

Article

Sensing Hinduism: Lucian-Indian Funeral “Feast” as Glocalized Ritual¹

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Abstract: Migrant narratives of Indo-Caribbean religious practices in the *smaller* island states of the Caribbean are rare, and that Diaspora’s funerary traditions are even less explored. This scholarly lacuna is addressed here by using data from ethnographic research conducted in St. Lucia to examine the funerary ritual of a Lucian-Indian “feast” through the multidisciplinary lens of *glocalization*. Specifically, we investigate the following: (a) ways that the diasporic identity of Lucian-Indians has been adapted and re-configured within a local-global nexus; (b) the extent to which there has been a local construction of a distinct socio-spatial identity among Lucian-Indians, one retaining “Hinduness” even as they assimilated into the larger St. Lucian society; and (c) whether *glocal* characteristics can be identified in the performance of a particular funeral feast. Following Roudometof, we posit that many aspects of a Lucian-Indian ethno-religious funerary ritual demonstrate *indigenized* and *transnational* glocalization.

Keywords: globalization; glocalization; glocal ethnography; Caribbean; St. Lucia; Indo-Caribbean; Hindu; funeral

1. Introduction

“Kala Pani” (black water) migrant narratives of Indo-Caribbeans are rare, and accounts of their religious practices in the *smaller* island states of the Caribbean are even rarer. Accordingly, relatively little about their funerary traditions is documented, especially in Caribbean countries like St. Lucia, where people of East Indian origin constitute a small minority. This paper focuses specifically on the sociocultural adaptations observed in a contemporary funerary ritual in St. Lucia, particularly as they relate to global Hinduism and an East Indian Diaspora that signify a form of transnational material culture. Using original ethnographic research, we reveal how Indo-Lucians have crafted a socio-religious space that represents an important and enduring fragment of their ethnic identity, one shaped by their indentureship in this small Caribbean island, starting in the mid-nineteenth century. This funeral ritual has evolved according to an interplay of global and local forces, and the resulting hybrid practices are best understood using the concept of *glocalization* [1,2].

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Foremost in form, we seek to provide a *glocal ethnography* along the lines suggested by Salazar ([3], p. 180), described as “the complex connections, disconnections and reconnections between local and global phenomena and processes . . . achieved by firmly embedding and historically situating the in-depth study of a particular socio-cultural group, organization or setting within a larger and ultimately global context.” To this end, we include information from extensive interviews of Lucian-Indians, as well as video documentation of a funeral feast to examine the following: (a) ways that the diasporic identity of Lucian-Indians has been adapted and re-configured within a local-global nexus; (b) the extent to which there has been a local construction of a distinct socio-spatial identity among Lucian-Indians, one retaining “Hinduness” even as they assimilated into the larger St. Lucian society; and (c) whether glocal characteristics can be identified in the performance of a particular funeral feast.

2. Indo-Caribbean Identity

General scholarship on Indo-Caribbean history, culture, and politics emphasizes the common narrative of indentureship of women and men from India who crossed the “kala pani” (or “black waters”) to work on Caribbean plantations, regardless of their linguistic and social diversity. Many historical narratives discuss the arrival of Indian women and men who brought with them physical and cultural pieces of their homeland, along with their dreams of making an honest living and saving enough to re-start their lives upon returning to India. Instead, as we know from the recorded histories of 19th century Indian immigrants, a majority of them had to lead a life tantamount to slavery, with neither a meaningful chance to fulfill their dreams nor return to their homeland. Despite the common travails among Indian indentured laborers in many parts of the Caribbean, what remains distinctly different is the unique sociocultural context that led them to shape particular individual or group identities as opposed to those of others.

Such transnational identity-shaping does vary from one Caribbean society to another. Consequently, the post-migration trajectories of Indians in their new homeland—requiring mediation, negotiation, innovation, and cultural production and re-production—are qualitatively and quantitatively different in various parts of the Caribbean. For instance, Guyana and Trinidad are characterized by what Hilbourne Watson calls the “the racialization of global politics” as “a dialectical process of construction and deconstruction,” whereby race and racialization have contributed to the “colonial construction of the region” that affected the internal and regional consciousness of the Caribbean ([4], pp. 449–50). In this context, Indo-Caribbean identity has been forged primarily in opposition to a creolized or an Afro-Caribbean one within a cultural arena of conflict. Unlike their counterparts in Guyana or Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia’s Indo-Caribbean population is considerably more assimilated into this majority Afro-Caribbean island state and their relationship with the Afro-Caribbean majority has not been surrounded by ostensible and comparable acrimony, hostility or segregation. Partly as a consequence of this context, inter-marriage among the various groups has contributed to an erosion of any acute sense of their East Indian Hindu heritage and identity. Yet, the funeral feast we describe reveals a primary way that ethnic “Hindu” norms are retained even as they are interspersed or intertwined with their contemporary Christian practices (Catholic, Methodist, Evangelical, or Pentecostal).

