

**“The Image of China” and Subjectivity of People's Ethnic
Representation Choices: A Case Study on Nishi-
Kawaguchi New Chinatown, Japan**

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Abstract

Chinatown has long been the subject of study as a cultural concentration point for Chinese immigrants. Historically, Chinatown studies have focused on the analysis of their function as a community agglomeration point, but in recent years Chinatowns have come to be seen as the result of the host society projecting a reified imagine of China onto a particular geographic area regardless of whether Chinese people live there or not. This paper first reviews the images projected onto Chinatowns around the world. It will then attempt to add a new perspective to the group of studies related to the imposition of the image of China on Chinatown by the host society by examining the Nishi-Kawaguchi district in Japan, where newcomer Chinese gather. What became clear from the qualitative research on media interviews with diverse subjects living in New Chinatown in this paper was the process by which local people proactively select Chinatown discourses from diverse discourses, a process that has been overlooked in the "Chinatown production from above" presented in previous studies.

Keywords: Chinatown, ethnic towns, representation, the image of China

1. Introduction

Chinatowns are "concentrated residential areas of Chinese in overseas cities, and are towns formed by various ethnic groups, i.e., one of the ethnic towns" (Yamashita, 2000, p.3). As a living center for overseas Chinese, Chinatown has been the subject of interest for many overseas Chinese researchers.

The history of ethnic town studies is very old. In the first half of the 20th century, urban sociologists at the University of Chicago attempted to describe the development of dynamic metropolises in terms of "human ecology" (Park 1936), analogous to the ecology of the natural world, to empirically theorize their development. In immigration studies by scholars who theoretically succeeded Chicago School scholars such as Portes (1985) or Zhou (1992), the segregation of different racial and ethnic groups was considered an essential element in large cities. Thus, ethnic towns have been examined as inseparable from the community of a given ethnic group.

On the other hand, starting around 1990, rather than focusing on communities within ethnic towns, research began to flourish that placed ethnic towns in the context of the social structure in which they exist and focused on how they are socially produced. This group of studies represented by Ealham (2005) or Bian (2018) views ethnic towns as "areas where specific expressions and ideologies are embedded and artificially tailored to achieve political and economic goals" (Bian, 2020, p.10). Thus, in the case of Chinatown, after the Chinatown zone is first delineated to achieve political and economic objectives, "an image of China" is projected onto the area by various actors with diverse objectives. Thereby, the diversity of the city area is discarded, and the significations assigned to it converge to essentializing notions of "China". As a result, the discourse of the "Chinatown" is treated as formed by its creation and reification by the host society.

In short, "the image of China" projected onto Chinatown areas varies greatly between countries and across periods (Wang 2013). In any case, I believe that similarities can be identified among Chinatowns in different countries with appropriate methods and in this article I describe several aspects observed from narratives of Chinatown inhabitants, focusing on the role of the host society in building and maintaining Chinatown as a concentrated residential area. The following section of this paper reviews studies that focus on the "image of China" projected onto Chinatown by various actors and points out some of the issues involved.

2. “The Image of China” projected onto Chinatown by the host society

In the Western world, Chinatowns have frequently been linked to a negative perception of China within the hosting society. For example, in Vancouver, Canada, at the end of the 19th century, a particular section of Dupont Street, where there were some Chinese immigrants, was named Chinatown by the administration to justify the authorities' intervention in its regulation. The image of Dupont Street was consistent with the image of the less civilized "China" and the "Orient" held by Europeans in Canada at the time (Anderson, 1987, p.589). Europeans at the time confirmed their identity and privilege by arbitrarily attributing outsider status to the Chinese (Anderson, 1987, p.594), and despite the lack of concrete evidence to support that Chinatowns were a public health threat, successive generations of officials continued to exploit the concept of Chinatown as an area with public health problems (Anderson, 1987, p.581).

The projection of a reified image of China onto Chinatown by outside powers sometimes ignored the reality of ethnic group congregations in the actual city. The Raval district of Barcelona, Spain, was named Chinatown at the end of the 20th century, even though there were no Chinese people in the area. The Raval district was the cradle of Catalonia's industrialization, and it had been home to a community of workers living in the city center since the first half of the 19th century. By the end of the 19th century, it had become a very unwholesome district where prostitution and gambling were prevalent in poor living conditions. From the 1920s onward, the urban elite and social critics dubbed Raval as Chinatown. Although there were no Chinese residents in Raval at the time, a weekly magazine projected the inferior image of San Francisco's Chinatown in American films onto Raval. The discourse of Raval as Chinatown was also linked to the racism that was dominant in Barcelona at the time and succeeded in simplifying the complex issues involved in Raval, such as social injustice, the urban crisis, and the gap between the rich and the poor, into issues of race. Also, the Chinatown discourse in Raval was socially produced and constructed as a morally problematic wildland (Ealham 2005, p.390). Because of the need to import morality and civilization justified the intervention of society and the state, the working-class resistance, traditions, and identity in Raval were destroyed. (Ealham, 2005).

Thus, historically, the image projected onto Chinatown areas by host societies cannot be separated from discriminatory sentiments toward China and the Chinese. On the other hand, China's economic development and increase in national power in recent years has caused a change in the situation in many parts of the world. Much accumulation of recent changes has been generated by studies of Chinatowns where mainly Chinese immigrants, after the Reform and Open Door Policy started in 1978, live. In this paper, such Chinatowns are referred to as

“New Chinatowns” (Yamashita, 2016). In the West, rather than being a city of poor conditions, host societies often project onto New Chinatowns an image associated with urban problems such as skyrocketing land prices due to the buying up of real estate by wealthy new Chinese merchants and the destruction of the residential landscape. A study of New Chinatown in Bangkok, Thailand, noted a difference between the image of China associated with Thais in Chinatown and that associated with new Chinese immigrants, and found that when competing images appear in the actual landscape, the latter i.e., the image of China associated with the newcomer Chinese prevails, due in part to China's increased geopolitical role in recent years (Wu et al., 2020). Eom (2019), on the other hand, depicts Chinese residents living in Chinatown in Incheon, South Korea, who, while their image of Chinatown changed before and after the Cold War, ultimately remained consistently subjected to violent destruction of their identity by state forces.

