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Calypso music : identity and social influence : the Trinidadian experience

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Chapter 1
Social, Historical and Cultural Background

Although Caribbean history has been well documented, a perusal of the historical and socio-cultural events peculiar to the island of Trinidad will be necessary in order to satisfy some of the goals of this study. It will serve as a backdrop against which the saga of the calypsonian that unfolded; the various strains of calypso music and related innovations that have emerged; the extravaganza of carnival that developed; and the conflict that accompanied these events will be pitted. This chapter facilitates such endeavor.

From its discovery in 1498 up until 1796 Trinidad had been a part of the Spanish Empire. Errol Hill (1976) has reported that around 1783, however, French speaking planters from the northern Caribbean islands of Santo Domingo (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Martinique, Guadeloupe, Dominica, St. Lucia and Grenada accepted an invitation extended to Catholics by King Charles III via the Cedula of Population to settle there. They brought with them their retinue of African slaves, their Patois French dialect, and their principal form of entertainment, street masquerading (p. 54-86).

Out of a total population of 17,700 in 1789, the Africans numbered 10,000. By Hill's (1972, 1976) accounts and by the accounts of others, after 1797, during the period of British rule which ended in 1962, the flow of immigrants into Trinidad became more diversified and included people from other British colonies, England, and Venezuela. The arrival of the first Chinese workers is also part of this influx. Hill (1972) has additionally given a sketch of the population in relation to ethnic representation and status among Negroes:

> The principal cliques were the French plantocracy - mainly royalist in sympathy - the Jacobite revolutionaries, and the English party. The colored population was also split into French, English, and Spanish-speaking groups, ranging in social status from slave-owning planters to traders, artisans, bookkeepers, small cultivators, peons, and loafers. The solid base of this polyglot society was the African slaves, numbering more than half the population, becoming every day more conscious that freedom would soon be theirs. (p. 9)

Pierre F. McCallum, a visitor to Trinidad in 1803, had made the following remark which was cited by Hill (1972),

> There is not a local spot in the universe that can boast such a medley of inhabitants: English, Scotch, Irish, Welch, Spaniards, Germans, Swiss, Italians, Americans and French; the latter are the most numerous. (McCallum, 1803, p. 23)

Mac Callum's observation reflected the demography of the island at the time, but as Hill interjected, "He might have added that few spots could boast [having] as many factions [that were] hostile to each other" (p. 9). According to Hill (1972), "in order to keep tight control of the explosive tensions in this divided society the British administration adopted measures based on strict color classification." The ethnic breakdown among the African contingents by 1813 is illustrated in figure 1 below.

Birth Place	Number	Main Peoples	Other Peoples*
Senegambia	1,643	Mandinka	Wolof, Bambara
Sierra Leone	597	Fulbe	Susu, Temne
Windward Coast	884	Kwakwa	Caplaou, Canga
Gold Coast	1,094	Coromantee	Fanti, Mine
Bight of Benin	1,080	Allada	Chamba, Popo
Bight of Biafra	5,520	Igbo	Moko, Ibibio
Central Africa	2,569	Kongo	Suku, Samba
Mozambique	11	-----	Yao, Nguni
Others	586	-----	-----
Total	13,984		

Fig. 1: The 1813 Slave census of Trinidad (B.W. Higman, 1978, 1984).

Although more than half of the population was comprised of Africans; despite their continued arrival which helped to rejuvenate African social customs; although there was diverse ethnic representation among society and although carnival had been a social institution for whites and as well for free coloreds from 1797 to 1834, "street parading had continued to be a major public festivity for the white elite only" (ibid). Hill (1972) has additionally cited Fraser's (1881) memorandum to the Governor in which Fraser stated that,

> It is necessary to observe that in those days the population of the Colony was divided into the following categories: Whites, Free Persons of Colour, Indians and Slaves.
>
> The Free Persons of Colour were subjected to very stringent Regulations and although not forbidden to mask, were yet compelled to keep to themselves and never presumed to join in the amusements of the privileged class. The Indians kept entirely aloof, and the slaves except as onlookers, or by special favor when required to take part, had no share in the Carnival which was confined exclusively to the upper class of the community. (Cited by Hill, p. 10)

Elder (1964) also has cited that memorandum in which Fraser informs that,

> In Trinidad, the White minority of which the Creole planter population comprised the core represented the ruling upper class 'majority' with economic and political superiority. Suppressed by legislation and at times 'illegal' methods that impressed upon them the inferiority of their race in ability, culture and privilege, the African slaves were at the lowest rung of the social ladder. (Cited by Elder, p. 128)

Nettleford (1978, 2003) has commented on race and class conflict extant in the Caribbean relative to cultural dominance and social control noting that,

> As a variant of the culture sphere known to social and cultural anthropologists as Plantation America, Jamaica and the Caribbean are often defined in terms of their pluralism. For the Caribbean is the story of 'arrivants' from across the Atlantic and beyond, each group bringing a cultural equipage, including for some the legitimacy of power supported by gun-powder, scientific knowledge and a latter developed sense of racial superiority. (2003, p. 2)

> The operative word here is "conflict", at least for the early comers-the Europeans and the Africans…their presence marked by a violent relationship, is part of the irony of the struggle by the "usurpers" to gain cultural ascendancy as part of the fight for total power. This has been done as part of a history in which economic exploitation went hand in hand with cultural subjugation by way of discrimination, psychological conditioning…systematic denigration and institutional colonization. (1978, p. 3)

In spite of the conflict extant in Trinidad at the time however, cultural assimilation had been taking place. The following account, translated from French, was given by a retired planter.

It establishes that cultural syncretism had already begun to take place sometime during the late 1700's and the early 1800's. More importantly, it locates a pattern of cultural mimicry by Whites i.e. the assimilation of certain aspects of Negro culture. The article appeared in the *Port of Spain Gazette* and was cited by Hill (1972, p. 11):

> In those day[s] the élite of society was masked or disguised. The favorite costume of the ladies was the graceful and costly one of the "mulatresse" whilst gentlemen adopted that of "negre de jardin", in Creole, "negue jardin", or black field slaves. At carnival time our mothers and grandmothers have even danced the belair to the African drum whose sounds did not offend their dainty ears, and our fathers and grandfathers danced the bamboula, the *belair* to the African tom-tom whose sounds did not offend their dainty ears, and our fathers and grandfathers danced the bamboula, the ghouba, and the calinda. (*Port of Spain Gazette*, March 19, 1881)

Mimicry of slave behavior during the eruption of cane fires on the plantations had been interlocuted by White masqueraders during their exclusive pre-Emancipation carnival celebrations. It became known as cannes brulées (French for burnt cane) which was permutated to canboulay (or camboulay), as sometimes pronounced by the man in the street, and as reported by Hill (1976, p. 54-86), was a prominent feature of mid-nineteenth century carnival. A similar procession took place wherein slaves, allowed by their owners to celebrate carnival in their own way, would re-enact the events of cannes brulees mimicking the French planters in parody of characters of themselves. Such reversal bears similarity to Minstrel performance in America between the 1840's and 1860's in that Afro-American performers, once free to participate after the Civil War had ended, continued to portray African-American stereotypes previously parodied by Caucasian performers (Campbell 1996, p. 1-66).

Minstrelsy with its characters, music and performing style have become identifiers of American culture and so too the re-enactment of canboulay has been retained as a main feature of Trinidadian carnivalesque culture. The two evolutionary processes share the following features:

- they had been underpinned by race and class conflict;
- the oppressive white faction withdrew from participation once the 'underprivileged' group had gained cultural dominance, and;
- members of the white group that had previously withdrawn from participation re-entered the arena as participants and as investors.

These observations are relevant to forthcoming discussions about identity and mechanisms of social control because they allude to ways in which groups identify themselves and are themselves identified. Role reversal and other related topics will also be discussed beginning in chapter 4 and in a subsequent chapter in the context of the nature of carnivals.

The accounts presented thus far have revealed that the cultural soup that had been brewing in Trinidad was a volatile alchemy of assimilation, syncretism, innovation, repression, and racial and class conflict. The two illustrations that follow afford us an opportunity to compare aspects of street parading as practiced by the two opposing factions involved in the on-going socio-cultural battle.

Fig. 2: Carnival in Frederick Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad (London Illustrated News, 1888)

The masqueraders, comprised of mixed ethnicities, their costume style (European sophistication, types of masks used, the themes, and the inclusion of a few devilish characters from the Jamette milieu, seen in the foreground) in figure 2 suggests that the scene is a depiction of a masquerade procession of the middle and perhaps upper-class sector of society.

The observation is validated by comparison with the illustration in figure 3 in which several aspects of socio-cultural change are evident:

- The masqueraders are of a different sector of society (the then recently proclaimed ex-slave population), the Jamette sector.
- White upper-class spectators, excluded from the festivities, watch the proceedings of black, lower-class masqueraders from the safety of their fenced yards. This reflects a quite different scenario from earlier times when they had mandated and enjoyed exclusivity, and during a later period, as illustrated in figure 2, when they had allowed Creoles and free blacks to participate.
- Musical accompaniment for the procession is comprised of miscellaneous percussive utensils and musical instruments (concertina included), and singing.

Improvisational skills among the Jamette sector had led to the subsequent utilization of bamboo shoots as musical instruments.

Fig. 3: 1934 Post-Emancipation Jamette carnival (www.dailymail.co.uk)

According to Elder (1969), the boiling point was reached when "the shackles of social control that had kept the pre-emancipated Negro 'in his place' were temporarily broken in 1838":

> Immediately after Emancipation Day trouble began. The deep rooted aggressions that had been smoldering for years took tangible forms. The Negroes refused to submit to the Apprentice System which succeeded Emancipation as a tide-over measure conceded by the

> Imperial Government to the Caribbean planters. The Negroes had been manumitting themselves long before Emancipation Day and had sent hundreds of petitions to the "Queen" requesting repatriation to Africa. The planters opposed this movement, as well as any laws that tended to be ameliorative to Negroes. The Negroes retaliated with veiled hostility as well as open aggression. Risings on the estates became very common. Murder, arson, assaults on the white overseers by Negro workers became the rule of the day. The reaction of the White group to this was ruthless and cruel. The sadism with which they meted out punishment upon the Negroes has become notorious history. (p. 11)

Emancipation had brought change. Elder (1969) writes: "In 1838, the Act of Emancipation became effective in Trinidad and what has been termed the Colonial Society began to take a new shape". It has been documented and confirmed that:

- Lower-class citizens, primarily the ex-slaves, took over street parading (fig. 3) and began defining what was to be the appropriate instrumentation and music suited to their taste and culture as the new curators of carnival.
- The African drum, accompanied by the banjar, shack-shack and several sonorous utensils, had been the central instrument and rhythmic percussion had been the basis for instrumental accompaniment.
- The evolution of instrumentation from this percussive nucleus continued with the addition of various other percussive objects and, following the banning of the drum in 1883, with bamboo (fig. 6) and bottle-and-spoon ensembles. The bottle-and-spoon combination added rhythmic and sonic contrast to the tamboo bamboo.
- By the 1850's innovations such as kettles, garbage cans, wash basins, boxes, and pieces of scrap metal (fig. 9, 10 and 11) had been incorporated into the ensemble of percussion instruments.
- The characteristic of improvisation among Africans first led to the emergence of iron bands, and eventually to the invention of the steel drum and the emergence of the steelband less than a century later.

By way of additional accounts presented by Elder (1964, 1969) we are informed that several laws and proclamations had been passed, and steps taken in 1858 and 1859 respectively to prevent Negro participation in the Mardi Gras festival. The Roman Catholic community made concurrent claims that the pagan Negro groups were desecrating a 'Christian Festival,' while the upper class resented and protested the invasion of the 'Negro commonality' of their 'upper-class' fête (ibid.).

