Raw Encounters: Chinese Managers, African Workers and the Politics of Casualization in Africa's Chinese Enclaves[1]

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China has returned to Africa since the late 1990s, building on the foundation of "proletarian internationalism" it forged on the continent between the 1950s and 1970s. The character of Chinese presence today has changed remarkably from these previous times. Its hunger for raw materials, financial prowess and wide ranging investment portfolio throughout Africa has raised the specter of "Chinese imperialism" in the United States and among former colonial powers in Western Europe.[2] The frenzy of alarmist media reports as well as a rapidly growing academic literature on China in Africa have recycled many aggregate statistics on the volume of Chinese investments, casting China as a formidable competitor for global energy resources and diplomatic influence. Yet, without comparative and grounded analysis on how these investment projects operate, the diverse agents and local conditions that enable and embed their interplay with workers, unions and communities, we remain trapped in sweeping and unproductive generalizations. Neither Chinese capital nor Africa is singular, and the dynamic of their encounters, raw in many ways as this paper will show, can be grasped only from within and across these Chinese enclaves.

This paper examines one of the preeminent logics of global capital flow today -- the pursuit of flexible labor regimes – as a window to explore how Chinese investments impact on African communities. Casualization (alternatively termed "informalization", "precarious employment", "non-standard jobs" in the academic literature) has become a global problem, afflicting even the advanced industrialized world. In Africa, it is being discussed with great urgency among trade unionists whenever Chinese investment is the subject.[3] For African workers, a permanent job means not just secure and higher income, and access to medicine. A formal job contract can also be used as a collateral to obtain bank loans for small entrepreneurial ventures or life and death emergency. Casualization therefore brings additional plight to African workers. I shall analyze the respective "politics of casualization" in the Chambishi mine on the Zambian Copperbelt and the Tanzania-China Friendship Mills (or "Urafiki" as the firm is known in Swahili) in the port city of Dar es Salaam. Both Zambian and Tanzanian workers have witnessed and resisted precipitous informalization of employment since the Chinese assumed full or

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[2] The Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, US Congress, "China's Influence in Africa," Serial no. 109-74, July 28, 2005. http://www.house.gov/international_relations; "Age of the Dragon: China's Conquest of Africa," Spiegel (Online) - May 30, 2007; "Chinese Influx Revives Colonial Fears," *The Guardian Weekly* (Online), August 3, 2007.

[3] I have attended two continent-wide trade union conferences in the past two years on "China in Africa" and both highlighted casualization as the main challenge for African workers employed by Chinese companies.

majority ownership in the late 1990s. Wildcat strikes were staged by workers in both cases. Nevertheless, Zambian copper miners, but not Tanzanian textile workers, seem to have successfully halted this tendency of casualization. After years of struggles, they are signing new collective agreements in 2007 with the Chinese management who has agreed to gradually convert all casual jobs into "permanent" pensionable ones. Why?

As labor politics is one of the drivers of social transformation, my objective here is not just to explain the divergent outcomes of these two cases of labor resistance but also to extricate the underlying dynamics of the encounter between Chinese managers and African workers. This involves an understanding of their worldviews and mutual expectations, rooted in their respective classes and national histories, particularly their divergent experiences with socialism and post-socialism. The first part of this paper highlights the historical, political economic parallels across the two cases, providing a baseline for comparison and the backgrounds that inform the behavior and mentality of the Chinese managers and African workers discussed in the second part. The third section analyzes grass-roots militancy, and how Zambian miners are able to exploit a resource nationalism in national politics and a hike in copper prices in the global market to arrest the trend of casualization, at least for now. Lacking these favorable conditions, Tanzanian textile workers' resistance has not been as effective. I shall conclude with a discussion of the theoretical implications of this study as well as some emerging issues in this continuous process of transformation.

Of Mines and Mills: From African Socialism to Structural Adjustment to Chinese Investment

Copper mines and textile mills in Africa have been the sites of hopes, struggles and desperation from the colonial period to post-independent socialism, and more recently neoliberal privatization. Nowhere in the continent did China's role in African development been more prominent than in Zambia and Tanzania. Presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere were then household names in China. They consolidated close ties with the Chinese Communist government and proclaimed to pursue African socialism (or humanism in the case of Zambia) after their respective country gained independence in 1964. China built the famous Tazara railway, or "the Freedom Railway" between 1969 and 1974, linking the Zambian Copperbelt to the port city of Dar es Salaam, and liberating Zambia from its dependence on railways controlled by the then white colonial regime of Rhodesia.[4] In the same period, China also built more than 100 factories in Tanzania, her largest beneficiary of aid in Africa, including the Tanzania-China Friendship Textile Mill, the largest fully-integrated textile mill in East Africa when it was completed.[5] Not even the chaos of the Cultural Revolution raging through China at that time affected these foreign projects.

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[4] Jamie Monson, "Liberating Labor? Constructing Anti-Hegemony Along the TAZARA Railway," in *China Returns to Africa. A Superpower and a Continent Embrace*, edited by Christopher Alden, Daniel Large, Ricardo Soares de Oliveira. London: Hurst, 2008.
[5] Gail A. Eadie and Denise M. Grizzell, "China's Foreign Aid, 1975-1978," *The China Quarterly* no. 77 (Mar 1979), pp. 217-234.

The Zambian Copperbelt had inspired intense expectations of modernity: it was where an epochal "African Industrial Revolution" would transform post-independence Zambia from a middle-income country to one gaining "ultimate admission to the ranks of the developed world".[6] In 1969, Kaunda announced the nationalization of all major industrial and financial concerns, including all mineral companies. The Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) was formed in 1982, with the Zambian Government holding the majority share. ZCCM operated a cradle to grave policy – free education for miners' children, subsidized housing and food, electricity, water and transportation, even burial arrangement for the dead. Plummeting copper prices following the oil crisis in the mid-1970s and 80s, and huge insolvency and mismanagement problems led to a deepening production crisis at ZCCM and a debt crisis for Zambia. Between 1974 and 1994, little investment was made in mining equipment and machinery, no new mines were opened, and per capita income of Zambians declined by 50%, leaving Zambia the 25th poorest country in the world. Zambia entered its first World Bank Structural Adjustment Program in 1983, which entailed the devaluation of currency, a 5% cap on wage increase, liberalization of prices of essential commodities and removal of subsidies on maize and fertilizers. Violent food riots, strike waves, and an abortive attempt by Kaunda to abandon the structural adjustment program ushered in a newly elected government in 1991 headed by Frederick Chiluba, the leader of the national trade union federation. In the second structural adjustment loan package, signed in 1990, privatization of Zambia's 280 parastatals, including ZCCM, was a major condition.[7] Between 1997 and 2002, ZCCM was unbundled into seven different units and sold off to investors from Canada, Britain, India, Switzerland, South Africa and China who bought the Chambishi mines.[8]