Lucian-Indians are Indo-Caribbeans who are descendants of East Indian indentured servants who began to arrive in St. Lucia starting in the 1850s (and through the early 1900s) following the abolition of slavery (in Britain, in 1833, but not fully realized until 1843). Many had been duped into labor contracts for migrant work on plantations, and were forced to settle in the Caribbean when the contractual agreements were reneged by the planter class. As Harmsen [5,6] reports:

Just over 1600 people arrived here [St. Lucia] between 1856 and 1865 and another 4427 Indians sailed to St. Lucia between 1878 and 1893. By 1891, there were some 2500 East Indians in St. Lucia (colloquially known as ‘coolies’), in a total population of 42,220 souls. Two years later, the last batch of indentured workers arrived on a ship called the ‘Volga’,

totaling 156 people By the turn of the century, St. Lucia had a free East Indian population of 2560 persons.

This diasporic population survived suffering, dislocation and relocation partly from their ability to use “religion as a process of transculturation” ([7], p. 4), thereby adapting to their new homeland by forging collective neo-identities.

From here out, we will exclusively use the term *Lucian-Indian* rather than Indo-Lucian to define and describe Indo-Caribbeans in St. Lucia. This draws a distinction between those of Indian descent in St. Lucia and their counterparts in countries such as Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, Jamaica, St. Vincent, or Guadeloupe. In these other societies, a larger percentage of the Indo-Caribbean population have successfully retained more of their “Indian-ness”. By placing “Lucian” before “Indian” we attempt to capture both the importance of the Lucian identity, which appears stronger than the Indian one but simultaneously does not erase East-Indian heritage.

St. Lucia’s current population is approximately 183,645 (according to a 2014 World Bank report), of which an estimated 3%–3.25% is identified as Indo-Caribbean—resulting in 5000–6000 Lucians of East-Indian descent. Nearly 12% of that population is of “mixed” ethnicity, representing miscegenation of other racial/ethnic groups (primarily Afro-Caribbean) with their East Indian counterparts. Whatever their exact number, St. Lucia’s comparable Indo-Caribbean population is rather small in relation to Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, or even Guyana (see Table 1 below). Likewise, by comparison to St. Lucia, the number and proportion of Indo-Guyanese and Indo-Trinidadians are considerably larger. Historically and politically, the inter-ethnic relations of the East-Indian and African populations in these two countries have often been less than amicable.

Table 1. Population of select Caribbean states.

Country	Total Population
Belize	351,700
French Guiana*	229,000
Grenada	106,300
Guadeloupe*	452,776
Guyana	763,900
Jamaica	2,721,000
St. Lucia	183,645
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	109,400
Trinidad & Tobago	1,354,000

Notes: Source: Data compiled from the 2014 World Bank Population Statistics except for French Guiana and Guadeloupe (data from INSE, France).

Among Trinidad and Tobago’s approximately 1.3 million people, about 40% are East Indian and 38% are of African heritage. In Guyana, with a population of about 764,000, roughly 45% are of East Indian descent while 30% claim African heritage). The size of a country seems to matter less than the size of the minority when addressing identity politics. In fact, we contend that, along with the length of time since the bulk of migrants arrived, the proportional size of the Indo-Caribbean population may be the most important variable to explain differences in the subsequent retention of an “Indian” identity. Yet, St. Lucia itself is not without its inter-ethnic dynamic. Simply because the Lucian-Indian population is small does not mean one can ignore their contributions to Lucian history, culture, and society.

In his comparative study of the Hindu diaspora in the Caribbean countries of Guyana, Surinam and Trinidad, Vertovec ([8], pp. 110–11) observed that there are strong, distinct “Indian patterns” of Hinduism because of “inadvertent permutation as well as conscious manipulations which have taken place over the course of three to five generations”. We argue here that for Lucian-Indians, despite their smaller number and their assimilation within the ethnic majority, there has been “inadvertent

permutation" and "conscious manipulation" of identity taking place. Despite their integration—one that includes aspects of "acculturation" (adopting the new homeland's culture) and "assimilation" (building strong inter-ethnic ties with the new homeland's majority)—there are certain cultural spaces where Lucian-Indians continue to rely on their Hindu antecedents. These cultural spaces usually surround rites of passage related to life and death, accompanied by foodways that inform and structure such rituals as the funeral "feast". While religious festivals and rituals relating to Hossay (Muharram) in Trinidad, diwali or Kali worship in Guyana, or even carnival and its symbolism have all been studied before, Indo-Caribbean funeral rites are less studied and, in the St. Lucian case, poorly understood.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methods

We employ an interpretation of glocalization favored by Roudometof ([9], p. 9), who contends that "glocalization is globalization refracted through the local." By Roudometof's account, previous conceptions of hybrid practices have been developed within a dialectic about the influence and result of global forces on local practices. On one hand, ongoing work launched by theorists such as Robertson [10,11] basically argues that globalization is not a separate, binary opposite to the local or a force that overwhelms or displaces local practices, but rather a force that is invariably merged to the local so that it can only manifest itself within myriad new, hybrid or glocal forms. This monistic view suggests that globalization can encourage either heterogeneity or homogeneity among local practices, and delivers not integration but fragmentation. We stress that it also implicitly celebrates the eternal presence of the micro. On the other hand, work fueled by theorists such as Ritzer [12,13] sees globalization as an external force in mutual opposition to the local, one that is driven by the profane character of international capitalism to exterminate the local. Ritzer's dualistic view predicts integration inside the structure of a largely homogenized global culture, where remaining glocal forms reflect the ideas and values of capitalist hegemony. We believe that Ritzer's view explicitly bemoans the ultimate victory of the macro.

