

ATHOS

ALBUM "RENÉ GUÉNON"



2004

RENÉ GUÉNON was born in November 15, 1886, in Blois, rue Croix-Boissée, on the left shore of Loire. Today the little street bears the inscription “René Guénon French Orientalist,” an insult to the master.

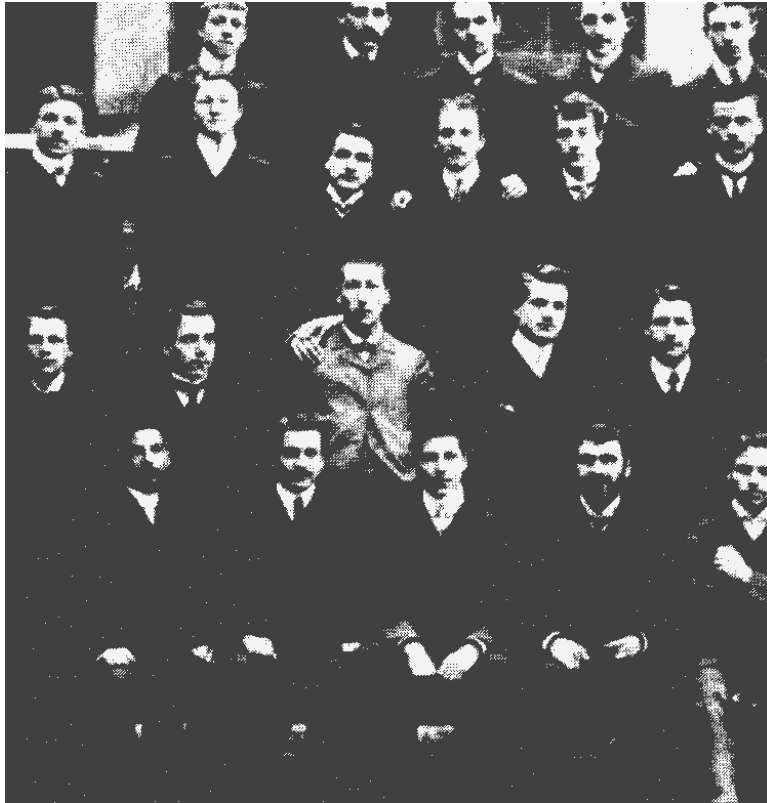


Blois, rue du Foix, no. 74, right shore of river Loire. In this house Guénon spent his childhood, and, after he moved to Paris, here he used to come during the holidays.



At school he was considered an excellent student, with aptitudes for mathematics and philosophy, but with a precarious health.

In 1904, René Guénon comes to Paris, becoming a student at Rollin College, with a major in mathematics.





In 1908 (the date of the above portrait), Guénon was already involved with all the occultist “schools” of that time. Initiated in Masonry, also member of the Martinist Order, student of Papus’ Hermetic School, he soon became a known figure in the esoteric movement of that time – a young man (he was twenty-two years old) with a promising future.

In this year (1908), members of the Martinist Order reunited at *Hôtel des Canettes* (rue des Canettes no. 17, close to Saint-Sulpice church), received an “astral order” to bring young Guénon at the next meeting. After several reunions, to which Guénon attended, The Renovated Order of the Temple was founded, and René Guénon became the head of it. Through this Order Guénon will try, following a less orthodox way, to influence the Occidental mentality. Unfortunately, the initiative will prove to be a failure and, after two years, René Guénon dismantled the organization.



Hôtel des Canettes as it looks today.

In 1909, René Guénon becomes member of the Gnostic Church, under the name of Palingenius. Here he meets Albert de Pouvourville; Guénon will call him “maître,” and quoted his fundamental works regarding Daoism. He will also use – with modifications – Matgioi’s geometric scheme regarding the multiple states of the being.



