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DAVID CHANDLER

Paul Mus (1902–1969): A Biographical Sketch

Paul Mus was only 67 years old when he died, but his life, covering two-thirds of the twentieth century, had been crowded with rewards, adventures, achievements, setbacks, griefs, and intimacies. To point to only one of the sudden changes in his life, he was a major scholar of Buddhism before he was 33 and a decorated lieutenant of machine guns, fighting in France, five years later. In his long and fruitful career he was successively a subsidized scholar, a soldier, a colonial official under Vichy, a commando, a secret agent, and the political advisor to a French general. At that point, when he was 43, Mus also reached the pinnacle of the French academic establishment, with a chair at the Collège de France. For the rest of his life he balanced the demands of the life of a public intellectual, a profoundly honest and provocative writer, a scholar of ancient Asia, and an inspiring teacher. In this period he became an active opponent of the First Indochina War and a fervent supporter—as few well-placed Frenchmen were at the time—of Vietnamese national aspirations. His masterpiece, *Vietnam: sociologie d'une guerre* [*Vietnam: Sociology of a War*], published in 1952, is a profound meditation on Vietnam, colonial wars, and issues of national identity. The book inspired Frances FitzGerald's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Fire in the Lake* (1972). More recently, his writings on Vietnam have attracted the admiration of a new generation of scholars drawn to his prescience, wide-ranging humanism, and intellectual integrity.

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In the last ten years of his life, Paul Mus also had to balance the demands of his career with those of his family, especially after his only son was killed in combat in Algeria. He died at the height of his powers. Because of his achievements and the affection and respect that he inspired in so many people, the story of his life is worth relating in detail.¹

Early Life

Paul (Leon Joseph) Mus was born on June 1, 1902, at his parents' home in Bourges. His father, Cyprien Mus (1872–1940), was at the time a professor of English at the Ecole normale annex in that town; he became its director in 1906. Cyprien's wife, Desirée Caille (1873–1945), had been raised in Normandy and was also a trained secondary school teacher. Both of them were ardent Republicans and Dreyfusards; Cyprien Mus was also a Freemason and a member of the Ligue des droits de l'homme. The couple were involved in the Université populaire movement with their near contemporary, the Radical pacifist Emile Chartier (*nom de plume* Alain, 1868–1951), who was to be Paul Mus' godfather, his teacher in Paris in the early 1920s, and a lifelong inspiration. In politicosocial terms, Paul Mus was a child of the Third Republic.

Cyprien Mus was the beneficiary of enlightened French educational policies that provided social mobility to high-achieving students. His father had been a road worker in the village of Murs in the Vaucluse, where Paul Mus' daughter's family still retains a small property and from which the Mus family may well derive their name. Cyprien excelled in school and advanced by hard work and sheer merit up the educational ladder. Paul Mus, in turn, was understandably proud of his Provençal roots, and throughout his life, whenever he could, he spent his holidays in Murs.

Paul Mus' sister Lucie was born in Bourges in 1905. Little is known about her later life, except that she stayed in Indochina through World War II before returning to France. In 1945, she was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese. Paul Mus' family was estranged from her, and Laurence Rimer, his daughter, never met her aunt.²

In 1907 the Muses moved to Hà Nội, where Cyprien and Desirée inaugurated the Collège du protectorat, later known as the Ecole normale, established to give Vietnamese students access to French language secondary

education and to train them in French pedagogical methods. Cyprien Mus rose through the ranks of the pedagogical bureaucracy, ending his career in 1926–1929 as director of the School of Pedagogy and inspector of the Normal Schools of Indochina. In 1929, two years after Paul Mus returned to Hà Nội with his young wife, Cyprien and Desirée Mus retired to France, living first in Aix-en-Provence and later in Carpentras, near Murs. Cyprien Mus died in 1940. His widow, who became a decorated heroine of the Resistance, died five years later.³

Mus' childhood in Hà Nội was a very happy one. He was guided into some of the intricacies and simplicities of Vietnamese life by the female servants in his parents' tolerant, respectful house. These affectionate, assiduous women took him to Vietnamese temples, treated him with Vietnamese medicines, and walked him through the city. He has written fondly about them, and the scholar of colonialism Laurent Dartigues has recently suggested that his time with them may have infantilized his later thinking about Vietnam. The suggestion fits badly with Mus' intellectual admiration for Hồ Chí Minh, his sympathy for Vietnamese Buddhism, and his friendships with many Vietnamese intellectuals. At the same time, these early experiences and relationships were certainly colonial ones, as Mus would have been the first to admit. Like Rudyard Kipling, one of Mus' two favorite authors (the other was Marcel Proust), Mus was a child of empire, and his contacts with his parents' household were more extensive and intimate than his contacts with Vietnamese peasants or revolutionaries were to be later on. Nonetheless, I would argue that the relationships and affections that Mus developed as a child made him fond of ordinary Vietnamese for the rest of his life and led him to see them as rational, patriotic human beings who merited his respect.⁴

In Hà Nội, Mus studied alongside the children of French officials and those of the Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian elite. A fellow student at the Lycée Albert Sarraut was Suzanne Godbille, a year younger than Mus. The couple were to marry in 1924. Mus was a talented student, and within his learned, tea-drinking family, his mother made him memorize all his lessons word for word. Even at the end of his life, he could recite, and without fault, poems in Latin by Horace that he had learned as a youngster. This ability to memorize and remember stood him in good stead as a scholar, since he was

able to remember things read years before with complete precision and then relate them to his present research.⁵

In the fall of 1919, Mus returned to France to prepare for university study. In Hà Nội, World War I had been a very distant reality. In France, Mus immediately noticed the sharp contrast between the triumphalism that suffused the French after their victory and the traumatic losses that they had suffered in the process. Mus' extended family in Normandy and the Vaucluse had been "depopulated" by the war. His only close contact when he arrived in Paris was with his godfather, Alain, under whom he studied philosophy for two years at the Lycée Henri IV.⁶

Alain and his work were lifelong inspirations for Paul Mus, who dedicated his chef d'oeuvre, *Barabudur*, to the philosopher. He was particularly impressed by Alain's eloquent antiwar meditation, *Mars ou la guerre jugée*, written while Mus was preparing for his diploma under Alain at Henri IV.⁷ Simone Weil, who was Alain's student in 1925–1927, was equally appreciative of her teacher, but Jean-Paul Sartre, who was two years younger than Mus and who audited some of Alain's classes (Mus recalled Sartre sitting "in the corner" and as "not particularly clean"), was unimpressed. Mus later said that Alain had foreshadowed many of Sartre's large ideas, especially in the area of perception, remarking in a lecture that "Sartre was furious when I said to him that he had taken something from Alain. Sartre didn't wish to owe anything to Alain!"⁸

Alain's vigorous, eclectic teaching methods, which foreshadowed Mus' own, have been described by a fellow student of the 1919 intake, the novelist and *littérateur* Maurice Toesca (1904–?), writing in 1952:

Alain passed before the class monitor, greeted him, and allowed him to close the door. While he was taking off his hat, he embarked on a monologue about taxis, Esperanto, trains, and busses, and we began to listen. Then he sat in his chair, taking from his pocket his enormous handkerchief, which he twisted this way and that. When the spirit was sufficiently warmed up, he surrendered to fantasy, or to whatever concerned him, following his inspiration. Alain was in his element. He was in his classroom like a priest in his church, surrounded by the faithful, or a shepherd playing a flute to his sheep. To tell the truth, while the shepherd was playing the flute to himself, it was not forbidden that some of the sheep might learn the tunes. Indeed, it was the best possible school for those with natural gifts.⁹

Paul Mus shared several traits with his mentor that sustained him throughout his life. These included openness to experience, empathy, unswerving honesty, and a dense, poetical writing style. The two men also shared a deep love of France, the French language, and the free play of intellectual inquiry. They hated violence, but when the time came, both of them volunteered for combat.

After earning his *licence* in philosophy in 1922, Paul Mus went on to earn a *diplôme* in philology at the Ecole pratique des hautes études (EPHE) in Paris, where he worked with such eminent scholars as Marcel Mauss, Marcel Granet, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. He also studied under Sylvain Lévi and earned a second *diplôme* in Siamese from the Ecole des langues orientales. Another student at the EPHE, Suzanne Karpelès (1890–1969), was soon to become, like Mus, a member of the Ecole française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO). She was a lifelong friend of Mus and his wife, and was the godmother of their son, Emile.¹⁰

Suzanne Godbille had come to France soon after Mus to study chemistry at the University of Rennes. In July 1924 she and Mus were married in Lorient. They spent their honeymoon in Murs. In 1926–1927 Mus fulfilled his twelve months of military obligations, completing officers' training in St. Cyr before serving as a sublieutenant in an infantry regiment in Paris.¹¹

The Young Scholar

By then, Mus' academic abilities had come to the attention of Louis Finot and Leonard Aourousseau, successive directors of EFEO. Mus spent the summer of 1923 with his parents in Hà Nội, and it is conceivable that he was already considering a career with the Ecole. Four years later, in any case, when he had completed his military service, he applied for a position as a temporary member of EFEO. His letter of appointment arrived only two weeks later, which suggests that he did not compete for the position. In July 1927 he and his wife sailed, first class, for Hà Nội.¹² The young couple settled easily into their native city. Mus spent the next ten months learning the ropes at the Ecole and revising his EPHE thesis for publication—a project that he soon abandoned.

In April 1928, he was EFEO's delegate to a conference in the Netherlands East Indies. When the conference was over, he spent two days at the

massive eighth-century Buddhist temple of Barabudur in central Java. He traveled on to Bali with Karpelès, who had also attended the conference, and when they returned to Indochina he spent several months on official business in Phnom Penh and at Angkor, using the time to compose his first major scholarly essay, “Le Buddha paré” [The Adorned Buddha], which appeared in the *Bulletin* of the Ecole later in the year, alongside his translation of a recently discovered Cham inscription, written in Sanskrit, that had been found in southern Vietnam.¹³

In 1929, Mus began studying the Cham language with a Cham rifleman stationed in Hà Nội. At the end of the year he embarked on three months of fieldwork in the region of Phanrang in southern Annam, collecting Cham manuscripts and attending Cham festivals. The period must have been a thrilling change for a myopic 27-year-old who had spent most of his mature life behind a desk. Mus’ time in the south also included some unexpected adventures. On one occasion, traveling on the Djiring plateau, he reported:

The return was marked by a curious incident. As our little column of ten horsemen followed a narrow, thicketed path, a tiger ran across the path, and this caused real confusion. Our Cham guide, thrown onto the ground, seemed to have lost consciousness. We were very near a little *bumon* [shrine] of *yan In* [Indra]. The guide was carried there and Bo Thuan, a literate Cham who was accompanying us, performed a proper exorcism on the guide, who knelt down at the door of the shrine and loosened his hair. Bo Thuan took the hair and put it in his mouth so as to breathe an incantation into it; later on, he gave me the written text.¹⁴

Years later at the Collège de France, Mus returned to the incident and identified the “literate Cham” as “Bo Thuan, a solid mixture of Savoyard and Cham, the natural son of the well known Khmer scholar [Etienne] Aymonier, my predecessor as the head of the Ecole Coloniale.”¹⁵

