

China's Second Continent Study Guide

China's Second Continent by Howard W. French

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Summary

“China's Second Continent” by Howard W. French provides an account of the undeniable and irreversible presence of Chinese interests in African nations. It also depicts the impact of the millions of Chinese nationals who have immigrated to Africa to run businesses and to work as employees for the thousands of Chinese companies that have been established in Africa.

China had been quick to see the potential that Africa held out for enterprising businessmen. There was an old Chinese saying that empty things exist to be filled up. The business ventures and enterprises of Chinese businessmen were eagerly supported by the Chinese government which made generous investments in the African nations in order to foster good will. There were important drivers that created the massive Chinese emigration to African countries. China was suffering from overpopulation which threatened to present serious problems for the huge country in the not-too-distant future. China had very little land that could be devoted to farmland and they had to feed a population of three billion that only promised to increase. They needed farmland to grow food and they needed a place where some of its population could be transplanted and yet remain productive and viable citizens for the motherland.

Africa was literally bursting with natural resources. Everyone has heard about African diamonds but that was just the glittery surface of their seemingly unending assets. Buried in the African earth were mother lodes of copper, bauxite, coal, gold and ores and minerals of great variety and in great quantities. Residing above these abundant resources was more available arable farmland than was located anywhere on earth. African nations had not tapped these resources to any great extent. Most of the mining and extraction of this wealth had been led by foreign concerns typically from the West. But the West began to think of Africa as a problem it didn't want to have despite its natural resources and great potential. Why the Africans didn't exploit their own resources is a question for the ages.

It was the perfect storm. Africa had the resources and opportunities that China wanted and space for its people and Africa was more than willing to be the recipient of the extravagant gifts offered by the Chinese that included cash, bridges, hospitals, and soccer stadiums and the promise to create modern infrastructures within the backward nations of Africa. China devoted billions of dollars to the development of their partnership with African nations and encouraged and incentivized its citizens to establish businesses there.

There was excitement and hope for the future but the honeymoon didn't stand the test of time. Chinese employers were resistant to hiring local employees and those who they hired were underpaid and often worked under unsafe conditions. Political and social activists in Africa saw that its nation was being stripped of its natural wealth and resources for what was really a pittance. Corruption and bribes became the norm; packages with millions and even billions was generally guaranteed to turn the heads of government officials.



It is expected that within the next 25 years, there will be three billion Africans and one billion Chinese immigrants on the continent. What will that do to the West and to the balance of power that currently exists in the world? Will a country that fundamentally is in charge of two continents feel emboldened to extend their power and influence even beyond those borders? A massive military could be developed from the populace which no other country on earth could rival.

There's a question about what country is really at the helm of Africa now. Will there be any question in the next few decades which country really controls the Dark Continent?



Part One: Chapter One

Summary

Hao Shengli and author Howard French had many conversations over a span of several days. Hao made his new home on farmland in Mozambique. He picked up French at his hotel, cursing and complaining about the many dialects in mainland China that had to be contended with. Hao pleaded with French to speak with his chauffeur in Portuguese and tell him where they wanted to go. His rudeness rivaled that of the Ugly American a generation before.

China had made serious investments in Africa over the past decade. In 1996 Jiang Zemin, then head of state, in an official visit to Ethiopia, proposed the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Jiang encouraged his countrymen to look for business opportunities in Africa. Six years later when French was working in China, Jiang's Forum convened for the first time with 53 African leaders in attendance. Among other promises, Jiang vowed to invest \$5 billion in African development. By 2013, the project had advanced exponentially. China's Export-Import Bank had made loans of \$62.7 billion to African countries more than loans granted by the World Bank. At that time, the estimate of China's total commitment was \$74 billion.

Like Hao, a million private citizens had pulled up stakes in China and moved to Africa for new opportunities and represented the human factor of the relationship. African merchants in Senegal, Namibia, Malawi and Tanzania complained about the influx of low-end Chinese traders who undercut their profits. Mainland China has an ethnically diverse population and one of the most unequal societies in the world. Political dissidents were a tiny sliver of the population. French learned that Hao's disaffection with China was the norm among emigrants. The desire for an improved financial status was one of the main drivers of the Chinese exodus to Africa. Mozambique offered wide-open farming opportunities to newcomers like Hao.

Hao felt lost when he first arrived in Africa because of the language barrier. He contacted fellow countrymen who had also emigrated to Africa but found the majority of them to be bad characters. There was a large number of Chinese natives from Fujian, a mountainous region that was not conducive to farming. Hao considered the Fujians as "no good." Ironically, Hao's own region of Henan was known to have a disproportionate number of corrupt and dishonest people. In total, it was estimated that one million Chinese had emigrated to Africa over a decade.

Hao did well being able to purchase a very large piece of land for a mere pittance. He had problems with locals who resented him wanting to know how he was able to secure such a large property. Hao was in the process of bringing his children to China. They would be considered Mozambicans and, therefore, would not be mistreated by the locals. The children would not be enrolled in school. The lack of education ran counter to Chinese culture. Hao insisted the children only needed to learn to speak English. Hao



claimed to have five children and three wives. Neither his youngest wife nor his brother wanted to make the move to Africa.

Hao wanted to secure control of his land through the “sexual colonization” by virtue of his son’s dalliances with local girls. The key was to have lots of children who could be successors and fill every role that was needed for success. He also planned to bring in some Chinese agricultural experts to help him run the farm.

Driving on Hao’s property, French witnessed an argument between Hao and some of his farm workers who claimed their pay was too low. Hao’s temporary home consisted of two shacks. Hao and his second oldest son, Chuan, had a tense relationship. Hao complained about Chaun playing games all day instead of hunting and getting to know girls like his older son. Yang pulled up in a rundown car proudly holding the pheasant he had shot. Yang gave the pheasant to Delima, his girlfriend, and ordered her to prepare it for cooking. Yang bossed Delima and her young girlfriend, Admire, around, slapping them and threatening them with worse. Chuan admitted to French that he hated the heat and missed his favorite TV shows.

Hao showed French around his property pointing out the infrastructure that the Portuguese had built then abandoned. Hao was determined to be successful but the heat had been too much for many other Chinese emigrants. Using African workers, Hao was having a large house constructed. These workers complained to French about the low wages they were receiving from Hao. He paid the eight-man team just \$10 a day.

Analysis

The author begins his report on the state of the relationships between China and the African nations which the former has made sweeping financial deals which have received a large and growing number of Chinese immigrants.

He begins with the nation of Mozambique which is rich in farmland. He interviews a Chinese farmer who emigrated from China who has both positive and negative reaction to the change. He hints at the mistreatment of African workers.

The author stresses the great investment that China is making into the economy and culture of these African nations. This is important information for the reader because China’s vigorous push into Africa is a sign of soft aggression which could have meaning for everyone in the world. Were China to take over two continents, their power and influence would overshadow the rest of the world.

Vocabulary

disparate, omnipresent, incarnated, espoused, lucrative, pittance, cajoling, equanimity, enigmatic, taciturn



Part One: Chapters Two & Three

Summary

Lusaka, Zambia, transitions to the north from a bustling modern metropolis to overcrowded slums. Africa is a storehouse of natural resources. Zambia is one of the top producers of copper on the continent. China represents 40% of the world's demand for copper. One of China's main goal for its investment in Africa is to create future markets for Chinese exports. The Chinese have been investing in Zambia since the early 1990s.

Chinese investment and increased African trade have apparently led to an increase in the number of middle-class Africans. Public education had advanced with a huge jump in high school enrollment. French noted the signs of Western influence as evidenced by teens who wore stylish clothing and baseball caps and rode skate boards. New housing was going up everywhere. It seemed that China was the only country to realize Africa's potential. The advancements according to the migrants had nothing to do with ideology but had everything to do with economic opportunity.

French visited the stadium that China was building in the city. Workers were tasked with completing it before the election so that the incumbent president Rupia Banda could claim it as an accomplishment. French talked with several Zambian workers at the site who complained that they were under the constant pressure of threats to be fired and even beaten. There were few safety precautions taken to protect the workers although Chinese workers were given protective gear to wear. Two Zambian workers had recently been killed in an accident at the site. French was shooed away like an annoying gnat by a Chinese worker that inferred he was trying to make trouble for China.

French met with John Kasonde who was a worker at a Chinese metallurgy plant and who echoed the same complaints about his Chinese bosses. A former worker at the plant, Chola Warren, lasted only a month. He was worked mercilessly hard and only made \$10 a week. Again, there were no safety precautions taken for the Zambian workers. Although power outages were a common occurrence in Africa, due to the smelters that ran day and night there was also a supply of energy.

After Zambia won independence in 1964, Kenneth Kaunda, the country's first leader, was faced with the same question that has plagued all leaders since then: how can Zambia gain more profit from the country's natural resources in order to advance the lives of Zambian poor? Raising taxes on mining companies didn't work and neither did a constitutional amendment. Kaunda ruled until 1991 and his economic policies were considered a disaster. When copper prices fell worldwide in 1994, Zambia's per capita income fell sharply. Frederick Chiluba, the next president, privatized the copper industry in 1997 in an effort to capture revenue. China took advantage of this privatization and



pounced. It proved to be a mistake for Zambia to sell off its top natural resource when its value was depressed.

