

French magnetic observation and theory at the time of *De Magnete*

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A b s t r a c t : In this paper we will discuss the development of geomagnetism in France around the time of Gilbert, concentrating on two aspects. Firstly, the increasing practice of making and recording measurements of magnetic declination and inclination, which culminated in 1667 in the foundation of the Paris Observatory by the Académie de Sciences, the first observatory to have a regular programme for measuring magnetic declination. Secondly, we examine the theory put forward by Nautonier, one of the leading French scholars at the same time as Gilbert published *De Magnete*, and we will see how experiment, observation and hypothesis played different roles in the acceptance or refutation of each work.

Key words : geomagnetism, magnetic observations

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