



## Society for French Historical Studies

---

Roots of French Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Lyon

Author(s): John F. Laffey

Source: *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), pp. 78-92

Published by: [Duke University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/286245>

Accessed: 12/02/2015 20:32

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Duke University Press and Society for French Historical Studies* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *French Historical Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# Roots of French Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Lyon

John F. Laffey

Why, demanded Jules Cambon in 1894, should Lyon, "famous for its wisdom, its moderation, its prudence, manifest such an ardent interest in colonization?"<sup>1</sup> The next year, the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon, Auguste Isaac, added: "That Marseille, Le Havre, Bordeaux, Nantes, and even Rouen, are centers of colonial enterprise is understandable, but why Lyon?"<sup>2</sup>

Lying at the confluence of the Saône and the Rhône, the city was justly famous for its commercial enterprise; but Lyon was also further from the ocean than any other major city in France. This alone would make the local interest in overseas affairs worth comment.

Religious fervor, for which Lyon was also renowned, played a major role in directing the attention of her citizens abroad. During the Restoration a new interest in foreign missions appeared. Pauline Jaricot, daughter of a local silk magnate, began to gather a small group about her.<sup>3</sup> With the goal of aiding the missions as a means of making reparation for the outrages of the Revolution, they founded in 1818 a branch of the Propagation de la Foi, an association created by the

Mr. Laffey is assistant professor of history at Sir George Williams University.

I wish to thank Professors Edward W. Fox, Knight Biggerstaff, and Mario Einaudi for the guidance and encouragement given me during the preparation of the dissertation upon which this study is based. I am indebted to the Cornell Graduate School and the Fels Foundations for grants which made possible two years of research and writing in Europe and the Far East.

<sup>1</sup> Jules Cambon, Address, "Exposition coloniale de Lyon—inauguration," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu des travaux, Année 1894* (Lyon, 1895), pp. 194-224.

<sup>2</sup> Auguste Isaac, Address, "Réception de M. Rousseau, Gouverneur général de l'Indo-Chine," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1895* (Lyon, 1896), pp. 234-55.

<sup>3</sup> On Pauline Jaricot and the Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, see David Lathoud, *Marie Pauline Jaricot, I, le secret des origines de la Propagation de la Foi* (Paris, 1937), and Marie-Andrée Sadrain, "Les Premières Années de la Propagation de la Foi (1820-1830)," *Revue d'histoire des missions*, 16<sup>e</sup> Année (Sept. 1939), pp. 321-48; (Dec. 1939), pp. 554-79.

Société des Missions étrangères to encourage support for its missions. Four years later, expanding horizons beyond a single missionary organization, a group of Lyonnais founded the Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Despite initial troubles, the association flourished and, although it spread its work to other nations, remained rooted in France. The Bishop of Avignon could declare with some accuracy in 1873: "The Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi is eminently patriotic. . . . It speaks above all, with the name of God, that of France."<sup>4</sup> Within France, the Oeuvre continued to be financially based in Lyon.<sup>5</sup>

If Lyon was not sparing with funds for the missions, neither was it frugal with its sons. The diocese had "blood and gold to place at the service of its beliefs."<sup>6</sup> Two missionary orders, the Maristes de Lyon and the Missions africaines de Lyon, were founded in the city during the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Under the July Monarchy, Jesuits from the Lyon province of the society established themselves in Syria.<sup>8</sup> The Far East was not neglected.<sup>9</sup> Père Tabert worked in Cochinchina, Daguin in Mongolia, Retord in Tonkin. Many missionaries lost their lives to the cause. Père Bonnard met martyrdom in Tonkin. Jean Pierre Néel was decapitated in China on February 18, 1862. For the French the site of his death became the Monts du Lyonnais. The struggle between France and China over Tonkin produced new victims. On May 20, 1883, Gaspard-Claude Bechet was decapitated in Tonkin. Six French

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in André Retif, "Les Evêques français et les missions au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Études*, CCLXXXXV (Dec. 1952), 362-72.

<sup>5</sup> "Détail des aumones transmisés par les diocèses qui ont contribué à l'Oeuvre en 1895," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi: Recueil périodique des lettres des évêques et des missionnaires des deux mondes et de tous les documents relatifs aux missions et à l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Collection faisant suite aux lettres édifiantes, LXVIII (1896), 166-87; "Détail des aumones transmisés par les diocèses qui ont contribué à l'Oeuvre en 1896," *Annales*, LXIX (1897), 165-86; "Compte rendu de l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, 1897," *Annales*, LXX (1898), 163-85; "Compte rendu de l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, 1898," *Annales*, LXXI (1899), 163-86; "Compte rendu de l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, 1899," *Annales*, LXXII (1900), 163-87.

<sup>6</sup> Adrien Launay, *Nos missionnaires, précédés d'une étude historique sur la Société des Missions étrangères* (Paris, 1886), p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> Comité départemental du Rhône, *La Colonisation lyonnaise* (Lyon, 1900), pp. 152-53.

