

# The Overseas Chinese and their Role on Creating a Destination Image of *Nankin-machi* (Kobe Chinatown Shopping District), Kobe, Japan<sup>i</sup>

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## 1. Introduction and Background

This is a case study of *Nankin-machi* (Kobe Chinatown) and roles played by the “New Minority” or the Overseas Chinese in Kobe (Hyogo Prefecture), in town promotion and branding. *Nankin-machi* is a good example of how they influence the destination image by utilizing their ethnic origin. It is also necessary to take note of different groups within the Overseas Chinese in Kobe – i.e. “Old Chinese” (*lao hua ch’iao*) and “New Chinese” (*xin hua ch’iao*) and to understand their different roles. Each group has its own business style and involvement for town management.

The Old Chinese refers to the descendants of the first Chinese immigrants who came to Kobe between the opening of the Kobe port (formally

Hyogo port) in 1868, to the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937. The most recent and youngest generation belongs to the 6th.

The New Chinese refers to the newly arrived Chinese immigrants who have come to Japan mainly after the 1980’s, when China took economic open-door policy and Japan began to accept Chinese students.

The aim of the present study is to show how the Old Chinese cooperated with the Japanese counterparts in town promotion on one hand and how they have coped with the new situation posed by the New Chinese on the other. It is also important to trace the process of how *Nankin-machi* has changed its townscape through time and developed into a ‘Chinatown’, based on data collected from various informants, documents and maps.

*Nankin-machi* has always been a focus of attention of historians in general. However when *Nankin-machi* has been converted from mere commercial or market area into a ‘Chinatown’, new field of research, such as architecture, sociology and tourism has gradually gained popularity (Ohashi 2000; Yu and Sugawara 2007).

More recently, gradual increase of number of the New Chinese in *Nankin-machi* has become a focus of attention. They have a different attitude towards commercial activities from the Old Chinese and generating a new trend. Until now, not much has been discussed on how they play their role on sustaining and developing the present *Nankin-machi*. This is the reason why the present paper focuses on this topic.

## 2. Development and re-branding of *Nankin-machi*

Immediately after the opening of Kobe Port in 1868, *Kyoryuchi* or the Designated Foreign Settlement was set up by the Japanese government for the foreigners from America and Europe which had treaty with Japan. Since China had not yet concluded treaty, the immigrant Chinese (the first generation of the Old Chinese) had opened their shops just outside *Kyoryuchi*, that came to be known as *Zakkyochi* or “mixed residing area” where other foreigners were allowed to live along with local Japanese. Since many of the first generation Chinese came from region around Nanjing, a historical city in China, the area soon came to be known as *Nankin-machi* (the difference in transcription reflecting the different pronunciations). It has grown into one of the three Chinatowns in Japan (the others being Nagasaki and Yokohama), and the only one in Kansai region (Yamashita 2003; Kobe Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas 2004). As far as its architectural features are concerned, however, all the shops were merely common wooden houses indistinguishable from any

other parts of Kobe.

