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**CHINESE MEDIA, KENYAN
LIVES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC
INQUIRY INTO CCTV AFRICA'S
HEAD OFFICES**



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Abstract

Since the launch of CCTV Africa in 2012, many academics from various disciplines have taken an interest in the role and impact of the Chinese state-run media outlet. Building on this scholarship, this paper develops a fresh approach to examining Chinese investment in Kenya's communications sector. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2016, the author examines how Kenyan, Chinese, and other international media professionals navigate the everyday production of media at CCTV Africa's head offices in Nairobi, Kenya. This working paper provides (1) an overview of existing literature on the topic of CCTV Africa and (2) a portrait of the multifaceted experiences of CCTV Africa staff, including their narratives of joining CCTV, producing news content, navigating relationships with managerial staff, and planning for the future. Ultimately, the author finds that feedback from CCTV Africa's staff are mixed. While CCTV Africa's employees are, on average, satisfied with CCTV Africa's work environment and conditions, problematic areas regarding safety, interpersonal relationships, and training deserve further consideration and investigation.

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1. Introduction

Since the launch of CCTV (China Central Television) Africa in 2012, many academics from various disciplines have taken an interest in the role and impact of the Chinese state-run media outlet. Building on this scholarship, this paper develops a fresh approach to examining Chinese investment in Kenya's communications sector. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2016, I examine how Kenyan, Chinese, and other international media professionals navigate the everyday production of media at CCTV Africa's head offices in Nairobi, Kenya. This working paper provides (1) an overview of existing literature on the topic of CCTV Africa and (2) a portrait of the multifaceted experiences of CCTV Africa staff, including their narratives of joining CCTV, producing news content, navigating relationships with managerial staff, and planning for the future. Ultimately, I find that feedback from CCTV Africa's staff are mixed. While CCTV Africa's employees are, on average, satisfied with CCTV Africa's work environment and conditions, problematic areas regarding safety, interpersonal relationships, and training deserve further consideration and investigation.

2. Existing Literature and Key Debates

Since 2012, nearly fifteen studies have been conducted on the topic of CCTV Africa, the main focus of this research project. However, this literature was not the first to examine Chinese state media in Africa. Beginning in 2009, academics, mainly from media studies, began to investigate Chinese radio and text-based media. These articles address the history of Chinese media interventions in Africa, Chinese media interventions on a global scale, the spread of Xinhua News Agency bureaus throughout Africa, and the influence of Xinhua, China Daily newspaper, and China Radio International (CRI) on Africa's media markets.¹ Furthermore, this literature examines Chinese media from the perspective of Chinese soft power and diplomacy.² It also participates in discussions regarding the global geopolitical role of media and meta-level attention to the study of Chinese media, especially with regard to political economy and cultural studies approaches.³ The key debates that surface in these earlier articles about Chinese media interventions in Africa concentrate on the relationship between media and control, tensions between the concept of "media imperialism" and the actual presence of diversified international news flows, and ways of critically conceptualizing the role of Chinese media within Africa's mediascape.⁴

Key debates among the literature that focuses on CCTV Africa are diverse. The main debates circulate around the impact of Chinese media policies on media outlets throughout the world, the relationship between media and geopolitical influence, the actual material impacts of Chinese investment in African media markets, and the relationship between Chinese media narratives and alternative imaginaries of China as conceived by audiences or other media outlets.⁵ These studies can be grouped into a handful of disciplines and themes. The two main disciplines to which the authors belong are media studies and international relations.⁶ The content of the articles can be further grouped into themes, which can be broadly categorized

under the study of Chinese soft power and diplomacy; material impacts of Chinese media investments in Africa; CCTV media content; audience responses to CCTV Africa's programming; and East African perspectives on CCTV Africa.⁷

3. Research Question(s) and Methodology

This research project joins previous research on Chinese media intervention that investigates the actual material impacts of Chinese involvement in Africa's media markets. However, the research diverges from previous inquiries in its attention to the material impacts on people rather than on markets. It is surprising that scant attention has been given to workplace dynamics within CCTV Africa and the other Chinese state media outlets Xinhua, China Daily, and CRI by academics. One potential reason for this is that, as mentioned above, the lion's share of research on this topic has been conducted by scholars within the fields of international relations and media studies. Other writing on the topic has been conducted by think tanks and has maintained a focus on the geopolitical intentions of the Chinese state with regard to media interventions in African markets.⁸

Without discounting the value of previous research on this topic, this project fills in a large lacuna within the literature on Chinese media development in China and also contributes to literature that has examined the social relations between African and Chinese social actors in other sectors, such as copper mining, wholesale trade, and small-scale business.⁹ Additionally, the project contributes to the academic community's only very nascent understanding of how and to what extent Chinese state investment is impacting Kenya's media landscapes. The overarching goal of this research is to deepen the emerging understanding in anthropology of how the expansion of Chinese media in Africa is potentially transforming local lives and industries, as well as cultural landscapes, in the context of a rapidly evolving transnational economy.