<sup>8</sup> Dominique Chevallier, "Lyon et la Syrie en 1919; les bases d'une intervention," *Revue historique*, CCXXIV (Oct.-Dec. 1960), 275-320.

<sup>9</sup> The following information was derived from largely hagiological works: Comité départemental du Rhône, *La Colonisation lyonnaise*, pp. 150-51; Launay, *Nos missionnaires*, p. 160; Jean Escot, *Le Bienheureux Jean-Pierre Néel et ses compagnons martyrs des monts du lyonnais au Kouy-Toheou* (Lyon, 1951); Valerien Groffier, *Héros trop oubliés de notre épopée coloniale* (Lyon, 1928), pp. 477, 501-3; "Le Muerte de M. Berthelot et les épreuves des Chrétiens du Koung-si," *Les Missions catholiques*, XXX (June 24, 1898), 289-92; Ulysse Pila, Rapport, "Mission d'exploration commerciale au Chine," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1895*, pp. 297-35; "Tonkin occidentale," *Les Missions catholiques*, XXX (Jan. 14, 1898), 15-16.

priests, three of them from Lyon, perished between December 25, 1883, and January 6, 1884. As late in the century as 1898 Mathieu Berthelot was killed in Kwangsi province in China. Lesser honors than martyrdom also distinguished the missionaries from Lyon. In the last decade of the century the Bishop of Chengtu, the Provicar Apostolic of Western Tonkin, and the Apostolic Vicar of Laos came from Lyon. The city had reason to be proud of the "colonizers of souls" it had spread throughout the world.<sup>10</sup>

Missionaries and their supporters were not the only Lyonnais, however, to concern themselves with overseas activity. The city's major industry in the nineteenth century, the manufacture of silken textiles, confronted serious problems both in securing a dependable supply of raw silk and reliable markets for the finished products.<sup>11</sup> These problems led to the development of a markedly imperialist orientation, expressed in the undertakings of particular business firms and the concerns of the local geographical society. But it was the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon which most clearly formulated the imperialist point of view and strongly supported concrete plans for expansion. By 1895 its vice-president was probably justified in calling it "the most colonial of the [French] Chambers of Commerce."<sup>12</sup>

The chamber's espousal of imperialism began with an address to the king in July 1830, that stressed the value of founding establishments in Algeria.<sup>13</sup> In the subsequent debate over the future of Algeria, the chamber vigorously supported retention of the new acquisition.<sup>14</sup> The Société de Colons lyonnaises, formed in 1835, detected great promise in the new colony.<sup>15</sup> Algeria would provide an outlet for domestic social discontent, something with which Lyon was all too familiar.<sup>16</sup> It would supply French factories with raw materials.<sup>17</sup> Of vital interest to Lyon was the prospect of developing Algerian sericulture.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Zimmerman, "Lyon colonial," *Lyon et le région lyonnaise en 1906*, II, *Économie sociale—agriculture—commerce—industrie—transports—navigation—aérostation* (Lyon, 1906), 230-83.

<sup>11</sup> These factors are treated at some length in John F. Laffey, "French Imperialism and the Lyon Mission to China" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Cornell University, 1966).

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Maurice Zimmerman, "Lyon et la colonisation française," *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales*, IX (June 15, 1900), 705-17; X (July 1, 1900), 1-21, 708.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Zimmermann, *Lyon et le région lyonnaise en 1906*, II, 238.

<sup>15</sup> Zimmermann, *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales*, p. 708.

<sup>16</sup> Louis-François Trolliet, le président de la Société des Colons de Lyon, *Mémoire sur la nécessité et sur les avantages de la colonisation d'Alger* (Lyon, 1835), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Although the production of raw silk in Algeria was ultimately to prove disappointing, other interests were developed, among them the Société agricole lyonnaise du Nord de l'Afrique.<sup>19</sup> Substantial Lyonnais holdings in Algeria and Tunisia were consolidated as the century advanced.<sup>20</sup>

Under the Second Empire, the thrust from the African littoral received support. In 1862 members of the Lyon Chamber of Commerce acted as hosts to a delegation of Turgeg chieftains with whom they discussed the possibilities of developing the commerce of the Sahara.<sup>21</sup> Four years later the Chamber of Commerce provided a subsidy for Le Saint, who was being sent by the Société de géographie de Paris to explore equatorial Africa.<sup>22</sup> By the sixties imperialism had become vital to the existence of Lyon's industry. With the outbreak of pebrine in French sericulture in 1852, the production of raw silk in France plummeted, and the manufacturers of Lyon were forced to look elsewhere for it.<sup>23</sup> Shortly after the outbreak of the disease the firm of the Saint-Simonian, Arlès-Dufour, began to inform its customers of the promising condition of sericulture in Syria.<sup>24</sup> French concerns established cocooneries there and by their employment of Maronite Christians lent another dimension to France's claims to the protection of Christians in the Near East. The Druse-Maronite hostility, erupting into massacre, harmed these establishments and led to the French intervention of 1860.<sup>25</sup>

Syrian silk, however, was not the only incentive for involvement in the Near East. As early as 1847 the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon had voted five thousand francs in support of studies on the piercing of the isthmus of Suez, a project especially dear to Arlès-Dufour.<sup>26</sup> In

<sup>19</sup> Zimmermann, *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales*, p. 717.