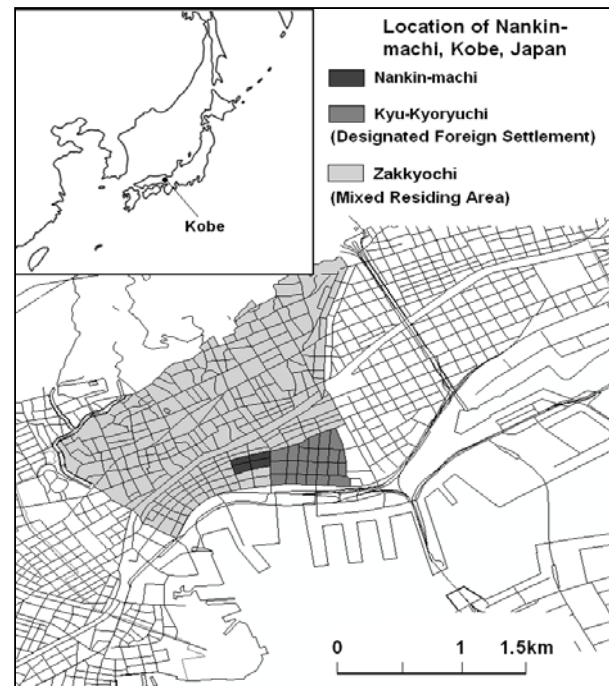


Figure 1: Location of *Nankin-machi*, Kobe

*Nankin-machi* developed into a prosperous market area by the early decades of the 20th century with various shops (restaurants, butchers, tailors, potters, greengrocers, bakeries, exchangers, barbers, laundries, chemists etc.) run by both the Old Chinese and Japanese (Takahashi and Yu 1996; Chuka Kaikan 2000). Many of the Chinese however, lived not in *Nankin-machi* itself but outside in various other parts of *Zakkyochi*.

With the Nanjing Incident of 1937 and plunge into the World War II, many Chinese closed their shops and returned to China resulting *Nankin-machi* into a notorious state. During the war, *Nankin-machi* was bombed and burnt to ashes. After the war, the shops were replaced by bars for Allied Occupation forces and sailors and lost its former scenery (Kobe Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas 2004).

Table 1 : Brief History of *Nankin-machi*, Kobe from 1867 to Present

year	Event
1867	Construction of the Foreign Settlement (~1868)
1868	Opening of Kobe Port (Jan 1) Designation of <i>Zakkyochi</i> (mixed residing area)
1888	Emergence of the name " <i>Nankin-machi</i> " in the literature Developed into a prosperous market where anything is available
1939	World War II (~1945)
1945	Air Raids on Kobe: the area was burned down End of World War II (Aug 15)
1960-70's	Increase of bars serving foreign sailors, causing security deterioration
1977	Establishment of <i>Nankin-machi</i> Shopping District Promotion Association
1981	<i>Nankin-machi</i> Reconstruction and Environmental Improvement Plan by Kobe city
1982~1993	New Constructions and Activities in <i>Nankin-machi</i>
1982	South Gate
1983	Central Square & Chinese style arbor
1985	Chang'an Gate (East Gate)
1987	First Chinese New Year Festival (with Dragon dance)
1988	A pair of Chinese lion statues at the north entrance
1989	Twelve statues of the Chinese zodiac
1990	Designated as a district for preservation of road scenery under city regulation
1993	<i>Garyoden</i> [Lying Dragon Palace] (public toilet and display of a dragon dance, with office space for the Association)
1995	the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (Jan 17)
1997	Registration of " <i>Nankin-machi</i> " as a trademark Designation of "Chinese New Year Festival" as an intangible folk cultural asset of Kobe
1998	First Mid-Autumn Festival
2005	Xian Gate (West Gate)

Source: [*Nankin-machi* Shopping District Promotion Association and Kobe *Nankin-machi* Environmental Improvement Council 2007]

It was not until the late 1970's when a group of both the Old Chinese and Japanese gathered to make an effort to restore and redevelop the town of *Nankin-machi*. This has led to an establishment of the *Nankin-machi* Shopping

District Promotion Association in 1977 which plays principal role in development of the area until today. More or less, this coincided with civil movement that gained popularity throughout Japan for preserving historical

townscapes. The Japanese Association for Townscape Conservation and Regeneration was founded in 1974 and historical towns such as Tsumagome-juku (Nagano Prefecture) or Imai-cho (Nara Prefecture) were preserved and protected from modern development.

The City of Kobe also extended help, with the Reconstruction and Environmental Improvement Plan set up in 1981. The main streets of *Nankin-machi* running east-west (160 m) and north-south (110m) both having width of 8m were renovated and new buildings and shops were decorated with Chinese style façade to give a 'Chinatown look' (*Nankin-machi* Shopping District Promotion Association and Kobe *Nankin-machi* Environmental Improvement Council 2007, Yamashita 2003). The entire area was differentiated from outside by Chinese style gateways at each entrance of the main street (Fu et al. 1997; Miyake 2000; Yamashita 2003; Yu and Sugawara 2007). The utmost aim of constructing such new townscape was to make the area into a tourist spot with distinctive character of its own and to attract visitors and tourists from all over Japan (Tsu 1999; Ohashi 2000, 2004).

