

RESEARCH ARTICLE

George Montandon, the Ainu and the theory of hologenesis

John L. Hennessey

Lund University, Department of Cultural Sciences, Box 192, 221 00 Lund, Sweden
E-mail: john.hennessey@kultur.lu.se

Argument

In 1909, Italian zoologist Daniele Rosa (1857–1944) proposed a radical new evolutionary theory: hologenesis, or simultaneous, pan-terrestrial creation and evolution driven primarily by internal factors. Hologenesis was widely ignored or rejected outside Italy, but Swiss-French anthropologist George Montandon (1879–1944) eagerly embraced and developed the theory. An ambitious careerist, Montandon's deep investment in an obscure and unpopular theory is puzzling. Today, Montandon is best known for his virulent antisemitism and active collaboration with the Nazi occupation of France at the end of his career. By that point, however, he had quietly moved away from hologenesis. This shift has gone unnoticed or been left unexplained in existing research. This article reexamines Montandon's theoretical outlook and reasons for championing Rosa's forgotten theory. It argues that while Montandon's adoption of hologenesis arose from a complex blend of scientific and personal factors, his previously overlooked early fieldwork with the Ainu played a key role. In contrast, hologenesis did not inform Montandon's later public antisemitism.

Keywords: George Montandon; hologenesis; *ologénèse*; Daniele Rosa; Ainu; scientific racism; antisemitism; evolutionary theory; anthropology

Introduction

If it were not for the shocking brutality of his behavior during the Nazi occupation of France, anthropologist George Montandon (1879–1944) would almost certainly be forgotten today. Starting in 1938, Montandon, then a professor at the École d'Anthropologie in Paris, published a series of violently antisemitic texts, becoming a darling of the French extreme right and like-minded Germans. Among other things, Montandon depicted European Jews as a parasitic force that needed to be forcibly removed to Palestine through appropriately brutal measures. These included castration or the death penalty for non-compliant men, and the mutilation of non-compliant women by cutting off part of their noses. Though he did not classify Jews as a “race” in the (for him) scientific sense of the word, Montandon maintained that they could be recognized by their physical features, in particular their nose shape (Reynaud-Paligot 2010, 70–71). Closely allying himself with the Nazis after their invasion of France, Montandon provided them with intelligence on his academic colleagues, some of whom were killed or forced out of hard-earned university and museum chairs (Conklin 2013, 317). He sought to benefit from the vacancies thus created in these institutions and he also profited from his frequent employment as an expert witness, using anthropometric methods to determine whether or not French residents were Jewish. He reportedly earned millions of francs in his production of

certificates of Jewishness or non-Jewishness that could mean the difference between life and death (Reynaud-Paligot 2010, 72). A major target of the French Resistance, he was assassinated at his home in August 1944.¹

The final chapter in Montandon's life has—understandably and rightly—dominated the relatively little scholarly attention he has been accorded. Nevertheless, Montandon's early career, while even less researched, also illuminates important aspects of the development of race science in the first decades of the twentieth century. This period was arguably marked by a number of confusing twists and turns, rather than an easily discernible trajectory. Montandon seems to have carefully hidden his antisemitism from public view before 1938. He worked in several international humanitarian groups, including the Red Cross and an anti-slavery organization, and he was even an active communist for several years (Piana 2016; Conklin 2013). In the most complete account of his life (which nonetheless only forms a portion of her history of modern French anthropology), Alice Conklin has masterfully charted the circles in which he moved and the reception of his work in interwar France (Conklin 2013). One of Conklin's main arguments is that Montandon's worldview was remarkably consistent throughout his life (Conklin 2013, 181). This is in many ways true. For example, Montandon was one of the earliest proponents of population transfers as a solution to Europe's intercultural violence (what he referred to as *transplantation massive* and what would later become better-known as ethnic cleansing), already having written a pamphlet on this in 1915 (Frank 2017, 24–29). The consistency of this with his abovementioned proposals for the forced emigration of Jews that he authored decades later is clear. Conklin also calls attention to a 1926 paper on physical characteristics of Jews that Montandon penned under a pseudonym, suggesting a longer, concealed, interest in the topic (Conklin 2013, 181; Montardit 1926). And yet, as this article will show, the relation of other major parts of his early work to his final worldview are less clear.

This article will examine Montandon from the standpoint of his main theoretical interest: the theory of hologenesis (*ologénèse* in French), as well as a previously overlooked, but crucial empirical interest: the Ainu, an Indigenous people from the Okhotsk region of Northeast Asia. An obscure alternative to Darwinian evolution proposed by Italian zoologist Daniele Rosa (1857–1944), hologenesis argued that life developed simultaneously across the surface of the earth, mainly in response to as yet unknown internal factors. Although this theory was almost entirely unknown outside of a small scholarly circle in Italy and near-universally dismissed by those international scientists who did learn of it (Bowler 1983, 255; Luzzatto, Palestrini and Passerin d'Entrèves 2000, 129–130), Montandon embraced it wholeheartedly, attempting to both popularize the theory outside of Italy and apply it to new problems in a barrage of publications. How should we explain Montandon's enthusiastic endorsement of hologenesis despite the obvious professional risks of such an iconoclastic position? And how exactly did hologenesis relate to his view of race and his later antisemitism?

Previous research, while to some extent investigating the content and reception of his writings on this theory, has not sufficiently answered these questions (Conklin 2013, 174–178; Ottaviani 2017). There is unfortunately no public archive of Montandon's early correspondence,² but he did publish numerous books and articles during his lifetime, in many of which he was surprisingly forthright about his thoughts and motivations. This article argues that a complex variety of factors led Montandon to turn to hologenesis, including his early fieldwork with the Ainu of Hokkaido, the perceived elegance of Rosa's theory, and his interest in the history of evolutionary theory. Montandon strove to play a role as a popularizer of hologenesis that was analogous to "Darwin's

¹Accounts disagree, but the preeminent specialist on Montandon, Alice Conklin, maintains that he was only mortally wounded during the attack, dying from his wounds shortly thereafter at a German hospital (Conklin 2013, 325).

²A large collection of his letters and writings, along with contemporaneous writings about him, is archived at the Mémorial de la Shoah (Fonds George Montandon, XCV, XCVIII–CI), but only from 1924, and mostly from the 1930s and 1940s. See the *Fonds George Montandon* website listed in the bibliography.

Bulldog,” Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), an aim which well suited his own combative, risk-taking personality. This last factor, Montandon’s predilection to pick fights and adopt unorthodox positions, seems to have been important in explaining his later antisemitism and collaboration with the Nazi occupation of France. Although hologenesis constituted the focus of most of his earlier career, it does not appear to have been related to his later open antisemitism. Instead, this article argues that Montandon developed his hologenetic theories to explain the origins of the Ainu, whereas his late-career open antisemitism can be best explained as the result of cynical opportunism in an increasingly fascist Europe.

