



Mathilde Kang

Francophonie and the Orient

French-Asian Transcultural
Crossings (1840-1940)

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Francophonie and the Orient

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Translated by Martin Munro

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Introduction: for a Francophonie of cohabitation¹

An apparently transcendental and inarguable idea conveyed within Francophone studies is the supposed equivalence between the Francophonie of the East and that of French Indochina or its variant, the former Vietnam. This position relates exclusively to the colonial past undergone by Indochina, which is neither a country nor a people. It is a name standardized for administrative reasons and based on where the states composing the colony are located. Consequently, several civilizations in Asia, including China, India, Japan, and many others find themselves left out from potential inclusion in the Francophonie of the East. It is not that these countries have never been subjected to a French regime in the course of their history, but they have been spared classical colonization, which is considered to be a requirement for belonging to the Francophone world.² Although these countries are de facto excluded from the French-speaking world, they are not, in spite of linguistic and cultural realities attested to by their histories, generally included within the framework of Francophonie. Stemming from a narrow and reductive perspective, this equation between ‘colonization and Francophonie’ dismisses out of hand any understanding of the Francophone reality in Asia before or after Indochina; in short, beyond the Indochinese borders.

Behind this self-evidently transcendental idea lies the stubborn conviction that colonization alone leads inevitably to Francophonie. This is because it guarantees the rise of French – the final step in the process – as one of the official languages of the country. Thus conceived, colonization is seen as a premise and a unique way to access the Francophone phenomenon outside of France. Moreover, several Francophone areas, such as Sub-Saharan Africa or the Maghreb, where the Francophone element comes directly from colonization, would seem to support such an argument.³ Such is therefore also the case for the Eastern Francophone world, where Vietnam, Cambodia, and

1 On the issues surrounding Francophonie in the East and in Asia, see *The Australian Journal of French Studies*, Special Issue: Francophonie and Its Futures, XLVIII (1), Jan-April 2011; also, *French Review*, Special Issue: Francophonie(s), May 2015.

2 In the sense of having been a colony of France.

3 Different cases produce different phenomena. If Francophonie in Switzerland or in Belgium has been able to benefit from a geographical proximity to the metropolis allowing them to share a geo-cultural osmosis, Quebec is an exception. For it was subject to classic colonization during

Laos remain the only proven protectorates or colonies in France. From this point of view, Indochina would undoubtedly be the only French-speaking cultural area in Asia. Does this thesis, which was largely held throughout the twentieth century, generating numerous essays in Francophone studies, still hold true? The question is all the more important if we consider the phenomenon of globalization and the generation of a transcultural world that broadens the horizons of the Francophone universe.

In the current state of thought on the French-speaking world in relation to Asia, the idea of a plural Asiatic Francophonie is not popular. Cultural phenomena or the realities arising from the French heritage in Asia, other than in Indochina, are still not seen from a Francophone-studies perspective. These facts do not give rise to the following questions: a) Is there a Francophone reality outside Indochina in Asia? b) Is classical colonization the only way for such a reality to come into being? c) Its variants or by-products, such as the 'concession', the 'trading post' or the 'lease territory', do they contribute to the cultural francization of a specific place in the same way as the classic colonization of a country? In other words, should the Francophone realities of cultural spaces outside Indochina in Asia be included or excluded from Francophonie? These questions, as essential as they are for the understanding of the French-speaking world in Asia, remain unanswered and do not find any response in the present state of Francophone studies.

Taking account of Asia's own historiography, this book seeks to examine the phenomenon of Francophone presence in Asian countries classified as non-Francophone. It will try to shed light on the ways and means of acquiring Francophone characteristics other than through classical colonization, by highlighting the cohabitation that results from migration and the transfer of French culture to Asia. Thus, my study will attempt to pave a new path towards understanding Francophone Asian reality, whose heterogeneous nature is likely to provoke debates. Several arguments support my hypothesis. Firstly, confining the French-speaking world to the colonial bosom, is to erase the Francophone life of cultures that were formerly unofficially or partially in contact with the French. There are plenty of examples. Think of the French misadventures in India, the Westernization of the Meiji era, the French regime of the colonial concession in Shanghai, or the semi-colonial situation of the Qing. Thus, this Francophone phenomenon that interests me survives in a different way, is unconventional compared to established

the expeditions to America, but with the migration of the French during the construction of French-speaking cities in Canada, since the first Quebecers were French colonists.

colonies, and requires a methodology of identification liberated from the *a priori*.

Some historical reminders

The relevance of this reconsideration of Francophone life in Asia is underscored by the continent's history. What is undeniable is that before the Indochinese Union, the numerous expeditions to the continent had created French connections and strongholds in several cultural spaces. The history of France in Asia does not therefore begin and end with the history of French Indochina. Indeed, since the fifteenth century, the developments in sailing ships on the high seas had enabled the European countries to engage extensively in maritime voyages. As the famous Silk Road of Marco Polo became impracticable, the multiple presence of Europeans was effected by sea, the Portuguese being the first to appear, along the coasts of Macau in the sixteenth century. Chinese historiography still records Macau's trading posts as the first breach that announced the influx of 'barbarian' sailboats, including those of the French, as they set their eyes on distant empires (Li Wenhai & al. 481). Motivated by both Christian proselytism and trade missions, the number of expeditions increased in the sixteenth century and reached its peak in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a result, the Indies and the Empire of Cathay are undoubtedly implicated.

