A Comparative Study of Chinatowns around the World: Focusing on the Increase in New Chinese Immigrants and Formation of New Chinatowns

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Abstract
Because of an increase in new immigrants from mainland China along with remigration, global Chinatowns are undergoing major changes. This study classifies global Chinatowns into “Old Chinatowns” and “New Chinatowns,” based on previous fieldwork conducted by the author in Chinatowns all over the world and the results of other relevant research.

Among new Chinese immigrants and remigrants, groups that occupy low socioeconomic positions tend to flow into Old Chinatowns. Some Old Chinatowns are transforming into tourist areas, and Chinatown gates have been constructed as the predominant symbol of Chinatowns. The interrelationship between the ethnic Chinese population and the host society is highly relevant to the rise and fall of Chinatowns. There are even cases where once-declining Chinatowns have been “reconstructed” by governmental tourism development, such as Kobe Chinatown in Japan and Incheon Chinatown in South Korea. Many Old Chinatowns have become increasingly multiethnic, owing to an influx of ethnic groups other than ethnic Chinese or Indochina Chinese.

Suburban New Chinatowns have been formed in the USA, Canada, Australia, and other countries as a result of such factors as an influx of wealthy new immigrants from mainland China or of ethnic Chinese who become affluent, leave Old Chinatown, and move to the suburbs. In some cases also, New Chinatowns have been formed in downtown areas by new Chinese immigrants, such as Ikebukuro Chinatown in Tokyo and Belleville Chinatown in Paris. Furthermore, large-scale commercial center Chinatowns selling Chinese products have been formed in Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Romania, and Poland, and in areas of the Middle East like Dubai.

Key words: Chinatown, ethnic geography, ethnic town, overseas Chinese, ethnic Chinese

I Introduction
Today, Chinese society is continuing its dynamic expansion and dispersion overseas. In China, the boom in overseas migrant work and studying abroad began at the end of the 1970s in tandem with the country’s policy of reform and opening up. Additionally, the overseas operations of Chinese companies have increased with China’s rapid economic development. In Hong Kong, an overseas emigration boom took place prior to the reunification of the territory.
with mainland China in 1997, with many Hong Kong residents migrating to countries such as Canada, the USA, Australia, and the UK. In Taiwan, an outflow of overseas emigration, mainly to the USA, is continuing (Yamashita 2002). Before the formation of the People’s Republic of China, most emigrants were from South China, but after the reform and opening of the country, new emigrants increasingly came from all over China. Those who have emigrated overseas since China’s reform and opening are referred to in China as “new migrants.”

Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia after the mid-1970s, there was an outflow of ethnic Chinese refugees, such as the Boat People, because of such factors as the Vietnam War and the shift to socialism in the nations of Indochina. This second immigration by immigrant ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia and South America to other places like North America or Europe is known as “remigration” in China. Traditional overseas Chinese society has since been facing huge changes from this increase of new migrants and remigrants (Yamashita 2005: 154–164).

This major influx of new migrants has effected considerable changes on hitherto traditional Chinatowns. Most of these traditional Chinatowns were formed in the downtown areas of cities. In contrast, the new Chinatowns have been formed in various areas owing to the increase in new migrants. In this study, I refer to these two types as “Old Chinatowns” and “New Chinatowns,” respectively (Yamashita 2013: 247).

In 1994, China estimated the overseas Chinese population as close to 30 million (Editorial Committee 1994: 52–57), but a more recent estimate of around 50 million was announced in 2011 (Qiu 2012: 2). Overseas Chinese society has undergone considerable changes with the increase in new Chinese migrants and remigrants, which is clearly reflected in the trends of global Chinatowns. The paper offers a comparative study of Chinatowns in various regions worldwide.

I will begin by defining “Chinatown” and discussing its general characteristics, as follows: a type of ethnic town formed by ethnic Chinese, a Chinatown is a zone outside of China where ethnic Chinese reside and maintain economic, social, and cultural facilities. Chinatowns come into existence via contact between Chinese culture and the culture of the host society of the region where ethnic Chinese are living; thus, Chinatowns in various regions are a reflection of how the ethnic Chinese adapt to their host society. Accordingly, conducting an interrelating comparative study of global Chinatowns from a geographical perspective will make it possible to discover regional characteristics in the way various Chinatowns have adapted to their respective regions, as well as the universal characteristics shared by all global Chinatowns. In addition to clarifying the regional and universal characteristics of Chinatowns through geographical research, it is important to examine the factors that cause these characteristics.

Chinatowns provide an arena for various activities by ethnic Chinese people. First, if we consider the economic perspective, Chinatowns are composed of residences along with a great variety of shops, offices, factories, and other facilities. Among these, the large numbers of Chinese restaurants attract the most attention. Customers of Chinese restaurants include non-Chinese members of the host society in addition to ethnic Chinese living in the Chinatown and the surrounding area. The Chinese restaurant business provides employment opportunities for fellow ethnic Chinese. In addition to Chinese restaurants, there are also many groceries, butchers, fishmongers, Chinese food markets, barbershops and salons, general stores, and supermarkets. In large Chinatowns, other facilities, such as banks and offices for insurance and legal matters, are targeted mainly at ethnic Chinese. Furthermore, travel agencies — which handle trips to mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and official invitations for relatives and acquaintances — as well as China-related antique shops, gift shops, movie theaters,
bookshops, and other businesses can be found. These are “ethnic businesses” for Chinese people, which not only provide various services to their fellow ethnic Chinese but also, perhaps more important, give them employment opportunities. If we also consider Chinatowns from a non-economic perspective, such associations as regional, trade, and family groups, as well as facilities such as schools for overseas Chinese and Chinese temples, are also important constituent elements.

