Television Comes to Town - The Role of Television in National Identity Formation in One Post-Colonial Nation

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Abstract

The decolonisation movement that swept the British Caribbean and which saw all but five of the islands begin their move to self-government between 1962 and 1983, while heralding a significant change in the political relationships with the metropole, did little for the consciousness raising of the formerly colonial people to be independent. The significant icons of law and state still remained, largely, British. In order to address this situation the government of the newly recognised Republic of Trinidad and Tobago sought to foster a national consciousness through the establishment of a local television station. Against the backdrop of prevailing media theories of mass media's role in national development and supported by the United General Assembly, the ultimate goal of TTT was to accelerate the development of a national identity, moving former colonials from British cultural imperialism to pride in self. It is here that this paper gains its relevance. By examining the role of the state television within government policy of the 1960s, within Wilbur Schramm's media for third world development framework, the paper will analyse the extent to which TTT, during its existence as the sole television station between 1962 and 1976, created a counter hegemonic discourse within the nation's movement from independence to republicanism.

Keywords: Caribbean Media Post-colonial Television Identity Nationalism

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On August 31, 1962 Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) and Trinidad and Tobago came into being; TTT's first broadcast was the flag raising independence ceremony. That iconic image has remained in the public imagination and continues to symbolize the birth of the nation. This image has persisted and continues to circulate in the national community even beyond TTT's last broadcast on 15th January, 2005. Trinidad and Tobago lies off the North-east coast of Venezuela and is often considered to be one of the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean due to its oil and gas reserves. This twin-island nation, was formerly a British colony but after a failed attempt at a West Indian Federation among British colonies of the Caribbean, proceeded to independence in 1962, as part of the de-colonisation movement that swept the British Caribbean between 1962 and 1983. However, this change in political relationship would not in itself heighten national consciousness and create a national identity.

Within prevailing media theory of the era, mass communication was seen as a tool for developing countries to foster national development and change to society's reliance on colonial imperialism to one of pride in self. For Trinidad and Tobago, the government attempted accelerate this process with the creation of a local television station – Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT). TTT was the first television station in the Commonwealth Caribbean (Hosein, 1976) and had the explicit purpose of fostering a national consciousness in the people by emphasizing the values of Trinidad and Tobago (Trinidad and Tobago third Five Year Plan, 1970). This historical moment in the history of the Commonwealth Caribbean has been largely ignored in the history of the region. The continued privileging of the written text has perhaps unwittingly neglected visual text, specifically moving images, in Caribbean history. Consequently, the role of television in constructing the founding story of Trinidad and Tobago has received little prominence in the literature. Thus, this paper will analyse the extent to which TTT, during its existence as the sole television station in the first two decades of Trinidad and Tobago's independence, created a counter hegemonic discourse that challenged the prevailing, colonial cultural imperialism within the national community. Firstly the theoretical underpinnings of the media in the developing world will be examined, then the paper will explore the policies and practices of TTT, within the social tensions of Trinidad society, and finally assess the extent to which it achieved its nationalistic goals.

The nationalist agenda of the anti-colonial period has influenced the use of television as public broadcasting in newly independent, former British colonies, particularly in the Caribbean (Lent, 1977, p. 58), in India (Sen Shitak, 2011; Butcher, 2003, p. 7), and in countries in Africa, such as Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa (Tayman, 2012, pp 249-251; Banda, 2010) The idea that electronic media could be an effective tool of social change gained popularity in the 1950s. The 1950s represented the last phase in the dominance of mass effects theories of mass media, such as the Hypodermic needle theory of mass media and the two-step flow theory. The Hypodermic Needle or "magic bullet" approach to media analysis held that audiences were passive recipients of highly influential media messages.

Katz and Lazarfeld in 1944 introduced the idea that the effect of media's information flow is mediated by opinion leaders in society, hence the two-step flow theory of mass communication which ushered in the era of limited effects theories of mass media, underpinned by social psychology theories of social learning.