Early career and research among the Ainu

Montandon seems to have harbored a life-long interest in human bodies and cultures, but he only began working full time with anthropology/ethnology in Paris in his forties, after spending a number of years working as a physician and a commissioner for the Red Cross.³ Born in 1879 to a wealthy family from Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Montandon studied medicine in Geneva and Zurich during the early years of the twentieth century. After practicing medicine for a time in Lausanne, in his late twenties, Montandon either became interested in, or decided to pursue an earlier interest in anthropology and ethnology, studying the subjects first in Hamburg and then in London (Conklin 2013, 92). He subsequently traveled to Ethiopia in 1909, at age thirty, where he conducted extensive fieldwork and sent detailed accounts of his journeys to the *Gazette de Lausanne*. After his return in July 1911, he published accounts of his travels in a wide variety of international journals: the French *Géographie*, the British *Geographical Journal*, the Italian *Bollettino della reale Societa geografica* and several Swiss scholarly periodicals (Montandon 1912a, 1912b, 1912c, 1913a, 1913b). The scope of his travels and publications reveal that he was by no means lacking in ambition or financial means. That he was awarded a prize by the Geographical Society of Paris *before* the full publication of his report is strong evidence that his efforts had been recognized (Anon. 1913a).

Montandon’s research career, off to a promising start, entered a short hiatus while he volunteered to work as a doctor in France during World War I, but the war’s end brought with it new opportunities. Though the Central Powers had surrendered, civil war still raged in Russia, trapping thousands of prisoners of war of different nationalities in Siberia. Montandon secured a position as a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross charged with facilitating the repatriation of Austrian, Hungarian and Turkish POWs in Siberia, departing in March 1919 (Piana 2016). Regardless of Montandon’s other goals, he must have viewed an all expenses paid trip to remote regions as a perfect opportunity to conduct further anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork that could propel him into the highest reaches of the academic establishment at home.

Unable to reach eastern Siberia by land because of the war, Montandon traveled around the world in the opposite direction, stopping to study Native Americans in Arizona on the way to Japan. But his main objective was to study the Ainu, a people indigenous to the Okhotsk region in Northeast Asia (primarily the islands of Hokkaido and Sakhalin). The Ainu, whose main homeland of Hokkaido had been subject to increasing encroachment from Japanese settler colonialism since the mid-1860s, had long been a source of fascination for Western ethnographers and physical anthropologists. The Ainu possessed a culture and language significantly different from Japanese, and Western observers were fascinated by their physical differences. Most Westerners described the Ainu as “white,” “Caucasian” or even “Aryan,” in contrast to the

³The terms “ethnology” and “anthropology” and the kind of research they represented were in flux in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century France, but “anthropology” more commonly referred to physical anthropology and anthropometry whereas “ethnology” (or “ethnography”) referred more often to the study of culture (See Conklin 2013). I will use these terms in this general sense in this article, except when quoting primary sources or institutional names that use them differently.

“yellow” or “Mongoloid” Japanese (see, for example, Bickmore 1868; Penhallow 1886; Batchelor 1901, 11; Griffis 1913). Where did the Ainu come from and who were they related to? What could they reveal about race and evolution? Besides living in a remote region, nearly all European and American (as well as Japanese) commentators believed them to be a “dying race” that would soon go extinct (whether from natural “degeneracy” or extermination by the Japanese was a point of contention). These racist assumptions aside, the Ainu were indeed few in number, were increasingly intermarrying with Japanese, and were adopting Japanese culture—in some cases willingly while in others under duress. It was a distressing situation for those who hoped to study the Ainu’s racial and cultural characteristics (see Siddle 1996). All this rendered the Ainu irresistible for the ambitious Montandon. As he put it himself in his published account of his travels in the Far East, “A visit to the Ainu, for an ethnologist, is a prime cut” (“*un morceau de choix*”) (Montandon 1923a, 58).⁴

When Montandon arrived in Japan, he was first obliged to visit POW camps, enter into repatriation negotiations and take care of other Red Cross business. Before long, however, he was able to make it to Hokkaido for several weeks in December 1919. This was to be his only fieldwork involving the Ainu.⁵ Such research was clearly not included in his mandate from the Red Cross, and Montandon became increasingly defensive of his excursion during subsequent years. In his first article on the Ainu dating from 1921, Montandon merely described it as trip during “several days of leisure,” but two years later he felt obliged to explain that his Hokkaido visit “was in effect the aim that we had decided on for several days of rest that we felt the need and the right to take before, our task in Japan being nearly complete, departing once more for Vladivostok” (Montandon 1921, 233; Montandon 1923a, 58). By 1927, he had an even more elaborate rationalization:

In the course of two years spent in far eastern Siberia, the political circumstances of the battles between the Whites and the Reds – I was on two occasions condemned to complete inaction regarding the aim of the mission with which I had been charged. I put this free time to use to undertake an ethnological survey of the neighboring indigenous populations. (Montandon 1927a, vii)

The Red Cross nevertheless suspected Montandon of misappropriation of funds and failure to stick to his mission objectives, leading to an investigation after his return to Switzerland. The officers of the Red Cross were likely unconvinced by his defense that anthropology was a free-time hobby for him just like playing a musical instrument, but they ultimately decided to drop the case because his original instructions had been vague and the Red Cross’s files relating to the mission were in a state of complete disarray (Piana 2016, 264, 267–268).

The possibility that Montandon knew very well what he was doing—and that it might raise objections—is supported by additional evidence. As Francesca Piana has uncovered, before his departure from Europe, Montandon had in fact complained in a letter to fellow Swiss anthropologist Eugène Pittard (1867–1962) that “the humanitarian work would leave little time for ‘ethnographic and anthropologic observations’.” He would try to collect ‘something’ without mentioning it to Edouard Naville, the acting president of the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] . . . as he did not want him to think that these actions would impact his humanitarian work negatively” (Montandon to Pittard, 8 Mar. 1919, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 8232/48, cited in Piana 2016, 288). Moreover, many clues indicate that Montandon was very well-prepared for his visit to Hokkaido. Montandon was not on Hokkaido long, apparently only several weeks in December 1919 at most, but he managed to be extremely productive, visiting no

⁴All translations from the original French are the author’s own.

⁵Montandon did *not* visit the Ainu living on Sakhalin, despite what several secondary accounts have erroneously stated, although he did collect Ainu skulls originating in Sakhalin when he was in Vladivostok.

fewer than six Ainu villages, taking anthropometric measurements of more than 100 Ainu, snapping numerous photographs and collecting a great many material objects for ethnographic analysis. He seems to have planned for this material to last for a good many publications, which he indeed produced for two decades afterwards. Montandon's first published work on the Ainu, a "Preliminary Notice on the Ainu" published in 1921, is dated January 1920, Tokyo (Montandon 1921, 242). Montandon left Tokyo for Vladivostok in "mid-January" 1920 (Montandon 1923a, 59), so his article must have been completed and sent off almost immediately after he returned from Hokkaido. This text reveals that Montandon was already very familiar with existing anthropometric literature on the Ainu by various Western scientists and the notorious Japanese physical anthropologist Koganei Yoshikiyo (小金井良精 1859–1944). He had almost certainly read up on the subject in advance and likely brought these materials with him on his travels.

The 1921 article, though ostensibly only "preliminary," is positively overflowing with pride and self-importance. Montandon did not hide the fact that many others had written about the Ainu before him and that he could not compete with Koganei's large anthropometric data set, but he proudly declared that such anthropometric data remained a rarity in studies of the Ainu and that he had the most complete data set of any European (Montandon 1921, 233–234; see also Montandon 1927a, vii, 186). Apparently reflecting lingering concerns about not making a terribly novel contribution, Montandon devoted a great amount of space to anthropometric methodology, correcting Koganei and other rivals on the finer points of human measurement and emphasizing any differing conclusions, however small. Koganei, we learn, was not careful to distinguish between different shades of brown for the Ainu iris, for example (Montandon 1921, 236).

