

Out of Africa: New Patterns of Settlement for African Immigrants in China

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Abstract

As its economy continues to reach new highs, China becomes more and more attractive to foreigners who look for employment and business opportunities either for short term stay or long term settlement. China is on the way to become a new country of immigrant destination in the 21st century. Chinese government has been adjusting policies and regulations on immigrants and shorter term workers, based on the emerging problems and incidences involving immigrants. In this paper, I focus on a newly established organization in Chinese neighborhood: Community Office of Foreigner Assistance. It is a government sponsored institution that is first established in the city of Guangzhou in 2007. Based on public records as well as fieldwork in Guangzhou done in the summer of 2012 and 2013., I examined: 1.how African immigrants' experience in foreigner offices different from their experience in other government institutions; 2.how African immigrants perceived the Foreigner offices. I discovered that doing paper work in foreigner office is more time saving than in the other institutions, the officials in foreigner office are more friendly, and the service provided in foreigner office is better. However, the paper work can be done in foreigner office is rather limited, and it can't solve the biggest problems facing African immigrants: the shortness of visa valid-period and the hardship of renewing visa.

Key Words: African immigrants, government institution

Introduction

Since 19th century, China has been sending migrants to other countries. In the early ages, laborers were sent to US and Southeast Asia. More recent times, mass migrants of various backgrounds were sent to developed countries. However, China were not receiving many immigrants until the last few decades. Its government lacked the experience of administrating foreigners. Only after the enactment of Act on Exit & Entry of Aliens in 1986 did China have the first law on foreigner management.

According to China's Ministry of Public Security, from 1985 to 2004, only 3000 foreigners became permanent residence in China (Sanqin Metropolis Daily, 2004). In 2004, a formal rule on the requirement of becoming permanent residence was enacted (China's Permanent Residence Examination and Approval Rule for Foreigners, 2004). According to this rule, foreigner need to invest half an million US dollar in west China or one million US dollar in central China to become investigator immigrant. Foreigners can apply for permanent residence as professional or expert, only if they own certain occupations in government institutions, large transnational companies or state-owned universities. The foreigners who intend to become permanent residents seldom meet these requirements. Among the 250 thousand foreigners who have resided in China for over 5 years, only 1 thousand received permanent residence through the 2004 rule (Oriental Outlook, 2011).

Few foreigners came to China before 1990s, who were mostly with visa for public affairs. The 1986 act was not very strict on illegally staying, and it mainly relied on self reporting or reports from hotels to find foreigners overstaying their visa. However, since many foreigners now come to China on private affairs, it became necessary for the government to find out

who's overstaying. Chinese government has adapted new ways of managing foreigners. One approach is to reduce the agents helping foreigners to enter boarder illegally, stay illegally or work illegally. In the new version of exit & entry act that will be enacted in 2013, the punishments for illegal agents helping foreigners are much harsher than those for the foreigners. This has been proved to be a effective way. Guangzhou policemen recently inspected the African communities and trading centers for illegal currency exchange agents. There is a limit on the amount of RMB a foreigner can exchange during one stay, so when these currency exchange agents are gone, African merchants wouldn't be able to do much business in one stay.

The national laws on foreigners failed to meet the specific demand of certain regions. For example, Guangdong has attracted many immigrants, thus there are also a lot of crimes involving foreigners. In 2007 and 2008, thousands of stowaways and illegal workers from Vietnam were caught in Guangdong province (Nanfang Daily, 2008). In 2007, 761 foreigners were arrested in Guangzhou for participating crimes. However, the 1986 act on foreigner management did not provide detailed items on punishing foreigners who violated the law.

Chinese government authorized local governments to set up their own rules on foreigner management. Guangdong province has enacted the Temporary Rule on Managing and Serving Foreigners in 2011. Most of the rule is detailed version of the national law, but it also emphasized the construction of information network on foreigner, and encouraged foreigners to take part in sub-district management. In Guangzhou city, where lots of foreign merchants and international students resided, Community Office of Foreigner Assistance (I will call it foreigner office for short) has been established to collect information of foreigners and to

provide service to foreigners.

The first foreigner office was set up by Dengfeng sub-district office in 2007. Immigrants in Dengfeng sub-district are mainly from Africa (except for Nigerians, who gathered in another community), South Asia and Middle-East. Dengfeng sub-district close to Guangzhou railway station, three large bus stations, and several trading centers. The officials of the sub-district office decided to try out a new kind of institution, which not only served as a place to manage foreigners, but also provide certain services to foreigners and help them to adapt to life in Guangzhou. This attempt has been proved very effective, thus Guangdong province governor Huang urged other sub-districts to set up foreigner offices for foreigners. Every sub-district with over 200 foreigners should have at least one foreigner office (Guangzhou Daily, 2008). Later, other cities with many immigrants, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Yiwu, also established foreigner office.

In 2007, about 18,000 foreigners have resided in Guangzhou for over 1 year, and each year about half an million foreigners would stay in Guangzhou for short term (Xin Kuai Bao, 2007). Because of China's investments in African, many Africans expected Chinese to be a country full of opportunities. Many of the African merchants came to China early made lots of money through selling Chinese products back to Africa. Their successful stories and ethnic network brought even more Africans to China.

The number of Africans resided in Guangzhou increased year by year until there were so many African immigrants that the city government and citizens began to consider African as a threat. African immigrants have strong ethnic connections and formed several ethnic enclaves in China. Thus it is easy for the local Chinese to spot them and to overestimate their number.

The support from ethnic network reduced the cost of new comers. Comparing with immigrants from Asian, European and American countries, the average social economic status of African immigrants are lower. African's crime rate may also be higher than the other immigrant groups.

African immigrants in Guangzhou have felt much hostility from the local government. However, the officials of Community Office of Foreigner Assistance have much better attitude toward Africans than other institutions. Thus, it would be interesting to find out if the foreigner office is just a special case, or if it can be a model for other government institutions. In this paper, I attempted to answer the following questions: 1. what does the foreigner office offer that could not be provided by non-government organizations; 2. how African immigrants' experience in foreigner offices different from their experience in other government institutions; 3. how can foreigner offices provide better services to African immigrants. In the following paragraphs, I will first review the literature on three kinds of organizations and on Africans in China. Then I will summarize my findings in the interviews. Finally I will provide some suggestions to the city government and to the foreigner offices on improving the services provided to foreigners, especially African immigrants.