Media's influence on audiences, largely reside in the way they shape perceptions of the world. All media are "the machinery of representation in modern societies". These representations inform our understanding of the world around us (Hall, 1986, p. 9), of our history, our relations with others and our position in the world and society. (Tayman, 2010, p. 249-251). In the context of newly independent developing countries in the 1960s, development communication theory - the idea of mass communication technologies could be used for national development was compelling. Wilbur Schramm, proposed that electronic media could facilitate national development by giving people a participatory role in deciding on the goals and pace of change. Specifically, Schramm stated, the use of mass communication offered citizens a participatory role in three key functions of developing a new nation – the watchman function, the policy function and the teaching function. The watchman function referred to the new nations' need to increase communication among its various segments within the national boundaries, as well as becoming concerned with surveillance of the international developments beyond their prior concerns with the colonizer. Additionally, the policy function refers to the use of media to gain the active participation of citizens in decision making, by fulfilling the need for information and persuasion inherent in the decision making process. Finally, the teaching function, he proposed, is fulfilled using mass media when, "the country uses information to increase the thirst for more information", particularly with respect to the acquisition of new skills. (Schramm, 1964, p. 7)

Schramm's theory was given impetus by the 1958 General Assembly of the United Nations' call for a "program of concrete action" to build up mass communication facilities (press, radio broadcasting, film and television) in countries in the process of economic and social development. (Schramm, 1964, p. 5) In particular, the role of mass media in "third world" development was convincingly supported by the UNESCO publication, The role of Information in National Development[1]. This 1964 publication was an abridged version of Scramm's influential book, *Mass Media and National Development,* where he discussed his development communication thesis. His is arguably an elitist, Eurocentric approach to development. However, his view was in congruence with the paradigm of nationalism to which many former British colonies, including Trinidad and Tobago aspired.

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[1] In 1962, Schramm, based on his prior work in theorizing the role of mass media in accelerating the development of newly independent nations, was commissioned by UNESCO to examine the role of the mass media in promoting economic and social progress. This followed the 1950s focus on developing the mass media of communication by the United Nations and included four years of work by the United Nations, from 1958-1962, working through UNESCO to develop mass media programme of development for each region of the world. According to the General assembly, "information media have an important part to play in education and in economic and social progress generally and that new techniques of communication offer special opportunities for acceleration of the education process." See Foreword to: Schramm, W., The role of Information in National Development - Abridged Version of Mass Media and National Development, UNESCO, 1964, p. 14

Modern nationalism, for which there are numerous definitions, refers to a collective consciousness of allegiance to a politically sovereign community[2]. This concept of nation states and nationalism has been influential in the aspirations of sections of the anti-colonial movement in the Caribbean. These aspirations have been largely spearheaded by European educated elites, such as Dr. Eric Williams. Therefore, although nationalism was promoted as an anti-colonial movement, it often adopted the state structure and ideology of the nation state introduced by the British colonizer, which was, essentially "the model of the bourgeois nation-state, the capitalist nation-state." (Basil, 1977, p. 39-46) For post-colonial, multicultural spaces like Trinidad, without a primordial basis for solidarity, nations are best conceptualized in Anderson's terms as, imagined communities with four qualities. Firstly, they are "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them of even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." Secondly, the nations are limited, "because even the largest of then has finite boundaries, which separates them from other nations. Thirdly, nations are also imagined as sovereign because the sovereign state is symbolic of freedom from the imposed, "legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" which preceded enlightenment. Finally, they are communities because nations are always conceived of as fraternities. (Anderson, 2006, p.7)

Brennan similarly argues, modern nations are "imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions." Drawing on the work of scholars such as, Anderson (1983), Gellner, (1983) and Ranger, he, emphasized the creative work of inventing the nation, which suggests, "the cultural importance of what has often been treated as dry, rancorous political fact." (Brennan, 1990, p. 130) Mass Media texts, in the form of the novel and newspaper, he notes, were instrumental in creating the literary myth which has allowed people to imagine themselves a part of, "a special community that was the nation" (Brennan, 1990, p. 131). Creating a national identity for former subject, went beyond political and economic considerations and involved complex social considerations. Thus, fostering national identity in post-colonial states like Trinidad and Tobago, as a form of social identity, required fundamental social change at the cultural level. The cultural change required in Trinidad resulted from historical antecedents of cultural erasure attendant to colonialism. In the context of post-colonial societies, the use media in the creation of national identity is founded on the concern with writing into history those subaltern histories omitted from dominant historical narratives. According to Brennan, in the west, this reclamation of histories, "has been a preliminary step in the construction of identity for marginalised groups" (Brennan, 1990, p. 131).

