

# The Cosmopolitan Yokochō: Immigrant entrepreneurs in a Japanese culinary community

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# Mobility and Diversification in a Japanese Yokochō: Questions

- What is the relationship between mobility and diversification in an old Japanese commercial district?
- How do migrant businesses serve as community spaces?
  - cosmopolitanism and conviviality? comparable to London? (Wessendorf)
- How do mobile people (tourists and migrants) both transform and sustain existing (“Japanese”) community spaces?
- How does the existing business community facilitate/hinder the economic activities and social incorporation of migrant entrepreneurs?

# Touristic Mobility in the Tokyo Yokochō

Japan has experienced a boom in inbound international tourism

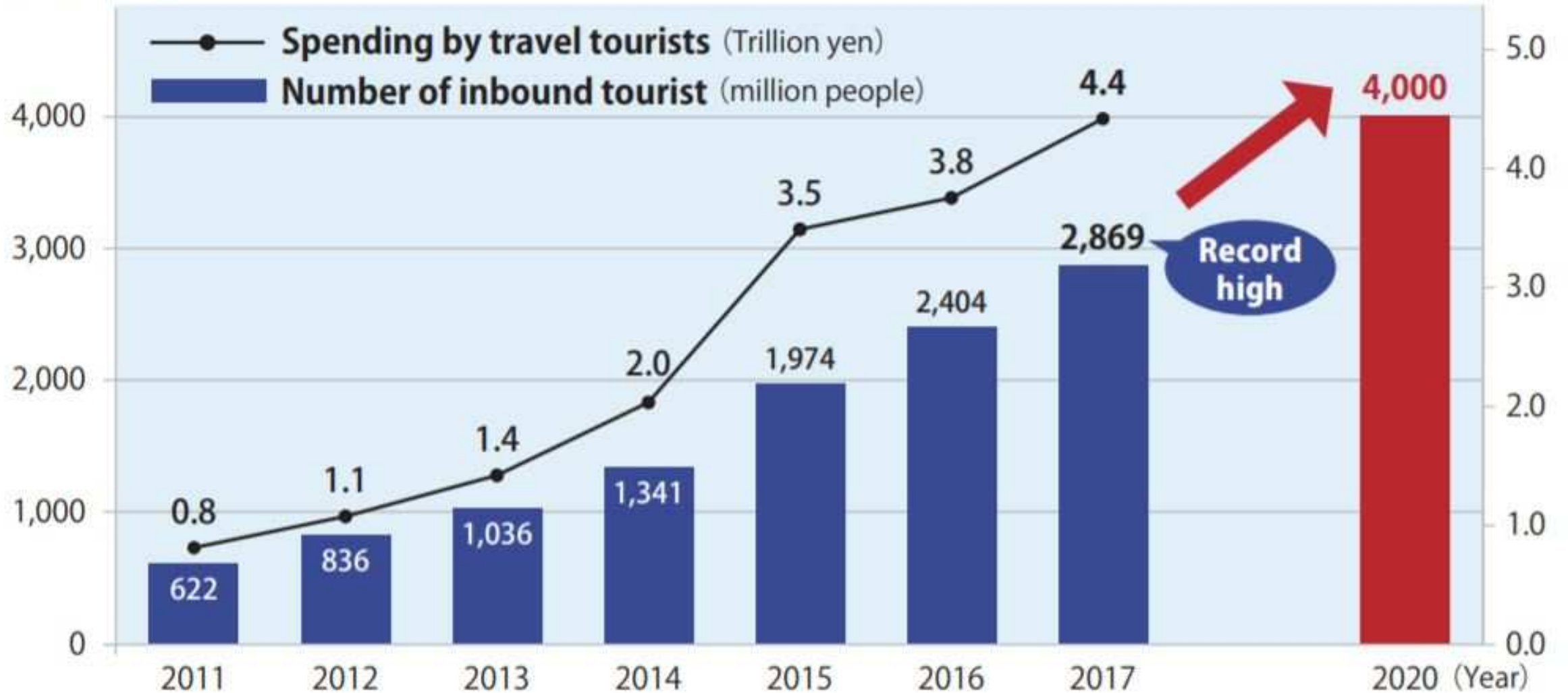
Might be as significant for urban diversification as migration

