

Theresa Zammit Lupi. *Cantate Domino: Early Choir Books for the Knights in Malta*.

Valletta: Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2011. xxii + 184 pp. \$130. ISBN: 978-99932-7-390-5.

The author presents a set of ten choirbooks, now in the Museum of St. John's Co-Cathedral in Malta, and commissioned by Philippe Villiers de L'Isle Adam, elected Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller of St. John in 1521. The Order was expelled from its conventual seat with the fall of Rhodes in 1522, shortly after L'Isle Adam's election as Grand Master, and only in 1530, on 26 October, did he

agree to move to Malta, accepting the invitation from Charles V. The set of graduals was commissioned in 1533. The date is written within a colored penwork initial in volume 6 (fol. 35<sup>v</sup>) and L'Isle Adam's coat of arms appears throughout the manuscripts together with that of the Order (gules a cross argent with the motto *Pour la Foy*). The conventual church was the parish church of St. Lawrence in Birgu. The choirbooks were probably commissioned after the fire that destroyed St. Lawrence on 1 April 1532. After the consecration of the new co-cathedral in Valletta, the manuscripts were moved there and remained in use for more than four centuries. Notes and additions attest to a continuous liturgical use and adaptation from the Council of Trent onward. The author points to corrections, erasures, and changes that occurred in the volumes for adaptation to the new liturgy. Some leaves were removed and others inserted, while still others were reused for binding and are now conserved in the National Museum of Fine Arts and in the Notarial Archives in Malta. The ten books, made for the use of Rome, were probably written and illuminated in Paris. They contain the chants for the mass and were probably part of a liturgical set comprising other volumes, now dispersed.

The author fully illustrates the commission and the history of the manuscripts from the nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century, when they underwent a restoration by Dom Mauro Inguanez, librarian at the Royal Library in Malta. Emphasis in the text is given to technical and manufacturing aspects of the books (chapter 2) and to sewing and binding of the volumes (chapter 3). A final chapter gives a survey of the codices and examines the illuminated initials and folios, identifying four artists. The author names them as style A, B, C, and D. The first illuminator is associated with the *bottega* of Jean Pichore, active in Paris and probably Rouen between the last two decades of the fifteenth century and the first two decades of the sixteenth century. Pichore died in 1520; perhaps one of his assistants worked at the graduals. The initial with the *Presentation of Christ to the temple* (volume 6, fol. 15<sup>r</sup>) is particularly close in style to the Parisian master. The second artist (style B) is close to the Master of Claude de France and he is recognizable in the initial with the *Trinity* in volume 5 (fol. 1<sup>r</sup>). The other two anonymous illuminators (C and D) are both French and the last reveals, according to the author, some Italianate influences. Nevertheless, as Lupi writes, "despite their diversity, there is uniformity throughout, possibly indicating that a master scribe or craftsman had been following or heading the project" (149).

This study brings to scholars' knowledge an important set of graduals and fully investigates their context and commission. However, a more detailed analysis of the illuminated initials and folios would have been welcomed. Most of the manuscripts cited for comparison are unfortunately not reproduced and a paleographical description of each volume would have been very useful for future research.

MILVIA BOLLATI

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore