

THOSE WHO STAY: LIFE STORIES OF TAIWAN'S RURAL ELDERLY

留下來的的人：偏鄉高齡者的 生命紀事

Kang Shu-Ya, a researcher long interested in social and public issues, depicts the lives of elderly people in Taiwan's remote coastal areas. She explores the labor and emotions her grandparents have invested in their rural home, offering a new perspective on "aging" and "elder care".

Aging populations are a worldwide challenge, the problem not just one of aging, but also how to provide elder care. Researcher Kang Shu-Ya grew up in a metropolitan area, but her grandparents live in Taixi Village in Changhua County, Taiwan. While conducting field research there, she recorded the life stories of elderly villagers who have chosen to "grow old in the place they're from".

Located in a remote rural area, Taixi Village is populated by elderly people. Big families with numerous children and grandchildren no longer exist, making the later years of these elderly individuals quite different from past times. The elderly in rural areas are also quite different from urban elderly in many respects. As a result, old age brings challenges: rural elderly must find a new focus after stepping back from the constant work of making ends meet; they have poor hearing and vision, are unable to work due to illness, and are alone after the deaths of spouses and children....

Writing from the field, the author recounts these elderly people's life stories, which are deeply entwined with their backgrounds. As they have aged, they have moved on from mending fishing nets, tending vegetable gardens, and working outside and found new ways to work and socialize, yet have retained a deep affection for the land. They live and work together, building daily routines in their old age that reflect the value of remaining where they are, exploring their inner



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worlds as they answer the important question, “Why stay?”

This book discards the typical narrative focused on medical and physical care for the elderly to look at one rural community’s subjective approach to aging. The narrative draws the reader into the everyday drama of life changes and the struggle to adapt, played out against beliefs, identities, and values shaped by the past.

Kang Shu-Ya 康舒雅

Kang Shu-Ya, born in Taipei, is very interested in grassroots community empowerment and public engagement. Her master’s thesis, which discussed aging in remote rural areas and people’s relationship to the land, won the Taiwan Sociological Association Field Work Award. She is currently a PhD student in anthropology at University College London.