



Fondation Francqui-Stichting

Fondation d'Utilité Publique - Stichting van Openbaar Nut

Ceremony of the Francqui Prize by His Royal Highness Prince Philippe at the "Palais des Académies" on June 6, 2007

Curriculum Vitae - Scientific activities - Report of the Jury



François de Callataÿ

Curriculum Vitae

François de Callataÿ was born in Uccle on June, 13 1961. Showing early signs of his future vocation, he grew up with a passion for ancient civilisations (beginning with the Pre-Columbians). After studying Greek and Latin at school at the Collège Saint-Pierre in Uccle, he decided to study Archaeology and History of Art at the Catholic University of Louvain where, thanks to one of his professors, Tony Hackens, he discovered and developed his enthusiasm for Greek coins.

After studying in Belgium and doing his military service in Germany (1984), he was awarded a research grant which allowed him to spend eight months at the French School in Athens (1984-1985); at the same time, the government awarded him the "Concours des bourses de voyage" grant.

In October 1985, he joined the "Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique" (National Science Foundation). There he wrote his doctoral thesis, which he submitted in October 1988. He was made head of research at the FNRS in October 1989, and was appointed to the Medals Room at the Royal Library of Belgium in April 1991. François de Callataÿ rapidly progressed within this establishment and was promoted to director of the Medals Room in 1994, and soon thereafter, in 1996, he became director of the "Museological Departments" in 1996. Since 2006, his responsibilities have included all the rare collections kept at the Royal Library of Belgium, *i.e.* the national collections of manuscripts, rare books, engravings, maps and plans, coins and medals, as well as the music

section. The Royal Library of Belgium is one of the ten greatest institutions in the world in each of these subjects. Here, François de Callataÿ leads a team of approximately 50 people, including 20 scientists. He is also a member of the Management Committee and of the Scientific Committee of the Royal Library.

In 1998, François de Callataÿ was elected and appointed as a professor at the "Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes" (Paris/Sorbonne). He occupies the "Histoire monétaire et financière du monde grec" chair, which was formerly occupied by Georges Le Rider. The "Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes", founded under Napoleon III, offers postgraduate studies with an international audience. Operating in the same way as the "Collège de France", the professors are required to teach two hours a week and to provide original and continuously updated teaching material.

François de Callataÿ began publishing his works early on in his career (his first contributions were published in 1982/1983), and is currently the author of 12 books, of approximately 140 articles and of equally as many notes and reports in the field of classics. This represents more than 4,500 pages he has published in no less than twenty different countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, England, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States). In his favourite domain, the study of coins, he was the most referenced author between 1996 and 2001, concerning any era or theme, among the 5,000 or so names in the last index of the International Survey of Numismatic Research 1996-2001 (Madrid, 2003). He was ranked third (out of approximately 4,500 names) in the previous one in 1990-1995 (Berlin, 1997)

This wealth of editorial activity has earned François de Callataÿ a series of distinctions both in Belgium and abroad. In Belgium, in December 2004, at the age of 43, he was elected a member of the literature section (Classe des Lettres) of the Royal Academy of Belgium. Prior to this, in 1998, he was made a member of the "Académie Royale d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art" and was awarded the "Prix Quadriennal" from the "Société Royale de Numismatique de Belgique" as well as the "Prix Victor Tournier" from the Royal Academy of Belgium.

In 1994, he was invited to Paris to give a series of conferences at the "Collège de France". Two of his works were awarded prizes by the "Institut de France" (Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres), including the renowned "Prix Bordin" (1998), which aims to reward the best work relating to antiquity. This is granted every three years. The "Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres" entrusted him with the publication of the monetary archives from the "Fonds Louis Robert", for which it is responsible, and he has recently (2006) received the "jeton de vermeil" from the "Société française de Numismatique", who awards an annual prize to a scholar from any country for all his/her work.

