

## Why Do So Many Tourists Visit Shin-Okubo?: An Answer Based on Quantitative Methodology

なぜ多くの観光客が新大久保を訪れるようになったのか：定量分析  
の結果を用いて

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this essay is to examine the following questions by using economics tools: “Why has Shin-Okubo Koreatown suddenly become bright?” and “Why are so many tourists visiting Shin-Okubo?” Previously the Shin-Okubo Koreatown had been Pang-Pang-Ya (パンパン宿, a red-light district) for a long time. However, now, three million young men and women flock to Koreatown, a significant tourist hotspot all year round. From Okubo Street to Shokuan Street, stylish shops like “Three Sisters,” supermarkets like “Seoul Market,” and Korean restaurants like “Memory of Kangtong” line the small back alleys, “full of lively crowds”. In a word, the town became “high-spirited and safe,” in sharp contrast to the past. Why is the Shin-Okubo Koreatown shining brightly? Seeking the answer, I shall investigate this riddle, which has not been taken up previously, through the use of an economics tool.

**Keywords:** Shin-Okubo Koreatown, Steven D. Levitt, economic tool, tourism economic studies

**要旨:** 本稿は、経済学の「道具」を用いて、在日コリアンに関する一つの疑問、「なぜ新大久保コリアンタウンは急に明るくなってきたのか」への検討を試みたものである。「新大久保コリアンタウン」においては、忌まわしい「タブー」——パンパン宿に始まる街娼街の歴史がある。ところが、今は、そういったかつての姿はもう微塵も見られなくなっている。現在、東京新名物の「新大久保コリアンタウン」には、年間 300 万人もの若い男女がガイドブックを片手に JR 新大久保駅からぞろぞろと集団で押し寄せている。一言でいえば、「明るくなった」のである。なぜなのか。そこで、本稿では、これまで取り上げられてこなかった、この「なぜ新大久保コリアンタウンは明るく変わったのか」を、経済学のツールを用いて追究していく。

**キーワード:** 新大久保コリアンタウン、スティーヴ・D・レヴィット、経済学の道具、観光経済学

### Preface

The purpose of this essay is to examine the following questions by using economics tools: “Why has Shin-Okubo Koreatown suddenly become bright?” and “Why are so many tourists visiting Shin-Okubo?”

The Koreatown district has recently been crowded with young people. However, an

unpleasant secret is hidden in the town; previously the zone had been Pang-Pang-Ya (パンパン宿, a red-light district) for a long time.

In the area formerly known as “the wrong side of Kabukicho,” Pang-Pang-Ya had been in the business of entertaining U.S. soldiers from early morning until late at night, employing older foreign sisters from the Japanese “love hotels” who had been run out of Shinjuku

2-chome (丁目) by anti-prostitution laws enacted in 1957. In other words, the origins of this Koreatown had been a “miserable” place (Figure 1-1).<sup>(1)</sup>

These former residents are no longer seen today. Now, three million young men and women flock to Koreatown, a significant tourist hotspot all year round.

From Okubo Street to Shokuan Street, stylish shops like “Three Sisters,” supermarkets like “Seoul Market,” and Korean restaurants like “Memory of Kangtong” line the small back alleys, “full of lively crowds” (Figure 1-2, Figure 1-3). In a word, the town became “high-spirited and safe,” in sharp contrast to the past.<sup>(2)</sup>

### Why? Why is the Shin-Okubo Koreatown shining brightly?

Seeking the answer, I shall investigate this riddle, which has not been taken up previously, through the use of an economics tool.<sup>(3)</sup> This is the first part of the essay. The answer to this question may also contribute to tourism economic studies.<sup>(4)</sup>

Recently, Japan has been concentrating her considerable resources on the tourism industry. For example, the Japanese government proposed the ambitious goal of attracting 40 million foreign visitors in 2020, double the number (19.7 million) in 2015, foreseeing inbound sightseeing as a strong driving force to bolster the Japanese economy.<sup>(5)</sup>

Consequently, Shin-Okubo Koreatown became one of the most popular spots for foreign tourists,<sup>(6)</sup> which can be observed as a change in the supply side of the area, useful for the economic study of tourism.

This essay is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 briefly introduces Shin-Okubo Koreatown. Chapter 2 refers to the changes in the area led by many newcomers who later gathered in the town. In Chapter 3, I will examine the reason for the change using the results of the quantitative analysis. Finally, based on the examination in these chapters, I shall generalize a discussion.



