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### *A rare illuminated normative codex from the Florentine Renaissance: the 1472 Statute of the Confraternity of Santa Maria Assunta in San Pier Gattolino*

The vellum codex MS. 482 (previously catalogued as 6/iv/27), held in the Birmingham University Library Special Collections Department and acquired from Hammond's Bookshop in 1957, contains the 15<sup>th</sup> century *Statuto* of the Italian lay association<sup>1</sup> *Santa Maria Assunta* (St Mary of the Assumption), which was founded in the church of San Pier Gattolino (henceforth referred to as the church of San Piero) in Florence. To the best of my knowledge, the manuscript has never been studied before and is the only surviving witness.<sup>2</sup>

As is well known, confraternities were Medieval and Modern reli-

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<sup>1</sup> In my discussion I shall use the words confraternity, brotherhood, and lay company interchangeably, without implying categorical differences which do not clearly emerge from the 15<sup>th</sup> century documents.

<sup>2</sup> See the description in *Medieval manuscripts in British libraries* 1977, p. 88; and in <<https://calmview.bham.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=XMS482>>. On this type of texts, normally written in a single copy and often reformed and integrated, see *Statuti di confraternite* 1974; Esposito 2010. I would like to thank the Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham for allowing the publication of the illuminated folios from MS. 482.

gious brotherhoods for lay people coming together under the guidance of certain rules and standards of behaviour usually fixed by a statute. Canonically erected by decree of the diocesan ordinaries, they promoted a religious life in common based on works of mercy and all forms of charity worthy of salvation. These kinds of associations were fully involved in the social, political, liturgical and cultural life of parish communities, and often enjoyed the protection and organisation provided by the friars of the Mendicant orders. Confraternities shaped civic religious cult and played a crucial role in most Italian Renaissance cities and towns.<sup>3</sup> It has been observed that they were known by a variety of names: a lay company might have the name of a patron saint, the name of the church in which it met, or a name descriptive of its membership. During its time, the same association might change its name, patron saint, or meeting place.<sup>4</sup> Statute books were texts descriptive of the normative standards that confraternities sought to promote in their members. Interestingly, they were read to the members periodically. Some companies, such as Orsanmichele in Florence, read the laws aloud every month.<sup>5</sup>

The church of San Pier Gattolino, also known as the church of *Serumido*, is located at 40-42 Romana Street (*via Romana*) in the Oltrarno Quarter of Florence (*Quartiere di Santo Spirito*), not far from Pitti Palace and the Boboli Gardens; it is currently used by a Romanian Orthodox Church congregation. The elegant late 16<sup>th</sup> century construction displays a gabled façade with three large windows and a portal embellished with a broken tympanum and a bust of St Peter

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<sup>3</sup> See, from a continental perspective, de La Roncière 1998; *A companion to medieval and early modern confraternities* 2019. For the Italian confraternities, see Monti 1927; Angelozzi 1978, p. 16-30; Black 1989; Gazzini 2006. On the historiography of this topic, see Black 2000. A bibliographic directory is available in Gazzini 2004, <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/187991426.pdf>>.

<sup>4</sup> In this regard, see Weissman 1982 (repr. 2013), p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> *Ivi*, p. 85. The problem of the effective use of normative texts in the confraternities is explored in Pamato 1998, in part. p. 24-25.

the Apostle dating from the 18th century. Its unpretentious interior is characterised by a single hall and a rectangular layout terminating in a barrel-vaulted choir [fig. 1 and 2].<sup>6</sup> The oratory dates from a later period. According to a document from the nearby monastery of San Miniato al Monte and modern learned compilations of Florentine monuments, the *Ecclesia Sancti Petri Gattuarii*<sup>7</sup> dates back at least to the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, and after 1115 was a peripheral parish located outside the penultimate circle of the city walls.<sup>8</sup> From the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was bounded by a small hospital for pilgrims and travellers reaching Florence from the south via the Cassia road leading to Rome. The original church, which seems to have had a three-nave structure, identified the eponymous *populus* of the Florentine *Oltrarno*.<sup>9</sup>

The curious name of the site with all its spelling variants (*Gattolino*, *in Gattolino*, but also *Gattula*, *Gattuarius*, *Cattuarius*) has been investigated by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Florentine scholars and periegetes, and found to be connected with some certainty to a city family of patrons (the Gattolini, recorded during the Middle Ages in the district of San Giovanni, *gonfalone* of the *Drago*),<sup>10</sup> or to the presence of *gattici*, a type of white poplar widespread in the surrounding area. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the church was certainly officiated by secular clergy. The first perspective view of Florence therein found, called *Veduta della Catena*, attributed to Francesco di Lorenzo Rosselli (1448-1513), who most likely produced it around 1472, confirms the place's symbolic

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<sup>6</sup> See Paatz - Paatz 1952, p. 621-628: 622-623; Busignani - Bencini 1974, p. 139-144.

