

activism “dies a quiet death,” blocked by more mundane forces, like budgetary cuts (p. 30). But this statement appears to take us back to binaries.

Nonconfrontational activism in and of itself is a multidimensional and fluid category. Are some policy domains (like the environment) more prone to producing effective results? Have certain regions been more fertile for nonconfrontational activism due to local official support, similarly to Guangzhou being famously lenient towards investigative reporting in the past? Do certain strategies work better than others in avoiding the so-called “quiet death” (p. 30) or at least in delaying it? And when does nonconfrontational activism shift into the more confrontational domain or into a darker shade of the grey one? After all, nonconfrontation is not a static disposition, as we have recently witnessed with the mourning of the coronavirus whistle-blower, Dr. Li Wenliang, rapidly shifting into a radical category of calls for freedom of expression.

Incorporating more ethnographic vignettes into the narrative style writing would illuminate some of these frictions or the micro-processes of nonconfrontational activism. While Wang introduces readers to multiple examples of online activism, as well as to impressive projects and evolving strategies of her own NGO work, only occasionally do we get to witness or really transplant ourselves into the site of action itself.

One such rare occurrence is a memorable vignette about a policeman sent to observe and report on the author’s NGO training. Instead of hiding or excusing herself, the author invited the policeman to attend and listen, which provoked an unexpected result. The policeman gets intrigued by the class, and in turn, evolves from a “supervisor” into a student. “Too often, we forget that a watchdog has a split identity too. At critical moments, his public persona – the police/censor – gives way to the private self that makes a moral choice in favor of the activist,” she writes (p. 134). This description was one of the few instances of experiencing the inner world of digital activism – the world that Wang so fluidly inhabits – and it would be fascinating and meaningful to get to know more from the inside. This may also help further reconcile the tensions between the author as activist and as scholar in the writing, something she reckons with in the final methodology chapter.

The Other Digital China comes out at a critical time, when much of the Western popular and scholarly literature is focused on the darker side of a more restricted China. This book provides evidence of the brighter side of relentless societal dynamism that subsists in, and adapts to, the current climate of political and commercial volatility. The author also gives China scholars hope for more field research possibilities, both in the digital and physical spaces of within-the-system activism.

MARIA REPNIKOVA
mrepnikova@gsu.edu

The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong

NGOK MA and EDMUND W. CHENG

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019

335 pp. €109.00

ISBN 978-94-6298-456-1 doi:10.1017/S0305741020000077

While there have been quite a few books on the Umbrella Movement of 2014, this edited volume provides a wealth of additional empirical knowledge and is thus an essential read both for experts and for the general reader who is interested in Hong

Kong's political development and the democracy movement. As such, it is also indispensable for anyone who seeks to understand the protest movement that emerged in 2019 and which at the time of writing has lasted for more than half a year with no end in sight. Based on the idea of occupying the Central business district, proposed by Reverend Chu Yiu-ming, Benny Tai and Dr. Chan Kin-man, students started the occupation on 28 September 2014 following a week-long university strike. When the police tried to clear the streets with tear gas and protesters used umbrellas to protect themselves, the Umbrella Movement was born. The book reveals many fascinating details about the motivations of protesters, the changing public perception, the cultural expressions and the government's response. Moreover, it also places the movement in comparative perspective. The chapters rely on meticulously researched data ranging from surveys to artefacts found at the three protest sites in Admiralty, Mong Kok and Causeway Bay.

The well-edited volume begins with a historical perspective that places the Umbrella Movement within the overall development of protest in Hong Kong. In the first chapter, Ngok Ma reveals in his on-site in-depth interviews with committed occupiers that a majority believed that there was no leadership. Edmund W. Cheng moreover reminds the reader in the second chapter that spontaneous protest was already the primary reason behind the massive turnout in 2014. Many people participated without being mobilized by those who were identified as leaders of the movement, and they later openly challenged the leadership, which made it impossible to promote a coherent strategy. As such, the fact that the 2019 protests did not have any clear leadership is less surprising.