Source) “Gangs of Kabukicho”  
(<http://www.pinterest.jp/pin813814595143884335>  
[Access date: June 7, 2019]).

Note) near bicycle parking lot of Shin-Okubo Station.

Figure 1-2: present



Source)  
<https://xwin2.typepad.jp/xwin2weblog201105weekendhar/ryu.htm>【Access date: June 13, 2019】.

Note) near bicycle parking lot of Shin-Okubo Station.

Figure 1-3: near bicycle parking lot of Shin-Okubo Station



Source) photographs taken by the author【Filming date: Sep 4, 2019】.  
 Note) near bicycle parking lot of Shin-Okubo Station.

## 1. Once upon a time: Shin-Okubo Koreatown's past

Japan achieved high economic growth after the war through Korean special procurements. As a result, her former production facilities had almost recovered by 1952 when the occupation by allied powers ended. At that time, Kabukicho, Japan's biggest red-light district, became busy. In the meanwhile, Shokuan Street, on the other side of Kabukicho, became the area where people who worked in Kabukicho settled, such as the “Miss Hippopotamus” (prostitutes) and the *yakuzas* who exploited them.

Meanwhile, in the area previously known as “the other side of Kabukicho,” the Pang-Pang-Ya, older foreign sisters were employed in the business of entertaining the U.S. soldiers from early morning until late at night, along with those who fled the Japanese love hotels when they were run out of Shinjuku 2-chome by anti-prostitution laws enacted in 1957. The chaotic narrow alleyway was lined with more than ten large-scale simple lodgings (commonly called *doya*, ドヤ), such as the Yamanote Rest House, the Yodobashi building, Okubo house, and Otome So, whose main tenants were day laborers, poor cheap restaurants, and old-fashioned public baths.

The area was the typical district where aging Japanese streetwalkers (also called *tachinbo*, 立ちんぼ) stood quietly under the dusky light at night. Therefore, the original atmosphere of what today is Shin-Okubo Koreatown was a place stylish people avoided.<sup>(7)</sup> In short, the area was originally such a wretched place.

By contrast, various other nationalities' neighborhoods, like the Korean area, the Malaysian area, the Indonesian area, the Thai area, and the Burmese area, existed in the district.<sup>(8)</sup> Unlike the present, in those days, the Korean area was one more power on the "power map" of the town. Actually, the influences controlling the Okubo were Chinese or Thai, called "Little Bangkok."<sup>(9)</sup> Korean restaurants were unappealing places that never seemed to be open.<sup>(10)</sup> Their image was far from that of the present Shin-Okubo Koreatown.

## 2. Transformation

As mentioned, initially the Korean area of the district was only one of many, but Koreans expanded their sphere of influence quite suddenly.<sup>(11)</sup> Korea had lifted its restrictions on foreign travel, and studying abroad in Japan was encouraged.

On the other hand, with the boom of the Japanese economy, Koreans' visits to Japan as migrant workers increased rapidly along various routes; the Shin-Okubo zone was one Koreans frequented as newcomers, drawn by *kimchi* (김치, information from the mother country).<sup>(12)</sup> And after that, the newcomers who flocked in began to extend their influence in the area (**Figure 2**). The newcomers refurbished Korean restaurants<sup>(13)</sup> targeting Japanese visitors in sequence,<sup>(14)</sup> and aiming for business opportunities<sup>(15)</sup> (**Tables 1 and 2**).

As a result, the area quickly began to be identified as a Koreatown.<sup>(16)</sup> For instance, the proportion of Korean restaurants eventually exceeded 52.7% of the total; Taiwanese, Chinese, Thai, and Myanmar restaurants accounted for 8.1% each in 1998, meaning that the trend toward becoming Koreatown had already progressed considerably by 1998.<sup>(17)</sup>

Figure 2 Power Distribution Map of Each Country



Source) Yamatani Tetuo, *ura kabukicho maria yokochoyo* (Back Kabukicho Maria Yokocho), GENDAI SHOKAN, 2013 (in Japanese).

Note) 韓国系=Koreatown, 中国・台湾=Chinatown.



Table 1 the ratio of Japanese customers (unit: %)

less than 50%	35.6
more than 50%	64.4

Source) Kyojikon, *sekai no syoku ga wa wo tunagu* (The World Foods Connects a Circle), Kyojikon, 2000, p. 30.

