Philatelic Society of Trinidad & Tobago

(Founded May 1942)

P.O. Box 596, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

Bulletin

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CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL OF PARANG IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

by Capt. AWB Sydney

The term parang is derived from the Spanish word *parranda*, which means a spree or a fête. In Trinidad, parang has evolved to the playing and singing of songs during the Christmas season. One theory suggests that the custom was brought over from Venezuela in the 19th century by the cocoa panyols who came from Oriente, East Venezuela to work on the cocoa plantations in Trinidad.



Figure 1: The 1984 Parang Issue

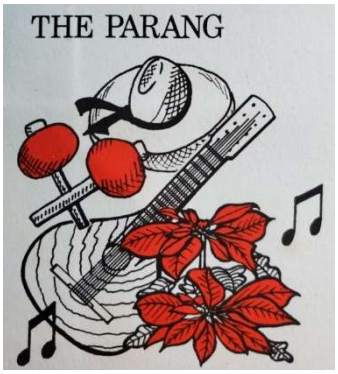

Figure 2: Detail from the FDC of the 1984 issue

Parang is now an integral part of the cultural landscape of Trinidad and Tobago and several international celebrities have been serenaded with its beautiful music.

- HRH Princess Margaret by St. Joseph Hilltoppers,
- HM Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip in 1966 with the Spanish Joropo Dance
- President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela by the San Jose Serenaders and Amantes de Parranda at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
- Former President of Trinidad & Tobago Anthony Carmona was involved with the La Familia de Carmona y Amigos parang group.

The official Parang Season runs from October to January 6th (Epiphany or Dia de los Reyes) and during this period, various parang groups take part in national competitions organized by the National Parang Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NPATT).

Parang on Stamps



Figure 3: The 5c value of the 1968 Carnival Issue

Trinidad and Tobago released the first Carnival themed postage stamps on 15th February of 1968, eleven days before Carnival. The 5c value which was designed by the Postmaster-General, Mr. George Lee, tastefully portrayed a steel pan, a bongo drum, quatro and maracas (chac chacs) which are recognized parang musical instruments. Interestingly, the representation of parang in Trinidad Carnival continued with the Queen of the Bands 1982 at the Dimanche Gras finals was won by Agnes Charles with her portrayal of 'Dance the Parang.'

