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Japan and the New Orleans Cotton Trade in the Early Twentieth Century

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The history of New Orleans, like that of the rest of the American South, is fundamentally intertwined with the evolution of the cotton trade. However, the narrative of this history has long remained uneven and incomplete. Until recently, scholars of the cotton South tended to focus their attention on the antebellum years, when “King Cotton” lay at the center of the nation’s economy and politics.¹ By 1860, raw cotton not only represented the major staple of trade between the South and the industrial North but also comprised up to sixty percent of the nation’s total exports. When associated business activities are included in the total—shipping, agricultural tools, bank transactions, shipping, insurance, and so forth—the cotton trade can be said to have been even more economically dominant. New Orleans, which was by far the South’s largest city and principal port, held a significant share in this commerce. Cotton cultivation was also, of course, the central activity behind the system of human enslavement that dominated antebellum southern society, while the primary source for wealth of white southerners was the monetary value of enslaved Blacks and their labor power.

Conversely, after 1860 the dominant narrative is one of decline and ruin. With the outbreak of the Civil War, which stripped southern farms and plantations of manpower and unleashed a blockade of Southern ports by the Union Navy, cotton exports all but ceased. New Orleans, occupied by Union forces early in the war, was cut off from its suppliers in the Confederacy. The emancipation of Blacks after the end of the Civil War wiped out the wealth represented by their value as property. Nonetheless, large-scale cotton cultivation resumed in the American South and even expanded, as landowners who had not previously specialized in cotton were obliged by banks and mortgage holders (largely from the Northern states) to cultivate the once-lucrative cash crop in order to receive financing, and freed Blacks had little choice but to return

to work on plantations as wage laborers or sharecroppers. However, in the generation that followed, a glut in domestic production reduced prices, while increased competition from India and Egypt sparked a downward cycle in the size of exports. After 1890, and well into the twentieth century, the American cotton market was shaken by periodic falls in production as a result of the boll weevil, an insect pest that devastated cotton crops, as well as by shifting world prices.

What this narrative of decay conceals is that the port of New Orleans continued its domination of the cotton trade, both domestic and international, after the end of the Civil War. Its role in the city's economy was solidified by the 1871 opening of the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, the nation's largest spot market and the South's chief commodities market site for the buying and selling of cotton.² A decade later, when the city's fathers planned an international exhibition to underline the city's return to economic health following the ravages of the Civil War and its aftermath, the cotton industry was at the center of their promotion. The eventual product was the Cotton Centennial Exposition, a world's fair that opened in New Orleans in 1884. It featured the culture and manufacture of cotton and displayed the machinery used in its production.³

Thanks chiefly to cotton, the port of New Orleans continued to expand through the early twentieth century. By 1915, with 2,182 vessels calling annually and with a gross shipping tonnage of 6,423,648, the largest part of which was cotton shipments, the city once more could claim to be the second port of the nation after New York, a position it held through the 1920s.⁴ This new growth was also symbolized by the construction in 1920 of a larger building to house the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, which moved into its new headquarters a year later. During the Depression, raw cotton remained the nation's chief export commodity, and sales of the commodity were fundamental to the port of New Orleans. By 1935, cotton sales represented about 49 percent of the total value of exports through the port.⁵

During these decades, trade shifted from Great Britain, the former focus of exports, to a new center across the Pacific: Japan. Through the first half of the twentieth century, raw cotton represented the bulk of US exports to Japan, in the process helping fuel Japan's industrial revolution. Trade expanded most heavily after 1918, when the newly opened Panama Canal and the end of World War I made direct shipments from New Orleans to Japan practical. By 1931, when Japan surpassed Great Britain as the world's largest producer of cotton textiles, Japanese producers were buying some three-quarters of their supply of raw cotton from the United States and shipping it through New Orleans and other Gulf Coast ports.⁶ Although total exports to Japan fluctuated during the 1930s, reflecting the course of international relations, Japan represented a major customer for New Orleans until the coming of the Pacific War. Not only did New Orleans serve as a central market for transpacific commerce, but its port was directly integrated into a global Japanese trade network that included exchanges with Africa and South America, all served by Japanese shipping.

The growing networks of commerce between Japan and New Orleans also helped lead to the establishment of a Japanese presence in the Crescent City, fortified by the development of official and semiofficial Japanese institutions. Most prominent among these were the Japanese consulate, opened in 1922, and the New Orleans Japan Society, founded six years later. Around these institutions flourished a small but celebrated ethnic Japanese population, including both residents and transients, as well as numerous businessmen and government officials from Japan. Japanese culture likewise exerted a visible influence on New Orleans society.

How did the Japanese cotton trade with New Orleans come about? Probably the most notable actor in putting this commerce into motion was Jokichi Takamine. Takamine, born in Takaoka, Japan, in 1854, studied chemical engineering at the Imperial University of Tokyo and the University of Glasgow. When he first arrived in New Orleans in 1884, he was still in his twenties, working as a staffer in Japan's Imperial Department of Agriculture and Commerce. The young Takamine was appointed co-commissioner of the Japanese pavilion at the Cotton Centennial Exposition, which included exhibits on Japan's industry, education, and agriculture (including the first appearance in the United States of kuzu, a Japanese plant—as the kudzu vine it would spread throughout the South). In addition to administering the Japanese pavilion, Takamine cowrote a pair of guides to it. In the process, he helped attract favorable publicity for the Japanese government.⁷

Following the close of the Exposition in 1885, Takamine remained in New Orleans, where he settled in a house in the French Quarter on Chartres Street, near Esplanade (today there is a plaque on the front of the house commemorating Takamine's residence there). He met and soon married a local white woman, Caroline Hitch, the daughter of his landlord. After bringing his new wife with him to Japan in 1888, Takamine returned to the United States in 1890 and settled with his new family in Illinois. In the years that followed, he revolutionized the whiskey distilling industry by developing a rapid fermentation process using a starch-digesting enzyme. Later, he moved to New York, where he set up his own research laboratory. In 1901, he succeeded in producing adrenaline (epinephrine), the first synthetic hormone, thereby achieving worldwide fame and a considerable fortune. In 1912, Takamine gained further renown when he arranged for the donation and planting of Japanese cherry trees on the National Mall in Washington, DC.⁸

Even though he did not reside in New Orleans after 1888, Takamine remained fond of his wife's native city, and he helped cement links between New Orleans and the land of his birth by encouraging his fellow Japanese brokers to buy American cotton. It was a logical development. Japan's cotton industry boomed in the last part of the nineteenth century. The region of Osaka-Kobe—dubbed the “Manchester of Japan”—became the premier center of Japanese cotton textile production. In 1894, the Yokohama Chamber of Commerce reported that from a total of sixteen mills and 43,700 spindles operating in 1883, total production nationwide had risen to a total of

twenty-four mills and 881,400 spindles by 1888 and to forty-six mills in which six hundred thousand spindles operated by 1893.⁹