Rohlehr (1990) has cited Brereton's report on post-Emancipation dynamics that had occurred some three decades later. The report reveals that,

> The 1880's and 1890's were marked by calls for the suppression of not only drum dances and African musical instruments, but wakes, the Bongo dance, the Shouters and other syncretic Afro-Christian sects which were normally described as 'diabolic.' These attacks on peoples' forms would be resolutely resisted; there is no doubt that they left deep scars on the psyche of

> the people, by rendering illegal and illegitimate the most genuine manifestation of their inner selves. (Rohlehr, 1990, p. 39)

The word desecration had also been expressly designated to the *bongo*, to Shango the Orisha (Orixa) religion, to the practice of Obeah, and to the Shouters (Spiritual Baptists). These activities had been described as barbaric and were listed as prohibited under the Summary Conviction Offences Ordinance. *Bongo* is akin to the *bomba* of Puerto Rico and the Cuban rumba and was danced at wakes and other ceremonies honoring the dead.

Shango is akin to *santeria* of Cuba and *candomblé* of Brazil and embodies exotic rituals involving spirit possession and the drinking of goat's blood. Rohlehr (1990) has additionally indicated that,

> Like all other Afro-Creole activities, it bore the scar of prohibition, and tended to be viewed with ambivalence by later generations becoming a clandestine activity in the towns but surviving in the rural areas as a normal part of folk life. (p. 163)

Even cult members had even been secretive about their association. Rohlehr (1990) mentions a few calypsos from the 1930s whose themes and lyric are about prohibited practice and "provide us with ideas of how calypsonians perceived themselves and other grassroots people" (p. 152). By highlighting the stereotypes that had been current at the time, these calypsos enable us to "measure the extent to which the age-old imperial of rendering Afro-Creole culture illegitimate and illegal had succeeded or failed". The list includes the Roaring Lion's *Shango Dance*, Cobra's *Shango Song*, Caresser's *Shango*, and Tiger's *Yaraba Shango*, wherein at times Orisha worship is presented as "a powerful but frightening thing,"

> equated with devil-worship, Faustian-type evil, and Black self-degradation; rather than being viewed as a node of stubborn resistance and an affirmation of African selfhood, in the face of cultural genocide. (ibid.)

Obeah, a form of black magic intrinsic in African folklore, thrived on its reliance to solve marital, economic, legal, emotional and other types of problems. Failure of the obeah man/woman to achieve success was regarded as fraudulent and ridiculed in calypsos. According to Rohlehr (1990) however, "beneath the ridicule… there lingered a residuum of dread; a fear of the negative, hostile magic which it was still believed the obeah man could direct against anyone" (p. 166).

Blake (1995) has corroborated the quarantine of the above-mentioned African retentions to the areas referred to by Gordon Rohlehr noting that,

> In Trinidad, the Rada communities have been dying out and the Yoruba tradition is represented only by a few Shango cults in Toco, Sangre Grande and John John in Laventille. (p. 31)

The Laventille hills overlook the city of Port of Spain, and it is there, as informed by Rohlehr, "where the people had had decades of experience defending their turf against the Police." This region and the area that lies directly below its foothills and east of the Eastern Dry River are referred to as 'Behind the Bridge.' It was, like the favelas of Brazil, a Jamette stronghold and has been the habitat of ex-slaves, indentured Yorubans who had migrated to Trinidad during the mid-1880's, and immigrants from smaller impoverished Caribbean islands. Among the members of this latter group one could find deported dissidents from Barbados who were given to belligerence, and migrants from Carriacou, a nation that, "had preserved its Nation Dances, its sense of distinct cultural heritage of each African ethnicity." (Rohlehr 1990, p. 158). Such traits and traditions and the survival instincts and skills that accompanied them were the characteristics of the members of the Jamette sector that inhabited the 'nefarious' parts of Port of Spain.

Belmont on the other hand, a town annexing the northern border of Laventille was considered a 'nice', 'quiet' neighborhood. This was because many of the Yorubans that had settled there after Emancipation were artisans, entrepreneurs, and persons who sought respectability. I was born and raised there and remember being constantly cautioned against venturing 'behind the bridge' or associating with "those wayward boys from round there". Laventille has retained its nefarious status, "One (an outsider) doh go up dey jus so nuh". Such cautionary attitudes accompanied by scorn and at times ridicule, had been extended toward the Shouters as well. Shouters would appear unannounced at various street corners in Port of Spain and elsewhere where they would conduct prayer meetings that were characterized by boisterous preaching, clapping, and singing that was constantly punctuated by the ringing of bells and the sprinkling of water from small receptacles. I must have been between seven and ten years of age then but I still remember my mother's vice-like grip around my wrist as we scurried past street corners where Shouter revivals were being held, or when we were in proximity of the Rada[2] compounds located on Belmont Valley Road and St. Francois Valley Road respectively. On such occasions my mother had always betrayed a sense of fear of which she

[2] As informed by Rawle Gibbons, the word Rada is a mutation of Arada, a word that identifies a Dahomian cult in which Voodoo is practiced. In Trinidad the word is used in reference to a compound where Rada communities gather to indulge in ritual practices of the Yoruba-based Orisha and Spiritual 'Shouter' Baptist religions. The Shouter Baptist religion is syncretic and indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago. The practice of Obeah (Black Magic) is often associated with this cult (Pers. comm. July 8, 2016).

never spoke, and in retrospect, a sense of denial which I never understood until my adolescent years. My curiosity did not allow me to shut the windows of inquiry nor suffer the cultural ambivalence that my mother must have experienced, that had been seared upon the collective psyche of society, and that was still extant during the late 1950's and mid-1960's. I am uncertain as to whether a distinction had been made among the general public between the terms *Voodoo* and *Obeah*, and *Shango* and *Orixa*, but by the latter 1960's public demonstrations by the Shouters were viewed with jocose acceptance. The Mighty Sparrow's calypso *Melda* satirizes the practice of Obeah, and Gordon Rohlehr (1990) informs us that,

> Sequestered and marginalized by the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance of 1917, the Shouters had become objects of ridicule for even their grass-roots colleagues. (p. 138)

The goal of the authorities—the eradication of African cultural retention that they deemed offensive, that had maintained solidarity among the masses and that had posed a threat to national stability—had been relentless and partially successful.

But resistance had been constant also as has been evidenced by reports of clandestine Afrocentric activity, laws introduced to impede cultural production and the systematic censorship of calypsos. Some degree of reversal of cultural consciousness among calypsonians and society must have taken place because ironically calypsonians who had sung calypsos in the 1930's parodying the Shouters came full circle and began to record Baptist hymns. This would lead to the incorporation of elements of Shouter/Baptist preaching, singing, melodies and rhythms in calypso and the eventual emergence of Baptist hymns as competitors of the calypso genre. More importantly, calypsos had been partially responsible for the re-recognition and socialization of the religion among Trinidadian society.

As a further example of the partial success of measures implemented by the authorities in order to impede cultural ascendency judgment against the singing of calypsos as pagan by parents and society in general was especially harsh during the observance of Lent, the period of forty days and nights that immediately followed the carnival season. During this period the performance of calypsos had been banned from airplay, substituted by music from North America and Europe, and discouraged by parents by a swift slap to one's cheek, or a pinched earlobe, even when only the melody was whistled or hummed. This is testimony to the degree of compliance to the mandates of the authorities and indoctrination in Christianity and corporal punishment that permeated Trinidad society.

Over time the period of quarantine served to abate collective appetites for indigenous music and, as I came to realize later, put the song-royalty machine in motion, much to the benefit of

foreign songwriters and publishers. A stanza and chorus from the Mighty Sparrow's *The Outcast* points to ambivalence and denial among Trinidadians alluded to in this chapter.

Outcast

Society in Trinidad for a steel band man
Was just as hard or even harder for that
For any calypsonian
Doh care how you talented
You had to go outside
No appreciation here
Society had too much false pride

Calypsonians really ketch hell for a long time
To associate yourself with them was a big crime
If yuh sister talk to a steel band man
Yuh family want to break she hand
Put she out, lick out every teeth in she mouth
Pass you outcast!

The Mighty Sparrow

Elder (1964), summarizing the events of the era has noted that,

> In spite of such measures, and a subsequent attempt in 1884 to stamp out certain African retentions, Calinda songs became part of the local tradition, and Cannes Brule had still not been 'extinguished' in the late 1890s. The harsh laws against Cannes Brule…only served to drive Cannes Brule and Calinda underground… The songs worked their way into the woof of the cultural tradition, becoming more bitingly bitter with satire and hidden meaning, castigating the laxity of high society with viciousness and effectiveness. (p. 130-131)

Rohlehr (1990) has stated that, "resistance…more normally took the form of stick-fighting bands going underground and avoiding direct confrontation with the Police". However, he referenced an example of open resistance, the March 1891 objection by villagers of Arouca to an attempt by the police to stop a drum dance. The confrontation, he reported, led to two days of fighting in which, "the Police were repulsed on several occasions by villagers armed with staves and stones" (p. 39):

> The stick fighting bands which had represented and controlled entire districts were replaced by smaller and more manageable 'social unions' whose venues were the 'yards' of Port of Spain, San Fernando, and other towns. These yards now held annual rehearsals of the Carnival songs of their respective bands, and were the precursors of the bamboo and coconut branch (cocyea) 'tents' of the early twentieth century. (ibid., p. 40)

The 'yards' housed bamboo shacks or 'tents' and were called Jamette yards because of the sector of the community that frequented them. The Patois (Creole) word jamette is a phonetic mutation of the French word diametre and was used to refer to the underclass sector of society. Jamette yards were akin to the samba schools of Brazil in that they were centers

where performers, masqueraders, musicians, calypsonians, stickmen and makers of costumes prepared for upcoming carnivals. The sketch below depicts a Jamette yard where two rival calypsonians engage in verbal combat (picong), accompanied by musicians much to the delight of on-lookers.

