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"Being Chinese" in Madagascar

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ABSTRACT

This PhD dissertation explores how the meaning of "being Chinese" is culturally and socially constructed in northern Madagascar, focusing on identity-shaping encounters between Mandarin-speaking Chinese and Malagasy people in three particular contexts: 1) a sugar plantation managed by a Chinese stated-owned corporation; 2) networks of Chinese and Malagasy private businessmen who enable the movement of cheap Chinese commodities from Guangzhou, China to northern Madagascar; and 3) the classrooms of the Confucius Institute - a worldwide educational project sponsored by the Chinese government aiming to promote Chinese language and culture. The dissertation provides an ethnographic account of Chinese-Malagasy encounters by discussing a number of prominent themes: the perceived homogeneity and actual heterogeneity of Chinese people in Madagascar, the influence of particular constructions of gender on intimate relationships between Chinese and Malagasy people, Chinese-Malagasy encounters mediated by global commodity chains and the selective representation of Chinese culture in the classes and events sponsored by the Confucius Institute. By juxtaposing the three contexts, this dissertation strives to bridge the growing literature on China-Africa encounters with broader discussions of Africa in the postcolonial world that has long been dominated by the dual protagonists of the "West" and Africa. The main argument is that all three contexts of Chinese-Malagasy encounters demonstrate the features of discontinuity, unpredictability, exclusiveness and disconnectedness entailed in Africa's participation in the contemporary world order. Although Chinese-led projects bring certain benefits to Malagasy communities, Chinese stakeholders in Africa are reinforcing and perpetuating the power hierarchy of a postcolonial world that systematically disadvantages underdeveloped countries such as Madagascar. The frictions in Chinese-Malagasy encounters are caused by different and unequal ways in which Chinese and Malagasy people are aspiring for better lives.

Keywords

Encounters, Globalization, Sugar Plantation, made-in-China Commodities, Confucius Institute, Gender and Morality, China-Africa, Madagascar

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My intellectual journey to conduct research in Madagascar started from a meeting with Dr. Andrew Walsh when I was just about to finish my master's degree at the University of Western Ontario in Canada. Before I realized how fast the first year of my doctoral program had elapsed, I was on a flight to the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo with my supervisor Andrew as the teaching assistant of his field course offered to senior undergraduate students majoring in Anthropology in the summer of 2015. It was my first trip to Madagascar, also to Africa, and I stayed 3 months in the city of Antsiranana and its surrounding areas. When we arrived, we were stuck in the seemingly endless and chaotic waiting lines at the customs of Ivato Airport after two long intercontinental flights. I still vividly remember the question that Andrew asked me while I was blankly staring at moths throwing themselves on the dim and shimmering lights in the waiting hall – "Mingyuan, are you a patient person?" It was only until after I completed my 11-month PhD fieldwork in September 2017 that I fully understood the implications of Andrew's question.

In October 2018, the completion of my PhD dissertation was largely celebrated as an individual achievement with a joyful picture of me holding a "goblet of knowledge" posted on my social media timelines. However, I owe my greatest and deepest gratitude to those who have gone out of their way to help me fill that goblet with knowledge, or beer, symbolically. Firstly, my sincere thanks go to all Malagasy and Chinese participants in this research. It is their kindness and trust that has allowed me to conduct this kind of anthropological research – long-term in time span, inquisitive and intrusive by nature. I must thank them for including me in their transnational and intercultural experiences in various Malagasy-Chinese encounters by sharing their stories, worldviews, emotions, and sometimes the most private aspects of their lives.

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It has been more than one year since I came back from Madagascar. My experience there feels like a blurry yet vivid dream. But all the people I have met, all the roads I have travelled, and all the stories I have experienced, have become an inseparable part of me. *Misaotra, aminy magnaraka koa*!

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INTRODUCTION – "*Sinoa*": "Being Chinese" in Madagascar

Since the turn of the 21st century, China's intensive engagement in Africa and its effects have come under local and global scrutiny. The Chinese government's foreign policy has sought to incentivize domestic firms to look for business overseas (Landry 2018), and, as a result, more Chinese firms have sought out and invested in contracts abroad, many in Africa. China's direct investment in Africa grew at an annual rate of 20.5% between 2009 and 2012 (China Africa Research Initiative 2017a) and China is now ranked as the fourth largest investor in Africa in 2017 after the US, the UK, and France (TRALAC 2017). China-Africa trade, worth less than 1 billion USD in 2000, surged to over 50 billion USD by 2006 (Alden 2007:8), and by 2009, China had surpassed the United States as Africa's top trading partner (Joseph 2015).

China's intensifying engagement in Africa has been termed many things by journalists and social scientists, of which some are clearly critical and others more congenial. Many journalists describe the participation of China as a global superpower in the competition for geopolitical and economic influence as a part of a "new scramble for Africa" (Heydarian 2015, Poplak 2016, Adam 2018). French (2014) refers to China's engagement in Africa as "building a new empire" on "China's second continent." Similar claims representing China's increasing presence in Africa as "neo-imperialism" or "neo-colonialism" can be easily found in Western media as many argue that the Chinese government gains tremendous political leverage by seeking control in the financial, real estate, and resource management sectors of many African countries (see for example Su 2017). These various interpretations come from macro-level analyses of China-Africa encounters that tend to adopt state-centred approaches and to emphasize the geopolitical, economic, and historical issues at play in the relationships between the two interconnected regions. One little considered outcome of China-Africa encounters, however, has been how associated global flows of people, capital, and commodities have contributed to the cultural and social construction of "being Chinese" as a socially meaningful semantic category in the discourses and imaginaries of Chinese guests and African hosts. As Brautigam (2009) argues, "the Chinese" are many things in Africa: touring presidents delivering grand promises for partnership, companies building roads and telecommunication infrastructure, factory managers demanding long hours of work,

traders bringing relatively cheap commodities to new markets, and vocational teachers and youth volunteers driven by a sense of curiosity, adventure and a spirit for helping the poor (2009:310), to give just a few examples. In this dissertation, I intend to explore the social and cultural connotations of "being Chinese" in Madagascar specifically, the commonalities among different Chinese-led projects in this Indian Ocean island nation, and the distinctive dynamics of the Chinese-Malagasy encounters they involve. The research on which this work is based focused especially on the social dimensions of encounters between Mandarin-speaking Chinese and Malagasy people in three particular northern Malagasy contexts: 1) a sugar plantation managed by a Chinese state-owned corporation in Anjava, Sakaimarobe; 2) networks of Chinese and Malagasy private businessmen who enable the movement of cheap Chinese commodities from Guangzhou, China to Tsaramiverina, Madagascar; and 3) the classrooms of the Confucius Institute – a worldwide educational project sponsored by the Chinese government aiming to promote Chinese language and culture in Tsaramiverina.[1]

[1] Anjava, Sakaimarobe, and Tsaramiverina are pseudonyms.

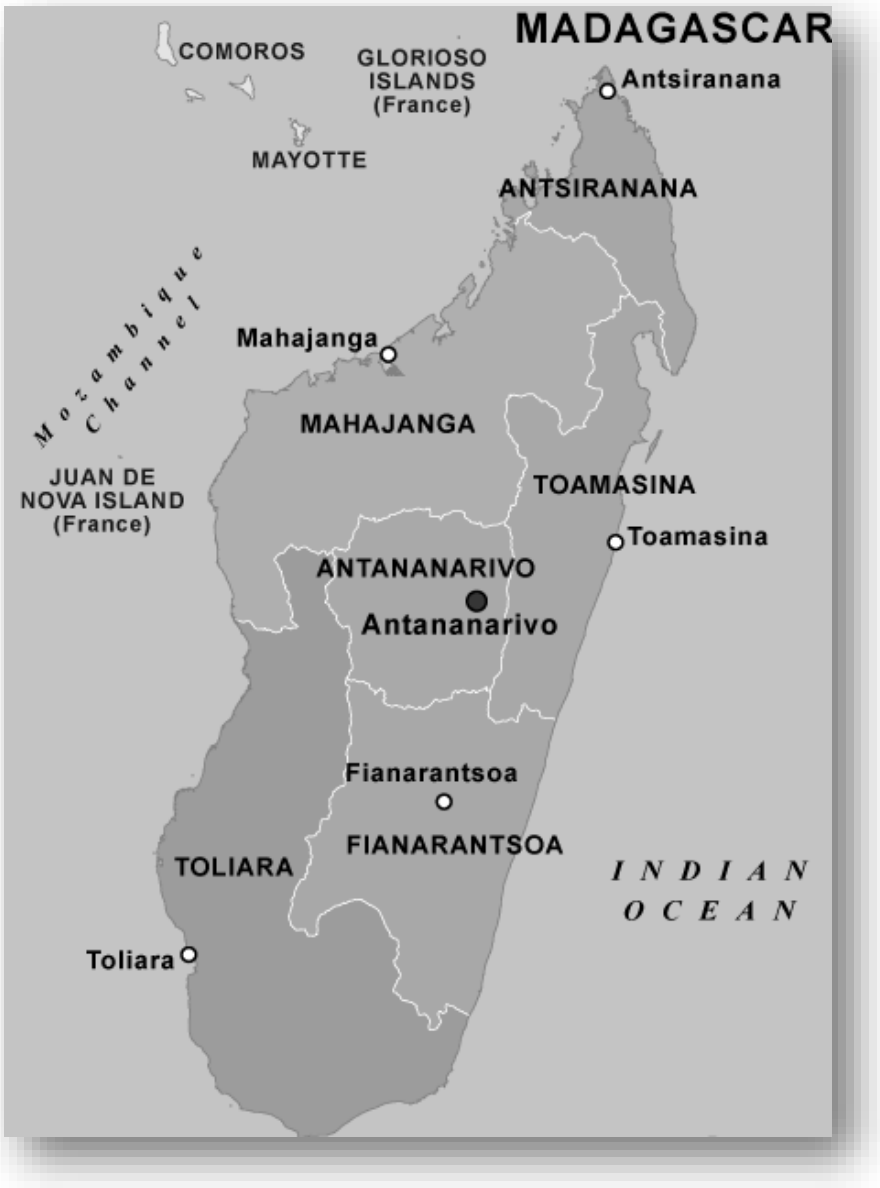

Figure 1 Map of Madagascar

Although any of these three research contexts might have been the sole focus of my attention, there are empirical and practical reasons for juxtaposing them as I do here. Empirically, this approach allows me to consider local manifestations of three major global projects that China is currently undertaking in Africa – 1) agriculture and infrastructure investment by state-owned corporations, 2) the trade in commodities involving private businesses, and 3) state-sponsored educational programs – as a way of developing as holistic a picture as possible of the effects of Chinese influence in

Madagascar, for Chinese and Malagasy people alike. All three contexts feature Chinese-Malagasy encounters that demonstrate the discontinuity, unpredictability, exclusiveness and disconnectedness entailed in Africa's participation in the contemporary global order (Ferguson 2006).

On a more practical level, I quickly understood from my earliest fieldwork experiences that it would be impossible to separate the three contexts on which I focus. Although Chinese people involved in the three contexts do not work in the same domain, their social circles in Madagascar overlap. Although common ethnicity, "being Chinese," ties them together, and they take up many opportunities for formal and informal social interactions, one of the most interesting features of this community is its heterogeneous makeup. In some cases, people from very different socio-economic backgrounds in domestic Chinese society cross one another's paths in Madagascar in ways they never would have done in China. In others, Chinese people who work for state-owned corporations and in private businesses in Madagascar may be relatives, colleagues, or acquaintances from the same hometown.

The Cultural Construction of "Being Chinese"

Anthropologists have long challenged the notion of "race" by arguing that it is a socially constructed concept. Many further unsettle the idea of "culture" by resisting use of the term out of concern for how it can reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes, or how, as Ortner (1995) has pointed out, it can foster assumptions of timelessness, homogeneity, and uncontested sharedness (1995:180) in the people we study. Abu-Lughod (1991) warns against the incautious use of "culture" since it is an essential tool for distinguishing "self" and "other." Racial categories and perceived cultural differences remain pervasive and powerful in many societies, however. In Madagascar, for example, one only needs to learn the language to develop an appreciation of the continuing relevance of the ethnic/racial category of *"sinoa."*

In the regional dialect widely spoken in the north of the island, many things are categorized as "Chinese" – or *chinois/sinoa*[2]. Such linguistic phenomena reflect a broader

[2] Madagascar has two official languages – Malagasy and French. The official Malagasy is based on the dialect of the Merina people traditionally from the central highlands. However, many other regional dialects of the Malagasy

picture of how Malagasy people have selectively constructed the meaning of Chinese people, things, and culture from encounters with people of Chinese descent since the end of the 19th century. For instance, almost every Malagasy restaurant and street vendor serves *soupe chinoise* (Chinese soup*)* – instant noodle soup sometimes boiled with chicken, shrimp or mixed vegetables and *riz cantonais* (Cantonese rice) – stir-fried rice with turmeric, green beans and carrots; after their meals, customers may even ask for *dessert chinois* (Chinese dessert, meaning a toothpick). Rambutan, locally referred as *litchi chinois* (Chinese litchi), are packed and sold in cone straw-woven baskets. *Telefony chinois* (Chinese telephone) generally means a telephone of poor quality. *Lokin'i chinois* (Chinese cooking) means cooking with many ingredients mixed together and without concern for food taboos (*fady*), alluding to a widespread stereotype in Madagascar that Chinese people eat everything. *Mason'i chinois* (Chinese eye) is customarily used to describe small but perceptive eyes, whose meaning is closely related to a Malagasy proverb "*maso-tsokina masom-boalavo, izay kely anana no ahiratra*," meaning that "although people do not always have everything they want, they should still be happy about what they already have." The list is long, and I confess that I was just as puzzled as some of my Malagasy friends about what is especially "Chinese" about *mofo chinois* (Chinese bread), *pomme chinois* (Chinese apple) and *gavon'i chinois* (Chinese guava).

As many scholars have argued, ethnicity and identity in Madagascar retains fluidity and saliency in which "incorporating tendencies are at least as strong as demarcating ones" (Lambek and Walsh 1997:309). For example, as Lambek and Walsh argue, the identity of *Antankarana* people is established "less by ascriptive categories than by means of commitment to a certain historical narrative" (1997:308). In Astuti's work (1995) on the identity of *Vezo* people, she also highlights "inclusion" as a key process of becoming *Vezo* by arguing that *Vezo-ness* is a way of doing that people perform instead of a state of being which people are born into (1995:16). Chinese people in Madagascar have long been recognized as an ethnic minority group since the early waves of Chinese migration in the 19th century. However, the boundaries of Chinese ethnicity are also blurry and flexible. For Malagasy people, the vocabulary "*sinoa*", when

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language can be very different from the official Malagasy. In the following content of this dissertation, I use "Malagasy language" to refer to the regional dialect of the Antankarana people in the north of the island.

used to refer to people, is a vernacular category that implies an ambiguous ethnic identity different from, and maybe between, "white westerners" (commonly called "*vazaha*" in Madagascar) and "the Malagasy" (*gasy*). Sometimes, the Chinese are loosely included in the category of "*vazaha*," partly due to their light-colored skin (Bloch 1971:31) Nevertheless, Malagasy people are well aware of the differences between "*sinoa*" and "*vazaha*" – as people often told me, Chinese have "narrow eyes" (*kirko maso*) and "soft silky hair" (*malemy fagneva*) and Europeans have "red ears" (*mena sofigny*) and hazel eyes (*gara maso*). "*Sinoa*" is also the term used to refer to Malagasy people of partial Chinese ancestry. Many Malagasy people mentioned to me that their relatives or friends are "*sinoa*" because they have a great grandfather who was Chinese. However, the term "*sinoa*" does not distinguish between the longstanding Cantonese-speaking Chinese community present in Madagascar and the newly arrived Mandarin-speaking Chinese on whom I mostly focus in this dissertation. As I will explain in Chapter 1, there are significant differences between these two Chinese communities in the contemporary demography of Madagascar in terms of their migration history, cultural and linguistic propensities and socio-economic status. As Bloch also points out, forms of ethnic labeling should also be linked to the historical and political processes in which they occur (2001). This dissertation is an effort to explore the new meaning of "*sinoa*" manifested in the historical continuity of Chinese-Malagasy encounters.

Vocabularies of racial categories such as "*vazaha*," "*sinoa*" and "gasy" are not only used to describe people, but also things. As Bloch argues, for example, "*vazaha*" means clever, crafty or "dangerously full of tricks," – "a quality which is typical of Europeans and which is more feared than admired" (1971:31). A thing is "*vazaha*" because it is remotely associated with foreigners. Similar examples can be found elsewhere in the world, as Bashkow (2006) argues in his study of the meaning of whiteness in Papua New Guinea, vernacular categories such as "European," "Westerner," or "American," constitute a powerful ideological force in the lives of people in Oceania. Stemming from racial stereotypes and ideas associated with "white people" and their objects, institutions, places and activities, the ideological power of race significantly influences local people's imaginings of social universes that incorporate diverse perspectives on education, time use, diet, architecture, morality, religion and economics

(2006:6-12). The arbitrariness, flexibility and context dependence of racial categories relevant to "being white in Papua New Guinea" also pertain to the focus of my study – "being Chinese in Madagascar." Malagasy people have formed widespread stereotypes (some positive, others negative) about how Chinese people behave, how Chinese commodities work, how Chinese languages sound, and how Chinese institutions function. By considering these stereotypes as they emerge through Chinese-Malagasy encounters in the contexts on which I focus in this thesis, my aim is to contribute something more than some might expect of a thesis concerning Chinese projects in Madagascar and the Chinese communities (in Madagascar and China) they involve. I hope my work will also be read and appreciated as a study of how Malagasy people understand, adapt to and sometimes resist the intensifying influence of Chinese projects in Madagascar.

The meaning of "being Chinese" must always be carefully contextualized in and outside of China. The "hegemonic production of Chineseness" (Ong 1996a:748) in Western discourse usually associates the concept with an essentialized, homogenous and univocal ethnic identity (Chow 1998). Within China, it is also a perplexing concept. Contemporary Chinese official discourse defines "Chineseness" in terms of "racial features, ancestral lineage, and linguistic proficiency" (Tao 2015). Oakes (2000) argues that different regions/provinces of China construct their unique identities by invoking ties to perceived "authentic" and "traditional" Chinese culture that is claimed to have been lost in China's rush toward Western-oriented modernization. Different from the discursive meanings of "Chineseness" constructed in the West and within China, "Chineseness" has gained new sets of meanings in the encounters between China and Africa.

In one sense, and for Chinese people in particular, "being Chinese" in Madagascar carries associations with distinctive visions of development, modernity and global connectedness, some of which are clearly understood as alternatives to European visions of the same. In the following chapters, I describe how such visions are manifested in, for example, the organization of labour at a sugar plantation, public events put on by the Confucius Institute, and even the personal lives and intimate relationships of the Chinese people I met. At the same time, however, I offer glimpses of how Malagasy people are

making sense of what "being Chinese" means by considering their own, mostly very new, engagements with Chinese people, commodities, language and culture. For many Malagasy people, working for Chinese state-owned corporations is the only way to stay connected to cash income generated from global flows of capital; trading Chinese commodities becomes an incentive for international travel and a way to a prosperous livelihood; studying the Chinese language seems to offer another channel for upward mobility and to fulfil the yearning of young hearts to stay connected to the emerging global super power; and dating Chinese men appears to be a shortcut to a materially rich life.

Research Methods

This dissertation is based on a total of fourteen months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Madagascar and China between May 2015 and September 2017. I spent three months in northern Madagascar from May to August 2015 on a preliminary fieldwork trip. I returned in October 2016 and spent eleven months mainly based in Tsaramiverina where I lived in a room (with a bathroom and access to a shared kitchen) provided me by the regional university. There were not many long-term residents in this bungalow. During my stay, a French geography teacher was my neighbour for a month, two groups of British volunteers stayed for four days, and two Confucius Institute Chinese language instructors were my housemates for ten months. While living on campus, I worked as a volunteer English language instructor, teaching second and third year Malagasy undergraduate students. I also worked as a Chinese language tutor offering free private classes to Malagasy people interested in learning the language. Initially, I approached my teaching as the best way to give back and benefit the Malagasy community that had welcomed me. I soon realized, however, that these teaching opportunities benefited me as much as (if not more than) my students. My Malagasy students learning English from me started to teach me the Malagasy language and became an agreeable group to hang out with. Malagasy students learning Chinese from me, meanwhile, became key interlocutors in my research and introduced me to more people involved in various kinds of Chinese-Malagasy encounters, as those who were motivated to learn some Chinese were already working in public or private sectors

directly related to Chinese businesses. They saw learning Mandarin Chinese as a shortcut to career advancement.

In addition to living and teaching in the city of Tsaramiverina, I made several trips to Anjava, the sugar plantation where I conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews with both Chinese and Malagasy workers. The Chinese administrators kindly offered me a private room to stay in at the plantation compound and allowed me to eat three daily meals together with Chinese workers at the cafeteria for two weeks. Although the sugar plantation is in a rural area, the accommodations offered here were the most comfortable of all I stayed in during my fieldwork – the room was equipped with air conditioning, a hot shower, cable television, a mosquito net and consistent electricity and running water. It was a great favor and a nice gesture to me but, unfortunately, I could not stay longer than two weeks, since such accommodations are limited and are meant to be reserved only for people working for the company. I spent the rest of my time at the sugar plantation in a Malagasy friend's house less than ten minutes' drive from the sugar plantation offices.

During my fieldwork concerning the plantation, I took an opportunity to travel to Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, where I arranged a structured group interview with three Malagasy officials working at *Le Centre Malgache de la Canne et du Sucre (CMCS).* They provided me with valuable insights and directed me to official reports compiled by the centre with recent data about the sugar industry in Madagascar. I spent another six days in a truck with two Malagasy drivers working for the sugar plantation traveling to the port of Toamasina, during which time I gained insights on how trucks arriving from China move through customs and on to the northern tip of the island. Finally, I joined a Malagasy trader to whom I had been teaching Chinese on a week-long trip that took us from Tsaramiverina to Guangzhou, China. While working as his assistant and interpreter and interacting with other itinerant Malagasy businessmen in Guangzhou, I closely observed how made-in-China commodities available on Madagascar's domestic market are originally sourced.

As generally happens in ethnographic research, participant observation took many forms, from the adventurous to the mundane: spending 30 hours on bush taxi listening to

loud and incessant *salegy* music that kept the drivers awake, hanging out with Chinese and Malagasy workers in fancy hotels and shabby *gargottes*, drinking Three Horse Beer and dancing at discos, helping Confucius Institute instructors organize Chinese cultural events, attending social gatherings such as political events, traditional rituals and ceremonies, dance rehearsals and so on, making *rendezvous* with potential interlocutors and finding out later the plan would not work out, cooking, grocery shopping, fetching water, or refilling the gas tank in the kitchen.

I used Mandarin Chinese, Malagasy, French and English during my fieldwork and chose the suitable language for conversations with different people. I had a Malagasy friend who was bilingual in English and Malagasy who came to teach me the local dialect four times a week during the first three months of my fieldwork in 2016. He also worked as my research assistant in 2017, traveled with me for one week to the sugar plantation, and translated a few important recordings of my interviews with Malagasy interlocutors. In 2015, I worked with another research assistant who spent one week with me on a preliminary trip to the sugar plantation. I conducted several interviews in Malagasy and French, and many more interviews in Mandarin Chinese independently. Most of the interviews were not recorded and conducted informally as the presence of voice recorders sometimes made my interlocutors uneasy. Instead, I kept notes in my cellphone and notebooks and then wrote in my journal by the end of each day. To protect the privacy of my interlocutors, all names (except those of public figures) appearing in this dissertation are pseudonyms. All place names, except China's trading hub Guangzhou, Madagascar's capital Antananarivo (Tana), the biggest port city Toamasina (Tamatave), and Morondava - a city in southwest Madagascar where a violent conflict took place at a Chinese-managed sugar plantation in 2014 – are pseudonyms. To avoid revealing identifying information about my interlocutors, I have slightly altered information related to their job responsibilities, hometowns, and backgrounds when needed. For the same purpose, when I quote their words in this dissertation, I do not provide the exact date when the conversation took place.

Although I have minimized or altered identifying information as best as I can, concerns remain. Maintaining the anonymity of research informants is probably one of

the most widely used ethical measures in social sciences to protect the identity and privacy of those who agree to participate in research. This measure may be effective in most cases, however, some cases in anthropology proved contrary. For example, after experiencing expulsion from her field site during a return visit, Scheper-Hugues argues that that the time-honoured practice of bestowing anonymity on anthropologists' communities and interlocutors "fools few and protects no one" (Scheper-Hughes 2000:128). Scheper-Hughes identifies two major problems with anonymity: first, the masks and disguises can easily be decoded by the community members with whom we conduct research; second, anonymity makes us unmindful that we owe our anthropological subjects the same degree of courtesy, empathy and friendship in writing as we generally extend to them face to face in the field (2000:128). This is especially true for my research and writing even though pseudonyms are consistently used. Although much of my writing in this dissertation is not secret *per se* for the Malagasy and Chinese communities, what is written and, more importantly, omitted in this dissertation is the result of my own inner struggle to find the best balance between academic integrity and research ethics, trust and betrayal, gratitude and moral judgment. I will discuss my concerns over the question of my positionality as a researcher and dilemmas that came up during my fieldwork in greater details in the epilogue. All the photos used in this dissertation were taken by the author.

Thesis Outline

The framework of my dissertation is inspired by my fieldwork experiences. As a Chinese person myself, it did not take long for me to become familiar with the recurring words, phrases and sentences that Malagasy people frequently use to describe Chinese people, Chinese things and Chinese culture. The central chapters of my dissertation take these characterizations as a starting point, leading into focused discussion of a number of prominent themes: the perceived homogeneity and actual heterogeneity of Chinese people in Madagascar, the various effects of Chinese investments in Madagascar, the influence of particular constructions of gender on intimate relationships between Chinese and Malagasy people, Chinese-Malagasy encounters mediated by global commodity chains, and the selective representation of Chinese culture in the classes and events sponsored by the Confucius Institute. Each chapter is dedicated to documenting the

nature of Chinese-Malagasy encounters in different contexts, and to considering not just how and why Malagasy people have developed certain stereotypes about Chinese people, things and culture, but what they are learning about "being Chinese" beyond these stereotypes.

In sum, the dissertation provides an ethnographic account of China-Africa connections by discussing how "micro-level dynamics of community, family fortunes, and individual trajectories" mediate "macro-level priorities of global business and nation-states" (Siu and McGovern 2017:339). By looking at how Chinese people, things, and culture represent themselves in Madagascar, my research also sheds light on how stereotypes of "being Chinese" are constructed, reinforced and perpetuated in Africa. The chapters that follow focus on different contexts of Chinese-Malagasy encounters. Based on my study of the three particular contexts mentioned above, each chapter offers historical and/or ethnographic accounts of local manifestations of China's global projects since the turn of the 21st century. Each chapter also includes a Malagasy sentence as a subtitle. I chose these Malagasy sentences because they came up so frequently in my conversations with Malagasy interlocutors and so speak to widely held stereotypes related to the meaning of Chinese people, things and culture.

Chapter 1 – *From "Anciens" to "Nouveaux": Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on Chinese-Malagasy Encounters* - first provides an overview of historical ties between Chinese and Malagasy people from the 19th to the 21st century. It suggests a division between the "old" generation of Cantonese-speaking Chinese immigrants and the "new" generation of Mandarin-speaking Chinese workers in Madagascar as the two waves of migration were driven by different historical forces and individual motivations. The chapter continues to outline the heterogeneity of the Mandarin-speaking Chinese people working in Madagascar today by reviewing relevant anthropological literature on contemporary China. It highlights how Chinese workers' gender, age, and educational and social economic backgrounds have shaped their decisions to come to Madagascar and influenced their experiences once there. Finally, the chapter reviews theoretical approaches to studying global connections and encounters in order to situate the respective role of Africa and China in the postcolonial world order. The Malagasy

subtitle of this chapter "*maro sinoa zio, iro lava vity, antany jiaby misy iro*" means "there are many Chinese here, they have long feet (travel a lot), and they are everywhere."

Chapter 2 – *China's Bittersweet Business: "Sucre Blond," Land and Labor in Northern Madagascar* – discusses the relationships and power hierarchy among the Chinese managers, high-ranking Malagasy managers and Malagasy laborers in the production of raw sugar. The chapter argues that China's sugar business in Madagascar is both bitter and sweet. It is "bitter" for the Chinese company due to constant conflicts of interests related to land, water and employee benefits, as well as misunderstandings caused by perceived cultural differences and mutual distrust. It is "sweet" because the Chinese company profits significantly from access to cheap land and labor in Madagascar. Although the Chinese company provides various sorts of social welfare and job opportunities for the local Malagasy population, it still, inevitably, manifests trends of a neoliberal economy and, as a result, reinforces the postcolonial global situation that systematically disadvantages underdeveloped countries such as Madagascar. The subtitle "*sinoa miasa soa, miasa mare. Fa sinoa magnamboa olo, magnefa helihely*" means "Chinese people work hard and well, but they treat people like animals, and pay very little money."

Chapter 3 – *"The Everlasting Canton Fair": Malagasy Traders in China's Global Bazaar* unravels segments of the social life of Chinese commodities that travel from Guangzhou China to Madagascar's domestic market. By closely observing and participating in the Chinese-Malagasy encounters mediated by commodities, in this chapter I address the challenges faced by Malagasy businessmen in Guangzhou. I focus on the effects of Malagasy businessmen's limited knowledge of the Chinese language and the hidden rules of the global bazaar by highlighting how deception and trust influence relationships among Malagasy businessmen, middlemen and Chinese merchants. I argue that African businessmen in Guangzhou are precariously situated due to their involvement in semi-legal business activities facilitated by Chinese accomplices and emergent mobile banking and electronic payment methods that push them into semi-legal business activities. Two sorts of ethnic relations come into play in the global commodity trade involving Malagasy traders in Guangzhou: 1) the first concerning relationships

among two historically antagonistic Malagasy groups – highland and coastal Malagasy people; and 2) the second concerning how Malagasy businessmen's experiences in China challenge and reinforce the racial stereotypes that Chinese have of Malagasy people (and Africans more generally) and vice-versa, and how they contribute to the social construction of Chinese people and commodities in contemporary discourse in Madagascar. The Malagasy subtitle of this chapter, "*sinoa fetsifetsy, iro misy raha jiaby agny*," means "Chinese people are cunning, they have everything there in China."

In Chapter 4, I shift my focus onto the Confucius Institute and its classes and cultural events to shed light on yet another context of China-Madagascar engagement in northern Madagascar. The Confucius Institute is a worldwide educational project sponsored by the Chinese government agency named "The Office of the International Chinese Language Council" (also known as, and hereafter referred to as, *Hanban*) under the supervision of the Ministry of Education of China that aims to promote Chinese language and culture on the global stage. I argue that the Confucius Institute in Madagascar should be considered a third important domain where identity-shaping Chinese-African encounters take place. Along with the state-managed agro-industrial business described in Chapter 2 and the businesses of private entrepreneurs described in Chapter 3, activities carried out in the name of the Confucius Institute in northern Madagascar also offer Malagasy people partial glimpses of Chinese domestic society. In this chapter, I offer my critiques of the Confucius Institute, its pedagogical approaches in classes and its rigid representation of Chinese traditional culture in cultural events. I also argue that the Confucius Institute's bureaucracy in Madagascar operates in the spirit of global capitalism, as it makes decisions based on the logic of economic loss and gain, its main goal being to benefit the Institute itself rather than its Malagasy students. Similar to the exclusiveness of the sugar plantation and the unpredictability of Chinese commodities, the Confucius Institute programs bear the features of discontinuity and disconnectedness entailed in Africa's participation in globalization. The Malagasy subtitle of this chapter refers to two commonly attributed reasons for why it is that very few Malagasy people could speak Chinese: "Chinese people are selfish and Chinese language is really hard." (*Anaro matity, tsisy olo mahay teny sinoa, tegna sorotro!*)

Chapter 5 explores Chinese-Malagasy encounters from a gendered perspective, focusing on the emotions, agency and morality of people directly involved in or indirectly influenced by heterosexual relationships between Chinese and Malagasy people. I first discuss the different kinds of sexual anxiety experienced by Chinese men and women. Due to variations of age and social background, Chinese men and women who generally adhere to the expectations and social norms of relationships and marriage in China face different challenges while working in Madagascar. Then I highlight the experiences of both Malagasy and Chinese women by focusing on the different types of agency exercised by three particular groups: Malagasy women who develop intimate relationships with Chinese men, the Chinese wives of those Chinese with Malagasy partners, and single Chinese women living in Madagascar in their 20s, a suitable and critical age range for relationship development and marriage in Chinese society. I conclude by discussing the moral dilemmas facing Chinese men working in Madagascar, arguing that they have developed ambiguous moral standards that transcend the binaries of good and bad, loyal and promiscuous. When talking about Chinese men and women, a widely circulated social stereotype is "*lelahy sinoa latapiso, tilely; viavy sinoa tsara fa miavogna*," meaning "Chinese men have small penises and love having sex; Chinese girls are beautiful but shy."

I conclude by suggesting provisional answers to some burning questions about China's rapidly emerging influence in Africa, stressing as I do so that the findings presented in this thesis are inherently provisional given the relative newness of the phenomena and encounters it addresses. Finally, I ask myself a question that many of my Malagasy friends asked during my fieldwork: "*aia ma sinoa vavy tsy miavogna*?" (where is the Chinese girl who is not shy?) Although my Malagasy friends asked the question to know about my actual whereabouts, I asked myself the question to examine my positionality in this research. In the epilogue, I provide reflections on my fieldwork by analyzing how my role as a Chinese woman anthropologist has influenced my research, how my subjectivity has led me to see what I saw, and how I have and have not yet managed to deal with the ethical dilemmas that I have had to face during and after fieldwork.

CHAPTER ONE – From *"Anciens"* to "*Nouveaux*": Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on Chinese-Malagasy Encounters

"Maro sinoa zio, iro lava vity, antany jiaby misy iro."

When asked if they know any Chinese people or about Chinese projects in Madagascar, my Malagasy interlocutors often answered as follows: "*maro sinoa zio, iro lava vity, antany jiaby misy iro*," or in English, "there are many Chinese people nowadays. They have long feet [a Malagasy idiom referring to people who like to travel], and they are everywhere here." This common response alludes to the palpably increasing Chinese presence in Madagascar. It also reflects a pervasively perceived dichotomy between the "locally bounded" Malagasy and the "internationally mobile" Chinese. Interestingly, this Malagasy cultural construction exists in contrast with how the Chinese are commonly portrayed in the West, that is as being traditionally attached to their own land or politically constrained by the Communist government. Nevertheless, both Malagasy and Western views of the Chinese are selective. Rather than seeing mobility as an inherently cultural characteristic of a particular group of people, it is more useful to examine the historical and social factors that have motivated people to move across borders, and, in this case, across the Indian Ocean.

In this chapter, I first briefly review the historical literature related to Chinese-Malagasy encounters, tracing a history of successive migrations that begins with the first wave of Chinese immigrants to the southern Indian Ocean during the late 19th and 20th centuries and proceeds through China's engagements throughout Africa after the Socialist revolution from the 1950s to the 1970s. As I will further elaborate, the two most significant waves of Chinese migration to Madagascar were driven by different forces and followed different paths. Understanding this historical background helps clarify the distinction between the "old" Cantonese-speaking Chinese and the "new" Mandarin-speaking Chinese communities coexisting in Madagascar today.

Although the Malagasy term "*sinoa*" does not specifically distinguish between the "old" and "new" Chinese, many Malagasy people and the two Chinese communities themselves are well aware of the differences. We should not, however, jump to the conclusion that all members of the "new" Chinese community on which I mostly focus in

this dissertation share a homogenous identity. To gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the Mandarin-speaking Chinese community in northern Madagascar today, one needs to closely examine the home society/societies in China from which these "new" Chinese come. Accordingly, as the chapter continues, I provide an overview of recent ethnographic and anthropological work on contemporary issues in China to highlight the distant factors, unseen and unknown by my Malagasy interlocutors, that contribute to the heterogeneity of newly arrived Chinese people in Madagascar (and Africa more generally). The three particular categories of Chinese people I encountered most frequently in my research - workers in state-owned corporations, private business owners and young language instructors of the Confucius Institute – continue following the protocols of social relationships and power dynamics rooted in contemporary domestic Chinese society. Focusing in particular on the multifarious effects of China's recent Reform and Open Policy (*gaige kaifang*), this chapter also provides relevant insights on contemporary Chinese society that are related specifically to the motivations and desires of those who have chosen to work in Madagascar. I attend especially to issues such as the widening gap between the rural and the urban, the emergence of the "new rich" and their entanglement with the state, as well as the resurgence of gender inequality among the (post) only-child generation, as these issues are the most pertinent to the Chinese interlocutors in this study.[3]

In studying Chinese-Malagasy encounters, it is not enough to only examine the history and current manifestations of China's engagement with the wider world. Therefore, the chapter continues by highlighting pertinent theoretical concepts and approaches to the study of global-local encounters around the world; concepts and approaches that can help to frame Madagascar's place in the contemporary world order. I argue that the global flows of people, capital and commodities that enable Chinese-Malagasy encounters resemble and replicate the power hierarchy of the postcolonial relationship between developed and the less developed countries. I further consider the interrelationship of concepts such as "globalization," "race," and "modernity" to shed light on how Malagasy communities have developed the meaning of "being Chinese"

[3] The Chinese government officially announced a "Two-Child Policy" in 2015, marking the termination of the decades-long One-Child Policy. However, the "One-Child Policy" has created a generation of singletons, which has enduring influences on Chinese society in macro-level population structure and micro-level household composition.

through interactions with Chinese people and things, and on how Chinese people, in turn, have developed their own assumptions about Malagasy people and society.

The "Old" and "New" Chinese: China's Historical Ties with Africa

Although the rapid influx of Chinese-led projects in Madagascar since the 1990s is a relatively recent phenomenon, the history of encounters between the Chinese and the Malagasy people can be traced back to the 1800s. The earliest Chinese migration to Madagascar was part of a historical trend of the 19th century that saw traditional colonial powers setting up plantation economies that required extra laborers beyond colonized populations. The second half of the 19th Century, in particular, saw a great expansion of the search for new sources of labor for use in tropical exploitation (Ly-Tio-Fane 1981), leading to the development of similar patterns of Chinese migration toward the Pacific, Latin America and the Southern Indian Ocean. For example, Greif (1975:972) reports that Chinese started to arrive in Fiji in the 19th century, some as merchants but most as indentured and non-indentured laborers working on banana plantations. Similarly, Chinese coolies were brought to mainland Papua New Guinea from the Dutch East Indies and Singapore by German colonizers to work on plantations of tobacco, spices, rubber and coconuts. Around the turn to the 20th century, Chinese migrants were encouraged to settle as traders, cooks, carpenters, shipwrights, and plantation overseers in Papua New Guinea (Cahill 1996:73). In the Caribbean and South America, Chinese laborers were also recruited to work on plantations.

In the Southern Indian Ocean, the first attempts to recruit Chinese agricultural laborers brought them to Mauritius and Reunion Island in 1829 (Ly-Tio-Fane 1981:38). Later, after French colonials had first successfully established a protectorate in Madagascar in 1885 and then fully occupied the island by 1895, Chinese laborers were brought to the new French colony to work on sugar or vanilla plantations. By the end of the 19th century, French colonial authorities had brought in more than 4500 Chinese contract laborers to Madagascar (Tremann 2014:73). In the ensuing decades, more Chinese immigrants left their home country for Mauritius and Madagascar to escape from a series of military uprisings during the Xinhai Revolution that eventually overthrew

China's last imperial dynasty. Independent Chinese migrants continued to settle in Madagascar until the 1940s (Tremann 2013, 2014).

Under French colonial rule, Chinese residents in Madagascar "were obliged to be members of an official organization chaired by a person appointed by the colonial authorities" for easy governance of the population of Chinese descent (Randrianja and Ellis 2009:166). As most of these early Chinese immigrants in Madagascar were originally from China's southern coastal province of Guangdong, they spoke Cantonese. Tche-Hao (1961:170) notes that the Chinese in Madagascar often played an intermediary role between the Europeans and the Malagasy people, given that they were not averse to going deep into "the bush" to collect coffee beans, vanilla, cloves, and other cash-crops to sell to bigger French collector-exporters. Many of these Chinese kept traditional Chinese customs but also gradually adopted European lifestyles, living harmoniously in their closed community. Today, Madagascar hosts the second largest population of Chinese descent in Africa and the Southern Indian Ocean, ranking behind South Africa and before Mauritius (Park 2009, Sautman and Yan 2007). Most of the Cantonese-speaking Chinese population in contemporary Madagascar engage in trade and private businesses, and many have family members who have further migrated to France or Canada. They are usually referred by the Mandarin-speaking Chinese as the "old" Chinese (*lao hua qiao*).

