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## JAPANESE PROSTITUTES IN FRENCH INDOCHINA

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### ABSTRACT

This research aimed to clarify the actual situations of Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina (limited to today's Vietnam). Japanese overseas prostitutes in Singapore and nearby areas were notorious as revealed in plenty of previous studies. However, the situation in French Indochina was almost concealed. The main materials of this research derived from such as books, magazines and newspapers published in Japan from the 1880s to the 1930s.

The first Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina were stated in the 1880s. They developed their business at important locations of military and industry under the public prostitution system of the authorities there. We confirmed they were at 25 locations. They also functioned as "*Comfort agency*" for French forces. Some prostitutes were patterned with Japanese appearance. This pointed out that the French despised the Japanese because of the prostitution. Nevertheless, Japanese prostitutes served abundant customers.

"Rue Boresse", today's Yersin Street, was the Japanese Garrison Street in Saigon. There were at least 60 garrisons and over 120 prostitutes in this area during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 1920s, Japanese consulates progressed the prostitution abandonment. According to the official data in 1923, such abandonment was completed in French Indochina.

**Keywords:** Japanese overseas prostitutes, French Indochina, Public prostitution system, Colony

## 1. Prologue

### 1.1 Purpose of this Research

As Yosaburo Takekoshi, one of the pioneers' expertise of colonization in Japan, visited French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, Singapore and some other areas from June to September 1910 and published *"Memorial of Tropical Countries"*, said, *"Because our nation has colonized Taiwan already.... An-Nam and Dong-King are our neighbors"*<sup>1</sup>, French Indochina might have been close to modern Japan. *"An-Nam"* indicated the central part of current Vietnam. *"Dong-King"* indicated the northern part of current Vietnam.

However, with the high tariffs, the trade was sluggish, and immigrants were few due to the land disposal regulation of foreigners' restriction to own land<sup>2</sup>. Some research showed 250-350 Japanese in French Indochina (within today's Vietnam) before World War I<sup>3</sup>. Suzuki1910P60-61 said that in 1909, there were 63 males and 198 females, and added, *"There are some females along Yunnan railway, so the total should be about 350"*. This indicated most of the Japanese in French Indochina were female. They were people who were so-called overseas prostitutes.

The purpose of this research is to clarify the actual situations of Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina (limited to today's Vietnam). Japanese prostitutes in the areas such as Singapore, the Malay Peninsula and the Borneo Island are notorious as shown in plenty of previous studies, but their situations in French Indochina were almost concealed. The main materials of this research are books, magazines and newspapers published in Japan from the 1880s to the 1930s.

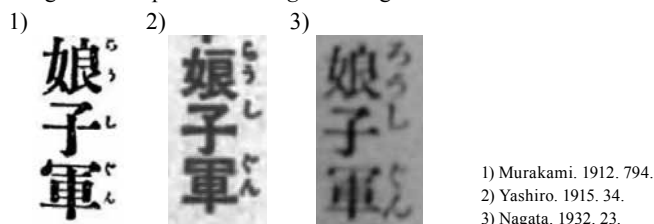
The Japanese overseas prostitutes had notably been called *"Karayuki-san (Karayuki)"*. According to Kazue Morisaki who addressed this term, it was used in the western and northern parts of the Kyushu Island during the Meiji era (1868-1912). This meant *"Women who went to overseas garrisons to work"*. From the Taisho era (1912-1926), *"Karayuki"* became the term used for going to the South Seas<sup>4</sup>, and used for people other than females and prostitutes<sup>5</sup>.

I would like to report that the Chinese character word *"娘子軍"* was used to indicate Japanese overseas prostitutes. According to Miyaoka1968P15, it was used in the 1890s, before the Sino-Japanese War. Kim1997P211 also mentioned on the term used for Japanese residents in the South Seas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As far as I researched, it was frequently apparent in the 1900s-30s in books and articles about Southeast Asia. The term *"娘子軍"* reminds many Japanese of woman warriors in Aizu War (1868). As it was said *"The prostitutes are the pioneers of emigrants and soon men will emigrate to the South Seas, India, etc."*<sup>6</sup>, the term *"娘子軍"*, indicated overseas prostitutes, was used to express some positive feelings.

The woman warriors were called [jo:sign], but in the case of Japanese prostitutes

in Southeast Asia, they were typically called [ro:sigun]<sup>7</sup>. Actually, in some cases, there is no indication to read, neither does in some books and articles [jo:sigun]. But it seems the authors who spent some time in Southeast Asia tended to use [ro:sigun].

Image 1. Examples of “*Roshigun*” Usage



“*Roshigun*” would be a better term to indicate Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina. So, in this article, the original text and write “*Roshigun*” would be a choice if needed. But in the description part, I just write Japanese (overseas) prostitutes because it is more suitable for English text. At this moment, I just report about the term used, “*Roshigun*”, as one of the results of this research.

## 1.2 Overview of Previous Studies

Before starting the main topic, let me summarize previous studies in Japan.

First, I picked up some books related to Japanese overseas prostitutes. The pioneer study was Katsumi Mori’s “*Human Trafficking*” (1959), describing “*Overseas migrant work*” of “*Women from Amakusa*”<sup>8</sup> (in Kumamoto prefecture today). Kenji Miyaoka’s “*Prostitutes - Record of Overseas Wandering*” (1968) mentioned “*Female stowaways*”<sup>9</sup> in Southeast Asia, Russia, India, Africa, and America. He used the term “娘子軍” but read it [jo:sigun]<sup>10</sup>. In 1972, Tomoko Yamazaki sent her oral history work of Saki Yamakawa who spent her half-life in Sandakan, on the Borneo Island titled “*Sandakan Number Eight Garrison*”, then published “*Graves in Sandakan*” (1974).

In 1976, Kazue Morisaki published “*Karayuki-san*” and described Japanese prostitutes in Southeast Asia, Russia, China, and India. In 1978, Yamazaki created the word “*Ameyuki-san*” meaning Japanese prostitutes in America and published “*Song of Ameyuki-san - Hapless life of Waka Yamada*”.

