

Life and Work Changes of African Businessmen Who Stayed in Guangzhou Before and after the Epidemic

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Abstract. Since the end of the 20th century, African businessmen have gradually moved from Hong Kong to Guangzhou Xiaobei and Guangyuan West Road. However, with the occurrence of the epidemic, due to policy, economic, and social reasons, the commerce and trade in Guangzhou, China and Africa have undergone great changes. Many previous the migration laws and migration patterns of African businessmen in Guangzhou have changed, this paper focuses on the way of maintaining China-Africa after the epidemic and the directions that can be explored in the future. The study found that kinship capital has a crucial influence on African businessmen in Guangzhou, and international students have also become a large part of Africans in Guangzhou. From a macro level, although the China-Africa policy has been strictness, there are still many possibilities for development, and this also provides a new development direction - online cross-border commerce. At the micro level, kinship capital determines and lays the foundation for the work and life of African businessmen in Suzhou. In the future, the China-Africa Business Association will conduct online cross-border commerce and trade through online live streaming, while African businessmen who stay in Guangzhou will build a bridge between China-Africa commerce and trade with their student status and kinship capital.

Keywords: Epidemic; China-Africa trade; Kinship capital; Review.

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s when Africans began to migrate to China for trade, Africa's purchase of China's market surplus and the services of foreign trade agents had a great impact on the GDP of China and Africa. The regional differences and geographical factors between China and Africa had not hindered the trade between the two countries. On the contrary, the economic and cultural differences between China and Africa had allowed the economies of China and Africa to achieve a balance between supply and demand. China's rapid industrial and economic development had led to overcapacity, and some of the excess capacity created by this surplus can be exported to Africa to meet the economic needs caused by Africa's industrial gap at a lower price. After the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, the originally balanced and stable China-Africa import and export transaction chain was broken, and the global macroeconomics suffered a severe decline due to investor confidence and isolation measures. At the same time, trade between the two globalizing countries of China and Africa has also been hit hard [1]. Many African immigrant businessmen have left Guangzhou, China for various reasons, and the two major economies of China and Africa have also suffered unprecedented heavy losses and "big reshuffles" [2,3].

Chinese and African economies have been hit hard since the pandemic relied on. In the research, the literature and theories mainly used are immigration system theory and social network social capital theory. These two theories are used to explain the analysis of the economic impact of the epidemic on China-Africa trade and the analysis of the survival, living and development of China-Africa trade immigrants. Institutional theory is used to analyze the link between changes in China's trade policy towards Africa before and after the epidemic and the burst in African business migrants [4]. According to the reasons and inference of the immigration burst analyzed in previous theories, the study found that the economy of China and Africa still has demand for China-Africa business immigration, so China-Africa business immigration is still continuing to promote. Due to the epidemic, China-Africa business immigration continues to change the form of trading and slowing down the trade [5-7].

This study is the first to study the maintenance and development of China-Africa trade in Guangzhou after the epidemic. This research continues and develops the previous research. Based on the field investigation, we have a general understanding of the new China-Africa trade development after the epidemic and find out the general new development direction of China-Africa trade. The research on the comparison and development of China-Africa trade before and after the epidemic has played a role in the continuation and development of the overall China-Africa trade research.

2. Literature review

2.1 The political, social and cultural background of China-Africa trade

Thirty years ago, the dominance of immigration had gradually shifted from Europe to Asia and Africa. The pattern of immigration gradually began to change into countries with relatively backward production and technology to the developed and developing countries with rapid development and technological development at the forefront of the world. [Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango] (Theory of migration page 2) In this historical background, the first group of immigrants from Africa to China frequently settled in Hong Kong in the 1990s.