<sup>20</sup> Zimmermann, *Lyon et la région lyonnaise en 1906*, II, 262-66.

<sup>21</sup> Comité départemental du Rhône, *La Colonisation lyonnaise*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>22</sup> And in 1875 the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon subscribed 5,000 francs to support Paul Soleillet's attempt to establish commercial relations between Algeria and Senegal by way of the Sahara. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> The last good harvest of cocoons in France for more than a decade took place in 1855, when 19,800,000 of them were gathered. Even then, however, it took eleven kilograms of cocoons to produce one kilogram of raw silk whereas it had taken only nine in 1851. The harvests of the succeeding years were disastrous: 7,500,000 kilograms in 1856 and 1857; 9,000,000 kilograms in 1858 and 1859; 8,000,000 kilograms in 1860; 5,800,000 kilograms in 1861 and 1862; 6,000,000 kilograms in 1863 and 1864; and 4,000,000 kilograms in 1865. E. Pariset, *Histoire de la fabrique lyonnaise; étude sur le régime social et économique et l'industrie de la soie, depuis le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Lyon, 1901), pp. 338-39.

<sup>24</sup> Chevallier, "Lyon et la Syrie," p. 282.

<sup>25</sup> M. Emerit, "La Crise syrienne et l'expansion économique française en 1860," *Revue historique*, CCVII (April-June 1952), 211-32.

<sup>26</sup> E. Pariset, *La Chambre de Commerce de Lyon; étude faite sur les registres de ses délibérations, II, Dix-neuvième siècle* (Lyon, 1899), 193.

1865 members of the chamber visited the Suez site and again were present at the opening of the canal in 1869.<sup>27</sup>

Beyond Suez lay the Far East, the world's greatest silk producing area. The industry in Lyon had considered China, first with fear and then with polite indifference, as a possible competing center of production.<sup>28</sup> The catastrophic impact of pebrine on French sericulture forced reconsideration. Paul Chartron had a representative in Shanghai from 1854. Victor Pignatal established a branch of his firm at Chefoo in 1862. These silk merchants would be among the founders of the *Crédit lyonnais*.<sup>29</sup> In 1860 the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon voted resolutions favoring the creation of a steamship line trading with the Far East and the founding of a bank there.<sup>30</sup> These recommendations were swiftly acted upon. Late in the same year the *Comptoir d'Escompte* opened its first foreign branch in Shanghai. The next year the French state signed a contract with the *Messageries maritimes* providing for a monthly departure to the Far East. In the 1860's China came to rival Italy as a source of raw silk for Lyon.<sup>31</sup>

The city jealously guarded its increasing stake in the China trade. On February 22, 1870, the president of the Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce about the Alcock Convention, Article XII of which allowed for an increase in the Chinese duty on the export of silk. He requested that "the representative of France in China receive the instructions required for him to oppose an increase in the duties on silks being exported and to refuse the concessions that the Chinese have obtained from the British envoy."<sup>32</sup> In a subsequent letter he underscored Lyon's concern with Chinese silk: "We attach . . . very great importance to this revision of the Treaty of Tientsin, for it is silk which forms the principal element of our

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Paul Pelliot, *L'Origine des relations de la France avec la Chine, le premier voyage de "l'Amphitrite" en Chine* (Paris, 1930), pp. 67, 74; Pierre Bonnassieux, *Les Grandes Compagnies de commerce; étude pour servir à l'histoire de la colonisation* (Paris, 1892), pp. 340-43; Justin Godart, *L'Ouvrier en soie, monographie du tisseur lyonnais* (Lyon, 1899), pp. 208-9; Pariset, *Fabrique lyonnaise*, p. 297.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Bouvier, *Le Crédit lyonnaise de 1863 à 1882, les années de formation d'une banque de dépôts* (Paris, 1960) I, 106.

<sup>30</sup> Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Commerce de la France avec la Chine: délibération prise sur le rapport de M. Rondot, délégué de la Chambre, Séance du 12 janvier 1860* (Lyon, 1860), pp. 25-26.

<sup>31</sup> "Mouvement de la condition des soies de Lyon depuis 1860 par provenances," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1900* (Lyon, 1901), n.p.