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[2] See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised Edition ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991, pp. 5-7; Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Hans, Kohn, Hans. The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins and Background. First ed. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944. See pages 10-11. ; Gellner, Ernest and Anthony D. Smith. "The nation: real or imagined?: The Warwick Debates on Nationalism." Nations and Nationalism 2, no. 3 (1996): 357-370. See pages 367-368.

Trinidad is the meeting point of many cultures, diasporas and world views, which have collided, often violently, for centuries. It is the meeting point of explorers / colonisers from, Britain, France, Spain, Latvia, and labourer, some forced, some lured by or deceived into indentureship contracts, from Scotland, Ireland, India, Sierra Leone, St. Helena and West Africa, China, Portugal. Additionally, prior in the early twentieth century, people fleeing religious persecution and economic hardship came from Greater Syria (present day Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon). These migrants groups all added to the multiple nations of indigenous peoples already present in the Caribbean at the time of Christopher Columbus's arrival in 1492 (Reid, 2009, pp. 11-48); Brereton 1981). Thus, the term "creolisation" has been introduced into academic discourse by Jamaican historian and poet, Kamau Brathwaite (1971) to bring a postcolonial analytical lens through which to view the Caribbean's social history of hybridisation, of which Trinidad is a part. Creolization refers to the process of interaction which produces a new reality, which is neither one nor the other of the original elements, but which nevertheless share some features with the original elements (Bamikole, 2007, p. 76).

The creation of creole cultures of the Caribbean resulted from the traumatic encounters of genocide, colonisation and slavery. These traumatic encounters rendered each group incapable of fully retaining its "mother" culture, resulting a process of forced cultural hybridization. Yet, through the intangible heritages of these diasporas which make up the Caribbean, the distinctive Caribbean ethos was created. (Nettelford, 2007, para.16) Creolisation in this perspective was a process which continued into the post-emancipation period and became the basis upon which national and regional identities were developed. The concept of creolisation has undergone, "a massive blurring" (Palmie´, 2006, p. 44) which extended its meaning to describe contemporary processes of cultural hybridisations being brought about by globalization (Hall, 2003, p. 234). However, some Caribbean scholars (Mintz 1971; Khan, 2001) have been opposed to removing the term from its geo-historical realities in the Caribbean. In the Caribbean, creolisation has "involved the loss and refashioning of cultural materials". (Mintz qtd in Stewart, 2007, p. 4) In this context it is considered subaltern agency - "a positive, resistive force to cultural hegemony" (Prabhu, 2007, p. 8).

The vision of national identity espoused by the premier and first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Eric Williams was undoubtedly a creole nationality. Williams advocated for the acknowledgement of the ancestral cultures of the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. However, these were to be subsumed within the emerging national culture of Trinidad and Tobago for a cohesive national identity. Colonialism relies on the destruction of national cultures, for culture is an integral part of selfhood. According to Fanon, "colonial domination, because it is total and tends to over-simplify, very soon disrupts in spectacular fashion, the cultural life of a conquered people. This cultural obliteration is made possible by the negation of national reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power". (Fanon, 1963) Thus, national culture is the highest expression of national liberation. The culture of Trinidad and Tobago was envisioned as a creole culture beholden to no mother country except Trinidad and Tobago, to be created and expressed by the people Trinidad and Tobago, starting with the excavation of those suppressed subaltern histories.

Therefore, construction of the nation's history was an urgent and essential component of the independence project. Here the government's use of mass media in this process is apparent. For instance, the week preceding the independence ceremony of August 31st, the nation was presented with a special publication; The *Independence Supplement* was published on August 26th 1962 in the daily. This publication focused on the histories of Trinidad and Tobago from 15th century European encounters with the indigenous peoples to the contemporary events of the era. This supplement included in depth articles on such topics as, History of the nation, History of Law and Order, History of the Sugar Industry, a book review of Philip Sherlock's *The Story of Trinidad*, Revolt of Indigenous people, East Indian Indentureship, the History of the development of Steelband and the History of Folklore, amongst others. (Guardian Newspaper, August 26, 1962). This supplement was the culmination a series of newspaper publications and radio broadcasts, which the Williams government used to create the nation in the public imagination. These media texts taught colonial subjects, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and independence, national symbols, national songs and protocols for their use. Symbolic of the central role of history in nationhood, Dr. Eric Williams, first premier and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, wrote, *The History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* and called it, "a declaration of Independence of the united people of Trinidad and Tobago." (Williams, 1964, p. ix) Having made this declaration of the country's independence the electronic media in the form of television was introduced to further the project of nation-building.

