

REPORT ON THE RESEARCH UNIT:  
Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale  
LaCiTO

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE  
FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS AND  
RESEARCH BODIES:

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3  
Institut National des Langues et Civilisations  
Orientales – INALCO  
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique –  
CNRS

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**EVALUATION CAMPAIGN 2017-2018**  
GROUP D



In the name of Hcéres<sup>1</sup> :

Michel Cosnard, President

In the name of the experts committees<sup>2</sup> :

Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, Chairman of the  
committee

Under the decree No.2014-1365 dated 14 november 2014,

<sup>1</sup> The president of HCERES "countersigns the evaluation reports set up by the experts committees and signed by their chairman." (Article 8, paragraph 5) ;

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation reports "are signed by the chairman of the expert committee". (Article 11, paragraph 2).

This report is the sole result of the unit's evaluation by the expert committee, the composition of which is specified below. The assessments contained herein are the expression of an independent and collegial reviewing by the committee.

## UNIT PRESENTATION

**Unit name:** Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale

**Unit acronym:** LaCITO

**Requested label:**

**Application type:** Renewal

**Current number:**

**Head of the unit  
(2017-2018):** Mr Alexandre FRANÇOIS

**Project leader  
(2019-2023):** Mr Alexandre FRANÇOIS

**Number of teams or themes:**

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Chair:** Mr Nikolaus P. HIMMELMANN, Université de Cologne, Germany

**Experts:** Ms Elisabetta CARPITELLI, Université Grenoble Alpes (representative of CoNRS)  
Mr Serge HEIDEN, ENS Lyon (representative of supporting personnel)  
Mr Emmanuel SCHANG, Université d'Orléans, (representative of CNU)  
Mr Jean-Christophe VERSTRAETE, Université de Leuven, Belgique

**HCERES scientific officer:**

Ms Anne CARLIER

**Representatives of supervising institutions and bodies:**

Ms Clarisse DAVID, CNRS, *Déléguée régionale*, DR Paris-Villejuif (videoconference)

Ms Hamida DEMIRDACHE, CNRS - InSHS (videoconference)

Mr Olivier GAUTIER, CNRS *Délégation régionale*

Mr Sylvain-Karl GOSSELET, CNRS *Délégation régionale*

Ms Stéphanie LACOMBE, *Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3*

## INTRODUCTION

### HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE UNIT

The unit *Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale* is a UMR (7107) of the CNRS. Founded in 1976, LaCiTO celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. Since 2000, the unit is located on the CNRS campus in Villejuif. It has two *tutelles universitaires*: the university Paris 3 Sorbonne nouvelle, and the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO).

### MANAGEMENT TEAM

Director: Alexandre FRANÇOIS  
Deputy director: Lameen SOUAG  
Administrator: Anissa FORGET

### HCERES NOMENCLATURE

SHS4\_1 Linguistique  
SHS2\_3 Anthropologie et ethnologie  
SHS5\_2 Littératures et langues étrangères, Civilisations, Cultures et langues régionales

### SCIENTIFIC DOMAIN

Since its foundation, LaCiTO has been engaged in research on little known languages, typically used in smallish groups without writing traditions (hence *tradition orale*). Many of these groups are giving up their traditional ways of life and, as a consequence, often also their languages and cultures. Thus, a primary task of research at LaCiTO is to document and analyse languages and cultures before they have disappeared, both from a linguistic and an anthropological point of view. Research at LaCiTO is not areally confined but includes all continents and habitats, which allows for cross-fertilisation and sharing insights and techniques across areas. One communality of the communities LaCiTO members work with is their remoteness in terms of location and their traditional organization of life and livelihood in accordance with orally transmitted practices. The following three themes strands structure research at LaCiTO:

1. Description and documentation of languages: Fieldwork, corpus building and analysis, digital archiving.
2. Typological and historical linguistics: Understanding and theorizing linguistic diversity.
3. Anthropological linguistics: Understanding and theorizing linguistic practices.

### UNIT WORKFORCE

Unit workforce	Number 30/06/2017	Number 01/01/2019
<b>Permanent staff</b>		
Full professors and similar positions	5	4
Assistant professors and similar positions	7	8
Full time research directors (Directeurs de recherche) and similar positions	6	6
Full time research associates (Chargés de recherche) and similar positions	3	3
Other scientists ("Conservateurs, cadres scientifiques des EPIC, fondations, industries, etc.")	0	0
High school teachers	0	0

Supporting personnel (ITAs, BIATSSs and others, notably of EPICs)	4	3
<b>TOTAL permanent staff</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Non-permanent staff</b>		
Non-permanent professors and associate professors, including emeritus	2	
Non-permanent full time scientists, including emeritus, post-docs	7	
Non-permanent supporting personnel	1	
PhD Students	33	
<b>TOTAL non-permanent staff</b>	<b>41</b>	
<b>TOTAL unit</b>		
	<b>66</b>	

## GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

LaCiTO is one of the world leaders in describing and documenting the languages and cultures of communities still following a more traditional way of life style based on orally transmitted traditions. Building on the fieldwork necessary to collect basic data for such languages and cultures, LaCiTO is also involved in crosslinguistic and diachronic comparison to better understand the ways language and the human mind operate and to unravel events in human history not documented in written records. The results of its work are not only available in a large number of high-quality publications in international journals and book series, but also in its *Collection Pangloss*, an online resource making its primary data collections available to the scientific and the general public. The unit in addition produces general interest publications and information for the French public as well as for the communities they work with.

In the last five years, LaCiTO has initiated a number of transformational processes triggered by changes in French research funding and government. The transformation process faces two interrelated challenges. The unit has been losing basic funding and personnel (due to retirements) and has to make special efforts to recruit younger researchers to achieve a more balanced age distribution among its core staff. And related to this, the unit has to find ways to reconcile its long-term goals with a more project-based working style that allows for the productive integration of short-term staff funded with grant money from a diverse range of sources. While relevant changes have successfully been initiated, the unit still has some way to go, and needs support from its governing bodies, to actually complete this demanding transformation process.

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