French traveled to Kitwe to see Rayford Mbulu who was a political ally of Sata. He claimed that the Zambian government was interfering in the relationships between the Chinese business owners and the Zambian workers. He felt that Zambians exploited anti-Chinese sentiment and that Zambia liked the investment money from China. However, the Chinese did not treat Zambian workers fairly and that there should be trickle down profits from the Chinese enterprises. Zambia had sacrificed its society in order to gain Chinese investment money. It was Mbulu's view that in addition to profiting from Zambian resources, the Chinese were also using Zambia as a dumping ground to alleviate their overpopulation. Seta finally won the election and proclaimed that the Chinese had to adhere to local laws.

Senegal in West Africa was a petty trading and commerce center which was a popular destination for the Chinese. Chinese shops are common throughout Africa. The influx of these shops began in the late 1990s in Dakar, Senegal, far ahead of other African nations. Their presence also sparked resentment among the locals. There were protests demanding the government protect its citizens from the Chinese emigrants.

On a recent trip to Senegal, French stopped by a prestigious area known as Le Place. The buildings were French-era and were leftovers from French colonialism. French was appalled at the deterioration of the formerly elegant promenade. Vendors were waving underwear and other items at passersby in hopes of making sales. Cheap plastic jewelry was laid out on tarps on the sidewalk. Dakar was filled with youth, none of whom had the promise of a bright future.

It was French's belief that the influx of Chinese into Senegal had begun without much thought on either side if it might lead to trouble. But trouble or not, China was always urging African officials to relax immigration regulations. The United States was slow to catch onto the relationship between China and African nations. They had been warned as early as 2005 about the large-scale movement that was advancing Chinese business and influence. There were also concerns about the transport of Chinese organized crime into Africa including human trafficking and smuggling. American warnings to African leaders about the Chinese were tepid and ineffectual.

Analysis

Zambia is one of the countries focused on in this section. Zambia is the top producer of copper in Africa, a continent that has more copper deposits than any other country on earth. While China has made huge investments in Zambia, its actions serve its own agenda that includes a goal to increase future markets for Chinese exports.

The author portrays the anguish of African leaders who are at a loss on how to develop and profit their own natural resources which are abundant and rich and which no other country on earth can rival. Yet they rely on foreign investors and interests to develop



their land and assets. This point is a salient one because it gives at least one reason why the Chinese have been able to insert themselves into African cultures and economies so easily and effectively.

Senegal is also featured in this section. Author French describes how appalled he was to find the once charming area known as Le Places so deteriorated and how Chinese vendors are waving everything from plastic flowers to underwear at passersby in an effort to sell to them.

There are obvious upsides to Chinese investments in Africa like an increase in the middle class but it is important to know the downsides as well. The Chinese are stripping the natural resources from Africa for their own profit, degrading cultures that have existed for centuries and bringing in a new element of corruption including human trafficking.

Vocabulary

exuberance, vanguard, impeccable, counterintuitive, copious, vehement, gesticulating, metallurgy, euphemistic, undulating, ubiquity, terminus, prestigious, laissez-faire

Part Two: Chapters Four and Five

Summary

French had been to Liberia many times, first as a college student, then as a young journalist and later to cover the prolonged civil war in the 1990s. He had been evacuated from Monrovia on a U.S. Marines helicopter that launched from the lawn of the U.S. embassy after it had become unsafe for Americans to remain in the city.

French was on his way to visit a three-country subregion that was beset with unrest and violence. The region consisting of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea had been tightly linked since the Atlantic slave trade and the return of former slaves from America and Britain in the 19th century. Now they were linked by modern warfare.

The death toll in Liberia alone had been a quarter of a million in the 1990s and early 2000s. The three countries possessed rich supplies of largely untapped natural resources. Foreign interest grew in the country especially from the Chinese. Initially it was not clear how foreign investment would impact the poor people of the region. French predicts that the wealth of the African countries which is derived by its natural resources will be virtually stripped away from the Africans. These riches could be used to uplift the continent's nations and their people. As populations grow in Africa, natural resources are being depleting in tandem. Although most of the African nations are democracies, they are fragile and largely ineffective.

On the way to Monrovia, French noted the poverty-stricken settlements on the outskirts of the city to housing that was made from abandoned shipping containers located nearer to the city. The city itself was overcrowded and made remarkable by its squalor and wretchedness. Some of the signage on the buildings represented western interests including American missionaries. It was true that some were out to save the country but others were set on exploiting it. Liberia was the closest thing to a colony that America had. It was to be an example of a democratic and Christian nation in a continent of brutal dictatorship. The Liberians always held their relationship with the Americans as a special one. French did not see how the Chinese with all their enterprise and work ethic could turn it around.

French was surprised to see that electric power had improved since he'd last visited. Driving by taxi to the downtown area, he recalled the fighting that had gone on there and that he had witnessed close up. Corpses would be lined on the streets in the morning following a firefight the night before.

The last time French was in Gbarnga was when he interviewed the notorious warlord Charles Taylor. At the time Liberia had been separated by the war and the internationally recognized government in Monrovia had no impact beyond the city's borders.



French had a meeting scheduled at the Central Agricultural Research Institute where he would spend the night. The leader of the institute, Li Jinjun was from the Hunan province. He prefaced his remarks by saying that the institute had limited goals because the Liberians were unable to understand much. He felt unease about their religiosity and their extreme demonstrations of their faith. The Liberians expected the government to do everything for them. They wait for help instead of working. French didn't respond but thought of the 40 million Chinese who had died of starvation a half century before. It was history's largest famine. The training center would be supported by the Chinese for three years after which the Liberian government had to take over. The plans were for the center to train 300 farmers a year. Li rubbed it in that America had failed to transform the country.

On a tour of the grounds, there was a stop at Cuttington University where his father had worked in the 1980s when he helped built a health care system for the entire country. Cuttington was an agricultural school which the Chinese were tapping for resources and experts for their training program. They viewed the vast Chinese-built irrigation of dikes and canals on a flat farmland area. Li was very pessimistic about educating the Liberians because there was "nothing to work with." Li showed them a building that was constructed as a storage facility and resting place for workers. Right after it was built, it had been vandalized and stripped of toilet, plumbing and everything that could be taken. Li was angry at first but he understood. The people were starving and they depended on theft to survive.

The city of Conakry, Guinea, was crowded with vendors and polio victims begging for money. A year before there had been a military coup in Guinea with protestors being shot, stabbed and bludgeoned to death. In a meeting with the minister of cooperation Koutoub Moustapha Sano readily admitted that the Chinese were everywhere. China had recently given Guinea \$39 million to ameliorate their relationship. They didn't say they wanted anything in exchange for the grant but it was understood. The deal did not appear on government books. Sano did not approve of China's refusal to discuss human rights and democracy.

Analysis

French visits two impoverished countries that are both wrought with violence. He had been a correspondent during the wars in Liberia in the 1990s and 2000s during which 250,000 people perished. He describes the aftermath of the war that still impacts the economy and the people. He observed poverty-stricken settlements on the outskirts of Monrovia. The economy and poverty made Liberia prime targets for the Chinese. How could that country resist the packages that China offered it?

More impoverished communities are described in Guinea where he observes polio victims begging for money. Guinea is also a violent nation. Just the year before in a military coup, protestors were stabbed and bludgeoned to death. China had recently given Guinea \$39 million in an effort to secure a relationship with the nation.



Activists were skeptical of any deals with China because of their refusal to include a discussion of human rights and democracy in the negotiations.

China is notorious for its abuse of human rights on its own continent. Those who cared about the future of the African nations and their people were rightfully concerned that the Chinese wouldn't treat Africans any better than their own people once getting a foothold in the continent.

Vocabulary

litany, primordial, auspicious, hegemonic, religiosity, faux pas, palpable, verdant, polemic, suffused, bludgeon, bauxite, voracious, impunity, platitudes



Part Two: Chapter Six

Summary

French met with Kelvin Lewis, a local reporter in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He had met Lewis in the 1990s during the insurrection led by rebel leader Foday Sankoh. Since those days, Lewis had acquired his own newspaper. Sankoh had been sponsored by Charles Taylor, president of neighboring Liberia. Lewis filled French in on the final days of the war. The Chinese began coming in near the end of the war. They fixed the plundered city, and when the war ended they were ready for business.

The Lebanese had been the highest profile foreign influence in Sierra Leone since the 1890s. After the conflict in the 1990s, the Chinese came in with earth moving machinery and began winning contracts for road building. The goal of the Chinese was to recapture the collapsed mining industry with voluminous lodes of iron, rutile, titanium and other industrial metals. They were sought major mining concessions in exchange for building a new Sierra Leone. However, a Romanian named Frank Timis beat them to it. By 2008, Timis's company, African Minerals, had discovered some two billion tons of iron deposits. It was by far the largest iron deposit in the world.

Eventually, Timis formed some partnerships with several state-owned Chinese partners including Shandong Iron and Steel. There was speculation that the Chinese offered Sierra Leone's president \$150 million to take control of the iron lode.

French met with the young manager of the hotel where he was staying. Yang left China because of the pressures he felt after graduating from college. He first traveled to Zambia where he secured a supervisory position for a construction company. He then moved on to Sierra Leone where he was able to participate in several big construction projects. He was thinking about returning to China because the job market was getting more competitive in Sierra Leone. He placed the blame for the poor economy in the country on the Lebanese who had control of the markets for many decades and gouged consumers with exorbitant pricing.

French met with Joseph Rahall, the head of an NGO named Green Scenery. He explained to French that NGOs sprang up in the 1990s during the war. The brutality of the war was what drove the formation of these civil societies. After the war the NGOs focused on democracy and human rights. The erstwhile bright outlook for Sierra Leone faded among the NGOs when they recognized the almost impossible challenge of building a robust democracy in a poverty-stricken country. Rahall's NGO was currently pushing for new mining laws and improved education. The Chinese deal strictly with the government and discuss nothing with the citizens or the NGOs. However, the influx of Chinese money had created new opportunities for the people. The Chinese always looked out for their own best interests. Rahall also held the same sentiment as other African leaders that the people lacked experience and skills and that the government was weak that allowed corruption and manipulation by the Chinese.



In his meeting with Joseph E. Kamara, the head of Sierra Leone's Anti-Corruption Commission. He had prosecuted an increasing number of corruption cases against Lebanese and Chinese business operations. He had closely monitored new business transactions to make sure they were lawful.

Analysis

The Lebanese had basically colonized Sierra Leone for a century. They were able to gain their freedom after a war led by rebels in the 1990s. The Chinese saw the opportunity to insert themselves into the vulnerable country with promises of infrastructure and a goal of renovating the mining industry. Sierra Leone was rich in ore and minerals and China wanted to have a huge presence in its extraction and export.

Political activists who had advocated the development of a democracy finally had to face the impossibility of doing so given the poverty level of the country. They also felt that the state of affairs in Sierra Leone made the leaders of the country vulnerable to the giant-sized offers from China. There was also the fear that the weakness of the leaders would allow Chinese corruption to flourish.

The Chinese preferred to negotiate their deals in secret. After the discovery of a huge iron deposit, China was said to offer \$150 million to take control of the iron which would make them billions over the years.

Vocabulary

insurrection, estuary, nonplussed, tactile, indigenous



Part Two: Chapter Seven

Summary

Mali in northwest Africa was not rich in natural resources other than a medium-sized gold industry. Most assumed that China wouldn't be interested in Mali but they were proven wrong. The Chinese presence is huge in Mali. They built a large embassy in Bamako, the capital. Its companies were everywhere as were its people. China financed a gigantic bridge that crossed the Niger River which led to a new hospital complex also built by the Chinese. The U.S. supported Mali because it was an ideal democracy.

There was some arrest and violence led by an insurrection by rebel groups that imposed Islamic rule over the people. France intervened and help defeat the Islamists in the elections. Things settled down in Mali and Bamako became the fastest growing city in all of Africa with the fastest growing population with a healthy surge in the middle class. It was revealed that Mali was receiving between \$200 and \$500 million a year from China.

French contacted Liu Qi, the economics officer of the Chinese diplomatic mission to Mali. Liu was most interested in a "fair" presentation of Chinese-African relations and resented how their image was influenced by America and Europe on the international front. He claimed that China respected the sovereignty of the African nations and wanted to help them develop. He viewed their relationship as a win-win and tried to portray China as peaceful and non-confrontational. French next met with the head of the American aid mission to Mali, Jon Anderson. The Americans were suspicious of Chinese motives in Africa and their operations that were intentionally opaque.

French thought back only five years before when the Americans thought it was ludicrous to think that China could threaten its profile in Africa. Now it was being seen as the country with a powerful presence in Africa and one that could change the direction of the African nations. Africans were largely disappointed in America whose action never matched its rhetoric on important matters such as human rights, corruption and democracy. The speeches were inspiring but the sense was that America looked at Africa as an albatross around its neck.

Since the Battle of Mogadishu, Black Hawk down in Somalia and the genocide in Rwanda it seemed to the Africans that the U.S.'s top concern was not be left holding the bag or taking the blame for Africa's many problems. Anderson explained that the U.S. aid mission was to help formerly tenured farmers gain the property rights to land they'd been working for years. But Mali was dragging its feet on implementing the program because these farmers were looked upon as peasants. While America was trying to get land titles for small farmers, China was building a \$230 water works facility that would connect to the farmland's irrigation system. America was playing small ball to China's large ball. The Malian government were seeking further investments from international concerns based on China's contribution to the farmland.



French spoke with another Chinese transplant, Liu Zhonghua the head of a large Chinese construction company and his wife who didn't want them to talk politics. Liu defended his homeland although French led him in a discussion of challenges that faced China including the rich-poor gap, corruption, aging population, social engineering and lack of focus on the environment, education and housing costs.

French took a ride to Ségou which was the gateway to the Delta where he saw a large Libyan tract of prime farmland, the first sign of growing interest in Delta land. He visited Gao Yi in a new sugar plant that was being constructed by the Chinese in the Delta. The plant was estimated to produce 100,000 tons of sugar per year.

Some of the Chinese that French interviewed were very critical of China whose leaders had been obsessed with revolution. Had they begun to focus much earlier on economic expansion, the country would have been much wealthier by now. Still others felt that Beijing pulled the strings about what Chinese citizens did in Africa and picked winners and losers among the companies that tried to make it there. The specter of corruption was always part of the conversation. Firms that provided kickbacks to Beijing were most likely to be successful. On the way to a village near the capital, French observed law enforcement officers extorting money from citizens. It was a sad reminder of just how badly the governments of African countries had let their people down.

French's driver pointed out a new hospital that the Chinese had built at no cost to Mali. In 1970, the Americans had built a big bridge over the Niger River which was named the John F. Kennedy Bridge. Two decades later, the Saudis built another bridge called the Fahd Bridge which crossed over to an administrative city built by Libya during Gaddafi's dictatorship. China's bridge eschewed grand names and just called their bridge The Friendship Bridge which would carry millions of people each year and would pass by the free hospital reminding them who their friend really was.

Analysis

The Chinese had a huge interest in Mali because of its rich farmland. China has a population of 3 billion people and needs to feed them. The Americans and other Western countries had become suspicious of China's involvement with Mali which was considered an ideal democracy fearing that it could be corrupted.

America had lost the confidence of many Africans. After being involved in some tragic events in Africa, the Americans seemed to back off. Maybe Africa was more trouble than it was worth. This allowed the door to open to China who eagerly stepped in. China was facing many problems at home including its aging population, overpopulation and lack of farmland. Farmland in Mali would mean a lot to them while the Americans didn't share the same concerns.

Mali had gone through some tough times of unrest and violence. China came in with a financial package that was hard to resist. The same pattern was repeated over and over again in China's dealings with the African nations that they wanted to insert themselves



in. They built sports stadiums, hospitals and bridges at no cost as visible symbols and reminders of their "friendship." They even named the expansive bridge they built over the Niger, "The Friendship Bridge."

Vocabulary

astutely, exemplary, opacity, mercenary, tendentious, entrepreneurial, proliferation, euphemism, indoctrinate, largess, ostentatious



Part Two: Chapter Eight

Summary

Ghana is a medium-sized country in West Africa and in 1957 was the first nation in the sub-Saharan country to win independence from Great Britain. Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah wanted to industrialize Ghana and in 1961 launching the development of huge public works projects including a massive dam over the Volta River in an effort to provide a steady supply of electricity to the populace. Nkrumah was criticized for the cost of the project but the Akosombo Dam was a huge success and still serves the public today.

Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 which launched 15 years of rule by conservatives and a corrupt military. The average incomes of the people declined by one-third during this era. Jerry Rawlings seized power in the 1980s and eventually gave way to democratic rule. Ghana is the most consistently democratic nation in Africa and has a flourishing economy that has been growing at 5% annually.

Edward Brown of the African Center for Economic Transformation saw Ghana as the best positioned nation to take advantage of its natural resources and of the eagerness of China to get involved in their economy because of its strong democratic government, growing middle class and wealth of highly educated professionals. According to Kwadwo Tutu, a senior economist at the Institute of Economic Affairs, Ghana had placed too much focus on infrastructure when the focus should have been on agriculture. They were extracting more minerals and receiving only a pittance for them. The West was guilty of this exploitation along with the Chinese. Ghana largely remained the passive party to deals with partners make it vulnerable to predators.

Ghanaians saw the Chinese as duplicitous. They came to their country declaring one purpose and then drifted off into other areas after settling there. Many Chinese were corrupt and used bribery to get their way. Ghana had hit a sweet spot. It was a strong democracy with money flowing into its coffers. The population was dominated by a young and vital demographic that was sophisticated and educated and capable. Despite all the good signs, there was skepticism among some scholars who worried about the country's lack of good leaders.

China's biggest project in Ghana was the rebuilding of the Bui Dam. The Chinese construction company tasked with the project was working completely under the radar. It would not communicate with Richard Twum, a grass roots activist who had questions about the project. After French made repeated calls to the company himself, he was unable to get a return call. Ghana government officials had tried to sell the reconstruction of the dam as a opening up and developing the interior of the country. Despite the Chinese company's lack of cooperation, Twum and other activists were making a difference thanks in large part to the country's democracy. French had also noted progress in Senegal and Zambia due to their budding democracies. Twum saw to



it that environmental safeguards were put in place during the construction. Americans were focused on stopping the spread of AIDS, limiting family size and sleeping under mosquito nets while China was focused on flashy projects like football stadiums and ultimately in making money.