The idea of feeding the mushrooming Japanese demand for cotton with American product was not entirely new. According to one report, Japanese began buying cotton in New Orleans on a small scale in the 1880s.¹⁰ A more authoritative source claims, however, that the first purchases of note came in 1892, when Japanese bought \$4,707 of raw cotton and \$215 of duck cotton in Louisiana.¹¹ Further evidence indicates Japanese cotton buyers coming to New Orleans in 1893. That year, Mr. Yeisaka Masuda of Mitsui Bussan Kaisha, the largest Japanese industrial combine, arrived to study the cotton business and figure out how to best manage trade between the US and Japan.¹²

With the outbreak of the Depression of 1893, the worst downturn in the American economy before the 1930s, the price of cotton dropped to an average of \$0.078 per pound, approximately half of the median price twenty years earlier.¹³ Despite the existence of such a buyer's market, nothing much in the way of orders came from Japan in the period that followed. The main obstacle to trade was not difficult to determine: Shipping from the Gulf Coast to Japan, in those times, meant either sailing around the tip of South America or transporting goods by rail to the Pacific Coast and then loading them on boats to cross the Pacific. Japanese merchants experimented with buying smaller loads to be shipped from the Gulf port of Galveston, Texas, which was nearer to the West Coast, but the expense of sending cotton from the South to San Francisco by rail was still enormous. To overcome such geographical hardships, the United States government had already begun considering the building of a transoceanic canal through Nicaragua. Small wonder, the article reported, that the article on Masuda's visit claimed that he "[l]ooks to the opening of a Nicaragua canal as the realization of his desires."¹⁴

In 1896, Jokichi Takamine personally escorted a group of six wealthy Japanese businessmen on a well-publicized trip to New Orleans, serving as their spokesman during their stay. Whether through the force of his diplomacy or negotiating skill, or just the needs of the trade, Takamine secured the first large orders for cotton from Japan. In September 1896, the buyers announced that Japan would henceforth procure between seventy-five and one hundred thousand bales of cotton from the United States.¹⁵ The daily *New Orleans Times-Democrat* announced officially that Japan intended to obtain the cotton it needed from New Orleans.¹⁶ At the same time, in an interview that presaged later developments, Takamine was asked about competition from Japan in terms of finished cotton cloth and "laughed at the idea that Japan could ever come into sharp competition with the United States."¹⁷ Takamine told reporters that Japan could not even satisfy its home market, and was still obliged to import higher-quality American textiles to meet domestic demand. Rather, he explained, the Japanese had a nearby market in China and the rest of Asia that they could already satisfy with lower-quality cotton goods, but that they would need to ramp up their industry considerably if they ever wished to make goods of sufficient quality to compete successfully on the American market.

The 1896 buying trip led by Takamine had immediate results. In 1897, the Japanese government appointed John W. Philips, a merchant at the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, as honorary Japanese consul in the city (Philips would later receive the Order of the Rising Sun from the Emperor of Japan for his efforts in encouraging international commerce).¹⁸ By 1898, Japan was buying 213,000 bales of raw cotton from the United States, 30 percent of its total importation.¹⁹ The largest part of this supply was shipped through New Orleans. Meanwhile, encouraged by the possibilities for increased trade, a series of Japanese cotton buyers visited New Orleans. In January 1899, K. Yokoo, an agent for the Home and Foreign Cotton Company of Osaka, and S. Shikata, of the Japan Cotton Trading Company, arrived in the Crescent City on a buying trip. They announced their intention to purchase up to two hundred thousand bales a year in New Orleans and Galveston to sell on the Asian market.²⁰ The following year Yokoo returned with a Mr. Ueda from Mitsui Bussan Kaisha.²¹ In 1902, Kazuhara Hiyama and Shiro Kubota stopped in New Orleans. Kubota told reporters that his company intended to buy one hundred fifty thousand bales of cotton.²² In October 1910, Baron Mitsui, Japan's cotton king, visited New Orleans as part of an American tour. He and his party visited the cotton exchange, which he described as one of the busiest places he had seen in the United States, and then examined the docks, pronouncing himself impressed by their size and modern facilities.²³

Still, the problem of how to ship cotton from New Orleans to Japan remained intractable over the following years. The limitations in terms of port facilities and transport remained thorny enough that in early 1900 Tetsutaro Imamura, an Imperial cabinet member, was sent to the United States as an official representative of the Japanese government. He spent six months in the country, including an extended stay in New Orleans, before drafting his report on the cotton trade. Meanwhile, a Mr. Yamamoto, a local manager for Mitsui Bussan Kaisha, publicly stated that, given the unreliability of supplies from India and the superiority of the American product, his firm proposed to buy one million bales from New Orleans by December. He expressed, however, the hope that an isthmian canal could be built, as it would facilitate transport.²⁴ In 1903, the United States signed a treaty with the infant government of Panama (in whose war of independence Americans had connived) to build an isthmian canal, and American engineers began work on the canal two years later. However, it was clear that the canal would take substantial time to complete.

Even without a canal, there were some attempts to arrange direct shipments overseas. Beginning in 1895, a local firm in New Orleans, the shipping agency of Ross, Howe, and Merrow, established a partnership with the Austrian Lloyd steamers to offer shipment of goods to Bombay, Calcutta, and Japanese ports.²⁵ In March 1898, the first direct shipment from any Southern port to Japan took place, when the British steamer *Indrani* was commissioned by Japanese buyers to make stops in the American South.²⁶ After making port at Mobile, where it took on a load of iron and 3,800 bales of cotton, the *Indrani* proceeded to New Orleans, where it took on an additional 7,700 bales. It then sailed directly from New Orleans to Yokohama around the tip of South

America.²⁷ Several months later, the *Tamba Maru*, a Japanese-owned ship whose Japanese crew was commanded by English officers, sailed to Japan from Galveston with 13,832 bales of cotton.²⁸

All the same, no direct steamship service was established during these years, and Japanese cotton buyers were still forced to rely primarily on rail shipment west to the Pacific Coast and transshipment from there on to Japan. For example, in the years 1898–1899, New Orleans shipped to Japan and China 184,156 bales of cotton via San Francisco, Portland, and other Pacific ports. The small size of all this trade can be inferred from the fact that Great Britain took 846,183 bales and France imported 323,023 bales that year from the United States, mainly via direct shipments from New Orleans. Besides its impact on the total price of transport, rail service could take up to forty days because of congested freight routes. It was clear that, until an Isthmian canal could be built, Japan would not be able to increase its purchases beyond a certain limit.²⁹

Even within those limits, the American cotton trade with Japan fluctuated widely over the years. From 168,841 bales in total US exports to Japan in the year ending June 30, 1902, the total dropped to 43,009 in 1903–1904 and then rose to 315,544 the following year. This fluctuation resulted from a variety of different causes. First, there was a perceptible drop in the shipment of cotton bales to East Asia during 1904 because of the Russo-Japanese War, which took up shipping, made transport more perilous, and devastated trade within Asia. Conversely, the need for war matériel and then the pent-up demand for exports caused a jump in cotton purchases after 1905.³⁰

