

DJIBOUTI

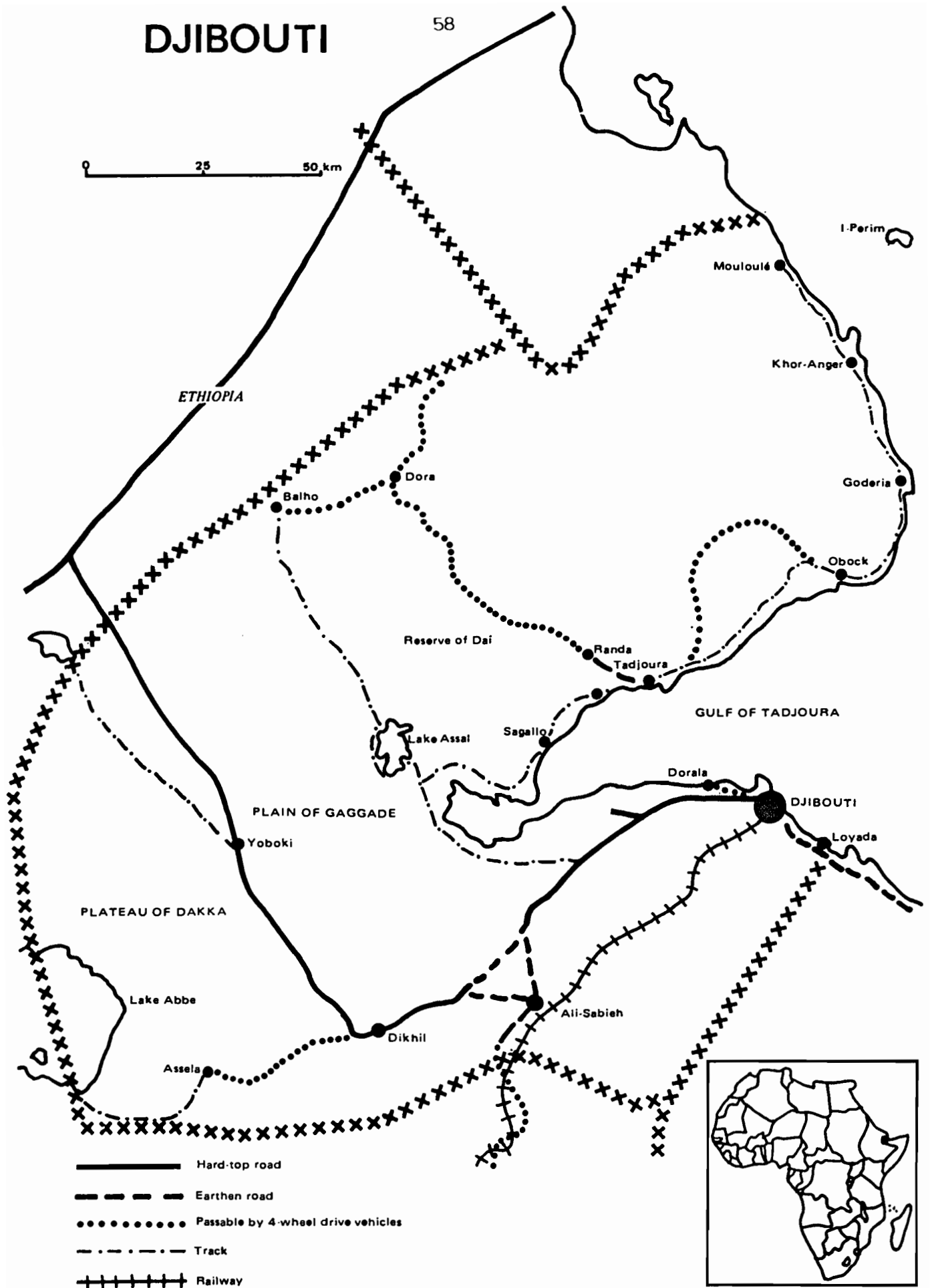
Agnès Guillaume

SEPTEMBER 1979

DJIBOUTI

58

0 25 50 km



- Hard-top road
- - - Earthen road
- Passable by 4-wheel drive vehicles
- . - . - Track
- + + + + + Railway

D J I B O U T I

I. INTRODUCTION

Bounded on the north and west by Ethiopia, on the east by the Gulf of Aden, and on the south by the Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Djibouti constitutes a territory of about 23 000 km².

The country was a French possession for more than a century; the French presence in the "territory of Obock" dates back to 1862 and was made official by the Decree of 20 May 1896 which gave it the name of "French Somaliland and dependencies". It became an overseas department in 1946. A referendum took place in the country on 19 March 1967: the country remained a part of the French Republic; it was given a new status and a new name "French Territory of the Afars and Issas", from the name of the nomadic tribes which make up its population :

- the Afars wander in the north-east of the country and on both sides of the border with Eritrea;
- the Issas make more substantial movements within the country and across frontiers.