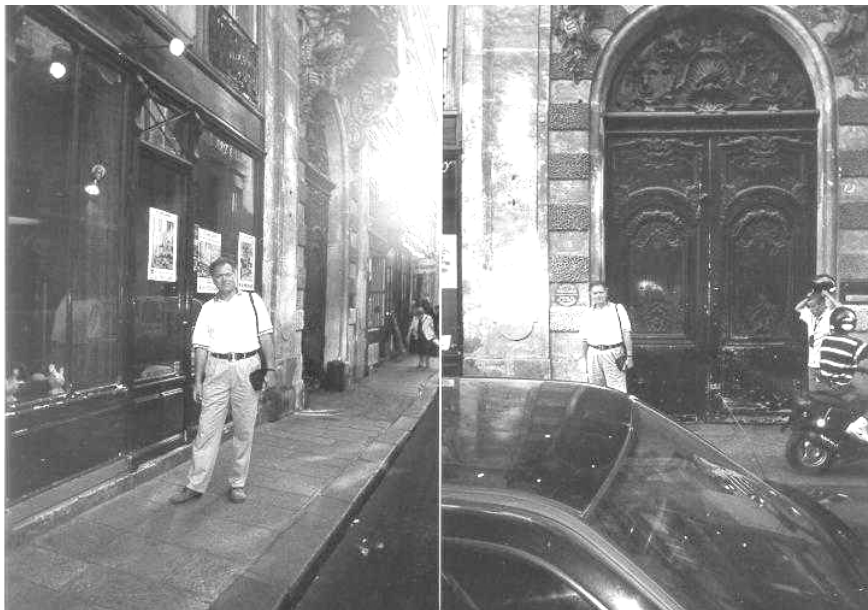
Albert de Pouvourville (see the above photo) received in Vietnam an initiation in Daoism, under the name of Matgioi, “the eye of the day” (meaning “the sun”). Approaching the end of his life, though, Matgioi will become more and more confused, spiritually speaking.

The 1908-1912 period is a very enigmatic one. In this interval, the *Superiores Incogniti* invest René Guénon with the function of Primordial Tradition's reviver, and more precisely, with the function of the absolute Truth's transmitter and interpreter, having the specific mission to modify the Western mentality. He did not operate as a spiritual master in the common sense of the term (therefore he refused categorically any disciples). René Guénon will fulfill this function continuously until his disappearance from the physical world. Between 1909 and 1912 Guénon's (at least theoretical) metaphysical realization was an accomplished fact, a proof being the articles he wrote back then, articles that predicted the books to come.



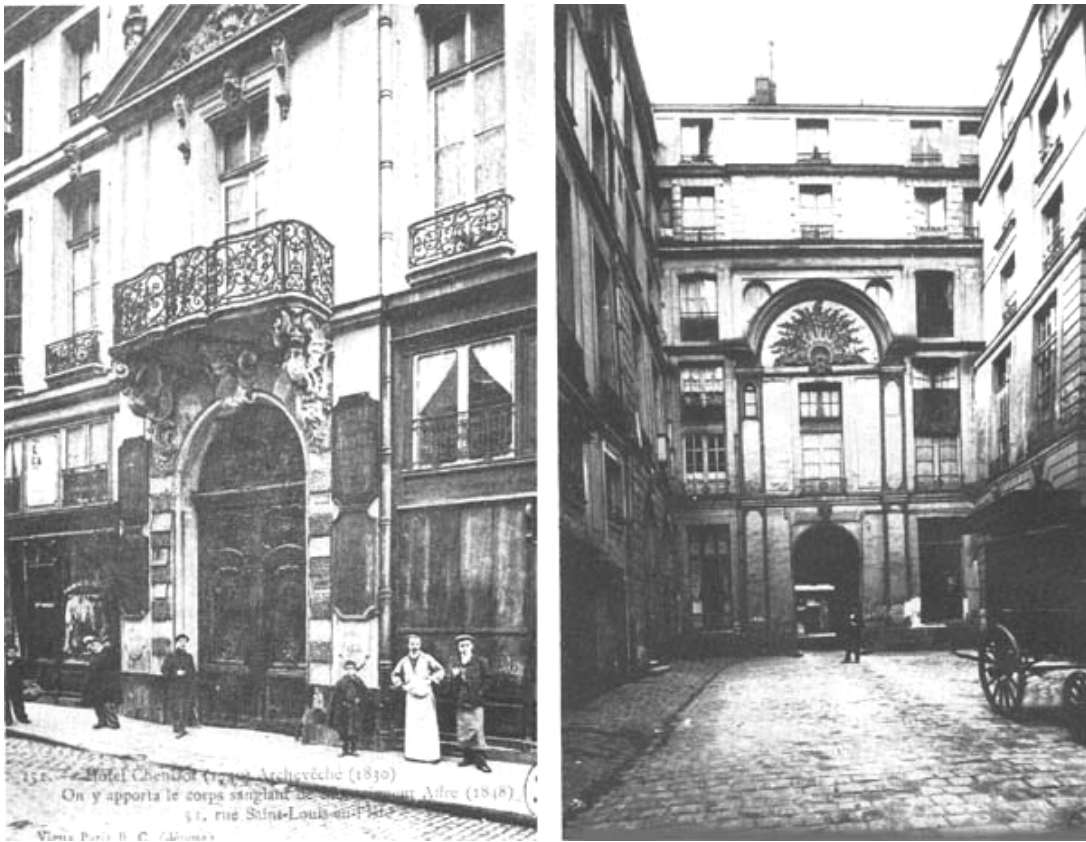
René Guénon and his first wife, Berthe Loury.