The political background of China-Africa trade was established during the founding of the People's Republic of China. During the process of voting for New China's re-entry into the United Nations in 1971, many African countries agreed. After China reformation and opening up, China's science, technology and economy have developed rapidly, and the productivity has increased unprecedentedly, while meeting the large domestic demand and generating productivity surplus. As most countries in the world have become pluralistic and multicultural countries, international migration has provided cheap labor for industrialized countries and has become one of the basic structural characteristics of industrialized countries. [Theory of migration page 3]

Piore mentioned that in the advanced industrial economic system, the immigrant experience changed the motives of business immigration and formed an immigrant culture that changed its own values. (Piore 1979) The globalization brought about by multiculturalism makes the views of immigrants changed during migration, and the values of immigrants are gradually changed with the impact of new things. In the history and culture of China and Africa, due to regional and political differences, there are many cultural differences in diet, behavior and habits. With the implantation of immigrant culture, African social culture has also been affected and changed. People's living habits are more inclined to immigrant-importing countries, and people are more able to adapt to immigrant-importing countries. Living culture, such as expectations for quality of life, also changes with social and cultural changes. In the end, African society has increased demand for Chinese goods, which has led to more frequent business immigration [8].

In the historical background of politics, the economic development difference of the two countries has also prompted trade migration between China and Africa. Because Africa has been in a semi-colonial state for a long time, a complete industrial system has not been built, and many products still need a lot of imports to meet domestic demand. In Africa, a place where supplies are relatively scarce, people's general sense of poverty will increase their motivation of migration. Then, several African families will participate in international migration to achieve the income level of the middle and upper social classes relative to the reference group which are other African families. But with the immigrant trade remittances of the first family resulting in a class upward movement and lower immigration costs [9], the remaining African families will be easier to emigrate (with low costs). [Stark, Taylor, and Yitzhaki, 1986; Taylor, 1992] The trend of immigration is driven by economic factors into immigration burst.

2.2 The impact of the coronavirus epidemic on immigration and commerce

Before the epidemic, the legal and regulatory measures and laws of the relevant agencies in Guangzhou to control African immigrants seemed strict. In fact, because the regulators understand that there is a great demand for low-cost things in the African market, and Guangzhou's production

can meet this part of the demand, they keep an open attitude towards the grey economy of Guangzhou and some businesses in Africa. [Mapping the New African Diaspora in China Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging] When China has more open policies towards foreign and African businessmen, Guangzhou's seemingly strict policy has formed a contradiction with the country's open attitude, but Guangzhou's internal deregulation of the policy has formed a contradiction with the strict policy. This makes the African commerce immigrating to Guangzhou and the economic and political development of Guangzhou into a balanced state before the epidemic [10].

Before the epidemic, in the area of Xiaobei Road and Guangyuan West Road, the business of African shopkeepers and Africans was very prosperous. At this time, unlike the previous generation, many businessmen are self-employed or run their own businesses or small foreign trade. [Mapping the New African Diaspora in China Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging] African freight forwarders have developed more mature at this time. According to Douglas's theory, with the maturity of the immigration industry, the risk cost and social cost of people's immigration have gradually decreased, whatever in terms of documents and visas or in terms of economic business and trade. The dominant part of African immigrants in Guangzhou is African businessmen and people in charge of commerce. Their local factories in Guangzhou, commodity freights and the needs of African customers have played a role as a bridge to balance the communication. [Mapping the New African Diaspora in China Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging]

Although Guangzhou is the largest gathering place for African immigrants in China, the background of social public opinion and the wind direction of the media are still unfriendly to African immigrant businessmen. Many media orientations are inclined to covertly broadcast the HIV virus carried by Africans and other diseases that are prevalent in Africa. These media orientations subtly affect the views and attitudes of Guangzhou locals towards African business immigrants. [Mapping the New African Diaspora in China Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging] Therefore, at that time, many African students were always in a state of "doing not believe that they could integrate into China" in their identity. [It's kind of becoming a culture': how habitus influences the migration trajectories of African students in China] But there are still some African students who want to stay and do business translation or agency work. [It's kind of becoming a culture': how habitus influences the migration trajectories of African students in China]

After the epidemic, although the immigration situation in Asia has generally become more severe, illegal immigrants can still benefit from the pores between some continents, so that their immigration costs can be reasonably returned. [On the Coattails of globalization: migration, migrants and COVID-19 in Asia] Chinese and African immigrant traders can also obtain the benefits of their own migrants through the still existing development imbalance and trade gap during the epidemic. And many illegal immigrants in Asia have higher expectations and valuations for their immigration as the epidemic normalizes, and push them to emigrate [11]. [On the Coattails of globalization: migration, migrants and COVID-19 in Asia]

2.3 Immigrant systems and social networks and the impact of social capital on China-Africa trade

The flow relationship and migration flow of China-Africa migrants can be mainly explained by the migration system theory macro way, and the social network and social capital theory-meso, micro way, these two theories.