According to the *New York Tribune*, Japan continued to import raw cotton, mostly low-grade, from India, the United States, and China, as well as a small amount of high-grade from Egypt. Still, yarn for home consumption came almost entirely from the United States. In 1904–1905, Japan imported \$55,090,345 of cotton from the United States, the largest portion of it from New Orleans, of which \$44,370,964 was absorbed by Kobe's twenty-eight mills, with Osaka taking much of the rest.³¹ This dramatic rise in purchases alarmed British-born unionist James T. Ford, who claimed that New Orleans cotton was going primarily to Japan and that the resulting Japanese production was forcing cotton mills in Great Britain to close.³²

Price remained a major factor in the size of cotton purchases. Japanese producers continued to be very large consumers of Indian cotton, and Japan especially turned to Indian cotton in place of American whenever prices of the latter went too high.³³ For example, in 1908, a pair of Japanese men from New York, Messrs. Morimura and Arai, came to New Orleans on a buying trip. They told reporters that the size of Japan's cotton imports depended heavily on price: whenever cotton prices rose above fifteen cents per pound, they became too expensive for the Asian market—Japanese customers were then forced to buy inferior Indian cotton. In 1907, cotton prices were high in the United States, business was poor in Japan, and exports of US cotton fell sharply as a result.³⁴

On August 15, 1914, even as Europe became embroiled in war (a war Japan swiftly entered as an ally of Great Britain), the Panama Canal officially opened. It was now possible for ships to sail from New Orleans and other Gulf ports to Asia without the added time and cost of circumnavigating South America. Yet, no exports to any East Asian countries were recorded as leaving the port of New Orleans during the fiscal year of 1914, as the outbreak of World War I curtailed international trade and reduced the number of available ships.³⁵ Over the years that followed, even with the canal in operation, Japanese trade with New Orleans proved very slow in developing, in part as a result of wartime shortages of shipping and dislocation of international markets, as well as landslides in Panama that left the canal closed for repairs during much of its first years of operation. Still, on April 27, 1916, the Japanese steamship *Nissei Maru* sailed to New Orleans, thereby becoming the first Japanese ship to visit the port. Between July 1, 1915, and June 30, 1916, Japan exported through New Orleans \$235,439 worth of goods and thus rose to the rank of thirty-second largest foreign trading partner, not far behind China. (These totals were dwarfed by trade with England, which bought \$66,498,832 of goods to fuel its unquenchable wartime military machine.) Meanwhile, two Japanese, “A. Yamada” of the Japan Cotton Trading Company, Ltd., with his office in New York City, and “K. Fukushima” of the President Southern Product Company, with his office in Dallas, appeared on the roster of the New Orleans Cotton Exchange as members.³⁶

By 1917, Japan’s commerce with New Orleans reached one million dollars in exports for the first time, and it grew to \$1.25 million the following year. This small increase became a torrent, however, in the three years that followed. As World War I ended and Japan, which had taken advantage of the wartime cutoff of trade with Europe to further develop its markets in Asia, experienced a postwar boom in textile production, the cotton trade took off. In 1920, New Orleans, the nation’s second-busiest port, conducted over a billion dollars of total trade.

As part of that boom, New Orleans for the first time shipped more bales of cotton to Japan and China than to Great Britain.³⁷ While some cotton continued to be sent to Japan via railroad traffic to the Pacific Coast, the vast majority was made up of direct shipments from Louisiana. In all, New Orleans exported 111,978 bales of cotton to Japan during 1920; 78,790 bales followed in the first nine months of 1921. This represented a jump from 26 percent of Japan’s total imports from the United States in 1913 to 42 percent in 1920. At post-war price levels, which were approximately three times the prewar average, this made for an annual commerce of some thirty million dollars.³⁸ While the portion of American cotton among Japan’s total cotton imports fluctuated during the mid-1920s (between a low of 29.2 percent in 1924 and a high of 49.7 in 1927) the decline in rail shipments to the West Coast in favor of direct exports through the Panama Canal meant that New Orleans and its sister Gulf Coast ports dominated the cotton trade with Japan.³⁹

This dramatic expansion was made possible almost entirely by Japanese managerial and transportation expertise. Curiously, no American shipping lines

thought it worthwhile to open routes from New Orleans to Asia during the 1920s. Instead, it was left to Japanese ships to take up the slack. The development of these trade routes was gradual. Throughout the period following the opening of the Panama Canal, Japanese shipping firms had studied the possibility of establishing direct service to New Orleans. In 1914, officials of the Toyo Kisen Kaisha investigated the commercial possibilities of New Orleans and proclaimed that Japanese commerce with the city was underdeveloped.⁴⁰ Two years later, Mitsui and Co. sent representatives to New Orleans to arrange the establishment of a regular line of steamers to Japan.⁴¹ The development of such transport links initially was hindered, however, by Japanese concerns over the economics of the trade, as well as the unpredictability of the Panama Canal amid the landslides.

The shipping line was the first Japanese firm to implement regular trips to New Orleans. In August 1918, even before the end of the war, a local association of commerce in New Orleans announced that Osaka Shosen Kaisha steamships would begin regular service between Japan and New Orleans that fall. In November 1918, just one week after the armistice, its vessel *Panama Maru* arrived in New Orleans, carrying coffee from Brazil. Japan's consul general Saboru Kurusu came to New Orleans for the inaugural ceremony and stated that the Japanese would gladly send their ships to bring cotton to Japan.⁴² In December, *Panama Maru* took away six thousand bales of cotton as well as machinery, passing through the Panama Canal and stopping in San Francisco on its way back to Japan.⁴³

Not until January 1919, however, did the Osaka line actually begin regular service, two sailings a month from Japan via South Africa, Brazil, and Argentina, with New Orleans as the final stop on the route back through the Panama Canal to Japan.⁴⁴ The first ship to make the journey was the *Altai Maru*, which left New Orleans on May 7, 1919, with thirteen thousand bales of cotton, plus other products.⁴⁵ Another ship, the *Tacoma Maru*, arrived in May 1919, bringing coffee from Santos, Brazil. After the coffee was unloaded on an uncovered wharf in a rainstorm, customers in New Orleans brought suit against the shipowners, claiming that the coffee had been ruined.⁴⁶ In August and September 1919, another route, which featured ships arriving directly from Japan and Hong Kong through the Panama Canal, was inaugurated by the *Raifuku Maru* and *Malay Maru*.⁴⁷ On February 23, 1920, the *Panama Maru* returned to New Orleans, making the journey of 12,788 miles from Singapore carrying a cargo of Indian rubber. Meanwhile, another line, the Toyo Kisen Kaisha, inaugurated its service to New Orleans, with service to New Orleans back and forth from Yokohama and Kobe. One boat arrived in May, and another in August.⁴⁸ In 1922, Toyo added a stop in New Orleans to its monthly transpacific route from New York to Nagasaki. In tribute to the new trade relations, the Isaka line built a new ship in 1921, which it dubbed the *New Orleans Maru*.⁴⁹

