


RESEARCH ARTICLE

French Sinology

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(Received 12 May 2022; accepted 13 May 2022)

Abstract

The history of French Sinology—that is, of scholarly research on things Chinese by French-speaking authors working from Chinese sources—goes back to the seventeenth century and can be divided into several periods determined in large part by sociopolitical factors, and marked by different approaches and emphases: I propose to describe them as the missionary age (seventeenth–eighteenth centuries); the first academic efflorescence (nineteenth century); the advent of field research and the impact of colonialism and the social sciences (first half of twentieth century); and the postwar era of specialization and internationalization (second half of twentieth century), which marked the end of a certain French domination of Chinese studies in the West.¹

Keywords: French Sinology; Jesuits; Collège de France; École française d'Extrême-Orient; Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat; Édouard Chavannes; Paul Pelliot; Paul Demiéville

Missionaries as Sinologists

In Ming and Qing China missionaries in general and Jesuits in particular formed quite a cosmopolitan group, composed of natives from every nation in Europe and sponsored by several European crowns, with the papacy as the ultimate authority. The first missionaries who published descriptions of China, starting in the late sixteenth century, were not French but Portuguese, Spaniards, and especially Italians—Matteo Ricci's seminal account of the first Jesuit mission in China, which included a general account of China's government and society, was published in his Flemish colleague Nicolas Trigault's heavily edited version first in Latin in 1615 and then in several European languages. However, despite early efforts at understanding the Chinese Classics or describing the Chinese language, and even if some of the early missionaries were keen

¹ A variety of studies have been devoted to French Sinology. The one essay that dominates the rest by its comprehensiveness and erudition is Paul Demiéville, "Aperçu historique des études sinologiques en France," *Acta Asiatica* 11 (1966), 56–110; rpt. in Demiéville, *Choix d'études sinologiques* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 433–87. Out of modesty, presumably, Demiéville does not say a word of his own, considerable, contribution. (The same is true of his essay on teaching Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales, cited in n. 36.) One should also cite Henri Cordier (1849–1925), an ardent bibliographer and exacting historian of Sino-European relations, who published (in *T'oung Pao* and elsewhere) a series of essays on French Sinology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries featuring abundant quotes from archival materials.

observers of the society they had elected to live among and proposed to convert, I would hesitate to describe their writings as “Sinology.”

A more “scientific” approach—in other words, less tied to apologetics or to a concern to respond to European curiosity—emerged in the wake of the French group of six Jesuits appointed and funded by Louis XIV in the mid-1680s to run a French mission in China that would be independent from the Portuguese *padroado*. This was not a straightforward religious enterprise. As their name indicates, the “*Mathématiciens du Roy*” who reached Beijing in 1688 were scientists by training, they had been made members of the *Académie des Sciences* before departure, and in the plan devised by the French king and his minister Colbert it was to that institution that they would send back observations on every aspect of China’s government, society, economy, sciences, literary productions, etc.—actually responding to a list of questions compiled by the *Académie*, supplemented a little later by no less an authority than Leibniz and followed by other lists during the eighteenth century. Paul Demiéville did not hesitate to see in the original assignment (dated 1685) “the founding charter of French Sinology.”² In this manner the *Mathématiciens du Roy* and their successors at the French mission in Beijing (a further group of eleven missionaries, brought back by their colleague Joachim Bouvet at Kangxi’s request, arrived as early as 1699) occupied an ambiguous position. On one side they remained, first and foremost, missionaries in charge of converting China to the true religion. In this capacity, and as had been the case since Matteo Ricci, their competence in science and technology was mobilized to impress China’s elites, or even serve China’s government, and convince them that the superiority of European science was inseparable from the superiority of Christianity. At the same time, thanks to their considerable abilities and eagerness to absorb Chinese culture, the best among them brilliantly fulfilled their task of informing their royal sponsors on China, and in fact went much beyond: for a full century the French Jesuit mission was the main conduit for the mass of knowledge about Chinese things that reached the European public, with consequences they did not necessarily intend.³ Again, there were ambiguities in this informational work. Jesuit apologetics were rarely far from the descriptions of the government, society, and culture of China—however competent and accurate many of them might be—found in such major publications as Louis Le Comte’s *Nouveaux mémoires sur l’état présent de la Chine* of 1696 (quickly translated into a plurality of languages), the thirty-four installments of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions Étrangères par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus* published between 1702 and 1776, or Jean Baptiste Du Halde’s massive and enormously influential *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* of 1735 (largely based on the writings of the *Lettres édifiantes* contributors and soon translated into several European languages). To be sure, these and other publications contained a lot of edifying and exotic stuff, and occasionally conveyed oddities like the so-called

²Demiéville, “Aperçu historique,” 62.

³Voltaire’s use of Jesuit writings in his critique of European absolutism and of Catholicism is the best known example of such misappropriation. The Beijing Jesuit Amiot, a particularly prolific author in the second half of the eighteenth century, told at one point of the missionaries’ being disgusted with working for Europe and seeing their writings quoted in “works of darkness aimed at combatting the very religion we are preaching at the risk of our lives”; see Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les jésuites de l’ancienne mission de Chine, 1552–1773*, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Mission catholique, 1934), 839.

figurist interpretations of the Chinese Classics as incorporating earlier importations of, or equivalences with, Judeo-Christian monotheism, which were popular with not a few seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French Jesuits; but they also featured no little solid information culled from Chinese sources or based on direct observation—information that despite its limitations made China into a serious object of study and would later support more pointed research, indeed, “Sinology.”⁴

In a way, Jesuit apologetics and the inordinate optimism and rosy interpretation of things Chinese it implied in publications aimed at the European public lost much of their urgency once the rites controversy, which had been raging since the turn of the eighteenth century, was settled to the detriment of the Jesuits’ positions and conversion strategies—the final condemnation of “accommodation” by the Holy See was published in 1742, thirty-eight years after a first papal condemnation and less than ten years after Du Halde’s brave attempt to turn things around with his *Description de la Chine*. Meanwhile, compared with the mid-Kangxi golden age the position of the missionaries, Jesuit or otherwise, had severely deteriorated in China, first with the Kangxi emperor’s angry reaction to the injunctions of the papal envoy in 1706, then in 1724 with Yongzheng’s expulsion of missionaries from everywhere in China except in the capital. Those allowed to stay there were technicians, artists, linguists, and scientists useful to the Court, and it is among them that we find the first authentic Sinologists.

To be sure, of the three French Jesuits who deserve particular attention as early Sinologists and whose work remained admired long after their death—Joseph-Henri Marie de Prémare (1666–1736), Antoine Gaubil (1689–1759), and Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718–1793)—only the last two lived in post-proscription Beijing. Prémare, a “figurist” who had arrived in China in 1698, served in Jiangxi until the 1724 proscription sent him back to Canton, then to Macao, where he died in 1736. He was widely read and acquired a remarkable knowledge and understanding of the Chinese language, of which he set out the substance in a manuscript completed in Canton in 1728 and titled *Notitia linguae sinicae*. This extremely erudite and well-conceived account of both the vernacular and the literary language, discussed in separate sections, mostly makes use of the categories of Latin grammar and rhetoric; it is above all a treasure trove of well-chosen examples (always including romanization, characters, and translation). Originally meant as a handbook for future missionaries, it was sent to Prémare’s correspondent Étienne Fourmont (1683–1745), a professor of Arabic and one of the few Paris lay scholars who tried to make sense out of the materials sent or brought back from China by the missionaries for the royal collection (the future Bibliothèque Nationale) during the eighteenth century—others included Nicolas Fréret (1688–1749), who was able to start studying Chinese with the help of Arcade Hoange (Huang Jialü 黃嘉略), a convert brought to Europe in 1702 to be trained as a priest who ended up as an employee of the Bibliothèque Royale, where he spent a short decade before his untimely death in 1716;⁵ and later Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800), a

⁴The quality and dependability of this information also improved with time: compare, for example, the descriptions of China’s administration and government in Le Comte’s *Nouveaux mémoires*, which still contain many odd or fanciful remarks, and Du Halde’s *Description de la Chine*—not to mention a number of pieces in the late-eighteenth-century *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* discussed below.

⁵Demiéville, “Aperçu historique,” 72, describes Fourmont as “un pédant médiocre et brouillon.” Nicolas Fréret, on the other hand, was a serious scholar with wide interests (and a resolute opponent of figurist theories); however, he does not seem to have actively pursued his Chinese interests beyond a 1718 memoir on Chinese writing in which he explained what he had been able to study with Arcade Hoange.

professor of Syriac who claimed a competence in Chinese, and Michel Le Roux Deshauterayes (1724–1795), also an Orientalist with a smattering of Chinese; but none of these early French “inland Sinologists” (so to speak) approached the competence of the best Jesuits in Beijing, with whom they were in correspondence and some of whose works they helped to print in France.⁶ In any case, Fourmont, who when he received Prémare’s manuscript was preparing his own Chinese grammar and was perfectly aware that his knowledge of the language could not compete with that of a missionary who had spent twenty-five years in the country, disposed of Prémare’s work with a few dismissive remarks and left it to rest in the Bibliothèque Royale, instead of communicating it to prospective users as Prémare had wished.⁷ As it turned out, the *Notitia*, the work of a French Jesuit aimed at his future colleagues, remained essentially unknown until it was printed by British protestant missionaries in Malacca in 1831 (in the original Latin) and in Canton in 1847 (in a mediocre English rendering). Since then it has been consistently held in admiration.⁸

In scholarly terms, Gaubil certainly was in a different league. A member or associate of various Academies (in Paris, St. Petersburg, and London), he produced an astounding quantity of high-quality work—much of it published long after his death, some never published—during his thirty-seven years in Beijing, both in the natural sciences and in Chinese letters and history. He has remained famous, among others, for his research on Chinese astronomy and chronology and for his translations of the *Shujing*, his history of Chinggis Khan and the Mongols, and his summary of the *Tangshu* (he contemplated translating all the dynastic histories).

An important step in what might be called the professionalization of research on China was the investigation of Chinese subjects launched in the mid-1760s by two statesmen and eminent representatives of the French Enlightenment, Anne Robert Turgot (1727–1781) and Henri-Léonard Bertin (1720–1792). The story is well known. The aim was to identify elements in Chinese institutions, society, and economy that might help the French kingdom out of its current crisis; and the agents in charge of this investigation would be two young Chinese converts, Aloys Ko and Étienne Yang (Gao Lei’en 高類恩 and Yang Dewang 楊德望), who had been brought to France to be trained as Jesuit priests but were now submitted to an intensive tour of French industrial sites and taught in the sciences before being sent back to China equipped with a long list of questions on the government, society, customs, products, agriculture, etc. of their country as well as its sciences and arts.⁹ Ko and Yang received an annual

⁶One important example of such publications is the *Histoire générale de la Chine*, translated from Zhu Xi’s *Tongjian gangmu* 通鑑綱目 by the Jesuit Joseph de Moyriac de Mailla (1669–1745), published in thirteen volumes by Le Roux Deshauterayes in Paris in 1777–1785, which remained influential until the twentieth century.

⁷Fourmont’s efforts were published after Prémare’s death, in *Meditationes sinicae* in 1737, and in *Grammatica duplex* in 1742. Though Fourmont did not acknowledge it, he was heavily indebted not only to Prémare’s manuscript but also to the work accomplished in Paris by Hoange and Fréret.

⁸It had been rediscovered and hand-copied by Abel-Rémusat in the 1810s, and in the next few years several other copies were made by hand. For a detailed history of the manuscript and published versions of the *Notitia*, see Paul Kwa, “Prémare’s *Notitia Linguae Sinicae*, 1728–1893: The Journey of a Language Textbook,” *East Asian Publishing and Society* 10.2 (2020), 159–200.

⁹Another questionnaire in fifty-two items, with elaboration and comments, was sent by Turgot sometime after Ko and Yang’s return to China: see “Questions sur la Chine adressées à MM. Ko et Yang,” in *Cœuvres de Turgot*, new ed. with various supplements (Paris: Guillaumin, 1844), vol. 1, 310–21. These are first of all an *économiste*’s questions, with a clear physiocratic slant, rather than a Sinologist’s, and

stipend from the French government, and they were expected to send back reports with the help of the Beijing missionaries.

Bertin was central to the project and appears to have been until the very end keen on supporting the ex-Jesuits in China, maintaining intellectual exchange, and sending books and information to his correspondents in Beijing, in exchange for which he did receive a continuous flow of essays and information—all of this forming what was called “la correspondance littéraire,” which the French king entrusted to him even after his bad health forced him in 1781 to step down from his many political responsibilities as “Secrétaire d’État” in the cabinet. What it has been possible to retrieve of Bertin’s papers shows that only a fraction of the reports he received from his correspondents in China found their way in the last major eighteenth-century French publication about China, the *Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs et les usages, &c. des Chinois, Par les Missionnaires de Pékin*, whose fifteen massive installments he managed to put out between 1776 and 1791 (an extra volume devoted to unpublished works by Gaubil was issued in 1814).¹⁰

Before Bertin’s retirement from the cabinet and while the project had started in earnest, an earth-shaking event took place: the suppression of the Jesuit order by Rome, decreed in 1773 and known in Beijing in August 1774.¹¹ Bertin devoted all his energies to preserving the French mission and pursuing the program despite the vicious infighting that the demise of the Jesuit order had spurred among the missionaries—Jesuit and others—posted in China. Without going into the extremely complicated details of the fratricidal disputes that took place in and around the Jesuit residence in Beijing,¹² it should be enough to recall that the problem was to decide who would take over the rather substantial assets and resources of the Jesuit mission (what was called “le temporel,” which included its rich library): while the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome and the *padroado* were eager to take control and would gladly have seen the French leave Beijing, the French crown was willing to continue supporting a group whose intellectual activities it had generously funded since the time of Louis XIV (in addition to the general expenses of the Beijing Jesuit establishment) and which in return had contributed to its prestige in Europe and (it was believed) among the Qing Court.¹³

the comments reveal quite a good command of the topics on the part of Turgot. There are also demands for sending seeds, samples, etc. Only the last three questions deal with Chinese history (to wit, the Kaifeng Jews, the Miao aborigines, and the Manchus’ degree of acculturation to Chinese ways).

¹⁰For an in-depth analysis of the *Mémoires* and a detailed enumeration of their contents and sources, see Joseph Dehergne, “Une grande collection: *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* (1776–1814),” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 72 (1983), 267–98.

¹¹The Jesuit order had been prohibited in Paris as early as 1762 and in the whole of France two years later: when Ko and Yang departed in 1765 they had the status of secular priests, but became Jesuits again after they had joined the Beijing mission the next year.

¹²On which see Henri Cordier, “La suppression de la Compagnie de Jésus et la mission de Peking,” *T’oung Pao*, ser. 2, 17.3 (1916), 271–347, and 17.4–5 (1916), 561–623. On the post-suppression mission, see also Catherine Marin, “La mission française de Pékin après la suppression de la Compagnie de Jésus en 1773,” *Transversales* 107 (2008), 11–28. Things calmed down after Lazarist Fathers arrived from Paris to take charge and managed to maintain harmonious relations with their ex-Jesuit colleagues.

¹³One of the main arguments for resisting attempts at seizing the Jesuit mission possessions in Beijing was the claim that they did not belong to the Catholic church but had been acquired through the generosity of the French crown and of the Chinese emperor.

As we saw, Bertin's correspondents in China did send to Paris a large amount of material during a period of about a quarter century, including data on plants and minerals, descriptions of techniques, accounts of various industries and of their products, population censuses (particularly prized by Bertin), reports on economic practices (including a famous essay on interest rates), various scientific notions, weather observations, and so forth. Besides Ko and Yang, whose not inconsiderable input can be reconstructed from the Bertin archive even if their names rarely feature in the *Mémoires concernant les Chinois*, the main authors were Pierre-Martial Cibot (1727–1780), an all-purpose writer who already in his time was criticized for his verbosity and lack of rigor, and Joseph-Marie Amiot. Amiot, who arrived in Beijing in 1751 and died of a stroke in 1793 after being informed of Louis XVI's execution, was the last of the Beijing Jesuit Sinologists. Though not esteemed as highly as Gaubil, he was a serious researcher and translator, held in high respect by his colleagues; he was regarded by Bertin as the main authority on Qianlong's China. Besides his many pieces on court life and contemporary events, or his series or portraits of famous Chinese since antiquity, Amiot is renowned for substantial essays on Sunzi and Chinese military art, Chinese music, a 400-page life of Confucius (in *Mémoires*, vol. 12), his introduction to the Manchu language, and more.

The rich correspondence exchanged between Bertin and his ex-Jesuit protégés in Beijing includes a letter of November 1777 addressed to Father Bourgeois (then the administrator of the group) in which Bertin strongly insisted that Bourgeois and his colleagues should “select Chinese books and translate them, be they dealing with morals, law or government, or history,” possibly with some explanatory footnotes; and more generally, send *original* Chinese works, literary, pictorial, or whatever, because such materials “will better succeed in Europe, will be more piquant for us, and will be infinitely more useful here for customs, government, the people's happiness, and so on and so forth, than anything the missionaries may send us of their own writing.”¹⁴ In other words, what Bertin wanted was raw documents revealing the Chinese as they are, as they think, and as they speak, rather than dissertations *on* the Chinese by European authors, which had proved to be a regular source of argument and quarrel among the public.

Bertin's long-term ambition was *improving* France, using the Chinese example, and he was pondering the best way to achieve this without raising controversies, especially the sort of religious controversies an enlightenment intellectual like him could hardly have sympathy with. In contrast, nineteenth-century Sinology did not have the same instrumental and idealistic approach to the study of China, which was no longer regarded as a potential model, except for some of its techniques and products, and it was hardly concerned with religious issues; yet the notion of presenting authentic sources in authoritative translations and with only the indispensable amount of explanatory comments, as it had been advocated by Bertin in 1777, remained central to nineteenth-century European Orientalism in general.

Beyond this, and to limit ourselves to the French case, the Jesuit connection in Beijing, which it had been possible to maintain against great odds until the last decade of the eighteenth century, created solid resources for the future development of Sinology. This was first of all due to the large quantity of materials the Jesuits sent or brought to Paris, including linguistic tools like Prémare's *Notitia* and a number of draft glossaries, but also through the translations and scholarly essays they did produce, and for the very fact that all this literature made China a concrete and contemporary,

¹⁴Quoted in Cordier, “La suppression de la Compagnie de Jésus,” Part 1, 309–11.

almost quotidian, part of Europe's perception of the world. Almost from the start, the Chinese books and manuscripts that piled up on the shelves of the Bibliothèque Royale had spurred the interest of such Orientalist scholars as Fréret, Fourmont, De Guignes, and a few others. But as we saw, compared with their missionary correspondents they were mere amateurs. As a consequence, the remarkable Chinese collection at the Bibliothèque Royale, by far the largest in Europe at the time (excluding perhaps the Vatican Library), was put to only limited use, and the ambitious projects drawn up in the early eighteenth century—describing the Chinese books held at the Library, compiling research tools such as grammars and dictionaries, producing a set of Chinese types to publish them—would yield serious results only in the next century, and then in a completely different environment.

Academic Sinology in France in the Nineteenth Century

Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat

Indeed, there exists a clear separation between the two centuries. While the eighteenth approached its end and the Ancien Régime was foundering, exchanges between France and China, intellectual or otherwise, came to a complete standstill: the final demise of the Jesuit mission and the death of its correspondents in Paris combined with political chaos in France and in Europe, of which one consequence was that France was completely cut off from East Asia.

Interest in Chinese matters had not completely disappeared, however. For example, projects to offer scholars an up-to-date Chinese dictionary were floated in France and elsewhere in Europe by several entrepreneur-Orientalists who clearly were very far from possessing the required competence. It took Napoleon's will to get the thing done: within only five years a Chinese–Latin–French dictionary adapted from an old missionary manuscript was compiled and printed using a set of Chinese wooden type engraved in the early eighteenth century. This was in 1813, the scholar in charge was Chrétien-Louis De Guignes, or Deguignes (1759–1845), son of Joseph De Guignes, who despite a decade in Canton as French representative and a trip to Beijing accompanying the 1795 Dutch embassy had no particular Sinological expertise, and the dictionary was an unwieldy, extremely heavy volume (more than twelve kilograms!), obsolete from its very appearance, that did nothing to advance Chinese studies.¹⁵

If Chinese studies took off in France at about the same time, it was due, first, to the creation of a dedicated chair at the Collège Royal (or Collège de France since 1870) at the end of 1814, and second, to the appointment to this chair of a young incumbent with more promise than actual accomplishments at the time, but who turned out to possess extraordinary talents and was able in the less than two decades left to him to almost single-handedly create the field of scientific Sinology. This was Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832).¹⁶

¹⁵For details see Isabelle Landry-Deron, "Le Dictionnaire chinois, français et latin de 1813," *T'oung Pao* 101.4–5 (2015), 407–40. The main innovation in relation to the missionary glossaries was a classification by character radicals, not by alphabetical order of romanization.

