Modern International Aid: The effects of PRC investment in Ghana

Independent Research Thesis

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Preface

My name is Roy, and I am a history student at The Ohio State University (tOSU). My passion for history began with my birth and early childhood in Southeast Asia. Spending my early, formative years amidst differing religions, cultures and people groups created a curiosity about the unknown.

Since then, many of my friendships and interests have revolved around international topics. I have loved learning the languages, history, and foods of foreign cultures. This translated into my senior year at tOSU where during my fall break, I traveled to Mayan ruins in the Yucatan and created an ethnographic film with the help of tOSU’s movie making club.¹

The spring of my senior year my interests led me to want to do field research in Africa, so I picked a class at tOSU on China’s involvement in Africa. After creating an itinerary, creating a project abstract, and receiving my required vaccines I told the professor of my China in Africa class of my plan to travel to Ghana for spring break. Professor Kobo is from Ghana and was incredibly gracious enough to offer his home there as a launch pad for the trip and connected me with people to help facilitate my project.

I collaborated with organizations such as The China in Africa project, The Afro-Sino Centre of International Relations, performed extensive research on a multifaceted topic under the tutelage of my tOSU Professor Kobo, as well as conducted in person interviews with pertinent respondents in the Ghanaian government and fishing community all in the context of a foreign country. I greatly enjoyed creating this project and am excited for a career in the future that will utilize these skills.

Modern International Aid: The effects of PRC investment in Ghana
Roy Conners

Introduction

A fishing harbor in construction juts out from the base of the Fort James slave castle, promising a new era. After the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) funded the $60 million dollar Jamestown harbor which had been on the drawing board since 1965, PRC representatives were quick to cast a bright future for Ghana. PRC project manager Luo Wei said that "When the fishing port is completed, 26,000 metric tons of fish can be traded here annually. Also, over 1,000 local fishermen can ply their trade and berth over 400 fishing vessels in the port." 2,3 While the infrastructure project may appear to turn a page on Ghana’s dark past, it expands the Chinese fishing industry which currently owns an astounding 90% of fishing vessels in Ghana. Luo is right when she says that the harbor will “berth over 400 fishing vessels in the port,” however that growth will come at the cost of the Ghanaian artisanal fishing community.4,5

Illegal fishing practices performed by Chinese fishing trawlers are decimating what’s left of Ghana’s fish stocks. The situation is so severe that as early as next year entire categories of fish, and the artisanal fishing community that once sustained coastal Ghanaian cities will be gone.6 The illegal actions of these Chinese fishing trawlers are a flashpoint, under toning the

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growing pains of Ghana, the growing influence of China in the international stage, and the complex relationship of government funded, government linked and private international development.

As China has grown into one of the largest economies in the world, every decision it makes on the international stage has serious implications. To better understand the global marketplace of tomorrow, it's crucial to analyze the environmental, financial, and political spheres with which China delves into today. The multifaceted relationship of the PRC to Chinese fishing fleets, the international stage and the nation of Ghana represent a case study with which broadcasts important implications on the modern global market, and acts as a warning for nations receiving infrastructure aid from the PRC.

This problem was created when the PRC expanded its economy out of Maoist economics and focused on remedying its history of devastating famines and droughts through an increase in food supply. In the 1990’s the PRC developed a robust aquaculture business to supply its high fish demand, and subsidized Chinese fishing fleets to feed a quickly growing population. These food initiatives were met with great success and created a stable foundation with which the PRC could change its trajectory internationally. With food needs met at home, the PRC has looked to be a source of liberation to formerly European colonized nations in Africa through finance initiatives such as their 2019 $2 billion investment into rail, road, and bridge networks in Ghana. Although the PRC has provided great aid in infrastructure to Ghana, the Jamestown harbor project facilitates Chinese fishing fleets to cause further problems for the Ghanaian fishing economy, highlighting the dark side of Chinese aid.

To better understand this topic, I traveled to Ghana during my spring break to conduct field research. I interviewed Ghanaian fishing communities, met with Chinese communities in
Ghana, the Ghanaian Navy, as well as several organizations seeking to bring awareness to the topic. Additionally, I took a China in Africa class at The Ohio State University where I conducted research on the history of Afro-Sino (African-Chinese) relations, as well as primary sources relating to the Ghanaian fishing economy.

Through conducting this project, it has been made clear to me that PRC infrastructure projects such as the Jamestown harbor appear to liberate Ghana from western colonialism but will instead lend to a future of PRC neo colonialization. China’s effort to grow their global influence through financial investments in Ghana have been heavily written about, however the linkage from their infrastructure projects such as the Jamestown harbor to the expansion of Chinese fishing fleets has not.
Journal entries

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I arrived in the capital city of Accra and was greeted by my professor’s cousin Aziz and brother Chief Brown. After 2 days of trying the local foods like Fufu and Banku as well as acclimating to the country, Chief Brown and I were to travel west along the coast to his hometown of Sekondi-Takoradi. Chief Brown is the tribal chief of the Mossi tribe in the city of Takoradi, so when we were to travel to the fishing harbor nearby, he would have the social capital to assemble relevant people for my project.

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While enroute to Sekondi-Takoradi, Chief Brown and I stopped in the capital of the central region, Cape Coast. Cape Coast is most widely known for the Cape Coast slave castle built in 1555. The large castle broadcasts the colonial past of Ghana, which must be understood to better understand the dynamics with which Ghana operates under today.

Ghana’s history

European colonial powers have left Ghana bearing the scars of about forty slave castles, trading posts and forts. At its peak, the Cape Coast castle held up to 1500 slaves in underground dungeons. With no sanitation, and cramped quarters, the slaves were forced to stand in the accumulated excrement for up to three months until they were sent off to the Americas. After several centuries of Ghana being colonized by European powers, the emancipation of Africans by European powers in the mid 19th century created a labor shortage.
In Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry’s “We Cast about for a Remedy” paper, Akurang-Parry speaks of the scarcity of labor in the British Empires colony in Ghana otherwise known as the Gold Coast. With the trans-Atlantic slave trade dismembered, labor was in short supply to fuel the new economic endeavors of the colonial powers in Africa. Subsequently European powers looked for cheap sources of labor, and China at the time was in high supply of indentured workers. Chinese laborers were marketed as more attractive to the British in the Gold Coast at the time due to the perception that the Chinese were more intelligent and civilized than the African workers. The former governor of the Gold Coast colony Sir William Edward Maxwell remarked that the use of Chinese labor would lead to "the development of alluvial gold-fields by a class of miners, who are more industrious and better instructed than the Gold Coast negro".

