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Title of Thesis:

An analysis of the traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine.

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## **Abstract**

This study gives a detailed analysis of the traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine, and features the character's impact on carnival in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the character's evolution and colonial influence. Other traditional carnival characters such as the Moko Jumbie also impacted on the development of Trinidad and Tobago's carnival, especially in the area of costume designing and culture. The evolution of Dame Lorraine consisted of different stages ranging from colonial times to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Different groups within Trinidad and Tobago's society would have made several contributions to the development of this traditional carnival character. A major stage of the character's evolution was its portrayal in theatre. Dame Lorraine's origin can be traced back to colonial times. The colonial era in Trinidad significantly influenced the Dame Lorraine traditional carnival character, especially since the character was originally meant to depict the white female elites' dress and mannerism for balls and other fancy gatherings.

Keywords: Dame-Lorraine, Carnival, Traditional-Characters, Evolution, Colonial, Influence.

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## **Introduction**

Traditional carnival characters are more than simply “characters” played by people. They tell a story, a significant story, and they represent a time period experienced by our ancestors. Many of these traditional carnival characters' influence stems from colonial times. The culture of the colonial period and the experiences of the oppressed (enslaved Africans) gave rise to traditional carnival characters. The word “traditional” before “character” indicates that something had been established or was in existence that led to the development of the “character”. These traditional carnival characters have since evolved and are now portrayed in many different ways and hold different meanings from what they represented and meant during earlier times. The traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine is one such character that originated during colonial times on the island of Trinidad. With the arrival of the French to Trinidad following the passage of the Cedula of Population of 1783, the Dame Lorraine character has taken up several meanings and today it is portrayed differently from colonial times. This analysis of Dame Lorraine will examine the character’s impact on carnival in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the character’s colonial influences and evolution.

## **Literature Review**

Traditional carnival characters have been substantially written about by many authors of the Caribbean and the wider world. These writings about traditional carnival characters like Dame Lorraine are often featured within a carnival context. However, there are also many authors whose focus is on the history, story or narrative and development of traditional carnival characters. Hollis Liverpool in his book entitled “*Rituals of power and Rebellion*” captured the historical background and influence of traditional Carnival characters. Liverpool looked at the

contributions of Africa to the development of culture in Trinidad, including traditional carnival characters, carnival, music and other cultural aspects like folklore and stick fighting. According to Liverpool, “Trinidad’s carnival, through social change and fed with European impacts, developed a crude festival of stick fights and European rivalry, into one involving European costuming, a display of European styles, history, values, attitudes and music” (Liverpool, ix). Liverpool is thus referencing the colonial influence of Trinidad’s culture. This point relates significantly to the analysis of Dame Lorraine as the aim is to also highlight the influence of the colonial period on the character’s origin in Trinidad. From a broad perspective, reference to slavery must be made when analyzing traditional carnival characters. Liverpool constantly mentioned the lack of credit given to Africa for Trinidad’s culture pertaining to carnival. According to Liverpool, “African peoples in Trinidad have not been adequately credited for their noble contributions” (Liverpool, ix). While Dame Lorraine’s origins have been significantly linked to the inspiration of the French, Liverpool’s writing extended the discourse by noting that Dame Lorraine’s features were developed and influenced in part by Africans. Liverpool noted that, “... in the carnivals before 1838, whites and Africans participated in many West African traditions” (Liverpool, ix). It has been recorded that many enslaved Africans came from West Africa into various colonies in the New World. Consequently, their African influence merged with the European influence and gave rise to a mixture of festivities as seen through traditional carnival characters. With reference specifically to Dame Lorraine, Liverpool mentioned a similar character that is depicted through the “Gelede Masquerade” in Nigeria and Benin. With reference to the Gelede Masquerade according to Liverpool, “dances are dictated by drums, satirical speeches, female costumes emphasizing buttocks and breasts” (Liverpool, 63). This Gelede masquerade carries similar features to the traditional carnival character of Dame Lorraine, hence

the reason why Liverpool suggested that Trinidad's culture including its carnival characters are not only influenced by Europeans via colonialism but also by Africa via slavery.