In Japan, the evolution of the image projected onto Chinatown areas by the host society is unique. The three Chinatowns of Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki are known in Japan as the three major Chinatowns in Japan. From the early 20th century until about the 1960s, Chinatowns were recognized by Japanese society as places where “unidentifiable Chinese people gathered” (Yamashita, 2000, page.iv), and mass media portrayed them in exaggerated terms as the scene of crimes such as prostitution, gambling, and smuggling (Yamashita, 2000, page.iv). However, after World War II, the image projected onto Chinatown by Japanese society changed dramatically. As a result of the efforts of local Chinese organizations, these three Chinatowns, which had fallen into disrepair, was restored as a ‘gourmet town.’ where many tourists visit for its gastronomy. Today, Chinatown has become a tourist destination representing these three cities, and eating steamed buns in Chinatown has become a fashion for young people (Yamashita, 2000, p.65).

On the other hand, the image projected onto New Chinatown in Japan by Japanese society is often associated with the chauvinism that has been on the rise in Japan in recent years. Ikebukuro, one of Japan's leading New Chinatowns, is seen by exclusionists as a mafia haven (Yamashita, 2016, pp.244-245), and they consider the influx of new overseas Chinese merchants there to be an invasion of Japan by China (Taki, 2018). In 2008, an effort to develop Ikebukuro as a tourist destination like Japan's three major Chinatowns was undertaken by local Chinese, but because of this background, it was abandoned due to opposition from local Japanese and others. However, it should be added that Japanese tourists are visiting Ikebukuro's Chinatown because of various media reports that Ikebukuro is the "real China" and that they

can experience authentic Chinese restaurants and near-authentic China in Ikebukuro (Kawase & Yoshimoto, 2013, p.78).

Thus, previous Chinatown studies focusing on the 'Chinese image' have not only studied the Chinese residents living there, but also how Chinatowns have been perceived in the dynamic flow of the society as a whole. It must be pointed out, however, that previous studies have discussed the process of projecting images of China onto 'Chinatown' in an essentialist, albeit recursive, way. At the same time, less attention has been paid to why the area has come to be spoken of in connection with China rather than other matters. There are two possible reasons for this. First, most Chinatown studies to date have mainly focused on Chinatowns that have a history and where the discourse of Chinatown has been already fixed in the host society, such as Yamashita-cho in Yokohama or Hua Lampong in Bangkok, as examples. Therefore, there has not been a major problem in treating the place essentially as a "Chinatown. Second, the traditional studies were mainly concerned with the projection of images by larger powers, such as the government and the media. Therefore, these studies did not pay attention to how the various actors actually living in the area reacted to the various images projected on the town by various powers and why the image of China ultimately remained.

In this paper, I hypothesize that, in addition to the perspective of the projection of the image of China by outside forces that has been discussed so far, there is a subjective selection of ethnic representations of Chinatown by the people living there in response to various image projections as a factor that causes a certain geographic area to become a Chinatown.

3. Data and Method

My analysis focuses on the Nishi-Kawaguchi area in the suburbs of Tokyo, where newcomer Chinese people have gathered and have recently begun to be referred to as "Chinatown¹". Nishi-Kawaguchi suddenly became known as Chinatown at the end of 2010, despite the fact that the administration had not put forward a Chinatown image. In addition, Nishi-Kawaguchi was inhabited by immigrants from various countries, not only Chinese.

Nishi-Kawaguchi, is in the suburbs of Tokyo, the capital of Japan, and is a 30-minute train ride from Tokyo Station. Nishi-Kawaguchi was originally a famous red-light district, and around 1980, sex industry establishments began to cluster in Nishi-Kawaguchi, becoming a nationally known concentration of prostitution at the end of the 20th century. Of course, Nishi-Kawaguchi was not recognized as a Chinatown at this time; in the 2000s, police raided the Red-

¹ Chainataun (チャイナタウン) in Japanese

Light District in Nishi-Kawaguchi, and by 2006 the illegal sex store district was destroyed (Masuda et al., 2008).

In addition, multi-ethnicization of the residents can be seen in Nishi-Kawaguchi. Originally, Kawaguchi had many Korean residents, but by 1993, the largest number of foreigners in Kawaguchi were Chinese, and in recent years, the population of Vietnamese and Filipino residents has grown significantly (Takamatsu, 2020, p.98, p.102).

After the destruction of the illegal sex industry district, the government initially aimed to turn Nishi-Kawaguchi into a tourist destination as a multinational gourmet town with ethnic diversity (Tamura, 2008). Despite extensive administrative support and several years of multinational gourmet events, Nishi-Kawaguchi was not recognized as a multinational gourmet town by the host community. And as soon as the regular holding of gourmet events ended, the discourse as a multinational gourmet town almost completely disappeared.

Meanwhile, Nishi-Kawaguchi began to be recognized as a Chinatown by various media in the mid-2010s. One of the most significant turning points was feature on Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown in several programs that aired from 2017 to 2018². Since then, the number of Japanese tourists visiting Nishi-Kawaguchi for the authentic Chinese cuisine, which is rarely found in other Chinatowns, has increased significantly (Takamatsu, 2020). Nishi-Kawaguchi has been recognized by its host community as one of the largest New Chinatowns in Japan. It should be noted, however, that there has been a negative image projection of New Chinatown onto Nishi-Kawaguchi by Japanese society, similar to that of Ikebukuro mentioned above, mainly since 2018, when the TV programs were broadcast. Numerous Japanese media outlets have sensationalized the transformation of Nishi-Kawaguchi into a Chinatown, reporting many problems with local residents, poor sanitary conditions, frequent crimes by the mafia and resale of daily necessities, whether true or not.