A great deal of research in recent years has studied the characteristics and trends of overseas Chinese society on a global scale. Ma and Cartier (2003) use case studies of Chinese society worldwide to survey trends in these societies as well as migration and settlement, the results of which are a valuable asset for research into Chinese society from a geographical perspective. Tan (2013) examines overseas ethnic Chinese from various angles including politics, economics, localization, education, literature, and media, also by means of case studies in Chinese society in various overseas regions.

Many studies have been conducted on Chinatowns, an important subject in the research on ethnic Chinese. However, the majority of these target a Chinatown in a particular region, with few of these studies discussing various Chinatowns from a global perspective. Among these, as a general introduction to the subject of global Chinatowns, Shen (1992) presents an overview of Chinatowns in various countries around the world, and Wu (2009) explores sixty-five Chinatowns, presenting them in a guidebook style. Künnemann and Mayer (2011) discuss Chinatowns and the related regional Chinese society on both the city level (including New York, Rotterdam, Hamburg, and London) and country level (including the USA, Germany, and other countries). They also examine the commonalities and generalities found therein. Wong and Tan (2013) explore the changes in characteristics and functions of major Chinatowns in various locations worldwide, including Vancouver, New York, Chicago, Lima, Havana, Paris, Lisbon, Sydney, and Tokyo; and, as such, theirs is the first significant scholarly study on global Chinatowns. To this volume I contributed a consideration of Ikebukuro Chinatown in Tokyo as the first New Chinatown in Japan (Yamashita 2013), and Wong (2013) and Tan (2013), the editors of the volume, used a global perspective to examine and classify the patterns of change and regional characteristics of Chinatowns around the world.

Of the sixty-five Chinatowns explored by Wu (2009), I have conducted fieldwork in forty-three plus further fieldwork in other Chinatowns not included in his collection. I have pursued fieldwork on the subject of Chinatowns in Japan and various other locations worldwide. Since conducting my first study on Yokohama Chinatown (Yamashita 1979), I have examined aspects such as the formation, townscapes, and regional characteristics of Chinatowns in Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar (Yamashita 1987). Subsequently, I incorporated the results of research on Chinatowns in the USA, Canada, England, France, and Australia to form a comparative study of global Chinatowns. At present, I continue my fieldwork in Chinatowns in various locations around the world, and in this paper I further develop a comprehensive consideration of global Chinatowns based on the results of the fieldwork.

In this paper, I aim to consider the recent changes that have occurred in Chinatowns around the world through a comparative study of various global Chinatowns, with particular focus on the changes in Old Chinatowns and formation of New Chinatowns that have accompanied the recent increase in new Chinese immigrants worldwide.
II Changes in Old Chinatowns

Old Chinatowns and the Influx of New Chinese Immigrants

In looking at where the increasing numbers of new immigrants from mainland China and remigrants are living in their new destinations, we can observe several patterns. While there is a trend for ethnic Chinese in high socioeconomic positions to desire housing in recently formed New Chinatowns in the suburbs, a contrasting trend shows an influx of groups into Old Chinatowns among new Chinese immigrants and remigrants in lower socioeconomic positions. Old and New Chinatowns, such as those in Manhattan, New York, and Vancouver, are typical representations of these (Yamashita 2000:131–136).

The Chinatown in Lower Manhattan is included in the Old Chinatown category. This Old Chinatown was formed mainly by early Cantonese immigrants, particularly those from the Taishan region, in the district that includes Mott Street and Canal Street, and is surrounded by Little Italy, Jewish neighborhoods, and the government office quarter (Kwong 1987, Zhou 1992). However, with the rapid increase in new Chinese immigrants, Manhattan Chinatown has expanded into the surrounding area. In particular, increased numbers of new immigrants from the Fuzhou area of northern Fujian Province (Yamashita et al. 2010), as well as illegal residents, have converged and settled in the East Broadway district from the 1980s onwards, so much so that the area is known today as “Little Foochow” (Guest 2013). Various mutual aid associations for ethnic Chinese are concentrated on East Broadway, the main street. Furthermore, territorial fights between new ethnic Chinese gangs from Hong Kong, Fuzhou, and Vietnam have also arisen because of the increase in new Chinese immigrants and remigrants (Gwen 1992).

Yokohama Chinatown, formed over a long period by ethnic Chinese since the opening of Japan’s ports at the end of the Edo period, was the largest Old Chinatown in Japan (Yamashita 2003a). However, according to my research, from the 2000s onward, Chinese restaurants managed by new Chinese immigrants in Yokohama Chinatown have increased. A characteristic of these restaurants is low-cost pricing; thus, they have been able to attract many Japanese customers against the background of Japan’s economic recession. In addition, a large number of long-established Chinese restaurants have suspended business. In many cases, new Chinese immigrants have taken over management of these failed establishments and have reopened them as new restaurants.

Such an influx of new immigrants from mainland China into the Old Chinatowns can be seen not only in Manhattan Chinatown and Yokohama Chinatown, but also in various global locations including San Francisco, Chicago (Ling 2013), Los Angeles, Toronto (Thompson 1989), Vancouver (Li and Li 2013), London (Sales et al. 2011), Amsterdam, Sydney (Inglis 2013), and Melbourne.

