

**Call for Papers  
to Session 197**

on the XVIth World Economic History Congress, Stellenbosch, 9-13 July, 2012:

**INTERROGATION OF CASTE-ECONOMY IN SOUTH ASIA**

The systematic study of caste system began in colonial period under the Orientalist knowledge project. The Orientalist interpreted caste system by heavily relying upon the Brahmanical-Sanskrit scriptures setting comparison with class. They defined caste predominantly as a religious construct and depicted it as a socio-religious phenomenon. Marxist scholars considered caste as a part of super-structure and therefore, never engaged in revealing material aspects of caste system. The postcolonial scholarship has also refused to see caste as a material system taking cultural/ linguistic turn. Phule and Ambedkar, who led the struggle for the annihilation of caste, offered a comprehensive critique of caste by spelling out various aspects of caste-economy.

Caste remained unique system of exploitation and domination where relationship of production...  
...relationship of workmen to workmen has been consecrated by religion. Endogamy played a key role in the mode of production and distribution of surplus. Caste as an economic system evolved complex web of surplus appropriation based on graded inequality and exploitation. Formal Economics being heavily burdened by empirical method never attempted to unfold the economy of Caste.

The Study of Caste economy required a coherent theoretical and methodological frame. Single discipline like Economics, political science, history, could not unfold the material aspects of caste. Sociological studies of caste hardly narrate economic characteristic of caste system.

Against this background we have to evolve an innovative eclectic and interdisciplinary approach where sociological-anthropological paradigms will blend with economic method.

The Economy of Caste should be interrogated with varied methodological and theoretical endeavors. In the proposed session, a study of caste-economy will be undertaken under the historical trajectory from Ancient times to Modern. We will explore the linkages of caste with patriarchy. We will probe the issue of the ownership of land and occupation and its role in socio-economic relations of production by unfolding the mechanism of caste mode of production and exchange taking place in caste society. We will unfold the role of state, religion and market in the appropriation of surplus taking place in caste society. We will also try to locate the cultural practices, caste conflicts and their grounding in the political economy of caste. With the advent of the capitalist mode of production, caste has undergone rapid change and has adapted itself to capitalist interests. In this session, we hope to explore the complex systemic interrelationships between caste and class.

Proposals for papers are welcome and should be sent to the corresponding organiser.

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