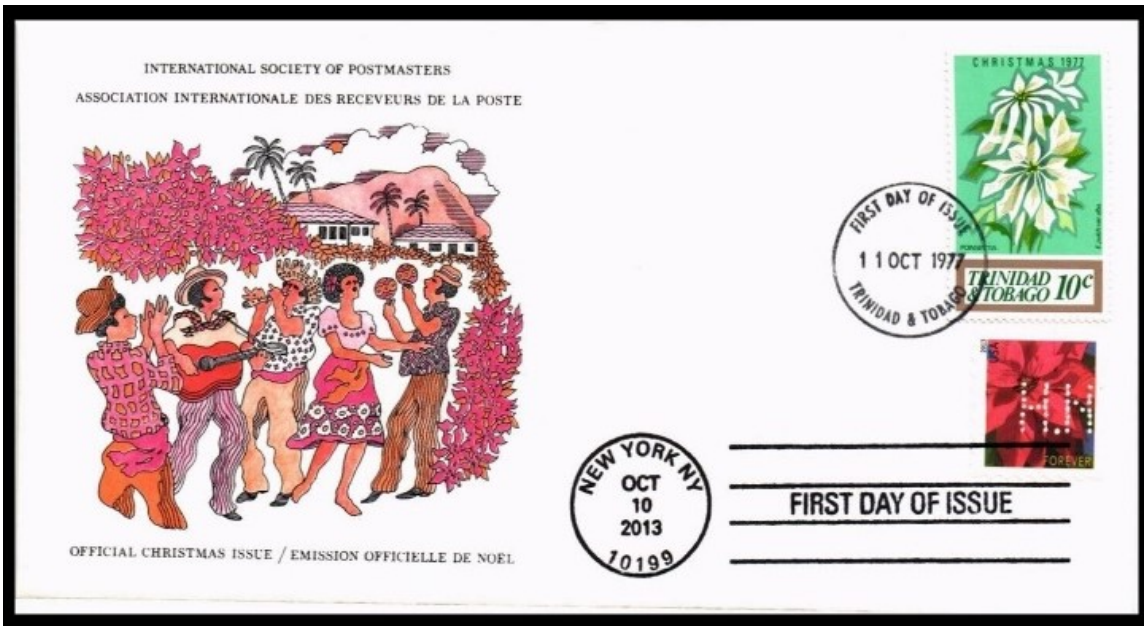

Figure 4: In October of 1977, the International Society of Postmasters issued a commemorative first day cover featuring the 10c Christmas 1977 issue and a beautiful cachet of a local Trinidad parang group.

In November of 1984, Trinidad & Tobago released its first issue totally dedicated to parang (see Fig.1). It featured Parang musicians (10c), a Parang Song against a backdrop of red poinsettias in bloom (30c), three Parang Musical Instruments ($1 and $3). At the time, the Executive of the National Parang Association at that time included the Parang Master, Leary Collymore, whose groups were the Trinidad Tesoro Parang Orchestra and the Rancho Qumado Parang Group.



Figure 5: The 2000 Christmas Issue FDC

One year after the local postal service transitioned to the Trinidad & Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST) in 1999, the 2000 Christmas issue set featured a parang theme on the $4.50 value. Titled “Los Paranderos” the design shows a trio of well-dressed minstrels strolling along the shore strumming their cuatros. Of course, the local sorrel, ginger beer, pastelles (wrapped in banana leaf) with poinsettia flowers all go hand in hand with the wonderful Parang Season.

For Christmas 2002, another release of four stamps, the $2.50 value featured “Parrenderos singers.” In 2016 this stamp was later overprinted $1.00 to meet local rate for stamp demand.

The Festivities issue of 2010 featured Parang on the souvenir sheet, depicting a scene at a typical family get together, welcoming a group of visiting Paranderos.

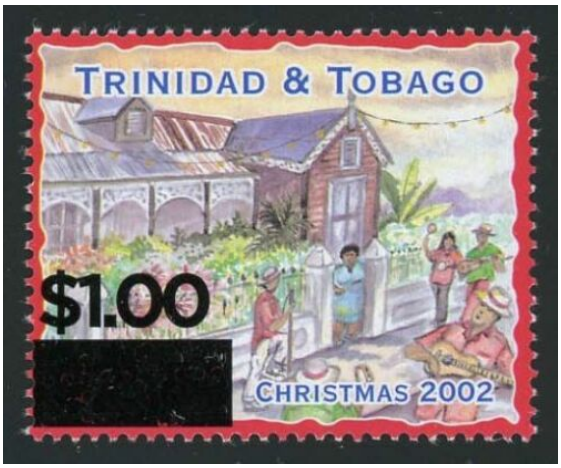

Figure 6: The $2.50 value of the Christmas 2002 issue, overprinted in 2016 with $1.00 value