This project joins genealogies of literature on the anthropology of media in Africa and the anthropology of journalists more broadly.¹⁰ Anthropological attention to journalists and other media professionals has only recently begun to take shape. The texts that serve as inspirations for this current project are Zeynep Gursel's *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of Digital Circulation* (2016); Amahl Bishara's *Back Stories: U.S. News Production and Palestinian Politics* (2012); and Dominic Boyer and Ulf Hannerz's special issue of the journal *Ethnography*, "Worlds of Journalism" (2006). In the introduction to the latter issue, Boyer and Hannerz put forth four sets of research problems relating to the ethnography of journalism within the social sciences: (1) the involvement of media professions like journalism in processes of social mediation and cultural production more broadly; (2) the opportunity of reflexive social science to "study sideways" other professional groups through ethnography; (3) the contemporary transformation of institutions and practices of political communication, democracy and citizenship; and (4) the emergence of new modes of translocal social experience such as those experienced by mobile, cosmopolitan professional groups.¹¹

Attention to the behind-the-scenes operations of CCTV Africa took into consideration the above four research problems. Additionally, the concrete questions that this study asked are the following: What sorts of relationships exist between Chinese and non-Chinese media

professionals, as well as among non-Chinese professionals themselves? How are professional networks created? Are networks mapped along ethnic or kinship-based lines, particularly given the complex political tensions that shape relations among Kenya's indigenous groups, such as the Kikuyu, Luo, Kalenjin, and Luhya? What relationships are created outside of the workplace in the process of producing content? And, finally, contextualizing CCTV Africa within Kenya's larger media and professional landscapes, do the workplace practices within the Chinese state media outlet abide by Kenya's labor laws?

Ethnographic methods were crucial for this project, as they enabled me to compare what people said in formal interviews, mission statements, and broadcast policies to what they described in informal talk, where they were more likely to articulate tensions and other aspects of their work lives that could not be found on paper. Through interviews, participant observation, and general "deep hanging," I became familiar with the variety of relationships that exist at CCTV Africa. My methodology is described at greater length in the "Research Findings" section.

4. Chinese Involvement in Kenya's Communications Sector

Kenya is well-known as an international media hub and for its legacy of vibrant, critical reporting, as well as for its leadership in digital innovation from mobile money products, crowdsourcing software, and cloud-managed routers, to the expansion of its ICT infrastructure over the past decade. The country's media industry is one of the most vibrant in sub-Saharan Africa, growing at a rate of 16.3 percent per year since 2013.¹² A PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report estimated that Kenya's media industry would grow to three billion USD by the end of 2017.¹³ Kenya is a particularly relevant location for any research concerning China's impact on a communications sector within an African country. Over the past decade, Kenya's communications sector has undergone significant transformations as China has invested over 150 million dollars into the development of media bureaus and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure throughout the country.¹⁴ A recent World Bank report on China's economic relationship with Kenya stated that China's investments in oil-importing countries such as Kenya, specifically the types of investments that are being made, are largely overlooked in the policy literature on China's relationship with Africa.¹⁵ This report also found that China invests a sizable amount of money in Kenya's communications sector, coming in second only to the country's metals sector.

Chinese state media has been operating in Africa since the late 1950s. China's first Xinhua News Agency office opened in Cairo in 1958 and Radio Peking began transmitting to East Africa in 1967.¹⁶ However, Chinese state media's marked presence in Kenya did not begin until the early twenty-first century. In 2004, Xinhua established its Africa bureau headquarters in Nairobi.¹⁷ In 2006, CRI launched in Kenya. In 2009, the Chinese central government announced its expansion of overseas media operations on a large scale. That year, the central government set aside 45 billion yuan (approximately \$6.6 billion) in funds for the expansion of news outlets across the globe.¹⁸ One year later, CCTV opened its first Africa Bureau in Nairobi, with the intention of producing content about China for African viewers.¹⁹ CCTV News Programming Director Zhuang Dianjun described the bureau opening as "another step in strengthening diplomatic relations between China and African countries."²⁰ Three years later, in 2012, CCTV Africa launched in Nairobi, with plans to broadcast news from the entire African continent to

be aired on CCTV News. Initially, the plan was to produce one daily show from the CCTV Africa headquarters.²¹ Since then, CCTV Africa has expanded its programming to three daily shows and special programming featuring a talk show (“Talk Africa”), documentary program (“Faces of Africa”), and sports program (“Match Point”) on the weekends.²² In Kenya, CCTV Africa programming can be seen on the “CCTV News” channel through the satellite television services DStv (operated by MultiChoice, a public-private joint venture between the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and MultiChoice Africa Limited), Zuku (operated by the privately-owned South Africa-based Wananchi Group), and StarTimes (a privately-owned China-based media group).