In 1987, *Shunsetsu-sai* or the New Year's festival (on the Chinese calendar) was organized. Although this is an important traditional Chinese festival, it was celebrated in a large scale for the first time in *Nankin-machi*. Dragon dance was presented, and several years later also Lion dance played both by Chinese and Japanese groups. In 1997, the Kobe city office has eventually designated *Shunsetsu-sai* as an intangible cultural heritage of the region. Also in the same year, the name "*Nankin-machi*" was registered as a trademark,

which meant that only those who (of any nation) joined the *Nankin-machi* Shopping District Promotion Association can use its name for commercial purposes (*Nankin-machi* Shopping District Promotion Association and Kobe *Nankin-machi* Environmental Improvement Council 2007).

### 3. Attitude and Identity of the Old Chinese

An important fact about the establishment of the *Nankin-machi* Shopping District Promotion Association and its activities towards renovation and popularization of *Nankin-machi*, is that they were carried out jointly with the resident Chinese - i.e. the Old Chinese - and local Japanese themselves (Feng 2001; Yasuda et al. 2001a and 2001b). Such cooperation worked out smoothly partially because the Old Chinese had their distinct attitude which is described as "*Rakuchi-Seikon (luo de sheng gen)*", meaning "a person who starts his new life in a foreign land crossing the ocean, should live harmoniously with former inhabitants adapting himself to the new circumstances" (Chuka Kaikan 2000). *Nankin-machi* has always been a mixed residing area for both Chinese and Japanese (as well as for other nationals who opens shops in the area) since its beginning, and has never been a Chinatown in its true sense. Therefore, the name *Nankin-machi* (and not Chinatown) itself implies its character (*Nankin-machi* Shopping District Promotion Association 2010).

The present Old Chinese who belong to the 5th to 6th generations of the first immigrants to Kobe are the outcome of such attitude, and although their identity remain as Chinese, they have no hesitation to cooperate or to mingle

with the local Japanese, and adopted Japanese language almost as their mother language (Guo

and Zhu 2006; Wang 2003; Zhang 2005).