Culture and technology are analytically distinct but dialectically related phenomena. Technology helps to shape and produce culture as culture creates and employs technology (Brwon, 1990). The media's main sphere of operations is the production and transformation of ideologies (Hall 1996, p. 160). The value of electronic media to the building of national consciousness lies in the ideological nature of their products (Thompson 1997, p. 34) and their influence on how people perceive their individual and group identities, (Hall 1996, p.161) including national identities. Broadcasting developed in accordance with two ideological, financial and regulatory models - one commercial and one public service. Broadcasting has been commercial almost from its inception in the United States. However, in European states, broadcasting was viewed as a public good. In the former, broadcasting was a free market activity; in the latter broadcasting was a government controlled and supported activity. (Brown, 1990) Caribbean broadcasting has historically followed the British public service model. However, following independence, broadcasting evolved into a hybrid to meet the economic and cultural needs of the region. Yet, the tradition of "public ownership and control was maintained even after independence, with the introduction of television in the decade of the 1960s (Brown, 1990). This reflected the practice in many post-colonial countries where national monopoly control was taken to be a technical necessity to protect the national interest" (Golding & Elliott 1979, p. 45). In other words, the potential of the new medium to influence opinion and culture was, considered to be too great to cede to popular control.

Schramm's observations on the use of media for social change had great relevance for Trinidad's society in 1962. The prevailing perspective that mass media were effective at creating solidarities was compelling. However, building solidarity through culture rather than conquest, is a gradual process (Schudson, 1977). According to Schramm, "when change is introduced in such a way to take advantage of, rather than tear, cultural links, then the results may be good and far-reaching." However, he cautioned, "mass media risk being ineffective – indeed being counter-productive" if they were used without adequate knowledge of the local culture. (Schramm, 1964, p. 14) In Trinidad the very notion of "local culture" was problematic as communities identified with ancestral and diasporic cultural links as well as syncretic cultures. The emphasis on the local in the context of Trinidad and Tobago society on the surface precluded colonial loyalties. However, with the perpetuation of colonial institutions of socialisation, the determination of the "local" / "national" as the antithesis of the "foreign" / "colonial" was problematic, for the "local" / "national" was still in the process of creation.

The idea for a local television station to serve the islands of Trinidad and Tobago originated with Lord Roy Thompson, a Canadian businessman and media magnate, who had already set up local television stations in a number of former British colonies, as they gained their independence. (Muhammad, 2006) A consortium was formed to bring together technical and financial resources: The Thomson Organisation and British broadcasting company, Rediffusion each owned 40% of the shares in Trinidad and Tobago Television. The government of Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America company, Columbia Broadcasting System each held 10% of the shares.

> There was no regulatory governance to television broadcasting, TTT was allowed to operate by the government granting a license and assigning its administration to a Cabinet Minister. The business of TTT was under the direction of a Board of Directors which reflected the ownership, with the general manager of TTT also occupying a seat. The set-up management consisted of non-nationals who visited the country to build infrastructure, install equipment, recruit and train local staff. (Muhammad, 2006)

TTT was therefore technologically and logistically built by professionals from North America and Britain and then shaped by the local staff. However, the operations was guided by the Trinidad Third five-Year Plan 1969-1973, which emphasized local control, staff, advertising, and content. (Trinidad and Tobago third Five Year Plan, 1970). Programming decisions were left to the management of the station, which was largely Trinidad nationals who were charged with the development of a wide range of local programming for the station marketed to the populace with the tag line *"It's Yours!"*. With this guiding policy, TTT impacted the cultural life of Trinidad and Tobago.

TTT brought new shared cultural practices and symbols, for with TTT came the ritual of public and private viewing of television. They rhythm of national life in many respects followed the TTT schedule and vice versa. For instance Sunday afternoon Indian movies followed Sunday lunch - a traditional, elaborate affair which involved the whole family. The viewing of the Indian movie with subtitles became an

extension of the family ritual. Television was relatively expensive and became a status symbol of sorts. Thus, in the first few years television, viewing was a community based activity. Residents came together around the one or few televisions in the community and having neighbors visit to "watch TV" became a new social norm.

