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Articles

Translating Orientalism. Louis-Mathieu Langlès as editor and translator of English literature between Oriental studies, commerce, and popularisation¹

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Abstract. This article delves into the translation and editing work of Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1764-1824), a significant figure in French Oriental studies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By examining Langlès' translations of British literature about Asia, the analysis underscores two interrelated strategies shaping his work. The first strategy involved the dissemination of knowledge about Asia through translations shaped by both a literalist approach to the text and intensive editing practices. These practices resulted in the incorporation of extensive footnotes and additions that served both informative and domesticating functions and highlighted Langlès' agency as a mediator of knowledge. The second strategy centres on Langlès' reform project for the French system of teaching and learning Asiatic languages, resulting in the establishment of the *École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes* in 1795. This strategy is strongly connected with his translation work as it reflects Langlès' pragmatic vision of Oriental studies as based on the British example, particularly the scholarly activities of individuals working for the East India Company. His translations, therefore, were not mere acts of appropriation but both embodied and encouraged 'emulation', allowing us to reveal the interplay of scholarly admiration and political competition and to uncover a distinct strand of Anglophilia within the broader context of early French Oriental studies.

Keywords: Orientalism, Travel literature, History of translation, British Empire, Paris.

1. INTRODUCTION

Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1763-1824) has long been recognised for his role in the development of Oriental studies in early nineteenth-century France. Arguably, his most significant achievement was the establishment of the *École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes*, a seminal institution based in Paris that later evolved into what is now known as the *Institut national des*

¹ For discussions, exchanges and conversations leading up to this article, I would like to thank Giacomo Carmagnini, Alessia Castagnino, Giovanni Lista, Rolando Minuti, Pascale Rabault-Feuerhahn, Fabien Simon, Giulio Talini, and Ann Thomson as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their very valuable comments.

langues et civilisations de l'Orient (INALCO)². However, despite his influential position in the Orientalist scholarly landscape of early nineteenth-century Paris, Langlès faced marginalisation in his later years and near-oblivion after his death. Only recently have scholars started to pay attention to his manifold activities, opening up new research avenues. This essay aims to contribute to this renewal by drawing upon his printed works as well as his private papers and other archival sources scattered across various Parisian institutions³. While Marten S. Saarela has reconstructed Langlès' role in the «early modern travels» of the Manchu script, and Fabien Simon has shed new light on Langlès' involvement with Oriental typography⁴, I will primarily focus on Langlès' role as editor and translator against the backdrop of his multiple scholarly pursuits as an Orientalist.

However, this article does not dwell on Langlès' (dubious) translations from Asiatic languages. Instead, it focuses on his interest in the extensive array of English literature about Asia that was produced in the context of a burgeoning British empire in the East. From this perspective, employing the history of translation as a lens through which specific problems and events can be better observed can offer fresh insights on the history of Oriental studies and Orientalism as a broader political, social, and cultural phenomenon⁵. As is widely acknowledged, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) has triggered far-flung debates in the humanities and has also left its mark on translation studies⁶. One of Said's primary arguments concerns the power/knowledge nexus and the connection between Orientalism and imperialism. As we will see, Langlès' case could be interpreted as an example of such argument, even though he was interested in commercial and diplomatic power rather than on outright conquest. However, the focus here is not so much on the relationship between European countries and the East, as on how the entanglement of Oriental studies, commerce, and empire could shape cultural interactions and translations among different European countries

involved in the construction or the projection of power in the East.

Langlès' translations and his relationship with British knowledge about Asia have been discussed by Indologist Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat and translation studies scholar Paul St. Pierre. Both scholars focused on Langlès' interest for India and the latter has interpreted Langlès' attitude towards translation and Oriental studies as «utilitariste»⁷. In addition, St. Pierre saw reactions to Langlès' work as reflecting the evolving landscape of Oriental studies. He suggested that some colleagues leveraged Langlès' reliance on British sources to make the case for the superiority of French Oriental studies, subtly undermining Langlès' credibility. While I share these conclusions, I contend that a broader perspective is needed to understand Langlès' translation activities. Drawing inspiration from sociological approaches to both biography and translation, I will first attempt to show that translation may have initially served Langlès' strategy of social ascent, only to later become a vulnerability in his reputation and finally influence how the historical memory of his scholarly persona was constructed. Then, by emphasising his role as a cultural broker and his agency as a translator, I will discuss Langlès' contribution to making a large amount of practical knowledge about Asia available to the French public. Finally, I will argue that Langlès sought to import and adapt locally what he perceived as a distinctly British way of dealing with 'the Orient', in a clear display of Anglophilia. This point underscores the significance of intra-European translation and cultural transfers for the early development of Oriental studies and allows us to situate Langlès' activities within the broader context of intellectual exchanges through translation in the eighteenth century. However, the fact that Langlès' efforts at cultural translation took place during a period of ongoing armed conflict between France and Great Britain should not only alert us to the political purposes attributed to translation during the French Revolution and its aftermath; it should also draw our attention to the ways in which Orientalism was shaped as a technology of knowledge and power – one to be applied well beyond India – by the dynamics of emulation between different polities⁸.

² Schwab 1950, pp. 98-99. On the history of 'Langues' O', see Labrousse 1995.

³ For some biographical outlines and short commentaries on Langlès see Lubrano di Ciccone 1995, Lardinois 2007, pp. 14-15, App 2010, pp. 472-75, Hitzel 2012b, and Messaoudi 2015, chap. 1-2. As we will see, the extent of Langlès' activity warrants a more profound exploration of archives in Paris as well as in other European cities.

⁴ Saarela 2020, Simon 2023; see also Giusti, Rabault-Feuerhahn, Simon 2024.

⁵ For this specific perspective on translation, see Rundle 2012; for an overview of the debates on translation and history see St. André 2009, Batchelor 2017 and Rundle 2020.

⁶ For a review of the debates on Said and *Orientalism*, see Varisco 2017². For Said's impact on translation studies, see e.g. the discussion in Chitiphalangsi and Henitiuk 2020.

⁷ Filliozat 2015; St. Pierre 2013, especially pp. 136, 155.

⁸ On translation as a means to cultural transfers in the eighteenth century see e.g. the essays collected in Stockhorst 2010 and Thomson, Burrows, Dziembowski 2010; on the role of translation and cultural transfers in the development of Orientalism see, among others, the essays in Rabault-Feuerhahn, Trautmann-Waller 2008, App 2010, pp. 440-80, Bevilacqua 2018, pp. 17-43, and, specifically on travel literature, the overview in Osterhammel 2018, pp. 232-236. The political values bestowed on translation at the turn of the eighteenth century are discussed in the essays collected in Bret, Chappey 2017.

2. THE FALL OF LANGLÈS AND THE USEFULNESS OF TRANSLATION

Born near Amiens in 1764, Langlès commenced his study of Oriental languages at the Collège Royal in Paris in the 1780s. According to his friends and colleagues, Langlès' passion for the Orient was genuine, yet he also harboured a desire to serve in India as a soldier or diplomat, possibly believing from early on in a connection between Oriental studies and French interests in the East⁹. His aspirations were shattered either by the conclusion of the war with Great Britain in 1783 or the onset of the French Revolution¹⁰. Nevertheless, Langlès may have seen an opportunity to contribute to France's Oriental endeavours in Paris, where he made a name for himself through his translation work and connections with the institutions of the French monarchy.

