

# »United We Stand«— Chinese Voluntary Associations in South Africa

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*»Spolu to dokážeme«—Združenia Číňanov v Juhoafrickej republike*

*Resumé* Štúdia sa venuje téme spolkového života Číňanov v Juhoafrickej republike (JAR). Zameriava sa na združenia s ambíciou reprezentovať celú čínsku komunitu, ich akceptáciu v rámci komunity i v hostiteľskej spoločnosti, a tiež na obraz, ktorý svojimi aktivitami o čínskej komunite aktívne a vedome vytvárajú. Čínska migrácia do JAR prebiehala v niekoľkých vlnách, čo dalo vzniknúť veľmi rôznorodej komunite (generačne, spoločensky, geograficky, jazykovo), napriek tomu našli predstavitelia jednotlivých vln prieniky v záujmoch, ktoré pôsobia ako platforma pre rozvíjanie spoločných aktivít.

*Keywords* South Africa · Migration · Overseas Chinese · Voluntary Association

In this study, I shall deal with the issue of the associations of Chinese migrants to South Africa. More specifically, I shall analyse their responses to local challenges and the ways in which they represent of the whole community to the host society. I shall not offer a complete list of associations, but rather a selection of all-Chinese organizations which are active and respected by South African authorities, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Chinese authorities. I chose two significant organizations that effectively represent Chinese in South Africa. The study is based on my field research done in Johannesburg, South Africa, in October–December, 2012, mostly in the form of interviews. I selected several organizations' leaders or people active in community affairs as informants to represent different parts of local Chinese community.

When it comes to the study of Chinese out-migration, certain regions have been thoroughly researched. This is true for south-east Asia where first enclaves of overseas Chinese were formed and which to this day accomodates a considerable portion of all Chinese overseas.<sup>1</sup> The United States and Canada, as well as Australia along with New Zealand are also often studied areas: They had imported indentured labour in the past, segregated them from white society, then restricted immigration from Asia, only to later transform their immigration policies to attract skilled, educated, or well-off migrants regardless of the place of origin.<sup>2</sup> Refugees were admitted as well. Western Europe came to spotlight in the last century, with Chinese in-migration accelerating in the 2nd half of the 20th century for variety of reasons.<sup>3</sup> Eastern Europe has enjoyed fair influx of Chinese migrants after the end of Cold War.<sup>4</sup> When it comes to the Chinese in Africa, large-scale migration (in terms of both numbers and areas covered) only took off in last decades, and so did research on Chinese presence in Africa, concentrating mainly on Chinese political influence and economic engagement.

All these regions have attracted attention of scholars of history, but also sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and sinologists too. Therefore, various aspects have been put into spotlight—merchants in south-east Asia, indentured labour trade, free migrants, coping strategies, cultural transformation. Several reasons prompt studies of Chinese overseas: their increasing number; new trends in trajectories, destinations, migrants' background and adaptation to host environments; and rising prestige and global presence of China as a power.

- 1 An excellent overview is offered by Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).
- 2 Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 197–238.
- 3 I consider the volume *The Chinese in Europe*, ed. by George Benton and Frank N. Pieke (Houndmills: Basingstoke; Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1998), to be the most coherent and systematic work on the history of Chinese migration to Europe (including Russia), even though it is a bit dated.
- 4 Pál Nyíri (also a contributing author to the volume *The Chinese in Europe*), an expert on the Chinese in Hungary, has also been engaged in several projects mapping Chinese migrants in Eastern Europe, as well as scrutinizing Chinese migrants from Fujian province to different countries in Europe—see Pál Nyíri, *Chinese in Eastern Europe and Russia: A Middleman Minority in a Transnational Era* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); or *Transnational Chinese: Fujianese Migrants in Europe*, ed. by Frank N. Pieke, Pál Nyíri, Mette Thunø and Antonella Ceccagno (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

South Africa is a very specific country in terms of Chinese migration. It is a country of immigration which (at some point) accommodated free migrants. Like the US or Canada, South Africa used to import labour (Transvaal experiment in 1904–10, see below), and likewise tried to restrict Chinese in-migration in the first half of the 20th century. However, unlike in northern America, migrants of European origin have been in stark minority. Nevertheless, as a ruling class, they put in force and used to their advantage an intricate system of regulations and discrimination against non-whites, known as *apartheid*, which fell apart in 1994. Nowadays, South Africa is a multi-ethnic, multi-language country where former immigrants may claim their rights and place in society.

Chinese migration to South Africa can be divided into several waves following different policies. For the first time people of Chinese origin set foot on South African soil in the 17th century in the service of Dutch East India Company to develop local resources. However, they were mostly not free migrants from continental China, but company slaves from the East Indies.<sup>5</sup> There are sporadic records of the free Chinese resident in South Africa throughout the 18th and 19th century, however, their numbers were not significant.<sup>6</sup> The ancestors of today's South African-born Chinese (for details see below) arrived in the late 19th century as free migrants.<sup>7</sup> Chinese out-migration was significant at the time, due to the combination of strong push and pull

5 Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), 5–6. The book is a community history project, none of the authors is a researcher. At the time of writing (which took almost 9 years to complete), Yap is a journalist; Man worked for the library of the University of Witwatersrand. However, they collected a great amount of primary sources, and the work is the most detailed and complete overview of the Chinese community history in South Africa. It is frequently referenced in the works of respected scholars in the field, for example Li Anshan 李安山, *Feizhou Huaqiao Huaren shi* 非洲華僑華人史 [History of Overseas Chinese in Africa] (Beijing: Zhongguo Huaqiao chubanshe, 2000).

6 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 8–9.

7 The in-migration continued throughout the first half of the 20th century. See Yap and Man, *Colour*, 14–24.

factors<sup>8</sup> as well as the existence of channels to export labour around the globe (the channels had existed before, however, the process was greatly accelerated and grew on scale after the Opium Wars).<sup>9</sup>

The aftermath of these processes could be felt in South Africa in 1904-1910, when altogether more than 63,000 Chinese indentured workers were introduced to Transvaal mines. These workers were repatriated when their term of service had finished, however, the very presence of such a high number of the Chinese on South African soil inspired resentment and fears of rapid Chinese immigration (free Chinese migrants did arrive, albeit in modest numbers compared to indentured workers) and gave rise to additional restrictions of the immigration, free movement and activities for the Chinese (and other non-White immigrants too).<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, free migrants were subjected to discriminatory policies and immigration restrictions. There was still immigration from China in the first half of the 20th century till 1953 (mainly on the grounds of family reunification<sup>11</sup>) and in very modest numbers in 1950s and 1960s. The sex ratio was very unbalanced with men constituting overwhelming majority at the end of the 19th century. In earlier decades of the 20th century, wives (and children too) were brought from China, however, the ratio remained skewed still.