Transformation of Old Chinatowns into Tourist Areas

When Old Chinatowns are located in downtown areas, with convenient access and a good relationship with the host society, they attract tourism. Among all the Chinatowns in the world, it seems that those in Japan are undergoing the most advanced transformation into tourist areas. In Japan, Old Chinatowns have formed in Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki, and these are known as the three major Chinatowns of Japan. A key characteristic of these three Chinatowns is that each has become an important tourist area within its city, and most of the visitors are
Japanese tourists. Although the original main function of Chinatowns is to provide services to fellow ethnic Chinese, the three major Chinatowns of Japan now exist as tourist areas in which the Chinese restaurants and Chinese goods shops target Japanese tourists (Yamashita 2003). In particular, Yokohama Chinatown is the largest Chinatown in Japan as of 2012, with around 600 China-related shops concentrated within an area of 400 square meters. The Japanese host society’s high level of interest in and admiration for Chinese culture is a likely cause for the increasing shift toward tourism in Chinatowns in Japan. In other words, Chinese culture has become a tourist attraction in Japan. Chinese cuisine is beloved by the Japanese, and many Japanese visit the three major Chinatowns in Japan to seek the flavors of authentic Chinese food or to have a pseudo-experience of being in China.

This transformation, in which a Chinatown becomes a tourist area, though not particularly common in global Chinatowns, has occurred in several notable spots. As another example, the Old Chinatown in San Francisco is an important spot in San Francisco tourism, and sightseers go equipped with cameras. Many tourists also visit the Old Chinatown in Manhattan, New York. In both the San Francisco and Manhattan Chinatowns, the services are still targeted primarily at fellow ethnic Chinese with Chinese food markets, Chinese bookshops, travel agencies, banks, Chinese-related associations, and schools and religious facilities; and many ethnic Chinese live within these Chinatowns.

In Australia, Sydney’s Chinatown is a strong tourist attraction, with a Chinatown gate built in 1979. The shopping center in the Chinatown’s outskirts contains several food courts where visitors can experience the flavors of Southeast Asian ethnic Chinese dietary culture, in addition to food from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. London’s Old Chinatown is situated in the Soho district, five minutes’ walk east from Piccadilly Circus, London’s downtown area. A concentration of Chinese restaurants and goods shops, it is easily accessed by public transport, and it possesses the characteristics of a tourist area. Likewise, Victoria’s Chinatown on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada, now exists as a sightseeing spot after previously falling into decline with the growth of Vancouver into a major city, and a Chinatown gate has been constructed (Lai 1988).

Because around 80% of the global overseas Chinese population lives in Southeast Asia, few of the many Chinatowns there have shifted toward tourism. The great majority of these Chinatowns are functioning centers of the retail and wholesale industries in their respective regions. Ethnic Chinese culture is not very likely to become a tourist attraction for the members of the host society; thus, the Chinatowns are not usually tourist attractions, but are places to buy retail and wholesale goods (Yamashita 1987). Even among such Southeast Asian Chinatowns, however, it is possible to find tourism development. Singapore’s Chinatown has been maintained as a tourist area since the 1980s, with government-sponsored urban redevelopment aimed at overseas tourists who visit Singapore. New Chinese restaurants and gift shops increased, along with the restoration of dilapidated traditional shop houses, and even a Chinatown museum was built (Yamashita 2000: 100–101). In the Kuala Lumpur Chinatown in Malaysia, a Chinatown gate and arcade were built in 2004, and the district has become an important sightseeing spot for overseas tourists. In Thailand, while the Bangkok Chinatown’s main function was to provide services to fellow ethnic Chinese, it also became an important center of retail and wholesale trade. Its Chinatown gate was built in 1999, and it has also become a tourist area for many overseas visitors.

When ethnic towns of any type, not just Chinatowns, are transformed into tourist areas,
symbols of the relevant ethnic group are created. In the case of Chinatowns, as has already been implied, this symbol is the construction of Chinatown gates. In the increasingly touristic Yokohama Chinatown, ten Chinatown gates have been built to date, the first of which was constructed in 1955. Chinatown gates were subsequently built in Kobe Chinatown in 1982 and in Nagasaki Chinatown in 1986, the first in each of those Chinatowns. The single Chinatown gate in San Francisco’s Chinatown was constructed in 1970. In the USA, since the normalization of diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in 1979, construction of Chinatown gates in Chinatowns nationwide has proceeded with Chinese cooperation, partly to symbolize the amicable Sino-American relationship. For example, a Chinatown gate was built in Philadelphia’s Chinatown in 1984 with cooperation from Tianjin, which has a sister city partnership with Philadelphia (see Figure 1), and in 1986 a Chinatown gate was constructed in Washington DC’s Chinatown, as well as in Chinatowns in Chicago, Boston, Seattle, and Portland, Oregon. In the UK, gates have been constructed in the Chinatowns of London, Liverpool (see Figure 2), Manchester, and Birmingham. Worldwide, these gates have become symbols of Chinatown.

In addition to the construction of Chinatown gates, event hosting is important for transforming Chinatowns into tourist areas. In particular, at the Chinese New Year, many members of the host society visit Chinatowns to watch lion dances, dragon dances, and parades. Event hosting heightens the visibility of Chinatowns as tourist areas.

Decline and Regeneration of Old Chinatowns

In some case, Chinatowns have gone into decline or vanished completely after their original formation. In California, ethnic Chinese lived in concentrated groups in larger-scale Chinatowns like San Francisco’s Chinatown in order to escape danger from persecution by whites on account of a growing anti-Chinese movement. As a result, many Chinatowns fell into decline or vanished, such as those in Sacramento, San Jose, Stockton, and other cities (Yu 1991, Minnick 1988). Thus, the quality of the interrelationship between the ethnic Chinese population and the host society is highly relevant to the rise and fall of Chinatowns.