Literature Review

The three kinds of institutions which have largest influence on immigrants are religious institutions, migrant organizations and government institutions. The former two often consist of many immigrants. Through participating in activities of religious institutions or migrant organizations, immigrants form new social network and adjust their values, thus they may

become more adapted to immigrant receiving countries, or become more segregated from main stream society (Nie, 2012). According to immigrants' purposes when joining these institutions, migrant organizations can be viewed as instrumental institutions, while most religious institutions are non-instrumental institution. Immigrants join migrant organizations to fulfill their aim of enlarging social network and searching for social capital through ethnic groups; immigrants who take part in religious activities usually just want to maintain their religious beliefs, other benefits are not their main purpose. Government agencies established by immigrant sending countries or receiving countries would function to meet the need of their own countries. They would try to attract migrants who can benefit their country and drive away migrants not wanted by their countries. Unlike religious institutions or migrant organizations, government agencies seldom recruit immigrants. They affect immigrants through activities, policies or direct management.

In China, these three kinds of institutions all played important roles on foreigners' life. In Guangzhou, Africans from the same country or from the same tribe often forms merchant guilds to exchange information and to protect their profits (Li, et.al. 2009; Xu, 2009). Some foreigners formed loose organization and meet regularly in foreigner bars. China has strict laws on religion, so it's rather impossible for foreigners to establish their own church or temple, but foreigners can take part in religious activities offered by local religious institutions. Several city governments have forced close churches without registration; In Guangzhou, Korean immigrants' religious ceremony had been interrupted by police because too many people gathered for a religious meeting in places that has not been registered for ritual use (Xu, 2009). Thus, international immigrants must follow the rules when organizing

or participating religious activities. In Guangzhou, Catholic Africans would choose to participate in religious activities in Shishi Sacred Heart Cathedral, and Islamic Africans can practice religious ceremonies in Huaisheng Temple. Since Chinese government has enacted strict rules on foreigners, the institutions that have most prolonged and significant influence on foreigners are most likely to be the government agencies.

Zhou mentioned that Africans generally considered Guangzhou as a nice place for them to live, but they are uncomfortable with two things, one is that policemen can check their passport at any place any time, the other is that taxi drivers may refuse to serve them (Zhou, 2012). The latter one showed the discrimination of taxi drivers towards Africans; some taxi drivers complained that Africans often refuse to pay the amount of money showed on the meter, and the perfumes used by Africans would remain in their cars for long time. The former one reflected the attitude of local government; when policemen deal with foreigners, they would follow the rules, so they don't take the responsibility if any accident happens, thus the harsh way in which policemen inspected passport is due to the strict rules of Guangzhou government. In a newspaper story, Ali, an African merchant who owned a company in Guangzhou, complained that policemen would inspect his company unexpectedly to check his employees' passports (Nanfang People Weekly 2009). In the following parts, I will provide the basic information of African communities in Guangzhou and review the papers on the three kinds of institutions that influences Africans.

Africans in Guangzhou

There are great variations among the African immigrants in Guangzhou. According to

Li's survey, there were about 15,000 to 20,000 Africans in Guangzhou in 2008 (Li, et. al. 2009). They speak French, English, Arabic or Portuguese. A large proportion of them came from west African countries like Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and Ghana. The others were from middle Africa (Congo and Angola) or east Africa (Tanzania and Kenya). Most of them have religious beliefs, which could be Catholic, Protestant, Islam or African Indigenous religions (Xu, 2009).

Most of the African immigrants in Guangzhou are economic immigrants. Li pointed out that there are two kinds of African merchants: the peddlers, who do small business and usually only stay in Guangzhou around the period of Canton Fairs; the tradesmen, who own business in Guangzhou and make profit from selling large amount of low-end products back to Africa (Li, et. al. 2008). Nie added that, there are also the laborers: Africans who are employed by merchants and do packing or lifting jobs (Nie 2012). Some of the laborers are poor people who came to China through the help of merchants; the others came as merchants, but later their business failed, and they had to work for others to earn a living. During my fieldwork, I have discovered another kind of immigrants: the agents. These Africans are mainly from Andorra or Congo. They provide temporary dwelling to new comers and show them the trading centers in Guangzhou. They may do small business from time to time, but mainly depend on agency fee.

There are five large foreigner enclaves in Guangzhou: Sanyuanli region, where some African and Korean merchants gathered; Huangshidong region, which is the first foreigner enclave in Guangzhou, and has the largest foreign population; Tianhebei region, which is the commercial center of Guangzhou, thus many white collar foreigners worked and resided

there; Ersha island, which is the richest area in Guangzhou, mainly foreign managers and high-level white collars live there; Panyu district, which a satellite city of Guangzhou, many migrants from West Asia and Middle East gathered there (Li, et. al. 2008). Most African immigrants resided in Sanyuanli (which includes Kuangquan sub-district) and Huangshidong (which includes Dengfeng sub-district). Some Africans lived in Foshan city, and commute to Guangzhou everyday to do business (Li, 2012). Foshan is adjacent to Guangzhou, and there are buses and subway connecting Foshan to Guangzhou.

Some rich and successful Africans lived in residence communities where the middle local Chinese lived. The rent of an apartment in residence communities is usually over 3000 Yuan (about 500 dollar). Most African immigrants lived in urban village where the rent ranges from 200 Yuan (about 30 dollar) to 2000 Yuan (about 300 dollar). Urban villages were once suburb villages, but became surrounded by urban areas as the city expanded. The city government bought most of the farmland from the villagers to build roads and mansions, but allowed the villagers to build apartments on their remaining lands (Wei & Yan 2005). These buildings in urban villages are in poor condition and lack management. The residents in urban villages are mainly poor migrants (including internal and international migrants).

Many African Muslims lived in Dengfeng village, a large urban village in Dengfeng sub-district. Before African immigrants arrived in Guangzhou, Xinjiang Muslims already gathered in Dengfeng village. They have opened stores that sell products for Muslim and restaurants that cook Muslim food. The Dengfeng village brought convenience to African Muslims.

Many Nigerians lived in Kuangquan village, an urban village in Baiyun District.

Kuangquan village is very close to commodity trading centers, such as the Canaan Market. Baiyun District has very strict rules on renting apartment to foreigners: the landlords need to make sure the foreigners are not overstaying their visa, and if their tenants are involved in any illegal activities, the landlords would also have responsibility. Thus few landlords in Baiyun District would rent rooms to foreigner. Many Nigerians lived in their warehouses or shared motel rooms in Kangquan village.