# Number of inbound tourist and spending on travel

Target: 40 million tourists visitors in 2020, eight trillion yen in spending on travel

(million people)

(Trillion yen)



Source: Created by JETRO from "Consumption Trend Survey for Foreigners Visiting Japan FY2017 (2015~2017) Annual numbers (final figures)", Japan Tourism Agency



# Globalizing the yokochō: *Golden gai*

- Shinjuku known as nightlife district since Edo period
- *Golden gai* is a product of the consolidation and resettlement of black market vendors in the Shinjuku area
- Preserves the postwar culture of small drinking places



# *Golden Gai* as global tourist attraction

- From members-only (and usually Japanese only) bars to tourist hang-outs
- 30 to 40 percent of customers are now foreigners





# A “Japanese” space: imagined nostalgia and the yokochō

- Shinya Shokudō (深夜食堂) or “Midnight Diner,” a TV drama based on a Japanese manga series by Yārō Abe.



# Making a Cosmopolitan Yokochō

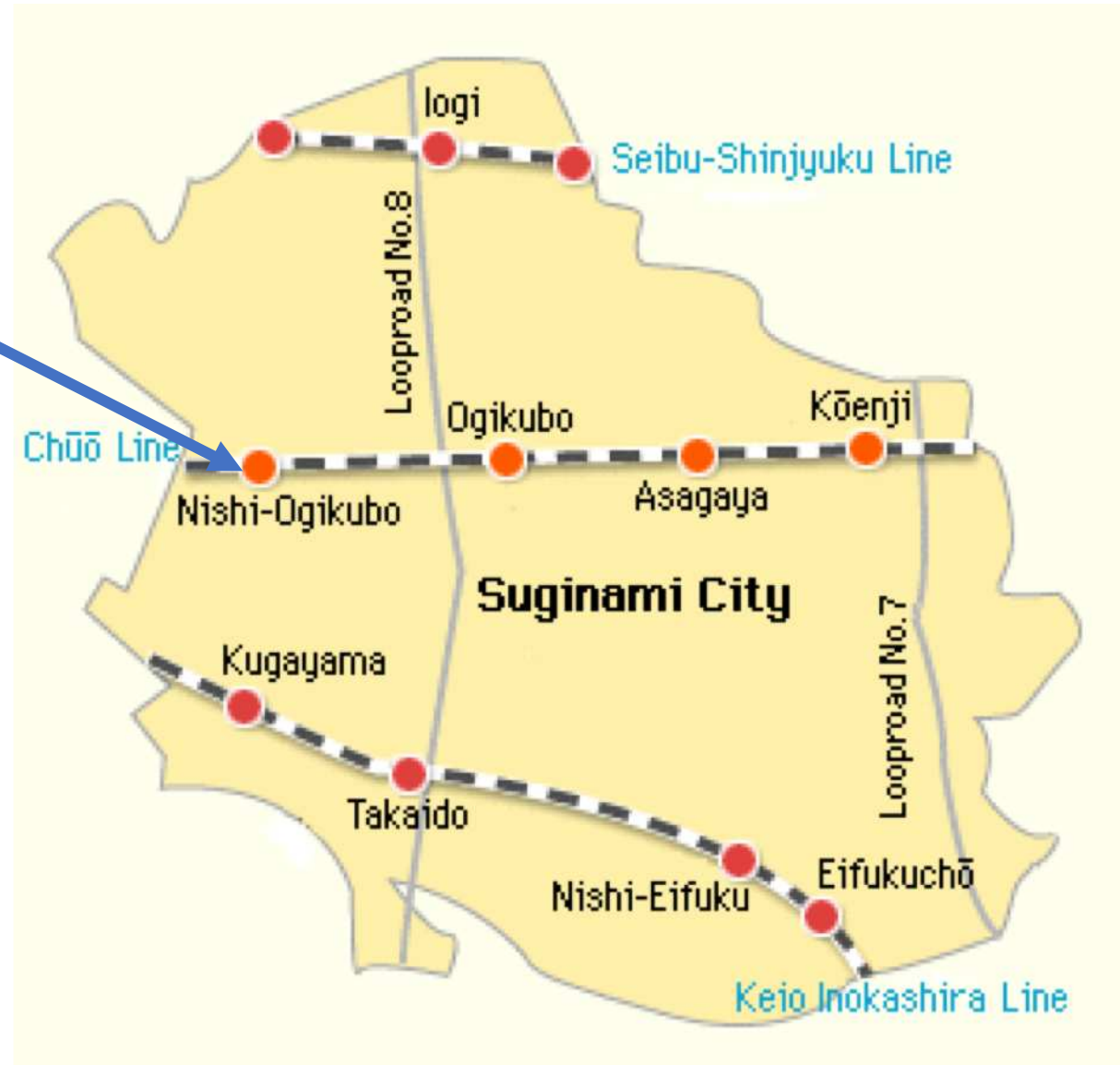
Migrant service providers are both *remaking* and *sustaining* the Tokyo Yokochō



