

# **Africans in China: the Role of Religion in the Process of Social Integration**

Zai Liang

University at Albany, SUNY

Bo Zhou

Sun Yat-sen University

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# ASIA In Southern China, A Thriving African Neighborhood

7:48

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April 26, 2012 · 3:50 AM ET  
Heard on Morning Edition

NINA PORZUCKI



In the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, thousands of African immigrants, many of them small-scale clothing traders from Nigeria, have come seeking business opportunities. One of the Nigerian traders, who goes by his "designer name" of Niceguy, is seen in the photo. (Photo: Michael Grecco)

LETTER FROM CHINA FEBRUARY 9, 2009 ISSUE

# THE PROMISED LAND

Guangzhou's Canaan market and the rise of an African merchant class.



By Evan Osnos

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The neighborhood around Canaan draws thousands of aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs. Taxi drivers call it Chocolate City.  
Illustration by John Ritter

Joseph Nwaosu, a Nigerian exporter, has yet to acclimate to the winter damp of Guangzhou, on China's southern coast. Over a button-down shirt he

## 黑色乡愁：非洲人在广州调查报告

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广州 调查报告 非洲人 黑色乡愁



11月19日，在环市西路与小北路交界处，一名外籍男子穿过马路。

在籍非洲人，这是一个比“中国农民工”走得更远的群体。

中国广州已成为非洲人历史桥段中无法抹去的记忆。1997年亚洲金融危机爆发以来，原来在东南亚曼谷、雅加达等城市经商的非洲人转战广州，至今已17载。他们与我们的历史、经济、文化、宗教乃至肤色都如此不同，却和我们生活在同一片天空下。

# 广州黑人影像调查

第1集 非洲人来了



【财新微纪录】广州黑人影像调查1：非洲人来了

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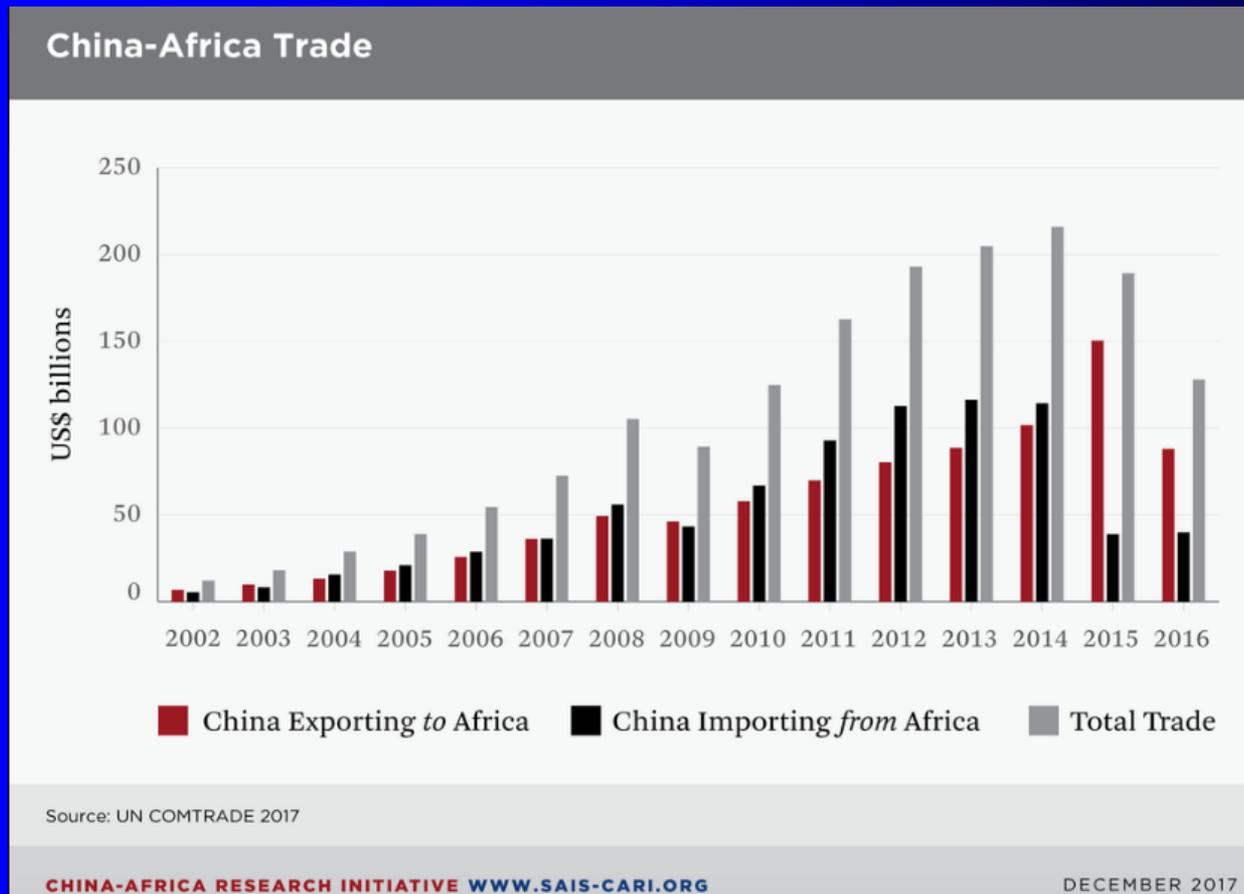
# China: from a country of sending emigrants to a country of receiving immigrants

