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ARTICLE REVIEW**BENNY YIU-TING TAI, „STAGES OF HONG KONG’S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT”, ASIAN JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS, VOLUME: 4 ISSUE: 4, PAGE(S): 352–380.**

DOI: 10.2478/ppsr-2020-0011

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Who will explain the 2014 Umbrella Movement better than Benny Yiu-ting Tai, an associate law professor at the University of Hong Kong who at the same time is the co-founding leader of non-violent civil disobedience movements at Hong Kong streets? Just like learning about the Civil Rights movement from Martin Luther King, Jr. himself while reading his famous ‘Letter From Birmingham City Jail,’ the article titled ‘Stages of Hong Kong’s democratic movement’ by Tai is one of the few pieces worth reading for the audience who wants to know and share more about the Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement from inside out.

The main line in the article is based on Bill Moyer’s eight stages in social movement as described in his book ‘Movement Action Plan’. Tai uses the same formula yet there are significant additions. While Moyer’s eight stages are Seeming normal (1), Exposing injustice (2), Ripening conditions (3), Taking off (4), Losing heart (5), Winning the majority (6), Reaping success (7) and Consolidating achievement (8), Tai’s stages end with Continuing struggle (8). Throughout the text readers get to learn why Moyer’s model is not a universally applicable model. Tai explains his modifications saying that Hong Kong has unique characteristics associated with the fact that Hong Kong wants a genuine democracy while still being connected to the authoritarian regime of China. The reflection of Moyer’s model and modification of it to the local circumstances are two parallel lines in the article. The article is written in a spirit of question and answer, although Tai presents no exact questions across the text. The author presents the stages and later checks whether the elements of the stage are present and if yes, how it is reflected in the Hong Kong Movement.

The unique and original point in the article is the reference to popular Cantonese song ‘Beneath the Lion Rock’. This Lion Rock Myth metaphor is one of the strongest parts of the article in terms of illustration of the bottom level reasoning about life in Hong Kong by an ordinary resident. Tai explains how the free market capitalism, economic growth and freedom understanding of residents shape the ideals of a mechanical form of rule of law, which means ‘maintaining social order and judicial independence and fighting against corruption’. These are the leading tones of ‘Lion Rock Myth’. The author mentions that the myth fails to incorporate the more substantial understanding of the rule of law including

the pursuit of democracy, human rights protection and social justice in it. Although the part of the article about the 'Lion Rock Myth' may seem quite specific to residents of Hong Kong, this linkage of people's grasp of ideal rule of law and civil disobedience movements followed later on, reflects the agendas of many reformists who also interpret the rule of law only narrowly.

The other side of the rule of law coin that Tai correctly refers to, is the general socio-political culture of the Hong Kong residents, which has an impact on the development of movement, such as general materialistic concerns to monetary terms, prioritization of social stability over social justice, familial interests over the interests of society. Tai puts it in a simple language saying that if governance was not too bad or seemed to be working normally, few would bother to question its legitimacy. This is stage one.

Tai presents the starting points of the Hong Kong movement with Moyer's words, saying that 'the second stage of social movements starts when people's disappointment with the unjust political system, social system, laws and government policies have reached a certain level making it impossible for the 'forms of injustice to go unnoticed'. At this point Tai gives the readers an insight from the Hong Kong movement, which he believes is to convince more and more people that the roots of injustices couldn't be eradicated without democratic governance.

The author describes the development of the movement as growing demands in the community for longer-term institutional changes and protection of non-materialistic rights as its core agenda. Yet Tai is not philanthropic and he knows that the main features of the Hong Kong residents cannot be changed in such a short period of time, especially in the political environment when no major changes in 'One country, Two system' regime has happened. The author says that there must be a trigger event and that event was the constitutional reform process to produce an election method that can ensure any Chief Executive elected through universal suffrage must be a person trusted by the Chinese government. Yet the big trigger event is the stage four, and it is the final point of the series of small campaigns and protests that shape the third stage – ripening conditions. Stage three is the escalation process until the trigger event and it describes how the injustices touch individual residents and their materialistic goals.

One of the most interesting points of the article, making it worthy of reading, is the resurrection of the student movements which for a long time has been nostalgia. The 2012 high school movements, later been joined by parents and teachers, against the new curriculum and reform in high schools as a new measure to brainwash the students and promoting patriotism are strong points of the movement and the article. Firing 87 canisters of tear gas at peaceful protestors was another trigger event, which brought the injustices of the system to the notice of everyone in Hong Kong. Throughout the text we see that author identifies different trigger events, which fulfil the publicity criteria of the traditional definitions to civil disobedience.

According to the author, some people join the movements at different stages, without living the earlier stages. The joy of reading the article is about how we can relate it to almost all protests and civil disobedience movements that have happened so far. For instance, the part of the article explaining how the government chose to be inactive for some period of time in order to gain the benefit from people's intolerance for long-lasting situation that was contrary to their daily normalcy, is a commonly used tool causing fluctuations in mood of protestors globally. Some activists lose their faith in the movement or in

non-violence, feeling frustrated and powerless so they are deceived by their own feelings. One interesting point of the article here is how the author describes such pluralism inside movements as both strengths and weaknesses. The author says that the perception of failure will usually happen at the exact time when the movement is extremely successful. Although to win back the larger public is the common goal, the methods of doing it are quite specific to every movement. This is the point where Tai extracts the article from Moyer's views and presents the modifications to foresee the Hong Kong crossroads with China and plan the future of the Hong Kong movement.

The final parts of, and overall, the article is written with this positive spirit with the repeating of the language of establishment of a democratic system in Hong Kong; yet Tai mentions that Hong Kong's 'democracy may be so near and yet so far'. Since the year 2018 when the article was first published many changes happened in the development path of the Hong Kong movement. It changed both in terms of methods used and the reactions it received from the "One Country, Two Systems." Yet, the article by Benny Yiu-ting Tai is a piece of work worth read not only because it is a well-written academic article by a lawyer/professor, but also because it is a reflection of the views of a leading figure in one of the iconic civil disobedience movements in the 21st century.