Michael Anthony in his books (volumes 1&2) entitled, " *The Carnivals of Trinidad and Tobago from Inception to year 2000* captured the development of carnival from the arrival of the French to Trinidad to the year 2000. Michael Anthony gave a detailed description of carnival in every year leading up to 2000. Anthony distinctly covered carnival and its evolution and development in terms of the events (J'ouvert) music (calypso) and competitions (Dimanche Gras). Anthony's writing on the French arrival to Trinidad shed light on the historical background of Dame Lorraine's emergence. According to Anthony, "... the French settlers and their slaves from the Windward Islands began to crowd into Trinidad...these were the people who brought the carnival to Trinidad" (Anthony, 2). Though Anthony captured the evolution of carnival, much attention was not paid to traditional carnival characters. For example, Anthony stated that, "the downtown Carnival remained the traditional carnival of old masks such as robbers, wild Indians, bats, jab molasses, jab-jabs, Dame Lorraine and Pierrots" (Anthony,83). Anthony generally mentioned traditional characters but does not go into great details. Anthony is basically chronicling the events of carnival in every year. This was seen again when Anthony stated that in 1965, "the most vigorous and resplendent jouvert morning of the first half of the 1960's opened on Monday March 1st 1965" (Anthony, 407).

Sandy Irwin and Julien Goddard in "*Mas in 72 Trinidad! Souvenir Copy*" also spoke a great deal of the French influence on Carnival. Irwin and Goddard stated that, "...according to history some four years after the arrival of the French, their customs and beliefs were all furrowed into the country, carnival being one of them" (Irwin &Goddard, 5). Irwin and Goddard did not go into detail about traditional carnival characters. However, their historical writings on

carnival gave some general insight into how carnival characters came about. It would have been extremely helpful and informative if both authors had included the specifics of traditional carnival characters. Nevertheless, the information pertaining to the French was sufficient and provided a great background for the analysis of Dame Lorraine.

Garth Green and Philip Scher in their book, *“Trinidad Carnival: The Cultural Politics of a Transnational Festival”* offered a notable definition of Dame Lorraine. According to the authors Dame Lorraine is “a carnival figure of a man dressed as a woman with exaggerated buttocks and oversized breasts...the buttocks sway in a comical fashion when the masquerader walks” (Green & Scher, 228). This definition provides a clear depiction of Dame Lorraine. Like other texts, this book presents a view into Trinidad’s colonial past with regard to its carnival and carnival cultural aspects such as carnival characters and music. There was a strong political and economic theme in relation to carnival in Trinidad in this source. According to Green and Scher, “the current context of carnival emerges out of the development of Trinidadian society from early colonization by Spain, the creation of slavery society and economy based on sugar production and the aftermath of emancipation” (Green&Scher, 2). Green and Scher’s writing was helpful in tracing the development of Trinidad’s carnival which helped with the understanding of the development of Dame Lorraine during different periods. According to both authors, in the 1970s, the characters associated with masculine assertions of language and aggression including Bat, Dragon and Pierrot Grenade and other forms of military map disappeared from the streets’ (Green&Scher, 12). Clearly, during specific times, traditional carnival characters represented certain events and thus had their periods of relevance and significance.

Dylan Kerrigan, *“Creatures of The Mas”* gave a lot of relevant information pertaining specifically to Dame Lorraine. Kerrigan's writing also contained writings on numerous other

traditional carnival characters. Kerrigan was able to show the evolution of Dame Lorraine as a traditional carnival character. Dame Lorraine's portrayal was presented through the enslaved Africans. Kerrigan mentioned that Trinidad's upper class ladies often got dressed up for masquerade in large ball gowns and a lot of jewelry. These elites had slaves who "observed through the windows" (Kerrigan, 2005) and mocked the elite ladies when the "freed slaves held their Carnival celebrations, and thus evolved the burlesque character of the Dame Lorraine" (Kerrigan, 2005). Kerrigan's writing showed one aspect of what led to the evolution of Dame Lorraine as an exaggerated traditional carnival character. The evolution of Dame Lorraine as a traditional carnival character was remarkably represented through Kerrigan's writing.