Tracing China's historical ties with Africa, Brautigam (2009) observes the different trajectory taken by China's foreign aid programs in Africa compared to those from the West. In the late colonial period, European colonial powers started programs aimed at improving health care and hygiene in their African colonies, laying the groundwork for later foreign aid programs from Western governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. In 1949, American President Harry Truman addressed "the need to give assistance to the emerging nations as part of the battle between communism and democracy, a center piece of his Cold War strategy" (Brautigam 2009:26). By contrast, China's foreign aid programs, rooted originally in the tribute system established by seafarer Zheng He in the 15th century, have been profoundly shaped by the country's own Communist Revolution with the creation of the principle of "non-interference in [the]

internal affairs" of other countries in the 1950s (Brautigam 2009:24). Through the 1960s and 1970s, Chinese aid programs in Africa were motivated by strategic and ideological goals. Evoking common sentiments of solidarity in fighting against colonial powers with many newly independent African countries, China's government provided aid with the aim of wresting diplomatic recognition away from Taiwan and to counter the influence of both the West and the Soviet Union. As Brautigam remarks: "Chinese delegations visiting Africa in the 1960s thought they saw a lot of similarities. Like China a decade earlier, Africa was emerging from a long period of colonial plunder and needed to produce food, clothing, and other daily necessities" (Brautigam 2009:33). China's offer to build the Tazara railway (between 1969 and 1974) in Tanzania and Zambia represented "an international poster-child" for China-Africa socialist solidarity and comradeship (Monson 2006:114). Among many other projects in Africa between 1965 and 1985, China's aid program built eight sugar plantations and factories in Africa, including one plantation in Morondava, Madagascar (Brautigam 2015:118). [4] In fact, the state-owned corporation that built that plantation in 1985 is now, following a series of reforms over the past two decades, managing the sugar plantation discussed in Chapter 2.

Since the 1980s, many African countries have experienced the effects of new economic policies based on market liberalization and structural adjustment. As Ferguson (1999) notes, for example, major parastatal corporations in Zambia were privatized in the 1990s so as to reduce the government's role in the economy, resulting in a plunge in urban living standards (Ferguson 1999). Even the earlier mentioned Tazara railway, once a manifestation of effective socialism in action, has felt the pressure to liberalize and privatize its operations (Monson 2006). And, as Monson notes, the local reaction to such changes has been significantly negative, rightly understood as being "part of liberalization reforms that sidelined community participation in favor of an economic efficiency agenda" (Monson 2006:125). During the same period, Madagascar's government was pressured to seek foreign buyers for formerly private sugar plantations that had been nationalized during its socialist regime from 1975 to 1991.

[4] Morondava is not a pseudonym.

While African countries were going through a period of imposed liberalization, China was entering a period of "Reform and Opening" (*gaige kaifang*) promoted by the state. Marking the beginning of China's "reform era," starting in1978, the top-down policies of Deng Xiaoping's regime "increased reliance on market mechanisms for the distribution of capital, resources and goods" and "[opened] the country to broader cultural and economic exchanges with the capitalist world" (Osburg 2013:4). In the decades following the launch of the Reform and Opening Policy, private businesses burgeoned, and state-owned corporations were gradually reformed. More recently still, since the turn to the 21st century, the Chinese government has initiated what it has termed a "Go Out Policy" (*zou chu qu*) to promote international trade and investments. As part of this broad effort, in 2013, the current president of China unveiled the "Belt and Road Initiative" (*yi dai yi lu*), a state policy intended to encourage China's influence overseas through infrastructure investment, trade, and educational projects. As a result of these reforms and developments, Chinese workers, business owners and language instructors have been drawn to Madagascar by economic, employment and experiential opportunities. This influx has been most apparent to Malagasy people thanks to the inflow of "new" Chinese on their land, made-in-China commodities in their markets, and the greater presence of Chinese "soft power" in society.

In recognition of the Chinese government's new foreign policy towards Africa, a performance at the 2018 Spring Festival Gala by the China Central Television Network (CCTV) tried to depict the positive influence of the Chinese-constructed Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Kenya in 2017. The performance started with choreographed dance by African dancers in "tribal" attire to the Shakira song "This Time for Africa," then featured an African mother played by a Chinese actress in blackface and exaggerated fake buttocks (BBC News 2018). Another pop-culture sign of new Chinese-African relations came in the form of a Chinese blockbuster film, Wolf Warrior II, released in 2017, that portrayed a Chinese loner hero saving nationals and locals in a generic war-torn African country (Kuo 2017). While both media productions tried to promote a favorable image of Chinese people and projects in Africa, both suffered from a critical backlash from both Chinese and international commentators due to their use of derogatory portrayals of African people that played to stereotypes in China's public

imaginary. For example, Lan (2018) argues that the movie Wolf Warrior II portrays "binary images of African men as either military rebels who kill innocent people or helpless victims waiting to be rescued by the Chinese hero." This depiction of African people and countries reflects a change in the pervasive rhetoric from the 1970s when a Chinese performance of crosstalk (*xiang sheng*) featured a famous comedian playing a Chinese man sharing his experience working for the Taraza railway (Sheridan 2018:242). In contrast to the racist and hierarchical undertones manifested in the recent gala performance and blockbuster movie, the crosstalk "Ode to Friendship" highlighted the comradeship of Chinese and African workers.

While understanding a little of the history of China's engagement in Africa helps contextualize the national interests at play in the work of "the Chinese" in Madagascar, understanding the motivations and interests of the actual Chinese people I met during my research requires a more nuanced approach that takes into account the contemporary contexts from which they have come. I do so in the next section by turning to a discussion of recent ethnographic studies of contemporary Chinese societies.

Anthropological Perspectives on Contemporary China

As discussed in the previous section, China's emergence as a global superpower over the past four decades and the associated increase in the number of "new" Chinese in Africa has caught the attention of the news media and academia alike. To fully understand China's emerging role in Africa, however, one must consider its roots within China as much as its effects in Africa.

The Reform and Opening Policy implemented in 1978 has been fundamental to China's economic achievements and growing political influence in global affairs. On the national scale, social transformation towards the goal of "modernization" (*xian dai hua*) has engendered a series of social phenomena such as rapid urbanization, growing wealth gaps between the rural poor and the "new-rich," conspicuous consumerism, the resurgence of gender inequality, and the emergence of an ambitious (post-) only-child generation. Alongside these developments, since the end of the Maoist era, Chinese immigrants have enjoyed an unprecedented level of international mobility. Many developed countries are hosting an increasing number of Chinese workers, investors and

students. China has also intensified its engagement with less-developed countries by exporting capital, commodities, personnel and expertise. In this section, I will consider some of the most significant trends in contemporary Chinese society that are relevant to my study. Among other things, this overview will give a better sense of the heterogeneity of the Chinese people working in northern Madagascar today.

China's relatively recent and dramatic economic reforms, centered on privatization, marketization and commercialization, have given birth to the rise of what some have called China's "new rich" (*xin fu*). While some presume that an emerging middle class will enable a political transition to the Western model of democracy, many studies argue against this prediction and its assumptions of both China's so-called middle class and a retreating state. For example, Osburg's study of the rent-seeking network-building practices of China's "new rich" argues that Chinese entrepreneurs in the private sector act *with* government officials to constitute an elite network whose power cannot be rooted in either the state or the market (2013:59). Osburg contests the notion of the Chinese middle class as a coherent social group defined by income level or occupation, and sees it, rather, as a fluid category constituted by a diverse group of entrepreneurs, professionals, artists and government officials (2013:12). Tsai (2007) makes a similar point, arguing that it would be wrong to imagine Chinese business owners as a distinct social class given their varying political values and occupational backgrounds.

Anthropologists working in China argue that it is necessary to study the emergence of the middle-class as a process. In other words, instead of seeing the middle class as an established and self-contained social group, it is a group that is constantly in the making – that is, in how socially meaningful actions serve to maintain and change its shifting boundaries, including and excluding people in the process. Osburg (2013) argues, for example, that through "shared transgression" associated with entertaining activities such as drinking, gambling, and the consumption of sex, Chinese middle-class men build intimate connections with one another. Zhang's (2010) work, meanwhile, focuses on the consumption of commodity housing in gated communities as part of the middle-class making process – a sort of consumption that reveals the yearnings and aspirations of the new middle class for a private and wealthy lifestyle. Both Osburg and Zhang describe

China's "new rich" as an ambiguous and unstable socio-economic group defined ultimately by similar orientations apparent in lifestyles expressed through consumption rather than structural positions. As the boundary of the new rich is constantly negotiated, people who identify themselves in/with this group must maintain certain practices associated with it lest they lose their socioeconomic status. Indeed, for these new rich, growing wealthier is usually accompanied by a sense of uncertainty and anxiety over the possibility of unpredictable political developments and policy changes that might block them from achieving their aspirations for upward mobility.

Accompanying the rise of China's new so-called middle class, China's state-led agenda for modernization also includes an audacious plan for urbanization that has created a dual system of "rural-urban spatiality" (Siu 2007) and ambiguous unregulated spaces in between. As a demographic strategy aiming for population governance and control, China's household registration system (*hukou)* was firstly implemented in the 1950s. By distinguishing urban and rural residents, the *hukou* system provided the principal basis for establishing identity and claiming eligibility for the allocation of life necessities in the collective socialist economy (Cheng and Selden 1994). Although, in the reform era, the *hukou* system has lost its historical functions associated with resource allocation, the government continues to use it for migration control and as a means to differentiate and discriminate (Siu 2007, Wang 2004). Whereas urbanism in the Maoist era was condemned as the embodiment of "evil" modern capitalism, cities in contemporary China have been constructed as symbols of modernity, material abundance and cultural sophistication. As Tang puts it, "urbanization means not merely a physical transformation of the previously rural landscape but also the institution of social values, such as mobility, privacy, and diversity, that are associated with life in the city" (Tang 1996:108, cited in Lei 2003:627-628).

Cities in China have also nurtured people's desires for consumption. Although it is often imagined that consumption has the potential to homogenize groups, the movement to consume never reduces the divide between the newly wealthy urbanites and the rural poor (Ngai 2003:477). China's Reform and Opening Policy has on the one hand rendered China "the world's factory," and on the other, presented China's consumers

with an unprecedented range of consumption options, which has allowed consumption to become a means for expressing an "inner being" (Zheng 2003). While the younger generations of China's new rich are seeking education and employment opportunities in developed countries and conspicuously consuming world-class luxury goods (Fan 2016), the rural poor and migrant workers are struggling to settle down in nascent Chinese cities to make ends meet. As I discuss further in the coming chapters, many of the Chinese people I met in Madagascar might be understood as positioned somewhere between the extremes of China's urban "new rich" and rural poor. Like China's urbanites, they aspire to lives and identities associated with wealth and consumption, but their efforts in pursuing these aspirations have led them to a place that recalls the rural Chinese lifestyles and landscapes they disdain.

This thesis does not only consider Chinese-Malagasy encounters in Madagascar, however. In Chapter 3, I discuss such encounters taking place in Guangzhou, the third biggest city in China and a global center of commodity production and trade. As Siu (2007) notes, Guangzhou is comprised of urban village enclaves inhabited by rural migrant workers. Often represented as "backward, uncivil, dirty, chaotic" places that need to be "cleansed" (2007:333), these sites offer an important contrast to official and middle-class imaginings of "modern" and "civilized" urban space. Studying the "floating population" (*liudong renkou*) of rural migrant entrepreneurs in Beijing, Zhang's (2001) research argues that China's internal rural migrants are considered "out of place and control" (2001:2). By investigating the clientelist ties with officialdom (mostly referred as *guanxi* - personal connections) that local leaders in migrant entrepreneur communities depend on to achieve their business and personal goals, Zhang, like Osburg, challenges the assumptions of popular Western discourse about post-socialist transitions, and in particular assumptions about "the inevitable retreat of the state and the triumph of the market and capitalism" (Zhang 2001:5, see also Rofel 2007:8). Studying female rural migrant workers in the city, Ngai (2005) argues that "the hybrid marriage of state power and global capital generates new forms of control on both the societal and individual levels" (2005:4). As the country is opening up to global capital, many rural migrant workers have been driven to cities in search of employment in factories, construction sites, and service sectors. Rural bodies are constantly devalued and downgraded in the

process. They are often imagined as "rough, dirty, rustic or lazy," in contrast with their "sharp, astute, dexterous urban counterparts." (Ngai 2005:14, see also Jacka 2006) The othering of people with rural origins has rendered them as being low "quality" (*suzhi*), essentially inferior, and their culture as "superstitious" and "backward."

Although some Chinese managers of state-owned enterprises in Madagascar can be categorized among the "new rich," most of the Chinese workers I met hardly belong to the same group due to their rural backgrounds and lack of formal education. Some Chinese private business owners in Madagascar are considered *baofahu,* (meaning people who get rich overnight) – a Chinese term describing a category of new rich from a rural background and, thus, stereotypically poorly educated and culturally unsophisticated (Osburg 2013:13); and others may have less social capital to maneuver due to weaker connections with officialdom. However, to some extent all of the Chinese workers and entrepreneurs I met in Madagascar share the yearnings of the "new rich," as "to make more money" is the foremost motivation behind their individual decisions to move there. Indeed, their aspirations in this regard became especially clear in how they represented their new home in negative terms. In the eyes of most of the Chinese immigrants I spoke with, Madagascar is far from an ideal destination for long-term living. Its poor infrastructure, lack of consumption choices, "traditional" cultures and beliefs, reminded many of my interlocutors of rural China with all its negative connotations. In many cases that is exactly how Chinese people describe Madagascar – that is, as a "backward rural-like place" (*luohou de nongcun*). To the Chinese in Madagascar, people in African countries often fit the stereotypes attributed to China's rural population. Such a perspective can be found, for example, in Driessen's (2015) study of how the limited success of Chinese road building projects in Ethiopia was attributed to the "low human quality" (*suzhi*) and "culture" (*wenhua*) of African workers.

To the disappointment of many Chinese workers, the local situation in northern Madagascar is in every way contradictory to the middle-class lifestyle that they are yearning for. The lack of high-end consumption choices and well-maintained urban environments renders Madagascar as the least ideal destination for long-term or permanent residency. While in Madagascar, however, at least some Chinese private

business owners experience one important feature of domestic middle-class networks in China by making the most of their personal connections or kinship ties with people working for state-owned enterprises or the Chinese embassy. Although it is not the case that all Chinese workers in Madagascar have formed a close-knit community akin to those described by Osburg and others, connections among private and governmental actors clearly do work in Madagascar, as in China, in ways that make it impossible to consider private businesses and state-owned enterprises as occupying totally separate domains.

Although China's state-led march towards "modernization" in the past four decades has spawned a new social stratum composed of networks of the "new rich", scholars have noted that women have experienced a dramatic rollback of rights and gains relative to men as a result of the breakneck race for economic growth at all costs (Hong Fincher 2014:6). Rofel (1999) points out that in the Maoist era, women's liberation was portrayed as a transgression of innate femininity that repressed gendered human nature (1999:31). During this period, social identities were based on collective labor and political correctness. The gender-neutral address of "comrade" (*tongzhi*) served as an indicator of efforts at overcoming traditional forms of gender inequality (see also Hong Fincher 2014, Osburg 2013 and Rofel 1999, 2007). Although recent economic and social reforms have generated novel avenues for women to accumulate wealth and to pursue personal achievements, many of these avenues contribute to the systematic marginalization and discrimination of women from various social, economic and educational backgrounds. In the reform era, some women have turned to a politics of the body in which they embrace and internalize ideas about innate femininity, marriage and motherhood that explicitly reject the practices of womanhood in the Maoist era (Rofel 1999:32) – a shift that signalled the "re-legitimatization of naturalized femininity and masculinity" (Osburg 2013:150). For example, for young women from rural areas seeking opportunities in the city, avenues for earning a decent living often involve different ways of commodifying their bodies, whether through prostitution, sexual bribery, or the "beauty economy" (*meinv jingji*) – a term referring to "a marketplace in which young, attractive women are used to promote commercial products and services" (Osburg 2013:144). For wealthy and successful middle-class women who are often

excluded from male-dominated networks, meanwhile, "femininity and sexual morality are under constant suspicion, often rendering them less-than-ideal marriage partners" (Osburg 2013:149). Single, highly-educated, white-collar women who have spent most of their twenties and early thirties pursuing higher degrees and climbing career ladders, have recently been labeled by Chinese official media as "leftover women" (*sheng nv*). This label blames women for being overly ambitious and diminishes their achievements by reinforcing the idea that a happy marriage should be a woman's only and ultimate goal. All of the above examples shed light on the resurgence of gender inequality in post-socialist China where men are greatly privileged.

Along with economic and social reforms over recent decades, the Chinese government also launched its well-known Only-Child Policy based on a presumed link between achieving the goals of modernization and low-fertility. According to Fong (2004), instead of allowing the Chinese population to keep producing cheap labor by maintaining high fertility patterns, the Chinese state's goal was to achieve a rapid fertility transition designed to cultivate a generation of "high-quality" (*gao suzhi*) people with the resources and ambitions to join the global elite (2004:17). It is worth mentioning that the constraining power of the policy has most directly influenced urban residents employed in state-controlled work units such as those associated with government, education institutions, state-owned corporations, and banks. The resulting only-child generation in conjunction with the resurgence of gender inequality has created intriguing social effects, for young women especially. Facing no sibling competition within the household, urban-raised daughters have become more important than ever before (Fong 2004:107) – a fact I also know from personal experience. Parents of singleton girls invest ambitiously in their daughters' education, nurturing "wide-ranging aspirations, hopes, needs and passions" (Rofel 2007:4). However, at the age of marriage, singleton girls are confronted with the problem of cultural and gendered expectations of hypergynous marriage (Pettier 2016:86). In traditional heterosexual marriages in China, most males prefer to find a wife who ranks lower in education and salary levels than themselves, while most females prefer a husband who ranks higher. Since young, high-achieving, singleton women sometimes surpass men in salary and education level, they can face a dilemma resulting from the

discrepancy between their ambitions and their assigned gender roles in the marriage market, which further exacerbates the so-called problem of "leftover women."

Many of the Chinese language instructors working with the Confucius Institute that I encountered in Madagascar were singletons, mostly girls in their early 20s. All were newly graduated from Chinese universities with a Bachelor's or Master's degree, and all shared most if not all of the characteristics commonly associated with their generation: they were curious, enthusiastic, adventurous and ambitious. Coming of age in such social and historical contexts has unquestionably shaped their perspectives and worldviews. For many of them, spending a few years in Madagascar in their early twenties (a very critical period of time for Chinese women in terms of personal development and marriage choices) can have both positive and negative effects on their futures. They risk becoming "leftover women" when they finish their terms of service in Madagascar and return home to establish themselves in the Chinese marriage market. However, they are also reluctant to give up their aspirations and ambitions for exploring the world and seeking higher education in other, more developed, countries.

As I have argued, the cultural context of domestic Chinese society from which Chinese workers in Madagascar have come can strongly influence their understandings of Malagasy society and people. For Malagasy people, however, the "new" Chinese in their midst are simply that: "new," different from the "old," Cantonese speaking Chinese of earlier generations, but still fundamentally the same in being "*sinoa*" regardless of differences in gender, age, social class, and place of origin. They are also "new" in the sense that they are only the latest identifiable group of foreigners to become involved in Malagasy people's lives. As noted in the next chapter, Chinese management of the sugar plantation at Anjava has developed over an infrastructure first established by the French. Similarly, the relatively new educational roles played by Confucius Institute instructors in the region are not so different from those played previously by French employees of the Alliance Francaise and by American Peace Corps volunteers. The same might be said of the relatively recent flood of Chinese commodities in Madagascar's markets – they are not by any means the first foreign commodities that Malagasy people aspire to consume,

only the most accessible, thanks in large part to the work of traders like those discussed in Chapter 3.

Anthropological Perspectives on Global Connections

As discussed in the previous section, reforms and changes that have shaped contemporary domestic Chinese society have also nurtured strong yearnings among some Chinese people for connections with the wider world. Similarly, China's rapid growth as a global economic powerhouse has offered both unprecedented opportunities for employment, mobility, and consumption in China, as well as unprecedented opportunities for international movement, entrepreneurship, and trade. In the following two sections, I provide a brief review of some of the theoretical literature I have found helpful in thinking through the processes, effects, and implications of global encounters involving Chinese people and commodities. By critically reviewing relevant concepts and metaphors and comparing examples of global encounters from other parts of the world, my goal is to situate my study in the broader anthropological literature on globalization.

Anthropological studies of global connections focus on the worldwide flows of capital, people, goods, images and ideas. The term "globalization" has been widely used to describe the intensification of global interconnectedness through which people, commodities, capital, and knowledge travel worldwide. Although global connections in various forms have been made throughout human history, according to Tsing (2000), it was only since the beginning of the 1990s that "globalization" has come to be defined as a process characteristic of an "era" in which use of the term is often intended, and taken as, an endorsement of international free trade, neoliberal capitalism, and certain values associated with both. Processes of globalization enable more than just economic connections, however. As Appadurai (1990) argues, globalization is a multi-layered process, in which five dimensions of global flow – "ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes" – interact. The dynamics among these dimensions are chaotic, historically contingent and radically context-dependent (Appadurai 1996).

Anthropological perspectives on "globalization" are maybe most different from other disciplinary approaches due to the attention they pay to "tracking global processes

as locatable networks of practices and connections" (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:7). Instead of studying large-scale, macro-level global trends, anthropologists are often more concerned with local manifestations of global processes in which contextualized local realities serve as mirrors reflecting large-scale trends. On the macro-level, globalization may be idealistically associated with a promising future of a united, intimate and harmonious "earth village" featuring collaborative environmental protection, effective cross-cultural communication, ethnic integration and socioeconomic development. However, the dynamics associated with global processes often play out on the micro-level in less harmonious and optimism-inspiring ways. Indeed, as many scholars have observed, global connections are often made in tandem with disconnections, exclusions and frictions. For instance, Ferguson (1999) argues that abandonment and abjection are created by the very same processes that have generated global flows and interconnectedness, highlighting, as other scholars of globalization have too, the unequal effects and unbalanced nature of global processes and drawing attention to the conflicts of interests that can develop among local and global stakeholders, even when they are collaborating to achieve ostensibly common goals (see, for example, Ortner 1999, Tsing 2005).

A second common feature of anthropological research on globalization is its critique of the presumed homogenizing effects of global processes. Exemplified by the wide circulation of mass media, the speed and intensity of global processes have led some to believe that cultural diversity in the world will ultimately succumb to a single, Western dominated, culture and that the distinctiveness of non-Western cultures will eventually diminish. However, research shows that rather than forging a homogenous world, global processes have engendered multifarious effects in local contexts. As Appadurai (1990:5) has put it, arguments about homogenization, sometimes used as synonym of "commodification" or "Americanization," fail to consider how the meanings of cultural productions and commodities become indigenized in various ways. For instance, in his study of the history and contemporary consumption of tea in Samburu communities in Kenya, Holtzman (2003) argues that local diversity can be constructed out of the very materials that appear to threaten it, highlighting the instability of the meaning of global commodities and the need for interpreting them within local contexts.

After all, as Ferguson has noted, cultural differences in Africa (and elsewhere) have always been produced, reinforced, and made meaningful within contexts characterized by social relations of interconnectedness rather than contexts of primordial isolation (2006:30).

My research might be productively situated within contemporary scholarship related to the study of "global encounters" – work that focuses on relationships among "local" and "international" actors rather than on a single groups in isolation, and work that emphasizes "the intertwining and mutual production of the histories" (Ortner 1999:17) of those who encounter one another. I have found two theoretical metaphors especially helpful for thinking through the Chinese-Malagasy connections and encounters that I am interested in: Ortner's (1999) "serious games" and Tsing's (2005) "friction." While Tsing uses the idea of "friction" to analyze the global connections entailed in the intersection of capitalism, knowledge production and social justice projects amidst rain forest exploitation and conservation in Indonesia, and Ortner uses the metaphor of "serious games" to trace the encounters of Himalayan mountaineers and Nepalese Sherpas, these metaphors share in suggesting more sophisticated approaches to global encounters than those that assume a simplistic dichotomy of the "global" and the "local," highlighting as they do how different global and local actors negotiate, collaborate, conflict and antagonize with and against one another. Both metaphors draw attention to how particular forms of "differences" shape experiences of global encounters, as well as how the relative power of multiple players in these encounters influence how they embody and reshape such "differences."

Using the theoretical metaphor of "serious games," Ortner synthesizes several interwoven features commonly entailed in local-international encounters. She conceptualizes such "encounters" as social games "of cooperation and competition, of solidarity and exploitation, and of allying and betraying" (1999:23). In the process, each group in these "encounters" is "the embodiment of other forms of difference, differences that they bring with them and that shape the enactment of difference between them" (Ortner 1999:22). These "encounters," thus, involve an intertwining "mess" of intentions (or desires, purposes), meanings (sets of cultural terms and codes and categories), acts

(the actual experiences of encounters themselves), and power. To further explain this "mess" in Ortner's own words: "…human experience is never just discourses, and never just acts, but is some inextricably interwoven fabric of images and practices, conceptions and actions in which history constructs both people and the games that they play, and in which people make history by enacting, reproducing, and transforming those games" (1999:23-24).

Coming from a different theoretical background, Tsing (2000, 2005) criticizes theories of globalization that are based on overly-simple understandings of the logic and processes of transnational capitalism, and overly-optimistic visions of the future. Instead of understanding global connections in terms of "flow" or "circulation," in ways that elide or naturalize inequality and power distinctions in global processes, Tsing (2005) proposes the metaphor of "friction" as a means for considering the scale-making processes and the close encounters that global connections entail, and to emphasize the unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction. Tsing argues that "all human cultures are shaped and transformed in long histories of regional-to-global networks of power, trade, and meaning" (2005:3) and that it is important to attend to "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (2005:4). Somewhat like Ortner's focus on the interrelationship of action, intention, meaning, and power, "friction" allows Tsing to draw attention to how actions and knowledge emerging in global encounters are produced in relations of power. On the one hand, "friction" highlights the "power" embedded in seemingly all-encompassing global processes and our understandings of them; Tsing argues that universalism has never been politically neutral, not in the establishment and management of the European colonial order nor in more recent neoliberal capitalism. On the other hand, "friction" emphasizes the particularity of global encounters, as "engaged universals are never fully successful in being everywhere the same because of the same friction" (Tsing 2000:10).

Both "serious games" and "friction" are inspiring theoretical metaphors for my study of Chinese-Malagasy encounters. First, as suggested by my reading of Ortner, instead of approaching "the Chinese" and "the Malagasy" as dichotomous actors "clashing with" each other, I am interested in their mutual production of the encounters

they share through an interactive process that has been shaped by historical, social and cultural contexts. It is precisely the differences that they carry with them, rather than the homogeneity that each group contains within them, that have shaped the multifarious dimensions of their particular encounters. Further, rather than see the relationship between groups in these encounters as purely antagonistic, it is more useful to consider how intertwining effects of intention, action and meaning contribute to the fluid and often ambiguous dynamics they share. Finally, as Tsing might recommend, it is important to recognize that Chinese-Malagasy encounters are certainly not the products of politically neutral global processes. Indeed, the relations of power played out in Chinese-Malagasy encounters – whether involving Chinese plantation managers and their Malagasy employees, Chinese commodity dealers in Guangzhou and their Malagasy buyers, Chinese language instructors and their Malagasy students, or Malagasy women and the Chinese fathers of their children – are a central focus in much of what follows.

In addition to studying human encounters enabled by globalization, anthropologists have also been studying the social lives of global commodities to better understand the meanings of global processes to people situated along different production-consumption chains, as commodities can offer "a fruitful arena for understanding the ethnographic implications of globalization" (Holtzman 2003:137). The anthropological approach to studying commodities criticizes the "objectification" of commodities and emphasizes the social relations embedded within commodity chains of production, distribution, and consumption. It highlights the different social lives and meaning of things which connect the seemingly separate domains of "manufacture" and "use." Previous anthropological studies of commodities have often focused on two themes in particular: first, how global commodity production and circulation has contributed to the production of inequality on a global scale, and second, the meanings attributed to commodities through consumption in particular sociocultural contexts. In West's (2012) study of the production and consumption of Papua New Guinean coffee, for example, she argues that the marketing of this commodity reinforces the image of the primitivity and the poverty of the Papua New Guinean people. She criticizes a system of certified coffee production and circulation that cannot keep its promises of fair trade and environmental protection given the rules of a neoliberal capitalist economy (of which

"fair trade" is so clearly a part) in which consumers in the global North are greatly privileged. Similarly, Walsh describes how in northern Madagascar, artisanal miners are systematically marginalized in a global economy that provides foreign consumers with unique and valuable, but relatively cheap "natural wonders" (gemstones and touristic experiences, in particular) (Walsh 2012). Like the coffee growers in Papua New Guinea, young Malagasy men risking their lives in pursuit of gemstones, and others working as eco-tour guides, feel connected to the world through the commodities and services they provide to foreigners. However, the processes of the global economy that have made their work possible are precisely what keeps these same people relatively marginal.

Commodities play a different but still very significant role in the Chinese-Malagasy encounters that I am interested in, as many of the Malagasy and Chinese business owners I met during my research are involved in the importation of commodities from China to Madagascar. In Madagascar, made-in-China commodities have created a rapidly growing array of consumption choices for Malagasy consumers in recent years: from plastic washbasins to locks, from stylish dresses and shampoos in fashion boutiques to T-shirts on the second-hand clothing market, from children's toys to counterfeit iPhones. Although many of these products are of inferior quality, they are generally cheaper than their alternatives, and this price advantage (of commodities like cellphones especially) has rendered them more accessible than ever. While most of the previous literature about made-in-China commodities has focused on how they are produced, how they are distributed and consumed overseas is scarcely explored. In most cases, the relatively affordable Chinese commodities that find their way to Madagascar reflect an obsession in Chinese industry with production and efficiency that has reduced both price and quality. However, even the most banal commodity has its social meanings, especially in the context of Chinese-Malagasy encounters. In simply being available and accessible to Malagasy consumers, cheap Chinese commodities arouse imagined possibilities of material abundance and prosperity. And yet, in often being of poor quality, they can also raise questions or doubts about the value of Chinese influence in Madagascar, and the sustainability of what it promises.

China and Africa in the World

In this section, I analyze examples of various local manifestations of the specific ways in which China and Madagascar participate in global processes and discuss what the Chinese-Malagasy encounters considered in my study have to offer in terms of our understandings of the postcolonial world. Since the 1950s, countries in Asia and Africa have often been pictured, or pictured themselves, as "emerging" into a future of prosperity. After half a century's "development" and "globalization," however, whole areas of Africa remain "quite literally off all kinds of maps – maps of telecommunications, maps of world trade and finance, maps of global tourism and the like" (Allen and Hamnett 1995:2, cited in Inda and Rosaldo 2008:6). Often represented as a "dark" and "inconvenient" continent, Africa has been overlooked in much of the enormous literature on globalization.

Ferguson (2006) identifies two major problems in recent anthropological literature about "Africa" as a socially meaningful place. Firstly, anthropologists refuse to recognize the shared inconvenience and predicament faced by African countries due to their reluctance to generalize beyond the localized sociocultural context they situate themselves in. Secondly, previous studies tend to have ignored "connections between cultural differences and material inequality," as if culture is somehow immaterial and apolitical (2006:20). That is to say, culture differences are always meaningful and made meaningful within contexts of social and economic inequality, especially in Africa. To understand the position of Africa in the world today, scholars must acknowledge the long history of unequal relations between Africa and the West, and anthropologists in particular must attend to how global connections are often made in tandem with economic declines and crisis, disconnection, marginalization and exclusion (Ferguson 1999, 2006). As Ferguson insists: "Africa's participation in 'globalization'…has certainly not been a matter simply of 'joining the world economy;' perversely, it has instead been a matter of highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of global connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion" (2006:14).

Examples of disconnection and exclusion can be found in African contexts as different as mining compounds and national parks. Rajak's research (2011) on the effects

of the corporate social responsibility programs provide by the Anglo-American Corporation's mining operations in South Africa uncovers an interesting example of, in Ferguson's words, how capital is "globe-hopping" instead of "globe-covering" (2006:38). Like other mining towns in Africa (for example, the mining towns of the Zambian Copperbelt), the town described by Rajak is composed of hostels, cafeterias, schools, hospitals, and entertainment facilities, and the milieu has been set up in a way such that the employees who work for the mine cannot really separate their working and domestic lives. Benefits such as accessibility to HIV anti-viral medicines are exclusively restricted to employees, however, and as Rajak notes, "one of the unintended effects of corporate-sponsored HIV treatment has been to reinforce the (very) economic and social inequalities in South Africa in relation to which the trajectories of the epidemic have been patterned" (2011:174). In contexts like this, mining towns become "islands of privileges" (Rajak 2011:174), and however much companies emphasize the "social responsibility" of their operations, their practices tend to reinforce colonial relations of patronage and clientelism, inspiring deference and dependence on the part of recipients rather than their autonomy and empowerment (Rajak 2011:177). As I discuss further in the next chapter, a similar dynamic is at work in the Chinese management of the Anjava sugar plantation. Although clearly different from their colonial- and socialist-era predecessors, the plantation's current Chinese managers find themselves reproducing longstanding hierarchies.

Madagascar is in many ways defined (and self-defined by Malagasy people themselves) as different from countries on the African continent. However, Madagascar shares significantly and in many ways the "inconvenience" of "Africa" as a place-in-the-world, and Malagasy people commonly experience global encounters through cultural differences, power and material inequality in ways found elsewhere on the continent. In the realms of biodiversity and environmental conservation, for example, Madagascar has experienced a similar form of disconnection and exclusion found in other African countries. As Sodikoff (2012) has observed, the creation of national parks throughout Africa reflects and reinforces the West's romantic imagination of Africa as being made up of vast territories of natural wilderness. However, access to the space and resources of national parks has often been denied to local people, echoing Ferguson's argument that

national parks are themselves "guarded enclaves" contested in "often fiercely combative relations between conservation actors and local residents" (2006:43). In addition, Malagasy labor in biodiversity conservation programs is systematically devalued, and the efforts of Malagasy workers go greatly under-documented compared to their foreign counterparts (Sodikoff 2009). Other than environmental conservation programs, Malagasy people have also been engaged in global encounters through ecotourism, sex tourism, and commodity trade with foreigners. As Cole argues, even intimate human relationships have been commodified in some parts of urban Madagascar, as "new social hierarchies that constitute globalization locally" (2004:585) are formed through young Malagasy women practicing transactional sex with relatively powerful foreign men.

In academic studies of globalization, China and its people have traditionally been placed on the local side of the "global-local" spectrum. Most previous studies of China's experience of global processes focus on how global capitalism anchored its power in China's labor-intense industry (for example, Rofel 1999, Ngai 2005), or on how Chinese society has experienced and reacted to the assumed homogenizing power of global processes (for example, Yan 1997, Davies 2011). Like life on the African resource extraction compounds described by Ferguson and Rajak, the lives of Chinese rural migrant workers is enclaved on factory compounds where the latest models of iPhones are assembled, and where workers' daily routines are scheduled from the moment they wake up to the moment they fall asleep. In many cases, China is also the victim of the sorts of inequality, exclusion and disconnection present in Africa. However, increasingly it is Chinese capital, commodities, personnel and knowledge that have been reaching other "local" destinations. Some of the destinations are developed countries. However, it is Chinese engagement with less developed countries in Africa and elsewhere that has brought unprecedented international attention, especially among observers wary of the possibility that China might reproduce the inequalities and disconnections that have come with global processes dominated by Western countries. Although China has been providing foreign aid to many Third World countries since the 1950s, it was only after China's economic and social reform (since 1978) that international observers have focused so intently on China as an "emerging," and potentially menacing, global power.

Although the international actors on whom I focus in my research are not from the "West," power differences and unequal access to resources among players in China-Madagascar encounters still "shape even the most well-meaning encounters and produce ongoing frictions" (Ortner 1999:17). Indeed, it is useful to consider how in the Pacific, influences from the "East" have long been under the scope of analysis in the way that influences from the "West" have elsewhere in the world. Studying rainforest conservation in the Solomon Islands, for example, Hviding notes how global encounters in the Melanesian South Pacific have generally involved "the West," mainly in the form of conservation-focused NGOs and eco-tourists, but also "the East," in the form of Asian agents of transnational capitalism, as well as "the Rest," including local Melanesian people (2003:539). Unlike the resource frontiers in the Pacific Islands where representatives of "the East" have been recognized as key players, however, the engagement of "the East" in Africa is still an emerging topic of study. Most literature about China-Africa encounters approach the topic from a macro-level analysis that highlights the geopolitical, economic, and ideological motivations of the Chinese state (see for example, Brautigam 2009).

Since the turn of the 21st century, journalists and scholars have attended carefully to the increasing influence of China in Africa. As noted previously, in contemporary Chinese domestic society, the state, the market economy and society operate as entangled domains. China's overseas investments have brought these domestic entanglements to the global scale. The motivations behind China's overseas investments are neither purely economic nor purely political, and which factor plays a bigger role needs to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Research in international relations has tended to pursue this topic from a state-centred approach emphasizing the diplomatic and political motivations of the Beijing government. In such an approach, state-owned enterprises and government-sponsored development programs are largely seen as agents of China's geopolitical interests, private businesses are seen as by-products of the Chinese government's endeavor to expand overseas market for Chinese commodities, and educational programs such as those run under the auspices of the Confucius Institute are arenas for the exertion of the state's soft power. The work of Mohan et al. (2014) among Chinese small-scale private business owners in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Angola challenges this state-

centred approach, however, by deconstructing the presumed homogeneity of the Chinese diaspora in Africa and highlighting the agency of people in host communities. Although this work successfully teases out the heterogeneity of Chinese-African encounters, its analytical focus seems to imply the homogeneity of the social contexts in the different African countries in which the research was based.

Thankfully, there is a growing literature focusing on social interactions in China-Africa encounters on the ground, based on ethnographic fieldwork among Chinese workers of state-owned corporations and private business owners in different African countries. A few examples give a sense of the breadth of this recent work: Driessen argues that China is repeating the flawed Western approach to development aid through these engagements, "perpetuating power inequality, diminishing local agency and simplifying complex realities in the process" (2015:7); Lee's research on relationships among Chinese employers and Zambian employees challenges a singular "Chinese" interest capable of imposing itself on a singular and vulnerable "Africa" (Lee 2009); Nielsen (2012) attends to labor and wage issues in a road construction site in Mozambique, arguing that Mozambican workers' wages can hardly lead to a promising future of material abundance; and Sheridan's (2018) work on Chinese workers' refusal to greet their Tanzanian interlocutors demonstrates how inequality plays out among transnational actors in everyday sociality.

Although remaining critical of China's engagements in Africa, Brautigam (2009) points out that many of the fears about Chinese projects on the continent are misinformed since some Chinese companies and businesses have, in fact, provided jobs in local communities and served as industrial catalysts for some African firms. Indeed, while "concerns about Chinese exports crushing African manufacturing are very real" (Brautigam 2009:308, see also Sylvanus 2013), the presence of Chinese people and products in African societies also symbolize an alternative power, distinct from the West/North, and alluring possibilities for achieving wealth, engaging in consumption, and realizing the promises of modernity (Braun 2015).[5]

[5] Another important aspect of Chinese-African encounters is focused on private Chinese businesses. For example, Haugen and Carling (2005) point out that the extension of Chinese "entrepreneurial migrants," or private businesses to

Accompanying the literature on China's presence in Africa has been a growing literature on Africa's presence in China. Based in research carried out in China's two largest international trading centres – Guangzhou and Yiwu – some such work focuses especially on the experiences of African traders (see for example Haugen 2012, Huynh 2014, Castillo 2015, Mathews 2017), addressing issues of mobility, il/legality, gender and hierarchy in another form of China-Africa encounter facilitated by the global trade of commodities. Echoing earlier mentioned critiques of the racist portrayal of Africa and Africans in Chinese movies, advertisements, museum displays, and performances, other scholars are problematizing the representation of African people and culture in China by conducting media and discourse analysis (for example, Lan 2018). However, no research has drawn connections among the three domains of people, things, and culture together to shed light on how China-Africa encounters are structured in the contemporary global world. In the next chapter, I begin my attempt at drawing such connections by focusing on Chinese-Malagasy encounters at the Anjava sugar plantation.