Montandon's scrupulousness and richness of detail, provided in an attempt to assert a place for himself in an already crowded research field, also reveal many of the practical circumstances behind his visit to Hokkaido, particularly the networks that made it possible. Montandon carefully describes how he obtained permission to travel to Hokkaido and gain access to the Ainu. He first approached the Swiss *chargé d'affaires* in Tokyo, through whom he was able to gain a recommendation from the Japanese foreign ministry to the governor of Hokkaido. After arriving in Hokkaido, the governor gave him letters of introduction to various Ainu village chiefs and to the Reverend John Batchelor (1854–1944), a British missionary who had been living among the Ainu since 1877 (and would continue to do so until the outbreak of World War II). Despite technically being an amateur, Batchelor had for decades been the world's most important and prolific Western Ainu scholar, primarily focusing on linguistics, although his work has now been largely discredited (see Refsing 2000). Batchelor agreed to help Montandon as best he could, quickly demonstrating his role as an essential gatekeeper for Western visitors to the Ainu. "The intervention [of Batchelor] . . . with his *protégés* was all-powerful," wrote Montandon, "and I was able to get to work without delay and without encountering any hostility" (Montandon 1921, 233). Montandon was not entirely grateful, however, complaining several years later that "the limited time that I had at my disposal and the fact that delivering measurements that would have required our subjects to disrobe would have compromised the good graces of the *indigènes*, left, from a certain point of view, our survey less detailed than I desired" (Montandon 1927a, viii). Clearly, Batchelor was somewhat less than "all-powerful," or else unwilling to help Montandon obtain nude measurements, whether for religious reasons or out of respect for the Ainu's wishes.

Montandon is also unusual, among physical anthropologists, in the explicit detail in which he publishes his subjects' identifying information. He provides the full names and village of origin for all his Ainu subjects in his 1927 book *In the Land of the Ainu: Anthropological Exploration*, as well as giving the names of the subjects under each of the book's numerous photographs in the appendix (Montandon 1927a, 229–231). Even more interestingly, in a particularly candid passage, Montandon describes the occupations of all the Japanese he measured. These included three musicians, seven junior stewards ("*garçons de service*") onboard the steamer he took to Japan and four more in Yokohama, his guide/interpreter in Hokkaido, along with nine other interpreters, two carpenters, a book-seller, thirteen more stewards and some of their wives in northern Japan, a

journalist, seven nurses from Sapporo hospital (“whom we were able to measure thanks to the amiability of the head doctor, Dr. Hada”), eight rickshaw men and five Kōbe prostitutes (Montandon 1927a, 189). Montandon provided this information because of a belief among many scientists that physiological differences existed between different social classes (whose members typically did not intermarry), offering a fascinating window into the opportunistic and haphazard ways in which Montandon acquired his data. The fact that most of his subjects were menial laborers of different kinds, and especially the inclusion of prostitutes, strongly suggests that Montandon paid many of his subjects, although he clearly also took advantage of the subordinate positions of others, like the nurses. Many of the stewards and other servants may have felt obliged to honor the requests, however unusual, of the Swiss gentleman from the Red Cross. Others, like his interpreter and the journalist, may have been interested in his scientific aims and willingly volunteered. In any case, Montandon unquestionably devoted significant time and resources during his Red Cross mission to finding and measuring subjects.

Whether with the help of Batchelor, his Red Cross affiliation or on his own, Montandon also connected with several important scientists in Japan. During his short visit to Hokkaido, he was invited to dinner with the local university president, Satō Shōsuke (佐藤 昌介 1856–1939) of Hokkaido Imperial University, as well as the Sapporo branch of the Japanese Red Cross (Montandon 1923a, 59). In addition to meeting an unnamed Swiss professor of German who was reportedly delighted to see a fellow countryman, he also met Japanese zoologist Hatta Saburō (八田 三郎 1865–1935) in Sapporo. This last connection proved especially profitable, as Hatta presented him with an Ainu skull. Montandon was in fact able to acquire at least seven Ainu skulls during his time in the Far East, which formed the basis of a personal collection and several major publications (Montandon 1926a, 209).

Photos illustrating his voluminous study *Craniologie paléosibérienne* (which is reminiscent of the noteworthy works by prominent racist scientists of an earlier generation like Samuel George Morton (1799–1851)) reveal that he inscribed his name and a number on each of his trophies (Montandon 1926a, 477) (see figure 2). Previously, Montandon had visited the Anthro-ethnographic Museum of Vladivostok and met with its directors, reflecting that “this was a time of great political troubles. My duties and my preoccupations did not, however, prevent me from visiting the museum” (Montandon 1926a, 209). The museum “kindly gave” six Ainu skulls of different geographic origins to Montandon (Montandon 1926a, 209). Montandon does not explain why the museum was so willing to part with its skulls, except for mentioning that they had never been subject to a proper analysis. Reading between the lines, however, one can guess that the museum curators might have been willing to sell them during a time of desperate civil war. Montandon was evidently not shy in approaching people and institutions and asking for what he wanted. He also visited his (self-appointed) rival, the anthropologist Koganei, upon returning to Tokyo. Montandon interrogated Koganei on his nose measurement technique and discovered, to his satisfaction, that they had measured differently, explaining some discrepancies in his data (Montandon 1921, 241). Besides providing a fascinating window into how a Swiss (then) amateur anthropologist could collect measurements, artifacts, and human skulls during a very brief visit to Hokkaido, Montandon’s writings provide important clues of his future ambitions and assertive personality.

Montandon would have to content himself with these Ainu materials, but he continued to measure and collect data from other Indigenous communities during the rest of his prolonged travels, showing a particular interest in the Buryats of eastern Siberia (Montandon 1923b), although this did not match the scope of his Ainu research and collections. In her account of his Red Cross mission, Piana has demonstrated that Montandon frequently took even official matters into his own hands, repeatedly ignoring directives from Geneva. As the Russian Civil War dragged on, further stalling plans for POW repatriation, Montandon argued that his mission should be extended to include medical and alimentary relief for the poorly treated POWs (Piana 2016, 264). Though the white Russian forces that held the vast majority of these barely had enough food for



Photo. G. L. MANUEL Frères

George Montandon

Figure 1. George Montandon.

Source: George Montandon. 1927. *Au pays des Aïnou, exploration anthropologique*. Paris: Masson, frontispiece.

themselves, they insisted that the prisoners could not be freed and left to return home across enemy lines, lest they join the communist forces (Montandon 1923a, 31).

The Red Cross seriously considered replacing the maverick Montandon, but eventually agreed to an extension of his mission. Montandon continued to take bold, unilateral actions in the name of the Red Cross, most notably creating a “relief train” (“the Montandon Train”) that could travel around Siberia providing aid for prisoners, but whose operation required a good deal of compromise with local warlords and the Red Army (Piana 2016). Finally, in 1921, Montandon’s mission was concluded, and he decided to make his way back to Switzerland westward via Moscow. During Montandon’s adventurous journey, he was briefly arrested by the *Cheka* security police, he met and married a Russian woman almost two decades his junior, and, perhaps under her influence, he became a communist himself (*Famille Montandon* 2002; Piana 2016, 272). Although he seemed to admire Lenin, was active in the Swiss communist party, and occasionally wrote for its newspaper *Clarté* (mostly about anthropology), the otherwise prolific Montandon wrote precious little in support of communist doctrine. Nevertheless, his activities, together with several lines in praise of the Soviet Union in the travelogue he later published, would land him in hot water.

