Present State of the Japanese Studies in France

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James Baxter : Welcome. This is the 45th in Nichibunken's Evening Seminar Series, and we are honored to have Jean-Noel Robert with us.

Prof. Robert's regular position is at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE) in Paris. This year he is a visiting professor at this Center. A specialist in Nara Buddhism, he is the author of a study of Tendai in the ninth century, and he has also written about Nara art. He is an expert on the Lotus Sutra, and has translated Kumarajiva's Chinese version of that sutra into French. He has made presentations to conferences on poems by the monk Jien that constitute a commentary on the Lotus Sutra, among other topics, and he has published a texbook on *kanbun*. Recently he has been a contributor to the updated edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Japan*, in France.

When I think of Prof. Robert, the first word that occurs to me is "prodigious,"in the sense of being wonderful or marvelous, a prodigy, some kind of amazement. He speaks Chinese and Tibetan, not to mention Japanese, and momentarily you will discover that he is the master of a stylish, subtle, and supple English. We're delighted to have him talk to us about the present state of Japanese studies in France.

Professor Robert : Thank you very much, Jim, for your kind introduction, something of an overpraise –*homegoroshi* – I'm afraid, and usually people are terribly disappointed by the real thing after having heard such words. I must confess that until 20 minutes ago I was a very happy man, as I thought my talk was due for 6:00 and I had still two hours to prepare some materials. Then, at 4:00 pm, it transpired that it was not 6:00 but 16:00, which explains the 20 minutes delay, for which I apologize.

Today's subject is very hard to treat for two reasons, the first one being my poor command of English, especially when I have to shift from one

language to another. It's been two days now that I am trying to speak aloud in English when I am alone, in order to get started and at the risk of passing in the eyes of bystanders for more perturbed than I already am, but it did not give much of a result, as you can hear. Fortunately, I still had time to prepare this outprint here, with an outline of my talk and some proper names written down. The second reason is that, trying to specialize in the study of Japanese Buddhism, I have no vantage point to cover the whole of Japanese studies and research going on in France at the present time, precisely in a period when these studies have grown beyond any individual's reach.

Let me begin with a historical introduction, relying heavily on outlines already published, especially those by Prof. Bernard Frank and J.-J. Origas.

I want first to make some very brief points, and then attempt a general description. We have to explain first the very confusing educational organization, simply to understand why it is so difficult to make a definite outline of Japanese studies there. There are simply too many different research institutions, research centers, higher and highest teaching facilities to try to embrace them all. Some of these institutions are connected by various research programs and there are too many different research teams to try to number them all. French cultural and scientific activities, especially in oriental studies, have traditionally been centered on Paris, but this is changing now, and there is quite an impressive number of scholars in various provincial universities, with specialized journals being published outside Paris.

The first thing to say is that compared to other fields of oriental and Asiatic studies, in France as in other European and Western countries, independent Japanese studies seem to have a much shorter history. It all depends, of course, on what we understand by Japanese studies. We can see that Léon Pagès, the second name in the historical figures in the outprint, made a bibliography of Japanese studies in Europe between the 15th century and 1859, and that he found already 658 titles to mention. That's quite a lot and shows that Japan was not by any means a terra incognita at that time. But it does seem that the first ones to tackle the Japanese language in a more or less serious way in 19th century France were the two names here: Léon de Rosny and Léon Pagès. Unfortunately, if I may say so, it was the former who was appointed the first professor of Japanese at the Ecole des Langues Orientales de Paris (now INALCO, first name in the

second paragraph), rather than the latter. It does seem that Pagès knew more Japanese than Rosny, who had been mostly schooled in the classical Chinese language as a disciple of the famous sinologist Stanislas Julien. Perhaps many here have read Fukuzawa Yukichi's famous autobiography, the *Fukuo jiden* : in the relation of his travels in Europe and France, he recalls that Léon de Rosny came to meet him twice, around 1857, first in Paris, and the second time in Le Havre port, where Rosny went especially to see Fukuzawa on his way to England. It is rather of a surprise, for those who consider Rosny as the father of Japanese studies in France, to read that, according to Fukuzawa, he spoke very good English and "some Japanese". Judging by the few lines I could read written by him in that language, we can say that is Japanese was nothing to speak of. But he was very enthusiastic about Japanese studies, and availed himself very much of the wave of Oriental and Japanese fashion at the time.