Today, if certain Asian countries produce French-language literature without having undergone official colonization, it is because French presence and contact with French culture, which have been hidden, survive otherwise. This is founded on a truism. The following description maps the original distribution of the European and French presence in Asia:

the cantonment of Europeans on the periphery of closed empires (China, Japan); a diffuse presence on the coast of the Indian continent [...]; the colonial settlements for the cultivation of spices (Indonesia), supplying ships on the Indian route (Cape Town, Mascareignes) or the Christianization of indigenous peoples (Philippines). (Favier 7-8)

These positions indicate the arrival of European countries (including France) in various cultural zones before Indochina, notably in China, India, and Japan. The recognition of this first impression highlights my methodology of identification, which is based on historiography. There is no denying that expeditions to Asia are in no way lesser than those to Africa or North America. The Francophonie of the countries of Asia must therefore reflect

the historical presence of France in all those empires that embraced French civilization throughout history.

Would it be to put the cat among the pigeons to label as 'Francophone' those sovereign countries whose cultures are historically autarchic and to apply the Francophone label to those cultures classified as non-Francophone? Are these cultures an integral component of a more broadly conceived Francophonie? My research on the French presence in several regions and zones in Asia should dispel any doubt, and support such a point of view. Far from being a circumstantial or random critical turn, the question of the relevance of Francophonie in these (non-French-speaking) countries is reinforced by the preservation of French language and culture within these host cultures. Historically obscured, this part of the Francophone world deserves to be brought to light by means of a methodological approach that first recognizes its existence. Reconsidering the Asian zone cannot be done by ignoring other established Francophone areas and, moreover, several guiding questions used to articulate the problematic are drawn from current developments in Francophone studies (Mackey 117).⁴ Thus, as a prelude to my reflections, I will gauge the pulse of recent research on the dynamics of the French-speaking world by reviewing the current state of Francophone studies.

The Direction of Francophone Studies

Basing itself on the relations interwoven with France in the winding course of colonization, Francophone studies has been split into geographical areas, and flourished for half a century. The 21st century will however upset these old definitions by emphasizing the fact that the French-speaking world is no longer a closed space, gathered around a colonial history with France, but rather a sphere of influence that is called into question by the present dynamics that characterize the contemporary world.⁵ In other words, not only would Francophonie be open to multiple horizons, it would also reflect the concerns related to the transnational phenomena of cultures on the threshold of globalization. That said, the idea that colonization of the

4 To objectively understand Francophonie we must recognize its evolution.

5 Since the origin of the word in 1539 by the ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, the notion of Francophonie has undergone major changes in relation to the practice in the world today. At the time, it stood for the establishment of French as an official language in metropolitan France. For a history of the evolution of this notion and that of the French-speaking world, see also the study by William F. Mackey (107-122).

entire country is the only criterion for the Francophone label is inevitably questioned in the transcultural era.

This direction around which Francophone studies is converging reflects the new stakes that mark the post-postcolonial state of the discipline. For some researchers, the Francophone field refers to French-related facts and realities that are in constant movement and are no longer circumscribed in advance, for example by the stipulation of being a former French colony or having French as one of the national languages...⁶ These reflections highlight the need to reconfigure the idea of Francophonie to take account of the cultural zones formerly excluded from the classical Francophone areas; thus there have been many essays since the 1990s in various Francophone journals that question the notion of 'modern Francophonie'. These studies, which have been constantly remodeled and renewed over the decades, show for their part the elusive nature of a field that is reconstructing and renewing itself and thus renders obsolete the concept of colonization as the sole means of spreading French influence in the world.

The difficulty of a standard definition

Another impasse highlighted by recent research is the difficulty of setting a standard definition of Francophonie that can be uniformly applied to each French-speaking area. In reality, this rigid standardization creates a problem from the very start. Thus, even before the question of Asia's entry into the sphere of Francophonie is raised, the attempt to redefine the latter has been a permanent preoccupation of scholars.⁷ After relentlessly questioning what constitutes Francophonie, Francois Torrel draws a conclusion:

It is impossible for us to define Francophonie in ideological terms, because the very diversity [...] of the Francophone situation of the principal actors, founders or financial donors who do not share the same history and the same practices of Francophonie, does not allow the definition of a motive, a common reason for belonging that would justify the cohesion of the whole. (Torrel 10)

6 I refer here to the section 'Francophonie in Asia' of my bibliography, in particular to the studies of William F. Mackey, Michel Beniamino and Isabelle Violette.

7 Is the trilogic approach that was the starting point of Francophone studies still valid in the era of globalization? How can we grasp the heterogeneous and contradictory characteristics of a changing Francophonie? See particularly the study of Isabelle Violette (13-30).

