

The main descriptive evidence comes from the realm of discourse. Beauty, gender and race are three fields in which translation between Chinese and English can be very difficult because the underlying worldviews are so different. Several translations of English “race” (*minzu*, *zhongzu*, *renzhong*) are offered in the summary of Frank Dikötter’s *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford University Press, 1992), but it is not clear whether Starr’s research subjects used any of them to organize their own thoughts. Little background is provided about the women – some or all of whom may be composites in order to protect the identities of the real women – so the book lacks an in-depth analysis of the real social structures underpinning their lives, and the reader does not get a thorough picture of the power relations that motivate their beauty practices.

*Modified Bodies, Material Selves* contains readable overviews of key topics in Chinese gender and beauty in the reform era, with sections appropriate for undergraduates. As a work of research, the book falls short of the methodological promise raised in the introduction: it does not provide a satisfying and convincing depth of local, cultural background for the practices examined. In the end, the research methodology was not up to the task of supporting the ambitious conceptual framework that Starr put forward.

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## Home Beyond the House: Transformation of Life, Place, and Tradition in Rural China

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All over the world, people are compelled to sever their connections with their hometowns due to employment, warfare, urban planning and other reasons. In China, millions of peasants are abandoning their old courtyard homes, moving into high-rise flats or being relocated to new villages in order to adapt to the advance of urbanization or the grandiose programme called “the new socialist countryside.” Wei Zhao, the author of *Home Beyond the House*, is deeply concerned about this process. As an architect engaged in the study of traditional dwellings, she is a cultural preservationist, worried that this brutal destruction of old houses for development not only ruins landscapes, but also decapitates cultural traditions and destroys rural lifestyles.

From the author’s perspective, the absurdity of the relocation process lies in the lack of attention given to the rural architectural environment and established ways of lives. Modern residences, which are disconnected from the local landscape and incompatible with rural living practices, are likely to fall short of rural inhabitants’ expectations of satisfactory living spaces (p. 298). In other words, they may not provide a proper sense of home. The author sets out to address the following questions: what is “home” for those dwelling within traditional built environments? And what elements contribute to the feeling of belonging to a hometown?

To answer these questions, Zhao uses an ethnographic approach to trace the origins and developments of a village called Yanxia situated in the mountainous regions of Zhejiang. Yanxia is a typical

traditional settlement, retaining many buildings from the Qing dynasty. Relying on a famous mountain range and the efficacious deities on the mountain, the villagers have benefited from the religious pilgrimage tourism industry since the 19th century, establishing hotels and restaurants for worshippers. To apply for the mountain range to become a World Natural Heritage site, local authorities, advised by heritage experts, decided to relocate all residents to a new resettlement area and renovated the historical village, transforming it into an open-air museum. Later, when faced with obstacles in demolition, the government no longer used the heritage application as a reason but instead demanded villagers relocate to new settlements under the flag of “creating a top tourist town” and “building a socialist new countryside.”

Zhao sets out the following interpretive framework to understand Yanxia villagers’ conceptions of home: the relationship to the land constitutes tradition, which in turn shapes the sense of home. The argument is developed into four dimensions:

- (1) The place-bound relationship sustained the *xiangtu* lifestyle, which required many fundamental resources for living from the land, (2) the place-bound relationship supported daily activities, social relations, and cultural performances that took place on various kinds of public and semi-public open places, (3) the place-bound relationship imparted a sense of ownership to local residents that was essential to the construction of the meaning of home, (4) and the place-bound relationship facilitated the construction of individual and collective identities. (p.153)

Zhao initially examined how the residents perceive their surroundings. Analysing photographs taken by villagers, alongside interview data, she identified four typologies of landscape to which they are connected: cultivated fields, water sources (ponds, streams and wells), communal open spaces (pilgrimage paths and village squares), and the prominent mountains and hills that surround the Yanxia valley (p. 153). The villagers’ conception of home transcends the physical confines of their own dwellings, encompassing the types of terrain to which they are attached, thus offering in important augmentation to their sense of home.