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rather remote places across the globe is an intriguing phenomenon that merits attention. Most of the Chinese private businesses in such areas include restaurants, hotels, grocery stores (*baihuo*), clothing stores, electronics retailers and export-import businesses. A frequently reported negative effect of the influx of Chinese businesses and goods is that Chinese shops are pushing local businesses out of local markets due to the low price of made-in-China products (for example, Braun 2015 and Tremann 2013). In 2015 when I conducted my preliminary fieldwork, I started interviewing several private Chinese business owners. However, when I returned to Madagascar in 2016, most of their shops were closed and the Chinese owners had left Madagascar.

CHAPTER TWO – China's Bittersweet Business: "*Sucre Blond*," Land and Labor in Northern Madagascar

"Sinoa miasa soa, miasa mare. Fa sinoa magnamboa olo, magnefa helihely."

In the sugar cane fields

After fixing the oil leak in an excavator scattering fetid fermented manure over a stretch of fallow field, *chef* Yang drove me in his four-wheel-drive pickup through a labyrinth of dirt roads winding through endless sugarcane fields, dragging a tumbling cloud of dirt along behind us. The *chef* complained to me:

> The working efficiency of one skilled Chinese excavator operator probably equals three Malagasy operators. Some of my workers at the garage [here on this Malagasy plantation] once asked me to take them to work in China. I directly told them that no one would want to hire them because they all work too slowly! A garage in China of the same size as this one at Anjava needs a maximum of thirty full-time workers. Here, though, I have more than a hundred formal workers plus more than four hundred contract labourers. No garage in China would make any profit hiring so many people. I do think that paying them 200,000 *ariary* [approximately 62 USD] a month is too little, but it is not possible that we can pay more! (Conversation with Yang)

Indeed, the *chef* himself drove the seemingly clumsy excavator as adeptly as an expert solving a Rubik's cube. While he was demonstrating how to scatter the manure evenly on the surface of the field to the other Malagasy operators, bystander farmers clicked their tongues as though watching an acrobatic performance.

Just as Chinese managers like Yang complain about the "speed" and "efficiency" of Malagasy workers in Anjava, Malagasy workers also complain about the working style of the Chinese. When I asked Malagasy people in Anjava, Sakaimarobe – the site of the sugar plantation on which I focus in this chapter -- "what do you think of the Chinese?", the most common response I got was some version of: "*sinoa miasa soa, miasa mare. Fa sinoa magnamboa olo, magnefa helihely.*" It means: "Chinese people work well and hard, but they treat people like animals, and pay very little money." As I learned through research in this location, this description was based on their ten years of experience interacting with, and working for, the Chinese in their midst.

In this chapter, I shed light on the social complexity and power hierarchy from which this almost unanimous vision of the Chinese work ethic has arisen, and on how

differently positioned people in and around Anjava negotiate both. I argue that China's sugar business in Madagascar is both "bitter" and "sweet." It is "bitter" due to persistent conflicts involving Chinese plantation managers and their Malagasy workers and neighbours over land, water and employee benefits, as well as misunderstandings caused by perceived cultural differences and mutual distrust. It is also "sweet," however, because the Chinese company profits significantly from the cheap land and labour it finds in Madagascar. In the process, the company is producing more than just sugar. It is also producing new hierarchies and fractures within local communities. Following a quick glance at the history and the current operations of Anjava, I focus on the plantation as a site of great social complexity by introducing the historical and cultural significance of the land it occupies, considering the varying social backgrounds of the Chinese people who are working there, and discussing how local farmers make land and water claims on what has become a highly regulated and closely monitored landscape over the past decade. I then turn more specifically to the work of the plantation, outlining the positions of Chinese and Malagasy workers in Anjava's labour hierarchy, and addressing the ways in which this hierarchy, and the company bureaucracy that enables it, creates fractures in the local community. The focus of this chapter is not on the distribution and consumption of sugar as a global commodity (for that, see Mintz 1986). Rather, the goal is to unravel the social complexity underlying sugar production that, while enabled by the global processes that have brought the Chinese to Anjava, must also be understood as an outcome of the shared work of the differently positioned people who make it happen.

"Bitter," "Sweet" and "*Biznesy*"

Since 2007, a Chinese state-owned corporation has been managing three of Madagascar's five major sugar plantations, the largest one being Anjava, a sugar plantation and refinery previously managed under different names by French, Malagasy and Mauritian companies near the town of Sakaimarobe. In 2016, Anjava produced a total of 65,957 tons of "*sucre blond*" (golden sugar), achieving a historic production peak that comprised more than 2/3 of Madagascar's total sugar production for that year (CMCS Website). Local people usually consume this kind of raw sugar directly in their everyday diet, using it to make yogurt and cakes, for example, or putting it directly in

their morning coffee and tea[6]. Most of Anjava's sugar production, however, is sold to domestic or international food processing enterprises where the raw sugar will be further refined. As Madagascar's two Malagasy run sugar plantations do not yield much production, China has become a dominant influence on the country's sugar industry, a fact that periodically raises concerns and suspicions, especially in times of political instability.

China's sugar business in Madagascar is "bitter" and profoundly shaped by the sort of "friction" (Tsing 2005) discussed in the previous chapter. In 2014, China's influence in Madagascar's sugar business first gained the attention of international media because of a violent conflict at a plantation in Morondava in which Chinese managers were targeted by the local Malagasy community. This conflict resulted in the deaths of two Malagasy policemen (Agence France-Presse in Antananarivo 2014, Aljazeera 2014) and a loss of more than 30 million USD (Interview with Shao). Since that time, the Morondava plantation has been shut down, and negotiations to resume production, between the Chinese company and the Malagasy government, are still in progress. During my research at Anjava, when I asked about the causes of the Movondava incident, both Malagasy and Chinese interlocutors admitted that both sides were responsible. The conflict began when Chinese managers took a tough stand on demands from Malagasy temporary contract workers to be promoted to permanent status so that they might enjoy the extended benefits provided by the company. Incited by xenophobic anti-Chinese political forces, the local community became hostile to the Chinese. According to the narratives of some Chinese informants, soon after the conflict started, all of the Chinese workers escaped in their cars, but no hotels near Morondava dared to accommodate them for fear of retaliation. All of the tensions bubbling under the surface before the Morondava incident apply to the current situation in Anjava as well, and Chinese managers and workers recognize that dealing with the demands of Malagasy workers is a delicate and sensitive matter.

[6] According to the statistics of *Le Centre Malgache de la Canne et du Sucre* (CMCS), although Madagascar produces a significant amount of sugar itself, it is still dependent on sugar imports from other countries. In 2016, on average each Malagasy person consumes 8.31 kg of sugar per year, far below the figure of France – 35 kilograms a year per person. As such, sugar remains an affordable luxury for ordinary Malagasy people (CMCS 2016).

Despite existing tensions, the sugar business is still "sweet" enough that the Chinese company is willing to carry on with its work despite the drawbacks of inevitable "friction." The cheap cost of using local land and labour and slack environmental regulations make the sugar business lucrative. For their part, many of the Malagasy people living in and around Anjava have witnessed the ups and downs of sugar production in their midst, and the social effects of good and bad times for that production, over the past 60 years as ownership of the plantation transferred first from the private French company that built it to a state-owned Malagasy sugar company in the 1970s, and then, in 2007, to the Chinese state-owned corporation that now manages it. Watching and feeling the effects of these developments up close is not the same as fully participating in them, however. Indeed, although the plantation at Anjava unquestionably involves the people of the region in the global economy, it does so in a particular way.

Logging, mining, agri-business and conservation projects facilitated by international capital flow have brought people living in the margins of the global economy yearnings of cosmopolitan dreams through a sense of connectedness and inclusiveness. However, as Ferguson (2006) argues, Africa's participation in globalization has been a matter of highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of global connection combined with widespread disconnection, discontinuity and exclusion. Writing about the social consequences of the closing of the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea, Jorgensen asserts that the mine realizes a particular form of development that includes access to cash, services and sought-after experiences of modernity, but also "sharpens fears and risks of marginalization and the possibility of being left out of modernity's promise" (2006:235). Similarly, Malagasy people in Anjava are well aware that the current prosperity of the plantation under the management of the Chinese company is tenuous. Social unrest at Morondava left the community surrounding that plantation void of job opportunities and basic living necessities such as running water and electricity, and, reportedly, with a widespread sense of regret. The difficulty stems from the fact that local Malagasy communities have no choice over who manages the sugar plantations on which they rely. If the Chinese abandon the business, it might be years before a new investor takes it over, leaving the local people no means for earning money or obtaining the (limited) social benefits provided by the company.

I italicize the word "*biznesy"* (a Malagasy pronunciation of the English word "business") in the pages that follow to highlight local connotations that go with using this term. Variations of the term "business" are widely used among Francophone Africans to refer to "nefarious exchange," for instance, in Côte d'Ivoire (Newell 2012:80). When Malagasy people use the word "*biznesy*," they are generally inferring a certain level of seriousness, lucrativeness and secrecy. Hence, I use *biznesy* in this chapter to not only indicate that the Chinese company is operating the sugar plantation for financial gain, but also to emphasize their lack of transparency in how financial gain is achieved and how their relationship with the local community is negotiated despite constant friction and frequent conflicts. As one Malagasy villager at Anjava told me one day while we stood together under a lush mango tree watching Malagasy workers install a water pump feeding an irrigation canal: "*misy sinoa maro aminy Madagascar mangala vola mafana*," meaning that "there are many Chinese people in Madagascar who take 'hot money.'" Walsh (2003) argues that in the northern Malagasy sapphire trade, use of the expression *vola mafana* (hot money) indicates, on the one hand, hard-earned money that is quickly spent in conspicuous consumption in spirit of "living the moment," and on the other, money earned through illegal or immoral ways such that "nothing good can come of it" (Walsh 2003:299). Ultimately, Malagasy people's use of *biznesy* and *vola mafana* to describe Chinese business activities alludes to concerns about how profits are being made by the plantation's managers, while also hinting at their dissatisfaction with how such profits have been eluding the local community.

The Past and Present of Anjava

The history of sugar plantations in Madagascar provides an interesting glimpse of the island's journey from colonial through post-colonial times. The first sugar plantation was established in Nosy Be by the company *Sucrerie de la côte Ouest de Tsaramiverina* during the 1920s during the French colonial period. In 1949, the company *Raffineries du Sucre de Saint-Louis de l'ile de la Réunion* created the Mampalahy Sugar Company in Sakaimarobe, and carried out its first harvest season in 1953. As a result of the socialist movement in Madagascar during the 1970s, the Mampalahy Sugar Company was nationalized and thus Anjava Malagasy was established as a Malagasy state-owned enterprise in 1976. Anjava was the name of the Malagasy national sugar company but

later people started to use it to refer to the town and the whole area where the sugar plantation is located. The nationwide political crisis from 2001 to 2002 paralyzed Anjava, after which all production activity was suspended. Starting in 2003, Madagascar's government sought potential buyers or renters to take over the dilapidated plantation. The World Bank and the European Union proposed to fund the sugar plantation with the condition of its privatization. China was also interested in the business in 2003, but due to fears over allowing the Chinese to dominate Madagascar's sugar business, the Malagasy government was not at first interested. After a two-year period of very low sugar production under the management of a Mauritian company, production at the Anjava plantation was suspended again. In 2007, then President Marc Ravalomanana visited China for a conference organized by the World Bank. The Chinese state-owned corporation SINLANX[7] took the golden opportunity to negotiate an agreement with Ravalomanana with the goal of making the Anjava sugar plantation viable again. The agreement was settled in July in Beijing, and by the end of 2007, SINLANX had already sent an inspection team to Anjava. In the agreement, the Malagasy government agreed to rent the land and factory facilities to the Chinese company to manage. The first harvest season after the Chinese started to manage the plantation was in 2009, with a production of 22,177 tons of sugar. With the agreement effective for twenty years, the Chinese company is slated to manage the sugar plantation until 2027.

SINLANX started recruiting sugar refinery specialists and interpreters from China's hinterland provinces soon after closing the deal with the Malagasy government. Shao was one of the first recruited crew and he has been working as the French-Chinese interpreter for the company for more than 10 years. His Chinese colleagues acknowledge him as the most knowledgeable person in the Malagasy language, culture and history, since he has been working at Anjava for the longest time and has a Malagasy wife. In one interview with him, Shao told me:

> When the French people first established the sugar plantation here in the 1950s, this area was covered by virgin forest. The French brought labourers from the Comoros to clear the land and build the factory. The design of the French was almost perfect with a complete set of infrastructures such as an airport, a railway system, a port and the factory compound itself. At that time, the Anjava area was

[7] This is a pseudonym.

> a prosperous "sleepless town" (*bu ye cheng*) during the harvest season. The year 1975 saw the most glorious days of the sugar plantation right before the nationalization of the company" (Interview with Shao).

The numbers provided by *Le Centre Malgache de la Canne et du Sucre* (CMCS 2016) confirm Shao's narrative of Anjava's history. In 1975, the plantation produced more than 63,000 tons of sugar, almost the same amount as the historical peak production of 2016. When the Chinese company started to recover the refinery and distillery facilities in 2007, the airport, railway and port had been long abandoned, their ruins all that are left to remind people of the most splendid days of the plantation. After two years of maintenance from 2007 to 2009, the Chinese company took up the French-designed factory facilities, irrigation system, and staff housing. Although many of the facilities of the French era remain out of use, the refinery and distillery compound of Anjava is still considered a local icon in the region since it is one of the biggest industrial establishments in Madagascar. This was the state I found Anjava in when I first visited it in 2015.

A badly maintained national road connects Tsaramiverina - a regional capital - to Sakaimarobe – a large town 20 kilometres southeast of Anjava. If you search for directions from Tsaramiverina to Sakaimarobe on Google Maps, it will tell you that the national road is the fastest route and that it takes three hours and thirty-four minutes to cover the distance of 130 kilometres. Unfortunately, sometimes Google Maps lie. In the dry season, the road trip will take at least 6 hours by *taxi brousse* (bush taxi), or 4 hours by a four-wheel drive vehicle with a skilled driver who knows how to steer around the numerous pits on the paved but broken surface of the road. Once arriving at Sakaimarobe, the remaining 20 kilometres to Anjava is usually a more-than-one-hour drive on a dirt road where you will find three-wheel *bajajs* and pickups carrying heavy loads: as many as seven passengers sitting in the back seat of a *bajaj* designed for three, and as many as 20 crammed into the tented back of a pickup. The closer you get to Anjava, the more you are joined on the road by people, mostly men, riding bicycles with sugar cane, machetes, or both in hand. Most of the traffic on the road to and from Anjava, however, is made up of semi-trailer trucks carrying sugar and containers, oil-tankers transporting diesel, and, during the cutting season (from July to November), tractors loaded with cut, burned sugar

cane. Dust and dirt linger in the air above the bush along the side of the road after any kind of vehicle passes by, even at extremely slow speed.

Soon after passing a fork in the road on my second trip to Anjava (in 2016), the *bajaj* driver told me that "the place where you can find Chinese" was not too far ahead. I got out of the yellow motor tricycle to face two rows of one-storey buildings with rooms that seemed to me like offices. Groups of Malagasy men were gathering and waiting outside of the buildings, chewing *khat* and talking. Later, as I learned more about the physical setup of the plantation, I understood that these offices belong to the department of finance and administration, and the Malagasy men who always seemed to crowd outside were truck drivers waiting for their receipts. I did not spot any Chinese people at first glance because the entrance to their offices was at the backs of the buildings, or because they were driving their pickups somewhere in the fields; while low and mid-level Malagasy workers ride bicycles or walk to work, the high-level Malagasy and Chinese administrators always travel by pickup or motorbike.

Parallel to this hierarchy of transportation is a hierarchy of housing, with employee accommodations clustered based on rank and position in the company. The southern side of the main road features the core administrative offices of the company and the well-maintained bungalows that serve as dormitories for the Chinese and homes for high-level Malagasy administrators. The refinery and distillery facilities along with the garage are located northeast of the core administrative and living area on the opposite side of the main road. Tractors line up at the gated entrance of the factory waiting to unload sugar cane onto the dump platform. Meanwhile, trucks line up opposite the factory entrance, all the way to the administrative offices, waiting to load tons of "golden sugar." Some of the sugar will be transported to the warehouse near the port of Anjava or in Tsaramiverina for storage. Others will be sent directly to the Tsaramiverina port for exportation, or to the capital Antananarivo ready to be sold on Madagascar's domestic market.

Passing the factory entrance and continuing east, you will reach the boisterous centre of the settlement. Twenty years ago, Walsh described this place (1998) as a suffocating, loud and busy area containing a hospital, a market, a Catholic church, a

number of large primary and secondary schools and the highest density of bars and cigarette stands in the region. Nowadays, the town still functions as a major place where Malagasy and Chinese workers go for snacks and drinks after work. Interestingly, when first approaching Anjava from Tsaramiverina and Sakaimarobe at the beginning of the harvest season in June 2015, I found the town busy but at the same time tranquil and soothing.

Keep going east and you will reach the meandering Mampalahy River that provides water for factory production and farmland irrigation, and the fields. Twelve villages on more than 6000 hectares of land have been divided into five farming groups. Diesel generators and steam turbines supply electricity to the town of Anjava and the core housing area 24/7 year-round. The company installed one diesel generator in each village affiliated to the farming groups to provide electricity. Within the core housing area, there is also stable supply of running water. To many Malagasy people, the availability of these seemingly basic living necessities is already a luxury.

Chinese on *Antankarana* Land

It is impossible to talk about the Chinese-Malagasy encounter in Anjava without recognizing the distinctive historical and political context presented by northern Madagascar – an area traditionally inhabited by an ethnic group called *Antankarana,* meaning *the people of the rocks*, organized around one of several, related, traditional polities established along the west coast of Madagascar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Gezon 1997; Lambek and Walsh 1997; Walsh 1998). The *Antankarana* ruler – *ampanjaka* – was officially recognized by the French colonial regime, largely as a result of longstanding relations. Almost 50 years before the French established full control over Madagascar as a colony in 1895, they claimed rights over much of the north and northwest Madagascar through treaties with two indigenous rulers (Walsh 1998:19). After independence in 1960, the *ampanjaka* continued to "have political and religious authority over the lives of the local people" (Gezon 1997:87). The current *ampanjaka* stays in his palace – a well-maintained bungalow right in the centre of the town of Sakaimarobe, and oversees traditional ceremonies such as *joro* (invocations of ancestors intended to bring blessing to various projects) and *fisehagna* (an annual event at which

the mediums of royal ancestral spirits, *tromba*, bathe in the ocean en masse) on *Antankarana* land. He has significant symbolic power in the surrounding rural areas, but holds no administrative position in the government.

The ethnicity of *Antankarana* people is also marked as being different from that of the *Merina* people of the central highlands of Madagascar; indeed, the incursions of 19th century *Merina* armies were the reason why *Antankarana* rulers of the time sought support from the French. The French colonial regime reinforced such ethnic differentiation, and in contemporary Madagascar, the socially constructed and historically reinforced sense of differences among ethnic groups permeates people's everyday lives. Simply put, many *Antankarana*, and coastal people more generally, consider *Merina* people to have more political and economic advantages and opportunities than they do. This is a point to which I will return in the next chapter.

Much has been said about the distinctive features of the ethnic identity of the *Antankarana* people (see, for example, Lambek and Walsh 1997, Walsh 1998). This is not to imply, however, that people in northern Madagascar comprise a self-contained, secluded and homogenous group; to do so would greatly diminish their rich history of encounters with "outsiders" or "foreigners" since long before the colonial period. For example, traditional *Antankarana* land now hosts large numbers of Malagasy migrant workers from other regions of the island, as well as people with Comorian, South Asian, and Cantonese-speaking Chinese descent – the "Old" Chinese mentioned in Chapter 1. Walsh describes the surrounding area of the sugar plantation in 1994 as follows:

> Approaching Anjava from the north, the first thing you are likely to notice is the seeming anomalies in the plantation's outlying areas: clusters of houses remarkable for their unusual construction, pigs instead of goats lying lazily in the shade, people speaking the same language in foreign tone, their sarongs tied altogether differently – anomalies explicable by the large migrant population in the area… Housing for those who have the right to live in and around the plantation town is provided by ANJAVA, and its range in quality corresponds to the company's labour hierarchy… A few large villas exist within a guarded compound. These had once been the homes of the French administrators of the plantation but are now occupied by the well-educated Malagasy who have taken over their positions. A great number of detached single-family houses also exist in compounds off the main road which runs from the refinery to the port. These accommodate lower administrators of the company and some of the highly skilled mechanics and foremen of the refinery and distillery. On the edges of the cane are

> smaller single-family bungalows designated to refinery and distillery staff, tractor drivers and a variety of other menial labourers who work year-round for and draw salaries from the company. Further afield…are whole villages occupied by cane cutters and their families (1998:43-44).

Whatever the current demographic makeup of Anjava, many still understand it as having been built on *Antankarana* land. Indeed, the French company that first conceived of and established the plantation in the 1950s did so only following consultations with the *Antankarana ampanjaka* of the time, and in the years since, this company and its successors at the site have recognized the significance of this longstanding association in a number of ways outlined further below. But how do Anjava's newest managers conceive of their relationship to local land?

The Chinese state-owned corporation that now runs Anjava, SINLANX, manages the plantation through a form of soft privatization known as "leasing management." As Brautigam explains, this type of management is like "a rental agreement, a lease turns over the property to an outside entrepreneur in exchange for the payment of a percentage, royalty, or rent of some kind; and the entrepreneur does not own the property but uses it as an owner" (2009:62). A product of China's social and economic reforms since 1978, "leasing management" is a result of China's experiments in converting former aid-related projects to overseas investments, particularly in developing countries since the mid-1980s (Brautigam 2009:62). SINLANX, founded in 1959 and owned previously by the Ministry of Commerce of China, became an independent company in 1993. In 2009, it was incorporated into a larger state-owned enterprise. SINLANX has successfully transformed several sugar plantations from aid-related projects to profit-oriented businesses in Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone, Jamaica, and, of course, Madagascar (see also Brautigam 2015:115-116).

At first glance, many projects of Chinese state-owned corporations in Africa appear to serve more than the Chinese state's economic interests overseas. However, in the case of Anjava, SINLANX's economic interests outweigh any geopolitical or ideological pursuits. Moreover, the Chinese workers employed by SINLANX in Madagascar are acting as anything but state agents. Coming from small rural towns in mainland China, many of the Chinese workers I spoke with have been struggling for

years to create better lives for their families through the period of socio-economic upheaval described in the previous chapter, and most of them decided to work in Anjava in pursuit of higher salaries than they might earn at home. Before coming to Madagascar, most had been working, since the 1990s, for a Chinese state-owned collectivist sugar factory in their home province. With recent socio-economic reforms in China, the production and profit of the sugar company employing them went downhill, and many of them lost their lifelong guaranteed "iron bowl" (*tie fan wan*) jobs when the company was privatized in 2005. Forced to navigate the job market again in their mid-30s or 40s, with families to support but not much education or experience, they jumped at the opportunity to work with SINLANX in Madagascar, especially thrilled by the prospect of the extra bonuses provided as a reward for working overseas. As *Chef* Yang told me:

> Until I jumped on the flight from Guangzhou to Madagascar, I had no idea where the country is located and what language the people here speak, let alone their culture and society! When I first arrived at the airport of Antananarivo, I was in complete shock and felt like a "deaf and blind person" because I understood nothing! I could not even imagine what my life in Madagascar would be like, as long as I work, and they pay me money, I will still stay here for several more years (Conversation with Yang).

Although most of their family members understand that taking this job means that they have no choice but to endure long-term separation from their loved ones, they still support their work in Madagascar, believing that the job will fundamentally improve the family's living conditions. They hope that the money will gradually allow them to join the club of China's burgeoning middle class, or "new rich," as described in the previous chapter. Many of my interlocutors proudly mentioned to me that after they started to work in Anjava, their wives in China were able to afford a car, that they were able to get a loan from the bank to buy a nice apartment in a bigger city, and that their children could be sent to more prestigious schools.

Whatever their struggles for higher social economic status in China, the Chinese workers in Anjava are considered extremely rich by Malagasy standards. Nowhere else in the world might the Chinese feel as privileged as they do in Madagascar, a place where most "foreigners" (*vazaha, karany,* and *sinoa*) have historically been associated with a higher social status enabled in part by their privileged place in a capitalist economy and the devaluation of Malagasy (*gasy*) labour (Sodikoff 2012). From what I saw, the

"upgrade" of social economic status that Chinese workers experience in Madagascar offsets their homesickness and creates a countercultural shock when they go back to China for holidays. Whereas the Chinese workers maximize their privilege as foreigners in Madagascar, they also often complain that such symbolic capital merely brings them psychological satisfaction. What they really need and want the most is material capital – money.

Interestingly, many of the Chinese workers I spoke with described Anjava as "reminiscent of a socialist company" with mixed feelings of nostalgia and disgruntlement:

> It is not real privatization. The Malagasy workers are living "the communist life" (*gong chan zhu yi sheng huo*) at Anjava here. The salary for the Malagasy workers are not very high, we admit that. But the real advantage for Malagasy workers to work at Anjava now is the extended welfare provided by the company. If one person works for the sugar plantation, almost all of his/her whole extended family members can enjoy free medical care. If you are a Malagasy permanent worker, you get a free house provided by the company with stable supplies of electricity and running water, your children go to school for free, and after you die, the company must pay to send the corpse back to your hometown. The Malagasy workers have somewhat better benefits than us. We, the Chinese here, are like "rural migrant workers" (*nong min gong*) of the capitalist company. Here in Anjava, we are "somebody." Once we return to China, the moment we land at the airport of our hometown, we become "nobody." We do not even have social insurance in China, let alone benefits for our family members. We just come to work in Madagascar because it pays better than our old job back at home (Conversation with Yang and Tian).

As such, Anjava sugar plantation stands out as an interesting case because of its status: a Chinese state-owned corporation rents the land and facilities of the Anjava sugar plantation and manages it under the apparent influence of a Malagasy collectivist economy, all as it participates in the global neoliberal economy.

Anjava is not simply a bilateral endeavour negotiated at a distance by Malagasy and Chinese states, however. The friction entailed in the global-local encounters taking place at this site is, in fact, produced by tugs-of-war among various stakeholders at multiple scales including: the Malagasy government at different levels, the *Antankarana ampanjaka* and his local representatives, full- and part-time Malagasy workers, farmers working the land surrounding the plantation's fields, and higher-level Malagasy and Chinese administrators working at different rungs of the bureaucratic ladder. From the perspective of the Chinese company, these tugs-of-war are often understood as pulling

them beyond the original agreement to which they often refer in refusing blatant or insinuating requests for greater benefits from Malagasy stakeholders.

The following description of my experience of attending a *joro* carried out by the *Antankarana ampanjaka* to mark the beginning of, and request ancestral blessing for, the harvest season of 2015 provides a detailed example of how such friction among different stakeholders takes place on the ground:

> A *joro* can be understood as a Malagasy ritual hosted by traditional rulers, well-respected elders or village leaders to seek ancestral blessing, most commonly in support of the productivity of land and people. Sugar production in Anjava is seasonal. The harvest season usually starts in mid-June and lasts less than six months. Customarily, the start of the harvest season is marked by a *joro* carried out by the *Antankarana ampanjaka*, in recognition of the longtime occupation of *Antankarana* land by the plantation.
>
> In 2015, my supervisor Andrew and I traveled to Anjava in the ampanjaka's four-wheel drive to attend that year's *joro*, taking place right in front of the office bungalows where truck drivers would gather and wait for their receipts. A table had been set up for us. The *ampanjaka* took a seat in the chair in the middle. The Chinese representative – Director Liu - a man in his mid-thirties deployed by the head office of the company in Beijing, sat to the left of the *ampanjaka*, and the Malagasy director of the plantation sat to his right. I sat next to Director Liu so that I could translate for him, and Andrew sat next to me to help me translate into Malagasy for the *ampanjaka*. The facilitators of the ceremony started off with a speech of blessings. A *zebu* (*aomby*) was sacrificed. Near the start of the ensuing feast, the *ampanjaka* turned to Director Liu while at the same indicating that Andrew and I should translate for him:
>
> > The fertile and blessed *Antankarana* land belongs to the *Antankarana* people. Our royal ancestors have been managing and giving blessings to the land. Before you (the Chinese) came here, we had agreed to give the land to the French to use it for free, in hope that the plantation would benefit the local community, and keep local people living and working in harmony, peace and contentment.
>
> After hearing my translation, Director Liu nodded his head with a sense of satisfaction at the kind words of the *ampanjaka*. The congenial atmosphere of the communication was soon interrupted, however, when the *ampanjaka* brought up a request for more benefits:
>
> > Now Madagascar's economy is going downwards. Life is so hard for the *Antankarana* people. But we still willingly provide the land to the Chinese people so you can use it freely. We would really appreciate it if you provide us more financial support after the harvest season.

After Andrew and I awkwardly translated the *ampanjaka*'s request, Director Liu appeared grouchy. He said to me in Chinese:

> Can you tell him that if he wants to share a bigger piece of cake from this plantation business, he needs to talk to the Malagasy government instead of us, because we signed the contract with the government, not the local royalty. We have already paid for the *zebu* and the drinks every time there is a traditional ceremony [like the one we were attending that day].

We notified the *ampanjaka* that the Chinese director understood the message and might give it a consideration instead of translating Liu's words literally. Liu continued:

> It is always about money here. Last year flood destroyed the bridge on the road connecting Sakaimarobe and here. The company was willing to pay for the restoration of the bridge as long as the government gave us permission to do it ourselves. However, the government wanted us to pay them money first then they promised to do it for us. We knew we couldn't trust their government. Once we paid the money, it would be like "water poured out from the bucket" (*po chu qu de shui*) – not possible to collect it back, and nothing will get done!" (Conversation with Liu).

As described above, Chinese-Malagasy encounters at Anjava sugar plantation do not only involve Chinese managers and Malagasy employees. As Ortner's "serious games" (1999) approach might suggest, encounters at Anjava are made possible by different global and local actors (in this case, including Malagasy government officials, Malagasy traditional rulers, Chinese managers, and Malagasy workers of the plantation) negotiating, collaborating, conflicting and antagonizing with and against one another. Interestingly, such encounters are not only shaped by human actors, as I will discuss further in the next section.

Fire and Water on a Plantation Frontier

Anjava is vast. More than 6000 hectares of sugar cane fields are divided to 350 numbered plots managed by the company's five farming groups. Thousands of contract labourers work in the fields growing, fertilizing, harvesting and transporting sugar cane every year. Unlike mining and logging projects, sugar production is seasonal. As noted earlier, the harvest period normally lasts less than six months, and so production schedules are tight: workers of the farm, the factory and the garage work on shifts around-the-clock.

Stepping into the refinery building on timeworn metal stairs, the production line struck me as something out of the Industrial Revolution: red brick walls in the boiler

room, giant oiled toothed wheels, three-metre tall white vacuum pans with effervescent syrup inside, combined with the smothering roaring and heat from machines and the suffusing smell of molasses. Interestingly, almost all of the Chinese workers I spoke with explained that sugar refining is, in fact, not a very complicated procedure. To describe it in over-simplified language: the farm groups dispatch workers to a chosen plot containing cane that is ripe and ready to be cut. They set fire to the field, and then, when the fire subsides, cut all the stalks of sugar cane by machete and pile them on the ground. Within the ensuing 72 hours they must tear off all the remaining leaves attached to the cane, load them on tractors, and transport them to the entrance of the factory. Then the cane is washed, shredded, pressed, boiled, and evaporated in the factory before reaching the packing room as the finished product - "*sucre blond*." [Figure 2]

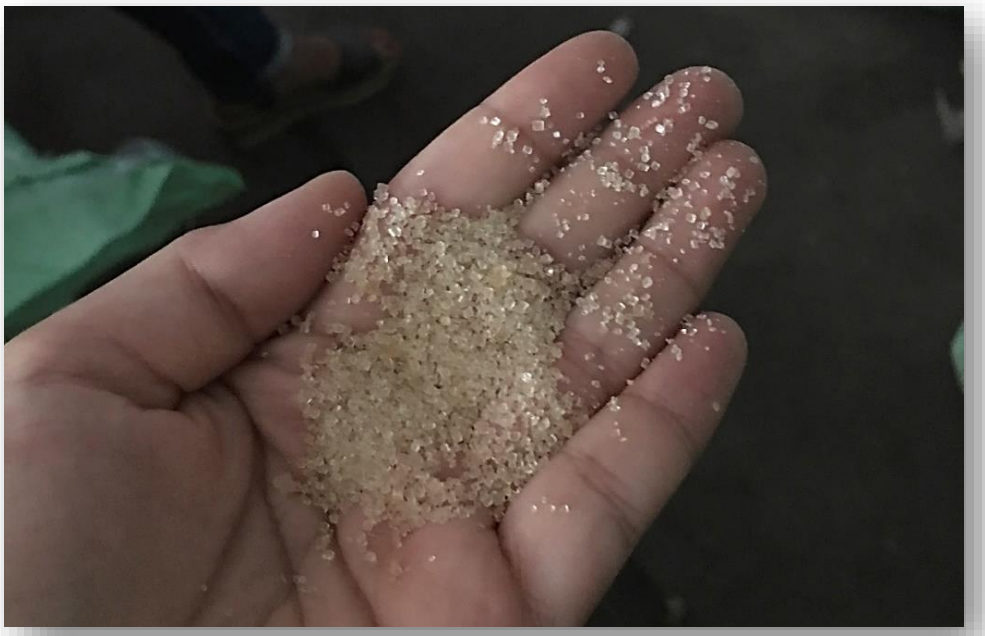

Figure 2 Golden Sugar Produced at Anjava

During the harvest season in Anjava, there is not a single day without smoke that can be seen from miles away. As described above, sugar cane fields are mostly intentionally burned before being harvested manually with machetes [Figure 3]. However, fire can also be used in favour of or against the harvest depending on when and where it is set. Local farmers have learned how to sabotage Anjava's sugar production as well as

how to make land and water claims by turning fire from a tool of the harvest to a weapon against the company. Like sugar cane harvesting, sabotage and resource-claiming activities are seasonal and timing is key. If fields are burnt before the harvest season in May, it will cause a pure loss to the company. One of Yang's duties involved putting out fires before the harvest season began. According to him:

> The farmers are very cunning. Sometimes they set fire to dry zebu dung then throw it randomly in the sugar cane fields. Sometimes they tie a string to a bundle of matches and set fire to the string. They leave the string very long, so when we realize there is fire somewhere, nobody can trace back to where the fire started. In this way, nobody can catch the culprit. It really gives us headaches if sugar cane gets burned before it is fully ripe. We have almost no way to save it once the fire starts burning. The fire trucks can only help a little bit because it is usually dry and windy in May, and our sugar cane is grown tightly in line, which helps fire spread fast. (Conversation with Yang)

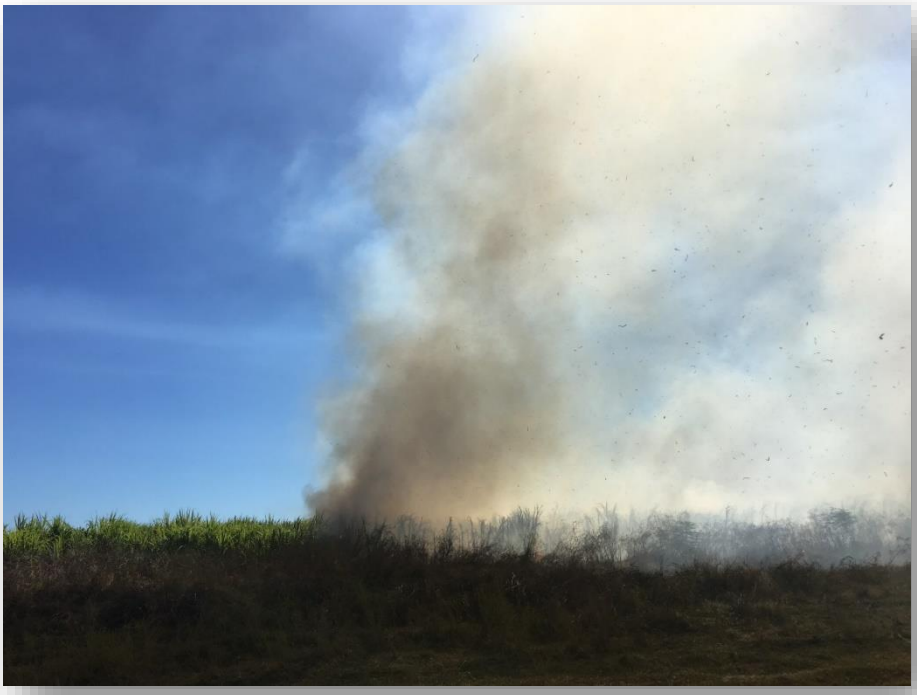

Figure 3 Burning Sugar Cane at Anjava

As Yang and some of his Chinese colleagues told me, Malagasy farmers burn sugar cane as a way of venting their grudges against the policies of the company. It is not a phenomenon unique to Anjava. Rumour has it that in other Chinese-managed sugar plantations, similar problems cause much bigger losses each year. In Anjava, one major

source of contention between the plantation and local farmers has to do with water. Local farmers make water claims from the sugar-cane fields because there is not enough water to sustain their own subsistence agriculture. When the Chinese company started to manage the sugar plantation, the local government and the sugar plantation signed an agreement stipulating that the company and the villagers should share the water from Mampalahy River. But, in reality, priority is given to the sugar plantation for irrigation and production purposes. In the original agreement, 70% of the water goes to the sugar plantation and the remaining 30% goes to local farmers. The proportion was recently altered to 65% for the plantation and 35% for farmers due to farmers' complaints of not having enough water to grow crops. The separation of the water supply is made possible by a dam built on the Mampalahy River near Sakaimarobe which diverts water into two different channels. During the dry season, with most water diverted to the sugar plantation, most of the riverbed of the natural course of Mampalahy River is exposed under the sun. One *bajaj* driver once complained to me as we were crossing the bridge of Mampalahy River in Sakaimarobe: "because of the dam, all the water goes to the sugar plantation. Malagasy people suffer because our animals do not have enough water to drink!"

Chef Shen works for the farm department and he is responsible for the irrigation system of the plantation. One day he drove me upstream along a canal towards the main water gate that diverts water from Mampalahy river to Anjava. Starting from the water gate, the company has full control over the amount of water that goes to the plantation. There are locks on the flashboards that control the flow of water, and only the company personnel have the keys to these locks. Shen told me that the company is currently facing a complicated situation with regard to farmers' water claims:

> It is a subtle business to deal with local farmers' water claims. If we do not handle the situation well, conflicts will aggravate. For example, we are facing a sticky situation right now. We do not think we can find a satisfactory solution to this problem for everybody in Anjava. More and more peasants are growing rice, cassava and tomato in our drainage canals. Growing stuff in the canals is fine so long as they do not "steal" water meant for irrigating the sugar cane fields. Farmers use iron sticks to drill holes on the bank of the canals to let water in. Thus, the water that should be used to irrigate sugar cane goes to irrigate farmers' rice and cassava. Such activity has two negative results for the plantation. First, there is simply not enough water for the sugar cane, especially in this year

> because we do not have enough rain. Second, the bank of the canals get wider and wider with a potential danger of collapse because of the holes that farmers drill. But the situation is tricky because if we completely forbid the farmers to grow crops in the canals, they will burn our sugar cane before the harvest season to sabotage us (Conversation with Shen).

Once caught, culprits responsible for sabotage activities face serious punishment and might even be sent to prison. As a result, what happens more often than burning sugar cane *before* the harvest season is burning it *during* the harvest season. In this case, it is a milder form of resistance in order to make water claims. How this is so takes some explaining.