<sup>32</sup> Louis Guerin to the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, Feb. 22, 1870, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Révision du traité de Tien-tsin avec la Chine: lettres à S. Exc. le Ministre de l'Agriculture et du Commerce* (Lyon, 1870), pp. 4-6.

commerce with China. Further, the use of Chinese silk is necessary to the work of our looms. Under this double relationship, we have a more direct interest than England in the question of the increase of duties on the export of silks, and we must be especially alert that this tax is not increased."<sup>33</sup>

The exercise of such pressure contributed to the growth of the silk trade. In the 1870's, despite a major crisis in the local industry, Chinese silks assumed a commanding position in Lyon. They accounted in 1877 for 42.07 per cent of the total amount of raw silk received from all sources.<sup>34</sup> By 1888 France, primarily Lyon, was possibly consuming two-thirds of the silks exported from China.<sup>35</sup> The importance of this commerce gave the city a vital interest in China while presenting France with a continuing unfavorable balance in its trade with that nation.

However, in southeast Asia, France was slowly acquiring hold over Indochina, reinforcing Lyon's concern with China and offering, among other advantages, a possible means of reversing the adverse trade balance. In pursuit of more exact information about the new colony of Cochinchina, the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon asked Bonnevey<sup>36</sup> to investigate it.<sup>37</sup> The acquisition of Tonkin could not fail to interest Lyon, its major firms having been among the first to invest in the Banque de l'Indochine.<sup>38</sup> Addressing the local Société d'Économie politique in 1884, Ulysse Pila stressed the advantages which would flow from the acquisition of Tonkin. With the spectacle of the crisis resulting from the crash of the Lyon-based Union générale immediately before him, he evoked a dark picture of France "on the eve of a terrible economic crisis" unless she expanded abroad.<sup>39</sup> As Pila's generalizations did not assuage the need for more exact information, the Chamber of Commerce decided to commission Paul Brunat "to explore our new Asiatic colony from the commercial point of view."<sup>40</sup> Brunat's ency-

<sup>33</sup> Louis Guerin to the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, May 3, 1870. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu des opérations de la condition des soies de Lyon pendant l'année 1895* (Lyon, 1896), p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Castonnet des Fosses, "La Chine industrielle et commerciale," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, VII (April-June 1888), 331-65.

<sup>36</sup> The documents do not provide full names.

<sup>37</sup> Comité départemental du Rhône, *La Colonisation lyonnaise*, p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Henri Baudoin, *La Banque de l'Indochine* (Paris, 1903), p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Ulysse Pila, *Le Tonkin et la colonisation française* (Lyon, 1884), p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Brunat, *Exploration commerciale du Tonkin: rapport présenté à la Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Séance du 18 février 1885* (Lyon, 1885), p. v.

clopedic report, submitted to the Chamber on February 18, 1885, dealt with such Tonkinese products as rice, sugar, silk, cotton, textiles, paper, tea, spices, medicines, dyes, woods, resins, and tobacco.<sup>41</sup>

Not content to concern itself only with Tonkin and the prospects of trade with south China moving through it, businessmen of Lyon also looked to the older stake in Sino-French relations. The treaty ending the conflict between France and China provided for the conclusion of a commercial convention between the two countries. The task of negotiating it was confided to Cogordan, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who originally came from Lyon.<sup>42</sup> On the night prior to his departure for the Far East, he was the guest of honor at a banquet given by the Chamber of Commerce. There Cogordan expressed his willingness "to serve the great Lyonnais commercial interests."<sup>43</sup>

He was obviously unprepared for what followed. The vice-president of the chamber revealed that in 1884 Félix Faure, Under-Secretary of Navy and Colonies, had secretly requested its views on modifications to be wrought in the Sino-French treaty of 1858.<sup>44</sup> The reply of the chamber was then read to Cogordan. He could only observe that "the moment has still not come in which to strip this communication of its confidential character."<sup>45</sup> But the concrete demands of the commercial and industrial magnates of Lyon were not to be avoided that evening. While it was recognized that "by the very fact of being a Lyonnais, M. Cogordan has known for a long time the *desiderata* of our commerce of silks and silken fabrics," he was yet reminded of them at length.<sup>46</sup> The views of the *Chambre syndicale des Soieries* were presented.<sup>47</sup> Giraud, on behalf of the *Syndicat des marchands de soie*, argued that the major concern of the French negotiator should be the suppression of the internal Chinese duties.<sup>48</sup> Morel, a Lyonnais director of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and Ulysse Pila agreed with Giraud.<sup>49</sup> Cogordan, of course, could not satisfy all

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-51.

<sup>42</sup> "Traité de commerce avec la Chine: mission de M. Cogordan," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1885* (Lyon, 1886), pp. 167-76.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



these demands, and the final treaty was bitterly attacked by colonialists.