As Bodomo pointed out, the Africans used to be scattered in China as students or official representative, and the African communities begin to form in the 1990s when traders entered China (Bodomo, 2010a). Especially after the 1997 financial turmoil, large amount of African merchants moved from Southeast Asia to Guangzhou (Li, et. al. 2008). Li noted that one important reason that Guangzhou attracted so many African is that Guangzhou has been hosting the Canton fair. For example, in 2006 Canton fair, 190,000 foreign merchants from over 200 countries participated. Xu believed that many Africans in China resided in Guangzhou, for Guangzhou is the trading center of south China, and most trades can be done in this city (Xu, 2009). It is becoming harder for Africans to get visa renewed, since the Chinese government applied stricter visa policy. One of my respondent said living in Guangzhou is convenient for her, since she can renew her visa easier in Hong Kong or Macao.

One important reason that African formed ethnic enclaves is that a large part of Africans in China are merchants, who are self-employed and economically independent. The Africans in ethnic enclaves formed their unique social network around the merchants: merchants protect their own interests through these network (Li et. al. 2012); new immigrants find help

through these network; poor or unsuccessful immigrants get employed through these network (Nie 2012).

Another reason for the formation of African ethnic enclave is Africans' unwillingness to live close to local Chinese. Africans are satisfied with Guangzhou city, but are not satisfied with Guangzhou government and local people (Li, et. al. 2008). 97% of African immigrants agree that Guangzhou accepts multicultural people, but only 69% think the Guangzhou government is friendly, and only 58% think local people are friendly. Li's paper also showed that 69% of respondents didn't want to live in the residential communities where local Chinese lived.

Guangzhou citizen's attitude towards Africans can also be influential. Min Zhou did a study on the attitudes of Guangzhou residents towards African and Africans towards local Chinese. On all questions like whether you will interact with them if lived in the same building, do you want to learn about their culture, how do you feel about their appearance, how close you would like to be related to them, Chinese respondents are more negative towards African than African towards Chinese (Zhou, 2012). Guangzhou residents are annoyed by Africans for four reasons: 1. Africans are often connected with negative images, like illegal migrant, criminal, or liar; 2. Africans value money too much, that they would fiercely argue with taxi drivers and Chinese businessmen for small amount of money; 3. Africans participate in religions activities (which Chinese people are not familiar with); 4. Africans have strange hobbies, such as wake up at noon, and use much perfume and play music very loud (Wen, 2012).

Because of the strict rules of Guangzhou Government on foreigner, the number of

Africans in Guangzhou has been decreasing since 2008. As Li pointed out, some Africans moved to Foshan city but still did business in Guangzhou; some moved to Yiwu, a new trading center located in Zhejiang province; some left China and went to Central Asia (Li, 2012). Li argued that the African enclaves in Guangzhou are declining.

Beside Guangzhou, there are also African immigrants residing in other Chinese cities. The number of African immigrants in Yiwu city has been increasing steadily since the 300 acres Yiwu Trading City was built in 2003. In 2009, 54,050 Africans registered in Yiwu, who owned 405 trading agencies (Jie 2012). The African merchants in Yiwu are mainly from North African countries. Due to the high cost of living, most of the African immigrants in Yiwu are merchants, and only a few Africans were employees of their relatives' or friends' company. African immigrants in Hong Kong formed communities in the heartland of Hong Kong's commercial centers: Chungkong Mansion and Tsim Sha Tsui (Bodoma 2007). 55% of the African immigrants in Hong Kong came from Ghana. Africans' occupation varied a lot: 26% are businessman, 16% are trader, 12% are salesman, other occupations like secretary, photographer, accountant each take up 2-4% of the African population. The main African community in Macau consists of about 1,000 people (Bodoma & Silva 2012). Most of them are from different Portuguese-speaking African countries. The Africans in Beijing concentrated in Sanlitun entertainment district (Bodoma 2012). A large proportion of them are government representatives. There are some African immigrants in Shanghai, but they haven't established an African community (Bodoma 2012). The characteristics of African immigrants in different Chinese cities varies a lot.

Migrant Organization

The main functions of migrant organization are to sustain migrants' connection to original country, to promote the culture of original country, to form ethnic social network, and to protect the interest of migrants (Song 2011). Migrants often join a migrant organization intentionally to search for ethnic resources and to form new social networks; they can benefit more from migrant organizations than religious institutions in the sense of increasing their social capital (Nie, 2012: p21-22). Migrant organization makes the utilization of resources more efficient among a group of people and protects their common interest, while the migrants support the migrant organization by participating in the activities and by paying membership fee.

According to Minghuan Li's methods of classification, there are local, national, continental and global migrant organizations depending on their size; according to their main function, there are political, economical, educational, association and service migrant organizations; some migrant organizations would mainly reproduce the cultures of their original countries, while others aim to localize (Li, 2002). The structure of a migrant organization is determined by the identity and aims of the establishers and participants, and is affected by the politic and economic environment of receiving country.

The first Chinese migrant organizations established in American were all local organizations based on kinship and/or origins, thus the participants of each organization were closely related to each other; the participants were local skill workers resided in ethnic enclaves, and many of them earned living in laundry or restaurants to avoid direct competition with the white (Li & Zhou, 2010). An important role of these early migrant

organizations was to be the agency for migrants to gather the seed money to start their own ethnic business. Most Chinese migrants were poor, and any one of them had to borrow money from many people to start a business; this is really hard to be done without close connection formed through migrant organization. After Immigration and Nationality Act passed in 1965, mass quantity of new migrants set foot on American. Various kinds of migrant organizations are established in USA: old fashion organizations based on kinship and origins, merchant associations or breeder associations formed by business owners, professional associations for high skill migrants, and Alumni associations for highly educated migrants graduated from same schools.

85% of the Chinese immigrants in Europe are non-elite (Song 2011). The migrant organizations of the high skill migrants are more likely to be based on graduated school, company, profession and other modern relations; even those based on origins, would emphasize ethnicity more than geographic closeness (Liu 2009) . But Liu pointed out that the migrant labors' organizations are still similar to traditional organizations based on kinship, origin, dialect and occupation (Liu 2009). The Chinese migrant organizations in Europe are established to meet the social and political need of Chinese; the organizations maintained migrants' passion towards China, promoted Chinese culture among European, connected migrant networks, and protected the interests of migrants (Song 2011).