The government's use of TTT to assist in Schramm's watchman, policy and teaching functions is reflected in the range of programming on the station in its early years. In the 1970s programming totalled over 73 hours a week and included: feature films, programs for community groups designed to contribute to the government's adult education campaign news and information, programms for special audiences, light entertainment and literature and the arts. During the same period 4 to 5 documentary and educational films were produced each year by the Public Relations Division film unit, under the Prime Minister's Office. (Skinner, 1994, p. 48) The watchman function was executed through news and information-based, current affairs programmes such as, *Time To Talk*, *Mainly For Women*, *At Home*, *It's In The News*, *Community Dateline* and *Zingay*. Local educational programming included *College Quiz*, *Know Your country* and the live in-studio children's educational programme, The *Rikki Tikki Show* (Rampersad, 2012) in specific execution of its teaching function. By 1975 the percentage of local programmes transmitted by TTT peaked at just over 40% which was the highest ratio in the Caribbean at the time (Skinner, 1994, p. 48).

Production was supported by the policy directive to TTT to give, dignity to rural life, and provide opportunities for local talent. (Trinidad and Tobago third Five Year Plan, 1970) To fulfil this mandate, in 1963 TTT began live coverage of the main national festival - carnival and related in-studio programs. The station soon developed the iconic talent show, *Scouting for Talent,* which became the first stage for many local artists who went on to achieve national and international fame. These initiatives set the stage for broadcasting of other artistic programmes which showcased the cultural diversity of Trinidad and Tobago. Also building on Trinidad's rich theatre and literary traditions, TTT provided the population with local soap operas, brought folk theatre to screen by and gave Trinidad and Tobago its first locally produced game show.

The range of programmes was also intended to mediate the social tensions in Trinidad society surrounding access to resources and opportunities for upward mobility. Those tensions were reproduced in the public contestations over representation on television. Members of the public complained of media's urban bias, and called for greater representation of marginalized groups in the television portrayals. Simultaneously, the public complained of the poor technical quality of the locally produced programmes. The government through the Office of the Prime Minister sought to address the issues of representation with the implementation of a national community-based performing arts competition, *Best Village*, which would be broadcast on TTT. These programmes, produced in Trinidad and in large part, reflecting cultural practices in Trinidad cleared a space among imported media texts and colonial education, in the mindscape of citizens and in some important respects centred the lived experiences of Trinidadians in media representations - in narrative films, live broadcasts and in-studio productions.

TTT allowed opportunities for the cultural resistance and the formation of a counter-hegemonic identity. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the commercial success and public support of iconic local talent programmes on TTT in that era, exemplified by the show, *Scouting for Talent*, which began its broadcast on TT in 1963. This show allowed ordinary citizens to showcase their musical talent in a production with live studio audience. Talent shows of this type offered the country new cultural heroes. *Scouting for Talent's* host, Holly Betaudier has become one of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural legends. However, Betaudier's lack of Eurocentric mannerisms in on-screen presentation was initially considered a grave problem to be fixed. Barry Gordon, as the head of TTT during *Scouting for Talent's* first few years, recounted his attempts to "fix" the problem:

> *Scouting for Talent* was probably the most successful local commercial show on television. While the talent that appeared on the programme deserves a lot of credit for this success I feel it was mainly due to Holly Betaudier the host. I had many sessions with Holly where I tried to correct his grammar and presentation. And then I realized that I was wrong. Holly was a son of the soil and represented the average local person . . . the clerk in the stores, the cutter in the cane fields, the cutlass-wielding vendor at the coconut carts. Holly was Holly and I was wrong to try to mould him into the likes of a sterile host as seen on North American television. (Gordon, 2006)

Programmes like Scouting for Talent and presenters like Betaudier, who routinely presented in both the English-based dialect and the lesser known French-based dialect called, *Patois*, were the exception rather than the rule in TTT's broadcasting.

