

*Chinese Community in Portugal: History, Migration, and
Business*



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Introduction

Although this paper derives from a previous study¹, its objective is to take a critical look back in time, tracing the evolution of the interest in this topic and the way in which it has been addressed. It establishes a timestamp on the Chinese presence in our country at the dawn of a new century after which, based on subsequent academic output, the path leading to our current time can be followed (Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006).² This research focused on the relations between groups and between people, which are naturally configured in a different way at any given time and particular space. The findings are described in more detail in the book of joint authorship³ from which the graphs summarising the obtained data presented herein are extracted. The attention and care taken by the team members in their direct contact and in establishing relationships with the respondents (who were assured anonymity) throughout the entire duration of the research, most particularly during the fieldwork stage, in which the cultural and social identity of the

¹ The research took place in an institutional context of two centres: the "Centre of International Strategic Studies" and the "Centre of Studies on Migrations and Intercultural Relations" (Universidade Aberta), both scientifically accredited in the area of physical mobility and social mobility.

² Developed from the project "The Chinese Business Community in Portugal. Catalysts of the Integration of China in the Global Economy (2003-2005)" (POCTI/SOC/40827/2001) funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) (Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education), its findings were published by the National Institution of Administration (Oeiras, 2006).

³ The team consisted of three researchers, Maria Beatriz Rocha-Trindade, Annette Bongardt and Miguel Santos Neves, whose areas of academic qualification – Ethno-Sociology, Economics and Law – enabled following a multidisciplinary itinerary in which an articulated approach characterised the entire sequence of the research stages. The working hypothesis was engendered by Miguel Santos Neves, whose longstanding interest dedicated to oriental societies and cultures, notwithstanding their diversity, and his personal experience gained during onsite assignments and visits, in particular in Macao, were determinant for the definition of the subject addressed and the pursuit of the methodological pathway.

interviewees was respected, undoubtedly contributed to our success in obtaining results⁴.

As the business community comprises one of the main segments of the Chinese population resident in Portugal, it was important to investigate the migratory framework that has always characterised it, albeit in a summarised manner, by collecting data enabling us to situate this community in the world, in Europe and foremost in our country.

Redesigning the initial questions, selecting and adjusting the research instruments and further expanding on one point or another, requiring further elucidation, all distinguish the flexibility that continuously accompanied the rigorous process of investigation, whose development encountered serious difficulties.

The characteristics of the migrant community under review are well known. The tightly closed circle of interaction among the members of this community, and that what is particular to them, leads to a certain isolation in daily life and brings about a certain mistrust of those outside their circle of interaction.

The necessary elucidation of the questions that emerged over time and the restructuring and reorientation of the subtopics that regularly came to light, often implied a search for ways to find new guidelines to reach the desired outcomes. An initially imprecise text gradually gained greater concision through written sources of information, electronic records and contacts achieved directly.

This text begins with a description of the geographic mobility of the Chinese diaspora in Europe and, subsequently, addresses the presence and evolution of the Chinese community in Portugal. The following section seeks to characterise the Chinese associativism in Portugal, and to present, at a final stage, the findings of the research study that was developed.

⁴ The selection and adaptation of the tools used to carry out our research depended on the existing material and human conditions. Alongside the initial bibliographic research, which preceded the formulation of the working hypothesis, the object of study was established definitively, encapsulating an extremely important and permanent position throughout the entire research (see the extensive and qualified bibliography consulted).

Geographic Mobility

All migratory flows have since time progressively developed through the support provided by existing transnational networks, in which the information circulated through contacts of personal nature, to a large extended family. Chinese migration did not evolve by chance, but rather occurred as a "chain reaction", composed of parents and neighbours who travelled to specific places of a given region. The routes taken towards the selected destinations and the types of behaviour portrayed implanted, from the onset, the necessary dynamics to ensure the continuity of their permanence and enable a successful settlement.

The constancy revealed by Chinese mobility throughout the centuries and the prolonged settlement attained by the migrants in their selected destinations, followed by the same situation found among their descendants, enables classifying their geographic displacement as a diaspora (Trolliet, 2000). This concept defines the situation that is observed, especially as the social dynamics and "feeling of belonging" binding the expatriates to a common ancestral origin, constitute one of its outstanding features (Rocha-Trindade, 2001).