Among the numerous invitations received from abroad, we would like to draw attention to his stay at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, 2001 – School of Historical Studies) as well as the fact that he was chosen twice – which is unaccustomed – as visiting professor of the Summer Seminar of the American Numismatic Society (New York, summer 1995 and summer 2003). In 2006 again, he was made laureate of the Huntington Medal Award, the highest

award given by the American Numismatic Society. He is an honorary member/member of the editorial committee of a series of foreign societies, vice-president of the “Société Royale de Numismatique de Belgique” and co-director of the “Revue Belge de Numismatique de Belgique”.

In addition to his scientific writings, François de Callataÿ is the author of a novel (“Le nombre et la chair. Petit temple païen”, published by Luce Wilquin in 1998 – awarded the prize from the French Community of Belgium for a first novel); he occasionally participates in reviews of essays or fictional works. He is the father of two children, a girl and a boy, and lives in the very heart of Brussels in the historical “Galerie du Roi”.

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Scientific activities

François de Callataÿ specialises in ancient history. His work focuses essentially on monetary economies. In particular, he has worked on quantifying money supplies with the aim of putting forward macroeconomic proposals for Graeco-Roman antiquity, and beyond. This quantification is based on the calculation of probabilities (how many dies [for coins] were originally put into operation to strike coins, bearing in mind that we have a certain number today and they maintain a certain type of distribution?) and historical reports over time (in order to determine the average number of coins struck using these stamping dies).

Between 1984 and 2000, he brought to light a dozen or so contributions; they were recently republished in the form of a collection, showing through a battery of arguments that the very real uncertainties associated with these extrapolations should not dissuade such an undertaking. His work has transformed the scientific community’s scepticism into almost general agreement, with, of course, an element of caution as regards the validity of such an approach. Working on more recent periods, such as the 16th – 18th century, he was able to show *ex absurdo* that the average productivity of stamping dies required for striking ancient coins most probably exceeded 10,000 units – and undoubtedly 20,000 (instead of the few thousand that many continued to attribute to them in the 1980s. Demonstrating this and, what is more, demonstrating that this type of extrapolation is marked by a tolerable margin of uncertainty, powerfully contributed ipso facto to giving the study of antique coins a new and important role in the eyes of economic historians and historians in particular.

To confirm his conclusions, François de Callataÿ took on the task of collecting and recounting all the data from the 600 or so studies on coin-stamping dies published up until now (i.e. almost 100,000 coins) on Greece, from ancient times to the Hellenistic period. This resulted in two collections, published in 1997 and 2003, which allow the type of distribution observed to be studied in detail. This material allowed him to first put forward proposals, then develop a general model which considers (in the absolute) the mass of precious metal coined at different times during the Hellenistic period (323-31 B.C.). As a result, he estimates the mass of gold coined at hundreds of tons (c. 300?) and the silver at thousands of tons (c. 3,000?). Of course, we can discuss the value

of these figures but there is no reason to place their order of magnitude into question. Considerable progress has been made.

In addition to the monetary framework, François de Callataÿ investigated the portion of precious metals converted into coins within the great royal treasuries. His conclusions led him to consider that this proportion was in fact limited and that the precious metals themselves did not constitute a preponderant part of the income, which undoubtedly continued to be paid in kind until the end of the ancient Graeco-Roman period.

Broadening his perspectives still further, François de Callataÿ recently attempted to quantify economic performance over a long period, i.e. the last four thousand years. He did this focusing on the lead and copper pollution in the atmosphere, recorded in the ice in Greenland and elsewhere. This survey revealed surprising results. Apparently, silver production (lead pollution) peaked in the first two centuries BC and the first two centuries AD; this level was not reached again until the 17th century. This therefore gives us a more precise vision of the economy in ancient times, which, as regards monetarisation, went through a period of development that remained unequalled for a long time, at the end of the Hellenistic period and during the High Roman Empire (which confirms other types of reasoning: GNP or GDP per inhabitant, extent of monetary findings relating to each era, money and stock supplies per inhabitant).

The quantification of capital in coins in antiquity has allowed a new path to be mapped out whose contribution, which is only beginning to be exploited, often proves to be decisive in the economic history of Greece and Rome. The old debate between "primitivists" and "modernists" has been revived.

