

## *Etrangers* in Indochinese Colonial Society: The Situation of Japanese Migrants\*

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### Abstract

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This paper is a historical reflection on the boundary making concept of *étranger* (foreigners) in French Indochina. It focuses on the case of Japanese migrants present in the Indochinese colonial society. In the first part is introduced the main aspects of the history of Japanese migrants in French Indochina between the years 1882 and 1952. Next, the chapter seeks to define the concept of "foreigners" from the point of view of colonial power by looking at the evolution of the legal definition. This work tries to show the importance and the complexity of fixing the status of foreigner for the colonial power. Then, the concept of *étranger* is analyzed at the meso level, that of interactions between communities of Indochinese colonial society, especially in the cities of Hanoi and Saigon. Finally, in the last part, the concept of *étranger* is looked at the micro level by presenting the trajectories of various Japanese migrants who had spent their life in Indochina. The chapter brings, with these three levels of analysis, elements to understand how the concept of *étranger* is polysemic and how populations categorized as such are nevertheless social actors in the colonial society.

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## I . Introduction

As French colonial power was trying to establish its domination upon the Indochinese Peninsula, the implementation of law to define who was an *étranger*<sup>1)</sup> in the colony was a fundamental process on its path. In some pre-colonial laws, a Vietnamese expression of this concept existed but was rather vague. For instance, in 1812, in the Gia Long Code (*Bộ luật Gia Long*) (Silvestre 1902 p. 210; Philastre 1909 p. 253) appeared a term used to name the concept interpreted by Paul Louis-Felix Philastre (1837-1902)<sup>2)</sup> as *étranger, hoa ngoai nhom* (Silvestre 1909, p. 61, p. 100)<sup>3)</sup> and was translated by Philastre as a "man apart from those who enjoy the effect of improving the country's laws," or in other words, those who are living outside the territory ruled by the Emperor of Annam (Silvestre 1909 p. 99-100, 210). Thus, a few decades after the enactment of this code, as French colonial power progressively took hold in the Indochinese Peninsula, and from 1864 (Girault 1929 p. 422; Sambuc 1920 p. 3-4, Corre 1894

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1) In the colonial system, generally speaking, an *étranger* is an individual who is neither a French national nor a "native" (*indigène*). The dichotomy between "native" populations and non "native" Asian populations was one of the challenges that the legal category of *étranger* tried to solve in the colony.

2) Chief of justice and Inspector of Indigenous Affairs in Cochinchina.

3) Administratively, the word *ngoại-quốc* or barbarian, also an heritage of Chinese codes was in use for the populations.

p. 355) new legislations were added to refine the previous definition and make it fit with the new colonial context.

During the colonial era, *étranger* was a category constructed from the will of the French administrators and by the creation of new legislations. Nevertheless, the “real” meaning of this legal category was built in the practice of the daily interactions of those categorized as such by the authorities and the rest of colonial society. Then, it is necessary to examine this question beyond the legislative aspect to understand its complexity. In this chapter, we choose to do so from the analysis of the situation of Japanese migrants in the colony.

Japanese migrants began to settle in French Indochina around the beginning of the 1880s. The earliest reference to the presence of Japanese residents is found in a directory of French Cochinchina (*Annuaire* 1879 p. 139; 1880 p. 96; 1885 p. 41, 324; 1887, p. 54) for Saigon in 1882 and in memoirs of a naval officer in Hải Phòng in 1885 (Rollet de l’Isle 1886 p. 274 - 73). During the sixteenth century, the Annam kingdom was an area of migration for Japanese populations, with settlements in various parts of the coast of Annam. However, this movement ends with the period of Japan enclosure (Sugimoto 1932 p. 92 - 3; Iwao 1940 p. 2 - 5; Kin Ei Ken 1943), which prohibited any migratory movement between Japan and the rest of the world from 1635. Migration, therefore, dried up, and the people, left behind, disappeared slowly into the continental vastness (Bouillevaux 1874 p. 111). Thus, the modern migration of Japanese to Vietnam had no basis in these ancient movements; permission for Japanese to go out of their country was not acquired until after the

Meiji imperial restoration in 1868 (Konno 1994 pp. 1-3; Imin 1994 pp. 17-29, Ishikawa 1997 p. 49). Although we limit our study to the chronological interval of the French colonial period in Vietnam, Japanese migration to this country did not end with the fall of colonial domination.

I propose to analyze the situation of Japanese migrants as *étrangers* in colonial society, giving examples of interactions and power relations at three scales of analysis: the first level is the colonial state; the second one is the scale of colonial society and inter-community relations in Indochinese cities (Hà Nội and Saigon); and the last one analyzes the individual trajectories of migrants who lived in Indochina. With these three levels of analysis, I plan to understand how the concept of *étranger*, which lies at the heart of colonial society, emerged from interactions created by reactions or strategies implemented by the Japanese migrants responding to interventions by states and political powers in order to sustain their positions in their host society.