<sup>7</sup> This is one of the Latin names of the church.

<sup>8</sup> Records show that the church called *Sancti Petri Gattuaelem* already existed in 1068 (*Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte* 1990, n. 31, p. 165), and, plausibly, at least before 1050 (Pocianti 1575, p. 79; Lopes-Pegna 1972, p. 31; Sznura 1975, p. 118).

<sup>9</sup> *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina* 1999, p. 262; Lami 1758, vol. 2, p. 997, 1490; Richa 1762 (repr. 1972), p. 99-108, 338; Bacciotti 1886, p. 510; Paatz - Paatz 1952, p. 628; Fanelli 1997, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Firenze, Archivio di Stato, *Ceramelli Papiani*, 2253.

value for the local population: in the painting, the large gate built in the 14th century, and later called *Porta Romana*, which was part of the southern section of Florence's Medieval walls, is named *Porta S. Piero Gattolini*.<sup>11</sup> According to modern scholarship, the church housed seven or eight chapels, including one dedicated to the Annunciation and one to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Most of them were sponsored by lay people.<sup>12</sup> In 1461 the painter Domenico Veneziano was buried in one of these chapels.<sup>13</sup> During the first half of the 16th century, the church welcomed, as local clergy, the regular canons of Bolognese origin called *di San Salvatore* or *Renani*, from the Florentine church of *San Donato a Scopeto*, destroyed during the siege of Florence by Emperor Charles V in 1529-30.<sup>14</sup> Between 1551 and 1552, the church of San Piero was also demolished at the behest of Duke Cosimo I, who wanted to extend the defensive ramparts erected inside the city walls twenty years earlier, in preparation for the war to conquer Siena (1552-55).<sup>15</sup> According to documents preserved in the Archiepiscopal Archives of Florence, following the demolition of most of the city's defensive structures, between 1570-1580 the church of San Piero was rebuilt, and probably on the same site as the previous one, also thanks to the donations of a devotee: Giovanni di Filippo Ricciardi called *Ser Umido*, after whom the new building was named.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Ludovico degli Uberti, from (attr.) Francesco di Lorenzo Rosselli, *Veduta di Firenze detta 'della Catena'*, early 16<sup>th</sup> century xylographic copy of a ca. 1472 painting, 6 sheets. For the name of the gate, see also *Piante di popoli e strade* 1989, vol. 1, c. 2; Bocchi 1677 (repr. 2004), p. 124; Ademollo 1840, p. 506, 660, 668-669.

<sup>12</sup> Rustici 2015, vol. 1, p. 153; Sznura 1975, p. 121, 137; *Le pergamene dell'archivio arcivescovile di Firenze* 2001, p. 21, 67.

<sup>13</sup> Milanese 1862, p. 9; Wohl 1980; Wohl 1991.

<sup>14</sup> *Le pergamene dell'archivio arcivescovile di Firenze* 2001, p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> Fanelli 1997, p. 96; Cresti 2016, p. 68; Mercani 2017, p. 1-2. See also Varchi 1858, vol. 1, p. 218-219; Manetti 1980, p. 48-49; *Michelangelo* 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Firenze, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. 2614, etching: Stefano Buonsignori, *Nova pulcherrimae civitatis Florentiae topographia accuratissime deli-*

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to underline that, given that it was one of the most worshipped, the chapel (*cappellania*) of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was also reconfigured in the new church, as confirmed by a pastoral visit in 1633.<sup>17</sup> The church of San Piero housed two lay fraternities (*compagnie di carità*)<sup>18</sup> that seem to have been merged in the 17th century: the *Compagnia de' Vigilanti di Maria*, and the flagellant association of *Santa Maria Assunta*, which dates back to at least 1280 and is mentioned in a 1454 processional list.<sup>19</sup> The laws promulgated on 20 December 1472 (see more below) and mentioned in the manuscript here described certainly applied to the latter, which was housed in the chapel of the *Santissimo Sacramento* of the new church.<sup>20</sup>

The elegant illuminated manuscript preserved in Birmingham, written in Latin and Italian vernacular,<sup>21</sup> consists of two parchment folders of 21 folios 270×190 mm in total, with a written space of 168×98 mm, and 25 long lines. Collation: i<sup>8</sup> (f. 2-5, 7-10) + 1 leaf after 4 (f. 6), 2<sup>10</sup> (f.

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*neata*, 1584; Richa 1762 (repr. 1972), p. 108-109, 117-118; Mercani 2017, p. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ivi*, p. 4-8; *Le pergamene dell'archivio arcivescovile di Firenze* 2001, p. 243.

<sup>18</sup> The *compagnie di carità* were types of fraternities unconnected to national communities (as was the *Compagnia della Pietà* of the Florentines in Rome) or to specific professional categories (as was the brotherhood of St Joseph of the Carpenters, present in many cities). See Sebregondi 1992, p. 88.