Table 2 the number of openings (Korean restaurant)

year	opening
1974	1
1975	1
1976	0
1977	0
1978	0
1979	0
1980	0
1981	1
1982	0
1983	0
1984	1
1985	0
1986	1
1987	1
1988	2
1989	0
1990	1
1991	3
1992	5
1993	3
1994	9
1995	0
1996	10
1997	16
1998	15

Source) Kyojikon, *sekai no syoku ga wa wo tunagu* (The World Foods Connects a Circle), Kyojikon, 2000, p. 30.

Table 3 the frequency of factors from the perspective of magazine titles.

year	food	brothel	JR	K-pop	others	sum
1988	1	0	0	0	2	3
1990	1	7	0	0	6	14
1991	1	3	0	0	3	7
1992	0	3	0	0	1	4
1993	1	3	0	0	3	7
1994	0	1	0	0	3	4
1995	0	3	0	0	1	4
1996	2	0	0	0	4	6
1997	2	0	0	0	4	6
1998	2	3	0	0	3	8
1999	2	5	0	0	2	9
2000	3	3	0	0	4	10
2001	3	4	36	0	8	51
2002	5	6	1	0	10	22
2003	4	8	0	0	5	17
2004	5	10	1	0	3	19
2005	8	2	0	1	16	27
2006	5	3	2	0	10	20
2007	6	3	11	0	9	29
2008	9	2	0	0	11	22
2009	9	4	1	0	13	27
2010	9	2	0	5	11	27
2011	15	4	0	14	24	57
sum	93	79	52	20	156	400

Source) Kang Bogyong, *shinokubo ni okeru toshi kankochi no keisei* (The Process of Development on Korean town area in Shin-Okubo as an Urban Tourist Destination), *Proceedings of JITR annual conference*, December, 2011, p. 150 (in Japanese).

Table 4 the frequency of "Korean food" and "others" in magazine titles

year	Korean food	others	sum
1988	0	1	1
1990	0	1	1
1991	0	1	1
1992	0	0	0
1993	0	1	1
1994	0	0	0
1995	0	0	0
1996	1	1	2
1997	1	1	2
1998	1	1	2
1999	1	1	2
2000	3	0	3
2001	2	1	3
2002	3	2	5
2003	4	0	4
2004	4	1	5
2005	5	3	8
2006	4	1	5
2007	4	2	6
2008	6	3	9
2009	7	2	9
2010	9	0	9
2011	15	0	15
sum	70	23	93

Source) Kang Bogyong, *shinokubo ni okeru toshi kankochi no keisei* (The Process of Development on Korean town area in Shin-Okubo as an Urban Tourist Destination), *Proceedings of JITR annual conference*, December, 2011, p. 150 (in Japanese).

Table 5. Abolished Facility  
Closed hotels (Okubo)

date of receiving license	date of abolishment	store name	house number	applicant	applicant's address	present
1986	1999	Takasawa	Okubo, 1 17 9		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1 Chome	present
1989	2001	Lion Hotel	Okubo, 1 17 9	Kim	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1 Chome	
Closed hotels (Hyakunincho)						
date of receiving license	date of abolishment	store name	house number	applicant	applicant's address	present
1981	2003	Southern Cross	Hyakunincho, 1 11 26		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1 Chome	present
1984	1992	Shinjuku Frat Hotel	Hyakunincho, 2 15 1		Hyakunincho, 2 15 1	
1986	2009	Shinjuku Frat Hotel 2	Hyakunincho, 2 17 24		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1 Chome	
1982	2005	Hotel Kayo	Hyakunincho, 2 27 7		Tokyo, Shinagawa ku, Higashiyashe	
1992	1994	Shinjuku Frat Hotel	Hyakunincho, 2 15 1		Hando Reddo Sutei Rejidenai (apartment)	
2001	2008	Shinjuku Frat Hotel	Hyakunincho, 2 15 1		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1 Chome	
2005	2005	Hotel Kayo	Hyakunincho, 2 27 7		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1 Chome	
Closed simple lodgings (Okubo)						
date of receiving license	date of abolishment	store name	house number	applicant	applicant's address	present
1989	2008	Shinokubo Sauna	Okubo, 1 17 5	Na	-	present
2007	2009	Tomonobe	Okubo, 1 9 12	Kim	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Nishiyashe, 3 Chome	
2008	2009	Dzumi Guesthouse	Okubo, 1 12 18	Suzuki	-	
Closed Inn (Okubo)						
date of receiving license	date of abolishment	store name	house number	applicant	applicant's address	present
1964	1994	ALPS	Okubo, 1 16 30		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1 Chome	present
1969	2000	HOTEL RYAL	Okubo, 1 16 20		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1 Chome	
1970	1994	Hotel Kamikochi	Okubo, 1 16 31		Hopperando Shinokubo (nursery)	
1980	2009	Hotel Oto	Okubo, 1 15 11	Ham	Kokusaiyukokai (serviced office space for rent)	
1981	2002	Hotel Kado	Okubo, 1 12 14	Sakurai	Kollabo (Korean restaurant)	
1984	2006	Hotel Rocky	Okubo, 1 16 29	Inoguchi	Souhansanokukan (Korean restaurant)	
1985	2000	Hotel Matsushita	Okubo, 1 15 7		Haro (Korean restaurant)	
1985	2012	MRT Hotel ASIA	Okubo, 1 16 22		Chunchondakarabi (Korean restaurant)	
1984	2009	A	Okubo, 1 15 4		Yasunaka (Korean restaurant)	
1985	2005	HOTEL WAKO	Okubo, 1 15 5		SUbin (apartment)	
1985	2005	Hotel Kayyo	Okubo, 1 16 24		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1 Chome	
					Gurahahtsuhoshinjukuk3 (apartment)	
					Makkorinonogataai (Korean restaurant)	