- The rise of China and rise of immigration to China.
- China has transformed from a country of emigrant-sending country to immigrant-receiving country
- The 2010 China Population Census collects information on foreigners who live in China (from over 100 countries)

# Why study Africa to China migration?

- China Africa economic connection: China is Africa's biggest trade partner for the last 9 years. Africans in China contributed to this trade volume.
- Rise of African immigrants in China, (Guangzhou).
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (Africa is an important part).
- Global impact of Africans in China (media reports: NPR, New York Times, New Yorkers, International Business News, and other international media).

# Figure 1. China-Africa trade (中非贸易)



We found 112 countries where China has financed projects. While most fall under its infrastructure plan known as the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has pushed beyond those boundaries.



# Globalization and African migration to China

- China as the world's factory, Guangdong as the center of the world factory: electronics, garment, shoes, fabrics, toys, wigs, furniture etc.
- Guangzhou history as trade center (广交会)
- Demand for goods, African market serves 1.2 billion population and 54 countries
- Chinese entrepreneurs are reluctant to do businesses in Africa



Guangdong

China

# Xiaobei (小北) neighborhood in Guangzhou: “the chocolate city”

- From Chungking mansion (重庆大厦) in Hong Kong to Xiaobei
- Proximity to locations of factories
- Proximity to transportation networks (rail road, buses, subway)
- Proximity to locations of religious worship
- Shared faith with Chinese Muslims



