The Formation of New Immigrant Chinese Communities:

The Structure of Social Support as an Analytical Perspective Based on a Field Survey in Ikebukuro

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Under the background of globalization, the integration of overseas Chinese is experiencing a transformation from traditional Chinatown to new immigrant Chinese community. Empirical materials are urgently needed to illustrate how the transformation occurs. Thus, by interviewing 25 Chinese operators in Ikebukuro, this paper aims to reveal the formation mechanism of new immigrant Chinese community by using 'the structure of social support' as an analysis framework. The findings show that the social support which new overseas Chinese receive presents a diversified structure. When abundant formal support can be easily accessed, new overseas Chinese need not rely heavily on informal networks and dwell in traditional Chinatown to get support. The mixed support structure has further affected the integrated choice of new overseas Chinese. A boundless, ethnically diverse new immigrant Chines community has eventually come into being.

1. Introduction: transformation of immigrant Chinese community

Since the reform and opening up, the integration of overseas Chinese is experiencing a transition to a new form. As a place where all economic and social activities of early overseas Chinese take place（Wei Wang, 2014）, old Chinatown is closed, exclusive and cohesive（Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2004）. Individuals who wish to obtain survival and development resources are fixed in this specific place. Relying on relatives and fellow townsmen is the favorable integration strategy. In recent years, however, in the context of globalization, new immigrant Chinese communities which have no visible geographical boundaries have emerged worldwide. In contrast to traditional ethnic enclaves such as "Chinatown", these new Chinese communities have a diversified inner structure and meanwhile are open to the mainstream society. The reason why new overseas Chinese（also referred as "new immigrants" in the following）

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who emigrated abroad since the 1970s have shown this integrated commonality needs to be explained based on empirical analysis. The transformation of immigrant Chinese communities has thus become a new topic in the field of immigration studies.

On the question of "how the transformation happened", multiple analytical perspectives can be adopted as immigration research methods are diverse. Capturing the sociological characteristics of new immigrant Chinese communities is one approach. Current research mainly focuses on Chinese communities in Europe and America, among which the study in the United States is typical. Min Zhou (2003), a well-known Chinese sociologist who noticed and studied the transformation earlier in the field, found that new immigrants' high level of wealth, skill and educational background were the important factors that led to the transformation. By studying two new immigrant Chinese communities in the U.S., Monterey Park in California and Flushing in New York, Zhou discovered new overseas Chinese who had above characteristics chose to purchase houses in local middle-class neighborhoods, intentionally bypassing old Chinatown at the beginning. As a result, a new community which is different from the traditional settlements has come into being. In view of the characterization of "Asian-dominated, multi-ethnic mixed" and "a wide variety of Chinese business enterprises" in the new immigrant Chinese community (Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2003:117), Zhou and Lin (2004) condensed a theoretical framework centered on "ethnic capital". By exploring the interactive process of financial capital, human capital and social capital in the community, their paper analyzed the causes of the transformation in American

new immigrant Chinese communities.

In the same year of Min Zhou and Mingang Lin's publication (2003), East Asian scholars had also made remarkable field-based discoveries. Yamashita Kiyomi (2003), a Japanese human geographer, observed the existence of Japan's first new immigrant Chinese community "Ikebukuro Chinatown" in Toshima, Tokyo, by personal visits. Although Ikebukuro is densely populated with Chinese shops, Ikebukuro Chinatown is not an "imagined community" in essence compared with traditional Chinatown such as Yokohama Chinatown. But ten years after the concept of "Ikebukuro Chinatown" was put forward, only Wei Wang (2014) and Qin Li (2018) in China had conducted follow-up researches on this issue. Based on text analysis, Wei Wang (2014:266) pointed out that low land prices and embracing heterogeneity were the historical background for Ikebukuro to be portrayed as "multi-national and multi-level living space". Qin Li (2018), by analyzing second-hand empirical materials, addressed that it was the more proactive attitude of new overseas Chinese towards integration that made Ikebukuro become a network-based new immigrant Chinese community. Compared with existing academic achievements in Europe and America, it is still necessary to obtain some empirical materials to reveal the formation mechanism of "Ikebukuro Chinatown". Under the background that immigration theory on new immigrants needs to be developed, this kind of supplement in East Asian context is likely to enrich the analytical dimension of the causes of new overseas Chinese' integration.

Thus, in order to better analyze the formation mechanism of "Ikebukuro Chinatown", the research process of this paper is divided

into two stages: field investigation and data collation. In view of the close relationship between the formation of a community and individual integration choices, this paper intends to establish its own theoretical framework after conducting semi-structured interviews with 25 Chinese operators in Ikebukuro.

2. Literature review and exploration of new ideas

2.1 Causes of new immigrant Chinese communities' formation

The demographic prerequisite for the formation and development of new immigrant Chinese communities is a certain number of new overseas Chinese. Since the 1970s, the global distribution of capital generated by globalization has enabled many countries to loosen their immigration restrictions and introduce a series of preferential policies to attract talents. At the same time, after the reform and opening up, China has also deregulated the control of private overseas trips. Therefore, Chinese citizens began a large-scale cross-border movement, and new immigrant groups were thus formed. According to statistics, the number of Chinese who went on private overseas trips in 1949-1978 was only 210,000. But from 1978 to 1998, the number jumped to 4 million, including more than 2 million permanent immigrants (Jin Zhao, 1998). Up to now, the number of new immigrant Chinese (including their children) has exceeded 13 million (Guotu Zhuang, 2020).

