Jayanta Sengupta, *At the Margins: Discourses of Development, Democracy, and Regionalism in Orissa,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 442 + xiv, ₹1195 (Hb)

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It is a matter of emerging consensus in social science discourse on India that language as a marker of identity is going through a process of erasure, an oblivion that very few are in the mood to lament for. With both frontal and creeping attacks on different sides from other aspects of identity, such as religion, caste and sexual preference, language seems to be resigned to a gradual fading away as a source of collective dreams and actions. But things were very different until the 1960s; for two generations in India's political life, across the divide of decolonisation till the seventh decade of the twentieth century, language-based sub-nationalism provided the bricks with which the house of pan-Indian nationalism was constructed. Things are very different today. Development is the reigning monotheistic devata of Indian politics; its real, imagined and promised versions animate TV showrooms, podia from where political speeches are made and our dreamscapes. Linguistic passions under the reign of development live peripheral lives. The only real passion for language is the lust for English; by popular diktat that seems to be the only language worthy of emotions.

In such a sociopolitical milieu, *At the Margins* speaks to the concerns of the times by digging up a not that well-known case that is actually the prototype of linguistic mobilisation in the Indian subcontinent; this is the case of creation of the province of Orissa as an administrative unit of British India in 1936. It is not a very well-known fact perhaps that Odisha was the first successful case in colonial South Asia of language being used as a tool of mobilisation to carve out an administrative unit for the speakers of the language. Odisha has always been imagined at the margins of everything. When the British conquest of Eastern India took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Odia-speaking areas were incorporated into three separate provinces: the Bengal Presidency, the Madras Presidency and the Central Provinces. Apart from the Odia-speaking areas directly under the administration of the British, the speakers of the language were also strewn across twenty-six princely states.

Due to the late onset of colonisation and the marginality of Odia-speaking areas in administrative units dominated by speakers of other languages (with greater number of speakers), the Odia upper caste elite found itself doubly disadvantaged. Therefore, from the very beginning, the Odia elite and its conceptualisation of the Odia nation developed as a response to this marginality. This elite tried to forge an Odia nation by trying to yoke together the fertile coastal tracts that formed its 'core' habitation with the hilly forested tracts of the interior dominated by tribals. With the formation of the Utkal Union Conference (UUC) under the leadership of Madhusaudan Das in 1903, the demand for the consolidation of all Odia-speaking areas under one administrative unit gathered steam. The UUC evoked the picture of Odias as a wronged race, and tried to fashion a regional identity based on putatively shared language and culture. The author argues that this movement had a limited

class character; its demands were primarily related to linguistic identity, education and employment in the colonial bureaucracy, and reflected the interests of middle-class, upper caste Odias. This was a serious limitation of the Conference's politics. But its efforts helped shape the foci around which Odia politics still revolves—the twin challenges of regional development and autonomy.

In 1912, the province of Bihar-Orissa was carved out from Bengal Presidency with Odisha being attached to Bihar to provide it with a 'seaboard'. This was widely perceived by the Odia elite as a betrayal by the colonial state. By the late 1910s and early 1920s, a new group of Odia politicians had arrived on the scene for whom the politics of UUC neglected the concerns of the masses. These new leaders, such as Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and Godavaris Misra, chose to work with the Congress whose politics was developing a mass character under Gandhi at that point of time.

The Odia movement claimed to speak for the Odia nation. But the author argues that for a large part, this movement worked at a distance from the real issues and concerns of the broadest mass of the Odia-speaking people. As the movement lacked mass engagement, petitioning the colonial authorities and holding public meetings for articulating one's concerns were often the sole means of putting forward the demands of linguistic unification and regional autonomy. By the 1920s, because of participation in the Indian National Congress by many leaders active in the Odia movement, local-level issues having a greater relevance to people's lives, a large number of them related to the agrarian condition, started assuming salience.

The deliberations in the colonial administration regarding the demands of the Odia movement, and the arguments being put forward by the movement itself for unification and autonomy, often revolved around the question of boundaries and funds. The proposed Odisha province was often perceived as a 'deficit' region with respect to administrative finance; this delayed the acceding of the demand for a separate province. Therefore, a key debate around which the movement was divided was whether to demand for a separate province for all Odia-speaking people in British India or to settle for the more limited demand of unifying them under any one administrative unit of the colonial state; even this proved factitious and divided the movement. The movement got its key demand accepted when Odisha was created as a province of British India in 1936.

Around the time of independence, the cracks in the Odia nation that was being forged came out in the open when the Odia-speaking princely states joined together with the Chhattisgarh states to form an 'Eastern States Union' that tried to argue for a Koshal identity opposed to the Odia identity. But by 1 January 1949, the process of merger of the princely states with the state of Odisha was complete. In the postcolonial era, the author argues, the state's elite hegemonised the discourse surrounding development and democracy by arguing a case of regional deprivation and biases in the national distribution of resources. The identity of Odisha as a state (an identity formulated and dominated by the upper caste, middle-class elite) is foregrounded by this elite at the cost of all other identities and interests. Despite subaltern challenges against this state of affairs, an alternative is yet to emerge.

