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China Town malls in South Africa in the 21st century: Ethnic Chinatowns or Chinese state projects?

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Abstract
In recent years, wholesale centers that sell Chinese goods and which, most often, are owned by Chinese nationals or ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs, have proliferated across South Africa at the same time as the increase in migration of individuals and capital from China. Because these centers also provide for retail sales, they are referred to as malls. While many of these malls have names that suggest their possible connection to China, the few that are named ''China Town'' stand out. The latter, it is argued and demonstrated here, make claims to China's global ascendance and shed light on a conflicting relationship between Chinese diasporic communities and Chinese state politics. China Town-named malls are more than merely spaces of commerce; they also present an analytical space to think about how diverse types of Chinese actors become implicated in and negotiate their identity and relationship to China's shifting global image and politics.

Keywords
China-in-Africa, China Town, Chineseness, migration, South Africa

Introduction

China's ascendance to a position of global power in the 21st century is unequivocal. On the one hand, research focused on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) role in the rapid transformation of the country's economy since the late

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1970s shows rising export, trade, investment and GDP as well as declining poverty rate (Bergstein et al., 2008; Deng and Wang, 2005; Hung, 2015; Xing, 2010; Zheng, 2005). On the other hand, new concerns about whether Chinese leaders would ''restructure[e] the capitalist world-economy in support of [the] nation's economic ascent to core status'' (Ciccantell and Bunker, 2005: 566) dovetail the now-popularized debate over whether the increased ''Chinese'' presence in Africa is part of Chinese state politics. That is, is China colonizing or renewing engagement with the ''Third World?'' Along these lines of thinking about China's rapid development and overseas expansion, the Western media (especially that in the USA and the UK), not to mention the leaders of the party-state themselves, have also portrayed ''the Chinese'' in Africa as either a ''silent army'' or ''foot soldiers'' that could either be undesirable to economies of African countries or beneficial to China's foreign relations, respectively. Such a binary representation of the new migrants (colonists or patriots), who started to emigrate in large numbers in the 1980s, is interwoven with assumptions about the state of China's national identity. That is, in the discourses concerning China's ascendance, what is ''China'' and what is ''Chinese'' – Chinese identity/''Chineseness'' – have been presumed. That the Chinese state is not unified and that ''the Chinese'' includes diverse types of Chinese actors – élites, state workers, entrepreneurs, local ethnic Chinese, etc. – are often overlooked. As Nicholas Thomas (2017) points out, ''. . . the voices of the Chinese people themselves are usually overlooked or assumed to be subsumed under that of the state.'' However, Thomas in turn leaves out the voices of ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese nationalities. Allen Chun, on the other hand, poses the problem in the form of a question, which this article takes up: ''who is really speaking here'' (Chun, 1996: 111)?

Scholars such as Tu Huynh et al. (2010) and Jixia Lu (2016) have started to offer responses. Whereas Huynh et al. delineate different ''waves'' of Chinese people that arrived in South Africa before and after the 1980s to disperse the conception of a homogeneous Chinese voice, Lu argues that the Chinese in Ghana are unequivocally constitutive of independent Chinese migrants. Describing them as diverse and fragmented agricultural workers of small privately-owned instead of large state-owned farms, Lu (2016: 33) asserts that the Chinese ''[work] hard to meet their own livelihood needs in an increasingly unpredictable and volatile market.'' With strong personal networks and family relations in Ghana, they ''[live] independently with no support or even contact with the Chinese government'' (Lu, 2016: 33). For Lu, the people and state have distinct interests; therefore, to continually frame intercontinental mobility as a state-led project to expand China's foothold in Africa misrepresents the Chinese people's rationale and agency. However, Lu tells little about who these people are in China. According to Ho-Fung Hung (2008: 157), China's post-Maoist reforms have produced a ''new class of oligarchs'' that includes ''the cadre-capitalist class [beneficiaries of political

lineage], self-made businessmen [or middle class small entrepreneurs], middle class professionals and the like.'' Lu's farmers could be any of these, just like the diverse groups of Chinese migrants Huynh et al. researched. Though Huynh et al. and Lu's studies draw attention to the complexity of the concepts of ''China'' and ''Chinese'' that have so far been indiscriminately used to refer to both state and people, recasting the Chinese people as independent economic migrants in opposition to the colonist image misses the evolving dialectic between people and state in defining these concepts that actually pose a problem of national identity.

This article aims to reveal that the more ''Beijing's leaders perceive that the Chinese overseas are crucial to the realization of the 'China Dream''' (Suryadinata, 2017: 3), the more the livelihood strategies of these people (inclusive of Chinese nationals and ethnic Chinese of other nationalities) and the CCP-state become increasingly entangled, in complex ways. In the 21st century, the relationship between different kinds of Chinese people and the party-state is understood better in dialectical terms, ''with the one set against the other but, at the same time, incomprehensible without reference to the other'' (Dirlik, 2004: 491). If ''China'' and ''Chinese'' were already treated as synonymous terms in the 19th and 20th centuries by those in the West, China's global ascendance unequivocally conflates the two. It is not only the West that is doing the conflating, but also the Chinese state and Chinese people overseas. Unlike other migrant or diasporic populations, ''China'' has always occupied an important role in defining what it means to be ''Chinese'' or ''Chineseness.'' That role ranged from leaders of the party-state directly calling on diasporic Chinese in the mid-20th century to take up the nationalities of the countries in which they resided, to China looming only as an imagined ancestral- and cultural-homeland in the conception of a global Chinese identity without a territorial state.[1] Now, at a time when reforms implemented by leaders of the party-state, including relaxing of emigration controls, have elevated the country's economic status globally and enabled large numbers of Chinese citizens to immigrate overseas to build lives elsewhere (Xiang, 2007), who actually sets the parameters of ''Chineseness'' and

[1]Lynn Pan (1990) and Yoon Jung Park's (2008) study of Chinese in the US and South Africa, respectively, suggest that the idea of China as an imagined homeland occurred when China was semi-colonized and weak. Also, in the US, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 restricted Chinese immigration and curbed interactions that the ethnic Chinese people had with China. In South Africa, the apartheid government's perception of a Communist threat after World War II minimized contact that ethnic Chinese South Africans had with China. In these instances, China was an imaginary community held together by blood lineage and a seemingly immutable culture. In another instance, Chun (1996) and Anthony Reid (2009) remind us that after the Tiananmen massacre (1989), the diasporic Chinese saw the party-state as having lost its moral authority and began to distance themselves from a state-centric China. Against that background, scholars like Wei-ming Tu (1991: 1 and 28) propose concepts such as ''cultural China'' to critique geopolitical China and call on diasporic Chinese and China scholars to interrogate the meaning of being Chinese.

what will be its defining characteristics in the 21st century?[2] Is the notion of ''global Chineseness,''[3] which has been assembled in relation to global imaginings of community ''unbound by any real-world embodiment'' (Reid, 2009: 197), losing its autonomy? A few scholars have already raised the issue of ''Chineseness'' becoming unbound, which seems to suggest an erosion of ''global Chineseness'' as constructed by diasporic Chinese, who reflect a particular kind of transnational cultural/hybrid identity and consciousness that connects multiple time and space. However, the question could also be conceived as an appeal, especially, to ethnic Chinese of any nationality to resist a rising tide of Chinese nationalism and opt out of a CCP-state-centric ''Chineseness.'' In this sense, ''global Chineseness'' is an extension of a state colonizing project of both new territories and Chinese diasporas.

