

A Survey of the African Diaspora in Guangzhou

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Abstract

The end of the Cold War has a number of implications for Africa's relationship with China. One such implication is the surge in human movement (i.e. migration) between Africa and China. During the 1990s, a relationship characterized by politics and diplomacy began to give way to another one characterized by economics and self-interest. While Africans, the majority of them self-sponsored migrants, began to travel to China looking for greener pastures, the Chinese under the auspices of the *zouquchu* programme began to travel to the continent searching for raw materials, investment niches and markets for manufactured goods. Prior to that decade, Africans, much like the Chinese were in Africa, were a rare sight and consequently an object of curiosity in China. The majority of the few Africans residing in China, like the majority of the few Chinese residing in Africa, were diplomats. The migrant numbers began to increase apace as a result of the migration that began during that first decade of the post-Cold War period. With regard to Africa, as a result of the migration, an African diaspora has emerged in China – in cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Yiwu. This paper, sourced with literature as well as fieldwork conducted in Guangzhou during 2014-2017, surveys the African diaspora in Guangzhou, where the largest concentration of African population in China is found. A synthesis of history and sociology consists the framework of study.

Keywords: *African diaspora, Chinese diaspora, Guangzhou, migration*

1. Introduction

Contact between geographical entities is mediated by factors such as migration, marriage, commerce, conflict and diplomacy. Migration is one of the factors mediating and fostering African-Chinese relationship. In fact, it was migration that laid the foundation for the relationship. For centuries, it was the most critical element in the relationship. Before the 1990s, it

was a neglected area of research. Its literature was scanty, receiving only a passing reference. The literature was also biased, copiously mentioning the presence of dark-skinned people in China but ignoring to mention Chinese presence in Africa. That was arguably because most, if not all of it was done by the Chinese. Teobaldo Filesi perhaps pioneered the effort to redress that imbalance in research when in 1972 he plucked migration from obscurity and neglect with his book *China and Africa in the Middle Ages*, which explores an aspect of the antiquity of China's contact with Africans. China's obtrusive return to the continent after the Cold War forced the world to reconsider their attitude towards Africa-China migration's literature. When was the initial contact between Africans and the Chinese? The answer is on the borderline, for while researchers seem to be substantially agreed about when the first wave of Chinese migration to Africa occurred, they may have been condemned to debate, for eternity, when the first wave of African migration to China occurred.

Chinese migration to the continent started in the seventeenth century. In 1660 the Dutch East India Company made its first shipment of Indonesian-Chinese convicts and company slaves to the Cape as a strategy to settle its staging post in that part of South Africa. According to Park (2012), some of those Chinese victims of human trafficking went back home, while others stayed back and gradually dissolved into South Africa's mixed-race population. The forced shipment of the Chinese to Africa continued during the next two centuries. In the 18th century, French, British and Danish companies shipped small numbers to Mauritius. Most of the shipments, however, came from Mainland China. In the 19th century, the French made an abortive attempt to ship Chinese labourers to Madagascar, to work on their railway projects in that island country. The British likewise shipped the Chinese to work on their fledgling diamond and gold mines in South Africa. Both the French and British schemed to use migrant shipment to corner the scramble for colonial possessions in those parts of Africa. For example, the French used its shipments to prevent the British gaining a foothold in Madagascar. The British likewise used their shipments to diversify the population of Afrikaner colonies. The British gambit backfired, instigating the enactment of anti-Chinese legislations in the Cape and Transvaal in 1902 and 1904 respectively. The Chinese indentured labourers (coolies), most of who came from the coastal regions of Fujian and Guangdong, as well as the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, formed the nucleus of the Chinese diaspora on the continent.

