



ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DEI LINCEI

A BRIEF OUTLINE

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I thought this guide might be useful and appreciated by groups of scholars, illustrious guests, Italian and foreign visitors, students and tourists.

The introduction – ubi major - is by Prof. F. Gabrieli, former president of the Accademia dei Lincei.

Ada Baccari



First edition of this work by Lincei

Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei

Historical background

Federico Cesi (1586-1630) was a Roman-Umbrian patrician with a passion for the natural sciences, above all in botany. In order to promote and cultivate these studies, in 1603 he founded in Rome a fellowship together with three young friends; the Dutchman *Giovanni Heckius* (Italianised as “Ecchio”), and two Italians, *Francesco Stelluti* and *Anastasio de Filiis* both from Umbria. This fellowship was named the Accademia dei Lincei, [lince, Italian for lynx] for the acute eyesight of the lynx which, in that period, was still a common species in Italy. This animal was soon adopted as the symbol of this learned company of scholars. The focus of the Academy, under *Cesi's* vision, was to study all the natural sciences from a liberal and experimental viewpoint, free from any traditional encumbrance or authority. This was the great innovation which characterised the birth of the Lincei from the other scholarly academies which were to take root in the Italy of the 1500's and 1600's. The Lincei focused their interests particularly towards the natural sciences, whereas the greater part of the other academies were more literary and erudite. Although respectful of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic tradition predominant in those times, they were not bound by this as was apparent in their new and experimental approach to scientific research which sometimes put this tradition to discussion.

Federico Cesi

This was well evident from the start of this new Academy's work which, from 1611 comprised amongst its members the great *Galileo*. Always in these first years, the Academy grew according to *Cesi's* generous plan to include many other Italian and foreign scholars from outside the Galilean school of thought, such as the Neapolitan *Della Porta* and the German *Faber (Schmidt)*, who was also Chancellor of the Academy. Many important publications and treatises on astronomy, physics and botany are attributed to this ancient core group of scholars whose activities are well recorded in the official annals of the Academy, recently made available in print version (*Lynceographum*). Among these works, we can cite the studies on sunspots, the celebrated work of Galileo - *The Assayer* - and also the commonly named *Mexican Treasure* on the flora,

Galileo Galilei

fauna and pharmacopoeia of the New World whose incredibly laborious drafting and publication lasted for over a decade until 1651.

By this date, almost half a century from its foundation, the most illustrious phase of the Academy's long life had already drawn to a close. *Cesi's* intense activity as both leader and founder was brusquely interrupted by his death in 1630 when he was just 45 years old. Following his premature death, *Cesi's* much-loved Academy was disbanded to become inactive, notwithstanding the generous contributions of *Stelluti* and *Cassiano dal Pozzo* who attempted to rescue the priceless patrimony of ideas and materials against this adverse fate.

For more than two centuries, many attempted to renew its prominent name and the memory of this illustrious Roman company of scholars; most important of all, was in the 1800's by the abbot *Scarpellini*, with his new Academy called the "Nuovi Lincei" which focused on the study of physics and mathematics. It was only through the decisive efforts of *Pope Pius IX* who, in 1847 re-established a link to the Lincei initiated by *Cesi* in the 1600's with the creation of the "Pontificia Accademia dei Nuovi Lincei".

Quintino Sella

The ultimate and definitive restitution was in 1870 through the efforts of *Quintino Sella*, a statesman and scientist from Piedmont. He affirmed a laical approach to sciences as the ideal and primary value to cultivate in the Capital of the new Kingdom of Italy and in 1874, gave light to the glorious institution which was to bear in its new name, the words "national" and "royal".

In that vibrant and decisive century in the history of Italy, *Sella's* new Academy was generally considered as the heir to the *Cesian* tradition. *Sella's* broad and far-sighted vision was to expand the scientific horizons of the Academy from the physical, mathematical and natural sciences – to which the Academy was dedicated in the 1600's – to also include the "moral" or humanistic sciences (history, philology, archaeology, philosophy, economics and law). Its first statute emanated in 1875, to be followed by others, defined the new composition of its members.

