

AUTUMN 2019

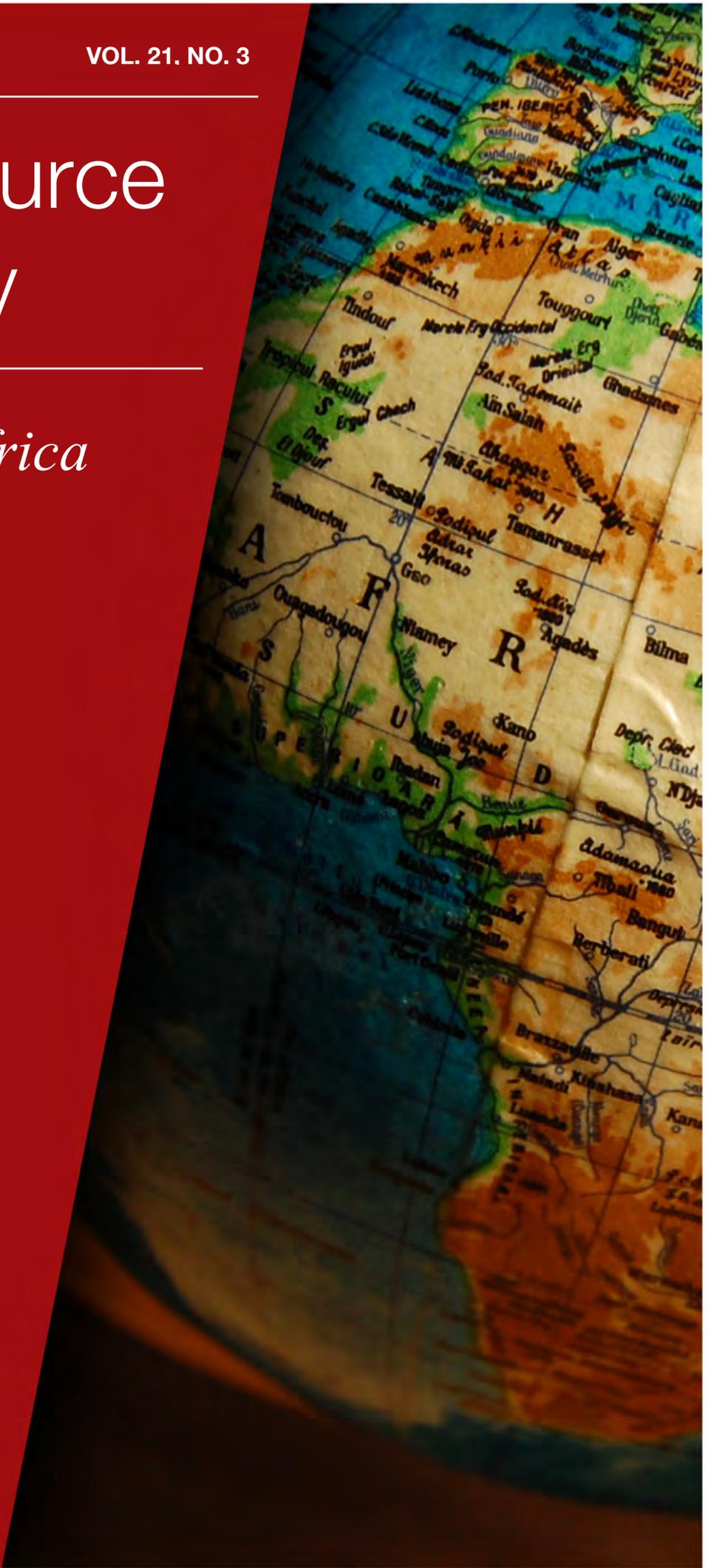
VOL. 21, NO. 3

ChinaSource Quarterly

China and Africa

Joann Pittman,
Guest Editor

華源協作
CHINASOURCE



About ChinaSource

For the past 20 years, ChinaSource has been a trusted platform facilitating the flow of critical knowledge and leading-edge research among the Christian communities inside China and around the world and engaging them in collaborating to serve the Chinese church and society.

As China continues to grow and change, the church in China is doing the same. With over 100 years of collective China-ministry experience, the ChinaSource team is strategically positioned to help bring knowledge, clarity, and insight to groups engaging with China.

Content

ChinaSource's content is aimed at providing reliable, balanced, and relevant information to those who serve China. All of ChinaSource's content resources can be found on the website: www.chinasource.org

Partnerships

ChinaSource's partnerships are aimed at playing a catalytic role in bringing together the right people, asking the right questions, and influencing Christian thinking about China.

We partner with individuals, organizations, churches, and interested groups who share our vision to see China's Christians engage the society inside and outside of China as they contribute to and influence the global church conversation for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

Training/Consulting

Under the ChinaSource Institute, ChinaSource provides its training/consulting services packaged in a variety of products and services that are easily accessible to a wide audience. A full list of our offerings can be found on our website: www.chinasource.org

Engagement

ChinaSource is committed to actively engaging with China in order to better connect and amplify the voice of Christians in China. We hope to act as a conversational bridge between the church in China and the global church. Whenever and wherever the church in China is being talked about, ChinaSource aims to be part of the discussion. This is primarily done via our network of Chinese Christians, conferences, research, events, and through media.

www.chinasource.org

To access embedded links to resources and other related articles, please go to the online version of this ChinaSource Quarterly (www.bit.ly/china-and-africa).

In this issue . . .

Editorial

[A Glimpse of “From Everywhere to Everywhere”](#)

[Page 2](#)

Joann Pittman

Articles

[Hand-in-Hand, Carving a New Imprint](#)

[Page 3](#)

Fred

With the recent influx of Chinese to Africa, how can the church stand in the gap and bring to these immigrants the gospel that will ultimately result in their reconciliation, not only with God but also with the Africans?

[China and Africa: An Introduction](#)

[Page 5](#)

Michael Hicks

What is the current relationship between China and Africa, and what are its long-term implications? The author looks at the historical backgrounds and contemporary issues that address this question.

[Challenges in Africa for Chinese Christian Workers](#)

[Page 7](#)

Christopher Lai

Chinese Christian workers in Africa find challenges that are formidable; this article looks at several of the major ones. Yet, despite these challenges, workers are making advancements for Christ’s kingdom.

[Building Bridges through Language and Culture](#)

[Page 10](#)

Faith Wanjiku Mworio

Faith Wanjiku Mworio founded the Discovery Chinese Cultural Center in Nairobi, Kenya for the promotion of cultural and language exchanges between Kenyans and Chinese. She tells how the Center began and describes its outreach and desired outcomes.

[An African in China: An Interview](#)

[Page 12](#)

Joann Pittman

Joann Pittman interviews “Tim,” a Zimbabwean student living in China, who shares his observations of similarities and differences between the two countries.

Book Review

[Sino-African Relations and International Contexts](#)

[Page 14](#)

China and Africa: A Century of Engagement, by David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman

Reviewed by Lucy Liu

The authors provide a brief history of Sino-African relations and international contexts to give readers a deeper understanding of the evolution of China’s engagement with Africa and modern Sino-African relations.

Resource Corner

[The China in Africa Podcast](#)

[Page 16](#)

“The Unintended Religious Consequence of Chinese Investment in Africa “

Listen as Dr. Christopher Rhodes explores the issue of converted Chinese migrants returning home from Africa and the potential political ramifications.

Editorial

A Glimpse of “From Everywhere to Everywhere”

By Joann Pittman



In November of 2006, Beijing hosted a gathering of leaders from African countries for a meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCOC). The Forum, established in 2000, had convened previous meetings at the ministerial level, but this was the first summit that included national-level leaders.