According to the conventional theory of ethnic town formation, the transformation of Nishi-Kawaguchi into a Chinatown since the mid-2010s could be viewed as being due to media representations. On the other hand, the "other representation" of a multinational gourmet town projected onto Nishi-Kawaguchi by Japanese society has ended without taking root in the discourse, even though the great power of government has provided tremendous support.

This paper analyses the narratives of people living in Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown in its early days to determine why a Chinese image, rather than a non-Chinese image, i.e., a multinational gourmet town, was chosen.

² For example, "EXD 44" on 17 September 2017 (TV Asahi) or "Tamori Kurabu" on 6 January 2018 (TV Asahi) (Takamatsu, 2020, p.103)

This paper presents a qualitative analysis using data from interviews conducted by various media sources. All sources are written in Japanese or Chinese and the author of this article translated to English. As Nishi-Kawaguchi is a prominent New Chinatown in Japan, various interviews with residents exist, but in this paper the narratives of five people who are considered to have had a significant impact on the establishment of Chinatown discourse are selected as the data to be used. What these five individuals have in common is that they run a commercial business in the Nishi-Kawaguchi area and have appeared in several media. A is a man who is local to Nishi-Kawaguchi and runs a real estate company there, and B is a Chinese woman who immigrated to Nishi-Kawaguchi and is a member of the project. These two are considered highly important in the analysis of this paper because of their activities to promote Nishi-Kawaguchi as a Chinatown. C is a local Chinese restaurant owner in Nishi-Kawaguchi with a complex ethnic background who participated in the activities of a multinational gourmet town; D is a newcomer Chinese immigrant typical of Nishi-Kawaguchi who runs a Fujian restaurant; and E is a Chinese immigrant who came to Japan in the 1980s. E is a Chinese immigrant who came to Japan in the 1980s and runs a Shanghai restaurant. These three are not directly involved in the promotion of Nishi-Kawaguchi as a Chinatown, but they are selected for analysis because it reproduces the Chinatown discourse by favorably perceiving the Chinese image projected on Nishi-Kawaguchi by the mass media and by responding to mass media coverage of "Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown" itself. This paper will test the hypothesis by analyzing the reactions of them to the projection of a Chinese image by the Japanese society of Nishi-Kawaguchi.

The reason why I used responses to interviews with Chinatown residents in various media and their own narratives on social networking sites as field data for this paper is that Nishi-Kawaguchi has seen a significant reduction in various activities since the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020. This is due to the fact that various activities have been greatly reduced in Nishi-Kawaguchi since the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020. By using this method, it is possible to use a narrative of the state of bustling activity prior to the contraction of economic activity by stores. It should be noted, therefore, that all of the field data in this paper was collected before early 2020, i.e., before the COVID-19 global epidemic.

4. Case Study in Nishi-Kawaguchi New Chinatown

4.1 A, Chairman of the "Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project"³

A is the chairman of the Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project, the most prominent activity as Chinatown in Nishi-Kawaguchi. The project was launched in April 2019, and the website states that seven Chinese restaurants are participating in the project as of November 2021, and that participating restaurants have "panda stickers" on the outside of their restaurants. The "panda stickers" are intended to convey that "Japanese tourists are welcome" and "recommended dishes are introduced to make it easier for Japanese tourists to order" (*Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project*, n.d.a).

According to an article on page 26 of the May 12, 2019, morning edition of the *Tokyo Shimbun*, the Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project is being run by A, the initiator and executive committee chairman, and B, a native of Zhejiang Province, China, who runs the *Malatang* restaurant W in Nishi-Kawaguchi. The two are visiting Chinese restaurants in Nishi-Kawaguchi to solicit participation in the project. B supports A, who cannot speak Chinese, as an interpreter, and explains that other participants will come to the restaurant as customers to eat and drink at future meetings, thereby increasing the number of supporters of the project.

A is engaged in this activity while running a real estate investment company as his main business (*Asahi Shimbun*, 25 April 2019, p.23). There was no indication that he was related to China by blood or had participated in any activities related to China in the past, as far as I could see from his interviews in newspapers and other media and from his own information transmission.

A describes the social background of the Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project.

After the Nishi-Kawaguchi area was hit by a roundup of illegal adult entertainment businesses, the number of vacant stores increased, and the town's image deteriorated.

The Chinese population, who were attracted by the low rents, rapidly increased, and the Nishi-Kawaguchi area has become a Chinatown. This has become a social issue, with an increase in the number of stores that are difficult for Japanese people to enter and garbage problems that do not follow the rules.

Therefore, we launched a project to increase the number of Chinese stores that Japanese people can easily enter, and instead of eliminating existing

³ Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Purojekuto (西川口パンダプロジェクト) in Japanese

Chinese restaurants, we started a campaign to change them into stores that Japanese people can also enjoy, and launched a project to create a Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown that Japanese people can also enjoy by combining the existing shopping association with Chinese culture. The project is now underway.

The Panda Project Executive Committee plans to bring together local business owners, Chinese restaurant owners, real estate agents, and facilitators to increase the number of Chinese restaurants participating in the Panda Project.”

(Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project, n.d.b)

In an article on *Tokyo Shimbun*, A also responded about how the project was launched.

After work, I entered a Chinese restaurant and was troubled. The signage was in Chinese only, the waitress spoke to me in Chinese, and when I looked at the menu, it was in Chinese only. The menu was only in Chinese. This experience was the starting point for the idea of the Panda Project. I thought, "If only I could enjoy myself in a restaurant like that while chatting with my friends..."

(Tokyo Shimbun, 12 May 2019, p.26)

At a meeting of the "Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project," A also expressed his attachment to Nishi-Kawaguchi, saying, "I want to make the town where I live enjoyable." He is trying to realize the coexistence of Japanese and Chinese in Nishi-Kawaguchi, where he lives, through Japanese people visiting Chinese restaurants. This is demonstrated in A's postings on social networking sites.

Create a Chinese restaurant that Japanese people can also enjoy!