Chinese migration to the continent continued, although in trickles, until the Communists came to power in 1949. Due to the restrictions which the Communists imposed on migration (emigration and immigration) in Mainland China during the Mao era, the majority of Chinese migrants to

the continent had come from Taiwan (controlled by the Nationalists) and Hong Kong (which remained a British colony until 1997 when it reverted to Mainland China). Most migrants from those two regions (Hong Kong and Taiwan) headed to the British colonies such as Nigeria. During that era (with the exception of the 1966-1976 decade of the Cultural Revolution when the country shut itself off from the rest of the world, disallowing both emigration and immigration), Chinese migration to the continent embodied an imitation of America's Peace Corps, namely the technical aid experts who were sent to the continent to effectuate Mao's technical aid diplomacy. All those experts are believed to have returned home at the end of their mission. Unlike the current wave of migration which is being actuated by economics, the Mao-era wave was actuated by the politics and diplomacy of the Cold War era.

Unlike Chinese migration to Africa, African migration to China boasts antiquity, having begun in the 7 AD. As noted by Li Anshan (2015: 11), "Chinese scholars such as Zhang (1928, 1930), Xu Yongzhang (1984), Ai (1987), and Jing (1998) generally agree that [black] African people came to China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.)." This is not surprising given that that dynasty was the most open-minded of the Chinese dynasties. As noted by the famous Chinese historian Bai Shouyi (2002: 195),

At its height, the Tang empire developed extensive ties with many countries and regions in Asia, including Korea, Japan, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Arabia.... The growing domestic and foreign contacts made the Tang capital Chang'an not only the nation's leading city but a cosmopolitan city as well. People of the ethnic minorities in China as well as foreign emissaries, ecclesiastics and merchants came to Chang'an en masse, bringing with them exotic products, music, dance, acrobatics, customs and religions. Some of them got married and settled down in Chang'an.

Black Africans must have been among the foreigners who came to China during the Tang Dynasty. They were probably those dark-skinned people referred to as *Kunlun* and *Kunlun nu* in Chinese history. This assumption is without prejudice to the fact that scholars are still bitterly disputing the identity and conveyance of those dark-skinned foreigners. While Li Anshan (2015: 14) is ambivalent about their identity and conveyance, postulating that they were either Negroid from Africa or Negrito from Southeast Asia, scholars such as Zhang (1930), Ge (2001), Cheng (2002) and Liang Jingwen (2004) are definite about them. Zhang contends that the dark-skinned people were the slaves brought into China from Zanzibar by Arab merchants. (The Arabs had traded in black Africans long before the Atlantic slave began in the sixteenth century; and ancient China's contact with the Arabs through the Silk Road cannot be sidelined in the efforts to account for the presence of dark-skinned

people in ancient China). In contradistinction to Zhang (1930), Ge (2001), Cheng (2002) and Liang Jingwen (2004) contend that the dark-skinned people were Negrito (black-skinned people) from Southeast Asia. Wherever was their origin, “some of the *Kunlun* were part of foreigners’ annual tribute to Chinese authorities, some were left in China by foreign envoys, and were enslaved people sold to the coastal regions” (Li Anshan, 2015: 15).

Some *Kunlun nu* might have been slaves bought from the Arabs by those Chinese who traded with the Arab colonists in North Africa (see Yuan, 2006: 20). The tempo of the exportation of black Africans to China must have been reduced by the Atlantic slave trade. The first group of Africans to visit China as freeborn were those envoys from east Africa who accompanied Zheng He on the return journey from his fourth voyage to visit the Ming Dynasty during the 15th century (Wu, 2007: 41). According to Wu (2007: 41), He’s fifth and sixth voyages “were mainly to return those envoys.”

African migration to China in modern times began with the launch of Mao’s scholarship diplomacy. (Scholarship is an instrument of soft power diplomacy. As regards China’s ties with Africa, it has been in China’s diplomatic toolbox since 1956 when China gave scholarship to four Egyptians to study in China. Diplomacy scholarships have their hidden price tag: they seek to predispose beneficiaries, should they become policy makers in the future, to pursue policies that would indulge the foreign policy objectives of their benefactors). Following the establishment of diplomatic ties with Egypt in 1956 (Egypt was the first African country to establish diplomatic ties with China), China began not only to dispatch technical aid experts to the continent, but also to award scholarships to the continent. Being more discriminatory and businesslike than it is now, China offered its scholarships to mostly people from those countries with which it had established diplomatic ties. By the 1980s, it had offered about 3,081 scholarships (Peking University, 2005). There is no evidence that any of those Africans who studied in China during the Mao decades stayed behind after their education. The country’s prevailing political and economic conditions, coupled with the restrictions on both internal and international migration, must have discouraged foreigners from contemplating long-term residency in the country during those decades. Although, those technical aid experts who worked in Africa and those Africans who studied in China during those decades cannot be considered migrants because of their short stay in their host countries, they must be recognized for the role they have played in making migration an important element in Africa-China relations.