As mentioned above, the first step in harvesting sugar cane is to set cane fields on fire, the main purpose being to burn off leaves and impurities on the cane. In most cases, the company sets these fires on a set schedule. Sometimes, however, local farmers set these fires ahead of schedule (but still during harvest season), giving the company no choice but to wait until the fire burns out and then send workers and tractors to collect the sugar cane; cane that has been burned must be sent for processing within 72 hours lest it be wasted. Significantly, however, after sugar cane has been harvested, their roots stay in the soil, and the company must immediately irrigate them in anticipation of the next crop. And so it becomes clear that the reason why farmers set fire to harvestable cane ahead of schedule is to force the company to release water into irrigation canals that also serve their own crops in bordering drainage canals. For Chinese managers seeking to maintain the efficiency of the plantation's operations, such pre-emptive burning poses a significant problem. But it is not one that is easily solved. As Shen explains:

> If we do not handle the requests of the farmers well, they will set fire to our sugar canes before the harvest season and cause huge loss to our company. Every year we have to pay money to the local police to catch these people. However, if they burn our cane during the harvest season, it is annoying but not the worst situation. How to stop the farmers from growing crops in the canals without infuriating them is our foremost issue at this moment. We are currently proposing a solution to this problem. Our idea is to let the crops that have already been planted in canals grow. However, we will not allow new crops planted in the canals from now on. We will have to request help from the Malagasy cadres from the security department to bring more people to patrol. We have already caught some farmers who try to grow more crops there, and we will not allow it (Conversation with Shen).

As we can see above from Shen's words, when conflicts of interest involving neighbouring farmers arise in Anjava, the Chinese company often needs to rely on Malagasy police or high-level Malagasy administrators to solve the problem. But what form do social relations within the company take?

Labour, Hierarchy and Fractures

The labour hierarchy on which Anjava's operations rely is pervasive on the plantation, apparent, as noted earlier, in the accommodations and modes of transport of different categories of Chinese and Malagasy workers, but also embodied in the daily routines of their work and lives in Anjava. The plantation is comprised of six major departments: finance, administration, farm, factory, garage, and warehouse, with two Chinese "*chefs*" and several Malagasy "*cadres*" leading each department. There are in total about 30 Chinese people working at Anjava, among whom only two are female. The average salary of a mid-level Chinese employees is around 30,000-50,000 USD per year; I have no accurate data on how much the Malagasy department heads earn, but it is safe to assume that it is far below that of their Chinese counterparts. As noted earlier, the higher status of Chinese and Malagasy department heads is manifested most obviously through the arrangement of living space and their level of mobility around Anjava area. They live in the well-appointed bungalows in the core housing area with 24-hour security guards, and they are each assigned a four-wheel-drive pickup. The only difference is that the department heads drive the vehicles with air conditioning, whereas the deputy heads drive those without.

One rung below the Malagasy department heads on the career ladder are the permanent workers of the company. On average, they earn a fixed salary of around 300,000 *ariary* (roughly equal to 93 USD) per month, with full medical insurance coverage and access to the housing provided by the company. But after they retire, they are expected to move out and find places of their own, which explains why many senior workers use their connections to bring younger siblings or children to work at the plantation to guarantee that extended family can continue to occupy company-provided housing after their retirement. According to the labour contract signed between SINLANX and the Malagasy government, permanent workers cannot be fired simply

because they are not "productive" at work. The company can only fire someone in case of serious offences that have been thoroughly investigated and confirmed by the union. There are also many hierarchical divisions among the permanent workers where superiors have full authority over inferiors. Although many Chinese found Malagasy workers hard to "discipline" (*bu ting hua*), they were also surprised by the amount of respect Malagasy workers show to the company's bureaucratic hierarchy.

Contract-based seasonal workers rank below permanent workers. Seasonal workers are usually manual labourers such as sugar cane cutters, tractor drivers, or garage apprentices. Due to the seasonal nature of sugar production, there is usually a surging need for temporary labourers during the harvest season. Seasonal workers earn approximately 120,000-200,000 *ariary* per month (roughly equal to 37-62 USD). They and their immediate families also enjoy full medical care and have access to company-provided housing. However, their settlements are farther scattered in nearby villages. Take cane cutters as an example. Every harvest season, the company hires 1500 seasonal workers to cut sugar cane manually. One way that the company adopted to avoid hiring too many seasonal cane cutters and tractor drivers is to outsource the labour to independent Malagasy contractors. This is a cost-saving measure for the company since workers for independent contractors are not affiliated with the company, and are thus not eligible for medical and other benefits. Even though working conditions for seasonal workers are sometimes harsh, there is still competition for such employment. In order to work at the garage, a potential candidate has to pay 100,000 *ariary* (31 USD – almost one month's salary of a lower level seasonal worker) to a Malagasy *cadre* as an "introduction fee" (*jie shao fei*). If one wants to work at the farm, the "introduction fee" is 50,000 *ariary* (16 USD), less than that for garage work as working in the fields brings fewer potential benefits than working in the garage. Working in the garage brings potential opportunities to sneak out automobile parts, to siphon diesel, or to earn easy cash from hitchhikers. For example, when a driver working for the garage drives a truck back and forth from Anjava to Tsaramiverina, he can allow hitchhikers or steal a little diesel. A mechanic, meanwhile, can steal small tractor and car parts to sell in the local market. The price of one nail or screw on Anjava's local market is 500 *ariary* (15 cents in USD). If one slips six screws in one's pocket, the money earned from selling them is enough for a

decent Malagasy-style meal at a *gargotte* in town. As a matter of fact, some can do better from such shadowy *biznesy* than from their salaries.

On the bottom of the labour hierarchy pyramid are what are commonly known as "hourly workers" (*xiao shi gong*) who are not eligible for the various sorts of benefits provided by the company. Most of these are sugar bag porters who manually carry sugar bags from trucks into warehouses or vice versa. They used to be paid by the hour, but, due to complaints about their low efficiency, are now paid by piecework – that is, by how many 50-kilogram bags of sugar they carry. Originally, each ton of sugar one person carried earned him 1000 *ariary* (31 cents in USD). After a meager increase several years ago, the current rate is 1500 *ariary* per ton (47 cents in USD). That is to say, every 20 bags that one man carries, he earns less than half a US dollar. When such manual labour is needed, men are gathered around 7 a.m., in two groups of 30 people, and then each group works in one warehouse under the supervision of two Malagasy and one Chinese superiors. One Malagasy superior is in charge of directing the workers on how to stack sugar bags on the truck; the other is responsible for counting the number of bags carried. The Chinese superior's job is to sign the work log after each truck is loaded. The first hour in the morning is the most efficient because everybody is exuberant. As I calculated one day, in the first 30 minutes of a working day, 30 shirtless, muscular men carried a total of 480 bags of sugar, which means that the whole group together made 36,000 *ariary* from carrying 24 tons of sugar. Thus, everybody in this group earned 1200 *ariary* in the first 30 minutes. However, carrying sugar bags is an extremely exhausting job in the heat and humidity of the warehouses. It requires two men to level one bag up above a third man's height before putting the bag on the third man's head. Then the third man climbs (most of times barefoot) up a wooden ramp bridging the ground and the elevated truck container. Soon after two trucks were loaded, people had taken turns to rest and recover. The wooden ramp became too slippery to climb barefoot due to the dripping sweat of the carriers; other workers had to periodically put sand on the ramp to create more friction and prevent falls. Sometimes people whistled or shouted to boost the morale; however, by 2 p.m. when the work was finished, everybody was extremely exhausted and craving rice.

An account like the one offered above might easily be used against the Chinese company since it seems to support the prevailing argument in the media about China's exploitative, neo-colonial role in Africa. However, looking deeper into this labour relationship, it becomes clear that both the Chinese company and Malagasy workers face dilemmas caused by the logics of a capitalist economy which disappointingly offers no easy solutions to a dreadful situation. In the case of the seasonal cane cutters, for example, the Chinese company does not in fact need any human labour at all since the work of thousands of temporary workers could be done far more efficiently by machines; according to Chinese workers' estimations, six combine harvesters are just about enough to harvest 3000 tons of sugar cane every day. The reason that no combine-harvesters can be used is that one condition of SINLANX's agreement with the Malagasy government was that it would guarantee local employment as a way of benefiting the Malagasy community. By employing 1500 cane cutters each year, SINLANX provides job for 1500 Malagasy people and means of living for 1500 families. From the perspective of SINLANX, they would rather use machines than manual labour, but they cannot. *Chef* Qian, from the administration department, told me that the company would like to provide other job opportunities to more local people if possible; however, many people are not qualified for different sorts of work.

The labour of sugar bag porters might also be substituted by that of machines, however, the company will not do so in the spirit of "mutual benefit." Indeed, many Chinese workers use this point to stake a claim to moral high ground and argue against accusations of being "new colonizers." The dilemma of Malagasy employees remains the same, however, and is fundamentally caused by a lack of choice. They seem to have no option other than accepting whatever the Chinese company provides them in terms of pay or benefits. Especially following the closing of the Morondava plantation in 2014, the Malagasy people I spoke with seem to have realized that they might lose everything they have now if they try to force the Chinese out of the region's sugar business. Memories of how the plantation deteriorated under the management of the Malagasy government before 2000 are still fresh in many local people's minds. Well aware of the difficulty of finding other foreign investors to take over the plantation, many Malagasy workers are satisfied with the current situation however unsatisfactory it might be at times. As I was

told many times: “we like the Chinese, you people came to us, fixed our machines and facilities, and made the plantation alive again. You do not pay much, but you always pay on time!”

Although not conceived of as an aid-project, some Chinese workers nonetheless saw themselves as doing good here in Anjava. As Yang and Shao told me:

> There have been many changes after the Chinese came. The way Malagasy people work now is beyond their own imagination. They are influenced by the hardworking spirit of us – the Chinese. After the production in Morondava was suspended, the workers realized that they have lost all the benefits and conveniences provided by the plantation before. Local people there even have difficulty getting water now. They also realized that if the Chinese abandon the plantation, nobody else can manage it as profitably as we do. If the plantation were in the hands of the Malagasy government again, they cannot run it as smoothly as we do. There are three reasons to explain why I say this. First of all, the Malagasy government does not have enough money to fund the plantation. Secondly, they do not have convenient access to all kinds of machine parts as we do. If machines break down, they are hard to fix. Lastly, but most importantly, it is because of the Malagasy style of management. Before the privatization of the company, all the management officers worked in the capital, and everything they did at Anjava needed to be reported to them there in Antananarivo. Bureaucracy and corruption ruined the company. Salaries couldn’t be distributed on time, then workers went on strike. They used to burn 1500 hectares of sugar cane every harvest season. Also, every year 300 tons of sugar went missing when transporting it the short distance from the factory to the warehouse near the port. How can a plantation be managed like this? Malagasy workers understand the fact and they admire the diligence and the spirit of devotion of the Chinese. But it is always those ranking higher with some level of power who want to kick the Chinese out of the business. They really overestimate their own ability. It is true that sometimes we walk on the edge and take advantage, but the local community benefits a lot when we are working here. If we leave, they will suffer and it will be hard for them to even feed themselves” (Conversation with Yang and Shao).

As Yang and Shao note, hierarchy and rank have created new fractures among Malagasy people within the local community, in a similar way to what happened in the South African mining town described by Rajak (as discussed in the previous chapter) where access to social benefits coming from the company served to reinforce “economic and social inequalities” (2011:174). The imbalanced distribution of power among Malagasy employees in Anjava has exacerbated conflicts among them, and some Malagasy people blame the Chinese for creating fractures in their communities.

How Malagasy *cadres* implement plantation regulations sometimes provokes discontent among the local community. For example, to prevent petty theft, every Malagasy employee leaving the gated factory entrance on foot or by bicycle needs to accept a routine pat-down body search; female guards are always available to conduct the body search on female workers. The Malagasy cadre who supervises this endeavour is Ludovic, the head of security. Besides overseeing body searches, he is also responsible for all security-related issues in the factory compound and for guaranteeing the safe production and transportation of sugar, and the personal safety of all the workers. I always spotted him at the gated entrance, making sure that nothing was stolen from the factory or warehouse. Petty theft is the most annoying problem for the Chinese. Things commonly stolen include diesel, machine parts and, of course, sugar, which can be sold outside of the factory for a decent price. The Chinese administrators have learned to address this problem with a balanced strategy: they take all kinds of precautionary and disciplinary methods to prevent theft, while at the same time turning a blind eye to some cases, allowing Malagasy workers to take just enough advantage of their positions to keep them loyal and satisfied. However, it is widely believed that once petty theft is caught by Ludovic, the consequences will be worse than if caught by the Chinese. Rachid, a well-respected community member who had never worked at the sugar plantation told me:

> The Malagasy head of the department of security - Ludovic, before he was just an ordinary worker, like everybody else. Now he has power and he catches people (*matatra olo*) and helps the Chinese to fire workers because of minor infractions such as petty theft. Even if a worker only takes five nails from the factory, once caught by Ludovic, he will kick him out. But the workers also have families to feed. What about their wives or children? Five nails are worth less than one dollar. They should have another system, for example, if someone steals things worth more than 30 dollars cumulatively, he can be fired. But you should not fire someone if he only steals five nails. But this is the way Malagasy people fight for a higher position (*miady place*). If you do something good to satisfy the Chinese, even if it is not a good thing for the Malagasy, you will get promoted. The Chinese already know that Malagasy workers sometime steal things. But people like Ludovic are even stricter than the Chinese. This is routine behaviour for Ludovic, he catches people stealing (*mangalatra*) and sends them to prison (*gadrany en prison*). But he himself also steals. Some people say Chinese have bad spirits (*ratsy fagnahy*) and do not know how to get along with or listen to Malagasy workers (*chinois tsy mahay miaraka zegny aminy raha volagninolo*), but according

> to me, it is not the Chinese who are have bad spirits but the Malagasy *cadres*" (Conversation with Rachid).

He continued by giving another example:

> The Chinese had offered the money to build a hospital, but people like Ibrahim [a Malagasy *cadre* of the department of administration] told the Chinese not to build it. He told the Chinese if they build a hospital here, all the workers are going to pretend to be sick and they will get medicine for free. I heard that people call Ibrahim "*sinoa gasy*" [Chinese Malagasy, meaning that he is not really benefiting Malagasy people, but he is only ingratiating himself to the Chinese], he makes the Malagasy people suffer. That is why now even if some workers are really sick and have enough money to see a doctor, they do not want to go to Anjava Hospital. Because if they go there, they must bring the prescriptions to Ibrahim, and only if he accepts the prescriptions, can the workers get their reimbursement after a month. But if he doesn't accept, there is nothing the workers can do. People would rather go to Tsaramiverina, or Sakaimarobe to seek a doctor's help, or directly to the pharmacy because in that way they do not need to bring the prescriptions to Ibrahim. The Chinese signed the agreement with ANJAVA, and they accepted all the requests from the old convention. But after the Chinese came here to lead the plantation, the Malagasy started to complain. Chinese just came here to work. They work really hard, get their hands dirty to work along with the Malagasy workers, and demand high production. It is not the Chinese, but the Malagasy officials to be blamed. They do not work together with the workers. They just sit in comfortably in their office and drive their cars everywhere. Their hands are clean. They put bad ideas [about Malagasy people] into the minds of the Chinese managers (*izy magnamia loha sinoa*) (Conversation with Rachid).

Not everyone agrees with Rachid, however. During my visit to the community centre of a village near Anjava, I met Donald, the mayor of the village. He was a short and paunchy man, wearing a T-shirt and a pair of pants made from one piece of cloth covered in dazzling colourful patterns, as well as two giant golden rings on each hand. He told me how interested he was to practise English with me, joking about how handsome Malagasy boys are and asking me whether I am single or married. After dodging those questions, I seized the opportunity to ask him what he thought of the Chinese here in Anjava. He did not take long to think before answering:

> Personally I am against the Chinese and I prefer the French. The Chinese do not want to benefit the local people here. Last year I asked permission from the director of the sugar plantation to borrow their bulldozer and grader to fix the roads in our village. But the Chinese did not agree. The Chinese work too much but they only pay the Chinese well, but not the Malagasy. Chinese have bad behaviour (*sinoa ratsy toeky)*" (Conversation with Donald).

After Donald realized that I understood more Malagasy than he had expected, he declared to me that the conversation was over.

It is not hard to find critical people like Donald anywhere in Madagascar since Chinese companies are involved in many projects throughout the island, whether in sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, mining or infrastructure construction. Chen and Landry (2016) estimate that, as of 2016, there are 54 Chinese firms currently active in Madagascar's manufacturing and agricultural sectors. The Chinese-managed sugar plantation is beyond a doubt benefiting the local community in various ways. However, providing job opportunities and benefits does not change the fact that the Chinese company is taking advantage of the cheap land and labour in Madagascar and profiting from the sugar business. In a Chinese news article about the Movondava plantation published some years prior to the earlier noted upheaval there, a reporter recounts the positive influences by emphasizing the "aid" or "gift"-like nature of the benefits provided by the company, described as:

> …aiming to create a harmonious internal and external environment, to develop the company steadily, and to emphasize economic performance but avoid greediness and venality, the company has on various occasions financed the construction of schools, repaired infrastructures, and donated food since 2000… (Xinhua Net 2006).

This account resonates with how Chinese workers in Anjava talk about how they benefit the local community. This position also corresponds with the discourse of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Studying the multifarious CSR projects undertaken by a multinational company on South Africa's platinum belt, Rajak (2011) argues that the social programs and moral endeavours of multinational companies are usually grounded in an ethos of gift-giving. Rajak also insightfully points out that moral economies of responsibility, generosity and community service have not become the weapons of the weak but the weapons of the powerful since CSR represents a new kind of agency for corporations (Rajak 2011:18).

When I asked three officials working at CMCS in a group interview whether the Malagasy government and local communities have any concerns about China's share in Madagascar's sugar business, they took some time to come up with a euphemistic but honest answer "yes and no," the head of the office Mr. Robert said:

> The real concern is not so much about China's role in Madagascar's sugar business. Compared to that we are more concerned with whether the Chinese respect the Malagasy culture or not. For example, we have many holidays in Madagascar, the workers need their holidays. But the Chinese are always working! The cultures are different and there is no system in Madagascar to require foreigners to understand the culture before they come to work here. If you want to work in America or France, you are at least required to speak the language, but here in Madagascar, we have no such rules" (Interview with Robert and his colleague, CMCS office, Antananarivo).

Indeed, most of the Chinese workers in Anjava and elsewhere in Madagascar have little intention to learn Malagasy. On the one hand, this reluctance to fully immerse themselves in their new home reflects the "awkward and unequal qualities of interconnection across difference" (Tsing 2005:4); but it is also clearly related to the fact that most Chinese people in Anjava have no intention of staying in Madagascar longer than their contracts require. In fact, they remain connected to their lives in China, even as they live most of their lives in Madagascar, a point to which I will return in Chapter 5 when discussing intimate relations between Chinese men and Malagasy women on the plantation.

In conclusion, instead of seeing the Chinese and the Malagasy involved in Chinese-Malagasy encounters at Anjava as opposed actors, it is more useful to consider the "thickness" of their encounters with one another by taking what Ortner called "an ethnographic stance" to understanding "how external forces interact with internal politics" (1995:179). In the production of sugar at Anjava, we see Ortner's "Serious Games" in action as Chinese managers, Malagasy *cadres* and workers, and other local people engaged simultaneously in relations of "cooperation and conflict," "solidarity and exploitation" (1999:23). Chinese-Malagasy encounters manifested at Anjava also involve people with their own agendas, Chinese people travelling to Madagascar and Malagasy people working for the Chinese, all of them pursuing available opportunities for achieving their respective yearnings for better lives. In the next chapter, I discuss how similar yearnings lead to encounters between Malagasy traders who travel to China and Chinese merchants doing business with foreigners in Guangzhou.

CHAPTER THREE – "The Everlasting Canton Fair": Malagasy Traders in China's Global Bazaar

"Sinoa fetsifetsy, iro misy raha jiaby agny."

En Route to Guangzhou

As the Air Mauritius flight was descending to the airstrip of Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Francisco clicked his tongue. This was his third business trip to Guangzhou – China's commercial hub of export-orientated production – since he had decided to expand his Tsaramiverina-based motorcycle spare parts business two years earlier. From the cloudless dark sky 15,000 feet above, the bird's-eye view of the warm yellowish lights of a metropolis of glittering high-rises and glowing overpasses looked like the resplendent Milky Way usually visible to the naked eye in Madagascar's night sky. Twenty-four hours earlier, Francisco was extremely late in picking me up from my hostel in a taxi due to his poor estimation of the traffic in Antananarivo. We almost missed our outbound flight. This did not seem to bother him much, even when I complained about his practice of *lera gasy* (meaning "Malagasy time," a phrase used by both Malagasy people and foreigners to express frustrations with Malagasy people who are habitually unpunctual or inefficient) all the way from Madagascar to Mauritius. When we arrived in Mauritius, our transfer flight was cancelled due to unknown technical difficulties, which really put Francisco on edge since he had only planned to spend six nights in Guangzhou to complete his purchases. With the unexpected flight cancellation, he was worried that it would be impossible to stick to his original plan and that the long and exhausting trip would not be worth the cost and effort. High above Guangzhou, however, his anxiety eased: "we are almost there," he said, "there is everything I need here."

According to the statistics cited in a news report in 2014, Francisco is one of the almost-half-a-million African travellers who visit Guangzhou each year. An additional 16,000 live in the city (South China Morning Post 2014). As many scholars interested in the topic of "Africans in Guangzhou" have pointed out, there are no official and accurate statistics on the size of African population lodging in the city (see for example Haugen

2012 and Castillo 2015).[8] Most of the Africans in Guangzhou are entrepreneurs who can be loosely categorized into three groups: (1) expatriate traders of African import and export or trading firms, (2) independent merchants and traders with prior business experience in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong, and, finally, (3) petty entrepreneurs sometimes referred as "calculator merchants," "suitcase merchants," or "garbage bag merchants" (Zhou et al. 2016: 1575-1576). Members of the last of these groups are described by Mathews as involved in "low-end globalization," a process involving "traders sending relatively small amounts of goods under the radar of the law, bribing customs agents on different continents, and getting these goods back home to stalls and street vendors" (Mathews 2011:2).

As an itinerant trader who makes 2-3 short trips to China each year, Francisco certainly falls into the third category. I first met him through a language centre in Tsaramiverina where he was searching for a Chinese language tutor. From a poor family in the northeastern region of Madagascar, Francisco started his business from scratch. When he started his first year of study at the University of Tsaramiverina, his family could not afford to support him financially, so he would go fishing overnight with fishermen who set off from the Tsaramiverina shore at dusk, chase schools of fish, and come back in the morning to sell their catch in the local market. With the money he earned and saved from his fishing, he was able to start a trading business focusing on second-hand clothes and spare motor parts. His uncle, living in Sakaimarobe, was already trading motorcycle spare parts, and so, knowing something of the business, Francisco decided to expand his business and focus fully on the same. Now in his early 30s, he has a monopoly on the city's motorcycle spare parts business. His shop, located at the centre of Tsaramiverina, has become a hub for motorcycle related businesses; it is frequented by *bajaj* taxi drivers, independent mechanics who come to solicit business, and motorcycle riders. Beggars walk into his shop demanding pittances every day. As a rich man, he is

[8] As mentioned by Haugen's 2012 article, a commonly quoted estimate is 20,000 African immigrants in Guangzhou. However, the Chinese state media reported that as many as 130,000 African immigrants are registered as residents in the city. In addition, there is an estimation of more than 60,000 Africans staying in hotels in 2007. Mathews also mentions that the population of foreigners in Guangzhou is unclear (Mathews 2017:1-2). The lack of accurate data is largely because it is hard for journalists or scholars to obtain official census figures and many foreigners are living in precarious situation or under illegal status.

always wary of being the target of local gangsters. He does not have a bodyguard, but carries a gun in his car in case of attempted robbery.

In accounting for his rapid accumulation of wealth, Francisco is very proud of himself. He notes that his shop offers quality products for the cheapest prices in town and attributes his success largely to his solo efforts as a self-made man. He told me that he has four major competitors in town, all of whom replenish their stock from other Malagasy businessmen based in Antananarivo. Going to Guangzhou takes him one step closer to manufacturers, which guarantees him a significant price advantage among his competitors. He triples the wholesale prices of the goods he purchases in China to earn a gross profit of 12,000-15,000 USD a month. His additional costs are mostly associated with transportation and customs fees. He only trusts a few family members to attend to his shop in his absence, so he does not have to hire any employees outside his family. His uncle sometimes comes to town to discuss business with him at his newly built ocean-view villa, or attends the shop for him when he is away. His ambition has grown bigger than ever. At the start, he told me, all he wanted was to have an affluent life, a nice house and a car. Now, however, the urge to earn more money has proven open-ended. He talks incessantly about expanding his business to every city and town in northern Madagascar, and about buying a new luxury car.

Francisco was not the only Malagasy businessman travelling to China on that flight. I estimated that at least 25 other Malagasy travellers on the same flight were going to Guangzhou for business. Many others on the flight were Mauritian businessmen. The group of Malagasy businessmen was not fully discernable, however, until all passengers of the flight had claimed their luggage and dispersed into the dark night of Guangzhou outside the exit of the terminal building. Although not seeming to know each other prior to the trip, all of the Malagasy businessmen (and me) wound up together, waiting by the roadside for a Malagasy woman living in Guangzhou who had arranged for three vans with Chinese drivers to pick us up. Francisco and I got into one of the vans and were taken directly to a hotel in Yuexiu District. Francisco told me that every time he comes to Guangzhou, he contacts the lady before hand to arrange transportation and accommodation. On arriving, all of the Malagasy traders handed in their passports and

checked into the Hotel Jade. The Malagasy woman who arranged all of this used awkward Mandarin Chinese to communicate with the hotel receptionists. Since Francisco and I kept hearing her pronouncing *san* (number three) in Chinese, we decided to call her "Madame San." The receptionist glanced at me with suspicion since I was the only Chinese person among the Malagasy businessmen. Based on the dialect difference, I was certain that Francisco was the only Malagasy businessman from northern Madagascar while the rest were all from the highlands.

Over the ensuing week, I helped Francisco as a temporary interpreter and accountant, closely observing how he did his business and thereby gaining insights on the experiences of itinerant traders in Guangzhou from an insider's perspective. Inspired by what many Malagasy friends have told me: "*Sinoa fetsifetsy, iro misy raha jiaby agny*" – meaning "Chinese people are cunning and foxy, they have everything there [in China]," in this chapter I address the challenges faced by Malagasy businessmen in Guangzhou, focusing especially on the effects of their limited knowledge of the Chinese language and the hidden rules of the "global bazaar." I also highlight the dual role of a social-networking app – WeChat (*weixin*) - in Chinese-Malagasy encounters in Guangzhou: although the app provides a way of overcoming language barriers, it also facilitates deceptive activities such as the flow of secret kickbacks. Additionally, I consider how deception and trust influence relationships among Malagasy businessmen, middlemen and Chinese merchants, arguing that African businessmen in Guangzhou are precariously situated due to their involvement in semi-legal business activities facilitated by Chinese accomplices and emergent mobile banking and electronic payment methods that push them into activities of a-darker-shade-of-grey. Finally, I focus on the effects of two sorts of ethnic relations realized in the global commodity trade in Guangzhou: the first concerning relationships among two historically antagonistic Malagasy groups - highland and coastal Malagasy people; and the second concerning Malagasy businessmen's experiences in China, how they challenge and reinforce the racial stereotypes that Chinese have of Malagasy people and vice-versa, and how they contribute to the social construction of Chinese people and commodities in contemporary discourse in Madagascar.

The Everlasting Canton Fair

Located two kilometres from Xiaobei – a centre of low-end globalization populated mostly by African and Arab traders – Hotel Jade did not strike me as a hotel from its façade and interior décor. Apart from the front desk, the extra space in the lobby was rented to a pet store, a rambunctious Cantonese-cuisine restaurant and a variety booth selling unregistered telephone SIM cards with a sign written in Malagasy reading *manakalo vola* (money exchange) [Figure 4]. The rest of the space was occupied by stacks of parcels and cartons wrapped in green poly woven bags and transparent packing tape. A creaky elevator on the other end of the lobby took all of the Malagasy merchants upstairs. Stepping out of the elevator on the third floor and onto the murky green carpet permeated with the smell of stale cigarettes, and then taking two turns along the dark corridor, I accompanied Francisco to the windowless room assigned by Madame San. The first room on the third floor was transformed into the office of a shipping company specializing in transporting goods from Guangzhou to Mauritius. The next seemed to be long occupied by Madame San, full as it was with her many personal belongings. In the corridor facing Madame San's room were more stacks of cartons and a scale.

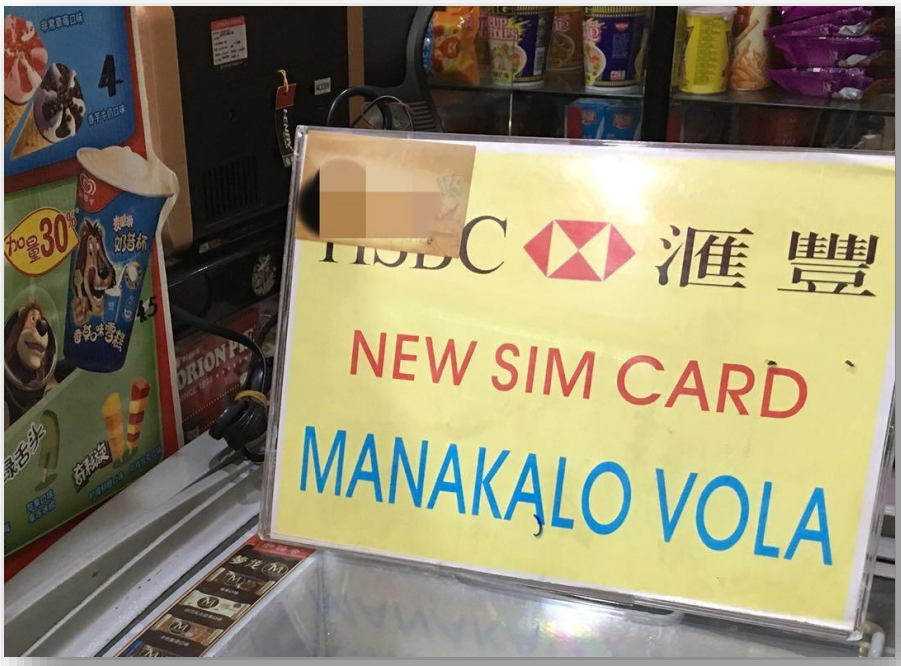

Figure 4 Money Exchange Sign at Hotel Jade

Soon after Francisco settled into his room, two young ladies came knocking on his and every other door offering to exchange money. Francisco asked about the rate that they offered and then agreed to exchange money with them, cashing in the Euros he carefully kept in his backpack for Chinese currency. "There is no better way to exchange money than this way," he told me afterwards. Unlike many hotels listed on mainstream travel booking websites, Hotel Jade has almost no reservation information online other than a Chinese landline number to call. Four Google reviews posted by foreign travellers along with some standard showcase photos were the only information available online. One standard twin bedroom of the hotel cost around 250 Chinese *Yuan* (less than 40 USD) per night during the month that Francisco travelled, the golden period for hospitality industries in Guangzhou when the city's hotels reach their full capacity and prices surge. This was the occasion of the 121st Canton Fair, taking place in April 2017.[9]

[9] "China Import and Export Fair", also known as the "Canton Fair", was established in 1957. Co-hosted by the Ministry of Commerce of PRC and the People's Government of Guangdong Province and organized by China Foreign Trade Centre, it is held every spring and autumn in Guangzhou. The Canton Fair is described as "a comprehensive international trading event with the longest history, the largest scale, the most complete exhibit variety, the largest buyer attendance, the broadest distribution of buyers' source country and the greatest business turnover in China."

Hotel Jade was overshadowed by many other high-end hotels located within a three-kilometre radius, these more expensive options targeting well-off Chinese middle-class travellers and foreign businessmen involved in "high-end globalization." When I stepped into Hotel Meilan, a four-star facility located two kilometres north of Hotel Jade, I saw a hanging red banner with a yellow bilingual slogan "Welcome to the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair or *guang jiao hui*)" in its marble-decorated lobby; a standard twin room here costs around 135 USD per night. Francisco was not in Guangzhou for the Canton Fair, however, an event that happens only twice a year. He was there for something that goes all year long. In a shopping mall for second-hand electronic devices we visited, red banners hanging from the ceiling refer to this year-round, "low-end globalization," trade show with the slogan: "the everlasting Canton Fair (*yong bu luo mu de guang jiao hui*)" [Figure 5]. This is what brought Francisco to Guangzhou.

Figure 5 The Everlasting Canton Fair Banner

http://www.cantonfair.org.cn/html/cantonfair/en/about/2012-09/130.shtml, accessed March 17, 2018

For petty Malagasy entrepreneurs, China is the place to go for business, but only for business purposes. As Francisco told me when he met me for the first time to learn the Chinese language: "I go to China only for business, I am not a tourist. I hope one day I can go to see the Great Wall. But I do enjoy Chinese food." In Guangzhou, it dawned quickly on me that the Francisco's "business" in China had nothing to do with negotiating deals during sit-down dinners at fancy hotels or signing contracts directly with manufacturers. For Francisco, "business" in China means getting on Bus No. 54 at the stop nearest his shabby hotel at 8 a.m. sharp, riding the bus for almost an hour to China's two largest motorcycle parts wholesale markets, choosing several shops from thousands of distributors, finding the products specifically needed in Madagascar's domestic market, making purchases (without eating or drinking) till seven o'clock at night when the wholesale markets close, taking the same bus back to the hotel, having a light dinner at a nearby restaurant, reviewing all his receipts and expenses, sleeping for a few hours, and then repeating the whole process again on the next morning. Whenever I proposed to him that we try some authentic Chinese cuisine at restaurants that many urbanites in Guangzhou would frequent, Francisco seemed reluctant, telling me that he had no time to enjoy the Chinese lifestyle: "*mbola misy business, tsisy le temps e! Sinoa tegna tia sakafo*! (Still have business to do, there is no time to do that. Chinese people really like food!)"

The night before the first day of Francisco's "shopping spree," he repeated to me that the next morning we would meet in front of the convenience store next to the bus stop at eight o'clock. His emphasis on punctuality shocked me given his practice of *lera gasy* in Madagascar, such as before catching our outbound flight. The next morning, after a breakfast of two steamed buns (*bao zi*), we hopped on the bus to China's biggest motorcycle parts wholesale markets. The two markets are adjacent to each other with separate entrances. The setup of the two is almost identical, each containing a warren of shops separated by cement-paved paths wide enough to let two trucks pass abreast. The shops are rented by wholesale companies representing manufacturers producing motorcycle spare parts all over China. There were cartons piled up in front of every shop. Flyers and cards for money exchange and translation services were scattered on the road almost everywhere.

Most of the Chinese merchants attending the shops are originally from other provinces (for example Henan, Hebei, Zhejiang, and etc.) or rural areas– known as internal immigrants, or as mentioned in Chapter 1, the "flowing population (*liu dong ren kou*)" in China. As Zhou et al. point out, many of China's rural-to-urban migrants lacking Guangzhou's city residency status and access to full citizens' rights "have taken up self-employment as an effective pathway to social mobility, engaging in businesses that complement the rising demands of African traders" (2016:1571). Many Chinese merchants spend more than 12 hours a day at their shops, rendering their private and professional lives inseparable. Many cook and eat three meals a day at their shops, supervising children doing homework while preparing delivery packages for their clients, playing computer games or taking naps in the storage room when there are no customers.

It is hard to give exact statistics about how many Chinese commodities are sent to Africa to be sold on local markets by street vendors and shop owners. It is also hard to estimate how many motorcycle spare parts functioning on the *bajajs* and motorbikes running around Tsaramiverina and Sakaimarobe are originally manufactured in China and made available by petty entrepreneurs like Francisco. Mathews points out that the revealing but greatly understated official figures concerning African trade in Guangzhou have increased extraordinarily to 2.1 billion USD in 2010 (2017:97). Chinese commodities available in Madagascar range from everyday necessities such as plastic water buckets, second-hand clothes, and kitchen utensils to assorted hardware and heavy machinery. Journalist Wasamu (2016) observed that Chinese motorcycles are a common feature in every major town and market centre in Kenya, creating business opportunities for Kenyans. However, it is worth noting that traders like Francisco are not only bringing spare parts for Chinese-made motorcycles. In his container one can also find accessories for Japanese made motorcycles and scooters, as well as for Indian-made *bajajs*. Certain models of motorcycles are especially popular in Madagascar, and these are Francisco's major targets.

Communicating the Incommunicable

Francisco does not speak Chinese. As noted earlier, he had approached me in Madagascar with the desire of learning basic oral communication for business before his next trip to

China. Over a dozen language sessions, I taught him what I thought should be included in the "survival language kit" for an African businessman in China, focusing on how to introduce oneself, count and bargain, and how to pronounce the names of certain motorcycle brands and parts in Mandarin Chinese.[10] However, my lessons proved to be insufficient for a number of reasons: my lack of experience in trading motorcycle parts, Francisco's forgetfulness and lack of time to practise, and the inherent difficulty of learning a completely different language. Most of the Chinese merchants at Guangzhou's wholesale markets have a small vocabulary of English keywords such as "hello," "less," "cheap," "yes," or "no," and absolutely no French vocabulary. Many are not aware of Madagascar as a country or of its geography, let alone its language. Merchants generally greeted Francisco and tried to introduce their products to him in English the moment we stepped into their shops. I had to put their enthusiasm down by explaining that Francisco did not speak any more English than they did. After hearing that, the Chinese merchants would ask me what language Francisco speaks, and where he is from. I would tell them where Madagascar is and the languages that people use there. Some merchants who seemed to have done business with Malagasy businessmen before would mumble to themselves, trying to remember what the most popular motorcycles are on Madagascar's domestic market (e.g. Yamaha Jog scooter, DY motor, Honda). Francisco, meanwhile, would spend his time quietly looking through the display samples on the wall to see if he could find what suited his needs.

It is amazing how much people can achieve, and how much business they can do with one another, despite not sharing each other's languages, thanks largely to several communicative strategies. In this section, I will highlight three strategies commonly used in the negotiations I observed and analyze their effectiveness and drawbacks: WeChat (a Chinese mobile social network app), face-to-face interaction using body language and a photo catalogue, and the use of an interpreter on the scene (in Francisco's case, me). I will also provide examples of how unintentional misunderstandings are caused by language barriers that might lead to complaints or conflicts.

[10] Although Cantonese is the most commonly used language in the city of Guangzhou and Guangdong Province, Mandarin Chinese as the official language of China is also widely used, especially among internal immigrants who are not originally from Guangdong Province.

WeChat (*Weixin*) is a mobile social networking "super app," developed by the Chinese company Tencent, that has been gaining great popularity in and outside of China, hitting one billion monthly users during the 2018 Lunar New Year (Atkinson 2018). Western technology commentators call WeChat a "super app" because its functions go beyond simply sending and receiving text, picture, voice and video messages. Two prominent features integrated in the app are the social sharing platform, similar to a combination of Facebook and Instagram, and a digital payment method similar to Apple Pay that allows cashless transactions. As credit card POS machines are not widespread in China, the WeChat payment system is a great convenience. Since WeChat has successfully reached a wide user group, breaking the myth that new technologies are only embraced by the younger generation, many companies and organizations have created official accounts within the app to reach potential customers and would-be audiences. It seems impossible for African businessmen in China to avoid downloading this app on their smart phones if they are to communicate with Chinese merchants online.

Francisco has a WeChat account that allows him to communicate with Chinese merchants over a distance because, as he noted, "all Chinese use WeChat to do business." Indeed, a unique WeChat QR code for scanning was printed on every business card handed out by the Chinese merchants we met during our time together. To facilitate transnational communication and to overcome language barriers, WeChat offers free automatic translation to its users. Widely used languages such as English and French can be translated into Chinese with a click. However, similar to what many users of Google Translate have experienced before, computer-based language translation has its inherent weaknesses in terms of grasping the nuances of and emerging trends in spoken languages. As a result, many WeChat translations are ridiculously inaccurate. Despite its drawbacks, however, WeChat translation is often the only way for petty traders like Francisco to communicate with Chinese merchants independently. Although Francisco can enjoy the convenience of unlimited texting and translation offered by WeChat, however, he does not have access to the digital payment function. To fully activate and use WeChat payment, one needs a legitimate Chinese bank account with online banking services, for which one needs an identity card and a legitimate Chinese mobile phone number with

access to cellular data or wireless Internet, all of which seem to be impossible or too much hassle for itinerant African traders.

