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David Chandler and Christopher E. Goscha, eds, *Paul Mus (1902-1969): L'espace d'un regard*. Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2006. 335 pp. Preface, introduction, footnotes, bibliography, chronology, appendices, index, table of contents. 34 Euros (pb). ISBN 2-84654-131-0.

Review by Bradley C. Davis, Eastern Washington University.

### A Life in Four Acts

Producing a volume of essays about a person is a difficult task. Fortunately, this collection of pieces concerning the life and work of Paul Mus benefits from the able editorship of two prolific scholars of Southeast Asia: David Chandler and Christopher E. Goscha. *Paul Mus (1902-1969): L'espace d'un regard* presents the thought, writing, and experiences of an intellectual as deeply rooted in "orientalist" philology as possessed of a vibrant sociological curiosity. Paul Mus' life spanned the final decades of French colonial rule in Indochina. He returned after the August Revolution, during which the Viet Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), to assist the negotiation of a settlement between the French Republic and Ho Chi Minh. Throughout his life, Mus remained passionately concerned about scholarship without becoming detached from world events. He was, as Ian Mabbett acknowledges in this volume, well-positioned within a European tradition of humanist erudition (p. 117).

The editors group the nineteen individual essays into four sections: "I. Autour de l'homme," "II. L'Asie vue par Mus," "III. Paul Mus face au colonialisme et à l'orientalisme," and "IV. Paul Mus et le décolonisation." A brief preface by Christopher Goscha and an informative biographical introduction by David Chandler precede the main text. Following the nineteen essays are a comprehensive bibliography of Paul Mus' work (pp. 291-298); a chronology of Mus' life (pp. 299-304); and four appendices containing extracts from Mus' writings, the transcript of an interview between Paul Mus and Dang Phuc Thong, a letter from Mus addressed to Léon Blum, a copy of Mus' *croix de guerre*, and a short poetic composition by Mus entitled *Croire*. Succinct notes about the contributors and an index complete the volume.

As Goscha notes in his preface, this volume resulted from the contributions of many scholars as well as the cooperation and support of the Mus family in Lyon, who have kept his unpublished papers. An exceedingly readable work results. While not all of the nineteen essays in this volume share the same combination of rigorous research and sociological curiosity that Mus himself advocated, each and every individual piece illuminates aspects of Paul Mus' life and work.

Chandler's biographical sketch situates Mus within the intellectual and political contexts of French colonialism in Indochina. Mus, Chandler notes, was *un enfant de l'Empire* (p. 17). Like many other contributors to this volume, Chandler studied with Paul Mus during Mus' Visiting Professorship at Yale University. After summarizing the key events of Mus' life, (his childhood in Hanoi, his academic studies in France, his time with the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, his work with the French government after WWII, Yale) Chandler offers an emotional and genuine final word on his former teacher from the historian André Piatier: "C'est à un homme qui a fait honneur à notre temps, à un

grand maître de l'Université, à un sage, à un grand citoyen du monde, que nous venons de dire un dernier adieu" (p. 42).

Chandler sets the tone for this tributary volume with his citation of Piatier. What follows is a heterogeneous book filled with historical analysis, theoretical ruminations, personal anecdotes, and insightful commentary about an unusually engaged intellectual. While certain aspects of this work warrant criticism, the volume in its entirety is a pleasant, lively, and erudite work mostly worthy of its subject.

The first section largely concerns personal recollections of Paul Mus. A brief discussion of Mus' relatively unacknowledged contributions to ethnographic research in the context of an interview between Yves Goudineau and Georges Condominas (the specialist on Vietnam's Central Highlands and author of *Nous avons mangé le forêt*) appears as the first chapter (pp. 45-51). A thoughtful piece by the "grand reporter" Jean Lacouture offers some anecdotes about Mus' time in Vietnam after WWII, when Mus worked for General Leclerc following the proclamation of the DRV and the subsequent re-engagement of French military in Vietnam. Lacouture notes that the death of Paul Mus' own son in Algeria inspired Mus to pen the moving *Guerre sans visages*, considered by Lacouture to be among the most lucid accounts of the war in Algeria (pp. 53-55).