Li Anshan in his book “Overseas Chinese in Africa” talks of how indentured servants adapted to the struggles they faced while in Africa. To withstand the racism and persecution being hurled from the Europeans in Africa, the Chinese created advocacy organizations to protect their businesses, and made sure to hold on to the religious ceremonies and activities they brought from China. The shared events of persecution between the Chinese and Africans created a distinguishable solidarity, community, and support system with which loyalty to one another was spawned. This solidarity of colonial persecution would form as common ground for future Afro-Sino relations.

The European empires global grasp of the developing world began to slip in the 20th century as empires fell out of fashion, and the Chinese labor exchange to Africa died off. Following the dissolution of European empires in Africa, independence movements rose. The non-alignment pact at the Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference) in 1955 saw

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7 Gold Coast Independent, August 22, 1896
representatives from twenty-nine governments of Asian and African nations gather in Bandung, Indonesia (coincidentally where I was born) to discuss the future for countries seeking to not align themselves during the Cold War, and for economic development in the context of decolonization. The twenty-nine countries that participated represented a total population of 1.5 billion people, 54% of the world's population at the time. China was invited to the conference, and the premier of China at the time Zhou Enlai looked to place China as the helping brother to the formerly colonized.

When the conference began on April 18, 1955, the president of Indonesia Sukarno in his opening speech titled "Let a New Asia and a New Africa be Born", stated, "Our task is first to seek an understanding of each other." Zhou of the PRC would later respond that: "All the Asian and African countries gained their independence from colonialist rule, whether these countries are led by communists or nationalists. We should seek to understand each other and respect each other, sympathize with and support one another, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence may completely serve as a basis for us to establish relations of friendship, cooperation, and good neighborliness." The PRC positioned themselves as an international power outside of the cold war powers, and as a liberator to the newly formed nonalignment pact otherwise known as the 3rd world.

Following the Bandung conference, African nations looked to break free from their colonial shadow, with Ghana in 1957 being the first sub-Saharan nation to gain its independence from a colonial power. Following its independence, Ghana started infrastructure endeavors such as the Volta River Project, which would harness waterpower through a dam and subsequently provide electricity for Ghana. The project would eventually be partially funded by the United

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States, the World Bank, and Great Britain. These international financiers would use their newly found influence in the country through financing, to attempt to sway Ghana away from the Soviet Union, and into the United States umbrella of influence. Additionally, the financial aid provided from the United States stipulated that the majority of the power produced from the dam would be directed to a US owned aluminum company in the region. Subsequently, Ghana was left searching for a source of financing that would not result in a regression back into a colonial relationship requiring submission to their western financiers.9

The PRC saw this as their opening and in 1999 they enacted their “Go Out policy”. I learned about this formative era of Afro-Sino relations from Eric Olander, who is the founder of the China Africa Project which provides projects, regular podcasts, research papers, and linkage to Afro-Sino content. I first found out about Mr. Olander through his podcast series on apple podcasts, and after listening to his podcast for several weeks, I contacted him through email and since then he and I have been in consultation through email and zoom. Mr. Olander has been a great aid in my research, and in the Bloomberg QuickTake documentary on “The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap in Africa”, Olander explains the investment relationship that African nations found themselves post colonization.

Mr. Olander explains that after WW2, the US, and European backed organizations such as the IMF and World bank funded infrastructure projects throughout the world to rebuild war torn areas. These western financiers then backed away from these infrastructure developments in the 1960’s and 70’s and instead offered humanitarian aid to Africa. African governments became tired of these humanitarian aid projects and wanted to be treated like partners, so the PRC said “great because we don’t do humanitarian aid. We are the best in the world now at producing

large scale infrastructure, fast and cheap and we have a surplus of capital. We will loan you the money, our great contracting companies, and our skill and ability will deliver infrastructure fast and cheap.”

It was an ideal match. The PRC recognized that Africa’s development stage was similar to the PRC’s state 30 years before hand. Africa’s only infrastructure in place was created during colonial occupation, they possessed a large population that was growing quickly, and there was a shared history of anticolonial struggle. You tick all those boxes and Africa made a lot of sense for the Chinese to invest.

The “Go Out policy” had an emphasis of increasing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to developing nations such as Ghana. This funding was offered without the various stipulations and humanitarian focus found from the United States, and the World Bank. The focus on international financing saw the PRC FDI in Ghana rise from 9.8 million in 1999 to 2 billion in 2019 alone. In 2013 the PRC overtook the United States as Africa’s largest equity investor as (measured by FDI) as it looked to become the lifeline for developing nations to decide their own destiny without the added directives from their emblematic former western colonial rulers. The PRC was able to provide these loans from a stance of friendship, based on a shared history. Not only had China been under subjugation from colonial powers just like Ghana, but it had also been part of the non-alignment pact against the post WW2 colonial archetype figures such as the United States and Britain during the cold war.

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After Chief Brown and I visited the Cape Coast and the oldest European building in existence south of the Sahara known as the Portuguese Elmina castle, we went into the Elmina fishing harbor.