Nishi-Kawaguchi is currently crowded with Chinese restaurants due to the increase in the number of foreigners. It is a great pleasure to see the increase in the number of foreigners, but are there many restaurants that are a little difficult for us Japanese to enter? As a resident of Kawaguchi, I want to develop Kawaguchi as a new Chinatown! I want to tell the existing stores that it will work better if they are more accessible to Japanese people than if they are only for Chinese people! It would be a waste if Japanese people can't enjoy the new Chinese restaurants that are popping up in Nishi-Kawaguchi.

I would like to take advantage of the buzz and give it a new wind! It's not that I want to exclude Chinese people. We want to make the Japanese people excited together! This project was started with this in mind!

(Facebook, 28 March 2019)

A expresses excitement for the increase in the number of non-Japanese speaking stores in Nishi-Kawaguchi, his hometown, and he responds to the Chinatown discourse with the clear objective of creating a lively town where Japanese and Chinese people can work together under such circumstances. This may be due in part to the fact that A is the manager of a local real estate investment company, and the increase in real estate values in the Nishi-Kawaguchi area is directly related to his own interests. Although A has been operating his business in Nishi-Kawaguchi for many years, there was no evidence that he has applied the discourse of a multinational gourmet town to his own business. Thus, it can be said that A intentionally selected the Chinese image from among the images projected by Japanese society onto Nishi-Kawaguchi.

4.2 B, the owner of Malatang restaurant

B, the owner of Nishi-Kawaguchi's *Malatang* restaurant W, is a Chinese woman born in 1982 and is one of the key players in the Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project. Regarding her reasons for participating in the project, B responded in the article in the *Tokyo Shimbun*:

Chinese restaurants are coming into Nishi-Kawaguchi because the rent is cheap. Restaurants that cannot afford high rent are lacking in service and other aspects. ... If we can get advice from the Japanese point of view, we can increase the number of Japanese customers and sales. I am nothing but grateful for the project. Everyone is grateful.

(*Tokyo Shimbun*, 12 May 2019, p.26)

B also started litter clear-up activities in Nishi-Kawaguchi. In an interview with a journalist, B explained the reason for her activities.

About a year ago, the Japanese media started coming to Nishi-Kawaguchi to cover the event. As the owner of a *Malatang* restaurant W in Nishi-Kawaguchi, I welcomed this trend. They asked me many questions during the interview. However, what was broadcast was only the negative aspects of manners and litter, which were mentioned in a small part of the many things we talked about. Rather than being angry at this, I felt very disappointed because I was confronted with the reality that "the bad image of China and

Chinese people in Japan is still rooted in the minds of people. ... Under such circumstances, I started this project in the hope that my appeal for litter pickup activities via microblogging and other means would trigger a change in awareness among Chinese people in Japan.

(Aichi, 2018a)

B has also been actively interviewed by various Chinese media outlets. *China Net* (7 January 2021), which is operated by the China Foreign Literature Publishing and Publishing Office under the direct control of the Central Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China, carried an article praising B's litter pickup. In an interview in the article, B answered that the reason she picks up litter is because "I was educated from childhood to enjoy helping others and to love my country, and these have become firm values for me".

B responds to the Chinatown discourse by forming a network with local Japanese people and receiving advice from the Japanese perspective, as it is in her own economic interest. On the other hand, interviews with Japanese and Chinese media covering another activity, litter pickup, reveal an aspect of B's strong patriotism toward China and her emphasis on solidarity with her fellow countrymen. This aspect suggests that B has become an actor that fixes the discourse of Chinatown by proactively choosing and responding to the image of Nishi-Kawaguchi as a Chinatown, rather than as a multinational gourmet town, among the images projected on it by Japanese society.

4.3 C, the owner of Shandong restaurant

C is the male owner of X, a Shandong restaurant in Nishi-Kawaguchi. X is a participating restaurant in the Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project. C has complicated roots. In this section, I first examine his background from his interview responses in one media outlet. It then discusses his response to the "Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown" discourse. An article written by a Chinese web media outlet, based on an interview with C, describes C's ethnic roots as follows.

X is a Chinese restaurant located a 3-minute walk from Nishi-Kawaguchi Station and has a 28-year history as a long-established Chinese restaurant with "Shandong Cuisine" as its signboard. The current owner is the second generation, and the first owner retired several years ago. In addition to Shandong and Cantonese cuisine, the menu also includes dishes such as homemade kimchi, which at first glance seems unusual for a Chinese restaurant, but this has something to do with C's family history.

C was born in Seoul, Korea. His maternal grandmother, a Japanese from Nagano Prefecture, met a Chinese student in prewar Tokyo, and the two

emigrated to Manchuria. In Manchuria, they gave birth to C's mother, but C's grandfather, who was a civil servant in Manchuria, suddenly disappeared one day, and World War II ended with no news of him. When the Soviet army invaded Manchuria, C's grandmother decided to take C's mother and flee to Busan on the Korean Peninsula, where she remarried a Chinese man who is a foundry manager. When C's grandmother learned of her country's recovery after the decision to host the Tokyo Olympics, she decided to return to her native Japan, taking her remarried partner, namely C's grandfather-in-law, with her. C's family's connection with Nishi-Kawaguchi began here. At this time, C's mother, who had not yet moved to Japan, married C's father in Seoul. C's father was born in Shandong, China, but moved to Korea at the age of 7 with C's paternal grandfather and others to Korea, which was then under Japanese rule. C's grandfather was a successful businessman who opened a restaurant and hospital in Seoul but lost everything when the family was evacuated to Busan due to the Korean War. After the Korean War ceased, the family returned to Seoul, where C's father married C's mother and had C. At the age of 42, C's mother and C moved to Japan with C's maternal grandmother. Shortly after arriving in Japan, he worked in various Chinese restaurants and eventually became the head chef of a famous Chinese restaurant. The Chinese restaurant in Nishi-Kawaguchi, opened by C's maternal grandfather-in-law, was taken over by C's father's younger brother, so C's father opened X by himself in 1991.