¹⁶"Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat" is how he signed his own works; but in much of the literature, even during his own times, Abel and Rémusat are used as his first and last names. On various aspects of his personality and career, see most recently the essays by Pierre-Étienne Will, Isabelle Landry-Deron, Mark Elliott, Nathalie Monnet, Georges Métailié, Frédéric Obringer, and Anne Cheng in *Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs: Deux cents ans de sinologie française en France et en Chine*, edited by Pierre-Étienne Will and Michel Zink (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2020).

Abel-Rémusat, still a medical student, caught the virus of the Chinese language in 1806 when he was shown by a collector friend a Chinese set of illustrations of plants with commentaries and decided he would try everything to learn how to read these beautiful but mysterious characters. This he achieved, in his own words, “without teachers, without a dictionary, and without a grammar”: he was denied access to the manuscript Chinese-European glossaries by ancient missionaries held at the Bibliothèque Nationale (then Impériale), there no longer were professors around with a modicum of knowledge of the language and writing (let alone native speakers like Arcade Hoange a century earlier), and he had to make do by looking at sundry materials such as Jesuit translations and a few Chinese dictionaries he was allowed to consult (“it often happened that, looking for characters I did not well understand, I found explanations with characters I did not understand at all”), and, interestingly, by using the Manchu versions of certain Chinese texts in order to break the secrets of the latter (Manchu was reputed to be much easier than Chinese, and there were learning aids).¹⁷ That Abel-Rémusat was a sort of prodigy is confirmed by what he was able to achieve within only a few years despite this paucity of means. His first published monograph, the 1811 *Essai sur la langue et la littérature chinoises*, which combines analyses and examples, demonstrates a remarkable familiarity with the few Chinese texts he had been able to access so far, an insistence on using original sources, a great sureness in critically using the existing literature, and an astonishing comprehension of the peculiarities and structure of the Chinese language, written or otherwise. He would continue to deepen his acquaintance with the language over the rest of his career, being able at one point to refer to Prémare’s *Notitia*—long kept from him at the Bibliothèque Impériale—with its clear distinction between the ancient written language (*guwen*) and the modern vernacular (*guanhua*), while at the same time submitting the description of the language to a theoretical approach (the word *théorie* features frequently in his writings) so as to free it from the fetters of Latin grammar.

Revolutionizing the pedagogy of the Chinese language, which he was able to do once he was in a position to teach students, was one of Abel-Rémusat’s major achievements. Quite early he had been noticed by Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), a scholar of Arabic, Persian, and several other languages, then regarded as the greatest authority of French Orientalism, who helped him with books and was quite impressed by the 1811 *Essai*, which he introduced to the authorities. And it was Silvestre de Sacy who during the first and short Bourbon restoration (he was a convinced royalist) persuaded Louis XVIII’s government to create a chair of Chinese studies and one of Sanskrit at the Collège Royal, where he was himself a professor, and to appoint the young Abel-Rémusat to the former.

¹⁷Manchu, let us recall, was one of the official languages of the Qing state, and would remain so through the fall of the empire. Abel-Rémusat’s chair at the Collège de France was called “Langues et littératures chinoises et tartares-mandchoues,” and the same *intitulé* was maintained through 1918 (when Henri Maspero took over the chair), though in effect using Manchu as an aid for Chinese studies fell into abeyance after Stanislas Julien. A number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuits were proficient in Manchu, and they used translations of Chinese text into Manchu, supposedly easier to understand, for their own translations into Latin and French; a manual on the language, the *Elementa linguae Tartaricae* (anon., attributed to Ferdinand Verbiest), appeared in Paris in 1696, and was used as a blueprint for Amiot’s *Grammaire tartare-mantchou* (first published in the *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* in 1788). For all of this, see Mark Elliott, “Abel-Rémusat, la langue mandchoue et la sinologie,” in Will and Zink, *Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 49–69.

Some Chinese had been taught at the Collège Royal by Fourmont, Deguignes, and Deshauterayes in the eighteenth century, but it was essentially a side occupation, not to say a hobby, for scholars whose main field was Arabic and other Middle Eastern languages. With Abel-Rémusat's chair of Chinese and Manchu studies—the first academic chair of the sort in Europe—things took on an entirely new dimension. As he himself insisted in several texts, his teaching was methodical, open to discussion, public, and free. One of his obsessions was to combat the notion—encouraged by the missionaries of olden times and still widespread in his age—that Chinese is a mysterious and dreadfully difficult language, devoid of clear grammatical rules and with an impossible writing system: quite the contrary, he insisted, with proper training and using the right methodology students could reach proficiency in a few years. To help them in their work and propagate his ideas he published—among other tools and research aids—his *Éléments de la grammaire chinoise* (1822), a remarkable work that relied on the experience of his first five years of teaching and should be regarded as the first modern Chinese grammar.

Abel-Rémusat's aim was also to train scholars who would be able to make use of the incomparable riches of the Chinese collection at the Bibliothèque Royale (amounting to over five thousand fascicles according to him), most of which had been gathering dust for more than a century for lack of competent readers.¹⁸ On his own request he was put in charge of establishing the catalog of Chinese and Manchu books as early as 1816—an earlier catalog numbering 378 works, published by Fourmont in 1739, then in 1742 with Chinese characters, was very incomplete and crammed with errors—and in 1824 he became chief librarian of the “Cabinet des manuscrits orientaux,” which gave him responsibility over all Eastern-language collections.¹⁹ His plans for a Chinese catalog that would be in part analytic and descriptive were extremely ambitious and combined for the first time Chinese bibliographical categories and modern classification principles; but because of his many responsibilities and premature death he was able to complete only a tiny part of it, which remains today in the BnF archives as an interesting historical document rather than a research tool.²⁰

Abel-Rémusat's lectures, which helped make the study of China and the Chinese language an ordinary scholarly pursuit rather than an esoteric occupation, contributed to establish the reputation and centrality of Paris and the Collège Royal to Oriental studies in Europe. They were attended not only by French students, but also by students from various European countries, prominently Germany.²¹ Among the Germans working in Paris at the time was Julius Klaproth (1783–1835), though he was not a student but a colleague, close friend, and in some way alter ego of Abel-Rémusat, his almost exact contemporary, with whom he shared the same taste for wide-ranging erudition and the same concern for applying scientific and critical methods to the study of Oriental

¹⁸In Abel-Rémusat's time the collection contained not only the books contributed by missionaries in the Ancien Régime, but also the contents of several private libraries—including Henri Bertin's prestigious collection—that had been confiscated during the French Revolution.

¹⁹The role of the Cabinet des manuscrits orientaux (which in fact holds a large quantity of printed books as well) has been central to the history of French Sinology, and Orientalism in general. To give but one example, it took care of the Dunhuang manuscripts brought back by Pelliot in 1909. It has regrettably been dismantled during the 2000s and integrated into the BnF Department of Manuscripts.

²⁰See Nathalie Monnet, “Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832): un autodidacte et ses livres,” in Will and Zink, *Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 71–116, in particular 98–107.

²¹See Hartmut Walravens, “Les recherches sur l'Extrême-Orient au début du XIX^e siècle ou Paris, Mecque des orientalistes allemands,” *Revue germanique internationale* 7 (2008), 33–48.

subjects. Contrary to Abel-Rémusat, Klaproth had had an extensive field experience in his younger years. Before settling in Paris in 1815²² he had spent several years employed by the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg; he had been a member of the 1806 Golovkin embassy to China (which was prevented from going beyond Kiakhta), during which he collected a large quantity of materials, and later he did fieldwork in the Caucasus. Even more than Abel-Rémusat, he was not only a Sinologist but also an Orientalist in the best sense of the term, competent in a large number of Asian languages, widely read, and with a global vision of Asia. Both men maintained multiple contacts among European colleagues—occasionally rivals—and both were merciless and feared critics of anything they regarded as misguided, substandard, or amateurish: this was an age when pamphlets (often published under pseudonyms) were readily printed and circulated to disparage rivals and when scathing reviews were the staple of scholarly journals.

One of the latter was the *Journal Asiatique*, the organ of the Société Asiatique founded in 1822 by Silvestre de Sacy, Abel-Rémusat, Klaproth, and others (and still in existence), from its inception a repository of new research and, on occasion, of ardent polemics. (It has become more staid since.)²³ A large part of Abel-Rémusat's remarkably abundant output—he published an estimated three hundred titles during his short career—appeared not only in the *Journal Asiatique*, but also in the *Journal des Savans* (or *Scavans* before 1792, *Savants* after 1830), a monthly curated by the Institut royal de France (which he joined in 1815 as a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) and principally devoted to review essays, and in various other scholarly or general public journals. Reading his essays and reviews, however outdated some of them may seem by today's standards, remains a rewarding, and at times an entertaining, experience, for his were a brilliant mind and scathing pen.²⁴

Abel-Rémusat inaugurated what might be called a post-Jesuit approach to Chinese studies: while making use of the corpus of materials the Jesuits had left, for which he had much respect,²⁵ he insisted on going back to the original sources, submitting them to rigorous reasoning and criticism, and wresting their contents from the narratives the missionaries had been prone to offer to the European public, not to mention the theological constraints placed upon them. Besides, he was intent on opening fields they had neglected or looked down on, notably Daoism and Buddhism, in which he appears to have been interested quite early in his studies (if not always impressed),

²²Though he had been appointed to a chair in Bonn, he had convinced the authorities to allow him to stay in Paris, the only place with enough resources to do his work. He lived there for the rest of his life, and much of his published output is in French. Not everybody liked him in Paris, some even suspecting him of spying for the king of Prussia (who was funding his chair in Bonn).

²³The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was created the following year. Several publications in French (by Klaproth, Stanislas Julien, and others) were funded by and printed in Paris for the Oriental Translation fund of Great Britain and Ireland, created in 1828.

²⁴A number of his reviews, programmatic essays, biographical sketches, polemical essays, and other shorter pieces (though some are quite substantial) were reprinted in the four volumes of his *Mélanges asiatiques* (1825–1826) and *Nouveaux mélanges asiatiques* (1829); an extra volume of *Mélanges posthumes* appeared in 1843.

²⁵Nowhere has the articulation between the pioneering work of the Jesuits and the academic Sinology inaugurated by Abel-Rémusat been better encapsulated than in the following assessment by Édouard Chavannes: "One keeps marveling at the enormous amount of work then accomplished by a few French men of religion; confronted with a civilization made intimidating by its antiquity, its variety, and its expanse, these pioneers were able to open up the thoroughfares which allowed their successors to cast a general look at this immense domain and direct their investigations." See Chavannes, *La sinologie* (Paris: Larousse, 1915), 5.

and on which he composed several essays, reviews, and book-length monographs.²⁶ His last work, published posthumously in 1836, was a translation with comments of Faxian's 法顯 *Foguo ji* 佛國記—according to Demiéville his “most considerable and least outdated work,” and a *tour de force* given the lack of resources and general-ignorance in the West about Buddhism at the time. Demiéville also remarks that Abel-Rémusat's preoccupation with China's relations with its neighbors as documented in Chinese sources, of which his *Foguo ji* work is not the only example, was to remain a characteristic of French Sinology during the nineteenth century, and in fact beyond.²⁷

What also deserves to be emphasized in Abel-Rémusat's oeuvre is that it encompasses much more than Chinese studies, his principal domain of expertise. A number of his reviews or remarks deal with cultures or languages of which he admits he has only a superficial or partial knowledge—Persia, Egypt, India—yet he always has something interesting to say and is prompt to debunk examples of sloppiness or dilettantism. As already noted, Abel-Rémusat had a global apprehension of Oriental cultures, one might say an Asian vision; and he deplored on more than one occasion that professional scholars not only lacked any such vision but were content with devoting their energies to trifles and oddities, leaving general discussions of Asian cultures to ignorant or interested individuals. The resulting image of Asia among the general public—of a vast, indistinguishable, and motionless aggregate of backward and tradition-ridden populations enslaved by despotic regimes—was exactly what Abel-Rémusat militated against when he advocated a discriminating, history-conscious, and above all competent approach to Asian countries and civilizations. But he went further. In a striking essay, first published anonymously in 1828, he scathingly denounced the destructive effects of what was not yet called Western imperialism—be it military, commercial, or religious—on the politics and cultures of Asia, and went on to assess each of them in terms of the greater or lesser harm they had suffered at the hands of the Europeans: by this gauge, the Japanese turned out to be the wisest of all for having barred their doors to foreigners after pondering what advantages or disadvantages they would likely bring; while China, because of its incomparably long historical experience and its mass and power, did not seem to risk the political dismembering and cultural annihilation that places like India or Indonesia had suffered.²⁸ This sort of consideration would not reappear in the European discourse on Asia until much later.

²⁶Regarding Daoism, *Le livre des récompenses et des peines* (a partial translation of the *Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇, with lengthy notes and comments) appeared as early as 1816; in its introduction Abel-Rémusat states his intention to prepare translations of the main “philosophical and religious works” of the two traditions, starting with the *Daodejing*. He was not granted the time to fulfill this program, unfortunately.

²⁷Demiéville, “Aperçu historique,” 79. The translation of Faxian's work, which had been completed and prepared for publication by Klaproth and Clerc de Landresse (1800–1868), a former student of Abel-Rémusat, after the latter's death, is titled *Foe Koue Ki ou Relation des royaumes bouddhiques de Fa hian*. One of Abel-Rémusat's important works on China's neighboring regions is his *Histoire de la ville de Khotan* (1820), which is mostly based on the relevant materials in dynastic histories.

²⁸The text appears in full in *Mélanges posthumes*, 221–52, as “Discours sur le génie et les mœurs des peuples orientaux.” It has led a recent author to see in Abel-Rémusat a forerunner of Edward Saïd: Markus Messling, “Philologie et racisme: à propos de l'historicité dans les sciences des langues et des textes,” *Annales HSC*, 2012.1, 173–74.

Stanislas Julien and His Students

1832, the year of a major cholera epidemic in France, was cruel to Orientalists. Within a few months, the Collège Royal and Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres had to mourn three illustrious colleagues: Jean-François Champollion, the founding father of modern Egyptology, Abel-Rémusat, and less than three months later Antoine-Léonard Chézy, the Sanskrit scholar whose chair had been created at the same time as the chair of Chinese and whom Abel-Rémusat often thanked for his help in his publications. By this time a number of students of various nationalities had attended Abel-Rémusat's intensive courses since they opened in 1815. Some ended up specializing in other disciplines or pursuing other careers, but among those who became Sinologists in their own right, one clearly dominated the lot, and he was offered the Collège Royal chair immediately after Abel-Rémusat's death: this was Stanislas Julien (1797–1873).

The role of the Collège Royal (later Collège de France) in the construction of French Sinology deserves a short comment at this point. Originating in 1530 (when the first two “lecteurs royaux” were appointed), the Collège always maintained direct ties with the central government and remained apart from regular academic institutions: its initial vocation was to publicly teach matters that were overlooked by the University of Paris, and Oriental languages entered its purview from the very beginning. As we shall continue to see, for more than a century and a half after its opening in 1815 the Collège de France chair of Chinese studies remained central to the development of French Sinology and inseparable from its international prestige. This was obviously due to the quality of its incumbents—most of them truly exceptional scholars—but it also resulted from the absence (or near-absence) of other institutions or careers concerned with the field. This extreme centralization did not exist in Great Britain—to give one example—where the first appointees to the chairs of Chinese studies opened much later in major universities were old China hands coming from the missionary and diplomatic worlds and could avail themselves of a tradition of field training developed in the Straits, in Canton, or later in Shanghai and other Treaty Ports.²⁹ In contrast, the founders of French academic Sinology were armchair professors shaped by an environment of scholarly Orientalism mostly disconnected from the diplomats and interpreters who worked in the East. Neither Abel-Rémusat nor Stanislas Julien ever set foot in China, and even if the period had been more favorable to doing research there, I am not sure that either would have been interested in going. Abel-Rémusat considered that a theoretical training acquired by attending lectures at the Collège Royal and examining the materials at the Bibliothèque Royale was a prerequisite to travelling with any chance of fruitfully “advancing science.” Julien, who contrary to his teacher could technically have contemplated a visit to China, especially after the 1860 treaties, does not seem to have felt the necessity: speaking the language was not considered a need in the academic context in which he operated,³⁰ and he was content with regarding himself—and being regarded by many—as the supreme authority on things Chinese in Europe.

²⁹Thus James Legge, who inaugurated the first Chinese chair at Oxford in 1876, and Thomas Wade, who did the same in Cambridge in 1888, and was succeeded by Herbert A. Giles, also a former diplomatic agent in China, in 1897.

³⁰On the rare occasions when Julien met actual Chinese in Paris he conversed with them in writing. See in particular the well-known testimony of Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), Legge's assistant for the translation of the Chinese Classics, who visited Julien in 1868 on his way to England, in his *Manyou suilu* 漫遊隨錄, *juan 2*.

That he rapidly became an authority is beyond doubt. Julien appears to have been extraordinarily gifted at languages—he mastered many, Oriental or otherwise, ancient and modern, besides Chinese. Already during the first years of his apprenticeship with Abel-Rémusat, he turned out a complete Latin translation of the *Mengzi*, much praised by his teacher, using two Manchu versions and a variety of commentaries as aids. Translating, to which he applied very high standards of grammatical rigor and semantic exactness, remained central to Julien's activity, and in fact it is mostly on his translations that his reputation has endured. He has left successful renderings of large number of works belonging to a variety of genres, many already tackled by Abel-Rémusat, such as theater plays (including the *Xixiang ji* 西廂記, which appeared after his death), novels of the *caizi jiaren* 才子佳人 (“scholar and beauty”) variety, short stories, and other pieces in the vernacular language, supposed to give direct access to the psychology and way of life of ordinary Chinese, and in addition more likely to please a large public than austere works of philosophy or history. He also published studies and translations on China's relations with neighboring peoples, as we saw a favorite topic of nineteenth-century French Sinology; technical treatises (essentially translations) on porcelain-making, sericulture, and more; and finally, works on Buddhism and Daoism, two fields whose study had been pioneered by Abel-Rémusat but in which Julien was able to advance much farther. In 1842, after many years of efforts he published a translation of the *Daode jing* 道德經 that he insisted definitively debunked the interpretations of some missionaries (imprudently followed by Abel-Rémusat) whereby the Laozi text revealed traces of Biblical terms and doctrines; and he replaced Abel-Rémusat's translation of the *Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇, which he claimed in a rather scornful preface was full of mistakes, with his own, also translating in full the four hundred stories and anecdotes that accompany the successive precepts of the rather short treatise in the edition used by both Abel-Rémusat and himself (Abel-Rémusat had only translated sixteen of them). However, Julien's most enduring contribution is to Buddhist studies. It took him, again, years of efforts and methodological ingenuity to identify the original Sanskrit terms and names concealed behind Chinese transcriptions that did not make sense by themselves, assembling more than a thousand index cards the contents of which he would publish later. This allowed him to put out a set of translations that are still admired and used today—of the biography of Xuanzang 玄奘, the *Da Ci'en si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (1853), and of Xuanzang's own account of Western countries, the *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記, in two volumes (1857–58); he rounded out these accomplishments with several volumes of translations of “contes et apologues indiens,” edifying Buddhist parables extracted from the late-Ming encyclopedia *Yulin* 喻林.

However incomplete it may be, the above should give an essential idea of Julien's impressive oeuvre, obviously a major step forward in the history of French and European Sinology.³¹ Yet, by all accounts Julien was a terrible character.³² Though his international prestige as a scholar was considerable, he was obsessed with showing

³¹His work on the grammar of the Chinese written language should also be mentioned, as well as a number of projects (on the classics and histories, in particular) he never completed but for which he left partial manuscript translations that we know he used in his lectures.