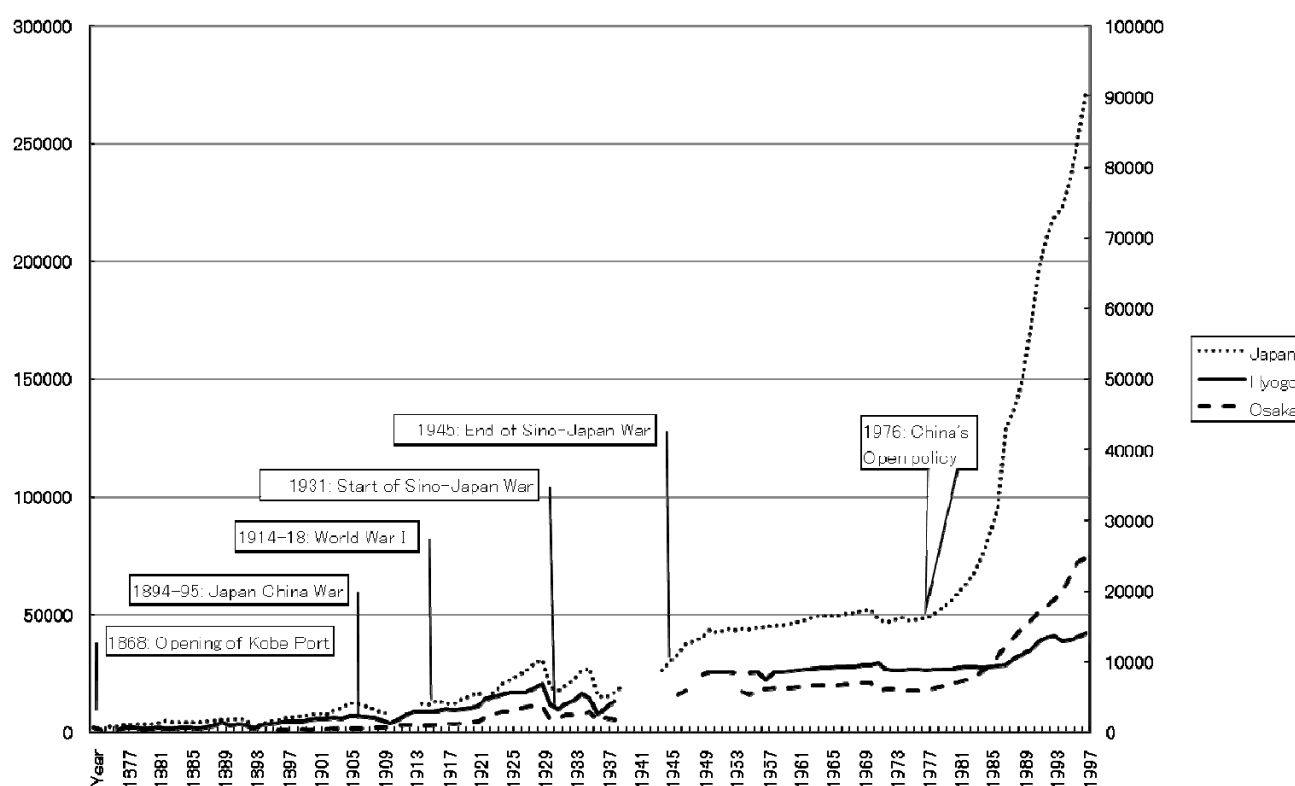


Figure2: Change of Chinese residents in Japan, Hyogo and Osaka

Based on [appendix 11, Chuka Kaikan 2000, p.398]

#### 4. New situation posed by the New Chinese

At around the same time of the establishment of the Association, the New Chinese started coming to Kobe following the open-door policy of China in 1976. Chinese government turned its policy to value overseas Chinese. It also meant that more Chinese could go abroad and that more pre-college and college students from China came to Japan. From 1981, Japanese orphans left behind in China during the World War II started to return to Japan with their family. Immigration by illegal means also increased.

In *Nankin-machi*, at least some of the New Chinese have started to work as part-time

workers, such as shopkeepers, wait persons and cooks. From around mid-1990's, some of the New Chinese started their own business by putting up food stalls on the main streets as well as opening their own shops. Gradually, such entrepreneurs of the New Chinese also began to join the Association.

##### (i) Shops

In the past one year, some of the shops are being replaced by the new ones, some of which are run by the New Chinese. Now there are about 60 Chinese restaurants and food stores in *Nankin-machi*, within which about 1/3 is owned by the New Chinese. Among 50 restaurants that

are owned by the members of the Association, 8 are run by the New Chinese, which can be divided into following two groups.

The first one is run by relatives of Japanese orphans left behind in China, who returned to Japan after 1981. After starting a restaurant in the east-south part of *Nankin-machi*, they called their relatives from China and expanded their business opening one restaurant after another. Now they own 5 restaurants.

The other is run by one New Chinese who came to Japan with a dream of winning success. He started his career as an employee of a Chinese restaurant owned by an Old Chinese. After earning enough skills and money, he started his own business. He opened two restaurants in *Nankin-machi*, and now also established a language school for Chinese students.

Nowadays such a rapid business expansion is rarely seen in the case of the Old Chinese in *Nankin-machi*.

## (ii) Stalls

Originally, stalls were started by local shop owners in late 1980's as temporary installments during festivals. Their intention was to attract visitors to taste local cuisine more casually and at a low price, so as to enjoy the festival. Stalls became more popular after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake hit Kobe on 17th January 1995. *Nankin-machi* also suffered serious damage. However, the Association put up small stalls on streets of *Nankin-machi* and served boiled-dumplings, steamed buns, noodle soups, croquettes and Shaoxing wine etc., free of charge to those suffering from the earthquake. This encouraged them greatly and was praised

by whole of Japan (Yamashita 2003).

Since then, stalls have become a characteristic element of *Nankin-machi*. At present, 40 stalls are observed, which are all set up right in front of respective shops run by local shop owners. 33 of them sell Chinese cuisine, 7 sell souvenirs and other food items such as donuts and cakes. More than half of these stalls are run by the New Chinese. Most of the New Chinese are not so much fluent in Japanese, and thus their Chinese accent reinforces 'Chinese' atmosphere of *Nankin-machi*. Many tourists stroll along the street with foods in their hands bought from stalls. It is certain that these stalls are the important attraction for the tourists, and it differentiate *Nankin-machi* from neighboring shopping districts.