The transformation of immigrant Chinese communities caught scholars' attention when the place new immigrants set foot in was noticeably different from their successors'. Years before, with a singular ethnic composition, the traditional Chinatown formed overseas was separated from the mainstream society. This is reflected in the fact that common cultural belief and ethnic language are the basis of forming a traditional Chinatown (Qiwen Huang, 1991), highlighting the preference of early overseas Chinese to live together with fellow townsmen and family (Yuhua Ju, 2003). However, with the development of globalization and the influx of new immigrants, traditional Chinatown is no longer a place for new immigrants to settle in foreign countries. It has been confirmed worldwide that new overseas Chinese have formed a different form of social integration.

By taking Monterey Park and Flushing as an example, Min Zhou and Mingang Lin (2004) pointed out that compared with traditional Chinatown, new immigrant Chinese communities had larger geographical area, more diverse membership and ethnic composition. In short, new immigrant communities were multi-ethnic, open and globalized. Huping Ling (2007:29) found that St. Louis had a "Fluid, time-sharing" geographically borderless community of new overseas Chinese. Huijing Zhang (2016:19) stated that new immigrant Chinese communities in Japan had undergone an evolution from "job-housing space to social space", and that new immigrants lived in a deterritorialized ethnic community (Huijing Zhang, 2017). Despite the geographical differences, above findings imply a commonality. That is, although the new immigrant Chinese community reflects certain ethnic characteristics externally, it is actually merged into the mainstream society due to the diversification of member nationalities and the ambiguity brought about by deterritorialization. It has not become an iso-

lated "ethnic town".

Based on their on-the-spot confirmation of new immigrant Chinese communities, the above-mentioned scholars have each focused on building an analytical framework that can explain the corresponding form. Min Zhou and Mingang Lin（2004）condensed the interactive relationship between financial capital, human capital, and social capital as an integrated concept of "ethnic capital". After comparing the differences in ethnic capital between the new and old Chinese immigrant communities, they pointed out that the prerequisite for the formation and development of new immigrant Chinese communities was new immigrants' rich financial resources and human capital. Instead of relying on traditional Chinatown, these characteristics enabled new immigrants to obtain social capital for their own survival and development through the operation of financial capital and human capital. Huijing Zhang（2016:20-25）also focused on social capital. Through the construction of an analytical perspective of "node and social capital interaction", she believed that traditional Japanese Chinatown could no longer meet the requirements of "high liquidity, high level, and high creativity" new immigrants. New immigrant Chinese community was formed because new immigrants used Chinese associations and "culture festivals" as nodes to extend their personal networks and accumulate social capital. In addition, there are theories of "cultural community" and "cultural symbolic community" from the perspective of cultural identity. Huping Ling（2007）defined a "cultural community" as a community that had no geographic boundaries and was based on the cultural identity of an ethnic group. The formation mechanism of this kind of new im-

migrant Chinese community is that its members have been integrated into the mainstream society both socially and economically while still maintaining a high degree of attachment to Chinese culture. It is noticeable that the prerequisite for applying "cultural community" theory is new immigrants in the community already possess upper-middle class socioeconomic status. For new immigrant communities with different internal strata, the explanatory power of "cultural community theory" may be insufficient. Based on this, Huijing Zhang（2017:1）put forward the theory of "cultural symbolic community" that can respond to "the adaptation and development needs of new immigrants from all strata at different levels". The theory believed that when new immigrants "need to gradually adapt to a non-immigrant country which lacks immigration policy", a cultural symbolic community that used "cultural identity as a link and symbolic signs as a carrier" was formed by the interweaving and bonding of networks of members in various strata （Huijing Zhang, 2017:4）. As a place where new immigrants can seek relief when they encounter difficulties, the essential function of cultural symbolic communities is to help ethnic group members eventually adapt to local life. Therefore, to some extent, the emergence of cultural symbolic community and cultural community corresponds to the spiritual needs of new immigrants at different stages of survival and development in foreign state.

In summary, the internal analytical logic of existing research is what characteristics the new immigrants have in order to survive and develop in foreign societies, and how their actions unfold. Under such a perspective of exploring inward, internal structure character-

istics, network extending methods, and spiritual needs of new immigrants are regarded as important factors that have spawned the new immigrant Chinese community.

2.2 New ideas for the analysis

Whether the focus is on social capital or cultural identity, there is a common problem in the analytical framework of the aforementioned studies: discussions from the perspective of foreign society are missing. In other words, existing studies just regard host country's social environment as a background of the formation of new immigrant Chinese communities, rather than an element that constitutes the analytical framework. However, the survival and development of new immigrants is undoubtedly wrapped in the political, economic, cultural and other formal or informal rules of the host society. The institutional system of a foreign society is likely to participate in the process of shaping new immigrants' integration as an influencing factor. Therefore, on the basis of existing literature, how to incorporate institutional factors into the construction of analytical framework is the new idea which this paper intends to explore.