The late 1970s to early 1990s saw the influx of Taiwanese industrialists with small traders on their heels (and in the 1990s also migrants from Hong Kong).

8 In China, the catastrophic situation after the Opium Wars and the Taiping rebellion was pushing people to search for opportunities elsewhere; on the 'pull' side, there was huge need for labour in the sectors of agriculture, mining, and construction in Western colonies and in the New World.—See Yap and Man, *Colour*, 26-31.

9 The scale and brutality of coolie trade invited numerous researchers to shed light on these processes, here I would mention Cao Shuji 曹樹基, in *Zhongguo yimin shi* 中國移民史 [A History of Chinese Migration], 6 vols. (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1997), 6: 521-526.

10 For a detailed account of the whole Transvaal experiment and its indirect influence on the lives of Chinese settlers see Yap and Man, *Colour*, 103-135. Numerous works on Chinese migration or coolie trade mention this episode. However, they point it out as a chapter in Chinese migration history due to sheer scale, or else channel attention to the brutal treatment of the Chinese in the hands of Westerners. For instance, see *Huaqiao Huaren gaikuang* 華僑華人概況, ed. by Fang Xiongpu 方雄普 and Xie Chengjia 謝成佳, [Summary of the Chinese Overseas and the Overseas Chinese] (Beijing: Zhongguo Huaqiao chubanshe, 1993); or *Huaqiaoshi yanjiu lunji* 華僑史研究論集 [Research on Overseas Chinese History], ed. by Wu Ze 吳澤 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue, 1984).

11 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 176.

First, big entrepreneurs were lured by government incentives to come and develop local industry. When the conditions changed, they mainly sought better opportunities elsewhere, and so did many other Taiwanese (who had come without direct incentives from the state) when the quality of their life in South Africa started to deteriorate. Taiwanese now constitute a minor group within Chinese community. However, the impact of Taiwan should not be neglected: The PRC only established diplomatic ties with South Africa in 1998, before that it had been the ROC to take care of the resident Chinese community, dispatch teachers (there are still Taiwanese-run schools of Chinese language teaching traditional characters, even though the Mainland Chinese children are in majority now).<sup>12</sup>

From the 1990s onwards, the immigration from Mainland China took force, escalating in the 2000s. Nowadays, Mainland Chinese constitute the biggest group within Chinese community. They can be divided into several subgroups too. The migrants who came throughout 1990s were employees of state-owned enterprises who were dispatched to the region for the fixed period of time, and some of them decided to stay. They were educated professionals from all around China.<sup>13</sup> Apart from them, there were also independent entrepreneurs coming to South Africa in this era. These migrants came predominantly from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces.<sup>14</sup> After 2000, numbers of migrants increased steeply, with their majority coming from Fujian province. Typically, they had not attained high levels of education and try to scrape up a living by trading.<sup>15</sup>

12 Interview with Zhuang Binguan 莊斌官, the chairman of the »Nanbu Feizhou Huaqiao Huaren gongshang lianhe zonghui« 南部非洲華僑華人工商聯合總會 [Southern African Overseas Chinese Industry and Commerce Federation] and the curator of the »Nanfei Huawen tushuguan« 南非華文圖書館 [»South Africa Hua Wen Library«] (Johannesburg, Nov 30, 2012).

13 Yoon Jung Park; Anna Ying Chen, »Recent Chinese Migrants in Small Towns of Post-Apartheid South Africa«, *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 25,1 (2009), 29.

14 Yoon Jung Park, *Chinese Migration in Africa*, (South African Institute of International Affairs, January 2009. China in Africa Project, Occasional Paper no 24), 29.

15 Park, *Chinese Migration in Africa*, 29-30. The opinions of Chinese associations' leaders were in accordance with this statement.

1 *The Chinese Community in South Africa*

I am using the term ‘Chinese community’ to denote all people of Chinese origin or descent (and who acknowledge this fact).<sup>16</sup> They have come in three waves of immigration, so now we can roughly split the community into:

South African-born Chinese, commonly referred to as SABCs are South Africans of Chinese ancestry who could be divided into two sub-groups: Hakka and Cantonese. While Yap and Man (1996) created an account of community history, Linda Human<sup>17</sup> and Yoon Jung Park<sup>18</sup> came with more plastic descriptions of their social status, education or identity issues. Human’s work dates into the era of *apartheid* when the SABCs did not trust an outsider enough to be willing to participate, and thus Human drew heavily on the statistics when doing research in the developments and current state of the community. Park, however, was able to conduct a great amount of interviews and compiled questionnaires which she systematized and interpreted, shedding light on the differences in experiences and identity issues changing across generations. I would like to point out that the group is not homogenous in terms of generations—the Chinese migrants were arriving from the end of the 19th century and throughout 20th century, with the number of generations passed uneven (there are 4th generation SABCs, but also a handful of migrants who came from the PRC in 1950s or 1960s—the first generation migrants). A possible Chinese equivalent could be *lao Huaqiao* 老華僑, although this term, as used by late migrants, usually

16 For the purpose of this work I understand ‘community’ as a group whose members acknowledge their membership and are believed to belong to the group by ‘outsiders’. As for recent Chinese migrants (first-generation migrants), their membership is readily acknowledged, as they combine Chinese identity, immigration experience, and a certain degree of social cohesion. For the Taiwanese and South African-born Chinese, they actively acknowledge their membership by taking part in community activities and projects. A similar approach has been used by Li Minghuan in her study of Chinese immigrants to the Netherlands. I utilize this approach, even though the South African Chinese community is more varied, and also because sub-groups might fit this loose definition of community on their own. See Li Minghuan, »*We Need Two Worlds*«. *Chinese Immigrant Associations in a Western Society* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 15–16.

17 Linda Human, *The Chinese People of South Africa: Freezebeeling on the Fringes* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984).

