Ethical and Methodological Muddles of Doing Ethnography on Corporations and Their Managers

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Anthropology has traditionally been a discipline that studies small-scale societies in far-flung places or subaltern groups in large, complex societies. On the margins, some anthropologists have been studying business organizations and their managers. In recent years, an increasing number of practicing and academic anthropologists have entered the fields of business anthropology and anthropology of corporations, expanding the broader trend of "studying up" in anthropology. Compared to "traditional" anthropology. Business anthropology and anthropology of corporations involve not only a different research setting, but also a different positionality of the researcher in relation to their research subjects, which results in unique ethical and methodological challenges for the anthropologist. Drawing on years of fieldwork experience of researching family businesses in Zhejiang, China, this article examines the ethical and methodological "muddles" associated with doing ethnographic research on corporations and their managers. The goal of this article is to offer some suggestions to address these methodological and ethical challenges and to call for more scholarly attention to this much-needed area.

Keywords: business anthropology, anthropology of corporations, methodology, ethics, China

INTRODUCTION

In Anthropology has traditionally focused on small-scale societies or the disenfranchised, underprivileged, subaltern persons or groups in large, complex, contemporary societies. To do so, anthropologists customarily participate as much as possible in the activities of those they study and observe their way of life in their natural settings. In other words, anthropologists adopt the method of participant observation in order to gain a deep understanding and appreciation of the way of life under study. Aside from its intellectual merits, this longstanding anthropological tradition is grounded in a belief that by doing so anthropologists can expose the plight of those they study, give them voices, and subsequently empower them. Against the grain of this long-held tradition, calls have been made for anthropologists to "study up" since the late 1960s (Nader 1974[1969]). According to Laura Nader, studying up (as opposed to studying down or sideways) has its own merits for social justice, namely, to expose how power and domination work. By providing a better understanding of power institutions and elites, the work of anthropologists can help broadening the access to knowledge, which in turn can lead to more equitable social policies. For example, the anthropological study of corporate social responsibilities (CSR) in recent years has not only brought greater awareness to this topic, but also directly engages with the communities that are impacted by the corporations, especially those in the extractive industries (e.g., Rajak 2011; Dolan and Rajak 2016; Cochrane 2017; Welker 2014).

However, some of the anthropological research on corporations are less concerned about social policies and are more grounded in empirical and theoretical considerations that arise simply in a "non-traditional" setting in which the research subjects enjoy equal or higher privilege than that of the researcher. A notable example is Yanagisako's study of Italian family businesses. Yanagisako (2002) is concerned about how capitalism is enacted, incited by historically specific entrepreneurs who have specific types of sentiments and desires. Likewise, Karen Ho's (2009) study of Wall Street is an ethnographic study of the inner workings of financial capitalism. Similarly, much of the work in business anthropology focuses on the application of anthropological findings in business organizations, which may or may not be socially progressive, nevertheless makes valuable contributions to the discipline of anthropology (and of course to the organizations studied as well).

The diverse theoretical, political, or practical considerations notwithstanding, anthropologists are increasingly interested in business organizations and their managers today. Yet, very little is written about the unique methodological and ethical challenges anthropologists face in conducting research on corporations and corporate elites, and much less is written on the topic in Chinese society. Young anthropologists are basically left with a piece of advice the earliest generation of anthropologists left their students: "you will figure it out once you are in the field." Drawing on years of fieldwork experience on family businesses in Zhejiang, China, this article explores the methodological and ethical challenges associated with doing ethnographic research with business elites and corporations, with special attention to the Chinese context. The goal of this article is not to enumerate all the challenges that I have faced or other scholars will potentially face doing fieldwork, but to highlight the deficiency in this area and bring much-needed attention to it, and in the process to share some of my experience and suggestions that may be useful for researchers in their ethnographic encounters in a corporate setting. It is my hope that more scholars, especially Chinese scholars, will join the conversation on this topic and contribute to the healthy growth of this burgeoning field. Before I get to the specific methodological and ethical challenges, a brief review of the history of anthropological study of corporations and business anthropology, in general, is in order.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIELD

Business anthropology has its origin in industrial anthropology, which emerged in the 1930s. One notable earlier case study of industrial anthropology was the Hawthorne Studies. The research project was named after the Western Electric Company's manufacturing plant, Hawthorne Works. Using anthropological methods of participant observation, W. Lloyd Warner, who was part of the research team, demonstrated that qualitative anthropological research offered a valuable understanding of human relations in the organization, which in turn made an important contribution to understanding the organization and worker productivity (Jordan 2003). The success of the Hawthorne Studies cascaded into an emerging field of industrial anthropology. The growth of applied research in business settings led to the formation of the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) in 1941, which publishes the journal *Human Organization*.