In Tanzania, after the 1967 Arusha Declaration emphasizing socialism and self-reliance, parastatals were established in all economic sectors: beer, textiles, diamonds, coffee, cashew nuts, publishing, timber, railways and city transportation, etc. The textile sector, growing from 4 textile mills in 1968 to 35 mills by 1980s, became the largest employer in the country employing about 37,000 people, the third taxation contributor to the government, and the largest exporter of manufactured goods. As in Zambia, mismanagement and corruption plagued the parastatals. In Tanzania, the problem was exacerbated by a near breakdown in infrastructure, production and distribution in the late 70s.[9] By the mid-80s, even Julius Nyerere, the architect of Tanzanian socialism, agreed to implement market reform. Just as China launched its own market liberalization at around the same time, and as the developed capitalist world came under the sway of neo-liberalism, Tanzania embarked on major structural adjustment programs in the mid-1980s. In 1995, after Primer Zhu Rongji's visit, the Chinese government decided to invest

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[6] James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 6.
[7] Miles Larmer, *Mineworkers in Zambia: Labor and Political Change in Post-Colonial Africa*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007; Neo Simutanyi, "The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Zambia," *Third World Quarterly*, 17(4), pp. 825-839, 1996.
[8] Alastair Fraser and John Lungu, *For Whom the Windfalls? Winners and Losers in the Privatization of Zambia's Copper Mines*. Lusaka: CSTNZ 2006
[9] John Loxley and John S. Saul, "Multinationals, Workers and the Parastatals in Tanzania," *Review of African Political Economy* no. 2 (Jan-Apr 1975), pp. 54-88.

US$ 1.7 million in the Tanzania-China Friendship Mills and became the majority stockholder (51%) of the revamped joint venture with the Tanzanian government.

Causalization Under the Chinese

Casualization was among the most salient results of privatization on the Copperbelt and in Tanzanian textile, even *before* the Chinese arrived. It is driven by a capitalist logic of accumulation and not a uniquely Chinese practice. On the Copperbelt, not only did the new international investors reduce the workforce by almost one third, stripping the workforce from 31,000 at the sale of the first mine in 1997 to 19,145 in 2001, compared to a peak of 62,222 in 1976 under ZCCM.[10] When employing new workers, the privatized mines either offer casual positions, including day laborers, fixed-term contract workers with no pension and no security, or subcontract entire units to other companies. The traditional "permanent" positions, those of open-ended duration and with pension contributions by employers, account for only half of all mining jobs in the five major mining companies.[11]

Against this industry-wide trend, the Chinese company, NFC Africa Mining PLC (hereafter NFCA), which has become the new owner of the Chambishi Mines, adopted a similar flexibilization strategy in managing its workforce. NFCA is a subsidiary of the state-owned China Non-Ferrous Metal Industries Corporation. Like many state owned companies, it responded to the new national policy of "going out", or outward investment announced in 1997. "Going out" is meant to create externally driven economic growth, finding new raw material supplies and investment opportunities for state companies, and in the process making them more globally competitive. The Chinese bought the mines for $20 million and have since invested over $150 million in updating its technology. Among the major mining houses, the Chinese have been the most notorious in casualizing its workforce. Before signing the 2007 collective agreement with the unions, out of a current total of about 2,063 employees, only 56 are on permanent employees. They are among the original 218 ZCCM employees the Chinese decided to keep when they arrived in 1998, and who have not yet reached the retirement age of 55. There are 189 Chinese "expatriates", occupying all major managerial and technical positions. The major drilling and underground mining work, done by more than 979 miners, has been subcontracted to a company called "Mining One", and the remaining 1,028 employees in the smelter, foundry, exploration and other mechanical departments are either casuals or are on fixed term contracts from six months to three years.[12] These casual workers do not get pension, only an end of service gratuity and they are entitled to less housing, medical and educational allowances than permanent workers. The Chinese are widely known to be paying the lowest wages among all major mining companies. Workers call them "slave wages", ranging from 1 million to 2 million kwacha, or $250 to $500. Only the highest

[10] Alastair Fraser and John Lungu, *For Whom the Windfalls? Winners and Losers in the Privatization of Zambia's Copper Mines*. Lusaka: CSTNZ 2006, p. 21.
[11] Alastair Fraser and John Lungu, *For Whom the Windfalls? Winners and Losers in the Privatization of Zambia's Copper Mines*. Lusaka: CSTNZ 2006, appendix 4, p. 73.
[12] Interview with the human resource manager at NFCA, August 28, 2007. For instance, in 2002, they employed 627 casuals and 306 contracts; in 2004, the respective figures were 588 and 232.

paid among the unionized workforce are able to cover the costs of the Basic Food Basket computed by a Zambian civil society group.[13]

Similar causalization took place under Chinese management in Urafiki. The Chinese first general manager sent to head the mills in 1996 emphasized that the Chinese government at that time had already had a transformed notion of “friendly assistance”. “It could not be like foreign aid in the past. It has to be financially viable, although the joint venture is also partially politically motivated,” he said.[14] The 25-person management team came from a Chinese provincial state-owned textile company in Changzhou City in Jiangsu Province which won the bid for undertaking this project. In 1998, the Chinese selected 1,923 employees from the original roster and resumed the three-shift production. The workforce has been gradually reduced to about 1,260 by December 2002. It began recruiting casual workers in 2003, initially at about 200 a year, or one-fifth of the workforce, increasing to more than half of all the employees (869 casuals to 818 permanent workers) by December 2006.[15]

Again, as in Zambia, casualization is an industry-wide phenomenon: the entire Tanzanian textile industry witnessed a dramatic turn toward casual employment between 1991 and 2004. Permanent jobs accounting for 98.5% of employment in the industry in 1991, have been almost totally substituted by temporary ones which accounted for about 90% of textile sector jobs by 2004. In November 2007, as the new Labor Law and a new Minimum Wage Law were to take effect, Urafiki summarily dismissed all casual workers, throwing into sharp relief the precariousness of casual employment.

In short, work casualization is part and partial of the respective post-socialist transition in Tanzania and Zambia, and not the least, China. By the 1990s, all three countries have dismantled their socialist employment system. For the Chinese managers, the adoption of casual employment system was a natural response to the political economic circumstances in China and Africa. China’s own state-owned enterprise reform had smashed the “iron rice bowl” and stripped the enterprises of all welfare functions. Twenty years of reform has shed about 55 million workers from the state and collective sectors.[16] But China’s post-socialist reform has been undertaken largely independent of the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF, which thrust upon these two African countries extremely unpopular austerity measures without bringing about the economic growth that China has achieved. These conditions have converged to produce a consequential irony: China has become a compelling and effective conduit of capitalism in Africa. Its unparalleled rise from a third world socialist country to be the growth engine of the world economy, achieved largely independent of international financial institutions, have lent it enormous credential as a model of development for many African countries struggling to catch up. This preeminent “model” status has been enhanced by the strong foundation of Sino-African socialist friendship in previous decades. While the governments and political

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[13] Fraser and Lungu, ibid., p. 23.
[14] Interviews with Urafiki management, August 22, 2007.
[15] Data compiled by the Urafiki branch secretary of TUICO, December 15, 2007.
[16] Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China’s Rustbelt and Sunbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

elite welcome China's return, African workers are less sanguine. They bear the brunt of a total collapse of the socialist social contract and a cadre of Chinese managers convinced by reform at home that China *and they* know the way to develop a third world country.