18 Yoon Jung Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2008).

denotes all pre-1994 migrants (even 1st generation migrants) and their offspring. Nowadays, the number of South African-born Chinese is estimated at 10,000.<sup>19</sup>

Taiwanese migrants who have not re-migrated, *Taiqiao* 臺僑.—This includes their offspring who grew up in South Africa. Park and Chen (2009) estimate their number at 6,000.<sup>20</sup> When it comes to intra-community relations, most *lao Huaqiao* have been away from China for generations and became a part of local society, but Taiwanese only started arriving in the 1970s–80s, so they are still first or second generation migrants, and therefore have a lot in common with recent Chinese migrants.<sup>21</sup>

The most recent migrants coming from mainland China, *xinqiao* 新僑.—They are currently by far the biggest group. The exact number is not available, however, it is estimated at 300,000.<sup>22</sup> There are several reasons why we cannot determine the exact number. Data on documented immigrants are released annually,<sup>23</sup>

19 Park and Chen, »Recent Chinese Migrants...«, 26.

20 The figure is based upon an off-record comment of a Taipei Liaison Office employee. See Park and Chen, »Recent Chinese Migrants...«, 28.

21 Interview with Michael Y Sun (Sun Yaoheng 孙耀亨; Johannesburg, Dec 13, 2012). However, I would like to point out that Mr Sun is very active in *xin yimin* 新移民 (i.e. *xinqiao*) projects, and so his views might differ from an average South African Taiwanese. Erwin Pon (Pan Mingyi 潘明怡), Chairman of Transvaal Chinese Association (TCA) (Johannesburg, Nov 23rd, 2012) describes the activities of the TCA as providing opportunities »to meet and greet«, it primarily fosters good interpersonal relationships, not national or ethnic pride. He confirms that just when the *xin yimin* arrived they were glad they could contact well-established *lao Huaqiao*. However, *xin yimin* are already so numerous and well established a community that *lao Huaqiao* can hardly help anyhow. Taiwanese, according to Mr Pon, are very versatile when it comes to performing their Taiwanese-ness or Chinese-ness.

22 This is the number endorsed by local Chinese community leaders (interview with Zhuang Binwen, Johannesburg, Nov 30, 2012). Park estimates the number of the Chinese migrants in South Africa between 200,000 and 400,000 in 2007 (Park, *Chinese Migration in Africa*, 4)—The census 2011 has a category »Indian or Asian« (and the percentage not born in South Africa). It does not give a total number according the country of birth. Documents of immigration only publish the data for a specific year (number of entries, number of visa/temporary or permanent residence permits granted), not the total.

23 The latest report (data for 2012) indicates China among the top countries of origin of immigration to South Africa (along with Zimbabwe, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and the UK). »Statistical Release P0351.4: Documented Immigrants in South Africa, 2012« (Pretoria: Statistics

however, there are indications that large portions of Chinese migrants are undocumented.<sup>24</sup> As for occupation, Chinese immigrants typically do not take up professional jobs but rather engage in trading (import, wholesale, retail). Chinese traders may be found in all types of settlements, dispersed. However, their numbers are highest in metropolitan areas. The town with the highest number of Chinese residents is Johannesburg, where the Chinese form clusters.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from these, there are still immigrants who came from Hong Kong whom I will not treat as a separate category, as they may fall under the 2nd or 3rd wave. I will not mention university students coming to study at South African institutions, as they do not engage in the social life of Chinese migrants I aim to cover. I also exclude Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE) representatives stationed in South Africa—they do participate in the Embassy events and get to meet Chinese associations' leaders, but their contact with the community of their compatriots remains limited, and typically they do not engage in Chinese associations' activities (unless they choose to immigrate).

I chose Johannesburg, Gauteng, as the venue for my field research, as it seems to be central to Chinese community activities in South Africa. Transvaal (now Gauteng) held the largest settlement of Chinese in the country at the beginning of the 20th century, with Johannesburg being a centre of communal activities (and also the seat of the Chinese Consul-General).<sup>26</sup> Nowadays, many new migrants gravitate to Johannesburg too, where large Chinese SOEs operate, the biggest Chinese associations exist and Chinatown is being formed around Derrick Avenue, Cyrildene.

This is not where the Chinese settlement used to be concentrated. The original Chinatown in Johannesburg at the beginning of the 20th century (which offered a Chinese school, press, associations) was located on Commissioner Street, Ferreirastown. However, only a fraction of Chinese in Johannesburg lived there and the businesses were located elsewhere (typically in low-income black neighborhoods). Even during the apartheid, the government failed to introduce Chinese Group Areas. Chinese resided in middle-class white areas.<sup>27</sup>

South Africa, 2013), 43 <[www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03514/P035142012.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03514/P035142012.pdf)> (last retrieval May 30, 2013).

24 Interview with Zhuang Binguan (Johannesburg, Nov 30, 2012).

25 Philip Harrison, Khangelani Moyo and Yan Yang, »Strategy and Tactics: Chinese Immigrants and Diasporic Spaces in Johannesburg, South Africa«, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38,4 (2012), 899–925.

26 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 229.

27 Harrison & al., »Strategy and Tactics«, 906.

The *xinqiao* just after their arrival to Johannesburg often reside in Chinatown (Derrick Avenue) where their compatriots offer a selection of hostels or flatshares.<sup>28</sup> However, well-established and richer migrants rent or buy properties in middle-class suburbs (according to my fairly limited observation and anecdotal information, mainly Bedfordview, Bedford Gardens or Edenvale).

## 2 Voluntary Associations in South Africa—Past

Voluntary associations created to ease life or address issues important to a community are hardly specific to the overseas Chinese (or Chinese *per se*). Informal societies originated in China itself, where people formed connections based on kinship, shared place of origin, shared dialect, or occupation (guilds). The societies were used by internal migrants to establish themselves in a new environment and to cope with unfavourable conditions, if necessary. These functions were indeed very sought after when establishing a new society abroad, though they might have been creatively interpreted or adapted in some respect.

Philip A. Kuhn sees kinship organizations (*tang* 堂) as examples for creative adaptation of orthodoxy in a new environment. As moving of a whole lineage abroad into one destination was highly unlikely, the migrants brought out the symbolic value of a kin and connected with people of the same surname to further their intentions collectively—or went as far as forming multisurname associations (presumably to fight against the influence of large lineages).<sup>29</sup>

In the era of mass migration, practices were put into action to deal with the needs of an increased number of sojourners—to provide connection with the community of origin<sup>30</sup> and to support the migrants in a new environment. Compatriot links had to be maintained to connect the sojourning individual with his home community and facilitate the transfer of information and finance. Native-place lodges *huiguan* 會館, sponsored by respected merchants, provided the community with essential social services (connection with home, socializing, religious practice) and protected common interests of a community, thus rooting

28 Interview with Chen Binbin 陳彬彬, an employee of the »Nanfei Huaren jingmin hezuo zhongxin bangongshi« 南非華人警民合作中心辦公室 [»South African Chinese Community and Polof the the South African Chinese Community and Police Co-operation Centre«] (Johannesburg, Nov 2nd, 2012).

29 Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 42.