Léon Pagès built his scholarly name on his translation of the famous Japanese-Portuguese dictionary made at the turn of the 17th century, which he revised according to a Spanish translation. This French revision is much more clear than the original and is still a reference book for late medieval and pre-modern Japanese language.

Michel Revon knew some Japanese, but I mention him here because he compiled, mostly from other European translations, the first anthology of Japanese literature in French, from the *Manyoshu* to the Meiji era. This work had a great influence on writers and artists, even outside France, as we see that Venceslau de Morais, the Portuguese equivalent of Lafcadio Hearn, who came to Japan at the turn of the century and died in Tokushima in 1929, drew most of his knowledge of Japanese literature from Michel Revon. The recluse life he chose to live in Shikoku in his last years was inspired, it seems, by the text of the *Hojoki* he found in Revon's anthology.

The next two names, Noël Peri and Claude Maître, were both real connoisseurs of Japanese language and culture. They were both attracted by Buddhist and artistic studies, the former being a Buddhist scholar, the latter a specialist in art history. Although they did not teach Japanese, they

were research fellows at the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, last entry on the next paragraph of the outprint (in Japanese: *Kyokutô gakuin*). They came to Japan, knew Japanese, used Japanese historical sources for their researches, and in some way, they could be considered as forerunners of these studies in France, but they did not leave any disciples.

Many seem to agree that the basis for academic Japanese studies in France was laid by Serge Elisséeff. He came from Saint Petersburg to Paris in 1921 and stayed there until 1947, I think. At that time he was called to the United States, where he really launched Japanese studies. His role in France was not as eminent as he deserved, for he had no official academic post. But he started lecturing in Japanese civilization and language when he came back to France in 1957, in what was later to become the EHESS, the School of Social Sciences.

The first fully appointed professor of Japanese studies at the Sorbonne (in 1953) was Charles Haguenauer, who knew Serge Elisséeff and, I think, even started learning Japanese with him. He then taught at the department of Science of Religion at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE), thus lauching studies in the field of Japanese religions. Charles Haguenauer had a wonderful command of Japanese. I met him only once or twice, but I saw letters by him in Japanese and they were written beautifully. He mastered not only Japanese but a host of other languages, all the main tongues of Asia and Europe and some African languages too. He was probably the first in France to devote entirely such a broad range of scholarship to the elucidation of Japanese language and civilization. His magnum opus, *Origines de la civilisation japonaise* (Paris, 1956), is a wonderful treasure trove of anthropological and linguistic lore that can only be mastered through repeated readings, as there is no index and the general plan is quite luxuriant, but it is still a rewarding study. It remains one of the main sources for the problem of the origins of the Japanese language as a scion of the Altaic family. Although as distinguished a scholar in this field as Roy Andrew Miller has rather harsh words against this work, the fact is many of his own arguments and evidence are already to be found in Haguenauer. He was not uninterested in Japanese literature too, as we can see from his translation of the chapter *Kiritsubo* of the *Genji monogatari*;

unfortunately, his love for languages led him a bit astray here, as he chose to translate that chapter in medieval French, which made it well nigh impossible to read for most people, and drew him rebuke from professional medievalists, for mixing grammatical forms of different periods. Charles Haguenauaer was the teacher of a whole generation of French *japonisants*, indeed most of those who are now over 60. Two of his foremost disciples were René Sieffert and Bernard Frank. The former had been in charge of the teaching of Japanese at the School of Oriental Languages (INALCO), on which I will say more later, while Bernard Frank was the first specialist in Japanese studies to be appointed a professor of Japanese Civilization at the Collège de France, generally held to be the highest educational institution in France. There had been no chair of Japanese language or culture in the Collège since its foundation in the 16th century, although one of the first teachers there, the Renaissance scholar of Hebrew and Arabic Guillaume Postel, wrote a few pages about Japanese religions, thus being one of the first to mention this country in France. In his inauguration lecture at the Collège de France, Bernard Frank spoke about the description of Japan by Postel.