The three essays that complete the first part of the volume deal with Paul Mus' time as a Visiting Professor at Yale University. Frances FitzGerald, author of *Fire in the Lake* and former student of Mus, describes the French intellectual as "une mine de sagasse," "a Buddhist Saint" whose thought combined elements of pragmatism and "Confucianism" (p. 58). FitzGerald expresses glowing admiration for Paul Mus as a window on a foreign world: Vietnam (pp. 70-71). He provided insight and understanding about the mentality of Vietnamese people to students such as FitzGerald who yearned for information about the former French colony. FitzGerald describes her chapter (and the entire volume) as a sort of offering, strangely commenting that "Nous les Occidentaux, n'avons pas de rites ancestraux." Mus, she continues, has a kind of continual life as his work continues to illuminate "the great traditions of Asia" (p. 65). This mimicry, perhaps intentional, of a famous line known to schoolchildren throughout present-day Vietnam about Ho Chi Minh ("Uncle Ho has passed away but he lives forever in our works") characterizes Paul Mus as a guide to foreign cultures for the interested observer of world events. Hiram Woodward and David Chandler contribute their own memories of Paul Mus at Yale. These chapters present some compelling, often illuminating, examples of Mus' thought culled from lecture notes and correspondence. Although the removal of these interesting quotations from their context might make them seem like disembodied axioms, Mus' thoughts on myth ("Le mythe est un langage," p. 78), the influence of Chinese and Indian ideas on Southeast Asia, Vietnamese politics during the 1960s, the durability of the "Mandate of Heaven" concept (p. 74), and Buddhism (p. 75) are as thought-provoking now as that must have been forty years ago.

"L'Asie vue par Paul Mus," the second section, brings the focus of the volume to Mus' academic work. Mus' work on sacred architecture is the subject of an essay by Jacques Dumarçay, a member of the EFEO and a former consultant with UNESCO projects at Borobudur in Java and Angkor in Cambodia. These sites were also subjects of Mus' earlier research and Dumarçay's contribution to this volume reinforces the notion, advocated by Mus, that researchers should be both well grounded in their training and sociologically aware. Ashley Thompson, a historian of art in Cambodia, offers a somewhat playful piece on the symbols of the Cham (pp. 93-108). For Paul Mus, the Cham, a community distinguished from the Vietnamese and other groups by their history, language, and religious orientation, possessed a sophisticated set of cultural practices. Just as Vietnam was not a pale imitation of China, neither were the Cham facsimiles of larger cosmologies such as those contained within Sanskrit literary culture (p. 108). Thompson's discussion of Mus' contributions also contains a brief digression about the Platonic concept of *khora* (pp. 97-100). A Greek term that can mean "countryside," *khora* was explained by Plato in *Timaeus and Critias* as that which permits being (p. 97). Thompson notes that Derrida has more

recently dealt with this concept before relating this term, complete with Platonic roots and poststructuralist credentials, to the twin Cham concepts of *linga* and *yoni* (p. 100). As Thompson also points out, *linga* has an essentially phallic aspect, while *yoni* represents the *khora* or, in his explanation, the space distinct from creation (p. 100). Although Thompson's chapter certainly raises some interesting issues with respect to Mus' study of Cham concepts of form and space, the chapter concludes with an odd remark that equates *khora* (*yoni*) with "le concept d'un lieu primordial ou plutôt d'un lieu avant lieu permettant l'avoir-lieu - ou bien, ce qu'on a toujours appelé en Occident l'Orient" (p. 108). This appeal to the conceptualization of the Orient as a *khora* for the West seems out of step with a volume dedicated to a scholar who consistently eschewed colonialist bravado.

Mus' criticism of his colleagues and his position within intellectual trends of the twentieth century concerns the sequential essays by Pierre-Yves Manguin of the EFEO (Paris) and the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes and Ian Mabbett of Monash University. Manguin quotes perhaps one of Paul Mus' most insightful statements about the limitations of classical, philological orthodoxy: "Quelle était cette Inde dont les civilisations khmère et chame peuvent passer pour un reflet?" (p. 112). This inversion of the hegemony usually granted to the grand civilizations demanded a fresh investigation of Southeast Asian cultures once regarded as derivative. These comments, which Mus articulated during his eight years with the EFEO in Hanoi (1927-1936), came decades before the celebrated work of John Smail in the United States. Like Smail, Mus advocated the examination of Southeast Asian societies in their own terms.[1] However, as Manguin aptly points out, Mus' concerns occurred within the institutional context of the EFEO. As did Émile Gaspardone, Paul Mus criticized the tendency of EFEO-affiliated scholars to engage in "quaint archeo-epigraphical proofs" (pp. 112-113). For Mus, the precious philological exercises of EFEO researchers served to minimize local cultural practices in favor of either the two "Great Civilizations" or *la mission civilisatrice* (p. 113). Manguin notes that Mus' *L'Inde vue de l'Est* not only embodied the spirit of Mus' criticism through its combination of Indology with *sociologie*, it also influenced other scholars of southeast Asia including Oliver Wolters, Paul Wheatley, and Hermann Kulke. Ian Mabbett's chapter, "L'Indologie de Mus: Sociologie ou Cosmologie?," concerns Mus' approach to the study of classical Indian civilization and its supposedly "Indianized" (following Georges Coedès) cultural colonies in Southeast Asia.[2] Mabbett positions Mus firmly within a European tradition of humanist erudition, in a league with Mircea Eliade and luminaries of such twentieth-century movements as structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstructionism (p. 117). While Mus advocated a more grounded approach to research, he remained fully capable of engaging in scholarly debates that centered on classical questions, as Mabbett demonstrates with Mus' skilled Sutra exegesis (p. 120).