Immigrant system theory refers to a stable relationship between immigrant-importing countries and immigrant-exiting countries. The strong ties between immigrant-in and immigrant-out countries led to subsequent large-scale immigration burst. [Immigration System Theory] As an immigrant to China, with the first wave of African business immigration in the 1990s before the epidemic, the cost of immigration has gradually decreased whatever is political costs or economic costs, so that the class of immigrants has expanded from the middle and upper classes, to the upper middle to the lower middle. In the area of Xiaobei Road and Guangyuan West Road in Guangzhou, before the epidemic, various large and small shops followed, and Africans in the trade city also flocked in an endless

stream. After the epidemic, most of the Africans who stayed in Guangzhou were only the first to third generation African business immigrants. Because of their wealth, these African immigrants have enough capital and footing in Guangzhou to stay.

Social network and social capital were proposed by Douglas Massey and others on the basis of "social capital" in 1987. [Social Capital Social Networks and Social Capital] Social networks are also referred to as immigrant networks. The immigrant network includes not only domestic social network relationships, such as relatives and friends, family division of labor and work relationships, and so on, but also the mutual connections between relatives, friends and families at home and abroad. Domestic social networks can increase immigration stability for African immigrant traders who have already immigrated, as they can stay in Guangzhou at lower cost and risk. [Migration System Theory] The mutual connection of relatives, friends and family homes at home and abroad can greatly increase the possibility of African relatives and friends migrating internationally to China for business and trade.

After the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, the main social capital in China is mainly kinship social capital, and the social capital of working relatives and friends is work capital. [Social capital] The role of family division of labor in kinship social capital before the epidemic has been more important after the epidemic. The rationality of the family division of labor can greatly reduce the additional cost of immigration after the epidemic. The sale and delivery of goods and the cost of delivering goods that African migrant traders can sell internationally play a key role.

3. The impact of the epidemic on China-Africa trade

3.1 Policy Changes During the Pandemic

With the outbreak of the epidemic around the world, the situation of middle and low-level migration and immigration in China began to gradually deteriorate. Politically, due to the epidemic, population and household registration checks have resulted in a sharp drop in the number of Africans who have not yet settled in China. From the first interview in August 2021, several Central African commercial locations that once flourished in Guangzhou have gradually shrunk. African shops and businessmen purchasing from Africa in the area of Xiaobei Road have basically disappeared, and only some shops run by ethnic minorities remain in the village. Many Islamic restaurants where Africans once stood shoulder to shoulder have closed down. According to the descriptions of some black people in the local trade city, some Islamic restaurants have been turned underground to do business in a small area, due to reasons such as being unable to pay rent. According to speculation, there may be some foreign trade stores transformed into simultaneous purchasing stores and catering outlets. They connected their friends and relatives in Guangzhou by using their social network and some social capital. Therefore, this part of the shops can market the accessories that Africans generally like in Guangzhou to reduce the loss of their own business. While visiting Xiaobei Road, I visited the local China-Africa Immigration Bureau and found that the photos of China-Africa friendship and cooperation that were posted there were all photos before the epidemic. It can be seen that there have been fewer China-Africa activities after the epidemic.

The strictness of domestic epidemic policies has also brought about strict immigration policies and a reduction in the number of unsettled Africans. At the end of 2022, Guangzhou's Baile Trade City has been forced to enter the state of attracting investment due to too few African businessmen and customers and too few shops. This also indicates that the government will standardize the management of the trade city and introduce large and stable merchants outside the administrative area to invest. Conversely, this also compresses the investment of small African merchants in Africa who are looking to join the Chinese market and small African enterprises that are still waiting to go through the formalities. In this way, the economic capital and social capital that these small businesses and enterprises can bring to Africa are also decreasing, because the opportunities for Africans to facilitate employment and financing opportunities for cooperative companies are reduced, making Africa less likely. The time cost and economic cost of people migrating to Guangzhou are higher. Africans who

want to migrate to China need to spend more time and money looking for suitable and easy-to-use residence and employment opportunities. According to local information in Guangzhou, the police on Guangyuan West Road will enter the trade city every three or five times to check the ID card or passport of the shop. Due to the strictness of immigration policies, some Africans who still want to stay in the Chinese market are unable to obtain work visas and permits to stay in China in time, so they will run away when the police are coming. It can be seen from this that the situation of Africans staying in Guangzhou is becoming increasingly severe and is not conducive to their livelihood.