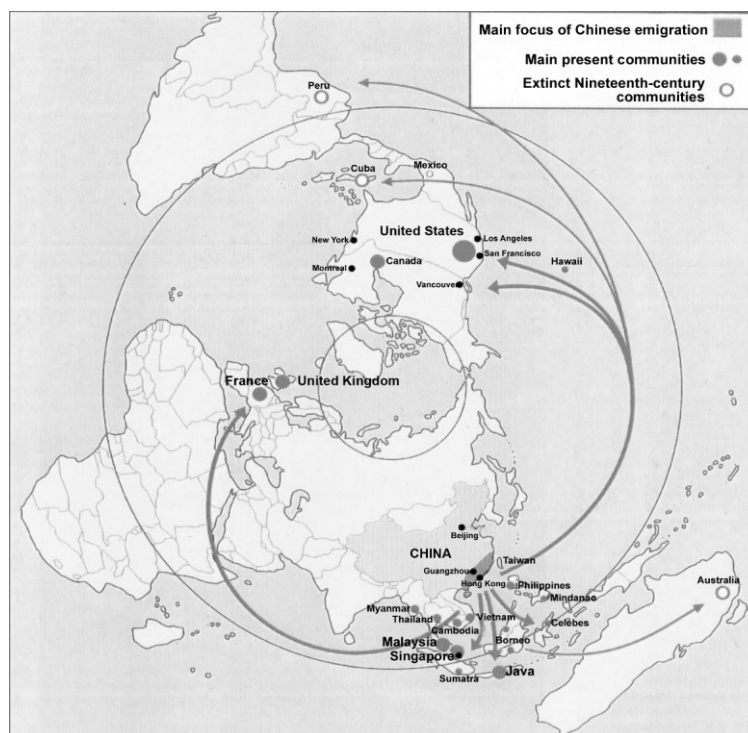


Figure 1 - Chinese Diaspora Source: Graphic design by Rita Martins

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The numerous communities of Chinese origin that have gradually spread throughout the four corners of the world originated from the migratory flows coming from diverse regions of this enormous country. A marked difference between China's national areas draws our attention to the division of the country marked by the Yangtze River. The first migrations date back to the third century (Han Dynasty) flowing towards Southeast Asia, a current that would become progressively more numerous and intensify towards the end of the eighteenth century. This visible growth that gradually took place and has currently attained a global dimension, essentially took place in the mid nineteenth century.

The two short periods corresponding to the two Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1859-1860) and the early years of the last century witnessed the opening of the ports located in the south, which became a region for the development of international trade (Rocha-Trindade, *et al.*, 2006). The end of slavery in countries colonised by Europeans and the need to find low-cost labour were ideal conditions for the Chinese mobility to have occurred (Fourgeau, 1997). Moreover, the Chinese economic crisis derived from political uprisings and natural disasters, floods and droughts, strongly contributed to migration representing a resource for survival.

Devastated by the drastic political intervention that transformed the millenary Chinese empire after the deposition of the Qing Dynasty, the country re-emerged as the People's Republic of China (1912). This radical change of regime converted it into a vast battlefield extending over various regions, in particular the southeast coastal zone.

Seeking to flee from the hardship and widespread severe hunger of that time, several Chinese citizens tried an active search for a better life and a peaceful environment. Alongside this situation, we should also consider that the residents were confronting a thirst for power manifested by the Japanese, who many Chinese had already encountered during their previous visits as migrant workers. In this scenario the internal displacement, such as the route to the south towards the particularly significant area of Guangzhou, extended in search of Europe and Africa by ship.

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A longstanding implantation in the European continent occurred in gradual stages from the beginning of the twentieth century. At this time France emerged as one of the first destinations, as recruited workers moved there during the First World War. These migrants were specifically hired to work in military equipment factories and carry out other tasks, such as, for example, digging trenches (Fabienne, 2003).

Much later, in the 1980s, Europe started to receive new and massive migrant inflows less linked to the traditional places of origin. In addition to the great majority of those seeking to travel to Europe originally from the province of Zhejiang, in the southeast of the country, there were now flows particularly from the provinces of Jilin, Liaoning, Heilongjiang and Hebei (northeast). This was the consequence of the new economic situation unfolding, primarily due to the closure of unprofitable state companies (Picquart, 2004).



Figure 2 - China

Southern Europe definitively took on the position of choice target to be reached at the end of the 1990s. A series of population movements shifting directly from China towards the previously selected destinations, where migrants of Chinese origin had already settled, contrasted with those that took place from one country of settlement to other countries of settlement, which could be referred to as inter-polar.

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The progressive growth of Chinese immigration, which enlarges its presence in Europe has been so significant that it is important to present the numbers reflecting this at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Figure 3 shows the number of foreigners in each of the listed countries, as receivers of migrants of Chinese ancestry, thus enabling a double appraisal, in absolute and comparative numbers.

