



## Determination of the Establishment, Development and Activity Areas of the French Institute of Oriental Studies Inalco

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### ABSTRACT

Language is a fundamental phenomenon that enables the expression of thoughts, the transmission of knowledge, and social interaction. Language education is an activity that facilitates cross-cultural communication and helps individuals gain the skills to communicate effectively worldwide. Knowing multiple languages opens one up to different cultures and perspectives. Government officials in France, who intend to be a civilized and interactive society that does not want to lag behind in the world order they live in, have taken significant steps in the field of language education. In 1795, they established Inalco, a specialized institution for Eastern languages, and began training experts who would learn the languages spoken in the Islamic world, including Ottoman Turkish. Since its inception, Inalco has systematically expanded its range of languages, incorporating Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Hebrew, and many other Eastern languages. Those who learn and speak these languages help France maintain strong ties with the East and continue to engage with the states in that region, whether remotely or closely.

With a history spanning approximately four centuries, Inalco has not only been a center for language education but also stands as a leading institution among Oriental studies, nurturing numerous orientalists and providing opportunities for the production of works in various fields. In line with its mission, the institution has specialized in Eastern languages and civilizations for an extended period, producing pioneering figures whose work promotes cultural interaction and fosters intercultural understanding. Expanding its scope continually through its institutional experience, Inalco now conducts research on almost every world language and civilization. With its expertise in language and culture and its deep-rooted history, Inalco is recognized as a respected institution globally.

Language experts trained at Inalco have actively participated in the French government's diplomatic and trade relations by providing translation services to officials. They have also maintained instructional positions to teach their respective languages to the younger generations and played significant roles in promoting an understanding of the cultures they were engaged with. Although their primary work was in the field of oriental studies, they have been instrumental in uncovering, evaluating, and categorizing elements of Eastern culture, thus contributing to the preservation of these cultural aspects. Many Eastern scholars, such as Silvestre de Sacy, Louis Bazin, Régis Blachère, Louis Massignon, and others, have been nurtured here, serving both their own countries and Eastern culture. However, it's a fact that there hasn't been enough research on institutions like Inalco in academic circles. Therefore, after introducing Inalco's establishment, operation, and fields of activity, this study will focus on Inalco's mission as an Oriental studies institution. The study which was created through field research, observation, and information obtained from authoritative sources, aims to fill this research gap.

**Keywords:** Islamic History, France, Oriental Studies, Inalco, Language Education.

## Fransız Şarkiyat Kurumu Inalco'nun Kuruluş, Gelişim ve Faaliyet Alanlarının Tespiti

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### ÖZ

Dil, düşünelerin ifade edilmesini, bilgi aktarımını ve sosyal etkileşimi sağlayan temel bir olgudur. Dil eğitimi ise kültürler arası iletişim kolaylaştırır ve dünya genelinde etkili iletişim kurma becerisi kazandıran bir faaliyettir. Birden fazla dil bilmek, farklı kültürlerle ve bakış açılarına açık olmayı sağlar. Yaşadığı dünya düzeni içerisinde çağın gerisinde kalmak istemeyen, uygar ve etkileşimli bir toplum olma niyetini taşıyan Fransa hükümet yetkilileri dil eğitimi konusunda ciddi adımlar atmıştır. 1795 yılında Doğu dilleri üzerine uzmanlaş Inalco'yu kurarak başta Osmanlı olmak üzere İslam dünyasının konuştuğu dili öğrenen uzmanlar yetiştirmeye başlamıştır. Kuruluşundan itibaren sistemli bir şekilde dil yelpazesini genişleten Inalco, Türkçe, Arapça, Çince, Farsça, Hintçe, Japonca, Korece, Rusça, İbranice ve daha birçok Doğu dilini bünyesine katmıştır. Bu dilleri öğrenen ve konuşan kişiler sayesinde Fransa, Doğuya olan münasebetini güclü tutmak ve burada bulunan devletlerle uzaktan yahut yakından temas içerisinde kalmayı sürdürmektedir.

Yaklaşık dört asırlık geçmişiyle Inalco, bir dil eğitimi merkezi olmanın yanında şarkiyat kurumları içerisinde önde gelen, sayısız öryantalist yetiştirip çeşitli sahalarda eserlerin yazılmasına imkân tanıyan bir kurumdur. Kuruluş, misyonuna uygun olarak uzun süre Doğu dilleri ve medeniyetleri üzerine uzmanlaşmış öncü isimleri yetiştirip çalışmalarıyla kültürel etkileşimi teşvik etmiş ve kültürler arası anlayışı geliştirmeye yardımcı olmuştur. Kurumsal tecrübeyle ilgi alanını hep genişleten Inalco günümüzde neredeyse tüm dünya dilleri ve medeniyetleri üzerine çalışmalarını devam ettirmektedir. Artık dil ve kültür alanındaki uzmanlığı ve köklü geçmişiyle dünya genelinde saygın bir kurum olarak kabul edilmektedir.

Inalco'da yetişen dil uzmanları Fransız hükümetinin diplomatik ve ticari ilişkilerinde aktif rol alarak bu konularda yetkililere tercümanlık hizmeti sunmuşlardır. Aynı zamanda uzman oldukları dillerin yeni nesillere öğretilmesinde öğretici pozisyonlarını korumuşlar ve ilişkide oldukları kültürlerin tanınmasında da önemli roller üstlenmişlerdir. Her ne kadar yaptıkları iş şarkiyat hizmeti olsa da Doğu kültürüne ait mirasın gün yüzüne çıkartılmasında, değerlendirilmesinde ve tasnifinde yer alarak bu kültürlerle ait öğelerin korunmasında yardımcı unsurları olmuşlardır. Silvestre de Sacy, Louis Bazin, Régis Blachère, Louis Massignon vb. birçok Doğu bilimci burada yetişerek hem kendi ülkelerine hem de Doğu kültürüne hizmet etmişlerdir. Ancak akademik ortamda Inalco ve benzeri kurumlar üzerine yeteri kadar çalışmanın olmadığı da bir gerektir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada, Inalco'nun kuruluşu, işleyiş şekli ve faaliyet alanları tanıtıldıktan sonra bir şarkiyat kurumu olarak misyonu üzerinde durulacaktır. Saha araştırması, gözlem, yetkili mercilerden alınan bilgi ve belgelerle oluşturulan çalışmanın alandaki boşluğu dolduracağı düşünülmektedir.

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### Introduction

While the origins of Oriental studies or, in a more modern understanding, Orientalism are assumed to date back to the 9th and 10th centuries, it has to be said that this is a misleading estimate, even if it is well-meaning. In reality, the West's active interest in the riches of the East can be traced back to periods even before the Common Era. The dazzling allure of the Eastern civilizations prompted the Greek and Roman civilizations to embark on numerous campaigns to assert influence over the East, some of which were conducted under the guise of religious endeavors. This enduring interest has taken various forms throughout history, serving purposes such as anti-Islamic sentiments and missionary activities during the Middle Ages. Subsequently, it gained momentum through the Crusades, the Renaissance, and the Reformation movements, but underwent a significant transformation after the 1789 French Revolution. During Europe's process of modernization and the simultaneous colonization of the world, the interest in other communities underwent significant variations. Therefore, Orientalism, which could not evolve into a systematic production in earlier periods, began to be perceived as an academic field of study from the 18th century onwards. In this sense, its history coincides with the development of social sciences and is profoundly influenced by the intellectual and academic activities of the time. Orientalist research has also made positive contributions to the preservation of humanity's cultural heritage. Well-intentioned efforts have been made by individual experts in Orientalism. However, it is evident that Orientalism, as a discourse, has serious issues.

