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Anca – Delia Moldovan, ‘Astrology and Agriculture in the Calendar of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII (Fondazione Giorgio Cini, inv. 2502/4)’, in *Rivista di storia della miniatura*, 22 (2018), pp. 136-148.

Abstract

L’Offiziolo di Carlo VIII fu commissionato a Giovan Pietro Birago dal duca Ludovico il Moro, per essere offerto come dono al re di Francia, in occasione della discesa di quest’ultimo a Milano, nel 1494. Il mio articolo propone un approfondimento di natura iconografica sulle miniature presenti nel calendario incluso nella prima parte dell’offiziolo. Lo studio delle raffigurazioni zodiacali e delle attività dei mesi presenti nelle miniature porta alla luce due aspetti significativi che caratterizzarono la corte milanese di fine Quattrocento: l’interesse verso l’astrologia e l’importanza accordata alla produzione agricola.

The precious *Officium parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis per annum* (Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, inv. 2502/4), decorated by Giovan Pietro Birago, received renewed scholarly attention on the occasion of the catalogue: *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini: pagine, ritagli, manoscritti* (2016)¹. The diminutive manuscript was commissioned by the Duke of Milan Ludovico Maria Sforza, otherwise known as il Moro, between the end of 1493 and 1494. It was intended to be presented to Charles VIII of France, on his visit to Milan in preparation for the Crusade against the Turks. This study is an interdisciplinary approach to the miniatures of the calendar, located in ff. 1v-19r.

¹ *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini: pagine, ritagli, manoscritti*, a cura di M. Medica – F. Toniolo, Milano 2016, pp. 439-450 (L. P. Gnaccolini), published in conjunction with the exhibition: *Mindful Hands. Masterpieces of Illumination from the Fondazione Giorgio Cini* (Venezia, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, 17 September 2016 – 8 January 2017).

The zodiac signs and the labours of the months depicted in the calendar convey important aspects that have yet to be fully explored (Figs. 1-3, pl. XV). A study of these illustrations will shed new light on two key features characterising the Milanese court of the late fifteenth century: the interest in astrology and the importance given to agriculture, particularly to viticulture, both seen under the umbrella of good governance.

Alessandro Cutolo was the first to identify the provenance of this codex and to speculate on its early history². His ideas are still widely accepted by scholars³. Cutolo recognised the stylistic and iconographic resemblance between the Offiziolo and the Bona Sforza Hours (c.1490-1494, London, British Library, Add. 34294), and attributed the main decoration of both manuscripts to the same, albeit anonymous illuminator, now recognised as Giovan Pietro Birago, a favourite artist at the Milanese court. The calendar of the Cini Offiziolo is generally ascribed to a second Lombard illuminator of the late fifteenth century, of a lesser artistic ability, whose identification is subject to debate⁴. More recently, Gnacolini suggested that the first sixteen pages of the calendar, characterised by a simplified treatment of shadows and folds, were executed by the workshop on Birago's drawings, while the remainder were decorated by the master himself (17v-19r)⁵.

² A. CUTOLO, *L'Officium parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis' donato da Ludovico il Moro a Carlo VIII, re di Francia*, Milano 1947. On Alessandro Cutolo: F. TONIOLO, *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, in *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., pp. 11-65.

³ P. TOESCA, *Miniature italiane della Fondazione Giorgio Cini dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*, Vicenza 1968, pp. 53-61; *Miniature dell'Italia settentrionale nella Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, a cura di G. Mariani Canova, Vicenza 1978, pp. 70-72 (G. Mariani Canova); P.L. MULAS, *Les manuscrits lombards enluminés offerts aux Français*, in *Louis XII en Milanais*, XLIIe Colloque International d'études humanistes (Tours, 30 juin – 3 juillet 2003), actes réunis par P. Contamine – J. Guillame, Paris 2003, pp. 305-322: 308-309; *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., pp. 439-450.

⁴ CUTOLO, *L'Officium parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis' cit.*, pp. 23-24; M. LEVI D'ANCONA, *The Wildenstein Collection of Illuminations. The Lombard School*, Firenze 1970, pp. 91-96; *Miniature dell'Italia settentrionale* cit., pp. 70-72. Cristina Quattrini attributes to Birago the entire decoration of the Offiziolo: C. QUATTRINI, *Miniature quattrocentesche venete e lombarde della Biblioteca Queriniana*, 'Museo bresciano', 5/1991-93 (1995), pp. 13-21: 17.

⁵ *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., pp. 439-450.

Books of hours were portable compendia of devotional texts for private use. They were modelled on the Breviary, a book containing the liturgical texts for the Office, recited in the choir or in private during the eight canonical hours of the monastic day. In Italy, books of hours were also called ‘offizioli’, and were produced between the end of the thirteenth and the middle of the sixteenth century. The offizioli were highly personal objects, created according to the taste of their owners, who included their coat of arms, emblems, portraits, personalised prayers, and cycles of illustrations. They were objects of piety as well as of wealth⁶.

The years of Ludovico il Moro (1451-1508) were characterised by the production of luxurious books of hours, amongst them the Cini Offiziolo (inv. 2502/4). This codex is exceptionally small, measuring only 59 × 35-36 mm (text-block: 34 x 23 mm). Pier Luigi Mulas placed this manuscript within a corpus of late fourteenth- and beginning of fifteenth-century books, created as objects of marvel, such as the Torriani Hours (Chantilly, Musée Condé, 83-1385, 72 x 57 mm). He convincingly postulated that the Offiziolo of Charles VIII was destined for a cabinet of curiosities, rather than actual devotional practice, in accordance with the diplomatic role of the manuscript⁷. The pages of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII include, amongst the monogram of the commissioner Ludovico il Moro (ff. 19v, 124r), references to the king of France and the imminent crusade (ff. 119v-120r). As Marco Pellegrini observed, Milan did not hold a leading place within international affairs and its position was under threat by the dynastic claims of Louis of Orléans⁸. Moreover, Ludovico il Moro came into power through usurping the regency

⁶ F. MANZARI, *Tipologie di strumenti devozionali nella Lombardia del Trecento: I libri d'ore e l'Offiziolo Visconti*, in *Il libro d'ore Visconti*, Commentario al codice, a cura di M. Bollati, Modena 2003, pp. 51-217: 65-69, 195-197; V. REINBURG, *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, c. 1400-1600*, Cambridge – New York 2012, pp. 53-83; F. MANZARI, *Italian Books of Hours and Prayer Books in the Fourteenth Century*, in *Books of Hours Reconsidered*, edited S. Hindman – J. H. Marrow, London 2013, pp. 153-209; F. MANZARI, *Italian Books of Hours*, in *Beyond Words: Illuminated Manuscripts from Boston Collections*, edited J. Hamburger – W. Stoneman – A. M. Eze – L. Davis – N. Netzer, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 2016, pp. 285-286; C. DONDI, *Printed Books of Hours from Fifteenth-Century Italy: The Texts, the Books, and the Survival of a Long-Lasting Genre*, Firenze 2016, pp. 108-109.