Mus was named secretary-librarian at EFEO in 1929, and he held the post until he went on sabbatical in Europe in 1935. He became a permanent member of the Ecole in 1931 and revisited Angkor in the following year before turning to his magisterial study of Barabudur, an enterprise which, like his posthumous book, *Hồ Chí Minh, le Vietnam, l’Asie* [Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, Asia], had its genesis as a book review.¹⁶

For several months in 1932–1933 Mus served in Coedès' absence as the interim director of EFEO. In February 1933 he gave an illustrated lecture entitled "L'Inde vu de l'est: cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa" [India Seen from the East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa], which became one of his most influential essays.¹⁷ The Muses' son, Emile, was born in Hà Nội in April 1932, and around this time, as Paul Mus turned 30, he later claimed that the myopia that had "darkened [his] childhood" was finally "cured."¹⁸

Mus was a great success as a scholar and an administrator at EFEO. Writing the governor-general of Indochina in 1931, George Coedès referred to him as "without doubt the most brilliant of the people working with me." He amplified this view in the generous preface that he wrote for the bound edition of *Barabudur* that appeared in 1935.¹⁹

Paul Mus returned to Phanrang with his wife and son in April 1934 for an extended period of research, noting later that "Tonkinese by formation, it was my first prolonged experience in the south of Vietnam."²⁰ He never published a detailed report on his fieldwork but spent much of his time exploring the backcountry and collecting myths about the region. The telegrams that he sent to Hà Nội suggest, in a staccato style, some of the excitement of these voyages, thirty-odd years before much of the region was carpet-bombed by the United States:

Telegram from P. Mus to [director EFEO], received November 22, 1934:
Phantiet, led by Churu, have discovered an archaeological grouping in foothills forest west Phantiet three towers two recently collapsed, one hollowed out three sides remaining . . . plus secondary vestiges enclosures for three towers Churu legends suggest Cambodian sojourn

Telegram from P. Mus to [director EFEO], received November 27, 1934:
Found rectangular Cham citadel, walled to a height of 9 meters maximum 2 to 4 [degrees] north Malam south Xuan Cau located on map bend of streams running northeast southwest tradition connects king paghuh end eighteenth [century].

Telegram from P. Mus, received January 12, 1935: [After] leaving Phanrang discovered ruined tower four kilometers east north east Giale, emplacements for five others 21 km [from Djiring] kilometer marker 852 on Route Mandarine [main north south highway in Annam]

Telegram from P. Mus received February 6, 1935: After long search discovered Moi alphabet among Churu according tradition originated Rhade writing sigillary, vertical.²¹

In all, according to EFEO records, Mus on these travels “discovered” some twenty-seven Cham constructions that had not been known to the French.

In the middle of 1935 Mus and his family embarked on a sabbatical in France.²² A year later, EFEO granted him an extension of his leave to study at the Indian Institute at Oxford. While he was in England, he received another extension to coincide with his appointment as a director of studies at the EPHE, where he taught the history of Indian religions, replacing André Foucher. This was his first experience as a teacher, and he seems to have enjoyed it enormously. At this time, Mus befriended his old mentor Marcel Mauss and renewed contact with Alain. The young scholar Paul Lévy, who first met Mus at this time, remembers him as professorially attired in black, carrying a huge umbrella—suggesting that Mus fully enjoyed playing the roles that were assigned to him by destiny or chance.²³

Mus wrote several important papers while he was in Europe. A seminar that he gave on “Primitive Mythology and Indian Thought” was attended by Mauss and Lévy-Bruhl, whose ideas were vigorously debated following the talk. Before globalization shrank and leveled the world, the differences among people and among the ways that people perceived and constructed the world was a topic at the center of much scholarly inquiry, and one that cannot be dismissed nowadays, at least in Mus’ case, as “Orientalism.” Although Mus flourished in a French and later in an American academic context, his openness to the world never carried the subtext that his nationality, his way of thinking, and his way of expressing himself (which he coded on two occasions with the word “Descartes”²⁴) were in any way *superior* to the modes of thinking that he encountered in Asia and that he strove so hard to understand.

Mus’ reputation as a scholar, based in large part on *Barabudur*, had preceded him to Europe. In 1936, when he was only 34, his name was put forward as a backup candidate for the chair in Sanskrit language and literature at the Collège de France. The nomination was flattering, but Mus never expected to occupy the post. The principal nominee was Jules Bloch, Mus’

former teacher, who, as expected, accepted the position. A decade later, Bloch generously welcomed Mus himself to a newly created chair at the Collège.²⁵

Despite these honors and the excitement of being in France and Great Britain, Mus does not seem to have contemplated staying in Europe to pursue an academic career. With his growing family (the Muses' daughter, Laurence, was born in Oxford in 1937, just as Emile was beginning his education) and the assurance of an ongoing position with the Ecole française, it seems likely that he was always planning to return to Indochina.

However, for the first time in many years his future may have seemed uncertain. His sojourn in Europe coincided with high political drama—Leon Blum's Popular Front government, the Spanish Civil War, the Munich Agreements, and the menace of Nazi Germany. Interestingly, aside from a glancing reference to being activated as a reserve officer during the Munich crisis in 1938, there is no echo in Mus' writings then or later about the impact of these events on his thinking at the time, or any hint that his sojourn in France and Great Britain led him to examine issues of colonialism in Indochina or anywhere else.²⁶ In 1938–1939, as he prepared to return to EFEO, it would have been impossible to predict the public man of action that he became in the 1940s. Paul Mus was still a scholar in the classic mode, happily immersed in the same arcane areas of inquiry that had attracted his attention since the 1920s.²⁷

He spent much of 1938 preparing for his *doctorat ès lettres*, which was granted to him early in the following year. The thesis and a complementary one were published in 1939, with the Mussien title of *La lumière sur les six voies* [Light on the Six Ways]. This dazzling piece of work expanded on the thesis that he had written in the 1920s at EPHE and subjected his earlier findings to more detailed linguistic and sociological scrutiny. He wrote the preface aboard ship while he was returning to Hà Nội in early 1939. These pages were to be the last that he was to publish for almost seven years.

In Hà Nội, Mus felt that he was re-entering a peaceful, almost paradisaical world. As he wrote later, “[It] seemed that I had arrived in a country shaded by a century: nothing at all had moved.”²⁸ He resumed work as EFEO's librarian and secretary in the summer of 1939 and served briefly as interim director.

Combat and Colonial Service

When war broke out in September 1939, Mus was mobilized as a reserve lieutenant and called to active duty as he had expected to be, but for a few months he was able to continue working part time at EFEO. In February 1940, at the height of the so-called Phony War, however, he volunteered to go to France to fight—a move made by relatively few of his comrades in arms. He sailed from Sài Gòn to France with his wife and children on March 23.²⁹

Mus' military records are incomplete, and it is unclear where he was in April and May 1940, when he received a citation for bravery, but we know that the armistice in mid-June 1940 found him, at 38, in command of a machine-gun section of the Nineteenth Autonomous Senegalese Battalion, engaged in combat near Sully-sur-Loire. The unit was covering the retreat of French forces south of the river and trying to delay the Germans' advance. Mus later wrote that he failed to hear de Gaulle's June 18, 1940, appeal "because I was busy killing Boches [French slang for "Germans"] on the Loire." When the fighting ended, the French armies south of the Loire, including Mus' Senegalese battalion, moved further south into the unoccupied zone, soon to be governed from Vichy. On Bastille Day 1940, Mus and "the other decorated soldiers" of his regiment paraded as proudly as they could past the Monument to the Dead in Chateauroux. The orderly retreat, Mus wrote later in his unpublished manuscript "Memento politique" [Political Memento], probably kept him and his comrades from becoming prisoners of war. For the next three months the troops were encamped near Saint Raphael, where Mus was put in charge of a company of soldiers who were waiting to be repatriated to Africa. He sought to raise their morale by enforcing early reveilles and supervising sessions of strenuous physical training.³⁰

Toward the end of the year after he had been demobilized, Mus visited his parents in Carpentras. His father was terminally ill. Cyprien Mus died before Paul Mus, a civilian once more, accepted an administrative position in French West Africa (AOF). Mus may have traveled to Vichy, which nearly everyone in France now considered to be the nation's administrative capital, to seek or discuss the African posting, but all we know for certain is that in December 1940 the Vichy minister of the colonies, Admiral Charles Platon, cabled to the governor-general of Indochina (technically Mus'

employer, since EFEO was a government body) with a copy to Coedès: “Envisage designating M. Mus member [EFEO] to take charge of teaching French West Africa. His personality would seem to me useful there. Please [if] possible consent to releasing for two years services named [person]. Please telegraph agreement. Signed: Platon.”³¹

Coedès’ response has not survived, but we know that he wanted Mus to replace Suzanne Karpelès as head of the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, where Karpelès had come under fire from the choleric *résident supérieur* in Cambodia, M. Thibaudeau, for her friendliness with members of the Khmer elite and her refusal to consider Thailand as a hostile state. She was also under pressure for her Jewishness. Admiral Jean Decoux’ regime in Indochina had been swift to enforce the anti-Jewish laws enacted by Vichy, and Karpelès, as a Jew, an eccentric, a pro-Khmer, and a woman, was an easy target. She was repatriated to France, at EFEO’s expense, in March 1941.³²

Mus probably was unaware of these maneuvers at the time, and his rationale for going to AOF is unclear. We don’t know how much of the move was due to his initiative or if he was simply responding to the need to earn a living. He wrote later, “At one moment the capriciousness of the armistice had made me an educational official in French West Africa” and also “the aftermath of the war threw me suddenly into Black Africa,” but less capricious factors may also have been at work. In 1946, for example, writing to a former colleague, Mus claimed that he was happy to follow his father’s example as a colonial educator. He also knew that there was a greater chance of his continuing the war from Africa than from Indochina, which by then had fallen under Japanese domination. As he wrote the former colleague, “One of my essential aims of staying in Dakar had been to be there when the fighting [between France and Germany] resumed.”

Mus and his family arrived in Dakar on January 27, 1941. His new position, echoing his father’s, involved teaching at the Ecole normale, inspecting French-language schools (including the *lycée* in Dakar), and traveling by ship and automobile through an enormous region that contained only eighteen million people (roughly as many as were crowded into the components of colonial Vietnam). Only seventy thousand of these were in schools administered by the French. In an unpublished essay written in 1954, Mus

found the disproportion between the total population and the numbers of people being schooled “arresting”: “School attendance ranges between 12 percent of the total possible number in Dahomey and scarcely 1 percent in Niger. In spite of its official statements, has our colonialism thus sacrificed teaching, the work of the future, to more immediately lucrative activities?”³³

These statistics compared unfavorably even with those in Indochina, where the level of education, from the vantage point of local people, was never satisfactory. In later life, Mus saw his African sojourn as something flung up at him by chance, breaking a natural flow, as the war had done. In 1967, he told his audience at the Collège de France, “Isn’t it grotesque? An Indianist thrust into Dakar who had fought as a machine-gunner against the Germans alongside the Blacks. There’s the logic of life! I found myself; I was a good machine-gunner.”