In late 1785, Langlès had been appointed an officer to the Tribunal des Maréchaux, a special court of jurisdiction of the *ancien régime* where his father had also served¹¹. In 1787, he displayed this commission on the frontispiece of his first two works: the *Institut politiques et militaires de Tamerlan*, purportedly a translation from Persian¹², and the important *Alphabet Tartare-Mantchou*¹³. Both works were dedicated to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. In 1788, capitalising on this success, Langlès presented himself as the «traducteur des Instituts de Tamerlan» when publishing his subsequent book¹⁴. Langlès likely benefited from a patronage network, including influential figures such as the statesman Henri Bertin (1720-1792) and the scholar Louis-Georges de Brequigny (1714-1795). Bertin was deeply interested in China, and Brequigny was well-versed in English history and sources – both areas of great significance for Langlès¹⁵.

⁹ While any detailed discussion of the complex relationship between Europe and India is beyond the scope of this article, on the topic see at least Teltscher 1995, Maillard 2008, App 2010, Vaghi 2012, Fourcade, Županov 2013, Davies, Roberts, Sánchez Espinosa 2014, and Subrahmanyam 2017. For a focus on the French cultural connections to India, see e.g. D'Souza 1995, Marquet, Smith, Singaravelou 2015.

¹⁰ See e.g. Roux de la Rochelle 1824, Dacier 1825, and Malte-Brun 1824 (all are concise biographies composed shortly after Langlès' death).

¹¹ A *lettre de provision d'office* kept in the Archives nationales (Grande Chancellerie, V/1/523, file 326) indicates that Langlès was appointed a *conseiller rapporteur du point d'honneur* in Villeroy, north-east of Paris, on 7 December 1785. On the Tribunal see Benoit 2017; on Langlès' father, see d'Aviau de Ternay 2012, p. 103.

¹² Hosayni 1787. On this dubious text see ud-Din 2011.

¹³ Langlès 1787. On Langlès' Manchu studies see Saarela 2020, pp. 190-221.

¹⁴ Langlès 1788.

¹⁵ On Bertin and Langlès, see Saarela 2020, pp. 190-221; on Brequigny, see Fossier 2018, pp. 76-77, and Bibliothèque nationale de France (henceforth BnF), MS Brequigny 161, ff. 60r-61v, letter from Langlès to

The success of his early works earned him a pension from the Tribunal¹⁶.

Once the Revolution broke out, Langlès was able to navigate the changing environment and secured his professional future. In the frontispiece of a 1790 collection of Oriental tales, he presented himself as both an officer of the Tribunal *and* a volunteer of the Paris National Guard¹⁷ (Fig. 1). Following the fall of the monarchy in 1792, Langlès began his ascent in the former Bibliothèque du Roi. It's possible that he had prior connections to the institution through Jean-Jacques Antoine Caussin de Perceval (1759-1835), the keeper of manuscripts, who had taught him Arabic at the Collège Royal. Langlès swiftly rose through the ranks, becoming the adjunct keeper (*sous-garde*) of Oriental manuscripts and eventually the keeper (*conservateur*) in 1795¹⁸. Between 1793 and 1796, he served as a substitute professor of Turkish and Persian at the former Collège Royal and taught at the École des jeunes de langues, the *ancien régime* institution tasked with training interpreters for Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and other languages spoken in present-day Asia¹⁹. Simultaneously, Langlès held various positions in the Comité d'Instruction publique of the National Convention²⁰ and worked in the Imprimerie nationale, an ideal setting for experimenting with 'oriental' typography and reinforcing his Republican credentials²¹. During this period, Langlès undertook several translations. On some occasions, he published anonymously, while at other times he ensured that the frontispieces made reference to his prior works or highlighted his roles at the Bibliothèque. This exercise in self-fashioning centred on

Brequigny, 5 November 1786.

¹⁶ *Biographie des hommes vivants* 1818; BnF, MS Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises (henceforth NAF) 20507, f. 368v, letter from Langlès to Armand-Emmanuel de Vignerot du Plessis, Duke of Richelieu, 20 May 1820.

¹⁷ Langlès 1790a («Officier de NN. SS. les Maréchaux de France, et Volontaire de la Garde Nationale Parisienne»); see also Langlès 1790b.

¹⁸ This last appointment was part of a major administrative reform of the Bibliothèque. See BnF, Archives Ancien Régime 40, f. 416, letter from Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas Chamfort to Langlès, 30 October 1792; *Procès-verbaux* 1889-1907, vol. VI, pp. 726-730, 805-806, 854-875, and Balayé 1988, pp. 324-410.

¹⁹ *Almanach national de France* (Paris, Testu) for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year of the French Republic (1793, 1794, 1795), respectively pp. 480, 434, 452; *Procès-verbaux* 1889-1907, vol. II, p. 359. On the École des jeunes de langues, see the overview and the bibliography in Hitzel 2012a.

²⁰ *Procès-verbaux* 1889-1907, vol. III, pp. 211, 315, 323, 327, 503; vol. V, p. 170.

²¹ On Langlès' work on typography see, besides Simon 2023, Messaoudi 2015, chap.1, pp. 22-30, and Giusti, Rabault-Feuerhahn, Simon 2024. Langlès, together with the director of the Imprimerie, Philippe-Daniel Duboy-Laverne (1755-1802), presented a *Manuel du républicain* to the Comité d'Instruction publique: see *Procès-verbaux* 1889-1907, vol. III, pp. 484-487.

his ability to extract and manage knowledge from the manuscript collections housed in Paris²²: as we will see, being professionally and personally positioned within or very close to these sites of knowledge both enabled and influenced Langlès' translation activity. If Langlès' election to the newly established Institut national in 1795 serves as an indication, his strategy of social ascent proved successful.

The year 1795 indeed marked a significant success for Langlès. The scholar had dedicated the first years of the Revolution to advocating a reform in the teaching and learning system of Asiatic languages – an idea he had been developing since at least 1788²³. In 1790, Langlès presented a fully-fledged project to the National Constituent Assembly with a speech about «l'importance des langues orientales pour l'extension du commerce, les progrès des Lettres et des Sciences»²⁴. Having failed to get the Assembly's attention, he campaigned for his project through various means, including his translations²⁵. Finally, on 30 March 1795 (10 Germinal an III), a bill was passed, establishing the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes according to Langlès' guidelines. Housed in the Bibliothèque, the École's mission was to spread practical knowledge of present-day Asiatic languages to the advantage of French politics and commerce: the Republic required consuls, traders and diplomats equipped with robust linguistic skills²⁶. According to Langlès, the creation of this new institution was prompted by the decline of the École des jeunes de langues and the inadequacy of courses at the Collège de France²⁷. Moreover, it became necessary due to the disadvantage that the French faced in comparison to the British in everything related to diplomacy and commerce with Asia. While the École did not strictly adhere to these principles, it did have an enormous impact on Oriental studies all over Europe, especially

thanks to its inaugural professor of Arabic, Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838)²⁸. Through his scientific prestige and administrative influence, de Sacy was partly responsible for steering the École in a more philological direction²⁹.

Langlès served as the first administrator and professor of Persian at the École. Remarkably, despite his Republican past, he not only navigated but thrived amidst the political upheavals of Napoleonic and Restoration France, holding his professional positions until his death in 1824. Through the plethora of books, pamphlets, articles, and essays he authored³⁰, often by relying on translation practices, he became a living icon of Oriental studies. The fourth volume of Michaud's *Biographie des hommes vivants*, published in 1818, featured a very flattering biography and portrait of Langlès, an honour bestowed upon individuals such as scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), the Duke of Orléans, and Maria Luisa of Parma, Queen of Spain³¹ (Fig. 2). It is not surprising, then, that following Langlès' passing many of his friends, colleagues and acquaintances wrote obituaries for him. As they reflect the specific perspectives of their authors, these sources may facilitate the reconstruction of a multifaceted biography of Langlès, a narrative that highlights the different social fields in which Langlès was active as well as the contradictions and tensions marking his 'trajectory' as a scholar. In this article, they will prove especially useful in underscoring the various social values attributed to translation practices³².

