The history of Chinese living in Japan, based in Chinatowns in Kobe, Yokohama, and other cities, began with the opening of modern Japan. They built their own public cemeteries, such as Chuka Giso in Kobe and Yokohama (the latter is generally called “Jizō-byō” because of the temple built near its entrance). Later, Kyoto Kakyo Reien, a cemetery for Chinese living in Kyoto, was built at Oubaku-sect Manpuku-ji Temple, separated from Chuka Giso in Kobe. Meanwhile, in Nagasaki, which continued trades with China even during the seclusion period in the early modern times, Chinese tombs are located in Japanese cemeteries at Chinese temples (e.g., Sofuku-ji Temple), Inasa-Goshin-ji Temple, and other temples. One of the major differences between these Chinese cemeteries and general Japanese cemeteries is that the former has a stone monument of the gods of earth called “HouTu (Shen)” or “Tu Shen.” In Nagasaki, which has a longer history of exchanges with China (i.e., over three centuries) than Kobe and Yokohama do, Chinese culture has had a large impact on Japanese cemeteries; for example, it is now very common to build a monument of the gods of earth in Japanese cemeteries in the city. Another fact worth noting about the cemeteries of Chinese-Japanese, who are mainly from Fujian, Guangdong, and Taiwan, is that the location of such a stone monument, as well as burial rituals, varies between Nagasaki, Kobe/Kyoto, and Yokohama. This paper examines whether these differences were caused by the difference of their homelands or arose after they settled in Japan due to the difference of their experiences. Moreover, this paper analyzes the differences between the customs of Chinese-Japanese and those of their homelands as well as the memories and attitudes of current first-generation immigrants who have actually experienced the customs of their hometowns. In particular, this paper examines the Qing Ming Festival held in April to honor ancestors (the most important festival in the year for Chinese not only in Japan but also in the Mainland and Taiwan) as well as Fudo-shoe held as a Chinese Bon Festival in Kobe and some other cities. Thus, this paper reveals that in Chinese cemeteries in Japan, the deity of earth is still honored today while acquiring a public meaning as it is playing a certain role in building a sense of community among the Chinese living in Japan and sharing the experience of ordeals, such as great earthquakes and other natural disasters, after their settlement in Japan.

Key words: Chinese living in Japan, public cemetery, cemetery, HouTu, Tu Shen, the gods of earth