Japanese shipping companies were creative in arranging routes and designing ships. Since it was not profitable for steamers to sail empty through the Panama Canal, Japanese planners planned routes that allowed the ships to stop in South America,

take on cargo there, and then sail to New Orleans to sell those goods and pick up cotton (some of this trade comprised coffee produced by Japanese immigrant plantation owners in Brazil, and then shipped through the port of Santos). After passing through the canal, the ships would then stop briefly to refuel on the Pacific Coast before heading back to Japan. This managerial innovation decreased the transportation cost to Japan of American raw cotton and made it more competitive with lower-quality cotton from India. As one historian notes:

Osaka Shosen Kaisha (Osaka Line) changed the cotton trade. Rail charges for shipping cotton from the southern fields to Pacific coast ports were prohibitive. So first the Osaka Lines, and later the others, routed their vessels to load coffee at Santos, Brazil, unload it at New Orleans in favor of cotton, and return to Japan via the Panama Canal.⁵⁰

The explosion of commerce with Japan changed New Orleans's landscape and culture. First, in response to the new demand, the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans (commonly known as the Dock Board) paid \$6,237,810 to erect a public cotton warehouse that could hold up to six hundred thousand bales.⁵¹ Meanwhile, Japanese firms set up business in and around New Orleans. In late 1921, the Imperial Cotton Company of Louisiana, created with Japanese capital, opened operations in the city. The company's local representative, Mr. T. Yamada, explained, "[w]e plan to obtain offices in the new Cotton Exchange building and will have branches in a number of cities in the cotton belt, but New Orleans will be the headquarters and our exporting will be through this port."⁵²

In the fall of 1922, the Japanese government opened a New Orleans consulate on St. Charles Avenue, under the direction of diplomat Michio Kaku. The Japanese Consul remained an active participant in the city's civic functions, and during the 1930s, parties held at the consulate were one of the highlights of the local social season.⁵³ In 1928, the Japan Society of New Orleans was founded by local businessman Neal Leach, an agent for Japanese shipping lines. By 1937, the society had 175 members.⁵⁴ It offered events to promote Japanese culture among white elites. For example, with backing from the consulate and the Japan Society, the city's first Japanese school opened in 1931 in the Monteleone Hotel. Hisashi Nomasa, a Loyola University student, was the school's first permanent language instructor.⁵⁵

Japanese culture meanwhile enjoyed a vogue in New Orleans, where designers and architects used Japanese elements in their work—most notably in the "Japanese Room" that opened at the celebrated eatery Antoine's Restaurant in 1910. Japanese designs and costumes became a recurring element of the city's celebrated annual Mardi Gras parade. For example, at the 1912 High Priests of Mithras ball, pins were distributed that featured a stylized "M" on a fan background, in Japanese style. A 1925 float of the Rex parade featured the Japanese emblem of life. Five years later, a float in the 1930 Rex parade, entitled "Japanese Rock Crystal," boasted a Japanese male

figure wearing a green kimono-like robe and holding a crystal ball.⁵⁶ Another site of appreciation for things Japanese was the opera. New Orleans welcomed multiple tours by the San Carlo Grand Opera Company during these years and lionized the ethnic Japanese sopranos Tamaki Miura, Haru Onuki, and Hizi Koyke, who successively sang the lead role of Cio-Cio-San in San Carlo's productions of Giacomo Puccini's Japanese opera *Madama Butterfly*—in 1927 there was even a Hizi Koyke Purse horse race at the Jefferson Park racetrack.⁵⁷ One significant cultural bridge between Louisiana and Japan was the writer Lafcadio Hearn. So impressed was he with Japanese people he met in New Orleans that Hearn immigrated to Japan and, under the name Koizumi Yakumo, became a citizen. He became famous for his heavily exoticized essays and novels about the Japanese.⁵⁸

The establishment of commercial relations between Louisiana and Japan helped consolidate the growth of a small but notable resident Japanese population in New Orleans, including merchants, sailors, students, and shopkeepers. In 1904, Tomehitsu Hinata, a US Navy veteran of the Spanish-American War, arrived in the city, and he opened a thriving Japanese art and curio store on Royal Street in the French Quarter. A few years later he visited Japan and took a wife, Katsue, a graduate of a Methodist missionary school, and brought her back to help in the store.⁵⁹ Their daughters Yuki, Toshi, and Kyo were the first Louisiana-born Nisei. After graduating from Louisiana State University, the two younger girls became teachers in the New Orleans public school system. Namyo Bessho, another US Navy veteran, settled in nearby Algiers with his wife, Koh, and their children and worked around the Quarter.⁶⁰ About the same time, A. M. Kashiwa, a graduate of Columbia University, migrated to New Orleans and soon after opened the city's first Japanese restaurant on Iberville Street in the Quarter.⁶¹

By the end of the 1930s, according to Tokumi Hamako, a Nisei employee at the Japanese consulate who wrote a column for the Los Angeles-based newspaper *Kashu Mainichi*, New Orleans had forty Japanese permanent residents. In addition to the staff of the Japanese consulate, Hamako joked, the local Japanese population included "Two Nisei doctors from Hawaii ... a chick-sexer; a young Nisei girl from the good ol' city of Los Angeles; a ship chandler who has a French wife, two children and a bad case of asthma; a shrimp dealer who is a Stanford graduate, and his family; and a fisherman with a red face."⁶²

In keeping with the economic importance of the transpacific cotton trade, Japanese people were offered equal rights and access to public spaces in New Orleans. Even in the depths of the Jim Crow era when Blacks were rigidly excluded, New Orleans was one of the few places in the United States where Japanese people received courteous service in hotels and restaurants and were routinely addressed as "sir" or "ma'am." Clifford Uyeda, future president of the Japanese American Citizens League, arrived in New Orleans in mid-1941 in preparation for medical school. Uyeda later recounted taking his first streetcar ride in the city and being reprovved when he unknowingly took an empty seat in the "colored" section of the segregated car. The

conductor settled the matter by taking the “colored” sign out from in front of Uyeda’s seat and sliding it in back of him, thus moving him into the “white” section. Uyeda added that he was treated as just another student during his time at Tulane University.⁶³

Yet even amidst the boom in cotton, there were already problems, and these would become increasingly visible in the following years. First, during the 1920s, foreign competition continued for the Japanese market, notably from India.⁶⁴ Second, on the domestic level, New Orleans faced criticism over shipping costs. A Japanese business party that toured the city in 1921 (at a moment when commerce was slowed by a dock strike) found that its port facilities were excellent but complained that the handling of cotton in the city was too expensive. Japanese buyers, they proclaimed, should go to other ports and explore arrangements elsewhere.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Texas farms undertook large-scale cultivation of cotton during the 1920s, which expanded the supply and thereby threatened existing profit margins upon sale. As one historian explained, “[T]he bringing of new lands under cultivation in the Southwest added to the rising domestic supply. Even before the Depression hit, the Southeast was moving from favored to marginal producer.”⁶⁶ Texas ports, such as Houston and Galveston, which had the advantage of being closer to the sources of supply, grew more attractive to Japanese buyers because of their lower shipping costs. Although New Orleans continued to be the second port of the nation, by the end of the 1920s, the city had lost its long-established position as the largest spot market for cotton in the United States.