C came to Japan with his family when he was a child, and after graduating from high school, he worked at a Cantonese restaurant in Yokohama Chinatown. However, when C's mother was hospitalized in an accident, he returned to Nishi-Kawaguchi and began helping his father run X. Currently, X's menu includes three kinds of dumplings invented by C's father, as well as Cantonese dishes such as stir-fried oysters and shrimp in oyster sauce, which C learned while working at a Cantonese restaurant in Yokohama Chinatown.

(Yoshii, 2019a)

Thus, C is a Chinese immigrant with Japanese roots in his grandmother, but C himself is from Seoul and has strong ties to the Korean peninsula through his family. Nishi-Kawaguchi is another place where the family has deep ties, while C learned Chinese cuisine in Yokohama Chinatown. This is evident in the diverse menu offered at X.

In the same interview, C also stated that he considers his hometown to be Seoul. He also recounts his memories of returning to Seoul only once in his life.

Twenty-eight years ago, when my father was opening X, he decided that there was no time for travel after opening the restaurant, so the whole family went to visit relatives in Seoul. There were many public bathhouses in Seoul at that time, and they were open from 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., so it was very convenient. When we walked to the nearest public bathhouse around 7:00 a.m., it was just the time when all the houses were cooking breakfast. The air in the city was filled with the good smell of soup. What kind of soup was that? *Doenjang-jjigae*? Anyway, it was something like miso soup. I left Seoul when I was less than 10 years old, so I have almost no memory of my life in Seoul, but when I felt that aroma, I heard a voice from the bottom of my heart saying, "I'm home! from the bottom of my heart.

(Ibid.)

These narratives suggests that C holds a multi-layered ethnic identity that folds together Chinese (Shandong and Canton), Korean, and Japanese. On the other hand, Regarding the media's coverage of Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown, C. said

The Japanese media has already done a lot of reporting on Nishi-Kawaguchi, so quite a few Japanese people from all over are coming to Nishi-Kawaguchi to eat. This is a good thing. We often have customers who speak Kansai dialect in our restaurant. They come from Osaka or Kyoto, and when they come to Tokyo on business, they take a hotel in Nishi-Kawaguchi. Because there are cheap hotels here, and there are so many restaurants and interesting places around, and the transportation is convenient. So maybe in the future, we Chinese restaurant owners can work together and do something for the development of Nishi-Kawaguchi as a whole.

(Ibid.)

According to the same article, C is a member of the Kawaguchi Chinese Cuisine Association and the Kawaguchi Chamber of Commerce. C is also closely involved in organizing the multinational gourmet events mentioned earlier, and X's cuisine won the 2010 competition. In the same interview, B describes his association with other Chinese immigrants as follows:

I don't mean to say that I don't have any association at all with the newcomer Chinese shopkeepers in Nishi-Kawaguchi. D (to be described in Section 4.4),

for example, wants to participate in Kawaguchi's gourmet events. I'm a member of the Chamber of Commerce here, so I've had some dealings with him. I also know the owner of the *Malatang* restaurant (B described in Section 4.2). She is involved in litter pickup activities in Nishi-Kawaguchi and was featured on NHK (The Japan Broadcasting Corporation) this year. But overall, I would say that there are not many people I really have a relationship with. The problem is that there are too many new stores. That means there are a lot of stores that are being eliminated. So, it is very difficult to build a long-term relationship.

(Ibid.)

In an interview in another article, C also complained about “the current situation in which it is difficult to get an overview of stores in the entire area because of the rapid turnover of stores” (Zhang, 2018). He also mentions the problem of the manners of some residents, pointing out that the "oil dripping problem" caused by people easily discarding oil as garbage has become a problem in the district, and that there are residents who cause trouble by dumping business garbage in the residents' garbage dump (Ibid.).

C states that he considers Nishi-Kawaguchi to be a "town of different cultures"(Ibid.). C mentions Yokohama Chinatown and Ikebukuro, where sightseeing and shopping facilities exist in addition to Chinese restaurants, and adds, "In addition to Chinese food, you can enjoy Indian, Thai, and Korean food, which is close to the authentic taste of each country, so besides 'different cultures', tourism If a leisure facility is established, Nishi-Kawaguchi will become more attractive," (Ibid.).

In parallel with the response to the Chinatown discourse, C is responding to the discourse of the multinational gourmet town with ethnic diversity. This seemingly mixed response is not a contradiction. At X, in addition to Shandong cuisine, which is C's family's hometown, the menu includes Cantonese cuisine, which C studied, and Korean cuisine, which is C's hometown and with which his family is deeply involved. For C, participation in activities related to Chinatown is probably only one of the many aspects of C's life. On the other hand, for C, who has spoken to various media about the rapid turnover of Nishi-Kawaguchi residents, poor manners, and lack of connection among store owners, the solidarity in the name of Chinatown suggests that participation in this project has meaning. At the very least, even for C with composite ethnic identities, responding to the image of Chinatown projected by the Japanese society generated real benefits for his livelihood.

4.4 D, the owner of Fujian restaurant

D is the owner of Y, a Fujian restaurant located near Nishi-Kawaguchi Station. Y's Facebook page shows that the restaurant has been interviewed by numerous TV stations, newspapers, and magazines. It has also received numerous interviews from online news outlets and Chinese-language media, making it one of the most prominent Chinese restaurants in Nishi-Kawaguchi.

D is not participating in the panda project, but on his Facebook page, he mentions the project and says that he wants to do his best so that together we can make Nishi-Kawaguchi more vibrant. He is one of the entities most actively responding to the projection of the Chinatown image onto Nishi-Kawaguchi. For example, the *Asahi Shimbun* once published a series of 15 articles on D's life story as a "portrait of the trials and errors of a Chinese man" who runs Y, a restaurant that "has a presence" in "Nishi-Kawaguchi, which is called Little China". In this article, when D mentioned the need for solidarity among Chinese restaurants in Nishi-Kawaguchi, he stated that he would like to join forces to create a Chinatown map and other efforts to attract people to the city itself (*Asahi Shimbun*, 24 May 2019). Thus, D is actively responding to the projection by the Japanese society onto the Chinese image of Nishi-Kawaguchi.