The launch of CCTV Africa took place during a transitional moment in Kenya’s international and domestic media markets. This transition was marked by a decrease in the local presence of Western news outlets – such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Radio France International – long regarded with ambivalence because of their emphases on crises in the region.²³ Additionally, beginning in 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta’s Jubilee Coalition began to pass bills limiting journalists’ freedom of speech around any critique of the government, although these have been challenged in Kenya’s High Court.²⁴ These bills, according to a report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), have led to a situation in which Kenyan journalists are now vulnerable to “legal harassment, threats, or attack,” while news outlets are subject to manipulation by advertisers or politician-owners.²⁵

Although this project focused on the backend of media production, it is important to note the ways in which Chinese actors have participated in other areas of Kenya’s communications sector. Huawei, a Chinese multinational networking and telecommunications services company, has played a critical role in connecting Kenya’s computer and mobile phone users to the internet. In 2012, the company was awarded a six billion KSH (US\$71 million) contract to build a national fiber optic infrastructure to connect Nairobi with other key areas in the country.²⁶ The project was jointly funded by the Kenyan government and a concessional loan from the China Exim Bank and was scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2016, although it is still in progress.²⁷ The development of ICT infrastructure is foundational to the circulation of all media, including Chinese state-sponsored media, in Kenya. Kenya is the leader in internet usage in East Africa with approximately 74.2 percent of the population able to access Internet services.²⁸ However, due to a lack of infrastructure, internet connectivity is still limited in rural areas, though expanding mobile phone usage has greatly increased access to these regions. Kenya ranks in the top five of countries in Africa for mobile phone ownership, with 82 percent of the population owning a phone, according to a 2015 Pew report.²⁹ Mobile phones are one avenue for Kenyans to access news content. In 2014, 28 percent of Kenyan mobile phone owners used their phones to access political news.³⁰ These are significant figures. One decade ago, the entire African continent had a mere 500,000 internet subscribers out of a population of 780 million and in 1996 only eleven of Africa’s 54 countries had access to the internet.³¹

As it can be seen, much is already known about China’s investments and activity in Kenya’s communications sector. However, little is known about the actual working environments of Chinese media outlets. Critical to this project is the deeper examination into the 2016 World Bank report’s finding that “78 percent of full-time and 95 percent of part-time employees in Chinese companies are locals.”³² Even more relevant to this project, the authors found that Chinese employers in Kenya created the greatest number of jobs in the communications sector, amounting to a total of 931 jobs.³³ When CCTV announced the launch of CCTV Africa,

they reported the hire of approximately one hundred employees from various backgrounds, the majority of which were Kenyan citizens.³⁴ Indeed, the establishment of CCTV Africa involved the extensive hiring of many of Kenya's top reporters, editors, camera personnel, and technical operators, as well as international correspondents from South Africa, Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Senegal.³⁵ Only minimal research about these dynamics can be done offsite. Onsite research is necessary to determine how many local employees CCTV Africa currently employs. An online investigation on CCTV Africa's website and the business-oriented social networking site LinkedIn shows that at least twenty of CCTV Africa's media personnel hail from Africa and fulfill the roles of anchor, broadcast journalist, correspondent, editor, and studio operator. My fieldwork in CCTV Africa's offices showed that the number of local employees is far higher than these sites indicate (see below).

Training is another key area to explore with regard to Chinese-run workplaces in Kenya. Over the past decade, Chinese employers in Africa have been accused of evading the transfer of technical knowledge to local employees. Refuting this myth, the authors of the 2016 World Bank report stated that 60 percent of Chinese companies offer formal training programs on skills, safety, and hygiene for local staff, compared with the statistic that 64 percent of all foreign firms in Kenya offer formal training.³⁶ The authors further state that training is more likely in the manufacturing sector and state enterprises. This research project investigates the incoming skill levels of CCTV Africa's local and international staff and the nature of CCTV's technical training, which occurs two times a year. Furthermore, I examine whether this training is considered useful and/or beneficial to the participants involved.

