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ABSTRACT

The Role of Heritage Institutions in Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Trinidad and Tobago

Alexia St. Bernard

This thesis explores the role of heritage institutions, namely the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago, the Tobago Museum and the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago in the preservation of the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. The study also highlights some challenges heritage institutions face in fulfilling their mandate to preserve the cultural heritage of the country. A qualitative approach was taken, employing case study and oral history techniques. A combination of primary and secondary sources in the forms of newspapers, books and journal articles were also used. The literature reviewed addresses themes such as roles of museums, Caribbean museums and cultural heritage preservation in the Caribbean.

Keywords: Heritage, Museums, National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, Tobago Museum, National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago, History, Heritage Institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The heritage of Trinidad and Tobago is diverse, from the island's natural heritage which encompasses waterfalls, mud volcanoes and mangroves to its cultural heritage in the form of Carnival, the ole time wedding, the Magnificent Seven and the many mosques, temples and churches dotted across the landscape. This research focuses on the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago from the perspective of its heritage institutions. The purpose of this study is to examine selected institutions namely the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago (NMAG), the Tobago Museum and the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago (NTTT) in preserving cultural heritage with a focus on their importance and roles in protecting the heritage of the twin island republic.

Defining key terms

Heritage can be defined as “a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present, and the sites themselves are cultural tools that can facilitate, but are not necessarily vital for, this process,” (Smith 2006, 44). “Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations,” (UNESCO). Cultural heritage can be defined as the expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on throughout generations, including objects, practices, places, customs, artistic expressions and values (ICOMOS 1999, 1). Cultural heritage, which is the focus of this project, is often expressed as either tangible or intangible (ICOMOS 1999, 1). Tangible cultural heritage encompasses the material aspects of heritage, including physical artefacts produced and maintained throughout generations in a society or community. This also includes monuments or buildings, objects, archaeological sites and other material traces that are of value to a society or community. Intangible heritage refers to the

‘practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills’ present in a culture, along with ‘instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith’ (Harrison 2012, 240). Heritage preservation seeks to conserve, preserve, and protect objects, buildings, landscapes or other artefacts of historical significance. “The conservation of cultural heritage refers to the measures taken to extend the life of cultural heritage while strengthening transmission of its significant heritage messages and values” (UNESCO 1988).

Heritage institutions such as museums and national trusts serve the primary function of being protectors of heritage and facilitators of its availability for easy public consumption. They strengthen historical thinking and knowledge, by allowing students to “meet” history face to face and “function as subtle hegemonic devices for the production and public representation of knowledge, meaning, and belonging,” (Ashley 2006, 639).

A National Trust is an organisation concerned with the preservation of historic buildings and monuments as well as the heritage of a country (Cambridge Dictionary; National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago Act 2000, 7). “A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (ICOM 2007). However, the mission, purpose and values of museums have gone through major transitions (Brown and Mairesse 2018, 525). Museums can be found in boats, warehouses, farms, castles, cottages, forts, or prisons as in Figure 1.1. There are several types of museums namely archaeology museums which display archaeological findings, art museums or art galleries that serve as spaces for showing art, historic house museums which are historic houses or buildings turned into museums for public consumption, natural history museums which display objects from nature related to natural history, dinosaurs, anthropology and more. For the purpose of this thesis, the general focus is on national museums.

Thesis Statement

Heritage institutions in Trinidad and Tobago are critical to the preservation of cultural heritage in various ways such as education, community awareness, protecting and exhibiting archaeological artefacts.

Rationale

In the first semester of my undergraduate programme at The UWI, I took a course in Heritage Studies which spurred my interest in heritage studies. That, in combination with my lifelong interest in visiting museums and learning about history, inspired this research project. Thus, the research examines the actions taken by heritage institutions in preserving the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. This discussion of heritage preservation would appeal to individuals actively engaged in museology and heritage preservation. It would also be useful to persons in History, Heritage Studies, Library and Archival Studies and Archaeology. Moreover, it can also be read as an introductory guide to the roles and functions of heritage institutions in the country to individuals who can be inspired to become involved in heritage preservation.

Significance

This study is of importance to add to the literature on museums in Trinidad and Tobago, a topic where there is not a substantial amount of literature. Further, as heritage continues to be under threat for various reasons across the world, it is important to examine how heritage preservation is being undertaken through heritage institutions in the country.

Parameters

In Trinidad and Tobago, there are several heritage institutions that preserve the cultural heritage of the nation. These range from the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, the National Library and Information System Authority, the National Carnival Commission, The

West Indiana and Special Collections Division of the Alma Jordan, to a myriad of community based museums in Toco, Moruga, Carapichaima and specialty based museums such as the Central Bank Museum to the recently opened Carnival Museum in Port of Spain. However, the study is limited to museums that fall into the category of national museums. Although the National Museum is the state museum of the island, the Tobago Museum functions as a defacto national museum of Tobago, representing the nuances of Tobago's cultural heritage. The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago was selected since it was established by the state to focus on matters relating to cultural heritage by an Act of Parliament.

