

FROM INVESTORS TO DO-IT-ALL: CHINESE IMMIGRANTS, THEIR
ACTIVITIES AND LOCAL PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS IN TANZANIA, 1990s TO
PRESENT

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of Chinese immigrants across Africa. In Tanzania, the influx of Chinese people forming social-economic clusters—'Chinatowns' is springing. The new individual Chinese quest for achievement, necessitating new waves of migration to Africa, is not yet well researched. This paper examines this new trend as it manifests in the Tanzanian context. It looks at the motivation for Chinese migration to Tanzania, their networks, activities, and the local people's perceptions of those engagements. Using information gathered from surveys, written and oral sources, the paper establishes that since the 1990s, Chinese migrants have increasingly turned from investors to engage in almost every small business they come across. Because of Tanzania's generally small local economies, these relatively new entrants to a market have undoubtedly caused mixed perceptions among the locals. While the Sino-African relationship is generally viewed positively by the Tanzanians, the Chinese residing in the country are perceived less positively, as exemplified by perceived hostility and rudeness from the Chinese migrants.

Keywords: Tanzania, China, Sino-Tanzania relations, migration, investment.

DES INVESTISSEURS À TOUT FAIRE : LES IMMIGRANTS CHINOIS, LEURS
ACTIVITÉS ET LES PERCEPTIONS DES POPULATIONS LOCALES EN TANZANIE,
DES ANNÉES 1990 À NOS JOURS

Résumé

Depuis les années 1990, il y a eu une augmentation sans précédent du nombre d'immigrants chinois à travers l'Afrique. En Tanzanie, l'afflux de Chinois formant des grappes socio-économiques – les « quartiers chinois » est en train de jaillir. La nouvelle quête individuelle chinoise de réussite, nécessitant de nouvelles

vagues de migration vers l'Afrique, n'est pas encore bien documentée. Cet article examine cette nouvelle tendance telle qu'elle se manifeste dans le contexte tanzanien. Il examine la motivation de la migration chinoise vers la Tanzanie, leurs réseaux, leurs activités et les perceptions des populations locales à l'égard de ces engagements. En utilisant des informations recueillies à partir d'enquêtes, de sources écrites et orales, le document établit que depuis les années 1990, les migrants chinois se sont de plus en plus détournés des investisseurs pour s'engager dans presque toutes les petites entreprises qu'ils rencontrent. En raison des économies locales généralement petites de la Tanzanie, ces nouveaux entrants sur un marché ont sans aucun doute provoqué des perceptions mitigées parmi les habitants. Alors que les relations sino-africaines sont généralement perçues positivement par les Tanzaniens, les Chinois résidant dans le pays sont perçus de manière moins positive, comme en témoigne l'hostilité et l'impolitesse perçues par les migrants chinois.

Mots-clés: Tanzanie, Chine, Relations sino-tanzaniennes, Migration, Investissement

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the spatial translation of 'global China' in Africa has evolved from an emerging phenomenon to an entrenched presence. Today China occupies a significant role in the development of Sub-Saharan African countries. Increasingly, China has established strong ties with the continent through grants to African governments and direct foreign investments targeting the continent. In 2015 China was Africa's largest trading partner, a significant increase from being Africa's eight largest trading partners in 2000 (Jones et al., 2022). In 2019, China's outflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Tanzania reached USD 115 million out of a total of USD 1.1 billion, making China the number one investor in the country. This amount was, however, 35% less than USD 177 million in Chinese investments in 2018 and a record of USD 226 million in 2015 (TIC, 2021).

China's expansion has been accompanied by the migration of Chinese communities who have increasingly taken part in the socio-economical arenas in these host countries. The intensity of such migration depends on the nature of the relationship between China and various host countries. Since the 1990s, there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of Chinese immigrants in Tanzania. The influx of Chinese people forming social-economic clusters –'Chinatowns' is springing. However, the new individual Chinese quest for achievement, necessitating new waves of migration to Africa, is not yet well researched. Because of Tanzania's generally small local economies, these relatively new entrants to a market have undoubtedly caused mixed perceptions among the locals. This paper examines this new trend as it manifests in the Tanzanian context. It looks at the motivation for Chinese migration to Tanzania, their networks, activities, and the local people's perceptions of those engagements. While the paper focuses on the modern Chinese migration to Tanzania, the historical aspect of the relationship is also discussed to provide nuance on the historical background.

I. Literature review

The Sino-Tanzania relationship began before Tanzania's independence in 1961. After Independence, as Tanganyika and Zanzibar states united on April 26, 1964, to form the United Republic of Tanzania, China recognized Tanzania and maintained diplomatic relations with Zanzibar and Tanzania mainland.

These bilateral relations have remained intact since 1964, and the two countries have undertaken extensive political, economic, military, and cultural cooperation. In the eyes of the Tanzanian government, China's dedication to constructing relationships and providing aid for development projects could be seen as an act of friendship. Through this rhetoric of friendship, Tanzania was able to gain a political ally as well as a financial provider.