On the way back, French and his driver ran into poorly constructed roads that had been flooded and easily washed out. Local road builders lost contracts to Chinese road building companies that made big promises but built cheap and poorly constructed roadways. Sections of roads that the Chinese companies built were breaking up just weeks after completion. The Chinese have to meet local standards around the world. But they take advantage of the low standards in Africa. Having poor roads or no roads has prevented the country from developing its agricultural industry and improving its economy.

Samuel Inokye a senior policy officer of the Association of Ghana Industries and a Chinese national pointed out that the Ghanaians were slow at building roads and that their workers didn't want to work hard. French responded that Chinese employers gave African workers only menial jobs and did not place them in positions of responsibility. Inokye responded that Ghanaians were not skilled workers and that they frequently stole from Chinese employers. Not surprisingly, Inokye put all the blame for the bad roads that they built on Ghanaian lack of maintenance and planning, claiming that the Chinese built only quality roads.

French met with Kofi Bentil and Franklin Cudjoe founders of the Ghanaian think tank called IMANI. They were young and full of energy and well-educated and determined to make a difference. They were focused on urging the government to ask more questions about their dealings with China which has a strategy while Ghana does not. They are concerned with the future when their natural resources will be depleted.

Just before leaving Ghana, French got together with Albert Osei a Ghanaian national who was not worried about China because they needed what Ghana had – its natural resources. He believed that the individual countries should not deal with China independently; rather, they should deal with them collectively as Africans.

Analysis

Ghana is the strongest democracy in all of Africa. The Chinese had a more difficult time in their dealings with the Ghanaians who were suspect of the Chinese and their offers of financial assistance. The populace consists of a higher percentage of educated and sophisticated people than many of the other nations and therefore are more demanding of their government and the partnerships they enter into.

While China was looking for the best deal for themselves, American aid was focused on fighting AIDS and other diseases and birth control. There is evidence in helping to build Ghana's infrastructure that their road building was substandard which could be attributed to their cutting corners to save money and increase profits.



Problems continue to surface about the treatment of African workers by Chinese employers. Some activists feel that Africa would have more leverage in their dealings with the Chinese if they dealt with them as an entire continent not just as individual nations.

Vocabulary

nascent, ardent, technocrat, tranche, ebullient, impeccably, perambulating



Part Three: Chapter Nine

Summary

French visited Dar es Salaam in Tanzania where the Chinese presence had grown since the last time he was there. He was astounded by the number of Chinese vendors on the street hawking cheap products like plastic flowers and knock-offs of superior products. Tamimyu Salehe, the Tanzanian Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers, told French that petty commerce was being taken over by the Chinese. It was puzzling why the Tanzanians gave so much space to the Chinese. Salehe believed the Tanzanian government was being paid by the Chinese to tread lightly on them. Tanzanian workers were warned by the Chinese that they'd be fired if they joined a union.

French decided to return to Mozambique since it seemed to be a main focus of the Chinese, the Bangladeshis and even the country's former imperial ruler, Portugal. French was focused on the northern part of the country where the poorest of the poor lived. Ironically, his visit coincided with reports about the economic devastation of the region by the Chinese. Chinese operators were accused of bribery and smuggling illegal resources.

By allowing the Chinese and others to plunder the land, the governments of Mozambique and other African nations were adopting the tenets of rentier capitalism. There was a struggle over dominance of the Nacala Corridor that joined Nacala the deepest natural port in East Africa and the Tete Province in western Mozambique. The corridor also gave access to the sea for Zambia and Malawi. The Chinese lost out on the first attempt to control the mining industry to a Brazilian company. The government apparently made it up to China by opening up many other opportunities for them. Joao Pereira, a former journalist who began the director of an NGO told French that the Chinese had been a disaster on the environment. They mow down trees – big and small – with no replanting. Land management was in crisis mode in Mozambique with selloffs run by corrupt officials. The Chinese were smuggling raw timber which baffled everyone. The impact on the forests had to be controlled or else they'd be devastated. Corruption ran the gambit from high ranking officials down to watchmen. There were efforts being made to strengthen the property rights for native citizens. In 30 years, the old-growth forests would be all but gone.

According to the Chinese attaché in Mozambique, trade between China and Africa had grown from \$1 billion in 2004 to \$7 billion in 2011. He boasted about the signature stadiums and convention centers that the Chinese had built. He claimed it meant a lot to the poor people. The land is agriculturally rich yet the people can't feed themselves. Their needs are few and what they need they are given. The Chinese are in a hurry to work and earn money. They thought of Africans as childlike and talentless.



The Chinese ambassador Huang Songfu contacted French to meet with him. He boasted about the quality of Chinese work and how they kept their promises to get projects completed. French remained silent but recalled a recent fatal accident on the high-speed railway in China and the many complaints about the quality of Chinese workmanship in Africa. He complained about the peasants in the country that didn't understand business. He added that blacks don't know how to do anything. He stressed that they offered training in every field. They were trying to teach the Mozambicans that they could not only feed themselves but sell their food abroad. Songfu was defensive when asked about the timber industry. He claimed that they followed all local laws.

French flew to Nampula that had been a showcase town built by the Portuguese. He met with Calisto Ribeiro, a local activist, who told him that although there weren't many Chinese there yet their presence was felt. Europeans will still be responsible for the majority of land grabs. He lamented that things were out of control and that the exploitation of the land was irreversible. Mozambique was flourishing as a country, yet it was doing little for educating the people on how to hold onto their land and resources.

French met with Chen Jun the head of the associate of Chinese residents in Nampula. He was from a long line of immigrants. He was into shipping and exporting and his best product was fish. He wanted his son to go to America where it is free and laws are clear. He echoed the sentiments of most of the Chinese that French had talks to. The blacks didn't have any qualifications and have no money. He had been robbed several times in a wave of attacks against the Chinese. French was invited to attend a wedding of a family member. Chen confided in French that the young Chinese people born and raised there were a new generation for the Chinese. They had never known hardship and had never eaten better. Delicious sea food including lobster and shrimp was served at the wedding feast. French asked about over-fishing. Chen responded that there were no worries. There was enough to last 50 to 100 years. French asked about training the Mozambicans in the fishing industry. Chen hired mainly Chinese workers. He could train the Mozambicans but it would be a slow process. Chen repeated the Chinese propaganda that their presence in Africa was a win-win.

Analysis

Having spent so much time in African, French is able to readily see the decline in many areas including in Tanzania. The Tanzanians seemed to have given up too much space for the Chinese to infiltrate their cultural centers.

The question of labor unions arises in this chapter. The Chinese, always concerned about their profit give little thought to the workers, especially the African workers. In Tanzania they are warned that if they join a union they would be fired.

Mozambique and other African countries are essentially adopting the practices of rentier capitalism. Instead of developing their own land and resources, they are allowing outsiders to do so. They are also allowing these interlopers to deplete their natural resources and greatly profit from them.



No matter what country French visited during his tour of the continent, racism is an issue. The Chinese resent the blacks and feel that are unskilled and unable to work hard or of being successful.

Vocabulary

depredations, paradox, rhetoric, paternalism, reciprocated

Part Three: Chapter Ten

Summary

French was the first American that Hou Zuecheng met with in Namibia. In his own words he had been a real nobody in China. Now in Africa he was a rich man. Hou and his Chinese workers boasted that they were hard working and earned their success. Namibia was largely a desert and only sparsely populated. However, there were at least 10,000 Chinese residents, the largest number in all the other nations. Most of the Chinese workers wanted to return to China and were in Africa merely to make money. There were no social or emotional ties. Chou claimed that it was the white people, the smallest minority in Africa, who hated the Chinese and influenced the blacks to dislike them as well. The Chinese were a good fit for Namibia. They had an old saying that said to leap forward in empty spaces. Empty spaces were there to be filled up.

They drove to Katutura which was a poverty stricken area of flimsy shacks with zinc roofs that dotted the hills as far as the eye could see. French was surprised to see the relatively large number of beauty salons in the downtown area. The owners of these shops were the newest residents of the city. Hou took French to his farm. A Namibian man oversaw the farm. A Chinese overseer would have cost him 3,000 a month while the native man only cost 1,000. The black man was “competent.” Next they drove to the hillside shacks and to a gated off piece of land that was still unplanted. Hou was renovating the villa for her personal use. But it had been robbed of everything that wasn’t nailed down which delayed its completion. Hou didn’t want to live in China because most everyone he knew could not afford a car.

At dinner that night, Hou told French that he thought Namibia would develop one day but that the native Namibians wouldn’t share in the success because it hadn’t happened for them all this time. He would never return to China where everyone was always watched and the Communist Party always pressed for more and more money.

French was joined by his brother, Jamie who flew in from Johannesburg. They drove to the border with Angola where a small community of Chinese in Oshikango was doing big business servicing Angola’s corrupt oil-rich southern border with everything from household supplies to heavy trucks and machinery. These Chinese transplants generally refused to speak with any outsiders. They met with Taara Shaanika, CEO of Namibia’s Chamber of Commerce. Shaanika bluntly told French that China was there to stay. There was no way they could be avoided. They were a major player in Africa’s economy. He believed that China’s goal was to dominate Namibia through trade relations. He resented their cannibalizing local arts and crafts trade and blatantly stealing local designs and carvings. There was anger when China received visas for opening up beauty salons. Dragon City near the border was nearly 100% Chinese. This bothered Shaanika because they’d already had apartheid.



