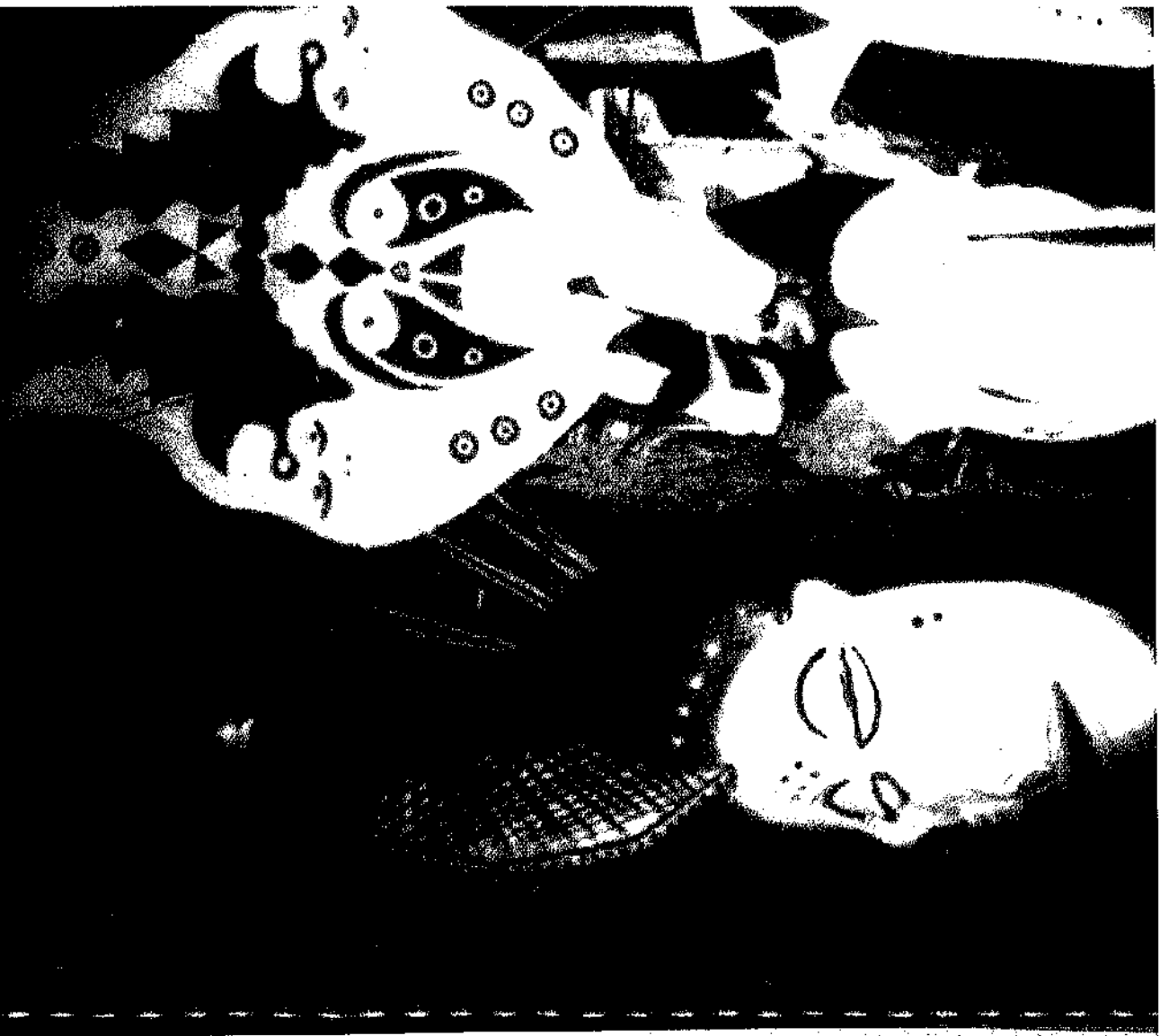


*Globalisation, Diaspora
Caribbean Popular Culture*



**GLOBALISATION,
DIASPORA AND CARIBBEAN
POPULAR CULTURE**

Edited by Christine G. T. Ho and Keith Nurse



Ian Randle Publishers
Kingston • Miami

2005

9 CHUTNEY SOCA MUSIC IN TRINIDAD: INDIAN ETHNO- NATIONALIST EXPRESSION IN TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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In 1995 in Trinidad and Tobago, an 'East Indian' political party won the national election for the first time.¹ More than a simple transfer of power, this historic event was laden with anxiety emblematic of broader concerns in the 'new world order'. First, the victory of the United National Congress ended 30 years of Afro-Trinidadian hegemony and foregrounded racial divisiveness in Trinidadian politics and everyday life. Second, the sudden visibility of Indians challenged the common perception of Caribbean culture as the domain of the African diaspora, raising larger questions about representation in relation to culture, power and place. The rise of Indian nationalism was intimately connected with a cultural flourishing that some describe as an 'Indian renaissance', marked explicitly by the emergence of chutney soca music as a mass form. In this essay, I critique representations of race and nation in Trinidad by exploring the cultural politics of chutney soca music. My analysis draws on extensive audience research among differently positioned subjects in articulation with state and transnational spheres of power.²

Scholars of international relations, political science and related disciplines have pointed to the heightened salience of race in the post-Cold War era, often expressed in ethno-nationalist or diasporic terms, linked to the decline of the nation-state. For many of these theorists, the war in Eastern Europe became evidence of a new paradigm for global conflict, shifting from an ideological struggle between Western-style democracy and the communist bloc to racial and religious unrest. 'Ethnic conflict' was thought to reveal the unleashing of ancient alliances and hatreds based on racial primordiality.

In contrast to the essentialism of this view, much contemporary critical theory emphasises the discontinuous and constructed character of 'race',

and the importance of analysing 'racisms' in specific social and historical contexts. In contemporary globalisation, some theorists argue that representations of ethnic conflict obscure the way global capitalism produces social insecurity and new struggles over land and resources. The end of the Cold War disrupted state-centred analysis in security studies and international relations, but the supposed rise in ethnic conflict legitimises new forms of global governance, including US police actions and UN 'peacekeeping' operations.

This chapter contributes to an understanding of ethno-nationalism in the context of globalisation by exploring the popularity of chutney soca music in the racially bifurcated state of Trinidad and Tobago. While chutney soca has come to represent Indo-Trinidadian cultural nationalism and diasporic community, my project centres on the multiple meanings of *chutney soca* for participants. Employing a situated, ethnographic approach to this popular cultural form, I demonstrate that audiences differentiated by gender, class, caste, religion and age have very different relationships to this musical form, and chutney soca events often produce an understanding of 'Indianness' far different than that imagined by Indian nationalists and Hindu religious leaders. More specifically, I link the popularity of chutney soca to globalisation — political economic change, migration, privatisation and media expansion — and provide insight into the production of new social formations in transnational space.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF AFRO- TRINIDADIAN HEGEMONY

In brief, the history of Trinidadian society was the movement from British colonialism to Afro-Trinidadian hegemony to the fragmenting of 'national culture' and the political rise of Indo-Trinidadians in the context of globalisation. While Haitian scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1992) has described the Caribbean as 'nothing but contact', Trinidadian journalist Burton Sankeralli argues: 'We have never really had a society, only a battlefield'.³ Even Trinidad's early history speaks to the Caribbean as a contested, transnational space.