My discussion and analysis of a small cluster of China Town-named malls show that, because of the ambivalent entanglement with Chinese state politics,[4] it would take substantial efforts for ''Chineseness'' to unbound in the second sense. Because the China Town-named malls are few in number, they

[2]As Kam Louie (2008: 8) points out, ''Debates about what it means to be Chinese have raged for decades.'' On the one hand, the concepts of ''China'' and ''Chinese'' serve diverse purposes that are related to ''the poverty of language,''[2] particularly English (Reid, 2009: 200). On the other hand, the diverse and, at times, contradictory purposes have generated awareness that the idea of an essential and fixed ''Chineseness'' in and out of China is hard to justify in spite of impulses at the popular levels to identify ''some discernable characteristics. . .something in their hybridity that is classifiable as somehow 'Chinese''' (Wickberg, 2007: 39). Aihwa Ong (1993: 745) offered a response to this debate by asserting that Chinese identity, particularly of cosmopolitan and affluent Overseas Chinese, is better understood through the frame of ''intersecting national and transnational political arenas'' that reflect multiple belongings (spread between family and economic opportunities). Overseas Chinese possess a ''deterritorialized modern consciousness'' and subjectivity (Ong, 1993: 770) that destabilize what it means to be Chinese.

[3]''Global Chineseness'' could be based on a common culture and kinship (Tu, 1991) or intersecting and transnational networks (Ong, 1993) – the different vectors from which diasporic Chinese could choose to self-identify or claim their belonging.

[4]This article brings together fieldwork conducted in South Africa and contemporary scholarship on Overseas Chinese /diasporic Chinese. During the time that I lived in South Africa (between 2005–2012), Chinese people and businesses became increasingly noticeable. As a result, I, working with two other researchers, started to conduct in-depth interviews in 2007. We created a questionnaire to ensure consistency of our interviews and used the snowball method to recruit Chinese migrants who had been resident in Johannesburg for more than five years. Informal interviews were also carried out when I started to conduct fieldwork alone in the Eastern Cape province in 2012. The research up until 2012 informs my analysis in this article, while the empirical data related to the China Town-named malls are from fieldwork mainly conducted in 2013. From my travels across the Eastern Cape and conversations with South African friends from that province, I learned about the China Town mall in Beacon Bay. I visited it once in 2012 to do preliminary observations and returned again in 2013. By then, I had already known about and visited one China Town mall in Cape Town. In October 2013, I traveled with four Chinese colleagues to Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. With assistance from collaborators in South Africa, we pre-arranged our visits with Chinese entrepreneurs, Chinese association leaders, academics and South African government authorities. These interviews did not follow a focus group model, because the number of interviewers always exceeded the interviewees. We also had informal conversations, over meals, with some of our interviewees. When my colleagues returned to China and I remained in South Africa to continue my research in Beacon Bay, I relied on informal interviews and more observations. I also relied on informal interviews with informants in

are an interesting case for investigating the possibility of a third claim to ''global Chineseness'' that simultaneously relies on and detaches Chineseness from the Chinese state and diaspora Chinese. That is, it is the property of global consumers who attribute to Chineseness different notions of otherness, culture, quality and opportunity. ''China Town malls'' in South Africa are emblematic of this. They are not simple spaces of commerce; they also present an analytical space for thinking about how diverse types of Chinese actors become implicated in and negotiate their identity and relationship to China's shifting global image and politics. These malls share the same origin as the wholesale centers that proliferated across South Africa at the same time as an influx of capital and people from China took place. These wholesale centers sell China-made goods and, most often, are owned by Chinese nationals or ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs (Dittgen, 2011; Harrison et al., 2012). Due to retail sales transactions, or the actual use of the word ''mall'' in the name, they are also referred to as malls. Many of them have names that indicate their connection to China (e.g., China Mall, China Mart, China Discount Shopping Center, Oriental City, and Dragon City), but few are named ''China Town.'' The latter, I argue, capitalizes on ''Chinatown'' as a global symbol of ''otherness'' and simultaneously makes claims to the Chinese state. By claiming to be ''Chinatown'' – an ethnic enclave/settlement mainly associated with racial exclusions in the West – at a time when it is impossible to ignore China's prominence, the China Town-named malls present a space in which to analyze the relations between and the malleability of Chinese capital, place- and identity-making, and nationalism in an African and Global South context. That this analytical space was created by Chinese and ethnic Chinese South African entrepreneurs, who insisted that conventional Chinatown settlements do not belong to any particular group of people, time or place, is critical. Though retrofitting Chinatown's essentialized ethnic features for modern consumption, their claims signal a historical consciousness of ''otherness'' and evoke a particular notion of Chineseness that is intended to counteract Chinese state politics. This phenomenon prompts the question: How will contemporary scholars of ''Chinese'' identity reflect the changing meaning of places as well as diasporic and transnational identities in the current global condition?

Chinatown settlement and its re-imaginings

When the leaders of the CCP-state began to implement market reforms in the post-Maoist period, state-owned enterprises were not the only entities encouraged to ''go out'' as part of the decentralization process. Chinese people were

Grahamstown, at Rhodes University where I was previously based, for information concerning the China Town mall in Beacon Bay.

also allowed greater mobility: ethnic Chinese capitalists of other nationalities, mostly from Hong Kong, were encouraged to invest in China (Hung, 2008), while relaxed migration controls allowed Chinese nationals to ''go out'' in unprecedented numbers. The two types of ''going out'' and market reforms were closely linked. As state-owned enterprises at various governing levels responded to new demands to improve industrial efficiency, and to profit-making pressures, welfare packages for workers and employment opportunities were either eliminated or reduced (Jones and Zou, 2017; Hung, 2008). Falling income and job insecurity in a once-encapsulated work unit system, combined with other changes, contributed to an increase in the international outflow of people from China. According to Biao Xiang (2007), the introduction of the identity card and liberalization of private passports in 1986, and urban housing reforms beginning in 1998, were also contributing factors. In the early 1990s, an estimated 3 million Chinese went abroad each year; by 2000, that number stood at 10 million and rose to 31 million in 2005 (Xiang, 2007: 69). Among them were new migrants from non-traditional areas in China, and students. In addition to Europe, Japan, South Korea and Singapore became popular destinations for business, education or tourism. Previously less well-known places like South Africa also became new migration destinations.