5. Research Findings

Accessing CCTV Africa

In May 2016, I received official permission to conduct research between June and August 2016 at CCTV Africa in Nairobi, Kenya from the outlet's deputy director. During this period, I made eight visits to CCTV Africa's head offices, interviewed eleven of the media outlet's employees using a questionnaire (Appendix 1), and spoke informally with many others. On one occasion, I accompanied one of CCTV Africa's reporters and a cameraman as they conducted interviews for a news segment. The news department supervisor was my primary point of contact. Each entry to the headquarters required permission from the deputy director. The following sections detail my research findings from my two months' of visits and interactions at CCTV Africa.

CCTV Africa's Head Offices

CCTV Africa is located in the Kilimani neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya, in a building called the K-Rep Centre. CCTV Africa occupies two floors of the Centre and part of a third, sharing the building space with organizations and agencies such as Human Rights Watch and USAID and companies such as the China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC), a Chinese state-owned enterprise most recently tasked with building the infrastructure for Egypt's new administrative capital east of Cairo.³⁷ CCTV Africa is housed on the third floor

and the fifth floor, with a canteen on the second floor. The third floor comprises two spaces designated for CCTV Africa's offices: the first space features the main reception desk (Figure 1), reception area, and offices for the outlet's directors, who are all Chinese. The second area features a large office with an open plan layout for the news department and desk editors, a glass-paneled conference room, and two backrooms, one for camera equipment and another for senior Chinese staff. On the fifth floor of the K-Rep Centre, CCTV Africa occupies another two spaces. One houses editors, graphic designers, and archivists. The second space features a reception area for studio guests, a small technician room, production control room (Figure 2), production studio, and broadcast equipment room. During the times I visited CCTV Africa, I spent time on both the third and fifth floors, where I observed everyday interactions, sat in on meetings, interviewed employees, and viewed live broadcasts.

My research into CCTV Africa's organizational structure was limited by the fact that Chinese managers would not grant me official interviews. My data regarding the organizational structure of CCTV Africa was gleaned from interviews and informal conversations. CCTV Africa is composed of multiple departments. The eleven interviewees worked in the news, business news, and broadcast departments. I found that the employee makeup of each of the

Figure 1: The main reception desk at CCTV Africa



Figure 2: CCTV Africa's production control room



departments was predominantly Kenyan and, to a much lesser extent, non-Chinese. However, per CCTV Africa's policy, department supervisors were ubiquitously Chinese nationals. Above each department head is the deputy managing editor, and above him the managing editor. A colleague of mine who has also conducted research at CCTV Africa informed me that several people in management were also members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, I was not privy to this information in my formal or informal interviews. I cannot provide an exact count of how many people CCTV Africa employs. However, a desk editor informed me that on a given day, there were approximately 50 employees on site. Because of the schedule under which most of the employees work, in which people are on four days, off three days, it is likely that CCTV Africa employs at least 100 employees in its head office, not counting the correspondents that are based throughout the African continent in Abuja, Cairo, Johannesburg, Lagos, and Mogadishu.

The Eleven Interviewees: Personal Backgrounds and Roles at CCTV Africa

The CCTV Africa staff is composed of employees from a diverse set of backgrounds. Through interactions and interviews, I discovered that the CCTV Africa staff is mainly consisted of Chinese and Kenyan nationals, with Kenyans holding the majority of the positions. Other members of CCTV Africa's in-house staff hail from South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. My set of eleven interviewees included seven Kenyan nationals, two British nationals, one South African national, and one Chinese national. The Kenyan nationals whom I interviewed were from a diverse array of geographical locations, which ranged from peri-urban areas near Nairobi, to the coastal region of Mombasa, to the more rural areas of central and western Kenya. The interviewees' indigenous group affiliations, which can be a politically charged subject within Kenya, also ranged widely. Interviewees belonged to groups such as the Kikuyu, as well as smaller groups such as the Maasai. I will return to this topic below.

My interviewees represent a cross-section of the CCTV Africa head office. Because I intended to acquire a sense of the range of individuals and activities that go on within the headquarters, I interviewed Kenyan, Chinese, and other international members of the CCTV Africa staff. The majority of the Chinese staff with whom I spoke would not go on record and so their voices are not captured in this working paper. Only one Chinese national, a technician, sat down with me for an interview. Because the extant literature on CCTV Africa mainly examines the outlet's programming content or the creation of its content, I wanted to explore the CCTV Africa offices from a broader perspective. The job roles represented in this study comprise content producers (five), the broadcast team (four), and archivists (two). In order to protect the personal privacy of the interviewees at this fairly small organization, no names will be mentioned in my findings and genders may at times be switched.