One of the Chinese historical financial and technical assistance to Tanzania was the Construction of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA), connecting Tanzania and Zambia. In 1965, immediately after winning independence, Presidents Nyerere of Tanzania and Kaunda of Zambia believed that TAZARA would be the only way to break the colonial blockage, consolidate the fruit of independence and achieve economic development. They subsequently made repeated but unsuccessful requests for financial assistance from many western countries and international organizations who insisted that "the project was economically not viable" (Futija, 2017). Unexpectedly, with a GDP per capita of only US\$ 100 and a total foreign exchange reserve of as little as US\$ 166 million, China made the commitment to save money to build TAZARA. On July 1970, China became a single investor of TAZARA and gave Tanzania and Zambia an interest-free loan repayable in thirty years, totalling 988 million Yuan (approximately 3.26 billion dollars), to support the costs of construction of lines and stations (Kambaulaya, 2016:3). Eventually, with more than 50,000 engineering and technical personnel and more than 1 million tons of material and equipment the construction of TAZARA railway was concluded in 1975, two years ahead of schedule (Fujita 2017). On July 14, 1976, a handover ceremony was done at the New Kapiri Mposhi Station in Zambia.



Figure I: The handing over of the completed TARAZA Railway

The handover ceremony of the TAZARA was solemnly held at the New Kapiri Mposhi Station in Zambia on July 14, 1976. President Julius Nyerere, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, Chinese vice Premier Sun Jian and Presidents of Zaire and Botswana attended the handover ceremony. (Photo, Xinhua)

Although most Chinese workers returned home after working in the country, teams of Chinese experts continued to dominate the railway authority as late as 2004. The continued reliance on Chinese experts was mainly due to emphasis on speedy construction, with little effort to train their Tanzanian and

Zambian counterparts who would replace them. The 1860km railway has also benefited Zambia as it provides an alternative to an existing railway route passing through Rhodesia. Tanzania has continued benefiting from TAZARA, also known as 'UHURU' (independence) Railway to signify its political, social and economic significance to the country. Although Monson (2004) considers TAZARA as an "unexpected success of the Cold War developments, it remains true that, Sino-Tanzania historical friendship had a lot to contribute toward the Chinese decision to finance such a huge project.

During the 1980s Africa became less important to China as the former had sought international recognition from Washington and Moscow. African states were no longer supported by China in their struggle against dictators or assisted in times of need because China lacked the financial resources to do so (Zhiguo, 1983). Tanzania was challenged in realizing its full potential as a socialist country on the scale of China, which is related to multiple factors. One of those was the democratic change in political leadership consistently every ten years and with those shifting visions that leaders have brought to the table. For instance, President Mwinyi was elected after Nyerere's presidency at a time when the socialist project was viewed as a failure by many from the outside in terms of its ability to produce a wealthy economy and position of economic strength for Tanzania. Mwinyi concluded that the socialist economic approach, *Ujamaa*, was incompatible with the global capitalist market system as it left Tanzania isolated and unable to produce growth. He shifted from the socialist approach, relaxed import restrictions, and encouraged domestic private enterprise throughout the 1980s. As a response to economic hardship, in the early 1990s China transitioned its economy to a freer market (Daly et al., 2020).

The short-term shift from economic socialism in both Tanzania and China weakened the relationship between China and Tanzania in many ways at least initially. Although both African and Chinese governments continued to claim their historical ties and praise their friendship, it was clear that the Sino-Africa relationship was becoming much more business-oriented (Cabestan and Chaponnière, 2016). The number of Sino-Tanzanian official visits and partnerships decreased during the transition period. While pushing for a western defined "liberalization" of morals, beliefs, values, and the economy within the legal framework, Tanzania also struggled to maintain relationships with their old ally. For instance, the then Tanzania's President Mwinyi made two trips to China in 1987 and 1992 and two top Chinese leaders, Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang and Vice Premier Zgy Ribgji, visited Tanzania in 1983 and 1995. These visits did not seem to bring about new projects but mainly dealt with improvement planning on the management of TAZARA (Monson, 2013). The friendly policy seemed to be outshined by structural adjustment, World Bank, and USAID relationships. Yet, despite general withdrawal in Africa, China and Tanzania did, however, maintain a collaborative relationship, at least with respect to the transfer of military equipment, educational programs, and medical assistance (SIPRI, 2005).

