

Maurice Daumas (1910–1984)



Maurice Daumas was born in Béziers, France on December 19, 1910, to a family of local teachers who instilled in him a taste for intellectual scholarship and culture. He attended secondary school at the lycée of Montpellier and continued his studies in Paris at the Faculté des Sciences Pharmaceutiques et Biologiques. He graduated with a degree in chemistry in 1936 (1).

From 1935–1942, Daumas worked as a chemist at the Paris Laboratoire Municipal de la Préfecture de Police and for the next two years after that at the Laboratoire de Recherches des Ets Doiteau in Corbeil. At the beginning of 1944, he went to work at the Fondation Française pour l'Etude des Problèmes Humains, known as the Alexis Carrel Foundation. Later he moved to the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques where he became Secrétaire de Rédaction. In 1947, he began his long tenure at the Musée du Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, for twelve years as Conservateur-adjoint, then as Conservateur. He also held positions as Director of the Centre Documentation d'Histoire des Techniques at the Ecole Pratique des Haute Etudes from the date of the creation of the center in 1960. In 1966, Maurice Daumas started teaching the history of technology as an associate professor at Nancy University. In 1969 a chair in the history of technology was created at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers and he fulfilled its duties with the oversight of the museum until he retired in 1976.

Daumas published numerous papers and memoirs dealing with interrelations between science, particularly chemistry, and technology. He was particularly interested in the role of scientific instruments in the progress of science and industrial archaeology. His books and edited publications include: *Les Matières Plastiques* (1941); *Lavoisier* (1941); *Arago* (1943); *l'Acte Chimique, Essai sur l'Histoire de la Philosophie Chimique* (1945); *Les Instruments Scientifiques aux XV^e et XVI^e Siècles* (1953); *Lavoisier, Théoricien et Expérimentateur* (1955); *L'Encyclopédie de la Pléiade: Histoire de la Science*, (Ed., 1957); *Histoire Générale des Techniques* (Five Volumes, Ed., 1962–1979); *Scientific Instruments of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries and their Makers* (translated by Mary Holbrook 1972); *l'Archéologie Industrielle en France* (1980); *Les Grandes Étapes du Progrès Technique* (1981); and *Le Cheval de Cesar* (1985).

Daumas was a laureate of the Prix Pelloit (1953) and the Prix Freycinet (1957) of the Académie des Sciences. In 1965 he received the Leonardo da Vinci Medal of the Society for the History of Technology. In 1968, he was cofounder of the International Committee for the History of Technology. He was its first secretary-general and organized its first conference at Pont-à-Mousson, France, in 1970. Under the auspices of the Historic Works Committee, he founded the publication *Archeologie Industrielle en France* (1976).

In 1980, Maurice Daumas received the Dexter Award for his numerous contributions to the history of chemistry and in particular for his biographical studies of Lavoisier and his work on scientific instruments. He died suddenly in Paris on March 18, 1984.

Sources

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