date of receiving license	date of abolition	store name	house number	applicant	applicant's address	present
1. 1960	2003	Hotel Shikibu	Hyakunincho, 1-9-19	Hondo	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	house
2. 1962	2000	Hotel Itoi	Hyakunincho, 1-7-12	Kobayashi	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	house
3. 1965	2000	Ito2	Hyakunincho, 1-7-11	Kobayashi	Tokyo, Chiyoda ku, Kanda Surugadai, 1-Chome	house
4. 1966	2009	Nagasaki Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-1-10		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Shinjukukokusaihoteru (business hotel)
5. 1969	1986	Nagasaki Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-4-19		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Dai5shihitoko (apartment)
6. 1971	1997	Hotel Monbun	Hyakunincho, 1-8-17		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1-Chome	Gorouma hoteru (capsule hotel)
7. 1972	1996	Hotel Hataka	Hyakunincho, 1-16-6		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Norun Shinjuku (business hotel)
8. 1973	2005	Hotel Piane	Hyakunincho, 1-4-11		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Dorufin (love hotel)
9. 1974	2000	Inn Miyuki	Hyakunincho, 1-4-24		Tokyo, Bunkyo ku, Seigotsubo, 4-Chome	Genda Shinokubo (apartment)
10. 1974	2008	Hotel Aisiro	Hyakunincho, 1-1-10		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Shinjukukinoshoteru
11. 1974	2000	Gyon2	Hyakunincho, 1-8-5	Seto	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Shinjuku, 3-Chome	Hotel Monbun
12. 1974	1992	Kanagawa2	Hyakunincho, 1-14-2	Kohara	Kanagawa prefecture, Kawasaki shi, Tama ku, Yurigaoka, 2-Chome	unknown
13. 1974	2005	Hotel Isumi	Hyakunincho, 1-22-18	Nemura	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	unknown
14. 1978	2005	Hotel Isumi	Hyakunincho, 1-22-18	Nemura	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	unknown
15. 1978	1992	Inn Oshi	Hyakunincho, 1-20-23	Kiyoshi	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Kabuchicho, 2-Chome	Innori Kengaku (musical instrument store)
16. 1979	2005	Hotel Hadome	Hyakunincho, 1-7-19	Ando	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Nishi-Shinjuku, 1-Chome	Business Hotel Matsui
17. 1979	2004	Inn Yoizuki	Hyakunincho, 1-11-7	Nakata	Tokyo, Suginami ku, Horinouchi, 1-Chome	Funawa Manshon (apartment)
18. 1980	2001	Hotel Chile	Hyakunincho, 1-3-7		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Sin Raizu Shinzuku (apartment)
19. 1981	2011	Hotel Monako	Hyakunincho, 1-4-25	Shimizu	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Hotel Monako
20. 1985	2003	Hotel Matsunoi	Hyakunincho, 1-7-19	Matsui	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Shinjuku, 4-Chome	business hotel Matsunoi
21. 1984	2001	Hotel Azusa	Hyakunincho, 1-8-15		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Hotel Monbun
22. 1985	2004	Hotel shima2	Hyakunincho, 1-6-28		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Hyakunincho 1-Chome Second ward house
23. 1985	2006	Hotel Foramu	Hyakunincho, 1-3-8	Oobaraist enterprise	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Foramu (love hotel)
24. 1986	2003	Ohara Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-2-3		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Best Hotel
