

# Chapter 3

## Chinese Enclaves: Formation of New Chinatowns by Chinese Newcomers



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**Abstract** In this chapter, I examine changes in the situation of Japan's Chinese residents, including the characteristics of their distribution and related background factors. In addition, I present a comparative analysis of two newly formed Chinese enclaves in Japan. An examination of the residential distribution of Chinese in Japan shows a tendency to concentrate in major cities, in particular the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, which includes the Tokyo Metropolis and the adjacent prefectures of Saitama and Kanagawa. There is a considerable difference between the Chinese who arrived in Japan from the mid-1980s through the 1990s, when China was relatively poor, and those who arrived after 2000, when China's economic development began to steadily advance, in terms of the way each group has adapted to Japanese society. While concentrations of Chinese grew among the former group, for the Chinese residents whose socioeconomic status has improved, we can see a tendency toward a wider range of options in their choice of residential area.

**Keywords** Chinese oldcomer · Chinese newcomer · New Chinatown · Ikebukuro Chinatown

### 3.1 Introduction

Among foreign-national residents in Japan, Koreans continuously occupied the position of the largest foreign-national group, significantly larger than any other, after the end of World War II. For example, according to the Ministry of Justice's Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan, there were 687,135 Korean nationals in Japan in 1984, in contrast to 67,895 of the second-largest group, Chinese residents. However, there was a rapid rise in "Chinese newcomers" to Japan from the mid-1980s, due to China's policy of economic reform and the opening-up of the nation. By 2007, there were 606,889 Chinese residents in Japan, in contrast to 593,489 Korean nationals,

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marking the first time in which Chinese residents had overtaken Koreans to become the largest group of foreign nationals in Japan. This gap in population numbers between the two groups has continued to widen in subsequent years.

Studies on Chinese residents in Japan have so far largely focused on the Chinese communities in specific areas of Japan. In particular, historical studies conducted on the three major Chinatowns of Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki have formed the core of such research.

In Japan, Chinatowns formed in the three port cities of Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki, where foreign settlements were created after Japan opened up its ports to foreign ships at the end of the Edo period. These three major Chinatowns of Japan—Yokohama Chinatown, Kobe Nankin-Machi, and Nagasaki Shintchi Chinatown—have become important tourist sites that attract large numbers of Japanese visitors (Yamashita 2003). All of these Chinatowns belong to the “Old Chinatown” type. The three major Chinatowns of Japan are examples of Chinatowns where touristification targeted chiefly at Japanese visitors has progressed.

Ito (2018) based a study on historical materials related to Yokohama’s Chinese community and Yokohama Chinatown. On a nationwide scale, without focusing on any particular region of Japan, Zhong (2017) conducted research on Chinese residents in Japan from a sociological perspective, using interviews to analyze life histories. Furthermore, a study by Nagano (1994) focused on the issue of Chinese identity. From a human geography perspective, Yamashita (1979) discussed the characteristics and background of lifestyles in Japan’s largest Chinatown, Yokohama Chinatown, encompassing economic, societal, and cultural aspects. In addition, Yamashita (2003) also conducted a comparative study of the formation and development of Japan’s three major Chinatowns on the basis of fieldwork from a human geography perspective.

Despite the fact that the Chinese population in Japan has notably increased in recent years, while the environment surrounding Chinese residents continues to change dramatically, very little research to date has focused on the current situation. Yamashita (2010, 2011, 2013a) focused on Ikebukuro Chinatown, which has newly been formed in Tokyo, as an example of a “New Chinatown” distinct from the traditional major Chinatowns of Japan, discussing the process of its formation, conflicts between Chinese and Japanese nationals, and other issues. Similarly, from a human geographical perspective, Zhang (2020) examined the motivation and preference patterns of Chinese white-collar residents living in the Tokyo metropolitan area to buy houses. As a result, it became clear that the areas where Chinese white-collar residents buy homes tend to be spatially diversified.

Considering the body of previous studies described above, there seems to be a need to clarify the changes that have occurred in the situation of Japan’s Chinese residents in recent years, on both national and local scales. Accordingly, in this chapter, I examine how the population of Chinese residents in Japan has changed, the characteristics of the distribution of this population, and the relevant causal factors. I also include a discussion of the newly formed Chinese enclaves in Japan.

Accordingly, this chapter begins with an examination of the changes in the population of Chinese residents in Japan, with a particular focus on the increase in “new-comers” in Sect. 3.2. This is followed by a consideration of the distribution of the

foreign resident population on a national scale in Sect. 3.3. Next, Sect. 3.4 gives an overview of Chinese residents in the Tokyo metropolitan area. In Sect. 3.5, I next present two case studies of urban areas with large concentrations of Chinese residents: Toshima Ward in Tokyo and Kawaguchi City in Saitama Prefecture. Finally, Sect. 3.6 concludes this chapter.

## 3.2 Trends of Chinese Residents in Japan

### 3.2.1 *Rapid Increase in Chinese Residents*

After the end of World War II, civil war broke out once more in China between the Kuomintang (KMT) forces and the Communist forces. The result was the victory of the Communist forces led by Mao Zedong, and in 1949 the People's Republic of China was established. Meanwhile, the defeated KMT, led by Chiang Kai-shek, fled to Taiwan. At this time, any new influx of immigration from mainland China to Japan was suspended.

From around the time of the 1972 normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, there was a rapid increase in Chinese residents living in Japan who acquired Japanese citizenship, as well as those who relinquished Chinese citizenship in order to apply for Japanese naturalization, particularly among those who were born in Taiwan and did not support the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); consequently, the number of holders of Chinese nationality decreased temporarily (Yamashita 1979).

In China, after the policy of economic reform and the opening of the nation was set at the end of 1978, there was an increase in the number of Chinese residents who left the country to earn money or study abroad in various countries worldwide. As described in the next section, such Chinese residents who departed for overseas nations following China's reform and opening-up policy are known as "Chinese newcomers." Conversely, Chinese residents who were already resident in foreign countries prior to this policy are known as "Chinese oldcomers." According to data in the *Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan*, there were 46,944 Chinese residents in Japan in 1974, which increased to 52,896 in 1980 and to 67,895 in 1984, due to the arrival of Chinese newcomers to Japan.

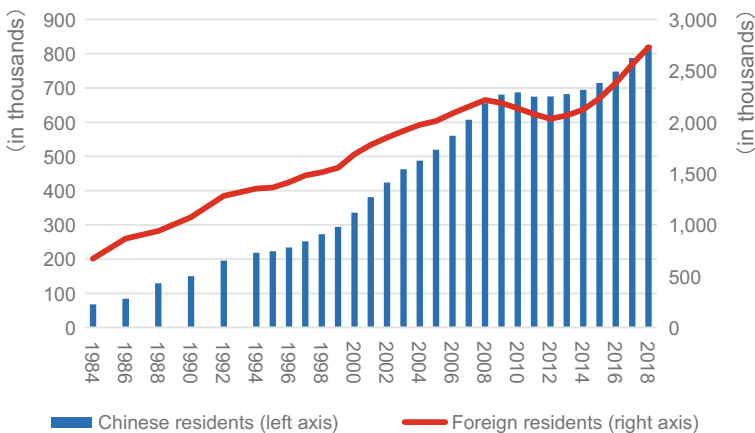
During the 1980s, the Chinese government began to dispatch large numbers of exchange students to Japan, financed by state scholarships or using various forms of public funding. In 1984, the Chinese government issued interim regulations on self-funded exchange students, and restrictions on study abroad were almost completely rescinded. Meanwhile, in 1983 the Japanese government launched its plan to accept 100,000 foreign university students to the nation, and it also simplified the immigration procedures for foreign students at Japanese language schools and vocational schools. In addition, in 1986 the Chinese government enforced the Exit and Entry Administration Law, which permitted Chinese residents to leave the country for personal reasons. These developments became a turning point for many Chinese

people, who had not had the opportunity to leave China until then, and large numbers of them acquired Pre-college Student visas to attend Japanese language schools and various other vocational schools, leading to a rapid rise in Chinese newcomers arriving in Japan between 1987 and 1988.