On other occasions he was more judicious, and his neglected masterpiece *Le destin de l’Union française* [The Destiny of the French Union] contains many insights into African culture and French policies in the region. Although he enjoyed being with his family under peaceful conditions—his son, Emile, learned to sail in the ocean off Dakar—and although he admired the Africans he worked with, there always remained for Mus something slightly comical about the high positions that he came to fill—first as federal director of general education and sport, AOF-Togo, and after September 1942 as director general of public instruction and general education and sport, AOF-Togo. Repeating this sonorous title in 1967, Mus could not resist adding: “Imagine that on a calling card with a three-letter name!”³⁴

After Mus had been on the job for a year, the governor-general of AOF, commenting on his work, wrote a glowing but slightly enigmatic report on Mus, which needs to be quoted in full:

The thought of M. Mus is very rich, nourished by incidents and insights that bear witness to a very large and profound culture. The thread running through his thinking, however, isn’t always clear, but the overall effect remains seductive.

M. Mus is methodically building up the structure of a service, which is undergoing expansion on a daily basis.

This is undoubtedly why he has up until now postponed going to meet with the educational services of the colonies on the spot, and hasn’t yet made indispensable contacts [with this group].

By his generosity of spirit, his knowledge of university circles and his personality, M. Mus has known how to acquire the necessary influence over personnel. I greatly appreciate the collaboration he has provided me.³⁵

Mus must have been a bewildering addition to the bureaucratic world of Dakar, where the officials were largely loyal to Vichy—a regime that became, with time, increasingly faction-ridden and doctrinaire, and where Mus sometimes encountered political problems. He seems to have concealed his antifascist sentiments (and he was never a full-fledged convert to Gaullism), but he made no secret of his animosity toward defeatism or of his eagerness to get back into uniform and to fight the Germans—in his phrase “with, without, or against Pétain.” Paul Mus, as I have suggested, was a child of the Third Republic, and he shared its cosmopolitan ideals. Several of his professors and role models—Lévi, Karpelès, Lévy-Bruhl, and Mauss—were Jewish. His father was a Freemason, and Paul Mus may have been one as well. In spite or perhaps because of this ideological baggage, he took his work in AOF seriously and tried hard to raise the level of education then being offered to African youth. In late 1941 he forced the repatriation to France of a pro-Nazi named Boyau who was teaching at the lycée in Dakar. He later ruled that Pétainist propaganda could play no part in the AOF school curriculum, and he made sure that religious schools gained no advantages over those that were subsidized by the state. By 1942, however, Mus was becoming restless, even though the regime in AOF was less doctrinaire than the one in Indochina under Admiral Decoux, and Mus was able to write, in the same revealing letter, “I worked under an open sky.”³⁶

By the end of 1942 after the Allied landings in North Africa, Mus’ fortunes and loyalties began to change and coalesce. When General Charles de Gaulle’s delegate René Pleven (who was to be a prime minister of France in the 1950s) visited Dakar, Mus asked for the privilege of leading a section of infantry, as he had done in 1940. He was told to wait, probably because Pleven felt that Mus’ idiosyncratic talents might be mobilized in a less straightforward, strategically more helpful way. A few months later, AOF declared its allegiance to de Gaulle, and de Gaulle’s provisional government in Algiers mobilized Mus as a reserve lieutenant. He said good-bye to his family in September 1943 and traveled to Algiers, seeking a military assignment. He had extended conversations in Algiers with Pleven and Henri

Laurentie, a former colonial governor who had become responsible for de Gaulle's evolving (and by implication, postwar) colonial policies. Paul Mus, scholar, machine-gunner, and educational official, was becoming an advisor on colonial affairs.

Return to Indochina

For the remainder of 1943, Mus underwent commando training in Mostagan in Algeria. In December, he was posted to India for more commando training and to transmit Gaullist propaganda to the clandestine, poorly organized Resistance movement in Indochina, where many French people were opposed to the Vichy officials in charge of the colony and eager to take up arms one way or another against Japan. To conceal his identity in these broadcasts, Mus chose the pseudonym Louis Caille, using his mother's maiden surname, because he had "nineteen members of [his] family in Indochina, at the mercy of the Japanese" — a reference to his sister Lucie's family and probably also to several of his wife's relatives.³⁷

Suzanne Mus and the children remained in Dakar and were kept in the dark about the nature of Mus' assignment. They were led to believe that he was stuck behind a desk in Calcutta. Mus' letters to them, which his daughter recalls were filled with fanciful stories and sketches in the manner of Kipling's *Jungle Book*, have unfortunately not survived. Mme. Mus and her two children remained in AOF for the rest of the war, where they continued to receive Mus' salary as an AOF educational official.³⁸

Throughout 1944, Mus and a scattering of French commando volunteers were trained by the British in various parts of India. Mus, because of the political nature of some of his work, came under the orders of Commandant François Giron de Langlade, whom de Gaulle had appointed as his political delegate in the Far East. Mus and de Langlade worked closely together for the next year and a half but never became real friends.³⁹

In July 1944, de Langlade (code-named "Lutèce") parachuted into Tonkin under orders from de Gaulle to contact General Eugène Mordant (code-named "Narcisse"), the commander of the roughly sixty thousand French troops in Indochina. Mordant had gone over to de Gaulle at the end of 1942 and had been secretly designated in 1944 to lead French resistance in the region. He was patriotic, vain, inept, and on the brink of retirement.

Unsurprisingly, de Langlade was unable to make much headway with him, and the general's management of the Resistance over the next six months left much to be desired.⁴⁰

Mordant kept de Langlade from meeting Admiral Decoux, whom he described as France's "enemy number one" in Indochina (the second enemy was Japan). Decoux, for his part, believed that his mission was to hold onto Indochina for France at all costs. Mordant quarreled with his military successor, General Aymé, and refused to abandon his desk, claiming that his secret position as head of the Resistance, even in retirement, overrode Aymé's as the military commander in chief. To cap the farce, Aymé refused to play any part in the Resistance. Paul Isoart has aptly described the pair as "two generals of evident mediocrity and unjustified ambition."⁴¹

Having accomplished next to nothing, de Langlade walked out to China and flew to France to report to General de Gaulle. He reached Paris in late August 1944, a few days after its liberation. DeGaulle pre-emptorily ordered him back to Hà Nội and told him on this occasion to make contact with Decoux.⁴²

Charles de Gaulle was playing a complicated game in Indochina. On the one hand he wanted France to earn credit from the Allies for resisting Japan, and almost the only French troops available to do so were those in Indochina, living side by side with the Japanese occupying forces. On the other hand, he wanted to make sure that Indochina remained French. The notion of a French empire in Asia was repugnant to the American President, Franklin Roosevelt, who was eager to dismantle it. De Gaulle needed to gain Roosevelt's friendship and also to make peace with Decoux, whom he considered a traitor. No one in France or in Indochina had a clear idea about what form the Resistance there might take. Moreover, no one could foresee Roosevelt's early death, the Japanese *coup de force* in March 1945, or the speed with which the war with Japan would end after the explosions of two atomic bombs.

In the summer of 1944, Paul Mus, alias Captain Caille (he had been promoted in May), underwent parachute training at Chakrata near Simla and took command of a ten-man Vietnamese commando unit that was part of Force 136, the multinational Far Eastern section of British Special Operations Executive (SOE), encamped on the shores of Lake Khakvala, near

Poona, in the heart of Kipling's India.⁴³ These commandos were to be dropped into mainland Southeast Asia as the war progressed to provide information to the Allies and to harass the Japanese. Mus relished the activity and recalled: "My nicest memory is of passing a month in the jungle—the genuine jungle of Mowgli, in the same region where Kipling had put him—with a sack of rice and 'Shift for yourselves.' My group and I, therefore, shifted for ourselves."⁴⁴

For two weeks in August, a much younger French officer, Jean Deuve, shared a Quonset hut with Mus at "Camp F," the portion of the base reserved for the French. Deuve was preparing to be dropped into Laos. He had no idea what Mus' eventual mission might be, because it was forbidden for members of different elements of Force 136 to exchange this kind of information. He has recently recalled, however, that the training that he and Mus undertook in 1944 involved daunting sessions of calisthenics followed by a full day of lessons in such subjects as sabotage, imprisoning, "silent killing," using "fold-boats" in the lake, night exercises, topography.⁴⁵

Deuve found that Mus, at 42, was often tired at the end of the day. More generally, he found his companion "[n]ot much for conversation . . . a man who seemed to me methodical, ordered, above all . . . a courteous man, not imbued with any sense of superiority, treating us as equals." At night, before going to bed, Mus "kept himself busy by copying Chinese characters." This poignant snapshot catches Mus exhausted, alone, in excellent physical condition, and uncertain about what role, if any, he might be asked to play.

In late November 1944 de Langlade reached Hà Nội on his second mission. This time, he had meetings with Decoux, Mordant, Aymé, and also with General Georges Sabattier, the slightly more warlike commander of French troops in northern Indochina. Decoux agreed reluctantly to cooperate with de Gaulle's provisional government in Paris but insisted that he remain in command in Indochina and be kept fully informed about Resistance activities. De Langlade was unable to give the admiral cast-iron assurances, and his mission was a mixed success.⁴⁶

Soon after de Langlade's return to India, he and Mus flew to Paris for consultations. En route, Mus spent a night in London, in a family pension in the West End. In *Le destin de l'Union française*, he recalled watching a V-2 rocket explode across the street, demolishing a block of buildings while

“we were eating our toast for breakfast.” He treated the incident, characteristically, as a multifaceted exercise in perception:

For me, in these Dickensian surroundings, I must say that my reaction had nothing military about it; at the moment that we knew (with the time lag of a fraction of a second) that a V-2 had blown up a house—the entire block, as we saw later, only a few meters from us, I saw myself, in my mind, inserted, if I can put it that way, inside the solidity of what had once been a house an instant before, with the sight of the destroyed interiors, and it occurred to me that children had been taken just as they were getting ready to go to school!⁴⁷

In Paris, Mus and de Langlade met with Laurentie, Pleven, and Léon Pignon, a career colonial official concerned with Indochina. In one of the meetings Mus proposed that the embryonic Communauté française, an amorphous umbrella organization for the French colonies after the war, be renamed l’Union française, suggesting more local initiative and less French control. Mus also received orders at this time to parachute into Indochina as chief of psychological warfare in the Indochinese Resistance. As he returned to India, thrilled at last to be playing an active part in the war, he was about to begin the most eventful year of his life.⁴⁸

On January 31, 1945, he floated down into southern Laos toward the Mekong “via a lovely blue moonlit night.”⁴⁹ He was accompanied by a radio operator. The two men proceeded on foot to Vinh on the Vietnamese coast and then went on to Hà Nội.⁵⁰ Mus met Admiral Decoux and told him that he hoped to recruit members of the Vietnamese elite into the Resistance. In Decoux’ bitter, elegantly written memoirs, the admiral referred to Mus as “this *savant* who has suddenly turned his attention to politics” and defined the Resistance in terms of the “anarchy and the confusion of powers” that it was bound to produce. Mus made more headway with General Mordant and with Decoux’ secretary-general, Georges Gautier, who was more sure-footed and less fanatically pro-Pétain than the admiral.⁵¹

Mus hoped to travel to Sài Gòn in March to consult with French Resistance figures and the local Communist leader Trần Văn Giàu, but his plans were disrupted by the Japanese *coup de force* of March 9, when the Japanese, in a series of coordinated attacks, disarmed and arrested French troops and sequestered French civilians throughout the colony while presenting local

rulers in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam with the ambiguous gift of independence. The French were taken by surprise, although General Sabattier had taken the precaution of moving several thousand of his troops out of the city a few days beforehand. The forces that remained behind put up a stiff resistance before being forced to surrender. Several thousand more managed to escape the city and headed for a rendezvous at Sơn La, in the mountains four hundred kilometers northwest of Hà Nội.⁵²

On the evening of March 9, Mus was talking to “the mediocre” General Mordant when the general was informed by telephone of the Japanese attacks.⁵³ Taking Mordant’s car, Mus raced across the city under fire and managed to destroy most of his papers. At his headquarters, he ran into a colleague, Captain Bouvaret, and the two men made plans to escape from Hà Nội at daybreak on the 10th, when they headed on foot for Sơn La.⁵⁴

Over the next ten days Mus and Bouvaret (whom Mus later called “a solid companion”) trekked over four hundred kilometers by foot, sampan, and horseback between Hà Nội and Sơn La. They were without maps, provisions, or a compass. They also lacked legitimate authority. Power was slipping through their fingers and through those of the French colonial enterprise in Indochina as Mus and Bouvaret walked through Japanese lines. They were guided toward Sơn La by friendly, indifferent, and occasionally hostile Vietnamese. They survived in large part because of Mus’ knowledge of what he called “my slightly incoherent, nicely pronounced Annamese.”