Objectives

This research seeks to:

1. Explain the roles of heritage institutions such as museums and national trusts in society.
2. Examine the roles and importance of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago, the Tobago Museum and the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago.
3. Analyse the function of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago, the Tobago Museum and the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago in heritage preservation.

Methodology

The nature of this research is qualitative, a type of research that aims to gather and analyse non-numerical data to gain an understanding of individuals' social reality. Vibha Pathak et al. assert that this method researches through a humanistic or idealistic approach, used to understand the beliefs, attitudes, motivations and experiences of people that cannot be discovered thoroughly through quantitative methods (192). While it provides a deeper insight, it is also considered to be less reliable than the quantitative method, because the sample size is often small and there often is a high level of subjectivity in the data (Pathak et al. 192). This

approach was selected as it provided specific, accurate and first-hand information on the roles and activities of cultural heritage institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

The research employed a case study approach. Case studies investigate contemporary phenomena with real-life context (Seidman 13). The case study approach was chosen as it is thorough, inexpensive and can be done remotely. It is acknowledged that this method can take longer than other methods to analyse and possesses the risk of researcher bias for the subject and its interpretation (Leavy 10). However, the decision to choose one museum in Trinidad and one in Tobago was to offer a detailed study of these institutions and present a balanced perspective and analysis as Tobago is often neglected from research and analysis.

Primary sources included the use of oral history in the form of interviews and, newspapers, specifically *Newsday*, *Loop News* and the *Daily Express*. According to Patricia Leavy, oral history is a method of qualitative interview that underscores the participants' perspectives through employing open-ended interviewing sessions (3). The method is effective in acquiring in-depth information from participants, however, can be less factual than other methods because participants' narratives can be false or contain inaccuracies (4).

Three interviews were conducted on January 30, February 3 and February 15 via Zoom. The interviewees were selected because of their experience and expertise in the fields of museology, heritage preservation and archaeology. Interviews were conducted with the Assistant Curator of the Tobago Museum, Dominique John with the purpose of identifying the Tobago Museum's effort in preserving heritage. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with two PhD candidates at Leiden University, Zara Ali and Ashleigh Morris. Morris is also the Heritage Preservation and Research Officer at the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. In the case of secondary sources, books, journal articles and websites were used for an in-depth examination of the topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review addresses literature on the roles of heritage institutions such as museums and national trusts, with a focus on Caribbean museums.

Role of Museums

Museums play an instrumental role in preserving heritage and cultural resource management. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill defines a museum and explores its diverse interpretations and the history and development of museums in Europe. The value of this text is found in its explicit outlining of definitions and the development of museums. Likewise, Karen Brown and François Mairesse's article, "The definition of the museum through its social role" provides specific context of the role of museums in society, how that role has been adapted over the years and addresses recent changes to the definition of museums.

Andrew L. Christenson's "The Role of Museums in Cultural Resource Management" offers an overview of the role of museums in cultural resource management and points to the need for meticulous assessment of the present curation systems for archaeology. This text is useful as it provides a brief outline of museums' role as repositories for cultural resources which can be used in education and research. Christenson labels the museologist as one who continues the job of cultural resource management after the archaeologist finishes (162). He also explores the challenges and weaknesses of museums, archaeologists and cultural resource managers in heritage preservation, enhancing the overall argument.

Caribbean Museums

Museums are also agents and instruments of national identity creation. In *Caribbean Museums and National Identity*, Alissandra Cummins spotlights museums in the Caribbean as

being agents of symbolism and cultural expression, beginning as instruments of colonial dominance and transforming into institutions of identity and nation-building and the expression of cultural heritage for newly independent Caribbean nations (228). *Plantation to Nation*, edited by Alissandra Cummins, Kevin Farmer and Roslyn Russell draws upon a multidisciplinary museology discussion grounded in the Caribbean. The text underscores topics of museum evolution, colonialism, collections, identity and heritage preservation in different Caribbean countries. “Natural History = National History: Early Origins and Organizing Principles of Museums in the English-speaking Caribbean,” and “New Museums on the Block: Creation of Identity in the Post-Independence Caribbean” both offer significant context to understanding the introduction and development of museums in the Caribbean and how the post-independence period with its decolonial and nationalist ideologies was involved in identity building.

Meanwhile, *The Social Museum in the Caribbean: Grassroots Heritage Initiatives and Community Engagement* by Csilla E Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke presents a mosaic of 195 museums in the Caribbean, delineating museum history, museology and their participatory practices, an approach of putting local communities first. Through case studies, the text provides extensive examples of the activities of Caribbean museums. Continuing on the note of community involvement, *Communities and Museums in the 21st Century* by Karen Brown, Alissandra Cummins and Ana S. González Reuda focuses on community museums throughout the Caribbean and outlines the ways in which both the museums and communities curate heritage and memory, a critical theme for this thesis.