As an architect, Zhao brings a unique perspective by incorporating extensive architectural surveys and detailed presentations of architectural features (chapter two). Throughout the book, in sections that address architecture, she offers an interpretive path that discusses the dialectical relationship between sociocultural factors and the rural architectural environment, shaping and influencing each other, a favoured topic in the cultural works of architectural scholars.

Zhao’s main argument is not new to scholars of rural Chinese society: the meaning of home transcends the physical boundaries of the house or the legal boundaries of the homestead and is instead attached to the traditions of local relations and lineage structure. Perhaps Zhao could have further explored how people cope when their home is destroyed? For example, how villagers adapt to new spatial arrangements, a topic the architect-author is excellently placed to examine.

In contrast to this conventional analysis, the participatory and empowering method of asking residents to photograph their surroundings is exciting. This innovative method not only provides a visual and personal record of the environment and its significance to locals but also engages them actively in the process of documenting and reflecting on their own sense of place and identity. It is an approach that enriches the research with first-hand perspectives and also validates the residents’ experiences and connections to their habitat.

Chapter three is also particularly inspiring, where Zhao dissects two approaches that local governments have used to promote local heritage: 1. the pursuit of designation as a World Natural Heritage site; and 2. selectively reconstructing cultural history and incorporating political ideology. Both approaches are based on a limited understanding of heritage: the separation of cultural significance from its natural environment, and taking heritage as a tangible object rather than a social process. More importantly, both methods negate the role of local residents in maintaining and nurturing heritage; residents, as bearers, inheritors, guardians and stakeholders of local tradition, are excluded from the proposed World Heritage centre and have also lost their centuries-long cultural tradition

of caring for pilgrims and tourists. Local governments have replaced residents, who previously operated family-run hotels, as the main beneficiaries of the economic gains from tourism (p. 143).

The author's concluding recommendations carry a somewhat condescending tone. She suggests rural residents should be guided on how to live in new architectural environments, including how to use modern appliances and how to dispose of plastic waste. This reveals a contradiction in the protectionist approach of elite experts, which underscores the importance of tradition and local opinions, yet seemingly treats villagers as blank slates to be educated. "Local tradition" is a term dearly held and defended by conservationists. This raises a typical question often explored in critical heritage studies: when traditions face challenges in a new era and need rescuing, who should have the say in dealing with these traditions? The residents or the experts?

Although the overall conclusions and whole story is not new, this book is a profound ethnographic study of a traditional settlement from various perspectives, including architecture and socio-culture. It offers insights into the factors that shape the sense of home. The methodological innovation is also quite notable. It serves as a useful reference for local practices involving the renovation, modernization, relocation and urbanization of rural architectural environments. As for the challenge many communities face today – how to modernize traditional settlements while preserving them – more targeted research is needed.

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## The Footballization of China: Strategies for World Cup Glory

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In 2011, prior to ascending to General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping reportedly declared on a state visit to South Korea that China would win the FIFA World Cup by 2050. It sounded like harmless wishful thinking: China's men's national team had underperformed for so long – qualifying for a single World Cup, at which they failed to score and limped home after three defeats – that it was inconceivable. Perhaps the famously football-loving Xi had been overwhelmed in the moment by meeting Manchester United legend Park Ji-sung. Perhaps he was tempted into hubris by South Korea's record of qualifying for seven (now ten) tournaments in a row. In any case, Chinese football had experienced so many droughts and false dawns, it was easy to dismiss.

By 2015, however, Xi had put his money where his mouth was, overseeing a transformative reform package highlighted by a 50-point development plan that promised to revolutionize grassroots, professional and national football, the football industry and its numerous adjacent sectors, and make China a "football superpower." Nowhere in the plan or other policy documents did it mention winning the World Cup, but Xi was evidently serious about soccer and it made the observers who had sneered four years earlier sit up and take notice: The Chinese Super League was catapulted onto British tabloid sports pages, European clubs stepped up their appeals to Chinese fans, and analysts of geopolitics began fretting about Chinese investors buying up foreign football assets.