One of these obituaries was published in the *Journal Asiatique*, the influential periodical issued by the Société Asiatique, a learned society rather firmly dedicated to Oriental studies as de Sacy understood them, established in 1822³³. It was written by the prominent orientalist

²² Hunter, Wolf, Eschelskroon 1793 was one of these anonymously published works. See instead Langlès' explicit self-fashioning on the frontispieces of Norden 1795-1798 («Langlès, Auteur de l'alphabet Tartare Mantchou») or Pallas 1793 («Langlès, Sous-Garde des Manuscrit de la Bibliothèque nationale»).

²³ See Langlès 1788, pp. xxxiv-xl.

²⁴ Langlès 1790b.

²⁵ For a few traces of Langlès' lobbying for this reform, see *Procès-verbaux* 1889-1907, vol. II, p. 359; vol. IV, p. 612; BnF, MS NAF 9620, ff. 35r-35v, letter from Louis-Mathieu Langlès to the National Convention, 28 June 1794 (30 Prairial an II). In addition, Langlès made reference to his reform projects in Hunter, Wolf, Eschelskroon 1793, pp. 5-22, and in Thunberg 1796, vol. II, p. 1-2, n. 1. This footnote was probably written before March 1795, when the reform project establishing the École spéciale was approved.

²⁶ *Documents* 1872, pp. 27-34.

²⁷ Accounts of the establishment of the École vis-à-vis pre-existing institutions can be found in Messaoudi 2015, chap. 1, pp. 20-26, and Rabault-Feuerhahn 2019.

²⁸ On de Sacy, see the essays collected in Espagne, Lafi, Rabault-Feuerhahn 2016.

²⁹ Labrousse 1995, pp. 30-31; Messaoudi 2015, chap. I, pp. 20-26; chap. 2, pp. 34-36; Rabault-Feuerhahn 2019, pp. 60-61. In order to understand the different approaches to language learning of Langlès and de Sacy, one can compare Langlès' speech at the beginning of the academic year 1796-1797 at the École (Langlès 1797) with the section on Oriental languages and literatures written by de Sacy for Dacier's *Rapport historique sur les progrès de l'histoire et de la littérature ancienne depuis 1789, et sur leur état actuel* (Silvestre de Sacy 1810).

³⁰ The most complete lists of Langlès' publications are in Gauttier d'Arc 1825, pp. viii-xi, and Mahul 1825.

³¹ *Biographie des hommes vivants* 1818.

³² The most important obituaries are Abel-Rémusat 1824, Malte-Brun 1824, Roux de la Rochelle 1824, Aubert de Vitry 1824, Dacier 1825, Gauttier D'Arc 1825, pp. i-vii. For sociological perspectives on biography and translation, including a critique of the biographical notion of *trajectoire*, see Bourdieu 1986, Loriga 1996, Chappay 2013b, and Wolf, Fukari 2007.

³³ On the relationship between de Sacy and the Société Asiatique see Fenet 2016.

and professor of Chinese at the Collège de France, Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788-1832). While Abel-Rémusat's *Nécrologie* confirmed that Langlès enjoyed a «véritable popularité» among those interested in Asia, it also indicated that his status as a scholar was disputed³⁴. Langlès' reputation had started to crumble around 1815, when accusations surfaced that he did not possess the extensive knowledge of Oriental languages he claimed. In addition, he was accused of presenting somebody else's work as his own translations from Persian. These criticisms, initially articulated in two libels that have since been associated with the Paris-based German orientalist Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) and Abel-Rémusat himself³⁵, eventually made their way into the entry on Langlès in Michaud's *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, penned by one Pierre-Hyacinthe Audiffret (1773-1841). Audiffret had known Langlès while working in the manuscripts department of the Bibliothèque³⁶. Broadly speaking, when compared to Langlès' life in the *Biographie des hommes vivants*, Audiffret's entry reads almost as a direct rebuttal, marking the culmination of the transition from Langlès' reputation during his lifetime to the posthumous construction of the historical memory of Langlès as a scholar. By this time, in the early 1840s, Langlès' translation practices, particularly his intrusive footnoting, had become nearly synonymous with imposture, pedantry, and faulty erudition. In particular, his self-positioning as translator (and transcriber) served as a platform for a severe judgment:

*Il eut la manie plutôt que la science de l'orientalisme. Il l'a prouvé par sa prétention à vouloir figurer comme traducteur, éditeur ou annotateur dans la plupart des ouvrages sur l'Orient, à s'ériger en législateur de l'orientalisme par une orthographe particulière et choquante des noms orientaux [...]*³⁷

The controversy surrounding Langlès reflected the intellectual and disciplinary fractures within the Paris-

ian orientalist milieu³⁸. His professional standing may have been undermined by the very process of professionalisation that he contributed to initiating by placing the École within the Bibliothèque – a place most suitable for the development of a philological Orientalism. According to Langlès' sharpest detractors, the story goes that since he did not truly master the languages he was supposed to know, he could only dedicate himself to the mere popularisation of the history and geography of Asia, often by using and translating somebody else's work³⁹. From this perspective, Langlès' departure from the philological approach shaped by de Sacy was viewed by some as a severe flaw. For instance, Audiffret implied that Langlès' absence from the Société Asiatique was due to his fear of being exposed as a fraud by the «hommes compétents» and the «véritables connaisseurs» who frequented the Société, among whom his «ennemis personnels» like Abel-Rémusat and Klaproth could also be found⁴⁰. Different views about Oriental studies were indeed exacerbated by personal struggles for prominence. Nevertheless, it is true that Langlès never matched de Sacy's grammatical and philological achievements, exemplified by works like de Sacy's *Grammaire arabe* (1810) and *Chrestomathie arabe* (1816). While Langlès worked on a French-Persian dictionary, grammatical essays, and a Persian anthology, the publication of these works was never completed⁴¹. However, Langlès did find time to publish, in 1811, an immense work of erudition such as the critical edition of Jean Chardin's *Voyages en Perse*, a masterpiece of seventeenth-century travel literature. Indeed, the reasons behind Langlès' downfall may ultimately lie in the scholarly environment turning hostile to his vision of the subjects that Oriental studies should focus on – history and geography – and how they should be managed to best serve the French nation. Conversely, it is not surprising that his staunchest eulogisers were found in the Société de géographie, wrote on related periodicals, and appreciated precisely

³⁴ Abel-Rémusat 1824, pp. 154-157. Most instructive is the remark that «le nom nouveau d'Orientaliste, sous lequel quelques personnes aiment à confondre ceux qui étudient les langues de l'Asie, et ceux qui cherchent à approfondir l'histoire de cette partie du monde, ce nom aurait pu être inventé pour M. Langlès, tant il exprimait bien ses goûts et les habitudes de son esprit». While Langlès' «popularité» was most likely confined to scholars and state administrators, for a discussion of forms of wider celebrity in turn-of-the-century Paris see Lilti 2014.

³⁵ Anonymous s.d.; Leontiew 1815. Leontiew is a fictional scholar. According to Audiffret 1842, pp. 196-197, the author of both texts was Klaproth; according to Barbier 1874, p. 1197, the *Lettre écrite de Lintz* (Anonymous s.d.) had been written by the very Abel-Rémusat. On Klaproth and Abel-Rémusat, see Walravens 1999 and Will, Zink 2020.

³⁶ Audiffret 1842, pp. 194, 199; see also Abel-Rémusat 1827, p. 55.

³⁷ Audiffret 1842, p. 199.

³⁸ On this topic, see Lardinois 2007, pp. 35-66; Messaoudi 2015, chap.1-2; Rabault-Feuerhahn 2019, pp. 39-84.

³⁹ For a discussion of some of the issues related to the problems of definition and popularisation of scholarly knowledge in this period, see Chappey 2004.

⁴⁰ Audiffret 1842, p. 197.

