

## **China-Africa Published Texts: Selected Bibliography & Notes**

Prepared by Tu T Huynh for “Chinese in Africa” workshop, University of Johannesburg, Sunday July 29, 2007

**Filesi, Teobaldo. 1972. *China and Africa in the Middle Ages*. Translated by David L. Morison. London: F. Cass in association with the Central Asian Research Centre.**

Two views among sinologists guide this study by Filesi: on one hand, Chinese information about Africa during the Ming period was obtained from interactions between Chinese, Arab, and African traders, merchants, and sailors at the port of Hormuz or in other coastal centers along the Persian Gulf; on the other hand, a group of scholars quibble with the periodization, stating that the theory of indirect contact with the coast of Africa can only be sustained in regards to the earlier T’ang and Sung dynasties. While the former view believes that stories about Africa were gained through secondary sources (or hearsay) and asserts that China only had indirect contact with Africa, the second view offers medieval maps and accounts by Arab and European travelers as evidence of early direct contact. Filesi seems to support the latter view, presenting porcelain and coins from the T’ang (618-906) and two Sung (971-1127 and 1127-1280) dynasties found on the East African coast as evidence of China’s direct contact with Africa during the late Middle Ages. By the Sung dynasty, according to the author, China’s maritime system (ships, foreign trade, and navy fleet) was unchallenged, which the emperors during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) then built upon and expanded. Despite the historical nature of this study, a statement by Filesi resonates with more recent views about China’s ambition in Africa; it reads as follow: “China’s peaceful ventures into the exotic world of Africa—a remarkable episode in the history of civilization—were the product of national propensities, of commercial interest, of technical ability and of the nautical knowledge acquired by the Chinese” (Filesi 1972: 12). China, for the author, had no intentions to conquer despite its maritime advances.

**Gittings, John. 2006. *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

Compared to most studies about China or related to China, Gittings’s presents a refreshing alternative, asserting that misperceptions of China have largely been invented and exacerbated by the Western (America in particular) prejudice, these views have been exacerbated by the cold war division of the world between capitalist and communist, and they must be changed in order to fully comprehend the complexity of Chinese society and extent of China’s transformation. Gittings’s premise is not that China is changing, but China had changed since the 1980s. The consequences for China are that no one has been left untouched and Chinese society has become even more complex. For him, the contours of this “changed face” have been hazy and are still being worked out. Examples of the latter are numerous, but Gittings notes several in his introduction: (1) while the ideology of the ruling or Communist Party in China has unequivocally shifted from state socialism to state capitalism and competition has taken over economy, there is more space for civil society (organizations) to emerge as autonomous players in the public sphere (albeit prior registration with government is necessary); (2) while supply of cheap labor is in abundance and China’s market has attracted vast amounts of inward

investment, creating a massive export surplus, increase in average incomes, and urban transformation, concerns about the widening wealth gap, underdevelopment of rural areas, unemployment of state workers, and shaky financial basis of many of the country's "wasteful prestige projects" have been increasing (Gittings 2006: 4); (3) on one hand, the new fourth generation of leadership headed by Hu Jintao appears to be sensitive to possible threats linked to social and environmental dislocations, but, on the other hand, the political culture in China has shown little to no change (Gittings 2006: 7-8); (4) Chinese print media is more diverse, but journalists have not been able to go abroad for further training; and (5) the electronic media has far more freedom than print media, yet during the SARS epidemic, journalists and civil rights campaigners were detained for attempting to subvert state power via the internet. This juxtaposition demonstrates that there is no simple way to understand China and that there is a range of possibilities for the future of China. There is something of everything in the "new 'New China'." Peasants are no longer the revolutionaries of society. Migration and informal economy for the unemployed in rural areas and laid-off state workers are means to contain plausible social unrest in China. As for foreign policy, Gittings's presents to us only the relationship between the U.S. and China. To elucidate this, Gittings's traces the road from revolution beginning in 1949 under the command of Mao Zedong to the democracy movement (or the Beijing massacre) at Tiananmen Square in 1989, to Deng Xiaoping's subsequent economic reforms in 1993 that "opened up" China to the world and sped its integration into the world market economy, and to China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001, showing the nuances of China's transformation.