These opportunities, were insufficient to mediate the realities of Trinidad's society in the 1960s and 1970s where race/class tensions were heightened by socio-economic disparities. The concept of Trinidad and Tobago's creole identity as subaltern agency was limited by institutionalized practices which confirmed Trinidad's occupation of a hybridized, hierarchical space located between two racial poles that, according to Hintzen, served as markers of civilization and savagery. He argued, "when applied to Europeans, creolisation implies the taint of savagery. When applied to Africans it implies a brush with civilization." (Hintzen, 2002, p. 94) Additionally, Aisha Khan argues there existed a two-fold interpretation of creole in the Trinidad context.

In the context of slave-plantation and post-emancipation society—the colonial period, in other words—Trinidadian society was conventionally depicted as a three-tier pyramid: "white" at the top, "brown" in the middle, and "black" at the bottom. This pyramid represented the color-class hierarchy of the population, and referenced the African-European ancestral foundations of Trinidadian society. Secondly, she believes the independence movement brought the idea of "mixed" , the second dimension of "creolisation" into prominence. "Mixed as an index of the Trinidadian national character became symbolized as the rainbow, which superseded the pyramid. The rainbow metaphorically represents a united, independent nation of culturally and racially distinct groups who coexist together in harmonious cooperation (Khan, 20017, p. 55). The different connotations of "mixed"

and "creole" according to Khan reflected the perception of marginalization held by some groups of Trinidad's post-independence society. "Ideologically, the allegedly "exotic" immigrants who came post-emancipation (East Indians, Chinese, Syrian-Lebanese) could not be mixed—as in absorbed—into the Afro-Euro foundation and were depicted (and treated) as foreign addenda that diversified Trinidadian society but did not alter its basic constitution" (Khan, 20017, p. 55).

Hintzen and Khan, articulated the ethnic tensions within the society, which presented challenges to the construction of the nation's founding story, which had been perceived as "an Afro Creole master narrative" (Brereton, 2007, pp. 171 - 182). The ideology of creolization, has been criticized for construing "Trinidadian" and "national" as Afro-creole. The national symbols, some have argued were considered to be symbolic of African retentions – the calypso, steelband and Carnival (Ryan, 1994). Consequently, elements which East Indians brought to the cultural mix, were seen and stigmatized by some as being 'oriental' and not born of struggle in the Caribbean as were, carnival, steelband, bongo, limbo or the Spiritual Baptist religion. Aisha Khan elaborates ("Sacred Subversions", 2004):

> In hegemonic nationalist discourse, creolization moves toward national unity, but that nation has been defined according to a middle-class Afro-Trinidadian vision; in Indo-Trinidadian nationalist discourse, creolization spells subsumption within a vision not its own. (p. 174)

Ironically, the nation faced its first major threat from Black Power activists, who had rejected creole nationalism in favor of Pan-African nationalism. The serious social upheaval came to a climax with the 1970 revolt, as the working class clamoured for a more equitable position in the country's socio-economic structure. The government's policies, were criticised, by Caribbean intellectuals, representatives of the labour movement and proponents of black power as being neo-colonial. (Quinn, 2014; Taimoon & Stewart, 1995) Brereton argues, this Afro-creole narrative and the ethnic and regional counter-narratives which merged following the 1970s, "suppressed the earlier, class-based interpretation of the nation's history" (Brereton, 2007, p. 171). TTT's role in legitimizing suppressed cultures contributed to the writing of the history of the new nation, from below.

Nonetheless, at TTT, despite its commitment to diversity in local programming, what often resulted was the creation of local versions of colonial practices and media products. While there were elements of "shooting back" - the moving images counterpart to the post-colonial literary arts movement articulated in *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Gareth & Tiffin, 2002) - often the programmes reproduced hegemonic representations. For instance to decision to name the flagship News programme Panorama, was no doubt influenced by its namesake from BBC and appropriated the British style of news presentation of the time. In an effort to localize TTT, the Trinidad and Tobago government assumed majority shareholding in the station in 1969 by purchasing the Thompson and Rediffusion shares, leaving CBS as the only minority shareholder with 10 per cent. Further the Third Five Year Plan for Trinidad and Tobago (1970) articulated the policy position that, there would be no new foreign television stations introduced in the country and no foreign enterprise

would be permitted to purchase any existing local television station. This economic intervention did little to address the organizational culture and journalistic practice of TTT. The journalistic values, programme formats and mannerisms of colonial broadcasting were retained.