Efforts to reinstate the strong Sino-Tanzania relationship were initiated in the mid-1990s. In December, 1997, China Investment and Trade Promotion Centre was established in Tanzania (MFA, 2008). As a result, in 2007, the total trade volume between China and Tanzania grew to US\$290 million, of which China's export was US\$180 million, and import was US\$110 million. China's main exports to Tanzania are: foodstuff, vehicles, textiles, light industrial products, chemical products, mechanical equipment, electric appliances and steel. Tanzania's main exports to China are: dry seafood, raw leather, log,

coarse copper, and wooden handcrafts (MFA, 2008). According to the statistics from Tanzanian Investment Centre, by the end of August 2012, there were more than 300 Chinese companies investing in Tanzania's infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and SME development, with a total registered capital of over \$1 billion (TIC, 2020). China rose from the sixth largest foreign investor in 2011 to the second in 2012. Apparently, China is arguably Tanzania's first trading partner and investor. In 2018, China's exports to Tanzania reached \$1.77 billion, and total Foreign Direct Investment reached \$115 in 2019 (Mikomangwa, 2022). While the available literature is rich in Sino-Tanzania socio-economic relationship, little is available regarding the post 1990s Chinese migration to Tanzania, their networks, activities, and the local people's perceptions of those engagements.

2. Methodology

The study mainly utilizes a desk review methodology, whereas various documents including publications, relevant news articles, and existing statistics and surveys related to Sino-African relations were referred. The *Afrobarometer* Survey (2014)¹ was very useful in obtaining Tanzanians' opinion on China and Chinese. Statistical and quantitative data was obtained from local English and Swahili language Tanzanian and East African regional newspapers as well as governmental publications available. Local newspapers and commentaries illustrate trends on Chinese investment and the economic relationship between China and Tanzania over the last two decades. Government publications provided the statistical data of economic activities between two countries, which primarily was used to analyze the impact of plans and undertakings on development in Tanzania. Legal and official statements from both countries shed light on the power relationship between the two nations. Analysis of development studies scholarship on Chinese investment outlines the framework of development in Africa more broadly for understanding where Tanzania fits into a bigger picture of China's foreign investment policies and projects. Oral interviews supplemented data from written sources. A few interviews with Chinese migrants and local Tanzanians aided to get individual insights regarding the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. Despite the limited scope, interviews provided, through micro perspectives, the social and personal perceptions of Tanzanian development. Thus, interviews helped to shed light on and test some of the official published data and official news.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Chinese Migration to Tanzania

The enduring collaboration between the two countries was reflected through the Chinese migratory pattern which accurately mirrored the historical patterns in Sino-Tanzania relations. There is significant immigration within the framework of cooperation between China and Africa. Mung (2008:95) identifies three types of Chinese migrants to Africa: temporary labour migrants linked to public building works and large infrastructure development projects undertaken by large Chinese enterprises, small-time entrepreneurs, and transit migrants. The Migration Policy Institute identifies a fourth category of agricultural workers,

¹ Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan survey project which purpose is to measure opinions among African citizens concerning governance and democracy, civil society, economics, and other topics in more than 30 countries in Africa. REPOA is the Afrobarometer National Partner in Tanzania.

mostly temporary labour migrants (Politzer, 2008:4). The largest portion of these various types of migrants eventually returns to China. Amongst the independent 'entrepreneurial migrants' their decisions regarding their longer-term intentions are often based on the success of their business ventures and the reception they receive in their host country. In Tanzania, the dominance of each of these migrant types depends on the historical period in question but the temporary entrepreneur is our focus. We can examine these migrations into two broad periods: the 1890s to the 1980s and the 1980s onwards. Each of these migrations had different motivations and patterns and, therefore, was perceived differently by the local population.

3.I.I. From 1890s to 1980s migrations

There were Chinese in Tanzania as early as 1891 (Mwalimu: 2004:15). The early Chinese appearance in Tanzania resulted from Germany East African Company (GEAC) hiring 491 Chinese and Javanese labourers from Singapore to work in Usambara plantations. Kao Liang, the correspondent of the New China News Agency, arrived in Dar-es-Salaam a few days after Tanganyika's independence celebrations. His first dispatch reminded his readers that over a thousand Chinese labourers had been brought in by the German colonial administration in 1906 to help construct Tanganyika's first railway (Bailey 1975). The initial migration was followed by a separate Chinese community that began settling on the island of Zanzibar by the 1930s (Hsu, 2006). Most of these early Chinese migrants, which found a niche, particularly in the food sector, became integral to the local population. Modern China-Africa migrations emanate from the Chinese international policy under former Chairman Mao Zedong in the late 1950s. As many as 150,000 Chinese technicians and workers were sent to the continent to work in agriculture, technology, and infrastructure development (Ma Mung, 2008: 95). The single largest and most symbolic of the era's China-Africa links was the Tanzania-Zambia railway construction which was epitomised by the great flow of Chinese personnel into Tanzania. The first thousands of Chinese Railway workers arrived in Dar-es-Salaam in August 1969. In the subsequent five years, twenty to thirty thousand more Chinese workers moved to Tanzania (Monsoon, 2004). By then, the Chinese population was between twenty-five to thirty percent or 13,000 of the thirty to forty thousand workers on the railway (Qu, 2008). In conclusion, TAZARA was built by 50,000 Chinese workers (Politzer, 2008).

