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China Books to Check Out

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If your New Year's resolution is to read more, or if cold winter weather has chased you inside, pour yourself a hot drink, settle into a comfortable chair, and enjoy one (or more) of these books:

1. *The Washington Post* includes two China-related books on its "[Best Books of 2009](#)" list: [When China Rules the World](#), by Martin Jacques, and [The Snakehead](#), written by Patricia Radden Keefe.

2. MCLC [recently reviewed](#) [Woman From Shanghai: Tales of Survival from a Chinese Labor Camp](#), written by Xianhui Yang and translated by Wen Huang. Yang's book walks the line between narrative history and fiction, as the thirteen stories within it are slightly fictionalized versions of the lives of survivors of the Jiabiangou labor camp, based on interviews that Yang conducted.

Another memoir of life within the Jiabiangou labor camp is Gao Er Tai's [In Search of My Homeland](#), reviewed in the [Los Angeles Times](#). Translated by Robert Dorsett and David Pollard, Gao's book also includes a translation of his essay "On Beauty," the work that led to his imprisonment in 1957.

3. Over at the *Financial Times*, their "[Books of the year](#)" list flagged a couple of works that *China Beat* readers might find interesting. [Inside Central Asia](#), by Dilip Hiro, takes a wide-angle perspective to examine the region and its relationship with both China and Russia. For a new look at an old power couple, read Jay Taylor's biography of Chiang Kai-shek, [The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China](#), together with Hannah Pakula's [The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-shek and the Birth of Modern China](#), which the *New York Times* included on its "[100 Notable Books of 2009](#)" list.

4. Thinking of cooking a Chinese New Year feast (or Valentine's Day dinner) on February 14? NPR's "[10 Best Cookbooks of 2009](#)" list can help: check out Andrea Nguyen's [Asian Dumplings](#) or Eileen Yin-Fei Lo's [Mastering the Art of Chinese Cooking](#) for assistance in the kitchen.

5. Urbanatomy has been running a fun series with China-related authors called "[Why I Write.](#)" Read a bit about some of the authors' likes and dislikes, writing habits, and worst distractions (not surprisingly, the internet/e-mail seems to be a common problem for almost everyone!), then check out their work at your local library. With almost 50 authors profiled to date, it's likely that you'll see a new name or read of a forthcoming work from one of your old favorites.

6. Additionally, March will bring two huge book events to China: the [Shanghai International Literary Festival](#) runs March 5-21, while the [Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival](#) will be held March 11-19. Participants in each are listed at the above links, so start assembling your reading list now . . .