After clarifying that the analytical framework should cover institutional factors and individual initiative, the concept of "social support", which has been fully discussed in sociology, has raised author's attention. Social support was first applied to the study of social etiology, which generally refers to the help received by individuals from others in society（Raschke, 1977）. In terms of types, the mainstream view is to divide social support into formal and informal support networks. Formal support is institutional assistance provided by state and society, while the

source of informal support consists of "relationships such as family, relatives, friends, and colleagues"（Xiaoguang Fan, 2012:95）. The introduction of the concept of social support in immigration research can be traced back to the 1990s. Since then, social support has been used to discuss the psychological pressure, aging, educational resources and educational expectations of immigrants（Vega et al., 1991; Feng Wen, 2017; Min Zhou & Jun Wang, 2019）. But generally, the concept has not been widely applied in the field of immigration studies.

The existing research on new immigrant Chinese communities did not directly apply the concept of social support in the analysis, but the research results showed the feasibility to follow up from the perspective of social support. As illustrated above, personal relationship is one of the factors that give birth to the new immigrant Chinese community, and it also assists new immigrants to obtain resources for survival and development. The aim-oriented use of personal relationships by new immigrants actually embodies a process of obtaining social support through informal networks. Meanwhile, state and society which provide formal support are precisely the institutional factors that existing studies have neglected and this paper intends to include when constructing the analytical framework. Hence in order to assess the applicability of formal support to the issue, and to establish a corresponding analytical framework based on Ikebukuro situation, it is necessary to conduct specific discussions in conjunction with the institutional environment faced by overseas Chinese in Japan.

3. Research design

3.1 Analytical framework: the structure of social support

After reviewing the existing literature and focusing on Japanese society, this study finds that institutional factors have a real impact on the survival and development of overseas Chinese in Japan. In the early post-war period, the icy diplomatic relations between China and Japan caused early overseas Chinese to suffer much social exclusion. This is mainly manifested in Japanese government's strict control over Chinese immigrants' residence and naturalization applications. During this period, most early overseas Chinese still lived in traditional Chinatown, relying on kinship, geo-relations and other strong ties to survive and develop. However, between 1970 and 1980, with Japanese government continuously revising its immigration policies to speed up internationalization process, the institutional environment faced by overseas Chinese has undergone multiple changes. In 1989, the "Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act" newly revised by Japanese government increased the type of employment visas from 7 to 14. In 1999, Japanese government raised the minimum residence time for investor visas from 6 months to 1 year, and the maximum residence time for skilled worker visas from 1 year to 3 years. At the beginning of this century, Japanese government has successively promulgated policies on the introduction of talents. Under the premise that many social benefits in Japan are only accessible to immigrants with long-term residence（more than 3 months）permit, changes in residence and naturalization policies also mean that new immigrants are more likely to benefit from institutional guar-

antees. For example, all immigrants with long-term residence permit can enjoy the same medical benefits as Japanese nationals as long as they join the National Health Insurance.

Based on above discussions, this paper eventually determines to use "the structure of social support" as the analytical framework, and explores the formation mechanism of Ikebukuro Chinatown by analyzing the support network of Chinese operators in Ikebukuro. This study still adopts the classification standard of "formalization" equaling "institutionalization" for the structure of social support. After combining characteristics of immigration studies with the reality of Japan, this paper defines government and communities as the sources of providing formal support for new immigrants in Japan, and treats Chinese associations and personal relationships（kinship, geo-relations, academic and professional relationships, etc.）as providers of informal support. The contents of social support provided by aforementioned entities includes material assistance（providing currency and other tangible objects）, behavioral assistance（sharing tasks through manual labor）, intimate interaction（such as listening）, and guidance（such as providing information）, feedback（to individual emotions, etc.）, positive social interaction（feeling entertained and relaxed）（Barrera, 1983）.

3.2 Research data and analytical methods

This research collects data through Nanjing University's 2019 International Scientific Research and Training Program. The preliminary field research lasted 13 days. Program members visited Ikebukuro and attended lectures held by Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the University of Tokyo, the

Overseas Chinese Association in Japan, the Duan Press, the Nanjing University Alumni Association in Japan and other institutions to learn about Ikebukuro environment. Then, based on the information collected, the research subjects were identified as 25 Chinese business operators in Ikebukuro, who were semi-structured interviewed from five dimensions: nationality, work status, marriage and family, daily life, and social interactions. At the same time, the program received first-hand official materials such as "Tokyo Guidelines for the Promotion of Intercultural cohesion" and "Foreigners Population by Nationality and Region in Japan" provided by Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

It should be noted that the use of semi-structured interviews and the determination of subject numbers have both undergone the considerations of research significance and research difficulty. According to Tokyo Metropolitan Government's latest data, the number of Chinese living in Toshima where Ikebukuro is located has reached 12,955 by the end of January, 2019. So from the perspective of operability, compared with quantitatively surveying all Chinese in entire Toshima area, the sample size of Chinese business operators in Ikebukuro is relatively small. Qualitative research methods can be used to reduce the research difficulty and dig deeper into individual experiences. Meanwhile, compared with only studying a Chinese association, the study on Ikebukuro can be extended. After using judgmental sampling and snowball sampling method to define the research subjects, the information obtained has been able to reflect the problems. The interview recording has been sorted out and its verbatim draft contains more than 350,000 words.