- Suginami 杉並  
(one of the 23 Wards of Tokyo)
- 560, 000 residents
- 12,000 foreign residents
- Not “superdiverse” demographically

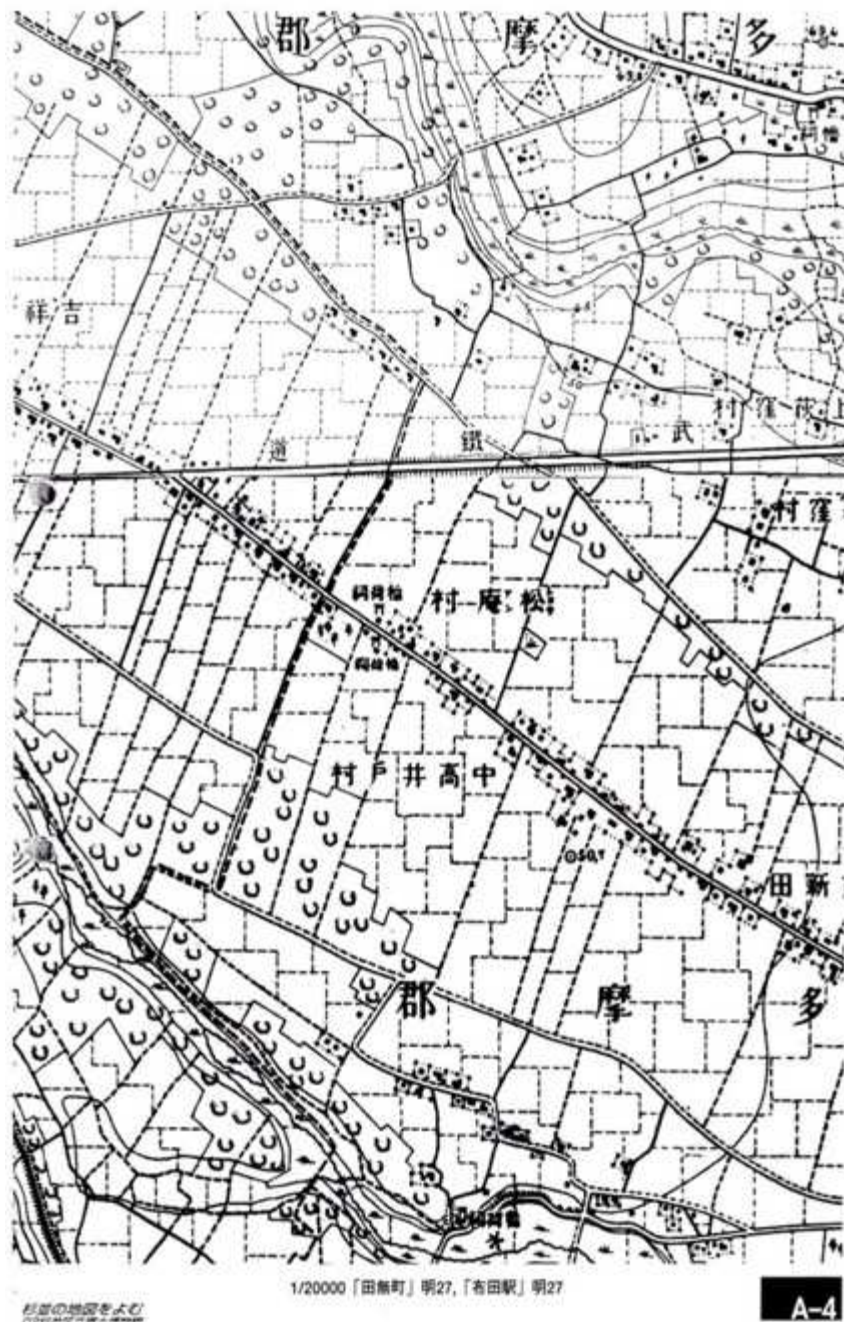


- Nishi-Ogikubo (Nishiogi)  
西荻窪 (西荻)
- Commonly mentioned positive points:
  - Diverse small businesses
  - No large-scale redevelopment
  - “Traditional” image
  - (Relation to mobility?)