**Ghanaian Fishing**

Ghana has the highest fish dependence in Africa, providing 60% of its citizens animal protein intake adding up to a yearly per capital fish consumption of an estimated 28 kg.\(^{14}\) The country’s fishery sector creates jobs for 20% of the active labor force (2.7 million people), making the Ghanaian artisanal fishing communities essential.\(^{15}\) The artisanal fishing economic supply chain starts not on the coast but inland through the cultivation of the *wawa* tree. Once the *wawa* tree has grown to the correct size, been transported to the coast, crafted into a canoe, and sold to a community, the fishing begins. Fishermen head out to sea in these canoes with paddles or small propellers and spend a multitude of days out at sea catching fish. Once a large deposit of fish has been collected, they head back to the coast and are greeted by women who buy the fish at wholesale prices and then bring the fish to the market. Once at the fish market, the large assortment of fish will be sold, feeding the community with the profits from these sales stimulating the surrounding economy. Jobs are provided along all these steps in the economic supply chain making the artisanal fishing economy essential for the Ghanaian economy. This artisanal fishing community fishes in the Gulf of Guinea which produces 3.6 million tons of caught fish every year.\(^{16}\) Although the Gulf of Guinea produces many fish, its future is in peril with the growing presence of Chinese fishing fleets.

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The Ghanaian artisanal fishing community has been in mainstream media reports over the last decade due to fishing fleets wreaking havoc on its fishing communities. These fishing fleets primarily being Chinese. As the PRC has financed new highways, docks and factories in Ghana, Chinese fishing companies and entrepreneurs have simultaneously sprung forth seeking to make a living along the Gulf of Guinea. The Chinese fishing fleets now represent 38% of the world's fishing fleets,\(^1\) accounting for more than 400 fleets which produce up to $380 million in profit each year in West Africa alone.\(^2\) With over 70% of China’s fishing fleets in the continent of Africa docked off the coast of west Africa, coastal west African nations have had to endure decades of intense exploitation which has resulted in over 50% of their fishing stocks being deemed heavily overfished and in disrepair.\(^3\)

**PRC food needs**

Understanding China's historic food problems explains their involvement in the Ghanaian fishing industry. China has had countless famines and droughts throughout its history including two of the deadliest recorded famines- both occurring in the 20\(^{th}\) century. China has historically had a large segment of the population which has lived below the poverty line and in severe malnutrition. China's economy and population hit drastic changes during the Great Leap Forward which sprung forth out from WW2. China experienced devastating poverty and food shortages during Maoism and the cultural revolution, however the 1990’s saw the PRC President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji usher in an era of explosive economic and social welfare growth.

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17 Yozell, Sally. "Shining a light: The need for transparency across distant water fishing." (2019), page 15
19 Ibid
To grow the middle class, and set a foundation for the future, the PRC sought to end its long-standing food problems that had been plaguing it throughout its history.

Just like in Ghana, fish have a proportionately large role in the Chinese diet. With 36% of the world's consumption of fish occurring in China, China is the largest consumer of fish in the world. With such a large demand for fish, the PRC heavily funded the creation of a domestic aquaculture (the rearing of aquatic animals or the cultivation of aquatic plants for food) economy to achieve its food production goals. The aquaculture economy in China jumped from 15.1 tons in 1990 to 81 million in 2018. This heavy focus on domestic fish production resulted in China accounting for an impressive 58% of global fish production in 2018. In 2017 China’s aquaculture was an incredibly lucrative sector of the economy supplying $20 billion in fish to the rest of the world, doubling what the second largest exporter of fish Norway produces.

The PRC looked to build off its massive aquaculture economy, through the expansion of their wild caught fish economy. The PRC initiated this through an upgrade and repair program for Chinese fishing fleets. This program saw Chinese fishing fleets receive equipment aid such as engine repairs, and hull patching along with other subsidies like a reduced cost for fuel. As a result of the subsidies, Chinese fishing boomed and fishing fleets branched out of Chinese waters. These PRC initiated subsidies were given under the agreement that 60-65% of fish caught would be returned to Chinese markets. These fishing fleets quickly grew fish supplies in Chinese markets and played a crucial role in the fulfillment of the PRC’s food production goals.

As a result of a booming domestic aquaculture economy, along with the growth of a successful fishing fleet economy, China’s undernourished population rate fell from 16% in 2000
to 8.6% in 2017. In 1990 the United Nations had set a target of cutting world malnutrition in half, and China’s food production achievements accounted for two-thirds of the total reduction in undernourished people among Asian countries from 2010 to 2017.  

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After visiting Cape Coast and Elmina, Chief Brown and I arrived at the dual city of Sekondi-Takoradi. Takoradi is the older of the joined cities and holds most of the residential population, while Sekondi hosts government buildings. I chose Sekondi-Takoradi to travel to because the Albert Bosomtwi-Sam fishing harbor of Sekondi is one of the largest fishing harbors in Ghana. There I could find relevant people to interview who would be aware of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing practices by Chinese fishing fleets as many of the Chinese fleets docked in the Albert Bosomtwi-Sam harbor.

Upon arriving at the Sekondi harbor with Chief Brown and his son, we passed the “All African Slipway Ltd” vessel repair, located at the entrance of the harbor. The ship repair slipway is owned by Rushan Shipbuilding Co., Ltd., a privately owned Chinese LLC founded in 1993 during China’s fishing fleet boom. This repair slipway fixes these Chinese fleets in contention and highlights the looming presence that the Chinese fishing industry has on Ghana.

Interview with John Eshun

Once at the harbor a fisherman named John Eshun was retrieved to talk with us. The fishermen spoke the Fante dialect of Twi, and Chief Brown was to mediate an interview session, translating and relaying questions I had for him. John regularly spent time as a deckhand on the

Chinese fishing trawlers (a ship that drags a trailing net to catch fish), as well as on Ghanaian fishing canoes, and subsequently had great familiarity with the topic.

John first explained that in certain sections of the ocean, there were rock collections on the ocean floor that created an ecosystem for marine life. The rocks created a foundation with weeds and plants where fish could feed and repopulate, however due to the Chinese dragging their trawling nets on the ocean floor, the ecosystems were destroyed. He added that the Chinese were not fishing in the area where the government had allotted for them but instead were encroaching into the area designated for the canoes. When the trawlers would fish in the canoes area, they would catch smaller fish known as a Herring that Ghanaians regularly consume. These Herrings would be caught by the trawlers and then thrown back into the ocean due to their small size. The discarded dead Herring would decompose in the ocean and pollute the water, subsequently driving other fish from the area.

