itinerary. The last pages are devoted to two interesting stories. It is not obvious that they can be considered as "oracle tales of the future" (p. 194), but they certainly represent the way the past is used in the present. The first concerns the regular Chinese New Year gathering of one thousand descendants of former revolutionary leaders congratulating themselves, their parents (or grand-parents) and above all the Party, which has brought so many advantages to them. This celebration of the past by the winners, devoid of any doubt or regret for those who suffered (including their parents in many cases), contrasts with the second story, which depicts one example of the patient work of those who were victims and now try, not to get revenge or settle accounts, but to simply salvage the past and reflect upon it. This reviewer's paper in a recent issue of *China Quarterly* (227) ended also with praise for those ordinary members of the Cultural Revolution generation who modestly try to save history as a way to transcend the conflicts of memories and thus to give meaning to the peculiar destiny of their generation.

Finally, a long-suppressed irritation: when will the main US university presses stop forcing readers to constantly interrupt their reading to find the endnotes somewhere near the end of the book or at the end of each chapter?

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Bitter and Sweet: Food, Meaning, and Modernity in Rural China
ELLEN OXFELD
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Bitter and Sweet is an ethnography about the meanings of food in rural China. Deftly interweaving ethnographic description, historical narrative and anthropological theories of food, the book explores the meanings and values attributed to different foodstuffs in a particular village in northeastern Guangdong and through the lens of food, it offers a uniquely intimate ethnography of life in contemporary rural China.

The narrative revolves around Moonshadow Pond, a fictitious name for the Hakka village with approximately 800 inhabitants that also featured in Oxfeld's "*Drink Water, but Remember the Source": Moral Discourse in a Chinese Village* (University of California Press, 2010). Being based on periodic fieldwork and visits spanning two decades, the ethnography has an unusual depth and authority and it draws inspiration from Mary Douglas and Sidney Mintz to deliver a description of food as a symbolic system subject to historical change. The material is organized under the headings *labour*, *memory*, *exchange*, *morality* and *conviviality* and each of these five chapters deals with an aspect of the value attributed to food. Since decollectivization in the early 1980s, the local economy has changed from an emphasis on the communal cultivation of rice to a more varied small-holder production of rice and vegetables for subsistence and fruits, pork, poultry and fish for the market. The vast majority of households rely on a combination of farming and wage labour, and much of the agricultural and domestic work is left to the elderly. This work generates little income, but eating food that is grown and cooked at home is nevertheless highly appreciated, and it is in the meticulous documentation of various non-monetary values ascribed to food that Oxfeld's ethnography really excels. Different foodstuffs

connect the present with the past as they evoke memories of festivities or hunger, they connect people by circulating as formal and informal gifts and affirm solidarity when presented as offerings to ancestors, they are indispensable means of fulfilling moral obligations in cycles of care between parents and children, and they fuel the pleasurable sociality of shared meals and banquets. Emphasizing that food is embedded in a moral economy, the book might have offered more information on the political economy of the village to allow the reader to assess their relative importance, but nevertheless, the point that the value of food is determined by much else besides the market is entirely convincing.

Bitter and Sweet tends to emphasize the sweet and to locate most of the bitterness in the past. In comparison to the scarcity of food and periodic famines that used to characterize life in rural China, the discontents of the present seem relatively insignificant, and particularly for the elderly, who lived through the famine in 1959–1961, the narrative of past scarcity and present abundance is clearly important. From this perspective, Oxfeld suggests, the most significant effect of the economic reforms that started in the late 1970s is not the emergence of anomie and dislocated individuals, but rather economic growth and the ready availability of a wide variety of foodstuffs that have enabled people to step up the connective exchanges of food and thus to strengthen the moral fabric of their communities. While this is a valid argument and a timely corrective to a body of anthropological literature that may have overemphasized the importance of unprincipled individualism and the loss of moral bearings in contemporary China, it would have been interesting to learn a little more about the aspects of their present lives that people find to be bitter. The beggars that interrupt the celebration of the *zuofu* festival, for instance, may well be the equivalents of the cosmological category of hungry ghosts, but presumably they are also actual people who have stumbled in the general race to get ahead. China has seen an increase in living standards for all, but this has been accompanied by economic stratification, and while the book duly notes that food may also be used to exclude, it offers but few examples of the way food is used to draw boundaries around privileged social groups.

Written in a clear and accessible style, the book provides a succinct image of contemporary rural China as well as an introduction to the many interpretative possibilities inherent in the study of food and it deserves to be widely read, not only by scholars and students interested in contemporary China and the study of food, but also by general readers who are curious to learn from an outstanding ethnographer what life is like in the Chinese countryside.

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Chinese Muslims and the Global Ummah: Islamic Revival and Ethnic Identity among the Hui of Qinghai Province
ALEXANDER BLAIR STEWART
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Alexander Stewart spent a year among the Islamic community of Xining, associating himself closely with members of two groups, whom he collectively calls "revivalists."