**Hall, Richard and Hugh Peyman. 1976. *The Great Uhuru Railway: China's Showpiece in Africa*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.**

Hall and Peyman assert that prior to 1975 Communist China's influence on the African continent was negligible, and China had very little interest in Africa. By 1975 China's aid to African countries increased by ten-fold, exceeding \$200 million a year. Also, China can be seen to have far more influence in Africa than the United States, Soviet Union, and former European colonial powers; African countries' acceptance of China as mentor to the Third World reflect this. The Great *Uhuru* (Freedom) or Tan-Zam (linking Tanzania and Zambia) Railway was, from the authors' view, the best indicator of China's shift in emphasis to Africa. Hall and Peyman write: "It is China's greatest aid project anywhere in the world, an unparalleled display of 'proletarian internationalism'; throughout the southern hemisphere there is no aid scheme by the other great powers which can compare with it" (Hall and Peyman 1976: 13). The Freedom Railway stretched 1,162 miles. Over 25,000 Chinese were sent to Africa to work on the line in addition to 50,000 Africans. Its cost in terms of material amounted to 310,000 tons of steel rails, 330,000 tons of cement, and shiploads of other necessary equipments from China. The estimated cost of to build this railway was \$450 million, which was financed by a 30-year interest-free loan from China because the World Bank, United States, Canada, and Britain would not extend any assistance (Hall and Peyman 1976: 51 and 57). At the surface and most simplistic level, the authors explain, the initiative for this construction can be viewed as spawning from China's desire to defeat the West in Africa, as well as the Sino-Soviet dispute, which can be dated to 1964. However, the Freedom Railway had geo-political significance. The construction of this railway would free

“Zambia from its dependence upon import and export routes through the South,” which was under white control (Hall and Peyman 1976: 17). For Tanzania, it presented a possibility to develop the agriculture in the southwestern part of the country (Hall and Peyman 1976: 57). In terms of China, agreement to help fund the Freedom Railway stemmed from Russia’s success in building the Aswan Dam in Egypt, which earned much credit in African eyes, but also China’s continued commitment to anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. Hall and Peyman discuss in much detail about how China became involved in building this railway following visits from Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Western cynical responses about China’s possible bluff, inevitable failure, or strategy to insert itself into Africa in order to subvert the continent. The authors also give insightful details about individual African leaders, such as Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), and Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu (Zanzibar), and how their experiences led them to form ties with China. Moreover, they nicely demonstrate for 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholars of China-Africa relations how history of repeats itself, especially China’s reiteration of historical links across the Indian Ocean in order to call for the strengthening of these old ties once the opportunity was presented to the Chinese leaders (Hall and Peyman 1976: 47).

**Hutchison, Alan. 1975. *China’s African Revolution*. London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd.**

Hutchison presents the view that the People’s Republic of China’s foreign policy in general and policies in Africa in particular since the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949 must be understood in relation to the evolution of Sino-Soviet relations and liberation movements across Africa. Africa received little to no attention from China until after the 1956 conference in Bandung; thereafter, trade and diplomatic relations with Egypt commenced, renewing official ties between China and Africa. According to Hutchison, the “Bandung spirit” continued to guide Chinese foreign policy decisions. At the same time, gradual ideological rift with the Soviet Union over the question of cooperation with non-communists, as well as the ascendancy of the left wing of the CCP party, turned Africa into an ideological battleground and pushed China to adopt a radical foreign policy. Here, the author notes: “Despite the revolutionary rhetoric, China was pursuing two types of diplomacy – the united front from above (state-to-state relations with sovereign governments) and the united front from below (support for revolutionary groups)” (Hutchison 1975: 19). This two-prong strategy not only showed “Chinese pragmatism” in its foreign policy, but also differentiated China from the Soviet Union. This difference – played out in their approaches to three key African revolutionary situations (i.e., the Algerian War (1957-1962), continued guerrilla war after independence in French Cameroon in 1964, and restoration of order in the Congo following independence in 1960), diplomacy, and economic aid – was recognized among Africans and resented by some (especially those in North Africans and some in West Africa). The latter presented views of Chinese intentions in Africa that paralleled Western suspicion of China’s African policies (Hutchison 1975: 105). Hutchison disputes the Western myths and blames them for influencing judgments about Chinese activities in Africa: “If observers had examined each example of a Chinese setback on its merits and not been blinded by their prejudices, they would have discovered that...China’s African policy was pragmatic, somewhat cautious and depended for success, like all other nations’ foreign policies, on good timing and good luck.... Nor was any credit given for...China’s

