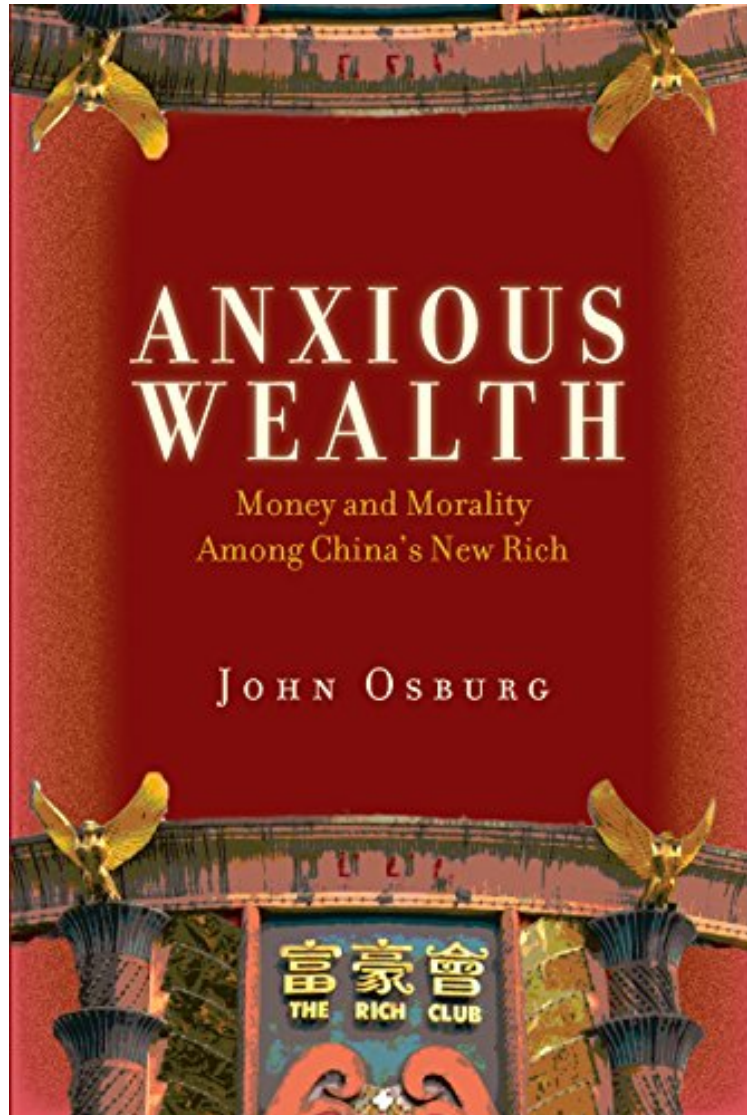


[FREE] Anxious Wealth: Money and Morality Among China's New Rich

## Anxious Wealth: Money and Morality Among China's New Rich

*John Osburg*

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**John Osburg : Anxious Wealth: Money and Morality Among China's New Rich** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Anxious Wealth: Money and Morality Among China's New Rich:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. "Studying Up" in ChinaBy Robert L. MooreLaura Nader once wrote that anthropologists have a lot to contribute to our understanding of how power is exercised in the United States by studying those who wield it. True enough, and John Osburg shows us that the same principle applies to China. Since I've spent a good deal of time downing shots of white liquor at Chinese banquets, I can say that I truly sympathize with Mr. Osburg for the endless series of network-building eating-and-drinking fests he had to face in order to collect his

data. And he did have to face them: one of the key features of the power structures that his ethnography reveals is that they are based to a large extent on the connections that ambitious individuals are able to put together by treating key players to hard-drinking entertainments at restaurants, karaoke bars and other venues, many of which involve opportunities for sexual encounters. In fact, for entrepreneurs seeking to build a power base, Osburg shows how sexual encounters with female "beauties," particularly encounters which can be regarded as inappropriate, are used to build a sense of indebtedness and even intimacy between male players. This highlights an important feature of Chinese influence networks that make them inherently discriminatory toward women. This is but one of the disadvantages faced by female entrepreneurs in China. In fact, the forms that gender discrimination takes is a major theme of *Anxious Wealth*. No other book with which I am familiar lays out in such compelling detail the differences in male vs. female experiences and opportunities in China's burgeoning economy. One of the most fascinating segments of this book is that which cites the lengthy confessional memoir written by Li Zhen, a government official found guilty of corruption. Beyond this, there is a wealth of information about such obscure corners of Chinese society as organized crime, and the complementary functions of criminal organizations vis-a-vis local governments in some contexts. Osburg's discussion of the implications of the connection-based power structures of China and future prospects for democratic reform is very informative. There is room for both optimistic and pessimistic forecasts. A striking fact brought out in his concluding comments is that according to a recent survey of individuals with assets over 10 million yuan (about 1.6 million US dollars), 60% of them "are either considering moving abroad or have started the procedures to do so." Most of the reasons cited to explain this trend have to do with the millionaires' concerns about corruption and the consequent threat to their long-term security and the quality of life in store for them. Interestingly, some who do go abroad become disillusioned and return to China. All in all, this is an excellent and quite readable ethnography of an important sector of Chinese society. Highly recommended.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A very deep research result. By C. Tong Osburg's book *Anxious Wealth* gives a first hand experience on doing business in China. The best part in this book is that the author compared his field research experience with traditional sociology models. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Mr Osburg has worked goudui magic. By Graeme An amazing debut. The fieldwork Mr Osburg undertook has me in eternal admiration of both his chutzpah and his liver.