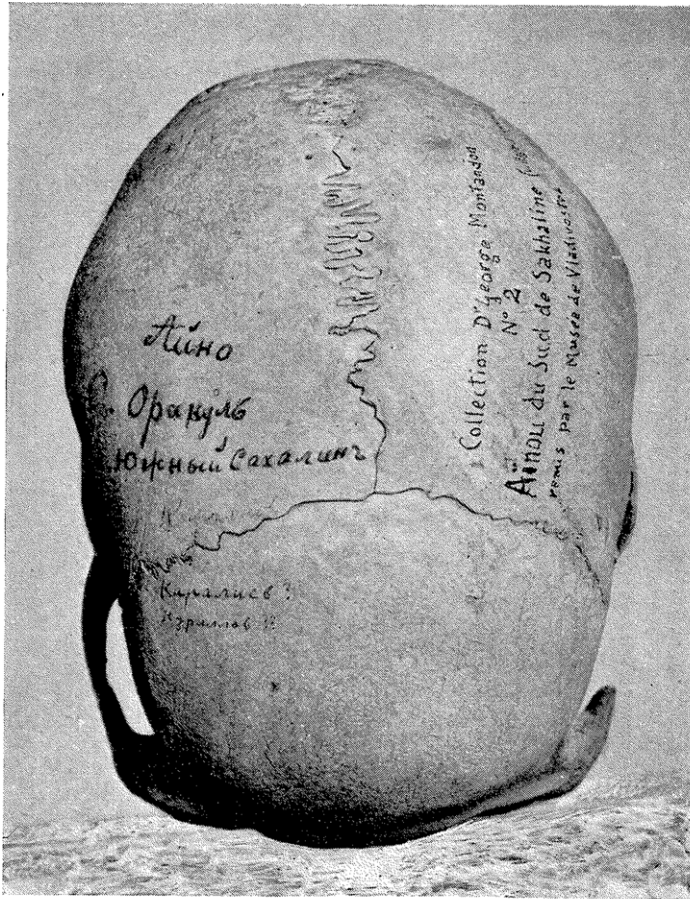


FIG. 45. — Aïnou n° 2, de Sakhaline (type pur).
Forme pentagonoïde. (1/2)

Figure 2. Montandon lay claim to the Ainu skull he acquired from the Anthro-ethnographic Museum of Vladivostok by inscribing his name on it.

Source: George Montandon. 1927. *Au pays des Aïnou, exploration anthropologique*. Paris: Masson, 119.

Montandon might not have envisioned embracing communism at the outset of his journey, but his plans to use his travels to advance his anthropological career quickly came to fruition after his return. As noted above, the Red Cross was at this point exasperated with him but too disorganized to press charges. When Montandon first delayed, and then asked for an unprecedented subsidy to finance the writing of his report in the winter of 1921-1922, the Red Cross reluctantly agreed. The following year, Montandon published the resulting report that the Red Cross had (exceptionally) paid him to write with a commercial press, deeply embarrassing the Red Cross in the process through his abovementioned praise of the U.S.S.R. (Piana 2016, 270–272). Here and at other points in his life, Montandon displayed a strange mix of caution and apparent incredulity when held accountable for his actions. While carefully defending his ethnographic work and other deviations from Red Cross instructions in his writings, he always seems to have believed that his successful results would lead to forgiveness for his unconventional means. For one thing, rather than hide it, Montandon triumphantly presented the results of his anthropological work in his official report to the Red Cross as though it had been part of his official duties. More incredibly, in

1922, Montandon had the audacity to apply to lead another Red Cross mission, a request which this time was firmly denied (Piana 2016, 267–268).

Academic journals, on the other hand, showed no qualms in accepting a steady stream of articles from Montandon, raising his profile in the scientific community. As a result of his publications on Ethiopia, Arizona, Hokkaido and Siberia, Montandon was accorded a professorship in ethnography at the University of Neuchâtel in 1921, but his appointment was invalidated before it started, almost certainly because of his communist affiliations (Piana 2016, 272). Besides this and his falling out with the Red Cross, Montandon managed to spectacularly burn bridges with the *Gazette de Lausanne*, for which he had earlier been a correspondent, and which had been extremely supportive during his travels in Ethiopia. Apparently outraged by the *Gazette's* failure to review one of his books, Montandon published a defamatory pamphlet and tried to commission a vulgar cartoon about the newspaper's editor in chief (Anon. 1924). After a much-publicized libel suit, Montandon was convicted by the district court in Lausanne in late 1924 and sentenced to ten days in prison. After his appeal to the Swiss Federal Court was rejected, and facing arrest, Montandon absconded to France in May 1925, where he planned to start anew in Paris (Anon. 1925a, 1925b, 1925c). As we shall see, these various experiences had a profound effect on Montandon's future career and his embrace of a novel, but obscure theory: hologenesis.

Classifying the Ainu and the theory of hologenesis

Italian zoologist Daniele Rosa's alternative explanation to Darwinian or neo-Lamarckian evolution, the theory of hologenesis, was first proposed in 1909 and subsequently expanded in his most important work, *Ologenisi* (1918). The French translation was first published in 1931, but Montandon seems to have read Italian and had close contacts with Italian academics following a presentation of his Ethiopian explorations at a 1913 conference in Rome (Anon. 1913b). Moreover, although he apparently did not embrace Rosa's theories wholesale like Montandon, one of Germany's leading physical anthropologists, Eugen Fischer (1874–1967), translated an article by Rosa and occasionally referenced his work (Montandon 1933, 110; Ottaviani 2017, 215). Montandon frequently cited Fischer and at some point, he entered into close correspondence with him. By the 1940s, Fischer was even vouching for Montandon's reliability to the German occupation forces in France (Conklin 2013, 318). It is not clear when or how Montandon first encountered the theory as he may have learned of Rosa's work through any of these channels. As with the Ainu, he published a "Preliminary Notice" on hologenesis, in the *Revue mondiale* in February 1927. This appears to be his first published article on the subject, but a report in the *Gazette de Lausanne* describing a lecture Montandon gave on the Ainu to a Swiss audience in 1922 indicates that he was already presenting about hologenetic theory at that time. "Don't ask me the details," the reporter felt obliged to add, "I can only agree that this view [of evolution] is grandiose" (J.E.D. 1922).

But what exactly was Rosa's theory of hologenesis that so captivated Montandon? Rosa rejected classic Darwinism, especially the idea of a wide diffusion of species through the migration and colonization of distant lands, but also neo-Lamarckism, principally its idea of the inheritance of acquired traits. Instead, Rosa developed his own theory with the following main points: a) evolution is primarily driven by internal (as yet unidentified) factors, with the external environment only playing a limited role; b) since it is mainly internally-driven, evolution happens concurrently in all of the individuals of a species when the species reaches a certain level of "maturity;" c) a mother species splits into two daughter species, but these are not equal: one is a "precocious" branch that develops more quickly but ultimately ends its development at a lower level than that achieved by the other, "late" branch, which ultimately becomes superior; and d) the rate of hologenetic evolution slows over time, and will eventually end. Species that have reached the end of their evolutionary line (whether remnant mother species or their "precocious"

branches) will eventually die out, although they may linger for a time as “living fossils” (Rosa 1931; Luzzatto, Palestrini and Passerin d’Entrèves 2000).