³²Most recently, Jean-Pierre Drège did not hesitate to entitle his extended essay on Julien (to which the present account is much indebted) “Stanislas Julien (1797–1873), savant éminent, était-il un ‘vilain homme?’,” in Will and Zink, *Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 167–221. The phrase “vilain homme” (nasty person) was first applied to Julien by Henri Cordier in an obituary published in 1906.

off, dropping names, and belittling colleagues, and more generally—as illustrated in so many of his prefaces—to remind the public that he was the best, the first to have discovered (or explained, or translated) this or that, or even that he was superior to his revered master, Abel-Rémusat. He also was eager to get control of everything in the field and would not easily countenance anybody he might regard as a potential rival. It is said that most of his classmates under Abel-Rémusat were discouraged by his arrogance and smugness to continue Chinese studies; and with few exceptions those who did were continuously subjected to his jealousy and attacks.³³

In the same way, Julien's obsession with eliminating whoever might threaten his domination of the field may explain why his many decades of teaching produced hardly any high-caliber scholars. The most interesting among his students probably was Édouard Biot (1803–1850), a former railway engineer whose comparatively late Sinological career was cut short by his untimely death. Biot's name is still known in the profession, of course, because of his translation of the *Zhouli* (*Le Tcheou-li ou Rites des Tcheou*, 1851), to this day the only one of this important classic into a European language; but before this accomplishment he had published or started several other studies, on ancient Chinese mathematics and astronomy, on historical geography, on the history of land, population, money, and other economic matters, and more—in other words, topics that would be taken up by French (and other) Sinologists only much later.³⁴

Another student was Antoine Bazin (1799–1862, also known as Bazin aîné), who produced a variety of translations (of Yuan plays, in particular) and studies largely forgotten today—some in collaboration with Guillaume Pauthier (1801–1873), an indifferent though prolific scholar and a lifelong target of Stanislas Julien who, like him, had studied with Abel-Rémusat. What historically distinguishes Bazin, however, is that he became the first professor of Chinese—more specifically, modern Chinese—in the *École spéciale des Langues Orientales*, an institution that would play (and still plays, under its present name *Institut national des Langues et Civilisations Orientales*, or INALCO) an important role in the development of Chinese studies in France. Though the *École* had been created in 1795 with the explicit aim of teaching languages useful to French commercial and political interests, only in 1841 was it admitted by the French government that Chinese might indeed be such a language. Bazin was recruited on Julien's recommendation, first as an unpaid adjunct, then in 1843 on a regular chair. The timing of course was not indifferent: Britain had just signed the Treaty of Nanjing, in 1843 France decided to send an embassy to obtain the same diplomatic and commercial advantages as the British (which it did, signing the Treaty of Whampoa on October 24, 1844), and it suddenly appeared that competent linguists and interpreters were urgently needed.³⁵ To train such specialists was the vocation of the *École des Langues Orientales*; but Bazin and the other French Sinologists at the time, none of whom had travelled to, let alone stayed in, China, were unable to handle Chinese as

³³Drège, "Stanislas Julien," 201–19, recounts in great detail these disputes, some of which were lifelong affairs.

³⁴See Karine Chemla, "L'histoire des sciences dans la sinologie des débuts du XIX^e siècle: les Biot père et fils," in Will and Zink, *Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 411–37. Jean-Baptiste Biot (1774–1862), the father, was a Collège de France professor of mathematics and had studied the history of Chinese astronomy. He edited his son's translation of the *Zhouli* and ensured its posthumous publication in 1851.

³⁵The only one available in France at the time was Joseph Callery (1810–1862), a former missionary with a somewhat sulfurous reputation and a brilliant linguist, without whose assistance Théodore de Lagrené (1800–1862), the French ambassador in 1844, would have been totally lost in his negotiations.

an everyday means of communication. As a result, “modern Chinese” (or “chinois vulgaire”) as taught at the École was the vernacular of fiction and drama, without any spoken practice—in other words, the same as what Abel-Rémusat and Julien had already been teaching at the Collège de France. This situation would continue after Bazin’s death, when Julien, anxious not to leave the place to someone he did not control, imposed himself as an interim, then permanent professor. Only after 1871 was the post given to “interprètes-professeurs,” all of them former employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a substantial living experience of China and mastery of its language, and it was with them that the leading Sinologists I will discuss later—Édouard Chavannes and his students—learned Chinese.³⁶

The last Julien student of some note, who succeeded him at the Collège de France in 1873, though not without some challenging, was the Baron, later Marquis, Léon d’Hervey de Saint-Denys (1822–1892). A middling aristocrat who contrary to his predecessors was independently wealthy, D’Hervey de Saint-Denys became interested in Chinese matters and attended Bazin’s and Julien’s lectures in 1844, but it was only in 1858 that he decided to become a professional Sinologist. How competent exactly he was in the Chinese language is difficult to assess, but he was certainly not ignorant of it, as was claimed by some of his enemies; besides, we know that for his translations and teaching he was much helped by a Chinese assistant named Li Xiaobai 李小白. D’Hervey also saw himself as an ethnographer, and it is to this facet that his *magnum opus*, an *Ethnographie des peuples étrangers à la Chine* in two volumes (1876 and 1883), belongs. This work—now completely outdated—is representative of the interest of nineteenth-century French Sinologists in the neighbors of the Chinese empire that I already noted; and like others of the same genre (by Abel-Rémusat, Julien, Biot, and d’Hervey himself) it is a translation with commentary of chapters extracted from Ma Duanlin’s 馬端臨 *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考, the famous early-fourteenth-century encyclopedia celebrated by Abel-Rémusat as a compendium of everything of interest in China. However, the only work by d’Hervey de Saint-Denys that is still considered with interest today is an anthology of Tang poetry (*Poésies de l’époque des Thang*, 1862) with a substantial introduction on the history of Chinese poetry from the *Shijing* to the Tang period and on the rules of Chinese prosody.³⁷

³⁶On all of this see Paul Demiéville, “Le chinois à l’École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes,” in *Cent-cinquantième de l’École des Langues Orientales* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1948), 129–61. (The first part of this essay offers the best description of the Chinese language I have ever seen.) Also see the contributions to *Un siècle d’enseignement du chinois à l’École des Langues Orientales 1840–1945*, edited by Marie-Claire Bergère and Angel Pino (Paris: L’Asiathèque, 1995). The École was profoundly reformed in 1869 with a view to restoring its original vocation as an institution teaching practical languages, whenever possible with the help of native coaches (“répétiteurs indigènes”). In 1874 it was allowed to move from its cramped quarters inside the Bibliothèque Nationale to a private mansion rue de Lille (still used for its research programs). The adjective “nationale” replaced “spéciale” and “vivantes” was added to “langues” in 1914, hence the acronym ENLOV, used until the École became INALCO in 1971.

³⁷In his “Aperçu historique,” 81–82, Demiéville—himself a profound connoisseur of Chinese poetry—finds d’Hervey’s translations of Tang poetry and of Qu Yuan’s 屈原 *Lisao* 離騷 (published in 1870) not particularly elegant or philologically exacting, but remarks that he was the first to introduce the French public to this genre—and, it seems, with some success. On the life and career of d’Hervey de Saint-Denys, also see Angel Pino’s detailed study in Bergère and Pino, *Un siècle d’enseignement du chinois*, 95–129, whose presence in that volume is justified by the fact that d’Hervey stood in for Julien at the École during the year 1869–1870. Pino devotes some space to the book for which d’Hervey’s name is still renowned today, at least in some circles—a treatise on dreams published anonymously in 1867 and titled *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger*, known to Freud and extolled by the Surrealists.

D'Hervey de Saint-Denys's first publication in Chinese studies had been a book on Chinese agriculture informed by his examination of copies of the *Bencao* 本草, the *Nongzheng quanshu* 農政全書 (1639), and the *Shoushi tongkao* 授時通考 (1737) held at the Bibliothèque Nationale (he offers a quite detailed description of the last) and making generous use of secondary sources such as essays by Jesuits or the writings of Robert Fortune (1812–1880). The explicit aim of this rather well-crafted opus was to locate plants and techniques that could be usefully transferred to France or Algeria—by then a French colony: the model to follow was England's importation of certain plants like cotton and tea from China into its Indian possessions. Such concern with Chinese techniques and products of economic interest was not new: it was prominent in the questionnaires compiled by Bertin and Turgot in the eighteenth century, and it also informs the translations and essays on technical matters that Julien, occasionally spurred by industrialists or statesmen, produced, beginning with his book on Chinese sericulture published in 1837 and soon translated in several languages. From the July Monarchy (1830–48) onward this kind of investigation took on a new signification as it came to be more or less consciously intertwined with French efforts at colonial expansion. This is clear from d'Hervey de Saint-Denys's book on Chinese agriculture, as just mentioned. In a somewhat different style, the Lagrené embassy that visited coastal China in 1844–46 was accompanied by a team of four “délégués du commerce et des manufactures” entrusted with exploring the opportunities offered by the Chinese market for French products and researching Chinese plants and techniques that might contribute to French economic development.³⁸

Yet it would be a misinterpretation to claim that nineteenth-century Sinologists (and Orientalists more generally) contributed, willingly or not, to the colonial expansionism that began in earnest in 1830 with the conquest of Algiers and included, among others, the involvement of France in Indochina and the eventual transformation of that region into a full-fledged colony. Rather, this expansionism had become part of the world in which they lived, and if later it sometimes had an impact on their careers, as we shall see, they did not necessarily feel comfortable with it. I mentioned Abel-Rémusat's vehement denunciation of the devastating consequences of Europe's expansion in Asia. While Julien, who completely lacked the vision and intellectual generosity of his teacher, never articulated this kind of view, as far as I can tell, it is interesting to note that both Pauthier and d'Hervey de Saint-Denys quoted approvingly and at some length from Abel-Rémusat's essays debunking European cultural prejudice and criticizing the arrogance and feeling of superiority of the Western nations—and did so in books published in 1859, while Britain and France had just failed to force the ratification of the 1858 Tientsin treaties and were preparing for an all-out attack.³⁹ Both

³⁸See *Missions au pays de la soie: l'ambassade Lagrené (1843–1846) entre science, commerce et diplomatie*, edited by Mau Chuan-hui and Pierre-Étienne Will (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 2017).

³⁹See Leon d'Hervey de Saint-Denys, *La Chine devant l'Europe* (Paris: Amyot, 1859), a general description of China followed by an account of the Opium wars and of the most recent incidents, for which British aggressiveness and insensitivity are held essentially responsible; and Guillaume Pauthier, *Histoire des relations politiques de la Chine avec les puissances occidentales depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu'à nos jours, suivie du Cérémonial observé à la cour de Pé-king pour la réception des ambassadeurs, traduit pour la première fois dans une langue européenne* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1859), which is centered on the question of etiquette and rituals. Both books are verbose and somewhat rambling, and neither has much scholarly merit, but they display a sincere concern with defending China against prejudice and countering European propaganda.

authors were inimical to the warlike and arrogant attitude toward the “barbarian” Qing empire then in vogue, and d’Hervey at least was harshly criticized for that. What happened then need not be recalled. But as far as Sinology is concerned, in time the consequences of the 1860 treaties obtained after Britain and France had militarily occupied Beijing were considerable: diplomatic representations were formally established, foreign concessions gradually multiplied, travelling became easier and easier, visiting diplomats and scholars felt protected as citizens of the Powers and had easy access to the local authorities, and so forth: China was no longer prohibited terrain.

Édouard Chavannes and the Advent of Modern Sinology

In a short essay on China studies in France published in 1915,⁴⁰ Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918) noted that “after Stanislas Julien’s death there was a slowdown in the output of French Sinology”⁴¹ and that “the British then took the lead in these studies,” but that “contemporary times have been marked by a very brilliant rebirth of French Sinology.” As actors in this revival he cites the Jesuit scholars belonging to the missions reestablished in South Zhili and Jiangnan, principally Séraphin Couvreur (1835–1919), the author of the first truly modern dictionary of classical Chinese (1890, and many reeditions) and of learned translations of the Classics, and the contributors to the *Variétés sinologiques* series published in Shanghai; then, Henri Cordier (1849–1925), whose knowledge of Chinese was extremely limited but who published countless solidly documented studies on the history of the relations of China with the West, in particular France, as well as that indispensable research tool, the *Bibliotheca sinica*, and who was one of the founders of *T’oung Pao*;⁴² and himself, Chavannes.

Chavannes’s education, professional career, and approach to Sinology are in profound contrast with those of his predecessors. Pelliot called him “le premier sinologue complet.” A typical product of the Third Republic, he acquired what was at the time the best training in philosophy and history as a student at the École Normale Supérieure, and at the same time started Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales. Soon he was able to take advantage of the new possibilities for doing research in China brought by the 1860 and later treaties: in 1889, aged 24, he was recommended for a sinecure at the French Legation in Beijing, where he spent close to four years perfecting his knowledge of the language, becoming familiar with Chinese daily life, collecting materials, and being tutored by a Chinese scholar with whose help he almost immediately started his famous translation of the *Shiji* (the translation of chapter 28 on the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices was published only one year after his arrival)—in a word, learning his trade directly in the field. His accomplishments during this period, which included a volume on Han sculpture published in 1893, with sixty-six plates of rubbings he had collected in Shandong, were enough to ensure his election *in absentia* to the prestigious chair of

⁴⁰Édouard Chavannes, *La sinologie*, 7–8. (This fifteen-page essay is extracted from *La science française*, Paris: Larousse, 1915, published for the San Francisco Panama-Pacific International Exposition that took place the same year.)

⁴¹He mentions d’Hervey de Saint-Denys and two lesser figures: Gabriel Devéria (1844–1899), a former interpreter who taught at the École des Langues Orientales, and Camille Imbault-Huart (1857–1897), who spent twenty years in China as an interpreter and consul and is remembered for his publications on Taiwan and on Chinese poetry.

⁴²Cordier also taught the history and geography of East Asia at the École des Langues Orientales for more than forty years. Demiéville, who attended his courses, describes him as a “living card index” (un fichier vivant) in “Aperçu historique,” 99.

“Langues et littératures chinoises et tartares-mandchoues” at the Collège de France,⁴³ where he succeeded the lackluster d’Hervy de Saint-Denys at the very early age of 28. During his Collège de France tenure, which was curtailed by his untimely death in January 1918, Chavannes made a second trip to China (1907–08), principally devoted to a carefully prepared archeological investigation of North China that brought him to Shandong (where he collected the materials for his celebrated monograph on Taishan, published in 1910), Henan, Shaanxi, and Shanxi.⁴⁴ The results were published as *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale* between 1909 and 1915 in several volumes, including hundreds of plates.⁴⁵

Yet archeology and epigraphy, which he regarded as indispensable complements to historical texts, were only one among the many interests pursued by the extraordinarily hard-working Chavannes. I mentioned his project of translating the *Shiji*. This was a path-breaking enterprise. As he makes clear in his long introduction, Chavannes’s aim was to go beyond the Chinese commentarial tradition, submit the *Shiji* text and its sources to the critical methods developed by classical scholars in Europe, examine its internal logic and structure, in short, take it as an object of historical inquiry by itself (“comme un fait”). Regrettably, his other concerns and responsibilities prevented him from pursuing the publication of the *Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts’ien* beyond volume 5, reaching only chapter 47 (the biography of Confucius) of the 130-chapter work.⁴⁶

It is said that Chavannes put his *Shiji* work on hold back in Paris in 1893 to respond to the solicitation of his friend (and soon Collège de France colleague), the great Indianist Sylvain Lévi (1863–1935), who asked him to translate Chinese materials on India and Buddhism. (Lévi himself had acquired a serious knowledge of Chinese, but not enough to be able to manage such a task by himself.) The studies of Yijing 義淨 (635–713) and other Chinese pilgrims which Chavannes started at that time inaugurated a long series of works on Buddhism, some of them in collaboration with Sylvain Lévi, of which the best-known remains the monumental *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka chinois* in three volumes (1910–11, plus a posthumous

⁴³As we saw, despite the mention of “tartares-mandchoues” Manchu had ceased being taught or used after Stanislas Julien.

⁴⁴Chavannes made the 1907 five-month trip in North China in the company of his former student and ardent admirer Vassilii Alekseev (1880–1951), whose journal was published in Moscow in 1958; see Serge Elisseeff’s (1889–1975) lively review in *T’oung Pao* 50.5 (1963), 575–92. Alekseev, who according to Elisseeff was regarded by his colleagues as “the brightest representative of the French Sinological school in Russia,” was interested above all in the productions of Chinese folk culture, whereas Chavannes would rather concentrate on the monuments of antiquity.

⁴⁵Besides the traditional method of rubbing, Chavannes was among the first to use photography as a tool of archeological survey in China. When embarking on his famed mission to Central Asia in 1905, Pelliot had hired a professional photographer, Charles Nouette. (Chavannes’s photographer was Chinese.) Chavannes’s research on ancient sculpture was pursued by one of his students, the writer and navy doctor Victor Segalen (1878–1919), who in 1914 was commissioned to explore Shaanxi and Sichuan together with two colleagues, studying and photographing monuments of Han and Tang sculpture; several publications based on their investigations appeared in the 1920s and 1930s.

⁴⁶The five volumes, with extensive commentary and several appendixes, appeared between 1895 and 1905; they were republished in 1967–69 with an extra volume 6 covering chapters 48–52, in part based on Chavannes’s drafts. According to Demiéville, “Aperçu historique,” 95, the Musée Guimet in Paris holds an unannotated rough draft of the complete *Shiji* translation dating to Chavannes’s first stay in China. Interestingly, Chavannes’s *Mémoires historiques* appears to have been an important source for Max Weber’s *Taoism and Buddhism*.

volume, 1934). Other notable works by Chavannes deal with the manuscripts, wooden slips, and other materials from a Han garrison north of Dunhuang brought back to London by Aurel Stein, of which he was able to publish a partial edition,⁴⁷ with the Western Turks and their relations with West Eurasia as seen in Chinese sources (in *Documents sur les T'ou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux*, published in 1903 in St. Petersburg); with the various religions of China; and with many other subjects. A quantity of articles on every aspect of Chinese history and culture since antiquity could be cited here.

Concluding his introduction to *Les Mémoires historiques*, Chavannes insisted that to analyze historical facts the historian needs to consider a multiplicity of perspectives—political, economic, social, and others—an ambition to which, in his view, the *Shiji* and Chinese historical works in general lent themselves particularly well due to their very artlessness in compiling raw data, as opposed to the elegant reconstructions of the historians of classical antiquity. His oeuvre well reflects this plurality of concerns in pursuit of historical realities that in his view were bound to remain forever elusive.

Chavannes's research was essentially devoted to historical China; but he maintained a constant interest in current affairs, to which he devoted a number of reports and essays, in particular during his years in China. More importantly, when living and travelling in China he was eager to absorb contemporary realities—intellectual life, social relations, popular customs, religion, ethics, etc.—on which he published several lesser-known essays that still deserve reading. In a recent assessment of Chavannes, the eminent historian of medieval China and Central Asia Zhang Guanda 張廣達 claimed that, even though Chavannes did not make sociological investigations properly speaking, he did open up the way to the sociological study of China; and he recalled that in his inaugural Collège de France lecture in 1893 Chavannes associated his work and his approach to the various forms of Chinese civilization with the emergence of “a new science: sociology.”⁴⁸

Chavannes's contribution was not just producing the monumental body of research that earned him the stature of first European Sinologist, or opening up his discipline to the social sciences; it was also training and inspiring a stellar group of scholars who shared their veneration and gratitude for their teacher and for a few decades dominated Western Sinology. This went through his Collège de France lectures, of course, but he was also known to go out of his way and offer extra training in his home to his most promising students. Another venue where he dispensed his knowledge in the form of practical and intimate seminars was the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE). Created in 1868, this was an institution that offered open research seminars conducted by scholars specializing in matters little or not taught at the university, who would initiate their audience into the more technical aspects of their field, such as reading

⁴⁷See Édouard Chavannes, *Les documents chinois découverts par Aurel Stein dans les sables du Turkestan oriental* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913). Aurel Stein had shipped all his materials in Chinese to Chavannes so that he could examine and catalog them. The same scenario was repeated after Stein's 1913–1915 expedition: this time Henri Maspero was the recipient (in 1920) of nearly a thousand documents on wood and paper. His manuscript was ready by 1936, but due to funding difficulties it was only published in 1953 by the British Museum as *Les documents chinois de la troisième expédition de Sir Aurel Stein en Asie Centrale*. For details see Michel Soymié, “Les documents d'Asie centrale dans l'œuvre de Maspero,” in *Hommage à Henri Maspero 1883–1945* (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 61–67.

⁴⁸See Zhang Guangda, “À propos d'Édouard Chavannes: le premier sinologue complet,” in Will and Zink, *Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 223–29.

sources. Chavannes was the first to teach Sinology at EPHE (to 1912), and from then on most Sinologists of note would hold “directions d’études” (professorships) there, either full-time or concurrently with a university or Collège de France position.⁴⁹

Paul Pelliot

This was not the case with Paul Pelliot (1878–1945), however. Pelliot was without a doubt the most prestigious of Chavannes’s heirs—in France, in Europe and America, and also in China and Japan. The rapidity with which he set himself up as a master of Chinese and Central Asian studies, his phenomenal erudition and memory, the critical acumen he displayed in countless essays and reviews, the breadth of his interests and his linguistic versatility, and also his authority and influence, his indefatigable travelling, his taste for adventure, even the ease with which he moved among public figures in French society—all of this has been described too often to necessitate much development.⁵⁰

In 1900, soon after graduating from the École des Langues Orientales, Pelliot was appointed to be a “pensionnaire” (and soon a ranking “professor of Chinese”) in an institution that had just been created and would have a profound influence on the future of French Sinology: the École française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO), seated first in Saigon and from 1902 in Hanoi. The place was a typical product of the French colonial enterprise, which was eager to inventory and ensure the preservation of its new possessions’ cultural assets (it was originally called a “mission archéologique”) and to get an historical and ethnographic knowledge of their peoples. But it also turned out to be a training ground for professional scholars involved in the study of neighboring cultures, first of all China: thus, the first serious investigations into Chinese bibliography, by Pelliot and others, appeared in the *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* (BEFEO) alongside a quantity of important, innovative articles and reviews.⁵¹

After a few months in Saigon Pelliot was sent to China with the task of perfecting his Chinese and acquiring materials for the library. He happened to be staying in the Legation Quarter in Beijing when it was put under siege by the Boxers, and he acquired much esteem (as well as the Légion d’honneur prestigious decoration) for his gallant

⁴⁹As of 1886, EPHE was comprised of five “Sections,” three for mathematics, physics, and natural science and two for humanities, namely “Sciences historiques et philologiques” (Fourth Section) and “Sciences religieuses” (Fifth Section). As we shall see below, in 1947 a sixth section of “Sciences économiques et sociales” was added. (The sections for mathematics and physics were closed in 1986.)