There have been two waves of African migration to China since the end of the Mao era. The first wave began during the 1980s and involved mostly those who terminated their journey in Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macau, having

been either deterred by the Mainland's stringent migration policy or enticed by prospects of economic breakthrough in those insular and coastal parts of the country. To some extent colonial history influenced the choice of destination. For example, most of those who terminated their journey in Macau came from the Portuguese colonies such as Mozambique and Angola, whereas a number of those who headed to Hong Kong and Taiwan came from British and French colonies. Curiously, migrants from French-speaking countries such as Mali and Guinea led the way in setting up as African merchants in Hong Kong. The second wave began in the early 1990s and was triggered by these four factors. The first factor was the attenuation of Europe's ties with their former colonies on the continent, a consequence of which has been the gradual restriction of migration from the continent. The restriction has forced the diversification of Africa's migration focus. It is worthy to note that China is one of the countries to which Africans have been migrating in their large numbers as a direct consequence of the restriction. As noted by Bodomo and Ma (2010: 283), China is the country where Africa's newest diaspora is about to emerge. (This assertion by these two scholars is not totally true, given that African diasporas are also emerging in other places such as Malaysia and Europe). The second factor was China's emergence as a country with a ravenous appetite for overseas raw materials and export market. To assuage their appetite, the Chinese have been retooling their ties with the developing world. They had downgraded the ties during the 1980s in favour of a rapprochement with the West (Elochukwu, 2015: 17). Africa is one of the regions providing the market and raw materials. A corollary of China's return to the continent is the increase in the volume of human movement between Africa and China (Skeldon, 2011; Xu Tao 2013a: 133; Shao, 2012; Sant, 2012). The third factor was the slow but steady liberalization of China's attitude towards migration. The fourth factor was the economic crisis that buffeted Southeast Asia in the late 1990s. To researchers like Bodomo (2009: 5), Cisse (2013), Bork-Huffer and Yuan-Ihle (2014) and Frost (2015), that economic crisis forced most African residents in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to re-migrate to China. The crisis was, beyond a shadow of a doubt, a trigger for African migration to China, for apart from forcing Africans to flee that part of Asia, it also forced many of those still at home who were planning to migrate to that part of Asia to migrate to China instead. However, considering the fact that the number that re-migrated from that part of Asia compared to the number that migrated direct from home during the same period appears to be small, the truth about the role of that crisis must have been patently exaggerated. Interestingly, for obvious reasons, Western Europe, remains the major destination for people emigrating from Africa (Castles and Miller, 2009: 151; Ratha et al., 2011: 25).

African migrants in China exhibit the following six characteristics. Firstly, they are concentrated in these six cities: Guangzhou, Yiwu, Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong and Macau (Bodomo, 2012: 196). Secondly, they are mostly traders (Bertoncelo and Bredeloup, 2007: 95; Bodomo, 2009: 4; Shao, 2012; Bork-Huffer and Yuan-Ihle, 2014: 583) who engage in the distributive sector of the Chinese economy, helping to decongest manufacturers' warehouses in different parts of the country. According to Li Anshan (2015: 22), research on the [African] diaspora has focussed on the traders. Some of the traders had previously been students or teachers who joined in the African gold rush in China. Thirdly, they are mostly self-sponsored migrants (Bork-Huffer and Yuan-Ihle, 2014: 583). Fourthly, they are mostly self-made entrepreneurs (Min, Xu and Shenasi, 2016). Fifthly, they are numerically inestimable (Xu Tao, 2013a: 135; Lan, 2016: 5). The difficulty in estimating their number accounts for the different figures that have been put on it, for example, 250,000 by Bodomo (2009: 4) and Davies (2009: 3), 100,000 by Zhu (2014) and 20,000-60,000 by Haugen (2015). Their number is difficult to estimate because of "the often transient and sometimes undocumented nature" of the migrants' stay (Pham, 2014). It is well worth noting that some of those considered migrants are actually African-based traders who are in China on short-stay business trips. Lastly, most of the migrants come from West Africa and the Maghreb (Davies, 2009).