Countries		Originally from the People's Republic of China				Originally from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan			
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003
1	Germany	50885	63111	72094	---	56157	68288	77306	---
2	Austria	---	6799	---	---	---	8254	---	---
3	Belgium	---	---	6011	---	---	---	6011	---
4	Denmark	3073	3434	3892	4729	3178	3549	4016	4859
5	Slovenia	225	314	---	---	225	314	---	---
6	Spain	27574	37522	51203	---	27985	38067	51628	---
7	Estonia	18 ^a	---	---	---	18 ^a	---	---	---
8	Finland	---	---	2706	---	---	---	2706	---
9	France ^b	31987	35506	---	---	31987	35506	---	---
10	Greece	---	569	---	---	---	616	---	---
11	Netherlands ^c	20054	21884	24638	30732	31492	33373	36284	42670
12	Hungary	11432	---	---	---	11432	---	---	---
13	Ireland	---	---	5599	---	---	---	7263	---
14	Italy	56660	58844	---	---	57230	59414	---	---
15	Latvia	---	45	---	---	---	45	---	---
16	Lithuania	5	9	---	---	5	9	---	---
17	Luxembourg	1070	---	---	---	1083	---	---	---
18	Portugal ^{b,d}	3281	7239	8336	8703	3581	7608	8636	8994
19	UK ^e	---	247403	---	---	---	247403	---	---
20	Czech Rep.	3798	3221	---	---	3798	3240	---	---
21	Sweden	8150	8959	9776	10852	9368	10190	11025	12106
22	Norway	3617	3818	4159	---	3623	3826	4167	---
23	Switzerland	6502	7381	8416	---	7194	8057	9200	---
TOTAL EU			521677 ^f				544371		
TOTAL EEA		---	533016 ^{f,g}	---	---	---	556394 ^{f,g}		

Figure 3 - Chinese Citizens Resident in Europe 2000-2003 (official data)

Source: Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006, pp. 51-52

EU: European Union; EEA: European Economic Area.

Notes:

- a. 1999 Data.
- b. Data refers only to citizens with Chinese nationality.
- c. Data refers only to citizens born on Chinese territory.
- d. In 2001, 2002 and 2003 includes citizens with residence and stay permits.
- e. Data refers to all ethnic Chinese citizens with diverse nationalities and origins.
- f. The data for Hungary and Luxembourg refers to 2000; the data of Belgium, Finland and Ireland refer to 2002.
- g. Includes the data of Iceland (140 in 2001).

As is clearly evident, the official statistics presented above do not include immigrants that are in an illegal situation and, in some cases, the records were produced based on nationality, not taking into account the immigrant's ethnic origin. While this list is not exhaustive, it does draw out, on a merely illustrative basis, some particular situations. The United Kingdom records the total number of citizens by association to their ethnic origin, irrespective of nationality or country of origin.⁵ In contrast, the Netherlands only records those born on Chinese territories, taken to include the entire extent, therefore excludes many who, being descendants, were born and lived in other countries (Minghuan, 1998).

Chinese people sometimes enter into Germany as students, refugees seeking asylum or workers in the context of family reunification situations (IOM, 2002). In Southern Europe, Portugal, France and Italy base their criteria on the legal nationality held.⁶ Within this region, Spain follows the rule of nationality in recording citizens of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, taking into account those that have been locally nationalised as Spanish (INE, 2003). Italy is notable in being one of the key destinations for re-establishment of this population, which has imprinted a significant presence in the European Union in the post-Schengen/1997 era (Pieke, 2002).

We should not forget the communities that are resident in some East European countries where, with the collapse of the communist regimes, these places were selected due to their offer of competitive products and services. With the fall of these regimes, the political spaces formerly governed by them have also become sites chosen not for settlement but as transit routes. This situation is due to these economies now urgently requiring new consumer goods, most particularly those linked to clothing and footwear, produced in China and sold at low prices.

⁵ The first *census* conducted on the Chinese ethnic issue in 1991 gave rise to various studies (Parker, 1995; Owen, 1995; Chan and Chan, 1997).

⁶ Information about the Chinese presence in Southern Europe can be obtained through various official, university and private sources. In Portugal, for instance, the sources include the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF); Balance of Payments Statistics and Statistical Unit of the Institute for Informatics and Statistics on Solidarity (IIES-UEST). In France, there is the European Federation of Chinese Organisations (EFCO).

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Russia, that maintains the features described above, has somewhere between 100,000 and 300,000 individuals (*Migration News*, 1999; Lintner & Mai, 1999). The capital city of Moscow is home to a significant Chinese community, whose organisation is notable. However, this organisation is very closed and can be considered self-sufficient – it has its own hotel facilities for example, and the same can be said of clinical structures and tourist agencies. Not being homogenous, it contains a series of micro societies constituted based on the province of origin of its members.

In Hungary, the number of Chinese residents varies according to the estimates of the actual Chinese organisations, suggesting numbers standing between 10,000 and 15,000, the majority of whom are living in Budapest and around 80% are engaged in trading activity. In the beginning of the 1990s, this country started to become a distribution centre for Chinese products all over Eastern Europe, particularly forwarded to Poland, Ukraine and Yugoslavia (Nyíri, 2000). Glancing towards the west allows us to point to the former Yugoslavia as the first clandestine gateway, the outcome of the good relations between Belgrade and Peking, which led to facilitating the obtaining of visas.

To summarise and, in an appraisal that constitutes more of an approximation than a reflection of the existing real situation, the number of Chinese in Europe (not including Russia) is estimated at around 556,394 on the date of the aforesaid research (Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006). The recognised and major difference between the figures presented officially by each of the host countries, which continues to persist, enables us to consider that this total number represents a figure that is very much below the current reality. It should be noted that the number of those in an illegal situation that could never be accounted for by official means would always need to be taken into account. This undervaluation is naturally due to the inexistence of comparable parameters concerning the records of foreigners, and this estimate can be regarded as being very far from reflecting the truth.

