

CALL FOR PAPERS

EXAMINING THE PROCESSUAL IN KINSHIP AND FAMILY IN SOUTH ASIA

1-2 February 2018

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Within kinship today, the idea of being related and constructing relatedness has been revived through the insightful essays by Marshall Sahlins on ‘What is kinship?’ Despite the burgeoning literature and ethnographic findings on relationships, family and kinship—engaging with ideas as varied as assisted reproduction, transnational care work, surrogacy, blood donation, genetic counselling, same sex relationships, and more—we are once again at the point of seeking to understand the meaning of being kin.

This conference seeks to engage with the notion of kin, kinship and family by examining the idea of the ‘processual’ within the academic engagements on the subject. Relatedness and kinning have emerged as important conceptualizations within kinship. The study of the ‘processual’ has indeed come a long way since its invocation in Janet Carsten’s iconic ethnography in Pulaw Langkawi. The conversations between the idea of making and unmaking—and the resulting ambivalence (Peletz 2001) that marks kinship has been an essential exploration of kinship analysis, as seen in Signe Howell’s formulation of ‘kinning’ and ‘de-kinning’.

There is now a move towards understanding beyond the structural and normative constructions that underpinned the study of kinship, to exploring it as a lived reality. A focus on the processual is key to unearthing the different forms of engagement that being, becoming and unbecoming kin involves. At the same time, scholars like Miller (2007) have pointed out the dangers of swinging completely in the direction of the negotiated and experiential and ignoring the limits posed by the normative and the structural. The conference will focus on exploring this and other debates through emerging ethnographies in South Asia, which has for long been the site of rich ethnographic and theoretical insights into family, kinship and marriage. Recent volumes on marriage and its changing contours within the South Asian context (Kaur and Palriwala 2014, Clark-Deces, 2014, Basu and Ramberg 2015) have pointed towards the need for a renewed engagement with academic research on family and kin.

We seek papers on the following themes:

- Processes of kinship and family
- Lived relations of kinship and family
- Kinning and de-kinning
- Performing kinship
- Conflict and ambivalence
- Rejection and negotiation
- New rituals of kinship
- New reproductive technologies and family and kin making
- Law, state and morality in kinship

Please share your abstract of 300 words by 31 August 2017 via email to: southasia.kinship@gmail.com

Selected conference papers will be published as a special issue of a journal. Limited travel and accommodation is available for participants.

References

Basu, Srimati and Lucinda Ramberg (2015). *Conjugality unbound: Sexual economies, state regulation and the marital form in India*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Carsten, Janet (1997). *The heat of the hearth: The process of kinship in a Malay fishing community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clark-Decès, I. (2014). *The right spouse: Preferential marriages in Tamil Nadu*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Howell, S. (2003). Kinning: The creation of life trajectories in transnational adoptive families. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9(3), 465-484.

Kaur, R., & Palriwala, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Marrying in South Asia: shifting concepts, changing practices in a globalising world*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Miller, D. (2007). What is a relationship? Is kinship negotiated experience? *Ethnos*, 72(4), 535-554.

Peletz, M. G. (2001). Ambivalence in kinship since the 1940s. In Sarah Franklin and Susan McKinnon (eds), *Relative values: Reconfiguring kinship studies*, 413-444. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sahlins, M. (2013). *What kinship is-and is not*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.