I will use sources found in archives centers in France (Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Archives, Defense Historical Services), Vietnam (National Archives Center N°1, Hà Nội), and Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Archives), as well as interviews conducted in Japan between 2001 and 2008.

First, I will shortly present a chronological overview of Japanese migrations in Indochina, then, I will consider the concept of *étranger* through its legal aspects with the changing legislation regarding

Japanese migrants in Indochina. In a third part, I will analyze relations between the Japanese and Chinese communities in Indochina. Finally, I will present a few individual trajectories of migrants in Tonkin.

## II . Japanese Migrations in French Indochina

Japanese migrants in Indochina represent only a very small proportion of the Japanese populations who migrated to Southeast Asia (Kokusai 1993 p. 122, 126-7). The average number of Japanese migrants who were living in Indochina was, before 1940, around 300 to 500 people (Kashiwagi 1990 p. 87; GGI n°07734; GER n°33; NAVN1 I 4620). The presence of Japanese in Indochina was linked with an emigration movement that began in the late 1870s, following the agrarian crisis on the island of Kyūshū in southern Japan.

Until the late 1910s, Japanese migrants living in French Indochina were mostly coming from this impoverished region of Japan. In Indochina, this migratory phenomenon mostly led to migration to the main urban centers, and migrants were concentrated in the three main cities of colonial Vietnam: Saigon, Hà Nội, and Hải Phòng. Unexpectedly, despite a long history of warnings about a so-called "yellow peril" and the rampant expansionism of Japan in Southeast Asia (Roustan 2001 p. 137-80), before the Pacific War, the Japanese presence remained small in practice. The modest nature of immigration compared to other colonial territories, such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Dutch Indies, or the Philippines (Kashiwagi 1990 p.

86), was coupled with a relative weakness of its economic influence in the French colony, with the French authorities erecting legal obstacles to Japanese investment (Takumushō 1937 p. 27-8; Mizutani 1942 p. 33-40). We have established a timeline and distinguished five major periods corresponding to changes in the nature of Japanese immigration in Indochina.

The first period started around 1880 and goes up to the first request for the opening of a Japanese consulate in Indochina in 1897 (SOMNF n°B04/2002-1). Japanese pioneers in Indochina consisted mainly of women, working as prostitutes, currently categorized under the term *karayuki* (lit. going to China). At that time, they were well known by French male colonizers, and Japanese brothels were called by the colonial society “Japanese consulates” (Guyot 1905). Also known as *Mousmés*, they were present in various Asian ports at the beginning of the Meiji Era, when there was an expanded presence of Western powers in the area. This illegal migration stream began around 1860, towards Hong Kong and Shanghai, and from the early 1880s, had rapidly grown, coming to Indochinese coasts around that time (Konno 1994 pp. 1-3; Imin 1994 p. 17-29). This emigration was due to the combination of extreme poverty in some rural Japanese provinces with increasing population and some patriarchal traditions that allowed the exploitation of women (Mihalopoulos 1993 p.47; Mori 1959 p.14-21; Morisaki 1976 p. 8-46; Mihalopoulos 1983 p.1-33). Networks to export these women were quickly developed by Japanese traffickers who used their connections with tradespeople abroad (Colligan-Taylor 1999 p. xvii-xviii). The prostitution of

Japanese women remained active in French Indochina until the mid-1920s. Many of these women died in the colony within a few years of their arrival because of the harshness of their living conditions or diseases (Roustan 2012 p. 52-105).

From the turn of the century, a new population of Japanese migrants appeared alongside the *karayuki*: Japanese males. Limited during the first period to brothel keepers, from the year 1900, a new population was established in Indochina. They were relatives of *karayuki* or members of the same villages/birthplaces. They started to join the *karayuki* sometimes to live as their dependents, usually to develop activities related to Japanese brothels or to open small businesses such as bazaars, hair salons, photography studios, or to work as craftsmen (Shiraishi 1992 p.8 ; GGI n° 65430; GGI n°07668; RSTAF n°34509; RSTNF n°7029). Most of these commodity merchants settled with their families. From the First World War, the masculinization of the Japanese community continued to amplify (Kashiwagi 1990 p.81, 89). The conflict created a rupture of economic relations with France. Governor General Ernest Roume voted for an exceptional and temporary economic measure in September 1915 (GGI n°41304), that broke the “colonial pact,”<sup>4</sup>) by authorizing favorable tariffs for allies’ countries in the region during the conflict. Japan, whose trade multiplied by five times between 1914 and 1919, significantly developed its economic relations with Indochina (Giacometti 1997 p. 287-99, 325). This situation brought to Indochina commercial and technical officers of major Japanese

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4) The colony buy exclusively products from France and save its production for France.