30 Not just for a transfer of information and resources to one's relatives: successful compatriots were expected to support their region, too.

newcomers in an unknown environment. Compatriot ties could as well serve to protect certain occupational niches against competition from other regions' migrants—by forming a guild based on shared roots, chain migrants from one particular area would monopolize an entire niche to themselves (again, a practice common inside China as well).<sup>31</sup>

Tan Chee-Beng offers a rich insight into the ways Chinese voluntary associations contribute to the economic success of the Chinese living in south-east Asia, providing them with enough capital to invest into their enterprises.<sup>32</sup> Tan predominantly explores credit societies (*bui* 會) and the advantages this form of organization offers to its members. The system originated in rural China to help peasants deal with occasional huge expenses via mutual cooperation and collective saving and lending. The *bui* met several times a year. At every meeting, each member was required to contribute a share. The total was then borrowed to one of the members, thus he acquired capital for investment or covering expenses. Members were taking turns as collectors, thus everybody had access to a considerable amount of money during one cycle. This system was also used by Chinese overseas to generate capital for business. As the entire structure was informal and could not rely on official enforcement methods, the most essential element of the whole system was mutual trust. Most importantly, Tan notes that even though these societies used to be organized around a core of relatives, i.e. based on kinship, the relations were purely business-like, treating everyone equally and not slacking standards for anyone.<sup>33</sup>

When transplanted abroad, the system would move beyond covering occasional expenses: it has become a crucial business tool. But the structure has extended beyond the nucleus of one group and formed a network, as the *bui* have been organized on a higher geographical level, connecting people living in different towns, provinces or even states by the means of capital and financial transactions.

For South Africa, Yap and Man mention traditional organizations that were typically found in Chinese communities around the world: based upon shared dialect or kinship, offering a support system (people who come to a foreign land could rely on compatriots speaking the same dialect), social and religious activities, recreation, communication with communities of origin, boarding houses, charity and aid (supporting both South Africa and China), even *bui*

31 Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 44–45.

32 Tan Chee-Beng, *Chinese Overseas. Comparative Cultural Issues* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 174–183.

33 Tan Chee-Beng, *Chinese Overseas*, 181.

lending schemes.<sup>34</sup> Set up at the beginning of the 20th century, they catered to the needs of first generation migrants. Next generations had different needs to accommodate—Chinese language classes or demands for socializing (sports, ballroom dancing, recreational activities).

Other types of organizations also include secret society and political types of organization (Chee Kung Tong Society 致公黨, which channeled its resources into social and welfare activities), professional associations (Transvaal Chinese Traders' Association, which protected traders' rights and promoted their interest), charities to support sending communities (relief funds), culture and sports clubs (without specific Chinese features), and branches of the Kuomintang 國民黨 (focusing on internal policies in China and promoting Chinese nationalism and patriotism).

The organizations did not just compensate for social inequality, they eventually actively (albeit not always successfully) communicated the requests of Chinese communities to government bodies (even though the government was not willing to recognize these bodies as official channels of communication, as there was the Chinese Consulate-General to protect the interests of Chinese nationals).<sup>35</sup> Such were the associations uniting Chinese communities according to the town where they settled (not by kinship or place of origin), which made them more vulnerable to disunity.

The differences between Cantonese and Hakkas were recognized, though, and at some locations it lead to:

- a) forming separate organizations for respective sub-groups (Moi Yean Commercial Association and Cantonist United Benefit Society in Porth Elizabeth; however, the membership in certain regional associations might as well overlap), and
- b) balancing power between the two within an organization (case in point: the Constitution of the Chinese Association in Port Elizabeth stipulated that both groups were to be equally represented in the executive committee).<sup>36</sup>

There were also broader bodies representing the whole community in mediation with authorities to defend their interests. The earliest umbrella organization was the Cape Colony Chinese Association (1905), which represented regional Chi-

34 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 208.

35 Contested issues included the degrading procedures of immigration officers, discrimination at schooling and in hospitals, or access to liquor. Yap and Man, *Colour*, 211.

36 For details on the abovementioned groups and associations, see Yap and Man, *Colour*, 218–245.

nese associations and pleaded with the government to repeal the 1904 Chinese Exclusion Act.<sup>37</sup>

Passive Resistance Movement made the Chinese to cooperate temporarily with Indians (to resist compulsory registrations of the Asiatics),<sup>38</sup> although it gave rise to strife within the Chinese community. The Transvaal Chinese Association eventually split into factions, with part of its members supporting strongly Cantonese Club,<sup>39</sup> only to reconstitute to represent the whole Transvaal Chinese community and eventually all Chinese in South Africa.<sup>40</sup>

In August 1930, the first-ever All South Africa Chinese Conference was convened, and recognized the need to unify the Chinese community in South Africa to protect their interests and claim equal rights in a country to the progress of which, they felt, they had contributed greatly.<sup>41</sup> However, a national-level umbrella organization unifying pre-existing associations had not been founded till 1954 (Central Chinese Association of South Africa). Its objectives included promotion of Chinese culture, protection of interests of the Chinese in South Africa, fostering harmony among the Chinese people and promoting mutual understanding with the other racial groups. From the beginning, the Consul-General of the Republic of China (Taiwan) was heavily involved in its actions and supported the Association. However, the Association was not able to avoid internal cleavages or work effectively as a sole body representing the Chinese and ceased to function in 1967.<sup>42</sup>

In 1980, the possibility to become engaged formally in government spurred the Chinese to try and agree on a common attitude. Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA, Nanfei Zhonghua zonggonghui 南非中華總會) was founded in 1981 as a result.<sup>43</sup> It is an umbrella organization that unites regional associations (Eastern Province Chinese Association, Free State Chinese Association, Pretoria Chinese Association, Transvaal Chinese Association / Chinese Association of Gauteng, Western Province Chinese Association, East London Chinese Association, Kimberley Chinese Association, Kwa-Zulu Natal Chinese

37 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 210.

38 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 137-147.

39 Not a case of homeplace or dialect association—both Cantonese and Moiyeaneese could enter. In this case, »Canton« pointed to Guangdong province, not Guangzhou, »Moiyeane« (Meixian 梅縣) is located in the same province. See Yap and Man, *Colour*, 233.

40 Yap and Man, *Colour*, 230.

41 *Ibid.*, 253-254.

42 *Ibid.*, 321-325.