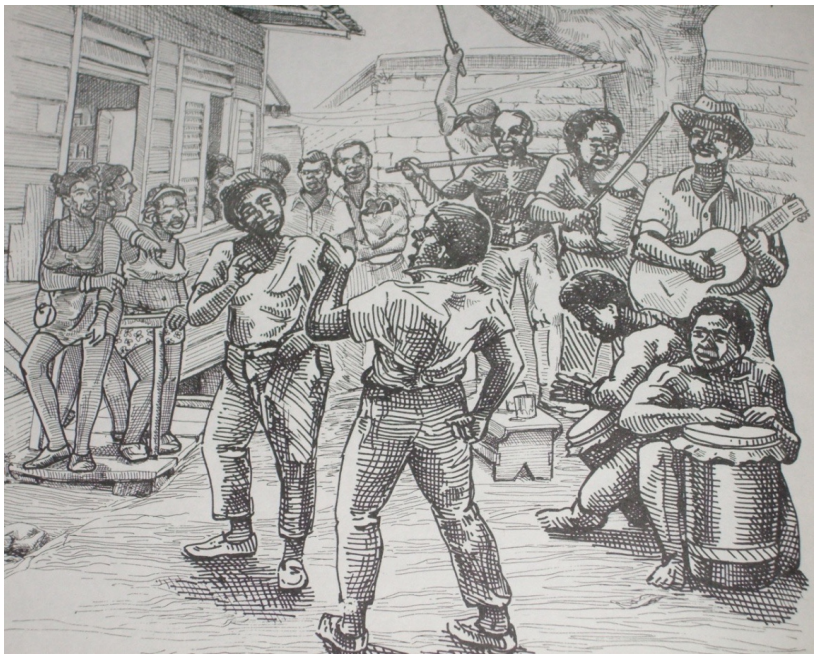

Fig. 4: A Jamette yard. The Calypso Hall of Fame (Juba Publications)

The inclusion of drums as part of the musical ensemble suggests that the depiction is probably of a Jamette yard that predated the implementation of the 1883 Musical Ordinance and the 1884 Peace Preservation Ordinance that outlawed drums. At that time the 'boom' or bass bamboo were excluded from among the musical instruments of African influence that had been integrated into string bands. Hill (1972) has informed that these yards were eventually,

> Turned into primitive theatres where performances connected with the carnival celebrations were witnessed by patrons paying a small admission price. Stick-fighting duels, calypso concerts, dance parodies, verbal encounters, and, more recently, steel band practices have been theatrical preparations that filled these crude shelters in the period between Christmas and carnival. (p. 14)

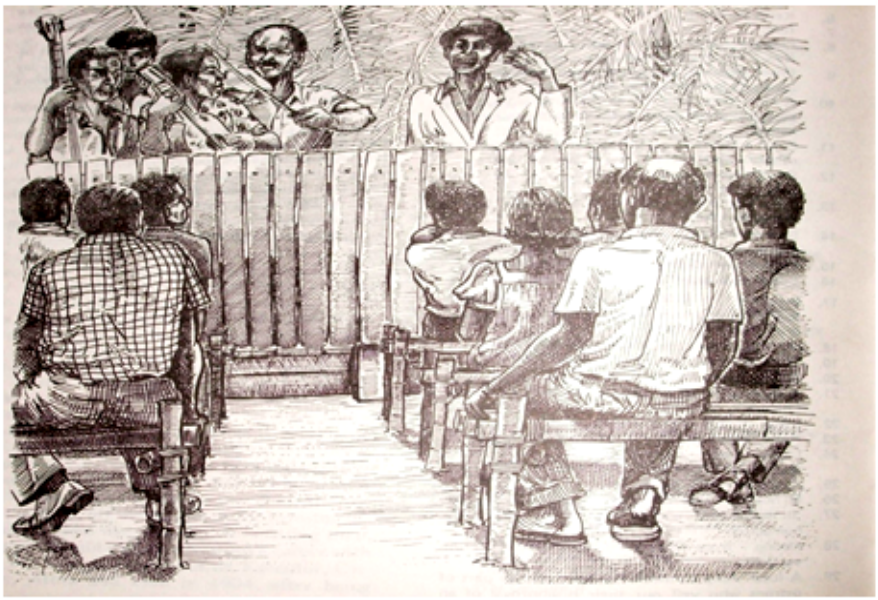

Fig. 5: An early calypso tent. The Calypso Hall of Fame (Juba Publications)

Comparison between the illustrations in figures 4 and 5 reveals enhancements to the dress code and accommodations, for instance, separation between the performers and the audience, and the inclusion of the violin as a member of the musical ensemble. These features became typical of mid-1920's calypso tents during the era when Railway Douglas had sought to improve conditions at calypso tents. Conditions had continued to 'improve' during the remainder of the decade and well into the 1930's, but high admission prices eventually excluded Afro-Trinidadians from audience participation: a crucial blow to the retention of African and grass root elements in the calypso entertainment arena. Instrumentation included the guitar, cuatro, shak shak, and the smallest member of the bamboo instrument family called the *foule*. The larger bamboo instruments seen in figure 6 had been excluded and the violin had become an occasional inclusion once 'respectable citizenry' began patronage. In spite of these reductions calypso tents and pan yards are two social institutions that have retained their functions of cultural transmission and dissemination of calypso music in present day Trinidad. The evolution of the calypso tent is further discussed in the closing pages of this chapter, and also in Crowley (1959, p. 5, 7-65, 117-124), Hill (1972, p. 32-45), and in Rohlehr (1990, p. 110-124).

The utilization of bamboo shoots of various lengths as percussive musical instruments had been a cohesive force within the grass root sector of the community that had continued to provide cultural continuity. Such innovation had provided a springboard from which the

invention of the steel drum would be launched. Tamboo-bamboo ensembles had been comprised of four bamboo instruments, the boom, the chandler, the cutter and the *foule*, ranging in size from long to short, in pitch from low to high, and in function from the keeping of steady rhythmic patterns to the improvisation of syncopated rhythm.

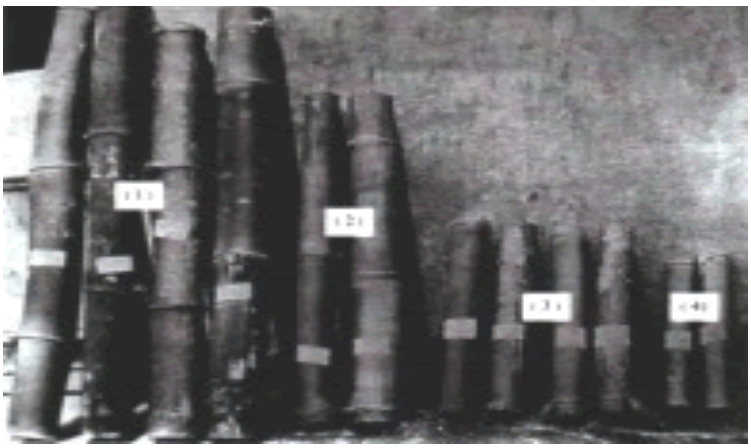

Fig. 6: Tamboo-bamboo ensemble (www.steelisland.com)

The boom, lowest in pitch was basically used for time-keeping while the chandler was used to play a steady but contrapuntal rhythm to the boom. The higher pitched cutter and *foule* beat out improvised rhythms, the cutter given unrestricted freedom. A precursor to these instruments had been the bamboula, a drum whose skirt was made from either a rum barrel which was covered at one end, or sometimes a larger bamboo shoot which was covered at both ends with animal skin. It accompanied the bamboula dance and was probably the source from which the dance and accompanying music derived their names. The bottle-and-spoon was often added to the tamboo-bamboo ensemble and provided rhythmic contrast. Later, as harmonic instrumentation got louder, the bottle-and-spoon concept of time-keeping was transferred to the 'iron' (tuned break drum), seen in the background (left) of the figure 8 illustration. It was ushered in with the emergence of iron bands, and has remained the main metronomic pulse of steelbands. The use of bamboo had been prohibited after sharpened lengths of bamboo had been used as weapons during skirmishes between tamboo-bamboo bands. This had led to the banning of drums in 1883 and a subsequent ban on the use of bamboo, which had for a time reduced the percussion ensemble to the quietness of the solitary shak-shak (Fr. Creole chac-chac). Also known as the maracas, they were used by string bands. A pair is held by the musician fourth from the left in the illustration below.

*Fig.7: **A Typical Venezuelan String-Band (Venezuelansounds.org)***

String-band music, the predilection of middle-class masqueraders who had renewed participation in street parading, would be supplied by Venezuelan musicians following the banning of drums and bamboo instruments. Included among the instruments that comprised the nucleus of stringed bands were the mandolin, banjo, and the Venezuelan cuatro, a stringed-instrument resembling the ukulele in size, shape, and sound (seen on the left and right foreground in the photo above). Traditional instruments such as the piano, violin, flute and guitar were used by "respectable colored and white revelers" who, "engaged in house-to-house sessions and did not care to mix with street maskers" (Hill 1972, p. 45-46). Rohlehr (1990) has cited an article in the *Port of Spain Gazette* dated Wednesday, January 23, 1889, which mentions some additional instruments used in string bands:

> The instruments used were violins, a piccolo, a concertina, and a tin vessel scratched with a small iron rod, corresponding to the "shack-shack" of Trinidad and known in Barbados as a "vira." (p. 41)

The tin vessel alluded to, called the *scratcher* in Trinidad, can be seen in figure 10 alongside a two-toned drum called the *du-dup*. It was sometimes substituted for the shak shak and had as its own substitute the grater, a kitchen utensil used to grate carrots, cacao etc. The guiro used in contemporary Latin conjuntos is its wooden counterpart.

Beginning in the 1890's, the string band had competed with the percussion ensemble and would eventually replace it as accompaniment for calypsonians both during street parading and in performances in calypso tents. The replacement that occurred during the early 1920's had led to the metamorphosis of the chantwel to professional calypsonian. The rivalry

however had continued well into the 1930's because bamboo had been within affordable reach of the poorer contingents of revelers, and because tamboo-bamboo accompaniment had remained the preference of some calypsonians and masqueraders. But change did not come via the string bands alone. Brass instruments were eventually introduced to the arsenal of accompanying ensembles at calypso tents and had for some time taken over the role of supplying music at fêtes and during street parading. As could be expected, there had been similar resistance toward brass bands from those who had had predilections for the musical accompaniment of string band and the tamboo-bamboo ensembles. The lyrics of Caresser's *Clear the Way When the Bamboo Play* and Ziegfield's *Carnival* are two calypsos that bear testimony to the predilection for tamboo-bamboo bands and the fact that there had been considerable resistance to their replacement. Both calypsos foreshadowed imminent change.

Clear the Way When the Bamboo Play
I don't want no brass band to play for me
Nor Jazz Hounds with the melody
A bottle and spoon I could make it do
With Cutouter cutting up the bamboo
Caresser

Carnival
Keep your whisky, don't play the fool
Give me my naked Kakapool
I don't want no Blue Rhythm band
It's the bamboo rhythm I understand
Ziegfield

Innovation had led to the replacement of the shak-shak as time keeper by the louder and more resonant scratcher, and continued innovation with metallic utensils embarked upon by the members of various bamboo bands would be catalytic to the subsequent replacement of tamboo-bamboo ensembles. Hill (1972, p. 48) has cited an account by Reginald Straker, an original member of the Gonzales Place Band. It sheds some light on the changeover from bamboo to metal instruments. In a letter dated April 20, 1965, Straker wrote:

> It all started in 1936 in Tanty Willie's yard about carnival time. The boys gathered as usual to beat bamboo; one of them, Sousie Dean, picked up a dustbin and started beating it, there was an old motor-car in the yard and Arnim began to beat the gas tank. Realizing it was sounding sweet they discarded the bamboo. Rannie Taylor got hold of a paint pan, Killie found a piece of iron and my brother, Mussel Rat, suggested the cutting down of a cement drum to be used as a kettle and so the first steel band was formed in time for carnival day.

The illustrations in figures 8 through 13 provide a glimpse of some of the evolutionary phases during the conversion from bamboo to steel instruments.

Fig. 8: The early years. The Steelband Movement. (Trinbagopan.com)

Fig. 9: Collection of drums made from metal objects (www.steelisland.com).