In addition to the inconceivability of a standard definition of Francophonie, encompassing Francophone cultural zones that are heterogeneous in origin and nature, there is another basic difficulty. This is that Francophonie does not refer to the same thing in the eyes of French people in metropolitan France as it does in the rest of the Francophone world. For the latter, Francophonie encompasses in itself the various linguistic, geographical, identitarian, and institutional dimensions (Violette 15-16), without being exclusively linked to the colonial past. And recent attempts at a 'globalizing definition' (Torrel 15) of the French-speaking world only accentuate the complexity of its heterogeneous components, which cannot be reduced to those dimensions rooted in the colonial past. In this vein, others go even further, dividing the Francophone world into the French-speaking aspect and French-language literature to relate the former to the ex-French colonies, and the second to a literary space where works are written in French.⁸ This second subcategory leads inevitably to literatures that go beyond the framework of the former colonies. From this, the idea of the evolution of the Francophone corpus continues, in that there are literatures (considered non-Francophone) of French expression, for example, Chinese literature of French expression. To conclude, the difficulty of redefining Francophonie, if one arrives at such, must still take account of the Asian area (outside of Indochina) – a hidden player – integrating itself into a broader notion of Francophonie.

The transcultural as a methodology

But there is more. The impasse of the claim that 'colonization made Francophonie' is accentuated all the more in the context of the 21st century, where the digital era and the age of globalization bring down geographical and linguistic boundaries, so much so that attributing the acquisition of French language or its continued use to the sole cause of colonization can no longer hold. From this other difficulties arise. If colonization in its classical sense is no longer the only way towards Francophonie, what would be the other means of accessing the Francophone sphere? In other words, what methodological approach would be suited to identifying the heterogeneity and multiple genesis of this form of Francophonie, as well as its corpus?

One thing is certain: the rethinking or the overthrow of the principles once considered to be foundational to the Francophone world opens up

8 For the difference between Francophonie and literary Francophonie, see Lise Gauvin et al. (Gauvin & al. 2005, 82).

new horizons and leads us beyond the trilogy (colonialism/anticolonialism/postcolonialism). Whatever the approach one favors, several ancient civilizations from which was born the Eastern world cannot be treated in a homogeneous way, if only given the vicissitudes of their contact with French civilization. Moreover, these cultural spaces have known, in terms of their French presence, other forms than colonization, hence the following reflection. Do the French concessions or territories granted to France contribute to the understanding of oriental Francophonie in the same way as the former Indochinese colony? Before answering this question hastily, let us delineate the subject of our research.

For the purposes of this book, I trace the history of oriental Francophonie to the commercial trading posts and exchanges in the Indies,⁹ to the origin of the concessions in China, to the French penetration into Japan and Korea, but exclude the Indochinese Union,¹⁰ whose Francophone realities are proven and widely discussed. Clearly, these territories or countries that have not undergone official colonization have a Francophone nature distinct from other Francophone areas, which makes the trilogy theory applied to other Francophone areas inapplicable. In these cases, it is not a question of a classical change of regime in a conquered country that could be regarded as Francophone, but there is instead cohabitation or linguistic/cultural crossing within a sovereign country. This dynamism calls for the full force of the notion of cultural/literary transfer as a methodology of approach to the phenomenon of Francophonie that interests me here.

It would be naive to believe that the notion of the transcultural remains unexplored in the field of Francophone studies, when in 2001 it was called into play by the impasse in which the trilogic approach found itself, creating a theoretical vacuum at the turn of the century. The phenomenon of Francophone literature at the time was envisaged in terms of the 'transnational situation' (Bessière & Moura 8), thus connecting already to transnationalism, which emphasizes the transgression of the 'established delimitations' (Kang

9 The team of researchers at the University of Liverpool should be credited for setting the stage for a reflection on the subject, with their work on Francophonie in India. A few sporadic efforts also point to the tentative forays and interests that have emerged in the United States, such as the seminar entitled 'Francophonie & Orient' at Stony Brook University, and the one offered at Macalester College under the title 'From the Far East to Antipodes: Francophone representation of Asia and the Pacific'.

10 In 1887, with the pacification of Annam and Tonkin, France created the Indochinese Union, composed of Annam, Tonkin, Cochin China, and Cambodia. Six and twelve years later, Laos (1893) and the Chinese estuary, the Kwang-tcheou-wan (1899), were ceded to France for a 99-year lease.

2009, 5), principally, national borders.¹¹ However, this first attempt at a new post-trillogic theory applies only to established colonies by faithfully referring to the Francophone literature of the colonies. Thus, this first transliterary marker refers to the common Francophone attributes shared by this literature based on an invariant related to language and colonial background. It is important to note that French is used here as a sociolinguistic medium (as an official language). French-language literatures that had not gone through classical colonization (where French is not one of the official languages) are therefore excluded or left out. This is the case for India, China, or Japan of the Meiji era, in short, all the sites referred to in this study.