Roudometof presents his view of glocalization as an alternate to previous views, one that proposes we consider the processes and results of globalization as neither ultimately subsumed by the local nor causing the local in effect to disappear. In what we view is an effective synthesis of a dialectic, glocalization becomes "an analytically autonomous concept" and resulting glocal forms are not required in essence to be either local or global. In Roudometof's words, "The local is not annihilated or absorbed or destroyed by globalization but, rather, operates symbiotically with globalization and shapes the telos or end state . . ." ([9], p. 9). That end state, or glocality, produces fertile glocal hybrid forms that are experienced locally, yet reflect multiple levels of power relations and agency at both the macro and micro levels. For example, in Roudometof's conception, the spread of powerful global memes may be buffered or "refracted" by waves of cultural resistance at the local level. We find this view the most effective from which to analyze the global and glocal forms we observed in St. Lucia.

We wish to demonstrate how the contemporary localized bricolage of ostensibly "Hindu" practices surrounding a ritualistic "Indian feast"—part of funerary practice performed by Lucian-Indians who are today self-identified as Christians—intersects innovatively with the global dynamics of historical colonialism to produce glocal practices. Those global dynamics led mostly Hindu migrants to become indentured laborers, arriving from India starting in the late 1850s. This Lucian-Indian funerary space is one that is distinct: while it contains a few elements we may describe as transnational hybridity, it is primarily glocal, and goes beyond the simple dichotomy of extracting and identifying global "Hindu" strands or global "Christian" strands. Instead, we attempt to understand this ritual as a heterotopic phenomenon, one founded on a collective and constructed memory in the context of a dominant culture and two dominant global religions, and performed locally in a unique social space. The various adaptations of Lucian-Indians, e.g., in comparison to the feast rituals of historical India, preserve what is now considered as "Indian" for their collective future identity, and the local space is in itself "context generating" (see Appadurai, [14]).

We restate that glocalization here is defined as “the refraction of globalization through the local ... a blend of the local and the global” (Roudometof [9], p. 13).² Elsewhere, Roudometof has lamented that “the glocal is conspicuously absent” from research agendas that tend to view “Creolization or hybridization” as “competing terms used to designate the production of various forms of heterogeneity under conditions of intensified cultural contact” ([1], p. 8). Other primary sources guiding our analysis include Pieterse [16] and Kriady [17] on forms of hybridity, and Khondker [18] on distinguishing the global and local features of glocal phenomena.³

This research is based on original ethnographic work. Over three week periods in June 2011 and May 2015, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a total of 35 women and men of Indo-Caribbean descent living in St. Lucia. Interviewees were first identified through local contacts and then later by word-of-mouth, either from earlier participants or through self-identified volunteers following local radio and television coverage of the project. The interviews were designed, conducted, and recorded by the authors. Since responses were digitally recorded, all interviewees were required to grant written consent. Respondents were also given the option to allow a recorded interview without recording their images (only one of our interviewees chose this option). In instances where a respondent was not fluent in English, a local interpreter translated between Creole and English.

While the Indo-Caribbean population is scattered throughout St. Lucia, small pockets of Lucian-Indians are geographically concentrated in certain areas (see Figure 1). Other than commercial centers such as Rodney Bay, Gros Islet, and the Castries area, we conducted the majority of our interviews in towns and parishes with high concentrations of Lucian-Indians: Babboneau in Forestiere parish (northeast), Choiseul in Laborie parish (southwest), Desruisseaux in Micoud parish (southeast), and Vieux Fort (south).



Figure 1. Map of St. Lucia and its eleven parishes.

² This definition deviates from Peter Beyer’s assertion of Robertson’s view of globalization as glocalization, but corresponds with the former’s identification of glocalization as “the global expressed in the local and the local as particularization of the global” ([15], p. 98).

³ Literature on the Caribbean has thoroughly developed numerous ways to understand the common condition of hybridity, including the conceptual tools of Creolization, douglarization, negritude, coolitude and so on. A previous draft of this paper attempted to address fertile connections between these and concepts associated with glocalization, but we decided in favor of leaving this discourse to a larger paper that could do justice to that enterprise. Though we adopt a narrower focus for the purposes of this work, we recommend several studies that will be useful for an overview of major concepts: Denis [19], Bongie [20] and Khan [21] on Creolization; for douglarization, Khan [22]; and for coolitude, Carter and Torabully [23], Crosson [24], and Mohammed [25]. Literature on the history of negritude is extensive, but we would suggest starting with any of the numerous works of Frantz Fanon or his teacher, Aimé Césaire.