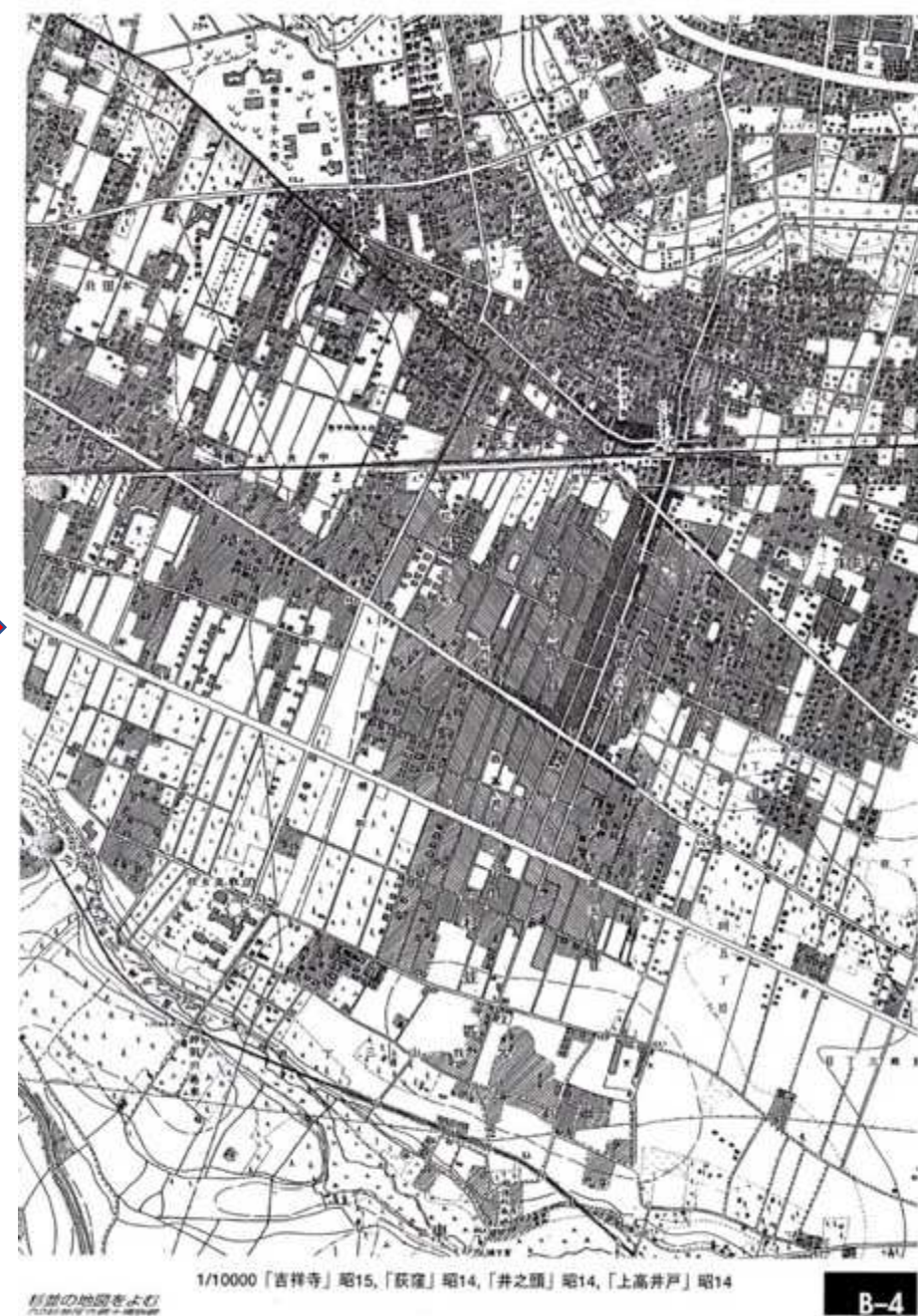




Tokyo  
urbanization  
(suburbanization)