Although the Orientalist efforts organized by Western powers may appear similar on the surface, they contain inherent differences. French Orientalism, with its distinct characteristics, is defined by the studies conducted by French intellectuals and academics on the cultures, languages, histories, and civilizations of the East. During this period, France took a significant interest in the East, leading to various research endeavors, travels, and intellectual pursuits aimed at discovering and understanding the East.

In France, the establishment and continuation of certain Orientalist institutions became a state policy. Notable among these are the Collège de France, founded in 1530, the Institut de France established in 1635, and the Société Asiatique (Asian Society) founded in 1822. In the present day, the origins of Inalco (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales/National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations), an important Orientalist institution, can be traced back to the establishment of École des Langues Orientales Vivantes (School of Living Eastern Languages) in 1669 by the French statesman Jean-Baptiste Colbert (d. 1683).<sup>1</sup> In addition to educational activities, Inalco has been a pioneer in organizing conferences and symposiums. Following the first Orientalist congress in Europe held in Paris in 1873, the city became a prominent hub for Orientalist studies, particularly from the early 19th century to the end of World War II. As a result, the process of institutionalization in the realm of Orientalism began well before these dates in France, which is considered one of the important centres of Orientalism.

French Orientalism contains academic studies across various disciplines. These studies have been conducted in fields such as linguistics, history, literature, archaeology, art history, anthropology, and religious studies. In its early stages, the focus was primarily on regions including the Ottoman Empire's

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<sup>1</sup> Faruk Bilici, "Fransa", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1996), 13/190.

area of influence, the Middle East, North Africa, and India. In this context, a wide range of activities emerged, including the establishment of educational and research institutions, Orientalist societies, and a spectrum of publications ranging from the publication of essential Islamic sources to translation activities, research works, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. French Orientalists, through studying and translating Eastern languages and cultures, conducting historical and archaeological research, and seeking to understand the social, political, and religious structures of Eastern societies, have accumulated significant knowledge.

On an academic level, the ultimate goal of understanding the East was to contribute to the construction of a powerful and prosperous France. As interest in the wealth of the East grew in 16th-century Europe, particularly due to the Ottoman Empire, seen as the largest state of the era, campaigns to learn Ottoman Turkish and other languages used in the Islamic world began. Inspired by the Venetian model, which was to send its citizens to Istanbul to learn Turkish starting from 1551, other states, including France, were influenced to adopt policies in line with the trends of the time. Following this model, concrete steps were taken to educate interpreters proficient in Eastern languages and scholars knowledgeable about the East. Inalco is one of these institutions, and this article aims to shed light on its history and mission. Given its long history and the multitude of scholars it has hosted, promotional efforts have been conducted approximately every fifty years, mainly through works written in French. Therefore, there is a clear need for comprehensive studies that introduce institutions like Inalco from various perspectives. Additionally, it is important to understand the stages of the institution's development, its fields of activity, and its foundations within the context of Oriental studies. Naturally, conducting field research is essential to establish such a study on solid ground. Therefore, this study has been crafted through interactions with experts and authorities in relevant institutions, particularly on-site (in Paris) at Inalco and other related organizations' libraries.

## 1. Foundation and Historical Development

Inalco is commonly known as an institution established on March 30, 1795, during the French Revolution (1789-1799). However, while this is partially accurate, its origins actually date back further.<sup>2</sup> One of the preliminary steps can be traced to the establishment of the Collège de France by French scholar Guillaume Budé (1467-1540).<sup>3</sup> At a time when France's King Francis I (1494-1547) recognized the need for qualified translators in diplomacy and economy, French intellectuals were also insistent on preserving ancient languages. This dual need led to the idea of establishing a language school in France.<sup>4</sup> Having close ties to the royal court due to his family's high-ranking positions, Budé took on roles as a notary and secretary to the king after studying civil law. King Francis I, who encouraged and supported developments in arts and literature, called upon Budé to engage in literary and philological matters when

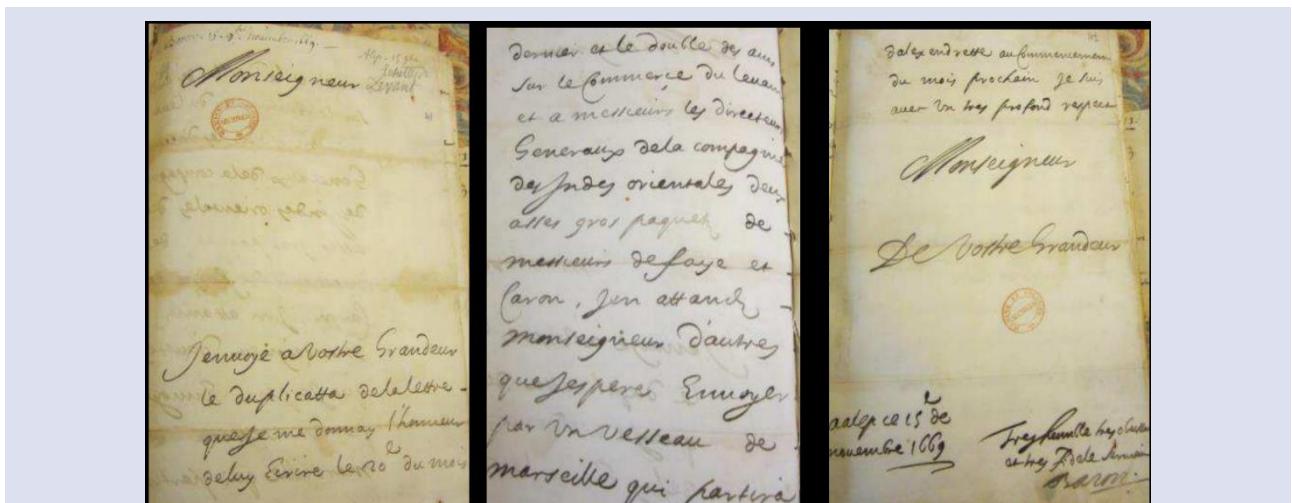
<sup>2</sup> Pierre Labrousse (ed.), *Langues O' 1795-1995, Deux siècles d'histoire de l'École des Langues Orientales* (Paris: Éditions Hervas, 1995), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie, "Guillaume Budé, a Philosopher of Culture", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19/3 (1988), 379.

<sup>4</sup> Luce Marchal Albert, "La Dédicace Du de Philologia (1532) de Guillaume Budé", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 67/1 (2005), 109.

he ascended the throne.<sup>5</sup> The king, influenced by Budé, enacted a law in 1530 to establish the Collège des Lecteurs du Roi (The Royal Readers' College), known as Collège de France, dedicated to literature and philology.<sup>6</sup> Since then, this college began providing specialized education in Eastern languages.

By the year 1669, the significance of establishing a language school became even more evident. Heavy taxes imposed by the Turks, coupled with the low quality of French goods, inadequacies in marketing products, and shortcomings in price determination, had left France lagging behind other European nations in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup> The mistrust and ill-treatment towards local translators who interpreted negotiations with the Ottomans were also concerning. Consequently, during the reign of France's King Louis XIV,<sup>8</sup> Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), a prominent statesman who held a crucial ministry position, found himself compelled to carry out a series of economic reforms to strengthen France's economy and trade.<sup>9</sup> These periods were marked by significant efforts of France to increase its influence in the East.<sup>10</sup>



**Image 1:** Report from the French Consul in Aleppo to Colbert, detailing the challenges faced in commercial relations.

On November 18, 1669, a new language school was proposed with the recommendation of Colbert. With the encouragement of the Trade Council, it was decided that every three years, six children aged nine or ten would be sent to the Capuchin/Jesuit Monasteries in Istanbul and Izmir.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert Gadoffre, *La Révolution Culturelle Dans la France des Humanistes* (Cenevre: Droz, 1997), 218.