<sup>19</sup> See Firenze, Archivio di Stato, *Signori Dieci di Balìa, Carte di Corredo*, 45, *Regole di frati come vanno a processione*, f. 18v, and the erudite, albeit imprecise, writings by Ferdinando Leopoldo Del Migliore (1628-96): Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, *Magliabechiani*, XXV.418, *Registro delle Compagnie di Firenze*, MS., non-numbered folios; *ivi*, XXV.423, *Fondazioni e Livelli [...] Stato Vecchio e Nuovo di Firenze*, f. 73. See also Richa 1762 (repr. 1972), p. 114-117; Papi 1976, p. 115 (with an incorrect identification of the institution); Henderson 1994, p. 469; Bertocci 2002, p. 365-367.

<sup>20</sup> On the devotion to the Virgin Mary in late Medieval Florentine confraternities, see *Capitoli della Compagnia della Madonna d'Orsammechele* 1859; Quilici 1969, p. 428-429; Orioli 1984; Rusconi 1987, p. 136; *Colloqui* 2004; Salvestrini 2020, p. 67, 69.

<sup>21</sup> On the use of the vernacular in these texts, see Bambi 2003.

11-18, 21, 1) + a bifolium inserted after leaf 8 (f. 19, 20). 2<sup>10</sup> has been folded back around quire 1 to form f. 1. Initials: (i) upper case letters blue or red with trimming frame of the other colour; (ii) f. 2 pink on blue, green, and gold background, historiated (Assumption of the Virgin) [fig. 3]. A pen-and-ink drawing is on the lower margin of f. 2r [fig. 4]. The wooden-board binding is modern and covered with damaged stamped brown leather. 4 out of 8 brass bosses and 1 of 2 leather and brass clasps remain. A damaged parchment miniature portraying the same subject found in the initial on f. 2 [fig. 5] is secured by nails to the centre of the upper front cover, it might once have had the protection of a piece of horn. This picture, badly faded, has evidently been added later, as it covers the decoration on the leather. It was probably part of an original parchment of the codex itself.

Folder n. 1, non-numbered f. 19r-20v. *Incipit*: «Aue maria gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Uenite exultemus domino» [fig. 6]. Folder n. 2, fragmentary modern numbering marked with the same pencil of f. 1v. Index + 2r-18v, 21r. *Incipit*: «Al nome sia della sanctissima et indiuidua trinità, padre, figliuolo et spirito sancto [...] Lo spirito sancto parlla per lla bocha del propheta dauid, dicendo: declina a malo». F. 1r and 21v blank. The codex was purchased in the antiques market, most likely because of its ornamental features. Its preservation is good, despite wear and tear of folios of the manuscript due to routine use, which has damaged above all the decorative apparatus.<sup>22</sup>

The text was written at a time when many Florentine churches and religious or lay associations were being endowed with liturgical codices and illuminated normative collections.<sup>23</sup> I would like to mention, for example, the 1413-14 *Capitoli della compagnia di Santa Maria della Pietà*, displaying an illuminated upper case letter with the allegory of Piety and an unknown author's portrayal of the works of mercy on the

<sup>22</sup> The use and consumption of these texts is explored in Fanti 1999, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Tacconi 1997, p. 70-73; Tacconi 2005, p. 143-174; Ceccanti 2010; Salvestrini 2017a, p. 326-336.

lower margin of the same folio.<sup>24</sup> The 1431 *Capitoli della compagnia di San Niccolò* and the *Capitoli* of the congregation of the *Buonomini di San Martino* show a similar pattern, with the former having an initial letter representing a member of the confraternity (*disciplinato*) engaged in the practice of self-flagellation.<sup>25</sup> The congregation of the *Buonomini* was founded in 1442 by the Archbishop Antonino Pierozzi to help the victims of political proscriptions and seizures known as the *poveri vergognosi* (shameful poor).<sup>26</sup> The association's book, dating to 1479-81, has a beautiful thumbnail sketch representing bishop St Martin and many decorated letterheads.<sup>27</sup> Another example is provided by the post-1501 chapters of the Venerable Archconfraternity of Mercy, written on the occasion of a plague in the city and aimed at regulating the activity of the confraternity members involved in assisting the sick. This manuscript bears elegant miniatures showing the works of mercy attributed to the circle of Attavante degli Attavanti.<sup>28</sup> The 1478-79 illuminated statutes of the magistracy of the *Otto di Guardia e Balìa* are embellished with an image of the Incredulity of St Thomas, and an upper case letter with the evocative allegory of Justice; the 1503-04 ordinances of the Magistrate of the Pupils (a public magistracy for the protection of minors and widows) bears a large ornament on the lower margin of the frontispiece with a saint seated on a bench in the act of dispensing justice.<sup>29</sup> Turning to an example from the countryside, I would like to draw attention to the 1397 *Compag-*

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<sup>24</sup> See Sebregondi 1992, p. 95.

