

over looting, theft, and corruption. Questions of class and status and the deserving vs. the undeserving become critical in this narrative structure—some received more than they lost, and corrupt officials and aid workers did not distribute goods fairly. A narrative division arises between “I” gave to my neighbors and received nothing and “they” (usually the poor) received much more than they lost.

This narrative provides the basis for the phrase “Golden Wave,” which becomes the symbol around which concerns of inequality, injustice, and corruption coalesce. In this book Gamburd uses her long experience in the region along with individual narratives to illustrate the points she is making in each chapter. Of particular interest should be her ability to discuss these issues with government and aid officials and to present their case—that in the face of an overwhelming natural event and a tsunami of foreign aid, many did the best they could within the political and economic structure in which they found themselves.

In the final two chapters Gamburd pursues two seemingly separate but ultimately related narratives. The first is the opportunity the tsunami afforded, according to some, for the creation of a national identity around the recovery process and ultimately for the end of the civil war. In 2005 the various factions came to an agreement in an effort to provide aid for those affected by the “Wave.” In her conclusions, Gamburd shows that all of the narratives demonstrate how “Under cover of disaster, capitalist interests can pursue neoliberal agendas, humanitarian workers can implement culturally inappropriate policies, and people pursuing international economic and political agendas can ignore or refuse local input” (p. 197)—a story that is repeated over and over from Nicaragua to New Orleans to Pakistan and beyond, and to which Gamburd has added rich narrative coupled with insightful analysis.

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The Right Spouse: Preferential Marriages in Tamil Nadu. *Isabelle Clark-Decès.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014, 204 pp. \$24.95, paper.

Isabelle Clark-Decès’s *The Right Spouse* offers a provocative rethinking of Dravidian kinship, a topic that underwrites the very history of anthropology. From Morgan to Rivers, Radcliffe-Brown to Lévi-Strauss and Dumont and to Trautmann and Trawick, Dravidian kinship has long been a fecund and contentious object of study. With her ethnography of kinship and marriage in periurban Tamil Nadu, India, Clark-Decès provides a next chapter in this history, a timely intervention into what is perhaps today an untimely topic.

Timely, because the lynchpin of Dravidian kinship in South India, “preferred” marriages between cross-kin (between cross-cousins, or a woman and her mother’s brother) are very much on the decline for a number of entangled “causes”: decreasing fertility and increasing age of marriage, female education, and social mobility within kin groups; the dissemination of scientific discourses about the harm of marriage with close-kin; and most important, as Clark-Decès points out, how such “causes” reflexively register and hence are themselves actively produced by those who are “affected” by them. Untimely, because the topic of kinship has, for better or worse, passed out of vogue in the discipline. This is reflected in the authors with whose work Clark-Decès most directly engages: Dumont, Lévi-Strauss, and Radcliffe-Brown. David Schneider is relegated to a quick footnote, and Margaret Trawick’s study of kinship in a Tamil family is made to metonymically sum up the Indianist work that followed in the wake of Schneider’s devastating critiques. Focusing on these authors allows the book to argue against views of kinship that privilege terminology (Chapter 2), a critique that Rivers already made of Kroeber in 1913 (published in *Kinship and Social Organisation*, pp. 1–27, London: Constable, 1914), as well as to point up the ways that kinship behaviors complicate and deviate from ideological reanalyses

of them (themselves presumably projected by kinship “systems”). This latter argument was made by Needham some forty years ago, and Anthony Good pursued it in the context of South Indian Dravidian kinship in the 1980s. It says something of the state of the study of Dravidian kinship that Clark-Decès’s interventions are still seemingly necessary, and that they significantly advance and complicate our understanding of kinship in this part of the world.

The first five chapters of the book present Clark-Decès’s view of Dravidian kinship, arguing against, most notably, Dumont’s alliance account (Chapters 1–2) and Trawick’s psychoanalytic account (Chapter 5). What emerges from the rich analysis is a complex picture of intersecting affects, forces, and strategies. This picture diverges from much of what has been written about kinship in South India. Moving beyond kin terms to opposing and intersecting cultural concepts such as *contam* (kin) and *anniyam* (non-kin, otherness), *murai* (right) and *urimai* (entitlement) (Chapter 2), and beyond cross-cousin marriage to “uncle-niece” marriage (Chapter 4), Clark-Decès shows how kinship is fraught with and caught in ambivalence between desires and anxieties for sameness and intimacy and for difference and hierarchy. Kinship is space of love, intimacy, and sacrifice but also violence, bitter competition, and ruination.

Marriage brings these dynamics together in their most acute form. This is not coincidental, for if kinship—as Clark-Decès’s materials suggest—is the dialectical and dynamic tension of such ambivalences (the sameness of kin becoming the difference of affinity, the perforation of intimacy by strange but exciting alterity, of equality giving way to rank, and sacrifice to status) then marriage is the event and institution—that is, the performative *medium* through which this kinship dialectic is most strained and generative. By detailing these tensions, Clark-Decès sets us up to appreciate the possibilities and dangers that inhere in their unfurling. In addition to the complexity that goes into determining spouse choice and all that entails, the book shows us matches gone wrong (Chapter 3) and “wrong” matches (Chapter 5); the violence of retribution when one cannot marry the “right” spouse (Chapter 2); the desire for and fear of non-kin as affines (Chapters 5 and 6), and the possibilities and impossibilities of “love” before and besides marriage (Chapter 7).