<sup>6</sup> M. Jean Leclant, "Discours", *Institut de France (Célébration du bicentenaire de l'École des Langues orientales)* 1 (1995), 4; Albert, "La Dédicace Du de Philologia (1532) de Guillaume Budé", 110.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Mantran, "À Vorigine de Lecole Nationale Des Langues Orientales / Vivantes : L'ecole Des Jeunes de Langues", *Institut de France (Célébration du bicentenaire de l'École des Langues orientales)* 1 (1995), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Louis-Dieudonné de France, also known as Louis XIV, is the longest-reigning king in the history of France. He ruled from 1643 to 1715 as the monarch of the Kingdom of France. He is also referred to by the French as Louis Le Grand or le Roi-Soleil.

<sup>9</sup> François Luchaire (ed.), *L'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales* (Paris: Comité National d'Evaluation (CNE), 1991), 9; Bernard Hourcade, "Iranian Studies in France", *Iranian Studies* 20/2 (1987), 4; Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 21.

These children were referred to as “Jeunes de Langues,” meaning “Language Youths.” The plan was for the students to receive education partly in Paris and then in Istanbul. Before the six children, aged nine or ten, set off for education in Istanbul, they received schooling at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, which was established in 1563.<sup>11</sup> The first generation educated in this school mostly consisted of children of French diplomats or merchants operating in the Ottoman Empire or Christian regions of the East.<sup>12</sup> However, the language education did not proceed as intended. Only the school in Pera (Beyoğlu/Istanbul) continued its education activities partially. Yet, there was insufficient infrastructure for Arabic and Persian lessons there.<sup>13</sup> These children, who continued their studies through a sort of scholarship, did not yield the expected benefits and ended up participating in significant missionary activities.

With the opening of language schools in Istanbul by France, Austria, Poland, and a few other countries aimed at training translators, studies on Ottoman Turkish took on an institutional dimension in the late 17th century. Indeed, the famous work “Bibliothèque Orientale” by Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville (1625-1695) marked a significant step. The author was cataloging manuscripts in the royal library and working on a trilingual dictionary encompassing Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Among these three languages, European scholars had a keen interest.<sup>14</sup>

In the year 1700, a wealthy woman donated 10,000 livres under the condition of supporting young Armenians trained for Catholic missions in Turkey. In response, Louis XIV reorganized the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, enabling twelve Armenian children to continue their education there. By 1705, the school had around ten students aged between 14 and 28, with seven being Greek and three being Armenian.<sup>15</sup> In 1721, it was decided that students at the School of Interpreters would be selected exclusively from among the French or, more accurately, in succession, from children born in France and families of established merchants.<sup>16</sup> The curriculum then focused on Latin, Ancient Greek, Turkish, and Arabic.

French orientalist Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1763-1824) expressed his dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of the courses offered at the Royal College in the year 1790 in a paper titled “A Petition to the National Assembly.” Consequently, he proposed the idea of establishing a new school for Oriental languages that would be more suitable for fulfilling the goals of diligent individuals, rather than merely satisfying a king's pride.<sup>17</sup> However, such a project did not have a favorable chance of being accepted

<sup>11</sup> Leclant, “Discours”, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Antoine Gautier - Marie de Testa, *Drogmans, diplomates et ressortissants Europeens auprès de la Porte Ottomane* (İstanbul: Les Editions Isis, 2013), 31.

<sup>13</sup> The Capuchins were in charge of the school and their expenses were covered by the Marseille Chamber of Commerce. This was an early example of non-tertiary education and collaboration with the private sector. See. Luchaire, L'Institut National des Langues, Students of the Jesuits (Armenian, Greek, Syrian origin) in Paris also attended the classes of this school.

<sup>14</sup> For more detailed information see Alexander Bevilacqua, *Şark Kütüphanesi: İslam ve Avrupa Aydınlanması*, çev. Kenan Çapık (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2020), 57-104.

<sup>15</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 22.

<sup>17</sup> “Notice historique sur l'École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes”, 1883 (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Littérature et art, 4-X-476), IV.

in the year 1790. The harsh criticisms directed towards existing schools had already unsettled many individuals. As a result, Langlès could not find the support he needed for his proposal.<sup>18</sup>

A few years later, a more suitable opportunity arose. In the 1790s, due to the government's policies resulting in the closure of many schools, the shortage of translators had become so serious that finding suitable candidates for vacant positions was extremely difficult. In 1794, French politician and former Catholic priest Joseph Lakanal (1762-1845) presented a report advocating the establishment of a state school.<sup>19</sup> In 1795, the Revolutionary Assembly passed a Decree by Law to establish "L'École Spéciale des Langues Orientales-Langues O" or the Special School of Oriental Languages, abbreviated as "Langues O."<sup>20</sup> The school was founded under the umbrella of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (French National Library) and was located on Rue Neuve de Parette-Champs, with the mission of teaching living Eastern languages to young individuals interested in politics and trade.<sup>21</sup> The initial languages taught at the school were Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Malay.<sup>22</sup> These languages were fundamental to the training of embassy secretaries and interpreters, and many of the researchers who learned them would later become renowned scholars. The institution steadily grew throughout the 19th century, with the addition of new languages. It merged with the school established in 1669 by Colbert to train translators in Oriental languages (L'École des jeunes de langues). In 1874, the school moved to a mansion at the corner of Rue Saint-Pierre.<sup>23</sup>

In 1868, the school's name was changed to the Special School for Living Eastern Languages (École Spéciale des Langues Orientales Vivantes). In 1873, the school, known as *Langues O*, moved from its dependence on the National Library and relocated to an old aristocratic palace on Rue de Lille. In the same year, it began to establish its own book collection.<sup>24</sup> In 1914, the school was renamed as the National School for Living Eastern Languages, known by its abbreviation École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes (Enlov)<sup>25</sup>, and it retained this special status until 1968 when the student movement led to its integration into the university sector as the *Living Eastern Languages University Centre*. During this period, the school's scope expanded further to include African languages, Native American languages, and languages from other regions. Due to the inadequate space on Rue de Lille, some departments were shared with institutions in Paris.

<sup>18</sup> "Notice historique sur l'École spéciale", V; Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> "Notice historique sur l'École spéciale", III-VIII; Leclant, "Discours", 3.

<sup>20</sup> Mantran, "À Vorigiine De Lecole Nationale Des Langues Orientales / Vivantes : L'ecole Des Jeunes De Langues", 9-12; Gernot U. Gabel, "200 Jahre Langues'O", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 146/2 (1996), 1.

<sup>21</sup> M. Louis Bazin, "Silvestre de Sacy", *Institut de France (Célébration du bicentenaire de l'École des Langues orientales)* 1 (1995), 20; Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère - Angel Pino (ed.), *Un Siècle d'Enseignement du Chinois à l'École des Langues Orientales (1840-1945)* (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1995), 28. The most common six languages in the East: Greek, Slavic, Arabian, Persian, Armenian ve Turkish. see. Gautier - Testa, *Drogmans, diplomates et ressortissants Europeens aupres de la Porte Ottomane*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Gabel, "200 Jahre Langues'O", 1.

<sup>25</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 34.



**Image 2:** Inalco on June 1, 1910, with administrator Paul Boyer, which established the first Russian platform, at the centre.

In 1968, the institution had fallen behind the higher education standards of that time. It needed to evolve from being a short-programmed organization for studying Eastern languages and become an autonomous structure with the status of an institute within higher education. By 1971, the institution, previously affiliated with Sorbonne Paris University, changed its name to the National Institute of Languages and Civilizations of the East (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, abbreviated as Inalco), a name that remains in use to this day.<sup>26</sup> The addition of *Institut* and *Civilization* to the name signifies a significant step in the institution's evolution. With this name change, Inalco shifted its focus to a broader scope, becoming an international reference point for language instruction, research, and cultural studies. In other words, this transformation aimed to reflect the goal of offering an academic program that not only taught languages but also delved into Eastern cultures. Thus, Inalco maintained pedagogical autonomy and gained financial independence on one hand, while also being associated with the university due to its ability to confer national diplomats.

