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The Netherlands

Love, marriage and revolution

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Citation

Teh, L. M. (2020). Love, marriage and revolution. *Tijdschrift Voor Geschiedenis*, 132(4).
doi:10.5117/TVGESCH2019.4.007.BESP

Version: Publisher's Version
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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3633965>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

allesbehalve absoluut te zijn. Nadere reflectie op die observatie zou een welkome aanvulling zijn geweest.

Bij gebrek aan eensgezindheid over een periodisering van de graphic novel is er even pragmatisch als grofmazig gekozen voor een driedeling. In min of meer gelijke aantallen zijn de 36 opgenomen hoofdstukken verdeeld over een voor-geschiedenis (1799-1978) die begint met geboortjaar van Töpffer – hoewel diens oudste stripwerk van 1826 dateert –, een tweede periode van ‘emergence’ waarin de graphic novel commercieel betekenisvol en literair erkend wordt, beginnend in 1978 met de publicatie van *A Contract with God* van de Amerikaanse striptekenaar en -theoreticus Will Eisner, en een laatste periode over de verdere opkomst – nogal stellig als ‘dominance’ aangeduid – van de graphic novel sinds 2000. Deze laatste cesuur oogt arbitrair. Het belangrijkste element in de periodisering, de doorbraak van de graphic novel in de jaren 1970 en 1980, wordt overtuigender gepresenteerd. In plaats van 1978 had met evenveel recht gekozen kunnen worden voor 1986 dat enkele malen als een belangrijk jaar wordt opgevoerd vanwege de publicatie van drie canonieke werken: de eerste bundel *Maus*

van Art Spiegelman, *Watchmen* van Alan Moore en Dave Gibbons en *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* van Frank Miller.

De gevarieerde bijdragen, die deels inzoomen op het werk van specifieke auteurs, deels thematisch te werk gaan (over punk en underground, feministische en LGBTQ stripverhalen maar ook over superhelden, sciencefiction en verfilmingen) en soms ook een geografisch kader hebben (zodat er toch nog een bescheiden rol is weggelegd voor Japanse en Franco-Belgische stripcreaties), bieden een rijk gevarieerd overzicht dat toegankelijk is geschreven en in bescheiden mate van illustraties is voorzien. De nadruk ligt op de stripmakers en uitgevers, en de culturele en, in mindere mate, economische betekenis van hun werk. Aandacht voor de lezers van de graphic novel is relatief bescheiden. Het geboden panorama vormt alleszins een waardevolle aanvulling op de academische literatuur, maar de samenhang van dit panorama had versterkt kunnen worden door de uitgangspunten nadrukkelijker en structureler ter discussie te stellen.

Kees Ribbens, NIOD en Erasmus Universiteit

Xiaoping Cong, *Marriage, Law and Gender in Revolutionary China, 1940-1960* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 2018), 283 p., ill., krt., tbl., €29,99 ISBN 9781316602614

Love, marriage and revolution

The historiography of the pre-1949 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has mainly treated two intersecting issues: the party's prioritization of women's liberation and its mobilization of rural society. Some

historians have argued that the party reinforced the patriarchy of rural society in its mobilization of rural society, while others have contended that the party undermined the patriarchy of rural society in its

mobilization. Xiaoping Cong's *Marriage, Law and Gender in Revolutionary China, 1940-1960* makes a refreshingly nuanced and empirically rich contribution to these issues. In this carefully researched book, Cong reframes existing debates by centering the agency of women in her account of how the CCP implemented marriage reforms in rural northwest China during the 1940s, and how these reforms shaped the discourses of socialist justice and the revolutionary heroine in post-1949 China.

At the heart of this book is the court case of *Feng vs. Zhang*. The families of Feng and Zhang had agreed in 1928 to an arranged marriage. Eleven years later, the Feng patriarch found another suitor offering a larger betrothal gift and annulled the arranged marriage. Unbeknownst to him, his daughter had fallen in love with her former fiancé and agreed to marry him. On discovering the new betrothal and the love affair, the Zhang patriarch led his fellow kinsmen to seize Feng's daughter and wedded her to his son. In response, the Feng patriarch sued the Zhang patriarch for kidnapping his daughter. In 1943, the local county judge ruled in Feng's favor and voided the marriage on the grounds that the arranged marriage had violated the 1939 Marriage Law. Upset with this ruling, Feng's daughter appealed to the regional judge, Ma Xiwu. After his investigation, Ma determined that their union was indeed a love marriage and he overturned the local county judge's ruling. Ma's ruling brought this case to national attention; it featured in newspapers throughout China and became the subject of woodcut prints, operas, songs, and even film.