Columbus claimed Trinidad for the Spanish Crown in 1498, but French colonists had a greater impact on the cultural character of the nation. Afro-French Creole culture was firmly established when the British

captured Trinidad in 1797 (Brereton 1981). Hill states that 'Trinidad was never completely dominated by slavery' and contrasts French assimilationist policy with the British who 'racialised' slavery (1993, 19). These factors were critical to the formation of a Creole middle class (which later led the struggle against colonialism and established itself as the dominant group in Trinidad).

After emancipation in the 1830s, plantation owners began replacing slave labour with indentured labourers from India, initiating the dual ethnic and cultural character of Trinidadian society. Between 1838 and 1917, approximately 239,000 East Indians immigrated to Trinidad, along with 2,600 Chinese. Look Lai (1993) argues that the key factors leading to Asian indenture included the breakdown of traditional mercantilist protection for sugar interests in the British West Indies (marked by the Sugar Duties Act in 1846), the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, and emancipation in 1833. Forty of 206 sugar estates had failed by 1850, as emancipated slaves left the plantations to become peasant labourers or to migrate to urban centres.

While the polarisation of Afro- and Indo-Trinidad dominates socio-historical debate, Singh (1988) notes that Indians began arriving in a society that was already 'tense and conflictive'. The social structure of Trinidadian society included a recently emancipated African population; the white plantocracy; a small black and coloured middle class, 'aggressively staking its claim to participation in the political decision-making processes in the colony' (Singh 1988, 1); and the Spanish-French Catholic elite, threatened by the rise of British imperial power. More important, there was a general fear of racial unrest, especially in the wake of the Haitian revolution. In the broader context of European empire, 'racial difference' became the instrument for structuring social inequality, so much so that much of the literature on the modern Caribbean emphasises how little the race-colour-class structure of society has changed.⁴

Much Trinidadian written history emphasises how Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians belonged to cultures with little common ground and, consequently, had different relationships to Trinidadian society as a whole. Although impoverished, East Indians managed to eke out a better life than they had left, while enduring harsh labour and social conditions. For its part, not only did the African population resent 'the insertion of the Indians into what they considered to be their economic and social

space', but the addition of East Indian labourers depressed agricultural wages in the new cash economy (Ryan 1996, xiii). Ryan also argues that African life-ways were decimated by slavery, while Indian communities retained strong familial, cultural and religious traditions. Thus, developing in the margins of the dominant political and cultural sphere facilitated Indian success in economic enterprises (Ryan 1996). This socio-historical legacy has resulted in contemporary representations of Indians as thrifty, hard-working and strongly tied to family and community, whereas Africans are represented as lazy (avoiding work), extravagant (spending their money on drinking and 'feting') and imbued with a 'Carnival' mentality. While these stereotypes elide specificity in terms of class, caste, gender, religion or individual difference, they remain important representations in the contemporary cultural debate.

Trinidadian cultural historiography has traced the separate cultural development of these two ethnic groups⁵ but has focused attention on the dominant national art forms of calypso and Carnival, which are African in origin. In the early twentieth century, the musical tradition of calypso developed and became an important force against British colonialism, as well as a chronicle of daily life for blacks who had moved to urban areas to escape plantation life. Likened to a musical newspaper, calypso songs of social and political commentary served as an alternative source of information for a subjugated population, many songs using humour to lampoon the British elite. After World War II, the impetus for national liberation accelerated in the British Caribbean and many African nations. Along with anti-colonial sentiment, greater race consciousness in calypsos was inseparable from the production of a new national identity.

... Blackness or Africinity in the post-war period became rooted in the notions of human rights and dignity and in the idea of citizenship.

Whenever this sense of dignity and personhood was threatened — as it was by the very nature of European imperialism — one found the twin themes of Blackness and Citizenship arising, often hand in hand with romantic notions of Africa. (Rohlehr 1990, 488)

A number of calypsos in this period reflect antagonistic African and Indian⁶ relations and the 'discomfort, dread and attraction which each presence generates' (Rohlehr 1990, 502).

Decolonisation was led by the Oxford-trained Afro-Trinidadian scholar Dr Eric Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM). After independence in 1962, people of African descent continued their cultural and political dominance. Williams, however, recognised the need for a new historical narrative of the nation's people, so he wrote *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1962). In defining a modern national identity, Williams stated: 'There can be no Mother India ... There can be no Mother Africa ... A nation, like an individual, can have only one Mother. The only Mother we recognise is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children' (1962, 279). While this statement attempted to define an inclusive 'Trinidadian' identity, for Williams and the PNM, evoking cultural nationalism in the name of a common European oppressor effaced gender, racial and class difference within Trinidadian society. In sum, the nation was defined by Afro-Creole cultural and political hegemony, while East Indians were pushed to the periphery, and the French Creole population remained economically dominant.

Independence produced a period of hopeful nationalism, but the nation experienced little political or economic sovereignty (Ryan 1988; Rampersad 1997). By the early 1970s, Williams and the PNM were challenged by the Black Power movement in Trinidad, which demonstrated against systemic racial and economic oppression, despite black leadership. African diasporic consciousness contributed to the dominant construction of the Caribbean as black. 'There are many reasons why Indo-Caribbean culture is not widely accepted either as a valid concept or as a legitimate subject of study. This is mainly because the Caribbean is viewed as African' (Birbalsingh 1997, ix). Ryan also notes that Afro-Caribbean scholars regard the region as the preserve of the African diaspora, 'forgetting that there is also an Asian and European diaspora in the region' (Ryan 1996, xxvi). Paradoxically, the Black Power movement produced greater racial and cultural awareness among Indo-Trinidadians. The first conference on 'East Indians in the Caribbean' was held in 1975, and scholarly texts published since the 1970s reveal this transformation in consciousness.⁷ Validating Indian culture also produced greater interest in traditional Indian music and dance (especially among the middle and upper classes), and in the 1980s, chutney emerged as a working-class/folk music which could compete with calypso as a national expression.

In addition to heightened race consciousness, Trinidad's recent economic history has profoundly affected national politics. Significant wealth from Trinidad's oil boom of 1974–1982 fuelled 'first world' consumption patterns and a large public sector. After the oil 'bust', unemployment climbed to 22 per cent, and while there were multiple currency devaluations and cuts in the public sector (Crichton and de Silva 1989; La Guerre 1994; World Bank 1995; Dookeran 1996), poverty jumped from a low three per cent during the oil boom to 36 per cent by 1996.⁸ The political fallout was marked most significantly by the dumping of the PNM in 1986, a coup attempt in 1990 by a Black Muslim group, and the victory of the Indian-based United National Congress in 1995. Support for the PNM and UNC exists largely through patronage within a racially divided society; both parties promote nearly identical policies, because neoliberalism has become naturalised (Premdas 1993; Yelvington 1993).

I argue that in the post-colonial period Afro-Trinidadian hegemony was facilitated by the state's centralised control of the mass media (established under colonialism). Following the PNM's loss in 1986, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) granted 12 to 15 new radio broadcasting licenses to create employment and attract international investment. A research report published by the University of the West Indies, *Ethnicity and the Media in Trinidad and Tobago*, states:

The victory of the NAR at the polls in 1986 and that party's subsequent democratisation of the electronic media was seen as a veritable turning point in the media coverage of Indian culture. More importantly, these developments laid the basis for the subsequent formation of a radio (103 FM) and a television station (AVM) with an orientation to Indian culture and events. Their formation was related to the historical neglect of Indian culture in the traditional media, and the economic possibilities, which the "Indian market" offered, given its size (1995, 22).