In 1984, Inalco achieved the status of a *grand établissement*, which translates to *major institution*. The term *grand établissement* refers to a special status granted to specific higher education institutions in France. This status signifies a certain level of autonomy and administrative independence for the institutions.<sup>27</sup> Inalco's attainment of the *grand établissement* status provided the institution with greater academic and administrative autonomy. This paved the way for Inalco to become more recognized and prestigious on both domestic and international levels.

Moreover, the *grand établissement* status facilitated the allocation of a broader budget and resources to Inalco. This status could contribute to Inalco gaining more recognition and prestige both nationally and internationally. As a specialized institution in linguistics, cultural studies, history, and related fields, this status enables Inalco to have a larger impact and engagement, allowing it to establish a more distinguished position.

<sup>26</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 36.

In 2010, Inalco became a founding member of Sorbonne Paris Cité. Sorbonne Paris Cité is a consortium composed of various universities, research institutions, and educational establishments in Paris. The purpose of this consortium is to promote academic excellence through collaborative efforts, support student and staff mobility, and create a broader education and research network.

After being spread across multiple buildings, in 2011, all of Inalco's facilities and the Bulac Library were consolidated into a single building located at Rue Des Grands Moulins 65 in the 13th arrondissement of Paris, near the National Library. Today, Inalco carries out all of its courses in a single place in Paris.



**Image 3:** A weathervane on the roof of Inalco's building on Rue de Lille, summarizing the institution's activities.<sup>28</sup>

Inalco, officially inaugurated in 1795, has undergone numerous name changes and expanded its scope over time. It has evolved into an institution focused on various languages and civilizations. Continuously evolving, Inalco provides a rich educational and research environment in fields such as linguistics, literature, history, arts, and social sciences. It plays a critical role in raising highly qualified professionals with deep knowledge of Eastern languages and cultures. Having officially celebrated its 200th anniversary in 1995 and now having surpassed 228 years, the institution in its current form represents the culmination of six centuries of effort and experience.

## 2. Management/Organization Structure

When Inalco was initially established, like other schools, it was necessary to form an administrative structure. As a first step, an administrator was appointed to the position of *administrator*. Following the regulations introduced after 1795, in addition to the administrator, the role of an assistant administrator (*administrateur-adjoint*) was created. In theory, the assistant

<sup>28</sup> The weather vane on the roof of the research center symbolizes the alliance of civilizations. The crane, representing immortality in ancient China, along with the snake, a symbol of time in Africa, adorn it. The moon, with its ancient associations, stands for the Arab world. Meanwhile, the palm, an emblem of victory in the Greco-Roman antiquity, ultimately evokes the Western world.

administrator was supposed to assist the administrator, step in for them when they could not perform their duties, or take over their position after their term ended. However, the assistant administrator played almost no institutional role in the life of the institution until 1971.<sup>29</sup>

With the reforms implemented in 1971, Inalco became part of the French higher education system. Its institutional structure took shape as an institute affiliated with the “Université de Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle,” known as Paris III University. From this point onwards, Inalco established a governance structure with a selected Board of Directors comprising 40 members, and René Sieffert, a professor of Japanese, was elected as its president. Following these changes, the highest authorities in the institution were appointed as *président*, not *Administrateur*.<sup>30</sup>

Table 1: Inalco Administrators and Presidents from Foundation to Present<sup>31</sup>

Years of Service	Name	Field of Expertise
1796 - 1824	Louis-Mathieu Langles	Persian
1824 - 1838	Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy	Arabic
1838 - 1847	Pierre Amede Jaubert	Turkish
1847 - 1864	Charles Benoit Hase	Modern Greek
1864 - 1867	Joseph Reinaud	Arabic
1867 - 1898	Charles Schefer	Persian
1898 - 1908	Charles Barbier de Meynard	Turkish, Persian
1908 - 1936	Paul Boyer	Russian
1936 - 1937	Mario Roques	Romanian
1937 - 1948	jean deny	Turkish
1948 - 1958	Henri Masse	Persian
1958 - 1969	André Mirambel	Modern Greek
1969 - 1971	André Guimbretiere	
1971 - 1976	Rene Sieffert	Japanese
1976 - 1986	La Bastide Henry	Middle Eastern Civilization
1986 - 1993	François de Labriolle	Russian
1993 - 2001	André Bourgey	Middle Eastern Civilization
2001 - 2005	Gilles Delouche	Thai
2005 - 2013	Jacques Legrand	Mongol
2013 - 2019	Manuel Franck	Southeast Asia
Since 2019	Jean-François Huchet	East Asian Economy

As can be understood from the table, Inalco administrators continued to hold their positions until the end of their lives. This might have been influenced by the difficulty of finding individuals trained at the professorial level and the respect for experience. After the shift to a presidential system, vice presidents began to take on more active roles. However, during this period, it was also

<sup>29</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 41.

necessary for financial matters to be handled by an expert, namely a general secretary. Until 1953, newly appointed teachers took on the secretarial duties at Inalco. After 1971, its budget was managed by the financial director of Paris III. Finally, in 1990, a general secretary position was established at Inalco.<sup>32</sup> With the institute's institutionalization, Inalco's governing bodies are as follows:

1. **Board of Directors (Conseil d'administration):** It is the highest decision-making body of Inalco. Comprising 40 members including university staff, students, academics, and representatives, the Board of Directors is responsible for the institute's strategic management and makes significant decisions.
2. **Executive Committee (Bureau):** Positioned beneath the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee deals with daily affairs and supports the institute's management.
3. **Technical Committee (Comité Technique):** Consists of representatives from the staff and members appointed by the management, this committee provides consultation and recommendations on personnel-related matters.
4. **Academic and University Life Council (Conseil des études et de la vie universitaire):** Makes decisions on academic matters, reviews curricula, course content, and academic policies.
5. **Scientific Council (Conseil scientifique):** Composed of academics, this council contributes to the institute's scientific strategy, and evaluates research and educational programs.
6. **Research Committee (Commission de la recherche):** Evaluates research projects and shapes the institute's research policies.
7. **Student Life Council (Conseil de la vie étudiante):** Represents students and organizes social activities and student services.

### 3. Service Buildings

Inalco's main service area is primarily in France. It is a university and research institute focused on various languages and civilizations based in France. However, over this long period, it had to operate in numerous main and ancillary buildings.

These main buildings can be summarized under three titles:

**Language School:** In 1795, when the Special School of Oriental Languages (L'École Spéciale des Langues Orientales) was established,<sup>33</sup> it began its activities on Rue Neuve de Parette-Champs in Paris.<sup>34</sup> From 1796 to 1834, this building was located in a sort of shack with small windows that provided inadequate lighting in a small courtyard. Unfortunately, it wasn't elegantly or comfortably situated around the National Library. Nevertheless, this location offered the advantage of proximity to Oriental manuscripts.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 41.

<sup>33</sup> Mantran, "À Vorigiine De Lecole Nationale Des Langues Orientales / Vivantes : L'ecole Des Jeunes De Langues", 9-12; Gernot U. Gabel, "200 Jahre Langues'O", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 146/2 (1996), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Bazin, "Silvestre de Sacy", 20; Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> "Notice historique sur l'École spéciale", XII.