After Morisaki, several books titled “*Karayuki-san*” were published: Kenji Shiraishi’s “*Karayuki-san in Zanzibar*”<sup>11</sup> (1981), Masanao Kurahashi’s “*Karayuki-san in*

*the North*” (1989) and *“Song of Karayuki-san”* (1990) written about Japanese prostitutes in Russia and Manchuria. Il Myeon Kim’s *“Genealogy of Prostitute, Karayuki and Comfort Woman”* (1997) and Niina Takemoto’s *“‘Karayuki-san’ - Modern Era of Female <Overseas Workers>”* (2015) starting with the selling body custom before the modern era.

There are some works about Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina. Miyaoka mentioned in his book above. Takuji Kashiwagi published ‘Karayuki-san in Vietnam’ (1979) and ‘Japanese Advancement to French Indochina before World War II - Through mainly “Chart of Occupational Population of Overseas Japanese” (1990). Kashiwagi clarified the locations and number of Japanese prostitutes.

Japanese overseas prostitutes in Great Power’s colonies were incorporated into their colonial governance. The modern public prostitution system was established in 1802, in France, spread all over Europe during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and introduced to the colonies<sup>12</sup>. Let me pick up some works published in Japan mentioning the public prostitution system in Great Power’s colonies. Yuki Fujime’s *“History of Gender - From Public Prostitution and Structure of Abortion Crime to Anti-Prostitution Law and the Structure of Eugenic Protection Law”* (1997) mainly mentioned British colonies. Akane Onozawa’s *“Modern Japanese Society and Public Prostitution System - From the Viewpoint of People’s History and International Relationship History”* (2010) discussed prostitution abandonment in Asia. Hirofumi Hayashi’s *“Armed Forces and Sex of Imperialist Nations - Regulations of the Prostitution and Sex Facilities for the Armed Forces”* (2021) mentioned the public prostitution system in Great Power’s colonies. They mentioned French Indochina but a little. Hiroshi Shimizu and Hitoshi Hirakawa’s *“Karayuki-san and Economic Advancement - History of Singapore-Japan Relationship in World Economy”* (1998) discussed Japanese prostitutes in Singapore from the viewpoint of economy. It was suggestive for other Southeast Asian areas including French Indochina.

## **2. Outline of Japanese Prostitutes in Southeast Asia**

### **2.1 Pioneer of Foreign Advancement**

Let me summarize the history of Japanese prostitutes in Southeast Asia in brief. According to the records, the first Japanese prostitutes appeared in Singapore during 1870 or 71, the center of Southeast Asia then. Afterward, those Japanese prostitutes gained massively<sup>13</sup>.

Due to Sino-Japanese Amity Treaty (1871), people started going to China so Japanese garrisons were built there, then invited criticisms of Japan and Japanese people<sup>14</sup>. In such a situation, “*Regulation for the Japanese in China and Korea*” was announced in March 1883, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1885, the penalty of this regulation became stricter<sup>15</sup> and this caused Japanese overseas prostitutes to head to Southeast Asia. Also, at the end of 1884, the Japanese consulate in Shanghai cut down prostitutes so the escaped prostitutes scattered<sup>16</sup>. This could be another reason for their going south. In 1884-85, Japan was in a situation of recession, so some people were pushed to sell bodies overseas<sup>17</sup>.

The increased number of Japanese prostitutes in Southeast Asia invited criticism. In 1890, it was reported that “*Contempt*” and “*Ridicule*” to the Japanese were apparent in Singapore, and its reason was explained as the “*Prostitutes and their kept men*” were the majority of the Japanese there<sup>18</sup>.

In 1899, “*Administrative Regulation of the Dutch East Indies*” was amended and the legal status of the Japanese there was changed from “*Eastern foreigner*” to “*Similar to European*”<sup>19</sup>. One of the reasons impeded it was Japanese prostitutes. In the Dutch East Indies, it was regarded that the Japanese there were “*Not civilized, mostly coolies*”, “*Many of them were prostitutes, philanderers and such kinds of people*”<sup>20</sup>, so the authorities had hesitated to give such privileged status to the Japanese. In addition, in the early 1890s, U.S. papers started to criticize Japanese immigrants and prostitutes there, and anti-Japanese sentiment rose<sup>21</sup>.

In such situations, instruction No.1 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was issued on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1893, “*Abduction of women who are ignorant of foreign affairs with flattery... after reaching the designated foreign countries...let them work as prostitutes*” was forbidden. “*Give the proper guidance for the women not to go overseas*” was set as a purpose. This policy was to appeal that the Japanese government would manage the issues.

But the main public opinion at that time was below.

*Japanese overseas prostitutes are especially needed to encourage overseas emigration.... We should not criticize overseas prostitutes and leave them freely for economic necessity.*<sup>22</sup>

Owing to this kind of opinion, the issues of Japanese overseas prostitutes were left unsolved. In December 1886, the Tokyo Women’s Temperance Union was established and submitted petitions to eliminate Japanese overseas prostitutes many times, but these had not been fulfilled<sup>23</sup>.

After the Russo-Japanese War, the tendency to head overseas became stronger, and the descriptions such as “*A woman who came back from the South Seas wears several gold rings and carries a silk parasol, watches the play at the best seat with a young husband, and manages a money lending shop*”<sup>24</sup> were apparent. Actually, “*A woman who came back from*

*the South Seas*” was exceedingly rare, but few successful episodes were talked about with big mouths.

Japanese prostitutes were regarded as bearers of foreign advancement. So, the issues were not only overlooked but also talked about frivolously.

## 2.2 In the Economic Advancement

A different tone of argument about Japanese overseas prostitutes appeared in the 1910s. Rubber planting had started in the first ten years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some results have already been brought out. Investments in different fields in Southeast Asia also became prosperous. Then, the number of Japanese enterprises and residents increased, especially in Singapore and the Malay Peninsula.