Kobe Chinatown was formed along with the opening of Kobe’s port in 1868, later than in Yokohama, Nagasaki, and Hakodate, which had opened their ports in 1859. Kobe Chinatown
went into decline after the Second World War, but in 1981, Kobe City Hall began restoration and environmental improvement in this Chinatown as a new sightseeing spot in Kobe. The main street was repaired, a China Square was built, and many new Chinese restaurants were opened. In 1982, the first Chinatown gate was constructed (Yamashita 2003a).

Incheon Chinatown in South Korea, similar to Kobe Chinatown, fell into decline after its formation and was then rebuilt. Incheon’s port was opened in 1882, whereupon a Qing settlement and then a Chinatown were formed in the city. However, after the Second World War, the ethnic Chinese society received a major blow as the Korean government, seeking to raise the independence of their ethnic economy, imposed strict restrictions on economic activities by ethnic Chinese. Many ethnic Chinese went out of business and were forced to give up their lifestyles in South Korea. They moved overseas to destinations including the USA, Canada, Taiwan, and Japan, and Incheon Chinatown effectively ceased to exist.

In 2001, with the expectation that large numbers of Chinese would visit Incheon in 2002 during the soccer World Cup co-hosted by South Korea and Japan, the Incheon Metropolitan repaired districts that contained many historical buildings from the foreign settlement era and began the work of creating a new tourist belt in the city. Central to this was the redevelopment of Incheon Chinatown. The main organizations promoting the redevelopment works on Incheon Chinatowns were Incheon Metropolitan, and in particular, the Jung District ward office (Yamashita 2001).

The political relationship between China and the country in which overseas ethnic Chinese reside has a major influence on the rise and fall of Chinatowns. For example, the only city in India to have a Chinatown is Kolkata. The Old Chinatown in Kolkata went into decline for political reasons, the worsening of bilateral relations between India and China. In 2009, I conducted fieldwork in this Old Chinatown, which is located in the Tiretta Bazar (also called Bowbazar) district in central Kolkata (Yamashita 2009). Ethnic Chinese in India congregated in Kolkata, which had been India’s capital during British colonial rule. Among them, Cantonese inhabitants were the largest group, with great numbers of Hakka in particular, and they specialized in the leather industry and shoemaking as economic activities. However, because of the worsening of bilateral relations that accompanied the Sino-Indian Border Dispute that broke out in 1962, increasing numbers of ethnic Chinese remigrated overseas, and Kolkata Chinatown fell into decline. At the time of my visit in 2009, a total of nine facilities, including Chinese temples and regional association buildings remained, but there was only one Chinese restaurant under ethnic Chinese management, along with two other shops.

Chinatowns in Vietnam also declined for some time. The Chinatown in the Cho Lon district of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) thrived during the French colonial era as the economic center of Indochina, revolving around rice trading, and developed into one of the foremost Chinatowns in Southeast Asia. However, the Vietnam War ended in 1975; North and South Vietnam were united in socialism the following year; and the Sino-Vietnamese war then broke out in 1979. In the Cho Lon Chinatown, most shops managed by ethnic Chinese were closed; most ethnic Chinese, faced with danger, made plans to flee abroad; and the Chinatown became a ghost town. Later, after the economic liberalization policy known as Doimoi (meaning “reform”) was implemented in 1986, increasing numbers of ethnic Chinese who had fled overseas returned to Cho Lon, and the prosperity of its Chinatown was restored (Yamashita 2000: 115–120).
Multiethnic Transformation of Old Chinatowns

The previously mentioned “remigration” of ethnic Chinese who had already migrated overseas from China can be cited as a significant recent phenomenon related to changes in global Chinatowns. For example, ethnic Chinese are increasingly remigrating from Southeast Asia, which is the region with the largest concentration of overseas ethnic Chinese, to regions such as North America, Oceania, and Europe. Among these remigrants, huge numbers of Indochinese refugees have dispersed worldwide, affected by the shift to socialism in the three nations of Indochina — Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia — after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Many ethnic Chinese who had been engaged in commerce and industry under the capitalist system are included in these refugees. In Chinatowns around the world, even as increasing numbers of ethnic Chinese are moving away from Old Chinatowns as the localization of ethnic Chinese progresses, an influx can be observed of these Indochina Chinese into Old Chinatowns. Shops and restaurants managed by ethnic Chinese from Indochina are increasing in Old Chinatowns, including Chinese restaurants that offer menus filled with Indochinese cuisine such as Vietnamese dishes, cafés influenced by the French colonial era, and bakeries typified by Vietnamese-style sandwiches, in particular.

An influx of ethnic Chinese from Indochina, including Vietnam, is especially conspicuous in the Old Chinatown in Los Angeles. The majority of ethnic Chinese who had previously formed this Chinatown were Cantonese from the Pearl River Delta. However, from the mid-1970s onwards, Indochinese Chinese who had moved to the USA entered the commercial activities of Old Chinatown with management of restaurants, supermarkets, general stores, traditional Chinese medicine shops, clothing stores, and so on. Meanwhile, the ethnic Chinese who were the former residents face a lack of successors to manage their businesses; thus, they continue to move away from Old Chinatown to the eastern suburbs in pursuit of a more favorable living environment (Smith 2000: 129-158).