<sup>25</sup> Firenze, Archivio di Stato, *Capitoli delle Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo*, 439, f. 2r.

<sup>26</sup> Zorzi Pugliese 1991, p. 275-280; Henderson 1994, p. 388-397; Fubini Leuzzi 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Firenze, Archivio Storico della Congregazione dei Buonomini di San Martino, *Congregazione dei Buonomini di San Martino*, 1.1.1.0.2, *Capitoli* (1479-81). See *Una volta nella vita* 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Firenze, Archivio della Venerabile Arciconfraternita della Misericordia, *Morini* A2. See *Una volta nella vita* 2014, p. 44-45.

<sup>29</sup> See *Dal Giglio al David* 2013.

*nia del corpo di Christo del comune di Campi* from the municipality of Campi Bisenzio, whose ordinances were approved by the Florentine archbishop in 1449, but dated back to 1441-42. The codex bears an illuminated upper case letter decorated with an image of the chalice of the Eucharist surmounted by a host and set in a green U-shaped field bordered with gold.<sup>30</sup>

Unlikely in Renaissance Florence and cities such as Siena, Bologna, Milan, Venice or Padua, where the production of manuscripts and printed codices was of high quality,<sup>31</sup> in minor contexts statutes were mostly devoid of miniatures and had modest or non-existent decorative devices; this is the case, for instance, for the lay companies of Modena.<sup>32</sup> The illustrations of manuscripts of lay companies evoke images of the patron saints and/or the symbols of the associations, the virtues to which the brothers should aspire, and the specific devotional practices they should follow. It is worth noting that scenes from the daily brotherhoods' activities are also often found.

The St Mary of the Assumption confraternity's statute is similar in many aspects to the illuminated codices above mentioned: to cite an instance, in this type of normative manuscripts the miniature was not only a decorative element but also served to highlight the confraternities' rules.<sup>33</sup> St Mary of the Assumption was a company of discipline and a welfare organisation based on the principle of brotherhood and

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<sup>30</sup> Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, *Fondo Nazionale*, II.IV.68, f. 21r-22r. See Salvestrini 2007, p. 25-27. On mutual influences and similarities among statutory texts from approximate geographical areas, see De Sandre Gasparini 1987, p. 366.

<sup>31</sup> See Medica 1999; Gazzini 2000, p. 496, 501-504; Ciampoltrini - Turrini 2007, p. XXVI-XXXI; Cova 2010, p. 81-97; Chen 2014; Humphrey 2015; Alexander 2016. See also Klange Addabbo 1996-1997; Orofino 2005, p. 510-518. On Florence see Caraballese 1985; Newbiggin 1988; Dessì 1998, p. 90-92; Taddei 1999, p. 136-137. For a comparative perspective, see Richardson 1994, p. 28-47; Richardson 1999, p. 25-35; Richardson 2009.

<sup>32</sup> See Al Kalak - Lucchi 2011, p. 60-67.

<sup>33</sup> See Sebregondi 1990; Esposito 1995; Cole Ahl 2000; Vincent 2004.



mutual assistance.<sup>34</sup> It was a congregational type of confraternity,<sup>35</sup> that is to say, a small size organisation in which all members participated in religious and social activities; on the other hand, companies of a collegiate-nature were usually larger in size and were able to recruit the entire population of a city district (as was the case in Bologna) or of a smaller town (as in the Tuscan community of Sansepolcro).<sup>36</sup>

In regard to the statute of the confraternity of San Pier Gattolino, the folder n. 1, in Latin, consists of the local *Proprium* of the Office for the feast of the Virgin's Assumption Day on 15 August. Its content is as follows: at the beginning the *Vetus latina* invitatory psalm 94 *Uenite exultemus domino*, interspersed with red ink for the salutation 'Hail Mary'. In the manuscript, the sources of the verses *Aue maria gratia plena / Dominus tecum / Et benedictus fructus uentris tui* are clearly the traditional invocations found in Luke 1:28 and 42, and John 1:14, and thus in the form which precedes the longer version of the *Ave Maria* found in the book of prayer by Antonio da Stroncone (1381-1461), including the *Sancta Maria mater Dei* intercessory prayer for the first time.<sup>37</sup> The tropes are followed by the *Gloria patri* and an indication

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<sup>34</sup> On this type of fraternities and their ordinances, see *Capitoli della Compagnia dei disciplinati di Siena* 1886; *Capitoli della Compagnia dei disciplinati della città di Firenze* 1871; Marinelli 1969; Alberigo 1962; Meersseman 1977, vol. 2, p. 713, 719-750; Henderson 1990; Arthur 1990, p. 339.

<sup>35</sup> According to the classification proposed by Terpstra 2009, p. 272-280. Another example is provided by the 1481-85 *Statuti della Compagnia del rosario* 1965.