I was living in Beijing at the time and remember it well since no effort was spared to spiff up the city. The streets were cleaned, traffic restrictions were imposed, and giant banners flew all over town proclaiming the enduring friendship between China and the nations of Africa. Joseph Khan, covering the event for *The New York Times*, had this to say about the meeting:

The official purposes of the three-day event are to expand trade, to allow China to secure the oil and ore it needs for its booming economy, and to offer aid to help African nations improve roads, railways and schools.

The unofficial purpose is to redraw the world’s strategic map, forming tighter political ties between China, now the fastest-growing major economy, and a continent whose leaders often complain of being neglected by the United States and Europe.

“African leaders see China as a new kind of global partner that has lots of money but treats them as equals,” says Wenran Jiang, a political scientist at the University of Alberta who has studied Sino-African relations. “Chinese leaders see Africa, in a strategic sense, as up for grabs.”¹

At the time it seemed like simply another big meeting that was being held in Beijing. Truth be told it felt more like a dress rehearsal for the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games than anything particularly meaningful. I did not imagine that I was witnessing the beginning of what would become China’s strategic involvement in Africa, and would turn out to be a precursor to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that was launched by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2013 which extended the aims noted by Khan in his New York Times piece to countries around the world.

That meeting in Beijing has been on my mind for the past few months as I worked on this issue of the *ChinaSource Quarterly*, in which we look at the growing ties and cooperation between China and Africa and explore the ways they relate to gospel opportunities. The aim of this issue is provide historical background as well as information and analysis of the various issues related to Chinese and Africans working together to reach both Chinese and Africans.

In the lead article, Fred writes about the need for partnership between Chinese and African believers in reaching out to and ministering to the Chinese in Africa. He provides a model of Chinese and African Christians working together to overcome cultural barriers, serving hand-in-hand to reach Chinese in one country in Africa.

Michael Hicks, a PhD candidate studying the history of China-Africa relations during the Mao era, provides us with important historical background information, while also providing context for understanding some of the current issues. Christopher Lai explores seven key challenges that Chinese Christian workers face in Africa. These range from preserving the “face” of the Chinese government to issues of cross-cultural communications.

Next we hear from Faith, the founder of a language and culture learning center in Nairobi that provides services to Africans and Chinese from all walks of life. She writes about her love of all things Chinese, and of using language and culture learning as a means of building understanding between Chinese and Africans.

Another African voice we hear from is Tim, a student from Zimbabwe studying in China, whom I had the chance to interview. He reflects on some of the cultural similarities and differences between Chinese and Africans, and shares his thoughts on how Chinese Christians can reach out to the African students in their midst.

Lucy Liu reviews the book, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, written by David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman. She commends the book for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it helps those interested in the subject to “get their facts straight.” “This is important for those wanting to engage both Chinese and Africans in meaningful ways.

We conclude with a recommended resource, *The China in Africa Podcast*, produced by the China Africa Project. Produced weekly, this podcast explores the numerous facets of the increasing engagement between China and Africa.

Four years after the summit in Beijing, the Lausanne Congress was held in Cape Town, South Africa. One of the emerging themes was that the spread of the gospel is no longer going to be “from the west to the rest;” rather it will be “from everywhere to everywhere.” This issue provides a small glimpse of that reality.

¹ “China Opens Summit for African Leaders,” by Joseph Khan, November 2, 2006, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/02/world/asia/02cnd-china.html>. Accessed August 29, 2019.

Joann Pittman is senior vice president of ChinaSource and editor of ZGBriefs.

Hand-in-Hand, Carving a New Imprint

By Fred



The Sino-African relationship began as early as the Tang Dynasty and grew during the Ming Dynasty through the voyages of Admiral Zhenghe. Of the seven voyages of Zhenghe, the last four reached sixteen countries and regions in Africa. The initial exchanges were short-lived, however, and did not leave much of an imprint. A long silence prevailed until recently when an influx of a large number of Chinese came to Africa. Media focus has been on how China is changing Africa with its investment in infrastructure building; what has escaped attention is how vibrant African churches are influencing the growing Chinese population at their doorstep.

T graduated with a Master's degree from a university in China. After his graduation, he worked for a state-owned company before going to country X in Africa in 2016. He went to join his high school sweetheart, M, who had secured a job with an international organization. He went with apprehension as he had heard horror stories about the challenges facing Chinese people in that country, including theft, robbery, carjackings, scams, bribery, and police extortion. His initial encounters with government officials were not helpful; on the contrary, they reinforced his preconceived ideas about the locals. He began to form negative stereotypes and dreaded staying in that country. It was only when he joined a Bible study and church and met some local Christians who demonstrated Christ-likeness and showed genuine love for the Chinese that he began to appreciate his stay in country X.

An increasing number of Chinese, like T, have come to country X to work or start businesses. Like him, a majority of those who come are young graduates in their twenties. This is a more recent phenomenon that is slowly changing the perception that the Chinese in Africa are mostly blue-collar workers and miners who toil at their work site day and night.

This same trend is happening in other African countries as governments all over the continent are increasingly issuing work permits to those who come with skills and substantial investments. In country X, there are more than three hundred Chinese companies. In most of these companies, about eighty percent of the employees are local while about twenty to thirty percent are Chinese. The Chinese staff is generally the management staff or those with engineering and technical skills.

Interestingly, many of the Chinese who go to Africa are like T in that they have no previous knowledge of Christianity. It can be argued that this group is one of the least-reached people groups in Africa. In country X, where we serve, less than one hundred Chinese, among the fifty thousand living there, worship in church on Sunday; even among that number, few are believers.

Reaching Out to the Chinese in Africa

“God has brought a large number of Chinese to our doorstep. Come and help us reach out to them. Please walk with us and do not pass us by.” This has been the plea of some key leaders of African churches. Our organization responded to their plea by sending a team to launch a Chinese diaspora ministry that involves the African churches in country X. Unfortunately, this plea from some key African leaders does not represent the voice of the majority of African Christians. Even as the Chinese are apprehensive of the Africans and do not reach out in friendship to them, many Africans, including Christians, have been slow in reaching out to the Chinese.

Recently, a researcher investigated factors that affect outreach to Chinese in a particular city. Questionnaires were distributed to eighty-two Christians who are active in ministry from four key evangelical churches and one mission organization. All of these were located within a five-kilometer radius of the center of activities of the Chinese community. Ten key leaders from among the four churches were interviewed as well. When asked about perceptions of Chinese, forty-six percent indicated they had a negative perception while forty percent indicated a positive perception. Nine percent of the respondents said they were “unconcerned” about the presence of Chinese in their town, and six percent indicated they were unaware of the Chinese in their midst. For those who had a negative experience with the Chinese as a result of personal encounters, experiences in business, or at the workplace, media reports about the Chinese reinforced their negative perceptions.

A journalist from *Ming Pao*, a Hong Kong newspaper, concluded his article on the Chinese-African relationship with this insight: “If China-Africa’s relationship began because of self-interest, inevitably it shall end because of self-interest. The Chinese in Africa do not seem to bother about the suffering souls of the Africans; on the other hand, the Africans have never been interested to understand the ordeals of the Chinese in Africa.” Between Chinese and Africans, there is little genuine friendship—only business transactions.

It is not known if similar research has been done in other African countries, but from my conversations with church and missions leaders from around the continent, they seem to share the same sentiment that there is a huge gap between Africans and Chinese. In general, African churches tend to be apathetic to the presence of Chinese in their

neighborhoods; this is demonstrated by few intentional efforts to reach out to them. Besides this existing gap, diaspora mission is new to African churches that, in this respect, are unlike churches in the West that have been engaging in diaspora mission for the last few decades.

