
Foreword - Malawi meets China: Thought systems and cultural exchange

Fei Xu

Guest Editor- University of Science and Technology of China (USTC)

Yamikani Ndasauka

Editor-In-Chief- University of Malawi (UNIMA)

A popular Chinese saying expresses what a great pleasure it is to have friends from both near and far. Even more valued are those friends from very far as that shows what a good standing one commands. Similarly, a Ugandan proverb extols the virtues of wide travel and the exposure it affords the one so disposed. In the words of another Igbo proverb, the world is like a dancing masquerade, if you want to see it properly you do not stand in just one place. Indeed, encounters among peoples of different regions and socio-cultural persuasions have been the feature of humanity since time immemorial lending credence to the postmodern cosmopolitan outlook that challenges all forms of an assumed autochthony that belie racism and crude conceptualisations of nationalism by positing that, unlike plants that have roots, humans have feet instead. The fear of the other is a generational case that has beguiled our existence since ancient times. The question that arises is: how do we meaningfully and productively encounter the other? The collaboration between Malawi and China is geared at each learning from the best of the other culturally, linguistically, politically, and economically. For Malawi or Africa and to co-exist with China, the two should strive for cooperation rather than competition or contest. Those that pretend to being complete would seek to lord it over others and the consequences of such attempts are invariably ultimately self-defeating. The greatest irony is that, pretensions to completeness and the consequent attempts to lord it over others are a sign not of civilisation but of its opposite, namely barbarism.

The collaboration between Malawi and China through the Confucius Institute started in 2016 with the aim of fostering precisely how a “meaningful incompleteness” would be engendered. As part of its efforts to achieve meaningful language and culture exchanges between Malawi and China, the Confucius Institute at the University of Malawi has undertaken to run Sino-Malawi Language and Culture Exchange conferences in order to use them to generate and share knowledge of each other’s language and cultural experiences. The papers you are about to read in this Special Issue of the *Journal of Humanities* are a product of two language and culture exchange conferences that the Institute has held so far. The first conference was in 2018 and the second one in 2020. The papers herein are a selection of papers from those two conferences, a full dossier can be obtained by request from the Institute’s archives. It is our hope that these efforts will stimulate debate and action on both sides of the Malawi-China divide with the hope to bridge the divide in the best mutually satisfactory way possible.