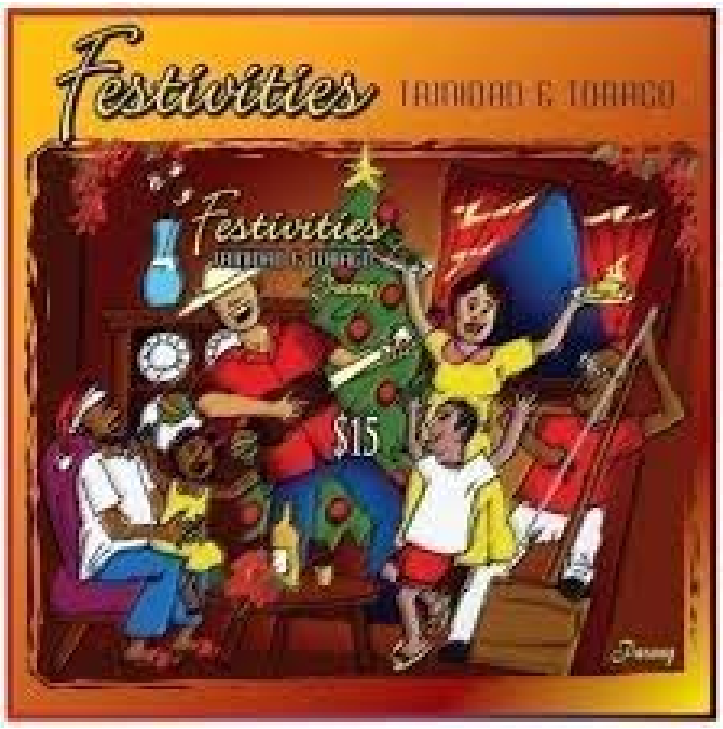

Figure 7: The 2010 Festivities Souvenir Sheet

Personal Reflections

When I think of the 1995 (Aug) Conservation issue with its special cachet of the Lopinot Complex, I immediately remember the photo on display showing the celebrated Indian super-star singer Lata Mangeshkar being presented with a special parang record by a parang group when she visited Lopinot in the 1980's.



Figure 8: Lopinot Complex (the cachet of the 1995 FDC of $3 Conservation issue)

In 2003 when I represented the Philatelic Society at the Carifesta VIII Celebrations in Suriname, and we produced a special philatelic cover, the National Parang Association was a major part of the celebrations.

To me, the greatest parang entertainers included the late Daisy Voisin who was

considered the Queen of Parang, Leary Collymore and the Lara Brothers, whose music was selected for a special National Geographic record called “The Music of Trinidad.” There is a Street in Siparia and Crescent in La Horquetta named after Daisy Voisin. There is a Henry Pereira Lane in Arima after the recently deceased parang stalwart and right and fitting is a Parang Boulevard in Santa Cruz.



Figure 9: La Familia Serena Parang Group

It would now be very timely after 50 years of the National Parang Association, there should be a postage stamp issue in the future celebrating local icons and pioneers of the parang diaspora here in Trinidad & Tobago, which has so much become a national festivity and an integral part of the cultural fabric interwoven between the many races and cultures of our dynamic Republic.

In amplifying the name of the album of the Trinidad Tesoro Parang Orchestra, I too exclaim heartily…..Viva la Parranda…!



Figure 10: La Estrella de Oriente Rancho Quemado Parang Group



Figure 11: Trinidad Tesoro Parang Orchestra

Upcoming Book

Published by The Philatelic Society of Trinidad and Tobago

The Stamp Cancelling Machine Slogan Postmarks of Trinidad and Tobago 1923 - 2023

by Jazad N. Ali

The book builds on the first publication 'Machine Cancellations of Trinidad and Tobago 1923 – 1997' written by Jazad N. Ali and Ronald G. Wike. The first publication won five silver medals at International Stamp Shows in the USA, Germany, China, Austria and the UK.

This new book, 'The Stamp Cancelling Machine Slogan Postmarks of Trinidad and Tobago 1923 - 2023' has been the author's labour of love over the last 26 years. It includes a brief history of the development of the postal system in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, it looks at the experimental and trial stamp cancelling machines used in the UK and the USA leading up to the modern high-speed machines. Background information and technical details on each slogan are also included. Groundbreaking research on the machine settings leading to variations in slogan strikes is dealt with using actual photographs of the machine parts from the stamp cancelling machines at the Post Offices in addition to schematics from the Pitney Bowes service manuals.

This publication covers the slogan postmarks used by the Postal Services of Trinidad and Tobago from 1923 to 30 June 1999, and the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST) from 1 July 1999 to present.

Hard cover. Printed in full colour.