By 1931, Houston, which shipped 3,185,943 bales of cotton, and Galveston with 2,295,412 bales shipped, both forged ahead of New Orleans, which ranked third with 2,111,799 bales.⁶⁷ In response to this rising source of supply and shipping, all the major Japanese cotton firms set up their American branches in Texas rather than New Orleans. Toyo Menka Kabushiki Kaisha (Oriental Cotton Trading Company), a branch of the Mitsui combine, owned the Dallas-based Southern Cotton Company, while the Nippon Menka Kabushiki Kaisha, or the Japan Cotton Trading Company, Ltd., had cotton-buying agencies in Dallas and Houston.⁶⁸

At the depths of the Great Depression, Japan increased its share of world textile production; as opposed to only two percent in 1912, Japan produced forty-one percent of the world’s cotton goods by 1933.⁶⁹ Japan further developed its cotton transportation infrastructure by introducing new ships with a top speed of thirty-five knots, sharply cutting the time needed for transpacific passage. In 1934, the Kokusai Kisen Kaisha line inaugurated its improved service from New Orleans to the Far East, using the faster ships.⁷⁰ By 1937, Osaka Shosen Kaisha, Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha, Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha, Rokusai Kisen Kaisha, Mitsui Bussan Kaisha (plus the Fern Line, Bank Line, Blue Funnel Line, and States Marine Line) all furnished service to New Orleans.

Meanwhile, New Orleans’s cotton trade, especially with Japan, rebounded. In the face of British tariffs of up to seventy-five percent on their cotton goods, Japanese

firms launched a boycott of raw cotton from India during 1932–1933. To fuel their expanding needs, the Japanese increased their purchases of American cotton, reaching a high of 2,294,000 bales of cotton in 1932, 71.6 percent of their total importation. They followed with 1,743,000 bales purchased in 1933. Even after the Indo-Japanese agreement of January 1934 reopened the Japanese cotton trade with India, Japan purchased 1,846,000 bales in 1934, representing \$112,178,000 of American cotton.⁷¹ As one economic historian has noted, by 1934, raw cotton represented 53 percent of all Japan's imports from the United States, even as sales to Japan represented 31.8 percent of America's total foreign sales of raw cotton—the largest single item in America's export trade.⁷² The trade leveled off slightly in the following years, as Japan's war machine in China absorbed more production. Still, in 1938, Japan remained New Orleans's third-best cotton market, buying 712,190 bales (which represented more than half of the total for all of Asia) compared with 1,636,118 bales to the United Kingdom and 911,507 bales to Germany. In 1939, Japan returned to first place with 904,280 bales, a prewar high, as compared to Germany at 504,952 bales and the United Kingdom, whose total dropped precipitously to 485,800 bales.⁷³ Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, commentator Virginus Dabney succinctly summed up the impact of Japanese trade on the region:

The Japanese situation is one which will definitely bear watching. Japan has been one of the largest buyers of Southern products, and in particular has been the region's best cotton market. The normal Japanese importation of 1,650,000 bales of cotton a year provides employment for 350,000 Southerners, with approximately 1,400,000 dependents, or a total of 1,750,000 of the 11,000,000 persons in the Southeast and Southwest who are dependent upon cotton for a livelihood.⁷⁴

Even as New Orleans's commercial relations with Japan boomed during the mid-1930s, however, they were overshadowed by international events. Tokyo's military occupation of China in 1937 sparked nationwide calls by progressive groups for boycotts of Japan. Cotton producers reacted to the international situation by organizing campaigns to maintain good relations between Japan and the United States, with the goal of encouraging the Japanese to buy American cotton. As early as September 1937, immediately following the Japanese invasion of China, Francis G. Hickman, editor of the *Cotton Trade Journal*, began working together with Yuki Sato, the Japanese consul in New Orleans, to put together a favorable publicity campaign for Japan. Hickman recruited James E. Edmonds to tour Japan and write favorable articles about the Japanese for the *Cotton Trade Journal* in order to improve Japan's image among the American people.⁷⁵ Sato provided letters of introduction to Japanese textile industrialists and commercial attachés.⁷⁶ Hickman admitted frankly to Edmonds that “the public opinion is strong for China in this country and while we are opposing this feeling with your articles, certainly the interest of the South is for continued friendship with Japan if we want to sell them cotton.”⁷⁷ In 1940, Hickman himself visited Japan and

spent several weeks in Kobe. During his trip, he urged the Japanese to continue to buy American cotton.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, in 1937/1938, a shadowy group that called itself the “Southern Association of Japanese Students” put out a propaganda pamphlet entitled “Salient Facts on Far East: Japan Biggest Single Market for United States Cotton.” It presented the case that since Japan was the largest market for American cotton, Southerners should support Japan against China.⁷⁹

Japanese authorities also used soft power diplomacy in search of allies. In late 1939, Kenzo Ito, Sato’s successor as New Orleans consul, organized the Lafcadio Hearn Society of New Orleans, in tribute to the famed writer. As honorary president of the society, Ito joined forces with Tamon Maeda, the director of the Tokyo-financed Japan Institute in New York—described in contemporary reports as the cultural headquarters of Japan in the western hemisphere—to put together financing for a Lafcadio Hearn memorial. Their initial plan was to create a Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Room at the Cabildo under the auspices of the Louisiana Historical Society. In the end, however, Ito and Maeda opted for a more scholarly venue. With financial aid from the Japanese government, they arranged for the construction of a Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Room at Tulane University’s newly built Howard-Tilton Memorial Library. The new room featured editions of Hearn’s works and correspondence in both English and Japanese, plus pamphlets and letters written by Hearn to friends and students. Japanese donors from the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai [Society for International Cultural Relations] of Tokyo shipped seventy volumes of Hearn’s published works from Japan for its collections.⁸⁰ The room was dedicated with a ceremony attended by some two hundred people in March 1941. The Lafcadio Hearn Society of New Orleans published a special commemorative volume of the inauguration ceremony, with the texts of speeches given at the event.⁸¹

Despite its visibility, the positive campaign was ineffective. In July 1939, the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt gave notice that the United States would be terminating the 1911 Japanese-American Treaty of Commerce and Navigation after six months. The expiration of the treaty in January 1940 triggered official limitations on trade and banking credits for Japan. In response, Ben J. Williams of New Orleans, vice president of the American Cotton Shippers Association, stated that whatever the nature of the political conflicts between the United States and Japan, the Cotton South needed Japanese markets for their product. He urged his readers to contact “[r]epresentatives of the South in the nation’s Capitol [sic]” to urge them to work for renewal of the trade treaty. In mid-1940, Williams complained that the abrogation of the treaty had cost Texas cotton growers alone 1.7 million bales per year in Japanese purchases.⁸² In May 1940, at a convention in New Orleans, the American Cotton Shippers Association voted on a resolution urging the federal government to take the initiative to preserve the South’s trade with Japan:

Resolved, that the Association communicate to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Commerce its belief that the retention and development of American cotton exports to Japan is a vital necessity and it is respectfully urged that an effort be made to place our commercial relations with Japan on a sound and permanent basis, in the interest of the Cotton South and the entire nation.⁸³

By the summer of 1941, cotton prices had declined by \$3.75 per bale on the open market. Some commentators at the time ascribed the drop in price to war pessimism and efforts by the federal government to halt inflation. Nevertheless, it was clear that the cutoff of trade with Japan, the South's most lucrative cotton market, had strongly affected the price.⁸⁴ That summer, on the pretext of repairs to the Panama Canal, the United States government denied Japanese ships access to the waterway, even though American ships continued to pass through it. As a result, the last Japanese commercial vessels in the Atlantic in mid-1941 were forced to sail around Cape Horn to return home.

By December 1941, when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor led to the Pacific War and the total severance of relations with the United States, the once-lucrative New Orleans cotton export trade to Japan had all but dried up. Shorn of the protection they had enjoyed due to Japanese trade, Louisiana's Japanese population was hit hard by the coming of war. The Japanese consulate closed its doors on the day of Pearl Harbor, and its staff spent that afternoon burning documents in the courtyard of the consulate. In the succeeding days, its Japanese alien employees were interned by the US government, while all American citizens were freed. Hinata's Japanese Arts Store in New Orleans was closed by order of the federal government.⁸⁵

Ironically, while commercial relations between Japan and Louisiana were severed with the coming of war, and the Japanese steamers that had carried the largest amount of cargo from Latin America had disappeared, there was still movement of ethnic Japanese along the old trade routes, as World War II brought Nikkei from all over the Americas into Louisiana. In April 1942, one hundred and eighty-four Japanese men from Panama interned with their families in the Panama Canal Zone were sent to the United States mainland to be interned there. After arriving at the Algiers immigration station in New Orleans, they were transferred to larger Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) facilities. Most or all were confined during 1942–1943 at Camp Livingston, near Alexandria, Louisiana. They were joined there by a group of Japanese aliens from Hawai'i who had been deemed dangerous by the territory's wartime military government and shipped for internment on the mainland. Later, New Orleans served as the port of arrival for some two thousand ethnic Japanese from across Latin America who were kidnapped from their home countries as part of a deal with the US State Department and shipped for internment in the United States. After landing in New Orleans and being processed (including a forcible delousing with DDT)

they were dispersed to different confinement sites, notably the Crystal City family internment camp in Texas.⁸⁶

Although the Pacific War totally cut off Louisiana's trade with Japan, the strength of their transpacific commercial ties can be demonstrated by their rapid renewal in the years that followed war's end. In 1952, the *S.S. Yamafuka Maru*, a new ship from the Yamashita line, arrived in New Orleans, inaugurating monthly sailings to Japan. In 1957, the Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha shipping company resumed twice-monthly sailings to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. By 1963, 171 Japanese ships per year were arriving in New Orleans.⁸⁷ Unlike in prewar years, however, there was little passenger traffic. During the 1950s, Japan purchased one hundred percent of its raw cotton from the United States, a trade that amounted to \$1.74 million by 1954.⁸⁸ The cotton trade was soon surpassed by an even more flourishing trade in grain, especially soybeans (shipped down the Mississippi River from Midwest farms). By 1962, when the Japan Trade Center opened at the city's International Trade Mart, Japan had once again established itself as New Orleans's principal foreign trading partner, including goods imported from Japan as well as exports. During the first half of 1961, New Orleans handled \$9,943,323 worth of Japanese goods.⁸⁹

As before the war, institutions helped link Louisiana residents with Japan. In 1950, even before the end of the postwar US occupation of Japan, the Tokyo government reopened its consulate in New Orleans. The New Orleans Japan Society was reestablished soon after. During the 1950s, the New Orleans Japan Society, in conjunction with the Japanese government, engaged in a notable initiative to construct a Japanese garden on the first-floor roof of the new main branch building of the New Orleans Public Library. Upon completion in 1959, the garden included stones of various colors and shapes, as well as a two-hundred-year-old Japanese lantern. The garden was reworked the following year, with more funding from the Japan Society, to include more rocks, bamboo, and other materials.⁹⁰

In sum, the role of Japan in the evolution of New Orleans's cotton economy during the first half of the twentieth century is a fascinating and little-known story. As during the antebellum years, cotton grew to be the nation's largest and most profitable export during this time.⁹¹ However, it was the burgeoning demand by Japanese producers for American cotton that made this growth possible. Moreover, its success was ensured by the integration of New Orleans and other Gulf Coast ports into worldwide Japanese shipping networks, a process driven by Japanese capital and expertise. The existence of the trade went hand in hand with the establishment of a thriving Japanese community, which enjoyed cordial relations with white elites, even as the city's residents pursued an interest in Japanese art and culture. The transcontinental commerce influenced the international relations of the United States and was halted for a number of years by international war. Scholars of the US South, American economic history, and international relations all have a great deal to learn from further study of this history.

Notes

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- ¹ Examples of the classic narrative are Harold D. Woodman, *King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800–1925* (University of Kentucky Press, 1968); and Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (W. W. Norton, 1978). A more recent study that still incorporates the classic temporal framework is Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). Some recent exceptions are Douglas A. Farnie and David J. Jeremy, eds., *The Fibre that Changed the World: The Cotton Industry in International Perspective, 1600–1990s* (Oxford University Press, 2004); and Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (Vintage, 2014).
- ² Tuffly Ellis, “The New Orleans Cotton Exchange: The Formative Years, 1871–1880,” *Journal of Southern History* 39 (1973): 545–564, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2205967>
- ³ John Smith Kendall, *History of New Orleans* (Lewis Publishing Company, 1922), chap. 29. On the Cotton Centennial Exposition, see also Thomas D. Watson, “Staging the ‘Crowning Achievement of the Age’—Major Edward A. Burke, New Orleans, and the Cotton Centennial Exposition,” *Louisiana History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 229–257, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4232358>
- ⁴ Benjamin Lee Wren, “A History of Trade Relations Between Japan and The United States in the New Orleans Area” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1973), 8, *passim*. See also the same author’s discussion of attitudes toward the Japanese in Louisiana: Benjamin Wren, “The Rising Sun on the Mississippi, 1900–1975,” *Louisiana History* 17 (1976): 321–333, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4231615>
- ⁵ *The New Orleans Exchange Diamond Jubilee 1871–1946* (New Orleans Cotton Exchange, 1946), p. 21, cited in Wren, “A History of Trade Relations,” 89.
- ⁶ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 408. See also “U.S. Cotton is not Losing its Hold in Japan,” *Japan Times*, August 4, 1935.