D elaborates on his background in an interview with one of the online news outlets (Aichi, 2018b). The following description is based on that interview.

When D was a high school student in Fuqing city in Fujian, there was a growing trend to "go abroad rather than go to university in China". After graduating from high school, D also attended Japanese language school while working part-time at a karaoke bar in China. D came to Japan in 2008, and after graduating from a vocational school, he found a job at a Japanese company. However, the salary was low, and he continued to work part-time at an *izakaya* (Japanese-style bar) after the end of his regular working hours. After getting married and having a child, D thought about starting his own business to support his family as the head of a family and decided to open a restaurant based on his experience working part-time at a karaoke bar and an *izakaya*. He was initially looking for a restaurant in Tokyo but decided to start his business in Nishi-Kawaguchi through a real estate agent.

In 2015, D's restaurant opened for business, but at first it was "a completely Japanese *izakaya* with no Chinese, let alone Fujian, flavor". The name of the restaurant was also different from the current one, being a purely Japanese name with the word "*izakaya*" in it. However, immediately after opening, there were no customers at all. A friend gave D the tools to make *Hailibing*, deep-fried rice cakes with oysters, which later became Y's signature dish. Seeing his

friends excited by the delicious taste and nostalgia, D thought to himself, "What could make everyone happy was actually close at hand!" he thought. Y's menu was gradually replaced by Fujian cuisine, and in 2017, when the number of Fujian dishes it could offer increased, the restaurant changed its name to include "Fujian cuisine".

A major turning point came for D during the Chinese New Year in 2018. This was a time when Nishi-Kawaguchi was beginning to attract attention as a New Chinatown, and Y was receiving a steady stream of press coverage, and the restaurant's name recognition was quickly rising. However, D closed his thriving restaurant for a little over a month and temporarily returned to China. D was worried that, in contrast to the growing popularity of his restaurant among Japanese customers, the number of hometown customers had not increased in Nishi-Kawaguchi, where many people were supposed to be from Fujian Province. This temporary return was made with the purpose of "going to learn the current local flavor". During this trip, D learned how to make *sanjiaogao*, a fried dish using taro, which has now become a popular menu item along with *halibing*.

One day, a Chinese from Beijing could not forget the taste of *halibing* that he had eaten at Y. He revisited the restaurant, but unfortunately, it was closed. When D was contacted, he told him that the restaurant was only open at the branch in Tokyo that day, and the customer from Beijing drove over an hour to Tokyo to buy fried rice cakes with oysters. D was so impressed that he has since set his sights on "getting more people to know and love the taste of my hometown". The above is what he said in the interview (Aichi, 2018b).

In a series of articles in the *Asahi Shinbun*, D also says, "I will start a boom of *halibing* from Nishi-kawaguchi," (19 April 2019) and "I want Japanese people to know more about the taste of my hometown" (29 May 2019). These two interviews would suggest that the dream of spreading "hometown taste" in Japan is the reason for D's active media exposure.

To achieve his dream, it is essential to increase the number of Japanese customers as well as Chinese customers. D also stated on his Twitter (26 March 2019) page, "If the number of Japanese customers does not increase from now on, the phenomenon of Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown will end in a short period of time, like a cherry blossom viewing" in Japanese. The article in the *Asahi Shimbun* also mentions that D is working with Japanese-owned stores in the neighborhood to increase the number of Japanese customers coming to Nishi-Kawaguchi, and D responded that the reason for this is that if the number of Japanese customers does not increase, Nishi-Kawaguchi Chinatown will end up being a short-lived phenomenon (28 May 2019). Thus, by taking on the role of a mediator who disseminates discourse that Nishi-Kawaguchi is a Chinatown to the Japanese society, it can be said that D is using the Chinese

image projected on Nishi-Kawaguchi by the Japanese society with a clear intention to achieve his own dream of increasing the number of Japanese customers and spreading the taste of his hometown in Japan.

4.5 E, the owner of Shanghai restaurant

E is the owner of Shanghai restaurant Z, located in front of the east exit of Nishi-Kawaguchi Station, whose signature dish is grilled *xiaolongbao*. E is a man in his 60s, originally from Shanghai, who has lived in Japan for half of his life. Z is considered one of the oldest Chinese restaurants in Nishi-Kawaguchi. Although E has a very strong attachment to the Nishi-Kawaguchi location, Z has not participated in the Nishi-Kawaguchi Panda Project, and E himself has not been actively exposed to the Japanese media. On the other hand, as the narrative below indicates, he has responded favorably to the image of New Chinatown projected onto Nishi-Kawaguchi since the mid-2010s. He describes his life story and his reaction to the Chinatown discourse in an interview by one Chinese media outlet (Yoshii, 2019b).

At the beginning of the interview, the reporter asked E whether the interview should be conducted in Chinese or Japanese. E replied, "When I talk about Japan, I use Japanese because I can express myself more clearly". After graduating from high school, E got a job at the Shanghai Transportation Bureau, where his parents also worked. He started out as a ticket office worker but worked his way up to a senior executive position. It was during this time that he met his wife, with whom he still runs a restaurant. E then decided to go to Japan to study. E came to Japan in 1988 and studied Japanese for a year and a half at a language school in Tokyo. E was able to adapt to life in Japan quickly, but he frequently craved the cuisine of his homeland. However, there were not many restaurants serving authentic Chinese food in Japan at that time. One day, E went to Yokohama Chinatown in search of a taste of his hometown, but his expectations were betrayed there (Ibid.).

I saw a sign in one restaurant that said, "baked steamed buns". The waiter explained that these were like grilled *xiaolongbao*, and as I was observing how they were made, he took the steamed buns out of the steamer and started grilling them on a griddle. Seeing this, I was convinced. I was convinced that I would never be able to eat a real grilled *xiaolongbao* in Japan. You know that grilled *Xiaolongbao*, steamed buns, and steamed *xiaolongbao* have different fillings, skins, and methods of preparation.

(Ibid.)