Moreover, the empirically rich chapter by Sebastian Veg reveals that the idea of flexible occupations, which became a feature of the 2019 protest movement, had already been mooted in 2014. He even references the Bruce Lee slogan: "Be water, my friend," which has since reached great prominence (p. 174). Then, in chapter eight, Yongshun Cai shows how the escalation of the movement took place at a time when the street occupation had lost its momentum and there was disagreement over the usefulness of adopting more aggressive tactics. At the time, the majority believed in the need to maintain peaceful methods, which meant that attempts such as breaking into the Legislative Council were widely seen as counterproductive. As moderates criticized the more radical activists, the movement became deeply divided and disagreements increased. The lesson from this was that it would be necessary to accept each other's tactics. In 2019, there was more tacit approval of radical tactics, even when they involved vandalism or the throwing of Molotov cocktails.

Even the state response in 2014 bears resemblances to that of 2019. Samson Yuen argues in chapter seven that the state moved from repression to attrition, seeking to tire the protesters over a long period of time. In 2019, the government again sought to use the advantage of time. Moreover, the state adapted its response to the protesters, aiming to undermine public support and the legitimacy of the protests. In 2014, regime supporters created a counter-movement in support of the police (symbolized by "blue ribbons"), which organized a number of larger protests and which continues to define the political landscape today. However, the comparison also clearly reveals serious differences. For instance, the elite in 2014 remained largely cohesive, but deeper splits emerged in 2019, most notably reflected in the low approval ratings of the chief executive.

While the book is overall a great contribution, the comparative section could have been improved. Only the Macau chapter by Eilo Yu Wing-yat (chapter 12) provides interesting comparative perspectives and illustrates well why the other Special Administrative Region is much less supportive of democracy and why a similar

protest movement is unlikely there. It also shows why the Chinese government will not be able to use the former Portuguese colony as a role model or replacement for Hong Kong. Ming-sho Ho and Thung-hong Lin's chapter on Taiwan (chapter 11), however, sadly does not draw any comparative perspectives, although it is obvious that there are many similarities especially relating to China's growing economic prominence. Jeffrey Wasserstrom's comparison with Shanghai (chapter 13) also does not provide any systematic insights. Future studies could focus more on the comparative angle because it promises many interesting insights. Despite this shortcoming, this volume is highly recommended and should be essential reading for anyone interested in Hong Kong. It should not be omitted from the syllabi of courses on Hong Kong's social and political development as well as contentious politics in general.

STEPHAN ORTMANN

stephan.ortmann@cityu.edu.hk

Corruption and Anticorruption in Modern China

Edited by QIANG FANG and XIAOBING LI

Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018

xxxi + 366 pp. \$114.00

ISBN 978-1-4985-7431-0 doi:10.1017/S0305741019001425

It is well known that China has engaged in a war against corruption since the onset of reform in the late 1970s. In the existing literature, much has been said about the prevalence of corruption and the detrimental consequences it has had on contemporary China. Yet, China's corruption problem has not been carefully examined from a historical perspective, although it has been reckoned to be a major cause of the collapse of many dynasties. The extent to which corruption challenged the prevailing political order in different historical periods and the forms in which it manifested itself remain underexplored. Neither is it clear how the various regimes in Chinese history sought to control corruption and whether (and why) their anticorruption efforts succeeded or failed. If there is any source that can tell us all this, it should be *Corruption and Anticorruption in Modern China*, edited by Qiang Fang and Xiaobing Li, with contributions from 12 scholars. The book provides a compelling overview of the complex attempts to control corruption in China's key historical periods.

The book consists of 13 chapters, which are divided into four sections under different themes. The first section focuses on "Centralized Power and Authoritarianism," illustrating how corruption developed as an embedded structural problem in China's centralized political system. The two chapters in this section indicate that despite harsh punishments, strict rules and various reporting mechanisms, corruption prevailed in the Qing dynasty and in the early Republican period as a deeply rooted political disease. "Political Parties and Legitimacy" is the theme of the second section, in which the authors explore the implications of corruption and anticorruption efforts for the confrontation between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party in the early- and mid-20th century. Each of the three chapters in this section has a specific focus, but collectively they highlight the role that corruption and anticorruption played in the collapse of the Kuomintang regime and in power consolidation by the People's Republic of China. The coverage of the third section, "Government, Individuals, and Conflict of Interest," is broad, with five chapters dealing with