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Commemorative Medal for the Centenary of the Imperial St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences
in 1826

Abstract

The article studies the commemorative medal for the centenary of the Imperial St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences as a part of the Academy's jubilee. Preserving memory of significant events is one of key aspects of culture. Jubilees and jubilee-related artifacts, i.e. commemorative medals, have their place among so called commemorative practices. Scientific community uses such practices make appeals to the authorities, to enhance its prestige, and to consolidate itself. The 1826 commemorative medal appeared to be a part of the jubilee events. The large-scale celebrations seemed to be a landmark in the history of the Academy of Sciences. Its President, Sergey Uvarov, used the opportunity to appeal to the Emperor and to show the Academy in all its glory. Medallionist Fyodor Tolstoy created for the occasion a jubilee commemorative medal, which was presented to the members of the Imperial family and other notable guests. That event was the climax of the celebration. The medal was authorized by the Emperor. Its creation therefore proved that the authorities recognized the import of the Academy of Sciences, the worth of science for state, its military power and its political reputation. The 1826 commemorative medal symbolized Imperial favor towards the Academy of Sciences; it bears the names of three monarchs: Peter I, its founder, Alexander I, its protector at the close of its first hundred years, and Nicholas I, its hope for the new era. Several drafts of the medal prove that academicians experts in numismatics participated in its creation. The authors consider the commemorative medal an important historical source and a set of symbols to be explained. The article analyses art media and studies the evolution of medal inscriptions (they were first made in Latin, but later re-written in Russian on the Emperor's orders).

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Keywords

Imperial St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, commemorative practices, jubilee, numismatics,

commemorative medal, symbols, Academy of Sciences, scientists.

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