In 1993, Radio 103 began broadcasting an all-Indian format, which revolutionised Trinidad's airwaves, the construction of national culture and the political arena.

INDO-TRINIDADIAN CULTURE IN THE NATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE

The construction of national culture in Trinidad previously included only Afro-Trinidadian forms like calypso, but with the political rise of Indo-Trinidadians this has been contested, largely through the promotion of 'chutney'. Examination of the emergence of chutney soca as a mass phenomenon reveals a contested history and divergent contemporary definitions. Most critics agree that chutney evolved in Indo-Trinidadian villages from *Bhojpuri* folk songs and Hindu wedding music (Patakar 1998; Ramnarine 1997; Reddock 1995; Ribeiro 1992). And, while some draw a tight definition around contemporary chutney soca, others argue that now, 'anything that sounds fast and Indian is chutney'.⁹ Below, I provide historical background on traditional chutney and chutney soca, before exploring the multiple meanings of this music for participants, and the conflicting political and commercial agendas of national elites.

Chutney is a secular music indigenous to Trinidad, based on women's music and dance during the *Maticor* (or *matkor*) on the Friday night of Hindu weddings. An older Indian woman, who lives in south Trinidad and has participated in numerous weddings, described how women gather, sing and dance at the *Maticor*. Women sing *bhajans* or religious songs from the *Rameyan* and play the *dholak* (a two-headed drum), the *lozah* (brass jar hit with two spoons) and the *dhantal* (an iron rod used as a percussion instrument), while clapping their hands. Most important, the *Maticor* entails sexual innuendo and ribaldry intended to initiate the bride into the mysteries of conjugal life, often with props such as eggplants. She emphasised how it is one of the few occasions to sing for 'we-self' and 'If I go to a wedding and me ain't sing I ain't satisfied'.¹⁰

In an interview about the origins of chutney, Professor Kushi Haraksingh's primary concerns were gender and caste.¹¹ He argued that chutney dancing came from the *Maticor*, but chutney singing drew on the Saturday cooking night and was always done by men. Male tent singers did songs that were less standardised than the religious songs of the *Maticor*, and included jokes and loud, long vocal lines (because there was no amplification). Chutney also used the harmonium for harmonic accompaniment, and the music was fast and percussive, hence the name chutney, from spicy, hot food.

Haraksingh bristled when questioned about the 'emergence' of chutney, because 'it was happening all along on a folk level'. But he agreed that as late as 1988, Trinidadian national culture did not include East Indians. Moreover, the upper caste has only recently embraced chutney. While traditional caste was not re-established in Trinidad, ranking coalesced into two broad castes of high and low, related to occupational activity. Haraksingh argued that *Bhojpuri* folk forms had strong sexual content and a tradition of ecstasy in dance, which acted as a form of resistance against the upper caste — who made efforts to 'sanskritise' the lower caste, primarily by policing women's dancing and behaviour.

Cultural nationalism typically exploits folk forms to articulate a people's uniqueness, but the fact that chutney is largely a working-class phenomenon has met with disapproval by conservative Hindus and elites who prefer that young people learn classical Indian music and dance. As chutney entered the public sphere, it has become dominated by male musicians and female dancers. Professional female dancers negotiate being acceptably sexy and unacceptably sexual in their movements. At chutney shows, women and men usually dance in same-sex groups, and chutney is most popular with Indians over age 30. 'Chutney soca', in contrast to traditional chutney, is popular with a younger audience for reasons I will discuss later.

For some older women I interviewed, chutney dancing was an extremely important and pleasurable vehicle for expression. One working-class woman, who was a professional chutney dancer at one time, deliberately distanced its politicisation and policing by conservative religious groups. When I asked her about the Hindu religious leader Sat Maharaj, she said, 'I outra he bracket altogether, I not too much of the Hindi thing'. She attends chutney dances every Sunday at a local venue: 'Even though I sick, if I hear music, I be up'. While she's a devoted chutney fan, she pays little attention to the songs themselves. 'I doesn't understand Hindi words, I understand the drum beat. Recalling a lower-class attitude towards work (an attitude stereotypically associated with the African population and its 'carnival mentality'), she spoke of her love for Trinidad: 'you can lime and not go to work on Monday ... you can't do that anywhere else. I will go perform in any country, but I'm not leaving Trinidad'. Interestingly, she told me that her passion for dancing led to the breakup of her marriage:

Me and the father of the children broke up over dancing. He couldn't handle it; when a friend would say "I saw your wife dancing" he couldn't take it, was jealous. He used to lash me, we broke up over it, three years.

That must have been very difficult ...

I lived through it. After I split with my husband my career took off — before he expected me to come home early. After fourteen years of marriage, I just walked out on him for the freedom to dance and would do it again.

Similarly, successful Indo-Trinidadian singer Ramrajie Prabhu stated that 'chutney is modern and it is a liberation for women ... We no longer hide behind doors to dance as we want'.¹²

Indra Ribeiro's bachelor's thesis (1992) is impressive, if overly romantic, focuses on chutney as the vehicle for women's liberation — and much of it focuses on controversy among Indian religious and cultural leaders over chutney's movement into the public sphere. Ribeiro argues that 'traditionalists/purists' abhor suggestive dancing to sacred Hindu songs in a bacchanalian atmosphere charged with alcohol consumption; and an executive member of the National Council of Indian Culture described chutney as a corruption of the folk tradition 'stuck in the quagmire of the soca beat'. Interestingly, abhorrent behaviour and corruption are linked to African culture through the references to soca¹³ and bacchanal. Similarly, Narsaloo Ramaya (Hindu leader and Indian music expert), 'grieved over the fact that the loving cultural legacy bequeathed to East Indians by their forefathers was in danger of being squandered in debauchery and obscenity'.

In audience interviews, the vast majority of respondents said they found nothing wrong with women's dancing at chutney shows. However, female chutney dancers have occasionally been overtly harassed. In a newspaper article entitled 'They Called Me Slut', teenage chutney dancer Michelle Samaroo criticised those who embarrassed her during a performance at the World Hindu Conference in south Trinidad.

"They told me dance chutney, and chutney means chutney, nothing else!" Samaroo was chased off the Naparima Bowl stage by a small clique seated in the audience. They disapproved of her vigorous winning on stage ... But she was even more hurt when a well-known San Fernando hairdresser later attacked her backstage.

The woman was so angry that she grabbed my hands, then attempted to hit me. She went on to call me a prostitute, telling me that there is no place in Indian culture for me." Samaroo ... made an attempt to return to the stage and apologise. But her supporters prevented her, since they said she had done nothing wrong.

"Dancing is my life and will be my career. Even now I'm being paid to dance, I earn my living by dancing." Her phone has not stopped ringing since. "I've since got several engagements to dance chutney."¹⁴

The newspaper article was remarkable for its distillation of contemporary issues: Indian cultural nationalists proudly display chutney on stage; a professional young dancer foregrounds chutney's sensuality and working class-ness, infuriating and embarrassing the middle class; friends support her dancing against its sanitised repackaging; and finally, the commodification of her sensual performance translates into increased engagements (which some feminists would argue increases women's oppression through objectification under the male gaze; others would argue that increased employment leads to greater economic and social independence).