### **Objectives**

The aim of this paper is to analyze the historical nature and colonial influence of the traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine. Additionally, the paper seeks to furnish a comprehensive understanding of the evolution and impact of Dame Lorraine in the development of carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. Another objective is to differentiate between the portrayals of Dame Lorraine during colonial times as opposed to the post-colonial era.

### **Methodology**

For this analysis of the traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine, multiple secondary sources were consulted and synthesized to grasp an understanding of Dame Lorraine. Qualitative research was the research method used during this analysis. With this method of research, multiple credible secondary sources were studied to understand and to form a general perspective about the traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine. Books and journal articles were among

the many secondary sources used for writing this analysis. Books and articles on carnival in Trinidad and Tobago were heavily used as they provided a bulk of information from general to specific, for the topic at hand. These books were able to capture the culture of carnival as there was a strong presence of cultural history in these sources. Primary sources such as newspapers were frequently mentioned in some books. This aided in providing relevant information which boosted data collection on Dame Lorraine. One such newspaper frequently referenced was the “Port-Of-Spain Gazette” newspaper.

### **Rationale**

This analysis is important as it seeks to enhance the knowledge of traditional carnival characters, specifically the Dame Lorraine character. Additionally, this study will provide information about the origin of Dame Lorraine which is necessary to preserve the traditional aspect of the character. Studying Dame Lorraine will aid in enhancing any previous documentation or written information about the character as new findings and knowledge will be analyzed.

### **Thesis Statement**

The traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine, has impacted on the development of Trinidad and Tobago’s carnival, has been shaped by colonial influences and witnessed evolution.

### **Parameters**

This analysis focuses on the colonial period to present day. The development, influence and portrayals of Dame Lorraine will be shown during the aforementioned time period. The main reason for the selected time period is to capture the historical nature of Dame Lorraine as well as to reveal the character’s evolving status over time. Other major traditional carnival characters

like the Pierrot Grenade and Moko Jumbie will occasionally be mentioned and referenced to draw comparison to Dame Lorraine so that the character can be thoroughly analyzed within a wider contextual framework. Though other traditional carnival characters will be referenced, many will also be excluded as the purpose of this analysis is to capture and understand the history and development of Dame Lorraine as a traditional carnival character. Dame Lorraine's origin and portrayal has been significantly associated with Trinidad from colonial times. Thus, Trinidad will also be referenced and explored in the study. Carnival in Trinidad, before the island was Trinidad and Tobago will also be explored briefly. It is necessary and extremely important to explore Trinidad prior to its association with Tobago due to Dame Lorraine's introduction and influence by the French who migrated to Trinidad prior to the union of Trinidad and Tobago. The French's influence prior to arriving in Trinidad will be explored as Dame Lorraine character's style, in terms of dress, clothing and other aspects can also be found rooted in the French culture. Many Caribbean islands will be excluded from the analysis in order to keep the focus on Dame Lorraine in Trinidad. This analysis of Dame Lorraine will highlight various themes such as colonialism, slavery and carnival as these themes all have bearing on Dame Lorraine.

### **Chapter Outline**

This thesis will consist of three chapters. Chapter one is entitled "Locating Dame Lorraine Among Traditional Characters in the Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago." This chapter will focus on the emergence and role of Dame Lorraine and other traditional carnival characters in the carnival of Trinidad and Tobago. Chapter two is entitled the "Colonial Influences of Dame Lorraine". The purpose of this chapter is to grasp an understanding of how traditional carnival

characters like Dame Lorraine were shaped both by the French and the formerly enslaved Africans during the colonial era. Chapter three is entitled the “Evolution of Dame Lorraine”. This chapter will seek to compare Dame Lorraine in earlier times to modern or present times so that the evolution of the character could be presented.

