

Interactions between Four Overseas Chinese Associations and the Cultural Tourism Industry in Yokohama Chinatown

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This paper examines the impact of cultural tourism toward four overseas Chinese association in Yokohama Chinatown in Japan and how they react to the growing industry. The research is based on the author's self-financed fieldwork done in 2011 and 2012, including observation studies and in-depth interviews with four overseas Chinese associations. As the biggest Chinatown in Japan, Yokohama Chinatown is different from any Chinatown in the world. In 1995, the Chinatown even attracted more tourists than the Tokyo Disneyland with a total number of 18 million tourists. Yokohama Chinatown further increased its accessibility with the opening of Minatomirai line in 2004. As of my fieldwork done in 2011, the Chinatown has 143 Chinese restaurants, 48 shops selling Chinese food and sundries, eight Chinese fortune teller's stores, five hotels and more than 80 other stores that serve different needs of tourists. However, current research focus solely on how business in Yokohama Chinatown, especially in the F&B industry. Literature on how overseas Chinese associations experienced the transformation of Chinatown from a local ethnic community to a well-known sightseeing spot and how these associations help boost the tourism industry in Japan have not been comprehensively discussed in existing literature. The paper argues that overseas Chinese associations have an important role in the tourism industry in Yokohama Chinatown by its members in promoting Chinese culture in the Chinatown on one hand, and they organized a variety of festivals annually not only to maintain the traditional Chinese culture among ethnic Chinese living in Japan but providing a greater entertainment for tourists on the other hand. This project utilized oral and social historical approaches and the use of oral interviews and observation, as well as analysis on materials collected from social media.