While we do not know with any accuracy the numbers of those who began arriving in Europe, by their own initiative and, at a later date, by means of carrier

agencies or smugglers established in China itself, it is known that the previously selected destinations were reached and were progressively settled in. Assistance at the destination, provided by members of previously established Chinese communities, initially led to the undertaking of modest and poorly paid work, a situation that as a rule rapidly changed over time.

The Chinese Presence in Portugal

Chinese migration to Portugal, which as a rule accompanies that of all international movements, is placed within the context of the migratory flows directed at all the other countries of the European continent, both via legal and illegal pathways, in which various strategies and different routes are used. Looking back at the Chinese community that gradually established itself in the country, how and when, enables understanding the pathway leading to its first implantation, growth and settlement, reflecting the interest aroused by it over time. As this consists of a multifaceted reality involving various dimensions, its understanding requires considering the different aspects that determined the evolution of its settlement on national territory, the growth of which has been exponential.

The first migrants arrived in Portugal during the last century, in the 1930s. The available records point to 63 male individuals as the total number that settled at that time, essentially in the regions of Lisbon and Porto, but also in the Centre: Aveiro, Coimbra and Castelo Branco. This was the situation registered on mainland Portugal; records were also kept of Chinese migrants that moved to the Atlantic archipelagos. Among this pioneering wave some returned to their place of origin, thanks to accumulated savings, while others remained, in many cases showing the early days of a process of miscegenation through mixed marriages.



Figure 4 - Mixed Marriages Source: *Grande Reportagem 160*, ano XV, 3ª série, 31/01/2004

At a later date, 1955, the records indicate the presence of 73 people (7 families) (Poston, DL & Yu Mei-Yu, 1990). It is important to mention that, having crossed the Indian Ocean, some settled in Mozambique, at that time a Portuguese colony. Here, some chose to live in the urban spaces of Lourenço Marques (currently Maputo) and Beira, while others created sparse pockets of smallholder farming communities, or settled along the coast of Inhambane, the ideal place for those formerly involved in fishing.

After the decolonisation in the wake of the April Revolution (1974), there were 700 individuals of Chinese origin, primarily from the province of Guangdong, dispersed throughout mainland Portugal and its islands (Tomé, 1994).⁷ Special reference should be made to the process of routing and implantation on national territory which took place with much greater frequency and in a much easier manner within the Portuguese society of origin, already installed, than among the actual Chinese community. Their perfect fluency in the Portuguese language and the generational position that the descendants held at that time, in view of the previous settlement of their families, considerably facilitated their integration.

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In Angola their numbers were low; however, in East Timor, before the Indonesian invasion (1975), followed by an extremely turbulent period, the community was at that time estimated at around 10,000 people and currently maintains its presence.

Nowadays, the Chinese community, which never portrayed a homogenous character in Portugal, consists of four groups, whose differences essentially reside in their place of origin, language⁸ and networks of knowledge possessed. A detailed analysis leads to considering those that were resident in Mozambique (as a Portuguese colony in the time of the dictatorship, as mentioned above). These are the original entrepreneurs of the South China triangle (Macao, Hong-Kong and Taiwan), migrants coming from the province of Zhejiang (southeast of the People's Republic of China) and the group of university students, whose temporary settlement must be mentioned, although their variable time of stay precludes knowing the absolute number that defines their permanence at any given time.

Starting out as travelling salespersons (selling ties, belts, costume jewellery), they progressively worked their way up to establish shops, in the form of small warehouses, in which the offer of diversified products introduced a novelty.

As we can see on the graph in Figure 5, that gives a more actual perspective on the evolution of Chinese migrants to Portugal, it was since the beginning of the 2000s when Chinese migration became more expressive, and also in subsequent periods like 2006 and 2008. After that time, the growth has been constant and in 2018, there were already 25.357 Chinese migrants officially registered in Portugal.

⁸ It is worth noting the importance of the existence of dialects and their distribution in the geographic space of East Asia to enable understanding the conditioning and orientation of mobility and the implantation of business networks that have operated since the distant past and continue active in the present.