The two concluding chapters in Part II elaborate on Manguin's insights about Mus' integrated approach and Mus' influence in the field of Southeast Asian Studies. Yves Goudineau provides an intellectual biography of Mus, attributing his particular approach to two key influences: the Indology of Sylvain Lévi and the sociology of Mauss and Gramet (p. 129). Mus' broad concern for knowledge and disciplined attitude towards research led to a body of work that, in Goudineau's estimation, relates to such diverse concepts as Mauss' *sociologie du geste* and, perhaps more interestingly, Gilles Deleuze's *l'image mouvement* (pp. 130, 141). Rémy Madinier closes Part II with an essay entitled "Une vision mussienne de l'Asie du Sud-Est." Madinier convincingly charts Mus' influence over the first generation of Anglo-Saxon Southeast Asia specialists, notably Brian Harrison, whose *South-East Asia: A Short History* (1954) represented an early attempt to synthesize a common historical narrative for the diverse countries geographically between South and East Asia (p. 143).

Part III, "Paul Mus face au colonialisme et à l'orientalisme," contains four essays that consider Mus' complicated relationships with Vietnamese intellectuals and French colonialism. Nguyen Phuong Ngoc, of l'Université de Provence, describes Mus' hope that Vietnamese intellectuals could help dissipate the trenchant misunderstandings that plagued Franco-Vietnamese relations (pp. 151-152). Ultimately, Mus felt that Vietnamese intellectuals, especially those affiliated with the EFEO, must bear the responsibility

for the future of Vietnam (p. 152). Ngoc lists several Vietnamese intellectuals with whom Mus corresponded and collaborated, including Tran Van Giap and Nguyen Van Huyen (pp. 154-155, 164, 168-170). For Ngoc, what distinguished Mus from other French members of the EFEO was his view of these Vietnamese researchers as equals, as colleagues, and as companions (pp. 160-161). In this sense, Mus appears as a model for international/inter-cultural collaborative research. Even Nguyen Van Huyen, who signed the Viet Minh-sponsored letter demanding the abdication of the French-supported Bao Dai Emperor in 1945, maintained a respectful rapport with Mus (pp. 168-170). The Vietnamese members of the EFEO, Ngoc reminds us, were a heterogeneous group (p. 170). Trinh Van Thao, professor of sociology at l'Université de Provence, authors the subsequent chapter, which details Mus' appreciation for Vietnamese intellectuals in the post-DRV (post-1945) period. Thao focuses on two French-educated Vietnamese figures, the medically trained nationalist Nguyen Khac Vien and the eminent philosopher Tran Duc Thao (p. 182). While Nguyen Khac Vien firmly represented the revolutionary ethos through his work, Mus perceived within Tran Duc Thao, whose *Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique* stands as a rigorous scholarly achievement, a persistent tension. Mus held that Tran Duc Thao personally and professionally struggled with his role vis-à-vis the Vietnamese revolution (p. 186). Such judgments, however, contained no stark condemnation of Vietnamese nationalism, featuring instead an earnest longing for better relations among intellectuals and populi on both sides.

The final two essays in Part III expand on Paul Mus' profound regret concerning the deterioration of Franco-Vietnamese relations, on all fronts, in the post-WWII period. Susan Bayly, University Reader in Social Anthropology at Cambridge University, offers a measured appraisal of Mus' understanding of the Vietnamese revolution. Bayly points out that Mus did not subscribe to the simplistic, Orientalist notion of the Mandate of Heaven ("Mandat du Ciel," vn: "Thien Menh"). Although Mus explained the Vietnamese perception of the end of French authority in Indochina as a "cosmic rupture" (p. 192), Mus did not rely on the Mandate of Heaven concept as an essentialist explanatory tool nor as the basis for advocating French policy in post-DRV Vietnam (p. 188). As Bayly reminds us, Mus believed that the tragedy of *la situation indochinoise* lay in the breakdown in Franco-Vietnamese relations (p. 192). Paul Mus also reminded his readers that "tous le régimes pourissent, tous les Etats changent" (p. 192). Agathe Larcher-Goscha, of the Institut d'Asie orientale, aptly summarizes Paul Mus' work and reflections on the tumultuous period from 1945-1954, during which the post-WWII French government reassumed and reasserted its colonial position in a land that hosted the Viet Minh-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam (pp. 195-218).