Our 35 respondents consisted of 13 women and 22 men of varied ages. With some success, we prioritized interviewing older Lucians, octogenarians and nonagenarians, to excavate from their memories precious oral histories about their foremothers and forefathers that only they could still recollect. The interviews averaged about 45–50 min each, though a few went on for over an hour.

The interview questions, structured to provide a personal “life-history” narrative, were later transcribed. Our focus is qualitative, so that perspectives about social, economic, political and cultural life expressed by our respondents lend themselves to possible, generalized conclusions concerning the extent of, and reasons for, their assimilation and, for many others, their *dougl*a (hybrid) identity. We particularly emphasized cultural markers relating to food, birth/marriage/death rituals, and social values as elements that cement either a latent or manifest identity. Then, by using a broad corpus of identity and assimilation theories, we have attempted to make sense of how Lucian-Indians now articulate an identity in their particular political and sociocultural context—that is, as a very small minority in a small island state. Generally, we assert that: (1) Lucian-Indians’ contributions to St. Lucia’s heritage and contemporary society are not insignificant, therefore it is essential to fully understand and incorporate their influence when constructing a pan-Lucian historical narrative or collective identity; and (2) there exists a unique context containing particulars of identity-shaping for Lucian-Indians that can offer a comparative case for the wider Caribbean.⁴

For this paper, however, we should emphasize some points related to these assertions. First, we do include some comparisons to help us to draw distinctions about what is uniquely St. Lucian; we believe that comparative analysis is invaluable and inevitable. But making fuller use of comparisons to related funereal practices (e.g., in the Caribbean or India or even other diaspora groups) is beyond the scope and aims of this paper. Case studies are intended to stand on their own, even when useful comparisons may be drawn to similar practices. The point remains that very little ethnographic work is done on Indo-Caribbean people in places where they are a substantial minority, and thus such work is valuable in its own right. To our knowledge, no other fully-documented Lucian-Indian funeral feast readily exists. Next, this study is not meant to be exhaustive but instead is located within an ongoing project on Lucian-Indian identity, so we choose to focus on some common themes that emerge from the narratives and practices we have already documented.

4. The Funeral Feast

In June of 2011, we were invited by one of our interviewees to attend and document an “Indian funeral feast” in Belle Vue (Vieux Fort parish) given by family members for a recently deceased uncle. She explained that this ritual was once common among Lucian-Indians but were now rarely performed except for older members of their communities, something corroborated by others we interviewed. In the Lucian tradition, the feast is always hosted and performed by family members after the corpse has received a Christian burial, sometimes 8 to 9 months after the death of their loved one, as was the case in the rite we documented. It was explained that the monetary cost and the time for arranging the feast often led to the delay in its performance, as it required not only the construction of a “shrine” or make-shift “house”, but also time to amass provisions for feeding anywhere from 50 to 100 guests—relatives, friends and neighbors of all classes and ethnicities who are routinely invited to such ceremonies.

According to some of our respondents who provided extensive narratives about the feast, it is traditionally managed and prepared by men-folk in the family or the immediate community, and no women are permitted to be involved in this effort. In earlier times, this effort included the following: first, a shrine or what was described to us as a “house” for the departed, was constructed deep in the woods with bamboo and leaves, away from where people lived. This feature is now changed so that

⁴ We are sensitive to Allahaar’s warnings that a unique Caribbean-ness as an identity category may be seen as a device foisted on the Caribbean by colonial authorities, a legacy of a colonial mind-set [26].

the “house” is constructed in the yard next to the home where the deceased lived, though it remains outside that building (see Figure 2). But it was still men who prepared the ritual meal for the feast we observed, when cooking is otherwise almost exclusively done by women.



Figure 2. The Funeral Shrine and the Drawing or Motif tradition of *Kohbar*.

Typically, men wake up before dawn and are required to wash and “cleanse” themselves. They clothe themselves either in clean black or black-and-white garments before they start their work in the kitchen, as early as 3 a.m., cooking about 8–10 different food items. In the feast we documented, the following food items were prepared: *dalpuri*, *suhari* (puffed bread), *chawal/bhaat* (rice), eggplant *tarkari*, pumpkin *tarkari*, potato *tarkari*, fish curry, a meat (goat) curry, and *gulgula* (mini donut balls). The food was contained in large metal pots covered with clean banana leaves. The banana leaves are significant because that material is traditionally used in India for all such rituals—metal lids and plates are considered polluted from previous use, whereas the biodegradable banana leaf is purer and cannot be re-used. Both in India and in St. Lucia, banana leaves serve to prevent food from drying out or being contaminated by flies, and fresh leaves function as plates from which food is consumed (traditionally taken to the mouth by one’s fingers).