An applied anthropology of business organizations did not develop unimpededly though. In the 1960s, several incidences of U.S. military soliciting "undercover research" by anthropologists, including Project Camelot in Latin America and later similar work in Vietnam, came to light. These events led to public condemnation by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) of "clandestine" or "secret" research, and the AAA's adoption in 1971 of a professional code of ethics banning secret research that would not be made available to the general public, which essentially prohibited consultancy work by practicing anthropologists. Consequently, little anthropological research was conducted in or for business organizations in the 1960s and the 1970s.

In the 1980s, a revival of business anthropology took shape. This was due to a confluence of several factors. On the one hand, an increasing number of anthropologists entered applied settings unrelated to the military and counterinsurgency, which led to a renewed debate on ethics that eventually resulted in the AAA allowing proprietary research, including consulting work by anthropologists. On the other hand, the

success of Japanese businesses internationally prompted an interest among business organizations as well as scholars in the concept of culture and its impact on the performance of business organizations (e.g., Pascale and Athos 1981). The idea that culture can influence business organizations descends from Hofstede's (1980) seminal work, in which he believes that our "mental programs" shape our behavior. Some scholars took the mental programs or culture at a very macro level to conceptualize different types of capitalism such as Confucian capitalism attributable to the cultural environment in which capitalism operates (e.g. Berger 1988; Redding 1990). Others adoptedthe concept of corporate culture or organizational culture to study behaviors of organizations (e.g., Deal and Kennedy 1981; Britan and Cohen 1980; Hamada 1998). The interest of anthropology in business organizations has since blossomed, thanks to the work of an increasing number of practicing anthropologists who are either employees or consultants of business organizations. As Jordan (2010) summarizes, business anthropologists are broadly interested in three areas: the culture and work processes of business organizations, marketing and consumer behavior, and product and service design. Much of this work has been presented at two major conferences: theConsumer Culture Theory Conference (CCT) and the Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference (EPIC). Without going into detail, suffice it to say that the broad trends and significance of this field have been well summarized in a few foundational texts (e.g., Jordan 2003, 2010; Baba 2012; Sunderland and Denny 2007; Cefkin 2009, 2012). Almost concurrently, the field of business anthropology is growing rapidly in China (Fang et al. 2019; Tian and Zhou 2012). This burgeoning interest of anthropology in business organizations culminated in the genesis of two academic journals dedicated to the field of business anthropology: *The International Journal of Business Anthropology* (inaugurated in 2010) and *Journal of Business Anthropology* (inaugurated in 2012). Moreover, a growing number of academic anthropologists, who are not applied anthropologists, are also studying the corporations for their intellectual and theoretical purposes (e.g., Yanagisko 2002; Rajak 2011; Ho 2009; Welker 2014; Kim 2013; Zhao 2014a, 2014b), even though they tend to call this subfield as the anthropology of corporations or anthropology of corporate forms (Welk et al. 2011).

Despite tremendous growth in scholarly studies of corporations and their managers, very little has been written on the methodological and ethical challenges in doing field research in corporations and with business elites. In the following, I will focus on a few topics surrounding ethnographic research on corporations, namely access, participant observation, interviews, and ethical concerns. I will discuss the common challenges in these areas and suggest some possible solutions. Given that my field experience is based in China, special attention is paid to Chinese society and the field of business anthropology in China.

