

Racist Persuasions: How Historical Formations of Chinese Identity Inform Contemporary Views of Africans

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The Project
The focus of this project is on assessing the 'strategic' economic relations made between these regional players – often imbuing the sentiment that Afro-Chinese interactions are a recent phenomenon. However, these approaches offer limited analysis of the extensive and webbed grounds of contemporary interactions. In this project, I examine historic interactions between Africans and Mainland China, paying particular attention to the perceptions of Africans. I juxtapose my findings with cases that convey the *de facto* realities of Africans in Mainland China today. It is my hope that this analysis offers a critical lens at understanding the identity politics that in part drive the emerging wave of Afro-Chinese partnerships and bring awareness to the complexity of these solidarities.

Findings

A primary determinant in the formation of Han identity is the perception of 'what it is not'. This method of comparison led to a tactic of 'othering' that was associating values to phenomena.

darker skinned people were reduced to solely being slaves and/or servants in China. The term would later evolve from being a broadly used term to explicitly referring to African peoples around the 14th Century. Beliefs of 'inherent' value determinable by skin colour remain in China today. The use of blackface in state sanctioned television programming, the continued production of colourist and racist soap advertisements as well as the exhibition of

continue to be portrayed as being barbaric, dirty and worthy of ridicule. As such, contemporary espousals of *de jure* brotherhood and solidarity amongst these regions whilst *de facto* remain intact beg the question of what Afro-Chinese relations will look like in the future.

The paper that culminated out of this research project was the fruit of extensive review and dissection of scholarly literature, interviews and media sources. These sources richly informed my understanding of the formation of Chinese Han identity, the history of Afro-Chinese interactions and helped me gain a pulse of the real