

about the legitimacy of protective power generated through Buddhist practice. Public intellectuals and reformist Buddhist leaders have argued that magic, protection and merit-seeking are indicative of a crisis in Buddhism. At the same time, however, recent decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in interest in merit-making and protection in Thailand, including intensifying lay interest in charismatic monks and popular spirit-medium cults influenced by mass media and religious commodification. Thai Buddhists are engaging with protective practices in the context of competing and compelling interpretations of what Buddhism might be as instantiated in practice. Clearly, concern over the meaning and practice of Buddhism is an ethnographic concern, even if it may no longer be an appropriate analytic. Nonetheless, *Monks and Magic* remains an impressively detailed ethnographic contribution to the study of Thai Buddhism.

Joanna Cook

Department of Anthropology, University College London, 14 Taviton Street, London, WC1H 0B, United Kingdom; email: Joanna.cook@ucl.ac.uk.

DOI: 10.1355/sj28-3j

Chinese Food and Foodways in Southeast Asia and Beyond. Edited by Tan Chee-Beng. Singapore: NUS Press, 2011. 256 pp.

Chinese Food and Foodways in Southeast Asia and Beyond deals with the anthropology of food in Southeast Asia and, in particular, examines how variants of Chinese food are transferred, reproduced and localized by overseas Chinese communities. Almost all of the contributors to the volume are anthropologists. Yet this is hardly a typical ethnographic project. Ethnographies are usually based on the stuff that “makes” anthropology: case studies, detailed descriptions of particular rituals and events, careful analysis of observed practices, and specific observations. The chapters in this book are much broader, based on many years of academic research, and on long-term engagement and personal experience that for most of the contributors go way beyond the academy.

Most importantly, virtually all of the contributors are Southeast Asian Chinese, and their chapters are complex culinary autobiographies based on first-hand experience. In many ways they are both researchers and informants, producing texts that do justice to the experience of eating by going beyond the observed and intellectually analysed, into the felt, embodied, liked and longed for. Jean Duruz and Nancy Pollok, the non-Chinese contributors, rely on their many years of academic and bodily involvement with Chinese foodscapes. And though their texts are written differently from the rest of the chapters, they contribute to the sense of comprehensiveness that characterizes the volume.

The first section, called (somewhat awkwardly) “Overview and Chinese Food in Diaspora”, sets the ground for the entire project. In the first chapter, Tan Chee-Beng discusses Chinese Malayan (i.e., Malaysia and Singapore) food and argues that Chinese food in Southeast Asia goes through processes of reproduction, invention and globalization. Together with Nancy Pollok’s chapter on the influence of Chinese gastronomy on the Pacific region, and David Wu’s essay on his encounters with Chinese restaurant food in many different places in and beyond Southeast Asia, the first section offers an “overview of Chinese food in Southeast Asia and its globalization” (p. 4).

The second section, “Chinese Food and Foodways in Southeast Asia”, includes four chapters on Chinese food in Indonesia (Myra Sidharta), the Philippines (Carmelea Ang See), Myanmar (Duan Ying) and Vietnam (Chan Yuk Wa). The chapters on Indonesia and the Philippines are as wide in scope as the chapters in the first section of the book, while those engaging with Chinese food in Myanmar and in Vietnam are more ethnographically “orthodox” — bounded in space, time and gastronomic landscapes.

These four chapters further enhance the sense of sweeping movement conveyed in the previous section of the book by demonstrating the prominence of Chinese food throughout Southeast Asia. They also highlight two main empirical findings of the project as a whole: that Chinese foodways in different communities in Southeast Asia have many similarities and that the cooking and

eating practices of each community display specific characteristics that have been shaped by the gastronomical traditions of the regions of origin (e.g., Fujian, Guangzhou, Hainan, Yunnan, and Chaoshan) as well as by the ethnic and regional cuisines of their respective host societies.

Chinese foodways in Myanmar, for example, and the Qingming offerings at the Cantonese congregation and wedding banquet at the Yunnanese association in Mandalay described by Duan Ying are very similar to the feasts and weddings of the Chinese communities that I studied in Vietnam's Hoi An. However, these feasts always display what I term as "culinary nuances": modifications in the ingredients, cooking modes, presentation or consumption. These nuances draw on local culinary customs, hence distinguishing the food of each Chinese community in each town in Southeast Asia.

The third section of the book explores the expansion of Southeast Asian Chinese food into the Western hemisphere and specifically to Las Vegas (Jiemin Bao) and Adelaide (Jean Duruz). While Veronica Mak's chapter is included in this section, it can double as a concluding chapter for the volume as a whole, as it revisits the theme of Southeast Asian Chinese food in China introduced in the first chapter.

Addressing each of the chapters is not an easy task as many of them do not convey clear arguments based on systematic research but are instead written as culinary autobiographies based on life-long experiences. The academic and the personal are interwoven to such an extent that separating them may lead to a collapse of the text. While this is a shortcoming of the different chapters, the text as a whole makes for much more than the sum of its parts.

In particular, the volume as a whole makes it clear that "Chinese Cuisine" or "Chinese food" is an erroneous conception. There are many cuisines in China, and endless "local" variations of dishes. Hainan chicken rice is a salient example mentioned by many of the authors. Although Chinese gastronomy is constructed around the basic combination of "*fan* and *tsai*" (literally, "steamed rice and vegetables") and, to a lesser extent, on the yin and yang of Chinese food and the

theory of “the five elements”, Chinese food should be discussed in specific regional terms. Thus, Sichuan and Yunnan cuisines are at least as different as French and Italian cuisines. Indeed, just as in France or Italy, regional cuisines are the more meaningful units of analysis in the study of Chinese food.

However, while it is tempting to distinguish between the cuisines of contemporary regions in the People’s Republic of China, such as Guangdong or Fujian, Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia arrived from different and smaller gastro-cultural sub-regions. To complicate the picture even further, the cuisine of each community is influenced, to a greater or a lesser extent, by the cuisine of the host society and, at times, by other culinary sources such as the colonial cuisine. Here again, there are local, regional and national foodways, as well as the cuisines of different colonizing nations, and they all have an impact on the ways in which each of the Chinese communities cook and eat.

Finally, many of these hybridized cuisines have been (re)introduced to new destinations where, once more, they are adopted and fused with local foodways. The outcome is highly complex, dynamic and varied foodways that are unique and different in each location and, at times, in each and every home and restaurant.

Nir Avieli

Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, Israel; email: avieli@bgu.ac.il.

DOI: 10.1355/sj28-3k

To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th Century. By Anthony Reid. Singapore: NUS Press, 2011. 360 pp.

Anthony Reid’s book is a collection of twelve essays previously published in journals and volumes over the span of four decades of his career. While the individual essays — which address a variety of topics — are noteworthy scholarship, putting them together in