companies such as Mitsui Bussan Kaisha, Mitsubishi, Osaka Ayen Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha (GGI n°19170). In 1920, the opening of the first Japanese consulate with a Japanese consul in Hải Phòng marked a transition in which Japan tried to take control of its overseas populations (GGI n°42445). Japanese authorities started in the French colony with the implementation of a ban on Japanese prostitution (DRO n°4-2-2-27). The main activity of the Japanese community was the import and export of ores of anthracite, coal (Robequain, 1939 p. 372; *Annuaire* 1937 p. 181, RST n°75071), and other minerals (SHAT n°07N-3334; RSTNF n°7058). The development of relations between the Japanese community in Indochina and Taiwan was also representative of this period, not only for ore exports, but also for shellac resin, the production of which was organized by the Japanese migrants (Yuyama 2011 p. 52-57). Japan (including Taiwan) was the exclusive consumer of shellac resin produced in Tonkin (Robequain 1939 p. 372; Morlat 2001 p. 313). In the mid-1930s, interactions between Japanese and Vietnamese had grown around economic issues and anti-colonial commitments (RSTNF 7058; Hisashi 2012).

Opening a five-year period, on 15 September 1940, after having bombed the city of Hải Phòng (CM n°418), Japan advanced militarily into Indochina, first north, then south from July 1941 to theoretically cut the equipment supply route of the Chinese armies fighting against Japan (Tachikawa 1995; Namba 2006). This event radically changed the number, but also the nature of the Japanese presence, with about 10,000 to 100,000 Japanese soldiers settling in Tonkin, quickly followed by hundreds of civilians who enjoyed new rights granted by

the French colonial power, maintained by its administrative functions. This golden age of Japanese immigration in Indochina ended with the war due to expulsion measures taken by the French authorities. However, all Japanese who were present did not leave the colonial territory.

This opens a fifth period, during which about 900 Japanese civilians and military personnel refused to return to Japan and escaped to the jungle alongside the Viet-Minh revolutionary movement (Goscha 2001; Oka 1994). Some of these Japanese provided logistical support to the Vietnamese fighters, not only militarily but also in many other areas such as agriculture. This population was not the only to stay. In South Viêt Nam, former Japanese residents of Indochina and a new population of businessmen came to settle shortly after 1952 (Oda 2007). From 1954, the regime of North Viêt Nam started to expel the Japanese from their territory (Kamo 2007), however, some tried to stay and lived the rest of their lives in Viêt Nam (Ikawa 2005).

During the period of French colonial domination, the question of Japanese migrants was an important issue for the colonial government, which had developed a complex legal system to control this population using the concept of foreigner as a keyword.

### III. Japanese as *Etrangers* in the Legal Frame of the Colonial State

This first level of analysis is used to understand the perceptions of the Government General of Indochina regarding the Japanese presence

in Asia as well as the Japanese diplomatic actions and their consequences on the legal construction of Japanese migrants in Indochina.

Colonial domination in French Indochina was partly based on racialist and essentialist framings of populations through the use of legal categorizations entitling each group specific rights. Boundaries, then, were an issue of power that the presence of newcomers from regional migrations was complicating: migrants should find a place inside the legal structure of the colony without changing the organization of colonial society. For this purpose, new laws were progressively enacted. However, because Japan was a non-occidental colonial power and a "chimera-nation" that was playing with boundaries established by European evolutionist theories, the situation of Japanese migrants was particularly problematic for French colonial authorities, and the question of their presence in the colony was overrepresented in the documents produced by the colonial administration, which are preserved in the archives.

Two years after the Treaty of Saigon, marking the beginning of French colonial domination in the Indochinese Peninsula, the decree of July 24, 1864, fixed (or tried to fix) the status of populations present in French Cochinchina (Sambuc 1920 p. 3-4; Corre 1894 p. 355). The colonial authorities made a distinction between several types of so-called *étrangers* based on the criteria of "race" (geographical origins). Indeed, Article 11 states that:

The Annamese law rules in all agreements and all commercial or

civil disputes between natives<sup>5)</sup> and Asians... Annamese law also regulates the crimes of the so-called natives or Asians. [On the contrary, in cases between] Europeans, Europeans and natives or Asians, they fall within the [jurisdiction of] the French court (Girault 1929 p.422).

It is therefore, in this Article 11, that three legal categories of people are created: "native," "European," and "Asian"; but no details are provided in the rest of the decree on the nature of the people belonging to these categories. This vagueness created many problems around the understanding and use of the category of "Asian." To solve the dilemmas created<sup>6)</sup> by the Decree of 1864, a Presidential Order, dated August 23, 1871, lists the populations who are supposed to be part of this category.<sup>7)</sup> This list created the basis of the legal administrative category of "foreign Asians," and categorized foreigners (*étrangers*) thusly:

[T]he category of Europeans and assimilated, including nationals of nations which have been recognized as a civilized nation [and the category of] the foreign Asians. [Outside these two groups] All other persons of whatever race they belong are subject to French laws (SOM n°158).

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5) *Indigène* in the original French document.

6) The need to "determine more precisely the reach of the word Asian" is requested by a ministerial dispatch on September 2, 1870 (Dareste 1900 p. 80).

