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## Beyond being koelies and kantráki

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# Beyond being *koelies* and *kantráki*

*Constructing Hindostani identities in the era of indenture, 1873-1921*

Margriet Fokken

- 1 The formal identities of Indian recruits established at local courts in colonial India should not be treated as a reliable description of who they were, but as a basis on which their interaction with the Indian and Surinamese authorities would take shape.
- 2 During recruitment, residence at the depot, on the ships and on the plantations, distinctions based on caste, gender, religion, culture, physical ability, skin colour, age and place of origin informed how individuals were treated by overseers, where they lived, and what opportunities and hierarchical positions were offered to them, an intersectional lens brings this into view.
- 3 The relative popularity of the worship of the goddess *Kali* among first generation Hindostani residents should be connected to their experiences of upheaval as migrants and indentured labourers.
- 4 Golab who made a successful return to India, Tetary who participated in resistance against plantation management, and the Widow Jankia Ramyad who successfully led a luxury store, are just some of the many examples that defy the image of Hindostani women as passive and submissive.
- 5 The term ‘settlers’ cannot be applied unambiguously to first generation Hindostani residents of Suriname, because many held on to the idea of returning to India one day.
- 6 ‘Home’ could mean different things at the same time for members of the first generation Hindostani residents: the place where their family and children resided, but also a cultural and religious place of origin and anchorage.
- 7 Hindostani residents did not remain passive socially, culturally and politically – as has been argued before – but participated actively in Suriname public culture from around 1895 and started to voice claims for citizenship from 1908.
- 8 Visual sources should be revalued as source for the study of everyday life and material culture.
- 9 The population of researchers at Dutch universities should become a better reflection of society, especially in terms of colour.
- 10 ‘We are never as steeped in history as when we pretend not to be, but if we stop pretending we may gain in understanding what we lose in false innocence.’ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) xix.