<sup>36</sup> Banker 1988. On this topic see Gazzini 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, f. 19r-19v. The textual fixation of the *Ave Maria*, or *salutatio angelica*, has been long and complex. In its western tradition, it did not contain the last pericope (*Sancta Maria, mater Dei*), connected with the Carolingian *Singularis meriti* prayer, until the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1494, Pope Alexander VI, in order to emphasise the immaculate conception of the Virgin, introduced the invocation to her mother Anne, also described as blessed among all women, into the prayer: *Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, tua gratia ist mecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedicta Anna mater tua, ex qua sine macula et sine peccato processisti virgo Maria, ex te autem natus est Jesus Christus, filius Dei vivi. Amen* (see Kleinschmidt 1930 - repr. 2020, p. 163,

of the songs and sequences to sing: the Venantius Fortunatus (attr.)' *Quem terra, pontus, ethera* hymn; the *Domine dominus noster* psalm 8; the *Benedicta tu in mulieribus* antiphon; the *Celi enarrant gloriam Dei* psalm 18;<sup>38</sup> the *Maria uirgo assumpta est ad ethereum thalamum* third nocturn; the *Deus deus meus* psalm 22; the *In odorem unguentorum tuorum* antiphon 3; the *Benedicite omnia opera domini* canticle, here indicated as *.iiii<sup>o</sup>. psalmo*; the *Benedicta filia tua a domino* antiphon; the *Laudate dominum de celis* psalm 148; the Cantic of Canticles 6,4 *Pulchra es et decora filia ierusalem* antiphon; the Venantius Fortunatus' *O Gloriosa domina* hymn; and the *Benedicta tu in mulieribus, versetto*.<sup>39</sup> The antiphons *Et benedictus fructus uentris tui*, introducing Zechariah's song *Benedictus dominus deus israel* from Luke 1:68-79, and the *Beata dei genitrix uirgo maria* conclude the series.<sup>40</sup>

Folder n. 2 presents a preliminary paragraph, which is followed by the regulations running over twenty-two chapters. The paragraph, preceded by a table listing the articles of the statute, is explanatory and states that the new reformed company was founded on 15 August 1471 in the church of San Piero, and that the decision to draw up the statute was taken on Florentine calendar 20 December 1472. The text opens with an invocation to the Trinity, the Virgin, the patron saint of Florence St John the Baptist (*protectore di questa alma città*), and St Peter the Apostle, after whom the church of San Pier Gattolino is named. Next to the introduction is a quotation and a vernacular paraphrase of Psalm 33, here attributed to the *propheta dauid*, inserted at the beginning as a programme of salvation for the brethren gathered under the Virgin's protective mantle.<sup>41</sup> The origin of the confraternity, which somehow continued the previously mentioned association

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223; Lodi 1979, n. 3188; Lodi 1985; Doerfler Dierken 1992, p. 17; Ossanna 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, f. 19v.

<sup>39</sup> *Ivi*, f. 20r.

<sup>40</sup> *Ivi*, f. 20v. These tropes and the liturgical devotions to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary are explored in Capelle 1952; Baltzer 2000. See also Everist 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, f. 2r.

founded in 1280, is then related to the new spiritual path of the brothers which distinguishes three different degrees of perfection: the contemplative, the active, and the moral life.<sup>42</sup> This preliminary paragraph also explains that the company had a council of thirty-one members.<sup>43</sup>

The series of the statute chapters opens with a description of the society's organisation which, like other religious lay associations, was based on the government regime of the Florentine Republic.<sup>44</sup> The brotherhood included a governor (*ghouernatore principale*), two councillors, one administrator (*prouueditore*), one treasurer (*camarlingo*), three novice masters, and four visitors to the sick. This management team was joined by a *correptore*, a priest who assisted the rector of the church of San Piero in the sacramental and pastoral care of the brethren. There were also a scribe, two sacristans in charge of the liturgical furnishings, and a steward responsible for the sacred candles. These figures, who could always be assisted by a servant (as mentioned in Chapter 20), were to be recruited primarily among the parishioners of the church of San Piero. There is also a reference to a *camarllingho delle coltre*, who was in charge of managing the funeral vestments.<sup>45</sup>

The statute devotes ample space to the methods of election and the duties and forms of remuneration of the officers (Chapters 1-5, 9-13, and 19). It states that the governor should be at least thirty years old and a member of the confraternity for at least one year. The laws regulate the moral behaviour expected from the affiliates (Chapter 6). In particular, gambling was forbidden, the brothers were obliged to settle disputes and conflicts, blasphemy was severely prosecuted, and frequenting taverns was prohibited. The number and the time to pronounce prayers and devotional meditations is also indicated: the

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<sup>42</sup> *Uita contemplatiua, la quale sta a lleuare la mente a dio con umiltà [...] uita actiua la quale sta in souenire el proximo [...] uita morale, la quale sta in ordinare sé medesimo con diritta uia* (*ivi*, f. 2v-3v).