Together Standing in the Gap of Misunderstanding and Prejudice

How can the church stand in the gap and bring to the Chinese in Africa the gospel that will ultimately result in their reconciliation not only with God but also with the Africans? This calls for partnership between African churches and global churches, particularly those in China. Chinese churches can send vocational missionaries and bivocational missionaries to work with the African churches in a genuine partnership that calls both parties to serve and give to one another.

Miss Z is from a city in China. She surrendered her life to Jesus while in college and began serving on staff in her church. At that time, the missionary movement within urban house churches was still in its infancy. She felt called to missions and began to get involved in church-based missions education. Two years ago, she received a graduate degree in intercultural studies and was sent to country X as the first cross-cultural missionary from her church.

J and M responded to God's call to move to country X to serve as bivocational workers. J works as a professional in a large Chinese company.

All three of these individuals are from churches in China that have been targets for crackdowns and increasing persecution. Even though they have no permanent place of worship, no registration, and no official bank account, they joyfully send out missionaries to the nations.

N is a local Christian in country X. She surrendered her life to Christ while in college and has since grown as a disciple. After her graduation, she joined an indigenous mission organization as an intern. That experience helped to equip her for cross-cultural missions. It was during that time that she sensed God's call to reach the Chinese in Africa. After graduation, she joined a team partially supported by her friends from the university. She is learning Chinese and at the same time developing a ministry that teaches the local language to Chinese people as an avenue for outreach.

R came from country A, which borders country X. She began to develop an interest in Chinese culture while she was in secondary school during a time when Chinese were still a small minority in that country. After her tertiary education, she signed up for TEFL with a view of engaging in an English teaching ministry in China, but God led her to join a team to minister to the Chinese diaspora in country X.

L joined the first three-month Chinese language and culture training class hosted by a local church and has since been the advocate for this ministry in the church. Being gifted in administration, she has become a key link between the team and the church and is a valuable member of the ministry.

K was born again through the ministry of an African fellowship when she studied in China. Upon her return to country Y, a Chinese company employed her due to her good command of the Chinese language and her knowledge of the Chinese culture. However, it was also during that time that she began to resent the Chinese when she discovered their prejudice against the locals and how they tended to maximize profits by underpaying the locals. Once, when the tension between the Chinese and locals was heightened, due to a Chinese uttering derogatory remarks against the leader of country X, K expressed strong resentment against the Chinese on Facebook. It was a painful journey for her, but God has never given up on her. He keeps stirring her heart to reach out to the Chinese on her doorstep. K's love for the Chinese was rekindled, and she joined our team for ministry to the Chinese.

Today, Z, J, and M from China along with Africans N, R, L, and K are together in a ministry team that we lead. We work closely to reach out to the Chinese diaspora community and, at the same time, to mobilize, equip, and come alongside local churches to do the same. A multicultural church and a multicultural team that embraces both Chinese and Africans were birthed as a result of this ministry. At a time when the Chinese diaspora community and the Africans are separated by a widening gap of prejudice, misunderstanding, and apathy, this team and the church have demonstrated a new model of relationship between Chinese and Africans, enabled by the power of the gospel that brings reconciliation.

New Possibilities

As much as China is changing Africa, will Africa slowly and quietly change China through the growing African and Chinese churches? No fanfare, no powerful resources, no top notch strategist, no shouting or crying out, and no raising of voices in the streets, but simply people called by God to do a new thing with a God who is able to call forth a stream in the wilderness.

In an interesting way, people like Z, J, and M from China and N, R, L, and K from Africa are part of the missionary movement of the majority church that is writing a new model of mission that grows from six continents to six continents. It is a new missionary movement that calls for partnerships across continents, churches, ethnic groups, and mission organizations. It is also a new missionary movement of the majority church that is often persecuted, if not poorer, compared to the people to whom they are ministering. It is a missionary movement of the vulnerable.

China and Africa: An Introduction

By Michael Hicks

The controversial Spring Festival Gala performance, carried by CCTV last year, made headlines throughout the world for its use of blackface and primitive depiction of Nairobi and Kenyans. The Gala performance, aired in February 2018, was taken in some sectors of Western media as evidence of Chinese racism toward Africans. However, the black faces seen on Chinese television are not just negative stereotypes.



Image courtesy of Alissa Wachter.

Known as Hao Ge (郝歌), Nigerian-born Emmanuel Uwechue has attained celebrity status in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Starting in Lagos, Nigeria as a singer at the House of the Rock Pentecostal Church, Uwechue traveled to China and began a musical career in the early 2000s, eventually garnering enough attention to be asked to sing at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Both the blackface controversy and Uwechue's musical career speak to a larger relationship linking the world's second largest economy and the 54 nations of the world's second largest continent. Importantly, because of its relationship with African nations, China is changing greatly—even as it impacts Africa.

But what exactly is this relationship(s)? Is there, as some editorials suggest, an effort to impose a new version of colonialism “with Chinese characteristics?” Or, as the Chinese government and pro-Beijing outlets suggest, does investment from the PRC offer an alternative option for investment and business deals? What are the long-term implications of China in Africa? How then can the church be attentive and responsive to this very vital and important relationship?

This essay will help to show some of the depths and complexities of Sino-African relations we see in the early twenty-first century. It entails racism and exploitation but also opportunity and possibility. This article will sketch some of the historical background as well as introduce some of the contemporary issues in China-Africa relations. I am a historian of China who researches Maoist internationalist outreach to Africa and African Americans during the heights of the Cold War. My perspective is geared toward both the reality and the rhetoric of China's relationship with African nations in the twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Historical Background

In thinking about China-Africa relations, it is useful to examine how both regions experienced the twentieth century. While the Republic of China (ROC) government struggled to exercise effective control over its nominal territories up to 1937, Africans throughout their continent bristled under the heel of European colonialism. The end of the Second World War, both the defeat of Axis Japan as well as the impoverishment of Allied colonizers, catalyzed a wave of decolonization beginning in Asia and later sweeping Africa.

A shared history of foreign domination and the wave of decolonization was used by PRC leaders, such as Zhou Enlai, who adapted a spirit of cooperation between African and Asian peoples following the Bandung Conference in 1955, to showcase Beijing's position to lead emerging African nations in pursuit of a world revolution to overthrow the old colonial order. The post-Bandung creation of a “Third Way,” or “Third World,” separate from the two Cold War poles of Washington and Moscow, brought the PRC into a close relationship, playing “big brother,” to emerging independent African nations under a banner of revolutionary change and world socialism. While the power dynamics between Beijing and its African allies have always been questioned and critiqued, less attention has been given to how African nations have shaped China's development as a major power.

Relations with African nations began to pay diplomatic dividends for Beijing during the decolonization era of the sixties and seventies. African nations were among the major supporters who voted for the PRC being admitted into the UN in 1971. The TAZARA Railway, also known as the Tan-Zam Railway, was celebrated as a major feat and propaganda coup for Beijing's policy in Africa as the longest railway in sub-Saharan Africa and the PRC's single largest foreign aid investment. Uniting the copper belt of Zambia to the coast of Tanzania, and financed with interest-free loans from China, the TAZARA Railway was criticized in European and American newspapers as a way for the PRC to control Africans and their resources through debt while boosting China's position on the continent. Criticism of Chinese investment in Africa in our own day continues to echo along the lines of predatory financing, resource extraction, and lack of concern for local people.