1894



1939



# Willow Alley 柳小路: Making a Cosmopolitan Yokochō

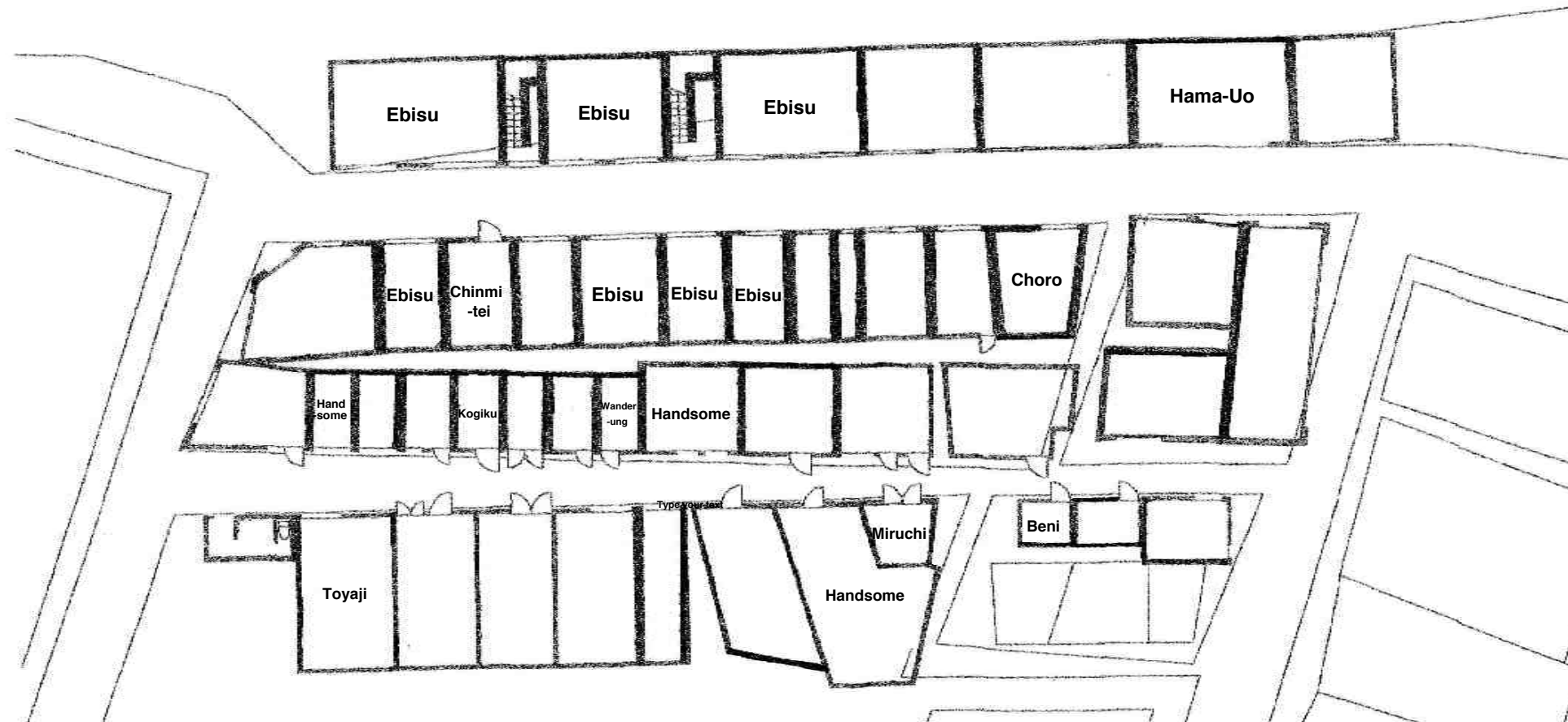


# Willow Alley 柳小路: Making a Cosmopolitan Yokochō

- <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/ondemand/video/2053145/?fbclid=IwAR2PebosFz1JVeJW-tFbiuECt7F1c7pk9qWyNF7EKZfa5OAuQWrKULZeMP4>



# Willow Alley 柳小路: a dense warren of small businesses





# Taiwanese Restaurant Chinmitei 珍味亭

- a third generation immigrant business, colonial legacy migration.
- now run by Hayashi Nobusuke, and his son Hayashi Kenji. It was opened by Kenji-san's grandfather, who came to Japan from Taiwan before World War II. The grandfather started his own restaurant in 1955 in the famous "Memory Lane" drinking alley (Omoide Yokochō) in Shinjuku.
- Moved to Nishiogi in 1963, chose the South Market in Nishiogi similarly developed out of a post-war black market.
- a spot for "ladder drinking" by middle-age men
- Unusual multigenerational restaurant