constructive policies. When they were mentioned they were regarded simply as devices for furthering disruptive policies....” (Hutchison 1975: 106). Further criticizing Western views about Chinese aims to subvert the continent, he states that they assume that “African governments were quite incapable of handling a Chinese presence in their countries” when in fact they were not (Hutchison 1975: 106-107). While the first half of the book explores the context for China’s presence in Africa, the second half delves into the direct relations China had with Africa. Most interesting is his first chapter to part two, entitled “Personal Relations” (Hutchison 1975: 178-192). He seeks to delineate how African and Chinese people reacted to one another. This study should be closely examined for its numerous unconventional arguments and analyses.

**Kynge, James. 2006. *China Shakes the World: The Rise of a Hungry Nation*. London: Phoenix.**

Reaching deep into Chinese history and noting various aspects of China’s industrial build-up – ranging from urbanization to technological prowess, to establishing business networks overseas, to having a growing appetite for oil – Kynge, a career journalist who reports primarily on Asia, displays his breadth of knowledge about China, where he has spent most of his life since 1985. He presents the image of a country that is not only rising, but also growing rapidly in a “typhoon”-like manner, which suggests violence and chaos for those countries that it sweeps across. While Kynge explains the domestic impact of China’s development by sharing snippets of different places that have experienced urbanization and population growth (e.g., Chongqing where he had spent some time), his focus is primarily on China’s impact on European and American economies. Thus, his observations/impressions of China’s economic growth weave between China, Europe, and the United States.

**Larkin, Bruce D. 1971. *China and Africa, 1949-1970; The Foreign Policy of the People’s Republic of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.**

Larkin asserts that contacts between China (specifically, the People’s Republic of China) and Africa were few and scattered until the Asian-African Conference met in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. A year prior to this, China had finally achieved internal cohesion with the Chinese Communist Party in control of government. Larkin’s study stresses the need to recognize the distinction and interplay of “evolutionary” and “revolutionary” aims, which influence China’s short and long term activities in Africa. The author refutes that the cause for China’s foreign relations with Africa can be reduced to the issue of Taiwan and recognition, the Sino-Soviet dispute, short-term political economic gains for China, or internal posturing. For him, “[t]he impetus for much of China’s present activity is commitment to world revolution” (Larkin 1971: 9). That is, through a disparate combination of activities – e.g., support for anticolonialism, anti-imperialism, and armed struggle; recognition of African states that gain independence; establishment of diplomatic relations; engagement in trade; and extension of aid in the form of loans (or credits), cash grants, and technical assistance programs (the Tanzania-Zambia railway being the largest project) – China aims to create the preconditions for social revolution in Africa that would occur sometime in the future. The eight principles (e.g., no “political quid pro quo”) governing China’s aid policy not only treat Africa as an equal partner, but also reflect this aim to gradually help Africa towards self-reliance (Larkin 1971: 103-

106). At the same time that Chinese aid seeks to expand markets and gain economic advantage, Larkin's study also reminds his readers that African governments are central in shaping the opportunities for China to influence change and achieve its objectives locally. Diversity, as well as setbacks, in China's activities on the African front can be attributed to this factor. In other words, Larkin presents the view that China's African policy was very much nuanced; there was no room for unilateralism.