WeChat has opened up an online space for African businessmen to connect with Chinese merchants as an extension of their offline shopping sprees. When Francisco was overseeing his shop in Madagascar, he periodically sent photos to several Chinese merchants that he had done business with before, asking for the price and availability of certain products. WeChat cannot translate from the Malagasy language, so Francisco would send his text messages in French. He would start a conversation by sending a photo and asking three questions regarding one product: about its availability, about its quality, and about its price. As mutual understandings grow deeper over time, even when the Chinese merchants do not click the "translate" option, they know how to respond. However, due to language barriers, it is almost impossible to hammer out a deal without a middleman through WeChat since it is difficult for the seller and the buyer to discuss crucial details such as colour, model, quantity, and quality the buyer needs, how the buyer wants the products to be packed, when they can be delivered, how money will be paid, when someone is going to pick up the packages, and so on. Francisco occasionally replenished his stock through WeChat with the help of intermediaries like Madame San. However, over time this has proven to be a less-than-ideal option for him.

In most cases when Francisco came to China for business alone, the most effective communicative strategy involved face-to-face interactions. There are things that are too difficult to do through online channels. Working with WeChat was not as efficient and secure as paying a visit to the Chinese wholesale markets in person, seeing the products on display and buying them directly. Doing business through WeChat put him at greater risk of miscommunication, misunderstanding, and deliberate deception. One significant feature of the motorcycle spare parts business is that it involves a vast array of models, parts, dimensions, colours, designs and qualities. Most boutiques categorize sample products and display them on the wall or in glass cabinets. Some boutiques specialize in one or several motorcycle accessories such as coils, igniters, chains, crankshafts, exhaust pipes, suspensions, and so on [Figure 6]. Physical presence at the wholesale markets allowed Francisco to pick the products he needed by choosing

meticulously. When he needed to confirm the corresponding model or the correct dimension of a certain product, he would first carefully read the label on the sample or bring the sample to the owner and write down the model and dimensions he needed. When he needed to know the price of a product, the Chinese merchants would type a number on the calculator then pass it to Francisco. Francisco would return the calculator with a lower price for the sake of bargaining. Many Chinese merchants would then press their hands down in the air while repeating the English word "less," in order to tell Francisco that the price they gave was already the lowest they could possibly offer. If Francisco was interested in a product but could not find the sample in the shop, he would ask for a photo catalogue showing all the products that the supplier could manufacture and would point it out to the Chinese merchants.

Although Francisco's presence at Chinese wholesale markets exposed him to a world of motorcycle accessories, it did not mitigate the problem of not being able to communicate the details of certain products. Francisco told me: "most of the made-in-China motorcycle accessories have four quality levels, A, B, C, and D. A is of the best quality and D is of the worst. One has to verify the quality each time one makes a

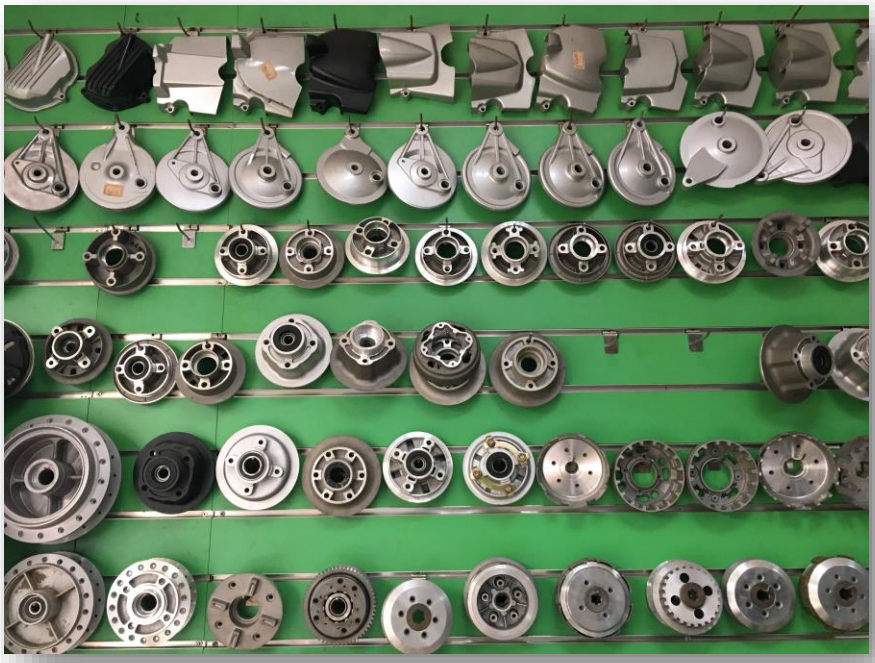

Figure 6 Motorcycle Parts on Display

purchase." One of the most commonly encountered communicative problems is how to ask about the availability and delivery arrangements of a product. Many sample products are hung on the wall of the boutiques only for display purpose and they are not available in stock. If a buyer wants to buy such products, they need to make an order big enough to reach the minimum amount of a production batch. A valid order can usually be finished by manufacturers within two weeks and delivered to a designated warehouse ready to be sent away. When Francisco took a sample product off the wall, the Chinese merchants could only respond to him by nodding or shaking their heads to inform him whether the product was available or not at the very moment. However, there was no way that they could tell Francisco that if he orders a batch, they can be ready within a few days. In this way, even if Francisco was overwhelmed by the ocean of various motorcycle accessories, his choices were significantly limited to whatever was available at the moment. He could also not negotiate expedited orders given his time constraints in China.

Face-to-face interactions also cannot circumvent unintentional misunderstandings due to language barriers that result in frictions that can aggravate the hard-earned but fragile trust between Chinese merchants and Malagasy traders. Below, I echo Mathews' argument that "a linguistic misunderstanding can in no time explode into accusations of cheating" (2011:65), explaining how Chinese numeral classifiers as a unique linguistic phenomenon have caused a great amount of doubt and misunderstandings between African businessmen and Chinese merchants.

As linguist Seifart (2010) has summarized, numeral classifiers in Mandarin Chinese are used as sortal classifiers and mensural classifiers in combination with nouns.[11] In the pragmatics of trading motorcycle parts, when Francisco requests to buy one hundred pieces of a side mirror or a tail light, the Chinese merchants might sell him a hundred pairs of such product and write the price of a pair as the unit price on the receipt, meaning that Francisco ends up buying and paying for double what he needs. Similar situations happen when he wants to buy a cord, but the Chinese merchants give him the price of a bundle containing twenty. Situations like these are an inconvenience for

[11] For example, "one" in Chinese is *yi* and "book" in Chinese is *shu*, however, when to express "one book," one needs to say *yi ben shu*. Here *ben* is a sortal classifier. One also needs to use the appropriate classifier for different nouns. "Person" is *ren* and "one person" should be translated as *yi ge ren.* In this example, *ge* is the appropriate classifier for the noun "person." Another example is mensural classifiers such as "piece" (*jian*) and "pair" (*shuang* or *dui*).

African traders who have no deep knowledge of the Chinese language since it makes it hard for them to compare prices among different boutiques. It is also nearly impossible for them to keep track of transaction records featuring the quantity and unit price of a certain product. The Chinese merchants usually provide a copy of handwritten receipts to their customers. However, the receipt is usually composed of hastily-written Chinese characters of abbreviated forms of product names, Arabic numbers of unit price and quantity based on Chinese classifiers such as piece, pair, triplet, quadruplicate, bundle, box, bag, package, cartons, and so on. At the end of the business trip, with dozens of illegible scribblings from multiple shops at which hundreds of items have been purchased, these receipts are of little use as anything but evidence of payment.

Many African traders choose to hire a Chinese interpreter if they can afford to do so. Both Chinese merchants and African traders greatly benefit from the work of an interpreter. Because of my presence, for example, Francisco was able to learn more details about the commodities that he bought such as whether a certain product is available at the moment, how many pieces are available, if not available whether he could order it from the manufacturer, if he orders it how long it will take to deliver, what is the minimum amount of an order, what quality the products have, what the cost of different packages is, and what is written on each receipt. With my help, he was also able to verify every item of his purchase, as well as the quantity and price of each product and take detailed notes in his own notebook in French. I was aware that he had managed to do business twice in Guangzhou by himself, so I asked him how different it is to have an interpreter helping him during this trip compared to his previous ones. He answered:

> Everything goes a lot faster. The cash I bought to China was supposed to last for a week, but now after two days I have finished all my money. Everything is clear, I am not confused like before. (*malakilaky e! deux jour fo efa lany vola. Raha jiaby mazava*) (Conversation with Francisco).

Many Chinese merchants were amazed by my translation between them and Francisco and self-deprecated in front of me: “if only we knew foreign languages as well as you do, we would not have any problems! We may know very well how to make money, but we are uneducated (*mei you wen hua*)!” A woman in her mid-30s, the owner of a boutique where Francisco and I spent a couple of hours one day told me:

> It is so much easier to do business with African businessmen when you are here to translate. To be honest, we really wish that foreign businessmen, especially those who do not understand much Chinese, would bring an interpreter with them all the time. We feel a lot easier and more relaxed this way. We can communicate more, they can understand more, and there will not be as many misunderstandings and conflicts. It is also a lot faster when you are here with him. For example, yesterday we had a customer from Africa. I forgot exactly where he was from. He came by himself and spent an entire day in my shop but ended up buying very few things (Conversation with Chinese merchant A).

Trust and Deception on the Global Bazaar

In Walsh's (2012) study of the sapphire and ecotourist trades in northern Madagascar, he compares Geertz's account of the features of a bazaar economy to the Ankarana sapphire market. According to Walsh, Ankarana's sapphire market shares certain features of the Moroccan bazaar as participants not only buy, sell, and trade but are also in "a perpetual search for information," and those who are less informed are rendered especially vulnerable in dealings with those who know more (Walsh 2012: xxvi, citing Geertz 1979). In most cases, the bazaar economy "favours buyers with other choices over sellers with immediate needs" (Walsh 2012:76). Guangzhou's motorcycle parts markets represent an interesting variation of the bazaar. Here, both Chinese sellers and African buyers are in a perpetual search for information. However, the bazaar economy does not always seem to favour buyers over sellers despite African buyers being exposed to a world of choices and Chinese merchants competing to sell their anything-but-authentic products.

In Chinese-Malagasy encounters in Guangzhou's marketplace, participants in the bazaar economy included not only Chinese merchants and Francisco, but also Malagasy middlemen from the highlands, other potential Malagasy competitors of Francisco from the central highlands, Chinese interpreters/middlemen, and other Chinese actors playing insignificant but consequential roles in cargo transportation and taxi businesses. Although petty traders like Francisco come to Guangzhou with money, they certainly do not have much advantage in grasping desperately needed information – a thorough understanding of the rules on which the global bazaar in Guangzhou operates. Actually, no actors involved in selling, buying, trading and transporting understand the full picture. However, the itinerant petty traders seem to be the most vulnerable as they are subject to various kinds of deception and conscious or unconscious discrimination, which they are clearly

aware of. As a solution, they must carefully nurture a certain level of trust with various actors as they muddle through the quagmire of deception and discrimination. In other words, in the ambiguous and messy relationships among all actors involved in the global bazaar in Guangzhou, trust and distrust are fluid concepts. In this section, I discuss trust and deception in three sets of relationships among different actors involved in Guangzhou's motorcycle parts bazaar and analyze how they affect Malagasy traders like Francisco.

The first set of relationships is between Francisco as a Malagasy person from the northern coastal region of Madagascar and the *Merina* people from the highlands of the island. The antagonistic sentiments between the *Merina* (Malagasy people originally from the highlands), and the *cotiers* (people originally from the coastal areas including a variety of ethnic groups) is played out in everyday interactions between the two groups. In Madagascar, people from the north felt bad about teaching me racial slurs for referring to people from the highlands, but did not feel shy using the word in front of me afterwards. Although ethnic boundaries are usually messy, contrasts and comparisons between the two groups have been observed from cultural, historical, and political perspectives. The rise of the *Merina* Empire since the 19th century marked the beginning of the centralization of political power in the central highlands of Madagascar, which placed highland people in all positions of privilege (Allen and Covell 2005: xxix). In northern Madagascar nowadays, one can easily hear backchat about how the *Merina* people have centralized political and economic resources in the capital (located in the central highlands) and impoverished the people on the coast. As a friend told me: "*borizany* have no resources. They are not like us. The people in the north are blessed because we have resources from our forest and ocean. If the *Merina* people did not have political power, they would be the poorest group among all Malagasy ethnicities." Many Malagasy people also make easy generalizations about differences between *Merina* and *cotier* appearances, lifestyles, worldviews and values.

Among the group of Malagasy businessmen who checked in at Hotel Jade in Guangzhou, Francisco was the only *cotier*. The rest of the group were, like Madame San, all *Merina*, a fact that could easily be discerned with basic knowledge of the differences

of dialects they used. Francisco had no option but to develop rapport with these *Merina* businessmen, and especially with Madame San because he relied on her to arrange his accommodation and cargo delivery. However, his behaviour also revealed that he did not see his *Merina* compatriots as completely trustworthy. Instead, they were sometimes seen as potential competitors, saboteurs and advantage takers. On the first day Francisco and I rode the bus to the wholesale markets, another Malagasy businessman on the same bus struck up a conversation with us. When Francisco was asked about which region of Madagascar he came from, he lied. I said nothing but later asked him why he had lied to his countryman, he explained:

> I do not want other Malagasy people, especially the *Merina*, to find out where I am really from. As for now, I am the only one from the north in the motorcycle parts business. And I have a plan to expand my business to the whole northern region of Madagascar. I do not want other people to find out how I make my money. I do not tell other Malagasy people where my business is, and I do not write my real full name on my cartons. If they know where I am sending my stuff, they might do something to sabotage me, to destroy my cartons, to charge me higher customs fees. There are many terrible things that they can do to me. You cannot even imagine it, Mingyuan (Conversation with Francisco).

Francisco's relationship with Madame San is also ambiguously characterized by both trust and incertitude. Since Francisco quickly spent all his cash within three days thanks to my translation and assistance, he did not want to spend the remaining three days wasting his time in Guangzhou. As a solution, he decided to borrow cash from Madame San. However, after calling her, he complained:

> I really do not want to borrow money from her, but there is no other option. She is like a loan shark because she charges 10% interest on the money that I am going to borrow. I borrowed money from the bank in Madagascar to come to China, and now I have to borrow from her too! Highland people are not good (*borizany tsy manjary*, in this case meaning that highland people are not nice or kind). You see, Malagasy are not willing to help their own people. However, when it is time to take advantage of others, they will not miss any opportunity (Conversation with Francisco).

When we arrived at Guangzhou airport for our flight back to Madagascar, Madame San brought two pieces of check-in luggage and asked that Francisco use his flight baggage allowance to bring them back to Antananarivo for her. According to her, the two large suitcases were filled with clothes ready to be sold in Madagascar, and someone would pick them up at the airport in Antananarivo. Francisco agreed to help her because he

found it too hard to refuse the request of his own countryman. In his relationship with Madame San, Francisco trusted her enough to follow her living and transportation arrangements and to borrow money from her, however, he often felt that he was being taken advantage of by her collateral conditions.

The second set of relationships is among Chinese merchants, Chinese interpreters/middlemen and Malagasy traders, the complexities of which are well exemplified in the phenomenon of kickbacks. One of the most widely acknowledged unspoken rules in Guangzhou's wholesale markets is that Chinese merchants should offer kickbacks to the Chinese interpreters/middlemen who bring foreign businessmen to them to make deals as a propitiatory gesture to maintain customer loyalty over the long run. The default kickback rate is one percent of the payment of the customer's full purchase. That is to say, if Francisco makes a deal worth a hundred dollars, I, as the translator should receive one dollar from the Chinese merchants. Several social meanings are endowed in the simple gesture of offering kickbacks. Firstly, Chinese merchants use kickbacks to secure a bond with Chinese interpreters/middlemen, especially when they see potential new foreign customers walking into the store with a Chinese interpreter. The bond is mainly based on mutual business benefits underpinned by an underlying idea of ethnic unity – Chinese merchants and Chinese interpreters can collaborate and make greater profit from doing business with foreigners. If Chinese merchants see the potential to develop a long-term returning customer, they will offer more than one percent as a kickback to ensure that the Chinese interpreter will always bring customers back. If Chinese merchants speculate that the customer, in most cases African petty traders, will not make a big purchase, they may not even bother bringing up the possibility of a kickback. In many cases, the Chinese merchants also worry that if they do not provide kickbacks to Chinese interpreters/middlemen who help the sellers and the buyers accomplish a deal, the Chinese interpreters/middlemen will not be satisfied with the Chinese merchants, or even hold a grudge against them and never bring back any customers.

I encountered several offers of kickbacks from multiple Chinese merchants during my stay in Guangzhou, some trying to do it secretly behind Francisco's back and others

asking me blatantly in Chinese with Francisco standing next to me. Kickbacks are so routinely offered throughout the market that some Chinese merchants were genuinely surprised that *I* was surprised to be offered one. When Francisco and I stepped into a shop on our second day in Guangzhou and glanced at the products displayed on the wall, two Chinese men sitting behind the counter checked us out. As Francisco took one sample off the hook from the wall and signalled me to ask for the price, I turned to the two Chinese men. Having heard my price inquiry, instead of offering an initial price, one man insouciantly asked me back: "do you want kickbacks or not?" I replied: "no, not really." Obviously, the merchant thought of me as a professional interpreter and middleman working for African businessmen. I continued the conversation by explaining to the Chinese merchants that I was just a friend of Francisco and a student doing research, and I asked: "what if I say yes, I want kickbacks, what difference will it make?" The man replied again with slight impatience:

> If you say you want kickbacks as soon as you step in our shop, the initial price we offer to your boss will be different. For example, we would offer 5 RMB for the cord your boss just asked about if you do not want kickbacks. If you do, however, we would say 5.5 RMB and we would bargain down from there. In either way, your boss pays the bill for me *and* for you. Nowadays, many university graduates in Guangzhou take up a career as interpreters or middlemen, just like you. We usually give one percent kickbacks, but we also do not dare to offer too much more. Because if we offer an initial price too much higher than the average, the buyers will realize that we are fooling them after spending a few hours in the market. If they find out other shops offer lower price than us, they will, of course, not come back and do business with us. If other Chinese merchants did not ask you about it, that in general means that they feel you are not making a significantly profitable deal, so they do not bother to ask. It will be too little for you anyways. But there are also merchants who do not offer kickbacks. Every boutique is different (Conversation with Chinese merchant B).

Many merchants insist on providing kickbacks without even discussing the matter with the interpreter or middleman. The flow of kickbacks can be clandestine as the payment can be transferred using WeChat over a few clicks on the smart phone. Since it is normal for Chinese merchants, interpreters and foreign businessmen to "friend" each other on WeChat, taking out the phone and scanning each other's QR code will not raise any suspicion from African traders. By "friending" each other on WeChat, kickbacks can be paid secretly and after the fact, which keeps inexperienced foreign businessmen in the dark.

On our last day, Francisco and I took Bus 56 to the wholesale markets again to arrange cargo delivery. After Francisco paid one merchant ten thousand Chinese Yuan (about 1600 USD), he asked secretly to add me on his WeChat, transferred a "Red Pocket" (*wei xin hong bao*) of 100 RMB (16 USD) to my account and said: "pretty girl (*liang nv*), thank you for the business, please bring him back to us the next time!" Later that day, Francisco and I spent the 100 RMB at a small Muslim restaurant near Hotel Jade after I made him aware of the kickbacks. Francisco frowned and nodded. Then he told me that he would still come back to that shop to do business, because he trusted the shop for the quality of its products. He has been going back to the same shop every time and buying many things from them, and there have been no significant quality problems. Francisco said:

> Yes, I know there are many problems doing business in China. It is very hard to do business here. I know that I cannot trust Chinese merchants completely. However, in most cases, as long as I pay what they ask for, there is no problem. I will just do whatever they want me to do. That is how my business goes (Conversation with Francisco).

It is interesting to note that Chinese merchants also conveyed to me that they thought Francisco was trustworthy. When Francisco was making his down payment at one shop, the owner, a Chinese businesswoman told me:

> I think your client is a good person because I see that he does not buy products of the worst quality. Usually people of his skin colour come here and buy whatever is the cheapest. However, he genuinely cares about the quality and he always requests good packaging options even if it means that he has to pay more. He is not so stingy as other Africans. Even though he is not buying many things from me, I still think he is trustworthy. I can see that he is just trying to build his own small business, trying to test our products, and that is why I would love to do business with him. It is OK if he only pays a small portion of money as deposit today. We will prepare his cartons and deliver them on time (Conversation with Chinese merchant C).

Other Chinese merchants made similar comments about Francisco. As discussed above, trust and deception are relative and fluid concepts between Chinese merchants and African businessmen. On the one hand, Chinese merchants will claim that they trust and value an African client while making extra profit from them. On the other, African traders will still choose to do business with some Chinese merchants even though they are aware that they have been ripped off.

In this case, WeChat, together with cellphones, has become an ideal medium for considering what Horst and Miller refer to as "the articulation between formal and informal economies" (2006:118). Like cellphones themselves, the meanings and uses of the WeChat system are not "determined by the form alone but come to be understood in distinctive ways by different user populations and other relevant groups" (Burrell 2012:6). Traders like Francisco are savvy enough to install WeChat on their smart phones and use it to communicate with Chinese merchants. As many African businessmen have already overstayed their Chinese visas and risk being caught by the police (Castillo 2016, Haugen 2012), it is impossible for them to use the money transfer function that WeChat provides. From this perspective, it is fair to argue that many African traders not only suffer from "secondary immobility" – a state where "migrants have succeeded in the difficult project of emigration but find themselves spatially entrapped in new ways in their destination country" (Haugen 2012:65), but also have to endure the "digital financial immobility" caused by a lack of access to formal online banking systems. This predicament will only push the already precariously situated African traders into business activities of a-darker-shade-of-grey, as they can only bring foreign cash in and transfer it into Chinese currency through the black market instead of exchange money through legal channels.

A third set of relationships to consider is among Chinese merchants, Chinese drivers and Malagasy traders, most obviously manifested in the process of making arrangements for cargo deliveries. In the early morning of the last day before we left Guangzhou, Francisco and I went to the market again. I gathered all of the receipts and called from the shop of Boss Duan to fifteen shops where Francisco had purchased motorcycle parts, requesting that they deliver everything to Boss Duan's shop. Whenever someone arrived, Francisco checked the cartons and the packaging, paid the full amount, coded each carton with a combination of acronyms, and wrote his telephone number and alias on at least two sides of each carton with a marker [Figure 7]. By 4 p.m., all 134 cartons were piled up in front of Boss Duan's shop.

I asked Boss Duan to help us find a truck to bring everything back to Hotel Jade where the cartons would be stored temporarily for few nights before being sent to a warehouse at the port. Boss Duan called a truck driver acquaintance immediately, and the

driver agreed to come to Duan's boutique as soon as possible. The price was set at 220 RMB (35 USD). However, after 20 minutes, the driver called Boss Duan back telling him that he did not dare to deliver to Hotel Jade because the hotel is located at the city centre where Guangzhou municipal government prohibits trucks from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. as a measure to relieve the city's rush-hour traffic. The driver offered two solutions: either we wait till after 8 p.m. and pay the same price, or he comes immediately and we pay 300 RMB (48 USD). Boss Duan tried hard to bargain the price down to 280 RMB (44 USD), but the driver refused. The driver was obviously just stalling for time, knowing that as time was ticking towards 5 p.m., we would have no option but to use other vehicles to transport our cartons. Fifteen minutes to 5 p.m., the driver called back proposing another solution: he would send three minivans to Duan's boutique, and we pay 360 RMB (57 USD) in total. We had no other option, so we accepted.

Soon after the phone call, three minivans appeared at Duan's boutique. Three drivers helped load the cartons into each van. However, when we arrived at Hotel Jade, they were not willing to unload them. According to regulations in Guangzhou, cartons cannot be left overnight on the curb or sidewalk. They must be brought inside the lobby of the hotel. One driver reluctantly agreed to help us carry the cartons into the hotel lobby after seeing me help Francisco carry heavy cartons inside, on the condition of us paying him an extra 80 RMB (13 USD). Before the driver left, he asked me whether I was married to someone from Madagascar and whether Francisco was my boyfriend. After I refused to answer his question, the driver smoothed the conversation by saying: "it is OK to admit something like this if it is true. We are used to seeing many Chinese girls with black men. Since you are not with him, if you give me your phone number, I can take you to a restaurant tonight." Knowing what he was implying, I refused again. Then he took the money and left. The chaotic day finished after we re-counted all the cartons in the lobby.

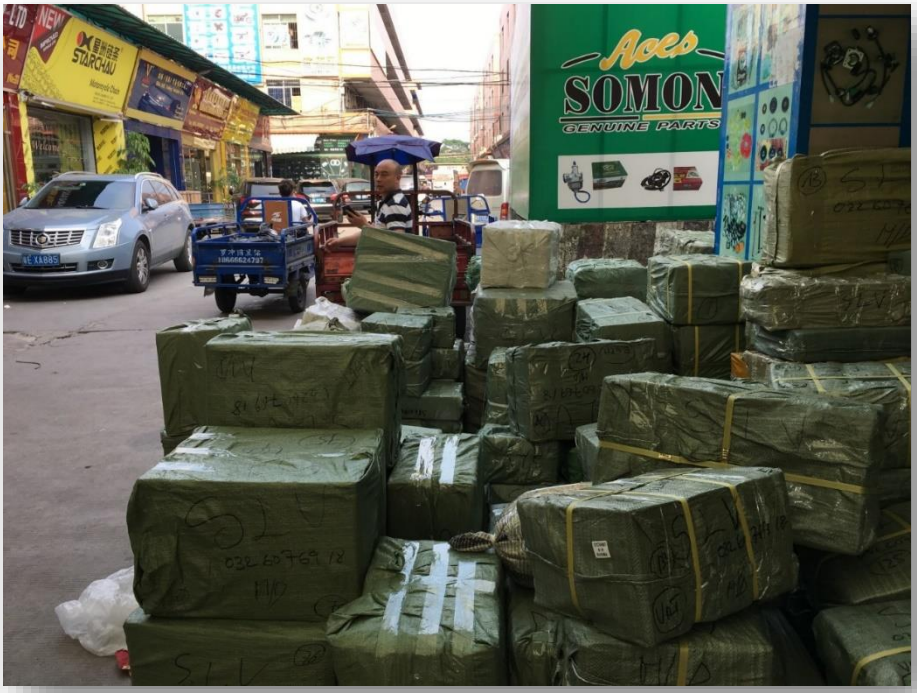

Figure 7 Francisco's Purchase in front of a Shop

Someone like Francisco, with a reliable connection (like Madame San), a helpful translator (like me), and a fair amount of experiences of doing business in China, can still be taken advantage of by strangers who know that he has no other choice. In Guangzhou's global bazaar, buyers like Francisco do not have the advantage that buyers in other bazaar economies have. Although African traders are faced with a world of choices of what to buy, they lack the time and options to get things done. They are constrained in many ways due to their lack of awareness of key information and services in Guangzhou, whether hidden rules about clandestine flows of kickbacks to interpreters, the inaccessibility of mobile financial banking systems, or even, in the last case, city traffic and administrative regulations. As discussed previously, language barriers and communication problems further obstruct their search for information. African traders are also subject to the play of two kinds of ethnic/racial dynamics: firstly, the power dynamics among compatriots of different ethnicities; and secondly, dynamics related to the presumption of a racial hierarchy among Chinese merchants, Chinese interpreter/middlemen and African traders. Being excluded from the fast-rising online

banking based in the WeChat Chinese social networking system blocks African businessmen's access to sharing the benefits of China's rapidly developing Internet technology and telecommunications infrastructure, which exacerbates the precarity and they face in living and doing business in China. All of the factors mentioned above have not, however, dissuaded African traders like Francisco from navigating the social, material and digital maze of Guangzhou's global bazaar, swinging between trust and distrust, and tolerating random gazes and discrimination for the sake of potential profits.

Sur le chemin du retour

While in Guangzhou, I befriended a Nigerian Igbo man who called himself "Dollar Man" on WeChat and Facebook; both of his profile photos feature stacks of American dollars. He had been in China for years and seemed to be close to several Chinese merchants at the wholesale market. Judging by his social network profile, he seemed happy with his life in China and satisfied with his business. The day I left Guangzhou, I received a text from him that was supposed to be sent to other people but was mistakenly sent to me. In the text he wrote: "there is nothing to enjoy in China but making money, man." Three seconds after I read the message, he recalled it and sent me another apologizing for the first. At the end of my research trip to Guangzhou, Dollar Man's message ruthlessly unravelled the truth of the life of African businessmen in China: for them, Guangzhou, China is only a business destination – they are there for the things (often things of secondary quality) and the money. It is certainly not a destination for experiencing people, food, culture or life – aspects that many native Chinese people would take pride in. Francisco's words echo Dollar Man's: "I only go to China for business (*zaho andeha en Chine magnano business fo*)."

Walking along the streets near Xiaobei Road, Francisco and I passed by numerous boutiques featuring counterfeit and knockoff clothes and cosmetics interspersed with cheap hotels like Hotel Jade. We also had the opportunity to spend an afternoon at a second-hand electronics market. Francisco had paid a visit there during his last trip, and did not realize it was a *second-hand* market until I pointed the fact out to him after reading one of its business cards. Under dazzling revolving police lights, marketplaces frequented by African traders in Guangzhou thrive together with legal or semi-legal

Chinese-run businesses offering accommodation, transportation, money exchange, visa consultation, and translation and interpretation services. Low-end hotels and commodities that have gradually been abandoned by China's rising middle-class have found new life in a business made possible by African traders. Cartons and poly woven bags containing loads of made-in-China commodities are tangible markers of African aspirations to something that China seems to have already achieved. After six weeks, Francisco's cartons would arrive at the biggest port in southeast Madagascar, clear customs, and then be transported northward by a domestic transportation company, jolted over 1000 kilometres on the country's bumpy and twisting national roads. Ultimately they would find a place in Francisco's personal warehouse waiting to be sold and installed on the motorcycles, scooters and *bajajs* (themselves all imports, of course) screeching and running around cities and towns in northern Madagascar. Afterwards, Malagasy consumers will form a generalized understanding, based on mundane experiences of Chinese commodities, of what it means for such parts and other things to be "Chinese." And however careful Francisco is to choose only the best quality parts for his own business, the general sense of things seems to remain the same: Chinese people, it is often said, can produce and sell anything, but Chinese things are of secondary quality, will not last long, and break easily.

As the flight took off from Guangzhou airport, Francisco clicked his tongue again. Done with his one-week hectic shopping spree, he fell asleep. I felt glad to have helped him, not least because I had been unable to teach him to speak Chinese as originally planned. In the next chapter, I will further discuss what makes teaching and learning Chinese in Madagascar so difficult and yet so appealing to those attempting to do it.

CHAPTER FOUR – Kung Fu vs. Radio Calisthenics: Chinese Language Education and the Representation of Chinese Culture in Northern Madagascar

"ching chong ching chong…"

"Anaro matity, ça fait dix ans sinoa teto, fa tsisy olo mahay teny sinoa, tegna sorotro!"

The Zest of Learning Mandarin Chinese

Wandering on the streets of Madagascar, I have been unmaliciously accosted in many ways. Some have come in groups, glancing at me and murmuring behind my back with a discernable pronunciation of the Malagasy word "*sinoa*" (meaning "Chinese person" in this context) or "*kirko maso*" (narrow eyes); some have mistakenly yelled random Japanese words at me; and some multilingual savvy youth have called out "hello" (*ni hao*) in Chinese with a bantering tone. Interestingly, the most common thing that I heard from Malagasy passersby was not any Chinese greeting but a nonsensical mimicking of the Chinese language: "*ching chong ching chong.*"

To the surprise of many Chinese people working in Madagascar, including the instructors of the Confucius Institute on whom I focus in this chapter, Malagasy people's enthusiasm for learning Mandarin Chinese is tremendous. When I first visited the compound of the Chinese-managed sugar plantation described in Chapter 3 in 2015, I was amazed by clusters of carefree school children greeting me with an almost perfect pronunciation of "hello" in Chinese. I commented to *Chef* Yang one day that the Confucius Institute teachers did an excellent job teaching Chinese at the schools affiliated with the plantation. The children were smart and well taught, as even those in first-grade knew how to speak Chinese. Yang grinned:

> The school kids here are just having fun whenever they see a Chinese person. They do not know any other words in Mandarin Chinese besides "hello" (*ni hao*). If you do not believe me, just try to greet them with the plural form of "hello" in Chinese (*ni men hao*) next time you see them.[12] They will be at sea. The Confucius Institute has sent many different language instructors to the schools here over the years. Because they are affiliated with our sugar company, we must take responsibility for their personal safety and logistics. But we have not seen any Malagasy student who can speak more Chinese than simple greetings. The instructors have been teaching self-introduction and greetings for almost ten years

[12] In Mandarin Chinese, there are two forms of greeting "hello". The singular form is "*ni hao*", and is usually used when greeting one person. The plural from is "*ni men hao*", usually used to greet a group of people.

> to different students but there has been no substantial progress (Conversation with Yang).

Later, while watching a group of Malagasy workers install a water pump, I had a casual conversation with a Malagasy villager who echoed Yang's comment. After asking me to teach him some words in Chinese, he told me: "*anaro matity, ça fait dix ans sinoa teto, fa tsisy olo mahay teny sinoa, tegna sorotro!"* — meaning "you guys are selfish. It has been ten years since Chinese came here, but nobody really understands the Chinese language. It is really difficult!" Then he continued the conversation by asserting that if the Americans or Italians had been there for ten years, everybody in the village would have been fluent in their languages by then. The same sentiment is shared by many Malagasy people in both rural and urban settings where Chinese language classes are regularly offered by the Confucius Institute through classes in primary and high schools, vocational schools and universities.

Although most Malagasy people in rural areas with little formal education can only speak Malagasy, many others are amazingly multilingual on a conversational level. Many are bilingual in Malagasy and French, and many can manage to carry on short conversations in English; Italian, German and Spanish are gradually gaining popularity in the north as the region's white-sand beaches are attracting more and more European tourists. One can also find someone who can carry a conversation in five languages, especially among those of Comorian decent. For instance, a 16-year-old boy working for his aunt's little variety store next door to my abode in Tsaramiverina could communicate in Malagasy, French, Arabic, Comorian and rusty English, at the same time nagging me to teach him basic Mandarin Chinese. A graduate student from the Department of Anglo-American Studies of the local university is fluent in all the five languages mentioned above and offers private English and French classes to clients all over the city. Some Malagasy people are self-taught language prodigies. However, it is still rare to find people whose Chinese is proficient enough to provide translation services or to offer high-quality language classes, especially compared to the growing number of speakers of European languages.

An obvious explanation for the scarcity of fluent Chinese language speakers in Madagascar is that Mandarin Chinese *is* very difficult to learn as a second or third

language since it belongs to a completely different language family than European languages. However, although there is tremendous enthusiasm from Malagasy learners and the Confucius Institute classes have reached almost all major cities in Madagascar since 2008, the education outcomes of Chinese-language education hardly seem fruitful to the eyes of local communities and the Chinese educational institution itself. The enthusiasm of many Malagasy students has proven short-lived. Their journey to improvement is usually blocked by an array of administrative and pedagogical problems that have rendered Chinese language education fragmented, incomprehensible, and boring. When I accompanied a language instructor to the final exam of her class at the local university, only three out of thirty students who originally registered for the Chinese-language class showed up in a giant classroom that can hold at least 60 people. The final exam itself took less than twenty minutes with only two sections: the first to dictate the Chinese pronunciation alphabet *pinyin*, and the second to write from memory some simple greetings in their *pinyin* forms.[13]

In this chapter, I shift my focus onto the Confucius Institute and its classes and cultural events to shed light on another context of Chinese-Malagasy encounters in northern Madagascar, focusing in the process on the outcomes of Chinese language educational programs in northern Madagascar. The Confucius Institute is a worldwide educational project sponsored by the Chinese government agency named "The Office of the Chinese Language Council International" (also known as, and hereafter referred to as, *Hanban*) under the supervision of the Ministry of Education of China. Its aim is to promote Chinese language and culture on the global stage. As Jensen argues, the academic promotion of Confucius and Confucianism within and outside of China has contributed to "a new cultural nationalism" in China's accelerated march toward the embrace of "a new global economic order dependent upon cheap goods, cheap labour and new markets" (2012:277). Haugen echoes Jensen's point, arguing that China's global educational ambitions "[aim] at matching the country's growing economic influence in

[13] Pinyin, also known as Hanyu Pinyin is the official Romanization system for Standard Mandarin Chinese language. As Chinese language is usually written using Chinese characters, the Pinyin system, invented by Chinese linguist Youguang Zhou in the 1950s, uses the Latin alphabet and tones to indicate the pronunciation of Chinese characters. The Pinyin system serves as a bridge to connect the character-based Chinese language system and Latin alphabet-based Romanization system, which provides an easier way to learn Chinese for non-native speakers. It is also the most widely used computer input system for Chinese characters nowadays.

Africa with greater ideological appeal" (2013:316). Based on my observations during fieldwork, I argue that the Confucius Institute in Madagascar should be considered a third important domain where identity-shaping Chinese-African encounters take place. Along with the state-managed agro-industrial project described in Chapter 2 and the business of private entrepreneurs described in Chapter 3, activities carried out in the name of the Confucius Institute enable unprecedented Chinese-Malagasy encounters. These activities also offer Malagasy people partial glimpses of Chinese domestic society.

In the following sections, I will first introduce the revival of Confucianism as the "authentic" traditional Chinese culture in China and discuss this revival's influence over China's overseas educational projects. Then I will discuss the practices of teaching and learning the Chinese language specifically in the social context of Madagascar, arguing that in countries such as Madagascar where education infrastructure is relatively weak, the classrooms of the Confucius Institute provide rare but much-desired opportunities for students to learn Chinese language and culture. Although the Confucius Institute functions under the supervision of the Chinese government, and concerns over this government's violations of academic freedom and the dangers of ideological conditioning are justified (Hubbert 2014, Sahlins 2015), it is wrong to assume that all instructors embrace their roles as state agents and full-heartedly propagate a governmental agenda. In fact, as I explore later in the chapter, people working at various levels within the Confucius Institute have a variety of motivations for teaching Chinese overseas.

The Revival of Confucianism in and Outside of China

Many observers of China have noted a return of Confucianism in the political and cultural domains of Mainland China since the 1980s. As Billioud (2007) points out, Confucianism permeated almost every aspect of life during China's classical era, that is, before it was greatly diminished by the Chinese Communist Party's anti-traditionalist policies during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976); radical Maoists considered Confucianism to be one of the feudal "Four Olds" (*si jiu*) that needed to be eliminated (Lam 2008).[14] The subsequent dawn of the Chinese economic "Reform and Open policy"

[14] The "Four Olds" or *si jiu*, refer to "Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits and Old Ideas" — a political propaganda discourse used during the Cultural Revolution, to include elements of Chinese culture and thinking that the Chinese Communist Party felt needed to be eradicated for the sake of modernity and development.

(*gai ge kai fang*), however, signalled the start of a "long process of re-evaluating Confucianism," leading eventually to its reification as the "crystallization of Chinese national culture" (Billioud 2007:52–53). During the 1990s, Confucianism served several functions for Chinese authorities: its "authoritarian" aspects supported the construction of a "socialist spiritual civilization"; its essentialization as the core of "traditional Chinese culture" contributed to state promotion of social cohesion against the threat of "Westernization" (Meissner 2006, cited in Billioud 2007:53); it was employed as "an instrumental rationality of futurist modernism and as a moral force to domesticate capitalism to contribute to the official constructions of Chinese modernity"; (Ong 1996b:70) and it replaced extreme nationalism and Marxist Leninism, filling the "ideology vacuum" of the country (Bell 2006).

After the turn of the new millennium, as the study of "Chinese classics" or Sinology (*guo xue*) gained popularity in the public cultural domain, Chinese "traditional culture" (*chuan tong wen hua*), exemplified by Confucianism, has been endowed with new meanings. The first decade of the 21st century saw the "re-entering" of Confucianism into China's public space as the celebration of Confucius on his birthday was broadcast on the national television channel and more Confucian Classics were included in the syllabi of elementary and post-secondary classes (Lam 2008). According to research on understandings of Confucianism among Chinese youth in Shanghai, college students' modern interpretations of classic Confucianism are filtered through their own experiences. For example, key Confucian values such as filial piety and the emphasis on extended family networks are thought of differently by students with rural backgrounds and urban (post) one-child-policy youngsters (Xing 2017). In 2018, China's national television channel CCTV advertised and broadcast a "cultural program" featuring celebrities singing ancient Chinese poetry and classic texts. A well-known American-Taiwanese songwriter performed a rap based on Confucian canon "Three Character Classic" (*san zi jing*) about the principle and philosophy of children's education. As Xing (2017) concluded, the rise of Confucian culture in contemporary China can only be described as a *revival* instead of a *return* because the knowledge that people have gained about Confucianism through the channels mentioned above proves to be superficial and fragmented.