The fundamental element of transnationalism, which refers to the migration of a literature from its culture of origin to one or several other cultures (Espagne; Werner presentation page), has not been elaborated in an overall methodology capable of grasping the heterogeneity of the corpuses that define the plurality of the French-speaking literatures of today.¹² The first theoretical model has thus failed, in that researchers have not been interested in pursuing and developing it by applying it to concrete literary situations. Five years later, in 2006, when the trillogic approach stirred the theoretical vacuum again, the transnational concept reappeared. Literary Francophonie is understood in terms of 'transborder and transgeneric' (Chikhi & Quaghebeur 11), a direct consequence of the sphere of influence of the Francophone world, which denies the old colonial divisions as a paradigm in Francophone literature. This renewal of interest could have led to a new understanding of the plurality of French-speaking literatures in the world, and in its progress prepared the ground for a new conception of oriental Francophonie; but this did not happen. It went unnoticed, generating neither debate nor substantive study within Francophone studies.

These notions are the precursors to my hypothesis that Francophone phenomena, in the case of the identifying oriental Francophonie, originate in cultural/literary transfer and not in colonization. In other words, transnationalism serves as a vehicle and guarantor for the manifestation of Francophone life in Asia, since the old civilizations, such as China, Japan, and India, are each nourished by a singular past with French culture whose Francophone effect demands to be treated with discernment. Already, Indochina does not embody the ultimate goal or the influence of France in

11 The expression belongs to Danielle Risterucci-Roudnick, cited by Mathilde Kang (2009).

12 French-Canadian literature, such as that from Quebec or Acadia, is not equivalent to French-speaking Chinese literature because of its different Francophone nature. They are nevertheless part of the corpus of French-speaking literature today.

Asia, far from it. In other words, this cause-and-effect relationship between upstream colonization and, downstream Francophonie, tends to overshadow Francophone elements in the countries/regions where the vestiges of the French empire come from the former French fief, indeed from an ephemeral form of colonization. The colonial concession in the case of Shanghai, and the leased territory ceded to France in that of Guangzhouwan, remain examples of emblematic antithesis.

So far, reflections in the conventional Francophone world have had the advantage of shedding light on the distinct Francophone phenomena in Asia. In the first place, the identified Asian contribution to the fold of Francophonie brings with it unexpected challenges that call for the vitality of a modern idea of Francophonie (Torrel 334).¹³ It follows that the trilogic postulate that has been used in the identification of classical Francophone areas within traditional notions of Francophonie does not apply to the Eastern Francophonie. The latter calls for an unprecedented look, a dynamism hitherto unseen in the French-speaking world, hence the need to reconfigure the notion (of Francophonie) itself, as well as its new delimitation. The sphere of Francophonie must be expanded, the notion renewed, its method of identification overturned. In French-speaking spheres or zones, whatever the dominant delimitations, the standardization of a uniform French-speaking world sharing a common colonial linguistic background is definitively surpassed. There is every reason to believe that Indochina is not the only place where Francophonie lives in the East; it lives also in other cultural spheres in a dynamism that has hitherto been unexplored. The distinctive feature of Eastern Francophonie is that these are sovereign countries in which France is not the dominant reference point in culture or in local literature; hence, cultural coexistence appears. In short, a form of Francophonie survives in a multilingual context within cultures where French is a language of culture.

Francophonie in the East or in Asia?

Faced with the Asian element and with the impasse created by the artificial criteria of the past, other questions arise. How can we aggregate the countries within a multifaceted Francophonie with a heterogeneous

13 The expression is borrowed from François Torrel: 'Francophonie in its modern peaceful and international version is a primarily African and Quebecois initiative'. In the question that interests me, the modernity of today's Francophonie relates to a multidimensional form of Francophonie.

history and disparate origins? Especially since the Eastern sphere has to take into account certain contradictions of its own. Indeed, the ambiguity of the notions of oriental or Asian Francophonie (in the sense of African Francophone, Maghrebi, among others) underlines an initial inconsistency.¹⁴ The Orient, the Far East, or Asia, these words, which are often used randomly and sometimes interchangeably, have divergent meanings that merit attention. The term Asia refers first of all to a geographical continent with its geopolitical-historical referent as a background, while that of the Orient or the Far East connotes civilizing and cultural entities, the ramifications of which refer to the ritual, the customs, the myth, and the imagination of the countries that make up Asia.¹⁵ Unfortunately, that is not all. The East, or the Orient, is also used to denote the opposite of the West, as Yves Clavaron affirms: 'The perspective through which we shall approach the Orient and Asia seeks to emphasize that the Orient is considered, mistakenly, as one of the surest markers of otherness in the West' (Clavaron 2005, 467).¹⁶

For all these reasons, in this book, any mention of the term 'Asia' refers to the geographical concept of the countries of the Levant, while the term 'the Orient' or 'the East', refers to the civilizations and cultures of those countries. In other words, Asia is a space, and the East (the Orient) is a notion, an idea. And the expression 'Francophonie in the East' refers to the Francophone cultural aspects of the Asian countries. Thus the term 'Orient' prevails in the case that concerns us here, since this idea of Francophonie does not designate a geopolitical referent but refers to the cultural/literary realities and phenomena of civilizations in Asia in contact with France. Alas, which Orient? As surprising as it is strange, the metamorphosis of the meaning of the term 'the East/the Orient' over the centuries is such that French literary history does not lack examples and evidence. Encompassing the time of Galland and Voltaire 'the Arabs, Turks, Persia, India (the Mongol), China, Japan and Siam' (Dufrenoy 271), the Orient lost its geographical attributes with Chateaubriand and Nerval, for whom it represented a romanticism filled with sublime landscapes and characters. From this chimerical and literary Orient, it then became a metonymy of exoticism and of the 'elsewhere' with Flaubert and Baudelaire, or even of France's displacement to the left (the East); finally, it is but an expansion of the West (Przychodzen 117). From

14 Francophonie in the East or the Orient signifies, within the framework of this book, the Francophone phenomenon within civilizations in the Far East. It is synonymous with Francophonie in Asia, which highlights the geographical space in which these civilizations are located.