Fig. 10: Tamboo-bamboo band with metallic instruments (Triniview.com)

Fig. 11: Postcard depicting a carnival steelband morning jump-up (pinterest.com)

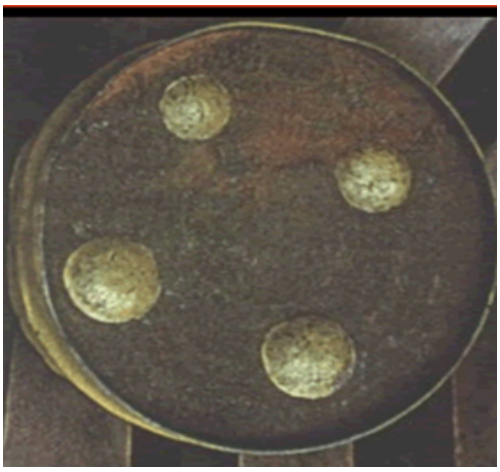

Fig. 12: Four-note pan (www.steelisland.com)

Fig. 13: Tony Williams (left) with friend showing his invention, the Spider Web Pan (www.steelisland.com)

Claims as to who were the first innovators, or as to which all-steelband was the first to make an appearance on the street during carnival are not as easily settled as Straker's letter suggests. There have been reports by other commentators about simultaneous occurrence of innovative activities at several other locations. Both Stuempfle (1995) and Manette (Pers. comm., 2012) have reported on, and cited accounts that introduce some degree of clarity and as well ambiguity pertaining to claims and dates. Stuempfle (1995) has written, "according to Carlton Ford",

> It was either 1934 or 1936 that his band picked up a paintcan from the road, and that by the Carnival season of 1935 or 1937 he and other younger members of the band had gathered together similar paint cans. They beat rhythms on these cans and eventually started using a large biscuit drum as bass. While the older men were rehearsing with bamboo, they gradually eased their pans into the band. After some initial resistance the pans were accepted and the band decided to go out for Carnival that year without any bamboo. They named themselves "Alexander's Ragtime Band" after a current movie. (p. 34-35)

As informed by Michael Phillips (Pers. comm., 2012), Alexander's Ragtime Band had been previously called the New Town Tamboo Bamboo Band, thereby locating them to Port of Spain.

Stuempfle (1995) has additionally recounted that George Goddard, then a member of the band, recalls their participation in the 1939 carnival, which is corroborated by the fact that, the movie was copyrighted in August 1938; that J.D. Elder recalls seeing members of the Hell Yard Boys group who later adopted the name the Iron Band, experimenting with discarded motor-car parts, and that it took the duration of the war for these experiments to come to a head; that Jerry Serrant, an early observer of pan, confirmed that the Hell Yard Band was indeed an all-steelband around 1939.

According to Ellie Manette however, Carlton Ford, the leader of a tamboo bamboo band whose members and instruments had become separated during a skirmish with another band,

> picked up a garbage can and started to beat it since he could not find bamboo pieces. He was the first man to do that, and then other members picked up paint tins and grease barrels that were used in gas stations to hold old grease; they were made out of steel. They also started using biscuit tins. I was about ten or eleven then, I don't know the band by any other name than Alexander's Ragtime Band. People ask, 'Who invented pan?' We all contributed, Carlton Ford, me, Tony Williams, 'Spree' Simon, no one man invented pan. When I came on the scene, that was around 1941, they used to push the pans from the inside up. I used to play with Invaders (Oval Boys) and I changed that from convex to concave. We used to play pan with pieces of wood and I was the first to start wrapping them with rubber from the inner tube of a bicycle tire. That was in 1943. (Pers. comm., July 29, 2012)

Stuempfle has additionally informed that,

> Newspaper articles from 1937 to1941 demonstrate that metal containers gradually replaced tamboo bamboo instruments throughout Trinidad during this period, but that the process occurred at a much faster pace in Port of Spain. The evidence also suggests that it was in Port of Spain that the first all-steel band performed on the streets for Carnival. (p. 35)

By the foregoing accounts and by numerous accounts reported elsewhere in other works, experimentation with steel instruments was being simultaneously conducted among several camps dispersed in various districts of the island. It has been further established that the claims stated in those accounts were made by members of ensembles within the district of Port of Spain. As it stands therefore, credit has been given to the following:

- Carlton Ford for being the first person to integrate a metal utensil (garbage can) into a tamboo bamboo band;
- Winston "Spree" Simon for having formed the first notes on a steel drum;
- Ellie Manette firstly, for being the first innovator to sink the top surface of the drum (1941) thereby giving the instrument its concave appearance and facilitating tuning options, and secondly, for being the first person to wrap pan sticks with bicycle tubing (1943) thereby enhancing sonority;
- Tony Williams for having invented the Spider Web tenor pan;
- Hell Yard Boys and Alexander's Ragtime Band for being among the very first all-steel orchestras;
- The City of Port of Spain for being the main center of development and the
- District where the above-mentioned achievements were accomplished.

The validity of these claims and others were corroborated by Mr. Manette (2012) during personal communication with me, and can be confirmed by a perusal of archives documenting the evolution of the instrument. Some of the innovations mentioned by him: concave and convex surfaces, note indication, and instrument design etc., visible in the preceding illustrations may give a sense of chronology in relation to the evolution of the instruments. Other characteristics such as sticks without rubber tips, and assorted utensils with unrefined appearance for example, that had been extant prior to the innovations that would lead to the evolution of present day instruments are also visible in figures 10, 11, 12 and 13.

The evolution of the steel drum relative to the performance of calypso music is valuable to this study in regard to subsequent analysis of composing and performing style, and as well to change within and to the structure of the calypso genre.

Other factors impacting calypso around the turn of the century and beyond include the following:

GROWING PUBLIC SENTIMENT OF A NEED FOR A MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

At the end of the nineteenth century a movement towards a more democratic government emerged:

> During the 1880's and the 1890's, there emerged in Trinidad a class of professionals and business people, who separately, and on occasion collectively, articulated the need for a more representative government… they sought the modification of Crown Colony Government by way of elections under a limited franchise. (Rohlehr 1990, p. 43)

According to Rohlehr, they highlighted "copious examples of the inefficiency, indifference and even brutality" of the then present administration. He additionally reported that,

> Members of the Reform Movement, the crusading journalists of Trinidad Review, the new Workingmen's Association of the 1890's and the emerging professional and business class, were viewed with equal suspicion by the British Crown Colony administration. (ibid.)

Citing *Governor Jerningham*, a calypso performed by Norman Le Blanc, chantwel for the White Rose Social Union, Rohlehr has additionally stated that,

> In 1898, Governor Jerningham dissolved the Borough Council, an elected body since 1853, which had become a forum for the airing of local grievances. While this action immediately affected only the handful of middle-class householders who could satisfy the qualification necessary for enfranchisement, its symbolic force went far beyond its immediate target. Jerningham's action was a clear signal to the masses that they would never be able to elect a representative government. (ibid., p. 44)

In spite of the dissolution, the calypso, perhaps more representative of public consensus "remained a popular and powerful tool for social redress" (ibid). *Governor Jerningham* was among some twenty calypsos that had continued the attack on the elite thereby signaling a high degree of animosity toward them, and leading to the following complaint that was cited from the *Port of Spain Gazette* by Rohlehr (1990):

> Despite the fact that special men were told off to prevent singing of indecent ballads in which the names of ladies and gentlemen were brought in, we regret to say that 20 of these indecent and personal Patois melodies were indulged in. We hope that the Police will be more vigilant in that respect today. (ibid., p. 44)

Le Blanc voiced his and his country's indignation in a lavway that accused the Governor.

> **Governor Jerningham**
> *Jerningham the Governor*
> *I say is fastness in you*
> *I say is rudeness in you*
> *To break the laws of Borough Council*
>
> Norman Le Blanc

One must note here that the calypsos targeted were referred to as 'Patois melodies.' That they had continued to be sung in a dialect that had been discouraged points to resistance against the attempts by the British colonial government to completely anglicize the colony.

The reluctance and refusal to conform can be interpreted as a form of rebellion since French Creole (Patois) had been customarily used by slaves and ex-slave population as a coded language to disguise and conceal meaning from the English-speaking slave masters and authorities. Calypsos sung in Patois chastising the authorities during earlier periods are referenced in Atilla*'s Kaiso, A Short History of Trinidad Calypso* (p. 8-10).

The Capitulation was sung in criticism of Governor Chacon's decision to cede the island to the British in 1797 rather than fight. The translated commentary is presented below.

The Capitulation	**Translation**
Governeur boudin paille	*Governor straw belly*
I pas bai bataille	*He did not give battle*
Soldats anglais entwez	*English soldiers came*
Pwend toute la Twinite,	*Take all Trinidad,*
Moen plantai pimen'	*I planted pepper*
Moen plantai citwo'	*I planted lime*
Les anglais pwend toute	*The English take all*
Quitte moen couyon,	*And leave me like a fool,*
Governeur Chacon dit	*Governor Chacon say*
I si mieux courri	*He prefer to run*
Vant mourri	*Rather than die*
Governeur boudin paille	*Governor straw belly*

Traditional

Amba Pons Marabella, sung around 1838, is purported to be the earliest kaiso to be rendered in Patois. It relates to an incident (a massacre) that occurred under the Marabella Bridge.

Amba Pons Marabella	**Translation**
Amba pons Marabella	*Under the Marabella bridge*
C'est la meme moen perdi gangan moen	*It's there I lost my grandmother*
Amba pons Marabella	*Under the Marabella bridge*
C'est la meme moen perdi gangan moen	*It's there I lost my grandmother*
C'est la meme yo blesse mun one moen	*It's there they wounded my uncle*
Amba pons Marabella	*Under Marabella bridge*
C'est la meme moen perdi gangan moen	*It's there I lost my grandmother*

Traditional

***C**ongo Bara* was sung during the period of slavery about a cruel jailor. The translated Patois lyric suggests that the prisoners are beckoned to put a light to illuminate the path of the jailor

on his journey to the other side but literal interpretation of the chorus depicts their overall sentiment of relief and good riddance. This kaiso was not rendered in English until the late 1890's. Analysis of its performing style reveals that the response *Pwizonne leve…mete limye bai Congo Bara* (indicated by asterisks *) is sung in alternation with the chantwel's calls which are rendered as single-tone couplets.

Congo Bara
Mete limye bai Congo Bara
*Mete limye bai Congo selewa... *Pwizonne leve…mete limye bai Congo Bara*
Mete limye bai Congo Bara,
*Congo Bara ka plewe pou imwen…**
Mena lamain si 'y ped baton y
*Sanmdi, Madi 'y se un malewe… **
Granpa mwen 'y mo Madi maten,
*Mama mwen ka plewe pou mwen… **
Mete limye bai Congo Bara,
*Judge and jury go try me for murder… **
De esclav courri sortie Tunapun'
*Congo bai o bois fair you devire…**
Traditional

Evidence that masking calypsos, even those sung in English, were being targeted around the late 1800's and early 1920's can be found in city councilor Dr. Mc Shine's address to a society. That oration sought to 'cleanse' carnival and calypso. Referring to the times as a 'period of reconstruction' Mc Shine had suggested that calypsos should be 'devoid of double meaning', a reduction that Rohlehr argued "would require the abolition of the metaphorical element of calypso and be a considerable loss in the verbal potential of the form" (Rohlehr, 1990, p. 96).

Rohlehr (ibid.) has informed us that the years between 1905 and 1914 are largely lost years in terms of the documentation of socially relevant calypsos, and that, according to Patrick Jones, the quality of 'mas' too saw a decline during those years.

> This is a period when, according to Patrick Jones, Quevedo and Lord Executor, the major chantwels withdrew from Port of Spain…They took with them the calypsos in English…and left behind the old improvised litanic Calinda form…It seems that they also took with them the kind of political topicality which had become pronounced in 1904. (p. 49)

He has additionally cited Pearse (1956, p. 250-262), who related that according to Patrick Jones (the calypsonian Chinee Patrick), during the period just before World War I "the Calypso was nothing." In corroborating the statements made by Jones, Rohlehr (1990, p. 72) has pointed to quotations by the other two calypsonians referenced in the first quote. He has

cited a 1919 article in the *Weekly Guardian* in which Quevedo, in support of his counterpart Jones stated that, "Kaiso reverted to the picong and the glorification of sex symbolism."