John said that that they used to go deep into the ocean and fish for two days and then return to land on the third day to sell the fish back on shore. However due to a reduction in fish stocks due to Chinese IUU fishing, they are now forced to spend close to a week at sea to cover the expenses and make a profit. Later in the day, in Takoradi I met with the head of the fishing sector of the NGO “Hēn Mpoano” which advocates for coastal ecosystem governance. He elaborated on the negative effects of fishermen being forced to stay out at sea for longer periods of time that John had described. As a result of longer times at sea, the caught fish had an extended time to rot. Subsequently some fishermen were applying formaldehyde to the fish to preserve them for longer. This has introduced health risks to those eating and interacting with the formaldehyde.
John mentioned that a collection of Ghanaians traveled to Norway during Rawlings regime (Ghanaian military officer and politician who led the country from 1981 to 2001) and were taught a fishing technique that included the submersion of light into the water. This practice used lights at night to attract the fish that were harder to catch, and then a net was thrown around the light to catch the fish. The fish were then brought back to shore on canoes and sold in the market. John explained that the Chinese had adopted this practice but would again discard the fish they did not like back into the ocean. Not only did this destroy fish stocks through an influx of decomposing fish, but it halted the bringing of fish to the shore and subsequent stimulation of the economy through the fish market. It’s important to note that the increase activity of Chinese fleets in Ghana coincides with the PRC expansion of economy and focus on food supply in the 1990’s, along with their 1999 adoption of the “Go Out policy”.

John went on to explain a new fishing practice known as the “saiko” fishing industry. In this “saiko” practice, Chinese trawlers will wade into areas of water in which have been designated solely for the Ghanaian canoes and use their large-scale equipment to catch massive quantities of fish. The fish caught smaller than their liking is then sold to Ghanaian fishermen on canoes instead of throwing them back into the ocean, subsequently creating a middleman for the acquisition of fish.

John said that about 10 years ago there were even more Chinese trawlers around the Sekondi Albert Bosomtwi-Sam harbor however many of these trawlers were caught pair trawling. This occurs when 2 trawlers connect their drag nets to create an even wider fishing reach that quickly results in overfishing of the fish stocks. These pair trawlers had been caught far from the coast by the Ghanaian navy (which hosts its naval base directly adjacent to the Sekondi harbor) and had since been banished from Ghanaian waters. The trawlers then went to
Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire, but the companies that owned them have now since disbanded. Now there are about 6 Chinese trawlers in the Sekondi harbor, and about 20 in Tema (the other major harbor in Ghana). He added that there are also Lebanese pair trawlers docked in the Tema harbor, but that some of those vessels had been forced to leave as well. John remarked that in the past Ghanaians had been abused on the trawlers after being hired as deckhands, but that he hadn’t heard about abuse on the fleets anymore. Finally, he added that many of the Ghanaians are forced to accept the Chinese as their livelihoods have been destroyed due to the fish stock depletion, and the only jobs now available being the ones on Chinese trawlers.

After interviewing John at the Sekondi harbor, we went to the adjacent Ghanaian naval base, and met with the Chief Imam of the Ghanaian navy who was a friend of Chief Brown. The Naval base hosts a power producing ship owned by the Turkish Karadeniz Energy Group. The company provides 10 percent of Iraq's and 20 percent of Lebanon's electricity needs through its fleet of seven power ships. The massive energy ship highlighted Ghana’s need for outside financing, such as independent power producers from abroad.

**Interview with canoe fishermen**

After the meeting at the Ghanaian naval base, Chief Brown facilitated an interview once again in the Fante dialect with a fisherman at the bustling Sekondi fish market. The fisherman asked to remain anonymous as he feared repercussions for speaking against the Chinese. He told a similar story as John, the destruction of seabed fish ecosystems from trawling, the encroachment of the trawlers into areas designated for the Ghanaian fishermen and the large role that fishing plays for the community. The fishermen added that due to the smaller fish stocks available due to IUU practices from the Chinese, Ghanaian fishermen had resorted to use certain
bad fishing techniques. The Ghanaian fishermen had been using dynamite, carbide, and DDT at sea to gain an advantage. He pointed out that if the fishing business was to thrive as it once had, a system to stop the use of items such as dynamite, carbide DDT and other damaging practices must be put into use.

The fishermen added that the Chinese had been in Ghana for 30 or so years, starting in the Rawlings regime. The timeline from the fishermen lined up with John’s time wise with when the Chinese began subsiding their private fleets. He lamented that due to economic problems, the price of fuel and diesel for their boats had significantly increased. He was happy to say however that the sitting center left “New Patriotic Party” had been helping the fishermen by supplying them with outboard motors, nets, and echosounders.

The fishermen noted that the government had been helping the fishermen in some ways, but that the leaders of these private Chinese fishing fleets were in contact with certain ‘big men’ in Ghana which allowed them to continue their IUU fishing. When Chinese trawlers had been hit with heavy fines by the Ghanaian government for IUU fishing, the Chinese opted not to pay them and had been largely met with no consequences. The Ghanaian government issued laws requiring there be a Ghanaian government worker on board every trawler to make sure no illegalities occur, and yet due to corruption IUU still happens.

In addition to a required government worker on the trawlers, there has even been a law stating that no foreign national can own a trawler in Ghana. The Chinese fleets have circumvented this problem through ‘front’ companies that are created by the owners of the Chinese private fleets paying a Ghanaian national to legally “own” a company. The company maybe in the name of a Ghanaian, however it's only a legal loophole to shield the Chinese
individuals from scrutiny regarding IUU fishing.25 Outside of the canoes and small artisanal fishing boats, as mentioned previously over 90% of fishing vessels in Ghana are directly linked to Chinese beneficial owners.26

These fleets are owned by a combination of private companies, individuals and PRC linked shareholders. The PRC has at times looked to separate themselves from the fishing fleets performing IUU fishing because of the damage it brings upon the PRC’s international image. This first occurred when overfishing from Chinese fleets in places like the South China Sea was met with international outrage over the destruction of coral reefs. PRC ministers spoke out against these injustices and enacted legislation such as an extensive registry of IUU practices which was to be used to punish Chinese fishing boats.27 Offenders of the IUU registry were to be put on a vessel blacklist, which holds sweeping consequences. Blacklisted vessels according to the registry are not allowed to dock into any Chinese harbor, ship captains lose their captain’s license for five years and the managers of the company owning the fleets are stripped of their managerial role for three years. The PRC also provided this blacklist to insurance companies, creditors, and other industries that support the vessels so that they will likely be less willing to work with high-risk businesses such as those on China’s blacklist.28