During this period, the contacts between China and Tanzania were primarily political and professional with Chinese politicians coming for brief visits on government delegations. During this early phase, most of the Chinese workers living and working in Tanzania were highly skilled, temporally migrants who were contracted by the Chinese state to carry out various projects all over the country (Hsu, 2006). Most migrants were dispatched on two-year contracts to work on government projects (Yu, 1975). After the 1980s, some new migration trends were evident, with the revival of intense relationships between China and Africa. This new trend is worth being examined and is the subject matter for this paper.

3.I.2. The New Migration Trends: 1980s Onwards

The history of Sino-Tanzania political and economic interactions after the 1980s had a crucial impact on the Chinese migrant flows to Tanzania, the intentions and expectations of the immigrants, and their experiences and motivations. Various types of Chinese migrants began flowing into Tanzania. Three types

of Chinese migrants can be identified. There were temporary migrants working on government-financed projects or projects commissioned by large Chinese companies. Others were small-scale entrepreneurs coming to Africa often independent of the Chinese state's financed projects. The third group involved transit migrants (Mung, 2008).

While the temporary migrants and entrepreneurs aim to work in Tanzania, transitory Chinese migrants often use Tanzania and other African states as a lenient location to break their journeys on their ultimate quest to enter North America or Western Europe (Ibid). In these temporal locations, these Chinese collect funds through various businesses and work and secure documents for their next journey (Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2009). It is no doubt that with such vigour, these transitory immigrants will take up petty trading with intention of long-term economic success.

The post-1980s migration trends are linked to China's economic reforms of the late 1970s and the liberalization of emigration legislation in 1985 (Pieke, 1998; Xiang, 2003; Carling & Haugen, 2004). With these changes, Tanzania witnessed a new wave of migration in which the Chinese migrants coming to the country was no longer predominantly trained professionals, but small-scale entrepreneurs who tried to reach their own personal economic goals by setting up their own business, most commonly retail or wholesale of Chinese goods, Chinese restaurants or Chinese traditional medicine clinics (Ho, 2008).

Like in much of Africa, this shift happened in a rather abrupt manner, and is indicative of various changes in Sino-African interactions. First, Tanzanians now began interacting with independent Chinese migrants in a setting that was no longer mediated by a formal authority. More specifically, most Tanzanians' perception of the Chinese in the country could easily be marked by the Chinese immigrants' presence in the market (Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2009). Sitting in doorways, they 'slap five' with passers-by and trade joke. Some speak the Swahili language better than they speak English. At the same time, the very context in which Chinese and Tanzanians interact with each other is also indicative of the differences between long-term Chinese immigrants and those who are engaged in temporary positions, and possibly interested in securing different types of job opportunities in Tanzania.

Since the early 1990s, Chinese migrants to Tanzania have originated from various departure points. Some migrants move directly from China. Some arrive in Tanzania after having already spent time in one or more other African countries (Park, 2009:5). Some will have moved to a country in Africa and then back to China before they eventually moved to Tanzania. A number of them will have spent some time on other continents like Europe or the Americas before moving to Tanzania. Some migrants will have spent time on different continents before moving to China and later on to one or more African countries or elsewhere before eventually ending up in Tanzania. Some Chinese entrepreneurs in Tanzania are Chinese-Africans from South Africa (Park 2009:5).

There has been a considerable increase of the Chinese population in Tanzania since the 1990s. In 2000, Tanzania's Immigration Department statistics showed that they had issued work or residence permits to just 239 Chinese nationals (Mwalimu, 2004). With this figure then, the Chinese were still one of the smallest groups of foreigners in the country. However, as of 2008, Tanzania had 10,000 Chinese residents, according to a 2008 story by state run Xinhua News Agency. Some are descendants of labourers who arrived during the 1890s when the Country was a Germany colony. Others stayed after being dispatched as aid workers by the

Chinese government in the 1960s and 1970s. The latest wave consists of traders and entrepreneurs (Tsuruoka, 2017:1).

In January 2013, the Chinese Ambassador to Tanzania was quoted to have said that there were more than 30,000 Chinese people in the country (Mwakawago, 2013). This increase of the Chinese population is particularly evident in larger cities. In Dar es Salaam's case, for instance, there are over 20,000 Chinese migrants, over 800 Chinese businesses, and a large 'Chinatown' filled with small Chinese shops (Chuanjie, and Karugia, 2012). It is in Dar-es-Salaam where the 'Chinatown' was first established in Kariakoo with so many Chinese entrepreneurs.

