

REPRESENTATION OF NATURE IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE OVERSEAS ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

by

Dominique Barjot,

Perpetual Secretary of the Académie des sciences d'outre-mer

The influence and international prestige of French science owes much to the activities of the five major academies of the Institut de France: The Académie des sciences d'outre-mer has a special place in the cross-cultural approach to representations of nature. Taking its profile from the legacy of the Geographical Societies of the 19th^e century, from the outset it benefited from the participation of some of the leading personalities of the time. Today, the Académie des sciences d'outre-mer is backed by an extremely rich library, focusing mainly on the Académie des sciences d'outre-mer has been involved in a wide range of scientific and academic activities that have made, or continue to make, unparalleled contributions to the representation of nature in pre-industrial societies. It has included, and still includes, many botanists (Raymond Dacary, Paul de Peyerhimoff), geologists and mineralogists (Alfred Lacroix), prehistorians (Yves Coppens, Henri de Lumley), often with a cross-disciplinary profile (Théodore Monod), as well as doctors (Alexandre Yersin, Eugène Jamot, Albert Calmette), soldiers, colonial administrators and diplomats, engineers and archaeologists (Jean Leclant), orientalist (Louis Massignon), geographers (Pierre Gourou) and historians (Hubert Deschamps, Robert Cornevin, and *alii*). The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the contribution of the Académie des sciences d'outre-mer through a selection of personalities, including Vladimir Arseniev, the Reverend Father François Aupiais, Hugues Berthier, Maurice Delafosse, our founder, Jacques Fauvée, Maurice Leenhardt, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Robert Montagne, Évelyne Porée-Maspero and Jacques Soustelle. We will look at three examples here.

Maurice Delafosse was a French colonial administrator. Africanist, ethnologist, linguist, teacher and essayist, he had a very rich career. Having started out in 1894 as a Foreign Affairs clerk in Ivory Coast, he became French consul in Liberia in 1899. On his return to the Ivory Coast, he was responsible for the demarcation of the country's border with Ghana. He was a lecturer in the Sudanese dialect at Langues O', in 1900-1901, and then worked on the preparation of the colonial exhibition in Marseille, before returning once again to the Ivory Coast. In 1908 he left this country for Sudan while continuing to teach at the colonial school and at Sciences Po in Paris. Mobilized in 1914-1915, he then served as director of political

affairs in Dakar, Senegal, between 1915 and 1918. In 1918, he was appointed 3rd class governor of the colonies. After retiring, he became Delegate to the League of Nations Slavery Commission. He also played a major role in the Committee for Historical and Scientific Studies of West Africa and, of course, within the Academy of Overseas Sciences.

Évelyne Porée-Maspero, a French teacher and ethnologist, was a specialist in Cambodia. Daughter of Georges Maspero, a colonial administrator, she was a graduate of the EPHE and Langues O'. A doctor of letters, she was the wife of Guy Porée, artistic advisor to the Cambodian government. She headed the commission on the mores and customs of Cambodia at the country's Buddhist Institute, became a member of the *École française d'Extrême-Orient*, then joined the CNRS. During her career, she accumulated numerous microfilms and documents filed with the *Société asiatique*. In addition, she published numerous works on the sociology and history of Cambodia.

A much better-known figure, Jacques Soustelle was an Americanist, ethnologist, politician and essayist all rolled into one. Originally from Lyon, he was the first to enter the *École normale supérieure*, then went on to top the philosophy aggregation. He obtained a doctorate in literature in 1937 and was a polyglot. He quickly established himself as a leading specialist on the Maya. He was a lecturer at the *Collège de France* and the *École nationale de la France d'outre-mer* and was a Marxist and pacifist when the Second World War broke out. However, he refused to accept the armistice of June 22, 1940, and joined General de Gaulle in London. The latter entrusted him with a diplomatic mission in Central and Latin America, then, from 1942, the direction of the National Information Commissariat. In 1943-1944, he was Director General of the Special Services of Free France in France and in Algiers. He then embarked on a great political career, occupying major posts: Minister of Information and then Minister of the Colonies (1945-1946), President of the RPF group (1951-1952), Governor General of Algeria (1955-1956), Minister of Information (1958-1959), Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister in charge of the Sahara, the French Overseas Territories and Atomic Energy.

In 1961, he joined the OAS (Organization of the Secret Army hostile to the independence of Algeria), and, threatened with arrest, went into exile abroad. In 1968, he was granted amnesty and returned to France. Director of studies at the EHESS, he sat on the Council of Europe and, in 1975, submitted a report to the Prime Minister on French research in anthropology and archaeology. For a time, vice-president of the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council (1975-1977), he

carried out important missions on behalf of the French government in South Africa (1978), Mexico and South America (1979-1980, then 1984-1986). In 1982, he became president of the European University Center for Cultural Heritage. He has received numerous prestigious foreign decorations and is a member of the Académie française. He has also been a member of the New York Academy of Science and the Instituto Mexicano de Cultura (Mexico City).