Hologenesis may sound like pulp science fiction to modern readers, and it was indeed rejected by the majority of the scientific establishment even in its day, but it is important to emphasize that the theory was presented before key advances in modern genetics and before the “synthetic model” of evolution eliminated the numerous alternatives to Darwinism from respectable science. Several biologists have retrospectively argued that Rosa’s theory was as rigorously developed as many more successful scientific theories and that it attempted to account for what were then seen as weak spots in Darwinism and other existing theories, particularly major anomalies in the fossil record (Luzzatto, Palestrini and Passerin d’Entrèves 2000).

Hologenesis was nevertheless quite a radical leap from most existing theories and palpably unpopular. What made Montandon decide to champion it in France? I believe that it was a confluence of factors, most of which are hinted at in Montandon’s writings. To begin with, hologenesis allowed Montandon a novel way to perpetuate some of the implications of polygenesis, a racist notion that different human races developed independently instead of from a single common ancestor. Polygenesis had by this point been largely discredited by the French scientific establishment. According to hologenesis, there is “a polygenesis of individuals, but a monogenesis of type, or, to employ the expression which I feel best defines hologenesis, we have a *ubiquitous monogenesis*” (Montandon 1929a, 49, emphasis in original). If species—including humans—originated over a widespread area, as the result of the internal dynamics of a single, widespread mother species, rather than from a single ancestor, one could reconcile racial difference with species unity. Though not stated in so many words, the implication was clear: racist scientists could have their cake and eat it too. On the one hand, they would not have to be related, in the sense of coming from the same individual ancestor, to individuals of other races; but on the other hand, it was no longer necessary to deny the scientifically obvious fact that all human beings belonged to the same species (in the sense of interfertility). As Montandon vividly put it, due to evolution occurring holistically in all individuals of a species, “two men from the same somatic group and from the same village, for example, could lack even a drop of vital liquid in common, not only since the origin of man, but since the origin of life” (Montandon 1929a, 50).

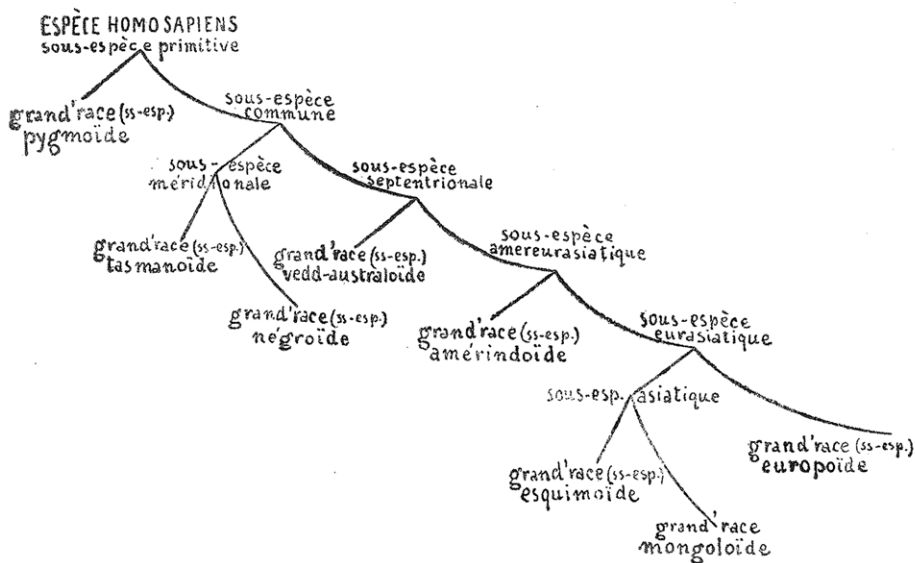
Adopting an iconoclastic theory like hologenesis was also consistent with Montandon’s penchant for the dramatic and desire for glory. Like his embrace first of communism, and later his extensive collaboration with the Nazi occupation of France, Montandon seems to have been eager to gain a leading place in a new revolutionary movement that he was convinced would soon sweep through society by joining up very early. Montandon was, moreover, interested in the history of science, as several of his texts reveal. He was intimately familiar with the story of Darwin’s remarkable success and the role that his dogged ally Thomas Henry Huxley, often known as “Darwin’s Bulldog,” played in popularizing the nineteenth-century naturalist’s theories (Montandon 1930; Montandon 1933, 72, 91). Montandon was already interested in Huxley for his writings on race, and he seems to have envisioned a role for himself as “Rosa’s Bulldog,” an international champion for the obscure but brilliant Italian theorist. Montandon published at least eight articles and two long books on hologenesis between 1927 and 1934, along with many more publications in which he applied the theory to various cases. The publication venues for the articles were both scientific and popular, reflecting an ambition to spread the theory far and wide. Montandon explained and extended hologenesis while also comparing it with alternative explanations and defending it against critics (see, for example, Montandon 1930). He was not unduly sycophantic towards Rosa himself, preferring to emphasize his own contributions to the development of hologenesis. Nevertheless, he gave Rosa due credit and seems to have made his way into his circle of (almost entirely Italian) disciples, for example attending a celebration of the zoologist and contributing to an Italian *festschrift* in honor of Rosa’s seventieth birthday (Montandon 1931e, 339).

Further paralleling the story of Darwinian evolutionary theory, Montandon sought to be the first to systematically apply hologenesis to the question of human origins, as Darwin famously hesitated to do in his *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and as Huxley had also done in his 1863 *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, years before Darwin's own *On the Descent of Man* (1871). Doing so was of course consistent with Montandon's own field of interest, but nevertheless provided him with a golden opportunity to make a theoretical contribution that he could call his own. As he stated in a 1929 article published in *Revue Scientifique*, the application of hologenesis to the understanding of human origins "is what I will permit myself to claim as my personal contribution" (Montandon 1929a, 50). Rosa, for his part, expressed approval in the 1931 French self-translation of his *magnum opus*, perhaps just happy that someone was interested in his theory (Rosa 1931, vi).

Montandon was also fascinated by the ancient human ancestors, such as the Java Man, that were then being uncovered around the world (see, for example, Montandon 1929a, 50). He believed hologenesis to be a far more convincing explanation for these fossil finds in numerous locations around the globe than complicated migratory narratives. Scoffing at such explanations, which were almost as numerous as the anthropologists that came up with them, he complained that with these new skeletal finds, scientists had pointed to nearly every region of the globe as the "cradle of humanity." Why not compile all of this data and abandon the idea of a singular point of human origins altogether? (Montandon 1929a, 52). "Humanity has no cradle!" became one of Montandon's favorite slogans, incessantly repeated in his many articles.