  
*Guangzhou train station*

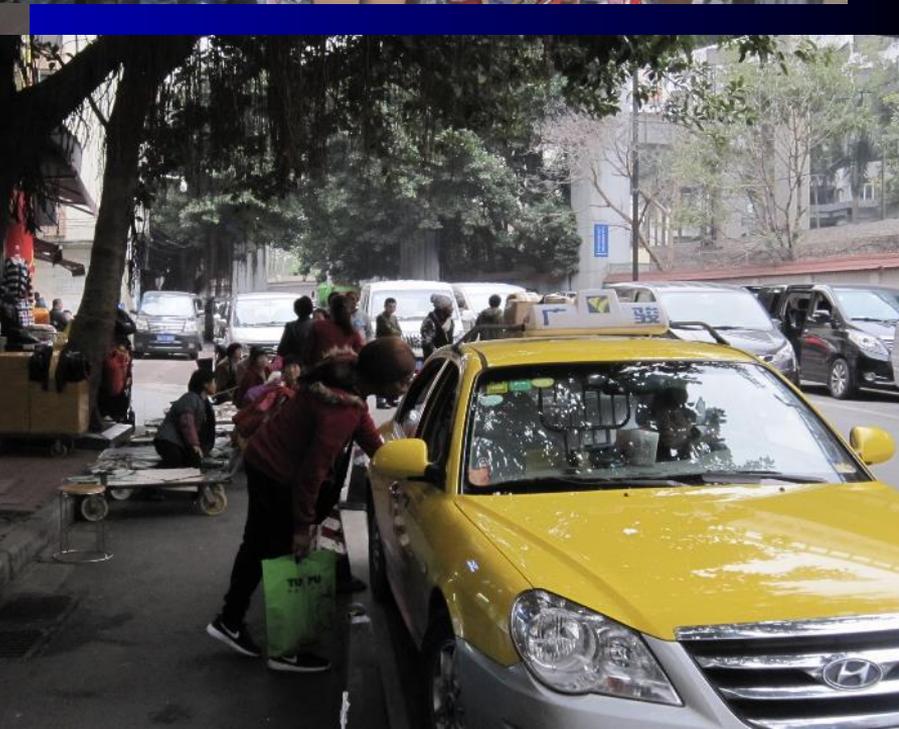
  
*Saad bin Abi Waqqas Mosque*

*Xiaobei Subdistrict*  
  
*Xiaobei subway station*

  
*Xiaodongying Mosque*

  
*Sacred Heart Cathedral*

0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers  

# Why focus on religion?

- Africans in China are very religious (Christian and Muslim)
- Church is an important institution to facilitate immigrant adaptation.
- Experiences of immigrants in the U.S.: Catholics, Jewish. Chinese immigrants in the U.S.
- Refugee settlement in the US: Vietnamese, Muslim immigrants.

# Religious services for foreigners in China

- In U.S. , immigrants can attend ethnic based church/masque/ temples where immigrant native language is used in service
- But in China, this is not possible. Pastors, Imams need to be Chinese citizens
- Unintended consequences of helping Africans adaptation in China

# The 1994 policy on religious practice

- 不得在中国境内成立宗教组织、设立宗教办事机构、设立宗教活动场所或者开办宗教院校，不得在中国公民中发展教徒、委任宗教教职人员和进行其他传教活动

# Revised 2010 policy from China Religious Affairs Bureau

- **第六条**以宗教教职人员身份来访的外国人，经省、自治区、直辖市以上宗教社会团体邀请，可以在依法登记的宗教活动场所讲经、讲道。
- 以其他身份入境的外国宗教教职人员，经省自治区、直辖市以上宗教社会团体邀请，并经**省级以上人民政府宗教事务部门同意**，可以在依法登记的宗教活动场所讲经、讲道。

# Shared places of worship and social integration

- Religious participation and Chinese language proficiency
- Religious participation and making new friends (from same country, Africa, shared faith, including local Chinese—new opportunities). More likely to rely on these church/mosque based friends when encountering difficulties in life.
- Religious participation and community activities (volunteering, Chinese language training, and cultural events)

# Survey of Africans in Guangzhou (2018.1-4)

- Method: respondent-driven sampling (被访人推动抽样方法)
- Seeds (Sun-Ya Sen University and Foreigner service center near Xiaobei, Dengfeng district)
- Sample size of 138 Africans in Guangzhou (from 34 African countries)