Because his initiation was a “universal” one, Guénon will “particularize” it, becoming initiated in Hinduism, Daoism and Masonry. And in 1911-1912, René Guénon received the attachment to the Islamic tradition, under the name *Abdel Wahed Yahia*. Also in 1912, on the 11th of July, he married Berthe Loury. The young couple will live in Guénon’s apartment, in Paris, rue Saint-Louis-l’Île, no. 51.



The front of the house as it is today, street Saint-Louis-l’Île, no. 51. Here no one knows about Guénon.

Though his work as “complication,” yet also as “explication” (in the sense of the words given by Nicholas of Cusa), was already concluded, René Guénon begins to publish his books only after ten years. World War One stopped him to manifest earlier, and his first book, about the Hindu tradition appears only in 1921. In the next decade, he will publish all his fundamental works, and in this period he becomes, also, the “heart” and the “intellect” of the French journal, *Études Traditionnelles*. On the other hand, he is more and more convinced that his subtle activity in the Western world will not succeed to change the mentality towards Tradition and sacred life, even the consolidation of an efficient elite being doubtful.



The front of the house, street Saint-Louis-l'Île, no. 51, and the inside courtyard – how they looked in Guénon's time.

Therefore, on March the 5th 1930, after his wife's death, René Guénon leaves France, establishing for the rest of his life, at Cairo, Egypt. From this moment he will adopt all the Muslim rites and customs, without abandoning his universal function.



In 1934, he marries Fatma, shayk Mohammad Ibrahim's older daughter. They will have four children, two girls and two boys, last one born after Guénon's death.



Khadjia (born in 1944) and Leila (born in 1947).



Though retreated in Egypt, Guénon continued to have a peremptory influence in the Occident. The monthly articles published in *Études Traditionnelles*, the amazing vast correspondence and the books written during the World War Two wisely completed his Work. At his desk, in his room in Cairo, Guénon patiently read all the books sent to him for review, all the letters received from different senders, no matter how inept these books and letters would have been. And with the serenity of a spiritual master he answered to all of them.



Even though, he firmly stated that he does not accept disciples, René Guénon influenced many individuals, overflowing his metaphysical knowledge and mercy into the world. The most valuable collaborator, the one whose life and work were changed entirely due to René Guénon, was Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy. His writings, after those of Guénon, are the most honest and trustful ones, with regard to the traditional field; they can be taken as a reference without any hesitation, keeping in mind though the difference between Guénon's spiritual qualifications and function, and Coomaraswamy's exoteric status.



Marcel Clavelle, alias Jean Reyor, helped Guénon to communicate with *Études Traditionnelles*. After the Master's death, Clavelle will be implicated in the dubious affair of the "unpublished document," a sort of "memoirs" about Guénon, which betrays Clavelle's lack of intellectual quality



Nevertheless, Frithjof Schuon was René Guénon's greatest hope. Schuon, initiated into Islam, will establish an "initiatory path" for Europe. This "path" will attract many known followers of Guénon's work, among whom we may mention Michel Vâlsan, Titus Burckhardt and Martin Lings. Michel Vâlsan will become, after Guénon's death, the chief editor of the French journal *Études Traditionnelles* and will begin to publish the Master's "posthumous" work. Unfortunately, the virus of *superbia* and individualism will infect Frithjof Schuon, and, trying to become the only and the greatest spiritual master for the whole Occident (Islamism and Christianity altogether), he will destroy any hope in the salvation of the Western mentality. Guénon will be so heartbroken that he felt almost "killed" by Schuon's attitude.