They drove to Oshikango where the Chinese influence was undeniable. French met the dean of the Chinese community of Oshikango, Chen Qinping who handed French a business card that read simply, "Chairman." He had been a manager at a manufacturing plant in Shanghai and never had enough money to buy a house. That's when he decided to try his luck in Africa. He boasted about how many businesses he had established in Namibia. He worried about the new flock of Chinese that were coming into Namibia who were lower class. When asked if crime was a big problem he said that all Africans are thieves.

French pointed out that European influence had whetted the appetite of Africans for new ways and ware centuries before. Colonialism followed with the introduction of Western religion coupled with the increasing number of Europeans who lived in Africa. There was also a show of force from the West that solidified its influence. China protests that it is colonizing Africa but the Africans that French spoke to did not agree.

They visited Swakopmund a coastal resort area originally established by the Germans. As they drove toward the resort, cars filled with whites were leaving after a long weekend. Apartheid was over but French noted the separation of races throughout his travels.

Justina Jonas a labor union activist believed that African workers employed by the Chinese were the most exploited workers in Namibia. He cited wages and conditions as both being subpar. He felt the government should monitor the treatment of its people by the Chinese more closely. However, the government repeatedly favored the Chinese in any labor dispute. In March 2011, 500 Namibian construction workers walked off the job protesting pay and conditions. The law did not allow an employer to terminate striking employees however the government deemed the strike illegal and allowed the company to fire all the workers. After huge protests, the government reversed the decision and reinstated all the workers. It was a sign that things may have been changing in favor of Africans.

Analysis

Namibia is the last stop on the author's trek. There are more stories of Chinese success, racism and exploitation. Activists feel that the Chinese have nefarious plans to dominate the country through trade relations. There was resentment among the people that the Chinese were stepping beyond the perimeters of business and industry into their cultures. Chinese were stealing the designs of local artifacts and creating cheap knock-offs of them thus squeezing Namibians out of the small commerce market.

Namibia was experiencing labor disputes and were let down by their government who sided with the Chinese. The promise of money and gifts and even bribes obviously go a long way in Namibia. The government in many cases deserted their own people in favor of the Chinese who were apparently in the wrong.



China denies that it is in the process of colonizing Africa but many skeptics believe they are doing just that.

The world needs to focus much more attention on what is going on between China and Africa. If the trends continue, China may soon be in control of two continents and literally billions of people. It would be a force that the world has never seen and one that would cast a long shadow on everyone else.

Vocabulary

assiduous, indigenous, interlocutor, impenetrable, apartheid, dissonance, vehemently, myriad, ostracizing



Important People

Li Jiong

French stayed at a Liberian hotel owned by a man named Li Jiong. Li insisted that the U.S. still controlled Liberia although French strongly disagreed. Li claimed that Americans were in every element of the government. The U.S. had made the mistake of giving Liberia money which ultimately was wasted. China learned from that and focused on building things that had enduring value.

Li held the belief like many of his fellow countrymen that most people are born as equals but it took “nuli” or hard work to succeed in life. His destiny or “yuan fen” was to get rich in Africa which was only made possible by his nuli. Li believed that the people in charge in Liberia were failures as evidenced by the nation’s 80% unemployment rate. He attributed this failure to the country’s leaders begging the U.S. and Europe and the World Bank for money when they should have been inviting people to invest in the country in order to produce products and provide jobs.

French noted that Li, like other Chinese businessmen, had staffs that were comprised of mainly Chinese workers. American countries had tried but failed in the past to establish successful enterprises in the country that would benefit the Liberians. Li felt it was a mistake for the Liberians not to exploit their lush woods. To create wealth a country had to tap its natural resources.

French asked if Li’s wife liked it in Liberia. His response was that she had no choice. Li, like most of his peers, were interested only in material advancement; it trumped any other consideration. Li had inspirations to get into timber trade but a small operator could not afford the heavy equipment it would take to harvest the forests. Li had immigrated to Africa because China was already developed and too competitive for real success.

Paulus Mulunga

Although most Africans had nothing positive to say about the Chinese and their “invasion” into the nations of Africa, there were some fans which author Howard French gave equal voice to when he encountered them.

Paulus Mulunga studied in China at the University of Geosciences at Beijing. He was a bright, good-looking young man whose charm helped him secure a Chinese-funded scholarship to the prestigious university. Despite the harsh criticism that he had heard about China for virtually his entire life, he wanted to see firsthand why the Chinese economy had a 10% growth rate. He wanted to learn what was behind this level of success.



Getting past initial racist stares and comments, Mulunga enjoyed his stay in China. He made friends and had a good time. He returned to Namibia with a positive outlook on his country's relationship with China. He felt that it was crucial that Africans understand Chinese culture in order to achieve an improved relationship. He did concede that the Chinese were crafty and tricky but their flaws were balanced out by their positive intentions.

Mulunga believed that overall the relationship benefited Namibia due to an improved infrastructure and China's investment in modern advancements for the country. Of course, the Chinese always wanted something in return but that was not unexpected or unusual. Mulunga felt that they had a better chance of benefiting from their relationship with the Chinese than they had with the Afrikaners. There was hope for a brighter future with the help of the Chinese; everyone else had left them for dead.

Hao Shengli

Hao Shengli had uprooted himself from his native China and moved to Mozambique, Africa, to farm. Hao at first struggled with the language barrier. He remained isolated not even trusting his fellow countrymen who he believed to be "bad" people who were corrupt and criminal. Ironically, Hao was from the Henan province of China which was notorious for its corruption and dishonest people. Hao was able to purchase a large piece of land for what was a real steal. He had brought some of his children to Africa. He expected his sons to procreate with African women so that he could secure his property through "sexual colonization." He felt that Chinese success in Africa depended on having lots of kids who could fill jobs at every level. He envisioned one day having complete control of a vast operation with grandchildren performing every necessary task.

Admira

Hao Shengli was sexually involved with one of his young daughter's friends who was named Admira. French met the young girl who was unfriendly and stone-faced. He knew that she was being abused and exploited and that there was little hope for a young girl like Admira in an uncaring society. When French got the chance he pressed a small amount of money into Admira's hand which brought a smile to her otherwise somber countenance.

Chen Rui

Chen Rui was a Henan native who ran a karaoke bar called the Dynasty Bar. She was 26 and had landed in Dakar alone at the age of 18 mainly due to the lack of opportunity for her in China. There were gaps in Chen's story and French suspected she had been trafficked into Dakar. Another young woman, Wang Fei, was a masseuse who was paying off her sponsor so she could return to China. Chen was ready to return to China, too, but her boss fell sick and she was given the opportunity to run the business. Chen



thought of returning to China some day. Chen found the summers in Dakar oppressively hot with the many power outages and no air conditioning or fan.

Zhang Yun

French met with Zhang Yun in a metallurgy plant in Thiès. Zhang was a successful businessman in several different fields. He came to prefer hiring Chinese individuals rather than Africans. Zhang relied on engineers and experts from his homeland to establish and maintain his ventures. He saw Africa as a robust source of opportunities and a place where lots of money could be made. He was condescending to the small-time Chinese traders and merchants in Dakar. He felt Africans were on a par with them and should be able to compete in the same markets although they were highly competitive. But Zhang in his lofty position was far removed from the gritty world of small trade. Zhang was heavily into construction in Senegal and had purchased a large piece of prime real estate for his personal residence. The Senegalese resented Zhang's involvement and success in construction. He attributed his success to good time and hard work.

President Abdoulaye Wade

President Abdoulaye Wade had a knack for approving the wrong construction project for Senegal. The Dakar Renaissance Monument was a 160-foot-tall Stalinesque statue that featured a man, woman and child looking hopeful toward the sky. The locals hated the statue and considered it a royal waste of time and money. It was through Wade's construction failures that Zhang Yun was able to launch a construction business after winning the rights to one of Wade's disasters. The citizens were irate over Wade's incompetence and bad judgment and voted him out. The first act of the new administration was to cancel construction of a football stadium; the poor country had many more urgent needs.

Hu Renzhong

Hu Renzhong had come to Zambia from the Chinese province of Jiangxi at 22 years of age. He began as a common laborer but ultimately was able to establish his own business and struck it rich raising chickens. His profits allowed him to purchase a huge farm where he enjoyed great success and financial reward. He and his family lived on a fabulous mansion on the grounds of his farm.

Yang Bohe

French visited Yang Bohe who ran a large copper-processing plant. He was tough and savvy having grown up during China's Cultural Revolution. For his newly formed company, Tianfen, Yang hired a Chinese engineer to direct construction. Yang was forced to spend a few years back in China but during his time there he longed to return



to his plant in Zambia. After getting start-up capital from an Australian investor, Bohe returned to Africa and made a fortune in copper.

Yang outlasted small inept Chinese operators who tried to make fast profits in copper. After the boom there was a bust which drove out the small concerns. The plant in Ndola was a large and impressive operation. Yang also had two smelting plants in the Congo which was where the ore originated from.

Tiawan Gongloe

Tiawan Gongloe was a human rights activist. He had bright hopes of the future. The Liberian government was better than it had been in decades. People felt safe to voice their opinions. There was hope in Liberia. French offered a dissenting voice. He heard that the government had become corrupt and unresponsive to its people. Gongloe had welcomed the Chinese to Liberia because they were willing to invest their money in the country. The Chinese were appreciated by the people because they made positive changes and kept their promises. Gongloe denied that the Chinese finagled worker permits to bring in more Chinese.