A new referendum took place on 8 May 1977 and on 27 June 1977. The territory proclaimed its independence and was made the Republic of Djibouti.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SOURCES

As far as demographic data are concerned, the situation of the Republic of Djibouti is very bad. The only available data on population come from censuses made every five years between 1921 and 1936, and between 1946 and 1956.

The censuses concern effectively only a small proportion of the population : in fact, nominative censuses are limited to the "European and assimilated" population. For the indigenous population we only have estimates.

Periods and methods of estimation were quite variable.

a) Period of estimation

In 1931, the enumeration took place during the first quarter of the year; on the other hand, in 1936, it was carried out at the time when the nomads move up to the heights of the border regions of Abyssinia.

The difference in the time of estimation may partly explain the variations observed.

Table 21
DJIBOUTI - EVOLUTION OF THE POPULATION

YEAR	INDIGENOUS POPULATION	NON-INDIGENOUS POPULATION
1921	56 000	369
1926	85 000	540
1931	68 000	356
1936	44 000	1 881
1945	43 000	1 415
1949	54 000	2 039
1951	60 000	2 170
1957	63 000	4 360
1961	74 000	7 200

b) Method of estimation

It is not known exactly what method of estimation was used. Article 5 of the Decree of 18 March 1921 mentions only that "each District Chief will endeavour to determine the number of indigenous inhabitants by race and tribe on the basis of the information which will be provided by the Okal." For the other years, no information is available.

Finally, civil registration is very imperfect, especially for deaths. It operates essentially only in the capital. In 1978, 6 044 births and 847 deaths were registered.

III. MAIN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

In 1976, the population was estimated (on the basis of work carried out in 1971-1972 by SEDES during an identification mission) at 250 000 inhabitants, of which 160 000 in Djibouti-ville. These data appear consistent when compared with the electoral rolls, which give a total of 110 000 adults (males plus females) aged 18 and over. The natural rate of increase would be 2½% per year, and the life expectancy at birth 50 years. According to a survey carried out at Djibouti-ville on 124 000 inhabitants on 1 October 1972 and at Dikhil-ville in 1976, the population is young : 51% is under 15 years.

The sex ratio varies among the tribes: 57.6% male for the Afars, 52% for the Issas and 45.5% for the other Somalis.

Population data are too fragmentary and too unreliable to allow an estimate of demographic trends. The projections (see Table 22 and Chart 2) are in fact rather contradictory : for example, Table 22 presents various estimates from 1885 to 1972, which indicate very sharp variations from one year to another; on the other hand, Chart 1 shows a smoother development, but the sources are not stated, except to mention a census necessitated by the 1967 referendum, which gave 125 000 inhabitants.

One common characteristic appears : the demographic imbalance represented by the town of Djibouti; the concentration of population there is substantial (between half and two thirds of the total population). The growth of Djibouti-ville has been very quick as it saw its population triple between 1895 and 1900 following the construction of the railway link to Addis-Ababa, and the increase has been steady since 1947 when the port was created. Its population was estimated to be 115 200 inhabitants in 1972 (according to the identification mission of the CEGD).

Its population is very cosmopolitan : it consists mainly of foreigners (Europeans, Arabs, Somalis, Asians) and Issas (the town is their movement zone); on the other hand, Afars are not numerous (less than 5% in 1967). A fairly substantial transient population composed of families and men seeking employment is attracted to the town. Its population is very young (see Chart 2, age pyramid).

IV. DIFFICULTIES OF COLLECTION

These are manifold :