Applying to CCTV Africa

In 2011, the year that CCTV Africa launched in Nairobi, David McKenzie, writing for CNN, stated that CCTV Africa was "poaching" Africa's most talented journalists from other outlets.³⁸ My research showed that this statement was not factually accurate. Of the Kenyan nationals I interviewed, only one person had been headhunted by CCTV Africa. Four had learned of

the openings through online advertisements and two through word of mouth. Of the non-Kenyan interviewees with whom I spoke, one was headhunted, one applied for the position after seeing an advertisement, and two had heard of openings through word of mouth. The majority of the staff who were hired began working on a full-time status immediately. However, three employees, all Kenyan, began their roles at CCTV as interns. After three-month trials, they were hired for full-time positions.

Reasons for moving to CCTV Africa from former positions varied. Three interviewees joined CCTV because they were offered more autonomy at proposing news content than at their former workplaces. Another joined because he knew that his workload would be more clear cut and he would be able to work less hours at a higher salary. The majority joined CCTV Africa because of the prestige associated with working for international (as opposed to domestic) outlets.

CCTV Africa's Employees: Education and Work History

Of the eleven people I interviewed, nine were brought up in families in which parents and siblings received or were planning to receive university degrees. However, all of my interviewees had received some form of tertiary education. Nine interviewees held degrees (awarded from a university), while two held diplomas (awarded from a technical school). Eight interviewees were educated in mass communication or journalism, one was trained in international studies, one in advertising, and one in engineering.

Prior to joining CCTV Africa, nine of the interviewees had experience working in media. Of the seven Kenyan nationals interviewed, six had experience working in Kenyan media outlets, including Kenya's leading television stations KTN (Kenya Television Network), NTV (Nation TV), and Citizen TV, as well as the newspapers Standard Express and Sun Weekly. Three out of four of the non-Kenyan staff interviewed also had experience working in domestic and international media, such as the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), France24, BBC, and CNN.

Working for CCTV Africa: Joining the Organization

Although interviewees expressed enthusiasm at having joined the organization, working for CCTV Africa was not without its own unique challenges for many of the non-Chinese interviewees with whom I spoke. "Cultural differences" were often cited as an initial hurdle to overcome within the workplace. These were mainly registered as differences in styles of interaction and expectations. A statement from one of the interviewees sums up this sentiment: "With us Africans, we are more interactive. We take quite some time with greetings, exchanging notes, all that. But later [I] came to learn that they [the Chinese] are very professional, it's about work and that is it. But it's a cultural difference." Interviewees also registered cultural difference positively. One interviewee stated, "At the end of the day, you're improving your efficiency levels. You don't spend too much time chatting, telling stories, forgetting what actually brought us here. That's about discipline."

The organizational structure of CCTV Africa also came up as both a positive and negative attribute of the media outlet. Three interviewees who had previously worked in local media stations found the environment to be much more organized, with more delineation between roles. However, two Kenyan nationals and two international non-Chinese interviewees believed that the organization had serious deficits that it needed to attend to. The issues presented included a lack of adequate provision of security safeguards for journalists traveling within the continent and an excessive amount of attention to hierarchies and bureaucratic procedure. One fieldwork experience stands out in this regard. The week I arrived, CCTV was trying to get one of the main reporters out to Mali to report on the Chinese UN Peacekeeper who had been killed in the northern region of the country. It took the team over a week to get her out to the field. As the reporter related to me, this was because it took time to receive a visa to the country. Other members of the CCTV team had a different take on the situation. While out in the field with a reporter, a British national, and a cameraman, a Kenyan national, I listened to a conversation between them about the lack of security checks taken in preparation for the reporter's trip to Mali. Both believed management didn't take the safety of their staff into consideration, the way other major international news outlets do. This experience was particularly interesting because it revealed the conflicting desires within the CCTV Africa team for expedience, on the one hand, and for more protection in the field, on the other.

One research question that this project sought to answer was the extent to which indigenous group affiliation within Kenya mattered in the CCTV Africa workplace. Ubiquitously, Kenyan interviewees felt that their affiliation did not impact their employment or treatment within the workplace. Conversely, respondents conveyed to me that they encountered favoritism surrounding ethnic identity while working for Kenyan media outlets. One respondent described this aspect of Kenya's media industry as "a problem." For instance, KTN, one of Kenya's leading domestic television stations, is considered a "Kalenjin" station because it is partially owned by a Kalenjin politician who used to work for former president Daniel Arap Moi.

Working for CCTV Africa: Producing News Content

As stated above, this research project was intentionally designed to include the voices of content and non-content producers. Of my eleven interviewees, five produced content for CCTV Africa's programs Africa Live!, an hour-long daily news program, Global Business Africa, a half-hour daily business news program, and Talk Africa, a thirty-minute weekly talk show covering current affairs. CCTV Africa's other programs are Match Point, an hour-long weekly program covering sports "from an African point of view," and Faces of Africa, an hour-long weekly documentary program on Africa-related topics.