⁷ P. L. MULAS, *L'Offiziolo di Carlo VIII e le miniature milanesi di età sforzesca della collezione Cini*, seminar, Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 20 December 2016.

⁸ M. PELLEGRINI, *Le guerre d'Italia 1494-1530*, Bologna 2009, pp. 77-83.

of his nephew, Gian Galeazzo, from Galeazzo's mother Bona of Savoy, in 1480. Il Moro, therefore, had to legitimise his rule both internally and internationally through diplomacy.

The use of books as political gifts was part of Ludovico's diplomatic norms. Two of *Sforziada's* editions, decorated by the same Birago, were possibly offered to Gian Galeazzo (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Vélins 724) and to Galeazzo da Sanseverino (Warszawa, Biblioteka Narodowa, Inc. F. 1347), respectively⁹. The practice was already attested in Milan during the Visconti rule. Francesca Manzari noticed the case of the *Offiziolo* of Gian Galeazzo (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, B.R. 397, Landau Finaly 22). The latter was not intended for devotional purposes, but was "a new type of luxury book that served as an instrument for the promotion of dynastic power"¹⁰. The *Offiziolo* commissioned by il Moro for Charles VIII was intended for the same role. As stated by Luisa Giordano, il Moro employed an iconographic programme which had the purpose of promoting his image as successor and re-founder of the Sforza dynasty¹¹.

Illumination was a favourite media, and Ludovico's books were richly decorated with coats of arms, portraits and emblems. Given the attentive use of imagery by il Moro, there is little reason to believe that the calendar included in the *Offiziolo* escaped the celebratory intent of the duke. The idea is further reinforced considering the prominence held by the miniatures of the calendar with respect to the text. This, together with the extensive use of gold and the reduced scale of this manuscript, produce the overall impression of a real jewel, fit to impress the king of France.

⁹ M. L. EVANS, *New Light on the 'Sforziada' Frontispieces of Giovan Pietro Birago*, 'The British Library Journal', 2/13 (1987), pp. 232-247; *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination, 1450-1550*, exhibition catalogue (London, 27 October 1994-22 January 1995; New York, 15 February-7 May 1995), edited J. J. G. Alexander, Munich – New York 1994, pp. 72-74 (L. Armstrong); C. QUATTRINI, *La miniatura "all'antica" a Milano fra gli ultimi anni del Quattrocento e i primi anni del Cinquecento*, in *Lombardia rinascimentale. Arte e architettura*, a cura di M.T. Fiorio – V. Terraroli, Milano 2003, pp. 73-91: 74-75.

¹⁰ MANZARI, *Books of Hours Reconsidered* cit., pp. 190-191.

¹¹ L. GIORDANO, *Politica, tradizione e propaganda*, in *Ludovicus Dux*, a cura di L. Giordano, Vigevano 1995, pp. 94-117.

The calendar opens with the only full-page illumination, representing two peasants felling trees as the occupation for the month of January (f. 1v). The scene is presented within a golden framed rectangle, crowned by a fleur-de-lis on a blue background, a clear reference to Charles VIII of France. Except for January, which spans four folios, the other months each occupy three folios. Every month is preceded by its occupation, described within vignettes of variable size (Fig. 1, pl. XV). The first page of the month begins with the initials 'KL' in gold within rectangles of alternating colour. The twelve zodiac signs are depicted on the *bas-de-page* against a light blue background, decorated with gold painted stars (Figs. 2-3). A golden disc in the upper part of the image suggests the annual movement of the sun through each zodiac constellation, similar to the calendar of the Hours of Borromeo, c.1471 (Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, S.P.42, ff. 2r-13v), where the sun is seen instead passing through the centre of the signs (Fig. 4)¹².

The focus of the calendar of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII (inv. 2502/4, ff. 1v-19r) is on episodes of peasant life, in contrast to the typical inclusion of courtly scenes in Medieval and Renaissance cycles¹³. One explanation might be that the labours of the months illustrated in the Cini manuscript reproduce the background occupations of the dispersed calendar of the Bona Sforza Hours. Scholars have remarked upon the strong resemblance between the two calendars decorated by Birago, suggested by the surviving folios of the Sforza Hours, namely the occupations of the month of May (London, British Library, Add. 62997) and October (London, British Library, Add. 80800; Fig. 5)¹⁴. Evans and Gnaccolini considered the rarity of

¹² *Il libro d'ore Borromeo alla Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, a cura di Luca Beltrami, Milano 1896, tav. I-XII.

¹³ P. MANE, *La vie dans les campagnes au moyen âge à travers les calendriers*, Paris 2004; M. D'ONOFRIO, *Primavera e nobiltà: la figura di maggio nel Medioevo*, Roma 2005; *Time in the Medieval World: Occupations of the Months and Signs of the Zodiac in the Index of Christian Art*, edited C. Hourihane, Princeton 2007 (Index of Christian Art: Resources, 3); R. S. WIECK, *The Medieval Calendar: Locating Time in the Middle Ages*, New York 2017, pp. 13-35.

¹⁴ M. VISIOLI, *L'iconografia dei mesi nei calendari lombardi del Quattrocento*, in *Il Libro d'Ore Torriani*, Volume di commento, a cura di P. L. Mulas, Modena 2009, pp. 85-122: 102; *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., p. 450.

the Bona Sforza calendar within the Italian panorama of the fifteenth century, both in terms of full-page illuminations and the combination of courtly life and agricultural activities within the same image¹⁵. The two scholars suggested the direct influence of the calendar of the *Très Riches Heures* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, 65-1284, ff. 1v-13r), but similar compositions were already present in Italian monumental cycles, in the frescoes of Torre Aquila (end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth century)¹⁶ and in the Hall of the Months from the Palazzo Schifanoia, in Ferrara (c.1470)¹⁷. It is plausible that the iconographic programme of the Cini manuscript was repeated in the lost months of the Bona Sforza Hours, indicating the existence of common preparatory drawings¹⁸. The diminutive occupations depicted on the background of the Sforza calendar were suited to the small size of the Offiziolo, and this might explain the omission of the larger aristocratic scenes. The relative importance attributed to agricultural labours was in accordance with the interest of Ludovico il Moro in promoting his farming enterprise.

