

L'Accademia Della Crusca

The Accademia della Crusca (Crusca Academy), still today the national language academy of Italy, was the first such institution in Europe and the first to produce a modern national language *Vocabolario* (1612), later taken as a model by other European states. The Academy developed out of the informal meetings of a group of Florentine intellectuals (including A.F. Grazzini (Il Lasca), Giambattista Deti, Bernardo Zanchini, Bernardo Canigiani, Bastiano de' Rossi) between 1570 and 1580 in the bookshop of the Giunti near the chapel of S. Biagio of Badia. They ironically called themselves "Crusconi" (the bran flakes) with the intention of giving a jocular tone to their conversations, impatient as they were with the solemnity surrounding the erudite but futile discussions of the Sacra Accademia Fiorentina. In 1582 the Crusconi gave formal status to their assembly, christening it with the name of Accademia.

Leonardo Salviati (L'Infarinato, "the floured one") joined the group at this time and gave it renewed impetus. Salviati interpreted in a new sense the name of crusca (bran): "... as if to say that the Academy should undertake a separation of the good from the bad." Together with Il Lasca, Salviati gave the Academy a new linguistic direction, setting as its goal the promotion of a Florentine language according to the model of vernacular classicism established by Pietro Bembo, who idealized the 14th-century Italian authors, especially Boccaccio and Petrarch. The Florentines differed from the purist Bembo to the extent that they included their national poet Dante among this privileged group. Salviati also personally promoted the creation of a *Vocabolario*, in which he planned to gather and declare "all the words and manners of speech, which we have found in the best writings, which were done before the year 1400" (*Avvertimenti* I. II, cap. xii.).

When the number of members reached 43, and the offices and responsibilities of the members were established, it was decided that each member should adopt a nickname, motto, and device having to do with bran and the oven. Some of the devices can be seen in the capitals of the 1595 edition of the *Divine Comedy*. At the meeting of 6 September 1589, it was decided that the Archcounsel, Giambattista Deti, should find a motto for the Academy's device, a flour bolter. "Il più bel fior ne coglie" (She picks the fairest flower), a hemistich from Petrarch was eventually chosen as the Academy's motto.