With the PRC increasing fishing regulations in their domestic waters, many of these Chinese fishing companies decided to disconnect from China and operate independently in foreign waters. In locations such as Africa, there were only 13 Chinese vessels in 1985. In 2013

there were a recorded 462 vessels. Many of these ships possess an extensive record of IUU infringements along with a membership on PRC fishing blacklist. These rogue fishing fleets have resulted in China being ranked as the worst IUU fishing offender in the world by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Crime. Despite many of these fleets being cut from PRC aid, the Chinese fleets IUU fishing practices have still managed to destroy much of the artisanal fishing communities in Ghana.

**Interview #1 with Hɛn Mpoano**

After interviewing fishermen and touring the Naval base, Chief Brown, his son, and I went to the NGO Hɛn Mpoano which seeks to create a world where inclusive and integrated management of coastal and marine ecosystems generate long-term benefits to nature and people. I found out about Hɛn Mpoano by simply messaging their Facebook page and was then connected to meet with Samuel-Richard Bogobley, the NGO’s Project Officer in charge of Fisheries. As previously mentioned, Samuel spoke of the use of formaldehyde on fish in addition to a dark trade that was occurring during saiko fishing practice. When the Ghanaian canoers were contacted to meet the Chinese out at sea to receive the smaller Herring fish that they would have thrown out, women were offered up as a bargaining piece. The Ghanaian women were transported on fishing canoes at night, and then brought onto the Chinese fleets to be prostituted out to the Chinese fishermen in exchange for the “saiko” fish.

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Interview with Mike Abaka-Edu

After meeting with Mr. Bogobley, we left Sekondi and went back into Chief Browns city of Takoradi. Once there, Mr. Bogobley of Hen Mpoano connected me with a fishing boat mechanic named Mike Abaka-Edu. Mr. Abaka-Edu is a member of the western region branch of the National Canoe Fisherman Council, which is an association representing the artisanal fishing community. Mr. Abaka-Edu is from the fishing village of Elmina where he spent his early years growing up helping the Ghanaian fishermen set up their canoes before they were to fish. He eventually went off to school to be an engineer to repair the motors on Ghanaian boats that used propellers. Since then, Mr. Abaka-Edu has been a vocal advocate for the artisanal fishing community.

Mr. Abaka-Edu explained the awareness he had brought to the Chinese IUU fishing through his advocacy program on the radio. Mr. Abaka-Edu has a program that is broadcasted every Tuesday on the radio where he speaks out against saiko and other dangers from the Chinese fishing ships. He not only represents the fishermen through his messages on the radio and regular appearances on TV but has been involved in awareness campaigns that have resulted in concrete fishing legislation. These campaigns have heavily reduced Chinese trawlers entering designated zones for artisanal fishermen.

Mr. Abaka-Edu said that due to their advocacy campaigns, saiko transferred at sea has ended but has sadly evolved into a new method. The Chinese fleets freeze the small fish at sea and then send the frozen ice pallets filled with saiko fish to the coast for their Ghanaian contacts in on the illegal trade to buy. The damage was still being done to fish stocks, but through a different method. He said they raised the alarm to the government, but the government did not believe the theory regarding the frozen fish. Subsequently some of his fishing activists would
hide and watch the frozen fish pallets come to the harbor. They would then buy the frozen fish and sift through the frozen pallets. They found that in these frozen pallets, 45% of the fish were the small pelagic kind of fish that the trawlers were banned from catching.

Mr. Abaka-Edu explained that when he returns to his childhood market of Elmina, he is heckled due to his advocacy on the radio and television. The Elmina fishermen were angry that Mr. Abaka-Edu was spoiling Chinese IUU fishing because it had made their life better. Although many are negatively affected by the residual effects of saiko, the larger quantities of fish getting caught from the Chinese created an influx of fish, lowering the price. The Ghanaians invested deeply in the Chinese fishing are doing so because it is incredibly hard to make money now as a fishermen. Without money from fishing, Mr. Abaka-Edu explained that communities experience an increase in thefts and prostitution. It has been a survival of the fittest for Ghanaian fishermen with many subsequently partnering with the Chinese.

After a long day of interviewing, and dialoguing with those affected by the Chinese trawlers, Chief Brown, his son, and I returned to their house. I had bought some tuna from the fish market earlier in the day, and Chief Browns wife served it to us in a curry. I ended the night preparing to return to Accra in the morning.

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In the morning I said goodbye to Chief Brown and his family and returned to Accra on a bus. On my return to Accra, I looked out the window and saw Hen Mpoano produced billboards set up all along the roads, warning of the effects of saiko and IUU fishing. All along the coast, I could see fishing communities crafting canoes, with fishermen no doubt filled with stories like the ones I had recorded the day before. Additionally, I saw several Chinese mining companies. In
addition to the fishing sector, the mining sector has seen a large presence of Chinese miners conduct illegal activities causing international outrage.

Once back in Accra, I met a colleague of Professor Kobo, Professor Hanretta who was temporarily staying in his house. Professor Hanretta was performing field research and hearing his wisdom on how to conduct field research was priceless.

**Interview #2 with Hɛn Mpoano**

I then met with the director of Hɛn Mpoano Kofi Agbogah at his office in Accra. Kofi explained that in the last several years, there has been increasing attention internationally about IUU fishing practices in Ghana and that he was happy that awareness regarding the subject was being spread throughout the world to people like me. Kofi had seconded Mr. Abaka-Edu’s sentiments about the effect of saiko on the economy in a separate interview when he said that “Saiko is sucking the heart out of Ghana’s fisheries. The incomes of small-scale fishers have dropped by as much as 40% in the last 10 to 15 years, and Ghana is now forced to import more than half of fish consumed. Trans-shipments of fish at sea are notoriously difficult to monitor, even with the most advanced systems in place. Instead, all catches should be landed in authorized ports and recorded in official statistics.”