There was a particularly rapid rise in Chinese-national students who acquired Pre-college Student visas, a category of visa that supports students studying at Japanese language schools and vocational schools, and who arrived in Japan from the late 1980s. Figure 3.1 shows the changes in the number of foreign residents in Japan and the Chinese-national population between 1984 and 2018, based on the above official data on foreign residents in Japan. While there were 52,896 Chinese residents living in Japan in 1984, this increased to 84,397 in 1986, to 129,269 in 1988, 150,339 in 1990, 195,334 in 1992, and reached 218,585 in 1994. In other words, the Chinese residents in Japan dramatically increased by a factor of 4.1 during the ten years between 1984 and 1994.

The Japanese economy continued to prosper, in the so-called “bubble boom,” until around 1991. As the cost of labor increased, the country faced a shortage of workers. There were plentiful working opportunities for the Chinese residents who came to Japan in this period. Wages in Japan were perceived as being extremely high in comparison to China, which was still in relative poverty at the time, leading to a boom in the number of Chinese residents attempting to live in Japan.

While the Chinese population in Japan continued to rise even after the decline of the economic bubble, the slump triggered by the global financial crisis of 2008 caused these numbers to fall into decline after reaching a peak of 687,156 in 2010. In addition, there was a temporary spike in Chinese residents returning home after the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred in March 2011. However, the population of Chinese residents in Japan then began to rise again, reaching 825,404 in 2018.



**Fig. 3.1** Changes in population of Chinese in Japan, 1984–2018. *Source* Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan

### 3.2.2 *Chinese Oldcomers and Newcomers*

As mentioned above, Chinese residents who arrived in Japan after China's implementation of its economic reform and opening-up policy are referred to as "Chinese newcomers," while those who were already resident in Japan at that time are differentiated by the name "Chinese oldcomers." An examination of the native regions of Chinese oldcomers reveals that the largest proportion were born in Taiwan, which had been under Japanese rule prior to the end of World War II, followed by those born in China's southern coastal region, which includes Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan Provinces.

According to *Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan*, among the 48,003 Chinese residents in Japan in 1964, 49.3% were born in Taiwan. This proportion is followed by 12.4% born in Fujian Province, 11.0% in Guangdong Province, 9.8% in Jiangsu Province, 6.3% in Zhejiang Province, and 3.7% in Shandong Province. While the majority of the Chinese communities in cities with Chinatowns, such as Yokohama and Kobe, were native to Guangdong Province, Taiwanese-born Chinese constituted the largest group when looking at Japan as a whole.

In contrast, Shanghai, Fujian, and the three northeastern provinces (Heilongjiang, Liaoning and Jilin Provinces) have become increasingly prevalent as the native regions of Chinese newcomers, and each year, the native regions of Chinese newcomers are becoming more decentralized across the whole of China. By 2008, the three northeastern provinces had risen to account for 34.9% of the birthplaces of all Chinese residents in Japan, with Liaoning Province at 16.2%, followed by Heilongjiang Province at 10.3% and Jilin Province at 8.4%. The three northeastern provinces were part of former Manchuria, which was under Japanese rule, and Japanese language education remains popular in the region in comparison to China as a whole. The area is also home to many ethnic Koreans, and since the grammars of the Japanese and Korean languages are similar, Japanese is relatively easy to learn for such communities. This is one reason for the high proportion of northeastern natives among Chinese residents living in Japan.

In Japan, where the population of foreign residents is increasing, the Tokyo Metropolis (*Tokyo-to*) was the region with the largest number of foreign-national inhabitants, reaching 402,432 as of 2008 (accounting for 18.1% of foreign residents in the entire nation). Chinese residents were already the largest group among foreign residents in the Tokyo Metropolis (144,469), followed by South and North Koreans (114,961), with Philippine nationals in third place (31,687).

### 3.2.3 *Residence Status of Chinese Residents*

A variety of different statuses-of-residence (*zairyu shikaku*) are held by Chinese residents living in Japan. Table 3.1 shows the residence statuses of Chinese residents in Japan in 2016. "Permanent Residents" were the largest group, accounting for

**Table 3.1** Status of residence of Chinese in 2016

Status	Population (persons)	Percentage (%)
Permanent resident	238,438	34.3
Student	115,278	16.6
Technical intern training	80,857	11.6
Dependent	69,784	10.0
Engineer/specialist in humanities/international services	68,274	9.8
Spouse or child of Japanese national	32,479	4.7
Long-term resident	27,140	3.9
Skilled labor	15,606	2.2
Spouse or child of permanent resident	12,984	1.9
Others	34,682	5.0
Total	695,522	100.0

Source Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan

34.3% of the total. A permanent resident refers to a person who has been granted the right to live in Japan indefinitely by the Ministry of Justice. After becoming a permanent resident, the foreign national has no restrictions on work and no longer needs to renew his or her visa.

The next largest group is “Student” at 16.6%, held by students studying at university, high school, or vocational school. Japanese language schools are included within the category of vocational schools. According to the results of the *Annual Survey of International Students in Japan* conducted by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), Chinese residents are the largest regional group among international students with 124,474 students (114,950 from mainland China, 9,524 from Taiwan), accounting for 41.6% of the total number of international students, which was 298,980 (as of May 2017).

In Japan, international students are, in principle, permitted to engage in part-time work up to 28 h per week, which has been extended to eight hours per day during long holiday periods such as summer vacation. The fact that international students are able to work part-time in Japan is a major benefit for international students who aspire to study in Japan. In the case of Chinese students, the wages and conditions of their part-time work are often comparatively high, as many Chinese students’ Japanese-language abilities are higher than those of other international students.

The third most common residence status is “Technical Intern Training,” which is often used for unskilled work in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, and its conditions are relatively poor in terms of wages and working conditions. As a result, with the impact of rising wages within China due to economic development, the number of Technical Interns from China has stagnated in recent years, with a declining trend. A rising number of Technical Interns now come from such nations as Vietnam and the Philippines, with their numbers compensating for the decrease in Technical Interns from China.

If we consider social status, many of the Chinese newcomers whose numbers increased rapidly from the late 1980s, aside from international students, were so-called “blue-collar” workers. However, from the 2000s, reflecting China’s economic development, there have been increasing cases among Chinese

newcomers of highly educated “white-collar” workers with postgraduate degrees or similar qualifications who engage in work that requires specialist skills, such as those in IT-related fields.

### 3.3 Nationwide Distribution of Chinese Residents in Japan

An examination of the distribution of Chinese residents in Japan reveals a trend toward concentrations of the Chinese-national population in major cities. Table 3.2 shows that 26.6% of all Chinese residents in Japan are concentrated in the Tokyo Metropolis. The next-highest concentration is in Kanagawa Prefecture (which includes Yokohama) at 9.1%, followed by Saitama Prefecture (which includes Kawaguchi) at 7.4%. These three prefectures with the highest number of Chinese residents are part of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, and combined they account for 43.1% of all Chinese residents in Japan. The fourth-placed prefecture is Aichi Prefecture (which includes Nagoya) at 7.1%, followed by Osaka Prefecture at 6.6%.

Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show the distribution of Chinese residents in Japan by prefecture in 2000 and 2016, revealing the changes in this distribution. In the data for 2000, a concentration of Chinese residents is notable in Tokyo and its Metropolitan Area in the neighboring prefectures of Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba. Other than this region, we can see that there are large numbers of Chinese residents in Osaka Prefecture, Hyogo Prefecture, and Aichi Prefecture. The data for 2016 confirms that the number of Chinese-national residents is increasing across the whole of Japan. Furthermore, the trend toward concentration in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area is further progressing. In addition, there are increasing numbers of Chinese residents in Fukuoka Prefecture, Kyoto Prefecture, and Hiroshima Prefecture, which include many universities and Japanese language schools.

**Table 3.2** Five prefectures with largest Chinese populations

	Prefecture	Population (persons)	Percentage (%)
First	Tokyo	136,182	26.6
Second	Kanagawa	46,294	9.1
Third	Saitama	37,822	7.4
Fourth	Aichi	36,525	7.1
Fifth	Osaka	33,862	6.6
	Japan	511,118	100.0

*Source* Microdata of the 2015 Population Census

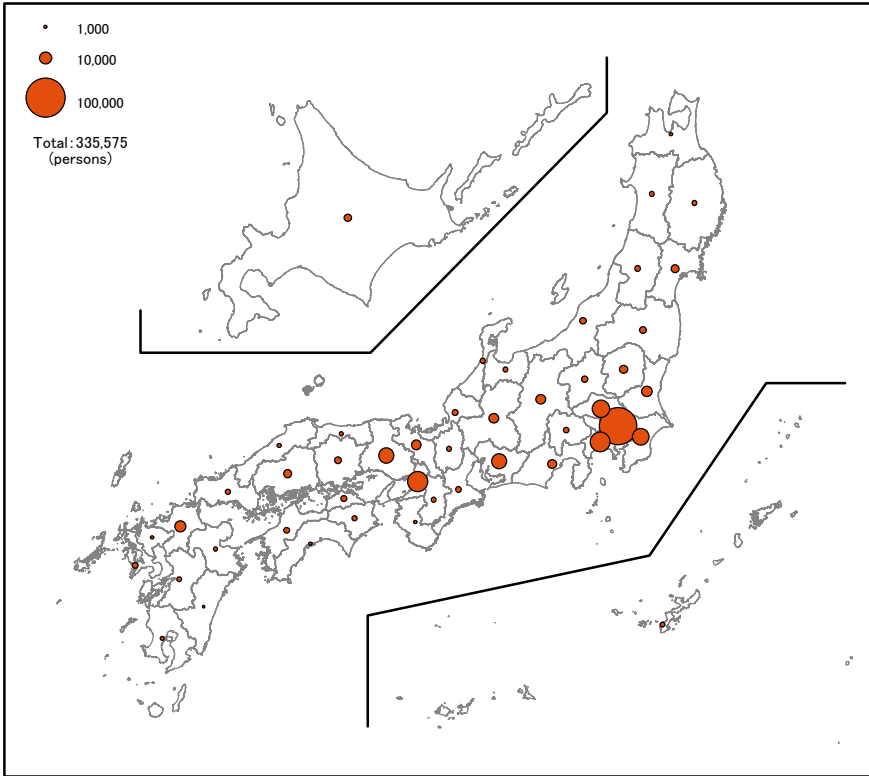


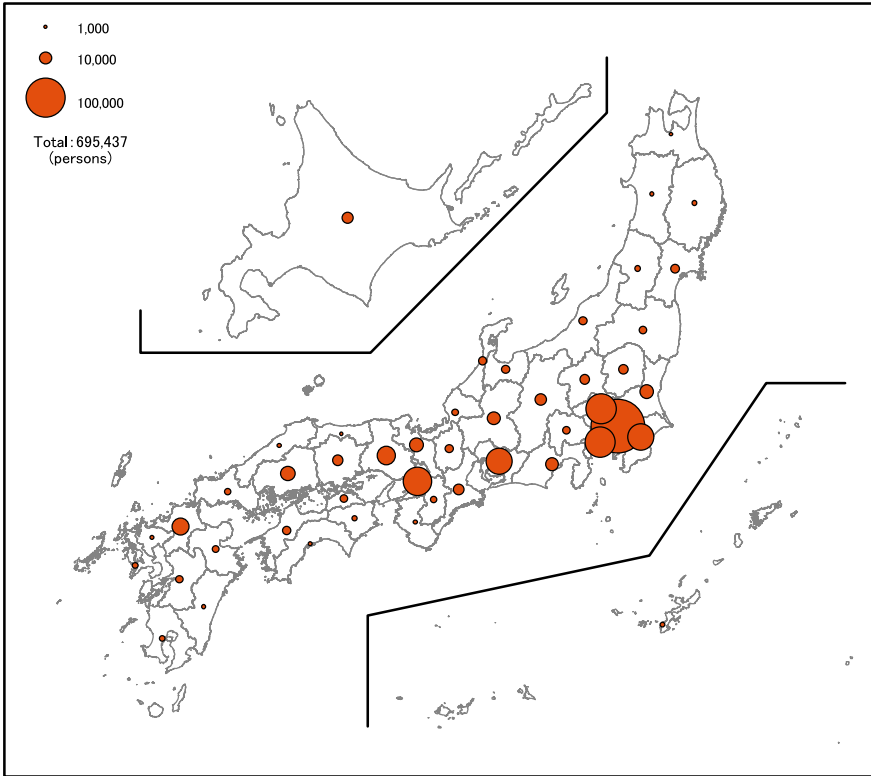
Fig. 3.2 Distribution of Chinese residents in Japan, 2000. *Source* Ishikawa (2019, p. 21)

### 3.4 Overview of the Chinese Residents in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area

As described in the previous section, there is a noticeable trend for the population of Chinese residents in Japan to centralize in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. Accordingly, this section examines the situation of Chinese residents in this area (Tokyo, Kanagawa Prefecture, Saitama Prefecture, and Chiba Prefecture) in detail.

Figure 3.4 shows the distribution of Chinese residents in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area by municipality, based on the national census of 2015. In the United States and Canada, new Chinatowns tend to form in the suburbs (Fong 1994; Yamashita 2013b). Similar trends are beginning to emerge in Japan. It is clear that there is a significant concentration of Chinese residents in the wards of Tokyo. If we look at this in further detail, we can detect distinct patterns in three areas: (1) from the northern part of Tokyo to the southern part of Saitama Prefecture, (2) from the eastern part of Tokyo to the western part of Chiba Prefecture, and (3) from the southern part of Tokyo to the eastern part of Kanagawa Prefecture.