China's African migrant population, believed to be the largest in Asia, comprises traders, students and those who earn a living from teaching the English language (Politzer, 2008). Due to legislations that demand high-end skills for migrant employment, the number of African migrants who have been absorbed into the country's labour market is still small. While the number of traders and students has increased, the number of English teachers (*sanpa* teachers) has progressively decreased. (In fact, the students, who are armed with a better education and reputation, are displacing *sanpa* teachers). According to Bodomo (2009: 5; 2012), Bork-Huffer and Yuan-Ihle, (2014: 581) and Le Bail (2009: 9), those students who transmuted into traders after their education were instrumental in the emergence of the trader sub-population. (They should also have noted that *sanpa* teachers were equally instrumental in the emergence of the sub-population). Students are known to be instrumental in diasporic formation. Their generally long years of study often acquaint them with the geography as well as the political, social, cultural and economic conditions of their host countries. Acquaintance with the local conditions invariably eases their adaptation. The number of African students who have stayed back to set up in business is rapidly increasing. This paper, sourced with literature as well as fieldwork conducted in Guangzhou during 2014-2017, surveys the African diaspora in Guangzhou, where the largest concentration of African population in China is found.

2. Guangzhou: China's 'Africa'

Guangzhou is arguably the best-known Chinese city in Africa. It is immensely popular on the continent because of its huge African population and its role in Africa-China trade. It has become a locale for sociological, cultural and linguistic research on Africans in the country, mainly because of these two factors. As noted by (Marfaing and Thiel, 2015: 68), it is "where the presence of Africans [in China] has been most thoroughly studied." Its African population is larger than that found in any other city in Asia (Bodomo, 2009: 5; Pham, 2014; Atanasov, 2015). The size of the population, however, is unknown, whereupon different figures have been quoted. According to Mathews (2015a), the migrants constitute the largest number of the developing world entrepreneurs of the city. As a transnationalizing agent, the population is making it possible for the Chinese to experience African culture and business practices first-hand (Bodomo, 2010: 695). The city is "a key destination for sub-Saharan Africans who are active in the import/export trade of Chinese goods" (Gilles, 2015: 18); and its African traders are helping to make Chinese manufactured goods available in their home countries (Le Bail, 2009: 6). The population is perceived in the following three ways: a community of traders (Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007), a socio-cultural bridge (Bodomo, 2010) and an African enclave (Li Zhang, 2008).

The Sanyuanli-Xiaobei corridor is the most Africanized part of Guangzhou. Its streets, particularly the Guangyuanxi Lu, teem with African residents and traders from Africa. Its malls such as Long'an, Tangqi, Canaan and Bole have a number of shops run by African-Chinese couples. Its hotels such as Tong Tong, Long'an, Hua Kang, Yu Chang and Two Minutes are very popular with traders from the continent. (Due to an ongoing crackdown on drug gangs in the city, most of these hotels have become very discriminatory in accepting Africans). Most of the traders would prefer to lodge and do business in that part of the city because of its African ambience. It does not only have a number of African restaurants (such as Mama Selina African Kitchen and Mama Chimamanda African Restaurant), but also a setting that conduces to interaction between the visiting traders and the migrants whose experience, finesse and acumen the traders may need to get bargains or to access manufacturers. Arguably because of its huge migrant population, Sanyuali is the most-heavily policed part of the city. A medium police station sits a few metres away from the Tong Tong Hotel. Also, a police van has been stationed in front of the Yulong Fashion Plaza since 2012 when the Golden Dragon mall was definitely purged of its African tenants. Igbo is probably the most widely spoken African language in that part of Guangzhou.