Africans in China are mainly merchants. Since China has a strict management on foreigners' organization, there are only a few formal African merchant associations in Guangzhou. Nigerians have stronger ethnic links than other Africans. For example, their merchant association "Nigeria Community" not only shares business information and cares

about the living condition of Nigerian migrants, but also provides temporary shelter and airline ticket to bankrupt Nigerian merchants; if there were problems the organization can't solve, it would contact Nigerian embassy in Beijing (Li, et. al, 2009; Xu, 2009). Li discovered that there were formal migrant organizations in Ghanaian, Nigerian, Cameroon and other African communities (Li, et. al, 2008). These organizations have regular gatherings. The Cameroons would have regular meeting each two months. They have organization funding. The Guinea organization has donated 73,000 RMB during Wenchuan earthquake, and the money is from their organization funding. These organizations are mainly community organization. The presidents of migrant organizations usually are community leaders. These organization leaders gained authority in their communities by helping other Africans. These leaders hire Africans in their business, settle economic disputes, and help Africans who got into economic or legal trouble (Zou 2013).

The migrant organizations are very effective in solving Africans' problems. The protests in 2009 and 2012 showed that Africans relied more on migrant organizations than the government (either Chinese government or their own government). In 2009, two Nigerian jumped out of a building during a passport inspection, and one fell to death (Xinhua Net 2009). Hundreds of Africans gathered and protested against passport inspection. After that, police in Guangzhou would hesitate to inspect Africans' passport. In 2012, a Nigerian man was arrested after a conflict with a local motorcycle driver; the driver said he was unwilling to pay the fare (Xinhua Net 2012). However, several hours later, the Nigerian died in the Kuangquan police station. Nigerians surrounded the police station and asked for the dead body. The Guangzhou government compensated his family a large sum of money and settle it

done. However, these protests led to the negative reaction of Chinese government. After the 2009 event, Chinese government set stricter visa policies to keep the Africans out.

Religious Institutions

Religious institutions, especially migrants' religious institutions, often have profound influence on migrants. Religious institutions would provide migrants with certain formal or informal social services, like language classes or repent services (Chen 2002). Besides sharing of belief and friendship, some churches also provide material assistance (Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000). On one hand the services and goods provided by religious institutions can help migrants to go through real hard times; on the other hand, religious institution might become the shelter for migrants, which separate them from the hardship as well as the contacts from the mainstream society.

Chen pointed out that most theories on migrant religious institutions are built on cases of Anglo-Saxon Christians, thus they are not adequate to explain the post-1965 migrant religious institutions (Chen 2002). She further argued that before 1965 have a consensus, migrant religious institutions mainly served as the shelters which was detached from the mainstream society, but the post-1965 migrant religious institutions have various functions.

Religious institutions often organize activities which migrants can take part in. however, some of them are multiethnic activities that encourage cross ethnic interactions, others are mono-ethnic activities that may strengthen ethnic identity, and this can affect the activities in the church (Chen 2002). Religious institutions can also provide values and morality standards to migrants (Chen 2006). As Yang and Ebaugh concluded, the major functions of religious

institutions on migrants are: they can be the social place to express ethnic distinctions; they may maintain the ethnic culture or acculturate migrants to mainstream society; they can assist migrants on adapting to mainstream society (Yang & Ebaugh 2001a).

Xu estimated that most Africans in Guangzhou believe in religion; among the Africans, 60 percents are Protestant or Catholic, 35 percents are Muslim, and 5 percent believe in African Indigenous religions (Xu, 2009). Kusow believed that Africans in Guangzhou formed different communities based on their religion (Kusow, 2012). Many African Catholics participated in the Shishi Sacred Heart Cathedral's special section on Sunday 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Xu discovered that many illegal migrants from African participate in the Mass in Shishi on Sunday (Xu, 2010). Even though Chinese policemen knew there were illegal migrants in the church, they wouldn't inspect the church for them. African Muslims would prefer to reside in Dengfeng village, an urban village where lots of Muslims from Xinjiang province settled. African immigrants can easily gain access to Muslim food and other special Muslim service in this urban village. The Muslim worship is usually done at home, but in important holidays, African Muslims would go to Huaisheng Temple or Sages Tomb to participate the ceremonies. The church and the temples are important places for African migrants to meet friends and get spiritual comfort.

Government Institution

Only a few articles have been concerning the influence of policy or government institution on international migration before 1990; but the theory on nation's effect on migration began to accumulate since 1990 (Massey 1999). Massey believes that international

migration must be analyzed from four aspects: the structural force of developing countries that promote migration, the structural force of developed countries that attract migrants, actors who respond to these forces, and the social and economic structures that connect area of in and out migration. Massey also mentioned that in some situations, the intentions of migrant sending country and of migrant receiving country are opposite to each other; developed country is more likely to promote policies to constrain the number of migrants, while the developing country would encourage laborers to emigrant.

Freedman's article analyzed how Malaysia government institutions hindered Chinese migrants from acculturation (Freedman 2001). About 30% of Malaysia population is Chinese, who has long been a threat to local Malays. Even though Chinese have migrated in Malaysia since 19c, they still identify themselves as Chinese, and maintained Chinese traditions and culture; this is rather unusual in other South-eastern Asia countries like Thailand or Philippine, where Chinese migrants are highly assimilated (two Thailand presidents, Thaksin Shinawatra and Yingluck Shinawatra, are actually ethnic Chinese). Since 1957, Malaysia government has provided formal definition for Malay: one has to be ethnic Malay, educated in Malay local language, believe in Islam, to be considered as Malay; this identity is connected with certain politic priorities. Most government institutions in Malaysia are taken charge by ethnic Malay; education institutions would provide Malay children with more opportunity and education resources.

Return migration is a significant phenomenon that caught the attention of many governments. Many countries have special institutions to attract return migrants, who have capitals gained in the foreign country and may have learned some advanced skills.

Athukorala's study analyzed one aspect of this important phenomenon: the reintegration of return migrant in Sri Lanka (Athukorala 1990). The emigrants from Sri Lanka are mainly laborers from similar industries; when they spent the best period of physical labor abroad, they usually return with some savings. The unemployment rate of these return migrants is twice as much as the rate before the migration, thus return migrants have become social problems. In 1982, the return migration branch of the Sri Lanka department of labor inaugurated a self-employment program, in the first part of which return migrants are trained for certain business, and in the second part a bank would provide them with loan to start their own business. Since the 4th cycle of the program, the department encouraged return migrants to establish joint venture, which requires lower seed money for every migrant, and the bank can devote more money and time to each company. Many return migrants become business owner through this program.

After 1979, when the open-door policy was carried out by the Chinese government, many Chinese migrated to developed countries. Chinese government formulated new policies to bring the transnational Chinese migrants back to the fold of the nation-state and to convey and project the nation-state agendas to the overseas Chinese communities (Liu 2005). Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (Qiaoban) played an important role in the revival of overseas Chinese nationalism. In 2001, the top officials of Qiaoban visited over 20 countries to meet the leaders of Chinese communities; they conveyed Chinese policy and culture during the journey, and promoted Chinese language education. In the mid-1990s, government agencies dealing with international migration, including the Qiaoban, changed their official slogan from "return and serve the country" to "serving our country", thus physically return to China

is no longer a prerequisite for patriotism. Thus, instead of urging the elites to return to China, these agencies promoted and strengthened the concept of ethnic Chinese among the overseas migrants.