## **Chapter One**

### **“Locating Dame Lorraine Among Traditional Characters in the Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago”**

Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago has been one of the greatest festivals celebrated on the twin islands. The festival developed significantly since colonial times. Bridget Brereton noted that prior to emancipation “carnival had been an elegant social affair of the upper-class creole white” (Brereton, 86). Carnival has since grown in popularity locally, as well as internationally, and is no longer seen as an affair only for the white upper class. Carnival is largely about calypso, the steel pan as well as masquerading which are often manifested through the portrayal of a character as noted by Garth Green and Philip Scher (Green & Scher, 2). Characters and carnival go together and consequently, carnival characters are important features of the festival. Traditional carnival characters have brought a story and thus a show to carnival in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is important to comprehend the significance of traditional carnival characters in order to preserve their history and significance to the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. According to Trinidad and Tobago NALIS Library, “the stories behind traditional carnival characters lend meaning and significance to portrayals” (Trinidad and Tobago NALIS Library, 2020). Masqueraders have used these stories or origins of traditional carnival characters to strengthen their depiction of the character during masquerading. For instance, the traditional carnival character Pierrot Grenade, origin goes back to the 16th century. According to Dylan Kerrigan, Pierrot Grenade came from “the pierrot pantomime character, a popular figure in the theatres of France from the 16th century” (Kerrigan, 2005). Pierrot was known for its “lavish costume, with satin gown decorated with bells” (Kerrigan, 2005). However, the formerly enslaved could not

afford such materials to depict the characters' costumes, and as such Pierrot Grenade was created using "scraps of cloth of many colours into strips" (Kerrigan, 2005). Pierrot Grenade was the folk's conceptualization of the slave master and consequently was depicted as being profound in the English language specifically in its use of vocabulary. Pierrot Grenade has remained a fan favourite for carnival and has developed since its origin through the use of props such as books or rulers which emphasized the character's profound erudition. Masqueraders enhanced their performance of Pierrot Grenade by grasping an understanding of the character's origin. Some other traditional carnival characters such as Baby Doll, Wild Indians, the Mid- Night Robber and, the major subject matter of this research, Dame Lorraine, would have also developed the Trinidad and Tobago carnival and made it more profound and colorful.

New costumes were created for traditional characters that were inspired by traditional costumes. These costumes added creativity in Trinidad and Tobago's carnival. Some pretty mas costumes were even influenced by the design of traditional carnival characters' costumes. The traditional carnival character, the Moko Jumbie, for instance, has made significant development in its costume design. The Moko Jumbie, according to Dylan Kerrigan, was described in West African folktales as "guardian and dancing spirits, originally protectors of villages using its towering height to fight off spirits" (Kerrigan, 2005). The Moko Jumbie costumes are extremely creative and are not limited to, one specific look. It has continued to change and develop over the years. Dylan Kerrigan noted one costume design of the Moko Jumbie which includes "wooden legs, elaborate jacket, hat and white mask" (Kerrigan, 2005). Peter Minshall did an excellent job at crossing over the Moko Jumbie character from old mas into pretty mas through his innovative costume design of the character which was seen in carnival 2016. Peter Minshall created a Moko Jumbie inspired costume entitled "A Dying Swan." The costume showed the historical

characteristics of the Moko Jumbie character, such as its long legs, and fused it with European aspects such as ballet shoes and an European styled dress. Peter Minshall in an interview about the extraordinary costume noted that, “classical Africa could mix with and also marry with classical Europe, so you could put ballet shoes on a Moko Jumbie” (Lindo, 2016). Evidently, traditional carnival characters like the Moko Jumbie has inspired creativity for the costume designing of new carnival characters.

Additionally, traditional carnival characters would have developed Trinidad and Tobago’s carnival through their importance and relevance in old mas. Old mas have been in existence for many years and have remained a dominant feature of carnival. Many masqueraders look forward to old mas and many partake in this carnival feature. Old mas normally occurs on jouvert morning and is dominated by the portrayal of traditional carnival characters such as the Jab-Jab and Blue Devil. Old mas also include the use of mud and paint. The grand portrayal of these traditional carnival characters at old mas have sustained an integral feature of Trinidad and Tobago’s carnival.

Traditional carnival characters have certainly brought many developments to carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. These characters have brought life and story-telling to carnival. They have also served as muses for the creation of pretty mas and they have added longevity to the celebration of jouvert.

