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The primary sources upon which this series is based are the manuscripts submitted for the Prix Volney which are housed at the Archives of the Institut de France. During the 1970s and 1980s, the study of the history of linguistics was rapidly developing in both the United States and Europe. We therefore proposed to implement a research and publication project to analyze and comment upon selected Prix Volney manuscripts and their subjects. The Prix Volney, awarded from 1822 onwards by the Institut de France, was the first major international prize to recognize work in general and comparative linguistics. Entries were submitted anonymously from all over the world and in at least six languages. It was the major linguistic prize of the nineteenth century and the first of its kind. It still survives today. Some of the essays submitted were by well known authors (including those in other fields such as politics, military science, law and anthropology); some were by authors not so well known or very obscure. In the period from approximately 1983 to 1986, the series editor, Joan Leopold, sent a preliminary list of all the essays submitted for the Prix Volney competition between 1822 and 1876 to scholars who had participated in the 1981 or 1984 International Conferences on the History of the Language Sciences (ICHoLS II and III) held at Lille and Princeton.

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