Mus described the trek in February and March 1946 in long letter to his wife that was published after his death. A copy of Bouvaret’s account, written in Paris in June 1945, has survived in Mus’ papers and probably served as a factual source for Mus’ published recollections. The two accounts read like boys’ adventure stories, as the men scrambled through the Vietnamese backcountry to escape what would almost certainly have been interrogation, torture, and death at the hands of the Japanese.

The voyage and Paul Mus’ subsequent experiences in Indochina gave him a rich fund of anecdotes and insights to describe what he saw as the failure of French power in the region. The villagers and boat people who watched Mus and Bouvaret heading west (the direction traditionally associated in Vietnam with death), Mus wrote, were saying “*adieu*, not *au revoir*.”

Mus felt at the time that France was being “blown out of history” in a sudden and unexpected revolution of fortune’s wheel.⁵⁵

The two men each lost ten kilograms on the trek, and Bouvaret caught malaria. By March 14, Mus’ shoes had disintegrated and his “feet had been worn down to raw meat, almost to the bone.” Soon afterward the pair caught up with elements of the French army heading for Sơn La and were given horses to ride. When they arrived at Sơn La on March 21, they were flown to Điện Biên Phủ, where General Sabattier had assembled his forces. Soon afterward, Japanese troops made contact with Sabattier’s column and fought a series of bitter engagements as the French retreated into northern Laos.

With his feet heavily bandaged, Mus flew out with Bouvaret to Calcutta. Less than a month later, on April 16, 1945, he parachuted back into Laos to join Sabattier’s column and to urge the general, via orders from de Gaulle, to continue to fight inside Indochina. Mus now had the title of political counselor to General Sabattier, but as he wrote his wife, he was unable “despite all my eloquence” to persuade the “bon vivant” Sabattier to make a stand. On balance, the general’s decision to retreat into China made sense, given the condition of his troops, shortages of weapons and ammunition, and the refusal of Americans in China to provide his forces with any military aid. Mus marched into Yunnan with the general’s column, which sustained heavy casualties on the way. On this occasion, presumably, Mus was wearing serviceable boots.⁵⁶

In the meantime, de Gaulle named his most trusted general, Philippe de Hautlecoque (nom de guerre, “Leclerc”), to command a French Expeditionary Force in eastern Asia. Troops for the force had to be found on an urgent basis and transported to Indochina. Mus spent much of the summer of 1945 in Paris, serving on de Gaulle’s Indochina Committee. In August, he wrote a prescient thirty-point memorandum to the committee, noting that Indochina “has just escaped from us, from both the military and the administrative points of view,” and arguing that the Vietnamese had come of age and had developed their own political momentum. It would be impossible, he wrote, to re-establish the status quo ante. Ideas that first came to the surface in this memorandum became major themes in Mus’ writing later on.⁵⁷

At a conference in Potsdam in July 1945, to which de Gaulle had pointedly not been invited, Stalin, Churchill, and America’s new president, Harry

Truman, had decided, along with many other issues, that British/Indian forces would receive the Japanese surrender and free Allied prisoners of war in Vietnam south of the sixteenth parallel and in Cambodia, with Chinese troops performing these tasks in the remainder of Vietnam. The decisions were humiliating to de Gaulle, but there was nothing he could do, given his position of weakness vis-à-vis the other Allied powers.

The Japanese surrender came suddenly less than a month later, and French policy shifted into high gear with very limited resources. General Leclerc was ordered to Indochina, and de Gaulle named another of his close collaborators, Vice Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, as high commissioner there. Paul Mus became Leclerc's political advisor, with the temporary rank of commandant. On August 18, Leclerc, Mus, and Leclerc's staff flew to Ceylon, the headquarters of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, commander in chief of the Southeast Asia Command. Mountbatten dissuaded Leclerc from proceeding to Sài Gòn before the Japanese forces had formally surrendered.

Soon afterward, Leclerc invited Mus to join him and the two other members of France's three-man delegation to observe Japan's surrender on board the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. This was an enormous privilege, and Leclerc's invitation reflects the rapport that he and Mus had managed to establish. Mus later called the ceremony "an absolutely memorable souvenir; the most striking thing I've seen in my entire life." Informal photographs taken at the time show him mingling, somewhat bemusedly, with the crowd assembled for the ceremony. He had not regained the weight he had lost in March and April, and he appears to be sporting a moustache. He wrote movingly about the occasion in an essay in 1963 when he was on sabbatical in Japan.⁵⁸

For the remainder of September 1945 Leclerc waited impatiently in Ceylon for French troops to arrive. Meanwhile, a detachment of British Indian forces under General Douglas Gracey had landed in Sài Gòn. They were followed almost immediately by a five-man American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) detachment headed by Lieutenant Colonel A. Peter Dewey, a well-connected, fiercely anticolonial officer. On September 3 in Hà Nội, the Việt Minh leader Hồ Chí Minh had declared Vietnam's independence from France before a crowd of several thousand people, capping a quarter

century of work aimed at removing the French from Indochina and imposing a socialist regime.⁵⁹

The security situation in Sài Gòn deteriorated sharply. General Gracey had to call on Japanese troops as well as the Indian troops under his command to maintain order. Lt. Col. Dewey, after freeing American prisoners of war—the *raison d'être* for his mission—began conferring in secret with Vietnamese nationalist figures. His cables to the United States, which urged full-scale American support for Vietnamese independence, are still unavailable to scholars, but one of his colleagues, George Wickes, who accompanied Dewey to several of the secret meetings, has recalled that on September 25 Dewey wrote to his superiors that “Cochinchina is burning, the French and British are finished here, and we [the US] ought to clear out of Southeast Asia.” Dewey’s anticolonial views were shared by his subordinates. By this time, he had been chastised by General Gracey for “conniving” with the Việt Minh, and either under Gracey’s orders or on his own initiative he prepared to leave. The plane to fly him out on September 26 was delayed, and on his way back from the airport Dewey was killed in an ambush by the Việt Minh. His body was never recovered.⁶⁰

General Leclerc, Paul Mus, and a small detachment of French troops arrived in Sài Gòn nine days later. What was left of the OSS detachment looked on in a tropical downpour as Leclerc literally waded into the enthusiastic French crowds of civilians and military personnel, recently released from captivity by British troops. The next morning, getting down to business, Mus, Jean Cédile, de Gaulle’s personal delegate to southern Vietnam, and Colonel Repiton Preneuf, Leclerc’s chief of staff, met for discussions with representatives of the Việt Minh. For the remainder of October, the French consolidated their position in the south. On November 15, Leclerc flew to Phnom Penh to arrest Cambodia’s prime minister, Son Ngoc Thanh, a scholarly, muddled patriot who had been a protégé of Suzanne Karpelès in the 1930s. Two weeks later, Admiral d’Argenlieu arrived in Sài Gòn, bringing along a Manichean view of politics, no experience in the region, and an unwavering loyalty to de Gaulle.⁶¹

“Our return in the shadow of the English,” Paul Mus wrote in April 1946, “was never regarded locally as the return of France, but as [the arrival of] an athletic team, a handful of adventurers.”⁶² He was firmly convinced as early

as October 1945 that the French empire in Asia as it had been before March 9, 1945, was becoming a thing of the past, but he believed that France might still play a constructive role in the region.

At the end of 1945, the French role included re-establishing order, and Mus took part in several armed forays against Japanese remnants and Vietnamese insurgents. The most important of these, on November 8, earned him his second *Croix de guerre*.⁶³ On this occasion, Mus was attached to elements of the Second Armored Division under Lieutenant Colonel Jacques Massu (later an infamous commander in the Algerian war) in an excursion to the city of Tây Ninh on the Cochinchinese-Cambodian border. The town was the headquarters of the Cao Đài religious sect, and Mus wanted to make sure that the Cao Đài did not take up arms against the French. He told Captain (later General) Jean-Julien Fonde, who was riding with him, that the Cao Đài's anticommunism might make it an ally of the French. He offered to parlay with the sect leaders, who had taken refuge with over a thousand followers in their compound outside the city. Fonde told Mus that he could offer him no support, adding, "You'll be alone with your responsibilities." Mus entered the compound alone and unarmed. He won assurances from the Cao Đài leaders that they would not obstruct French efforts in Cochinchina. It was a courageous moment, which Mus treated amusingly when he wrote about it in a letter to his wife: "That's how I wasted the chance of my life—to assault the sacred places of a religious cult—as an historian of religions."⁶⁴

On an excursion toward Mỹ Tho in December, Mus parlayed with a local committee that had assembled to meet the French in the village of Ben Tran. The villagers seemed relatively friendly and welcomed the detachment of French troops that arrived with Mus. A hand-painted sign of welcome read:

Long Live France
 Long Live Peace
 Long Live the French Lieutenant

In a dramatic gesture, Paul Mus, on his own authority, had the second line erased and replaced by these words: "Long Live Vietnam." He later wrote that "to these patriots who were so profoundly open with us . . . we

owed them that. That's how in their village the name Vietnam, the name which their country had chosen to give itself, was accepted by us for the first time."⁶⁵ Mus' use of the word "Vietnam," the mention of which had been prohibited for most of the colonial era, marked a decisive, permanent reorientation of his thinking.