Caribbean Heritage edited by Basil Reid presents a collection of articles on different aspects of Caribbean heritage, covering intangible heritage, philanthropy, the natural environment, built heritage and archaeology and museology. The text’s value is in its definition and discussion of heritage, tangible and intangible, issues of national and ethnicity in the

context of heritage, natural and built environments through examples from different Caribbean countries. Some of the chapters discuss maritime heritage management, the movement of cultural property and museums apropos of colonialism and identity creation. The chapters “Imagined History: Colonialism and Caribbean Museums” by Alissandra Cummins and “Identity Forged: The Museum’s Role in the Creation of Identity in the English-Speaking Caribbean” by Kevin Farmer and Alissandra Cummins are beneficial in their examination of colonialism and identity in the Caribbean and the museums’ role in that.

Cultural Heritage Preservation in Trinidad and Tobago

Protecting Heritage in the Caribbean edited by Peter E. Siegel and Elizabeth Righter offers a discussion on the situation of heritage preservation in across the Caribbean. The text outlines heritage legislation, heritage institutions, archaeology, museums and the main challenges of heritage protection and preservation in the named countries. The chapter on Trinidad and Tobago written by Basil A. Reid and Vel Lewis proves most useful to this study as it delineates key agencies: the Royal Victoria Institute, the Tobago Museum and the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago as well as various committees, centres and conventions. The benefit of Reid and Lewis’ work is further seen in their discussion of challenges and offering recommendations for improvements in heritage preservation in the country.

Basil Reid’s *Encyclopedia of Caribbean Archaeology* supplies an invaluable compendium of useful information about archaeology, findings, agencies, organisations and sites throughout the Caribbean. For the purpose of this thesis, the writings about Trinidad and Tobago ranging from the natural environment, the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, historic and archaeological sites and communities to the archaeology of the indigenous peoples, serve critical in understanding the full scope of archaeology and heritage in the country.

The literature review discussed the literature on the multidisciplinary role of heritage institutions in society, especially in regard to heritage preservation, with a Caribbean perspective.

Chapter Outline

This study contains five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction, definition of key terms, thesis statement, rationale, parameters, objectives, methodology and literature review. The second chapter offers an overview of roles and significance of heritage institutions in society. Chapter three examines the role of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago Museum in preserving cultural heritage. The fourth chapter highlights the functions of the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago and its efforts in preserving cultural heritage and the final chapter is the conclusion.

Summary

Museums and national trusts are essential preservers of heritage. They primarily serve as repositories of cultural resources as well as being utilised as educational and research tools. Furthermore, they contribute to the development of national, cultural and individual identities. The following chapter discusses the role of heritage institutions in society.



Fig 1.1: Clink Prison Museum, London, England.

Source: "Clink Prison Museum Tours and Tickets." *Viator*, 2024, <https://www.viator.com/London-attractions/Clink-Prison-Museum/d737-a28887>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.

CHAPTER TWO

The Role of Heritage Institutions: Museums and National Trusts

This chapter examines the roles of heritage institutions such as museums and national trusts in heritage protection. Heritage institutions bear the responsibility of maintaining and prolonging the survival of unique assets while also making them accessible to the public, ensuring that humankind can remember our past (Aslan 2016, 4). Exhibiting the physical manifestations of heritage such as objects, artefacts, assets and collections to the public is another major responsibility (Ashley 2006, 639-640).

Visiting heritage attractions such as museums, national parks, historic sites and forts is a common part of schooling, specifically history education (Rantatalo 2002). Students being able to “meet history ‘first hand’” can influence their historical thinking and analysis (Stolare et al. 2021, 264) (Figure 2.1). The responsibilities of museum educational work include the hosting of programmes for exhibition visitors during open hours, programmes outside visiting hours or in special settings, and various modalities including dance, theatre, music, and movement (Hein 2005, 358).

Museums and archives host vast collections that specifically document and catalogue information. They interpret objects and collections to give them historical, social and cultural context and significance. Interpretation is crucial in engendering tolerance, respect and social cohesiveness in places with diverse populations. These institutions also address the intangible aspects of culture namely cultural knowledge, performance, music, religion and belief systems (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005, 2).

Heritage institutions are actively involved in safeguarding and preserving valuable structures and objects that they understand are sensitive, and work to protect cultural heritage against environmental and urban threats of climate change and construction (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005, 4). Heritage institutions also help to promote rights for marginalised groups,

who are frequently silenced by dominant narratives, thereby supporting social cohesion and development, and fostering intercultural understanding and respect (Dümcke and Gnedovsky 2013, 51). Some institutions even lead repatriation efforts advocating for the return of items to their rightful owners. In that, heritage institutions are part of a greater effort to develop an inclusive and respectful society.

The responsibility of heritage institutions to conserve, exhibit and preserve heritage ethically has progressively become a crucial criteria for organisations such as museums around the world to meet. The International Council of Museums (ICOM), established an ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, which “sets the minimum standards of professional practice and performance for museums and their staff,” (ICOM 2018).