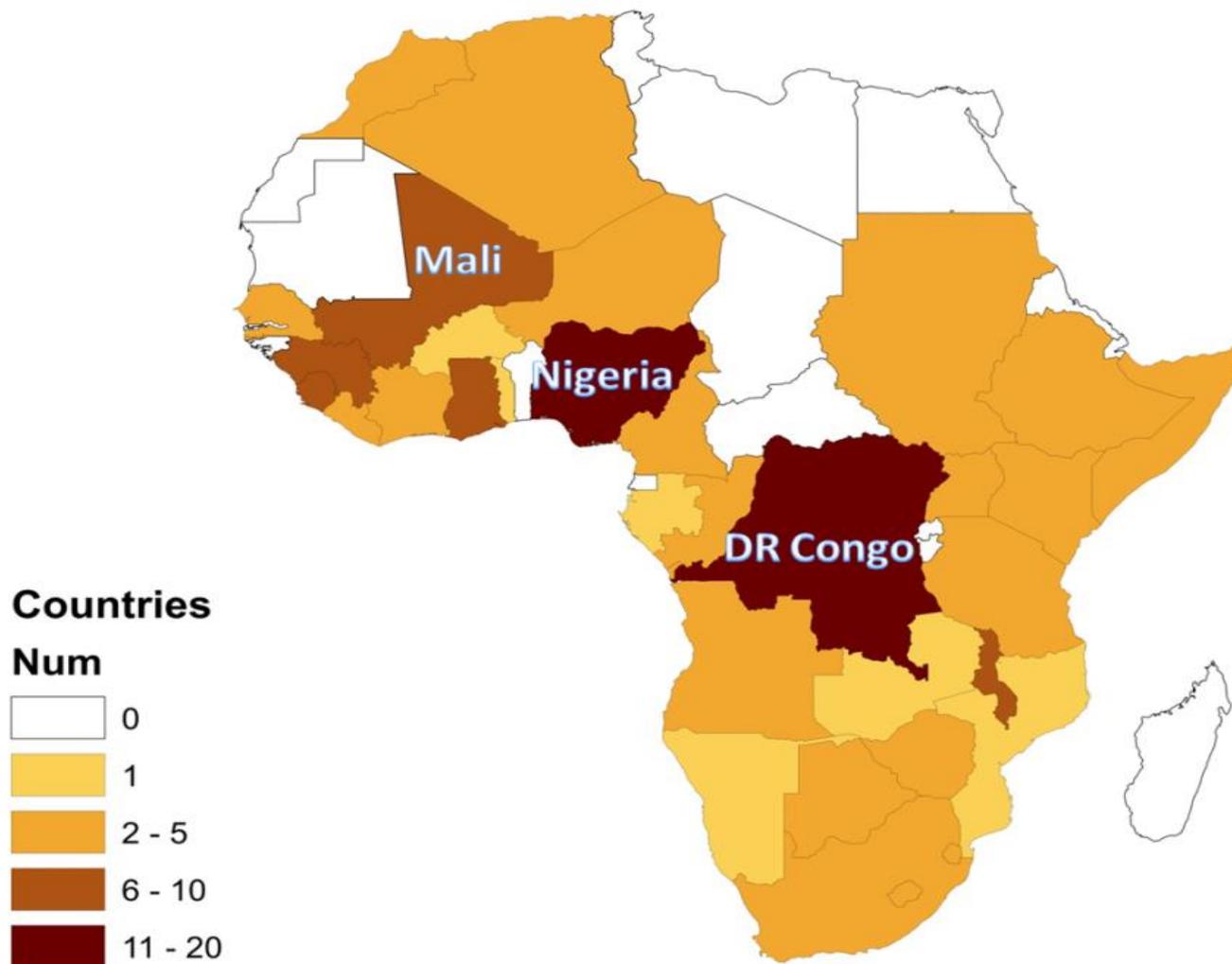


# Table1. Distribution of Countries of Origin for African Immigrants in Guangzhou

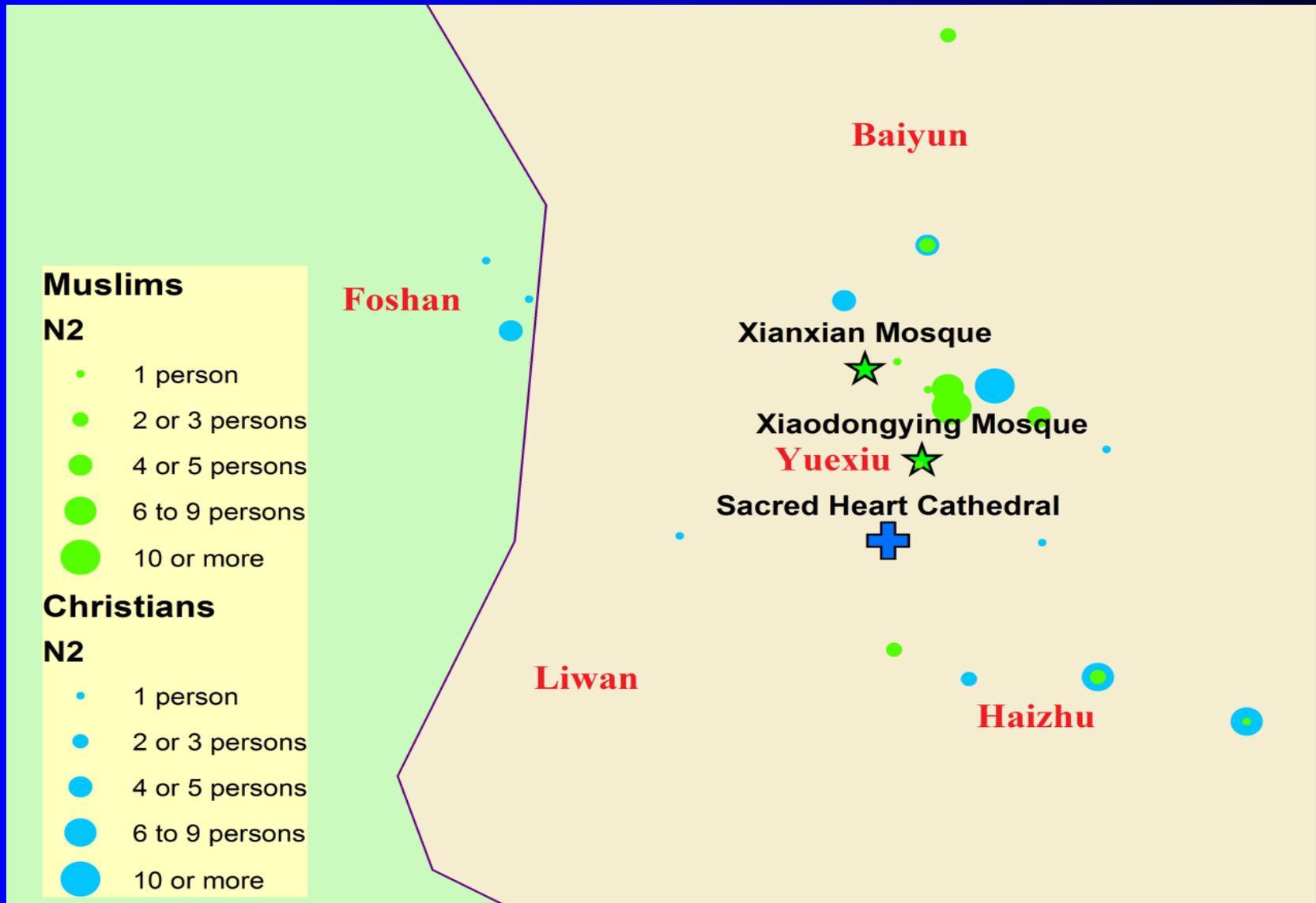
Nationality	N	%
Nigeria	20	14.71
Congo DR (刚果金)	13	9.56
Ghana	9	6.62
Mali	9	6.62
Sierra Leone	7	5.15
Guinea	6	4.41
Malawi	6	4.41
Zimbabwe	5	3.68
Algeria	4	2.94
Cameroon	4	2.94
Ivory Coast	4	2.94
Kenya	4	2.94
Liberia	4	2.94
Angola	3	2.21
Ethiopia	3	2.21
Lesotho	3	2.21
Niger	3	2.21

Nationality	N	%
Senegal	3	2.21
Tanzania	3	2.21
Botswana	2	1.47
Congo	2	1.47
Morocco	2	1.47
Somalia	2	1.47
South Africa	2	1.47
Swaziland	2	1.47
Uganda	2	1.47
Burkina Faso	1	0.74
Gabon	1	0.74
Mozambique	1	0.74
Namibia	1	0.74
South Sudan	1	0.74
Sudan	1	0.74
Togo	1	0.74
Zambia	1	0.74
Total	135	100

# Map 1. Distribution of Migrant-sending Countries in Africa (34 countries)



# Map 2. Residential distribution of African migrants in Guangzhou



## Table 2. Descriptive table (n = 138)

	Mean	SD
Age	33.1	7.1
	%	
Gender		
Male	73.5	
Female	26.5	
Marital status		
Married	59.6	
Long-term partner	7.3	
Single	33.1	
Education		
High school or below	24.4	
Secondary school or college	21.4	
<b>Bachelor</b>	<b>37.4</b>	
<b>MA or PhD</b>	<b>16.8</b>	
Year of first arrival at China		
2000-2005	3.7	
2006-2010	8.9	
2011-2015	37	
After 2015	50.4	
Year of most recent arrival at China		
2000-2005	0.7	
2006-2010	2.2	
2011-2015	17.8	
After 2015	78.5	

