

provided a convenient excuse allowing both artifact hunters and museum curators to overlook the role of German colonialism in the process.

Aly pivots from this baleful narrative in the final third of the book. A chapter connecting the Luf boat to the wayfarers of “an ancient culture” quickly reviews what is known and hypothesized about the peopling of Australia, New Guinea, and Polynesia thousands of years ago by seafarers whose sailing technology was far superior to anything developed in the Mediterranean world.

A final chapter rejoins contemporary debates about the repatriation of looted cultural treasures. Here Aly shows us how, even today, much of the discourse of German ethnology museums is anemic or worse when it comes to reckoning with histories of collecting and colonial genocides. Remarks about working cooperatively with “source communities” appear side by side with the proclaimed responsibility these museums accrue to themselves to protect the cultural heritage of the entire world. In these discourses, “nebulous terminology” and “hypocrisy” abound, according to Aly (pp. 142–43), and they rarely result in ethically responsible action.

The Magnificent Boat is in one sense an easy read: Aly’s argument is evident from the outset, readily understood, and (I think) correct in its basic orientation. In another sense, however, the book is difficult to follow: the historical narrative jumps back and forth between decades, and historical actors appear and disappear and then reappear. Aly himself perhaps thought his story would be difficult to follow since an appendix provides “brief biographies” of some of the main characters (pp. 159–65). Had the narrative been constructed more carefully, such an appendix would not have been needed.

In the end, then, *The Magnificent Boat* is compelling as a magnificent diatribe, centered on a fascinating ethnographic artifact, but is not a well-crafted book.

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Onscreen/Offscreen. Constantine V. Nakassis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022, 400 pp. \$36.95, paper. ISBN 9781487541774.

In 2022, S.S. Rajamouli’s Indian Telegu-language epic drama film *RRR* took the world by storm when it became the third Indian film to be nominated for and win a Golden Globe last year. The song “*Naatu Naatu*” was also performed globally, making the lesser-known South Indian cinema accessible to an international audience. Before the global success of *RRR*, Indian cinema was typically associated with the Hindi film industry, known colloquially as Bollywood. However, there is growing interest in the regional film industries within India. There is a cult-like following for films produced in Telegu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada.

After more than a decade of ethnographic fieldwork in Tamil Nadu, Nakassis's monograph gives his readers an in-depth lens into the Tamil film industry's politics by asking: "What is an image"? He responds by studying and analyzing the ontological politics that occur in theaters, film sets, and everyday sociocultural lives in the region, often shaped by electoral, gender, and caste politics. Structurally, the book is divided into "Presence/Representation" and "Representation/Presence." The first half of the monograph centers on gendered politics in Tamil commercial cinema, and the second half explores the politics of parody and reality.

In the first part, the author engages with gendered politics in the Tamil film industry by giving us an insight into how the Tamil hero/actor is an object of mass obsession by the public. In contrast, the Tamil actress faces discrimination. She is discouraged by sociopolitical and cultural norms that prevent her from playing the role of the heroine—the object of sexual desire—once she is married (p. 96). The author observes, "Immediately after marriage, actresses generally shift away from being heroines: they begin to act as older sisters, sisters-in-law, or mothers, that is, they become character actors whose bodies are enveloped and shielded by the narrative" (p. 96). The author also observes that many film actresses also diverge into playing goddesses in devotional Goddess films or women-centric soap operas and reality television shows (p. 96). The author thus offers his readers a powerful insight into the gender politics that exist in the region of Tamil Nadu and suggests that a woman's desire and sexuality are often central to the cultural norms and customs that create conditions that discourage actresses from playing the roles of heroines—the subject and object of female desire.

In contrast, the first chapter, titled "The Hero's Mass," explores the author's experience of watching the film *Mankatha* (2011) in an Indian theater when a particular scene caused an uproar among the audience. In the movie, there is a moment when the actor Vaibhav Reddy slaps the iconic actor Ajith Kumar. While such a filmic scene may seem innocuous to us, this moment created a tense atmosphere, especially for Vaibhav following the film's release. The author later notes "that he [Vaibhav] was terrified of Ajith's legions of fervent fans who were furious with him, a relatively junior actor" (p. 29). Focusing on this controversial moment, the author questions two problematics: the image's *being* and the image's *doing* (p. 33). In doing so, he turns to the works of French film critic André Bazin to explore this question in his monograph. Through the case study of *Mankatha*, the author calls for the notion of "ambivalent realisms" (p. 55) in which the narrative of the slap's performativity offered "different, competing positions to engage with the image" (p. 55) and led to "a set of overlapping tensions – between 'class' and 'mass' films, story, star, character, actor, presence, and representation" (p. 57). Ultimately, through the analysis of parody and reality, as they are politically situated within the Tamil film industry, the author's central argument of his monograph encourages his readers to rethink how a film is perceived and not limit themselves to reading only a texture of a film. Instead, it is crucial to focus on its "cinematic context of happening" (pp. 204–5), which includes "the production, distribution, exhibition, other texts, and so on" (p. 205).

Onscreen/Offscreen thus makes a significant contribution to linguistic anthropology, film, visual and media studies, and South Asian studies. The author's extensive knowledge of the Tamil commercial film industry is evident throughout the book. By examining critical ideas concerned with performativity and ontology of images, spectatorship, realism, and presence, Nakassis's arguments contribute to bridging these fields of media studies and linguistic anthropology. As a pedagogical tool, this book will make an important addition to graduate media theory courses, and sections of it can also be helpful for undergraduate students interested in visual and linguistic anthropology in cinema and media studies. Finally, Nakassis's astute analysis of the gendered politics in Tamil cinema also offers a valuable new perspective in postcolonial feminist theory courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

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Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives.

M. Nazif Shahrani and Robert L. Canfield, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022, 404 pp. \$35.00, paper. ISBN 9780253066770.

The new edition of *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives*, a volume that grew out of a 1980 symposium and first appeared in 1984, comprises a Foreword and six parts, with each part containing several ethnographic studies dealing with the evolution of resistance against the Soviets and their client Afghan regime in the early 1980s.

In his introductory chapter, co-editor M. Nazif Shahrani delineates the ideological contours of the resistance. He provides a historical and social context for the centrality of Islam and the concept of *jihad* in the political culture of Afghanistan. Shahrani maintains that, as an alternative to the oppressive "Communist" rule, the "Islamic" resistance, led by educated urban and provincial activists, engaged in an armed struggle with a vision toward building a new sociopolitical order.

The rest of the contributors seem to generally agree that the resistance was a collective Islamic struggle motivated by an alternative moral/political imagination. Louis Dupree considers the measures taken by the "Communist" regime—and its Soviet patrons—as a catalyst for widespread rebellions and the subsequent displacement of millions of Afghans as refugees. In his analysis of the resistance in the Vaygal Valley Kalasha, David J. Katz shows that, from early on, an emergent active minority managed to sideline traditional Kalasha leadership in favor of the ideologically more inflexible "fundamentalist" elements; the latter dominated Nuristani power dynamics for years to come. Meanwhile,