Such attacks in part reflected frustration in face of the anticolonial reaction which had set in after the defeat at Langson (March 28, 1885). Yet despite the disinterest, if not hostility, of the mass of the French population to expansion, Lyon did not abandon imperialism. In 1884 Ulysse Pila had founded a branch of his firm in Tonkin. Two years later he opened up trade with the Chinese province of Yunnan.<sup>50</sup> Although this undertaking did not immediately prosper, Pila's position in Tonkin was far from hopeless.<sup>51</sup> "Under the auspices of the most honorable houses" of Lyon, the Société des Docks de Haiphong had been founded in 1886.<sup>52</sup> Pila was its president. His fellow activists in the ranks of the local geographical society, G. Cambefort and G. Saint-Olive, were also officers.<sup>53</sup> After encountering various problems, it opened its first installations in 1889.<sup>54</sup>

In France itself the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon pursued the protection and expansion of the Lyonnais interests in Indochina and China. In 1886 it received from the Resident General of Indochina a collection of samples of Tonkinese silken fabrics.<sup>55</sup> Three years later it held a reception for the uncle of the Annamese monarch.<sup>56</sup> That year the chamber was also receiving, through the geographical society of Lyon, information on central China and Tibet from a Lyonnais who was supposedly exploring the area on behalf of the Russian government.<sup>57</sup>

The role of the geographical society was not accidental. Lyon

<sup>50</sup> Ulysse Pila, "Le Régime douanier de l'Indo-Chine, communication faite à la 6<sup>e</sup> section, le 18 décembre," *Recueil des délibérations du Congrès colonial national—Paris, 1889-1890. II. Rapports de commissaires. Documents annexes* (Paris, 1890), 345-54.

<sup>51</sup> By 1889 Pila's steamboat line to Hongkong had been discontinued, the Nam Dinh branch of the firm had been closed, and that at Hanoi was on the verge of suspension. *Ibid.*, 352-53.

<sup>52</sup> "Société des Docks de Haiphong," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1888* (Lyon, 1889), pp. 249-51.

<sup>53</sup> Alfred Bonzon, *Manuel des sociétés par actions de la région lyonnaise* (Lyon, 1893), p. 293.

<sup>54</sup> The government of Indochina eventually purchased the installations at an excellent price. J. Chaillley-Bert, *Dix années de politique coloniale* (Paris, 1902), pp. 122-23.

<sup>55</sup> "Enchantillons des tissus de soie du Tonkin," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1886* (Lyon, 1887), p. 68.

<sup>56</sup> "Réception de la Mission annamite," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1889* (Lyon, 1890), pp. 251-55.

<sup>57</sup> "Explorations de M. Martin dans la Chine centrale et le Thibet," *ibid.*, pp. 63-64. "Mort de l'explorateur Martin," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1892* (Lyon, 1893), p. 217.

initiated the basically imperialist geographical movement of the 1870's with the founding of the first such provincial society.<sup>58</sup> The local business community stood behind the geographical society, with the Chamber of Commerce a major source of financial aid.<sup>59</sup> Although the listing of professions is often incomplete, the geographical society's membership lists contain the names of many of the city's more prominent entrepreneurs.<sup>60</sup> Of major interest to the local business community was such information as that forwarded to the society by the Apostolic Vicar of Korea and that contained in the atlas of sericulture prepared under its auspices.<sup>61</sup>

In the last decade of the century a combination of threat and well-being drove the business community of Lyon both to continue along what were by then traditional imperial lines and to open new avenues of expansionist endeavor.<sup>62</sup> In both the old and the new undertakings the Chamber of Commerce played the central role. It continued to provide a subsidy for the geographical society.<sup>63</sup> Pila, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, was vice-president of the society.<sup>64</sup> He was also a vice-president of the Paris-based Union coloniale française. Founded in 1893, this organization received an annual subvention of 1,000 francs from the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon.<sup>65</sup> With a contribution

<sup>58</sup> Donald V. McKay, "Colonialism in the French Geographical Movement," *Geographical Review*, XXXIII (April 1943), 214-32. Agnes Murphy, *The Ideology of French Imperialism, 1871-1881* (Wash., D.C., 1948).

<sup>59</sup> In 1878 the geographical society of Lyon received these subventions: Conseil général du Rhône, 250 francs; Conseil municipal de Lyon, 3,000 francs; Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, 1,000 francs; Ministre d'Instruction publique, 900 francs; total, 5,150 francs. "Situation financière, 31 décembre 1878," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, II (1878), 496-97.

<sup>60</sup> "Liste des sociétaires," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, V (1884), 361-74.  
<sup>61</sup> F. C. Ridet, "Lettre, 25 août 1875," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, I (Jan. 1876), 278-82; Léon Clugnet, *Géographie de la soie, étude géographique et statistique sur la production et le commerce de la soie en cocon* (Lyon, 1877).

<sup>62</sup> For the situation of the silk industry of Lyon in the last decade of the century, see Laffey, "French Imperialism," pp. 104-16.

<sup>63</sup> "Actes de la société: assemblée générale du 10 décembre 1898," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, XV (Jan. 1, 1899), 289-316; "Actes de la société, assemblée générale du jeudi 7 décembre 1899," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, XVI (Jan. 1, 1900), 97-123.

<sup>64</sup> "Nomination annuelle du bureau, séance du comité d'action du 11 décembre 1896," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, XIV (Jan. 1, 1897), 98.

