Colin Clarke and Gillian Clarke, *Post-Colonial Trinidad: An Ethnographic Journal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 246.

Post-Colonial Trinidad is a valuable addition to the ethnography of pre- and post-colonial Trinidad. For nine month in 1964 the authors lived in Trinidad, testing the earlier theses of the Niehoffs and Klass and conducting more extensive research on the East Indian community. Their book consists of three sections, each of which is important in its own right: their journal from 1964, which is a properly annotated record of interviews conducted during the year; a comprehensive glossary of terms, Indian and non-Indian, which is essential for an understanding of a complex Oriental ontology; and an introductory essay, written some 45 years after the journal itself. This essay contextualises the 1964 research, analyses the 1964 work and provides general conclusions with regard to the ethnography.

The journal traces the evolution of the East Indian community from the time of its arrival in 1845 and the manner in which this community sought to reconstruct its life after the deconstruction occasioned by the trauma of departure from India. The account is important because it captures the community immediately before the exodus of thousands of Indo-Caribbean people to North America and Europe, an important historical moment. Other subsequent researchers on the Indo-Caribbean presence take their cue from this journal. One of its strengths is the obvious preparation which went into the authors' efforts.

They familiarised themselves with the intricacies of the caste system and its attenuated operation in the new environment, and with forms of worship among Hindus and Muslims, as well as the physical appurtenances to such worship. This meant that their queries were well informed, eliciting insightful responses from the interviewees. The diarists took care to include a number of articulate women in their list; this is of particular importance, since Indian women were traditionally left out of the narrative despite the major role they played in the process of adaptation and survival in the new environment. In an interview with Dr Stella Abidh, for example, the normally non-political, reserved lady expressed strong views on the rise of communism in the Caribbean and the ethnic character of the voting pattern, of which she disapproved.

Part of the preparation for the project was the authors' familiarisation with the wide range of Bojhpuri and creole terms which are a necessary part of any interviewers vocabulary in this context. They are contained in a useful glossary, which contains terms brought from India that are now rapidly disappearing from the local lexicon. In the current post-1964 search for roots that has become popular among Caribbean peoples, this glossary has become an essential part of that search. Copies are made for use in schools and universities, and Indo-Caribbbean writers refer to it to authenticate their writing….Equally, the glossary carries a number of creole words which have become part of the discourse: *souse* (marinated pig's feet), tanté (aunt) and *bobol* (corruption). The authors learned these terms as part of their preparation, and they now bequeath the list to a waiting prosperity.

The introduction to the volume, which actually comes between the glossary and the journal has been left for last because it can be described as the *vedanta*, the essence of the work. Written after four decades of reflection, it does a number of things. In the first place it provides a description of the field, namely the Trinidad landscape, for readers who may be unfamiliar with its geography and history. There is then a critical review of previous ethnographic studies, including Herskovits, Niehoff, Klass and Rubin as well as others such as those by Lloyd Brathwaite, Steven Vertovec and Aisha Khan. All of these pre- and post-colonial social

scientists are analysed sociologically, and it is from this premise that Colin Clarke examines the operation of the political system, tracing the interactions between South Asian ontology and local politics. For both Hindus and Muslims there is not a separation between politics and religion that occurs in Western Christian belief. For Indians, therefore, politics is necessarily intertwined with religion. Colin Clarke uses his understanding of this holistic approach among Hindus and Muslims to reveal fresh, up-to-date insights which are of current usefulness in analysing this aspect of plural societies.

The great benefit of *Post-Colonial Trinidad* is that it clears up vast areas of darkness in the sociology of Caribbean Indianismé. It explains the antecedence of the Indo-Caribbean struggle to carve out a space in the New World and gives a canvas against which current analyses are made. The work is specific to Trinidad, but it closely relates to the situation in neighbouring Guyana and finds resonance in other mixed societies such as Mauritius and Fiji. It will remain relevant for a long time.

Brinsley Samaroo, Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol 46, Issue 4, 2014, pp 837-839