
Red Money: Nigerian money spraying, music, and aspirations in China

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Abstract (in French and English)

Recently, African presence in China has attracted considerable scholarly and media attention. While researchers have provided significant insights about the political economy of trade, they have largely neglected other cultural practices. Over the last five years, a thriving trans-African music scene has emerged in the southern city of Guangzhou. During some performances, members of the audience ‘spray’ popular singers with 100 RMB notes (15). In this paper, I examine the re-articulation of this and other cultural practices in contemporary China as an entry point to discuss wider historical and cultural undercurrents connecting African (mainly Nigerian) traditions and artistic practices with the globalisation of Chinese and African economies. I argue that highlighting the interconnectedness of these undercurrents is critical not only to make better sense of the entrepreneurial drives and aspirations behind African presence in China, but also to interrogate what are the real possibilities and futures opened up by narratives such as the ‘Chinese Dream’ and the ‘New Silk Road’. In short, this paper aims to shed some light on how (and to what extent) African presence in China (and Nigerian renminbi spraying in particular) signals important transformations in the contemporary (and future) articulation of material, discursive and imagined Sino-African cultural and economic spaces. I believe that by looking deeper at these spaces (and practices) we could open up new ways to engage existing epistemologies and offer hope (and tools) to go beyond the spaces of imperialism and political economy that so pervade the Africa-China conversations.

Keywords: China, Africa

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