The author posits that although no alternative political framework is in sight (apart from the regional Odia identity premised on a logic of regional marginalisation and demands for an equitable share of national resources), the image of Odisha as a quiet, marginal backwater is changing. There has been significant politicisation of traditionally marginalised communities, especially the Scheduled Tribes, by the Hindu Right. The dangerous impact of such politicisation and the resultant mobilisation has led to bitter harvests of hate, as seen in the anti-Christian riots in Kandhamal in 2008. The implications of such a process for the Odia regional identity are not yet clear.

A key dichotomy that animates the arguments and descriptions of this book is between 'the regional' and 'the local'. This dichotomy maps onto a key argument that the book makes. It argues that from the last third of the nineteenth century onwards, the regional linguistic articulation of a cultural identity—that of Odia-ness—started to seek a mediating role for itself between the 'Odia race' and the colonial administrative machinery. Whereas the bulk of the problems of the toiling masses were apparently of a 'local' character, the 'regional' articulation of identity rode roughshod over it and chose to ignore such local problems. Although the book does not consciously use class analysis as a methodological tool, it uses a perceived class divide as an analytical device to explain certain historical phenomena in the life history of the Odia-speaking people under and after colonialism.

The book is also a self-conscious intervention against the continuity thesis which argues for significant continuities across the colonial divide. The loss of language as a strong binding glue in postcolonial Odisha's political and social life is seen as a major discontinuity in the postcolonial period. This is true. But a significant fact (a discontinuity) of postcolonial Odia politics is left completely unexplained by the book. Until 1980, Odisha's politics was marked by instability, with no government able to finish its term. But since that year, the politics of the state are marked by a remarkable degree of stability. This has also been a period where the political dominance of the Karana jāti in Odisha seems complete, with the state having a Karana chief minister at the helm of its affairs for around 34 years of the 35 years since 1980. This is worth drawing attention to as the author very correctly identifies the tussle between Brahmins and Karanas as a key axis around which the state's politics have evolved, especially surrounding the period of decolonisation.

Further, this book builds a rationale for itself by arguing that although Odisha is a much neglected region in the social scientific discourse in India, it should not be so. It argues for the possibility that Odisha is in some sense a typical, and in many ways a 'pioneer', Indian state, from the studies of which some important insights regarding India's politics can be obtained. But, it can be argued with equal force and validity that Odisha is a very atypical state and that is the reason for studying it thoroughly, as it is the exceptions that prove the rule. I will just mention two facts here that make Odisha an 'exception': first, the birth rate of Odisha's population has been consistently lower than what it should be when seen in the context of the state's high death rate and infant mortality rate (this flies in

the face of most narratives of demographic transition) and second, identity politics based on caste and ethnicity (apart from some pockets) has been very conspicuous by its absence in the state, whereas issue-based movements, especially against large development projects, for example, against BALCO in western Odisha and a TATA project in Chilika, have been successful in stalling these projects.

The latter point has to be seen in the context of the significant rise of the Other Backward Class (OBC) jātis in a large number of North and South Indian states over the last three decades or so. So, any narrative that tries to capture the upheavals that Odisha has gone through over the last 150 years (that forms the canvas of the picture that *At the Margins* tries to paint) has to account for both the exceptional nature of Odia society and the many ways in which it fits into the larger patterns of Indian sociality. Whether the book under review does manage to do this is open for debate.

The book is beautifully produced and flawlessly edited, but there are quite a large number of scare quotes that sometimes distract from the arguments. There are a couple of factual errors in the book as well; on page 219 of the book, Surendranath Dwivedy is mentioned as a non-Brahmin leader when he is, in fact, a Brahmin. On page 308, it is mentioned that Biju Patnaik established a large textile mill in Chauduar in Ganjam, whereas Chauduar is located in Cuttack district. Despite these reservations, this is an important and necessary book and fills a big gap in the contemporary history of Odisha. It will be useful for students and scholars of Odia politics, and promises to become a landmark and a classic.

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Tabassum Ruhi Khan, *Beyond Hybridity and Fundamentalism: Emerging Muslim Identity in Globalized India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 218, ₹750

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The community of Muslims is the second majority community in India. It is ironical that the community has been relegated to minority status, discriminated as well as victimised at multiple levels and we are left with a landscape replete with signage of otherness. A maze of stereotypes circulates and rarely do we come across scholarly engagements capable enough to penetrate inside the wrapper of otherness. *Beyond Hybridity and Fundamentalism* by Tabassum Ruhi Khan is one such welcome effort. The book successfully challenges the dominant image of Muslim youth as fundamentalist in attitude and traditionalist in appearance.

Focused on the middle and lower middle class sections, the author frames her enquiry around four crucial yet overlapping axis: modernity, media, consumerism and aspirations among Muslim youths living in Zakir Nagar, Delhi. The