Detailing the empirical specifics of this kinship dialectic elucidates the understudied practice of marrying a girl to her mother’s younger brother (Chapter 4). Clark-Decès describes such marriages as a “sacrifice” by the brother to his elder sister and mother, a sacrifice of money and mobility (since dowries are smaller in such unions) and potential intrigue and novelty (for such a spouse may be disappointingly familiar) for the love of kin. In such marriages the man is circumscribed by his female kin. A form of affinity that brackets affinity, such marriages blur the line between in-laws and consanguines that constitutes kinship as such, collapsing these categories around the relationship between a mother and a daughter. This focus on the mother-daughter relation is novel and important, not only because it forces attention on a gender dynamic that is often ignored but also because it forces attention away from those neatly resolved symmetries that have been the focus of much work on Dravidian kinship. Such a marriage, Clark-Decès suggests, presents one asymptotic ideal (or extreme) within the dialectics of kinship (for these women at least), where one can give while keeping (for the girl is always already the man’s), where one can marry without losing kin or dividing property. At this limit, kinship folds in upon itself.

We can now see the other side of this dialectic—the desire for otherness beyond *contam* (the kin group)—*not* as an exteriority to Dravidian kinship as such, but as already entailed by it. Chapter 5 ends by noting that preferred marriages with close kin are also experienced as “boring,” as creating a space of captivity where everyone already knows everything about everyone. This experience is exemplified by Abi, Clark-Decès’s young research assistant (Chapter 6). Abi wants out of *contam* (kin group), out of her village. Although we may see Abi’s desire for exteriority and her avoidance of marriage with kin as exemplifying a

shift away from Dravidian kinship, I would stress that it is also already part and parcel of the becoming-otherness that Dravidian kinship presupposes and entails. The change that Abi embodies—a desire for marriage with *anniyam*—is, in some sense, already implied by the dynamics that generate the complex mosaic that Clark-Decès describes as normative Dravidian kinship (also see C. Nakassis, 2014, *Current Anthropology* 55:175–99). I say this not to discount the very real transformations that are going on in contemporary Tamil Nadu, but to underscore what I see as Clark-Decès’s important point: such changes aren’t simply driven by causes external to Dravidian kinship (thereby figured as a static tradition acted on by modernization, urbanization, liberalization, etc.) but are part and parcel of kinship as a medium through which social practices take shape in historical time and social space.

There are certain ways in which the arguments of the book work against their own critical interventions. For example, consider that the argument against a focus on kin terminology presents in its stead a focus on another set of terms, that of *urimai* and *murai*, *contam* and *anniyam*. Much of the book is devoted to exegesis of these words. Although this undoubtedly opens up a richer discussion of Dravidian kinship than reflection on the semantico-referential properties of kin terms, it misses an opportunity to fully expand the notion of kinship beyond cultural “concepts” as denoted by words into a fuller theoretical treatment of the pragmatics of kinship as such. Similarly, another of the book’s arguments is that previous attempts to define the “atom” of Dravidian kinship (e.g., male ego–mother’s brother for Radcliffe-Brown, to-be affinal men for Dumont, or brother-sister for Trawick) misses the importance of the mother-daughter relation implied in uncle-niece marriages, that “most critical bond of this most preferential marriage” (pp. 90–91). Although this is undoubtedly correct, one wonders if the project of finding *the* atom of Dravidian kinship itself misses the point: that Dravidian kinship, if it is anything, is a field of intersecting and partially contradictory tendencies, dialectically entangled ambivalences, desires and anxieties, rights and duties, sacrifices and fights, practices and metadiscourses—the very stage through which lives are lived; marriages are made and unmade; kinship is propelled, conserved, and altered.

The Right Spouse is a must-read for anyone interested in Dravidian kinship, South India, and kinship studies more generally. It makes many needed interventions in the literature, many of which question its fundamental assumptions. Dravidian kinship studies are and have been a fraught field, but as Isabelle Clark-Decès shows, so too is kinship. All the more reason to study it.

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Ayya’s Accounts: A Ledger of Hope in Modern India. Anand Pandian and M. P. Mariappan. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, 232 pp. \$24.00, paper.

Ayya’s Accounts is a gem of a book: fluid, accessible, moving, instructive, compact. It is a book with the word “hope” in its title and this means a lot. *Ayya’s Accounts* shows readers a globalized world that is not dehumanized. If I were teaching “Introduction to Anthropology,” I would assign this book right at the beginning.

The pleasures and depth of *Ayya’s Accounts* resist summary, but here are the contours containing its richness. Pandian, an anthropologist, grew up in the United States in one branch of a large South Indian family, a family that sustained close relationships across vast distances. Pandian’s co-author, M. P. Mariappan, who is his paternal grandfather, grew up in rural South India, where he experienced poverty and prejudice—although he did not necessarily call them by those names. He also lived “colonialism,” possessing a vivid recollection of singing “God Save the King” in his childhood schoolroom. As a very young man Mariappan followed