Among the African countries, South Africa is one of the few with a long history of Chinese presence. The Dutch East India Company ferried Chinese slaves from Batavia (Indonesia) to work in the Cape Colony in the 17th century (Worden, 2016); British capitalists recruited Chinese indentured laborers to work in the Transvaal Colony's (Gauteng province) gold mining industry in the early 1900s (Harris, 1994); and independent Chinese migrants found their way to South Africa following stories about the ''gold mountain'' (Accone, 2004; Ho, 2011a). A group of ''Chinese'' industrialists, actually ethnic Chinese of Taiwanese and Hong Kong nationalities, arrived in the early 1980s by invitation of the apartheid government to help create industries in the Black homelands (Pickles and Woods, 1989). This centuries-long history has resulted in South Africa having one of the oldest Chinese settlements on the African continent. In Johannesburg, South Africa's most populous city and economic hub, there are two Chinatowns that are ''neighborhoods of Chinese settlement'' (Anderson. 1987: 580). Although they are located in the same city, the two Chinatowns are byproducts of different migration histories. Now referred to as ''First'' and ''Second'' Chinatowns (Park, 2009), the latter grew in the context of new waves of Chinese migration and the suburbanization of post-apartheid South African cities (Xu, 2017).

Dating back to the 19th century, First Chinatown emerged as a result of the presence of independent Chinese migrants from Guangdong seeking fortunes in the gold mining industry, as had other Chinese in Australia, Canada and the USA (Yap and Man, 1996). Not being granted digging licenses, which were

reserved for White people, they started up businesses that catered to the non-white miners in the area, near the former Malay Camp. Melanie Yap and Diane Man (1996: 84) describe the presence of opium dens, gambling and prostitution, along with police raids and other ''vices'' in the area. Their description of what would become ''First Chinatown'' resonates with Chinatown settlements elsewhere, as vice-ridden places of filth and depravity where brothels, gambling halls, opium dens and crime were found (Light, 1974). Perceptions of Chinatown as a ''Celestial cesspool'' was in part how Western societies came to terms with the Chinese ''Others'' living in their midst. This view would later be subverted by marketing schemes to transform Chinatown settlements into areas for ethnic tourism. Nonetheless, when the apartheid government enacted the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, which severed all contacts between South Africa and China (Harris and Pieke, 1998:118), First Chinatown became the place where local ethnic Chinese could find Chinese food and groceries, imagine cultural belonging, and enjoy the camaraderie of other local Chinese. On the southwestern edge of the inner-city, First Chinatown still stands despite a prolonged exodus caused by shifting demographics, fear of rising rates of crime and capital flight to the suburbs at the end of apartheid. However, a small number of new migrants from Guangdong, relatives of the South African-born Chinese, began to trickle in at the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s. The few businesses that they sustain, mainly restaurants and a supermarket, and the annual Lunar New Year's fireworks display organized by The Chinese Association (previously Transvaal Chinese Association) still attract visitors. For the local ethnic Chinese, it has become ''a place of memory, nostalgia'' (Ho, 2011b). Initiatives to revitalize First Chinatown show little success; while Second Chinatown, being embedded in transnational Chinese capital and migrant networks, already surpasses First Chinatown in importance. The attention that local government and Chinese state authorities give to the migrant associations (allegedly there are more than 50 that are active) in Second Chinatown reinforces this (Čavojská, 2013).

Second Chinatown emerged as a Chinese settlement at the end of apartheid, in a previously Jewish area in Johannesburg's northern suburbs called Cyrildene. It began with a Taiwanese-owned noodle restaurant, followed by a Chinese-owned restaurant. Soon thereafter, ''other Chinese followed suit and accelerated their occupation of the area through purchasing properties, opening restaurants and supermarkets, and setting up novelty shops'' such as massage parlors and karaoke bars (Xu, 2017: 85). Although acting as a gateway for the majority of the new migrants, Second Chinatown does not fit easily into settlement models like ''ethnoburb'' or ''satellite Chinatown,'' as David Ip (2005) and Wei Li (2005) theorize in the cases of Australia and the USA. An ''ethnoburb'' is a suburban ethnic settlement constitutive of commercial district and residential area for educated and affluent middle class

Chinese migrants. Being situated within a larger geographical boundary, Chinese migrants are not the dominant population and the businesses bear no obvious cultural symbols. ''Satellite Chinatown'' suggests that the Chinese settlement is an ethnic enclave, though not located in the inner city like earlier Chinatown settlements. Ethnic enclaves have been conceived as a periphery within the core, operating as a socio-economic complex within its geographical boundaries. They are characterized by ''crowdedness, internal conflicts and [a] certain degree of business closed-ness'' (Xu, 2017: 88). Contrary to these models, Philip Harrison et al. write:

> Cyrildene, with its origins in the 1990s, is however, not the archetypical Chinatown – which would generally have a long history going back to the waves of Chinese emigration from the late nineteenth century – and has a suburban, rather than an inner city location. It is also not an 'ethnoburb' as it is a space of petty entrepreneurialism that is overwhelmingly and very visibly Chinese, although it is embedded within the broader and more diffuse cluster of Chinese activity in the eastern part of Johannesburg. (Harrison et al., 2012: 917)

With more than 160 prominently visible Chinese-owned businesses in Cyrildene (see Figure 1), Derrick Avenue is the place to go to ''for anything Chinese,'' ranging ''from restaurants to hair salons, butcheries and even a Chinese library'' (Nair, 2014). An ''invisible economy'' under the guise of ''normal'' businesses also thrives, trading in forged visas, passports and driver's licenses; money laundering; prostitution; drug dealing and money lending, etc. (Xu, 2017: 86). Further complicating Second Chinatown's identity is its connection to a complex of Chinese businesses and residential clusters dispersed across Johannesburg. These include First Chinatown in the inner city; emergent Chinese ethnoburbs in suburbs surrounding Cyrildene, where local ethnic and new Chinese migrants reside behind gated property developments and engage in non-traditional Chinatown businesses; the Chinese wholesale–retail centers that mainly concentrate around Fordsburg/Crown Mines (nearby Soweto); and the Chinese state-owned enterprises in Sandton/Rivonia (Harrison et al., 2012: 914–924). Through these clusters, Second Chinatown is integrated into other local and international economies, distinguishing it from ethnoburb and satellite Chinatown.