43 See <[www.casa.za.org/index.php](http://www.casa.za.org/index.php)> (last retrieval June 7, 2013).

Association; regional associations existed earlier and are autonomous, CASA just coordinates their actions and agrees on a common attitude regarding certain topics). Its regional associations cater to the need of the Chinese community—be it organization of various events or service to the community (e.g. support for Hong Ning Chinese Aged Home by TCA in Johannesburg). Its latest and probably the best known activity was the motion to include Chinese in the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003<sup>44</sup> (High Court ruled in favour of South African Chinese represented by CASA in 2008)—an effort not welcomed by all Chinese, but with a genuine impact on the whole community.

### 3 *Voluntary Associations in South Africa—Present*

As a source of information on Chinese associations in South Africa in the (more distant) past, the research done by Yap and Man (1996) is comprehensive and reliable. Yet when trying to determine how Chinese voluntary associations currently operate in South Africa, one faces a problem: Allegedly, there are some 50 active associations operating among *xinqiao* alone (in total, there are supposedly about 100 associations, not all of all of them active).

As the current research work is intended more as a case study of certain associations, rather than an exhaustive account of all associations, I shall not proceed in an enumeration of all existing associations. However, I would still like to offer a concise overview. The membership in associations (at least among leaders) is largely overlapping—among my respondents, one person would engage actively in numerous associations. Of course, for the reasons elaborated in the next section, associations' leaders engage with the South African Chinese Community and Police Co-operation Centre and the All-African Association for Peaceful Re-Unification of China, the organizations so influential that they regularly appear in the local Chinese press. Their leaders are present at almost every social occasion and place their functions within these organizations into the most prominent positions on their namecards. Some try to exert influence in China-town via the Regulatory Committee of Johannesburg Chinatown (Yuehanneisibao Tangrenjie guanli weiyuanhui 約翰內斯堡唐人街管理委員會) or to

44 The so-called B-BBEE Act is intended »to establish a legislative framework for the promotion of black economic empowerment«, where »black people« is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians«, *Government Gazette* vol 463 (Jan 9, 2004), available online at <[bee.bisa.co.za/docs/The%20Broad-Based%20Black%20Economic%20Empowerment%20Act%2053%20of%202003.pdf](http://bee.bisa.co.za/docs/The%20Broad-Based%20Black%20Economic%20Empowerment%20Act%2053%20of%202003.pdf)> (last retrieval June 28, 2013).

contribute to community building by supporting South Africa Hua Wen Library (Nanfei Huawen tushuguan 南非華文圖書館). Apart from that, they are leading members in several organizations, typically in some *tongxianghui* 同鄉會 ('home district association') and chambers of commerce (*shanghui* 商會), which are organized according to regions of origin (Fujian, Canton, Hong Kong, Macao etc.) and of destination (Southern Africa, South Africa), as well as in Mainland Chinese organizations designed to maintain connections with the compatriots overseas (*Qiaolian* 僑聯, overseas exchange associations *haiwai jiaoliu xiehui* 海外交流協會, regional overseas friendship associations *haiwai lianyibui* 海外聯誼會). Some are even engaged in the Political Consultative Conference (Zhengxie 政協) of the PRC. Of course, there are also charity associations such as the Club Bauhinia South Africa (Nanfei zijinghui 南非紫荊會) or the Women's Federation (Funü lianhehui 婦女聯合會) which is mainly present in charitable events.

3.1 *South African Chinese Community and Police Co-operation Centre*  
(*Nanfei Huaren jingmin bezuo zhongxin* 南非忽然警民合作中心).

South Africa has been facing severe security issues. Violence and crime plagued everybody, not just Chinese (naturally, Chinese are a target as well).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, there is a kind of unlawful behavior that ails Chinese specifically—they are often targetted by the police who purposefully seek bribes. Chinese are an easy target due to several issues: Reportedly, many Chinese crossed the border illegally<sup>46</sup> or otherwise have incomplete paperwork, so the police hope to make them pay, rather than to have them face legal consequences. Also many Chinese do not speak perfect English, and if asked by the police for money on the pretext of an offense, they simply obey because they are not able or not willing to explain themselves. There were also cases when Chinese migrants had allegedly their

45 During the time period 2003–11, more than 100 Chinese died by force in South Africa, more than 200 were wounded, the kidnappings, armed robberies or extortion are common occurrence. See *Nanfei Huaren jingmin bezuo zhongxin di si jie zuzhi jigou shouce* 南非湖人警民合作中心第四屆組織機構手冊 [Manual of the Fourth Organizational Body of the South Africa Chinese Community & Police Co-operation Centre] (Johannesburg: Nanfei Huaren jingmin bezuo zhongxin bangongshi, 2011; hereafter *Shouce*), 2.

46 Interview with Zhuang Binguan, the Chairman of Southern African Overseas Chinese Industry and Commerce Federation (Nanbu Feizhou Huaqiao Huaren gongshang lianhe zonghui 南部非洲華僑華人工商聯合總會) and Honorary Director of Johannesburg Chinatown Regulatory Committee (Johannesburg, Nov 30, 2012).

property stolen by the police (an officer secretly took some of the cash during an inspection).<sup>47</sup>

The Centre was officially established in January 2004. It unites the forces of all Chinese organizations in South Africa.<sup>48</sup> It is not an umbrella organization intended to coordinate ordinary activities of member organizations. However, the fact of being a Chinese community-wide association (*quanqiaoxing shetuan zuzhi* 全僑性社團組織) gives it legitimacy in order to protect the interests of the whole community. This function is emphasized by the fact that the representatives of all<sup>49</sup> Chinese voluntary associations are on the board of directors.<sup>50</sup> The board holds elections every two years to decide upon key positions. Li Xinzhu<sup>51</sup> served first three consecutive terms as a chairman, to be succeeded by Ng Siu Hong (Wu Shaokang),<sup>52</sup> currently serving his second term. Several vice-chairmen are elected, too.

47 Interview with Chen Binbin; and »Jingju juzhang fang Huaxia baogao si yue fen Huaren bei qiang an jiju zengjia« 警局局長訪華夏報告四月份華人被搶案急遽增加 [Head of Police Department Visits and China and Reports About Dramatic Increase of Robbery Against Overseas Chinese in April], *Huaqiao xinwenbao* 華僑新聞報 May 4, 2013, available online at <sa-cnet.net/content/2013/0504/38159.html> (last retrieval June 6, 2013).

48 The Centre needs resources to operate. It was started with private funds by a handful of people, but to maintain its long-term operation, every Chinese association is now required to contribute financially. Interview with Li Xinzhu (Johannesburg, Dec 10, 2012).

49 The English version of the leaflet says »all«, yet in Chinese it is just »leading overseas Chinese groups« (*zhuyao Huaren qiaotuan* 主要湖人僑團).

