

Serge Elisséeff: Dreams of Japan

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Abstract: This article is devoted to the memory of Serge Elisséeff (Sergey Grigor'yevich Eliseev), a prominent Japanologist of the 20th century; a globally recognized researcher and educator; founder of the Far Eastern school of research in the USA and academic Japanese studies in France; one of the first Russian experts on Japan and an emigrant from Soviet Russia. It describes different stages of his life and work in several countries of the world, and scientific and educational institutions he was connected with. The author also focuses on Eliseev's contribution to the dissemination of knowledge about Japan and Japanese mentality in the Western world.

Keywords: Sergey (Sergei) Grigor'yevich Eliseev, Serge Elisséeff, Japanese studies, Japanese art, Japanese literature, Russian emigrant world, Musée Guimet, School of Living Oriental Languages, Practical School of Higher Studies, Harvard University, Harvard-Yenching Institute, Christian universities in China, Kyoto bombing.

Sergey Grigor'yevich Eliseev (1889-1975) was one of the first Japanologists in Russia and abroad who received a professional training. Moreover, Sergey Eliseev was the only one to get a special education at the Imperial Tokyo University, in the Japanese Language and Literature Department of the Historical-Philological Faculty. He was the first European who received a diploma of this elite educational establishment. In July 1912, shortly before his death, Emperor Meiji personally welcomed

the young European among the best University graduates as tradition prompted. The University Certificate was dated as of July 10, 1912.

Sergey Eliseev's graduation soon became known in Russia. The 1912 issue of the *Commentaries of the Amur Region Department of the Imperial Society of Oriental Studies* journal reported on page 300: "Sergey Eliseev, 23, received a degree in Japanese literature from the Tokyo Imperial University. No European has so far managed to graduate from a Japanese university. There were only students from India and China who did it. Thus, Eliseev is the first European who succeeded in getting the academic degree of *Bungaku shi*. The academic degree of *Bungaku shi* was conferred on the young scholar for his thesis *On the Poetry of Bashō, a Great National Poet of Japan*.

Having completed the post-graduate course in Tokyo in July 1914, right before the beginning of World War I, Sergey Eliseev returned to Russia. His plans to perfect his knowledge at a Western university collapsed, but Nikolay Marr, Dean of the Oriental languages faculty in the Petrograd University, was interested in the best modern Japanese language expert of that time. Yet, making the Japanese diploma equal to that of any European university required the Public Education Minister's intervention as well as a Supreme Order. After all formal procedures had been completed – passing professional exams and delivering two public lectures – he was appointed a visiting Professor of Japanese language and literature.

As Eliseev studied at the Japanese university for six years, familiarized himself with the country, its culture, traditions, he turned into a universal orientalist competent in all areas of Japanese studies. His friendship and close communication with prominent writer Natsume Sōseki and emerging authors – members of his "Thursday Club" (the coterie convened on Thursdays in the writer's mountain house) – enhanced his relentless focus on Japanese literature. It is not without reason that he chose the works of an excellent medieval poet Bashō as the theme of his graduation thesis. Lessons taken from a Kabuki master and acquaintance with actors plunged him into the world of traditional theater and made him focus on its

history. Visits to temples, monasteries, museums, and workshops laid the ground for his study of Japan's history, geography, and art.

In Petrograd, like most academic intellectuals, Sergey Eliseev worked for several institutions before and after the revolution. In addition to his work at the University, he was the Archives director at the Asiatic Museum of the Academy of Sciences, delivered lectures on Far Eastern art at the Institute of Arts history; and, as a member of the Archeological commission, he was involved in looking for private collections of oriental art, which he studied and described. He was a member of many academic societies: Russian Archeological, Russian Geographic, Russian-Japanese, Oriental Society, and even such an unusual one as the Society of Japanese University graduates. There, Eliseev made several presentations on literature, history, geography, and economy of Japan; he also gave talks on the Russian-Japanese treaty signed in 1916 and on the Japanese scientist and politician Arai Hakuseki.

Sergey Eliseev was born in Saint-Petersburg to a famous merchant family, one of the richest in Russia. In 1907, he graduated from the Larinskiy Gymnasium with a gold medal and went to Berlin University for a year to get the basic knowledge of the Japanese and Chinese languages. His goal was certainly the Imperial Tokyo University. In Berlin, Sergey Eliseev got a very decent training in basic subjects, particularly, in comparative linguistics of Indo-European Languages, philosophy, aesthetics, as well as history and art of Japan and China. However, Japanese language teaching left much to be desired. As a result, Eliseev went to Japan with nearly zero knowledge of the language and had to master it using primary school textbooks. He first reached Vladivostok by the Trans-Siberian railroad, went by boat to the Japanese port of Tsuruga, then to the cities of Maibara and Kyoto, from where he finally reached Tokyo by train.

Sergey Eliseev's wish to receive such a rare and exotic specialty was shaping gradually – along with his growing childhood interest in Japan. The reason was a shock from what he saw in the pavilions of Asian countries during the World Exhibition in Paris (1900), his visit to the exhibition of Sergey Kitaev's Japanese art collection in 1905-06,

and browsing through Japanese art magazines. The boy himself had an artistic bent and took lessons of drawing and painting. On the other hand, with his ability for scientific analysis, he tried to understand the cause of Russia's defeat in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war. But it seemed impossible without studying Japan and the Japanese language.

It was with great difficulty that Eliseev managed to enroll for a Japanese literature course at the Tokyo Imperial University. More difficulties were in store for him later: he understood nearly nothing in the lectures delivered in Japanese, and Japanese students treated him, a foreigner, with suspicion. He was surrounded by a strange oriental world. Owing to the support from professors, first-class tutors, and nearly round-the-clock studies, the Russian student reached the required level by the end of the second year. He was thoroughly schooled by such outstanding philologists as Ueda Mannen, Haga Yaichi, Fujioka Sakutarō, Fujioka Katsuji and others.

He made new friends, among whom was Komiya Toyotaka, a student who later became a famous Germanist and writer. It was Komiya who introduced him to Natsume Sōseki's coterie, and Eliseev and Natsume soon patched up a close relationship. The writer treated Eliseev like a son, and Sergey considered himself to be Natsume's disciple. Eliseev wrote a number of essays about contemporary Russian literature and published them in the *New Russian Writers* section of *Asahi Shimbun*. Natsume Sōseki was a great help as he was the editor of the *Literature and Art* section in this newspaper. The Russian student also made publications in other editions; he stepped up as a theater critic writing about Russian and Japanese theater.

In 1910, his father, Grigoriy Grigor'yevich Eliseev, an excellent entrepreneur, philanthropist, and public man, was ennobled with his entire family for his merits in trade. Thus, Sergey Eliseev became a nobleman; yet he liked to be referred to the class of bourgeoisie and always adhered to liberal views. In February 1917, he heartily welcomed the first Russian revolution that toppled the monarchy. The Bolshevik coup aroused negative feelings in him, but Sergey cooperated with the new authorities and continued to work in the same, now Soviet, institutions.