In the follow-up data analysis stage, this paper uses qualitative research software MAXQDA to analyze the interview manuscripts based on the topic framework. According to the analytical framework and content of the interview, two main categories "formal support" and "informal support" are formed. The basic information of research objects is shown in the following table:

Case No.	Gender	Time of entry	Age (till 2019)	Business industry
1	Male	1983	56	Language school
2	Male	1987	56	Volunteer association
3	Female	1990	54	Real estate
4	Male	1991	61	Newspapers and publishing
5	Male	1994	50	Investment
6	Female	1997	53	Real estate
7	Female	2001	38	Restaurant
8	Female	2002	About 36	Massage shop
9	Male	2002	30-40	Restaurant
10	Male	2002	33	Hairdressing
11	Male	2004	42	Restaurant
12	Male	2005	46	Restaurant
13	Male	2006	43	Restaurant
14	Male	2006	34	E-commerce
15	Male	2007	26	Restaurant
16	Male	2008	34	Restaurant
17	Male	2008	24	Pharmaceutical Company
18	Male	2009	29	Real estate
19	Male	2009	34	Martial arts
20	Male	2010	29	Communications company
21	Female	2011	42	Beauty shop
22	Female	2012	44	Restaurant
23	Male	2012	40-45	Restaurant
24	Male	2013	32	Restaurant
25	Male	2015	37	Bed and Breakfast

4. Research findings

4.1 Initial support structure: the preference for informal networks

In order to highlight the diachronic evolution of support networks in the survival and development process of new immigrants in Ikebukuro, networks associated with immigration from the time the movement does not occur to the time it just occurs are defined as the initial structure of social support for new immigrants.

Materials show that the formation and implementation of new immigrants' intention to immigrate to Japan are closely related to the support provided by personal relationships in informal networks. In terms of the strength of support, many new immigrants who originally came to Japan for the purpose of studying stated that whether their family can afford the expenses was an important influencing factor when determining which country to study. According to interviewee Mr. W（Case 14）, "*At that time, the idea of studying in Japan was very popular in China. In my circle of friends, many of them wanted to study in the English-speaking countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada... I took tuition fees into consideration and eventually decided to go to Japan*." Mr. S（Case 18）, who came to Japan after graduating from high school, also mentioned that "*when graduating from high school, it was common for students to study abroad. The cost of living in Japan is not as much as that of Europe and the United States, and yet Japan is a relatively developed country. So I came to Japan to study*." In terms of the form of support, intimate interactions and guidance provided by personal relationships also become a dragging force to attract individuals to Japan. Mr. G（Case 20）, who cur-

rently runs a telecommunications corporation in Ikebukuro, said that he chose Japan because compared to other countries, his older sister was studying in Japan and "*here can have some care*". If siblings can support each other in a foreign country, "*parents will be happier too*." Mr. Z（Case 13）had a close relationship with Mr. B who was "*working in the same kitchen in a restaurant*" in China. After Mr. B quitted his job to run a restaurant in Japan, the considerable income he received gave Mr. Z the idea of opening a restaurant abroad. Mr. Z had a good salary in China at that time. He was a chef with "*a salary of 8,100 yuan a month and the head of a hundred people*", but he couldn't save money to open a shop. Because "*one part of the money was spent on feeding family, and another part was on socializing*", his savings were "*basically gone*." The reality of "*it was difficult to open a restaurant as a chef in China*" eventually prompted Mr. Z to ask for help from Mr. B, then he was invited to Ikebukuro with a skilled worker visa as a chef. It can be seen that financial assistance and spiritual comfort from relatives, the provision of information and support from fellow townsmen, etc., have profoundly shaped individual's mobility choices.

When cross-border movement just occurs, the limited sources of support induced by "unfamiliar place of life" make new immigrants either seek help from their contacts in the China, or turn to local Chinese associations when encountering difficulty. In the case of relying on personal relationships, the specific content of social support received by new immigrants is mostly manifested in the supply of basic survival resources and spiritual support. When Mr. Y（Case 24）and Mr. S（Case 18）first came to Japan, they found

houses both through their personal networks. Ms. W（Case 21）also gradually adapted to foreign life through interactions with friends:

When I first came to Japan, I found a Chinese dormitory... It was introduced by a friend...I have known this brother（friend）for more than ten years, a former friend at work in China. （Case 24, restaurant operator）

When I first got here, I thought I was lucky. I was studying in a language school in Fukuoka, I had a fellow townsman from Dalian there, and the house was already rented. I just need to move in and share the fees.（Case 18, real estate operator）

When I first came, I was greeted by friends. It wasn' t that I was dragging luggage alone or that I was unfamiliar with people. Because there are friends here, it' s okay just to slow down and adapt gradually.（Case 21, beauty shop operator）

At the same time, the Chinese associations, which acts as a glue between the individual and the mainstream society, is also an optional source of support, especially when new immigrants have no personal relationships to rely on. Chinese associations, such as fellow townsmen associations and alumni associations, possess a "middle" position between the public and the government, functioning as a "buffer zone" for new immigrants to adapt to Japanese society. Compared with personal relationships, Chinese associations that can communicate with the mainstream society are more able to give new immigrants guidance of knowing relevant policies. When new immigrants who have just left their home country face adjustment difficulties due to language barriers and insufficient understanding, Chinese associations can provide services and organize activities to help new immigrants better connect with the local society.