<sup>65</sup> "Souscription à l'Union coloniale française," Séance du 8 février 1894, Lettre du 20 février, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1894*, p. 174; "Souscription en faveur de l'Union coloniale française," Séance du 1er avril 1897, Lettre du 3 avril 1897, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1897* (Lyon, 1898), p. 225; "Subvention à l'Union coloniale française," Séance du 10 février 1898, Chambre de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1898* (Lyon, 1899), p. 326. "Union coloniale française (Allocation de la Chambre)," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1899* (Lyon, 1900), p. 352.

of 1,000 francs, the chamber in 1896 became one of the founding members of the colonialist Comité Dupleix.<sup>66</sup> Two years later a smaller subsidy went to the Comité de Madagascar.<sup>67</sup>

The problems of imperial education also occupied the Chamber of Commerce. Lyon's École supérieure de Commerce, founded in 1872, had encouraged a concern with expansion.<sup>68</sup> But this was not sufficient for Lyon, nor was the program of the École coloniale in Paris. Its founding in 1889 had provoked a slashing report drafted by Pila for the Chamber of Commerce. He complained that the chambers of commerce had not been consulted about its founding.<sup>69</sup> Charging the new school with possessing a monopoly of colonial posts for its students, he argued that this discriminated against provincial and colonial youth.<sup>70</sup> The Chamber of Commerce resumed the attack in 1895; it wanted the termination of what was again described as the Parisian institution's virtual monopoly of colonial positions.<sup>71</sup> It asked that competition for these positions be opened to "students of other colonial schools, and notably the one which we wish to create at Lyon."<sup>72</sup>

When negotiations with the Academy of Lyon and the local École supérieure de Commerce for the founding of a program of colonial studies came to little, the Chamber decided to sponsor its own series of courses.<sup>73</sup> In January, 1899, Paul Doumer, Governor General of Indochina, offered an annual subvention of 30,000 francs for such a program.<sup>74</sup> The following July the chamber itself provided 10,000

<sup>66</sup> "Comité Dupleix: Souscription de la Chambre," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1896* (Lyon, 1897), p. 314.

<sup>67</sup> "Souscription en faveur de Comité de Madagascar," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1898*, p. 327. The Chamber had already provided 2,000 francs for the Comité de l'Afrique française, "Souscription en faveur du Comité de l'Afrique française," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1891* (Lyon, 1892), pp. 399-400.

<sup>68</sup> Ganneval, professeur à l'École supérieure de Commerce de Lyon, "La Colonisation moderne, conférence du dimanche 27 novembre 1887," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, VII (Sept.-Dec. 1887), 183-84.

<sup>69</sup> "Création d'une école coloniale," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1890* (Lyon, 1891), pp. 331-37.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>71</sup> "Privilège de l'École coloniale de Paris," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1895*, pp. 256-61.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> "Création à Lyon d'une chaire d'études coloniales," Séance du 8 novembre, Lettre du 26 octobre 1894, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1894*, p. 173; "Projet de création à l'École de Commerce d'une section d'enseignement coloniale," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1895*, pp. 272-73; Zimmermann, *Lyon et la région lyonnaise en 1906*, II, 247.

<sup>74</sup> "Organisation du cours d'enseignement colonial," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1899*, pp. 332-48.

francs in support of colonial courses.<sup>75</sup> Although Pila accepted the program, it fell far short of his ideal arrangement. He had envisioned a series of regionally based colonial schools, oriented more toward commerce than administration and specializing in instruction on the colonial area most relevant to the region where each school was located.<sup>76</sup>

Disappointed on this score, Pila nevertheless had several major successes to his credit in the last decade of the century. He was the organizer of the large Colonial Exposition held in Lyon in 1894.<sup>77</sup> In justification of the decision to hold the exposition, the Chamber of Commerce had reviewed Lyon's colonial history, deciding that "this natural tendency has assumed a very great strength as a result of an abundance of Lyonnais capital, the importance of the export industries of the region, the necessity of resorting to colonial products for numerous industries and even for the feeding of a dense population."<sup>78</sup> Another motive behind expansion was suggested at the opening of the exposition when the mayor of the city, aware of the increasing restlessness of French labor, outlined a program of social imperialism: "Colonial expansion will increase the public wealth, will give impetus to the industry of the nation, and will attenuate the crises born of suffering and misery. In place of a chimerical and harmful dream, it will realize the equality which honors not a lowering of some individuals but the raising of the entire nation to a higher degree of prosperity and morality."<sup>79</sup> The *mission civilisatrice* was not forgotten, although the president of the Chamber of Commerce gave it a typically Lyonnais twist: "The sole *raison d'être* of colonial conquest is to bring peoples more justice and science in their government and in the exploitation of their riches."<sup>80</sup> The exposition, with its exhibitions and the distinguished visitors it attracted, provided a focus for the Lyonnais imperialism of the last decade of the century.

