Rather than viewing state-directed heritage projects in China as either interventions to protect the past, as political tactics aimed at building a national identity, or as economic resources in the service of material development, heritage campaigns are best understood when situated within China’s complex relationship with modernity over the past one hundred years. In short, to cite Chairman Mao, the past is being used to serve the present in China – not simply as evidence of China’s historical roots, but as a pedagogical tool in training people to be modern in a Chinese way.