However, in other ways, it resembles the latter two models. Economic transactions aside, Second Chinatown is also a place where different Chinese dialects, together with Mandarin-Chinese, are spoken, and a place where hometown associations are located and where Chinese goods can be consumed. Thus, it is a place where newcomers from China can go to feel ''at home.'' It clearly offers a sense of reconnecting with hometowns and reimagining community and Chineseness. It is a real, living, breathing entity where the economic and socio-cultural activities of the Chinese people are

Figure 1. Map of Cyrildene.
Source: Google Maps (2018a).

concentrated and newcomers find their footing before moving to other parts of the country. However, as the number of Chinese people continues to increase and diplomatic ties between China and South Africa deepen, the local media represents Second Chinatown as foreign and mysterious (*Mail & Guardian*, 2007) as well as dirty and a place where bylaws related to housing and other matters are infringed (Ho, 2013). To the South African observers, including local ethnic Chinese, it is an ethnic enclave unrepresentative of the new South Africa. At either end of Derrick Avenue, Second Chinatown's two elaborately-designed arches with *Yuebao Tangren Jie* (Johannesburg Chinatown) etched on them (see Figure 2), funded by the Chinese community in Cyrildene and unveiled in 2013 (Ho, 2013), infuse the landscape with an ethnic–racial flavor and sense of foreignness that heightens local residents' concerns about the substantial presence of China in Africa.

Amidst criticisms by certain segments of South African society, however, the worldliness of the twin-arches offers a strategic response to local challenges and a way of representing the entire community to the host society. Ufrieda Ho's (2013) description of the twin-arches captures its nuances: they are an ''invitation and proclamation'' of boundaries that embody diverse

Figure 2. *Yuebao Tangren Jie* (约堡唐人街)/Johannesburg (Second) Chinatown: photo taken in 2013.

definitions of community, whether local, transnational or ethnic. Indeed, being a cultural symbol like the Chinese characters on business signs, East Asian motifs on buildings, and lion dances and firecrackers that people globally associate with Chineseness, the twin-arches also serve as an invitation for non-Chinese tourists. In claiming its place for cultural consumption too, Second Chinatown weaves together identity, culture and political-economy as do conventional Chinatown settlements in cities elsewhere that have taken a tourism-turn. Statements such as the one by the executive deputy director of the Chinatown Administration Commission render Second Chinatown's connectedness with global Chinatowns: ''The arch, characterized by typical Tang and Song architectural styles, is the largest of its kind among Chinatowns all over the world'' (Confucius Institute, 2016).[5] Ivan Light's (1974) use of ''purposeful Orientalizing'' to describe the tourism-turn of Chinatowns on the US West Coast since the 1930s captures the ongoing phenomenon of reconstructing these settlements as exotic destinations by revising their demeaning imagery and reinforcing the imagination of non-Chinese tourists of the Chinese ''Other.'' Rather than being contradictory, stereotypes of ''Chineseness'' and the continual foreignness of Chinatowns enable them to be ''authentic tourist meccas'' at a time when ideas governing urban economic

[5]This claim cannot be underestimated, especially when the Chineseness of South Africa's new Chinese migrants has not been problematized or adequately analyzed vis-a-vis ethnic Chinese migrants with non-Chinese nationalities (see Suryadinata, 2017).

development are shifting globally (Light, 1974: 391). As phases of urban deconcentration spread across the globe in tandem with the gradual shift toward a new global economic order, from the late 19th century onwards, cities, including Johannesburg, that were once dependent on a single industry became economically unviable when confronted with population, capital and employment flights to the suburbs (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012; Murray, 2011).

Among possible strategies for urban regeneration, tourism emerged as a powerful device to augment incentives, investments and a wealthy population (see Spirou, 2011). In the USA, urban tourism focused on marketing diversity merged with city developments and the struggles to save inner-city Chinatown settlements (see Guan and Knottnerus, 2006; Pang and Rath, 2006). In their own ways, all drew (and continue to draw) ''upon traditional characterizations of Chinatown as Other while reconstructing this Otherness in a way that appears friendly to tourists'' (Santos et al., 2008: 1002). Studies concerning Chinatown's revitalization in the USA suggest that the construction of arches and representation of Chinatown as ''an exotic, yet comfortable place to visit''[6] were common in large North American cities (Santos et al. 2008: 1004 and1007). Cindy Wong and Gary McDonogh (2013) and others challenge such reduction of Chinatowns. For Wong and McDonogh (2013: 42), contemporary Chinatowns in global cities are ''markers of modernity, cosmopolitanism and globalization.'' They recreate established global visions of the city, as Ip (2005) observes in the case of Brisbane, whereby having a Chinatown in the urban center, in spite of a clear absence of Chinese residents, signals the city's stature as a cosmopolitan metropolis. Monica DeHart (2015: 184) refers to this as ''world conjuring,'' which failed in the case of San José, Costa Rica's Chinatown. These views suggest that, as a result of contemporary re-imaginings of Chinatown, it is a highly-visible icon within post-industrial cities and a global carrier of ethnic authenticity and modernity. The history of community building that connected Chinatown settlements falls by the wayside, because global Chinatowns now embody the dialectic of segregation and diversification (Wong and McDonogh, 2013: 42). However, the latter is not as straightforward when municipal efforts are fraught with debates that are interlinked with a changing landscape increasingly defined by China (DeHart, 2015).

As discussed above, determining whether Second Chinatown in South Africa is an ethnic enclave or ethnoburb in Johannesburg is already a complex matter. The unveiling of the twin-arches further complicates its identity as a community and tourist destination similar to global Chinatowns. However, the China Town-named malls suggest another interpretation of conventional

[6]Emphasis is placed on food, visual symbolism and cultural festivals in addition to safety and the residents' friendliness.

Chinatown settlement that is articulated in relation with, and possibly even is in opposition to, Chinese state politics. Chinatown is a usable brand: while it draws upon a particular history embedded in the development of Western countries, it is ultimately emptied of history when transformed into a property of global consumers who consume ''China'' in a way that attributes different notions of otherness, culture, quality and opportunity to Chineseness. China Town malls are created by Chinese expatriates and ethnic Chinese South Africans who have combined resources with other Chinese expatriates or non-Chinese South Africans. They are few, located in Ottery, Milnerton and Parow in Cape Town (all three properties of the China Town Trust, an investment company owned by a local ethnic Chinese and two White South Africans), and in Beacon Bay in East London (see Figure 3).

Whereas the China Town malls in Ottery and Beacon Bay are newly constructed commercial centers, the ones in Milnerton and Parow are pre-existing shopping malls that the China Town Trust purchased and re-named China Town. China Town malls, as already mentioned, are wholesale–retail centers like the ones that opened in the latter half of the 1990s in Johannesburg and multiplied since 2010 (Dittgen, 2011).