Who exactly are China's new rich? This pioneering investigation introduces readers to the private lives and the night lives of the powerful entrepreneurs and managers redefining success and status in the city of Chengdu. Over the course of more than three years, anthropologist John Osburg accompanied, and in some instances assisted, wealthy Chinese businessmen as they courted clients, partners, and government officials. Drawing on his immersive experiences, Osburg invites readers to join him as he journeys through the new, highly gendered entertainment sites for Chinese businessmen, including karaoke clubs, saunas, and massage parlors; places specifically designed to cater to the desires and enjoyment of elite men. Within these spaces, a masculinization of business is taking place. Osburg details the complex code of behavior that governs businessmen as they go about banqueting, drinking, gambling, bribing, exchanging gifts, and obtaining sexual services. These intricate social networks play a key role in generating business, performing social status, and reconfiguring gender roles. But many entrepreneurs feel trapped by their obligations and moral compromises in this evolving environment. Ultimately, Osburg examines their deep ambivalence about China's future and their own complicity in the major issues of post-Mao Chinese society: corruption, inequality, materialism, and loss of trust.

"In *Anxious Wealth* John Osburg provides important insights into the rise of the new rich in post-Mao China through an ethnographic case study on young and middle-aged, male private entrepreneurs . . . Osburg has done an excellent job deciphering hidden cultural rules and moral codes in this gendered and sexualised space of elite masculinity . . . [T]his carefully written ethnography provides an important and accessible guide for understanding relationship cultivation, gender relations, inequality, class, and consumption in China's ongoing market transition. The book will appeal not only to anthropologists of contemporary China, but to anyone interested in the dynamic relationship between culture and economy." (Nanlai Cao Renmin University of China, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*) "*Anxious Wealth* provides a close up view of the elite networks that criss-cross China's state/society divide, generate new forms of masculinity, and compel members to enact particular moral codes. Osburg's depiction is simultaneously critical and sympathetic, theoretically deft and ethnographically rich? a compelling anthropological portrait." (Andrew Kipnis The Australian National University) "*Anxious Wealth* is a compelling narrative of China's new rich, revealing the blurred boundaries of legality/illegality in the guanxi networks of private entrepreneurs, government officials, and state corporate managers. Osburg provides a valuable explanation of how masculinity, elite status, and wealth are stitched together in the leisure-cum-business activities of KTVs, saunas, and sex, thereby reframing notions of Chinese masculinity. This book offers a rare story of the interior, in Chengdu, Sichuan, giving readers another angle on the specificities by which capitalism is unfolding in China." (Lisa Rofel, Professor of Anthropology, University of California Santa Cruz) "John Osburg's arguments about the constitution of elite networks,

the relational morality that structures those networks, and the profound importance of gender to male power in China are thought-provoking, compelling and provocative. Osburg takes us into a world of deal-making and networking that is often, literally, hidden behind curtains and closed doors. This book is a must-read for people seeking to better understand how power operates in China today." (Amy Hanser University of British Columbia)"In an engaging and compelling example of an anthropologist 'studying up', John Osburg opens an insightful window onto what happens behind closed doors among the new rich of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, in China's interior . . . Osburg makes a convincing case that gendered hierarchies and networking practices intimately intertwine state and society in the Chinese Market Era . . . Osburg's timely ethnography captures the Zeitgeist of the new rich in China . . . Osburg provides compelling evidence that elite networks, and the accumulation of wealth and privileges these entail, result from structures of state power and economic opportunities in contemporary China . . . [T]his ethnography makes important contributions to debates about morality, privilege, and sentiment, especially under conditions of capitalist marketization." (Charlotte Bruckermann Critique of Anthropology)"[Osburg's] ethnographic study of the emergence of China's new rich in the last three decades depicts and analyzes networks among elite entrepreneurs and between themselves and government officials, through which they establish alliances or even social institutions to generate, increase, and protect their wealth and social status . . . A must have book for China studies . . . Highly recommended." (A. Y. Lee Choice)About the AuthorJohn Osburg is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Rochester.