ACCESS

The challenge of access is one of most widely discussed topics in studying up in anthropology. It is generally acknowledged by anthropologists (and other social scientists) that elites in general and corporate elites in particular are less accessible to anthropologists than other social groups such as marginalized groups that anthropologists traditionally study. As Robert Thomas puts it, "You cannot just walk into an office suite and expect to strike up a conversation or hang out and observe the scene…" (Thomas 1993, 82). Studying a corporation of a decent size in China or anywhere for that matter, the anthropologist will undoubtedly encounter different types of barriers to access. The premises of Chinese firms are typically physically secluded by walls, fences, and gates, and entry to the premises is subjected to verification of identity by security guards at the gates. Moreover, direct contact with top executives usually has to go through gatekeepers such as schedulers, secretaries, or personal assistants. On top of these barriers, there is a general sense that top business executives are always busy and that their time is "expensive" (i.e., they are less available than the marginalized groups that anthropologists often study). While it is true that there are challenges that anthropologists have to overcome in order to gain access to business elites they study, this is not to say that "studying down" or sideways would be challenge-free for anthropologists. As Clifford Geertz's famous example of cockfight in Bali — for months he was treated like a ghost by the villagers — reminds us that being able to physically stay in a village does not

immediately translate into a rapport with the villagers (Geertz 1973). Anthropologists have to be able to establish a certain level of trust with their research subjects before real field research can be underway no matter where the research site may be, even though there may be unique challenges to access in different field sites.

Recognizing the challenges of access to guarded organizations and elite informants, Monahan and Fisher (2015) have suggested a list of nine strategies for obtaining access. Yet, their strategies, which are drawn from contexts in the United States, range from highly useful, to not so useful, to not at all applicable to the Chinese context. The useful strategies include "attending industry or government conferences" and "communicating legitimacy" (of the researcher). From my experience researching the Chinese fashion industry, industry conventions (in my case the fashion weeks) are an extremely opportune time to do research with fashion designers, as one of their main goals to be there is to meet and engage with the public (i.e., doing interviews with the media). For my current project on Chinese family businesses, I have also had much luck in talking to family business successors through government-organized workshops. The next category of suggested strategies by Monahan and Fisher has a much lower rate of success based on my research experience in China. An example of this type of strategies is "finding the names (through publicly available sources) and making cold calls." I have done cold calling during my field research in China, but it is certainly not a dependable strategy. Much of my success of cold calling is dependent on how well-prepared I was both in terms of the information I obtained through public sources or a third party, my self-introduction, and luck (say, the subject was having a good day and happened to be available). Monahan and Fisher's last category of strategies is not at all applicable to the Chinese context, and this includes "filing for freedom of information requests." What works the best in the Chinese context, at least based on my experience, is through a trusted intermediary. If the researcher can find a local organization or individual that the research subjects trust to facilitate an introduction, they will not only be able to "get a foot in the door," but also have their credibility established prior to a meeting.[1]

The reason that an introduction by a trusted intermediary works well for field research in guarded organizations and with elite informants in China is not just because of the importance of *guanxi* (social connections) in social interactions,[2] but also because of the nature of social stratification in China today. As a matter of fact, the rise of private entrepreneurs and business elites in general as a privileged social group is a relatively recent phenomenon in China. For the purpose of clarity and brevity, I do not want to venture into the historical processes through which socioeconomic stratification takes place in contemporary China. Suffice it to say that the economic reform that allows private entrepreneurship only started in the late 1970s, prior to which the Chinese economy was largely state-owned and state-controlled (Naughton 2007). This means that Chinese entrepreneurs and business elites (especially older members of this group) have a lot of preexisting social ties with poorer neighbors, friends, and relatives. As a result, they are not as socially insulated as their counterparts may be in Western societies. The nascent nature of Chinese business elites and the relatively porous, though increasingly rigid, class boundaries in China make anthropologists' access to them relatively easier than to their counterparts in the West. With some efforts, it is possible for anthropologists to interact socially with Chinese business elites over tea or dinner (Osburg 2013). Moreover, major universities (both in and outside of China) are elite organizations themselves. Consequently, affiliations with major universities offer credibility needed for access to Chinese business elites as well. In my case, the School of Business at Zhejiang University, which is among the best-known universities in China, opened a lot of doors for me in my research with private business entrepreneurs in Zhejiang province.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation has long been a staple in ethnographic research. It is particularly valuable for anthropologists to obtain an emic perspective and ask informed questions. Yet, participant observation is significantly limited in a corporate setting. Some anthropologists managed to study corporations from within in the capacity of either an employee or a researcher (e.g., Ho 2009; Welker 2014; Kim 2013).