Inside the Chinese Enclaves: Managerial Ideology and Worker Consciousness

The notion of "enclaves", as distinct territorial, cultural, or social units enclosed within or as if within foreign territory, quite aptly describes Chinese presence in Africa. The Chinese translation of "enclaves", *feidi* 飞地, meaning "flying lands" even captures the alien nature of these spaces. But there are significant variations among these enclaves, some more socially embedded and integrated with the local society than others. This section will show that despite maintaining similarly strong social and cultural boundaries, the Chinese company in Chambishi has developed a greater community presence than the one in Dar. This is caused by the different imperative and nature of the respective type of capital in each locale and it has led to different dynamics of change.

The Chinese management teams in both firms lead segregated lives from the local workforce. The "China House", as it is called by the locals, in Chambishi and Kitwe (about 15 miles from Chambishi) and the "Chinese Compound" across the street from Urafiki are secluded residential quarters for the Chinese personnel, complete with its own security guards, cooks, kitchen, satellite dishes, television and karaoke rooms, video and DVDs from China, ping-pong tables and basketball courts.[17] Inside the Chinese Compound for the 25 Urafiki managers, engineers and office staff, there is a huge vegetable garden where African caretakers grow Chinese vegetables, raise pigs, ducks and chickens. They rarely buy food from the local market. They even dug their own wells. Sometimes the Chinese Embassy and other Chinese companies come to buy their produce and poultry. A Chinese-style stone bridge, with engraved Chinese characters "friendship" on the side, crosses a small creek. Traditional Chinese New Year couplets and paper decorations don the entrance to the dormitory quarter. The Chinese are chauffeured everyday from the factory to the canteen in the Compound for lunch and dinner, even though the distance is only half a mile. The China House in Kitwe, Zambia is also a spacious compound, with basketball fields and large areas of greenery, low-rise staff quarters, and more heavily guarded than the one in Dar.

Over lunch, a Urafiki manager explained why the Chinese managers do not get paid locally,

"Our staff doesn't get paid in Tanzania. Their salaries go directly to their bank accounts in China where their families can withdraw the money. This way, they can save.

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[17] James Ferguson has observed that foreign and flexible firms in mining and oil extraction operating in weak or conflicted African states provide for their own security much as they do for electricity, or infrastructure, disconnecting their enterprises from the local and national social and political entanglement. My observations of the two Chinese companies suggest that the Chinese do not maintain such disconnection. In Chambishi, the Chinese have been investing in infrastructure, schools and clinics in the local communities, and the mine security has not replaced local police. James Ferguson, "Governing Extraction: New Spatializations of Order and Disorder in Neoliberal Africa," in his *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 194-210.

Everything they need here is provided for. But they need some local money to buy little things like fruit or toiletries. So we give them allowances every month, which amount to an annual bonus of 10,000 yuan per person. We also advise them not to go to downtown or mingle with the locals, for their own safety."[18]

Language barriers only reinforce the company policy of not venturing into town, going to the movies or hanging out in entertainment venues. Chinese managers in their fifties and forties usually speak little English, and younger ones who speak English complain about the "impure" English Zambian and Tanzania workers speak with heavy accents. Almost none among the Chinese speaks Bemba (a Zambian dialect) or Swahili (national language of Tanzania). At Urafiki, a young college graduate with a degree in Swahili was recently hired to provide translation for the managers, and the human resource managers in both Chambishi (until recently) and Urafiki are Africans who have spent time studying or working in China, and can speak fluent Mandarin. African workers complain all the time about the Chinese playing games with the language gap. Their general observation is that when African workers make demands, the Chinese pretend they do not understand English. But when vendors or government officials come visit, the same people suddenly become conversant in English. A trade union representative in Chambishi who has met with the senior managers several times during the annual collective bargaining session said, "They do not speak to us directly, only to their translators. But it is obvious that they speak English very well. I saw one manager who did not utter a word of oral English sat across the table and started correcting errors in the draft of the collective agreement while the translator did all the talking."

More profound than communication barrier is the gap between what managers called "work ethics", but assailed by workers as "class exploitation". Herein lies the crux of conflicts inside the Chinese enclaves; it has to do with how each side come out of their respective experience with underdevelopment and socialism and how they interpret and orient the present in light of that past. Chinese managers in both locales have come to Africa with life long experience in state owned enterprises, and have now basically rejected the socialist firm as a viable form for economic development. They often attribute China's lift from backwardness and poverty to its abandonment of the iron rice bowl mentality and practice. They demand of their African workers the same work ethics and sacrifice they believed have allowed the Chinese to develop, and have yet to be found among the African workforce. On the contrary, Zambian and Tanzanian workers appealed to the moral economic standards and labor rights that have been established during the government periods (even the colonial period, "the times of the Anglo", in the case of the Zambian Copperbelt) and insisted that foreign investors today should provide the same if not more. The socialist ethos lingered as standards of fair return to labor, ethos that the Chinese (along with other investors) insist on wiping out and deem unproductive.

The manager of Urafiki's finance department reflected on his experience with Tanzanian workers at the end of his nine-year stint at the textile mill. He was about to return to China for good. Reflecting a view common among his colleagues, he contrasted African

[18] Interview with Urafiki management, Dar es Salaam, August 24, 2007.

workers' "backward" work ethics and their unwillingness to make sacrifice with his own efforts in breaking out of poverty. He did not explicitly mentioned "race" but his comments insinuated racial stereotypes:

"Maybe because they have lived a much longer time in a primitive state. So much land with so little industry. You see Africans sleeping under the trees all the time and when they wake up they look for fruits on the trees. They are content with having enough to eat… Workers said our wages are too low. But they do not want to work harder for more. I understand their lives are hard, prices are high and they have to support six to twelve people in the household. I told them to be more serious about work. I grew up in very poor and backward rural areas in Anhui province. Before I turned seventeen, I had never tasted milk. When I first arrived at Changzhou, I did not have enough to eat. No rice, just porridge, a bit of cabbage, salt and oil. Three times a day, the same porridge. Now these Africans all spend their money on Coca Cola. They could use the same money to buy eggs or milk to get more nutrition. Chinese would never waste their money on Coke. We Chinese will save their money for the family. But here whenever they have money in their pockets, they just spend it without thinking. One month's wage can only support half a month's expenses. Then they turn to stealing."[19]

Indolence and poor work ethics constitute the frame through which managers interpreted the union's rejection of a more flexible and intensive work schedule. To the Chinese management, the cyclical product market requires flexibility of employment. Each year, the high season for kangas, the cloth that Urafiki produces, runs from July to October, because those are the months when farmers obtain cash after their harvests, and they will buy kangas for themselves and as gifts. Orders and labor requirement will then shrink from December to June. They have repeatedly demanded a 12 hour work schedule during the busy months but the union does not approve of overtime work because workers do not want to work more than 8 hours a day. To the Chinese, this just confirms their views that African workers are lazy and lack work ethics.