Cases like this can be seen in many Chinatowns worldwide, including those in San Francisco, New York, and Toronto. The Old Chinatown in Chicago is referred to as South Chinatown, whereas a New Chinatown known as North Chinatown (see Figure 3) has been formed by ethnic Chinese from Indochina (Ling 2013). Seattle’s Chinatown originally coexisted with a Japantown, but in recent years, the influx of Indochinese Chinese has been considerable, and the area is now officially called the International District (Sugiura 2004, 2009). In Honolulu, shops left behind by the outflow of ethnic Chinese away from the declining Chinatown have passed into the hands of latecomer ethnic Chinese refugees from Indochina, mainly Vietnam, and Koreans since the latter half of the 1970s. Today, a Vietnamese corner containing a concentration of Vietnamese bakeries, cafés, and restaurants specializing in Vietnamese pho noodles, as well as a Koreatown, have formed in Honolulu’s Chinatown (Yamashita 2000: 147-151).

Figure 3. New Chinatown called “North Chinatown” in Chicago

(Taken by the author in August, 2013)
III Formation of New Chinatowns

Suburban New Chinatowns
In the USA, with the reform in immigration law in 1965, the immigration policy that had previously given preferential treatment to Caucasians was revised and expanded to a framework that accepted Asian immigrants. As a result, the numbers of ethnic Chinese immigrants rapidly increased. The USA population census reveals a steady rise in the Chinese ethnic population, from around 240,000 in 1960 to 440,000 in 1970, 810,000 in 1980, 1.66 million in 1990, 2.43 million in 2000, and 3.35 million in 2010. This increasing ethnic Chinese population has not only moved to certain Old Chinatowns, such as those in San Francisco and New York, but also has formed New Chinatowns in the suburbs (Li 2009). This phenomenon can be often seen in Canada, Australia, and the USA, as well as in other countries.

The New Chinatown in the suburbs of Los Angeles can be cited as a typical example of the New Chinatowns that have formed in urban outskirts. Located in the center of Monterey Park, around 10 km east of Los Angeles’ Old Chinatown, is an area known as “Little Taipei” or “Chinese Beverly Hills,” the first suburban Chinatown in the USA (Fong 1994). Monterey Park was originally a white middle-class residential town. In 1960, 85% of the city’s population was Caucasian, but owing to a considerable influx of ethnic Chinese after the 1965 reform in immigration law, 41% of Monterey Park’s population of 60,051 was ethnic Chinese by the year 2000. In the population census of 2010, ethnic Chinese constituted 48% of the 60,259 total population of the city, and Asians as a group including Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and Koreans made up 67%. In contrast, the proportion of Caucasians was 19%. The concentration of ethnic Chinese has expanded to the neighboring cities of Alhambra and Arcadia to the north of Monterey Park. Shops managed by ethnic Chinese with Chinese-language signboards line both sides of the main arterial roads, and large supermarkets and shopping centers built with ethnic Chinese capital can be seen in various places.

This newly formed Chinatown is continuing to expand from Monterey Park’s surroundings towards San Gabriel Valley in the east. In particular, the hillsides of the Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights areas have become highly popular residential zones for affluent ethnic Chinese. Recently, since the implementation of China’s reform and opening-up policy, it has become common for wealthy new immigrants from mainland China to obtain upscale residential land. A phenomenon is increasing wherein ethnic Chinese live in gated community-style exclusive residential areas, in which a housing district consisting of multiple residences encircled by walls and appointed with a 24-hour security staff. According to the 2010 population census, ethnic Chinese have now reached 39% of the 48,993 population of Rowland Heights.

Suburban New Chinatowns have also formed in San Francisco. Ethnic Chinese seeking housing in the Richmond and Sunset suburban residential districts in the western part of San Francisco are increasing, and New Chinatowns have formed around Clement St. in the Richmond District and Irving St. in the Sunset District. These areas have become popular new residential districts for ethnic Chinese residents of the USA whose socioeconomic position has risen, as well as wealthy new immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China. Whereas most inhabitants of Old Chinatowns are Cantonese so that Old Chinatowns have historically been Cantonese language environments, Mandarin is the common language in the
Chinese restaurants and shops in New Chinatowns (Yamashita 2000).

In New York, second and third suburban New Chinatowns have recently formed, separate from Manhattan’s Old Chinatown, and are continuing to expand. Both are located at a distance of around thirty minutes by subway from Manhattan. New York’s second Chinatown is in Flushing, in the borough of Queens, originally home to many middle-class Taiwanese, and it contains a concentration of restaurants, groceries, supermarkets, bookshops, tutoring schools, branches of Chinese banks, and other establishments. Many Koreans and Indians also live in the area. New York’s third Chinatown is in Sunset Park in the borough of Brooklyn. A New Chinatown has formed close to Eighth Avenue Station, around thirty minutes by subway from Manhattan’s Old Chinatown. Its formation is newer in comparison to the Chinatown in Flushing; the shops are smaller in scale, and residents of lower income levels from mainland China are conspicuous. In that area, there are many garment factories, which attract a female ethnic Chinese workforce (Yamashita 2000:137–145).

In Houston, Texas, although an Old Chinatown had formed in the central downtown area, I found during my 2012 fieldwork that it has fallen into decline, with only a few dilapidated Chinese shops remaining. In contrast, a New Chinatown has formed in the suburbs west of the downtown. Several large shopping centers line both sides of Bellaire Boulevard, the main arterial road. However, within these shopping centers, many of the restaurants and shops are Vietnamese, and the Vietnamese language is used more frequently than Chinese characters on the signboards (see Figure 4). Thus, the Indochinese transformation of Chinatowns is occurring not only in Old Chinatowns, but also in suburban New Chinatowns.

