

Asian ‘Massage Parlours’ in Paris

Results of the research carried out by Zéromacho during the summer of 2021

Here is an analysis of the situation in Paris. Such brothels are also operating in other French towns and in other countries. Zéromacho will soon be extending its research beyond Paris.

IN SHORT

300 Asian ‘massage parlours’ in Paris are actually houses of prostitution.

A record number of these – 55 – are in the **17th ‘arrondissement’** (district), especially its south-eastern sector.

85% of the masseuses are Chinese, 14% Thai.

They **speak very poor French**, even if they have been in France for a long time.

Men only go in and out of these ‘parlours’.

On these parlours’ websites, accessible to all whether from Zeromacho or the police, ‘user’ comments leave no ambiguity whatsoever as to the prostitudinal acts (“massage with trimmings”) being performed.

Zéromacho has alerted the public prosecutor for Paris to the situation, asking him to have the law enforced.

Asian ‘Massage Parlours’ in Paris

Summary of the research carried out by the Zéromacho team during the summer of 2021.

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CARRIED OUT

During the summer of 2021, we scoured the streets of Paris to check the data that came up when we typed ‘Massage parlours in Paris’ on the internet generally and also on Vivastreet’s webpage (known for advertising prostitution), which publishes information on 146 of these ‘massage parlours’, each of which is illustrated with pictures of young women in alluring outfits and poses.

As we wandered the streets of Paris, we also found numerous other ‘parlours’ that we hadn’t seen on the internet.

In the process, we found other houses of prostitution, with much higher fees and whose masseuses are not Asian. We have not included these in our report, since it is centred exclusively on the Asian so-called ‘massage parlours’. There are 300 of these in total and the vast majority Chinese. In reality they are brothels employing women who are most probably victims of trafficking.

We noted the characteristics these ‘parlours’ share but also their own particularities.

We went into all the parlours that opened their doors to us and asked for information.

When the investigator was male, he would ask if he could have a massage ‘with trimmings’ and the reply was always ‘yes’. He would then ask for the price list and leave.

When the investigator was female, she would ask if she could come back with someone and if the answer was negative, it indicated that the masseuse was working alone in the parlour. The female investigator would ask to see the price list and noted that in many cases there were two different ones: an all-purpose one and one reserved exclusively for men (see details below). The investigator would observe the place carefully and try to start a conversation with the masseuse.

We spoke to neighbours, residents of the buildings or shopkeepers, situated next to, or in front of, the ‘parlours’. We also talked to the men coming out of the ‘parlours’, on the pretext of wanting to find out what they thought of the quality of the ‘massage’.

HOW MANY “PARLOURS”?

In Paris there are at least 300 of these Asian so-called ‘massage parlours’, which are actually brothels.

Their distribution varies enormously depending on the district (‘arrondissement’). There are:

- very few in two areas: the centre (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th arrondissements) and east (19th and 20th)
- many in the 16th (23), 9th (25), 14th (32), 15th (35) and especially 17th (55) with record concentration in the latter's south-eastern quarter.

All these 'parlours' are open 7 days a week, with long opening times: usually 10 am to 10 pm.

WHAT ARE THEIR PREMISES LIKE?

The vast majority of these 'parlours' share the following characteristics:

- an Asian-sounding name
- a street with little passing traffic
- a small boutique
- windows obscured by posters of hands massaging young and beautiful bodies; often also a map of the soles of feet divided into sections according to Chinese medicine
- a run-down façade: peeling-off paint, dust; sometimes a name has been painted over or is different from the one on the flyer
- a sign advertising 'massage' in (flickering) blue and red LED lights
- flickering lights framing the shop window
- a white plastic doorbell; some have none and the door simply pushes open
- a door opening towards the inside; a woman is hidden behind the door, only showing her head, before letting anyone in. A look at her clothing makes her reticence at being seen from the outside easy to understand: she is usually in a very short, low-cut dress and is barefoot or wearing high-heeled mules.

Inside: a small entrance with a reception counter, one or several cabins where a mattress can be seen on the floor; a general impression of dirt and slovenliness; cheap, drab decoration; gilt 'waving lucky cat' trinket.

WHICH COUNTRIES DO THESE WOMEN COME FROM?

In **161 'parlours'** the masseuse is **Chinese**, as are her colleagues if she has any.

In **25 'parlours'** the masseuse(s) is or are **Thai**.

Only one 'parlour' is Korean and one Japanese.

While there are many Thai massage parlours that are what they claim to be, and do not deal in prostitution; this is hardly ever the case with the Chinese 'parlours'.

Paris's Chinese 'massage parlours' are nearly all brothels.

HOW OLD ARE THE WOMEN INVOLVED?

Between 20 and 55, the majority being over 35.

IS THERE ONE OR SEVERAL WOMEN IN THE 'PARLOURS'?

The female investigators asked if they could bring someone: if the masseuse was alone, she explained that she could not take two people at the same time.

Sometimes, even if the LED sign outside said 'open', a woman pinned up a sheet of paper saying something such as 'engaged until 4:30'.

In two cases, the female investigator was not even allowed in and the masseuse significantly stated, 'We don't do women' or 'We only do men'.

We were able to determine that **in 52 of the 'parlours' the woman was alone.**

For sure, it was summertime, and there were fewer customers, but it makes one wonder about the risks being taken: anyone can walk in, brutalise or rob them... We did not see any security device.

DO THEY SPEAK FRENCH?

With few exceptions, these women speak little French; they only know a few words if any.

