MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIANS IN GUANGZHOU, CHINA

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Certification

I certify that this work was carried out by Kudus Oluwatoyin **ADEBAYO** in the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, under my supervision.

……………………………….
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Dedication

For my favourite uncle, Ismail Adebayo.

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And again, to those who taught me discipline.

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Abstract

Recent economic and political transformations in Africa and the rising influence of China in global affairs have led to increasing migration of Africans to Chinese cities. Scholars have examined issues such as migration drivers, trade networks, and challenges faced by Africans in China. However, little has been done on the migration and settlement experiences of distinct African migrant groups. This study, therefore, examined the settlement experience of Nigerians in Guangzhou, the largest city in South China.

Integrated International Migration and Diasporisation theories guided the study and exploratory and descriptive designs were adopted. Guangzhou was purposively selected owing to the concentration of African migrants. A total of 69 participants – 52 Nigerians and 17 Chinese – were sampled using snowballing and accidental techniques respectively. Chinese participants provided information on their relationship with, and perception of Nigerian migrants. Intra-method triangulation of 58 in-depth and eight key informant interviews and three life histories were used to elicit information on the migration, settlement experience and challenges faced by Nigerians in Guangzhou. Non-participant observation of everyday life of some Nigerians was employed to collect additional data at work, recreational spaces and homes. Transcribed interviews and fieldnotes were processed using a software. Thematic, content and narrative analyses were carried out, and ethnographic summaries and direct quotations were used for data presentation.

Majority of Nigerian participants (63.0%) were of Igbo ethnic extraction, 25.0% were Yoruba, 6.0% were Hausa, and 6.0% were from others. Sixty-three percent were aged 44 years or below while 83.0% were males. Participants were predominantly involved in business with a few of them being students. Majority (44.0%) had secondary education while 35.0% obtained tertiary-level qualifications. Experiences of poor social and economic conditions served as remote factors for out-migrations. Four strategies adopted prior to and during migration to China include planning, relationship management, document acquisition and mapping of travel trajectory. Majority of the migrants arrived five years prior to when the study was conducted, although there were longer-term residents as well. The constitution of early arrivals in the 1990s into *Igbo Ezue* initiated the formation of a community that supported members, expanded access to market spaces and introduced and coordinated internal discipline. Newly arrived Nigerians established networks of support with 'integration mentors' who educated them on survival strategies; and sometimes exploited and or introduced them to criminal careers. Perception of Nigerians as *mafan* or 'troublemakers' limited social interactions with the host community; but interracial romance fostered deeper relationships. In-fighting, minority/majority and ethnic schisms and community-wide apathy had negatively impacted on community processes. Stigmatisation, which shaped the perceptions of Nigerians, and challenges of documentation created uncertainties and vulnerabilities that further exposed them to social discrimination.

Nigerians have managed to establish a vibrant and dynamic community in Guangzhou. However, the host country should urgently address the settlement challenges of Nigerians by reviewing its immigration policies and laws, and engaging the Nigerian community to resolve the barriers to integration in China.

Keywords: China-Nigeria relations, Guangzhou, Migrant communities, Nigerian diaspora, Settlement experience

Word count: 481

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

The scale of contemporary international migration, and the interest it has generated from scholars, the media, policymakers, and everyday people, has made cross-border movements one of the most intensely debated issues in many parts of the world. In 2017, about 258 million people were living outside their countries of birth [International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2018)]. While internal migration remains the dominant pattern of human movement (IOM, 2015), international movements continue to be one of the 'most visible and volatile' issues of our time, particularly in the Global North (Massey and Taylor, 2004, p. 1) where the phenomenon has led to increased securitisation of borders. Many countries have introduced policies to either drastically reduce or halt further inflows and/or encourage return migration (Koser, 2007; Olaniyi, 2009b; Adepoju, van Noorloos and Zoomers, 2010). In combination with factors that are peculiar to different countries, this change in migratory order is transforming the pattern of international migration in the Global South (Van Hear, 1998), with more and more people forging alternative pathways in other countries in the South, including the Persian Gulf and Asia. This study focuses on the processes of movement and settlement experiences of Nigerians in Guangzhou, the largest city in South China.

Much like many other societies, Africa has experienced and is still experiencing a range of human movements, both short and long distances and in varieties of directions (see Curtin, 1984; Koser, 2003; Zeleza, 2005, 2010; Adepoju, 2013). These out-migrations have been fuelled by many factors, especially postcolonial social, political and economic realities of state failure, conflict, poverty, unemployment and population growth (Adepoju, 2013). A recent report estimates that the population of international migrants from Africa grew to 25 million in 2017, a 67% rise from 15 million in the year 2000 [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division (UN DESA), 2017)]. Although the same report indicates that about 53% of this migrant population are within the continent, a substantial proportion live outside the continent, predominantly in more developed countries. Despite this, South-South migration has become a major dynamic in African cross-continental movements [Adepoju, 2004; De Haas and Flahaux, 2016; IOM and ACP Observatory on Migration (ACP), 2012]. This includes movements of Africans to countries without previous colonial ties with Africa and towards territories with relatively distant proximities in Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Latin America.

In Asia especially, China has proved to be a viable alternative destination in Africa's South-South migration. A key factor in this transformation lies in how the Chinese state is shaping the economic, social and political spheres of the African continent. More than any other foreign country in recent history, China has been very aggressive in establishing itself as a critical development player in Africa. In 2000, China established the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) as a framework to promote equal consultation, enhance understanding, expand consensus, strengthen friendship and promote cooperation with over 50 African countries [The Peoples Republic of China (PRC), 2013]. From 2000 to 2005, China-Africa trade rose from $10 billion to $25 billion (Alden, 2005), and had reached US$198.49 billion by 2012 (PRC, 2013). China's share of exports from Africa increased from 3% in 1998 to 15% in 2008, and it had already displaced the United States as Africa's largest trading partner by 2009 (Songwe and Moyo, 2012). As at 2007, Brautigam (2008) reported that the 'Going Global' policy of the Chinese government had contributed to the entry over 800 Chinese companies in African markets. Enterprising Africans too have invested in China with a total volume of direct investment standing at US$14.242 billion in 2012, up by 44% over 2009 levels (PRC, 2013). While the discursive environment in China-Africa relations is torn among competing claims, with celebratory and condemning views in extremes (see Zeleza, 2008b; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011). Large (2008) insists, however, that the latest wave of China's relations with Africa will likely persist, deepen and be consequential.

The increase in migratory flows of Chinese to Africa and of Africans to China is one of the most significant consequences of China-Africa relationship (Politzer, 2008; Mohapatra, 2009). Although official statistics on the number of people that have moved in both directions is not available, Chinese inflows into African countries, which involve labour, trade and proletarian migration (Kuang, 2008), was estimated to be up to 800,000 individuals (Park, 2009). A more recent review of emergent literature showed that the population of Chinese in Africa continue to vary with some suggesting that close to one million of them live in African countries (French, 2014, cited in Cornelissen and Mine, 2018). At the other end, China's Guangdong province is believed to host the largest single concentration of Africans on the entire Asian continent with a population running into hundreds of thousands (Bodomo and Pajancic, 2015). Africans in China have also attracted scholarly attention and, there are indications that African communities, chiefly trading communities, are in the making (Li, Ma and Xue, 2009; Bodomo, 2010; Li, Lyons and Brown, 2012; Castillo, 2014a). It seems accurate, therefore, that '…a new

land of opportunity has opened its gates in the East, as those of Europe close' (Rennie, 2009, p. 384).

In an attempt to study Africa's embryonic community in China, however, most 'Africans in China' studies neglect the peculiarities of movement and experiences of different African groups. Consequently, it is difficult to isolate and appreciate the particularities of movements and challenges of specific African groups, and the diverse ways that China's migration-context impact uniquely on their everyday lives and settlement experiences. The present study was conducted to address these issues as they manifest among Nigerian migrants in Guangzhou, China.

1.2. Statement of the problem

As a result of social, economic and political changes on the continent and the rise of the 'Asian Tigers' in global economic affairs, migrations to Asia has become popular among Africans. In China especially, African migration is driven by the deepening economic ties between the Chinese government and several African countries (Politzer, 2008; Mohapatra, 2009). Although opinions differ on the size of the African population in China (Castillo, 2014a; Bodomo and Pajancic, 2015), estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands may be scattered all over Chinese cities, concentrating mainly in Guangzhou and engaging in trade-related activities (Bodomo, 2016). Literature on this population have examined the origins, backgrounds and drivers of migration (Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007; Liang, 2014), the emerging African ethnic enclave (Li et al., 2009; Li et al., 2012), and business transactions and trade networks (Müller and Wehrhahn, 2013; Marfaing and Thiel, 2015). Other studies focused on the intersection of African-Chinese interracial relationships and entrepreneurship (Lan, 2015), as well as the role of food and religion in community life, place-making practices and belongingness (Bodomo and Ma, 2012; Haugen, 2013; Castillo, 2014a). More recent investigations examined the challenges facing the population, including health-related barriers (Lin, Brown, et al., 2015; McLaughlin, Simonson, Zou, Ling and Tucker, 2015), and racial and legal problems (Lan, 2014; Bodomo, 2015).

However, in-depth understanding of the patterns and processes involved in this movement is plagued by an assumption of homogeneity, which erroneously portrays Africans in China as having a uniform migration course. The involvement of most of the migrants in trade, and the subsequent focus of many scholars on economic issues also means that much effort was

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devoted to understanding the 'organisation of trade' as against the 'organisation of people in trade.' The assumption and research focus created three problems at least. One, the majority of the studies are unhelpful for arriving at concrete conclusions about specific African groups in China. Two, and relatedly, it is arduous to delineate how groups differ in their migration trajectory and experiences of the host society as members of distinct migrant communities. Three, it became increasingly difficult to understand critical intra-community dynamics and nuanced social contexts and processes that shape individual and group experience in Chinese cities. This study fills this gap by focusing on the movements and settlement experiences of Nigerians as a distinct group in African migrations to China.

In some Chinese cities where Africans congregate in large numbers, Nigerians are one of the largest groups. Despite the odds of language and race and lack of colonial ties, Nigerians are moving into China in thousands. In Guangzhou, where a large African population exists (Bodomo, 2010; The Nanfang Insider, 2015), Nigerians are the most visible group (see Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007; Haugen, 2012; Li et al., 2012). Most of them are temporary visitors who source for goods in Chinese markets and ship them for sale in Nigeria, both legally and illegally (Egbula and Zheng, 2011; Lan and Xiao, 2014). Still, some are staying back for much longer and forming incipient communities in the process (Haugen, 2012; Castillo, 2014a). Literature is replete with the participation of Nigerians in international migration that resulted in the formation of large communities, in Europe and America (Nwokeji, 2000; Reynolds, 2002; Falola and Childs, 2004; Reynolds and Youngstedt, 2004; Korieh, 2006; Schler, 2011; Ogbuagu, 2013). Nigerians are also settling in other parts of Africa (Olaniyi, 2009a; Singh, 2012; Adeniran, 2014; Akintola and Akintola, 2015). However, we do not know enough about the development and nature of the fledgling Nigerian community in China.

Apart from this, studies indicate that Africans in China are affected by widespread negative perceptions in the host community based on prejudice (Cheng, 2011; Zhou, Shenasi and Xu, 2016). In contrast to other Africans, however, the involvement of some Nigerians in crimes such as robbery, trafficking, drugs, forgery and others (TayoTFC, 2009; Odili.net, 2011; Haugen, 2012; Castillo, 2014a) is peculiarly problematic for Nigerian migrants as a group. In 2009, about 732 Nigerians were in Chinese jails, among which 106 were imprisoned for trafficking, robbery and fraud (TayoTFC, 2009). A Nigerian embassy official also accused Nigerians of insolently flouting Chinese immigration laws on entry, stay, and work (Ojeme, 2014). Nigerians also experience exclusionary attitudes and dispositions from other Africans

who perceive them as notorious 'illegals' (Pang and Yuan, 2013). According to Haugen (2012), many undocumented Nigerians in Guangzhou are 'spatially entrapped' and live in fear, even though they operate legitimate businesses. Under this condition, it becomes necessary to explore how Nigerians manage to navigate and function in Guangzhou, not only as they interact amongst themselves but also in their social relations with the host community. So, apart from seeking to understand the processes of movement, this study explores the various influences on, and the dynamics of, settlement experiences of Nigerian migrants in Guangzhou, China.

1.3. Research questions

1. How do Nigerians move to Guangzhou?
2. As a distinct African group, how did Nigerian migrants manage to settle in this Chinese city?
3. In what ways are the challenges encountered in Guangzhou shaping the everyday lives of Nigerians, both as individuals and as a group?

1.4. Research objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the migration and settlement experiences of Nigerians in Guangzhou, China. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Describe the processes involved in the migration of Nigerians to Guangzhou;
2. Investigate the settlement experiences of Nigerians in the host community, and;
3. Explore how the challenges experienced in Guangzhou influence their everyday lives as migrants from Nigeria.

1.5. Justification of the study

In many part of the world, millions of people are on the move. International migrants, in particular, are covering greater distances to seek opportunities. This study is momentous because it focuses on emerging international migration dynamics from Africa. For a very long time, Nigerians have traversed the continents of Europe and America, and the nature of the communities they forged have been documented. Although many of them continue to move to these destinations, border control has intensified forcing them to explore other migratory corridors, including Asia. This study advances our understanding of the processes involved in this change from the perspective of Nigerian migrants in Guangzhou, China.

Secondly, being a more focused study than the majority of research in the area, the study makes specific contributions to the growing body of knowledge on the presence of Africans in Asia. Essentially, previous studies on African migrants in China have a 'continentalist orientation,' whereby the diverse African groups in Chinese society are homogenised and presented as though they have similar migration profiles and experience the host community in the same way. The study cuts through country-specific dynamics and complexities that have been less appreciated. This approach offers the best prospect for gaining insights that are useful for engaging in the comparative study of different African ethnonational groups in China.

Thirdly, the study raised questions about the community life and social experiences of Nigerians in China, both of which are under-explored in the literature. Because of the economic foundation of contemporary China-Nigeria interactions, research continues to neglect the social issues that define and influence the lives of Nigerians in Chinese society. This study directs attention to the 'organisation of people in trade,' as against the 'organisation of trade.' In doing this, the study details the processes of emergence and nature of the community structures that Nigerians are evolving in Guangzhou.

Chapter Two: Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This review evaluates and gives a critical overview of scholarship on Nigeria's international migration realities and the participation of Nigerians in China-bound journeys. It begins by describing the international migration situation in sub-Saharan Africa as a way of illuminating how the barriers in traditional migration destinations in Europe and North America and emerging opportunities in Asia are transforming the dynamics of out-migration from the continent. The next section focuses on the drivers and patterns of international migration in Nigeria and how Nigerians have participated in, and engaged with, the global migration system. A fundamental contention in this review is that even though Nigerians remain active in the previous, and still, dominant migration corridors to the Global North, they have increasingly become visible subjects in Asia in general, and China in particular. Immediately after this, the notion of migrant communities and the processes that shape their emergence are explored using relevant sociological materials. Following this, the review problematises the 'migration receiving context' as a potential structural impediment that migrants must navigate in their destination society. Particularly, it emphasises the interplay of 'illegality' in people's lives under the condition of cross-border movement. Subsequently, the concept was deployed to interrogate documented evidences on lived experiences of African migrants, and Nigerians in China. That section contends that Nigerian migrants are in a contradictory relationship with the host society, which probably influences individual and group experiences. Before concluding that the growing literature on African migrants in China mostly overlooked the specificities of experiences of different African groups, the theoretical perspectives of the study were discussed. The review draws on sources from databases (JStor, PubMed, and Google Scholar) and additional information were obtained from grey literature like published reports, white papers, news bulletins and other internet-based resources.

2.2. International migration from Africa: Drivers, patterns and processes

Movement, both short and long distances, is common to human societies. According to Koser (2007, p. 1), 'There are more international migrants today than ever before, and their number is certain to increase for the foreseeable future. Almost every country on earth is, and will continue, to be affected.' At the turn of the millennium, approximately 160 million people were immigrants (Massey and Taylor, 2004). In 2010, the global migrant population had grown to

214 million and rose to 232 million in 2015 (IOM, 2015). Factors such as demographic disparities, environmental change, global political and economic dynamics, technological revolutions and social networks will shape the projected rise in the population of international migrants to 405 million by 2050. Globalisation will also facilitate increased human mobility as it becomes more embedded in worldwide economic and social structures, and will make it easier for more people to move at a reduced cost (IOM, 2013; Koser, 2007).

Although recent growth in international migration is due mostly to South-North movements, a discernible dynamic in contemporary out-migration from Africa is the South-South migratory phenomenon [Adepoju, 2004; De Haas and Flahaux, 2016; IOM and ACP Observatory on Migration (ACP), 2012]. South-South movement is common among migrants living in countries with contiguous borders but a lot more occurs cross-continentally and to countries with relatively distant proximities, from Asia to Africa, Middle East, the Caribbean and Latin America – and back in all directions. According to Campillo-Carrete (2013), the factors shaping other forms of mobility are also at play in South-South migrations. However, an attempt has been made to analyse the peculiarities of South-South patterns of movement, including the role of restrictive policies and border securitisation in the Global North (Adepoju, Noorloos, and Zoomers, 2010; Hujo and Piper, 2010; IOM and ACP, 2012; Ratha and Shaw, 2007. Also, *International Migration Review*, Special Issue vol. 48, no. 1, 2014).

Historically, Africans have embarked on cross-border migration in response to population, environmental, economic, social, and political problems (Adepoju, 2003). While these factors manifest in different ways today, they continue to influence migration processes on the African continent. Chereni (2014) notes that real and perceived opportunities influence the popularity of Gauteng, South Africa, as a migration destination. In a recent reflection on international migration situations in sub-Saharan Africa, Adepoju (2013) asserts that the key drivers of movement are poverty, political instability, and a growing population. While agreeing with other authors on the role of economic and political problems and conflict in out-migration across Africa, Agadjanian (2008) and Adeniran (2014) emphasise the role of regional policies and free movement in driving population mobility on the continent.

Moreover, Van Dalen, Groenewold and Schoorl (2005), while studying stated intentions to emigrate out of Africa among Ghanaians, Senegalese, Moroccans and Egyptians, found that emigration pressure is high in West Africa, especially among males with what they called

'modern values.' They observe that the optimism about economic prosperity upon migration and presence of family networks abroad are crucial factors. Kinship and family networks, in particular, are essential structures of support to African international migrants (Akanle, 2011; Akanle, Aderonke and Jimoh, 2018). Migrants receive financial, moral and spiritual support from family members who hope that journeys will lead eventually to economic success (Pelican and Tatah, 2009; Alpes, 2012; Atekmangoh, 2017).

In the context of globalisation and free information flows, international migrants from Africa still encounter frustration due to limited access to information or outright misinformation about destinations. As revealed in Şaul's (2014) ethnographic study among sub-Saharan Africans in Istanbul, migrants often possess some information before arrival, but such information is often incomplete, partial or wrong. In another brilliant case analysis of a Europe-bound migration, Horn-Udeze (2009) describes international migration as a 'cult' that is so secretive and inaccessible to the uninitiated (non-migrants). According to him, travel stories from returnees are often incomplete or misrepresented while negative experiences about migration are kept secret (Horn-Udeze, p. 383-384). His case analysis suggests that international migration is a puzzle that prospective migrants are unable to solve until they undertake the journey.

Although some aspects of international movements from Africa are unchanged, other dynamics have also occurred. Regarding distance, most African international migrants move within the continent, both in the past and today. According to Agadjanian (2008), 70% of African international migrants do not leave the continent. Intra-regional movement is also typical, especially among countries who are members of sub-regional economic blocks [e.g. the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)] (Adepoju, 2013, p. 299). Contrary to previous migratory patterns, however, out-migration from the continent has become varied and spontaneous (Adepoju, 2004). Some scholars even claim that newer migrants from Africa defy extant migration theories (Koser, 2003) as they '…no longer adhere to classic geographic patterns, but explore a much wider set of destinations than those where traditional seasonal work can be found' (Adepoju, 2004, pp. 68-69). Additionally, African migrations are being feminised, destinations are diversifying, and commercial flows are replacing labour flows. Skilled migrations (IOM, 2014; James, Sawyerr and Emodi, 2014) and circular movements (Adepoju, 2013) are also a growing pattern.

Furthermore, the rise of previously impoverished countries in global economic affairs is changing the terrain of migration to one dominated by South-South travels to Asia and the Middle East. Also, contrary to the conventional view that poverty, violence and underdevelopment drive migration from Africa, recent processes of development have increased Africans' capabilities and aspirations to move out (De Haas and Flahaux, 2016, p. 23). This interpretation captures the circumstances of many migrants who are participating in global trade outside the Global North.

However, a critical gap in mainstream African international migration scholarship is that while new realities are opening up new migration corridors, non-South-North movements have remained at the margin of research. Many South-South migrations discussions are based on those moving intra-regionally – and within the continent – due to displacement or search for short-term work. This is in spite of the increased recognition of the growth in commerce-driven migration as an emergent dynamic in African out-migration (Adepoju, 2013). In spite of this, interest in such mobilities is low, and on-going discussions are isolated from the China-Africa field.

In subsequent sections, this review will draw attention to South-South migration, with focus on Africa-China movement. It claims that this migration corridor epitomises a novel pathway, involving young and middle-aged Africans, mainly men but also women. It contends that while African international migration scholarship is stuck on internal, intra-regional, and South-North migration pattern, a new South-South extra-continental movement is unfolding rapidly, with implications for those involved in the journeys and the peoples and societies of destination.

2.3. Nigeria and global international migration system

As the most populous African country and with a long history of cross-border movement, Nigeria has always been tied to the global migration system. Nigeria occupies a special position in African migrations, moving to Europe, the United States, the Persian Gulf and South Africa, while acting as a source, transit and destination country (De Haas, 2006). Globally, estimates on the population of Nigerian international migrants vary, with conservative figures of 3 to 6 million and questionable estimates of up to 15 to 20 million (Mberu and Pongou, 2010). Although majority of them move within the continent, Nigerians have a long history of migration to the Americas, Europe, Australia, and Asia. Migrants from Nigeria moved as

slaves, seamen, students, intellectuals, traders, asylum-seekers and economic migrants and produced communities in these locations (Nwokeji, 2000; Reynolds, 2002, 2004; Reynolds and Youngstedt, 2004; Korieh, 2006; World Bank, 2007a; Mberu and Pongou, 2010; Schler, 2011; Haugen, 2012; Castillo, 2014a).

According to the 2013 report of the Office for National Statistics (ONS), for instance, about 180,000 persons residing in the United Kingdom reported Nigeria as their country of origin (James et al., 2014). Similarly, around 3.4 million Nigerians reside in the United States, which is 19% of the total black African immigrant population in that country (IOM, 2014). A concept note published in by the World Bank in 2007 reveals that Nigerians are the most represented African nationality in Ireland, Austria and Greece. They are also the second most represented in Germany, Spain and Iceland; and ranked top five in nineteen of some of the most developed countries in Europe, except in France, Portugal, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Luxemburg (World Bank, 2007b). Regarding their profile, De Haas (2006) points out that most Nigerians in the UK and the rest of Europe come from the Igbo, Yoruba, Edo and Ogoni ethnic groups while the Hausa move to the Gulf States. De Haas (2006) insists that increased border regulation in Europe did not reduce Nigerian migration but led to a rise in undocumented movements.

In Zeleza's (2008a) view, it is possible to periodise the distribution of African bodies across the world into historical and contemporary phases. Following this framework, Nigerian international migration was, at the historical phase, shaped by trans-Saharan trade and later by the slave trade, and formal Western colonisation (Curtin, 1984; Falola and Childs, 2004). In the contemporary phase, there are three main waves: colonial, decolonisation and structural adjustment waves. During the colonial period, Nigerians moved as students and seamen, some of whom settled and formed communities in their various destinations (Zack-Williams, 1997; Schler, 2011). Migration of decolonisation includes those who moved during the struggle for independence and immediately after.

The structural adjustment period, starting in the 1980s, was perhaps the most significant in the contemporary phase of Nigeria international migration. First, before the social and economic crises of the 1980s, the Civil War of 1967-70 had triggered a massive outflow in the Southern part of the country (Reynolds, 2004). Second, the structural adjustment programme (SAP), promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, resulted in social and

economic privations, which forced millions to flee the country (Akanle, 2011). The scale of out-migration during this wave was significant as SAP also coincided with repressive military regimes, which undermined academic and associational freedoms (De Haas, 2006; Akanle, 2011). For the most part, economic considerations and the pursuit of a better life influenced the participation of Nigerians in the global migration system (IOM, 2014; James et al., 2014; Mberu and Pongou, 2010; Otiono, 2011; Schapendonk and Steel, 2014; Singh, 2012) .

Conventionally, Nigerian international migrants are in countries where they have a linguistic advantage, high employment prospect, and where settlement and presence of family and friends and networks can facilitate adjustment (Kómoláfé, 2002). These factors explain the presence of sizeable Nigerian migrant populations and communities in English-speaking countries in the Global North (IOM, 2014; James et al., 2014; Mberu and Pongou, 2010), as well as in more developed Global South countries such as South Africa (Muhwava and Chiroro, 2014). In these countries, Nigerians establish communities in response to the needs, constraints and opportunities that persist in the host society. The communities also function as a protective instrument against social marginalisation (Singh, 2012). They form ethnic organisations that meet regularly and organise cultural events to promote social cohesion and adjustment in the host society (Reynolds, 2004). De Haas (2006) observes, however, that Nigerians abroad are a diverse group. As such, communities are often formed along these diversities, rather than establishing a homogeneous community on the basis of national affiliations. Reynolds (2004, p. 26) expressed similar viewpoint when she observes that '…an Igbo speaker from one region in Igboland is unlikely to attend a meeting with a group of Igbo speakers from another region or state.'

That said, as migrants, having a strong presence in another country often leads to unwanted outcomes that threaten personal goals or group advancement. Studies show that Nigerian migrants experiences discrimination, stereotypes, violent xenophobia and precarities due to problems of 'illegality,' criminalisation, and deportability (Olaniyi, 2009a; White, 2009; Singh, 2012; Suter, 2012; Akintola and Akintola, 2015). A critical appraisal of the causes of xenophobic attack on Nigerians in South Africa reveals that poor socioeconomic realities in the host society shapes ill-feeling towards them (Olaniyi, 2009a). Despite the deep historical links between Nigeria and South Africa, Nigerians experience xenophobic attacks and are stereotyped as job thieves and drug pushers (Mafukidze and Mbanda, 2008; Olaniyi, 2009a). They also experience '…instances of harshness, intimidation and abuse by officials,

and…arrests by police – until they convinced the authorities about being in South Africa legally' (Singh, 2012, p. 44).

Outside the continent, scholarly accounts of Nigerians' experiences of stereotype exist. In Istanbul, Nigerian migrants struggle to circumvent a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1965) because of reputation and image problems in the host society (Suter, 2012). In Ireland, they are criminalised in the media as fraudsters, scams and human traffickers (White, 2009). While this fuels negative stereotypes against them, members of the Nigerian migrant community are also under constant threat of deportation from policymakers who seek to maintain racial purity (White, 2009).

Back home in the country of origin, policymakers denigrate Nigerian international migrants as a disgraceful lot, despite the fact that many of them abide by the laws of host nations (De Haas, 2006, pp. 10, 22). Fernandez (2013) observes that the default position of most African governments to emigrants is mostly negative. While sometimes voicing concerns about the 'brain drain' of professionals and engaging them via diasporic instrumentalism, African states are largely interested in how other migrant groups partake in migration and employ it as a survival strategy. Even less concern is shown about the treatment of undocumented nationals abroad, with states choosing instead to portray them as foolhardy, desperate and a disposable surplus population. In this wise, Olaniyi (2009a, p. 117) argues that despite the alarming record of discrimination against Nigerians abroad, the Nigerian state hardly seeks redress to protect citizens, especially in cases involving Nigerians and donor/creditor countries. De Hass (2006, p. 21) puts it that the Nigerian state:

> …is equally seen as failing to adequately defend emigrants' rights… Emigrants have often been seen as deviants or even as traitors, and the Nigerian state has done little to protect their rights abroad and those of forced and voluntary returnees… The Nigerians embassies do not really support migrants and protect undocumented and even legal migrants. Going to the embassy has even been described as "the very last option" in case of trouble.

Despite the challenges highlighted above, Nigerians continue to partake in the global migration system for varied reasons and are also exploring non-traditional migration destinations, including the Asian region (Afolayan, 2011; Haugen, 2012). In her research on the dynamics of mobility of Nigerian international traders, Afolayan (2011) reported that the prevailing economic conditions at home and destinations are informing the decisions about where

Nigerians are going. Afolayan (2011) found that most first and latest international travels are to Southeast Asia, with 50.3% of those on first business trips going mainly China, Dubai and Hong Kong while only 6.6% and 2.9% are going to Northern Europe and North America respectively.

Unlike the previous, and still, dominant migration pathways in the Global North, Nigerian migration subjects in Asia in general, and China in particular, are only beginning to attract scholarly attention. As would be shown, the eastward migration of Nigerians to China cannot occur within the shifts in global migratory regimes; the social and economic opportunities ushered in by the rise of new actors in the global economy, development of new geopolitical relationships, information technologies, transportation, and individual agency.

2.4. Migration and community formation

In an influential paper titled 'Migration and community formation under conditions of globalisation,' Castles (2002) declares that migration is one of the key forces in social transformation in both the origin and destination societies. Irrespective of the purpose and duration of movements, migrants transform the social, political and cultural terrains of the origin and host countries by just *moving in/out* and *being away/present*. Importantly, Castles (2002, p. 1145) posits that at the destination society, population mobility leads to the formation of migrant communities. In other words, as people arrive in a host society in large numbers and live there over some time, some form of community often emerge (Agadjanian, 2008, p. 413) and such structure usually becomes a tool for social adaptation (Owusu, 2000).

Under the condition of migration, community formation requires active and interactive engagement and involvement. As captured in the following definition, community formation or 'community building' means:

> …the construction of a set of features seen as common to all individuals within a group of people and then using this set of features as the basis to try to bring these people together to form a community, that is, a cohesive network of people constantly interacting with each other to advance their common interests. (Bodomo and Teixeira-E-Silva, 2012, p. 75)

However, the concept of community and the processes and factors that bring it into being are often not straightforward. As a social sciences concept, community has its origin in sociological thinking on the structure and pattern of social organisation following the ascension of the

industrial revolution. Notable contributors to the development of the concept include Ferdinand Tönnies, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Robert Redfield, Ernest Burgess, amongst others.

According to Schulte-Tenckhoff (2001, p. v), community may be understood as a type of 'social group' or a 'certain quality of social bond.' As a social group, community refers to small and inward-looking groups which are characterised by '…direct personal relationships unfolding in small-scale social networks' (Schulte-Tenckhoff, 2001, p. 4). Presumably, members of such social groups have common origin and culture, shared memories and experiences, and inhabit common locality (Schulte-Tenckhoff, 2001; Voydanoff, 2001; Allan, 2006). As a quality of social bond, however, community refers to key relational features, such as '…group consensus, shared norms and values, common goals, and feelings of identification, belonging and trust' (Voydanoff, 2001, p. 138). These features differentiate a community from other types of social organisation.

Schulte-Tenckhoff (2001) observes that a primary concern among those who employ the term is the assumption that a community has a clear-cut boundary and is homogeneous, and harmonious. The misconception, which derives partly from Weberian thinking on ideal types, ignores the fluid, heterogeneous and conflict-laden nature of community as a form of social formation. Some scholars have indeed challenged the notion of seamless solidarity in migrant communities (Riccio, 2003; Horn-Udeze, 2009). Riccio (2003) in particular points out that ethnic and religious boundaries often break down when migrants come face-to-face with receiving context, and internal tensions occur in close-nit migrant communities. This observation is most relevant in migration contexts where migrants establish communities with complicated features, depending on their social experiences and the demands, social, political and cultural realities encountered in host societies (Owusu, 2000; Knight, 2002).

Moreover, the rise of transnational and online communities, which became widespread as a result of globalisation processes, has weakened the relevance of 'shared locality' in understanding community (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc, 1995; Schulte-Tenckhoff, 2001). Many factors influence the process of community formation under migration situations. Today, one major factor is the globalisation phenomenon. According to Castles (2002), whereas globalisation is blurring the line between temporary and permanent migrations, it is also making repeated and circulatory flows more pronounced. Based mainly on the situation in the Western societies, he insisted that rather than jeopardise community

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formation projects, globalisation facilitates the spawning and maintenance of transnational communities whose networks transcend the boundary of a single nation-state (Castles, 2002, p. 1147). As a crucial aspect of migration experiences, these networked transnational communities feature increasingly in promoting migrant belongingness in a seemingly non-inclusive destination context (Chereni, 2014). Furthermore, Castles (2002) adds that the practices of exclusion and discrimination in destination society could also influence the formation of communities that are economically, culturally and politically distinct. Although such migrant communities may operate outside the structures of the host society, they will probably remain interconnected within those structures.

Conversely, being present in an alien setting does not automatically lead to community formation. In a study conducted in Oshikango, Namibia, Dobler (2009, pp. 734-725) found that even after ten years of presence, Chinese migrants did not form a close-knit, stable community. While local state regulation and precarious legal standing constituted barriers, Chinese migrants on their part maintain social distance from the Namibian mainstream economy and society by living at the margin and interacting more with Angolans rather than with the host population. Because most Chinese own shops along the Namibian-Angolan border, and conduct business with a predominantly Angolan clientele, a social interaction that is oriented towards Angolans, rather than the host community, was reasonable and efficient. Nevertheless, Chinese migrants rely on Namibian intermediaries to link up with the state, a strategy that helps them to form strong alliances with influential members of the host society even though their local knowledge and connections are limited (Dobler, 2009).

On the overall, membership in strong and cohesive communities is a valuable resource for persons in migration situations. As shown in diverse migration settings, migrants rely on communities at different stages of their journeys, during preparation, while on the move and upon arrival. Upon arrival especially, migrants depend on community networks to navigate the social systems of the host society. Boateng, Nicolaou, Dijkshoorn, Stronks and Agyemang (2012) found in their study of Ghanaian migrants in Amsterdam that community structures are crucial to the maintenance of the health of migrants. In another setting, Owusu (2000) explains that migrants associations fulfil economic, cultural, social and political roles which serve the needs of immigrants. Through these communities, migrants engage in transnational practices that connect them to both 'here' and 'there.'

2.5. The migration-receiving context: 'Illegality' and migrant vulnerabilities

Once people arrive at their destinations, they encounter social, political and economic institutions, as well as practices, beliefs and cultural norms and dispositions that differ relatively from what exist in the place of origin. Together, these institutions, practices and dispositions form the 'migration-receiving context.' This context constitutes the opportunities and constraints through which migrants' goals and expectations can be achieved or otherwise. Unfortunately, the context of receiving societies is often an impediment to international migrants, especially in a situation where the problem of 'illegality' dominates public discussions and imaginations of the host population. The studies reviewed in this section suggest that the problem of 'illegality' is a major challenge for international migrants, particularly undocumented persons. The section advances the position that 'illegality' often exposes international migrants to risks and structural vulnerabilities in the host society.

2.5.1. 'Illegality' and structural vulnerability: some conceptual clarifications

Migrant 'illegality' was the subject of De Genova's (2002) paper on 'Migrant "illegality" and deportability in everyday life.' First, De Genova (2002, p. 422) considers 'illegality' as pre-eminently a 'political identity' that is produced through migrants' social relation to the state. As a juridical status, '…migrant "illegality" is a spatialized social condition that is frequently central to the particular ways that migrants are racialized as "illegal aliens" within nation-state spaces…' (p. 439). Second, 'illegality' connotes a status that is lived with fear and consciousness of deportability or the possibility of being removed from space through constant policing and surveillance of, and repression in, the public space. To grasp how migrant 'illegality' plays out at destination society, De Genova implores that we reflect on the historical processes and agentic interventions that produced migrant 'illegality' as presently constituted. In addition, De Genova makes two key affirmations. One, that 'illegality' is a social relation that is fundamentally inseparable from citizenship because those tagged as 'illegals' live and interact with a 'legal,' citizen population. Two, irrespective of how we reckon the phenomenon, 'illegality' certainly creates an apparatus that sustains migrant vulnerability.

Building on De Genova's conceptualisation, Willen (2007, p. 9) contends, from a critical phenomenological standpoint, that 'illegality' is a complicated condition that is characterised by anxiety and fear. Willen's (2007) conceptualisation describes 'illegality' as a tri-dimensional notion with judicial, socio-political and existential connotations. While the term defines people

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and structures their positionality and relationship to the state, an 'illegal' status shifts the status of migrants from 'excluded others' to 'wanted criminals' as the social and political circumstances of the host society change. As an existential reality, 'illegality', continues Willen (2007, p. 10), is a form of 'abjectivity' which affects migrant's experience of the world by altering their '…experiences of time, space, embodiment, sociality, and self.'

On the other hand, medical anthropologists, in particular, have applied structural vulnerability increasingly and forcefully to describe the social experiences of immigrants in Western societies (Quesada, Hart and Bourgois, 2011; Quesada, 2012; Castañeda, 2013). The concept refers to positionality or the location of an individual in hierarchical social order and the ways it shapes people's relationship to power and affects them (Quesada et al., 2011, p. 341). This position imposes physical and emotional suffering on specific population groups and individuals in patterned ways (Valdez, Valdez and Sabo, 2015). People in a position of structural vulnerability are exploited and subjugated, and there is a tendency for them to internalise this position through the process of embodiment (Quesada et al., 2011). This concept is apt for analysing the experience of migrants in irregular or 'illegal' situations because it treats 'illegality' as a risk factor which can expose people to discrimination, intolerance, exclusion, criminalisation and social indifference from the host society (Quesada, 2012). While emphasising that structural vulnerabilities may become cumulative and harmful in their effects, Quesada (2012, p. 894) maintains that the negative sentiments about migrants are also being institutionalised as 'disciplinary regimes.'

Applying structural vulnerability as a heuristic category broadens the conceptual arsenal with which 'illegality' may be understood beyond the condition of 'abjection' (Willen, 2007). In this study, 'illegality' and structural vulnerability are employed to describe the processes of deployment of legal and bureaucratic mechanisms to structure exclusion in host societies, and in distinguishing between wanted/unwanted and welcomed/unwelcomed populations.

2.5.2. 'Illegality,' structural vulnerabilities and lived experiences of migrants

'Illegality' as a legal status, socio-political condition and an existential reality is a contradiction in the pursuit of better life in migration projects. As a concept that scholars deploy to illustrate the power of nation-states to exclude and distinguish the wanted/welcomed from the unwanted/unwelcomed aliens, 'illegality' is ontologically a barrier to the attainment of improved living in cross-border movements. In the literature, empirical evidence from various

migration contexts shows that the status and condition of 'illegality' constitutes a distinct vulnerability which often impacts negatively on the lives of international migrants (Willen, 2007; Dobler, 2009; Şaul, 2014).

Indeed, in the last few years, global agencies that work on migration issues have argued that a migrant status is inherently a vulnerable status. In a background paper written for the IOM, Schultz (2014) points out that the migration corridor is characterised by stage-specific vulnerabilities, which migrants encounter as they move back and forth along the migration corridor. 'Illegality' creates vulnerabilities when it threatens the personal or group safety and well-being of undocumented migrants or people in irregular situations, regardless of whether the threat is real or imagined. Scholars such as Arnold, Theede and Gagnon (2014), Cavazos-Rehg, Zayas and Spitznagel (2007), Quesada et al. (2011), and Quesada (2012) offered expositions that illustrate the connections of 'illegality' to vulnerabilities.

In their work on the relationship between deportation concern and emotional and physical well-being among Latino adults in the US, Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2007) describe the health consequences of 'deportability' in the life of undocumented immigrants. For one, 'illegality' creates a vulnerability due to fears around the possibility of deportation. This problem prevents immigrants from visiting social and government agencies (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2007, p. 1130). They also found that Latino immigrants who express concerns about deportation were at a heightened risk of experiencing negative emotional states, particularly anger. The study demonstrates, amongst other things that as immigrants worry about their legal status, deportation becomes a source of vulnerability and poor emotional well-being.

In Tel Aviv, Israel, Willen (2007) offered a critical account of how 'illegality' affects the everyday life of West African and Filipino migrants. Since the mid-2002, the anti-immigration campaign of the Israeli state and popular social and political sentiments shifted the legal identities of immigrants from benign excluded 'others' to 'criminals' who must be deported. An 'illegal' status became a ground for harassment, intimidation, arrest and forcible deportation of the members of West African and Filipino communities (Willen, 2007, pp. 15-16). Among migrants in Tel Aviv, Willen (2007, p. 13) found that 'illegal' status is a catalyst for fear, anxiety, frustration, and suffering. These findings are similar to what scholars observed in other settings.

In a study on the migration, work and living conditions of about 169 sub-Saharan Africans in Istanbul, Turkey, Şaul (2014, p. 153) reveals that migrants without valid documents were afraid to go about the city to seek job opportunities or visit spaces where valuable information can be accessed. Irregular migrants are also denied housing rental services while those who manage to secure apartments live in poor housing and overpriced spaces as lodgers (Şaul, 2014, pp. 166-168). However, owing to the differences among the sub-Saharan African communities, housing accessibility varied from group to group. With particular reference to the population studied, Senegalese migrants in Istanbul have relatively better access to housing than Nigerians who constitute about 44% of the study population. Factors such as having stronger community solidarity, higher income and a higher minimum living standard played essential roles in the relatively better access of Senegalese to housing in Istanbul. Nevertheless, Şaul's study indicates that sub-Saharan Africans who are living in Istanbul 'illegally' experience constraints which limit their prospects of attaining improved social and economic well-being.

The case is not so different for international migrants who moved to wealthier countries on the African continent. In South Africa, social exclusion predisposes migrants to difficulties. Among low-income African migrant women in South Africa, who are sometimes exposed to gender-specific challenges, socially excluded migrants face housing problems wherein they are confined to living in deplorable conditions, from residing in dilapidated buildings to insecure expensive and overcrowded shacks (Mafukidze and Mbanda, 2008, p. 183). They also face emotional problems, loss of income, and avoid public hospitals, all of which impact negatively on their lives. In the same setting, another study shows that economic migrants have poor well-being outcomes and are vulnerable to insecurity and xenophobia. Also, being migrant limits access to public services such as healthcare (Mazars, Matsuyama, Rispoli and Vearey, 2013).

The challenges can be worse for migrants in receiving contexts where migration issues are politicised, and where anti-migrant sentiment is high. Chereni (2014) demonstrates this reality clearly in his work on Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the public sphere, the politicisation of migration projects viewpoints which shape the nature of the conversation about migrants' presence, and helps to fuel anti-migrant sentiments (Chereni, 2014, p. 299). Hostile migration-receiving contexts may feature xenophobic behaviours toward migrants. Narratives used to promote xenophobic behaviours included that they are flooding the country, stealing jobs, and overburdening social service, causing crime and importing

diseases. In this type of migration context, the anti-immigrant feeling is high, and deportation is common (Agadjanian, 2008).

Hence, specific realities at the destination society can influence migrant belongingness as a whole, including their social interactions, relationships and identification (Chereni, 2014). The situation may be more problematic for migrants with little or no historical, cultural, political or linguistic affiliations with the host society. While acknowledging this, Chereni (2014) nonetheless challenged the view that belongingness is an absolute state. He argues that in the face of seeming instability, migrants maintain certain forms of place-specific membership through solidarity formation and social ties already forged in countries of origin and imported into destination setting. The implication, therefore, is that social belongingness (as inclusion/exclusion) vary within, and between sub-systems in the host society, from housing to health accessibility, work, or worship spaces, all of which makes 'total exclusion' an unlikely possibility in migration situations (Chereni, 2014).

2.6. China-Africa relations and international migration from Africa

Although the interaction between China and Africa became regular in the second half of the 20th century, direct contact dates as far back as the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) (Anshan, 2005, 2015). Following the Bandung Conference of 1955, China-Africa relations developed through the 1960s with the signing of agreements between a country and a continent. Being a relationship that was marked by political and economic considerations, the friendly ties that evolved over the years helped China to win a permanent sit on the United Nation Security Council, and governments in Africa received aid and economic and educational assistance worth billions of dollars (Sautman and Hairong, 2007; Cheng and Shi, 2009). The intensification of the developing countries' agenda and anti-hegemonic discourse of the 1970s-80s further strengthened China-Africa social, political and economic links. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, China had emerged as Africa's second largest trading partner and second largest consumer of African resources, following only the United States (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011).

One significant consequence of China-Africa relationship is the increased flows of people in both directions. Although the China-Africa migration corridor only began to attract attention around the 2000s, African migrants were already entering China by 1980s. According to Bertoncello and Bredeloup (2007), African trade migrants, in particular, developed an older

and more discreet dynamic as early as the mid-1980s. Specific economic logics informed the decision of these early callers. Mainly, Africans trading in precious stones in China's neighbouring countries wanted to expand their network and diversify into other lines of business, the financial crises that affected Southeast Asia made onward migration inevitable, while the introduction of direct flight services between China and major African cities made movement cheaper (Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007).

More importantly, a combination of social, political, economic and institutional changes in Africa, and at former high migrant-receiving countries in the North, caused prospective African migrants to explore other migratory destinations in the Middle-East and Asia as alternatives to the Northern countries (Adepoju, 2000; Pelican and Tatah, 2009). The fortress built around Europe has had the most impact on the migration project of Africans (Olaniyi, 2009b). According to Le Bail (2009), early African arrivals to Chinese cities of Guangzhou and Yiwu wanted to participate in China-Africa trade. African students who have spent years at Chinese universities later joined this group (Sautman and Hairong, 2007; Le Bail, 2009). These immigrants are forming permanent communities, living in clustered settlements and engaging in specialised occupations (Li et al., 2009; Pieke, 2011; Li et al., 2012). Today, Africans contribute to the diversity of immigrant populations in China.

2.6.1. Africans in China: New movements and types of flows

At present, the statistics on the exact population of Africans in China is not available. Because of this, the population of Africans in China has been a subject of intense debate. Castillo (2014a, 2014b), for example, challenged speculative estimates of about 500,000 (Bodomo, 2012, p. 10) as unfounded given the transient and recurring nature of African migratory flows into China. In 2014, a widely circulated figure put the population of Africans in Guangzhou alone at 200,000 (Wang, 2014). However, a state official openly denounced this estimate following the fears raised by the locals about the growing African population during the Ebola crisis (Liu, 2014). A more recent rebuttal published by Bodomo and Pajancic (2015) offered reasons why a 'guesstimate' of 500,000 is closer to the real picture of the size of African migrant population in the whole of China. There is no doubt that in the absence of more credible data sources of African inflows and mechanism for determining the size of the undocumented population of Africans in China, it will be difficult to resolve the question about the number of

Africans in China. What is clear from the literature, however, is that Africans are key participants in China's 21st-century migration reality (Bodomo, 2010; Pieke, 2011).

Reporting some of the findings from China's sixth population census, Liang (2014) mentioned that 62% of all international migrants in China are in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong province. Unlike the first two cities, however, Africans have more presence in Guangdong province, mainly in the city of Guangzhou. Many accounts indicate that most of them are there to trade. The submission contrasts sharply with African migrants in the North who travelled to fill the demand for both skilled and unskilled labour (Akyeampong, 2000; Reynolds, 2002). Further, Castillo (2015) claims that there are three main African migrant groups in China: those who attempt to live in Guangzhou; those who recurrently visit the city; and those who pass through it – the majority.

Given the relative infancy of Africa-China migratory flows, a substantial population of Africans moving to China are males. In contradistinction to the increasingly feminising cross-border flows within Africa and towards the Global North, African migration to China is primarily a male endeavour, dominated by young and middle-aged men (Bodomo and Ma, 2010; Mathews and Yang, 2012; Liang, 2014). However, some argue that this pattern is beginning to change. In Tu Huynh's (2015) account of the activities of African women traders in Guangzhou, women are increasingly joining African males in China to trade.

While the preponderance of qualitative approaches to 'Africans in China' research may be limiting the extent of available knowledge on the demographic composition of African populations in China, relevant insights are noticeable in a handful of mix-method studies. As with most authors, a survey, which involved 233 Africans and conducted in Guangzhou by Zhou, Xu and Shenasi (2016), shows that majority are traders, mainly from Nigeria (37%) and highly educated (67%). The high level of education by Africans in China was also observed by other scholars in Yiwu, the second most popular city with trade migrants from Africa (Bredeloup, 2014; Cisse, 2015). Finally, Zhou et al. (2016) found that proficiency in the local language is low as less than one-fifth could speak Chinese and only six percent can speak it well.

2.6.2. African migrations and China's receiving context: Researching realities

Over the past decade and a half, China has increasingly felt the presence of Africans. Pang and Yuan (2013) observe that African blackness, involvement in public unrest and congregation in a particular location (Chocolate city) have drawn attention to African migration reality in the Asian country. Although only a few of the earliest journalistic and academic research on Africans in China were accessible because of the language of publication,[1] many studies have since emerged on different areas of African migrations, activities and experience in China.

Mathews (2007) for instance described the presence and business/ethnic interactions of sub-Saharan African traders and tourists in Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong, China. He found that while different legal categories of African migrants live in the Mansions, some tourist from mainland China expressed disapproval about African presence in the space (Mathews, 2007, p. 175). More recently, Mathews (2016) explored the roles of African logistic agents and middlemen as cultural brokers and the ways they function in economic and social adjustments of African traders in Guangzhou.

On his part, Gilles (2016) employed the concept of translocality in an ethnographic study to show how Africans appropriate multiple spaces in business and community structuring. In his view, the city of Guangzhou is to African traders a translocal space that is composed of multiple localities and links with various spaces, from China to Asia and all over Africa. Fundamentally, the nodes in these multiple spaces form the building blocks for African migrant organising and lives in China. Within China, Giles (2016, p. 31) observes that:

African restaurants, hairdressers, cafés and house churches serve the Africans as meeting points, market squares and trusted places, where the omnipresence of a black population communicates a sense of home.

Giles' (2016) study is particularly significant in that it highlights the critical role of spaces within and outside China in the lives of African migrants. However, only 13 of the 33 participants were from the sub-Saharan region, and the study did not include any Nigerians who form the largest African community in Guangzhou, one of the cities chosen for the study.

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[1] *See* major sources cited in Pang and Yang (2013, pp. 77-78).

This exclusion renders suspect the 'African' view represented in generating knowledge on the role of spaces in everyday experiences in the host society.

Another area of African migrants' lives that scholars discussed is the nature of emerging community formations in the Chinese city. While this issue constitutes a tangential aspect of their research, 'Africans in China' scholars illuminate specific elements that may be useful in thinking about the processes of community formation among African migrants. Writing from the point of view geography, Zhang (2008a) describes the development of an African ethnic enclave in Guangzhou. He traced the emergence of an African enclave in Guangzhou to the Yuexiu district, the oldest Central Business District, where African migrants live in poorly maintained or abandoned housing apartments (Zhang, 2008a, pp. 390-391). Zhang further explains that the residential pattern informed the social distance between immigrants and the local Chinese population. The limited interaction between Africans and Chinese beyond business affairs sustains social distance.

Lyons, Brown and Li (2008, p. 201) examine the commercial strategies of Africans in Guangzhou and highlight the interplay of trade, space, religion and shared culture in community processes. In well-known commercial mansions such as the Tian Xiu Building, trade and pattern of space use encouraged community clustering (Lyons et al., 2008, p. 201). Similarly, religion shapes migrants' experiences of China, their commerce and bonding. According to them, religious affiliations and nature of worship spaces influenced the differences observed in the level of community cohesion and bonding between Francophone and Anglophone Africans (Lyons et al., 2008). Whereas the Muslims from Francophone Africa exploited their religion to establish a cohesive and bonded community, the Anglophone Africans are spawning a more dispersed and less cohesive community and the two large churches attended by its members are not able to serve a commercial function (Lyons et al., 2008, p. 201). Validating this observation, Zhang (2008) indeed argues that religion, not the ethnic economy, enhances ethnic ties among Africans in Guangzhou. Once established, migrant communities assist local authorities in clamping down on illegal activities, settling quarrels and dispersing angry mobs during demonstrations, and networking, while also promoting group activities in the city (Castillo, 2014a, p. 252).

Some scholars focus on the rise and consequences of African-Chinese families in China. As more and more Africans stay in China on a longer-term basis, interracial families are becoming

common in cities where Africans exist in large numbers. In Yiwu, Cisse (2015) observes that many traders have long-term resident status, often living with families and possessing local connections. In another study conducted in Macau, one of China's autonomous regions, Morais (2009) points to the emergence of African-Chinese marriages even though such Sino-African romantic relationship is perceived negatively (Morais, 2009, pp. 15-16). In Guangzhou, the stigmatisation of African-Chinese union fails to halt interracial romance among Africans who employ marriage to a Chinese woman as a strategy for adapting to and surviving 'illegality' (Mathews and Yang, 2012, p. 114).

Concerning adaptation, the inability of African migrants to adopt or use the language of the host society causes integration problems (Mathews and Yang, 2012; Mathews, 2016). For instance, Mathews' (2016) study among 10 Africans who have lived in China between one and 12 years show that only three of them speak Mandarin fluently while one can speak Cantonese. In Mathews' (2016) view, the problem of integration due to language limitations is worsened by the minimal interaction between Africans and their host, even in business. Although opportunities to learn the language exist, Africans view them with suspicion (Mathews, 2016, p. 124).

2.6.3. 'San fei': 'Triple illegality' and migrant vulnerability in China

The issue of 'illegality' or lack of documentation is common to most narratives on African migrants in China. It is almost a consensus that most African migrants in China are overstayers or undocumented migrants (Haugen, 2012; Bork-Hüffer and Yuan-Ihle, 2014; Liang, 2014; Castillo, 2015; Cisse, 2015). For a long time, China was largely a non-immigration country (Liang, 2014; Haugen, 2015) although citizens living in countries within proximity have moved in and out of the territory. In the 1990s China worried about the migrants that were tagged 'low quality' migrants from North Korea and Vietnam, but fear of immigrants has since extended to in-flows from Europe, North America and Africa (Haugen, 2015). In cities like Guangzhou, Africans were initially seen as positive for local economic growth (Lan, 2015). Over time, Africans became targets of special legal reforms and became susceptible to increased policing and surveillance (Lan, 2015). The reason for this, observes Liang (2014, p. 1), is that 'the influx and settling of large numbers of African immigrants in Guangzhou have caused problems of illegal residence, illegal immigration, and illegal employment (also known as "the three illegals").'

The 'triple illegal' or 'the three illegals' or '*san fei*' immigration regime in China is a fallout of nation-state's continued and cumulative responses to the presence of foreigners. Given the changes that occurred from 1985 to 2012, immigration reforms in China may be said to have been deployed in the production of 'illegal' aliens in a sense articulated by De Genova (2002). The Law on Control of the Entry and Exit of Aliens, which was adopted in 1985, punished immigration offenders with jail terms. The said law also provides that people with an irregular status must pay the cost of detention, release and repatriation (IOM and ACP, 2012). In the course of the 2000s, the inadequacy of the existing law became increasingly obvious and the Chinese state responded by embarking on a comprehensive reform that led to the passage of the new immigration law in 2012. The new law, according to Haugen (2015, para 2), '…marked a step towards stricter immigration control.'

Describing the law as the first comprehensive legal framework on international migrant visas, residence, and rights in the whole of China, Haugen (2015) explains that it seeks to eradicate 'illegal' entry, stay and work. The '*san fei*' or 'three illegals' law doubled the fine for over-staying visas and increased detention time for those who cannot pay. The law also imposes a hefty fine on those who employ or help 'illegal' immigrants and rewards those who report illegal migrants to the authority (Haugen, 2015). Specifically:

> The law raised the penalties for all immigration offenses. The fine for overstaying a visa, previously RMB 5,000 (USD $800), was doubled to RMB 10,000. The stipulated detention time for the same offense, to be served instead of paying the fine, increased from three to ten days to five to 15 days, and up to 60 days "if the case is complicated." …[It] also targets those assisting unauthorized migrants. A RMB 5,000 fine may be levied on individuals providing fake documentation or qualifications to ineligible foreigners. Employers of unauthorized migrants can be charged RMB 10,000, while the fine for those working illegally is RMB 20,000 (USD $3,200). Under Article 45, anyone who becomes aware of foreigners who have entered, reside, or are employed illegally in China should notify the local public security bureau. Some local governments have gone further in providing incentives to citizens for fighting the "three illegals." (Haugen, 2015, para 10-12).

The Guangdong province, which hosts the largest African migrant population in China, is known to incentivise local Chinese population under the '*san fei*' regime. Before 2012, the province had introduced the Interim Provisions of Guangdong Province on Administration of and Services to Aliens. According to Lan (2015, p. 5), the provision was a reward and

punishment scheme that was meant to encourage local Chinese to report 'illegal' migrants. It also gave more stop and search powers to the police. 'Due to their black skin color, African migrants are the easiest to identify among foreigners and they became the most vulnerable group in the local government's anti-immigrant campaign' (Lan, 2015, p. 5).

The recent changes in China's immigration law and its consequences on foreigners have been a subject of investigation. In one assessment, Bork-Hüffer and Yuan-Ihle (2014) critique the management of foreigners by the Chinese state and how it impacts the livelihood and opportunities of non-Chinses foreign populations, especially Africans. They argue that Chinese legal reforms produced stricter control and monitoring of Africans while those categorised as 'foreign talents' benefit from it. Apart from punishments of fines, repatriation and possible imprisonment, offenders are blacklisted, which often implies that the networks built over many years may be lost (Liang, 2014).

In enforcing the immigration rules, instances of African getting injured and dying while trying to escape visa inspection by Chinese police officers have been reported (Rennie, 2009). Consequently, undocumented migrants increasingly perceive the host state as an obstacle or enemy (Mathews, Lin and Yang, 2014, p. 221). On their part, undocumented African migrants adopt some strategies to evade the state, including laying low, being inconspicuous, and committing 'trivial' transgressions, relying on networks/capital to evaluate uncertain information, and engaging in concealed self-representation (Mathews and Yang, 2012; Mathews et al., 2014). As a result, locating and arresting the migrants becomes difficult for the state. Despite this, the city administrators respond by adopting informal strategies and empowering individual law officers to serve as interpreters of the law (Mathews et al., 2014, pp. 220, 227, 228). The state is also able to leverage on community associations to advance its security agenda while enforcement officers exercise discretion over immigration laws (Castillo, 2015). Unfortunately, this leaves the fate of migrants to the discretion of officers, potentially making immigrant lives difficult.

2.6.4. African encounters: Discrimination, racism and other forms of 'othering'

The Chinese state perceives all foreigners as an 'othered' population. Before 2010, China's official census did not capture foreigners (Pang and Yuan, 2013). When foreigners finally appeared in the 2010 population census, no distinction was made amongst Africans, Asians, Europeans or any other foreign population. The document grouped everyone as 'foreigners'

(Pang and Yuan, 2013, pp. 48-49). In major destination cities for Africans, Chinese people are finding it difficult to accept African migrants even though they acknowledge their presence (La Bail, 2009). While available evidence suggests that majority of Africans in China's cities and commercial centres are involved in trade and other legitimate economic and social activities, many of them experience social and structural discriminations, racism, and stereotypes.

Africans experience institutionalised discrimination and negative perceptions in China, from the port of entry up to where they work and live. Bodomo (2015) studied the interaction and discriminatory encounters of regular African visitors to China. Although interaction with Chinese immigration officers is peaceful, African travellers reported cases of tension, conflicts and unpleasant experiences. Some scholars alluded to the problem of increased raids targeted at Africans by 'foreigner police' (Bork-Hüffer and Yuan-Ihle, 2014, p. 585). Within places of residence, Zhou, Shenasi, et al. (2016) found that raids over visa are common in African dominated neighbourhoods. According to them, these haphazardly conducted raids are popular activities of the local authority. As Lan (2015, pp. 13-14) observes:

> …while the local state's immigration control claims to target all foreigners, in practice the police tend to single out African migrants for visa and passport check. Most of the immigration raids in Guangzhou also occur in areas where African migrants are concentrated.

At the local level or in the day-to-day encounter, negative perceptions and attitudes drive social discrimination against Africans. A survey indicates that 71.7% of the 5,119 Chinese respondents knew very little about Africa, and about 30.4% associates Africa with poverty, underdevelopment, and HIV/AIDS (Li and Rønning, 2013, as cited in Lan, 2015). Zhou, Shenasi, et al. (2016) examined how Chinese people encounter and perceive Africans and the ways that such perceptions shape attitudes and racial formation. Their findings show that local Chinese residents maintain an ambivalent disposition towards African aliens. While welcoming their presence, Chinese perceive Africans negatively and maintain ambivalent attitudes towards them (Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016). They maintain stereotyped negative perceptions of Africans regarding physical attractiveness, personality traits, and abilities, although they did not consider them as lazy or innately unintelligent (Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016, p. 157). In the same study, only 6% of 513 Chinese respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Africans were good-looking and 56% viewed them as violent. Furthermore, about three-

quarters of these Chinese respondents disagreed that Africans were law-abiding and nearly three-quarters believed that Africans had unpleasant body odour. The researchers reported observing Chinese covering their noses when Africans got near them, whether in shops, buses, or subways (Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016, p. 159).

Likewise, Bodomo and Ma (2010) found that law enforcement officers single out Africans for routine visa checks. Whereas billboard notices advice all foreigners to carry passports, Africans experience overwhelming stoppages, interrogation and harassment, both publicly in the streets and during private moments in the restaurants (Bodomo and Ma, 2010, p. 287). This experience differs markedly from what obtains in the city of Yiwu where Africans enjoy more freedom and experience less harassment (Bodomo and Ma, 2010). In explaining the variations in the experiences of Africans in Guangzhou and Yiwu, however, the authors argue that the regions of origin may have played a role – Africans in Yiwu come mainly from the Maghreb while sub-Saharan Africans are dominant in Guangzhou (Bodomo and Ma, 2010, p. 288).

In times of crisis in the countries of origin, African migrants in China were exposed to a process of 'illegalisation,' which in turn led to systemic criminalisation and vulnerabilities. Following the outbreak of the Ebola crisis across West Africa in 2014, the Chinese state responded by placing an embargo on migrants from affected countries. Apart from sealing of the borders to prospective migrants, some nationals of those countries who were already within China's borders became causalities of public health response (Lin, Hall, Khoe and Bodomo, 2015). The story of a Liberian woman presented in Tu Huynh's (2015) study on African women traders in Guangzhou is instructive. At the height of Ebola crisis, the United Nations granted a Liberian asylum document, but she was unable to use it to obtain a right to stay in Guangzhou. Lacking necessary papers, the Liberian became an overstayer, an 'illegal trader' (Tu Huynh, 2015, p. 3). Hood's (2011, 2013) research into China's HIV/AIDS public health promotion strategies provides a rich historical, socio-cultural and political context for grasping current perceptions about Africans as diseased population.

Other studies on African population in China also highlight the challenges of racism. Zhang (2008) for instance mentions that Chinese people direct psychosocial xenophobia against Africans. Cameroonian migrant teachers working in rural China complained about latent racism (Pelican and Tatah, 2009). In a critical comparative exploration of campus racism and contemporary internet racism against Africans, Cheng (2011) discovered that Chinese freely

deploy extreme racist constructions and comments towards black people. As shown in the following quotes, the constructions range from fear to utter disgust about African presence:

> "It is a racial invasion!"; "Public safety is gone!"; "Are they becoming the 57th ethnic group?" (officially the government identifies 56 ethnic groups in China); "China is not a camp for refugees; our resources are already scant"; "Not obeying law and order is their nature, not to mention their body odour!"; "Go home you African dogs! You are here only to share our businesses and our women!" (Cheng, 2011, p. 567).

Although African and Chinese people have interacted for many decades, a black person remains a racialised 'other' in the everyday imagination of many Chinese. Africans have been disparaged using labels such as *hēi guǐ* (black devils), *aizibing* (AIDS) while Africa is sometimes described as *feizhou* (evil continent) (Sautman, 1994).

Besides, racism towards Africans are projected in the media through demeaning constructions of the black person (Le Bail, 2009; Cheng, 2011). Le Bail (2009) argues that the Chinese media did not help in improving the relationship between the local population and African migrants. According to her, the projection of Africans in the Chinese media is fuelling a widespread stereotype about the population. While Chinese in Guangzhou do not perceive Africans as a threat, given their negligible number in the city, conflict potentialities are present due to stereotyped media reporting about Africans in relation to differences in lifestyle, public health hazards and threats, and social problems (Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016, p. 158). Zhou et al. (2016) reveal that misrepresentation in Chinese media is prevalent and official talk about Africans revolve around the '*san fei*' (three illegals) phenomenon. However, Zhou et al. (2016) emphasise that the types and levels of contact as well as the social contexts of African-Chinese encounters shape the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion of African migrants in Guangzhou. In this regard, their study shows that while mutual distrust is common between Africans and Chinese taxi drivers, Africans interact with minivan service providers and rental agents on a relatively equal status.

As far as African presence is concerned, China's migration-receiving context is fraught with many challenges. However, some scholars disagree that Africans are singled out for discrimination in China (Castillo, 2015; Bork-Hüffer, 2016; Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016). Given how recurrent the themes of exclusion, discrimination, racism and mistreatment are in studies on Africans in China, scholars who expressed reservation about 'unique experiences of

suffering' contesting instead that Africans are *not so* different from other migrant populations in China. Different shades of these positions are noticeable in discourses on the challenges of social discrimination, marginalisation and housing problem (Castillo, 2015; Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016). As the quotation below implies the statuses of Africans and internal Chinese migrants overlap and, they are perhaps evening out:

> …when the two groups compete directly in the housing market, local Chinese residents tend to be low-skilled rural migrants without GZ *hukou*, who are themselves marginalized in society. In some cases, the Chinese migrants without GZ *hukou* are discriminated against more harshly than Africans, as in the case of the informal rental housing market, which favors Africans over Chinese migrants without *hukou*. (Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016, p. 158).

On her part, Bork-Hüffer (2016) argues that Africans compare with the Chinese floating population in healthcare exclusions. Also, contrary to scholars who believe that Africans face unique challenges (Bodomo and Ma, 2010, p. 287), or 'exceptional suffering,' Castillo (2015, p. 6) insists that their social experiences are almost similar to what internal Chinese migrants undergo[2]. Similar viewpoint has been expressed in a more recent study (Zhou, Shenasi, et al., 2016, p. 158).

Unfortunately, by arguing this way, and in an attempt to draw similarities between Chinese and Africans on issues of exclusion and un-belonging, studies that contest the narrative of 'unique suffering' strip Africans of their peculiar realities. They also erroneously suggest that 'uniqueness' is an absolute state of being when this may not necessarily be the case. Even in a situation when policy and structural contexts of the Chinese state may affect African and Chinese internal migrants in the same way, the identity and notion of being an alien 'other,' as opposed to the latter's Chineseness and citizenship, could make much difference. In the subsequent section, the review claims that further disaggregation within the African population

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[2] Castillo later clarifies in the endnote that he is "…not arguing that Africans in the city do not suffer some particular forms of discrimination, my intention is to highlight that the 'discrimination' issue is more complex than is often assumed" (2015, p. 16). This is an interesting clarification but the assertion that 'discrimination issue is more complex' is not the same thing as the claim that Africans do not experience it in a unique way.

will likely reveal internal complexities, which 'comparative analysts' trivialise, perhaps unintentionally.

2.6.5. Influences of lived experiences on African migrants in China

Numerous studies highlight the effects of China's '*san fei*' regime and the context of discrimination, racism and negative perceptions on African migrants. For one, local immigration regulation imposed a rigid identity of 'illegality' on many irregular African migrants within Chinese territory (Le Bail, 2009). This imposition has fuelled problems of lack of freedom, state surveillance and control of Africans. More specifically, the Chinese migration-receiving context exposes Africans to exploitation and spatial entrapment, fear, health and housing challenges, and threatens settlement and mobility aspirations.

First, law enforcement officers are exploiting the vulnerabilities created by the '*san fei*' regime. As Castillo (2015) shows, the problem of 'illegality' is appropriated to create informalised institutional exploitation. In Guangzhou, enforcement officers that monitor immigrants on the ground (the *Chengguan*) charge money from every overstayer arrested. While seeking to avoid jail, and lacking requisite fee to procure return documents to their countries, many of these overstayers become entrapped (Castillo, 2015; also see Haugen, 2012). On his part, Mathews (2016) argues that the 'feelings of uncertainty' is widespread among the population, and China does not feel like home even though they enjoy staying there.

Second, 'illegality' issues intersect with problems of race and discrimination to produce housing barriers, with negative social implications on African migrants. Quoting Yao (2012), Pang and Yuan (2013, p. 71) point out that while annual increment on house rents is pushing Africans out of the core urban settlements, rents for the same premise is higher for foreigners than for locals. Lyons, Brown and Li (2008) also mentioned how linguistic incompetency is exposing Africans seeking accommodation to exploitation in Guangzhou. A form of institutionalised housing discrimination is also common in the city. Zhang (2008, p. 394) explains that housing agents often raise rents to discourage the influx of Africans into some neighbourhoods while some landlords outrightly refuse to rent spaces to them.

Similarly, Zhou et al. (2016) claim that visa restriction causes housing barriers by entrapping Africans in a vicious circle of exclusion. Because of visa issues, residential choices for African migrants are limited to stigmatised spaces such as *chengzhongcuns*, or settlements that are

'…self-governed enclaves in gray [*sic*] areas of local legislation, [where] homeowners often enlarge their houses with illegal add-ons or multiple partitions to create more rental units' (Zhou et al., 2016, p. 147). In Foshan, a city close to Guangzhou, unofficial order compelled registered housing agents to stop leasing apartments to Africans (Bork-Hüffer and Yuan-Ihle, 2014, p. 585). Elsewhere in Macau, China, Morais (2009) explains that the nature of residency law which forces the migrants to live in poor informal guesthouses drives low access to quality housing.

Furthermore, the vulnerable positionality of Africans is having an adverse effect on African-Chinese families. Despite the fact that some Africans are settling in China and starting to raise families, they experience challenges in educating their children, including children born to African and Chinese parents (Lan, 2015). Public schools, in particular, are not willing to accept black African children and private schools, which are mostly exorbitant, are not close to where Africans conduct businesses (Pang and Yuan, 2013, pp. 71-72).

Despite the challenges they encounter, migrants, as active agents, counter their exclusion and improve individual and group well-being by maintaining solidarity and establishing communities. As Castillo (2015) argues, the monitoring of African illegalities, while making life difficult, also triggered social cohesion through the formation of sporting clubs and association offices. Social networks and migrant communities are essential for support and adjustment in China. In the context of exclusion, African migrants draw upon social networks while seeking health care with informal associations operating as a resource for advice on healthcare options (Bork-Hüffer, 2016, pp. 67-68).

2.7. Moving east: Nigerian migrants and China's receiving context

The studies reviewed so far show that African migration in China is real and complicated. These studies opened up discussion on emerging African immigrant settlement in China, their living conditions, trading activities in different Chinese spaces, and aspects of their encounters with their host community. However, the tendency of researchers to singularise Africa and present their migration and social experiences at the destination society as the same pose a serious challenge. Within China, Castillo (2014a) states that:

> …in the case of Africans in Guangzhou (as seems to be common to several other African
> diasporas) the trajectories, paces, and paths these individuals undertake subvert, confuse,

and blur the notions of movement and settlement that are pervasive in traditional/structural/economistic approaches to migration. (Castillo, 2014a, p. 241).

Notwithstanding, Castillo (2015) continues to generalise African migration stories and experiences in China. He represented 'Africans in China' with data generated from an insufficient observation from few migrants coming from one or two countries in one corner of the African continent. The need to disaggregate the migration experiences of Africans in China may be gleaned from existing evidence on African international migrants in Chinese societies. Based on their study on the role of language in the integration of Africans in Macau, Bodomo and Teixeira-E-Silva (2012) found that whereas Africans occupy the lowest rung of the society, historico-linguistic affinity placed Portuguese-speaking Africans far and above Anglophone Africans. This is so because Macau was a former colony of Portugal, and as such, Africans from former Portuguese colonies arrived much earlier than other groups. Given that Portuguese is the language of power, especially in the civil service, Lusophone Africans have better access to the administrative structures of Macau than English-speaking Africans.

What is more, even though the cities of Macau and Guangzhou are far apart, Africans in Macau denigrate those living in Guangzhou as 'bad people' from 'Chocolate City' who may come and undo all the good things that Portuguese-speaking Africans have done (Bodomo and Teixeira-E-Silva, 2012, p. 84). Morais (2009) made a similar conclusion when she studied Nigerian students in Macau. In Guangzhou, Pang and Yuan (2013, p. 61) observed similar nuances wherein other Africans attempt to escape the stigma of 'illegality' by dissociating themselves from Nigerians.

2.7.1. Nigerians in China

No doubt, the strengthening of diplomatic ties between Nigeria and China played a significant role in the dispersal of Nigerians to Chinese cities. It is worth noting that before 1971, China did not have official diplomatic relations with Nigeria. In 2006, President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Nigeria to cement trade relations between the two countries. Nigerian presidents have also paid a diplomatic visits to China, including Olusegun Obasanjo in 2001 and Goodluck Jonathan in 2013. Utomi (2008) comments that some Nigerian state governors led delegations to China in a bid to attract investment and aid to their respective states. Hence, between 2000 and 2010, annual Nigerian-Chinese trade increased from $2 to

$18 billion. In 2012, the country also imported more goods from China than from the US (Wagner and Cafiero, 2013).

According to Egbula and Zheng (2011), the majority of Nigerians in China are businessmen and stay for short period. This view resonates with available empirical evidence given by most researchers (Haugen, 2012; Bodomo and Pajancic, 2015; Castillo, 2015). Like the rest of Africans in China, the population of Nigerians is not known, but available estimates indicate that they are the most populous African nationality. One researcher states that the Nigerian community office in Guangzhou has over 3,000 registered members, which makes it an important organisation in the city (Castillo, 2015, p. 12). It was also said that around 700 or 800 Nigerians have a long-term residence permit in Guangzhou (Castillo, 2014a). However, these estimates did not capture non-registered Nigerian migrants and those with undocumented status.

Studies detailing the specific experiences of Nigerian traders in China are scarce. In a study that focused on Africans broadly, Castillo (2015) provided information on how Nigerians negotiate everyday living in Guangzhou under a condition of uncertainty or what he called 'precarity.' Based on an ethnographic approach that involved observation and interviews with two Nigerian community leaders and other African migrants in Guangzhou, he documented how Africans struggle with image problems because of the criminal activities of others, particularly Nigerians' (Castillo, 2015, p. 13).

 To date, Heidi Haugen (2012) conducted the most in-depth analysis of the problem of 'illegality' among Nigerians in Guangzhou. In a paper titled 'Nigerians in China: A second state of immobility,' Haugen (2012) contextualised the issue of 'illegality' as it pertains to Nigerians in China. Haugen's study framed the immigration of Nigerians to China as an exemplary instance of contemporary diversification of migration flows, commercialisation of migration process and increased policing of immigrants within national borders. Noting that the ways that a destination country responds to immigration are crucial to the well-being of the foreigners, Haugen (2012, p. 66) asserted that Chinese immigration laws constrain Nigerians to '…constantly assess how, where, when, and with whom they move about.' Conducted in Guangzhou among Nigerians, non-Nigerians and Chinese, the study revealed how Chinese immigration policy is impeding the physical mobility of Nigerians once their visas expire. Using the concept of 'second state of immobility,' she explains that having succeeded in

emigrating from the country of origin, Nigerians find themselves spatially entrapped in new ways in China, causing business impediments and personal distress. Haugen linked the problem of immobility to the context of fear that Nigerians experience on a day-to-day basis in China. For some Nigerians, the anxiety and fear of arrest have caused disability. Describing the case of Ben, a Nigerian living in Guangzhou, Rennie (2009, p. 4) captures how 'illegality' leads to fear and risk of disability as follows:

> After his one-month visa expired, he stayed on, renting the space under a friend's valid visa. When police raided the shopping complex, he jumped a fence to escape, injuring his ankle. He is lucky – some die jumping from apartment windows or trying to escape across busy roads. Still on crutches five months later, Ben wants to go home; his own experience, and those that others recount – including that of a Nigerian beaten to death by police last year – are enough to convince him.

In another study, Pang and Yuan (2013) attempted to interrogate the experiences of African migrants that are resident in Chocolate City, including Nigerians. Their findings show that Nigerians are the most projected in Chinese media spectacles while other Africans ostracise them. On the one hand, because of their sheer size and 'notoriety,' Nigerians in Guangzhou are the most reported group from sub-Saharan Africa in the Chinese media (Pang and Yuan, 2013, p. 61). This makes them easy targets of discrimination and racial profiling. On the other hand, within the African community, Nigerians attract social distancing from other Africans who perceive them as chronic 'illegals.' Because of the stigma attached to an irregular or 'illegal' status, other Africans sometimes dissociate themselves from Nigerians (Pang and Yuan, 2013, p. 61).

There were other criminogenic dimensions to the presence of Nigerians in China, which create a new set of vulnerabilities. Apart from the criminalisation that results from visa expiration or false documentation, Nigerians in China are implicated in drugs smuggling and sales, robbery, theft, street drinking and so on. At the 2009 Nigeria-China Strategic Dialogue in Beijing, the Permanent Secretary to Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Joe Keshi, said that 732 Nigerians were in jail, among which 106 were in prison for trafficking, robbery and fraud (TayoTFC, 2009). In 2011, Aminu Wali, the Nigerian Ambassador to China, also said that about 400 Nigerians were in Chinese jails, with close to five notifications of the arrest of Nigerian nationals received at the embassy on a daily basis (Odili.net, 2011). According to

Shola Onadipe, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Nigerian Embassy in Beijing, Nigerians' notoriety in China is simply unprecedented. Commenting further on the 'embarrassing behaviours' of some Nigerians, Onadipe swears that:

If not that we are in democracy, I would say there are a lot of Nigerians who are living outside the shores of Nigeria who don't have any business outside… What the law requires you to do is either seek for extension or go out and renew your visa and come back, but what do you see in China, Nigerians, those who have overstayed for three, four, five, six years, go and open shops, buying and selling. Most of them are not paying tax, most of them use fraudulent means to run the shops… a lot of them are notorious for nefarious activities with hard drugs. (Ojeme, 2014).

The previous assertion reproduces the negative official disposition and treatment of Nigerian migrants by their home government (De Haas, 2006; Olaniyi, 2009a). For the traders, in particular, the stereotypes, discrimination, and negative perceptions and dispositions are problematic. They are caught in a complex web during encounters with the host society. As indicated above, this group experiences discrimination, from law as well as daily practices and constructions around 'problem immigrants.' While some of them conduct legitimate businesses, their lack of a right to stay in Chinese spaces imposes strict 'illegality' on their presence. At another level, their identity is interlocked with the identity of marginality smeared on them by co-nationals that were involved in crimes. The interplay of these issues will likely influence the settlement experiences of Nigerians as a distinct ethnonational African population in China. This research will attempt to understand how Nigerian traders manage these complications as they seek to insert themselves in Chinese society.

2.8. Theoretical perspectives: Integrated international migration and diasporisation framework

The theoretical perspectives that guide the study derive from Integrated international migration (IIM) perspective and diasporisation framework. The IIM perspective has its origin in the theoretical synthesis of Massey et al. (1991) who called attention to the critical need for an explanation of international migration that is based on multifactorial analysis. The diasporisation framework, on the other hand, derives from Kim Butlers' (2001) re-conceptualisation of 'diaspora' as an analytical tool. Whereas IIM perspective combines the central propositions of extant international migration theories, diasporisation framework

presents 'diaspora' as a heuristic tool for diagnosing migrant communities that are constituted in a 'certain way.'

2.8.1. Integrated international migration perspective

The IIM perspective is a robust theoretical approach that seeks to explain the causes of international migration from a holistic point of view. The underlying assumption is that the processes that lead to the dispersal of people cannot be explained using a single theoretical perspective. It holds instead that international migration is initiated and perpetuated by a diverse set of factors. In stating this assumption, Massey et al. (1993) declared that:

> …[A] full understanding of contemporary migratory processes will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone, or by focusing on a single level of analysis. Rather, their complex, multifaceted nature requires a sophisticated theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels, and assumption (1993, p. 432).

The explanatory propositions of IIM perspectives are scattered among two broad categories of competing, yet compatible, theories of international migration.

In the first category are theories explaining the *initiation* of international migration, including neo-classical economics, new economics of migration, dual labour market and world systems theories. Neoclassical economics identifies differentials in wage and employment conditions between countries as the macro-level cause of international migration and recognises rational actors' cost-benefit calculation as a micro-level causative factor of trans-border movement. The new economics of migration situates migration within the confines of households wherein decisions to move are taken to minimize risks to family income or to overcome capital constraints on family production activities; dual labour market theory links international migration to the structural requirements of modern industrial economies; world systems theory explains the trans-border flow of people as a natural consequence of unequal economic globalisation and market penetration and destabilisation across national boundaries (Massey et al. 1993, p. 432-454).

The second category of theories, however, is interested in explaining the *perpetuation* or the factors sustaining the continuation of international migration. Massey et al. (1993) contended that factors initiating migration are sometimes different from those perpetrating it as 'new conditions that arise in the course of migration come to function as independent causes

themselves: migrant networks spread, institutions supporting transnational movement develop, and the social meaning of work changes in receiving societies' (p. 448). These migration-perpetrating factors are theoretical postulations with strong roots in the network, institutional, cumulative causation theories.

Given the multiple dimensionalities of the explanations that the IIM perspective invites us to explore in accounting for why people move across international borders, Van Hear (1998, p. 14-16) surmises the factors, albeit creatively modified, to include:

1) individual decision-making and motivation based either on cost-benefit analysis or considerations that are linked to social, cultural, safety and security concerns;

2) household decision-making and strategies directed at minimising or spreading risks;

3) disparities between places of origin and destination in terms of wages, employment or income generating opportunities and inequalities in standards of living;

4) state of development of migrant networks and institutions which connect former, current and potential migrants and those whose do not migrate, in countries of origin and destination;

5) prevailing migration regime which encompasses the national and international body of law, regulations, institutions and policy dealing with the movement of people, and;

6) a macro-political economy which shapes the distribution of power and resources globally and regionally, including those affecting the structure and distribution of production and consumption, and transports and communication.

2.8.2. Diasporisation framework

The diasporisation framework was offered by Kim Butler (2001). In a bid to correct the public essentialisation of diaspora as an ethnic category, Butler perceives 'diaspora' as a framework of analysis with a strong diagnostic power. In his view, 'rather than being viewed as an ethnicity, diaspora may be alternatively considered as a framework for the study of a specific process of community formation' (Butler, 2001, p. 192). In pursuit of this 'diaspora as a framework' goal, Butler argues that a researcher must address five fundamental questions:

reasons for, and condition of, the dispersal; relationship with homeland; relationship with host society; interrelationships within the diaspora group; comparative study of different diaspora.

The first question deals with the process of dispersal, and it is considered as a fundamental basis for understanding any given diaspora. This dimension in the process of diasporic formation derives from the view that people have different reasons for migrating from their ancestral homes and that is necessary for the diaspora researcher to capture the variations in the experience of the initial dispersal. The goal of raising this question is to determine why people left, which segment of the society migrated and to understand and link the circumstances of their departure to their experience in the new places of settlement. Butler (2001) emphasised that these factors focus on the conditions of the original dispersal rather than on the roles assumed by migrants once they have settled in their new host-lands. She notes that it is possible within a single diaspora to have multiple types of migration depending on the degree of volition on departure (if forced or voluntary) and the type of movement involved (whether it is cumulative individual movements or through trade networks for instance). Butler notes that migration theories are relevant in this initial stage of analysing diaspora communities.

The second dimension of diaspora analysis posits that it is reasonable to interrogate the nature of the relationship that specific diaspora groups have with her homeland. Is the relationship between the two political, economic, cultural or all three plus others? In other words, what is the nature of flows in both directions? Is the homeland ambivalent about the situation of its diaspora or actively engaged in their lives? Through what practices do the diaspora connect the homeland? These questions are important because it is the homeland, be it actual or imagined, that gives meaning and identity to the diaspora in the first place.

The third aspect of diaspora analysis incorporates the host society as the primary agent in the formation and development of diasporas. Apart from the homeland and the diaspora group itself that partake in the formation of diasporic identity, the host society is a distinct site within which immigrant communities interface with members and institutions of the host community to influence the process and form of diasporisation. The assumption here is that host communities play a crucial role in stimulating diasporic consciousness among immigrants. The response to, and treatment of, immigrants can influence how quickly they become diasporised, and it is, therefore, germane to tease out how immigrant communities relate with the host society.

The goal of the fourth dimension is to assess how different segments of a diaspora interact. Butler (2001, p. 207) contends that 'contact between communities of the diaspora, *independent* of contacts with the homeland, is vital in forging diasporic consciousness, institutions, and networks.' This aspect helps to recognise the 'unique community' between members of the diaspora group and the role played by this connection in the construction and expression of diasporic consciousness. The final dimension of diaspora analysis serves comparability purposes. The ultimate goal of the framework, according to Butler (2001), is to provide a basis for a comparative approach to diaspora studies. When the first four questions have been raised and answered, it is possible to compare diasporas in spatial and temporal terms to account for changes over the course of the diasporisation of a group. The comparative analysis can also help to identify qualitative similarities and differences between and within a single national diaspora.

2.8.3. Synthesising IIM and diasporisation frameworks

Diaspora formation is a consequence of some form of movement of people from an original place of origin to two or more countries of destination (Safran, 1991; Cohen, 1997). The movement which produces a diaspora community – be it labour, the victim, cultural, imperial or trade diasporas – is itself a consequence of multiple factors that cut across micro-level conditions of individuals and households, and the macro-level structures that permit movement to occur. As a distinct group in China, Nigerians have a complex dispersal course with multiple origins and their diasporisation, through increased settlement, are produced through factors that weave practices, institutions and networks across the home and host countries.

Hence, the reason for initial migration is expected to be varied and complex (Van Hear, 1998). For instance, some may move due to genuine desire to participate in the China-Nigeria trade corridor, and the entrepreneur who ventures out on this footing may not necessarily be 'pushed out' forcefully in a deterministic sense – as argued by Gopalkrishna and Oloruntoba (2012). It may thus be possible to distinguish those who moved with matching financial capability to do so. It is also probable to have those who leverage on networks as they seek to achieve improved lives and others who initially migrated because of economic hardship in the country of origin. Substantial exploration of the diverse migration courses taken by Nigerian will be explored using the IIM perspective.

Through Butler's analytical framework, we can explore the experience of Nigerians as an emergent migrant community. In the spaces where Nigerians settled, their experiences may vary from hostility to friendliness or a mixture of both. Whatever the response of a host community to their presence, one can anticipate that the intersectionality of identities they hold, as Nigerian, (black) African, members of an ethnic group, 'illegal/legal' resident, and whether they are males or females, will shape the process of settlement. Perhaps, of even greater influence on how Nigerian immigrants will experience China is the attitude of the Nigerian embassy, as an extension of the government back home, the relationship with host society and the nature of relationship within the diaspora itself. Ultimately, the frameworks will give insights into the migration and settlement experiences of Nigerians in Guangzhou.

2.9. Conclusion

More than demonstrating that African international migrants are exploring new migration pathway in China, this review highlighted that the context of reception influences the settlement experiences of people on the move. The synthetic position of the studies reviewed is that, overall, Africans face many problems in the host society. Regardless of how the Chinese state has 'opened up' to Africans over the past decade and a half, studies suggest that Africans face challenges of racism, stereotypes, discriminations, and legal issues.

In as much as the studies reviewed enhanced our understanding about the reality, enormity and complex nature of Africa-China migrations, persisting generalisations and low level of data disaggregation about 'Africans' in Chinese society are significant weaknesses. As revealed in the negligible, but more nuanced studies on African migrants, the majority of works are insensitive to variabilities in the experiences of specific African groups in China. In the case of Nigerians in particular, their biased representations, scapegoating and experience of intra-African social distancing demonstrate that extant studies conceal more than they reveal.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In order to answer the research questions raised, this section provides a detailed, systematic description of the methods and methodology of the study. It describes the methods employed in executing the study, how they were used and the rationale behind the choices made. In the next paragraphs, a cursory view of the research design is presented, followed by more detailed explanations of the critical elements of the research process, including population and area of the study, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research design

The study was non-experimental and adopted an ethnographic qualitative design. Ethnography is an approach that involves a commitment to 'being there, and recognises the importance of a researcher's connection with the site and subjects of research (Murchison, 2010). It also emphasises the participation of researcher in the day to day life of the study participants (Adato, 2007). Fieldwork was conducted over the course of two separate visits to Guangzhou, first from January to February and then between September and October 2017. During this period, the interactions and social relations among Nigerians were observed within work and living environments. Data collection was done using qualitative approaches of in-depth, key informant and life history interviews, informal conversations and a mixture of participant and non-participant observations in different research settings. In all, a total of sixty-nine (69) participants were interviewed, including Nigerians and Chinese.

3.3. Area of the study

The study was conducted in Guangzhou, China. Guangzhou is a megacity and major port city in China's Guangdong province. It is located in the southeast of the province and to the north of the Pearl River Delta, bordering the South China Sea and adjacent to Hong Kong and Macau (The People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality, 2010) (See Figure 3.1). Covering a total area of 7434.4 square kilometres, the city has 10 districts and two county-level cities under its jurisdiction. With a population of over 12 million people in 2011 and a vibrant industrial sector, Guangzhou has grown its economy since 1992 to become the third highest ranked among the 10 largest cities in China (The People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality, 2010).

Figure 3.1: Map showing the city of Guangzhou, China
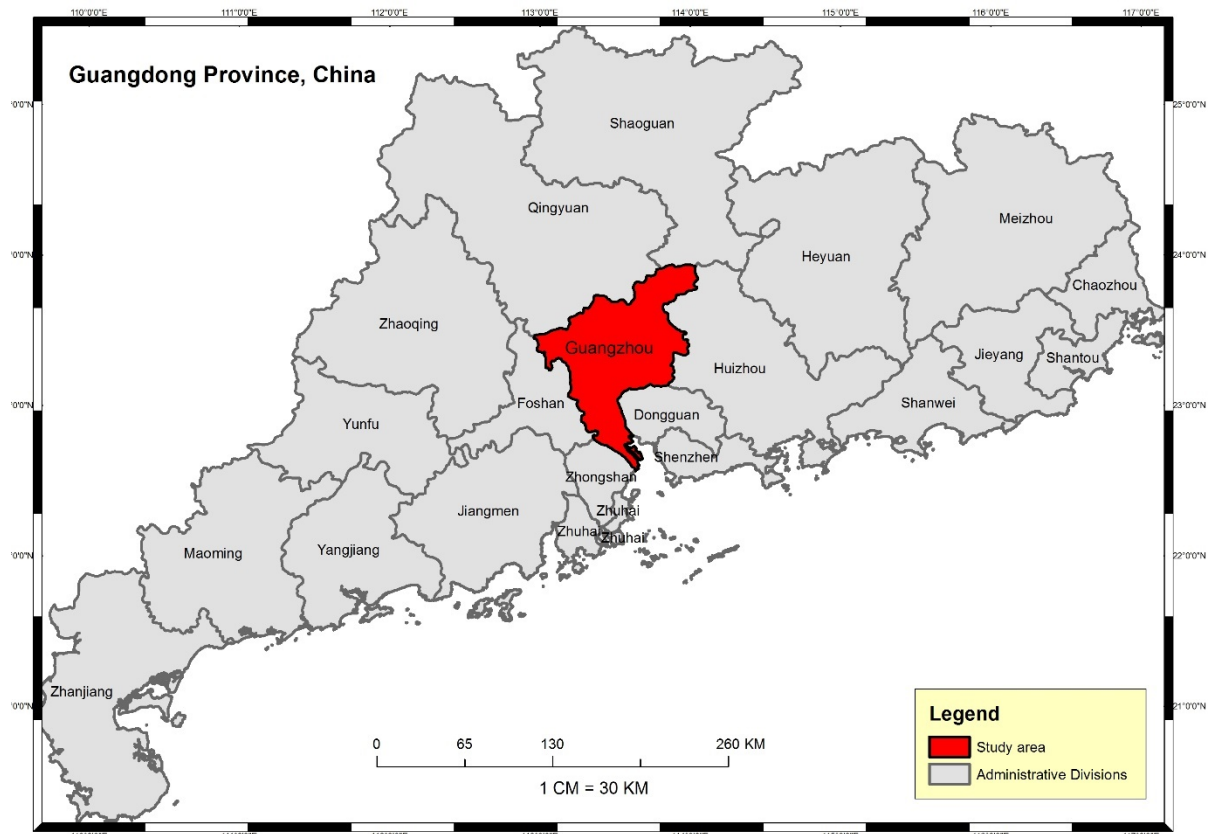
The choice of location was informed by documented accounts of the concentration of Africans in the Chinese city. Since the 1990s, sub-Saharan Africans started moving into Guangzhou from Hong Kong, Bangkok, Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur, opening offices in large buildings around Baiyun and Yuexiu Districts (Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007). Haugen (2012), who studied the same group that is of interest in this project, had remarked that Guangzhou in southern China has emerged as a centre for immigration from sub-Saharan Africa, Nigerians in particular. Although Nigerians are also in Hong Kong and mainland areas like Yiwu, it is in Guangzhou that majority of them are concentrated. The city also hosts a bi-annual Chinese Export Commodities Fair which had attracted hundreds of thousands of foreigners since 1957, including transnational African traders who hope to benefit from China's mass production of consumer goods, ranging from textiles, clothing, foot wares, bags, and auto parts to computers, phones and many others. One author claims that a third of all exports are negotiated at this bi-annual fair (Bredeloup, 2012). A popular African settlement called 'Chocolate City' or 'Little Africa' (Li et al., 2009; Pang and Yuan, 2013), known for its African outlook is also found there. The space is therefore appropriate for understanding Nigerian international migrants in China.

3.4. Population of the study

Participant for the study included: a) Individual Nigerian migrants and key members of Nigerian community associations; b) Nigerian consular representative in Guangzhou; and c) Chinese shop owners, property agents, and ordinary community members. To be included in the study, Nigerian migrants must have arrived in China at least three months before the start of the fieldwork while Chinese participants must be residents of Guangzhou city.

3.5. Selection of participants

As mentioned before, data on the actual population of Nigerian traders in China is not available. So, initial interviews and informal conversations were carried out at the research site to reach prospective participants. In selecting Nigerian participants, two main selection pathways were explored: the first involved the identification and initiation of contact with key members of the Nigerian community, through community associations, while the second approached was based on on-site recruitment. The processes were complementary in the sense that the first accelerated access to the target population while the second ensured that the researcher did not slip into selection bias that could result from exploring only one channel of participant recruitment. Since Nigerians in Guangzhou occupy different positions, participants were selected from different sections/classes of the migrant community. Non-probabilistic sampling techniques (mainly purposive, accidental and snowballing) were employed to select participants.

3.6. Fieldwork procedure

In the months before the fieldwork, the researcher established contact with Nigerian traders in Guangzhou through personal contacts and China-Nigeria businesspeople based in Nigeria. With personal contacts, academic and regular ones, it was possible to join a WeChat group of Nigerian students in Guangdong province and connect with informants in Guangzhou and other nearby cities. One male informant, a businessman based in Computer Village, Ikeja, Lagos and a deportee from China who is married to a Chinese, was repeatedly visited over a year to collect preliminary information about what it feels to live and work in Guangzhou. He shared personal contacts of Nigerians residing in Guangzhou, and his story helped with the modifications done to the interview guides before the field visits. Additional contacts were obtained from some of the clients of the travel agent that handled the researcher's visa application at the Chinese embassy in Lagos. Because of these efforts, some key individuals in the study area were identified and contacted in advance.

During Phase I of fieldwork, which lasted for thirty (30) days, the researcher participated in the day to day activities of Nigerians in Guangzhou by being on the ground and having informal conversations with many of them. The three (3) weeks spent as a roommate and *Sampa*[3] to an informant made it possible to be part of the daily life of Nigerians on Guangyuan Xi Lu, a road known for the presence of Africans who visit to patronise retail and wholesale markets. The free access to the shops provided an opportunity to observe Nigerians close-up. On the job as a *Sampa*, the researcher started and ended his day at shoes and clothes trading shop, observing and taking notes. In-between the hours, other key sites in the city were visited, either for observational activities or to conduct interviews.

Based on preliminary analysis of the data from Phase I, the approach taken in Phase II was to monitor transformations, follow-up on informational gaps, and approach hard-to-reach groups to capture alternative views. For instance, a participant who arrived just two (2) months before the start of data collection was recruited for life history interview. At Phase II the goal was to know what had changed for him and how he had managed to navigate and settle in the city despite his precarious situation when we first met. The second fieldwork, which similarly lasted for thirty (30) days was an opportunity to probe deeply into how the community functions, while also gaining further insight about the ways that the relationships within state associations shape the processes of the Nigerian community as a whole. Moreover, more Nigerian women, mostly married, were targeted and sought out for an interview in Phase II because they were hard-to-reach. Reaching them, therefore, required visiting underground Nigerian churches that operate in different hotels in the city. At the same time, through assistance from two bi-lingual research assistants, 15 Chinese people were recruited to give opinions on their experiences with Nigerians they encounter in the city. Two Chinese women that were married to Nigerian men also participated in the study

The data collection was done in different settings, mainly markets, shops, restaurants, bars, and offices, but also streets, hotels, churches, a mosque and shopping malls. These spaces were

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[3] A *Sampa* is both a person and job situation. As a person, *Sampa* are boys in markets with an unstable employment or job situation. They can be errand boys too when the condition is right. As a job, a *Sampa* job is the only employment that is readily available to new entrants willing to get a piece of Guangzhou after the prospect of return has become bleak, despite the problems of uncertainty upon arrival in the city.

selected because many Nigerians are to be found there. About nine Nigerians were interviewed in multiple settings, and in some cases, an interview with a single person took place in three different settings, including the home. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the total of 69 participants that were interviewed during Phases I and II.

Table 3.1: Data collection approaches at each phase of field visits

	Nigerian	Chinese	Total
Phase I			
IDI	32	2	34
KII	5	-	5
LH	3	-	3
Phase II			
IDI	9	15	24
KII	3	-	3
LH	-	-	-
Total	**52**	**17**	**69**

3.7. Primary data sources

3.7.1. Non-participant and participant observations

Varied settings at the study location were observed at different times during the fieldwork using non-participant and participant strategies. Non-participant observation was conducted around Baiyun and Yuexiu (Chocolate City) districts. The researcher visited some trading complexes, called markets, and maintained a permanent presence in strategic clothing and shoe retailing shops along Guangyuan Xi Lu. The daily routine and interactions of Nigerians were observed first-hand, and participation in day-long hangouts was common, sometimes involving whole families, and in settings such as churches, bars, restaurants, homes, and markets outside the city and villages where some Nigerians source for Chinese manufacturers. Because of the state of the community associations at the time of data collection, no community meeting was observed. However, the researcher visited, many times, the office an ex-Nigerian community president, the de facto leader and probably the most popular Nigerian in the city. Here, meetings involving many undocumented Nigerians were held, and conflicts were resolved. The researcher witnessed some of the proceedings.

Observations were recorded, and the notes produced in the process formed part of the data presented on the presence and experiences of Nigerians in Guangzhou, China. The observation method is a standing qualitative data gathering tool in anthropological and sociological studies

that scholars have applied to study African migrants in varied social settings, from Benin (Beuving, 2006) to New York (Stoller, 2002) and Italy (Riccio, 2003). In the studies listed, the method illuminated fascinating aspects of migratory experiences that may not be immediately obvious to the migrants themselves. This method provided an emic view of the group that was researched and generated data that were organised into narratives that convey the interrelations of multiple spheres of living and their respective influence on the experiences of the study participants.

3.7.2. In-depth interview

A total of 58 in-depth interviews were conducted, involving 41 Nigerians migrants and 17 Chinese (housing agents, shop owners, ordinary Chinese and Chinese women married to Nigerians). Nigerian migrants were engaged to share their experiences of migration and personal lives as Nigerians in Guangzhou. Until trust was established with prospective interviewees, the researcher initially adopted less invasive techniques, like doing away with a tape recorder. Stoller (2002) adopted similar approach while researching West African traders in New York. Apart from Stoller, other studies have shown that migrants sometimes engage in 'illegalities,' and in China particularly, a good number of Africans have 'triple illegal' statuses, that is illegal immigrant, illegal (over)stayer and illegal worker (Haugen, 2012; Mathews and Yang, 2012). So, ordinarily, they were expected to be suspicious of researchers.

A selected number of Chinese who regularly interface with Nigerians were also interviewed using the in-depth interview method, particularly shop owners, housing agents and ordinary Chinese people. These groups have been shown to interact with African immigrant communities at different levels (Li et al., 2012). This category of Chinese was easy to reach and the researcher assumed that they would have more experiential and informed opinions about Nigerians than those who did not interact with our target migrant population. Questions relating to their interactions with, and perception of, Nigerian in the city were explored. Two Chinese women who were married to Nigerian men at the time of the study were included to explore details about interracial relationships at a much deeper level.

2.7.3. Key informant interview

When immigrants settle in new places, associational lives would likely be constructed and structured around ethnic, religious, national and other interests. Steps might also be taken by

the country of origin to interface with its migrant population. The key informant interview method was used to collect data from eight Nigerians, including persons identified and recognised as leaders, or for their roles in the Nigerian community. These individuals provided information on the rationale or motivations for establishing migrant associations, their connection and relationship with other groups, level of participation, roles, and activities, and so on. The oldest officer at the Nigerian consulate in Guangzhou was also recruited for a key informant discussion. This was set up to understand the official experiences and dispositions to the presence of Nigerians in the city.

3.7. 4. Life history

This approach is relevant because of '…its unambiguous emphasis on the point of view of the life in question and a clear commitment to the processual aspects of social life, showing how events unfold and interrelate in people's lives' (Bryman, 2012, p. 489). Based on 'criteria of competence and appropriateness' that include years of settlement, the degree of attachment in the host society, and community involvement, life history interviews were done with three Nigerians. Two of them were married to Chinese women with two and three mixed-children and had lived in the city for about a decade, and the third life history participant was a single Nigerian male who arrived only recently. Issues explored covered all aspects of their lives before, during and after migration to Guangzhou. Their narratives were used to uncover hidden processes and important events, and all of these shape settlement experiences in the study area. Table 2 shows the distribution of each data collection method across the different groups of the study participants.

Table 3.2: Study population by data collection techniques

Study population		IDI	KII	LH
Nigerian	Migrants	41	7	3
	Embassy official	-	1	-
Chinese	Housing agents	5	-	-
	Shop owners	5	-	-
	Ordinary Chinese	5	-	-
	Chinese wives of Nigerians	2	-	-
	Sub-total	58	8	3
	Total	**69**		

3.8. Secondary data sources

Sources such as books, relevant and up-to-date journal articles, news reports, statistical and official bulletins and other materials were consulted extensively. Mainly, available publications, newsletters, bulletins or published documents such as magazines and constitutions of Nigerian trade associations were acquired and analysed.

3.9. Data analysis

Data generated through tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and processed alongside the field notes for qualitative analysis. The first step in the analysis process was data transcription which started immediately after few interviews were conducted in the field. Starting transcription immediately, with the assistance of six research assistants, was an opportunity to review data continuously and identify alternative directions of questioning while still in the field. The second step of analysis was to review transcripts for quality assurance. To improve data fidelity, the researcher undertook a second review of each transcript by listening to audio files and comparing them with the discussion in transcribed files. As an element in data cleaning, gaps were detected and filled, and observational notes were inserted to show speech gaps, pauses and other non-verbal cues and communications during the interviews. In step three, transcripts were imported into NVivo 11, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Using a text query tool, an open-coding was done on the data to generate broad codes, some of which did not readily fit in the variables suggested by the research questions of the study.

The open-coding was followed by thematic, content and narrative analyses. In doing thematic analysis, the researcher conducted axial coding whereby new codes were created from the main variables in the research questions. For objective one as an example, 'migration process' was created as a 'parent node.' Underneath the parent node, 'child nodes' such as 'background experience,' and 'pre-departure situations' were generated. These codes were applied to relevant portions of transcripts. Where required, 'grandchild nodes' were created under the child nodes. Knowing that conflicting or overlapping codes could have been created, steps were taken to do code cleaning. The procedure significantly reduced the conflicts in the coding structure. Following this, content analysis was carried out to explore sub-themes and unanticipated issues in segments of the transcripts that had been coded. Narrative analysis was done on in-depth interviews and life histories as a way of isolating and describing exhaustively

some of the issues that mattered to the participants and the ways they influence their daily lives in Guangzhou. Personal stories of encounters with the host society were transformed into narratives that illuminated the variabilities that characterise individual experiences of the participants.

3.10. Validity of research method

The methodology adopted was appropriate for understanding a relatively new subject, and sufficient for generating valid data. Most interviews were conducted in English and pidgin (a localised form of the English language that is widely spoken by Nigerians). The researcher is competent in both. Two Chinese students were recruited from Jinan University to do interviews with Chinese participants. Both research assistants were familiar with the study area and fluent in the local dialect and the English language. Before they conducted the interviews, one training session was held at a public restaurant to familiarise them with the aims and objectives of the study and the role they were expected to play. The information generated was reviewed as acquired. The strategy ensured that informational gaps were identified and promptly corrected – usually by meeting the participants concerned again to clarify or fill-in observed gaps.

However, it was difficult to interview people outside their working hours as many live outside the city and only come into Guangzhou for work. Because of time constraints and the problem of convenience, interviews with some Nigerian shop owners were done in the presence of others – customers or acquaintances. In one session, two Cameroonian women and a Nigerian male were present, and this affected how the participant responded to some questions about his impression about the host society. For another participant, the presence of other people prevented the researcher from exploring some questions (issues bothering on his relationship with a Chinese lady he calls his 'wife,' though not married to her yet). Later, there was an opportunity to explore the issue on the same day after we changed location to a public restaurant called the African Pot along Guangyan Xi Lu. Meanwhile, female participants, which were a hard to reach group, were connected through churches. Most were married and for them, scheduling a meeting outside the church seemed impractical. Unfortunately, the church setting limited the amount of information we were able to collect. Despite this, the quality of the data was not affected in any fundamental way as most of the participants offered information that helped to answer the questions raised in the study.

3.11. Ethical considerations

A research plan with strong ethical awareness of, and sensitive to subjects' condition is a general prescription in social research. However, a high level of adherence to ethical conduct is particularly crucial when studying migrant populations. Many studies conducted among immigrants in a variety of settings showed that they face socio-economic, political and legal issues that make them vulnerable participants in social research. In respect of residential status, for example, migrants have been found to have documentation problems. The principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice were followed in carrying out the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the Social Science and Humanities Ethics Review Committee (SSHE) of the University of Ibadan to ensure that all anticipated issues have been addressed. Relevant ethical considerations for the study are as follow:

3.11.1. Confidentiality of data

Information that is not of direct relevance to the study was not collected, and those supplied were used for research purposes alone. The anonymity of the participants was maintained by guiding against identifying participants with interview sessions. All names used in the report are not real. In interviews where participants' identities are relevant for demonstrating authenticity and validity, expressed consent was obtained.

3.11.2. Beneficence

No direct benefit to participants was anticipated as the study is aimed at advancing understanding on the migration and settlement experiences of Nigerian migrants in China. However, results output in the form of publications will be disseminated to key members of the Nigerian community in China. It is believed that this could help the groups organise better and achieve a greater sense of integration in the host community.

3.11.3. Non-malfeasance

The investigator did not anticipate any serious risk to the participants in the course of the study. Nevertheless, an item in the interview guides asked about the residential status of respondents, whether they possessed valid documents or not. Because some of the participants were living in the China 'illegally,' they were educated on the potential risk of revealing such information. While encouraging them to respond truthfully to the question, the researcher emphasised their right to withhold such information.

3.11.4. Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation was ensured on the field. Every participant was taken through the aims of the study before an interview session and were educated on their right to withdraw from the sessions. Due to the fears and anxiety expressed against the signing of – any kind of – form, the participants only gave verbal consent.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Introduction

The objectives of the study were to explore and describe the processes involved in the migration of Nigerians to China, their settlement experiences, and the challenges they encounter in the host community. In this chapter, the findings are presented in line with the study objectives. The next section highlights and discusses the demographic profile of participants. That is followed by a description of the processes that shaped the migration of Nigerians to China, with an emphasis on pre-departure situations, from individual to family and societal conditions within which movement occurred, as well as the range of motivations that influenced personal migration decisions. Amongst other issues, the section details the range of 'strategy forms' employed prior to and during travels. On settlement experiences of the participants, a discussion on the ethnography of presence is used to give a general picture about Nigerians in the city, focusing on what they do and the various ways they inhabit and interact in the host society, thus making their presence noticed and felt. The different aspects of their settlement experiences are later described, starting from when they arrived newly and how they survived a period we would call the 'liminal days,' and how they managed social relations while also forming interracial families and establishing a migrant community. Immediately after, the challenges faced by Nigerians during encounters and social interactions in the city are engaged, with focus on how they impact on their everyday lives as migrants. The result presentation is followed by a critical discussion of the findings, taking cognisance of what the evidence means, vis-à-vis the existing body of knowledge.

4.2. Research participants

This section presents the background information of the study participants. As highlighted in the methodology, apart from the informal conversations, 52 individual interview sessions were conducted with Nigerians residing in Guangzhou. As shown in Table 4.1, their backgrounds were diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, place of origin, travel experience and duration of stay in the city.

On age, people from different age groups were included in the study. Those aged 35-39 years were more than participants in other age categories. However, a small majority were under 35 years at the time of data collection. Indeed, like other Africans in Guangzhou, most Nigerians in the city are young – as many studies have shown (Bodomo and Ma, 2010; Mathews and

Yang, 2012; Liang, 2014). However, the researcher ensured that elderly Nigerian migrants (50+) were included in the study. The vast majority of them were men, with only nine of the study population being women. Apart from a handful of students, shops owners, restaurant attendants, Nigerian women who reside in Guangzhou were hard to reach. While they visited wholesale markets for quick shopping or to order goods on behalf of clients in Nigeria, most were stay-at-home wives married to Nigerian men (Chukwura/IDI/female/35).[4] Up to 30 participants (or 58%) were married; a majority when compared to those who said they were single (37%) or currently separated (6%) from their marriages.

Furthermore, Nigerians from the Igbo ethnic group were more than people from other ethnic groups combined. The predominance of the group was because Igbo people started coming to China long before others, and they have managed to establish themselves for much longer. Also, because of pre-eminence of trading activities in Guangzhou, the city has continued to be an attraction for Igbo men who are known for their industry (Agozino and Anyanike, 2007). This fact is similarly responsible for the geopolitical and state of origin distributions observed among the study participants. As shown in Table 4.1, more than half of the participants (or 28 participants) came from South-eastern Nigeria, mainly from Anambra and Imo states.

Apart from Igbo people, the second largest group in the study were Yoruba people from the South-western states of Lagos and Osun (four per state). As with the Igbo, Nigerians from the Yoruba ethnic extraction have long engaged in long-distance trade. Their history predates the colonial encounter and much of what they did are well documented in historical and sociological literature (Eades, 1994; Olutayo, 2005; Golub and Hansen-Lewis, 2012). However, Yoruba women were more prominent as traveling traders (Golub and Hansen-Lewis, 2012). This contrasts sharply with our observation in Guangzhou where Yoruba males are more visible. While the observation does not provide an evidence of a major shift from previously observed patterns among Yoruba trade migrants, it definitely mirrors the general situation in Guangzhou city whereby more Nigerian men than women come to the Chinese city. While

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[4] The tag used to represent participants' voices should be read as 'name/interview type/sex/age.' Except for a few key informants that were mentioned in the section on the development of the Nigerian community, all other names are pseudonyms. Importantly, however, the names of all IDI, LH and some KII participants were anonymised.

among the minority, some participants self-identified as having other ethnic/regional backgrounds, including members of the Hausa ethnic group from states like Katsina and Kano.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of participants*

Socio-demographic information		Count (52)	% of Total (100)
Age	25-29	9	17%
	30-34	8	15%
	35-39	16	31%
	40-44	5	10%
	45-49	7	13%
	50-54	5	10%
	55-59	1	2%
	60+	1	2%
Sex	Male	43	83%
	Female	9	17%
Ethnicity	Igbo	33	63%
	Yoruba	13	25%
	Hausa	3	6%
	Others	3	6%
Marital status	Married	30	58%
	Single	19	37%
	Separated	3	6%
Highest education	Primary	1	2%
	Secondary	23	44%
	Tertiary	18	35%
Pre-departure occupation	Trading	16	31%
	Professional/Civil Service	11	21%
	Sales/Marketing/Business	7	13%
	Artisan	5	10%
	Casual Work	3	6%
	International Business	2	4%
	Healer	1	2%
	Schooling	1	2%
	Unemployed	2	4%
Place of origin	South East	28	54%
	South West	12	23%
	North West	3	6%
	South South	3	6%
Previous travels	No	30	58%
	Yes	19	37%
Years in China	< 1	5	10%
	1 – 5	21	40%
	6 – 10	15	29%
	11 – 15	5	10%
	16+	4	8%

*Background information on Nigerian participants only.

The majority among the participants had secondary education, and about 18 (or 35%) furthered their education up to tertiary levels, with as much as 13 participants attending universities. Before departure, a little over a third of the participants were involved in trade-related works while a fifth were previously employed as civil servants and in professional occupations such as in a flight agency, customer care services, nursing, modelling and others. Another seven participants (or 13%) were into sales and marketing or what they named 'business,' and five others (or 10%) were artisans doing barbing, auto mechanic and electrical work. Only two participants said they were involved in international business before their eventual arrival and settlement in Guangzhou.

Their previous travel experiences showed that majority (or 58%) came to China directly from Nigeria. That is, most of the participants were first-time travellers, and thus had no first-hand experience of living in another country when they embarked on a journey to the East Asian country. However, about one in three had been to another country before arriving in China: 19 participants have visited at least one country, 12 went to at least two, and five had travelled to three countries in the past. It is worth noting that most of the previous travels reported occurred within the African continent, especially the West African sub-region. This observation is consistent with the general pattern of movements documented among international migrants from Africa. As evident in Adepoju (2013), those moving from the continent often begin their journeys by travelling, first of all, to nearby cities, then proceed to countries with contiguous borders to their original country of origin. The free movement guaranteed by the international passports issued to some citizens living within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region had no doubt influenced this type of migration trajectory among Nigerian international migrants.

Meanwhile, as at the time of data collection, only a few participants had spent under one year in Guangzhou. Around 40% had spent between one and five years in China, 29% arrived between six and 10 years while 18% had been there for more than 15 years. In fact, four participants had lived in Guangzhou for over 20 years. The long duration of stay by those known as 'old Sampa' in community circles suggest that Nigerians were among the earliest African arrivals in the city.

In addition to the 52 Nigerians interviewed, a total 17 Chinese people, females (seven) and males (10) participated in the study, including housing agents, traders, ordinary persons and two Chinese women married to Nigerian men. Their ages ranged between 25 and 45 years.

4.3. Migration of Nigerians to China

One of the main issues explored with participants was their pre-departure situation. Specific questions were used to dig into individual backgrounds, social and economic circumstances up to their time of departure, their travel motivations, and the range of strategies employed during the pre-departure phase. On their backgrounds, the growing up experiences of participants were explored to isolate features that could provide clues about their lives and social relations more broadly, and how their decisions to go abroad may have been shaped by these experiences. Some of the notable features in the growing up stories of participants include previous migrations within Nigeria, apprenticeship and trading experiences, need for independence, innovativeness, poverty – and in the situation of large families –, calculations about available and obtainable opportunities, and precarious work lives. Among a very few, a network of personal relations stirred interest, and prepared them for an eventual out-migration.

4.3.1. Pre-departure experiences and migration motivations

Participants were motivated to depart Nigeria because they felt a need to succeed, locate opportunities, expand businesses and meet future expectations, or to simply live a dream. As a critical precursor to success, some of them perceived international migration a main pathway without which nothing can be attained. For instance, a male participant wanted to 'forge ahead and look at the way the other side of the world will be' (Adeoye/IDI/male/54); a female came for 'travelling sake' (Adaobi/IDI/female/40), and; another 'just wanted more' (Efe/IDI/female/ 26). Yet, migration motivation for Chimeze (LH/male/40) arose from a need to manage future expectations. As a small-scale businessman selling recharge cards and phone accessories procured from Lagos in Aba, his father queried to know how he planned to marry and sustain himself with the current business. Chimeze, therefore, began to work on acquiring travel documents because he needed a bigger business that could sustain him into the future. However, for Tunde, while China was never his first-choice destination, he had always dreamed of moving away. While in primary school, he said he '…dreamt of travelling out of Nigeria… [and] see myself being in the midst of white people' (Tunde/IDI/male/27). Although these feelings may be self-generated, returnees sometimes play an important role in igniting it.

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This was the case with a male participant who said 'there was somebody that came back internationally and was doing okay. He made it, and I can also make it outside' (Anichebe/IDI/male/38).

However, beneath these motivations were significant personal-, family- and society-level social and economic circumstances that influenced the migration decisions of the participants, especially in the period immediately preceding their final departures from Nigeria. For instance, at the personal level, participants were experiencing uncertainties on current livelihoods, as well as intolerable levels of poverty, business failures and a sense of purposelessness. These issues made movement an urgent need and influenced their decisions to leave. Some participants had jobs that were either unstable or unsustainable. On the one hand, an unsustainable work circumstance could be as a result of not being able to earn enough to meet personal and familial needs. According to Eddy (IDI/male/39), in doing business in Nigeria 'you will have to pay for house rent, and your younger ones will want to go to school, you cannot meet up. You can never meet up.' Unstable situations, on the other hand, could involve being in casual employment or involuntary unpaid employment.[5] In casual employment:

> The payment was not enough for me, and I had to join another company. …I worked at the mechanical workshop. …I am a mechanic, driver, industrial mechanic, all these things combine, and the salary is too poor. (Ibeh/IDI/male/43)

Having one's business did not make a difference either, as the case of 'Ladele (IDI/male/38) showed. As a trader with years of international experience which spanned the West African sub-region and the Middle East, 'Ladele started his business in the popular Balogun market on Lagos Island as a hustler. Having gained trading knowledge as an apprentice with a family member in the market, he went on his way, then approached and gained the trust of big shop owners who gave him small items on credit to sell at a retail price. As business expanded, he explored markets in Cotonou, and later in Dubai. Unfortunately, his business began to fail. He said that:

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[5] Ibeh/IDI/male/43; Yisa/IDI/male/35; Favour/IDI/male/35

At the point, things were not going on as expected, so to survive and bring myself back on track, I had to move… [I knew] it might be difficult for me to stay abroad…but when the necessity came, I had to get out. ('Ladele/IDI/male/38)

Also, many participants were embedded in families whose members they felt responsible for – in some ways. Of the 23 participants who talked about their family sizes, the average number of children was seven, with only four participants coming from a family of four children and below. The family and their personal situations made some of them desperate. In fact, while describing stories of abjection, two participants said things were 'getting out of hand.'[6] For one participant especially who tried his hands on the sales of second-hand clothing, acting and modelling, Nigeria was:

[A] living hell. I needed every alternative to leave Nigerian because I was almost getting fed up. It was getting out of hand. …The only thing that was not an option for me was armed robbery. (Anichebe/IDI/male/38)

Expectedly, participants rationalised their poor conditions within the subsisting macro-level structures and processes of the country of origin. In other words, many of them engaged and situated their decisions within the context of available opportunities in the society they later escaped from. On or after several hours of conversations, many participants, female and male alike, deployed negative qualifiers in the same breath that their pre-departure condition was being described. Some of them used words like 'terrible,' 'suffer,' 'very bad,' 'worse,' and suchlike to capture how they felt about the country of origin in the period leading up to departure. They expressed frustration about lack of social services and infrastructure, job unavailability, insecurity, the high cost of living, inflation, social inequality and the rapid decline of local businesses due to the influx of Chinese businesses and cheap Chinese products. For example, one macro-level condition that many participants did not cite, but which is significant, for obvious reason, to a participant from Northern Nigeria was the on-going social crisis of terrorism in Nigeria. Before he decided to leave, Lukmanu previously sold school bags procured from Niger at the Abubakar Birni Central Market, Kaduna. At a later time, he

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[6] Anichebe/IDI/male/38; Isiche/IDI/male/33

ventured into a trade in second-hand cars between Niger and Nigeria. With Boko Haram, however:

> All the business stopped in Nigeria especially in Arewa states…nothing was moving. That was why I decided that I cannot stay in *Africa*, and some of my brothers advised me to come to China. This is why you meet me here. (Lukmanu/IDI/male/38)

On perceived social inequality, another participant reasoned that:

> Before you can grow business in Nigeria, it is very hard. The rich do not want the poor to grow in any aspect of life. That is one problem we are facing. When I was in Nigeria, before you can move an inch of your business you know what it takes. (Solo/IDI/male/25)

In the absence of a national policy that protects local businesses, competition from abroad led to economic declines. Specifically, one of the old Sampa who arrived China in 1997 narrated that the inability of local businesses and small enterprises to cope with Chinese competition in domestic market forced people to leave. From the late 1990s, he explained that the Taiwanese, who had done business in Nigeria for many years (see Brautigam, 2008; Omobowale, 2013), brought the Chinese to work for them in Nigeria. When the Chinese noticed the opportunities on the ground, they invited other Chinese to import goods into Nigeria. However, instead of importing high-quality goods, low-quality items were being imported. Since the Nigerian government failed to protect local businesses, the Chinese were reported to have taken over the market, forcing small businesses to shut down.[7]

The role of Chinese actors in fast tracking the decline of medium and small-scale businesses in Africa has been a major point of debate in Sino-Africa relations (Taylor, 2007; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011; Mohan and Lampert, 2013; Niu, 2017). In Nigeria specifically, Taylor (2007) had analysed how local media perceived Chinese goods as crowding out local manufacturers and how local elites and the Nigerian government put effort in solidifying their relationship with Beijing while indigenous firms collapsed. The views that Taylor (2007) analysed, that Chinese incursion into local markets was leading to loss of jobs, were similar to the perspectives that Nigerians in Guangzhou shared. Nonetheless, Sino-African analysts barely

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[7] KII, Mr. Emma Ojukwu, Guangzhou, 2017

connect the Chinese activities in the local economy to out-migration from Africa nor were they able to link it to the out-flow of African businesspeople to China. The prospect of this situation, however, is precisely what the world systems approach to international migration had predicted (King, 2012, pp. 18-19).

That being said, all the above can be categorised as being remote or surrounding factors that influenced the migration of participants to China. Besides these, people mentioned other reasons that operate more or less as immediate factors. Fundamentally social or economic, these immediate reasons of departure were the principal purposes for which the journeys to China were undertaken. In this wise, purposes such as marriage and familial unification, schooling, and career advancement fell under social factors, while the search for a better business atmosphere constitutes an instance of the immediate economic reason for movement.

Among the range of purposes under social factors, it is worthy to note that marriage was a strong reason among female participants. While most of the Nigerians living in China are single males, and more of them have married Chinese women, a sizeable number of Nigerian males also have Nigerian wives living in the city with their children. It was therefore interesting to find that among most of the women interviewed, marriage was the main reason they came to China. For example, one female participant who had never considered leaving before her marriage to a Nigerian living in China said 'my husband was here, so he invited me here' (Chukwura/IDI/female/35). Another female shop owner trading in children apparel in one of the busiest markets but had hitherto graduated from a Chinese university said that nothing motivated her to stay after her degree except for '…my husband [because] I do not want to have a separate home, like living in Nigeria' (Oby/IDI/female/28).

Conversely, male participants were predominantly economic migrants, at least in the sense that China's business environment was critical in their migration decision. China was perceived as a destination fertile for business and where interested persons could move to and succeed (Favour/IDI/male/35). They ascribed to the destination features such as a promising and booming marketplace where endless business opportunities exist, where useful contacts can be established, and failing businesses can be resuscitated. Some of these representations are noticeable in the following quote:

China is the world of business. Even still right now the world of business is heading to China. So, I wanted to be part of the earlier people that will come to China…purposely for business [and] to make business contacts. (Glover/KII/male/34)

In the next section, we discuss the 'strategy forms' that participants used over the course of their migration to China. Apparently, as would be revealed, focusing on specific reasons or factors alone, be it social or economic, can mask crucial underlying processes involved in the execution of migration projects, particularly the spectrum of structures and calculations within which migration decisions were often made.

4.3.2. Strategy forms in pre-departure phase

The process leading up to eventual migration to China involved a series of strategy forms that participants adopted depending on available – and indeed obtainable – possibilities. The strategy forms can be related to the deployment of knowledge to navigate during migration and when making decisions about how to move when access to an intended destination country is denied. They can also be related to pre-departure trajectory decisions or concern document hunting practices. The analytical framework with which these strategy forms were categorised and explained was based on the evidence that in the pathway/s that led Nigerian international migrants to China, plans, social relational acts, decisions, and even embodiments play out in interesting ways. From the narratives of participants, four main strategy forms were categorised, namely strategy forms of 1) planning, 2) relationship management, 3) document acquisition and 4) trajectory.

4.3.2.1. Strategy of planning

The strategy of planning comprised organisational activities such as information gathering, the establishment of relevant contacts 'here' and 'there,' and raising funds for travel. This strategy is necessary for preparedness. Some participants sought contacts in China and connected with Nigeria-based businesspeople to get the information they need to execute migration project. As Solo reported, 'before I moved down, I already had people, brothers selling mobile phones. I know where I am going' (IDI/male/25). Similarly, Bodunrin was in contact with a regular Nigeria-China trader for many years before she visited herself for the first time in 2000. Another younger participant who migrated in 2016 sought information about Asia – and China

– on the internet (Tunde/IDI/male/27). Even though it may turn out to be false, access to some form of information is crucial.

Apart from information and contacts, funding was also a part of the strategy of planning. Depending on the 'package' and previous travel profile, cost of documents can run from N300,000 to N1,200,000. In further elaboration given under strategy of document acquisition, some people received funding supports from friends, relatives or other close associates. Some borrowed money while some others sold properties to raise the necessary funds. In one conversation about Nigerians in the city, Richie (IDI/male/40) recalled that 'some of them sold their land, some of them borrowed money from a different person in different places to catapult themselves to China.' For those with personal businesses at the time of departure, it was not unusual to sell-off assets,[8] sometimes at a much cheaper amount than the actual market value (Favour/IDI/male/35). Together, fund raising, with information and contacts were key devices for planning and constructing expectations at pre-departure phase.

4.3.2.2. *Strategy of relationship management*

The strategy of relationship management concerns how migrants manage their social relations with families and friends. To a small or large degree, family members and friends are often a part of migration projects, not only after migrants have arrived at the destination but from the earliest stages of ideation, planning and departure. At pre-departure especially, migrants receive various forms of social supports from these significant others, many of which contribute towards successful out-migration. Among the participants of this study, for instance, the dominant forms of pre-departure social support, namely informational and instrumental support, came from people close to the migrants. In respect to informational support, significant others supplied information that led to a connection with reliable agents who facilitated visa processing (Brian/IDI/male/47), while others offered advice that helped in weighing options about alternative migration destinations (Olorundara/LH/male/45). As with many other young Nigerian migrants, Chizoba too relied on informational support from 'a brother' in Nigeria and then from another 'brother' in China, to connect with agents at different times until he got a visa in 2015.

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[8] Nwanyi/IDI/male/35; Nonso/IDI/male/33

However, the most widespread and impactful social support for participants in the process of migration was instrumental support. Instrumental assistance consists of tangible or material aids and services that took participants closer to achieving their migration objectives. In some cases, significant others single-handedly sponsored migration projects of children or siblings and some provided only partial instrumental supports, leaving prospective migrants to make up the difference. An example of the latter case was Kuti who was assisted with cash by both his friend and father. In his explanation:

> My friend rallied round to gather money for me. Had it been that God did not use that my friend for me, we will not be able to raise that money. …I [also] went to my father. I told him I need some little change, that I want to do something. He asked me what it was and I told him I want to travel to somewhere. He said okay take this N40,000. (Kuti/IDI/male/39)

Of course, not everyone had these types of support. Solo, like some other members of a trifling number of participants, sponsored his project independent of help from family and friends. He made this point boldly when he said thus: 'I sponsored myself in travelling out. I paid for my visa, I paid for everything, I paid for my flight. I [also] have the money…to buy the goods' (Solo/IDI/male/25). Nevertheless, in highlighting the roles of family and friends in providing social support, we intend to point out that these people play crucial roles. By implication, prospective migrants usually devise a strategy to manage their relationships with significant others.

However, aside from the actual support provided, the strategy of relationship management became a more meaningful category when we consider instances when significant others refuse to give positive support to a migration project or when participants did not trust them with information regarding travel intentions. An illustrative case of the first scenario emerged when, in preparing to travel, Favour was advised against travelling to China by his eldest brother, who also doubled as his father. His 'father' developed disaffection towards China from stories he learnt about the Asian country while residing in India. In his words:

> My elder brother was not in support of me coming to China. He wanted me to go to another place because before then, my brother had been to India. India and China are so close, and he has heard many stories about China [that] there is nothing happening in China, there is nothing; no business, no work. As a young graduate, what are you going to China to do? (Favour/IDI/male/35)

Because everyone else was in support except his 'father,' Favour's decision was to, therefore, execute his travel plans without informing him. Three other participants employed secrecy as a tool in their strategies of relationship management at the migration preparation phase, although their rationale differed from Favour's. For example, Chimeze (LH/male/40) did not inform his father and 'didn't discuss the [travel] with anybody. It was just a discussion within me' until he arrived in China. Also, apart from his immediate family, Brian told one trusted friend because he asked. Similarly, with secrecy as a tool, Kuti was only forced to inform a friend and his father because the visa was expiring and he was yet to raise the needed funds. When he left about 48 hours before visa expiry date, he did not tell anyone else because 'I was not sure if they will allow me in or not. So, if they did not allow me, I will just go back to my life' (Kuti/IDI/male/39).

Similarly, Smith (IDI/male/30) had to deal with negative social support while organising his departure. However, he did not employ secrecy but only rejected useful experiential information from a China deportee. The deportee, who was Smith's blood brother, was deported after 40 days of arriving in Guangzhou. Rather than engage and ponder the stories of his deportee brother, the participant maintained a silence and decided 'to see to believe' or simply try out his luck. As he explained:

> I prefer seeing things myself than asking questions. I did not really ask him anything about his journey. … I believe and know that things change. So, the information might be based on his own experience but coming here I may have different information. (Smith/IDI/male/30)

What was suggested by the existence of strategies of relationship management is that the people close to migrants perform positive supportive roles, such as assisting with informational and instrumental support. At other times, significant others perform negative supportive roles by being discouraging to the intentions of prospective migrants or by appearing unworthy of being trusted with details of movement intentions. Whichever happens, prospective migrants apparently evolve a strategy form to manage their relationships with family and friends in the pre-departure phase.

4.3.2.3. Strategy of document acquisition

The strategy of document acquisition involved specific activities and the ways that Nigerian migrants approached the procurement of travel documents to China. The strategy consisted of the choices made regarding migration destination and influencing circumstances, such as embassy visitations, engagement of agents, cross-border 'visa hunting,' 'identity shopping,' and passport 'building' and 'dis-virgining.' First of all, China was not the most favoured destination for some of the participant, but they were compelled to consider moving there because of rejections at other first choice embassies. Put in another way, rejections at the embassies of more desired countries in Europe, America and the Middle East made constant destination review a key process during the pre-departure phase of migration. Before resorting to China, at least four participants had applied and had been interviewed at the embassies of Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Qatar and an unnamed European country. One of them, a young male participant who attempted to enter three countries on two different continents, said 'I processed travelling to Qatar but I was not granted visa. [Interviewer: So, you considered Canada and America but you were not given?] No, it did sail not through' (Salami/IDI/male/ 28).

But resolving to stick to China was not a guarantee that visa will be granted. This observation remained accurate despite the fact that a vast majority of participants believed that it was relatively easy to obtain Chinese visa. As evident in the case of the participant just quoted above, his application failed the first time he applied to the Chinese embassy. Chizoba (IDI/male/28) too applied twice, spending about N360,000 for the first visa processing. Another female participant who currently combined schooling and customer service work with business said she applied thrice before she was given a visa (Efe/IDI/female/26). Some other participants narrated similar experience while trying to obtain visas to migrate to China. As such, the practice of multiple visitation to the Chinese embassy was an integral aspect of strategy of document acquisition.

A third dimension in the strategy of document acquisition had to do with the use of third-party travel agents, based in Nigeria, China or another country. In various interviews, agents were involved in 'packaging' travel documents for migrants at a fee. Interestingly, many of those who engaged them felt that agents were responsible for visa application failures, as well as for

losses in money and time, as well as opportunities that often accompanied the process.[9] Expressing her anger towards visa agents, a female participant said 'agents…*make people to frustrate*. They will not do the paper for you but will eat your money, do fake document and give it to you' (Diana/IDI/female/38). Ironically, the failure did not define agents as such because a vast majority of the participants actually engaged agents while preparing to migrate. Some of the participants went to seek them out in Lagos and Abuja from places like Port Harcourt, Aba, Abeokuta and others. Even with the exorbitant fees they charged for visas, the reason for their continuing esteemed position and patronage in the strategy of document acquisition was clarified by Lukmanu who explained that:

> For the matter of visa, if you want to get it very quickly, you have to apply for it by agents. …It is expensive, but if you need satisfaction, the agents are professional in making all the papers that the embassy will require… [I]f I decide to process it by myself, it will take a lot of time. (Lukmanu/IDI/male/38)

The fourth dimensions of the strategy of document acquisition entailed cross-border 'visa hunting,' an activity that required prospective migrants to leave, physically, the shores of Nigeria to another African country in order to apply for a Chinese visa. While many participants agreed that, in comparison with countries in Europe and America, the Chinese visa was easy to obtain, some of them experienced great difficulty when they made an attempt – an observation that was also evident in the preceding analysis. Consequently, they embarked on mini-journeys to 'visa-hunt' in countries believed to host a more liberal Chinese embassy than the one based in Nigeria. One exemplary 'visa hunter,' narrated that he went to Ghana, then to Sierra Leone where he spent six months. He planned 'to get visa [in Sierra Leone as] it is tough to get a visa in Nigeria' (Obinna/IDI/male/35).

Another interesting dimension identified in the strategy of document acquisition had to do with 'identity shopping.' As a strategy, identity shopping demanded that migrants procure another nationality by buying other country's passport. The decision to take on this approach can be made in Nigeria or at another country where the participant had lived for a while. One 'identity shopper' who bought a Nigerien nationality while living in Nigeria said he had applied with

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[9] Diana/IDI/female/38; Efe/IDI/female/26; Nwanyi/IDI/male/35; Chizoba/IDI/male/28

Nigerian passport, but it failed (Okocha/IDI/male/37). On his part, Ejimba who had lived in Mozambique for two years explained his strategy thus:

> When I wanted to travel to China, the passport I was using was not my country's passport. I dropped my Nigeria passport and filled the Mozambique passport with the Chinese visa. (Ejimba/LH/male/28)

In both cases, the decision to shop for a new identity was based on a shared belief that the Nigerian passport imposed a limitation on them. A main challenge for this strategy, however, was that in preparing to cross over to their destinations, they must evolve additional strategy to carter to the risks produced by the appropriation of another country's nationality; e.g. by making an exit via a country other than the one whose passport they were holding (Ejimba/LH/male/28).

The final dimension that was identified under the strategy of document acquisition was 'passport dis-virgining.' With a construction that drew inspiration from human sexuality, 'dis-virgining' a passport was meant to imbue a new passport document with a history of use viz immigration stamps. Because many of them were travelling for the first time, 'dis-virgining' was a way to enhance or elevate the status of a passport and its holder by extension. By making a series of short visits to nearby countries or other 'easy-to-enter' destinations, they were building their passports while at the same time gaining relevant travel experience.

4.3.2.4. Strategy of trajectory

Essentially, the strategy of trajectory tracks and describes the movement pathways of the participants. As a strategy form, the trajectories feature a range of choices and embodiments. Already, in the description of participants' backgrounds, we have observed that the patterns of movement varied, divided primarily between a group that moved directly to Chinese cities from Nigeria, and another group whose members had, at one time or another, travelled to another country prior to leaving for China. We have categorised these two predominant flow patterns as unimodal and multimodal strategies of trajectory – see the graphical representations of flows pattern in Figures 4.1a and 4.2b.

Compared to the multimodal trajectory, the unimodal trajectory is not complicated because those whose pathways had this character moved directly to China from Nigeria. The majority

Figure 4.1a: Flow map showing the movement pattern from Nigerian to Guangzhou, China
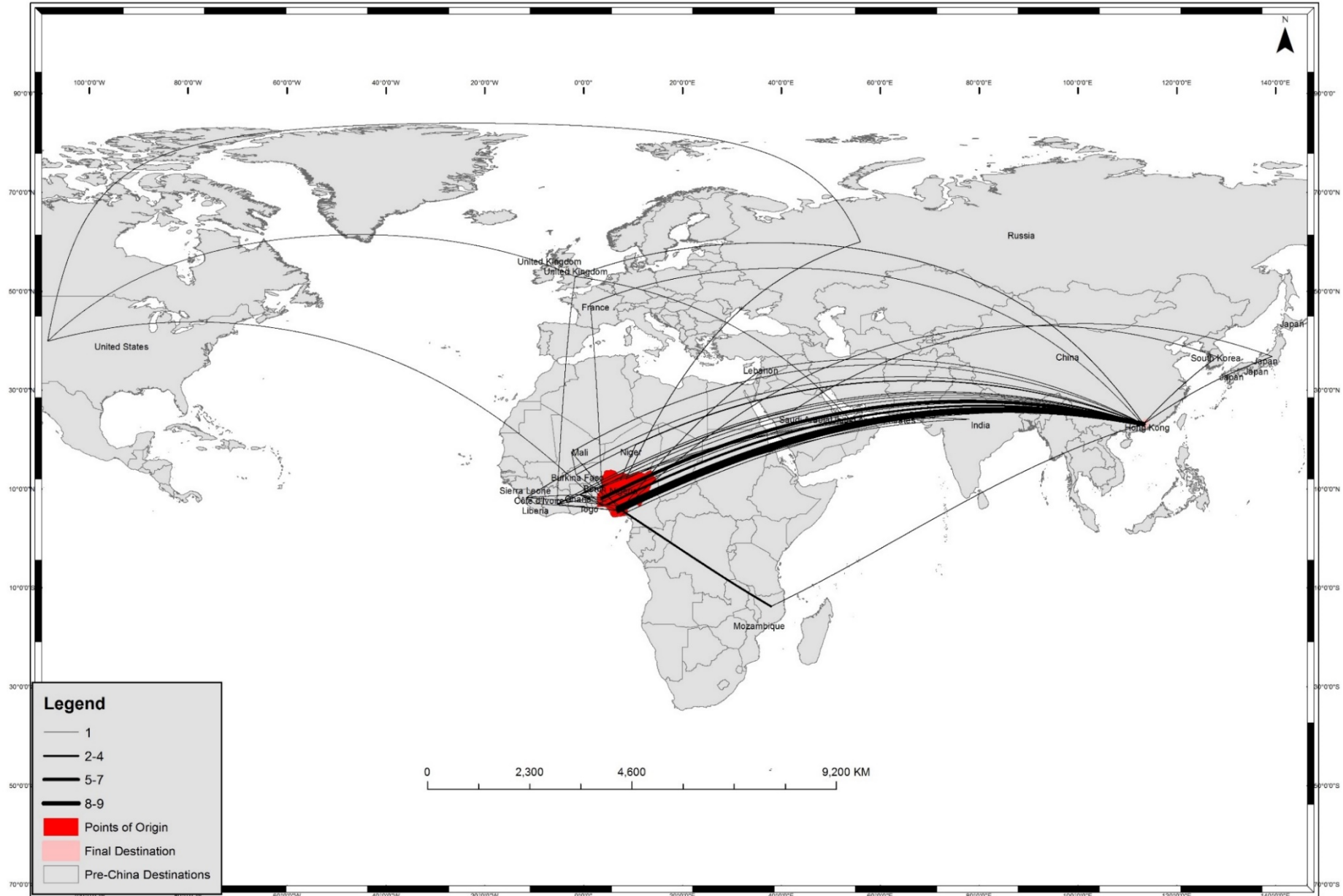
of the participants fall into this category, mostly embarking on China trips as first-timers, not having prior international travel experience. However, a trajectory of multimodality involved a much complex set of activities and embodiments. Basically, the multimodality derived from the narrations that participants shared regarding how they moved, where they moved to first, the follow-up movements, and the series of short returns made until they arrived in China.

For analytical convenience, the multiplex sub-movement patterns within multimodal trajectory were described using a schema with four main embodiment types, namely: 'round tripping,' 'seeking,' 'strandedness' and 'uninhibitedness.' Round tripping was a multimodal trajectory in which participants started journeys by moving out but then return to Nigeria at some point to re-plan, and then move again till they finally get to China. The main point to note about the round trippers is that having left the country, they usually return to Nigeria at some point on their way to China. The reasons for such return may be to process another visa or to wait for other identity documents to arrive, or even to perfect the building of travel profiles with exit and entry stamps on their passports. Some of the participants in this study left Nigeria and then returned to the country, both acts leading them on a more prosperous path, and both leading them closer to where they believed that opportunities for success were available. An illustrative case of a round-tripper was George. When his round tripping began, George wanted:

> To cross to Libya. …I have the [whole] map [of Africa] inside my brain. So, after the 40 days anniversary of the death of my friend's father, we left together to Abidjan. …When we got Togo, we needed to sell our Tee-shirt so that we can buy a long bread to eat until we get to Abidjan. (IDI/male/35)

He spent five years in Abidjan without success moving on, and without contact with family members in Nigeria. There was one time when he, along with some co-travellers were intercepted in Senegal on their way to Holland as stowaways on a ship. They emerged from their hiding place not knowing that they were yet to arrive at the destination. Some period after he was deported to Abidjan, a call came through for him to return home. The reason, as he explained, was that:

My uncle…said I need to go home, that my brothers want to programme[10] visa for me because they know I want to travel. All my dream, all my life is to travel [and] they want to make visa. (George/IDI/male/35)

After returning to Nigeria in response to the call from home, George was unable to leave Nigeria for the next two years. Although he adjusted to being home again by starting a video club business, and then taking a shot at being a musician, he never gave up on moving again. Later, through his earning from the video club service, he sponsored his girlfriend to the UK in the hope that she would invite him later. That did not happen. Eventually, an opportunity to China surfaced, which he took. What was suggested by George's round-tripping, and of others

Figure 4.1b: Flow map showing pre-China departures of Nigerians within West African sub-region

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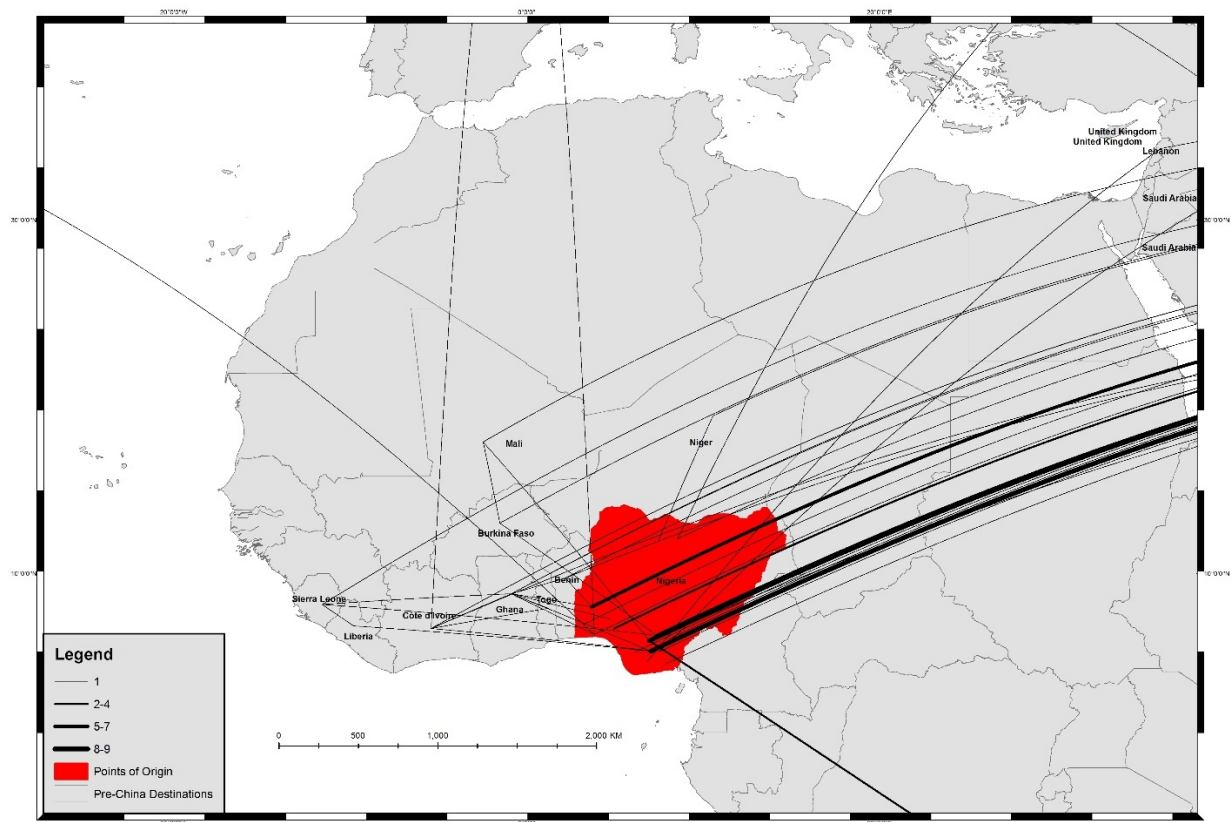
[10] To arrange a visa.

like him,[11] is that leaving Nigeria on a journey to the promised land may also involve returning home – so that the 'real journey' can start.

Unlike round tripping, seeking involved moving-on upon arrival at a first destination without a return to Nigeria. Having made it out, the seeker endured a period of stability at the chosen destination, found work or did business until the place was no longer considered viable to support her aspirations. This meant that she became dissatisfied with a destination and began to nurture, and put into action, the thoughts of moving elsewhere. The thoughts of the seekers precluded a return to Nigeria, and, in the case of some participants, the alternatives only accommodated a strategy that entailed prospecting a much better place than the ones they have been to or planned to leave behind. Two participants, both of who coincidentally lived in Mozambique, clearly embodied the seeker's feature. Prior to his travel to China, Francis (IDI/male/33), for example, lived in the city of Maputo for two years. He was engaged in spare part trade and operated a shop at a Maputo market but later decided to move on because of economic decline. Likewise, Ejimba (/LH/male/28) said he 'didn't have the capital to operate there... It's not that Mozambique is not good; [but] when you have the capital, it's better.'

Participants who embody strandedness were basically 'get stuck in place' while in transit. Fundamentally, their pre-departure projection was oriented to a migration destination other than the one they eventually found themselves. That is, although the stranded, like other multimodal movers, decided to depart from Nigeria, they came to be in China because their journey was truncated. As such, they were living in China because they never reached their intended destination. From three cases where strandedness was observed, journey truncation was a result of abandonment (Benson/IDI/male/33), documentation problems (Diana/IDI/female/38), and insufficient funds to support stay at intended destination (Ejimba/LH/male/28). Visibly angered about the truncation of her journey, a female participant, who had documentation problem, described how she became stranded because of her strategy of trajectory:

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[11] Diana/IDI/female/38; 'Ladele/IDI/male/38; Olorundara/LH/male/45

I did not decide, the place I went to, they did not allow me to enter. …I was going to Hong Kong, I had a problem, so they now transferred me to China. …Instead of going back [to Nigeria], it was better to stay [in China]. (Diana/IDI/female/38)

The last embodiment typology within the strategy of multimodal trajectory was uninhibitedness. This category of participants was more deliberate in how it organised movements, and enjoyed a relative degree of freedom while executing travel plans and sojourning. While it was observed that at different times in their journeys, the uninhibited embodied the features of both the round trippers and the seekers – returning home to re-plan (as round trippers) and/or move from a former destination to China (as seekers) – their stories did not reflect strandedness. Of course, it was not the case that because they enjoyed relative freedom, the uninhibited, therefore, did not encounter disruption on their journeys. The contrary was actually the case. What made uninhibitedness distinct was its capability to respond to the disruption so that journeys were not truncated in a fundamental way, such as becoming stranded and being forced to resign to fate – as Diana above. The cultural capital they possess, through either the quality of their travel experience or knowledge, could have influenced the emergence of this uninhibited embodiment as a strategy of multimodal trajectory. The process of movement of Akingbola (KII/male/50), who left Nigeria over two decades ago and had intended to enter Japan but was denied entry, illuminated this claim. After he was denied entry to Japan:

[The airline] used the coupon of …Hong Kong to take me through Seoul so that I can board flight directly to Frankfurt. …I had to use my experience by walking to the airline and I applied to change my route. Then I managed myself to Hong Kong but they didn't allow me to enter. So, from Hong Kong, I went to Saudi Arabia. But instead of returning to Nigeria, then I went to Singapore and from Singapore back to Hong Kong. So, from Hong Kong I made my way to China. (Akingbola/KII/male/50)

Akingbola as an exemplary uninhibited was able to navigate the migration process by drawing on his experience as a travel agent. Like with other embodiments, he encountered challenges along the way but they did not truncate his migration in any fundamental way. In literary and cultural studies, Akingbola's capability conforms to the image of the socially constructed and idealised cosmopolitan, or, better still, a citizen of the cosmos/world (Sterling, 2015; Toivanen, 2017).

The foregoing analysis shows that the strategy of trajectory accommodated two main modalities, with the multimodal type being more complex than the unimodal type. What also came out was that three of the four embodiments in the multimodal trajectory process have some similarities, in spite of the differences underlined. Except from round trippers who return home at some point in their journeys, the other three categories in the multimodal sphere do not return. Not emphasised, however, was the fact that migrants embodied more than one of these multimodal strategies of trajectory over the course of their journey to China, such that a migrant exhibits a seeker embodiment at a stage and then becomes stranded at his/her final destination (e.g. Ejimba/LH/male/28).

4.4. Nigerians in a Chinese city: an ethnography of presence

A newcomer to Guangyuan Xi Lu (or Guangyuan West Road in English) would be struck by the presence of African people in the streets, markets and the pedestrian crossings as they wait for the rapid vehicular flows to come to a momentary halt. This is one of the areas where Africans are found in large numbers. Right from the Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, one of the busiest airports in China, Chinese cab drivers would ask new African arrivals if they needed a ride to Guangyuan Xi Lu. Without language competence nor a clear idea about how to reach a contact in the city, newcomers will approach 'African brothers' for direction and other assistance that can enable them to reach who they need to contact or to get to where they had to get to. Such anxiety was often met with an assurance that once they reach Guangyuan Xi Lu, all will be resolved.

4.4.1. Survival and economic life in the city of trade

Most times, Guangzhou is calm yet it is always busy and bubbling with business activities, mainly trading, both on the streets and within several buildings where retail and specialised wholesale markets were housed. In Yuexiu district where some of these activities occur, Nigerian traders were noticeable in big markets like Tongtong A, B and C, Tangqi, Yingfu Plaza, Bole Clothes Market, Canaan Export Clothes Wholesale Centre, and Goutai Plaza. The Goutai Plaza, a market that was before now dominated by Chinese leather and bag traders was mostly occupied by Nigerians. From the ground floor to the right where groceries from Nigeria were on display, up to the upper floor where the majority of shop owners deal in male and female apparels, Nigerians were everywhere. The Igbo language was being spoken by the majority, and people were seated in clusters chatting or having drinks while Nigerian music

played in the background. The business office of the ex-president of the Association of Nigerian Community China (ANCC)[12] or the Nigerian Union was located in this plaza.

In Guangyuan Xi Lu area especially, young men can be seen sitting around and talking aloud around rented shops that Nigerians operate. Some seat in a small disorganised circle, chatting and laughing. In one shop, loud music of Nigerian origin was playing from the medium sized stereo player and the atmosphere was convivial. A similar atmosphere was observed in other places from a distance. Some shops were partitioned, serving multiple business purposes like cloths retailing on the outside while the inner compartment functioned as a barbing salon. The owner may also operate 'money-business' on the side. Other shops provided specific services to Nigerians living in the city, including barbing and ethnic provision stores, which stored food items such as dried meat and fish, stockfish, *egusi*, palm oil and others. Imported daily items were on display for sale in other stores, from hair and body creams to other Nigerian manufactured beverages, alcoholic drinks and noodles.

Meanwhile, in shops operated by Nigerian women, customers and shop owners interacted with each other in a manner that was different from male-owned shops. When the researcher spent hours observing one of these women's shops, customers discussed and made small talks about many things, including personal family matters. They also shared stories about Nigeria and about the challenges of maintaining families. Because many of these customers did not turn up alone whenever they came to place orders, the shop owner always trusted them to bring potential customers along – every time.

In the night, previously vacant public spaces along Guangyuan Xi Lu are transformed into 'bend-down-select' markets, with a number of new Chinese street traders joining shop owners to sell cheaper items to African traders walking back and forth. Expectedly, Nigerians living in the city also traded in the night: a young man can appear with a small bag containing daily needs from Nigeria while a Nigerian food vendor goes about with a large laundry bag, selling in plastic takeout with chants of *jollof rice, white rice, plantain!* In Bole market, Adaobi, a 40 years old Nigerian woman was flanked by her 11 years old son while she dragged a trolley containing *moi moi* which had been packaged in disposable plastic plates. Yet another middle-

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[12] Exactly as spelt in the constitution of the association.

aged Nigerian man would come to deliver herbal medicine to his clients almost at the same time that a drug peddler that had stayed 'on the low' throughout the day would surface from the dark, giving 'handshakes' and collecting money in return. These nightly street trading, licit and illicit, are attractive to many undocumented Nigerians who are unable to move freely during daytime because of the police (Haugen, 2012).

Far out towards Liwan district, Nigerians operate cargo businesses around the Universal Comprehensive Building (Shoe City) where they occupy shops that Chinese businesses abandoned. Some had clothing shops and hidden restaurants. A widespread view of this place is that many Nigerians around the area do not have valid documents, and began to congregate when police crackdown worsened in the busiest market areas along Guangyan Xi Lu. Compared to the early periods, the presence of Nigerians in most markets is on the decline, except in Goutai Plaza and Universal Comprehensive Building.[13] The changing relationships between the migrants and the host society had a significant impact on this decline. Outside these areas, Nigerians have commercial visibilities in Sanyuanli, mobile phone markets at Ouzhuang and Shatou, and Xiaobei.

Xiaobei in particular is popular with Africans from Francophone countries, together with Arab-speaking African and Middle Easterners. Most Nigerians in the area are from the Hausa ethnic group. They had concentrated in the area over the years because the environment and lifestyle of other migrants in Xiaobei supported their way of life (Muhammed/KII/male/60). But there are also Nigerians from other ethnic groups in the area. For instance, Moses, a 26 years old Nigerian who left his former school in the North of China to 'hustle' in Guangzhou established a haircut shop in Xiaobei. After several months of serving at a restaurant and doing poorly remunerated jobs, he learned barbing and later rented a shop. Assisted by two Nigerian friends of Yoruba and Edo origins, the shop was often busy, with young men from Ethiopia or Somalia waiting in line. The shop lacked adequate space: two chairs for the workstation, and about three to four short plastic stools for seating or holding mobile phones plugged into power sockets. Two additional plastic stools were just by the door, one to the right and another to the left of

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[13] KII, Mr. Emma Ojukwu, Guangzhou, 2017; KII, Mr Ademola Olagunju, Guangzhou, 2017

the door. If all the stools in the shop were occupied by people, it would be impossible to gain leg room.

Figure 4.2: Map showing the locations of participants in the area of the study
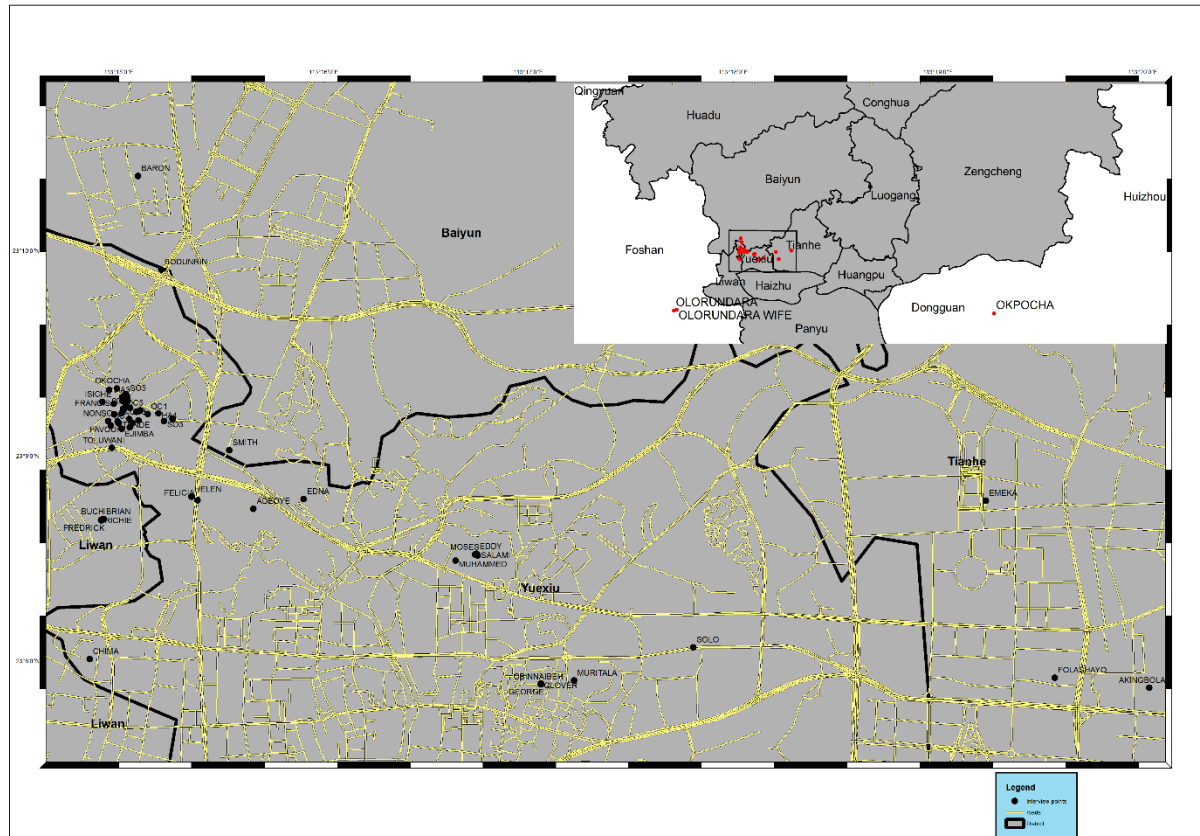
Apart from those that rented shops in places like Guangyuan Xi Lu and Xiaobei, a few Nigerians maintained offices in more expensive areas of Baiyun, Yuexiu and Tianhe districts. Nigerian-owned offices in these locations were shielded from the regular hustle and bustle of trade dominated sections of the city. The people interviewed in this part of town were long-term residents with decades of business experiences in Guangzhou, and China more generally. Some of them operate representative offices, have Chinese business partners, and maintain strong business connections in the host community. This group is also well connected with the Nigerian consulate which was established in 2014 and sited in Tianhe district. One of them, an ex-president of the Nigerian community, operates a consultancy company in Sanyuanli. His office walls hold awards and frames of certificates that validate his status as a respected and active community member. A few wall photos showed him with eminent personalities, including a governor and other members of the Nigerian business and political class like Olusegun Obasanjo, the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from 1999 to 2007. In

another office located within the Guangzhou World Trade Centre (WTC), a high-rise, double-tower building, the atmosphere is more formal. The researcher did not observe Africans around this section of the city. Inside the office located on the 20th floor, there was an open space, more like a general office area and a lobby. Looking straight ahead were three smaller offices. Apart from the participant's office on one extreme, there were Chinese workers coming in and out of the other two; mostly women sitting in cubicles. The workers went in and out of smaller offices as though something urgent was being worked on. The office also served tea to visitors.

Yet, beyond what some participants said they did and the range of economic activities that were observed in the streets, shops, offices, restaurants and markets, probing into what people 'actually do' did not always generate straightforward answers. The first reason is that a lot of people find it difficult to pin down their 'work' to just one thing. Many Nigerians in the city do more than one work at a time, and there were people who engaged in almost everything that can be done to earn income, depending on season and as opportunities present themselves: a barber can easily be a trader; trader can be a 'money-man'[14] and a market agent may assist internet fraudsters to withdraw funds from where fraudsters themselves cannot dare to enter – e.g. a bank. As Favour (IDI/male/35) would later inform the researcher, 'in China, no one is involved in a single business.' Another participant (Chizoba/IDI/male/28) was asked what his primary job in the city was; he responded that he was selling clothes and shoes and making orders for people. Yet, when the researcher noticed him for the first time, he was carrying bundles of renminbi in a plastic bag and sorting it for distribution. A chance sighting of him with another informant led to additional information on his work; a Bureau de Change of sorts. The informant later referred to him as one of the 'silent Big Boys' in town. Given the nature of trading activity in the city, money transfer and changing are important lines of work for those with access to capital and networks.

The second reason is that even while away in China, the survival of Nigerians in Guangzhou depends on what happens in Nigeria. Many participants repeatedly connected their declining economic fortune in China by alluding to the poor state of the Nigerian economy. Unlike in the Northern countries where opportunities for sustenance exist, the opportunity for work is closed to the majority of Nigerians who come to China. Those who own businesses rely on buyers

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[14] Unofficial currency exchanger

from Nigeria and other African countries while many more who are struggling to find their footing with small-scale transnational trade engage primarily with the market in the home country. This means that predominantly, the Nigerian economy supports many Nigerians in Guangzhou so that if Nigeria is experiencing an economic decline, Nigerians in China are also, economically, on the path of decline. As this participant observes, 'China is not good again because of our [Nigeria] economy' (Nonso/IDI/male/33).

This inexactitude about work life was often taken for granted, and some would instead just tell you they were into 'business,' which made the description of personal livelihoods less complicated. As expected, *business* has been appropriated as a catch-all term for work, even among Nigerians involved in criminal economies as they have come to rely on it as a 'script.' Here, migrants involved in legally prohibited activities such as drug dealing and online fraud were always quick to mention *business*. In fact, after giving similar script on record, a participant told the researcher that his *business* was essentially online fraud, or 419, or what others have called 'Yahoo Yahoo' (Okpocha/IDI/male/38).

4.4.2. Inhabiting Guangzhou social spaces

Beyond business, there were a number of social spaces with high Nigerian visibilities: religious centres, restaurants and bars. Some of the interviews and observations conducted happened in Saad Ibn Abu Waqqas Mosque, and four churches, including the famous Sacred Heart Cathedral at Yide Lu. The mosque was a special space for Nigerian Muslims. Throughout the Chinese New Year, a handful of Nigerian men, especially older men from the Yoruba group of Southwest Nigeria, spent a lot of time here by staying back at the mosque in-between prayers, instead of being in the street in Guangyan Xi Lu. The distance between the mosque and the African dominated market sections, as well as the relatively short hours between the afternoon and evening prayers, did not encourage them to leave the mosque after Dhuhr (or afternoon prayers). On one Friday afternoon when the researcher visited to catch up on an appointment, the number of Nigerians standing at the gate swelled, growing from about 5 to about 12 to 15 people. It was later discovered that the regular gathering was an avenue to 'gist and catch up' with everyone, including those close to and distant from Guangzhou city. More importantly, the small post-Jumaat gathering helped them to keep a tab on everyone; who was doing well and who was not, and who was still around and who had 'left.'

Such gathering also occur among Nigerian Christians after weekly Sunday services. Like most other church services conducted outside government-approved spaces, one church was hidden within a rented hotel conference room. Unlike the Sacred Heart Cathedral where post-service socialisation happened over a special secondary service organised by members of the Charismatic Renewal Ministry, members of some hidden churches did post-service meetings in public restaurants like MacDonald's. Some of these hidden churches also served lunches after service. In one, the pastor's wife was coordinating with volunteer servers, who were also part of the congregation. Chinese women married to Nigeria men can be seen in attendance and kids were running and playing around the church space. Adults were seen catching up with their kids as they moved on and about the service ground.

Bars and restaurants are also important social spaces. In addition to the well-known African Pot restaurant which targeted residents and circulating migrants from Africa, Nigerians operate restaurants-cum-bars with tailor-made menus for people interested in Nigerian delicacies. Some of the popular ones include Chimamanda, Nwanyi Nnewi, and Destiny Foods. In Tongtong C, a market dedicated to shoes, a small section designated 'African Restaurant Area' contained a food court with up to four restaurants operating from much smaller cooking and serving spaces. Based on their menus, these restaurants targeted predominantly Nigerian clientele, although ownership pattern differed, from Chinese-Nigerian partnerships to an entirely Chinese or Nigerian-owned arrangements.

In Yuexiu district, a bar along Ma Lu is managed by a Nigerian-Lebanese man. The traffic at the bar builds up slowly, but many Nigerians, Chinese, as well as African and non-African foreigners frequent the spot. The setting was a bit different, cosy with spotlights and comfortable bar stools and lounge areas. About four tables with four seats each were lined outside the bar to accommodate guests with a love for the open sky and fresh night air. When the owner noticed that certain persons were being interviewed, he told the researcher that the interviewees cause problems with the 'shady businesses' they were involved with. Their 'shit,' he insisted, had attracted police to his bar. Apart from not making purchases, they spend time sitting around and distributing banned substances.[15] He's unsure what to do about them. The

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[15] Informal conversation with a Nigerian bar owner.

bar owner felt that there are more 'respectable members' of the Nigerian community to interview.

On weekends, and away from everyday hustling, Nigerian-Chinese families maintain a presence in Guangzhou and nearby city spaces. Some were seen giving their toddlers a bit of sun in a stroller, and stopping intermittently to engage in short chats with Igbo men standing along pedestrian areas or exchange greetings with a wave of the hand to shop owners. Mixed-race children of Nigerian men and Chinese women took turns in chasing one another. In another part of town, a Nigerian husband gave his Chinese wife a driving lesson with their children in the back seat. In preparation for a regular family meal, they visited the farmers market to shop for food items, and then to Lotus©, a popular shopping mall, so that the kids can pick out children's books published in the Chinese language. At every step, the Nigerian father would dish out rules and bark orders at his two daughters, especially the older one. He watched the girls closely and monitored how they walked and how much space they maintained from others. One time when they walked too close to 'other people,'[16] he yelled:

> Hey! Go back! I told you don't stay too close to people. If anything happens they'll be telling you this and that. Give people space. This manner, you have to really watch it, okay?! People have their own space. (Olorundara/LH/male/45)

In a loud bark, he repeated the final statement in Chinese. For this Nigerian father, Chinese children were too slow and walked carelessly. Being a Lagosian himself, his children must be space conscious and learn to stay alert – just in case they find themselves in Lagos!

Strikingly, with all the congregation of Nigerian persons in Guangyuan Xi Lu and Xiaobei, those without enough income, that is the majority, would retreat to the outskirts of the city, mainly Nanhai district in Foshan or to Dongguan (see inset on Figure 4.2). Generally, informants were suspicious of people asking to know where they lived. However, a prominent community member was happy to give a tour of his home in Foshan. As we approached Foshan, the participant pointed towards a well-built residential garden. 'This is where I was living until one month ago… It is more expensive than where we live now,'[17] he muttered. There was a

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[16] That is, Chinese people.
[17] Olorundara/LH/male/45

brief stopover at a neighbourhood in Nanhai where many Nigerian migrants have flocked to in recent years. Dongguan, on the other hand, took two hours to reach from Guangzhou. Since the crackdown and increased policing of Guangzhou, many Nigerians have rented apartments there and shuttled between the two locations on a day to day basis. An informant showed the researcher a bit of the city and made it clear that Dongguan was not like Guangzhou where Nigerians can trade. He said that Nigerians without work in Guangzhou but reside here were into 'online business' – a business he later confirmed was internet fraud (Okpocha/IDI/male/ 38). In all, Foshan and Dongguan were places of rest, spaces to relax in a relative peace of mind until dawn when the hustle would continue.

Even though the 'Guangzhou of 2017' was calmer, Anichebe (IDI/male/38) said 'there was a time when all this place was "very hot."' Even with its present 'calmness,' this bubbling trade town had an economy of deviance and crime in which Nigerians were strategically placed. In one street that was always filled with people, some Nigerian men smoked and sold marijuana in tiny packets while some drank beers and spirits from a nearby Chinese-owned provision store. Hence, is it not unusual for police to disrupt the spaces that Nigerian inhabit through raids. On one occasion, a participant received calls repeatedly and had to leave to attend to a matter on the ground floor. The police had come to make arrests. When the researcher accompanied the participant to the ground floor, a small group of Nigerian men emerged from the elevator, apparently to go on with their lives after the 'hide and seek' routine with the police had ended.

So, with the social interaction and massive economy of selling and buying going on, it was always hard to know who is who and who is into what. On one of the Sundays spent in Guangzhou, the Bureau De Change 'Big Boy' mentioned earlier walked past the shop where the researcher worked as Sampa. The 'Big Boy' was returning from the Catholic church and the manager of the shop hailed him. The informant later turned to the researcher to share the information that 'that guy is one of the silent millionaires from Nigerian in China. He is into money business. He's so simple; you won't even know.'[18] True. But the shop manager did not know enough about the 'money businessman' because the 'simple man' was also a drug

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[18] Isiche, Informal conversation, Guangzhou, 2017

kingpin.[19] This case revealed the extent of lack or limitation of knowledge of the other, even though Nigerians encounter one another on a day to day basis. To get interaction going, therefore, Nigerians in the city are always operating with incomplete information; information that is only enough to serve them for now.

4.5. Settlement experiences of Nigerians in Guangzhou city

Evidently, Nigerians maintain a presence in Guangzhou. Based on the second objective of the study, this section described how this came to be the case by exploring the settlement experiences of Nigerian migrants in the city. Essentially, settlement experiences consist of the gamut of processes, social relations and practices with which Nigerians increasingly established themselves as a distinct group in Guangzhou. The findings presented in this section documents participants' experiences of the Chinese receiving context with specific focus on narratives of arrival, how Nigerians navigate 'illegality' and uncertainties. It also traces the emergence and changes in the formation of the Nigerian migrant community and discusses their inter- and intra-group social relations in the host society.

4.5.1. 'China wasn't as we thought it was': Narrations of arrival in China

Having successfully made it out to China, many participants were often quickly confronted by new realities, both anticipated or otherwise. As first-time migrants from Nigeria, the awkward conversation at the Chinese immigration desk – which might be followed-up by a secondary check – alerts them to the transition that was about to unfold. An awkward conversation may begin on an accusatory note like: 'You know you Nigerians swallow drugs and bring into China?' 'Are you one of them?' 'What do you have in your stomach?'[20] Being a city that typically receives Africans on trade or business visits, immigration officers at the port of entry may also wish to know whether migrants had adequate *show money*[21]. This was a tense moment for two participants who arrived in China with $80 (Ejimba/LH/male/28) to $100 (Kuti/IDI/ male/39) in pocket. One of them reported having the following conversation:

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[19] This fact was obtained in-between the fieldwork break and during Phase II of data collection in Guangzhou.

[20] Personal experience of the researcher at the immigration desk of Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, January 16, 2017.

[21] Personal/business travel allowance (P/BTA)

They were asking me 'what are you coming to China to do?' I told them I came to buy goods. They asked 'Which goods?' I said cloths. They asked 'where's BTA?' [Business Travel Allowance] I replied I don't have. I showed the $100 in my pocket. They said 'What?! You are coming to China to buy goods with $100?' I said yes, that my brother had bought the goods. (Kuti/IDI/ male/39)

Certainly, there was no brother to meet, nor goods to pick up: Kuti came to stay. But despite overcoming the pressure of interrogations, the greatest hurdles lie outside the airport where migrants must manage the contradictions between expectations and reality, make adjustment to goals, build relationships, secure a living arrangement and work, thrive and struggle with decision about whether or not stay in Guangzhou – and on what terms.

In preparing for journeys, people gather information that they use to construct their expectations about the opportunities at the destination. Studies showed that more often than not, such information is outrightly false or incomplete (Horn-Udeze, 2009; Şaul, 2014). Some participants, for example, believed, based on information from either close associates or travel agents, that they can easily gain passage to South Korea or Hong Kong provided they arrive in China. However, they managed to come only as far as China, becoming 'stranded' in the process. Some others thought that there are jobs waiting for them, only to discover that China's population was *actually* enormous, that 'even the indigenes don't even have jobs let alone the foreigners' (Nonso/IDI/male/33). A 26 years old male participant planned to work and study, having obtained information from a friend who was, supposedly, schooling and working in China. He thought:

[T]here will be chance for working but when I got here, I discovered that the chance to work was so slim. …They don't give foreigners rights, and there is no work. (Moses/IDI/male/ 26)

Besides an expectation of finding any kind of work, one participant hoped to put his artisanal skills to use, and, maybe, relocate his family to China. But then, again:

We discovered that China wasn't as we thought it was [*speaks in a low voice*]. I thought that when I get here, I will use my learned skills to earn a living.[22] I [also] thought China was like America or those other countries in the Western world, that if you get there within six months, you'll be able to bring in your family to live together. It was until I got here that I found out that China was not as we thought it was. (Ahmed/IDI/male/45).

In comparison to destination countries in the Global North, some of the newly arrived 'mis-imagined' China's opportunities and possibilities.

Consequently, like the modifications done to review preferred destination choices at pre-departure phase, an adjustment to expectations seemed apt. For instance, once his friend told him '*guy*, you have to find your own way now,' after three weeks of waiting in China to be 'picked up' and transited into South Korea, Benson (IDI/male/33) went into the street to 'hustle' for food and money. Those who 'packaged' student visas to cross the border made their way to Guangzhou from Beijing and other Chinese cities. Many of these 'visa students' were either unable to afford fees (Tunde/IDI/male/27) or it became hard to survive and pay fees without work opportunities.[23] Many male participants went into Guangzhou streets in this way, including early arrivals who have now achieved some success at the time of the study. Unarguably, cases outside this pattern are a possibility. However, only in few narratives was this exception unambiguous.

Nonetheless, in revising expectations, many participants had to embed themselves into new networks and relationships, particularly the supportive types. The ability of participants to locate their 'brothers' was crucial at this stage. These 'brothers' were not necessarily consanguineous or direct relatives of any kind, but people perceived to be sympathetic towards their situation, from co-ethnics to people from the same states of origin, local governments, village, or simply for the fact of being Nigerians. Here, knowing where to find 'your brothers'[24] was crucial for getting timely assistance. Indeed, new arrivals with needs for assistance were

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[22] During Phase II of data gathering, the researcher met a young Nigerian, probably under 25 years of age, who was armed with the belief that he would be able to find job in construction with his skills with plaster of Paris (POP).

[23] Salami/IDI/male/28; Moses/IDI/male/26

[24] In Xiaobei where Hausa people were concentrated, one Hausa informant asked the researcher if he knew where 'your brothers' were. When the researcher said no, he offered to take him to see one of them, a young Yoruba male operating haircut shop within a hotel building.

expected to seek help in spaces where they could easily be recognised as a 'brother.' Lukmanu, a Hausa man who had lived and worked in Nigeria and Niger, described how this logic worked for him when he first arrived:

> This place [Xiaobei]…is a popular place; everybody knows about this place. If you come from Africa especially Nigerian or Nigerien…people will tell you to come to Xiaobei Lu. …So here, I meet one of my brothers who I know back then in Niger. (Lukmanu/IDI/ male/38)

To a large extent, similar logic applies in Guangyuan Xi Lu area where most Igbo and Yoruba Nigerians do business. So, when people arrive newly and require one form of support or another, it was not unusual if those on ground probed to know where you were from; if you were Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba; and if the new arrival was Igbo, giving additional information about state of origin, local government or village may influence how quickly help would come. In this process, some of the participants were able to connect with people who provided guidance and instrumental supports needed to stabilise. As Okocha emphasised:

> You must definitely see a Nigerian. If not an Igbo man, it will be a Yoruba man; I don't know about Hausa. If you don't see a Yoruba man, you'll see an Igbo man and once you explain yourself [that] 'I'm a Nigerian,' he must receive you as a Nigerian. It's not easy…when you come to a country with nothing…but along the line as long as you're seeing your brothers, they will tell you what you're supposed to do. (Okocha/IDI/male/37)

As shown in the quotation above, at the core of these new networks and relations of support were individuals who operate as 'integration mentors.' These mentors furnish newly arrived migrants with information and stories while also circulating community-wide beliefs about the host society. The mentors initiate and socialise new members into the Nigerian community while also giving survival clues and exposing them to the implications of the choices available to them in China. However, there were positive and negative sides to this.

On the positive side, 'integration mentors' may draw on their experiences to re-orientate newcomers about the dangers of criminal ambitions in China. An instance of this was the case of Ahmed who took steps to dissuade a 25 years old Nigerian from engaging in criminality. As the young Nigerian male informed him that 'in Nigeria today, China boys are the big spenders…I asked if they told him what they are doing here, to which he said *anything they fit*

like to do (Ahmed/IDI/male/45). Likewise, while accommodated in a brother's apartment, Favour said his 'brother':

> Really enlightened me and educated me on how things happen here; if you don't have visa how the police people will rough-handle you and everything. (Favour/IDI/male/ 35)

Other positive socialisations include integrating migrants into useful skills to be able to offer services as cargo or freight and market agents; two of the most popular jobs in which newly arrived can hustle and get by.

On the negative side, there were two dimensions identified. The first had to do with how the social condition of being relatively new in the migration space exposes people to exploitation while the second part involved a heightened risk of being socialised into desperate acts in the early weeks of arrival. With respect to how embeddedness in networks of relations expose people to exploitation, newly arrived individuals were usually unaware that early arrivals too could also be desperate – sometimes even more desperate. In one instance, Anichebe narrated that:

> As soon as I get here, the money I brought to China was stripped off from me here, in this carnal [he pointed towards the footbridge sitting over the canal beside the Tangqi Building on the other side of the road]. The person that received me said that I should bring the money. I gave him the $500 dollars I had on me; he changed it, bought ice cream with it, gives me one ice cream and one for him, bought a SIM card and gave it to me, recharged the phone and tells me: Now welcome to China! (Anichebe/IDI/male/38)

Anichebe explained further that with the same money, his handler prepared a large meal for about 10 to 12 boys he shared the house with. So, without anticipating it, some newly arrived find themselves entangled in a reverse dependency, which therefore speeds up the rate of depletion of already inadequate funds. With a mixture of naivety, blind trust, and cluelessness regarding what should happen next, newcomers were at risk of being exploited.

Besides being exposed to financial exploitation, many participants were cash-strapped after a few days or weeks of arrival. As a result, those they became associated with in the new networks of relations and support may encourage them to sell their travel documents. As put by a male participant:

> One thing our people do here [which] is very bad and affects most of the Nigerians here, [is that] most Nigerians don't have papers, the reason being that when they get here, they [that is, those on the ground] tell you that you have to sell your papers. (Ahmed/IDI/ male/45)

For younger newcomers especially, the risk of being socialised into serious crimes, such as fraud and drug dealing, was high. In the words of one male participant who was arrested twice before being imprisoned for drug-related crimes, the network of relations he joined at arrival influenced the life he led in China, saying:

> Whatever you are doing, I will join you, and I will be doing it also. Assuming you are getting pliers from here to Nigeria, you will go to the factory, and he too will join you. As I am saying now, I do not know anybody. So, that is what I will join too. [25] (Eddy/ IDI/male/39)

Therefore, newly arrived Nigerian migrants were confronted by a number of experiences and difficulties which required them to make decisions. While some of them have been highlighted above, a more urgent issue for the majority of interviewees concerned how to respond once the basis for their continuing stay in China draws to a close. The decisions or actions explored at the initial period of arrival often go a long way in shaping the settlement experiences of Nigerians in China. The broader context of this assertion would be subjected to further analysis by exploring how the participants experienced the period we categorised as 'liminal days' – or the first 30 days of arrival – in China.

4.5.2. Liminal days: From 'paper death' to 'staying put'

The dynamics of the presence of Nigerians in Guangzhou has a lot to do with arrival encounters and decisions. One way of assessing the veracity of this assertion is to consider their positionality at arrival. First of all, the majority of the participants were ordinarily expected to stay for 30 days and they were supposed to apply for visa extension, change to another visa or exit the country. While visa extension may be possible for only a few times, maybe once or twice, changing to visa types that allow them to stay in China without exiting requires additional documentation and involves costs that these newly arrived did not prepare for.

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[25] Before admitting that he was a drug dealer, this participant referred to himself in the third-person.

Curiously, to exit meant that, under 30 days, these migrants would have completed their journeys and achieved the purpose for which they lunched out. Unfortunately, this expectation was highly unlikely because the majority were probably still trying to find their way around, penniless and jobless, and without requisite knowledge nor networks to facilitate their stability in the city. The implication of this is that Nigerians at the lower echelon of the migrant ladder – the majority – generally made one of their most impactful decisions within the first month of arrival.

In the lives of newly arrived, the 'liminal days' was a period of transition within which critically consequential decisions were made. In the first instance, a large proportion of the study participants arrived in China with ordinary 30 days visas, predominantly the business type. Except in cases where a participant claimed to have adequate information prior to departure and then started functioning as soon as s/he landed,[26] many participants spent the first two weeks trying to figure out how the city works. At the time of arrival, Brian (IDI/male/47) pondered within himself by asking: How can I know this Guangyuan Xi Lu? Who can take me from house? Can I know road? Those who checked into a hotel would have checked out due to cost, making the task of finding an alternative accommodation a top priority.[27] A few newcomers that have exhausted their funds to procure and send goods to Nigeria, and waiting in desperation to get returns so that they can deal with immediate needs.[28] But as anxiety grew over what will happen next over the course of the month, a good number contemplated abandoning China and returning home.[29] Their visas would soon expire. As one participant poignantly described this underlying fear:

> My first month was so tough, so difficult, to the extent that I wanted to use my ticket to go back. I arrived the first week; I was confused, I didn't know what to do. I used the money I came with to buy some things, and I was expecting the return [from Nigeria but the person] didn't return it. So, I didn't have money to extend my visa. I was so afraid if my visa expires, what am I going to do? (Favour/IDI/male/35)

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[26] Bodunrin/IDI/female/58; Solo/IDI/male/25; Muritala/IDI/male/54
[27] Nwanyi/IDI/male/35; Ejimba/LH/male/28
[28] Favour/IDI/male/35; Ahmed/IDI/male/45
[29] Favour/IDI/male/35; Nwanyi/IDI/male/35; Smith/IDI/male/30; Brian/IDI/male/47

Over the course of data collection, only one of the participants returned to Nigeria voluntarily, and that happened after spending three months in the hope that things might turn around for him.

Fundamentally, as the date of visa expiry approached, a critical decision must be made between two options: return home or stay put. As shown in Figure 4.3, any of these options has implications. The most straightforward choice was to return home then strategise on a possible return, which may end in re-entry or failed re-entry. A large proportion of Nigerian men that were interviewed decided to stay put rather than return to their country of origin. According to the participants, the main influences on the decision to stay put were uncertainty at home, considerations regarding resource wastage, and homeland orientations which ruled out the possibility of return after the first month of departure.

Figure 4.3: Decision making during early days of arrival in Guangzhou, China
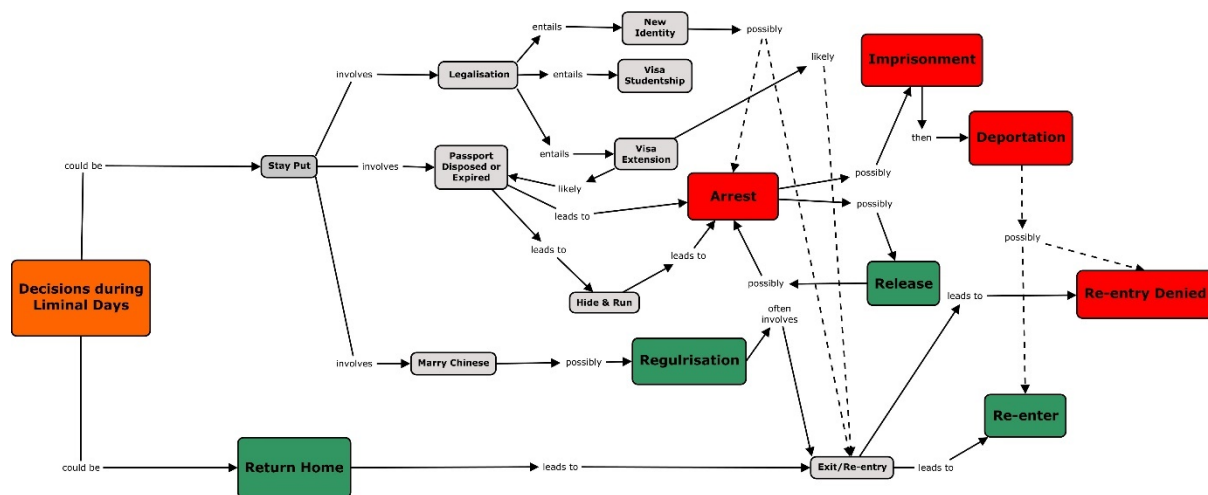
For example, in addition to being directed by his father to 'stay put' and do 'whatever your mates do there,' Ahmed (IDI/male/45) was uncertain that the uncertainty he tried to escape in Nigeria had waned. As he said, 'I was fed up…but I thought that even…the Akala government [which gave him his last employment in Nigeria] had been changed; power had changed and transferred from our hand.' In the words of a female participant, returning within a month would be a waste of resources, which 'I checked, the money I had spent…almost a million plus…so I do not need to go back just like that' (Diana/IDI/female/38). Some participants consulted with family and friends in Nigeria about their anxiety and possible return but were discouraged them from leaving. In one case, a male participant who arrived Guangzhou in 2013 at age 43, said:

I want to confirm my ticket to go back. What made me stay was that I called my friend who gave me some money. I told him I would be back next week. …He shouted on the phone, I was not able to talk. He disconnected the phone. …When he called back, he told me not to return, given how much I wasted to come. So, that I should stay, that there is no problem. (Brian/IDI/male/47)

Contrary to Brian's friend, however, in reality, staying put in Guangzhou involved options with complicated outcomes and problems. As represented in Figure 4.3, participants selected from three options at least: to legalise their stay, dispose passports or allow it to *die* or marry a Chinese woman. The legalisation of stay entails three additional sub-options, any of which may be accomplished through legal or illegal means. Examples of legalisation process for a new identity might be to extend visa by a few weeks, changing one's status to an asylum seeker (Adeoye/IDI/male/54), buying a non-Nigerian passport (Eddy/IDI/male/39), or apply to Chinese schools to become students.[30] Some of those that took up studentship became 'visa students' in the sense that they tend to remain students in perpetuity. In order to sustain these statuses, it is worth noting that some of these participants travelled to Chinese cities, near and far, and to nearby Asian countries to legalise their stay in China.

In post-liminal days, being able to legalise one's stay provided a degree of rest of mind – while it lasted. On their part, some participants that allowed their visas to *die* were forced to wake up. As one of them explained, 'when I discovered that my paper is already dead, I had to wake up. There was no going back. …I have already stayed and overstayed' (Brian/IDI/male/47). Waking up, however, means more than becoming more aware: it was about being prepared to hide and run. This fact was not lost on Ejimba, a 28 years old male participant who had managed to extend his visa once after the initial 30 days. As another expiration was looming, he decided that 'if I stay and the visa expires, I will just throw it away with the passport, then be running from the police' (Ejimba/LH/male/28). Other decisions options during the liminal days and their respective consequences are shown in Figure 4.3.

Beyond revealing the quagmires that many participants face upon arrival, liminal days and the period following visa expiration showed that passport as a legitimising and human authentication tool was limited in crucial ways. The fact that some of the participant had

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[30] 'Ladele/IDI/male/38; George/IDI/male/35

internalised the act of disposing their identity document along with expired visas as a real adjustment option was an indication of the limits of passport legitimacy. That is, while visa expiration on the official document should end a journey de facto, migrants still manage to retain their identity with a 'throwing away' social act and by maintaining a presence in the destination country.

It is necessary to point out that, essentially, the forgoing depicts the situation of many newly arrived Nigerians in Guangzhou. In other words, the existential predicament that 'liminal days' signposts capture the 'prevailing migration reality' of Nigerians. Yet, the experience of Nigerians in China has not always been this way. To appreciate 'liminal days' as a sociologically significant experience, we need to understand how the Nigerian community was initially constituted since the 1990s and how it has changed not just in terms of its internal dynamics but, most importantly, in respect to its relationship with the host society.

4.5.3. The formation of Nigerian migrant community in Guangzhou

While the facticity of presence was affirmed by the mode of interactions and pattern of relations between Nigerians and Chinese, the community organisation that Nigerian migrants created, nurtured and attempted to stabilise since the early 1990s was a distinct process in their overall settlement. More than their interaction with the host society, the establishment of the Nigerian community associations was an outcome of intra-group social relations. The documentation of the community formation processes will elucidate key antecedents and transformations that informed the settlement of Nigerian migrants in a Chinese city. Here, the 'Nigerian community' is used as an omnibus term to cover individual Nigerians and groups formed by people of Nigerian origin. However, we will associate the term more with a number of interdependently formed organisations established by Nigerians in Guangzhou, and whose members interact on the basis of shared affinities or interests.

4.5.3.1. Phases in the development of Nigerian community in Guangzhou

Although the Nigerian community in Guangzhou had been in the making since the early 1990s, many Nigerians interviewed only began to feel the presence of a vibrant migrant community from 2006 upward. Based on information generated from long term residents, past and current community leaders and other informed participants, two major waves of arrival can be identified among Nigerians in the city: the early and later waves. The early wave of arrival

started in the early 1990s up to 2005. The early arrival involved trickles and a slow congregation of predominantly Igbo people of the South-eastern Nigeria. Many of these early arrivals came to China from other Asian countries and later moved to Guangzhou from other Chinese cities. The later migration wave which began from 2006 upward is characterised by the influx of a more diversified population of young Nigerians who migrated to China directly from Nigeria. This later wave in particular introduced social problems which not only strained the relationship of Nigerians with the host society, but forced stakeholders in the Nigerian community to reorganise, reform and respond in a manner that creates new opportunities for trust-building and community rejuvenation. In order to ground the Nigerian migratory waves in concrete socio-historical moments, we shall discuss each wave in phases.

4.5.3.2. The early wave of arrival: circa 1990-2005

4.5.3.2.1. Phase I: The emergence

The formation of the Nigerian community in the early period was linked to the entrepreneurial drives of the first comers in the 1990s. As with other accounts in which the presence of Africans in Guangzhou was described (Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2007), changes in the economic circumstances of Asia around the late 1980s triggered the movement of Nigerians into mainland China. In the 1980s and 1990s, Nigerians moved to South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Japan in search of work and for business. As a Commonwealth country, most of these trips were routed through Hong Kong which was also under the control of Britain until 1997. 'Every person coming to Asia passed through Hong Kong, whether you're going to work in Taiwan, in Korea, you must stopover at Hong Kong' (Baron/KII/male/50) and the small port country was also visa-free to other Commonwealth countries. But apart from being a visa-free transit country for a lot of Nigerians moving around the Asian sub-region, Hong Kong was at the time a major centre of international commerce and trade that attracted businesspeople and fortune-seekers. Although Igbo businessmen from well-known markets in Southeast Nigeria were a dominant group in Nigeria-Hong Kong trade, Hausa traders too were involved in the 1990s.

However, as the economy of Asia began to decline, the role of Hong Kong also changed in the social and economic affairs of Nigerians travelling in East Asia. On the one hand, for those visiting that country for business, the cost went up, and business became increasingly

unprofitable. On the other hand, Nigerians who were being deported from Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and other nearby countries as a result of economic downturn, were being taken to Hong Kong. Rather than return home, many Nigerian deportees took advantage of their status as Commonwealth citizens to stay back in Hong Kong in the hope of finding work. Unfortunately, a lot of them were unable to secure work, 'doing nothing, virtually doing nothing' (Baron/KII/male/50). Their condition remained mostly unchanged for most of the mid-1990s.

Apart from a few Nigerians who moved into mainland China as English teachers in 1989/90, China was not considered a priority location for work or business opportunities. One of the earliest stories recorded of Nigerian presence in Guangzhou was a man named Smith who arrived in 1990 to teach English. The story of Mr Smith as the first person from Nigeria to settle in Guangzhou was corroborated by accounts of participants who had lived in the city for more than two decades.[31] Mr Smith, said to have been an Okija man, was well-known in Guangzhou at the time as he later married a Chinese and learned to speak Chinese. He was claimed to have laid the foundation for the formation of the Nigerian community through his unification of Nigerians that came later (Glover/KII/male/34). The second person, called Eugene Madu, came in 1992 to set up a business consultancy service. However, it was the discovery of motorcycle business after the arrival of one IK Okani in 1995 that made a significant impact on the eventual influx of Nigerians into Guangzhou.

According to one account, Mr Okani went to Hong Kong after sustaining a factory accident in South Korea where he worked up to 1994:

> He [Okani] sustained some injury that he was not able to work; he was not physically fit to work in the factory. So, he decided to relocate to Hong Kong. When he came to Hong Kong, there was virtually nothing Nigerians were doing there. (Baron/KII/male/50)

Mr Okani was forced to move on again because he was unable to find something to do. Without money to venture into business in Hong Kong, he decided to cross over to mainland China, Guangzhou in particular. Upon arriving in the city, Okani was immediately taken by the huge presence and use of motorcycles in the streets. Back in Nigeria, Okani had engaged in

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[31] Chima/KII/male/48; Akingbola/KII/male/50

motorcycle parts business and was aware that majority of what was in Nigerian market was coming from Asia. So, his first thought was to locate where the second-hand of all the motorcycles in the streets can be procured, a thought he executed by locating a large motorcycle impounding site in Sanyuanli area.

Given the enormity of the motorcycles at the site and Okani's limited financial capability, he invited Smith and Eugene to partner with him. Having managed to reach an agreement with the responsible local authority, these partners connected merchants in Nnewi, a famous commercial centre in Southeast Nigeria where motorcycle sales was a big business at the time. The arrangement was to load 'turn by turn; this person will load today; another person will load tomorrow' (Baron/KII/male/50). Unfortunately, as work started on loading containers, these partners began to face some problems with their Chinese workers. The challenge was that the Chinese workers lacked the skills to fill up shipping containers: they were loading up 60 motorcycles in containers that can take up almost 200 if dismantled. Their decision was to replace the Chinese workers, which the local management did not oppose. But where will Nigerian replacement workers be found, given their general lack of presence in Guangzhou?

At the same time that Okani and others were setting up the motorcycle business in Guangzhou, the number of Nigerian deportees in Hong Kong was growing. Many of those who managed to cross to mainland China stopped in Shenzhen, an industrial city lying two hours away from Hong Kong and three hours to Guangzhou. In Shenzhen, up to 50 Nigerian men shared a room in hostel apartments that cost RMB50 per night (Baron/KII/male/50). One informant who lived in one of such apartments, called Chinese Overseas Hotel, from 1995 to 1997 recalled that:

> We only have one room. They give us one room of three bed inside. They allow only three people to stay, but the people living there are 18, 15 to 20 people. …When the management comes to the room, we don't want them to see more than three. …So, you stay one [night] in and two nights outside. …Anywhere you like go and sleep, you might go to the club and sleep, but you [still] have to pay for that night you're outside. …So, now we're rotating ourselves [and] …this is how we have been doing it and maintaining ourselves. (Akingbola/KII/male/50)

Okani and his partners tapped into the labour of unemployed Nigerians in Shenzhen by spreading the news of job availability. A lot of these young men responded by moving into Guangzhou. At the site, they were shown how to disassemble motorcycles and load them into

the containers. 'So, any day there is a container to load about 60 to 70 people will be loading one container' (Baron/KII/male/50). While these workers earned little money at the time, about RMB50, the pay was manageable enough to attract many more people, including those floating in Hong Kong. More than growing to become a multimillion dollars enterprise for Nigerian businesspeople in China and Nnewi, motorcycle work sustained many Nigerians in Guangzhou from 1997 to 2000. The area around the motorcycle loading site in Sanyuanli was later dubbed *Igbo Ezue*, which means the 'Igbo have gathered' (Baron/ KII/male/50).

As second-hand motorcycles became a huge business, attracting many people from nearby Chinese cities, Hong Kong would also lose more Nigerians trading in specialised merchandise to Guangzhou. Nigerian businesspeople that visited Hong Kong from places like Onitsha and Aba were dealing in textiles and other exportable goods. The factors responsible for this were that vital equipment in textile packaging and freight services were predominantly available in Hong Kong. Specifically, many textile dealers from Nigeria did not have the capital to fill large containers on their own and were therefore constrained to buy in bits, after which a number of them will assemble their merchandise in a warehouse and then ship using what was known as a groupage system. What made this system efficient was the availability of textile compressing machines in Hong Kong. This vital equipment was not available in Guangzhou when Nigerians moved in the early 1990s. Of course, while the textiles on sale in Hong Kong were being produced on mainland China, only big dealers with substantial operating capital could source goods from there. Hence, small textile dealers from Nigeria were unable to move into mainland China because they were incapable of dealing in large volumes and compressing machines were nearly absent to allow for a groupage system to flourish in Guangzhou.

So, in addition to attracting unemployed and deportee Nigerians from Hong Kong and the nearby city of Shenzhen to gather in Sanyuanli's second-hand motorcycle site, Nigeria's early arrivals also took a significant step to pull Nigerian textile traders towards Guangzhou. This was done by setting up companies that provided textile compression services. As at 1998, two shipping companies had been established: one Evans, owned by a Nigerian, and later Choice was started with a Nigerian-Chinese partnership. These companies started shipping and cargo services that made it possible for more business traffic to be redirected to Guangzhou. And as this was going on, some Nigerians began to set up representative offices in Guangzhou, just like the informant who claimed to have established the fourth representative office and would later become the pioneer leader of the Nigerian community in the city. Also, before the turn of

the millennium, Nigerians in the city had experienced the famous bi-annual Canton Trade Fair and had discovered new business opportunities that they shared enthusiastically with businesspeople back in Nigeria. Describing the response of people at this initial period, another ex-president of the Nigerian community at a later phase of the community formation said:

> [Nigerians in China] were calling our people to come to China, to which most of us were surprised then. China? What is China? China is Third World! But when we came in, it was surprising that China had developed in this way. (Mr Ojukwu/KII/male/45)

But there was also another major change in 1998 which made Hong Kong increasingly inaccessible to and made Guangzhou a top alternative location of choice for, Nigerian migrants: the immigration reform that removed Nigeria from the list of countries that may enter Hong Kong without a visa.

So, with transformations in previous migration destinations in Asia, migrant impoverishment, entrepreneurship and business collaborations among Nigerians, and between Nigerians and Chinese people, Guangzhou was feeling the presence of Nigerians. According to many accounts from community leaders,[32] it was relatively easy to extend visas and prolong one's stay in Guangzhou. As connoted by the *Igbo Ezue* construct, Nigerians from Southeast Nigeria were gathering, and their presence was becoming obvious in the communities they had taken residence.

4.5.3.2.2. Phase II: The stabilisation

The stabilisation phase started between 1999 and year 2000 when a Basil Ukaere was nominated the first President of the Nigerian community. At this time, there were already a 'sizeable number of Nigerians' to constitute a community. Back home, Nigeria just transitioned to its fourth democratic regime since independence, and the federal government was reviving relationships with the rest of the world. China was going to be a next stop for the then President Olusegun Obasanjo in August 2001, and so, ensuring that he meets an organised and functioning community structure appeared to be a reasonable decision for many stakeholders at the time. In fact, the Nigerian embassy in Beijing, through an ambassador, visited

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[32] KII, Mr Emma Ojukwu; KII, Ademola Olagunju; Mr Basil Ukaere, Mr Elochukwu; Guangzhou, 2017

Guangzhou to facilitate the appointment and investiture of the president of the Nigerian community.

> We wanted the ambassador to preside over the election. …In fact, my office as the first president of the community was not contested with any person. Overwhelmingly, everybody just got up and said, unanimously, this is our president. (Mr Ukaere/ KII/male/50)

But more than this, the rising population of Nigerians in the city made the formation of a well-structured community an urgent task. It was believed that if the plan to establish a vibrant and functional community was successfully executed, it may have helped to resolve a lot of emerging social problems emergent at the time, including visa overstays and arrests. Having been inaugurated on the same day of the election, the seven-man Executive Committee proceeded with the task of community building. Their first task was to produce a written constitution, which they succeeded at. In that document, the community was named the 'Association of Nigerians Resident in Guangdong' (ANRG) – a.k.a. the Nigerian Union (NU).

Mr Ukaere ran the community for four years and handed over to an Interim Community which had the constitutional duty of managing the transition to new leadership. However, no election was conducted until two years after, with about three different people managing the community at different periods. Before another election was held in 2006, which led to the emergence of Okechukwu Uche, one of the people that led during the interregnum attempted to change the ANRG from community association into a business association – or a chamber of commerce.

With Mr Uche's government in place in 2006, and with the 'instruction of the embassy,' the erstwhile president blessed and inaugurated them (Baron/KII/male/50). According to informants' accounts, the Uche regime was smooth for the most part, up to the point when his relationship with the authority of the host community became sour. There are conflicting accounts of what transpired at the time. One account holds that Mr Uche challenged the host community over what he believed was exploitative immigration policy. He was said to have protested against the mandatory imprisonment and compulsory payment of RMB5,000 fine for overstaying. In the city, the majority of overstayers had had to rely on community assistance in order to fund their own deportation, and many often languish in Chinese prisons when community effort was not enough to raise needed funds. As one KII participant explained:

> Okey [*Okechuckwu*]…said no, that they should scrap the fine entirely and leave the ticket so that the community can assist those in the prison rally round and help to buy a ticket; [that] this fine is too much; it's bearing much on us, on the people. (Baron/KII/male/50)

The suspicion of the informant above was that since the community was forthcoming with the money, the authorities could not forgo the revenue. 'They didn't know how to lose that money' (Baron/KII/male/50). Rather, more and more people were being rounded up, jailed and made to pay overstay fees. The position taken against the host community was radical, at least when compared with the strategy of Mr Ukaere who said he negotiated with the police on a case by case basis – instead of calling for a major change to the Chinese immigration law.

Another version of the story stated that Mr Uche was operating an illegal church. Of course, only a limited number of churches were approved in the city, and many churches that a large number of Nigerians attend outside the state-approved ones were illegal. But as one informant interpreted the situation, there was a conspiracy that made Mr Uche a target. Mr Uche, he explained, was set up by people who 'reported' him to the authorities: 'they said he is a pastor, he is running a church…and the reporting was done by Nigerians as an allegation to set him up' (Emeka/KII/male/45).

Irrespective of the version that accurately tells what led to the conflict, the outcome was the same for Mr Uche: he was arrested, imprisoned for a few months and then deported to Nigeria. Or as put by an informant 'they used an upper hand on him to tell him you are only a community leader but we are the people, we are the police' (Baron/KII/male/50). At that time, his family was in China, and he had valid papers. This again underscores the limits of passport legitimacy in the presence of Nigerians in China. But in contrast to visa expiration, which essentially exposed the limits of passport during the liminal days, the sovereignty of the nation-state to illegalise previously legal people is more important in the current case.

Between Mr Uche's ouster and 2006, there was a lull in terms of community activities. By 2007, another meeting had been conveyed by Nigerian embassy officials who revisited Guangzhou from Beijing. The Foreign Minister of Nigeria was visiting in the company of the Head of Mission named Sunday Omaghade and former Governor of Imo State, Ikedi Ohakim. This was about the first meeting to be attended by the man who would usher in the reformation phase of the Nigerian community, Mr Emmanuel Ositadome Ojukwu – or Emma Ojukwu for

short. So, as it happened in the year 2000, the Nigerian embassy in Beijing supervised reorganisation of the Nigerian community in 2007: 'the Foreign Minister…demanded that the Head of the Mission, Sunday Omaghade should not go back to Beijing, that he should stay and re-organise the community.'[33] Based on the principle set out in the ANRG constitution, an interim government was constituted with Mr Ojukwu as its chairman and three other persons as members.

When Mr Emma-led interim government was constituted, the population of Nigerians in the city had shot up, and the baggage of social problems that accompanied the in-flow of predominantly young men from Nigeria was straining their relationship with the host community. In comparison to 2001 when the Nigerian community cultivated friendship with the host society through sporting events and awareness campaigns and welfare programmes to orphanages and Chinese prisons (Baron/KII/male/50):

> [In] 2005/06…people were dealing on…drugs and…forming cultist groups [sic]. They formed *Aye*; they formed *Bagga* and [cult groups with] so many names. …Each of the cultist groups brought criminals from Nigeria to strengthen their groups and secure drugs business. They fund the transportation of (member) to come to China and join them. (Mr Ojukwu/KII/male/45)

Using a similar comparison lens, a female participant said before the spike in criminality 'I could bring my dog [to China]. …I blame our boys. …They made us forfeit a lot of benefits, plus visa being difficult' (Bodunrin/IDI/female/58).

Another fallout of the problem was that Nigerians and the Nigerian passport were taking a hit from the host community as a result of the circumstance of the time. In order to make it difficult for Nigerians to stay in Guangzhou, the authorities made it tougher to extend visas on the Nigerian passport and conducted routine crackdowns on areas with high presence of Nigerians. More significantly, those involved in drugs and partake in cultic activities were said to have transformed Guangyuan Xi Lu into a terror zone where daylight robbery and macheting became part of the everyday experience of Nigerians and the host community.

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[33] KII, Mr. Emma Ojukwu, Guangzhou, 2017

4.5.3.3. Later wave of arrivals: 2006-2017

4.5.3.3.1. Phase III: The reformation

The principal figure during the formation phase was Mr Ojukwu. At different times when the researcher met him, Mr Ojukwu talked slowly and calmly. His plump body size made that manner of talking appropriate. He was never alone, often in the company of two or more people, mostly his cabinet members. Both in talks and in reporting his deeds, Mr Ojukwu presented himself as a selfless benevolent that regularly goes out of his way to help others. Many Nigerians in the city, especially those at the lowest rung of the community, also perceived and talked about him in almost the same way.

Initially, the new interim leadership he led was supposed to last for three months. However, Mr Ojukwu persuaded the community to give extensions citing the enormity of the problems at hand. The extensions postponed elections indefinitely and elongated the lifespan of the interim to three years, from 2007 to 2010. When the election was finally called in 2010, Mr Ojukwu emerged victorious, winning by a huge margin of votes. The reforms he undertook from 2007 to 2014 were acknowledged as successful by everyone in the community – including those who would later join him to create and deepen schisms in the community from 2015 onward.

As a leader, the most urgent tasks for Mr Ojukwu were to find quick and radical ways to remake the image of Nigeria and resolve the issue of criminality among Nigerians in the city. First and foremost, to legitimise his leadership, he sought official approval and letter of support from the Nigerian embassy in Beijing. This was considered useful for validating his authority over the community when he eventually approached the host community for negotiations. As expected, he met with the local authorities to discuss and provide solutions to issues of mutual concern, from community meetings to deportation procedures. The Nigerian community itself was reorganised into a federal system with more unambiguous community hierarchies and line of communications from the lowest to highest levels (see Figure 4.4).

Based on the Constitution of the association, the most powerful organ under Mr Ojukwu is the General Congress, followed by the Executive Committee which is constituted by elected officers. The General Congress is the highest decision-making organ and is expected to meet regularly to discuss and make decisions on general business of the association, election matters,

income and expenditure review and budgets, as well as appointment of ad-hoc committees. The Executive Committee on the hand will implement decisions and assignments from the Nigerian embassy, run the day to day affairs of NU, promote members' welfare and rights, notify the Nigerians embassy about issues affecting members, be image makers for the country in China, and may also set up ad-hoc committees. The Executive Committee comprised 10 members: President, Vice President, General Secretary, Assistance Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officers, Welfare Secretary, Assistant Welfare Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Provost. The tenure of executive officers was stipulated at four years from the day of inauguration.

Figure 4.4: Social organisation of Nigerian community in Guangzhou, China
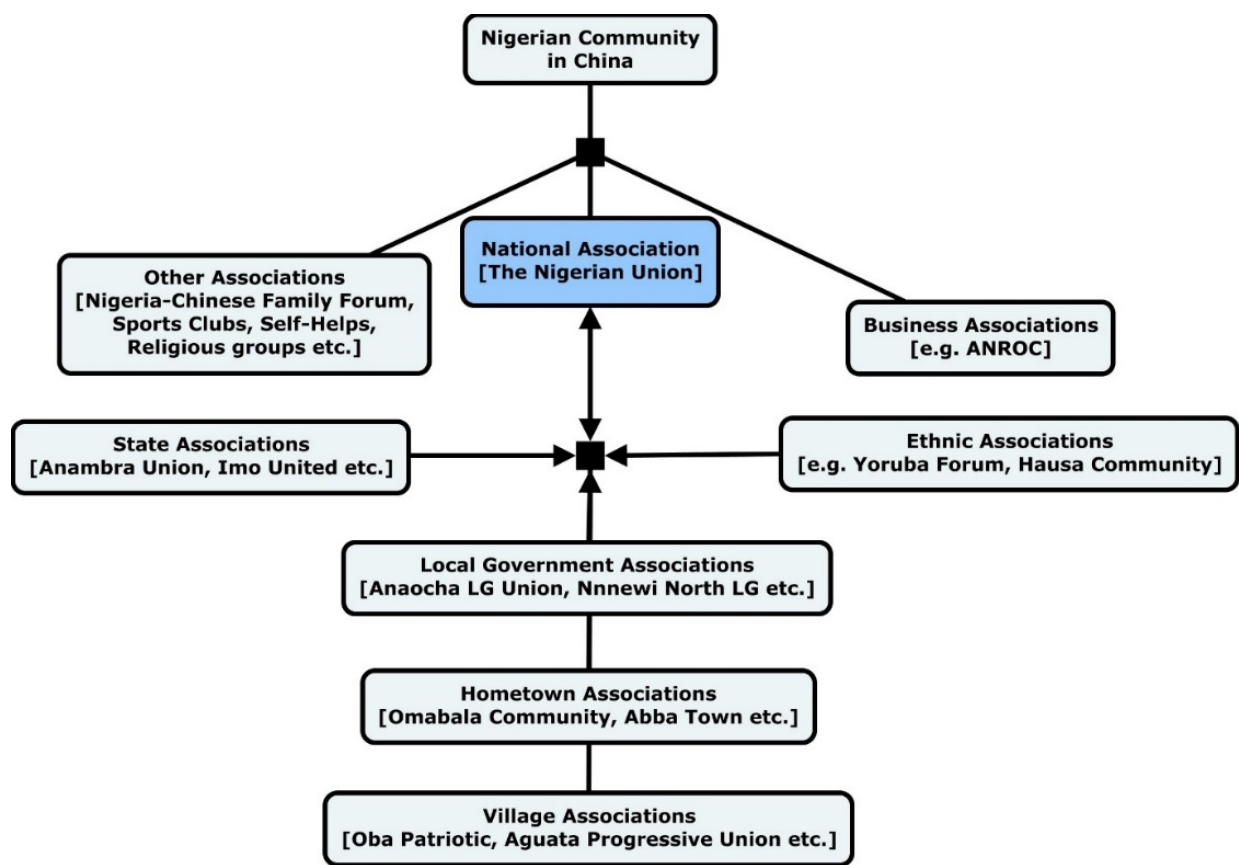
One of the key negotiations that Mr Ojukwu pursued was to expand access of Nigerians to business spaces, irrespective of their documentation status. This feat was significant because the majority of Nigerians that moved in from the first decade of the millennium did not have appropriate visas to stay, work or operate businesses in the city. Given the fact that a lot of them had previous trading experience, Mr Ojukwu encouraged the host community to loosen restrictions and widen access to markets as a way of promoting productivity through legitimate means. One community leader said that because of the step taken by Mr Ojukwu:

> The [city] government had to allocate places where Nigerians can now open shops and trade and make money, unlike our own time when they said you just have to bring in money and go back to Nigeria. (Baron/KII/male/50)

At a point, Nigerians were allowed to trade openly in about 14 markets. Lack of passport or visa expiry were no longer barriers to access trading spaces; only a willingness to engage in a legitimate business. In the process, Nigerians employed Chinese people as workers and formed partnerships that introduced Chinese to how the market system in Africa operates. Some of these Chinese workers would later move on to establish their personal businesses within the same or in other markets in the city, either dealing with or serving the same clientele that Nigerians attracted to the city.

Meanwhile, through a constitutional amendment, the name of the community was changed from ANRG to the 'Association of Nigerian Community China' (ANCC). Mr Ojukwu said the Chinese authorities were negatively disposed to the previous name and were not interested in dealing with as it was. So, a name change was considered appropriate. Other key changes to the constitution placed the power to dissolve the Executive Committee of the association in the hands of the 'Honourable Embassy' of Nigeria in China. The tenure of the executive members was extended to four years, two years more than what was stipulated in Mr Ukaere's (or ANRG) constitution.

By 2014, the dream to extend official consular service with a physical presence in the city was achieved. While the need for consular service in Guangzhou had been pitched by former community heads, the Nigerian government could no longer ignore the increase in the number of Nigerians residing in and around the city. According to a Nigerian embassy official at the Guangzhou consulate, the establishment of the consular office aligned with:

> The general interest of the [Nigerian] government, basically their political relationship with China but you know the country is also pursuing the aggressive trade and investment drive. …We know that China will remain strategic to this drive based on the existing

relationship between African countries, [and] of course which Nigeria is also very strategic.[34]

More critically, continued the official, consideration was given to the fact that the city was where the majority of Nigerians resided in China and the consular issues arising therefrom, particularly the image problems caused by the involvement of many nationals in crimes. Regardless, Mr Ojukwu ascribed the consulate establishment to his tenure and claimed to have influenced the appointment of the first ambassador of Nigeria to the office as he:

> Demanded an Igbo man to be the Consulate General in Guangzhou because the Igbo are mainly 70% of Nigerians here, and with my idea and understanding, if 70% are Igbo, it is better to pick an Igbo man as a consular so that he can control the 70%. Thirty percent will be very easy for him to control if they [consular officers] are really here for the work.

As other community heads have done in the past, Mr Ojukwu explored ways of dealing with financial burden posed by overstaying and proposed a strategy to make deportation easy. The strategy, which gained community-wide acclaim, was pursued in partnership with the newly established Nigerian consulate and the host community. Typically, those arrested and facing deportation because of immigration offences spend between a month and three months – some spend a year or more – in Chinese jails. While incarcerated, they were expected to pay RMB10,000 fines for overstay, and then raise money to procure return tickets, without which they will remain in prison. The amnesty programme, as it was popularly known, secured a reduced or no prison sentence – depending on the case – and made it possible for those willing to return voluntarily to do so by paying a much-reduced overstay fees.[35] Conducted annually from December to January, the amnesty has gradually become a programme that many Nigerian overstayers tap into to secure a less stressful return to Nigeria. What is more, Mr Ojukwu claimed to have improved community harmony and introduced processes that helped in the management of conflicts in intercultural marriages and churches.

However, by far the most critical project pursued during the reformation phase was the formation of a vigilante group known as 'the Peacekeepers.' The primary task of the group was

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[34] KII with Mr Falusi, Guangzhou, 2017.
[35] The amount mentioned varied, between RMB3,000 to RMB5,000.

to deal with the criminality problems. In fact, the stability and increased bonding achieved in the Nigerian community cannot be understood in full without considering the existential crisis of drugs and other forms of criminality that became emblematic of Nigerians' presence in the Chinese city. In other words, the rise of a more active and responsive community coincided with the period when drug pushing and peddling was highest and had become an extraordinary emergency for the host society and the growing number of Nigerians that have taken residence in Guangzhou.

In the Nigerian community in Guangzhou, the Peacekeepers have managed to attain an urban legend status. Several accounts from Nigerians who experienced or participated in the Peacekeepers movement maintained that Guangzhou was a perilous place. 'People's 'f**k ups' were being treated in public restaurants with a machete (Okocha/IDI/male/37), restaurant owners were forced to pay 'protection fees' using open threats, drug traffickers were being gutted to retrieve swallowed drugs, and deep freezers were converted to storages for human carcasses.[36] Similarly, phones and money were being 'obtained' in the open streets, while imported Nigerian cultists groups fought for supremacy at the same time (Anichebe/IDI/male/ 38).

According to its initiator, the Peacekeepers was mobilised to quell the terror of young Nigerian men that descended on the city. Following a recruitment process that involved oath-taking, the team of 60-plus men was assembled from a large pool of over 100 Nigerian men who volunteered to sanitise the community and remake the image of Nigeria. To ensure that the host community did not misread their intentions, the mobilisers reminded the volunteers that 'we are doing the job of peace,' and not a 'task force.' Some long-term stayers and stakeholders who could not participate directly supported by donating money for the execution of the group's activities (Glover/KII/male/34). The Peacekeepers was organised to gather intelligence, make arrests and handover criminals to the Chinese authorities (Ibeh/IDI/male/43), and some of their activities spilled over to cities outside Guangzhou, from Foshan to Dongguan. It was a major community clean-up performed on Nigerians by Nigerians outside the Nigerian borders.

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[36] KII with Mr Ojukwu, Guangzhou, 2017.

In spite of the improvements and stability that occurred during the reformation phase, the Nigerian community would fall under a strain that challenged its own internal resilience, survival and capability to escape an impending disintegration.

4.5.3.3.2. Phase IV: The disintegration (or evolving still?)

In 2014, the euphoria of past achievement was waning, and many community members were looking forward to another transition through an election, which never held – and remained so after the researcher exited the field. The post-reformation phase of the NU, which one prominent community member tagged as being '…in turbulence right now' (Glover/KII/male/ 34), was mainly characterised by political and constitutional stalemates, a social-relations crack, internal disaffections, and community-wide apathy.

To start with, in the build-up to the election that was to hold in 2014, underground but strong and influential voices in the community had started to express discontent over the seven-years leadership of Mr Ojukwu. His opponents believed that the interim period that lasted for three years should count as a tenure, which when added to the four years from 2010 to 2014 should make up two tenures. But Mr Ojukwu disagreed, claiming that 'tenure' and 'interim' were different. It should be noted that before the constitutional amendment of Mr Ojukwu, the tenure of all executive members was two years and his interim was supposed to have lasted for three months. Those opposing him ruled out the possibility of him contesting again as they insisted that he should step down completely and allow 'fresh people' to come in.

The political impasse was further complicated by disagreements on the rule of political participation in the community. Those opposed to Mr Ojukwu desired an electoral rule that limited participation to Nigerians with 'valid/legal' identity documents. According to one of the community actors that advanced this rule, the principle should be applied strictly to those vying for elective position, even though:

> [All] Nigerians can participate, insofar as you're a Nigerian. But to be an executive, you must have a valid Nigerian identification. That is compulsory because if you say, we are the executive of the Nigerian community and the government asks you to present your passport. If you don't have a valid passport, how do you want to present it? (Akingbola/ KII/male/50)

Mr Ojukwu and his followers argued that many Nigerians will be excluded from the elections. It should be noted that in both the old and current constitutions, full membership of the association was open to:

> All Nigerians with Nigerian passports or other approved personal identities while in China, provided that the person is not declared *persona non-grate* [sic] in China as at the time of membership.[37]

The majority of those that would be excluded by the election rule formed Mr Ojukwu's support base: Nigerians with expired visas and others holding a non-Nigerian passport. Moreover, throughout his leadership, Mr Ojukwu presented himself as a populist and his energy was directed towards working for this undocumented segment of the Nigerian migrant community. Those challenging the propriety of his continued stay in office and who sought to takeover have resident permits with more established businesses and families in the city. Also, Mr Ojukwu was suspicious that a frontline business association called the Association of Nigerian Registered Operators in China (ANROC) was scheming to 'hijack' the Nigerian community to serve its business motives, and exclude poor Nigerians from benefits that should accrue to all community members. But again, a prominent community member thought that ANROC has 'a problem with his person [Ojukwu as an individual], not the community…. For the number of years, they saw him as somebody who doesn't want to leave office' (Baron/KII/male/50).

As the community leaders failed to achieve consensus on how to proceed, the Hon. Ambassador of Nigeria in Guangzhou, Cyril Anozie, 'stepped in' by directing that the Executive Committee be dissolved. In order to achieve his aim, the ambassador exploited a loophole that had, ironically, been introduced in the constitution that Mr Ojukwu amended, that is, that:

> The Executive Council shall be dissolved and a Sole Administrator is appointed by the Honourable Embassy, if there are: j) cases of very serious emergency; ii) general lack of trust from members of The Association; iii) if a vote of no confidence is passed on the

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[37] The researcher was able to obtain two constitutions, the 2000 version and the version produced during Ojukwu-led regime. It was recently gathered that a third constitution might be in circulation in which a three-year tenure was set for those holding executive positions.

Executive Committee, as a whole, in a properly constituted meeting; iv) acts considered inimical to either Nigeria or China or both [sic]. (ANCC constitution, Article X).

In the ANRG constitution, the power to dissolve the executive resided in the General Congress. According to one informant, Mr Ojukwu's motivation for amending that section of the constitution was due to the suspicion that the General Congress might be used to remove him from office. As he said:

> There was a kind of tension, and the president discovered that they could use that version [ANRG constitution]. …So, he organised his own men to rewrite the constitution and it says that it is only the consulate or the embassy will have the right to dissolve the executive…not knowing that in a couple of years we'll have a consulate here in Guangzhou and the consulate will take charge. (Glover/KII/male/34)

Unsurprisingly, some of the community leaders in Mr Ojukwu's camp dismissed ANCC constitution and the spirit that motivated its invocation by Ambassador Anozie. They also insisted that the dissolution was unnecessary because the ongoing problem was under control,[38] given the fact that an electoral committee had been constituted and forms had been procured. While this did not change the position of the ambassador, it was not immediately clear what set off his animosity towards the Mr Ojukwu's regime, and even less was found out about how it started. What was apparent, however, was that the relationship between them had deteriorated.

There were competing interpretations on the propriety of the dissolution of Mr Ojukwu's executive. One view, which we called the 'community naturalist position,' held that the ambassador and the Nigerian embassy itself should have no power of dissolution because the community has always been here, and will continue to be here, with or without the Nigerian consulate. The position contended that the Nigerian community predated the embassy and should, thus, exist and be independent of the consulate or embassy's power and control. Mostly subscribed to by the supporters of the ousted president, an example of community naturalist position might be couched as follows:

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[38] Ahmed/IDI/male/45

They want the association to be under them; we cannot be under them; it [Nigerian community] is a different entity. It is like the Federal Government wanting to choose the head of NLC [Nigeria Labour Congress] for Nigerians. Is it possible? (Olorundara/LH/ male/45)

And may also be presented using narrations that placed the community and the Nigerian consulate within two distinct realms:

[The] Community is [the] community, [the] consulate is [the] consulate. The community was formed here and not form by the [Nigerian] government. …Our constitution was not written by the embassy…which right do you have to ban the community? (Emeka/KII/ male/45)

A second interpretation was the 'government precedency position,' a more formalist view which stated that there is nothing like the Nigerian community without the embassy. Being an extension of the Nigerian state in China, the position held that the community and its leadership must submit to consular authority. One ex-community leader who held this view even described the ambassador who removed Mr Ojukwu as 'the overall…the first Nigerian in China…representing the president of our nation' (Baron/KII/male/50). When the consulate was probed to provide clarifications on these views, it refrained from acknowledging its power, even the constitutional powers that supported the action taken by the embassy's representative. Rather, the consulate insisted that the community was in total control and had the freedom to organise freely and engage with the embassy as a unified house – not a divided one.

Nevertheless, since the dissolution was pronounced, there has been a persistent in-fighting and divisions in the Nigerian community. One participant described the power struggles that dominated the post-reformation phase as being similar to the 'power tussle going in Africa' (Anichebe/IDI/male/38) and a key informant believed 'it's worse than Nigerian government politics.' On the one hand, the community crisis was complicated by ethnicity and majority versus minority schisms in which some ethnic communities felt powerless. As one long-term resident from the Hausa ethnic community said, 'I come from the minority side, a Hausa-Fulani from Kano. …There's nothing much that I can do' (Muritala/IDI/male/54). On the other hand, some leaders of some non-Igbo groups believed that as the largest sub-national Nigerian community, the Igbo group were out to dominate other Nigerians. 'It has been like that from

the beginning… Igbo always like to be the president' (Akingbola/KII/male/50). Similar view was expressed by an informant who said that the Igbo group:

> Almost take it as their birthright which should not be so. If organised very well the north should have presidency for some years maybe after two or three tenure, Yoruba and other people. …We should have a kind of federal character if there must be peace. (Glover/ KII/male/34)

The idea expressed in the quotation above reflect the close similarity in the foundations of homeland and diaspora politics. Nigerian community members that reject a perpetual Igbo rule were drawing from the idea of 'power rotation' and the 'Principle of Federal Character' which have dominated the debate about the political (re)structure of Nigeria for decades (Oladele, 2018). Back in the homeland, power rotation was 'introduced to address the problems of hegemonies, marginalisation, and domination of one region over others' (Oladele, 2018, p. iv) and thereby reduce tension and instability. Confronted by the same reality in the diaspora, Nigerians in China easily drew on a familiar idea which was believed to be useful for dealing with crisis in the diaspora.

Interestingly, while this majoritarian politics of the 'Igbo domination' appeared incontrovertible, an 'Igbo ethnic absolutism' should not be assumed. This is because the Igbo group in Guangzhou was not wholly homogenous. In other words:

> There is a lot of confusion within them [the Igbo group]. When power/office was given to this person from this local government or from this set, another set will jump and say 'Ha! what about us?' (Muhammed/KII/male/60)

In the months and years that followed the decision, ethnic associations such as the Yoruba Forum have also split into factions, state unions formed caucuses that later went their ways and members of groups who hitherto operated as unified block exchanged blames and accusations, including corruption allegations.[39] Among the Yoruba in particular, a participant stated that 'we Yoruba in China we are not united, *we are not gree now* [sic]. We have factions' (Ahmed/IDI/male/45). In confirmation, one factional leader that emerged from the crisis

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[39] Baron/KII/male/50; Akingbola/KII/male/50

announced to the researcher that 'I am a leader of my own Yoruba group now' (Olorundara/LH/ male/45). In short:

> The problem has escalated to the extent that it has destroyed a lot of friendship and affected a lot of communities…there are backbites, assassination of character, …gossip, rumour. …There are factions; …a lot of communities like Anambra, a lot of state unions, like Oduduwa, Arewa divided. …So, now we have two Nigerian Unions. (Glover/KII/male/34)

Also, the interim government that was proposed to manage community affairs after the dissolution failed to gain necessary support, especially from some of the largest Nigerian community blocks in the city. For instance, in the 14-man Interim Executive that was proposed to the embassy for approval, no one signed up for the two positions assigned to Anambra state, one of the largest state communities and the state of origin of Mr Ojukwu. In the same Interim Executive list, Anambra state was also not listed as signatory unlike all other states and ethnic association blocks that were proposed as members. To further demonstrate the low level of support given to the immediate post-reformation interim leadership, one of the original signatories in the Oduduwa block later announced publicly that he was deceived into signing.

Meanwhile, the protracted crisis in the Nigerian community had resulted in a community-wide apathy, including among previously active community members and Nigerians who recently arrived in the city. For example, like so many people whom he said were avoiding the NU, a one-time member of the Peacekeepers said he had lost all interest in community affairs; only interested in his business and survival in Guangzhou (Anichebe/IDI/male/38). Another participant hissed and looked away when I asked him about his membership status (Kuti/IDI/male/39). Part of his reasons, as later discovered, was that Kuti's shop was recently invaded and he was engaged in a brawl by a community leader who believed he should not have attended a community reconciliation meeting. One other participant that qualified as a member of Nigerian professional class in the city complained about the politics of bitterness and decided that he '…would not want to waste time on something that will bring sentiment in the system' (Muritala/IDI/male/54). On his part, Benson (IDI/male/33) thought that 'they are all playing politics and…trying to enrich themselves. So, I think it's going to be time wasting for me to join them.'

Of course, the community disorganisation observed, and its current and future consequences, may help to forge a pathway for the emergence of a more vibrant NU, thus becoming an

antithesis on the path to the realisation of an inescapable organisational dialectic. However, considering the gains achieved on the path to community formation, the fallout of stagnation or possible reversal may pose an even more significant challenge to the people who make up the Nigerian collective in Guangzhou, particularly undocumented Nigerians and others facing difficulties in the host society.

4.5.4. Aspects of everyday social relations of Nigerians and their Chinese host

In many ways, the settlement experiences of Nigerians in Guangzhou were influenced by the character of the inter- and intra-group relationships. On the one hand, many Nigerians maintained minimal contact with their Chinese hosts outside business interactions. While few deeper relationships were established through interracial marriages of Nigerian men and Chinese women, social contacts were generally limited on the ground, with images and perception of Nigerians being shaped mainly by cultural differences, and negative perceptions on both sides, as well as racism and stigma. On the other hand, intra-group interactions within the Nigerian migrant population occurred at different levels, and their growth as a distinct African group in Guangzhou has contributed to the emergence of a community that has undergone various phases of development. Findings on these patterns of social relationships are presented in the next sub-sections.

4.5.4.1. 'Outside business, we all mind our business': exploring Nigerian-Chinese relations

There is no doubt that trade is a dominant feature which sets Guangzhou apart as an attractive migration destination to many Nigerians. As such, a lot of interaction between Nigerians and Chinese people took place within trade-related interactions and exchanges. In interview sessions with both groups, the emphasis was apparently on the idea that the knowledge that Chinese and Nigerians had of one another emerged from the business interactions that dominated their day to day encounter in the city. When asked to talk about the nature of their interactions with Nigerians, the opinion that business was indeed the primary motivation for interaction did not vary amongst ordinary Chinese and others like Chinese housing agents and shop owners who Nigerians mainly engaged for economic exchange purposes.

Mostly, the Chinese participants in the study perceived Nigerians as cooperative partners that they interfaced in a harmonious relationship over sales and other commercial purposes.

Accordingly, when discussing his relationship with Nigerians, a Chinese housing agent said 'I only know they come here to do business. They pay for what they want. We are doing business. The point is money. There's no other relationship' (HA1/IDI/male/35). Similarly, a shop owner said that, in interacting with Nigerians, 'the common goal is to make money' (SO5/IDI/male/44). Outside of this pattern of relationship, 'I often keep a distance from them' (SO1/IDI/female/26) and only 'few become friends' (OC2/IDI/male/25).

Although Nigerian participants described the business interactions at a deeper level, and with details that were suggestive that other relational pattern might be at work beyond economic interest, their views did not diverge from what the Chinese participants said in any fundamental way. So, for instance, apart from day to day buying and selling, Nigerians explained that their business interactions with the Chinese had a mutual interdependency built into it. To grasp this mutual interdependency, we may have to expatiate on the logic of employment practices that Nigerians and Chinese routinely deploy towards one another.

On the one hand, in order to tap into the vast pool of African customers coming into the city, especially Nigerian clientele that circulates Guangzhou in large numbers, a Chinese businessperson may rent a small shop, fill it with imported items from Nigeria and then employ a Nigerian as a salesperson. In one case, the Chinese businessman had been to Nigeria many times and possessed some knowledge about goods that will attract Nigerians. The Chinese businessman makes money, and the Nigerian thrives in the city. On the other hand:

> There are a lot of Nigerians who have a residence permit in China. They employ a lot of Chinese, and after some years those [Chinese] people resign to establish their own business. (Glover/KII/male/34)

Even an undocumented Nigerian who might be interested in renting a shop but prevented from doing so because of documentation constraints might invite a Chinese to become a partner. In some cases, when the Nigerian finds a way to rent the shop on his own, a Chinese employee will be brought in to be the face of the business. This often implies that when the police arrive in the market for routine checks, the Nigerian would either leave the shop or simply claim that he was a customer – in his own shop! This identity swap becomes an important survival strategy for navigating the condition of being undocumented.

As far as Guangzhou is concerned, this collaboration makes practical business sense for Nigerians in that the law prohibits access to shops and business registration for foreigners without proper documentation. Even with those with business permits, securing business registration document, especially if you are a Nigerian was difficult ('Ladele/IDI/male/38). Hence, this synergy that made a Chinese the face of the business is widespread, almost like a norm. By the same token, Chinese target Nigerian traders coming in and out of the city by employing Nigerians as salespersons. Beyond shops where daily needs items were sold, such arrangements were observed in other business types such as restaurants.

Box 4.1: 'They were giving trouble': a case of conflict in business relationship

When I was pregnant with my third baby, I employed a Chinese. She didn't even work up to two months because I had two shops then. I always ask people that do bring goods for me, so as if she got the contact of people doing business with me. Let's just say it is not up to two months, she just came and gave me my keys back and said that she was done with me. I had to pay her. She did not just stop the job, she quit here and opened there [she points to shop just a few steps away from her shop to show the distance between their shops] and just change her shop to exactly mine. Just as I have this mannequin, I have this and that, she just put exactly the same things the way it is, you understand. And she didn't just stop there; she started making trouble. If I sell something to somebody, she will come and ask why I sold it cheap, why did I do this just showing me that I am in their place. And before you know what is happening, the next neighbour will be like…they were like a partnership, you know; they were giving trouble. And before you know what is happening, they called the police, and the police wouldn't want foreigners to have a shop. So, they were like the police were coming and coming. When they asked, they would just say one thing, all they wanted to make sure is that the police tell me not to stay there again. At the end of the day, I thank God for everything. And with the pregnancy.

Even the day they beat me, she came out with some blows [i.e. punches], just sitting down there just like we are sitting now, and she said 'Oh! You think I don't understand your language? Why are you telling her about me?' I was talking with somebody. She just came and 'gboom, gboom!' [*makes a sound of punches coming in quick succession*], and I was very heavy with almost nine months and then people that saw it, people wanted to riot – our people. And the police came, instead of to like ask what's happening, they insisted that there was no camera, no nothing to see precisely what happened. They were not even eager to know what happened, they just took a side and said I should come to the police station. Not even two of us; not two people to come, just me. At the end of the day, some people helped to make a point that I was not leaving. So, they left. After two or three days, they came and asked me not to continue. So that is just the only experience that I can say that I can never forget in a hurry. (Chukwura/IDI/female/35)

One other interesting dynamic to this mutual economic interdependency was that, on the ground, Chinese people work to ensure that their business interest was protected. One of the ways of doing this was to help secure the interest of Nigerians. For instance, market managers

regularly circulate information about possible raids and advise those without valid papers to stay away, at times at very short notice.[40]

Unfortunately, due to the competitive nature of economic relations as a dominant interaction pattern between Nigerians and Chinese, the relationship was highly prone to conflict. As shown in Box 4.1, conflicts induced by business relationships can engender violent confrontations or other troubles, which many Nigerians try to avoid– even if it means avoiding Chinese people at all cost.

4.5.4.2. 'Mafan': Everyday encounters of Nigerians in the host community

In many markets where Africans interact with Chinese people, one of the first Chinese words that a newcomer would like pick up is *mafan* or simply 'trouble.' It was common to hear 'you *mafan*!' from a Chinese shop owner who had spent the last few minutes haggling with an African over a product. Africans too can deploy the same vocabulary to suggest that the Chinese was not being considerate with pricing. In this sort of interaction, *mafan* might appear as an innocent enough word; something to keep business conversation going. But for Nigerians, *mafan* was a characterisation that has important social relations consequences. As shown in interview data from Chinese participants, Nigerians were synonymous with trouble, in that 'they don't quite get along well with their neighbours. Sometimes, they're just hard to understand' (HA5/IDI/male/35) and 'some agents dread that their habits may bother other clients' (HA3/IDI/male/25). One shop owner believed that Nigerians 'have moods, and [are] quite stubborn' (SO4/IDI/male/27). Another housing agent said that when Nigerians rent an apartment, and enter into an agreement:

> They come to me to complaint, saying the electric fee is too expensive, one month later. I helped them to check, and found that they didn't turn off the air-conditioner, keeping it on without being at home. But they wouldn't listen to me, and continued to complaint… When they don't pay fee on time, and I tell them to leave, they will be rude to me. (HA4/ IDI/female/35)

In social settings where cross-cultural understanding is limited between migrants and their host, the troubles represented in the preceding lines should be expected. Unfortunately, the

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[40] Smith/IDI/male/30; Moses/IDI/male/26

perpetration of these kind of troubles by Nigerians had increasingly defined them as a group, prompting many of them to find ways of escaping the manifest characterisations. As shown in Box 4.1, the inability to escape the characterisation of *mafan* can potentiate labelling that impact on social inclusion and enjoyment of fair treatment. While interfacing with the institutions of the host society in particular, the *mafan* label might be used as a basis for dismissing Nigerians seeking one form of assistance or another. As a participant explained:

> [When] you are forced to tender document, they will be saying Nigeria *mafan*, Nigeria *mafan*. There is nothing that you want to do, it is always a problem, it gets to a stage that when you want to go and do a registration, they say that they are no longer doing a registration for Nigerians and that Nigerians should go back. (Adeoye/IDI/male/54)

A similar *mafan* construction was used when another participant approached a Chinese police department for a housing registration:

> Assuming I am not a Nigerian, they will not take up to five minutes. I was there from morning till 3 O' clock. I was almost bursting into tears before they tried to help me. …But the first thing they said was Nigeria *mafan, mafan…;* that Nigerians give them problems. The landlords usually say that if Nigerians rent apartment, they don't pay much. …So…they think that we are bad people. (Salami/IDI/male/28)

It appears that a lot of them did not wish to be labelled as troublemakers. Knowing the consequences of such a label, many participants have become accustomed to being selective of their interactions with the host society. In whatever way possible, they were deliberate about avoiding trouble, irrespective of whether social relations with the host community suffers. In a sense, the pre-eminence of business relationship as the basis of most of the interactions Nigerians have with Chinese also made trouble avoidance a comfortable choice. This is because, in their view, limiting their interaction to Chinese outside of business reduces the likelihood of inviting trouble.

So, like other Nigerians, Francis (IDI/male/33) did not have any Chinese friends and had no problem with them either. According to him, he does not want to get in trouble with Chinese people and prefers it that way, since interacting with Chinese people outside of business is an invitation to trouble. To avoid such situations, they choose to be on their own and distance themselves from their Chinese host. Shedding light on the logic and value of trouble avoidance

in Guangzhou, one Nigerian community leader explained that all you need to do is to do business while staying clear of other interactions. He warned that:

> If you go and chase their women, if anything happens to you, then you create the problem for yourself even the police cannot intervene. …You cannot face any challenge …If you are walking on the street, nobody talks to you, you don't talk to anybody; so what problem will you face? Nothing. (Muhammed/KII/male/60)

Interestingly, the main reason for the appeal of trouble avoidance was the belief that in casual interactions, trouble can lead to confrontations in which the loser will always be the *mafan* Nigerian. As Adeoye reiterated:

> Always try to avoid having a problem with them because no matter what Chinese will never support a foreigner when it comes to a problem [even] if you on a right side. But if there is a way, you just try and avoid them. (Adeoye/IDI/male/54)

The point to stress here is that Nigerian-Chinese social relation (or lack of it) was also taking shape in the context of a strategically self-imposed interactional barrier. Staying out of trouble appears to be one other aspect of the lived experiences of Nigerian migrants, which also operates as a mechanism through which exclusion from the host society is embodied. While some Nigerians were using trouble avoidance as a way of getting by in the host society, the fear of troubles outside business interactions create interactional gaps, which may lead to integration difficulties.

4.5.4.3. Interracial romance and Nigerian-Chinese family: closing interaction gaps?

Despite the isolationist tendencies of 'trouble avoidance' as a social relations tactics, some Nigerian men in Guangzhou have managed to engage with the host community at a most intimate level, through interracial romance, marriage, and family establishment. The most intense form of cross-cultural engagement was taking place in the interracial families that Nigerian men and Chinese women were creating, and from the mixed-children resulting from such union. While the romantic relationship between Nigerian women and Chinese men was a rarity, most Nigerians dating or married to foreigners in the city were with Chinese women. A number of these families have produced and raised children that study at the university (Chima/KII/male/48).

As with data on many aspects of the life of Nigerians in Guangzhou, there was no accurate information on the extent of this interracial romantic relationship. However, Favour (IDI/male/ 35), who had a church wedding in Guangzhou and currently fathers a son with his Chinese wife, believed that Nigerian-Chinese romance was 'not an abnormal thing here;' so normal that an association called the Nigerian-Chinese Family Forum (NCFF) was established. Although the NCFF was initially formed by a group of old-timers who married Chinese women, the association had absorbed many new Nigerian-Chinese couples. While educating and providing counselling services to intending spouses and organising picnics to improve family bonding, the NCFF had grown to be a major conflict resolution platform that is helping to stabilise interracial families in Guangzhou.

Before and after getting into the interracial union, Nigerian men maintained different dispositions regarding how much other Nigerians in the city should know about their intention to marry a Chinese woman. One interviewee who planned to marry his Chinese girlfriend but still facing a barrier from the woman's parents said such decision was personal and should be handled in the same way as an examination. In this examination-like condition:

> All of you might have the same question papers, but you face the question as if you are the only one writing the exam. You're not allowed to copy other people or to ask, [or] to consult. …You face your own thing. ('Ladele/IDI/male/38)

Conversely, some of them consulted other Nigerians with experience of marriage to a Chinese before and after marriage, maybe to arrive at a decision or to manage the crisis that may have erupted along the way. Before Chimeze made his decision, he was worried about the complications that an interracial family may produce, and therefore approached other Nigerian men. According to him:

> I started meeting people that had married for many years. …I really need to go and see people in a far place. It was not something that you just see on the street then. If I heard that you had married, I would go and meet you for consultation. (Chimeze/LH/male/40)

In the process of consultation, some experienced discouragements from people with or without past romantic relationship experience with Chinese women. Many times, the views expressed to discourage intending men were based on perceptions and beliefs regarding the workability of interracial marriage with a Chinese. One of these perceptions was that a marriage to a

Chinese woman is stressful. As Anichebe (IDI/male/38) explained this view, to gain the full trust of the woman, the Nigerian is expected to buy a house as a proof of commitment. The property was a form of insurance for the woman because she can be guaranteed that when the Nigerian man decides to return home with his children in the future, for whatever reason, the wife will not lose out completely. On the same issue, a Hausa community leader said that people from his own ethnic group would not participate in such marriages because the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Some of the disadvantages he highlighted include 1) the desire of Chinese woman to trick the man to live in China permanently by encouraging him to buy a house which might take 20 years to pay for in full; 2) the difficulty of returning home with one's children, and; 3) the position that any Muslim man that entrust the care of his children to a Chinese woman would be unable to perform his God apportioned duties to the children, especially in regards of education, setting them up for business, and making sure they get married. Finally, he added that a Chinese woman wants to be in control of everything. 'They will take over. They watch you everywhere and are suspicious of you because they think all men are like Chinese men who have girlfriends in every city they go to' (Muhammed/KII/male/60). The Chinese government, he said, also sides with their women in everything.

So, it was not surprising therefore that when one Nigerian man was weighing his options, one of his most trusted 'brothers' told him that:

> [It] is a big problem, that in China, it is not easy, that I cannot pay the marriage dowry. [Later he asked] 'are you still dating that your Chinese girlfriend?' and I said that yes; then he told me to be careful that Chinese [men] can be very jealous and that they can kill me on the street. (Olorundara/LH/male/45).

Yet, many Nigerian men defy these warnings by marrying Chinese women and producing offspring in Guangzhou. In two interracial marriages where the researcher interviewed both marriage parties, it was observed that Chinese women functioned as bridges and crucial go-betweens for their intending spouse. Given the fact that their parents always resisted the idea of marrying a black foreigner, Chinese women help to secure parental consent. More so, having parental consent ensures that upon marriage, Nigerian-Chinese couples will continue to enjoy the support of the Chinese parents for years, including in the area of citizenship registration, child care and schooling. These two men, in particular, expressed satisfaction with their

Chinese wives. As Chimeze (LH/male/40) said, marrying his Chinese wife had played a big part in his life, and he believed he would have left China without the union. Olorundara (LH/male/45) was very proud of his wife or 'mummi' as he fondly called her throughout the 10 hours of our tour of the city and home visit.

Of course, the motivation to establish a somewhat permanent presence in China is important for many Nigerian men in the city. This made interracial marriage an attractive option. As one early comer said, Nigerian-Chinese marriage is on the rise because it 'is the only way they [Nigerian men] can get their papers regularised' (Baron/KII/male/50). Another view, not mentioned by many people, was that the Chinese women also loved Nigerian men for their money (Smith/IDI/male/30). Incontrovertibly, nonetheless, was that there were benefits to the marriage for Nigerian men. Chinese wives, for example, were helping their husbands to bridge the gap with the host community, functioning as translators, acting as frontwoman for house rentals, and assisting with critical social advancement opportunities, such as in accessing government business and housing loans. As 'Ladele said:

> A Chinese lady will try to like access loan to assist the boyfriend or the husband. And if you are the serious type, with a good heart, that will be an excellent starting point for you. And apart from that, she can assist you to penetrate the system to your advantage. ('Ladele/ IDI/male/38)

Be that as it may, the rise of interracial family as a core dimension of Nigerian socio-relational dynamics in Guangzhou had led to the emergence of interesting practices and issues. First, distrust and suspicion have grown with the rise in this type of marriage. To address this problem, Nigerians and their Chinese wives engage in a number of trust-building practices. Some Nigerian men visit their wives' villages during long holidays and take trips to Nigeria with the whole family.[41] Property acquisition in Nigeria was also made transparently, and the man could at times procure properties in their wives' names. Chimeze (/LH/male/40) explained that even though he had sacrificed a lot by letting his children stay in China to attend school, what he called 'the biggest sacrifice,' it was important to be transparent in other respects as well:

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[41] Olorundara/LH/male/45; Chimeze/LH/male/40

Whatever we are doing back home she knows about it. In 2009, I bought land with her name, then $15,000 must be about two million something. I bought with her name. (Chimeze/LH/male/40)

Similarly, Olorundara recalled that he procured a:

One and a half property, one flat in Jakande Estate, another 4-bedroom flat, and one decking around Alimosho too. I am trying to be myself, to me, there is no fear. …My wife knew. (Olorundara/LH/male/45)

Second, the differences in orientations and background made cultural negotiations inevitable in Nigerian-Chinese marriages. Whereas the Nigerian men were passionate about instilling Nigerian cultures in their mixed-children, they believed that it was more important to be open to the other side and avoid cultural impositions. So, when naming their children, the family name of the wife was a priority. This is because, in order to obtain Chinese citizenship card, the children borne to interracial couples had to be registered under their mother's registration record. While the wife's family name must remain unchanged, first names can change. The main approach to this was for the Nigerian father to obtain a preferred Igbo or Yoruba name, translate to Chinese and then get a substitute Chinese name in place of the original Igbo or Yoruba name. The creativity in naming children was, therefore, to ensure that both parents were represented on children's identity. It was also a means through which Nigerian fathers negotiate the entrenched identity exclusivity of the host society.

Third, due to decades of strict population control policy in China, a lot of Chinese parents did not have more than one child. As a result, engaging in interracial marriage often implies that Nigerian men will encroach on a unique parents-daughter attachment, which in turn leads to affection competition. Even after marriage, Chinese parents can remain a stumbling block, especially when the family reside under the same roof as the wife's parents. Chimeze (LH/male/40) for example struggled with his wife's mother over the heart of his wife: 'the more the mother is attached to her daughter, the more I try to attach to her daughter too. I try to fix myself because both of us have one interest.' Such matrilocal circumstance was usually conditioned by the cost of building families which many Nigerian men found to be too prohibitive. In other words, living at his mother-in-law's apartment, with wife and three children, was a pragmatic decision. However, as an Igbo man, he knew his co-ethnics would

react negatively to his matrilocality. So 'all they knew was that I was married, living here but nobody really knew where I'm living' (Chimeze/LH/male/40).

Fourth, other emergent social and institutional issues have also introduced perplexing processes to Nigerian-Chinese marriages. Some of these issues involved documentation, children upbringing and racism problems. For instance, children born to Nigerian-Chinese couples cannot attend schools until they have been appropriately registered by the state. According to the key informant, this documentation will begin at the point of decision to marry (Chima/KII/ male/48). At this stage, the standing of the Nigerian man must be verified by the state; that he has no criminal record and possesses valid documents. The marriage itself must be registered with the state. Regardless of the status of the document, valid or not, a marriage visa cannot be obtained until the Nigerian husband return to Nigeria to apply. For those whose document had *died*, a return was oftentimes not an option. In some cases, these prospective Nigerian husbands were unable to gather necessary funds to return and re-enter.

Consequently, many Nigerian men 'marry'[42] and produce offspring with a Chinese woman without properly documenting their marriages with the state. A key challenge with this was that children produced from such unions were also not registered. Even, among Nigerians with valid papers, the place of birth of the Chinese woman is a permanent source of concern. If she is not from Guangzhou for example, the mixed-child must be registered in her hometown – regardless of whether the Chinese woman lives there or not. With the *hukou* policy, such a child would only be able to access government school freely at his/her mother's hometown. In Guangzhou, where the wife of the mixed-child may not be a resident, accessing 'common public schools' may cost between RMB 50,000 and 80,000 while the good ones may cost up to RMB 100,000.[43]

Accordingly, many Nigerians married to non-Guangzhou residents face barriers in having their children admitted into public schools. With private schools as the only option, many Nigerian men suspend the idea of sending children to school in China. Oftentimes, Nigerian men were faced with competing demands of whether children should be sent to school with the huge

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[42] Many unions were not official in the sense of registering and obtaining a marriage certificate, which is the only valid proof that a marriage was completed.
[43] IDI with a Chinese wife.

amount which can be put to better use in Nigeria or to do business in China. There were cases where Nigerian husbands prioritised business over sending children to school (Chimeze/LH/male/40). All of these imposed limitations on the educational prospects of many Nigerian-Chinese children. In fact, key community leaders said that there is a rising pool of racially mixed 'left behind' or 'ghost' children.[44] Some of these children can be seen in the markets playing and running around on school days.

All in all, evidence on interracial marriages reveal how a more profound interaction was taking place in spite of the incontrovertible social relationship gaps between Nigerians and the host community.

4.6. Encounters and challenges of Nigerian migrants in China

While the Nigerian community organisation continued on the path of decline – or evolution? – those making up its membership were experiencing a range of challenges. These challenges impact on their lives in various ways: they shaped their perceptions and social relationships, influenced how they use public spaces and individual ecology of opportunities and survival capabilities led to uncertainties and risks and exposed Nigerians to vulnerabilities and stigmatisation. Participants mentioned a number of challenges, from the high cost of living to lack of socioeconomic opportunities, deviance and criminality, and difficulty of raising a family in Guangzhou. However, repeated review of responses and in-depth analyses revealed that majority of the challenges highlighted and their consequences were set in motion by documentation problems and stigmatisation of the Nigerian identity in the city. As shown in the results presented below, these two challenges permeated many aspects of the lives of the study participants and impact on their day to day experiences in the host society – irrespective of how long they have been in the city or their position in the Nigerian community.

4.6.1. Nigerian migrants and documentation problem in Guangzhou

Although an increasing number have managed to secure a way to maintain a presence in the city, a vast majority acknowledged documentation problem as the greatest challenge confronting Nigerians. The documentation problem featured prominently in many interview sessions, with a total of 42 people mentioning it. The consideration of documentation as a

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[44] Baron/KII/male/50; Emeka/KII/male/45; Olorundara/LH/male/45

problem cuts across participants who have lived in China over a different number of years, and the status of individual migration documents did not appear to make much difference in whether or not people acknowledge that such a challenge existed. There were at least five critical dimensions to the ways that Nigerians experienced the documentation problem in Guangzhou.

In the first place, as far as China was concerned, some participants tend to believe that the identity document issued by the Nigerian government is a burden. While presenting this view, participants reasoned using what may be called a 'comparative gaze,' an explanation tool by which the status of the Nigerian passport was constantly being checked against other passports in the 'comity of passports' from Africa. 'I have faced so many things because of the country I am from – because of the passport of the country that I'm using' (Salami/IDI/male/28). They complained that, unlike other African countries, e.g. Mali, Togo, Niger, the passport of Nigeria was hard to extend in China, and that when they were able to do visa extension, it lasted for only a short period – typically seven days to two weeks. As a male interviewee explained, migrants from:

> [O]ther African countries that arrived with a month [visa as most Nigerians did] will be given an extension of six or three months, even a year. …But for Nigeria, they can only give you two weeks [extension] for you to leave. (Solo/IDI/male/25)

On the contrary:

> Malians can go to the immigration with three wives and 10 children, without the wives and children appearing and would get visas extended but Nigerians cannot even bring his Nigerian wife [to China].[45]

As shown before, there were Nigerian men residing with their wives and children. However, some procured identity documents of countries like Ghana in order to ensure that their wives can live with them (Chukwura/IDI/female/35). Besides that, Nigerian holders of long-term, multiple entry Chinese visas but with very short stays cannot make exits in nearby Special Administrative Regions (SARs), Hong Kong and Macao. Both leaders and regular community

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[45] KII, Mr. Emma Ojukwu, Guangzhou, 2017

members blamed the situation on the diplomacy inadequacies of the Nigerian government and increased restrictions that characterised host society responses to the presence of Nigerians in Guangzhou.

The second dimension to the documentation problem had to do with the entrenched nature of corruption in the management of immigration. Some participants reported that they were constrained to employ the services of visa agents who act as middlemen between migrants and the Chinese embassy in Nigeria and the immigration office in China (*see* an instance of latter in Box 4.2). One participant who initially tried to travel through 'normal process' was asked to approach an agent, 'that is, their people that they are working with' (Solo/IDI/male/25). Similarly, another participant said that 'if you don't pass through an agent they will not give you visa' (Okocha/IDI/male/37). The agents usually charge amounts that exceeded the actual cost of visas by many folds. 'Most of the money we get here we use it for visa' (Favour/IDI/male/ 35), and depending on the number of months applied for, the cost can be as high as:

> RMB12,000…that is a lot of money. Some people are paying it but no income, they just
> want to hold it for maybe things can change. There were some people that put themselves
> in debt because of stay but later there was no money, but they dumped it [the passport].
> (Nonso/IDI/male/33)

For those who had become undocumented because their visas expired, the tendency for exploitation and/or extortion was high. As revealed in some interviews, the Chinese police were often implicated in the corrupt visa management practice:

> Those policemen have turned us into a business. When they arrest…they will tell you to
> call your brothers [to look for] RMB10,000; like almost [N]700,000 to make bail, and they
> would not give you receipt…until they arrest them again in a surprise raid. (Ahmed/
> IDI/male/45)

In fact, some of the people interviewed have witnessed situations where Chinese police officers negotiated for a 'settlement' in exchange for Nigerians arrested for visa offences. In one particular case, the police officers demanded RMB10,000 for each of the 10 Nigerians arrested. Through efforts of community leaders that coordinated 'fundraising activity' among Nigerians in various markets, up to RMB60,000 was raised, 'so, they were begging those policemen to

release all of them. In the process, I did not know what really happened, but they [the police and community representatives] started shouting' (Nonso/IDI/male/33). In the end, the negotiation failed, and those arrested were eventually processed for imprisonment and deportation.

Box 4.2: China's visa black market economy exposed Nigerian migrants to exploitation

Since arriving in China about nine years ago, Yisa has been arrested and detained twice and held in Chinese cells. In one instance, he was deported after serving a prison sentence but managed to re-enter after two months. Both episodes of arrest and imprisonment were linked to the visa black market economy in China.

The first time, he was jailed for one month and then deported in Shaanxi Province after he and 14 others went to the police station to complain about a Chinese visa agent who duped them of $2,000 each. The agent was paid to assist with visa renewal but failed to deliver. They went to the police to intervene in the matter but were detained. Most of them were Nigerians, and the person who went to report the case was a Nigerian Igbo. The police had called all of them for a meeting under the pretence that they wanted to resolve the matter. The Chinese visa agent was also summoned. But instead of resolving the issue they were all locked in the cell and were informed them that the only help they will get from the police is to serve one month in prison and be permitted to go home.

All 15 of them accepted the imprisonment option and returned home afterwards.

The second arrest happened when his visa extension was being processed. While waiting to hear from the agent that was processing his visa extension, he was stopped by the police to show his visa, but all he had on him was his visa extension slip, the only evidence available to confirm where his visa status and where his passport was. The police told him that the slip was only relevant for his business with the visa agent, not for police business in terms of documentation issues. Yisa was jailed for 21 days before he was released. Although the police allowed him to call the agent in order to confirm his story, he was not freed until his passport with a valid one-month visa was delivered. When he was finally allowed to go, his 'new visa' will expire the next day. He said he had to run around to raise enough money for flight ticket and left China on the same day. Many friends assisted him with loans which he used to procure the plane ticket. He made a quick choice to either return to Nigeria or allow his visa to *die*.

Once the deportation procedure had been initiated with imprisonment, however, Nigerian migrants face additional documentation problem at the Nigerian consulate in Guangzhou. In particular, participants reported that Nigerians facing deportation experience difficulties at the consulate while trying to obtain travel certificate (or 'TC'), an important document without which the imprisoned will not be released to return to Nigeria. The delays at the consulate often led to an extended imprisonment period for some Nigerians. Friends and community leaders who assist in processing the TC, as those imprisoned cannot handle it personally, often

expressed frustration when interfacing with consulate (Ahmed/IDI/male/45). Meanwhile, Nigerians who, at the time of arrest, were in possession of a non-Nigerian passport, were subjected to what some participants considered an unnecessary nationality verification scrutiny which also caused deportation delays and extended prison time of Nigerian immigration offenders.

A third dimension to the documentation problem is that lack of valid document introduced risks and vulnerabilities in the lives of Nigerian migrants. The documentation-induced risk may result from uncertainties of outcomes when a Nigerian migrant rents an apartment, makes an investment or uses the city's public spaces. For instance, owing to the high cost of rent in government approved foreigners' residential apartments, known to many participants as Gardens, Nigerians find a way to secure housing in villages like Xiaobei or in 'ghettos' sections around Nanhai district in Foshan. But as Francis (IDI/male/33) said, 'there is no guarantee' in such housing because the police can force you out at any time. When this happens, the migrant can forfeit rents to the Chinese landlord. In the quote below, one undocumented female participant, who currently lives in Nanhai with her son, described how this uncertainty operates to create risk. She said that:

> No matter how much you make, no matter how much you have, that visa issue is a problem. You can store money in a house, and in just one day, they [police or immigration] will come and arrest you. All the money is lost. It is gone. (Adaobi/IDI/female/40)

The same uncertainty of outcome can occur in business dealings with Chinese, such that without valid papers, 'everything you do is just risk' (Smith/IDI/male/30).

Aside from risks associated with uncertainties of outcomes, the documentation problem also infused risk into how Nigerians use and interact with public spaces in the city. This particular risk was being driven by a perception contradiction that while majority believed that the city is generally safe, a lot of them did not also feel *so safe* in public spaces. In a city where only an 'intact documents' makes you '…as free as bird' (Smith/IDI/male/30) and gives the 'courage to stay or go anywhere you want to go' (Tunde/IDI/male/27), undocumented Nigerians in particular must always exercise caution whenever they go out. They must ensure that movement plans did not clash with the working hours of the police. They also expressed fears when moving about and were often forced to remain in their enclosures while in Guangzhou

(Smith/IDI/male/30). For Kuti who previously lived in Dongguan and take long trips to and from Guangzhou on a daily basis, 'you cannot predict anything that will happen' as arrests can happen while in transit.[46] Consequently, many undocumented Nigerians experienced fear whenever they get on the street. When in the midst of others in the markets and other public spaces, they maintained a high level of alertness, always ready to run.[47] In fact, in times of extraordinary need to use certain spaces, for instance the hospitals:

> They will be afraid, thinking that the police will stand there to arrest them. …Rather than go to the hospital, they'll go to the pharmacy, '…give me paracetamol; give me this, give me that.' It's not that they don't have money to go to hospital but most of them are afraid that the police will be there. Our people are so much afraid of police catching them. (Glover/KII/male/34)

The foregoing aligns with extant evidence that the condition of being undocumented impact negatively on the health-seeking behaviour of migrants in Chinese (Lin, Brown, et al., 2015) and non-Chinese settings (Ransford, Carrillo and Rivera, 2010; Fleischman, Willen, Davidovitch and Mor, 2015).

Besides being the source of multiple risks and vulnerabilities, the documentation problem was also a barrier to advancement opportunities. During an observation at one of the busiest markets along Guangyuan Xi Lu, one Nigerian employed in a Chinese-owned provision store was able to secure the position because he had a valid paper. Although many Nigerians, with or without a document were engaged in some form of work, majority of undocumented felt that their status had been a barrier to self-advancement. In other words, documentation status influences personal desire to aspire, such that 'if you do not have paper, you cannot make a move' (Diana/IDI/female/38). The problem kept some participants 'fixed-in-place' with little opportunity to embark on mobilities required to grow and achieve success in the host society. To further demonstrate how some of the study participants experienced this spatial fixity, Diana (IDI/female/38) reported that her freedom is curtailed if 'I want to come out or to go to

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[46] Different accounts from participants revealed that the police conduct regular stop and search on buses. Along roads to the Nanhai district, many arrests have taken place on the bus. The researcher observed a scenario where an undocumented stop and search escapee narrated his escape story to an informant on one cold night in Guangyuan Xi Lu. The escapee narrated that he jumped from the bus and narrowly escaped a police taser.
[47] Benson/IDI/male/33; Ibeh/IDI/male/43; Obinna/IDI/male/35

Shanghai or to the factory to place orders, I will be shaking because I don't have a [valid] paper.' This finding confirmed the catastrophe of immobility among Nigerians, which Haugen (2012) had excellently detailed, and corresponded with the underlying problem of underachievement that migrants were experiencing in other contexts (Şaul, 2014).

As a corollary, the fixity and spatial immobility imposed by the documentation problem easily translated to 'social immobility.' Indeed, in one interview, a participant asserted that the documentation challenge confronting him was responsible for his lack of accomplishment in China, having arrived more than eight years ago. In a reflection on his 'migration-time-accomplishment self-evaluation,' the participant believed he would have advanced much better, that:

> There were many companies that I ought to visit but could not go… In the end, Chinese will not give me the right percentage. …It's basically *that* document that is causing it… Had it been I had my complete documents…it won't be this level. I must have advanced. [emphasis mine]. (Ahmed/IDI/male/45)

Finally, for the community to work, and for people to feel a sense of belongingness in the city, they must connect, link up and freely gather to do things together. As participants tend to see it, everyone is needed to make the community work, regardless of whether they have papers or not. Unfortunately, the documentation-imposed mobility restriction was preventing many Nigerian migrants from participating in community gatherings. As a barrier to community building in Guangzhou, social functions often had a low attendance because people were afraid to come out. As one married female participant said, social gathering is difficult and 'most of the people we can invite for a wedding or something don't have papers' (Oby/IDI/female/28). Occasional event such as community end of the year parties were usually held on the city outskirts in order to encourage attendance from undocumented community members. As a result, 'those who actually have papers [also] suffer because they are trying to be nice' (Oby/IDI/female/28).

4.6.2. 'This one is NG': Racism, stigma and social discrimination

Generally, studies have documented the experiences of racism among Africans in China (Zhang, 2008b; Le Bail, 2009; Pelican and Tatah, 2009; Cheng, 2011). In this respect, racist encounters of Nigerians in Guangzhou were not fundamentally different from what other

scholars discovered. In the course of work or other day to day activities, many participants were of the view that Chinese in Guangzhou held racist perceptions and exhibited racist attitudes and behaviours. One long-term Nigerian resident said that he never knew about racism and had thought that only white people were racist. Having lived in China for 15 years and had acquired high Chinese language competency, Benson (IDI/male/33) was certain that Chinese racism towards Africans was real: 'the way they [Chinese] talk to you. What they feel about you… Some Chinese people just see you and they hate you because you're black.' Some participants believed that many Chinese people operated with an inaccurate imagery of an African man, a person they assumed to have emerged 'from one remote village, who is hungry, wretched and in need of help' (Smith/IDI/male/30). Likewise, Yisa (IDI/male/35) was of the view that 'Chinese people feel that Africans are animals, like you are poor and suffering, mainly because of your skin colour.'

There were also racist encounters in which participants were approached with cloth and water by a Chinese in order to rub on their skin and be certain that the blackness could not actually be washed off.[48] The imagery of black as essentially dirty informed racist behaviours such as nose covering by some Chinese when an African approached. 'You can be going, and they do "suh" [*closes nose, makes a spitting sound*]' (Nwanyi/IDI/male/35) and 'some will come and meet you, touch your cloth to see if it is dirt that made you black' (Kuti/IDI/male/39). The nose-covering ritual was also commonly experienced in the train or bus. While commuting on public transport, a female participant who attends a language course and worked at a restaurant said that:

> Nobody wants to sit with you when you are sitting on a train. Like twice it has happened,
> I'd sit down, and the person sitting close to you will probably shift or stand up entirely.
> (Efe/IDI/female/26)

With the chants of 'Mama! Mama! *Hēi guǐ*! *Hēi guǐ!*'[49] in the streets while pointing to an obviously black person, one participant reported experiencing racism through the voice of little Chinese children (Okocha/IDI/male/37). In the school, a number of children of African parentage – pure or mixed – also encounter Chinese children with racist perceptions and

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[48] Smith/IDI/male/30; Yisa/IDI/male/35
[49] Black devil.

attitudes. One Chinese mother of two Nigerian-Chinese girls reported that pure Chinese kids from the school refer to her children as *hēi guǐ* (black devil). On a particular day, her eldest daughter returned from school sobbing and reported to her that 'they [Chinese children] laugh at her hair, that her hair is curly, big nose, problem with the face, the colour.'[50] Because of this, some parents only allowed their 'mixed-babies' to cultivate friendship with other mixed-babies. At other times, the same woman would try to infuse her children in playgroups that are dominated by mixed-children.[51] Similarly, parents may assist their children to cope by encouraging them to internalise racial superiority beliefs. For instance, after complaining that a Chinese kid refused to be her friend, a Nigerian mother asked her daughter the following question: 'Why do you want to be friend with someone that is yellow in colour?' (Chukwura/IDI/female/35). A Chinese woman married to Nigerian man may also 'tell her [daughter] not to mind the [pure] Chinese children with racist attitudes' while instilling in her 'that they don't have [her] type of hair [and were] jealous of you.'

There was also an institutional dimension to the racism problem that participants discussed. Some participants experienced institutional racism in a school dormitory, immigration office and the hospital. A Chinese wife, who herself was an internal migrant and married to a migrant from Nigeria, insisted that many host community members are racists, 'like the governor, the police. They are not friendly; they are not good; the policies are not good.' While her view was no doubt informed by her social condition as an internal migrant, the experience of her husband at the immigration office confirmed her viewpoint in an incredible way. Since marriage visa became accessible to foreigners married to Chinese, her husband, Olorundara (LH/male/45), tried and later abandoned the idea of procuring the document. This happened because of what her husband described as racist encounters experienced at the immigration office. He said that whenever he visited the immigration office, the:

> Local immigration there would be abusing me. It is hard to say this, but I have to say it. I recorded their voice and played it to my wife, they would say '…that they didn't know me, looked at me and say look at this black devil, how dare you marry our child…' (Olorundara/LH/male/45).

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[50] IDI, Chinese wife
[51] A Chinese wife.

Usually, he reported to his wife. However, '…my wife does not believe me, and I too find it difficult to prove… Then I now recorded their voice' (Olorundara/LH/male/ 45). Unable to believe still, the wife accompanied him to the immigration to be sure. Pretending that they did not know each other, the immigration officers repeated racist slurs directed at her husband. Even as marriage visa would have improved his social standing as a migrant, and improve his and his family's life chances, Olorundara (LH/male/45) vowed to refuse the visa for as long as possible.

Another institutional-based racist behaviour, though experienced less dramatically, occurred at school dormitory when Ibeh (IDI/male/43) was denied hostel accommodation because '[Chinese] people were afraid of blacks' and '…have little children in the school.' In a government hospital, a Nigerian woman who checked her daughter in for medical attention, said that because she '…was black, his [doctor's] reaction was horrible. He didn't even want to attend to me. He was like saying "Eh! Eh! Eh!"' (Chukwura/IDI/female/35).

A few participants went further to give some explanation as to why they think that Chinese people behaved as they did. One of the explanations offered was that the increased concentration of Africans in Guangzhou particularly had produced an unhealthy familiarity which made foreigners more susceptible to racist views. According to Yisa (IDI/male/35), who regularly visits the city from another province, unlike Guangzhou, Chinese in another part of the country desire to meet a foreigner. Another female participant believed that experiences of racism changed with settings (Chukwura/IDI/female/35). For her, the market space where she worked alongside other Chinese was characterised by reduced racism than the hospital – for example. Yet, another explanation held that the Chinese exhibit racist attitudes and behaviours because 'they have been brainwashed by the media' ('Ladele/IDI/male/38).

These individual accounts indicate that racist attitudes and behaviours were a concern for Nigerians in the city, and they experience the problem as much as other Africans. Perhaps, this fact accounted for why almost all the study participants narrated their personal racist encounters using terms such as 'black' or 'Africans,' rather than discussing the problem as a purely 'Nigerian experience.' Despite acknowledging this reality, there was an insistence on the part of the participants that Nigerians live through peculiar biases that sets them apart or distinguishes them from other Africans in the city.

In informal conversations and during interviews, people talked about what it means to live in Guangzhou as Nigerians. There was a convergence of opinions that because of their country of origin, Nigerians were treated differently. With statements such as 'Nigeria's name is always bad' (Favour/IDI/male/35) and 'Nigeria has been cast' (Salami/IDI/male/28), participants affirmed that an entrenched nationality-based blemish exists and impact on the lives of Nigerians. As Nonso surmised:

> They don't use eyes to see us; they do not like us. Once you are not from Uganda, Tanzania…they do not pity us. Once you are a Nigerian, they will put eyes on you; they will focus on you. (Nonso/IDI/male/33)

In the build-up to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in October 2017, the police stepped up the eviction of foreigners, mostly black Africans, in places like Xiaobei. Before their eventual forceful eviction from the rented apartments, three of the study participants had lived in Xiaobei for over a year, working and attending school in the city. At different times, while on their way home from work, they were subjected to random checks which mostly ended up with a urine sample collection and a rapid urine investigation. They said that the police wanted to know if they had traces of drugs in their urines.[52] When one of them was visited at the rented apartment he shared with a Senegalese; he narrated that 'as they entered my house, I brought out my passport. They said this one is NG, as in, one of the police guys said "this one is NG," which is Nigeria' (Isiche/IDI/male/33). Isiche complained about how he was treated differently during arrest and at the police station, as compared to his Senegalese roommate who in fact had harboured someone 'illegally' in the apartment. While having similar legal standing, only him 'the Nigerian' was eventually evicted from the apartment. In his words, 'they only asked me to leave, not the other guy [Senegalese] that was living with me' (Isiche/IDI/male/33).

While admitting that the Nigerian identity has not always been that tainted, one community leader maintained that Nigerians in today's China have been relegated; 'they look at Nigerian like you are nobody!' (Akingbola/KII/male/50). Clearly, the involvement of Nigerians in deviance and serious crimes, and their subsequent labelling as 'drug pushers' and

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[52] Isiche/IDI/male/33; Moses/IDI/male/26

'troublemakers' were the major contributor to stigmatisation. Some participants frequently mentioned those they called 'bad eggs' as the source of the community-wide stigma that Nigerians experience (Chukwura/IDI/female/35), that even though many Nigerians have established many profitable businesses in the city, pay taxes and maintained clean records, 'the [Chinese] government…think you're all the same' (Akingbola/KII/male/50).

Among participants at the lowest rung of the Nigerian community hierarchy, there was a belief that the ways that the Nigerian state had represented Nigerians to China had contributed to the stigma. In Nigeria and in China, participants believed that the Nigerian state, through silence, aloofness and public utterances of untruths Nigerians abroad (e.g. Smith/IDI/male/30), helps to sustain a regime of nationality-based stigma. With the cases of Isiche and other Nigerian evictees in preceding paragraphs, that stigmatisation constituted a challenge was not in doubt. However, there were other social discrimination consequences that should be emphasised.

For example, Nigerians were sometimes prevented from procuring housing registration documents (Adeoye/IDI/male/54).[53] The stigma was also believed to be at work when at the port of entry, you '…show a Nigerian passport…[and] they delay you…[which] is not so for other countries' (Solo/IDI/male/25, also Akingbola/KII/male/50). There were also other participants who believed that Nigerians were demonised because of the crimes committed by a few, and the host state uses this to justify their unfair treatment of Nigerians (Baron/KII/male/ 50).

It is worth observing that there were alternative views expressed on whether Nigerians were particularly targeted for stigmatisation and discriminations. Among the in-depth interviewees, one male participant, with a Chinese wife and three children, said he didn't see social discrimination. Rather, he 'see[s] people that are more accepting' (Chimeze/LH/male/40). Still, on the issue of discrimination towards Nigerians, a Chinese housing agent said that rational business decisions were sometimes misinterpreted as discrimination, just as the case of his Nigerian client whose space was rented to another client after deportation:

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[53] Also *see* Ifeanyi who reported similar problem.

But, when the Nigerian came back to me after a period of time, he got upset because there's another person using the place. He didn't understand why I did so. He thought it's out of discrimination. (HA5/IDI/male/35)

Such misinterpretation was also echoed by the Nigerian embassy official at the consulate in Guangzhou. While citing the case of a Nigerian who approached the embassy because he felt a company denied him of employment because of his nationality, the embassy official stated that errors and social ambiguities could lead to a misreading of intentions. This, he implied, was what some Nigerians believed to be social discrimination – in which the Chinese state and people were perceived to discriminate against them because their nationality.

While taking these alternative opinions into account, it should be underlined that a vast majority of Nigerians engaged in the field believed that 'there was something about Nigeria/Nigerian identity' that suggested the existence of a blemish or a stigma of some kind. Most importantly, this stigma was believed to be the basis of the differential treatment Nigerians in the host society, even as they appeared to have been experiencing racist attitudes and behaviours in the same way as other Africans in Guangzhou.

4.7. Nigerian community: Mediating settlement experience?

Despite these challenges, Nigerian migrants have seemingly managed to establish a vibrant and dynamic community in Guangzhou. Especially, the roles and responsibilities of community association (or the NU) are extending beyond Guangdong as coordinators of the Nigerian community associations are being appointed in other districts of China. The elaborated goals and objectives of the reformed NU, which are spelt out under Article II of its constitution, seek to unify Nigerians in China under one umbrella for mutual assistance, and improve assistance to members as a way of reducing criminal inclinations. The association also aims to collaborate with the Nigerian embassy for promotion of community interests and welfare, promote cordial relations with host community, establish a good reputation with local authorities as a way of promoting bilateral relations and identifying barriers to cooperation, and resolve community problems while also engaging the Nigerian embassy when necessary. More so, the drafters of the NU constitution set the goal of maintaining records on Nigerians in China, engaging in awareness campaigns on harmonious living in the host community, and to confront, surveil, and, when necessary, report members involved in crimes. At the same time, they wanted to promote, among Nigerians in China, the love for Nigeria, both in practice and conduct.

As the umbrella body of many associations established by Nigerians in the city, the NU of Mr Ojukwu continues to intensify its roles in the lives and general affairs of Nigerian migrants. First, the NU promotes network-building and bonding among 'brothers' in the city. Due to the centrality of Guangzhou, Nigerians living in nearby cities were only able to connect with people from their states, hometown and villages by joining associations and attending meetings. In addition to helping brothers to locate themselves, the networks built through the Nigerian community can helped to grow business. As a participant said below, finding his brothers means that:

> As a brother, they will trust me more than outsiders; they come to my shop, bring customers even sometimes some of them will travel, and they will be calling me to take care of their things here. (Favour/IDI/male/35)

Some of these brothers, through their various sub-associations, also collaborate to promote homeland investments. For instance, the Anambra State Union mobilised its members to invest in land procurement deal worth ₦100 million in their state of origin. Their plans include the establishment of a business that will employ many people at home and generate profits that all members can depend on upon return to Nigeria (Chima/KII/male/48).

Second, migrants of Nigerian origin continue to rely on the help of the NU. For example, it functions as an avenue to discuss and deal with welfare issues that members face. The NU provides financial assistance for dealing with emergencies of many kinds, including those relating to the retrieval of stolen travel documents, procurement of air tickets for those facing deportation and settlement of hospital bills, or for organising return trips for critically ill members. In response to problems arising from interracial marriages, an informal welfare programme was instituted to help Nigerian-Chinese children and their mothers that became impoverished as a result of the imprisonment or deportation of the Nigerian partner. Even though the assistance was not formal and limited, it nonetheless alleviates the suffering of the children and their Chinese mothers.[54]

Third, the NU has facilitated business connections between China and Nigerian and brought together companies and individuals from both sides to establish profitable partnerships. At the

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[54] Chima/KII/male/48; Baron/KII/male/50

same time, for Nigerians in Guangzhou, the NU promotes access to business spaces. In many markets where Nigerians owned shops, a substantial number did not have the requisite documents needed to rent legally. The community managed to secure access to 'safe havens' markets where people can do legitimate business with minimal harassment from the authorities. This helps many undocumented Nigerians to remain economically active in legitimate businesses.

Fourth, the Nigerian community association plays an important role in the establishment of a Nigerian consulate office in Guangzhou and had collaborated with the office on important community matters. Before the Nigerian consulate was set up in Guangzhou, Nigerians were only able to access consular services by travelling to Beijing and Shanghai. Prior to when it opened for business, Nigerians in China, most of whom reside in Guangdong province, had to travel several hours to Beijing to access consular services. Meanwhile, as the number of undocumented Nigerians swelled in the city, the community leadership, in conjunction with the Nigerian consulate, engaged the host community to institute an amnesty programme. The programme was designed to allow overstayers return to Nigeria at a reduced fee and without the mandatory imprisonment, provided they were not involved in crimes during their stay. Both community leaders and consulate officials agreed that the programme had helped many trapped Nigerians to return home without incurring substantial financial loss or being imprisoned.

The NU also manages inter-personal, business, romantic relationship conflicts involving Nigerians and others, and provides free translation service to members in need. Their extra-legal conflict management procedure is being used to settle many issues without the involvement of the police. The researcher witnessed the handling of child welfare and custody conflict between a Nigerian man and a Ugandan woman. Similar stories involving Nigerian men and Chinese women and a Kenyan lady were shared. In addition, the NU appointed translators who serve Nigerians residing in different districts, especially when they are facing police matters. One community leader who held the 'chief translator' title visits police stations to assist detained individuals in managing conversations with the authorities, and when possible secure their release – at times through community mobilised 'settlement money' (Olorundara/LH/male/45).

In line with some of the goals set out in its constitution, the NU made community awareness and outreach programmes a part of its operation in the city. With the problem of drugs among

Nigerians, anti-drugs campaigns were held to sensitise Nigerians about the dangers of being involved. The most recently held, which was tagged 'Say No to Drugs Campaign,' in 2016 included participants from the local communities and Chinese security authorities.

Of course, not all Nigerians in the city are members of the community association. Among the 51 participants that responded to a question on community membership, only 24 said they were active members while 27 said they were not members. While acknowledging the gregarious nature of people, especially when they move to a different society, some participants either pulled back or refused to become a member of any association. A previously active member in the NU for example became inactive because he believed that the needs for which the community was set up were being fulfilled through other means. As he said, technology and the ease it introduced to social interaction made membership in a migrant group obsolete:

> There is no much of need of groups, it just of being friends; being in group chats where Nigerians communicate will give information about what's happening …because it's a new world. We are in the age of technology... (Anichebe/IDI/male/38)

The same participant quoted above added that the Chinese government frowns at public gathering and makes effort to control it through surveillance. While he believed that community membership and involvement would outrightly expose him to trouble, the reality of being under state surveillance was a major disincentive (Anichebe/IDI/male/38). Other participants complained about lack of time (Ibeh/IDI/male/43) or absence of tangible benefits.[55] Some were not sure that membership would be good for them given their documentation status – e.g. using another country's passport (Okocha/IDI/male/37). There were also people who tried to participate but were discouraged by the scale of enmity in their community associations (Ndubisi/IDI/male/32). Yet, two participants pulled out upon realising that they might not be financially capable of maintaining a community membership. As one of them said:

> If I go that meeting and they asked me to bring money, I don't have. They say they want to go to this place, I didn't have money ...So, I could not meet up. (Kuti/IDI/male/39)

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[55] Salami/IDI/male/28; Moses/IDI/male/26

However, in contrast to men who voluntarily abstained from community membership, Nigerian women are largely excluded in community affairs. Among the nine Nigerian women interviewed, only two were active community members. Interestingly, as at the time of interview, both women lived in China alone having been previously separated from their marriages before departing from Nigeria. Married Nigerian women in the city live with their husbands and children and originally moved to China because of marriage. The single women travelled on their own and mostly independent and free to control their associational life given their limited male attachment in migration destination. This is not the case with married women whose lives and livelihoods depend on their husbands.

More than this, access to connect with other women is limited for women migrants, except in the church or in salon where they encounter each other. According to a female participant, Igbo women especially:

> …Do not go to these village meetings; they won't even allow it. The only time the women go near anything is when they're having Easter parties, weddings, Christmas; the Igbo don't encourage their women to do all these 'parapo.'[56] (Bodunrin/IDI/female/58)

In other words, 'majority of the Nigerian women here are just like housewives' (Chukwura/IDI/female/35). Buttressing this assertion, an Igbo woman who was interested in joining a Nigerian business association explained that:

> My husband is there and there is no need to go there. I can't be going for meetings when he's going to meetings; someone has to stay back with the girls. So that's why I stay back (Oby/IDI/female/28).

Be that as it may, a large proportion of the participants identify with the Nigerian community even when they did not participate actively in community affairs. For example, one woman believed that she has been participating in the Nigerian community through her husband's active involvement. According to her, 'since I'm married, it is easy to connect through my husband' (Edna/IDI/female/37). Another man said although he was not a card-carrying member, he was often invited to participate in associational activities ('Ladele/IDI/male/38).

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[56] Merriments or communal parties.

So, while people did not become official members of Nigerian community associations, in the sense of attending meetings as regulars would do, they participate in the community in one way or another. That is, while not self-identifying as a member, a sense of participation can nonetheless be gleaned from what they do in or for established community organisations. In prospecting the future of Nigerian community in China, therefore, what may be called a sense of 'community belongingness' becomes crucial.

4.8. Discussion of findings

The participation of Nigerians in China-bound migration is motivated by a mix of factors that Massey et al. (1993) attempted to systematise in the integrated international migration framework. While individual motivations to experience 'something different' and a desire to 'move on' to better life characterised discussions with some participants, more engaged in social and economic calculations about opportunities 'here' and 'there,' real or not, and on that basis decided to leave. Specifically, the pre-departure narratives showed that many Nigerian migrants in Guangzhou were on the 'brink' in the periods leading to movement, and were experiencing uncertainties, business failures due to internal and external factors, and purposelessness. Some, simply, could not 'meet up.' So, with macro-level circumstances of the country of origin and the interplay of networks – in few cases – and current migration regime, China was constituted into a viable opportunity space where Nigerian migrants believed they could recalibrate and achieve some stability and social and economic advancements. Some studies have shown that indeed, the prevailing conditions at the country of origin and optimism about economic success abroad combine well in motivating international migrations (Van Dalen et al., 2005; Pelican and Tatah, 2009; Afolayan, 2011). However, it is worthy of note that in China, these motivations depicted the situation of most Nigerian men more than they captured the situation of Nigerian women, the majority of whom migrated to Guangzhou because of marriage.

In embarking on the actual movement, Nigerian migrants deployed a range of strategy forms that varied in complexities. Nigerian migrants planned for information and contacts acquisitions and funds mobilisation. They also managed significant others who often provided positive social supports but may decide to exclude them using secrecy when supports they gave are considered a threat to migration target. Another strategy form that was identified had to do with tactics set for document procurement, which, more than anything else, revealed the

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growing expediency and determination with which people treat and approach international migration. The cross-border dynamics of visa agency services, identity shopping and passport 'dis-virgining' further underscore the complexity that has been built into international migration as a social practice. The strategy of trajectory, in its unimodal and multimodal patterns, and the embodiments it produces and sustains further complicates the process of migration as non-linear social action and condition. The lack of previous travel experience of a large segment of the participants, predominantly moving from a particular section of the country of origin suggests the existence of a possible direct linkage that must be studied both 'here' and 'there' to unravel. Among those who deployed a multimodal strategy of trajectory, evidence from this study reaffirms the role of a regional block like ECOWAS in shaping the dynamics of movement in the West African sub-region (Agadjanian, 2008; Adepoju, 2013). More than this, however, is the opportunity that the alliance offered to creative migrants and migration brokers to convert other areas to stopover where immigration stamps are 'gathered' and profile of authentic travellers is constructed.

In evaluating the usefulness of 'strategy forms' for thinking about processes of migration, a critical question to raise is whether pre-China departures were intended or oriented towards China. In other words, did migrants engage in elaborate detours and knew they were building towards the eventual movement to China or the final destination happened by chance? How we respond to this important question would no doubt impact radically on the analytical relevance of the framework. For the time being, its import lies in the recognition that international migration is often a project, in which people almost always combine plans, social relational acts, decisions, embodiments to achieve (or not achieve) their target. In the case of China, it was shown that at times, this on-going project never ends, even though people are 'emplaced' for the moment. In Guangzhou, some Nigerians still hope to find a way to their desired destination, or, if you wish, a promised land that lies far beyond the shores of mainland China in Hong Kong and Korea, and in the West. With permanent desire to 'get on and move on,' a migration project may easily be a failure even when arrival at specific destinations are complete and have been 'lived.'

Given the extent of presence and visibility in the city, in the market, recreational, and sacred spaces in Guangzhou and nearby cities of Foshan and Dongguan, Nigerians have established a community of their own at the heart of South China. However, it is a community whose members have been forced to gauge and realign expectations with China's reality. 'China

wasn't as we thought it was' echoed voices in international migration literature on unrealised expectations, wherein people build migration aspirations on incomplete, partial, or wrong information (Şaul, 2014). It also echoed the voices of people that denied migrants the access to truth using well-crafted and black-boxed narrations and imageries which can only be unwrap upon arrival (Horn-Udeze, 2009). However, as shown in the results, the assumption that migrants will utilise correct and complete information when available ignores the value that people place on authentic personal experience. It also ignores the deep-seated feeling of exceptionalism that people sometimes hold about themselves. As stories of Flavour (IDI/male/35) and Smith (IDI/male/30) revealed, individuals, as social agents, embody subjective understandings. The understandings exert influences on how they think about situations and their chances in circumstances where others have failed. In the case of Favour, the feeling of negative support emanated from second-hand information. However, for Smith, he rejected 'authentic information' about his desired destination only because it was not his own experience – rather than being outrightly incomplete, partial or wrong. In essence, the feeling that 'things might be better for me' or 'I can make it there, even though XYZ failed' becomes a powerful motivation for movement, whether or not information is available and accessible. The point remains valid regardless of the experiential nature of the information and relationship of the informant with a prospective migrant.

Nevertheless, once on the ground, migrants tend to realign expectations with reality in migration-receiving context. The process usually starts from the port of entry to the streets of Guangyuan Xi Lu where 'liminal days' are expended on the struggle for survival, decisions, the establishment of self and new networks of support. While exposed to 'integration mentors' who assist in amending orientation or exploiting them in a 'reverse dependency,' participants must also 'wake up' and deal with the urgency of imminent visa expiration and manage homeland relationships that compelled migrant to 'stay put' and disregard anxiety of a possible return. Confronted by double uncertainty, one originating from where they just departed and the other standing with them in Guangzhou, many choose to stay on, even if it requires a submitting to a life of running and hiding.

Building on international migration perspective, the heuristic suggested by the diasporisation framework situates the settlement of migrants within the nature of inter- and intra-group social relational dynamics of the host society. Outside business, Nigerians in Guangzhou have minimal contact with their Chinese host. Their relationship is shaped by negative perceptions

on both sides, and Nigerians mostly avoid the host as a social interactional act. This pattern of social relations was also evident in Zhang (2008a) who studied the African enclave in Guangzhou. He had argued that social distance between Africans and Chinese in Guangzhou was informed by strict residential pattern enforced by the local authorities. Interviews and observations in the city validated the existence and practice of the residential rule. However, Zhang (2008a) missed the point that many Africans, indeed Nigerians still managed to secure housing in prohibited areas, from Xiaobei to Nanhai in Foshan, and many of them have Chinese neighbours. Also, Nigerians interface with a range of social spaces which regularly placed them in proximity to Chinese, especially in markets. While this offered ample opportunity for deeper inter-group interactions, social distancing remained dominant. So, as a complimentary position to Zhang (2008a), this study showed that the notion of 'mafan' is also shaping social distancing between Nigerian and Chinese. 'Mafan' mischaracterised Nigerians as trouble and mischief makers, who are unworthy of fair treatment when interactions with a Chinese becomes conflictual. Because social interactions potentiate conflict, many Nigerians, therefore, chose the social distance as a self-imposed barrier that, to them, guaranteed minimal frictions. Here, avoidance is a socio-relational act, which while operating on the logic of evasion and silence also denotes the existence of an on-going conversation in which conversers maintain a form of 'close distance.'

While social distancing remained firmly in place, interracial romance has allowed for a more profound interaction between Nigerians and Chinese. The result showed that while Nigerian-Chinese marriages, in particular, have engendered cross-cultural negotiations, from how children are named to trust building through transparent property acquisition practices, the establishment of interracial families is affected by social and institutional issues.

The roles, position and formational socio-historical antecedents of the Nigerian community associations, notably the Nigerian Union, reflect the rootedness and disambiguate critical aspects of intra-group social relations among Nigerians in Guangzhou. As an elemental system in settlement of migrants, the NU improved bonding among Nigerians, and, at the same time, interface with the host society in a way that affirmed it as an established community. Over the course of its development, the NU emerged as a product of economic, social and political changes outside and within mainland China, and became rooted as an offshoot of *Igbo Ezue* or the gathering of the Igbo people. Through processes of increased formalisation, reconstitutions, transitions, and engagement – and confrontation at times – with the host society, the Nigerian

Union evolved and achieved credibility as a force, one capable of enthroning a system of volunteerism and vigilantism for internal discipline and community clean-up. However, the NU has been a 'community of men,' a situation that reflects the small population of Nigerian women in Guangzhou. So, contrary to the pattern observed in contemporary international migration from Africa (Adepoju, 2003, 2013), Nigerian migrations to China is still un-feminised.

While the path of formation and current status of the NU reveal the often non-homogenous and inherently conflictual nature of community association (Owusu, 2000; Schulte-Tenckhoff, 2001; Knight, 2002), they also underscore essential issues for understanding African migrant communities in China. First, in China, the Nigerian migrant community relies on informality to nurture and sustain group cohesion and build a relationship with the host society. Even as social proclivities of the country of origin impact on how migrant organise in transnational/transboundary space, the community they established can provide an enduring structure for sustaining informality that works. In this particular migration-receiving context, where strict rules control the presence of foreigners, engagement, rather than confrontation, had helped the Nigerian community to establish itself in the host society. Regarding its internal operations, informality remains crucial for community stability. As shown in the response of a segment of the community to the proposal on election rules, the resistance put up by undocumented Nigerians was based on the fact that the proposal threatened an unwritten code of political participation where 'validity/invalidity' should not be paramount. According to this code, that many Nigerians live in China without visas or with other country's passport is an open secret, and which, they believe, should not set aside their actual Nigerian citizenship or 'Nigerian essence.'

Second, increased stability of migrant community leads to the rise of powerful actors. When this happens, the nature of the relationship of those constituting this group will likely determine the sustainability of the community. At the initial stage of community formation, Nigerians organised around a shared goal, such as to promote unity and then lay a foundation that can sustain their presence in Guangzhou. Nigerian migrants rallied around a shared identity and purpose. With prolonged stay associated with increased stability, community leaders gained recognition and advanced socially with charisma, networks, and followership. However, community stability transformed powerful actors to competitors, for economic, social or political reasons. Since most of those who became community leaders are more stable with

residency and more established business, the personal stakes for prolonging disagreements is low, even though the community itself might disintegrate (or change?) on the same account. At the height of the problem, the differences that community leaders deemphasised gained increased amplification, as indicated by current 'minority/majority,' ethnic, and state level schisms. Differences become the instrument by which followership is maintained and sustained, tactics that ultimately lead to apathy among other community members. This shows the dysfunctional aspect of increased stability in the migrant community.

Finally, in the affairs of the Nigerian migrant community, the Nigerian embassy, as an extension of the Nigerian state, is a party to community conflicts and politics. Despite the discourse proffered at the embassy, a flash on the evolution of the community as a formalised group suggests that the Nigerian embassy has always been involved. In 2000 when it was 'officially' inaugurated, up to the point that Mr Ojukwu was appointed as interim and then elected as president, the Nigerian embassy was always in the mix. For legitimation purposes, an ex-president 'wanted the ambassador to preside over the election' while Mr Ojukwu's request for official introduction and executive members approval letters from the embassy in Beijing. Both were indications that the community leaders have always interwoven and formalised their legitimacy and authority through the powers of official endorsement. This embassy-backed legitimacy persisted over the course of the evolution of the Nigerian community. However, as with the relationship of the ranks of community leaders, and between personalities in the community and the embassy, Nigerian community actors sought to reconstruct a 'legitimated community' that stands far and apart from, and independent of, embassy powers. While refusing to acknowledge its position and roles, the embassy is being perceived as a disruptive – or even destructive – force. This is a community-level instantiation of the dismissiveness that has come to characterise the interaction of Nigerian embassy with Nigerians abroad (De Haas, 2006).

Meanwhile, at different phases of development, the Nigerian community has engaged the host society for the protection of undocumented but legitimate businesspeople in Guangzhou. The existence of the NU also improved relations between Nigerians and their host. With the political stalemate and schisms, however, there has been a drastic decline in community engagement and activities. Of course, there is no complete evidence to prove that the NU can eradicate criminality. We do not also know for sure that it even can foster more improved relations with the host community in a way that makes the Chinese state perceive and treat

being undocumented as a common misdemeanour. Incontrovertible, however, is the view that the presence of a vibrant and responsive community association made a positive impact on those issues – e.g. establishment of the Peacekeepers and subsequent community clean-up, access to market space to undocumented Nigerians, and the institution of the amnesty arrangement that made deportation cheaper and less painful for Nigerian overstayers.

So, as a general climate of stagnancy persists in the community association, many Nigerians in Guangzhou continue to experience challenges of documentation and stigma. As shown in the results, both issues are having an adverse impact on their everyday life. For instance, the documentation problem exposed them to exploitation, risks and vulnerabilities, constituted a barrier to social advancement, confined them 'in space,' resulting in spatial and social immobilities, and made community connection and bonding difficult. Because of documentation problems, Nigerians in Guangzhou embody the spatial and psychological conditions that made an undocumented life a form of abjection that alters migrant's experience of the world (Willen, 2007). The problem of spatial immobility that Haugen (2012) described among Nigerians in the city has not abated. To reduce the risk of arrest, undocumented Nigerians avoid the hospital and refrain from visiting areas where they can easily access opportunities. In this respect, undocumented Nigerians in Guangzhou are similar to their counterparts in global cities in South Africa (Mafukidze and Mbanda, 2008; Mazars et al., 2013) and Turkey (Şaul, 2014).

In addition to racism, which is a challenge for Africans at large (see Zhang, 2008b; Le Bail, 2009; Pelican and Tatah, 2009; Cheng, 2011), nationality-based stigmatisation appears to be a 'Nigerian problem' in the city. Many Nigerians felt targeted because of their nationality. In the Chinese media, Nigerians have high visibility in negative reports. In one of these reports, a Congolese made an effort to disentangle from an African identity which represented him as the same as a Nigerian (Pang and Yuan, 2013, p. 61). Nigerians too are aware that 'Nigeria has been cast' in the city. Many of them are conversant with the stigma and how it blemishes their nationality. How they reckon the challenge in everyday conversation suggest that a lot of them felt shame and considered their national identity as something defiling, something to not possess (see Goffman, 1965, p. 7). This explains why the use of other country's identity document is widespread among Nigerians in Guangzhou. Most importantly, by serving as a

ground for discrimination, such as being refused services[57] and shaming them at immigration offices,[58] the stigmatisation of Nigerians has also been institutionalised as a 'disciplinary regime' (Quesada, 2012).

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[57] Adeoye/IDI/male/54
[58] Olorundara/LH/male/45

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study by restating its aims, the questions explored, and how the questions were probed. The key findings of the study are also highlighted along with some submissions and a conclusion. Other sub-sections cover recommendations of the study and statements on what they research contributes to knowledge and suggestions for further research.

5.2. Summary

In response to changes within and outside the African continent, migrants from Africa are exploring destinations in the Global South, including East Asia. This study was designed to examine how Nigerians have participated in China-bound movement. As part a consequence of China's increasing role in global economic affairs, the research focused on Nigerian migrants as a distinct group in the cross-continental flows of Africans to Chinese cities. Based on the premise that studies on Africans in China have neglected the specificities of different African peoples in Chinese society, the study set out to understand how Nigerians migrate to and settle in Guangzhou, and how the challenges they encounter in the host society shape their everyday life.

A critical review of relevant literature was done to situate and elaborate on the gap addressed in the study. Some of the themes in the review evaluated the involvement of Nigerians in the global migration system, and their experiences in different migration-receiving contexts, from countries in the North to more prosperous ones in the South. The review also engaged sociological and anthropological perspectives on concepts such as 'illegality' and structural vulnerability as used in the scholarship on undocumented migrants. The main submission of the exercise is that while Nigerians are participating in the African-China migration corridor, their involvement has been subsumed under the larger 'African community' discourse. This, it was argued, concealed unique processes of migration among different groups, especially Nigerians were designated as the most populous African migrant community in Guangzhou. The last main sub-section of the review described the theoretical perspective to be adopted in the study, namely integrated international migration (IIM) perspective proposed by Massey et al. (1991) and Butlers' (2001) diasporisation framework.

The research design adopted to answer the questions raised in the study was non-experimental and used an ethnographic qualitative approach. Data collection was done in Guangzhou, China over the course of two separate visits in 2017, with a total of 69 participants, including Nigerians and Chinese people. Additional data was collected through a sustained presence in, and direct observation of, the everyday life of Nigerians in Guangzhou, from work to recreational spaces and homes. Transcribed interviews and field notes were processed using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (NVivo 11). The codes developed through open and axial coding processes were applied to relevant portions of the data, after which thematic, content and narrative analyses were carried out.

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

1. The process of migration from Nigeria to China
    i.   Some Nigerians in Guangzhou were motivated to leave their country of origin because they felt a need to succeed, find opportunities, build businesses or secure their futures. However, the pre-departure situation of the participants indicates that many were experiencing poor social and economic conditions, in their personal lives, their families and at the macro levels of the state. Stories of poverty, business decline and purposelessness were common. These are all remote factors that shaped out-migrations from Nigeria to China.
    ii.   Social reasons such as career advancement, marriage and family unification, and schooling, and economic ones like the search for a better business atmosphere were the immediate factors cited for movement. Marriage as a reason for migration was cited mainly by female participants.
    iii. Participants adopted four crucial 'strategy forms' during migration. Each of these were used for planning, relationship management, document acquisition, and in mapping out migration trajectory. The strategy forms involved elaborate processes of planning, social relations, decisions, and embodiments that constitute migration into a project, something to execute through deployment of knowledge, networks and navigational skills.
    iv.   Lastly, while some of the participants were experienced international travellers, the majority were first-time travellers, moving directly to Chinese cities from Nigeria.
2. Settlement experiences of Nigerian migrants in Guangzhou

i. Nigerian migrants have firmly established themselves in the city of Guangzhou. This fact is reflected in their sheer number, high visibility in public spaces and availability of services specifically established to meet their needs. Many of the migrants are young, but there are older people in the community as well. Regarding years of residence, long-term Nigerian residents are in Guangzhou, although the majority (or 40%) have arrived in the last five years. Participants were involved in a wide range of economic activities, from retail and wholesale businesses to artisanal works, and market middlemen. There were also people who qualify as a professional class, operating businesses in offices with Chinese partners and employees.

ii. Upon arrival, a lot of them, especially those with short-term visas, undergo a process of adjustment in which they are forced to 'wake up' and realign their expectations with reality of China – in terms of finding work with previously acquired skills or being able to invite their families over to join them

iii. Newly arrived establish new networks of social support with 'integration mentors.' The mentors socialise them into the community and give (re)orientations about how to (or not to) survive in China. In some cases, the mentors exploited newcomers in a process of 'reverse dependency' or introduce them to criminal careers.

iv. In the first 30 days of arrival or the 'liminal days,' many of them deliberate about whether to return or stay put. The decision to stay put were influenced by uncertainty in the country of origin, considerations regarding resource wastage, and homeland orientations which discourages return after a very short departure. As a critical transition period for Nigerians facing document expiration, the decisions made at this time impact on their settlement experiences in the city.

v. Business relationships dominate the social interaction between Nigerians and their Chinese host. Outside business, social interaction is minimal. The perception of Nigerians as *mafan* or 'troublemakers' prevents Chinese people from establishing non-business relationships. Whereas Nigerians too employ social distances as a way of escaping troubles with Chinese people, whom they feel will have an unfair advantage, such social relational stance widens the gap between the visitors and the host.

vi. The deepest interaction between Nigerians and Chinese occurs in interracial romance and marriages. Interracial marriages between Nigerian women and Chinese men are a rarity, but those involving Nigerian men and Chinese women were considered 'normal' in today's Guangzhou. Some cultural negotiations are made to make the relationship

work, from the naming of children to transparent property acquisition practices. Nigerian-Chinese couples face social and institutional problems, including in the area of training children and documentation.

vii.   Nigerians started constituting themselves into a vibrant community in the early 1990s following the arrival and business partnership established by those who originally came to teach or find opportunities on mainland China. In Sanyuanli where a motorcycle-crushing site provided opportunities for export trade and employment for Nigerian deportees from Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, these early callers congregated as *Igbo Ezue*.

viii.   Consequently, people from the Igbo ethnic group constitute the largest sub-Nigerian population in Guangzhou. They formed community associations at the state, local government and village levels. Smaller groups like the Yoruba and Hausa formed ethnic blocks, and joined others, small and large, to create the Nigerian Union, the umbrella body of Nigerian community associations in Guangzhou, China. The membership and participation in the community reflect the gender dynamics of Nigerians in the city, in which men dominate community affairs. Nevertheless, the community served everyone, gave critical social supports to members in need, expanded access to market spaces, for the documented and undocumented alike, and established a system of internal discipline through which community leaders were able to negotiate essential matters with the host.

ix.   Throughout its four phases of evolution – emergence, stabilisation, reformation and disintegration phases – the formalisation of the community was influenced by the Nigerian embassy in China. That influence persisted into the last documented phase of community development; a phase characterised by constitutional and political impasses, in-fighting, factionalisation, power struggles, minority/majority and ethnic schisms, and community-wide apathy.

3. Challenges experienced and their influence on the day to day life of Nigerian migrants

i.   While some challenges were identified, most were influenced by documentation problem and stigmatisation of Nigerians in the city.

ii.   Due to barriers to visa extension and cross-border mobility limitations, many participants considered the identity document of Nigeria as a burden. The immigration management in China was also believed to be exploitative and corrupt, while the Nigerian embassy was thought to have been responsible for the prolonged

imprisonment of Nigerian visa overstayers. Also, Nigerians are also at risk of losing investments and payment on house rents to landlords due to documentation problem. Lack of valid papers further immobilises and prevents them from freely exploring social and economic opportunities. The same problem also makes it difficult for them to meet and gather as a community. This impact on people's sense of belongingness in the city.

iii.   The expression 'this one is NG' underscores the peculiar nature of stigmatisation experienced by Nigerians in Guangzhou. While experiencing as much racial discriminations as other Africans, participants were of the view that 'Nigeria's name is always bad' and that the country has been 'cast,' due mainly to the problems of crimes and criminality in the community. Interestingly, a lot of them embodied this belief and admitted that the discrimination against them was a direct consequence of their stigmatisation.

iv.   Overall, these challenges shape how Nigerians are perceived, and influence their social relationships. They also influence the ways they occupy and use public spaces, as well as individual ecology opportunities and survival capabilities. Finally, the problems of documentation create uncertainties, risks, and vulnerabilities while increased stigmatisation functioned as a ground for social discrimination in the host society.

5.3. Conclusion

The evidence provided on the migration and settlement processes of Nigerians in Guangzhou revealed a complexity that 'Africans in China' scholarship has neglected. In the motivations expressed, decisions and choices made, and strategies adopted to execute migration project, international migrants from Nigeria exhibited a diversity of purpose and capability in the pursuit of a life that they imagined to be better than the one they left behind. Even though expectations were ruptured by the reality of the destination country, they made adjustments and embedded themselves in new networks. With the urgency of time and deliberation over staying put, as against returning, many stayed-on in the hope that China will be yield something good, at least better than what obtained in the country of departure, even if they must run and hide to enjoy the goodness. In a way, the incontrovertibility of presence and reality of an established migrant community ease these migrants into the host society. This is clear from the role the community played from the time of the early arrivals to the present. The community structure and the subsisting visitors-host society social relations pattern of social distancing

combined with documentation and stigmatisation issues to shape the process of settlement of Nigerians Guangzhou, one of China's biggest cities.

Certainly, the declining social and economic conditions at home continues to drive out-migration from Nigeria and China is being embraced as an alternative to Europe and North America. Many travels are direct to destination from the country of origin but a considerable amount of movements consists of series of short trips, detours, returns and re-emigrations that occur within or across continents. With the diverse strategy forms that migrants adopt, it is obvious that migration is not a singular event but a complicated project to be managed in association with family and friends, and visa agents. These collaborators interface with prospective migrants in a network of social relations that help to facilitate preparedness, resources mobilisation and document acquisition. The collaboration stimulates the development of embodiments needed for successful execution of international movement. Even with these strategies in place, nonetheless, we observed that international migration has become more complex. The repertoire of practices such as 'identity shopping' and passport 'dis-virgining' in the strategy of document acquisition – for instance – reveals this complexity in Africa's 21st century reality.

Furthermore, migrants are able to inhabit the economic and social spaces by leveraging on available and or exploitable opportunities. In the case of Nigerians in China, later arrivals tend to 'mis-imagine' China as a land of opportunities and possibilities, and experience greater difficulties in maintaining a presence. This is contrary to the experience of early arrivals who migrated to Guangzhou from other parts of Asian and neighbouring Chinese cities with more concrete economic opportunities – and realised promises. For those intending to settle in China, 'liminal days,' the period of transition when Nigerians struggle with the decision to either 'stay put' or return home, might explicate much of what recent migrants must confront and reckon with in order to manage potential 'legalisation.' There is no doubt that the fallout of the decision made during this transition period structured the 'contentious presence' of migrants and the disposition of the host society towards them. But while the current circumstance is significant in itself, a more comprehensive explanation should be grounded in the emergence of, and transformations in specific migrant communities. More precisely, the intra-group cohesion that waned with increasing community stability and the subsequent ethnic/state schisms and power tussles among Nigerian migrants affected the capacity of 'old Sampa' (early arrivals) to sustainably manage the influx of energetic and 'survive-at-all-cost' newcomers. All of this is

happening at the same time that the suspicion of *the* 'obvious migrant' population is growing in the host society. Chinese, with who Nigerian migrants interact, perceive them as *mafan* (or troublemakers) even as business relations and interracial romance flourished between Nigerians and Chinese people.

Be that as it may, the presence of Nigerians in Guangzhou query presumed 'homogeneousness' of migration pattern, experience and community processes, even within a migrant population whose members identify with shared country of origin. The experience of Nigerians challenges this 'homogeneity myth' from the point of departure to settlement in China. More crucially, their presence will also, undoubtedly, trigger transformations to which state and society must respond. In conclusion, however, the sense of community belongingness among Nigerians (including the bonding and flows it would generate, as well as mixed-race family formation and state responses from China and Nigeria) will determine the future of the Nigerian community in Guangzhou and Sino-Nigerian relations.

5.4. Recommendations

1. Efforts should be directed at addressing the socio-economic issues that drive the outflows of Nigerians.
2. Low interaction beyond business is a threat to cross-cultural dialogue. A joint response involving the Chinese and Nigerian government and community associations should be set up to map out a pathway for a strong engagement and improvement of intercultural interactions between the visitors and the host.
3. Steps should be explored to create a sustainable programme for proper documentation of Nigerian-Chinese children, independent of the status of their parents. This will both improve the life chances of the children and help the origin and host countries to safeguard against future problems that may arise as a result of 'left-behind' Nigerian-Chinese children.

5.5. Contributions to knowledge

1. By framing migration as a project involving a range of strategy forms, the study provides a framework for thinking about the growing complexity of international migrations. The concepts that the perspective generated are useful heuristics for exploring the universe of constructions that can illuminate obscured aspect of

contemporary movement from Nigeria, and Africa as a whole. For instance, the parallel drawn between identity document and human sexuality through the concept of 'dis-virgining' can open up opportunities for engaging how the certification of authentic traveller now involves more than having an international passport, funds and other requirements. The concept highlights that the legitimacy of movers depends increasingly on evidence of 'initiation,' provable through immigration stamps – in much the same way that a woman demonstrates initiation into womanhood through evidence of bloodied clothing or a hymenal breaking.

2. The problematisation of 'liminal days' as a critical phase in international sojourning revealed the calculations that are entailed in deciding to overstay. This attempt contributes to our understanding of an aspect of migrant decision-making that literature is yet to interrogate thoroughly.

3. No significant attempt has been made to document the socio-historical context of the formation of African communities in China. To the knowledge of the researcher, this is the first thesis-length attempt to document the evolution of a national migrant community in Guangzhou. 'Africans in China' literature has not appreciated the importance of intra-group dynamic in the settlement processes of migrants. The evidence given in this study contributes a much-needed material for exploring possible convergences and divergences within African communities in Guangzhou, and how these communities differ from those established in other migration-receiving contexts. Also, the study is a timely contribution to the emerging literature on Africa's new diaspora, particularly in Asia. The relevance of the study as a historical sociology material is also underlined.

5.6. Suggestions for further research

1. Future studies should engage the notion of 'migrant validity' as a phenomenological problem which transcends more than a simple 'valid/invalid' or 'legal/illegal' dichotomies. Such study must attempt to interrogate what it takes to 'stay valid,' particularly the broad spectrum of choices, decisions, trade-offs, risks and vulnerabilities that lie in-between the extremities of 'migrant validation process.' Comparative sociological studies can explore how migrants' pursuit of validation occurs in diverse contexts and the ways that this existential process shapes individual predicaments and conceals (or reveals) institutional exclusion and corruption, while, at

the same time, creating and fuelling a 'human validation' black market economy in the Global South.

2. The most intense cross-cultural interaction is taking place in interracial marriages that Nigerian men and Chinese women are establishing. Studies should examine the processes at work as a basis for designing agenda for improved cross-cultural dialogues, which can be exported to other spheres of interaction between Nigerians and Chinese.

3. Future studies should also explore the dynamics of power struggles and community capture in migration situation. One underexplored issue in the study is the view that Nigerian community leaders in Guangzhou repeatedly assert that community participation was motivated by a desire to serve, and not financial reasons. However, the leadership of the community continues to be a source of division, generating competitions and brutal enmity. What is the prize? How much of this diasporic competition is influenced by the nature of political, social, and economic structures of the origin and host societies? These and related questions can help to uncover potentially concealed values served by migrant community structure in a transnational moment (Tölölyan, 1996).

The theme of 'ethnic non-clustering' can further our understanding of the formation of migrant communities under the condition of increased uncertainties. One of the major features of migrant presence in foreign countries is their ability to form ethnic clusters, particularly around businesses and housing. This, according to ethnic conclave literature, is a way to protect community bonding, preserve shared norms and strengthen support networks. However, a preliminary observation indicates that many undocumented Nigerians in China valued 'ethnic non-clustering,' especially outside the work setting. What social processes inform this value formation? How is this theme useful for interrogating underclass international migrants in urban centres?

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Appendix

IDI Guide 1 – Nigerian Traders

Preamble

State name and explain the aims of the study to participant. Then explain confidentiality terms and obtain consent using attached Consent Form (or by obtaining verbal consent).

A. Migration process

1. What has it been like for you here in Guangzhou?
2. Please tell me about your background.
   Probe for

   - Age in years or date of birth
   - State of origin
   - Work history
   - Family information

3. How did you arrive at the decision to come to China (Guangzhou) and not elsewhere?
   Probe for

   - Personal motivations
   - Migration aspirations
   - Personal travel history
   - Attractions to Guangzhou/China
   - Supports received
   - Activities undertaken while preparing for China

4. If you want to compare your situation back in Nigeria with your life in Guangzhou, how would you describe it?
5. How would you describe your work in this city?
   Probe for

   - Years of living in the city (China more generally)
   - Work history, and type and scale of current business
   - Years of trading experience in the city
   - Subjective understanding of the importance of the work s/he is doing.

B. Community membership and participation
6. Kindly tell me something about the Nigerian associations/organisations/clubs/groups that you have joined or thinking of joining in Guangzhou.
   Probe for

   - Name(s) and type of association (religious, trade, ethnic, hometown associations)
   - Reasons for joining
   - Diversity of membership
   - Level of participation
   - Degree of formality via regularity of meetings, dues payment etc.

7. Do you belong to any other associations/organisations/clubs/groups which has Chinese people and/or other Africans as members?
   Probe for

   - Name(s) and type of association (religious, trade, ethnic, hometown associations)

- Reasons for joining
- Diversity of membership
- Level of participation
- Degree of formality via regularity of meetings, dues payment etc.

8. How has your life in Guangzhou been impacted by these associations/ organisations/ clubs/groups?
    Probe for

    - Concrete instances of benefits/advantages and hindrances/disadvantages

C. Experiences in Guangzhou
9. Tell me a little bit about when you first arrived in Guangzhou.
    Probe for

    - Experiences of settlement in the city.
    - Securing an accommodation and changes living arrangement over time.
    - General modes of adjustment in a new society.
10. What has been your personal experiences in Guangzhou?
    Probe for

    - Relationship with local population.
    - Relationship with co-traders including Nigerians, Africans and Chinese.
    - Experiences with host community members (Chinese landlords and neighbours).
    - Encounters with state officials like police, municipal officers and immigration authorities.
    - Experiences when taking transportation, visiting hospitals, engaging in religious activities.

11. Think about the period you have been here, which experiences have affected you the most?
    Probe for:
    - The situation, moment or events.
    - What happened as recalled by participant?
    - Specific issues like review of immigration law and Ebola situation in 2014 (long-term stayers).
12. Before we conclude this interview, I want you to share with me some of the challenges you are facing in this place.
13. In your view, which problems do you consider as the most common among Nigerians?
14. In your opinion, how do you think these challenges can be addressed?
15. Since you've been here, which three people did you rely on to get out of difficult situations (e.g. paying rents, finding housing, business opportunities, health issues, police, immigration etc.)?
    Probe for

    - Information on the persons mentioned (names, type of relationship with participant, nationality).
    - Instances when assistance was rendered and surrounding situations and roles played by the mentioned persons.

16. Tell me about the availability and your experiences of using social services in Guangzhou.
    Probe for access, quality and satisfaction with:
    - Housing.
    - Healthcare services.
    - Transportation.
    - Schools (for participant with children).

17. How would you describe your social life in the city?

Probe for
- Religious activities
- Leisure
- Access to public spaces and parks

18. How do you cope with the problems that you face in the city of Guangzhou?
    Probe for:

    - Specific coping strategies for each challenge identified by participants

 Thank you for your response.

IDI Guide 2 – Nigerian consular representative in Guangzhou

Preamble

State name and explain the aims of the study to participant. Then explain confidentiality terms and obtain consent using attached Consent Form.

1. Before we start properly, I'll like you to tell me about who you are and your roles in Guangzhou.
2. In your opinion, how is the Nigerian trading community different from other African trading communities in Guangzhou?
3. How would you describe the relationship of this office with the Nigerian traders in the city?
   Probe for: cordiality, conflicts, engagement.
4. Generally, how are Nigerian traders organised in the city?
   Probe for: knowledge about existing communities/associations/group, details about the ones mentioned, instances of engagement/contacts between the trading community and consular office.

5. How would you describe the relationship of Nigerian trading community with Chinese people and institutions of Guangzhou?
   Probe for: interaction/encounter with local population, including other trading communities, local Chinese institutions and officials including police, municipal and immigration authorities.

6. What challenges do Nigerian traders face as a group in Guangzhou?
7. Could you give me examples of problems concerning Nigerian traders that you have dealt with?
   Probe for: surrounding circumstances, what happened, why, who was involve, course of action taken (or not taken) etc.

8. Are there on-going/planned initiatives designed to promote engagement with host community.
9. In your opinion, how do you think these challenges can be addressed sustainably?

Thank you for your response.

Life History Guide – Nigerian Traders

Preamble

State name and explain the aims of the study to participant. Then explain confidentiality terms and obtain consent using attached Consent Form.

State name and explain the aims of the study to participant. Then explain confidentiality terms and obtain consent using attached Consent Form (or by obtaining verbal consent).

A. Migration process

1. What has it been like for you here in Guangzhou?
2. Please tell me about your background.
   Probe for

   - Age in years or date of birth
   - State of origin
   - Work history
   - Family information

3. How did you arrive at the decision to come to China (Guangzhou) and not elsewhere?
   Probe for

   - Personal motivations
   - Migration aspirations
   - Personal travel history
   - Attractions to Guangzhou/China
   - Supports received
   - Activities undertaken while preparing for China

4. If you want to compare your situation back in Nigeria with your life in Guangzhou, how would you describe it?
5. How would you describe your work in this city?
   Probe for

   - Years of living in the city (China more generally)
   - Work history, and type and scale of current business
   - Years of trading experience in the city
   - Subjective understanding of the importance of the work s/he is doing.

B. Experiences in Guangzhou

6. Tell me a little bit about when you first arrived in Guangzhou.
   Probe for

   - Experiences of settlement in the city.
   - Securing an accommodation and changes living arrangement over time.
   - General modes of adjustment in a new society.

7. What has been your personal experiences in Guangzhou?
   Probe for

   - Relationship with local population.
   - Relationship with co-traders including Nigerians, Africans and Chinese.
   - Experiences with host community members (Chinese landlords and neighbours).

- Encounters with state officials like police, municipal officers and immigration authorities.
- Experiences when taking transportation, visiting hospitals, engaging in religious activities.

8. Think about the period you have been here, which experiences have affected you the most?
   Probe for:
   - The situation, moment or events.
   - What happened as recalled by participant?
   - Specific issues like review of immigration law and Ebola situation in 2014 (long-term stayers).

9. Based on you experiences so far, do you feel a sense of belonging in Guangzhou?
   Probe for

   - Reasons for responses given.
   - How feeling of belongingness is experienced at places where they live, work and visit.
   - Role of community membership and community participation.
   - Personal feeling of safety.
   - Long- or short-term orientation towards the China.

10. Since you've been here, which three people did you rely on to get out of difficult situations (e.g. paying rents, finding housing, business opportunities, health issues, police, immigration etc.)?
    Probe for

    - Information on the persons mentioned (names, type of relationship with participant, nationality).
    - Instances when assistance was rendered and surrounding situations and roles played by the mentioned persons.

11. Tell me about the availability and your experiences of using social services in Guangzhou.
    Probe for access, quality and satisfaction with:
    - Housing.
    - Healthcare services.
    - Transportation.
    - Schools (for participant with children).

11. How would you describe your social life in the city?
    Probe for
    - Religious activities
    - Leisure
    - Access to public spaces and parks

12. How do you cope with the problems that you face in the city of Guangzhou?
    Probe for: specific coping strategies for each challenge identified by participants

13. Is there anything else that you would like me to know about your life in Guangzhou that we have not touched upon?

Thank you for your response.

IDI Guide 3a – Chinese Shop Owners and Property Agents (Chinese)

IDI指南 - 中国店主和地产代理

前言

状态名称并向参与者解释研究的目的。然后解释保密条款并使用附带的同意书获得同意。

1.在我们开始正常之前，我想让你告诉我你是谁，你做什么。

2.你如何描述这个办公室与尼日利亚人在城市的关系？

探索：亲切，冲突，参与。

如果你被要求提到两件关于尼日利亚在广州的事情，它会是什么？

4.在工作和处理尼日利亚人在城市生活和贸易，你遇到什么困难？

探针：

- 问题和周围情况

- **具体问题的后续行动**

- 对移民的反应。

5.一般来说，你如何描述尼日利亚贸易商与中国同行在市场上的关系？（仅限店主）

探针：

- 与当地人口，包括其他贸易社区，当地中国机构和安全机构的互动/接触

6.根据你与尼日利亚商人的经验，你已经找到你租/买商店或公寓，请描述他们在获得这些服务面临的障碍。探针：

- **政策和法律问题/限制**

- 与文化/种族/移民身份有关的实际问题（仅限物业代理）

你还有什么其他你想讨论的？

谢谢你的回复。

IDI Guide 3b – Chinese Shop Owners and Property Agents (English)

Preamble

State name and explain the aims of the study to participant. Then explain confidentiality terms and obtain consent using attached Consent Form.

1. Before we start properly, I'll like you to tell me about who you are and what you do.
2. How would you describe the relationship of this office with Nigerians in the city?
   Probe for: cordiality, conflicts, engagement.

3. If you're asked to mention two things that stand out about Nigerian in Guangzhou, what will it be?
4. In working and dealing with Nigerians living and trading in the city, what difficulties do you encounter?
   Probe for:
   - Problems and surrounding situations
   - Follow-up on specific problems
   - Responses to the migrants.

5. Generally, how would you describe the relationship of Nigerian traders with their Chinese colleagues in the market? **(Shop owners only)**
   Probe for:
   - Interaction/encounter with local population, including other trading communities, local Chinese institutions and security agencies
6. From your experience with Nigerian traders that have approached you to rent/buy shops or apartments, please describe the barriers you they confront in obtaining these services.
   Probe for:
   - Policy and legal issues/constraints
   - Practical problems related to culture/race/migrant status **(Property agents only)**

7. Do you have anything else that you'll like to discuss?

Thank you for your response.

KII Guide – Leaders of the Nigerian Community in China

Preamble

State name and explain the aims of the study to participant. Then explain confidentiality terms and obtain consent using attached Consent Form.

A. Community formation, membership and participation
1. Before we start properly, I'll like you to tell me about who you are and your roles within the Nigerian trading community.
2. How did you emerge as a community leader among Nigerians in Guangzhou?
3. In your opinion, how is the Nigerian community different from other African communities in Guangzhou?
4. Why are the reasons for establishing this association/organisation/group?
5. Please describe this association/organisation/group in details.
   Probe for

   - History
   - Functions
   - Size/number of members
   - Programmes and activities
   - Entry and exit rules
   - Group diversity

B. Experiences in Guangzhou
6. You'll agree that to an extent, China is a very different place. As a group, what has it been like for your members?
7. Overall, how would you describe the relationship and experiences of members of the Nigerian trading community with other groups in the city?
   Probe for
   - Relationship with local population.
   - Relationship with co-traders including Nigerians, Africans and Chinese.
   - Experiences with host community members (Chinese landlords and neighbours).
   - Encounters with state officials like police, municipal officers and immigration authorities.
   - Experiences when taking transportation, visiting hospitals, engaging in religious activities.

8. As migrants, which experiences or events have affected this association/organisations/ clubs/groups the most?
   Probe for:
   - The situation, moment or events.
   - Specific issues like review of immigration law and Ebola situation in 2014 (long-term stayers).

9. Give me examples of problem that you have had to deal with as an association/ organisation/group?
   Probe for:
   - Surrounding circumstances
   - What happened, why, who was involve
   - Course of action taken (or not taken) etc.

10. What challenges do members of the Nigerian trading community face in Guangzhou?
11. How would you say that these problems have affected the members and the Nigerian trading community itself?

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12. What role(s) has your association/organisation/group played in tackling the challenges?
13. In your opinion, how do you think these challenges can be addressed sustainably?

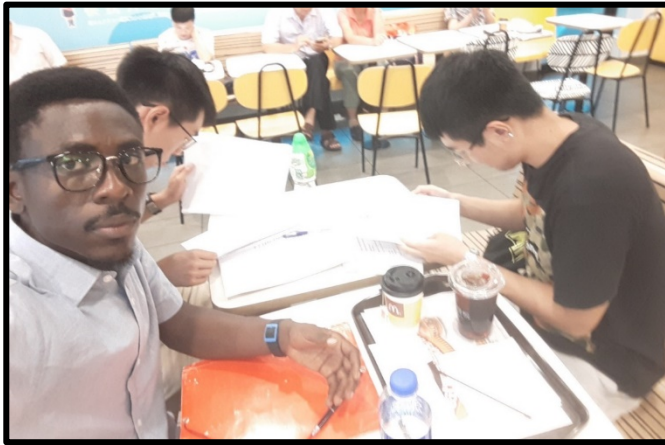Thank you for your response.

The field: Guangzhou

Plate 1: The researcher and two Chinese assistants studying research IDI guide, MacDonald's restaurant, Taojin, Guangzhou, China
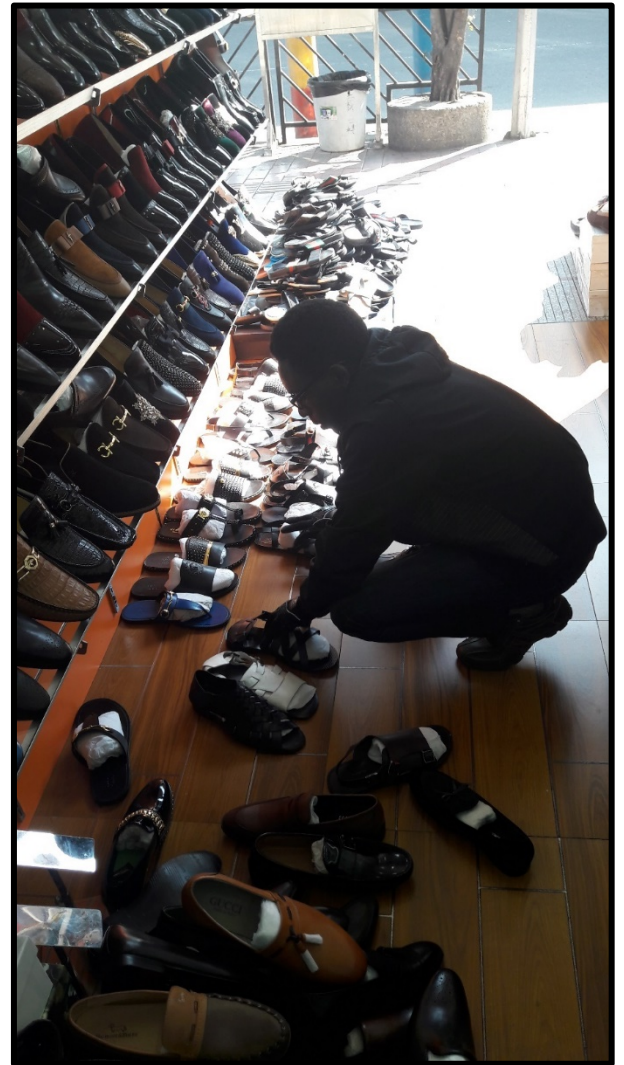

Plate 2: Late night discussion with an informant, Guangyuan Xi Lu, Guangzhou, China

Plate 3: The researcher as a 'Sampa' for observational data along Guangyuan Xi Lu, Guangzhou, China

Plate 4: Visit to the Nigerian consulate in Tianhe District, Guangzhou, China

Plate 5: Bole market, Guangyuan Xi Lu, Guangzhou

Plate 6: Shoes market (Yezhou), Liwan District, Guangzhou [Bottom]

Plate 7: The researcher with Mr. Emma Ojukwu, Tianhe District, Guangzhou

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