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Throughout their investigation of the political, socio-economic, and cultural characteristics of the new rich in China, the authors in this collection illustrate a unique group, one rising from the convergence of globalization and neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics. Published in 2008, this volume captures the prosperity of this new wealthy class before the advent of the global financial crisis and subsequent state stimulus plans, as well as before the anti-corruption campaigns that have plagued Xi's presidency since 2012, all of which have presumably altered the landscape for the wealthy in myriad ways.

It is useful to revisit the political, economic, and social conditions that gave rise to China's new rich, especially when we try to understand the relationships between a rising Chinese wealthy class and luxury consumption, the global real estate market, Chinese investment in Africa, and even the growth of maternity and birth tourism in North America.¹ The wide scope and geographical span of the studies included in this volume allow perspectives beyond the much studied examples of Beijing and Shanghai, bringing us to China's deindustrialized northeast, to the country's southernmost reaches, and to the inland.

The concept of China's new rich is a loose one, comprising a multi-faceted group of those who have benefited most from three decades of economic growth. Rather than a social stratum defined by personal wealth, membership in this group, to varied degrees, rests on ideology, status and access to power, economic resources, and social networks both local and national. Unlike China's power elites, members of this unique group need to navigate their way through China's one-party rule, forming a dynamic relationship with the party state.

Authors in the first section of this volume focus on the notion of class and examine the contested notion of China's new rich as something of a middle class. Compiling interview data gathered over ten years, David Goodman provides a comprehensive view of the complex composition of China's middle class, comprising professionals and private entrepreneurs alongside managers of state-, foreign-, and collectively-owned enterprises. Goodman's significant insight in this chapter is that this new, rich stratum of Chinese society will turn into the new ruling class, as has already been observed in the political and socioeconomic power wielded on a national and global stage by princelings and the new wealthy class's second generation (*fu erdai*).

In what is largely a content analysis, Yingjie Guo reviews various governmental and academic sources to examine an ideological shift initiated by the state, which views the middle class as the embodiment of desirable values, the backbone of the socialist market economy, and its members as progressive actors in the "harmonious society"² espoused by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Most tellingly, the officially endorsed middle class is situated between the new super rich and the increasingly disadvantaged working class.

Despite the state's endorsement of a middle class, the general public holds a so-called "wealth hatred" toward the new rich, as Xiaowei Zang reveals. Shady methods of capital accumulation, immense personal wealth, and a demonstrated lack of compassion or social responsibility are among the reasons Zang identifies as most important in understanding the public's negative opinions of the new rich. Furthermore, investigating three particular groups of entrepreneurs, the so-called "official racketeering" profiteers, real estate developers, and former managers of state and collective enterprises, Zang illustrates how the public perceives the wealth

of this new stratum as having been accumulated as a result of exploiting state assets, directly inflicting loss and hardship on peasants and urban working class communities.

In the last chapter of the first section, Stephanie Donald and Zheng Yi provide an extensive literature review on the cultivation of middle class taste and attempt to link school choices for children among Beijing's new wealthy with Bourdieusian distinction-making.

Following the explanation in the work's first section of the public's negative opinions about China's new rich, the second section of the volume focuses on the new rich's own reflections upon status-seeking and esteem-fabricating processes.

Colin Hawes examines how the CEOs and other senior executives of China's large corporations present themselves as cultural connoisseurs and practitioners, providing educational programs within workplaces, and facilitating cultural activities organized by the party to contribute to the promotion of "spiritual civilization"³ (*jingshen wenming*) among their employees. The author argues that all these are efforts by members of the new rich themselves to mitigate political pressure, to deflect negative attention, and to a certain extent, portray wealthy entrepreneurs and executives as virtuous, honorable "scholar merchants" (*ru shang*), and thus, an inseparable part of a "harmonious society" under one-party rule.

Carrillo turns our gaze inland, to examine how the rich coal entrepreneurs of Shanxi province seek social prestige through investment in education and the healthcare industry. Paradoxically, while effectively replacing their negative reputations with respectability, private entrepreneurs reap great profits in those seemingly philanthropic engagements, due to the commercialization of these sectors in the economic reform era. Minglu Chen analyzes rich empirical data to investigate female entrepreneurs' political and social conditions in Shanxi, Hainan, and Sichuan Provinces. Despite a significant increase in personal wealth, political participation, and social recognition, these women remain confined by traditional gendered expectations and continue to bear the burden of household responsibilities. This chapter is a much needed study on China's middle-aged female new rich beyond their consumption patterns.

Ivan Cucco illustrates how highly educated professionals and high-tech specialists in Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province in the Yangtze River Delta, move freely between the private and the public sectors. Such mobility generates unprecedented advantages and results in personal networks that benefit these professionals both economically and politically in the long term.

