

# Chinatowns and Overseas Chinese

## 世界の中華街に共通するものは？

中華街は世界中にあるが、主要な中華街は共通した特徴を持っている。まず、ニューヨークもシンガポールも横浜も、みんな港湾都市であること。これは、南中国の海岸沿いの故郷をあとにして船に乗り、着いた港に住みつくから。第二には包丁、散髪ばさみなど手近な道具のできる仕事をはじめから料理店、理髪店などが軒を連ねる。そして伝統的な団結力、閉鎖性を背景とした生活をするから、華僑の圧倒的に多い街をつくる。その生活力は旺盛だが、中華街はこのままでいいのか。

“Where there’s seawater, there are overseas Chinese.” This is an old Chinese saying which implies three things. Firstly, it means that there are overseas Chinese all over the world. Secondly, it means that most of the Chinatowns are located in port towns. And thirdly, it means that most overseas Chinese come from waterfront provinces in China. Indeed, the Chinatowns in Yokohama, San Francisco, Singapore, 5 and even the smaller ones in Hakodate, Kobe and Nagasaki, are all located near harbors in port towns. This is a distinct feature of the overseas Chinese.

Southern China has relatively little flat land. Therefore, whenever food shortages occurred due to a poor harvest or war, many people had to move to other areas. Families living in coastal towns like Fujian, Guangdong, or Hainan would get on a boat 10 and go to Southeast Asia and other destinations. The surviving retainers of the Ming dynasty, which lost to the Qing dynasty, fled to Southeast Asia on a large military ship to escape execution at the hands of the conquering Qing dynasty. Fleeing soldiers usually left their families and started a new life in a new place. Starting in the 20th century, Chinese who wanted to start their own business moved abroad and estab- 15 lished Chinatowns in port towns all over the world.

The Chinatown in Yokohama is decorated with bright colors such as red, yellow, and purple and is well known for an atmosphere much closer to that of “China” compared to the downtown areas of Beijing or Shanghai. The tourist atmosphere of Yokohama’s Chinatown is very different from the neighborhood atmosphere of other Chinatowns 20 around the world. Yokohama’s Chinatown is globally famous for its Chinese restaurants despite the fact that it is not very old. The history of the Yokohama Chinatown started after the port of Yokohama was opened based on the Japan-U.S. Amity and