The second half of the fifteenth century brought significant changes in Italian country life. New irrigation and drainage campaigns were undertaken across the valleys of the rivers Po and Arno by local rulers, eager to celebrate their agricultural endeavours with commissions of artworks and literature. The great farming projects followed the enthusiastic reappraisal of classical agricultural texts¹⁹. For example, the 1490 catalogue of the Sforza library located in Pavia castle, included key texts by Cato, Varro, Palladius, Pliny and Pietro de' Crescenzi²⁰. This

¹⁵ M. EVANS, *The Sforza Hours*, London 1992, pp. 29-32; L.P. GNACCOLINI, *Giovan Pietro Birago*, tesi di dottorato, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia (1997), p. 257.

¹⁶ E. CASTENUOVO, *I mesi di Trento: Gli affreschi di Torre Aquila e il gotico internazionale*, Trento 1986.

¹⁷ *Atlante di Schifanoia*, a cura di R. Varese, Modena 1989; *Lo zodiaco del principe: i decani di Schifanoia di Maurizio Bonora*, a cura di M. Tosi, Ferrara 1992; M. BERTOZZI, *La tirannia degli astri: gli affreschi astrologici di Palazzo Schifanoia*, Livorno 1999.

¹⁸ MULAS, *L'Offiziolo di Carlo VIII* cit.

¹⁹ J. L. GAULIN, *Trattati di agronomia e innovazione agricola*, in *Il rinascimento italiano e l'Europa*, a cura di P. Braunstein – L. Molà, III, Treviso 2007 (Produzione e tecniche), pp. 145-163.

²⁰ A. G. CAVAGNA, 'Il libro desquadrato: la carta rosechata da rati.' *Due nuovi inventari della libreria visconteo-sforzesca*, in 'Bollettino della società pavese di storia patria', 41 (1989), pp. 29-97: 40-69. On the library

testified to an increasingly humanistic approach towards the study of agriculture, promoted as a noble activity, culminating in the second half of the sixteenth century with the creation of a body of texts, by authors such as Alvise Cornaro, Agostino Gallo and Camillo Tarello²¹.

The Italian economy at the end of the fifteenth century was largely agrarian, and the Milanese Duchy prided itself with the most advanced technology of the time²². Ludovico il Moro's innovative and entrepreneurial spirit manifested itself in the governance of his various country estates spread across the area of Lomellina, in the Po valley. Amongst them, the favourite was the farmstead near Vigevano, which il Moro named with the eponymous *Sforzesca*²³. His agricultural achievements were listed in inscriptions composed by the humanist Ermolao Barbaro, who, after carefully attesting Ludovico's dynastic links, praised the peace and fertility he brought to the land. The epigraphs celebrate the expensive canal system which transformed the sterile and uncultivated fields²⁴. Il Moro's model-estate became a centre of innovative experimentation. Ludovico called to Vigevano experts from all over Italy to guide the acclimatisation of the new species of animals and plantations²⁵. It is hard to believe that the calendar of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII, which dedicates great space to the various labours characteristic to each month, is indifferent to the ambitious agricultural projects of its commissioner, particularly as the creation of the Offiziolo coincided with a period of intense activity at Vigevano.

of Pavia: E. PELLEGRIN, *La bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza, ducs de Milan, au XVe siècle*, Paris 1955, and Florence 1969 (Supplement).

²¹ GAULIN, *Trattati di agronomia* cit., pp. 145-163.

²² PELLEGRINI, *Le guerre* cit., p. 80; P. MAINONI, *The Economy of Renaissance Milan*, in *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Milan: The Distinctive Features of an Italian State*, edited A. Gamberini, Leiden 2014, pp. 118-141.

²³ GIORDANO, *Politica, tradizione* cit., p. 100.

²⁴ R. SCHOFIELD, *Ludovico il Moro and Vigevano*, 'Arte lombarda', 62 (1982), pp. 93-140: 93-95; GIORDANO, *Politica, tradizione* cit., p. 100 nt. 24.

²⁵ F. MALAGUZZI VALERI, *La corte di Lodovico il Moro: la vita privata e l'arte a Milano nella seconda metà del Quattrocento*, I, Milano 1913 (Vita privata), pp. 664-672; SCHOFIELD, *Ludovico il Moro* cit., pp. 95-96; M. COMINCINI, *Ludovico il Moro a Vigevano*, in *Un palazzo per una corte: Il castello di Vigevano, una lettura storico-artistica*, a cura di M. Comincini – P. Lucca, Vigevano 1991, pp. 53-85: 54, 57-58; L. GIORDANO, *Le residenze ducali*, in *Ludovicus Dux* cit., pp. 24-43: 33-36.

Leonardo da Vinci, present at Vigevano during the years 1493-1494, was commissioned with hydraulic engineering works at the Sforzesca. His notebooks record the works undertaken, as well as local agricultural aspects recognisable in the occupations depicted in the Cini Offiziolo²⁶. Water is, in fact, a recurrent theme in the Offiziolo, canals are depicted on almost every page of the calendar, and peasants are shown fishing (f. 4v) or carrying buckets of water (f. 7v). References to Vigevano can be noticed in the background of the scenes. The castle's profile, with the mulberry trees planted around the towers by order of il Moro, appears on the page dedicated to the month of April (f. 6r). The round stone dovecote, depicted in the Offiziolo during the month of November (f. 16v; pl. XV) and in the calendar of the Sforza Hours during October (Add. 80800; Fig. 5), survives to this day in the immediate proximity of the Sforzesca²⁷.

Ludovico il Moro took great pride in his farm, which he exhibited to his most important guests²⁸. The chronicler Pierre Desrey narrated the visit of Charles VIII to the Sforzesca, in October 1494, and the wonder of the king at the number of livestock²⁹. The Offiziolo was possibly offered to Charles VIII shortly before his visit to Vigevano. In view of the political coalition between the two rulers, the pages of the book were filled with references to the French monarch³⁰. Whereas, the calendar of the Offiziolo appeared as a celebration of Ludovico's personal endeavours, testifying to the good governance of his lands, which the king was now able to admire in person.

Tending to the Vineyard

²⁶ MALAGUZZI VALERI, *La corte di Lodovico* cit., pp. 669-671.

²⁷ The dovecote can easily be viewed using freely available satellite imaging. (Latitude: 45°17'24.26"N, Longitude: 8°53'11.46"E). On the typology of round dovecotes: G. ROSSI, *Le colombaie del Salento meridionale: Rilievi e documenti*, Roma 2012.

²⁸ GIORDANO, *Le residenze ducali* cit., p. 36 nt. 37.

²⁹ SCHOFIELD, *Ludovico il Moro* cit., p. 96.