The iconic figure of Confucius and his teachings have become symbols of "authentic" Chinese tradition both within and outside of China, especially in the field of education. Since 2004, private Confucius-style schools have attracted many elite Chinese parents to enroll their children (Lam 2008). At the same time, the Confucius Institute — officially announced as a non-profit public educational organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China – was founded in 2004. According to the official website of *Hanban*, as of 2018, 525 Confucius Institutes and 1113 Confucius Classes have been established in 146 countries/regions around the world (33 countries in Asia, 39 in Africa, 41 in Europe, 21 in North and South America, and 4 in Oceania [Hanban website, 2018]). A brief introduction to the Institute's history and mission can be found on its website:

> Confucius Institute was founded as a non-profit educational organization under the cooperation between Chinese and foreign agencies in order to suit the needs of people in different countries to study Chinese languages, to improve understandings of Chinese languages and culture, to strengthen cooperation and communication between China and other foreign countries, to develop amicable relationships between China and foreign countries, to promote the development of multiculturalism, and to construct a harmonious world. The Confucius Institute develops Chinese language education programs and cultural communication projects to promote cooperation between China and foreign countries. Its services include: Chinese language education programs, Chinese language instructor training programs, cultural communication activities, as well as providing pedagogical resources for Chinese-language education, standard Chinese language tests, Chinese language instructor certification, and counselling of Chinese educational and cultural opportunities. The Confucius Institutes in various locations of the world have used their advantages to develop a rich variety of pedagogical and cultural activities, have gradually explored educational patterns with their own characteristics, and have become important venues for foreigners to study Chinese languages and culture and to understand contemporary China. They are warmly welcomed by local societies and communities (Hanban website, 2018).

In this section, I provide responses to two general critiques of the Confucius Institute by Western scholars to lay ground for a better understanding of how Confucius Institute programs operate in Madagascar. Then in the following sections of this chapter, I will use ethnographic details from my fieldwork to support my responses and to identify three issues with Confucius Institute programs that need to be addressed urgently in Madagascar's specific social context.

To begin, it should be noted that China is not the only country that supports the international spread of its official language and culture in such an organized way. The Confucius Institute is often compared with Germany's Goethe Institute and Spain's Cervantes Institute, for example, all three educational institutions named for iconic cultural figures of the countries they represent. It might also be considered alongside *Alliance Française* and the British Council, both of which share the Confucius Institute's goals of promoting language education and cross-cultural communication. Based on research in North American and European contexts, scholars have critiqued the Chinese government's control of the Confucius Institute, drawing attention to issues of academic freedom associated with the selective use of teaching materials and deliberate avoidance of politically controversial topics (Hubbert 2014, Sahlins 2015). In the Confucius Institute programs that I observed in Madagascar, however, conversations in and outside of the classes rarely touched on the political. In fact, communications between Chinese language instructors and Malagasy communities were limited due to an array of factors related to living and transportation arrangements, language barriers, institutional regulations and personal lifestyle choices.

Another critique levelled against the Confucius Institute is that, unlike its European counterparts, it usually seeks to graft its programs with a local educational institution (e.g. primary school, high school, vocational school, community college, or university) offering generous funding packages as an incentive. This practice is also adopted by the American Peace Corps, as evidenced by Peace Corps volunteers working in the public educational sector in Madagascar. While Peace Corps volunteers do not know where they will be dispatched when they sign up for a program, however, Chinese language instructors are aware of their destination country from the very beginning of the selection process, thanks to collaborative arrangements between their home (Chinese) universities and Malagasy universities. Since 2008, all Confucius Institute programs and activities in Madagascar were carried out by two Chinese universities and almost all instructors were selected from newly graduated students from these two universities. The first Confucius Institute regional headquarters in Madagascar, named the "Tana Confucius Institute," was launched with a collaborative agreement between University K and the University of Antananarivo in 2008. This agreement sends Chinese instructors to

Madagascar's capital and other cities south of the capital. The second regional headquarters, named the "Tamatave Confucius Institute," was launched between University L and the University of Toamasina in 2014, and now includes branches in Toamasina and cities north of the capital. The two headquarters are both affiliated with *Hanban* headquarters in Beijing but recruit instructors and develop programs independently from one another. As my fieldwork is based in northern Madagascar, most language instructors that I met were from University L. In principle, only when there are not enough candidates from the two designated universities can applicants from other Chinese universities consider applying to work in Madagascar.

Many scholars have recognized the parallel expansion of Chinese educational projects and investment in Africa as indications of China's instrumental strategy to "win hearts and minds" by exerting "soft power" on the continent (Jensen 2012, Haugen 2013). Haugen (2013) argues that China's recruitment of African students through government sponsored scholarships (many offered through the Confucius Institute) "aims to match the country's growing economic influence in Africa with greater ideological appeal" (2013:316). The effectiveness of such soft power is debatable, however. Based on research with African students in China, Haugen (2013) concludes that African students are disappointed with the quality of the education they receive in China. Similar disappointment is often expressed by Malagasy students taking Chinese language classes with Confucius Institute instructors.

Becoming a Confucius Institute Instructor

Among the six Confucius Institute instructors with whom I interacted during my fieldwork, five were female, and one was male. Two came from single-child families, and the other four came from families of two children. All of them were in their early to mid-twenties. Five had recently graduated with a Bachelor's degree, and one was a registered graduate student who had decided to take a year off to work in Madagascar. Two were working at a primary school affiliated with the Chinese-managed sugar plantation, living in Anjava in the same area as the Chinese workers discussed in Chapter 2; two were teaching at a vocational school in Tsaramiverina and living off-campus in a house arranged by the school administration; and the other two were living and working

on the campus of the University of Tsaramiverina. Unlike American Peace Corps volunteers who are encouraged to mingle with local communities where they are sent to practise the "optimism, can-do spirit and selfless nature of the United States" (Strauss 2008), Confucius Institute instructors usually stay together with one another. Five were selected from among applicants from University L, and one was accepted from another university. Although most of the instructors came from the same university, their hometowns were in some cases different from the city where University L is located. Their undergraduate and graduate majors varied from Business English to Korean Literature. They had all learned English as a second language throughout their studies in China, but none of them were fluent in French or Malagasy. Their working terms with the Confucius Institute varied from one to three years, mainly depending on personal preferences. During their terms, their main duty was to teach Mandarin Chinese to students in accordance with the teaching schedules of their local partner schools. Besides teaching, the instructors were also responsible for organizing Chinese cultural events, singing competitions, and preparing students for the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) if required by their regional headquarters or the Chinese embassy.

The personal journeys of Confucius Institute instructors from China to Madagascar had not been easy. Two instructors, Ma and Cai, told me of their paths, from submitting their applications to successfully becoming teachers in Madagascar. Ma was 23 years old when I met her in Tsaramiverina. She was one of the two instructors teaching mandatory Chinese language classes at a vocational school in the city. She received her Bachelor's degree from University L, double majoring in English and Korean language and literature. I met her in her third year working in Madagascar when she was trying to connect to Wi-Fi at her office while waiting for a school-designated driver to take her home. She and another instructor, Tang, lived in a three-bedroom house with an iron gate and concrete fence a 15-minute drive from the school where she taught. She recounted her experience of coming to Madagascar as follows:

> I have always wanted to explore the world and I want to apply for graduate schools in England or America in the future. I thought working with the Confucius Institute outside of China would be a unique advantage for me. As a result, when I was in my fourth year of my undergraduate, I applied to become a Chinese language instructor of the Confucius Institute through my home

university. They only accept applications from senior undergraduate students or graduate students. When I applied, there were positions in two countries that I could choose from: one was Iceland and the other one was Madagascar. However, the Confucius Institute branch in Iceland only had one vacancy and they specifically required a male student majoring in Chinese martial arts. Obviously, I was not eligible, so I chose Madagascar. In general, the criteria are higher if one wants to work in countries in the West. For example, you need a decent TOEFL or IELTS score to prove your English proficiency. Some countries have more specific requirements because they want applicants to have good knowledge of Chinese folk dancing, traditional Chinese painting, or martial arts. But there is no such requirement for African countries. The general requirements are that one needs to demonstrate a deep understanding of traditional Chinese culture, to be able to speak standard Mandarin Chinese, and to show some talents such as singing, Tai Ji or papercutting arts. There were so many applicants competing for limited spots in developed countries, however, there were not enough applicants willing to work in African countries.

Before *Hanban* officers came to select applicants, all applicants were briefly trained by my home university. Then applicants all went to another city to continue the selection process. The first round of the selection process was a paper-based psychological evaluation. There were dozens of multiple choice questions on the exam. The goal of the exam is to make sure that successful applicants are psychologically stable enough to work in an unfamiliar and sometimes harsh environment. The second round involved interviews with *Hanban* officers. Contents of the interviews included self-introduction, mock teaching, talent presentation, English language assessment, Chinese grammar assessment, and open Q&A. When I was interviewed, I remember that after my self-introduction, the examiner panel first asked me to write some Chinese idiomatic expressions and to correct grammatically wrong sentences on the blackboard. Then I did a short mock-teaching session as the examiners pretended to be my foreign students. They asked me to explain Chinese classifiers [See a more detailed explanation of the unique grammar phenomenon in Chinese language in Chapter 3]. Then I sang a Chinese song at the talent show section. There were so many applicants who chose to sing or to practise Tai Ji, unless you are superb in singing, it will not give you much advantage. The girl waiting in front of me brought a box of Chinese dumplings for the examiners to taste. Then I was asked to answer a question in English. The question I got was to describe the historical origin of a traditional Chinese festival — the Dragon Boat Festival (*duan wu jie*). They also asked about my personal motivation to go to teach Chinese in Madagascar, although I did not know much about the country at that time.

It took more than six months from the day when I submitted my application to the day when I learned I was a successful applicant. After that, it was mandatory to participate in the 40-day training session in a city in southern China. Every day we had to take intensive classes about Pinyin, Chinese grammar, Chinese culture and traditional etiquette from university professors. There were former volunteers

> working in Thailand and African countries sharing experiences with us. There were only two or three classes that taught some basic information about Madagascar, facilitated by a Malagasy student studying in China. However, there were no classes or seminars discussing topics about Malagasy culture or local languages. There were a few sessions of French-language training. It was not enough. We basically only learned the French alphabet before coming to Madagascar.
>
> There are many potential benefits to work with the Confucius Institute. If one works for two continuous years, one can become a full-time instructor, as we are officially called "volunteers" even though we receive a monthly stipend of 1000–1200 US dollars. And if one takes the entrance exam of graduate schools within China, one will be granted 10 bonus scores as a recognition and a reward of the service at the Confucius Institution (Personal Conversation with Ma).

Cai, a 23-year-old girl from northern China worked with the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Tsaramiverina. She had just moved into the university-provided residence for foreign teachers — an ocean-view bungalow with eight bedrooms and two shared kitchens – when I met her at the start of her first month as an instructor teaching elective classes for second and third-year undergraduate students. She was the one instructor who had not graduated from University L, but, rather, had been taken in as an external candidate because there were not enough students at University L interested in going to Madagascar. She had majored in Business English in her undergraduate studies. She remembered her recruitment as follows:

> I was in my fourth year and was almost ready to graduate when I saw the call for applicants for the Confucius Institute on the website of my university. I knew that the destination would be Madagascar, but I did not know about the working environment. I got excited, did not think too much about it and wanted to try this opportunity anyway. My dossier was submitted to the office of the International Exchange Center of my university, then transferred to the provincial Ministry of Education for further review. After a few weeks, I got a notice informing me to go to another city for exams and interviews. I also had to pass the psychological evaluation before meeting my examiner panel at the interview.
>
> My interview was similar to Ma's but not exactly the same. I had Chinese character dictation and synonym analysis in the grammar section. Then I was asked to improvise a class with little preparation time. I was then questioned whether I wanted to teach in Madagascar and how to overcome difficulties such as cultural shock or frequent blackouts. In the English oral communication section, I translated a few sentences and answered a question about what I thought about globalization. Then I went to a city in southeastern China to participate in the training sessions.

> Some university professors taught us theoretical knowledge about teaching Chinese as a second language. We applied these theories by doing group assignments and presentations. According to *Hanban* regulations, our classes should ideally be taught in Mandarin Chinese. However, it is not possible in reality. We had to use English or French to make foreign students understand what we were teaching. There was another exam by the end of the training. I remember that we had to write an essay in Chinese about Madagascar to demonstrate our knowledge about my destination. There were also questions about Hanban regulations and pedagogical theories in the exam. I vaguely remember that there was a student from Cameroon coming to teach us a little bit of French, probably one session per week, and a student from Madagascar talking about the baobab trees, lemurs and Malagasy food briefly. I do not think there were enough applicants interested in working in Africa and that was why I was selected in the end. If *Hanban* required more qualifications from the candidates like "knowing French is a must," there would hardly be anybody applying for the positions in Madagascar. The qualifications for positions in Africa are definitely different from those in North America or Europe (Personal conversation with Cai).

The other two instructors based in Tsaramiverina — Guo and Tang — shared similar stories about why and how they had chosen to work in Madagascar. They were similarly motivated to work with the Confucius Institute by desires to explore the world, to expand their horizons, and to take steps towards future education or career goals. Ma was determined to study education in a European graduate school; Cai was considering working in Madagascar for another year to further improve her English and French; Tang was not satisfied with her previous job before coming to Madagascar, and was preparing to go to graduate school in China; and Guo was unsure of his future, swaying between starting his own business in China and continuing his studies in a Western country. All strongly believed that overseas experiences offered by the Confucius Institute would work to their advantage in their envisioned futures.

The instructors tended to adopt a housebound, inactive lifestyle due to Confucius Institute regulations prohibiting them from going out to discos and karaoke bars or developing romantic relationship with Chinese or Malagasy men (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed analysis of how gender dynamics affect Confucius Institute instructors). They spent much of their spare time preparing their graduate school applications or finishing their theses. As a result, communication and interactions with Malagasy students outside of the class were uncommon, and rarely touched on any politically sensitive topics.

As described in detail by Ma and Cai, to gain this opportunity for global travel and personal and professional development, Confucius Institute instructors had to work through the competitive selection process of the government agency. They were aware of their affiliation with a Chinese government agency and they generally did not transgress Confucius Institute regulations that prohibited them from immersing themselves in local life. As such, the Confucius Institute works as a double-edged sword in their lives. On the one hand, it offers hard-earned opportunities for young university graduates to learn about the world outside of China; on the other, the institution restricts what they can do and learn abroad. It is fair to relate the educational institute to "soft power" and China's grand global strategies; however, it is clearly wrong to assume that every Confucius Institute language instructor is fulfilling a mission of spreading political propaganda for the Chinese government. Even if they did take on such a mission, however, it is hard to imagine how they could ever effectively achieve it in Madagascar. As discussed in the next section, the primary medium through which Chinese "soft power" is meant to be exerted – the Mandarin Chinese language – is generally very difficult to put into practice.

Teaching and Learning Chinese in Madagascar

As mentioned in the previous section, successful applicants of the Confucius Institute receive training prior to their postings outside of China. However, very little emphasis has been put in such training on local languages and country-specific cultural awareness. And while the best educated, capably multilingual volunteers going to preferred destinations in the West may have at least some sense of what to expect, those going to countries like Madagascar generally do not. This can have significant impacts on their relations with Malagasy students and vice versa. Having limited abilities in conversational English, and virtually no working knowledge of Malagasy or French, Guo and Cai struggled to get their message across in their classes. Recognizing their limits, they sought help by hiring a French language tutor to teach them twice a week during the first three months of their term. However, their progress proved to be slow and inadequate. Ma learned basic French with *Alliance Française* in her first year of service, which proved very helpful in her classes. No instructor showed much interest in learning the local dialect of Malagasy language, however, as they felt that learning French would be more helpful for their future studies or careers.

Not surprisingly, the inadequate language competence of the instructors became the greatest problem in their classes. Class content often consisted of nothing more than the teacher writing Chinese vocabulary on the blackboard with English or French translations, and students writing down notes and reading the words out loud after the instructor -- pedagogical methods that were recognized as monotonous and not at all engaging by instructors and students alike. Effective conversations between Chinese instructors and Malagasy students and school administrators were mostly realized, when they were, in English — the third or fourth language of many Malagasy students. One Chinese instructor had to bring a Malagasy graduate student who understood English and French along with her to help translate lessons in her class for several months. After the Chinese instructor explained something about Mandarin Chinese in English, the graduate student would translate her English into French so that the Malagasy students could understand. Not surprisingly too, then, many Malagasy students felt that they could not learn much Chinese language from the instructors and decided to skip or drop classes, which explains why, as noted earlier, only three of 30 registered students might show up for a course's final exam. One university student told me:

> We would love to learn Chinese, but we do not understand anything. It is hard for us to follow our Chinese language instructors' English. Also, their classes are boring. We spend most of the time taking notes and repeating after the instructors. There are no class activities like our English or French language classes. There is no atmosphere in the class. It is hard to personally connect with our Chinese instructors too. As a result, after several classes, many of us do not want to continue anymore (Conversation with Malagasy student A).

Besides communicative and pedagogical incompetence, most Chinese instructors are young, inexperienced and have never lived outside of China alone. Their reluctance to adopt a new lifestyle and lack of basic cultural awareness about local social etiquette often leave them unconscious of their rude behaviour in the eyes of local people. It is almost ironic that some Chinese instructors frequently talked about China as "a country of courtesy" (*li yi zhi bang*) while behaving rudely themselves. They are so indoctrinated by the mission of the institute, feeling that they have been sent to Madagascar to *teach* from a superior vantage and position, that they forget to *learn* as the first step towards effective teaching. What is more, instead of reflecting on their own imperfections, some Confucius Institute instructors tend to blame the Malagasy institutions and students for

their poor teaching outcomes. When I asked instructors what they thought of as the biggest challenge in their teaching, two instructors provided contradictory yet thought-provoking answers. Ma, who taught at a vocational school in the city, argued that the mandatory nature of the classes she taught was the main cause of poor teaching outcomes:

> At my school, I think the biggest problem is the design of their general curriculum. All Chinese language classes are mandatory for students and many students are forced to be in my class to learn Chinese. If students do not choose to learn Chinese voluntarily, they have no motivation. The classes at the university are different because they are elective classes, which means students choose the Chinese classes because they are interested in learning the language, so they will be more motivated and more willing to put effort into memorizing and reviewing class content. Another problem is that there is no continuity in curriculum design. We have ten classes this year at this school, and only students from two classes have learned Chinese before. Students are changing every year, so are the instructors. There is just no cumulative effect (Conversation with Ma).

Contradicting Ma's assumptions, Cai argued that elective classes at the university do not, in fact, adequately motivate Malagasy students to learn:

> I believe that the main problem at the university is that Chinese language classes are all scheduled as elective classes. There are no mandatory Chinese classes. That is why students do not take our classes seriously and always drop off during the term. Students take their French or English classes seriously because they are mandatory for their major and degree. I always feel that students do not really want to learn Chinese. They register and come to the classes in the beginning because they think "Chinese is cool," but they do not know how hard it is to learn it. And because the Confucius Institute is not a business, we must teach even though there are only two students left in the classroom after three weeks since the beginning of a new semester. It feels like we are providing Malagasy students "educational aid" here. I personally do not mind helping the students, but it is frustrating for us if the students are not willing to learn (Conversation with Cai).

When Guo negotiated class schedules with the university administrators, there were many misunderstandings and he found the result unsatisfactory. He noted:

> I do not really care about learning the [Malagasy] culture and language here, and I do not want to communicate much outside of my classroom. I have already read a lot about the geography of this country and it should be enough. The curriculum at this school is always poorly organized because the university administrators never do their job properly. If we cannot reach an agreement with the university, the worst-case scenario would be to cease the cooperation and find another local institution to be affiliated with. It is not a big deal because there are so many institutions that desperately want to work with the Confucius Institute. Anyhow, learning Chinese is already an irresistible trend in the world. Chinese is such a beautiful, musical and sophisticated language (Conversation with Guo)!

There is indeed a lack of competent bilingual speakers of Malagasy and Mandarin Chinese in northern Madagascar, and many Chinese state-owned and private companies have difficulty finding interpreters. The communication barriers are usually mitigated by two strategies: some Chinese workers start picking up Malagasy after working in Madagascar for several months; or the Chinese companies hire Mandarin-French translators from China. When new Chinese companies set up their business projects in Madagascar, they often contact local Confucius Institute personnel for recommendations of good interpreters. However, the language ability of the recommended candidates is seldom satisfactory for the companies. During my fieldwork, an infrastructure construction company developing a project in northern Madagascar found only one Mandarin-Malagasy interpreter, a former student of the Confucius Institute in Antananarivo (where Chinese classes are most regularly offered). One representative from the company gave a short morale-boosting speech in Chinese at a Chinese cultural festival to the audience, most of whom were vocational school students taking Chinese classes, emphasizing the need for fluent Mandarin-Malagasy interpreters:

> I really admire your enthusiasm to learn the Chinese language. I wish the best for students here who want to study hard and progress fast. If you think you speak good Chinese, talk to the teachers at the Confucius Institute, because our company really needs good translators. There will be many more opportunities ahead waiting for you if you can speak good Chinese (Gao's speech at a Chinese Cultural Festival).

Since the Confucius Institute mainly collaborates with local educational institutions, resources for learning the Chinese language are restricted to registered full-time students and not available to the public, especially adult learners who may be motivated to learn Mandarin Chinese for business purposes. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, a villager at the Chinese-managed sugar plantation criticized Chinese people for being selfish and not wanting to teach Malagasy people the Chinese language. After I told him that there were instructors at local schools to teach Malagasy children, he questioned me: "yes, I know that. But only children at school can learn your language. What about us — older people who are not in school but want to learn the language to work for the Chinese company?"

As mentioned in the Introduction, I provided private Chinese language classes to three adult learners during my fieldwork, two of whom contacted me through the Tsaramiverina Language Centre, a continuing education agency affiliated with the university that provides language classes to the public. My first student was Thomas, a 33-year-old man from Antananarivo working for the Ministry of Agriculture as an engineer specializing in sugar cane cultivation. He wanted to learn Chinese because he had recently taken on a new position that might require him to communicate with the Chinese sugar plantation managers. My second student was Francisco, the 31-year-old Malagasy motorcycle parts entrepreneur discussed in Chapter 3. He wanted to learn some basic Chinese to avoid being deceived by Chinese merchants in Guangzhou. My third student was Esmeralda, a 28-year-old woman who developed an intimate relationship with a Chinese private business owner and worked as the cashier at his restaurant. She asked me to teach her some Chinese, she said, because her Chinese boyfriend was mean and violent to her and did not want to teach her anything (I will return to her case in the next chapter).

I taught all of these students for free and realized that for many Malagasy people, the ability to speak a foreign language is one of the few ways for them to stay or get connected to the global world: being able to talk to Chinese people is the first step to getting involved in Chinese-led projects, to studying in China, or to making personal connections with Chinese people (for example, dating). In northern Madagascar – a region that has long hosted a variety of foreign influences – many people take pride in being able to connect with foreigners. As China's influence in Madagascar grows, however, many Malagasy people are seeking the ability to speak Chinese specifically, seeing great potential for advancing their careers, and therefore leading to a better life. Since Confucius Institute regulations forbid instructors from offering private classes outside of their designated cooperative institutions, and Confucius Institute instructors tend to take such regulations seriously, opportunities for adult learners to study Chinese are scarce.

Confucius Institute Representations of Chinese Culture

It is not only in the classroom that Confucius Institute instructors engage with Malagasy students. As noted earlier, they are also expected to organize public events, festivals or competitions. As I have described in previous sections of this chapter, applicants to Confucius Institute teaching positions need to demonstrate their individual "talents" related to what is loosely categorized as "traditional Chinese culture" such as Kung Fu, Tai Ji, papercutting, dumpling making, singing and dancing. In this section, I offer an ethnographic account of how these "talents" of the Confucius Institute instructors were applied through the organization of a Chinese cultural festival in the city of Tsaramiverina.

After almost one month of preparations, three instructors — Guo, Ma and Tang – organized a "Chinese Cultural Festival" in the name of the Confucius Institute. During the rehearsal period, Ma and Tang spent half of their class time teaching students to memorize the pronunciation of the lyrics of some Chinese pop songs that they had chosen. They also selected two small groups of girls who were willing to learn Chinese dancing from videos saved on the instructors' laptops. Guo, meanwhile, gathered a group of male students and taught them Tai Ji according to a video that he downloaded from the Internet [Figure 8]. Some Malagasy students participated in both dancing and singing performances. The event was scheduled in an afternoon near the Christmas holidays at a conference hall owned by the association of the "Old Chinese" community in Tsaramiverina (see Chapter 1 for more information about the "Old Chinese" diaspora in Madagascar). The event took the form of a gala show with seven performances: three Chinese songs, one Kung Fu performance, and two Chinese traditional dances directed by the instructors and performed by their students, as well as one *er hu* (a traditional Chinese musical instrument) solo performed by instructor Guo. Some Chinese state-owned corporation workers, private business owners and Malagasy school representatives were invited to attend this event, but most of the audience was made up of students from the university and the vocational school. A journalist from the local newspaper was also present at the event. Stage costumes such as Tai Ji clothes, long dresses with patterns found on blue and white porcelain, and traditional *Han* Chinese clothing were sent from the regional headquarters Confucius Institute beforehand. Litchi and bottled mineral

water were prepared for the Chinese and Malagasy VIP guests sitting in the first two rows.

While I do not want to diminish the efforts that the instructors and their students put into preparing for this event, it is clear that the performances were prepared with the main goal of 'putting on a show' rather than encouraging participating students to learn. The Malagasy students who participated in the event did have a fun time fitting into and dancing in the novel and exotic Chinese stage costumes. However, they did not learn much about the meaning of the choreography they were performing. In a similar fashion, students who sang Chinese songs on the stage remembered the tune, rhythm and the pronunciation of the lyrics, but had no idea what the songs were about, and, in fact, would forget the lyrics soon after the event [Figure 9]. For their part, meanwhile, students in the audience were more amazed by seeing their friends pronouncing amusing Chinese lyrics in shiny costumes than by their progress in learning the Chinese language. However, when covered by local Malagasy media and reported to the Confucius Institute headquarters, the event was held up as an affirmation of the teaching effectiveness of Confucius Institute instructors in the field.

In events such as this, the Confucius Institute tends to represent "Chinese culture" as a bounded and timeless entity only composed of "traditional" activities like those featured in the performances described above. According to the current guiding spirit of the Confucius Institute, "culture" is equated with "tradition" – both unsettling concepts that are frequently contested in the discipline of anthropology – resulting in a "systematic reduction of the diverse cultures of Chinese tradition to a uniform, quaint commodity" (Jensen 2012:295) branded under the name of "Confucius." In northern Madagascar, by showcasing "traditional Chinese culture" through staged performances in cultural events and festivals, the Confucius Institute has been contributing to the self-construction of a concept of culture "shadowed by coherence, timelessness and discreteness" that is often used to "freeze difference" (Abu-Lughod 1991:144–147), in this case between a particular version of "the Chinese" and their Malagasy audience. The difference manifested through such cultural events is usually informed by an unspoken sense of superiority underlying the conspicuous rhetoric that event hosts use to describe "China's

long history of cultural richness" and "fast pace advancement towards modernity and development."

Some Confucius Institute instructors also found the representation of Chinese culture problematic. For example, Tang, a girl in her early 20s working on a one-year contract, criticized the representation of Chinese culture based on her experiences:

> My understanding of "Chinese culture" is very different from the understanding of the institution that I am working for. Before I came to Madagascar as a Confucius Institute instructor, I failed in my graduate school entrance exam in China, and was not satisfied with my job, so I had decided to try this opportunity to see if I like it or not. I was not sure what I would do in my future. But now at least I am sure that I will not work for the Confucius Institute for the rest of my life. After this one-year term, I will go back to my hometown to find a new job.
>
> I keep asking myself what Chinese culture really is! I do not think that the Confucius Institute is teaching the *real* Chinese culture by any means. What they want us to teach is only *ancient* Chinese culture. I can see a huge gap between the real contemporary Chinese culture that my generation experiences and the ancient Chinese culture that I have to teach but do not fully understand. For example, they want us to teach ancient Chinese royal court dances or Kung Fu to Malagasy students. But we do not know this stuff either! We learned Kung Fu and the dance from movies and videos too but then we had to teach our students as if it is more authentic when taught by Chinese faces. *We never learned Kung Fu in our entire life; however, we grew up learning and practising radio calisthenics at school!*
>
> In my interactions with my students, I tried to teach them the China that I understand, for example, the real benefits of development in our everyday life such as the rise of online shopping and overnight delivery; as well as the actual problems faced by my generation, like skyrocketing property prices and environmental degradation. I also think that if foreign students really want to understand Chinese culture, they need to learn how social networks influence relationships in China, and the pragmatics of the language. But we never have any opportunity to teach these deeper issues. I cannot stress enough that even in ancient China, Chinese culture was not entirely about Kung Fu or dancing either! The Confucius Institute just wants to use these elements to represent the Chinese culture because they are so distinctive, iconic and catchy, but nothing authentic.
>
> Sometimes we want to teach the dining culture of China and to provide students opportunities to try authentic Chinese cuisine. However, it is not feasible to cook for our students due to our living and financial conditions. Since we do not have extra funding at hand to take our students to Chinese restaurants, it is too expensive for us to treat them out of our own pocket. Our words are mostly empty cheques for our students. When they ask us, "teacher, how does authentic Chinese food taste?" we can only say, "it is delicious!" but cannot provide them anything to try. I appreciate that the Confucius Institute provides scholarships for African

> students to study in China; however, the opportunities are so rare. So few of the students can actually have the opportunity to go to China and experience what is authentic about China and Chinese culture (Conversation with Tang).

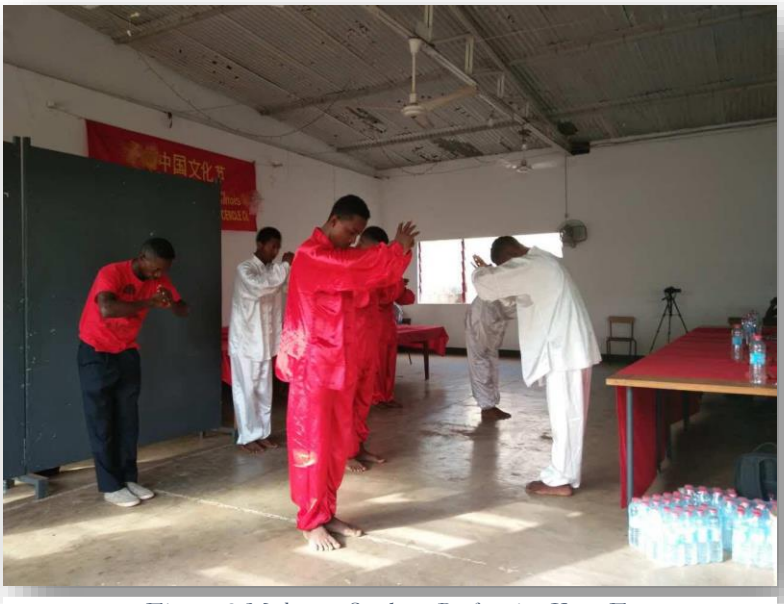

Figure 8 Malagasy Students Performing Kung Fu

What struck me most from Tang's comment was her sharp, insider's, critique of how the Confucius Institute represents Chinese culture by contrasting Kung Fu with radio calisthenics — the latter being a popular sporting activity in China that offers an interesting glimpse into changes in the country's social contexts. Radio calisthenics were first introduced to China in 1951, following the example of a similar program in the Soviet Union, to promote fitness activities nationwide and thereby strengthen Chinese people's physical health. The tradition of practising radio calisthenics in China was established during Mao's socialist regime. For decades, since the introduction of radio calisthenics into China, it is the most accessible fitness activity nationwide. Even now, students from Grade one to twelve in most of China's public schools are still required to participate in daily goosestep and radio calisthenics routines to develop a collective sense of honour and the respect for discipline and conformity (Liu and Tobin 2017). Although Chinese Kung Fu has a long history of being portrayed as the essence of Chinese culture, especially in Chinese movies, most Chinese people in the same generation as the Confucius Institute instructors who went through China's mandatory nine-year education system have never practised Kung Fu; Tai Ji, meanwhile, enjoys greater popularity

among Chinese seniors than 20-somethings. To expect Confucius Institute language instructors to teach Kung Fu rather than the radio calisthenics they practice through years of schooling, reflects the discrepancy between China's social reality and the image that para-government agencies such as the Confucius Institute want to represent to the world. Working under such a scheme, some instructors obediently accept the identity of "cultural ambassadors" given them by the Confucius Institute. Others like Tang, however, have pinpointed the discrepancy between their own cultural experiences as native Chinese and the representation of Chinese culture realized in Madagascar.

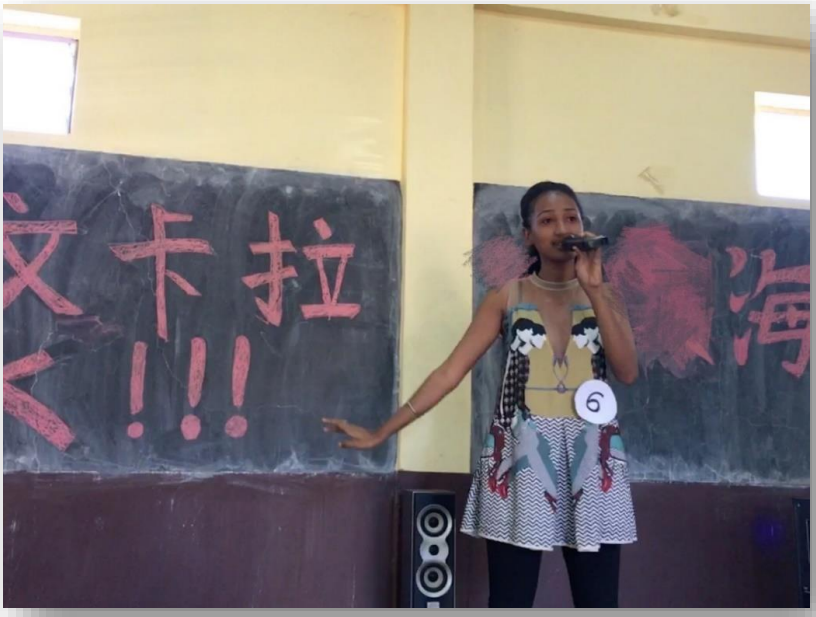

Figure 9 Malagasy Student Singing Chinese Songs

In the Wake of the Confucius Institute

Very soon after I finished my fieldwork, some university students at the University of Tsaramiverina sent me a Facebook message with crying emojis. They told me that there would not be any Chinese instructors coming to teach them next term. The Confucius Institute instructors that I had befriended later confirmed the news. Only one girl decided to extend her stay in Madagascar for another year, but she had been transferred to teach in a different school. Two other instructors decided to develop their careers back in China, while the last of them had received an offer from her dream school in Europe soon after

going back to China. The Malagasy university students also told me that within less than two years, they lost instructors from both China and America, as the Peace Corps also decided to terminate their relationship with the university. As a result, there would not be any Americans teaching English or any Chinese teaching Mandarin at the university in the near future. When I asked why the Confucius Institute had decided to cease their collaboration with the university, a former instructor told me:

> The teaching outcomes of the university are frustrating for our director. The Confucius Institute has worked hard to continue providing Chinese language instructors to the university, but the university has not done a good job of putting the Chinese language classes in the curriculum. The university is poorly organized, and students are not motivated to learn. Although the Confucius Institute receives funding from the Chinese government and the institute is under the mission to "help," we still have to calculate our input-output ratio like a business. What is the point of sending teachers to a place where there are hardly any students? That is why the director finally made the call to cease the cooperation. I feel sorry about it too because I lived and worked on the campus and I am already attached to it. But there is nothing I can do to change the final decision (Conversation with a former instructor).

The decision was sudden but not without warning. The Confucius Institute does not risk losing much by ceasing cooperation with one university in Madagascar. With the generous funding package associated with cooperation with the Confucius Institute, it has never had much difficulty finding willing educational institutions in Africa with which to partner.

The instructors are fully aware of the backlash that the Confucius Institute has been experiencing in North America and Europe since 2010. However, they are also aware that the Confucius Institution, as a global educational project sponsored by the Chinese government, will continue to expand by establishing more branches and classes. Having observed and studied the practice of the Confucius Institute in northern Madagascar, I cannot stop wondering who the Confucius Institute benefits most, and whether the educational agency is adopting the same neoliberal logic and power dynamics embodied in other global business and investment projects initiated by China and other developed countries.

In previous chapters, I referred to Ferguson's (2006) argument that Africa's global connections are often made in tandem with economic declines and crisis,

disconnection, marginalization and exclusion. Although Ferguson's argument focuses primarily on Africa's position in the global economy, it is certainly also pertinent to the realm of global education and "soft power" projects such as those undertaken by the Confucius Institute. Indeed, the effect of terminating cooperation between the Confucius Institute and the local university in northern Madagascar is somehow similar to the effect of closing a mine, as it "sharpens fears and risks of marginalization and the possibility of being left out of modernity's promise" (Jorgensen 2006:235). From this perspective, China's Confucius Institute stands in parallel with the country's other global projects through which flows of capital, commodities and people go hand in hand with disconnection, discontinuity and exclusiveness, leaving local communities shattered dreams of obtaining the better lives they imagine they might have if only able to learn Chinese. At the same time, it contributes to the fragmenting of understandings of what it means to be *sinoa* in the wake of Chinese interests in Madagascar.

CHAPTER FIVE – Intimate Relationships in Chinese-Malagasy Encounters: Sexual Anxiety, Female Agency and Ambiguous Morality

"Lelahy sinoa latapiso, tilely; viavy sinoa tsara fa miavogna."

The Myth of Chinese Sexuality

During my stay in Madagascar, casual conversations about intimate relationships between Chinese and Malagasy people usually included "reasonable doubts" from my Malagasy interlocutors about the sexual preferences and propensities of the Chinese. I was sitting in the front seat of a friend's car when I engaged in such a conversation for the first time. While my friend was driving, he asked: "Mingyuan, is it true that Chinese men working in Madagascar take special medicine to kill their sperm so that when they have sex with Malagasy girls, the girls will never be pregnant?" Several interesting thoughts crossed my mind before I responded negatively. It is obviously an open secret that Chinese men living in Madagascar develop intimate relationships with Malagasy women. However, it is not common for these relationships to ripen into long-term commitments of marital and familial bonds in a traditional sense. In two different versions of the rumour, Chinese men either take this medicine by mouth or by injecting it in their bodies. One villager at the sugar plantation once told me:

> I have heard that Chinese men inject medicine to kill their sexual desires and sperm because they are racists. They want to have sex with Malagasy women but do not want to have babies with them. The Chinese have been working in Anjava for almost ten years, but we never see any mixed-race babies! (Conversation with villager A at Anjava)

Having known many of the Chinese men working at the sugar plantation, I found the comment preposterous. I answered: "no, you are wrong! There is no such Chinese medicine! Do you know why I am so sure about it? Because I have seen the babies!"

The wide circulation of this rumour suggests a sharp contrast between Madagascar's Mandarin-speaking and Cantonese-speaking Chinese communities, as the latter is widely acknowledged as well-integrated in contemporary Malagasy society (see Chapter 1 about the discussion of the "old" and "new" Chinese). The "new" Chinese workers at places like Anjava, on the other hand, are imagined to be members of a very different community in the eyes of local Malagasy people. The creation and circulation of "rumours" like those described above, certainly, attest to how 'other' and 'exotic' these

new Chinese are. On the African continent, the presence of a surging number of Chinese workers and business owners has also inspired a wide range of rumours like these. According to Braun (2015), for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chinese companies' involvement in the construction of telecommunication infrastructure has caused an effervescent online circulation of distorted images of *Mami Wata* - a mystical female siren traditionally symbolizing modernity and wealth in Congo's public imaginary. Recently, the mermaid-like figure has appeared as a grotesque monster in online photos and videos alongside associated rumours claiming that the Chinese workers installing underwater Internet cables have discovered the latest incarnation of the siren and made her ugly. Braun argues that the new image of the mystical figure "reveals contentious and contradictory relationships between the Chinese presence and the new-technology infrastructure in Kinshasa" (Braun 2015:2). Similarly, in Togo, a rumor about the mysterious murder of a trading girl working for *Les Nanettes,* a rising competitor in the country's textile trade bringing made-in-China products to African markets, reflects a local imaginary in which "business" involving "the Chinese" appear as "immoral, dangerous, greedy, manipulative, and dishonest" (Sylvanus 2013:67).

