

VISIONS OF *LA GÉOGRAPHIE HUMAINE* IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRANCE

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ABSTRACT. In the first half of the twentieth century French academic geography did not present a unified front: The “outsiders” Jean Brunhes and Pierre Deffontaines offered a vision of *la géographie humaine* that did not conform to the one proclaimed by Vidal de La Blache and his disciples. After sketching the careers of Brunhes and Deffontaines, this essay explores the network of connections between the academic editor Deffontaines and the contributors to the *Géographie Humaine* series published by Gaston Gallimard. As committed Christians, Brunhes and Deffontaines emphasized the realm of ideas, values, and decision making, as well as their tangible realization and visual expression in cultural landscapes. Both men saw the discipline of geography as a means of celebrating the diversity of the world and the popularization of geography as a way of promoting international understanding and tolerance. Their inclusivity and interaction with other academic disciplines are relevant to current practitioners of cultural geography. *Keywords:* academic publishing, Jean Brunhes, Pierre Deffontaines, diffusion of geographical knowledge, France, human geography, methodology.

In the western suburbs of Paris lies a remarkable property incorporating an elegant Japanese garden (Figure 1), a stretch of pine forest evocative of the Vosges, and a formal French garden. At the center stands a fine pavilion, and several detached houses are found within the confines of this welcome green space. The estate was landscaped by a Jewish banker and still bears his name: Jardin Albert Kahn. The Musée Albert Kahn is accommodated in one of the houses. Fascinated by the landscapes and peoples he encountered on business trips, Kahn sought to promote international understanding (Beausoleil and Ory 1995). He was drawn to the fledgling discipline of geography, served as a benefactor for travel scholarships and a prestigious academic post, and established a remarkable resource base. By 1931 this would include 72,000 photographic plates and 183,000 meters of film. He supported *la géographie humaine* through promoting the career of Jean Brunhes (1869–1930), who operated beyond French university life at the very distinguished Collège de France, where lectures were delivered but no degrees awarded.

Between the two world wars geography had become firmly established in lycée (high school) programs in France and was gradually developing an identity distinct from that of history, with which it continued to be taught. The community of university geographers remained small, and patronage was a powerful force in academic life. It allowed some scholars to escape from lycée teaching programs and become university professors but ensured that others, whose personalities, beliefs, or views did not fit, remained beyond or on the margins of the university world. The main cluster of geographical activity, in terms of academics and students, was at the Sorbonne in Paris, where Emmanuel de Martonne (1873–1955) and Albert Demangeon (1872–1940) led the Institut de Géographie and proclaimed the mes-

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