50 *Shouce*, 2.

51 Li Xinzhu 李新鑄 (b1962) comes from Lianjiang County 連江縣, Fujian province. Without higher education, he started a successful business in China. In 1992 he left for South Africa. At the beginning, he traded in small consumer goods, and later on diversified his activities (manufacturing, mineral products, media). See Yuhuan 雨幻, »Li Xinzhu—shanyao zuanshi de guangmang« 李新鑄——閃耀鑽石的光芒 [Li Xinzhu—The Brilliance of Shining Diamond], *Fujian dang'an xinxiwang* 福建檔案信息網 (date not stated) available at <www.fj-archives.org.cn/html/baminzhizi/11676.html> (last retrieval June 27, 2013).

52 Wu Shaokang 吳少康 comes from Fujian province. In 1980s he migrated to Guangdong province and started to do business in electronics. In 1996 he moved to South Africa. Nowadays, he distributes his own brand of electronic equipment. Besides, he is active in electronic appliances manufacturing in South Africa, realities, and shopping centers. »Nanfei Wu Shaokang—yao ba Zhongguo pinpai tuixiang shijie« 南非吳少康——要把中國名牌推向世界 [Wu Shaokang from South Africa—Famous Chinese Brands Have to Be Sold to the World], *Fujian qiaowang* 福建僑網 Oct 9, 2011, available online at <www.fjqw.gov.cn/qbcmsapp/

To increase security of Chinese households and premises, the Centre established a private security service serving specifically to Chinese clients in 2006. The support is currently available outside Gauteng Province, too—a Centre was founded in KwaZulu-Natal Province and there are plans to gradually cover every province.

The idea of active cooperation with police force is not unique to local Chinese community. In South Africa, there is the well established institution of Community Police Forum (CPF) that encourages citizens to contribute to the safety of their community by cooperating with local police force—reporting suspect individuals, receive training to cope with difficult situations, etc. The Centre is part of this structure, and therefore might be referred to as Chinese CPF. To maintain everyday activities, the Centre has got a director, a supervisor, a secretary-general, a treasurer and a head of the office, apart from the structure of a chairperson and vice-chairs.

The office is located in Johannesburg Chinatown (Derrick Avenue, Cyril-dene) and currently employs three people. They are all fluent in English as their crucial role is to communicate with South African police officers (there is usually one officer present in the office). Anyone who requires assistance can call the phone number of the Centre. Whether it is a case of being a victim and requiring assistance in communication with the South African police officers, suspecting false policemen, or being harassed by the police, the Centre is there to provide assistance—its employee is driving to the location to offer support, interpreting for the person, or contacting a police officer if in doubt. It is also offering help in reporting incidents to the police and assisting the police force during investigation. The Centre keeps statistics about the incidents against the Chinese (local police forces also contribute data). The Centre also cooperates with the Department of Home Affairs organs handling immigration, and with other regulatory organs dealing with Chinese immigrants. It also boasts its function to assist the Consulate General with consular protection work.<sup>53</sup>

The Chinese Embassy in South Africa (Pretoria) and the Consulate General in Johannesburg openly support the activities of the Centre, contributing resources to keep the Centre operating and attend events organized by the Centre. However, Chinese are not just victims, but may also become perpetrators of crimes—which are targeted at their fellow compatriots.<sup>54</sup> For such

[www2/fjqw.gov.cn/zh-cn/C4756FoDDC432147A2Co11E78EE527EB/2011-10-09/8DDB31EEF686AC6D9280F515BD21446D.htm](http://www2/fjqw.gov.cn/zh-cn/C4756FoDDC432147A2Co11E78EE527EB/2011-10-09/8DDB31EEF686AC6D9280F515BD21446D.htm) (last retrieval June 27, 2013).

53 *Sbouce*, 3.

54 Interview with Zhuang Binguang (Johannesburg, Nov 30, 2012).

cases, there is a liaison police officer (*jingwu lianluoguan* 警務聯絡官)<sup>55</sup> stationed at the Embassy.

I claim the Centre to be a unifying structure for the community of the Chinese in South Africa—it may not possess direct authority over other associations and organizations, however, it surely represents the community as such to the host society: For one thing, it organizes charity events (or assists the Embassy and the Consulate General to coordinate other associations' charity work) to benefit the local society, specifically impoverished regions and schools.<sup>56</sup> Thus it represents the whole Chinese community in demonstrating its contributions to South African society, as the donations to the poor

resulted in positive social effects, raised the image and status of the Chinese communities in South Africa, improved the views of locals on Chinese, winning praise from the ANC, the ruling party of South Africa, as well as from the South African Communist Party, local governments and local people.<sup>57</sup>

Here I would point out another positive feature of the Centre: It did not only establish a channel for communication with organs of the state, but also offers a framework to connect with South African political representatives, enhancing the prestige of the whole community (and its leaders).

To sum up the Centre and its activities, it is an organization responding to community needs, while using a host society structure to achieve its aims. It does not try to settle issues internally, but actively engages and invites local organs to act.<sup>58</sup> It employs Chinese graduates from South African universities or other Chinese with strong English language and professional skills and has set up a structure with transparent rules and regulations governing its activities. The activities go beyond self-help enthusiasm—the Centre employs qualified personnel, relies on the assistance of South African police officers, and cooperates with lawyers.<sup>59</sup> It is also involving Taiwanese and *lao Huaqiao*, both in its organizational structure (honorary directors) and as consumers of its services.

55 The Embassy staff strictly declined to meet and share their opinions and experience.—Interview with Zhuang Binguang (Johannesburg, Nov 30, 2012).

56 *Shouce*, 3.

57 *Shouce*, 6.

58 But this is true especially of the cases when Chinese are attacked or harmed by locals; the Centre supposedly offers to »resolve internal disputes between Chinese people« (*Shouce*, 6) when local authorities might not be asked to intervene. For prevention or in cases of criminal investigation among Chinese, it involves the police liaison office from the Embassy (*Shouce*, 3).

59 Michael Y Sun (Sun Yaoheng), second generation Taiwanese immigrant and an attorney, City of Johannesburg councillor, is honorary director and legal advisor for the Centre. He partici-

Reviewing the literature on Chinese associations' services to their communities, such professional structure and services are very uncommon among first generation migrants who more commonly rely on informal channels and personal relations to handle problematic issues, while the associations they are establishing are typically not as transparent in structure and hardly offer institutionalized communication channels to host society administration organs or political bodies.<sup>60</sup>

The reasons why the *xinqiao* opted for such an advanced structure might be manifold: The security situation in South Africa is poor indeed, so that the sheer number of incidents might inspire thoughts about need of better organized assistance.<sup>61</sup> Then there is the problem of corruption among police officials or mistreatment in their hands—this issue may only be addressed in cooperation with the police itself, as the police need to investigate within their own ranks. The high concentration of Chinese residences and premises in Derrick Avenue, Cyrildene makes it also easier to involve ready-made local solutions (CPF).

