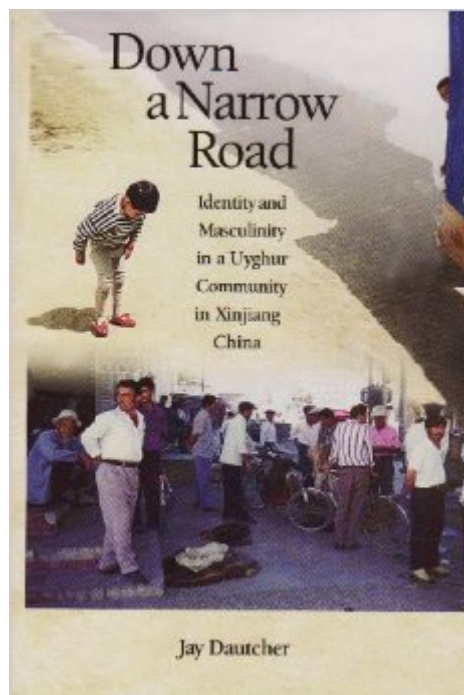


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Down A Narrow Road: Identity And Masculinity In A Uyghur Community In Xinjiang China (Harvard East Asian Monographs)



Synopsis

The Uyghurs, a Turkic group, account for half the population of the Xinjiang region in northwestern China. This ethnography presents a thick description of life in the Uyghur suburbs of Yining, a city near the border with Kazakhstan, and situates that account in a broader examination of Uyghur culture. Its four sections explore topics ranging from family life to market trading, from informal socializing to forms of religious devotion. Uniting these topics are an emphasis on the role folklore and personal narrative play in helping individuals situate themselves in and create communities and social groups, and a focus on how men's concerns to advance themselves in an agonistic world of status competition shape social life in Uyghur communities. The narrative is framed around the terms identity, community, and masculinity. As the author shows, Yining's Uyghurs express a set of individual and collective identities organized around place, gender, family relations, friendships, occupation, and religious practice. In virtually every aspect of their daily lives, individuals and families are drawn into dense and overlapping networks of social relationships, united by a shared engagement with the place of men's status competition within daily life in the community.

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Customer Reviews

Jay Dautcher has written a great ethnography with a level of wide-ranging detail that is rare in modern academic work, along with a depth of discussion of the ways in which male identity is constructed through male relationships, teasing, and nicknaming. His interspersing of jokes and

fieldnotes add additional color to his story. As someone who has visited several parts of Central Asia, there were times in reading this when I was surprised to see some small detail of culture, life-cycle or place which I would never have thought to record -- but which Jay has recorded. These details of life on an everyday level, and the exploration of Uyghur life in Xinjiang (especially being outside of Urumchi, and not focused primarily on ethnonationalism), are rare and valuable. In some ways, the weakest part of this to me was his symbolic analysis of masculinity and sexuality as seen through jokes, anecdotes, and conversation. At points it seemed almost Freudian, where a comment offered at one level is interpreted at a much deeper level. His discussion of nicknaming and engagement with onomastics (the study of names), however, is a valuable addition to the ethnography of Central Asia. It's definitely worth your time to read at least a chapter or two from this book!

There aren't a lot of resources about the Uyghurs available. Jay's book is very scholarly, esoteric and pedantic. But it is also a rare insight to the Uyghur culture. In person, Jay is very engaging. I wish his book was more like his personality.

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