Suburban New Chinatowns can also commonly be seen in Canada. The 1997 reunification of Hong Kong with mainland China caused many Hong Kongese to feel anxious about the future, and an emigration boom took place. Increasing numbers immigrated around the world to such countries as Canada, the USA, and Australia. In particular, Vancouver in Canada became a popular destination for Hong Kongese immigrants, so much so that it gained the nickname “Honcouver.” In both Vancouver and Toronto, many affluent Hong Kongese reside in the suburban residential areas, forming suburban Chinatowns. Wealthy ethnic Chinese have avoided Old Chinatown, which is a somewhat unsafe area, and have sought residences in Vancouver’s southern suburb Richmond, investing in real estate there. Many large shopping malls and high-rise condominiums are located in the center of Richmond. A new railroad known as the Sky Train connected Richmond to central Vancouver in time for the hosting of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, and development of the area is continuing (see Figure 5). Statistics from 2006 revealed that 45% of Richmond’s total population of 78,790 was Chinese.

Suburban New Chinatowns are also being formed in Europe. Although there were no Old Chinatowns in Spain, there has been a huge influx of new Chinese immigrants into Spain accompanying China’s economic development since the 1990s. In my fieldwork of 2011, I found that New Chinatowns had formed in the suburbs of Barcelona and Madrid. Many of the
immigrants to Spain are from Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, and the neighboring Qingtian County to the west (Yamashita et. al. 2012). In Barcelona, a New Chinatown is forming around Fondo Station, the last station on Line 1 of the Metro, in the eastern suburbs of central Barcelona. The Fondo district was originally inhabited by other immigrants, such as African Muslims, but the district was transformed into a Chinatown after a sudden increase in new Chinese immigrants. In addition to Chinese restaurants, there is a concentration of Chinese food markets, clothing stores, supermarkets, and other Chinese shops (see Figure 6). A New Chinatown is also forming in the southern suburbs of Madrid, the Spanish capital. Around the Usera Station on Line 6 of the Metro, there are rows of Chinese shops centered mostly on two streets, Nicolas Sanchez and Dolores Barranco.

Italy, too, has had a rapid increase in new immigrants from mainland China since China’s reform and opening-up policy. Prato is a textile industry city and a suburb of Florence, located less than thirty minutes from Florence by train. In the 1990s, new Chinese immigrants created a large influx into Prato as a low-cost workforce, and nowadays many employers and even managers of garment factories are new Chinese immigrants (Smyth and French 2009). When I conducted fieldwork in Prato in 2010, most of the city, with the exception of a section of central Prato, contained a concentration of Chinese restaurants, cake shops, supermarkets, clothing stores, and jewelry stores managed by ethnic Chinese, and most passersby were also Chinese (see Figure 7). In Prato, many Chinese have bought up Italian-managed garment factories, employed laborers from China, and are manufacturing clothing with the description “made in Italy by Chinese.”

In Cabramatta, a southwestern suburb located around 30 km from Sydney, “Sydney’s Second Chinatown” has formed. This is a Chinatown created by ethnic Chinese from Indochina, particularly Vietnamese; it is also known as “Little Saigon.” Under the socialist transformation of Indochina, the ethnic Chinese in Indochina were subject to discrimination and abuse, and were driven from their hometowns because of their Chinese ethnicity. As a result, they possess a strong sense of ethnic Chinese identity (Yamashita 2000: 195-196). A trend can often be seen in Indochina Chinese overseas wherein even if they cannot read or write Chinese, their shops signboards are written in Chinese characters, and they actively display their identity as ethnic Chinese.
In Paris, “Chinatown” is generally used to indicate the Chinatown in the 13th arrondissement. This Chinatown was formed by ethnic Chinese from Indochina from the mid-1970s onwards. From the perspective of the host society, both mainland Chinese and Indochina Chinese are simply “Chinese,” and a district where Chinese-managed shops are concentrated is a Chinatown.

Most suburban New Chinatowns can be found in Western countries, but in Kolkata, India — where there is an example of an Old Chinatown, as previously stated — a New Chinatown is forming in the suburban district of Tangra (also known as Dhapa), located around 5 km southeast from central Kolkata. India’s leather industry is concentrated in Tangra, Kolkata, and virtually all managers of the district’s tannery plants had been Hakka Chinese originating from the Meizhou area in Guangdong Province. However, owing to the decline of the leather industry in recent years, there has been a notable transition from tannery plants to Chinese restaurants, and this concentration of Chinese restaurants is currently developing into a New Chinatown. During my 2008 fieldwork, I saw around thirty Chinese restaurants in the Tangra district (Yamashita, 2009).

Downtown New Chinatowns

Although there are many cases of New Chinatowns having formed in urban outskirts, this section will examine New Chinatowns that have formed in downtown areas.

In Japan, “Chinatown” immediately conjures up an image of the three major Chinatowns in Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki, but a New Chinatown of the kind found in Western countries has also formed in Japan in Ikebukuro, Tokyo. In 2003, I described this area as the first New Chinatown in Japan and denominated it “Ikebukuro Chinatown.” Since the latter half of the 1980s, there has been a rapid increase in Chinese entering Japan under student visas with the stated purpose of studying Japanese at Japanese language schools. These Chinese have gradually opened businesses for their fellow ethnic Chinese, such as Chinese restaurants, Chinese groceries, Internet cafés, and beauty salons around the north exit of Ikebukuro Station; and as of 2010, there were around 160 Chinese-managed shops around the north exit of the JR Ikebukuro station alone (Yamashita 2010:19). The interrelationship between new immigrants from mainland China and the local Merchants’ Association was tenuous during Ikebukuro Chinatown’s formation. Furthermore, with a worsening of Sino-Japanese relations because of the territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands, Ikebukuro Chinatown has become one of the few sites of ethnic conflict in Japan (Yamashita 2013).