While the PRC under Mao pushed for an African policy and relationship based around Third World solidarities and world revolution, the start of the Reform and Opening policy in 1979 marked a major shift in Sino-African relations. Political relations would continue; however, economic restructuring would necessitate a much larger role for trade and business development as a major pillar of the China-Africa relationship. This new economic relationship would bring new issues, problems, and solutions both to China and African nations. Third World solidarities, once political, would also come to describe economics and denote vast differences in prosperity and poverty.

Contemporary Issues

The integration of China into the Washington-centered world order occurred in stages. From joining the UN in 1971, normalizing relations with the US and restructuring economic policies in 1979, to more recently joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, the Sino-African relationship played a large and, as yet, still largely understudied role in facilitating the “Chinese miracle.” But what does that mean in 2019? What has been built on the diplomatic and economic relationship linking China and Africa?

Natural and human resources as well as markets throughout the African continent continue to play a major role in China’s economic ascent and, conversely, China has proved a major financier of Africa’s economic development. Chinese firms, both private and state-owned, invest in natural resources from copper, gold, and petroleum to agriculture yields. Chinese investment in Africa spans the continent from Egypt to South Africa and from Senegal to Ethiopia. In addition to mining, many independent Chinese investors, as well as state-owned enterprises (SOEs), have increased their stakes in African agriculture from rice in Cameroon to palm oil in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

According to a 2018 study by Deloitte, Chinese investment was estimated to be in a third of all regional and continental projects in Africa that year with a large footprint in East and Central Africa, at 54.7% and 38.5% respectively. Further, the largest share of Chinese funded and built projects were targeted in transportation. These major investments were a part of Beijing’s multinational project called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Announced in 2013 by then new Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, BRI was designed to strengthen Beijing’s commercial relationships with nations throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is attempting to recreate the China-centered economic world of the Silk Road with trade uniting Europe to China through Central Asia and Africa to the Indian Ocean via China. African nations make up 37 of the 103 countries that signed to join the BRI. Recent infrastructure projects, such as the construction of a Chinese rail in Kenya’s port at Mombasa, are also related to BRI.

The nature of Chinese investment in Africa is the topic of frequent debate by scholars and journalists. Chinese media celebrate the achievement of deepening Sino-African ties as a triumph of China’s rising economic prowess and of mutual benefit to Africans and Chinese alike. These ties have a “no strings attached” policy to economic aid and business deals that bring more benefit to Africans than Western policies that attach political conditions to aid and investment. While Western investments in Africa are often based on a measure of human rights assurances or environmental protections, Beijing’s policy has been criticized by Western newspapers as friendly to autocratic governments with records of human rights abuses and contributing to environmental degradation in African nations. News headlines in Western newspapers often focus on the ramifications of African nations’ increasing reliance on Chinese banks and enterprises as a source of foreign investment, arguing that Beijing’s offer of easy money baits weak and inefficient governments into a trap of dependence on the PRC. For many in Africa, this contested nature of Chinese investment is not an academic question but one of economic survival and immediate political consequences.

Conclusion

A world of scholarship and analysis of China-Africa relations has emerged in response to the deepening ties between these two economic regions. New areas of exploration shift from political and economic relations to an examination of environmental impact, migration, cultural exchange, and Christianity as areas of common interest to Chinese and Africans. CNN recently profiled a small community of Chinese Christians who converted while living in Kenya. While China-Africa relations can include political, economic, and cultural aspects, as we will see in the other articles in this issue, there is also an important spiritual component of this relationship.

The relationship between China and African nations is a major topic of concern around the world. It is multi-faceted, and there are many interests in play, not just for the Chinese but for Nigerians, Senegalese, South Africans, Egyptians,

[Continued on page 9](#)

Challenges in Africa for Chinese Christian Workers

By Christopher Lai

In May of 2018, CNN published an article “As Churches are Demolished at Home, Chinese Christians Find Religious Freedom in Kenya.”¹ The title suggests that there is a great flight of Chinese Christian workers leaving their land for greener pastures in Africa. It conjures up images of baby Jesus fleeing Judea for safer grounds in Egypt, or the spread of the gospel due to persecution after Stephen’s death. However, the reality is that believers in China have long had a vision for the nations, including the nations of Africa. Yet, when we look closely at Chinese Christian workers in Africa, we see that the challenges are formidable. This article will highlight some of these challenges. It makes the point that, despite them, workers are making advancements for Christ’s kingdom.



[AMISOM Public Information via Flickr.](#)

Publicity Embarrasses the Chinese Government

The publicity surrounding the recent murder of two young Chinese workers in Pakistan confirmed in a *New York Times* article² and recent protests in Hong Kong have caused the Chinese government to lose face over the issue of the global involvement of Chinese Christian workers.

At stake for the Chinese government is the much-vaulted claim that China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) delivers riches and enhances trade opportunities with China. However, we see many cracks in these claims; the last thing that Xi Jinping needs is a domestic debate over whether donations and support should be going to these nations when there are still many poor and needy people in China. He also does not want an international debate about the intent of the investment and the potential corruption that results. While these issues may make the disenfranchised Chinese nationals in African countries more open to engaging with Chinese Christian workers, they also put targets on their backs as potential threats to the BRI initiative.

A Mismatch Between Government and Popular Sentiment

In Ethiopia, the Chinese built a new headquarters for the African Union. The goal was for China to remind African nations that they are a good and generous friend and trading partner. Given this, you might think that the Africans would welcome Chinese people with open arms. However, you would be terribly mistaken.

Public sentiment within various countries has been negative for a long time. The bad reputation of Chinese people, whether warranted or not, presents an obstacle for Christian workers. In some countries, local people believe that Chinese are stealing their jobs. So, authorities may stop Chinese at the airport or local police may stop them for the purpose of extortion. In extreme cases, they have been victims of violence, such as kidnapping. Chinese Christian workers lack the support and training to deal with these types of crises. Conversely, as Christian workers lead Chinese nationals to Christ in these nations, the security concerns have become an issue in discipleship. One new believer, traumatized after being robbed, said, “In Jesus’ name, I will shoot the next burglar dead that tries to come into my home.”

Access to Chinese Workers

Given these challenges, state-owned Chinese companies and factories have been very careful about not allowing their workers to leave their work compounds; they are designed to shield African people from getting to know the average Chinese migrant worker. The rationale is that since the Chinese do not speak English, they will not be able to navigate cross-cultural communication with local Africans. In other words, China does not want to deal with potential threats of misunderstanding with local people. Workers are not allowed to take time off to go outside the compound; instead, they live as indentured servants until it is time for them to go on holiday or return home.

It is possible to have contact with English-speaking Chinese in managerial positions who are allowed to leave the compounds or with Chinese business owners. They are often educated and have left their families back home for the duration of their contract. To alleviate the loneliness experienced by these men who miss their families, the factory will often bring in prostitutes from China. Challenging men to be faithful to their wives is quite difficult. One Christian worker said that there are two things one should not ask a Chinese person in Africa: first, “What is your salary?” (a common question in China); second, “What is your family situation?” The problem is so pervasive that even

those who hear the gospel or attend church find it very difficult to give up their life of sin.

Cross-cultural Challenges

There are many Chinese idioms that would suggest Chinese people know how to engage in cross-cultural communication. For example, 入乡随俗 (*ruxiang sui su*) carries a similar meaning to, “When in Rome do as the Romans do.” In reality, however, very few Chinese workers are taught about cross-cultural adaptation; unfortunately, that is true for Christian workers as well. They often end up offending local Africans and many end up returning home early because they are unable to adapt.