The third account cited by Rohlehr (ibid.) was one which was given by Executor and was paraphrased from *Argos* newspaper (1919, p. 5). It stated that,

> Soon after 1900, with the calypso gaining popularity and competition becoming quite fierce in Port of Spain, the calypsonians began to "scatter". Norman le Blanc was the first to leave the capital for St. Joseph, where he carried on the White Rose band. Lord Philomel went to La Brea, the Duke of Marlborough to Cunupia, Henry Forbes to Manzanilla, the Black Prince to Tunapuna, all opening tents in these districts. Executor himself joined the Iere Belles in St. Joseph in 1905. (Cited and paraphrased by Rohlehr, 1990, p. 72)

THE JUST ENDED BOER WARS AND WORLD WAR I

The following Elder (1969) quote bears relevance to the degree of impact the Boer war had had on calypso performance.

> The chantuelles identified themselves with the heroes of war. The leaders called themselves by names like: Iron Duke, Albany, Pharaoh, Duke of Marlborough, Black Prince, etc., and their bands carried names like: Artillery and Brigade…It was as though the struggle between the Boers and the English was symbolically transferred to Trinidad. (p. 13-14)

Similar sentiments in opposition to Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) were voiced by the Roaring Lion's *Mussolini*. The themes of calypsos produced during and after World War I displayed patriotic sentiment and loyalism but, according to Rohlehr (1990, p. 106), these began to dissolve "under the realities of low wages, unrest, repression, and protest against the intention of local authorities to 'temporarily' abolish carnival."

During the 1920's, a politically hectic decade, there had been much thematic ambivalence. On the one hand colonial loyalist sentiment was expressed in calypsos such as Kaiser Williams, whose melody has reappeared fitted with different lyrics on several occasions.

Kaiser Williams
Run your run
Kaiser Williams
run your run,
Run your run
Kaiser Williams
run your run,
You hear what Chamberlain say
Cheer boys cheer
With surety and security
We go wipe out Germany

Lord Inventor

On the other hand, grassroots dissent and redress was expressed in calypsos like Atilla's *West Indian Federation*, and Growling Tiger's *Worker's Appeal* and *Advice to West Indians*.

West Indian Federation
The Dominion of Canada, India,
Australia and South Africa
Have all got Governments of their own
That pay allegiance to the throne.
If such a high standard they can maintain
Why can't West Indians do the same?
So let's join in unity
For political liberty.

Atilla the Hun

Worker's Appeal
Anywhere you go you must meet people sad
They search for employment: none can be had (Repeat the first two lines)
They start to drop down dead in the street
Nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep
All kind-hearted employers I appeal now to you
Give us some work to do
The Growling Tiger

Advice to West Indians
I am advising every worker as a West Indian
To be careful and join a labour union
It's the only way you can achieve your right
And to stop the oppressive hands of might
And allow your progressive march to be an inspiration
To the rising generation

The Growling Tiger

The lyrics of those three calypsos are presented in part on subsequent pages for perusal. The calypsos were testimonies of the collective feelings of the masses so it is not surprising that Growling Tiger's *Advice to West Indians* had won him the crown at the first national calypso competition to be held in Trinidad.

Other calypsos like *Cipriani* referenced earlier and *Britain, Give Us Our Freedom* had helped to put key political figures such as Cipriani and Quevedo in the Legislative Council, and according to Rohlehr (1990), "that meant greater representation of the people and the realization of legislative amendments." The consciousness of the populace had continued to grow in spite of censorship, and according to Rohlehr (1990),

> During the twenties the Calypso would focus on topical issues, and by the mid-thirties some calypsonians would develop an acute political consciousness which would lead to direct censorship of the form (p. 106)

In 1934 and 1936 respectively calypso performance and records became targets of state censorship, and following the 1937 labor riots another sedition bill that sought to control freedom of speech was passed. The amount of calypsos that advocated social reform in the 1940's even in the face of a censorship campaign that was even more severe than those previously launched is evidence of the calypsonian's defiance and resilience, and of the function of the calypso as a part of the mechanism that challenged the authorities.

The chronicle of events so far has continued to reveal that Africans and their descendant Afro-Trinidadians from among the Jamette contingents had almost single-handedly contributed to the music culture of the island from 1783 to well into the first two to three decades of British rule from 1797.

As reported by Michael Phillips, Urban East Indians had sung calypsos beginning as early [or as late as] the mid-1930's,

> Munsie Daley is the earliest known… others include Clipper, Raja, Indian Prince and Dougla but their calypsos rarely gave an Indian perspective. The initiative was taken by the Mighty Killer in 1947 with Grinding Massala followed by Christo, Lord Melody, Kadie, Lord Shorty and the Mighty Sparrow via Winsford des Vignes. (Pers. comm., 2011)

THE RISE OF THE MULATTO TOWARD MIDDLE CLASS STATUS

In addition to Norman Le Blanc other Mulatto and White chantwels had emerged around the turn of the century. Included among them were Cedric Le Blanc, Hannibal, the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Executor. Norman Le Blanc belonged to the White or off-White loyalist group of chantwels. As inferred by Rohlehr (1990), the other group, from lower-class ranks probably had little or no relationship with even the local middle-class and, according to him, would have had "few qualms about attacking even the group of local reformist on whose behalf Le Blanc had censured Jerningham" (p. 32).

The following quotation by Elder (1964) shows the mindset of this latter group toward the 'half-casts':

> Due to the fact that the mulatto group was the result of race-mixture, and also because members of this group despised the Negroes, the singers made life for the mulattoes very uncomfortable by singing offensive songs about them as a group of persons 'that did not belong', whose grandmothers were rejected by them and whose grandfathers were ashamed of them. (p. 131)

The group under discussion, the middle and upper-class French-Creoles (mulattos) had been leaders of the business community during much of the period of British colonial rule in

Trinidad and had habitually boasted of their aristocratic descent. Resentment toward them had also been harbored by the British who heckled them because of their Catholic heritage, and as a traditional European enemy. In spite of differences, however, the relationship between the bourgeois reformists and the disfranchised masses became a threat to Crown Colony Government due to anti-colonial sentiment extant among both groups.

The alliance had developed out of mutual solidarity in the aftermath of the 1903 Water Riots massacre of civilians, and other inconsistencies. Because of such an alliance, 'certain persons' were placed under surveillance by the authorities. The following citation by Rohlehr is from the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Water Riots. It was stated in the report that,

> For some years a group of persons has existed in Port of Spain whose main conception of public spirit and independence is to vilify the Government and indulge in personalities regarding the individuals who compose it. Conspicuous among this group are certain coloured lawyers, some who have studied law in England, coloured tradesmen doing a substantial business, and some less reputable persons, while a few persons of English birth, including the editors of two newspapers, have thrown their lot in with them. (Cited by Rohlehr, 1990, p. 43)

Looming trends of anti-colonial sentiment had become the genus of a fourth impacting force,

RENEWED PARTICIPATION BY WHITES IN CANNES BRULE

Elder's (1964) quote below helps to shed light on this matter. He wrote,

> By the turn of the century it was clear that Cannes Brule was far from being stamped out. In fact, members of the White group that had tried to suppress it had entered Cannes Brule, and so began the evolution of what has become present-day Carnival, the national annual Festival of Trinidad… In 1899, it is recorded that one Norman Le Blanc, a French aristocrat set up the first Carnival Tent to which he invited the Negro singers to compose kalenda songs… In fact, [he] is remembered as the first man to sing Calypso in the English tongue in Trinidad (p. 132)

Renewed participation by Whites was first manifested by street masquerading and later on through financial support. Its occurrence had coincided with the period between the banning of drums and the emergence of string bands. String bands had begun to emerge with the arrival of several groups of Venezuelan immigrants: estate laborers, traders, sailors and refugees from the Independence wars. As discussed previously, the music supplied by string bands had been the preferred music for street parading among white participants, and according to Hill (1972, p. 46), was on its way to becoming "the order of the day".

The end result of the alliance reported on in Elder's citation on the preceding page, whereby members of one group assimilate or adopt the attitudes, behavior and customs of the

members of a previously opposed group, is a process that has been described in the field of psychology as 'winning over.' It is one of the topics that will be explored in a subsequent chapter dealing with group dynamics and identity, and the genre's role in that process of 'winning over'.

Another impacting force, one that has dealt some of the most severe blows, was:

THE TAKEOVER OF THE ISLAND BY THE BRITISH IN 1797

It set in motion a major avalanche of assimilation that has impacted Trinidadian society on many fronts. Its impact on calypso linguistics and narrative style has been indelible.

The insistence upon the mastery of English by the colonial government at the turn of the century eventually created a tendency among Trinidadian society toward 'high-sounding' English. The following summary of Pitts' (1962) oral accounts of Lord Executor was made available by Rohlehr (1990):

> During the first decade of the twentieth century, it was considered old-fashioned to sing in Patois. In fact, melodies became secondary and a calypsonian's success depended upon his mastery of the English language…the ability to use high-sounding English words and phrases, was much admired by audiences… (Cited by Rohlehr, p. 69-70)

Resultantly calypsonians began to employ more eloquent texts in their calypsos thereby enhancing communication with English-speaking audiences, increasing public appeal, and boosting self-esteem when performing for 'certain' audiences i.e. within erudite circles. Honed linguistic skills in English had helped the calypsonian to achieve 'elevated' status as "Man-of-Words" and acquire a verbal arsenal that proved to be useful during combat in song against his adversaries. This type of competition became known as picong, extempo and calypso war. The verbal attacks or sorties as they were called were designed and employed so as to belittle and silence one's opponent and were delivered in sans humanité song style.

The following sorties are excerpts from two 'Masters of Picong', The Roaring Lion and [3]Atilla the Hun; they exemplify the type of 'high-sounding' language alluded to, and the tradition of rhetoric that had become formalized in Trinidad society.

Sortie #1

I admire your ambition, you'd like to sing,
But you'll never be a Kaiso King

[3] Raymond Quevedo chose to spell his sobriquet contrary to the known spelling of the name Attila.

To reach such a height without blemish or spot
You must study Shakespeare, Byron, Milton and Scott
But I'm afraid I'm casting pearls before swine,
For you'll never inculcate such thoughts divine
You really got a good intention,
But poor education
Sans humanité

Atilla the Hun

Sortie #2

On grammatical subjects I will now state
Inviting lexicographers who can debate
With Ramsomfousis asceticism
They may try to argue but are bound to run,
Through the extensive alteration of anklyosis
And my encyclopedic analysis,
That makes me a man of psychology
And I can always sing grammatically
Sans humanité

The Roaring Lion

The tendency toward magniloquent speech, especially among people in the administrative sector was confirmed by Slinger Francisco a.k.a. the Mighty Sparrow. During an informal conversation in Amsterdam in August of 2009 he told me, demonstrating as he did so, that, "People just wanted to talk big and sound important and educated."

Several decades earlier he had satirized the misuse of 'the Queen's English' in the calypso *Well Spoken Moppers*, a perusal of "high-sounding' language demonstrating blatant inefficiency and pompous misconceptions of the mastery of English. Spurned by British insistence on proficiency the trend toward superfluous English usage revealed erudition in some instances and at other times exposed ignorance and illiteracy.

Well Spoken Moppers[4]
Half de trouble in the world today
Comes from people who doh know what to say
They like to use words that's big and long
An dey eh know when dey using it wrong

[4] Inconsistency in spelling among the English texts of all the calypsos referenced is a resultant of a mixing of spoken Trinidadian lingo (Broken English) with Standard English. Nuances often come across include the omission of 'a' in the word 'afraid', 'l' in 'already', 'd' and 'g' at the end of words, the substitution of 'Ah' for 'I', 'eh' for 'am not', 'doh' for 'don't', 'dey' for 'there', 'way' for 'where', 'couda, shouda, and wouda' for 'could have, should have, and would have', 'kinda' for 'kind of', 'he' and 'she' for 'his' and 'her', 'd' for 'th' as in 'dis', 'dat', and the pluralization of singular nouns.