⁴¹ For the Persian-French dictionary: Archives nationales, F/17/1144, folder 6, 'Rapport au Directoire exécutif' (probably by Nicolas François de Neufchâteau, Minister of the Interior); for the Persian grammar: *Procès-verbaux* 1889-1907, vol. VI, p. 425 (16 July 1795); for the Persian anthology: Merlin 1846, p. 227, no. 2921. Several versions of the Persian grammar are still available in manuscript form and deserve further study: BnF, MS NAF 8988; Paris, Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations (BULAC), MS Pers 100; Université de Liège, MsW108.

this perspective⁴². However, even Abel-Rémusat, while excluding Langlès from the ranks of pure philologists, acknowledged the political and social relevance of his work as a translator, a populariser, and a cultural broker. Abel-Rémusat also agreed with Langlès' supporters that he dedicated himself to what was *useful* to the nation. It is in Langlès' role as editor and translator that the historical meaning of such 'usefulness' may be clarified.

3. TRANSLATING ORIENTALISM, TRANSLATING EMPIRE

The European literature about Asia, translated and edited by Langlès, including travelogues, memoirs, and essays, was predominantly written in English by British authors (Table 1). Two remarkable exceptions, the books of Peter Simon Pallas (1741-1811) and Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828), stand out as among the greatest European works on Asia of the age and deserve separate study⁴³.

Naturally, Langlès' translation activity was shaped by the political, social, and intellectual context. His appointments in the Bibliothèque and his position within the École greatly enhanced his access to source material⁴⁴ and his connections with foreign scholars⁴⁵. In his later days, Langlès could write from his desk directly to the Minister of the Police to expedite the delivery of books sent from London⁴⁶. His private library may have been equally significant, as Langlès possessed one of the most important book collections about Asia on the continent⁴⁷. Located next to the Bibliothèque, at the corner between Rue de Richelieu and Rue des Petits Champs, this social space epitomised Langlès' role as a cultural broker as he opened it to friends and colleagues, effectively making it both a site of knowledge and sociability⁴⁸. The two libraries clearly played a crucial role in

the still little-known network that Langlès established at home and abroad, encompassing publishing houses, learned societies, scholars, and travellers⁴⁹. Information gathering was probably one of the main purposes of this network, as suggested, for example, by an English manuscript travelogue about India that Langlès received through one of his contacts, Gould Francis Leckie⁵⁰. Langlès' network undoubtedly included individuals with whom he collaborated to produce the books listed in the catalogues of his works⁵¹: at various points in his life, Langlès edited translations by Pierre de la Montagne (1755-1825), François Soulès (1748-1809), Antoine-Gilbert Griffet de Labaume (1756-1805) and Pierre-Vincent Benoist (1758-1834).

Soulès, Labaume, and Benoist were among the men of letters whose translation efforts were at times financed by the Directory in the last years of the eighteenth century. The 'policy' of translation under this government (a still little-known topic) displayed two features shared by Langlès' activity. Firstly, there was a strong presence of British authors in the source material, which in some cases contributed to the Republican cause⁵². The second feature was that both the translation activity and the translated texts were recognised as useful by the government and/or the translators. While there is still limited evidence that Langlès' translations were financed by the government⁵³, the connection between what is British and what is useful to the French strongly resonates with his work. What characterised Langlès' translation activity is that its purpose was given an Asiatic setting and, at least in his early works, it was adjusted to the shifting

in this period see the seminal collection of essays in Schaffer et al. 2009, and Van Damme 2020, pp. 63-84, for a discussion of recent approaches to the question of knowledge situatedness.

⁴⁹ See for example BnF, MS NAF 28003, ff. 127r-128v, letter by Langlès to Treuttel et Würtz, 24 February 1820; Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, MS 1319, ff. 2r-3v, letter by Langlès to Treuttel et Würtz, 28 July 1820.

⁵⁰ BnF, MS Anglais 46. A much more significant English manuscript, a travelogue about Tibet by George Bogle (1746-1781) could have entered the Bibliothèque in the same way (MS Anglais 63).

⁵¹ Langlès published many such catalogues; the first I could find is in Forster 1802, vol. III, pp. 493-496.

⁵² On this topic see Chappey 2013a, Chappey, Martin 2017, and Monnier 2015.

⁵³ In Samarqandī, Francklin 1798, vol. II, p. 270, George Hoest's *Description géographique, historique and politique de Maroc et de Fez*, translated by Langlès, is said to be under the press «par ordre et aux frais du gouvernement, à l'imprimerie de la République». However, despite diligent searches, I have been unable to locate this book in any library listed in WorldCat or in the BnF. In 1801, a translation of William Lempriere's *A Tour from Gibraltar to Tangier* (1791) was published by the booksellers Tavernier, Legras and Cordier (*Voyage dans l'empire de Maroc et le royaume de Fez, fait pendant les années 1790 et 1791*). One may speculate that in the highly competitive market of travel literature, the production of Hoest's translation was discontinued due to the existence of this rival publication.

⁴² Roux de la Rochelle 1824, pp. 46-54; see also Aubert de Vitry 1824, pp. 83-87; Dacier 1825, pp. 3-4.

⁴³ Pallas 1793; Thunberg 1796.

⁴⁴ Many loan requests from Langlès to Joseph van Praet (1754-1837), the keeper of printed books at the Bibliothèque, are preserved in BnF, MS NAF 854.

⁴⁵ For example, see the encounter with Sir John Malcolm, a British soldier, diplomat, and author of a ground-breaking *History of Persia* (1815), for which Langlès arranged the translation, in Kaye 1856, vol. II, pp. 111-120.

⁴⁶ Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, MS 6580, f. 11r, Langlès to Élie Decazes, 3 March 1817.

⁴⁷ Two catalogues are extant: 'Inventaire après le décès de Ms. Langlès', Archives nationales, Minutes et répertoires du notaire Jean Eustache Montaud, MC/ET/CVIII/997, folder 1, file 8, ff. 32r-58v; Gauttier d'Arc 1825.

⁴⁸ Almost all of Langlès' biographers share such views. Some of the invitations to his Tuesday evening meetings are preserved in BnF, MS NAF 854. On mediation, information gathering and knowledge construction

power dynamics in relations between France and Great Britain. The defeat against the British in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the loss of possessions in India opened a heated debate in France about the causes of the disaster and/or possible solutions to French shortcomings in the East⁵⁴. Langlès arguably used a part of his works to popularise his ideas on the subject: a recovery would only be possible if the French caught up with the British in terms of knowledge about Asia. To contribute, Langlès deployed two distinct yet interconnected strategies, with translation playing a pivotal role in both.

The first strategy involved translating British literature to disseminate knowledge about Asia. Langlès published numerous translations dealing not only with Persia, India, and the Far East but also with North Africa, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula. This large geographical scope is unsurprising, given that during the years surrounding Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (1798-1801), more distant parts of Asia could readily be perceived as connected to the Mediterranean and the Levant. In the absence of unified theories or practices of translation in late eighteenth-century France⁵⁵, Langlès combined a somewhat literalist approach to the text with intense editing work. Langlès claimed the most «scrupuleuse fidélité» to the original text even in the case of what is perhaps his most-edited translation, Thunberg's travels to Japan⁵⁶. However, he arguably interpreted such fidelity more as accuracy in reproducing the information carried by the source text than as following its style or phrasing. In the preface to his first major translation from English, Henry Rooke's travels in the Red Sea, Langlès justified his method, stating: «j'ai cru qu'en traduisant la relation d'un voyageur, on devenoit son compagnon, et que cette qualité donnoit une certaine liberté»⁵⁷.