**Research House (La Maison de la Recherche):** The Special School of Oriental Languages moved to a mansion located at the corner of Rue des Saints-Pères and Rue de Lille in 1874. The building, inspired by a classical spirit with preserved features of the northern wing, which were remnants of a 13th-century inn, consists of different extensions made at different times. Construction work that began in the mid-18th century was completed in 1935. Despite its gradual construction, the entire building exhibits a strong architectural coherence. The recorded student enrolment was 50 in 1938, 250 in 1948, approximately 860 in 1958, and over 1200 in 1968. However, by that time, the building in Rue de Lille was no longer sufficient, and the search for additional buildings became necessary.<sup>36</sup> The lack of space due to the increasing number of students was a significant problem. Acquiring a new location, obtaining new resources, and changing the institution's legal status were definitely required to establish a notable position in higher education. By 1968, the existing status was no longer compatible with the prevailing university conditions. After 1971, Inalco quickly obtained permission to move to a building constructed in Clichy, then later moved to another building built in Asnières. At the same time, it also retained a space in Dauphine. As a result, apart from its main building on Lille Street, Inalco occupied spaces in other university-owned locations that were either subleased or shared with others.<sup>37</sup>

**Languages and Civilizations Centre (Le Pôle des langues et civilisations):** This campus-style building is located at 65 Rue des Grands Moulins, 75013 Paris. The building is a modern structure situated in the 13th district of Paris, along the banks of the Seine River. It was created through a construction project completed in 2001. The former flour factory, Grands Moulins de Paris, was restored to become a modern facility. The renovated building offers a spacious campus area with contemporary architecture.

#### 4. Fields of Activity

##### 4.1. Language Teaching

The primary goal of Inalco is to educate language experts, diplomats, and individuals skilled in international relations and proficient in oriental languages.<sup>38</sup> These languages were neglected in France until the early 17th century and were nearly abandoned by the period of revolution.<sup>39</sup> When the school was founded in 1795, its main objective was to train interpreters and translators who could address France's diplomatic and commercial needs in the East.<sup>40</sup> As the academic staff and library expanded, various languages were added to the curriculum. Initially, only Arabic, Persian, and Turkish were taught, but over the years, the educational program was expanded to teach 12 Eastern languages. By the year 1900, education was provided in 20 different languages at the school.

<sup>36</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O'* 1795-1995, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O'* 1795-1995, 36.

<sup>38</sup> Bergère - Pino., *Un Siècle d'Enseignement du Chinois*, 28.

<sup>39</sup> "Notice historique sur l'École spéciale", III; Luchaire, *L'Institut National des Langues*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Gautier - Testa, *Drogmans, diplomates et ressortissants Européens aupres de la Porte Ottomane*, 32.

This number doubled until World War II, and currently, Inalco teaches at least 100 languages spoken in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Eastern Europe.<sup>41</sup>

The school started with a male teaching staff, but gradually included women as well, and the first female students graduated in 1888. In 1919, a scholarship was granted to a student for the first time. By 1930, women represented 23% of the student body and 25% of the alumni. The first female teacher to enter the archives was Kantchoclovski, who was appointed for Russian in 1910. Remizov-Douguello became the first teacher to offer free lessons in Russian and Slavic paleography in 1926.<sup>42</sup>

By 1971, Inalco had become an educational and research institution offering international and comprehensive education in recognized languages and civilizations. Thus, its mission was defined as “to teach students the living languages, geography, history, constitutions, and political, economic, and social life of the relevant countries so that they can practice their profession abroad.”<sup>43</sup> After 1971, its affiliation with Paris III granted the institution a dual identity and profoundly changed its status due to the constitution of 1969. While Inalco maintained pedagogical autonomy and gained financial autonomy, it also became part of the university due to its ability to issue national diplomas.<sup>44</sup> President René Sieffert, after 1971, established the *Centre de préparation aux échanges internationaux* (CPEI), a professional program designed to align Inalco with the university’s new functions.

During François de Labriolle’s presidency (1986-1993), significant changes took place at Inalco, in particular the creation of a new status specifically for teaching staff and assistants. The institution gained the authority to confer bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees under its own seal. More recently, under the presidency of André Bourgey (1993-2001), Inalco acquired the ability to conduct *habilitation* (a high-level academic exam) programs to guide research, thus solidifying its status as a full-fledged educational institution.<sup>45</sup>

Today, Inalco provides education and conducts research not only on the languages of Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas but also on the geography, history, institutions, and political, economic, and social life of the relevant countries.<sup>46</sup> As an academic institution specialized in languages, it offers diverse and high-quality language programs. Students are given the opportunity to receive education in a wide range of languages spoken in these regions, along with the opportunity of choosing between various options for language learning.<sup>47</sup> Language learning programs are offered at different levels, from beginner to advanced, thus ensuring that every student can receive education tailored to their grammar proficiency.

Inalco utilises contemporary and effective methods for language education. Language courses emphasize a balanced approach to grammar, speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. The

<sup>41</sup> Gabel, “200 Jahre Langues’O”, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco), “Qui sont les premières diplômées et enseignantes des Langues O’?” (Accessed 27 July 2023).

<sup>43</sup> Luchaire, *L’Institut National des Langues*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O’ 1795-1995*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O’ 1795-1995*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco), “L’Institut” (Accessed 23 July 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Bergère - Pino (ed.), *Un Siècle d’Enseignement du Chinois*, 30.

students are also educated in cultural and social aspects of Eastern civilisations alongside the language education they receive. Language education at Inalco is carried out by experienced and expert teachers. The teaching staff consists of instructors who are proficient in the relevant languages and specialize in language teaching. Language laboratories are available to support language learning process, allowing students to practice, enhance their language skills, and strengthen their language proficiency. Upon completion of language learning programs, students are awarded with various language certificates, which are recognized and respected internationally.

Inalco offers education from undergraduate to doctoral levels, providing professional courses focused on more than 100 languages and civilizations. It offers students advanced education with a research-oriented approach.<sup>48</sup> With approximately 3,000 different courses offered across five educational centres around Paris, Inalco stands as one of the largest educational institutions worldwide dedicated to Eastern languages and cultures. The institution's educational activities are as follows:

**Undergraduate Programs:** Inalco offers various undergraduate programs focusing on different languages and cultures. These programs generally include linguistics, literature, history, and cultural studies courses.

**Master's and Doctoral Programs:** Inalco provides a range of programs at the master's and doctoral levels across various disciplines. These programs aim to specialize in linguistics, literature, history, cultural studies, and other related fields. The intention is to equip students with research skills, engage in thesis work, and attain advanced knowledge in the relevant areas.

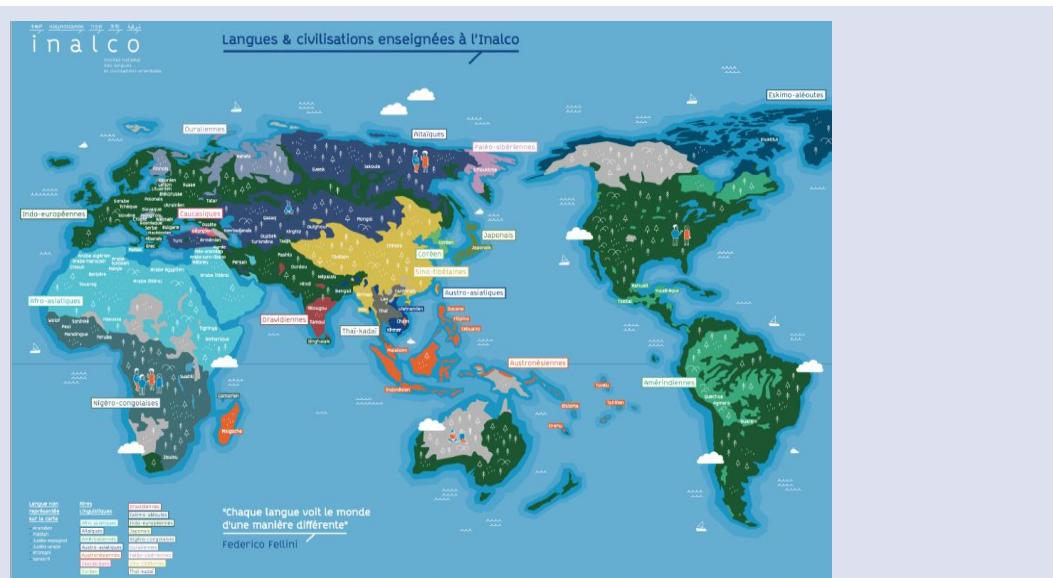
**Language Courses:** Inalco offers a variety of language courses for those who want to learn a new language or enhance their existing language skills. Taught at different levels, these courses allow students to improve their language proficiency and deepen their cultural understanding.

