



# Alidori Battaglia, Laura. Il libro d'ore in Italia tra confraternite e corti (1275–1349). Lettori, artisti, immagini. Biblioteca di bibliografia

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## Reviews

**Alidori Battaglia, Laura. *Il libro d'ore in Italia tra confraternite e cor-  
ti (1275–1349). Lettori, artisti, immagini. Biblioteca di bibliografia.  
Documents and Studies in Book and Library History, 209. Florence:  
Leo S. Olschki, 2020. Pp. xvi, 411 + 221 ill., 68 pl. ISBN 978-8-8222-  
6664-4 (hardcover) €70.***

Laura Alidori Battaglia's *Il libro d'ore in Italia* is the first book-length publication dedicated to the Books of Hours produced in Italy from the last quarter of the thirteenth century until the advent of the Black Death (1349). In a multidisciplinary perspective and in relation to the social, artistic, and cultural contexts of production and use of the Books of Hours in medieval Italy, Battaglia's work certainly represents a milestone in the study of the genre.

Starting from the relations between the production and diffusion of this 'medieval Best seller' (it was, in fact, the most widespread text of prayer and private devotion of the late Middle Ages) in Italy, France, Flanders, and England, this study highlights how the Book of Hours (also called *of-fiziolo* in the peninsula), traditionally considered a luxurious product of French derivation, proliferated in municipal, bourgeois, and mercantile Italy from the second half of the thirteenth century. Its spread across Italy was encouraged primarily by the spiritual renewal that was favored by the rise of mendicant orders and new forms of secular devotion linked to confraternities.

After an introduction that covers the origins and general characteristics of the Book of Hours (1–15), Alidori Battaglia analyzes a corpus of seventeen exemplars along three lines of research (divided into specific and separate chapters). The exemplars come primarily from north-eastern and central Italian collections, but also from public and private collections abroad.

The first chapter (17–65) considers the Book of Hours in relation to the social context of the users who commissioned them, from laymen of the merchant/banking class to confraternities. In so doing, it interweaves private and collective devotion, focusing in particular on the *Compagnie di disciplinati* that were actively present in contemporary of society.

The second chapter (67–165) looks at the artists and studios that decorated these devotional codices, from the masters of fourteenth-century miniature schools to painters and goldsmiths who were quite active in producing works commissioned by lay and religious patrons. This chapter offers a fascinating journey through art and iconography that highlights both miniaturist masters and the major late medieval artists. Stylistic, palaeographic, codicological, and liturgical data provide the basis for the

refined historical-artistic analysis that allowed Alidori Battaglia to identify the creative, geographical, and chronological context of most codices under examination, almost all undated and out of context, as well as often mutilated and in a precarious state of conservation.

The third chapter (167–260) looks at the images that illustrate the various sections the *offizioli*. It analyzes the most widespread iconographic cycles (the Virgin, the Passion, the Cross, and the Deceased ones) that were present in the Book of Hours: from the Stories of the ‘Virgin’ to the ‘Madonna with the Child’, from Giotto’s stories of the ‘Passion’ to the ‘Crucifixions’, from ‘Christ in *Pietà*’ to the encounter of the three living with the three dead, without neglecting the influence sacred iconology, private devotional artifacts, and sacred plays (*sacre rappresentazioni*). All three chapters are enriched with 222 black and white illustrations.

This splendid journey into late medieval art and devotion ends with a conclusion (261–266), a detailed catalogue of the seventeen Books of Hours under examination (267–325), an appendix with a list of Books of Hours mentioned in the documents (327–329), two distribution tables (331–335), fifty-eight colour illustrations from the codices (unnumb. pp.), a table of the calendars present in eight of the codices (337–361), an extensive bibliography of works cited (363–406), and an index of manuscripts (407–411).

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**Bino, Carla and Roberto Tagliani. “Con le braccia in Croce.” *La Regola e l’Offitio della Quaresima dei disciplini di Breno. Nuova edizione riveduta e ampliata*. 2nd ed. Milan: Ledizioni –LEDI publishing, 2012. Pp. 230. ISBN 978-88-6705-048-2 (paperback) €24.**

In this revised and expanded version of their earlier volume (2004), Carla Bino and Roberto Tagliani present the history of the flagellant confraternity of Breno, a small village in Val Camonica (an alpine valley in eastern Lombardy), between the fifteenth century and eighteenth centuries, and three important document from the confraternity.

The volume opens with a short preface by Daniele Montanari (7–9) and brief introduction by Claudio Bernardi (12–14). Two long chapters then follow: the first, by Carla Bino, presents a detailed history of the confraternity (21–89); the second, by Roberto Tagliani, carries out a linguistic and philological analysis of the confraternity’s statutes, an episcopal charter granted to the confraternity, and the confraternity’s Lenten office (93–147). A diplomatic-interpretative edition of the three texts follows