In such a situation, Yasuto Kajiware, chairperson of “*Taiwan Newspaper*”, visited French Indochina, Hong Kong, the Philippines and some other places from September 1912 to February 1913 and published “*Memorial of Travel to the South*”, said below.

*I cannot agree with Japanese overseas prostitutes about the reasons for their money transfer to Japan and contributing to repay some of the external debt. In addition, I am not such a coward who would feel glad for their money transfer. They certainly advanced to barbaric areas before men, but I do not think it has any value to praise.*<sup>25</sup>

It had been said that Japanese overseas prostitutes played the roles of “*Money transfer*” and “*Advancement to barbaric areas*”. However, Kajiware denied both roles because economic advancement brought them new bearers. We could say Japanese overseas prostitutes had completed their missions, but nobody evaluated so.

Such new Japanese residents saw Japanese prostitutes below.

*We Japanese open our offices in downtown Singapore and manage rubber plantations in the Malay Peninsula with confidence as “The first-class citizens”, but our female fellows walk around barefoot and are ridiculed by other countries’ people. We just cannot leave them.*<sup>26</sup>

With pride as “*The first-class citizens*” and some success in the business field, “*Female fellows*” came to be regarded as an obstruction to their advancement. Some rubber plantations’ owners were females who related to prostitution<sup>27</sup>, but such an opinion was regarded as the majority.

In addition, there were criticisms apparent like, “*Japanese young men in the South*

*Seas often lose themselves to Japanese prostitutes and ruin their purposes...as a result, not a few people become drifters*”<sup>28</sup>. Japanese garrisons had not accepted Japanese customers, but the situation had changed. After World War I started, many European people left the South Seas areas. Japanese garrisons lost their customers and were unable to choose customers. For this reason, Japanese customers became their choices. The withdrawal of European people during World War I brought an economic boom to Japanese business in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Japanese garrisons failed into recession so tried to develop new customers into fellows, then caused criticisms.

Criticism of human trafficking also rose in the 1910s, the Singapore authorities started some policies for prostitution abandonment, then influenced nearby areas. Also, the British authorities decided not to allow any female Japanese who had the intention of prostitution to enter British colonies<sup>29</sup>.

In such situations, the Japanese consulate in Singapore implemented a policy of exiling men from Japanese garrisons in April 1914, prohibition of British colonies’ males from managing garrisons within reason. In January 1920, the “*Representative of Japanese residents*” decided to make the prostitutes abandon voluntarily within the jurisdiction of the Japanese consulate in Singapore<sup>30</sup>.

Then, what was the result? The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ed. “*Chart of Occupational Population of Overseas Japanese*” (“*Chart*” for short) showed that at the end of June 1922, the category of “*Performing Woman, Prostitute, Barmaid, etc.*” of Saigon, the Java Islands and the Celebes Island became zero. Previous studies said that some just switched the category to “*Hired housekeeper, Cook*”<sup>31</sup>. This also pointed out that, in Singapore, some women became private prostitutes and belonged to other working places such as restaurants, rooming houses and cafes<sup>32</sup>.

“*Chart*” means completion of the abandonment, which could not be expressed as zero. However, we could regard such a zero person as an official declaration of complete prostitution abandonment, as seen in the consulates’ attitude. Incidentally, at the end of June 1923, Singapore still had 65 prostitutes while the Malay Peninsula and the Sumatra Island had about 200 in this category.

With the advancement of Japanese enterprises and people toward Southeast Asia, the new Japanese residents started to treat Japanese prostitutes as a nuisance. In the tide of criticism of human trafficking, Japanese prostitutes in Southeast Asia were forced to abandon.



### 3. Actual Situations of Japanese Prostitutes in French Indochina

#### 3.1 Locations and Number

“Choya Newspaper” (April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1885, P3) reported about the exiled Japanese prostitutes in Shanghai above – “Some Japanese women moved to An-Nam and Dong-King”. As far as I did the research, this is the oldest description of Japanese prostitutes in the area of today’s Vietnam. Also, the descriptions like, “There were some people who saw a grave of who died in 1885 around Hanoi” were often shown<sup>33</sup>. China and France were fighting over the suzerainty of the Nguyen Dynasty then, so it was certain that Japanese prostitutes set the target on officers and soldiers, and then moved.

Some books and articles reported the locations and number of Japanese prostitutes in the same era; Kashiwagi summarized and showed them on the maps<sup>34</sup>. According to these descriptions, maps and some other additional materials, Japanese prostitutes were in 25 locations and five other possibilities in French Indochina. Let me explain the background.

In ‘Memoir of French Indochina’, Takekoshi mentioned “Roshigun” in Lao Cai, and told the reason why they were doing their business there below.

*Let me explain why the base of Roshigun is in such a place. French troops are on this side of Lao Cai deep valley, and Qing troops are on the opposite side of the valley because this place is at the border area between French Indochina and Qing. So, Roshigun exist to perform as the comfort agency for both French and Qing troops.*<sup>35</sup>

According to Takekoshi, “Roshigun” in Lao Cai functioned as a “Comfort agency” for the troops, and Japanese prostitutes might perform this role all over French Indochina. It is said that some Japanese prostitutes accompanied the military exercise of the troops<sup>36</sup>. This shows that Japanese prostitutes did their business under the colonial governance there.

In France, regulations of prostitution in invaded areas were enacted in the 1830s to build hospitals for the registration and medical check of the prostitutes in urban areas. In the rural areas “Bordel militaire de campagne” (Garrisons for field troops) were opened. It was institutionalized in 1918 and stipulated that authorities’ permission was needed to open a new garrison for the force<sup>37</sup>. In the atmosphere of “Hatred of the colonized natives was the potential thread”<sup>38</sup>, Japanese prostitutes, people belonging to the third country, were set as bearers of the “Comfort agency”.

‘Chart of Arrangement of the Troops in French Indochina’<sup>39</sup> shows the locations of French troops, so it also implied the locations of Japanese prostitutes. According to this chart, French troops were assigned below.

*Saigon, Hue, Tourane, Hanoi, Lang Son, Lang Thuong, Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai, Hai Phong, Sept Pagodes, Bac Ninh, Cap Saint Jacques*

We could confirm the existence of Japanese prostitutes besides Hue, Lang Thuong, Tuyen Quang, Sept Pagode and Bach Ninh. But these locations have high possibilities of their existence.

Tourane was today's Da Nang (in the central part of Vietnam) and had an important port, close to the capital Hue of the Nguyen Dynasty. Besides the above, we noticed some descriptions of Japanese prostitutes in the coastal areas of Cat Hai, Nha Trang and Bac Lieu<sup>40</sup>, too. Cat Hai was close to the important port of Hai Phong, and Nha Trang had a big port in the central area. Bac Lieu was in the southern area. So, there had to have some troops, and then Japanese prostitutes joined.

Lang Thuong was inside Hanoi today, and Bach Ninh and Sept Pagodes were near Hanoi. We saw there were some Japanese prostitutes in Son Tay, Hanoi<sup>41</sup>. Tuyen Quang and Yen Bai are inland in the northern part (mentioned later). Cap Saint Jacques is located at the mouth of the Mekong River. Kashiwagi1979P211 said there were 12 Japanese prostitutes at Cap Saint Jacques in the 1910s.

Other descriptions show that there were some Japanese prostitutes in Dong Dang and Van Yen<sup>42</sup>. Dong Dang was in border areas like Lao Cai and Lang Son. Van Yen was near Dong Dang. So, there must be some troops.

Next, let me select their locations in industry areas<sup>43</sup>. These are in the northern area of today's Vietnam.

*Dap Cau, Viet Tri, Nam Dinh, Yen Bai, Thai Nguyen, Mong Cai, Vinh, Nghi An, Hon Gai*

Dap Cau was at the crosspoint of the Cau River and the railway to Lang Son, one of the central cities in the northern Hong River Delta. Dap Cau was the heart city of rice transportation so there was a big market since the old days. Sericulture also had been started which was encouraged to provide raw silk for French industry<sup>44</sup>. In addition, in 1913 Indochina Paper Mill Company was established. Dap Cau and Viet Tri factories were started operation<sup>45</sup>. Around Nam Dinh was an agricultural area where settled some important manufacturing such as Indochina Brewing Company and Dong-King Spinning Company<sup>46</sup>. Thai Nguyen and Yen Bai had iron mines, northern area of Tuyen Quang and Thay Naguyen had zinc deposits, Tuyen Quang had coalfield, and in Mong Cai and Vinh antimony was produced<sup>47</sup>. Mong Cai was also at the border area. Nghi An was near Vinh. Geographer, Akamaro Tanaka said when he visited Thai Nguyen, he met a Japanese woman who had married a native<sup>48</sup>. She might be a retired prostitute.

In Hon Gai, Dong-King Coal Mine Company was established in 1888, monopolized 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> at the east side of Hon Gai, and constructed roads, a port, and urban areas<sup>49</sup>. Kizo Nishihara told the reason he had opened his garrison in Hon Gai below.

*Previously, a French camp was here, and it had many soldiers, so the authorities requested us to open a garrison for soldiers' hygiene.*<sup>50</sup>

This indicated the authorities requested to secure their “*Comfort agency*” to even a foreigner. This garrison certainly accepted customers from not only the camp but also the industry field.

In Hon Gai, there was another Japanese garrison managed by Mr. and Mrs. Hamano<sup>51</sup>. The writer, Sakan Ando and Shingo Tazawa of the office of the Governor-General of Taiwan visited their garrison during their travels in 1921<sup>52</sup>. Ando wrote “*People Who Invite Their Mother Countries - Voice of Female Drifters*” based on his stay and published it in 1932.

In the southern area, it was recorded that Japanese prostitutes and western concubines were in Saigon, Bien Hoa, Baria and My Tho<sup>53</sup>. Saigon and My Tho were key points of commerce<sup>54</sup>. Bien Hoa and Baria were regarded as rubber planting areas<sup>55</sup>.

As we saw, Japanese prostitutes existed in not only urban areas but also rural areas. Yusaku Uehara (later minister of the Army) visited French Indochina to inspect the territory issue of the left bank of the Mekong River between French Indochina and Thailand in 1893, telling how Japanese prostitutes advanced in rural areas.

*When we entered Dong Dang, the French guide said he would show us something rare and took us to a cafe and brought three Japanese women. They were from Amakusa.... They said that they had negotiated directly with the chief of the authorities of this area to advance in this mountain, and they did not have any fear. Their advancement into the hinterlands was audacious enough to make us military men marvelously.*<sup>56</sup>

“*They had negotiated directly with the chief of the authorities of this area*” indicated their sales activity. This was an example of how Japanese prostitutes expanded their business. It also showed that the authorities accepted such an offer to secure the “*Comfort Agency*”.

Table 1 below showed the number of Japanese prostitutes with some of selected descriptions. We saw many “*Prostitutes*” and “*Roshigun*” especially in Saigon. Also there moderately were “*Western concubines*” and “*Concubines*”. Japanese prostitutes became not

Table 1. Locations and Number of Japanese Prostitutes in French Indochina

Year	Place	Nominal	Number
1903 Research <sup>1)</sup>	Hai Phong	Roshigun	About 30
1904 Record <sup>2)</sup>	Saigon	Prostitute	124
1908 Research <sup>3)</sup>	Hanoi	Prostitute/Wife of the French	60
	Hai Phong	Prostitute/Concubine	35
	Saigon	Prostitute/Concubine	70
	Lang Son	Prostitute	6
	Tourane	Prostitute	5
	Son Tay	Prostitute	3
	Lao Cai	Prostitute	5
	Bac Lieu	Prostitute	2
	Others	Prostitute	10
1909 Research <sup>4)</sup>	Saigon	Prostitute	About 70
1913 Issue <sup>5)</sup>	Saigon	Roshigun	192
1913 Issue <sup>6)</sup>	Hanoi	Japanese girl	About 50
		Western concubine	15
	Saigon	Prostitute	70-80
1913 Research <sup>7)</sup>	Saigon	Prostitute	34
		Western concubine	24
	Baria	Western concubine	3
	Bien Hoa	Western concubine	4
	My Tho	Western concubine	3
1917 Issue <sup>8)</sup>	Saigon	Roshigun	About 30

1) Mizutani. 1942. 34.

2) JACAR- B07090992000.

3) JACAR- B03050447900.

4) Kobayashi. 1910. 94.

5) Kikokusei. 1913. 55.

6) Kajiwara. 1913. 280, 322.

7) JACAR-B13080352700.

8) Murayama. 1917. 149.

only concubines of the Europeans but also other people, the natives, and the Japanese, and some married them.

From March 1913 to October 1920, Sanshiro Ishikawa visited Belgium, England, and France. During his stop-by Saigon on his way, he met some Japanese women below.

*After I landed, when I stopped by a shop to buy some postcards, the Chinese master called a name, and then a Japanese woman appeared. I felt some unexpected nostalgia, so I spent some time buying postcards and collars, requesting some Saigon coins, asking how to get to the post office, etc. Then four or five beautiful Japanese women came in and greeted me politely. They looked very happy but showed some nostalgia. So, I thought it was because they seldom see the fellow in this foreign country. When I left the shop to go to the post office, I saw a few Japanese women wearing dresses riding on xich lo. They looked very dignified.<sup>57</sup>*

Another author's story was from the shop, named "Tran Bao" –she was this Chinese man's wife. Description such as "Her age was about 34 or 35 and staying in French

*Indochina for seven years*", "*Came from Shimabara, Kyushu*"<sup>58</sup> indicate that she used to be a prostitute. Other women must be someone's wives or concubines, too. Seeing such many "*Japanese women*" in a short stay implied how many there were.

The descriptions, "*Greeted me politely*", "*Looked very happy*", "*Looked very dignified*" implied their stable life. "*Wearing dresses riding on xich lo*" might show their wealth. This pointed out that most of the Japanese prostitutes in the southern area of French Indochina lived with low-level French soldiers and low-level civil workers<sup>59</sup>. But they were described with such impressions.

In French Indochina, Japanese prostitutes got a position of "*Comfort agency*" of the forces. They also advanced to the economic field and did their business in both urban areas and rural areas. Japanese garrisons were opened due to the authorities' request and the suggestion by the Japanese.

### 3.2 Recognition by the French

How were Japanese prostitutes recognized by the French? Let me consider a description of Japanese prostitutes in Hanoi below.

*In An-Nam and Dong-King, there are many prostitutes from Germany and France, but people fear them. On the other hand, Japanese prostitutes are very honest and cute so for the guards, it is the best joy to stay with them, and among high-level officers getting a Japanese girl as a concubine is one of their trends. On Sundays, we see the French soldiers with their beautiful uniforms and Japanese prostitutes wearing beautiful long-sleeved Yuzen Chirimen and speaking in Amakusa dialect while having fun. Right now, there are hundreds of Japanese prostitutes, the best class earn 30 to 50 dollars a day and not a few of them transfer money to their homes.*<sup>60</sup>

The description, "*European prostitutes are more professional than Japanese prostitutes*"<sup>61</sup> explained the reason for "*There are many prostitutes from Germany and France, but people fear them*". They thought that Japanese prostitutes were easy to treat but such a factor favored the French.

Morisaki1976P138-139 would imply a cause of such an atmosphere of Japanese prostitutes above. In Korea, Japanese prostitutes became the target of hatred from the native customers and the prostitutes feared them. Indeed, Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina did not have such a fear. This also pointed out, "*Because France accepts the public prostitutes, Japanese prostitutes look arrogant*"<sup>62</sup>, which might be true.

Many people would agree that Pierre Loti's "*Madame Chrysanthème*" invited some interest in Japanese prostitutes. Novelist Pierre Loti, French Naval Captain Louis Marie-Julien Viaud, published 'Madame Chrysanthème' in the French paper "*Le Figaro*" in 1887. In March 1893, it was published as a book from Calmann-Lévy in Paris<sup>63</sup>.

French people in French Indochina enjoyed reliving this popular novel through Japanese prostitutes. It is said that this novel attracted the readers with exoticism<sup>64</sup>, so the "*Long-sleeved Yuzen Chirimen*" of Japanese prostitutes above might fulfil such interest. Japanese visitors often pointed out that their Kimono appearance was mismatched and strange<sup>65</sup>, but the French did not mind. It was also said some prostitutes who called themselves "*Okiku-san*" (the name of a Japanese concubine in the novel) as a sales tool<sup>66</sup>.

The descriptions of such mismatched appearances implied that they were forced to buy them. It was not certain if they had any particular intention for their Japanese appearances.

Yusuke Tsurumi, who visited the Philippines, French Indochina and the Malay Peninsula from October 1915 to January 1916, described "*A Japanese woman wearing Japanese Kimono*", whom he saw on the ship on the Mekong River below.

*A young French soldier walked around this woman persistently and tried to talk with her. She looked like a hassle and said "Non, monsieur", then left for her room. The next day, that soldier talked with her closely all day again.*<sup>67</sup>

The young French soldier was treated coldly but did not give up. This description showed their approachable atmosphere.

In Hanoi, right after the opening of World War I, such a scene was apparent.

*I heard children of the French base say "Con gái japonaise!" and point at the Japanese women. Then these Japanese women raised their hands with scared faces.*<sup>68</sup>

"*Con gái*" is Vietnamese meaning a young girl, and "*Japonaise*" is French meaning the Japanese woman. Such a phrase by the children's expression showed that Japanese prostitutes were well known among even children.

Previous studies implied some factors of their approachable atmosphere in the business strategies of the garrisons. Nishida1977P55 said that in Vladivostok, Hong Kong and Singapore, the fee of Japanese prostitutes was cheaper than white prostitutes. Shimizu & Hirakawa1998P30 said, in Singapore, Chinese prostitutes took only Chinese customers, and European prostitutes took white customers mainly. However, Japanese prostitutes accepted

the white, Chinese, Malaysians, and many other people. The reason of those came from their sense of crisis such as *“If the garrisons in the South Seas area would not take many native customers, the business might fail”*<sup>69</sup>. Accepting *“Many native customers”* would mean accepting anyone. Such situations had to be similar in French Indochina.

There was a report that the Japanese in Hai Phong were despised by the French because of the prostitutes<sup>70</sup>. Kinnosuke Takagaki, who stayed in Saigon for a while in 1910s-20s, also said, *“There is no doubt that French people think that Japanese women are free with money”*<sup>71</sup>. The French were nothing but consumers of Japanese prostitutes, but the prostitutes indeed succeeded in getting their favors and surviving.

### 3.3 Background of Prostitution Abandonment

As for his French major from Tokyo Foreign Language School (graduated in March 1916), Otokichi Mizutani, entered Mitsubishi Cooperation and worked at Hai Phong branch<sup>72</sup>. He later established Mizutani Trading Company and wrote some episodes of *“Roshigun”*.

He selected a person with his wife and a son in Tokyo but started to live with a *“Roshigun”* in Dong-King. He called this person *“X”*, but his (apparent) name is Seishu Yokoyama with the descriptions such as *“Studied French at night school”* and *“Works as a coolies’ manager of a coal mine”*<sup>73</sup>. According to *“Yomiuri Newspaper”* (September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1940, P7), he started to work in French Indochina after the Russo-Japanese War. In 1940 he returned to Japan and at that time he was 75 years old.

Mizutani also wrote a Japanese person called *“Y”*, who moved from Singapore to Hai Phong: *“Got support from one of Roshigun and opened a shop, saved money successfully”* to *“Open a branch in Yunnan”*<sup>74</sup>. *“Y”* should be Akinosuke Yasuda from Hyogo prefecture. Because of the railway construction, there used to be many Japanese prostitutes in Yunnan<sup>75</sup>.

Anonymities were used, but we did not see any particular negative feeling against *“Roshigun”*. None of their sympathy or guilt was seen, either. We also see many descriptions of Japanese prostitutes written by the visitors. They just wrote down what they had seen and heard during their stays frankly. Due to the report above, contempt by the French would cause some damage to the Japanese there; nothing indicates such issues, though.

A report by Keiichiro Kobayashi, an apprentice translation officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatched for the inspection of immigrants in 1909<sup>76</sup>, implied the cause in his article ‘Successful People and Strategies for Japanese Development that I Saw in An-Nam’.

*People who are doing activities are only prostitutes, and we say other Japanese just rely on*

them.<sup>77</sup>

In such a dependency, other Japanese residents could not say anything to the prostitutes who were the economic superiors and the majority. In the economic boom of Southeast Asia brought by World War I, Japanese population in French Indochina also increased, but it was brought by the increase of prostitutes<sup>78</sup>. In such a situation, the issues behind “*Roshigun*”, for example, abduction, moneylending, exploitation, were overlooked. So, their relationships could be just sufficient.

The prostitution abandonment proceeded in such an atmosphere in French Indochina. According to “*Chart*”, the number of “*Performing woman, Prostitute, Barmaid*” in Saigon became zero in 1922<sup>79</sup> and 1923 in Hai Phong (data ended in June).

In April 1923, a consul of Japan consulate in Hai Phong reported below.

*It was said that there used to be 11 or 12 Japanese prostitutes in Hai Phong. Consul Nakamura had ordered them to abandon before he left, so eight or nine of them had returned to Japan already.*<sup>80</sup>

Japan’s consulate in Hai Phong was established on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920<sup>81</sup>. They could proceed with the abandonment in few ties, so they made some results quickly. In addition, the consul Osamu Nakamura in charge above had done this mission just before his leaving. This might have had some effects. We also see a description, “*A command to leave*” was issued in Saigon<sup>82</sup>.

In a shallow relationship between Japanese prostitutes and other residents, the prostitution abandonment in French Indochina was conducted quickly.

#### **4. Rue Boresse - Japanese Garrison Street in Saigon**

##### **4.1 The Establishment of “Rue Boresse”**

There was a place named “Rue Boresse” in Saigon, where Takagaki described about below.

*Along this street, there are some cargos loading shops, billiard halls, and Japanese snack shops, but most of them are garrisons. In short, Boresse Street is a Japanese Garrison*



Street.... In Saigon, people have to speak in the dialect of Nagasaki or Shimabara, or they can do nothing.

Boresse Town is located out of town and was built by landfill as a swamp, so in the old times crocodiles appeared there. The garrisons face the street in a line and each garrison is a two-story house but very shabby, so for the Japanese inside Japan it is almost impossible to live in. The garrisons are called No.1, No.2, according to the street address....

In the evening, they make a line at the painted parapets of the second floor of garrisons like shanties. They apply foundation on their sunburned faces, smoke pipes and talk to the customers on the street in French and the dialect of Nagasaki. I still remember that they were hugging and kissing the customers in full view of the public, playing the broken Japanese guitar, drunk European customers saying the learned obscene Japanese words, the red lantern hanging under the roof, etc. I still remember them.<sup>83</sup>

“Boresse Street” was also called “Boresse Town”, and it is today’s Yersin Street in district one in Ho Chi Minh. Warren2003tranP88 said that French Indochina had well organized Japanese brothel districts, this must be Boresse Street. Takagaki said, “Built by landfill as a swamp”, according to “Plan de la Ville de Saigon (Cochinchina)” issued in 1878 (Map 1), Boresse Street was located from “Quai de l’Arroyo Chinois” (today’s Vo Van Kiet Street) to “Rue Lagrandiere” (a part of today’s Tran Hung Dao Street) and the length was about 800m. At about the center of Boresse Street, on the right side from “Quai de l’Arroyo Chinois”, there was “Marais Boresse” (Boresse Swamp) on the map.

But “Plan de la Ville de Saigon (Cochinchina)” issued in 1900 (Map 2) did not have this swamp. The railways from Saigon to My Tho and from Saigon to Cho Lon were running instead. The distance from the nearest end of Boresse Street to Saigon Station was about 300m.

The railway from Saigon to My Tho was the first one in French Indochina and started construction in May 1881<sup>84</sup>. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1885, the first train ran, and the train ran three times a day<sup>85</sup>. This railway was not long but its income was the most in French Indochina. The railway from Saigon to Cho Lon was constructed in July 1882. The train ran four times a day<sup>86</sup>. Takagaki said, “Boresse Street is out of town”, but it gained an advantage of the land because of the railways.

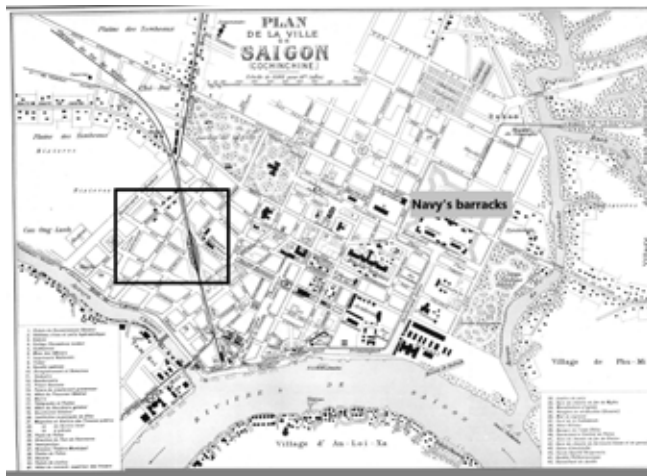
It is said, “The garrisons are called No.1, No.2, according to the street address”. Some documents show us the number of garrisons and people in Boresse Street. In 1904, Tatsukichi Nishida and Hikojiro Igarashi transferred 375 Japanese yen to the Ministry of the Army. In one of the documents, they wrote one of their addresses “No.60, Boresse Street”<sup>87</sup>. This meant there were at least 60 garrisons on Boresse Street in 1904.

Takagaki mentioned, “Very shabby”, “Like shanties”, but a line consisting of 60

Map 1. Issued in 1878



Map 2. Issued in 1900



two-story houses should be spectacular. Zenshiro Tsuboya, an employee of Hakubunkan who visited Saigon in 1916 as a member of Osaka Steamship Sightseeing Inspection, said his xich lo was pulled into a Japanese garrison<sup>88</sup>, which might be at Boresse Street.

As I wrote, Japanese garrisons acted the role of the “*Comfort agency*” for French forces. In Saigon, Boresse Street must be the one. French navy’s barracks were built on the site that used to be Jardin Castle<sup>89</sup>. According to Map 2 above, it was on the west side of “*Rue Rousseau*” (today’s Nguyen Binh Khiem Street), a square with sides of about 600m, and about 1.6 km away from the nearest end of Boresse Street. We could guess that French officers and soldiers started near the University of Humanities and Social Sciences today, passed Notre Dame Cathedral Saigon and Ben Thanh Market, turned to the left at Nguyen Kim Electronics Store today, and then inhaled into Boresse Street.

Boresse Street, a street of Japanese garrisons, was in Saigon’s new city area. There were at least 60 garrisons in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japanese Garrison Street was born in the development of Saigon.

#### 4.2 People in Boresse Street

Nishida and Igarashi whom I mentioned above<sup>90</sup> also sent a name list of the donors. It lasted nine sheets and showed the residents of Boresse Street. On the first and second sheets, there were 18 names, birthplaces and the amount. Ten of them donated 20 Japanese yen. Six did ten yen. One donated three yen, and another did two yen. From the third sheet to the ninth sheet, there were just birthplaces and names. On the tenth sheet wrote, “*110 yen in total from 122 persons*”<sup>91</sup>. The people on the first and second sheets might be the owners of garrisons. The rest of them should be prostitutes.

These are people’s names on the first and second sheets. Six of them were female names, so they must be retired prostitutes.

*Tokumatsu Akita, Hatsujiro Akita, Fukutaro Murakami, Tamejiro Yamaguchi, Tatsukichi Nishida, Hikojiro Igarashi, Tomezo Nakamura, Chozaburo Kaneko, Harumatsu Nagata, Hatsutaro Hamada, Chino Matsuo, Hana Baba, Mita Nishida, Riyo Hayashida, Sado Iwanaga, Sami Arie/Yue, Takematsu Murakami, Daigoro Tozawa*

In 1911, Igarashi started a rubber plantation in Bien Hoa with Saigon residents. Takematsu Murakami, Soji Akita and Eiji Kawai<sup>92</sup>. Murakami was in the name list above. Akita would be a relative of Tokumatsu Akita and/or Hatsujiro Akita. Kawai managed Nihon Hotel in Saigon<sup>93</sup>.

Let me add some more about Igarashi. He opened a restaurant in Saigon in 1885; the year that the train from Saigon to My Tho had opened. He managed both garrison and restaurant<sup>94</sup>. A French literature researcher, Shuto Osada wrote that he had dinner at Igarashi's restaurant on his way to Singapore in 1909<sup>95</sup>.

There were some other examples of donations from Saigon. Igarashi also donated five Japanese yen for Tennyodo of Bentensan Taishido (at today's Minatomachi, Shimabara-city, Nagasaki prefecture). It was established in 1909 and was well known as an establishment by many overseas residents' donations. There were 132 donors. Ones in Malaysia were 34 and the most, and 26 people were the residents of today's Vietnam<sup>96</sup>.

According to Kurahashi1991P7, there was a female donor who lived in Saigon named "*Yori Hayashida*". This person might be the same one as "*Riyo Hayashida*" in the name list above. She donated five Japanese yen. The birthplace of Igarashi and Hayashida was Nagasaki so their donations were not for their hometown.

"*Official Gazette*" No.6835 (April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1906, P23) said "*Saigon Charity Society*" donated 275 Japanese yen for the charity of poor harvest in Northeastern Japan. Eiji Kawai and Genjiro/Motojiro Mori (mentioned later) also donated to this charity (amount is unknown).

Table 2. Birthplaces and Number of the Prostitutes of Boresse Street in 1904

Prefecture	Number
Nagasaki	56
Kumamoto	33
Saga	7
Fukuoka	4
Ehime	3
Hyogo	3
Yamaguchi	2
Hiroshima	2
Shimane	2
Kochi	2
Wakayama	2
Kagoshima	2
Oita	1
Kagawa	1
Osaka	1
Nara	1
Tokyo	1
Unknown	1
Total	124

It was said that overseas prostitutes transferred much money to their families, but joining such donations would have other meanings. I guess for the foreign workers, joining donation was a chance to assert themselves, and they could feel ties with not only their families but also Japan.

Table 2 shows the prostitutes' birthplaces from the third to ninth sheets above<sup>97</sup>; as it was often said that there were many prostitutes from Nagasaki prefecture and Kumamoto prefecture.

Suzuki1909 said that Saigon and Hanoi had one Japanese doctor each. The doctor in Hanoi was at a house of prostitutes without opening a hospital. This meant medical check and caring for the prostitutes were the doctor's main jobs. The doctor in Saigon must be in the same situation.

Japanese prostitutes needed barbers for their Japanese-style hair. According to Takagaki1938P129, there were two barbers along Boresse Street. Kashiwagi1990P82 said that there were six Japanese barbers in Saigon in 1908

and four in 1913. The names of the barbers in Saigon in 1913 were below.

*Fukumatsu Nishizaki, Genjiro/Motojiro Mori, Tokijiro Osumi,  
Yamanaka (first name is unknown)*

Tsuboya1917P202 said, “*There is Mr. Mori’s barber in front of the hotel*”. Koshimura1919P554 also mentioned “*Mori barber shop*”. It was reported, “*In Mori barber shop, a few Japanese are working. They earn about 100 Japanese yen a month, including salary and tip*”<sup>98</sup>. “*Mr. Mori*” might be “*Genjiro/Motojiro Mori*” above. “*Hotel*” indicated Continental Hotel, next to the theater. Mori had his shop about 1 km away from Boresse Street.

Because of prostitution abandonment, it was said that the garrisons in Saigon decreased to four or five and in 1923 completely closed. However, some of them were changed to restaurants<sup>99</sup>. As I mentioned above, “*Chart*” recorded zero prostitutes in 1922.

We see some episodes about retired prostitutes below.

*From the late 1920s to the early 1930s, a lady named Yone opened a Japanese restaurant in Hanoi, and a lady named Natsu opened one in Saigon. Both businesses were quite successful. Natsu’s was near Saigon Port, and there were many Japanese who drank and had fun there during World War II.*<sup>100</sup>

Saigon Port was about 1 km away from Boresse Street. Natsu got a chance to open her restaurant at a suitable location and succeeded in her business.

Let me pick up some other episodes. A Japanese woman was working as a masseuse at Nihon-Hotel. Another was managing Akatsuka Store in Saigon. It was also said that there were about 50 retired Japanese prostitutes working as housekeepers at the French homes in Saigon<sup>101</sup>.

Along Boresse Street, there were over 100 Japanese prostitutes at the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We saw their charity activities. Their donations indicated their active businesses. We also saw some kept working there after the prostitution abandonment.

#### 4.3 Around Boresse Street

City Saigon had Saigon Port. Next to Saigon, there was Cho Lon area prospering with rice export. There were many other prostitutes in such areas. We noticed the descriptions

of Indian prostitutes and a native prostitute<sup>102</sup>. Also, it was pointed out that for gigolos of French prostitutes, Saigon was a base city. They sent the prostitutes to Singapore, Batavia, Manila, and other places<sup>103</sup>. Some might stay in Saigon.

Osada1917P327 wrote in the section of ‘Adventure of a Haunt of Devils’ below.

*At last, we arrived at No.15 Garrison of Pierre Street and stopped our carriage. An old native lady Emily is managing this garrison, and at any time, there are many white and mixed-blood beautiful young prostitutes. This garrison is thickly forested, and it looks like a haunt of devils.*

According to some maps<sup>104</sup>, “*Pierre Street*” was in the northern area of the navy’s barracks. The description indicated at least 15 garrisons were there and there was a garrison managed by a native. Because of white prostitutes, Pierre Street might be more deluxe than Boresse Street.

Boresse Street did its business within the competition.

## **5. Final Chapter**

Lastly, let me summarize what could be clarified about Japanese prostitutes in French Indochina through this research.

In French Indochina, Japanese prostitutes were apparent from the 1880s. We confirmed that they did their business under the public prostitution system of the authorities there. The business had run in the important locations of military and industry and developed even in rural areas. We confirmed their 25 locations. We saw the examples of the authorities requesting the Japanese to open the garrisons. The Japanese made a sales call. Japanese prostitutes also served as “*Comfort agency*” for French forces. Some prostitutes did their business in Japanese appearance. Despite the contempt of the French, they looked popular.

In Saigon, there was a Japanese Garrison Street, “*Rue Boresse*”, which is today’s Yersin Street. There were at least 60 garrisons and over 120 Japanese prostitutes at the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japanese prostitutes held their competitive business with the people such as the whites, Indians, and natives.

The prostitution abandonment in the 1920s was managed quickly by Japanese consulates. According to the official data in 1923, the abandonment was completed in French Indochina.

Future studies should be positioned as Japanese prostitutes in French colonial governance. It is necessary to clarify the situations in the places besides Saigon in detail to get actual examples of prostitutes.

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- 26 Nanyo oyobi Nihonjinsha ed. 1938. 153.
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