Inalco's classrooms are equipped with modern teaching technologies, facilitating interactive learning environments for students. As of today, Inalco has 9,000 students from 120 different nationalities, engaging in 3,000 courses alongside teachers and students.<sup>49</sup> With over 80,000 alumni worldwide, the institution's extensive network provides job opportunities in international trade, import-export, marketing, logistics, finance, and business consultancy to those within the network. Moreover, Inalco students can explore job opportunities in defence industry, communication, humanitarian aid, intercultural mediation, economic intelligence, journalism, multilingual engineering, SEO expertise, natural language processing, translation and interpretation, cultural action, guided interpretation, transportation companies, heritage preservation, and more. Alumnis hold positions as linguists, diplomats, CEOs of major companies, members of parliament, and various other roles.

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<sup>48</sup> Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco), “L’Institut”.

<sup>49</sup> Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco), “Réseau Inalco Alumni” (Accessed 20 June 2023).



*Image 4: A map demonstrating Inalco's scope today.*<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.2. Academic Research and Development

As an academic institution, Inalco focuses on research, education, and publication activities in various fields. While initially focusing language education, it also recognized the importance of understanding culture and civilization codes as a path to become a proficient translator, therefore paying attention importance to research activities as well. As students spent their time getting acquainted with different cultures, instructors also kept their desire to thoroughly learn the languages and cultures within their expertise alive. Many professors authored books on grammar and cultural elements in their respective fields, incorporating them into the curriculum. In 1971, the academic activities were regulated with Inalco's new institute status. In line with its mission, Inalco supported the academic activities of students and researchers in fields like linguistics, literature, culture, history, and social sciences.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Inalco established research centres that developed various programs and launched a total of 15 journals, including at least five successful ones.<sup>51</sup> With over 100 languages taught and a faculty of 300 teacher-researchers, Inalco engaged in current debates to establish intercultural dialogue, address societal issues, and deal with political, economic, social, and environmental conflicts. Utilizing resources in local languages, it provided in-depth historical analysis and sociological reflection unique to the French academic world.

With more than 100 languages and cultures taught, students and teachers from over 120 nations, and research projects in more than 100 countries, Inalco has steadfastly become an international institute for over two centuries. Inalco values various forms of collaboration which include maintaining and enriching a global communication network with foreign universities and institutionalizing relationships with partners.

<sup>50</sup> Please refer to the catalogue prepared by Dr. Mariana Losada: studyinfrance, "Inalco\_presentation\_ChooseFrance" (Accessed 25 July 2013).

<sup>51</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 36.

In Inalco, the research aims to bridge cultural and disciplinary areas. It focuses on combinations that yield scientific productivity, including studying languages alongside the history, geography, institutions, and political, economic, and social life of relevant countries and regions. Researchers and research teams here prefers to work with a thematic and interdisciplinary approach, often situated simultaneously in major global regions. The research staff is based on 14 teams, half of which work in partnership with CNRS and IRD research organizations.

In conclusion, Inalco actively conducts research in linguistics, literature, culture, history, social sciences, and related fields. Researchers in relevant disciplines engage in projects, publish articles, and participate in conferences and national/international research networks. Articles are typically published in academic journals and publishing houses. These articles contain researchers' and academics' works in their respective fields, theoretical and methodological approaches, discoveries, and conclusions.

#### **4.3. Library**

Although it can be thought that Inalco, being an institution focused on language and research, would not prioritize first rate library services, it was necessary for the organization to have a library to carry out its tasks. Therefore, the founding of the library date back to the founding of Inalco and is closely intertwined with it. As the institution evolved and established its own archive, it successfully integrated a functional library within its structure. Although this library was formed by Inalco, it eventually separated from it for more effective utilization. Nevertheless, it never got away from Inalco's reach, maintaining the stance of being two different but united entities.

On November 18, 1669, when the Young Languages School, the first of its kind, was established in Istanbul with Colbert's initiative, some books and manuscripts which were granted to the library of this school were used as the first teaching materials. During the same period, manuscripts and books prepared for students, brought from the Middle East also proved useful.<sup>52</sup> These dates coincide with the time when Antoine Galland, a French orientalist and archaeologist (1646-1715), who was the first European to translate One Thousand and One Nights (*Les mille et une nuits*), was commissioned by the King of France to collect books from the East. A skilled translator with education in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, Galland began collecting manuscripts and ancient coins, particularly in Istanbul. He even mentioned, "Buying books here is easier than buying from anywhere else in the world. There are many bookshops, and every day new books take their place on the shelves, sold to the highest bidder."<sup>53</sup> This indicates that cultural knowledge from the East, especially in Istanbul, was being transferred to the West, and specifically to France (Paris).

In 1795, when the Special School for Eastern Languages was established, the library was moved to the national Rue de Richelieu. In 1838, a catalogue of the works in the library was created,<sup>54</sup> and a budget of 5,000 Francs was allocated for acquiring manuscript works.<sup>55</sup> During this period, the courses of the School of Eastern Languages were offered in a quite modest venue which belonged

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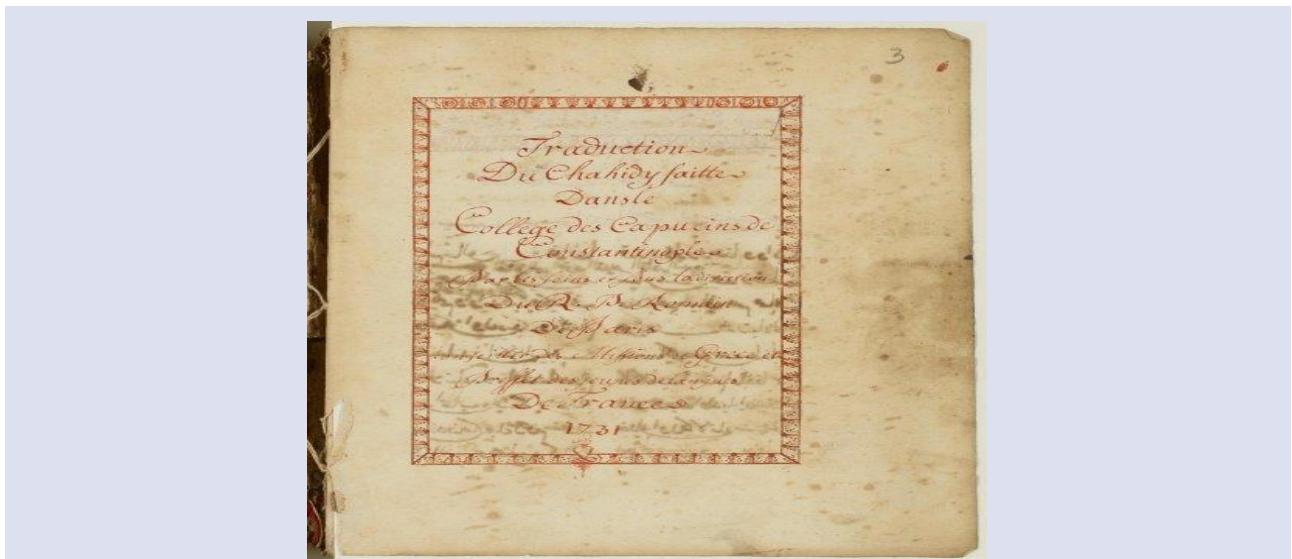
<sup>52</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 44.