Belleville, which spans Paris’ 19th and 20th arrondissements, and was formerly a laborers’ area, became home to many Jewish, Arab, and other immigrants to Paris. However, after China’s reform and opening-up policy, new immigrants from mainland China increased, and Belleville is rapidly being transformed into a Chinatown. There are rows of Chinese restaurants, beauty salons, jewelry stores, and other shops with Chinese-language signboards (see Figure 8). In
Belleville, as in Italy, France, Spain, and Austria, immigrants from Zhejiang Province are common, particularly in the vicinity of Wenzhou; shop names that feature the names “Wenzhou” or “Zhejiang” are conspicuous, and Wenzhou cuisine is featured on the menu boards of Chinese restaurants.

It can be said that the main economy for new Chinese immigrants in Europe derives from the retailing and wholesaling of low-cost Chinese products, as well as the management of Chinese restaurants. While New Chinatowns are forming in various regions, the collected residences of new Chinese immigrants can also lead to isolation from the host society. In particular, a tendency to support limits on immigration and anti-immigration policies can be seen in the public opinion of the host societies, owing to the economic recession in Europe of recent years, and ethnic conflicts between new Chinese immigrants and the host societies are beginning to manifest themselves.

Within Europe, Italy was a country with few Chinese residents. However, at present Italy is a popular destination country for migrant workers from mainland China, and permanent resident Chinese are also increasing. There is a cluster of Chinese-managed stores selling shoes, bags, and clothing, as well as Chinese restaurants, which is forming a New Chinatown around Termini Station, the central station in Rome. In Milan’s Chinatown, which has a longer history, the number of shops managed by new Chinese immigrants has increased, particularly clothing stores and Chinese restaurants, and the scale of the Chinatown is expanding.

There has also been a major influx of new immigrants from mainland China to Spain since the 1990s, accompanying China’s economic development. In addition to the previously mentioned suburban New Chinatowns in Barcelona and Madrid, the advances of new Chinese immigrants into central Madrid are also notable. During my 2011 fieldwork, I saw around twenty Chinese businesses — such as Chinese restaurants, supermarkets, travel agencies and IT-related stores — on Calle de Leganitos, a street close to the Plaza del Callao Metro Station in Gran Via, central Madrid’s shopping hub. Thus, New Chinatowns are forming not only in suburbs but also in urban centers.

A New Chinatown is also forming in Vienna, Austria. According to my fieldwork in 2010 and 2011, an accumulation of Chinese restaurants, supermarkets selling Chinese foods and general goods, Chinese bookshops and Chinese-language newspaper offices is creating a New Chinatown around the Naschmarkt, a food market referred to as the “Stomach of Vienna,” which has many Muslim and Asian ethnic restaurants.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil’s largest city, a Japantown had been formed by ethnic Japanese in the central district of Liberdade. However, after the Second World War, as increasing numbers of second-generation Japanese immigrants obtained a higher education and took up employment in fields requiring specialist knowledge and skills, it became difficult to find successors to take over shops and restaurants managed by ethnic Japanese. In these circumstances, Taiwanese who had learned the Japanese language during the Japanese colonial era increasingly took over such...
businesses. Additionally, because of an influx of both Koreans and other new immigrants from mainland China into Japantown, it became known instead as “Oriental Town.” Furthermore, until that point, the biggest event in Japantown had been Tanabata, the Star Festival, whereas now the major event in Oriental Town is the Chinese New Year festival celebrated by ethnic Chinese. In this way, the transformation of a Japantown into a Chinatown is rapidly proceeding in the Liberdade district of Sao Paulo (Yamashita 2003b).

In Sao Paulo also, a New Chinatown is forming in the Rua 25 de Marco district situated north of Liberdade. This area was previously known as an Arab quarter and as an unsafe neighborhood. Chinese immigrants to Brazil have increased since China's policy of reform and opening up. In the Rua 25 de Marco district, there is a concentration of stores dealing in low-cost Chinese-made clothing, electronic products, toys, shoes, bags, watches, sunglasses, and metallic goods. These small stores, known as “stand shops,” are located within the several shopping buildings in the Rua 25 de Marco district, and their trade is targeted at Brazilians. For this reason, inside the shopping buildings there are almost no stores with Chinese-language signboards visible, with the exception of Chinese restaurants, and their outward appearance is different from that in generic Chinatowns (Yamashita 2003b).

**Commercial Center Chinatowns**

The distribution of ethnic Chinese in Europe before the Second World War shows that there was an inclination toward immigrants from Western European countries, including the UK, the Netherlands, and France. However, after China’s policy of reform and opening up, new Chinese immigrants came to be distributed widely over all of Europe. In particular, the democratization of Eastern Europe that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led to new business opportunities for new Chinese immigrants. In Eastern Europe, there were many cases in which New Chinatowns were formed when distribution centers, shopping malls, and other establishments that handle Chinese products were set up using Chinese capital, and residential and working districts for large numbers of ethnic Chinese have been created around these commercial centers. I denominate such Chinatowns “Commercial Center Chinatowns.”