The full ritual is meant to be witnessed by assembled family and neighbors. A significant moment arrives when a select group of seven family members, later to serve as a processional group, assemble in the room where the food is housed to set up a ritual meal for the spirit of the deceased, who is served first. Before this however, the seven must undergo a highly choreographed “purification” ritual of washing their hands and feet. Immediately after washing their hands, each must sprinkle some clean “holy water” behind their back to stave off evil spirits. They go through a ritual cleansing of their hands, and then on clean banana leaves reserved for this purpose, they take turns spooning portions of each dish for the dead loved one’s spirit. This is also done in a ceremonial way: they form a circle, placing precisely three pieces or spoons of each food item in the banana leaf, and the food is served always with the right hand, cradled at the elbow or wrist by the left hand.

Once the food for the deceased is set aside, the next step is to collect on a tray (not a banana leaf) some consumable items dear to the deceased so that the select members may take them into the shrine in a solemn procession. In the case we documented, this included a packet of cigarettes and matches, a favorite soda beverage, water and coffee. But the tray also included incense, wax candles, and a traditional Indian lamp or *diya* (which our hosts called a “local candle”) made from dough and shaped like a cup or crucible and filled with oil and a cotton wick. The seven select members of the funeral feast group included 3 men and 4 women. All were dressed in casual black clothing, including t-shirts, except for one man at the back of the procession. We discovered that he remained in regular

clothing since he was a friend of the deceased but unrelated to the family. Each of the women's heads were covered by a black scarf, and all seven members wore matching funeral ribbons of purple and white to signify their status both as special members of the feast group and as mourners.

For the procession (done in silence), the food for the dead is carried out first by a daughter, followed by a grandson who was charged with lighting the candles and incense. Slowly reaching the shrine, the grandson entered the space first to produce light inside. Then the procession kneels and carefully sets each item into the shrine in turn, remaining for some time in a position of prayer, meditation or reflection. One male member, in this case the family friend, stands guard at the rear of the procession carrying two ceremonial items: a smoldering log or "torch" and a machete or "cutlass" as it is called by Lucians. The shrine portion of the ceremony concludes when the supplicants rise and make their way out of the shrine space into the family home for their ritual meal.

Before the waiting guests can begin the feast, the seven processioners first gather in the house and sit in a circle on the floor where they are each served a portion of the prepared food items, again on banana leaves. In the middle of this circle, a banana "plate" is ritually set for the deceased, who is included in the group by receiving a serving of rum. Once the select group begins their meal, eaten with their fingers, everyone else begins to feast, and the solemn atmosphere turns to merriment. The many guests were served their fill from long tables set outside and the party went on for many hours.

5. Analysis: Global and Glocal

If the particular history, culture, or religion of any one island in the Caribbean is, indeed, the composite result of a series of transnational processes over time, it is then critical to consider the global effects on the production of locality and the local construction of globality, or "glocality" [27].

The most important way that Indian heritage appears passed down in the St. Lucian context—recognizably and significantly—is through funeral rituals, commonly called "feasts", or "dinners" by Lucian-Indians. From our interviews and documentation of a funeral feast, some noteworthy features emerged. We find the Lucian-Indian funeral feast is laced with reconfigured Hindu symbolism. Our case study focuses squarely on Roudometof's call to identify the "glocal" in culture and religion, and we will draw upon his heuristic categories of glocal-cultural hybrids: *i.e.*, *vernacularization*, *indigenization*, *nationalization*, and *transnationalization* [28]. We expect to show that indigenization and transnationalization are clearly identifiable elements in the funeral feast we analyze, whereby the "glocal turn" is revealed as "continuous processes of hybridization and of incorporation of cultural items borrowed from elsewhere" ([28], p. 1020). We further attempt to unpack and decode the global and the glocal by dissecting various material and non-material elements that relate to the performance of the feast.

5.1. The Global

To be glocal, there must be an identifiable global stream to influence and blend with the local. Among the potential global streams, we consider these most important: (i) aspects of global culture (material and non-material); (ii) the Indian diaspora itself (that section of it that is constituted by descendants of indentured laborers in St. Lucia); (iii) its global imaginary (which involves negotiating the disjuncture between their historical place of origin and contemporary settlement, and which continues to be shaped and re-shaped by their sense of collective ethnic identity that connects the idea of "India" with memories of "Hindu" practices); (iv) the global religions of Hinduism and Christianity; and finally (v) pan-Caribbean relations and influence (which raises a theoretical point we address later). For example, identifiable items of global material culture include the aforementioned t-shirts worn by the males in the feast procession printed with the international brands Nike and Adidas, and other "feast" paraphernalia such as rum (exported around the world), the plastic tray, and candles, to name a few. Since these same items can be purchased almost anywhere, we would not offer them as

glocal. Global non-material culture would include the fashion of t-shirts, consumerism, and other ideas behind global branding and consumption (such as Ritzer's well-known concept of *McDonaldization*).