<sup>53</sup> Bevilacqua, *Şark Kütüphanesi*, 57.

<sup>54</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 44.

<sup>55</sup> Luchaire, *L'Institut National des Langues*, 9.

the National Library. By 1867, the School of Eastern Languages had only a few books that were critical for explaining some Arabic, Persian, and Turkish texts, and professors and students had no alternative options beyond these books.<sup>56</sup> There was a total of 300 volumes in the room where only educational classes were held.



**Image 5:** Front page of a copied manuscript, from the Istanbul's Young Languages School.

In 1873, the school had around 4,000 volumes in its library, all of which were related to the languages and history of the modern East. These volumes included many texts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Chinese, and Japanese, printed in the East, and the books were open for everyone to use.<sup>57</sup> By 1874, when the institution permanently moved to Rue de Lille, it was time to establish a proper library. The works obtained before this date were referred to as the old collection. After moving to Rue de Lille, the library saw an acceleration in the development of financial resources. Starting from 1875, Wladimir Brunet de Presle (1809-1875), a 19th-century French Hellenist, Byzantinist, and historian who was a translator in Greek and academician, donated a total of 1,600 volumes. This way, the library was formed, and by 1898, more than 50,000 hardcover works obtained from Europe were collected. Collections based on languages were established from 1930 onwards.<sup>58</sup> By 1945, the library administratively separated from the school. In the early 1970s, following the split of University of Paris, the library gained an inter-university status.

La Bibliothèque interuniversitaire des langues orientales (Biulo), or the Interuniversity Library of Oriental Languages, was historically associated with Inalco and specialized in Eastern languages. The term “Orient” in its name goes beyond the concept of near, middle, or far, and includes the entirety of Oceania, all of Asia, Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe, the Slavic world, and the native civilizations of the American continent.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> E. Lambrecht, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de l'École des Langues Orientales Vivantes* (Paris:9 Ernest Leroux, 1897), V.

<sup>57</sup> “Notice historique sur l'École spéciale”, LII.

<sup>58</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Labrousse, *Langues O' 1795-1995*.

Biulo, previously affiliated with Sorbonne Paris III University, gained a separate legal status as of 1971. Its central office was located on Rue de Lille in the 7th arrondissement of Paris, adjacent to Inalco. In 2001, when Inalco was seriously in the process of acquiring a new building, its staff and collections were integrated into La Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations (Bulac), the Library of University Languages and Civilizations, in 2010. This library, integrated into the Inalco building, houses thousands of rare books and manuscripts.<sup>60</sup> Presently, it holds around 750,000 books and 12,189 periodical publications in approximately 100 different languages.<sup>61</sup>

Bulac owns a rich library collection, serving as a wide-ranging information source for students, researchers, and academics. The library has a wide collection of works of linguistics, literature, culture, history, and social sciences. The collection contains books, journals, articles, thesis, electronic resources, and other materials published in various languages.<sup>62</sup> The collection is organized and indexed according to modern cataloguing standards, facilitating easy access to desired materials for users. With online catalogues and search tools, the library provides users with the capability to find and request resources efficiently.

#### **4.4. Printing-Publishing**

Inalco has emphasized on book publishing almost since its establishment. Operating in an environment where printing technology was becoming widespread, it aimed to pioneer the publishing of both periodical and non-periodical works. Starting from 1875, funds were allocated to the school for the publication of books related to Eastern languages and the countries where these languages were spoken. This process was promptly initiated, with the bookseller and publisher Ernest Leroux (1845-191) working as the school's publisher.<sup>63</sup> Later on, Inalco established its own publishing house.

“Presses de l’Inalco” is a publishing house managed by Inalco that handles Inalco’s publishing activities. Established in 1996, the publishing house has since been publishing a wide range of academic books, journals, and other publications focusing on cultures in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Oceania. The purpose of this publishing house is to support the works of academicians and researchers, specializing in Inalco’s areas of expertise and to disseminate knowledge on an international scale. *Presses de l’Inalco* offers publications encompassing a broad spectrum of academic content in fields such as linguistics, history, anthropology, literature, sociology, and other social sciences.

The publishing house functions as an important platform for researchers and academics worldwide who work on Eastern languages and civilizations. Additionally, by supporting cultural interaction and knowledge sharing on international level, it contributes to acquiring more knowledge about Eastern cultures and enhancing understanding of them. The goal of “Presses de l’Inalco” is to contribute to the extending of scientific research and cultural understanding.

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<sup>60</sup> The collection includes materials in various languages, with particularly significant holdings in Arab-Islamic languages (55,000 volumes), Chinese (30,000 volumes), Japanese (30,000 volumes), Slavic languages (80,000 volumes), South and Southeast Asian languages (22,000 volumes), as well as Western languages (80,000 volumes).

<sup>61</sup> Gabel, “200 Jahre Langues’O”, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Lambrecht, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque*, VI.

<sup>63</sup> “Notice historique sur l’École spéciale”, LIII.

## 5. Orientalism And Inalco

Orientalism has various definitions, but it can be understood as the Western interest in and attempt to understand the language, religion, history, and cultures of the East. This concept gained importance particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries as Western interaction with the East increased and studies about the East were conducted in various disciplines. Orientalism recognizes that the East encompasses a vast geographical and cultural diversity. When referring to the East, it goes beyond mere geography to include different countries, languages, religions, traditions, and ways of life. This diversity is a crucial element in comprehending the complexity and richness of Eastern cultures.

Orientalism also acknowledges that there are some commonalities among Eastern cultures. For instance, many Eastern societies have interacted with each other throughout history and shared similar religious, philosophical, or artistic motifs. Orientalist studies encompass efforts to highlight these shared elements and to understand the structure of Eastern societies. However, when discussing Orientalism, having a critical perspective is also important, for the reason that certain Orientalist approaches have faced criticism for portraying the East as exotic, underdeveloped, or foreign, emphasizing Western superiority. After all, Orientalism is a discipline that includes two fundamental aspects: diversity and unity, in the context of studies about Eastern cultures and societies. Adopting a critical perspective when approaching this discipline is essential to understand and evaluate the rich and diverse cultures of the East.<sup>64</sup>

Humanist and scholarly/academic Orientalism particularly focuses on the Islamic field, more specifically on cultural areas where Arabic, Turkish, and Persian are used.<sup>65</sup> According to Orientalists, while it is acceptable to criticize Islam, attacks on the religion of Prophet Muhammad are often seen as a disguise for an enmity against all other religions. Thus, the traditional depiction of Prophet Muhammad is regarded as a supposititious perception.<sup>66</sup>

Inalco's role is very prominent in grasping the Eastern history and civilisations, development of and gaining new perspectives on this understanding, and emergence of the science known as "oriento-Sharqiyat". The Ecole des Jeunes de Langues (Youth Language School) arranged the training of interpreters from the late 17th century onwards. This heritage was subsequently taken over by the Ecole des Langues Orientales (School of Oriental Languages), which gained a particularly prestigious reputation at a very early stage.<sup>67</sup> In this context, Inalco, while examining languages, cultures, histories, and societies from various regions from an academic perspective, became a part of orientalist studies and contributed to the academic foundation of Orientalism. In general, Inalco clung to academic methods and an objective perspective as a principle. Researchers

<sup>64</sup> M. Henri Laurens, "La Place de L'Orientalisme Dans L'Emergence des Sciences Humaines, A La Fin Du XVIII Siecle", *Institut de France (Célébration du bicentenaire de l'École des Langues orientales)* 1 (1995), 13.

<sup>65</sup> Laurens, "La Place de L'Orientalisme Dans L'Emergence des Sciences Humaines, A La Fin Du XVIII Siecle", 13.