In Hungary in Eastern Europe, because of the adoption of a visa waiver system for Chinese nationals between October 1988 and April 1992, around 45,000 new Chinese immigrants entered Hungary during that time. Hungary played the role of a transit point for new Chinese immigrants who were migrating to other countries in Eastern, Western, and Southern Europe (Nyiri 1999). New Chinese immigrants also formed a New Chinatown in the capital, Budapest.

It can be said that a characteristic of Chinatowns in Eastern Europe is that they begin as a bazaar-style gathering of stores that offer low-cost Chinese products, both wholesale and retail. One representative model is the “Four Tigers Market,” also known as “Jozsefvarosi Piac,” in the eastern suburbs of Budapest (see Figure 9). In my 2010 fieldwork, I observed security guards...
stationed at the market’s gate, keeping a close watch on the visitors. Near to the gate was a sign instructing that bringing “dogs, pistols, cameras, and video cameras” into the market was prohibited. Rows of shops were selling various Chinese products, including Chinese-made clothing, shoes, bags, electronic products, tools, and food. Within the shops were some Vietnamese items. Hungarian merchants constituted a large number of the customers. In its appearance, the market was a collection of improvised buildings, and it could be described as a bazaar formed by Chinese brokers.

Whereas this market may be regarded as typifying the original Commercial Center Chinatown, a more modern type is “Asia Center Budapest” located in Budapest’s 15th District, a northern suburb. This is a large, three-story shopping mall with a Chinatown gate built in 2003. The shops within the mall are Chinese-managed, but the customers are local people, and as a result barely any Chinese-language writing can be seen in the Center. Nearby the Asia Center is another shopping mall, called the “Budapest China Mart.”

In Warsaw, Poland, a large distribution center for Chinese products, called the “GD Poland Distribution Center,” was established in 1994 in Wolka Kosowska, a southern suburb (see Figure 10). In my 2012 fieldwork, I observed nine gymnasium-like commercial buildings with a wide variety of Chinese products for sale — such as clothing, shoes, bags, electronic products, and general goods (see Figure 11). Here, wholesaling is the main business, and all the shop managers are Chinese, although many shops employ Polish staff. Surrounding this distribution center, in addition to similar distribution centers containing numerous shops that deal in Chinese products, there are many businesses that support the Chinese workers’ lifestyles, such as restaurants, beauty salons, barbershops, and massage parlors. This whole area is creating a Chinatown with the Distribution Center at its core. In the suburbs of Bucharest, Romania, there is another Commercial Center Chinatown in the form of a large shopping mall called “Dragonul Rosu,” which opened in 2011. Likewise, in the Middle East, an enormous shopping mall called the “Dragon Mart” has been built in Dubai, and it is referred to as the “Chinatown of Dubai.” Dragon Mart opened in 2004 as a gateway for the supply of Chinese products into the Middle East and North Africa, and a Chinatown is forming around this distribution center also.

In Vientiane, the capital of Laos, many public facilities have been built using Chinese aid, and a close relationship has developed between Laos and China. Before the Fall of Saigon in South
Vietnam in 1975, there was an Old Chinatown in central Vientiane. However, the socialist transformation of Laos caused many ethnic Chinese to flee overseas to countries such as Thailand, France, and the USA, and the Chinatown rapidly fell into decline. Subsequently, an increase in new Chinese immigrants resulted in the formation of a district containing a cluster of Chinese-managed shops selling Chinese-made products, such as motorcycles, machinery, metallic goods, tools, and parts; shopping malls full of Chinese shops were built, and a New Chinatown was created in Vientiane with these districts at the center (Yamashita 2006).

IV Conclusion

I have presented here a comparative study of concrete case examples of global Chinatowns, based on the results of fieldwork previously carried out in Chinatowns around the world and the results of other relevant research. The focus of this consideration was the changes in Old Chinatowns and the formation of New Chinatowns, both of which have accompanied the recent increase in new immigrants from mainland China.

As demonstrated, Old Chinatowns are undergoing major transformations owing to increasing numbers of new Chinese immigrants and remigrants. Among these new Chinese immigrants and remigrants, groups that occupy low socioeconomic positions tend to flow into Old Chinatowns. Some Old Chinatowns, such as the three major Chinatowns of Japan, and the Chinatowns in San Francisco and London, are transforming into tourist areas, and Chinatown gates have been constructed as the predominant symbol of Chinatown. The rise and fall of Chinatowns is also strongly dependent on the interrelationship between the ethnic Chinese and the host society. In some cases, once-declining Chinatowns have even been “reconstructed” by governmental tourism development, such as Kobe Chinatown in Japan and Incheon Chinatown in South Korea. Many Old Chinatowns have become increasingly multiethnic because of an influx of ethnic groups other than ethnic Chinese or Indochina Chinese.

In addition to the revival of the Old Chinatowns, suburban New Chinatowns have been formed in the USA, Canada, Australia, and other countries, resulting from such factors as an influx of wealthy new immigrants from mainland China or of ethnic Chinese having become affluent, whereupon they have left the Old Chinatowns for the suburbs. Furthermore, large-scale commercial centers, built using Chinese capital and selling Chinese products, have been created in such Eastern European countries as Hungary, Romania, and Poland, and in areas in the Middle East like Dubai, and commercial center Chinatowns have formed around these centers.

As described in this paper, both Old Chinatowns and New Chinatowns around the world have undergone transformations, through prosperity and decline. Today, ethnic conflict is rising between increasing numbers of new Chinese immigrants overseas and their host societies, particularly in Europe, and this trend is likely to have an impact on the future of global Chinatowns.

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Notes


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