

talk to each other at a comfortable distance. They engage in discussion about ordinary subjects (the environment, the family, food, etc.) and share their ideas within the group. They identify material traces of places undergoing transformation and they take part in a collective commemorating effort of the kind that occurs in the popular radio programme "Speaking about the Tianjin Garrison." These different experiences thus contribute to the establishment of a "we" through the setting of a collective narrative that sometimes diverges from the official history. The three chapters that comprise this first part provide an account of the way in which "common understandings are created and know-how shared" (p. 182) within a group that is loose in terms of its structure and resilient by dint of its regularity, but above all dynamic through the configurations of mutual presence that unfold there and that are on public display. Without any control over concrete reality, the people taking part in these daily gatherings have to adapt to urban transformations such as the one happening on Shengli Square itself, which pose a threat to the legitimacy of this institutionalised "doing things together."

The second part of the work deals specifically with the urban development of Tianjin and the role of its residents. The fieldwork study begun in 2011 documents interviews, archives, and participation in various meetings. Its aim is to reconstitute the origin of a team of volunteers whose objective was to protect the cultural heritage of a Chinese city recognised in 1986 as being "famous for its history and culture." The fieldwork interviews conducted in Tianjin and the systematic explorations of endangered places (Guyijie, Wudadao, Belfran, etc.) are presented in three chapters that point out the various modes of engagement developed by those involved (a forum, publishing newsletters, writing reports, sending letters, paying visits, winning prizes, etc.) to prevent the rushed destruction of certain cultural assets. In order to ensure the enforcement of the local and national legislative framework for heritage protection, this collective firstly engaged with the many administrative levels, regulations, and heritage labels in a series of initiatives to save buildings. Imbued with a feeling of responsibility for the protection of the city, the team then mobilised various written, oral, and visual sources and championed the cause of oral history and residents' memories of the past to legitimise their stance and activities. The upshot was an increasingly sophisticated capacity to position themselves in the sometimes-conflictual system between the local administration and the heritage experts. These initiatives resulted in the recognition of the "Tianjin model," according to which "the government rules, the experts advise, and the public participates" (p. 240). Their ability to mobilise is not only shown on multiple fronts but is, above all, something that is shared across the group. Indeed, their actions fall within a regulatory framework that encourages civil participation. The volunteers carefully choose what is to be made public in their exchanges with the representatives of the Party and the state in order to produce an authorised public discourse aimed at limiting the destructions. By playing with the local administration's codes, they embarrass it and impel it to act. Isabelle Thireau's research presents the issues at stake and the limits of public discussion. Her analysis of the different categories of citizen gatherings ultimately examines the fragility of their existence as well as the mechanisms of their representativeness in the current political and administrative context.

This ethnography provides an original and very specific account of a topical phenomenon in which unrestrained urbanisation meets social movements in China. It reflects the inevitable tensions between urban transformations and participatory processes and in doing so reveals the strategies and tactics put in place by politicians who are blinded by the

development of their city, and residents who are attached to the spirit of the place in which they live.

■ Translated by Peter Brown.

■ Florence Graezer Bideau is Lecturer and Head of the Research Group *Patrimoine, culture et ville* (Heritage, Culture and City), Collège des Humanités, École polytechnique de Lausanne EPFL, CM2270, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland (florence.graezerbideau@epfl.ch).



**CAPDEVILLE-ZENG, Catherine, and Delphine ORTIS (eds.). 2018.**  
***Les institutions de l'amour: cour, amour, mariage. Enquêtes anthropologiques en Asie et dans l'océan Indien.*** (Institutions of Love: Court, Love, Marriage. Anthropological Surveys in Asia and in the Indian Ocean). Paris: Presses de l'Inalco.

## PASCALE-MARIE MILAN

Marriage is one of the social institutions that is still playing an important role in many Asian countries. At least, that is what is shown in the work co-edited by Catherine Capdeville-Zeng and Delphine Ortis, which brings together ten case studies around the topics of "choice of partner," "individual expressions of feelings," and "marriage rituals." Love is an area that is "not easy to talk about," often running into the sociological hurdle of telling (p. 11), but this work succeeds in its aim of providing a comparative study of the contemporary configurations of the institutions of love in China, Korea, Japan, India, and Madagascar. At the outset, Catherine Capdeville-Zeng and Delphine Ortis emphasise that the very notion of love cannot simply be projected onto different local conceptions. It is about a set of culturally situated ideas justifying a preference for the expression "feelings of love" or an interest in studies on the institutions of love (*ibid.*). As one of the motivations of social relations to which individuals commit themselves, this subject offers the advantage of being a vehicle for exploring a society in action and exploring its values, hierarchical relationships, and social relations of sex. The work thus looks at the reconfigurations of intimacy without reducing them to the vagaries of Western-style romantic love, and by providing analyses that consider the weight of tradition, the family, and the state.