When I first came to Japan, I wanted to entrust someone to help, so I found the Chinese Volunteer Association in Japan. At that time, my wife was pregnant, I needed an interpreter to help us do the check-up. I needed an interpreter next to me when we had the baby.（Case 25, B&B operator）

I didn' t know the law and regulations of Japan at the beginning, but later I heard Lawyer X say something about Japan...We are fellow townsmen...The association often want to do something beneficial, like holding real estate lectures. Lawyer X gave a lecture on law.（Case 6, real estate operator）

However, only a few interviewees include Chinese associations as a source of informal support. Most interviewees still obtained support through personal relationships when they first arrived in Japan. It can also be seen that the strong ties such as kinship and geo-relations used by early overseas Chinese are reflected in new immigrants' structure of social support in the early stage of integration. However, compared with early overseas Chinese who are still struggling to survive at this stage, the degree of formalization of new immigrants' support structure has increased significantly. At this time, formal support of Japanese society is exerting influence on immigrants' lives thoroughly from top to bottom through intermediate associations such as municipalities and communities, and then expands horizontally to various aspects of life that need to be guaranteed, such as education and medical care.

In daily life, Japan' s formal support for for-

eigners is manifested in language assistance and social welfare. Interviews show that new immigrants with relatively weak Japanese language skills and their children will receive free Japanese classes provided by local governments. Government will also provide sufficient and necessary social security such as education, medical care and disaster prevention, so that new immigrants who have obtained a long-term residence permit can enjoy the same kinds of support as Japanese nationals.

I have never attended a formal Japanese language school, just two classes a week in university. The voluntary classes provided by government is one class a week. （Case 4, newspaper and publishing practitioner）

When we first came here, because the child was not good at Japanese, there were two Chinese speakers in our community accompanying him to school, two hours a day. That is, I will walk you to school for two hours today, and another two hours tomorrow. If you have anything to communicate with the teacher,（they will）at least accompany you for about two months to three months. There is also a specialized school in each community for you to learn Japanese. For example, at nine o' clock every day, I can give you one hour of tuition, and I will give you Japanese tutoring for free. （Case 11, restaurant operator）

If your kids don' t go to private school, all the way to high school, it won' t cost you a cent. One is education, the other is medical treatment... When the child is ill, he goes to the hospital for examination. After the examination, the hospital prescribes medicine for him, and we do not spend any money... I pay only 30% when I go to the hospital... So everyone is equal. （Case 9, restaurant operator）

In summary, from the time when cross-border movement does not occur to the time it just occurs, new immigrants rely more on informal support to survive the life transition from home country to host country. The anxiety of "unfamiliarity" aroused by foreign environment is relieved by the intimacy and warmth generated from personal relationships and Chinese associations. Although during this period formal support from Japanese government has begun to radiate its influence, the impact on individuals has not yet been fully revealed because language learning takes time and welfare benefits people in certain situations. The initial support structure of new immigrants presents the characteristics of mainly relying on personal relationships, supplemented by Chinese associations and formal support.

4.2 Source expansion and strength reconstruction: the stabilization of diversified support structure

As the time of studying or working increases, new immigrants gradually build new personal relationships at schools, companies and other places. These relationships, such as academic relationship and business relationship, are formed and becoming more stable due to frequent interactions in a specific space, and then constitute new sources of informal support network for new immigrants when needed. Different from the initial support structure in which private relations are still confined to Chinese circles and are mostly used to solve basic survival problems, during this period the ethnic composition of relationships tends to be diversified, and the informal support provided corresponds to the higher development needs of new immigrants. In economic life, this is mainly mani-

fested in providing funds and information during the start-up and operation of business.

Our Japanese friend, he lent me the money... To register a company, you must have a deposit of 10 million Japanese yen. At that time, you transferred in and you could withdraw after the company being registered. It means that I didn't really borrow the money. The contractor just lent it to us for registration.（Case 4, newspaper and publishing practitioner）

Friends in Japan are basically classmates. That is, classmates in the language school, many students were from China. There were Chinese, Vietnamese, and American... (Starting up a company) Because I had some contacts in Japan, like classmates.（Case 5, investment company operator）

Mr. Z opens an izakaya next to me...Although they are all restaurants, the way they purchase goods is completely different...Now the information resource is your own wealth. In fact, you can really get other people's information at that time. Like me and Mr. Z, we exchange information.（Case 9, restaurant operator）

As the network of personal relationships expands, the role Chinese associations play in informal support network of new immigrants is becoming weaker and weaker. Studies have demonstrated that in Japan, new immigrants' sense of organizational identity towards Chinese associations is weakening (Huiling Zhu, 2003). Ikebukuro Chinese operators studied in this paper show similar characteristics. Only 7 of the 25 interviewees said they would regularly participate in Chinese association activities to meet their compatriots and relax. Busywork and lack of leisure time are the objective reasons why most interviewees do not participate.