Unfortunately, after Bernard Frank's untimely death in 1996, there has been no successor to his chair of Japanese Civilization. It is to be hoped that it will be provided again, as the other teachings on China, India and Islam have suffered almost no break since their creation. Another very important step has been taken in the recognition of Japanese studies as a full discipline in Academe, and that was the creation of the *agrégation* in the Japanese language. The *agrégation* is a state examination for the status of full professor at the high school level. There are of course *agrégations* for all the traditional school subjects (Latin and Greek, literature, history, etc.) as well as for a number of languages, starting from the main European ones like English and German to Russian, Arabic or Hebrew. One of the results of the visit of President Mitterrand to Japan in 1982 was the creation of the *agrégation* in Japanese language, which was done around 1986. To succeed at this rather difficult examination means that you are provided with a teaching post at high school level for your whole career, with the obligation for the State to create such posts if they don't exist yet. It's a surprising fact that the agrégation in Chinese language was created only in

1999 , about 15 years after the Japanese one.

Now let me try a very brief outline of the teaching and research institutions. The foremost place to learn Japanese is of course the School of Oriental Languages (now known as INALCO: Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales). Although created under the monarchy, its definitive status was delineated after the Revolution. Under the reign of Louis XIV and until the beginning of the 19th century, mostly Near Eastern languages were taught: Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Armenian, then came Chinese, and about twenty years later, in 1863 as we have seen, Japanese. The Ecole des Langues Orientales was for a very long time the only place in France were you could study so many Eastern languages, and it had thus a good start ahead of other institutions. Even now, it is the place where most students want to go when they wish to engage in such pursuits. I thank Ms. Watanabe for having so kindly xeroxed the list of registered students in Japanese at the INALCO: you can see that the number rises from 41 in 1960 to 1,560 in 1984. I remember that when I registered as a student there in 1967, ours was the first year to reach the 100 students level. I had a talk last summer with my friend and colleague Prof. François Macé, head of the Japanese department there, who told me that there were about 1,800 students registering yearly in Japanese. So the progression is not so fast now, being steady around that number, but it still makes Japanese the language with the greatest number of students at the INALCO, above Chinese and Arabic. Of course, it does not mean that we have around 1,500 students graduating every year in Japanese, but still their number is quite high, something like 200 a year getting some kind of degree in Japanese language at the INALCO only. The main other place in Paris where they teach Japanese within a full academic organization is the department of Far-East languages at the Université de Paris 7, which can boast around 200 students for Japanese. And there are now universities outside Paris, in cities like Lille, Lyons, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence, which deliver at least the *licence* degree in Japanese after three years . The total number of students of Japanese in France is very hard to assess, if you must take into account all the private foundations, some religious ones, like Tenrikyo, being very active in the field, and many private or public business schools making a point of honour of having some

course in business Japanese. In a meeting we had last year of colleagues in the field of Japanese studies, the number was said to be around 10,000 people, which would be a credible number.

At the INALCO and the universities, professors have a status defined as "*enseignants-chercheurs*", something like "research-professors". That means they are both teachers and researchers and have to divide their time between both activities, which is easier said than done, given the paucity of means. For each professor to have his own study-office, as we see in most Japanese universities, would be an impossible dream certainly not to be realized in any foreseeable future.