Finally, Part IV, "Paul Mus et la décolonisation," brings the story of this rare intellectual into the post French colonial period, with particular attention paid to Mus' humanist tendencies and his deep understanding of Vietnamese nationalism. Daniel Hémerly, a leading historian of modern Vietnam and *maître de conférence honoraire* at l'Université Paris VII-Denis Diderot, depicts Paul Mus as a knowledgeable advocate for peaceful resolutions and mutual understanding (pp. 243-245). For Hémerly, Mus' avoidance of paternalistic language and his evident respect for the aims of Vietnamese nationalism made the scholar a unique, temperate voice within the French camp after 1945 (p. 243). Daniel Varga, a doctoral graduate of l'Université de Provence, presents a compelling picture of Mus' failed efforts to persuade the French government to take advantage of the post-DRV situation and secure a peaceful solution. His essay contrasts Mus' diplomatic approach with that of Léon Pignon, the Haut-Commissaire in Indochina who endorsed the abdicated Bao Dai Emperor in October 1948 (p. 258). Prior to 1948, according to Mus, peace between France and an independent Vietnam seemed possible (p. 247). Varga demonstrates the disregard of the French government for Mus' position with an episode that occurred between Mus and de Gaulle. In reply to Paul Mus' suggestions that France seek negotiations with the Viet Minh leader Ho Chi Minh, de Gaulle flatly replied: "Monsieur le professeur, nous gagnerons parce que nous sommes les plus forts" (p. 252). The tragedy of *la situation indochinoise* would continue despite Mus' advice.

Mus' advocacy for a common humanity provides the topic for the final two chapters of this volume. Sabine Rousseau, of l'Université Lyon II and author of *La colombe et la napalm, des chrétiens français contre les guerres d'Indochine et du Vietnam* (2002), concentrates on Paul Mus' articles that appeared in the pages of *Témoignage Chrétien* between August 1949 and February 1950. Thoroughly non-polemical, Mus' reportage played a significant part in the Catholic peace movement in France (pp. 262-265). Two assertions by Mus from this chapter stand out. The first, and perhaps most iconic, is an article entitled "Les Vietnamiens aussi sont des hommes" which galvanized a religiously justified opposition to the escalation of the military conflict in Vietnam. The second, from Mus' celebrated later work *Viet Nam. Sociologie d'une guerre* (1952), is the notion that any solution to the conflict in Vietnam would have to be political (p. 266). Despite de Gaulle's confidence, Mus maintained that force would not resolve *la situation indochinoise*. Christopher Goscha's chapter reflects on the ways in which war shaped Paul Mus' humanism or, in Goscha's delightful rendering, *un Humanisme Mussien* (p. 269). Mussian humanism features an empathetic pulse. To better understand the aims and attraction of Vietnamese nationalism, Mus invited his readers in *Le Destin de l'Union française* to imagine a post WWII France continually occupied by the United States (p. 275). In terms of Vietnamese people, Mus noted that his own sister, imprisoned by the Japanese military occupation prior to 1945, benefitted from the compassion of Vietnamese women in Saigon as she fought for her life (p. 276). Goscha favorably compares Mus to the nineteenth-century journalist Pierre Loti, whose 1883 reports from the French bombardment at Thuan An dissuaded segments of the French population against war with Vietnam (pp. 284-288). Goscha might have also referenced Albert de Pouvourville, an eccentric Gnostic who, under the nom de plume "Mat Gioi," wrote *L'Annam sanglant*, an iconic anticolonial piece of historical fiction in 1898. Goscha concludes his chapter and the body of this edited volume on a somber and profound note. Towards the end of his life, with the American phase of the war in Vietnam at its height, Paul Mus lamented that a solution to the problem of decolonization in former French Indochina never lay with the recognition of nationalism by French politicians. Colonialist thinking itself, Mus contended, exerted a strong attraction for the French élite, to the extent that any effort to explain the aspirations of Vietnamese leaders, no matter how erudite and articulate, failed to stir French appreciation for the aims of Vietnamese nationalism (p. 289). Mus would not outlive this lingering misunderstanding that precipitated *la situation indochinoise*.