<sup>66</sup> Laurens, "La Place de L'Orientalisme Dans L'Emergence des Sciences Humaines, A La Fin Du XVIII Siecle", 16. For a detailed understanding of the portrayal of Prophet Muhammad in French Orientalism, you may refer to the following sources: İsmail Metin, *Fransız Oryantalizminde Hz. Muhammed İmaji* (İstanbul: Kitap Dünyası, 2022).

<sup>67</sup> Mantran, "À Vorigine de L'ecole Nationale Des Langues Orientales / Vivantes : L'ecole Des Jeunes de Langues", 12.

in such institutions aim to enhance intercultural understanding objectively by taking critiques of Orientalism into account and striving to understand Eastern cultures within their own dynamics.

Inalco has a tradition of over 300 years in the field of Asian studies and has been a significant place for the education of numerous significant orientalists throughout history.<sup>68</sup> Orientalism is generally known as an interdisciplinary field that focuses on Eastern languages, cultures, histories, and other related areas. Inalco has hosted many experts and researchers in these fields and contributed to the development of orientalism. Here are some famous orientalists who have emerged from Inalco:

**Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838):** Made significant contributions to Eastern languages by conducting comparative studies between languages and cultures. He is also one of the pioneering figures who introduced the Arabic language to the West and advocated for the translation of Arabic literature into French. He made a substantial contribution to the spread of knowledge about Arab culture by translating Arabic grammar and literary texts into European languages. He also worked on Persian, Turkish, and other Eastern languages and translated works in these languages. The works of Silvestre de Sacy contributed to the improvement of Orientalism and increase in the interest towards Eastern cultures in Europe.<sup>69</sup>

**Antoine-Pierre-Louis Bazin (1799-1863):** A recognized French sinologist and specialist in Eastern languages, Bazin is particularly known for his studies in Chinese language and literature. He played a role in establishing Chinese language courses at the School of Living Oriental Languages (École des Langues Orientales Vivantes) by focusing on teaching Mandarin dialect.

**Louis Massignon (1883-1962):** A significant figure in French Orientalism and Islamic studies, Massignon is a prominent figure associated with Inalco, who also considerably influenced later generations of orientalists. He is known for his research on the Islamic religion, Arabic literature, and the Kurdish language. He particularly focused on Islamic mysticism, notably the works of Hallâj-ı Mansûr and Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî.<sup>70</sup>

**Régis Blachère (1900-1973):** A French orientalist who was also a member of the Institut de France. Blachère served as a professor of Arabic language and Islamic law at Inalco. In 1935, he was appointed as the Arabic language instructor at the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes (School of Living Oriental Languages) and later in 1950, he left the institute to become the head of the Chair of Medieval Arabic Language and Literature at Sorbonne University. He conducted important research on the Arabic language, Islamic law, the Quran, and the life of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>71</sup>

**Gustave E. von Grunebaum (1909-1972):** A German-born American orientalist and Islamic scholar, Grunebaum received education in Arabic language and Islamic culture at Inalco. He authored significant works on Islamic history, Arabic literature, and Islamic thought.

<sup>68</sup> Paul van der Velde, "Re-orienting Asian Studies", *The Asian Studies Parade* (New York: Leiden University Press, 2023), 238.

<sup>69</sup> Bazin, "Silvestre de Sacy", 19.

<sup>70</sup> Examples of these works can include the following: Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Hallaj: Martyr Mystique de L'Islam* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> Metin, *Fransız Oryantalizminde Hz. Muhammed İmaji*, 33-39.

**Claude Cahen (1909-1991):** A French Marxist orientalist and historian of Jewish origin. Cahen specialized in the Islamic Middle Ages, Muslim sources concerning the Crusades, and the social history of Islamic society during the Middle Ages. He was an expert in Turkish history and Islamic civilization and taught Turkish language and culture courses at Inalco while conducting significant research on Turkish history.

**Maxime Rodinson (1915-2004):** French social scientist, historian, sociologist, and orientalist, born to a Jewish family of Polish origin. He is known for his research on Islamic history, the Arab world, and the biography of Prophet Muhammad. He received education at Inalco and passed the entrance exams for the School of Living Oriental Languages in Paris in 1932, where he studied Semitic languages, Arabic, Turkish, and Ethiopian languages.<sup>72</sup>

**Jacqueline de Romilly (1913-2010):** French classical philologist and orientalist. She learned and taught Greek and Sanskrit at Inalco. She is recognized for her contributions to research on ancient Greek culture and language.

**Gilbert Lazard (1920-1998):** French orientalist and Iranologist. Lazard received education in Persian and Iranian languages at Inalco. He conducted significant research in Iranian literature, linguistics, and culture.

**Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont (1920-1996):** A French orientalist and Sinologist, Bacqué-Grammont studied Chinese and East Asian cultures at Inalco. He is known for his works on Chinese history and literature.

**Alexandre Popovic (1931-2012):** A political scientist, historian, and orientalist, Popovic specialized in Balkan languages and cultures at Inalco. He conducted studies particularly on the Ottoman Empire's influence on the Balkans and the analysis of Balkan languages.

**Louis Bazin (1922-2011):** French orientalist and Turkologist. Bazin received education in Turkish language and culture at Inalco. He conducted research on Turkish history, literature, and folklore.

**François de Blois (1949-2016):** An English orientalist and Iranologist, de Blois studied Iranian languages and cultures at Inalco. He conducted significant research on ancient Iranian literature and Zoroastrianism.

**Catherine Mayeur Jaouen (1964-...):** Mayeur-Jaouen specialized in Chinese language and culture - studies at Inalco. She is an expert in Chinese literature, cultural history, and contemporary China.

Here are just a few of the prominent orientalists who have been educated at Inalco. There are many more scholars whose names we have not mentioned. Inalco, being a specialized institution in languages and civilizations, has contributed to the education of numerous significant orientalists throughout history.

## Conclusion

Orientalism, or Oriental Studies, is more of an institutional phenomenon rather than individual endeavours. Historically, the continuity of institutionalized structures has proven to be more effective and lasting than individual efforts. In this context, Inalco, which began as a decision to

<sup>72</sup> Metin, *Fransız Oryantalizminde Hz. Muhammed İmaji*, 40-49.

educate a small group of young individuals in response to the common demands of French leaders and intellectuals who sought to engage in the political and commercial environment of the East, has evolved into a significant establishment, despite facing occasional challenges, by maintaining its process of institutionalization that began in 1795. Inalco has established its academic competence and become both a language and research centre as well as an Oriental Studies institution. In fact, the increased interest and research in Eastern sciences during the 18th century led to the emergence of an academic discipline known as 'Orientalism' or 'Oriental Studies.' During this period, scholars and researchers interested in Eastern languages, cultures, and histories contributed to the development of Eastern studies in Europe. Throughout this process, European scholars and intellectuals began to engage more with Eastern countries. Diplomatic, commercial, and cultural interactions with the Ottoman Empire and other Eastern civilizations necessitated a greater understanding of Eastern languages and cultures, driving the advancement of Eastern studies.

The development of Eastern studies during this period laid the foundation for the emergence of modern social sciences and humanities. Knowledge and research about Eastern cultures served as inspiration for disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, linguistics, and more. Inalco achieved all of this through its historical experiences and commitment to institutionalization. Its careful selection of leaders and its democratic approach on the matter, transition to a presidential system after becoming an institute, and lastly, the appointments of vice presidents and general secretaries contributed to its well-structured institutional functioning.

Over the past fifty years, Inalco, as a language education centre, has undergone profound and significant changes. It has become a regular institution due to its status and objectives, while also excelling in a wide range of languages. Its expertise in teaching "Living/Vivantes" languages and its practical approach in teaching methods have accelerated the language and cultural transfer. With its extensive library and master's/doctoral programs, Inalco continues to raise thousands of qualified individuals. More recently, its efforts to enhance communication networks among alumnis have contributed significantly to both diplomacy and cultural exchange.

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