	%
Occupation	
Owner of trading company (registered)	12.1
Owner of trading company (not registered)	18.6
Employee of trading company	12.1
Business intermediary	14.5
Employee of other business	23.4
Student	11.3
Other occupation	8.1
Chinese fluency	
Don't know	22.4
Know a little	40.3
Can cope with daily life	28.4
Fluent	9
English fluency	
Know a little	2.9
Can cope with daily life	27
Fluent	70.1
French fluency	
Don't know	38.3
Know a little	12.4
Can cope with daily life	7
Fluent	42.3

## Table 3. Religious Worship Locations for African Immigrants in Guangzhou

<i>Muslims</i>	N	%
(1) Huaisheng Mosque (怀圣寺/光塔寺)	12	18.46
(2) Saad Bin Abi Waqqas Mosque (先贤古墓)	37	<b>56.92</b>
(3) Haopan Mosque (濠畔清真寺)	1	1.54
(4) Xiaodongying Mosque (小东营清真寺)	7	10.77
(5) Informal religious place in friend's homes	5	7.69
(6) Other	3	4.62
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Christians</i>	N	%
(1) Sacred Heart Cathedral	33	<b>42.31</b>
(2) Informal religious place in friend's home	28	35.90
(3) Other	17	21.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

## Table 4. Distribution of Respondents' Possible Help-seeking Behavior

	Borrow money	Illness	Scam	No income	Homeless	No school for child	Conflict	Traffic accident	Visa
Embassy	1.28	3.11	12.87	5.47	9.38	17.12	6.51	10.41	50.65
Local government	0.43	1.95	29.82	2.99	2.6	19.18	20.93	19.91	19.48
Family member	24.79	16.73	8.77	14.93	13.02	8.22	9.3	11.76	2.16
Relative	42.34	31.39	10.95	21.9	18.25	8.76	14.6	18.98	3.65
People from same country	19.23	20.23	13.45	19.9	24.48	11.64	18.14	12.67	6.93
Trade/hometown association	2.14	1.56	5.85	12.94	10.42	2.74	9.3	5.88	3.03
Persons known through church/mosque	10.26	13.62	4.68	12.44	13.02	8.22	11.63	7.24	4.76
Chinese friend	5.56	8.17	5.26	5.47	7.29	13.7	6.05	5.43	7.36
Other	2.14	4.67	6.43	1.49	3.65	5.48	3.26	4.52	2.16
No one can help	0.85	0	1.17	1.99	0.52	2.05	0.47	0.9	0
<b>Total %</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>231</b>