However, most of these studies only involve some elements of participant observation with rank and file workers and mid-level management, very rarely anthropologists are allowed to shadow the CEOs in their daily activities. As Gusterson (1997, 115) puts it, "participant observation does not travel well up the social structure". In lieu of traditional participant observation, he suggests "polymorphous engagement," by which he means interactions with elite informants in different forms at various venues. Ortner (2010), on the other hand, use the term "interface ethnography" to describe this type of interactive and horizontal engagements between anthropologists and their elite research subjects. In fact, seeking out as many opportunities as possible to engage and interact with business executives both inside and outside their offices is a valuable form of participant observation. For one, participant observation as a research method does not entail a precise demarcation of half participation and half observation, but a spectrum of various forms ranging from detached observation (with minimum or no participation) to complete immersion and participation (Murchison 2010, 84-87). Depending on the researcher's goals and the circumstances, they may choose to balance participation and observation in a way that best suits their project. Thus, interactions and engagements with business elites in different settings, though often not as extended as desired, are a form of participant observation in nature. For another, as will be explained in detail later, Chinese private business owners have multiple personas, and interacting with them in diverse settings will yield valuable insights about them. For example, my interview with a company's CEO in his office during the day and another one with him in a coffee shop after work went very differently. The former was much more formal and guarded, while the latter was much more relaxed, which allowed me to learn different things about him as a CEO and as a person.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews take on an outsized importance for data collection in doing field research with business elites because of limited opportunities for anthropologists to conduct participant observation in these settings. From the outset, it needs to be stated that all "conventions" of ethnographic interviews are applicable to interviews with business elites. For example, anthropologists typically ask open-ended questions and give space for the interviewee to respond and elaborate, which is also true for interviews with business elites, but there are things that are unique to interviews with this group of research subjects, which will be the focus of this section.

One general attribute of business elites is that they are used to "just talk" (Hertz and Imber 1993, 4), and it would be counter-productive for the researcher not to be well prepared ahead of time. To prepare for the interview, the researcher needs to do a comb-through of publicly available sources on the research subject and design an interview guide in advance. The interview guide will prevent a directionless conversation and show the interviewee that the researcher is not wasting their time. Additionally, it will potentially save the researcher the embarrassment for not knowing some widely known "facts" about the interviewee. Chinese business elites are not only used to facing the public and taking interviews from the media, many of them are also authors of books and articles. Without doing any prior research on the entrepreneur and their publications, the researcher may risk being dismissed or intimidated by their interviewee from the get-go. "Here is my book and it has the answers to your questions" was the answer I heard in one of the first interviews I had with a CEO of a company. In fact, during the course of my research on Chinese family businesses, I have received more than a dozen books written by Chinese entrepreneurs. A few are purely literary works (such as collections of poems and essays), some are biographies, and most are about their experiences of and commentaries on business management. While I never take these writings at face value (as they tend to be on the side of self-aggrandizement), knowing some of the contents of the interviewees' writings has allowed me to ask more informed questions and given me more attentive respondents.

Another attribute of business elites is that they can take on multiple personas (Thomas 1993, 88), each representing the individual, the position, and the organization. Typically, anthropologists would be more interested in the first two, which means that anthropologists have to think of ways to bring those two personas out of the interviewee and limit the influence of the third (the public face of the

organization) during their research. To that end, anthropologists should try to interview business elites outside of their offices to the extent possible. In the event that outside of the office is not an option, anthropologists should find an area in the office (say, a coffee table instead of a chair right across their desk) that is more conducive to an ethnographic interview. Related to the environmental or contextual influence on the interview, anthropologists should avoid addressing business executives by their company titles. While this may seem to be a subtle choice of words, this practice will differentiate anthropologists from journalists or scholars from a business school — the type of folks from whom business elites are used to receiving interviews. Addressing them by their company titles can remind them of their official corporate speech (thus assuming the third persona), which Thomas (1993, 89)calls "mentally 'rewinding the tape.'" Moreover, the researcher may appear to be rather deferential to the business elites, which can further influence the way in which they respond to the interview questions. In my first research trip to a large family firm that was accompanied by a scholar from Zhejiang University, I had to remind him not to call an interviewee who was the CEO of the company by his title but Mr. so and so.

