



The Impacts of the Africans in Guangzhou

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Abstract. African migration to China is a phenomenon that has invoked public attention and scholars' heated discussions. This article reviews previous research on the impacts of African migration to Guangzhou, an international economic and cultural centre in south-eastern China in three different aspects: cultural, economic, and social influences. The African immigrants affect local culture in trade, religion, music, and life. In general, the arrival of Africans contributes to the diversity of culture, bringing new trends to the society such as hip-hop and Islam. The main economic impact is that Africans bring a new business pattern. They act mainly as middlemen who import goods from China and sell them to their own countries. It strengthens the economical connection between China and African countries. Regarding the social effect, current research mainly focused on Africans' and local residents' attitudes towards each other. The residents mainly hold welcoming attitudes although there are some negative comments. African clusters might result in bad public security and disharmony between races.

Keywords: Migration · African · Effect · Guangzhou · Enclave

1 Introduction

Internationally, both in popular and scientific media, debates occasionally emerge concerning the impact of the Africans in Guangzhou. In these discussions, different views have arisen and different aspects of the impacts that Africans brought to Guangzhou have been elaborated. These views are broadly divided into three areas, cultural, economic, and social. The arguments used in these debates often refer to particular theoretical grounds or empirical evidence. This paper examines the impacts that Africans have had on Guangzhou and categorises these impacts. African immigrants have an impact on local culture in terms of trade, religion, music, and daily life. In general, the arrival of Africans contributes to cultural diversity by introducing new religions and music. On the other hand, they also influenced the existing local trade culture. The most significant economic impact is that Africans introduce a new business model. They primarily serve as middlemen, importing goods from China and reselling them in their respective

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countries. It strengthens the economic ties between China and African countries, despite the fact that Africans do not account for the majority of Guangzhou's GDP. In terms of the social impact, current research has primarily focused on examining the attitudes of Africans and local residents toward one another. Although there are some negative comments, the residents are mostly friendly. Worsening public security and discord between African nations could result from the African cluster.

2 Culture

The emergence of Chocolate City influenced the culture of Guangzhou. The establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Egypt on 30 May 1956 initiated the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and African countries. For more than half a century, cultural exchanges between China and Africa have developed considerably through various forms of cultural activities. However, these exchanges have not led to a better understanding between the Chinese and African peoples. In particular, little attention has been paid to African literature, cinema, and music in the cultural sphere.

2.1 Trade Culture

Guangzhou has developed its own unique trading culture, which attracts foreigners. At the same time, the entry of Africans influenced this trade culture.

In Li's article, he mentioned the influence on the trade culture in Guangzhou [1]. Further Mathews et al. quoted Li's article and made a new point, that is, these African traders are practicing "low-end globalization", involving small amounts of capital and semi-legal or illegal transactions under the radar of the law. A new trade culture emerges in Guangzhou [2].

2.2 Life Culture

In addition to the trade culture, Africans have influenced many aspects of life. For example, food and language are also influenced. Bodomo analysed the attitudes of Africans towards local food and language by means of a questionnaire, regarding how people identify themselves, what friends they choose, what cultural activities they participate in, and what they eat [3]. The African community is still steeped in African culture. Their worldview, on the other hand, is shifting. They are gradually influencing Chinese society, and the Chinese are gradually influencing them as they interact with them. Whether in an ethnic enclave, an outpost or an integrated community, the migrant community is gradually building cultural bridges with the host communities. A strong link between Africa and China is formed in terms of socio-cultural relations. Castillo, based on Bodomo's research mentioned the exchange between Chinese and Africans in Guangzhou [4]. However, he presented a phenomenon but does not propose a solution.

2.3 Religious Culture

Africans have influenced the religious culture of Guangzhou with Christianity and Muslim. Li presented the religious uniqueness of Africans and the impact on the culture of Guangzhou [1]. However, he did not provide further empirical evidence about it. Bischoff also mentioned Africans' influence on Guangzhou in terms of religion by providing numerous examples. These examples he provided show that Africans have influenced the native language of Guangzhou. As he mentioned, "Also in Guangzhou, a Congolese evangelical church meets regularly without official permission. Originally intended only for Congolese, it now preaches in French with an English translator to attract congregants from across Francophone and Anglophone Africa looking for succour and support" [5]. Other researchers looked specifically into the Islamic Jama'at in Guangzhou [6]. With its long history of Islamic culture, Guangzhou has become one of the most active Muslim regions in China.

2.4 Music Culture

Impacts on music culture were also noticed. Li explored music culture in Guangzhou [7]. She divided the music of Africans in Guangzhou into three types: music for church, entertainment, and individual performances or gatherings. She collected examples through fieldwork and gave many examples of the musical life of Africans in Guangzhou. The arrival of these Africans added richness to the music of Guangzhou.

3 Economy

In recent years, more migrants worldwide have headed for the East, not the West, in search of safety, tolerance, and opportunity. Specifically, Guangzhou's African population is a typical example of the eastward move, and this chapter examines current research about how African people in Guangzhou affect the region's economy, focusing on two aspects, local business, and overseas trade.

There are many enclaves of African people in Guangzhou to guarantee their daily life, and they will also find jobs or start businesses through these channels. However, due to the excessive number of Africans, some enclaves become problematic, such as illegal residence and illegal work [8]. Nevertheless, these enclaves overall have a positive impact on the economy of Guangzhou. At a group meeting on May 30, 2008, all four African leaders agreed that African shopkeepers had significantly contributed to Guangzhou and China both economically and socially by employing a large number of Chinese [3]. African businessmen and Chinese people generally have two different kinds of economic and social relations. One is the relationship based on commercial interests, called "economic integration"; the other is the relationship based on emotional and cultural identity, called "social adaptation", including friendship and marriage. Economic integration can be divided into different ways, such as business partnerships, employment relationships, and service relationships through which African business people can quickly find an economic foothold after coming to Guangzhou [9].

Many scholars have noticed the contribution of Africans to the economy of Guangzhou, Li and Adams proposed that "Africans settle down in China, and run their

shops or businesses, and employ Africans or Chinese”. Meanwhile, Mathews considered the way in which Africans affected Guangzhou’s economy much more traditional. “As middlemen, Africans buy many goods in Guangzhou that are not available in Africa, such as mobile phones and clothes, and then bring them back to Africa for sale.” Also, Africans can have a positive influence on Guangzhou’s Economy by providing opportunities to sell things needed by Africans within enclaves.

3.1 Business Economy

Africans who have set up their businesses in China have been beneficial to Guangzhou’s economy. First, the existence of the “transnational trade doctrine” provides development opportunities for immigrant groups and temporary residents, thus creating a dynamic new economic and social space. Second, the enterprise founded by Africans has solved the employment problem of a large part of the Guangzhou people. Most African countries indeed lack industry and materials, which makes trans-regional and trans-national commercial activities the norm [9]. The business created by Africans in Guangzhou connects Africa and Guangzhou and promotes the development of Africa and China. It can be said that without the Africans in China, the business between China and Africa would be very little.

3.2 Enclave Economy

This approach is not very popular, but it has also contributed to Guangzhou’s economy. No matter when the business was started, business owners (African traders and Chinese) found the enclaves of Africans a profitable community for their business because of the particular ethnic goods, ethnic resources, and alliances of ethnic customers. For example, most Africans like to eat corn, so corn traders do very well in the African enclaves. Furthermore, the characteristics of an enclave economy show that co-ethnicity continues to promote businesses in their endeavors, thereby supporting the enclave economy model [10].