Comparing professionals' financial conditions in both the pre-reform and reform eras, Jingqing Yang's chapter wraps up the second section of this volume. Yang examines the earnings of college professors, medical doctors, and lawyers, detailing how institutional changes plausibly create grey areas in which such individuals acquire "extra" income, not always in legal ways, and often with inconsistent results. Beyond ample survey data, we also hope to see the sociopolitical implication or symbolic significance of these three groups joining the ill-famed new rich, given these three groups' high educational achievement and their professions' prestige.

In the volume's third section, the chapter "The Forest City Homeownership and New Wealth in Shenyang," Luigi Tomba and Beibei Tang illustrate the transition of Shenyang, an industrial base in northeastern China, from dilapidation, disinvestment, and disappearance of social services for the socialist working class, to beautification, gentrification, and the rise of the propertied urban elites. During Shenyang's rebranding into a post-industrial metropolis, inequality has been widespread in the form of housing quality and location, as the state actively caters to the needs of the young professionals and entrepreneurs, neglecting the working class.

Carolyn Cartier looks at how the new rich and aspiring middle class try to claim their social status through luxury consumption, in particular, through shopping trips to Hong Kong and the purchasing of fine jewelry. Focusing on professional and young female consumers' interest in diamonds, Cartier also hints at empowerment through consumption among China's middle class. What Cartier has discovered about their repeated shopping trips to Hong Kong helps us to understand the current proliferation of such trips to the U.S. and European countries.

Through a case study of activism on women's issues such as sexual violence and female infanticide, Louise Edwards argues that politically engaged young middle-class women practice issue-based politics in an effort to construct a civil society within the authoritarian party-state. However, while such activists' claims address the evils of the patriarchal structure, these privileged female urbanites have no intention of challenging the current regime. Thus, in response to such activism, the CCP has simply strengthened its authority and the legitimacy of one-party-rule. In light of the recent imprisonment of feminist activists, the optimistic view expressed in Edwards' study reminds us of the contingency of the CCP policy and urges an updated study on the deteriorated situation for women's activism in the era of the "China Dream."⁴

Centered on the role of domestic service in the homes of the new rich, Wanning Sun illustrates the creation of a distinct middle-class in the domestic sphere, for which having a maid is essential. Based on rich qualitative data, Sun argues that regardless of whether urban middle-class women choose to be full-time wives, full-time professionals, or anywhere in between, their "freedom" comes at the expense of predominantly rural poor women, who provide invisible though indispensable labor in urban homes. From the voices of domestic workers in this study, we learn about how class identities and gender roles are reconstructed and refabricated in the post-socialist era. In the last chapter of this volume, Elaine Jeffreys provides a content analysis of scholarly studies and media accounts of China's bureaucrat-entrepreneurs' moral and sexual corruption. She ponders whether this counter-stabilizing matter would be resolved through "rule of law."

The "China Dream" currently advocated under Xi Jinping's presidency calls for not only full-fledged individualism and self-governmentality but also loyalty to the party. Since the publication of this text (and, indeed, since the rhetoric of the "harmonious society" espoused in the 2000s, during which the studies in this volume were conducted), we have seen increased social tensions surrounding income and gender inequality. Chapters in this volume serve as important reminders of how the Chinese middle class was constructed to be ideologically compatible with the socialist market economy and, specifically, to justify various social inequalities. This book will be useful for scholars and students interested in contemporary China, social stratification, women studies, and transitions of socialist regimes.

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¹ Birth tourism is something of an underground industry in which wealthy expectant Chinese mothers travel to the United States to bear their children, subsequently departing with a US passport and birth certificate for their newborn babies.

² With the concept of social harmony in China dating back to ancient times, the notion of a "harmonious society" was developed as a key socioeconomic component of President Hu Jintao's (2003-2013)

administration in response to calls for increased attention to social justice in China. The governing philosophy implied by the term included a shift in focus from economic growth toward overall societal “balance and harmony.”

³ Deng Xiaoping first introduced the concept in 1980, and it remains an important notion in CCP’s political vocabulary throughout the later presidencies of Jiang Zemin (1989-2002), Hu Jintao (2003-2013), and Xi Jinping (2013-) It is developed in tandem with the notion “material civilization”(*wuzhi wenming*), the heightened level of the latter is demonstrated by the improved material conditions in the economic reform era. “Spiritual-civilization”-building policies stress the importance of socialist morality, political consciousness, and discipline, in an effort to ward off negative aspects of the societal transformation, such as nihilism, consumerism, and hedonism.

⁴ The term “China Dream,” was a concept introduced by Xi Jinping, the current General Secretary and President of CCP, in November 2012. In his speech, he used the phrase to mean “the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”, but the exact implication of this political ideal remained vague, without clear parameters. Within Chinese socialist thought, in general, it describes a set of nationalist ideals and is meant to invoke the notion of Chinese prosperity, emphasizing the importance of collective effort and socialism in order to achieve national glory. Xi has asserted that citizens should “dare to dream” and be “inspired to realize the dream” as a means of contributing to the revitalization of the country.