One interesting dynamic which is noticeable is the image and connotation of Chinese goods. Tanzanian shopkeepers have begun to name their shops 'Chinese' to attract business. On the contrary, Chinese shopkeepers avoid using Chinese names to combat the notion that Chinese goods are of poor quality (Ichikaeli, 2009). Despite the 2009 Tanzania government law forbidding foreigners from owning shops in Dar es Salaam, informal Chinese businesses remain overwhelming. A cross-section of city residents, questions this influx of Chinese nationals and their involvement in petty businesses. The Chinese merchants who sell a range of commodities, including kitchen utensils, clothing, curtains, electronic gadgets, mobile phones, umbrellas and traditional medicine appear to be doing fast trade.

Chinese arrive in Tanzania by various means. Usually, the immigration of a small number of Chinese professionals and labourers is arranged via direct government arrangement; this would be the case for Chinese medical doctors or agricultural advisors linked to development aid projects (Politzer, 2008:4). Progressively, however, Chinese migration is arranged via government licensed private employment agencies that find and recruit workers. These agencies help workers obtain proper visa and travel documents. According to Politzer, most workers hired by such agencies tend to work in government-run projects in construction, oil fields and mines. However, there are many independent migrants who travel to Africa via informal social networks of friends, family, fellow villagers/townspeople, and other interpersonal connections.

This contemporary migratory patterns and the informal engagement of Chinese migrants in small businesses are often facilitated by various migratory and business networks that are already well established. These earlier migrants to Africa often help newer migrants, setting up semi-legal or unlicensed employment agencies, which sometimes charge high fees for a wide range of services. The growth of the Chinese enterprises eventually creates a more demand for labour migration from China (Mung, 2008:91). The typical pattern is for initial family member, usually male, emigrating and then followed by close family and extended family joining as required (Dobler, 2009). However, there are some few who move alone, and start a business. While most Chinese migrants move to Tanzania as proprietors or employees of the aforementioned Chinese investments, some migrants move to Tanzania without an idea of what they are going to do.

3.1.3. Motivations for Chinese entrepreneurs to Tanzania

The earlier motives of the relationship between Tanzania and China were an act of goodwill. However, the recent motives of China are not well known to many. China proclaims that it establishes relationships with

African countries for the sake of increasing trade. But, recent instances like the surrender of Entebbe International Airport—for failing on loan repayments to China's EXIM Bank and Uganda's desire to renegotiate certain 'poison terms' being denied by Chinese officials, sheds unclear picture of the motives. Similarly, the late President of Tanzania Dr. John Magufuli halted the Flagship Chinese Bagamoyo SEZ project (Tanzania) on the grounds that the terms of the agreement were not favorable to the Tanzanians. These instances are indicative of the dark side of 'friendship'.

At individual level, one may also ask what motivates Chinese migrants to even risk their lives by sometimes informally migrating to Tanzania or any other country. There is no universal or rather general answer to this question. An anonymous (2014) pointed to the possible explanation emanating from being unhappy with strict controls over their lives, incomes, and oppressive culture, all important to the Chinese government's control over its citizens. To these Chinese, therefore, migration is a sign of hope. The good Sino-Tanzania historical relation explains better the push and pull factors determining why migrants choose Tanzania over other countries. China's president Xi Jinping's choice of Tanzania as his first Africa's official foreign visit as China's president in 2003 partly signifies the importance of bilateral relations with Tanzania.¹ The good Sino-Tanzania relationship is also a determinant of the extent to which the Chinese living in the country interact with the Tanzanian citizens they meet.

The modern-day Chinese entrepreneurs want to make a profit in Africa and return, successful, to their home villages and towns. To them, hardships of life in Africa are worthwhile and surmountable because they are seen as temporary. Yoon Park quotes a Chinese Ambassador who pointed to a cultural value placed on suffering for the longer-term goals. 'The value of delayed gratification is a part of the Chinese philosophy and mentality; there is a firm belief that if you focus, if you work hard, and if you live frugally, you can succeed' (Park, 2009:9). Africa provides great opportunities if migrants are willing to assume the risks involved in migrating, temporarily, to places so far and so different from home. Amongst the entrepreneurial migrants, even a modest return on initial investments can afford continued travel between Africa and China (Ibid).

In such a general context, however, almost every Chinese migrant seem to have a personal migration story. One Chinese migrant whose family moved to Tanzania in 2008 explained their decision to set up a car repair garage taking advantage of the fragility of traffic laws.

Tanzania has no limitation on driving after drinking, which causes more accidents; and more accidents bring us more business. Even though we are new here, our garage is full of cars every day; sometimes even there is not enough space for us to park our own car. The traffic conditions in Tanzania are terrible. Tanzanians don't have the skills and techniques to repair cars by themselves. That is why there are many Chinese-run garages...almost all the Chinese garages are doing good business.²

¹ On March 24, 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This was Xi's first visit to Africa as Chinese president. After Tanzania, Xi travelled to South Africa he attended the fifth BRICS summit in the port city of Durban on March 26-27. He, thereafter, flew to the Republic of Congo for state visits.

² Yun Lee interviewed by the author, July 10, 2016, Dar es Salaam.