³⁰ Gnaccolini recounts the evolution of the diplomatic relationship between il Moro and Charles VIII, and how it reflected upon the history and iconography of the Offiziolo: *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., pp. 444-446.

This study takes as a model the work of Perrine Mane for the identification and re-evaluation of agricultural practices in art³¹. The methodology is extended to encapsulate the inquiry of agricultural customs within the wider cultural and geopolitical context in which these cycles of the months were created.

One aspect prominently featured in the calendar of the Cini Offiziolo is the special attention devoted to activities concerning viticulture. Four months illustrate occupations related to the tending of the vine: the pruning in March (f. 4v), the harvest in September (f. 13v; Fig. 1), the winemaking in October (f. 15r) and the earthing up of the vine in November (f. 16v; pl. XV). Today viticulture does not hold a principal role in the context of Lombard agriculture, except for the centres of Oltrepò Pavese, Valtellina, Brescia³². However, this was not always the case: Bonvesin de la Riva described the variety and abundance of the Milanese wines at the end of the thirteenth century in his work *Le Meraviglie di Milano*³³. By the end of the fifteenth century, the cellars of the Duchy included precious local and important wines of all varieties and colours, and the lands around Sforzesca were surrounded by vast vineyards³⁴.

The occupations of maintenance and production of the vine are meticulously described in the Northern Italian cycles of the year, such as in the frescoes of the Torre Aquila³⁵, in the Borromeo (S.P.42, ff. 4r, 10r, 12r; Fig. 4) and Torriani Hours (83-1385, ff. 4r, 10r, 12v, 13v), and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, in the series of twelve tapestries designed by Bramantino and woven at Vigevano for Gian Giacomo Trivulzio³⁶. As Monica Visioli considered, the recurrence of the tools and methods used for grape harvesting, transporting and

³¹ P. MANE, *Calendriers et techniques agricoles (France-Italie, XIIe -XIIIe siècles)*, Paris 1983; MANE, *La vie dans les campagnes* cit.

³² L. A. LOUBÈRE, *The Red and the White: The History of Wine in France and Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, Albany, N.Y. 1978, p. 52.

³³ B. DA LA RIVA, *Le meraviglie di Milano*, trad. E. Verga, Milano 1973 (rist. anast. Bologna 1973), p. 29.

³⁴ MALAGUZZI VALERI, *La corte di Lodovico* cit., pp. 351, 668.

³⁵ CASTENUOVO, *I mesi di Trento* cit., pp. 195-213.

³⁶ G. AGOSTI – J. STOPPA, *I mesi del Bramantino*, Milano 2012, pp. 50-55, 58-63.

pressing in Lombard calendars, constitutes strong evidence of a shared material cultural characteristic of this space³⁷.

Visioli also noticed that the Offiziolo of Charles VIII particularly emphasises the activity of vintage, by dedicating it two distinct months: the harvesting in September (Fig. 1) and the making of the wine in October (f. 15r)³⁸. Within the corpus of Renaissance Italian calendars, only the Florentine cycles present a comparable iconographical programme. This is possibly due to the high regard in which viticulture was held in Tuscany³⁹. Examples include codices commissioned by Lorenzo de' Medici, such as the Book of Hours held in Holkham Hall (41, ff. 9r-10r), the Hours of Maddalena de Medici (Waddesdon Manor, Rothschild Collection, 16, ff. 9r-10r)⁴⁰, as well as the mid sixteenth-century tapestries designed by Bachiacca for Duke Cosimo I de' Medici⁴¹.

The relative importance associated with viticulture in the Cini Offiziolo is further reflected in the occupation of November (pl. XV), which recalls a common practice on the lands of Vigevano. The image shows two peasants toiling the land around the vines with a hoe and spade. November was typically reserved to labours regarding the preparation for winter. French calendars usually illustrate during this month a swineherd knocking down acorns to feed the pigs⁴², Flemish cycles often depict the killing of oxen⁴³, while Florentine calendars show the ploughing and sowing of wheat and barley, as recommended by Crescenzi for the warmer

³⁷ VISIOLI, *L'iconografia dei mesi* cit, p. 99.

³⁸ *Ibidem*

³⁹ For the practice of viticulture in Tuscany: D. BALESTRACCI, *Il consumo del vino nella Toscana bassomedievale*, in *Il vino nell'economia e nella società italiana Medioevale e Moderna*, Atti del Convegno di studi, Greve in Chianti (21 – 24 maggio 1987), Firenze 1988 (supplemento 'Rivista di Storia dell'Agricoltura', 1), pp. 13-29.

⁴⁰ L. M. J. DELAISSÉ – J. MARROW – J. DE WIT, *Illuminated Manuscripts: The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor*, London 1977, pp. 324-347.

⁴¹ R. G. LA FRANCE, *Bachiacca: Artist of the Medici Court*, Firenze 2008, pp. 261-263.

⁴² MANE, *La vie dans les campagnes* cit., pp. 173-177.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 179-183.

regions⁴⁴. In Lombardy, November is the month dedicated to the market, the tasting of wine, carpentry, and the breaking and scotching of flax, as seen in the Borromeo (S.P.42, f. 12r) and Torriani Hours (83-1385, f. 13v), and in the Trivulzio tapestry⁴⁵.

Within this panorama of art, the occupation of earthing up the vine during the month of November appears unprecedented (pl. XV). The practice was attested at Vigevano by Leonardo da Vinci, who, in one of his notes wrote: ‘vines of Vigevano at 20 March 1494 and in the winter, they are covered with earth’ (Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France, H, f. 38r)⁴⁶. The earthing-up of the vine was also advised by Crescenzi in the *Ruralia commoda*, in case of a harsh winter⁴⁷. The activity appears to be illuminated in one of the medallions from the long borders of the introductory page to Book IV, from the *Ruralia* commissioned by Francesco II Gonzaga around the end of the fifteenth century (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 2313, f. 53)⁴⁸. Crescenzi also recommended adding a small quantity of pigeon manure around the plant, and Birago depicted a distinctive round dovecote close to the vineyard (pl. XV)⁴⁹.

Leonardo’s note accompanied a sketch representing the vine (H, f. 38r). The technique of training described resembles that depicted in the Offiziolo of Charles VIII. The main difference consists in the fact that, instead of using the pyramid structure as support for the plant, in

⁴⁴ P. CRESCENTI, *De Agricultura*, XII, 11, per stampa di M. Capcasa, Venezia 31 May 1495, 4°, p. L⁸ (Incunabula Short Title Catalogue, ic00975000). For example, in the Breviary of Lorenzo de’ Medici, late fifteenth century, London, British Library, Add 25697, f. 6r; in the Book of Hours, c.1469, Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Ashburnham 1874, f. 11r; M. EVANS, *Die Miniaturen des Münchner Medici-Gebetbuchs Clm 23639 und verwandte Handschriften*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, pp. 226-227.

