

BROKERING MARRIAGES: WAR, DISPLACEMENT AND PRODUCTION OF FUTURES AMONG JAFFNA TAMILS

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There is a long tradition of studying kinship in Sri Lanka. Given the centrality of marriage and kinship relations in the southern subcontinent, scholars have focused on marriage as being grounded in kinship rules and obligations rather than personal choice. These marriages are seen as a means of alliance formation between family groups, and as expressive of political, economic and caste negotiations, ensuring social reproduction and continuity within Sri Lankan kinship systems. The focus of Sri Lankan studies has shifted from kinship and marriage to ethnic conflict and political violence, scholars have focused on, ethnicity, violence, and displacement as their object of inquiry. Three decades of war and political violence in Sri Lanka have devastated the social and economic landscape of Sri Lankan communities, making their lives insecure and disrupting their livelihoods and relationships. But there is a relative dearth of literature that attempts to map out kinship and marriage in the time of political violence in Sri Lanka.

In my research 2004/2005, I engaged with brides and grooms who get married to Tamil Diaspora and leave Sri Lanka. My field research brought up interesting questions on whose Tamil marriage are we talking here? What kind of documentations, at site of embassies, are produced and circulate of making Tamil marriage? How the role of state/s constitute/s Tamil marriages? What is the emerging role of marriage broker? I suggest that one has to break away for the classical conceptual framework of kinship and marriage which is limiting us to understand the complicate process of movements of Tamils and Tamil kinship and marriage in the time of political violence. Which bring out the notions of state, citizenship and family upfront in order to rethink about kinship and marriage in the time of political violence. My paper deals with above questions.

Keyword: Kinship, Marriage, Political violence, Family, State, Citizenship

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