

Speech by Professor Francois Macé, Department of Japanese Language and Civilization at France's National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations

I am Francois Macé, representing the Department of Japanese Language and Civilization at France's National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations. We at the department are honored to receive this Japan Foundation Award 2012. Today I would like to share with you a story about the long-standing, close ties between the Japan Foundation and our department.

In tracing the history of our department, allow me to bring up two extraordinary figures who were formerly my mentors and subsequently my colleagues. The late Professor René Sieffert gained international fame for his translations of classical Japanese literature. He was a recipient of the Japan Foundation Award In 1983, and has told me in detail about the award ceremony at the time. The late Professor Jean-Jacques Origas became a central figure, along with Professor Bunkichi Fujimori, to the great progress of our department. He was a recipient of the Japan Foundation Award in 1988.

Going further back, from 1862, when INALCO instituted its first Japanese language course, until as late as 1969, each academic year the institute employed only one full-time professor. During this time, there were merely a dozen or so students. In the 1970s, when interest grew in Asian languages and cultures, the number of students saw a rapid increase. But even then, the number of professors failed to keep up accordingly. Both then and now, French universities in general, and departments dealing with rare, "exotic" languages in particular, are faced with the harsh reality of limited funding. Amid this situation, the Japan Foundation's Library Support Program and Japanese-Language Teaching Materials Donation Program have provided our department with valuable aid. These, coupled with the Japan Foundation Fellowship Program, have provided a number of professors at our department—including me—with the opportunity to visit Japan and further pursue our individual fields of research. As recently as this year, two of our graduate students have benefited from this fellowship program.

It is no coincidence that I have talked about the difficulties in education and research in the same breath. The INALCO Department of Japanese Language and Civilization is distinctive in that it does not separate courses in Japanese language and Japanese culture. For instance, some years ago, when I was a student, the philosopher and professor Arimasa Mori taught Japanese composition in addition to his course in Japanese history of ideas. More recently, Professor Origas was a specialist in Meiji period literature, but he continued to give first-year

students lessons in the basics of Japanese language until his retirement. Even this year, our assistant professor who specializes in law, for instance, teaches both Japanese law and Japanese lexicology.

The INALCO Department of Japanese Language and Civilization is also distinctive in that it offers a diversity of courses in Japanese culture. We have professors who specialize in archaeology; ancient, early modern, and modern history; art history; cinematography; history of ideas; religion; ethnology; music; law; sociology; economics; international relations; and of course ancient, modern, and contemporary literature.

Today, with advances in internationalization and as our lifestyles are shaped by globalization, our department is fortunately not isolated. At the level of French–Japanese relations, in fact, since the 1970s our department has concluded academic exchange agreements with many Japanese universities. And thanks to these agreements, we are sending an increasing number of students to Japan each year. The venue of my commemorative lecture on the 11th is La Maison Franco–Japonaise, whose current director, Christophe Marquet, is also my colleague and a professor at our department. France, and especially Paris, is endowed with excellent institutions in Japanese studies, including the Collège de France, the École Pratique des Hautes Études, L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and the Université Paris Diderot, or “Paris VII.” Situated in this inspiring environment, we at the INALCO Department of Japanese Language and Civilization are confident that the level of our academic offerings will continue to rise in the future.