One of the main features of Langlès' editing method was the use of footnotes. Primarily, Langlès employed them to insert additional information drawn from his expertise as a scholar and manuscript keeper. However, Langlès' penchant for additions could take on far greater proportions. In addition to forewords, he often appended various texts to his translations, typically defined as *notices*, *précis*, or *dissertations*. Langlès was accustomed to presenting these materials during the sittings of the Institut national and/or publishing them in the *Magasin*

Encyclopédique, an important channel for popularisation in turn-of-the-century Paris⁵⁸. This attitude suggests that translation played a key role in Langlès' scholarly work. On one hand, Langlès' professional positions enabled his translations to increase in size and complexity. On the other hand, translation itself frequently served as the starting point for other erudite pursuits. As the polymath Charles Athanase Walckenaer (1771-1823) remarked in his *notice* about Langlès, published in the periodical of the Société des bibliophiles français, «à la vérité [l]es nombreux ouvrages [de Langlès] ne sont, pour la plupart, que des traductions de voyages écrits en anglais ou en allemand, ou de nouvelles éditions de voyages déjà publiés en français; mais ces traductions sont fort exactes», and Langlès' substantial additions made his translations and editions «plus utiles et plus instructives que les ouvrages originaux»⁵⁹.

While the «fidélité» facilitated the reader's acquisition of information, fulfilling one of the typical functions of translation – namely, filling gaps in one's culture or, in Peter Burke's words, «reaching out» – the annotations served to further the circulation of 'domesticated' knowledge⁶⁰. In his footnotes and paratexts, Langlès quoted classical texts by Oriental authors and state-of-the-art literature from foreign scholarly contexts, such as the geographical works of James Rennell (1742-1830)⁶¹. Simultaneously, Langlès relocated these data in a familiar intellectual frame by referencing authors consecrated by tradition or national pride. An example of this practice is the *Précis de l'Histoire de Marathes* inserted at the end of Soulès' translation of *Transactions in India* (1786) by John Moir, a history of British-French relations in the East Indies from the Seven Years War to the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Langlès allegedly wrote the *Précis* by translating the original Persian text along with the English translation made by William Chambers⁶². In the footnotes that Langlès added or created by reworking those of Chambers, French authorities such as geographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782) or orientalist Abra-

⁵⁴ On French commerce and empire in South Asia in this period see at least Gainot, Vaghi 2014, Vaghi, Gainot 2015, Vaghi 2016, Platania 2017, Vaghi 2019, Takeda 2020.

⁵⁵ On this topic see the sources excerpted in d'Hulst 1990 and the editor's introduction, pp. 7-15.

⁵⁶ Thunberg 1796, vol. I, pp. i-viii.

⁵⁷ Rooke 1788, p. ii. Although published anonymously, Langlès acknowledged the authorship of the translation of Rooke's travelogue in 1802: see Forster 1802, vol. III, p. 494.

⁵⁸ For example, the *Dissertation sur la statue parlante de Memnon* was published in Norden's *Voyages d'Égypte et de Nubie* (Norden 1795-1798, vol. II, pp. 155-256) as well as in the *Magasin Encyclopédique* (Langlès 1796); the *Notice chronologique des Khâns de Crimée*, published in Forster's *Voyage du Bengale à Pétersbourg* (Langlès 1802), is also mentioned in the *Mémoires de l'Institut national des Sciences et Beaux-Arts* (Camus 1804, p. 15). On the *Magasin Encyclopédique* and Orientalism, see Rabault-Feuerhahn 2005.

⁵⁹ Walckenaer 1827, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Burke 2007.

⁶¹ See e.g. Kašmīrī 1797, Forster 1802, Hornemann 1803.

⁶² See Ḥusām al-Dīn Munshī 1788. Relay translation was an important tool for Langlès and it is certainly worthy of further study. On the topic, see e.g. Roche 2001, and among Langlès' relay translations, see those involving a Persian original: Ḥosaynī 1787 and Samarqandī 1788.

ham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) were invoked to counterbalance British knowledge. These authors were not only drawn upon to discuss ideas relevant to the historical understanding of Asiatic countries but more often used to shed light on eminently practical matters⁶³.

The kinds of grain chiefly produced in this country are javâr, bâjerâ, &c. Rice † grows in the Kokun province, and is also brought from the Soobah of Khandaisse [...]*

* These are different kinds of pulse.

† The Kokun rice is like that commonly used in Bengal, and is, indeed, generally sold at 12 or 13 seer for a Rupee [...]

Cette contrée produit différentes espèces de légumes (1). Le riz réussit assez bien dans la Province de Kouken; on en tire beaucoup du Soubah de Khandaisse (2). [...]

(1) Le texte Persan porte différentes espèces de grains, tels que les Djévares, les Badjerahs; ce sont des légumes que nous ne connoissons pas. Kouken & Khandaisse sont de petits districts ou Soubah, dont le riz fait la plus grande célébrité.

(2) Le riz de Kouken ressemble à celui qu'on mange communément dans le Bengale, l'on en a ordinairement 12 ou 13 sères pour une roupie de 45 sols [...]

La sère est un poids de l'Inde. M. Anquetil l'évalue à 35 tolas ou 13 onces 4 gros 25 grains; il passe ordinairement pour 14 onces. Le même Savant nous apprend qu'il y a une autre sère nommée sère Pakar qui vaut deux sères ordinaires. Il y a aussi différentes roupies, la plus commune est estimée 2 livres 5 sols argent de France⁶⁴.

The intensive editing practices employed by Langlès can be understood as a means to underscore his own

⁶³ The importance Langlès attached to practical knowledge, as well as the extent of his domestication attempts, is also evident in his collaboration with Jean-Baptiste Lamarck: see Pallas 1793, Thunberg 1796, *Recherches asiatiques* 1805. For a comparable case, see D'Souza 2014 on the translation of British travel literature in the *Histoire générale des voyages* by the abbé Prévost.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ḥusām al-Din Munshī 1785, pp. 233-235, and Ḥusām al-Din Munshī 1788, p. 306-307.

agency as a mediator and source of knowledge. Simultaneously, the apparently liminal space these practices created on the page became the site of construction of scholarly and national identities⁶⁵. However, all of this does not imply that Langlès' attitude towards English literature was one of mere appropriation. His motivation stemmed from a deep admiration – and almost uncritical appreciation – for everything the English produced about Asia⁶⁶. In this display of Anglophilia, Langlès participated in a widespread cultural trend. Even among other French Orientalist scholars, especially in the last decades of the eighteenth century, various degrees of appreciation for British advancements in the knowledge of Asiatic languages and cultures were evident⁶⁷. However, the structural role played by interest for British knowledge and 'policies' in shaping Langlès' view of Oriental studies should not be underestimated and deserves special consideration.

This point brings us back to Langlès' reform project, the second strategy he developed to support the French cause in the East. As mentioned earlier, the project was based on an assessment of political and administrative matters, as well as on a vision of what Great Britain and France had come to represent as nations in relation to Oriental studies and commerce. In the years following Warren Hastings's (1732-1818) term as governor-general of Bengal (1773-1784), Langlès began to view the East India Company not only as an example of a well-conceived policy but also as the embodiment of a superior nation. Already in the *Discours préliminaire* to his 1788 collection of Oriental tales, Langlès extensively discussed the commercial and scholarly might of the British in the East, highlighting individuals associated with either Hastings or the judge and scholar William Jones (1746-1794). In 1784, Jones had founded the learned Asiatic Society of Bengal, and in 1788, he commenced the publication of the *Asiatick Researches*⁶⁸. Langlès was later

⁶⁵ For an ample introduction to matters related to footnotes and other forms of 'paratext' see Genette 2002²; see also Van Damme 2020, pp. 85-113. For discussions on the agency of the translator and the issue of nationhood, especially in the context of travel literature, refer to works by Bassnett 2019, Martin, Pickford 2012, Martin 2021, Pickford, Martin 2013.