<sup>43</sup> *Ivi*, f. 3v-4r.

<sup>44</sup> Sebregondi 1992, p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> See another example in Orioli 1984, XIII, p. 27.

brothers should recite 5 *paternostri* and 5 *avemarie* every day, but 7 on Saturdays. The laws specify also that confession should occur every four months, and regulate the celebration of the canonical feasts. The statute imposes maintaining secrecy about confraternity practices.<sup>46</sup> Chapter 8, which regulates the activities of those who visited the sick (*uisitatori degli uomini infermi*),<sup>47</sup> is of particular interest: these visitors were obliged to offer 20 *soldi* a week taken from the confraternity's coffers, once verified that the beneficiary had been properly confessed and had received Communion. They were also expected to comfort the brothers in prison, but only if the latter were detained for unpaid debts, giving them as much as 5 *soldi* a week.<sup>48</sup> The text also mentions the administration of the company's finances and alms box, for which a special register of entry and exit records was kept.<sup>49</sup> Curiously enough, there is no reference to the practice of self-flagellation, notwithstanding the fact that the whip (*disciplina*) was a mark of the association and was buried in the tomb of each deceased brother.<sup>50</sup>

The way in which the brothers contributed to the institution budget, the participation of the members in liturgical ceremonies, and holding masses in suffrage for the dead (St Gregory's masses), with equal treatment of men and women,<sup>51</sup> were also normatively governed. The duties of the acolytes included participating in the solemn celebrations in honour of the Virgin Mary held in March at the shrine of Our Lady of Impruneta, near Florence and one of the city's main

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<sup>46</sup> See similar precepts in *Capitoli della Compagnia dei disciplinati di Siena* 1886, vol. 3, p. 52-53.

<sup>47</sup> See a similar chapter in Landini 1786, p. 14-15. See also Sebreghondi 1993.

<sup>48</sup> Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, 8, f. 11r-11v.

<sup>49</sup> On this type of register, see Esposito 1998.

<sup>50</sup> Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, 8. See, conversely, the chapter *Del tempo e del modo della disciplina*, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Prato Augustines fraternity ordinances: *I capitoli della compagnia di disciplina* 1864, p. 20; *Capitoli della compagnia di Sant'Agostino* 2000.

<sup>51</sup> See other examples in *Statuti della Pia fraternita di Santa Maria di Arezzo* 1870 (repr. 2019), p. 26; Salvestrini 2015; Salvestrini 2017b.

Virgin Mary shrines<sup>52</sup> (Chapter 14), and organising the feast of St Peter the Apostle in June (Chapter 16). The preparation of the feast of the Assumption on 15 August<sup>53</sup> occupies the whole of Chapter 17. Ample space is also given to the celebration of the feast of All Souls' Day in November (Chapter 18).<sup>54</sup>

Even from this succinct presentation, one can conclude that the manuscript containing the statute of the confraternity of St Mary of the Assumption is of primary importance to understand the history of this brotherhood of laymen in all its aspects. An analysis of some figurative manuscript decorations found therein can help to shed light on their symbolic meaning. As mentioned, on f. 2r the introductory paragraph of the statute is marked by a large illuminated upper case letter L in pink, decorated with phytomorphic touches in green, blue and gold which extend in a frame-like manner along the left margin of the folio. The letter stands out on a gold and straw-yellow background with a square base containing a blue field in the centre with the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heavenly glory, praying on a throne and wearing a greyish blue dress, surrounded by six red seraphim angels. In terms of visual hierarchy, the figure of the Virgin dominates two crossed keys (one yellow, the other dark) symbolising Peter the apostle and the Church. It is not possible to determine the attribution of this miniature to one artist or workshop. Nevertheless, the modest quality of the drawing suggest that it could have been executed by a member of the confraternity itself, which was perhaps open to artists since, as I have said, Domenico Veneziano was buried in 1461 in the church of San Piero. The picture could be, therefore, a direct product of the brotherhood and its devotion to the image of the Virgin of the Assumption. It is worth remembering that most of Florence's charitable associations had painters and artists among their members.<sup>55</sup> The

<sup>52</sup> Casotti 1714; Cardini 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Preparation of *una bella festa*, supported by *una bella offerta*.

<sup>54</sup> On the festive character of confraternities, see Weissman 1991, p. 210-211.

<sup>55</sup> See Barr 1989; Sebregondi 2009, p. 338; Salvestrini 2017b.

damaged reproduction of the same subject on the cover of the codex, which, *prima facie*, seems to have been painted by the same artist, served to directly recall the content of the statute.<sup>56</sup> This second figure is, in fact, similar to the one described above which appears inside the manuscript, but it also differs in that here the image of Mary is enclosed in a more stylised mandorla with four red seraphim angels and inserted into a blue roundel simply bordered with a line in brown ink. The two-coloured crossed keys also appear in this representation.