I don't have time to attend（townsmen associations）. Because I run a store, the catering industry is like this, and there is little time for rest.（Case 7, restaurant operator）

I don't think the（townsmen association）is formal... and I think life in Japan is quite stressful...the monthly living expenses are fixed, so you can't stop. When you are at a Tokyo subway station, you will feel that everyone is trotting and can't rest.（Case 18, real estate operator）

I know some people in the（townsmen association）, but I may not participate in their activities. All I can see the post in their Moments is eating, singing, chatting and so on. The pace of life in Japan is very fast, and people who have that time are rare.（Case 24, restaurant operator）

In terms of subjective willingness, many interviewees hold the view that Chinese associations have limited functions. Mr. D（Case 10）believes that participating in Chinese associations is not a necessary way to expand personal networks. Individuals will only "*do that kind of thing if they are too lonely*". If "*they have buddies to play with*" and "*have their own social circle*", then "*there is no need to expand the network*". From a practical point of view, Mr. Y（Case 24）points out that joining an organization cannot effectively alleviate conflicts of interest caused by competition when the business industry is homogeneous. Because "*the business association to some extent is a community of interests. If there are common interests, everyone will participate*". If it "*does not provide great benefits for others*", it is difficult to gain recognition. Mr. Z（Case 2）, who runs a Chinese association and thus knows behind-the-scenes stories, directly states that there are power games behind some associations and such associations are

losing touch with real life. "*How to found associations, there are two ways, at least two. One is that associations have a certain background, that is, the official political background. The other is purely non-governmental... These with official backgrounds, they want to make profits. These associations have a common problem...is that they are not grounded.*"

Moreover, in this period, new immigrants have been able to improve their Japanese through independent learning or official assistance. They do not necessarily need Chinese associations as an intermediary to communicate with the mainstream society. In fact, under the circumstances that Japanese society has relatively sufficient formal support to offer foreigners, new Chinese immigrants can easily obtain various types of assistance from official sources. Many interviewees say that as long as they comply with relevant regulations and meet the qualification standards, they are indiscriminately treated in the process of obtaining formal support.

It's easy for us to do things in Japan now. It's really simple. Without complication. It's just, you reach its standard, and the standard is not particularly high, you can usually reach it. You only need to apply, all are very simple, including a series of procedures such as business fire protection and so on.（Case 9, restaurant operator）

Japan is relatively equal in this respect. It won't be different if you are a foreigner or whatever, it's all the same, as long as you have enough materials. Japanese institutions and public utilities treat you equally.（Case 11, restaurant operator）

Specifically in Tokyo, where Ikebukuro is

located, the local government has been actively pursuing a policy of "multicultural co-existence" in recent years, aiming to enable all foreigners display their talents in a safe and comfortable environment. As a result, when encountering problems, interviewees either directly seek help from local administrative department or rely on their expanding personal relationships to solve difficulties, and the role of Chinese associations in support network has declined.

If we encounter any difficulties, we usually discuss with friends if the problem can be solved by ourselves... After settling down, we will turn to local government, neighbors, district government, or the embassy if we need help. It can be said that you can get things done smoothly here, otherwise there would not be such many Chinese, more and more. When I came here, there was only 200,000 Chinese, and now it's millions. So this number, this change indicates that the overall environment and the institutional environment here are relatively good.（Case 4, newspaper and publishing practitioner）

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the sources of social support available to new immigrants have expanded in total amount, and the strength of different sources in informal support network has been reconstructed. Government, community and personal relationships are preferred choices for new immigrants to obtain social support. The strength of Chinese associations in support network is weakening. The multi-level support system revealed in initial support structure has now stabilized. Compared with the support structure of early overseas Chinese who highly relied on informal networks,

multi-level support system marks the formation of new immigrants' survival and development strategy which is distinguished from traditional integration methods.

4.3 Diversified support structure and the shaping of "Ikebukuro Chinatown"

Sociologist Claude S. Fischer（1976）pointed out that the continuous improvement of social welfare and other institutional systems in the modernization process will inevitably shift support structure from being "overly dependent on interpersonal networks to a more diverse support system that includes formal support"（Xiaoguang Fan, 2012: 95）. The diversified support structure of new immigrants in Japan fits the prediction of this shift, and the formation of "Ikebukuro Chinatown" is connected to this shift.

The over-reliance of early overseas Chinese on informal support networks gives birth to traditional Chinatown. Kinship and geo-relations are the ties that hold traditional Chinatown together from inside. With these social relationships, resources for early overseas Chinese to survive and develop are generated and then distributed through Chinese associations such as townsmen associations（Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2004）. Considering the possible social exclusion one may face in a foreign land, the certainty that traditional Chinatown can provide social support makes early overseas Chinese willingly carry out all activities in this specific area. As the internal cohesion of traditional Chinatown gets stronger over time, the community also gradually isolates itself from mainstream society.（Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2004）.