On the other hand, stalls seem to gradually become a source of concern to the local shop owners. Since the more people go for the stalls, the less people enter and sit in the local restaurants. Some owners worry that tourists pass by their shops and only taste stall food. Furthermore, stalls tend to focus on one-time customers such as tourists, sometimes neglecting local repeat guests as a result. Those attitudes are considered as against the spirit of "*Rakuchi-Seikon (luo de sheng gen)*" of the Old Chinese.

## (iii) Difference in behavior

As the presence of the New Chinese in *Nankin-machi* became apparent, their different behavior and attitude from the Old Chinese also came to be noticed in daily business scene, as well as in the town management or the involvement in the festivals.

Staffs of some new shops and restaurants

stand on the main street, distributing pamphlets and luring tourists persistently to persuade them to come to their shops and restaurants. Luring customers is prohibited by the *Nankin-machi* Town Promotion Association. But these shop owners do not obey this rule, since they have not become members of the Association.

These behaviors of the New Chinese sometimes become a source of concern to the members of the Association.

## 5. Concluding remarks

*Nankin-machi* historically traces its origin back to Zakkyochi of 1880's and people often regard it natural for *Nankin-machi* to have Chinese atmosphere. But as reviewed in the present study, the 'Chinatown' image of *Nankin-machi* has been constructed artificially as a means to promote this area through cooperation of the Old Chinese, Japanese and the Kobe city office. The designing and transforming of *Nankin-machi* into the 'Chinatown' worked as a tool for *Nankin-machi* to differentiate itself from the neighboring shopping areas, which are mainly in European style.

Through such cooperation, the Old Chinese community has developed strong ties with local Japanese counterparts. This was in accord with their norm of Rakuchi-Seikon to keep cordial relations with the neighbors. It is important to note that residents of *Nankin-machi* have developed common identity based on their township, rather than on ethnicity or language.

The arrival of the New Chinese posed a new situation. As a recent migrant, they naturally maintain strong Chinese identity and strong tie

with China. They are growing into the third important stakeholder in *Nankin-machi*, as a "newer New Minority" with different scope and goals.

It might be imperative for the Old Chinese to bridge the gap between themselves and the New Chinese, if they want to sustain effects of their town promotion. One of the solutions may be usage of the trademark of "*Nankin-machi*". Since it has a strong influence on customer's decision and its use is permitted only for the members of the Association, it acts as an incentive for the New Chinese (as well as Japanese and any other origin) to join and cooperate with the Association.

The future of "*Nankin-machi*" depends on how both the Old and the New Chinese would jointly work for the management and planning along with other members of the Association. To fulfill this goal, it will be important for the members not only to keep the business contacts but also to increase daily communication and joint participation in the branding activities.

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Kobe Overseas Chinese History Museum

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#### 【要旨】

観光地としての神戸南京町のイメージづくりに果たした華僑の役割

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「ニュー・マイノリティ」と観光の関わりについての研究の一環として、本研究では日本の「ニュー・マイノリティ」の一つである神戸華僑が、神戸南京町の街づくりや知名度アップやブランド化に果たした役割について考察した。

神戸南京町は、ニュー・マイノリティが自分のエスニックな出自を活かして、観光地イメージを築いた好例である。さらに、南京町の事例からは、ニュー・マイノリティを研究するには、その内部の差異にも注目する必要があることも指摘できる。とくに 1980 年代頃以降、華僑には神戸開港以来現在まで 6 代にわたる「老華僑」と、中国の開放政策以降来日した「新華僑」との大きなふたつの流れが見られるようになった。

神戸における老華僑は、開港から日清戦争時までに来日した中国移民とその末裔であり、もっと

も若い世代は現在は 6 代目となる。他方、新華僑は中国の開放政策以降のとくに 1980 年代以降に来日した移民である。「落地生根」の精神で地元根づいた老華僑と、新たなビジネスの開拓に熱心な新華僑とでは、南京町との関わり方にもそれぞれの独自性がある。