25. 1986	1996	Hotel Matsura	Hyakunincho, 1-15-31	Yun	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Gumaston Okubo (apartment)
26. 1988	1994	Kehiwa2	Hyakunincho, 1-7-8		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	unknown
27. 1992	1996	Kanagawa Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-14-2	Kohara	Kanagawa prefecture, Kawasaki shi, Kawasaki ku, Oshima, 3-Chome	unknown
28. 2003	2003	Ohara Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-2-3		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Best Hotel
29. 2003	2004	Nise Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-2-3		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 1-Chome	Best Hotel
30. 2004	2004	Shinjuku K2 Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-2-3		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1-Chome	Best Hotel
31. 2004	2008	Best Hotel	Hyakunincho, 1-2-3		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Shinjuku, 7-Chome	Best Hotel
32. 2006	2010	Hotel Foramu	Hyakunincho, 1-3-8	Kato	Tokyo, Minato ku, Hamamatsuchio, 2-Chome	Foramu (love hotel)
33. 1963	1993	Shinjuku Inn	Hyakunincho, 3-4	Aida	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	unknown
34. 1967	1992	Inn Miyuki	Hyakunincho, 23-18	Handa	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	unknown
35. 1973	2009	Inn Ajiro	Hyakunincho, 21-10	Iina	Tokyo, Shinagawa ku, Togoshi, 1-Chome	Hotel Nakao Oyama
36. 1985	2009	Inn Shimatsu	Hyakunincho, 21-7		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	unknown
37. 1980	2006	Hausi	Hyakunincho, 11-7		Tokyo, Chiyoda ku, Kanda Surugadai, 2-Chome	Haru Hotel
38. 1981	2009	Hotel Sanwa	Hyakunincho, 11-8	Tomura	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	Rekurub (apartment)
39. 1983	2000	Shaton Hotel	Hyakunincho, 23-8		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Yotsuya, 4-Chome	Shaton Hotel
40. 1983	2008	Kawaguchi Inn	Hyakunincho, 23-18	Kinoshta	Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	unknown
41. 1985	2003	Hotel Sammarin	Hyakunincho, 17-3		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	Hotel Sammarin
42. 1985	2011	Inn Ishiguro	Hyakunincho, 15-10		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	Shinrodogotei (business hotel)
43. 1985	1997	Hotel Saffin	Hyakunincho, 21-13		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	unknown
44. 2000	2005	Shaton Hotel	Hyakunincho, 23-8		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	Shaton Hotel
45. 2006	2011	Hanabi Hotel	Hyakunincho, 11-7		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Hyakunincho, 2-Chome	Haru Hotel
46. 2008	2008	FRASER PLACE howff	Hyakunincho, 27-7		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Shinjuku, 4-Chome	Hando Reddo Suitei Rejiansu (apartment)
47. 2008	2009	FRASER PLACE howff	Hyakunincho, 27-7		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Shinjuku, 4-Chome	Hando Reddo Suitei Rejiansu (apartment)
48. 2008	2011	TOKYO PLAZA HOTEL	Hyakunincho, 15-1		Tokyo, Shinjuku ku, Okubo, 1-Chome	Gyomu Super Shinjukuokuboten (supermarket)
49. 2009	2009	FRASER PLACE howff	Hyakunincho, 27-7		Tokyo, Minato ku, Kaizans, 1-Chome	Hando Reddo Suitei Rejiansu (apartment)