The chronology of this case and its afterlives in the cultural realm underpins the organizational structure for the book.

The first part of the book introduces the case and the challenges complicating the Communists' marriage reforms in this part of China, where customary practices like arranged marriage and child brides had persisted. New ideas about marriage, mainly the idea of love marriage, arrived with the Communists in 1936 and the Communists' introduction of new marriage laws in 1939. But these new laws failed to end customary practices. The failure, as Cong observes, stemmed not from entrenched traditions, but from mistaken assumptions that informed the marriage laws. Marriage customs as practiced in this region granted women greater freedoms in expressing their sexuality and in asserting their autonomy. Cong finds that many women in this region begun using new rhetoric of love marriage to validate their longstanding freedoms and autonomy while continuing with traditional marriage customs.

The second part pays attention to the party's accommodations of local customs in its legal practices and principles. It details Ma's approach to adjudication and his writ so as to highlight legal practices and principles that the CCP established. Instead of interviewing witnesses in his court, Ma conducted extensive on-site interviews with villagers and kinsfolk of both families, acquainting himself with local customs and personalities. Ma's unconventional approach became celebrated by different groups for different reasons. Villagers lauded his impartial stance, the Party for his inclusion of the masses in the adjudication process and the legal practitioners for his method of obtaining knowledge of local customs. At the same time that Ma provided a model of adjudication, he also clarified the legal

principle for adjudicating future disputes concerning marriage laws. In his writ, Ma employed the colloquial term *zizhu* – self-determination – instead of the abstract term *ziyou* – freedom – to validate the union as a love marriage. In doing so, Cong argues, Ma incorporated local culture into his interpretation of the legal principle, thus narrowing the gap between socialist ideals and social reality.

The final part of the book examines cultural productions that this case inspired. In the late 1940s a local schoolteacher fictionalized the case into an opera and a local troubadour retold the case as a ballad. In the 1950s a famous opera performer staged her interpretation of the fictionalized case. Her opera was subsequently adapted into a film, which propagandized the marriage law that the nascent Communist party-state promulgated. Cong's meticulous analysis of these operas, ballad and film charts two significant discursive developments: firstly the

transformation of Feng's daughter from anonymous victim to revolutionary heroine with a proper name, Feng Zhihui, and secondly the framing of the revolutionary state as a transformative force on local society. Each reimagining of the case added new layers of significance until the case became imprinted in popular consciousness of socialist China, with Feng Zhihui embodying the revolutionary heroine.

This book draws on an impressive range of primary sources, including new archival documents from the Shaanxi provincial archives and oral interviews with Feng's daughter. Anyone interested in the history of twentieth century China, gender history or legal history should read this comprehensive account of the complex interplay between Communist state and local society, revolutionary ideals and rural norms, and socialist laws and social customs.

Limin Teh, Universiteit Leiden

Thomas W. Gijswijt, *Informal Alliance: The Bilderberg Group and Transatlantic Relations during the Cold War, 1952-1968* (Routledge; Londen en New York, 2019) 310 p., €109,- ISBN 9780815396741

Bilderberg als 'emotional community' en barometer van trans-Atlantische betrekkingen

De omstandigheden waaronder bankiers, diplomaten, *captains of industry*, invloedrijke journalisten, politici, academici, vorsten en economen elkaar jaarlijks ontmoeten tijdens de Bilderbergconferenties zijn op zijn zachtst gezegd geheimzinnig te noemen. Bilderberg is daarom nog altijd een populair onderwerp voor complotdenkers, die Bilderberg bijvoorbeeld zien als uitgroei van Amerikaans

imperialisme. Als object van serieus academisch onderzoek bleef de aandacht voor Bilderberg echter relatief beperkt.

In *Informal Alliance* laat Thomas Gijswijt zien dat de werkelijkheid minder spectaculair is en dat er geenszins sprake is van een wereldwijd complot van de CIA. Sterker nog, de Amerikaanse veiligheidsdienst was in het geheel niet bij de oprichting van Bilderberg betrokken (p. 52). Bilderberg, zo