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Karayuki-san: Japanese prostitutes in Australia, 1887–1916 (I & II)

In *Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, Issue 68, pp. 323–341
and Vol. 17 Issue 69, pp. 474–488, 1977.

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KARAYUKI-SAN: JAPANESE PROSTITUTES IN AUSTRALIA,
1887-1916—I*

KARAYUKI was the word which the Japanese used in the earlier years of this century for those of their countrywomen who sought the means of subsistence in South-east Asia or the Pacific. At that time a plaintive song about them, sung to the samisen, used to be popular:

Carried on the drifting current,
Her destination will be
In the west, Siberia;
Or in the east, Java.
Which country will be her grave?
Lovers' chatter
Is like the dust
Of any country.

The ideographs comprising the word, *karayuki*, literally mean 'going to China'; for most of the *karayuki*, as we shall demonstrate, were from Kyūshū, the part of Japan closest to China. There was a substantial flow of these women to China before emigration to South-east Asia began.

According to an article appearing in the *Japan Mail* early in 1896,¹ there were at that time some 200 Japanese prostitutes in Australia—about the same number as in British India, about twice as many as in Hong Kong, and about two-thirds as many as in Singapore. Furthermore, according to figures it cites, in Australia their per capita income was much higher than anywhere else, averaging 400 yen² per month (cf. 200 yen in India, 120 yen in Singapore, and 100 yen in Hong Kong). The article continued that the women who went overseas were smuggled out of Japan by various ingenious devices on board foreign steamers. Usually they went first to Hong Kong, where they found agents engaged in this special line of business. After a short stay they drifted southward to such places as Singapore, Penang, Australia, India etc. Generally they paved the way for Japanese traders: when a batch of five or six women settled in a port,

* This is the first instalment of a two-part article. The second part will appear in October. The following files (or portions of them relating to Australia) from the archives of the Japanese Foreign Ministry referred to in this article are available on microfilm in the Australian National Library:

3.8.4.8	}	Australian National Library (N.L.A.) microfilm G16164			
3.8.8.4					
4.2.2.27					
4.2.2.34					
6.1.5.9.7		"	"	"	G16175
6.1.6.29		"	"	"	G16166

¹ *Japan Weekly Mail*, Yokohama, 30 May 1896, p. 609. It cited the Tokyo daily *Kokumin* as its source, but the original has not yet been located. The English-language *Mail* appeared as both a daily and a weekly.

² The rate of exchange at that time was about £1 Sg. = 10 yen.

the Japanese merchant soon followed with the goods to satisfy their various needs. After the merchants came the Japanese labourers.

Unfortunately there are no figures for 1896 from Australian sources against which the total given by the *Japan Mail* for Australia—200—can be checked. The scattered information available for particular regions a little later, however, suggests that it may not have been an overstatement.

When a return showing the number of Japanese women in each Queensland police district was requested by the Home Secretary in September 1897 he was informed that there were 116 Japanese women in the colony and that all but one of these, the Consul's wife, were prostitutes: Thursday Island 34, Cairns 16, Childers 15, Croydon 14, Innisfail 13, Mackay 9, Cooktown 4, Townsville 3, Halifax 3, and Rockhampton, Ingham, Port Douglas and Normanton one each.³

We have more detailed information about the Japanese women in Thursday Island not very long before this—at the end of 1893. Hattori in his book on Thursday Island, published early in 1894, gives a complete breakdown of the Japanese population into their prefectures of origin. He gives the total number of women as 32. It is very close to the number given by the police in their 1896 count. Fortunately he goes further and divides them into: prostitutes, 21; and respectable women, 11.⁴ We can accept this as accurate. Hattori would have been no more eager than the Queensland Police to over-estimate the proportion of respectable women. He was favourably inclined towards the anti-prostitution movement there, and his principal informant, Matsuoka, was one of the leaders of that movement. Although it would probably be safe to accept Hattori's figure rather than that of the Police for Thursday Island, it might be unwise to apply Hattori's ratio of 1 respectable: 2 prostitutes, across the board to the Police totals for the other towns. The Japanese population at Thursday Island was probably more than twice the size of that at Townsville, Cairns or Mackay, and there would have been mere handfuls in the other towns. On Thursday Island to a greater extent than elsewhere the Japanese population would have been large enough to sustain some respectable services. It is doubtful whether

³ PRE/103, Col. Sec. 97/11771, Queensland State Archives (Q.S.A.). Police Headquarters do not appear to have given the lady in Rockhampton the benefit of the doubt. The telegram from the local Inspector merely stated that she was 'not doing anything at present for a living' (Q.S.A., POL/J1, 13M). The Police Commissioner (W. E. Parry-Okeden) thought that in some districts there were more Japanese prostitutes than this count indicated. The results of a more careful survey of coloured aliens by the Police on 31 October of the following year suggest that his doubts may not have been without substance. This later count put the total number of Japanese women at 220, *Queensland Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings*, 1898, vol. 3, p. 821. During the interval 1/9/97-31/10/98 the net influx of Japanese women from overseas was only 40, Q.S.A., PRE/103, Arrivals and Departures at Queensland Ports 1897-1901. Other figures showing annual arrivals and departures by both sea and rail indicate net increases of only 66 for the calendar year 1897 and 6 for the calendar year 1898, *Queensland Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings*, 1898, vol. 3, p. 332; 1899, vol. 3, p. 522.

⁴ T. Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinshokumin*, Tokyo 1894, p. 21.

there would have been the same degree of 'respectability' among the Japanese elsewhere in Queensland.

The official decennial Censuses conducted by the Governments of each colony indicate that in that era the only other parts of Australia where there were significant numbers of Japanese women were Western Australia (209 in 1901) and Northern Territory (38 in 1901).⁵

The first Japanese consulate in Western Australia was not established until 1910. Fortunately, however, among the scattered remnants of the Australian consular correspondence that survive in the archives of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, there is the report made by Aiba Tsuneji, a clerk from the Sydney Consulate-General, of the official visit that he paid to the southern portion of Western Australia in August-September 1901.⁶ For this report Aiba compiled a table giving the breakdown by sexes, occupation and prefectures of origin of Japanese residing within an area whose extremities are roughly Geraldton, Cue, Kalgoorlie and Albany.⁷ This table is reproduced below, omitting only the 48 prefectures of origin. He shows all the 58 or 59 women in the area as prostitutes and 49 out of the 207 Japanese men as living off their earnings.

What of the Japanese women in the other parts of Western Australia? The Census of March 1901 shows 209 Japanese females in the State, but does not give their occupations. Its regional breakdown tends to confirm Aiba's: in the municipalities covered by him its total is 70 compared with his 59. The remaining 139 are scattered among pearling and mining settlements.⁸ Of these, probably Broome alone had a large enough Japanese community (303 males, 63 females) to sustain a few respectable married families. There seems no good reason to believe that, for Western Australia as a whole, the proportion of Japanese who were prostitutes was vastly different from that in Queensland.

The date closest to the *Japan Mail* article for which we have detailed information about Japanese prostitutes at Darwin is 1893. In that year the Japanese Diet voted 10,000 yen to survey territories likely to be suitable for Japanese

⁵ The 1901 Census figures for Japanese women in the other parts of Australia were: the remainder of South Australia 1; N.S.W. 9; Victoria 1; Tasmania 0 or possibly 1 (i.e. 1 non-Chinese Asian).

⁶ Japan, Foreign Ministry Archives (J.F.M.A.), 6.1.6.29.

⁷ Aiba regarded these figures as substantially complete for the area covered by the table, except for insignificant exceptions such as Mt. Magnet, Day Dawn, Nannine, and Norseman. At the W.A. Census of 31 March 1901 the Japanese population of these places was 4, 2, 1 and 1 respectively, and all were males. In the narrative part of his report he gives unconfirmed figures for the settlements on the branch lines extending out beyond Kalgoorlie. The pattern seems to be the same. At Kanowna 'There are two men and two women. There is a laundry but it seems to double as a brothel'. At Menzies 'There are 15 or 16, of whom 8 are women. There are, I am told, 4 laundries and 4 brothels'. At Kookynie (at that time the railhead)—'I can't find out how many are there, but there are 8 women among them. There are 5 brothels and 1 laundry'.

⁸ For details of the regional distribution of the Japanese population in the W.A. Census 1901 see the Appendix to my unpublished paper 'The Japanese in Australia 1871-1946' read to Section 26, 45th ANZAAS Congress in Perth in 1973, Ms. 3092, N.L.A.

AIBA'S TABLE SHOWING OCCUPATIONS, LOCATIONS AND SEXES OF JAPANESE RESIDING
IN SOUTHERN PORTION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1901

Location	Sex		Occupation															Total			
			Servant	Agriculture	Cook	Making Bamboo-ware	Carpenter	Fishing	Boarding House	Wood-cutting and Charcoal-Burning	Sale of Liquid Refreshments	Sale of Vegetables	Sale of Fish	Sale of Fruit	Laundering	Unemployed	Prostitution	Restaurant cum Brothel	Sundries Store cum Brothel	Laundry cum Brothel	
Perth	m	w	6	1	20	1											11			39	
																	14			14	
Fremantle	m	w			1			1									1			3	
																	3			3	
Albany	m	w		2													1			3	
																	1			1	
Bunbury	m	w			2															2	
Kalgoorlie	m	w			12		1		1						32	10	11	3		2	72
																	16			16	
Boulder	m	w			5					1					12		9		1	28	
																	10			10	
Coolgardie	m	w			3						1				4		6	2	3	13	
																				6	
Geraldton	m	w		3	1							3	5	1	4		4			17	
																				4	
Cue	m	w		1	14										10		5			30	
																	5			5	
Total	m	w	6	7	58*	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	5	1	62	10	38	5	3*	3	207*
																	59*			59*	

* In Aiba's table these figures read from left to right 55, 58, 2, 213 and 58 respectively. I have adjusted them so that each vertical column tallies. Aiba's table also provided information about birthplaces which I have summarised on p. 336.

emigration.⁹ Of this sum 2,000 yen was allocated to Watanabe Kanjūrō to visit and report on Australia and some Pacific islands. His 300-page report was completed on 3 May 1894 and was printed.¹⁰ According to Watanabe, there were at that time 12 Japanese women in Darwin, all of whom had come there as prostitutes. Two had married in Darwin. The women were distributed among three brothels, three or four at each.

That prostitution continued to be the principal activity of the Japanese women in Darwin is suggested by the following comment on Darwin's division of labour in the Methodist *Missionary Review* of 12 December 1898: 'The Japanese women are almost all professional prostitutes, the Malay women are nurse-girls, the Chinese women are mostly patient drudging wives'.¹¹ It seems unlikely that their numbers in Darwin would decline until the Immigration Restriction Act came into effect in 1902.¹²

Adding together these figures for Queensland, Western Australia and Darwin, it would appear that the total given by the *Japan Mail* for Japanese prostitutes in Australia, 200, may have been a little too low.

Were the prostitutes the first Japanese arrivals?

As we have already observed, the *Japan Mail* claimed that, in the spread of Japanese immigration to South-east Asia and beyond, the prostitutes were the pioneers paving the way for the shop-keepers and the labourers in turn.

The most detailed and best documented work on Japanese prostitutes overseas is *Shōfu: Kaigai Ryūrōki* by Miyaoka Kenji.¹³ He cites numerous sources that support the *Japan Mail's* thesis. For example, when the first Japanese shop in Shanghai, the Tashiro-ya, opened in 1868 (one year before the establishment of the Japanese consulate) part of its sales were Japanese cosmetics. From this he deduces, not unreasonably, that the Japanese prostitutes had already arrived.¹⁴ It must have been the same in Hong Kong; for when Itagaki, the leader of the Liberal Party, visited there in 1882, he noted that the Japanese

⁹ *Shimpō*, 12 Jan. 1894, reproduced in *Shimbun Shūsei: Meiji Hennenshi*, vol. 9, p. 12.

