

## Chinese Entrepreneurial Networks in Ghana

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This past summer, I did pre-dissertation fieldwork in Ghana to investigate four sets of related issues about the Chinese entrepreneurship. Most of my data was collected in Accra and Tema.

First, I investigated the types of current Chinese businesses that are based in Accra and Tema. These include general trade, fishing, manufacturing, food services, construction, mining and various others. Recent years of stable economic and political conditions have drawn an increasing number of Chinese to seek business ventures in Ghana. However, not all Chinese businesses have success stories to tell. The most common concerns are the formal regulations for setting up businesses and adapting to Ghanaian culture and society.

The variations in Chinese

entrepreneurs' knowledge of African history and culture, experience with formal businesses procedures, language skills, and interaction with Ghanaian networks have different effects on their businesses. Some were able to blend in to some extent, but many more found it extremely hard to rely on themselves to cope with the economic, cultural, legal, religious, and political aspects of a society that are quite different from China's.

This points to another objective of my work, which is to identify networks among Chinese entrepreneurs. Specifically, I paid close attention to the



interactions among members of the Ghana Central China Chamber of Commerce. Established by five Chinese entrepreneurs, this Accra-based organization is the most active informal business organization of Chinese entrepreneurs in Ghana. Through online interactions and regular activities, many members were facilitated in overcoming difficulties to some extent. The website and instant messenger discussion group serves as an online platform where Chinese entrepreneurs can find up-to-date information about specific policies and share their own experiences of dealing with relevant officials. The organization also holds lecture series on immigration policies, tax regulations, and so on.

The third part concerns the influences of Chinese investments on Ghana's social and economic spheres. On one side, Chinese businesses have made many manufactured goods more affordable to Ghanaians and contributed to technology diffusion in some sectors. From the Ghanaian side, some entrepreneurs have called for more government regulation of Chinese counterparts in the retail sector to stem competition. From the point of view of network analysis, I am interested in how Chinese entrepreneurs have contributed to Ghana's development through interactions with their Ghanaian counterparts.

Many Chinese entrepreneurs are not familiar with Ghanaian culture and society at all. This has resulted in misunderstandings and even prejudices. Some Chinese entrepreneurs I have interviewed have expressed a negative view on some Ghanaian employees. I am also interested in how Chinese entrepreneurs perceive Ghanaian culture and behavior during their direct contact with ordinary Ghanaians along with the impressions of Ghanaians about the Chinese. I hope to collect more data about this on my next research trip.

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