

# 中国ニューカマーに伴う異文化がホスト社会の都市空間に与える影響 ー西川口ニューチャイナタウンを事例にー

## The Impact of the Exotic Culture Carried by the New Chinese Immigrants on the Urban Space of Host Society: A Case of “Nishikawaguchi New Chinatown”

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Along with the wave of new Chinese immigrants after the 1980s, the new Chinatown, as a worldwide phenomenon, also came in to being in Japan. In order to explore the mechanism of the formation and development of this exotic cultural urban space in today's era, a comprehensive analysis of the formation process and current characteristics of Nishikawaguchi new Chinatown was carried out in this research. Through the comparative study with other new Chinatowns and Japanese old Chinatowns, the uniquenesses of the Japanese new Chinatown were summarized. According to the current policies and the Chinese people's intention, I came to the conclusion that Nishikawaguchi new Chinatown will be a commercial district with multi-ethnicity.

### 1 Background And Purpose

With the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomacy in 1972 and China's “Reform and Opening-up” policy carried out in 1978, the door of bilateral exchanges opened again. Entering the 21st century, the deepening of the globalization has led to an increasing number of Chinese pouring into Japan to pursue better work and education opportunities and a relatively ideal living environment, which marks the arrival of a new era of immigration. Accompanied by the new wave of immigration, “New Chinatowns” have emerged in Japan in the past few decades. They are exotic cultural spaces created by the interaction between the Chinese newcomers and Japanese society, which have a colossal impact on regional development. In the National Capital Region, the new Chinatown has come into being in the area where Chinese are concentrated. Two typical cases are Ikebukuro Chinatown and Nishikawaguchi Chinatown.

The lack of existing research on new Chinatown makes us know little about this phenomenon. Kiyomi Yamashita has proposed his “Three-phase theory” after studying the Ikebukuro Chinatown to describe the different development stage of both new and old Chinatown. But in new social context, will the old Chinatown be the future of the new Chinatown? In order to answer this, and understand more about new Chinatown's formation

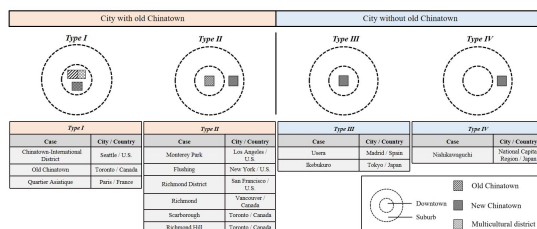
mechanism and current condition, I chose Nishikawaguchi Chinatown as my research object.

### 2 Formation of New Chinatown

#### 2.1 New Chinatown as A Worldwide Phenomenon

As an indicator of the new Chinese immigrants, the new Chinatown is actually a global phenomenon that has appeared in many cities. The spatial attributes of New Chinatown is a point worthy of attention, so here I attempted to classify the new Chinatown according to its spatial relationship with the city where it is located based on previous studies. According to the location of new Chinatowns, they can be divided into four types (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Main types and cases of the new Chinatown



#### 2.2 The Formation Process of Nishikawaguchi New Chinatown

Chinese people first concentrated in the Shibazono-danchi community because of the simplicity of leasing procedures in this residential complex, as well as enrichment of public facilities.

Since the 1990s, Nishikawaguchi has been famous as a red light district, and it was once full of illegal sex services. Around 2000, the sex industry here reached its peak, when there were as many as 200 illegal sex shops. However, in 2006, following the revision of the relevant laws, the illegal sex industry there was banned by the Saitama Police (Masuda, etc., 2007). Although there are a large number of vacant shops, this area was shunned by the Japanese residents because of the terrible environment and bad reputation. The whole region began to decline, which was also reflected in the reduction of shop rent. At that time, it was a critical opportunity for Chinese immigrants to move to Nishikawaguchi to live and start their business. Therefore, from 2010, more and more Chinese people began to open Chinese restaurants in Nishikawaguchi area.