Tiébilé Dramé

Tiébilé Dramé was a political activist and human rights advocate. He was one of the most sophisticated and well-informed people that French had met in his many years in Africa. He complained that Mali had no policy regarding the Arab world even though they bordered it. They also had no official policy regarding the Far East despite the fact there were many dealings with the Chinese. Dramé believed that China's true interest in Mali was in its vast farmlands.

Farily Boly

Farily Boly was a rice farmer in Molodo and was a legendary figure. He had been a gifted and talented young man with great interest in the socio-political front. He didn't finish college but instead became a farmer who loved the land and didn't read a newspaper for a decade. He eventually became leader of the Agricultural Workers Union. He said the Chinese were patient and waiting for the right moment to exploit their position in the Delta. Boly explained the unique quality of the Delta that had drawn such intense focus from the Chinese. In the entire world there were very few stretches of arable farmland that could thrive with a gravity-fed irrigation system. The Delta in Mali was a jewel, comparable to the Nile River Valley. A jewel was something that should be kept and protected. But this was Mali and Malians were willing to sell it off.



Nana Koho Wuo

Nana Koho Wuo was the local king of Sunyani, a regional capital of Ghana. It was common for local leaders like Wuo to shortchange their own people in deals with foreign interests. But Wuo was a college-educated man who was truly concerned about protecting his people. He and Richard Twum, a local activist, had seen to it that there was a plan in place to relocate people who would lose their homes in the upcoming construction of a new dam. Wuo was disappointed that the government did not build a new city as had been promised. He also complained about the Chinese hiring largely Chinese workers and that the people would get only a one-time payment from profits from the dam instead of multi-year payments that would provide security for future generations.

Kauko Nishikaku

Kauko Nishikaku was an electrical engineer for one of the big mining companies and was a hectoring critic of the Chinese. Kauko was a member of the small group of professional blacks in Namibia. He was disturbed by the increasing presence of the Chinese and by their business practices. He blamed the government for selling out to the Chinese. By their lap-dog relationship with the Chinese, the Namibian government had destroyed small and medium native business operations. Kauko resented that deals with the Chinese included the schooling of the children of Namibian officials in China. The government portrayed the impact of the Chinese as positive for everyone but terms were always favorable to the Chinese. The claim that China was not exploiting Africa or its people was laughable to Kauko.



Objects/Places

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)

In the past decade, China has aggressively pursued interests in Africa and made huge investments in most of its nations. By doing so, it was wresting control of the Dark Continent from the more passive West. This trend was based on the establishment several decades before of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). In 1996 in an unheard of attempt at reaching out, China's head of state, Jiang Zemin, made an official state visit to six African countries. In a speech at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Jiang proposed the FOCAC to facilitate the partnership between China and the African nations in which they had become a presence with a goal of adding additional African nations to the partnership.

Mozambican Wars

What was referred to as the "liberation war" was fought in every town and village of Mozambique during the 1960s and 1970s. The Portuguese who had colonized the country treated the people like their slaves. Mozambicans had no rights and lived at the mercy of the Portuguese. Once Mozambique earned its freedom from the Portuguese, a bloody struggle took place between the socialist party that had taken over the government and rebels from apartheid regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa. After five years of fighting, the second and final round of this conflict ended in 1992. These wars were considered the bloodiest and most brutal of modern Africa.

Kapiri Mposhi

During the British rule of Zambia, rail had been brought to the world's largest copper reserve. Kapiri Mposhi was the gateway to Zambia's copper belt. In 1895, an American explorer named Frederick Russell Burham discovered found the copper deposits and reported to the British South Africa Company that his discovery was the richest copper field in the entire world. Contrary to what most Chinese inferred about blacks more than one hundred years later, he observed that the Zambians were successfully mining the ore and that they possessed the necessary skills to do so. Burham was said to have been the inspiration for Indian Jones who was the featured character in several Hollywood blockbusters.

Cultural Revolution

China's Cultural Revolution began in the mid-1960s and lasted for a decade. It was a socio-political movement established by Mao Zedong with the purpose of preserving Communist ideology within the political structure of the country. Several of the Chinese businessmen who French interviewed had been part of the revolution or had at least



endured it and felt they had become stronger because of it. They attributed their ability to work hard and be successful to that experience.

Chambisi Copper Mine

In 1997, the Zambian government privatized the country's copper industry which had formerly been government-run. China had already become a powerful force in Zambia's economy. Once the privatization was enacted, China pounced on the opportunity fully understanding the potential profits to be made from global copper sales. The first takeover of a Zambian copper processing plant was in the city of Chambishi that was located on the Congo border. The China Nonferrous Metal Mining Company, which was owned by the Chinese government, bought the Chambishi Copper Mine which was one the crown jewel in the Zambian economy for only \$20 million.

Rentier Capitalism

Many of the African nations that were budding democracies but still had a way to go before achieving robust democracies were becoming nations that existed under what is referred to as "rentier capitalism." This term refers to a sovereign nation like the various countries in Africa that basically rents out its resources to foreign concerns and lives off the financial packages received for these resources rather than developing these resources themselves and succeeding off those revenues.

Eaten Bitter

"Eaten bitter" was a comment that French heard quite a bit in his conversations with Chinese transplants in Africa. The Chinese were proud of their work ethic which they attributed to hard times or as they referred to it, they had "eaten bitter" and were made stronger and better workers because of harsh times. Many of the Chinese were quick to say that African workers had not "eaten bitter" and therefore did not have the gravitas and character to be dedicated and hard working employees.

Comatex

French visited Comatex, a Chinese textile factory that had been built in the 1970s. After making a splash with the construction of stadiums and bridges around the country, China overwhelmed small industries with cheaply priced Chinese imports. The textile industry was one of these victims. Jia Jinwen, the company's chief engineer, insisted that the textile produced in Africa could not compete in the Chinese market which produced textiles at a lower cost.

The Mali textile production industry held an advantage over its Chinese counterpart because of its central location which facilitated faster delivery than factories in mainland China could provide. Jia Jinwen did not train Mali workers how to run his factory



because he didn't trust them. By keeping these workers untrained in such skills, Comatex was contributing nothing toward lifting the status of the Malian people.

The Delta

The Delta is located in the northern reaches of Mali and is surrounded by what is considered the most arable farmland in the world and one that uniquely thrived from the inexpensive irrigation system controlled by gravity. The Delta was comparable to the rich valley in the Nile River.

The Delta became an intense focus of the Chinese for two reasons. First, China had a lot of people to feed and hardly any indigenous farmland to satisfy that need. Secondly, the lush farmland promised to lure Chinese farmers to immigrate to Mali thus relieving the motherland of some of its populace. By controlling the fertile farmlands of the Delta, China could be elevated to a major food producer which would increase its power and influence on a global basis – not to mention its profits. He said the Chinese were patient and waiting for the right moment to exploit their position in the Delta. The Malian people should have developed this rich land themselves but instead were selling it off. China waited for the right moment to exploit its influence there.

The Bridges of the Niger

In 1970 in the midst of the Cold War, the U.S. built an expansive bridge across the Niger in Niamey, Niger's capital. It was named the John F. Kennedy Bridge. Two decades after that, the Saudis gifted Africa with another bridge across the Niger which they, like the Americans, named after one of their legendary leaders, King Fahd. At the foot of the King Fahd Bridge, General Gaddafi of Libya constructed what was termed an administrative city that consisted of two hotels and other structures. It was named for Gaddafi. Subsequently, the Chinese always seeking to stand out and beat the West at its own game, built a fabulous Niger bridge in a blatant attempt to achieve an advantage through soft power. Instead of naming the bridge after one of their leaders, they cleverly named the bridge with what was in essence a message from China to Africa: The Friendship Bridge. Not by accident, the bridge passed right by a new hospital complex also built by the Chinese that would serve as a reminder to the Africans as to who their friend really was.

Themes

Racism

Many of the Chinese employers in Africa displayed biases and prejudice against the indigenous people of Africa. Most did not want to hire African workers preferring to recruit their labor force from their homeland. Hao Shengli pointed out that Chinese projects that fail in Africa do so because Chinese officials do not know how to adequately communicate with blacks. French noted a racial bias in Hao and was to find this common thread among the majority of Chinese transplants that he interviewed.

Jin Hui and her younger brother who were from Hong Kong were traveling to Monrovia where Jin would reunite with her boyfriend. She ridiculed the fact that everything was closed on Sundays in Africa. A lot of money was made on Sundays in Hong Kong. The spiritual practices were very important to the people of Liberia, a custom which was disparaged by many of the transplanted Chinese. Another Chinese immigrant claimed that blacks only did what they are supposed to do when they were watched. If not being monitored, blacks do whatever they want.

Some Chinese displayed what could only be termed as a phobia about black people. French observed a Chinese man in a restaurant who refused to eat food that was a favorite dish of black people. A doctor who ran a clinic told French that he didn't hire black workers because he thought they were dirty, lazy, stole from their employers and his white patients refused to be treated by blacks.

Most employers felt that black people were largely inept because they had not been raised in the modern world. Some Chinese employers claimed to be afraid of blacks and believed they were in danger and were targets of angry blacks.

Chinese Business Enterprises and the African Workforce

One theme that emerges in "China's Second Continent" is the disturbing impact that the Chinese often had on the people of the various African nations. The Chinese did not seem to lose any sleep over what the people thought of them. They were often blatant about their dislike of Africans and it showed in their treatment of them and their refusal to hire them.