Heritage institutions also have an economic function. Visiting institutions such as museums create work opportunities and the wealth museums create within a community can go back to the community (Kelly 2006, 4). Further, UNESCO World Heritage Sites contribute to tourism, entrepreneurship, create employment, increased revenues, and cultural infrastructure. The sale of cultural products to visitors allows for the enhancement of cultural, heritage and creative industries (Samuel et al. 23; Dümcke and Gnedovsky 2013. 51).

In the Caribbean, there are many heritage institutions which include numerous museums from the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, the Museo de la Revolucion in Cuba (Figure 2.2), the maritime museum in Curacao to the Memorial Acte in Guadeloupe. There are a range of national trusts in islands such as Saint Lucia, Grenada and Jamaica that are instrumental in managing, protecting and educating the public on the heritage of the Caribbean. In Trinidad and Tobago, there are similar institutions that preserve the heritage of the island.

Summary

Heritage institutions are essentially the gatekeepers of cultural heritage. They assume many roles in society as key preservers of heritage who make it accessible, educate the public, interpret objects and as act as advocates. The following chapter discusses heritage institutions (museums) in Trinidad and Tobago.



Fig 2.1: Students of the Bishop High School in Tobago on a visit to the Buccoo Historical Park and Nature Centre.

Source: Tobago Heritage Conservation Society. “Students of the Bishop High School in Tobago visited the Buccoo Historical Park and Nature Center.” *Facebook*, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/THCS Tobago/posts/students-of-the-bishop-high-school-in-tobago-visited-the-buccoo-historical-park-/526576662525584/>. 10 Apr. 2024.



Fig 2.2: Museo de la Revolución, Cuba

Source: Trip Cuba. “Museo de la Revolución, Cuba.” *Trip Cuba*, <https://www.tripcuba.org/museo-de-la-revolucion-havana>. 6 Apr. 2024.

CHAPTER THREE

The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago Museum

In the post-colonial context, according to Heather Cateau, the Caribbean is still in a “process of becoming” wherein the journey to full freedom after independence is ongoing and museums are critical for forming and solidifying heritage and identity during the extended process of decolonisation (1992, 33). In this chapter, some of the activities of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago (NMAG) (Figure 3.1) and the Tobago Museum (Figure 3.2) in heritage preservation are discussed.

Museums in Trinidad and Tobago, are largely dedicated to the preservation and exhibition of historical and cultural materials, archaeological findings and other objects of that nature that represent diverse aspects of the country’s history, natural history and heritage. Some museums in the island include the Angostura Museum and Barcant Butterfly Collection, Money Museum at the Central Bank (Figure 3.3), the Military Museum in Chaguaramas, the Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust and the Cleaver Woods Museum near Arima (Reid and Lewis 2007, 154).

Morris notes that museums are essential for cultural heritage preservation, and acknowledges that the topic of museums is divisive in the current climate (2024). The purpose of museums is to be repositories for tangible materials which at one point belonged to a people and were created by a group of people. Increasingly now, the descendants of those people want their artefacts and possessions back, as such, there exists a huge issue with the collection and display of things in museums (2024). Nevertheless, museums are essential in that there is no place for the public to appreciate the artefacts and materials that are closely associated with our past. As an institution, they are important but there is discussion and negotiation needed now

and, in the future, especially with the descendants of the people who created the artefacts that are housed in museums (2024).

The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad, similar to other Caribbean countries during the latter half of the nineteenth century, recognised the need for an institution that encompassed the history of the island. This need was actualised in 1870 with the formation of the Trinidad Society of Arts and Sciences which became the pioneer in pushing to build the Victoria Institute (later the Royal Victoria Institute) with inspiration from the Victoria and Albert Museum, the museum started construction in 1892 (Cummins 2004, 36). The institution commenced its construction in 1892, also acting as a commemoration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria and because of a general British colonial policy to implement cultural institutions with archaeological collections throughout the Commonwealth (Reid and Lewis 2007, 153). The institution housed research exhibits of natural history and archaeology while also providing vocational classes in arts and crafts (Reid and Lewis 2007, 153). In its early years, the museum developed a collection of local fauna and by 1892 when the institution was opened to the public, geological and archaeological specimens were added to the collections. A reading room, recreation room and lawn tennis court were added to the room in 1901.

The Colonial Government, in 1945 proceeded to expand the exhibits into a museum, and, the Royal Victoria Institute Act of 1947 gave the institute the formal status of a museum (Reid and Lewis 2007, 153). Currently, The National Museum and Art Gallery located at Frederick Street, Port of Spain has a collection varying between contemporary art and archaeological finds (Reid and Lewis 2007, 153) in seven major galleries- Art, Petroleum, Social History, Natural History, Economic History and Geology. The exhibitions display depictions of national festivals, Carnival, life during the World War II and artefacts from the

indigenous peoples (Sunday Express 2019). A small gallery of art by Michel Jean Cazabon, and a small gallery on carnival arts were also housed at the NMAG.

