

descriptive. More theoretical and comparative exploration will stand the contributors in good stead.

Nevertheless, the book is a must-read for all those, professionals and nonprofessionals alike, who are interested in China and global Sinicization, especially in religions among immigrant Chinese communities overseas.

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Falun Gong: Spiritual Warfare and Martyrdom. By James R. Lewis. Cambridge University Press, 2018. 102 pages. \$18.00 softcover; ebook available.

The starting point of *Falun Gong: Spiritual Warfare and Martyrdom* is leader Li Hongzhi's instructions to practitioners to refrain from talking to ordinary people about high-level spiritual things. He advises instead for them to talk about the persecution they suffered and tell people they are just doing exercises. The author, James Lewis, pivots away from these statements to delve into Falun Gong's teachings related to spiritual violence.

The introduction hints at the emotional labor behind the research. Lewis is the former editor of the *Journal of Religion and Violence*, and like other scholars (including this reviewer), he initially wanted to help persecuted members. Later, he discovered the spiritual movement was not as it seemed. His thesis is clear: the leader Li Hongzhi urges practitioners to seek brutalization. The more they are brutalized, the more Li Hongzhi's power expands.

The next chapters examine this brutalization and its origins. Lewis discusses the spiritual teachings that drive practitioners to protest the Chinese government with foreseeably grim consequences. An especially relevant doctrine is that during abuse, the aggressor passes precious white matter called *de* to the victim. Therefore, practitioners do not resist abuse because they receive *de* from it, which contributes to their *xinxing* (spiritual nature).

By itself, this belief could be heartening to those who are mistreated. However, Lewis draws attention to its context—Li Hongzhi's warnings of an imminent apocalypse in which only those with high-level *xinxing* will survive. Lewis says these teachings incite a kind of spiritual vampirism where practitioners provoke the police to arrest and imprison them as a way of quickly getting enough *de* to save themselves. Their need for *de* meshes with the Chinese government's need to stamp out rebellion, and the line between attacker and victim blurs.

These points are not new, but Lewis makes them more persuasive by drawing on his interviews with former practitioners who were at the

main protests in China. These sources enable him to identify a crucial problem. Li Hongzhi urges practitioners to protest and to let go of attachment to their own body, yet he gives few specific directions about how to do this. This ambiguity allows him to attribute failures to the purportedly demonic Chinese Communist Party or to alleged demons masquerading as his followers.

Lewis demonstrates the impact of this ambiguity by recounting the grisly scene of Falun Gong self-immolations in Tiananmen Square in 2001, which followed Li Hongzhi's cryptic exhortation to go beyond the limits of forbearance. In the wake of the tragedy, Falun Gong issued a statement that the self-immolators were not real practitioners, a view that Lewis finds implausible. He is at his most poignant when he describes meeting one of the surviving self-immolators, Chen Guo. He reached out to shake her hand only to remember she lost both hands in the fire.

Interspersed throughout the book are intriguing sections on Li Hongzhi's self-perception, how pro-Falun Gong editors gerrymander Wikipedia pages, and why Western media often uncritically accepts Falun Gong claims. The book closes with an afterword in which Lewis describes his disenchantment with Falun Gong and addresses potential counter-arguments to his research.

Practitioners and advocates may feel confronted by Lewis's study. Irrespective of what incentivizes Falun Gong martyrs and why they refrain from disclosing these incentives, many have been traumatized. Certainly, Lewis does not support the way the Chinese government brutalized them, but he does not soften or whitewash Falun Gong's dogmas, and the volume could be subtitled "Why it is unwise to join Falun Gong."

The book will be of interest to scholars studying the pay-offs of martyrdom, as well as Sinologists and researchers of new religious movements. The most appreciative readers may be investigative journalists delving into the hidden side of Falun Gong. That is because Lewis has a captivating style and invites the question of what other secrets Falun Gong may be hiding.

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Religions of Beijing. Edited by You Bin and Timothy Knepper. Photography by Bob Blanchard. Translated by Phoebe Liang D'Alessandro. Bloomsbury Collections, 2020. 224 pages. \$30.95 soft-cover; ebook available.

Religions of Beijing is a long photo essay on seventeen of Beijing's most prominent and historically significant Buddhist, Daoist, Christian,