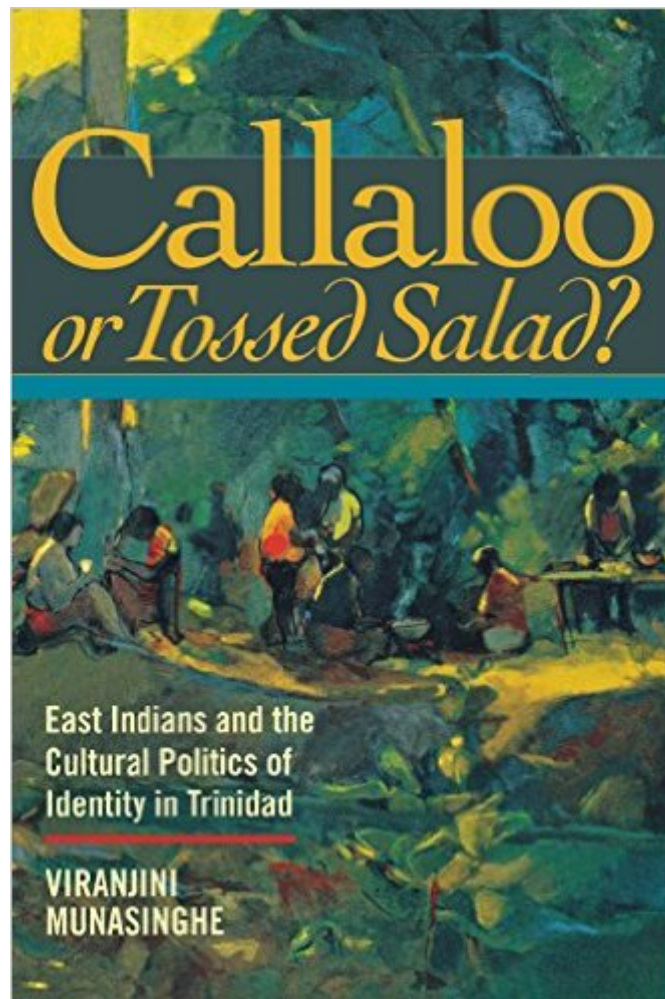


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Callaloo Or Tossed Salad? East Indians And The Cultural Politics Of Identity In Trinidad



Synopsis

Callaloo or Tossed Salad? is a historical and ethnographic case study of the politics of cultural struggle between two traditionally subordinate ancestral groups in Trinidad, those claiming African and Indian descent. Viranjini Munasinghe argues that East Indians in Trinidad seek to become a legitimate part of the nation by redefining what it means to be Trinidadian, not by changing what it means to be Indian. In her view, Indo-Trinidadians' recent and ongoing struggle for national and cultural identity builds from dissatisfaction with the place they were originally assigned within Trinidadian society. The author examines how Indo-Trinidadian leaders in Trinidad have come to challenge the implicit claim that their ethnic identity is antithetical to their national identity. Their political and cultural strategy seeks to change the national image of Trinidad by introducing Indian elements alongside those of the dominant Afro-Caribbean (Creole) culture. Munasinghe analyzes a number of broad theoretical issues: the moral, political, and cultural dimensions of identity; the relation between ethnicity and the nation; and the possible autonomy of New World nationalisms from European forms. She details how principles of exclusion continue to operate in nationalist projects that celebrate ancestral diversity and multiculturalism. Drawing on the insights of theorists who use creolization to understand the emergence of Afro-American cultures, Munasinghe argues that Indo-Trinidadians can be considered Creole because they, like Afro-Trinidadians, are creators and not just bearers of culture.

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