Chinmitei 珍味亭





# Handsome Shokudō

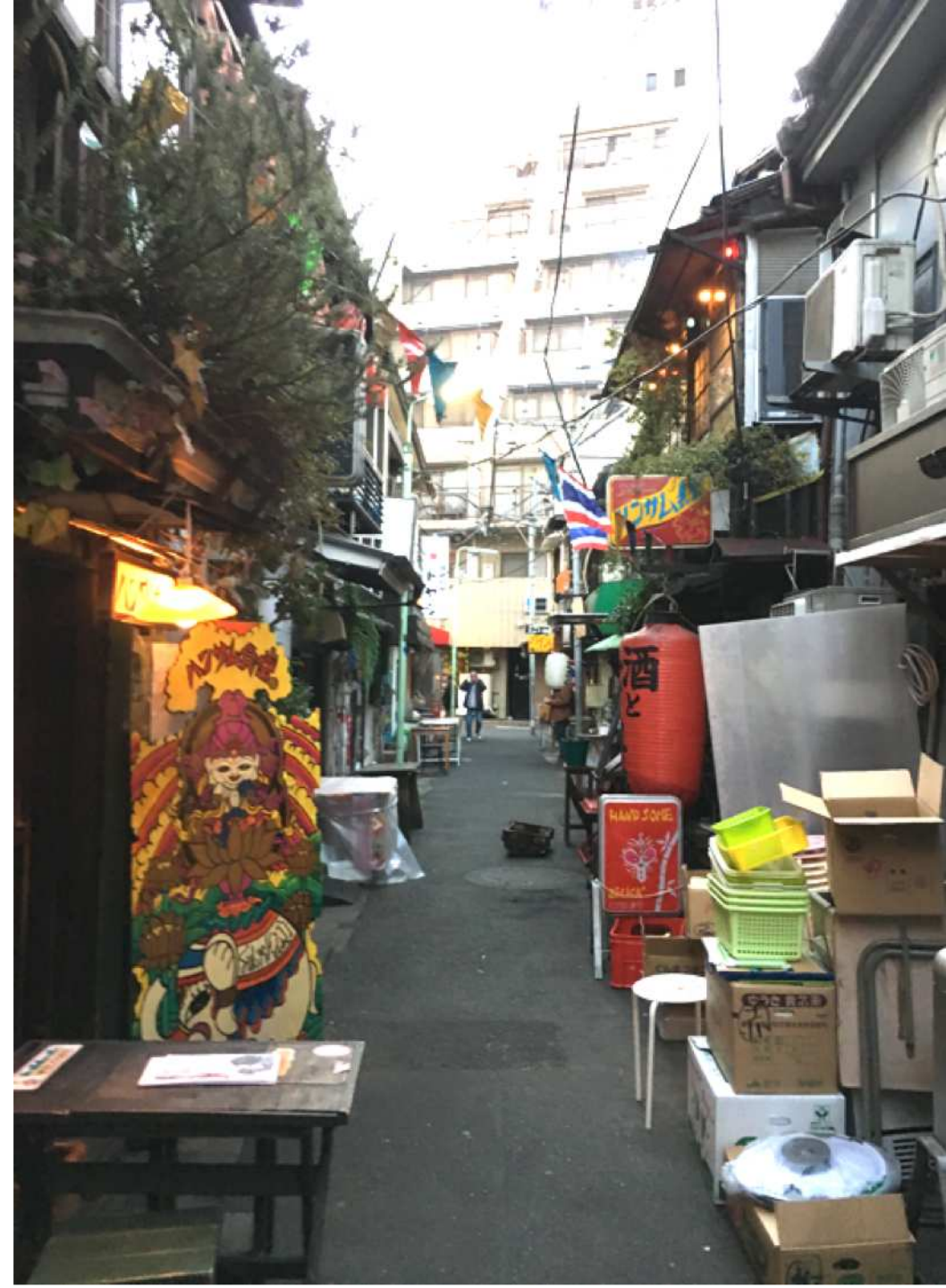
## ハンサム食堂

- An “ethnic restaurant” run by Japanese who travelled in Thailand.
- Importance of touristic mobilities and touristic spatial imaginaries.
- Consumer demand for “diversity.”
- Created a Southeast Asian night-market atmosphere in a Japanese Yokochō space
- Made it easier for migrant-owned ethnic businesses to open there.





# Handsome Shokudō as a diverse drinking space





# Bangladesh Bar: Miruchi ミルチ

<https://www.nishiogiology.org/miruchi>



First migrant entrepreneur in  
the alley





# Toyaji トヤジ: A Taste of Cheju Island from an Immigrant Mother

- Toyaji is run by Ms. Yoshida Nanami, who was born in Cheju, and her daughter Yoshida Yonju, who grew up in both Japan and Korea, and attended university in Japan. The name “Toyaji” is Cheju dialect for pig. And grilled pork is the specialty of the house.
- Toyaji also participates in the “daytime market” that was originally organized by the owners of the Thai restaurant Handsome.







# Toyaji Tenth Anniversary Party

Building a community with customers





# Greek Village Sanchome

ギリシャ小町三丁目



Marriage migration as basis for entrepreneurship



# The (Chinese-run) Okinawan Restaurant

## Akaihana 赤い鼻

- Yu-chan became the manager of Akai Hana about five years ago.
- Restaurant was owned by a Taiwanese woman and managed by the Japanese man from Okinawa, who was also the chief chef. After he died from cancer in 2012, Yu-chan's boyfriend, the nephew of the owner, took over the restaurant and became the manager and chef. However, only half a year later, for some personal reasons, he had to go back to Taiwan. At that time, Yu-chan was already a part-time waitress at the restaurant, and she fell in line as the only person who could manage it.
- “It was an accident that I could become the manager of this restaurant.”
- Migrants sustaining Japanese social spaces
- Welcoming to newcomers