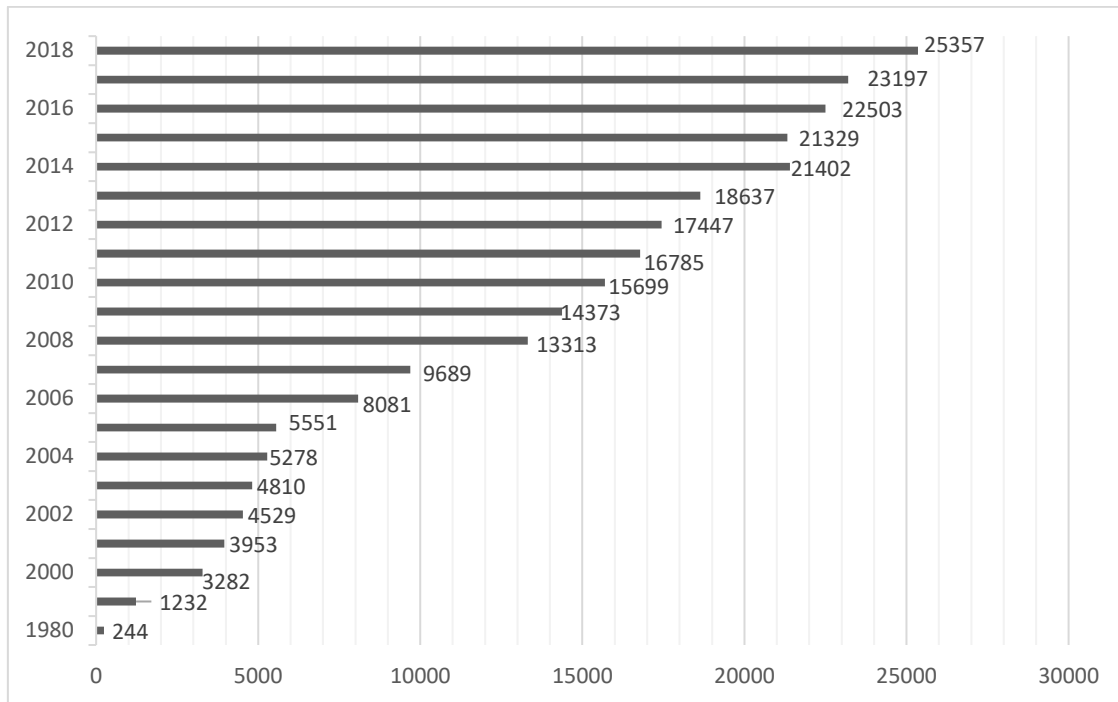


Figure 5 - The Chinese Community in Portugal

Source: SEF, Pordata (1980-2018)

Characterisation of Chinese Associativism in Portugal

Taking into account the research project (Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006), and in order to understand any of the situations reflected above it is fundamental to situate the object of analysis in the social circumstances in which it operated. Accordingly, we considered the series of intervening variables⁹ that could explain the evolution of prior situations that had led to or contributed to their subsequent occurrence.

Therefore, the leaders of the main Chinese associations were interviewed, at previously selected locations according to the number of people involved: Lisbon, Porto and Algarve. From these associations, 23 were located in the North, 91 were in Lisbon, 17 in Faro and 1 in other location. Besides, from the total Chinese leaders interviewed, 24.7% are between 41 and 50 years old (around $\frac{1}{4}$), 38.5% are between 31 and 40 years old, and 29.6% are less than 30 years old.

Likewise, the businesspersons interviewed were chosen according to company size, degree of diversification of the business, areas in which new activities

⁹ At an individual level, the age cohort and sex were taken into account; regarding mobility, the processes of naturalisation, deportation and asylum application were considered; and in relation to work, integration and the Social Security system were considered.

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considered emerging are situated, and frequency of international interaction, primordially that established with the People's Republic of China.

The different times at which the interviews were conducted sought to achieve diverse but complementing purposes: define the location of the target group that would constitute the sample, facilitating the alignment of an intentional selection. The non-existence of a sampling structure that could enable extracting a random representative sample, with a reasonable confidence level, immediately eliminated the possibility of taking this position. Therefore, this implied seeking specialised "informers" within the actual Chinese community, capable via direct knowledge of finding credible respondents, who would be requested to provide trustworthy collaboration.

Having recognised the significance of the Chinese associative space, inserted within Portuguese society, the decision was taken to lend it particular attention and search for members from whom elucidative answers could be obtained. Due to its significance it is important to mention this point.

The "Luso-Chinese Association", the first among the associations progressively installed, was founded in 1990 in the city of Albufeira (Algarve) by Chinese businesspersons based in Portugal. Essentially underlying its creation was concern about the teaching and fluency of the Chinese language. This attitude portrays apprehension in view of the lack of language skills of second-generation children and young people, as the power of communication is rightfully considered a factor of identity, which not only facilitates but strengthens understanding between people of the same origin.

The "Association of Luso-Chinese Merchants and Industrialists" (1997), positioned in the geographic region of Greater Lisbon has its head office in Algés (Oeiras). This association fundamentally pursues two goals, considered priorities: that of offering support to Chinese enterprises wishing to establish themselves in the country, and that of providing a legal framework on matters related to the migratory phenomenon for those wanting to be contracted and establish their residence here.