His teaching and academic career was quite successful: he was elected Professor at the Institute of Arts history and headed a division in the Archeological commission. In late 1919, for a number of reasons, he remained the only professor of Japanese studies at the Petrograd University. The young scholar wrote several articles on Japanese and Chinese art – about monochrome painting, landscape and portrait, sculpture, and Japanese cold-arms. He was the first professional Japanologist to touch upon the theme of Far Eastern art. It had been the field of Western art experts before, but Sergey Eliseev's advantage was his knowledge of the language, which enabled him to resort to original sources and Japanese scholars' works. His own experience accumulated during his life in Japan was of great importance. Alas, none of his works was published due to the financial difficulties Russia was facing at that time. Eliseev was preparing the *History of Far Eastern Art* monograph for publication by the famous publishing house *Brockhaus-Efron*, but his departure from Russia put an end to this project.

At the university, Sergey Eliseev's students became acquainted with the classical Japanese literature and with the contemporary works as well – such as *Sanshirō* and *Mon (The Gate)* by Natsume Sōseki. The academic's archive contains a fragment of *Sanshirō* translated into Russian. Had he remained in Petrograd, he would have become the first translator of the story into a European (Russian) language.

Literature was the second “Japanese” passion of the young orientalist after art. “Having first stepped on the Japanese soil in September 1908”, the Russian young man understood or felt intuitively “that the country with such a magnificent art must have great literature as well” [Eliseev 1914, p. 30]. The ability to appreciate literary works created in another cultural environment enabled Eliseev to develop new approaches to the study of Japanese literature and work out new cultural, historical, and philosophical principles of research. Unlike his predecessors, European Japanologists W.G. Aston, Karl Florenz, and B.H. Chamberlain, who always compared Japanese literature with familiar notions and examples of European literature, thus underrating the former, Eliseev suggested treating Japanese works as a very special phenomenon outside the

Western literary paradigm. The beginning scholar pointed out the difference in the inner structure of European and Japanese works, the primary and the secondary, the whole and its parts. “The difficulty of understanding lies not in the philosophy of life reflected in literature... The difficulty is to understand unknown foreign forms, in which the point is not where it would have been with us; where the writer just touches on something perceived by Europeans as the most important. Hence a different perception of the parts and a different perception of the whole. We should not treat Japanese literature with ready-made templates and deny everything not matching them. On the contrary, we need to understand these new forms of literature” [Eliseev 2000, p. 243].

The *Japanese Literature* essay in the *Literature of the East* digest of articles is the only paper by Sergey Eliseev published in the Russian language [Eliseev 1920]. It was the best critical review of Japanese literature of that time, which retained its significance for several decades. In 1936, when Eliseev was working at Harvard University, one of the American publishers was ready to publish this digest in English, but it never happened.

Until the spring of 1919, Eliseev hesitated to emigrate from the Soviet Russia, as he feared the uncertainty and hoped that the Bolshevik power would collapse. His family, like most Petrograd inhabitants, was surviving through several years of severe hunger, cold, and misery. Eliseev, his wife Vera Petrovna, and their two children had their health seriously undermined. And in the end of May 1919, he was suddenly arrested as a hostage during the Yudenich Army’s offensive on Petrograd. He spent ten days in a military prison and was released only through his colleagues’ petition. However, he was in danger now and could be arrested any time. Eliseev twice submitted documents for an academic trip to Europe with his family. It was the only legitimate way to leave Soviet Russia. After both attempts failed, he made a decision to flee.

On the night of September 23, 1920, the Eliseevs crossed the Finnish Bay by smugglers’ boat and arrived in Finland. Soon they were in Sweden, where the academic managed to get a temporary job at the Stockholm University – he was to deliver a course of Far East Art Fundamentals

(in German). In January of 1921, the family arrived in Paris, where Vera Eliseev's sister resided. Later they were joined by Sergey's brother Nikolay.

His entry to the new environment was not easy. But Eliseev's position as an orientalist, a specialist in a rare field equally acceptable for any European country, differed him advantageously from most Russian emigrants. In the absence of professional Japanologists in Paris – the center of European Sinology in the early 20th century – he had every reason to occupy the leading position. Of great help was that Eliseev was acquainted with French orientalists as well as Japanese diplomats, writers, journalists, and academics.

Eliseev's most stable income came from his interpretation services at the Japanese embassy and a liaison officer position in the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation under the League of Nations (Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle). One of the most important spheres of his job in the Institute was to enhance cooperation with several Japanese organizations, to ensure representation of Japanese scientists at international symposiums, etc. Japanologist Orest Pletner, who was staying in Japan, mentioned that all the Japanese sent to Europe had gone "through S.G. Eliseev's hands and got relevant training". [Or.V. Pletner's Letter to V.M. Alekseev (undated, by context, spring, 1929). – Orientalists' Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences]¹.

The young Russian scholar was already well known in the academic circles of France as the best expert in Japanese art and literature. He received a warm welcome from Paul Pelliot, Sylvain Levi, Henri Maspero, and other orientalists. Nevertheless, he failed to bolster his career for a long time because of some objective reasons: all positions were occupied by other people, though inferior in competence. In addition, he was a foreigner and obtained French citizenship as late as on June 23, 1931.

¹ The document was introduced into scientific discourse in: [Marakhonova S.I. 2016]. Some of the sources below were also introduced into scientific discourse in the above-stated book.

Then, he changed the spelling of his name from Sergey Eliseev to Serge Elisséeff, under which he gained worldwide renown. Yet, the first spelling was seen more frequently before his departure to the USA.

In 1921, Eliseev started working for the Guimet Museum of Asian art. Having served there until 1932, he did not achieve any serious position, although the museum's administration regarded him as an "outstanding expert". He dealt in inventory taking and compiling catalogues of Japanese books, translating Japanese documents and identifying museum artefacts [Archives of Guimet Museum. Correspondence Administrative. 1907-1925. № 532]. A great cultural response was aroused by Eliseev's lectures on Far Eastern art delivered at the museum. The news spread even in Petrograd owing to Vassiliy Alekseev's essay *Oriental Studies Abroad*, published in the *East* journal. "As a lecturer, he (S.G. Eliseev – S. M.) is known in Paris due to his lectures in the Guimet Museum where he works as a catalog librarian" [Alekseev 1923, p. 132].

His work in the museum satisfied Eliseev's interest for Japanese (and, in a wider sense, Far Eastern) art. During his ten years in France, the scholar wrote and published virtually all his articles on art history. Most of them were published in the *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* journal, issued since 1924 under the aegis of the Guimet Museum and Cernuschi Museum of Chinese and Japanese art.