⁵⁰See, among many others, the essays in *Paul Pelliot: de l’histoire à la légende*, edited by Jean-Pierre Drège and Michel Zink (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres, 2013). The best, and at the same time quite entertaining, testimony on Pelliot the man, with his imposing personality and little foibles, is due to Denis Sinor (1916–2011), who was a favorite student between 1939 and 1945 and seems to have enjoyed the confidence of this standoffish and rather overbearing “maître.” See “Remembering Paul Pelliot, 1878–1945,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119.3 (1999), 467–72.

⁵¹One important aspect of the training that most EFEO “pensionnaires” greatly benefited from was working with the Chinese and Vietnamese literati they were able to hire as assistants despite their rather low pay—a fruitful (even though criticized by some as typically “colonial”) method encountered in many other contexts as well. The BEFEO has appeared regularly from 1901 to the present, with an interruption during the Pacific and First Indochina Wars in the 1940s and early 1950s. For a review of Sinological work during the first twenty years of EFEO, including regular reports on the contemporary situation in China, see the (unsigned) contribution by Paul Demiéville in BEFEO 21 (1921), 366–87.

participation in the fighting. More academically, his several stays in China during his EFEO years were the occasion of acquiring a large number of Chinese books for the library in Hanoi: throughout his life Pelliot would remain both a formidable bibliographer and an institutional and private buyer of Chinese books with a nose for valuable deals and, more importantly, a vision of what was needed in institutions like the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises (on which more below) to promote research on China. His numerous contributions to the *BEFEO* during the same years also inaugurated the immense corpus of exacting, merciless, and astoundingly erudite book reviews and essays he would continue to publish in such journals as the *Journal Asiatique* and, especially, *T'oung Pao*, of which he was the editor (in collaboration or alone) from 1920 to his death in 1945.⁵² Taking the work of other authors as a springboard for his own research was to remain a favorite *modus operandi*. As his former student Denis Sinor wrote many years later: “In a not very respectful way I would describe his approach as leech-scholarship. He would read a work, attach himself to it, and then produce a masterpiece which usually did little to improve on the essential merit of the original but served as vehicle to carry the reader into uncharted territories.”⁵³

Pelliot travelled back to Paris in 1904, in principle to attend a congress, but as it turned out, in August 1905 he was appointed to lead a scientific expedition in Central Asia whose aim was to ensure France's presence in a field already much visited by Russian, Swedish, German, and British scholars/explorers. The expedition was sponsored and funded by various academic institutions and placed under the authority of the Comité de l'Asie française—an outfit well attuned to this period of forceful colonial expansion, created in 1901 with the explicit aim of combatting the British monopoly on information and thinking about Asia. The Pelliot mission, which left Paris on June 15, 1906, started its work in earnest around Kashgar in September of the same year, then spent several months each time in the various locations it explored, to eventually reach Beijing on October 4, 1908, and above all its sensational findings in Dunhuang, made the young Sinologist go down in legend.⁵⁴ The manuscripts in Chinese, Tibetan, and other languages he was able through his Sinological expertise to assess and select with almost incredible speed during the three weeks he spent in what would later be Mogao cave no. 17, and then to purchase, were shipped to France together with the many artefacts, works of art, photographs, rubbings, etc. collected during the expedition. During their Dunhuang stay Pelliot and his colleagues were also able to draw detailed plans of the entire set of caves and to make copies or photographs of the mural inscriptions and paintings.⁵⁵

⁵²Demiéville (“Aperçu historique,” 102) says that Pelliot made *T'oung Pao* “a kind of Sinological court” (Une sorte de tribunal de la sinologie).

⁵³Sinor, “Remembering Paul Pelliot,” 470.

⁵⁴From Beijing Pelliot went to Shanghai and Wuxi, then sailed to Hanoi, returning to Beijing in May 1909, and to Paris (where his sponsors were impatiently waiting for him to celebrate) via Russia in October of the same year. Much has been written on Pelliot's mission in Central Asia. For two recent and extremely detailed accounts, using Pelliot's diary (published in 2008 as *Carnets de route 1906–1908*) and his private papers held at Musée Guimet, see Éric Trombert, “La mission archéologique de Paul Pelliot en Asie Centrale (1906–1908),” in Drège and Zink, *Paul Pelliot*, 45–82 (including a day-by-day chronology of the expedition), and Jean-Pierre Drège, “La mission de Paul Pelliot au Turkestan chinois et en Chine (1906–1909): les clefs d'un succès,” in Will and Zink, *Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 263–331.

⁵⁵Pelliot's notes were of such quality and precision that their publication between 1981 and 1992 was a big event among Dunhuang specialists, all the more so since many of the inscriptions he had copied had become damaged in between.

Before returning to Paris in October of 1909, Pelliot introduced a small selection of especially interesting pieces to a group of distinguished Chinese scholars in Beijing. They were dazzled by his presentation, which inaugurated a period of fruitful collaboration between French and Chinese (and soon Japanese) scholars; but they were also dismayed when they realized how easy it was to take away—many would say “plunder”—national treasures that their country was unable to protect and retain.⁵⁶ Indeed, periodically and until recently campaigns have been launched in China to denounce the expatriation of the Dunhuang manuscripts as a typical example of imperialist plundering, even though it is generally acknowledged that the documents brought back to London (by Aurel Stein, who had visited the Dunhuang caves less than a year before Pelliot) and to Paris at least were in a safe place and escaped probable destruction or dispersion.⁵⁷

Interestingly, after they were securely stored in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Pelliot made only spotty use of the Dunhuang manuscripts. In particular, the vast trove of Chinese materials (as well as the “banners” kept at Musée Guimet) would have to wait until after World War II to be consistently explored, catalogued, and exploited by a host of French, Chinese, and Japanese scholars.⁵⁸

Following in his predecessors’ tracks, from early on in his career Pelliot devoted much of his research to China’s western regions and neighbors, and to China’s foreign religions as well (such as Buddhism, Mazdeism, Manicheism, and Christianity), taking advantage of his access to a number of Oriental languages and scripts and, when necessary, soliciting the help of colleagues specialized in other areas and languages. He actually extended his investigations to China’s relations with medieval and modern Europe, in which he maintained an active interest to the end of his life.⁵⁹ As a matter of fact, the chair created for him at the Collège de France in 1911—the appointment of the 33-year old hero of Central Asia was not without controversy—was titled “Langues, histoire et archéologie de l’Asie Centrale” and existed in parallel with the chair of Chinese studies then occupied by his teacher Chavannes.

⁵⁶For details on Pelliot’s dealings with Chinese officials and scholars, who were generally captivated by his fluency in Chinese and vast erudition, see Rong Xinjiang and Wang Nan, “Paul Pelliot en Chine (1906–1909),” in Drège and Zink, *Paul Pelliot*, 83–119. After the expedition Pelliot continued to exchange with his Chinese colleagues and sent them a large number of photographs of the documents held in Paris, as he had promised to do, in several installments. Among the scholars of note with whom he exchanged correspondence for many years are Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940), Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), and Dong Kang 董康 (1867–1947). He also had particular respect for Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880–1971). In general, his familiarity with the research published in China was exceptional among Western Sinologists and much valued by his Chinese colleagues.

⁵⁷At Pelliot’s and Luo Zhenyu’s urging, the imperial government was alerted and decided to bring back to Beijing what remained in Dunhuang. (Only part of it was retrieved, however, and there was a lot of *actual* plundering.)

⁵⁸There was some important prewar research, however. For example, many of the sources used in Demiéville’s *Concile de Lhasa* (on which see below; though the book was published in 1952, the research dates from the 1930s) are Dunhuang documents. Demiéville was helped in his research by the librarian and scholar Wang Zhongmin 王重民 (1903–1975), who spent several years in Paris preparing a preliminary catalogue of the Pelliot collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale before moving to the Library of Congress and ultimately becoming head of the Library Science Department at Peking University.

⁵⁹His last series of Collège de France lectures was devoted to the legendary figure of Prester John. On Pelliot’s work in such “margins of Sinology,” see Michel Tardieu, “Les chrétiens d’Orient dans l’œuvre de Paul Pelliot,” in Drège and Zink, *Paul Pelliot*, 471–88.

Yet Pelliot remained a giant of “pure” Sinology throughout, regarded by his colleagues as the ultimate authority in matters of bibliography and intervening with authority on every conceivable sort of topic—an exhaustive list of the subjects that captured his attention seems almost impossible to establish.⁶⁰ In line with Denis Sinor’s remark quoted above, it has often been regretted, including by his most fervent admirers, that Pelliot dispensed his prodigious knowledge essentially in the form of critical reviews or of “notes”—some of them actually reaching hundreds of pages—spurred by the publications of other scholars or by some recent discovery. There are exceptions, to be sure, and he entertained several book projects (such as his now famous *Notes on Marco Polo*, which appeared posthumously between 1963 and 1973), but these remained in the condition of unfinished manuscripts which it fell to his successors to painstakingly edit and publish after his death. He himself admitted that he was not interested in working out large syntheses, which he would in any case have considered premature when so much detailed knowledge remained to be acquired; in fact, when Sinor once asked him why he devoted all his energy to “clarify matters of no consequence” (what Pelliot called “petits faits,” which, as he said somewhere, when solidly established could be more valuable than a long dissertation), Pelliot “cheerfully answered” it was because that was what “amused” him.⁶¹

I have mentioned the relations established by Pelliot with Chinese scholars in the wake of the Central Asia expedition. They only developed in the following decades, through correspondence and on the occasion of Chinese scholars’ visits to consult Dunhuang documents in Paris—Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) and Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) are among the most famous—and of Pelliot’s further visits to China. Pelliot’s reputation in China was immense, and to this day he continues to be spoken of by Chinese scholars as a “genius”—perhaps the only Western Sinologist regarded as an equal by them. In September 1928, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940), President of the newly established Academia Sinica, who had early French connections and knew Pelliot personally, invited Pelliot to be a corresponding member (*waiguo tongxinyuan* 外國通信員) of the Institute of History and Philology (IHP).⁶² Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950), the head of IHP, also wrote Pelliot. It does not seem that the two men had previously met, but it is difficult not to remark how intellectually close they were in certain respects. The style of historical research forcefully advocated by Fu Sinian and pursued by IHP scholars—document-based and positivist, looking for new kinds of sources and new languages, highly specialized, averse to theorizing and moralizing, apolitical—was not unlike Pelliot’s obsession with sources and established facts, concern with frontier studies, and refusal of grand narratives.

⁶⁰Tardieu, “Les chrétiens d’Orient,” 483, speaks of “une bibliographie protéiforme, quasi-insaisissable.” The one attempt to draw up a complete catalog of Pelliot’s publications is Hartmut Walravens, *Paul Pelliot (1878–1945): His Life and Works—A Bibliography* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2001), which lists 866 items.

⁶¹Sinor, “Remembering Pelliot,” 471. In his obituary in *T’oung Pao* 38.1 (1947), 1–15, Pelliot’s co-editor Duyvendak noted that he “wrote like many Chinese scholars, *sui-pi* 隨筆.”

⁶²Pelliot was one of only three European Sinologists to be thus honored by IHP (there was also an honorarium), the other two being Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) and F.W.K. Müller (1863–1930). Pelliot had been a corresponding fellow of Peking University since 1923. When he received the invitation from Academia Sinica he was at Harvard, where he had been invited to help organize the newly established Harvard-Yenching Institute. (Some time later he was invited to become its director, but he declined and suggested Harvard hire Serge Elisseff instead.)

Fu Sinian, incidentally, was one of many scholars in China at the time who deplored that public opinion tended to locate the center of Sinology in Paris or Kyoto, and ardently wished to bring it back to China; and to achieve this they considered it necessary to break away from traditional Chinese scholarship (only the evidential philologists of the Qing escaped their scorn) and learn Western methods by studying abroad and getting help from foreign colleagues—until the time would come when foreign advisers could be dispensed with.⁶³ Apart from the notes on IHP activities and publications he regularly published in *T'oung Pao*, it is unclear what concrete forms Pelliot's collaboration as a fellow of Academia Sinica took. He visited IHP (then housed in Beiping) in the winter of 1932–33—his first visit to China since 1918. In May and June of 1935 he again travelled to Beiping and Shanghai, and went with Fu Sinian to visit the IHP excavations at Anyang. On both tours Pelliot was invited everywhere to give talks and feted in banquets attended by the cream of Chinese scholarship and reported in the press. Although he could be critical of his Chinese colleagues, he was clearly impressed by what he saw. The following year he enthusiastically discussed the Anyang findings in talks at London and Harvard, speaking of a decisive advance in international Sinology.⁶⁴

Henri Maspero

These were the years when a small group of French Sinologists, of whom Pelliot was the most famous, were regarded as the leading lights by Western Orientalists and by many—though by no means all—of their Chinese counterparts. Another prominent member of this group was Henri Maspero (1883–1945), also a devoted Chavannes student but a very different sort of person from the flamboyant Pelliot and someone who, despite a high reputation among his peers, did not enjoy the same public exposure in France or in China.⁶⁵ Described as modest and unassuming, Maspero was the only one in this group with an academic family background—and a glorious one, as his father, Gaston Maspero (1846–1916), was the leading Egyptologist of his time, charged with honors and distinctions, appointed professor at the Collège de France at a young age and a member of several academies. Joining his father in Cairo after he had graduated in history, Maspero briefly considered becoming an Egyptologist—his first published work was an essay on Egypt's finances in the Hellenistic period, which has been said to “already reveal two characteristics of Henri Maspero's disposition as an historian: the attention paid to concrete data and the ability to infer long-range consequences from them.”⁶⁶ Yet back in Paris he followed courses in law and in Chinese (the latter at the École des Langues Orientales and attending Chavannes's lectures and seminars), and after graduating in 1907 in both specialties he seized the opportunity to move to Hanoi and the EFEO. Taking into account his research trips in China, a period of

⁶³See Wang Fansen 王凡森, “Bo Xihe yu Fu Sinian” 伯希和與傅斯年, in his *Fu Sinian: Zhongguo jindai lishi yu zhengzhi zhongde geti shengming* 傅斯年——中國近代歷史與政治中的個體生命 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2013); Chinese translation of *Fu Ssu-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). These considerations (less the last one) featured in a 1931 letter to Pelliot asking him to contribute to a *Festschrift* in honor of Cai Yuanpei's sixty-fifth birthday.

⁶⁴For details on Pelliot's dealings with his Chinese colleagues, see Sang Bing 桑兵, “Bo Xihe yu jindai Zhongguo xueshu jie” 伯希和與近代中國學術界, *Lishi yanjiu* 1997.5, 115–38, and Wang Fansen, “Bo Xihe yu Fu Sinian.”

⁶⁵The best account of Maspero's life and oeuvre is his obituary by Paul Demiéville in *Journal Asiatique* 234 (1943–1945), 245–80, which includes an exhaustive list of his publications and lectures.

⁶⁶See Jacques Gernet, “La vie et l'oeuvre,” in *Hommage à Henri Maspero*, 15–24, here 16.

furlough, and military service during the Great War, he was to spend more than half of the years 1908–20 in Vietnam, returning to Paris in 1920 to succeed Chavannes in the chair of Chinese language and literature.⁶⁷

Studying the history and culture of Indochina was central to the mission of EFEO, and most of the Sinologists who stayed there devoted part of their work to it, in particular to the Sinicized heart of the country and to its relations with China. Maspero was special, however, both for the number of years he spent in Hanoi and for his intense commitment to fieldwork, studying assiduously the languages, customs, social organization, legends, and religious practices, as an ethnologist would do, in the villages of the Red River delta and in most regions in Indochina. At the same time he researched the history and administrative geography of ancient Vietnam since the time of Han domination, an endeavor for which Chinese sources were crucial, and he organized the collection or copying of an enormous amount of manuscript, printed, and epigraphical sources from all over Vietnam, as well as data and field notes, which were deposited in the EFEO library.⁶⁸

Though path-breaking and marked by a thoroughly critical approach to the sources and a systematic effort to disentangle history from legend, Maspero's publications on Vietnamese history are relatively limited in number, and he more or less abandoned the field after 1920. Yet his Indochinese experience was fundamental in shaping his sensitivity to the realities of village life and organization, popular religions, folk rituals, legends, and so forth; and the extent to which comparison with what he had observed and recorded in the plains and mountains of Vietnam (and in China as well during several tours) informed his research on ancient Chinese society is apparent in many of his writings. The comparative method was equally crucial to his work in historical linguistics, equally path-breaking, which dealt with Vietnamese, Chinese, and the multiplicity of Thai languages spoken across Indochina. Regarding Chinese, he was able to work out a method to reconstruct the phonology of the dialect spoken in Chang'an during the Tang dynasty. Interestingly, his work on historical phonology ran parallel to the research of Bernhard Karlgren during the same years (the 1910s), the two scholars actually responding to each other in their publications and discussing their findings and differences.⁶⁹

After his return to France, Maspero concentrated almost exclusively on his work on China, which actually had always been in the background of his Vietnamese studies. Contrary to Pelliot, Maspero had a grand plan: his ambition was to work out a vast synthesis that would cover every aspect of the history and culture of China from remote antiquity. Preparation for this led him to read a vast array of sources, accumulate an enormous quantity of notes, and publish many articles and book reviews on a variety

⁶⁷At Chavannes's death in 1918 the Collège de France suggested to Pelliot (then serving in Northeast China) that he annex Chavannes's domain—that is, Sinology proper—to his own chair; but Pelliot advised that Chavannes's chair be maintained and offered to Maspero.

⁶⁸The EFEO library in Hanoi, which during the first half of the twentieth century developed into a world-class collection on the cultures of East Asia, including an outstanding collection of Chinese books, was transferred to the Vietnamese government in 1956. Before this took place, however, part of the collections could be moved to other centers in Southeast Asia and to the new EFEO library in Paris. The Vietnamese archive assembled and safeguarded thanks to the exertions of the "colonial" EFEO members remained in Hanoi and is now one of the treasures of the Vietnam National Museum of History (itself a continuation of the EFEO Louis Finot Museum).

⁶⁹Then and later Maspero wrote reviews of most of Karlgren's main publications. (As it happens, Karlgren's seminal works on historical phonology were published in French.)

of topics. He was only able to complete the first part of his synthesis, however: this was to be the one monograph he published during his lifetime, *La Chine antique* (1927), which covers the period from archaic China to the Qin's final victory in 221 BCE. The book opens with accounts of the origins of Chinese civilization and of ancient society, religion, and mythology; then it offers a highly detailed political, diplomatic, and military history of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods; and it ends with sections on literature and philosophy. Maspero's volume was a contribution to the *Histoire du monde*, a series aimed at a general public; yet it is an intensely scholarly work—indeed, a pure work of Sinology—at places intimidating by its density, but also able to supplement the dryness and gaps of primary sources with the vision of a historian and anthropologist. Even though part of its contents has been superseded by later research, especially archeological findings, *La Chine antique* is still regarded as a classic. A new edition incorporating the revisions and changes Maspero had scribbled in the margins of his own copy and supplying Chinese characters—sorely lacking in the original edition—was prepared by Paul Demiéville in 1955 and has been reprinted several times; an English translation based on the 1955 edition appeared in 1979 as *China in Antiquity*.⁷⁰

The next volume envisioned by Maspero would have concerned the early empire and the Six Dynasties. Though the project remained in the background of much of the research he pursued during his remaining years, it never approached the stage of even preliminary drafting, and together with several other book projects was still in limbo at the time of his death. It would be much too long to enumerate all the topics he dealt with, concerning antiquity as well as later periods, in his articles, in his Collège de France lectures, and in the manuscripts that could be retrieved and reorganized for publication by his faithful disciple Demiéville in the late 1940s and through the 1960s—including essays on ancient astronomy, religion, the land systems, the society and institutions of antiquity and the first empire, and more. Yet one at least deserves special mention because, once again, Maspero was a pioneer: Daoist religion, its practices in pursuit of immortality, and its communitarian organization during the first few centuries of the Common Era. No one before Maspero had studied this subject seriously, and there is no doubt that his lectures since the 1920s and his essays published after his death powerfully contributed to the brilliant development of Daoist studies in postwar France.⁷¹

⁷⁰The English version includes a useful introduction by Denis Twitchett, discussing Maspero's accomplishments and summarizing the advances made in the field since the original publication of *La Chine antique*. Incidentally, in a tribute written a little later, Twitchett spoke of Maspero as “perhaps in our century the most illustrious name of Sinology”—a distinction generally reserved for Pelliot; see *Hommage à Henri Maspero*, 13. Edwin Pulleyblank comments in a review essay on why despite its obsolescence in several respects Maspero's synthesis remains a unique effort and still deserves to be read; see “*La Chine Antique Revisited*,” *Pacific Affairs* 53.1 (1980), 115–19.