Some Moppers come by me last Christmas Day
Eat me out and drink me out in the worst of way
Ah had a swell time dey started to boast
But before ah go let me make a toast, and they tell me,
Here's to my good friend I wish that he
And everybody live in enemity
I wish him ill health and adversity
Disaster and strife eternally

May your cup of sorrow never run dry
May misfortune follow you until the day you die
You are such a nice quiet illiterate lad
Your obnoxious company make me feel glad

Ah long maga one dey call D'arbreu
Say "Three cheers for insipid Sparrow"
The fame and fortune he has accomplished
I wish it all would rapidly diminish
He's a fella that I have always despised
Ah doh know why people does watch him and criticize
His stupidity is unsurpassed
In other words, he's a high hypothetical ass,

May his friends bring him joy and frustration
Impose on him and lift him to degradation
He's a jolly good fellow and a kind reprobate
Unscrupulous and always inconsiderate.

The Mighty Sparrow

Analysis of the satire reveals that the verses and accompanying toasts are rendered in similar erroneous, pompous fashion. The fourth chorus deteriorates into a kind of jocose mumble-jumble characteristic of superfluous illiteracy and drunken stupor combined. Rohlehr (1990) has informed us that "this sort of language would go out of style during the twenties, when the impulse towards oratory became blended with the necessity for a simple, down-to-earth narrative style" (p. 100).

The foregoing accounts signal change in idiom, topicality and lyrical style and foreshadow other parameters that would be affected as well. Thematically calypso continued to expand.

During our conversation I had asked Sparrow to comment on the avoidance and ambivalence among lower class Trinidadians toward Patois in relation to social pressure. He explained that the reason that transmission of that language through later generations did not occur was because,

> Parents used it when they didn't want their children to know what they were talking about. It was not only because of some kinda pressure by the White man. (Pers. comm., July 26, 2009)

Several other informants corroborated Sparrow's statement while others expressed opposing sentiments of pride and shame regarding Franco-phonic issues peculiar to the Anglo-Caribbean, especially on islands that had been former French colonies, during the early decades of the 1900's. An acquaintance, Jennifer Defoe who was born and raised in Dominica, corroborated the Mighty Sparrow's statement and other documented reports that Patois had been used as a form of coded communication. In keeping with the nuances of the speaking style peculiar to Franco-West Indians she gave the following account:

> My Dad didn't grow up speaking Creole because he was born in Antigua [Anglo-Caribbean]. He left Dominica for England when he was seventeen; he joined the military, I don't know how long he stayed there. I learned to speak Patois in Dominica, in Pointe Michelle, if you lived in Point Michelle you had to speak Patois. Since Dominica had a lot of contact with France, Martinique and Guadeloupe, Patois was not outlawed. He went to study in England and upon his return he didn't want us to speak Patois, not even his wife. I was about seven, he never gave me a reason. We were not allowed to sing those Patois songs and dance certain kind of dances. You see, in those days those carnival songs in Patois and that style of dancing was associated with vulgarity. School teachers used to beat you when you speak it. Most people switched to Patois when children were close by. I guess my father wanted me to be a 'proper' young lady, speaking good English. (Pers. comm., July 28, 2009)

Dave Defoe, her husband who was born in Curacao but grew up in Dominica, spoke English fluently. With a Francophone accent similar to that of his wife Jennifer he said,

> I did not like Patois too much, it was too rough, but I could understand it because I grew up with it and around people who used to speak it. (Pers. comm., July 28, 2009)

Another observer Lendor "Mackie" Mac Donald who grew up during the 1920's and 1930's in La Cour Harpe, a Jamette stronghold in Port of Spain, confirmed that in Trinidad the speaking of Patois then had been discouraged in public as well as at home. During our conversation he diligently tried to recollect the lyrics of songs that his maternal grandmother had taught him. Mr. Mac Donald spoke with a strong nasal tone and peculiar Francophonic inflection as he gave the following account to me in second person narrative, identifiable characteristics of people of French Creole ethnicity.

> Your parents didn't want you to talk Patois because that was low talk, but they couldn't talk English. The people used to call the Patois 'Hog language'. (Pers. comm., Feb. 2007)

The preceding types of reactions toward the speaking of French Creole (Patois) had been common among people in communities throughout the British Caribbean where it (French Creole) had previously been the mode of communication among lower-class citizens.

My close friend Michael Phillips, historian and archivist, made the following observation that: “Maybe parents observed the trend and thought that the inability to speak English would hinder the progress of their children in an increasingly anglicized society” (Pers. comm., 2010). He also brought to my attention the fact that the repression of languages in Trinidad had been extended to Hindi as well.

Rohlehr (1990) has stated that by 1869 a tendency among teachers to ignore a child’s first language if it was not English had already been established (p. 56).

Rex Nettleford (2003) has vehemently attacked the colonial mechanism of imposed language. Referring to the nature of colonial and post-colonial linguistic phenomena in the Caribbean as “problems of language,” he has written,

> That problem is not simply the matter of the call for the mandatory fulfillment of proficiency in the use of the master’s tongue now seen by some to be a universal necessity, but rather the threat that the unrelieved promotion of such a cultural manifesto poses for that self-realisation and hope of independent discovery in the world of human expression through the use of the languages that are themselves the organic linguistic expression of the vast majority of the people in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean. (p. 13)

The quest for acquisition and as well the acquisition of imposed language served to repress one major form of the cultural expression of repressed peoples, limit communication among them, and secure a social and academic advantage for the repressors. Resultantly many repressed groups that did not speak the ‘mother tongue’ as a first language were left with two options, adoption or refusal of the imposed idiom. Refusal to conform to the new *status quo* constituted a hindrance to the ascent of the social structure and possible exclusion from the changing social mainstream, and adaptation was often accompanied by a partial or total denunciation of intrinsic vernacular. The predilection for speaking European languages (the mother tongues), and the tendency toward eloquence that became formalized in zones of contact can be interpreted as attempts by the ‘colonized’ to ascend the social structure that had been imposed upon them by the ‘colonizer,’ and to improve their (‘the colonized’) own self-image. Over a sufficient period of time such adaptations had festered a sense of false pride, ambivalence, shame, animosity and cultural denial in the psyche of the ‘colonized’.

However, in spite of the efforts of the British to completely anglicize Trinidadian society intrinsic languages of several ethnic groups have survived. Included among those ethnic contingents are the Indo-Trinidadians, Chinese, Assyrians, Lebanese, and peoples of French Creole and Hispanic heritage who belong mainly to rural planter communities. Reasons why the intrinsic languages of those contingents have survived are attributable to several facts:

- The contingents had established communities that have continued to be a cohesive and economic infrastructure that has continued to be sustainable and somewhat autonomous.
- They were not perceived as a threat to national security because they had/have managed to remain politically marginal while at the same time maintaining involvement in mainstream society.
- Several linguistic features (words and phrases pertaining to foods, utensils, and activities etc.) belonging to their respective cultures have been assimilated into the folklore (vernacular, culinary practices, folksong etc.) of mainstream national culture.

The ethnic groups mentioned above share three main commonalities; their languages have continued to serve the function of maintaining identity among their members and contingents; cohesion within their communities; and exclusivity from other ethnic groups.

These three features have been identified as some of the phenomena common to the 'contact zones' mentioned earlier and will be discussed in chapter 4 in the context of individual and group relations in culturally plural societies. They will be discussed elsewhere in the context of sources of conflict, resistance toward anti-colonial practices, and repudiation of colonial ideology. For the time being it is necessary to revisit the topic of cultural repression embarked upon earlier, in order to expand on it concerning its impact on the relationship between song and dance.

The subversive potential of this relationship had been recognized early on by Europeans, as is evident through the passing of an Ordinance in Martinique in 1654 prohibiting assembly; the codification of its regulations in the Code Noir of 1685; and its updating in 1758 and 1772 respectively. The French had been cautious but somewhat tolerant, and had even participated in some aspects of African music and dance culture, but from the period of British takeover many aspects of African cultural manifestations came under attack by protest from the church, by harsh criticism and resentment from the 'respectable' citizenry, and by repression from the authorities. Supplementary information presented by Gordon Rohlehr (1990) highlights reasons for attempts by the British and French to suppress African cultural expression in Trinidad. He has recounted that,

> In the Antilles, as in Africa, song and dance were closely related expressions…Slave dances were viewed by the planters with a mixture of suspicion and tolerance…they provided gatherings of Black people with private space and the power of assembly, and had been known to lead to rebellious uprisings throughout the Antilles…Before 1700 both the British and the French had prohibited the use of certain instruments such as drums and horn-trumpets, whose playing they viewed as an incitement to rebellion. (p. 2-3)

Rohlehr, citing Wood, has additionally reported that,

> The upheaval in Haiti and the rebellion of the Grenadian mulatto Fedon in 1795…helped strengthen British mistrust of the French in general and the free people in particular, and explains their enactment of repressive and retrograde legislation against the Coloureds in early nineteenth century Trinidad. (Rohlehr, 1990, p.7)

St. John (1996) has reminded us that,

> It is a generally accepted thesis that state powers, in their effort to consolidate their rule, have always tried to suppress self-expression, especially when it is articulated through the cultural manifestation of the masses. (p. 10)

According to Rohlehr (1990), during post-Emancipation there had been a constant effort to,

> Censor the dance; to purge it of its potentially explosive quality and reduce it to pure escapism and entertainment with as diluted a sexual element as was possible, the level on which it became simultaneously unsubversive and tolerable. The same control was sought of the lyrics of the songs, as the language became less coded, more open in its sexual suggestiveness or political attack. (p. 5)

The criteria for calypso tents that had been outlined by the Argos Committee in 1919 had signaled another attempt to "divorce the Calypso from its Calinda root by disqualifying tamboo-bamboo and bottle-and-spoon accompaniment from consideration as musical instruments" (ibid., p. 110).

The following year prizes for outstanding performances were offered by the *Argos* and *Guardian* Carnival Committees, but were accompanied by stringent regulations, that sought "a de-Africanization of the music, the final abolition of its percussive Jamette elements", and had "the makings of organized bourgeois sponsorship/control of Mas" (ibid., p. 96-97).

For the purposes of this dissertation the term 'de-Africanization' above, as implied by Rohlehr, is interpreted in the context of social control since the slave community, who represented the lower class masses, and whose contribution to mainstream culture had been predominant, was the target of repression. The limitation or elimination of their expressions of African, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Trinidadian cultural traditions from mainstream culture by bourgeois control can therefore be appropriately termed 'de-Africanization.'

Rohlehr additionally recounted that in 1920, calypsonian 'Chieftain' Walter Douglas opened his own tent based on the committee's model, broke away from the sans humanité tradition, introduced the ballad or narrative style calypso, and began making significant changes to the tent environment (ibid.). Some of the physical changes made by Douglas include the replacement of flambeaux with gas lamps for improved lighting; the replacement of thatched roofs by tarpaulin, and bamboo benches and improvised seating by chairs; the addition of an elevated stage; and the expansion of the accompanying musical ensemble from drum and

shak shak to include the flute, clarinet, guitar, cuatro bass, and female background chorus. Douglas also began charging a higher fee, and avoided the practice of calinda. These developments among others such as increased police vigilance gradually began to limit the attendance of the poorer 'under-class', the 'riffraff', and the vulgarity and violence associated with the 'nefarious downtown neighborhoods' and attract the patronage of the upper and middle classes.

