

ABSTRACT

Kingston's Formal Christian Worship Spaces: An Exploration of Hierarchies and Aesthetic Distinctiveness

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This thesis argues that sites of Christian worship in Caribbean territories such as Jamaica are essential to any attempt at understanding the identity politics that govern daily life within the region. In this vein, it highlights ideological contestation and spatial battles as the most important influences on the evolution of the varying aesthetic conventions utilised in the erection and presentation of the worship spaces that can be found on the island. Specific emphasis is placed on those spaces that are found in the capital city of Kingston. The extent to which the varying aspects of architecture were impacted by the differing types of socio-cultural hierarchies that have acted on the consciousness of the Jamaican people over the period of the English/British occupation of the island to the present day are assessed. The architectural aspects discussed here include the external structure, the contained space, the furnishings utilised, and the ornamentations and symbolic elements used to adorn or mark the various sectors of the spaces, as well as the function and meanings associated with the outer and inner aspects of particular worship environments.

To this end, relevant publications on Christianity, architecture, Jamaican history, cultural studies, philosophy of religion, and various social theories were consulted as support material for the analysis of the primary data extracted from the numerous visits to approximately 250 existing Christian worship sites across the city

of Kingston. The result is a significant and original contribution that is the first to demonstrate how Christian worship spaces function as signifiers of institutionalisation, ideological imposition(s) and hegemonic manipulation. In fact, the thesis provides important analysis on the ways in which space has functioned to bind the city's various social and ethnic groups to larger systems of imposed and modified ontological, theosophical and cosmological meanings.

Keywords: aesthetic, ancestry, architecture, chapel, Christian, church, congregation, culture, denomination, distinctiveness, hegemony, hierarchy, ideology, indigenous, Kingston, logo, religion, sacred, signage, signifier, space, symbol, urban, vernacular, worship