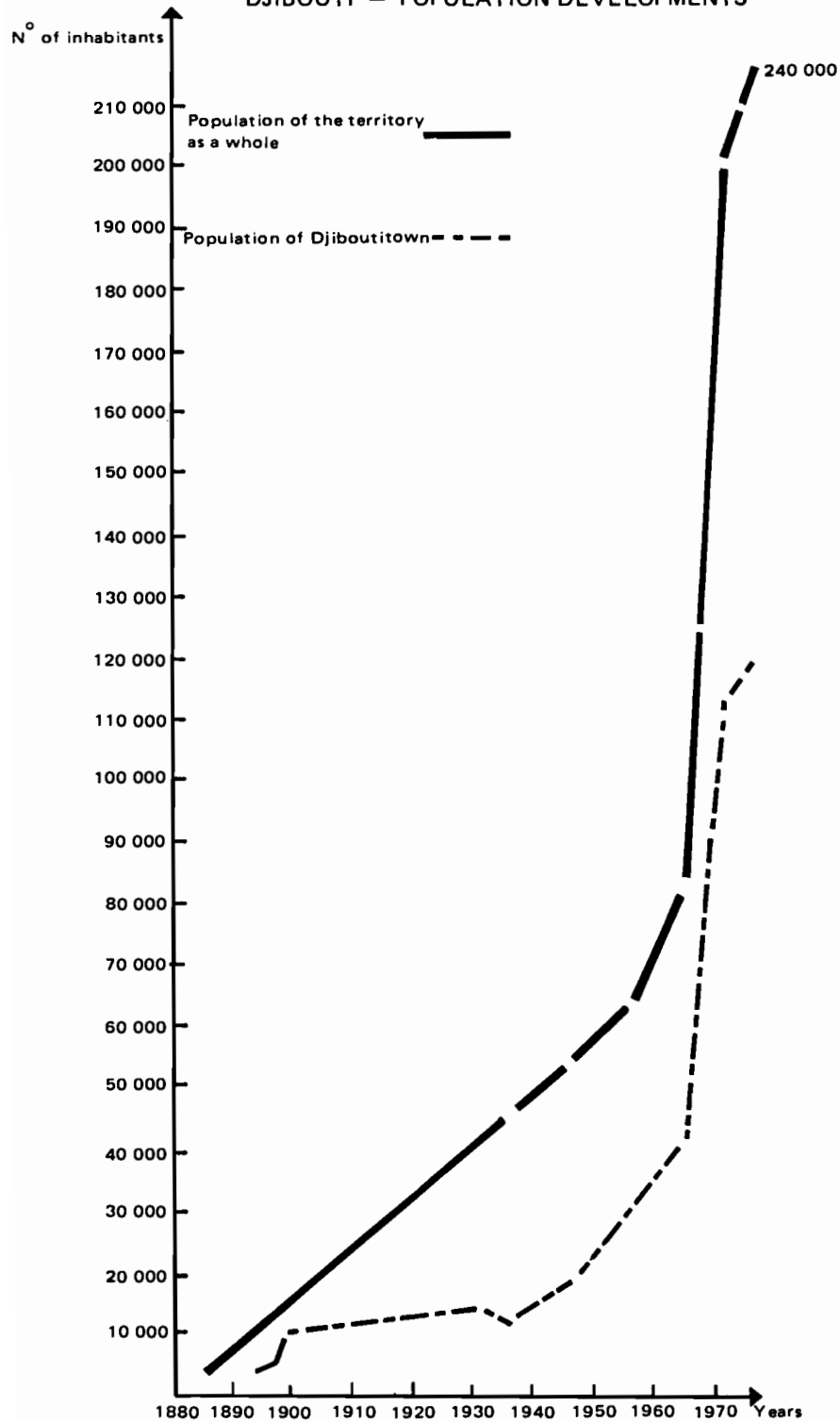
- the frontiers of the country are not well established :
 - . estimates of its surface area sometimes vary;
 - . nomads and Somalis coming from the Democratic Republic of Somalia and Ethiopia often cross the border;
- the nomadisation of the Afars and Issas, as well as their feuds, complicate enumeration operations.
- last, one must mention the substantial immigration, in particular of Arabs and Somalis, and the flow of refugees from Dgaden who are concentrated in the main town. The number of refugees was estimated to be 20 000 in 1977 by the Refugee Committee. This figure may be an under-estimate, bearing in mind the "clandestine refugees" whose number can be estimated to be 50 000, and the total Djibouti population to have been 300 000 inhabitants in 1977.

Since the time of independence, no figures have been published. During the last few years, operations have taken place on the territory geared towards a population enumeration. However, no information concerning them is available.