On the lower margin of f. 2r is a penstroke drawing of two flagellants kneeling with a whip in their hands, their faces turned towards the image of the Virgin, and wearing the white confraternal robes that are slightly repainted over the cords. The robes cover them entirely and leave only a gap on the back marked by red blood. The flagellants' *bufe* – denoting the hood with two holes at eye-level – cover the men faces, and the tip of the hoods fall behind their heads.<sup>57</sup> It is not possible to ascertain whether the drawing is contemporary with the illuminated letters or whether it was added later. It cannot be attributed to the hand of the illuminator, although this cannot be excluded; but I would suggest that it dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of a comparison with some similar images from the manuscripts mentioned above, such as the *Capitoli della compagnia di San Niccolò*, and with some painting of the same period, like the *Miracle of the Crucifix*, a tempera on panel held in the Empoli's *Collegiata* museum, by an anonymous 15<sup>th</sup> century Florentine artist.<sup>58</sup>

There is no doubt that, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, lay companies were the most innovative forms of people's aspirations to a more intense and participatory religious life. Based on the model of priestly confraternities, they developed on a territorial and socio-professional basis by combining the practice of common prayer with mutual material and spiritual assistance. These organisations sought to

<sup>56</sup> On the reiteration of images, see Lollini 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Similar examples are found in Sebregondi 2009, p. 345-347.

<sup>58</sup> See Paolucci 1985, p. 53-55. For comparisons, see Cova 2011; Lollini 2011.

gain a foothold on both the ecclesial bodies and the common people, and often constituted support institutions for activities pertaining to parish churches.<sup>59</sup> The confraternities' statutes were simple and short writings; interestingly, they were among the first statute books written in the Italian vernacular, in some cases as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> The miniatures found in some of the manuscripts of confraternities' ordinances, regardless of the quality of their execution, served not only a decorative function. They exemplified, in visual terms, a symbolic map making up the set of legal regulations and religious rules presiding over the activities of the brethren. The brothers had to obey the rules of their institutions because they were also legitimised and sacralised by the images and symbols that accompanied them as an integral part of their collective identity.<sup>61</sup> These representations played a similar role to the sacred icons that adorned the altars and the chapel rooms in which the associations periodically met.

The image of the Virgin Mary and that of the flagellants in the statute of the confraternity of Santa Maria Assunta should be understood in the light of this discussion. Their visual, immediate impact reinforced the sense of membership, that is the belonging to a community with specific characteristics and values. As we have seen with regard to the reference to self-flagellation, the image could complement or even replace the written reference to, for example, penitential practices. Images represented a shared message helping to construct a common memory with which the members of the confraternity identified.

We know nothing of the history of the manuscript, apart from the date of purchase on the antiquarian market in 1957. Local historiography on the Florentine confraternities seems to ignore the existence

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<sup>59</sup> See Weissman 1982 (repr. 2013), p. 43-105; Rusconi 1986, p. 467-506; Henderson 1994, p. 415-442.

<sup>60</sup> See the 1278-84 statutes of the Florentine *Compagnia di San Gilio (Testi fiorentini del Dugento)* 1926 (repr. 1954), p. 34-54; Monti 1927, vol. 2, p. 144-158. See also Zorzi 1999, p. XCIII-XCIV.

<sup>61</sup> See, in this regard, Cova 2011; *Space, place, and motion* 2017.

of this book, which may suggest an early departure from Florence. As I argued, it seems likely that the interest in this text, and also its value on the antiques market, was not determined by its content, but primarily by the iconographic apparatus with which it is equipped. The fact that the statute has been removed from the historical and cultural context in which once it played a role can help to explain the lack of attention that the manuscript has so far received. Far from its original milieu, which is now home to immense archival sources and thus the place where most scholars of Renaissance Florentine confraternities gather to conduct research, the statute and its close relationship between textual data and visual aspects have not fully emerged in their entirety. This paper, on the contrary, contends that the text of a statute book and its visual aspects form a unit with two inseparable sides. Texts and miniatures both served as aids of devotion but also functioned as memorable elements for guiding the brothers through ritual practices, prescriptions, and proscriptions. As argued above, decorative elements served a practical function as well as an aesthetic one. Images were decorative embellishments to the pages but they also supported a visual focus.

By this point of view, although limited in scope, this paper has tried to draw scholarly attention to another key witness for our understanding of the history of confraternities' manuscripts and their connections with visual arts in Early Renaissance Italy.



PICTURES



Fig. 1. Florence (It.), San Pier Gattolino church façade.



Fig. 2. Florence (It.), San Pier Gattolino church interior.



Fig. 3. Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, f. 2r,  
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gham.



Fig. 4. Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, f. 2r, detail, © Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.