Through *Sella's* restoration efforts, the Accademia dei Lincei is now made up of two classes, one for the physical sciences and the other for the moral sciences or humanities. Its latest statutes foresee a maximum of 90 Italian members for each class and the same number of foreign members and corresponding members who are co-opted annu-

ally. Under this new composition which leaves the initial organisation more or less untouched, the Academy has continued its work for over a century in this new reincarnation representing one of the most antique and prestigious heritages of European and international scientific research. Illustrious members from *Righi* and *Pacinotti* to *Fermi*, *Pasteur* to *Röntgen* and *Einstein*, from *Mommsen* and *Wilamowitz* to *Comparetti*, *Croce* and *Gentile*, all Olympians of scientific research of their periods, have filled its annals and the halls of the prestigious Roman Palazzo Corsini alla Lungara, built in the 1700's, which thanks to the efforts of *Sella* was assigned by the then Kingdom of Italy as the official seat of the Academy. But during the 1900's, the events of that same nation were also to echo through the corridors of this peaceful seat of science.

The Accademia dei Lincei founded by *Cesi* was inspired by a spirit of free and liberal modern inquiry combined with “divine love” – in the words of its founder – with an open and inquiring rather than dogmatic approach to religion. *Sella's* resurrected Academy was the lay and liberal child of the Italian Risorgimento.

The totalitarian State which dominated Italy for over 20 years could not but regard the independent and liberalist approach of the Academy with suspicion. For this reason, in 1939 under a Fascist Government law, the Academy was “merged”, or rather absorbed by the Accademia d'Italia, founded by the same government as a docile counterweight to the severe Accademia dei Lincei. This last eclipse lasted just a few years and was disbanded with the end of the war and the Fascist regime.

Fascist period

Following the collapse of Fascism in Italy, one of the first steps of the new liberated Italy proposed by the liberalist statesman *Benedetto Croce*, was the suppression of the Accademia d'Italia and the reconstitution of the Accademia dei Lincei founded by *Cesi* and later re-establish by *Sella*, which the previous dictatorship had tried to suppress. Once again – like the mythical phoenix – the Accademia dei Lincei rose from its ashes, hopefully to a long and peaceful future.

Recent years

Francesco Gabrieli

Aims of the Academy

The Statutes of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (last version approved on August 2, 2001, under decree of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities) state:

Art.1: “The Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, a cultural institution, situated in Rome, in accordance with article 33 of the Italian Constitution, decides its own rules and performs its institutional duties in compliance with the laws of the State and within the limits established by these...”

The scope of the Academy is to promote, coordinate, integrate and spread scientific knowledge in its highest expression, in the unity and universality of culture ...”.

Art. 2: “In accordance with the scopes defined in the previous article, the Academy holds Assemblies and Meetings of the Combined Classes or of the single Classes; it organizes national and international congresses, conferences, meetings and seminars; it participates with its own Members in similar Italian and foreign meetings (...); it promotes and carries out research activities and missions; it confers awards and grants; it publishes the reports of its own meetings and the notes and memories presented therein, as well as the acts of the congresses, meetings and seminars it promotes.

It furnishes - upon request, as well as on its own initiative - opinions to public entities in the fields of its own competence; if necessary it formulates proposals...

It performs, carrying on a longstanding tradition, all other activities useful to its purpose. The Academy can accept inheritances, donations and institute foundations in order to accomplish its aims”.

Organization and structure

The Academy is divided into two Classes: Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences and Moral, Historical and Philological Sciences. Each of the two Classes comprises 90 national members, 90 corresponding members and 90 foreign members.



Corsini Palace (antique print)



Corsini Palace – Library Reading Room



Villa Farnesina - exterior view
(interior with frescoes by Raphael)



Villa Farnesina – The Triumph of Galatea (Raphael)

The Class of Physical Sciences is subdivided into 5 categories: Mathematics, Mechanics and their applications; Astronomy, Geodesy, Geophysics and their applications; Physics, Chemistry and their applications; Geology, Palaeontology, Mineralogy and their applications; Biological Sciences and their applications.

The Class of Moral Sciences is subdivided into 7 categories: Philology and Linguistics; Archaeology; Criticism of Art and Poetry; History, Historic and Anthropic Geography; Philosophical Sciences; Juridical Sciences; Political and Social Sciences.

Organs of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei:

- the President or the Vice President;
- the Academic Administrator;
- the Council;
- the General Assembly of the two Classes;
- the Assembly of each Class in its competent fields;
- the Audit Committee.

The President represents the Academy; the President and the Vice President are the Presidents of their respective Classes.

When the President is a member of the Class of Physical Sciences, the Vice President must be a member of the Class of Moral Sciences and vice versa.

The President and the Vice President are elected for a three year period. They can be immediately re-elected only once.

The Chancellor of the Academy assists the President and the Council and is the General Director of the Academy.