Jointly with the Guimet deputy curator Claude Maître, an art critic, Eliseev took part in publishing the *Japon et Extrême-Orient* monthly journal, which was issued with the financial support of the Japanese embassy, the Nichibutsu Ginkō bank, and the Mitsubishi company, and testified to a new deep interest for Japanese culture in France. In each issue, Eliseev presented to the French readers translations of novels by contemporary Japanese writers: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Nagai Kafū, Shiga Naoya, Kubota Mantarō, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, and many others. Those were frequently the first translations of these authors' works in the world. Through these translations, Eliseev proved himself to be a wonderful translator of literary texts, but he failed to achieve his potential later on for objective reasons. He also published critical articles on Japanese literature and wrote analytical reviews of scholarly papers.

Unfortunately, due to Claude Maître's sudden death, the journal was published for a short period from December 1923 till December 1924, and only 12 issues came out.

The Russian scholar also made many publications in the *Journal Asiatique*, issued by the respectable *Asian Society* association, set up in Paris in 1822. Sergey Eliseev was its member since 1921.

During his first years in Paris, Eliseev managed to get a position of a visiting professor in Sorbonne, where he delivered lectures on Japanese literature of different periods and a course of written Japanese grammar. But his work in Sorbonne was apparently quite short. Since 1923, he worked at the School of Living Oriental Languages (École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, today – INALCO); first, he was not a professor of Japanese studies, but an examiner. Once a year, he examined students in the Japanese language (May 29, 1923, May 29, 1924, May 13, 1925, and so on, until 1930). In 1921 and 1922, before Sergey Eliseev started his work, exams had not been taken by a professional Japanologist, but by the French Consul in Japan Monsieur Bourgois [National Archives of France. F17/13610].

In 1925-34, the Russian emigrant taught a course of Japanese philology at the School. However, he succeeded in getting the position of a professor only at the free (open to the public) courses of oriental languages set up in the School for the general audience. All positions in the Japanese department that was teaching university students had been long and steadily occupied by Josef Dautremer, a former consul in Japan, and Japanese coach Naitō. The National Archives of France still contain posters with the program of free courses in the late 1920s – early 1930s. They state that “Mr. Eliseev delivered lectures on Grammar and History of Japanese Literary Language” [National Archives of France. 62 AJ 70].

In February 1932, the situation in the Japanese department changed dramatically as Professor Dautremer resigned. The department announced a competition to fill the vacancy and it seemed that Eliseev had every reason to occupy it as a professional Japanologist and an experienced teacher. But the congregation of French professors opted

for their countryman Charles Haguénauer, a diplomat and secretary of the House of France in Tokyo, who had no experience in teaching. Ten professors voted for him and only five for Eliseev, who passed as the second candidate. That is how Eliseev characterized Haguénauer: “He is a knowledgeable Japanologist, but with no zest, no enthusiasm; students of the School of Oriental Languages complain he is very boring” [S.G. Elisséeff’s Letter to V.M. Alekseev. May 1934. Cited from: Dyakonova, Smirnov 2005, p. 43-44]. It took Haguénauer quite a while to grow to a leading French Japanologist, linguist, and ethnologist; he also attended several lectures delivered by Eliseev. Apparently, in 1928 Sergey Eliseev was entrusted with delivering lectures on Far Eastern Art at the Louvre School (École de Louvre) [Pouillon (ed.) 2008, p. 377], although only the 1930-32 documents have survived. He held a course of General History of Arts, Japanese and Chinese art. It is known that in the second semester of the 1933/1934 academic year he read a course of Chinese painting. He also delivered lectures open to public that were held on Sundays at 10 a.m. in the Louvre School [Archives of the State Museums of France. F 26].

It was only in the Sorbonne Practical School of Higher Studies (École Pratique des Hautes Études, EPHE) that the scholar reached a high position – and very quickly at that. Like in the School of Living Oriental Languages, he started by delivering public lectures for free courses open to public. On February 1, 1930, Sergey Eliseev was appointed a temporary professor to replace a departing colleague and delivered one, then two lectures a week on the subject of *Japanese Religions*. The academic himself specified that these had been lectures on the history of Buddhist art, specifically iconography [Dyakonova 2000, p. 157, 162].

In spring 1931, when the Practical School of Higher Studies had a vacancy of a regular Assistant Professor (maître de conférences), Sylvain Levi nominated Eliseev, but the colleagues elected Mestre, a beginning French teacher of the Annamese (Vietnamese) language, and not Eliseev. Only in late 1932, on November, 1 Eliseev was appointed a full professor (directeur d’études) of the Department of Japanese Religions (section V) [National Archives of France. F17/27834].

Sergey Eliseev's competences as the foremost expert in Japanese art were highly sought soon after his arrival in Paris. He was involved in academic advice on the exhibition of modern Japanese art (the Meiji era – 1868-1912) held in Grand Palais from April 20 to June 30, 1922. The exhibition was arranged and conducted at the highest level – under the patronage of Raymond Poincaré, President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Léon Bérard, Minister of Public Education and Fine Arts, and Viscount Ishii, Ambassador of Japan to France.

Eliseev was an organizer and a cataloguer of the exhibition. In Vassilii Alekseev's opinion, the catalog professionally compiled by Eliseev “was nearly for the first time made by the person who combined the knowledge of the language with the knowledge and understanding of art, and thus will mark an epoch in Japanese studies” [Alekseev 1923, p. 132].

The Japanese side selected for the exhibition several works by modern artists Kume Keiichirō, Wada Eisaku, and Nagatochi Hideta, grand masters of the Tokyo school of painting. They had spent some time in Paris, taking lessons from French painters, and adhered to the principles of Western painting in their works. The Paris exhibition received 388 contemporary works including paintings, drawings, scrolls, kimonos, and others. An earlier period of the Japanese history – the 17th and 18th centuries – was represented by just 97 artefacts. A major interest of the public and critics was aroused by items of traditional art, familiar to them since the last third of the 19th century. Contemporary Japanese paintings received, however, a frosty welcome.

Therefore, Sergey Eliseev's monograph *Contemporary Painting in Japan* [Eliseev 1923], that was connected with the opening of the exhibition in Grand Palais, was of great educational significance. It was the first work on the Japanese art of this period that remained to be the only one until the late 20th century. In the first part of the book, Eliseev made a professional review of the traditional Japanese painting development and analyzed particular features of various art schools, manners, and styles. In the second and third parts, the author studied the process of influence of Western on the Japanese painting of the Meiji era and analyzed works of over 70 contemporary artists belonging to traditional

and western trends. As today's art critics estimate, "he (Eliseev – *S. M.*) has the most objective position towards Far Eastern aesthetics; he does not make apriori statements and is never limited by Western vision. His interpretation is similar to current research in the field of Japanese art" [Sharie 2000, p. 104].

In addition to the monograph, Eliseev wrote articles on several issues of Far Eastern art that were not described in the book: portrait painting in China and Japan; peculiarities of the Kanō art school; and Japanese monochrome painting. He used his Petrograd material there – unpublished articles and lecture courses.