## Chapter Two

### “Colonial Influences of Dame Lorraine”

Dame Lorraine, like many other traditional carnival characters, has its identity rooted in colonial times. Hollis Liverpool noted that Trinidad’s carnival is one involving “European costuming, a display of European styles, history, values, attitudes and music” (Liverpool, ix). Dame Lorraine’s character would have gotten many of its attributes from European influences in Trinidad. According to Michael Anthony, “the people who brought Carnival to Trinidad did so around 1785 and they came to the island because of the Cedula of Population” (Anthony, 1). The Cedula of Population was an official document from Spain that granted “Spaniards and foreigners of the Catholic faith the right to settle in Trinidad” (Hill, 6). Many incentives were offered to interested settlers including land grants and reduced taxes/duties. Bridget Brereton noted that, “the principal incentive that the Cedula offered was a free grant of land” (Brereton, 13). Thus, a large number of French people flocked to Trinidad as a result of the Cedula of Population. Consequently, the French was responsible, and can be credited for the origin of traditional carnival characters such as Dame Lorraine. Prior to the French’s arrival, the island was underpopulated by a Spanish population. There has been no evidence of carnival on the island of Trinidad prior to the arrival of the French. Errol Hill noted that, “it is unlikely that carnival was prominent in Trinidad prior to 1783, there is no available evidence on the observance of carnival before 1783” (Hill, 6). The French settlers who came to Trinidad brought their culture which would have started the development of Dame Lorraine. Dylan Kerrigan noted that at the “start of the 19th century Trinidad’s upper class ladies dressed for masquerade balls in voluminous flowing gowns...with exquisite jewelry, they danced elegantly throughout the night”

(Kerrigan, 2005). Masquerade balls and the wearing of huge fancy gowns were not aspects that were known to Trinidad prior to the arrival of the French. The character Dame Lorraine represented white elite or aristocratic European women who attended masquerade balls, wore huge fancy elegant dresses and a lot of jewelry. These women were considered to be at the top of the social ladder and were extremely wealthy and privileged. Enslaved Africans had no involvement with such women in society, except to provide them with servile labour. The French planters who played mas during the 18th and 19th century depicted a character that was imitative of Dame Lorraine (Trinidad and Tobago Nails National Library, 2020). These French planters who were men dressed in “elegant costumes of the French aristocracy and paraded in groups at private homes” (Trinidad and Tobago Nails National Library, 2020). From the arrival of the French in the 18th century, the character Dame Lorraine developed and flourished, confirming the character’s colonial influence. The fancy masked balls of the colonials set the foundation for the development of Dame Lorraine and influenced the character’s dress, style and mannerism which were used by the French planters and Africans (enslaved and liberated) to mock the upper class women. Errol Hill noted that reports from the *Trinidad Gazette* in 1822 and the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* on the carnivals of 1829, 1830 and 1832 spoke about the “uncommonly attractive fascinations, the variety of dresses, the gay throngs of ballrooms and as well as the brilliant costumes” (Hill,10). Many masked balls formed part of the carnival celebration that took place after Christmas. These elaborate, over the top balls led to a creation of a traditional carnival character. All those who took part in the depiction of the Dame Lorraine character during colonial times would have been impacted or intrigued by these masked balls and by the persons who attended the balls.

The French colonial balls influenced the nature of Dame Lorraine in terms of what the

character wore, behaved, performed (dancing, a specific walk with the swaying of the buttocks) and the props associated with the character (jewelry, umbrella and a mask). A report in the *Port-of-Gazette* of February 16th 1831 further depicted the environment of the masked balls that influenced the persona of the Dame Lorraine character (Hill, 10). According to the report, the “masked ball at Mrs Bruce’s Hotel had in attendance the beauty and fashion of Port-of-Spain, comprising a motley assemblage of elegantly dressed ladies.” Andrew Pearse also made reference to “masked balls given at St. Ann’s by the governor, Sir Ralph Woodford” (Pearse, 188). These masked balls were evidently common and led the way for the creation of Dame Lorraine’s persona.