The following accounts reflect the disdain with which 'respectable' society regarded 'downtown' neighborhoods. Liverpool cited Egbert Moore (Lord Beginner) who related from his recollection that,

> People were afraid to come to the tents in the late 1920's and even in the early 1930's. We used to have a lot of hooligans in the area, particularly in nearby Royal Theatre. Besides, the poor people couldn't pay, so we moved from the vagabond area. (Cited by Liverpool, 1990, p. 11)

Lord Iere too was cited by Liverpool (1990, p. 20-21). He recounted that it was pure love of the art that made men like Atilla and himself 'go down' to George Street to sing; that they were not of that milieu; that their parents bitterly resented such 'low excursions;' and that they were ostracized by their friends.

The historical events that had occurred between the 1920's and the late 1950's represent a profound wave of impact on socio-cultural life in Trinidad. This wave, caused by urbanization and rapid industrialization, was responsible for the commercialization of the calypso tents, recording and foreign employment opportunities for musicians, calypsonians and other artistes during the 1930's, the emergence of the 'Iron Band', the invention and evolution of the steel drum during the early 1940's and a more widespread national consciousness. According to Rohlehr (1990), the fierce allegiance to and the violent defense of territory which had characterized the stick-fighting bands, were modified in the first thirty years of the twentieth century" (p. 48) and eventually "transferred to the steel bands". Communities no longer financially supported the "idle…tribal chieftain" lifestyle of the chantwel, who had "slowly lost his privileged place in an identifiable community" (p. 12).

And so, in the wake of the 1929 Depression and imminent World War, the chantwel's metamorphosis into professional calypsonian occurred. He was now forced to redefine his image and style to suit the new demands of professional performance and the stereotype of the then up and running recording industry. By the late 1930's and during the 1940's tents were being relocated to venues that were closer to the suburbs inhabited by the upper and middle classes whose pockets were being targeted. The following account which reflects the

'new' environment at tents in relation to class/economic power during these decades was given by Lord Superior and was related by Liverpool (1990):

> In the early 1950's, the tent was still a place for whites. It was the poor entertaining the rich, even the managers and financiers were from the rich upper class. I remember that there used to be one black woman in the audience - Mrs. Audrey Jeffers. (Cited by Liverpool, p. 12)

Amidst growing concern in the late 1930's about the future, calypsonians sought to organize themselves. In 1939 they formed the Trinidad Calypso and Musicians Advertising Association. The Government simultaneously made efforts to improve carnival, and the Carnival Improvement Committee embarked on an agenda to raise the standard of calypso and make carnival a main tourist attraction. The deliberate use of calypsos in 1939 to construct a positive idealized image is another blatant example of the recognition of the genre's potential as a tool of social influence.

Rohlehr (1990), has stated that,

> Calypsonians sang a number of tourist-oriented calypsos in a sentimentally patriotic eulogizing of their island. The importance of calypsonians to the tourist trade was from the start officially recognized, and the attempt 'to lift Calypso' was inspired by the need to project an image of decency and respectability to the visitor…The Committee…was firm in its intention to eradicate "the vulgar and improper side of the festival, with particular reference to "Dame Lorraine" and "Old Mask". (p. 328)

The following calypsos were included among those selected for this purpose: *La Belle Trinidad, Ballad of Beautiful Port of Spain, Sweet Trinidad,* and *Beautiful Land of Iere.*

Recognition by the authorities of the potential of the genre to unify society was by no means limited to the eulogizing of Trinidad so as to entice tourists. The times had been characterized by militaristic expansion by Germany and Russia and by the threat of war, two central themes of many calypsos such as Lord Ziegfield's *How Hitler Invaded Poland*, King Radio's *Impressions of Chamberlain and Hitler*, Growler's *Fall of France*, composed in an around 1939. The Roaring Lion's *Rise of the British Empire* was among those presented at the Downtown Mas at Marine Square. According to Rohlehr (1990), it

> Naturally won the interest and approval of the Governor, Sir Hubert Young, who was the first Governor to attend the Downtown Mas…The Governor's attendance at Marine Square signaled his recognition that calypsos could be used to promote the ideology of the British Empire; to lift the people's spirit; to support the propaganda campaign against Germany and Russia; and to advertise strategies for survival such as the 'Grow More Food' campaign. The Growling Tiger had, in fact, recommended this strategy in 1934 in his Workers' Appeal. J'ouvert 1940, one of the most popular refrains was 'Grow more food in the Colony to conquer Germany.' (p. 334)

For clarification the reader is informed that the word downtown in 'Downtown Mas' has several designations. It draws attention to:

- the rivalry between the bourgeoisie factions that had sought to control carnival and calypso, a rivalry that in 1919 had led to the occurrence of two separate carnivals, the Downtown Carnival and Mas in the Queen's Park Savannah;
- the division and disparity that had been extant along class and economic lines; and
- locates the activities in the 'nefarious neighborhoods' described, neighborhoods that were usually avoided by 'respectable' members of society.

For the time being however, the agenda of the Tourist Board and the carnival celebrations of 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945 were postponed by World War II. Also, a ban was imposed, which, like the ones enforced in 1901 and 1916, did not impede the indoor festivities of the upper-class. These and other bones of contention would soon be addressed. Atilla the Hun, as Legislative Board member Raymond Quevedo, was instrumental in securing the calypsonian's right to be heard. This turn of events created liaison shifts and caused roles and identities to be redefined. An amendment in 1950 of the 1934 Theatre and Dance Hall Ordinance which had placed the State as the authority over calypso gave calypsonians more freedom of access to perform in public, calypso competitions for prize money were proposed and another outcrop of calypsos designed to sway public opinion would occur in the late 1950's.

A combination of repression, anti-imperialist sentiment, hard times, frustration, and a rising crime wave among young men would culminate in a decade (1946-1956) of post-war social conflict which impacted tourism negatively. Steelband rivalry had become a major source of violence during those years. The following citation was extracted by Rohlehr from the 1948 Commissioner of Police's Annual Report. It describes an incident in which steelbands spontaneously took to the streets in re-enactment of the VJ-Day and VE-Day celebrations, "whose affirmation of the principle of joyful and unfettered freedom," Rohlehr reported, "had become a major folk-memory" (p. 371). The document, article number 25 under the caption Steelbands reads:

> Hooliganism broke out in Port of Spain and a section of the North-Western Division's areas when steelbands, in defiance of the law came out and played in the streets; they attacked small squads of the police who tried to disperse them. The police party was confronted with a barrage of stones and bottles. (Cited by Rohlehr, 1990, p. 370-371)

The rebellious inclination and confrontational behavior characteristic of the stick fighting bands of old had now been transferred to steelbands. The aggression was manifest within at least three arenas:

- the pursuit of freedom from the yoke of colonialist ideals,
- blatant rebellion of idle and unemployed young men,
- territorial wars.

The newspaper too played its part in the establishing and perpetuating of negative stereotypes. The following anonymous account about steelband clashes was cited by Rohlehr. It accomplishes several things: it locates the social environment out of which the steelband movement grew in the early 1950's, it identifies the shift that had occurred in the centralization of inter-territorial aggression away from the stick fighting arena, it informs us about another wave of socialization and creolization processes that had already begun to take place, and it reminds us that class antagonism was still extant.

> In the early days when pan beating was not socially accepted, the steelbands were made up entirely of unemployed young men from the lower class…In those days the followers of the band, mainly hooligans and saga boys, fought among themselves. Steelband wars were confined to the lower classes.
>
> During the past two or three years, however, the middle and upper classes have taken up pan-beating. College boys, civil servants, store clerks and other white-collar workers have formed themselves into bands- Dixieland, Dem Boys, Hit Paraders, etc. Not only have these bands learned to play as well, or even better, than many of the old bands, but they have been getting all the engagements at the clubs, dances etc.
>
> The proletarian bands, jealous of the prowess of what they call the 'social' bands, and resentful at their encroachment on what were (sic) their exclusive preserve, have openly resolved to 'run all the social bands off the road.'
>
> On Saturday, every 'social' band, unarmed, unsuspecting and not looking for trouble, was attacked in broad daylight by hooligans with baseball bats, big sticks, bottles, cowhide whips, and even razors and cutlasses and put to flight. Many of them did not dare venture out into the night. Some have vowed never to beat on the road again. (Cited by Rohlehr, 1990, p. 425)

The phrase 'During the past two or three years' establishes that the commentary was made during the latter part of 1950, since in 1955 Dixieland steel orchestra, formerly Boys from Iwojima and Melody Makers, became the first social band to appear on the streets. In 1960 they won all four stages of the music festival, and later also won international acclaim. Social bands were comprised of members of middle and upper classes and were catalytic to the eventual acceptance of the steel drum and the steelband institution.

In 1946, the Government in its effort to curtail hooliganism had reintroduced corporal punishment (The Flogging Bill) which had been abolished in 1941. Many calypsos such as

Bring Back the Cat-o-Nine Tails reflected public sentiment and were supportive of harsh measures. Others addressed the degree of brutality in the castigations meted out. Atilla sang,

Christmas Eve Night
Christmas Eve night on Quarry Street
I was listening to some music; it was very sweet
Christmas Eve night on Quarry Street
I was listening to some music; it was very sweet
It was the tintinnabulation of the iron band
When suddenly policemen drove up in a van
With big stick charging furiously
As though they were attacking Nazis in Germany

Imagine Christmas Eve night
All you can hear is, "Peace and goodwill to men"
Poor people had to scamper and run
All they were doing is having innocent fun
I wonder when the present administration
Will realize that is only through toleration
Will better conditions be had
Between the people and the Government of Trinidad
Atilla the Hun

According to Rohlehr (1990), Atilla's calypsos almost single-handedly addressed injustices and criticized Government policy aimed at suppressing dissent. He writes,

> Calypsos in this vein such as Tiger's *Workers' Appeal* and Atilla's *Four Cents a Day* would challenge British imperialism to prove its moral worthiness by eliminating abuses that were inseparable from normal colonial rulership. (p. 380)

The text of Atilla's *Four Cents a Day* blatantly expresses disapproval of the response by the police regarding police/residents conflict.

Four Cents a Day
I went to the Square just the other day
And what I saw filled me with dismay
It stands out in my memory
As a demonstration of sheer brutality
Workers were marching around
When near the Red House they were found
Policemen with batons knocking them down
Starving people begging for bread
We offer them teargas and lead instead.
Atilla the Hun

Rohlehr's analysis of the preceding text sheds light upon Atilla's style of redress and the function of rhetoric in the political calypso. He writes,

> *Four Cents a Day*…asserts that people through hunger and discontent are saying we have a *"criminal Government*." The terminology shows that the Calypso had become a People's Court, a sort of moral Assizes for the indictment of the "criminal" regime. This was Trinidad's Nuremberg. The idea would persist in the collective psyche of the nation, and in the 1970s and eighties Calypso would play a similar role as the People's National Movement under Eric Williams and George Chambers, foundered against the same concretion of abuses that had existed since the days of the British. (1990, p. 380)

According to Rohlehr,

> Atilla's calypsos in this period were assuming the appearance of a political manifesto; as well they might in a year when they helped enhance his political appeal as a candidate for the City Council. His *Britain, Give Us Our Freedom* marks the death of Crown Colony as a system relevant to Caribbean development. (ibid., p. 375)

Rohlehr's analysis and observations help to corroborate the calypsonian's employment of the idiom with intent to elicit social change in regard to public awareness, opinion and response, and government policy.