15 At the risk of complicating things further, I would say that Asia is a geographical space; the Orient/the East is a geographical space in the imaginary.

16 Régis Poulet, 'De l'illusion orientale à l'altérité asiatique' (Clavaron 2005).

the beginning of postcolonial studies, the volatility of the meaning of the Orient, culminating in the definition given by the Larousse dictionary, is emphasized (Yee 2000, 11). All these references to the semantic turns of the term 'Orient' might be confusing in this study of oriental Francophonie, which refers to the Francophone cultural facets of Asian countries.

Francophone by root vs. Francophone by culture

Just as the signifier 'the Orient/East' has undergone transformations, the notion of the 'Francophone' has also seen a revolution in the course of its history (Schmitt; Günter 687). The case of Chinese Francophone authors (such as Gao Xingjian, Dai Sijie, Ying Chen) is proof of this. Their works published in France or in Quebec are precedents as to the meaning of the notion of the 'Francophone author'. Indeed, the integration into Francophone literature of a growing number of works written (in French) by Asian authors outside Indochina is breaking down the classical delimitation of the French-speaking world and within it the designation of a Francophone person.¹⁷ Today French is no longer the prerogative of the French or the 'colonized', but the language of the one who wants to use it. Within the Francophone milieu, the individual, personal character of the use of French as a vehicular language and not necessarily as a native or institutional language is emphasized by several scholars (Torrel; Violette). In the digital era, with communications that nullify geographical distance, it would be conceivable to have impeccable French without having set foot in France or in any French-speaking country. Both the stakes and the premises of being Francophone already reflect the characteristics of the multilingual 'citizen of the world', and thus negate the daily (or personal) employment of French as an exclusive marker of a Francophone person by birth.¹⁸

It follows that French, for a Francophone person today, can be his or her mother tongue or one of their acquired languages. In the second case, the individual is no doubt bicultural, even tricultural, therefore Francophone and something else, not exclusively Francophone, defying the old concept

17 See, for example, François Cheng, *Le dit de Tianyi* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998); Dai Sijie, *L'acrobatie aérienne de Confucius* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009); Ying Chen, *L'ingratitude* (Montréal: Leméac, 1995).

18 Who or what is a Francophone person? In the eyes of the French, it is someone who speaks French without being born in France. This perspective is different from that which exists outside France where the term Francophone refers to those whose mother tongue is French. See on this subject, William F. Mackey (116).

that refers only to Francophone by birth to designate a Francophone person.¹⁹ From this point of view, it is only a small step to conceive that a Francophone person nowadays can be born and live in an English-speaking country, or be of allophone parents. This explains the distinctive character of French-speaking Asian writers in their a posteriori mastery of French, as well as in their contact with French culture. Born and living in a different cultural area, they are Francophone by choice and not by birth.²⁰

Whether it is the mutation of the French-speaking world or the transcultural approach that theorizes it, the evolution of ideas elucidates the problems specific to Asia. From now on, being designated as a 'Francophone zone' or as a member of the French-speaking world no longer necessarily refers to a state in which one of the languages is French. The example of Asia will show that Francophonie includes regions/territories steeped in French culture at a specific moment in their history in sovereign non-Francophone countries. This is a Francophonie of a different kind and degree, due to a different form of French presence. What my research sets out to do is not only to take into account the conditions of the Francophone genesis of the spaces in question, but also to discern the different forms of Francophone presences within these officially non-Francophone cultures.

Francophone literature vs. non-Francophone literature

In the wake of the classically conceived ideas, there remain the notions of Francophone literature vs. the so-called non-Francophone. Such cleavages based on colonization are equally fragile under the pressure of transculturalism. Many French fiefdoms are excluded from traditional Francophonie because they are grafted onto spaces that do not belong to the classical colonies. However, French heritage plays a preparatory role in these cases upstream from Asian Francophone life, which crystallizes more fully downstream from the Indochinese colony. This highlights several aspects. First, classical colonization, considered as a tangible sign of the French-speaking world, is clearly obsolete and eliminatory. Also, the entry into the corpus of French-language literature of works of French expression coming from literatures not designated as Francophone renders the a priori concepts inapplicable, since these works do not come from the fruits of colonization.

19 Each person whose native language is French.

20 Anyone whose mother tongue is not French but who adopts that language as a language of culture, in other words, an acquired language.