Activities

The Academic year is inaugurated in November and ends in June with a closing ceremony in the presence of the President of the Italian Republic, diplomatic corps and other government officials. During the closing ceremony the Academy prizes are awarded in different branches of study, and a summary of the scientific activities that were carried out during the year is presented. Class sessions are held once a month.

The activities of the Academy are carried out according to two guiding principles that complement one another: to intensify scientific knowledge and disseminate science.

Meetings

To intensify scientific knowledge, the Academy gives special attention to current and social issues. Conferences and meetings are organized to encourage scientific cooperation and exchange between scientists and scholars at the national and international level. The Academy also promotes institutional exchanges by inviting representatives of national and international institutions to participate in seminars, lectures or debates.

As part of its mission to disseminate science, the Academy organizes conferences and events, aimed at a broad audience, as well as seminars, specialization and refresher courses.

The Academy also promotes a series of lectures in numerous Italian universities which are delivered by leading experts in various scientific fields. This initiative allows Italian students to follow the same lectures delivered in prestigious American and European universities while at their home universities.

Centro Linceo

Scientific knowledge is also disseminated by the Centro Linceo Interdisciplinare “Beniamino Segre” which bears the name of its founder. The mission of this Centre is to create awareness in the scientific world of a series of problematic issues generally associated with daily life and also to create a beneficial exchange between the general public and the scientific world. The Centre also organises on-line lessons and training programmes for high-school teachers, as well as guidance courses for students who wish to enter various fields.

Permanent Commissions

The Academy has also some permanent Commissions, such as a Commission for the environment and natural calamities. In past years, this Commission has examined the flooding of the Tiber, Po and Arno rivers, has studied possible defence mechanisms and has researched into the feasibility of forecasting earthquakes. This Commission intends proposing its consulting services to the public sector for problems which have recently been unleashed on Italy caused partly by the natural geomorphologic condition and exacerbated by man’s intervention. Other Commissions are also engaged in further areas of study; the history of

the Academy, the defence of human rights, a working group on international security issues and arms control.

The Academy also finances scientific research and study missions both in Italy and abroad pertinent to the areas of interest of the Commission for natural science museums, zoological parks, botanical parks, aquaria and other ecological issues.

In 1986 an association called “Amici dell’Accademia dei Lincei” (friends of the Accademia dei Lincei) was established to subsidise, at least in part, the Academy in its activities. It constitutes a permanent link between the Academy and the financial and business sectors.

Associazione
Amici

To ensure the ongoing cultural promotion, the Academy each year confers numerous prizes and scholarships. These awards are differentiated by typology and the criteria for which they are conferred. While prizes are granted to reward careers dedicated to innovative research or discoveries beneficial to mankind, grants or scholarships are awarded to encourage young researchers to continue their work and to allow them to enhance their scientific preparation. The most prestigious prizes include: the National Prize of the President of the Italian Republic, the “Antonio Feltrinelli” Prizes established by the Lombard industrialist Antonio Feltrinelli, the Prize of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, and the Linceo Prize. The prizes, together with the scholarships, are granted with funds from both private and public “sponsors” to be conferred to figures considered by the Academy as highly meritorious in the fields of science and art.

Prizes and
Scholarships

The Academy also promotes culture through its publications: the notable results from its scientific research could not be considered universal heritage if these findings were not published and disseminated amongst the scientific milieu. In addition to numerous works on archaeology published by the Academy – exemplary in their presentation – another more modest but flourishing initiative, operating under the name “Contributi del Centro Linceo” is active in adding new editions to its list of publications. Other works and journals of the Academy are also published to continue the ancient tradition of academic exchange and are sent to many academies and cultural institutions worldwide and in turn, the Lincei receives numerous publications and journals for its own library archives.

Publications

The Academy Library

The Library of the Accademia dei Lincei, housed on the first floor of Palazzo Corsini in the splendid halls designed by Ferdinando Fuga, comprises several sections, some of great value. The principle and oldest section is the Biblioteca Corsiniana, belonging to Cardinal Neri Corsini (in the Touring guide attributed to Lorenzo Corsini), was opened to the public in 1754. In 1883 Prince Tommaso Corsini sells the Palace to the Italian State with its entire collection, on the condition that “ the Royal Accademia dei Lincei shall conserve the Library for public use, maintain the name *Corsiniana*, and keep its location not only in Rome but in Trastevere, as was disposed by Cardinal Neri Corsini, one of the founding members of the Library”.