The feedback I received from my interviewees was mixed. Out of the five content producers interviewed, three were Kenyan nationals and two were British nationals. Within the group, one person, a Kenyan national, expressed extreme satisfaction with regard to autonomy over creating content and the rest of the group expressed moderate satisfaction over their abilities to suggest and produce content for their respective programs. The interviewee who was the most enthusiastic listed "safeguards against issues of quality, balance, significance of news

stories, [and] journalistic input” as the reasons for why CCTV Africa was a good place to work as a journalist. Additionally, this editor took pride in being involved in and responsible for the decision-making process for his program. In his words, “You are involved all the way.”

The content producers who expressed moderate dissatisfaction with CCTV Africa’s style of producing content listed censorship over topics relating to China, emphasis on governments’ official state positions, and bureaucratic protocols as their reasons for frustration within the workplace. One editor was very pragmatic in her comments on these matters. She said that any news story involving a government has more “checks,” which was normal because CCTV Africa is a “state broadcaster.” However, she was still dissatisfied, as she had taken the job with the impression that she would produce “African news for African people.” The job was attractive, but, according to her, she “didn’t read the fine print.” At the end of the day, she stated, covering negative topics about China is like “biting the hand that feeds you.” Another content producer provided a concrete example of his experiences working at CCTV Africa, noting that “we’re not very nuanced of our coverage of China-specific issues.” The example he provided involved coverage of the South China Seas dispute and the story CCTV Africa had produced following the result of the UNCLOS arbitration between China and the Philippines. The final cut showed a reaction from Chinese President Xi Jinping, a sound bite from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and then two to three sound bites from African countries that supported China’s position. There was, in this content producer’s words, “nothing from The Hague, nothing explaining what the court of arbitration said, and nothing from the Philippines.” He added, “I’m not surprised, just pissed off. It violates everything that I’ve been taught.”

Working for CCTV Africa: Workplace Relationships - Supervisor and Supervisee

My visits to CCTV Africa and responses from my interviewees indicated that management at CCTV Africa promotes a sense of collegiality between supervisors and supervisees. Of all of the responses to my interview questions, the one which asked about superior-junior relationships yielded the most consistent answers. Ten out of eleven of the interviewees expressed satisfaction with their supervisors. One interviewee even cited his good relationship with his supervisors as the primary reason for staying at CCTV Africa for over four years. Another interviewee stated that his relationships with his supervisors are “professional, cordial, [and] open.” Another stated that the relationship is “quite relaxed,” adding that, “you don’t feel as if she [the supervisor] is superior and you’re inferior. It’s very leveled, it’s very professional.”

One interviewee shared that her conflicts between supervisors and supervisees occurred over content-related disagreements. She added that the spatial layout of CCTV Africa did not contribute to the sense of collegiality, noting that it did not make “any sense.” In this case, the interviewee was referring to exceptions in the open floor workspace, office space set aside for Chinese staff, who have private workspaces allocated to them on the third and fifth floors. I also found that tensions between supervisors and their juniors occur offsite. One camera person, a Kenyan national, related that working with Chinese-speaking reporters from CCTV’s Chinese-language outlet, located across the street from CCTV Africa, was “tricky” on both linguistic and cultural levels. According to him, the Chinese team never allows the Kenyan team to make decisions regarding hotels or restaurants when they go out in the field. “They always find the

Chinese food,” he said. The way this cameraman described it, the main issue was that the Chinese-speaking reporting team had a lack of desire to communicate and interact with the African crew. This feedback was echoed by another one of my interviewees, who expressed dissatisfaction at the ways in which transportation is arranged when teams go offsite. This person found that the CCTV Africa staff is grouped by nationality for transportation and therefore Chinese and non-Chinese staff ride in separate vehicles when they are in the field. In one instance, the interviewee was asked to arrange transportation for her and her non-Chinese colleagues, while her Chinese colleagues arranged their transportation needs separately.

Although I generally noticed a tone of collegiality within CCTV Africa’s head offices, I also observed that boundaries were created between Chinese-speaking and Kiswahili-speaking staff. English is the official language of CCTV Africa’s head office. However, it is common to hear Chinese and Kiswahili, Kenya’s national language, being spoken throughout the workspaces. Two of my interviewees took issue with this. One Kenyan national expressed that he disliked it when employees spoke any language other than English, as he thought that the practice was exclusionary. Another interviewee, who was not a Kenyan national and was a newer employee at CCTV Africa, saw linguistic exclusivity as prejudicial. Soon after joining the team, he “understood that from observation, there is a bit of a line between the Chinese and the black people.” He continued, “The Chinese keep to themselves and the black people also keep to themselves. It’s not really integrated. Coming from a society where a lot of races and cultures are integrated, you don’t really see that awkwardness...But there, there is that undertone, but it’s not an in your face kind of thing.” From his observations, he believed that Chinese nationals view Kenyan nationals as inferior. An example he gave was a simple greeting: “You’d find a Chinese person walk into the newsroom. They’re only going to greet the Chinese. If they’re going to need to speak to the black guy, then they will speak to them. But if it’s not need be, then they won’t.”