However, their growing presence calls for a reconfiguration of the French-language corpus that could integrate the emerging voices formerly excluded from the French-speaking zone. Who would have suspected, even a few years ago, that the idea of a form of Francophonie in China or in Japan could appear? And yet the recent expression of Chinese Francophonie (Symington & Bonhomme 141) points in full force to the movement of the Francophone world and consequently the changing nature of its corpus. Already, to designate Francophonie in the East by referring exclusively to Vietnam is an outdated concept, especially since the Francophone realities in other Asian cultural zones are indisputable. This is proven in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean literature written in French, which has never been recognized as an integrated French-speaking phenomenon of the East.²¹ Moreover, the movement in kind is reflected by that in form: the result is that French-language works no longer come only from the member countries of Francophonie, but from open and extended horizons. And Francophone literature no longer has its origins only in former colonies, but also in cultures that have not undergone French domination. The names of Gao Xingjian, Ying Chen, and many others mentioned above, the stars of Chinese Francophonie, shatter the initial and conventional conditions designated a priori to be classified as a Francophone author.

Born in China, Gao Xingjian is a naturalized Frenchman who writes in both languages. He was, as was to be expected, identified as a Chinese writer until the day he obtained the Nobel Prize for Literature in Paris. Immediately, he became a French writer of Chinese origin and his works became part of the patrimony of French literature. This change of register will establish a precedent for other cases of Asian authors whose works follow a similar cross-cultural path, underscoring the mutation of the French-speaking world. Works whose cultural belonging was previously beyond question, are no longer immune to any ambiguity. Does the novel *Montagne de l'âme* (written by a Chinese citizen) belong to French literature (after Gao's naturalization) or Chinese literature?

As legitimate as it may seem, this question is in fact inoperative so long as the debate is based on faulty foundations. For the borders or cleavages that delimit a national literature entrenched in the territory or the language of a specific country cannot hold today. Such delimitations are absent in the transnational concept on which, I believe, today's French-speaking literature is based, privileging transliterary relations and not colonial relations. A fortiori, the biographical/cultural journey of the writers mentioned above

21 See on this subject, chapter IV of this book.

imperatively calls for a reinterpretation of the field of Francophonie and renders invalid the classic concept according to which the country of a former French colony is point of reference for defining Francophone literary production. The old school that plots the French-speaking world on a 'Francophone map' by tracing geopolitical-linguistic delimitations as the only criteria to circumscribe the French-speaking world seems inevitably obsolete. The same applies to other artificial divisions such as socio-historical, identity, institutional (Violette 16-17) – delimitations that were once symbolic of belonging to the French-speaking world.

And there's more. These works of French expression (by authors originating from Asia) from the literatures designated non-Francophone should not be considered as marginal. They intersect the works (of traditional Francophone literatures) of the postcolonial generation in their liberation from the colonial yoke, in particular the binary subjugation between France and the Other. Once regarded as the founding theme and driving force of literary Francophonie, this binary relation collapses, bringing in its wake the fall of the understanding of 'Francophone literature' based solely on colonization. As a result, French-speaking (classical) literature sees the emergence of previously excluded voices seeking to assert their right to be part of Francophone literature. These voices thus hope to bring to the Francophone corpus their long past, their evolution, and more particularly the capacity to traverse new and wider borders. Yet do these voices, which aim to establish new landmarks in the French-speaking world, call for a shift towards Asia?

Delimitations of the corpus

One of the factual elements could modify the current configuration of Francophonie would be the addition of other works to its corpus, and also the fact that I must treat certain French works here for purposes of illustration. This is because the France-Asia influence is reciprocal, and Asian works inevitably encompass works of French heritage. Obviously, not every book on Asia interests me, only those whose inspiration, content, and substance draw from the Levant. These works include the blatant representations of the East found in pseudo-Oriental works. For obvious reasons, the Europeans, especially the French, have been writing for a long time on the Levant. This is evidenced by Marco Polo, who, long before the French translation of Antoine Galland's *Thousand and One Nights* (1704-1717), announced what would become a kind of unquestioned intoxication faced with a fashionably mysterious and seductive Orient. Thus in the spirit of many others, the *Book*

of *Marvels of Marco Polo* (1298) would lay the first foundation of this gigantic corpus. In fact, the catalog compiled by Ternaux-Compans of books on Asia in European languages since the discovery of printing until 1700, provides a clear sense of the early writings on Asia. It is not important to determine who was the first, but it is good to emphasize their increasing number as the expeditions progressed.

On the brink of the expansionist era, the advance of the French presence in Asia as part of the expeditions of the 'civilized' powers was based on a widely shared socio-historical background of a metropolis already initiated into and in love with an idealized East. The first expeditions resulted in the introduction of the Far East into metropolitan France, and from there appeared the first manifestations of an unbridled literature on Asia, thanks to the journeys made to those places, which to that point had been made only in the imagination. In the wake of this, China, Japan, and other previously unknown countries were introduced into France (Joubert 6-7). From then on, the French literary world hastened to capture the sublimated oriental ideal to which imperial France succumbed with novels that featured Chinese, Persian, or Turkish protagonists, embracing those remote cultures under the same oriental label held dear by the literature of the time (Martino 28-29). Due to the lack of first-hand material, the works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries merely dissimulate the Oriental world, alongside those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries conceived in the Levant, which contrast with this pseudo-Oriental literature. The three works dealt with in Chapter V will illustrate this.