After graduating from language school, E attended a trade school for two years. He then worked as an office worker for 15 years at a Japanese lumber trading company. E had two

children and a happy family but lost his job during the recession of the 2000s. E tried to make a living by setting up his own company and selling overseas logs to Japanese construction companies, but that failed either. However, he was not successful. Then E had a turning point. According to what he heard, a new take-out restaurant in Machida (suburban Tokyo) specializing in grilled *xiaolongbao* has become so popular that there are long lines every day. E thought this could be a good business opportunity. His wife had a relative who had a restaurant in Shanghai, so they immediately went to Shanghai and spent a month and a half learning how to make grilled *xiaolongbao* and how to run a restaurant (Ibid.).

The next step was to choose a location for the store. E spent eight months wondering where to start his second life. He considered various areas but had a hard time deciding due to budget issues. E describes how he finally decided to open Z in Nishi-Kawaguchi (Ibid.).

I came to see this property now in Nishi-Kawaguchi at the last minute. Originally, there was a *daoxiaomian* noodle restaurant here. The first time I came to look at it alone, I thought it would be good there. Because the location is good, and the rent is cheaper than Tokyo. As soon as I arrived at Nishi-Kawaguchi by train, I heard Chinese and thought that the number of Chinese people here was not small, so I thought that customers would surely come. The second time, I brought my wife and we both observed the street in front of the store for a while, and then the free shuttle bus of "Kawaguchi Auto Racing Track" (Auto racing in Japan combines gambling) came and many people got off. Seeing this, I thought that if I opened a store here, many customers would definitely come. The rent at that time was a little over 200,000 yen (approximately 1,500 USD). In August 2010, I started making grilled *xiaolongbao* here.

(Ibid.)

The “authentic taste” offered by Z immediately attracted Chinese customers living in the Nishi-Kawaguchi area, and the lines were long every day. However, seven months after E opened his restaurant, the Great East Japan Earthquake struck. Due in part to the nuclear power plant accident, many Chinese living in Japan fled the country. At the time, E's restaurant employed three Chinese nationals, who oversaw cooking all the dishes except for the grilled *xiaolongbao* and dumplings. However, E did not return to China (Ibid.).

At the time, I thought seriously about the future of my family. All my children had grown up in Japan, so it was not realistic for me to return to Shanghai.

So, I decided that I would not complain anymore. I felt that I had no choice but to die in Japan. The most important thing is to have my family together.

(Ibid.),

After the earthquake, E realized that it is better to do everything by himself. He began researching how to make dishes other than grilled *xiaolongbao* and dumplings, and now he makes all the food served at the restaurant by himself. E describes his own cooking as follows:

The quality of the ingredients is good, the oil is good, and after all, I fry the food myself. Customers in Shanghai tell me that the taste is exactly the same as the one they had when they were little. They say that our taste is something they can no longer have in China today.

(Ibid.)

In the past, most of the customers were Chinese, but now 80% are Japanese. Some customers come all the way from far away to eat grilled *xiaolongbao* because they saw it on social networking sites. E explains why so many Japanese come to Nishi-Kawaguchi:

I think it is a good thing that Nishi-Kawaguchi is becoming famous for its Chinese cuisine. For example, the restaurants in Yokohama Chinatown are mainly Cantonese, and even if there are Peking or Szechuan restaurants, they all have different tastes to suit the Japanese palate. But most restaurants in Nishi-Kawaguchi do not care about Japanese tastes. They serve what the owner thinks is delicious. This is the charm of Nishi-Kawaguchi. I hope that more Japanese people will come to Nishi-Kawaguchi, and at the same time, I hope that this style of Nishi-Kawaguchi will not be lost.

(Ibid.)

In an interview with local media in Nishi-Kawaguchi (*Kawaguchi Navi*, n.d.), it was reported that when a Japanese reporter came to Z for the first time and ordered grilled *xiaolongbao*, E started from kneading the dough to serve it to him freshly. As this was the first time for the reporter to try grilled *xiaolongbao*, E's wife stayed behind to teach him how to eat it. This shows that E is making efforts to preserve the "good old taste" of his hometown in Nishi-Kawaguchi, which is no longer there. This shows that E is committed to preserving the "good old taste" in Nishi-Kawaguchi, which is no longer available in his hometown.

E has lived in Japan for more than half of his life. When he was young, he was shocked to know that authentic Shanghai-style grilled *xiaolongbao* was not available in Japan. And now, he has made it his life's work to provide "a taste that is no longer available even in China today" in Japan. E, who experienced the earthquake in Nishi-Kawaguchi and chose to remain in Nishi-

Kawaguchi after much consideration, responds very favorably to the projection of the Chinatown image onto Nishi-Kawaguchi, to which he has strong attachments. In response to the fact that many Japanese tourists now visit Nishi-Kawaguchi, he responds that the appeal of Nishi-Kawaguchi, which Yokohama Chinatown does not have, is that the store owners serve what they think is delicious, without regard for the Japanese palate. "What owners think is delicious" that E talks about probably means the good old Shanghai-style grilled *xiaolongbao* which he makes. E is an overseas Chinese who has lived in Japan for a long time, but his attitude of "not caring about the Japanese palate" and "serving what the owner thinks is delicious" is consistent with the image generally projected onto New Chinatowns where new overseas Chinese gather (Takamatsu, 2020, pp.100-101).

Although E's stores have a long history, there was no indication that they had responded to the discourse of a multinational gourmet town in the past. That E is not a person who opportunistically responds to the image projected on Nishi-Kawaguchi by the Japanese society for business purposes is suggested by the fact that, as noted above, E has had no media exposure except for the two interviews discussed in this paper. However, his practice in response to the image of China projected onto Nishi-Kawaguchi by Japanese society seems to be done with a strong will rooted in his life history, rather than for reasons of livelihood.