⁴⁵ AGOSTI – STOPPA, *I mesi del Bram.* cit., pp. 70-77. In the Hours of Pavia (late fourteenth century, Avignon, Bibliothèque municipale, 111, f. 15r), Michelino da Besozzo depicted the sowing of seeds during the month of November. On the Hours of Pavia: P. L. MULAS – M. VISIOLI – M. ZAGGIA, *Michelino da Besozzo: Le Livre d’heures de Pavie*, ‘Art de l’enluminure: Michelino da Besozzo: Un maître italien du gothique international’, 55 (2015), pp. 22-39: 29-30.

⁴⁶ “Vigne di Vigievine a di 20 marzo 1494 e la vernata si sotterano.”: *Leonardo da Vinci, i manoscritti dell’Istituto di Francia*, a cura di P. Poli Carpi, VII, Roma 2000, H 38r.

⁴⁷ CRESCENTI, *De Agricultura* cit., IV, 16, pp. g^{4v}-g⁵.

⁴⁸ On the *Ruralia commoda* (2313): P. MANE, *L’iconographie des manuscrits du Traité d’agriculture de Pier’ de Crescenz*, ‘Mélanges de l’Ecole Française de Rome’, 97/2 (1985), pp. 727-818.

⁴⁹ On the importance of dovecotes in the Medieval and Renaissance economy: F. CAZZOLA, *I lavori agricoli*, in *Atlante di Schifanoia* cit., pp. 201-209: 203-204.

Birago's calendar, the vine is grown on trees (Fig. 1, pl. XV). The practice of training vines on arboreal support was predominant in Northern Italy starting in the late fourteenth century⁵⁰, when it was represented in the Lombard *Tacuinum sanitatis* (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vindobonensis, S. N. 2644, f. 54v)⁵¹. In a recent study, Maria Antonietta Aceto analysed the iconography of the vine trained on trees, with a special focus on the region of Campania⁵².

The method depicted in the calendar of the Cini Offiziolo, called 'piantata', was typical of the Po Valley⁵³. Pliny and Columella referring to this training system as *arbustum gallicum*, advised on the type of trees and techniques to be employed⁵⁴. According to this method, the festoons of the vines, planted in rows, spread out from tree to tree, and often stakes were used to sustain heavy stocks. The pruning and training of the vine to the trees are exemplarily illustrated in a manuscript copy of the *Georgics*, decorated by a Milanese artist in the middle of the fifteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. G. 98, f. 26v; Fig. 6). It also appears in the woodcuts of the first Italian illustrated edition of Crescenzi, printed in Venice by Matteo Capcasa, in 1495⁵⁵.

The reappearance of the *piantata* after a period of absence during the Early Middle Ages was attributed by scholars, such as Francesca Finotto, to the development of hydraulic engineering projects, which, in the case of the Milanese duchy, reached a pinnacle of activity during the

⁵⁰ G. ARCHETTI, *Tempus vindemie: per la storia delle vigne e del vino nell'Europa medievale*, Brescia 1998, pp. 360-366.

⁵¹ On the Lombard *Tacuinum*: O. PÄCHT, *Early Italian Nature Studies and the Early Calendar Landscape*, 'Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes', 13/1/2 (1950), pp. 13-47.

⁵² M. A. ACETO, *La rappresentazione della vite maritata: Alcune recenti identificazioni*, 'Rivista di terra di lavoro – Bolletino on-line del' Archivio di Stato di Caserta', 11/1 (2016), pp. 1-24.

⁵³ S. TOMIATO – L. SORMANI, *Il vino tra i dossi della Lomellina: dall'antichità a una proposta ricostruttiva*, in *Archeologia della vite e del vino in Toscana e nel Lazio. Dalle tecniche dell'indagine archeologica alle prospettive della biologia molecolare*, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Scansano, 9-10 settembre 2005), a cura di A. Ciacci – P. Rendini – A. Zifferero, Firenze 2012, pp. 707-722: 712-713. In the same volume: A. ZIFFEREO, *Parchi per l'archeologia e il paesaggio: uno sviluppo possibile per Arceo Vino*, pp. 683-704: 698-699.

⁵⁴ C. PLINII SECUNDI, *Naturalis Historia*, XVII, 35:199-200, trans. H. Rackham, V. Cambridge, Mass. 1950 (Loeb Classical Library, 371), pp. 138-139, 144-147; COLUMELLAE, *De re rustica*, V, 7:1-2 trans. E. S. Forster – E. H. Heffner, II, Cambridge, Mass. 1954 (Loeb Classical Library, 407), pp. 66-69.

⁵⁵ CRESCENTI, *De Agricultura* cit., IV, 12, p. g2v; XII, 3, p. L5v.

reign of Ludovico il Moro⁵⁶. The technique of training the vine on a high support offered an appropriate solution, because the tree protected the vine from the cold and stagnant waters, at the same time rendering it resilient to drought, which often affected the area of Lomellina⁵⁷. It also permitted the efficient use of the land, the parcels between the rows of the trees being employed for the cultivation of crops or as pastures. The benefits of this type of plantation were highly celebrated in 1288 by Bonvesin de la Riva⁵⁸.

In Northern Italian calendars, *piantate*, such as those found in the Cini Offiziolo, are also encountered in the calendar of the Borromeo Hours, during the month of March (S.P.42, f. 4r) and September (Fig. 4), in the Mirandola Hours (London, British Library, Add. 50002, f. 9r), and later in the second half of the sixteenth century, in the cycle of the villa Margone⁵⁹. This demonstrates that these images can be studied as valuable historical documents, testifying to the various agricultural practices and their evolution over time.

The Zodiac Signs

In accordance with the prevailing thoughts of the time, the prosperity brought by Ludovico il Moro to the lands of Vigevano, and celebrated in the calendar of the Offiziolo, could only be possible under the auspices of the stars. Since time immemorial, peasants have observed the effects that the celestial bodies had upon their fields. Agronomists such as Crescenzi stipulated the importance of astrology in the practice of agriculture⁶⁰. Aside from the specialised treatises, the patrons of villas also possessed calendars, forecasts and almanacs, to guide them regarding the best time and perfect conditions for the various agricultural activities⁶¹.

⁵⁶ F. FINOTTO, *Vaghi ordini di alberi dalle viti accompagnati: la piantata padana*, 'Quaderni della Ri-Vista, ricerche per la progettazione del paesaggio', 4/1 (2007), pp. 173-191: 178.