The inclusion of programmes featuring creole language varieties and folk cultures, such as *Scouting for Talent*, *Mastana Bahar*, *Best Village* and *Play of the Month* delivered with a distinctive local accent, were attempts at inclusion and cultural resistance, following calls from the public for programmes which reflect local "grassroots" values and norms. However, the manner of their inclusion within the full range of programming served to reinforce the notion that the norm was still American and British. For instance the use of dialect was relegated to entertainment programme and /or programmes specifically highlighting, or exoticising African and East Indian cultural retentions. "Serious" issues and programmes, such as the flagship news broadcast, *Panaroma* and the current affairs discussion programme *Time to Talk*, required the closest approximation of British language and presentation codes. These practices in media were a reflection of the institutional practices of key state institutions in Trinidad, such as the, judiciary, primary and secondary educational institutions, which continued to privilege Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies.

Technological and economic realities combined to erode the efforts of TTT in creating a hegemonic nationalist discourse, in its first decade of operations. The growth and popularisation of video technology, the compatibility of the North American broadcasting systems, the proximity of the Caribbean to North America and the rise of the Hollywood blockbuster, led to a significant increase in the imports of television programs from the US. (Brown) By the mid 1970s, it was now relatively cheaper to purchase the North American video programmes than produce locally. Thus, from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s imported content in TTT had grown by a bewildering 89% (Mullerleile 1996). The pattern of North American media penetration was also evident throughout CARICOM, prompting a regional response to the emerging cultural dependency which accompanied the imported cultural ideologies of foreign media texts.

Thus by the end of the first decade of Trinidad and Tobago's independence, the political and academic winds had shifted with respect to their optimistic projections for media's role in the development of newly-independent nations. In the Caribbean, theories of development communication had given way to concerns about North American cultural penetration. As the 1960s drew to a close, Trinidad and Tobago and the wider CARICOM region governments entered the international debate on ICT, expressing concerns about the flow of information about the region, into and out of the region. At The fourth Conference of Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean countries meeting in 1967 the countries agreed to "the establishment of a regional news agency; and the regular exchange of sound radio and television programme material including educational programmes by territorial broadcasting organisations"[3] as a starting point in these new nations' control of their information

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[3] Summary Of Conclusions Of The Fourth Conference Of Heads Of Government Of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries, 23-27 October 1967, Bridgetown, Barbados, Caribbean Community Secretariat, Web.

and communication flows. Internationally, UNESCO became, "the site for the debate about the net flow and effects of the exchange of information between nations in the nineteen-seventies" (Pendakur 1983). Trinidad and Tobago, as part of the non-aligned movement joined in the articulation of arguments against the western developed nation's dominance of mass communication flows, 1973 at the Fourth conference of Non-aligned countries in Algeria in 1973. In the Caribbean, the dominance of foreign media products and control of news flows resulted in:

- A veritable monopoly of news on the part of the developed countries
- A de facto hegemony founded on financial, industrial, cultural and technological power, which resulted in developing countries like Trinidad and Tobago being relegated in large part to the status of consumers of information.
- Cultural colonialism via the propaganda of advertising, content of television programmes, had become, "instruments of cultural domination and acculturation, transmitting to the developing countries messages which are harmful to their cultures, contrary to their values and detrimental to their development efforts."

These concerns were not unique to Trinidad and Tobago and were raised in one of the reports of the United Nations' International Commission for the study of Communications problems, *The New World Information Order,* presented by Mustapha Masoudi at the third session of the International Commission for the Study of communication Problems in 1978.

These concerns gave rise to the call for the creation of a New World Information and Communication order to redress these imbalances.

The experience of TTT is relevant to Masmoudi's assessment of the communication problems facing developing countries. He stated, "the framework within which communication takes place is ultimately determined by the political and social struggles which have shaped the prevailing social consensus in a given society." (UNESCO, 1980) The years 1962 to 1976 represented a period of transition for Trinidad and Tobago. However, despite valiant efforts to construct a national identity from its diversity, Trinidad and Tobago in retaining the inherently inequitable systems and institutions of colonialism, was unable to correct these legacies, or resist the communication dominance of North America. Thus, TTT, while creating significant spaces of cultural resistance and promoting a founding narrative of the independent creole nation where "every creed and race finds and equal place"[4] ultimately reproduced the neo-colonial hegemony prevailing in the wider society.

Acknowledgements

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[4] A line from the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago

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