What the three rumors above have in common is they are all associated with Chinese men and African women, whether in reality or in myth. This is partly a reflection of the fact that in Madagascar, and presumably in other African countires, men disproportionally outnumber women among the "new" Mandarin-speaking Chinese workers. At Anjava, men occupy the majority of posts as engineers, construction supervisors, and project administrators; while women take up scarce positions as translators and laboratory technicians. It is not uncommon to find only one or two female workers among three dozen men among the crew of a project. In the state-sponsored educational projects discussed in the previous chapter, on the other hand, there are many more female language instructors than male ones, and most of these women are significantly younger than both men and women working in state-owned and private business sectors. These differences in sex ratio across sectors reflects the situation of domestic Chinese society where sedentary jobs, such as teaching and interpreting, are by and large considered more "fit" for women than nomadic and strenuous work. It is also worth noting that almost all of the Chinese men I met in Madagascar were married and

had wives and children living in China. The few Chinese women I met were in their mid-40s to 50s and had husbands and children in China. Almost all of the Confucius Institute instructors were single women in their 20s.

In the regional dialect of northern Madagascar, the sexuality of Chinese men was often described in the following way: "*lelahy sinoa latapiso, tilely"* – meaning that "Chinese men have small penises, but they like to have sex." When describing Chinese women, on the other hand, local people would say "*viavy sinoa tsara fa miavogna"* – meaning that "Chinese women are beautiful but shy and not sociable." Not surprisingly given such reputations, it is relatively easy for Malagasy women to develop intimate relationships with Chinese men, but rare for Malagasy men to form romantic relationships with Chinese women. In order to explore the reasons and meanings behind these reputations and associated realities, this chapter discusses the emotion, agency and morality of people directly involved in or indirectly influenced by heterosexual relationships between Chinese and Malagasy people. I first discuss the different kinds of sexual anxiety experienced by Chinese men and women, discussing how Chinese men and women who are inclined to adhere to the general expectations and social norms of relationships and marriage in China (see Chapter 1) face different challenges while working in Madagascar. Then I highlight the experiences of both Malagasy and Chinese women by focusing on the different types of agency exercised by three particular types of women: Malagasy women who develop intimate relationships with Chinese men, the Chinese wives of the Chinese men who have developed intimate relationships with Malagasy women, and single Chinese women living in Madagascar in their 20s, a suitable and critical age range for relationship development and marriage in Chinese society. I conclude by discussing the moral dilemmas facing Chinese men and women working in Madagascar, arguing that they have created an ambiguous moral standard that transcends the binaries of good and bad, loyal and promiscuous.

Masculine Anxiety

One day, a group of Chinese men working on a construction project in the city invited me to join them for a beer in a bar. They lamented: "you see Mingyuan, we cannot find girls here. *Even our stones are male*!" The sentence is a direct translation of the Chinese

expression: "*lian shi tou dou shi gong de."* They are so lacking for female companionship, they mean, that it seems that everything around them is male, even the stones at their feet [see Figure 10, showing that most of the seasonal Malagasy workers at Anjava are male]. In this section, I discuss several reasons for the anxiety around matters of masculinity and sexuality expressed by these and other Chinese men. While there may well be fundamental differences in how Chinese and Malagasy men and women think about sexuality and extramarital affairs, such differences are not enough to keep them from establishing relationships with one another.

In Xiang's compelling study of Chinese migrant workers in Singapore, Japan and South Korea, he describes their experiences as those of "point-to-point labor transplant[s]," meaning that migrants "are extracted from their hometowns and inserted directly into foreign workplaces" and that "journeys between and beyond these two points are minimized in the migrants' experience" (2012:722-723). Although Chinese workers affiliated with state-owned enterprises in Madagascar are usually recruited through different channels, they share similar experiences overseas. As noted in Chapter 2, before coming to Madagascar, most of the Chinese workers at Anjava came from small rural towns of Mainland China, where they had been struggling for years to create better lives for themselves and their families. After they decided to work in Madagascar in pursuit of higher salaries, they hopped on flights to Madagascar with no knowledge of basic facts about the country. Not surprisingly, once they settled in the Anjava compound, everything felt far different than they had imagined. In conversations with me, these men expressed difficulties they encountered in trying to learn the local language, understanding cultural and social customs, and adjusting to the tropical weather. While their basic living necessities such as food and housing are arranged by the company, even this benefit proved problematic given how it made their lives monotonous.

A routine day for such men starts with a 6AM breakfast at the canteen situated five-hundred meters' walk from their core living area. A full-time Chinese chef, assisted by several Malagasy kitchen helpers, prepares and serves three meals daily to Chinese workers. The breakfast is always served with congee, boiled eggs, steamed buns, Chinese pickles and coffee. Lunch is served at 12 o'clock punctually, and dinner at 5:30 in the

afternoon, both with two meat dishes, one vegetable dish, steamed rice and a soup as designated in the weekly menu. Limited bottles of beer and soft drinks are available on Saturdays, and special snacks or specialty foods are reserved for Sundays. Most Chinese workers finish their work at 2PM, leaving them lots of time to kill with nothing to do but wait for dinner, stroll around, watch the few Chinese television channels available in their dorms or drink beer in thatched shacks in the nearby town. The company has no plans to bring in basic recreational facilities such as a gym or a movie projector. Although many workers would like to visit some of the most popular tourism destinations in the regions, they have worked for years at the sugar plantation without the opportunity to do so. For employees of other construction projects based in urban settings, there are more distractions such as karaoke bars and restaurants. These options prove tedious and unsatisfying, however, compared to the recreational opportunities available in China. For Chinese private business owners, meanwhile, life revolves around business-related travel and supervising their shops, leaving them limited time for personal entertainment.

In China, work-related affairs are often dealt with during recreational activities. Business entertaining activities, for example, are generally carried out in gendered social settings dominated by men. As Osburg (2013) compellingly argues in his study of China's emerging middle class, "business networking requires entering spaces (such as night clubs and saunas), and participating in activities (such as drinking, gambling, and sex consumption) that are not viewed as appropriate for 'proper' women" (2013:38). It is hard to categorize all Chinese workers in Madagascar as part of China's emerging new middle class, since the salary of many of them hardly qualifies them for membership in the "new rich club" and the criteria of "middle class" itself is vague and fluid in Chinese society (see Chapter 1). What being in Madagascar has provided these Chinese men, however, are privileges that they did not have much chance to enjoy back in China – they are privileged not only in terms of wealth and their status as foreigners, but also in terms of gender and their popularity among Malagasy women. Bearing a long tradition of hosting relatively powerful foreign others, local people in northern Madagascar associate foreigners (and especially those with light skin) with wealth, modernity, and development.

For many Malagasy girls, as Cole (2004) points out, youthful sexual experimentation and participation in transactional sex is not uncommon. Seeking out relationships and sexual encounters with foreign men especially enjoys a high level of social acceptance. Indeed, many Malagasy girls associate achieving a better life with developing intimate relationships with foreign men, believing that they can provide a shortcut toward higher social status and more wealth – something enviable among relatives and friends. However, it is precisely this association between "race" and "modernity" that has made the Chinese men I spoke with skeptical about their own popularity among local women. Wary of being targeted by Malagasy women aspiring for rewarding long-term relationships, Chinese men tend to deem sexual encounters with Malagasy girls as casual, physical and transactional. Chinese men also seldom "get serious" with their sex partners since they have no intention of leaving their wives. In some cases, when casual encounters develop into longer-term relationships with emotional entanglements, Chinese men may provide a certain level of financial support, but nothing more, and certainly not the promise of marriage.

The perception of Chinese men's sexuality as ambiguous is manifested in the contradictory messages of the stereotype and the rumour discussed in the beginning of this chapter. On the one hand, they "like having sex with Malagasy girls," but they also "do not want to have sex with Malagasy girls [for fear of getting them pregnant] and so they take sperm-killing medicine." Some observers even question the sexual ability of Chinese men, wondering whether those who do not have Malagasy girlfriends are sexually impotent. For their part, many of the Chinese men working in Madagascar face a dilemma caused by the incongruity between the rigid moral standards of home (related to marital faithfulness, for example), and their own sexual desires exacerbated by long-distance relationships and loneliness of life in Madagascar. Many confessed to me that they had experienced strong "cultural shock" when they first started working in Madagascar, especially in terms of attitudes about sexuality and extramarital affairs. Compared to China, where personal experiences with sex and sexuality largely remain closely guarded secrets and humbleness and shyness are still generally considered qualities of virtuous women, Madagascar is – according to the words of the Chinese men – "a 'westernized' country of sexual permissiveness for both men and women."

Many people in northern Madagascar do have a high tolerance for extramarital affairs. Indeed, extramarital affairs are frequently depicted in locally-produced music videos and movies as an ordinary daily drama, a trend I also observed among many of my Malagasy friends. One need only consider the array of vocabulary in the local vernacular used to talk of such affairs for a sense of how common they are. For example, people ridicule the type of young Malagasy men who live off the money of a richer girlfriend who is herself in an intimate relationship with a rich man (often a foreigner), calling such a young man *jaombilo*. People also commonly make a distinction in meaning between "*madame*" and "*sipa*" when talking of a man's romantic partner, in which the former refers the legitimate wife whose status is unshakable, and the latter is used to refer to sexual partners in extramarital affairs who need to be kept in secret. Alternatively, people might refer to a man's "*permanent bureau*" (permanent office, referring to his legitimate wife) and his "*deuxieme bureau, troisieme bureau…*" (second and third offices referring to multiple mistresses). Chinese men often cite this prevalence of a culture that seems to tolerate extra-marital affairs to justify their own unfaithfulness. Working in Madagascar seems to have provided them a temporary getaway from moral judgements.

For Chinese men working in Madagascar, one outstanding feature of their lives is the imbrication of private and professional life, which, I argue, significantly intensifies their sexual anxiety. Colleagues at work share living spaces in bungalows or villas as neighbours or roommates. Under such living arrangements, gossip travels fast due to the lack of boundaries between their public and private lives. It is almost impossible to keep any secrets, especially those about intimate relationships, away from the scrutiny of others – superiors, inferiors, friends, night guards, chauffeurs, neighbours, villagers or sometimes passers-by. Since many Chinese male workers have lots of time to kill with nothing to do, drinking beer, making obscene jokes, bragging about their sexual fantasies and "conquests" and other forms of "shared transgression" (Osburg 2013, see also Chapter 1) are ways of forming fraternal bonds among one another and building personal connections commonly used among China's new rich. In this way, the sexuality of Chinese men is not only challenged by local rumors, but also challenged by other Chinese colleagues and friends as well. By encouraging each other to "try" Malagasy girls, sharing their contentment with or complaints about their sexual experiences, a

relationship (*guan xi*) based on ideologies of male solidarity is nurtured and sustained. One Chinese man once joked: "no matter how decent, loyal, timid and conservative you were before you came to Madagascar, it is too easy to follow bad examples. This is a paradise for men!" They continue to endure the boredom and enjoy the freedom of being a faraway husband, as well as the privileges that they take for granted in Madagascar.

Figure 10 Seasonal Sugar Porters at Anjava

Feminine Insecurity

Compared to Chinese men working in Madagascar, Chinese women, especially young Chinese women in their early 20s, experience a completely different kind of sexual anxiety – a sense of deep insecurity caused by both the yearning for and the fear of physical intimacy with Malagasy or Chinese men, the lack of necessary sex education, and the worry of growing old single and becoming unattractive in the marriage market in the future. As discussed in Chapter 4, most of the Chinese language instructors working with the Confucius Institute were freshly graduated from medium-level Chinese universities with a Bachelor's degree. Curious, adventurous and ambitious, they decided to work for the Confucius Institute in Madagascar under a contract of one to three years to fulfil their personal aspirations to see the world outside of China, or to serve their

ambitions for higher-level education in China or other developed countries. Their age, gender and lack of social experiences (usually understood as synonymous with "gullible" and "naive" in China) set them apart from other members of the Chinese community in Madagascar and render them easy targets for Chinese men. Their celibacy, foreigner status and skin color also make them sexually attractive in the social aesthetics of Malagasy men. However, their shyness and avoidance of socializing with Malagasy men, whether deliberate or natural, beyond professional interactions have sometimes aroused gossip behind their backs. Chinese girls in Madagascar are under a triple layer of pressure regarding the regulation of their own bodies and sexuality: pressure from protective parents who expect them to be competitive in future marriage markets, the pressure of a paternalistic style of micro-management from their male superior within the institution, and the pressure they exert on themselves by internalizing mainstream Chinese social expectations of an ideal female body and sexuality.

Many of the female language instructors had to fight against their parents' will before making the decision to come to work in Madagascar. Ma, a skinny and talkative young woman from southeast China, was in this situation. For her, working in Madagascar for two years would serve as a springboard towards her dream for the future. She told me about how her ambitions for the future contradict her family's expectation that she should settle down at a young age:

> When I applied for this teaching position in Madagascar, my mother was against the idea. She thinks that I should stay in China and marry when I am 24 years old. But I have my own plan for my future, and I will stick to my plan regardless of the opinion of my family. I want to broaden my horizon by teaching in Madagascar. After my contract is finished, I want to apply for graduate schools in Europe to study education. Studying outside of China has always been my goal. After my Master's degree, I want to work for a foreign company in southeast China. However, my mother thinks all of these plans including teaching in Madagascar are risky since I will waste my best years as a girl. She worries that when I finish my teaching and my education, I will be too old to marry (Conversation with Ma).

Other female instructors also mentioned family disapproval of the idea of working in Madagascar due to similar concerns. Tang, a girl from northwest China, saw her coming to Madagascar as a rebellious victory:

> I did not tell my parents that I applied for this position until I got it. Before I decided to come to Madagascar, I had not been successful in my entrance exams to get into graduate schools in China, and I had not been satisfied with my job. Though I was not sure what I wanted to do in my future, I had always known that I wanted more freedom and flexibility, so I was determined to escape from my nine-to-five job. After knowing that I was going to Africa, my parents begged their relatives and friends to persuade me to change my mind. They even used their personal connections to get me an entry-level job at a government agency. But I refused to obey them. After I graduated from my university with my Bachelor's degree, my mother always talked about finding me a man who owns an apartment and a car to marry. She always wanted to set me up for blind date. But I insisted my own criteria about who I want to date and marry (Conversation with Tang).

The second layer of pressure comes from the male superior of the language instructors. Many described their superior as trying to play the role of their temporary "father." He would keep reminding the girls to "pay attention to their behavior" and to learn to "protect themselves," since virginity, purity and chastity are highly praised as fundamental to a desirable female body in Chinese mainstream ethos. As a result, although not written explicitly, a rule that all woman language instructors were aware of was that it is forbidden to develop any kind of intimate physical relationships with Chinese and Malagasy men during their terms. One precedent case that many instructors mentioned to me was about one girl who developed a romantic relationship with a Chinese businessman; she was allegedly transferred back to China in the middle of her term because of her violation of the rule. It is not clear whether male language instructors are bound by the same rule. As noted earlier, there are relatively few male Confucius Institute teachers in Madagascar, though men seem to be favored to serve as higher level administrators in the organization. One female instructor described the structural gender inequality to me without being critical of it:

> Our boss obviously prefers male language instructors because whenever he travels, he will only bring guys. It is always "convenient" for guys in Africa. Our girls are always assigned with less dangerous or risky jobs. After all we are girls. It is good that our boss is a little protective of us. Besides, they would love to keep the guys in bigger cities since there are bigger Chinese communities in such cities. Guys are better at drinking than girls (Conversation with Cai).

Many female language instructors have internalized the gendered expectations that others project on them. As a result, most of them have adopted an indoor lifestyle. They go out to the market for food and to work at the school where they are assigned, but seldom go

out to places such as dance clubs, discos, or karaoke bars by themselves since these places are deemed risky, unsafe and inappropriate for girls. The local educational institutions working in collaboration with the Confucius Institute provide drivers and vehicles to escort them for work-related outings and grocery shopping in the city. Many of my Malagasy friends were baffled by how the Chinese girls dress everyday: they cover their body up with full length dresses and long-sleeve clothes, sunglasses, sunhats, and sunscreens under an umbrella to avoid getting tanned from the blazing equatorial sun, a behavior rooted in the Chinese beauty standard that fancies lighter skin color as an important characteristic of a desirable female body.

Many Malagasy people say Chinese girls are *miavogna*, meaning that they are shy, not willing to communicate with other people and hard to socialize with. Rather than see such shyness as an inherent quality of these young women, I am inclined to see it as a choice. Single Chinese girls choose to exercise their agency by deliberately minimizing contacts with Malagasy men and being prudent in socializing with Chinese men. At the sugar plantation, many Chinese men criticized the two young women teaching Chinese language there for living in their little fenced-in world, suggesting that they lacked basic knowledge of social protocol. One man once described their situation to me as follows:

> The two language instructors we have here never socialize with us. They seldom talk to us, and we don't understand why. Maybe because they look down upon us because we are all rural workers (*nong min gong*) and we are uncultured and uneducated (*mei you wen hua*). The instructors are university graduates! They are not congenial and do not have common language (*mei you gong tong yu yan*) with us. They only come to us when they needed our help, like when they need a ride, or need a hand for heavy-lifting. However, the friendliness is never sustained. Sometimes we've tried to approach them or offer our help, however, they did not seem to respond with gratitude or reciprocity. As a result, we are all discouraged to be nice to them by now. Or maybe they are scared of us. If they get too close with us, we might be a little bit flirtatious with the girls, or somebody will spread gossip about them. Maybe they do not like that. But you know, we are not going to do anything with them. We will not screw around with Chinese girls who work here (Conversation with Chinese man D).

However, personal motivations vary among these young women. Contrary to Chinese men who come to Madagascar mainly for economic gains and who do not see their connections with the Chinese state even though they are working for a state-owned corporation, Chinese language instructors associate their identity with a moral obligation

to righteously represent the positive image of Chinese people and culture. As one girl told me one day:

> We need to be careful with our personal image (*xing xiang*) because of the nature of our job, our position and our status (*shen fen*). We cannot behave like the Chinese men in Madagascar. We should not get intimate with any Chinese or Malagasy men while we are doing our job here. It is first of all against the regulations. Secondly, as we have been told by our parents and our boss, we are girls, we will easily suffer losses (*chi kui*) when we get too close with men. After all, our work represents the state and government, so we have to take that into consideration. We cannot do whatever we want to do in terms of personal relationships during our working contract period (Conversation with Chinese instructor A).

By saying "suffer losses," she means that girls might lose their virginity, or be fooled physically or emotionally by men. Another girl provided another reason for celibacy and constraint in her social circle:

> I am just not interested in dating any Malagasy men or any Chinese men here. It will not work out with Malagasy men because we are so different, and my family will never agree with it. I will not date a Chinese man here either because most of them are married. It is simply not an option. I am here to work. I will solve my personal issue (*jie jue ge ren wen ti*) when I go back to China after finishing my job in Madagascar (Conversation with Chinese instructor B).

During my fieldwork, two female instructors decided to change their physical appearance dramatically. One shocked everybody around her by shaving off all of her waist-length hair and wearing a white kerchief in public. Chinese men wheezed about her hairstyle with bewilderment and secretly compared her look to that of Chinese Buddhist nuns. Some made mean comments about her baldness relating to a feudalistic custom in Chinese ancient history dictating that women who are unfaithful should be punished by shaving all their hair off, putting them into a cage and throwing them into a lake. The other girl was less radical as she cut a significant length of her hair and changed it into short spiky hair like a boy. The motivations behind such sudden and radical excision of their feminine characteristics remain unclear. Whether these girls wanted to alter their appearance in order to be less attractive to men, or they simply had a hard time adjusting the heat of the tropical weather is a topic that I never had an opportunity to discuss with them.

Female Agency

In casual discussions with Malagasy women who develop intimate relationships with Chinese men, the women always grined with a wink of the eye when they used the Malagasy expression for "small penis." It is considered as a *sababo* – "dirty talk" in the local vernacular – vulgar, disgraceful and never suitable in public. However, after I got to know them better, they did not mind talking about their relationships. Whether intimate relationships between Malagasy women and Chinese men should be categorized as part of the "informal sexual economy" or "transactional" is sometimes hard to define. As Cole (2004) observes, since the early 1990s, as Madagascar entered the post-socialist period associated with economic liberalization, there has been a generally perceived increase in girls' use of sex to earn money – an economy in which "sex, consumption, and social status are intertwined" (2004:574). It is not uncommon in Madagascar and elsewhere that girls step in and out of the sex-for-money business, or straddle between serious and fleeting relationships with financial benefits. As Leclerc-Madlala argues, "the nature of transaction is fluid, ranging from the provision of a basic need to the acquisition of a consumer want" (2003:224). Many Chinese men asserted that Malagasy girls came to "knock at the door" of their dorms at night in order to have quick sex in exchange for money, though they also admitted that if a relationship lasted over a longer period of time, there was an investment of emotions from both sides. In all discussions about these relationships between Malagasy women and Chinese men, however, reference to disputes over money always came up: on the one hand, Chinese men usually complained that their mistresses asked for money that they could not or dared not afford; on the other, Malagasy women quickly slide into complete financial dependence, turning their Chinese boyfriends into "sugar daddies," or in Chinese metaphor, "money trees" (*yao qian shu*).

Although Chinese men in Madagascar are greatly privileged compared to Malagasy and Chinese women, it is wrong to assume that women are deprived of any kinds of agency. Wardlow's discussion of "wayward women" (2006) among the Huli people in Papua New Guinea offers an effective analytical tool for elaborating the kind of agency that Malagasy women exercise in relationships with Chinese men. Wardlow argues that the agency of Huli women is a kind of "encompassed agency" because these women are positioned as encompassed by the more powerful projects of others. It is also

a kind of "negative agency" because their agency comes from the refusal to cooperate. The Malagasy women that I encountered had either chosen to develop romantic relationships themselves with Chinese men or decided to persuade their daughters to do the same. Those who date Chinese men directly have consciously chosen a foreigner as a shortcut towards wealth and higher social status. However, the promise of wealth and happiness that comes together with a life dependent on Chinese men is doomed to be effervescent and unsustainable, since Chinese men rarely plan to divorce their wives, to bring their Malagasy girlfriends back to China, or to settle down in Madagascar. Malagasy women enjoy a certain level of "negative agency" under the broader unequal power dynamics due to the mobility, higher social status (as *vazaha*), and relative wealth of Chinese men. For those younger Malagasy girls who had been pressured by family to start dating Chinese men, their agency is not only "negative" but also "encompassed" since their relationships serve to fulfil the more powerful projects of others. In this section, I will provide stories to further elaborate how the "encompassed" and "negative" agency of Malagasy women is exercised.

Tales of three Malagasy women

The first story is about a Malagasy woman in her mid-40s and her three daughters. The Chinese men who know her call her *madame atody* - "Mrs. Egg" – because she sells eggs to the canteen of Chinese workers at the sugar plantation. Her major income comes from managing a little bar located in a village five-minute drive from the plantation compound. The start-up money for her bar business came from a Chinese man with whom she had developed an intimate relationship while he was working at the sugar company. She and the Chinese man have a young mixed-race daughter, but the man finished his contract with the company and returned to China several years ago. Today she still receives money occasionally from this man to support their young, now six-year-old, daughter. Her two other daughters are around 20 years old, and she encourages them to study the Chinese language at the Confucius Institute in universities because she sees it as really helpful for their future, since being able to communicate with Chinese men is the first step to approach them. The language ability of the two older daughters proved to be a huge advantage for them among the Chinese men they met. However, their mother chose

two men in particular – *Chef* Tian and *Chef* Ye - and sent her two daughters to develop relationships with them. The reason she purposely chose these two men was because she could benefit the most from their power and positions. Part of Tian's job responsibility is to dispatch vehicles going back and forth between major cities and the rural village where the sugar plantation is located, and since inter-city public transportation in Madagascar is excruciating and uncertain, developing a good relationship with him would guarantee free rides to her and her family whenever they want. Her other side business is buying unused sugar bags cheap from the Chinese company and selling them to villagers at a higher price. Developing a good relationship with Ye would guarantee her monopoly on the source of these bags [Figure 11]. So, she sent her older daughter to develop a relationship with Ye, and her second daughter with Tian. On one occasion, however, she sent her second daughter to "give a massage" to Ye on Saturday and then to Tian on Sunday. On Monday, when the two men chatted with each other, they realized that they slept with the same girl just one day apart. Tian did not take it seriously, but Ye was furious and he blamed her mother, Mrs. Egg. To punish her, he significantly increased the price of sugar bags that she was buying from the company, meaning that even today, the price of sugar bags in the village market is much higher than it used to be. In this case, since Ye has full power over the pricing of sugar bags, the economy of sugar bags in the village is fundamentally influenced by sexual encounters between Chinese men and Malagasy women.

The second story is about a Chinese private business owner and a Malagasy woman in her late 20s – Esmeralda – who works at a bar in the city of Tsaramiverina. "Boss Wang" is a man in his mid-40s, married to a Chinese woman. He decided to come to Madagascar because he is a remote relative of someone working at a state-owned corporation. Knowing of business opportunities in Madagascar and having the right connections with the Chinese corporation, he decided to try his luck. Like many other young Malagasy women, Esmerelda was not strictly a sex worker or prostitute when she first met Wang, but she did regularly seek out foreign men for transactional sex. She had several sexual encounters with Wang and got pregnant. After Wang found out about the pregnancy, he gave her money to abort the baby. She agreed, accepted the money and took off. However, after eight months, she came back to him with a baby in her belly

ready to be born, leaving him no option but to give her more money and let her deliver the baby. After the baby was born, she stayed with Wang in his restaurant and worked almost full-time there as a cashier. Every time I went to Wang's restaurant, he complained to me about Esmerelda doing nothing at home and being too demanding of his money because he had given her too much money in the early stage of their relationship. Once, Wang's wife came to visit him in Madagascar, and he asked Esmerelda to leave the city for a while. She asked Wang to give her a great amount of money in return, threatening to show up in front of his wife if he did not. Wang secretly thought about bringing the baby back to China alone and never bringing him back, however, in order to do so, he would need the mother's signature on extensive paperwork. Knowing the potential consequences of letting the father take the baby from her, Esmerelda refused to sign any documents. She also requested that I teach her some Chinese because Wang would not teach her anything. After I obtained permission from Wang and had several language sessions with her, she told me that Wang has been really *masiaka* (meaning rude and violent) to her and that she is always scared of him. The last time I went to the restaurant, Wang was holding his beautiful one-year old son on his shoulder, telling me of his plans to leave Madagascar for other business in Africa and that he was ready to leave the baby in Madagascar with his mother. He said: "I love this boy, he is my son, but this is his destiny. He has to stay here and grow up in Madagascar." As we can see from this story, Esmerelda exercised a certain level of negative agency since she refused to cooperate with the Chinese man even though she is financially dependent on him. Similar to many other Malagasy women dating Chinese men, money both empowers and disadvantages them. They demand money from Chinese men when they are not satisfied with the relationship or do not want to obey demands. However, it is the desperate need for money that has pushed them towards practicing transactional sex in the first place. Compared to Esmeralda, Wang obviously enjoys a higher level of personal mobility and a greater financial advantage.

The third story is about Helene, an energetic and cheerful young woman around 20 with big, watery eyes. At the time I first met her, she was dating a Chinese man almost 30 years older than her working at a state-owned corporation. She came to town with her father who was also working at the same Chinese corporation. I came to the hotel where

she was staying around dinnertime to meet her. She told me that it had been her parents' idea to "arrange" her relationship with the Chinese man whom she was dating. Her parents encouraged her to be together with him so that her whole family could benefit from the conveniences associated with the high position of the Chinese man. They also wanted him to financially support her study, her business plan and other sundry family expenses as long as the relationship lasted. She complained that her parents had too much control over her and that there was nothing she could have done to disobey their will. The second time I met Helene, we were both riding back to the company base with a Malagasy driver; however, Helene hopped out of the car all of a sudden long before we reached our final destination without a single word of goodbye. After she vanished in the crowd, the driver said: "*atsika tsy nahita izy*", meaning that "none of us have ever seen her." He was asking me to keep the secret for Helene from the Chinese workers since she did not go back directly as planned. I understood immediately that the Malagasy driver was helping Helene by keeping his mouth shut about her whereabouts. The most rational explanation is that Helene went to see her real boyfriend – her *jaombilo* – and tried to keep it as a secret from the Chinese man she was seeing. By the time I finished my fieldwork, Helene was still together with the same Chinese man. The last time I met her, she was with her *vady sinoa* – Chinese boyfriend – with a happy smile on her face.

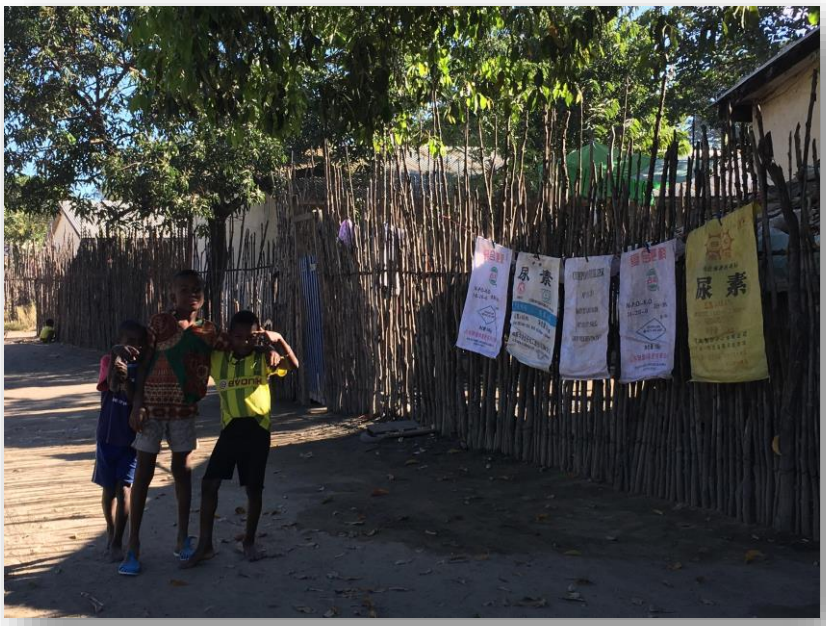

Figure 11 Malagasy Children and Fertilizer Bags on Sale

Faraway Wives in China

As discussed in the previous section, money plays a central role in sustaining intimate relationships between Chinese men and Malagasy women. Money is also critical in the maintenance of marriages between Chinese men and their wives in China. The Chinese working in Madagascar can usually enjoy a one-month vacation per year around the Chinese Lunar New Year. For the rest of the year, family members remain in China. Some Chinese men told me they had already gotten used to their life in Madagascar without the constraints of household affairs, and so returning to their families for a short period of time each year can be both exciting and intimidating. In China, meanwhile, wives have learned to cope with the long absences of their husbands in different ways. I never had the opportunity to meet or interview any of the wives in person, however, based on what their husbands told me, I grasped the gist of how being a wife at a distance can involve exerting a certain level of control over husbands.

Most of the wives of the men working for state-owned corporations have full control over their husbands' finances due to the companies' payroll systems. The

companies deposit monthly salaries in Chinese currency in the men's bank accounts while paying a small monthly stipend (approximately 60 USD) to each man working in Madagascar in Malagasy cash. Since the companies provide accommodation and food, theoretically the men working there do not need to spend any of their own money. The small stipend is meant to cover small expenses like cigarettes and beers. Since the Chinese men do not have much Malagasy cash in hand, if they need extra cash for paying for extra services such as transactional sex, or keeping a Malagasy mistress, they need to apply to the companies' office of finance to deduct money from their fixed salary in Chinese currency. Since almost all wives have access to their husbands' bank accounts, they will know immediately from the transaction history if there is any "suspicious" deduction of money, and thus have a means of monitoring their husbands' behaviour. One man once assured his wife:

> I have told my wife before that if I do not bring money back home in any year, that means that "I am having someone outside" (meaning keeping a mistress). If you see money every time I come back, you should be assured that I am loyal (Conversation with Chinese man A).

However, while the wives have control over most of the salary that their husbands earn in Madagascar, men have many ways of generating discretionary cash without leaving a trace in their bank accounts. For example, close buddies lend each other Malagasy cash to spend in times of need. Another way to get quick cash is to sell things to local Malagasy people. A lot of ordinary things from the Chinese men can be desirable commodities in the local market, even if they are second-hand. Things like a pair of worn-out boots, an outdated cellphone, an archaic laptop, bottled water, sugar or fertilizer bags, nails, car components, and diesel can be sold to earn extra cash. Driblets of bribery can also accumulate substantially as a source of local cash when, as mentioned in chapter 3, Malagasy workers who want to work at a Chinese company pay a small "introduction fee." Most of the fee is paid to mid-level Malagasy *cadres*, however, it is hard to calculate how much the Chinese benefit from this kind of "grey income." In this way, a balance between how much to spend in Madagascar for girls and how much to send home to support the family in China is deliberately and carefully kept. One man once told me proudly:

> once my wife saw the wife of my colleague buying a brand-new car and driving the car in town every day, she called me telling me she wanted a new car too. So, I told her to use the money in my bank account to buy one (Conversation with Chinese man B).

Another man told me:

> I told my wife to be careful spending the money in my bank account because we are trying to save it for bigger investment, like buying a nice apartment in a nice housing estate in the future. If she wants to buy anything luxurious, like a designer handbag, she needs to discuss with me first then we will make the decision together (Conversation with Chinese man C).

Similar to Malagasy women who date Chinese men, money both empowers and disadvantages the faraway Chinese wives whose husbands are absent. While it is idealistic to assume that all Chinese wives remain loyal to their husbands, based on what I have learned during my fieldwork, it is presumably less possible for them to have extramarital affairs compared to Chinese men. It is also worth mentioning that not all wives are kept in the dark about their husbands' external romances. Some wives are furious but cannot do anything; others may seek out extramarital affairs of their own as a revenge. However, most marriages have somehow survived such situations, at least in the legal sense, in keeping with the spirit of protecting the family as an integral and unharmed unit.

Ambiguous Morality

I conclude this chapter by reconstructing a conversation that I overheard in a Chinese restaurant in Toamasina, Madagascar's largest port city with a great presence of both Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking Chinese people. A Mandarin-speaking Chinese man was sitting by the table behind me with two young Malagasy women. It was hard to gauge their relationships, however, my guess based on how they talked to each other and how the girls were dressed was that one of the two Malagasy girls worked as a translator for the Chinese man doing business of some sort and the other girl was a friend of the translator. The Chinese man, between drinks of Three Horses Beer, blustered in Mandarin Chinese:

> Us, Chinese men, unlike your man [Malagasy men], we are men of responsibility! Once we marry a woman, we take responsibility and take care of our family, not only our wife, children, but also our parents, our wife's parents. We respect our marriage and we are loyal to our family. But your men are always promiscuous. A

> man can screw around, have a baby with one girl and abandon her, go to find another girl. You see, very few Malagasy men actually validate their marriage, because they simply do not want and need to.

Similar stereotypes about Malagasy men being unwilling to take the legal responsibility associated with marriage can be found among other Mandarin-speaking Chinese men I met in Madagascar. A man at the sugar plantation told me:

> We always say that Madagascar is a paradise for men, because men do not need to get married here. Malagasy men live and travel light. However, Chinese men are always tired, burdened by responsibility associated with our marriage and family. It is reflected in the administrative system here. For example, the company provides free medical care to all male employees and their extended family members, including their wife and their domestic partners. The way to prove a domestic relationship is very simple. They just need a certificate from a community administrator proving that the couple have been living together for a short period of time. You see Frederic, my driver, he has two wives in two different towns. And my deputy, every time he is paid, he distributes the money into five portions, each of which to support one lady. I do not understand why they are doing this. I will only use my hard-earned money on my own family (Conversation with Chinese man B).

As discussed above, "Malagasy men do not tend to marry, Malagasy women want to develop intimate relationship mainly for the sake of money, both genders are habitually promiscuous" is the stereotype of morality that Chinese men usually use to demarcate cultural boundaries between Chinese and Malagasy people. As Robbins (2004) argues, for those caught living between two different cultural systems, morality is likely to provide the window through which they can see the contradictions with which they live. Robbins defines the moral domain as "one in which actors are culturally constructed as being aware of the directive forces of values and of the choices left open to them in responding to that force" (2004:315). About their extramarital affairs with Malagasy women, many Chinese men have developed an ambiguous standard of morality that has developed under the mixed influence of their yearning to join China's "new rich" where masculinity and personal achievement are manifested through extramarital sexual encounters, traditional Chinese values that define a model husband by his faithfulness in marriage and his responsibility to family, as well as a social environment in Madagascar where mutually satisfying sexual relationships among Chinese men and Malagasy women are easily developed.

As discussed in chapter 1, for China's emerging middle class and those who dream of joining the "new rich" club, social networking and social environments are often gendered. There is a well-known humorous Chinese expression – *jia li hong qi bu dao, wai mian cai qi piao piao* – that translates as "the red flag at home doesn't fall, the colourful flags outside are fluttering." Presumably, "the red flag" is a metaphor for a man's wife and "the colourful flags" for his partners in extramarital affairs. This expression is often used to describe a man who is successful in satisfying both his wife and his mistresses without causing any trouble. Many men consider the situation described in the expression as something to be proud of since it proves that they are attractive enough for the "colourful flags" while rich enough to support both the "red flag" and the "colourful" ones. Due to wealth differences between Chinese men and most of the local Malagasy people who live and work nearby, Chinese men in Madagascar have the opportunity to enjoy the privilege of having both "red and colourful flags" at once. However, once they go back to China, the wealth they have accumulated by working in Madagascar is hardly enough to win them a place among China's elite. As one man described the situation: "we are almost like the upper class in Madagascar, however, once I land in the airport of my hometown, I am nobody. I am just like a migrant peasant worker who does not even have medical care" (Conversation with Chinese man A).

Many Chinese men consciously made a moral choice by maintaining their relationship with their Malagasy partner while financially supporting their family at home. It is deemed a compromise between the need to be rich and the need to keep a family together. One argument shared by many Chinese men who self-claimed to have behaved morally is that although many Chinese wives have been kept in dark, men should be excused from their extramarital sexual encounters so long as they generously provide financial support to their wives and families at home. This proves that their heart is still loyal to their family even though their body is not. Someone who has a Malagasy partner occasionally without spending too much money seems acceptable. However, if someone treats his wife at home badly and spends too much money on his Malagasy mistress, it is something to be despised. Chinese men also make the distinction between "true love" (*zhen ai*) and "emotional attachment" (*gan qing*). In this context, "true love" is interpreted with emphasis on the responsibility that comes with the bond of marriage,

including involvement in family affairs and unconditional financial support to family members, whereas “emotional attachment” is caused by physical and emotional involvement and is akin to the stage of dating. The Chinese men I spoke with assume that “true love” is more valuable than “emotional attachment,” and most acknowledged that there is hardly any “true love” in their relationships with their Malagasy partners since almost all of these relationships were initially motivated by the primal physical drives of Chinese men and the demand for money from Malagasy women. In relationships that last longer, it is undeniable that Chinese men and Malagasy women have developed mutual emotional attachment. However, for most Chinese men dating Malagasy women, “emotional attachment” can never transcend to “true love.”

Some Chinese men supported their Malagasy partners out of mixed motivations of sexual attraction and beneficent sympathy for their dreadful economic situation. It is worth mentioning that the relationships between Chinese men and Malagasy women was never a single-sided effort. Many Malagasy girls understood that the wives of the Chinese men are too far away to fulfil their husbands’ needs so they take advantage of the sympathy of Chinese men to make the most out of the relationship, especially with a clear goal of financial gain.

