



Introducing the Academy

Founded in 1663, in the reign of Louis XIV and on the initiative of Colbert, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres is one of the five Academies of the Institut de France. Since 1805 it has been located in the Palais de l'Institut, the former College of the Four Nations, whose famous cupola rises opposite the Louvre.

Under the name of Academy of Inscriptions and Medals it was originally in charge of creating the Latin and French mottoes to be inscribed on the king's buildings, medals and coins. As early as 1701, however, a reform gave it both its present name and a single mission, still relevant today, namely the advancement and diffusion of knowledge in the fields of Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages (now extended to the European classical period) and non-European cultures (of the Near and Far East). Its concern, nowadays, covers other continents, especially through Amerindian studies. The proceedings of the Academy deal therefore with history, archaeology, history of the fine arts, philology and linguistics, literature, history of ideas as well as related disciplines (epigraphy, numismatics, diplomatic, etc.).

The Academy is heir to a very long tradition of scholarship, as witnessed by its publication of the oldest extant scientific magazine, *Le Journal des Savants*, founded in 1665. Its many activities are widely recognized, its publications, renowned all over the world.

In accordance with its statutes the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres promotes and enhances research by means of prizes. The papers and research reviews given at its weekly public sessions provide a national and international response to the most recent studies and discoveries. Its intensive publishing productivity and intellectual rigour make the Academy one of the major French centres of scientific publications. As a national institution,



it plays the role of consultant with official authorities for matters within its competence. It also participates in the vetting of research centres abroad and gives its advice on candidates for the posts of directors of important French institutions of teaching and research.

The Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres can therefore be viewed both as a repository, a place where human memory is saved and kept alive, and also as a laboratory, where research on mankind, its societies and cultures, develops and flourishes.

Key-words: Academy – History – Archaeology – Human sciences – Philology – Oriental Studies – Antiquity – Middle Ages – Erudition – Scientific publications – Patronage.