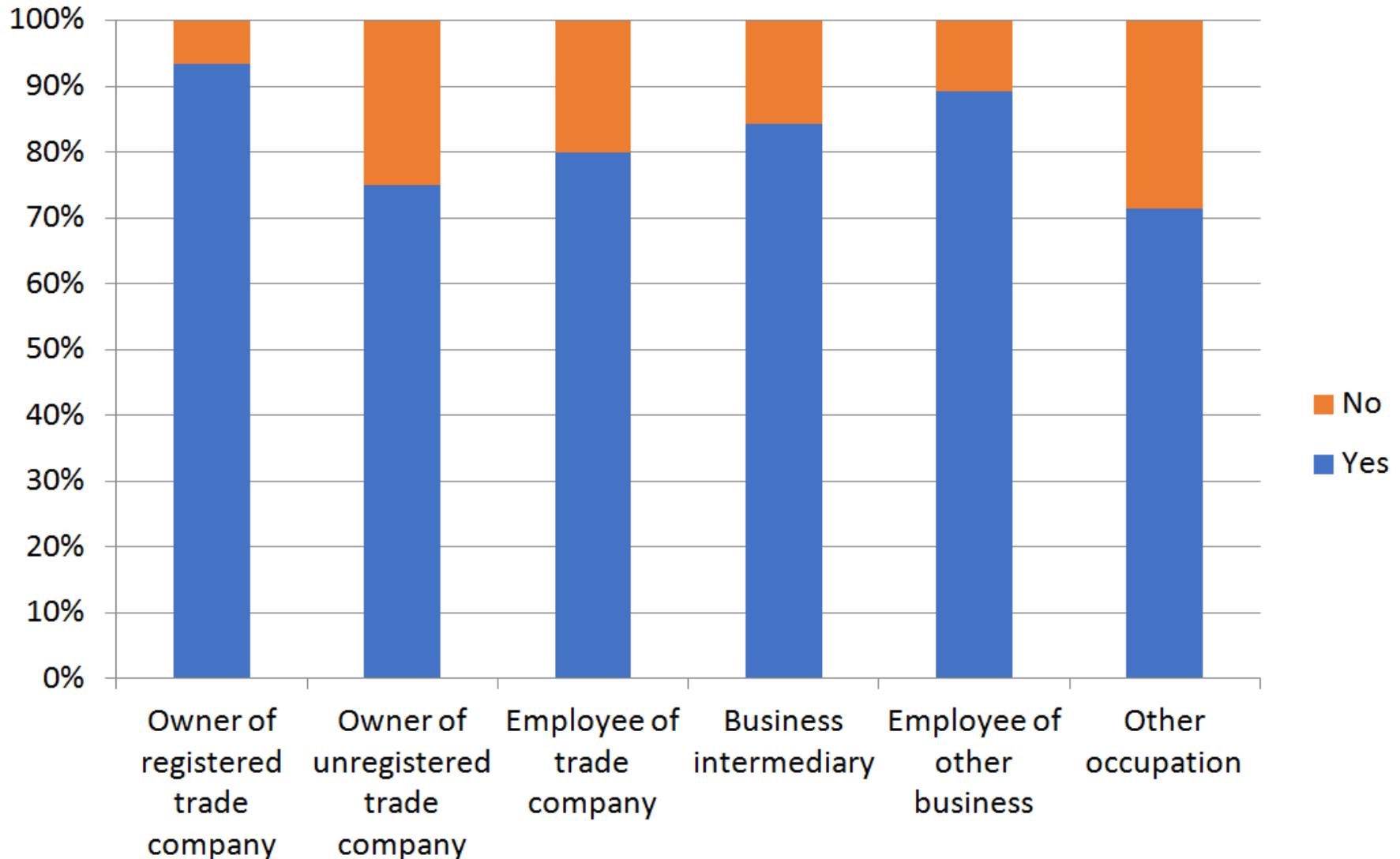
## Table 5 Participation in Community Sponsored Activities by Frequency of Church/mosque Attendance

		Never	Less than once a week	About once a week	More than once a week
Volunteer	Participated	3.57	30.77	14.52	30.43
	Did not participate	96.43	69.23	85.48	69.57
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Chinese training	Participated	10.71	30.77	16.13	30.43
	Did not participate	89.29	69.23	83.87	69.57
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Cultural events	Participated	14.29	42.31	17.74	17.39
	Did not participate	85.71	57.69	82.26	82.61
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total N</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>23</b>

**Table 6. Chinese Language proficiency by Frequency of Church/mosque Attendance**

	Never (%)	Less than once a week (%)	About once a week (%)	More often than once a week (%)
Not at all	38.46	19.23	23.33	4.55
Just a little	38.46	34.62	43.33	40.91
Can cope with daily life	19.23	26.92	25.00	50.00
Fluent	3.85	19.23	8.33	4.55
<b>Total %</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22</b>

## Figure 2. Distribution of Long Term Settlement Plan by Occupation



# Summary and discussion

- (1) Guangzhou as a center of the world factory, history, African market, role of Chinese entrepreneurs.
- (2) Xiaobei as immigrant neighborhood: proximity to factories, transportation, shared faith with Chinese Muslims..
- (3) Religion facilitates social integration: (a) Chinese language learning, (b) community participation, and (c) coping with challenges of life in Guangzhou for Africans.

- Thank you!