All such strategies — designing an interview guide, having some control over space (non-verbal cues) and employing subtle verbal cues — are necessary to avoid turning an ethnographic interview into a complete public relations response, and to access behaviors and thinking of the business executive as an individual in a more informal and less guarded way. Hertz and Imber (1993) contrast these two types of behaviors as those in the frontstage and those in the backstage. Following their metaphor, the goal of ethnographic research is to get to the "backstage" with corporate elites and talk to them with their "microphone" turned off. After all, that is what makes ethnographic research valuable and what distinguishes ethnographic research from journalistic interviews. Yet, despite these efforts, anthropologists may not be successful at their first attempt. Should that be the case, anthropologists can consider mitigating measures such as developing a long-term relationship by repeated follow-up visits and interviews with the business executives and triangulating data obtained from them with those obtained from their subordinates and family members who are less experienced in dealing with the public (and the media).

ETHICAL CONCERNS

Unlike methodological challenges, which anthropologists face during field research, ethical questions must be considered before, during, and after field research. Throughout the research process, anthropologists must consider: To whom do we have ethical responsibilities? What types of ethical responsibilities and considerations do we have to deal with? What ethical rules and guidelines do we have to follow institutionally and professionally? These questions are interconnected and are broadly relevant to all ethnographic research. However, answers to these questions, especially to question three, have evolved over time. Moreover, there may be specific ethical concerns unique to a subfield in anthropology, such as business anthropology or the anthropology of corporations. In this section, I will outline the rules and guidelines on ethics in anthropology in the United States, then discuss prevalent ethical concerns most relevant to ethnographic research on corporations and their managers, and then highlight some ethical challenges facing ethnographic research on corporations and corporate elites in China.

Research on human subjects always involves ethical issues, however, what is ethically acceptable and what is not have evolved over time. In the United States, a code of ethics for biomedical and behavioral research did not always exist and only came into being after ethical debacles were committed and exposed. For example, the notorious Tuskegee syphilis study in the 1940s exploited disadvantaged, rural black men to study a disease that was not limited to this population. This and other ethically problematic studies led to the U.S. government to pass the National Research Act and the creation of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (the Commission hereinafter) in 1974. In 1979, the Commission published the Belmont Report, which has since become the guidepost for the protection of human subjects in biomedical and behavioral research. The key ethical principles enshrined in the Belmont Report are "respect for persons," "beneficence," and "justice." The Belmont Report later became the foundational text that came to be known as the "Common

Rule," which was adopted by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now the Department of Health and Human Services) along with 14 other federal departments and agencies. Subsequently, American research institutions including higher education institutions are required to establish Institutional Review Boards (IRB) to ensure that all research conducted within their institutions follow federal regulations and their own institutional policies. The IRB approves and monitors all research involving human subjects based on seven criteria. The key goals are to ensure that the risks to the research subjects are minimized, that the selection of subjects is equitable, that informed consent of all subjects is obtained, and that their privacies are protected.

Aside from the IRB, disciplinary associations have adopted their own code of ethics. The American Anthropological Association issued a statement on problems of anthropological research and ethics as far back as in 1967, which has been subsequently revised and updated several times. The current AAA code of ethics was adopted in 2012. This code includes seven principles: Do No Harm, Be Open and Honest Regarding Your Work, Obtain Informed Consent and Necessary Permissions, Weigh Competing Ethical Obligations Due Collaborators and Affected Parties, Make Your Results Accessible, Protect and Preserve Your Records, and Maintain Respectful and Ethical Professional Relationships. Similarly, the Society for Applied Anthropology and the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology have adopted their own codes of ethics. Together these codes provide important guideline for ethnographic research on corporations and their managers. However, they cannot possibly resolve all ethical challenges anthropologists face in their ethnographic encounters. With respect to anthropological research on corporations, the most common ethical questions surround the interest of the public and the autonomy of the researcher. These questions become even more acute when the research is funded by the corporations under study or if the researcher is employed by the corporation. As the case studies in Malefyt and Morais's (2017) edited volume make it abundantly clear, how to ensure "Do No Harm" is not just applied to research subjects, but also to the consumers (if the research involves consumer products). For anthropologists working for corporations, how to prevent research results from being kept secret and how to maintain control over the research process are not always easy tasks and there are not clear guidelines. Part of the difficulty lies with the fact that no uniform answer can be provided to different anthropological projects in different situations. As noted previously, even the AAA code of ethics has evolved over time, partly to allow for consulting work by practicing anthropologists. Jordan (2003) also notes that she would negotiate with the corporations in advance on the terms in which she does her work for the corporations in order to ensure that she works in a manner that is consistent with the AAA ethical principles and that she can publish the results with necessary safeguard measures.