3.2 The economic impact of the epidemic on China-Africa trade

Due to the strictness of various policies on immigration and settlement work, the situation of freight and foreign trade from Guangzhou to Africa has also become more severe. In the express and foreign trade area of Guangyuan West Road, there are several freight logistics companies, such as Longshi, Anderong and so on. The Anderon branch of Guangyuan West Road was established after the epidemic. They said that the monthly logistics is unstable: sometimes it can reach 800 to several thousand kilograms, but there is no lower limit. Because they are the company's branches, the company's operations can basically be maintained by the social capital and previous customers of the headquarters. Therefore, in the Anderon branch, the logistics of a Chinese and an African is suitable and relatively stable. In all their express and logistics, bulks account for the majority, while large ones are very few. Preliminary analysis of the reasons shows that due to the strictness of domestic foreign trade policies and the gradual reduction of small African companies in the country, the price of freight has been forced to increase.

At the same time, the domestic freight policy has also raised various tariffs on large items, resulting in many African shops having to choose bulk shipping methods with higher freight costs. Andron also revealed that in order to prevent the occurrence of the new coronavirus outbreak and lawbreakers from sending illegal things in disorder, the approval of large items is more troublesome than before, and it takes longer and increases the survival and living costs of African immigrant traders. Before discussing the economy, the declining global economic indicators under the epidemic has also become an assumption that an African is in a bad situation in Guangzhou. However, after communicating with a friend who once lived in Guangzhou and returned to Africa, I found that Africa still has a very large demand for various products in China, especially in Guangzhou, Zhejiang and Northeast China. In the "Maintenance of China-Africa Trade", it will be mentioned that Africa's demand for some commodities is still very large and special. For a series of historical and cultural reasons in Africa, there is no systematic system of factories in Africa. Therefore, as mentioned in the world system theory, many peripheral countries in Africa rely on factories established by some colonies, which also leads to the slow industrial development of many African countries, because many surplus labors are extracted by developed countries. The remaining African countries rely on imports from some major countries to meet their needs. On the basis of the friendly political relations established between China and Africa, many African countries have chosen to purchase some products from China, which enables a part of China's excess output to be consumed. However, due to the restrictions on immigration policies such as the epidemic and freight, many people in Africa have no way to come to China to choose cheap goods or carry out affordable freight. Although this part of the demand exists, there is no way to meet it. In the past, because China was a big industrial country with a relatively complete factory system, but the labor force at the bottom was very scarce, so many Africans were attracted to come to work. But now, the cost of living and social capital requirements for part-time jobs are so high that many Africans cannot unilaterally transfer assets, and merchants cannot earn enough to resell goods to Africa to cover their living costs. Therefore, after the epidemic, the market demand is still unabated, but the cost of operation and small-scale trade is too high, resulting in a shortage of cheap goods at the bottom of China and Africa. In the area of Xiaobei Road and Guangyuan West Road, the small hotels and inns that used to rely on African business immigrants have suffered from a slump in business due to the reduction of African business

immigrants, and the strict policies do not allow them to recruit too many illegal African business immigrants.