4 Society

4.1 Africans’ Contributions to Society

To explain the current situation and general living conditions of Africans, scholars applied theories and terminologies to the clusters and gatherings of Africans. Zhao used the term “residential segregation” to analyze the reasons for the formation of African clusters and compared them with Africans’ situation in western countries [11]. Zhao concluded that the formation of clusters can be attributed to the inflows of illegal African immigrants and local residents’ negative attitudes towards them. These clusters are located nearly in the villages within cities, and they are mostly chosen by newcomers, leading to public insecurity. Africans are generally labelled as “criminals” and “inferiors”. In addition, some Africans lack stable incomes. They might transfer their dissatisfaction to the local communities, thus this triggers residents’ anxiety and conflicts

between them, forming a vicious circle. Porte's investigation of Cuba clusters in Miami demonstrated that social diversity, class heterogeneity, and continuous immigration contribute to the economic growth locally [12]. His research was cited by Li and Du to study the international trade between China and Africa [13]. However, especially in developing countries, this relationship is unstable, random and has low economic efficiency. In their research, most African merchants stated that they cooperated well with Chinese merchants, and they already had some Chinese friends. By forming various relationships with local people, the Africans found that they are able to integrate into Guangzhou, getting an economic foothold more easily. This forms the basis of African cultural and further economic development in Guangzhou. Li and Du concluded that although the existence of the African economy might not largely contribute to the GDP in Guangzhou, it still influences African people's lives hugely [13]. In conclusion, Africans could bring social problems to Guangzhou and they might create great economic benefits, but their business in Guangzhou has significant influences on their own countries.

4.2 Africans' Attitudes Towards Local Residents and Police

ScholarS have pointed out that Africans' migration into China is mostly because of commercial cooperation with Chinese merchants and education opportunities [14]. Most of them act as middlemen, stocking goods from wholesalers in China and selling them to their own countries. They are mostly proficient in French and English, but few of them learn Chinese due to their temporary stays in Guangzhou. This leads to their difficulties in communicating with locals fluently, as they have to express their requirements and needs through interpreters, gestures, facial expressions, and calculators [15]. These are frequently used in occasions such as stores and neighborhoods. The main issue that prevents Africans' normal lives is visa. A large number of Africans hold invalid visas or overdue residence permissions. Racism has also attracted academic attention. Current literature in the field of racism has considered local people's attitudes towards African immigrants. An African interviewee in Zhou's investigation claimed that Chinese policemen treated them like animals. They have bad attitudes towards Africans, such as impatience and discrimination [15]. On the other hand, the police seemed to treat people in dark skin differently, not only Africans but also Arabians and other races. The interviewee concluded that they were discriminated against on the basis of nationality. Lan's previous study in 2015 mentioned two cases of death that were caused by invalid visas and the arbitrariness of police [15].

4.3 Local RESIDENT's Attitudes Towards African Immigrants

There are different attitudes towards Africans. According to a survey about local residents' attitudes towards Africans in *Xiaobei* district in Guangzhou, over 60% of people were willing to live with African neighbours, and only 30% of them insisted that Africans will lead to the decline of the social environment [1]. However, Zhou et al.'s research showed that over 60% of people agreed that Africans have contributed to diversifying the culture in Guangzhou [15]. They also concluded that the more contact with Africans, the more comprehensively and positively they will consider them. In their words, "more contact reduces social distance". In contrast, the Internet and social media which usually

exaggerate the facts and make negative reports about them, such as drug smuggling and rape, contributed to Chinese people's, mostly those who are unfamiliar with the Africans, negative attitudes. Some media claimed that "the cases of rape are rapidly increasing" and "AIDs threats are brought by Africans". In addition, according to Zhou's and An's research, some local renters refuse to lend houses to African tenants, because of the obstacles in communicating and Africans' bad behaviour such as scrawling and destruction of furniture [11]. To summarize, those who have contact with Africans frequently are likely to hold extreme attitudes.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, the Africans in Guangzhou have influenced Guangzhou from three aspects: culture, economy, and society. First, African immigrants have promoted the diversity of local culture in Guangzhou. Second, they have accelerated the economic development of Guangzhou and built a bridge of economic exchanges between Africa and Guangzhou. Third, in terms of social effects, although the comments about Africans were primarily positive, they were still discriminated against.

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