⁷¹Maspero's writings on Daoist religion are found in vol. 2 of the three-volume *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950). Also note an important text on “La religion chinoise dans son développement historique” in vol. 1. These and other essays on the subject have been collected in Henri Maspero, *Le taoïsme et les religions chinoises* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). For a learned assessment of Maspero's Daoist studies by one of his most eminent successors, see Max Kaltenmark, “Henri Maspero et les études taoïstes,” in *Hommage à Henri Maspero*, 45–48, as well as his preface to *Le taoïsme et les religions chinoises*. Maspero's understanding of “la religion chinoise” as a non-contradictory blend of many beliefs and doctrines was novel at a time when scholars tended to see everything through the same Confucian lenses as their sources. His very last publication, a review of vol. 2 and 3

After taking refuge in Southern France during the German invasion in 1940, Maspero returned to Paris to resume his teaching and research. On 28 July 1944 he and his wife were arrested by the Gestapo and deported. The reason apparently was that his elder son, an active participant in the Resistance, had barely escaped being captured during a confrontation with the Germans, so they seized the parents instead.⁷² Maspero was interned in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Already in poor health since a grave illness during his Vietnam years, he died of exhaustion on March 17, 1945. (Mme. Maspero, who had been interned in Ravensbrück, survived, and after the war helped Demiéville to sort out the huge *Nachlass* left in her husband's study.)

Marcel Granet

The third among the more famous Chavannes students was Marcel Granet (1884–1940), again a very different person from both Pelliot and his quasi-contemporary Maspero. Like Chavannes, Granet was an alumnus of the elite *École Normale Supérieure* and had a solid training in classical humanities (he qualified in history, Chavannes in philosophy). What led him to Sinology, however, was sociology, which he studied for several years with Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), in many ways the founder of the discipline. A close associate of Marcel Mauss (1872–1950)—Durkheim's nephew and junior colleague, often seen as the initiator of French anthropology—and a dedicated collaborator and assiduous reader of *L'année sociologique*, the journal founded by Durkheim in 1898, Granet saw himself all his life as first of all a sociologist.⁷³ In 1908, at the start of a three-year research scholarship in Paris which he planned to devote to “honor in feudal societies,” he was encouraged by Mauss and Chavannes to try his hand on China. After three years studying Chinese in Paris he left for an eighteen-month stay in Beijing (1911–13) to work on the research project on family organization in China he had submitted to the Ministry of Public Instruction.⁷⁴ This was not intended as an ethnographic investigation, however:

of Otto Franke's *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches* (1936–37), contains a vivid passage on the “intensely religious” Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties period, with all the popular fervor and agitation in Daoist and Buddhist festivals and “democratization” of purification and immortality practices—something, Maspero regrets, that Franke completely missed, unconced as he was in a perspective heavily dependent on Zhu Xi's *Tongjian gangmu*. See *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 45 (1942), col. 260–66.

⁷²According to later testimonies, Maspero had been in contact with the underground *résistance*, but he himself never said a word of it, not even to his wife, and in all probability the Germans were not aware of it. In 1943, Maspero, Pelliot and several colleagues were arrested by the Germans and spent about ten days in prison, nobody knowing exactly what was the cause, and why they were released. Though Pelliot does not seem to have belonged to a resistance network, he behaved openly as a “patriot” (he was a sort of patriotic conscience among his colleagues at the Collège de France and at the Société Asiatique, which he chaired at the time), encouraged his students to join the “maquis,” and did not conceal his hatred of the Vichy regime and, especially, of the invaders: to a German scholar who wished to visit him he responded: “When we have won the war.”

⁷³For excellent assessments of Granet's work, see: Maurice Freedman's introduction to his translation of Granet's *La religion des Chinois* (*The Religion of the Chinese People* [New York: Harper and Row, 1976]); and Yves Goudineau, “Introduction à la sociologie de Marcel Granet” (Ph.D. dissertation, Paris X University, 1982), as well as “Marcel Granet (1884–1940): un ethnographe de la Chine ancienne,” *Préfaces* 7 (1988): 119–25, and several other essays by the same author.

⁷⁴This was to be his only stay in China, if one accepts a short visit to Beijing in 1919 after he had served—like Pelliot and several other Orientalists—on the French military mission of assistance to the anti-Bolshevik forces in Siberia. In his letter of support in 1911, Chavannes noted that Granet had followed

Granet planned, first, to perfect his knowledge of Chinese and pursue the study of the Classics (like so many he had the opportunity to work with a local scholar), and, second, to make observations in the field to validate hypotheses he had begun to outline from ancient Chinese ritual texts—what he called “experimental verification.” In Granet’s eyes, scrutinizing ancient sources was in fact the only way to reveal the original system against which ethnographic facts could be interpreted. As he acknowledged in his final report, Beijing was a large cosmopolitan city, then in the middle of political agitation, therefore not an ideal field to approach popular customs in their pristine condition. Yet the few personal observations he records here and there in his writings are remarkably acute and ingenious.⁷⁵

Granet’s first publication, “*Coutumes matrimoniales de la Chine antique*,” appeared in *T’oung Pao* in 1912, during his stay in China. His basic source, the love songs of the *Guofeng* 國風 section in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*), was submitted to radical treatment as he decided to go back to the original text unencumbered by the many centuries of commentaries that attempted to moralize what he saw as the peasant customs of archaic China.⁷⁶ This critical attitude was to characterize his approach to ancient texts in the rest of his oeuvre: rather than concentrating on the date or authenticity of his sources through philological efforts—an endeavor for which he tended to show disdain—he would practice a sort of textual archeology, deconstructing the commentarial tradition (as Chavannes had done in his *Shiji* work), disregarding chronological development, and bringing together bits of evidence (or “facts”) he deemed sociologically significant, extracted from a multiplicity of sources that illuminated his reconstruction of the original structures of Chinese civilization, possibly with the help of ethnographic data from “primitive” cultures.

For this is what he was striving towards: identify and understand the archaic peasant society in which he saw the matrix of Chinese civilization and from which everything important thereafter evolved and diversified; and explain these evolutions, always maintaining a holistic stance, approaching China as a totality. His first book, *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (1919), expanded his analyses (and lively translations) of the *Shijing* songs in an attempt to piece together the “social and moral milieu” of this *Ur*-society of China. In his next book, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne* (1926), which concentrated on mythology, Granet applied the same method of textual

his courses at the Collège de France and EPHE for two years (he must also have learned the basics of the language at the École des Langues Orientales), and asserted that, although his Chinese was still limited, a stay in China would allow him to make rapid progress—which it did, at least as far as reading texts is concerned: one is indeed stunned how fast he mastered the tools and sources of Sinology. See “Dossier de mission en Chine de Marcel Granet,” edited by Yves Goudineau, *Gradhiva: revue d’histoire et d’archives de l’anthropologie* 14 (1993), 101–12.

⁷⁵See in particular his conclusion to *La religion des Chinois* (1922), on religious feeling in modern China, which he acknowledges is principally based on his own observations, therefore inevitably limited. Granet would also refer on occasion to customs or practices attested in non-Han groups from the Chinese frontiers in order to illustrate or confirm some of his points. This was from secondary sources, however, very far from Maspero’s immersion in and personal contact with Vietnamese or Chinese populations to understand their beliefs and practices. Granet had been soundly trained in the analysis of ethnographic materials by Durkheim and Mauss and had extensive knowledge of the relevant sources.

⁷⁶Maspero commended highly this cleaning up of the *Shijing* in a review of Granet’s first book, *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (1919), of which the 1912 *T’oung Pao* article offered a prolegomenon. (The book was ready by 1914 but its publication was delayed by the Great War, during which Granet spent three years in the trenches and was wounded and decorated.)

archeology to an even larger and more varied corpus in order to bring out a body of fragmentary legends, ritual and religious references, ancient practices, and symbols, and reconstruct the “schèmes directeurs” and “principes de coordination” that determined Chinese thought as well as the organization and functioning of the main sectors of society—the peasant communities, the urbanized, militarized, and patriarchal nobles.

Granet’s theories have been much debated, then and later, in particular by Sinologists who have criticized him for ignoring recent archeological findings that went against his views and for a tendency to force evidence to conform to his theories.⁷⁷ Today his reconstruction of an archaic society with a matrimonial system characterized by a strictly regulated exchange of women, and of its historical transformation into a feudal society based on the agnatic family and ancestral cult, is regarded as basically wrong. Yet his impact has been considerable. His last book, *Catégories matrimoniales et relations de proximité dans la Chine ancienne* (1939)—an extremely complex and innovative work—was at the same time used as a model and springboard and criticized in many of its aspects by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his seminal *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1947): it is not an exaggeration to say that Granet in effect laid the foundations of structural anthropology.⁷⁸

Beyond this more demanding legacy, however, Granet’s two big syntheses on ancient China (down to the Han dynasty), *La civilisation chinoise: la vie publique et la vie privée* (1929), and especially *La pensée chinoise* (1934)—the latter principally dealing with structural components such as language, numerology, cosmology, the notion of *dao*, etc., only the fourth and last section discussing the “schools”—were and remain extremely popular among a wide readership.⁷⁹ It is easy to see why: for one thing, as everything that Granet published they are brilliantly written, with a sort of passionate thrust in moving forward and articulating ideas, and more often than not enlivened by his polemical bent. But their attractiveness also comes from their clarity, from the author’s dexterity in conveying complex notions and integrating them into a coherent and systematic whole, and from his talent at evoking past societies in a lively and imaginative way—Granet’s “poetic” flair has often been remarked on. A feeling that “everything is there” no doubt explains why for many (non-Sinologist) readers Granet remains the last word on China’s antiquity, when it is not on Chinese civilization in general.

⁷⁷One of the most damning criticisms I know of is the review (or more appropriately, savaging) of Granet’s *La civilisation chinoise* by the famous scholar and geologist V.K. Ting (Ding Wenjiang 丁文江, 1887–1936), who also takes Granet to task for his *Shijing* translations and the theories he derived from them in his first books. The text starts ominously: “A Chinese historian well-acquainted with European Sinological literature is never tired of saying that all Sinologists are incompetent pedants.” While Ting makes clear that this is unjust regarding the work of such scholars as Pelliot or Karlgren, he then adds: “But Prof. Granet’s new book with its facile generalisations and erroneous reading of Chinese texts tends to prejudice the mind of Chinese scholars against European Sinology.” See *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin* 34 (1931): 161–76 (the text is in English). For a more recent example, see Léon Vandermeersch, *Wangdao ou la voie royale: Recherches sur les institutions de la Chine archaïque*, vol. 1 (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1977), 239–60, disproving most of the conclusions offered in *Catégories matrimoniales et relations de proximité*.

⁷⁸See Yves Goudineau, “Lévi-Strauss, la Chine de Granet, l’ombre de Durkheim: Retour aux sources de l’analyse structurale de la parenté,” *Cahiers de l’Herne* 82 (2004), special issue on Lévi-Strauss, 165–88. Likewise, Granet’s handling of myths in *Danses et légendes* clearly influenced Lévi-Strauss’s four-volume *Mythologiques* (1964–1971).

⁷⁹The two works were commissioned to be part of a series named “L’évolution de l’humanité,” sponsored by a “Centre international de synthèse” and aimed at a general audience. They are regularly reprinted.

Sinology in France before World War II

In the field of Chinese studies Chavannes, Pelliot, and Maspero were the most brilliant representatives of a style of scholarship that is almost impossible to imagine today: equally comfortable with philology and linguistics, archeology, art, and history, and capable of producing authoritative and highly technical work covering a vast expanse of time from antiquity to the modern period. Although Granet remained essentially a specialist of ancient China and differed from the others by his theoretical bent and close association with the French sociological school of Durkheim and Mauss, he too was a formidable Sinologist with a command of the Chinese textual tradition that may have been doubted by some of his Chinese critics but that few Westerners can match today.

All of them had a profound impact not only through their writings, but also through their teaching, which they dispensed in lecture or seminar form in such institutions as the Collège de France, the EPHE, the École des Langues Orientales, and the Sorbonne: Granet taught in the last three (his main position was at EPHE), Pelliot deputized for a time at the Langues Orientales, Maspero taught at the Collège and EPHE, where Chavannes also taught from 1908 to 1912.

Another institution that offered courses on China—delivered in part by the same scholars—was the Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises (IHEC). This Institute had been founded in 1920 by the authorities of France and of the young Republic of China as a sort of cultural center funded by the two countries, devoted to showing off Chinese culture and to the development of Chinese studies in France—something not unlike the present-day “Confucius Institutes.”⁸⁰ Its origins were quite political: the initiators had been the mathematician and statesman Paul Painlevé (1863–1933), on the French side, and the scholar, calligrapher, and Beiyang minister of Communications Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (1881–1968), on the Chinese side. Its Management Committee, composed of Chinese and French academics and politicians, did not include any China scholars: Pelliot, regarded by the authorities as the dean of Chinese studies in France, and the only one invited to the preliminary meetings, had soon dropped out complaining that the Sinologists were ignored. Despite grand announcements—there was even question at one moment of transferring to Paris one of the three surviving copies of the *Siku quanshu!*—for several years nothing happened, one reason being that the Chinese government never paid a cent of the sums it had promised.⁸¹

Things changed between 1926 and 1927 when Painlevé, who was back in government after the victory of the left in the 1925 general election, obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the annual payment of a substantial allowance from the Boxer funds ear-marked for Franco-Chinese educational cooperation, while at the same time seeing to it that the Sinologists were put in control of the Institute.⁸² Granet, who had never cut ties with what was until then a virtual organization

⁸⁰For a detailed history of IHEC see Ge Fuping and Pierre-Étienne Will, “Paul Pelliot et l’Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises (1919–1945),” in Drège and Zink, *Paul Pelliot*, 271–312.

⁸¹The only activity associated with IHEC before 1926 seems to have been a course on Chinese civilization delivered at the Sorbonne by Granet (who had been recommended by Pelliot when the latter decided to remain aloof) and Louis Laloy (1874–1944), a former Chavannes student who among many activities (he was secretary general of the Paris Opera from 1913 to 1940) specialized in Chinese music and literature.

⁸²This was when the Chinese government resumed the payment of its Boxer annual installments following a period of moratorium after China had joined the allies against Germany in 1917.

administered by non-Sinologists, played a central role in the transition, and the program he submitted to make the most of the new funds remained the base of IHEC's activities for about three decades. From then on IHEC became a purely academic institution, effectively run by French scholars and funded by the French government, and it rapidly developed into a major center for Chinese studies. Granet was appointed director and convinced Pelliot to resume his place on the Management Committee and be part of an advisory committee whose other members included Granet, Laloy, Maspero, Pelliot, Vissière, and two non-Sinologist colleagues, Louis Finot and Paul Boyer.⁸³ Within a few years a research library was started through a campaign of purchase directly in China, and then enriched year after year; a publication series was initiated; the Institute was made part of the University of Paris and allowed to deliver diplomas; and it was allocated comparatively spacious premises in the basement of the Sorbonne. And as early as the second semester of 1927, a substantial program of courses and lectures was offered to the public, with five series of courses dealing with traditional as well as modern China, and a variety of more specialized lectures.⁸⁴ The placard that announced the courses and lectures (Figure 1) also mentioned the regular courses on China taught in various other institutions. The sum total is impressive: in those years the offerings in Paris certainly were the richest in the Western world.

IHEC carried on and developed under the hyperactive Granet until his sudden death on November 25, 1940.⁸⁵ Pelliot, who had fully participated in the development of the Institute, in particular the growth of its library, took over and strived to maintain as much as possible of its activity in the difficult circumstances of war and occupation.⁸⁶ Indeed, the correspondence that has been preserved suggests that during the entire interwar period the cooperation, almost complicity, between these two very different personalities in supporting Chinese studies in France went on untroubled: though polar opposites in their styles of scholarship, Pelliot and Granet respected each other and maintained friendly, if not intimate, relations. With Maspero, on the other hand,

⁸³For Louis Laloy, see n. 81, above. Arnold Vissière (1858–1930), who had a twenty-year experience with China as interpreter and diplomat, was an exacting professor of Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales from 1899 to 1930. Louis Finot (1864–1935), an Indianist and Southeast Asia archeologist, and for many years director of EFEO in Hanoi, was at the time professor at the Collège de France. Paul Boyer (1964–1949), a Russia specialist, was general administrator of the École des Langues Orientales.

⁸⁴A further course on Chinese science, which was planned to be entrusted to invited Chinese scholars, could be set up only erratically due to the difficulty of finding adequate candidates. Starting in 1927–28, a course on Chinese law was taught every year by Jean Escarra (1885–1955), a professor of law who seriously studied Chinese and from 1921 spent long periods in China as an advisor to the Republican government.

⁸⁵Having just been appointed head of EPHE in replacement of Marcel Mauss (dismissed as a Jew), Granet was called for an interview with the newly appointed Vichy Minister of Education. A patriot and a socialist, Granet could only detest the representatives of the newly installed Vichy government and their policies. The meeting is said to have been extremely tempestuous. Back at his home in the southern suburbs in the evening (which he had to reach on foot because the trains were not running), he died of a heart attack. His widow, Marie Granet (1892–1990), a high school teacher, a socialist militant, and a strong personality, participated actively in the Résistance, of which she later became an archivist and historian.

⁸⁶On January 25, 1945—only months after the liberation of Paris and while the war was still going on—Pelliot gave a talk at the Chinese Art Society of America in New York City, on “Orientalists in France During the War.” Apart from listing those who had died or were missing (such as Maspero, of whom nothing had been heard since September of 1944), this intensely patriotic speech offered a general view of the dire straits in which French Oriental Studies had found themselves under German occupation, of the current general state of exhaustion, and of the difficulties ahead. The text is found in *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 1 (1945/1946), 14–25, following Pelliot's obituary by Serge Elisseff.

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
UNIVERSITÉ DE PARIS

**INSTITUT
DES
HAUTES ÉTUDES CHINOISES**

Année scolaire 1926-1927

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**ENSEIGNEMENTS DE L'INSTITUT
COURS**

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| <p style="text-align: center;">CIVILISATION CHINOISE M. GRANET, Professeur :</p> <p>I. — <i>Introduction à l'étude de la philosophie dite taoïste</i>, les Jendis, à 18 heures (Amphithéâtre E.-Quinet, à la Sorbonne).</p> <p>II. — <i>Étude de textes ethnographiques empruntés aux historiens chinois</i>, les Mercredis, à 14 heures, (Amphithéâtre Milne-Edwards, à la Sorbonne).</p> <p>III. — <i>Exercices de traduction, travaux pratiques et préparation au certificat de civilisation chinoise</i>, les Mercredis, à 15 h. 1/4 (Amphithéâtre Milne-Edwards, à la Sorbonne).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PHILOGOLOGIE, LITTÉRATURE ET ART CHINOIS M. PELLIOT, Professeur :</p> <p>I. — <i>Sources et répertoires à utiliser par un sinologue</i>, les Jendis, à 16 h. 1/4, à l'École des Hautes Études (sciences historiques).</p> <p>II. — <i>Introduction à l'étude de l'art chinois ancien</i>, les Lundis, à 14 h. 1/4, à l'École des Hautes Études (sciences religieuses).</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">ESTHÉTIQUE CHINOISE M. LALOY, Chargé de cours :</p> <p><i>Doctrines et théories chinoises sur la musique</i> (exposé historique et explications de textes), les Jendis, à 13 h. 1/2 et 14 h. 3/4 (à l'École des Langues orientales vivantes, Salle 3).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HISTOIRE ÉCONOMIQUE DE LA CHINE MODERNE ET CONTEMPORAINE M. MESTRE, Chargé de cours :</p> <p><i>La contribution volontaire récompensée</i>, étude sur les finances de la dynastie mandchoue, les Mardis, à 14 heures et 15 heures (à l'École des Langues orientales vivantes, Salles 3 et 4).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HISTOIRE POLITIQUE ET DIPLOMATIQUE DE LA CHINE CONTEMPORAINE M. DUBARBIER, Chargé de cours :</p> <p><i>La Chine à la Conférence de Washington</i>, les Mardis et Vendredis, à 18 heures (à l'École des Langues orientales vivantes, Salle 2).</p> |
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CONFÉRENCES

I. — M. MIEN TCHENG. — *Le théâtre chinois contemporain* (six conférences, à partir du 5 Mars), les Samedis, à 15 h. 1/2 (à l'École des Langues orientales vivantes, Salle 4).

II. — M. PRZYLIŃSKI. — *Les cérémonies bouddhiques du culte des morts en Chine* (six conférences à partir du 30 avril), les Samedis, à 15 h. 1/2 (à l'École des Langues orientales vivantes, Salle 4).

III. — M. DUBOSQ. — *La Chine et les Puissances* (six conférences, à partir du 5 Mars), les Samedis, à 14 heures (à la Faculté de Droit).

