SERIES FOREWORD

The politics of marriage (and divorce) is an often-used strategic tool in various social, cultural, economic, and political identity projects as well as in symbolic conflicts between ethnic, national, or religious communities. Despite having multiple strategic applicabilities, pervasiveness in everyday life, and huge significance in performing and managing identities, the politics of marriage is surprisingly underrepresented both in the international book publishing market and in the social sciences.

The Politics of Marriage and Gender: Global Issues in Local Contexts is a series from Rutgers University Press examining the politics of marriage as a phenomenon embedded into and intensely interacting with much broader social, cultural, economic, and political processes and practices such as globalization; transnationalization; international migration; human trafficking; vertical social mobility; the creation of symbolic boundaries between ethnic populations, nations, religious denominations, or classes; family formation; or struggles for women's and children's rights. The series primarily aims to analyze practices, ideologies, and interpretations related to the politics of marriage, and to outline the dynamics and diversity of relatedness—interplay and interdependence, for instance—between the politics of marriage and the broader processes and practices mentioned above. In other words, most books in the series devote special attention to how the politics of marriage and these processes and practices mutually shape and explain each other.

The series concentrates on, among other things, the complex relationships between the politics of marriage and gender, ethnic, national, religious, racial, and class identities globally, and examines how these relationships contribute to the development and management of social, cultural, and political differences, inequalities, and conflicts.

The series seeks to publish single-authored books and edited volumes that develop a gap-filling and thought-provoking critical perspective, that are well balanced between a high degree of theoretical sophistication and empirical richness, and that cross or rethink disciplinary, methodological, or theoretical boundaries. The thematic scope of the series is intentionally left broad to encourage creative submissions that fit within the perspectives outlined above.

Among the potential topics closely connected with the problem sensitivity of the series are “honor”-based violence; arranged (forced, child, etc.) marriage; transnational marriage markets, migration, and brokerage; intersections of marriage and religion/class/race; the politics of agency and power within marriage; reconfiguration of family: same-sex marriage/union; the politics of love, intimacy, and desire; marriage and multicultural families; the (religious, legal, etc.) politics of divorce; the causes, forms, and consequences of polygamy in contemporary societies; sport marriage; refusing marriage; and so forth.

Global Dynamics of Shi'a Marriages: Religion, Gender, and Belonging offers fascinating insight into why, how, and to what extent Shi'a Muslim marriages have been undergoing transformation in rapidly changing local and transnational contexts as a result of global developments, trends, and processes. Although the main focus is on the complex relationships between marriage practices and preferences as well as religious identities, value regimes, and institutions, the volume convincingly demonstrates that, in the case of Shi'a Muslim marriages, not only religious belonging shapes the meaning and patterns of marriage: nationality, ethnicity, generation, and class can also play a decisive role. Based on a brilliant investigation of the interplay between and context-sensitive hierarchies of religious and other forms of belonging, the volume argues against the widespread essentializing and deceptive practice where the imagination and meaning of being a Muslim is reduced to religious affiliation, commitment, and identity. Through analysis of various forms and aspects of Shi'a Muslim marriages—such as new dating practices, the politics of dowry, temporary marriages, or long-term changes in marriage patterns—the chapters provide the reader with a novel comparative perspective through which major similarities and differences between marriage practices among Shi'a Muslim communities in different parts of the world as well as the consequences of embeddedness of marriage practices within wider contexts of migration, transnationalism, and living in a diaspora can be effectively captured.

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