

REIMAGINING HISTORIES

SELECTED PAPERS FROM KERALA HISTORY CONGRESS

GENERAL EDITOR

Dr. N. GOPAKUMARAN NAIR



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'Reimagining Histories,' a compendium of research papers written by historians of eminence, emerging historians and young researchers seeks to encapsulate the various historical probings they are presently engaged in. This volume which addresses both the limits and the possibilities of the textualisation of history, is an off shoot of the first Annual Session of Kerala History Congress held in January 2016 at Thiruvananthapuram. It marks the ruptures in historiography during the last three decades: a shift towards discourses, identities, culture, community, consciousness etc.

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| | |
|---|-----|
| History, Traditions and Christianity: A Historical Analysis of Margamkalipattu Tintu K. J..... | 208 |
| ദേശീയതയുടെ സർവ്വദേശീയ പശ്ചാത്തലം - നോവലിൽ വർഷ കെ. എസ്..... | 218 |

POLITICAL HISTORY

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Pakistani Mappilas : Population Without State Heidi Sande Mariam | 237 |
| Socio- Economic Profile Of The Kadars Paper Presentation - Kerala History Congress - Thiruvananthapuram - 29 To 3 P Jan 2016 Thanooja Devi P. K..... | 245 |
| Role Of T. K. Madhavan In Vaikom Satyagraha : A Review Divya Chandran..... | 251 |
| Conceptualising Communalism Aneesudheen P. K..... | 262 |
| Evolving The Social Mind: Reforming The Dalits - T. R. Krishna Swami Iyer Dr. Saritha K. S..... | 268 |
| Trade Relation between Tellicherry and Chinese Markets: In the Context of English East India Company Trade Arun Thomas M. | 275 |
| പിල්ക്കാലമധ്യകാല കേരളത്തിലെ സമ്പദ്ഘടനയും ഭൂവിനിയോഗങ്ങളും: പാലയൂർ ചെമ്പോലക്കരണങ്ങളെ മുൻനിർത്തിയുള്ള വിശകലനം പി. അരുൺ മോഹൻ..... | 287 |
| Ships and shipbuilding in early south India as reflected in Sangam literature Shamli C. K. | 301 |

Evolving The Social Mind: Reforming The Dalits - T. R. Krishna Swami Iyer

Dr. Saritha K. S.

(Assistant Professor, Department of History, S. S. V. College, Valayanchirangara, Ernakulam)

Kerala society was a highly stratified with many glaring inequalities among different socio economic groups. The most important and numerically significant social category which is traditionally excluded from the main stream society is called 'Dalits'. Dalits were always on the marginalized sections of the Kerala society, inequality was the main source of this marginality which led to insecurity, injustice and exploitation. The denial of basic human rights, lack of access to land and other earning assets and occupations ultimately resulted into socio- economic deprivations of the dalits through the process of social exclusion and discrimination.

An attempt is made in this paper to understand the social mentality of 19th century Malabar society towards dalit and also to examine the works of T. R. Krishna Swami Iyer towards the upliftment of dalits.

Hegemony is described as a leadership or domination that is imposed. Gramsci defined hegemony as political, intellectual and moral leadership. It consisted in the capacity of a that way the leading force of a collective will.

The dominant class in Malabar is Brahmins. The position occupied by the Brahmins in Kerala society was in conformance with the caste system traditionally followed by the Hindus. Its origin can be traced to the Vedas.² The Purusha - Sukta hymn in Rig Veda mentions the four social classes or varnas.³ Besides there is also the interpretations of these scriptures by the 'centers of knowledge' and the creation of apparatuses including mythologies⁴ which further validate caste and untouchability. We witness here the confluence of hegemony employed by civil society in different ways with hegemony exercised by the state⁵ in a concurrence that preserves caste and untouchability, notwithstanding the fluidity of these concepts and their different construal from. It appears impossible not to perceive that this hegemonic religious ideology justifies an apparently immutable stratification of society, hence providing a validation for the presence of subaltern groups within the caste system.