In celebration of Trinidad and Tobago's 50th Independence, the National Museum launched a '1962 and 2012' art exhibition in September of 2012, which spanned local art works from 1961 and 1962 up to 2012, done by artists like Jackie Hinkson, Eddie Bowen and Luise Kimme. Iconic locations such as the Coral Reef, Independence Square, Port of Spain's Chancery Lane and the Port of Scarborough were featured in the diverse art works (Daily Express 2012). According to the *Daily Express*, the exhibition was "committed to the preservation of the past and development of the future of visual arts in Trinidad and Tobago" (2012).

As museums delve more into the intangible cultural heritage of communities, expanding beyond artefacts, the National Museum also presents to the public events that promote the preservation of one of the country's most fundamental cultural elements: Carnival. The exhibition titled "Carnival Long Ago," opened from January to March 2020, featured the works of 47 artists and six photographers (Figure 3.4). The central theme highlighted the impact and historical significance of Carnival and its elements on visual perceptions. Among the visual depictions were live portrayals, lectures, tutorials and performance sets by traditional Carnival characters including jab jab, fancy sailor and fancy Indian (Greaves 2020). Multicomponent exhibitions such as this prove itself to be one of the greatest examples of this museum's work to preserve heritage. The incorporation of not only both the visual and performance aspect, but the supplying of tutorials encourage people to become involved in the craftsmanship directly related to a major element of their cultural heritage. In essence, the advancing of heritage knowledge and skills to new generations supports the preservation of heritage for the future.

One of the major challenges of museums housed in historic buildings is maintenance. The National Museum has faced obstacles relating to the physical plant and being able to fully

fulfill its mission of fostering public awareness of the country's history and heritage through the presentation, preservation and interpretation of aspects of the island's heritage. This major issue is being addressed as the NMAG is in the process of upgrading its operations to better serve the public. Under the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT), refurbishing began on March 27, 2023, and is scheduled to take twelve months to complete at a cost of \$23 million. Part of this plan for the revamp is to reorganise and classify its collections and display them in a manner that both instructs and entertains its audience ranging from researchers to schoolchildren by diversifying its delivery methods through lectures, multimedia displays and entertainment that reaffirm the museum's purpose (Newsday Reporter 2022).

Although it faces the challenge of being temporarily closed to the public at the Royal Victoria Institute, the National Museum still offers events and activities, which function out of other museums or art-related buildings. For example, in commemoration of World Art Day 2023, NMAG offered performances, and art gallery hops out of the City of Port of Spain Museum, with the theme "Performance is Art" (nmagtt 7 Apr 2023). In August of the same year, the Museum presented an exhibition curated by Carlisle Harris titled "Echoes of Times Past," "a month-long call to reflection and celebration as we celebrate National Patriotism Month," which was held at Killarney Castle in Port of Spain (nmagtt 28 Aug 2023). National Museum continues to engage the population with performances, exhibitions and activities celebrating and preserving the heritage, history and art of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Tobago Museum

Conceptualisations of a museum in Tobago began in 1976 with the purchasing of an archaeological collection of Tom Cambridge, deceased Curator of the National Museum by the Mount Irvine Bay Hotel and Golf Club (Reid and Lewis 2007, 155). The archaeology collection

placed under the control of a Trust formed by the Hotel and archaeologist Dr. Lou Lichtveld primarily consisted of Amerindian artefacts mostly from Tobago, and some artefacts from Trinidad and other islands. The Tobago House of Assembly established a public institution called the Tobago Trust to improve the protection and preservation of the archaeological collections. The Trust was inaugurated on October 27, 1990, and its objectives included (1) “the collection of works of art, cultural artifacts and items of national, artistic, cultural, natural and historical interest to Tobago,” (2) “the identification, preservation and restoration of buildings, structures, sites, monuments, works of art, cultural artifacts, objects and items of national and/or historical interest to Tobago or things of natural beauty,” and lastly (3) “the administration and promotion of the Tobago Museum with a view to maintaining its essential character....” (Reid and Lewis 2007, 155).

The Tobago Museum operates at the Barrack Guard House of Fort King George in Scarborough. Built in the 1770s by the British in honour of King George the Third, the fort became home to the Tobago Museum. Some of the highlights of the museum are the barracks, officers’ mess hall and prisoner’s bell tank. Its varied collection includes antique maps, the African slave heritage of Tobago, shells, minerals, military buttons and Amerindian artefacts among others (Reid and Lewis 2007, 155). Assistant Curator of the Tobago Museum Dominique John further identifies the Tobago Museum as possessing pottery, animorphs and within recent years, funerary items and maps from the various colonial powers that once owned Tobago (2024). The use of historical infrastructure has aided in the process of restoration and heritage preservation because “people are more willing and likely to preserve something that is actually in use,” (2024). “The physical representation tells a story,” she says in reference to punishment cells, the gunpowder magazine, and the military cemetery, which have a great impact on the average Tobagonian’s interest in their history, heritage and preserving it (2024).

