
Building a Chinese "Imagined Community" in Ghana: Institutionalizing Chinese-ness for Better Localness

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Abstract (in French and English)

The notion of a Chinese community in Ghana is problematic, because whether such a community exists and what it is composed of are arguable. Certainly, "natural" factors like period of arrival, length of Ghanaian experience, and social and professional backgrounds have contributed to a heterogeneous and segmented Chinese group. However, what really alienate Chinese from other Chinese in Ghana are fierce competition, unhealthy business practices between Chinese companies, distrust, experiences of cheating, and rumors circulating among Chinese. Nevertheless, one cannot say that a Chinese community is absent in Ghana, as it does exist, at least in "imaginary" both externally by the media and the hosting society and internally by the Chinese themselves.

In recent years, established and localized Chinese private entrepreneurs and Chinese state-owned enterprises (CSOEs) directors in Ghana actively create institutions like Chinese associations and norms for building a socially superior and socially responsible "Chinese community" to be viewed both internally and externally. While other Chinese, like private traders, have attempted to do the same, they have not been able to obtain the blessings of the Chinese Embassy to Ghana. It is primarily the localized CSOEs directors and successful entrepreneurs who belong to the same social class, are engaged by the Chinese Embassy to take leading roles in institutionalizing a "good" Chinese community. This paper will focus how such "Chinese community" in Ghana is a class-based group rather than a shared (Chinese) ethnicity representation. Building a "Chinese community" in Ghana is instrumentalized by the Chinese Embassy for Chinese image improvement and control at local level, as well as by the established Chinese entrepreneurs and CSOEs expats for enhancing their own local business development and network.

Keywords: Chine, Afrique, China, Africa

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