Source) Yamamori Tetsuo, *ura fubukicho mara yokechogyo* (Back Kabanicho Maru Yokochogyo), GENDA SHOKAN, 2013, pp. 220-221. (in Japanese).

At that time, the newcomers began to promote a positive campaign to clean up the town, excluding the *tachinbo* from the neighborhood.<sup>(18)</sup> Their campaign would bring big changes to the area. First, the town changed into a bright City of Hope. The “gloomy shops” (i.e., Pang Pang Yas) disappeared and were replaced by “sound” shops.<sup>(19)</sup> Reviewing magazine articles mentioning “foods” and “brothels,” considered factors reflecting the changes to Shin-Okubo, the frequency of “brothel” steadily decreased after 2005 as visitors to Shin-Okubo began to increase.<sup>(20)</sup> Likewise, in terms of articles mentioning “foods,” the content in articles about Korean food gradually replaced those referring to “ethnic food” (**Tables 3 and 4**). Such tendencies extended to hotels and inns that were replacing the “brothels” in the area, and further transformations into “sound shops” included cafes, kimchi stores, Korean beauty shops, nursery schools, tourism offices, Korean restaurants, and apartments (**Table 5**). In short, the decline of the brothels, the acceleration of Koreatown, and recognition as a city sightseeing spot that met the needs of Japanese society seeking “Korean food” quickly brought renovation to the area, led by Koreans called newcomers.<sup>(21)</sup>

### 3. What did they bring?

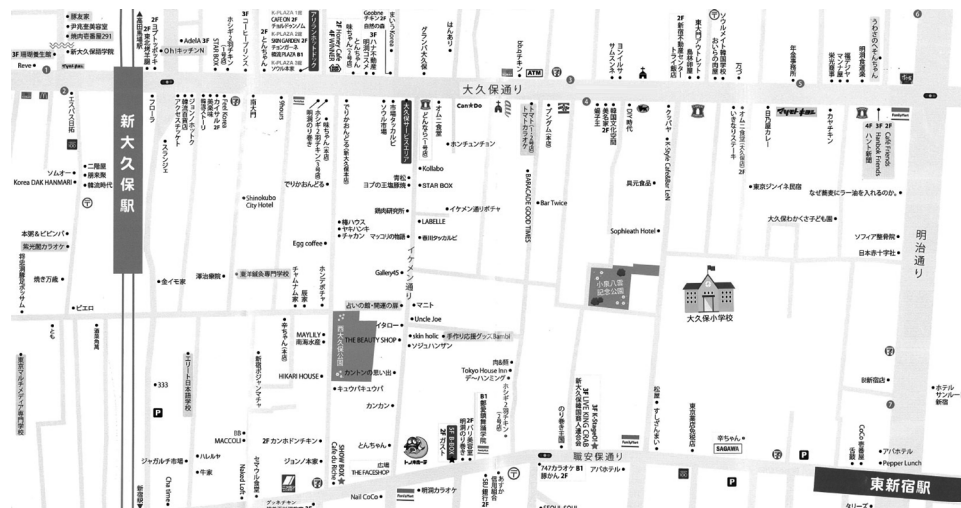
In Shin-Okubo, Korean restaurants flourished in the wake of the Korean boom known as the “Winter Song of Love” in the 2000s. This boom assured that its current identity as a Koreatown was at last fully established as such (**Figure 3**). Historical dramas like “Jewel in the Palace” dealing with Korean food raised interest in the cuisine, and the boom became the impetus for even more Korean restaurants in the area.

Following the success of Korean dramas, other Korean popular forms, such as K-pop and films, were introduced one after another in Japan. As a result, shops selling products featuring Korean celebrities started to appear in the area. Meanwhile, Ikemen Street linking Okubo Street to Job Placement Office Street, in particular, became the heart of Koreatown, recording over 30,000 visitors on holidays.<sup>(22)</sup> Additionally, the upsizing and differentiating of Korean stores began to stand out.<sup>(23)</sup>

In the midst of this, both the town’s clean-up campaign led by newcomers and the increase in Korean restaurants propelled a chain reaction; further expulsion of brothels ➡ drop in the crime rate ➡ increase of visitors ➡ further economic activation of the area (**Table 6**).

We can verify the aforementioned chain reaction through a quantitative analysis (**Table 7**). Results demonstrate that the increase in restaurant business in Okubo led to a

Figure 3 Okubo map



Source) <http://www.wowsokb.jp/map/> (Access date: June 15, 2019).