3.3 The impact of the epidemic on the public opinion environment

According to the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, China-Africa trade volume will reach a new high in 2021, with a year-on-year increase of 35%. However, in interviews and inquiries from more than 30 random samples, trade between the middle and lower levels of China and Africa has been declining. It is speculated that the increase in trade between China and Africa may be due to the fact that large companies are offsetting the decline in trade by small-scale African enterprises under the preferential policies that encourage and regulate investment in Africa. At the same time, government investment at the national level and large-scale enterprises attracting capital have also met the needs of some Africans, compressing the living space of small African enterprises and black people in Guangzhou. This resulted in some African immigration that was overshadowed by rising trade volumes and the loss of the class of settled peoples. According to an African who is married and has a registered residence, they estimate that 7,000 to 8,000 Africans who run small logistics companies leave China within a month. These Africans still want to do business in China, but due to the strictness of immigration policies for the middle and lower classes and the rising cost of living and working, they can only go back to Africa. At the same time, since the outbreak of the epidemic, the public opinion of the domestic public has become more serious towards Africans than before the epidemic. Many locals in Guangzhou have changed from seeing Africans staying in Guangzhou as competitors for jobs to seeing Africans staying in Guangzhou as carriers of the coronavirus. As a result, many middle- and lower-class Africans are increasingly unpopular, and cannot rent houses in urban areas of Guangzhou, such as Yuexiu District, making it more difficult for them to work and live.

From politics, economy, to social factors, middle- and lower-level African businessmen and laborers who stayed in Guangzhou suffered a "big reshuffle" after the epidemic. Many people left Guangzhou under the pressure of various pressures, and the trade opportunities and trade volume of the middle and bottom groups also declined. Immigrants don't just refer to legal immigration and visas, immigration also includes some immeasurable illegal immigrants, such as refugees or low-cost smuggling. It can be seen from the Africans who know the inside story and the neighboring Chinese shops that the immigration of the middle and lower classes in these two areas is declining sharply, which has led to the severe trade situation of the middle and lower classes in China and Africa.

4. The main factors affecting China-Africa trade

4.1 The process of maintaining China-Africa trade by national policies and institutions

In the sociology of migration and this study on African businessmen trading in Guangzhou before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, the macro level will be explained and explained mainly at the political level and at the level. The analysis at the macro level is helpful for discovering the problems behind the trend of China-Africa trade changes before and after the epidemic according to the policy and conducting further research.

The institutional theory under the immigration burst refers to the emergence of interest gaps on the basis of a series of policies designated by the government and the immigrant country, thereby intensifying the "black market" immigration that cannot be stopped by some policies. As mentioned in the theory of "Sociology of Immigrants" in the previous part, the group of immigrants not only includes legal immigrants, but also illegal immigrants who cannot be accurately estimated and counted. In the Xinlongan Internet Trade City on Guangyuan West Road, a Chinese shop owner adjacent to the African shop revealed:

"There are actually some black people here who will run away when they see the police. Not all of them are legal (immigrants). The police come to check every now and then, and they are very strict. These blacks are more alert."

In the process of interviewing African shops, many Africans who stayed in Guangzhou rejected the word "visa" very much. When several Africans heard similar words, they all asked the interviewer to show their documents to prove that they were not the police, and quickly used various reasons to leave. Since the 1990s, the social and economic network of Chinese immigrants has been gradually established and enriched. It is mentioned in "Institutional Theory" that once there is a market demand and an immigration network has been established, the government and the state have no way to control the general trend of immigration. Many "underground" private businesses create fake visas, offer unregulated (no strict identification) hotels and easy-to-get jobs. Because Africa's own industrial system and overall demand for commodities have not changed much when the epidemic happens, the difference between the remaining production value of Guangzhou, China and the huge market still supports the social and economic network of immigrants to carry out illegal immigration under the system. And China-Africa business immigrants can also draw benefits from it. Overly strict immigration policies will be met with international condemnation and resistance from humanitarian organizations. Therefore, the burst and kinship capital of immigration support social economic networks and illegal immigration under strict immigration policies.

Online commerce is a commerce method in which commodities are displayed and sold on various online live broadcast platforms. With the emergence of the epidemic, many products cannot be well introduced offline or on-site to make reasonable purchase choices. Therefore, the emergence of online commerce effectively solves part of this problem. When visiting the neighborhoods of China-Africa bottom-level trade, part of the China-Africa small-scale trade makeup and hair in Meibo City has begun to conduct online commerce through live broadcasts, thereby attracting African customers. However, I understand that the business and trade of the small-scale online live broadcast between China and Africa is not smooth. Many times, the few network benefits obtained will be absorbed by online platforms, while the remaining online trade benefits cannot be satisfied online. Time cost and equipment cost of trade. According to an interview with Meibo City, we learned that they are trying to build their own live broadcast platform, but they have not yet done so and are still relying on old customers to maintain their business. According to the analysis of the small-scale trade market in China and Africa, it can be known that the online business method of "Live Streaming Ecommerce" is a way for Africans who stay in Guangzhou to maintain their business in the future. With the support of kinship capital, these African migrants who stay in China can become a bridge for China-Africa trade through live streaming and other online commerce, to meet more unmet needs in Africa and consume the remaining Chinese resource. According to the trade city along Guangyuan West Road, many factories in Guangzhou are also slow to sell, because there is a lack of Chinese and African immigrant traders to buy and consume. On the basis of certain demand and supply, online live delivery will surely become a bridge for the future development of China-Africa small-scale trade.