Furthermore, just like any other historian, François de Callataÿ specialises both in time and space. The three centuries of the Hellenistic period (323-31 B.C.) form the core of his works that cover a large area, from Sicily to Afghanistan and from the Black Sea to Egypt, focusing, in particular, on the economic functioning of the various kingdoms. He has published a great deal on Alexander the Great and is very familiar with the great Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms. François de Callataÿ is one of the best specialists on the last great figure of this period, Mithridates VI of Pontus (c. 132-53 B.C.), the subject of his doctoral thesis. Using extreme chronological precision of the series of coins from this period (the coins of Mithridates himself are dated to the month!), François de Callataÿ reached the following dissymmetrical proposal: the coins of kings (and even certain cities) were struck to pay the troops but, given the insufficient number of coins issued, the troops were not primarily paid in coins. Other collective or more individual pieces of work have confirmed, as regards to money supplies, this observation of "a lot (more than is featured) but not enough (less than what was required to fulfil the supposed needs)", which obliges us to reconsider the purpose of the actual coins struck.

Alongside the research of other specialists, François de Callataÿ's research has focused on the perception of currencies in antiquity as a whole. Distancing himself from Aristotle's vision, which favours an etymological understanding of coins (*nomisma*) linked to the law (*nomos*) and therefore the egalitarian vector of democracy, François de Callataÿ has shown how strong the link was, regarding the minting in gold and silver, with public expenditures, mainly for

military purposes. In general, it is a pragmatic and relatively non-programmed vision that results from his studies where a concern to adequately supply the circulation of money to ensure the smooth operation of daily transactions hardly ever appears in the scheme of the issuing powers. His work has also helped to modify our ideas, by revising them downwards, concerning themes such as "currency as a sign of civic autonomy", "monetary image as a vector of propaganda" or "the economic rationality of ancient societies".

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Report of the Jury (April 14, 2007)

François de Callataÿ is making a revolutionary contribution to our understanding of the numismatics and the history of the classical world, and his methodological advances have implications for improving the study of many other past cultures.

His research publications are many in number and of a uniformly high quality. In particular he has advanced our understanding of the numismatic, monetary and financial history of the Hellenistic period (the last 300 years BC), a period during which the Greek social concept of coined money spread from the Mediterranean to Afghanistan.

He has made a decisive contribution to the debate between the primitivists and the modernists in the field of ancient economic history. He has convinced the scholarly community that it is possible to make meaningful statements about the size of the ancient monetary economy, and that we need no longer rely solely on descriptive approaches.

The jury is convinced that François de Callataÿ's work has transformed our understanding of the world of classical antiquity, both Greek and Roman. This has implications for developing the political understanding of the role of historical precedents in the current debate about monetary and financial unions.

Jury members :

Professor Glen Dudbridge

Oxford University
United Kingdom

Chairman

and

Professor Sudhir Anand

Department of Economics
University of Oxford
United Kingdom

Professor Pedro Barros

Faculdade de Economia
Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Portugal

Doctor Andrew Burnett

Deputy Director of the British Museum
United Kingdom

Professor Wolfgang Dressler

Institut für Sprachwissenschaft
Universität Wien
Austria

Doctor Raymond Geuss

Faculty of Philosophy
University of Cambridge
United Kingdom

Professor Helge Kragh

Department of History of Science
University of Aarhus
Denmark

Professor Michael Kubovy

Department of Psychology
University of Virginia
U.S.A.

Professor Dr. Amélie Mummendey

Institut für Psychologie
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
Germany

Professor Iaria Porciani

Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche
Università di Bologna
Italy

Professor James Alan Robinson

Department of Government
Harvard University
U.S.A.

Professor Pierre Rodrigo

Université de Bourgogne à Dijon
France

Professor Dr. Peter Schreiner

Institut für Byzantinistik
Universität Köln
Germany

Professor Ditlev Tamm

Law Faculty
University of Copenhagen
Denmark

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