In an important article on Indo-Caribbean women and cultural nationalism in Trinidad, Shalini Puri (1995, 11) argues: '... crucial to my analysis is the claim that the bourgeois-nationalist PNM and the bourgeois-nationalist UNC share an interest in maintaining this racial demarcation and opposition' (through cultural forms). Tejaswini Niranjana (1999) also argues that the modern Indian woman in Trinidad is discursively figured against that which is 'African'.¹⁵ While I agree in part, the above incident highlights the impossibility of controlling cultural expressions like chutney soca music and dance when they conflict with multiple interests and wider commercial possibilities.

Besides those interested in promoting chutney for political reasons, others promote Indian cultural expression for cultural and commercial purposes (while distancing religion and politics). The Mohammed family is unparalleled in its promotion of Indian culture in Trinidad (Kamaluddin Mohammed was a former PNM Minister of Health):

To speak of Indian culture, its propagation, growth and development in Trinidad and Tobago — any chronicle or record of such cannot be considered complete without the names of Kamaluddin, Sham and Moean Mohammed who are aptly described as torch bearers of Indian culture in Trinidad and Tobago.¹⁶

Their contributions deserve greater attention than I can provide here, but their central achievements centre on the use of national media. Kamal started the first Indian radio programme in 1947, and Moean conducted the first televised Indian cultural programme, titled *Indian Variety*, and promoted cultural shows in Guyana, Jamaica, Surinam and other Caribbean islands with East Indian popularisations. However, the single most important programme in Trinidad has been *Masrama Bahar*, nationally televised since 1970, along with the annual Indian Cultural Pageant.

Famous chutney artist Sunda Popo sang 'Nani and Nana', on *Masrama Bahar* in what some describe as the first chutney hit.

Of the earlier days, one straight away calls to mind Sunda Popo's composition entitled "Nani and Nana." The song created quite a stir among TV viewers, radio audiences and juke box entertainers. Its lively tempo and catchy rhythm brought much entertainment to the average Trinidadian, both Indian and non-Indian. In fact, though lacking much substance in meaning, it was sung, hummed and whistled by people almost representative of every age and group in the community. (Mohammed 1976, 12)

By 1989, 'chutney' was added as a competition category in the annual Indian Cultural Pageant.

The use of national media to promote Indian culture continues with the dramatic changes in radio broadcasting for Indian music and cultural programmes. Radio 103, the first all-Indian station, was launched in 1993, and prominently features Shamoan Mohammed, whose programme *Chutney Train* airs six days a week. In an interview, Shamoan noted that before 1993 chutney artists had hardly been heard, but 103 brought the music to a national audience, including Afro-Trinidadians 'from Morvant' who would call and request songs like 'Guyana Baboo' by Terry Gajraj. As late as 1992, there had not been a single chutney CD produced, but now there is a substantial local and international market. Shamoan argues that 103 brought the Indian community together more than anything else, and feels that 103 'definitely' aided the UNC victory in 1995. Simply put, '103 caused a revolution.'

Regular national programming created a sense of inclusion in an ethno-national project using Indian content, because radio transforms space and location. Shamoan said there was little difference between urban and rural audiences for his show because of the 'substantial levelling out' engendered by national broadcasting. Moreover, radio is highly 'populist'

in Trinidad, with almost every radio station adopting programming with a high degree of listener participation. Shamoan mentioned how important 'requests' are to Indian formatting, so that when he initiated call-in segments there was an instant response:

Everyone wanted to get on the air, and "everyone must know that I called". There's a sense of achievement. People want to participate in things that are good, and also have their friends say, "I heard you on 103, it sounded good, man!" They even write requests and hand them to me in the bank, at the market — I end up with lipstick on my cheek now!¹⁷

Shamoan argues that, more than any other song, 'Lotayla' brought chutney into the mainstream. Sonny Mann's huge hit not only promoted chutney music, it became associated with the rise of Indian political power. 'Lotayla' was the unofficial anthem on the UNC campaign trail (and was also played at rival PNM events). The Hindi lyrics focus on the quotidian (the often testy relationship in Indian families between the sister-in-law, or *bhongi*, and her husband's brothers). However, the song's infectious melody and beat were semiotically political — the sound of Indian Trinidad's cultural, economic and political power. In addition, in 1995, 'Lotayla' topped the playlist at New York's WLIB, a first for an Indo-Caribbean song, eclipsing dancehall artist Shaggy, who had the biggest-selling crossover reggae hit in US history. Sonny Mann won the first Chutney Soca Monarch competition in 1996, his tape 'The Mann Himself' reportedly sold 80,000 copies worldwide, and the song was extremely popular during the 1996 Carnival.

The Carnival stage has become symbolic of national public visibility (first, for Afro-Trinidadians in relation to the colonial regime; second, for women in Trinidad), although Gordon Rohlehr has discussed the contradictions of visibility for Indo-Trinidadians.¹⁸ Even if Indian calypsonians like Rikki Jai or Drupatee Ramgoonai were mixing Indian elements and soca, culturally it involved Indians entering Creole terrain. In contrast, chutney not only challenges national cultural space, it involves ethnic mixing (dougularisation¹⁹), and generates responses such as 'No Tailor', a humorous song that parodied 'Lotayla'. In sum, the increase in 'Indian' radio stations from zero to four, the national promotion of Indian cultural competitions and events, and UNC victory were read by many Afro-Trinidadians as an assault on Creole hegemony.

An African backlash was most evident when Sonny Mann was pelted at the Soca Monarch finals in 1996:

I was there at Skinner Park when a triumphant Sonny Mann walked away from the Chutney Soca Monarch finals with the Monarch title and the Korean motor car. I was there too when, at the Soca Monarch finals (a different kind of competition, in and of Creole Trinidad), the crowd threw cans and fast food boxes (but, thankfully, no bottles) at Sonny Mann and refused to let him perform. I was there to hear Sonny Mann, nonplussed, say quietly, "Thank you, thank you," before moving off the stage.

I think the stoning of Sonny Mann had as much to do with objections to the lawsuit, which — perhaps unwisely — he tried to slap on the Monarch organisers, as with some notion that he didn't really belong. He didn't fit the soca mould: too old, too Indian, too chutney. (Poppowell 1996)

Similar to the contestations over chutney dancing discussed previously, examining the promotion of chutney *within* the Indian community for political, cultural or commercial reasons also reveals conflicting interests. I attended several events sponsored by the National Chutney Foundation of Trinidad and Tobago, and two held at D Triangle, which were poorly attended. The opening of the official Chutney Tent in 1996 at D Triangle drew 100 people, but organisers expected 1,000. Ironically, the very next night at D Triangle, a 'Soca vs. Chutney' show drew a huge crowd. The contrast between these events suggests disinterest in, or resistance to, the political and commercial packaging of chutney soca, compared with the attraction of these shows for audience-centred reasons of partying, socialising, drinking and dancing. The Chutney Soca Tent was moderately successful during Carnival 1997, but was dropped the following year.

The annual Chutney Soca Monarch competition has enjoyed greater success, but intense controversy emerged over defining chutney soca in relation to judging criteria. The first year of the contest, in 1996, Sonny Mann was such a clear-cut favourite that definition was not an issue. But in 1997, the judging results were considered very conservative, and many popular artists — including Rikki Jai, Sharlene Fookram, Nirmal "Massive" Gosine and crossover sensation Chris Garcia — didn't even place in the top ten. A group of contestants filed a lawsuit against the promoters, which was later dropped, but the controversy has not faded

as easily. When I interviewed Rikki Jai, he was particularly disturbed. An experienced performer in his early 30s, Jai had placed second to Sonny Mann in 1996, had just quit his day job as a customs officer to do music full time, and had high hopes for 1997 and his ragga-flavoured chutney soca.