These specially built “saiko canoes” that take the fish from the trawlers back to ports carry 450 times the average catch of traditional fishing canoes and are operated by only a few individuals according to a report from the London based Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF). The report calculates that while canoe fishing offers direct employment for around 60

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fishers for every 100 tons of fish, the saiko practice produces only 1.5 jobs per 100 tons – 40 times less.\textsuperscript{31} In a joint study from EJF and Hen Mpoano it was found that an estimated 100,000 tons of “saiko” fish were caught in 2017 alone and then sold back to local communities for around $50 million. Not only is this practice incredibly lucrative for the private Chinese fishing fleets but they are also extracting millions of dollars from the local economy.\textsuperscript{32,33}

I ended the day in Accra with Professor Kobo’s cousin, and prepared to go to Jamestown, the location of the new Chinese harbor in the morning.

\textbf{3/18/2022}

\textbf{Jamestown}

In the morning I went to the Jamestown community of Ga Mashie to learn more about the new Chinese harbor in construction. I was met by someone offering a tour of the Jamestown slave castle. I said I’d go on the tour if he guided me through the Ga Mashie fishing community. The slave castle, adjacent light house and Ga Mashie fishing community have historically been some of the biggest tourist attractions in the capital city of Accra. Once in the slave castle, one could hear construction occurring. Peering one’s head out from the castle window, one could see a Chinese man directing a team of 5 or 6 Ghanaian men in construction outfits, and a building in construction with the “China aid for shared future” logo plastered on its side. The “China aid for shared future” logo first started appearing on PRC infrastructure projects at the beginning of 2020, with the PRC stating that the logo was meant to demonstrate “China’s foreign aid concept,\textsuperscript{34,35}


\textsuperscript{32} Eric Olander, “China’s Distant...”

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{How is China Feeding its Population of 1.4 Billion ...}.\url{https://chinapower.csis.org/china-food-security/}
publicize the effectiveness of its foreign aid work, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.”

The Ga Mashie community however has not experienced what the logo claims to promise. As a result of the construction the old Jamestown fishing community was destroyed to make room for the harbor. The historic fishing grounds that had once sprouted out from the base of the slave castle now host a concrete jungle of construction equipment. The construction site was placed directly on the beach location where the community had built their houses and stored their canoes, forcing the Ga Mashie community to move further down the beach with many of the residents claiming that they were given little warning before bulldozers razed the area. “I have four children, and we live here with my husband,” a local resident named Adoko told Agence France-Presse (AFP). “Now that they have demolished our building, when it rains, I have to go to another person’s room, and they can’t ask me to leave. Why do they come to demolish this place when they are not ready to develop this place? Now we’re all sleeping in the same room.”

The Ga Mashie residents live in anguish as they have not been told if they will be able to move back to the location of their historic fishing grounds, or if their cramped temporary relocation spot will become permanent.

In addition to the destruction of the fishing ground, a school, playground, and soccer field were destroyed. Not only has the PRC construction project destroyed key communal locations, but the Ga Mashie people feel that the Chinese have not involved the community in the creation of the harbor. “I need a job over here,” a local resident named Ismaila told AFP. “The youth here, they need a job. Find ways and means to train them. If you don’t do so, do you know what

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is going to happen after this project is done? The Chinese, they will bring their people to come and work here. So where is the benefit?” People saw Chinese managers being flown into Ghana to order Ghanaians around and were dumbfounded as to why talent for the project was not being grown organically.

After touring the Jamestown slave castle, the guide led me through the relocated Ga Mashie beach community. There I could see women smoking and drying fish, and men repairing their canoes. I paid one of the fishermen to take me out to sea on a canoe to get a feel of what it was like. After returning to shore, the communities’ sentiments about the construction project were clear. This project not only relocated the community, destroyed their community, didn’t provide jobs, but it would also create a boom of trawlers able to dock in the new Jamestown harbor that would surely further hurt the Ga Mashie community. As the canoes docked their canoes on the beach, the harbor would be most beneficial to trawlers.

After spending the day with members of the Jamestown fishing community, I met with members from The Afro-Sino Centre of International Relations (ASCIR) which looks to bring awareness, consultancy, and a P.R. platform for Afro-Sino matters. I was connected with ASCIR by Mr. Olander, and founder Pamela Carslake had been incredibly helpful in matters related to my project. In my meeting with ASCIR, I expressed some of my findings in relation to the damage to fishing communities to the other founder of ASCIR named Arhin Acheampong. I added that I wanted to learn more about how the Ghanaian government has responded to the trawlers, and Arhin subsequently connected me with a captain in the Navy who could help me further in my inquiry.
The next morning, I went to the Kpone-Katamanso fishing community outside of Tema, about a 1-hour drive from Accra. To get the fishing community, I rode past the Accra-Tema Beach Road Expansion Project which is a PRC funded operation engineered by the China Ganzu International Corporation for Economic and Technical Cooperation (CGICETC). The 16-kilometre project expected to be completed April 2023 costs around $100 million and will serve as a pipeline for transportation from the capital of Accra to its largest port and harbor in the country in the city of Tema. This highway was covered with Chinese managers and Ghanaian laborers and highlights the PRC’s involvement in Ghanaian infrastructure.

Once at Kpone-Katamanso I met with Pamela from ASCIR, and her friend who spoke the local language of Ga was to mediate an interview session, translating and relaying questions I had for the fishermen. The fishermen we interviewed said that they were no longer able to catch fish during their peak season. Subsequently his child was no longer able to go to school, because without the fishing profits, he is unable to pay for school supplies. He said that before the Chinese trawlers, the fishing canoes were able to catch 100 crates of fishes a day, but now the trawlers engaged in light fishing have hindered almost all of those catches. He seconded the notion that the saiko process has changed from canoes receiving the fish at sea, to instead the Chinese freezing them and selling them on shore.