IV. — M. ESCARRA. — *L'esprit du droit chinois* (six conférences à la Faculté de Droit), les Samedis, à 14 heures, et les Lundis, à 15 h. 1/2; ces conférences auront lieu le 30 Avril, les 2, 7, 9, 14, 10 Mai.

V. — M. le Dr MARCEL LEGER (cinq conférences, à l'Institut Pasteur), les Vendredis, à 17 h. 45. I. *Peste* (18 Mars). II. *Lèpre* (25 Mars). III. *Bériberi* (1^{er} Avril). IV. *Tuberculose et Syphilis* (8 Avril). V. *Maladies du tube digestif et de ses annexes, en particulier par helminthes* (29 Avril).
M. le Dr GAUDUCHEAU (une conférence à l'Institut Pasteur), le Vendredi 22 Avril, 17 h. 45. *Alimentation des Chinois et leur hygiène générale*.

Les COURS de l'INSTITUT des HAUTES ÉTUDES CHINOISES COMMENCERONT le 3 MARS

M. MESTRE, secrétaire, se tiendra à la disposition des Étudiants, et tout particulièrement des Étudiants chinois désireux de recevoir des conseils sur l'orientation de leurs études, les Mardis, à 16 heures, à l'École des Langues orientales vivantes.

ENSEIGNEMENTS RELATIFS à la CHINE DONNÉS dans les ÉTABLISSEMENTS D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR PUBLICS de PARIS

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| <p style="text-align: center;">ÉCOLE DES LANGUES ORIENTALES VIVANTES</p> <p>Langue Chinoise — M. VISSIÈRE, Professeur :</p> <p>1^{re} ANSÉE, les Mercredis, à 17 heures.</p> <p>2^e — les Mardis et Samedis, à 17 heures.</p> <p>3^e — les Lundis et Vendredis, à 17 heures.</p> <p>M. MIEN TCHENG, Répétiteur</p> <p>1^{re} ANSÉE, les Vendredis, à 9 heures, et Samedis, à 10 h. 1/2.</p> <p>2^e — les Lundis, à 13 heures, et Vendredis, à 10 heures.</p> <p>3^e — les Lundis, à 10 heures, et Jendis, à 9 heures.</p> <p>Géographie, Histoire et Institutions des États de l'Extrême-Orient. — M. GRANET, Professeur : <i>Notions générales sur l'histoire et la géographie de l'Extrême-Orient</i>, les Lundis à 9 heures.</p> <p>Littérature chinoise (cours libre). — M. MARGOLLES, les Vendredis, à 16 heures.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ÉCOLE DU LOUVRE</p> <p>Histoire des arts de l'Asie. — M. SALLES : <i>L'Art en Chine</i>, les Mercredis, à 16 heures.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">COLLÈGE DE FRANCE</p> <p>Langue et Littérature chinoises. — M. MASPERO, Professeur :</p> <p>I. — <i>Explication du T'ien wen de K'iu Yuen</i>, les Samedis, à 10 h. 1/2, Salle 3 bis.</p> <p>II. — <i>La formation des légendes relatives à Lao tseu, avant les Tang</i>, les Mardis, à 10 h. 1/2, Salle 3 bis.</p> <p>Langues, Histoire et Archéologie de l'Asie centrale. — M. PELLIOT, Professeur :</p> <p>I. — <i>Les étrangers en Chine à l'époque mongole</i>, les Lundis, à 15 h. 1/2, Salle 3 bis.</p> <p>II. — <i>Étude de textes mongols des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles</i>, les Vendredis, à 11 heures, Salle 3 bis.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ÉCOLE PRATIQUE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES (Sciences religieuses)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Religions de l'Extrême-Orient. — M. GRANET :</p> <p>I. — <i>Étude du calendrier de King Tch'ou</i>, les Mercredis, à 9 h. 1/2.</p> <p>II. — <i>Étude de textes taoïstes</i>, les Mercredis, à 10 h. 1/2.</p> |
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L'Administrateur de l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises, **Marcel GRANET.**

Le Président de l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises, **Paul PAINLEVÉ**

Vu : Le Recteur, Membre du Conseil d'Administration, de l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises, **S. CHARLÉTY.**

Figure 1. Teaching Chinese civilization in Paris in 1927.

things seem to have been a bit more complicated. He may well have been impatient with Granet's rather overbearing and humorless way of running things, and it is a fact that in their ways of using ancient Chinese sources and their relation to Chinese realities the two were extremely different—just compare *La Chine antique* and *La civilisation chinoise*, published two years apart. Maspero apparently stood back from most IHEC activities, and only after Granet's death did he join the Management Committee (on Pelliot's suggestion) and give lectures at the Institute. Yet one should not exaggerate the division between these two formidable scholars. Maspero wrote admiring reviews of *Fêtes et chansons* and *Danses et légendes*, which despite some reservations on Granet's interpretations he hailed as “epoch-making” and “powerful” books.⁸⁷ And at the end of his life, four years after Granet's demise, while confiding to a visitor that he was “not very much in agreement with Granet,” Maspero talked about him “with esteem and regretfully.”⁸⁸

Whatever the case may have been, all the key scholars whose names feature on the 1927 placard had students—French, European, American, Chinese⁸⁹—some of whom were to contribute importantly to the future of Sinology in France and abroad. Those I will discuss in the last section of this essay are only the most important, and some of them—beginning of course with Paul Demiéville—had started their careers and research well before the great divide that was World War II. Still, the deaths of Granet in 1940, of Maspero and Pelliot in 1945, definitely marked a strong caesura in the history of French Sinology. Apart from their scholarly eminence and prestige, which perhaps only Demiéville equaled after the war, for a variety of reasons Sinology became a much more international field than before, with a higher degree of specialization, and more open to the social sciences. Above all, the relative weight of France in Western Sinology diminished considerably, if only in correlation with the rapid growth of Chinese studies in America.

Postwar French Sinology

Not everything changed overnight, of course. For a time, the institutional layout remained the same. Despite the chaotic conditions created by World War II and the Japanese occupation of Indochina, later by the Vietnamese Revolution and the ensuing

⁸⁷See *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 19.5 (1919), 65–75, and *Journal Asiatique* 210 (1927), 152–55, respectively. Maspero does not seem to have reviewed Granet's other books.

⁸⁸The visitor was the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945), like Granet a stalwart of the Mauss school, who at that time was running for a Collège de France chair. Like Maspero, he was arrested by the Gestapo shortly thereafter and died in Buchenwald—one day before Maspero. See Maurice Halbwachs, “Ma campagne au Collège de France,” *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 1999.1, 189–229 (here 226).

⁸⁹I have not found mention of Japanese students. Chinese students are a particular case, if only by their numbers during the interwar period. Not a few Chinese studying in France were first trained at the Institut franco-chinois in Lyon, which functioned in tandem with the Université franco-chinoise in Beijing—both were operating largely with Boxer funds. Others had various backgrounds, in China, in France, or elsewhere. Among them, over forty students or former students of IHEC defended and often published French dissertations dealing with Chinese topics (only part of these qualifying as “Sinology,” however) between the 1930s and 1950s. A few former IHEC students did enter the French academic system after the war and made careers there. See Stéphanie Homola, “Le dialogue entre étudiants chinois et sinologues français à l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises (1927–1968),” in Will and Zink, *Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 509–38.

French “guerre d’Indochine,” EFEO continued to be the East Asian base of French Orientalism, and several important figures of postwar Sinology spent time in Hanoi and were able to travel to and sojourn in China from there. In Paris, after the demise of Maspero and Pelliot, Paul Demiéville took over at the Collège de France in 1946. (He had been appointed at EPHE the year before.) His contemporary and friend Robert des Rotours (1891–1980) succeeded Pelliot as director of IHEC, a post he would fill until 1959.

Demiéville and des Rotours were at the time the last Chavannes students alive, even though des Rotours’s attendance to the master’s lectures had been limited to a period of furlough in 1917 during the Great War. (He spent—or wasted, in his own view—a total of seven years in the military; when he was finally released Chavannes had passed away.) Contrary to the other scholars discussed here, des Rotours, who was born to an old aristocratic family, enjoyed considerable wealth: he never applied for an academic position, preferring to travel to China (which he did immediately after his graduation at the École des Langues Orientales in 1920), acquire a very large library, and pursue his studies on his own. Unassuming and hard-working, anything but a dilettante, des Rotours also studied with Pelliot and Maspero, and in time he became a leading specialist of the Tang dynasty: among his several books and articles on the subject, which appeared from the late 1920s, his translations and indexes of the monographs on officials, on examinations, and on the army in the *New Tang History* remain classics indispensable to anybody doing research on that period.⁹⁰

Paul Demiéville

However, it is the figure of Paul Demiéville (1894–1979) that definitely dominates French Sinology from 1945 and until the 1970s. He already had a rich career in research and teaching when he assumed his positions at EPHE and the Collège de France immediately after the war.⁹¹ Born in Lausanne and the son of a distinguished doctor, he was from the beginning an authentic European citizen—a French native speaker, he was educated in French as well as German and English. Being a Swiss citizen, he was not compelled to serve during the Great War, as Pelliot, Granet, Maspero, and des Rotours had, and went on to study musicology in Paris—where he earned a doctorate in that discipline in 1914—and Edinburgh. In Edinburgh he made friends with a Chinese, and this contact spurred him to learn the language: at the time he already had a solid grounding in Russian language and literature, in which he planned to specialize in the future, and became interested in the relations of Russia with China in the Qing period. In 1915 he went to study Chinese at the University of London, and it is said that his professor of Chinese (a former missionary) was so overwhelmed by his curiosity and progress that after a few months he sent him back to Paris and Chavannes. Chavannes did take him under his wing, even inviting him to his home to work with him. Demiéville also trained in modern Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales under the demanding Vissière, learned Sanskrit with Sylvain Lévi, attended the courses of several other Asian scholars at the Sorbonne and

⁹⁰For a detailed and affectionate appreciation of des Rotours, see Donald Holzman and Denis Twitchett, “The Life and Work of Robert des Rotours,” *T’ang Studies* 13 (1995), 13–31.

⁹¹The most detailed biographical account of Demiéville through 1945 is Christine Nguyen Tri, “Paul Demiéville, les Langues’O et les études chinoises,” in Bergère and Pino, *Un siècle d’enseignement du chinois*, 173–210.

Collège de France, and started Japanese: both Sanskrit and Japanese would be essential for his future work on Buddhism.

Having graduated in Chinese in 1919, Demiéville was appointed a “pensionnaire” at EFEO, arriving in Hanoi in early 1920. In Hanoi he and Maspero initiated a friendship and collaboration that would endure through Maspero’s arrest in Paris in 1944. In other words, Demiéville became another EFEO Sinologist who started his career (there was no her at the time) *in medias res*, so to speak, being immersed right away in an East Asian—and colonial—environment where scholarly erudition combined with travelling around. (Demiéville is said to have spent much of his time in the library, however.) From Hanoi he made his first trip to China, which lasted about six months, staying in Beijing with his former classmate des Rotours and working with Chinese literati, travelling to Shanxi, Shandong, and other places, and buying books for the École. He vastly preferred China over Vietnam, in fact, and at the end of his contract in 1924 he accepted a teaching position at the University of Amoy (Xiamen), where the vice-president was an old Chinese friend and where he taught Sanskrit and French literature while pursuing his own research and publications. He stayed two years there before being invited to Tokyo by his teacher Sylvain Lévi to be a resident in an institution that has had a certain importance in the history of French Sinology: the *Maison Franco-japonaise* (*Nichi-Futsu kaikan* 日仏会館), founded in 1924 by the poet and diplomat Paul Claudel (1868–1955) and the industrialist and banker Shibusawa Eiichi 渋沢栄一 (1840–1931). There Lévi and the Buddhologist and Sanskritist Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945) started the *Hōbōgin* 法寶義林 project, an “encyclopedic dictionary” of Sino-Japanese Buddhism featuring long, extended entries (in French), of which Demiéville became the chief editor and to whose first fascicles he contributed heavily.⁹²

This enterprise was to confirm Demiéville’s engagement with Chinese Buddhism, which had been apparent since his first publications and would make him an international leader in the field. His two books published in his lifetime are devoted to Buddhist topics.⁹³ The first, *Le Concile de Lhasa* (1952), deals with a doctrinal controversy between Chinese and Indian monks—the former advocating an extreme quietist form of *Chan*, looking for sudden enlightenment, the latter defending a gradualist process of awakening—that took place in the presence of the king of Tibet in the late eighth

⁹²The entries are by alphabetical order of the Chinese terms (in Japanese pronunciation)—the first entry of fascicle 1 being “A” 阿. The *Hōbōgin* had a checkered history. The project was stopped after the first three fascicles, plus a supplement, published between 1929 and 1937, due among others to the Pacific War. It was resurrected in the 1960s and housed in a detached temple of the Shōkokuji 相國寺 in Kyoto, becoming the Japan branch of EFEO. For over three decades the *Hōbōgin* Institute was a center of East Asian religious studies visited by countless scholars from every country, who all retained (or still retain, like the present writer) fond memories of this magical place where scholarship and friendship flourished. Five new *Hōbōgin* fascicles appeared between 1967 and 2003, with entries that increasingly took the form of substantial monographs. The editors were Jacques May (1927–2018), Anna Seidel (1938–1991), and Hubert Durt (1936–2018)—a Swiss, a German, and a Belgian, the first two having been trained in Paris and the third in Brussels under the famous Indianist and Buddhologist Étienne Lamotte (1903–1983). Subsequently it was decided to completely reshape the project, abandoning the alphabetical pattern (only the letter “D” had been reached) and preparing conference volumes concentrating on particular topics. For details, see Nobumi Iyanaga, “A History of the *Hōbōgin*: *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises*,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 481 (2017), 7–22.

⁹³A third one, a translation of vernacular Buddhist poems extracted from Dunhuang documents, was published posthumously in 1982 by IHEC as *L’œuvre de Wang le Zélateur*.

century CE. The principal source—which definitely confirms the historicity of the debate—is a Chinese account of the controversy found among the Dunhuang manuscripts held in Paris, which Demiéville collated with parallel sources in Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit. The main text, written with typical Demiévillian liveliness and ease, is in two parts, a translation of the Chinese manuscript and a “commentaire historique” rich in data on the relations between China and Tibet during the Tang.⁹⁴ It is accompanied by a *huge* and proliferating apparatus of footnotes, quite a few extending over several pages (the main text disappearing from view), that discuss with utmost erudition and exhaustiveness every conceivable subject closely or remotely related with the disputation in Lhasa. Indeed, this marvelous book is exactly the sort of thing that no academic publisher today would even consider accepting.

Le Concile de Lhasa was researched and written in the 1930s,⁹⁵ after Demiéville, back from his four years in Japan,⁹⁶ had acquired French citizenship and become professor of Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes—a position he fulfilled with great dedication and efficiency until 1945, when he was elected to the EPHE and one year later to the Collège de France. The circumstances of Demiéville’s second book, *Entretiens de Lin-tsi* (1972), are very different. Originating in his Collège de France lectures and published eight years after his retirement in 1964, it is an annotated translation of the *logia* of a ninth-century *Chan* master, the famous Linji 臨濟 (Jp. Rinzai), and in a way can be regarded as a summation of decades of research on *Chan* Buddhism; yet it is set in a format adapted to a general audience, and it appeared in a series entitled “Documents spirituels” produced by a non-academic publisher (hence, no Chinese characters): Demiéville strives to make a text that he himself acknowledges is “full of enigmas” accessible and readable, something at which he was better qualified to succeed than anybody else; and at the same time the explanations and commentaries that follow each paragraph are crammed with erudition and manage to situate Linji’s utterances in the larger context of Chinese literature, Buddhist or otherwise.⁹⁷

Though the study of Buddhism was central to Demiéville’s work, he was familiar with and wrote important pieces on practically every domain of Sinology, such as archeology and architecture, Daoism (Zhuangzi in particular), linguistics, Chinese literature and especially poetry, and Qing-period thinkers (Dai Zhen 戴震 and Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 prominently), to name a few.⁹⁸ Beyond this catholicity of interests, which was

⁹⁴Demiéville announced a second volume devoted to a “commentaire doctrinal” and to the history of the Dhyāna/*Chan* school, but it never materialized.

⁹⁵According to the introduction, the manuscript was ready on the eve of the war. Before preparing it for its eventual publication in 1952, Demiéville was able to integrate some new findings of his Tibetan colleagues (Marcelle Lalou, Jacques Bacot, Rolf A. Stein) into the text, making for even more numerous and longer footnotes.

⁹⁶During which he was joined at the Maison Franco-japonaise by his friend and teacher Henri Maspero, who spent a fruitful year and a half in Japan in the late 1920s.

⁹⁷As Demiéville explains in some detail in his introduction, he also benefitted from the vast literature in Japanese on *Chan* Buddhism in general and Linji in particular, with which he was intimately familiar.

⁹⁸A large selection of Demiéville’s essays, reviews, and annual summaries of Collège de France lectures, has been published (in fac-simile form) in two thick volumes: *Choix d’études sinologiques (1921–1970)* and *Choix d’études bouddhiques (1929–1970)* (Leiden: Brill, 1973). Both volumes include a near-complete bibliography of his writings, including the many reviews and bibliographical notes he freely published in *T’oung Pao*, which he edited or co-edited from 1947 to 1975: this was “his” journal, as it had been Pelliot’s before him. When Jacques Gernet and Erik Zürcher took over in 1975, *T’oung Pao* reverted to

not unlike Pelliot's, though in a rather different style, what distinguishes Demiéville's work is the combination of thoroughness and precision on the one hand, and broadness of outlook on the other. We see everywhere how his extremely vast general knowledge made him into a sort of instinctive comparatist, able to perceive equivalences, or at least suggestive parallels, between what he was studying in China and developments, ideas, or literary references found in a multiplicity of European cultures, in Japan, in Sanskrit sources, and elsewhere.⁹⁹ Such cultural range, and a general intellectual generosity, certainly marked this truly exceptional man apart from his colleagues in the Sinological profession.

Sinologists Across the War: Étienne Balazs, Rolf A. Stein, Max Kaltenmark

A few important Sinologists, younger than Demiéville by ten or fifteen years, benefitted like him from the teachings of the prewar masters (Pelliot, Granet, and Maspero), becoming teachers in their turn only after the war. All three scholars discussed here came from Central Europe to study in Paris and pursued their careers in the French system.

The first, Étienne Balazs (1905–1963), born Hungarian, had a large impact on post-war Sinology, not just in France, and in fact not just on Sinology, as certain of his ideas have been popularized in circles far beyond.¹⁰⁰ In 1923, aged eighteen, he went to Berlin to study under Otto Franke (1863–1946), at the time the dean of German Sinology, and a scholar who had spent long years in China at the end of the Qing and maintained a keen interest in contemporary Chinese affairs. He soon became Franke's favorite student. In Berlin, too, Balazs discovered the writings of the recently deceased Max Weber, which would have a lasting influence on his own thinking about China. If Franke was his first mentor, Henri Maspero became another one during a one-year scholarship in Paris in 1925–26: with Maspero, Balazs perfected his already excellent command of philology in dealing with Chinese sources, and he got a better sense of the multidimensional nature of Chinese civilization—including material culture, economic facts, religion, etc.—as brilliantly exemplified in *La Chine antique*, then on the eve of its publication.

Back in Berlin, in 1932 Balazs defended his dissertation, a path-breaking study of the economy of the Tang dynasty.¹⁰¹ No China scholar, in the West or in China, had so far

a more conventional pattern, and in time it has had to adapt to the present "peer review" epoch. Pelliot and Demiéville certainly did not need peer reviewing: they had no peers.

⁹⁹On Demiéville's linguistic versatility and vast culture in the literatures of many countries, in music, in the arts, etc., see his obituary by Donald Holzman, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99.3 (1979), 553–55.

¹⁰⁰On Balazs, see the essays in *Actualité d'Étienne Balazs (1905–1963): témoignages et réflexions pour un centenaire*, edited by Pierre-Étienne Will and Isabelle Ang (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 2010), which also provides a comprehensive bibliography of Balazs's writings, including unpublished pieces and translations of his works. See also Harriet Zurndorfer, "Not Bound to China: Étienne Balazs, Fernand Braudel and the Politics of the Study of Chinese History in Post-War France," *Past & Present* 185 (2004), 189–221. The obituary of Balazs by Demiéville in *T'oung Pao* 51.2–3 (1964), 247–61, is especially valuable because the two were close friends and Demiéville quotes from a number of Balazs's letters to him.

¹⁰¹It was published serially as "Beitrage zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der T'ang-Zeit (618–906)," *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 34 (1931), 1–92; 35 (1932), 93–165; and 36 (1933), 1–62.

attempted a coherent study of a subject that seemed at first sight very far from the ordinary preoccupations of Sinologists—like politics, philosophy, literature, or art. Balazs explicitly intended his work to be a contribution to global economic history, and at the same time help understand why it was that China evolved the way it did, in other words why it did not develop a form of capitalist-industrial economy—in other words, the Weber question. These preoccupations would remain central to his future work, in particular to his analyses of imperial China as a state-capitalist, bureaucratic, indeed totalitarian system.