5.2. The Glocal

Among the category of glocal elements, we offer: (i) the singularity of the feast ceremony as distinct from its Hindu origin; (ii) the shrine, or the "special place"—referred to by the locals as a "house" constructed for the sole purpose of the funeral feast; (iii) foodways related to the "dinner"; (iv) the home-made candle that supplements the ubiquitous wax candles and was conspicuously significant to the performance of the rite; and (v) the constitution and performance of the processional group of seven members, including their black clothing and head coverings (for women), as well as the funeral ribbons.

The feast ceremony is informed by Hinduism but has been thoroughly blended with the local. Hindu death and post-mortem rituals in India vary according to family, caste, sect, and region; however, most Hindus generally draw from two bodies of Hindu texts: the Vedas and the *Garuda Purana* – a funeral liturgy. In contemporary practice, most Indian and diasporic Hindus tend to follow the latter more than the former. Significant to our case, the Hindu last-rites (*antam samskara*) mandated in the rite of transition requires:

On the 3rd, 5th, 7th or 9th day, relatives gather for a meal of the deceased's favorite foods. A portion is offered before his photo and later ceremonially left at an *abandoned place*, along with some lit camphor [29]. (Emphasis Added).

This liturgical tenet for the ritual meal, and its ceremonial offering at "an abandoned place", is but one part of a multi-phased and elaborate *sraddha* (post-mortem rites)—a ceremony that lasts ten to thirteen days as part of a purification process for the family, as well as a rite of passage for the spirit to become a *pitr* or ancestor.⁵ The Lucian-Indians, however, have collapsed an elaborate, days-long process to a single-day, a singular ritual that is particular to Lucian-Indian praxis. The practitioners have no direct knowledge of Hindu customs but describe what they do as "Indian"—the emic view is therefore more ethnic than religious. From that, and the fact that many of the migrants were from lower castes arrived poor, and were forced to convert to Christianity, it makes sense that a collapsed ritual would evolve—one that skips most of the purification and instead emphasizes the communal celebration.

The Hindu liturgical rationale for the "abandoned place" remains a distinct part of the funeral feast in the Lucian context, but local dynamics produce a unique spiritual space that takes the physical form of a spirit-house. The shrine is constructed to look like a mini-shed with an altar, covered with palm leaves and festooned with colorful (plastic) garlands, where the special dinner for the hungry and thirsty spirit is placed (see Figure 2). As one interviewee observed:

When grandfather died we had a dinner. . . . They had a "special place" where they would place it [dinner] . . . [Recently] it baffled me: they had decorated a little house and everybody was dressed in black and white shirts . . . as if it was a Church ceremony . . . but all food at the feast was Indian. [Emphasis Added].

What this respondent and others confirmed is that the construction of a physical shrine is a variant local feature that was not previously practiced. Our respondents were unable to provide a rationale for this change to a physical construct of the "special place", nor for making public what used to be isolated and private. When prodded about this, their replies fell along the lines from another interviewee who said:

⁵ Indeed, the *Garuda Purana* [30–33] carefully lays out the complex outline for various rites distinct to each of the purification stages in three different chapters.

... we accept everything ... nobody asks questions ... The old Indians, they know how to do everything and they volunteer.

Our etic interpretation is that the increase in trans-Caribbean movement of people, and subsequently of norms and ideas, has resulted in imitation of the Guyanese or Trinidadian “*kutiya*” or religious shrine and thus has led to a Lucian inclusion of the same in their funeral feast [34,35]. Also, there is no longer the perceived need to hide this “Indian” ritual from intolerant Christians, as in the colonial past.

A parallel ritual, similar to Hindu counterparts in India, is drawing on the floor of the sacred space with white rice flour. In Trinidad, this tradition of “drawings in coloured rice flour and multi-coloured powders around the area of a house or temple consecrated as [a] prayer ground” ([36], p. 137) is known as *kohbar*.⁶ A closer look at the *kohbar* inside the shrine we observed reveals that the drawing is clearly meant to resemble the Union Jack (refer again to Figure 2). This global artifice is complicated: on one hand it celebrates their British and perhaps Christian identity, but on the other it bears the legacy of empire, colonialism, and the brutal Kala Pani passage related to an indentureship that cut their link with their original homeland. Yet, none of our interviewees at the funeral feast or elsewhere were able to identify a name in the local lexicon for the geometric floor pattern, nor provide a particular reason for the Union Jack motif.