Enslaved Africans and liberated Africans influenced and contributed significantly to Dame Lorraine’s development during colonial times. The enslaved Africans would have witnessed the extravagantly dressed elite women and thus also sought to mock these elite women by portraying themselves as a wealthy elite white woman. Enslaved Africans would have added their own touch when portraying the character and consequently would have further re-branded the character during colonial times. Liberated Africans had the advantage of partaking in carnival during colonial time and added their own concepts to the character. Post- emancipation, many Africans took to the streets to portray their carnival characters. This form of portrayal was extremely theatrical and involved a lot of music. Canboulay was perceived as the African carnival and was popular post emancipation. Milla Riggio defined Canboulay as a “ceremony symbolizing cane burning that Africans of Trinidad devised to celebrate their freedom from slavery in 1838” (Riggio, 49). Dame Lorraine’s influence post emancipation was therefore more theatrical. Errol Hill noted that there was a “Dame Lorraine tent” during post-emancipation carnival celebrations, which would have facilitated performances.

The fusing of cultures during colonial times brought out new cultural elements that were often seen in traditional carnival characters like Dame Lorraine. Dame Lorraine is a representation of the mixing or fusing of cultures during colonialism which further indicates the colonial aspect of the characters' origin. Dame Lorraine is thus a representation of colonialism as it emerged from that time period. The French and Africans would have each influenced the character's origin during this era. Both groups' influence on Dame Lorraine during colonial time contributed to its development which was seen in the character's evolution.

## Chapter Three

### “The Evolution of Dame Lorraine”

The evolution of a character is key to understanding its development. Dame Lorraine, from colonial times to the present has been depicted by many, and as such, has experienced numerous changes. Dame Lorraine’s character development and evolution were from the late 18th century and continued after the abolition of slavery in 1834. Dame Lorraine has been depicted by the French planters and enslaved Africans. Dame Lorraine also went on to become a play/production. Additionally, Dame Lorraine developed into a well-known carnival character portrayed by former enslaved Africans and has become a popular traditional carnival character in Trinidad and Tobago’s carnival.

The evolution of the character from the French planters’ portrayal has been witnessed and was further developed by enslaved Africans. The French planters who played mas during the 18th and 19th century depicted a character that was imitative of Dame Lorraine (Trinidad and Tobago Nalis National Library, 2020). Male French planters engaged in ‘transvestism’ as they wore female dresses to mock French elite women.

**Figure 1. Old Mas, cross- dressing depiction of Dame Lorraine-Source - (Riggio, 264)**



According to Rosamond King, “characters such as the Loca and Dame Lorraine were famous for transvestism as men dressed in women’s dresses with padded or exaggerated breasts and buttocks” (King, 581). Cross dressing is quite prominent with the Dame Lorraine

character and evidently has been from since the 18th century with the French planters. From the early stages of this character's development, men have actively participated in the character's portrayal. Richard Bolai noted that "Dame Lorraine was a character taken from the French aristocrat from the 18th century" (Bolai, 2008). The white elite women were certainly captivating and many groups in society attempted to copy their mannerism and style. This largely due to the high level of fashion that was common among the white elite women, a feature of address symbolic of upper class economic and social status.

As discussed in chapter two, enslaved Africans differed from the French planters in their portrayal of Dame Lorraine. Enslaved Africans witnessed many masked balls and would have attempted to emulate what they saw. According to Dylan Kerrigan, aristocratic ladies at the balls were "observed through the windows by their slaves and servants" (Kerrigan, 2005). The formerly enslaved did not have access to the props used by the French planters to emulate the aristocratic ladies. They could not afford jewelry or fancy dresses. Consequently, they used whatever fragment or pieces of fabrics/materials to which they had access. Dylan Kerrigan noted the use of "assorted rags, makeshift fans and hats and shiny objects imitating jewels" were among the things used by the Africans for their portrayal (Kerrigan, 2005). The crafting of props to portray the eloquently dressed ladies at the masked balls further developed Dame Lorraine as a traditional carnival character, as art and crafting were now added to create the character. There were no ready-made dresses or available jewelry in the Africans' depiction.

The freed Africans significantly transformed the portrayal of the Dame Lorraine character, and made it quite popular during the 19th century. Dylan Kerrigan noted that the "freed slaves mocked the elite women when they had their own carnival celebration and thus evolved the

burlesque character of Dame Lorraine” (Kerrigan, 2005). Burlesque refers to an exaggerated rendition or a comical exaggeration of a character.