Lyon's imperial endeavors, however, were remarkably diffuse in

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>76</sup> Ulysse Pila, *Vingt ans de progrès colonial: nécessité d'un enseignement colonial, conférence faite à la Société d'Économie politique de Lyon* (Lyon, 1900), p. 29.

<sup>77</sup> "Exposition coloniale de Lyon en 1894," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1893* (Lyon, 1894), pp. 193-200.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>79</sup> Gaillon, Address, *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1894*, pp. 200-04.

<sup>80</sup> Edouard Aynard, Address. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-15. Another member of the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon provided much the same definition of the *mission civilisatrice*: "To civilize people in the modern sense of the word is to teach them to work in order to acquire, to spend, and to trade." Auguste Isaac, Address, "Réception de M. Doumer, gouverneur général de l'Indochine," *Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, Compte rendu, 1901* (Lyon, 1902), pp. 470-98.

this period. In 1891 the Chamber of Commerce sent a representative on a mission of investigation to the French Congo.<sup>81</sup> The next year the chamber gave a reception for Charles Rouvier, then on his way to take up the post of Resident General in Tunisia. Rouvier obliged his hosts by assuring them that he would devote "the greatest care to the protection of Lyonnais interests in Tunisia."<sup>82</sup> A deputy of the chamber toured Tunisia in 1896.<sup>83</sup> The next year, introducing a speaker then in France on a mission for the Tunisian government, a member of the Chamber of Commerce remarked that no other city had "proportionately furnished as many *colons* to Tunisia."<sup>84</sup> By the end of the century seven firms interested in the exploitation of Madagascar had their home offices in Lyon.<sup>85</sup> The Comptoir lyonnais d'Abyssinie was founded in 1899.<sup>86</sup>

Even so, Africa was hardly the key region in the colonial preoccupations of Lyon. The Far East still held primacy of place for the city. The interests there were carefully cultivated. The Chamber of Commerce in 1891 gave a banquet for Jean de Lanessan, who was departing the next day to assume his functions as Governor General of Indochina.<sup>87</sup> Pila read a report at the affair. Silk could be produced in Tonkin, he declared, indeed the very type which Lyon now purchased in Italy.<sup>88</sup> He stressed the advantages of making direct contact with China through Tonkin.<sup>89</sup> Exchange between the south of China

<sup>81</sup> "Mission commerciale au Congo française," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu*, 1891, pp. 398-99.

<sup>82</sup> "Réception de M. Charles Rouvier, résident général à Tunis," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu*, 1892, pp. 204-8.

<sup>83</sup> "Délégation de M. Teste en Tunisie," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu*, 1896, pp. 307-12.

<sup>84</sup> Louis Chavent, Address, "Conférence sur la Tunisie, par M. Bonhoure," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu*, 1897, pp. 219-22.

<sup>85</sup> Zimmermann, *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales*, p. 718.

<sup>86</sup> Comité départemental du Rhône, *La Colonisation lyonnaise*, p. 98.

<sup>87</sup> Lanessan, then a deputy from the Seine, had addressed the geographical society of Lyon in 1888, acknowledging that "it is from here, from Lyon, that the first colonists carried to Indochina . . . their capital and their wise experience in business." Lanessan in his capacity of Governor General of Indochina was back in Lyon for the inauguration of the Colonial Exposition of 1894, where he drew attention to the millions of Indochinese awaiting French products. Jean de Lanessan, "L'Expansion coloniale de la France, ses intérêts dans l'Extrême Orient, Conférence du 25 mars 1888," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, VII (July-Aug. 1888), 473-88; Jean de Lanessan, Address, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu*, 1894, pp. 218-19. Lanessan was elected a deputy by a Lyonnais district in 1898 and became Minister of Navy in Waldeck-Rousseau's cabinet.

<sup>88</sup> Ulysse Pila, Report, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Séance extraordinaire du 28 mai 1891: réception de M. de Lanessan, Gouverneur générale de l'Indo-Chine, rapport de M. Ulysse Pila sur son second voyage d'études commerciales au Tonkin, Banquet offert par la Chambre de Commerce de Lyon* (Lyon, 1891), p. 6-27.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and France's possession could be encouraged by the construction of a railroad from Hanoi to Yunnan and by the provision of more free trade between the French colony and the Chinese empire.<sup>90</sup> A similar banquet was held on February 16, 1895, in honor of Lanessan's successor, Armand Rousseau. Auguste Isaac, vice-president of the chamber, drew attention to the particular interest of Lyon in Asia.<sup>91</sup> He informed Rousseau that "China has always exercised a fascination on our Chamber. We have asked the government of the Republic to favor there the attempts at the pacific and commercial penetration of the southwest."<sup>92</sup> Isaac was followed by Pila, who, repeating the same message in more detail, declared that "of all the parts of the world which have been opened in recent times to French expansion, the Far East has most seduced the ambitions of the commerce of the Lyon region."<sup>93</sup> Pila gave Rousseau to understand that he would not be leaving Lyon behind when he arrived in the Far East.<sup>94</sup> He then urged the construction of two railroads which he believed would allow France to dominate the trade of the western provinces of China.<sup>95</sup> The stage was being set for the despatch of a major mission to these areas.