In the years that followed, Elisséeff² continued to organize and curate art exhibitions. Thus, in the autumn of 1931, he was appointed the Commissar of the Japanese art exhibition that was conceived to be held in Stockholm by the Swedish-Japanese Society. Elisséeff's task, as a "great expert in art and philology" in the organizers' opinion, was to select items of Japanese painting, sculpture, applied art, and arms owned by private collectors and public organizations in Sweden. He also compiled a very detailed catalog of the exhibition supplementing it with a serious introduction. The exhibition was held under the patronage of Crown-Prince Eugene of Sweden and Japanese Prince Chichibu on November 8-22, 1931. In Elisséeff's opinion it was unexpectedly a great success and aroused interest of Swedes for Japanese art and all "the things Japanese" as a whole.

In the summer of 1934, before departing from France, Elisséeff prepared an exposition of 500 Chinese bronze items (vessels, vases, and arms) in the Orangerie Museum. Having studied these items, the author wrote an article with his conclusions that simplified dating these vessels and vases. In 1938, when working in Harvard, Serge Elisséeff participated in arranging an exhibition of sculptures and bronze items in New York and presented the exhibition catalog to Paul Pelliot [S. Elisséeff's Letter to P. Pelliot (12 January 1939). Archives of Guimet Museum. Pel. 108 p. 1939. № 3].

² Here in the article we use the spelling Sergey Eliseev prior to 1931 and Serge Elisséeff after 1931.

Serge Elisséeff's long-term studies in the field of Far Eastern art were summarized in vast chapters on China and Japan in the Oriental volume of the huge *History of Arts*. It was virtually his last profound approach to the theme of art, the culmination of his work. While previously Elisséeff had repeatedly discussed different aspects of painting, sculpture, and Buddhist iconography, his reference to architecture in these chapters was the first and the only one. In his lecture course, he always focused on architecture, believing that it expresses social and class-specific tastes best of all. The study of Japanese architecture presented by Elisséeff in his book was one of the first in the Western historiography of the 1920-30s. As a Japanologist, the author managed to discuss the architecture of Japan in the sociohistorical context of different epochs.

Elisséeff wrote essays about the Japanese, Korean, and Ainu languages for the prestigious edition *Languages of the World*. He participated in creating the fundamental book *History and Historians for the Last Fifty Years (1876-1926)*, for which he wrote a large section on Japan's historiography.

In 1933, Serge Elisséeff's book on the Kabuki Theater with Alexander Yakovlev's illustrations came off the press [Iacovleff A., Elisséeff 1933]. Strictly speaking, at first the Japanologist saw the album with Yakovlev's drawings made in Japan in 1917-19 and then wrote an academic text for it.

Publisher Jules Meynial probably gave a priority to the artistic component of the book and put the name of Yakovlev (against the Latin alphabet order) first [Iacovleff, Elisséeff 1933]. It was an edition of a very few copies, which soon made it a rarity.

This monograph was the first scientific paper in Western historiography specifically devoted to the history and peculiarities of the Kabuki Theater and written by a professional orientalist. Moreover, it was created not just by a scholar, but by a person who found the way to gain an insight into the essence of this Japanese cultural phenomenon, as he had participated in the performances himself. During his young days in Japan, Eliseev was so keen on the Kabuki Theater that he began to take lessons from a Kabuki master and made progress in this art. He

was well trained in dancing, could portray any scenic image, and was acquainted with the actors. The young Russian performed dances even at the meetings of Natsume Sōseki's coterie.

It is interesting to mention that in the 1920s the Japanese Embassy's employees in Paris asked Sergey Eliseev's advice on how to stage a Kabuki production [Komiya, Abe, Nakamura 1953, p. 19]. Eliseev had developed some artistry and interest for the theater in his childhood, because twice a year his family used to stage amateur performances with the participation of children and adults. His mother, Maria Eliseev, acted in her own amateur theater. There is an old photo with Maria Eliseev acting in E.N. Zalesova's comedy "Mother In-Law in the House – All Upside Down", which was very popular at the end of the 19th century [Personal Archives of Ya. Elisseeff (USA)]. His younger brother, Pyotr Eliseev, a former officer, acted under the stage name of Kamensky after the 1917 revolution until his expulsion from Leningrad in 1934. Serge Elisséeff and his wife Vera participated in performances of some "antique theater" at the Sorbonne in Paris in the early 1930s. It is known that Serge made settings, while Vera sewed Byzantine costumes. It is quite possible that they also played roles in the performances. Later, residing in the USA, they rehearsed some parts for a performance in Harvard in 1935 [Archives of the French School of the Far East. Vadim Elisséeff's foundation].

Thus, in the early 1930s, the Russian Japanologist occupied a very steady position in the orientalist community of France and laid the foundation of academic Japanese studies through his professional research. A decade in France proved to be very beneficial for Elisséeff as a scholar. The bulk of his papers were created at that time and became publicly known. He was also quite satisfied with his position of the head of the Department of Japanese Religions at the Practical School of Higher Studies. It is very likely that a rather successful career was in store for Eliseev in France, but a sudden proposal from overseas caused a dramatic change in his life.

In 1928, Harvard University in the USA set up a private Harvard-Yenching Institute. Its purpose, stated in the Memorandum of 1925, was to develop and perfect higher education in China in the field of traditional

culture (literature, art, history, linguistics, etc.). The document indicated the possibility of cooperating with other countries of Eastern Asia as well. That referred mainly to financial and scientific support for six Christian universities (Yenching University near Beijing and others) and several colleges in China. It was essential to ensure a good education in Sinology for Chinese students of Harvard University and those who would attend Master Courses in Chinese Christian universities, which were to be arranged with the help of Western scholars. Therefore, an equal priority for the Institute was to organize Far Eastern studies at the highest level in Harvard itself [Harvard University Archives. HUF 890.140.32].

The Trustees offered the post of the first director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute to the prominent French Sinologists Paul Pelliot. But he refused and pointed to Serge Elisséeff instead. Elisséeff was invited to Harvard as a professor for the 1932-33 academic year to deliver a number of lectures on the history of Japan. He also held practical classes with students on contemporary Japanese and Chinese historical texts. In the Lowell Institute in Boston, he delivered a course of eight public lectures on Japanese literature and its reflection in art. Elisséeff showed his good organizing skills when developing a program of Chinese and Japanese classes: he brought forward an idea of publishing an academic journal on the Far East and compiled a list of books on Japanese studies for the Institute's library.

Serge Elisséeff made a very positive impression on the Trustees of the Harvard-Yenching Institute by his professionalism, motivation, commitment, and devotion to the cause. The only minus was his qualification of a Japanologist, and not a Sinologist; the Chinese colleagues showed a negative attitude to the person who had received a diploma of higher education in Tokyo. However, this slight controversy was easily overcome by the argument that the Institute's Director would reside mainly in the USA, while other people who had received a degree in Harvard would be working in China. The Trustees approved Elisséeff's candidacy.