The Tobago Museum has gradually expanded its collections and activities, currently being acclaimed for its efforts in preserving and promoting Tobagonian heritage. Within recent years, one of the most impressive sections of the museum is the “Icons of Tobago Museum,” which opened in 2019, highlighting the life of Calypso Rose born Linda McCarthy Sandy-Lewis and Winston “Shadow” Bailey. Debra Greaves, a *Newsday* reporter, cites the impetus to the establishment of the Icons Museum to Calypso Rose’s donation of her archives to the Tobago House of Assembly (Figure 3.5). This, in combination with her prior donation of her sculpture in 2015 supported the creation of the museum. Winston “Shadow” Bailey also furnished the museum with his archive and memorabilia to be placed on display (Greaves 2019).

Moreover, the Tobago Museum offers interactive experiences with re-enactments illustrating the distinct history of the Fort and its role throughout Tobago’s development (Sunday Express 2017). In 2019, The Tobago House of Assembly’s Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation hosted a “walking theatre” dramatising the daily experiences of enslaved Africans on the island to the audience (Connelly 2019). Live re-enactments are often one of the greatest forms of heritage preservation because of both its entertaining and educational manner. Thus, regular interactive activities undertaken by the Tobago Museum contribute to heritage preservation in Tobago.

While the museum has made strides in its efforts to promote and preserve history and heritage, John confirms that challenges continue, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic (2024). Funding has remained a central issue throughout the existence of the museum, as the museum only has a small entrance fee of \$5, and income from visitors usually cannot make a dent in supporting the financial operations of the museum. She also highlights the lack of resources and trained personnel, which has led to the Tobago Museum having to outsource processes like conservatory work (2024).

Summary

The museums of Trinidad and Tobago, specifically the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago Museum both preserve the cultural heritage of the country in many ways both interactive and exhibit style in spite of challenges faced.



Fig 3.1: The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago.

Source: The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago. “The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago.” *Royal Victoria Insitutue (National Museum and Art Gallery)*. <https://nationaltrust.tt/home/location/royal-victoria-insitutue/>. Accessed 10 Apr. 2024.



Fig 3.2: The site of the Tobago Museum, Fort King George.

Source: Tripadvisor “Fort King George” *Tripadvisor*.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g147393-d1440347-Reviews-Fort_King_George-Scarborough_Tobago_Trinidad_and_Tobago.html. Accessed 10 Apr. 2024.



Fig 3.3: The interior of the Money Museum in 2004.

Source: The Central Bank Museum. “The Money Museum in 2004.” *About The Central Bank Museum*, <https://museum.centralbankarts.org.tt/a-brief-history-of-the-central-bank-museum/>, Accessed 6 Apr. 2024.

FEATURES

Carnival Long Ago exhibition at museum

DEBRA GREAVES FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2020



Fig 3.4: Carnival Long Ago exhibition at museum.

Source: Debra Greaves. “Carnival Long Ago exhibition at museum.” *Newsday*, <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/02/07/carnival-long-ago-exhibition-at-museum/>, Accessed 2 Apr. 2024.



Fig 3.5: The Icons of Tobago Museum at Fort King George.

Source: Debra Greaves. “The Icons of Tobago Museum at Fort King George.” *Icons of Tobago Museum opens*, <https://newsday.co.tt/2019/03/19/icons-of-tobago-museum-opens/>, Accessed 2 Apr. 2024.

CHAPTER FOUR

The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago

This chapter discusses the purpose and the role of one of the premier heritage institutions of Trinidad and Tobago, the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago (NTTT) (Figure 4.1). The NTTT was founded under Act No.11 of 1991 amended in 1999. Operating under the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Trust is vested with the authority to secure legal protection for nationally important heritage sites, buildings, objects and monuments, (built and natural) known as properties of interest. The Trust promotes access for all Trinidadians and Tobagonians to their heritage and fosters a greater awareness and understanding of Trinidad and Tobago's heritage and its significance and richness. Moreover, the National Trust collaborates with regional National Trusts, international agencies, academic institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and is an associate member of the International National Trust Organisation (National Trust 101).

National Trust Act

According to the National Trust Act, the mandated purpose of the National Trust is as seen below:

5. The Trust is established for the purpose of carrying out the functions given to it by this Act, which include—

- A. listing and acquiring such property of interest as the Trust considers appropriate;
- B. permanently preserving lands that are property of interest and as far as practicable, retaining their natural features and conserving the animal and plant life;
- C. preserving, maintaining, repairing and servicing or, arranging for the preservation of property of interest other than land and where such property of interest comprises buildings, augmenting the amenities of such buildings and their surroundings;
- D. making provision for the access to and enjoyment of property of interest by the public;

- E. encouraging research into property of interest including, where applicable, any animal, plant or marine life associated therewith;
- F. compiling photographic or architectural records of property of interest;
- G. making the public aware of the value and beauty of the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago; and
- H. advising the Government on the conservation and preservation of property of interest and on any or all of the matters referred to above.