In one African nation, a Christian worker did not last more than a week. Several realities triggered his early departure. First, he realized that learning the language would be very difficult. Second, he saw other Chinese believers suffer from severe cases of malaria. Third, there were no good options for educating his children. For many workers from other countries, these would be considered simple cross-cultural adaptation issues that go with the territory of counting the cost and measuring one’s call to serve. Nevertheless, for this brother, who had not been adequately prepared, he simply could not continue.

Incorrect Expectations and Lack of Support

Christian workers sent from China often deal with misperceptions of the type of work they will be doing. Most sending agencies in China believe that workers are being sent to the Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu worlds, not to the Chinese in the destination country. Furthermore, in some African nations, especially in sub-Saharan, the majority of the populations is Christian.

Still, many of those sent out feel called to reach the Chinese in these countries, but because of these misperceptions, often they are disillusioned with the lack of support they receive from their home fellowships and sending organizations. They feel as if they have been forgotten, and no one is interested in hearing how their work is helping to equip Chinese with cross-cultural skills to reach unreached people groups back home. In fact, it is the Chinese workers and migrants who themselves are an unreached people group. Educating the Chinese church is a priority in terms of framing the needs for Chinese Christian workers in these countries.

Difficulties for Chinese Christian Workers to Keep a Visa

Another challenge for Chinese Christian workers is the high entry barrier for long-term visas in African countries; there are only a few options. Student and tourist visas are obviously very limiting in terms of duration and cost. The next obvious option is a religious visa, but that assumes that a worker will be sponsored by a denomination or religious organization that is already recognized by the host country. Some countries also require Bible degrees from accredited schools. These are hard to come by for Chinese Christian workers because their theological education was received in underground training centers with no legal standing for providing certificates. Those with seminary degrees from overseas schools will have an easier time.

Another way to obtain a visa is by starting a business or non-profit NGO. The Business as Mission model (BAM) is popular among Chinese workers because of the perceived benefit of being able to support oneself. This is important as the situation in China gets harder for house churches; sending and supporting missionaries is increasingly difficult. This avenue may provide multiple visas for a team to be formed, potentially bringing more benefit to the community.

The reality, though, is that there are many challenges to starting a business or NGO. A person needs capital, an entrepreneurial sense, and accountability, things that most Chinese Christian workers lack. Even if they are successful, there is the challenge of balancing time spent on their work with time spent in outreach. Presence in a country does not equate with effectiveness, so those who do end up going this route often struggle to keep the business or organization afloat, let alone being effective in their ministry. Christian workers who take this route need to truly build a solid team with varying gifts and resources in order to be successful.

The last type of visa is an employment visa. This may make the most sense on a number of levels. A Christian worker can negotiate working with Chinese business owners to extend employment to them, assuming there is a fit. The problem is that most countries have a high unemployment rate so work visas are reserved for those with high-level skills who can do jobs that an average local person cannot do. However, most Chinese businesses want to work with Chinese people instead of Africans, and they need workers who are not engineers. In some cases, they work through an

agent who has connections with the local government and has an agreement to allow their applicants to obtain “engineering” visas even though they do not meet the requirement. This presents a dilemma for the Christian worker: “Am I going to lie in order to do the Lord’s work”?

The Itinerant Nature of Migrant Workers

A big challenge is the itinerant nature of the Chinese community in Africa. Many who attend church and discipleship classes one year may not be there the following year. In some ways, this work often mirrors college ministry because the window is short to work with most of the believers who may be going back home.

Christian workers coming to China need to have a kingdom mindset. Local Chinese churches will need to establish partnerships to devise strategies to help meet needs. Christian workers will need to delegate tasks to others in order to raise them up for future discipleship and team-building. Finally, Chinese Christian workers will need to come up with creative ways to continue to build on momentum that is empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit while constantly having to say, “I’ll see you back in China.” To those he says “good-bye” to, progress in their walk with Christ will have to be seen from afar.

Conclusion

God is moving in the Chinese church, and many are joining the work of making disciples of all nations. Although the challenges are real in Africa, God is still asking his church to send out workers because the harvest is here. Despite the challenges, the reality is that many Chinese Christian workers do plant churches. Amazingly, God works in powerful ways, providing workers with divine encounters for sharing the gospel, making disciples, and raising up new leaders in the church. May the Lord bless the Chinese church as they do all they can to send beautiful feet that brings good news!

¹ Jenni Marsh, “As churches are demolished at home, Chinese Christians find religious freedom in Kenya,” CNN, May 21, 2019 at <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/28/asia/china-christians-africa-kenya-intl/index.html>.

² Salman Masood, “Chinese Couple Abducted in Pakistan Have Been Killed, Officials Say,” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/12/world/asia/pakistan-chinese-couple-killed.html>.

Christopher Lai (pseudonym) has served in East Asia for more than a decade helping Chinese to establish their own sending bases so that they can serve both domestically and internationally in cross-cultural contexts. He believes the next wave of kingdom workers will be those from China. Lai, with his wife and children, has spent much time in East Asia.

China and Africa: An Introduction

Continued from page 6

Congolese, and citizens in other countries throughout the continent.

China-Africa relations also encompass industries ranging from mining and agriculture to infrastructure and shipping, and between private and state-owned enterprises. The end result is a complex relationship linking China and Africa, a relationship that is deep enough to include both the allegations of Chinese racism and exploitation as well as the increased economic opportunities coming to the African continent. This complexity in China-Africa relations, from economic and political to cultural spheres, demonstrates the significance of these two regions to the wider world.

¹ Jimmy Wang, “Nigerian Finds Pop Stardom in Beijing,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/arts/music/haoge-a-nigerian-becomes-a-pop-star-in-china.html>.

² See Jamie Monson, *African Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania* (Indiana University Press, 2009).

³ “A Look at Chinese Investment in African Agriculture,” <https://gro-intelligence.com/insights/articles/a-look-at-chinese-investment-in-african-agriculture>.

⁴ Hannah Edinger, Jean-Pierre Labuschagne, “If you want to prosper, build roads,” *Deloitte Insights*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/industry/public-sector/china-investment-africa-infrastructure-development.html>.

⁵ More prominent examples include the China Africa Research Institute (CARI) sponsored by Johns Hopkins University <http://www.sais-cari.org/>, ChinaFile’s The China Africa Project <http://www.chinafile.com/library/china-africa-project>, and the China Africa Podcast <https://chinaafricaproject.com/>

⁶ Jenni Marsh, “As churches are demolished at home, Chinese Christians find religious freedom in Kenya,” CNN, May 21, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/28/asia/china-christians-africa-kenya-intl/index.html>.

Michael Hicks is a PhD candidate in History and African American Studies at Penn State University. He is currently writing a dissertation on Chinese internationalism with African nations and African American activists during the Cold War.

Building Bridges through Language and Culture

By Faith Wanjiku Mworira

My name is Faith. I am a 34 year old Kenyan, married with one son. After I graduated from the university with a Bachelor of Education in English and Literature, I felt the urge to study the Chinese language and culture. At that point in my life, all I wanted was to study another foreign language. I had no concept of the Chinese language. Through a friend who had just come from China, I found out I could learn Mandarin Chinese. So, in 2008, I took a short course of basic Chinese for about three months. After that, I did not study Mandarin again as I had to begin a government employment position as an English teacher. While I was doing this, through many interventions by God, I received a scholarship in 2009 to go to China to study the Chinese language and culture. God was working behind the scenes to ensure that I could learn Chinese. God had a great plan for me; he only needed me to obey in faith and he would then place me where he wanted me to be.