Despite its obvious readability and essential importance, *Paul Mus (1902-1969): L'espace d'un regard* also inspires a few words of criticism. In several chapters throughout the book, there is an abundance of orientalisms. The editors might have offered an explanatory note about the different senses of the French term *orientalisme*, meaning a set of investigative techniques and conceptual assumptions that form a school of intellectual activity, and the perhaps related Anglo-Saxon term conventionally associated with the work of the late Edward Said, which is somewhat confusingly rendered into French also as *orientalisme*. Goscha, in the preface, advises readers that being an *orientaliste* during the age of French colonialism did not necessarily indicate allegiance to imperial politics - "*C'est plus complexe*" (p. 14). Susan Bayly also emphasizes the fact that Mus did not adhere to certain orientalist stereotypes including the essential fatalism of the Vietnamese people regarding the Mandate of Heaven (p. 188). However, the reader can also encounter Daniel Hémerly's essay entitled "Paul Mus: un orientaliste dans la décolonisation," Yves Goudineau's "Généalogie des formes et scénarios rituels dans l'Asie des Moussons: l'orientalisme de Paul Mus entre sociologie et iconologie," and Pierre-Yves Manguin's "Un 'sociologue' parmi les orientalistes: Paul Mus à l'École française d'Extrême-Orient" as well as a reference to Indology in Ian Mabbett's piece. Granted that editors intended this volume for a French readership, they might have nonetheless cleared up the different meanings of *orientalisme*. Without clarification, readers to whom the term represents an epithet reserved for essentialist exoticism, the denial of history or agency to entire arbitrarily categorized groups of people, or a talismanic keyword indicating an ethnocentric field of study might derive decidedly less from this volume. On a related note, the excellent essay by Nguyen Phuong Ngoc begs a question unanswered elsewhere in this book: What is the genealogy of the assumption that Vietnam is nothing more than an imitation of China? While Ngoc does cite Philippe Langlet's recent work on the Nguyen Dynasty to argue that Vietnamese leaders have

at times strategically expressed an affinity with China (p. 158), neither Ngoc nor any other contributor to this edited volume provides an explanation of the source of the French lacunae regarding the little China concept. At the very least, a discussion of French sinology would have illuminated this claim.

Also, as a minor yet important criticism that appears all too often in reviews of works related to Vietnam, Vietnamese words appear throughout this text without diacritics. Although this was most likely a decision made by its publishers, this volume dedicated to an intellectual who tirelessly struggled to provide for mutual understanding between France and Vietnam does not print personal names, place names, or phrases in a way that respects the conventions of the Vietnamese *écriture*.

These reservations aside, *L'espace d'un regard* should occupy a place on the reading lists of all those seeking to understand the work of Paul Mus and the history of Indochina whether from a French colonial or a Southeast Asian perspective. Taken as a whole, the volume left this reader with a fortified appreciation for a disciplined combination of erudition and humanistic compassion, of musty philology and extroverted *sociologie*, and of deep contemplation and thoughtful action. Rather than a votive offering to an intellectual ancestor, *Paul Mus (1902-1969) L'espace d'un regard* might best be described as a window into a rare, engaged intellect. Its readers, to paraphrase Paul Mus himself, may feel delightfully haunted by the eloquence of a tireless predecessor (p. 77).

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

Christopher Goscha, "Voir, simplement..."

David Chandler, "Paul Mus (1902-1969): Une esquisse biographique."

Georges Condominas, "Paul Mus ou la génétosité intellectuelle."

Jean Lacouture, "Hommage à Paul Mus."

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Susan Bayly, "Penser la résistance et la révolution: la vision de Paul Mus du colonialisme en crise."

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Sabine Rousseau, "La réception des écrits de Paul Mus sur la guerre d'Indochine dans les milieux chrétiens français."

Christopher Goscha, "'Qu'as-tu appris à la guerre?' Paul Mus en quête de l'humain..."

#### NOTES

[1] For a treatment of John Smail, see Laurie Sears, ed., *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John Smail* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

[2] A former Director of the EFEO and a member of the Institut de France, Georges Coedès (1886-1969) authored *Les États hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient* (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1944). Engaged in historical and archeological work since the beginning of the twentieth century, Coedès advanced the notion that smaller states in Southeast Asia became 'Indianized' through selective contact with Sanskrit-literate Brahmans from South Asia. An English edition of *Les États hindouisés*, edited by Walter F. Vella and translated by Sue Brown Cowing, was entitled *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968). During his career, Coedès published over 100 scholarly articles and several monographs about various topics in Southeast Asian history, including the trade state of Srivijaya, ancient Cambodia, and Sukhothai. His scholarly work, for which he drew on material in Pali, Sanskrit, Khmer, and Thai, also includes *Les Peuples de la Péninsule Indochinoise* (Paris: Dunod, 1962) which has been translated by H.M. Wright as *The Making of South East Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

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