⁵⁷ TOMIATO – SORMANI, *Il vino tra i dossi della Lomellina* cit., p. 718.

⁵⁸ DA LA RIVA, *Le meraviglie* cit., p. 29.

⁵⁹ On the villa Margone: M. LUPO – J. KLIEMANN, *Villa Margon a Trento e il ciclo affrescato delle vittorie di Carlo V*, Trento 1983, pp. 57-174.

⁶⁰ CRESCENTI, *De Agricultura* cit., II, 21, pp. d²-d³v.

⁶¹ E. CASALI, *Le spie del cielo: oroscopi, lunari e almanacchi nell'Italia moderna*, Torino 2003, pp. 121-145.

Astrology played an essential role within the Renaissance courts, where it was used in both personal and political matters⁶². In the case of Milan, this was discussed in depth by Monica Azzolini in *The Duke and the Stars*⁶³. Azzolini elucidated the compulsive way in which Ludovico il Moro consulted his astrologer Varesi da Rosate, who was asked to determine the most appropriate time for events such as marriage, diplomatic trips and meetings⁶⁴. Il Moro used astrology to legitimise his power and demonstrate his good fortune and governance. In 1495, the Duke commissioned Bramante with the decoration of a planetary ceiling in Vigevano castle⁶⁵. Of these paintings, nothing remains, but the episode testifies to Ludovico's interest in astrology, clearly reflected in the calendar of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII.

In the Offiziolo, the zodiac signs are represented in an ideal situation in conjunction with the planets, when their maximum potency is exerted over the sub-lunar world. Unusual insertions can be observed for each zodiac sign, such as the sickle in Capricorn (f. 19r; Fig. 2), the bust of a king in Pisces (f. 3v; Fig. 3), and the helmet and the mace in Aries (f. 5r). The recent catalogue of the Fondazione Cini does not include any reference to these attributes⁶⁶. Pietro Toesca identified a few elements as features of classical figures in the 1968 catalogue of the Cini miniatures⁶⁷. However, the iconographic programme of Birago's zodiac remained ambiguous. When the various figures and symbols depicted within the zodiac are systematically grouped according to their appearance, as shown in Fig. 7, it becomes clearer that the calendar of the Offiziolo shows the twelve zodiac signs in conjunction with their governing planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Sun and the Moon.

⁶² S. CAROTI, *L'astrologia in Italia*, Roma 1983; *A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance*, edited B. Dooley, Leiden 2014.

⁶³ M. AZZOLINI, *The Duke and the Stars: Astrology and Politics in Renaissance Milan*, London 2013.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 167-212.

⁶⁵ G. MULAZZANI, *La decorazione affrescata*, in *Un palazzo per una corte* cit., pp. 101-121:106-107.

⁶⁶ *Le miniature della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., p. 443.

⁶⁷ TOESCA, *Miniature italiane della Fondazione Giorgio Cini* cit., pp. 56-57.

Until the late sixteenth century, the general belief was that the universe was governed according to a geocentric system. The twelve zodiac constellations formed an inclined band that encircled the Earth. This band coincided with the ecliptic orbit of the sun, as well as with the trajectories of the other six planets. Ptolemy in *Tetrabiblos* discussed the influences of the celestial bodies over the sub-lunar world, which depended on the zodiac sign in which they were situated at a certain moment in time. Each of the five planets presides over two houses: one diurnal and one nocturnal, while the sun and the moon each have one domicile⁶⁸.

Classical tradition often personifies the planets according to their mythological namesakes⁶⁹. In the *Offiziolo* of Charles VIII, the viewer is invited to recognise the deities by means of their attributes and to associate them with the planets and their respective houses. In such light, the sickle, a key feature of the divinity Saturn, is depicted in Capricorn (Fig. 2) and in Aquarius (f. 2r), namely the diurnal and nocturnal houses of the planet Saturn. The depiction of the planet Jupiter relates to the homonym king of Olympus, and differs in its two houses. The god is illustrated as a crowned head on Centaurus's quiver, in its diurnal domicile in Sagittarius (17v). The quiver might also allude to Jupiter's lightning bolt, and thus to his meteorological power as ruler of the sky. The god is represented with a quiver and a bundle of arrows in the *De Sphaera* (Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, ALFA.X.2.14 = LAT.209, f. 6v), an astrological compendium composed at the court of Francesco Sforza between 1450-1460⁷⁰. If this image represents a classical illustration of Jupiter, its depiction in the nocturnal house in Pisces (Fig. 3) is reminiscent of the medieval iconography. Here, Jupiter, wedged in between the two fish, is imagined as the bust of an emperor with a sceptre and a globe. His appearance

⁶⁸ C. PTOLEMAEI, *Quadripartitum (Tetrabiblos)*, I, 17, trans. F. E. Robbins, Cambridge, MA. 1940 (Loeb Classical Library, 435), pp. 79-83.

⁶⁹ J. SEZNEC, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, Princeton 1972; R. DUIJS, *Reading the Stars of the Renaissance. Fritz Saxl and Astrology*, 'Journal of Art Historiography', 5 (2011), pp. 1-18; D. BLUME, *Picturing the Stars*, in *A Companion to Astrology* cit., pp. 333-398.

⁷⁰ On *De Sphaera* see: D. BLUME, *Regenten des Himmels: astrologische Bilder in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, Berlin 2000, pp. 179-183.

recalls the Jupiter painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the medallion on the upper border of the frescoes representing the Effects of the Bad Government, in the Palazzo Comunale of Siena, between 1338-1339⁷¹.

The planetary deity Venus is housed in Taurus and in Libra. Venus is represented nude while riding a bull in its diurnal house (inv. 2502/4, f. 6v), a reference to the rape of Europa by the transfigured Jupiter, and to the creation of the zodiac constellation of Taurus according to the astrological tradition (Hygini, II, 21; Manilii V, 140-156; Ovidii, *Metamorphoses* II, 833, 3:1). The scene might also allude to the main domain of the ancient goddess Venus: love and procreation. On the other hand, in its nocturnal house, the planet appears as a maiden dressed in white and carrying a set of scales (f. 14v). This image evokes the description of the virgin-goddess of justice Astrea/Dike, with whom the iconographic tradition used at times to associate with the sign of Libra⁷². In these cases, a similar iconographic programme is present in the Palazzo della Ragione in Padova, where the repetition of the planets allows the representation of two distinct aspects of the celestial bodies⁷³. However, in the Cini manuscript this scheme is not replicated in the cases of the other planets. The helmet and mace of the warrior Mars finds its house during the day in Aries (f. 5r) and at night in Scorpio (f. 16r). The sun and the moon do not exhibit any specific mythological reference, but they are represented in the form of celestial bodies: namely an anthropomorphised disc, held in the mouth of the lion in Leo (f. 11v), and a half-moon in Cancer (f. 10r).