This later work, which includes some of Balazs's most popular pieces, would have to wait for many years, however. If we omit a couple of articles published in the 1930s in Germany, nothing appeared until 1948. In between, after a short period when he seemed on his way to quietly integrate into the German academic system, among which he enjoyed a good reputation, Balazs was compelled by the Nazi regime's stranglehold to emigrate to France.¹⁰² Arriving in Paris in 1935, he worked with Maspero again, conducted library research, wrote essays on the socio-economic history of the Six Dynasties and Song periods for a book project that did not materialize, and lived in dire poverty. When the German army invaded France in 1940 he went into hiding with his family in a village in Southwest France, where he survived by practicing horticulture and raising poultry. After Liberation he spent another three years in the town of Montauban in the same region, teaching some German and English in private schools, a period he described as a "lent suicide provincial." Only in 1948 was he able to return to Paris.

After two more difficult years, during which he was able to publish his first two articles in French—dealing with the social and intellectual crisis of the second and third centuries CE—Balazs was at long last offered a research position in the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Thus, at age 45 he was enjoying material stability for the first time in his adult life and was able to devote himself entirely to his research and writing. The less than fifteen years left to him (he died of a heart attack in November 1963) were incredibly active and productive. In the first half of the 1950s he prepared and published the first two parts of an intended three-volume *Études sur la société et l'économie de la Chine médiévale*, consisting of translations and commentaries of the Treatises on Economy and on Law in the *Suishu* 隨書; they appeared in 1953 and 1954, respectively.¹⁰³ These are quite remarkable pieces of work, as Balazs managed to infuse his highly erudite translations and commentaries, crafted in what was then the traditional way in French Sinology, with an acute sense of everything tragic and violent in Chinese history: this is especially striking in his commentaries on the Treatise on Law, where it is all arbitrariness and cruelty under a varnish of legality. This pessimistic, somber approach to the Chinese state, both traditional and modern, imbues much of what Balazs wrote during these years—on the relations between state and society, the

¹⁰² Apart from his leftist inclinations and abhorrence of the Nazi regime, the exact reasons why Balazs left in 1935, and then went into hiding in 1940, are not known with precision. The political commitment of his German wife may have played a role. Balazs's former assistant Françoise Aubin's (1932–2017) interesting study on his politics, "Sinologie et politique. Autour d'Étienne Balazs (1905–1963)," *Études chinoises* 27 (2008), 147–61, shows that to the end of his life Balazs dabbled in critical Marxist politics, moving in Marxist oppositional circles and publishing texts under pseudonyms. His hatred of bureaucratic capitalism, in both Communist and capitalist countries, is reflected in his articles on the Chinese imperial polity.

¹⁰³ A third instalment, devoted to the Treatise on Law in the *Jinshu* 晉書, was found in draft form at the death of Balazs and was sent to A.F.P. Hulsewé (1910–1993) for edition and publication, but nothing came of it. The manuscript can now be regarded as lost.

crippling effects of bureaucratic domination, the aborted emergence of capitalism, even the totalitarianism of a welfare state that was also a “Moloch state,” and so on. Only in his last years, when he started studying the Song and the Ming seriously, would he qualify somehow his views of the relations between state and economy, allowing for less autocracy on the part of the state and more creativity on the part of the merchants.¹⁰⁴

In 1955 Balazs was appointed to be a “Directeur d’études” at the Sixth Section of EPHE, which had been created in 1947 by the historians Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) and Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) and devoted itself to socio-economic studies and to the social sciences.¹⁰⁵ This was certainly a turning point in his career, both in terms of his public visibility¹⁰⁶ and of the support he could mobilize for his projects. Braudel, who was controlling things at the time and was getting help from American foundations, was intent to develop “area studies” in France, even though, in opposition to his American sponsors, he insisted on historical depth. Together with Balazs he got several other Asianists appointed in 1955, including Jacques Gernet, Vadime Elisseeff, Jean Chesneaux, and the Indianist Daniel Thorner. Balazs became a sort of “Chinese adviser” to Braudel in his effort to evolve a global history of the beginnings of capitalism. At the same time, he was more and more seeing the Song period—hitherto of no particular interest to European Sinologists—as a crucial articulation in the history of the Chinese state and society: indeed, as the advent of a new period, “modern China,” in which he concurred with the Kyoto school of Sinology. At one of the meetings of “Junior Sinologues” that took place almost every year in Europe at the time, he proposed to his colleagues to set up an international program aimed at producing research tools on the Song period. Enjoying Braudel’s full support in this venture, he displayed great talent and devoted much energy in organizing and mobilizing the profession. The more remarkable perhaps in this so-called “Sung project” (probably the first example of international teamwork in Chinese studies) was the close collaboration Balazs developed with a group of Japanese historians from Tokyo and Kyoto.¹⁰⁷ Though the program lost momentum after Balazs’s death, several of the bibliographies, chronologies, and so forth, that he envisioned duly appeared during the sixties and seventies and are still in use.¹⁰⁸

Balazs’s role in renewing and reorienting Chinese studies in the second half of the twentieth century has been considerable, in France and internationally. Often scornful of the minutiae that kept traditional Sinology busy (or so he deplored), building on the intuitions of Maspero or even Chavannes,¹⁰⁹ and inspired by the EPHE Sixth Section

¹⁰⁴The publication in China of the literature on “sprouts of capitalism” at the same time seems to have contributed to this turn.

¹⁰⁵The Sixth Section became the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in 1975.

¹⁰⁶Before joining the Sixth Section Balazs had given some lectures at IHEC and at the EPHE’s Fifth Section, but these were more “Sinological” and much less attended than his Sixth Section seminars.

¹⁰⁷Balazs himself travelled to Japan in 1957 to meet his colleagues there; it was to be his only personal contact with East Asia, and the trip was marred by his first heart attack—six years before the one that was fatal—necessitating a six-week stay in a hospital.

¹⁰⁸See in particular *Sung Biographies*, edited by Herbert Franke (1976), and *Bibliographie des Song/Sung Bibliography*, edited by Yves Hervouet (1978), an analytical and descriptive bibliography of Song writings.

¹⁰⁹Maspero’s concern with economic matters went back early in his research, but it developed more consistently with the preparatory work he did for the sequels to *La Chine antique* he envisioned. Several important essays on land property and taxation systems have been reprinted in vol. 3 of his *Mélanges posthumes* (1967).

and *Annales* milieu, he was extremely influential in setting up the socio-economic history of China as a topic in its own right. His influence on the general public, in particular through the two posthumous anthologies of his studies—one in English, which he had helped to prepare, the other in French¹¹⁰—was equally strong: not unlike Granet with his *Pensée chinoise*, Balazs shaped for several generations of students and amateurs the perception of China as the land of bureaucracy and a metaphor for modern totalitarianism. It is an image that has been only slowly qualified by more recent research.

Like his older schoolmate Balazs, Rolf Alfred Stein (1911–1999), who was born to a Jewish family in a Polish town then part of Prussia, started studying Chinese in Berlin. He left in 1933, however, and spent the next six years studying in Paris with a stellar group of scholars who seem to have been unanimous in encouraging and supporting him: not only Pelliot, Maspero, and Granet,¹¹¹ but also Sylvain Lévi for Sanskrit, Marcelle Lalou (1890–1967) and Jacques Bacot (1877–1965) for Tibetan, and Marcel Mauss. Made a French citizen only a few days before the declaration of war in 1939, he was proposed, with Pelliot's warm support, for a membership at EFEO and left for Indochina to first accomplish the military service attached to his new status. This in a sense saved his life, since, had he stayed in France, the new Vichy laws would have deprived him of his recent citizenship and put him in the greatest danger as a foreign Jew. Instead, he soon joined EFEO thanks to a local arrangement (his formal membership would be restored after the war as of July 1941). He spent six materially difficult yet extremely productive years there, getting a sense of the immediacy of popular religion and at the same time using a comparative approach to set facts from different cultures against each other so as make them explain each other, elucidate borrowings and influences, and illuminate structural correspondences. This approach, for which he more than once acknowledged Granet as a major inspiration, was to characterize his work to the very end and explains his particular interest for frontier regions—what he called the “marches.” In this respect, though Vietnam was important to Stein (as it had been, prominently, to Maspero), the dyad to which he devoted the greater part of his research and teaching career was China and Tibet. In the same way, confronting scholarly and folk sources and making them illuminate each other remained a constant preoccupation: his is a rare example of the assiduous combination of erudite scholarship and ethnographic investigation.¹¹²

Stein's first experience of China took place in 1946–49. Though he travelled to many regions, his base was in Beijing, at the Centre d'études sinologiques de l'Université de Paris à Pékin, a little-known yet for a short while important institution that deserves a few words. Inspired by a project articulated by Pelliot as early as 1919, the Centre had been created by the French embassy in Japanese-occupied Beijing in early 1941 under the name “Centre franco-chinois d'études sinologiques,” with the aim of maintaining French cultural influence in a location deemed “neutral” inasmuch as it was far from both Chongqing (the temporary capital of the Nationalist regime) and Nanjing

¹¹⁰*Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variations on a Theme* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); *La bureaucratie céleste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968). Both selections were translated into several languages.

¹¹¹Granet was in many ways his principal influence: see Stein's “Souvenir de Granet,” *Études chinoises* 4.2 (1985), 29–40.

¹¹²The fullest account of R.A. Stein's life and oeuvre is Kuo Liying, “Rolf Alfred Stein (1911–1999),” *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 11 (1999–2000), x–xxx, including a detailed bibliography.

(the capital of the “puppet” Wang Jingwei regime).¹¹³ Its head was André d’Hormon (André Hyacinthe Roquette, 1881–1965), a local literatus and a Beijing resident since 1906 who had actively supported Sino-French academic cooperation, notably through the creation of the Université franco-chinoise in Beijing, and was a well-connected bibliophile and a fine connoisseur of Chinese literature.¹¹⁴ It was under the somewhat controversial authority of this éminence grise of French Sinology in China that the wartime Centre franco-chinois sheltered several research programs, mostly run by “refugee” Chinese scholars from institutions that had been shut by the Japanese;¹¹⁵ it also started building up an important Chinese library, and from 1944 it published the bilingual yearly *Hanxue* (later *Hanxue luncong*).

The “Centre sinologique de Pékin” joined by Rolf Stein was in fact a rather profoundly reformed institution, no longer “Franco-Chinese” but purely French: from 1947 it had been placed under the direct control of the University of Paris and of a Management Committee composed of distinguished French Orientalists, also located in Paris, with Paul Demiéville, the new holder of the Collège de France chair, as its vice-president. Demiéville and his colleagues proposed a variety of measures to streamline the institute’s organization, reduce the number of Chinese personnel, and give priority to professional young French Sinologists. Louis Hambis (1906–1978), a former Pelliot student specializing in Mongol and Central Asian studies, was appointed to administer the Centre while pursuing his own research.¹¹⁶ Also present during the few years allowed before the Institute was ordered by the Beijing Municipal Government to close (in November 1953), were Max Kaltenmark (see below) and his wife Odile Ghéquier; Alexis Rygaloff (1922–2007), who had studied with Granet and Pelliot and would later preside over the development of Chinese linguistics in France; Robert Ruhlmann (1920–1984), future professor of Chinese at the École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes—and Stein, who technically was still a member of EFEO.

Stein in fact returned to Paris in the spring of 1949, where, following a two-year stint teaching classical Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales, he was appointed to an EPHE “direction d’études” titled “Religions comparées d’Extrême-Orient et de Haute Asie.” Fifteen years later, in 1966, the Collège de France offered him a chair of “Étude du monde chinois, institutions et concepts,” which he held until his retirement in 1981. It has never been clear to me why the Collège chair would only refer to China, when in the same manner as in his EPHE seminars Stein shared his time equally

¹¹³On the somewhat shady circumstances of this creation, and more generally on the history of the Beijing French center until it was closed in 1953, see Ge Fuping, “Le Centre franco-chinois d’études sinologiques de Pékin et la sinologie française,” in Will and Zink, *Abel-Rémusat et ses successeurs*, 539–71.

¹¹⁴D’Hormon lived in Beijing through 1955, at first as a diplomatic and economic adviser to the Chinese government. He made a point of not putting his name on the many translations he either published or helped to see through (including the *Guoyu* 國語 and the *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢). He is also said to have significantly helped Granet in his translations of the *Book of Odes* during Granet’s stay in Beijing.

¹¹⁵Among these programs were a series of investigations on popular religion and local customs conducted under Yang Kun 楊堃 (1901–1999), a Yenching University professor and former Granet student, as well as a series of Sinological indexes. The latter program hosted the team previously in charge of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, closed in 1941 by the Japan-controlled local government.

¹¹⁶He arrived in Beijing in early 1948 and stayed until 1950. The Institute continued its activities under increasing control and pressure on the part of the new PRC authorities until it had to close in 1953. Fortunately, the larger part of its Chinese library was allowed to be shipped to France, where it is now part of the IHEC Library.

between China and Tibet, of which he had become the leading scholar in postwar France.

Tibetan civilization is without a doubt central to Stein's oeuvre.¹¹⁷ Indeed, his most popular book bears that very name—*La civilisation tibétaine*, first published in 1962, enlarged and revised in 1981, and translated into several languages. His “thèse d'État,” of which there seem to exist two different Chinese translations, dealt with Tibetan epic and its performers (*Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet*, 1959); and he published a large number of scholarly essays and translations related to this and other aspects of Tibetan culture.¹¹⁸ But, as we saw, Tibet was also, and perhaps above all, an element in a larger program of transcultural comparison that involved not only China but also Japan and other East Asian cultures. The studies of Tantric Buddhism and of its complicated relations with local religions, pursued by Stein during his years at the Collège de France, are an example. Another one, quite fascinating, and typical of Stein's approach to a comprehensive “Asian culture,” is his investigation, pursued over many decades, of the correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm in China, Tibet, Vietnam, Japan, and North Asia, as exemplified in miniature gardens, in dwellings, in the religious thought expressed in architecture, and in the descriptions of “cosmic mountains” in Chinese and Buddhist lore. The first installment of this research had appeared in *BEFEO* as early as 1942 in an article of proliferating erudition, “Jardins en miniature d'Extrême-Orient,” and it kept expanding until its final account was presented as *Le monde en petit: jardins en miniature et habitations dans la pensée religieuse d'Extrême-Orient* (1987).¹¹⁹ None of this is reader-friendly stuff, to be sure, and despite luminous recapitulations here and there one frequently risks becoming bogged down in the accumulation and confrontation of evidence drawn from everywhere: in this last respect the influence of Granet is unmistakable, but what distinguished Stein from his mentor—certainly a more compelling writer—was his extended contacts with the realities of the field.

Sinology and Chinese sources are never absent from the multi-cultural investigations just described—quite the contrary, they are central to them, and it is recognized that one of the strengths of Stein's Tibetan studies was his systematic use of Chinese sources. He also produced important work on purely Chinese topics, however, first of all popular religion, and in particular religious Daoism, whose proximity to Tantrism he extensively studied in his lectures during the 1960s and 1970s.¹²⁰

The field of Daoist studies, in particular what Stein called the “organized Daoism” of the early medieval communities that functioned independently from the state, had been opened by Maspero in the 1930s, as we saw, and many would explore it further in postwar France. Here the key scholar to cite is Max Kaltenmark (1910–2002). Kaltenmark was born in Austria, but contrary to his near-contemporaries Balazs

¹¹⁷ It was so very early on. One of Stein's first publications was an 83-page article on Tibetan divination slips, “Trente-Trois Fiches de Divination Tibétaines,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 4.3–4 (1939), 287–371.

¹¹⁸ Stein was also instrumental in setting up documentary and library resources for Tibetan studies in Paris. In a general way, he envisioned (and practiced) Tibetology as the study of a living culture—a threatened one in many respects—not as an appendix to Indology or Sinology.

¹¹⁹ An English translation was published by Stanford University Press in 1990 as *The World in Miniature: Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Thought*. There is also an Italian translation (1987).

¹²⁰ The three-volume Festschrift edited by Stein's American student Michel Strickmann (1942–1994) is titled *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein* (Brussels: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1981–1985).

and Stein he moved to France at a very early age and was entirely educated in the French system. Like them he spent his formative years under the aegis of the prewar masters—Pelliot, Maspero, and Granet, especially the last two, who spurred the interests in Daoism and more generally in religion and mythology that he would pursue during his entire career. When exactly he moved to China is unclear, but we know that he was acting director of the Centre d'études chinoises in Beijing from 1949 to its closing down in 1953, and it was there that he published his first pieces and accumulated materials for his future research (including a copy of the 1447 Daoist Canon).¹²¹ Back in France, he was elected in 1956 to a chair of “Religions de la Chine” at EPHE. It has been noted, and regretted, that Kaltenmark’s publications, though highly valued, including the gem that is his *Lao Tseu et le taoïsme*, are comparatively few in number.¹²² Yet his influence as an exacting and supportive teacher has been crucial for the development of Daoist studies in France and elsewhere. Among his many students, Isabelle Robinet (1932–2000), Kristofer M. Schipper (1934–2021), Anna Seidel, and Catherine Despeux have become particularly important authors. The Dutch-born Schipper, who had acquired a unique participatory experience of living Daoism during a long stay in Taiwan as an EFEO member, became himself a “Directeur d’études” at EPHE in 1973 and trained several generations of young scholars.¹²³

Demiéville’s Students and the Expansion of Sinology in Postwar France

Chinese studies in postwar France developed under Paul Demiéville, who had been an influential scholar and teacher since the 1930s, under the prewar-trained scholars discussed in the previous section, and under a new generation of scholars born in the early 1920s who started their studies immediately after the war. For many of them Demiéville was the principal inspiration and scholarly enabler; yet as we shall see these postwar years are also marked by an institutional and intellectual diversification, by a process of specialization, and by an increase in numbers in marked contrast with the earlier period, when a handful of prestigious masters reigned from the Collège de France or EPHE over a field that was still regarded as exotic territory.

Among this new generation, the one scholar who to a certain extent prolonged the tradition, born with Abel-Rémusat, of Collège de France masters looked up to as natural leaders by the profession is Jacques Gernet (1921–2018). At the same time, the evolution of his scholarly interests and the way his career developed are illustrative of the

¹²¹Kaltenmark first substantial publication, a study of the Confucian apocrypha (*chanwei* 讖緯), appeared in *Hanxue*, the Centre’s periodical, in 1947. His next publication, “Le dompteur des flots,” a book-length essay on the cult of the Han general Ma Yuan 馬援, appeared in the same periodical in 1948.

¹²²*Lao tseu et le taoïsme*, an essay for the general public enriched with attractive illustrations, appeared in 1965 in a series called “Maîtres spirituels” (Éditions du Seuil); it has been often reprinted and there are several translations. For a complete list of Kaltenmark’s works up to the late 1980s (excluding book reviews), see Farzeen Baldrian Hussein and Anna Seidel, “Max Kaltenmark: A Bibliography,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 4 (1988), 8–17.

¹²³For Schipper’s career and oeuvre, see Vincent Goossaert, “In memoriam Kristofer M. Schipper (1934–2021),” *T’oung Pao* 107.3–4 (2021), 221–31. Among his many publications are *Le corps taoïste* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), which was translated into several languages, and the three-volume *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, co-edited with Franciscus Verellen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

transformations of French Sinology from the 1950s onward.¹²⁴ Gernet used to say that the two major influences in his intellectual life had been his father, Louis Gernet (1882–1962), and Paul Demiéville. Louis Gernet, a scholar of ancient Greek religion and law regarded as one of the founders of modern Hellenism, was a Durkheimian and a close associate of Marcel Mauss and Marcel Granet at *L'année sociologique*: if it is difficult to find any specific influence of Granet's sociology in Gernet's oeuvre, what counts is that from an early age he was exposed to an intellectual milieu in which the social sciences were part and parcel of the research on civilizations, classical or otherwise.

Gernet, who was born and grew up in Algeria (his father was a professor at the University of Algiers), moved to Paris immediately after he was freed from military service in 1945 and started studying Chinese at the *École des Langues Orientales*. Very soon he was a regular presence at the lectures and seminars of Demiéville, who appears to have encouraged and trained him as a favorite student. As a matter of fact, Gernet learned his trade very fast, and as early as 1948 he was offered a position of junior researcher at CNRS: here as in many other examples from the late 1940s (we have already seen that of Balazs), this nationwide research organization, originally founded in 1939 but restructured after the war, contributed importantly to the development of French Sinology by helping scholars to start their careers or even offering life-long assignments, and from the 1970s by supporting research teams and co-funding university centers.