Because my research is funded by my university and a granting agency based in the United States, the ethical challenges that I have faced while doing field research on Chinese family businesses are less complicated than a business anthropologist funded by a corporation would. During my field research, however, I have met several Chinese scholars in related fields whose projects were partly or fully funded by the businesses they study. Funding alone does not necessarily entail ethical issues for those projects. Yet, Chinese journals and presses do not always require authors to disclose their funding sources, especially private funding sources. In published books based on research funded by corporations, the authors often acknowledge the funder in the preface or acknowledgements, and some even ask the funder to write a preface for the book. The problem associated with this type of public "disclosure" is that Chinese scholars, although anthropologists are more conscious than scholars in other fields, tend to use real names instead of pseudonyms of the executives and the corporations they study, which may be the reason why it is hard pressed to find anything critical of the business elites or corporations that funded the research in these books. In fact, in a few books that are funded by Chinese businesses that I came across, compliments and flattery of the entrepreneurs/funders abound.

Part of the cause as well as a potential solution to these issues in China is an equivalent of the institutional review boards in U.S. academic institutions, which is generally absent for social science research in China at present. An effective IRB can potentially monitor and enforce ethical standards in research. Additionally, Chinese disciplinary associations should adopt a code of ethics. Even though professional associations such as the AAA cannot enforce the code but rely on voluntary compliance, the

code provides important guidance for research and valuable material in college courses to educate the next generation of anthropologists. Again, a code of ethics is currently absent for many academic disciplinary associations in China. For anthropology, this perhaps has to do with the fact that the discipline is only relatively recently revived and only exist in a handful higher education institutions in China. Nevertheless, the lack of institutional and disciplinary support, coupled with relentless pressure to obtain funding from all sources and to publish, creates a very difficult macro environment in which Chinese scholars have to navigate all the ethical challenges confronting ethnographic field research. For individual scholars and educators, perhaps the most effective measures to change the situation are to draw more attention to these ethical challenges, to have straightforward discussions about these issues with colleagues and students, and to develop their own best practices.

CONCLUSION

In recent decades, anthropology has seen a growing body of literature on corporations, thanks to the contributions of both practicing and academic anthropologists (Jordan 2003; Cefkin 2009; Baba 2012; Yanagisako 2002; Rajak 2011; Welker 2014). However, very little is written about methodological and ethical challenges that anthropologists face while conducting field research with corporate elites. In graduate seminars on methods, business elites in corporations are usually not differentiated from marginalized groups anthropologists traditionally study. As James Watson (2006, viii) puts it: "In fieldwork you live where people live, you go where people go, and you do what people do." In fieldwork in a corporate setting, however, most of the time you cannot do that.

Corporations are usually guarded organizations and their top executives are often off-limits to anthropologists. Moreover, the challenge of doing fieldwork in corporations is not just limited to access, but also has to do with the different personas that top executives tend to inhabit and the unique positionality of the researcher in relation to their research subjects. Drawing on my own fieldwork experience of family businesses in Zhejiang, China, this essay explored the methodological challenges and techniques in overcoming those challenges in gaining access, doing participant observation, and conducting interviews with business executives in a corporate setting, which I hope will be useful to other scholars in other contexts of studying up. In addition, this essay discussed ethical concerns and possible solutions associated with doing research on corporations, particularly those in China. It should be noted that ethical concerns and codes of ethics are always evolving, and that ethical challenges facing Chinese scholars are not of their making and consequently they have fewer options in dealing with them on their own. Barring from changes in institutional and associational support, the best individual scholars can do is to discuss, learn, and share their experiences with their colleagues and students and develop some forms of best practices.

Finally, the methodological and ethical challenges I discussed in this essay are limited in their scope, although I doubt an exhaustive attempt is possible. It is my hope that more scholars will join the conversation and contribute to the healthy growth of the field of business anthropology or anthropology of corporations both within and outside China.

ENDNOTES

1. This credibility is of course tentative and has to be affirmed by direct interactions with the researcher.

2. *Guanxi*, or social connections, is a pervasive concept in Chinese society, and it is also very well researched concept in the field of China Studies. For an overview, see Smart 1993; Yang 1994; Yan 1996; and Kipnis 1997.

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