As mentioned previously, the non-quotidian food and beverage items at the feast (such as *dalpuri*, various forms of *tarkari*, mutton, fish, *gulgulla*, and rum) reveal local particularization of Indian foods used in Hindu funeral rituals elsewhere. The Lucian-Indian feast foods are specially prepared to reflect their collective memory of Hindu customs (as reflected by the *Garuda Purana*, Chapters III and IV), but the “Indian” food items themselves are refracted through local lenses. For instance, the Lucian *dalpuri* is closer to its Indo-Caribbean counterparts (arguably, there is variation even in intra-Caribbean cuisine) than to the North Indian preparation [37,38]. In the Lucian (and pan-Caribbean) variant, the *dalpuri* is generally made with white flour and split peas and is pan-tossed, unlike its Indian counterpart that is typically made with whole wheat flour, Bengal gram or lentils, and is very much deep-fried. In St. Lucia, accessibility to yellow split peas rather than Bengal gram or moong beans accounts for some of this. But the variation is also a consequence of intra-American agro-trade in the nineteenth century that led to using first wheat flour and then bleached flour that replaced whole wheat flour throughout the Caribbean. Another divergence is that Indian Hindus serve rice balls (*pindas*) and other items such as *ghee* (clarified butter) that are dissimilar from the food items served in the St. Lucian feast [31,32].

What is a common thread, however, in both the sub-Continent’s funeral foodways and the Lucian one, is the significance of three servings of each item (described earlier). This may stand as a remnant global practice, since it is done identically in India and St. Lucia. Likewise, it is significant that banana leaves, rather than a plate or a lid, were used to cover the food—these leaves are not used on an everyday basis either in Lucian or in Lucian-Indian households. This feature also seems global, since those leaves are used for funeral feasts in India as part of a Hindu religious dictum against encountering a non-pollutant, and because it is a pan-Caribbean practice. Among Indo-Trinidadians, Aisha Khan describes the “pollution ideology” of “*juthaa*” (pronounced joot-ta)—a Hindi/Urdu word for food “defiled by eating, drinking, or using otherwise”—and she elaborates on the extension of this concept: “*Juthaa* in this sense does not refer to regurgitated food, that which already has been consumed; it signifies the remaining food that has been symbolically tainted by association with another person (really, another person’s essence, concretized as bodily substance, e.g., saliva, sweat, etc.)” ([39], p. 246). Whereas among Indo-Trinidadians this “pollution ideology” is extended to describe other aspects of defilement, in St. Lucia, its conceptual meaning is neither recognized nor extended in this way. We believe this is largely because of: (a) St. Lucia’s very small East Indian minority that has not

⁶ It is called an *alpana* in Hindi or *kolam* in Tamil.

managed to salvage this cultural norm; and (b) its geopolitical insularity from Caribbean societies with larger majorities of East Indians, since the pollution norm is observed by Indo-Caribbeans not just in Trinidad and Tobago but also in Guyana, Suriname and Jamaica [40–46]. In those places, intra-Caribbean movement of Hindu ritual specialists is a norm, whereas in St. Lucia the better survival strategy would have favored integration over maintaining a manifestly Hindu identity.

Earlier we discussed the inclusion of a home-made candle made of flour dough, shaped into a lamp, containing oil and three wicks that was used in the funeral procession; it was ceremonially carried by the grandson, along with a bowl containing incense made out of potpourri. Our interviewees labeled it a “local candle” but it is a “*diya*” or “*dheep*” when used for worship among Hindu families in India. The coexistence of a traditional lamp and wax candles is again significant, since it mixes a traditional Hindu ritual feature with a non-Hindu one more common in Christian church rituals. The particular symbolism, meaning, and interpretation of the consumables and the “light” brought to the spirit of the deceased are not exactly comparable to their Indian antecedents nor are they comparable with the larger Caribbean trio (Guyana, Trinidad and Suriname). Despite this, Lucian-Indians assert as essential the inclusion of the *diya* because they know that it is “Indian”. Once more, the emic lack of knowledge about the proper name or symbolism does not alter the fact that it is glocal, while it also emphasizes the cultural imaginary of “Indian” as ethnic more than religious.

Some Lucian-Indians perform the feast procession with men only while others have a mix of women and men, yet the constant is seven members. The procession we documented had four women and three men and was led by the daughter of the deceased. This gender structure is not what the *Garuda Purana* prescribes, but it has become common custom even among contemporary Indian-Hindu and diasporic Hindus in the absence of a son of the deceased who would otherwise lead the rites. We posit that two historical, global trends are at work in this shift of gender role and status. First, the Hindu funeral ritual that began in the nineteenth century in St. Lucia would have required constructing a “special place” in the woods, outside the purview of the established secular and religious authorities, which reinforced this ceremony as an all-male affair (*i.e.*, one meant to “protect” women from having to make their way through a dark, dangerous forest full of spirits and wild animals). The contemporary “Indian” funeral practice is less discreet in the context of more flexible and liberalized norms of ecumenical propriety, thereby allowing for an altogether different space, one that allows women to be active co-participants. Second, the globalized shift in women’s roles, and their relative rise in status over colonial times is reflected in both the Indian and Lucian context. Beyond the direct global and ethnic tie of the ritual itself, there is perhaps an indirect influence from the global spread of industrialization that has caused the same phenomenon to evolve independently [44]. This aspect, then, does not appear glocal by our chosen framework.