If a foreigner intends to stay in China for more than 3 days, s/he need to register for temporary staying in the sub-district office, thus Chinese government can keep a record on where they are staying and who they are staying with. Foreigners who work in China need to register in Municipal Labor and Social Security Bureau, and pay tax in Tax Bureau. Thus, immigrants with legal status have to deal with government institutions as long as they stay in China. Some immigrants become illegal residents due to the high cost and inconveniency of renewing visa or applying for new visa. Being afraid of detention and deportation, they would avoid any contact with government institutions. Some of these government institutions are established to manage and serve migrants. The rest have multiple functions but also deal with migrant affairs. The attitudes of these institutions toward migrants are rather determined by migrant policies and related laws or rules.

Police station is the government institution that contacts African immigrants most frequently. However, most studies on police station focused on improving the methods of managing foreigners and reduce the foreigners' crime rate. Shen (2009) suggested that police stations should strengthen the management of foreigners' information and increase the efficiency of dealing with crimes involving foreigner. Based on the unique situation of Beijing, Xiao (2007) provided some ways of protecting foreigner crime in the embassy district. Only Hu suggested to improve the relation between police and foreigner through propaganda and service (Hu et. al. 2011). Police station is still considered as a place to

manage foreigners.

Data Collection

This paper is based on official records as well as fieldwork done in Guangzhou in the summer of 2012 and 2013. The information on China's new immigration policies and foreigner offices are from government reports. The data on origins of foreigners resided in Dengfeng sub-district are a part of a monthly report on registration. I also spent about 2 weeks in the Dengfeng foreigner office in the summer of 2012. In 2013, I revisited the Dengfeng foreigner office, and also did some fieldwork in Kuangquan sub-district. I interviewed the officials working in Dengfeng foreigner office about how they operated the Foreigner office, how they treated the foreigners and how they viewed the foreigners. I also interviewed about 20 African immigrants who came to the Foreigner office. I asked them about their experience in Chinese government institutions and how they perceived these institution. For respondents who came to Guangzhou before 2007, I will ask them to compare the service in foreigner office with the service in police stations.

The Community Office of Foreigner Assistance

To study the functioning of Community Office of Foreigner Assistance, I have visited the foreigner office in Dengfeng sub-district, and interviewed the officials several times. I also collected information through city government and sub-district office. A report on June 13th 2012 provides some information of the foreigners in Dengfeng sub-district. 1400 foreigners

and 75 residents of Hong Kong, Macao or Taiwan were registered in Dengfeng sub-district. They are from 72 countries or regions (See table 1 and graph 1). 73% of them are males, 27% are females. 778 are temporarily staying, while the other 697 are residing for long term. The six sending countries with most migrants in Dengfeng are Mali (294 people), India (148 people), Guinea (111 people), Nepal (99 people), Congo DRC (98 people), and Niger (66 people). 67 percents (989) of them are from African. Only three Nigerians registered in Dengfeng, even though Nigerian is the largest immigrant group in Guangzhou.

The Establishment and Importance of Foreigner Office

The Dengfeng foreigner office was set up in October 2007 by the Dengfeng sub-district office. Due to its location, Dengfeng sub-district faces great pressure of managing foreigners. Dengfeng sub-district is close to railway station and many trade building located there, thus African merchants were attracted to this area. The Dengfeng sub-district office established the first foreigner office at the entrance of African ethnic enclave and used it as a place to do Temporary Accommodation Registration for foreigners.

Temporary Accommodation Registration is required by the Division of Exit & Entry Administration Department of Public Security of Guangdong Province. According to its rules, foreigners who would like to stay in China need to register in local police station within 24 hours of their arrival at a city. Foreigner's passport and the ID card of the person who provides dwelling to the foreigner are needed for the registration. Through the registration, the police station can collect information on the valid period of a foreigner's visa, where s/he will stay, who s/he will be staying with and how long s/he may stay there, thus it would be

easier to administrate the foreigners. A problem is that foreigners may not be willing to process the registration, probably because of the trouble of registration or because their visa is no longer valid, thus the police system won't have documents for them.

A traditional way of detecting undocumented foreigners was large-scale inspections. Policemen would do regular or surprise inspections in the buildings where many foreigners lived to check their visa and Temporary Accommodation Registration receipt. However, this costs policemen lots of time and effort and is extremely annoying for foreigners residing in Guangzhou. Now the government emphasizes foreigner information management and prevention of foreigners' illegal behavior (Hu et. al. 2011).

The foreigner offices is an important part of the foreigner information network. Guangzhou established a platform of foreigner information sharing network connecting 16 government institutions. Through this network, information collected by foreigner offices, state-owned banks and traffic systems can be accessed by police officials. Foreigner offices are also included as a part of Guangdong's "Mega Foreigner Management" system, which was first implemented in 2003 and now includes 37 government institutions, 81 Community Office of Foreigner Assistance, and 119 "Harmonious City" sub-district offices (Guangzhou Daily, 2012).

The Function of Foreigner Office

The main function of foreigner office to provide Temporary Accommodation Registration for foreigners residing in the local sub-district. Most African merchants won't remain in China for more than three month in a single stay, due to the valid period of their

visa; they may travel back to Africa to manage the cargos they send back from China; and then they apply for a new visa and come back to China to purchase more goods. Each time they enter China, they will need to do the registration. Before 2007, foreigners had to register in the police stations, which are always full of people. It took hours to wait in line for one's turn to register, and if some material is lack, perhaps a photograph or a copy of visa, all the time is wasted.

Because of the dozens of foreigner offices spread around Guangzhou, the registration process became much faster for foreigners. In Dengfeng foreigner office, there would be 20 to 30 foreigners each day in average. Every foreigner who comes in just needs to wait for 10 minutes for service, if s/he is not served immediately. All Africans who stayed in Guangzhou for over five year and experienced registration in police station told me that the foreigner offices were really convenient for them.

Any apartment that has been rented by foreigner for at least once would be recorded by the foreigner office. Foreigner office would renew the information of residents of an apartment based on the registration of new resident and on the volunteer report of landlord. However, since the foreigners are not required by any law or rule to report their departure to the foreigner office, and landlords are not always willing to assist, the information on apartment residents really lag behind. One day when an African lady came to register in the foreigner office, her address was already registered by six other foreigners; according to her report, all those foreigners had moved out, thus an official modify the record for that apartment based on this. On another day, the address an African provided had already been registered by 15 foreigners; the official contacted the landlord to verify the information, but

the landlord refused to do so and required the official to finish the registration for new resident; the official can do nothing but register another foreigner on that address.

