# 'They're trying to steal the pan'

## Book takes new approach to pan history

THERE ARE forces at work today trying to wrest from Trinbagonian Africans the ownership of the steelband. This was stated emphatically yesterday by Kenrick Thomas, the author of a new book entitled *Panriga—Tacarigua's Contribution to the Evolution of the Steelband Phenomenon in Trinidad and Tobago.*

Thomas also disagrees with those who claim that only people from Port of Spain contributed to steelpan and has written the book to show how the pan developed.

Speaking at the launch of his book at the Emancipation Village, at Queen's Park Savannah, the author declared decisively and insistently, that steelband music developed from the Orisa tradition, adding that in view of what was happening with the art form today, a book such as *Panriga* was timely.

In attendance at the launch was Professor Ian Smart of Original World Press, the publisher of the book, chairperson and poet Eintou Pearl Springer and musicologist Merle Albino De Coteau, who delivered the feature address.

The book establishes the connectedness of Trinbagonian culture to "Mother Africa" proferring an account of the development of the art form that is peculiar to the two island nation.

Thomas, 66, of Cane Farm, Tacarigua, said that the book contained true accounts of his experiences as a rural steelbandsman.

He said: "The idea to write the book was due to some of the discrimination I suffered. I researched the book thoroughly, but I assure you I make no pretence of being an academic."

Thomas became directly involved in steelband music at the age 14, when he was drafted into the Boom Town Village Steelband to play one of the pans called "kittle".

In 1962, he was elected to the executive committee of the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandsmen (NATTS) under the presidency of George Goddard. He demitted in 1971, the same year in which (NATTS ) evolved into Pan Trinbago. **—Angela Martin-Hinds**