As was mentioned earlier, carnival had been suspended during the war years (1942-1945). The calypso tent had been heavily relied upon then as it was the only outlet for the masquerading masses to release tensions. Beginning in 1946, the Carnival Improvement Committee resumed undertakings to 'clean up' carnival and make it attractive to tourists. Once again a struggle for proprietorship of the celebrations ensued among several factions. In addition to the list of restrictions and instructions that had been prescribed, "this not too well disguised bourgeois effort to fleece carnival of any residue of its Jamette root" (Rohlehr, 1990), included the following: the downplay of calypso competitions, low prize money, the inclusion of calypsos in shows as side acts, the elevation of the Carnival Queen competition from its status of added attraction at the crowning of the Calypso King competition to being the main attraction at the Demarche Gras show, the inclusion of the Calypso King competition eight years later as an enhancement to the Demarche Gras show, and the abandonment of the traditional Dame Lorraine character due to the adoption of the Carnival Queen image. By 1952 the goals of tourism were beginning to materialize and by the following year various elitist groups had been in control of the 'up-town' celebrations. However, as was reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* (Saturday, Feb. 11, 1956), despite the influx of big business monies the prize for first place in the Calypso King competition of 1956 was a mere $25 and a silver cup. The accumulation of prizes for the Carnival Queen competition, as was reported in the *Sunday Guardian* (Jan. 15th 1956), had an estimated value of $6,000. Rohlehr (1990) mentions that,

> By the mid-fifties…the Carnival Queen competition which had begun as a pleasant if irrelevant ornament to Carnival, had become a means whereby the substantial Caucasian segment of the commercial class advertised, celebrated and applauded itself. (p. 447)

Attempts at curtailing this unreasonable trend coincided in 1957 with further demands for increases by the Carnival Bands Union, agreement by bandleaders to boycott celebrations at the Queens Park Savannah and the taking over of affairs by the new Government's Carnival Development Committee, which immediately began to improve the situation.

According to Rohlehr (1990) however, "the grievances of the past eight years…could not be easily forgotten" (p. 449-450). The 1957 Calypso King Competition boycott by the then-popular Mighty Sparrow, the previous year's winner and Lord Superior, and their respective accompanying calypsos *Carnival Boycott* and *Brass Crown* are of major significance in having effected social change. Both calypsos exposed disparity and had helped to restore dignity and strengthen solidarity among calypsonians, bandleaders, steelbandsmen and masqueraders. These undertakings helped to heighten public awareness, change perspective about the essential ingredients of carnival, and improve conditions at future competitions.

Brass Crown
Yes, a calypsonian
Needs more consideration
Yes, a calypsonian
Needs more consideration
You got the Carnival Queen Competition
And the King Calypsonian
Well, the Queen getting everything
And nothing goes to the Calypso King

They take the Calypso King
To make a pappy show
He gets a couple dollars
And a million pat on his shoulders
What he gets, my friends, is rather small
It less than nothing at all
But the Queen only puts herself in spot
And after that she becomes a real big shot

The Carnival Committee
Should check up on this thing seriously
We cause the tourist to come here
They making thousands of dollars per year
Well Trinidad is known anywhere you go
To be the land of Calypso
And no part of the Caribbean
Is known as the land of Carnival Queen

She gets refrigerators
Machines, radios and even motor cars
Sometimes a Simmons bed
And all the King get is a brass crown on his head
Lord Superior

The verses of *Carnival Boycott* also outlined reasons for the boycott, and, according to Gordon Rohlehr (2007), "emphasize the importance of the essential ingredients of carnival and so appeal to the collective psyche of the people." The text reads,

Carnival Boycott
I am going to play mas' as usual
Because I love Carnival
I am going to play mas' as usual
Because I love Carnival
But no competition for me
In San Fernando or the city
They could preach Peter or Paul
I won't even go Savannah to see football.

The Calypsonians with the talent
Hardly getting a cent
I think it's overbearing
So now give me a hearing;
Calypso is the root of Carnival
Steelband is the foot of Carnival
Without Calypso, no road march could beat
Without Steelband, I'll bet you don't move your feet

I intend to keep all my costume
on the shelf
Let them keep the prizes in the Savannah
for they own self
Let the Queen run the show
Without Steelband and Calypso *2nd time (With she fridge and she radio)*
Who want to go can go up dey
But me ain't going no way.
The Mighty Sparrow

The chorus expresses the intent of the calypsonian, draws attention to the absurdity of carnival without its essential ingredients and beckons followers to join in solidarity.

Notice how the prizes offered are cleverly itemized with the interjection of an alternate fourth line in the last chorus; a ploy used by the calypsonian to downplay their value and at the same time remind his audience of the degree of disparity that had been extant between the purses of the Calypso King Competition and the Carnival Queen Show.

A greater sense of devaluation and anger is transmitted when one listens to the expressive tone in which Sparrow communicates his message in song, and especially when one sees his facial expressions and physical gestures of indignation during live performance. This type of internalization, is what Patton referred to as 'situational influences, the creation of layers of meaning through the symbolic action of performance'. (The reader is referred to a recorded rendition of *Calypso Boycott* which can be found on the LP *Calypso Madness*, vol. 2.)

With *Calypso Boycott* Sparrow won the historical alternative Calypso King Show held at the Globe Theatre, an event which, according to Gordon Rohlehr (1990), "questioned the legitimacy of the Calypso King competition at the Savannah" (p.454).

"The acclaim that singing *Carnival Boycott* won Sparrow", Rohlehr added,

> was intense and spontaneous, because the song was a precise summary of the position taken/or at least threatened by the Bandleaders for over a decade. (ibid. p. 451)

Sparrow's timely emergence during the mid-fifties initiated yet another wave of innovation in the evolution of calypso music in regard to stage performance, composition, orchestral sound and dance. His singing prowess, the lyrical and musical quality and scope of his calypsos, the relevance of his calypsos and the characters they highlighted, the 'cock man' reputation he constructed, the dynamism and quality of his performances, and his shrewd business sense distanced him from his field very early in his career and are of major importance. At the height of his career the times had been characterized by socio-political vertigo because of the negative inter-ethnic and inter island stereotypes, and by tensions that had become extant during the post-war years. Also, Trinidad had become the center stage for the drive towards Federation and Independence, major events that were sentinels of the era of 'deconstruction'. The two predominant ethnic groups in Trinidad, Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians, would become more deeply entangled in intragroup relations of a more complex nature. Already engaged with each other in a struggle for political dominance and socio-economic equilibrium, they were now being called upon to unite under the banners of West Indian unity, and nationhood. This is precisely what Pratt (1992) was referring to when she made the statement about sites of encounters where "previously separated people enter into and establish relations, often antagonistically, usually unequally". Solidarity between these two contingents is further discussed in chapter 4 below in the context of socialization.

The era of 'deconstruction' or dismantling would envelop the remaining part of the twentieth century and extend into the contemporary period paralleling the Mighty Sparrow's career. Calypso music would continue to be both an object and an instrument of change because of

the nature and intent of the calypsos being composed, and because of the continued repression being leveled against it. Many calypsos of that era inspired a spirit of nationalism characteristic of National Anthems, and had been used to bring about greater social unity, repair negative images, construct positive ones, promote local industry, reignite public awareness, and sway opinion. The calypsos symbolically articulated notions of social text referred to by Patton (1994, p. 56) through their interaction with specific Trinidadian audiences that were collectively focused on nationhood.

Summarization of the events outlined by the historical accounts just perused reveals that:

- From the point of entry of the white French plantocracy onward well into the period of British Crown colony rule, Africans had represented more than half of the population of Trinidad.
- Division along class and racial lines had positioned the Negro at the bottom of the social ladder and under a yoke of social and cultural repression.
- Resistance toward such oppression was manifest among the oppressed by the use of Patois (French Creole) as a coded language—in the performance of banned practices, among them drumming and several associated dances (the bamboula, bongo and calinda), rituals (Orisha worship and wakes), the singing of specific types of songs (calindas and calypsos), and by physical confrontation (slave uprisings, and subsequent acts of rebellion).
- The French settlers had had a tradition of costumed street parading but had begun assimilation of elements of African cultural expression.
- Even though Europeans had debarred African slaves from participation in their exclusively elite carnival festivities it was the slaves and their descendants who emerged as the main contributors to the development of indigenous music, carnival music and new musical instruments.
- The indigenous music which evolved, the calypso, had inherited features such as redress, double entendure, piquant insult, and confrontational and intimidating delivery from its ancestral counterpart the calinda.

The historical accounts have also revealed that the authorities had recognized the potential that calypso performance had via its rhetoric and its relationship with dance. Calypsos could be used to promote the ideology of the British Empire, and to support propaganda campaigns against their enemies and rivals, and to promote local industry. The authorities had also realized that the subversive potential of this musical rhetoric was enhanced when combined with dance and certain instruments (the drum and trumpet). They had recognized too the threat it posed to their security for it could be used publicly or in private assembly to lift the spirit of the masses: ignite public awareness, sway public opinion and incite rebellion, as

demonstrated decades later when the idiom was used to construct positive idealized images, repair negative ones and inspire nationalism. As noted earlier "state powers, in their effort to consolidate their rule, have always tried to suppress self-expression, especially when it is articulated through the cultural manifestation of the masses" (St. John, 1996).

In spite of constant efforts to censor African dance and control the lyrics of the songs, and the successive institution of increasingly harsher measures to limit the transmission of Afrocentric culture, calypso music had continued to be a main voice of open resistance; had remained one of the main vehicles by which ties with the cultural past were procured and transmitted; had remained integral to the daily activities of the Jamette sector and the social institutions within its grassroots community. Over time, as those activities and social institutions became socialized, calypso music and its associated practices acquired mainstream acceptance and ambivalence toward it as an Afro-Trinidadian cultural expression began to diminish. The acceptance of the calypso and the steel drum was partially attributable to involvement by members of the middle-class. This represents another example of the 'winning over' effect outlined by identity theory and will be discussed in chapter 3. It is reminiscent of the plight of ragtime music and its acceptance in the United States. As informed by Campbell (2006), "Ragtime was the first African-American music that looked on paper the way it sounded in performance" (p. 45). In addition, it was being performed by musically trained musicians such as Scott Joplin and James Reece Europe at a time when there had been a need for music to accompany high-society ballroom dancing. Ragtime gained entry into that arena only after it had been introduced by Vernon and Irene Castle, a 'respectable,' renowned white husband and wife dance-team.

Based on the historical evidence perused, the following two posits about attempts by the authorities to limit the function of the calypso genre and silence its voice have been embraced by this study: The calypso had been targeted by the authorities because

- it was a major cultural expression of the repressed masses, and
- it had been the loudest voice and the solitary public forum for redress in response to atrocities perpetrated by the authorities and disparity extant within society.

The calypso genre had been a cohesive force among the grass roots population, it eventually achieved similar status among opposing contingents during the unification of Trinidadian society, and it has maintained that status during nationhood. Further support of claims made in this chapter pertaining to the potential of calypsos of the era will be woven into later

discussion about the function of the calypso in Trinidadian society in chapter 4. I have cited a few calypsos whose titles alone make clear their intent in regard to unification, solidarity, identity, the awakening of social consciousness, and change. The Mighty Sparrow's *We All Is One, Wear Yuh [5]Balisier on Election Day* and *Federation,* The Mighty Shadow's *Unite African,* and Lord Melody's *What the Queen Face Doing on My Money,* Sniper's *Portrait of Trinidad*, and Black Stalin's *Caribbean Man*, were of that milieu.

The study so far has identified the Jamette sector of society, predominantly Negroes, as being the creators and curators of the calypso, an indigenous music form of Trinidad. In the next chapter the study will attempt to pinpoint the ancestral origin or origins of the genre.

[5]The Balisier is the common name by which the African hybrid *Heliconia balisier* of the Heliconiaceae family is known. It is of rhizome propagation, grows up to 5 to 12 inches tall, flowers after twelve months and blooms all year long. It was adopted as the floral emblem of the Peoples National Movement, the political party led by the first elected Prime Minister of the Trinidad, Dr. Eric Williams.