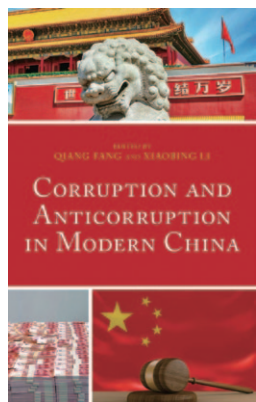


pollution or the Pacific trash vortex, would have perhaps deserved a more comprehensive treatment in dialogue with waste studies, insofar as the pages are teeming with briefly-mentioned metaphors that have much potential for ecocritical theory: The *sanwen* 散文 as a “residual genre,” intratextuality and characters being “recycled,” or – shall I suggest – waste come to life through the goldfish of the Chunghua market morphing from tree to paper-object to fish, or elaborating further the idea of waste underpinning the liminal space of the market in “A Story of Toilets,” which takes “human waste” to an even more literal, bodily sense.

So, can Taiwan help? Rather than being presented as an isolated island (geopolitically, cognitively, geographically), Gaffric’s reading of Wu Ming-yi extends a compound prism for grasping multiple ways for literature and environmental action to interrogate one another in today’s Anthropocene – insights translatable indeed far beyond Taiwan’s shores. Even more strikingly, Gaffric offers what I would call a “multiscalar ecopoetics”: crisscrossing spatial scales (the island re-envisioned as interface and the ocean as route), timescales (compressed in the capitalist logics of the Anthropocene or slowed down by Wu), bodily scales (infinitesimal oceans, or the shared scales of Wu’s butterflies, mineral sedimentation, and the wounds of our own human skins), and musical scales (moving away, once again, from anthropocentrism and allowing a multiplicity of human and non-human voices to coexist).

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FANG, Qiang, and Xiaobing Li (eds). 2019.

Corruption and Anticorruption in Modern China.

Lanham: Lexington Books.

CAROLIN KAUTZ

Since Xi Jinping launched a major anticorruption campaign after coming to power in late 2012, corruption and efforts at combatting it have become a prominent topic in China-related scholarship. A growing number of publications on Xi’s campaign largely fall into two main directions. In the first one, authors analyse the campaign as a power struggle and a means to increase Xi’s personal power. In the other one, scholars see it as a way of dealing with a threat to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which is reinventing itself and strengthening its governing capabilities. This edited volume by Fang Qiang and Li Xiaobing

contributes to the growing academic debate on corruption in China, while also diverging from these two main directions in the literature.

This edited volume consists of 15 chapters (including the Introduction and Conclusion) and is organised into four parts. Of these four parts, only the last one, entitled “New century, new struggle,” deals with developments directly related to Xi Jinping’s anticorruption campaign. The other three parts, “Centralized power and authoritarianism,” “Political parties and legitimacy,” and “Government, individuals, and conflicting interests” contain chapters that are loosely subsumed under these headlines, presenting case studies from a number of different periods of Chinese history. The historical diversity of case studies ranges from the Han and Tang Dynasties (Chapter Ten) and the Qing Dynasty (Chapter One) to the Republican period (Chapters Two, Three, and Four), the Maoist People’s Republic (Chapter Five), and post-Mao China (Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen). This approach of covering an extensive historical period and discussing corruption throughout Chinese history distinguishes this edited volume from most other publications, which usually concentrate on a specific period. Discussions on corruption in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) quite often only focus on the post-Mao era without considering earlier developments in Maoist China. This is particularly the case for recent publications that have appeared in the wake of Xi’s anticorruption campaign. The editors of this volume argue instead that: “corruption as an illicit or abnormal activity has a long history in China and many rulers from at least the Han Dynasty till the PRC have launched numerous anticorruption campaigns” (p. xii).

Other ways in which they contribute to current academic debates include the fact that some chapters are based on newly released primary material, for instance Chapter Two, which relies on Yuan Shikai’s diaries to analyse his contributions to anticorruption work in early Republican China. Additionally, the authors claim that their personal cultural and family backgrounds closely connecting them to China place them in a better position to study corruption in China. The editors argue that “such kind of cross-cultural national sentiment can rarely be found among scholars who study China simply as a career or interest” (p. xvii). However, it remains unclear throughout the book how this different perspective distinguishes their work from that of other scholars. Finally, the editors claim that the fourth original contribution of the book is the embedding of Chinese debates on corruption into global developments. They do this – albeit briefly – in the concluding chapter, where they compare corruption in China and the United States. They conclude that while corruption is a global issue, a democratic state under the rule of law is better equipped for dealing with it. Hence, they recommend political and legal reforms for China to deal with corruption more successfully.

