

The impact of the domestic market on industrialization was rudimentary due in part to the paternalistic concern of the state, which feared imported industrial products would corrupt the moral standards of the peasantry and consequently forbade the sale of most such products in the countryside. The state itself, acting as a substitute for the lack of free-market forces, was the chief agent of industrialization. However, its protective industrial policy from the Customs War with Austria (1906–1911) onwards was to a certain extent counterproductive since it prevented Serbia from reaping the benefits of international competition and made domestic products too expensive for the local population. As Calic rightly points out, in order to reach the level of developed nations a developing country has to combine protectionism with the diversification of domestic production.

In contrast to the pattern of development in major industrial nations, Serbia's proto-industrial production was too weak to resist the imported industrial products that threatened to flood the country up to the Customs War and not sufficiently diversified to serve as a powerful stimulus to the country's industrialization. The Serbian industry that did emerge (mainly textiles and food processing) was craft based and as such did not require sophisticated technology. The engineering sector remained relatively marginal, and Serbia largely had to resort to importing foreign-made, and as a rule technologically obsolete, equipment.

Other prerequisites for an industrial take-off were missing too: the lack of domestic capital and an extreme dependence on foreign investors who pursued their own interests, the lack of a geographically mobile and adequately trained labour force (the education system was poorly suited to the task it faced because it neglected elementary education and produced too many philosophy and law graduates), the volume of exports was only modest and the terms of trade unfavourable, the proportion of raw materials processed in Serbia and subsequently exported was also low, the country lacked a modern communications network, and so on.

To those studying Serbian history, Calic's book and the potential offered by pursuing her line of research in adjacent fields (nation building, the development of political institutions in a broad sense, the inclination to populist politics, studies in mentality and the history of ideas) give a sense of finally being on the track of the "material substratum" of something they perceive as it were intuitively. One can only hope it will encourage an unprejudiced and well-informed study of Serbia within Serbia itself.

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**MENON, DILIP M.** Caste, nationalism and communism in south India. Malabar, 1900–1948. [Cambridge South Asian Studies, 55.] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 1994. xvi, 209 pp. £30.00; \$54.95.

When one of my students was doing fieldwork training in Malabar, south-west India, he reported back home in surprise that the people he had seen passing by in a boisterous Red Flag demonstration early in the morning were marching in a silent religious procession the same evening. His surprise discloses not only the bias of a Western mind, bent on polar analysis, but is also indicative of a

fundamental aspect of the Indian situation: seldom do people belong to a social category which would claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of their complex identity. They are villagers, ancestor worshippers, low-caste Hindus and members of a peasant union, all at the same time. This convolution of identities comes out very clearly too in Dilip Menon's study of Malabar, for instance in his description of Bharateeyan, a man from a caste of temple officials who, like many others, became a communist without abandoning his religious identity and intellectual baggage (p. 133). The people described by Menon move in a number of social circles, combining divergent identities, activating those which their situation or interests demand, much to the confusion of an unprepared outsider.

What Menon aims at in this book is an inquiry into the historical origins of communism in Malabar. We are long since past the stage when Indian communism was studied by looking primarily at directives or political agents from Moscow. Menon breaks away from a much more deeply entrenched discourse, which sees communism basically as a political movement organizing workers and peasants for a militant class struggle. His book is a social history of communism, the origins of which he wants to trace not only by examining the organization of local agriculture, but also by investigating the various forms of worship and the intricacies of a rigorous caste system. Central in his analysis is the notion of community.

The notion of community has gained wide credence in the study of Indian history and society. It can be seen as an *a priori* sense of belonging together among subordinate groups or as a deliberate construction by interested elites. Whatever the interpretation adopted, common to both positions is the assumption that there is a coherence of interests or values within groups or communities which binds individuals together and engenders fixed entities. Menon makes the valuable observation that communities are always in the process of formation. They are negotiated between parties and represent aspirations, not achieved entities. He discusses several of these "communities under negotiation" in his study of Malabar.

In his first chapter he discusses the agrarian economy as a community of subsistence, focusing on the relations between *tharavadus* (landed properties) and small cultivators. Revising the concept of a peasantry burdened by the exactions of lord and state, he expounds the view that many small cultivators in Malabar benefited from tenancy legislation and successfully responded to growing market opportunities.

The next chapter centres around the community of worship. The larger temples in Malabar restricted entry to the upper castes. But the numerous shrines, where deceased ancestors, local heroes and Vedic gods rubbed shoulders, were the characteristic site of worship for a much larger community of upper and lower castes within village society.

Out of this shared culture of the shrines emerged an attempt to ensure a more restricted community of caste equals, which is the subject of the third chapter. A much larger community, not of caste equals but of equal Hindus, is what the National Congress tried to negotiate out of the multiple divisions within Malabar, especially after the violent uprising of the Muslim Mapillas. Yet the response to civil disobedience activities in Malabar was muted, mainly

because, according to Menon, nationalism did not specifically address the problem of caste inequality.

From the 1930s attempts were made to create wider secular identities in opposition to the moderate programme of Gandhi and the Congress. The last two chapters deal with this community of peasants versus landlords under the impact of the Depression. Falling prices and the drying up of sources of credit upset the earlier balance between *tharavadus* and lower-caste cultivators and led to the formation of peasant unions. These unions tried to eradicate caste by removing economic inequality. No longer were wider communities of caste, religion or nation being appealed to, but Menon refrains from introducing the concept of a community of class which many readers may have been eagerly waiting for. Since a single person could be a landlord, tenant and cultivator in different contexts, Menon believes it is extremely difficult to make rigid divisions along lines of class.

After Soviet Russia had entered the war in 1942, Malabar communists translated the party doctrine of cooperation in the British war effort into a programme of renegotiating rural relations. That programme included the revival of local shrine culture as the site of rural worship and community, making the communists responsible for the restoration of religious life in the countryside.

Menon's study makes excellent reading. He has consulted a wide variety of sources, including a lot of Malayalam publications that are not easily accessible to most Western researchers. His style is succinct, almost condensed, and in passing he challenges many established concepts and accepted views. I shrink from using the cliché, but this book is a must for all future students of the region.

Since this work is not restricted to the study of one single community, it does not suffer from the constraints inherent in attempts to subsume divergent interests and values under one communal identity. However, his juxtaposition of various communities raises another no less challenging problem that could have been brought out more clearly: where do the different forms of community overlap, cross-cut or impinge on each other, especially at the level of individual people?

Apart from that, communities are not only in the process of formation, they are also continuously threatened by processes of dissolution. The *tharavadu*-shrine complex reiterated the communities of subsistence and worship. Nevertheless, it was torn apart by a lower-caste Tiyya elite who became inclined to see the shrines more exclusively as manifestations of caste inequality and therefore tried to establish their own places of worship. The opening of temples to all Hindus threatened to divide especially the upper castes into hostile camps, while temperance, a major item of the Congress programme, was likely to hit the Tiyya toddy business, in so far as they had not already lost their trade to the Mapillas. Efforts to create a larger community often resulted in the exacerbation of conflicts at another level. This formation and dissolution of communities were processes that took place over time and a chapterization that does not deal with chronologically successive periods seems ill-suited to tackle this problem.

Finally, the Muslim community, although the largest single community, does not receive the attention it deserves. And the index could have been more extensive.

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