### 2.3 General Formation Mechanism of New Chinatown

In order to summarize the formation mechanism of the new Chinatown, I also focused on the formation process of other cases. In the 1980s, the aging problem in the Richmond District led to a large number of Americans who purchased real estate right after the WWII to sold their houses and went to senior Apartments. And Chinese immigrants therefore seized the opportunity to occupy this region and expand their business (Laguerre M. S., 2005). In addition, according to K. Yamashita's research, the collapse of "Bubble Economy" in Japan in the early 1990s caused a sharp drop in land prices and rents in downtown like Ikebukuro area, and many existing shops closed down. Driven by such a key opportunity, Chinese businessmen were able to carry out their commercial activities in Ikebukuro. So that the new Chinatown there came into being.

In summary, the formation mechanism of the new Chinatown can be divided into three steps.

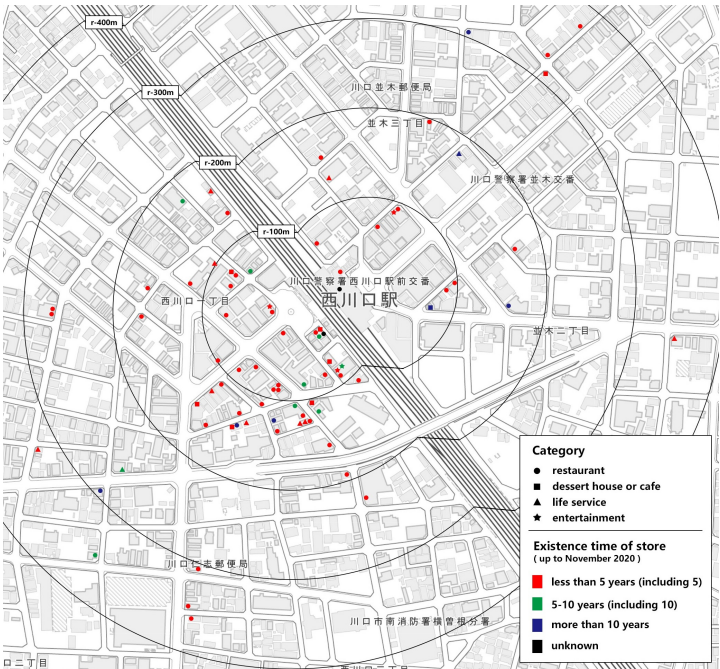
First of all, the rapid population growth of the new Chinese immigrants in certain cities accompanied by the wave of immigration mainly caused by national-level policies is a well-known step one. The second step is the concentration of Chinese in specific areas of the city. The main influencing factors are housing policies, rents and the convenience of the public transportation, which are also universal. Finally, the emergence of dense Chinese commerce is the crucial step three. It is very difficult to form a Chinese cultural districts in a short period of time. A key opportunity is usually the aging or the recession of the region, which directly or indirectly leads to the decrease of the rent, making the region a magnet for Chinese immigrants.

### 3 External Space of Nishikawaguchi New Chinatown

#### 3.1 Current Distribution of Chinese Stores

Within a radius of 400 meters from the station, there are as many as 82 Chinese stores (as of November 2020) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The distribution of Chinese stores



The number of stores is negatively correlated with the distance to the station. However, according to the distribution of stores, the spatial boundary of the new Chinatown is very vague, which is also an

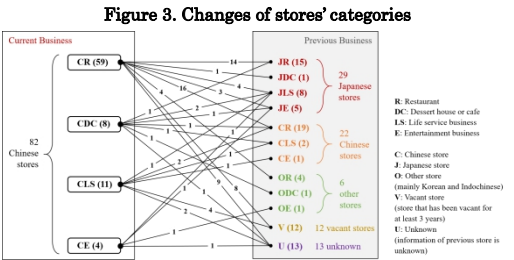
important feature of it. As for the existing time, 78.0% of the stores have a history of 5 years or less and are relatively new stores, while only 8.5% of the stores have existed here for more than 10 years.