Besides these full teaching institutions, we have another, variegated array of organizations which can be defined as more research-oriented, which does not mean that the people there are better researchers than their colleagues at the university. Let me begin with the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE), to which I happen to belong. It was created at the end of the 19th century and is still located for the most part inside the Sorbonne. It is now divided in three departments, the first one treating earth- and life sciences; I will not speak of it here. The two departments (or "sections", as they are called in French) which shall detain us now are the fourth and the fifth (an old numeration which no longer reflects reality, as often in France, but which has been kept since last century; the first department is thus called "Troisième section"). The Fourth Department or "Quatrième section" is devoted to historical and philological sciences (Sciences historiques et philologiques). That's where Bernard Frank was teaching before entering the Collège de France; he was succeeded by Francine Hérail, the translator of the *Mido kanpakki* of Fujiwara no Michinaga and a well-known specialist of Heian. She is now retired and has been succeeded by Charlotte von Verschuer, a specialist in relation between China and Japan during the Nara and Heian periods. The Fifth Department or "Cinquième section" is called Section des Sciences religieuses. This very name is now a matter of debate, but most of us are rather attached to it. Actually, this section was constituted in 1885 on the ruins of the department of theology, much as a sign of independence of religious studies from the Catholic church. The first head of the department was the famous scholar Ernest

Renan, who studied Judaism and Chistianity as any other historical phenomenon. Now, of course, the militant anti-religious edge of the section has been considerably attenuated and the recent problems concerning the relations between a lay state and religious minorities, mainly Islam, have raised a new interest for our department from some political spheres. The successor of Charles Haguenauer, who was in charge of Japanese Religions, as I told you, is now my friend and colleague Hartmut O. Rotermund, whose chair is now called "Religions populaires du Japon" and who is studying religions and modernity at the beginning of the Meiji era. Mine is called "Japanese Buddhism", and I devote most of my lectures to the study of commentaries in the Tendai tradition, together with an introductory course in *kanbun*. Compared to most other places, our Ecole is a minor paradise, a Pure Land of study: the professors there, who are called *directeurs d'études*, have two hours a week to teach, plus one hour of students' supervision or introductory course. The courses are given in the form of seminars (which explains the adjective "*pratique*" in the name of the EPHE, quite a laughing matter for our outside colleagues, given that most of the subjects are most unpractical), the professor being supposed, so to speak, to pursue his own research before the eyes of the students. Most of them are undergraduates who intend sooner or later to write a doctoral dissertation, but there is yet quite a number of enlightened amateurs attending regularly.

The Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) was formely the sixth section of our EPHE, which has now been independent for more than thirty years. It is a most active place for the sociological study of Japan under the direction of Augustin Berque, who was a visiting professor here at the Nichibunken a few years ago. He is in charge of a research team specializing in urbanism and environment in Japan.

As I told you, there is no professor in charge of Japanese studies now at the Collège de France, but the study center organized there by Bernard Frank on the basis of Charles Haguenauer's library and called the Institut des Hautes Etudes Japonaises (IHEJ) is thriving and functions as a gathering place for most of Japanese scholars in Paris, under the thoughtful guidance of Mrs Matsuzaki-Petitmangin. The liaison office of the Société

Française des Etudes Japonaises (SFEJ) is situated there too. Those who want more details on the French japonisants and activities in Japanese studies should consult the yearly newsletter (*Bulletin*) of this society. Every other year the SFEJ organizes a congress of Japanese studies attended by an impressive number of people and the transactions of the congress are published a few months later, giving a fair overview of the current state of scholarship.

The prestigious Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) has always been a hothouse for Japanese studies. I can only name a few of the scholars engaged in research there: Patrick Beillevaire on Okinawa culture, Jean-Pierre Berthon on new religions, Jane Cobbi on material culture, Nicolas Fiévé on historical urbanism, Josef Kyburz on religious ethnology, Simone Mauclaire on historical anthropology, Eric Seizelet on law, etc. I can only apologize for those I forget to mention. One of the most wonderful advantages of the CNRS, and a matter of envy for all those outside, is that the researchers there are utterly free to pursue their own studies without having to teach, nor is the urge for publishing as insistent as I'm told it is in the United States for example. Scholars there are masters of their own research, although they are all members of research teams.