Another migrant, who came to Tanzania in 2004 and now owns several businesses, explained his and his family's presence in Tanzania as follows:

First, we examined the investment climate in Congo, Kenya and Uganda, it just wouldn't work out. We couldn't make any money. And finally, God led me to Tanzania. When God wants to show something to me, [Xing added] always blocks other possibilities. We are making money here.¹

After moving to Tanzania, some migrants live with their acquaintances, friends or families as they seek ideas and opportunities. This is the effect of migrants or immigrant social networks and there are various kinds of migrant's networks, all with their own characteristics. Different migrants attach different meanings to their networks. That is, what roles the people involved play for each other, or the value they attach to the various people in their network. For example, some Chinese teach others Kiswahili—the Tanzania's national language. Nevertheless, mostly Chinese business owners learn Kiswahili from their Tanzanian employees. Amongst Chinese people, '*guanxi*' is undoubtedly one of the most popular terms used to describe social relations and it carries a much deeper meaning and significance than the simple English translations of 'relations' or 'connections' would indicate since *guanxi* is a dominant form of exchange among the Chinese (Lin, 1980).

Chinese, through *guanxi*, has managed to penetrate the Tanzanian market to become the dominant trading partner surpassing the western superpowers. *Guanxi* is made up of two characters: *guan* (gate) and *xi* (connection). Thus, in order to connect to networks, one must pass through the gate (Chen, 2006). Over the course of years, it has been evident in Tanzania that *Guanxi* has been more influential than the Western Relational Marketing culture (Mrisha, 2022:106).

3.2. Chinese Do-It-All: How do Tanzanians Perceive?

There exist both negative and positive views on Sino-African relations. While the critics consider Sino-African relation as a form of neo-colonialism or imperialism, only benefiting China, those that are in favour of the China-Africa relationship argue that it is beneficial for both sides and that it is an important factor in furthering the development on the continent (Chen 2016; Mlambo, Kushamba & Simawu 2016). Sigalla (2014) concludes that while the west is more skeptical about the China-Africa relationship, Sub-Saharan African countries generally view the relationship more positively, viewing China as a trade partner. Therefore, Sino-African relationship cannot entirely be viewed as black-and-white. Perceptions towards such relations are highly complex that it cannot be categorized as either entirely "good" or "bad". There are variations between countries and individuals.

In a survey conducted by Afrobarometer (2014) where 2,386 adult Tanzanian respondents gave their opinions on China and the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, 77 percent of respondents residing in an urban area perceived the Chinese economic and political influence on Tanzania as "somewhat positive" or "very positive" while 67 percent of the respondents residing in a rural area opinioned it as "somewhat positive" or "very positive". In the same survey, 35 percent of the respondents believed that China should serve as a

¹ Yu Xing, interviewed by the author, July 11, 2016, Dar es Salaam.

role model for Tanzanian development, followed by the United States at 30 percent (Afrobarometer 2014). Despite excellent evaluations of China as a consequence of its economic activity in sectors such as development aid, investment, and bilateral agreements between the two nations, there is a dark side of the Guanxi that have tarnished China's reputation as discussed in the proceeding paragraphs.

While the Sino-African relationship is generally viewed positively by the Tanzanians, there are varied reactions with regard to the Chinese undertakings in Tanzania. Some scholars argue that African consumers benefit from cheap products offered by Chinese firms. For instance Ralph Wrobel, (2008) talks of Chinese plastic sandals that have conquered the whole African continent in the last years. He considers it to have changed the daily life of African women and children enormously that waking shoeless as it used to be in the past in poor African countries is becoming a dead past. In this context, given the fact that *Kariakoo* is a local market where most of the people shopping have limited financial resources, the sudden drop in prices had a significant impact on how they managed their finances.

Contrary to the Chinese immigrants who in the main, have very clear negative opinion about Tanzanian people, a significant number of Tanzanians prefer not to be so direct in their answers (Arsene, 2010). Their favourable opinion about Chinese immigrants partly stems from Tanzanians' understanding of Chinese as hardworking and well-intentioned. Chinese are also acknowledged for living a hard and simple life as most of Tanzanians. In comparison with Europeans, Chinese tend not to prefer luxurious life. Their spirit of togetherness and their living in almost similar conditions as Tanzanians have amounted to their being accepted by Tanzanians. However, this does not mean that Chinese and Tanzanians operate as equals. There are many complaints about Chinese immigrants.

Economic experts believe that the Chinese use project financing as bait to secure routes to scarce natural resources to feed their home industries. There is henceforth, a strong perception among Tanzanians that Chinese activities are geared towards trade rather than investment. Many of such economic actors obtain investment licences but continue to import Chinese goods in Tanzania rather than making actual investments (Jasson, Burke and Hon, 2009). Although some still believe that this could be as a strategy to test the market before establishing manufacturing operations, the reality of it is real doubtful.