The academic worked in Paris for another year, pondering over a pivotal decision. Now he had a department where he was teaching

a course on Buddhist iconography; he was used to “regular personal communication with gurus of Far-Eastern studies”; he would rather be “the last in Rome” and would not strive to be “the first in the village” [S.G. Elisséeff’s Letter to V.M. Alekseev (26 May 1934). Cited from: Dyakonova, Smirnov 2005, p. 43]. But Elisséeff could not earn enough money in France to provide higher education for his sons. This must have played a major part in making the decision to move to the USA. He was also tempted by the grandiose tasks, both pedagogical and organizational, that awaited him overseas.

Paul Pelliot assuaged his doubts by advising as follows: «...if I can find a better position in Harvard and it looks more interesting, I should not hesitate because it is also important for Japanese studies” [S.G. Elisséeff’s Letter to V.M. Alekseev (21 January 1933). Cited from: Dyakonova 2000, p. 157]. On 18 July 1934, applying to the National Education Minister of France with a request to permit accepting the Harvard proposal, Elisséeff explained that “this mission is beneficial to France albeit performed within the walls of the American university” [National Archives of France. F17/27834]. It is no coincidence that in 1949 France awarded the scientist its highest Order – that of the Legion of Honor – in the nomination “Professor of the Natural Sciences and Humanities Department of Harvard University (USA)”. The award was adjudged on a submission from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Assuming on October 1, 1934 the post of the Harvard-Yenching Institute Director and Harvard Professor of Far-Eastern Languages, Elisséeff was regarded to be on an official trip, which continued, with regular prolongations, for 23 years. Thus, Serge Elisséeff was not only the first Director of the Institute – he occupied this post longer than any of his successors.

In as little as one year Elisséeff reorganized the teaching system in the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The Chinese language courses were extended and rearranged. New courses were added: Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced Chinese, Interpretation of Ancient Chinese Texts, Historiography, and History of Particular Dynasties. Other innovations included a program of Chinese art evolution from ancient to

contemporary times and a special course on reading and analyzing texts, which did not exist in other universities.

The situation with teaching the Japanese language was much worse. Japanese poetry and religion had been studied in Harvard since the 1895-96 academic year – 61 students in all for the years until the early 1930s. Although the issue of instituting the post of the Japanese Language and Literature Professor had been raised on a very high academic and administrative level in the early 1900s, the course of Japanese language and reading for beginners was introduced as late as in 1931-32. The teacher was a Japanese, Kishimoto Hideo, a former professor of philosophy at the Tokyo Imperial University. The following year, Kishimoto started two more courses: History of Japanese Civilization and History of Japanese Religions. But in the 1934-35 academic year, he left Harvard forever. Kishimoto had barely laid the first foundations of the Japanese studies during the three years of his stint, while the real study of the language and other Japan-related disciplines developed later – and through Elisséeff's effort.

Elisséeff started courses of Elementary and Intermediate Japanese, Japanese Literature, History of Japan, and Art of some Far Eastern countries with a focus on architecture. The professor delivered all lectures by himself during the first years, with a big academic load of 12 hours a week. Then he was joined by Shimoyama Shigemaru, Edwin O. Reischauer, and later – Yoshihashi Takehiko, McKenzie, V.H. Viglielmo and Bennet. In 1939, a department of Far Eastern studies was set up with the number of employees growing continuously.

Serge Elisséeff was not only a pioneer in a number of scientific studies where he suggested quite new, non-traditional approaches. He applied an unusual method of teaching Far Eastern languages in Harvard, which was drastically different from the previous one. Western universities practiced a scrupulous study of ancient languages; teachers and students very rarely had a good command of modern colloquial languages. Elisséeff made a focus on the study of contemporary languages – Japanese and Chinese – and, having it as a basis, acquainted the students with the traditional culture of these countries and earlier language forms. He

invented a new standard of teaching in the West, which was applied by his disciples very successfully. The professor instilled in his students self-confidence, ability to read, analyze and interpret oriental texts, translate them correctly, and use dictionaries.

Being in charge of the curricula in Chinese Christian universities as the director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Elisséeff tried to introduce Western methods of education there and balance off the focus on fiction – traditional for the Chinese language study – with the reading of historical works and, predominantly, original sources. With the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, when some of the universities and colleges assigned to Harvard found themselves on the occupied territory, their American trustees, and, first of all, Serge Elisséeff as an administrator, had to reorganize educational institutions, reconsider the programs, and provide a higher than usual financial support.

Elisséeff considered establishing major centers for Japanese and Chinese studies in Harvard as one of his most important tasks. The success of this endeavor could be achieved by founding a scientific journal where scholars along with students, would have an opportunity to publish articles devoted to China, Japan, Korea, India, and other Asian countries. The first issue of the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* came out in April 1936. Specially for this issue Serge Elisséeff wrote the article *The Bommōkyō and the Great Buddha of the Tōdaiji*. Three more issues appeared until the end of the year. Since that time, the journal's publication has been regular, and today Elisséeff's project is one of the most authoritative peer-reviewed editions in the field of Oriental Studies.

During Serge Elisséeff's tenure in Harvard, he was so successful in enriching the scientific library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute with rare books in Oriental languages, manuscripts, wood engravings, and works by Western authors, that he made it the best library on Oriental studies in the Western hemisphere. It was second only to the US Congress Library by the number of volumes. The university's library was founded in 1879, when a small number of Chinese books were purchased. In 1927, the library counted 4,526 books in Chinese and 1,668 books in Japanese. As of July 1, 1956, the library contained

299,841 volumes in the languages of Eastern Asia, including 231,189 publications in Chinese and 56,381 in Japanese [Archives of the Harvard-Yenching Institute. Report. 14 November 1956].

In the 1940s, coauthored with E.O. Reischauer and T. Yoshihashi, Elisséeff compiled a number of Japanese language text-books for university and college students as well as Japanese text readers.

With the beginning of World War II, especially in the Pacific, the Department of Far Eastern Languages, in addition to the existing programs, used special ones to train linguists and translators from Japanese and Chinese. The first crash courses were arranged in the summer of 1941 at the Cornell University, Ithaca. The Chinese language was taught by Cornell University Professor Peter Boodberg, while Serge Elisséeff was invited to teach the Japanese language to a group consisting of 8 students [Archives of the French School of the Far East. V. Elisséeff's Foundation].

In autumn 1941, crash courses of the Japanese and Chinese languages were organized urgently at Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley, under the contract with the Naval Ministry. Harvard had 25 students; after nine months of daily five-hour practice with Elisséeff, Reischauer, and other teachers, the best of them mastered spoken Japanese. Yet Professor Elisséeff disappointed the military as he did not want to change his method of academic, unhurried and highly theoretical teaching for the sake of rapid training of military translators. As a result, the military stopped cooperation with Harvard and the contract was terminated in September 1942 [McNaughton 1952, p. 58].