Table 6

year	the enrollment of Korean (新宿区)	the Korean population of Okubo and Hyakunincho	the numbers of restaurants and lodging facilities.	the number of Korean restaurants ①	the number of crimes committed ②	the daytime population of Shinjuku	the number of average daily passengers (Shinjuku station) ③	official land price Tokyo, Shinjuku, Okubo, 1-14-7 ④
1989	-	-	-	-	-	-	36,381	-
1990	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1991	-	-	-	17	-	-	-	-
1992	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	38,167
1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37,679
1994	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36,405
1995	-	-	-	-	-	30,952	-	35,893
1996	-	-	-	29	-	-	-	35,668
1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,423
1998	-	-	-	56	-	-	-	35,230
1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34,708
2000	-	-	-	-	-	31,983	-	34,155
2001	-	-	-	40	-	-	-	33,427
2002	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,454
2003	10,853	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,369
2004	10,957	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,630
2005	11,384	1,479	-	-	-	30,412	-	34,104
2006	12,678	-	352	-	-	-	-	34,791
2007	13,392	-	-	-	-	-	-	36,133
2008	14,201	-	-	-	127	-	-	35,165
2009	14,515	1,500	350	-	-	860	-	34,783
2010	14,332	1,484	-	-	148	904	24,283	37,344
2011	14,406	1,452	-	-	-	829	-	42,433
2012	12,567	1,373	321	-	-	784	-	41,545
2013	12,381	1,301	-	-	-	703	-	39,629
2014	11,377	-	336	206	-	718	-	39,814
2015	10,544	-	-	-	-	695	31,970	41,746
2016	10,142	-	312	-	-	570	-	43,929
2017	10,165	-	-	-	-	502	-	48,220
2018	9,998	-	-	500	-	496	-	490,000
2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	511,000
								552,000

Source) Statistics Department, Civic Affairs Division, Civic Affairs Department, Shinjuku ku ed., *shinjuku no tokei* (the Statistics of Shijuku ku), each fiscal year (in Japanese) ; Statistics Division, Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of General Affairs, *jūyōsho·kigyō tokei chosa hokoku* (Overview and History of Business/Corporate Statistical Surveys), each fiscal year (in Japanese) ; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, the *Search System of Standard and Reference Location*; Yamatani Tetuo, *ura kabukicho maria yokochoyo* (Back Kabukicho Maria Yokocho), GENDAI SHOKAN, 2013 (in Japanese); Inaba Keiko, *okubo tosi no chikara : tabunka kukan no dainimizumu* (the Power of the Okubo City - Dynamism of Multicultural Space), the gakugei press, 2008 (in Japanese); *Cluster Analysis in Shin-Okubo Koreatown*.

decrease in crime rate (minus an adjustment R-squared 0.9365, level of significance 10%). The drop in crimes produced an increase in “average passengers per day at Shin-Okubo Station,” indicating the number of visitors (minus 0.6358, 1%). Official land prices corresponding to the activity index of the area rose as visitors increased (plus 0.6828, 5%).

Table 7 quantitative analytical result (python)

	①⇔②	②⇔③	③⇔④
	-	-	+
adjusted R-square	0.9365	0.6358	0.6828
significance level	10%	1%	5%

Note) result strengthened by MI (Multiple Imputation).

Thus, the results show that the newcomers’ campaign led wonderfully to the drop in crime rate, the increase of visitors, and economic reactivation of the area. In conclusion, the reason the Shin-Okubo Koreatown began to shine brightly was the clean-up campaign led by newcomers.

## Conclusion

The story illustrates, through an economic investigation, why the Shin-Okubo Koreatown suddenly became bright by describing these events:

- ① Once upon a time, there was a town filled with brothels.
- ② Immigrants (newcomers) arrived.
- ③ Newcomers started restaurants in sequence there.
- ④ They pushed the brothels out.
- ⑤ Thereby the town became bright.
- ⑥ People increasingly visited the town.
- ⑦ And the town became wealthy.

The above elucidates the series of events that answer the question of why the area suddenly became bright. To finalize the story, I would like to ask another question:

### **What are the “ignorant people” who ran the brothels doing now?** <sup>(24)</sup>

According to Tetsuo Yamatani, “though renting one or two tsubos (坪) in Ikemen Street was 30,000 yen two years ago, at present the same rent is 100,000 to 150,000 yen. [...] children of former brothel owners become owners of the buildings, and seem to sponge off the newcomers now.” <sup>(25)</sup> That is, they are living among the newcomers as parasites thanks to their “negative inheritance.”

