



The Warrior Merchants: Textiles, Trade and Territory in South India

Mattison Mines

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The standard image of Indian society emphasizes its largely agrarian economy and parochial outlook, yet this image ignores the major economic and political role of commerce and artisan production. This book presents a study of one of the most important artisan-merchant communities, the weavers, who form the second largest sector of the south Indian economy. It thus offers an important corrective to the unbalanced picture that we have of Indian social organization from those accounts that have focused almost exclusively on agrarian society. Professor Mines traces the role of the weaver-merchants in the organization, of south Indian states and society from the medieval period to the present, and shows that at times in their history they rivalled the status and power of the agriculturalists. He also demonstrates that, far from being provincial, the weavers have for centuries maintained supralocal organizations to administer their affairs and represent their interests. As the political economy has changed, so they have modified their organizations and created new ones better to fit changing conditions and interests.

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