While hologenesis could thus resolve some of the problematic issues related to fossil human discoveries, it did not at first glance seem applicable to the question of human races. Hologenesis was originally proposed to explain the emergence of different *species*, yet Montandon unequivocally rejected the idea that humanity was more than one species. Undeterred, Montandon nevertheless believed that racial differentiation could be explained by hologenesis, convinced that "all raciological problems can be understood and resolved using the same formula" (Montandon 1929a, 56, emphasis in original). Montandon started by breaking up human races into larger "great races" (*grand' races*) and smaller "races" (*races*) and "sub-races" (*sous-races*). The great races, though belonging to the same species, emerged through hologenetic dichotomous evolution, with the most "advanced" arising from the "late branch" of several dichotomies and more "primitive" ones from "precocious" branches (see figure 3). The subordinate *races* and *sous-races*, on the other hand, were more influenced by environmental factors and miscegenation (*métissage*). Needless to say, in Montandon's scheme, the "blond race" of Northern Europe was the most advanced of all (Montandon 1928, 374–377).

But perhaps the most important factor in the development of Montandon's scientific worldview, which has been entirely overlooked by other historians, was his fieldwork in Hokkaido. Even if the Ainu were not exactly Montandon's version of Darwin's finches, the mystery of a white "race isolated in the middle of an enormous Mongolic bloc" that had drawn him to northern Japan certainly made hologenesis seem far more convincing than alternative explanations (Montandon 1921, 233). He viewed it as extremely implausible that the Ainu had developed "europid" traits independently of Europeans through evolutionary convergence (Montandon 1929a, 56). Equally exasperated with contradictory and highly speculative migratory accounts of human racial origins, Montandon felt that it was more elegant to argue that races had hologenetically originated in a large area through the concurrent, internally-driven development of all individuals in the group: "This resolves the problem of racial debris that they [the proponents of migratory theories] have all derive from a unique center, not knowing where, or when to have them arise" (Montandon 1927c, 229). Montandon specifically gives the example of the Ainu to illustrate this point in a 1929 article: "the ainien [*ainien*, a term Montandon coined to describe the race the Ainu belonged to] is the residue and the proof of the hologenetic creation [*enfantement*] of the europid over the entire extent of the Eurasian continent" (Montandon 1929a, 56). This explanation fit well with the longstanding idea developed by Batchelor and the eminent Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), based on a (somewhat dubious) analysis of place names, that the ancestors of the



GRAPHIQUE 13. — *Formation des huit grand'rares par dichotomie ologénétique.*

Figure 3. “Formation of the Eight Great Races by hologenetic dichotomy.”

Source: George Montandon. 1928. *L'Ologénèse humaine*. Paris: Alcan, 204.

Ainu had previously inhabited the entirety of the Japanese archipelago, before being slowly forced northward by the advance of the Japanese, a hypothesis to which Montandon frequently referred (Montandon 1926b, 2296; Montandon 1927a, 224; Montandon 1937a, 10; Montandon 1937b, 278). Not only did hologenesis explain the seemingly anomalous presence of the Ainu in the Far East, as a vestige of a previously much greater “white” racial domain, but it allowed Montandon to classify the Ainu as a “primitive,” “precocious” branch of the europid great race. This allowed the Ainu to be both racially “white” and “primitive” at the same time, resolving another conundrum for earlier European Ainu researchers (Refsing 2006, 152). Thus, while his work on the Ainu has been ignored by other commentators, it was arguably crucial in his “conversion” to hologenesis, along with the other factors described above.

Puzzlingly, although Montandon believed that the Ainu once inhabited all of Japan, and that they were gradually pushed into a marginal northern area by the “Mongoloid” Japanese, he did not try to explain this manifest disparity in military power in any of his texts. This question preoccupied many other Western commentators, some of whom were disturbed by the apparent extermination of a “white” race by a “yellow” one and thus sought to explain Japanese success through an element of “white” Ainu blood in their racial makeup (Bender 2009, 92–94). While designating “white” “europids” as the most developed (“late branch”) racial group in his hologenetic scheme, Montandon curiously never tried to explain why the Ainu could nonetheless be overtaken by the Japanese. He briefly hinted that he viewed “other Far Eastern cultures” as “superior” to “Ainu civilization” in a 1931 article, so it is possible that he thought that the “precocious” “Mongoloid” branch could supersede the most “primitive” branch of the “europid” race (if not the “late,” European ones), but he took no pains to elaborate (Montandon 1931c, 736). He was clear that he viewed the Ainu as “primitive” and vastly inferior to Europeans, at least. In a 1937 comparative work, he argued that they were the most primitive of all the “arctico subarctic cultures” and gave them the designation “rough” (*fruste*). This term was even more degrading than “backward” or “retarded” (*retardé*), descriptions that he had applied to other cultures, thereby expressing his low view of the Ainu despite their purported “whiteness” (Montandon 1937a, 251–252).

Montandon does not seem to have harbored any particularly strong feelings for or against Japan, unlike most other Ainu researchers, for whom the racial question was intimately bound up with either support for or fear of Japan's rapid rise and often a racial self-identification with the Ainu. Montandon's Siberian travelogue repeats some common patronizing judgments and praises the Japanese for their treatment of POWs (Montandon 1923a, 15–16). In a much later article, he expressed support for Japanese expansion in Korea and Manchuria, if mainly because of the archaeological discoveries this promised to facilitate (Montandon 1940b, 130). Nevertheless, despite his great interest in the Ainu and consistent identification of them as “europid,” Montandon did not seem particularly bothered to see them increasingly marginalized by Japanese encroachment, except for the loss this would represent for anthropological and ethnographic research (Montandon 1927b, 247). For Montandon, the Ainu were interesting not as distant ancestors or clues to the development of East Asian politics, but as a theoretical puzzle, the solution to which could further his career.

The cultural turn: The *ethnie* and cultural hogenesis

As Conklin has demonstrated, French anthropology and ethnology lagged behind their counterparts in other Western countries in the twentieth century. Even though these disciplines were in a process of rapid development, there were still few formal research positions and institutions when Montandon fled to Paris in 1926. Like many others with professional ambitions in this field, Montandon joined key learned societies like the Institut Français d'Anthropologie and also volunteered to work with collections at the National Museum of Natural History (Conklin 2013, 96). There, he worked closely with the ethnologist Paul Rivet (1876–1958), who helped him analyze his Ainu skulls (Montandon 1926a, 210–212, 270). Montandon even discovered several more Ainu crania in the Museum's collection when organizing the Asian section at Rivet's behest (Montandon 1929b, 271).

Like Montandon, Rivet had a background in classic physical anthropology, but at this point, he was increasingly moving towards the study of human cultures, establishing a new French antiracist school of the study of humanity together with Durkheimian sociologist Marcell Mauss (1872–1950). Rivet was only a few years older than Montandon but had had a straighter career trajectory and was already able to become director of the National Museum of Natural History in 1928, one of the few paid positions in French anthropology/ethnology at the time. Although the two had seemed to work cordially together after Montandon's arrival in France (Rivet even reportedly vouched for Montandon when his naturalization process was held up on account of his earlier communist connections), Montandon became increasingly jealous, souring the relationship. He appears to have broken with Rivet in 1933 (Conklin 2013, 96).

In 1931, Montandon was able to land a professorship at the École d'Anthropologie, an older institute founded by the renowned Paul Broca (1824–1880) whose faculty was going through a generational turnover. The École had a far more politically conservative character than the new institutions founded by Rivet and Mauss (the latter were in fact deliberately established in order to supplant the École) and had a vested interest in anthropometric methods and forms of racial classification that were becoming increasingly discredited in more liberal circles (Conklin 2013, 96). This institution thus suited Montandon well and provided him with a solid basis from which to spread his ideas, but was nonetheless generally considered less prestigious than its newer rivals, which tended to attract better students, allowing his professional jealousies to continue to fester.