**Figure 2. Dame Lorraine characters masquerading- Source- (Chock, 149)**



The freed or liberated Africans formed a caricature from what they had been witnessing from the masked balls. Errol Hill added that “Dame Lorraine was fashioned into an elaborate and grotesque parody of the way the elite conducted themselves at their stylish balls” (Hill, 40). The Dame Lorraine character with its enhanced elaborated features and mannerism was now essential in the Canboulay celebration.

Canboulay became an important festival among the blacks. Errol Hill noted that Dame Lorraine, “took the place of the banned Sunday night Canboulay procession” (Hill, 40). The enhanced features of Dame Lorraine were really exaggerated by the freed Africans’ depiction of the character. As noted by Dylan Kerrigan, “Dame Lorraine became more elaborate and posterior reinforced the parody...the character had fire wire mesh masks, with eyes and mouth painted in,” (Kerrigan, 2005). Dame Lorraine became a favorite portrayal of the ‘jamettes’ in the post emancipation underworld carnival celebrations. According to Rosamond King, “jamette is a unique Trinidadian and also eastern Caribbean creole term that refers to those below the diameter

of respectable society” (King, 214). ‘Jamettes’ were the poor black creoles who “worked in marginal or illegal sectors such as prostitution and gambling” (King, 214). The ‘jamettes’ were known to have over the top sexualized displays and performances for carnival. These displays were known for wreaking havoc upon Victorian morals, particularly with their sexualized carnival performances” (King, 214).

Not surprisingly, Dame Lorraine would have been heavily sexualized by the ‘jamettes’. Rosamond King noted that Dame Lorraine, who was popular with the “jamette class can be linked to the creation and exhibition of new sexualities” (King, 216).

This overly sexualized depiction of the character added to its development as Dame Lorraine has certainly evolved into a character that has a sexual undertone which can be seen in the character’s walk. Dame Lorraine typically walks with a “sexy” or flirtatious swaying of the hips. Richard Bolai noted that the swaying of “hips and high position of derriere is an open invitation that wets the sexual appetite of the male observer” (Bolai, 2008). This sexual nature was not acceptable to European morals and values and thus when they portrayed the character in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the sexy gait was absent. It was only from the post emancipation period that Dame Lorraine was associated with immoral sexual values. According to Rosamond King, “the Dame Lorraine mas exemplified the explicit sexuality that Victorian Trinidadian colonials abhorred, desired and overwhelmingly associated with blacks but especially with jamettes” (King, 216). Black masqueraders used the Dame Lorraine character to express their sexuality, a sexuality which, at least in public, some white colonials denounced as shockingly appalling.

The traditional carnival character Dame Lorraine also evolved into a character that supplied entertainment through theatre. Major performances of the Dame Lorraine production began in

the late 19th century. The first performance in Trinidad “appeared in the 1880s” (King, 216). Dylan Kerrigan mentioned that in “Port-of-Spain’s backyard the Dame Lorraine evolved into a theatrical event enacted for an eager audience” (Kerrigan, 2005). Thus, the advancement and development of Dame Lorraine is quite astonishing as the character kept becoming more prominent and entertaining. The character developed so greatly that it found its way in theatre. The character’s performance even had a paying audience and its own tent. Errol Hill significantly noted that Dame Lorraine’s performance formalized into public theatre for a paying audience and it continued until the beginning of World War two” (Hill, 41). The Dame Lorraine performance entailed a sophisticated dance and theatrical performances. The dance was accompanied by a specific song. This song became associated with Dame Lorraine and still exists. It is played whenever they appear in groups at cultural events” (Trinidad and Tobago Nails National Library, 2020). The dance of Dame Lorraine mocked the white elites' style of dancing. The first part of the performance entailed a “grand march of people dressed in 18th century costumes of the French aristocracy” (Hill, 40). There were couples in the Dame Lorraine performance whose names were announced by a “pompous butler” (Hill, 40). The names that were announced in the performance were “impressive-sounding names” (Hill,40). The production was put on entirely to mock the colonials. Rosamond King noted that “mockery was formalized into the Dame Lorraine play” (King, 216). The Dame Lorraine character thus evolved into a wide scale production with several performances and characters.