⁶⁶ On this point see also Filliozat 2015.

⁶⁷ For example, consider the comments made by Anquetil-Duperron on the occasion of the publication of the first English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (Anquetil-Duperron 1786). On Anglophilia, see Dziembowski 1998, pp. 111-162 and, more generally, Buruma 2000.

⁶⁸ The immense bibliography on Jones and the Asiatic Society cannot be discussed here. We will only reference the traditional biography by Garland Cannon (1995), the new synthesis by Franklin (2011), Kejariwal 1988 and the essays collected in Cannon, Brine 1995. See, however, the bibliography and the short but enlightening discussion in Raj 2001, pp. 175-179, as well as the recent literature review in Ehrlich, Stewart 2023.

accepted as a member of the Society⁶⁹.

*Je me suis un peu étendu sur les travaux littéraires des Anglais non seulement pour leur payer un juste tribut d'éloges, mais encore afin d'exciter parmi nous une noble émulation. Nous les voyons livrés avec la plus grande ardeur à un genre de littérature que l'intérêt et la gloire nous prescrivent également de cultiver, et nous nous amusons avec une indifférence stoïque à faire des pamphlets ou bien à en lire. La fortune rapide des petits formats suffit pour caractériser le gout et l'esprit de notre nation. Je ne doute pas que si l'on parvenait à mettre en in-18 les grammaires et les dictionnaires des langues orientales, nous ne devinssions bientôt les plus savans hommes de l'Europe. C'est donc pour me conformer entièrement au gout de mes compatriotes, que j'ai réduit mon ouvrage à ce format [...]*⁷⁰.

In his 1790 speech to the National Constituent Assembly, Langlès insisted on this comparison between British activity and French inanity, while discursively tying the construction of knowledge about Asia with the projection of power in Asia. In particular, the attention that East India Company administrators paid to Asiatic languages

*n'est-elle pas une preuve indubitable de l'utilité qu'ils en tirent pour leur commerce, leurs opérations politiques ou militaires? Les hommes les plus distingués de l'Angleterre par leur rang et par leur mérite se font un honneur de les apprendre; le gouvernement, la Compagnie des Indes favorisent cette étude par toutes sortes d'encouragement et fournissent des sommes considérables pour l'impression des dictionnaires, des grammaires et des ouvrages relatifs à la littérature asiatique [...] Les mêmes motifs d'intérêt et de gloire qui animent les Anglois devraient nous exciter à les imiter ou même à les rivaliser. Nous les voyons, avec une étonnante indifférence, étendre sans cesse leurs domaines dans l'Inde, ils sont sur le point à chaque instant de nous en expulser et nous ne songeons pas à nous y raffermir et à partager avec eux les richesses de cette superbe contrée*⁷¹.

The character of the British nation was usually construed by Langlès as the key to its success in the East and stood in stark contrast to the allegedly frivolous French⁷². The British were able to use Asiatic languages to their advantage for power and prosperity also because they did not share the political and cultural flaws that hindered the French. According to Langlès, the only way

for the French to overcome their shortcomings was to emulate the British as closely as possible. He recognised that such emulation required a certain degree of adaptation of the texts that could encourage it, and that is why he insisted on the necessity of making descriptions of British exploits in the East not only useful and instructive but also appealing to the taste of the French reading public. It is in instances like these that Langlès' penchant for popularisation is most visible, an inclination perhaps best represented by his longest-lasting translation project, the pocket-size *Collection portative de voyages*⁷³. Emulating the British was indeed a very practical matter, and as such, it also depended upon the infrastructure of learning and teaching Asiatic languages. It is not surprising that the reform project presented by Langlès in 1790, eventually leading to the foundation of the École spéciale, was also inspired by a 1773 proposal by Hastings and others to establish a Persian professorship at Oxford. Once again, Langlès discursively tied this proposal to commercial competition.

Je pourrais invoquer ici le témoignage des négocians et des voyageurs qui ont parcouru le Levant, je pourrais citer les écrits de plusieurs savans membres de la compagnie anglaise des Indes Orientales, qui ont recommandé à leurs compatriotes l'étude du Persan. Le célèbre M. Hastings qui a contribué infiniment au progrès des langues orientales dans les établissemens anglais (10), a même pris la plume pour en démontrer toute l'utilité. Mais une preuve plus forte encore que toutes ces autorités, est la stagnation du commerce de l'Asie, chez nous, à qui il ne manque absolument que la connoissance des langues pour le faire avec autant de facilités que d'avantages, tandis que nos voisins étendent d'autant plus le leur, qu'ils se livrent davantage à ces mêmes langues.

(10) MM. Vansittart & Hastings, se proposoient d'établir à Oxford, un collège pour le Persan. Le dernier a publié une brochure pour prouver la grande importance & l'utilité de cette langue [...]

Langlès' project was not isolated. Similar ideas circulated widely in the first years of the French Revolution and even earlier, as evidenced by a 1779 project by Anquetil-Duperron⁷⁵. While Langlès was likely aware

⁶⁹ Abel-Rémusat 1824, p. 157.

⁷⁰ Langlès 1788, pp. xxxix-xl.

⁷¹ Langlès 1790b, pp. 14-16.

⁷² Hunter, Wolf, Eschelskroon 1793, pp. 7-11, 20-22. The place of Langlès' discourse on national identity in wider contemporary debates on 'national characters' deserves separate and further study. On this topic, see at least Dziembowski 1998 and a recent discussion in D'Auria 2020, pp. 1-25, 129-167.

⁷³ Kašmīrī 1797; Samarqandī, Francklin 1798; Tone 1820.

⁷⁴ Langlès 1790b, pp. 11-12, 28-29.

⁷⁵ For exemple, see the *mémoire* by Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis (1739-1799), dragoman and later professor of Turkish at the École, 'Nécessité d'encourager en France l'étude des langues orientales – Moyen sûr et facile d'y parvenir. Avantages réels qui en résulteroient pour nos relations politiques et commerciales avec les peuples musulmans en Europe, en Afrique et en Asie', in Cordier 1911, pp. 283-288. Anquetil's project was only published in Anquetil-Duperron 1798, vol. I, pp. 233-348. Anquetil is also the subject of an ever-expanding scholarly literature. In connection to the subject of this article, see Valensi 1995, App

of these precedents, and while the British experience needed to be addressed in any such project, Langlès' continuous invocation of the British example is indicative of his vision for Oriental studies: he perceived in the British approach to the East a synthesis of erudition, linguistic skill, and commercial success that the French should aspire to. From his early days, Langlès turned to British authors serving in the East India Company⁷⁶ and to British scholarly achievements, such as the *Asiatick Researches*⁷⁷, that were the result of privileged access to Oriental countries and civilisations. This may also explain why he dedicated some of his works to the memory of French 'men on the field', such as the learned Jesuit father Jean-Joseph Marie Amiot (1718-1793) or the soldier and collector Jean-Baptiste Gentil (1726-1799)⁷⁸: in Langlès' view, these men likely came closest to the British example due to their direct knowledge of the East and their ability to leverage their professional positions for the advancement of scholarly interests.

It's important to underline that the impact of the British example and its consequences on Langlès' translation work were not confined to India, nor were they limited to a time when a French recovery in the area seemed possible⁷⁹. Its influence persisted even after the foundation of the *École*⁸⁰. In a translation published in 1805, Langlès explicitly reiterated the same observations from his 1790 address, emphasising how the French government should emulate Great Britain – only this time the focus was on China⁸¹. Throughout his life, Langlès continued to pay attention to British colonial, commercial, and scholarly activities in the East, as evidenced by his coordination of the luxurious adaptations of the *Asiatick Researches* (1805)⁸² and his *Monuments anciens*

et modernes de l'Hindoustan (1821), a tribute to British antiquarian knowledge about India. The fact that he seemingly overlooked the strong political opposition faced by the East India Company in Great Britain⁸³, or that he himself never left Paris, refusing even to join Napoleon on his expedition to Egypt, underscores the limits and ambiguities of Langlès' vision of Orientalism – a British-dominated, pragmatic field of knowledge that the French should aspire to emulate and compete with.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Just as his Anglophilia, Langlès' approach to translation wasn't unique. He merged a literalist approach with strong editing, using footnotes and additions to adapt the source text and guide the French reader back to a familiar context. In this way, he combined two essential functions of translation: reaching out and domestication.