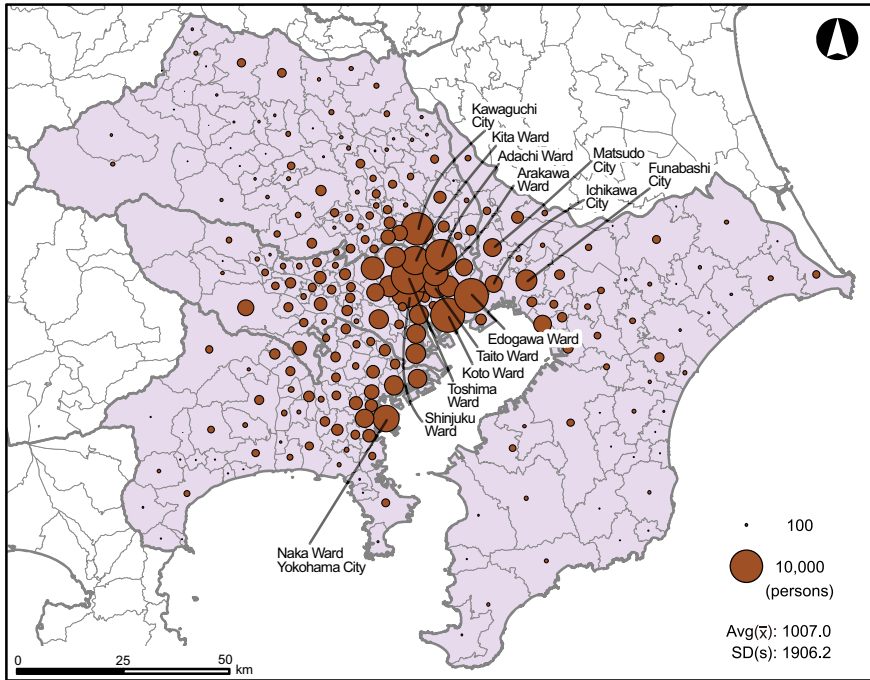




**Fig. 3.3** Distribution of Chinese residents in Japan, 2016. *Source* Ishikawa (2019, p. 21)

Patterns (1) and (2) can be viewed as the suburbanization of Chinese residents in central Tokyo. Pattern (1) indicates suburbanization from the center of Tokyo toward the north sector, while pattern (2) represents suburbanization from the center of Tokyo toward the east sector. Pattern (3) marks the suburbanization of Chinese residents of Naka Ward in Yokohama, which includes Yokohama Chinatown, toward the surrounding regions. In the following, I examine these three patterns of expansion of Chinese-national residential areas.

According to the data on foreign residents in *Statistics of Tokyo* (as of January 2020), the wards with the highest Chinese populations (including Taiwanese) were, in decreasing order, Edogawa Ward with 17,321 residents, Shinjuku Ward with 17,071 residents, Itabashi Ward with 16,481 residents, Koto Ward with 16,405 residents, Adachi Ward with 16,029 residents, and Toshima Ward with 14,857 residents. While wards such as Shinjuku and Toshima, which form subcenters of Tokyo, were areas with high land prices overall, from the late 1980s Chinese newcomers, whose numbers had rapidly increased, often lived there in groups in cramped, aging apartments with cheap rent in order to reduce their living costs. These conditions primarily arose in the areas around JR Shin-Okubo Station in Shinjuku Ward and



**Fig. 3.4** Distribution of Chinese residents by city and ward in Tokyo Metropolitan Area in 2015. Source Ishikawa (2019, p. 20)

JR Ikebukuro Station in Toshima Ward, where there were many Japanese language schools and opportunities for part-time employment. As their stays in Japan became longer, many such Chinese residents got married or brought family members over from China. As a result, they came to need larger living spaces than apartments and started to relocate to suburban areas where rent was comparatively cheaper.

This type of suburbanization progressed along specific rail routes. In the case of Chinese residents of Shinjuku Ward and Toshima Ward, suburbanization progressed from JR Ikebukuro Station toward Kita Ward and the adjacent city of Kawaguchi in Saitama Prefecture along the north-heading JR Saikyo Line, or from Ikebukuro Station toward Itabashi Ward along the northwest-heading Tobu Tojo Line, a private railway. I discuss the suburbanization of Chinese residents in these areas in detail in the following section.

The next type of suburbanization of Chinese residents occurs from the eastern part of Tokyo to the western part of Chiba Prefecture. The eastern part of Tokyo, which contains an expanse of wetlands, was the part of the city known as *shitamachi* (lower town). The *shitamachi area*, which was at high risk of flood damage, had relatively cheaper rents in comparison to the *yamanote* (upper town) residential area of western Tokyo, and a tendency could be seen for many Chinese newcomers to select *shitamachi* as their area of residence. The Chinese-national population is also

increasing in Arakawa and Adachi Wards, located to the north of Taito Ward, which includes Ueno and Asakusa.

There has also been a notable increase in the Chinese-national population in Koto Ward and Edogawa Ward along the JR Sobu Main Line, which runs eastward from central Tokyo, and along the Tokyo Metro Tozai Line. Furthermore, an expansion of Chinese-national residential areas, or in other words suburbanization, can also be seen to the east toward the cities of Ichikawa, Funabashi, and Matsudo, all in Chiba Prefecture.

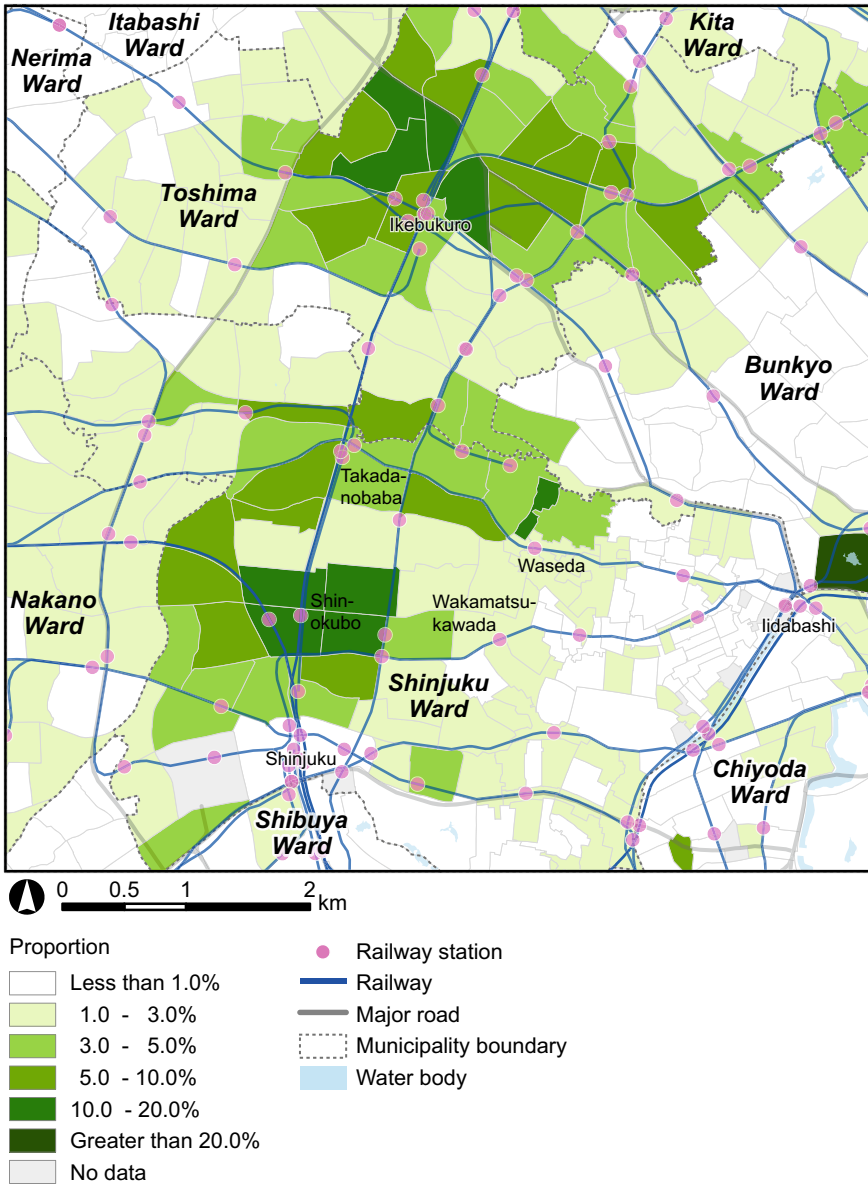
On the other hand, a different pattern of suburbanization of the Chinese population from central Tokyo, as described above, can be seen in Yokohama. According to data collected by the municipality of Yokohama, there were 44,436 Chinese residents, including Taiwanese, in Yokohama as of June 2020. Among the city's 18 wards, 23.2% (10,305 residents) of the total Chinese-national population were living in Naka Ward, where Yokohama's Chinatown is located. The second-highest concentration of Chinese residents was in Minami Ward, with 13.5% (5,992 residents) of the total. Neighboring Naka Ward is the location of the Kanagawa Prefectural Office as well as Yokohama City Hall, and it is also an area conveniently situated for transport access, thus supporting high land prices. Accordingly, many families of Chinese newcomers who manage or work in Chinese restaurants in Yokohama Chinatown have come to reside in Minami Ward.