If the Chinese managers see themselves as imparting a more modern work ethics and disciplines to the Africans, they are quick to refer to their own current working conditions and hard work as living proves. Chinese managers constantly referred to "eating bitterness" when speaking about their experience in Tanzania. The first general manager of the mills recalled with grueling detail how the Chinese staff suffered and overcome a serious drought in 1997.

"Altogether I have worked here for eight years. I have many stories of eating bitterness. When I first arrived in September 1996, it's really really harsh. Power and water stoppage was so frequent and irregular that we did not even count that as hardship. In China, we had rolling blackouts; here no plans, no warning, that's Tanzania's national situation…I went to the electricity bureau and water bureau numerous times, all days, asking their heads to give us special consideration. The living conditions, sanitations and housing for Chinese personnel were really terrible. Only in 2002 did we renovate the Compound. We had the money but at that time we wanted to uphold the principle of productive investment first, living conditions second. Bitterness first, enjoyment later, this is our old Chinese wisdom. We only had oil lamps in the dormitory. I still remember the historic drought in 1997. When we ran out of water, we found a large tank of dead water inside the factory, covered with dead rats and cockroaches. The 23 of us removed the dirt and sterilized this dead water for our daily use for an entire month. Still we could not use that as drinking water. So, we went to the Chinese expert team at Tanzara who share with us their well. Later, we recruited a well-digging company from China to explore underground water. During the next three years, we dug three wells in the

[19] Interview with Urafiki management, Dar es Salaam, August 23, 2007.

Compound, and nine wells in the factory premise. Today, we are still using the water from these wells for production. Come another drought, we will be prepared."[20]

Similar stories of overcoming hardship were related by Chambishi managers. "The geological conditions here are very complex. We have to dig down to 900 meters below the ground to find any ore. The British only dug down to 480 meters. Only the Chinese have the technology to do this, the Zambians cannot do it themselves. This mine was abandoned for years when we bought it. At that time, only 2% copper 98% was just waste and water. Now we manage to raise the ore content to 45% before making it to 99% refined copper for sales in the international market."[21]

At the firm level, in the Chambishi mines and Urafiki mills, Chinese "work ethics" and Chinese experience with reforming old socialist practices are ubiquitous refrains among managers, Chinese and African alike. Work ethics, understood to be a devotion to work, a willingness to make sacrifice without concomitant demand for rights, rewards or privileges, is invoked by these managers to explain China's recent economic development and to justify their demands on workers. At the Chambishi mines, the Zambian human resource manager related to me what to him was the most "inspiring" moment of his visit to NFCA's headquarters in Beijing.

"This lady in the head office is amazing. She works so fast, walks so fast in the office that she was literally running from one desk to another, only two meters apart, to grab things for her work. She is a high achiever, very motivated, but not necessarily for the salary. Here (in Zambia) you see people dozing off at their desks. Zambian government employees are four times slower than us here in the mines whom I think are slow. We don't have a clocking system yet, and everyone was up in arms when I tried to introduce one. Now I am trying a 'discipline campaign', to raise consciousness among our employees about the importance of being on time, putting in effort at work, etc."[22]

Chinese managers would use their own hard work as examples to demand similar sacrifices from their African workers. Echoing a popular saying in post-socialist China, managers in these two plants in Africa talk about "sacrifices are necessary for economic takeoff", and workers are the implicit sacrificial lambs.

At Urafiki, a Chinese senior manager related the experience of his Tanzanian human resource manager who spent seven years in Shanghai as a foreign student. "Mr. Swai has seen how China was once backward and poor too. People did not have cell phone or televisions. Why did the country develop? We eat bitterness and make sacrifice. (African) Workers do not see that Chinese made sacrifice for progress. Here they think because this is a Chinese owned factory, that we have come to assist them so it's natural that we should feed and pay them everyday they are alive. They don't have any ambition, or motivation to improve themselves or work hard. China's reform experience has taught us that you need sacrifice. Our own industrial enterprises have turned the corner from losing money to making profits by intensifying the labor process and reduce manpower."[23]

[20] Interview with Urafiki management, August 22, 2007.
[21] Interview with NFCA management, Chambishi, July 1, 2007.
[22] Interview with NFCA management, Chambishi, August 28, 2007.
[23] Interview with Urafiki management, Dar es Salaam, August 24, 2007.

The deputy general manager at Urafiki emphasized, "When our enterprise decided to send us here, China was no longer socialist. To be honest with you, neither did our leaders nor did we mangers have any ideological considerations. My wife opposed to it but I thought it would be a good opportunity to test my ability. Being chosen by our enterprise leadership also gives me a sense of responsibility. I was also paid well: five to six times more than in China."[24] The finance manager corroborated his emphasis on personal and material reasons for coming to Tanzania. "A long time ago, you might hear the official rhetoric of contributing to Sino-Tanzania relations. But when they recruited us, there was none of that propaganda talks. They asked us to think about our personal circumstances and interests. I was young then and wanted to see a new world and to try something new."[25]

Workers on the other hand have an alternative standard of fairness. Despite their different capacity to assert their demands on the Chinese, as the following section explains, Zambian and Tanzanian workers share a similar understanding of worker rights that have roots in their respective "government periods". Zambian miners in particular have been used to a rather paternalistic labor regime since the colonial period when the Roan Selection Trust and the Anglo-American Corporation ran the mines. The government-controlled ZCCM continued many of the welfare provisions including housing, free water and electricity, medicine for miners and their dependents, and a football team. The centrality of copper mining to the national economy made miners the labor aristocracy enjoying higher salaries and social prestige unavailable to the ordinary working masses. What were then the standard terms of employment have to be fought for under the Chinese. Whereas the Chinese allowed medical coverage of one child per family, Zambian miners demanded all dependents to be included. "How could the Chinese impose such painful choice on us? All four are my children and they make me choose only one? Can you do that? During the government period, all miners' children were covered. We are not Chinese who only have one child!"[26]

Even among Tanzanian textile workers, the same standards were upheld and they complained about the meager transport subsidies, compassion leave, medical services and the high rent of company housing. Pension is available only to permanent workers, not casuals which did not even exist under the government periods.