Africa had been exploited before the Chinese came along. It possessed 60% of the world's uncultivated land and was a natural draw for emigrant farmers. The purported abundance of land was misleading because of the growing indigenous population that would soon demand access to the majority of it. One reason for the economic woes of Mozambique was it had been under the colonial power of Portugal which dictated the prices and profits of its exports. Portugal, a poor country, was able to do little to improve



the economy of Mozambique. As time passed, the country saw economic advancement through the enterprise of its own people and initially from the influx of Chinese money and business. China's business with Africa was growing by 20% year over year.

China was notorious for building flashy structures that signaled their commitment to African nations. It was common for China to finance the building of \$60 million soccer stadiums that ironically were built among poverty stricken areas with starving people who had no hope.

Li Jicai was the unofficial leader of the Chinese in Senegal and boasted that the Chinese were in every sector of Senegal business. People from Henan had established themselves in Senegal as the largest Chinese presence. One of the biggest draws in Senegal for Chinese employers was that laborers were allowed to stay beyond their contracts if they were involved in a big construction project like the building of a stadium. This law allowed them to hire Chinese workers because Chinese employers generally preferred not to hire local Senegalese. Their communications about how successful they were drew more people from the homeland. Li convinced his brother and sister-in-law to make the move to Africa.

Aziz Diop, head of the national civil society was concerned about Guinea dependence on China and that China was not interested in democracy or human rights. The Chinese would make deals with the junta without blinking an eye. He also didn't like the lack of transparency that the Chinese preferred in conducting their business and making deals. There was a growing resentment in the way that the Chinese was exploiting African resources, dumping cheap goods on the people and importing labor. The pleas of Guinea officials urging China to change its approaches were ignored.

By mid-century 2000 it was estimated that the population of Africans would grow to two billion and a billion Chinese. China will be in the catbird seat with its own huge population and wealth and its semi-colonization of African and the control of all its rich natural resources. The Chinese were ready to strike for quick profit without stopping to consider the suffering, needs and struggles of the indigenous people.

Why China?

Why did China focus so voraciously and consistently on interests in Africa? There were a number of reasons – some obvious and some more opaque and subtle.

Mali farmland had in the past been sold to foreign interests but due to protestations, the government for a time stopped issuing new land titles. Many were sounding the alarm about a possible take-over of Mali by the Chinese. China was in dire need of food and farmland. Although it represented 20% of the world's population, it only had 9% of its farmland. Africa has 60% of arable farmland. Oddly the Chinese often rented back to the Malians the farmland that they had purchased. America seemed disinterested in developing Mali or in actuality any other African nation. Mali's draw for all foreign interests including the U.S. and China was its rich and seemingly endless farmland.



China had a more urgent need than other countries with its overpopulation problem, sparse farmlands and high unemployment.

Gao Yi told French that the reason the Chinese had become such a presence in Africa was because the Americans and Europeans couldn't do the hard work. The Chinese are willing to "eat bitter" although they would like to live like Westerners. Chinese people were forced to seek opportunities in other countries because of overpopulation. French believed that one of the reasons that China began "invading" Africa was because it was easy to be a stakeholder in uncontested territory. Chinese workers were coming to Africa by the tens of thousands. The former Chinese ambassador explained that China's attraction to Africa was simply because there was so much room to grow. For whatever reason, a new Chinese empire was in the making.

Since it is estimated that by mid-century 2011, there will be one billion Chinese nationals who have emigrated to Africa and hundreds of thousands of Chinese businesses on the Continent, their presence and influence there should not be taken lightly by the West. China currently has a population of 3 billion on its mainland. Coupling that number with the estimated population in Africa which would roughly represent 25% of Africa's population, the image of a powerful global force emerges. China has already demonstrated its ability to bribe and bully and essentially ride roughshod over African governments. With the sheer numbers that China would have at its disposal, it may be tempting to try to spread its power and idealism beyond just two continents.

China's Financial Strategy

China worked its way into the graces of the governments of the African nations with gifts, promises, sweet deals and cash. Given the poverty and hopelessness that existed in the nations of Africa, China was persistent in pursuing their interests in Africa at any cost. They knew in the long term that they would profit greatly from their ventures and investments in the Dark Continent and would never experience a serious financial loss. The African rulers were desperate in finding solutions for the poverty, illness and devastation that their countries faced and the shiny objects that China held out were too tempting to resist. Unfortunately, the rulers did not always use their gifts to help those who most needed it.

China offered a huge package deal including loans and investments and infrastructure-for-resources exchanges in order to exploit the natural resources that Africa held in its rich soil and the promise it presented in its fertile field all of which was largely untapped. There was the rich farmland of Mali and the gold, cocoa and oil of Ghana. The richest copper field in the world was in Zambia. Each African country had unique stores of natural resources that the Chinese knew would yield them power, influences and wealth beyond the imagination.

China was not a benevolent partner. They sold their packages that a top priority was the lifting up of African nations – their people and their economies. However, early on there



was the hint of tarnish upon the golden deals that they offered up to African leaders. The west had growing suspicions that China was positioning African nations to fall behind on loan repayments which would set the stage for huge African indebtedness and a new era of Chinese imperialism.

Ghana's president, John Atta Mills, had signed on to a memorandum of understanding for a \$13 billion loan from China that promised to transform Ghana and its people. The loan was later downgraded to \$3 billion. There was nowhere else that Ghana would get that kind of money and get it so easily. Many had been dubious of the loan because of its lack of scrutiny for risk and its submission for proper assessment by experts and scholars. The ramifications of such a huge economic deal were unknown. Many economic experts saw China's business activities as generally self-serving and were repulsed when China tried to portray their country as a peer, a member of the developing world.

China had invested \$6 billion in the Congo in a resources-for-infrastructure deal. It would provide new roads and railway lines along with housing and hospitals in exchange for supplies of copper and cobalt for the next 20 years. Despite the big price tag, experts concluded that Africa was vastly underselling its assets. Guinea's resources rivaled that of the Congo. The Chinese had tried to make a similar deal there but the Chinese wanted to keep such a deal private and out of the eyes of critics. Skeptics concluded that African leaders were lazy and that detailed agreements were too complicated for them to comprehend. They signed up for the money and the flashy chotskies.

At one point it was known that China had invested in the neighborhood of \$70 billion in Africa. The return on investment is an unknown but the Chinese never made a deal unless they knew that they would profit from it and generally profit from it in a big way.

Mistreatment of Workers

While China was bringing industry, investment and ostensibly opportunity to Africa, a schism existed and grew between Chinese employers and African workers. In large part, the Chinese bosses preferred to import their workers from China. They considered them more reliable, highly skilled and more trustworthy when compared to African laborers who most Chinese believed to be averse to hard work, unskilled and known to steal from their employers. In many cases, there were two standards for workers. Chinese employers paid Chinese workers at a higher rate and provided safety equipment for them that often was not made available to African workers. Unfortunately, the African governments, who were in receipt of literally millions of dollars from China, were not strong supporters of their own people and often sided with Chinese employees during labor and safety disputes.

Zambia was ahead of the rest of Africa in terms of its economic opportunities and influx of Chinese nationals. However, it was also the first country to have to deal with huge labor disputes and unrest and resentment among the locals for low pay and poor



working conditions. China's push into Africa coincided with a radical transformation of Zambia's political world. Early on, there were many problems between Chinese employers and their Zambian workers. In one incident, a blast at a Chinese explosives factory killed 50 Zambian workers while Chinese management ran for cover offering no warning or assistance to their employees. There was dissatisfaction leading up to this incident. Afterwards, Zambian anger at the Chinese was at a boiling point. The Zambian government promised an investigation but they were more concerned with their relationship with the Chinese and an investigation never happened.

Workers in the city of Chambishi held a protest over wages and conditions with violence ultimately breaking out. Chinese employees wounded a number of Zambian protestors with shotgun blasts. Once again, the Zambian government did not support their own people. Michael Sata, a political activist, waged a campaign for the presidency by exploiting anti-Chinese sentiment. He lost after the Chinese countered his claims about them by threatening that Zambia would suffer financially if Sata won. Sata lost the election and two years later lost again. When French met with Sata in 2009, he expressed his concern that there were too many Chinese emigrants and that Zambians suffering from their presence would only increase and corruption would grow within the Zambian government.

Locals complained that many of the workers in Chinese businesses were brought in from China, thus preventing them from securing jobs. There was speculation that some of the Chinese workers were sprung from Chinese prisons to work for Chinese nationals in Africa. Using Chinese workers prevented locals from learning new skills and advancing. The Chinese workers were more skilled but also more costly and could only stay short periods of time. Zambian workers made on the average \$300 per month. However, in weighing the pros and cons of hiring Chinese versus African workers, Chinese employees usually decided in favor of their fellow countrymen.

In a Zambian copper plant that French visited, the air was thick with particles from the smelting process. French covered his nose and mouth with his t-shirt to block out the debris. He noticed that none of Yang's workers had any protection from the polluted air even though they worked in it for long hours each day.

Jia Jinwen an executive with Comatex Textile did not trust Malians to run his factory. By keeping the locals virtually untrained in the skills necessary to run a factory or a line in a factory, companies like Comatex were contributing nothing toward elevating a new native Mali culture which was apparently the way the invading Chinese wanted to keep it.