In the photo: Jacques Cottat, Frithjof Schuon and Titus Burckhardt.

Martin Lings, who wrote good lines about the Islamic tradition, was close to Gu enon in the last years of Gu enon's life. Lings tried to conciliate, post-mortem, Gu enon with Schuon.

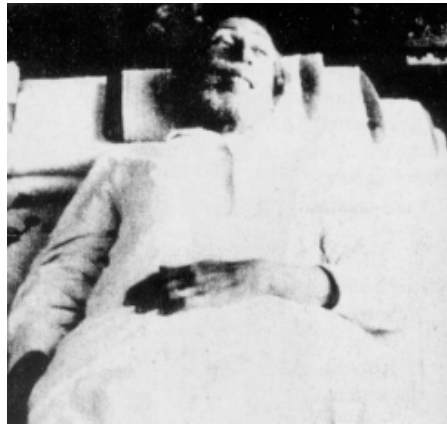




René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon



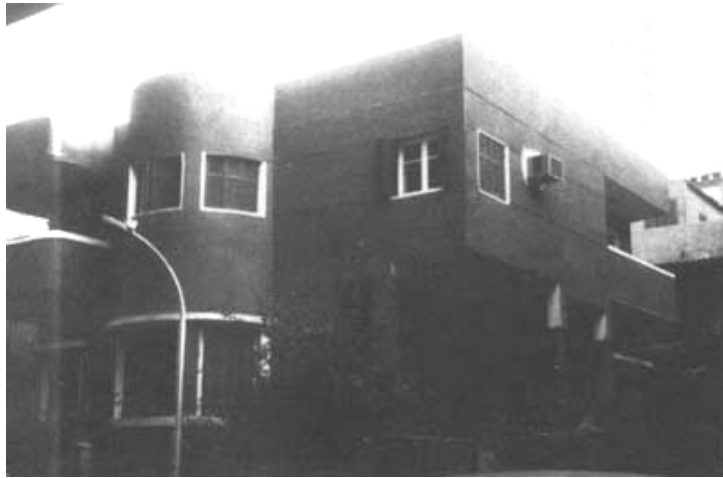
A strange episode: for six months, René Guénon was immobilized in bed because of a so-called crisis of rheumatism. In fact, Guénon confessed, this crisis was the effect of some kind of malefic forces directed against him by the “adversaries.”



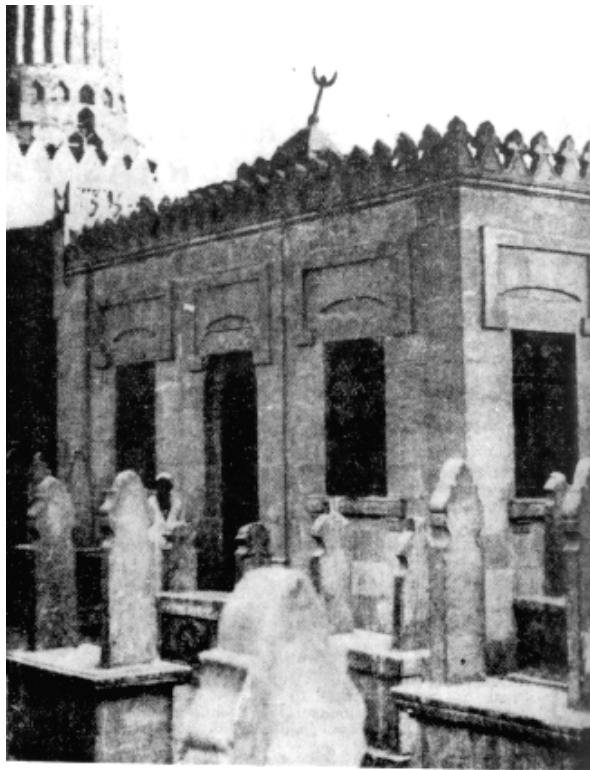
In 1949, Ahmed, his first son, was born.



After intense suffering, René Guénon asked his wife the permission to die. He will leave the physical world on January the 7th, 1951. Guénon's body found rest in his wife's family mausoleum. Though he asked Fatma to leave his room untouched, his library and other documents will be taken away.



Fatma villa, at Cairo, where Guénon, together with his wife and kids, lived.



Wife's family mausoleum, where Guénon was buried.