The community in general expressed that the Chinese trawlers were the biggest harm to their community. While driving away from the fishing community, I passed the Sunon Asogli Thermal Power Station. The natural gas-fired thermal power station covered in Chinese caricatures and fully owned by the PRC, is the first Independent Power Producer (IPP) in Ghana. The foreign owned power station was like the Turkish electricity ship docked at the Sekondi
naval harbor, but instead had a large permanent campus fit with many apartments and facilities. Unlike the harbor construction in Jamestown, the Sunon Asogli Power Station felt a corporate social responsibility to engage the young people in the community. A large state of the art astro turf soccer field was built by Sunon Asogli and was filled with Ghanaian youth running soccer drills and performing scrimmages. In addition to the construction of a soccer field, Sunon Asogli rebuilt 4-kilometers of concrete roads crucial for the community and made various donations to the Kpone Police and Fire Service.

Not only has Sunon Asogli looked to rebuild the Kpone-Katamanso community through construction projects, but it supported the community deal with Covid-19 by donating facemasks, sanitizers, disinfectants, along with other medical items. General Manager of Sunon Asogli Power, Jin Zhengyi said that “As the covid-19 pandemic has taught us, our health is extremely important and access to quality health care is essential to one’s livelihood,”

In addition to Covid medical relief on the Kpone Polyclinic’s 25th anniversary Sunon Asogli made substantial donations of medical equipment. The medical equipment included mechanisms such as a Chemistry Analyzer which is used to analyze concentration of various substances of a sample and a Sysmex Hematology Analyzer used to analyze blood samples. This equipment is crucial for treating patients with diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, and obesity. The Public Relations Officer of Sunon Asogli, Khadija Torbay Lartey said the donation of chemistry and hematological analyzers follows a request by the health facility. “This community is quite big, so if you do not have such important equipment how you can handle situations that come your way. So we took the opportunity to purchase the equipment for them”, she explained.

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The municipal Health Director for Kpone-Katamanso, Dr. Esther Biamah-Danquah was grateful for Sunon Asogli’s support and shared how the Kpone Polyclinic is 25 years old but had not been properly equipped. He explained that the only hematological analyzer the polyclinic possessed had served for a decade and subsequently had constant breakdowns. As a result, the polyclinic was forced to turn away patients needing their blood analyzed, who would then have to go to a neighboring hospital to get the results. Municipal Chief Executive, Samuel Okoe Amanquah said the equipment will improve services being offered to patients and bring Sunon Asogli much closer to the community.

It is clear to see that the Sunon Asogli Power Station has looked to create a sustainable community through communal construction projects, and donations to key sectors like the Police, Fire Service, and hospitals. The PRC owned Sunon Asogli has also looked to uplift Ghanaians into the company like their Public Relations Officer Khadija Torbay Lartey. Sunon Asogli has had such a significant influence on the Kpone community that the highest tribal Chief of Kpone-Katamanso Nii Tetteh Otu II expressed his gratitude with the company’s gestures and applauded the direction set for the polyclinic by the power station.

I ended the night back in Accra and ate at Palace Chinese Restaurant Dzorwulu, a Chinese restaurant nearby Professor Kobo’s house. By far the best Chinese food I had ever tasted.

3/20/22

This day was a recoup day. With all the interviews and running around, I needed a day to relax. Additionally, I received my acceptance letter into graduate school, which was a pleasant surprise. I ended the night preparing to go to Tema harbor the next day.
The next day I went along the PRC funded Accra-Tema Beach Road Expansion Project once again, but instead of going to the Kpone community I went to the Tema harbor which hosts the largest concentration of Chinese trawlers in Ghana. A coworker of mine back in America had a brother named Eric that worked at the Tema port, who could show me around Tema. Because Eric worked at the Tema harbor, I had the opportunity to bypass the harbor's security, and directly interact with people on the harbor under his supervision. Upon meeting Eric outside the harbor, I was given the appropriate credentials to enter. Eric not only worked at the adjacent Tema shipping port but he had a side business running a delivery business. The products with which his company delivered were made in China and had only Chinese instructions explaining them. As a result, most Ghanaians did not even understand what was on the product without an accompanied English manual. This was yet another example of the considerable influence that China holds in Ghana.

Once Eric and I made it through security and into the harbor, we could see massive decrepit ships with Chinese caricatures plastered on the hulls. These Chinese ships were the trawlers that I had been waiting to see. Looking around on the dock, there were many Ghanaian teenagers working as deckhands. As a result of the lack of employment opportunities in the artisanal fishing community, many of the youth from places like Kpone-Katamanso had joined staffing agencies with which the Chinese trawlers would subcontract jobs to. In those contracted jobs, the youth that would have previously only been in contact with those within their fishing community, were now in daily contact with the inner-city youth of Tema. I was told that these inner-city coworkers introduce the youth originally fishing communities to drinks like
Ataya, that gives them endurance to do the jobs for the Chinese. The Ataya drink is a controversial stimulant tea that when abused gives a drug like effect. Eric and I saw some Ghanaian dockworkers on the side playing card games, so we decided to join them. When I asked one of the workers about the Chinese trawlers, all had nothing but good to say about the Chinese. This is not surprising, because just like in Elmina, the uncontrollable surge of fish being caught benefits those who aid these trawlers. They said that working under the Chinese management style on the trawlers was tough, but that they overall enjoyed working for the Chinese.

At the harbor there was a post for a government worker to board the Chinese trawlers when they returned from the sea, and search through the trawler to make sure that no frozen fish were being unloaded. Although a guard was supposed to be searching the trawler, after watching one of the trawlers unload the boxed fish that had been frozen while at sea, the guard instead was sitting at the post nonchalantly. Once these frozen fish were unloaded out onto the harbor, some of the boxes were transported into unmarked cars, or vans. These vans would then go off to sell the frozen fish potentially with small illegal fish included to markets or specific clients, while the other fish would be sold at the nearby harbor market.