Another function of foreigner offices to provide consulting service to foreigners and to the landlords of foreigner. The foreigner offices provide booklets on the laws, rules and precautions for the foreigners; the booklets have four language versions, which are in Chinese, in English, in French and in Arabic. The officials in foreigner office can answer the questions of foreigners in English; if the foreigner doesn't understand English or Chinese, the officials might ask foreigners living around the foreigner office to help out. The police stations have the contact information of some foreign volunteers who can speak multiple languages, but due to their mobility, it's not easy to find them.

The most frequent questions asked by foreigners in the foreigner office are about visa. Some foreigners reported missing passport and asked for help. Others were uncertain about the rules of the single-entrance visa. If the foreigner's problem can't be solved by foreigner office, the official would tell them where to find solution. For example, if the foreigners asked to renew their visa, the official would tell them the way to go to Guangdong Exit and Entry Administration Department and remind them about the material they need.

The receipt of Temporary Accommodation Registration is required to renew visa, thus there are some foreigners who came to foreigner office when their visa was about to expire (which means they have stayed in China for a long time without registration). The officials in foreigner office would warn them about this but still do the registration for them. Once an African merchant wanted to registered but was refused by the officials, because his visa was to expire on the next day; the officials told him that when they processed the registration to

the system, his visa would already been invalid. They suggested the merchant to stay in a hotel for one night and do the registration in hotel, which can process faster.

Dengfeng foreigner office also collects rental tax, which can be paid by either the landlord or the residents of an apartment. The sub-district office collects rental tax, but people need to wait in long lines for services. Thus the Dengfeng sub-district office decided to authorize foreigner office to assist them with rental tax collection. It seems that as long as the amount of functions is not beyond the capacity of foreigner office, it can provide better service than other government institutions.

The Problems of Foreigner Office

The most serious problem of the foreigner office is its instability. Two things lead to the instability of foreigner office. The first cause is the mobility of foreigners. Foreign merchants won't stay long in one same place. Sometimes they need to travel to Yiwu to purchase some goods. Sometimes they need to travel back home to sell the goods they bought from China. There are limitations on the visa renewal Africans can get in China. After they replied two renewals, some of them need to go back to home country to apply for a new visa, some of them can do it in Hong Kong or Macao. In any case, they are very likely to change their apartment when they are back in China. Since Guangdong province only required communities with over 200 foreigners to have foreigner office, the sub-district government can close their foreigner office if a lot of foreigners moved out. For example, the foreigner office in Xiadu sub-district is nearly cancelled because not many foreigners registered there. Many sub-district governments opened foreigner office due to the requirements. Thus when

there are fewer foreigners in their sub-district, they won't try to provide addition service and serve the remaining foreigners better, but will simply close the foreigner office.

The second cause of instability is that the government considered foreigner office as a temporary institution: they are opened when there is pressure of managing foreigner, and they can be closed when situation or policy changed. On one hand, there isn't any fixed position for foreigner office. In Dengfeng foreigner office, one official is hired by police station, and the other is hired by sub-district office. In Kuangquan foreigner office, the officials are employed by police station, but get paid by sub-district office. Thus the officials didn't feel that they belonged to foreigner office; they will still get job in police station or sub-district office if the foreigner office is closed. On the other hand, the foreigner offices are either set in temporary buildings or sharing room with sub-district offices. It was hard for me to mark the foreigner offices on map, since many of them don't have a street number. For example, the location of Dengfeng foreigner office was officially described as "Baohanzhi Street, opposite to Dengfeng Hotel". In June 2013, due to the alteration of Donghao Creek, Dengfeng foreigner office had to move to another place, "the junction of Xiatangxi Street and Lihuxi Street". Again, it's a temporary building without street number. Since the foreigner office is considered to be a temporary institution, the government won't try to improve its service. Since there is no way to gain promotion, its officials won't devote themselves to it.

As is described in the prior part of the paper, the foreigner office has limited functions: to do registration and to provide consultation. Although the foreigner office is capable of providing more services, it's difficult to get authorized by other institutions. In fact, when the first foreigner office was established in Dengfeng sub-district, police department refused to

let it share the work of Temporary Accommodation Registration. During my interview, many respondents complained about the hardship of getting visa renewed, and hoped that the foreigner office can assist them with that. It would be rather impossible for foreigner office to decide who can renew visa, but I think it is possible for foreigner office to check visa materials and deliver it to Exit & Entry Department. In fact, many consulates in China are cooperating with Citic Bank to process visa delivery, which saved a lot of trouble from visa applicants and consulate officials.

The Opinions of Africans

Africans who have come to China before October 2007 have experienced doing Temporary Accommodation Registration in the police station. All of them think foreigner offices provided better service. First of all, it is more convenient to do registration in the foreigner offices. The foreigner offices not only located closer to where the Africans lives, but also provide services much faster, because they only deal with foreigners' affairs. Even after the Dengfeng foreigner office moved to new site, it is still close to several residential communities.

Tim is a merchant from Mali, and has been in Guangzhou for 10 years (all respondents' names mentioned in this paper are anonyms). He can speak French, English and Chinese, but he think his Chinese is not good enough for business. He owns a trading corporation in Guangzhou, and can apply for 1-year visa, thus he doesn't need to worry about visa renewal. However, as a trader, he need to go back to African a lot, and need to do registration frequently:

I just went back to Mali. Every time there is large cargo sent back to Mali, I need to follow it. I used to do the registration in the police station, and each time can cost me hours. It's much better here. Besides, it's closer to where I lives.

Zack came from Yemen, and has lived in Dengfeng sub-district since 2003. He also uses 1-year visa, but need to travel a lot. His whole family lived in Guangzhou, and the foreigner office made registration much easier for his family:

My whole family is in China, and I'm doing the registration for me, my wife and my daughter. It's nice that they don't even need to come here. The foreigner office is much closer to my home than the police station I used to go to.