Alongside the vitality of fictional works, there is a personal literature, written by actors and witnesses of France in the Far East, which cannot be confused with the school of European orientalism. These first-person narratives by the actors themselves became more popular with the growth of more systematic and organized journeys, which took explorers, missionaries, and officials to Asia. The Jesuit *Relations*, which set a model for this kind of narrative, have great value as 'testimonies from the field'. In this sense, their voluminous narratives recounting their travels in the lands of the Middle Empire, the Indian Empire, or Cochin China, created a sensation in the eyes of an initiated European readership. The immense contribution of their correspondence to the stigmatization of the European imagination, turned towards the Far East, goes far beyond orientalism. This writing of the intimate, which records the first traces of France in Asia and which testifies to the expansionist doxology of Europe interests us for these very reasons. As eyewitness accounts of the time, these stories appear in various nineteenth-century journals, notably the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the

Mercur de France, which I have analyzed closely for the years 1829-1929 and 1890-1935, respectively. The value of this intimate literature lies in its status as first-hand accounts.²²

Alas, these two kinds of writings on the East – the literature of the intimate and fictional writing – have not been examined so far in the perspective of cultural crossings, but only from the point of view of Orientalism. Incorporated into works of all kinds devoted to Asia that crop up in the twentieth century, these texts are constantly the subject of anthologies that have crowned, since Pascal, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Loti and Claudel, a prodigious corpus of France's literary heritage.²³ Up to this point, their virtue was their belonging to French literature, not to narratives of cultural crossing. As the twentieth century saw an increase in the number of books on France in Asia, a question arises: within this flowering of writings as varied as they are abundant about the societies, histories, and peoples of Asia, which ones belong to France-Asia crossings and which do not? It is not that any work written in French on Asia will be part of my corpus; choices and categories are determined according to a scientific selection, determined by methodology.

The overall plan

Consisting of five chapters, this book aims to reconsider the Francophone phenomenon in Asia (outside of Indochina), from various approaches, the first of which is the historiography of the continent. In search of the origin of the French fiefdoms, Chapter I retraces the footprints of French civilization by going back to Macau – the original connecting point of the Europeans – then to Pondicherry and Canton. Following the first Catholic missions that paved the way for economic expeditions, I consider the anchoring of French interests in those places hitherto excluded from the Francophone sphere. Then I will emphasize the French strategic readjustment following the decline of the trading posts in India to explain the transfer to the Chinese market of the rebutted French ambition. Thus, the intrinsic relations between China and Indochina, which have been little studied so far, will be highlighted to show how Indochina (the vassal states of China) was built to

22 An emblematic example of personal literature is the ship's logbook. For example, Bouet-Willlaumez, 'Les colonies françaises en 1852', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 14 (April 1852), 929-951.

23 Examples include, Tristan d'Huriel, *La Chine vue par les écrivains français* (Paris: Bartillat, 2004); Jean-Claude Berchet, *Le voyage en Orient: anthologie des voyageurs français dans le Levant au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1985).

compensate for the French imperialist plan that initially targeted the Indies and Cathay. The salient point of the chapter is the origin of the concessions that set up a French Empire in the Middle Kingdom. The overview of the French presence in Japan and Korea will close the chapter by leading our reflections to a fundamental question: is there a Francophonie in the East?

Chapter II examines the consolidation of the French presence in Asia, beginning with Shanghai, which became the 'Paris of the East' in the middle of the nineteenth century. The French presence in this Chinese city, which was written about since the arrival of the Jesuits, will be analyzed through a series of events contributing to the emergence of the Francophone milieu. The chapter will discuss the infiltration of French culture thanks to the French establishments that flourished alongside the maritime lines set up between Shanghai and Europe. We shall see that this 'city of whites' culminates in the creation and success of the only French university in Asia, the *Aurore*, in short the emblems and symbols of a transferred culture. Then comes the case of Guangzhouwan, a French colony omitted by Western historiography. The 43 years of French rule during which France behaved as the new Master of the place will be analyzed in order to understand the management of the place and the particular conditions in which Francophonie was established. The analysis of the modes of colonization in Asia will close the chapter. The case of Macau, which evolved from trading post to a classical colony, gives a strong example of the changing modalities of practices on the ground.

Chapter III details the French cultural products transferred to Asia, taking the Chinese case as an example. First, there is the appearance in the ports and concessions of the French establishments, which became important meeting places, and altered the homogeneous local culture. Then I analyze the conditions in which the first Francophones in China/Asia emerged, who came from the language schools, seminaries, and other Christian charitable organizations. I will also address the spread of the Francophone space that grew with the fashion to travel to France. The study of the appearance of French books in Asia will close the analysis of the conditions in which the Francophone presence emerged. Next comes the part on the translation industry, which brought the era of French literature in translation. The remarkable success achieved by many translated French novels established a readership of cohabitation. Several pre-eminent figures of French-speaking Chinese literature will be presented, those who set benchmarks for this form of Francophonie.

