

**Eastern Africa-China Connections:
Cultural Flows, Epistemic Exchanges and Quotidian Articulations of the Popular**

**Edited by
Oduor Obura (Technical University of Kenya)
and
James Ogone (JOOUST)**

Call for Chapters

The 'Swahili Seas' or Western Ocean predates the Atlantic and Pacific oceans within human nautical exchanges. It has an expansive continental roof, spanning 100,000 kilometres. This uniquely equips it with rich, symbolic and actual littoral spaces that have been the site of some of the earliest forms of connective transcontinental human linkages from eastern Africa to China. This book volume focuses on entanglements between China and the eastern African countries along the shores of the Indian Ocean, popularly known as Swahili Coast. This coast stretches 3,000 kilometres from Somalia to Mozambique. The earliest Chinese contacts with the Swahili coast are traceable to the Tang and Ming Dynasties. From the mid-20th century to date, there has been an increasingly relational interaction between China and eastern Africa, enhanced by the rapid economic growth and industrialisation of China. Previous scholarship has largely scrutinised the Indian Ocean as a place of mobilities underpinned by commercial and political interests. However, a more comprehensive understanding of the Indian Ocean needs to move beyond the mere transit possibilities afforded by its geographies into a critical engagement with it as "a cultural pathway" (Lockhard 2010). Indeed, the Indian Ocean world is defined by particular interactions, networks, and historical memories between the coastal, island, and maritime communities (Lavey 2021; Presthodont 2020). Within this space of intricate connections, China and eastern Africa engage in dynamic South-South socio-political exchanges deprived of due attention within dominant global oceanic intellectual discourses. This book intends to characterise such exchanges as informal, bidirectional, everyday and increasingly mediated by popular modes of expression. The connections of interest in this book are especially those outside the scope of state-led official and structured engagements of grand proportions. Notably, debates on Chinese influence in eastern Africa have tended to give prominence to mainstream media representations, political and economic relations (van Dijk 2009; Shinn and Eisenmann 2012; Alden and Large 2019; Zufle 2023; Wekesa 2023). Therefore, the focus of this book volume will shift to people-to-people interactions that continue to define the Indian Ocean social world and its imaginations. Of interest will be the ordinary and everyday cultural exchanges between China and eastern Africa through broad platforms including the contemporary digital and literary spaces. We seek to examine cultural productions and imaginaries between China and eastern Africa with a critical focus on the less-documented disruptions and continuities; articulations contesting dominant histories; productions refining the understanding of the present; and imaginaries that reconstitute and speculate on the futures between these two global South

locations. We invite novel reflective chapter contributions from a variety of disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological backgrounds including but not limited to the following topics:

- Soft power between Eastern Africa and China
- Filmic representations in/between China and eastern Africa
- Epistemic ties between China and eastern Africa
- Material culture, archival, and artistic links
- Culinary influences and adaptations
- Swahili Ocean littoral cultures
- Piracy and counterfeit practices
- Martial arts cultures
- Textile/Fashion trends and urban culture
- Humour and comedic representations
- The politics of migration between China and eastern Africa
- China's digital presence in the eastern African space
- Chinese consumer cultures in eastern Africa
- China in eastern African imaginaries and vice versa
- Oceanic interactions between eastern African and Chinese literature
- China in eastern African social media and vice versa

- Infrastructures and cultures

Timeframes

- October 15th 2024 Submission of Abstract
- November 15th 2024 Acceptance of Abstracts
- February 28th 2025 Submission of developed chapters
- July 30th 2025 End of Internal Review Process
- August 2025 Submission of manuscript to Publisher
- December 2025 Publication

Please send us an abstract of between 250 and 300 words. Contact us on any of the following email addresses for any correspondence:

tony.oduor@tukenya.ac.ke

jamesogone@jooust.ac.ke