Yet, the real intrigue lies in the purpose of Langlès' translations, their connection to multiple topics and problems, and how they reveal Langlès' presence in different social fields. Broadly speaking, Langlès' translations highlight the significance of networks, the potential relevance of government translation 'policies', the role of manuscript keepers as a special kind of go-betweens, and the diverse value attached to translation in different social and professional settings: what might be praised by a geographer or a bibliophile could be scorned by a philologist. More specifically, Langlès' visible display of his agency as a translator through editing was instrumental to his self-fashioning as a scholar and a cultural broker, even though the same display proved detrimental to his scholarly persona after his death. Additionally, his domestication strategies can be understood as a means to define national identities, engaging the French in a conversation between the 'foreignness' of the main text and the 'Frenchness' displayed in prefaces, footnotes, and additions.

However, while translating British literature on Asia, Langlès wasn't simply disseminating domesticated knowledge. He sought to import an entire attitude towards Asiatic languages and the management of his country's diplomatic and commercial interests in the East. Far from a mere act of appropriation, Langlès' translations embody both an instance and a promotion of emulation. Through his editing-intense translation method applied to English literature about Asia, Langlès emulated the British. Simultaneously, he advocated French emulation of British endeavours in Asia by mak-

2010, pp. 363-439, Smith 2013, and Van Damme 2014. On British projects, see Kopf 1969, pp. 3-20, and Raj 2000.

⁷⁶ I refer to William Hunter, Thomas Forrest, Francis Gladwin, William Francklin and William Hodges. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ad vocem.

⁷⁷ Langlès 1788, pp. xxxii-xxxvii.

⁷⁸ Holmes 1805, Forster 1802. On Langlès and Amiot, see Saarela 2020, pp. 190-221; on Gentil, see Richard 1996.

⁷⁹ On this point see the partially different opinion of St. Pierre 2013, p. 157.

⁸⁰ This may have been due, in part, to the fact that the *École* did not immediately prove effective. On this point, see the project 'Sur le Rétablissement des langues Orientales en France' drafted by Costantin-François de Chasseboeuf, count of Volney, around 1806: Archives nationales, F/17/1095, folder 12, file 226, and 'Vues nouvelles sur l'enseignement des langues orientales', in Volney 1820, pp. 191-208 and slightly later in the *Œuvres complètes* (Volney 1821). See Simon 2023 for a discussion of Volney's difficult relationship with Langlès.

⁸¹ See the *Observations sur les relations politiques et commerciales de l'Angleterre et de la France avec la Chine* (Langlès 1805, pp. xiii-xlv, especially pp. xl-xli), appended to Langlès' edition of Samuel Holmes' report of his participation to the Macartney Embassy to China in 1793.

⁸² *Recherches asiatiques* 1805. On this work, see Giusti, Rabault-Feuer-

hahn, Simon 2024.

⁸³ On this very complex topic see the overview in Barrow 2017, pp. 42-81.

ing available to the French public what he believed was needed to match the British, both in terms of knowledge and of an infrastructure for learning and teaching Asiatic languages. Reflecting on the concept of «noble émulation» that Langlès aimed to inspire, a parallel can perhaps be drawn between Langlès' translations from the English – a diverse array of texts all connected to the experience of travel and all referable to the notoriously blurred field of Orientalism – and the genre of political economy and its translations, as Sophus A. Reinert has masterfully illustrated their connections with theories and practices of empire in the eighteenth century⁸⁴. This parallel might underscore that focusing on the history of translation can offer a more nuanced way of discussing Orientalism as a technology of knowledge and power. While this remains a possibility to further explore in other intellectual environments and at different historiographical scales, Langlès' case illustrates a distinct strand of Anglophilia within early French Oriental studies, one in which a significant role was played by the most practical and material aspects of Orientalism – professorships, printing, and book formats. Ambiguously combining scholarly admiration and political competition, Langlès' inclination for the British aligns with the understanding that Anglophilia is never entirely disconnected from Anglophobia and showcases the fundamental ambivalence of cultural brokers and translators.

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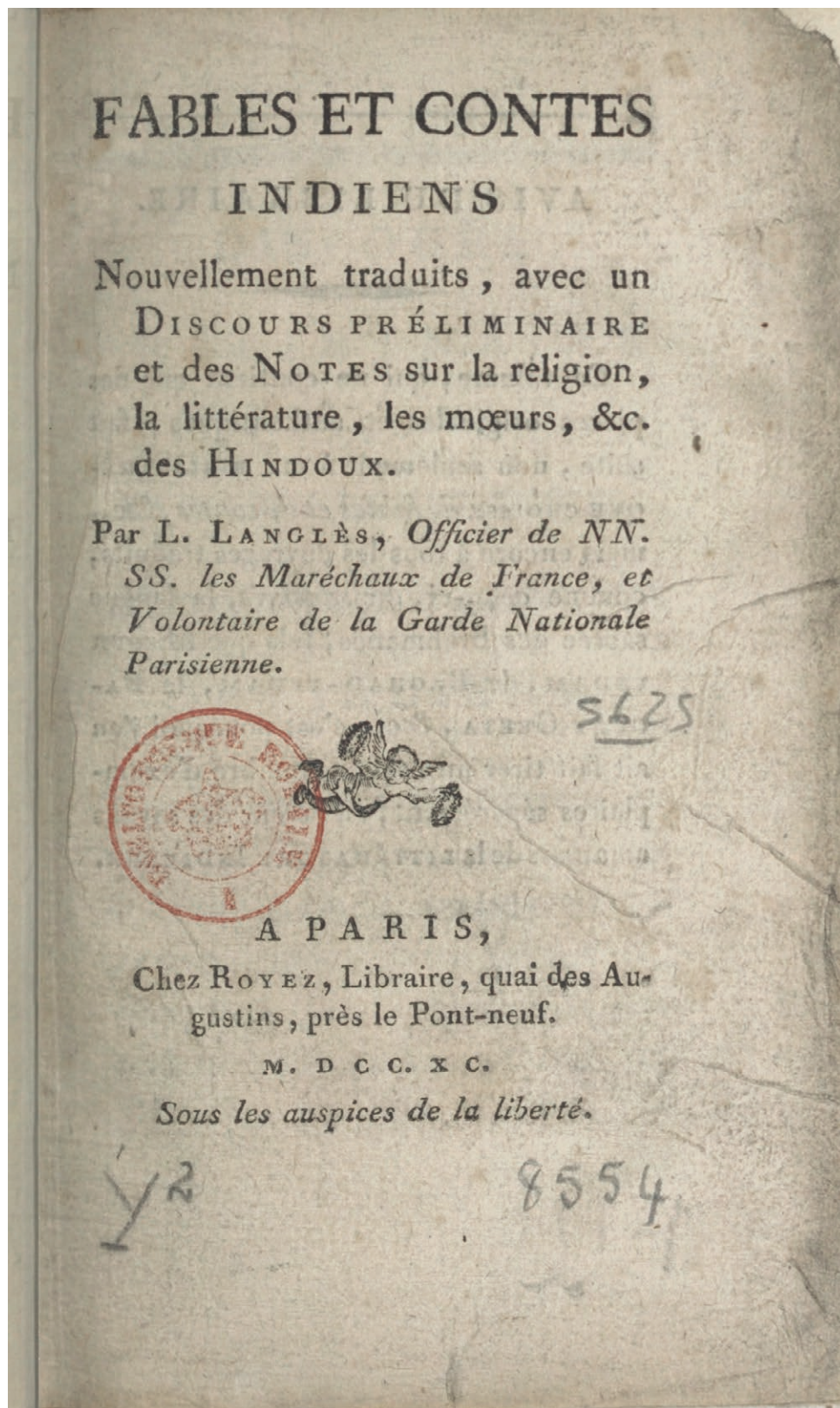


Figure 1. Frontispiece of the collection of Indian tales translated and published by Langlès in 1790 for the publisher Royez, sporting both his *ancien régime* and revolutionary credentials. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Figure 2. Portait of Langlès published in the fourth volume of Michaud's *Biographie des hommes vivants*. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Table 1. Literature about Asia translated and/or edited by Louis-Mathieu Langlès.