5. Discussion

This article first revealed that the image projected onto Chinatown by its host society varies with the countries of the world and with the arrival period of Chinese immigrants living there. The image projected onto Chinatown where newcomer Chinese live by the host society is often negative and exclusionary, but it also has the aspect of an ethnic enclave where one can taste authentic Chinese cuisine. The article then showed the reaction of local people in Nishi-Kawaguchi, Japan, when images of New Chinatown suddenly began to be projected there by Japanese mass media in late 2010. Despite the government's huge budget to project the image of a multinational gourmet town, the result is that Nishi-Kawaguchi is now perceived as a Chinatown. The response of the residents to the media's projection of a Chinatown image onto Nishi-Kawaguchi shows that each side used this image projection to their own benefit, such as the improvement of the city's value, the formation of networks and solidarity between Japanese and Chinese residents for economic success, and the expectation of an increase in Japanese visitors.

This paper argues that what determines whether a geographic area becomes a Chinatown is how people choose to represent their ethnicity in relation to the image projected by an outside

power. Examining the life stories of each Nishi-Kawaguchi resident, very personal and micro practices were the basis for their response to the mass media projecting an image of Chinatown. Examples include ambitions to breathe new life into the town where they live, efforts to improve the image of the Chinese people, and dreams of spreading the taste of their hometown to Japan. In some cases, those with complex backgrounds responded particularly strongly to the image of Chinatown projected by media, while in others, their own life's work of recreating the authentic flavors of their childhood matched the image of New Chinatown projected by the Japanese society.

Chinatown studies based on classical Chicago School immigration studies believed that the factor that led to the establishment of Chinatowns there was the concentration of Chinese people. The group of studies that focused on the projection of the image of China by the host society criticized this and found the discourse production and development by outside powers to be a factor in whether an area becomes a Chinatown or not (e.g., Anderson, 1987. Ealham, 2005. Bian 2018). On the other hand, as indicated in the main text, in the case of Nishi-Kawaguchi, although the administration presented the ethnic representation of a multinational gourmet town, the residents' reaction was only partial, and the discourse did not take root. The ethnic representation of Chinatown that was subsequently presented by the mass media overlapped with the interests of the residents in many ways, and their reactions were positive, eventually leading to the discourse of "Chinatown" in Nishi-Kawaguchi. This case study provides a glimpse into the importance of the subjectivity of representation selection, which has not received much attention in previous studies, in which residents select Chinatown discourses based on their personal life stories and micro-practices from among various ethnic representations projected by external powers in the process of fixing Chinatown discourses (Figure 1).

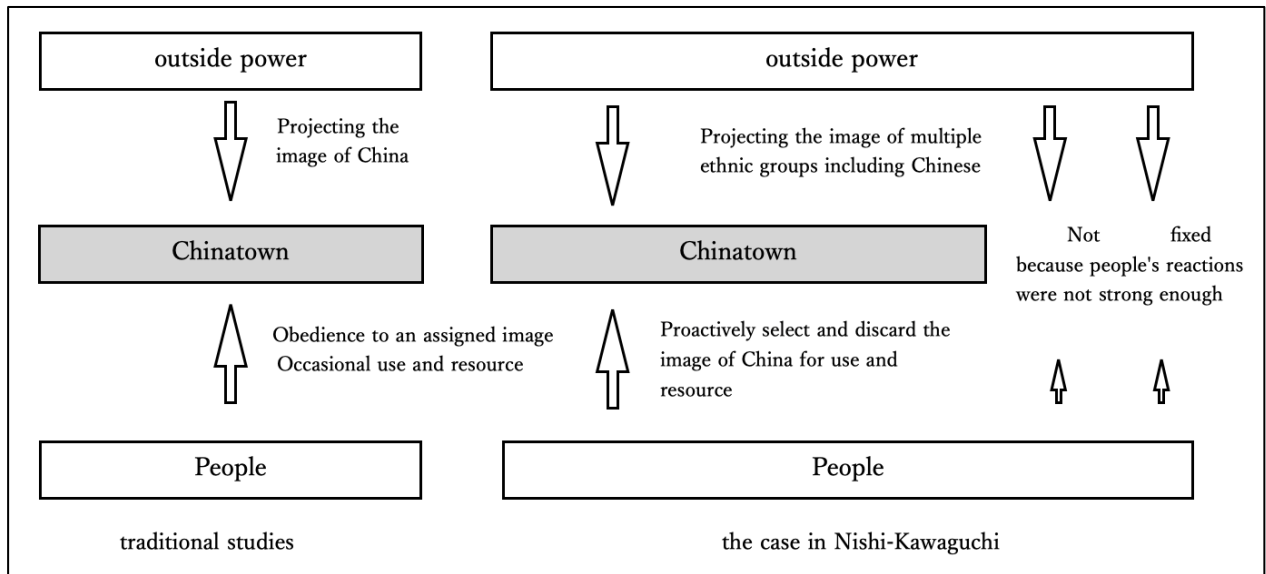


Figure 1 How the case in Nishi-Kawaguchi is different from traditional studies

In addition to research on traditional Chinatowns, the accelerated growth of New Chinatowns has also become a hot topic in Chinatown research (Yamashita, 2016). When examining why New Chinatown was established, it may be important to look not only at the conventional production of space from above, but also at the subjectivity of the local people who respond to the projection of the image of Chinatown, and to focus on the process by which the discourse of Chinatown is selected from among multiple discourses.

Finally, there are two issues that I was unable to examine in this paper. First, as mentioned earlier, in addition to Japanese and Chinese immigrants, many immigrants from ASEAN countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines also live in Nishi-Kawaguchi. The multinationalization of New Chinatown is a phenomenon that is occurring not only in Japan but around the world. Examination of whether they are involved in projecting the image of New Chinatown, or whether they are responding to and utilizing it, is a subject for future study. And while there are many neighborhoods with high newcomer Chinese population, some neighborhoods are projected the image of China by the Japanese society and others are not: thus, there are neighborhoods that become/are not Chinatowns. A comparative study of areas that do and do not become New Chinatowns will be presented in a separate paper. Lastly, I believe that the findings in this article can serve as good ground for further comparison with parallel phenomena in other regions, particularly new Chinatowns emerging in Southeast Asian countries in the more recent past.

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