Africans who use short-term visa need to renew their registration each time after they renewed their visa. Thus the foreigner office saved them a lot of time:

My business didn't go well. I'm using the 1-month visa, and that's very inconvenient. But the registration process here is still convenient. ----Mike from Mali, 3 years in Guangzhou

This is my second time of doing the registration. I also came to pay the (rental) tax. It doesn't take me much time.----Daisy from Tanzania, 4 months in Guangzhou

The attitude of the foreigner office officials toward African is much better than the attitude of policemen. Foreigner office officials are more considerate for foreigners, and treat them equally. Policemen, on the other hand, are usually harsher on Africans than on Europeans or Asians. Some Africans complained that Guangzhou policemen would only check Africans' passport, and ignored Europeans (Nanfang People Weekly, 2009). Foreigner office officials would say "hi" to foreigners, and may chat with them a little bit about their

children and family. Africans felt much better in the foreigner office than in police station, because they won't feel the tension in foreigner office.

Tim complained about his experience in police station. Comparing to police station, the official in foreigner office is much more friendly:

I used to do the registration in police station. Policemen are so serious. They don't smile, and they stare at me as if I did something wrong. I would feel nervous in police station. Everything is better here. They smile at me, and I smile back at them.

Samuel came into foreigner office with his 6 years old son. He's from Mali, and has been in Guangzhou for 8 years. An official in foreigner office was curious about his son and asked if he speaks Chinese and which school he's in. Samuel answered the questions in fluent Chinese:

He doesn't speak Chinese, he only speaks English now. I don't want him to learn many languages at the same time, because that could be confusing for him. He will learn Chinese later. He's now in a school that teaches children in English. (To my question about the foreigner office) It's time saving to do registration here. The staff here are all nice guys.

The foreigner office provides English service, which benefits a lot of Africans who can speak English but not Chinese. For Africans who could only speak French and didn't bring a translator, officials would find volunteers to help. Although the foreigner office hanged the pictures of some volunteers, only the police station knows their phone numbers. Foreigner office depends on the Africans walk in or walk pass foreigner office.

Several African merchants told me that their mother tongues were French, but it was easy

for them to get English training in their country. English is good enough for the merchants to do business in China, since the local merchants who do international trading would hire translator. However, not many government institutions provide English services.

My mother tongue is French, but I also speak English. I learned English from a language school in Mali. I can speak Chinese, but not fluent enough to do business in Chinese. When I just arrived in China, 10 years ago, it is very inconvenient because I don't speak Chinese. But it is becoming better these years. Chinese is no longer a big problem. For example, I can speak English here, and they understand me. ---- Tim

I and my wife know a little Chinese and a little English. It's nice they can understand us.

----Adam, 8 years in Guangzhou

When I asked my respondents about the disadvantages of foreigner office, they said everything was fine in the foreigner office. But respondents with short term visa would start to complain about the inconvenience of renewing visa every 1 or 3 months. Daisy and her sister used to do business in Dubai and Hong Kong. They can get long term visa in Dubai, and they don't even need a visa in Hong Kong. They find renewing visa the most annoying thing in China. Others also complained about the trouble of renewing visa in Exit & Entry Department. However, as the official of the foreigner office has said, "It's impossible for Exit & Entry Department to authorize us to do the visa renewal. We can do nothing about it".

Conclusion and Discussion

Community Office of Foreigner Assistance is more influential on Africans than on any

other foreigners. Due to China's policy, it's easier for people from Europe, America and Asian to get long-term visa or to renew their visa, so they don't need to travel in and out for a new visa and don't need to do Temporary Accommodation Registration so frequently.

In this unfriendly society, most Africans turn to migrant organizations and religious institutions for friendship and comfort. Through these institutions, they can share feelings with people similar to them and develop a social network that helps them to survive in Guangzhou. However, migrant organizations and religious institutions can only provide Africans with the support to live and success on this alien land, but can't provide official recognition. Most government institutions in China made Africans feel that they were not welcomed. In this context, the friendliness and good service offered by foreigner office officials stand for more than personal attitude towards African, but can be view as a sign of official recognition. The establishment of foreigner office shows that Guangzhou government is adjusting its way of managing African immigrants.

I would suggest Chinese government to set institutions that only serve foreigners and don't have power to penalize foreigners. The different attitudes between the officials of foreigner office and other government institutions are caused by the structural difference of the institutions. For example, the police station has a lot of duties, and managing African is only one of them. Comparing with managing Chinese, it's troublesome for police to manage Africans. Thus policemen might be hostile to African. Exit & Entrance Department not only serves the foreigners, but also owns the power to punish them (for example, deporting foreigners). The officials in Exit & Entrance Department won't feel the necessity to treat Africans friendly. Foreigner office officials' only task is to manage and serve foreigners, and

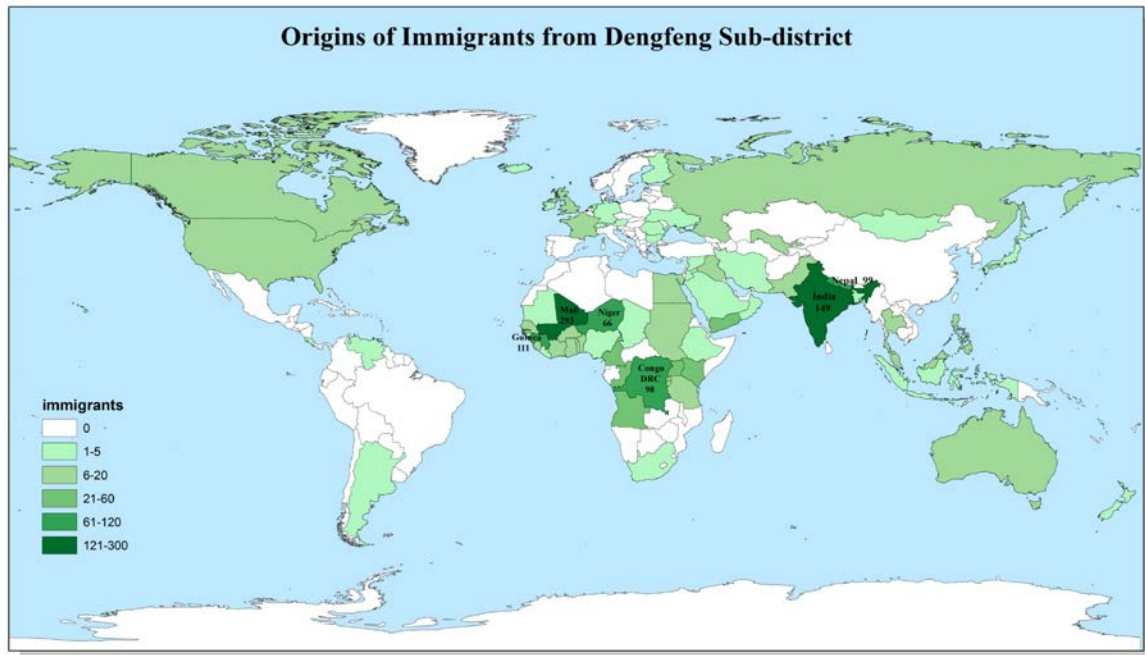
they don't have power over foreigners, thus they have to treat African nicely to exchange for corporation. Since the friendliness of the foreigner office officials is a result of the function and structure of the foreigner office, such friendliness should be able to be reproduced in other government institutions.