(National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago Act 2000, 7)

The Trust delineates the powers of the act concerning various aspects. The seventh clause outlines the Trust's powers in respect of property. The eighth clause articulates the Trust's operations regarding the listing of property of interest. The preparation of a list of buildings or sites to be preserved as listed properties along with a list of properties of interest that do not necessarily fall under the first listing but should still be preserved to an extent is the foremost role of the trust in this regard (Act 2000, 11). Further, the listings must be approved by the Minister, who also maintains a Register of all lists, which then can be published in the *Gazette*. Public notices of listed properties should be made regularly, being that they were signed by the Secretary of the Trust.

The following acts relate to the whereabouts and legal punishments. Clause 23 begins the discussion of penalties. Specifically on the restriction on exportation of listed property, the Act states that the exportation of listed property without a licence is not allowed and a fine of five thousand dollars can be imposed upon the individual (2000, 19). The 25th clause notes that the Trust can request an individual in possession of a listed property for the whereabouts of the property, which if not complied with results in a fine of two thousand, five hundred dollars. Clause 26 notes orders for protecting listed property, to secure the safety of listed property, persons in possession of property are required to follow specific guidelines related to the preservation of the listed property and if these stipulations are not followed, persons can appeal

to the Minister in writing to essentially pause or revoke completely the Trust's involvement in their property. If a person does not comply with the law is liable to a fine of five thousand dollars (2000, 20-21). Finally, the last clause of relevance is clause 27 which delineates that any person who damages or demolishes any listed property is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars (2000, 21). It is debatable whether this fine is a substantial enough deterrent.

Championing Heritage Preservation

Ashleigh Morris notes that the Trust and its staff find themselves acting as advocates for heritage preservation, engaging in “politics” to ensure that the heritage preservation frameworks as in Rome and Egypt can be brought to Trinidad and Tobago (2024). Beyond heritage preservation, Morris and the Trust are large advocates for archaeology and the indigenous peoples of the country, whose voices are largely subdued in societal matters and decision-making. Regarding this discussion of taking legal action, the Trust, in recent years, took legal action against individuals who made attempts to destroy or destroy heritage sites or items. For instance, in 2015, the Trust announced its intention to take legal action against businessman Alfred Galy who demolished the historic Greyfriars Church of Scotland on Frederick Street, Port of Spain. Galy was in contravention of the rules stipulated by the Trust concerning the preservation of the building, which was a Gazetted part of the National Trust (Boodram 2015).

The demolition of the historic Greyfriars Church of Scotland in spite of the law and pressure from the Trust reveals that there is an issue with the enforcement of laws and power from the Trust to prevent demolition. While the law exists, prevention and enforcement is highly inadequate. This can also be evidenced by the number of other historic sites that were demolished despite the threat of the law and pressure from the trust like the Corsbie House and

the Belmont gingerbread house. While it had yet to be listed by the National Trust, the interest was expressed and despite requests to maintain the structure, work commenced and it was demolished in 2020 without any notice to the Trust (Loop News 2020).

In other cases, the Trust almost took legal action due to sites or assets being under threat. A proposed development requiring quarrying operations was announced to happen at a site located in the Maracas Valley St. Joseph. However, at this site is found the Caurita Petroglyphs, one of the country's rarest indigenous artefacts, which was located close to the proposed development and quarrying. The Trust noted that quarrying operations and development operations can drastically alter the landscape, having the ability to disrupt the land the stone rests on. The listed heritage asset was made by the First Peoples of Trinidad centuries ago, depicting anthropomorphic fertility images, possessing further value as it is the only documented rock art in Trinidad and still holds spiritual importance to the indigenous people of the country. As such, all activity that could cause damage to the rock is expressly forbidden (Sunday Express 2021).

The National Trust's exercises in heritage preservation and the spreading of historical knowledge are multifaceted. The listing of heritage sites has increased in recent years. In 2022, the Trust added sixteen new properties to its heritage asset inventory, now entitled to legal protection under Section 8 of the National Trust Act. Some properties are: Lopinot House, the Five Islands (Caledonia, Pelican, Lenagan, Rock and Craig), Carnegie Free Library and the President's House.

The mandate of the National Trust includes the preservation of archaeological heritage. Zara Ali, points out the importance of the National Trust relating to archaeology in Trinidad and Tobago (2024). Morris echoes this sentiment that the National Trust is highly involved in archaeology in Trinidad and Tobago (2024). "As the structure of heritage preservation is not as mature as in other places, we find ourselves doing more. I find myself doing more, being an

advocate for heritage preservation, both archaeological and for other types of heritage,” (Morris 2024).

In the twenty-first century, the National Trust has also partnered with the Department of History at The UWI and other international universities regarding archaeological investigations and excavating sites at Caledonia Island and Nelson Island. Both the National Trust and The UWI have had a role to play in the preservation of the Banwari Trace archaeological site dated 5000 BC, which is the oldest pre-Columbian site in the West Indies. In 2013, it was listed as a legally protected site in accordance with the National Trust Act. Banwari Trace is important as it highlights migration patterns from South America to the Lesser Antilles via Trinidad. The skeletal remains of the Banwari woman are in custody of the Zoology Museum at The UWI. The Government acquired some of the property which has afforded ease of access and ongoing maintenance by the National Trust which maintains a partnership with the Siparia Regional Corporation on activities relating to this site (Reid 2002) .