Common criticism of Chinese engagement in Tanzania, as it is for other African countries, is that Chinese immigrants flood the Tanzanian market with cheap and low-quality goods which drive local Tanzanians out of business. This lamenting about Chinese counterfeit products has two dimensions: some Chinese immigrants sell counterfeit goods that illegally use international known brands. The other way of doing it is for Chinese sellers to feature products that local producers historically made. Increasingly such products are made by local Chinese workers in Tanzania. An excellent example of such products includes '*kangas*' and woodcraft. No wonder Erick Kabendera, a Tanzanian freelance investigative journalist considers the Chinese as 'do it all' whereby they enter the country as contractors but they graduate as mineral prospectors, explorers of oil and gas and everything that is economical that can be traded around (Kabendera, 2014).

Despite the earlier favourable opinion by local Tanzanians, Chinese immigrants are still seen as foreigners (Arsene, 2010). In this way, tensions are still to occur as many Tanzanians still see distinct boundary between what is to be done by them, and what the foreigners are expected to do. As Chinese

immigrants encroach such boundaries, unavoidable tensions between the two sides are likely to continue and be intensified in various forms (covert and overt). Their engagement in selling sun glasses, peanuts, roasted corns, T-shirts, fruits and vegetables in streets is by no means seen as a confiscation of Tanzanian's opportunities. In fact these entrepreneurs do mostly operate independently of the Chinese state agenda (Ho, 2008). Their entrepreneurial practices have turned into being of the 'predatory nature that frustrates locals', observes one Kariakoo trader who is not ready to see the Chinese selling cashew nuts, burns and doughnuts in Dar-es-Salaam streets while the government is doing nothing. "What will our people do when petty trading is given to the Chinese?" wonders Peter Masawe a fruits trader in Kariakoo.¹ One Member of Parliament was reported to have been shocked by foreigners carrying out small businesses that could be done by Tanzanians: selling plastic flowers, watches, clocks, belts, food, mattresses, restaurants, motor garages, shoe shops etc. This way, a guardian reporter, on February 3, 2011, argued for Tanzania to "keep tabs on the Chinese like a married couple should respectively keep tabs on the best-man or bridesmaid of their marriage, so that either of the latter may not go too far".

Most of the Chinese firms established in Tanzania are of small capital to be considered foreign investments. By 2008, out of 147 Chinese companies, only 22 had portfolios of more than \$1million (Baregu, 2008: 152-66). This suggests that the majority of such firms are set as private small and medium enterprises. Compared with their Indian counterparts, most of the Chinese firms are also not well integrated in the domestic economy. Borrowing from the 2007 World Bank survey, about 93% of the Chinese owned firms in Africa were run by Chinese themselves (Broadman, 2007). As noted by Dobler (2009), these Chinese tend to live quite a frugal life style mostly utilizing family labour. Lack of trust is often cited as the reason for preference of Chinese labour over Africans. Whether the reason is valid or not, what is vivid from the trend is that the practice fuels more the problem of unemployment on the part of African as it denies them employment opportunity. In that way, if Tanzanians are at all employed by these Chinese firms, they are employed as semi legal workers. The contribution of these established firms to the host nation's economic growth is, therefore, questionable. The ways Chinese companies operate in Tanzania have occasionally provoked riots by locals looking for work. However, most of Tanzanians interviewed, repeated again and again the fact that they are happy to at least be earning some money for the upkeep of their families even though it was not enough and they hoped to get better salaries. In some cases some Tanzanians are underpaid below the minimum wage set by the Tanzanian government.

In Dar-es-Salaam, independent Chinese traders or businessmen who deal with miscellaneous products, general merchandise or everyday household goods, at their "firm" or shop reside predominantly in the central market zones of the city. They live and create their livelihoods within the social and economic milieu of these markets' territorial space. By contrast, those who work in construction carry out their roles and interactions at their worksites and compounds, usually within a space that is enclosed by high metal fencing branded with the firm's initials.

As a strategy to diversify opportunities, Chinese immigrants also engage in a range of services such restaurants and medicine (Hsu, 2008). In Tanzania/Zanzibar, some Chinese doctors who worked for aid

¹ Peter Masawe, interviewed by the author, October 10, 2016

terms in the 1970s, stayed on and set up private practices using both Chinese and western medical technologies (Mohan, and Tan-Mullins, 2009). The 1990s new wave of Chinese migration to Tanzania was accompanied by unexpected opportunities. Although most Chinese initially came to Tanzania hoping to work in more typical industries, a good number of them ended up setting up traditional Chinese medicine clinics (Hsu, 2008:234). Nevertheless, most Chinese engaged in such medical practices without medical training. They just took the opportunity of the health demand that opened in the country and capitalized on the World Health Organisation's push for privatization of health services. This rise of Chinese medicine in Tanzania can also be situated within the context of a globalized cultural economy where ideas, notions and even values are considered as commodities to be traded. The first of such Chinese medical clinics got opened in Tanzania in 1996 (Hsu, 2008:221-5). The setup of most of Chinese clinics, their prices and medicine types, are clearly geared towards popular sector. Hsu (2007:117) notes one of the clinics selling condoms or handing them to regulars as customers purchased the male-potency-enhancing Chinese pills. Such pills appear to be popular among the clientele of almost all Chinese clinics in East Africa. The Chinese are, generally, very market oriented in whatever business setup they make.