3.2 Facade Characteristics of the Chinese Stores

In Nishikawaguchi, the decoration style of stores is mostly simple, and there are few stores with strong Chinese-style decoration. However, the use of Chinese characters on signboards of stores, the use of Chinese colors, and the posting of photos of special dishes on the facades are common features. From the facade statistics of Chinese stores on the first floor base on the historical data of Google Street Map, I found that 73.8% of the stores use Chinese colors (red and yellow) on their signboards, while almost all (96.7%) of the stores use Chinese characters, and even simplified characters can be seen. These two characteristics make the stores run by Chinese people easier to be recognized, and make us more like being in China. In terms of facade decoration, 68.9% of the stores have pasted photos or posters of the restaurant's specialties on their facade to attract customers. However, only 31.1% of the stores have used Chinese style ornaments, which also reflects that the decoration of most stores is simple. In summary, these features have made up the unique streetscape of Nishikawaguchi new Chinatown.

3.3 Change and Stability, the Characteristics of Streetscape

The status of the previous business of the existing stores are analyzed to understand the process of the Sinicization of the Nishikawaguchi area accompanied by the business shift (Figure 3),



and how the Chinese characteristics of the streetscape are formed along with this process. Among the 82 stores, with the exception of 13 stores for which no relevant information was obtained,

31.9% of the remaining 69 stores were originally Chinese stores, and 50.7% of the stores were originally operated by Japanese or people from other countries. Only 17.4% of stores were vacant stores (at least 3 years or more). This result obviously reflects two coexisting trends. The first one is the Sinicization of Nishikawaguchi area. Chinese stores have been occupying the market continuously since 2010, and a large number of stores operated by Japanese and a few stores operated by other foreigners have gradually become Chinese stores. Secondly, the competition among Chinese stores is also fierce, leading to rapid shift of Chinese stores, and newly opened stores may still not be able to gain a foothold in the long term.

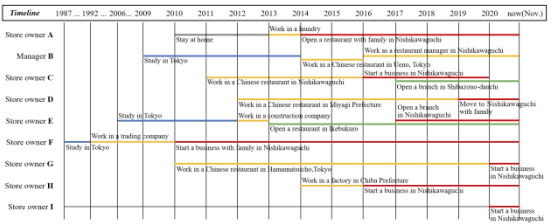
During the shift process of Chinese stores, the use of Chinese characters and the position of the signboards remained basically unchanged, and the Chinese colors and other decorations were inherited in more than half of the cases. I think this is the reason why the streetscape with Chinese characteristics can stably exist in the shift of store.

4 Ethnic Network Behind the Chinese Business

4.1 Chinese Store Owners in Nishikawaguchi

In order to understand the living condition, business status and previous experience of the Chinese store owners, 9 of them were randomly selected to conduct semi-structured interviews (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Experience of Chinese store owners in Japan



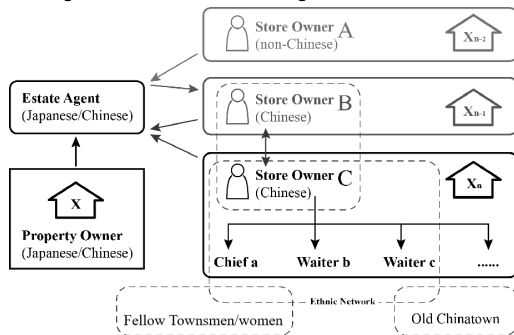
These interviewees are not affluent immigrants from the mainland China. Among the 9 store owners I interviewed, 6 of them were from the northeastern provinces of China. And none of them have a good educational background. They came to Japan and work in restaurants or factories, then started to open their own stores after obtaining some experience. There are also some people who have education background in Japan before they start a business. They have a better Japanese proficiency and are more willing to stay.

## 4.2 The Rules Behind the Streetscape

Nishikawaguchi new Chinatown's unpretentious atmosphere comes from the simple and cheap decoration style of most Chinese stores. On the one hand, this must be related to the level of wealth of the store owners. On the other hand, the main reason is related to the land ownership. However, even if a part of Chinese do own the property rights of the building, they still won't carry out very gorgeous decorations. Because there is no need for that, if they just serve local Chinese residents without catering to Japanese or foreign tourists.