Table 22
DJIBOUTI - POPULATION OF THE FRENCH TERRITORY OF AFFARS AND ISSAS
FROM 1885 TO 1972

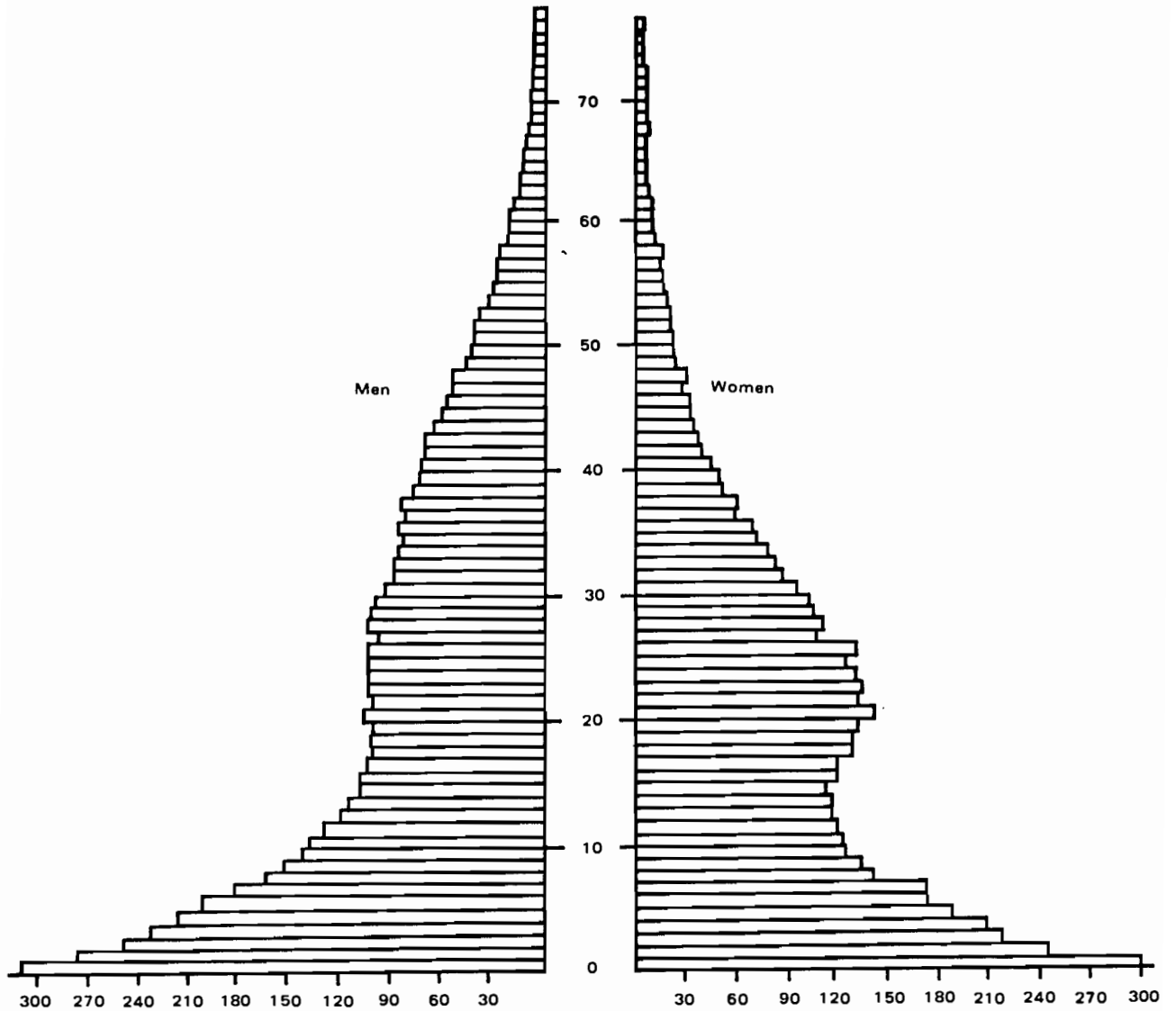
YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION OF DJIBOUTI-VILLE	REMARKS
1885	22 500		Concerns the territory of Obock only
1891	200 000		
1893		1 250	
1895		4 500	
1897		6 000	
1898		10 000	
1900	50 000 or 200 000	15 000	For the Territory, the figure of 200 000 is the most frequently quoted
1902		13 500	
1906	208 000	8 000	"enumerated and estimated"
1910	90 000	10 000	
1911		13 500)	There is no census of population as a whole
1913		16 700)	
1921	65 000	8 500	
1926	85 000	?	General statistics in France do not show any particular information on Djibouti
1927	85 000	9 400	
1931	69 000	10 000	
1936	46 000	10 000	
1939		16 000	
1942		6 000	
1945	85 000	15 000	Notes and documentary studies. These figures seem particularly inflated
1946	46 000	17 000	
1947	54 000	19 000	
1950	53 000		For 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955 population figures supplied for the Territory concern non-Europeans only
1951	59 000	26 000	
1953	62 000	30 000	
1954	62 800		French Overseas Ministry
1955	65 000		
1956	67 500		
1957	70 000	31 500	
1958	72 500		
1959	75 000		
1960		32 000	
1961	80 000	40 000	
1963	81 500	41 500	
1966		62 000	
1967	125 000	62 000	
1972	120 000	40 000	Declaration of Mr. Krieg at the National Assembly (May 1972)
		120 000?	Paper of the Haut-Commissariat (December 1972)
		85 000	Le mois en Afrique (January 1973)

CHART 1
DJIBOUTI — POPULATION DEVELOPMENTS



Source : (17)

CHART 2
DJIBOUTI — PYRAMID AGE IN 1972



Source : C.E.G.D. analysis of ten percent sample of identification mission data

V. CONCLUSIONS

Population data are very unsatisfactory since no operation has been carried out in the territory since 1960.

Based on the identification mission (which gives a figure of 250 000 inhabitants in 1976) it would seem that the population would have been about 230 000 inhabitants on January 1st, 1975.

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**POPULATION SIZE
IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES :
AN EVALUATION**

Volume I

Paris
1986

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