The most prestigious nucleus of the Corsiniana – conserved in the “sala dei rari” – contains many manuscripts which document the activity of Federico Cesi and the first members of the Academy, active from 1603 to 1651, the date of the last publication of the original Lincei. Among these works, we have the commonly-known *Mexican Treasure – Rerum medicarum Novae Hispaniae*, published 20 years after the death of Federico Cesi. We also have a list of famous academicians and the date when they became member of this prestigious and ancient brotherhood; 32 signatures, amongst which “Galilaeus Galilaeus Lyncaeus Vincentii filius florentinus...” emerges. The most significant manuscripts include: the Lynceographum, statutes and programme of the Academy; the Gesta Lynceorum by Johannes van Haeck (Giovanni Ecchio), one of the founding members of the Academy and man of high distinction; numerous letters signed by Federico Cesi, Francesco Stelluti, Galileo and other fellows (this collection was studied and published by Giuseppe Gabrieli); and the minutes of the Academy’s first years, drafted by Johannes Faber, Chancellor and secretary of the Academy. The ancient collection contains the works and publications by the first members of the Academy (the Apiarium by Federico Cesi, the History and demonstrations about Solar Spots and the Assayer by Galileo Galilei), as well as numerous manuscripts, precious incunabula, and a rich collection of printed books of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Today the Academy has a rich collection of periodicals and proceedings from the most important Academies and Cultural Societies worldwide. This important collection has been provided to the Academy in exchange for its own publications.

The library was enriched in time with donations from private collections. Among the most important holdings of the library are those donated by the Caetani

Foundation (Oriental section of the library), Pascarella, Levi Civita, Salmi, Verginelli-Rota (ancient esoteric texts), Marconi Archives, Volterra and many others.

The Corsini Palace and Villa Farnesina, seats of the Accademia dei Lincei

The Corsini Palace

The seat of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei is in the Corsini Palace, located in Via della Lungara 10, in the heart of old Trastevere. Opposite the Corsini Palace on Via della Lungara 230 is Villa Farnesina, the Academy's representative centre.

In 1736 Cardinal Neri Corsini, of noble Florentine family, and nephew of Lorenzo Corsini (Pope Clement XII) purchased the Riario Palace – which had been the residence of the young Michelangelo and later Queen Christina of Sweden (a commemorative inscription is in one of the halls on the first floor of the Palace).

Cardinal Corsini had the palace altered and enlarged by the Florentine architect, Ferdinando Fuga. In his hands it turned into one of the most magnificent palaces of 18th century Rome and, from then on, became known as the Corsini Palace.

In 1883 the palace was purchased by the Italian government for 2.400.000 Lira, provided it became the permanent home of the Royal Academy of Lincei. The Corsini family returns to Florence.

That same year, Prince Tommaso Corsini, donates to the Academy the magnificent family library. The outstanding collections of books, prints and pictures belonging to the Corsini family were arranged on the first floor of the palace. Together with the Corsinian archive, Prince Tommaso Corsini presented to the Lincei Academy prints which, together with the collection later purchased by the Ministry of Education, form the National Collection of Prints. A collection of paintings which belonged to the Corsini family was also given to the Italian State by Tommaso Corsini. This formed the nucleus of the national gallery which is now divided between the Barberini palace and the Corsini palace.

Although the facade of the building on Via della Lungara has a uniform, monotonous appearance, the entrance provides a beautiful atrium with great pillars that give it a scenographic design.

The rear facade of the Palace provides a more lively form. On the right side of the building the old Riario Palace is still visible. The panoramic view of the gardens,

surrounded by gates decorated with vases originally provided an extensive view of the Janiculum before the establishment of the Botanical Garden.

From the entrance hall of the Corsini palace, a wide staircase leads up to the first floor where the library of the Academy and the Gallery are situated. On the second floor a glass door, on which is emblazoned a lynx (the arms of the Academy), leads into a series of imposing rooms, among which the private apartment of the Corsini family. The meetings and conferences of the Academy are held on this floor, in the conference rooms of the two Classes of the Academy: Sciences and Humanities. From the entrance hall, one passes through the Sala Impero, Sala dei Divani, Alcove and the Tapestry room. Other impressive rooms on this floor are the Sala Rossa, Sala Gialla, Sala dell'Orologio, Sala Dutuit (where there are valuable collections of porcelain and other works of art, mainly from the Orient), the President's office, the Chancellor's office and the Secretariat.