The end of the chapter raises a literary phenomenon particular to Asia: the literature of cohabitation. This phenomenon, common among several

Asian literatures, is explained first of all by the migratory journey of French works in their transfer towards Asia, and by the role of stepping stone and intermediary played by Japan. I will highlight the similar conjuncture of local literature, having encountered French literature. The common attributes of this literature of cohabitation based on French literature as a new reference point will also be highlighted. Finally, I analyze the ways in which the translated works modify the local literary paradigm by introducing a new poetics of Asian literature.

Chapter IV attempts to identify this literature of cohabitation with examples of local works. Thus *Fleur sur l'océan des péchés* (1903-1936) will serve as a prototype to illustrate the innate elements of coexistence of this literature, the heir to French fictional poetics. The work of Zeng Pu will show how this literature, born from the encounter with French literature and having a Francophone author, a reader and translator of the Masters, crosses the national and homogeneous spheres. The pastiches of *Madame Bovary* (*Rides sur les eaux dormantes*) and of *Jean-Christophe* (*Rejetons d'Houbereau*) are also part of this literature of cohabitation.²⁴ First, I will set out the migration of *Madame Bovary*, in particular its conditions of transfer and triangular journey (Paris-Tokyo-Shanghai). Then the pastiche involved in *Rides*, which also forms the basis of Chinese Realism, will be analyzed. *Rides* serves as an index value (an invariant) to a whole literature of cohabitation in other countries in Asia where its presence can be identified according to the same model of analysis. Like Li, the authors of pastiches (Francophones and translators) did not work only in their native languages, but also in French, hence the existence of a whole corpus of French expression by these same authors. The end of the chapter will explore possible avenues to trace such a corpus, including the close reading of newspapers/journals, as well as the collections of publishing houses. These trails provide valuable insights in tracing the corpus of French-speaking works of Asian authors.

Chapter V examines France-Asia crossings, in reverse, drawing on works of French literary heritage. First, there is a literature of the intimate conceived from the East, which expresses itself in the form of diaries, memoirs, and travel narratives, and these are eyewitness works of France in the East, and not of French Orientalism. Alongside this abundance of testimonial writings, there is a fictional literature of Oriental inspiration, which includes *Madame Chrysanthème*, *Le Soulier de Satin*, and *Comment Wang-Fô fut sauvé* as emblematic examples. First, the transfer of *Madame Chrysanthème* to Asia,

24 The works concerned are Li Jieren (*Si shui wei lan*. Shanghai: Zhonghua shu ju, 1936) and Lu Ling (*Cai zhu di er nü men*). First published in the journal *L'Espoir*, 1948.

in particular its triangular route (Paris-Tokyo-Shanghai) will be discussed; then the history of the reception of this work will be analyzed, from the apology of *japonisme* by its first readership to the worst denigration of its detractors. Finally, the paradigm of the Oriental woman that Loti erected under the guise of 'transcultural marriage' will be analyzed.

Le Soulier de satin will be immediately explained with reference to the story of the 'forgotten slipper' which depicts the myth of Cinderella. We show the unknown origin of this myth, whose first version dates from ninth-century China. Yang Kwei-fei's embroidered shoe, of which we succeed to retrace the first appearance in France, adds much to the meaning of the *Soulier de satin*. Finally, I discuss how the legend of *Bouvier et Tisserande* explains the meaning of the sacrifice to which the work refers. The end of the chapter deals with the short story by Yourcenar, *Comment Wang-Fô fut sauvé*, which remains an underrated text for lack of first-hand data that can attest the origin of its Taoist sources. In fact, limited to the artifices that touch the surface of the words she uses, studies of Yourcenar are confined to a superficial understanding of the text without being able to go beyond. My research succeeds however in exhuming the hitherto unknown Oriental background of the work, thanks to a thousand-year-old legend that provides the explanation of the 'Fô'.

The general conclusion sets Francophonie in the East at the crossroads between France and Asia in order to underline the common modes of acquisition of French language and culture in these non-French-speaking countries. This refers to all the cultural spaces that have not been integrated into the classical Francophone sphere despite their sinuous encounters with French civilization. Considering Asia in a broader idea of Francophonie will signal strongly the need to redefine the French-speaking world today; not through traditional colonization but by the transcultural element.

Indeed, since the beginning of the concessions/lease territories through which the French-speaking zones established a foothold in different parts of Asia, Francophonie in the East survived in ways other than by the colonization of the whole country, which raised French as 'language of the country'. In ways different than in North America or in Africa, the acquisition of the French language/culture took place in these Asian sites in the form of cultural crossings. Although the French-speaking Asian authors (outside of Indochina) of the first generation were able to pastiche French works, not one of them was subject to official colonization. They were Francophone by their choice of culture and language. Because of the way French is acquired, the French-speaking community in Asia is not equivalent to the classical Francophone world, and consequently Francophonie in the East differs from

other Francophone areas in its expression, manifestation, and character. Finally, without studying all the Asian countries, nor claiming to have the final say on the question, my study hopes to offer some preliminary findings on the origins of this form of Francophonie, its existence, and its recognition.