4.2 The Impact of Affinity Capital on China-Africa Trade

In this research report, at the micro level, it mainly discusses the difference between affinity capital and affinity capital on China-Africa trade before and after the epidemic.

Kinship social capital is a social network formed by close relatives or family members, which enables the immigrant himself to stay in the immigrant country to live, work and draw benefits at a lower cost of living and time in the immigrant country. The underlying transaction of kinship social capital remaining in Guangzhou, Africa is also a migration network, that is, a risk network or a social mobility network, which is the social migration network proposed by Douglas. Affinity social capital can politically help African immigrant traders to stay in Guangzhou, China for foreign trade and agency. The social capital of working, relatives and friends has become an important capital for African immigrant traders to obtain orders, publicize and ship goods in Guangzhou. The capital of working relatives and friends determines the business and work stability of African immigrant traders in Guangzhou after the epidemic. In the process of Sino-African middle-bottom trade, kinship capital has become a necessary condition for most Africans to stay in Guangzhou, China for a long time after the epidemic. In many African families who stay in Guangzhou, China, the family structure is mostly

an African husband and a Chinese wife from mainland China, and a small number of families also have a Chinese husband and an African wife. Among the many shops visited, many Africans who were able to stay in Guangzhou, China stably after the epidemic have settled in China for three years or more. These Africans have accumulated a part of social human capital under the foundation of time, such as the resources of some Chinese manufacturers and old friends and cooperative friends. More importantly, their status as husbands from Guangzhou, China can make them more convenient to get jobs. Visa, can work stably to survive and absorb the benefits they need.

The risk theory means that if immigrants have the basis of marriage in the immigrant country, it can greatly reduce the risk of immigration in the immigrant country and strengthen the social and economic network of immigrants in the country of immigrant. From the family level analysis, the family division of labor in this part of the Central African family is very clear. Chinese wives can use this part of African husbands to open up the untapped market in Africa, because most countries in Africa have very underdeveloped industrial systems. For Africans who stay in Guangzhou, they can use their husbands in China to reduce the risk of being forced to leave Guangzhou, China due to changes in policies and the impact of large changes in people around them. This has improved the social economic status of these Africans who stayed in Guangzhou, China, strengthened the stability of their social and economic network of immigrants in China and Africa, and at the same time can help their own countries who are interested in immigrating to Guangzhou, China to work and live. People's migration channels with lower risk, such as work channels and life convenience channels. At the same time, there are enough family members in African cultures that many brothers can emigrate to work rather than being required to stay at home to take care of the family of origin.

5. Conclusion

Since the outbreak of the new crown epidemic, the form of China-Africa trade has gradually become severe. China has formulated and implemented stricter identity verification policies and more cumbersome economic policies for Chinese and African immigrant traders, which has led to the closure of many African foreign trade shops due to transportation and other reasons. Under such circumstances, they are trying to find and integrate new policy gaps and open up a new way of doing business, live Streaming Ecommerce.

The status of international students has also become a major mainstream of Africans staying in Guangzhou. Therefore, it is expected that the future development of China-Africa trade will play the role of Chinese and African students as a bridge connecting China and Africa. In the future, it is also expected that more African youth will come to Guangzhou, China to study and stay to live and do business to meet the huge market demand in Africa through China's study abroad welfare policy. At the same time, because online commerce includes the combination of online live broadcast and online and offline agency work, international students may combine the general development direction of online commerce and trade to explore the China-Africa trade market and maintain a new China-Africa trade balance.

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