¹⁰ K. Watanabe, *Gōshū Tanken Hōkokusho*, Tokyo 1894. I am indebted to Prof. Katō Shunsaku of Kantō-Gakuin University for drawing my attention to this report.

¹¹ *Missionary Review*, Sydney, 12 Dec. 1898, cited in *Northern Territory Times*, 20 Jan. 1899.

¹² The South Australian Census of 1901 indicates that there were 39 female 'coloured natives of Japan' in the Northern Territory on that day. For details see my 'Japanese in the Northern Territory 1884-1902', *South Australiana*, vol. 15, no. 2.

¹³ K. Miyaoka, *Shōfu: Kaigai Ryūrōki*, Tokyo 1968. After graduating in political science at Keio University, Mr. Miyaoka in 1922 entered the Osaka Shōsen shipping company. In the course of his many overseas visits, particularly to South America, he became interested in the history of the Japanese overseas. He built up a private library of some 3,600 books devoted principally to accounts of their overseas travel or residence written by Japanese since the 1860's. A copy of the catalogue of this collection, Miyaoka Bunko Shomoku, is held in the Australian National University Library. His book is written on the basis of eye-witness accounts from the books in this collection.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

population consisted of about 10 men, and about 20 women of whom most were prostitutes. In Singapore the first Japanese women were operating by 1877. Ten years later there were more than a hundred women and only 17 men. It was principally for the prostitutes that the Japanese cemetery was established at Serangoon the following year.¹⁵ Even in 1897 the overwhelming proportion of the local Japanese population were the prostitutes and their touts. It was only by conducting a door-knock appeal around the brothels that the Consul was able to finance the fireworks display which was the Japanese community's contribution to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.¹⁶

In Australia, however, the sequence appears to have been rather different. The first reference to Japanese prostitutes in Australia that I have come upon was in 1887. In that year it was brought to the attention of the Honorary Consul, Alexander Marks, that two Japanese prostitutes were operating in Melbourne and four in Thursday Island. Marks made efforts to get these women to leave the country and, in the case of those in Melbourne, was successful.¹⁷ This, of course, was long after Japanese had appeared in both these places. In Melbourne the marriage between Rikinosuke, a Japanese acrobat, and one Jane Kerr was registered in 1875. In 1881, just after the International Exhibition, Akiyama and Tokuta set up in business as importers of Japanese goods, next door to Young and Jackson's in Flinders Street. At Thursday Island the first Japanese to arrive appears to have been Nonami Kojirō in 1878.¹⁸

The next reference that I have come upon is in William Lane's magazine, the *Boomerang*. Its issue of 12 May 1888 carries an account of a recent visit to Darwin. Idiosyncracies of style indicate that the writer was undoubtedly Lane's friend, James Murdoch, who had just resigned from the position of Second Master at Brisbane Grammar School and was on his way to take up a teaching position in Japan.¹⁹ In this article Murdoch reports that there were then five Japanese brothels in Darwin containing 25 Japanese prostitutes and that there were branch establishments at Cambridge Gulf (i.e. Wyndham) and 'down the Western Australian coast well nigh as far as Fremantle'.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 120-3.

¹⁶ T. Irie, *Hompō Kaigai Hattenshi*, Tokyo 1942, vol. 1, p. 237.

¹⁷ Data paper prepared on the instructions of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 20 Feb. 1891. J.F.M.A., 4.2.2.34 (vol. 1).

¹⁸ For details of early contacts between Australia and Japan see D. C. S. Sissons, *Australian-Japanese Relations: The First Phase, 1859-91*; Canberra 1971, mimeographed, Ms. 3092, N.L.A. I have been unable to find anything to substantiate the unlikely assertion made by the Japanese Legation in London in 1900 that Japanese were engaged in the pearling industry at Thursday Island as far back as 1875. Enclosure in Hayashi to Chief Secretary, Queensland, 30 July 1900, reproduced at p. 19 of 'Admission of Japanese into Queensland—Further Correspondence Relating to', *Queensland Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings*, 1901, vol. 4, p. 1139.

¹⁹ In later years Murdoch achieved an international reputation with his three-volume *History of Japan*. In 1919 he was appointed Professor of Oriental Studies at Sydney University. For biographical details about Murdoch see J. H. Longford's preface to vol. 3 of Murdoch's *History of Japan*, London 1926, the obituary in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 Oct 1921, the appreciation in the same newspaper, 26 Nov. 1921 by M. Miyata, and the reference at p. 15 of S. Stephenson, *Annals of the Brisbane Grammar 1869-1922*, Brisbane 1923.

Murdoch was back in Australia briefly in mid-1889 and appears then to have heard that Japanese prostitution had spread to 'Normanton, Burketown, and some other ports in the Gulf of Carpentaria'.²⁰

Unfortunately for the *Japan Mail's* thesis, the employment of Japanese crewmen on pearling luggers at Darwin, and on the north-west coast of Western Australia, predates this by several years.²¹ The *Register* (Adelaide) reports the arrival at Darwin of 12 indentured Japanese from Hong Kong on 30 June 1884 and of three more on 20 July.²² Pearling vessels from Darwin operated from the outset on the north-west coast. Early evidence of Japanese among their crews appears in Western Australian official records. The death of a Japanese diver named Nishimoto was registered at Derby on 30 April 1885. The following June the 'occurrence book' of the police station at Cossack records the presence of a Japanese, Kinoshita, aboard the pearling schooner, *Flowerdale*.²³

The proceedings of an inquest into the shooting of a Japanese prostitute, Aramaki Kumie, aged 22, at Wyndham on 7 March 1889, indicate that Murdoch was right about there being a Japanese brothel in Wyndham, and that there were certainly Japanese prostitutes at Cossack, 500 miles to the south. The story that emerges from the depositions is that at the end of 1888 Kumie and another Japanese girl, Kiku, were operating at Cossack. Kumie was kept by a Chinese. We are not told whom Kiku was working for. Kumie forms an attachment with Taniuchi, a Japanese who was spending two months at Cossack pearling. He sells his boat at Cossack for £110, and advances £20 to Kumie, and takes her to Wyndham where he deposits her with a Japanese couple, Masaichi and Taki, who have been engaged in prostitution there for some time. Taniuchi returns to Cossack via Darwin to finalise details of the sale of the boat. At Cossack he spends a week with Kiku, who then travels with him to Wyndham where she joins the other three. Three days later Kumie is found shot about 300 yards from the town. The police arrest Taniuchi.

The Japanese witnesses testify that Kumie was much put out when Taniuchi and Kiku arrived from Cossack and Taniuchi stayed at the hotel instead of with her, that on the night of her death she had found him in bed with Kiku, whereupon she had rushed out of the house. At the time of his second visit to Cossack Taniuchi had left his belongings in the care of Kumie. She accordingly had access to his revolver. The implication was that when she rushed out of the house she took it with her and, in a fit of jealousy and depression, shot herself. She

²⁰ Article by Murdoch on 'Japanese Paphians' in *Japan Echo*, Yokohama, 15 Nov. 1890. This fortnightly journal, of which Murdoch was Editor, lasted for only six issues, 1 Nov. 1890 to 15 Jan. 1891. A complete file, 138 pages in all, is in the National Diet Library, Tokyo.

²¹ Mr. Hoolan in the Queensland Parliament also claimed that the prostitutes were the first Japanese to arrive at Darwin, *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 70, 28 June 1893, p. 183.

²² *Register*, Adelaide, 1 and 21 July 1884.

²³ Cossack Police Occurrence Book (Ms. A/366), W.A. State Archives.

also had access to his money which, Taniuchi testifies, was found to be missing when Kumie rushed out. Together, the Japanese witnesses present Taniuchi with a firm alibi. The jury expresses its dissatisfaction with them but, reluctantly, returns an open verdict. Taniuchi is released.²⁴

This case presents intriguing possibilities. Had Taniuchi amassed the capital for his boat by trafficking in women; or was he a legitimate pearler who was also a Lothario? The freedom with which the girls seemed to move from town to town is somewhat surprising. According to Taniuchi, Kiku and Kumie were not satisfied with their prospects in Wyndham and had decided to take the boat to Darwin two days later, make money there, and return to Japan. All this suggests that Murdoch may have been correct when he referred to the brothels in the North-west as *branch establishments* of the Darwin brothels. Could the girls, in fact, move only with Taniuchi's consent and with him as escort? What was the role of Suzuki Tokujirō who, according to the Melbourne Consulate, lived in Lahvana (Cavanagh?) St., Darwin, and reported Kumie's death to the authorities in Tokyo?

One thing that emerges is that the Wyndham case does not support the *Japan Mail's* thesis. Even in Wyndham, there were Japanese who do not appear to be connected with the brothel (which, incidentally, was at the most only a two-room affair)—in the course of the inquest we meet two other Japanese householders and the court interpreter.

Even though, in the case of Australia, the Japanese prostitute may not have been the cause of subsequent Japanese immigration and commercial activity, she may have played a role in the accumulation of capital by some of the Japanese enterprises that came after her. According to *Muraoka Ihei Jiden*, said to be written by the biggest trafficker in Japanese women in South-east Asia in the 1890's, 75 per cent of the heads of successful Japanese enterprises in the Pacific were ex-convicts or fugitives from justice, who first became prosperous as procurers.²⁵ Muraoka is, as we shall see, a suspect source and anything said in the autobiography must be treated with caution. But Professor Mori Katsumi, after fieldwork at Amakusa, the district that provided many of the prostitutes for South-east Asia, argues that prostitution was an important factor in the development of Japanese wealth in Malaya where, he claims, the Chinese capitalists would never lend money to Japanese for other purposes.²⁶

Irie Torajirō, whose history of Japanese emigration, published in 1942, still remains the standard work on the subject, takes a similar view, observing that when the Consul-General in Singapore finally closed the brothels in 1920 the withdrawal of the capital which they had provided to other local Japanese enterprises caused a chill wind to be felt throughout the Japanese resident com-

²⁴ C.S.O. 1296/89 and 269/90, W.A. State Archives.

²⁵ Y. Kawai (ed.), *Muraoka Ihei Jiden*, (The Autobiography of Muraoka Ihei), Tokyo 1960, p. 57. I am indebted to G. J. Toff of Nagoya Kōgyō University for bringing this useful source to my notice.

²⁶ K. Mori, *Jinshin Baibai: Kaigai Dekasegi Onna*, 1959, p. 166.

munity.²⁷ Mori came across the case of a doctor from Fukuoka prefecture, who in the Netherlands East Indies was able to acquire coconut and rubber plantations with money which he borrowed from the local Japanese prostitutes.²⁸

We have already raised the possibility that Taniuchi in the Wyndham case may have bought his lugger from money made out of trafficking in women. It was asserted in the *Sydney Bulletin* (6 January 1894) that the Japanese prostitutes at Thursday Island 'often devote their savings towards purchasing boats for their male friends'. This was something that seriously worried the senior representative of the Queensland Government on the Island, John Douglas, the Government Resident. In October 1893, reporting to the Queensland Colonial Secretary on an official inspection of the brothels, he wrote:

The profits are very considerable. I have not been able to ascertain exactly how these profits are divided—Several Japanese women are known to have made a good deal of money, and much of this has been invested in shares of shelling boats. There are now forty boats owned by Japanese. . . .

Douglas at the time was very worried that the Japanese might gain control of the pearling industry and, partly for this reason, he recommended that steps should be taken to prevent the entry of more prostitutes.²⁹

Who were the traffickers?

There are two early cases where the modus operandi of the traffickers is described.

In April 1889 H. Satō, a local government official from the northern island of Hokkaidō, visited Australia. He passed through Darwin on his journey south. What he heard there disturbed him so much that he wrote (in English) to the Honorary Consul in Melbourne about it. He reported that there were 19 Japanese women in Darwin, all of them leading 'a shameful life to the disgrace of their countrymen'. Five of them, all young women born in Nagasaki, had come from Hong Kong to Darwin with Takada Tokujirō. One he had sold to a Malay barber for £50, two to a Chinese at £40 each, one he had kept as his concubine; the fifth he was working as a prostitute.³⁰

We have already mentioned Watanabe's reference to prostitutes in Darwin in his report on his visit to Australia in 1893.³¹ This states that the 12 prostitutes (all of them born in Kyushu, most from Nagasaki prefecture) had all come to Darwin after plying their trade in places like Hong Kong and Singapore. Accor-

²⁷ T. Irie, *Hōjin Kaigai Hattenshi*, Tokyo 1942, vol. 2, p. 230.

²⁸ Mori, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

²⁹ Douglas to Hon. H. Tozer, 2 Oct. 1893, Q.S.A. 55/1, Col. Sec. 93/12777. Also Douglas to Col. Sec., 7 Oct. 1893.

³⁰ In Darwin Takada had also managed to ruin another Japanese by fraudulent dealings and was planning to abscond by the next boat to Singapore. H. Satow to A. Marks, 12 April 1889, enclosed in Marks to Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, no. 11 of 24 April 1889. J.F.M.A., 3.8.8.4.

³¹ See page 327 above.

ding to Watanabe the procurer in Japan would seek out poor families and make an advance of 20-30 yen for each victim. He would then make arrangements with the captain of a foreign ship to smuggle them to Hong Kong or Canton at 50-60 yen per head—they would be put aboard from a fishing boat as soon as they were beyond the radius of surveillance by the water police.³² At Hong Kong the procurer would sell them for about 200-300 yen and then return to Japan and repeat the process.

In 1960 a former Professor at St. Paul's University, Tokyo, Kawai Yuzuru, published the autobiography of Muraoka Iheiji³³ who (as already noted) claimed to have been a leading figure in the operation of Japanese prostitution overseas. In the autobiography he states that from about 1890 to 1894 his headquarters were at Singapore, and that during that period he superintended the smuggling of 3,222 women from Japan to Singapore whence he despatched them as prostitutes as far west as Mauritius.³⁴ He claims that at one time during this period he was sending 20-30 girls per month to Australia.³⁵

Among Japanese scholars a controversy still rages as to the reliability that should be accorded 'Muraoka's' assertions. For example, Yamazaki Tomoko, in the preface to her book, *Sandakan Hachiban Shōkan*, published in 1972, argues that very little reliance can be placed on them.³⁶ She bases her argument principally on two grounds: (1) Many books have been written by Japanese travellers and residents in South-east Asia, and several of these mention the names of the principal Japanese brothel-keepers. Muraoka is not mentioned in any of these. Furthermore, Miss Yamazaki has interviewed a dozen or so old women now in their 80s and 90s who in their youth were prostitutes in South-east Asia and none of them had ever heard of him; (2) Several of the claims in the book are at variance with the facts. For example, although Muraoka alleges that he met two famous Japanese statesmen, Itagaki and Itō, in Singapore in December 1890 and October 1891, Japanese newspapers indicate that each of these was in Japan at those dates.

There are, however, others who regard Muraoka as a valuable historical source. Naturally, among these is Professor Kawai who published the autobiography. In the 1930's Kawai was teaching at the Japanese Higher Commercial College at Taihoku in Formosa. He claimed that in 1936 on a visit

³² We do not have to rely on Watanabe for evidence that girls were at this time shipped to Singapore in this fashion. On 10 Feb. 1894 the Master of the *MacDuff* testified at Singapore that he had brought 34 women and 6 men in this manner. Ten women and 3 men came aboard the night before the ship left Kuchinotsu (Nagasaki prefecture). When they had cleared the harbour he picked up the remainder from a boat. He was promised \$30 per head (J.F.M.A., 3.8.8.4).

³³ See footnote 25 above.

³⁴ An *Asahi Shimbun* correspondent visiting Zanzibar in 1925 met a Japanese prostitute there who had reached Mauritius from Bombay before the turn of the century, I. Shirakawa, *Jitchi Tōsa Higashi Afurika no Tabi* (cited in Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, p. 184).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁶ T. Yamazaki, *Sandakan Hachiban Shōkan* (Brothel No. 8 at Sandakan), Tokyo 1972, pp. 14-19.

to the Philippines he met Muraoka who gave him his notebooks to edit and that in 1937 Muraoka spent three weeks with him in Formosa helping him to remedy obscurities in the text. He is convinced that Muraoka's notebooks were honest attempts to set down fact. His personal assessment of Muraoka is that he was quite lacking in the imagination and literary talent that would have been required to concoct such a story.³⁷

Professor Mori, on the basis of research in Amakusa, the district in Kyushu that provided many of the prostitutes for South-east Asia, also places considerable reliance on the autobiography. He claims that names that Muraoka mentions as coming from this district do, in fact, tally with the names of people who went overseas from the district.³⁸ Miyaoka, to whom we have already referred, considers Muraoka '75% reliable'.³⁹

What reliance should we place on Muraoka's references to Japanese prostitution in Australia?

They certainly cannot be accepted without qualification. I have already referred to his claim that at one time he was sending 20-30 girls a month to Australia. The Western Australian Census figures, however, suggest that he could not have maintained such a rate for any length of time.⁴⁰

The only part of Australia that Muraoka mentions is Western Australia and the only specific place-name that he gives is rendered by his editors in Japanese phonetic script (*katakana*) as 'Fu-ru-ga-te-n'. Referring to his activities late in 1889 (corrected by his editors to 1890), Muraoka writes:

As soon as I got back to Singapore [from India] I provided women for the Australian region. I took 8 to Takano at *Furugaten* in Western Australia and, in the same way, 11 to Nishiyama. The natural products there are gold, silver, pearl-shell, wool and coal. The natives are called 'binghi'. There the Japanese prostitutes also go inland. An old madam, O-some, goes on tour with two girls. They carry their tents with them on their backs. O-natsu-san also goes on circuit with two girls. Each of them has put away three or four thousand yen. A man from Wakayama prefecture is working 5 girls in Furugaten; so next I provided Osaka and Sakata with 8 girls each and set them up in business. . . . After that I got Matsuda and Araki each to take 5 girls to Furugaten.⁴¹

If Muraoka's handwriting was at all hard to read (and his editors readily admit that it was) Fu-ra-ga-te-n could well be Ku-ru-ga-de, i.e. Coolgardie. The problem is that, while by his own account Muraoka appears to have ceased operations in Singapore in 1894, local material strongly suggests that Japanese prostitutes did not appear in Coolgardie until the first half of 1896.⁴² Assuming

³⁷ Kawai, *op. cit.*, postscript.

³⁸ Mori, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

³⁹ Interviewed by D.C.S.S., 12 Nov. 1973. See p. 327 above.

⁴⁰ The number of Japanese females in Western Australia rose from 62 in 1891 to only 209 in 1901.

⁴¹ Kawai, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴² See detailed account of the history of prostitution in Coolgardie in *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 17 April 1897. See also *ibid.*, 8 July 1896.

that 1889 or 1890 is correct, the region that corresponds most closely with Muraoka's description is Cossack-Roebourne and the Pilbara Goldfields (proclaimed July 1889) to which it was the gateway. Of the 62 Japanese females in Western Australia at the 1891 Census 39 were in this region (North).⁴³ Cossack, Roebourne and the Pilbara would explain Muraoka's references to pearl-shell, wool, gold and binghis. Moreover, from the Wyndham inquest we know that Japanese prostitutes were operating in Cossack as early as 1888.

One item in his autobiography suggests to me that Muraoka was acquainted with Western Australia's immigration procedures (which for that day and age were somewhat unusual). He states that on his first arrival at Singapore in March 1889 (corrected by his editors to 1890), he stayed at a 60-room hotel cum brothel operated by Inada Shinnosuke, where he claims there were 15 or 16 girls who were going to Australia. He claims that he and two other Japanese who had arrived on the ship with him joined the party and went to be examined in order to get permits for Australia. He passed the examination, but his two male companions failed.⁴⁴ Not wishing to be separated from his companions, he decided to remain in Singapore. As I understand the Western Australian Imported Labourers Registry Act in force at that time, Muraoka and his male companions, as Asians of the labouring classes, would have been required to undergo a medical examination at Singapore before embarking.⁴⁵ Accordingly, I do not reject out of hand his other references to his operations in Australia.

My own position is about one-third the distance between Miss Yamazaki and Professor Mori. I think Muraoka was a boaster, the scale of whose operations was very much smaller than he gave out. I also think that, in writing some years after the event, his memory may have let him down. In, say, 1896 the stream of Japanese prostitutes may for a while have been directed to the Coolgardie/Kalgoorlie district. In after years Muraoka may have remembered the name, Coolgardie, but forgotten such names as Cossack or Roebourne.

He claims that in Singapore he recruited an organisation of dozens of Japanese ne'er-do-wells—mostly criminals who had either escaped from gaols or fled the country to avoid imprisonment. One can assume that the Japanese police and prison authorities were rather more efficient than to let dozens escape to Singapore alone. But let us say that he was associated in some way or other with a few such people. He claims that he used these as procurers and escorts to set up branch establishments. He gives brief biographies of several of the men that he set up in Western Australia.

Of the men in the passage that we have quoted about his consignment to Western Australia in 1889 or 1890, Muraoka gives us additional information

⁴³ The remaining 23 were divided between: Kimberley West which included Broome and Derby, 20; and 3 in Gascoyne which included Shark Bay. There were no Japanese on the Kimberley Goldfields at the time of the Census.

⁴⁴ Kawai, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ 48 Vic. No. XXV, Sects. 3, 10 and 11.

about Osaka, Sakata, Matsuda and Araki. In Japan Osaka Tamekichi used to enjoy throwing stones at shop windows and pinching the bottoms of the girls among the throng of spectators that this attracted. He had finally been apprehended and sent to prison for eight months. Sakata Junzaburō had seduced his employer's daughter, planning to return after the birth of the child and be accepted as heir. Instead, his employer offered a reward for his capture. He was imprisoned but escaped to Singapore. Matsuda Hitoshi had been in and out of gaol in Japan for armed robbery and for smuggling girls out of the country.

Later in the autobiography Muraoka says that, when he wound up his establishment in Singapore, he sent one of his employees, Ueda Tomosaburō, to Australia with the injunction that he was to send him every penny he made. He also warned him that he had more than 10 henchmen in Australia who would deal with him seriously if he was caught ill-treating the women.⁴⁶

Perhaps these men were Muraoka's superiors or competitors, and not his henchmen; but like Kawai, I doubt whether Muraoka could have made them all up.

Fortunately we do not have to rely on Muraoka for evidence that, before the enactment of the Immigration Restrict Act, both prostitutes and *souteneurs* used to move from Singapore to Australia, and back again, as opportunities presented themselves. Nishimura Takejirō who lived as a medical practitioner in Singapore from 1902 to 1936, recounts the following story told to him by a Japanese prostitute in Singapore in 1904.

It was when I was working at No. 15. It was the couple who are now operating in such a big way in Malabar St. (the centre of the Japanese brothel area in Singapore). Now he is the proprietor of a magnificent store. When he was young he bought some girls, and without paying for them, went to Australia where he set up a brothel. The brothel-keeper here told me to go to Australia and dun him for the money. I set off—partly to see Australia. It's a hot place. Even out at sea it's much hotter than Singapore. During the daytime you can't venture outside for a moment. It's like being baked in an oven. The houses have only four or five rooms and are single storeyed with a galvanised iron roof. Around you there is nothing but sand—not a blade of grass or a tree to be seen. It's a tiresome place.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ According to Muraoka, Ueda had been orphaned when he was 14 years old. Soon afterwards, when he discovered that the children next door were stealing his family's grain, he set up a bomb as a booby-trap. This blew off a child's foot, and he was sent to a reformatory until he was 20. He had no sooner returned home than he beat up a child that his sister had adopted. For this he was put in the local lock-up. He escaped, however, and in revenge set about burning down some 14 or 15 of the houses of his neighbours. Fortunately, it had been raining and the fires did not take. He fled to Hong Kong. As a brothel-keeper in Australia he prospered and returned to Shimane Prefecture where he became a large landowner. Kawai, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-5, 93-4.

⁴⁷ T. Nishimura, *Zainan Sanjūgonen*, Tokyo 1936, p. 46. Miyaoaka (*op. cit.*, pp. 155-6) quotes this passage and, without stating any reason, makes the locale Thursday Island. The description of the climate and the terrain, however, is more suggestive of the North-west.

Additional evidence that the smuggling of women out of Japan was controlled by operators in Hong Kong and Singapore, whose activities extended to Australia, is provided by Sano Makoto, a trainee in the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade who was sent on a tour of South-east Asia. On the ship that took him to Macassar he met a Japanese prostitute who told him the following story. She was born in Kumamoto prefecture and was working as an operative in a local cotton mill. She and her boy-friend and five others were smuggled out of Moji with the promise that there would be work for them at high wages in a mill at Singapore. When they arrived at Singapore four or five bullies were waiting for them. The women were sold to the brothels, and the man was sent to 'the gold mines in South Australia'.⁴⁸ When I first read this I was inclined to reject it as fictional, because there were no gold mines in South Australia and because Asiatics were usually prohibited in mining areas. When it is remembered, however, that, at that time, South Australia included the Northern Territory, the picture changes. Furthermore, South Australia, unlike Queensland⁴⁹ and Western Australia,⁵⁰ had no legislation excluding Asiatics from gold fields. At the 1901 Census, of the 166 Japanese males in the State, 16 were employed in gold-mining, making this their next largest occupational group after the pearling industry.

Where did the women come from?

Our best sources for the birthplaces of the Japanese women who came to Australia are the applications by Japanese residents for Alien Registration in 1916⁵¹ and the inscriptions on such Japanese tombstones as still survive at Thursday Island and Broome.

Among the 54 Japanese women who applied for Alien Registration in Queensland the birthplaces of 50 are stated. Of these, 54 per cent were born in Nagasaki prefecture and 12 per cent in the neighbouring prefecture of Kumamoto. At Thursday Island, out of the 8 Japanese women whose birthplaces are stated on their graves, five were from Nagasaki prefecture and one was from Kumamoto prefecture.⁵² Nagasaki prefecture also provided most of the Japanese women who went to Western Australia. In 1901, of the 59 women in Aiba's table (above, page 326) 30 came from there and 5 from Kumamoto prefecture. In 1916, among the 87 Japanese women who applied for Alien Registration in Western Australia, the birthplaces of 80 are given. Of these 51 (i.e. 59 per cent) were born in Nagasaki prefecture and 6 (i.e. 7 per cent) were born in Kumamoto prefecture. At Broome 10 of the 15 Japanese women

⁴⁸ M. Sano, *Nanyōshotō Junkōki*, Tokyo 1913, quoted in Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Queensland, Mining Act 1898, Sect. 15.

⁵⁰ W.A. Goldfields Act 1892, Sect. 3; Minerals Lands Act 1892, Sects. 8 and 12.

⁵¹ Brisbane Office, BP 4-3-51; Perth Office, PP 14/3, Australian Archives (A.A.)

⁵² I am indebted to Mr. Ochiai of Thursday Island and to the Consul-General in Brisbane (Mr. S. Okamaru) for kindly providing me with a copy of their list of inscriptions on all the surviving tombstones on Japanese graves at Thursday Island, compiled by local Japanese residents in about 1972.

whose birthplaces are stated on their graves were from Nagasaki prefecture.⁵³ Professor Mori in his research on emigration from this region analysed the birthplaces of 304 prostitutes named in Muraoka's autobiography and obtained a similar result: the largest number (34 per cent) were from Nagasaki; while Kumamoto provided 16 per cent.⁵⁴

Unfortunately the Queensland Alien Registration Applications rarely show which parts of the prefectures the women came from. Mori, however, has been able to establish that 55 per cent of the women from these two prefectures mentioned in Muraoka's autobiography came from the Shimabara Peninsula, and from the Amakusa Islands, which face the peninsula from across the Hayasaki Strait. These together amount to only about 12 per cent of the combined area of the two prefectures.

So far as I am aware, little demographic work has been done on the Shimabara Peninsula. Mori, however, has done some interesting work on the Amakusa Islands. From the accurate population and taxation records that have been kept, he demonstrates that, between 1691 and 1856, their population more than trebled, while rice production increased by a factor of only 1.08.

In this part of Japan accurate records were kept of people who were absent from the district. The region was converted to Christianity in the 16th century and, in order to stamp out this religion and detect its adherents, the whole population was required annually to trample on a Christian image. A register was kept of those who, because of absence, had not been tested. By comparing this register for the village of Takahama for the years 1828, 1849 and 1859 with the taxation returns, Mori demonstrates that it was the households with either a small output or a large number of mouths to feed who had absent members—i.e. who were sending members away to earn money to keep the family solvent. From similar records for the same village he also demonstrates that by 1862 it was the women who were being sent away.⁵⁵ The region's dependence on emigration continued until World War II. In 1941 about one-sixth of the total population was outside Japan—and, as in the past, among its emigrants, women were in a majority.⁵⁶ The Osaka *Mainichi Shimbun* before World War II calculated that the annual remittances home from Amakusa women overseas exceeded 200,000 yen. According to Mori this would go a long way towards covering the import surplus of the region.⁵⁷

How were they procured?

Muraoka writes that, when at the outset of his operations in Singapore he collected his band of ruffians to procure women in Japan, he instructed them

⁵³ I am indebted to Mr. T. Kawabata, formerly Consul-General at Perth, for providing me with a copy of the list of the inscriptions on all the surviving tombstones on Japanese graves at Broome, compiled by local Japanese residents in 1956.

⁵⁴ Mori, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

to go, not to busy places, but to the country; to choose girls with as little education as possible and avoid those who had been to secondary school. They should also avoid girls whose parents had capital.⁵⁸

The few primary sources that are available to us suggest that Japanese women who came to Australia were for the most part very young. Of the 33 women from Nagasaki and Kumamoto Prefectures applying for Alien Registration in Queensland, the ages on arrival of 32 can be deduced.⁵⁹ They were as follows: under 13 years, 3; 15-17 years, 8; 18-20 years, 13; 21-23 years, 5; 24-27 years 2, 28 years and older, 1. Similarly, of the six Japanese women whose deaths were registered at Broome between 11 February 1896 and 16 October 1901, five were born at Nagasaki. The age on arrival of all five was between 18 and 21.

The only information available about the education of the Japanese women is the proportion of them who were illiterate. Of the 209 Japanese women in Western Australia in 1901, 206 over the age of five years answered the literacy question in the census. Of these 61 (i.e. 29 per cent) answered that they could not read any language. This was almost the same proportion as amongst the men (30 per cent).

Less evidence is available regarding parental wealth; but what very limited information we have suggests that, as one would expect, the women who came to Australia from Nagasaki and Kumamoto were daughters of farmers or labourers. In the Broome register of deaths the father's occupation is given for three out of the five Nagasaki women. They are: farmer, lighterman and labourer. Among the Japanese women in Queensland who were interned in 1941 were eight who had arrived from these two prefectures before the enactment of the Immigration Restriction Act. For seven of these the occupation of their father is known: farmer, 3; shopkeeper, 2; ship's captain, 1. Possibly the status of the ship's 'captain' had risen in the daughter's imagination over the years.

The only completely reliable pieces of evidence available about how the traffic to Australia operated are two references in communications from the Government Resident at Thursday Island.

In 1893 he reported that he had placed in quarantine three prostitutes who had arrived from Hong Kong en route to Normanton and Croydon, their fares paid by Chiyokichi of Thursday Island, 'with whom they are under an agreement'; \$80 had been paid to the parents of two of the girls; the third girl was going to her sister's 'coffee-shop' in Croydon.⁶⁰ We have been able to establish the age of one of these girls from other evidence—it was 15.

The other case reported by him was in December 1897. He transmitted to the Home Secretary the deposition of a recently arrived prostitute, Hashimoto

⁵⁸ Kawai, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ These ages are only approximate, as the original registration particulars are recorded in rounded years.

⁶⁰ Q.S.A. 55/1, C.S.O. 93/14648.

Usa, aged 21, from Nagasaki. She claimed that in June of that year in Nagasaki a man named Konishi had offered to take her to see her sister who ran a lodging house in Singapore. He embarked her along with 10 other young women on a sailing ship at midnight without passports. At Shanghai they were transferred, without landing, to a steamer for Hong Kong. At Hong Kong they were all put into a Japanese lodging house. She suspects that the proprietor of this lodging house paid a considerable amount of money to Konishi for her. The proprietor told her that she could not land in Singapore without a passport, and urged her to go to Thursday Island, where a passport was not required. She agreed and was duly despatched to Thursday Island with other Japanese women, escorted by a Japanese called Matsubara. Matsubara handed her over to a brothel-keeper, Shiosaki, in Thursday Island, in return for cash. Accordingly, she entered into an agreement with Shiosaki whereby she undertook to pay him £100 out of her earnings.⁶¹

Had the girl booked a passage from Japan to Thursday Island in the normal way, it would probably have cost her about £12.⁶² Instead, she incurred a debt of £100 which she had to pay off by prostitution in return for the hardships of a stowaway. The ordeals of the latter sometimes ended in a horrible death. Katō Hisakachi, for many years a ship's captain on the China run, writes of an incident that took place early in this century. On a voyage from Kyūshū to Hong Kong, engineers investigating loss of pressure in a water pipe found in the bunkers a group of girls who, in the last stages of starvation and exhaustion, had bitten a hole in the pipe to secure water. Buried under the coal beside them were the lacerated bodies of their two procurers on whom the girls had taken a terrible revenge as what they thought were their own last hours approached.⁶³

In a book that he wrote when an official of the Seamen's Union in 1918, Honekubo Mitsusuke, the former ship's captain who, in 1947, became a minister in Japan's first Socialist Cabinet, also describes the terrible fates that sometimes awaited these stowaways. Women hidden in the bunkers were crushed to death when the coal shifted with the rolling of the ship, or burned to death when the coal caught fire by spontaneous combustion. The only sign of their one-time presence would be when a fireman's shovel brought up a shred of cloth or a piece of bone. The *Kachidate Maru* which operated between Kyūshū and Hong Kong/Singapore was said to be haunted by the ghosts of nine women and two men. The story is that, in return for money, some firemen hid them in the space between the boiler-room and the ballast tanks. Just out of Nagasaki the boilers burst and they were scalded to death. The firemen waited till dark and secretly dumped the corpses into the sea, like refuse. For this reason the ghosts of the women were unable to leave the ship and remained to haunt it.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Q.S.A., Col. A/822, 97/15833.

⁶² Hattori, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁶³ H. Kato, *Sentō no Nikki kara*, quoted in Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2.

⁶⁴ M. Yonekubo, *Madorosu no Hiai*, Tokyo 1918, quoted in Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-5.

Another hazard for the women who were smuggled aboard in this fashion was suffocation. When the *Fushiki Maru* arrived at Hong Kong on 26 March 1890, 12 Japanese stowaways from Nagasaki were discovered in the coffer-dam separating the engine-room from the hold. Of these, 8 (7 women and 1 man) were dead and the remaining 4 women were barely alive. The coffer-dam was 3 ft. wide and extended for the width of the ship; its height varied from about 18 inches to about 3 ft. After the stowaways had entered, the hold had been filled with coal and this had rendered their hiding place virtually airtight. The surviving girls testified that the dead man, who went from house to house selling cooking oil, had lured each of them aboard by promises of good situations in Hong Kong. Some of them had got aboard dressed as coal coolies.⁶⁵

As we have noted, Hashimoto Usa arrived in Australia with a debt of £100, in return for which she had received nothing. This illustrates one of the aspects in which the overseas prostitutes' lot was worse than that of the women who entered prostitution in Japan. As Mori points out, under Japanese law,⁶⁶ an agreement by a woman to enter a brothel as a prostitute had to be registered at a police station. The police at the time of registration satisfied themselves that the woman was a willing party and that the advance against future earnings stipulated in the contract was actually paid. The police also established that the woman was at least 18 years old.⁶⁷ This was another safeguard that the girls who went overseas did not enjoy: as we have observed, many of those who went to Australia were well under 18.

The girl in the case just mentioned deserves much sympathy. At the same time, a closer look at the documents reveals that her sister's lodging house in Singapore was in Malabar St., the centre of the Japanese brothel area. Her real intention in leaving Japan may well have been to join her sister in that business. Muraoka, however, describes a case which, if true, is much more serious. In 1895 a 19-year-old girl delivered to him at Singapore for despatch to Australia implored him instead to keep her for himself. Her story was that she was the daughter of a draper in Kyoto. She was engaged to be married to a university student in Tokyo the following year. A procurer overheard her say that she would like to spend the months before her marriage learning how to do housework. The procurer came forward and said he knew just the job in Nagasaki where, in the course of acquiring such skills, she could earn 6-7000 yen—and the train left that night! At Shimonoseki he transferred her and three other girls surreptitiously into the hold of a steamer, telling them to make no sound or they would be apprehended and punished as illegal emigrants. The ship took them to Singapore.

⁶⁵ *Japan Weekly Mail*, 12 April 1890. For further details see J.F.M.A., 3.8.8.4. vol. 1.

⁶⁶ *Naimushōrei*: Shōgi Torishimari Kisoku (Oct. 1900).

⁶⁷ Mori, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-9.

Although by his own account Muraoka rarely repatriated a girl unless she had become ill or deformed, he claims that on this occasion, he notified the girl's parents and gave them the chance to redeem her for 600 yen. They did so.⁶⁸

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⁶⁸ Kawai, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101.

KARAYUKI-SAN: JAPANESE PROSTITUTES IN AUSTRALIA,
1887-1916 — II*

Women stowaways landed in Australia

In the pre-federation period Japanese women do not appear to have entered Australia as stowaways. It is not until after 1900 that allegations to this effect begin to appear periodically in the Australian press.¹ Until the Immigration Restriction Act came into force in 1902, in the three colonies in which we are interested, only the Government of Western Australia had a statutory power to prevent the landing of prostitutes or persons living off them. Furthermore, this statute was not enacted until December 1897.² The only other statutory powers with regard to the landing of immigrants appear to be, in the case of Western Australia³ and South Australia,⁴ the power to levy a £200 bond for persons likely to become a charge upon the public. *Chung Toy v. Musgrove* in 1891 established that an alien who had been denied admission had no legal remedy;⁵ but despite this, Colonial Governments in Australia appear to have been almost as reluctant as the British Government to use the crown prerogative in order to deny entry to immigrants by categories. For example when on 23 August 1894 a deputation waited on the Western Australian Premier, Sir John Forrest, seeking the closure of the Japanese brothels in Geraldton he replied that 'There was a difficulty in this matter and unless they prohibited the ingress of Japanese altogether they would hardly be able to keep out members of this particular class.'⁶

My guess is that until at least the late 1890s prostitutes entered Australia as they did the United Kingdom, virtually without let or hindrance. Admittedly, in 1891 two Japanese prostitutes on arrival at Thursday Island were deported by the Queensland Government to Hong Kong.⁷ This action, however, seems to have been most unusual. The fact that in this case their deportation was formally requested by the Japanese Consul may perhaps have had something to do with it. The South Australian Government, acting not under statute but under the prerogative, on 20 July 1898 issued a proclamation directing all Customs officers, subject to the approval of the Treasurer, 'to refuse and prevent admission into South Australia of any alien not entitled by treaty to enter South Australia'.⁸ Whether this Proclamation was ever invoked to prevent the entry of a Japanese into the Northern Territory is not known.

* Part I appeared in the previous issue.

¹ An exception is a Thursday Island report in the *Bulletin* (11 Jan. 1896): 'Within the last two months they have introduced women in men's clothing for the purpose of prostitution. These women are attended by a keeper to every gang, and are practically slaves, as the police here know.'

² Immigration Restriction Act 1897, 61 Vic., No. XIII, Sect. 3f.

³ Customs Consolidation Act 1892, 55 Vic., No. XXXI, Sect. 339.

⁴ Immigration Limitation Act 1891, 54 and 55 Vic., No. 519, Sect. 2.

⁵ *Musgrove v. Chun Teeang Toy* (1891) A.C. 272.

⁶ *Geraldton Advertiser*, 27 Aug. 1894.

⁷ Q.S.A., COL/A680, C.S.O. 91/14105.

⁸ *South Australian Government Gazette*, 1898, No. 30 (21 July), p. 107.

As late as July 1898 nine Japanese prostitutes and their three escorts were permitted to land from the *Tokyo Maru* at Thursday Island. Since they had come aboard at Hong Kong and not in Japan, the shipping company was, presumably, not contravening Japanese law. The three men apparently carried some quantities of clothing as samples to lend credence to their claim that they were merchants.⁹

In such circumstances there would have been little need for Japanese prostitutes, on the last leg of their journey to Australia, to stow away.

Obviously Japanese brothels in Australia could not continue indefinitely to operate profitably unless they were replenished by younger women as those introduced before 1902 aged. The brothels continued and this led to suspicion that young women were being smuggled in. As late as 1928 for example the Queensland Branch of the National Council for Women forwarded to the Customs authorities allegations that batches of Japanese women were being landed at Townsville at regular intervals.¹⁰ H. W. Hardie, the Sub-Collector of Customs at Thursday Island, referred to this question in the course of a report to the Secretary, Home and Territories, at the end of a tour of North Queensland in search of Japanese male illegal immigrants in January 1921.

I have just recently been placed in possession of some very disquieting information regarding the stowaway question and the story, which is briefly as here related, is being followed up. Each of the Japanese mail boats has a secret compartment which has been built by the boatswain or the carpenter. It is fitted with electric light and has an electric fan to keep the air sweet. On every trip women are brought down. These women are led to believe that they are being taken to Australia to fill honourable positions and they go the length of entering into bogus contracts. When they are on the vessels they are subjected to such treatment that their scruples are broken down and they then lead the immoral life that they were originally intended to follow. It is stated that they are landed on an island near Thursday Island in collapsible boats; that a depot is in existence somewhere in North Queensland and that a launch proprietor takes them from the island where they land to such depot, whence they are subsequently distributed over Australia. It is said that two of these women are now at Ayr. Of course it will be seen that there are flaws in the story, but it is possible that there is a grain of truth in it. I know that something similar was done in 1908 and it was in connection with the story that I held up Nobu Ide's C[ertificate of] E[xemption from the] D[ictation] T[est] pending investigation.¹¹

Fortunately there survives in the Commonwealth Archives the Register of prosecutions initiated under the federal Immigration Restriction Act for the period 1902-30.¹² From the Register it appears that no Japanese woman was ever charged as a prohibited immigrant under Sect. 3(f) — 'any prostitute or person living on the prostitution of others'. The Register indicates, however, that several Japanese women were charged for failure to pass the dictation test. Such Department of Home and Territories files as exist suggest that some (perhaps all) of these were prostitutes.

⁹ Acting Consul, Townsville to Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, No. 3, 25 July 1898, Japan, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho*, 1898, vol. 2, p. 102.

¹⁰ Prostitution — registration details of Home & Territories file 28/8880, A.A. A31.

¹¹ H. W. Hardie to Sec., Home & Territories, 19 Jan. 1921, A.A. A2219.

¹² A.A. A19.

Ide Nobu, the woman referred to in Hardie's report, was one of two 'young, fresh-looking girls' discovered in a Thursday Island brothel in 1910 when the police were following up an anonymous letter that claimed that three women stowaways had entered Queensland the preceding year aboard the *Yawata Maru*. On failing the dictation test, they were prosecuted as illegal immigrants under Section 5(2) which empowered officers to administer the test to *any* immigrant within one year (amended in September 1910 to two years) of arrival. In court both girls testified, rather unconvincingly, that they had arrived on the *Omi Maru* in 1897 or 1898. The Crown, however, failed to convince the magistrate that the test had been administered within the statutory period and they were acquitted.¹³

The *Yawata Maru* remained the object of suspicion for some time. It figured in another prosecution under the same sub-section the next year (1911). Following a tip-off that this vessel had landed eight Japanese (three men and five women) in a small boat forty miles north of Townsville, the police discovered an apparent 'new chum', Urita Otomo, among the Japanese prostitutes at Charters Towers. Although the Crown managed to cast serious doubt on her testimony that she had arrived on the *Futami Maru* in 1900, it once again failed to convince the court that the dictation test had been administered within the prescribed period.¹⁴

In the third of the *Yawata Maru* cases the prosecution managed to secure a conviction. The Register indicates that at Thursday Island on 13 June 1913 Yoshida Tsumoe was convicted under Sect. 5(i) and that as a result Constable Merrit was paid £5 reward. Section 5(i) provides that an immigrant 'who evades an officer or who enters the Commonwealth at any place where no officer is stationed' may be given the dictation test if *at any time thereafter* found within the Commonwealth. Prosecutions under this sub-section were very rare. Presumably this was because, of its very nature, the task of proving that the accused had evaded an immigration officer was a difficult one. Where the circumstances permitted, it was customary, as we have seen, to lay charges under Sect. 5(2). Since Yoshida was not charged under Sect. 5(2) we may presume that she landed some time before June of that year, i.e. on the voyage commencing Yokohama 10 December 1910 or that commencing 4 March 1911. Since she was convicted on so difficult a charge, our guess is that Constable Merrit had been able to secure a confession. This appears to have been the only case where the landing of a Japanese woman stowaway in Australia was ever established beyond reasonable doubt.

The archives of the Japanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs contain a despatch from the Consul-General at Hong Kong reporting another incident involving the

¹³ A.A. A1, 10/5858. In 1921 it was because Hardie suspected that the two women at Ayr were working for Ide (who now resided in that town) that he considered denying her the exemption certificate without which she could never re-enter Australia. 'Confidential Notes for the Guidance of Officers: Immigration Restriction Act 1901-10' (A.A. A1, 17/16266) laid down that such certificates should be refused to brothel-keepers. Evidently Hardie failed to establish this; for the certificate was issued and with it she in due course re-entered the Commonwealth. The Department's Book of Precedents indicates that being a prostitute did not *per se* render an applicant ineligible for an exemption certificate ('C.E.D.T. — Jap. prostitute — application appld. — 19/2263', A.A. A1823).

¹⁴ A.A. A1, 12/12137. See also *Evening Telegraph*, 8 Feb. 1912, and *Northern Miner*, 9, 23 Feb. 1912.

Yawata Maru — that prior to its departure for Australia from that port on 26 January 1913, 13 Japanese stowaways (including two women from Hakata, the port of Fukuoka City in northern Kyushu) had been discovered in the hold and handed over to the police.¹⁵

These two open-and-shut cases involving the *Yawata Maru* suggest that there may have been some substance in the two earlier charges. The length of the journey to Australia meant that operators would use only a ship in which the co-operation of some members of the crew could be secured. Once this was known to be available the tendency would be to use the same ship.

The Register of Prosecutions lists only three other cases where Japanese women were charged under the Immigration Restriction Act. Of these only one, Sakurai Iye, convicted at Broome on about 9 November 1905 and deported on 12 November could have been a stowaway. But here, as in the Yoshida case, we lack any details; for neither the Departmental file nor the local newspaper for that period appear to have survived.

Other women prosecuted under the Immigration Restriction Act

The remaining prosecutions referred to in the Register of Prosecutions are of interest in confirming that Japanese prostitution in Australia was often conducted under the front of legitimate shop-keeping and that even its small operators may have had connections with the trade elsewhere in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

On 31 July 1909 Oyasu, a fare-paying passenger on the S.S. *Nera* holding a ticket from Colombo to Noumea, tried to land at Fremantle claiming a domicile in Western Australia, which she had left in March 1906 in order to return to Japan.¹⁶ As she did not hold an exemption certificate she was given the dictation test and, when she failed, was prevented from landing. Ishii Hide, a Japanese resident of Western Australia since 1888 who claimed to be her husband, then secured her release by a writ of habeas corpus in the Supreme Court. In her trial as a prohibited immigrant that followed in the Police Court, it transpired that Hide and Oyasu had cohabited successively at Cossack, Geraldton, Coolgardie¹⁷ and Perth since about 1894, that Hide had from time to time carried on business as an importer of Japanese goods, that he had at one time bought a woodyard at Coolgardie for £2,000 and that he owned four shops at Cue which until three or four years ago had brought him £20 per week in rents. The prosecution tendered evidence that in both Geraldton and Coolgardie they had lived in houses occupied by prostitutes. The magistrate, in finding Oyasu guilty of failing the dictation test, remarked *obiter* that the evidence pointed very strongly to the fact that she carried on prostitution. From the evidence, it would appear that at the time of Aiba's visit

¹⁵ Con. Gen. Hong Kong to Foreign Minister, Kōshin 12, 16 Jan. 1913, 3.8.8.4 vol. 5(2), Archives of Japanese Foreign Ministry [hereafter referred to as J.F.M.A.].

¹⁶ For details of this case see *West Australian*, 2, 4, 26 Aug. 1909, and registration details of papers 08/3283 to 10/452 in A.A. A30. (The file itself appears to have been destroyed.)

¹⁷ She may have been the 'Mrs Oyas' whom the Police at Geraldton (W.A.) in 1894 charged (unsuccessfully) with keeping a house of ill-fame (*Geraldton Advertiser*, 27 June 1894), and the 'Oyasu & Co., Shaw Street, Coolgardie' listed under *Refreshment Rooms* in Wise's *W.A. Post Office Directory 1898*.

to Western Australia in 1901 (see Part I, p. 326) the Ishiis would have been in Coolgardie. In the light of Aiba's analysis of the occupations of the Japanese in Coolgardie at that time one may accept the magistrate's dictum and also infer that prostitution was the initial source of Hide's capital.

The remaining prosecution is that of Shigematsu Mitsu. It has some similarities with the preceding case. Mitsu apparently made her pile in Australia through a mixture of prostitution and shop-keeping, returned to Japan (presumably for good) without first obtaining an exemption certificate, tried her fortune in various parts of Southeast Asia and, eventually, attempted to return to Australia. At her trial she claimed to have arrived at Thursday Island in about 1883, aged 12. If this is true she must have been one of the first of her kind in Australia. She said that she had spent eight years on Thursday Island, seven in Cairns, three in Rockhampton, two in Sydney and then (c. 1903) returned to Japan. She produced witnesses who testified that she had kept a Japanese fancy-goods shop in Cairns at the material time. The police, however, claimed that there were Japanese prostitutes on those premises. After two years in Japan she married and with her husband spent a total of about two years in Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila and Penang. In March 1909 they arrived at Thursday Island claiming to be commercial travellers and carrying passports. The Customs Officer was inexperienced and admitted them despite the fact that they had no visas. In May the police reported that they were at Atherton, engaged in prostitution. In August the dictation test was administered to them. They failed; but the court proceedings were delayed while they left Australia at their own expense by the next ship. Nothing daunted, on their arrival in Japan they went to a British consulate, secured a visa and returned to Australia. They landed at Thursday Island on 26 April 1910 and arrived back in Cairns on 24 May. The dictation test was again administered on 11 June. They failed; but this time refused to leave the Commonwealth at their own expense. They were tried, found guilty and were deported on 23 August.¹⁸

Our general conclusion is that, thanks to the federal Immigration Restriction Act, the Japanese brothels in Australia declined steadily after 1902. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the following return on the number of Japanese prostitutes within his area furnished by the Consul-General to the Foreign Ministry on 1 September 1916: Fremantle and Perth 12, Broome 20, Rockhampton 3, Cairns 9, New Britain 7, Total 51.¹⁹

The Japanese brothels and public order

In its issue dated 2 January 1897 the *Coolgardie Pioneer* contained a piece of doggerel on the Japanese prostitute, written on the theme: 'Where are you going to, my pretty maid?' One of its verses went as follows:

¹⁸ A.A. A1, 10/5151. See also *Cairns Post*, 9 Oct. 1910. I am indebted to A. T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia*, Melbourne, 1964, p. 186, for drawing my attention to this case.

¹⁹ J.F.M.A., 4.2.2.27, vol. 5.

'Do you turn your mind when the sun has sunk
 To something better than earth — dear maid?'
 'On no! I turn the slumbering drunk
 and snave!²⁰ his shammy,²¹ Sir', she said.²²

To the *Pioneer's* editor, F. C. B. Vosper, any stick would do to beat the Asiatic. In fact, the culprit in the only case of theft in a Japanese 'cool drink shop' reported in its pages at that time was a Caucasian.²³

Not long afterwards the *Cairns Post* made similar allegations:

It will hardly be credited that there are now in Cairns 37 Japanese women. They look very nice in their light, flowing Oriental costumes, and, woman-like, know it. These creatures are openly engaged for export in Japan for a number of years — generally four — at a salary of three or four pounds per annum. As prostitution machines in a town like Cairns, they are worth, on an average, about £12 per week to the Japanese pimps who preside at the doors of the Chinatown hovels . . . Rows are now the order of the night in Chinatown . . . The Japs are clever thieves, and it is a shilling to a gooseberry about anyone leaving an establishment with his pockets correctly balanced. They are also adept at the bully business, and the slightest altercation with a lady is regarded as sufficient pretext to start an axe-handle row at the termination of which the visitor leaves the presence of his fair Chrysanthemum looking kind of anyhow. And there are 37.²⁴

From the local police reports, however, it seems that the *Cairns Post* like the *Coolgardie Pioneer* was inaccurate in its references to such matters.

The attitude of the Queensland Police to prostitution was similar to that of law enforcement agencies throughout most of the world. It was summed up by the Commissioner (W. E. Parry-Okeden) at about this time in connection with a case in Bundaberg. Human nature and sexual impulses being what they were, he considered that a certain level of prostitution must be tolerated. In particular he felt that in the sugar districts there must be outlets for the sexual passions of the kanakas and that it was less revolting and degrading if these were satisfied by Japanese rather than by Caucasian women. Accordingly, he saw the role of the police not as exterminating prostitution but as 'controlling it so that its evils and pernicious influences may be lessened as much as possible' and ensuring that 'the doings of the persons concerned in carrying on this loathsome trade should be kept from being openly, flagrantly offensive and demoralizing'. Where prostitution was quietly conducted he considered it expedient, in the public interest, not to interfere.²⁵

Instead of the *Post's* 37 Japanese prostitutes, the police at Cairns could only find 15. Insofar as the activities of these prostitutes had, however, become a subject for

²⁰ Snave: Australia — to snaffle or steal, *Webster's International Dictionary*, 1948 ed.

²¹ Shammy: Australia — a bag of chamois leather in which miners keep their gold dust, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933 ed.

²² 'The Ubiquitous Jap', *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 2 Jan. 1897.

²³ *Ibid.*, 23 Sep. 1896.

²⁴ As reproduced in the *Bulletin*, 29 May 1897.

²⁵ Minute by W. E. [Parry] O[keden] on a report by Snr. Sgt. P. Bowen of 7 March 1899 and memo by Parry-Okeden enclosed in his letter to the Under Secretary of 23 March 1899, Q.S.A. HOM/A24, 99/04177.

public discussion, they had been seeking evidence to support charges against the Japanese proprietors for keeping disorderly houses. But in this they had been quite unsuccessful. There were two particular difficulties. The first was that each of the six Japanese brothels maintained a good pretence of being something else — a store, a boarding-house, a laundry, etc. The other difficulty was that 'these women altho a nuisance by reason of their calling are so orderly in their conduct that a stranger coming to town would have to seek them before he would find them'. The Sub-Inspector was not aware of a single instance where a Japanese woman had created a disturbance. Rows occurred occasionally in and around the brothels when Japanese workers at the sugar plantations came to town. These were among the Japanese themselves and were probably the result of jealousy. The police considered that the whole matter had been much exaggerated and noted the fact that one of the signatories to a petition requesting the removal of the Japanese was the owner of the premises occupied by the town's two Caucasian prostitutes.²⁶

Many people sought to have the Japanese brothels suppressed — a petition to this end presented to the Western Australian Premier by citizens of Geraldton in 1894 was reported to be 31 feet 6 inches long and to contain 733 signatures. But from Wyndham to Kalgoorlie and from Thursday Island to Brisbane there seems to have been a fairly general consensus that they were well conducted. The Government Resident at Thursday Island reported (1893) that 'On the whole these establishments are well conducted — There are no rows, there is no drinking . . .'.²⁷ The *Murchison Advocate* (1898) in a leading article demanding the removal of the eight or nine Japanese brothels in Cue couched its argument in the following terms:

We do not say that they are ill-conducted . . . or that they are disorderly in any sense but a technical one, we do not argue that they are not a necessary evil; we are not indeed, prepared to contend that they would be an evil outside the town boundaries. What we do say is . . . There is no reason why they should disfigure the two main thoroughfares of the town . . .²⁸

Even the *Bulletin* (1895) published a not entirely unfavourable comment from a Roebourne contributor:

'The Jap women' (very numerous in Westralia) totally eclipse their white competitors. They are particularly clean, modest, sober, exceedingly polite, don't steal, and look upon their calling in a purely commercial sense. No white woman can compete against those brown dots of humanity . . .²⁹

²⁶ Sub-Inspector, Cairns to Inspector, Cooktown, 24 Nov. 1897 enclosing report by Act. Sgt. Griffin 23 Nov. 1897, 'Japanese Women', Q.S.A. POL/J1. I am indebted to R. Evans, 'Soiled Doves: Prostitution and Society in Colonial Queensland', *Hecate*, vol. 1, No. 2, July 1975, for drawing my attention to this memorandum.

²⁷ Q.S.A. 55/1, 93/12777.

²⁸ *Murchison Advocate*, 19 Nov. 1898.

²⁹ *Bulletin*, 16 Nov. 1895. For a similar comment on the Japanese prostitutes at Roebourne see A. F. Calvert, *My Fourth Tour of Western Australia*, London 1897, p. 249.

Generally they appear to have been conducted unobtrusively. There were occasional exceptions. Marks in a despatch to the Foreign Ministry dated June 1888 reported that at Darwin the brothel-keepers caused the women to loiter in public places improperly clad.³⁰ At Charters Towers at a later date the girls appear to have been put on display in much the same fashion as was done in the licensed quarters in Japan. The autobiography of the journalist, Claude McKay, contains the following description of Charters Towers' *yoshiwara*.

We walked along the street they occupied. The women were perched on raised platforms, fanning themselves in the heat; behind their heads was a light with a reflector. They were dressed in their national costume, and wore lacquered ornaments in their hair . . .³¹

One of the Charters Towers town councillors, C. J. Frazer, used this as an argument in a deputation to the Premier in 1900 seeking Government approval for a special municipal bye-law to deal with the Japanese brothels. Frazer described the displaying of the Japanese women as 'resembling a wild beast show in their little cages'. At the same time, however, he admitted that the Japanese women 'did not create any disturbances, and were in no way noisy, as were white women of the same class'. It was for this reason, he argued, that special legislation was required to deal with them.³² The Crown Law officers, however, persisted in their refusal to confer on municipalities the power to enact 'a law of indecency unknown to Courts of Justice in the British Dominions'.³³ The difficulty in securing evidence with which to proceed against Japanese brothels also seems to have been at the back of representations made in 1902 by church and citizens groups in Charters Towers, Townsville, Innisfail and Ipswich urging the Government to amend the Local Government Act so that municipal inspectors could enter suspect premises. The Home Secretary, however, refused to countenance this proposal — 'Under it any person's house would be liable to be entered without warrant upon mere suspicion'.³⁴ In Geraldton (W.A.), at the time of the 1894 petition to which we have already referred, the municipality was confronted by the same problem — the difficulty of securing sufficient evidence.³⁵ In similar fashion the Council there urged the Government, unsuccessfully, to add to the Police Act a special provision relating to houses of ill-fame *occupied by aliens*.

It will be remembered that the report from the Cairns police in 1897 indicated that sometimes rows occurred *among the Japanese community* as a result of the

³⁰ Data-paper prepared on the instructions of the Minister for Foreign Affairs 20 Feb. 1891. J.F.M.A. 4.2.2.34, vol. 1.

³¹ C. McKay, *This is the Life*, Sydney 1961, pp. 51-52.

³² *Northern Miner*, 11 June 1900.

³³ Minute by A[rthur] R[utledge] on Town Clerk, Charters Towers to U/Sec, Dept. of Justice, 10 March 1899. Q.S.A. COL/O 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Minute by J. F. G. F[oxton] (Home Secretary) on Ipswich and West Moreton Christian Citizens Assoc. to Home Secretary 8 Sep. 1902.

³⁵ According to the Attorney-General, in Western Australia the municipalities had no power to deal with this subject by by-laws and the only statute which applied was the *Police Act 1892*, Section 65(7) of which provided up to 6 months imprisonment for 'the occupier of any house which shall be frequented by reputed thieves, prostitutes, or persons who have no visible means of support' (*Geraldton Advertiser*, 27 Aug. 1894).

presence of the prostitutes and that jealousy was usually the cause. On 19 November a case had occurred there in which one Japanese had seriously wounded another with a sword stick. Sometimes the jealous lover made a murderous attack on the prostitute. Omatsu (Thursday Island 1894),³⁶ Orui (Thursday Island 1896),³⁷ Ode (Broome 1896),³⁸ and Osano (Kowanyana 1903)³⁹ met their deaths in this manner while Masano (Cossack 1898),⁴⁰ Fukugi (Darwin 1903)⁴¹ and Ohana (Thursday Island 1907)⁴² were wounded. Usually the assailant killed himself immediately afterwards. There were also the joint suicides that in Japan were so much a part of this aspect of life. In 1898 at Kalgoorlie Mukai and Otana killed themselves when they were unable to raise £35 to buy out Otana's share in the brothel that she and another prostitute ran as a partnership.⁴³

According to Miyaoka, more often than not, Japanese brothels overseas refused to admit Japanese customers. He notes that this was particularly the case in Siberia. The adoption of such a rule would have meant an unacceptable loss of business in places like Thursday Island and Broome where Japanese predominated; but the incidents referred to above suggest that it might have been appropriate elsewhere in Australia. According to Miyaoka, the reason underlying this practice was not the safety of the prostitute but fear by the brothel-keeper that she might form attachments and waive payment.⁴⁴

Of course not all the violence inflicted on the Japanese women was perpetrated by Japanese. Two were stabbed by an escaped prisoner at Nulligene in 1898.⁴⁵ In the same year another appears to have been raped by two Caucasians at Mt Malcolm.⁴⁶ Another was stabbed at Onslow in 1900 by a Manilaman.⁴⁷

On at least two occasions breaches of the peace occurred involving Japanese living off the earnings of Caucasian women. In Perth in 1911 a French prostitute, Marguerite du Tour, was shot dead by Seto Tsunekichi, whom she had left after four years. He was under the influence of liquor at the time. This (and the fact that he attempted to shoot himself also) appears to have impressed the judge and the jury and he received a sentence of only twelve months.⁴⁸

In about August 1922 a Japanese named Nishi Tarōichi who had resided in Australia since 1899 arrived on Thursday Island from the Queensland mainland. With him was a young white woman whom he claimed was his wife. He installed her in the Japanese quarter and returned to the mainland. His 'wife' appears to

³⁶ *Cooktown Courier*, 24 April 1894; *Evening Observer*, 28 May 1894.

³⁷ Inquest No. 22 of 1897, Q.S.A.

³⁸ Police 654/96, W.A. State Archives.

³⁹ *Western Argus*, 31 March 1903.

⁴⁰ Police 701/98, W.A. State Archives.

⁴¹ For details of this case see my 'Japanese in the Northern Territory 1884-1902', *South Australiana*, vol. 15, no. 2.

⁴² Depositions, *R v. Nakai* (Supreme Court, Cooktown, 19 Sept. 1907) Q.S.A.

⁴³ *West Australian*, 1, 9 Sep. 1898.

⁴⁴ Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁴⁵ Police Department, Subject Index 1898: 'Offences', W.A. State Archives.

⁴⁶ *West Australian*, 8, 19 Oct. 1898.

⁴⁷ Police Department, Subject Index 1900: 'Murder', W.A. State Archives.

⁴⁸ *West Australian*, 21 Feb. 1911.

have received customers and on 1 September this was the cause of an attack on a Japanese by two Caucasian residents. A situation of such tension developed that the Sub-Collector of Customs ordered all Japanese indentured crewmen back to their luggers and, on the ground that the presence of the woman was 'a menace to the peace between whites and Japanese on Thursday Island', requested the Department of Home and Territories to move her on. This they had no power to do. Instead they denied Nishi an exemption certificate.⁴⁹ Presumably this did little to hamper 'Mrs Nishi's' activities. All it could do was to prevent Nishi from making his projected visit to Japan.

The most bizarre of the public disturbances associated with Japanese prostitution occurred at Thursday Island in 1891. On 29 September of that year Douglas cabled Brisbane for instructions regarding the arrival of two young women, Otashi and Otoyō, whom he described as 'undoubtedly prostitutes but of a respectable and orderly type'. He kept them in quarantine pending instructions. Brisbane cabled Marks, the Consul, who asked that they be deported. There was, however, no north-bound ship until 23 November. In the meantime the pillars of respectability among the local Japanese community apparently feared that Douglas's resolution was weakening. He writes that 'Their arrival here caused some trouble among the Japanese inhabitants of this island, and I was waited upon by the whole of them with a request that I would remove the women'.⁵⁰ Perhaps he should have qualified his remarks and said that *nearly* all of the Japanese residents had so requested him. Some months later a Nagasaki newspaper, *Chinzei Nippō*, carried a very graphic account of the meeting of the Japanese residents at which the address to Douglas praying that the two women be deported, was adopted. In this account 'when the motion was put, a shot rang out and Hirano Sennosuke was shot where he sat'. According to the newspaper the shot was fired by a pistol-packing madam named Okiyo under whose auspices the girls were to have worked.⁵¹ Apparently Okiyo's aim was not good and Hirano made a good recovery. There are inaccuracies in this story. For example the only shooting incident among the Japanese community reported by Douglas at this time took place on 26 October, two days *after* the petition of the Japanese residents had reached him. The important point is that the Japanese residents did make representations to Douglas along these lines. Indeed, as an earnest of their sincerity they presented him with £8 towards the cost of repatriating the two girls. The attitude of the Japanese residents and the Japanese Government to the prostitutes throughout the period merits examination in some detail.

The attitude of the Japanese residents to the prostitutes

In their petition to Douglas in 1891 to suppress Okiyo's brothel the signatories argued, with some perception, for securing to themselves and their countrymen the continuance of their 'past goodly reputation of being a well conducted law

⁴⁹ A.A. A1, 26/11048.

⁵⁰ Q.S.A. COL/A677, 91/14105.

⁵¹ As reproduced in *Mainichi Shinbun*, 9 March 1892.

abiding and orderly portion of the community' and in terms of anxiety that if the evil were not put down it would 'continue to be the cause of many dissensions, quarrels and perhaps most serious ones amongst our own countrymen and between the other inhabitants'.

In later years we see evidence of similar responses elsewhere. In November 1897 a Japanese resident at Coolgardie wrote to Marks complaining at the large number of Japanese engaged in prostitution at Perth (nearly 70), Coolgardie (about 50), Kalgoorlie (nearly 60) and Menzies (nearly 20).⁵² Early in 1899 the police at Bundaberg (Qld) reported that Japanese men and women had been arriving in the town almost daily and setting up brothels disguised as fruit or soft-drink shops in the main street. The Japanese residents responded by sending a deputation to the police station requesting that proceedings be taken against all the Japanese brothel-keepers. They said that 'they as working people thought it could injure them seriously in the opinions of the white population if the brothels . . . were allowed to continue . . .'⁵³

The attitude of the Japanese Government

From the time it was established, one of the principal objectives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to maintain and enhance Japan's prestige in the eyes of the rest of the world. This is, of course, one of the primary functions of all Foreign Ministries, but it was particularly the case with Japan. The revision of the unequal treaties and the abolition of extra-territoriality in Japan was an urgent political task for every Japanese cabinet. In order to bring this about it was necessary at all times to impress upon the foreign powers that Japan was a civilised, westernised community. Very early in the Meiji period the Japanese Government came to realise that the system of public prostitution practised in Japan was prejudicial to this image, and took steps to modify it to conform with Western standards.

For the same reason the Foreign Ministry also viewed with concern the presence of Japanese prostitutes overseas. From about 1882 a stream of reports began to arrive from the consulate at Shanghai drawing attention to the increasing number of prostitutes operating openly there. In September 1884 the Consul claimed that of the 488 Japanese women there, 90 per cent were prostitutes. As a result four consular police were sent from Tokyo and action was taken locally against 43 persons. By the following year the evil appears to have spread to most of the China coast and the Korean ports. Under 'Regulations for the Control of Japanese Residents in China and Korea' promulgated in March 1883, Japanese consuls in that region had the power to move on Japanese residents who they considered were subverting public morals. It appears that they made some use of this power to

⁵² J.F.M.A. 6.1.6.9.7., vol. 1.

⁵³ Q.S.A. HOM/A24, 99/04177. In other parts of the world a similar attitude to the prostitutes appears to have developed as the Japanese residents in legitimate occupations became more numerous. For example, the action taken by the Japanese Government in 1920 to close the brothels in Singapore and Malaya appears, at least in part, to have sprung from a resolution passed at a conference of representatives of Japanese residents societies there (Consul-General Singapore to Secretary to the High Commissioner 30 Jan. 1920, J.F.M.A. 4.2.2.27., vol. 5. See also Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, p. 136).

deal with prostitutes. The principal consequence, however, was merely to transfer the problem elsewhere. People dealt with in this manner rarely returned to Japan. Those denied residence in Korea went to Shanghai; if they were not admitted there they went to Hong Kong; if they failed to secure public prostitutes' licences there, they went to Burma, India or Australia. Like government departments in many lands, the enthusiasm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appears to have moderated a little when it came to expending money from its own budget. It seems only rarely to have repatriated prostitutes at public expense. In Singapore in 1894 when the immigration authorities drew the consul's attention to the plight of six girls smuggled from Nagasaki, he disclaimed any responsibility for their repatriation and left it to local Japanese residents to collect money for this purpose.⁵⁴ It was much the same at Thursday Island in 1891 — although it was the Honorary Consul, Marks, who asked the Queensland Government to deport Otashi and Otoyō (see p. 474 above) their passages were finally paid for by the Queensland Government and by the local Japanese community. It seems, however, that Marks did induce the two Japanese prostitutes in Melbourne in 1887 to leave the country — possibly at the expense of the Japanese Government.⁵⁵ When he tried in the same manner to put an end to Japanese prostitution in Darwin in 1889 he was unsuccessful.⁵⁶ Perhaps, the Foreign Ministry refused to make the funds available.

After 1896, career diplomats were appointed to the principal Japanese consular posts in Australia. These men, like Marks, appear to have regarded the presence of the prostitutes as prejudicial to Japan's reputation. What few records survive suggest that, when requested by the Australian authorities, they provided their co-operation in dealing with them. Eitaki, who was appointed Consul in Sydney in 1898, records in his autobiography his embarrassment when, as well as the Japanese divers, the prostitutes turned out to welcome him when the ship carrying him and his credentials called at Thursday Island.⁵⁷ When Mrs Shigematsu returned to Australia in 1910 (see above p. 478) masquerading as a merchant, the Consul-General, at the request of the Department of External Affairs, wrote to her urging that she leave the Commonwealth without delay.⁵⁸

In an attempt to cope with the problem of Japanese prostitutes overseas, the Foreign Minister on 6 July 1885 issued instructions to prefectural governors that the antecedents, occupations and destinations of all women proceeding overseas unaccompanied by their families should be carefully checked and that in suspicious cases passports should not be issued and the women made to abandon their journeys. This, too, failed to produce the desired effect. It merely resulted in the women leaving clandestinely, without passports. In an attempt to remedy this,

⁵⁴ Saitō to Protector of Chinese 12 June 1894, J.F.M.A. 3.8.8.4., vol. 1.

⁵⁵ Data-paper prepared on the instructions of the Minister for Foreign Affairs 20 Feb. 1891 J.F.M.A. 4.2.2.34., vol. 1. This presumably is the case referred to by the Melbourne agents of Butterfield and Co. in the *Evening Standard* (Melbourne), 6 July 1889.

⁵⁶ See interview with Marks reported in *Evening Standard*, 6 July 1889.

⁵⁷ H. Eitaki, *Kaiko Nanajūnen*, Tokyo 1935, p. 95.

⁵⁸ Con.-Gen. to Sec., External Affairs 31 May 1910, A.A. A1, 10/5151.

police surveillance at the ports was stepped up. At Nagasaki in the 18 months from January 1888 to June 1889 escorts with their women in tow were caught in the act on 21 occasions. The police however could only remove them from the ships: leaving Japan in this manner was not a crime.

In these circumstances the Foreign Ministry drafted a bill providing penalties of up to two months' imprisonment for women attempting to go abroad for the purpose of prostitution and up to three years' imprisonment for persons attempting to despatch them.⁵⁹ The bill was introduced as a Government measure during the inaugural session of the Imperial Diet, but for reasons that are not clear it was withdrawn at the end of the session, before it had been passed by both Houses.

Before its acceptance in Cabinet, the Bill had come under very strong attack by the *Hōseikyoku-chōkan*, the Government's senior legal adviser. He considered it fantastic to make criminal the act of going overseas to indulge in what was not criminal either at home or overseas. He also pointed out that in order to secure a conviction it would be necessary to prove intent and that this would be a very difficult process. He considered that the matter would be much more satisfactorily dealt with by legislation requiring all women to secure a permit before going overseas. The Foreign Ministry, however, considered that this would be an unwarrantable interference with legitimate travel. It considered that legislation of the type that it had drafted would be the more likely both to scotch the stories, prevalent among the classes at risk, that it was a simple matter to get out of Japan and make fortunes overseas, and to protect society in Japan itself against the depredations of the traffickers.⁶⁰

The Foreign Ministry also used the argument that unless effective action was taken Japan's international prestige might be damaged by foreign governments themselves taking action to deport the prostitutes. Accordingly it continued with the task of drafting legislation along the lines of its original proposal, for presentation at the next session of the Diet; but in the course of so doing it appears to have come to realise the logic of the *Hōseikyoku-chōkan*'s objections and eventually abandoned its attempt to deal with the problem by special legislation.⁶¹ For the present it had, perforce, to content itself with instructing the metropolitan and prefectural chiefs of police to hinder the procurers' operations and warn women against them.⁶²

A year later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs returned to the task of dealing with the matter by legislation, as part of a wider plan to submit all emigration and emigration agents to greater control. The method it now adopted applied to all emigrants the kind of screening which the *Hōseikyoku-chōkan* in 1890 had proposed

⁵⁹ A translation of the text of the bill as it emerged from the committee stage in the House of Peers is available in the *Japan Weekly Mail*, 7 March 1891. It contains no substantial departures from the original Foreign Ministry draft.

⁶⁰ Data-paper prepared on the instructions of the Minister for Foreign Affairs 20 Feb. 1891, J.F.M.A. 4.2.2.34., vol. 1.

⁶¹ Foreign Ministry internal memo on reasons for not proceeding with the *kaigai fujo hogo* bill, *ibid.*

⁶² Gaimushō, Kunrei I of 3 Feb. 1893.

for women, and which the Foreign Ministry had, on that occasion, vigorously opposed. The Emigrants Protection Regulations, issued as an Imperial Ordinance, received royal assent on 12 April 1894.⁶³ It provided that all emigrants seeking work overseas had to have passports and, more importantly, limited recruiting to approved firms. In 1896 the Regulations were re-enacted in amended form as a statute, the Emigrants Protection Law.⁶⁴ This legislation does not appear to have been very effective in preventing the emigration of prostitutes. It would hardly have appeared a fearsome deterrent to the stowaway. Moreover as the case of the *Tokyo Maru* at Thursday Island in 1898 (see above p. 475) indicates, it was possible to circumvent its provisions by carrying a few samples and masquerading as a 'merchant', a category which did not fall within its definition of an 'emigrant'. But the statistics of the number of women charged under the Emigrants Protection Legislation suggest, at least, that the Japanese Government was not completely insincere in its professions: 1894, 12; 1895, 11; 1896, 76; 1897, 37; 1898, 66; 1899, 9; 1900, 43; 1901, 53.⁶⁵

The number of Japanese prostitutes overseas appears, nevertheless, to have continued to rise. At Singapore the peak may have been reached in about 1904-05⁶⁶ and there seem to have been ample replenishments until the British authorities in about 1915 began to take steps to reduce prostitution there.⁶⁷ As early as 1895 Nosse, the Consul at Vancouver, was commenting on the ineffectiveness of the new legislation. Although the point of his complaint was the indiscriminate issue of passports to persons of either sex, and not prostitution, his remarks may also explain the continued emigration of prostitutes in contravention of the law. Nosse pointed out that it was, in the last resort, the prefectural officials who issued the passports. He suggested that, irrespective of the instructions issued to them by the central government, officials in the poorer prefectures could hardly be expected to be too zealous in screening applications for passports. Every passport issued meant one less mouth to feed. Several prefectural Governors regarded emigration almost as a panacea for all the ills of their prefecture. As an example Nosse mentioned Matsudaira, the Governor of Kumamoto prefecture (where, as we have noted, many of the prostitutes came from) who hoped to rid himself of 30,000 citizens by emigration.⁶⁸

Conclusions

From the late 1880s the women from Nagasaki and Kumamoto prefectures played a role in prostitution in Australia quite disproportionate to the size of the Japanese community there. Moreover, throughout most of the 1890s Australia may have been important among the terminals in the vast net of vice that extended from Kyūshū north to Siberia and east to Cape Town. Although in Australia the

⁶³ Imin Hogo Kisoku (Chokurei 42 of 1894).

⁶⁴ Imin Hogo Hō (Law 70 of 1896).

⁶⁵ Shihōshō, *Keiji Tōkei Nempō* (annual).

⁶⁶ Miyaoka, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶⁷ Gov., Straits Settlement to Sec. of State No. 89, 13 July 1917, Singapore National Archives.

⁶⁸ Consul, Vancouver to Foreign Minister 23 Aug. 1895, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho*, 1895, vol. 2, p. 689.

prostitutes were not the trail-blazers for the Japanese immigrant, they were posted from their bases in Hong Kong and Singapore to what for Australians was the sweltering frontier of toil. By 1887 they had reached Thursday Island. By 1888 they had spread from Darwin westwards down the coast past Cossack — possibly as far as Geraldton. The following year they were in Normanton, Burketown and other Gulf towns. The trio operating inland on a pack basis on the Pilbara Goldfields in 1890 is one of the less unlikely entries in Muraoka's memoirs. It was the same a decade later on the Eastern Goldfields: in 1901 Aiba could report them strung out along the branch lines that extended out from Kalgoorlie — with five brothels at the railhead at Kookynie.

Some observers, as we have noted, attributed the success of the Japanese brothels to the honesty, sobriety and other refined qualities of their inmates. There may be some truth in this. But to me, experienced management is a more obvious explanation. There are, no doubt, special skills involved in running a brothel, as in running any other enterprise, and the Japanese had been developing these for generations. They had also, since the days of the *Tashiro-ya* at Shanghai, had extensive experience of the particular problems involved in operating on an international basis. From the accounts given by Murdoch and Douglas, the brothels at Darwin and Thursday Island were not only orderly; they were professionally conducted along traditional Japanese lines. To what extent they provided the capital with which local Japanese acquired pearling vessels remains to be established. In the meantime we may accord to Douglas's beliefs on this aspect of the question the respect due to those of an intelligent and well-informed observer on the spot.

The Foreign Ministry and its representatives in Australia and elsewhere appear consistently to have been opposed to the traffic but lacked the political or administrative power to deal with it at its source.

With the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901 the brothels were effectively deprived of new blood. Nevertheless they took a long time a-dying. This is not surprising: a girl of sixteen who arrived in 1900, unless cut down by the occupational hazards of disease⁶⁹ or murder, would still have been capable of earning money in this occupation in 1930.

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⁶⁹ This aspect has not yet been studied systematically. From scattered information it appears that, following an epidemic of syphilis at Thursday Island in 1901, some infected Japanese prostitutes were sent back to Japan by the Government Medical Officer there. Another example was Cairns where three cases of syphilis were reported among the Japanese prostitutes in 1900 (Q.S.A. COL/A934, 11/10972).

END OF REPRINT

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in Australia, 1887–1916 (I & II)

This text is taken from *Bridging Australia and Japan: Volume 1*.
The writings of David Sissons, historian and political scientist,
edited by Arthur Stockwin and Keiko Tamura, published 2016 by
ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.