7) Presidential Decree of August 23, 1871, first article: "Asians who, under the decree of July 23, 1864 belong to Annamese legislation are: the Chinese Cambodians, the Siamese, the Chams, the Stiengs, and the "mixed blood" (Malay from Chaudoc). All other individuals from whatever race they belong are subject to French law" (SOM n°158).

Japanese populations were absent from the list of populations quoted by the decree. Japanese migrants' presence in Indochina was recorded for the first time in 1882. In theory, at that time, the Japanese were subject to French laws but did not clearly belong to a singular category. Nevertheless, when the categories were specified in 1871, Japan was still under the constraint of unequal treaties, and Japanese migrants were not yet an element of French colonial society. Within this context, the French, who did not imagine their future relationship with Japan, did not specifically account for this country's population in their racial hierarchy.

The colonial government began to consider the question of the status of the Japanese in Indochina in 1897, encouraged by a request from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to open a consulate in Cochinchina, almost twenty years after the start of the presence of Japanese migrants in the area (SOMNF n°B04/2002-1). The issue was considered again in 1901, after another official request was made for the recognition of the Japanese as belonging to the category of "assimilated to European" (SOMNF n°B04/2002-1; SOMNF n°973). The answer was not forthcoming, because, despite the existing laws and the perceptions of Japan as a "civilized nation,"<sup>8)</sup> the colonial powers had to deal with the sensitivities of other Asian populations, especially those they had colonized, i.e., the Vietnamese and Chinese. When the French colonial authorities were wondering how to act vis-à-vis the Japanese, an example already existed. In the Netherlands East Indies, where colonial authorities constructed a racialized legal

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8) Because of the colonization of Taiwan in 1895.

classification system similar to the one used by French authorities in Indochina, the "Japanese law" [Japannerwet] of 1899 officially brought the Japanese migrants out of the category of "Foreign Asians" and assigned them to the category of "European and assimilated" (Fasseur 1994 p. 35-7). The consequences were immediate: the Chinese population started to request that the same definition be applied to them, not to mention the claims of "native" populations (Fasseur 1994 p. 38-9). Following the Japanese request, the General Governor of Indochina started an inquiry among local governors. If answers indicated that the Japanese were generally regarded as Europeans, the legal status of Japanese was "rather precarious" and the day-to-day classification of Japanese was usually improvised (GGI n°7734; n°20040 GGI; SOMNF n°B04/973; DRO n°3-9-4-62).

In 1906, a decree defined one more time which populations belong to the category of "Foreign Asians" (GGI n°42315). This new decree attempted to clarify the situation of Japanese migrants, but in fact, the question of the racial acceptability of the Japanese regarding the colonial order was still debated. The discussion between French and Japanese officials shows a "juridical war of races," with each government fighting for its own image of a civilized nation. Indeed, nobody was taking into consideration the interests of the migrant population. It was not until the Decree of August 20, 1913 that the status of Japanese migrants was officially fixed into the category of "Europeans and assimilated." (SOMNF; n°971). However, this was not freely decided by the General Government of Indochina but imposed by the French Minister of Colonies, Albert Sarraut.

Then, the First World War broke out and the question of the Japanese was forgotten for a time, until it returned in the early twenties. At that time, the racial acceptability of Japanese migrants was not questioned anymore by the French colonial authorities. However, the debate moved from the perception of status to the problem of rights granted by this status and its economic consequences. In June of 1920, the Board of Trade, Industry and Agriculture of Indochina, in other words the so-called "colonial milieu" that represented the economic interests of French private companies, put the subject on the table. In a report about the juridical situation of foreigners in Indochina, they asked the General Government "to limit any excessive infiltration of the Japanese elements" in Indochinese company capital, in land ownership, and in mining (GGI n°17420).

In March 1922, Maurice Le Gallen, acting Governor General (GGI), "wanted to keep these questions absolutely confidential" (GGI n°17420). The GGI added that the issue was beyond the question of private interests. In his view, the General Government should address this issue to "ensure that the exercise of certain rights granted to foreigners will not obstruct the exercise of the national sovereignty or limit the amplitude of the powers vested in the General Government of Indochina" (GGI n°17420). The GGI feared that foreigners, and especially the Japanese, would challenge its colonial domination. Indeed, when the GGI received the report, inquiries related to foreigners in Indochina had been already conducted since the beginning of Maurice Long's governance. From 1920, the General Government interfered several times when Japanese individuals tried

to buy rural land from Vietnamese or French. In such cases, legal justifications were found to cancel the transactions.<sup>9)</sup>

The French colonial economic lobby was not the only party to press the GGI to reform legislation. Since the signing of the French-Japanese treaty in 1911, Japanese representatives were also seeking a promulgation of this treaty in Indochina with a *de facto* extension of rights for Japanese in Indochina. In 1925, a new law enhanced the ownership rights of foreigners in Japan. The Japanese government then used this to reinforce its demands through the intermediary of its representative in Paris, Viscount Ishii (GGI n°17420). General Governor Varenne explained to Minister of Foreign Affairs Brian his point of view regarding the new Japanese requests:

Land concessions can only be granted with the authorization of the government and, in Tonkin and Annam, property is limited to French. [...] A modification of the current law, with a more liberal consideration, in favor of foreigners in general and Japanese in particular, seems hardly possible at this time for Annam and Tonkin (GGI n°17420).

The GGI then initiated a process for reforming legislation related to the rights of foreigners in Indochina. This process led to a decree in June 1929 that was enacted in 1933. The decree did not change the status of the Japanese population in Indochina but clarified legislation that was, until that point, vague and undefined (GGI n°42315). However, more than guaranteeing the rights of the Japanese and other foreigners in the colony, it should be said that it guaranteed the

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9) References can be also found in colonial literature (Leubat 1920).

absence of rights; the decree explicitly excluded the general category of *étrangers* from various rights (mining, capital, landowning, several categories of employment, etc.) in order to protect French economic activities.

Until the outbreak of the Japanese military presence in September 1940, the status of Japanese migrants in Indochina and the potential presence of this specific population in the French colony were perceived as a great threat by the French colonial authorities. The restrictive legislation undoubtedly contributed to the low number of Japanese migrants in the colony before 1941. However, for those who lived in the colony, strategies were developed to circumvent legal restrictions, such as the use of French and Vietnamese front men, and exemptions were granted for certain categories of professions like hotel keeper or coffee shop keeper (RST n°41302).

In May 1941, an economic agreement between Indochina and Japan was concluded (SOMNF n°2750). With this treaty, the Japanese gained a bit more than the rights afforded to those included in the category of "Europeans and Assimilated." Indeed, "Japanese" became a category by itself: a category that gave new access to rights previously forbidden to foreigners and similar to those afforded to the French colonizers (GGI n°42315; HCI Conspol/165). Also, in the administrative documents appeared a category of "assimilated to Japanese" as it had been previously applied to European populations (RSTNF n°6966). This status was initially used to categorize people from countries under Japanese colonial rule. However, it was rapidly extended to Vietnamese with close relationships with the Japanese, or

those being protected by them (HCI Conspol/161). This situation was not met with agreement by the Vichy government. Only a few days before the treaty's signature, Foreign Minister Paul Baudoin categorically refused to assimilate the Japanese to the status of the French (SOMNF n°1143). A couple of month after the signature of the treaty, the Colonial Office complained and considered the new status of the Japanese as an offense to the sovereign rights of France (SOMNF n°2749).

The end of the Second World War marked yet another step in the legal categorization of Japanese in Viêt Nam. For the French authorities and the Japanese government, the Japanese migrants returned to the category of *étrangers* in Indochina, indeed, foreigners who were unwanted by the French authorities (HCI n°375). Their expulsion started with the repatriation of military troops. For a vast majority of them, Japanese migrants, coerced (HCI Conspol/10),<sup>10)</sup> had to leave everything behind, and after a couple of months interned in camps (Furuyama 1990; Oda 2007; Kameyama 2007) they took a boat to Japan. However, some Japanese refused repatriation and chose to stay. The Viet-Minh offered a way out for them because they valued the support of experienced fighters. The category of *Tan-Viet* or new-Vietnamese was created at the end of the war for all non-Vietnamese who wanted to join the ranks of the revolutionary army, regardless of nationality (HCI n°198; SOMNF n°1249; DRO A'1.2.1.12). Despite appearances that would suggest that this status

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10) Almost all the Japanese who migrated before the Second World War did not want to go back to Japan and made demands to be allowed to stay in Indochina (Oda 1945).

gave access to a form of Vietnamese nationality, it did not correspond to naturalization (HCI n°198; Kamo 2007). The status of these individuals was ambiguous and not fixed by law, and thus, constituted a category that might be best described as "Viet-Minh friendly foreigners."

If we look at the notion of *étranger* at the level of the state, taking into account the legislative perspectives regarding the status Japanese migrants, we can see a complex, evolving notion that was never clearly defined. However, as the French held authority in this regard, the successive legislative changes to redefine the notion do not show a willingness to consider foreigners, in this case the Japanese, as an element of colonial society, but rather reveal intentions to exclude them from this society. After this analysis, we will address the issue of relations between foreigners' communities in the colony by analyzing some aspects of Sino-Japanese relations up to the 1930s.

#### IV. "*Etranger*" in Indochina at the Level of Inter-Community Relations

This section considers another point of view, attempting to provide some analysis on the concept of "*étranger*" in Indochinese colonial society at the level of inter-community relations involving Japanese migrants.

In January 1905, police departments reported "gossip" originating from the Chinese community in Saigon predicting an imminent

invasion of Cochinchina by Japan (GGI n°64327). Indeed, in the main population centers, where there were large numbers of Chinese, there was a mood of sympathy toward Japan's victory over Russia, viewing Japan as a model to keep China out of the hands of Western nations. However, the perception of overseas Chinese vis-à-vis Japan quickly changed. In 1907, in the report of Péné Sieffert (GGI n°6663), a very different discourse is described. Péné Sieffert moved to Cholon to study the Chinese community and collected their opinions on the Japanese:

The Chinese in Cholon have told me, one after the other, they do not like the Japanese because they consider them arrogant, conceited, cruel, etc ... but they are forced to use their military and naval training, due to their superiority and proximity to China (GGI n°06663).

By May 1908, following the incident involving the Japanese cruiser *Tatsu Maru* (SOMNF n°2221), an anti-Japanese movement appeared in Indochina with boycotts organized by Chinese residents against Japanese goods. The boycott started after a Japanese ship that was carrying weapons and munitions for a trader in Macao was arrested by four Chinese gunboats, then brought to Canton, where it was held on charges of smuggling. After some official Japanese protests, the vessel and its crew were released. This triggered a broad anti-Japanese movement in Canton and Hong Kong, which also reached the French colony. There, Chinese activism was limited to Cochinchina (SOMNF n°0919-1) where Chinese merchants from Saigon and Cholon started to boycott Japanese goods (RSTAF

n°36474). The French government, informed of these plots, did its best to minimize the extent of the movement. They did not want a Sino-Japanese conflict erupting within Indochinese society, which could have only resulted in negative outcomes for the colony. Any public event promoting anti-Japanese sentiments was prohibited, but the colonial authority could not prevent the boycott itself. The movement disappeared fairly quickly, but it was only the first in a long list. In 1915, an anti-Japanese movement was sparked after Japan took possession of German territories in China, and in response to the "21 requests," a Japanese attempt to extend its colonial presence in China (GGI n°18911). It was once again a repercussion of the Japanese policy vis-à-vis China, and the colonial administration tried to intercept and destroy all materials that encouraged Chinese actions in Indochina.

It must be said that these boycotts were severely felt by the Japanese. According to the newspaper *l'Avenir du Tonkin* (1919), "the Japanese influence in Cochinchina was growing for some time but it was stopped by the Chinese boycott of Japanese products." The Japanese suffered from these actions due to their fragile financial position, and they could not resist very long. From the 1920s, the movement grew and had become chronic: a boycott due to the situation in Shāndōng peninsula in 1919 was followed by another for the question of the lease of Port Arthur and Dairen in 1923, and then another took place from 1927-1929 in response to the Japanese military presence in Shāndōng (NAVN1 I3121). Beyond 1931, following the Manchurian incident (RSTNF n°6763; n°2165,

n°4834), the consequences had become so dire that the entire population of Indochina was concerned.

From January 1920, documents (RSTAF n°36474), confirm that boycotts created a real problem for the Japanese: they were not only unable to sell their products, but also, as the Chinese were "the masters of transportation," they could not export raw materials to Japan until they found other shipping companies. A small number of stores were forced to close. However, we must understand that the boycotts also impacted a proportion of the Chinese in the colony because their own activities were hindered by their actions. In fact, before the 1930s, the movement was not supported by all Chinese congregations in the Colony. For example, the Lang Son group refused to climb on the bandwagon, the chief of the congregation having explained to the population under his authority the weightiness of following the boycotts and asking them to not commit to actions against the Japanese (RSTAF n°36474). And it was the same in a number of other congregations like Cao Bang and Lai Chau. Only the large urban centers followed the boycott movement. Some witnesses confirm that Chinese traders could not do business without Japanese goods and rather preferred to put a stop to the boycott movement (RSTAF n°36474). A police report in September 1920 recounts the words of another Chinese man:

If this situation continues, we will be forced to close our stores. The only one who is able to provide us goods is Japan. American products are too expensive, and Europe cannot even provide us goods (RSTAF n°36474).

In March 1921, the congregations decided to stop the boycott and trade resumed immediately. The documents reviewed in the archives repeatedly emphasize the power of the main congregations (Hà Nội, Hải Phòng, and Saigon) that forced the Chinese to obey. However, French police noted that the Chinese congregations committee created in 1919 was terrorizing Chinese people in the colony. From the 1920s, there are many examples of Chinese who used all sorts of techniques to disguise their Japanese imports despite punitive penalties. Communities in their everyday life were indeed more interdependent than they appeared at first glance, and this situation continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

This brief analysis shows that inter-community relations are influenced at a broader regional scale. However, we also see the complexity of the ambiguities/conflicts of interest between pressures coming from the outside of colonial society and the daily relationships/interests between foreign members of the same society. Finally, in the last part of this paper, I will focus closer on the Japanese experiences as "*étrangers*" in the colonial society.

## V. Japanese Migrant Trajectories

In this final section, we will complete our multi-scale analysis by following the trajectory of Japanese migrants who made their path into colonial society starting with the case of *karayuki*, which are representative of almost 30 years of the Japanese presence as

"*étranger*" in Indochina.

It is hard to follow with accuracy the trajectories of these women in the colony because they were a "ghost population," leaving very few traces of their existence at the individual level that have persisted over time. However, famous former brothel keepers passed to posterity, such as Takatani Masa, a matron in Hải Phòng who made her fortune in Tonkin and withdrew to Nagasaki to finish her life in luxury (Kurahashi 1993 p. 44), or Ishiyama Yoshi (1875-1935), the so-called "boss of Hải Phòng," (Kashiwagi 1979 p. 213) who became notorious for her hotel and its residents who featured as the protagonists in a play, *Ushiyama Hoteru* [Hotel Ushiyama], by the Japanese writer, Kunio Kishida (Ōno 1915 p. 493; Nanyōkyōkai 1919 p. 525; Tazawa 1922 p. 377). "The humanistic and good nature" of this woman was highlighted, mostly because she helped Japanese residents in Tonkin (Mizutani 1942 p. 34-5) and "defended [them] against the French authorities" (Kashiwagi 1979 p. 213). It was said that she launched a glass of whiskey at the face of the Commissioner of Police for a Japanese who had problems with them. However, despite this incident, it appears that she had, like the other Japanese brothel keepers, kept good relations with the French authorities who authorized them to perform activities normally prohibited to foreigners (RST n°76425). This woman spent her life in Tonkin and her trajectory is representative of the first generation of Japanese migrants. Like almost all other Japanese women present in Indochina before the 1920s (Yamaguchi 2008 p. 781-813), she was from Amakusa on the island of Kyushu. She arrived in the colony in 1893.

She first practiced as a prostitute in Hà Nội until 1898, then in Lang Son until 1900, and again in Hà Nội until 1908. She moved then to Hải Phòng and opened her hotel in 1912 (RST n°72046, n°76425) and stayed there until her death in the 1930s.

However, there were more tragic trajectories, probably representative of the situation of the majority of the girls. The life of one of them was told by a French employee of a Japanese maritime company in Saigon, who also worked as a Japanese-French translator. In 1906, he wrote to the local police about the situation of a girl named Ueki, a native of Shimabara (Kyushu) who had been working for three years in the colony in the establishment n°8, held by an individual named Oseki in Saigon. The author described Ueki in a critical condition, unable to speak anymore due to the inhuman conditions of living inside the brothel (DRO n° 4-2-2-27). A couple of weeks later, he reported that Ueki was admitted to the emergency hospital and died there a few hours later. Generally speaking, the only information that we could find about the path of these women in the colony were the notices of their arrival in the colony and then the notices of their deaths (DRO n° 4-2-2-27). Considering the question of interactions with other communities of the colonial society, Japanese prostitutes were working with European and Japanese customers and were supposed to refuse "Annamite" customers (Roustan 2012). Originally, the *karayuki* did not come to stay in Indochina and hoped to return quickly in Japan. However, among those who survived, a small number of them stayed in the colony, married with Europeans, or opened small businesses, such as cafés in hotel, and finished the rest

of their lives in Indochina.

The second example is representative of Japanese men who migrated to the colony around the beginning of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most famous Japanese migrant in French Indochina was Matsuhiko Matsushita, who has been studied by several Japanese scholars because of his involvement since the 1920s with Vietnamese nationalists, such as Prince Cuong Dê, Ngô Đình Diem, and Tran Cuang Vinh (Tachikawa 2001 p.102-4; Mizutani 1942 p. 5-12). I chose to follow the trajectory of another migrant from Kyushu, Naohiko Oda (1886-1945), who was a friend of Matsushita's, but had a very different character and stayed far away from politics (Oda 2007). Naohiko Oda arrived in Hà Nội in 1910. Originally, he planned to emigrate to Europe, but changed his mind on a boat bound for Indochina, convinced by another Japanese traveler to try his luck in the French colony. For a short time, he survived in Hà Nội, helped by *karayuki*, before he opened his photography studio close to the citadel in the area where Japanese were living at that time. He actually achieved great success taking European settlers as customers and became the official photographer of the GGI (Oda 2007). However, after the First World War, his business began to decline due to the economic crisis of 1921 that affected the colony and also because of the competition created by the increasing number of Vietnamese photographers (Kashiwagi undated). He then considered returning to Japan due to the bankruptcy of his photography business but was asked by the Japanese consul to buy the hotel owned by Matsushita in Hà Nội. Thus, he stayed in Hà Nội, and in 1930, he

opened the "Hotel Oda." Oda Naohiko died of disease in Hà Nội in 1945. He was considered by colonial authorities as the representative of Japanese migrants in Hà Nội, and indeed he was the "perpetual" vice-president of the Japanese association in Tonkin (RST n°79715). Unlike Matsushita, Oda was not involved in political activities, but he played an important role in relations between the Japanese and other communities in Tonkin (RSTNF n°1613). Upon his arrival in Indochina, Oda was already married, but he immigrated alone. Then, after a few years, his wife and his first daughter joined him. Also, two other girls and a boy were born from this couple in Hà Nội. The eldest daughter, Shizu Oda, married a member of the Japanese consulate in Hà Nội, Maruyama Hikijiro, and followed him to Belgium in 1936 before she went back to Japan in 1939 fearing the war in Europe (RSTNF n°7059). The second daughter died in November 1945 in Hà Nội. The son, Oda Chikashi (known as Michel in the colony), born in 1921, was, like other Japanese children of the colony, educated in a French school with French children. After helping his father for a time at the hotel, he began working in the late 1930s for Matsushita's company, the Dainan Kooshii. During the war, he was first used as a translator by the Japanese authorities and then sent to northern Tonkin as a soldier. At the end of the conflict, he considered going underground, but advised by his sister, he returned to Hà Nội after his demobilization in October 1945. The hotel was sold to a Chinese neighbor, and he went to Japan for the first time in his life in May 1946 to the village of his mother after spending some time in camps close to Hải Phòng where Japanese were interned

pending repatriation (Oda 1949). After a few years teaching English in the village of his ancestors, he was contacted by Mitsuhiro Matsushita who needed a representative in Viêt Nam for his company. In 1952, Oda returned again to Indochina and was arrested by the *Sûreté générale* because of his relationship with Matsushita, who was a *persona non grata* for the French authorities. He then started working again for the Dainan Kooshi in Tokyo before he could go back to Saigon in 1956, where he stayed until 1975, on behalf of the Dainan Kooshi/Nippon Koe as director of the local branch. The last member of the family, the youngest daughter, Toshiko, was educated in Hà Nội with the Vietnamese and French elite, along with, for example, the future bride of Diem's brother. During the war, she fell in love with a young Japanese officer in the Japanese air force, who was, in his civil life, an agronomist of the imperial house (Oda 1949 p. 3). At the end of the war, they went together back to Tokyo, where they still live today. Like her brother, Chikashi, she recalled her strange feelings when they were forced to move to Japan, which was for them at that time a foreign country (Oda 2007; Igusa 2007).

Such examples of life history of Japanese migrants could be multiplied, and all will show the same complex interactions between a local community experience and some broader transnational context. People were indeed foreigners in Indochina but also members of colonial society, sometimes even born there and, at the same time, subjects of the Japanese Empire, but in a way, also foreigners in Japan.

## VI. Conclusion

If the Japanese military presence in Indochina during the Second World War is well known and has left traces in the history of Việt Nam, Japanese migration since the late nineteenth century in French Indochina was somewhat forgotten both at an individual and at a collective level. Considering their legal status, and regardless of the political regime, they remained throughout their lives *étrangers* in French Indochina, and then later, in the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam. Yet, they were an active component of colonial society that interacted with other members of this society.

With "European" status, they benefited from advantages not afforded to other Asian populations and had quite privileged relations with the French colonizers. However, tensions always existed, exemplified by events such as the so-called "yellow peril" crisis between 1903 and 1906 (Roustan 2001 p. 138-62) and the boycotts organized by leaders of Chinese congregations, not to mention the Japanese military occupation. However, beyond the political and economic issues that created relationships of mutual interest between communities, other types of relationships existed, such as marriages with French or Vietnamese (RSTNF n°7058). The trajectories presented in this paper may be too few to illuminate the variety of existing cases among the Japanese community who lived in Việt Nam from the period of French colonial domination. However, what we understand from our research is, despite the fact they were Japanese nationals and generally dependent on trade relations with Japan and

its colonies like Taiwan, most Japanese migrants living in the French colony had no intention of returning one day to Japan regardless of their legal categorization. It was only under duress that at the end of the Second World War, the majority of the migrants had to leave the territory of Viêt Nam (RSTNF 7059).

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요약

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## 인도차이나 식민사회의 이방인들: 일본 이민자를 중심으로

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본 논문은 프랑스령 인도차이나 시기 이방인의 개념을 만드는 경계의 역사적 관점에 대한 논의이다. 특히 인도차이나 식민 사회에 존재한 일본인 이민자를 주요 연구대상화 하였다. 우선 1882년에서 1952년 기간 동안 일본인 이민자의 역사적 주요 측면을 다루었다. 다음으로 같은 기간 식민지 권력의 관점에서 “외국인”의 개념을 정의하였다.

이상의 두 가지 측면을 다룸으로써 첫째, 식민지 권력에 대한 외국인 지위 변경이 가지는 중요도와 복잡성에 대해 논의하였다. 둘째, 이방인의 개념을 논의하는데 있어 인도차이나 식민지 시기 특히 하노이와 사이공 같은 도시를 중심으로 공동체의 상호 작용을 분석하였다. 셋째, 인도차이나 지역에서 그들의 여생을 보냈던 일본 이주민들의 궤적을 미시적 수준에서 바라보았다. 본 논문은 이상의 세 가지 수준의 분석을 통해 이방인의 개념이 어떻게 다의적으로 개념화되는지를 검토하고, 나아가 식민지 사회의 사회적 행위자로서 그들이 어떻게 분류되었는지를 여설한다.

**주제어:** 이방인, 프랑스령 인도차이나, 베트남, 일본, 이민자, 식민사회, 법체계