Working with Rivet made Montandon aware that the dynamism of the field had shifted from the physical anthropology that had been his main focus to the realm of culture. Rivet was so successful in large part because he could demonstrate expertise in both physical anthropology *and* culturally oriented ethnology, and Montandon determined that he would do the same, marking a cultural turn in his research. This decision was also practical, since he had already exhausted

whatever conclusions he could possibly draw from his Ainu measurements and skulls in numerous publications. Montandon faced a problem, however: he was unable or unwilling to give up the idea that he had consistently expressed that “race” was exclusively biological (see, for example, Montandon 1933). It seemed too obvious that members of the same race could speak different languages and belong to different cultures. The solution came in the form of another obscure concept that Montandon attempted to popularize: the *ethnie*.

Like hologenesis, the idea of *ethnie* originally came from another anthropologist, this time Félix Regnault (1863–1938), even if Montandon made it his own (Montandon 1933, 14). Much of Montandon’s critique of other researchers throughout his career involved their laxity with the application of terminology, and Montandon was frustrated by the confusion of “race” and “ethnicity” that was already apparent in the 1920s (Montandon 1933, 14–16). Montandon believed that there were three distinct elements that could be used to scientifically classify groups of people: race (which for Montandon was purely somatic), language and culture. The sum of these three elements formed the *ethnie*. He argued that the term was necessary by using the example of Black Americans. According to Montandon, Black Americans could be grouped together with their white countrymen if only linguistic and cultural factors were taken into consideration, a situation which he clearly believed his reader would find objectionable (Montandon 1933, 18). In practice, there was often little difference between what Montandon labeled a “race” and an *ethnie*. For example, in a 1937 article, he labelled the Ainu (whom he had earlier classified as the only living members of the “ainien race”) as an *ethnie*, which he defined as “a human group possessing a race, a language and a civilization of their own” (Montandon 1937b, 276). *Ethnie* was a usefully slippery term that allowed Montandon a great deal of freedom in gliding between racial and cultural assumptions in his writings, as we shall see.

The *ethnie*, while useful, was just a term, and thereby insufficient for establishing Montandon’s ethnological credentials so that he could compete with Rivet. This was probably the driving factor behind Montandon’s massive 1934 ethnographic work *Cultural Hologenesis*, in which he once again turned to hologenesis as the solution for all of anthropology/ethnology’s persistent questions. In this book, Montandon attempted to reconcile hologenesis with the theory of cultural circles (*Kulturkreislehre*), an approach that he had picked up in Germany but which was unpopular in France (Conklin 2013, 177; Ottaviani 2017). This theory involved the close study of material culture from various societies, such as the forms and techniques for producing tools and other everyday objects, in an attempt to discover historical links between different groups. Paralleling Montandon’s stance on the development of racial groups, proponents of *Kulturkreislehre* argued that it was unlikely that similar cultural forms would develop independently in different areas through convergence (Rebay-Salisbury 2011).

As with *Human Hologenesis* (1928), in which he applied Rosa’s biological theories to human beings, the Ainu seem to have been very much on Montandon’s mind when he used hologenesis to explain human cultures. In fact, Montandon’s earliest writings on cultural hologenesis, dating from late 1931, were an attempt to disprove those diffusionist explanations for Ainu origins that contradicted his biological human hologenesis line (Montandon 1931a; Montandon 1931b). In an article on Ainu weaving practices from earlier that same year that criticized Leo Sternberg’s (1861–1927) assertion that the Ainu had migrated to Hokkaido from Polynesia, Montandon did not yet seem to have hit upon using hologenesis to explain culture (Montandon 1931d). Drawing connections between Ainu weaving techniques and those of other northern peoples, Montandon argued that Ainu “civilization,” rather than specifically Polynesian, is a “composite” of cultures from “all the continents, with the exception of Africa,” since it blends elements from the north and from the south (Montandon 1931d). But just as with the somatic origins of an isolated “white fragment” in East Asia, Montandon was already bothered by what he viewed as contradictory and unconvincing diffusionist explanations of cultural origins.

At some point later that year, Montandon seems to have realized that he could go even farther with Rosa’s theory than he had in *Human Hologenesis* by applying it to cultural anthropology in a

way that was largely consistent with his earliest anthropological training in Germany. In a presentation at the anthropological congress that was held in conjunction with the 1931 Paris colonial exposition, and in a follow-up paper on “Hologenesis and Ainu Culture,” Montandon delineated the ideas that would form the basis of his 1934 book (Montandon 1931b, Montandon 1931c). Instead of originating at a single point and radiating outwards as was typically argued, cultural “complexes, or cycles” developed over a large area or domain and were later “codified” by a political center. In his conceptualization of cultural hologenesis, Montandon seems to have been thinking about a language analogy, with various dialects over a large area being standardized by a centralized government. This idea would have been intimately familiar to contemporaneous Frenchmen due to the late-nineteenth-century standardization of the French language through compulsory schooling, although Montandon employed the older example of Gaul in his paper (Montandon 1931b, 130). Linking this to somatic hologenesis, Montandon argued that modern humans everywhere exhibited the same basic primitive culture shortly after their emergence, explaining why similar cultural practices could be found in disparate places, but that these were succeeded by more specific “cultural cycles” that arose in large areas, instead of universally (Montandon 1931c, 731). This theoretical perspective allowed Montandon to explain Ainu culture and refute Sternberg: the Ainu were the isolated remains of a larger cultural domain from ancient times that, like their racial domain, had disappeared from neighboring areas, although they also still exhibited certain universal “primitive” cultural elements (Montandon 1931c, 736).

Cultural hologenesis was, however, to prove equally unconvincing to his peers, if not more so, than Montandon’s earlier forays into applied Rosaism. At its most fundamental level, cultural hologenesis relied both on the idea that cultural elements were unique and important clues of the origins of human groups, and the logically contradictory notion that these did not reflect diffusion and could thereby not pinpoint human origins. Thus Montandon had to rely on complicated explanations of cultural mixtures and processes of distillation. The book *Cultural Hologenesis* was comparatively successful, since only the first section developed this theory. As Conklin has noted, even figures like Mauss recommended it to their students for the detailed and richly illustrated compilation of ethnographic data from around the world in the theory-free subsequent sections, while rejecting the hologenesis part (Conklin 2013, 177–178). This disapprobation from his colleagues notwithstanding (it had not stopped him before, after all) the flexibility of this new application of hologenesis to the cultural domain could have provided ample fodder for years of further scholarly publications, but Montandon instead shifted focus yet again as the political winds began to change.

Antisemite and *collaborateur*

From the late 1930s, Montandon’s work took an ugly turn as he openly embraced an increasingly vicious antisemitism. It has been a matter of debate among the few historians who have studied Montandon whether this represented the emergence of a long-concealed attitude with the advent of a new political climate or a purely opportunistic move. Arguing against earlier accounts that emphasize the lack of overt antisemitism in Montandon’s publications before the late 1930s, Conklin convincingly traces themes in Montandon’s late antisemitic writings to his earlier work. However, Conklin’s list of recurring themes does not include hologenesis (Conklin 2013, 181–182). As hologenesis was so central to Montandon’s research for so many years, I think it is necessary to qualify Conklin’s assertion that each of Montandon’s publications “was only one piece of a larger whole” that remained consistent throughout his career. Based on the above discussion and an analysis of his works from 1938 on, I argue that Montandon’s overt antisemitism was the result of a combination of both a preexisting worldview and opportunism, but mostly the latter. Most importantly, much of Montandon’s earlier scientific work, including the theory of hologenesis, did not form the basis of his work on Jews.