- ⁷ On the fair, see Watson, "Staging the 'Crowning Achievement of the Age.'" On Takamine generally, see William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, comps., *Jokichi Takamine (1854–1922) and Caroline Hitch Takamine (1866–1954): Biography and Bibliography*, (Soyinfo Center, 2012).
- ⁸ On Takamine, see, for example, Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami, *Jokichi Takamine: A Record of his American Achievements* (W. E. Rudge, 1928); and Greg Robinson, *The Unsung Great: Stories of Extraordinary Japanese Americans* (University of Washington Press, 2020), 10–14.
- ⁹ "The South as a Manufacturing County," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), February 3, 1896.
- ¹⁰ "Brazos Valley Cotton," *Dallas Morning News*, February 9, 1897.
- ¹¹ Sung Jae Koh, *Stages of Industrial Development in Asia: A Comparative History of the Cotton Industry in Japan, India, China, and Korea* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), 247.
- ¹² "A Merchant from Japan," *Times-Picayune*, April 25, 1893.
- ¹³ David O. Whitten, "The Depression of 1893," *EH.net*, <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-depression-of-1893/>
- ¹⁴ "A Merchant from Japan," *Times-Picayune*, April 25, 1893.
- ¹⁵ "Notes," *The Watchman and Southron*, September 16, 1896; and "Japan Taking Our Cotton," *Atlanta Journal*, September 9, 1896.
- ¹⁶ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, cited in "Notes," *The Watchman and Southron*, September 16, 1896.
- ¹⁷ "Japanese in New Orleans," *The Baltimore Sun*, October 19, 1896.
- ¹⁸ "Recognition of Consuls," *Washington Times*, August 21, 1897.
- ¹⁹ Koh, *Stages of Industrial Development*, 248.
- ²⁰ "Cotton for Japan," *Dallas Morning News*, November 18, 1899.
- ²¹ "Our Cotton for Japan," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 1900.
- ²² "Prominent Japanese," *New Orleans Item*, November 4, 1902.
- ²³ "News and Notables at the New Orleans Hotels," *Times-Picayune*, October 20, 1910.
- ²⁴ "Our Cotton for Japan," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 1900.
- ²⁵ Wren, "A History of Trade Relations," 96.

- ²⁶ “New Departure in Commerce,” *Times-Picayune*, January 16, 1898.
- ²⁷ “Direct Trade with Japan,” *Times-Picayune*, March 6, 1898.
- ²⁸ “Galveston,” *Times-Picayune*, January 25, 1899.
- ²⁹ Wren, “A History of Trade Relations,” 97.
- ³⁰ See US Government, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Atlas of the United States* (US Government Printing Office, 1914).
- ³¹ “Japan Cotton Industry,” *Times-Picayune*, August 6, 1905.
- ³² “Is a Real Yellow Peril,” *Toronto Globe*, February 23, 1905.
- ³³ John A. Todd, “The World’s Crisis in Cotton,” *Foreign Affairs* 2 (1923): 232–243.
- ³⁴ “American Cotton and Japanese Silk,” *Times-Picayune*, September 19, 1908.
- ³⁵ *Nineteenth Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans Second Port USA* (Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, 1915), 11, cited in Wren, “A History of Trade Relations,” 8–9.
- ³⁶ Wren, “A History of Trade Relations,” 77.
- ³⁷ United States Tariff Commission, *The Japanese Cotton Industry and Trade*, (US Government Printing Office, 1921), 95–97; and *New Orleans Cotton Exchange Secretary’s Report, 1920–1921* (New Orleans, 1921), 3, cited in Wren, “A History of Trade Relations,” 82.
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- ³⁹ Barnard Ellinger and Hugh Ellinger, “Japanese Competition in the Cotton Trade,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 93 (1930): 185, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2342172>
- ⁴⁰ “Rail Deal Insures Biggest Port Here,” *Item*, June 9, 1914.
- ⁴¹ “Around the Horn,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 31, 1916.
- ⁴² “Steamship Service Between Japan and New Orleans,” *Richmond Palladium*, August 21, 1918; and “Japan Will Send Ships to Orleans for Cotton,” *New Orleans States*, November 26, 1918.
- ⁴³ “Japanese Liner at New Orleans,” *Bellingham Herald*, November 20, 1918.
- ⁴⁴ “Japanese Steamers to Link Valley and China Ports,” *Times-Picayune*, May 8, 1919.
- ⁴⁵ “Ship Leaves Port for Japan; Draws Almost 32 Feet,” *Times-Picayune*, May 8, 1919.

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- ⁴⁷ “Oriental Trade Chance is Given,” *Item*, July 27, 1919; and “‘Record Ship’ Comes ‘Round the World to New Orleans,’” *Item*, August 3, 1919.
- ⁴⁸ “Toyo Kisen Kaisha will open Service to New Orleans,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 3, 1919; “Promises Orleans Japanese Steamers,” *Times-Picayune*, July 19, 1919.
- ⁴⁹ “Japanese Steamers will dock here Company to Operate One Boat Monthly to New Orleans,” *Times-Picayune*, August 27, 1922; and “Names Big Vessel for New Orleans Japanese Line will use Chrysanthemums, Doves in Launching,” *Times-Picayune*, March 8, 1921.
- ⁵⁰ Nobuo Kawabe, “Japanese Business in the United States Before World War II: The Case of Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha, the San Francisco and Seattle Branches” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1980), 29.
- ⁵¹ “Ships from Many Nations use Port here,” *Times-Picayune*, February 28, 1935.
- ⁵² “Japanese Capital Finances Louisiana Cotton Company,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 24, 1921.
- ⁵³ See, for example, Elizabeth Kell, “In Society,” *Times-Picayune*, November 13, 1933; “Two Weddings Hold Interest of New Orleans Social Sets Today,” *Times-Picayune*, April 21, 1935; and “Wife of Japanese Consul Hostess at Smart Party,” *Times-Picayune*, April 30, 1935.
- ⁵⁴ Wren, “A History of Japanese Trade,” 125.
- ⁵⁵ On Japanese in New Orleans, see Greg Robinson, “Beneath the Color Line: The Astonishing History of Japanese Americans in Louisiana,” in Raymond A. Mohl, John E. Van Sant, and Chizuru Saeki, eds., *Far East, Down South: Asians in the American South* (University of Alabama Press, 2016), 10–26.
- ⁵⁶ Designs and photos with descriptions of these costumes can be found in the holdings of The Historic New Orleans Collection: <http://hnoc.minisis-inc.com/>
- ⁵⁷ “Twinkling Scores Thrilling Victory with Great Rush,” *Times-Picayune*, December 7, 1927.
- ⁵⁸ On the life and writing of Lafcadio Hearn, see for example Jonathan Cott, *Wandering Ghost: The Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn* (Kodansha International, 1992).
- ⁵⁹ “Yuki Hinata, First Japanese Baby to be Born in New Orleans,” *Times-Picayune*, January 14, 1911.