Although the store owners in Nishikawaguchi lack contact with each other, they have complicated relationships with their relatives, fellow townsmen, or other friends (Figure 5). These networks, usually

**Figure 5. Ethnic network among Chinese store owners**



based on SNS, are not confined to the local area, but have established tight connections with their hometowns in China and various parts of Japan, including the old Chinatowns. The ethnic network that exists both in store leasing and employment echoes the sinicization process that we can observe in streetscape of Nishikawaguchi area.

## 4.3 Chinese Visitors in Nishikawaguchi Area

In order to understand the characteristics of Chinese customers in Nishikawaguchi, I conducted a questionnaire survey of Chinese visitors randomly selected in the Nishikawaguchi area from November to December 2020 and obtained 35 valid samples. According to their residential information, I proved that Nishikawaguchi Chinatown mainly serve the local residents that live in Kawaguchi Prefecture. And 94.2% of the interviewees were young people between the ages of 20-39, which exactly echoed the population pyramid of the

Chinese in Kawaguchi. Most of them lack the interaction with the local society, but they have the willingness to communicate. About the future of the Nishikawaguchi area, unexpectedly, 48.6% of them hope that its diversity will be enhanced to experience more foreign cultures.

## 4.4 The Socioeconomic Impact of Nishikawaguchi New Chinatown

Although the emergence of the new Chinatown has not completely changed the Japanese people's negative impression on the region and even caused new problems, it must be admitted that the agglomeration of Chinese residents and their business have greatly reduced the vacancy rate of stores and saved the region from recession caused by the disappearance of the sex industry. According to an informant, rents and land prices in Nishikawaguchi have begun to rise year by year, which is inseparable from the fierce competition among the Chinese merchants there.

The success of Chinese business there will lead to an increase in Chinese stores in the surrounding areas with similar conditions. For example, Chinese stores in and around Shibazono-danchi community are gradually increasing as well. In addition, Warabi Station and Kawaguchi Station also attract more Chinese residents and Chinese businesses.

## 5 Comparative Study

### 5.1 Differences with Japanese Old Chinatowns

Comparing Nishikawaguchi area with the old Chinatowns in Japan, their main differences exist in the following aspects: (1) Social policies in the formation stage; (2) Land ownership and streetscape; (3) Main target customers; (4) Ethnic network.

Without restrictive policies, new Chinatown can grow more freely without clear boundaries. It mainly serves the surrounding Chinese residents, where you can experience the authentic Chinese flavor. But the ties among the Chinese newcomers are not as close as those of the old Chinese. The rapid population mobility leads to little interaction between Chinese and host society. All these characteristics also lead to the possible future that Chinatown may become more diversified and eventually lose its label of Chinatown.

## **5.2 Uniqueness of the New Chinatown in Japan**

Different from many other new Chinatowns in Europe and America, we can easily conclude that Nishikawaguchi new Chinatown grows vertically. About a quarter of the Chinese stores are not on the first floor, so they spread the Chinese characteristics to the higher part of the building, causing the building to be occupied by collage-like billboards. Compactness is another feature of the Nishikawaguchi new Chinatown. All the Chinese stores are closely distributed around the station. Differently, the distribution of Chinese stores in western new Chinatowns is usually linear or scattered (even point-type). Since most of the new Chinatowns are located in the suburban areas with low building density, there are often major avenues that become commercial axes. As a result, the Chinese stores are distributed along the street.

## **6 The Future of New Chinatown**

### **6.1 The Failure of “Tokyo Chinatown Ikebukuro” Campaign**

In 2007, a campaign called “Tokyo Chinatown Ikebukuro” was proposed by Chinese shop owners in Ikebukuro to try to build the first official Chinatown in Tokyo, but they finally failed. According to W. Wang (2014), the Chinese merchants put forward the plan of Chinatown unilaterally without the support of local government or Japanese merchants. The main reason for the failure of this campaign is the lack of good communication and cooperation between Chinese store owners and local merchants organizations in Ikebukuro area.