In the meantime, General de Gaulle had concocted a quixotic scheme for Indochina, whereby he would place Duy Tân, a boy emperor deposed by the French in 1917, on the imperial throne in Huế. Duy Tân, who lived on Réunion and had demonstrated loyalty to de Gaulle during the war, met the general in Paris on December 15. De Gaulle suggested that they visit Indochina together in March 1946 to test the water. Unfortunately, at the end of the month, on his return to Réunion from France, Duy Tân died in an airplane crash, and de Gaulle's off-the-cuff "solution" to the Indochinese "problem" vanished with him.⁶⁶

In late December, High Commissioner d'Argenlieu, bogged down in negotiations with Vietnamese factions in Sài Gòn, sent Mus to Paris to see de Gaulle and to deliver a confidential letter stating, "In a negotiation that promises to be difficult, I ask you for the authorization to pronounce the word 'independence'." Mus also hoped to encourage de Gaulle to accelerate the Duy Tân "solution," which, unknown to him, had been overtaken by events.⁶⁷

Mus left Sài Gòn on January 2, 1946, and arrived in Paris five days later. He was unable to see the general, who was in southern France attending his daughter's wedding and deciding whether to remain in office as head of the provisional government. According to his biographer Jean Lacouture, de Gaulle planned to resign dramatically soon after he returned to Paris, which he did, but he expected to be called back into power by popular demand, which he was not. He remained out of office for the next twelve years.⁶⁸

After consulting with Minister for the Colonies Jacques Soustelle, Laurentie, and others, Mus met the general on January 18, only two days before de Gaulle's "surprise" resignation. He delivered d'Argenlieu's letters, and General de Gaulle, without reading them, Mus recalled, "[r]ose up like a great seal in the Jardin des Plantes to see me off, and said, 'M. Mus, we will return to Indochina because we are the strongest'."⁶⁹

The Scholar-Official

Mus stayed in Paris until early March, when he accepted an appointment to direct the prestigious *Ecole nationale de la France d'outre-mer* (formerly the *Ecole coloniale*, and later the *Ecole administrative de la France d'outre-mer*) on a three-year contract, which was renewed in 1947. The *Ecole* served as a training school for people headed for administrative positions in the French Empire. Exactly how this position came to Mus is unclear, but his Resistance credentials, his work in Africa, and his good standing with officials like Laurentie and Pleven must have all been helpful.

When he returned to Indochina briefly in March, Mus found that his opportunities to influence policy had diminished sharply, for General Leclerc, a far better listener than d'Argenlieu, had left the region for good after parading with French units through Hà Nội. In April, Thierry d'Argenlieu sent Mus to Hà Nội to sound out Hồ Chí Minh, whom the admiral hoped to meet soon afterward. When Mus met Hồ Chí Minh, the Việt Minh leader asked him: "What will the French Union be—circular or square?" Mus later explained this elliptical comment: "This was to translate an old expression: the sky is round, the earth is square; so where would this unknown object find its inspiration—in the sky or on earth? I replied that I was happy not to give him an answer just yet; the Union was not prefabricated, and those who were assembling it might be able to work together." This deft reply may have been pleasing to Hồ Chí Minh, but the Việt Minh leader went on to give Mus a stern warning for transmittal to d'Argenlieu: "If France, in Sài Gòn, wants to get something out of a game that's becoming hard to win, I understand that policy; but if you're trying to extend your influence on the sly, you'll have war to the death."⁷⁰

French options and those available to the Việt Minh were narrowing fast, as both sides hardened their positions, gathered their forces, and edged toward the full-scale conflict that Mus and others were working hard to avoid. Mus returned to France soon after his meeting with Hồ Chí Minh, and the more doctrinaire career colonial official Léon Pignon replaced him as d'Argenlieu's political advisor.

Freed at last from responsibilities in Indochina, Mus began to speak out about the war. For the rest of his life he was both a scholar and a public intellectual. His first major publication since 1939 was a powerful pamphlet entitled

Le Vietnam chez lui [Vietnam at Home], derived from a talk that he delivered at the Sorbonne in June 1946. In the meantime, his name had been put before the Collège de France by his former teacher Jules Bloch, with a view to his being named professor of Far Eastern Civilizations. Here again, Mus' war record probably played a role in his appointment to a position at the pinnacle of French academic life when he was only 43. Bloch closed his generous presentation by quoting the late Louis de la Vallée Poussin, a scholar of Buddhism whose work Mus had occasionally called into question in *Barabudur*. Referring graciously to Mus, the older scholar had written: "I allow myself to be led along by this amiable guide, sometimes showing genius, always erudite. . . . What power of imagination! What skill at taking advantage of the tiniest details!" Mus' appointment to the Collège came through officially in December, and he held the professorship until his death.⁷¹

Mus was reunited with his wife and children that summer, and spent much of the next two months in Murs. In the meantime, the situation in Indochina had deteriorated further. In November and December 1946, full-scale fighting erupted between French and Việt Minh forces in Hà Nội and Hải Phòng. As the French returned to power, the Việt Minh government dispersed from Hà Nội to the countryside. The brief tenure of Leon Blum as head of the French provisional government (December 1946–January 1947) offered grounds for hope. Blum dispatched Leclerc to Indochina on Christmas Eve. When the general returned early in 1947, Blum asked him to be high commissioner, replacing d'Argenlieu. Leclerc consulted de Gaulle, who advised him to refuse the position, loftily blaming "the system and the politicians" for the crisis that had developed.⁷²

On January 15, the day before the Fourth Republic came into being, d'Argenlieu prohibited the use of the word "Vietnam" throughout Indochina.⁷³ Mus gave his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France two weeks later, and at the end of March he flew to Sài Gòn to be political advisor to the new high commissioner, Emile Bollaert, replacing Pignon.⁷⁴ Mus stayed in Sài Gòn and Hà Nội for about two months. On May 1, he met in Hà Nội with Đặng Phúc Thông, a technician who had had attended the Lycée Albert Sarraut shortly after Mus and had administered the railroads for the Việt Minh regime. In a free-ranging, somewhat incautious conversation, Mus

compared the French occupation of Indochina with the German occupation of France and compared Hồ Chí Minh favorably with Gandhi. Đặng Phúc Thông's summary of the conversation fell into French hands.⁷⁵

A week later, Mus met outside Hà Nội with Hoàng Minh Giám, the Việt Minh foreign minister, to arrange an urgent interview with Hồ Chí Minh. In late April 1947, the Việt Minh had formally proposed peace talks with a view to a cease-fire. The French perhaps justifiably suspected that the offer was insincere. In any case, on May 12, Mus traveled on foot to Hồ Chí Minh's headquarters in Thái Nguyên, seventy-five kilometers north of Hà Nội. He carried an ultimatum that demanded that the Việt Minh lay down their arms, allow the French to circulate freely in Việt Minh areas, and turn over their armed non-Vietnamese supporters to the French. It took Mus two nights of walking to get to Thái Nguyên. Arriving at midnight, he was summoned into Hồ Chí Minh's presence three hours later.

Mus told us at Yale that as he was walking from Hà Nội he had thought carefully about how to begin the meeting. He decided to greet Hồ Chí Minh by saying, "How are you?" [*Comment allez-vous?*] and to see how Hồ Chí Minh replied. When he essayed his greeting, Hồ Chí Minh's reply, "*Suffisament*," best translated as "Well enough," convinced Mus that a favorable response to the French ultimatum would be impossible to achieve. Less obliquely, Hồ Chí Minh then told him, "In the French Union there is no place for cowards. If I accepted these conditions I would be one." Regarding the foreigners who had joined the Việt Minh—who included hundreds of Japanese and some French deserters, Hồ Chí Minh added, "You can't ask us to surrender our companions to you." It was to be the last time these two men saw each other, and their parting was marked by mutual respect. The bottle of champagne that Hồ Chí Minh had set aside in the event of a successful conversation was never opened, and Mus walked back to Hà Nội disconsolate, but deeply impressed by Hồ Chí Minh's determination. He later recalled the mission as "two days and three nights during the course of which I learned more than in thirty years elsewhere about what a people could wish for and accomplish."⁷⁶

Toward the end of the year, after Mus had returned to France, a French military raid on Hồ Chí Minh's headquarters at Bắc Cạn almost succeeded in capturing the Việt Minh leader. Several of his associates were taken prisoner,

and one of them, Nguyễn Văn Tó, was killed “attempting to escape.” The aloof, aristocratic scholar had worked with Paul Mus at EFEO in the 1930s. Mus admired him and was angered by his death. He wrote to the cabinet minister Paul Coste Floret, expressing his distress, and later commented, “*This* letter, had it been received by other people, would have advanced by a year my return to my ‘beloved studies’ (that was the phrase they used).”⁷⁷

For the next two years, Mus busied himself with his duties at the Ecole administrative de la France d’outre-mer and at the Collège de France and gradually stepped up his antiwar activities. He also lectured on Vietnamese politics at the Collège libre des sciences sociales et économiques. His approach to Indochina at the Ecole administrative drew fire from the colonial lobby and the right-wing press. In April 1948, writing René Pleven, Mus admitted that “some newspapers turn against me today.” Although he was not too concerned about this development, he may have begun to realize that he was unsuited for his position at the Ecole, where, among other things, he had to be an apologist for French imperial behavior. In 1949, he traveled to the United States to visit several universities, seeking openings for students who might benefit from advanced training. During this trip he made contact with Yale University and may have conceived the idea of teaching there. His daughter has recalled that he was attracted to the United States “because he had the greatest admiration for American freedom of the press and for the remarkable holdings and accessibility possible with American research libraries.”⁷⁸

In any case, Mus’ life changed course more abruptly than he may have expected in early 1950, when his contract with the Ecole administrative was not renewed. Nothing in his dossier explains the action, which suggests that the initiative for breaking the contract came from higher authorities. The decision had almost certainly been brought on by a series of antiwar articles that Mus wrote for the Jesuit weekly *Témoignage chrétien* [Christian Witness] in late 1949 and early 1950. In these articles, which drew on interview material, Mus discredited reports of Vietnamese massacres of French civilians in Hải Phòng in December 1946 and suggested forcefully that the Vietnamese should not be considered as monsters or children but as responsible human beings—a recurrent theme in all of his writing, as Christopher Goscha has suggested elsewhere.⁷⁹

The articles were attacked in conservative circles. François Mauriac condemned them in *Le Figaro* in January 1950, for example, and others felt that by stressing French misconduct Mus had fallen for the Communist Party line. In fact, however, Mus was an anticommunist all his life, and although he was not a church-goer, much of his support from the 1950s onward came from enlightened Christian circles. In the 1950s and 1960s, he was closely associated with the liberal Catholic monthly *Esprit*, whose editor, Jean-Marie Domenach, became a close friend and wrote a perceptive eulogy for him in 1969.⁸⁰

On February 19, 1950, aware of what was happening to his career, Mus presented a sixty-nine-page paper (never published) to an antiwar meeting sponsored by Christian activists at Issy-les-Moulineaux. In April, when his contract at the Ecole administrative expired, he requested and received a year-long leave of absence from the Collège de France. He had been invited to teach at Yale, starting in September. Mme. Mus and Laurence planned to accompany him, and Laurence would attend school in New Haven. It must have been a relief for them to escape from the rancor, polemics, and hypocrisy that had greeted Mus' contributions to the debate on Indochina,

His impending departure drew this comment from the editors of *Le Monde*: "The activities of P. Mus on the margins of his functions as director of the National School of France Overseas had led us to deplore the fact that he was specifically responsible for training young administrators for the colonies. His attitude was an insult to the soldiers fighting in Indochina. The government has understood this incompatibility."⁸¹ The editorial went on to suggest that Mus was more acceptable as an Indianist and a teacher than as someone involved in politics. The idea that a genuine patriot could oppose government policy was as hard for the French establishment to accept in 1950 as it has always been for regimes in France and elsewhere.