Much of the same atmosphere prevails in the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), certainly one of the most extraordinary research institution devoted to oriental studies in the world. I would hardly agree with the one who described it somewhere as "the most sophisticated weapon of French imperialism", because, if anything, and whatever may have been the purpose of those who created it, the EFEO, which celebrates in 2000 its first century of existence, fostered a whole array of oriental scholars opposed to colonialism (I will simply mention the name of Paul Mus). I mentioned earlier Noël Peri and Claude Maître, who both were members of this organization. This year sees a number of very young research fellows entering the EFEO in the field of Japanese studies. Both EFEO and CNRS provide ideal conditions for research, with no teaching obligation, the main difference between them being that EFEO expects its members to carry on their studies in the relevant countries of Asia rather than in France. They both provide a career for scholars in fields not taught at uni-

versity on a sufficient scale, be it Cambodian or regional Indian cultures.

I will just end my presentation with a general observation. Even if there is quite an impressive number of students of Japanese who study this language in order to "do business" with Japan and to get into the real life of firms and enterprises, the fact remains that a majority of them prefer to choose classical or modern literature. I know from some remarks I overheard that Japanese diplomats or staff of Japanese cultural centers in Paris feel a bit frustrated by that state of things. They would prefer students to engage into the study of "real", economic Japan and resent the paucity of the demand in those matters. Although there are very able young scholars researching and teaching Japanese economics now, like Claude Hamon or Bernard Thomann, most of those who study the Japanese economy prefer to enter private firms, or go into the diplomatic service, to staying in academic institutions. That is the main fault of Japanese studies in France, if we should call it a fault.

Audience member : I was quite surprised by the sheer numbers of students majoring in Japanese studies in France, as shown in your handout. My first question is, What are those students doing for jobs? Do you have any idea? And my second question is about French Japan specialists' activities outside France. In European Japanese studies meetings, France doesn't seem to be so well represented, for instance in the EAJS (European Association for Japanese Studies) or the European Japan Experts Association that was, I think, initiated by the EU. I don't think I've ever met a French colleague. I have met Greek and Italian colleagues, and British of course, but no French. I would like to hear from you why—is there less interest from the French side, or is there a language problem, or...?

Robert: Well, for your first question: as you know, the French unemployment rate, although somewhat diminishing, is still one of the highest of the European Community, and until now, there has been quite a wide discrepancy between the subjects students graduate in and the demands of the job market. I'm sure that a degree in Japanese is no magic key to employment, but still I think that those who have one are rather better off than in many other subjects. There is a variety of activities, connected with

tourism in France for example, which can provide at least part-time jobs. I know of some very bright undergraduates who make quite a decent living guiding Japanese tourists through the mysteries of nocturnal Paris. As for teaching jobs, those who can get the *agrégation* are sure to be given a post in school or high-school, the others must stick around for a number of year before finding something, either at school or at the university, but more often than not those jobs hardly provide a living. I would personaly think that it's somewhat easier to find some kind of work with Japanese than with most European languages. The problem is more at a general level of orientation in French studies; the ratio of students graduating in technology in Germany, for example, is devastatingly superior to France: something like 10 to 1, or so I've heard. The fact is that French students seem invincibly drawn to humanist studies. I remember that about 25 years ago, a best-seller book exposing the shortcomings of French society asserted that there were 12 persons graduating each year in Assyrian studies and that no country in the world could possibly secure a living for so many Assyriologists. I'm sure that now the rate of production of Assyrian scholars is still higher, without speaking of Egyptologists, specialists of modern German or Russian literature, and so on. It's a common view now that we have too many students in the humanities, though many still make a difference between studying, which is still largely a matter of personal taste, and getting a job, something outside academe, but there's no denying that things are changing rapidly.