Guangzhou's African diaspora has become a focus of academic research and media coverage. Some of the works that have been specifically done on

it are: “The emergence of new African “Trading posts” in Hong Kong and Guangzhou” (Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007); “Ethnic congregation in a globalizing city: The case of Guangzhou” (Li Zhang, 2008); “The ‘third tier’ of globalization: African traders in Guangzhou” (Lyons, Brown and Li, 2008); “The African enclave of Guangzhou: A case study of Xiaobei” (Li, Xue, Lyons and Brown, 2008); “The African presence in contemporary China” (Bodomo, 2009); “Foreign migrations to China’s city markets: The case of African merchants” (Le Bail, 2009); “China wahala: The tribulations of Nigerian “bushfallers” in a Chinese territory” (Morais, 2009); “In the Dragon’s den: African traders in Guangzhou 2005-2008” (Lyons, Brown and Li, 2009); “The African trading community in Guangzhou: An emerging bridge for Africa–China relations” (Bodomo, 2010); “From Guangzhou to Yiwu: Emerging facets of the African diaspora in China” (Bodomo and Ma, 2010); “African Pentecostal migrants in China: Urban marginality and alternative geographies of a mission theology” (Haugen, 2013); “African trading posts in Guangzhou: Emergent or recurrent commercial form” (Bredeloup, 2012); Nigerians in China: A second state of immobility (Haugen, 2012); “We are what we eat: Food in the process of community formation and identity shaping among African traders in Guangzhou and Yiwu” (Bodomo and Ma, 2012); “The social relations and interactions of Black African migrants in China’s Guangzhou Province” (Xu Tao, 2013b); “Individual grassroots multilingualism in Africa Town in Guangzhou: the role of states in globalization” (Han, 2013); “Feeling at home in the “Chocolate City”: an exploration of place-making practices and structures of belonging amongst Africans in Guangzhou” (Castillo, 2014); “The causal mechanism of migration behaviors of African migrants in Guangzhou: From the perspective of cumulative causation theory” (Liang Yucheng, 2014); “‘Agents of translation’: West African entrepreneurs in China as vectors of social change” (Marfang and Thiel, 2014); “A ‘Wild West’ of trade? African women and men and the gendering of globalisation from below in Guangzhou” (Huynh, 2015); “African traders in Guangzhou, China: Routes, profits, and reasons” (Yang, 2015); “Africans in Guangzhou” (Mathews, 2015a); “Counting beans: Some empirical and methodological problems for calibrating African presence in Greater China” (Bodomo and Pajanvic, 2015); “African logistics agents and middlemen as cultural brokers in Guangzhou” (Mathews, 2015b); “The social construction of Guangzhou as a translocal trading place” (Gilles, 2015); “African traders in Yiwu: Their trade networks and their role in the distribution of ‘Made in China’ products in Africa” (Cisse, 2015); “African diaspora in China: Reality, research and reflection” (Li Anshan, 2015); “State regulation of undocumented African migrants in China: A multi-scalar analysis” (Lan, 2014); “Transnational business and family strategies among Chinese/Nigerian couples in Guangzhou and Lagos” (Lan, 2015); “‘Homing’

Guangzhou: Emplacement, belonging and precarity among Africans in China” (Castillo, 2015); “Structure and agency: Africana immigrants in China” (Adams, 2015) and “Guangzhou’s African migrants: Implications for China’s social stability and China-Africa relations” (Elochukwu, 2016).