For comparison, Xiao Yifan («Polly Hsiao», 蕭依凡), a first generation migrant from Taiwan who operates the Chinese language radio *Nanfei Huaxia zhi sheng* 南非華夏之聲 (Voice of China; «ArrowLine Chinese Radio») in Johannesburg, introduced me to a similar initiative she is personally contributing to—the Friends of Police Gauteng (Haodeng sheng Taiqiao jingcha zhi youhui 豪登省臺僑警察之友會). However, this initiative lacks formal recognition, professional structure and the connections of the Centre, therefore it may be, in my understanding, characterized more like a self-help personal initiative (when a person regardless of origin contacts the Friends, they try and go to either interpret or involve relevant authorities). They did accumulate certain experience, know-how, and also personal capital, however, the scope of their activities is limited.<sup>62</sup>

pates in activities to raise awareness of legal issues.—*Sbouce*, 11; interview with Mr Sun (Johannesburg, Dec 13, 2012); interview with Li Xinzhu (Johannesburg, Dec 10, 2012).

60 Zhou Min and Rebecca Y. Kim, «The Paradox of Ethnicization and Assimilation», in *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*, ed. by Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-Dehart (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 239–244.

61 Li Xinzhu in an interview (Dec 10, 2012) mentions the poor security situation as one of the main factors causing the community to stick together.

62 Interview with Xiao Yifan (Johannesburg; Nov 7, 2012).

### 3.2 *All-African Association for the Peaceful Re-Unification of China*<sup>63</sup>

(*Quan Feizhou Zhongguo heping tongyi cujinhui* 全非洲中國和平統一促進會)

The All-African Association for the Peaceful Re-Unification of China (abbreviated in Chinese as *tongcubui* 統促會) is part of the global structure of the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Re-Unification (Zhongguo heping tongyi cujinhui 中國和平統一促進會)<sup>64</sup> which was founded in 1988 after Deng Xiaoping's 鄧小平 (1904–1997) proposal by relevant personalities from all democratic parties, organizations and non-party representatives [to] raise high the patriotic flag, unite all compatriots in China and abroad supporting peaceful reunification of China, promote public diplomacy and contacts in Taiwan Strait, oppose activities leading to 'Taiwanese independence', 'two Chinas', 'one China, one Taiwan' and other separatist activities, promote early peaceful reunification of China.<sup>65</sup>

In this context, I would like to draw attention to the »other separatist activities« —the website of China Council keeps a special column for Tibetan issues, so we can gather that the agenda, aimed at Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and overseas personalities and related organizations,<sup>66</sup> does include other contested issues, too. In this study, I shall pay attention to these issues.

The All-Africa *tongcubui* was established on January 18, 2002, curiously, by a *lao Huaqiao* who could not even speak Chinese. After his death, *xinqiao* came to run the Association. In South Africa, there are two branches (Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal), in all-African scope there are 17 national-level (not All Africa) *tongcubui*.<sup>67</sup>

Li Xinzhu, current chairman (he became Chairman in 2011 and is currently serving his second term), takes very non-confrontational approach towards the issue of re-unification. »It is "peaceful" first, "reunification" comes second.«<sup>68</sup> Xiao Yifan (who maintains contacts with all important Chinese personalities in

63 As for the English name, I have opted for the version stated on the Association's website <afcpirc.org.za> (last retrieval June 28, 2013).

64 Here the English translation differs from the name of its All-African kin, even though Chinese names do correspond. Again, I am using the English name as stated at the Council's website <zhongguotongcuhui.org.cn> (last retrieval June 28, 2013).

65 »Zhongguo heping tongyi cujinhui jianjie« 中國和平統一促進會簡介 [A Short Introduction to the China Council...; 2008], *Zhongguo tongcubui wang* 中國統促會網 <zhongguotongcuhui.org.cn/bhjs/201210/t20121011\_3169352.html> (last retrieval June 7, 2013).

66 Ibid.

67 Interview with Li Xinzhu (Johannesburg, Dec 10, 2012).

68 Ibid.

South Africa but does not engage in *lao Huaqiao* or *xinqiao* activities) turns down any talk about the *tongcubui*, claiming it is a purely political organization.<sup>69</sup> Michel Y Sun (engaged with the *xinqiao* professionally) only admits that a small group of Taiwanese feel resentment about the *tongcubui* because of its clearly political nature. He himself is very careful to phrase his own opinion on the issue:

I am Taiwanese-born Chinese South African. [...] My forefathers came from China, but my generation, we were born in Taiwan. [...] But then we do not support the independent Taiwan policy. Not for the reason that we do business in China, not for that reason. I think it is a recognition that we are Chinese and our forefathers came from China. But then you find a group of young people, they are only in their teens and twenties, they sort of support the independent Taiwan policy. So it is a very difficult and a very delicate subject to talk about.<sup>70</sup>

The issue with great potential to raise passions is Tibet. Li Xinzhu becomes agitated as he explains how *Huaren*<sup>71</sup> are to propagate abroad what they see as the truth about Tibet. And he took it as his responsibility indeed, *tongcubui* organized exhibitions portraying the positive changes in Tibet since it had been re-incorporated within China. But they would not stop here. When the 14th Dalai Lama was invited by his friend and fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (b1931), to South Africa, Li Xinzhu expressed Chinese views over the visit to South African politicians.<sup>72</sup> The Dalai Lama planned to attend Tutu's birthday celebration in October 2011, but was not granted entry visa in time, so the trip was canceled.<sup>73</sup> (This is not to suggest that the visit was called off solely due to the *tongcubui* activities, but merely to point out that the Association has channels to make its opinion heard.) Mr Sun stays rather

69 Interview with Xiao Yifan (Johannesburg, Nov 7, 2012).

70 Interview with Michael Y Sun (Johannesburg, Dec 13, 2013).

71 During interviews, respondents did not seem to distinguish between *Huaqiao* and *Huaren*, and use both terms interchangeably. However, when asked, they do recognize a difference among the two.