Whereas Chinese managers draw moral boundaries between themselves and Africans, the latter explicitly talked about class exploitation and racial antagonism in the companies, especially in Urafiki where workers' pay rates are lower and the Chinese managers make fewer concessions to workers' demands, a difference to be explained below. At Urafiki, comments about "cruel" Chinese "exploitation" were common, even as many noted that their own government officials were not better managers. For instance,

[24] Interview with Urafiki management, Dar es Salaam, August 22, 2007.
[25] Interview with Urafiki management, Dar es Salaam, August 23, 2007.
[26] Interview with union representative, Chambishi, August 29, 2007.

"…During the government period, we had thieves (corrupt officials) but the stolen wealth was maintained in our country but in the current period, the Chinese steal our labor power and wealth and profits and send them to China."[27]

"The Chinese are cruel: they don't treat us like people, but like animals. Many workers only get little transport allowance but have to travel 16 or 20 kilometers to get home. The Chinese live in the Compound across the street but they have a car to take them back and forth. They don't even want to walk that short distance."[28]

"Even the dogs owned by the Chinese were well off compared to the Tanzanian workers"[29]

"If you want your cows to get more milk, you have to give them more grass, but the Chinese give them less grass. They are really bad employers. White colonialists were better, at least they greet you. The Chinese don't greet you when they pass by you. Last year, there was a leaking problem, he asked the Chinese to buy some tarmac but the Chinese said to me that I am Tanzanian and therefore I cannot give him advice. A year later, they finally bought the tarmac, but from China, at a price three times higher than local Tanzanian tarmac…The Chinese are thieves. They steal our wealth and send it to China. Everything used in the mills is from China. Even second hand and poor quality machines are from China, bought with Tanzanian shillings."[30]

On the Copperbelt, on the other hand, people's views are more mixed and layered. The intense public discontent caused by the fatal explosion in an NFCA-affiliated facility in 2005, killing 52 casual workers, is still palpable but it is counterbalanced by the prosperity that the Chinese have brought to the community. Assailing the Chinese for treating them as cheap labor, many miners also credited the Chinese for reopening a bankrupt and abandoned mine and creating employment. Their Zambian government managers during the ZCCM period had failed them abysmally and Chambishi was resuscitated by the infusion of Chinese capital and technology. Some miners also appreciated the Chinese work style, especially when compared to expatriates of other nationalities on the Copperbelt. Comments like these are common:

"The thing I like about the Chinese is that if a Chinese is not designated as a boss, they will bring him down to work with us and they will not discriminate in his favor because he is a Chinese. He will do the same job as everyone else. I had Chinese guys working under my supervision. This is something you don't see a Boer, a Canadian or Indian doing. To me, who has worked with them closely, I like them because they are down to earth."[31]

[27] Interview with a female electrical engineer at Urafiki, Dar es Salaam, October ??, 2007.
[28] Interview with a female weaver at Urafiki, Dar es Salaam, December 12, 2007.
[29] Interview with a male technician at Urafiki, Dar es Salaam, October ??, 2007.
[30] Interview with a construction department worker at Urafiki, Dar es Salamm, December 10, 2007.
[31] Interview with a miner, Chambishi, August 29, 2007

“There was massive unemployment in Chambishi…But with the coming of the Chinese you find that almost everybody, as long as he can work, is now employed in the Chinese mines. So we are happy … the Chinese are able to give us at least an income to feed and keep our children. Before the Chinese came people would just be loitering on the streets while some will go into the plant to steal things like cables and scrap metals but those are things of the past. So despite the poor conditions being offered we appreciate what the Chinese are doing.”[32]

New investments by the Chinese also have also created a sense of optimism:

“This town has been designated a Free Economic Zone and the Chinese are to build a multi-facility economic zone. As such workers are to benefit because by next year worker housing will be built, two big colleges and two stadiums, a shopping complex and a smelter which is in progress…”[33]

The difference in the degree of class and racial tension between the two cases also throws into sharp relief the need to distinguish different types of Chinese capital, with their varied degree of (dis)connection from local communities. The parent company of NFCA is one of China’s largest state owned enterprises and has branches in many countries. Chambishi has also been designated the site of the first of the five special economic zones the Chinese government has pledged to construct in Africa. On the other hand, the Changzhou No. 2 Textile Company that holds the majority share of Urafiki is a provincial level, share holding company, and does not carry the same level of state economic and political mission. The nature of their industry also generates different incentives to be embedded in the local society. Copper mining is place-dependent whereas textile mills are more foot-loose. The different interests of these two investment projects produce different patterns of engagement with the local communities. NFCA’s long term interest in Chambishi and the copperbelt region makes it very sensitive to local popular sentiments and attempts are made to shore up its image as a good corporate citizen. For instance, in 2007, NFCA launched a Corporate Social Responsibility Plan, which covers the repairing of roads, building bus station shelters, setting public recreation facilities on the copperbelt, donating stationery to Chambishi school children, supporting the women empowerment plan and participating in Malaria and HIV/AIDS campaigns. In contrast, at Urafiki, Chinese managers have no plans to make similar social investments. In short, the more capital intensive extractive project in Chambishi turns out to be more constrained by and responsive to local pressures than a manufacturing concern in a competitive sector. This difference also shows up in the ways the two companies react to worker resistance, and cautions against an undifferentiated view of “Chinese capital”.

Grassroots Militancy and its Divergent Outcomes

In the two enterprises in this study, strikes have occurred after the Chinese became owners, staged by disgruntled workers demanding higher wages and more secured terms

[32] Interview with a worker in the concentrator, Chambishi, August 28, 2007.
[33] Interview with a shop steward, Chambishi, August 28, 2007.

of employment. Zambian miners' misgivings about "low" wages arise in relation to wages at other foreign-owned mines on the Copperbelt and to the windfall profits the Chinese are presumably reaping with the sharp rise in copper prices. Thanks to the transparency of global copper trade, centralized and priced at the London Metal Exchange, miners know the value of the commodity they produce and use it as claims for better conditions of work.

"We are lowly paid compared to other mines. Even when you compare our wages with Chambishi Metals which is in the Chambishi area, we are paid less. If you compare with other mines like KCM, Kansanshi Mines and Lumuwana Mines, the disparity is even more unspeakable. It is like we are just paid to get some strength to work in the plant, and not to live. At Kansanshi Mines, workers are getting about 5 million Kwacha per month, and what about us, we only get 1 million."[34]

For workers, this became particularly unacceptable when copper prices have risen from $1,400 a ton in November 2001 to about $7,000 a ton by April 2006.[35] Miners refer to the BBC broadcasts and their company magazine as sources of information on copper prices and are enraged by the gap between corporate profits and worker salaries.