Working for CCTV Africa: Workplace Relationships – Friends and Social Networks

One of the goals of this research project was to determine the extent to which collegial relationships within CCTV Africa were producing social connections outside of the workplace. My research found that workplace relationships are, overall, not translating into close connections across nationalities. However, during my time in Nairobi, I did attend a social event held by a British national at which another British national and two Kenyan nationals attended.

My research showed that Kenyan nationals feel closest to other Kenyan colleagues, for stated cultural and network-related reasons. One interviewee, a Kenyan national, told me that he thought CCTV Africa had a good social atmosphere, even though he mainly socialized with people who work on his program. He stated, “the team is pretty social, because Nairobi has a social culture. African people mind about each other’s business.” Another cultural reason offered was that Africans pay attention to each other’s “well-being beyond work.” Three Kenyan interviewees mentioned knowing people through former work experiences. The non-Kenyan staff tended to have more cross-cultural friendships, but not with Chinese staff. One British national mentioned that she had more in common with expats and Kenyans. Another

British national cited the presence of non-Kenyan employees as a “point of tension” when he first began working at the position, but added that the tensions had subsided. My one Chinese interviewee stated that he is closest with one of his Chinese colleagues in the office, although he did enjoy having conversations in the office with two Kenyan nationals.

The majority of my interviewees stated that their closest friends are those who they grew up with, not people within the media industry. Two interviewees stated that they have cordial relationships with people at work, but keep their personal lives outside of the office.

Working for CCTV Africa: Professional Growth

Technically, CCTV Africa runs a biannual (twice a year) training in Beijing for CCTV Africa’s staff. However, only one of my interviewees out of the five people – all Kenyan nationals – who went to Beijing to receive the training, agreed that the training contributed to professional growth. The training is a 21-day trip that consists of a tour of the CCTV headquarters in Beijing and visits to key tourist sites such as the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, as well as other cities such as Yiwu and Shanghai. According to one interviewee who went on the trip, department-specific training is not a part of the 3-week long training, although it has been “in the plan” for five years. The point of the trip, according to another interviewee, is not to provide media-related training as much as to “help you gain familiarity and appreciation for Chinese history.”

Three of the five interviewees who went on the trip stated that they had learned about Chinese culture and ways of life, and found that learning about what “informs their [Chinese] attitudes” helped them understand management’s behavior within CCTV Africa. One example of this is that when Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited CCTV Africa, one Kenyan national interviewee found it strange that everyone had to dress up at the office and formally greet him, as this would not have been the protocol in Kenya. However, when he went to China, he found that his hosts had to greet them and usher them around. The practice in CCTV Africa began to make sense. However, although he understood the process, he did not agree with management imposing Chinese practices on a multicultural staff. Interviewees also had more vehement responses to the Chinese training. One person said that the training was “technically called a training, but we don’t actually learn anything...If I sent you to Western Kenya and made you run around, visiting companies, talking to the locals, then say ‘I have trained you’ – trained me in what?! CCTV has a very dismissive attitude toward training, especially the formal sort.” Another problematic feature of the training is that in order to participate, employees are asked to sign commitment forms stating that they will commit to working for the organization for an extra year if they go on the trip and that they would reimburse the cost of the training, around KSH 600,000 or US\$6,000 if they left sooner. One interviewee declined to sign the forms twice, and was eventually permitted to go on the trip without signing.

Through informal discussions and formal interviews, I learned that CCTV Africa has provided formal training for their employees. One interviewee stated that he was given a full-month of equipment training before he was permitted to become a full-time member of the production control room. One interviewee recalled an editorial training workshop held at the CCTV Africa office but run by CNN in early 2016, and right before I left Nairobi in late July of 2016, one of my

informants told me that there was a two-day long hostile environment training taking place at work. This was the second year that they had run the program. However, the interviewees who do seek avenues for formal professional growth expressed to me that they generally pursued this outside of the workplace. Two interviewees frequently attended media-related seminars and events within Nairobi.

Whether through formal or informal means, eight out of eleven interviewees stated that they had learned things during their time at CCTV Africa. Yet, learning skills on the job did not necessarily translate into feeling a sense of professional growth at CCTV Africa. Although the majority of my interviewees were satisfied with their positions, only two out of the eleven interviewees had been given a promotion at CCTV Africa during their tenure there. One interviewee, a British national, took issue with this, as she had been told during the interview process that there would be room for upward mobility. The denial of a promotion over the course of two years caused her to feel that she had been “oversold” during the interview process.

