

The eight profiles are exquisitely crafted, memorable stories that put to rest the penchant to think of the 200 million migrant workers as a faceless en masse unit. My only wish is that the introduction and conclusion further explored the larger issues implied by the profiles. For instance, Loyalka might have offered a more nuanced understanding of her title theme, eating bitterness. Do her first four profiles eat more bitterness than the last four or are the different kinds of eating bitterness comparable? At one point, the Nowhere Nanny states that she would avoid the stressful lifestyle of her employers. Do the blue-toothed urbanites, then, eat bitterness, too? Finally, Loyalka notes that the younger migrants (and urbanites) are less willing to endure hardships than their parents. If this is “as it should be” (244), how will the cycle of urban development play out over time since it has thus far depended upon a population willing to eat bitterness?

Although the inhabitants of Gan Jia Zhai have scattered long ago to make way for upscale cafes and restaurants, Loyalka has ensured that they will not be forgotten. With humour, compassion and lucid prose, the author illustrates how migrants like those in Gan Jia Zhai make possible China’s meteoric urban transformation.

*St. Lawrence University, Canton, USA*

GRACE HUANG

**BEYOND SUFFERING: Recounting War in Modern China.** *Contemporary Chinese Studies.* Edited by James Flath and Norman Smith. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011. xix, 306 pp. (Tables, figures.) C\$34.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-7748-1956-5.

For decades the field of Chinese military history was a sorely neglected subject in the West and had received scarcely more attention in China. Thankfully, the past fifteen years have witnessed a veritable explosion (if you will) of works in English, many of which draw upon recently published Chinese secondary studies and newly available archival materials. This volume marks another contribution to this rapidly growing field, bringing together a diverse group of (mostly Canadian) scholars to examine various ways in which war in general and different forms of suffering in particular have affected memory and the construction of history and historical identities in modern China. The result is a wide-ranging collection of essays that introduce several little-known topics, such as the so-called Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900 along the Sino-Russian frontier in Manchuria, to Western audiences while also touching upon new dimensions of more familiar subjects, such as the significance of the Whampoa Academy in creating a new image of revolutionary soldiers in modern China. However, while the overall quality of the contributions is high, some of the authors are clearly less comfortable relating their subjects to war than others. Furthermore, the level of broader knowledge of the field

of Chinese military history varies widely by author, some of them apparently being much less conversant with recent literature than others. Nonetheless it is refreshing to see scholars moving beyond their normal comfort zones and recognizing the significance of the military and the effects of warfare on virtually all aspects of modern Chinese society.

After a preface by Timothy Brook that touches upon various historical and philosophical typologies of suffering, the book continues with an altogether too brief introduction from the editors that draws attention towards the increasing recognition of the significance of suffering as perhaps the major trope in modern Chinese history. The work is then divided into three rather nebulous and at times only tenuously linked parts: “Society at War,” “Institutional Engagement” and “Memory and Representation.” As is often the case with such conference-derived volumes, at times the authors are at pains to link their arguments to larger themes within one another’s work, though that also admittedly reflects the complexity of the subject matter and the chronological scope of the essays. Additionally, while China is admittedly the focus of the book, greater efforts on the part of the contributors to make comparisons with similar phenomena elsewhere (as in comparing the bombing of Chongqing to The Blitz in London) would have been most welcome and would have broadened the book’s appeal, especially for classroom use. It should be noted that some authors, such as Michael Szonyi in his chapter on the militarization of Jinmen (Quemoy), explicitly reject such comparisons, arguing for the uniqueness of the cases they are studying.

In terms of common themes, several emerge. The first concerns the relationship of the military to state legitimacy. This plays out in a confusing variety of ways ranging from the subversive writings of Manchukuo intellectual deployed to write accounts of how the Japanese-imposed state was improving public health and morals by taking control over the opium trade in an essay by Norman Smith, to how the inability of warlords to control their soldiers undermined an emerging sense of the possibility that soldiers could serve as a revolutionary vanguard in modernizing the nation in the early twentieth century, as discussed in essays by Edward McCord and Colin Green. In other words, when both regional and national military regimes proved unable to actualize their own widely publicized programs, whether in regards to curbing drug use or simply maintaining public order, the state’s legitimacy was undercut. At the same time the state sometimes sought to turn potentially destabilizing developments, such as the proliferation of orphans during the Japanese invasion, into a source for state support and mobilization. M. Collette Plum shows how the Guomindang grappled with integrating the traditional family and its values, which many in the GMD hierarchy, including Chiang Kaishek, supported, into its modern state-building initiatives that sought to subordinate traditional loyalties to more modern ideas of nationalism. The fact that newly emergent organizations

then recast the state's language to suit their own interests and improve their lots bespeaks the populace's increasing awareness of its role in helping to shape the directions of state policy, even if such power was circumscribed by generally authoritarian political regimes.

State legitimacy also emerges with respect to changing memories, commemorations and memorialization of historical events. For example, fine essays by James Flath and Diana Lary discuss how contemporary political concerns continue to shape the ways in which the PRC government casts the so-called "War of Resistance" against Japan and how the changing political climate also contributed to decisions to make tourist attractions out of sites and memorials that had languished in obscurity for decades after the founding of the PRC. And while ordinary citizens, filmmakers and the like are producing a fascinating array of new materials shedding all kinds of new light on China's wartime experiences, as Lary observes, "Official memories are all about contemporary political legitimacy" (284). In this sense remembering and reconstructing the history of the War of Resistance in particular is not unlike the compilation of official histories in the dynastic era. Recognizing this we can nonetheless move forward to a more subtle and nuanced appreciation of the multifarious links between war and suffering and how they have shaped China's modern history. By drawing attention to such important questions the essays in this collection have certainly advanced our knowledge and opened up a number of fruitful avenues for further investigation. For as no less a luminary than Jiang Zemin has reminded us, echoing *The People's Daily*, "the past, if not forgotten, can be a guide to the future."

University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, USA

KENNETH M. SWOPE

**GOURMETS IN THE LAND OF FAMINE: The Culture and Politics of Rice in Modern Canton.** By *Seung-joon Lee*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. xviii, 300 pp. (Tables, figures, maps.) US\$55.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8047-7226-6.

More than forty years ago, in his seminal work, *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China 1839–1861*, the late Frederic Wakeman of the University of California, Berkeley, challenged the conventional narrative of the Opium War by analyzing the impact of the battle on the local society in Guangdong. Being in the last generation of Wakeman's students, Seung-joon Lee, in *Gourmets in the Land of Famine: The Culture and Politics of Rice in Modern Canton*, investigates Guangdong again, this time to reconsider the transformation from the late Qing to the Guomindang (GMD) regime in the 1930s. The shared interest in the southern province may not be coincidental. Far from the political centres like Beijing and Nanjing, as well as possessing economic structures different from the major agricultural areas such as the