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**Sociopolitical Legitimation of Namboodiri Brahmins in Kerala:
An Institutional Entrepreneurship Perspective**

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Abstract

How did Brahmin immigrants to Kerala acquire legitimacy from the indigenous Dravidian population? Building on theories of institutional change, I propose a framework where legitimacy for Brahminic vision of social and financial superiority was acquired in the Dravidian field by deploying rhetorical strategies and creating a feudal agricultural oligarchy. The Brahminic vision exploited imbalances of the Dravidian field and reduced environmental uncertainty by proposing normative solutions that elevated the status of dominant Dravidian actors, while also generating profits for themselves. This began a virtuous cycle of legitimacy and profits. This study (a) advances institutional entrepreneurship research by integrating models of institutional change with rhetoric and feudal organizations, and (b) extends scholarly understanding of how rhetoric can alter institutions and create antithetical ones.

Keywords: Dravidian, Brahmin, rhetoric, institutional change, indigenous populations



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