At Urafiki, livelihood is even more precarious than on the Zambian Copperbelt, if only because workers earnings are much lower. Miners take home on average $250 -- $500 at Chambishi, but casual workers at Urafiki are paid only $50 and permanent workers $65, inclusive of transportation allowance and a sick leave allowance. Workers reported accruing multiple debts, cutting back on food, eating only beans and rice without meat or fish, not being able to send their children to school and having to rely on irregular incomes from informal jobs (usually peddling vegetables and other sundry items on the streets). When asked what the main differences are between the Government and the Chinese periods at Urafiki, most workers pointed first and foremost to the decline in living standard. They earned less in terms of shillings during the Government period, but were able to afford more food, clothes and services. But unlike copper miners, textile workers in Urafiki cannot easily establish how much surplus value is produced and extracted by their employers, as there is no international pricing mechanism for textile. .

[34] Interview with a NFCA miner, Chambishi township, August 28, 2007.

[35] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4937622.stm. Copper has been stable for many years. In fact, from the late 90s to 2003, the London Metal Exchange copper price sat below US$2000 per ton. It climbed sharply in 2004, peaking mid-2006 at almost $9000 a tonne. More recently it's trading between $5000 and $7000. So it's been quite volatile over the past three years. It's worth noting that the average price between 1998 and 2003 was only $1650 a tonne, and because of such a low price for so long a period, many mining companies either collapsed or shut down their copper operations. Basically the price was so low that, in many cases, it was costing them more to dig it out of the ground and process it than what they could sell it for. Demand will be strong due to its diverse uses, the continuing strength of the infotech revolution and major electrification projects around the world, led mainly by China. Supply will be low due to fewer discoveries, lower-grade ores, higher costs for exploration, mining and production and more difficult domains to extract the ore from. Copper price will be buoyant in the short term and remain strong in the long term. "What's really driving the price of copper?" by Paul Stathis, August 20, 2007. http://www.electricalsolutions.net.au/feature_article/article.asp?item=1435.

"Putting Fear Among the Chinese"

Indeed then, workers are literally "dying a little," as the Zambian president Chiluba has infamously demanded. But they also fought back at the employers. In Chambishi, workers reported two strikes (June 2004 & July 2006) since the Chinese came, and both were instigated by workers without the blessing of the unions.

The first strike was brief and was caused by discontents about differences in pay among different categories of workers: permanent workers were paid more in wages and benefits than casuals on contract, and those directly employed by NFCA were paid more than those in Mining One. One worker said, "Most of us are not happy because why should my friends with similar qualifications and doing the same job get double my salary…After we heard that the management had refused to give in to our demands, we didn't even wait for a report from the union representatives. We started the strike right away. The corrupt union (Mine Workers' Union of Zambia, or MUZ) was able to convince us to go back to work and I guessed they were just bought off by management."[36]

The second strike, also initiated by workers without union approval, turned violent and became more frightening to the Chinese management. A branch union representative who participated in the collective bargaining with the Chinese said that "it was this strike that has put fear among the Chinese… It was illegal but it was necessary because it was the quickest way to achieve our goal".[37]

It took place as negotiations were going on between the two unions and the Chinese management. The Chinese have actually agreed to pay workers some back wages. Unfortunately, some calculation mistakes occurred in the payroll department, and instead of paying workers the back wages, deductions showed up in workers' pay slips. When the night shift workers saw the pay slips before they started their work, they became furious. They decided to show up at the front gate but refused to go in to start their shift. The day shift workers came at 7am and joined them, and then the 2pm workers also joined. All stopped working. Workers' wives and children had gathered at the main gate, annoyed, holding stones in their hands. There were talks about blasting the shaft but the union people talked workers out of their plan. They assured them that they were going to sit down with management that night and come the following morning everyone would get what was owed them. But then things turned ugly. A union representative at the scene recalled,

"Upon hearing this they started cheering as a way of congratulating us but the head of the security thought the noise indicated a riotous mob, and that the workers wanted to beat up or manhandle the union leaders. They started firing tear gases to disperse the workers…Workers had stones in their hands so they reacted and caused lots of damages with the stones."[38] Another worker recalled, "workers burned the trucks loaded with

[36] Interview a miner at NFCA, Chambishi township, August 28, 2007.
[37] Interview union branch secretary at NFCA, Chingola, December 4, 2007.
[38] Ibid.

copper, trashing paper documents in the offices, and even attacked the China House on the edge of Chambishi township. The Zambian police used rubber bullets and one miner was shot in his leg. Workers also blocked the main road to going to Chingola and set logs on fire to prevent passage. Twenty-four hours later everyone went home, and two weeks later, management signed the new agreement."[39]

NFCA also agreed to a basic pay raise of 23%, with the actual total increment including allowances amounting to a 65% increment. Jobs that were previously on contract became permanent, and casuals were given contracts of one to three years, with the promise that these would be changed to permanent in the near future.

"Shedding Fish Tears"

At Urafiki, low wages and casualization have also been the major grievances among the workers. But workers could only accept casual jobs and suffer quietly, like "shedding fish tears", as one worker put it vividly in Swahili.[40] Also, many of the casual workers the Chinese recruited were relatives and family members of the permanent workers. Such nepotistic casualization has helped assuage some of the discontent among workers. Still, there have been three strikes since the Chinese started operation, respectively in 1997, 2002 and 2005. In addition, there were inconspicuous "cold strikes" or go slows, according to workers in the weaving and spinning departments. What is remarkable about these strikes is that overtime, workers seemingly became more demoralized by the futility of their action. The Tanzanian government has staunchly supported the Chinese and the union representing the textile sector, TUICO, has a penchant for bureaucratic arbitration rather than mobilizing workers for strikes. Demoralized, workers either continue seeking the intervention of the government and the union or simply acquiesce to deteriorating employment conditions.

According to a worker who was part of the 2002 strike,

"Workers made 14 demands, including back pay of 10,000 shillings per worker for ten years, and reducing working hours from 12 to 8. But the Chinese refused. Workers called in the Minister for Industry, and when he failed to resolve the issue, workers chased after him and the police had to come and rescue him. Then the workers went to the Prime Minister, Mr. Sumaye, who also came but he said to us, 'those who want to work keep working, those who do not want to work, off you go'. The Prime Minister is backing the Chinese so they dare to ignore us because they know the government is supporting them. The Chinese finally agreed to give us a paltry 2,000 shillings raise. The government supports the Chinese because the two governments are in good relations, and the Chinese government gives aid to the Tanzanian government, but they do no good to the ordinary

[39] Interview with a miner at NFCA, Chambishi township, July 4, 2007.
[40] This is a Swahili saying for those who are oppressed but cannot access any help. When fish cries, tears are washed away by water so no one can notice that it is crying. Interview with a male technician at Urafiki, October ?? 2007.