... We were subjected to a type of judging we were not informed by. They reverted to judging like it was chutney, but we all thought we were in a "chutney soca" competition.

Do they define chutney soca?

No, they haven't gone down that road.

What's the difference between chutney and chutney soca?

Chutney is what they do at weddings, you have Hindi songs sung to fast beats, traditional chutney uses non-electric instruments ... just like calypso, there's a traditional way and a new way.

Do the competitions restrict creativity?

I don't think they should say the melody has to be a certain way; they shouldn't be puttin' a handle on what I sing. The flavour of calypso will come into my music, otherwise you'd just have traditional chutney.²⁰

The following year Rikki Jai won first place with more-traditional songs, one sung in Hindi.

The issues of musical style and cultural identity also vary depending on the market that artists intend to reach, whether local, diasporic or international. Young Indo-Trinidadian singer Sharlene Fookram signed with Sony after having success in Europe with a reggae remake of a 1980s song entitled 'Joe le Taxi', which includes Jamaican dancehall-style 'chants' by Patrick 'Vybe' Gordon. Sharlene launched her first record at the age of eight, and although her career began in chutney soca, her music incorporates dub and soca, emphasising contemporary production values. Lately she has deliberately distanced herself from the 'chutney' category and identity. Similarly, when I asked Rikki Jai how he describes himself for the music business, he said, 'I was a calypsonian when I started; now I consider myself ... an entertainer'.

While Shamoone Mohammed has been at the forefront of promoting Indian music and culture, his greatest concern has been with promoting *Indo-Trinidadian* expression. 'If we are sending a group to London, how

can we send them to sing Indian songs? We must do something Trinidadian, even mix some pan ... we need the Caribbean and local flavour'. Similarly, Veerehdra Persad, of JMC Triveni, discussed the importance of representing Trinidad as a cosmopolitan country with a unique cultural identity — and its connection to the market.

Your band is described as "crossover?"

We are the only band that crosses the East Indian music with calypso, soca. We're recognised throughout North America, we have a lot of engagements annually, carnivals ... We're always working, because if we don't have English jobs [soca], we do Indian music, and if we don't have Indian music, we do calypso or, like, chutney soca — we incorporate both.

Is it mainly a matter of work, or ...?

I believe that living in a cosmopolitan country like Trinidad and Tobago it's imperative that you do all types of music for different crowds, different races. Soca originated here, chutney originated here, so it's the origin of both types of music, and being a Trinidadian band, it's important. It's more or less a representation, as ambassadors travelling, you must play your music, you must have an identity.²¹

This statement contradicts the 'homogenisation' thesis of globalisation and speaks to the importance of national difference. As Bill Maurer (1997) writes of another Caribbean context:

The production of national difference is not in conflict with globalising tendencies. Rather, the processes of globalisation, including the creation of large-scale legal arenas, capital flows, and migrations, work to foster, rather than mute, ideas about national uniqueness and national difference (p. 257).

While the global marketplace fosters the production of a distinctive national identity, my research illustrates the impossibility of producing a singular national identity within the nation-state, as media influence and the everyday experience of socially stratified subjects foster affinity with transnational and ethno-nationalist cultural forms. Below, I further illustrate the fragmented meanings of Indian ethno-national expression by describing a chutney soca performance by Dil-E-Nadaan, one of the most popular bands.

INDIAN ARRIVAL

'Leadership!'

The young man behind the keyboards shouts out the unmistakable Beenie Man line, producing a roar of delight from the packed crowd. The band strikes the opening bars of 'Sycamore Tree', a hit by Jamaican dancehall diva Lady Saw, and the whole dance floor starts to groove. The place is packed with about 1,000 sweaty people. It's a young crowd: the majority are under 30 and quite a few are in their early and mid-teens. The guys are dressed in their brands, with Reebok, Nike and Polo Club shirts carefully untucked over baggy pants. Most have the latest urban short hairstyle, like 'fades', while a few sport long hair held back in a ponytail. The girls are equally 'top of the line', many with short hairstyles, wearing short tops and baggy jeans belted at the waist. The audience is 95 per cent East Indian, and the event is in celebration of Indian Arrival Day. It is late May 1997.

A few older people, sitting in white plastic chairs near the stage, seemed comfortable enough, although they were surrounded by 'brand-clad' youth, crowding in the hundreds behind them. My friend Indra said, 'no one here is in Indian clothes; they are definitely not here for the chutney'. We were halfway through the first session, but at the beginning the band did play more 'Indian' music. When they first came on, a strobe light flickered on the band and a few strands of fog enveloped the stage from a fog machine, as the crowd shouted excitedly at the opening rhythm of 'Bolo Ta Ra Ra', the bhangra song. With the fast pace, they segued into a chutney as the keyboardist yelled, 'Triangle posse, I want to hear you!!' An older couple got up and moved to the side of the chairs to dance chutney. The man was wearing an old yellow baseball hat and the woman a tight red evening dress. After a reggae song, the band did a couple of Indian film songs, over which the keyboardist added some dancehall ad libs — 'sounding wicked and wild!' Chutney Soca Monarch Heeralal Rampartap performed next, with a young chutney dancer, dressed in a green halter-top and skirt with sparkling coloured stripes, her waist-length black hair flipping to the movement of her hips. Then the MC announced one 'for all the young people' as the band went into the first dancehall tune.

Sitting next to us on the balcony, an East Indian guy and his girlfriend looked as if they belonged at a heavy-metal show.²² The guy was in his

late 20s, with long, stringy hair and a scraggly beard. His girlfriend looked striking, with long black hair flowing down her back, her thin frame accented by skin-tight black pants, black top, black spike-heeled boots, and silver bracelets that jangled on her wrists. Just then a young boy came around selling Sonny Mann's tapes from Carnival 97 — it wasn't his best year — and I bought a cassette for TT\$10 (about US\$1.50). Teenage girls were clustered together, here and there, excited and gossiping about the crowd, the boys, the band — all those ordinary, extraordinary experiences of adolescence.

Raymond Ramnarine (keyboardist, lead singer and 23-year-old heartthrob of the Soca Paradise New Image Dil-E-Nadaan Orchestra) segued from 'Sycamore Tree' into Beenie Man's 'Silent Violence'. He not only performed the song in flawless Jamaican dialect, he totally captured the spirit of the music, and his enthusiasm connected with the young audience. On the dance floor, a few couples swayed back and forth in a loose embrace, but most moved in their own way or sang along with the popular tune. The rocker next to me, who had been drinking heavily all night, seemed particularly inspired. He rolled up his white t-shirt, exposing a huge, hairy beer gut. Revelling in the pleasure of his grotesque body, he wined seductively towards his seated girlfriend. Halfway through the song, Dil-E-Nadaan broke into the second bhangra hit in Trinidad, 'Na na na re'. The men in the audience, most having consumed too much rum and beer by now, started churning or bhangra dancing together and falling over each other in a state of joyful inebriation.

It was the end of the first session. DJ Lalo jumped on the mic: 'Anybody from Barbados?! He had turned this phrase commonly used by soca singers, into a racial joke (since the audience was mostly neighbourhood Indian youth). Actually, 'DJ Lalo' comprises several DJs. Suddenly, a familiar truck horn blasted out the signature intro to Machel Montano's Road March winner, 'Big Truck', producing the loudest roar of excitement heard that night. After 'Big Truck' they played more soca hits, including Ajala's 'Bring the Rhythm Down', 'Dr Cassandra' and Krosfyah's 'Wer Me'. The audience was loving it, winning more and 'getting on bad'. I made my way downstairs and struggled through the thick crowd.