I would suggest the foreigner office to provide more services to foreigners. On one hand, other institutions should authorize foreigner office to assist them with affairs involving foreigner. On the other hand, foreigner office can be more considerate and provide services that foreigners need. For example, the foreigner office in Wangjing, Beijing would call foreigners and remind them about renewing visa before their visa due (The Mirror 2011). Foreigner office can also organize activities that invite both foreigners and local Chinese, and help them to know each other better. There are lots of services that are necessary for foreigner and do not require the authorization of other institutions.

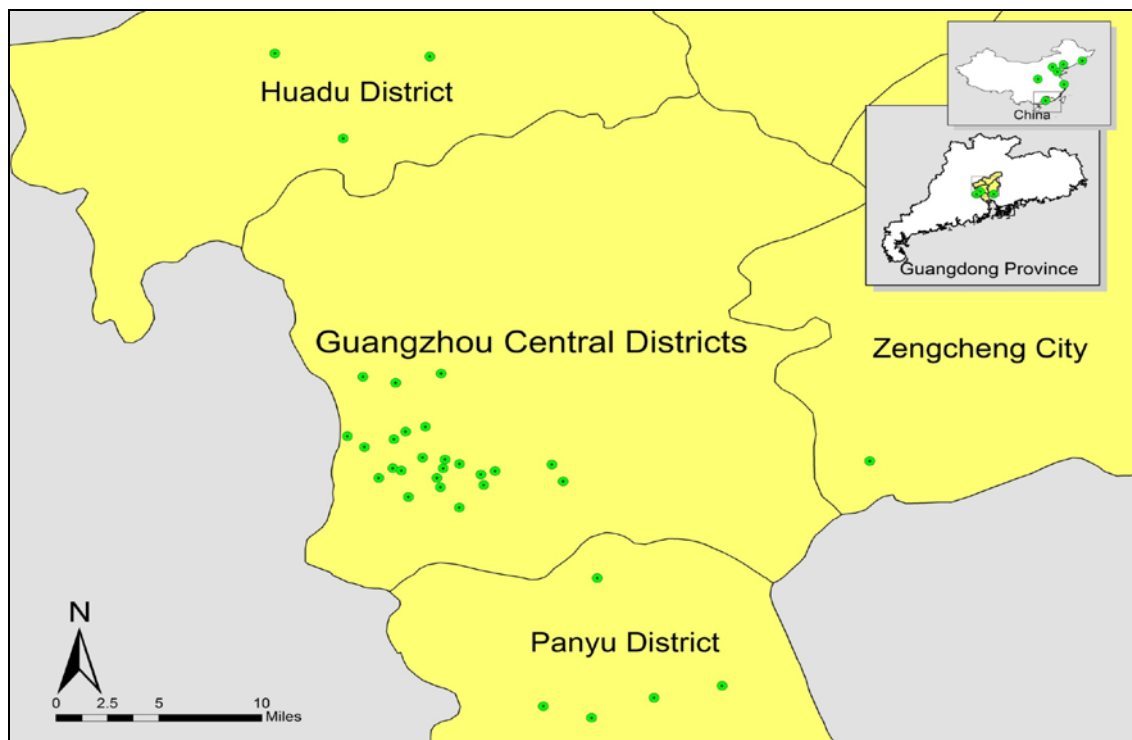
Table 1. The Number of Foreigners Registered in Dengfeng Foreigner Office**Listed by Nationality and Length of Stay (June 2012)**

ID	Nationality	Temporary Stay	Long Term Reside	Total
1	Angola	29	3	32
2	Argentina	1	0	1
3	Australia	1	5	6
4	Austria	1	0	1
5	Burundi	5	9	14
6	Benin	6	2	8
7	Burkina Faso	8	1	9
8	Bangladesh	0	2	2
9	Bulgaria	1	4	5
10	Brazil	1	0	1
11	Canada	8	5	13
12	Switzerland(CH)	1	0	1
13	Cote d'Ivoire	9	10	19
14	Cameroon	18	10	28
15	Congo DRC	50	48	98
16	Congo	24	19	43
17	Colombia	4	3	7
18	Costa Rica	0	1	1
19	German	0	1	1
20	Egypt	5	4	9
21	Ethiopia	2	0	2
22	Finland	1	0	1
23	France	4	10	14
24	England	2	6	8
25	Ghana	2	4	6
26	Guinea	68	43	111
27	Gambia	19	17	36
28	Guinea-Bissau	0	1	1
29	Indonesia	1	3	4
30	India	81	68	149
31	Iran	1	0	1
32	Iraq	3	4	7
33	Ireland	0	1	1
34	Jordan	0	2	2
35	Japan	1	3	4
36	Kenya	46	5	51

37	Liberia	1	3	4
38	Mali	117	176	293
39	Mongolia	2	0	2
40	Mauritania	2	0	2
41	Malaysia	1	0	1
42	Niger	41	25	66
43	Nigeria	1	2	3
44	Netherlands	1	2	3
45	Nepal	64	34	98
46	New Zealand	2	1	3
47	Oman	1	0	1
48	Pakistan	3	9	12
49	Philippines	3	5	8
50	Palestine	0	3	3
51	Romania	1	0	1
52	Russia	6	2	8
53	Rwanda	5	2	7
54	Saudi Arabia	1	0	1
55	Sudan	4	5	9
56	Senegal	2	6	8
57	Singapore	0	3	3
58	Sierra Leone	5	8	13
59	Somali	2	1	3
60	Sweden	1	0	1
61	Syria	0	2	2
62	Chad	1	1	2
63	Togo	7	3	10
64	Thailand	4	2	6
65	Tanzania	17	2	19
66	Uganda	28	1	29
67	Ukraine	2	0	2
68	USA	1	5	6
69	Uzbekistan	5	3	8
70	Venezuela	0	1	1
71	Yemen	32	13	45
72	South Africa	0	1	1
Total		766	615	1381



Graph 1. The Origins of the Foreigners Registered in Dengfeng Foreigner office(June 2012)



Graph 2. The distribution of Community Office of Foreigner Assistance



Graph 3. The Community Office of Foreigner Assistance in Dengfeng Street (photo taken in July 2013)

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