As for your second question, and if I may speak from my own experience, I attended the first congress of the European Association of Japanese Sudies (EAJS) in Zurich in 1976 and after that in the Hague in 1982 and I enjoyed it very much, but I cannot deny that when I have to choose between going to Japan or China and going to any other place in Europe or the West, I do not hesitate to choose the Far-East, simply because I feel that even a short stay there is worth weeks of study elsewhere. Most of my friends and colleagues seem to feel the same. It's not a question of language, although I'm sure I don't approve too much of the monolingualism that's prevailing now in a field that should by essence be plurilingual. And let's not forget that a congress of the EAJS was organized at the Sorbonne, in the mid-'80, by Hartmut O. Rotermund.

Audience member : Would you take notice of the literature by European scholars, or would you say, well, it's much more important to read the Japanese?

Robert: It all depends on which side of your studies you value most; primary sources, as a rule, must have priority. In Buddhist studies, be it Chinese or Japanese studies, specialized literature in Japanese is overwhelming, and you can hardly hope to master it. In other fields, there is very good material now in English, and even French or German, but nothing yet to supersede Japanese.

Audience member : France has been famous for Chinese studies. How do you feel Japanese studies compares with Chinese studies in France? What is the status of Japanese studies and those French scholars who are engaged in Japanese studies? That's my first question. My second question is, "Which aspect of Japan are French scholars interested in?" And—I'm sorry—a third question is, "Are French researchers enthusiastic about learning English for communication and for presenting their research results?"

Robert : When I was still thinking I had two hours' time ahead, I wanted to make copies of the recent French publications on Japanese studies or matters pertaining to Japan. There is quite a number of translations of novels and poetry, some research monographs, and then a whole six pages of *manga* translations. An impressive number of students pick up Japanese for reading comics in the original, and use them as exclusive practice material. In some way, *manga* are connected with the Internet, informatics, modern music, in a word to modernity, or even "post-modernity", whatever it might mean. Even people without any knowledge of Japanese insist on reading *manga* in the original! There is thus a whole subculture being born around Japanese as a super-modern language. So you have here quite a different facet of the role of Japanese studies.

Now, you know that the reading public in France has always been rather limited, much of what Somerset Maugham wrote about it in his *A Writer's Notebook* still obtains today. You could even say, according to some survey research, that the illiteracy rate is growing. Nevertheless, the sheer amount of translations from Japanese into French is impressive. I would even ven-

ture to say that it's superior to what is to be found in English; that means that there is an interest for Japanese literature out of proportion with the size of the reading public. Inaga-san has spoken about the famous Pléiade collection published by Gallimard; the head of this collection for many years had been an enthusiastic lover of Japanese literature. We owe him the publication in this series of two volumes of works by Tanizaki Junichiro, more than 3000 pages. The same amount will be devoted to Ihara Saikaku, to be published in the near future. So we cannot ignore this craving for all levels of Japanese culture.

On the other side, the scientific and technological demand is not the same at all. In a meeting I attended last December in Tokyo on French-Japanese scientific cooperation, there was quite a telling example: in some very high-level Japanese laboratory, in physics I think, there were twenty American researchers, about ten Britons, and only one Frenchman. Everybody asked the French side the reason why, and the French answer was that... the Japanese don't speak enough English! This language problem did not seem to bother the American and English scientists. It seems that the French simply do not imagine yet the need of a full scientific cooperation with Japan. On the other hand, I know for instance a French plastic surgeon who studied in Japan and is now quite successful in Paris. Perhaps there will be more people like him in the future.

Audience member : You mentioned that when President Mitterand visited Japan, he encouraged Japanese studies in France. At that stage did he suggest that French young people should know about Japanese culture, as well as about economics or the political situation?