Image courtesy of [Discovery Chinese Cultural Center](#).

In August of 2009, I resigned from my government employment and left for China. I went to Shandong Normal University in Jinan to study Chinese. While there, I not only learned the language but also the people's culture. This was intriguing! The Chinese are very different from us Africans, though there are some similarities. I learned to eat their food, interact with them, and build lasting friendships. Later, I traveled to Shanghai and Beijing for teacher training.

In August of 2010, I started working as a Chinese language teacher at the Confucius Institute in one of Kenya's universities. At the Institute, I had many interactions with my Chinese colleagues. I worked there for an amazing six years and am forever grateful knowing that I gained so much experience there.

While working at the university, I felt there was a need for more cultural experiences between the Chinese people and the local, Kenyan people. By this time, many Chinese had already started coming to Kenya, and many Kenyans were working with Chinese. I realized that with their interaction—and understanding the diversity between the two people groups—there would likely be many conflicts that would arise because of the differences in culture.

I took time to pray and ask God what my role should be in this. Through his direction, I decided to open a language and cultural center in the capital city, Nairobi. As a result, in September of 2011, [Discovery Chinese Cultural Center LTD](#) (our present name) opened. In that center, I began to reach out to business people and others outside the scope of the university to sensitize them to the need to understand the Chinese language and culture. In addition to the young, Chinese language students at the university, I felt that there was another unreached group outside the university who needed to learn more about the Chinese people.

At that time, my country had begun to engage the Chinese people in much infrastructure development, education, and trade. Many partnerships between the Chinese and Kenya were developing. Many people were working among the Chinese. Some of them were not as educated as they had not gone to the university.

I asked myself who would take care of these unreached groups of people. The answer was within me: it had to be me—I had to rise to the occasion. The call of God and his daily confirmation of it were strong; I began doing what I felt God had called me to do. Through our small center, I started teaching the Chinese language and culture. We became involved in teaching the Chinese language to African employees of some Chinese companies in Kenya. Many people had become interested in learning Chinese and China's culture. Our timing and flexibility have so far enabled us to have a niche in the market. We are able to reach everyone, offering a platform to learn the Chinese language wherever they are.

We also began to teach English to many Chinese people, either as groups or as individuals. We would visit them, even in their homes, to teach them English. We would also teach their children English. In addition, we began teaching Chinese people Kiswahili which is one of our national languages and the major language for local interaction apart from English. Right now, many Chinese can speak basic Kiswahili.

I started forming strong partnerships with different people and organizations by going to various places to teach the

language and culture. This was amazing. After a few years, I also joined the church to teach Chinese language and culture in ministry. By this time, around 2014, my church, in particular, realized that many Chinese people who were now in Kenya were in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This revealed a need in the church for Kenyans to be able to communicate and minister to the Chinese.

Through these opportunities, in three subsequent years, I was able to effectively teach both Kenyans and foreigners the Chinese language and culture. The group of those in love with this ministry of reaching out to the Chinese gradually started to grow, and it has continued to grow ever since. Some of the locals have taken up the Chinese language and gone as far as learning it up to HSK level 4 (Chinese proficiency levels by Hanban). Some are able to attend Chinese-led Bible studies and continue to show love to as many Chinese people as possible.

It is worth noting that in every venture, whether at our language cultural center, in Chinese companies, schools, hotels, or churches, I have continued to emphasize the need for cultural integration and mutual understanding between the two groups of people. Of course, this has not been easy. There have been many conflicts between the two people groups with Kenyans feeling that the Chinese people have come to take them over and seize their work opportunities. Sometimes there are cases of racial discrimination between the Chinese and Kenyans. These and other challenges have occurred between the two groups.

When I have an opportunity to speak to any group of students, whether young or old, I always feel it is my role to ensure that despite the differences in our cultures, we must find a common platform of interacting with one another so that we can accommodate one another and thereby live peacefully with one another.

Many years have now passed. We have had a lot to do with the Chinese people; our center has grown and employed other staff. We have been conducting teacher training programs to help other teachers understand more of the language and culture. We hope that when these teachers go to teach, they will be sure to spread the message of reconciliation and love to other Kenyans, whether young or old. All our clients, both Chinese and local Kenyans, are able to get a taste of understanding each other's culture.

We, as a center, are now involved in teaching Chinese language and culture to both children and adults. We hope our children will grow, appreciating the differences in cultures and feel the need for cultural integration and living in peace with one another. We shall also be having English classes for Chinese children. We hope these classes will go a long way in ensuring that Chinese understand Kenyans as well and can learn their culture. We also hope to continue training many more people in Kenya who interact with the Chinese about how to build friendships at their places of work, maintain integrity, and serve as a good example. This will help in reaching out to the Chinese people with God's love, as well as maintaining healthy relationships.

Africans are a very loving people and, Kenyans in particular, want always to be hospitable to foreigners. A great love for God is engraved deep in their hearts. Kenyans are ready to share this love with others. If by sharing this love, lasting and loving relationships are created, this will serve as an avenue for building bridges among the people groups.

We hope to establish other centers in different parts of Africa. All these will have the aim of demystifying the Chinese perceptions that have spread as well as creating lasting friendships between the Africans and Chinese people. I am highly involved in this assignment and trust God to enable us and provide the necessary resources to ensure this happens. We also hope to establish a large center that will serve as a place for building friendships—a place where both Chinese and Kenyans can display and exchange their cultural values.

Our center will be eight years old this September. We have continued to grow and believe we shall grow even more. Our primary role is to ensure Kenyan and African children and adults are exposed to the Chinese culture and language. In addition, we want to help build lasting friendships that lead to healthy mutual agreements and partnerships—all for the glory and honor of God.

Faith Wanjiku Mworio is the founder of Discovery Chinese Cultural Center in Nairobi, Kenya where she promotes cultural and language exchange between Kenyans and Chinese. You can learn more about Discovery Chinese Cultural Center from its [website](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).

An African in China: An Interview

By Joann Pittman

ChinaSource's Joann Pittman interviewed "Tim," a Zimbabwean international student in China. She asked him to reflect on his experiences as an African living in China, as well as his thoughts and advice for Chinese Christians who wish to share the gospel with Africans living in their country.

JP: On a personal level, can you describe your experience as an African in China?

Tim: My experiences in China as an African student have been exciting and at the same time challenging. I have found Chinese culture very interesting because there are so many aspects that are different from African culture: these include holidays, beliefs, and ways of thinking. Many Chinese people tend to be kindhearted towards foreigners although there are some who tend to feel some discomfort when they encounter an African.

Being able to speak Chinese has, in many ways, helped me to appreciate China more as it allows me to dig deeper into why Chinese people think and behave the way they do. I have made some great Chinese friends as well as international friends which have enriched my experience.

China has also offered me opportunities to learn about other cultures through its growing international community. I found a great church which has helped me grow and has taught me how to reach out to others with the gospel. In many ways, my experiences in China have helped me grow.

JP: What are some key cultural differences between Chinese and Africans and how do these affect relationships?

Tim: Relationships: In African culture, relationships between people are considered crucial and usually are not based on what one possesses or what one has to offer to the other person since it is believed that every person always has something to offer society. People are expected to offer help to one another without expecting immediate recompense. It is very common in Africa to have people who have not known each other for a long term share their problems with each other and help one another find solutions. Being willing to share possessions or ideas and discuss them with others is seen as the key to relationships, not merely what one can offer.