Examples of women alone in the 'parlour':

<< She shows a sheet of paper on which it is written: 'you vaccinated?'>> (a 'parlour' in the 14th arrondissement)

<< She calls a friend by video (wearing a mask) who tells her to give me a card>> (15th)

<< She doesn't understand me; I speak to her telephone which translates>> (5th)

<< I ask her what 'royal massage' means; she replies phonetically 'sen-su-al'>> (5th)

Such limited knowledge of French is not due to having recently arrived in France. For instance, one woman of 27 said she had been in France for 7 years, but she spoke little French (15th).

WHO PAYS THEM? MEN

Although many 'parlours' say they are for 'men women' and sometimes also 'couples', the simple truth is that, according to neighbours' testimonies, only men are seen going in and out of them. Judging from the way they are dressed, these men are from all age groups and social backgrounds.

Their behaviour is discreet, even secretive. When they leave, they hurry away. They clearly neither want to be recognised nor identified.

Comments by prostitute-clients

On the parlours' websites, which are accessible to all, including Zeromacho and the police, 'user' comments leave no doubt whatsoever as to the prostitutional acts being performed.

Some comments:

"Extreme trimmings. The girl was so heated when she sucked me that it ended up with condom-free intercourse (I must go and get tested). Bring your own condoms, Gentlemen."
Karim Benn (parlour in the 7th)

“She offered trimmings but very expensive. I refused, so she botched the last part of the massage.” Masa Vitor (parlour in the 7th)

“Trimmings with her hands only. Very pleasant... relaxing... 50€ for 40min.” Franck Franco (parlour in the 7th)

“Super! 80€: intercourse + preliminaries” Franck Franco (parlour in the 7th)

“Very stimulating massage, very professional, very slim and sexy girl, over-hasty wank at the end with too much oil, but very nice all the same!” Marc Justa ((parlour in the 14th)

“Impeccably clean premises but the same can’t be said for the masseuse who didn’t seem at ease either for the end bit, which was rather perturbing especially as it is the part most looked forward to ... a shame!” Sofiane So (parlour in the 16th)

“Nina massages particularly well! From the feet all the way up to the scalp, all tension disappears. Completely relaxing and the grand finale leaves you utterly chilled out.” Nicolas Lapointe (parlour in the 17th)

“An all-inclusive price, but quite high (100€). The masseuses really are the ones on the photos. The massage isn’t great, but that’s not the real reason anyone goes into this parlour.” Lacazette 111 (parlour in the 17th)

Report by female investigators

“I entered the parlour and spoke to the masseuses, two Chinese women of thirty-five. I heard some noise behind a curtain: a man was putting his clothes back on. He went out, put on his helmet and got onto a big motorbike parked in front. I asked him what he thought of the massage, pretending to hesitate between several types. He replied, ‘I come to fuck. For 120€ I fucked both of them.’” (parlour in the 9th)

A glimpse of the dire living conditions of these women who, in spite of their smiling exterior, seem utterly exhausted.

“No doorbell, I push open the door. It is 8:15 pm. A door on the right leads into a bedroom; I see a large mattress on the floor with sheets and blankets. Two Chinese women are lying under the sheets. One gets up in haste; she is Chinese, thirty years old and speaks very poor French. She asks me if I want a massage and seems ready to give me one there and then, as if she had been caught out skiving. I leave with a flyer.” (parlour in the 17th)

What massages are offered?

One has to distinguish between the list pinned up in the parlour, an A4 sheet in a transparent plastic pocket, and the flyer handed out or distributed.

It is even necessary in some parlours to differentiate between two lists offered at the reception desk: one is presented to the female investigator while the other is quickly removed from sight because it is exclusively reserved for men and clearly offers acts of prostitution.

The first, the 'respectable' list, does not include any massages with suggestive names such as "body-body – nudist – reciprocal – erotic" ...

There are several kinds of massage and the prices are surprisingly similar in all the parlours. The cheapest ("Chinese massage") costs 30€ for half an hour and the most expensive ("Royal massage") 80€.

Our investigators did not ask for the cost of 'trimmings' but, according to several user comments, you have to pay a supplement, sometimes demanded even during the very act.

CONCLUSION AND ACTION

The many similarities noted – comparable premises, decoration and window-dressing, predominantly Chinese women, identical photographs on some of the flyers – seems to point to a small number of decision-makers running what appear to be chains of small brothels.

According to incomplete earlier findings, their number in Paris is on the rise. For instance, a resident of the 17th 'arrondissement' said, "Every time a local retailer closes, it is replaced by a new parlour."

The parlours do not cause any inconvenience to their neighbours: the women are described as discreet and nice. Nonetheless, their increase contributes to normalizing prostitution and this is worrying considering that in 2016 France adopted legislation banning it. How can one accept the proliferation of 300 Asian brothels in Paris amid widespread indifference?

In Paris there are hundreds of sex slaves, cooped up all day and every day in tiny premises, waiting for clients. No one can reasonably believe they have crossed half the world out of their own free will.

In Paris every day there are thousands of men who commit the crime of paying for sex.

Men who are taking advantage of the dire poverty of destitute Chinese women; their oppression is sexist, racist and class-based.

Men whose money is bringing wealth to pimps, proprietors, lessors and traffickers.

Men who are contributing to human trafficking.

Zeromacho is demanding enforcement of the law of 13 April 2016 that provides:

- helping prostituted women out of prostitution;
- punishing procuring;
- prohibiting the purchase of sex acts.

Article 611-1 of the Penal Code states: "To solicit, accept or obtain sex acts from a person involved in prostitution, including on a sporadic basis, in exchange for payment, promise of

payment, provision of benefits in kind or the promise of such benefits, is punished by the fine established for fifth class contravention.”

Zeromacho has written to the public prosecutor demanding that he have the law enforced.