The interview with Mr. L (an ethnic Chinese) and Mr. K (a White South African) in 2013 revealed that while they share a common understanding as to why their malls are named China Town, only Mr. L further imagined them as

Figure 3. Beacon Bay (Eastern Cape province), Ottery, Milnerton and Parow (Western Cape province) in relation to Johannesburg.
Source: Google Maps (2018b).

conventional Chinatown settlements. Both men are investors of the China Town Trust in Cape Town. Speaking for the Trust, Mr. K shared the view that the presence of wholesale centers in Johannesburg, and that almost every big city in the world has a Chinatown (settlement), inspired the cross-fertilization and naming of their wholesale centers China Town. That is, Cape Town's status as a big city in South Africa justifies a Chinatown and, in turn, the presence of a Chinatown (of any form) reinforces Cape Town's already global reputation as a tourist destination. Rather than elaborating on tensions between Cape Town and Johannesburg, Mr. K immediately added that the Trust's three malls are only ''themed as Chinatown, and the general public seem to like that and it attracts them'' (Interview, 2013). The name makes it easy for customers to remember; and others also seem to agree with this. A non-South African Black shop attendant at China Town mall in Beacon Bay, who has worked for one Chinese employer for 11 years, affirmed that he knew ''Chinatown,'' as a place with ''China shops,'' and that there were three places like this in Johannesburg (Interview, 2013). Similarly, a Black South African university employee in Grahamstown, approximately two hours from Beacon Bay, stated that unlike other South African malls, she goes to ''China Town'' to buy Chinese goods from the Chinese (Interview, 2013). Her understanding actually reinforces the rationale for that mall's name.

That neither have been to First or Second Chinatown in Johannesburg and yet could offer descriptions of Chinatown bring to mind Wong and McDonogh's (2013: 43) point that, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, people ''relate diffuse images to sometimes different imaginations and experiences.'' Whereas Wong and McDonogh refer to ''the flows of images of Chinatown [by] multiple global media based in Chinese and non-Chinese production,'' in the South African context ''China's'' increasing presence in the forms of shops and low-wage employers, manufactured goods, investment, and as representing an anti-human rights state, influences how people know ''Chinatown'' even before experiencing one form of it or another. Mr. K's further description of Cape Town's China Town malls clearly highlights China's reputation as the world's manufacturer of ''cheap goods'' that enables the extension of globalization from below (Mathews, 2011): They are places where customers could ''buy good value'' or ''reasonably priced goods,'' but they are not ''Chinese markets'' (Interview, 2013). While China Town malls are markers of difference and value to a particular class of South African consumers, Mr. K emphasized they are not dominated by Chinese people. The latter is crucial because of post-apartheid policies related to equity issues that prevents their malls from being exclusive to one race. Mr. K cited the presence of the East African and Indian shops in the malls to indicate the Trust's China Towns' ''non-Chineseness,'' thereby affirming that they are neither conventional Chinatown settlements nor global Chinatowns. It is here that China Town malls are not sources of diasporic community building or cultural

reproduction, but are ''themed as Chinatown'' gains prominence' unless you can explain to me what "as the latter term" is referring to.

Ethnic Chinese restaurants, supermarkets and specialty shops that sell ethnic products stand alongside shops that sell China-made household electronics, apparels, fashion accessories, etc. inside the China Town malls in Cape Town and Beacon Bay. As Harrison et al. (2012: 916) and others explain, these are ''traditional 'Chinatown' activities.'' Cultural symbols, such as miniature pagoda-shaped watchtowers, small-scale gateways and red lanterns, also adorn the external structure and interior of these places, conjuring up a ''Chinese'' cultural space. Rather than proclaiming a Chinese space, cultural symbols constructed an ethnic experience for South African consumers. Certainly, Chinese wholesale–retail malls with other names that signal their connection to China also use the same cultural symbols to mark their difference vis-a-vis South African shopping malls. For example, Mr. N, an Indian South African manager of China Mall in Durban, believed that the mall's name reflected ''the trade between China and South Africa, the business venture between the two countries. That's why we follow the traditions of the Chinese culture to call it China Mall. We don't want to divert from the Chinese culture'' (Interview, 2013). Mr. N did not offer an explanation about what he meant by ''Chinese culture,'' but large red lanterns hanging from the ceilings and a Chinese medicine shop adorn the mall. It is not the use of cultural symbols that makes China Town-named (or themed) malls conspicuous, therefore, but rather the Chinese and non-Chinese investors' deliberate summoning of a long history of global diasporic Chinese community making.

China Town-named malls against the backdrop of rising China

China Town-named malls are distinct from other Chinese wholesale–retail malls in that they embody layers of relations and meaning-making. On the one hand, their materiality reflects China's ascendance as an economic power on the global stage and the African continent in particular; on the other hand, their name and display of Chinese cultural symbols implicate them in an ongoing process of re-imagining/re-negotiating conventional Chinatown settlements, diasporic Chinese communities and Chineseness over time and space. By dividing the word ''Chinatown'' into two words, the China Town malls signal, for South African customers, the Chinese origin of the shops and goods and make claim on a contemporary China that is increasingly powerful in the global imaginary. Similar to other Chinese businesses, these malls are capitalist undertakings that benefit from China's increased political and economic clout in Africa, observable through increased aid and development projects, loans and investments, and trade (Brautigam, 2009). Figures from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce reveal that China–Africa trade alone

''increased from USD1 billion in 2000 to an astounding USD221.88 billion in 2014,'' while Chinese investment reached nearly USD30 billion at the end of 2014 and commercial loans surpassed USD50 billion (Xu, 2017: 82). The ramifications of China's global ascendance are clear, from an African perspective. As Harrison et al. (2012) and Gordon Cheung (2009) suggest, ''China'' is a ''Chinese brand'' that the owners of these malls can capitalize on to maximize economic opportunities.

Because analysts have situated all ''Chinese'' activities under the canopy of ''China'' as a result of China's rise, Cheung (2009: 2) argues for differentiating between ''Made in China'' and ''Made by Chinese.'' The first signals the country's role as the world's factory after its entry to the World Trade Organization in 2001, and the Chinese state's national interests at the international level. In the Western media, ''Made in China'' also denotes cheap labor and politico-economic and human threats: whether or not China's loans and investments are mechanisms to colonize Africa would be included in this view. An equivalent term used in the African context is ''China, Inc'' (see Gill and Reilly, 2007; Wu, 2005). ''Made by Chinese'' relates to diasporic Chinese communities and refers further to transnational entrepreneurial actors together with their capital, networks, knowledge and cultural resources (global Chineseness). According to Cheung (2009: 5), Chinese state politics and diasporic Chinese economic activities compete, but also intersect, in mapping out ''Chinese'' business identities, especially in the region and contributing to China's global ascendance. Leo Suryadinata's (2017) study, detailing the changing importance of the Chinese overseas with regard to meeting China's foreign policy objectives and internal needs, supports Cheung's call to disaggregate the term ''China'' and thus, also, ''Chinese.'' This is important, albeit difficult to untangle, because ''the interests of the overseas Chinese [i.e., Chinese nationals overseas] have become merged with China's key national interests'' (Suryadinata 2017: 89). Through examples of how an increasingly confident Chinese state has intervened in incidents of anti-Chinese violence in the 21st century, Suryadinata adds that ''Beijing has begun to treat the Chinese overseas as a single entity, regardless of their citizenship'' (Suryadinata, 2017: 143). That all Chinese, expatriates and otherwise, are being subsumed under a singular national identity through a kind of imagined flexible/de-territorialized citizenship gives new meaning to global Chineseness – that is, paradoxically, belonging to a geopolitical China.