In Chinese culture however, relationships are usually based on what one has to offer. If one is offered help there is an expectation on the other end to reciprocate. If one does not benefit from the relationship then there is no need to continue in that relationship. There is a belief, however, that a relationship should not be easily broken.

Hospitality: In African culture, hospitality is a virtue. Africans are taught to warmly welcome strangers, but there is an expectation on the guest to follow the rules and not take advantage of the host. In Chinese culture, however, there is a tendency towards suspicion when it comes to welcoming strangers with whom relationships have not been established.

Religion and beliefs: Religion is considered to be an integral part of African culture and the basis of morality; hence, its incorporation into institutions. It is considered very strange if one does not believe in a supreme being. In Chinese culture, however, it is common for people to not believe in a supreme being; nevertheless, many people believe in ideas from ancient teachers or respected figures such as Confucius.

Because of the above points, I think it is easier for Africans to form relationships with strangers although there is pressure on the stranger to try and adopt the culture. In Chinese culture, on the other hand, relationships take time to form as there is a need to find mutual trust and benefit. However, when they do form, those relationships will be strong and are cherished.

JP: What are some key cultural similarities between Chinese and Africans and how do these affect relationships?

Tim: African culture and Chinese culture tend to be similar when it comes to collectivism. Both cultures tend to emphasize the needs and goals of the group as a whole over the needs and desires of each individual. In both cultures, decision making is not a one-person affair but has the entire family behind it.

In African and Chinese culture there is a deep veneration of ancestors and elderly people. Everyone is expected to



Image credit: [Deedee86](#) from [Pixabay](#)

listen to what elders say and often times should not question back. This trait is very influential in how young people view decisions.

JP: What advice do you have for Chinese who want to reach Africans with the good news?

Tim: *Most Africans are very open and enjoy making friends. This makes it very easy to start conversations. However, there is need to be careful not to assume things about their culture or way of life or else walls will quickly be put up.*

Most Africans tend to say they know God, and most of them have heard the gospel, so they tend to say they know it all, but there is always a need to dig deeper to understand the roots.

Africans tend to connect more with you through your story. It is crucial that one gets to share his/her story as this makes most Africans more open to share.

Even though in this interview I have identified Africans as one people, often times Africans do not want to be identified as one people. People from the same country may prefer to be identified by their ethnicity (tribal group) more than just by their country. So, it is good to have a target group in mind if you are ministering with Africans from a multi-ethnic nation.

Just as Paul did with the Jews in trying to become like them, it is the same with Africans. It is always good to try and understand some key aspects of African culture to be able to make strong relationships and significant impact.

There is the need to have some interest in learning a foreign language, at least English, to help with communication.

JP: What opportunities do you see for Chinese to reach Africans in China?

Tim: *A lot of Africans don't know much about Chinese culture, so helping them integrate into the culture presents a huge opportunity to reach out to them. One way would be to make use of Chinese holidays or festivals by organizing an event to explain its origins and activities and through that form relationships or share the good news.*

A lot of Africans in China have a strong desire to learn Chinese because they see the impact of China in Africa. Being willing to help them with their Chinese also presents good opportunities to reach out to them; this could be done through language partnerships or Chinese corners.

A lot of African men are very athletic but find it hard to team up with Chinese because often Chinese people already have established relationships. Chinese being willing to welcome Africans and play sports with them presents a huge opportunity to reach out to them.

JP: What opportunities do you see for Africans to reach Chinese?

Tim: *A lot of Chinese are heavily involved in English corners. Going to these as a foreigner to help presents a good opportunity to reach out to Chinese.*

As an African, showing curiosity in Chinese culture drives one to engage more with Chinese who often are willing to interact with you and help you. This in itself is a great opportunity.

Africans can make use of platforms where they get to share their culture and traditions to reach out to some Chinese people.

Holidays like Christmas and Easter also presents good opportunities for Africans to share the good news.

JP: Thank you, Tim. We appreciate your sharing your thoughts and observations with us.

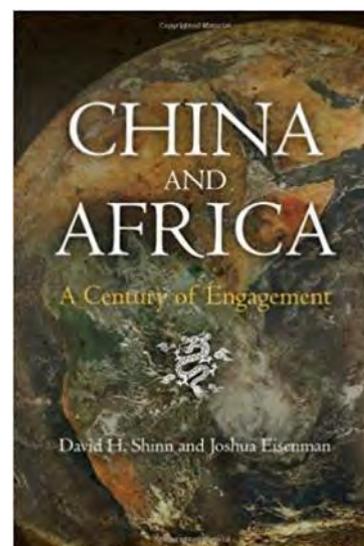
Joann Pittman is senior vice president of ChinaSource and editor of ZGBriefs.

Book Review

Sino-African Relations and International Contexts

Reviewed by Luxi (Lucy) Liu

China and Africa: A Century of Engagement, by David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. Hardcover, 544 pp., ISBN-10: 0812244192; ISBN-13: 978-0812244199. Available at [Penn Press](#) and [Amazon](#).



Sino-Africa relations have increasingly drawn public attention in recent years, especially since China's Belt and Road Initiative took off in 2013 with the aim to stimulate China's involvement in infrastructure development and investments overseas, including African countries. In order to put newspaper headlines, political science theories, and daily anecdotes into context for understanding perspectives of different parties at play in a less subjective way, it is essential to know the nuts and bolts history of Sino-African relations and international contexts in each era.

China and Africa: A Century of Engagement, by David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, is a high-level introductory book in this field. Dr. Shinn is an adjunct professor of international affairs at The George Washington University and former ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso; Dr. Eisenman is a China researcher who currently teaches at the University of Texas. American diplomat and scholars as they are, Shinn and Eisenman admirably balance competing narratives "through the eyes of the Africanist, Sinologist, and policymaker" (p. 362). One can be convinced of the book's comprehensiveness by the diversity of its source types, the languages in which data were collected, as well as interviewees' nationalities, roles, and social class.

The book starts with an introduction that analyzes the nine key themes and historical trends in China-Africa relations and summarizes academic literature in Sino-African relations (and lack thereof). Shinn and Eisenman contend that the contemporary literature is framed by a debate between optimistic researchers who see China as a benign business partner and loyal friend of Africa, and pessimistic observers who believe that an authoritarian China supports political illiberalism on the continent.

In chapter two, the authors trace Sino-African trade and diplomatic relations from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) to the People's Republic of China (1949–present). Since the beginning of the Cold War, some key factors influencing China's involvement in Africa include Sino-Soviet conflict, the Cultural Revolution, China's economic reform and opening up policy, and the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

The following five chapters examine the key areas of China's engagement with Africa, namely political relations, trade, investment and assistance, military and security ties, media and cultural relations, and ties with Chinese communities in Africa. Chapters eight through eleven delve into the bilateral relationships between China and individual African countries from 1949 to 2011. Lastly, in the conclusion, Shinn and Eisenman make eight predictions about Sino-African relations based on their research.

The book's strong analysis of the evolution of Chinese diplomatic strategies highlights China's pragmatism in its engagement with Africa since the 1970s which is different from its focus on support for African national liberation and revolutionary movements in the 1950s and '60s. Such diplomatic shift is consistent with both Chinese and African countries' domestic changes and the escalating Sino-Soviet split.

From the perspective of China, the shift was out of the need to compete with Taiwan for diplomatic recognition, especially at the United Nations; to repair quickly the damage brought by the Cultural Revolution, a great calamity brought about by the state; and to be diplomatically "independent" and economically robust. Such pragmatism explains the political nonconditionality of Chinese investments and aid in Africa and the greater focus on bilateral relationships instead of multilateral organizations. Until today, China does not promote any particular development models, as many contextual factors make China's economic growth irreplicable, though there are aspects that have attracted interest and are being learned.