Author, title, and translator if other than Langlès	Source material and previous translators when applicable	Source language(s)	Role of Langlès
‘Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandī <i>Ambassades réciproques d’un roi des Indes, de la Perse, etc. et d’un empereur de la Chine</i> , in Warren Hastings, <i>Mémoires relatifs à l’état de l’Inde</i> Royez, Londres [Paris] 1788 Translated by Pierre de la Montagne	‘Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandī <i>Maṭla’-e sa’dāyn va maǰma’-e baḥrayn</i> , Paris, BnF, MS Persan 106 <i>Histoire de Schah-roch</i> Paris, BnF, MS Français 6084-6085 Translated by Antoine Galland <i>An account of Embassies and Letters that passed between the Emperor of China and Sultan Shahrokh</i> , «The Asiatick Miscellany», 1, 1785, pp. 71-113 Translated by William Chambers	Persian and/or French and/or English	Editing, major additions (with preface)
Henry Rooke <i>Voyage sur les côtes de l’Arabie heureuse, sur la Mer Rouge et en Egypte</i> Royez, Londres [Paris] 1788	Henry Rooke <i>Travels to the coast of Arabia Felix</i> , 2 nd edition R. Blamire, London 1784	English	Translation, preface
Ḥusām al-Dīn <i>Précis historique sur les Marattes</i> , in John Moir, <i>Affaires de l’Inde</i> Buisson, Londres [Paris] 1788, vol. 2, pp. 282-330	Ḥusām al-Dīn <i>A short account of the Marratta State</i> , «The Asiatick Miscellany», 1785, 1, pp. 212-249 Translated by William Chambers	English and/or Persian	Translation
William Hunter, Johan Christoph Wolf and Adolf Eschelskroon <i>Description du Pegu, et de l’Isle de Ceylan</i> Maradan, Paris 1793	William Hunter <i>A concise account of the Kingdom of Pegu</i> J. Sewell and J. Debrett, Calcutta-London 1789 Johan Christoph Wolf and Adolf Eschelskroon <i>The life and adventures of John Christopher Wolf</i> G. G. J. and J. Robinson, London 1785 Unknown translator from German	English	Translation, Preface
Peter Simon Pallas <i>Voyages du Professeur Pallas, dans plusieurs provinces de l’Empire de Russie et dans l’Asie septentrionale, Nouvelle Edition</i> Maradan, Paris 1793, 8 vols.	Peter Simon Pallas <i>Reise durch die verschiedenen Provinzen des Rußischen Reiches</i> Kaiserliche Akademie von Wissenschaften, Saint Petersburg, 1771-1776, 4 vols. <i>Voyage de P.S. Pallas</i> Lagrange, Paris 1788-1793, 5 vols. Translated by Gauthier de la Peyronie	German	Editing
Frederik Ludwig Norden <i>Voyages d’Egypte et de Nubie, Nouvelle édition</i> Pierre Didot l’Aîné, Paris 1795-1798, 3 vols.	Frederik Ludwig Norden <i>Voyages d’Egypte et de Nubie</i> Imprimerie de la Maison Royale des Orphelins, Copenhagen 1755	French	Editing, preface, major additions
Carl Peter Thunberg <i>Voyages de C. P. Thunberg au Japon</i> Benoît Dandré, Garnery, Oubrè, Paris 1796, 2 vols.	Carl Peter Thunberg <i>Resa uti Europa, Africa, Asia</i> Joh. Edman, Uppsala 1788-1793, 4 vols. <i>Reise durch einen Theil von Europa, Afrika und Asien, hauptsächlich in Japan</i> Hande und Spener, Berlin 1792-1794, 2 vols. Translated by Christian Heinrich Groskurd <i>Reisen in Afrika und Asien, vorzüglich in Japan</i> F. A. Schrämbel, Wien 1792 Translated by Kurt Sprengel	Swedish German	Translation, preface, additions

Author, title, and translator if other than Langlès	Source material and previous translators when applicable	Source language(s)	Role of Langlès
'Abd-al-Karīm Kašmīrī <i>Voyage de l'Inde à la Mekke</i> Crapelet, Paris 1797	'Abd-al-Karīm Kašmīrī <i>The Memoirs of Khojeh Abdulkurreem</i> William Mackay, Calcutta 1788 Translated by Francis Gladwin	English	Translation, preface
'Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandī and William Francklin <i>Voyages de la Perse dans l'Inde et du Bengale en Perse</i> Crapelet, Paris 1798, 2 vols.	'Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandī <i>Maḥḥla'-e sa'dāyān va maǰma'-e baḥrayn</i> Paris, BnF, MS Persan 106 <i>Histoire de Schah-roch</i> BnF, MS Français 6084-6085 Translated by Antoine Galland William Francklin <i>Observations made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia</i> T. Cadell, London 1790	English	Translation, preface, additions
George Forster <i>Voyage du Bengale à Pétersbourg</i> Delance, Paris 1802, 3 vols.	George Forster <i>A Journey from Bengal to England</i> R. Faulder, London 1798, 2 vols.	English	Translation, preface, additions
Friedrich Konrad Hornemann <i>Voyage de F. Hornemann, dans l'Afrique Septentrionale</i> Dentu, Paris 1803 Translated by Antoine-Gilbert Griffet de Labaume	Friedrich Konrad Hornemann <i>The Journal of Frederick Horneman's Travels</i> W. Bulmer and Co., for G. and W. Nicol, London 1802	English	Editing, preface, additions
<i>Recherches asiatiques</i> Imprimerie impériale, Paris 1805, 2 vols. Translated by Antoine-Gilbert Griffet de Labaume	<i>Asiatick Researches</i> , vols.1-2 M. Cantopher-P. Elmsly, Calcutta-London 1788- 1790	English	Editing, additions
William Hodges <i>Voyage pittoresque de l'Inde</i> Delance, Paris 1805	William Hodges, <i>Travels in India</i> , 2 nd edition J. Edwards, London 1794	English	Translation, preface, additions
Samuel Holmes <i>Voyage en Chine et en Tatarie</i> Delance et Lesueur, Paris 1805, 2 vols. Partly translated by an unknown translator	Samuel Holmes <i>The Journal of M. Samuel Holmes</i> London, W. Bulmer and Company, 1798	English	Editing, preface, additions
William Henry Tone <i>Voyage chez les Mahrattes</i> Everat, Paris 1820	William Henry Tone <i>A Letter to an officer of the Madras establishment, being an attempt to illustrate some particular institutions of the Maratta people</i> Courier Press, Bombay 1798	English	Translation, Preface
John Malcolm <i>Histoire de la Perse</i> Pillet-ainé, Paris 1821, 4 vols. Translated by Pierre-Vincent Benoist	John Malcolm <i>The History of Persia</i> John Murray, London 1815, 2 vols.	English	Additions