Beyond CCTV Africa: Plans for the Future

One of the most revealing findings of my research was that the majority of my interviewees had worked for CCTV Africa for over three years. The average length of time worked was 2.75 years and the median amount of time was four years, with the longest amount being 4.5 years (the lifetime of CCTV Africa thus far) and the shortest amount of time 0.08 years (around one month). Another telling revelation was that nine of my interviewees hoped to stay at CCTV Africa for an indefinite period of time. Three reasons given for wanting to stay on at CCTV Africa were that the job is “enriching” and “challenging,” and that the local media could not provide the types of opportunities and salaries that are offered at CCTV. The two interviewees who expressed that they wanted to move on from CCTV Africa were not Kenyan nationals. The reasons that they expressed for not wanting to stay on at CCTV Africa were that job growth within the organization did not meet expectations and that it was time for a new experience and challenge.

It is also critical to mention that, as with all organizations, employees have left CCTV Africa over the 4.5 years since the outlet’s launch. Interviewees expressed to me that former employees had left for different reasons, which included better positions at other international outlets or former domestic outlets, dissatisfaction with a position, or “cultural misunderstandings.” I was given the contact information for one former employee but was unable to reach him for an interview.

CCTV Africa: Meeting Kenyan Labor Standards?

Kenya’s labor standards are regulated by a number of legal sources, including the constitution, statutes and regulations, collective agreements, and individual labor contracts.³⁹ My fieldwork indicated several practices that deserve further investigation by experts in Kenyan labor standards and practices. First, CCTV Africa’s chain-of-command structure should be further examined to determine whether the organization’s policy of only placing Chinese nationals in

supervisory positions is legal according to the country's anti-discrimination policies.⁴⁰ Second, my research revealed that CCTV Africa's non-Chinese staff were treated differently than Chinese staff when they were in the field. Experts should investigate CCTV Africa's practices and ensure that the organization is abiding by Kenya's labor laws. Finally, formal and informal interviews indicated that CCTV Africa does not adequately implement safety protocols, especially for staff who travel offsite to insecure regions. Experts should look into CCTV Africa's protocols to determine whether they meet Kenya's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), which regulates legal standards for worker protection.

6. Conclusion

In one of my interviews with a Kenyan member of the CCTV Africa news team, I asked him whether he planned to stay on at CCTV Africa for the foreseeable future. He gave me the following response:

The problem right now is if you're – especially if you're a black African journalist – it's not like you have a multitude of opportunities out there. BBC is cutting down. Al Jazeera fired guys last year. So, in terms of international media, if your objective is to have something stable for at least five years, then your options are limited. At the same time, the local media industry is smack in the middle of some serious disruption. Nation Media has laid off everyone in radio, Standard Group has reported losses for the last five years, and Royal Media isn't really expanding.

This quote makes clear that CCTV Africa serves an important role in Nairobi's complex international and domestic media landscapes. For the nine seasoned media professionals I interviewed, CCTV Africa stands out as an international media outlet that hires more (or, at least, appears to hire more) black Africans than their competitors in the international market. As I detail above, CCTV Africa also provides a more organized and stable work environment than Kenya's domestic media houses. However, as this one interviewee conveys, CCTV Africa is not the dream choice for media workers aspiring to work in international markets. Rather, it is a stable choice for media professionals in Kenya. As this research has shown, media workers tolerate CCTV Africa's organizational flaws and interpersonal obstacles in order to pursue their careers as media professionals. If CCTV Africa begins to incorporate their staff's concerns regarding security protocols, interpersonal relationships, and professional training, then it is possible that the outlet will continue to retain employees for multiple years at a time.

APPENDIX 1: Interviewee Questionnaire

Name:

Job Title:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and went to school?
2. Can you tell me about your family background and what other members of your family do professionally?
3. How did you get into the media profession? What was your work experience before joining CCTV?
4. Who told you about the job at CCTV?
5. How long have you been working at CCTV?
6. What do you do on a daily basis at CCTV?
7. Who are your direct managers at CCTV? And what is your relationship like with the managerial team at CCTV?
8. What were your initial impressions when you began the job? Have those changed in the time since you began working for CCTV?
9. What did you think about China before you began working for CCTV? Has that changed?
10. Who do you feel closest to in the office? Are these people also your friends outside of the office?
11. What have you learned on the job? If you have learned new skills, how has this happened?
12. How does this job compare to what your friends and family are doing?
13. How long do you see yourself working here?
14. Do you have anything you want to share?

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