

Pré-rapport du mémoire de M2
Pre-report of the Master's thesis
Édition/Édition (2019—2021)

Étudiant(e)/Student :

Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name : Meyiu Zhai
Titre du mémoire M2 / Title of the Master's thesis : Redéfinir la relation à une époque de patrimoine : le dialogue culturel franco-chinois

Mobilité / Mobility :

Veillez souligner les établissements !/ Please, underline the institutions !
Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest (ELTE)

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris (EHESS)

Università degli Studi di Catania (UNICT)

Univerzita Karlova, Prague (CUNI)

Université Laval, Québec (UL)

Directeurs de recherche / Supervisors¹ :

Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name : Péter Erdősi
Titre /Title : assistant professor
Université/University : Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest (ELTE)

Évaluation/Evaluation:

Veillez consulter le tableau de conversion ci-dessous !/ Please, consult the grade conversation chart below !

Note dans l'établissement / Grade at the institution:

Note dans le 2^{ème} établissement (ELTE) / Grade at the 2nd institution (ELTE): 3

(Note dans le 3^{ème} établissement / Evaluation – grade at the 3rd institution:)

Note TEMA+ / TEMA+ grade:

Pré-rapport / Pre-report :

max. 4500 caractères espaces inclus/max. 4500 characters including spaces

¹ Le pré-rapport est écrit par le 2^{ème} directeur (ou par le 2^{ème} et 3^{ème} directeurs) qui ne participe pas à la soutenance et inclut des questions à aborder lors de la soutenance./The pre-report is written by the 2nd supervisor (and in case the 3rd supervisor too), who does not personally take part in the defense and it includes questions to be addressed to the student during the thesis defense.

The MA thesis written by Meyiu Zhai explores the role of cultural heritage in diplomacy, framed with the concept of soft power, with a main focus on the exchanges between France and China, but it covers even more than that because of the author's praiseworthy effort of comparing the linguistic/conceptual tenets and the systems of heritage management existing in the two countries. The work has a lot to offer for European academic audiences, due to Meyiu Zhai's knowledge on Chinese cultural institutions and policies; at the same time, the text is a proof of her comprehension of the French dimension of the topic too. The work contains an introduction, three main chapters and a conclusion. While posing the main research questions and drawing up the political, conceptual and historical contexts, with an useful chronological table indicating the phases of Chinese-French cultural diplomacy, the Introduction has missed the opportunity of explaining the methods, the source types used in the thesis and outlining the previous scholarly literature on the subject. However, Chapter I, *Cadre Théorique*, functions as an introduction rather well because it explains the difference between the French term of *patrimoine culturel* and the Chinese *Wenwu*, 'cultural relics', by which it hints to limits of the energetic adaptation of the Western concept of heritage. In fact, this chapter has been the part of the thesis which offered me perhaps the most to learn because of the very interesting linguistic and conceptual reflexion involved in it. Chapter II, *Analyse de la politique culturelle française et chinoise*, is also a thought-provoking one as a result of its comparative approach, with its attention on the institutional setting both on the French and the Chinese side, on the different variants of cultural governance in the spectrum between centralisation and decentralisation/democratisation. Meyiu is aware of the fact that the concept of *patrimoine culturel*, going beyond the state-sponsored, centralised tradition of cultural governance, can justify bottom-up patterns: this is proven by the fact that, at the end of this chapter, she specifies three institution types—foundations, associations and museums—contributing to the democratisation of culture as a result of their bonds with the civil society. After the scrutiny of the heritage management systems of the two countries, the thesis logically proceeds to the cultural exchanges between China and France, the key unit of the thesis: here, in Chapter III, *Partenariat des musées et des institutions culturelles*, Meyiu has chosen, from the array of cultural heritage institutions and their activities, the international cooperation of museums. This chapter highlights the bulk of the author's own findings. It focuses on the cooperation of the Shanghai West Bund Museum with the Pompidou Center of Paris; an additional example, the Louvre Abu Dhabi has been added as a useful element to characterise French museum diplomacy strategies. Subchapters 1.4 and 1.5 have the merit of discussing the variety of techniques composing strategies of cultural promotion, while 1.6 shows the author's awareness of assessing the social impact of international cultural exchanges. A further in-depth analysis of the exhibitions, including the selection of objects, exhibition methods (e. g. spaces, installations, captions, digital tools), catalogue texts and illustrations, museum pedagogy programs and media coverage, if available, could have provided an even richer analysis of the content transmitted to the audiences of the partner country. The brief conclusion revisits the results of Chapter I, II and III in a sketchy summary: it would be important to explain in more detail how they contributed to each other; all three chapters are valuable as essential constitutive units of the logically structured thesis, but the reader may be curious of the synergy of those elements at the very end. Another flaw of the thesis is the relatively limited source material used by Meyiu; the primary sources used by her should appear in the Bibliography as an unit distinct from the secondary literature. I would have appreciated if she made reference to her sources of information more frequently in the main text. Field work and/or bibliographical research in China and France could have surely add much to gathering a more impressive amount of source material, but I fully acknowledge that this idea was

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far from being possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic which created very difficult research conditions during the last three semesters of Meyiu's TEMA+ studies indeed. I appreciate, however, her research targeting digital platforms, which, in my view, compensates to some extent for the limited research possibilities in a situation embittered by the pandemic. All in all, I think that Meyiu has used her semesters at TEMA+ efficiently. Her M1, submitted last summer, showed significant progress, and the noteworthy results of her M2, in my opinion, are another proof of her diligence. Balancing the achievements and the flaws of the thesis, I am giving the grade 3 (according to the scale used at ELTE, corresponding to C at CUNI). In consideration of Meyiu's laudable efforts, I think that more favourable conditions—which were so improbable to avail during the pandemic—could have helped her reach even more prominent achievements. I hope that she can use her knowledge of two cultures and heritage management systems, shown by her thesis, with a growing expertise in her future career.

Questions :

The thesis has explained that the making of *country image* is a key element in the exercise of soft power, and the international cooperation of museums has an important share in this process. But how would you characterize the *academic* content of the exhibitions offered by China to France, and by France to China, respectively? Please mention some examples of what the visitors of those exhibitions can potentially learn about the other country's culture, in historical or aesthetic terms.

The main focus of the thesis is the cooperation between Chinese and French museums. Are there similar cultural exchanges in other fields of cultural heritage protection, such as *monument care* or *archaeology*, or in the safeguarding of *intangible heritage*, in the framework of French-Chinese cultural dialogue?



13 June 2021

Date, Signature (digital)

TEMA+ Grade conversion table

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ELTE (Hungarian)	EHESS (French)	UNICT (Italian)	CUNI (Czech)	UL (Canadian)	Notes TEMA+
5	16-20 (pas de 19 et 20)	30 (A, Excellent)	A	95-100 (A+, 4,33) 90-94 (A, 4,00) 85-89 (A-, 3,67)	Très bien/Excellent
4	14-15	27-29 (B, Very Good)	B	80-84 (B+, 3,33) 75-79 (B, 3,00) 70-74 (B-, 2,67)	Bien/Good
3	12-13	23-26 (C, Good)	C	66-69 (C+, 2,33) 63-65 (C, 2,00) 60-62 (C-, 1,67)	Assez bien/ Ample sufficient
2	10-11	21-22 (D, Satisfactory) 18-20 (E, Sufficient)	D, E	55-59 (D+, 1,33) 50-54 (D, 1,00)	Passable/ Satisfactory/ Almost sufficient
1	0-9	1-17 (F, FX)	F	49 et moins (E, 0,00)	Insuffisant/ Insufficient