## 3.5 Description of the Chinese Enclaves

### 3.5.1 *Concentration of Chinese Residents in Central Tokyo: Toshima Ward and Ikebukuro Chinatown*

From Fig. 3.5, we can see that the area around JR Shin-Okubo Station is one example of an area with a notable Chinese-national resident population. There are numerous Japanese language schools established in this area, which is reflected by the large numbers of Chinese residents in the surrounding international student dormitories of these language schools. Similarly, the Chinese enclave observed close to JR Iidabashi Station, on the eastern edge of the figure's map, is due to the large international student dormitory built in that area.

Ikebukuro Station is a Tokyo subcenter terminal that is connected to regional private railway lines and the Tokyo Metro as well as Japan Railways (JR). A Chinese enclave is expanding in the area around Ikebukuro Station. There is a concentration of commercial facilities that play important roles in the lifestyles of Chinese residents, such as Chinese restaurants and Chinese food supermarkets. In addition, there are many apartments and condominiums occupied by Chinese residents in the area, located a five- to ten-minute walk from Ikebukuro Station. This area is where Ikebukuro Chinatown has been formed.



**Fig. 3.5** Ratio of Chinese population in Toshima Ward and Shinjuku Ward in Tokyo in 2015. Source Microdata of the 2015 Population Census

Ikebukuro is a busy commercial area that surrounds JR Ikebukuro Station in Tokyo's Toshima Ward, and it is one of the major new downtown areas of Tokyo along with Shinjuku and Shibuya. Ikebukuro Station, which is used by the second-highest number of passengers in Japan after Shinjuku Station, is an important terminal station in Tokyo, connecting to a total of eight lines, including private railway lines and the Tokyo Metro.

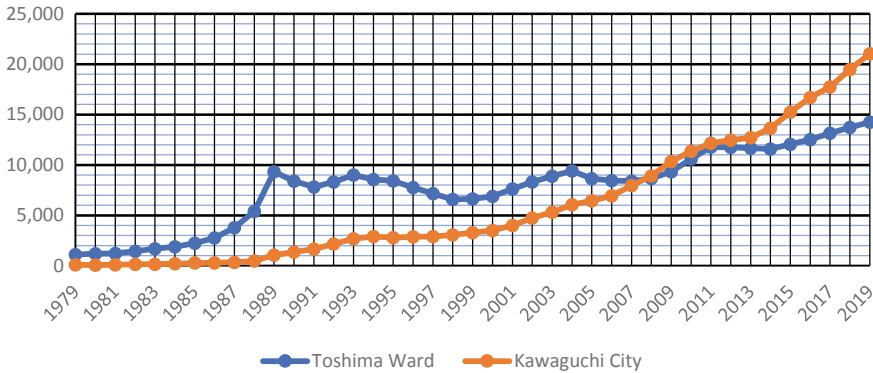
The following three factors can be cited as the main reasons why Chinese newcomers have come to settle in the vicinity of Ikebukuro Station.

First, there are numerous Japanese language schools in the area around Ikebukuro Station. In the late 1980s, many Japanese language schools centralized their operations in Tokyo, and the areas around Ikebukuro Station and Shin-Okubo Station were locations with particularly high numbers of Japanese language schools. The second reason is the large number of cheap, aging apartments available in the district around a five- to ten-minute walk from Ikebukuro Station. Chinese newcomers, at the time, commonly lived in groups of two to four people sharing one cramped room, of around eight to ten square meters, in order to reduce living costs. Third, for "Pre-college Students" (a previous residence status in Japan for foreign students in Japanese language schools and vocational schools) who had recently arrived in Japan and barely spoke any Japanese, Ikebukuro, one of Tokyo's busiest downtown areas, was a place where it was easy to find part-time work washing dishes in restaurants and pubs, or cleaning office buildings.

Among these Chinese newcomers who lived in such cheap, run-down apartments in Ikebukuro, there was a particular concentration of Chinese newcomers from Fujian Province (in particular, the Fuqing region of Fuzhou City). This district even came to be known as "the Fujian Village of Toshima Ward." There were many Fuqing natives among the Chinese oldcomers in Japan, and Chinese oldcomers resident in Japan had, in many cases, donated large sums of money to the development of their hometown. Due to the fact that numerous Fuqing residents had family members or relatives who were living in Japan, a network formed between Fuqing and Japan, which may have given rise to the Fuqing-born Chinese newcomers.

According to Fig. 3.6, based on the Tokyo Metropolis' statistics on foreign-national registration, the number of Chinese residents in Toshima Ward, which had been 3,779 in 1987, increased by a factor of 2.5 in only two years to 5,394 in 1988 and then to 9,330 in 1989. During this period, among Chinese "Pre-college Students," there were many who engaged in part-time work for longer periods than their legally permitted hours, or who registered at a Japanese language school but spent their entire time engaged in illegal employment. As a result, the Japanese Immigration Bureau enforced stricter rules on the issuance of visas, and the Chinese population of Toshima Ward decreased to 8,399 residents in 1990 and to 7,823 in 1991. Subsequently, until 2008, the number of Chinese residents in Toshima Ward fluctuated between seven and nine thousand people. It later rose again, reaching 14,857 as of January 2020.

By the start of the 1990s, an increase in newcomers from the three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang becomes notable. One factor behind the rise of newcomers born in the three northeastern provinces was the fact that



**Fig. 3.6** Changes in population of Chinese residents in Toshima Ward and Kawaguchi City, 1979–2019. *Source* Population Statistics of Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Kawaguchi City Hall

many ethnic Koreans from China started to come to Japan. China's three north-eastern provinces are concentrated areas of ethnic Koreans, and since the Korean and Japanese languages have many linguistic similarities, Japanese is a straightforward foreign language for ethnic Koreans to learn. In addition, the three northeastern provinces were part of “Manzhou Guo” (Manchuria), which was formerly under Japanese rule, and Japanese language education continues to thrive in the region in comparison to China as a whole, motivating many residents to come to Japan to study.

However, despite this concentration of recent Chinese newcomers in the aging, low-rent apartments around Ikebukuro Station, a Chinatown would not have been formed without the accumulation of commercial and service functions operated by Chinese newcomers, such as restaurants and shops. In the case of Ikebukuro, the establishment of the Chinese foods supermarkets Zhi-yin and Yang-guang-cheng played a central role in the Chinatown's formation.

Zhi-yin opened a store near Ikebukuro Station's North Exit in 1991. Zhi-yin's business originally developed from a rental service offering Chinese-language recorded videos. Zhi-yin went on to establish the largest supermarket and Chinese bookshop in Ikebukuro Chinatown, and this expanded to become a comprehensive enterprise with travel companies, Chinese restaurants, and even publishers of free Chinese-language newspapers. However, Zhi-yin went bankrupt in January 2010, and a different Chinese company now operates a similar business in the same spot.