Styles

Structure

“China’s Second Continent” by Howard W. French is separated into three main parts: Part I, Manifest Destiny which contains three chapters that highlight issues between China and Mozambique, Zambia and Senegal; Part II, The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea which has five chapters and covers China and its relationships with Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Ghana; and, Part III, Happy Family, has two chapters which focus on issues with Tanzania and Namibia. The relationships that the Chinese interlopers have with African people are similar among the various African nations covered in this anthology of interviews and observations; however, what distinguishes the countries are the rich natural resources that are unique to each of them.

Included at the front of the book is a map of Africa with insets of the nations that were focused upon in the book. The Introduction provides an overview of the history of China’s relationships with African countries. In an epilogue French warns of the chance of Chinese imperialism rearing its ugly head based on the aggression they displayed in the pursuit of its interest in Africa and the breathtakingly rapid advancements that China has made into the economies and cultures of the continent. He warns of the possible ramifications of this blatant power grab by the Chinese.

French provides an Acknowledgments section along with a Notes section in which he lists his resources and references. There is also an Index for easy reference.

Perspective

“China’s Second Continent – How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa” by Howard W. French is a non-fiction look at the influx of Chinese emigrants and influence in the nations of modern-day Africa. The story is told in the first person by the author who is part of the story. He chronicles his recent extended trip to Africa in which he sought to learn if China is shining a light on the Dark Continent. His observations and the many conversations and interviews that he had with Chinese nationals in Africa as well as native Africans are at the heart of the story.

French is a prize-winning journalist who was the New York Times bureau chief in Shanghai and in West and Central Africa. His background and experience make him uniquely qualified to provide an unbiased and knowledgeable account of the growing Chinese influence in African nations and the reactions that Africans have to China’s growing presence in their homelands.

It is obvious that French had built up a rolodex of many important contacts that he was able tap for this in-depth update on the relationship between China and the nations of Africa. These contacts coupled with his fluency in multiple languages and his many years of reporting, enables French to provide a penetrating look into how Chinese

influence is impacting the governments and the ordinary people of the African nations that some say are being exploited by the Chinese.

Tone

“China's Second Continent” by Howard W. French is written in a straight-forward manner that is clear despite the intense level of detail involved in this account of China's relationship with the nations of Africa and the topics that the author covers which are unfamiliar to most readers. French is a prize winning journalist and had served as the bureau chief in both Shanghai and West and Central Africa. He therefore provides a largely unbiased accounting of the news gathering and interviews he has had with various Chinese and African people in compiling the data for his book. His knowledge about Africa shines through the pages and is an asset to the retelling of his conversations and observations.

Having lived and worked in Africa for an extended period of time, French has personal connections and memories about the Dark Continent. His feelings about Africa and his attachment to the people and places there comes through in some elements of the book. Although he interviews what could be termed as both sides of the issue – Chinese and Africans – only a slight bias toward the African viewpoint can be detected.

It was an emotional time for French during the time he wrote the book. His brother joined him on part of his trek through Africa. He mentions that it was a time of healing for both of them because they had recently lost their mother. French is a reporter but a human first and it's a perfectly human reaction to have feelings for a place that had been part of one's life.



Quotes

I'd never dealt with African people before. At first just coming in contact with them made me feel uncomfortable, their skin is so black. But once you're in contact with them you begin to get used to it. You realize it's just a color.

-- Hao Shengli (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 17)

Importance: Howard French picked up on Hao's racist views of Africans. He saw the same mindset among many of the Chinese emigrants he made contact with.

As China scaled up its presence on the continent, more and more Africans were working for its companies, and in the Copper Belt, where the newcomers were particularly thick on the ground, Chinese bosses had developed a reputation for rough and dangerous conditions, low pay and punishing hours.

-- Author (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 25)

Importance: Zambia was ahead of the rest of the country in terms of economic opportunities; however, Chinese employers were unfair to their workers. The other African nations would eventually catch up on both fronts.

Africa, I believe, is embarking upon an era of sharp divergences in which China will play a huge role in specific national outcomes – for better and for worse, perhaps even dramatically, depending on the country.

-- Author (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 93)

Importance: This statement captures the heart of French's theory that Africa's future will be greatly influenced by outside interests. The current trends indicate that the biggest player in this role will be China.

There seemed to be a seediness about the place you couldn't get to the same extent elsewhere.

-- Graham Greene (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 95)

Importance: Author Graham Greene spent a lot of time in Liberia and wrote about the profound effect of the city that had lasting impact on him.

I shared with them the population projections demographers were making for the continent, that there would be twice as many Africans by mid-century as there were today. With two billion Africans, including vastly more people who will have attained middle-class status or better, and over a billion Chinese, whose lives will be more affluent, much more globalized and deeply involved in every corner of the world, it was possible to imagine an unfolding relationship between China and Africa as one of the most important in the worlds.

-- Author (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 114)

Importance: This comment captures the potential impact that the China-Africa



relationship can have on the word. It also underscores that the Chinese will fare better than the native Africans. If this relationship trend continues, China will become the world's biggest superpower by far.

A favorite tactic of his soldiers involved amputating the hands and feet of villagers in order to spread terror through the countryside, causing peasants to flee and allowing his forces to occupy the land and plunder its diamond fields and other riches.

-- Author (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 128)

Importance: Leader of the insurrection in the 1990s led by rebel leader Foday Sankoh had a unique way of getting his way. People were terrified of this depraved man who was supported by equally brutal Charles Taylor, president of Liberia.

I hope that you will inject a new realism into the discussion about China and Africa because the international community is still controlled by the Europeans and Americans, and they are having a lot of difficulty adjusting to the new realities of globalization.

-- Liu Qi (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 149)

Importance: Liu Qi was the economics officer of the Chinese diplomatic effort in Mali. He was a strident, blunt individual who wanted to elevate the stature of China on the international front. China had been slowly taking a firm grasp on Africa's business operations and wanted credit for its power grab.

Most Western people probably have the wrong idea about life in China. They think that whatever you do, the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] is following you around, ready to arrest you. It's like our ideas about America. We think everybody has a gun in their pocket, and there's danger everywhere.

-- Gao Yi (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 171)

Importance: Gao Yi, a Chinese national, directing the construction of a new sugar plant in the Delta in Mali describes a simple view that the Chinese and U.S. have of each other. He is intimating that both descriptions are hyperbolic.

China saw an urgent need to secure its food supply into the future. It had a nearly endless supply of people, eager for a better life. Before long, it will have the world's largest economy. And it has a deep civilizational patience, a belief in planning and engineering on the largest of scales. What else would it take?

-- Author (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 172)

Importance: The author offers a theory on why China was interested in Mali, one African country that was not rich in minerals and ore. What Mali did have was vast and rich farmland which was capable of growing enough food to secure China's needs into the future.

Our problem is not your environment. Your environment is a question for your future, not mine. Talk to me about money. I came here to make money and I have brought money to your country.



-- Chinese Timber Co. Executive (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 217)

Importance: This quote captures the disregard that Chinese companies had for the environment in the African nations that they embedded themselves in. They were only worried about making money and were not subtle about it.

China has too much money, with all those American dollars we are holding. There's so much money that they don't know what to do with it.

-- Chen Qingping (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 248)

Importance: This quote is referring to the glut of money that China had allowed them to invest in Africa and offer them so many incentives and even out-and-out cash gifts that enabled Chinese companies to operate without intervention from the government.

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that help us together and we have fallen apart.

-- Okonokwo (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 249)

Importance: The above is a quote from "Things Fall Apart" by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. The book's hero, Okonokwo, is expressing the underlying resentment that Africans have for the West and the white man who tore African tribes apart with the stealth weaponry of religion.



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

What status did Hao Shengli claim his children would have once he moved them to Mozambique? What unusual plan did he have for securing control of his land that involved his son, and what did he feel was central to success for him in Africa?

Topic 2

What signs of Western influence did author Howard French notice in Zambia? What positive impact did Chinese investment and influence apparently have on the people of Zambia?

Topic 3

The United States was said to be slow to recognize the growing influence of China in Africa. Describe what threats would be presented by the African continent being largely controlled by China. Specifically, what impact would such a eventuality have on the United States?

Topic 4

What draws China and other foreign nations to Africa? What threat does the over-immigration of foreigners into China hold for the future of Africa? What mistake do African nations make about their natural resources?

Topic 5

What was Li Jinjun's view of Liberian workers? Why was Li's storage shelter vandalized? Describe how poverty drives crime.

Topic 6

What is the role of an NGO in a society? Why were NGOs founded in Sierra Leone in the 1990s? What progress did the NGO named Green Scenery make?



Topic 7

What incidents in Africa left the U.S. wanting to distance itself from Africa and why? What program was Jon Anderson, head of the U.S. aid mission, trying to implement in Mali? Describe the project that China had begun in Mali farmland at the same time?

Topic 8

What issues did Ghanaians have with Chinese immigrants running businesses within their borders? Explain why Ghana was able to stand up more successfully to Chinese pressures and demands.

Topic 9

What is “rentier capitalism” and how is it applicable to the accounts contained in this book? What were the ramifications for African nations as a result of this type of governance?

Topic 10

Why was the large population of Chinese in Dragon City considered a threat by some Africans? What is apartheid and is it a current threat to African nations because of the influx of Chinese influence and population?