**Mutukwa, Kasuka S. 1976. "Politics of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Project." Thesis (PhD), Columbia University.**

Mutukwa uses the politics around the Tanzam Railway as a case study to demonstrate the relevance of dependency theory in understanding the motives of peripheral states. What emerges from this study, however, is a comprehensive analysis of domestic, regional, and international relations within and between Tanzania, Zambia, and China. The idea of a Tanzam Railway, the author begins, originated from colonial aspirations to expand into the "African heartland," incorporating Southern and Eastern Africa into the Western politico-economic system in order to facilitate the consolidation of imperial rule and the extraction of resources (copper in particular) in Northern Rhodesia, which would become Zambia. This idea, however, did not come to fruition for various economic reasons until Nyerere and Kaunda became presidents, "turning a grand imperial design into a pan-African scheme" (Mutukwa 1976: 3). As importantly, for Nyerere and Kaunda, the revival of the idea of the Tanzam Railway following independence was linked to national development and regional integration strategies. For Zambia, the Railway would sever its long dependency on the white South and subsequently allow the country to create new links to other independent states and help connect all regions of the country to Lusaka, creating balanced socio-economic development domestically. Nyerere's motivation was to develop especially the remote southern regions of Tanzania for agriculture and mining, as well as to expand the port of Dar es Salaam along with job prospects at the docks. International lending organizations and western powers were approached to help finance the Railway project, but all declined their assistance on the basis of its economic unsoundness, giving China the opportunity to step in. The final Tripartite Agreement was signed in 1970, when Zambia eventually gave up on western powers and agreed to Chinese aid. According to Mutukwa, aid from China can be attributed to the following: to gain influence in Africa and the Third World, observe revolutionary goals, legitimize great power status, and win economic benefits (e.g., trade) (Mutukwa 1976: 163-64). China provided the finances, but also Chinese laborers, training for African workers, technology, and material. Despite observations about China's motivation for its generous zero-interest loan to build the Railway, the decision to accept China's assistance, the author reminds us, was ultimately made by African leaders. The Railway took five years to build and the process strengthened ties between China, Tanzania, and Zambia.

**Ogunsanwo, Alaba. 1974. *China's Policy in Africa, 1958-71*. International Studies. London and New York: Cambridge University Press.**

Given that it was the People's Republic of China that initiated diplomatic relations with Africa in the 1950s, why did China become interested in Africa? Ogunsanwo argues that Chinese policy in Africa reflects China's interpretation of the changing international environment (e.g., the division of the world into an anti-imperialist and anti-communist

bloc, and the convening of an Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia). Moreover, it shows the Chinese Communist Party's attempt to alter aspects of this environment that were unfavorable to the country's interests, especially as it begins to participate in the modern international system. The author impresses on his readers not so much the failure of China's diplomacy in Africa, but its success in a territory that consists of other players, which include the United States, Soviet Union, and newly independent African states. While certain African states have responded to China's policy with caution, taking into consideration their own immediate needs for and ideas of development, others, colonies still in revolutionary struggles, have provided useful avenues for China into Africa. China's short- and long-term objectives in Africa seem to coincide with this difference among African states. Ogunsanwo specifies China's objectives: "The short range objective in [independent African states] was to break through the barrier of suspicion created by 'imperialist' propaganda, establish diplomatic relations, extend trade and eventually aid, while trying to persuade the government to adopt an anti-western brand of neutralism. The long range objective would be to help train indigenous revolutionary cadres whose function would be to transform the African nationalist political temperament into a Communist one" (Ogunsanwo 1974: 18). According to the author, economic aid to independent African states continued albeit on a small scale during the Cultural Revolution, and China's resolute to support revolutionary struggles in Africa intensified as a result of sweeping political independence across Africa. China's improvement in the domestic economic front, but also the Sino-Soviet dispute over the latter's warming relationship with imperialist powers, Taiwan's pursuit of diplomatic relations in Africa, and "Chinese aspiration to great power status" (Ogunsanwo 1974: 71) extended China's activities in Africa. In short, Ogunsanwo demonstrates that China's policy in Africa was influenced by domestic and international conditions; and he meticulously maps out shifts in China's Africa activities over a short period of time.

**Note:** It is not as interesting to ask if China has historical connections with Africa and how that looks like. It is much more interesting to ask how China-Africa relations have transformed over time. This second question requires us to inquire into the forces that altered the terms of this relationship. The 1970s publications show that the wave of African liberation and fissure in Sino-Soviet relations were critical, and contemporary scholars could not ignore the Cold War. In 2007, globalization (used loosely here) and the increased pressure to liberalize economies, as well as aims to consolidate regional economies, should all be taken into consideration when analyzing China-Africa relations.