China's practical focus on commercial ties, joint ventures, and technical services makes its diplomatic moves more predictable. However, with the decrease of previous "Third World" policy that claims that China is a socialist developing country which will not seek to become a super power, it concerns some whether China still holds to this principle. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to think about what the end of the Cold War means for China's ideological needs and what has changed and what has remained in the views of Western common observers towards China.

Another component that is interesting and relevant to this particular audience is the role of Chinese communities in Africa and Africans in China. They are heterogeneous yet with traceable patterns. Shinn and Eisenman categorize the Chinese communities in Africa into three types: (1) professionals who staff embassies, aid missions, and Chinese companies; (2) contract Chinese laborers; (3) and small traders and business persons. They all vary in the levels of language skills, integration into local society, and willingness to stay in Africa permanently.

The authors observe that despite relatively ample understanding on the official level, local level conflicts do occur, leading to hostility on both Chinese and local communities' sides. This can result from a variety of reasons: lack of cultural sensitivity, ignorance on both sides, spread of antagonistic or generalizing narratives (which is a fascinating topic by itself), corruption, and the asymmetry of power dynamics or the perception of it. The manifestations and consequences of the local conflicts vary case by case. The official and grassroots efforts to directly tackle such tensions are not mentioned in the book, possibly because they were not noticeable enough by the time it was published in 2012.

Africans in China, on the other hand, are mostly traders, diplomats, and students. They concentrate in several major cities. Being in a largely homogenous country with less flexible visa policies, many African traders (predominantly West African) face inspections of their illegal overstay, while the local police express concerns about drug trafficking and other crimes where Africans concentrate, such as in several districts in Guangzhou City. The authors find it "not surprising" that many Africans studying in China have returned home feeling lonely and disillusioned "given the linguistic and cultural differences." That being said, some Africans have been able to find professional success in China and build their own cultures and communities there.

To sum up, Shinn and Eisenman have been successful in creating a well-informed synthesis of historical facts and past analyses, providing a deeper understanding of the evolution of China's engagement with Africa, and modern Sino-African relations. The book summarizes and compares various interpretations of Sino-African relations history based on balanced analysis, which makes it an excellent reference text for anyone who wants to understand this topic in broad strokes. However, the book is not among those that break new ground of theories or facts in this area; neither does it go into more nuanced analysis at individual or firm levels, even though these actors can respond to events differently from a state or political party.

For readers like us, this book is recommended because getting the facts straight helps us engage Chinese communities in meaningful and respectful ways when going deep into a particular topic. Furthermore, the presentation of various narratives makes sense of how people have been informed differently on the same topics.

Luxi (Lucy) Liu is an international development practitioner and researcher who has worked on China-Africa cultural and economic exchange issues. A Chinese native, she holds a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and a bachelor's degree in international politics from Fudan University.

In the future, will the partnerships that are birthed in Africa be replicated in the Middle East and North Africa to reach Muslims, and in Europe to reach post-Christian Europe?

Eternal Imprint

Contact between China and Africa during the time of Admiral Zhenghe's voyages left little imprint on either culture. Today, multitudes of Chinese are in Africa, but their impact is wanting, if not negative. Z, J, and M who are in Africa working alongside N, R, L, and K are painting a new picture of how the church in China and the church in Africa could carve an imprint on both Chinese and Africans far deeper than what others could do. It is an eternal imprint written on hearts by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹ Chen, Gongyuan. "Chenghe's Westbound Voyages and Sino-African Relationship." *Chinese Academy of Social Science, Institute of West Asia and African Studies*. http://waas.cssn.cn/academic_achievement/201506/t20150608_2026090.shtml (accessed June 5, 2019)

² Names of people and places have been changed or are not identified for security reasons.

³ Contact the author at info@chinasource.org for more details.

⁴ 中国人在非洲 (Chinese in Africa), *明报周刊*2148期, 2010 (*Ming Pao Weekly* 2148, 2010). <https://www.douban.com/note/309474988/?type=rec> (accessed June 5, 2019)

Fred (pseudonym), an Asian living in Africa, is keen to see African churches rise up to reach their new neighbours.

Resource Corner

The China in Africa Podcast

The [China Africa Project](#) (CAP) was started in 2011 by Eric Olander and Cobus van Staden as a non-profit, educational resource focused on exploring every facet of China's increasing engagement with Africa.

Their weekly podcast, [China in Africa Podcast](#), covers a variety of topics related to China-Africa relations and is invaluable for anyone interested in understanding more about those relationships.

Of particular interest for readers of this issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly* is "[The Unintended Religious Consequence of Chinese Investment in Africa](#)" with guest speaker, [Dr. Christopher Rhodes](#), lecturer in Social Science, and Religion and Politics at Boston University.



Image credit: [Juja Han](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Brief Description of the Recommended Episode

Life is not easy for many of the hundreds of thousands of Chinese who live and work in Africa. Low pay, long hours, and extended assignments in unfamiliar cultures often lead to feelings of isolation and disillusionment.

In places like East Africa, some of these disaffected workers are finding their way into the evangelical Christian community that is so much a part of life there. Some churches are readily embracing this new population with services in Mandarin and other Chinese dialects.

In Africa, these newly-converted migrants are part of the large community of Christian evangelicals. However, when they return to China, they must adapt to the strict regulations and greater control on religious life of the Chinese Communist Party.

Dr. Christopher Rhodes joins *The China in Africa Podcast* hosts to discuss this important, yet poorly understood, consequence of Chinese investment in Africa.

To listen to the podcast, go to: *The China in Africa Podcast* at: <https://bit.ly/2IS0kp4>.

ChinaSource Publications

ChinaSource Blog

A platform where China ministry practitioners and experienced China-watchers offer timely analysis and insight on current issues relating to the church in China. Posts feature voices from those inside and outside China.

ZGBriefs

For those who want and need to keep up on what is happening in China, we monitor more than 50 different news sources and curate the most relevant and interesting stories out of China each week.

ChinaSource Quarterly

Providing strategic analysis of the issues affecting the church and Christian ministry in China, the Quarterly encourages proactive thinking and the development of effective approaches to Christian service.

Newsletter: The Lantern

Our monthly newsletter keeps you abreast of how ChinaSource is responding to opportunities to serve with the church in China and of related items for prayer. To subscribe to any or all of our publications, visit www.chinasource.org.

ChinaSource Online Courses

Under the ChinaSource Institute, we offer online modules and on-site training on a wide variety of cross-cultural and orientation topics. Content is focused on the China context and geared to those involved in Christian ministry.

- ***Serving Well in China*** - Are you preparing to serve in China, or maybe you're already there? Are you working with Chinese students in your home country? This course will help you serve well where you are.
- ***The Church in China Today*** - The religious climate in China, especially for Christians, may be messy but it's not beyond understanding. This course offers a comprehensive overview, ranging from a historical understanding, to the struggles it endures in present day, to common misconceptions about the state of the church.

For more information, visit www.chinasource.org/institute/training-courses

ZGBriefs

Relevant news on China and
the issues that impact its church



[www.chinasource.org/
resource-library/zgbriefs](http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/zgbriefs)

[Subscribe Now](#)

華源協作
CHINASOURCE

 info@chinasource.org

 www.chinasource.org

 [chinasource.org](https://www.facebook.com/chinasource.org)

 [@ChinaSourceOrg](https://twitter.com/ChinaSourceOrg) [@ZG_Briefs](https://twitter.com/ZG_Briefs)