# Akaihana 赤い鼻



# Diversification in a “low-diversity” Place: Migrations, Erasures, Openings, Revivals

- Mobility and Erasure:
  - The Chinese and other migrants made important contributions to the early postwar yokochō nightscape.
  - These contributions are largely erased in mediated nostalgia
- Diverse Mobilities:
  - Tourists as mobile consumers
  - Japanese “ethnic” spaces created by “alternative” Japanese with touristic experience
  - International migrant entrepreneurs
- Diversification as Interactive Social Process
  - Migrants are reviving and sustaining nostalgic “Japanese” spaces.
  - Many “ethnic” spaces are migrant-run; many “Japanese” spaces are sustained by migrants



# Diversification as Process in a Tokyo Alleyway: What is preserved? What has changed?

- Preserved:
  - The practice of “ladder drinking” and the enforced sociability of small spaces
  - The cumulative texture of urban space and the consciousness of these layers
- Changed:
  - An increase in immigrant entrepreneurship
  - The celebration of cultural and culinary diversity
  - Diversifying drinking communities
  - Catering to a tourist economy
  - The opening up of the street visually, spatially, and socially
  - The feminization of drinking and the return of young people
  - The decline of commercial sex work



# Engagement: presenting ethnography in the community



西荻空想計画  
Nishiogi Fantasy  
Planning Session



## 西荻の柳小路：夜の多文化コミュニティ

### Nishiogi's Willow Alley: A Nocturnal Multicultural Community

西荻の「こころ」となるのは、個人経営の店と、コミュニティ空間を作り上げる小さく華やかな商業小路だ。これらの空間は、しばしば、「昭和東京」を連想させるものと思われがちだが、実のところ「令和東京」の多文化空間へととなりつつある。その中でも最も知られているのは柳小路だろう。この多文化空間を作り上げた経営者たちは、日本人と外国からの移住者の双方なのである。よき昭和の東京であり続け、新しい令和の東京を創る。これは今で**未来の西荻だ**。The “heart” of Nishi-Ogikubo is its small vibrant commercial alleyways which create a space for small owner-operated businesses and face-to-face communities. Although we can indeed think of this as part of the culture “Showa Era” Japan, these spaces are increasingly multicultural, including the most famous of all, Nishiogi's Willow Alley

「西荻町学」は東京都杉並区「西荻窪」に焦点を当てた民族学的研究プロジェクトだ。研究主体は、都市の食文化、料理人の仕事、コミュニティ参加である。このプロジェクトは、上智大学社会学教授ファーラー・ジェームスと編集者木村史子が主体となって運営している。Nishiogiology is an ethnographic research project centered in the Tokyo neighborhood of Nishiogikubo, focusing on urban foodways, the meanings of culinary work, and the ways community life is formed around food. It is led by James Farrer, a sociologist based at Sophia University in Tokyo and Fumiko Kimura, the Japanese editor.



### ハンサム食堂 Handsome Kitchen

柳小路のトレンドセッターは日本人が経営するタイ料理店だ。彼らは東南アジアの「夜市」の空気を小路に持ち込んだ。The trendsetter on the alleyway is a Japanese owned Thai restaurant, giving the street the feeling of Southeast Asian night



### ミルチ Miruchi

柳小路の最初の外国人移民店主はバングラデシュ出身のバブさんだった。The first immigrant restaurant owners on Willow Alley was Babu from Bangladesh



### ギリシヤ小町三丁目 Greek Village Sanchome

日本中、そして世界中から、若い起業家たちがこの路地に引き寄せられてくる。Young entrepreneurs from around Japan and around the world are drawn to the historic alleyway.



### バーボーイ Baboy

沖縄出身の女性であるバーのオーナーは、この通りに最初の多文化空間を創った。An Okinawan woman bar owner created one of the first multicultural spaces, a meeting place for migrant workers in the 1990s.

For more see: [www.nishiogiology.org](http://www.nishiogiology.org)