When all citizens including immigrants can equally access resources from social institutions, obtaining social support only from informal networks has become a history. Diversified support structure then affects the integration choice of new Chinese immigrants. "Ikebukuro Chinatown" is the example of new immigrant Chinese community shaped by this choice.

Unlike the informal network that brings early overseas Chinese together from a scattered state to a specific place（traditional Chinatown）, geographic location is the objective yet crucial reason why new immigrants come to Ikebukuro. Yamashita（2003）pointed out that in Ikebukuro, one could find a concentration of Japanese schools, rent house at low prices, and be given many job opportunities. The interviews correspondingly shows that Ikebukuro' s prosperity and convenient transportation are the main factors that attract interviewees.

There are 23 districts in Tokyo. Then there are 6 core areas among these 23 districts, known as the most prosperous places. Shinjuku being the first, and then there are Shibuya, Ikebukuro, Ginza, Ueno, and the sixth is Roppongi. These are the most prosperous areas in Tokyo. So, there is a phrase called "the heart of Tokyo" , right? In terms of "the heart of Tokyo" , there are six in Tokyo, Japan. Therefore, Ikebukuro is one of the most prosperous places in Japan.（Case 19, martial arts hall operator）

Later, I chose Toshima（Ikebukuro）because of the publication and convenient transportation.（Case 4, newspaper and publishing practitioner）

Ikebukuro is a nice place...After all, a million people come to take transportation here every day.（Case 9, restaurant operator）

But Ikebukuro' s geographical advantage

only gives new immigrants the opportunity to gather together in a specific place. What enables this gathering to maintain for a long time is new immigrants' same need for informal support network, just like early overseas Chinese. After initial gathering, the growing Chinese circle in Ikebukuro, which can provide business opportunities and mutual assistance among compatriots, makes new immigrants who have come here willing to stay, and attracts more to come.

It is relatively cheap to rent office buildings in Ikebukuro. Secondly, it has convenient transportation and is close to everywhere. Meanwhile there are many Chinese shops nearby, so there are more opportunities to do business with Chinese.（Case 17, operator of a pharmaceutical company）

I have been in Ikebukuro since I was in Japan. I never left Ikebukuro... The school I once studied in is in Ikebukuro, so I am familiar with the surroundings. Besides, there are many Chinese here, and it is convenient to do what I want, so why should I leave... After all, here you can eat, drink and have fun. There are more and more Chinese shops, so the Chinese are more than willing to gather here.（Case 10, operator of hairdressing shop）

（In Ikebukuro）There are many Chinese here, so they help each other and sometimes take care mutually. After all, we are a small group in a foreign country. There is no union formed, but a small group will emerge spontaneously. It is said that "relatives faraway are not as helpful as neighbors nearby", so there are many friends here.（Case 11, restaurant operator）

I came to Japan in 1991 and moved to Ikebukuro in 2005. 15 years have passed by now. I witness the changes at the North Exit of Ikebukuro. In the past, there were very few Chinese shops, but now, it is said that the number has reached 600. We have the custom industry, the cultural industry, instructions on driving license tests in Chinese, as well as kindergartens, Chinese schools, and banks, almost all trades and professions.（Case 4, newspaper and publishing practitioner）

It can be seen that, similar to the traditional Chinatown, the formation of "Ikebukuro Chinatown" also includes the gradual increase of immigrant population in a specific place. However, the gathering of new immigrants in Ikebukuro has not been transformed into a "Chinatown-like" community which is isolated from the outside world. New immigrants' low degree of recognition and participation in Chinese associations is the influencing factor. In traditional Chinatown, Chinese associations were the main sources from which early overseas Chinese can obtain resources for survival and development. The close relationship between individuals and associations later became a kind of community structure, restricting and fixing members in this place（Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2004）. However, to new immigrants in Ikebukuro whose personal relationships are not limited to Chinese circle and are assisted by the system, the sources of support they can choose are more diverse, and Chinese associations are not a must. In 2008, there was a Chinese Association Committee in Ikebukuro that aimed to establish "Tokyo Chinatown". Members of this association tried to unite Chinese operators in Ikebukuro and promote the collaboration among new overseas Chinese（Yamashita Kiyomi, 2011）. Although this attempt eventually ended in failure under the influence of many factors, the failure did

not affect the survival and development of new immigrants in foreign societies because of the diversified support structure.

Thus, in physical form, the location advantage of Ikebukuro and the attraction of Chinese circle make new immigrants gather together geographically. In terms of internal cohesion, Ikebukuro Chinatown is relatively loose compared to traditional Chinatown. This is in part because to new immigrants, the Chinese circle in Ikebukuro is only one of the ways in which they extend personal networks, and the reduced reliance on Chinese associations also indicates the fade of a way to be bonded. Hence like other new immigrant Chinese communities that have been discovered elsewhere, Ikebukuro Chinatown has a gathering of Chinese but no clear community boundaries, and the ethnic composition is diverse. Although it has merged into the mainstream society, it is known as "New Chinatown" publicly.