Two years later General Sabattier, in his memoirs, had this to say: "M. Mus (alias Captain Cailles [*sic*], the director of the School of France Overseas, has particularly distinguished himself by lending his authority in support of the Communist thesis. Having had to leave his post in Paris to go and teach Asiatic archaeology in an American university—and this is his specialty—one can only hope that he will have rediscovered, in his beloved studies, something to calm his tumultuous scruples."⁸² The general's suggestion

that Mus' lifelong commitment to Vietnam was a curable disease must have made Mus, a very tolerant man, shake his head in wonder.

The Wise Professor

Mus plunged happily into American academic life. He and his wife made friends among the faculty at Yale, and he enjoyed the face-to-face conduct with students that was impossible at the Collège de France.⁸³ In 1951, Yale named him Professor of Southeast Asian Civilizations. In the same year, in New Haven and Murs, he composed *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre* [Vietnam: Sociology of a War], certainly his most influential book. It was published in the spring of 1952, two years before the end of the war.⁸⁴

Writing a sustained essay on a contemporary theme was a new departure for Mus. *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre* drew on his skills as a political analyst, on his time as a political actor in 1945–1947, on his earlier years of in Vietnam, and on a lifetime of thinking about the country. Characteristically, Mus thought deeply rather than read widely as he composed the book. It earned respectful reviews, especially in the Christian press, but made little impact in France. In the 1960s, however, as the situation in Vietnam deteriorated, it made a deep, positive impression on several authors including Pierre Brocheux, Bernard Fall, Frances FitzGerald, John McAlister, and Serge Thion.

In 1953, Mus' long encounter with French colonialism led him to write another book-length essay, *Le destin de l'Union française*, which was published at the end of 1954 after the fall of Điện Biên Phủ. This neglected masterpiece contains a searing assault on the violence and dehumanization that adhere to imperialism, "Le Cas Loti" [Loti's Case],⁸⁵ which has been discussed by Christopher Goscha.⁸⁶ The book also displays Mus as a participant-observer and as a proponent of policies that were too far-sighted and humane for the French government of the day to absorb.

In 1955, the war in Algeria had broken out. Unlike the First Indochina War, the French fought it with a conscript army. Because they considered Algeria to be part of France, they were for many years immune to compromise and negotiation. The insurgents, in turn, were inspired to an extent by Vietnam's victory over France, and the French were determined not to allow such a victory to recur. The fervor and legitimacy of Algerian nationalism

went unnoticed, as hundreds of thousands of young Frenchmen were funneled into the conflict. Mus' son, Emile, 25 years old in 1957, was one of them.

While he was writing *Le destin de l'Union française*, Mus discovered the work of the French psychoanalyst O. Mannoni, whose book about Franco-Malagache relations, *La psychologie de la colonisation* (translated into English as *Prospero and Caliban*), became a favorite of his. His lectures at the Collège de France in 1954–1955 dealt with Mannoni's work—the first of several departures from such perennial topics as the meaning of the Buddhist stupa, transmigration, and or the resonances of certain Vedic texts.⁸⁷

In the summer of 1957 Paul Mus traveled to several Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, to discuss a program sponsored by Yale and the Asia Foundation to train local scholars in the United States and elsewhere in the field of Buddhist studies. He traveled with the knowledge and approval of the French foreign ministry and was in Asia for about a month, but the project never came to fruition, it seems, and Mus did not mention the trip or the project in any of his writings.⁸⁸

In the same year, Emile Mus embarked on parachute training as part of his military service. The Algerian War was intensifying, and he expected to be sent into combat as a paratrooper *sous lieutenant*. Mus' heartbreaking book *Guerre sans visage* [The Faceless War] was inspired by his son's death in Algeria in 1960, as the war was winding down. It contains many of Emile's letters to his parents and provides a few biographical details about his son. Emile was nearsighted, like his father, and rather slightly built. He was also a speleologist, a flautist, a keen rifle shot, and a practitioner of judo. He had already learned to parachute as a civilian. He loved the Vaucluse and spent as much time as he could in Murs. He had hoped to become a dentist when he got out of the army. His rationale for choosing to be a paratroop officer in Algeria is unclear, but he may have seen it largely as another skill to master, another challenge to accept.⁸⁹

For the heading of the book, Mus chose a sentence composed for a British war memorial by Rudyard Kipling, who had lost his only son in World War I: "We are dead because our fathers lied." After reading his constrained, heartbroken book, one cannot avoid the veiled implication that Mus himself, a pacifist combatant and a child (and sometime servant) of the

empire, was one of the fathers who had lied—but about what? French colonial wars in the past, he wrote, had been built on lies. In the closing pages of *Guerre sans visage*, he argued that the lying continued, and the failures of communication that went with them were widespread.⁹⁰

Guerre sans visage draws on almost superhuman reserves of suffering, agape, and lucidity. Facing the dehumanizing hurricane of a war literally *sans visage* (and Emile's offhanded, sometimes almost playful descriptions of combat), Mus took a step backward and suggested that if people learned to communicate and to know one another, wars like this one might not happen, and Emile might have been alive.

Mus wrote the book in Murs and New Haven after he had traveled to Algeria to collect Emile's effects (including his beret, his citations for bravery, and his glasses) and to interview his military colleagues. Mus took notes on these interviews in tiny calligraphy in a small notebook that he had first used, perhaps forty years before, to transcribe Tibetan script. He delivered the manuscript to his publishers in January 1961 and resumed his teaching schedule in France. That autumn, while he was teaching at Yale, he suffered the first of what were to be several heart attacks. "The attack came," his daughter has written, "a year after my brother's death, caused by that and by the effort of writing *Guerre sans visage*." In the spring of 1962, he cancelled one of the two sets of lectures he offered at the Collège de France. He didn't teach at Yale in the fall, embarking instead, accompanied by his wife and daughter, on a ten-month sabbatical in Japan, financed jointly by *Yomui* newspaper and the French government.⁹¹

It was only Paul Mus' second visit to Asia since 1947. En route to Japan, he stopped off briefly in Cambodia and revisited Angkor, which he had not seen since the 1930s. He was thrilled to be back, and the experience inspired him to deliver what must have been a mesmerizing speech. A young scholar attached to EFEO at the time, Claude Jacques, has recalled: "In Cambodia, or more precisely in Siem Reap, Jean Filliozat (the director of EFEO) had wanted to profit from Mus' presence in October or November 1962 . . . to arrange a scholarly meeting. We had lunched at Bernard Groslier's house and had gone into the living room (there were seven or eight of us). Paul Mus began to speak and didn't pause or stop until almost seven in the evening. I was fascinated, and I believe everyone was, for nobody tried to interrupt him."⁹²

Mus and his wife and daughter proceeded to Japan, where they enjoyed a pleasant and for Mus an academically fruitful year, studying Japanese Buddhism at close range and absorbing some of the nuances of Japanese life. Claude Jacques visited the Muses in Kyoto in the spring of 1963: “Paul Mus agreed to take us to several temples and later invited us to a performance of old folkloric dances, which were marvelous. At the entrance to one of the temples there was a disabled Japanese veteran. [Mus] gave him some alms, but he forbade us to do so, saying, ‘This man was my enemy, and therefore he is close to me. You and he have no relationship.’”⁹³

Mus seems to have regained some of his spiritual and emotional balance in Japan. He also rekindled an interest in twentieth-century Buddhism. Although he suffered a minor heart attack soon after he returned to France, he was immensely productive and intellectually confident for the remainder of his life. He wrote at least three book-length manuscripts, only one of which has yet been published, immersed himself in his teaching, and published widely on a range of subjects. He wrote admiringly about Georges Gurevitch, the sociologist, and Jacob Moreno, the sociometrician, for example, using their work to illuminate his perennial concern with the importance of sociability in Asian societies.

He was nearly always hard at work. Laurence Rimer has recalled: “He was completely devoted to his work, and quite passionate about it. I remember an occasion when he was working hard writing an article; he worked all night until five in the morning. He then went off to teach at the Collège de France in the morning. When he returned home he asked, ‘How long before lunch?’ and when he was told “fifteen minutes,” he opened a book and started to study. He never took time off from his work, even on vacations.”⁹⁴

During these years, Mus watched from Paris and New Haven as the United States slid into the Second Indochina War. He was hesitant to speak out against the war, feeling he had no right to do so as a guest of the United States, but he inserted a good deal of Vietnamese politics and sociology into his lectures at Yale and made friends with the Yale graduate student John McAlister and the journalist Frances FitzGerald, who were both writing about the war.⁹⁵ Mus also contributed to a television documentary about the war, *In the Year of the Pig*, fondly recalling his meetings with Hồ Chí Minh,

and in 1968 what began as a book review of Lacouture's biography of Hồ Chí Minh billowed out into a book-length manuscript, published after Mus' death, entitled *Hồ Chí Minh, le Vietnam, l'Asie*.

One of Paul Mus' most moving and least known pieces of writing was published in *Esprit* in 1966. It was the elegy that he delivered that summer in Gordes, a village near Murs at the funeral of Hilarion Icard, a 76-year-old peasant who had had been badly wounded in World War I. Icard had been a close friend of Mus' son, Emile, who was also buried in Murs, "on the other side of the hill." In his eulogy, Mus honored Icard's heroism, his intimate relationship to France and to the land and people of the Vaucluse. Speaking about the courageous old man, but perhaps obliquely about himself in the aftermath of Emile's death, Mus remarked that Icard had said "no to mutilation, no to discouragement, no to the bitterness that sprang from the irredeemably handicapped existence that separated him, at 26, from other people."⁹⁶

The last three years of Mus' life were happy and productive. In 1969 at the Collège de France, he lectured on the war in Vietnam, seeing it, as he had seen the Algerian War, in part as a problem of communication. He enjoyed getting to know his first grandchild, John Rimer, who was born in 1965, and in 1967–1969 he was busy finishing a large manuscript, *Les masques d'Angkor* [The Masks of Angkor], which, as he told J-M Domenach, he hoped might unlock "the enigma of Angkor." He also wrote at some length about Vietnamese Buddhism and composed admiring reviews of books written by his friend Bernard Fall, who was killed in Vietnam in 1967.⁹⁷

There were, sadly, several more medical episodes in these years. Mus continued to exercise vigorously, perhaps in excess of what his doctors might have suggested, lifting weights on a daily basis and in summer walking long distances in the hilly terrain around Murs. By 1969, the episodes caught up with him. That spring, Mus' son-in-law has written, "He suffered a stroke while visiting us in New York, when I was finishing my graduate work at Columbia University. He was treated in Presbyterian Hospital and then went back to France for the summer. The family, including both of us, was staying in Murs. [After his final heart attack in Murs] he was taken to the hospital in Avignon, and then was sent back to die in Murs, where he wanted to be."⁹⁸

Mus died at home on August 9, 1969, and was buried on the following day in Murs. Seven years before, soon after his first heart attack, he had privately asked the Collège de France to see that his funeral be celebrated in complete intimacy, “without any speeches.” When the time came, a neighbor in Murs, André Piatier, delivered a beautiful speech as Paul Mus was laid to rest close to Emile, Halation Icard, and his old friend from Henri IV, Laurence Mus’ godfather, René Cailloux.

Piatier’s speech was followed by several elegant eulogies—at the Collège de France, in *Esprit*, and in the *Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’extrême orient*, but his unpublished remarks were anchored in time and place in a way that would probably have pleased Paul Mus. One can easily imagine the sun-drenched scene. After noting Mus’ devotion to the Vaucluse and to his family, Piatier, a distinguished professor himself, went on to say, “We only need to retrace the stages of his life to see how he managed to combine in himself great physical courage, organizational gifts, and political action with the activities of research and the in-depth labor of educating people, the success of which constitutes the high standing of this great professor.”⁹⁹

Piatier hinted at the humanity, the graciousness, and the lightly worn grandeur that characterized Paul Mus for many who knew him even slightly, like myself, and that seem to have marked his entire life. His daughter cannot recall Paul Mus ever saying a cruel word about another person. In Piatier’s closing phrases, “It’s to a man who has honored our time, to a great university master, to a sage, a great citizen of the world, that we have just addressed a last goodbye.” ■

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ABSTRACT

Using recently available archival materials, this essay presents a new, detailed biography of Paul Mus (1902–1969), a brilliant scholar of Buddhism, a brave soldier, and a public intellectual who was out of step with

the French establishment in the 1940s and 1950s as an early opponent of the First Indochina War and the French war in Algeria. His profound and timely insights into Vietnamese nationalism, largely ignored at the time, have had a delayed and positive impact on Vietnamese studies in France and the United States.

KEYWORDS: *First Indochina War, Ecole française d'extrême orient, Paul Mus, Hồ Chí Minh*

Notes

1. This article is a revised version of an essay originally published as “Paul Mus, 1902–1969: esquisse d’une biographie,” in *Paul Mus (1902–1969): l’espace d’un regard* [Paul Mus (1902–1969): In a Flash of a Look], eds. David Chandler and Christopher E. Goscha (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2006).
2. Laurence Rimer (hereafter LR), personal communication.
3. Undated typescript in an unnumbered dossier, carton “Bibliographies de Paul Mus” [Bibliography of Paul Mus] (c. P94, Paul Mus), in the archives of Ecole française d’extrême orient (hereafter AEFEO). On Cyprien Mus’ career: LR, personal communication. Desirée Mus hid Resistance figures in her house, which was a rendezvous for Resistance fighters. She was awarded the Legion of Honor for her work—a decoration earned by Paul Mus in 1945 and by his son, Emile, posthumously, in 1960.
4. Laurent Dartigues, “Le Vietnam de Paul Mus: grandeurs et malentendus d’un dialogue interculturel” [Paul Mus’ Vietnam: Grandeurs and Misunderstandings in an Intercultural Dialogue], *Moussons* 5 (July 2002): 49–71. Here and elsewhere, translations from French are my own. For Mus’ own description of his childhood, see Paul Mus, *L’angle de l’Asie* [The Asian Angle], ed. Serge Thion (Paris: Hermann, 1977), 214–215.
5. LR, personal communication.
6. Paul Mus, *Le destin de l’Union française* [The Destiny of the French Union] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1954), 106, 128–129. At Lycée Henri IV, Mus formed a lifelong friendship with René Cailloux, who became godfather to Mus’ daughter, Laurence, when she was born in 1937 (LR, personal communication).
7. Alain, “Mars ou la guerre jugée” [Mars or the Judgment on War], in Alain, *Les passions et la sagesse* [Passions and Wisdom], ed. G. Benaze (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 549–705.
8. On Sartre, see Paul Mus, *Hồ Chí Minh, le Vietnam, l’Asie* [Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, Asia] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), 107; Paul Mus, lecture at

- Collège de France, personal papers of Paul Mus, Institut d'Asie Orientale, Lyon (hereafter LCF), March 15, 1967.
9. Maurice Toesca, "La classe d'Alain" [Alain's Classroom], *Nouvelle Revue Française* (October 1952): 28–34. See also André Sermin, *Alain un sage dans la cité* [Alain: A Sage in the City] (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1985), 206ff.
 10. On Mus' academic credentials, see Paul Mus, *Carnet de fonctionnaire* [Functionary's Notebook], c. P94, Paul Mus, AEFEO; and Paul Mus, Ecole coloniale dossier (hereafter EC). On Suzanne Karpelès, see Karpelès dossier, Mus papers, Institut d'Asie Orientale, Lyon; and LR, personal communication. See also Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860–1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 182–209, 227–244. Karpelès arrived in Cambodia in 1923 and left under a cloud in 1941, the victim of Vichy France's anti-Jewish legislation. Mus was examined for fluency in Siamese by George Coedès, who was later the director of EFEO.
 11. On Mus' marriage and military service, see "Extrait du rapport du 1er batallion du 24eme regiment (Caserne de Latour Maubourg) mai 1927," c. P94, Paul Mus, AEFEO; and LR, personal communication.
 12. Télégramme officiel Colonies à Gougal, Hà Nôi, No. 619, July 25, 1927, c. P94, Paul Mus, AEFEO.
 13. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extreme Orient* [Bulletin of the French School of the Far East] (*BEFEO*) 28 (1928): 515–528.
 14. *BEFEO* 29 (1929): 512ff.
 15. *Annuaire du Collège de France (ACF)*, (1965–1966): 384.
 16. *Barabudur* was published serially in *BEFEO* 32 and 34 (1932–1934) and appeared as a book in 1935. The only editorial change between the periodical appearances and the bound version was that the latter omitted the phrase *à suivre* [to be continued] from the last page of the earlier version. Where the book would have ended otherwise is impossible to say.
 17. Paul Mus, "L'Inde vu de l'est: cultes indiennes et indigènes a Champa" [India Seen from the East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa], *BEFEO* 33 (1933): 367–410. For an English translation, see I.W. Mabbett and D.P. Chandler, eds. and trans., *India Seen from the East* (Clayton, Australia: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1975). For two interesting analyses of the essay, see Ashley Thompson, "Paul Mus vu de l'Ouest: à propos des cultes indiens et indigènes en Asie du Sud-Est" [Paul Mus Seen from the West: Regarding Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 93–108; and A. Thompson, "Performative Realities: Nobody's Possession," in *At the Edge of the Forest: Essays on Cambodia, History and Narrative in Honor of David Chandler*, eds. Anne Hansen and

- Judy Ledgerwood (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2008), 93–120.
18. Mus, *L'angle de l'Asie*, 21: “The complete correction gave me the joy of sight and let me discover, for example, the shape of leaves against the sky.”
 19. G. Coedès, preface to Paul Mus, *Barabudur* (Hà Nội: EFEO 1935), 4–5.
 20. Paul Mus, *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre* [Vietnam: Sociology of a War] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), 129.
 21. *BEFEO* 34 (1934): 759. See also Mus, *L'angle de l'Asie*, 222, which cites some of the oral memories of Angkor that Mus collected at this time from tribal people in central Vietnam.
 22. “Certificat de visite No. 2 de Fabry et Durolle, Dossier Congés et mouvements, 1935–1939,” c. P94, Paul Mus, AEFEO. This document shows that Mus was diagnosed with endemic malaria in May 1935, soon after his arrival in France. The illness is never mentioned in later materials.
 23. Paul Lévy, “Ce que je sais de Paul Mus et de son oeuvre” [What I Know about Paul Mus and His Work], *Monde non chrétien* (October–December 1969): 30. Lévy and Mus worked together in Hà Nội in 1939–1940. After World War II, Lévy served for several years as director of EFEO.
 24. See Mus, *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre*, 184–202; and Paul Mus, “Toward a Chinese View of Descartes,” in preface to François Geoffrey-Dechaume, *China Looks at the World: Reflections for a Dialogue: Eight Letters to T'ang Lin* (London: Faber, 1967), 15–31. On “national characteristics” as a branch of sociology, see Thomas Blass, *The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 14–47.
 25. On the nomination, see *BEFEO* 37 (1937): 682.
 26. On Mus’ brief military service in 1938, see Paul Mus, *Memento politique*, an unpublished and incomplete manuscript dating from 1965, which is among his papers in the Institut d’Asie Orientale, Lyon.
 27. But see Sernin, *Alain*, 397, where Alain writes Paul Mus on January 16, 1939: “I’m persuaded that the largest worries are over.” Mus may have known Leon Blum through Alain, who had been Blum’s fellow student at the Ecole normale in the 1890s.
 28. Paul Mus, “Un eau dormait” [A Body of Water Was Asleep], in Mus, *L'angle de l'Asie*, 17. On Nguyễn Văn Tố, see *BEFEO* 33 (1933): 1049; Mus, *Le destin de l'Union française*, 226; and Nguyen Phuong Ngoc, “Paul Mus et les ‘annamitissants’ vietnamiens de l’EFEO” [Paul Mus and the Vietnamese *Annamitissants* of EFEO], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 151–173.
 29. Mus lectured on Lévy-Bruhl in January 1940 and spent a few days in Phnom Penh preparing a report on Khmer Buddhism before proceeding to

- France. See “Ordre de mission 25 janvier 1940,” in c. P94, Paul Mus, AEFEO.
30. Information on Mus’ war service in 1940 comes from Mus, *Le destin de l’Union française*, 163–165, 258, and 348; and from “Lettre manuscrite de Paul Mus, concernant ses activités pendant la Seconde guerre mondiale” private papers of Paul Mus, Institut d’Asie Orientale, Lyon (hereafter AOF letter). See also Paul Mus, “Mémento politique,” chapter 3, “Juin 1940.” The machine-gun section that Mus commanded contained more metropolitan than Senegalese soldiers.
 31. Télégramme d’état December 18, 1940, c. P94, Paul Mus, AEFEO.
 32. Material drawn from Karpelès dossier, Mus papers, Institut d’Asie Orientale, Lyon, and BEFEO 41 (1941): 238.
 33. Paul Mus, *Planète vietnam: petit sociologie visual* [Planet Vietnam: A Small, Visual Sociology] (Paris: Arma Arta, 1988), 102; and Paul Mus, “L’expérience coloniale en milieu rurale” [The Colonial Experience in a Rural Setting], in *L’angle de l’Asie*, 76.
 34. Both quotations are from LCF, February 28, 1967.
 35. Centre des archives d’outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence (CAOM), EE2 5513 “Paul Mus.”
 36. This paragraph is based on information in the AOF letter (see note 30).
 37. On the Resistance in Indochina, see J. Legrand, *l’Indochine à l’heure japonaise* [Indochina in the Japanese Hour] (Cannes: n.p., 1963); and Paul Mus, *Le Vietnam chez lui* [Vietnam at Home] (Paris: Hartmann, 1946), 4–6.
 38. LR, personal communication.
 39. de Langlade had been a rubber planter in Malaya since 1927. He had gone over to de Gaulle in June 1940, and he escaped from Malaya before the Japanese invasion. He had been in India as de Gaulle’s delegate since early 1943.
 40. On the first de Langlade mission, see Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *Général de Gaulle et Indochine 1940–1947* (Paris: Plon, 1987), 94–97.
 41. See Paul Isoart, ed., *Indochine 1940–1945* (Paris: PUF, 1982), 321n12. See also Gabriel Sabattier, *Le destin de l’Indochine: souvenirs et documents, 1941–1951* [The Destiny of Indochina: Memories and Documents, 1941–1951] (Paris: Plon, 1952), 114–117.
 42. Institut Charles de Gaulle, *de Gaulle et Indochine*, 97. De Gaulle and Decoux saw each other as traitors, but after the establishment of de Gaulle’s provisional government in Paris they were forced to work together. See Frédéric Turpin, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et l’Indochine 1940–1956* [De Gaulle, the Gaullists and Indochina] (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2005), 177.