As working and living in Madagascar provides an “escape” for the Chinese men from their banal adult life in China, many have adopted an attitude of “live in the moment” by neglecting the possible future consequences. As many men mentioned to me, they are actually living a bachelor’s life in Madagascar, at least sexually, which both constrains them and sets them free. The narrative of one man captures how he has made his ambiguously moral choice:

> I kept my abstinence for two years when I first came to work in Madagascar until I had my first sexual encounter with a girl. It was ten o’clock at night when she came to knock my door, asking for some water. I opened the door and let her in. But once she came in, she started to take off my pants. It was my fault that I couldn’t resist it but what else can I do? And this kind of thing, you know, after you do it once, it changes everything, and it does not matter anymore if you do it again, so you just kind of give up fighting the desires and let yourself go. However, I love my wife. When I married her, I promised her and her family that I would be responsible for my family for the rest of my life till death do us apart. I kept my promise and I bought a nice apartment in a major city in Southwest China and moved my family from the rural town where we are from to the big

> city for better education and living environment for our son. She can spend as much money as she wants even though she does not have a formal full-time job. I never spend too much money on girls in Madagascar. I try to keep my sexual encounters to a minimum. I have been keeping every penny I earn and send all money home. When I go home for vacation, we spend good time together as a family and we seldom quarrel with each other. She will be mad at me if she knows that I have slept with Malagasy girls. So I would rather not tell her to keep her happy the way she always is. I have never doubted the meaning of my marriage. My responsibility as a man in my marriage is the only reason that I came to work in Madagascar in the first place – to work hard and make more money so that my family can have a better life" (Conversation with Chinese man D).

In Malagasy, casual romantic relationships are often referred as *misoma*, meaning "playing games." The intimate relationships in Chinese-Malagasy encounters, especially those involving Chinese men and Malagasy women, bear resemblances to "games," as actors participate in (or sometimes, refuse to participate in) the mutual construction of these relationships out of their own needs and deliberate calculations (whether related to physical, emotional or financial interests). Through the "allying and betraying" (Ortner 1999), manifested in the stories of Malagasy women and Chinese wives, the dynamics of women's romantic relationships or marriages with Chinese men are processes in constant making and remaking. In this sense, many of the intimate relationships considered in this chapter share features of "serious games" together with other kinds of Chinese-Malagasy encounters described in this research. In the following concluding chapter, I will highlight the commonalities among the different kinds of encounters addressed in this thesis and their broader implications for a deeper understanding of China and Africa in the contemporary world.

CONCLUSION – Concluding Reflections on Chinese-Malagasy Encounters

One of the first few phenomena that I observed after I arrived in northern Madagascar in 2017 was an amazing number of Malagasy men wearing T-shirts featuring Chinese characters. Every time I walked down the street, I snapped photos of such men [Figure 12]. At first, I presumed that the popularity of such T-shirts was due to the fashion sense of Malagasy men; perhaps they envisioned wearing something with Chinese characters as "chic," like those in the West who get Chinese character tattoos. However, after having brief conversations with a few of these young men, I realized that most of them had bought their T-shirts from second-hand clothes markets without realizing that the patterns on them were in fact Chinese characters. Most of these T-shirts were not of any specific brand. In fact, judging by the messages on them, most were originally produced to raise awareness about public service events or as advertisements for private businesses or institutions; the Chinese characters printed on these T-shirts were sometimes the names of events or institutions, slogans, or advertising pitches. Thus, Malagasy men wore notifications for coming university entrance exams, anti-corruption petition rallies or the grand-openings of restaurants in China, without even knowing it. The characters that conveyed so much meaning to me were simply "patterns on clothes" to them.

At first glance, the popularity of T-shirts with Chinese characters seems to reflect China's increasing influence in Africa, as more Chinese state-owned corporations are investing in agro-industrial or infrastructure construction projects, more Chinese commodities (whether new or second-hand) are reaching African markets and more language classes are offered and taught by Chinese language instructors. However, the meaning of Chinese-led projects, cheap Chinese commodities and Chinese culture remains largely puzzling or incoherent to Malagasy people and communities much in the way that the Chinese characters on these T-shirts do. Just as Malagasy students singing Chinese songs at cultural events without understanding the lyrics can be (and, indeed, were) mistakenly seen by some as indicating how deeply young Malagasy people have embraced Chinese culture, young men wearing these T-shirts suggest the possibility of a profound influence that, in fact, is simply not there. This is not to suggest that the recent influx of "new" Chinese people and things in Madagascar has had no effect, however.

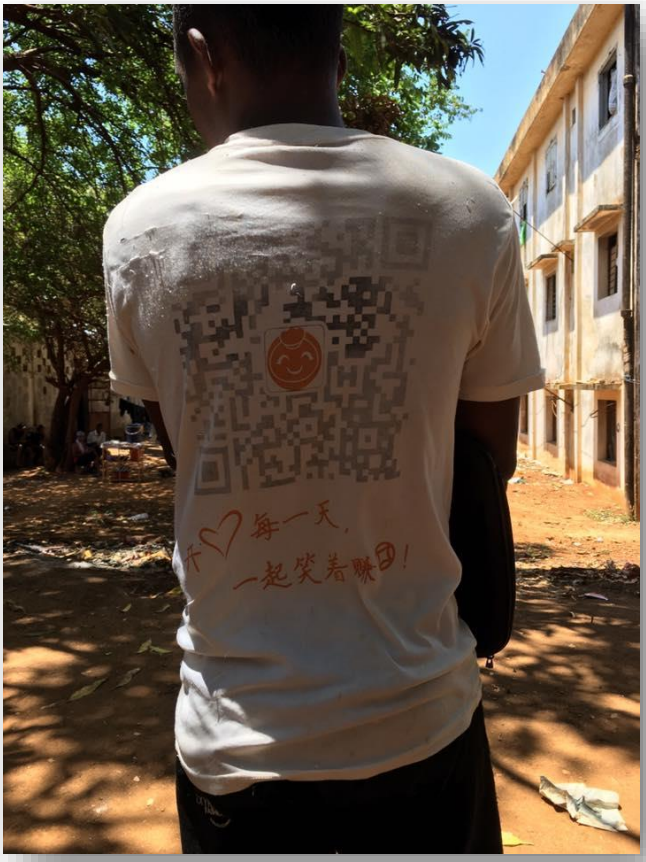

Figure 12 Malagasy Student Wearing T-Shirt with Chinese Characters

The photo above was taken on the campus of the University of Tsaramiverina. I came across this Malagasy student when he was walking back to his cramped and stifling dorm-room that he was sharing with four other students and, sometimes, their respective partners. The room was on the third floor of an ill-maintained building known as the "bloc" with no supply of running water or plumbing. The big square pattern printed on his worn-out T-shirt is a QR code that people can scan with their WeChat app on their smartphones (see Chapter 3 for discussions on the use of social networking app WeChat and QR codes by Malagasy traders and Chinese merchants in Guangzhou). The Chinese sentence under the QR code means "happy everyday, together we make money while smiling." There is no way of knowing what this T-shirt was originally produced for, but the slogan partly reflects the social ethos of domestic Chinese society represented by

Chinese workers and teachers in Madagascar. As positive as it seems to be, the slogan might also be understood as referring implicitly to a fear of "missing out on wealth" and, thereafter, "missing out on all possible future opportunities" (Zhang 2000, cited in Xiang 2012:723-724).

For many Chinese working in Madagascar, pursuing a better life means pursuing a "modern" life – an idea strongly influenced by the slippery concept of Western modernity. As Piot summarizes, modernity can be understood with reference to "those everyday forms of culture, politics, and economy associated with the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe and disseminated globally – forms, however, which have no essence" (Rabinow 1989:9, cited in Piot 1999:179) and "whose content is unstable and shifting" (Pratt 1998, cited in Piot 1999:179). With more specific reference to the relationship between Africa and modernity, Piot argues that "Africa has long been presented as a place where modernity's signature institutions and beliefs – democracy and development, monogamous marriage, individualism and secularism – have failed to take root." (1999:2) As I have illustrated repeatedly throughout this thesis, such apparent failings were often highlighted by Chinese in contrasting themselves with Malagasy people and explaining the complexities of Chinese-Malagasy encounters. For instance, when faced with difficulties or investigations into their own projects, Chinese employers argued that "their lazy Malagasy workers who do not listen" or "their greedy Malagasy collaborators who just want money" were to be blamed. When the Confucius Institute language instructors could not keep their students in their classes, they believed that the low efficiency and poor organization of their host educational institutions was the reason for poor attendance. When engaging in extramarital affairs with Malagasy women, Chinese men justified their infidelity by developing ambiguous moral standards, emphasizing their own inclinations toward the ideal of monogamous marriage, and more importantly, criticizing Malagasy culture as being overly tolerant of sexual promiscuity. As such, Chinese stakeholders in Africa have copied one core signature of Western modernity by reinforcing and perpetuating the power hierarchy of a postcolonial world that systematically disadvantages underdeveloped countries such as Madagascar by systematically devaluing the ways in which the people they encounter there live.

In many parts of Africa today, people "struggle to reach beyond the fractures inflicted by the postcolonial world and the disjunctions at play in the myths of modernity and tradition" (De Boeck and Plissart 2014:18). This, I would argue, is what the Malagasy people involved in the Chinese-Malagasy encounters discussed in this thesis are trying to do. They are not pursuing visions of modernity coming from "the West" or "the East," but pursuing better lives by following the opportunities available to them – opportunities that just so happen to increasingly involve them in Chinese-Malagasy encounters. And however new some aspects of these encounters may be, they continue to demonstrate the same features of discontinuity, unpredictability, exclusiveness and disconnectedness that have long been entailed in Africa's participation in the global order.

Chinese-Malagasy connections are exclusive as they only benefit few in the Malagasy communities involved. As I have argued in describing different contexts of Chinese-Malagasy encounters, for many Malagasy people, the opportunities for pursuing a better life by working with Chinese people or trading Chinese commodities create fractures within their own community. Higher ranking Malagasy *cadres* at the sugar plantation are despised by many under them for how they are seen to exploit their Malagasy countrymen. Similarly, traders like Francisco who have accumulated wealth over years of going back and forth between Guangzhou and Tsaramiverina become targets of rivalry (from *Merina* competitors, for example) and jealousy from others, even family. And, the opportunities for learning Chinese through the Confucius Institute are reserved only for Malagasy people enrolled in certain schools. All this to say that although Chinese people and things have unquestionably been having a profound influence in Madagascar over recent years, Chinese-Malagasy connections themselves are fairly exclusive, and only benefit relatively few Malagasy people directly and always in somewhat ambiguous ways.

Chinese-Malagasy connections have also proven discontinuous and unpredictable. The contract between the Malagasy government and the Chinese state-owned corporation that manages Anjava was meant to be effective until 2027. However, after several conflicts (including the Morondava incident of 2014), the company has become hesitant to renew the contract. Uncertainties prevail elsewhere as well. As the experience of

Francisco, described in Chapter 3, indicates, many of the cheap Chinese commodities available in Madagascar's domestic markets have become available thanks to individual efforts of Malagasy traders and entrepreneurs through paths that offer no guarantees and many ways of being sabotaged. Meanwhile, one of the two Confucius Institute regional head offices has already decided to halt their programs in the University of Tsaramiverina, and most intimate relationships between Malagasy women and Chinese men end easily and permanently the moment that the working terms of the Chinese men they involve finish. In the face of such uncertainties, one cannot stop wondering: what will happen if China leaves African countries such as Madagascar behind or takes them "off all kinds of maps" (Allen and Hamnett 1995:2, cited in Inda and Rosaldo 2008:6, see page x)? And what will happen if Chinese commodities, even those that are second-hand or of secondary quality, stop reaching Madagascar's markets?

How to measure Chinese influence in Africa? For now, I argue that terms such as "neo-imperialism" or "neo-colonization" are by and large media fanfare, buzzwords, or accusations based mainly on out-dated cold-war conceptions of the world order. We must also be wary, however, of propaganda in favor of the Chinese government's interventions in Africa, even if Chinese-led projects do provide certain benefits (though limited in time and space) to Africa, or in the case of this thesis, Malagasy communities affected by them. The temporary and exclusive prosperity that various forms of Chinese-Malagasy encounters have made possible is often celebrated only by disguising the lurking danger behind the achievements such encounters enable – namely, the fundamental lack of choice facing the ordinary Chinese and Malagasy people most commonly involved in these encounters. At the Anjava sugar plantation, Chinese workers on the verge of being laid off from jobs in China seek out job opportunities in Madagascar to make more money, while desperate Malagasy labourers (many of them internal migrants) find scarce opportunities for employment. Meanwhile, in Guangzhou, Chinese merchants, most of whom are China's own internal migrant workers who have never had opportunities to pursue higher education, deal with and often defraud Malagasy traders looking to profit themselves from making made-in-China commodities available in Madagascar's domestic market. At the same time, Chinese language instructors who have recently graduated from an extremely competitive education system search out stepping stones to

advance their education and careers by providing unsatisfying yet much valued language courses to Malagasy students who are themselves desperate for opportunities to advance. For many Chinese men, dating Malagasy women is an out-of-options choice because they do not have their wives or other single Chinese women with them in Madagascar; but it is also a product of their privilege as people of relatively higher status in Madagascar. For the Malagasy women, however, such relationships have become a shortcut to what they hope will be a materially rich life.

Ultimately, I argue that whatever their differences, the frictions and serious games that come to light when carefully considering encounters among Chinese and Malagasy people are fundamentally similar in how they involve people motivated by visions of the better lives they hope to achieve by way of these encounters. While most of the Chinese people I met in Madagascar were only there for a short time, however, the Malagasy people I met were not. As time goes on, it will be interesting to see if and how all that is hard to decipher in Chinese language, culture, and projects becomes clearer to Malagasy participants and observers, and what such new understandings might contribute to alternative visions of an always elusive modernity. It bears noting too that encounters of the sort on which I have focused throughout this thesis are themselves relatively "new." The dynamics of such encounters that shape the mutual understandings of Malagasy and Chinese people are always in process and constantly changing. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, Chinese-Malagasy encounters, whether developing or on the verge of ending, face an uncertain future that remains to be examined in the decades to come.

What does "being Chinese" mean in Madagascar after all? In Malagasy, "*sinoa*" refers to an ethnic group of people, with distinctive physical traits such as narrow eyes, black silky hair and light skin. Over time, and among the Malagasy people I came to know best through my research, however, the term has also become associated with people who like to travel (or who are privileged enough to travel), people with whom a Malagasy person might productively work (albeit without a fair share of the ensuing wealth), commodities from which one might hope to earn a great profit, and men with whom a Malagasy woman might be lucky to date but from whom she should not expect a

lasting relationship. It is also a term associated with women who are (normally) shy and reclusive, and, as noted in the Introduction, with me. I take this final point, and many of its complications, up in the following epilogue.

EPILOGUE – Researching My Own Countrymen: A Reflection on My Fieldwork Positionality and Dilemmas

"Aia ma sinoa vavy tsy miavogna?"

This epilogue is meant to accomplish three interconnected goals. First, and most obviously, it provides an answer to a question that many people have asked me after I have shared my findings and experiences with them: how did my role as a female, Chinese anthropology student from a Canadian university influence my research? At the same time, it is a response to the "reflexive turn" in anthropology since the 1980s that has seen many anthropologists adopt a new tradition of critical analysis concerning their positionality in ethnographic encounters. And finally, it is an acknowledgement that many of the Chinese-Malagasy encounters from which I have drawn insights in thinking through the contents of this thesis were ones in which I myself participated.

Crapanzano challenges the taken-for-granted naturalization of ethnographic fieldwork by highlighting the historical and positional particularity of participants in ethnographic encounters. He argues that every field encounter influences how data is collected, framed, interpreted, and generalized (2010:57), and that anthropologists are constantly negotiating their respective identities and understandings of the situations in which they find themselves within particular historical moments. Although there is always a danger of being labeled a "narcissistic researcher" when emphasizing reflexivity, anthropologists who consider their own role in their research have provided valuable insights on the power dynamics and ethical dilemmas entailed in ethnographic fieldwork and its aftermath. I believe that reflexivity should be used as a guide to show readers how anthropological research has been done, how an ethnographer has come to see what he/she sees, and how a piece of text has come to be written as it is written. Through such sharing of behind the scenes experiences, anthropological research and writing become less products of a "black box" where objective and authoritative "knowledge of the 'Other' is usually reproduced by Euro-American males" (Behar 1995:11). A reflexive approach humanizes anthropologists and their work, challenging the assumption of researcher-informant distance, acknowledging the voices of others, and, thus, contributing to the development of a discipline that values ethnographic fieldwork as its core methodology.

As many anthropologists have argued, ethnographic fieldwork is by nature intrusive both during and after the research period. Anthropologists' relationship with their "field" is summarized by what Ortner calls "the ethnographic stance" – a concept that defines the nature of ethnographic work as the combination of "an intellectual and moral positionality, a constructive and interpretive mode, and a bodily process in space and time" (1995:173). Significantly, this can never be a fully objective stance. As Scheper-Hughes argues, what anthropologists know from fieldwork is filtered through "the highly subjective categories of thinking and feeling that represent their own particular ways of being," and, indeed, "ethnographers may use the field to work out their own neurotic conflicts and anxieties about attachment, power, authority, sanity, gender or sexuality" (2000:127). It is inevitably the case, in other words, that the data that I collected during my fieldwork has been influenced by the continuous negotiation of the relationships between my research informants and me, and by my own deliberations on what the encounters entailed in these relationships meant to any of us.

This epilogue discusses my positionality as an ethnographic researcher, and associated ethical dilemmas that I faced on a number of fronts: as a "native" anthropologist critically studying and representing my own countrymen in Madagascar, as an "outsider" researcher striving to find out what "others" (Malagasy and Chinese) think, and as a female anthropologist negotiating her gendered identity in relation to those of different research participants. In the following reflections, I use what Crapanzano called "informants' counter-ethnography" – "the eye informants have on the anthropologist as a representative and a source of knowledge of the anthropologist's society and culture" (2011:121) – to discuss my positionality during fieldwork. I will provide examples from my ethnographic encounters to discuss this positionality in detail, drawing attention to associated advantages, inconveniences and ethical dilemmas. Echoing Narayan's (1993) argument, instead of trying to sort out how authentically "native" I am as an insider or "halfie" anthropologist (Abu-Lughod 1991), it is more rewarding to examine the ways in which I am situated in relation to the diverse groups of people I studied (1993:678).

During my fieldwork, I was at times conveniently and at times awkwardly positioned in between the Chinese and Malagasy communities with which I worked. In many cases, characteristics of my identity that blocked my access to some groups of people or social settings turned out to be stepping stones or golden keys to others. Indeed, over my stay I had to learn to calibrate my position with subtlety when dealing with people of different ethnicity, gender, age, social economic status, educational background, power and interest involved in the Chinese-Malagasy encounters that I studied. I eventually succeeded in developing long-term friendships built on shared memories, trust, happiness and bitterness with many participants of this research. I was given nicknames and referred to differently by different groups of people: I was initially known to the Chinese workers at the sugar plantation, for example, as "Madagascar island volunteer (*ma dao zhi yuan zhe*)," highlighting the fact that I had not come to Madagascar to make money. I was referred as "Dr. Zhang (*Zhang boshi*)" by most Chinese businessmen who expressed admiration at the fact that I had spent 21 years of my life studying in school; the male Chinese merchants in Guangzhou who I briefly encountered on my trip there usually called me "beautiful girl (*mei nv*)" – a common appellation in China used to flatter female clients and friends. Confucius Institute language instructors called me by my first name because we considered each other peers due to our similar age, but also referred to me as a "*xue ba"* (straight-A student) in recognition of my educational background in and outside of China. Malagasy friends and acquaintances, meanwhile, most commonly referred to me jokingly as "*sinoa*" or "*sinoa vavy*"(Chinese, or the Chinese girl). One day, after my Malagasy language teacher came to where I lived in a *bajaj*, he said to me: "*sinoa*, the *bajaj* driver asked me where you were and why you were not with me! He asked me '*aia ma sinoa vavy tsy miavogna'* (where is the Chinese girl who is not shy)!" "The Chinese girl who is not shy" was in fact my reputation among many Malagasy people that I encountered.

Counter Ethnography

My ethnicity was an influential identity marker throughout my fieldwork. As a Chinese national, my critical perspective on Chinese projects in Madagascar was frequently challenged by those Chinese and Malagasy informants who assumed that, whatever I might say, I in fact shared the beliefs of other Chinese, on matters of race especially. My

strong urge to speak the local dialect of Malagasy and to mingle with Malagasy friends set me apart from other Chinese in Madagascar, however, arousing suspicion at times from my fellow countrymen. Occupying the messy boundaries among the Chinese, Malagasy and *vazaha* (white foreigners from the West) communities worked to my advantage in most cases since I was seen as an informal liaison by different sides. For example, I received numerous inquiries from Malagasy and *vazaha* acquaintances about issues such as doing business or working with Chinese companies, transporting medical equipment from China, learning Chinese languages, and so on. For their part, many of my Chinese friends would ask me to take them to bars where Malagasy and *vazaha* people sing or drink, to teach them dancing or Malagasy small-talk, to work as an interpreter or to explain Malagasy cultural practices that had long befuddled them. I tried the best I could in these situations, while keeping in mind that Malagasy-Chinese encounters take place regardless of my presence and efforts at mediation. For my Malagasy friends, however, no matter how close I was to them, there was always something inherently "Chinese" and a little bit "*vazaha*" about me. When I texted rapidly on my phone or typed fast on my laptop, I became a "real Chinese" (*sinoa marigny*) because I do things very fast. When I ordered salad in a Malagasy restaurant without any rice, I became "like *vazaha*" (*karaha vazaha*) because Westerners have a reputation for preferring vegetables over rice.

"She is already 'Madagascar-ized!'"

Among the Chinese workers and businessmen I have met in Madagascar, Chinese people like me who have shown an interest in Malagasy culture and language, have established close relationships or friendships with Malagasy people, or have partly adopted a so-called "Malagasy lifestyle" are often teased as being "Madagascar-ized."[15] As many Chinese were aware of my efforts to learn the local dialect and to socialize with Malagasy people, I was labelled by the Chinese as "having been Madagascar-ized" very soon after they knew me. Mundane aspects in my lifestyle were quickly noted and portrayed as proof that I had adopted the Malagasy lifestyle, from eating a Malagasy

[15] It is a tease because "Madagascar-ized" is a phrase coined by the Chinese people working Madagascar - "*bei ma hua le.*" The country name "Madagascar" is translated as "*ma da jia si jia*" in Mandarin Chinese. The first character of the Chinese translation "*ma*" also means "horse." As a result, the word "Madagascar-ized" is homophonic to "horse-ized" in Chinese language.

meal with a large amount of rice and a drink of *ranony apango* (rice water), to tolerating the unreliability and unpunctuality of *taxi brousse* (bush taxis). Many Chinese people told me that they felt odd and found it funny when they saw me dancing *salegy* – a traditional *Sakalava* dance featuring fast hip-shaking to the music's rhythm – in a local disco, or wandering down the street with my hair braided in the manner of Malagasy women. Still, despite their awareness of these habits, they expected me to side with them in business negotiations because of my ethnicity, which at times put me in an awkward position. For instance, in Chapter 2 I wrote about my first experience attending a *joro* in 2015 together with the Chinese manager of the sugar plantation, my supervisor and the *Antankarana* traditional ruler. As soon as the *ampanjaka* started to demand more benefits and the Chinese manager started to criticize Malagasy people of being "avaricious," I had to be selective in translating. Similarly, in the meetings described in Chapter 3, the Chinese merchants that Francisco and I dealt with in Guangzhou assumed that my interests lay with them and not him, based on nothing more than our shared ethnic identity.

A similar situation occurred when I was invited to join a business dinner and hangout by representatives of a Chinese infrastructure construction company. As the Chinese project manager had mentioned to me earlier, his team was facing pressure from two sides: his Chinese superior expected him to finish construction as fast as possible, while the Malagasy supervisors wanted the project to be finished at a slower pace, allowing more attention to be paid to construction quality and environmental impact. These divergent agendas put part of the project into a deadlock, and the Chinese manager hoped that my presence at the dinner with three Malagasy project supervisors would have ice-breaking effects, allowing an easing of the relationship between the two parties and hence making the project easier for the Chinese company. The Chinese workers picked me up in their car and took me to a karaoke bar where the three Malagasy supervisors were already seated. There was not much discussion of serious business, but more phatic and boastful conversations facilitated by alcohol. At one point, the Chinese manager told a story in Mandarin about how a Chinese company recently repaired an overpass in Beijing within 40 hours, his intention being to demonstrate that they were capable of completing such complex projects fast and with a guarantee of quality. Then he hinted that I should translate his story to the Malagasy supervisors. Later, however, when he was

talking to his Chinese colleague, he reminded me not to translate everything I heard to the Malagasy supervisors. "You gotta help *us*, Mingyuan," he said to me. Since the Malagasy supervisors of the project were well aware that I did not work for the Chinese company, they enjoyed my company and I maintained an agreeable personal relationship with them after the dinner. When I met them again on other occasions afterwards at personal gatherings without the Chinese project workers' presence, I usually notified the Chinese manager beforehand so that they would not be suspicious of what I was doing. It was a delicate matter to handle such relationships.

"She is a real Chinese!"

For most of the Malagasy interlocutors in this research, my educational background – as a student of anthropology enrolled at a Canadian university – set me apart from the other Chinese people they knew. They were mostly genuinely surprised and happy to find out that I was trying to speak Malagasy with them. Most of them also understood that I was not working for any Chinese businesses or educational institutions, but still saw me as a potential liaison to the Chinese community in times of need. For example, representatives of a local NGO asked me whether I could talk to a Chinese company to help them fix a road leading to the organization's base; a villager in Anjava called me one day asking me whether she could buy second-hand tires from the Chinese working at the sugar plantation; a doctor working at a hospital in Tsaramiverina asked how to buy medical equipment from Guangzhou and send it to Madagascar; and a lady that I met at a dance club asked me to find her a Chinese language instructor right before I was ready to leave Madagascar. However, I was always referred to by my ethnicity when Malagasy people talked about me. It is common in Madagascar that close friends jokingly use racial identifiers to refer to each other. Malagasy Friends close to me were not reluctant to use vocabulary such as "*kirko maso*," meaning "small eyes," to call me; while at the same time I would use *ajojo* to refer to my Malagasy friend with Comorian descent. Many Malagasy people would also test the water with many perceived racial stereotypes about Chinese people, language and culture on me – "yes I can teach Mandarin Chinese; no I do not know Kung Fu, nor do I eat dogs every day." There were also times when they exclaimed that I was "*sinoa marigny*," meaning "real Chinese," especially when I

completed some task quickly or mildly complained that something was not finished on time.

In addition to all of the apparent indicators of me being "Chinese," I see one similarity between my project and other Chinese projects carried out in Madagascar: that is, the gap between the benefits that my project has brought to me and to Malagasy people respectively. Generally speaking, from what I have experienced, foreigners such as Westerners and Chinese people receive conspicuous respect from Malagasy people and thus are situated in a privileged position. The privilege largely comes from socially constructed ideas related to ethnicity, relative wealth, and the power to lead a business or project. As Walsh argues, ethnographic fieldwork – "the mysterious means" (2007:202) by which the life experiences of research interlocutors might be transformed into livelihoods for anthropologists – is itself "an investigative endeavor enabled by privilege" (2007:207). As I am writing my dissertation in Canada now, my memories of fieldwork more than a year past have started to fade, and my promise to return to Madagascar for more research or just a short holiday visit seems less likely than when I first proclaimed it. During my research, I was lucky to have two Malagasy university students – Sophie and Snyders – who spoke English, French and Malagasy and worked with me as research assistants for a short period of time. Each traveled with me for one week to the sugar plantation, and Snyders also worked as my Malagasy language tutor in the first three months after I arrived in Madagascar in 2016. My friends Khaladi and Florida were also of immense help during my whole stay. While I feel deeply indebted to these and other Malagasy friends and colleagues with whom I have shared innumerable Chinese-Malagasy encounters, I do not know how what I have done will benefit them now that my fieldwork has finished. Encounters are one thing. The opportunities for local people to feel involved in and connected to global projects are something else; something always temporary and volatile. In this sense, I have to admit: *ia, zaho sinoa marigny* (yes, I am a real Chinese).

Gendered Fieldwork

Another aspect of my identity – my gender – has also significantly influenced and complicated my ethnographic encounters with Chinese and Malagasy research

participants. Like my ethnicity, my gender limited my access to some fieldwork opportunities but opened doors to others. When I was working among male Chinese and Malagasy officials, workers and businessmen, I had to master the art of establishing enough trust and intimacy to conduct participant observation and to collect in-depth data, while at the same time keeping a decent distance from those who might take advantage of this rapport in different ways. When I did not conform to the stereotypical perceptions of what is considered a "good girl" in Chinese domestic society, both Chinese men and women might put a certain level of social pressure on me by starting rumours, gossiping behind my back, or criticizing me face-to-face.

"If you were a man, why would anybody even care to talk to you? We already have enough guys around us," one Chinese man told me frankly one day. Although the comment made me slightly uncomfortable, I still appreciated his candour. To some extent, being a young and single woman helped me gain as much interest from my potential research participants as the interest I had demonstrated in them, especially in the early phases of my fieldwork when I was trying to establish initial contacts. However, the Chinese man who told me this was only partially right. My relatively easy entry into these fieldwork networks did not guarantee an easy time negotiating them. My role as a female researcher turned out to be both a convenience and a challenge during my fieldwork. Similar to what many other female anthropologists have experienced in fieldwork, the "systematic relationship between the experience of doing cross-cultural fieldwork and the fieldworker's sense of gendered self" (Whitehead and Conaway 1986, cited in Bell 1993:10) significantly influenced my research.

As noted in previous chapters, the context of my fieldwork determined that I had to inevitably conduct a significant part of participant observation with both Chinese and Malagasy men. Night watchmen, cleaning ladies, owners of bars and clubs, co-workers, and passers-by observed my most mundane activities: riding on the back seat of the motorbike of my most trusted male Comorian friend (though Chinese informants assumed him to be Malagasy), frequenting dancing clubs, karaoke bars and discos with male Malagasy students whom I taught, and accepting the kind (maybe sometimes flirtatious) gestures of male friends driving me to different places. As my Comorian

friend and his Malagasy girlfriend came to my place to visit often, people around us mistakenly believed that my Comorian friend and I were in a romantic relationship and his girlfriend was hired to cook for us. They gossiped things such as "*ajojo efa nahazo vavy sinoa, areiky sauvé*," meaning that "the Comorian man has got a Chinese girlfriend and he is 'saved' (from suffering from poverty)." When his girlfriend travelled to other towns, she would get phone calls from her friend telling her to "be careful" since her boyfriend was cheating on her with a Chinese girl. And gossip like this was taken by some as a reflection of reality, even when it was completely false. As a Chinese man kindly consoled me one day: "if you heard people here gossiping something about you, do not take it personally. We just gossip for fun and do not mean anything negative. Sometimes life gets too boring here, and we are only humans." In retrospect, living as a woman with the pressure of gossip in a community of acquaintances was the hardest know-how to grasp during my fieldwork.

Although fieldwork with men was sometimes worrisome, conducting participant observation with women involved a different kind of dilemma. Feminist anthropologists have long challenged "the assumptions of unity underlying 'women' as a central category of analysis" (Mohanty 1991, cited in Wolf 1996:5-6), and, in fact, I found a great discrepancy between my own feminist understandings of agency and those shared by the women with whom I conducted research. My own feminist propensity led me to assume an alliance with Chinese and Malagasy women, but also induced conflicting feelings towards those who were not as "feminist" as I would have liked them to be. Although sometimes common gender identity transcends ethnic differences between Malagasy and Chinese women, including me, my sensitivity to everyday manifestations of gendered power hierarchy provided me unique perspectives on the gendered aspects of Chinese-Malagasy encounters discussed in Chapter 5. On the one hand, it helped me to understand the various ways in which Malagasy and Chinese women exert their agency (however limited); and on the other, it enabled me to understand that the dynamics of such agency should be contextualized in relation to relevant gender norms and be analyzed as interactive and fluid processes involving men and women alike. It also aroused my own sentiments about, and moral judgments over, some Chinese and Malagasy men which, interestingly, sometimes eased over time as I came to understand (if not fully appreciate)

their ambiguous justifications for their behaviour, their standpoints, and the complexity of the social contexts in which their encounters with women took place.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, it was shocking for me to see what many Malagasy women would do in order to cultivate romantic relationships with foreign men. Some relationships provided substantial economic benefits for these women while others did not; some were virtual relationships maintained through online chatting platforms, while others were face-to-face and purely physical; some ended with a happy family and *métis* babies while others left behind a single mother more desperate to find another foreign man. However, after knowing more about the aspirations and behaviours of the women in such relationships, instead of diminishing them as the powerless and the suppressed, I started to see how they utilized their limited agency to fulfil their aspirations for better lives. The worst struggle for me came with knowing that a female friend's partner had been cheating on her or treating her badly and that there was nothing I could do about it. It was almost equally gnawing to know that a male friend's female partner was willing to be with him for economic reasons, and to seek out and maintain relationships with other lovers while still with him. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I still got furious whenever I perceived female friends being taken advantage of physically or mentally. However, as solutions to ethical problems that arise during fieldwork should be found through negotiation and adaptation to the specifics of the situation or context (Sluka 2007:275), I came to evaluate each troubling scenario in relation to its complicated context. Were these the reactions of a supportive friend or a deliberative anthropologist? I would like to think both. In such cases when anthropologists like me became greatly involved in the lives of the people who we originally approached as the focus of research, it is indeed difficult to paint a black-and-white picture of the complicated dynamics entailed in the different kinds of Chinese-Malagasy encounters described in this study.

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2010 In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Zhang, Zhen
2000 Mediating Time: The Rice Bowl of Youth in Fin de Siecle Urban China. *Public Culture* 12(1): 93-113.

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Zhou, Min and Tao Xu, Shabnam Shenasi

2016 Entrepreneurship and Interracial Dynamics: A Case Study of Self-employed Africans and Chinese in Guangzhou, China. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39(9): 1566-1586.

APPENDIX: ETHICS APPROVAL

Western Research

Research Ethics

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrew Walsh
Department & Institution: Social Science\Anthropology,Western University

NMREB File Number: 108308
Study Title: Chinese-Malagasy Connections in Northern Madagascar

NMREB Initial Approval Date: September 10, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: September 10, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received September 9, 2016	
Letter of Information & Consent	Interviews and Participant Observation (verbal)	2016/09/09
Instruments	Interview Questions	2016/08/25
Other	Confidentiality Agreement - Received for Information Only	2016/08/11

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile ___ Nicole Kaniki ___ Grace Kelly ___ Katelyn Harris ✓ Vikki Tran ___ Karen Gopaul ___

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London, ON, Canada N6G 1G9 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

CURRICULUM VITAE

Mingyuan Zhang (张明源)

EMPLOYMENT

2018 Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, Canada

EDUCATION

2018 Ph.D., Sociocultural Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, Canada

2014 M.A., Sociocultural Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, Canada

2012 B.A., International Politics, School of International Studies, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

Non-degree programs

2012 Summer workshop of China Multi-Generational Panel Datasets, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Shanghai, China. *(Two-week workshop on quantitative research methods in Social Sciences)*

2011 Helsinki Summer School, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland. *(Three-week seminar on Holocaust and Genocide Studies)*

2010 Georgetown University Summer School, Washington D.C., USA. *(Two undergraduate-level courses on American Political System and Peace and Justice Studies)*

LANGUAGES

English, Chinese (Mandarin), French (DELF B2), Malagasy (Sakalava)

PUBLICATIONS

2018 Telecommunication Infrastructure, Public Space and CASCA Conference in Cuba. *Culture* (Newsletter of the Canadian Anthropology Society), special issue. https://cascacultureblog.wordpress.com/2018/08/16/telecommunication-infrastructure-public-space-and-casca-conference-in-cuba/

2015 Powers of the Dead: Struggles over Paper Money Burning in Urban China. *The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 23, Issue 1. http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem/vol23/iss1/2/

2014 The Reciprocal Influences of Tourism and the Old Order Mennonite Community in St. Jacobs, Ontario. MA thesis, University of Western Ontario, the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 2168. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/2168

SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

2018 *Resilience in the Field: Ethnographic Subjectivity and Ethical Dilemma of Researching My Own Countrymen in Madagascar.* American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, San Jose, California, USA (forthcoming)

2018 *Ethnographic Reflections on "Lera Gasy."* Paper submitted and presented with Dr. Andrew Walsh, Madagascar Workshop, Rutgers University, Newark, USA

2018 *Intimate Relationships in Chinese-Malagasy Encounters: Sexual Anxiety, Female Agency and Ambiguous Morality*. African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK), University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

2018 *"Kung Fu vs. Radio Calisthenics": Chinese Language Education and the Representation of Chinese Culture in Northern Madagascar.* 5th Conference of the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Research Network (CA/AC), participant of the Early Careers Scholars' Workshop, *China's Bittersweet Business: "Sucre Blond" Land and Labour in Northern Madagascar*, Université Libre de Bruxelle (ULB), Brussels, Belgium

2018 *"The Everlasting Canton Fair": Global Bazaar, Mobile Social Network and Malagasy Businessmen in China*. Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA), Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba

2018 Panelist and organizer, *Behind the Scenes: Sharing Experiences of Doing Research in Africa,* Africa Institute Graduate Committee Spring Speaker Series, the Africa Institute, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. Video available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLd5e5_NZvc&t=0s&list=PLbZM4TW_GWGQAi3Lfed_JdAjsuTmPeULT&index=5

2017 *Intimate Relationships in Chinese-Malagasy Encounters: Masculine Anxiety, Female Agency and Ambiguous Morality*, Graduate Research Seminar, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada

2017 *China's Bittersweet Business: "Sucre Blond" Land and Labour in Northern Madagascar.* Madagascar Workshop, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

2015 *Chinese-Malagasy Business Networks in northern Madagascar,* Alliance Française, Antsiranana, Madagascar

2014 *"We are just people!": Encounters between Tourists and Old Order Mennonites in St. Jacobs, Ontario*. Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA), York University, Toronto, Canada

2013 *Rethinking Modernity: Tourism and Old Order Mennonite Communities in St. Jacobs.* Graduate Research Seminar, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, Canada

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2018 Student Travel Grant, Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA) Annual Meeting

2012-2018 Western Graduate Research Scholarship, University of Western Ontario

2012-2013 Graduate Thesis Research Award, University of Western Ontario

2010-2011 Third Prize Scholarship of Renmin University of China

2008-2009 Scholarship for Outstanding Student, Renmin University of China

RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

2018 Research Assistant, 4 months, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario

2016-2017 PhD fieldwork, 11 months, northern Madagascar, and Guangzhou, China

2015 Preliminary PhD fieldwork, 3 months, northern Madagascar

2013 MA fieldwork, 2 months, St. Jacobs-Elmira-Wallenstein, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

2011 Research Assistant, 3 months, Research Center, China Daily (Media), Beijing, China

2010 Administrative and Research Assistant, 2 months, Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center (NGO), Beijing, China

TEACHING EXPERIENCES

2018 Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, Canada
ANTH1025F Introduction to Socio-cultural Anthropology
2018 Western Certificate in University Teaching and Learning, Teaching Support Center, University of Western Ontario, Canada
2017 Lecturer, Université d'Antsiranana, Madagascar
Renforcement de l'Anglais Niveau B1, Lettres Modernes, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines
2016-2017 Co-coordinator of UWO-Ud'A: Canada-Madagascar Research and Education Collaboration Project (Madagascar Field Course 2017)
2012-2018 Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Western Ontario, Canada

OTHER SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Professional Service

2017-2018 Member of the Graduate Committee, the Africa Institute (AIGC), University of Western Ontario
2012-2015 Reviewer of *The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology (UWOJA)*

Media

2018 Guest Speaker, Hour of History Podcast, Temple University, Philadelphia, USA. https://www.hourofhistory.com/china-meets-madagascar-with-mingyuan-zhang-hoh-podcast-ep-43/
2018 Guest Speaker, the GradCast, Podcast of Graduate students, University of Western Ontario, Canada. https://gradcastradio.podbean.com/e/episode-187-being-chinese-in-madagascar/
2018 Guest Speaker, *Chinese Businessmen in Madagascar and Malagasy Businessmen in China*, invited talks on CNPolitics (*Zheng Jian*), an academic Podcast program in China, https://music.163.com/#/djradio?id=333322059, program no. 57, 58, 59.

Community Engagement

2018 Speaker, Community Outreach Workshop on anthropological research methods for high school students, University of Western Ontario, Canada

Extra-curriculum Activities

2009-2011 Vice-President of Renmin University of China Model United Nations Association (RUCMUN)
Organizer, 5th and 6th Renmin University Model United Nations, Beijing, China, 2010-2011
Panelist, 1st China-Korea-Japan Youth Forum, Tokyo, Japan, 2011
Delegate, Harvard Model United Nations, Boston, USA, 2010
Delegate, Asian International Model United Nations, Beijing, China, 2010
Best Delegate, Model United Nations of Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing, China, 2009

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA)
American Anthropological Association (AAA)
African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK)
Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Research Network (CA/AC)