The establishment of Zhi-yin attracted Chinese newcomers not only from the Ikebukuro area but also those residents throughout the Tokyo Metropolis and in nearby prefectures such as Saitama and Chiba. As a result of the increase in such Chinese newcomer visitors, many shops and offices managed by Chinese newcomers were established in the area around Zhi-yin, including Chinese restaurants, computer and mobile phone shops, and internet cafés.

In 2002, Yang-guang-cheng, which would later become Zhi-yin's rival, opened in the immediate vicinity of Zhi-yin. Yang-guang-cheng's colorful Chinese-style

red and yellow shop exterior was a symbol of the increase in shops managed by Chinese newcomers around the North Exit of Ikebukuro Station. Yang-guang-cheng also operates Chinese restaurants and publishes free Chinese-language newspapers in addition to selling foodstuffs (Fig. 3.7).

While the number of shops managed by Chinese newcomers near the North Exit of Ikebukuro Station began to increase in the 1990s, the emergence of Yang-guang-cheng in 2002 was the genesis behind the formation of Ikebukuro Chinatown. I observed this process from its early stages and was the first to propose the appellation “Ikebukuro Chinatown” in August 2003 (Yamashita 2010, 2019, pp. 284–301). In my 2016 survey, the total number of stores or offices connected to Chinese residents in the vicinity of the North and West Exits of JR Ikebukuro Station was 194. A detailed breakdown of these facilities reveals that Chinese restaurants were the most common, with 63 establishments, accounting for a third of the total number (Fig. 3.8). Other facilities included 9 travel agencies, 31 beauty and esthetic salons, 8 real estate companies, and 7 computer and mobile phone sales and repair shops, including web-design services. In addition, there were 8 administrative scrivener and law offices, whose business names were those of Japanese people; all of these offices have assigned Chinese-national staff to deal with Chinese-language cases, who carry out procedures such as visa and naturalization applications on behalf of Chinese-national clients. Since it is difficult for Chinese newcomers to acquire the



**Fig. 3.7** Chinese food supermarket *Yang-guang-cheng* in Ikebukuro Chinatown. *Source* Taken by the author in 2020



**Fig. 3.8** Chinese restaurants run by Chinese newcomers in the alley of Ikebukuro Chinatown.  
*Source* Taken by the author in 2020

qualifications necessary to become a lawyer or administrative scrivener in Japan, these administrative scrivener and law offices managed by Japanese nationals have emerged in Ikebukuro Chinatown in response to the increasing demand from Chinese newcomers.

A distinctive feature of Chinese newcomer businesses is that almost all of them exclusively target fellow Chinese newcomers as customers. This stands in stark contrast to how the three major traditional Chinatowns of Japan have come to develop, that is, mainly aimed at Japanese tourists. The customers of Ikebukuro Chinatown's shops are nearly entirely fellow Chinese newcomers.

Throughout the formation process of Ikebukuro Chinatown, the interrelationship between Chinese newcomers and the local Japanese community has been extremely tenuous. Two organizations representing the local community are the neighborhood association and the store association. The neighborhood association is a voluntary group organized by residents of the area for the purpose of friendship and mutual benefit, and it carries out communication and coordination between residents, as well as environmental beautification, disaster prevention, and crime prevention activities. The store association, meanwhile, is a group organized by storekeepers of the shopping district and other particular areas. The store association hosts events and carries out crime prevention patrols and cleaning activities within the district. However, very few Chinese newcomers are members of these local organizations. Furthermore, in



the current situation, virtually no mutual communication can be observed between the Chinese newcomers and the local Japanese residents.

An incident occurred that vividly reflects this fraught situation. In January 2008, a group of around forty Chinese newcomer managers of Chinese restaurants, stores and offices in Ikebukuro Chinatown organized a “Tokyo Chinatown” preparatory committee and promoted the concept of a “Tokyo Chinatown” that would link the Chinese establishments located within a 500 m radius of Ikebukuro Station in a network. The local store association reacted with extreme displeasure to the idea that Chinese newcomers would consider creating a Chinatown in Ikebukuro without any consultation with the local residents. Since then, there has been no major improvement in communication between the local store association and the Chinese newcomer community, a situation that remains the same at present.

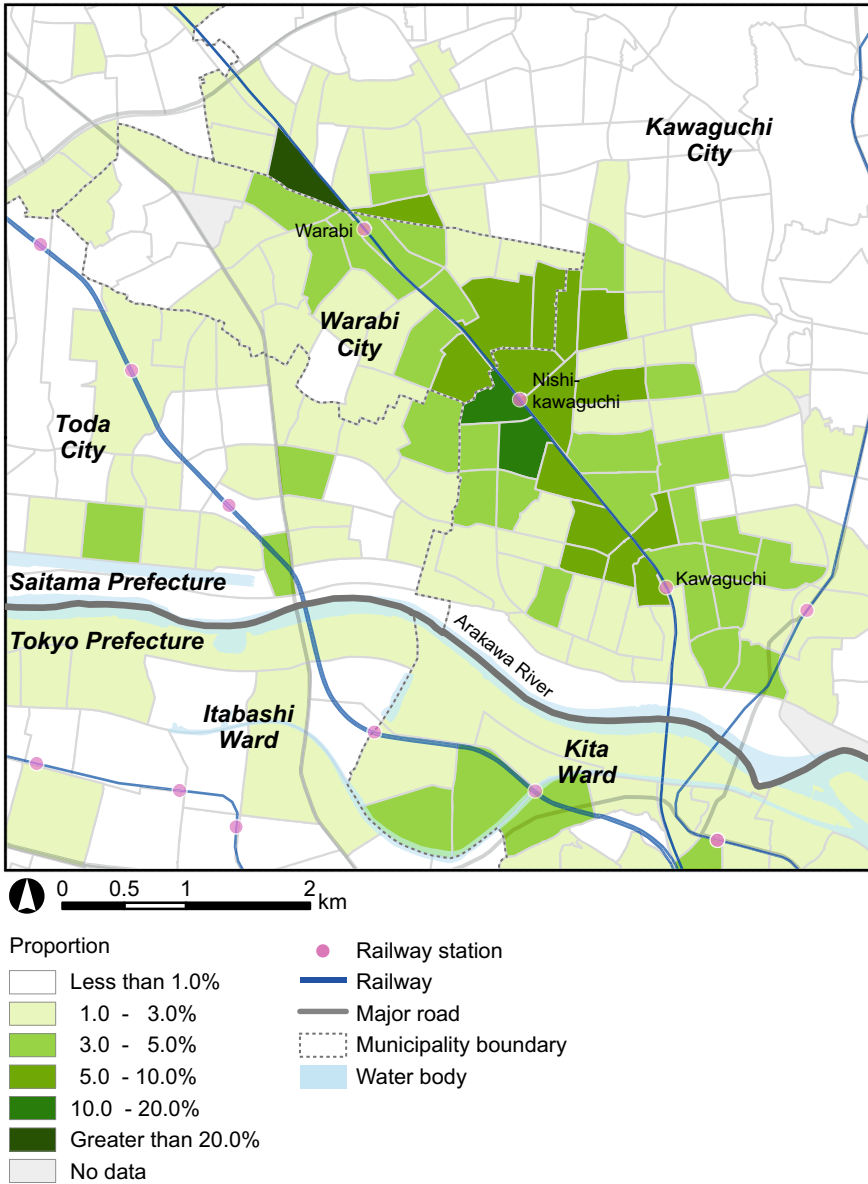
Against this background, some political groups that carry out anti-Chinese actions have advanced the idea of a “Tokyo Chinatown” consisting of Chinese newcomers as a target for attack, and they have screamed hate speech such as “Kick the Chinese out of Ikebukuro!” and “Crush the Chinese plan for a Chinatown!”. However, such actions have not gained the sympathy of the majority of the general resident population, and they tend to occur as isolated street propaganda activities by nationalist groups.