神戸南京町は、当初の雑居地に中国人と日本人との商取引等の活動の場として発達し、第二次大戦後には一時寂れたものの、1960 年代の区画整理事業のなかで神戸市の支援のもと復興が図られ、現在は神戸有数の観光地となっている。

本研究では、南京町の街並み（タウンスケープ）の変化を、既存研究、インフォーマントからの聞き取り、地図の検討から確認し、チャイナタウン化の過程をたどった。

#### 1. 南京町のブランド化

南京町のブランド化には、1977 年に老華僑と地元日本人が結成した南京町商店街振興組合が重要な役割を果たした。同振興組合は、店構えや電柱、公園などの意匠を中国風に変更し、町の景観の統一を図るとともに、1987 年以降には獅子舞や龍舞

と伴う春節祭を開催するなど、観光客を呼び込む努力を続けている。

1997年に、同組合は「南京町」全体をテーマパーク化することを目的として「南京町」を商標登録した。2009年には(1)食品の提供、(2)中華食材の販売という2つのカテゴリーの商標を取得し、各店舗単位でも「南京町〇〇店の肉まん」というように店名を入れれば「南京町」を使用できるようになった。

## 2. 新華僑の参入による新たな変化

1970年代末頃から中国からの「新華僑」が神戸にも参入するようになった。「新華僑」のなかには、南京町で、売り子や給仕、コックとして仕事を始めた人々もいた。その中から、裏通りで店を開いたり、自前の店舗を構える人も徐々に出てきている。近年では、新華僑による店舗経営も増える傾向にあり、南京町商店街振興組合への参加も増えつつある。顕在化しつつある「老華僑」と「新華僑」の両者がどのような形で南京町を支えていけるのが課題である。

1995年の阪神淡路大震災後に定着・増加した屋台が固定店舗とともに南京町のイメージ作りに一役かっているのは事実である。ただし屋台を今後どのようにしていくかについては、老華僑、新華僑、日本人を含む組合全体の課題となっている。

## 3. 主な観察結果

現在の南京町は、職住近接となっている横浜中華街とは異なり、おもに商業ビルからなる商業地区となっている。

南京北路、東路、南路、西路の大通りは主に中華の料理屋や雑貨店によって占められるが、とくに路地には寿司屋やタイやトルコ料理屋、おしゃれなカフェなどが目立つ。こうした多文化的な側面もまた、南京町が独自の雰囲気を出し出す要因となっており、老華僑、新華僑とともに、これらの多様な出自の店が一体となってこれからの南京町を作り上げていくことが望まれる。

## 4. 考察

南京町商店街組合によるチャイナタウン景観づくりとイメージ作りは、南京町商店街を近隣の洋風の商店街（たとえば、元町商店街や旧居留地地区など）から差異化するツールとなっており、顧客を呼び寄せるのに一役買っている。

また「南京町」の商標は顧客に強力な訴求力がある。商標の使用は、南京町商店街振興組合の会員にしか認められていない。新華僑をはじめとする新規参入者が振興組合に加わるインセンティブとなると考えられ、新華僑と老華僑、および地元日本商店主の結びつきを強まるきっかけになる、と考えられる。

南京町の将来は、老華僑と新華僑が他の組合会員とともに、いかに街づくり（マネジメントと計画）に協力していいけるかにかかっていると考えられる。その観点からすれば、日常的な商取引だけでなく、南京町のブランド化作業への共同参加が重要であろう。

### 主要参考資料

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<sup>i</sup> 本稿は、2009年度神戸夙川学院大学共同研究「文化遺産の価値伝達に関する比較研究：ペルー及び日本のガイドの比較から」のメンバーが2010年1月22～23日に参加したEuropean Academy of Bolzano-Bozen (EURAC research：イタリア)での"International Scientific Workshop on New Minorities and Tourism"での発表内容である。神戸華僑博物館、神戸華僑総会、神戸南京町振興組合の方々には、ヒアリングに快く応じていただいた。また、当時の小磯・蝦名・高根沢ゼミの学生には南京町での店舗の入れ替わり調査に協力いただいた。心より感謝申し上げます。