(Ikebukuro) In fact, it is already a Chinatown, subconsciously. Everything you need is here, right? Even the Chinese snacks. (Case 14, E-commerce operator)

The North Exit of Ikebukuro is the gathering place for Chinese. Snacks, restaurants, and entertainment facilities such as karaoke are almost all concentrated in this area. The North Exit is already an unspoken Chinese gathering place. (Case 18, real estate operator)

Ikebukuro is pretty good, not only Chinese, but also foreigners come here more often... The gathering of Chinese contributes to its prosperity. Ikebukuro is like Kowloon...Even if the Chinatown is not officially established, everyone assumes that this is the place where Chinese live. (Case 24, restaurant operator)

5. Conclusion and discussion

Using the "structure of social support" as a theoretical framework, this paper analyzes the formation of a new immigrant Chinese community in Ikebukuro, which is a follow-up attempt based on existing research. First of all, there are not many cultural facilities in Ikebukuro that maintain ethnic life. So the "cultural community" theory (Huping Ling, 2007) and the "cultural symbolic community" theory (Huijing Zhang, 2017), which both emphasize the reason why new immigrants gather together is because of their needs for cultural identity, are not applicable to the Ikebukuro case. Second, theories focusing on social capital, like "ethnic capital" (Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2004) and "nodes and social capital interaction" (Huijing Zhang, 2016), just exactly describe the diverse ways in which new immigrants extend their personal networks. Besides, since existing studies all discussed foreign social environment in research backgrounds, the impacts of institutional environment on the survival and development of new immigrants do exists. Based on this, after clarifying the formal support received by new and early overseas Chinese in Japan is indeed different, this article incorporates formal support as a constituent element of the analytical framework, and discusses the formation mechanism of Ikebukuro Chinatown.

The results show that the "structure of social support" has an explanatory power on Ikebukuro case. As a form of new immigrants' integration under the background of globalization, "Ikebukuro Chinatown" reveals the possible impact of diversified support structure on the formation and development of new immigrant Chinese communities. In

consideration of social and economic factors, such as cheap rent prices and convenient transportation, the first Chinese immigrants to Ikebukuro gathered together in this geographically advantageous land. The Chinese circle formed later became the dragging force to attract more new immigrants to Ikebukuro. The number of new Chinese immigrants gathered here was thus increasing over time. From the perspective of demography, Ikebukuro already has the conditions for forming a new immigrant Chinese community in terms of reginal population. New immigrants' reliance on informal support network such as kinship and geo-relations, just like early overseas Chinese, become the possible means to maintain this form of gathering. But unlike early overseas Chinese who have suffered much social exclusion and have to "get together for warmth", new immigrants in Ikebukuro now live in a more diverse and equal social environment. New immigrants can easily obtain various kinds of formal support from the ever-improving official system. At the same time, their personal relationships extend beyond the boundaries of ethnicity and community. Compared with early overseas Chinese who were embedded in traditional Chinatown through associations, the diversified support structure enables new immigrants no longer treat Chinese associations as a necessary source to obtain resources for survival and development. The unitary support structure that only relies on informal networks has become history. Therefore, in the context of diversified support structure, the integration of new immigrants in Ikebukuro is agglomerated in physical space, but loose in internal cohesion. A new immigrant Chinese community-" Ikebukuro Chinatown" -finally came into being. The de-

territorial nature of Ikebukuro Chinatown is consistent with existing studies on the openness of new immigrant Chinese communities.

Meanwhile, based on empirical materials, this article explores and discovers the diachronic changes in the support structure of Ikebukuro' s new immigrants, responding to and supplementing relevant discussions in existing studies. First of all, in terms of formal support, some scholars pointed out that political regulations and cultural policies of a host country had significantly affected how new overseas Chinese adapted to mainstream society（Bing Wang & Xiao Liang, 2003）. In this paper, as the openness of Japanese institutional environment to immigrants is increasing, it is easier for new immigrants to obtain resources for survival and development from social institutions. For example, new immigrants can break through language barriers and accelerate their adaptation to local life with the help of Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which provides free Japanese learning classes. Secondly, in terms of informal support, new immigrants' frequent use of non-traditional personal relationships in the later stages of their survival and development, such as academic and professional relationships, are consistent with existing studies that new immigrants have higher human and social capital（Min Zhou & Mingang Lin, 2004; Huijing Zhang, 2016）. However, the characteristic of using Chinese associations as an important intermediary for extending networks（Huijing Zhang, 2016）is not reflected in the interpersonal interactions of Chinese operators in Ikebukuro. On the contrary, interviewees' recognition and participation in Chinese associations is weakening（Huiling Zhu, 2003）. This may because this article restricts the research object to busi-

ness operators, so samples of other occupational identity need to be included for further discussion.

In general, the "structure of social support" analytical framework proposed by this paper, enriches both the perspective to analyze formation of new immigrant Chinese community, and the application of the "social support" concept in immigration studies. Meanwhile, the field survey conducted by this paper in Ikebukuro, Tokyo, Japan, also provided first-hand materials for current domestic studies on Chinese immigrants in Japan. Whether this analytical framework can be applied generally needs follow-up studies to correct and discuss.

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