## Notes

- <sup>(1)</sup> Yamatani Tetuo, *ura kabukicho maria yokochoyo* (Back Kabukicho Maria Yokochō), GENDAI SHOKAN, 2013, pp. 9–13 (in Japanese).
- <sup>(2)</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>(3)</sup> Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner (2005) *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*, Allen Lane.
- “Economics is a science with excellent tools for gaining answers but a serious shortage of interesting questions” (Steven D. Levitt, op. cit., p. ix).
- <sup>(4)</sup> See Asoh Ken-ichi, Tsuda Yasuhide (May 2014) *waga kuni no kankou keizai gaku kenkyuu no doukou* (The Trend Survey of Tourism Economic Study in Japan), *Rikkyo University bulletin of studies in tourism* (16) (in Japanese).
- <sup>(5)</sup> NIKKEI BUSINESS ONLINE, Nov 17, 2016 (in Japanese).  
<https://business.nikkei.com/atcl/report/15/262112/110800006/?P=4>. Accessed on: Nov 22, 2020.
- <sup>(6)</sup> Tokyo-to, *2017 nen kunibetu gaikokuzin ryokousya koudou tokusei tyousa* (A Foreign Traveler Behavioral Characteristic Investigation by Country in 2017) ONLINE (in Japanese).  
<https://www.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/tosei/hodohappyo/press/2017/09/07/17.html> Accessed on: Nov 22, 2019.
- According to the field survey table of foreign tourists visiting Tokyo, 56% of respondents (multiple answers allowed) visited the “Shinjuku, Okubo” district; 50% visited “Ginza”; “Asakusa” 46%; “Shibuya” 43%; and “Akihabara” 39%. Many tourists visiting Shinjuku and Okubo enjoyed “shopping for miscellaneous goods and cosmetics.”
- <sup>(7)</sup> Sun Wonsuk (Mar 2005) *tiiki syakai ni okeru tabunka kyousei matizukuri he no tyousen: sinzyukuku ookubo tiiki no zirei* (A Challenge to Multicultural Symbiosis Town Planning in the Community: Example of the Okubo, Shinjuku-ku area), *Discussion Paper* (264), Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University, p. 4 (in Japanese); *ibid.*, p. 197.
- <sup>(8)</sup> Inaba Keiko (2008) *okubo tosi no chikara: tabunka kukan no dainamizumu* (the Power of the Okubo City—Dynamism of Multicultural Space), Gakugei Press, p. 86 (in Japanese).
- <sup>(9)</sup> Kyojuron (2000) *sekai no syoku ga wa wo tsunagu* (World Foods Connect a Circle), Kyojuron (in Japanese), pp. 26–27; *ibid.*
- <sup>(10)</sup> Kyojuron, op. cit., p. 6.
- <sup>(11)</sup> Yamatani Tetuo, op. cit., p. 86.
- <sup>(12)</sup> Kyojuron, op. cit., p. 24.
- <sup>(13)</sup> Inaba Keiko, op. cit., p. 90; Kyojuron, op. cit., p. 30.
- In the hometown of the manager, Korea is 51.2% (Taiwanese: 12.2%, Chinese: 9.8%, Japanese: 12.2%). The main stream of newcomers is from Seoul. (Yamatani Tetuo, op. cit., p. 207).
- <sup>(14)</sup> Yamatani Tetuo, op. cit., p. 31.
- The store, in which half the customers or more are Japanese, is overall 60%. There are many Japanese customers until around 10 pm. After that time, the majority of customers are Korean.
- <sup>(15)</sup> Kyojuron, op. cit., p. 6.
- <sup>(16)</sup> Inaba Keiko, op. cit., p. 86.
- <sup>(17)</sup> Yamatani Tetuo, op. cit., pp. 205–206; Kyojuron, op. cit., pp. 26–27.
- “Surprisingly, the first characteristic is that there are predominantly Korean stores in this area (Korean: 52.7%, Taiwan: 8.1%, Chinese: 8.1%, Thai: 8.1%, Myanmar: 8.1%). For these several years, Korean stores have clearly increased rapidly (in 1998)” (Kyojuron, op. cit., p. 26).

Table ① the kind of restaurants

year	Korea	Taiwan	China	Thai	Myanmar	others	Multinational
1998	52.7	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	4.1	10.8
1994	34.8	17.4	8.7	17.4	4.3	8.7	8.7

Source) Kyojuron, *sekai no syoku ga wa wo tsunagu* (The World Foods Connects a Circle), Kyojuron, 2000, pp. 26-27.

- (18) Yamatani Tetuo, op. cit., p. 207.  
 (19) Kyojuron, op. cit., p. 6.  
 (20) The author used WEB OYA bunko (<https://www.oya-bunko.com/>).  
 (21) Ibid.  
 (22) Inaba Keiko, op. cit., p. 90.  
 (23) Ibid.  
 (24) Yamatani Tetuo, op. cit., p. 187.  
 (25) Ibid, p. 206.

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