43. On Force 136 in India at this time, see Terence O'Reilly, *The Moonlight War* (London: Collins, 1987); and Leon Comber, personal communication. Comber trained people in Force 136 for parachuting at this time, and although he doesn't remember doing so, he may well have trained Paul Mus.
44. Paul Mus, "Lettre à sa femme, 14-2-46" [Letter to His Wife], in *Monde non chrétien* (October–December 1969): 8–28 (hereafter *Lettre*), 9. In *Le destin de l'Union française*, Mus wrote, "I was a student and later an instructor in a school of jungle warfare, in India" (258).
45. Jean Deuve, letter to Christopher Goscha, July 14, 2004; and Jean Deuve, *Guerrilla au Laos* (Paris: Harmattan, 1996), 46. The phrases in quotations are in English in Deuve's letter.
46. On the second de Langlade mission, see Jean Decoux, *A la barre de l'Indochine* [At the Helm in Indochina] (Paris: Plon, 1949), 319ff; Sabattier, *Le destin de l'Indochine*, 106–110; and Institut Charles de Gaulle, *de Gaulle et Indochine*, 98–99, 101–102.
47. Mus, *Le destin de l'Union française*, 121.
48. *Ibid.*, 83–84; Mus, *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre*, 195. Mus devoted some time in this period to "intensively refreshing my knowledge of the Annamite language" (Mus, *Le Vietnam chez lui*, 23).
49. Mus, "Lettre," 10. On the previous page, he had written, "Among the talents that I acquired, at least for my age (42 years): I am a brilliant parachutist."
50. "Lettre," 11.
51. Decoux, *A la barre de l'Indochine*, 320. For a balanced assessment of Decoux, see Isoart, *Indochine*, 10. See also Georges Gautier, *9 Mars 1945: Hà Nội au soleil de sang: le fin de l'Indochine française* [March 9, 1945: Hanoi in the Blood-red Sun] (Paris: SPZ, 1979). Gautier referred to Mus' mission as "a marginal initiative." On de Langlade, Gautier commented: "He didn't have any real knowledge of Indochinese problems and didn't seem desirous of having any" (113).
52. For a discussion of the events of March 9–10, 1945, see David Marr, *Vietnam 1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995), 13–69. On Mus and Trần Văn Giàu, see Stein Tonnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Hồ Chí Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War* (Oslo: PRIO, 1991), 356n27.
53. On "mediocre," see Mus, "Lettre," 10.
54. Mus, "Lettre," 12ff.; Capt. Bouvaret, "Compte rendu des circonstances dans lesquelles le Capitaine BOUVARET a quitté l'Indochine, après l'agression japonaise du 9 mars 1945," typescript prepared June 14, 1945, Mus papers,

- Institut d'Asie Orientale, Lyon. Bouvaret was later on Leclerc's staff in Sài Gòn, so he and Mus would have met again at the end of 1945.
55. Mus, *Le destin de l'Union française*, 28 and 345; Mus, *Le Vietnam chez lui*, 38.
 56. "Lettre," 26; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 61ff.; Sabattier, *Le destin de l'Indochine*, 200.
 57. Paul Mus, "Note sur la crise morale franco-indochinoise par le Capitaine Paul Mus." For the full text, see Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 310–314. See also Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944–1947* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996), 133–137.
 58. Paul Mus, "Japon, segment 45–63" [Japan, 45–63 Segment], in *L'angle de l'Asie*, 98–108; and LCF March 21, 1966. Peter Dunn, in his *First Indochina War* (London: Hurst, 1988), asserts that MacArthur on this occasion urged Leclerc to rush as many troops as possible into Indochina (49).
 59. See George Rosey, *The British in Vietnam* (London: Panther Books, 1970); and Dunn, *First Indochina War*, 214.
 60. On Dewey, see Dunn, *First Indochina War*, 214ff.; and George Wickes, letter to author, September 12, 2004.
 61. On Mus' meeting with the Việt Minh, see Dunn, *First Indochina War*, 244. In early October, Mus also met with local members of the French Communist Party (see Mus, *Việt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre*, 342). On Son Ngoc Thanh's arrest, see David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 26. In October, Mus probably met his sister Lucie, who had been imprisoned and tortured as a *Résistante* by the Japanese. See Mus, *L'angle de l'Asie*, 52.
 62. Mus, *Le Vietnam chez lui*, 28.
 63. For the text of the citation, see Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 323.
 64. On this event, see Mus, *Việt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre*, 116; "Lettre," 27–28; Jean Julien Fonde, *Traitez à tout prix: Leclerc et le Vietnam* [Negotiate at Any Price: Leclerc and Vietnam] (Paris: R. Laffont, 1971), 61–62; and Institut Charles de Gaulle, *De Gaulle et Indochine*, 181.
 65. Paul Mus, "Un matin de décembre en Cochinchine" [A December Morning in Cochinchina], in *L'angle de l'Asie*, 24–41, quote on p. 40. The article was originally published in March 1946.
 66. E.P. Thébaullt, "Le tragique destin d'un empereur d'Annam, Vinh San Duy Tân" [The Tragic Destiny of an Emperor of Annam, Vĩnh San Duy Tân], *France Asie* 200 (1970): 3ff. See also Shipway, *The Road to War*, 161–162.
 67. Isoart, *Indochine*, 71. See also ACF, 1968–1969.
 68. On the Mus mission, see Georges Thierry de l'Argenlieu, *Chroniques de l'Indochine, 1945–1947* [Chronicles of Indochina, 1945–1947] (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985), 73.

69. Jean-Marie Domenach, "Paul Mus," *Esprit* 37 (October 1969): 404–406. See also Institut Charles de Gaulle, *de Gaulle et Indochine*, 73; and Thierry d'Argenlieu, *Chroniques de l'Indochine*, 120.
70. On this meeting, see Mus, *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre*, 262, 314, and 352.
71. Paul Mus, Collège de France dossier (hereafter CF). Bloch's generous remarks were never published. That Mus held down the two positions simultaneously did not seem to distress officials at the Collège de France or those at the Ecole nationale de la France d'outre-mer.
72. Philippe Devillers, *Paris-Sài Gòn-Hà Nội* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 316–317, 323ff., 326.
73. *Ibid.*, 336: "The term Vietnam should be prohibited in official documents and if possible in the press and in conversation." A view more antipathetic to Mus' position and all he had worked for in 1945–1946 is impossible to imagine.
74. On the relationship between Mus and Pignon, see Daniel Varga, "Léon Pignon et Paul Mus" [Léon Pignon and Paul Mus], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 259–268.
75. On this conversation, see "Entrevue entre Paul Mus et Dang Phuoc Thong" [Interview between Paul Mus and Đặng Phúc Thông], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 317–321.
76. For descriptions of the meeting, see Mus, *Viêt-Nam: sociologie d'une guerre*, 312, 372. The final quotation is from Mus, *Hồ Chí Minh*, 79. Mus met with French President Vincent Auriol on July 3, 1947, to discuss the meeting. See Vincent Auriol, *Journal de septennat* [Seven Years' Journal] (note: French Presidents in the Fourth Republic had seven-year terms), vol. 1 (Paris: A. Colin, 1970), 325–328 and 775m13. I'm grateful to Daniel Heméry for providing this citation. Mus also briefed Leon Blum, who described their meeting and praised Hồ Chí Minh in *Le Populaire*, August 6, 1947. See Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Vietnam de 1946 à 1952* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), 404.
77. Mus, *Le destin de l'Union française*, 226. Nguyễn Văn Tố was chair of the Việt Minh National Assembly Standing Committee. He had consistently refused to be drawn toward the French "side" in Indochina.
78. LR, personal communication.
79. See Christopher Goscha's illuminating essay "Qu'a - tu appris à la guerre? Paul Mus en quête de l'humain" ["What did you learn in the war?" Paul Mus in Search of the Human (Factor)], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 269–290. On Mus' relations with the Christian press in France, see Sabine Rousseau, "La réception des écrits de Paul Mus sur la guerre d'Indochine dans les milieux chrétiens français" [The Reception of Paul Mus' Writings on the Indochina War in French Christian Circles], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus*, 259–268.

80. On Mauriac, see Jacques Dalloz, *La guerre d'Indochine* [The Indochina War] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), 171.
81. *Le Monde*, April 27, 1950.
82. Sabattier, *Le destin de l'Indochine*, 342.
83. LR, personal communication. Lévy ("What I Know," 30) makes a similar point about Mus' fondness for contact with students, and the lectures he gave at Yale in 1966 and 1967, which I attended, were characterized by a good deal of jovial give and take.
84. Professor Karl Pelzer's daughter, Kristin Pelzer White, was inspired by Mus to become an academic specialist in Vietnam.
85. Mus, *Le destin de l'Union française*, 158–177.
86. Goscha, "Qu'a - tu appris?" passim.
87. ACF 1954–1955, 227–229. Paul Mus refers to Mannoni's book as "incoherent, baroque, but just." Mus, *Guerre sans visage* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961), 51. Perhaps the most notable departure in his Collège de France lectures came in 1968–1969, when he lectured on "Un problème de communication: Vietnam" [A Problem of Communication: Vietnam], ACF, 411–429.
88. Télégramme de départ, 24 juillet 1957, Ambassade France Sài Gòn no. 1129/30, dossier 75 (sept. 1956–juin 1964), *Culture et relations culturelles, Asie 1944–1955*, volume 2, Asie Océanie Sous Série Laos 1955–1964, Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères. I'm grateful to Nguyễn Quốc Thanh for providing this information.
89. Material on Emile Mus is taken from *Guerre sans visage*, especially 57, 60, 70, and from the notebook that Mus used on his visit to Algeria in August 1960. The notebook is among Mus' papers at the Institut d'Asie Orientale in Lyon.
90. Mus, *Guerre sans visage*, 174. See also Paul Mus, "Le métier de Cassandre" [Cassandra's Trade], *Les cahiers de la République* (April 1956): 8–27; and Paul Mus, "La guerre d'Algérie: guerre sociologique" [The Algerian War: Sociological War], *Les cahiers de la République* (July–August 1957): 37–45.
91. On his heart attack: LR, personal communication.
92. Claude Jacques, personal communication.
93. Ibid. See also Paul Mus, "Angkor vu de Japon" [Angkor Seen from Japan], *France-Asie 177–178* (September–December 1962): 521–538.
94. LR, personal communication.
95. See Frances FitzGerald, "Apprendre de Paul Mus" [Learning from Paul Mus], in Chandler and Goscha, *Paul Mus* (see note 1), 57–66; and John McAlister, *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1969). FitzGerald's *Fire in the Lake* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972) and McAlister's book are both dedicated to Mus.

96. Paul Mus, "Paysans et paysages" [Peasants and Countrysides], *Esprit* 35 (March 1967): 461–467.
97. J.-M. Domenach, in "Paul Mus" (see note 69), remarks tellingly about Mus that "praise and admiration never reached him because he was like an adolescent, radiant from discovering a new reality every week." There was indeed something *boyish* about Paul Mus that constituted part of his charm. See also Roger Jellinek, "Intuitions about Vietnam," *New York Times Book Review*, August 17, 1972, 31.
98. Thomas Rimer, personal communication.
99. LR, personal communication.