Also noted earlier was the color and type of attire donned by the seven processioners. Two of the men wore black t-shirts emblazoned with the global brands Nike and Adidas, while the women were more formally attired in black Christian “church dress” and head scarves, a custom quite different from their Indian counterparts who wear exclusively white mourning garments. The Lucian-Indian procession, then, is clearly a glocal affair. The use of a purple and white bereavement ribbon pinned to their clothing is common among Catholics and is reflective of their Christian experience. The women’s head-cover, a black scarf, mimics those of Hindu women who are required by tradition to cover their head, particularly during a prayer ritual, but the Lucian-Indians more closely mimic the Catholic influence of proper reverence during worship.

When the seven go through the “purification” ritual of washing their hands and feet, followed by sprinkling some water behind their back, this harkens to Hindu rituals that employ “holy water” to stave off evil spirits. In traditional Hindu custom, the “holy water” is the water of the River Ganga/Ganges known as “*ganga pani*”, but in many parts of India tap water is used to symbolically represent “*ganga pani*”. Among the Lucian-Indians we interviewed, the symbolism of the purification ritual was unknown. The procession is representative of the five Brahmin priests or in some instances

nine, who are required to conduct the funeral rites of the deceased in Hindu families in India [31]. Significant here, in the case of the Lucian-Indians, is not just the retention of representatives of the Hindu priesthood, but the number seven (rather than five or nine). Seven is a prominent holy number in Christian traditions.

All of the characteristics emphasized above reflect the glocal and can be identified with two of Roudometof's glocalization classifications: indigenization and transnationalization. As shown above, "Indian" funeral practice has been *indigenized* through the fusion of religious and ethnic categories "in the absence of political authority" to create and re-create a symbiotic cultural product that assures a survival of Lucian-Indian history and a cohesive root identity. Hinduism has thus contributed to a public performance in a public-private space and can be sensed in the cultural reproduction of the funeral feast by Lucian-Indians. *Transnationalized* glocalization is evidenced in Lucian-Indians, since what we document reveals how they "reconstitute their ties to both host and home countries [as] they engage in a creative process of blending elements from both points of reference" ([28], p. 1028). In the context of a decentralized Hinduism and the absence of a clerical hierarchical authority, Lucian-Indians have successfully navigated their cultural and political space in their current homeland to creatively reconstitute their "Indian" customs relating to a final rite of passage from their land of origin. Their adaptations and reconfigurations demonstrate concomitant and non-sequential glocalization that are both *indigenized* and *transnational*.

One aspect from our analysis that invites more attention is the assertion that what is pan-Caribbean is sufficient to count as the "global in the local". This may require a revised or expanded understanding of globalization by our reading, but we defer to those with wider knowledge of globalization theory. For now, we can see no reason, given the framework employed here, to prevent such usage.

6. Conclusions

This paper was an ethnographic summary and analyses of how religious rituals involving Hindu funeral rites have been glocalized, retained, and adapted to the specific context of both acculturation and assimilation in St. Lucia. For Lucian-Indians, there is an absence of "many factors that help to keep alive (albeit in modified form) cultural patterns from the home country ... [such as] strong immigrant communities and institutions, dense ethnic networks and continued, transnational ties to the sending society" ([40], p. 963). In St. Lucia we did not find forms similar to those observed by Keith McNeal [41], such as overt "Shango-Baptist interface" or the "Hinduizing" of Orisha praxis.⁷ What we see instead in St. Lucia is more subtle, and more akin to Rocklin's description in Trinidad of the subaltern's contesting of colonial institutions of religion by "crossing reified religious lines" through "norm-bending practices"[42], an adaptation and negotiation of memory to shape and reconfigure current and future identity.

We have argued that indigenized and transnational glocalization is concurrently evident in the Lucian-Indian funeral context. But in closing we dwell on the need to consider how much of what is glocal is informed by non-material construction—in this case a reification of what is an Indian imaginary. As Kaufman writes, "Innovation does not happen in free form but within the parameters of constrained disagreement. Divergent innovations must retain enough remnants of the original form to remain discernible to viewers familiar with that tradition" ([43], p. 338). It is not merely structure that shapes social actors/denizens and supplies a certain meaning. Instead, social actors/consumers create and add meaning to the cultural factors and thereby bring meaning to their lives.

In this Lucian-Indian case, we might celebrate the glocal. Early conversions to Christianity, whereby Catholic or Methodist church institutions substituted for Hindu institutions, have in turn led to an effacing of many Hindu religio-cultural norms and rituals. But modern Lucian-Indians are

⁷ See his excellent historical ethnography of Hindu and African alter-cultural religious experiences in Trinidad and Tobago in the context of globalization.

not passive receivers of a dominant global or local culture: they have adapted and retained certain “Indian” cultural features in their social and spiritual lives, as in the memorial of a recently-dead family member who shares a still important (and altered) sense of Indian identity. In this sense, it makes little difference that such cultural constructions are poorly understood among Lucian-Indians themselves. Similar adaptations, such as those associated with gender and generation, should be further explored among comparable populations.

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