Robert : I'm afraid I don't remember precisely what he said. But, as I've told you, it was after his visit in Japan that the *agrégation*, the state-held examination for Japanese-language professorship was established. In order to become an *agrégé*, you have to study classical and modern literature and take an option in economics or sociology. But the interest of the general public, perhaps I should say cultivated public, for Japanese culture is quite independent from political incentives.

Audience member : May I just confirm that Elisséeff is the same person

who came to Japan and then later went to Harvard?
Robert : Yes, yes.
Audience member : ...the personal friend of Natsume Soseki.
Robert : Yes, yes.
Audience member : There is a book written by Mr. Kurata Yasuo....

Robert : Yes, it is still available, it's a very good book and possibly the only one written on Elisséeff in any language; the exact title is *Eriseefu no shôgai* (Chuokoron, Chuko shinsho). Serge Elisséeff started his career in France, then went to the United States, but eventually came back to Paris, where he ended his life. One of his sons, Vadim Elisséeff was the curator of the Guimet Museum of Asiatic Arts.

Audience member : In the case of Edwin O.Reischauer, he was able to read Chinese, as well as Japanese. And it used to be that in order to learn Chinese history, students had to learn Japanese, as well. I knew a professor of Chinese history when I was in England, and he felt he had to know Japanese, because there are many valuable studies on China by Japanese scholars. Is the same case true in France? Do scholars of Chinese subjects feel they need to learn Japanese?

Robert : It was very much the case until recently in Buddhist, Chinese and Far-East studies. Japanese was surely one of the main scholarly languages in those fields. It's becoming unfortunately less and less true now. It may be partly due to the soaring amount of publication of secondary literature in English, without forgetting that scholarly literature in Chinese too has been constantly growing for the last twenty years, and a knowledge of modern Chinese is becoming necessary.

Still, such a long-term project as the *Hobogirin*, the encyclopædia of Buddhism according to Chinese and Japanese sources, which got started in 1924 and the eighth fascicle of which will be published shortly, shows that all has not yet been said and done in this perspective. There indeed remains a huge amount of research there to be developed between Japanese and French scholars.

Audience member : Let me ask a final question. I have been waiting for this moment. One of the questions we have been asking to all the speakers in this series of Evening Seminars is this : What is unique or distinctive about Japanese studies in your homeland, compared with Japanese studies in Japan or the United States or elsewhere? What distinguishes French specialists in their approaches to Japanese affairs, or to Japanese studies? And second, what's the contribution of French scholars to the whole global body of academic work on Japan?

Robert : I am a bit at a loss to give an answer, but I will connect it to a previous question, the individualism Inaga-san was speaking about. We have in Paris a research team which was organized by Bernard Frank and is now headed by Harmut O. Rotermund, with about 30 members. We have no clear-cut research agenda and everybody, belonging to one or the other teaching or research institution I tried prieviously to describe, pursues their own research, but we have a few meetings a year which we use to exchange views on our work. One or two colleagues are asked each time to make a summary of their researches and we discuss it. It would be impossible to have everybody working on the same project, but somehow we find that we have many things to say to each other and that everybody's studies shed some light on the others'. In more than one way, it would not be exagerated to say that for many of us the study of Japanese culture is more an art than a science. Which explains why most French specialists in Japanese culture are reluctant to use English; almost no one among us can hope to write decently in English; it would then be a mere instrument, just like when you write on some hard scientific matters, nuclear physics, palynology and the like. I would rather say that they mainly aim to be in sympathy with their subject and give it an accurate expression. If you read the historical outlines written by Bernard Frank or Jean-Jacques Origas, you will see there is almost always an appreciation on the style of their predecessors, and on the way they had of penetrating the culture; these scholars are thus judged as artists too, or rather "hommes de lettres". I realize that such a view may seem furiously "*dépassée*" now, but I think it still can be held. Japanese studies are still very much a part of the humanities in France. But this is only the opinion of a Frog sitting in the bottom of the well.