Mercury's caduceus is placed in its two houses, Gemini (f. 8v) during the day and Virgo (f. 13r) at night. The figure of Virgo holds a caduceus with two dragons wrapped around it, rather

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

⁷² For example, in the Book of Hours attributed to Venturino Mercati, c1470-1480 (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, G.14, f. 13v).

⁷³ M. CANOVA, 'Duodecim celestia signa et septem planete cum suis proprietatibus'. *L'immagine astrologica nella cultura figurativa e nell'illustrazione libraria a Padova tra Trecento e Quattrocento*, in *Il Palazzo della ragione di Padova: indagini preliminari per il restauro: studi e ricerche*, a cura di A. M. Spiazzi, Padova 1998, pp. 23-61: 41; BLUME, *Regenten des Himmels* cit., p 79.

than the customary serpents. This image resembles the device of il Moro, as represented on the capitals of the Rocchetta, at the Castello Sforzesco, in Milan⁷⁴. It also bears a similarity to the decorated initial 'L', on the frontispiece of the *Litterae ducales*, the act of donation to the Dominicans of Santa Maria delle Grazie, attributed to Master B.F, c.1499 (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 434, f. 1r)⁷⁵. Since Ludovico's marriage was consummated under the sign of Mercury, the use of this device has a personal astrological significance for the duke, further underlining the customisation of the Cini calendar.

The combination of zodiac signs and planets, as it appears in the Cini manuscript, clearly results from the key principle of astrology that the celestial bodies influence the human world. In Western art, this topic originating from Middle Eastern astrology, developed during the fifteenth century into an iconography called 'the children of the planets'. The popularisation of this theme occurred in the German area, coinciding with the advent of the printing press⁷⁶. In Italy, at the Milanese court of Francesco Sforza, this subject was transcribed into the precious medium of a manuscript in *De Sphaera* (LAT.209, ff. 5v-12). In this example, the seven personified planets are depicted with their specific domiciles. The zodiac signs are enclosed into distinct circular areas at the feet of the planetary divinity. On the lower section of the image as well as on the following respective page, humans are represented while receiving the influences of the astral entities under which power they were born, and which determined their character and professions.

The topic of the seven planets and their domiciles is rarely represented in calendars. Two further examples are known to me. The first is the astrological cycle in the Palazzo della

⁷⁴ On Ludovico's device of the caduceus: GIORDANO, *Politica, tradizione e propaganda* cit., pp. 106-110.

⁷⁵ *The Painted Page* cit., pp. 74-75 (W. M. Voelkle).

⁷⁶ E. PANOFSKY – F. SAXL, *Classical Mythology in Mediaeval Art*, 'Metropolitan Museum Studies', 4/2 (1933), pp. 228-280: 245-273; F. SAXL, *I figli dei pianeti*, in *La fede negli astri: dall'antichità al Rinascimento*, a cura di S. Settis, Torino 1985, pp. 274-279; D. BLUME, *Children of the Planets: The Popularization of Astrology in the 15th Century*, 'Micrologus', 12 (2004), pp. 549-63.

Ragione, in Padua, first frescoed by Giotto between 1309 and 1312, and repainted after a devastating fire in 1420. This complex iconographic programme was studied by Giordana Mariani Canova who underlined the focus of the cycle on the properties of the planets and their influence on the citizens of Padua. Here, each zodiac sign is placed in relation to its dominant planet, the occupation of the month, and the respective figure of an apostle⁷⁷.

The second example is the calendar of the Mirandola Hours (London, British Library, Add. 50002, ff. 1r-12v), commissioned by Galeotto I Pico della Mirandola, Lord of Mirandola and brother of the philosopher Giovanni, between 1490 and 1499⁷⁸. The calendar opening this book of hours is decorated with the labours of the months and the characteristic zodiac signs. In addition to these, the first seven months of the calendar include illustrations of planets as mythological figures, each featuring their attributes, here Saturn (Fig. 8). The planets are identified by scrolls bearing their names and are depicted within rectangular frames against a blue starred background that qualifies them as heavenly bodies. They sit on triumphal chariots drawn by beasts distinctive of each deity; two dragons for Saturn (Fig. 8), eagles for Jupiter (f. 2r), swans for Venus (f. 4r) etc. The domiciles of the planets are inscribed on the wheels of the corresponding chariots.

The triumphal planets depicted in the calendar of the Mirandola Hours closely resemble those represented in the Florentine series of engravings on the subject of the 'Children of the Planets',

⁷⁷ CANOVA, 'Duodecim celestia signa' cit., pp. 23-61; G. MARIANI CANOVA, *Per la storia della figura astrologica a Padova: il 'De Imaginibus' di Pietro d'Abano e le sue fonti*, in *De lapidibus sententiae: Scritti di storia dell'arte per Giovanni Lorenzoni*, a cura di T. Franco – G. Valenzano, Padova 2002, pp. 213-224; C. BELLINATI, *Il calendario liturgico negli affreschi del Palazzo della Ragione*, 'Padova e il suo territorio', 21/122 (2006), pp. 12-14.

⁷⁸ U. BAUER-EBERHARDT, *Giovanni Francesco Maineri als Miniator*, 'Bruckmanns Pantheon', 49 (1991), pp. 89-96; *The Painted Page* cit., pp. 82-82 (J. J. G. Alexander); *Das Mirandola-Stundenbuch: Faksimile-Edition der Handschrift MS. Add.50002 der British Library London*; Kommentar mit Beiträgen von C. de Hamel – U. Bauer-Eberhardt, Zurich 1995; C. M. BROWN – A. M. LORENZONI, *Nuovi documenti dall'archivio di Mantova su "Johane Francisco de Mainerii da Parma miniatore et dipintore"*, *Civiltà mantovana*, 43/126 (2008), pp. 45-47.

attributed to Baccio Baldini, c.1464⁷⁹. Baldini's images of planets achieved remarkable success and were taken as a model for the edition of the *Poeticon Astronomicum* by Hyginus, published by Erhard Ratdolt in Venice, in 1482⁸⁰. It is in fact from the latter that Giovanni Francesco Maineri, artist of the *Mirandola Hours*, appears to have taken inspiration in the elaboration of both the planets and the zodiac signs.