Tanzanians. No party dares to declare themselves anti-Chinese because they are big investors."[41]

The following account of the second strike in 2005, given by the current branch union secretary at Urafiki, also illustrates how workers were demobilized by their own unions:

"In 2005, two weeks before the strike, the TUICO regional office called together all the workers in the social hall and discussed the issues. Workers voted to strike by a ¾ majority. They demanded the entire Tanzanian management team to step down, because they all were supporting the Chinese. They wanted a new management who would give them the raise. The District Commissioner came here in the second day of the strike, and cheated the people, urging them to go home, promising he would talk to the President about their demands. The strike lasted for five days, and he never returned. A rumor circulated that workers would all be fired if they did not return to work.Workers were scared and went back to work. But later they realized that it was the union leaders who spread the rumors. Angry workers later voted out the TUICO branch leaders. But the strike did not bring any result. The Chinese did not fire anyone, but deducted four days' wages from all workers."[42]

When 725 casual workers were summarily dismissed in November 2007, the branch union secretary persuaded the worker representative not to strike or go violent, but to file a complaint with the Commission of Mediation, charging that the Chinese illegally denied them formal contracts which are required under the 2004 Labor Law. These workers have been at Urafiki for at least one year and some even five years. The retrenched workers managed to pull off a little protest on the day when they were told to return to the factory to collect their last paycheck. The intervention by a member of parliament and wide report in the local media resulted in no change in the Chinese decision. The workers were dismissed.

In short, the Chinese made significant concessions to Zambian miners' strikes but not the Tanzanian textile workers. The notable difference in the effectiveness of the strikes is that Zambian workers were able to leverage a boom in the world copper market. Workers' bargaining power also receives a boost from a palpable "resource nationalism" in Zambian public discourse which has been forcefully articulated by opposition politicians. On the other hand, there is no equivalent windfall in the textile industry to increase their bargaining power with the Chinese. While the boom and bust of the product markets are not predictable, the difference in workers' political sensibility, i.e. the spontaneity and autonomy of rank-and-file workers, between the two cases may be rooted in their respective working-class history.

Organized labor in Tanzania has been politically weak but rank-and-file workers have also been relatively acquiescent. Labor has been so pacified that there was a virtual disappearance of strikes in the 70s, following a secular decline in the number of strikes since independence. The Tanzanian government has obtained such industrial peace not

[41] Interview a worker at Urafiki, Dar es Salaam, December 10, 2007.
[42] Interview union branch secretary at Urafiki, December 10, 2007.

just by restricting the right to strike and the right to engage in collective bargaining, but also through a system of state paternalism. It gave workers minimum wage protection and average earnings in parastatals were 1.4 to 1.7 times higher than the whole economy between 1967 and 1977. Moreover, workers obtained "new substantive rights, ranging from greater financial and tenurial security to industrial democracy and workers' education."[43]

In sharp contrast to parastatal workers in Tanzania, an enduring feature on the Zambian Copperbelt is grass-roots militancy. The widespread skepticism and distrust among the rank-and-file miners towards their union leaders that came up in almost all the miner interviews I have conducted has a long pedigree in the working class history of that region. From Michael Burawoy's study in the late 1960s to Miles Larmer's more recent research in the 2000s, disunity within and among the unions, and schisms between miners and their union officials are consistent themes. The clashes between miners and their unions gave rise to spontaneous and periodic outbursts of worker militancy that are not susceptible to control by the unions, political parties or arbitration committees. To the Copperbelt miners, an iron law of oligarchy has jinxed the unions for decades; as unions were dominated by a distanced and materially advantaged leadership. The arrival of the Chinese did nothing to alleviate the need for spontaneous and direct action. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, short localized strikes continued to arise from grievances about food subsidies, racial hierarchy in wages[44], fees for medical service and pension schemes, championed by miners and their branch representatives who tended to respond to increasing repression and declining terms of service and livelihood with more confrontational strikes. [45] Their targets were not just the government and the companies but also the union bureaucracy, as this miner explained,

> "When they (union leaders) negotiate with management, usually they fail to reach an agreement. They don't have that zeal and courage…all the strikes we have staged have been started by the workers themselves and not the unions. They are cowards…Since it is not possible for us to speak to management at the same time, it pays to belong to a union But in terms of forcing management to raise our pay, it's the workers themselves who do that. A strike is most effective, but the union is always against it. In most cases, the unions will agree to terms which we don't like and usually force things they have agreed with management on us."[46]

Corruption is the perennial problem that plagues the national offices of the two miners' unions.[47] Under the Chinese, free trips to China for union leaders invite the most suspicion among miners.

[43] Dudley Jackson, "The Disappearance of Strikes in Tanzania: Income Policies and Industrial Democracy," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17(2), 1979, p. 251.
[44] By 1980, expatriates represented only 4.7% of the workforce, down from 16% in 1964. Zambians earned between half and two-thirds of the wages of expatriates doing the same job, the latter also receiving additional benefits. Larmer, pp.107-108.
[45] Larmer, Chapters four and five.
[46] Interview with a miner at NFCA, Chambishi township, August 28, 2007.
[47] Challenging the close ties between MUZ and the government, a new rival National Union of Miners and Allied Workers (NUMAW) was registered in 2004, representing miners who are new recruits in the privatized mining houses. At NFCA, NUMAW represented all but the fifty plus permanent employees staying on after privatization.

"Corruption is very serious in the current NUMAW. We have heard that many of the union officials are being sent to China not to work but to have leisure. The big question is what work did they do to deserve this? Small things like this make us question the credibility of our union representatives. Those trips are usually done in secret with the knowledge of union members. Why? So to me it simply shows that there are bigger things happening behind our backs which we don't know and probably will never know."[48]

Miners have been aided by the Zambian presidential election in 2006 in which Chinese labor practices became a political issue. A year before that, a tragic and deadly industrial accident enraged the local community and lend enormous moral legitimacy to miners' argument that the Chinese are truly exploitative of Zambian causal workers. In April 2005, the single most deadly disaster in 35 years happened at the Chinese owned Beijing General Research Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (BGRIMM) in Chambishi. All the 52 workers died in the incident were Zambian casual workers who were paid only $15 to $30 a month for working in such hazardous environment. A national day of mourning was observed to mark the mass funeral of the deceased. Popular outrage was directed as much at the Chinese as the government for not imposing adequate safety standards in foreign invested mines. Anger continued to simmer after compensations of about $10,000 per killed employee were paid. The Chinese president Hu Jintao's planned visit to Chambishi to lay the cornerstone for a new $220 million copper smelter in February 2007 was called off due to threats of mass protests.[49]

In 2006, Michael Sata of the opposition party Patriotic Front, who was President Levy Mwanawasa's main challenger, made China's presence in Zambia's copper mining and trading sectors a campaign issue. "They ill treat our people and that is unacceptable. We are not going to condone exploitative investors. This country belongs to Zambians," Sata said of Chinese investors. Mwanawasa defended the Chinese when Sata first made the threat to review state contracts should he come to power. Later, Mwanawasa agreed with the general complaint about the quality of investment, saying he would order the arrest and prosecution of investors in the copper mines that broke labor laws. Sata's populist "Zambia for Zambian" campaign did not make him the president but he won the majority vote in Lusaka, where Chinese traders have employed many locals, and the Copperbelt.[50] Sata's articulation of "resource nationalism" has parallels in other parts of the developing world, by political leaders in countries with reserves of oil, natural gas, minerals resources, from Russia and Iran to Bolivia and Venezuela. It is founded on widening income inequality amid soaring world commodity prices and read demands by the disenfranchised citizens for a larger share of the profits from their natural resources.[51]

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[48] Interview with a miner at NFCA, Chambishi, August 28, 2007.