Whereas Cheung cautions against a state-centric interpretation of China's rise that inevitably neglects distinct human agency, Suryadinata (2017) and scholars such as Elena Barabantseva (2005) and Pál Nyíri (2001) remind us that making such a distinction is necessary against a backdrop of strengthening Chinese nationalism within and beyond China. But, as Suryadinata suggests, an extant notion of global Chineseness is fundamental to incorporate all ''Chinese'' into Chinese state politics: ''By appealing to their primordial

Chinese sentiments, Beijing hopes to use the Chinese overseas as a form of social capital'' (Suryadinata, 2017: 143). The Chinese state, through agencies like the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, facilitates the construction of a '' 'reality' of closeness to home'' to appropriate and reinforce the Chinese identity of new migrants and local ethnic Chinese (Barabantseva, 2005: 16). In particular, Chinese overseas are encouraged to form new hometown/provincial and professional organizations and organize large meetings to convene leaders of the organizations and representatives of the Chinese state. These meetings, often reported by the Chinese media, contribute to flows of people, information and capital and to strengthening the feeling of proximity to home. Nyíri (2001: 641) observes that the public narratives of identity generated by many of the new migrants in such platforms both mirror the state's discourse of Chineseness (e.g., patriots achieving success to contribute to developments in the homeland) and participate in a global construction of Chinese identity that links '''global Chinese' identity with shared values [that] raise[s] cultural Chineseness and transnational modernity in importance above the [place of residence].'' The latter draws on ''the Chinese/foreign dichotomy and re-'other[s]' the foreign'' (Nyíri, 2001: 640). In taking up both roles, this ''class of transnational apparatchiks,'' as Nyíri (2001: 649) refers to the new migrants in Europe, are ''the main vehicle of the Chinese globalization project. . .'' Each public platform (i.e., meetings, holiday celebrations, exhibitions, arts festivals, etc.) reinforces a feeling of proximity to home and, at the same time, allows the Chinese migrants to ''prov[e] [their] loyalty to an official audience in China'' (Nyíri, 2001: 649-650). What seems to be happening is that a diasporic imagination (with or without direct participation of the Chinese state) that is infused with transnational nationalism/nationalist transnationalism is supplanting other imaginings of Chineseness (Ang, 2013).

In South Africa, Chinese associations organized by new migrants in Second Chinatown and a few individuals who have made their ''first bucket of gold,''[7] also work to ''unite the community. . .to face the challenges of [the] South African environment. . ., 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. . .'' (Čavojská, 2013: 79). One example is a statement by ''300,000 overseas Chinese,'' which appeared as an advertisement in a daily newspaper, admonishing the Tshwane mayor's visit to Taiwan in contravention of the ''One China'' policy (*The Star*, 7 January 2017). The launching of the Shunde China Africa Chamber of Commerce in 2017 in South Africa is another example, revealing that the local ethnic Chinese who are South African citizens are no exception in articulating and mobilizing Chinese nationalism. Though the investors of

[7]This is a term used among Chinese migrants who arrived in South Africa with state-owned enterprises in the early 1990s and remained in the country to establish their own businesses.

the China Town-named malls emphasize commerce as the heart of the malls, they recognize the significance of being connected to China, too. Moreover, using ''China'' in naming Chinese-owned businesses in South Africa is unexceptional. As Mr. X, a Chinese manager of China Mall in Johannesburg, pointed out, in the vicinity of where he works, at least 15 to 20 commercial centers exhibit ''China'' in their names (Interview, 2013). Harrison et al.'s map of the distribution of Chinese firms in Johannesburg that utilize ''China'' and ''Chinese'' in their names (see Figure 4) supports Mr. X's estimation. Relying on the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) database of registered firms, Harrison et al. (2012: 913) found that there were at least 329 businesses with ''China'' and ''Chinese'' in their names, with 172 of them in

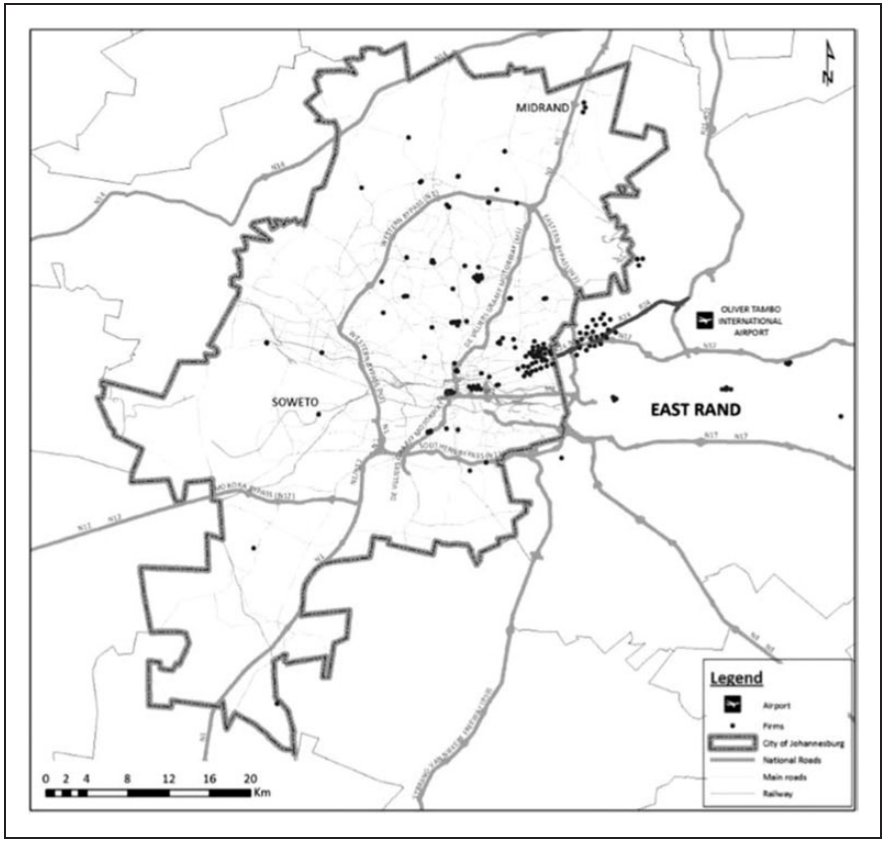

Figure 4. Map of businesses with the words ''China'' or ''Chinese'' in their names in the CIPC database.
Source: Harrison et al. (2012: 913).

Johannesburg, covering a range of business types. To this, Mr. X added that the China-named commercial centers, including the one he manages, sell everyday products that the local people need and prefer because of the low prices as well as the improved quality of goods manufactured in China. His points emphasize the idea that use of the name ''China'' and cultural symbols suggests to consumers with low buying power a particular notion of ''Chineseness'' that is associated with affordability and value in terms of price and quality. That is, ''China'' performs as a brand name, marking the China-named (and stereotypical derivatives like ''oriental'' and ''dragon'') businesses as different. In that regard, the ''China'' in China Town malls is a usable brand and an opportunity for the investors.