After conversing with the dockworkers for several hours, Eric and I drove around Tema to see some of the cultural sway of the Chinese. Tema is thought of as being the Chinese hotspot in Ghana, due to the high amount of Chinese infrastructure projects and businesses. There were multiple Chinese casinos in the area, with which the dockworkers had said the Chinese would often go to. The Chinese would spend a week or so at sea on the trawlers, and then splurge the money they earned at the casinos. Additionally, a multitude of Chinese restaurants, car dealerships, construction equipment outfitters as well as a plethora of other Chinese businesses
were found all around Tema. I even got a Chinese version of my favorite soccer team A.C. Milan’s jersey.

After a long day conversing with dockworkers, learning the sentiments about the Chinese and seeing much of the cultural pull of the Chinese in Tema, I returned to Accra and finished my night off with some more of the best Chinese food at Palace Chinese Restaurant Dzorwulu. After eating at the restaurant several times, I befriended one of the servers. I asked her what it was like working at the restaurant and she expressed some of her problems with the Chinese in Ghana. It was clear that China’s involvement in Ghana was a topic that Ghanaians were wrestling through.

3/22/2022

On my last day in Ghana, I was connected by Arhin Acheampong from ASCIR to an off the record conversation with a captain in the Ghanaian Navy. The captain had extensive knowledge of illegal maritime practices conducted in Ghana, so he was an ideal person to converse with about the Navy’s responses to the Chinese trawlers. It should be noted that the Navy and the Ghana Police Marine Unit are two separate entities. The captain explained that the Ghanaian marine police’s jurisdiction was up to 12 nautical miles from the coastline, while beyond 12 nautical miles the Navy took responsibility. The Ghana Police Marine Unit has existed as far back as 1916, however it disbanded in 1942 and was reinaugurated in June 2013. It consists of 60 mariners, with their command post being in Tema and headquarters in Takoradi.

The captain explained that the major players in Ghanaian fishing are the Japanese, Korean, and Chinese. The Japanese primarily fished far from the coast due to their cultures heavy interest in tuna and subsequently were in the jurisdiction of the Navy more often. I asked
the captain about the legitimacy of a story I had heard from a dockworker about the Chinese trawlers. The dockworker claimed that the Chinese trawlers that had been effectively banned from Ghana would stay out 12 miles from the coast as to not get caught by the Ghana Police Marine Unit. Ghanaian motorboats would then meet the Chinese trawlers deep at sea and refuel them. The dockworker warned however that transferring the fuel was an incredibly dangerous endeavor as the Chinese held the Ghanaians under gunpoint. The dockworkers story along with the sentiments of many Ghanaians I had met around the Chinese had portrayed the Chinese trawlers as pirates. The captain dispelled this story and stated that for his job he boarded an assortment of fleets originating from a multitude of countries and was to make sure that the fleets paperwork was in sorts and that their equipment followed Ghanaian regulations. Never had the captain ever seen guns present on the fleets. Just as tall tales had occurred about the trawlers, so too had there been about the PRC. The PRC has not been completely apprehensive about the damage from trawlers and has even donated four patrol boats to the Ghanaian Navy.37

There has been plenty of tall tales and false information slated towards the Chinese trawlers, as well as incorrect sentiments that the PRC has no care for the Ghanaian fishing community, however it is blatantly apparent that Chinese trawlers have inflicted tremendous harm upon the Ghanian fishing communities.

I said goodbye to the captain and the rest of my newly made friends in Ghana and headed to the airport to fly back to America after a productive spring break in Ghana.

Conclusion

The Jamestown harbor is where the PRC and Ghanaian infrastructures needs are met, and Ghanaian artisanal fishing community needs are ignored. Ever since Ghana’s independence in 1957, it has looked to improve their national infrastructure without the aid of their former colonial overlords. The PRC has looked to provide Ghana with the financing it seeks to obtain, however this financial support comes at the expense of the Ghanaian fishing industry in instances like the Jamestown harbor.

The Chinese control over the trawling industry dictates the future of coastal communities in Ghana. It has been clear throughout my interviews that these trawlers have inflicted great damage to the Ghanaian artisanal fishing community. These trawlers have not only destroyed fishing ecosystems and put Ghanaian fishermen out of work due to the saiko trade, but the economic effects have destroyed communities and even led women into prostitution. The trawlers have avoided prosecution through the usage of front companies and corruption through connections to powerful people within Ghana. If one thing is to be clear, is that the expansion of Chinese trawlers in Ghana has left a trail of destruction for fishing communities.

The construction of the Jamestown harbor will only make the problem worse. The Jamestown harbor already has destroyed the Ga Mashie communities’ homes and communal gathering places and has not involved the community in the construction of the harbor. Furthermore, the harbor’s invitation of additional trawlers into the area promises a further depletion of fish. Although the Jamestown harbor has made many mistakes thus far, it has other PRC ventures such as the Sunon Asogli power plant as a reference to right their wrongs.

The PRC funded Sunon Asogli power plant in the Kpone community of Tema has been a source of innovation for the community through the construction of roads, soccer fields, and has even donated much needed medical supplies to local hospitals. The Sunon Asogli power plant
has played a tremendous role improving the Kpone community with which it has entered, without destroying the local economy that was in place before it arrived.

The PRC funded Jamestown harbor could make just as much of a positive impact for the Ga Mashie community. Simple acts such as building communal centers and donating supplies to local medical centers will go a long way to uplift the community. If the PRC is genuinely interested to “berth over 400 fishing vessels in the port”, it must use the blacklist along with all of its consequences that is uses back in China onto IUU fishing trawlers that dock in the Jamestown harbor. PRC representatives in Ghana must be in regular contact with fishing advocates like Mr. Abaka-Edu to get a better understanding of the problems that Ghanaian fishermen face due to Chinese trawlers. Finally, PRC representatives must work in tandem with both The Ghana Police Marine Unit and Navy to maintain maritime law and end IUU practices at sea.

The PRC support for the Jamestown harbor may result in the projects speedy completion, however it will undoubtedly further destroy Ghana's own fishing economy in the process. The Jamestown harbor can be a turning point for the PRC allowing it to “publicize the effectiveness of its foreign aid work and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.” found in the design of its “China aid for shared future” logo. Finally Ghana must reflect upon the negative effects of PRC investment and seek to prioritize Ghanaian communities’ livelihood over the speedy construction of infrastructure project during its financing negotiations with the PRC.