Nevertheless, in 1943, Harvard University was involved in the training program for various specialists in Engineering, Medicine, and the Humanities for the army needs (Army School Training Program). Over 20 students studied Chinese, and some – Japanese, at the intensive courses of colloquial language (30 class hours a week without the study of Chinese characters). The best among them mastered simple colloquial language and could translate from Japanese or Chinese. In 1943-46, Serge Elisséeff was the only teacher for four language courses. In total, about six thousand people underwent training in this program in the USA [Harvard University Archives. UAV 344; Elisséeff 1949, p. 259].

Regular academic Japanese language courses continued to work as well. Attendance thereof increased considerably – 237 students were studying there in 1941-45. Naturally, Elisséeff held a number of classes there. A summer semester of 12 weeks was added to the academic year to expedite the training of specialists, and the classes became more intensive.

In the autumn of 1943, Elisséeff was invited to work for the Office of Strategic Services in Washington. Having a high workload at the university, he was able to come to Washington only for one day a week, Saturday, spending two nights on the train. He was offered the post of a consultant in the Moral Operations Branch, specifically, for providing assistance in conducting information warfare with Japan. According to the special services, “S. Elisséeff is definitely one of the most competent specialists who is able to give us essential advice in the field...” [National Archives and Records Administration. RG226 E92A B102 F2131]. He was allowed to serve only after a thorough check of his reliability; the fact that his sons were in France occupied by the Nazis was given a serious consideration.

Elisséeff's responsibility in the Moral Operations Branch was to conduct individual classes with employees and hold general meetings for solving special issues. He gave consultations on the Japanese language, literature, customs and traditions, peculiar mentality of the Japanese and their response to propaganda. This information was used for writing leaflets, developing scripts for rumors and compiling “Black Radio” programs. The employees of the Branch had three scenarios of information attacks: “black propaganda”, i.e. false information per se; “black propaganda” in reply to Japanese broadcasting, and sudden cross-cutting of Japanese programs. It was also essential to obtain the professor's recommendations on photos and cartoons as well as on surrender proposal texts broadcast to the frontline.

Being a Russian, a citizen of France, and an American professor, Serge Elisséeff considered his aid to the special services against militarist Japan to be very important for the USA, for the Soviet Union, and for himself personally. But as a Japanologist aware of the value of ancient

Japanese monuments, he tried to prevent their destruction. He realized only too well that the loss of such cities as Kyoto, Nara, and Kamakura, sacred to the heart of every Japanese, would hamper the process of restoring relations between the USA and Japan after the war and compel Japan to take a sharp turn towards the USSR.

By his own account, Elisséeff applied to the Military Command to discuss this issue. In 1972, speaking with a Japanese reporter, he described those events as follows: “During World War II, Americans were bombing Japan with all their might, but Kyoto was spared. I worked at the Yenching research center in Harvard at that time and applied to the American Military Command with the advice to refrain from bombing Kyoto as this city is a cultural asset of the country – and cultural monuments must not be destroyed” [Umeda 2000, p. 107].

Also, working with security officers, Serge Elisséeff had every opportunity of shaping a proper image of Japan among them and explaining the particulars of Japanese perception of religion, nature, art, and beauty in general. Elisséeff’s arguments against Kyoto’s carpet bombing were, probably, communicated to US Defense Secretary Henry Stimson. And although the Americans’ goal was to raze most Japanese cities to the ground and Tokyo was virtually wiped off the face of the earth, Kyoto, Nara, and Kamakura were saved from full destruction.

It was certainly not Serge Elisséeff alone who was fighting for the salvation of Japanese holy places. For example, one of the journals issued by the Guimet Museum stated that Serge Elisséeff jointly with Langdon Warner saved from bombing the wonderful Japanese cities of Nara and Kyoto – the cultural assets of the country [In Memoriam... 1976].

Langdon Warner, a Harvard Professor of Archeology and History of Far Eastern Art and the curator of the Eastern Art Department in the Harvard Fogg Museum, worked for a special division of the American military during the war. The Division of Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives dealt in preserving cultural values in the combat zones, on the occupied and liberated territories.

There were other units engaged in preserving monuments. Thus, on January 21, 1944, a conference on the protection of cultural values in

the Far East was held in Washington under the aegis of the American Commission of Scientific Institutions. Serge Elisséeff and Langdon Warner were to attend the conference along with other persons of science and culture. The main issue of the conference was to discuss the program of assistance to the territories of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia that were subjected (or could be subjected) to attacks of the Ground and Naval Forces as well as air bombing. The American Defense, Harvard Group, compiled lists of the most important monuments in a number of countries. Relevant lists on Japan, China, Korea and Siam were made by Langdon Warner. Yet, neither he, nor Elisséeff were able to attend the conference, and we will never know what each of them was going to say on the salvation of cultural monuments [National Archives and Records Administration. American Commission. Washington, 21 January 1944.]³.

On April 27, 1945, Kyoto, as a city with a population of over one million with a large number of industrial enterprises, was included into the list of atomic bombing targets under number 2. But in late July, during the Peace Conference in Potsdam, President Henry Truman and Secretary of War Henry Stimson eliminated Kyoto from this notorious list, repeating Elisséeff's argument almost *ad verbum*. In his diary on July 24 Stimson wrote: "...if elimination was not done, the bitterness which would be caused by such a wanton act might make it impossible during the long post-war period to reconcile the Japanese to us" [Stimson's Diary. 24 July 1945]. Truman confirmed this position in his diary on July 25: "... we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop that terrible bomb on the old capital (Kyoto) or the new (Tokyo)" [Bernstein 1980, p. 34].

Serge Elisséeff worked for the Moral Operations Branch for about a year but had to stop this cooperation because he had to perform another task of the Army Command. In the autumn 1944, when the war

³ Conference on Protection of Cultural Treasures in the Far East under the Auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies Century Club. Washington, 21 January 1944. Microfilm publication. This document available at: <http://www.fold3.com/image/270023159> (access free with authorization).

outcome was clear to all, Harvard University (along with five other US universities) introduced a special program for Civil Affairs Training Schools. It was a training program for officers who were to work in Germany and Japan occupied by the Allied Forces. Harvard trained experts for Japan who were fluent in colloquial Japanese and familiar with the national specifics.

After the war, the alignment of forces in the world changed, and the *Asian Studies in Harvard* memorandum, written by Serge Elisséeff with contributions from Sinologist J.K. Fairbank, suggested new areas of Asian research: Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, Korea, Mongolia, India, and the Asian part of the USSR. These objectives were very well captured by instituting language teaching courses at the Department of Far Eastern languages in 1940-1945: Mongolian, Korean, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Persian, and languages of India.

The foundation of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949 changed dramatically the Harvard-Yenching Institute's policy towards Chinese Christian universities in its charge. Chinese authorities' interference in curricula and their ideologization made the Institute's assistance unfeasible. The Board decided to terminate the Institute's activities in China and transfer projects to other countries: Japan, Korea, India, and Hong Kong. It was possible to cooperate only with the institutions associated with the church or Christian missionary work [Archives of the Harvard-Yenching Institute. Report. 5 November 1951. List 118, 122-124].