### ***3.5.2 Concentration of Chinese Residents in Suburban Tokyo: Kawaguchi and Nishi-Kawaguchi in Saitama Prefecture***

The area surrounding Ikebukuro Station, with its concentration of stores offering services needed for the lifestyles of Chinese residents, is a convenient place to live. However, the low-rent, run-down apartments in which impoverished Chinese newcomers lived as groups in the 1980s and 1990s have been gradually reduced in number. Chinese newcomers, meanwhile, have become affluent in step with the economic development of China. In particular, Chinese newcomers who have married and gained households have come to relocate to the suburbs in search of more spacious, comfortable housing. There has been a notable expansion of the Chinese newcomer residential zone from Ikebukuro toward Saitama Prefecture in the north along the JR Saikyo Line, as shown in Figs. 3.5 and 3.9.

The cities of Kawaguchi and Warabi in Saitama Prefecture, which lie beyond Tokyo’s Kita Ward (adjacent to the north side of Toshima Ward, where Ikebukuro is located) and the Arakawa River, are areas where the population of Chinese residents is increasing. In particular, significant numbers of Chinese restaurants, food shops and other establishments managed by Chinese newcomers have opened in the area surrounding JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station. Next, I examine the background of this development.

From the 1990s, there was a concentration of illegal brothels in the area surrounding JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station, exceeding 200 establishments at its peak.



**Fig. 3.9** Ratio of Chinese population in Kawaguchi City and Warabi City in Saitama Prefecture. Source Microdata of the 2015 Population Census

However, in 2004, the Saitama Prefectural Police designated the area as a priority district for cleanup of the sex industry, and the illegal brothels were thus exposed. By 2007, virtually all such illegal sex establishments had been closed down. Along with this development, the number of nearby eating and drinking establishments also decreased, and the area surrounding JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station went into decline, with many of its commercial buildings lacking tenants.

JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station is convenient for access to central Tokyo, with journey times of roughly 23 min to JR Ueno Station and 24 min to JR Ikebukuro Station, including a transfer at JR Akabane Station. However, it was not easy to fill up the real estate vacancies due to the negative regional image of “Nishi-Kawaguchi” for the reasons described above. On the other hand, Chinese newcomers’ image of the Nishi-Kawaguchi district was not as negative as that of Japanese nationals. The area around the station contained many vacated commercial buildings, and condominium and apartment rents were quite reasonable considering the relatively good access to central Tokyo. For Chinese newcomers, who tend to have a strong entrepreneurial spirit, opening a Chinese restaurant in Nishi-Kawaguchi could be achieved with far less capital than would be needed in Tokyo.

In my survey of March 2018, 34 establishments thought to be managed by Chinese newcomers (including 24 Chinese restaurants as well as karaoke clubs, internet cafés, food shops and greengrocers, and real estate companies) were confirmed within 400 m of Nishi-Kawaguchi Station (Figs. 3.10 and 3.11). A major feature of the Chinese newcomer enclave in Nishi-Kawaguchi is that there are many Chinese restaurants offering authentic Chinese cuisine that can rarely be experienced in other locations in Japan. The background factor behind this is the presence of large numbers of Chinese newcomers living in the surrounding area.

The Kawaguchi Shibazono Housing Complex, managed by the semi-public Urban Renaissance (UR) Agency, is located about a six-minute walk from Warabi Station, the station next to Nishi-Kawaguchi Station (Fig. 3.12). Kawaguchi Shibazono is a large-scale housing complex, built in the 1970s. Although its nearest station is JR Warabi Station, the complex is located in Kawaguchi City for administrative purposes. The buildings of the complex have deteriorated, now at more than forty years since their construction, and as a result it has been difficult to find new Japanese tenants. The age of most of its Japanese residents is remarkably high.

However, for Chinese residents, the complex is conveniently located for easy access to central Tokyo, and in spite of the somewhat aging condition of the buildings, an increasing number of Chinese residents have moved into the UR Kawaguchi Shibazono complex, due partly to the internet-based exchange of information among Chinese residents. UR rental accommodation does not require its new residents to have a guarantor or pay “key money,” commission fees or contract-renewal fees; moreover, there are no restrictions on nationality. As a result, around half of the approximately 5,000 residents of the complex are now Chinese residents, as of 2019.



**Fig. 3.10** Multi-tenant building with three Chinese restaurants near Nishi-Kawaguchi Station in Kawaguchi City. *Source* Taken by the author in 2018

### 3.5.3 Comparison of Ikebukuro and Kawaguchi

Following my examination of the Chinese enclaves in Ikebukuro Chinatown and Nishi-Kawaguchi in the previous subsections, in this subsection I conduct a cross-comparison of case examples from both districts. Note that Warabi City is adjacent to Kawaguchi City, but the enclave in the former city is less notable than in the latter city, and thus the situation in Warabi is not further considered in this subsection. The comparison below between the two enclaves of Ikebukuro and Nishi-Kawaguchi is based on the six tables presented in the second chapter.

Figure 3.6 shows the changes in the populations of Chinese residents in Toshima Ward and Kawaguchi City from the end of 1978, when the Chinese government set its policy of economic reform and opening up the country. In contrast to the rapid rise in Chinese residents from the late 1980s in Toshima Ward, where Ikebukuro is located, a gradual increase in Chinese residents can be seen in Kawaguchi City after 1989. With the impact of worsening Sino-Japanese relations and stricter issuing of visas by the Japanese Immigration Bureau on the numbers of Chinese-national students, the Chinese population of Toshima Ward showed repeated rises and declines until around 2008. In contrast, the number of Chinese residents of Kawaguchi City, which had increased due to the suburbanization of Chinese residents, followed a consistent



**Fig. 3.11** Multi-tenant building with Chinese restaurant and beauty salons for men run by Chinese newcomers near Nishi-Kawaguchi Station. *Source* Taken by the author in 2018



**Fig. 3.12** Kawaguchi Shibazono Housing Complex near Warabi Station. *Source* Taken by the author in 2020

rise, and it has since rapidly increased, surpassing the resident Chinese population of Toshima Ward from 2008.

In the following, I compare the characteristics of the two Chinese enclaves on the basis of microdata of the 2015 Population Census. Table 2.1 in the second chapter reveals that females outnumber males in both Toshima Ward and Kawaguchi City, with little difference between the municipalities. The average age of Chinese residents is slightly higher in Kawaguchi City. Furthermore, the employment rate of Chinese residents aged 15 and older is just 23.5% in Toshima Ward against 56.6% in Kawaguchi City, revealing the advancing domiciliation of Chinese residents in Kawaguchi City.

Next, a comparison of the residents' addresses five years prior to the census time (Table 2.2) shows that in the case of the Chinese residents of Toshima Ward, there were 1,475 people who had been living at the same address or another address within Toshima Ward five years before, 213 who had been living in another prefecture in Japan, and 977 who had been living overseas. In contrast, in the case of the Chinese residents of Kawaguchi City, there were 4,082 people who had been living at the same address or another address within Kawaguchi City five years before, 1,568 who had been living in another prefecture in Japan, and 1,538 who had been living overseas. In other words, the proportion of respondents who lived abroad five years ago was 36.2% in Toshima Ward but only 20.3% in Kawaguchi City. We can thus assume that Toshima Ward is more important as an initial place of residence for newcomers from China.