By adding ''Town'' to the name of the malls, the China Town mall investors also conjure an-''other'' world (in the West) that consists of residential segregation and exists in cinematic representations (Wong and McDonogh, 2013). Though they are all called ''China Town'' in English, the Chinese names of the malls owned by the Cape Town China Town Trust vary, but refer to historical moments when a Chinese identity was articulated. The one in Milnerton is called *tang ren jie* (唐人街), which is the old reference for Chinatown settlements in the USA and Johannesburg, where people from Canton (Guangdong) were able to find accommodation and enter into trades that did not directly compete with the White population. At a time of racial exclusion, the Chinese name signified the Tang dynasty (618–907), regarded as a glorious period in Chinese history. It was also a term that Cantonese people used colloquially to refer to themselves (*tangren*/Tang people) as a community (Chun, 1996: 112). Thus, *tang ren jie* is a place of residence and community building for Cantonese-Chinese people. China Town in Parow is called *zhong hua guan* (中华馆) or China/Chinese Pavilion. The name signals the era after the decline of the Qing Empire, when a modern nation-state and Chinese national identity were being constructed in the early 20th century. Like the abovementioned *tangren*, *zhonghua* further refers to *hanzu ren* or ethnic Han people (Schneider, 2017: 120). In Ottery, being called *zhong guo cheng* (中国城), literally, China/Chinese Town/City, in English, renders a less obvious connection to the past. Beacon Bay's China Town mall shares this Chinese name. The Chinese names of the malls are, for the most part, meaningless to South African consumers who view them all as ''Chinatown.''

According to the Taiwanese manager of Beacon Bay's China Town mall, who only agreed to take part in a brief phone interview, it is unequivocally a shopping mall, not a town like a historical Chinatown settlement (Interview, 2013). He differentiated China Town mall and Chinatown settlement in terms of composition and scale. However, instead of presenting a view of Chinatown settlement as a place of community or tourism, he insisted that no one owns ''Chinatown'' (Interview, 2013). He claimed that the local people are the ones who referred to the Chinese-owned mall as ''Chinatown.''

Therefore, for convenience, the investors from Johannesburg named it as such. The manager's wife, a Filipina who arrived in South Africa with a German company that had factories in the former Ciskei during apartheid, added to the conversation, saying that it was originally called Beacon Bay China Mall although it is unrelated to the China Malls in Johannesburg and Durban. China Town mall, she pointed out, did not exhibit anything like the Chinatown settlement in Manila that she knew well (Interview, 2013). Not only is it geographically vast, Manila's Chinatown is also a place of residence and commerce for a long-established Chinese community (see Figure 5). Though imperfect, China Town malls in Cape Town and Beacon Bay attempt to reproduce ''the 'look' of Chinatown – the sensual décor, language/calligraphy, lanterns, [etc.]. . .'' (Wong and McDonogh, 2013: 45). But, more important is the notion that ''Chinatown'' (regardless of form) cannot be owned like a brand in the manner that ''China'' can be. That the name cannot be owned finds resonance among the investors, especially Mr. L. The reasons for using the name ''China Town'' further reveal not only a consciousness of the transformation of Chinatown settlements in major global cities, but also a refusal to accept ''Chinatown'' – thus, also ''Chineseness'' – as belonging to any one group of people, place or time. In this manner, China Town malls offer an alternative lens through which to observe how a particular class of Chinese renegotiate/re-interpret the meaning of China/Chinese in relation and opposition to the Chinese state as well as the ''Chinese diaspora'' that has always assumed a unified ethnicity, culture and place of origin (see Shih, 2007).

Mr. L was born in Guangzhou, grew up in Taiwan, studied in the USA and emigrated to South Africa for work in 1967, bridging several diasporic Chinese communities. He explained that the three China Town malls under the Trust are called as such because ''the shops are all owned by people from China and all the goods come from China'' (Interview, 2013). Of the 160 tenants,

Figure 5. A juxtaposition of China Town mall in Beacon Bay (left) and Chinatown settlement in Manila (right): photos taken in 2014.

he continued, 95 percent were Chinese. They were mostly uneducated and came from villages in Fuqing (Fujian province) to look for opportunities to earn more money than they were making in China. Rather than linking the other five percent of non-Chinese tenants to South Africa's equity policy, Mr. L stated: ''[The reason for] putting in some local trader[s] [is] because we don't want the people [to] think you're in my home, what [*sic*] do you think you are'' (Interview, 2013). Though a South African citizen who is entitled to economic empowerment opportunities as a result of the High Court's 2008 ruling to include Chinese South Africans into the category of historically disadvantaged or ''Black,'' Mr. L's statement suggests that he views himself and other Chinese people as an outsider population – or, to use his words, ''guests'' – within a larger society. In producing the Chinese–foreign dichotomy he not only identifies himself with his Chinese tenants and imagined a Chinese community that subverts the landlord-tenant relation but also re-''Others'' the China Town community.

Mr. L implicated the imagined China Town community (consisting of his tenants from all three malls) in the abovementioned global Chinese narrative, whereby cultural Chineseness and transnational modernity are elevated in importance. For example, in acknowledging that competition among the tenants makes community-building challenging, Mr. L emphasized that it is possible because of the idea of ''harmonious relations'' among Chinese people. He shared the story of a shop owner who was shot and killed, and how everyone organized to donate money to support the deceased's wife's return to China. His point was that if something happens to one of them, everybody would extend kindness because ''we're all Chinese people,'' sharing a history and culture (Interview, 2013). In another example, he said that the idea of ''tak[ing] from society [and] giv[ing] back to society'' to cope with being ''Other'' comes from ''ancient Chinese tradition'' (Interview, 2013). This philosophy is promoted through interactions with the local community by creating job opportunities (e.g., hiring the local people as security guards and shop assistants) and giving back to the underprivileged communities (e.g., organizing Christmas twice a year for his tenants to donate food baskets and blankets). However, revealing his own difference in this imagined community, Mr. L further viewed these initiatives as helping the new Chinese migrants to ''create goodwill'' and a positive perception of them among the local people, who were also their customers.[8] Here, China Town malls are not simply a place of ''otherness'' but, equally, a space to produce a different Chineseness that offsets any negative representations of China in Africa.

[8]Mr. L's defense of a specific positive Chineseness corresponds with the Chinese government's ''all-round foreign policy of peace'' that entails ''spread[ing] friendship and bring[ing] souls closer'' (Xinhua, 2013). The latter are to be achieved through direct interactions with the ''foreign public'' and increased cultural and people-to-people exchanges to reinforce the foundation for friendship (Xinhua, 2013).

