Alexander Rocklin, *The Regulation of Religion and the Making of Hinduism in Colonial Trinidad*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. ix + 298 pp. (Paper US\$ 34.95)

What is Hinduism? Is it a religion? Is it a way of life? While this is a question that all scholars of Hinduism struggle with, Alexander Rocklin sets out to answer a more intriguing question: how is Hinduism made? *The Regulation of Religion and the Making of Hinduism in Colonial Trinidad* is a well-argued text that guides us through the making and remaking of Hinduism in colonial Trinidad. Drawing on extensive archival research, often supplemented by insights offered by his contemporary interlocutors in Trinidad, Rocklin demonstrates how multiple actors—Indians, Europeans, Africans, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians—produced Hinduism through discourse. The resulting book challenges us to rethink categories and to be mindful of the dynamics of power in order to appreciate how “Trinidadian ways of being in relation were shaped by colonial governmentality and discipline, fractured by multiple discourses, ritualizations, and exchanges” (p. 7).

To make his argument, Rocklin divides the book into two parts—a discussion of the creation of religion as category and an examination of how Hinduism is defined, presented chronologically. Readers are led through an impressive selection of primary documents—colonial reports, court proceedings, newspaper articles, and more—to witness how divisions between the religious and the secular were created and negotiated in Trinidad. Rocklin wisely focuses each of the book’s six chapters around a specific issue, event, or institution so that readers can better appreciate how discourse is deployed differently in relation to the context and the needs of the actor. From his discussion of the debates around Hosay and the 1844 massacre to his examination of the Trinidad Hindu Mahasabha’s role in molding Hinduism into a world religion, we come to recognize how “actors were produced by but also participated in and reproduced the discourse (the normative set of assumptions and practices) of religion” (p. 109).

A major strength of this book is Rocklin’s commitment to prioritizing race and class in his analysis, a move that encourages readers to think about the underlying social structure. For instance, through examples of contradictory reasoning in colonial court cases, we appreciate how the colonial elite were motivated by concerns of controlling Indian labor rather than by protecting religious freedom. Also, we start to see how dividing and ruling unfolds in discourse to create divisions between Indians and Africans, then Hindus and Muslims, and then among Hindus. But, as Rocklin highlights, this process is not without resistance, offering episodes of how “racial identifications allowed for

new ways of conceptualizing and performing social solidarities" (p. 68), such as the participation of African Trinidadians in Ramlila performances. Such moments capture the way the process of making Hinduism is complex, which we only gain by Rocklin's astute choice not to study Hinduism in isolation.

The depth of Rocklin's analysis is enhanced by his knowledge of South Asian history, Hinduism, Caribbean history, and African-orientated Caribbean religions. Readers gain greater insight into the making of Hinduism in the Caribbean context because of his ability to explain changes in relation to similar rituals in the Indian context and to situate certain changes in the larger transformation of Hinduism happening globally within the Indian diaspora. His knowledge of discussions within scholarship on Caribbean religion also clearly positions Hinduism as a Caribbean religious tradition.

While Rocklin offers a compelling study that is a welcome inclusion to Caribbean studies, Religious studies, and South Asian studies, the analysis of the primary documents will not hold the attention of undergraduate students, and the discussion of existing scholarship requires a familiarity that one would find only among more seasoned scholars. But for those scholars, this is a captivating read that will have them rethinking their understanding of Hinduism and religion.

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