The Trust regularly offers lectures and workshops to the public that cover various topics from archaeology to miniature art. In August 2021, the Trust partnered with the La Brea Tar Pit Museum of Los Angeles and held a two-day palaeontology workshop to strengthen and develop the explorative, research and conservation of the country’s prehistory, stemming out of the repatriation of fossils discovered in Trinidad in the 1920s (Newsday 2021). Educational activities are significant as this delivers information to the public which often allows individuals to see the value and responsibility in protecting heritage.

Among the recent endeavours of the Trust was the launch of the Resilient Heritage programme (Figure 4.2). The project was facilitated through a US\$200,000 grant from the US Embassy’s Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation. Completed in 2023, it entailed the use of 3D laser scanning and photogrammetry to digitally map the landscape to be discussed

with stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago for consultation to enhance resilience against climate change (Newsday 2022).

The National Trust also frequently hosts events such as “Ponche de Crème and Parang on Nelson Island,” tours to explore Carnival in Paramin and museum tours (Sunday Express 2017; tnationaltrust Jan 7, 2024). For Divali, the Trust invites the public to decorate a deeya, that would then be displayed at their Mille Fleurs Divali Celebrations (tnationaltrust Oct 13, 2023). This type of heritage tourism contributes to the promotion of heritage by engendering interest among the public for the protection of sites as well as generating revenue that allows for the continued preservation of sites.

Summary

The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago has continued to be the leading organisation of heritage preservation in the country. Despite ongoing challenges with the enforcement of laws and destruction of heritage sites, the Trust continues to advocate and promote heritage tourism and preservation through countless methods.



Fig 4.1: Mille Fleurs, the headquarters of the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago.

Source: The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago. “Mille Fleurs.” *National Trust 101*, <https://nationaltrust.tt/home/national-trust-101/>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2024.



Fig 4.2: National Trust launches Resilient Heritage research programme.

Source: Newsday “National Trust launches Resilient Heritage research programme.” *Newsday*, <https://newsday.co.tt/2022/05/05/national-trust-launches-resilient-heritage-research-programme/>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2024.

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to explain the importance and roles of heritage institutions namely the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago, the Tobago Museum and the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago. A qualitative method of interviews, newspapers, secondary sources with a case study approach was used in this analysis.

Each heritage institution has demonstrated various ways of heritage preservation. The National Museum of Trinidad and Tobago is under renovation to preserve this historic building which will contribute to an improved museum to cater to the needs of the public. Its preservation by the Government is an important step in heritage protection. The National Museum also has preserved heritage in several ways through its collections, art exhibitions, tours and, activities relating to intangible cultural heritage. The Tobago Museum's significance in capturing the history and heritage of Tobago was also explored. The Tobago Museum is also located in a historic building and has a range of exhibitions of indigenous peoples artefacts, military objects and domestic life artefacts. The Tobago Museum also hosts interactive activities such as re-enactments to their audiences.

In keeping with the discussions of Alissandra Cummins, Kevin Farmer on Caribbean museums, preserving and presenting the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago through museums directly contributes to national identity creation. As noted by Andrew L. Christenson, the educational and instructional aspect of some museum activities foster both the proliferation of heritage knowledge and the persistence of core skills related to cultural heritage. While strides in heritage preservation have been made, these institutions continue to face difficulties in fully executing heritage preservation. Inadequate funding, a lack of trained personnel and little availability of resources continue to complicate efforts made to preserve heritage. Through these two case studies, it is argued that museology in Trinidad and Tobago can be

further developed to protect cultural identity and heritage within the country, used mostly for tourism and school visits, its potential has not fully been realised.

The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most essential institutions preserving heritage in the country. Their diverse undertakings from legal protection to listing heritage sites, archaeological investigations, lectures to heritage tourism display a dedication to preserving heritage in ways that appeal to the population and garner further interest in preservation from the average person. The Trust continues to struggle to fully legally protect heritage sites and enforce the laws of the National Trust Act as some historic sites have unfortunately been destroyed; however, efforts to improve this are consistent. Through this examination of efforts by three heritage institutions in preserving cultural heritage and the difficulties they face, this thesis has argued that despite setbacks, Trinidad and Tobago's heritage institutions play an instrumental role in heritage preservation and are committed to preserving the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, what is the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago?
2. Why is cultural heritage preservation important?
3. What is the role of museums in the preservation of cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago?
4. What is the role of archaeology in the preservation of cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago?
5. In your opinion, is the housing of archaeological artefacts in museums essential in preserving the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago? Why or Why not?
6. How does your museum engage in the preservation of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage?
7. Do you incorporate community engagement and participation in the museum's heritage preservation initiatives? Why or Why not?
8. To what extent is it important to protect the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago through institutions such as museums?
9. What types of archaeological artefacts are housed in your museum? How are they incorporated into the museum's cultural heritage preservation activities?

10. What are some challenges that museums face in protecting cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago?