

CRISES OF WHITENESS AND EMPIRE IN COLONIAL INDOCHINA: THE REMOVAL OF ABANDONED EURASIAN CHILDREN FROM THE VIETNAMESE MILIEU, 1890-1956

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From 1890-1956 the French colonial government of Indochina became increasingly involved in the affairs of the colony's miniscule and marginalized population of abandoned Eurasian children. During this period, French civilian "protection" organizations and the French colonial government conducted exhaustive, often covert searches throughout the Indochinese countryside to find mixed-race children who had been abandoned by their French fathers.¹ Because they lacked a French father and French cultural influences and lived within the Vietnamese milieu, such children were labeled "abandoned."²

The colony's small population of abandoned Eurasians was a consistent source of anxiety for members of French colonial society. Many French colonists believed that the combination of a supposedly debauched Vietnamese mother and a Vietnamese cultural environment put Eurasian children at risk for social deviance. These children, many of whom could pass for white yet had supposedly been corrupted by Vietnamese culture, were considered a threat to white prestige. If Eurasian females engaged in prostitution, as was feared, this would embarrass the colony; if Eurasian males engaged in anti-colonial activities, this would call into question the very authority of whiteness. French colonists further suspected that abandoned Eurasians would come to resent their place in the colonial racial hierarchy when they reached young adulthood. Being of partial European descent, yet classified under colonial law as Vietnamese, the abandoned Eurasians might well expect privileges that would be denied them. French colonists feared that these children, already supposedly predisposed toward deviance, would eventually channel their resentment into rebellion against the colonial government.³

In the 1890s, a small group of French civilians formed non-governmental societies to "protect" abandoned Eurasians from Vietnamese cultural influences, thereby neutralizing the threat they were presumed to pose. The goal was to remove these children – forcibly if necessary – from their Vietnamese mothers and the Vietnamese cultural environment and transform them into young French men

and women.⁴ As children, the abandoned Eurasians were believed to be culturally and morally malleable. Assuming French cultural practices to be morally corrective, and motivated by fears of political security, French colonists placed abandoned Eurasians in French-run orphanages, where they were raised to be culturally French and loyal to the colonial government. In 1938, the colonial government would assume control of the protection organizations. These organizations would continue, albeit under different names, through 1956, the last days of French presence in Indochina.

This article will supplement the rich works of Emannelle Saada, Gilles de la Gantes, Pierre Guillaume, Ann Laura Stoler, and David M. Pomfret⁵ by focusing on the diverse and changing attitudes toward the racial formation of abandoned Eurasians that occurred throughout the colonial period 1890-1956. This period was fraught with historical exigencies, perceived threats to white prestige, and inherent challenges to the colonial patriarchy. I will argue that the racial formations of abandoned Eurasian children in colonial Indochina changed repeatedly in response to these threats. Drawing from the rhetoric of racial sciences, the colonial government increasingly made the case that these children were white.⁶ The “whiter” that Eurasians appeared to the colonial gaze, the more pressing it became to remove them from the Vietnamese milieu and educate them as French. The hope was that the newly whitened young French men and women would help offset the many threats facing the colony. This article will trace the history of the colony’s security concerns and how these concerns led to a reimagining of abandoned Eurasian children’s racial formation.

Crucial to this reimagining of racial formation was the management of gender roles. The removal of abandoned Eurasian children from their Vietnamese mothers was driven in part by a desire to maintain the colonial patriarchy. The Eurasian welfare organizations were themselves male-dominated, in contrast to Progressive-era child welfare organizations in the U.S.⁷ The desire to transform the abandoned Eurasian children into culturally French individuals was motivated not just by political expediency but also by the patriarchal assumption that race passes through the father. Because abandoned Eurasian males did not meet French standards of masculinity, the colonial government and Eurasian protection societies sought to make “men” of them, Frenchness being equated with masculinity. The hope was that these Eurasian males would pass this French brand of masculinity on to future generations. As for abandoned Eurasian girls, there was no discussion of making “ladies” of them; the aim was simply to prevent them from becoming prostitutes and usher them into marriage with whites or other francified Eurasians. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese mothers of abandoned Eurasians were perceived by the French colonists as an obstacle to the francification process. (The children’s French fathers, being absent, were rarely discussed.) The colonists were confronted with an uncomfortable contradiction in the fact that the mothers who had given birth to these prospective French men and women were Vietnamese. Moreover, in raising their abandoned Eurasian children, these Vietnamese women had effectively usurped the role of head of household, which in the colonial imag-

ination was implicitly patriarchal. On the broader social level, the Vietnamese women's movement, in challenging colonial gender roles, posed a political challenge to colonial patriarchy.

A marginalized population

Abandoned Eurasian children, both urban and rural, lived on the margins of colonial society. Most of them were born near current or former military camps; their fathers were usually unidentified but it is likely that most were colonial soldiers. Some fathers, however, were civilians or even members of the colonial administration. The fathers had abandoned their children for numerous reasons, which included job reassignment, the end of a short-term romance with the mother, divorce, and occasionally death. The mothers were wives, concubines, prostitutes, house servants or victims of rape.⁸

There exists very little available data on Vietnamese perceptions of Eurasian children during the colonial era. Articles on this subject appeared in the Vietnamese press only infrequently. A small number were translations of articles that had appeared in the French language press publicizing and promoting the Eurasian protection societies. Other articles, written by Vietnamese journalists, warned of the dangers of miscegenation, which allegedly included adultery, domestic violence, robbery, and damage to the Vietnamese family structure.⁹ From the Vietnamese point of view Eurasians represented either collaboration with colonialism¹⁰ or, in the case of rape, colonial dominance.

Meanwhile, the large volume of French writings about Eurasians revealed complex attitudes toward Eurasians. Eurasian children who had been legally recognized by their fathers were integrated into the French legal system and, usually, French society. Eurasians who had not been officially recognized by their French fathers, by contrast, were legally "indigène" [native].¹¹ As for Eurasian children who had been abandoned by their fathers, these children were shunned by French society – whether or not they had been recognized – because they were not culturally French.

Although abandoned Eurasian children made up only a small percentage of the population of colonial Indochina, some French administrators and civilians perceived them as crucial to the preservation of whiteness in the colony. Being part white, the Eurasian children occupied the margins of whiteness, according to the French point of view. In this exposed position, they had on one hand the potential to reveal the vulnerabilities of whiteness, as prostitutes or anti-colonialists for example. On the other hand, if francified and thus "whitened" in the protection societies, they could bolster declining white population numbers, thereby assuaging French anxiety about white depopulation. In short, abandoned Eurasian children's position at the margin of whiteness made them the first line of defense in the protection of the empire.

From colonization to 1914: The founding of Eurasian protection societies

Eurasian protection societies were founded within a context of colonial anxiety about the security of the new colony. The establishment of French colonial rule in Vietnam and the other countries of Indochina was a gradual process marred by rebellions that exposed French vulnerabilities. Although French missionaries, and some French advisors, had been in Vietnam since the mid-16th century, it was not until the mid-19th century that the French military intervened directly in Vietnam.¹² From 1856 through the beginning of the 20th century, the French military fought Vietnamese anticolonial forces in bloody battles. Although the French established governing powers through treaties, the local populations of the area continued to combat the French military. Throughout the colonial period, the French government would continue to face multiple small rebellions, thereby making security a preoccupation and a consistent theme in the discourse on abandoned Eurasian children throughout the colonial period.

Officials in the colonial government were alarmed by abandoned Eurasian children, whom they equated with a potential threat to white prestige and, by extension, colonial rule. French colonists identified three ways in which abandoned Eurasian children would pose a threat to the colonial regime. First, colonists suspected that male abandoned Eurasians would, when they reached young adulthood, come to resent their place in the colonial racial hierarchy. Presumably rejected by Vietnamese as well as French populations, these young men “were destined to become rebels and enemies of France.”¹³ Second, colonists claimed that Eurasian girls would damage white prestige by becoming prostitutes. Those who held this belief frequently vilified the mothers. As one government administrator warned: “[Because] there is no maternal direction, the child does poorly in school and the girls often go on to become prostitutes. If not taken care of, they are potential dangers to the colony.” According to this administrator, it was the moral duty of French *colons* to prevent girls from becoming prostitutes.¹⁴ Third, officials in the French government expressed concern that abandoned Eurasians would become a source of white poverty in Indochina as they had in the Netherlands Indies, where Eurasians comprised the majority of impoverished whites. In order to prevent an epidemic of white poverty in Indochina, the French Consulate of Batavia advised Indochina’s colonial government to monitor its entire Eurasian population.¹⁵

To neutralize the threat that abandoned Eurasians were presumed to pose, French civilians throughout Indochina formed non-governmental Eurasian “protection” societies in the early 1890s. Eurasian protection was designed to remove abandoned Eurasian children from the Vietnamese cultural environment. According to a French social theory popular at the time, a change in social environment could correct a person’s moral shortcomings.¹⁶ Assuming French cultural practices to be morally corrective, French colonists placed abandoned Eurasians in French-run orphanages, where they were raised to be culturally French and loyal to the colonial government.

Before the founding of the Eurasian protection societies in the 1890s, Catholic orphanages cared for both Vietnamese and Eurasian orphans who had been abandoned or deposited there. By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, abandoned Eurasian children were sent to the new Eurasian-specific protection societies, which formed a separate, secular orphanage system. Catholic orphanages continued to accept Eurasian wards but then channeled them to the Eurasian system.¹⁷ The goal of the Eurasian protection societies was not only to care for the children but to regulate environmental influences and the children's behavior.¹⁸ The private protection societies differed from the church-run orphanages in that the church passively accepted the Eurasian children into its care while the private protection societies aggressively sought them out.

Eurasian protection societies employed metropolitan French legal mechanisms to justify removing Eurasian children from their mothers' care. One such law was the 24 July 1889 Metropolitan Law, which declared that the state could claim paternal rights over children who had been physically or morally abandoned by one or both of their parents. The law, known as the *Déchéance de la puissance paternelle*, meaning the divestiture of paternal power, allowed the state to intervene in the family and take custody of children.¹⁹ As a colony, Cochinchina was required to follow French Metropolitan laws on childcare, and the 1889 paternal divestment law was made applicable to French citizens in Indochina by a decree of 7 May, 1890.²⁰ The law was not promulgated in the protectorates of Tonkin, Annam, Laos, and Cambodia until 1924.²¹ Even before that year, however, protection societies for abandoned Eurasian children would use the rhetoric of the 1889 law to justify their actions. In 1907, the colonial state began offering legal and financial support by declaring the organizations "recognized by the public" and providing subventions. That said, protection societies would remain private until 1938.

The Eurasian protection societies justified the removal of abandoned Eurasian children from their mothers with the argument that a Eurasian child's domestic environment should conform to French cultural norms. Some orphanage administrators expressed a belief that the parents of abandoned Eurasians were of morally dubious character. Most of the colony's abandoned Eurasian children were born out of wedlock, and unmarried parents were automatically assumed to have low morals and thus to have a corruptive influence on their children. Charles Gravelle, an orphanage administrator in Cambodia, made the case for taking custody of Eurasians on the grounds that their mothers were prostitutes and their fathers, as young soldiers, had been involved in "debauchery," opium, or "oriental vices." Further evidence of the fathers' immorality lay in the fact that they had abandoned their children.²²

The orphanage societies were alerted to the existence of Eurasian families through witness reports. While touring the countryside, military officials would report to local French colonial officials on cases of Eurasian children found living with their single Vietnamese mothers.²³ Police, orphanage administrators, and local French civilians reported to the protection societies on Eurasians found living in single-mother homes.

World War I

World War I shattered the illusion of French superiority in the world. During World War I and its aftermath, colonial Indochina experienced three major threats to French dominance: nationalism, feminism, and a perceived white French depopulation crisis. These threats intensified anxiety about Eurasian resentment and rebellion, which in turn increased efforts to francify abandoned Eurasians in the protection societies.

During World War I, the Vietnamese nationalist movement continued to grow and drew increasing attention from the French Sûreté, the colonial security force. Colonial leaders feared losing political control as they sought to quell localized rebellions. These rebellions called attention to weaknesses in French authority and colonial security that became more apparent through the decade after the war.²⁴

Concurrently, elite Vietnamese female journalists began to challenge the patriarchal foundations of colonial society. In 1917, *Nữ Giới Chung*, the first Vietnamese-language newspaper for women, questioned gender roles in Vietnamese society.² The paper's writers called for a more assertive female role in society; in particular they championed female education.² One article demanded that textbooks be written not only for male but also female students.²⁷ The articles strongly encouraged women's education in the sciences.²⁸ Changes in gender roles in Vietnamese society resulting from the women's movement would alarm the French colonial government during the following decade. Although the Vietnamese women's movement did not take a stance on colonialism in its early years, it did challenge the existing social order.²⁹ Writers in the women's movement provided an alternative to the patriarchy as France was referred to in feminine-maternal terms such as *Mẫu Quốc* [motherland],³ and *Pháp Lan* [western mother].³ The women's movement was nationalist, and by the end of the 1920s it would become affiliated with the radical youth movement and thus pose a threat to colonial order.³²

Eurasian protection society administrators reacted to the threat posed by the changes in the colonial social order by once again urging colonial officials to take a more aggressive role in the "protection" of abandoned Eurasian children. Changes in Metropolitan theories about population management and race gave Eurasian protection advocates a language through which to explain the significance of Eurasian children to the French colonial nation. Two trends in particular, Pronatalism and racial categorization, influenced colonial officials to reconsider their racial perceptions of abandoned Eurasian children.

The large number of casualties resulting from World War I led to the rise of the Metropolitan-originated Pronatalist movement in Indochina. Pronatalists believed that a large population was the key to French military strength. The Pronatalist movement therefore focused on promoting large families and child protection.³³ Ironically, while the Pronatalist movement in France focused on promoting the growth of the *white* French population,³⁴ the Pronatalist movement in

Indochina was partly responsible for the French reconsideration of abandoned *Eurasian* children as descendants of Frenchmen and thus part of the French nation and race. Ironically, the Eurasian protection societies used the rhetoric of Pronatalism while contradicting the movement's initial trajectory.

The Pronatalist movement in Indochina owed its relative inclusivity to the colony's distinct racial demographics. Most obviously, the French population in the colony was far outnumbered by Asians. Given that the French had begun to equate population numbers with political and military might, French colonists in Indochina experienced considerable anxiety over the possibility of losing control of the colony, and this anxiety was exacerbated by the rise of Vietnamese nationalism. Another difference between the Métropole and the colony was the relative prevalence of miscegenation and mixed-race families. Pronatalist-supporting French colonists sought to boost the numbers of white French in the colony in order to maintain political power. Eurasian protection society administrators used Pronatalist arguments to lobby the colonial government to expand benefits for Eurasian children, who were starting to be considered French.

At the same time that Pronatalism was developing in France and Indochina, "scientific" theories of racial blood typing, which categorized races based on a presumed biological difference, were gaining popularity in the Metropole. In 1919 Ludwik and Hanna Hirtszfeld published *The application of serological methods to the problem of races*, which proposed using blood groups to show the origins of ethnic groups. The anthropology community used the Hirtszfelds' theory as a basis for distinguishing races.³⁵ By the late 1920s, racial blood typing was popularly accepted in the Metropole.

In Indochina, science-based racial theories developed very differently from the Métropole. Instead of making the case for an essentialist definition of whiteness, colonial officials employed the scientific discourse on racial categorization to make the case that Eurasians were white. As a note from the president of the Society for the Protection of Abandoned Mixed-Race Children in Annam stated:

At a time when the Mère Patrie is losing a little more blood of its children every day, it appears to us that, from a patriotic and social point of view, our obligation is to increase efforts to save all those who are related to our race, even if it [relation to race] is only a minimum.³⁶

The president's words mark a subtle shift in discourse on abandoned Eurasian children. In the pre-war period, references to what the French viewed as immoral Vietnamese cultural influences dominated the calls to remove abandoned Eurasian children from their mothers' care. As wartime French anxiety about population decimation increased, discussions about abandoned Eurasian children changed to include language that evoked a sense of Eurasians' blood ties to the French "race."

The wartime draft and resulting casualties meant that an increasing number of Eurasian children were being abandoned by their French fathers and left in the

care of their Vietnamese mothers. In 1917, protection society administrators estimated that the number of abandoned Eurasian children had quadrupled as French fathers left for war.³⁷ Protection society administrators stepped up their efforts to take custody of these children. In 1920, Charles Gravelle, a Eurasian protection society administrator, appealed to the Governor General to increase aid to the protection societies because, being “French from the heart and blood,” the Eurasian children represented a “certain progress for the colonization” of Indochina.³⁸

By 1917 the colonial government had become deeply concerned about the growing numbers of white and Eurasian children orphaned by war. Three wartime laws were passed in the Métropole and reinterpreted in the colony to protect the children of soldiers. As efforts to ensure the survival of these children, these laws entered the discourse on the perceived problem of French depopulation. Additionally, the laws enabled the colonial government to intervene in greater numbers of Eurasian families. The first was a law to retroactively legitimate illegitimate children of French fathers who were killed in the line of duty.³⁹ The second was a law to establish permanent state support for war orphans, who were known as *Pupilles de la Nation*. In the Métropole, under the *Pupille* law, the state legally adopted these children, although many had living mothers who had not abandoned them.⁴⁰

At the same time that the *Pupille* law was being legislated, the Minister of Colonies enacted another policy intended specifically for the Eurasian children of fallen fathers. Whereas the original *Pupille* law had been formulated out of Metropolitan law and was intended to assist the French children of French mothers, this third law was regulated the cultural environments in which Eurasians were raised. In June 1917, the Minister of War and the Minister of Colonies decided that both recognized and non-recognized Eurasian children in Indochina would be raised with their Indochinese mothers until the age of ten, at which point the state would institutionalize the children.⁴¹ This policy marked the first aggressive governmental action to remove abandoned Eurasian children from their mothers' care. The Eurasian application of the *Pupille de la Nation* law, along with the original *Pupille de la Nation* and retroactive legitimation, opened the door for future governmental interventions in Eurasian families, even in cases where the father was not in the military.

The three historical developments described above – Vietnamese anti-colonialism and feminism, racial blood typing, and Pronatalist laws – collectively led the colonial government to play a more active role in protection programs for Eurasians. During World War I, Eurasian protection societies developed a plan to utilize the labor potential of institutionalized Eurasians after the war. Abandoned Eurasian children would be placed in land settlement training programs in the Đà Lạt/Lang Bien area of Annam as well as in the Métropole. The programs would serve three purposes. First, they would help, however minimally, to solve post-war

labor shortages in Annam and the Métropole.⁴² Secondly, the programs would educate the Eurasian wards to become productive citizens loyal to the colonial government, thereby mitigating any security threat they might pose. (An administrator named Lan of the Society for Abandoned Mixed-Race Children of Annam warned of the dangers of “[creating] a caste of Métis”; instead, he proposed transforming Eurasian children into “industrial workers or farmers capable of rendering service in the country that receives them.”⁴³) Thirdly, at the settlements, protection society administrators could regulate the behavior of abandoned Eurasian children and prevent them from joining the ranks of the anticolonial movement.⁴⁴

The colonial settlement programs would last, in various forms, through the end of the colonial period. As for the Metropolitan French apprenticeship version, it appeared to end with the financial collapse of 1929.⁴⁵

The Great Depression and the Radicalization of Eurasian Protection Policies

The Great Depression crippled France and the colonies. Among other things, Depression era privations led to the rise of various political movements that posed a potential threat to colonial security and the established patriarchy. These included a communist movement, a feminist movement, and a Eurasian identity movement. In response, the colonial government would step up its control of the Eurasian protection societies to ensure that their Eurasian charges would not become involved in anti-colonial activities.

Throughout the 1930s, the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) took advantage of Depression-era privations to boost its membership and worked in poor areas to aid farmers and lead rebellions. The rise of the ICP and frequency of worker and peasant strikes called attention to weaknesses in colonial authority. In 1937, various members of the colonial administration articulated a fear that impoverished Eurasian adults would join the ranks of the communist movement.⁴⁶ The government responded by increasing security in many aspects of colonial life, including Eurasian care.

A second threat developed in the form of the Vietnamese women’s movement, which challenged the colonial social order and patriarchy. In the late 1920s, the Vietnamese feminist movement promoted nationalist values and urged women to consider the maternal role as their contribution to nationalism. As the movement continued in the 1930s, it became increasingly nationalist and anticolonial. Shortly after the ICP was founded in 1930, the Vietnamese Women’s Union, a branch of the Communist Party devoted to women’s issues, emerged;⁴ women began organizing trade unions and supporting ICP strikes.⁴ Meanwhile, *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, the most popular mainstream women’s magazine, joined the anti-colonial movement. *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn* urged women to take an active role in the movement by raising their children to be young nationalists.

The flurry of articles encouraging women to teach their children nationalist values played into colonial fears about the rebellious potential of abandoned Eurasians being raised by their Vietnamese mothers. *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*'s authors wrote that nationalism was to be practiced within the family domain. Children were expected to respect and nurture the nation in much the same way that they were expected to respect and nurture their parents. One article declared: "We know how to love our family; we must know how to love our country."⁴⁹ In addition, the articles portrayed the family as the means by which to reproduce the nation. In the most fundamental sense, this meant increasing population numbers (clearly an influence of the rhetoric on population emanating from the *French Pronatalist* movement). One *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn* article was entitled "Society Should Encourage Large Families."⁵⁰ Multiple children, according to another article, were the key to reproducing a strong society. The task of reproducing the nation also entailed raising upstanding, patriotic young citizens.⁵¹ The magazine urged mothers to raise their children to become intellectuals who would lead the independent Vietnamese nation.⁵² Articles instructed child-readers to "love your country as you love your mother and father."⁵³ It was within this environment of increasing anticolonial women and the politicization of children that the colonial government, in 1937, formulated plans to remove abandoned Eurasians from their mothers' care.⁵⁴

Further contributing to colonial anxiety over the Eurasian threat was a new political-identity group led by Eurasians that emerged in Indochina in the mid-1930s. The group, *Les Français de l'Indochine*, was comprised mostly of male Eurasians, as well as Vietnamese, Cambodians and French. *Les Français de l'Indochine* were, among other things, low-ranking colonial administrators and philanthropists concerned about abandoned Eurasians.⁵⁵ Those who belonged to *Les Français de l'Indochine* described themselves as a new race or ethnicity, argued for equal rights with the French from the Metropole, and sought Franco-Vietnamese collaboration. Although they were supportive of the colonial government,⁵⁶ the government for its part perceived them as a political threat. This, in fact, was exactly the type of Eurasian identity movement that colonial administrators sought to prevent.⁵⁷

In addition to creating a new political and ethnic identity, *Les Français de l'Indochine* were interested in securing more rights for Eurasians, whom they felt were treated as second rank Frenchmen.⁵⁸ The group focused in particular on child protection, as some of its members themselves had once been orphans. *Les Français de l'Indochine* lobbied the government to take a greater role in the lives of abandoned Eurasian children.⁵⁹ One Eurasian even suggested that *Les Français de l'Indochine* should take (*voler*) abandoned Eurasian children from their mothers' homes in the name of protecting the children from the supposedly corruptive influences of their Vietnamese mothers.⁶⁰

By 1936, the group lobbied to transform Indochina into a settler colony, a move that would give *Les Français de l'Indochine* more political power vis-à-vis the transient French population. Of course, in order to maintain this power, the

group would need to sustain its population. After all, they were a “new” ethnic group, with neither ancestors nor heritage. Les Français de l’Indochine thus sought to secure political rights and welfare for their next generation.⁶¹ It was these calls for unity among Eurasians and collaboration with Vietnamese that had caused anxiety among French colonial administrators since the late 19th century. Citing the Français de l’Indochine among other threats, the colonial government would in 1937 take complete control of the colony’s abandoned Eurasian protection program.

In 1936, Popular Front Prime Minister Leon Blum dispatched the Guernut Mission to Indochina to explore the social, political, and economic problems of the colony and to seek ways of addressing these problems.⁶² The rhetoric referencing abandoned Eurasian children in the reports to the Guernut Commission was consistent with pre-Depression discourse on these children. As in the pre-Depression period, the moral dubiousness of abandoned Eurasian children was a concern. Colonial administrators likewise continued to be preoccupied with what they perceived as the base moral nature of their mothers. Vietnamese cultural practices were linked to debauchery while French cultural practices were considered evidence of moral righteousness. The Mission concluded that the situation of the Eurasians in Indochina posed a serious “moral” and political problem for the colony.⁶³ According to the colonial administrators who reported to the Guernut Mission, the moral problem was that the children of Frenchmen were not being raised as culturally French.

As in the 1920s, reports to the Guernut Mission echoed the theme that Eurasians were biologically French. In the Guernut reports, an administrator from Bâc Liêu identified the Eurasians as “already French by blood,”⁶⁴ and the Resident Superior of Tonkin described Eurasians as “carrying true French blood.”⁶⁵ Ironically, the belief that abandoned Eurasians were French “by blood” contradicted theories of racial biology popular in the Métropole at the time. By the mid-1930s, European countries had embraced fascist racial categorizations; according to these theories, a person without two white parents was not white.⁶⁶

Many colonial administrators who reported to the Guernut Mission also echoed the pre-Depression concern that abandoned Eurasian children posed a potential political problem for the government. Of particular threat was the growing influence—both numerically and politically—of Les Français de l’Indochine.⁶⁷ The report of the Guernut Mission warned that the Eurasians posed a particular political threat because, by 1937, Eurasian adults with French citizenship already held a majority of French votes in the colonial legislature. A growing Eurasian population, he argued, would increase the proportion of Eurasian votes; for this reason it was in the colonial government’s best interest to foster Eurasian loyalty to the colonial state.⁶⁸

The final Guernut report warned that Eurasian young people who did not join Les Français de l’Indochine would become Vietnamese patriots and turn against the French empire—a symbolic as well as a political blow for France.⁶⁹ Administrators reporting to the Guernut Mission warned that the Eurasians were

a “possible destabilizing element”; after all, the anti-French deposed Prince Cường Để had issued a directive for Vietnamese revolutionaries to ally with the colony’s Eurasians.⁷

Guernut Mission officials urged the colonial government to take the Eurasian children from their Vietnamese mothers, who were presumed to be influencing their children with “indigène ways.”⁷ An administrator from Bạc Liêu suggested that the government “take charge of the children, educate and instruct the abandoned Métis to raise them effectively within the ranks of French citizens.”⁷ The suggestions by the Guernut Mission were realized in 1938 with a decision to found the Jules Brévié Foundation, a centralized Eurasian child protection institution under the administrative command of the colonial state. The Governor General issued state directives to institutionalize impoverished Eurasian children who had been abandoned by their French fathers. The Brévié Foundation would operate through 1946.

World War II and the Japanese Occupation

Security concerns during World War II contributed to French fears that abandoned Eurasian children would join the anticolonial movement. During this period, the ICP and other anticolonial groups capitalized on French weaknesses and gained political support. On 29 September 1939, the Indochinese Communist Party announced a change in strategy to join with all “patriotic” elements of the Vietnamese population—farmers, the proletariat, and even the bourgeoisie—to fight for national Vietnamese liberation.⁷³ In the summer of 1939, the Japanese invasion of Hainan Island alerted the French to an impending war in Indochina. In June 1940, less than a year later, France fell to the Germans. The 22 June 1940 armistice moved the French capital to Vichy and installed Marshall René Pétain as leader.

Along with the security threats facing the colony, French colonial administrators believed there was an additional threat to colonial whiteness in the form of a perceived population imbalance. French administrators feared that the colony did not have a visible white presence.⁷⁴ Colonial officials turned to Eurasians to bolster the French population. In 1942, a demographic study by Philip Huard and Do Xuan Hop argued that Eurasian births could solve the white population deficit. Huard and Do argued that although the biracial births “do not reach the importance of the strictly white births, they are a distinctly fair way to increase” the white population.⁷⁵ This argument was a departure from the World War II-era racial sciences that held that race was an essentialized category and denounced mixed-race people as non-white.

French colonial administrators proposed to use Eurasians to solve two specific population issues: the settlement of Đà Lạt and the dearth of colonial administrators. In 1937, Đà Lạt was designated to become the new colonial capital. As Eric Jennings has shown, Đà Lạt urban planners designed the town as a “con-

spicuous symbol of French domination.”⁷⁷ *Đà Lạt*, in the words of one colonial author, was to become a “cozy little corner of France.”⁷⁷ The problem, however, was that the capital-to-be lacked a sufficient white French settlement and was thus scarcely appropriate as a symbol of domination. Although it was a popular seasonal vacation destination, its isolated location in the mountains discouraged permanent French settlers.

Colonial administrators looked to abandoned Eurasian children to form the new white population of *Đà Lạt* and the surrounding *Lang Bien* area. Jules Brévié Foundation president Georges Coedès, also president of *L'École Française de l'Extrême Orient* and himself the father of six Eurasian children, devised a plan to bolster the white population of *Đà Lạt* by locating the main orphanages of the Jules Brévié Foundation in the center of town.⁷⁸ The Eurasians were to be educated as “young metropolitans” and, as such, augment the white population of the proposed new colonial capital.⁷⁹

The Japanese occupation caused a significant shift in the demography of the colony that would lead to a reconsideration of the role that Eurasians could play in the colonial social order. The war brought a dramatic influx of Japanese soldiers, which restricted the power of colonial administrators. Moreover, a suspension in maritime travel caused a decrease in the number these officials.⁸⁰ In response, the colonial government stepped up its efforts to remove abandoned Eurasians from the native milieu and groom them as the colony’s next generation of political elites. Since Eurasians, according to this plan, had no permanent ties in France, they would not be inclined to leave the colony, as so many French administrators had done in previous years. France would thus have a stable and fixed population of colonial political elite. The children would be educated to form a class of “future colonists,”⁸¹ or a “classe spéciale de ‘Français de l’Indochine’”⁸² This plan assured that the colony would never again lack for white French administrators.

As soon as it was apparent that war was coming to Indochina, colonial administrators intensified efforts to remove abandoned Eurasian children from the Vietnamese milieu. On 18 March 1939, P.I. De Tastes, the Resident Superior of Tonkin, Indochina, issued a directive to conduct a massive search for Eurasian children who had been abandoned by their French fathers and were living with their native mothers. Once located, these children were categorized as “colored/black,” “lightly tinted,” or “white;”⁸³ those labeled “colored/black” were left in the native milieu. Children under the age of seven who could pass for white were taken, sometimes forcibly, from their native mothers.⁸⁴ These abandoned Eurasian children were then placed in orphanages where they would be educated as “little Frenchmen,” or the future “permanent colonial French population.”⁸⁵ The policies ordered by the De Tastes directive were practiced throughout the colonial period, although not necessarily by the colonial government.

The colonial government proceeded to conduct searches throughout the Indochinese countryside to find Eurasian children who had been abandoned by their

French fathers. Government administrators searched areas of former military camps and followed leads reported by French or Vietnamese civilians. Jules Brévié Foundation administrators demanded a “quick, serious track-down of the children before they are 6 years of age,” and instructed its agents to “tear [*arracher*] [the children] from their mothers, preferably at 2 to 3 years of age” and enroll them in French schools.⁸⁶

The Jules Brévié Foundation, still dominated by men, hired white women to search for abandoned Eurasian children, and either negotiate with Vietnamese women or coerce them into placing their children in the Brévié orphanages. One of the women, a Madame Aumont, conducted a search for Eurasian children in the Hai Phòng area of Tonkin. From 1942-44, Aumont placed Eurasian children in the Jules Brévié Foundation, many of them *unwillingly* “abandoned” by their mothers. As Aumont reported to the Resident Superior of Tonkin, she deliberately placed the children in orphanages in discreet locations where the mothers would not find them.⁸⁷

In one complicated case, a mother with three Eurasian children engaged in a kind of cat-and-mouse pursuit with Madame Aumont. The Jules Brévié Foundation obtained custody of two of the children, Thérèse and Felix, through the efforts of Madame Aumont.⁸⁸ In 1940, the Brévié Foundation sought to gain custody of the third child, Marc, and offered his mother a subvention of 10 piastres per month. The mother originally complied, then changed her mind and asked to have all three of her children back. The Brévié Foundation refused and moved her children to three separate orphanages so that she would have trouble finding them. The mother did, however, manage to track Marc down and forced the priest in charge of the orphanage to give her back her child. The mother escaped Madame Aumont by frequently moving within the area of Gia Viên and Kiển An. Aumont suspected that Vietnamese village heads in various areas were aiding the mother by sending advance notifications warning of Aumont’s arrival. Aumont also suspected that other mothers went into hiding when they learned of her impending visits.⁸⁹

The First Indochina War and Decolonization 1945-1956

On the night of 8 March 1945, the Japanese military staged a coup d’état and seized power from the French officials in Indochina. The Japanese takeover provided an opportunity for Ho Chi Minh’s anti-colonial Viet Minh party to gather support. The Japanese surrender was announced on 15 August, leaving a power vacuum in Indochina. Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) on 2 September, the same day as the international ceremony to accept the Japanese surrender. The DRV rapidly attracted political support, loyalty, and soldiers.⁹⁰

Neither the French nor the Allied forces that were supporting them accepted Ho’s declaration, and in mid-September Chinese and British troops were sent to Indochina to disarm the Japanese troops and assist with the French return to

power. By 25 September the French government had returned to Southern Vietnam. By 1946, the First Indochina War had broken out between the French and Vietnamese. During the bloody and chaotic decade that followed, both the French and Vietnamese governments claimed control of Indochina.

Almost immediately after Hô Chí Minh declared independence, the new Vietnamese government began to institute a range of new social programs designed in part to build political loyalty among villagers. Among other things, the DRV offered, and granted, Vietnamese citizenship to Eurasians, including those who had been francified under the protection societies.⁹¹ The DRV's inclusive citizenship program played into the longstanding fears of colonial authorities about the political threat posed by Eurasians. The French military responded by increasing efforts to remove abandoned biracial children of military fathers from the Vietnamese milieu.

As the French colonial government Indochina faced its greatest challenge yet in the form of the DRV, a second potential threat emerged: two related mixed-race identity groups that included former members of Les Français de l'Indochine.⁹² The groups were La Mutuelle des Français de l'Indochine and the Fédération des ouvres pour les enfants Franco-Indochinois (FOEFI). The former concerned itself with the political situation of adult Eurasians, while the latter made efforts to ensure the political and personal welfare of Eurasian children. Both groups sought political rights for biracial individuals equal to those of French Metropolitan citizens.⁹³ The FOEFI, the institutional descendant of the Jules Brévié Foundation,⁹⁴ was directed by William Bazé, a former low-ranking Brévié Foundation administrator and minister under the colonial government.⁹⁵ Bazé criticized the French government for treating Eurasians, metaphorically speaking, as France's "illegitimate child" (and indeed many were the children of unmarried parents). He observed that this problem extended throughout the French empire, drawing a parallel between the situation of the Franco-Vietnamese children and that of the Franco-African children in France's African colonies.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, FOEFI and La Mutuelle des Français d'Indochine had a complicated relationship with the Vietnamese government. They were not explicitly opposed to the DRV, at least until 1950. After all, as one member, Mutiny pointed out, the Vietnamese government was "offering as much [to Eurasians] as the French" in terms of citizenship and political access.⁹⁷ It was this kind of political flexibility that the French colonial had long feared in its Eurasian population.

Around 1947, as the First Indochina War continued and the DRV consolidated its political and military power, colonial perceptions of race made a significant shift. As the colonial government faced the prospect of decolonization, their obsession was no longer on protecting whiteness – as had been the case only two years earlier – but rather on preserving the empire. The term "French" was no longer limited to white or Eurasian children but now applied to any child born of one parent who was a soldier from anywhere in the French empire: Africa, India or the Middle East.⁹⁸ This shift became evident as the French School for Eurasian *Enfants de Troupes* opened its admissions to mixed-race children of one Vietnamese

parent and one parent from the French empire: Africa, India, or the Middle East.⁹⁹ The FOEFI sought out “white-looking” and non-“white-looking” Eurasian children as well as the Afro-Asian children of African soldiers.¹⁰⁰

In 1951, after four years of bitter fighting that included guerilla warfare in the major cities, it appeared that the French would begin the process of handing over political power to the DRV.¹⁰¹ The members of FOEFI feared that Eurasian children would be left behind by the French government in the political turmoil of decolonization. William Bazé and FOEFI argued that it was in the best interest of the French to remove abandoned Eurasian children from Vietnam. Bazé warned L’Action Sociale that if the French government failed to do so, these children would become culturally Vietnamese and thus undermine the French colonial legacy. Bazé declared: “The progressive and unavoidable assimilation of a group of Eurasians by the Vietnamese masses signifies nothing less than the definitive loss of all French influence on Asian soil.”¹⁰² The implication of Bazé’s statement was that if biracial children remained in Indochina, they would become a symbol of the lost empire. In 1947, FOEFI began sending some of its young Eurasian charges to orphanages in France.¹⁰³ By 1956, the organization would extend this policy to include all biracial children.

During the First Indochina War, the FOEFI gained custody of the colony’s biracial children in one of two ways. Either mothers brought their children to FOEFI orphanages, or a section of the military, L’Action Sociale, sought them out. Aware that French troops were having sex with local women, L’Action Sociale would return to military camps nine months to one year after the military had left a particular site and offer assistance to the impoverished mothers of the soldiers’ children. L’Action Sociale’s welfare agent then offered the mothers the option of placing their children in FOEFI orphanages with the understanding that the children would be educated at L’École des Enfants de Troupes.

As the French were losing the battle at Dien Bien Phu, the Metropolitan government signed the Geneva Accords, which stipulated that French forces and the colonial government would leave Vietnam by 1956. The country would be temporarily divided at the 17th parallel, with the communist DRV in the north and the non-communists in the South. When it became clear that the French military and government would pull out of Indochina within a few years, Bazé again advised the French government to include Eurasians and Afro-Asians among its evacuees. He based his appeal on two arguments. First, he said, any Eurasians or Afro-Asians who remained in Vietnam after the French pullout would be an uncomfortable reminder of the failed French empire: “The local population will look at them and say ‘Voilà, here’s the work of the French.’” In extending his concern to Afro-Asians and Indo-Asians, Bazé’s statement reflects a slight difference from the pre-1945 rhetoric on abandoned Eurasian children.¹⁰⁴ Now that the French had begun the process of decolonization, they were less concerned with white prestige than with imperial prestige. Bazé also argued that Eurasians and Afro-Asians posed a security threat. After all, the DRV military was actively recruiting youth, including biracial youth, and offering them Vietnamese citizenship. A

Eurasian fighting for the DRV would amount to what Bazé called a “propaganda line” against the French. In other words, Bazé warned, “the orphans, who could serve our cause one day, risk becoming the contrary, later our worst enemies.”¹⁰⁵

In keeping with these arguments, FOEFI resumed its efforts to locate impoverished and abandoned Eurasian and Afro-Asian children, with the intention of sending them back to France.¹⁰⁶ These FOEFI wards would then become eligible for French citizenship. Speaking in terms of a “moral duty,” FOEFI explained: “We could not abandon the children, so we took them.”¹⁰⁷ FOEFI’s “moral duty” also extended to Afro-Asians and Indo-Asians; it would be “unconscionable,” FOEFI members agreed, to leave Afro-Asians and Indo-Asians in the Vietnamese environment.¹⁰⁸ Like FOEFI, the French military continued recruiting Eurasian and Afro-Asian children for its 1955-1956 school year.¹⁰⁹ The older *Enfants de Troupes* cadets who did not go to France had the option of joining the U.S. military or the CIA, both of whose presence in Vietnam was increasing.¹¹⁰

According to FOEFI documents, rumors were circulating among the Vietnamese public that the French were abducting children; this, of course, implicated FOEFI. However, records indicate that FOEFI did not knowingly participate in these actions: indeed, the organization denounced them. It was, instead, L’Action Sociale that took the children from their mothers and placed them in FOEFI orphanages. Specifically, these were the biracial children abandoned by soldiers serving in the French military. The children arrived at the orphanages without any identifying documents. As a result, when mothers demanded the return of their children from FOEFI, it rejected their demands on the grounds that it had no means of verifying whose child belonged to whom. Bazé not only denounced L’Action Sociale’s seizing of the children; he also went so far as to cut all ties with that wing of the military. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Bazé’s organization ever returned these children to their mothers.¹¹¹

By 1955, at which point the French government had already lost Indochina and agreed to decolonization, it continued to care for abandoned biracial children and even sent some to France. Although French administrators knew that a French departure from Indochina was imminent, a precise date to evacuate the children was not set until late 1955. Tensions among the older wards at the School for *Enfants de Troupes* were, understandably, high. The chief of military forces in Indochina reported a general feeling of unrest at the school, describing the cadets as nervous and insecure.¹¹² A few of the cadets ran away but were arrested and returned to the school.¹¹³

As the School for *Enfants de Troupes* prepared its students to go to France, some of the students were developing distinctly anti-French sentiments.¹¹⁴ The Eurasian, Jean, was among those who denounced the French. In fact, he claimed not to be French at all, instead identifying with his Vietnamese family. Jean’s attitude distressed the school’s administrators, given that he had recently been sent to spend his holidays with a French family in Indochina as part of a French nationalist program designed to build able-bodied citizens and increase patriotism.¹¹⁵

Marc, another Eurasian student who posed a discipline problem, was also scheduled to leave for France.¹¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, Marc had posed a particular problem for the Jules Brévié Foundation. His mother had refused to surrender him to Madame Aumont, but Aumont's forces had nonetheless managed to seize the boy. In his mother's efforts to reclaim him, she had gone so far as to strong-arm a priest. Ultimately, FOEFI prevailed and regained custody of Marc. After being raised in the Jules Brévié Foundation and FOEFI, Marc, like other wards, was admitted to the School for *Enfants de Troupes*. Although his teachers believed he was very intelligent, they wrote that he was a "deplorable" student with frequent disciplinary problems and a "bad spirit." Marc, the military record explained, was vehemently anti-French to "the point of being dangerous ...[his] presence at the school [was] particularly deadly." The School for *Enfants de Troupes* resolved to discharge him; they did not request a reimbursement given his "family situation"—an allusion to fact that Marc had been effectively been orphaned by the French protection system.¹¹⁷

On 2 February 1956 the last of the FOEFI wards as well as the cadets from the School for *Enfants de Troupes* left Vietnam for France. Three weeks later, on 23 February, their ship landed in Marseille.¹¹⁸ A 1957 article in *L'Eurafricain* reflected on the history that had brought Eurasians to this point: "The métis note that they lost the 'liberation' of Indochina. Now they are either assimilated by force into Vietnamese [society] (which only suits the Communists) or are forced to take refuge in France, where life is difficult."¹¹⁹ After decolonization, FOEFI continued its operation in France, where it lobbied the French government to accept citizenship requests from Eurasians and Afro-Asians through at least 1982.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Throughout the colonial period, French colonists and colonial authorities in Indochina placed an inordinate importance on the colony's minuscule population of abandoned Eurasian children. These children were difficult to track, as they were legally classified as "indigène" and lived in Vietnamese society. French colonists, Eurasian protection societies, the colonial government, and the French military nonetheless went to great lengths to find and remove abandoned European-looking Eurasian children from the native milieu, at times against the will of their Vietnamese mothers.

Colonial authorities made great efforts to conceal evidence of these actions. Many of the documents that relate to policies to remove abandoned Eurasian children from their mothers' care were labeled secret or confidential. However, as the colonial archives were declassified during the post-colonial period, stories of removals became available in the archives of Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City, Paris, Aix-en-Provence, and Chateau-Vincennes. Some of these cases, like that of young Marc, were important enough to appear in multiple archival collections spanning various government departments, with documentation spanning more than a decade. Yet despite the abundance of stories of abandoned Eurasian chil-

dren being forcibly removed from their mothers, their collective narrative is absent from the historiography.

It was the hybrid identity of the colony's abandoned Eurasian children that made them an object of fixation in colonial society. To French colonists, these children were a troubling racial-cultural paradox. The fact that the children had physical traits that were visibly European, yet followed Vietnamese cultural norms, made them an embarrassment to French colonists. Moreover, because it was assumed that these European-looking children would come to resent their low social status, many colonists feared they would eventually rebel against the colonial government. The colonists' response to the presumed threat posed by abandoned Eurasian children was as mixed as the identity of the children themselves. On one hand, the French heritage of abandoned Eurasian children was used by colonists to justify the removal of these children from their mothers; on the other hand, the children's Vietnamese heritage was cited to explain the failure of some of the programs designed to integrate them.

Throughout the colonial period, the French government in Indochina consistently used racial categorization as a means of dominating potentially rebellious Eurasians. As each of the aforementioned historical exigencies threatened French control of the colony, the colonial government reacted by removing more abandoned Eurasian children from their native mothers and by stepping up governmental involvement in this process. Colonial officials used orphanages as a mechanism to shift the racial categorization of abandoned Eurasian children. The various historical shifts in Eurasian racial categorization corresponded to the political climate, and the French government did succeed in thwarting whatever Eurasian rebellion might have occurred. The only real Eurasian threat during the colonial period was the Eurasian identity group known as *Les Français de l'Indochine*. The colonial government effectively prevented additional young Eurasians from joining this potentially anti-colonial movement by taking over the Eurasian protection system and establishing the Jules Brévié Foundation. The government's stepped-up involvement also maintained the image of French prestige by controlling the children's cultural influences. The French success in controlling the colony's population of abandoned Eurasians via enculturation was evidenced in two ways. First, although abandoned Eurasians did join the revolutionary movement, for the most part they did not join *en masse*. Moreover, those who were expatriated to France through the FOEFI remained loyal to France, and many still live there.

The growing threat that abandoned Eurasian children were presumed to pose to colonial security, the colonial patriarchy, and white prestige led the French colonial public to repeatedly re-imagine the racial categorization of these and other biracial children. Until World War I, these children were not considered white; their importance lay in the threat they posed to colonial rule – real or not. As anxieties about depopulation grew during the war, French colonists highlighted the abandoned Eurasians' biological connection to the white race. The Great Depression heightened earlier fears about a Eurasian security threat, yet colonists

maintained the belief that Eurasians were white by virtue of their “one drop” of French blood. This more inclusive approach to white racial formation was a distinct contrast to the Métropole’s essentialized perception of race throughout the 1930s. During World II, influenced by a Metropolitan concern with “white” features, the colonists narrowed their definition of whiteness to include only those Eurasian children with one or more “white features.” Beginning in 1947, however, confronting decolonization, the colonial government became less focused on exploiting the perceived whiteness of Eurasian children to protect colonial rule, and more focused on expanding the definition of Frenchness to protect the imperial legacy. Colonial officials began to identify all biracial children as French, including those whose fathers came from Africa, India, and the Middle East. Like their Eurasian counterparts, these children were an uncomfortable reminder of French imperial defeat, and so they were removed from the native milieu and sent to France. French identity thus became more rooted in imperial ancestry than in whiteness.

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ENDNOTES

1. For the most part the fathers were French and the mothers were Vietnamese. Eurasian children, who lived with both parents, or with a single European parent, did not raise questions among the colonial French population. It was believed that, with the father present, the native mothers would have less influence over their children. Eurasians, according to this belief, would be raised as culturally French—what French colonists believed to be an appropriate practice for White-looking people.
2. For the sake of clarity, I will use the colonial era term, “abandoned Eurasian children” to refer to these children who were abandoned by their French fathers, though they were not necessarily abandoned by their native mothers.
3. For example, see “Société de protection des enfants métis abandonnés du Tonkin, Statuts révisés à l’assemblée générale, 18 mars 1904.” VNNA 1, Fonds of the Resident Superior of Tonkin (hereafter RST) 5545.
4. This case was similar to that of the mixed-race children of early twentieth century Australia, known as the “Lost Generations.” See for example, Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales, 1883-1969*. (Canberra, 1981); Barbara Nicholson, “Stolen Generations” in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Thought in English*, edited by Prem Podar and David Johnson (NY, 2005) 388-452.
5. Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie : Les métis de l’Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté*. (Paris, 2007).; Gilles de Gantès, “Les métis franco-indochinois à l’époque coloniale. A l’interface des dominants et des dominés ou à leur marge?” in *Actes du colloque Interfaces*, ed. Michael Chang et Chantal Zheng (Aix-en-Provence, 2006).; Pierre Guillaume, “Les métis en Indochine,” *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1995): 185-195.; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Los Angeles, 2002).; Ann Laura Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable:

The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis, 1997).; David M. Pomfret, “Raising Eurasia: Race, Class, and Age in French and British Colonies,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009): 314-343.

6. French documents of the period use the terms “français” and “blanche” interchangeably when referring to Eurasians. “Français,” in to these documents, refers to someone who is both culturally and biologically white French. Although most French documents use the term “français” rather than “blanche,” it is clear that they are referring strictly to white French, not Asians with French citizenship.

7. Only in the 1940s would there be an increase in female membership; at that point, it was women who engaged in the face-to-face negotiations with Vietnamese mothers.

8. For an excellent reportage on Vietnamese women who engaged in sexual relations with western men in the 1930s see Vũ Trọng Phụng, “Kỹ nghệ lấy tây” in *Kỹ nghệ lấy tây, com thấy com cô* (Hà Nội, 2004) 7-101.

9. See for example *Hà thành Ngọ báo*, “Cuộc số của hội trẻ con tây vô thừa nhận,” page 2, October 2, 1928.; *Ngọ Báo*, “Cuộc số số giúp trẻ tây-lai vô thừa nhận,” page 2, September 28, 1928.; *Đông-pháp*, “Trẻ con tây-lai vô thừa-nhận ra xem vịnh Hạ Long,” page 3, May 29, 1927.; *Đông Pháp*, “Lập trường huấn luyện vô bị cho các trẻ con Pháp Việt vô thừa nhận,” page 2, October 18, 1938.; *Ngọ báo*, “Việc Bắc kỳ,” page 1, March 19, 1928.; *Đông Pháp*, “Một ý kiến về vấn-đề hôn-nhân của người pháp và người Nam,” page 3, January 24, 1937.; *Đông pháp*, “Có phải cô Ninh bỏ nhà theo 1 người lính tây, mẹ đến tìm còn hành hung?,” March 4, 1937.; *Việt báo*, “Chồng lừa đảo! bạn chồng lừa đảo! tiền mất, chồng cũng mất nốt,” page 5, August 6, 1937.

10. Gilles de Gantès, “Les métis franco-indochinois à l'époque coloniale. A l'interface des dominants et des dominés ou à leur marge?” in *Actes du colloque Interfaces*, eds. Michael Chang et Chantal Zheng (Aix-en-Provence, 2006).

11. For a rich history of the legal status of Eurasians see Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie: Les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté* (Paris, 2007).

12. Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (NY, 1996) 68-82.; Trần Văn Giàu, *Chống Xâm Lăng: Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 đến 1898* (Hồ Chí Minh City, 2001) 769-778; *Địa Chỉ Văn hóa Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh tập 1: Lịch Sử*, ed. Trần Văn Giàu and Trần Bạch Đằng (Hồ Chí Minh City, 1998).

13. “Société de protection des enfants métis abandonnés du Tonkin, Statuts revisés à l'assemblée générale du 18 Mars 1904.” VNNA 1, Fonds RST 5545.

14. “Note,” [no author, no addressee] 29 February 1904. Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer (hereafter CAOM), Fonds Gouverneur Général d'Indochina (hereafter GGI) 7701.

15. “Rapport sur le paupérisme à Java,” 3 October 1903. CAOM, Fonds GGI 54225.

16. Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago, 1989) 11.

17. “La société de protection des enfants métis abandonnés du Tonkin, Statuts Révisés à l'assemblée générale du 18 Mars 1904.” Vietnam National Archives (hereafter VNNA) 1, Fonds RST 5545.; *Notice sur la Société d'Assistance aux Enfant Franco Indochinois du Tonkin* (Hà Nội: Imprimerie G. Taupin, 1937). VNNA 1 Fonds GGI 400.; “La société de protection de l'enfance au Cambodge.” VNNA 1, Fonds GGI 10329.

18. Meeting, 7 October 1896, Association for the Protection of and Assistance to Franco-Anna-

mite Children. CAOM, GGI 7701; Meeting, 28 January 1897, Association for the Protection and Assistance of Franco-Annamite Children. CAOM, Fonds GGI 7701.

19. Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Fathers, Families, and the State in France, 1914-1945* (Ithaca, 2003) 23-25.

20. Decree of 7 May 1890, Promulgated by Ruling of 19 September 1890, "Nomenclature des textes relatifs à la traite des femmes et des enfants en Cochinchine". *Journal Officiel* (hereafter JO) (1909) 242. VNNA 2, Fonds Governor de Cochinchine (Hereafter Goucoch), IVA8/286(17).

21. Emmanuelle Saada refers to the date 22 January 1924 when the 1889 law was made applicable in Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos. She argues that the law was made applicable within a large scale change to the colonial legal system resulting from the debates on assimilation and association. Saada, Emmanuelle. "La 'Question des Métis' dans les colonies Françaises: Socio-Histoire d'une catégorie juridique (Indochine et autres territoires de l'Empire Français; années 1890-années 1950)," (Ph.D diss., École des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales, 2001) 195, 297, 306.

22. Charles Gravelle, "Enquête sur la Question des Métis," *Revue Indochinoise* (January 1913): 32.

23. Letter, The Administrator at Nhà Nam to RF at Bắc Giang, 8 September 1911. VNNA 1, Fonds RST 5489.

24. *Đại Cương Lịch Sử Việt Nam Tập II*, ed. Đinh Xuân Lâm (Hà Nội, 2004).

25. *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Xả Thuyết: Nhĩa Nam Nữ Bình Quyền là gì?" February 22, 1918.

26. *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Tập Trữ: Bàn về Giáo Dục," June 28, 1918.; *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Việc Nữ Học" July 19, 1918.

27. *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Xả Thuyết: Bàn về Sách dạy đờn bà con gái," April 5, 1918.

28. *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Mẹ con nói chuyện cách trí," 1 February 1918.; *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Cách trí: mẹ con nói chuyện," March 22, 1918; *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Học nghệ cách lấy hơi thơm trong các thứ bông," March 22, 1918.

29. For an excellent discussion of *Nữ Giới Chung*, see Đặng Thị Vân Chi, *Vấn đề phụ nữ trên báo chí tiếng việt trước năm 1945* (Hà Nội: NXB Khoa học xã hội, 2008) 58-82.

30. *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Xả Thuyết: Lòng yêu nước của đờn bà pháp," April 12, 1918.

31. *Nữ Giới Chung*, "Nhiệt thành tự ngôn," April 26, 1918.

32. David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial 1920-1945* (Berkeley, 1981) 190-251.

33. The Pronatalist movement had its origins in 19th century French political anxieties about military strength. The 1870 French defeat by the Prussian army surprised the French public. French politicians and military officials made a connection between political-military might and population figures. The French military attributed the loss to the relatively small French population that had not provided sufficient military troops; the larger German population, by contrast, had provided ample troops for battles. French anthropologists and eugenicists warned that the depopulation trend would undermine the French not only as a military power but as a racial group; William H. Schneider, *Quantity and Quality: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1990) 13-15.

34. As Elisa Camiscioli has shown, although Pronatalists supported the Metropolitan initiative to bring immigrant workers to France and encouraged racial mixing, they were careful to support what was considered hygienic racial mixing. Asian and African immigrant workers were specifically excluded from the recruitment process and the approved miscegenation. Eliza Camiscioli, "Producing Citizens, Reproducing the 'French Race': Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth Century France," *Gender & History* 13 (2001) 593-599.
35. William H. Schneider, 208-229.
36. Memorandum, The Committee of the Society for the Protection of Abandoned Eurasian Children of Annam (Huế) to the Representative of the Association of Clerks in Civil Service of Annam, [Undated World War I, probably 1916]. VNNA 2, Fonds Résident Superior d'Annam (hereafter RSA) 867.
37. "Société de protection des enfants métis abandonnés, Assemblée générale du 20 Janvier 1917." VNNA 1, Fonds RST 5545.
38. Letter, Gravelle to the Governor General of Indochina, 25 May 1920. CAOM, Fonds GGI 15297.
39. The law to legitimate illegitimate children of French fathers killed in war retroactively was enacted on 7 April 1917 in the Métropole and promulgated in the colony on 3 July 1917. Once legitimated, the children became French citizens and received citizenship benefits, but their mothers were subject to the 1889 law that regulated unfit parents.
40. On 27 July 1917 the Metropolitan government enacted a second law that established a special status of state ward for White children of fallen French soldiers called *Pupille de la Nation*. On 23 September 1918, the law was extended to the colonies to include not only children of French citizens but of French subjects and protégés.; Olivier Faron, "The Age of War Orphans: Construction and Realities of a Group of State Wards between Education and Assistance 1917-1935," *The History of the Family* 4 (1999): 17-29. ; Oliveir Faron, *Les Enfants du Deuil: Orphelins et pupilles de la nation de la première guerre mondiale (1914-1941)* (Paris, 2001) 50-78.; Letter, Ministry of Colonies to GGI, 23 September 1918. CAOM, Fonds GGI 15294.
41. Letter, Minister of War to Minister of Colonies, 16 June 1917. CAOM, Fonds GGI 26921.
42. Memorandum, The Committee of the Society for the Protection of Abandoned Mixed-Race Children of Annam to the Representative of the Association for Clerks of the Civil Service in Annam, [undated, before October 1916] VNNA 2, Fonds RSA 867.
43. Letter, Lan to RSA, 7 October 1916. VNNA 2, Fonds RSA 867.
44. Letter, Charles Gravelle to GGI, 25 May 1920. CAOM, Fonds GGI 15297.
45. CAOM, Fonds Service de Liaison avec les Originaires des Territoires français d'Outre-Mer (hereafter SLOTFOM) XII 1.
46. "Enquête sur les métis," Response from Bến Tre. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97.
47. Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai founded the women's branch of the Tân Việt, which later became the ICP. Sophie Quinn-Judge, *Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years* (London, 2003) 130-131.; For more information on Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai's life see Lê Quốc Sử, *Chuyện Kể Lê Hồng Phong và Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai* (Hà Chí Minh City, 2001).; Nguyễn Q. Thắng and Nguyễn Bá Thế, *Từ Điển Nhân Vật Lịch Sử Việt Nam* (Hà Nội, 1999) 644-645.
48. Hội Liên Hiệp Phụ Nữ Tỉnh Bắc Ninh, *Lịch Sử Phong Trào Phụ Nữ Tỉnh Bắc Ninh (1930-2000)* (Bắc Ninh, 2000) 40- 56.

49. *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Con Chim Con, Con Cá Con,” June 19, 1930.
50. *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Xã Hội Phải Khuyến Khích những Gia Đình Đồng Con,” October 10, 1929.
51. *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Xã Hội là gì?,” November 10, 1932.
52. *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Nuôi Con Đẻ Cây về Sau” January 14, 1932.
53. The article uses the term “yếu nước” which also means “to be patriotic.” *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Tinh Mẹ Con,” February 13, 1930.; *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Tinh Mẹ Con Của Loài Vật,” December 1, 1932.; *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Tinh Mẹ Con Của Loài Vật,” December 15, 1932.; *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Con Phải Săn Sóc Cho Cha Mẹ,” April 3, 1930.; *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*, “Công Đức Cha Mẹ,” May 9, 1929.
54. See Christina Firpo “‘The Durability of the Empire’: Race, Empire, and ‘Abandoned’ Children in Colonial Vietnam 1870-1956” (Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2007).
55. *Les Nouvelles du Dimanche*, “...Fait la force,” December 8 1935.
56. *Blanc et Jaune*, “Politique Locale: Français de l’Indochine! Présent!,” 11 July 1937. They are represented by the newspapers *L’Alerte*, *Les Nouvelles de Dimanche* and *Blanc et Jaune*. Many members of the orphanage association wrote for these three newspapers.
57. “Les Français de l’Indochine.” CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 25.
59. *Les Nouvelles du Dimanche*, “...Fait la force,” December 8 1935.; *Blanc et Jaune*, “La Suppression des emplois Reserves,” July 25, 1937.
60. *L’Alerte*, “Pour les Français d’Indochine—Le Droit de Vivre,” June 28, 1934.
61. *Blanc et Jaune*, “Tribune des Lectures: Hommes Heureux Pensez aux Petits Métis,” September 26, 1937.
62. *Les Nouvelles du Dimanche*, “Editorial,” March 22, 1936.
63. Charles Fourniau, “Les Années 1930 et l’Impasse Coloniale en Indochine” in *Rapport de Mission en Indochine 1 Janvier-14 Mars 1937*, eds. François Bilange, Charles Fourniau and Alain Ruscio, 20 (Paris, 1994).
64. *Rapport de Mission en Indochine 1 January—14 Mars 1937*, eds. François Bilange, Charles Fourniau, and Alain Ruscio (Paris, 1994) 157.
65. “Enquête sur les Métis,” Response from Bạc Lieu, 1937. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97.
66. “Enquête sur les Métis,” Response from the Resident Superior of Tonkin, 1937. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97. William H. Schneider, 208-229.
67. See files on Les Français de l’Indochine in CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97, 25.
68. *Rapport de Mission en Indochine 1 January—14 Mars 1937*, 159.
69. “Enquête sur les Métis,” Response from Bến Tre, 1937. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97.
70. “Enquête sur les Métis,” Response from Bến Tre, 1937. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97.
71. “Enquête sur les Métis,” Response from Bến Tre, 1937. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97.

72. "Enquête sur les Métis," Response from Bén Tre, 1937. CAOM, Fonds FM Guernut 97.
73. Huynh Kim Khanh, *Vietnamese Communism 1925-1945* (Ithaca, 1982) 233-238, 251.
74. Gregoir Kherian, "Extrait de la Revue Indochinoise Juridique et Economique" (Hanoi, 1937) 1-33.
75. P. Huard and Do Xuan Hop "Recherches sur l'importance numérique des européens et des eurasiens," *Bulletin de l'Institut Indochinois pour l'Etude de l'Homme*, 1942 Part V section I (Hanoi, 1943).
76. Eric Jennings, "From *Indochine* to *Indochic*: The Lang Bian/Dalat Palace Hotel and French Colonial Leisure, Power and Culture," *Modern Asian Studies* 37 (2003): 159-194.
77. *Indochine Hebdomadaire Illustré*, "La Naissance de Dalat," February 10, 1944, 23-24.
78. For a rich discussion of the relationship between orientalist, colonial administrators, and protection institutions see Saada and Pierre Singaravélou.; Emmanuelle Saada. 112-126; Pierre Singaravélou, *L'Ecole française d'extrême-orient ou l'insitution des marges (1898-1956): Essai d'histoire sociale et politique de la science coloniale* (Paris, 1999) 142.
79. "Propositions relatives à l'éducation et au placement des métis, procès verbal du protectorat du Cambodge," report of the Resident Superior of Cambodge, 24 September 1938. VNNA I, RST 71816.
80. Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics* (Sanford, 2001) 166.
81. Letter, Governor of Cochinchina to Governor General of Indochina, 14 December 1943. VNNA I, GGI 10349.
82. Letter, Governor of Cochinchina to Governor General of Indochina, 14 December 1943. VNNA I, GGI 10349.
83. Municipal Police, city of Hanoi "List of abandoned Eurasian children and those whose mothers consent to relinquish jurisdiction," 6 April 1939, VNNA I Fonds Mayor of Hà Nội 5917.
84. Circular, Resident Superior of Tonkin [hereafter RST] De Tastes to Head Residents of Provinces, Commanders of Military Territory, Mayors of Hà Nội and Hải Phòng, 18 March 1939. VNNA I, Fonds Mayor of Hà Nội 5917.
85. Note 2440/AIS, The Director of Legislation and General Administration in Hà Nội from Paul Chauvet, the Director of Political Affairs, 17 November 1942. VNNA I, GGI 89.
86. "Notes au sujet du problème des Eurasiens" by R.P. Dupont, 1942. VNNA I, GGI 89.
87. Letter, M. Aumont to Mayor of Hanoi 28 October, 1942. VNNA I, Fonds GGI 495.
88. The author has deliberately left out the last names of Eurasian wards in order to protect their privacy.
89. Letter, M. Aumont to Mayor of Hanoi 28 October, 1942. VNNA I, Fonds GGI 495.
90. *Cách Mạng Tháng Tám (1945)* (Hà Nội, 1970), 99-125. ; *Cách Mạng Tháng Tám Tổng Khởi Nghĩa ở Hà-Nội và các Địa Phương, quyển I*, ed. Trần Huy Liệu (Hà Nội, 1960) 32-60.
91. See citizenship cases in CAOM, Fonds Du Gouvernement du Fait 9.

92. "Le Depart de M. William Bazé," *L'Eurafricain*, 10 (undated, presumably 1951): 42.
93. "Position juridique des métis." *L'Eurafricain*, 101 (1949): 11.
94. Jules Brévié, the Foundation's namesake, had returned to the Métropole during World War II and worked under the Vichy government. By a decree of 13 June 1946, the Jules Brévié Foundation officially became the Federal Eurasian Foundation (Fondation Fédérale Eurasienne, or FEF).
95. "Fédération des Oeuvres de l'Enfance Française d'Indochine: Exercice 1952, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 10, 11, 12 Septembre 1953" (Imprimerie Française d'Outre Mer: 1953). The foundation changed its name many times before May 1949 when it settled on The Federation of Foundations for French Children of Indochina (La Fédération des Oeuvres de l'Enfance Française de l'Indochine, or FOEFI). "Une Oeuvre Humaine." *Le Populaire*, 24 July 1947. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1108.
96. In addition, FOEFI's members were politically and socially linked to other organizations in the greater French Union as well as Indochina, which aimed to secure rights for bi-racial children. There was, for example, a frequent correspondence between Bazé and the African group *L'Eurafricain*, which had published Bazé's articles in its journal *L'Eurafricain*. The close relationship and frequent correspondence among groups concerned with mixed-race children in other colonies reveals the emergence of a transnational French imperial identity among mixed-race individuals. The groups found solidarity among peoples with familial ties to the French colonies. The metaphor of family and neglected children were frequently employed when discussing mixed-race children in the empire. See for example "Retour vers le passé," *L'Eurafricain* 10 (1950): 18.
97. Mutiny, "Discours de M Mutiny d'un Groupe des Jeunes Eurasiens," *L'Eurafricain*, 101 (1949): 23-24.
98. For an excellent study of North African soldiers who started a family with Vietnamese women, see Nalcy Delanoë, *Poussières d'Empires* (Paris, 2002).
99. In 1948 the school abandoned the word "Eurasians" and officially became The School for *Enfants de Troupes*, perhaps to reflect its policy to admit admissions policy. Note from the High Commissioner of France in Indochina," 18 July 1951. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1108.
100. Fédération des Oeuvres de l'Enfance Française d'Indochine: Exercice 1952, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 10, 11, 12 Septembre 1953" (Imprimerie Française d'Outre Mer, 1953).
101. In the context of civil unrest, a top Eurasian politician was assassinated. On 12 January 1951, two men in a jeep stolen from the U.S. consulate lobbed a grenade into Henri De Lachevrotier's car and killed him. The crime was attributed to the Việt Minh. "M Henri de Lachevrotiere, Avocat Honoraire Président d'Honneur de la Mutuelle des Français de l'Indochine, Journaliste Assassiné à Saigon à Coup de Grenade," *L'Eurafricain* 11 (1951): 35.
102. Letter, President of the FOEFI to Mr. Head of the Central Service of the Social Action, 11 October 1951. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H327.
103. "Nés de pères français et de mères asiatiques 350 jeunes eurasiens ont retrouvé, en France, une famille." *L'Eurafricain*, 12 (1951): 18.
104. "FOEFI: Exercice 1953, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 13, 14, 15 Septembre 1954," (Saigon, 1954).
105. "FOEFI: Exercice 1953, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 13, 14, 15 Septembre 1954," (Saigon, 1954).

106. "FOEFI: Exercice 1953, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 13, 14, 15 Septembre 1954," (Saigon, 1954)
107. "FOEFI: Exercice 1953, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 13, 14, 15 Septembre 1954," (Saigon, 1954)
108. "FOEFI: Exercice 1953, Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 13, 14, 15 Septembre 1954," (Saigon, 1954)
109. Letter from General of the Army Ely to "general diffusion," 15 March 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H327.
110. The U.S. military sent newly commissioned Eurasian officers to the U.S. to train at one of three sites: Fort Leavenworth, the armed forces staff college in Norfolk, Virginia, and Fort Bragg. Letter, The Minister of the Armed Forces to the Commanding Generals of the Military Regions and Territories, 15 February 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H327.; Letter, Secretary of State to the Armed Forces to the Military Governor Generals, 16 December 1954. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H327.; Letter, Minister of National Defense and of the Armed Forces to General Distribution, 7 July 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H327.; "Note de Service" by the Commander in Chief of the Land, Naval and Air in Indochina, 25 February 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H327.
111. "FOEFI, Exercice 1953: Assemblée Générale Ordinaire des 13, 14, 15 Septembre 1954," (Saigon, 1954).
112. Letter, Commander of the Ground, Naval and Air Forces in Indochina transmitted to General of the Army Corps, 10 January 1956. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.
113. Letter, Head of Squadron P. Prothin to General of the Army Corps, 9 December 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.
114. Letter, Commander in Chief of the Land, Naval and Air Forces in Indochina to Captain Morgand, 9 January 1956. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.
115. "Rapport du Capitaine Morgand," 1 September 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.; The program to send abandoned bi-racial children to vacation with French families was part of a larger program in the colony to build French national identity among the youth through the Colonies de Vacances. For more information on these programs in the Métropole see Laura Lee Downs, *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working-Class Movements and the Colonies de Vacances in France, 1880-1960* (Durham, 2002).
116. "Liste nominative des enfants de troupe ayant la qualité Française et qui ont été transférés en Métropole." SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.
117. Untitled document, 1 September 1955. SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.
118. See files on departure in SHAT, Fonds Indochine 10H1113.
119. Albert Paraz, "Les Métis," *L'Eurafricain* 25 (1957).
120. See files requesting citizenship in the FOEFI private files.

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