3. Cleavages

African religious and language clusters have emerged in Guangzhou, vindicating the postulate by Chiswick and Miller (2004: 1) and Epstein and Gang (2010: 3) that a major characteristic of migrant populations is a tendency to cluster in ethnic or religious communities. According to Lan (2016: 5), most English-speaking and Christian migrants transact their business in the Sanyuanli district, whereas most French-speaking and Muslim migrants transact theirs in the Xiaobei and Yuexiu districts. The two largest African national groups in Xiaobei are Malians and Guineans. Those clusters have generated derisive appellations like “Chocolate cities”, “Little Africa,” and “Guangzhou’s Harlem.” The clusters which have formed along religious and colonial-language lines militate against Pan-Africanist camaraderie in that city. For example, English-speaking migrants, particularly those from Nigeria, like to deride French-speaking migrants, calling them ‘*zabarama*’. Anglophone-Francophone rivalry, nationalism and ethnicity are some of the factors bedeviling the efforts to form Pan-African associations in the city. While the migrants have not formed even one Pan-African association, they have formed a number of national, ethnic and hometown associations (HTAs), for example the Nigerian Community (for Nigerians), Afenifere (for Yoruba migrants), Ohaneze Ndigbo (for Igbo migrants) and Enugu State Association (for migrants from Enugu State of Nigeria). The HTAs are transnational models of the HTAs that exist in the home countries. They function as social capital platforms for members, extending assistance to members in diverse ways. For example, they issue advisories, counsel members with adaptation challenges, give ‘condolence envelopes’ to bereaved members and help with the hospital bills of sick members or the plane tickets of deported or sick or deceased members. According to Lan (2016: 15), Nigerian migrants have “the most mature ethnic support network in Guangzhou.” Cleavages exist in the churches too. The national origin of a church (that is the country where its headquarters are) appears to be the major determinant of its congregational mix. Hence migrants from Nigeria predominate in ‘Nigerian churches’ such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Lord’s Chosen Charismatic Church. The churches compete with one another. According to a former president of Nigerian Community, it was inter-church rivalry that instigated the deportation, to Hong Kong, of Daniel Mbawihe of the Royal Victory Church.

4. Enclaves

No African commercial or residential enclave has emerged in Guangzhou or in its suburbs yet, the city's huge African population notwithstanding. The migrants live singly or in small numbers in the neighbouring cities such as Dongguan, Foshan, Nanhai and Panyu. The cities constitute their commuter belt. There are yet no African enclaves in the city because of security concerns about the emergence of such enclaves. A municipal city official is quoted as saying, "The government was afraid that blacks would gather and form an African village, like Chinatowns in the United States. They do not want such ethnic communities to exist. If Africans become united, it would be very difficult for the government to manage them. This message has been stated very clearly in a confidential internal file" (quoted in Lan, 2014: 296). The municipal authorities have used two strategies to encumber enclave formation. One such strategy is their periodic purge of malls and residential apartments in the city centre of migrant occupants. For example, the Golden Dragon malls which used to teem with the migrant shopkeepers a few years ago now have only one or two African-Chinese couples. The malls were definitively purged following the 2012 raid on the drug syndicate, comprised of both the Chinese and their West African accomplices, who were using their rented apartments for narcotics. The timing for mall purge is an interesting narrative of 'use-and-dump' or 'pick-and-drop' in Nigerian parlance. The malls are purged after the migrants have helped to animate them. According to an intermarried migrant from Enugu state,

Those malls (Tangqi, Canaan and Bole) remained lifeless until we, Nigerians, began to occupy them. Only those ones who did not have the money to rent a shop at the Golden Dragon malls might be found here (Bole) before 2010. At first, the Chinese were begging us to go and occupy their shops free of charge for as long as six months. Our presence here animated these malls. The malls are nothing without our presence. The Chinese are smart. If they want to animate a mall, they will dangle an offer of rent-for-free shops before our people. Such was one of the tactics they used to make Bole and other malls what they are today. They still use this tactic to entice our people to animate their dormant malls (2017/1/12).

Once a mall has been animated, Africans are evicted and the Chinese will move in to occupy their shops. The other strategy is tightening residency and tenancy requirements. The migrants do need a residency permit to be able to rent shops and apartments, travel by air, litigate, go to the hospital and move with fewer restrictions in the city. Migrants who have overstayed their visa are severely handicapped by the requirements. For example, they are vulnerable to exploitation by not only the law enforcement officers, but also house agents, business partners and friends. They are also marginalized in

the competition involving the migrants and their hosts for the control of trade with traders from Africa. Migrant enclaves will certainly reduce the volume of contact between the Chinese and such traders.