The development of cultural activities is not considered a priority; however, practices allusive to significant dates are respected (which are always extremely

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popular), with the most significant example being the festivities related to the Chinese New Year. Also called Spring Festival, it is regularly celebrated in different ways all over Portugal. Supported by the Embassy of China in Portugal in collaboration with the Chinese associations based in the country, these celebrations are held in the North, most especially in Póvoa do Varzim and Vila do Conde, in the capital (Lisbon) and extend to Lagoa in the Algarve. A series of cultural expressions of diverse nature include parades, exhibitions, photographs, street markets and musical attractions, among which particular reference should be made to the performance of Beijing Opera. The Ambassador and the senior leaders of these associations honour the parades with their presence. The social composition and their order in the alignment reflect the hierarchical position of the participants, enabling the audience to become aware of the values that are revered and entrenched. The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Portugal and the leaders of the community are followed by groups dressed for the occasion, according to the tradition, joined by members of the community carrying banners with groups identifications as "Lisbon Chinese School" and "Confucius Institute of the University of Aveiro" among many others.

The following images portrait the Chinese New Year celebrations in Lisbon in 2019 and 2020 including the parade in Av. Almirante Reis and the show at Alameda.

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Photos by Sérgio Miguel Rocha Trindade

Lastly, the "League of the Chinese in Portugal" (1997), which could best be explained as a federation of associations of diverse nature. Based in Oporto, its action covers the entire northern region of the country. The commercial and cultural actions developed include providing support to Chinese immigrants, giving them access to an easier and more harmonious integration in Portuguese society.

Data Collection and Methodology

In the research project (Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006) and in view of the existing research hypotheses, we sought to gather information through two types of inquiry: qualitative elements (as mentioned above), accomplished by means of unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and quantitative data obtained by applying a questionnaire.

The construction of the questionnaire included a double version with one form written just in Chinese language and another bilingual in both Chinese language and Portuguese. This attempted to facilitate the respondents' full understanding of what we wanted to know and the correct meaning encapsulated by each question. Sent to 200 enterprises in various zones of Chinese associations in Portugal, 129 questionnaires were received and considered valid. The questionnaire presented eight subject groups, aimed at providing information about:

- a) the respondent entrepreneur's profile, place of origin, duration of residence in Portugal and motivations for having chosen this country;
- b) professional activity performed and corresponding activity sector; location and size of the enterprise; origin of the workers; the respondent's assessment of the results achieved and expectations created;
- c) importance of participation in the associative scenario: knowledge of the position of each entrepreneur, membership time; opinion about the benefits received from this connection;
- d) relations maintained with other Chinese enterprises established in the country, intensity and nature of the existing relations;
- e) relations maintained with other Chinese enterprises established in the European Union;

- f) relations maintained with Portuguese enterprises, and intensity, nature and main difficulties of the existing relations;
- g) nature of business relations with the Portuguese State and ascertainment of any problems;
- h) interaction established with the country of origin.

In the situation under review, it is imperative to consider the geographic location of Portugal and China, and observe the technological development over time, that has introduced profound changes in the way of disseminating information, in reciprocal knowledge and the far greater ease of establishing communication. For a long time, contacts were practically inexistent¹⁰ - evoking a country situated in another continent was subject to preconceptions that were progressively instated and rarely coincided with the reality of the facts leading to the entrenchment and construction of stereotypes.

From the onset the business community showed a clear interest towards specialised sectors, one could almost say market "niches" that currently confirm the trends observed all over Europe, namely, restaurants, trade, textile products especially in the area of women's clothing. At a time when the restaurant sector was heading downhill, due to the existence of a situation of too many establishments running the same type of business – a phenomenon which could be labelled as saturation –, this rapidly gave way to the installation of another type of activity.

¹⁰ Macao, a remote territory under Portuguese administration, was referred to by those who mostly knew it, by direct or indirect means, and based on this, permitted themselves to extrapolate information not always coincident with the truth. Mainland China, in an undersized perspective, was frequently identified with Macao.