Although he wrote extensively on a wide range of peoples, from the inhabitants of Ethiopia to Ainu to Native Americans, Montandon wrote precious little about Jews before his “coming out” in the late 1930s. As Conklin has discovered, however, the subject was not entirely new to him. In 1917, he wrote approvingly of Camille Spiess (1878–1965), a radical antisemitic proponent of Aryan supermanism. In 1926, he also published a short article about the origin of “the Jews” in the communist newspaper *Clarté* under the pseudonym P. Montardit. The latter example suggests an active concealment of antisemitic views from potential criticism (Conklin 2013, 92–93, 181; Montardit 1926). Montandon had seemed concerned with establishing a reputation as a serious, objective scientist until the late 1930s, when he completely abandoned such pretensions. His virulent attacks on Jews, though ostensibly grounded in science, could not be mistaken by anyone for impassive objectivity. Montandon received sharp and widespread criticism for this (Knobel 1988, 108), but no longer seemed to care, friendly as he now was with important figures on the far right. As with communism and hologenesis, he went all in, betting his chips on a future under the Nazi-led “New Order,” this time with more success, at least temporarily.

Although several historians have emphasized the consistency of Montandon’s views over the course of his career (Conklin 2013; Ottaviani 2017), which is in general an accurate assessment, there is strong evidence that the theory of hologenesis did not underpin his antisemitism. For one thing, the hologenesis that had so fervently preoccupied Montandon for more than a decade almost entirely disappeared after the publication of his 1934 ethnological tome *Cultural Hologenesis*. The following year, he shifted gears with the publication of *The French Ethnie*, discovering that he could sell more books when he wrote about race in France, rather than obscure theories or distant peoples (Montandon 1935; Conklin 2013, 178). Although he did author a few more short articles and a 1937 book on the Ainu, nearly all his works from 1935 onwards concerned the French and, increasingly, Jews. *Ainu Civilization*⁶ (1937), a cultural complement to his previous physical anthropological work on the Ainu, still included hologenetic reasoning, but barely, and the word “hologenesis” only appears twice in the entire book (Montandon 1937a, 138, 181). This is striking to say the least, coming only three years after a 700-page work devoted to “cultural hologenesis.”

Montandon does briefly describe human origins in terms of hologenesis in his 1940 pamphlet *How to Recognize the Jew* (Montandon 1940a, 13–14), but without the fervent desire to educate readers and win them over to hologenesis, a theory that had characterized nearly all of his previous writings. Indeed, the term “hologenesis” does not appear a single time in the book! When he gained control of his own journal, also entitled *The French Ethnie*, in 1941, he also did not use the opportunity provided by this megaphone to further promote hologenesis, opting for straightforward antisemitic propaganda instead. None of the journal’s ten issues (stretching to April 1944) seem to contain the slightest mention of Rosa’s theory, even in an article Montandon penned entitled “On the Formation of Human Races” (Montandon 1941).

Jews were not included in Montandon’s original racial classification system, unlike the Ainu, for whose existence hologenesis seemed to provide a compelling explanation. Montandon had already argued that Jews were not a biological “race” (Montardit 1926; Montandon 1933, 262–263). Perceiving that they lived assimilated into various European cultures while maintaining a distinct cultural identity themselves (Reynaud-Paligot 2010, 70), it was difficult for Montandon to explain Jews through hologenetic evolution. This explains why Montandon’s interest in hologenesis seems to have correspondingly waned as he became increasingly eager to expound antisemitic views. Instead, he used his previously-developed concept of the *ethnie* to be able to make wide-ranging, “expert” claims about Jews while simultaneously retaining a shred of scientific credibility by technically not arguing that they were a “race.” Even more disingenuously and perversely, motivated by a desire to be able to apply his anthropometric expertise to Jews (which,

⁶Montandon makes sure to point out that he does not use “civilization” in the sense of “the supreme civilization, that of the Occident” (p. 11).

as we have seen, could be quite lucrative), he developed a theory of a Jewish “mask” of facial features. This “mask” was somehow superimposed on Jews as a result of centuries of intermarriage (“auto-domestication” in Montandon’s words), without technically affecting their racial affiliation (Montandon 1940a, 14).

Based on existing written sources, and given the fact that Montandon was assassinated before the war’s end, it is difficult to determine whether this fairly sudden turn away from hologenesis (in which he had seemed to genuinely believe) and adoption of increasingly flimsy scientific arguments in the service of an ever-fouler antisemitism strongly suggests that Montandon was acting more out of personal gain than scientific conviction. Though ultimately unsuccessful, Montandon aimed for the directorship of the prestigious Museum of Man after Rivet had been fired in 1940 for his criticism of the occupation regime (Reynaud-Paligot 2010, 75; Conklin 2013, 286, 318). The stark opportunism of Montandon’s profitable tests and certification of Jewishness or non-Jewishness for the occupation authorities also demonstrates that he was not an unyielding ideologue, at least not to the point where he was unwilling to occasionally accept large bribes in exchange for declaring accused persons non-Jewish (Reynaud-Paligot 2010, 72). Though Montandon’s violent antisemitism from 1938 was by no means completely inconsistent with his earlier worldview and career, the many years of work he devoted to expanding and popularizing hologenesis was arguably unrelated. Both his anthropological and ethnological development of hologenesis developed in response to his reflection on Ainu, rather than Jews, even if he had secretly held antisemitic views long before 1938.

Conclusion

By analyzing the racist anthropologist George Montandon’s early career and previously unexplored writings on the Ainu, this article has sought to explain his “conversion” to the obscure evolutionary theory of hologenesis and the relation of this theoretical orientation to the rest of his career. I argue that while his fascination with the question of Ainu racial origins was a major factor leading him to embrace hologenesis, which he also (incorrectly) apparently believed could provide a path to scientific acclaim, hologenesis was *not* in fact closely related to Montandon’s end-of-career virulent antisemitism and subsequent collaboration with the Nazis during their occupation of France. He had largely moved on from using hologenesis by 1935 and the theory did not offer as good of a fit for what he wanted to argue about Jews. This observation sheds important new light on the question of whether figures like Montandon were motivated in their embrace of genocidal hatred by opportunism or scientific conviction. This question can never be definitively answered and of course varies from individual to individual, but in Montandon’s case at least, it seems that he was led to champion antisemitism less by science than by ambition.

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John L. Hennessey is an associate professor of the History of Ideas and Sciences, Lund University. His research interests include modern colonialism, especially the Japanese and French Empires, transnational and transimperial history, nationalism and scientific racism. His PhD dissertation, *Rule by Association: Japan in the Global Trans-Imperial Culture, 1868-1912* was shortlisted for the International Convention of Asian Studies Dissertation Prize (2019) and received an honorable mention from the European Network in Universal and Global History (2020). His current project investigates Western scientists' attempts at a racial classification of the Ainu before World War II.