5. Masculinization

The diaspora is predominantly male (fieldwork observation). Some of the few female migrants are spouses of *sanpa* migrants – those pioneer migrants who arrived at the turn of the century. Most of the unmarried female migrants are single mothers who scrape a living from prostitution or hawking African foods such as *moi-moi* (steamed bean pudding) and *jollof* (one-pot rice). The following are the major reasons for the small number of female migrants in the diaspora.

The first reason has to do with affordability. Most documented migrants cannot bring their families to live with them in China due to “the high cost of maintaining a family in China.” For example, migrant children are generally denied enrollment by public schools; and most migrants cannot afford to send their children to private schools. Some married migrants who could not afford to send their children to private schools have sent their families back to Africa or returned to Africa to become visiting traders. The high cost of child education is a reason for the progressive decrease in the number of endogamous families in Guangzhou. A certain female migrant complained that her family was expending six thousand *kuai* (\$900) every month to school their two children in a private school (5 January 2017).

The second reason is that, due to their illegal residency status, most migrants cannot provide the documents their families will need to successfully apply for a Chinese visa. Some migrants have circumvented this obstacle by getting their spouses to disguise as traders who want to travel to China for business. The spouses may use the invitation letters and other documents the migrants purchased from unscrupulous Chinese travel agents and phony companies. Nowadays it is easier for female traders coming from certain African countries to get a Chinese visa than it is for male traders.

The third reason is that China has a labour policy that discriminates against both internal and international migrants. For example, *hukou* can make it difficult for, say migrants from Dongguan (a city in Guangdong province) to find a job in Guangzhou (the capital of Guangdong province). The *hukou* has been extended to apply to foreigners as well in the form of laws that restrict the employment of foreigners who lack high-tech expertise. Female migrants may not be employed as domestic helps because the law, according to Tan (2010), forbids the Chinese to employ foreigners as domestic helps. Consequently, most domestic helps are migrants from the rural areas. The

few foreigners working in the hospitality industry mostly come from the Philippines, Burma and Vietnam.

The fourth reason is the hosts' resentment of all forms of commercial rivalry with the migrants. The Chinese regard migrant shopkeepers as a threat to their control of transaction between visiting traders and manufacturers; and they use some different strategies to stifle the erosion of their advantages over the migrants. One such strategy is to reject outright any attempt by the migrants to rent space in the malls. The other is to antagonize migrant shopkeepers. Such strategies have the power to deter migrants to bring their families from home to live with them. A certain female migrant shopkeeper at one of the malls on Guangyuanxi Road complained that her Chinese neighbours were being hostile to her because of her popularity with African traders:

I want to move out of this place [her shop] because my [Chinese] neighbours don't want me around them. They complain I have cornered the patronage of African traders here. They are so jealous of me. Be careful with that woman [one of her neighbours]. She smiles always; but her heart is full of evil.

In extreme cases the hosts can instigate the immigration officers to deport their migrant rivals.

The fifth reason is that prostitution is yet to become a lucrative venture for African female migrants in the city. Most victims of human trafficking from Africa to China are still male. Patronage of African prostitutes among the Chinese is still low. Patronage by the migrants is also low mainly because it is cheaper to patronize local prostitutes. According to a group of Nigerians interviewed at the Tanqi mall on 8 January 2017, the majority of the few African sex workers in the city come from east Africa.

6. Conclusion

The emergence of African diaspora in Chinese cities such as Guangzhou and Yiwu in a short space of twenty years is a testament to the astounding speed at which Africa-China relationship has developed since the end of the Cold War. Unsurprisingly, the diaspora has attracted a lot of scholarly and media attention; most of the attention, however, has focused on Guangzhou, where Asia's largest African diaspora (city wise) is found. As was evident in the foregoing, Guangzhou's diaspora (one of the world's newest diasporas) developed by design (by those who deliberately travelled to China to settle in the city) and by accident (by those who were forced to terminate their journey to Japan, South Korea or Oceania in the city). Its characteristics include the preponderance of males and traders as well as the apparent cleavages of religion, ethnicity and nationality. Indeed, the diaspora has become fundamental to the debate about Africa-China relations.

Note

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