An examination of the residents' length of stay in Japan (Table 2.3) shows that in the case of the Chinese residents of Toshima Ward, 65 people had continuously lived in the ward since birth, while in contrast, this figure in Kawaguchi City was 409 people. We can infer that many Chinese-national children were born in Kawaguchi City, and there are correspondingly many Chinese-national households with young married couples. In addition, it is clear that there are more long-term Chinese residents of Kawaguchi City than those who have continuously lived in Toshima Ward. This can be viewed as indicating a stronger tendency toward domiciliation in Kawaguchi City.

Next, a comparison of the occupations of Chinese residents (Table 2.4) shows that, in decreasing order, the most common occupations among Chinese residents of Toshima Ward are (1) service work, (2) professional and engineering work, and (3) clerical work. This stands in contrast to the order among Chinese residents of Kawaguchi City, which is (1) professional and engineering work, (2) service work, and (3) sales work. From these data, we can assume that there are many Chinese residents engaged in specialist professions such as workers in the IT industry in Kawaguchi City, in contrast to the high proportion of workers engaged in the service industry in Toshima Ward. This suggests that the residents' socioeconomic statuses in the former enclave are higher than those in the latter enclave.

If we look at the distance between residence and workplace (Table 2.5), while there is an average commuting distance of 6.2 km for Chinese residents in Toshima Ward, the commuting distance for Chinese residents in Kawaguchi City is 11.7 km. There was little difference in the proportion of Chinese residents whose place of

employment is also their residence, which was 4.0% in Toshima Ward against a slightly higher ratio of 5.7% in Kawaguchi City. These figures suggest that more residents in the Kawaguchi enclave have a longer commuting distance, probably due to workplaces in the Tokyo Metropolis. This provides further convincing evidence of the suburbanization of Chinese residents.

Finally, a comparison of the proportion of intermarriage with Japanese nationals (Table 2.6) shows that while 1.42% of Chinese residents in Toshima Ward have a Japanese spouse, this figure is 0.95% in Kawaguchi City. The ratio of intermarriage with Japanese nationals is low in both districts, although slightly higher in Toshima Ward.

As far as intermarriage of Chinese residents with Japanese nationals is concerned, the cases of Japanese husband and Chinese wife are much more than those of Chinese husband and Japanese wife. However, marriage between Chinese spouses is conspicuous in both Chinese enclaves.

In this subsection I have presented a comparison of the Chinese residents in Toshima Ward and Kawaguchi City, based on the main indicators of the 2015 Population Census. The findings reveal that the domiciliation of Chinese residents in Kawaguchi City is relatively further advanced than that of Chinese residents in Toshima Ward.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined changes in the Chinese residents of Japan, the characteristics of their distribution, and the related background factors. In addition, I presented comparative examinations of the two newly formed Chinese enclaves in Japan, i.e., Ikebukuro and Kawaguchi.

First, after investigating the changes in Chinese residents with a particular focus on the increase in “newcomers,” I examined the distribution of Chinese residents on a nationwide scale. I went on to present case studies of two enclaves in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area with high concentrations of Chinese residents: Toshima Ward in Tokyo, which includes Ikebukuro Chinatown, and Kawaguchi City in Saitama Prefecture, centered on the JR Nishi-Kawaguchi station, where there has been a rapid increase in the number of establishments run by Chinese newcomers in recent years.

In this concluding section, I summarize the findings obtained from the examinations of this chapter. They can be expressed as follows.

Due to China’s expansion of its economic reform and opening-up policy, the number of Chinese newcomers who came to Japan increased rapidly from the mid-1980s. At that time, the Japanese economy was continuously buoyant during the so-called “bubble boom” until around 1991, leading to an increase in the cost of labor and a shortage of workers. For the Chinese residents who came to Japan in this period, employment opportunities were numerous, and in comparison to China, which was still in relative poverty at the time, wages in Japan were perceived to be

extremely high. This led to a dramatic increase in the number of Chinese residents who attempted to live in Japan.

Many of these Chinese newcomers to Japan were students who attended Japanese language schools or universities while working part-time. In addition, there were also many Technical Interns, who engaged in unskilled work in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture. However, from the 2000s, reflecting China's economic development, there have been increasing cases among Chinese newcomers of highly educated "white-collar" workers with postgraduate degrees or similar qualifications who found work that requires specialist skills, such as positions in IT-related fields.

The spatial distribution of Chinese residents in Japan showed a tendency to concentrate in major cities. In particular, the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, which includes the Tokyo Metropolis and the adjacent suburban prefectures of Saitama (which includes Kawaguchi City) and Kanagawa (which includes Yokohama City), accounts for 43.1% of all Chinese residents in Japan as of the 2015 Population Census. A more detailed examination detected distinct patterns in three areas: (1) from the northern part of Tokyo to the southern part of Saitama Prefecture, (2) from the eastern part of Tokyo to the western part of Chiba Prefecture, and (3) from the southern part of Tokyo to the eastern part of Kanagawa Prefecture. I subsequently presented case studies of two enclaves in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area with high concentrations of Chinese residents: Toshima Ward in Tokyo, where Ikebukuro Chinatown has been formed, and Kawaguchi City in Saitama Prefecture, which includes the areas around JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station and Warabi Station.

From the mid-1980s, a concentration of Chinese students emerged in Ikebukuro, a subcenter of Tokyo. These students were often enrolled in Japanese language schools and lived in relatively cheap, aging apartments in the vicinity of Ikebukuro Station. The numbers of Chinese food supermarkets, Chinese restaurants, internet cafés, and various other establishments offering services to Chinese residents increased, particularly in the area around the North Exit of Ikebukuro Station; in this way, Ikebukuro Chinatown came to be formed.

Meanwhile, as the length of their stays in Japan became longer, many Chinese newcomers' households expanded due to marriage and childbirth, resulting in a need for larger living spaces, which led to an increase in Chinese residents relocating from central Tokyo to suburban areas. I discussed the enclave surrounding JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station in Kawaguchi City, Saitama Prefecture, as a case of Chinese suburbanization. Until around 2007, there was a concentration of illegal brothels in the area surrounding JR Nishi-Kawaguchi Station. Consequently, with such a lingering negative image of Nishi-Kawaguchi, the area around the station had many vacated commercial buildings, and condominium prices and apartment rents were very reasonable considering the relatively good access to central Tokyo. Chinese newcomers' image of the Nishi-Kawaguchi area was not as negative as that of Japanese nationals, and thus many Chinese residents came to reside in this area. Furthermore, an increase in Chinese residents in the nearby UR Kawaguchi Shibazono Housing Complex led to a rise in Chinese-run shops and businesses in Nishi-Kawaguchi.



Although I have summarized here the findings reported in this chapter, detailed statistical data for each enclave, such as that obtained in the US, is difficult to acquire in Japan. Moreover, there is a considerable difference between Chinese residents who arrived in Japan between the mid-1980s and 1990s, when China was relatively poor, and Chinese residents who arrived in Japan after 2000, when China's economic development had steadily advanced, in terms of the way each group adapts to Japanese society. While concentrations of Chinese residents advanced among the former group, we can see a tendency of Chinese residents with improved socioeconomic status, among the latter group, to exercise a wider range of options in choosing residential areas. As a result, Chinese residents currently tend to be far more strongly oriented toward home ownership than Japanese nationals, and thus many prefer to buy condominiums rather than rent apartments for long-term residence. Based on interviews with numerous Chinese residents of Japan, I have reported that affluent Chinese residents purchase condominiums in Tokyo, and particularly economically successful individuals decide to live on the top floors of high-rise condominium buildings. Zhang (2020) made it clear that the areas where Chinese white-collar residents buy homes tend to be spatially dispersed. Although I have not yet been able to obtain empirical data that convincingly supports such statements, it seems clear that Chinese residents' methods of adapting to Japanese society are gradually diversifying.

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