Villa Farnesina

Villa Farnesina, considered one of the most magnificent creations of Italian Renaissance, was built for the rich Sieneese banker, Agostino Chigi, in the early sixteenth century by Baldassarre Peruzzi, a Sieneese architect of great renown. The interior is richly decorated with frescoes by great masters such as Raphael, Sebastiano del Piombo, Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Sodoma, and Peruzzi himself.

In 1511 the Villa, on the banks of the Tiber, in all its splendor of a magnificent "viridario" was completed. In this residence Agostino Chigi, also known as "Il magnifico", lived the splendid life of a renaissance merchant, in a setting of pomp and splendour, entertaining artists, poets, and noblemen with sumptuous banquets. The most memorable was the banquet splendidly laid out in the stables, almost to show that Chigi's stables were more fabulous than the halls of the Riario Palace that was being built on the other side of the street, or the one where gold and silver plates used for the banquet were flung into the Tiber as a sign of munificence; though the banker ordered nets to be laid on the river bed so that the valuable objects could be recovered.

After such splendour during the life of Agostino, the villa, in which the Lansquenets set up bivouacs during the Sack of Rome and left their mark on the frescoes of the first floor, at the end of the sixteenth century was purchased by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and was named Villa Farnesina, to distinguish it from the Farnese Palace located on the other side of the river; according to a project by Michelangelo a bridge was to be built across the Tiber to connect the two Farnese estates.

The Villa later passed to the Borbone family and subsequently to the Duke of Ripalta. Finally, the Villa was purchased by the Italian State to seat the Academy of Italy. The Villa is now owned by the Accademia dei Lincei.

Today the entrance is from the rear side of the villa (the main entrance has two lateral risalits). The construction and decoration presents a close link between the villa and the gardens, as if each represented the ideal continuation of the other.

On the ground floor of the Villa an entrance hall leads to the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche (originally without the protective stained-glass windows), with frescoes by Raphael and by his pupils. Amidst the wonderful festoons, the frescoes represent episodes in the story of Cupid and Psyche as told by Apuleius.

On the left of the Loggia of Psyche is the Room of the Frieze with a frieze that runs around the tops of the walls illustrating mythological scenes painted by Baldassarre Peruzzi (the labours of Hercules, the myth of Orpheus, Mercury with the heifers of Apollo, and the Rape of Europa). On the right is the Hall of Galatea, which contains Raphael's famous fresco representing the Triumph of Galatea. The nymph, with delicate facial features, in contrast to her exuberant physical body, is shown amongst a throng of sea creatures as she is pulled in a shell-shaped chariot by dolphins.

On the adjacent wall, Sebastiano del Piombo frescoed a large figure of Polyphemus, miserably in love with Galatea. It was originally a nude figure and later covered with a light blue drape. In subsequent epoch, the surrounding landscape was added and is attributed to Dughet.

On the first floor, the Hall of the Perspective Views, frescoed by Peruzzi, is one of the first pictorial creations that introduces the concept of linear perspective works of art. It represents ideally the continuance of the loggias on the ground floor: the imaginary loggia with a view of urban and rural landscapes under a bright sky and at a distance the urban setting with the Church of Santo Spirito, the roman Basilica and the Septimian Gate.

During recent restorations, an ancient "graffiti", in German gothic, came to light between the columns. It marks the passage of the Lansquenets and states: "1528 - why shouldn't I laugh: the Lansquenets have put the Pope to flight". Beneath the ceiling runs a frieze with mythological scenes.

Finally, a door leads to the bedroom of Agostino Chigi. The room was frescoed chiefly by Sodoma and depicts the life of Alessandro Magno (the family of the King of Persia at the mercy of the great Macedonian; the wedding of Alexander and Roxane). On the wall adjacent to the left side of the door is the episode of Alexander the Great subduing Bucephalus. Mostly likely this last fresco is of a later date, given that originally Chigi's bed was positioned against this wall.

From the windows on the first floor there is a beautiful view of the gardens. A pleasant stroll under the laurel bower leads to a marble plaque which bears the inscription:

Quisquis huc accedis: quod tibi horridum videtur mihi amoenum est; si placet, maneat, si taedet abeat, utrumque gratum.

[*Whoever enters here: what seems horrid to you is pleasant to me. If you like it, stay, if it bores you, go away; both are equally pleasing to me.]*



For enquiries the Academy offices are opened on weekdays.

The Academy Library is open to the public on weekdays from 9.00 to 13.00 and Thursday afternoon.

The Library is closed the month of August.

For the Accademia dei Lincei activities and publications, please visit www.lincci.it

Villa Farnesina is open for visits everyday, except Sundays, from 9.00 to 13.00.

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