Fig. 5. Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, upper front cover, © Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

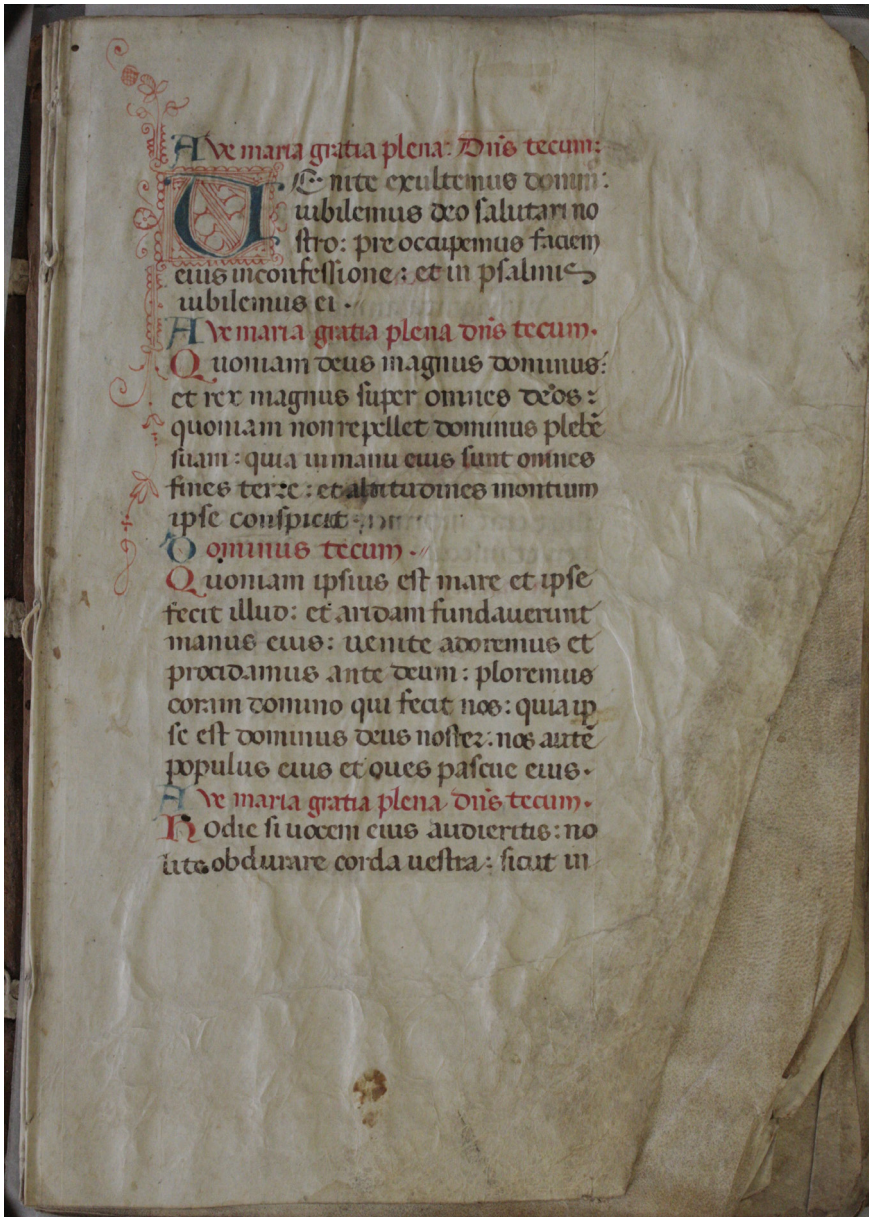


Fig. 6. Birmingham (UK), University Library, *Special Collections*, 482, f. 19r,  
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gham.

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## Abstract

The paper analyses the content of the so far unknown Florentine confraternal statute of the lay company of Santa Maria Assunta in San Pier Gattolino. It traces the history of this church and the brotherhood that produced the statute book in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and explains the relationship between text and illuminated images. The report highlights that both the rules and the pictures formed part of an integrated message contributing to the practical application of the laws and increasing the symbolic value of them.

Statutory codexes; iconography; Florence; Renaissance; associationism

*Il contributo prende in esame lo statuto della compagnia di Santa Maria Assunta nella chiesa fiorentina di San Pier Gattolino, un dettato finora sconosciuto alla storiografia sull'associazionismo religioso laicale, e colloca la descrizione del codice normativo nel suo contesto di produzione, ossia una realtà confraternale della seconda metà del Quattrocento. Il saggio, inoltre, approfondisce il rapporto fra testo ed apparato iconografico, evidenziando il significato e il ruolo delle miniature di cui il manoscritto è corredato in rapporto alla pratica liturgica e alla vita sociale dell'istituzione.*

*Codici statutari; iconografia; Firenze; Rinascimento; associazionismo*