### **6.2 Development Strategies for Nishikawaguchi Area**

The development of Nishikawaguchi area is inseparable from the guidance of policies from local government. The relevant plans are the Fifth Comprehensive Plan of Kawaguchi City (2016-2025), Kawaguchi City Multicultural Symbiosis Guidelines (2018-2022), and the Machizukuri Plan for the area around Nishikawaguchi station. Reviewing these existing plans and policies, we know the top-down development goal is the multicultural symbiosis, instead of a new Chinatown. In fact, in addition to

Chinese restaurants, there are also restaurants operated by Thai, Vietnamese, Turkish, and Korean, which currently account for a very small proportion though. The local government has been trying to help foreign residents better integrate into local society in all aspects of life and conduct their business activities to make Nishikawaguchi an international gourmet street. Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that Chinatown will be used as a formal label to restrict the area.

### **6.3 The Future Intentions of Chinese in Nishikawaguchi Area**

According to my interview to the Chinese store owners, they don't seem to care much about the new Chinatown. Most of them plan to stay in Japan for a long term as long as they can run the store smoothly and their children can adapt to life in Japan. They just hope that the tourism industry featuring by gourmet can be developed in Nishikawaguchi to attract more customers. For Chinese customers, the Chinese business here does meet their strong needs. However, a multicultural neighbourhood where people can taste food from all over the world will be more popular.

There are also some NGOs dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and further exchanges between China and Japan. Such as Nishikawaguchi Pikapika Team, Nishikawaguchi Panda Project and Fuqing Chamber of Commerce. But the “New Chinatown” is not the common goal of them.

### **6.4 The Possible Vision of Nishikawaguchi New Chinatown's Future**

From the will of the government and the Chinese newcomers, I believe that under the background of globalization and multicultural symbiosis development of Kawaguchi City, new Chinatown is likely to become a multicultural area dominated by Chinese characteristics. At least an “Asian-town” can be expected in the future.

## **7 Conclusions and Prospects**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

The first conclusion I draw from the formation process of Nishikawaguchi area and the other two cases of the new Chinatown is: the process from the gathering of Chinese to the emergence of a new

Chinatown needs some key opportunities, which are usually regional recession or other special policy reasons. New Chinese immigrants often seize these critical opportunities to expand their business in a short period and promote the formation of a new Chinatown.

Then, through the analysis of the physical aspect of the Nishikawaguchi area, I found that in the last ten years, many original non-Chinese stores have transformed into Chinese stores. Meanwhile, Chinese stores themselves have been undergoing rapid shift. These changes not only reflected the fierce competition there, but also showed that rapid mobility is also the main feature of the new Chinatown in today's social environment. The lack of land property right and tourism are the two major factors that limit the decoration style of most stores there. As a result, a streetscape completely different from the old Chinatown in Japan has been formed. As for the social aspect, there is a lack of connections among Chinese individuals in the new Chinatown. However, they have complex and extensive connections with their fellow townsmen and acquaintances in other regions through SNS, which ensure the continuity of the Chinese-style streetscape.

Finally, whether it is the formation process or the relationship between the Chinese and the local society, there are significant differences between the new and the old Chinatown in Japan, which leads to the differences of their development paths. Therefore, the "Three-phase theory" hypothesis proposed by Kiyomi Yamashita seems unreasonable. Coupled with the discussion about the policies of Kawaguchi City and the intentions of the local Chinese residents, I believe that a commercial district with multi-ethnicity will be the future of Nishikawaguchi area.

## 7.2 Prospects

First, for the living conditions of the Chinese in Nishikawaguchi area, due to the lack of relevant data, it is impossible for me to conduct a specific analysis of the land ownership of the Chinese residents. If data on the proportion of Chinese with real estate property rights can be obtained, the social changes that have occurred in

Nishikawaguchi area can be better interpreted.

Secondly, This study failed to investigate and analyze the intentions of Japanese people living in Nishikawaguchi. Since Chinese are the main customers here, I only launched a questionnaire survey of Chinese customers. But with the gradual increase of Japanese customers in the future, I hope that the survey on the Japanese side can be conducted.

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