During his CNRS tenure Gernet was temporarily assigned to EFEO in Hanoi, where he spent a little more than a year and a half in 1949–50. This was not an altogether comfortable stay: by then Vietnam was at war and Hanoi was virtually under siege. Still, Gernet was able to seriously advance his research taking advantage of the vast resources of the EFEO library, and to get his first—and strong—impression of China during a two-month trip to Yunnan on the eve of the Communist takeover. It was also there that he produced his first articles, which are typically Demiévillean studies of *Chan* Buddhism. Yet Gernet soon opened his mind to other influences and preoccupations, in particular those associated with the so-called “*école des Annales*,” dealing in several articles on ancient China with problems of material life and technology, economic history, “*mentalités*,” and *longue durée* historical change, while at the same time endeavoring to figure out the mental, intellectual, and civilizational specificities of China—something he would pursue during his entire life.¹²⁵ In any event, such orientations and interests probably explain why Gernet was part, together with the more experienced Balazs, of the small group of East Asianists invited by Braudel to join the faculty of the Sixth Section of EPHE in 1955. Yet if the heady intellectual atmosphere and taste for innovation at Braudel's Sixth Section was clearly an important factor in Gernet's development, he did not forget about the Sinological and Buddhist roots of his training, as evidenced by his first masterpiece, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du V^e au X^e siècle* (1956), which is based in large part on Buddhist treatises of ecclesiastical discipline and Dunhuang documents dealing with the communities' everyday life. To be sure, this major contribution, which instantly ensured Gernet's international reputation, is not a work of Buddhism strictly speaking, even if Buddhist notions are very much present: it is, rather, a path-breaking attempt at

¹²⁴For a detailed account, see Pierre-Étienne Will, “Jacques Gernet (1921–2018),” *T'oung Pao* 106.5–6 (2020), 487–524.

¹²⁵For a selection of reprinted essays, see Jacques Gernet, *L'intelligence de la Chine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

evaluating the impact of the Buddhist church, of its doctrines, and of its institutions on the socio-economic history of medieval China.

As a “thèse d’État,” *Les aspects économiques* opened the doors of the Sorbonne to Gernet: in 1957 the first professorship of Chinese studies at the University of Paris was created for him. (Until then only occasional courses on China had been offered by adjuncts, notably Granet in the 1920s.) Gernet’s tenure at the Sorbonne—and at the University of Paris VII after the post-1968 break-up of the University of Paris—inaugurated the development of university East Asian departments to which I will return. As far as his oeuvre is concerned, a large part of these years was devoted to researching and writing what remains his most popular and in certain respects most important book, *Le monde chinois* (1972). Many times republished, rather drastically revised in 1999, and translated into a multiplicity of languages, *Le monde chinois* is modestly described by its author as a general introduction aimed at a generally ill-informed lay audience; it is in reality a state-of-the-art and multidimensional history of China from its origins to the foundation of the PRC, insisting on the profound transformations from one period to the other and on China’s connections with the rest of Eurasia, replete with new data, original approaches, theoretical considerations, and rare *realia* (as had already been *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme*), and marked by a constant effort to relate the different aspects of change—societal, political, intellectual, technical, and so on. *Le monde chinois* established Gernet as the last of the “total Sinologists,” in the tradition of Chavannes and of his most famous followers.

From the early 1970s, and particularly after his election to a Collège de France chair of “Histoire sociale et intellectuelle de la Chine” in 1975 (he retired in 1992), Gernet’s work took up a new orientation, as he concentrated more and more on the society and culture of the late Ming and early Qing periods. He once remarked, somewhat cryptically, that Braudel had made him “discover the Ming”—possibly through his requests for information about China while he was investigating the economic history of the precapitalist world. But what interested Gernet during his last decades was, rather, the social and intellectual life of the literate elite, the impact of its encounter with the Western world through its contacts with the missionaries present in China since the late sixteenth century, and finally, the nature of what could be called a Chinese “mental identity,” as revealed by the writings of major thinkers of the period. Two among Gernet’s many publications during these last decades of his career need to be singled out. The first is *Chine et christianisme* (1982), an essay that analyzes the reactions of the Chinese elite to the teachings of the Jesuits, giving pride of place to the arguments of those who raised doubts or even strongly opposed Jesuit views, and attempting to explain such opposition by fundamental differences between the world-views, religious conceptions, and modes of reasoning in China and Europe, down to their linguistic underpinnings.¹²⁶ The book was not without controversy, not only because it somehow deflated the heroic narrative of the missionary enterprise in China that dominates Western literature, but also because Gernet’s binary oppositions between the Chinese and the Western minds were criticized by some as overly systematic.

Yet—systematic or not—they were of the utmost importance to him, and he has elaborated on them in a number of his writings, including the second book to mention here, *La raison des choses: Essai sur la philosophie de Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692)* (2005).

¹²⁶The original edition was subtitled “action et réaction.” In the 1991 revised edition it became “la première confrontation.” The English translation (1985) is titled *China and the Cristian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*. There have been several other translations, including two into Chinese.

Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 is only one among the many thinkers of the Ming–Qing transition to whom Gernet devoted his attention, but he occupied a special place. As is well known, the immensely erudite Wang expounded both his own, sometimes provocative, ideas and those of a large array of authors whom he commented on, either to extol or to criticize them. For this reason Gernet regarded him as an ideal vehicle to comprehend the evolution and specificities of the Chinese ways of thinking; but doing so necessitated a thorough exploration of Wang’s proliferating oeuvre, in which the materials are dispersed in the form of more or less extended commentaries on philosophical and historical texts. *La raison des choses* is the result of a systematic effort at representing Wang’s ideas (and Gernet’s own views) on every sort of subject in an organized way. The book in fact is in many respects unique among the productions of French Sinology, resulting as it does from some three decades of intellectual companionship between a modern scholar and a seventeenth-century Chinese thinker. Yet, for reasons that can only be guessed, it did not meet the attention Gernet hoped for: contrary to his other books, this contribution, which he regarded as the conclusion of a life of research on China, received comparatively few reviews, and so far it has not been translated or republished. Admittedly, it is not an easy read, and it does not have the polemical flavor that contributed to the success of *Chine et christianisme*. Yet, rarely has the *voice* of a Chinese thinker been made itself heard in translation with the talent displayed by Gernet in the extensive quotations that, one might almost say, make the backbone of the book.

As already mentioned, Gernet’s election to a chair at the Sorbonne in 1957 marked the beginning of the integration of Chinese language and civilization into the matters taught in French universities—until then only the École des Langues Orientales offered an initiation to the subject.¹²⁷ Chinese professorships were created, first in Bordeaux (1959), later in Aix-en-Provence (1966). They were entrusted to two Demiéville students, Yves Hervouet (1921–1999) and Léon Vandermeersch (1928–2021). Both had been EFEO members and had an extended experience of Asia in China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Japan—Vandermeersch, in particular, who had spent six years in Saigon and Hanoi as a high school teacher before becoming an EFEO member in 1956 (during the years 1989–93 he would be tasked with modernizing and expanding the institution as its director). Later in their careers they moved to professorships in Paris. Hervouet, who turned to Chinese studies after a decade in the Jesuit order, specialized in ancient Chinese poetry (he published two major studies on Sima Xiangru 司馬相如) and also left, among many other contributions, an important legacy as a bibliographer.¹²⁸ For his part Vandermeersch, who had also trained in law, has authored an abundant oeuvre that touches on many topics: his more original and influential

¹²⁷There was an exception, however: as early as 1900 courses on China and East Asia in general were offered at the University of Lyon, though on a very modest scale and with a strong commercial and colonial orientation—for centuries Lyon had been indirectly connected with the East through its silk industry, and more recently its Chamber of Commerce (which was funding the courses) had supported efforts to establish direct commercial relations with China. The first lecturer, made full professor in 1913, was Maurice Courant (1865–1935), who had been Chavannes’s classmate at the École des Langues Orientales and started his career as an embassy interpreter in China, also becoming a specialist of Korea. Today Courant is mainly remembered by Sinologists for his catalog of Chinese books at the Bibliothèque Nationale (only recently made obsolete by the digitization of the BnF catalog). In Lyon he was instrumental in helping set up the Institut Franco-chinois (1921–1946), which prepared Chinese students to higher education in France. See the extended essay by Daniel Bouchez, “Un défricheur méconnu des études extrême-orientales: Maurice Courant (1865–1935),” *Journal Asiatique* 271 (1983), 43–150.

¹²⁸See Jean-Pierre Diény, “Yves Hervouet (1921–1999),” *Études chinoises* 17.1–2 (1998 [1999]), 325–45.

contributions—first of all his two-volume *Wangdao ou la voie royale* (1977–80)—concern the institutions and culture of archaic China and its writing system.

In 1969 Hervouet was succeeded in Bordeaux by André Lévy (1925–2017), also an EFEO alumnus, who presided over the last year of the Hanoi establishment before staying for extended periods in Japan and Hong Kong.¹²⁹ The bulk of Lévy's copious oeuvre is devoted to Chinese vernacular fiction; in addition to a variety of studies, he published a large number of translations, including epoch-making renditions of the *Jin Ping Mei* and of the *Sanguo yanyi*.

Besides the Chinese departments which opened (or continued to exist in the case of Lyon) and steadily grew in the *province* as well as in Paris, several new EPHE chairs were created and assigned to scholars belonging to the same generation of Demiéville students. I already mentioned the 1955 appointments in the Sixth Section and the installation of the Kaltenmark chair. Two other important names deserve mention here. The first is Michel Soymié (1924–2002), who after studying with Paul Demiéville and R. A. Stein spent ten years (1956–66) in Japan, first at the Maison Franco-japonaise and then as an EFEO member. In 1966 he was offered an EPHE chair of “Histoire et philologie de la Chine médiévale et moderne.” His main topic was Buddho-Daoist popular literature and religion, to which he applied the comparative and ethnographic approach he had learned with Stein. Then, from the 1970s onward he assembled and trained a team of young scholars that was tasked with completing the catalog of the Chinese Dunhuang documents kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale.¹³⁰ Yet beyond this particular assignment, which Soymié oversaw with admirable thoroughness, the group developed into a major center of Dunhuang studies, producing a large number of publications and maintaining close cooperation with Dunhuang scholars in China and Japan.

Jean-Pierre Diény's (1927–2014) profile is somewhat different. Not unlike Granet at the beginning of the twentieth century, he was trained in classical humanities at the École Normale Supérieure. After a stint as a high school teacher he was awarded a three-year scholarship during which he started his Chinese studies under the aegis of Paul Demiéville. Following stays in Japan, in China, and in Hong Kong, he was elected in 1970 to an EPHE chair of “Histoire et philologie de la Chine classique.” His principal field was ancient and medieval literature, with an emphasis on poetry and literary criticism. The many studies and translations he published are a rare combination of extreme erudition and stylistic elegance.¹³¹ Beyond this particular domain, however, he was tremendously influential in training generations of students in the subtleties and rigors of classical philology.

¹²⁹ André Lévy is the only French Sinologist of note who was born and raised in China. His father, the owner of a jeweler's shop in Tianjin, took his family back to France when the Japanese invaded in 1937. During the war the young Lévy joined the “maquis” of the French Resistance in the Auvergne mountains. He started studying Chinese (as well as Japanese and Sanskrit) after the war.

¹³⁰ Of the five volumes of the final, descriptive catalog—as opposed to the preliminary lists drafted by Pelliot and Wang Zhongmin before the war—the first, which had been prepared by Jacques Gernet and Wu Chi-yu in the 1950s, appeared in 1970; the second, which was entrusted to Bibliothèque Nationale scholars, never materialized; the last three were published by Soymié's team between 1983 and 1995. For an account of Soymié's life and oeuvre and a detailed list of his publications (a not inconsiderable part of which appeared in Japanese), see Jean-Pierre Drège, “Michel Soymié (1924–2002),” *BEFEO* 89 (2002), 6–14.

¹³¹ More than forty of Diény's articles in revised and edited form feature in his *Images et représentations du monde dans la Chine ancienne: choix d'études* (1962–2006), 2 vols., edited by J.-P. Diény and Pierre-Henri Durand (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 2012); vol. 2 includes a complete list of his publications.

The generation of scholars just discussed, whose individual contributions would have deserved more detail than is possible to provide here, played a critical role in the development of postwar French Sinology. Their training under Stein, Kaltenmark, and especially Demiéville, directly linked them to the great tradition illustrated by Chavannes, Pelliot, Maspero, and Granet, with its insistence on general culture and philological thoroughness and its creativity in opening new fields. To a large extent they were able to pass this tradition on to their own students, and it can be said that it is still alive, though, I would say, in a diluted form in the best of cases. Since the 1970s and 1980s the field has grown enormously. In contrast with the somewhat rarefied milieu of prewar Sinology,¹³² universities—a handful of them, to be sure—have opened to Chinese studies,¹³³ and professorships and assistant professorships have multiplied; several of these schools, including the *École des Langues Orientales* (now INALCO), have set up research centers and doctoral programs; and finally, both the CNRS and EPHE (and later EHESS) have created research positions opened to junior scholars: as I already mentioned, the CNRS in particular played a crucial role in the postwar development of Sinology (and many other disciplines, of course) by offering positions and subsidizing research centers. The same is true of the EFEO, which since the loss of its Hanoi base has established its presence in Kyoto, Hong Kong, Taipei, and more recently Beijing.¹³⁴

Parallel to this quantitative growth was a process of specialization—and it goes without saying that in this respect France is no exception. Contrary to the Sinologists of old, who would naturally start from a general competence in the basic sources of Chinese culture and were prone to explore a variety of domains and periods, modern scholars tend to concentrate on narrower issues early on, as it is difficult not to do given the proliferation of sources and of secondary literature. Disciplinary specialties have emerged, with their own research outfits and networks. Examples include art history and archeology (where the main influence has been Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens [1934–2018]), socio-economic history (in which the influence of Balazs, Gernet, and the EPHE Sixth Section has been decisive), religion, literature, late imperial history, the history of law, and the study of science and technology (here too Gernet was influential). None of these fields were unknown to the older generations, who at times investigated them quite thoroughly, but they did not develop as independent disciplines.

One domain in particular has tended to set itself up as a self-sufficient specialty: the study of contemporary China. Whereas for Chavannes and his disciples, concern with contemporary developments was a natural component of their identity as Sinologists, this was not the same thing as taking current (or recent) affairs as a topic for investigation. The scholar who initiated “modern and contemporary China”—that is, post-imperial—as a specialty in its own right in France was Jean Chesneaux (1922–2007), who as I mentioned was one of the East Asianists recruited by Fernand Braudel to join the Sixth Section in 1955. A medieval historian by training, Chesneaux discovered his new calling during a six-month stay in China in 1948 (he had been assigned by a private outfit to investigate universities in Asia, and this was the last stage of a rather

¹³²There were other scholars than those cited in this essay, of course, but they were not many.

¹³³By creating Chinese (or Oriental) departments: contrary to the situation in America, for example, generalist departments of history, literature, economics, etc., remain extremely reluctant to welcome specialists of China, or any other non-Western cultural area.

¹³⁴Today EFEO members spend only part of their tenures in the field. Otherwise they operate in France (mostly in Paris) and complement their research activities by teaching courses in universities.

adventurous trip);¹³⁵ it was also in the wake of this Chinese experience that he became a Communist militant. Back in France, Chesneaux learned Chinese at the *École des Langues Orientales* and decided to devote his research to China's labor movement (and, more generally, contemporary socio-economic history), at a time when such topics were totally absent from academic preoccupations. The resulting doctoral dissertation, *Le mouvement ouvrier chinois de 1919 à 1927* (published in 1962), was certainly a seminal and path-breaking effort; the book is still regarded as a "classic" despite ideological and evidential limitations that Chesneaux himself acknowledged in his preface to the 1999 new edition.¹³⁶ More importantly, Chesneaux's seminar was a training ground for a group of younger scholars, most of them historians by training, who in turn taught the new specialty in the various institutions in which they pursued their careers.¹³⁷ At about the same time, in 1958, the Sixth Section set up a library specializing in modern China, whose direction was entrusted to a military officer who was also an experienced diplomat and a scholar of contemporary China, Jacques Guillermaz (1911–1998).¹³⁸ Headed by Guillermaz until his retirement in 1976, this modest "centre de documentation" eventually grew into a major research center mostly dedicated to twentieth-century China. As in other countries, the relationship between contemporary China studies and premodern China scholarship has not always been easy and in some cases has given rise to quasi-militant opposition (and competition for resources); the more recent generations seem open to a more inclusive approach, however.

French Sinology in the twenty-first century is the product of these various developments. Teaching and research positions are much more numerous than in prewar and early postwar years—a trend encouraged by the fast growth of student demand, notably after 1968, and by the opportunities for studying in China that have developed since the late 1970s. Research centers (or "laboratories," in CNRS parlance) have multiplied and accompanied the general drift towards specialization already mentioned. Even though the French legendary bent for centralization remains very much alive—the bulk of teaching and research on China still is in Paris and its immediate surroundings—research centers on East Asia are flourishing in cities like Lyon or Aix-en-Provence and are active members of the national scholarly community. Likewise, research outfits in East Asia, such as the *Maison Franco-japonaise* in Tokyo, the French Center for Contemporary China in Hong Kong, or the EFEO centers in Beijing, Taipei, Hong

¹³⁵Chesneaux was imprisoned several months in Vietnam after a visit to Viet Minh positions. He had already known the prison in Paris as a member of the student *Résistance*, but contrary to Maspero, he escaped deportation thanks to the liberation of Paris.

¹³⁶Chesneaux, who left the French Communist Party in 1969, became for a time a devoted Maoist before turning to environmentalism and cultural criticism. He abandoned the China field in the 1970s.

¹³⁷They include, among others, Lucien Bianco, Marie-Claire Bergère, Alain Roux, and Marianne Bastid (all retired now).

¹³⁸Guillermaz, who had been appointed French military attaché in China in 1937 and spent the years 1941–1943 in Chongqing, returned to Nanjing in the same capacity in 1946, remaining there until 1951. He also advised the French delegation at the Geneva conference on Vietnam in 1954. He retired from active duty in 1958, the year he agreed to set up a Chinese documentation center at EPHE, and in time became a "Directeur d'études" with his seminar and students. In 1964 General de Gaulle entrusted him with the uncomfortable task of visiting Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan to inform him that France was about to establish diplomatic relations with mainland China. The same year he became the first military attaché to the new French embassy in Beijing (with the rank of general), and he stayed there through 1966. Though superseded by later research in some respects, his *Histoire du Parti communiste chinois, 1921–1949* (Paris: Payot, 1968, English edition 1972, new edition 1975) and its sequel *Le Parti communiste chinois au pouvoir, 1949–1972* (Paris: Payot, 1972) remain standard reference works.

Kong, and Kyoto—of course very far from the old Hanoi colonial model—are welcoming young scholars eager to spend time in Asia and do field research.

Yet France's position in world Sinology cannot by any means compare with what it was in the glorious days of Pelliot *et al.* To be sure, even though Paris more or less dominated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from the start—indeed, from Abel-Rémusat's time—Sinology had been a European endeavor, with scholars from every country actively corresponding, travelling between capitals, and occasionally jockeying for preeminence or priority in this or that area or new project. Today the European scene remains important, as attested by the vitality of the European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS), itself heir to the “Junior Sinologues” meetings of the 1950s and 1960s. But France can no longer claim any preeminence, and indeed has long ceased to do so. More significantly, French has ceased to be the language that a Sinologist, whatever his native country and the place where he works, *needs* to be conversant with. The language that has replaced it is of course English, which has in the same way made German, Italian, or even Russian into exotic idioms on the international scene. Even though a degree of multilingualism still exists among European academia, and “national” schools (i.e., writing in their own language) have not disappeared, we are all—the present essay is an illustration—yielding to the domination of English (or American English) as a Sinological *lingua franca*.

The reason of course is the rapid and brilliant development of Chinese studies in the US since World War II. The time when Harvard called on Pelliot or Elisseeff to tell them what to do or even to do it for their sake is long gone. By the 1950s and later the attraction ran the opposite way: for many French scholars the thing to do would be to go on a pilgrimage to Harvard, where John K. Fairbank and his colleagues were generously welcoming foreign visitors and putting their resources at their disposal. Together with the US postwar political and cultural ascendancy in general, the quality of its elite universities, the means that the federal state or even the military put into Far Eastern studies, the outstanding library resources built up since before the Pacific War, the multiplication of venues for publication, all of this could only act as a magnet on impoverished postwar European academics—and not just European, of course: after all, one of the great strengths of American Sinology in the postwar decades has been the presence of a large number of Chinese scholars who for a variety of reasons, political or otherwise, decided to stay and make their careers there.

In a word, France, which for a few decades had been accustomed to being at the center of international Sinology, is no longer so. Its China scholars are operating in a multipolar world, and they participate in a profession run through by multiple networks, national preoccupations, political trends, and fashions. (In this last respect, the international destiny of “French theory,” as it is called, would be a topic for research in itself.) The eighteenth-century learned Jesuits of the French mission, the nineteenth-century pioneers at the Collège de France, the “giants” of the first half of the twentieth century, remain very much present in our national Sinological conscience. But they are a thing of the past. What French Sinology needs to do today is to maintain the standards of philological rigor and scholarly creativity established by that hallowed tradition and hold its place in the international concert of Chinese studies.

Conflicting interests. The author declares none.