Pila, acting for the Chamber of Commerce, organized this exploratory mission.<sup>96</sup> Invitations to participate in it were accepted by the chambers of commerce of Lille, Roubaix, Roanne, Bordeaux, and Marseille. The chamber of Lyon mobilized government support for it. Leaving France in 1895 the expedition spent two years in the Far East, visiting Indochina and the provinces of south and western China. While it was still conducting its investigations, the Chamber of Commerce welcomed the Chinese statesman, Li Hung-chang, to Lyon. The president of the chamber pointed out to him that owing to the importance of the silk trade "very few cities" had as much claim as Lyon to

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 21.

<sup>91</sup> Auguste Isaac, Address, Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu, 1895*, p. 237.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>93</sup> Ulysse Pila, Address. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-53.

<sup>94</sup> ". . . you will recognize in the country you have been called upon to administer . . . [that] the Lyonnaise dominate both commerce and the administration, and that most of the works undertaken or accomplished are of Lyonnaise creation or have been participated in by the Lyonnais region: I will cite to you the Houillères de Tourane, the Docks de Haiphong, the public works of the city of Haiphong, these last under the direction of M. Malon, a Lyonnais, the Syndicat lyonnais d'études pour l'Indo-Chine, the farm of the Croix Cuvelier, under the direction of M. Thomé, a member of the council of the protectorate, also a Lyonnais. . . ." *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 251-52.

<sup>96</sup> For the mission, see Laffey, "French Imperialism," pp. 251-400.

his "attention and sympathy."<sup>97</sup> The aims of the mission then in China were described for him.<sup>98</sup> Whatever Li privately thought of this program, he expressed his happiness at visiting Lyon because of its ties with his country.<sup>99</sup>

The mission bore fruit. The Compagnie lyonnaise indo-chinoise was founded in 1898 to promote trade with China and economic development in Indochina.<sup>100</sup> Its president was Pila, and two former members of the mission were its representatives in Tonkin.<sup>101</sup> The same year the Société cotonnière de l'Indochine was founded with Pila on its board of directors.<sup>102</sup> He was also involved with the Société des Ciments Portland artificiels de l'Indochine, which was founded in the next year.<sup>103</sup> The Compagnie lyonnaise indo-chinoise possessed exclusive rights to the sale of the products of both the textile and the cement firms.<sup>104</sup> After the return of the expedition, Pila also concerned himself with plans for Anglo-French cooperation in the exploitation of the supposed wealth of Yunnan.<sup>105</sup> He was not, however, connected with yet another undertaking resulting from the mission, the Société lyonnaise de Colonisation en Indo-Chine.<sup>106</sup>

These concerns, along with others such as the Société des Docks et des Houillères de Tourane, led the business community of Lyon to take pride in its imperial achievements.<sup>107</sup> By the end of the century, the city alone had invested an estimated 255,000,000 francs in the empire.<sup>108</sup> The largest single amount of this sum, between 60 and 80

<sup>97</sup> Edouard Aynard, Address, "Réception de S. E. Li Hong-chang, Ambassadeur extraordinaire de S. M. l'empereur de Chine," Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *Compte rendu*, 1896, pp. 460-70.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>99</sup> Li Hung-chang, Address. *Ibid.*, pp. 465-66.

<sup>100</sup> Alfred Bonzon and J. J. Girardet, *Manuel des sociétés par actions de la région lyonnaise* (Lyon, 1901), pp. 519-20.

<sup>101</sup> Zimmermann, *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>102</sup> Bonzon and Girardet, *Manuel*, pp. 517-18.

<sup>103</sup> Zimmermann, *Lyon et la région lyonnaise en 1906*, II, 274.

<sup>104</sup> Comité départemental du Rhône, *La Colonisation lyonnaise*, p. 121.

<sup>105</sup> Michel Brugière, "Le Chemin de fer du Yunnan; Paul Doumer et la politique d'intervention française en China [1889-1902]," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 77<sup>e</sup> Année (July-Sept. 1963), pp. 262-78.

<sup>106</sup> Bonzon and Girardet, *Manuel*, p. 542.

<sup>107</sup> An important coal vein at Non San had been ceded by the government of Annam to a Chinese. In 1889 he sold the concession to the Société des Houillères de Tourane, which had been founded in Lyon. Fires in the shafts and lack of capital drove this concern into dissolution in 1894. Four years later the Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane, with Pila as its president, took over the concession. Comité départemental du Rhône, *La colonisation lyonnaise*, pp. 112-14.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

million francs, was invested in Indochina.<sup>109</sup> As the citizens of Lyon were, and are, reticent about their investments, such figures can be only approximations. What is clear is that during the nineteenth century the business community of Lyon developed an interest in economic imperialism which complemented the religious impulse towards expansion.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*