

crowd and turn a deaf ear to lyrics that, in any case, would not only mystify him linguistically but assail him morally.

In this region, to discuss calypso is to evoke Carnival. Carnival is described as the season when everybody comes together as one. Families are reunited as members return home from hundreds and thousands of miles away. Carnival is advertised as two days of giant parades, pageantry in which the Islands' romanticists and realists compete for center stage — Main Street from one end of town to the other. Fantastic costumes abound; social parody is plentiful. And Carnival is the World Series of Calypso, replete with a junior series for the up and coming generation of Caribbean troubadours. Here they compete for the title of King or Queen of Calypso before appreciative but wise and discriminating audiences. Carnival is also the season when political aspirants traditionally announce their plans for upcoming elections. Carnival speaks volumes about social organization and cultural identity and political posturing in the Virgin Islands.

From the vantage point of our approach founded on "sociolinguistic sectors," the unity of Carnival can be seen to be mediated by several social realities. St. Thomians and St. Johnians accept Tortolians and British Virgin Islanders as kinfolk; regular commerce with the British Virgin Islands and waves of migrations from them have gone on uninterrupted since Europeans

settled these islands. On the other hand, when Crucians discuss their past and their cultural traditions they pay homage to ancestors, including relatively recent ones, whose place of birth was on one of the Eastern Caribbean islands such as Antigua, Barbados, Nevis or St. Kitts. Several mini carnivals or ethnic celebrations in our islands demonstrate this bidirectional orientation. British Virgin Islands/American Virgin Islands Day is primarily a St. Thomas and St. John fête, while Eastern Caribbean Day is celebrated on St. Croix. Dividing along similar lines, Fathers Day in St. Thomas — including boat races and a fishing tournament — toasts the contribution of the French settlers and their descendants; while on St. Croix, Puerto Rico/VI Friendship Day celebrates the presence of those who migrated from Vieques and Culebra to our shores.

A vigorous debate has been going on in the Virgin Islands about whether these festivals promote unity or disunity. But in each community the grand-daddy of the annual celebrations is clear: it is Carnival on St. Thomas and St. John, and Festival on St. Croix. All groups participate and compete in these events. Calypsonians flock to them from the Greater Caribbean to meet the challenge of feting and entertaining the Virgin Islands in all its cultural diversity. In this way, the fissures of rampant exploitation and its attendant cynicism are subjected to intense festive meltdown. And the culture prospers.

WERE THERE GIANTS?

Gilbert A. Sprauve

Yes, one!
WHO?
Tampo!
Sifting meticulously through recollections from his youth the writer was able to recall one man that enjoyed the status of "giant." "Enjoyed" is used rhetorically, for Tampo certainly did not solicit, much less abuse, any special dispensations that came with the distinction. He may in fact have been totally oblivious to them.

The writer next pondered the question of confirming the Tampo-the-Giant myth. Tracking down schoolmates would be simple enough. It is a small, close-knit community. Just mention "Tampo," and Jiggy, for one — our unofficial class historian — would recite the exact day when Miss Marcellus, after struggling with an

incredulous Kenny, who resolutely refused to swallow the meaning of the Lilliputian fairy tale for the better part of a class period, suddenly made him and the rest of the class understand by comparing Gulliver to... you know who!

But the writer decided on a different tactic. At the end of each interview done in preparation for the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival, he would ask his interlocutor to tell him what he or she knew of Tampo.

Fred (a fisherman): De story 'bout Tampo??

Interviewer: ... ain' got a bank out dey, dey call Tampo?

F: Not me!

I: I hear some St. John man talkin' 'bout Tampo Bank.

F: You know who dey call Tampo?

I: I know who dey call Tampo, but...
 F: No, ah ain' talkin' 'bout da fellow... Ah talkin' 'bout a whale... a whale shark.
 I: A whale shark de call Tampo?
 F: Yes... yeh, being so big, no? An' ferocious-lookin'!
 I: W'at it is: a whale of a shark??
 F: A whaleshark. I was on he back, Man! Yo' don' believe me? Edouard Blanchard an' anodda fellow name... gimme a chance, ah goin' tell yo'... Battiste, a sixteen year ol' boy was also in de boat. Fourteen foot plywood boat. He had us up on he back fo' 'bout 20 minutes. An' he didn' want to do not'ing wid us. Mus' be scratchin' he back. Battiste had want us... take de oar an' stick him.
 I: He actually get up under de boat?
 F: He came up... like we was anchored here. He came up like dere an' went nort'... 'bout half de way over dere an' he turn straight sout', come straight under de boat an' w'en he get half o' heself under de boat he raise up an' he stop movin', yo' know. Jus' raise right up like a helicopter, raise up right outa de water. He was about dis height outa de water. But I wasn't scared because I know dey don' eat people, dey're not dangerous. W'at dere danger is, if you create it, if yo' hit dem wit' a oar and dey get frighten an' dey dump yo'.
 I: 'Bout how long yo' say he was?
 F: 'Bout 50 feet long, 'bout ten feet wide... We average him by de boat an' he was, ah believe, t'ree and a half times de lengt' o' de boat, maybe four times...

(from interview on 12 February
 with Mr. Alfred Richardson)

I: Yo' remember a fellow in St. Thomas dey call Tampo?
 J: Tampo is a big fellow. But wait, I hear he dead? Dere were two Tampo.
 I: Yeh, tell me 'bout dem.
 J: Dere were two. One had name Cyril. Dere's anodda one from To'tola. A set o' dem boy had fight him a time, down Buck Hole. Lawd, I know... I know de boy-dem

name... an' he take an' dey say dey is boxer, an' t'ing. He say: Come, come: in dis To'tola language, jus' lemme ge me hean' on him. He had about two o' dem under dis foot an' dey couldn' move... squeezin' dem. An' dey say dey boxin'. An' he only makin' so, grabbin' dem. 'Bout some four, five o' dem. But Tampo was too much fo' dem. Das de one!

(from interview on 18 February
 with Mr. Jospehus Williams)

I: Yo' know a fellow... firs' yo ever hear of a place call Tampo?
 H: A place yo' call Tampo, yo' say?
 I: Yo' ever hear any o' de fisherman o' anyt'ing talkin' 'bout a place dey call Tampo?
 H: ... No, no, no.
 I: But yo' know a man... dey name, dey call Tampo?
 H: Here? I know a guy w'a we call Tampo. De one fellow w'a I know...
 I: W'a yo' remember 'bout Tampo?
 H: Yeh, but he wasn't a fisherman.
 I: No, I jus' want to know w'a yo' remember 'bout him.
 H: ... 'bout a fellow name Tampo? Well, Tampo is... he *was* a very strong man. De one dat I know.
 I: De same one.
 H: An' he got a bad leg. An' I went down to he coal pit. Down at Mr. Newton, back dere. An' I find Tampo: he had two half bag o' coal on he head, one straight an' de odda one cross, an' he still had two under he arm, comin' wid dis piece o' foot.
 I: Even wid de bad foot, yo' tellin' me?
 H: Wid de bad foot! I say: 'Well, Jesus Christ! W'a dis man doin'?' An' Tampo dere comin' t'rough de stone... de place dere, not'ing couldn' run. Tampo was dere even wid he bad foot. If somebody had tell me dat, I woulda say 'No!' But w'en I firs' know Tampo he was a prayer meetin' man. He had a nice voice an' ting!

(from 27 February interview
 with Mr. Humphrey Hermon)