In January 1953, Director Elisséeff arrived in Japan after a long interval to clear up the situation and select institutions for further cooperation. He also delivered several lectures in educational establishments. During his work at the Seikadō Archives in Tokyo he was lucky to find a book by medieval scientist, politician and statesman Arai Hakuseki; the young Japanologist once, long ago, had delivered a lecture about him in Petrograd.

On arrival to Kyoto, the scholar was met at the rail station by eight famous Japanese professors and a photographer from *Asahi Shimbun*. The photographer captured Elisséeff shaking hands with Professor Umehara [Archives of the French School of the Far East. Vadim Elisséeff's

Foundation]. Elisséeff decided in favor of Japan's International Christian University in Tokyo and the Tokyo Women's Christian College Tōyō Bunko, as well as Dōshisha University in Kyoto and the Research Institute for the Humanities (Eastern Section) affiliated with Kyoto University. The institute's responsibility was to provide all these universities with required literature and compile programs for professor exchange between Christian educational institutions [Archives of the Harvard-Yenching Institute. Report. 25 March 1954, p. 329]. Serge Elisséeff visited Japan for the last time in the spring of 1955 to audit educational establishments that had received grants from the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

In August 1956, at the age of 67, Professor Elisséeff passed the post of the Harvard-Yenching Institute's Director over to E.O. Reischauer, but he continued to teach at Harvard University for another academic year. In the summer of 1957, he resigned and, together with his wife, returned to France forever – he retained French citizenship till the end of his days.

For over 23 years Serge Elisséeff was connected with Harvard, and his merits before the academic community are indisputable. Having achieved his capacity as an organizer of the learning process, he set up in Harvard the USA's largest center of Far Eastern studies, predominantly in the sphere of Japanology and Sinology. The Department of Far Eastern Languages started with one teacher in the early 1930s, then two or three. In the 1950s, the number of professors and teachers ranged from seven to twelve with some more working part-time. They delivered lectures not only on different linguistic aspects, but also on literature, history, and other country-specific disciplines. Besides Elisséeff, the following professors worked for the Department: E.O. Reischauer; partner professors G.W. Ware, F.W. Cleaves, R.G. Hightower, and Yang Lien-sheng; assistant professors R.N. Frye, D.H.H. Ingalls, and Dr. J. Pelzel; two visiting tutors K. Chen and Su. Nearly all of them had been Elisséeff's students in some special disciplines. Among his other famous alumni are H.S. Hibbett, M.B. Jansen, D.H. Shively, P. Akamatsu, A. Wright, D. Keen, and H. Rosovsky.

The number of Orientalist students at Harvard grew tenfold during the 1930-50s. In the decade of 1950-60, the number of students (1028)

exceeded that (908) for all the previous 55 years. While in 1930-35 there were 36 students of Japanese studies, in 1956-60 the number increased to as many as 627 [The Edwin O. Reischauer Institute... 1996, p. 24]. Elisséeff's students remembered their teacher as a devoted, dynamic and vital man with a spacious mind and a fine sense of humor; he was an excellent specialist who loved and respected his students. They noted his brilliant mind, warmth and specific "zest" in everything he did; they underlined the tact and delicacy of Serge Elisséeff, who created a special atmosphere of teaching at Harvard [Akamatsu 1975, p. 205; Serge Elisséeff: A Japan Scholar... 1977]. The issue of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* newspaper devoted to the ten years of his work at Harvard stressed that Serge Elisséeff's lifework was to interpret the Oriental way of thinking in the Western world.

Bidding farewell to Serge Elisséeff, Harvard University President Nathan Pusey emphasized that in Harvard "no field reached more fruitful results than Far Eastern research conducted under your (Elisséeff's – *S.M.*) caring guidance and inspired by your great expertise" [Reischauer 1957, p. 28]. Members of the New York Visiting Committee associated with Harvard also expressed their gratitude to the professor. Their welcome letter said: "What Harvard stands for today in the field of Far Eastern Civilization is your accomplishment and your monument. But the members of the Committee do want you to know that they recognize the accomplishment and, as you end your nearly quarter century of service to Harvard and return to your work in Paris, they wish to express to you their appreciation, admiration and affection" [Archives of the French School of the Far East. Vadim Elisséeff's Foundation].

Serge Elisséeff, as the first Harvard-Yenching Institute Director, played the pivotal role in developing and introducing educational programs in China's Christian universities. As a long-standing director of the Institute, he was confronted with the need to make changes in the learning process organization during the Sino-Japanese war in 1937-45, when a large part of China was occupied. When, after World War II, the balance of power changed, the director had to totally change

the strategy of the Institute and look for partners in the countries other than before. Serge Elisséeff coped with these challenges successfully and passed over to Edwin O. Reischauer a very well-functioning institution.

Over 60 years have passed since Serge Elisséeff left Harvard; this year, it is 45 years since the academic's death. Nearly all his disciples passed away; very few remain who saw Elisséeff during the last days of his life. The Harvard-Yenching Institute – indebted to him in many ways – has long radically changed its focus and is now engaged only in Chinese studies. The Reischauer Institute of Japanese studies set up by Edwin O. Reischauer in Harvard in 1973 – the oldest among the global centers of Japanese studies – now bears the name of Elisséeff's first disciple. Serge Elisséeff's name has only been immortalized by the fund of Japanese collection compiled in the early 2000s to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Institute Library. There is a large portrait of the scholar in the office of the Institute's current director. The historical building of Boylston Hall, which housed the Harvard-Yenching Institute, its library and the Department of Far Eastern Studies under Serge Elisséeff, now accommodates the Faculty of Arts.

With Elisséeff's resignation from Harvard and return to Paris, his career can generally be considered completed. Officially, he could claim his former position at the Practical School of Higher Studies because for a long period of over twenty years he had been regarded to be its employee on a mission to the USA. By law, he was to be reinstated in his position as soon as a vacancy opened. However, he faced the same situation as in the early 1920s when the Russian emigrant-Japanologist started to “conquer” academic Parris, laying claim to French citizens' jobs. Now the reason was more profound and significant – Paris witnessed a return of the scholar who had won himself a name in the USA, initiated Far Eastern research at Harvard, governed a very successful institution for many years and had vast ties in a number of Asian countries. Envy and fear to lose one's position did, as usual, play their role. Some of the French Japanologists were just shy to communicate with Elisséeff on his return from the USA because of his brilliant command of Japanese [Matsubara 1977, p. 142].

H.Ch. Puech, President of the V section in the Practical School, in his letter of December 23, 1958, notified the Minister of National Education, Youth and Sports, that there was no vacancy and Elisséeff's position had long been occupied by Charles Haguénauer [National Archives of France. F17/27834]. It seems that the main reason was different – Serge Elisséeff had very tense relations with the administration and faculty of the School. Elisséeff's reinstatement was discussed on the official level as early as in the 1950s, on the eve of his resignation from Harvard. Puech expressed a very hostile attitude to the situation in his letter to the Minister of January 7, 1952: "Elisséeff has been no part of our section's faculty for a long time... Attempts to reinstate him are made contrary to consultations with the Section Bureau that believes Elisséeff has nothing to do with it" [National Archives of France. F17/27834]. In another letter to the Minister Puech said that "the colleagues considered the circumstances of the scholar's departure from the Practical School of Higher Studies (in 1934 – S. M.) to be objectionable". He could not provide even elementary data about the academic – the date and place of his birth and his address, as he did not maintain any relationship with him [National Archives of France. F17/27834].

The order of the National Education Minister reinstated Serge Elisséeff in the Practical School from October 1, 1957, but he failed to get back his previous status: first he became an auxiliary teacher or an unpaid ordinary Professor, and then – a first-class ordinary professor (as previously), but in the other section. Elisséeff delivered weekly lectures on the Tokugawa period in the Modern Japanese History Section. He planned to publish a book on his research [Archives of the French School of the Far East. Vadim Elisséeff's Foundation].

He delivered a course of lectures on Japanese literature in the School of the Living Oriental Languages, but for a very short time [Matsubara 1977, p. 153]. Elisséeff was quite active for several years after his return to France, although he made a few publications and mainly wrote forewords to some editions. It would be absolutely essential to mention one of his papers of that time: in 1961, three issues of his essay *Japanese Literature* in the *General History of Literatures* series came out, which

was the result of his many years of analysis of Japanese literary works. He examined the main features of the works in a cultural and historical context, adding the authors' biographies. Starting with a review of ancient and medieval works, the author proceeded to contemporary literature written after 1945. Serge Elisséeff was elected a corresponding member of one of the French Academies as well as an honorary member of the French School of Far Eastern Studies. France highly appreciated his scientific, pedagogical, and organizational activities: apart from the Order of the Legion of Honor, he was awarded the Order of Academic Palms.

General De Gaulle, President of France, and his wife invited Serge Elisséeff, a Sorbonne Professor, with his wife to the Elysee Palace for breakfast on July 20, 1961, at 13.15 [Archives of the French School of Far East. Vadim Elisséeff's Foundation].

In 1964, at the age of 75, Serge Elisséeff left his post due to a serious illness, but he still kept abreast of all academic news and read a lot of contemporary Japanese fiction. He maintained an active correspondence with his fellow Japanologists, particularly, in the USSR, and received his Japanese friends and acquaintances in his home.

Elisséeff's another important merit was the creation of an academic dynasty. Both of his sons became prominent Orientalists, scholars and teachers: Nikita (1915–1997) was a Middle East expert, and Vadim (1918–2002) – a Far East expert. Nikita Elisséeff received a degree in Oriental Studies from the Sorbonne and the School of Living Oriental Languages. Being an expert on the Middle East, he worked in Damascus for a long time, then taught history and Arabic in universities of Lyon and Paris. He was in charge of several research expeditions to the Moslem East. On graduation from the School of Contemporary Oriental Languages, Vadim Elisséeff obtained a degree of a Japanologist and a Sinologist and focused on the archeology and art of the Far East. He was also famous for his museum activities, being Director of the Cernuschi and Guimet Museums and Curator General of Paris museums; he also worked for UNESCO. The Elisséeff brothers were knights of the Legion of Honor; they had other awards as well as Resistance medals.

In 1968, for the foundation of Japanology and dissemination of knowledge about Japan in other countries of the world, the scientist became a foreign knight of the Order of the Sacred Treasure, 2nd class, the highest degree for a foreigner. Serge wrote about it in his letter to Orest Pletner of April 4, 1969: “There was a reception in the embassy of Japan yesterday. Regretfully, I could not attend because of illness (cox arthrose), and the Order of the Sacred Treasure was handed over to Vadim. Nikita, who arrived from Lyon for the Easter holidays, was present there and told me that Ambassador Matsui, handing the order over to Vadim, said very cordial words. The 2nd class Order is a star carried on the side in most solemn cases. I did not at all expect such a monarchal largesse. The reigning Emperor’s grandfather was present at the University Act of 1912 when I was getting my Bungaku-Shi diploma” [Ermakova 2005, p. 261]. In 1973, Elisséeff was the first to be awarded the Japan Foundation Prize in the category “Foreign Citizens Contributing to Dissemination of Knowledge about Japan and Japanese Culture among Their Peoples”.

After his wife’s death on March 16, 1971, Elisséeff led a very secluded life. He died on Sunday morning April 13, 1975, at the age of 86 in the Bishar hospital. Serge Elisséeff laid to rest in the Russian Cemetery in Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois near Paris next to Vera Petrovna. Nikita Elisséeff was buried there in 1997. A simple wooden cross is rising over their grave...

The article in memory of the teacher, published in Harvard, was signed by his now widely famous disciples – Far East Orientalists Francis W. Cleaves, Edwin O. Reischauer, Donald H. Shively, Yan Liang Sheng, and Howard S. Hibbett. They assured that “it would be impossible to doubt the depth of his influence as well as admiration and gratitude that will forever live in the memory of his numerous students here (in the USA – S. M.) and abroad” [Serge Elisséeff: A Japan Scholar... 1977].

In France, Serge Elisséeff’s name is associated with the creation of scientific Japanology and foundation of the Orientalist dynasty. In the USA, he remains to be the pioneer of Far Eastern research (Japanese studies, primarily), who organized his own scientific school, as well as

a brilliant strategist who developed new programs of academic help to universities in Asian countries. In Japan, he is remembered as a “legend” – he was the first European student who received a degree from the Imperial Tokyo University and one among the few non-Japanese scientists who laid down the foundation of Japanese studies in the West. In contemporary Russia, he is known as a remarkable representative of the Russian expatriate scientific community who brought glory to his motherland by his versatile talent.

Conclusion

Serge Elisséeff’s name is predominantly associated with the foundation of the Far Eastern research, primarily Japanology, in the USA. At Harvard University, he managed to create a first-class teaching center for the Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Mongolian, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and other languages, whose graduates became outstanding Orientalists. Elisséeff’s efforts as the first director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute focused on cooperation with China’s Christian universities in the field of higher education. In the USA, the prominent Orientalist demonstrated excellent teaching and organizational competences. He proved himself as a scholar mainly in France where he pioneered scientific Japanology. The bulk of his research papers were published in France, as well as numerous translations of modern Japanese writers into French. It was not by his will that Serge Elisséeff emigrated from Soviet Russia where he had also proved himself as a serious and promising young researcher as well as a talented teacher. From the very beginning he already had an original view of his subject matter and was known for his wide-ranging scholarly interests. His works on Japan’s literature, language, art, theater, and mythology were pioneering as he used in them new methods of research. This made Serge Elisséeff one of the most prominent Orientalists in the world.

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