The topic of the triumphal chariots appears in the astrological cycle of the Palazzo Schifanoia. At Schifanoia, however, the chariots illustrate the twelve Olympic divinities according to the *Astronomica* of Marcus Manilius (II, 434-447), who assigned a tutelary god to each zodiac sign. As Dieter Blume noticed, the focus of the Schifanoia cycle is not on the planets, but rather the zodiac signs and their astrological powers⁸¹.

The calendar of the *Offiziolo* does not follow the iconographic traditions mentioned above when depicting the celestial bodies. Instead, Birago chose to merge the zodiac signs and planets into a single hybrid image: Venus rides the Taurus, the Scorpio holds with his claws the mace of Mars and the sickle of Saturn pierces the body of the Capricorn (Fig. 2). On one hand, this might be an ingenious solution found by the artist, faced with the limited dimensions of the *Offiziolo*. However, this hybrid closely recalls the planets from the sculpted capitals of the Palazzo Ducale, in Venice (1340-1355). Here the seven planets, re-presented in the optic of Medieval personifications, ride or hold the zodiac signs corresponding to their houses (Fig. 9). The analogy between the Venetian capital and Islamic iconography has been noticed by

⁷⁹ U. Bauer-Eberhardt, *Giovanni Francesco Maineri als Miniator des Mirandola-Stundenbuchs*, in *Das Mirandola-Stundenbuch* cit., pp. 89-138: 116-121.

⁸⁰ On the fortune of Baldini's engravings: BLUME, *Picturing the Stars* cit., pp. 392-397.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 343-345. See also nt. 22.

Antonio Manno who particularly mentioned the *Traité des Nativités* attributed to Abu Ma'shar, c.1300 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Arabe 2583)⁸².

When compared to the zodiac depicted in the Paris manuscript (Arabe 2583), or in the *Kitab al-bulhandā*, dated late fourteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. Or. 133, ff. 2v-25r)⁸³, the Cini zodiac appears almost as a humanistic re-elaboration of the Arabo-Persian iconographic scheme. In the *Kitab al-bulhandā*, each of the twelve zodiac signs is associated with the planet in the domicile and represented within a single image. The planetary deities are transformed according to the Arabo-Persian imagery. For instance, Cancer is represented as a crab with the disk of the moon in its pincers (Bodl. Or. 133, f. 7v), Capricorn is illustrated as a goat ridden by a bearded figure holding a type of hoe (Bodl. Or. 133, f. 19v; Fig. 10) and a figure is sitting cross-legged on a large fish in Pisces (Bodl. Or. 133, f. 22v).

The issue of the reception of Islamic astrology in the West has been at the core of the Warburg Institute⁸⁴. More recently, Anna Caiozzo analysed the Islamic model of the zodiac in conjunction with planets⁸⁵. In contrast to the iconography of constellations of Hellenistic origin, the topic of the zodiac in conjunction with planets was borne at the crossroad of the Middle Eastern civilisations and was developed in the local metalwork production of the twelfth century⁸⁶.

⁸² *Il poema del tempo: I capitelli del Palazzo ducale di Venezia: Storia e iconografia*, a cura di A. Manno, Venezia 1999, pp. 117-118 (A. Manno). On the capitals of the Palazzo Ducale: A. Manno, *Pietre filosofali: I capitelli del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia; catalogo delle iscrizioni*, 23/1992 (1993), 'Studi veneziani', pp. 15-100.

⁸³ S. CARBONI, *Il Kitāb al-bulhān di Oxford*, Torino 1988.

⁸⁴ PANOFSKY – SAXL, *Classical Mythology* cit; *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, edited C. Burnett – A. Contadini, Warburg Institute Colloquia 6, London 1999; A. WARBURG, *Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara*, in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, Los Angeles 1999, pp. 563-92.

⁸⁵ A. CAIOZZO, *Images du ciel d'orient au moyen âge: une histoire du zodiaque et de ses représentations dans les manuscrits du Proche-Orient musulman*, Paris 2003, pp. 113-212; 235-316.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 199-206.

It is surprising that the Offiziolo of Charles VIII adopted for its zodiac an iconographic programme which closely recalls a typical Arabo-Persian scheme. This influence might have come from Venice⁸⁷, not forgetting that the library of the Sforza contained a great number of astrological works, and that classic and Arabic authors were studied at the local University of Pavia⁸⁸. However, none of the books which survived after the dispersion of the library in 1500 presents the exact prototype.

The calendar of the Offiziolo should be considered in the general context of the Milanese court where astrology played a crucial role. One of the features of the calendars originating from this area is the search for models which correspond to the new knowledge and iconography, both in the subject of astrology and agriculture. An example is the book of hours decorated probably in Milan by Venturino Mercati, between 1470-1480 (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, G.14, ff. 1v-18r)⁸⁹. Here, the zodiac signs illustrated on full-page illuminations, are clearly drawn from the constellations depicted in the manuscript copy of *Il Dittamondo*, created at Milan, in 1447 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Italien 81, ff. 171v-179r)⁹⁰. Later, the Trivulzio Tapestries used, as an iconographic source for its zodiac signs, the woodcuts of the 1482 edition of Hyginus⁹¹.

The calendar of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII is a real status-symbol. Ludovico il Moro presented Charles VIII with a diplomatic gift which, apart from its flattering aim, showed to the king of France that he held the fortune of the stars. The calendar, mirror of a utopian farm, presents an ideal cosmic and sub-lunar situation, in which every activity is carried out at the

⁸⁷ D.HOWARD, *Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500*, New Havey – London 2000.

⁸⁸ AZZOLINI, *The Duke and the Stars* cit., pp. 22-64.

⁸⁹ *Time in the Medieval World* cit., lxi, 20.

⁹⁰ On *Il Dittamondo* (Italien 8): D. BLUME – M. HAFFNER – W. METZGER, *Sternbilder des Mittelalters: der gemalte Himmel zwischen Wissenschaft und Phantasie*, II.1 1200-1500, *Katalog der Handschriften*, Berlin 2016, pp. 297-303.

⁹¹ AGOSTI – STOPPA, *I Mesi* cit., p. 16.

appropriate moment of the year, the fruits and crops are ripened in time and the harvest is abundant. This is due to the attentive eye and care of Ludovico, who, as declared in his epigraphs, brought peace and fertility to the lands of Vigevano. The ideal character of the calendar does not exclude the observation of the real nature, habits and costumes. In this sense, the Offiziolo is part of a Lombardy tradition which stems from the *Tacuinum sanitatis* until the tapestries designed by Bramantino at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

All the aspects analysed here demonstrate how the calendar of the Offiziolo of Charles VIII can be considered as a visual document of late fifteenth-century Milan. It attests to two intermingling features relevant for Lombardy's economy, culture, and political practices: the importance of astrology and agriculture.

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