Considering the overall contributions of the volume to current debates on corruption in China, two aspects stand out. The first one is indeed the broad historic approach of analysing corruption in very different periods of Chinese history. Such a comparative approach is important, as it allows for overcoming normative arguments based on assumed cultural incomparability. The second strength of the volume is its very specific case studies that focus, for example, on the role of corruption in the demise of the Guomindang 國民黨 on the Mainland (Chapters Three and Four), early corruption cases in the PRC (Chapter Five), or the way corruption becomes visible in popular rhymes (*minyao* 民謠) circulated among the Chinese public (Chapter Nine). Such diverse case studies can provide interesting new evidence on corruption and anticorruption during different historical periods.

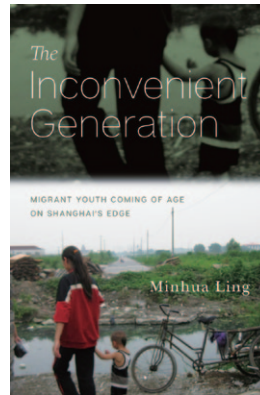
However, the volume's broad historical coverage and the specificity of its case studies constitute at the same time its drawback. Because the focus is extremely broad, the book lacks a larger analytical framework that would link the chapters together and allow them to conceptually interact with each other. Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that no common definition of corruption is used. While the editors in the introduction refer to the work of Lü Xiaobo (2000) and argue that "any activity, no matter how trivial it is, could be corruption so long as it breaks the existing norms and laws" (p. xii), Yang Zhiguo (Chapter Five) refers to the definition of corruption as the "use of public office for private advantage" (p. 134). On the contrary, Hou Xiaojia (Chapter Six) identifies a "variety of forms of political corruptions" (p. 156) one of which is "the CCP's long trend of making arbitrary decisions regardless of local customs" (*ibid.*). While all these activities can obviously be subsumed as breaking existing norms and laws, this variety of definitions and the fact that they are often not explicitly spelled out poses an analytical challenge. Therefore, the broad historical focus and the rather specific case studies, while interesting on an empirical and descriptive level, prove to be a challenge for analytical coherence and leave the chapters somehow unconnected.

Thus, this book is a good read for historians and social scientists who are interested in a broad historical lens on corruption in China and in new empirical data from different historical periods. It can provide a starting point for further research on corruption throughout Chinese history. However, in order to engage in meaningful comparisons, such research would also have to think more conceptually about this issue.

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LING, Minhua. 2019. *The Inconvenient Generation: Migrant Youth Coming of Age on Shanghai's Edge*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

CAMILLE SALGUES

The Inconvenient Generation paints the portrait of the children of internal migrants (*nongmingong* 農民工) in the period between their secondary education and the start of their working lives. The focus of much concern, this second generation has not yet been the subject of an in-depth study, so this book fills an important gap. In terms of methodology, access to the respondents was obtained through admission to a middle school in Pudong and an NGO in Shanghai. However, although the school enters directly into the perimeter of observation, we learn nothing of what happens within the NGO, despite the obvious importance it has in the life of several of the respondents – a choice that at least deserves to be explained and discussed. The book is made up of seven chapters that offer a wide-ranging overview: habitat, demography, secondary education, the vocational schools these young migrants are channelled into, the problematic choice involved in leaving for their parents' home province to continue their studies, their consumer practices, and lastly, the problems that occur if they wish to remain in Shanghai. We must also welcome the clear and useful appendixes (biographies of the respondents, chronology, glossary of Chinese terms, and the index).

Striking for the reader is the breadth of the investigation both in time (contacts extending over ten years resulting in exceptionally detailed biographical tracking of the respondents) and in the social space. A wealth of material is enlisted: ethnographic scenes (such as a remarkable passage in which the author reveals the construction of educational disqualification, p. 81), photos, group discussions, and public controversies (p. 61). To integrate this material, a wide variety of scientific literature has been used, ranging from urbanistic debates over the people's appropriation of the city (p. 41, 53), to the sociology of labour in China and a critique of student exploitation (p. 183), including the social struggles surrounding family planning (p. 59). The author rightly describes these "second generation" children as occupying a "liminal" space (p. 12) where "new subjectivities" are being constructed (p. 203) half-way between the big names of brash consumerism and the toughest of exploitative workshops. Hence, the book is not only essential reading for those interested in the *nongmingong* or Chinese youth, but may also be read as a depiction of contemporary China, since it sheds light on the whole of society and its transformations, and therefore might be likened to the analyses of Abdelmalek Sayad (1991) in France on immigration as a "total social fact."