D Triangle Sports and Cultural Club is located in Aranguez, a large Indian area in the densely populated, predominantly African East-West Corridor, about ten minutes by highway from Port of Spain. It is one of two large venues in this area that have shows every Sunday night, the

other being the Himalaya Club. Both draw a mostly local crowd, but people come from all over Trinidad for a popular show. An African and an Indian guy were spinning at the DJ booth, a long box of CDs on one table and crates of records below. They played Heeralal Rampartap's winning chutney soca 'Basmatie', followed by a chutney soca by Cecil Fonrose. One of the DJs went over to the board and turned up the bass even more. The DJ switched momentarily to dancehall with 'Delilah', followed by a new version of 'Bolo Ta Ra Ra'. But then it was back to dancehall, which had generated the best audience response. They played 'Rubbers' off the popular *Joyride* compilation, and the African DJ performed some ad libs on the mike while they segued into the huge hit 'Living Dangerously', by Bounty Killer and Barrington Levy. The popular new song 'Dub Plate' followed a track from Buju Banton's *Til Shiloh*. When 'Dub Plate' hit the chorus, the DJ mured the sound system, and all of a sudden you heard hundreds of voices singing, 'never live to see tomorrow, gun shot ah tek you belly!'

In many ways, dub songs are more relevant to the lives of Trinidadian youth than the chutney. Chutney either is in a language they do not understand (since almost no one under 30 speaks Hindi) or narrates the foundational experiences of another generation, like the journey from country to city. For instance, the lyrics to 'Basmatie', written by Heeralal Rampartap's wife, recount the story of Basmatie and her trip from Debe to the Samar Entertainment Centre.²⁵

*Well this girl name Basmatie, she come from Debe
She come in this chutney show to dance and breakaway.*

*Basmatie dance girl and dance to the ground
Hold on to your gangarie and spin it all around ...*

*When the tassa start to play Basmatie breakaway
She say give me ah chance boy and let me dance away
Basmatie on the stage ready to get on
She hold meh round meh waist and spinning all around ...*

In contrast to such innocently sweet chutney songs, dancehall speaks across racial lines to the Trinidadian youth experience and the contemporary urban reality of increased unemployment, crime, violence and AIDS.

On the stage, I noticed Dil-E-Nadaan's equipment — multiple keyboards including Korg, Ensoniq, Kawai, Alesis (all the most popular

equipment worldwide), an electronic percussion rack with sampler, plus electric guitar and bass. I could not help thinking about music technology like MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) and the synthesiser, which have recently created a universal language for popular music. Later, Raymond explained to me that they do their own sampling for drum sounds, but most Indian bands use a 'tassa card' (no digitally reproduce tassa drumming).

After 'Dub Plate', the DJ played Machel's 'Music Farm', a track frequently used as a musical transition, since it is soca with a dub feel. Then they went into soca with 'Horn Song' and 'Property' by 'boom boom master', Iwer George; a chutney; then 'Made in India', 'Lovergirl' (known locally as the Indian disco), and Chris Garcia's huge 1996 hit, 'Chutney Bacchanal'. Throughout the DJ set, the crowd had been dancing and more couples had been wining (Creole style). I noticed an Indian girl and a black youth dancing together, the young man looking 'fly' in a white, black and red Chicago Bulls tank top, darkers (sunglasses), with his hair cut high. They sneaked a kiss in the privacy of a crowded dance floor. The 'Big Truck' horn blew and everyone screamed in delight again, rallying around that sonic sign.

Back on stage for the second session, the band struck up an energetic version of Bill Haley's 'Rock around the Clock' and a medley of classic rock-n-roll tunes like 'Wake up lil Suzy', which the audience really enjoyed. Suddenly, they inserted a sample from the hip hop classic, 'Pump up the Volume', before announcing Sonny Mann on stage. Sonny Mann might be popular with East Indians of all ages and many Afro-Trinidadians, but being in his 60s, he seemed old compared with this audience. (Raymond, in contrast, stands out in the chutney scene for being young, someone the youths can relate to as a peer — besides, who else can perform chutney and Beenie Man equally well?)

This time the audience did not respond to Sonny Mann. Instead of the guest artists being the focus of attention, the opposite had been the case all night — the youths were respectful but barely interested, becoming preoccupied with each other, talking and gossiping during the featured performers' numbers, and then engaging with the music again during the band and DJ. The band resumed with sampled fragments of Xtatik's 'Music Farm' before playing the song itself. After an exciting medley of four soca hits from this year's Carnival, they did 'Kirka na din', a hot chutney soca by Cecil Foutrose. The band followed it up with another chutney

and then segued into a reggae classic by Gregory Isaacs, 'Night Nurse'. Then two more guest artists performed chutney to little enthusiasm by the audience. The band closed with Bob Marley's 'Three Little Birds', ... every little thing gonna be alright ... as the MC said 'good night and drive home safely'.

This 'chutney' show at D Triangle for Indian Arrival Day invites questions about 'arrival'. The holiday commemorates the arrival of East Indian indentured labourers more than 150 years ago, but, given the profound disruptions of social location in the new world order — exactly who has arrived where? Dominant Indo-Trinidadian discourses construct this period as an Indian renaissance, but the popularity of 'chutney soca' shows among youth often have little to do with Indian music, as the D Triangle show illustrated. Below, I further analyse the meaning of chutney soca for young Indo-Trinidadians.

THE POPULARITY OF CHUTNEY SOCA FOR CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCES

Extensive audience research and observations of chutney soca performances reveal key reasons for the popularity of chutney soca with Indian youth: 1) variety in song selection, especially dub and soca; 2) the modern electric sound, preferred over traditional acoustic Indian music; 3) bands and DJs, preferred over individual chutney performers; 4) songs in English, as opposed to Hindi; 5) lyrics that address youth concerns about contemporary experiences, not those of an older generation; 6) the fusion with the soca beat, the pumped-up bass, and contemporary production values; 7) heterosexual dancing (in the dominant Creole form of wining) rather than the same-sex groups of traditional chutney. In addition, there is cultural mixing — much of which has to do with generation, class and the influence of global black youth culture — in terms of language, musical elements, song selection, clothing style and dancing.

Audience interviews confirmed the importance of these themes among youth in chutney shows, especially the popularity of the two biggest crossover bands, JMC Triveni and Dil-E-Nadaan. Although calypso and chutney may be considered opposites in terms of racial politics in Trinidad, they are similar in terms of generation. Compared with soca and chutney soca, calypso and chutney draw an older audience, and as traditional

forms they are sometimes considered less creative. For instance, a 21-year-old Indian man said 'chutney music is stagnant', and associated musical creativity and hybridity with the contemporary sound of his generation. A young working-class chutney soca fan summed up many of the main points regarding the music's appeal:

What do you like about chutney soca?

It real modernised now, it's a higher standard of music now with the bands in the last five years, before, long time, music for older people, now it for younger. The music is very good, you can understand the music now.

Do you understand Hindi?

No.

What do you mean by "modernised"?