In fact, there are mandatory evening seminars at China Town malls to provide legal information concerning immigration, customs, taxes, medical aid and banking, and to inculcate the Chinese newcomers in ''Western'' ways of doing business. Lessons on being ''Western'' include, inter alia, how to say ''thank you'' and make eye contact with customers and how to maintain their shops' cleanliness. Listening to Mr. L, China Town malls and Chineseness emerge in the dialogue as an imagining of global and, particularly, South African consumers – essentially, the Taiwanese manager's point that naming a ''Chinese'' mall China Town is what the local people/consumers want. Furthermore, a particular kind of Chinese ethnic essentialism is evoked and retrofitted for modern consumption.

Mr. L was not reticent about sharing his idea of Chineseness, centered on culture and critique of the Chinese state, when he discussed the Trust's naming of the wholesale–retail malls as China Town. The extent of Mr. L's reference to a collective memory of ''ancient'' China and shared ethno-cultural values prompted one Chinese researcher to comment that he saw ''more Chinese'' in Mr. L and that his view of Chinese culture is from a China that is unfamiliar to contemporary Chinese citizens (Interview, 2013). Mr. L riposted with an observation about China's current problem, gained from business trips made over the years. In his view, the Chinese people in present-day China have lost their sense of humanity or human attributes (*renxing*/人性).[9] He gave the example of how the Chinese public has to be reminded via television about returning things to people when they drop them, or giving their seats to elderly people in public areas. As a result of losing such fundamental attributes or Confucian moral values, the Chinese people in modern China have, according to him, lost their souls, regarding which Mr. L included a loss of ''ancient tradition.'' Echoing the (Western) media's critiques of China's adverse practices in Africa, such as poaching and smuggling rhinoceros horns, among other international transgressions, he added that as people without a soul they could do any (unethical) thing. In his view, something had gone wrong in passing down ''Chinese tradition'' within China. Rather than holding the CCP-led state culpable, he expressed the belief that ''ancient tradition'' is redeemable, because every Chinese person belongs to a discrete biological and cultural group that has maintained its intrinsic qualities through time. Retaining an essentialized overtone, he intimated that ethnic Chinese are a valuable asset in the remaking of Chineseness. Mr. L's idea of Chineseness finds resonance with a racial nationalist discourse[10] that has gained prominence in China and conforms with the

[9]*Renxing* includes one's basic sense of morality.

[10]Barry Sautman's (2001) study on ''the politics of paleoanthropological nationalism in China'' places Mr. L's notion of Chineseness in a nationalist discourse that the Chinese government is constructing to influence how Chinese citizens view themselves as part of the nation-state. Referring to this state-led project, Sautman (2001: 95) explains, the theory that Chinese paleoanthropologists have put forth with the Peking Man ''holds that each of us can trace our identities to a discrete community of biology and culture whose 'essence' has been maintained through time.''

''primordial Chinese sentiments'' that the Chinese state uses in the hope of transforming Chinese overseas into social capital (Suryadinata, 2017: 143). However, if we bring it back to the China Town-named malls, it is clear that the history and identity of conventional Chinatown settlements as places of community or tourism fade away and the malls stand out as an imagined space of cultural particularity. Such an imaginary complements that of global consumers.

The interviews with Mr. L and Mr. K provide insights into different ideas of identity, place and nationalism that fuel commercial spaces in ways that have seemingly not yet been considered by scholars when analyzing the meaning of China's rise and China in Africa. Though at the margins of discussions on China and Chineseness, the China Town-named malls interconnect at least three phenomena that differ in culture and value: one is part of Western racial capitalist development; a second is China's rise as an economic power; and a third is South Africa's post-apartheid development. As such, they elicit a number of questions: What is to be made of these interconnections? Might the histories and representations of conventional Chinatown settlements and complex Chinese communities in South Africa become subsumed to China Town malls or would South African China Town malls become representative of Chinatowns across the Global South? Can China Town malls contribute toward articulating a notion of ''global Chineseness'' in the manner that Reid calls for, in the absence of a singular hegemonic Chinese ethnicity, culture or homeland? These questions connect South Africa's China Town malls to other studies that challenge us to rethink geocultural aspects of China's global ascendance and their ramifications for identity and community-making among diasporic Chinese.

Conclusion: China Town malls and unbound Chineseness

At a time of China's rise, ''Chineseness'' is becoming territorially bounded as unlike before. According to Allen Chun (1996: 124), the beginning of this process of extending borders and incorporating diaspora could be delineated from ''[t]he transformation of Chinese overseas into 'overseas Chinese' (*hua-ch'iao*).'' Contextualizing this new terminology, Chun (1996: 124) explains that it reflects ''an expansion of Chinese nationalism abroad that attempted to galvanize Chinese identity from what was once kin-centered, dialect groups into a radically new 'imagined community' re-educated in standard Mandarin and the orthodox teachings of Chinese civilization.'' The new unity of Chinese identity, ''Chineseness,'' lies in allegiance to the nation – even if only an emotional sense of belonging – with no criteria to reside in China. This kind of de-territorialized citizenship expands the space for patriotism, reinforcing a sense of ''primordial Chineseness'' among some and instilling ''alienation'' among others.

As the state discourse appropriates and refers to migrants as ''patriots contributing to the development of their home country'' (Nyíri, 2001: 638), some of the Chinese migrants in South Africa, élites like Mr. L, are not readily allowing themselves (their identities, more precisely) to be incorporated into China's rise. They participate in a state-promoted identity construction process, but on their own terms. They do not build on Chinese antiquity alone, as discussed above: Mr. L and the group of Chinese entrepreneurs who own the China Town mall in Beacon Bay turn to a historical place of settlement and representation of Chinatown that emerged from Western societies. At one level, by evoking earlier Chinatown settlements, which have gained worldwide recognition as ''Chinese'' and have become an emblem of modernity in global cities, in naming their commercial centers as China Town, these entrepreneurial élites assert their claim to authentic ''Chineseness.'' Such a claim – being seen as ''Chinatown'' – has the effect of offsetting prevailing negative stereotypes associated with China-made goods and China's presence as an imposition of yet another ''colonial'' economic power in Africa. More specifically, the claim to be Chinatown creates a social and cultural distance between the Chinese migrants and the Chinese state. From the interview with Mr. L, it appears that a distancing from the Chinese state does not necessarily mean jettisoning China, calling attention back to Ang's (2013) view that the diasporic imagination is now infused with a sense of transnational nationalism. Therefore, at another level, the claim to Chinatown can be understood as a renegotiating and re-interpreting of relations with the Chinese state, as entrepreneurial élites also seek to maximize opportunities connected with China's rise. By separating ''China'' from ''Town'' in the name, the malls capitalize on a ''Chinese brand'' that signifies China's global economic strength. While the China brand makes them recognizable to consumers, being viewed as patriots, the ethnic and expatriate Chinese élites also gain access to the state. This play on the name suggests how élites manipulate the identity construction process among migrants vis-a-vis a state-led imagining process.

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