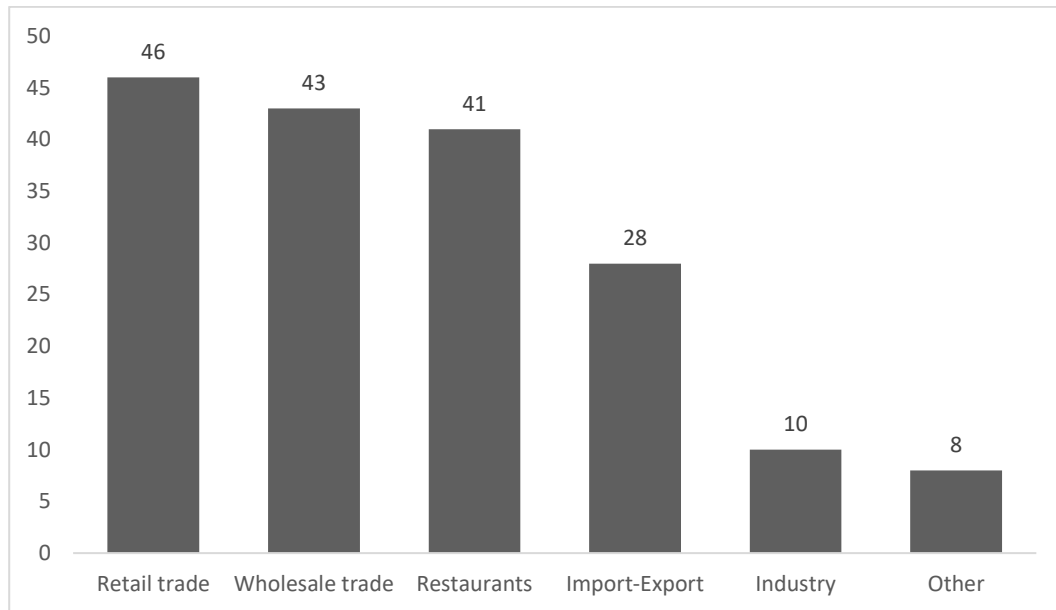


Figure 6 - Professional Activity Sectors in Portugal Source: Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006.

The data obtained reveal that around a quarter of the Chinese residents in Portugal work in the context of the export-import business, reflecting the growth of trade activities with China (see Figure 6). This enables considering them as potential agents of promotion of bilateral relations, embodying a facilitating vehicle and operating as a bridge of internationalisation between Portugal and the “Orient”/Asia.

The implications of the presence of the Chinese business community in Portugal concerning relations with China essentially boil down to the business field. Marked by relations of family nature, which lend continuity to the tradition of Chinese enterprises, their business organisation basically presents the following features: management that holds total control and in which family members hold key positions; visible hierarchisation based on leadership driven by a living ancestor, who has the final say in ultimate decisions; stability in roles and obligations undertaken; and funding assured by the family, which contributes to strengthen the actual internal unity.

Guanxi, an extremely important practice firmly rooted in the operation of family firms, consists of an interactive web that is able to create opportunities, establish partnerships and provide assistance and support when necessary. This web

is established between people and not between enterprises, ensuring credit by instilling the feeling of reciprocal trust and confidence.

The information obtained through the questionnaire relative to the connections instituted between enterprises, whose owners are of the same origin, established in Portugal or China, or with owners of Portuguese enterprises established in their own country, reveals the differences illustrated in the following graphic representations.

Thus, our findings demonstrated that the intensity of the relationships of Chinese businesspersons with Portuguese businesspersons is above all of low (48%) or zero (15%) intensity, which indicates that their commercial and business networks are essentially situated outside the Portuguese business community. Likewise, when questioned about the intensity of their relationships with Chinese companies operating in Europe, the Chinese businesspersons answered that they are above all of low (31%) or zero (42%) intensity. However, when questioned about their transnational relations with China, almost all the businesspersons (93%) answered that they maintain ties with their country of origin.

The settlement of Chinese immigration on national territory triggers challenging situations both with respect to the policy developed domestically and at an external level. As to relations with the Portuguese State, offering difficulties that would be desirable to see overcome, the Chinese critically prioritised the lack of compliance with deadlines, bureaucracy, tardy or non-existent response, which is considered discriminatory conduct (Figure 7).

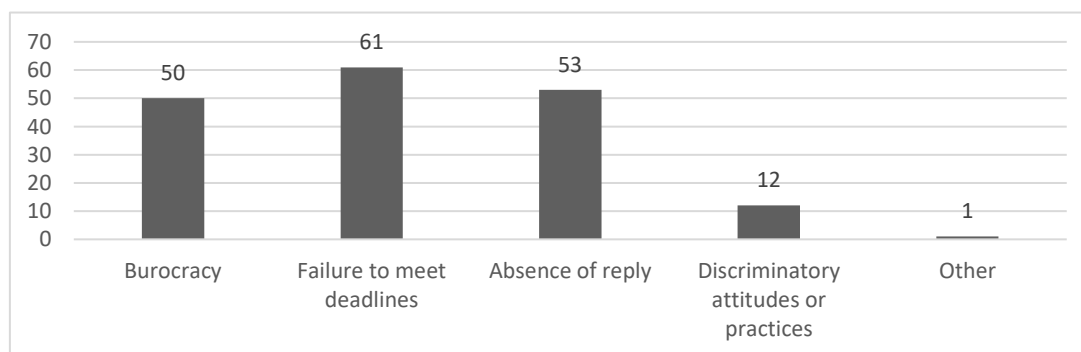


Figure 7- Difficulties in interactions with Portuguese Authorities Source: Rocha-Trindade *et al.*, 2006

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The most recent wave of Chinese migration (from the last decade of the twentieth century), characterised by the "search for opportunities", reflects the current dynamics of globalisation and China's growing insertion in the world economy, incorporating individuals with the highest educational level and, in some cases, personal experience of having previously lived in other European or even American countries.

In the context of migratory policies, the replacement of a logic of restriction of entrance into national territory by a flexible attitude based on the attraction of qualified flows, especially of entrepreneurs, potential investors as well as brains who could act in areas with an acute shortage of specialists, could lead to a revival offering benefits to both sides.