The feeling of the music is better, I could dance to that music, the tempo, now you could sing to the music together. Triveni has a clean sound system, they play anything you want to hear. I like the variety of music — Indian, calypso [soca], dub, I like to dance. I still love calypso [soca], but it's [Carnival] just for a few months, Indian shows go all year. Plenty audience for it now, everybody getting into it. Once a song is easy to sing everybody will like it, like "Lotayla". Chutney is mainly Hindi, soca chutney mainly English and good for the young people to understand.

What's the most popular music with Indian youth?

Dub, all the younger generation like it, they like to get on bad. If you pass a car, it's dub.

Why?

The lyrics is easy to pick up and they relate to the songs.

Is Indian music more "yours" than soca?

Yes, it more popular and international, it makes me proud to see international Indian performances. But there's more mixing now, Indian singing soca, you see Creole boy beating tassa, Indian beating pan.

I noticed you wrote on the survey that you rarely vote; that was unusual among Indians ...

Most times I don't vote. They promise you this, they promise you that ...

The importance of variety, 'modernisation', and a younger crowd are issues I have explored at length. While I believe that globalisation produces greater awareness of international music standards, it also produces a heightened sense of the local. Expressing pride in Indian identity through youth-oriented, hybridised chutney soca has paralleled the political and cultural movement of Indians into the mainstream. In my audience survey, a 19-year-old man listed Triveni (chutney soca), Xtatik (soca) and Green Day (a popular pop-punk band from the US) as his favourite bands. The diversity of styles was interesting, and in the interview he connected his recent enthusiasm for chutney to the change in music and not feeling ashamed:

A couple years ago I used to feel ashamed to associate with Indian music, but now I see more and more young people, and people of other races, going to the shows and enjoying it.

Why did you feel ashamed before?

Well back in them times, with the traditional classical, which the older people ... to see a younger person involved with it — you just don't fit in ... But now, as soon as they start introducing brass and soca into the chutney music, more and more people getting involved. Soca chutney, where they singin' in English, I could understand the lyrics, but traditional chutney, I don't understand it.

Raymond Ramnarine of Dil-E-Nadaan has the same generational experiences as his peers — growing up on dancehall, soca and other international music, in addition to Indian forms — and his band has drawn many young people to chutney soca shows.

By me coming out there (I started singing at 15), it was a big influence on the younger folks, because they look at me on stage — "Look at that guy, he's a young guy and he's out there doing this and he's not ashamed of his culture, why should we be ashamed of it?" To be honest, the percentage of youths coming to shows now is a big, big difference, because long ago you had people coming out, but it was more the middle-aged and older folks, but now you get the younger folks coming out. Why? Because of the variety of the music and the influence that me and my brothers have had.²⁴

Ethnographic and audience research demonstrate that the elements that make chutney shows popular among youth are defined both by generation and by class, but crucially, these elements are contextualised in an Indian-defined space, with an Indian band and among an Indian audience. Chutney shows are attended by an Indian majority, so in many ways these occasions perform a racially divisive function more characteristic of the broader history of Indian-African relations. Shamoon Mohammed explained that chutney was a reaction to the dominance of African cultural forms and a way of saying 'We can have our own party'.

There is a distinction between *listening* to diverse music and *participation* at music events. Control over physical space implies control over bodies, which is linked with dating, family, property and the structuring of national society. It is also connected to the subject of interracial marriage, which is probably the biggest flash point for racial antagonism in Trinidad. The calypsonians most often accused of racism, like Cro Cro, Warchman and Sugar Aloes, frequently target this issue when attacking the UNC's promotion of 'national unity'. While some liberal or Christian Indians support marriage on the basis of love, most conservative Hindus publicly oppose race mixing.

The issues of music, space and identity raise other important questions. If the music at 'Indian' shows is at least half black music, why is it that Afro-Trinidadians with the same musical preferences do not attend? Why are these spaces so rigidly demarcated by race? While there are cross-cutting social influences, the country is still divided geographically, and by informal forms of segregation, elaborated in social values and a segmented labour force of agricultural and industrial workers. Clarke (1993) argues that residential proximity does not lead to intermarriage in Trinidad because of the 'general influence of group socialisation'. I interpret this as the imbrication of family, religion, education, business, party politics and national governance. While a public image of stable racial unity benefits neo-liberal political and economic policies in the international arena, a singular national identity conflicts with the imperatives of race-based political parties and their reinforcement of spatial and social separation.

Parents also exercise tremendous influence, although in the context of neo-liberalism, youth increasingly challenge their received identity, as illustrated by this 1997 excerpt from *Vox*, a popular youth magazine in Trinidad:

Q: "Why am I a Hindu?"

A: "Because my parents were Hindus."

In less than an inch of type, Naipaul prophetically incised the heart of the Indian dilemma in contemporary Trinidad. To be or not to be like our parents ... from childhood, my strongest memory of the Indian family structure was of a totalitarian regime which tolerated no dissent, and among other things, was a breeding ground for a generation of what amounted to highly accomplished, well-educated racists ...²⁵

The challenging of gender roles and race-based family structure reflects the influence of neo-liberal ideology, which promotes free choice among autonomous subjects. However, overt racial discrimination at prestigious nightclubs in the capital city erupted into a major national controversy in late 1996.²⁶ I argue that discrimination in the nightclubs sparked an intense public response because emphasising race in the context of entertainment highlights the failure of the liberal promise of the middle class as a value-free space where wealth alone determines membership and access.

DANCEHALL AND SOCA — THE PARTY THAT UNITES!

While globalisation fuels increased migration and transnational imaginings of group identity, it also produces a contradictory movement towards locality and the certainty of familial relationships and 'traditional' culture. However, the popularity of dancehall across racial lines indicates similarities in the social and material circumstances for the young generation and, as a form of expression, provides a third space, separate from the racially divided histories of calypso and chutney. In numerous interviews, dub (dancehall) was cited as the 'most popular music among East Indian youth', and when I asked a teenage Indian girl why they played so much dub at chutney shows, she laughed, saying, 'If they didn't, the youths would pelt!' Equally consistent in the interviews was the popularity of soca music and the dislike of 'racial' calypsos. Most people exhibited extensive knowledge about soca songs and had gone to fetes, and just like black youth, really enjoyed the participatory, 'instructional' socas.

An 18-year-old Indo-Trinidadian woman told me that she likes 'some chutney for dancing', and revealed why dub is her favourite music: 'I got into listening to dub from my brother — Buju Banton, Beenie Man. Most of it makes sense, not like Indian music where you can't understand'. She said her father finds it strange that she listens to such music: 'He'd ask if we don't know is Indians living in the house!' Towards the end of the interview, she added:

I have a Negro boyfriend, and just this morning we [she and her father] had an argument. They want to have a lot of control. My dad wants to tell me what to do and think. Trinidadians are too racial ...

Do you have a problem marrying a Negro?

I don't, but my parents do.

Another 18-year-old woman preferred soft rock, slow tunes and dub. When I asked her about dub she said, 'It have some nice ones like Tony Rebel ... *If Jah is Standing by my Side* ...'. She also said that dub and slows were the most popular music with Indian youth, and voiced concerns about the future that are consistent with those of young Afro-Trinidadians. She did not know who had won the Chutney Soca Monarch competition that year, but she attended local chutney shows and commented on changes in the music and its relation to race.

Has chutney soca become more popular?

Yeah. Now you see different people, races and thing.

Why?

Probably because of the music, its how the beat or the rhythm is — what it has to offer — then they would listen to it. You wouldn't find Negroes before in chutney, but now you do.

What are you most concerned about in Trinidad?