In comparison to present times, the 21st century, such grand performances are not portrayed by the character nor are they still associated with the character. Dylan Kerrigan noted that “the Dame Lorraine survived in a less elaborate form” (Kerrigan, 2005). Dame Lorraine as a traditional carnival character in present times, nevertheless, is still quite popular among

traditional mas and thus, has evolved into a prominent traditional “Old mas” character and is also present among pretty mas.

**Figure 3. Old Mas depiction of Dame Lorraine – Source- (Hill, 42)**



Peter Minshall described a school boy’s depiction of the character which is basically how the Dame Lorraine character is portrayed for old mas or jouvert in Trinidad and Tobago presently. According to Peter Minshall, the school boy tied “a pillow to his backside, stocking every inch of his body including his head with a T-shirt, wore a mask, hat and his sister’s discarded dress and goes in town quite unconsciously as Dame Lorraine” (Minshall, 171). This is

how the Dame Lorraine costume is often portrayed for jouvert.

The costume is significantly less stylish but still maintains the exaggerated body parts. Noted by Minshall the “pillow” on the school boy aided in exaggerating his “buttocks” for the character’s depiction. Dame Lorraine has always been an important character for jouvert even before the 21st century. Rosamond King noted that, “the end of Dame Lorraine as a production marked the beginning of jouvert with audiences and still-masked performers going out into the streets” (King, 217). The stylish depiction of the character is still widely displayed for carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. The costume is frequently represented as an “elaborate fanfare of hats, fans and large hoop skirts decorated in glitter” (Bolai, 2008).

**Figure 4. Overly exaggerated Dame Lorraine portrayal- Source- (Chock, 43)**



Men and women are famous for portraying this character for carnival time. The character has maintained its essence as being a representation of the once French elites. In Trinidad and Tobago the costumes of Dame Lorraine are portrayed both in an eloquent, fancy manner, with beautiful dresses and props and also in a comical less- fancy manner where the costumes are plain with exaggerated breasts and buttocks as mentioned in Peter Minshall's description. Dame Lorraine has surely evolved from since the 18th century to the present. The character has taken on different meanings and portrayals by different people of Trinidad and Tobago's society. The character has developed tremendously, with significant changes, yet the character has maintained its inspiration and original representation from colonial times. The theatrical development of the character could be considered its greatest development. Dame Lorraine has indeed evolved from colonial times to the present and has impacted on the development of Trinidad and Tobago's carnival.

## **Conclusion**

The identity and origin of the Dame Lorraine carnival character, like many other traditional carnival characters, were found in colonial times. The society, people, events and environment of that era led to the creation of traditional carnival characters as seen in the Dame Lorraine character. Dame Lorraine character's colonial influences came from the female white elites in Trinidad's society. The behaviour, mannerism and fashion of these people would have all influenced the Dame Lorraine character and hence its colonial influence. The enslaved Africans as well as the liberated Africans were all product of colonialism, and would have also influenced the development of Dame Lorraine as a traditional carnival character. Dame Lorraine developed and evolved from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dame Lorraine's character development occurred to a great extent during the post emancipation era. The liberated Africans were extraordinary in developing the character and adding a theatrical aspect to the character's persona. Furthermore, Dame Lorraine developed into a prominent 21<sup>st</sup> century traditional carnival character that has gained tremendous coverage and popularity for its old mas portrayal. Dame Lorraine as well as other major traditional carnival characters has impacted on the development of Trinidad and Tobago's carnival through their origin, influence on new costume designs and involvement in old mas. Traditional carnival characters have brought tradition to carnival and have led the way for the creation of new costumes through inspiration of their own traditional costumes. Old mas for many years have been dominated by traditional carnival characters and as such, have developed as a prominent feature of carnival due to the involvement of traditional carnival characters. More importantly, traditional carnival characters like Dame Lorraine have provided for masqueraders, characters to portray for the carnival festival which can be considered an important impact.

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