- ⁶⁰ Roku Sugahara, "Pioneer in the Southland," *Pacific Citizen*, December 23, 1947, 16.
- ⁶¹ "Seamen's Bethel," *Times-Picayune*, February 6, 1906; and "A Samurai's Sacrifice for Wife He Loved, Who Loved Another Man," *Times-Picayune*, January 13, 1911. Kashiwa's restaurant became the scene of successive scandals. In 1908, a white woman, Annie Lavin, had her throat brutally slashed by her lover George Cassanova in the rooms above the shop. Eighteen months later, Fred Vance, in despair over his unrequited love for Mabel, a waitress at the restaurant (by then located on Poydras Street), ended his own life.
- ⁶² Tokumi Hamako, "Southern Accent," *Kashu Mainichi*, February 3, 1940.
- ⁶³ Clifford I. Uyeda, *Suspended: Growing up Asian in America* (National Japanese American Society, 2000), 78, 139–140.
- ⁶⁴ "U.S. Cotton Export to Japan Increases," *Japanese American Courier*, November 24, 1928.
- ⁶⁵ "Arbitration Wins," *New Orleans States*, December 3, 1921.
- ⁶⁶ Kent Osband, "The Boll Weevil Versus 'King Cotton,'" *The Journal of Economic History* 45, no. 3 (1985): 643, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2121755>
- ⁶⁷ "New Orleans Cotton Exchange Secretary's Report, 1931–1932," 4, cited in Wren, "A History of Japanese Trade," 85.
- ⁶⁸ Ellinger and Ellinger, "Japanese Competition in the Cotton Trade," 198.
- ⁶⁹ Patrick J. Hearnden, *Independence and Empire: The New South's Mill Campaign, 1865–1901* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 149.
- ⁷⁰ "Japanese Veteran of Seas is Retired," *Times-Picayune*, July 30, 1935.
- ⁷¹ Harry J. Robinson, "United States Cotton Production and Trade" (Superintendent of Documents, 1937), 14, cited in Wilfred Yoshitaka Horiuchi, "Japanese-American Trade in Raw Cotton and Raw Silk, with Emphasis upon the Methods of Financing" (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1941), 67. "US Cotton is not Losing its Hold in Japan," *Japan Times*, August 4, 1935, has slightly different figures but shares the picture of overall tendencies.
- ⁷² Koh, *Stages of Industrial Development in Asia*, 250. Koh's asserted source for these statistics is a Department of Commerce report for 1934. See also "U.S. in Trade Row Japanese Blamed," *Times-Picayune*, April 14, 1935. These figures are contested by those in "Exports of Selected U. S. Merchandise: 1790 to 1957," U73-93, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (US Census Bureau, 1960), 13. These statistics confirm that cotton made up the largest single item of export sales,

but even in 1932–33, the best years for cotton, it represented less than 33 percent of the total value of US exports. <https://www2.census.gov> and hist_stats_colonial-1957.

- 73 Wren, “A History of Japanese Trade,” 15.
- 74 Virginius Dabney, “The South Looks Abroad,” *Foreign Affairs* 19 (1940): 171–178.
- 75 Letter, James E. Edmonds to H. Yamanouchi, September 2, 1937, James E. Edmonds Collection, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, hereafter cited as Edmonds Collection.
- 76 Letter, James E. Edmonds to Jane and Richard Bauenbach, September 21, 1937, Edmonds Collection.
- 77 Letter, Francis Hickman to James E. Edmonds, January 10, 1938, Edmonds Collection. In addition to his series in *Cotton Trade Journal*, Edmonds placed one of his articles in the Curtis Publishing Company’s magazine *Country Gentleman*, though he was unable to persuade their sister publication *The Saturday Evening Post* to publish his writing.
- 78 “Urges Japan to Buy More U.S. Cotton,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 22, 1940; and Francis G. Hickman, “War Turns Japan’s Cotton Buyers from Brazil to United States,” *Times-Picayune*, July 28, 1940.
- 79 “Salient Facts on Far East,” (New Orleans, 1938). A similar (undated) pamphlet, “New State of Manchukuo,” was also published in New Orleans around the same time by a group that called itself the “Japanese Student Association of the South.” Both these groups listed themselves as based in New Orleans, but neither pamphlet provided any information on individual authorship or membership, and they had no public activities other than the production of pamphlets in support of Tokyo’s foreign policy. Both pamphlets adhered to the official Tokyo position on Far East questions. It is thus plausible that both were backed, if not actually created, by the New Orleans consulate, which was already engaged with James Edmonds in a campaign to improve the image of Japan.
- 80 “Buys Lafcadio Hearn Relic,” *New Orleans States*, December 19, 1939; Edward Larocque Tinker, “New Editions, Fine and Otherwise,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1940; and “A Memorial for Hearn,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1941.
- 81 “The Dedication of the Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Room of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library and the Inauguration Dinner of the Lafcadio Hearn Society,” pamphlet (New Orleans, 1941), copy at Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- 82 Ben Williams, “Treaty with Japan and South’s Prosperity,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 6, 1940; “Pact Plea Made by Cotton Chief,” *Japanese American Courier*, July 20, 1940; “U.S. Cotton Shippers Official Hits Abrogation of Japan Trade Pact,” *Nichibei Shimbun*, July 6, 1940.

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- ⁸⁴ Wren, “A History of Japanese Trade,” 88.
- ⁸⁵ “Japanese Consulate Seized for Rent,” *Times-Picayune*, December 9, 1941; and “German, Italian Nationals Being Arrested Here,” *Times-Picayune*, December 10, 1941.
- ⁸⁶ On wartime Japanese in Louisiana, see Greg Robinson, “Beneath the Color Line”; and Jonathan van Harmelen and Greg Robinson, “Panama Canal Zone,” *Densho Encyclopedia*, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Panama_Canal_Zone/. See also Hayley Johnson and Sarah Simms, *Beneath Heavy Pines in World War II Louisiana: The Japanese American Internment Experience at Camp Livingston* (Lexington Books, 2023).
- ⁸⁷ On the postwar revival of trade, see Wren, “The Rising Sun on the Mississippi,” 328–331; “Japanese Ship Sailings Added,” *Times-Picayune*, December 26, 1957, 15; and Wren, “A History of Japanese Trade,” 148–149.
- ⁸⁸ US Department of Commerce, “U.S. Exports to Japan,” cited in Jerome B. Cohen, *Japan’s Postwar Economy* (Indiana University Press, 1958), 139.
- ⁸⁹ “Japan Trade Center,” *Times-Picayune*, January 21, 1962.
- ⁹⁰ “Japan Society Provides Funds,” *Times-Picayune*, February 6, 1960. See also “Main Library—Japanese garden (1956–1968)” Box 10, Subject/Correspondence Files, New Orleans Public Library, Special Collections, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans.
- ⁹¹ See *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957*.

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