It have too much violence and danger, plenty negative ... I don't want to bring a child into this world, and you don't know what would happen to her, with hard times, employment difficult ...

In this chapter I have explored chutney soca as a sign of Indian political and cultural ascendance in Trinidad, in the broader context of globalisation. As a national phenomenon, political elites and businessmen represent chutney soca as a unified expression of Indian cultural

nationalism. However, extensive audience research revealed contested definitions of 'chutney soca', and multiple meanings by class, caste, gender, religion and age. I attribute these differences, in part, to transnational processes like media expansion and economic decline, which have disproportionately affected young adults. For Indian youth, chutney soca is popular because it is identified with a newfound pride in Indian culture, but the elements of the music that are appealing are cosmopolitan — the use of English rather than Hindi, modern-sounding electric instruments, and mixing with other popular youth music like soca and dancehall. This highlights the contradictory character of globalisation, which produces both transnational awareness and, at the same time, localised ethnic identity (marked by the consumption of hybridised chutney soca in Indian cultural venues among a largely Indian audience). Indicative of generational identity, many Indian youth said that their favourite music was Jamaican dancehall, a form that speaks to contemporary youth experience and through which young people chafe against traditional gender roles, racial bias and parental control.

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NOTES

1. The Indian-based United National Congress (UNC) was re-elected in 2000.
2. This essay draws on 20 months of field research conducted largely from 1996 to 1998, culminating in my dissertation, *Noisy Spaces: Popular Music Consumption, Social Fragmentation, and the Cultural Politics of Globalization in Trinidad*. This project included interviews with cultural producers and extensive research among soca, dancehall, chutney soca and rock audiences in Trinidad. I situate my audience research in broader transnational changes in law, media and political economy.
3. 'At the Trinity Crossroads', *Express*, 8 September 1996.
4. See, for example, Braithwaite (1975); Williams (1991); Austin-Broos (1994); Lewis (1983); Martinez-Alier (1974); Mintz (1971, 1974); Segal (1994); Smith (1970); Safa (1987).
5. While the development of Afro- and Indo-Trinidadian culture is commonly represented as autonomous, the Muharram 'massacre' of 1884 was a significant event that conjoined multi-ethnic labour unrest and mass participation in a public religious festival. Kelvin Singh's book *Bloodstained Tombs: The Muharram Massacre 1884* (1988) extensively

documents the events surrounding the British attack on the Shia Muslim celebration of Muharram, or Hosay, where at least 16 people were killed and 100 wounded. The shootings occurred in the broader context of labour unrest during capitalist crisis and depression in the sugar industry. In contrast to the African population, the Indians had been perceived as a 'docile, manageable' labour force (despite occasional militancy on the plantations). By the 1880s, the Hosay celebration had become a festival of national proportion, and there was considerable involvement of Hindus and Africans, in addition to Muslims. The middle and upper classes became fearful of its mass popularity and it was violently suppressed by 1884 (Singh 1988).

6. 'African' and 'Indian' are common identity terms in Trinidad.
7. See, for example, *Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians of Trinidad*, edited by La Guerre (1985), first published in 1974; Dabydeen and Samaroo (1987); Singh (1988); Birbalsingh (1997).
8. Poverty indexes are figured and interpreted differently in various reports. One survey by the Ministry of Social Development in 1992 rated 36 per cent of households as poor. The World Bank (1995) identified 21 per cent of the population as poor, with 11 per cent extremely poor. Both surveys generally agree on the distribution of poverty, that it is significant only among the dominant ethnic groups (African and Indian). Structural adjustment also reduced basic social services like education and health care. While poverty in Trinidad is relatively low compared to other Caribbean and Latin American countries, the dramatic economic decline after the oil boom meant that in less than a decade, one-third of the population had fallen into poverty, the 'new poor' primarily youth and women.
9. This observation was offered by Peter Hanoomansingh.
10. Thanks to Indira Rampersad's mother for this discussion.
11. Kasha Haraksingh, interview by author, December 30, 1996.
12. *Punch*, December 17, 1995.
13. Soca music is a youth-oriented, 'festival' form of calypso, emphasising dancing and partying over lyrical content. Contemporary soca incorporates elements of dancehall and is largely consumed during Carnival season (approximately two months, from January 1 through Ash Wednesday). Soca fetes draw audiences of up to 40,000 people.

14. *Punch*, July 19, 1992.

15. By figuring contemporary Indian identity in dualistic contrast to 'African', Niranjana reproduces a singular representation of African-ness. Historically, the Afro-Trinidadian subject (not the Indian) has been the privileged site of national discourse on vulgarity and respectability, and conflicts between religious leaders and the Carnival industry frequently erupt into major national controversies.

16. *Express*, October 26, 1970.

17. Shamoan Mohammed, interview by author, June 17, 1997.

18. Gordon Rohlehr, interview by author, December 30, 1996.

19. The word *douglz* derives from the Hindi word for 'bastard' and, in Trinidad, refers to people of mixed African and Indian descent. Based on my research and common assertions in Trinidad, most *douglz* people identify with the Creole population and often feel excluded by Indian relatives. Conservative Hindu organisations advocate Hindu endogamy, but some Indians support 'doulgarisation' to articulate a 'Trinidadian' identity.

20. Rikki Jai, interview by author, June 11, 1997.

21. Veerehdra Persad, interview by author, January 22, 1997.

22. Trinidadian society includes a small but significant heavy-metal subculture, which is largely East Indian. My research indicates Indian metal fans are generally lower class and do not feel enfranchised by Indo-Trinidadian nationalism. This group also participates in rock shows that include the white/mixed middle and upper-middle classes; what these divergent groups share is anti-black sentiment and a claim to whiteness through rock music.

23. Heeralal Rampartap, interview by author, June 1, 1997.

24. Interview with Raymond Ramnarine, interview by author, June 1, 1997.

25. *Express*, June 1, 1997.

26. For an important article on the nightclub controversy, see McCree (1999).

10

HYPERNATIONALIST DISCOURSE IN THE RAPSO MOVEMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Stephanie Saire-Orafai

For until Caribbean people are able to wrestle to the ground the conflict between local and foreign cultures, they will remain forever colonized.
(Adisa 1998, 21)

The appropriation and/or consumption of foreign musical influences, while commonplace, is highly scrutinised and stigmatised in the realm of post-colonial, nationalist discourse. Many post-colonial nationalists are simultaneously proponents of the cultural imperialism thesis, which maintains that the hegemony of the West in political and economic matters must also prevail in the cultural realm.¹ That is, the West will thrust not only its economic and political structures upon periphery nations, but also its cultural models. Founded on the Centre-Periphery model of global political economy, this thesis is considered bankrupt in some circles, as it flattens the complexity of transnational flows, representing them as unidirectional (from Centre to Periphery), essentialising them, and assigning purity both to the Centre and the Periphery. Despite these faults, the cultural imperialism thesis still enjoys much support within popular, post-colonial nationalist discourse.²

Proponents of the cultural imperialism thesis characterise consumption as a passive act. For example, periphery nations that receive hegemonic musics are seen as precisely that — passive receptors. Jonathan Friedman (1994, 16), an anthropologist specialising in consumption, counters this passive characterisation of consumption: 'While in material terms consumption is the passive last stage of the reproductive process, in social terms it is the origin of a specific structure of demand'. In this chapter, I agree with Friedman, and argue against the passive portrayal of consumption. Instead, I offer an active characterisation of consumption as a means of broadening the acceptable mechanisms of national