The opening four chapters exploring the "choice of partner" bring out very clearly the important role played by the family and the state. The cases presented therefore show that individual expressions fall within the

frameworks of configured social frameworks under the collective social order beyond the family and the state. In South Korea, or between statutory groups among the Mérina in Tananarive, particular sociohistorical contexts have fashioned the categorisations and representations that go into making marital choices. In both cases, a quasi-biologising essentialism turns "ethnic consanguineous purity" (Kim's Chapter) or the criterion of genealogy (Rakotomalala's Chapter) into ideologies stigmatising exogamy. At the China-Vietnam border, as in China itself, the idealised representations of one's partner and compromises fully contribute in determining the pathways to matrimony, for which the traditional social relations of sex remain intact, whether in the case of mixed marriages between Vietnamese women and Chinese men (Grillot's Chapter) or in order to preserve "the harmony" of the family (Zavoretti's Chapter).

The second part of the work looks into the social construct of feelings of love, showing that this is not simply about the formulations of individuals. In China, the analysis of the place of feelings of love in the "organised search for a partner" (*xiangqin* 相親) by Chinese bachelors or their parents draws out the tensions between a status ideal to which the Chinese aspire and the new centrality of "romantic desire" in the choice of a marriage partner (Pettier's Chapter, p. 174). In the Indian state of Kerala, the Mohiniyattam, a danced theatrical practice presenting the feminine world, shows "how an embodiment of the imaginary is intimately linked to the vicissitudes of daily life" (Mathou's Chapter, p. 204). The hierarchy of values and affects makes devotion "a form of love that is superior to love as desire" peculiar to the Indian world (p. 32). The analysis of *deudā*, a ritualistic poetic tradition in Nepal, and of the fate of two brothers who are enthusiasts of this art form, enables a comparative reading of different conceptions of love and marriage (Bordes's Chapter). Accordingly, the "realm of thought" (p. 248) brings out the centrality of marriage and conjugal life. A desire for emancipation from control by the family still exists, however, as demonstrated by pre-marital relations and the new modalities of daily life.

The third part examines the feelings of love in marriage rituals. It clearly sets out the development of this institution, notably towards the ideal of a conjugal relationship between two people rather than the union of two families. The various authors point out how the tradition of heterosexual relations remains sturdy. The study of a ritual from a wedding ceremony between a Muslim martyr and a young Hindu woman broaches, for example, the question of mixed marriages and the place given to love as desire in a "multi-confessional" society subject to numerous tensions and where traditional devotional love remains expected (Ortis's Chapter). In Japan, changes to the part played by feelings of love are presented through the analysis of a wedding scene during which the final lines from *Takasago*, a traditional Noh play, enable the writer to explain "a discourse [that has become] more popular that highlights a moral tale about couples" (Butel's Chapter, p. 303). The innovations and developments of marriage rituals that appeared at the same time as "the affirmation of the ideal of family and modern couple" (p. 311) do not, however, prevent these vignettes of discourses on love from being channelled in particular ways. Based on an analysis of DVDs of weddings, Catherine Capdeville-Zeng sets out to identify how this ritual is being reconfigured, using both Chinese and Western elements (p. 325) and "traditional and modern values" (p. 351), to show that the weight of tradition persists. The open expression of love between partners is still a taboo subject, and is only possible through the intervention of third parties or as a message delivered in the context of the wedding ceremony itself (p. 342-3).

The tension between the insertion of individuals into larger social orders such as the family and the state, and the growth of sexual "freedoms" and "dreams" of romantic love explored in this part of the world underlines specificities that a conclusive synthesis would have had the advantage of highlighting. Indeed, this work presents a dual interest. It offers insights into new modes of relations that are singular to Asia and Madagascar, based on nuanced ethnographies of the institutions of love, enabling the authors to get beyond a reading based simply on individuals (Yan 2003). It also provides a thoroughgoing documentation that allows us to have an understanding of the capacity for the social to reconfigure itself, and in doing so it attests to the need for a dialogue with Western approaches in order to give a renewed approach to the study of the transformations of intimacy (Bauman 2004; Giddens 2004; Ilouz 2012).

■ Translated by Peter Brown.

■ Pascale-Marie Milan is an anthropologist, currently a postdoctoral researcher at the EFEO (École française d'Extrême-Orient) and Associate Scholar in the LARHRA (Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes), 14 avenue Berthelot, 69007 Lyon, France (pascalemariemilan@gmail.com).

#### References

- BAUMAN, Zygmunt. 2004. *L'amour liquide. De la fragilité des liens entre les hommes* (Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds). Rodez: La Rouergue/Chambon.
- GIDDENS, Anthony. 2004. *La transformation de l'intimité. Sexualité, amour et érotisme dans les sociétés modernes* (The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies). Rodez: La Rouergue/Chambon.
- ILLOUZ, Eva. 2012. *Pourquoi l'amour fait mal. L'expérience amoureuse dans la modernité* (Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation). Paris: Seuil.
- YAN, Yunxiang. 2003. *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.