72 Interview with Li Xinzhu (Johannesburg, Dec 10, 2012).

73 The 14th Dalai Lama had already visited South Africa in the past during Mandela's and Mbeki's administration. However, in 2009 he was refused entry. See Xan Rice, »Dalai Lama Visit Blocked by South Africa to Please China, Says Opposition«, *The Guardian* Sep 27, 2011 <[guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/27/dalai-lama-banned-south-africa](http://guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/27/dalai-lama-banned-south-africa)>; and »Dalai Lama Cancels South Africa Tutu Trip Over Visa«, *BBC News Africa* Oct 4, 2011 <[bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15164383](http://bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15164383)> (last retrieval both June 29, 2013).

indifferent about Tibetan independence, however, finally voices his view that Tibetans are to have autonomy, but China should not be split into pieces.<sup>74</sup>

In autumn 2012, the contentious issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (Diaoyu dao 釣魚島) ownership came to the spotlight again, when the Japanese government claimed to have purchased the islands from a private owner. *Tongcubui* around the world used the Mukden Incident anniversary (Sep 18, 1931) to remind of Japanese misdeeds in the past and stage protests against the current 'invasion' of the islands.

On September 16, 2012, the All-African *tongcubui* held a preparatory meeting with the heads of Chinese associations and decided to organize a demonstration in Chinatown (Derrick Avenue, Cyrildene).<sup>75</sup> On 18 September 2012 there was a demonstration attended by 1000 people.<sup>76</sup> After this mass protest, six leaders (including Mr Sun) arranged a meeting at the Japanese embassy to hand in their memorandum about the issue and a notice announcing demonstrations, however, the Japanese embassy in Pretoria did not accept the letter despite having agreed to delivery previously.<sup>77</sup>

The *tongcubui* certainly aims to unify and represent the opinions of the Chinese in the broader region on certain issues. I speak of representation too as it not only organizes visible activities (mass protests, charity) but also invites host society members to participate in its activities and invites the host society to understand Chinese point of view. The wife of South African President Zuma

74 Interview with Michael Y Sun (Johannesburg, Dec 13, 2013).

75 »Quan Feizhou heping tongyi cujinhui juxing "shisi hanwei Diaoyu dao" choubeihui« 全非洲和平統一促進會舉行“誓死捍衛釣魚島”籌備會 [All-African Association for Peaceful Re-Unification of China Organizes »Promise to Die to Protect Diaoyu Islands« Preparatory Meeting], *Huaqiao xinwenbao* Sep 18, 2012 <sa-cnet.net/content/2012/0918/27884.html> (last retrieval June 7, 2013).

76 »Nanfei 1000 duo Huaqiao Huaren juxing jihui shisi bao Diao« 南非 1000 多華僑華人舉行集會誓死保釣 [More than 1000 Overseas Chinese residing in South Africa Rally and Pledge to Give Their Lives to Protect Diaoyu Islands], *Renminwang* Sep 18, 2012 <world.people.com.cn/n/2012/0918/c1002-19043569.html> (last retrieval June 9, 2013).

77 Interview with Michael Y Sun (Johannesburg, Dec 13, 2012).

attended African Forum convened in Johannesburg in October 2012 and a high member of ANC is a honorary president.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4 Conclusions

What I present here is just a selection of associations or organizations with the greatest potential to unite the community. I only review in detail the activities of two truly significant and all-Chinese organizations, but these two are crucial when studying influence inside the community and its representation to the outside world.

The South African Chinese Community and Police Co-operation Centre utilizes an organizational pattern already existing in South Africa, but imprinting it with some Chinese specifics. As for its core function, it maintains a team of paid professionals. It is well placed, and even required to engage actively with the host society (state agencies and the police forces of South Africa). As for its structure, its objective is to include every Chinese association leader to protect common interests. There is hardly an objective way to enforce this, yet in the ecology of an overseas Chinese community, it would not pay off to decline. The position of the director seems to be honorary rather than executive—there is a chief of office who is responsible for current operations. The Centre receives delegations from Mainland China and other African countries, and mainly attracts the attention of public security organs. Of course, it cooperates closely with the Consulate General and the Embassy of the PRC in South Africa, which places it into a position to effectively protect Chinese interests in South Africa (by interests, we may imagine mainly security issue, that is avoiding harrassment from South African organs and agencies).

The *tongcubui* is, again, considered a very prestigious organization as well. *Tongcubui* have been established around the globe, many of them in response to former ROC President Chen Shuibian's 陳水扁 (b1950, in office 2000-08) emancipatory tendencies. However, there is little evidence of their concrete activities. The *tongcubui* in Johannesburg, South Africa, is regularly participating in All-African forums and admits to propagate Mainland Chinese views on

78 »Quan Feizhou Zhongguo heping tongyi cujinhui 2012 di er jie Feizhou luntan zai Nanfei zhaokai« 全非洲中國和平統一促進會 2012 第二屆非洲輪胎在南非召開 [The 2nd African Forum of the All-African China Peaceful Reunification Organization Takes Place in South Africa], *Renminwang* 人民網 Oct 23rd, 2012 <world.people.com.cn/n/2012/1023/c1002-19362904-1.html> (last retrieval June 13, 2013).

important issues (Tibet), but apart from that, its activities seem rather scarce. However, when a need arises (e.g. Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands issue), it disposes of the necessary resources and authority to mobilize the community.

Both the Centre and the *tongcubui* give its high office holders great prestige—or is it other way round, that the organizations possess authority *because of* their high office holders? The current director of the Centre, Ng Siu Hong (Wu Shaokang), succeeded Li Xinzhu in this position. Li Xinzhu, having served three terms as a director of the Centre (now honorary director), moved on to the leading position in the *tongcubui*, where he succeeded Ng Siu Hong and is serving his second term now.<sup>79</sup> Which makes me think that apart from the work done by these organizations (the Centre is without any doubt putting in a lot of energy and resources to improve the situation of the Chinese living in South Africa), the organizations serve as a base for their leaders' activities, regardless of the official function of the organization. Being in the spotlight attracted South African officials too, earning prominent Chinese invitations to ANC activities and forums set up and run by the state.

Regardless of the situation behind the stage, both organizations reviewed in this study unite the community (predominantly *xinqiao*, but leaving space open for *lao Huaqiao* and Taiwanese engagement too) to face the challenges of South African environment, to promote interests of the whole community, to take part in propaganda promoting Chinese views on important issues attracting international attention, and maybe, to open a way to new connections within the host society, thus integrating the community within the pre-existing structures.

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79 More names are frequently mentioned on boards of important organizations, however, for the time being I was not able to meet them in person. As for press coverage, it is certain that Ng Siu Hong (Wu Shaokang) and Li Xinzhu most frequently attend public events and represent the highest degree of accomplishment within the community.