Conclusion

Taking a retrospective glance at the mobility that characterises the life of the Chinese people, the classic "diaspora" model could be applicable as a concept, which is embodied here in all its aspects. Throughout the ages, the different waves that carried Chinese migrants all over the world, coming from diverse regions, and the latent motivations, reveal a series of triggers of economic and social nature, not unrelated to factors of political order, which arise according to the time and place in which they occur.

The international movements that have flourished for centuries and continue to take place, the settlement that followed in areas that subsequently began to secure the possibility of absorbing these immigrants, as well as the maintenance of contacts in terms of the installed dispersion, allow for shared emotional relationships which complete the set of specific features of these movements.

As the European space has progressively become a highly prized destination, increasingly sought after, its growing Chinese community is significantly distributed throughout the continent, albeit with its constitution being heterogeneous and the assessments pointing to the total number resident in each country differing.

Among all who reside within the European space or beyond its borders, a constant connection is maintained with the country of origin, arising from a process

of ongoing interrelations, that are conducted through reciprocal information networks and operate via family, personal and social ties. Underlying all of this is an economic relationship, in which the situation of the labour market and business opportunities constitute driving conditions towards increased emigration.

Mostly originating from the province of Zhejiang, those newly arrived as a result of recruitment provided by those already established here could be classified as part of a displacement made from their origin to a foreign country, more as a movement within the actual community than considering it as international migration.

The choice of Portugal as their destination country is relatively recent. Although the beginning occurred in a marginal way in the first part of the twentieth century, from the 1930s, the migratory currents have progressively grown in a significant manner from the 1990s, a situation, which is expected to continue.

Chinese businesspersons in Portugal nurture an ongoing relationship among one another, with countries where other communities of theirs reside and with their own country of origin. They manage to develop and maintain connections with China both in the institutional sphere and social sphere, essentially marked by issues of economic scope. For this reason, we should consider the importance that they constitute for an immediate strategy to be able to be envisaged in the long term.

The settlement and growing presence of Chinese immigrants in Portugal should be reflected upon by those in government that are responsible for this area. In addition to the mandatory internal regulations that define the rules on entrance and permanence in the country and those that guide forms of development of professional activities, it would be desirable to take into account the whole existing potentiality of this community, when pondering the perspective of internationalisation that is posed.

The activity of the businesspersons comprising the Chinese business community established in Portugal creates new investment opportunities for the country acting as an attractive factor that boosts the entire economy. The current insertion holding the migration of Chinese origin, integrated in the worldwide

geographic scope where its existence is demarcated, merits being highlighted in the process of transnational globalisation.

A stronger involvement of the Portuguese authorities and of civil society itself in the knowledge and dissemination of China and its extremely rich culture, which should include an approach taking into account all the diversity that it encapsulates as well as knowledge of the language, could counter the construction of stereotypes and the distorted view in common circulation.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Maria Beatriz Rocha-Trindade is a Sociologist and a Full Professor at Universidade Aberta (the Portuguese Open University). Her research career began with a doctorate at Université René Descartes–Sorbonne, in Paris (1970) with a thesis on Portuguese emigration to France. Since then she published more than two hundred scientific works, in different languages, in Portugal and in various countries in the world; among them, she is the author of several books, including a well-known Portuguese textbook, *Sociologia das Migrações*. International, as well as internal, migrations and cultural relations have always been her dominant fields of interest. She was the founder of the Centro de Estudos das Migrações e das Relações Interculturais, in Lisbon (a R&D Unit of the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology) where she works as a senior research scientist. She belongs to several international scientific associations and networks and is a member of editorial boards or referee for journals and revues dedicated to the study of migration issues. In recognition for her teaching and research work, she has been awarded the French Ordre Nationale du Mérite and the Portuguese Grã-Cruz of Ordem da Instrução Pública.

ABSTRACT

This text explores the presence of the Chinese community in Portugal, considering its specific characteristics and its evolution. Moreover, the individuality of this community motivated our interest in pursuing a research project, centred on the business community group established in this country. This study led to a transnational vision of the networks that interact in this field. The diversity of the migratory flows involved and the economic dimension prevailing throughout the entire Chinese diaspora compelled the analysis of their relationship in terms of European networks and the institutional link maintained with China itself.

Keywords: Chinese diaspora; Portugal; Chinese businesspersons; associativism, entrepreneurship, migration

RESUMO

Este texto explora a presença da comunidade chinesa em Portugal, considerando as suas características específicas e sua evolução. A individualidade que assume motivou o interesse pela realização de um projecto de pesquisa, centrado sobre a comunidade empresarial estabelecida no nosso país. Este estudo levou a uma visão transnacional das redes que interagem nesse campo. A diversidade dos fluxos migratórios que as integram e a dimensão económica que prevalece em toda a diáspora chinesa, conduz a perspectivar o seu relacionamento ao nível das redes europeias e a ligação institucional que mantêm com a própria China.