[49] Yaroslav Trofimov, "In Africa: China's Expansion Begins to Stir Resentment,", *Wall Street Journal,* February 2, 2007, P. A1.

[50] Isabel Chimangeni, "Chinese Presence Met with Resistance," July 18, 2006, online. http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=35152; see also Joseph A. Schatz "Zambian Hopeful Takes a Swing at China," *The Washington Post* September 25, 2006, A16; Miles Larmer and Alastair Fraser, "Of Cabbages and King Cobra: Populist Politics and Zambia's 2006 Election," *African Affairs,* no. 106, pp. 611-637, 2007.

[51] The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Latin American Politics: Resource Nationalism Revived," April 6, 2007 online at http://www.viewswire.com/index. Joshua Kurlantzick, "The Coming Resource War, Crude Awakening," *The New Republic* October 2, 2006. There are recent policy changes in these countries. For

A Chambishi miner stressed that the resentment against causalization and exploitation whipped up by Sata lent the miners useful pressure. But he was happy to see Sata lost the election, because he thought that the Chinese have brought positive changes to people in Chambishi.

"In the past year, there have been cries by the general public all over Zambia about casualization. It so happened that Chambishi Mine has been on the center stage of casualization in the press and I am sure NFCA is worried about its image. Even president Mwanawasa made serious remarks about the issue which has made his government very unpopular on the Copperbelt…The opposition leader promised that he would chase away all the Chinese investors in Zambia if he won. Fortunately he did not win and the Chinese are still here. The point I want to make is that people spoke through the votes that they don't like the Chinese way of paying small salaries coupled with casualization. So that's message enough for them to put an end to the issue of casualization and improve on the salaries. The union does not come in any way."[52]

Conclusion

Much has been said and criticized about China's intentions in Africa.[53] The rhetoric of Chinese colonialism (e.g. China's "scramble for Africa", "conquest of Africa", "the new sinosphere") underscores the angst of Western powers about the rise of a formidable rival but reveals little about the varied capacities, interests and constrains of the foot-soldiers of Chinese projects on the ground. These diversities defy the mistaken notion, prevalent in current debates and reports, that there is a singular "Chinese" interest bringing about uniform impact, imperialist or not, on a singular Africa. To go beyond banal rhetoric will require comparative research to uncover how various configurations of Chinese capital, African working class histories, governments and societies lead to different developmental outcomes.

The comparison of two such projects in this article generates several working hypotheses. Different investors have varying capacities and interests, and they encounter the local labor force with varied collective histories and leverages. The Chinese at Chambishi and Urafiki resort to casualization as a means to cut cost but Chambishi's interest in securing long- term, territorially specific development has hamstrung its relentless pursuit of casualization, forcing it to yield to pressure generated by grassroots militancy that rode on the wave of resource nationalism at a time of a global hike in copper prices. Chinese

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instance, in Zambia, even though the re-elected MMD government is friendly to foreign donors and investors, political leaders are proposing changes to the country's policy on mining, like removing tax holidays, reserving fiscal incentives for exceptional cases, introducing public scrutiny of and parliamentary approval for new investment agreements. Ronald Mwila, "Zambia Seeks to Change its Mining Policy," August 2, 2007, online at: http://mineweb.com/mineweb/view/mineweb/en/pages67?oid=24484.

[52] Interview with D. Muswala, miner , NFCA, Chambishi, Augsut 29, 2007.

[53] For a critical, reality-check kind of assessment of the "China-in-Africa discourse", see Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, "The Forest for the Trees: Trade, Investment and the China-in-Africa Discourse" May 2007, Unpublished manuscript. For historical and contemporary analysis of Chinese state interests in Africa, see Chris Alden, *China in Africa*. London: Zed Books, 2007; Philip Snow, *The Star Raft: China's Encounter with Africa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988. An overview of China's new south-south policy as the larger context of China-Africa relation is Alex Fernandez Jilberto and Barbara Hogenboom, "Developing Regions Facing China in a Neo-liberalized World," *Journal of Developing Societies* 23 (3): 305-339, 2007.

investment in the competitive textile sector, in contrast, has a shorter time frame, less political burden and thinner profit margin. Lesser and less embedded investors may ironically turn out to be more formidable adversaries for workers. A fruitful line of inquiry is to re-evaluate the different logics and impacts of, for instance, extractive, industrial and merchant capitals from China which are all active in today's Africa.

Another theoretical issue is whether or not Chinese capital behaves differently from capital of other nations. The presence of a number of multinationals originating from different countries on the Copperbelt provides a natural experiment to study if class exploitation has any elective affinity with any racial group, or if it takes different forms under different national management. For a start, miners constantly make comparison among the mining houses and realize that they all share the interest of making profits off their native resources and labor. For instance, all major international mining houses are found to employ casual labor and some of them subcontract more of their core activities to other companies than the Chinese. Wildcat strikes protesting against low wages and casualization have occurred in the past few years at mines owned by Indian, Swiss, South African and Canadian investors. Yet, Chinese became the sole target of resource nationalism. Whatever the reasons for this bias, vigilant international spotlight on the Chinese has led to lofty pledges of economic partnership and anti-imperialist solidarity emanated from Beijing. It remains to be seen if this Chinese reaction will indeed constrain Chinese capital interests on the ground. But certainly, as miners emphasize, their Chinese managers are gradually learning, changing, and adapting to the African contexts.

Finally, this study sheds light on another perhaps obvious point: African workers and governments bring with them different histories and evolving capacities in encountering Chinese investors. Zambian miners boast a long tradition of grassroots resistance, especially in Chambishi among other mines. The Zambian government is becoming more assertive, thanks no less to the increasing assertiveness of civil society groups which demand more national share of the profits from copper. The recent imposition of the Windfall Profit Tax is a forceful illustration that resource nationalism may be changing the way international investors in the minerals and resource sectors conduct their business in Africa.[54] Resource poor countries combined with weak or government-dependent civil society sector like Tanzania may lack such leverage.

[54] John Lungu, "Copper Mining in Zambia: Renegotiation or Law Reform?" *Review of African Political Economy* no. 117: 41-53, 2008.