Chinese nationals are also accused for their involvement in the poaching industry in Africa. The published report of the Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES, 2007), expressed explicit concern over the involvement of Chinese nationals in the direct procurement of ivory in elephant range States in Africa including Tanzania. This is a relatively recent phenomenon as 87 % of these cases occurred in the most recent period since 1998. With an already strong and growing economic presence throughout Africa, Chinese nationals are now well positioned to exploit direct sources of illicit ivory in a manner that was not the case in the past (Ibid, p. 7-8). Chinese nationals on the ground in Tanzania have been jailed in connection with large-scale interdictions. In November 2013 three Chinese nationals were arrested in Dar es Salaam with a stockpile of 797 tusks (Lawi, 2014). Between 2010 and 2013, over three tons of ivory has been seized in Tanzania, and two-thirds of the elephants at Selous Game Reserve have disappeared (Ibid).

According to the United Nations report, the link between Chinese demand and Tanzanian supply is the single most destructive influence on the African elephant population. In the immediate aftermath of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) findings, the then Tanzania's Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Lazaro Nyarandu, responded to citizen complaints of Chinese nationals, engaging in the massacre of animals and transporting them to their countries for their own benefit. He clearly stated that, "the government of Tanzania would take action against poachers without regard to their countries of origin, and that any threat against tourism revenues would be taken seriously" (Tanzania Daily News, 2014). In March 2014, Chinese national Yu Bo appeared before the Kisutu Resident Magistrates' Court in Dar es Salaam, accused of illegally collecting 81 elephant tusks (Ibid). Tanzanian authority had also arrested the Chinese business woman, Yang Fenglan, popularly known as "queen of Ivory" for smuggling 706 elephant tusks between 2000 and 2014. Tanzania has experienced massive poaching of elephants in recent years to supply a growing market which is predominantly in East Asia (Kideghesho, 2016:371). These and other many cases are indicative of the Chinese involvement in illegal practices of which the Tanzanian authorities needs to be aware and take proper actions to save the diminishing animal

species.

The less positive of Chinese entrepreneur by most Tanzanians was exemplified by an Afrobarometer (2014) survey in which “An appreciation for Chinese people, and culture” only received two percent. The low percentage might imply that the Chinese migrants in Tanzania are themselves not necessarily seen as a major positive factor on China’s reputation in the country. In the same survey, the unacceptable behavior of some Chinese citizens in the country emerged as the most factors a negative image of China in Tanzania (Afrobarometer 2014). A study by Sigalla (2014) gives weight to the sentiment that the perceived behavior of the Chinese tarnishes China’s image in Tanzania, citing rude behavior and the usage of abusive language.

China certainly does suffer an image problem in Africa. With all its gains as the world’s second-biggest economy, it has battled to shed its tag as a vestige for human rights abuse, political repression and censorship. On the other hand, one million Chinese workers have moved to Africa to work in the telecommunications and mining industries or selling shoes or tobacco across the continent. These jobs, people say, could be filled by ordinary Africans. While there are laws in Tanzania, for instance, designed to protect local vendors and prevent the flooding of cheap Chinese goods into local markets, implementation is rarely carried out.

Conclusion

Sino-Tanzania relation is very historical and it has culminated in significant influx of Chinese people in Tanzania. Such Migratory trends have not been uniform. From the 1990s most Chinese migrants to Tanzania were no longer tied to Government-led developmental projects but rather as individuals with their own economic objectives to be fulfilled. This new wave has led them to do almost every possible business—the do-it-all. This has led, for instance to the Inner-city Kariakoo be on its way to becoming Chinatown faster than Tanzanian authorities can keep pace with. It is evident that this new trend of Chinese migration to Tanzania, whose economy is generally small-scale, carries socio-economic and cultural impacts. Although Tanzanian state has taken lazes faire response to Chinese immigration, what is conspicuously absent is a critical look over the cost-benefit of the Chinese presence. The relationship between Tanzania and China appears to be very one-sided since it is China that is exporting goods, capital, technicians, and ideas to Tanzania, while the traffic in the opposite direction is small. Probably this is the inevitable result of the interaction of a nation of over 1,000 million people with one of 50 million. While the Sino-Tanzania relationship is generally viewed positively by the Tanzanian citizens, the Chinese residing in the Chinese living in the country are perceived in a less positive way. However, these conclusions focus on how China and the Chinese are perceived in Tanzania rather than how they actually are.

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