



Ricketts 97 (recto)

10. Antiphonal

Bohemia (Prague), 1400-1405

Ricketts 97

1 leaf (numbered 101); 57x40.4cm. (41.3x28cm.); vellum

Gothic minuscule script with four-line stave in red; one historiated initial, 17.6x15.9cm.

This antiphonal leaf is one of the missing folios of a Benedictine antiphonary (or choirbook) kept in the Austrian monastic library of Seitenstetten until the early 1920's when it was disassembled. At least 14 leaves have previously been identified and are now preserved in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the National Museum, Stockholm; the L.V. Randall Collection, Montreal; and the Rosenwald Collection, now in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (For locations of known leaves see Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1975, 152-9.) Twelve of the Seitenstetten antiphonary leaves, including the Lilly leaf, were offered in a 1928 Sale Catalogue of Maggs Brothers, London, which reproduces Ricketts 97, describing it as "Austrian" (Maggs Brothers, no.291, ill. XXXIII). In 1975, the National Gallery catalogue entry of its Seitenstetten pages noted that the location of the Epiphany miniature was unknown (National Gallery of Art, 154).

The Lilly leaf corresponds closely to those published in the National Gallery catalogue. It has the same format and script; it is the same size as the companion sheets (56-57x40-40.5cm.), and likewise has one large historiated initial introducing seven lines of Gregorian chant on a four-line stave. The page is double-ruled vertically in minium with musical notation spilling beyond the vertical ruling. A tab at the lower right of the recto side would have facilitated turning of the page as the chant was sung by the choir. As with Ricketts 89 (item no. 9), the large format was necessitated by the book's use.

The chant on this folio is for the Vigil of the Epiphany; the historiated initial "M" introduces the text: "Magi videt res. stella . . ." The scene shows one king kneeling and presenting his gift, while one of the two standing magi removes his crown. The ermine collars of two kings bear the arms of dragons, also seen on the collar of King David in Prayer (National Gallery of Art, fig. 41d, 152). Two monochromatic angels detailed in gold emerge from a

red ground in the upper interstices of the arcade formed by the ducti of the "M." A delicately tooled and pearly burnished gold leaf ground creates a flatness which contrasts with the three-dimensionality of the figures themselves. The Virgin's red and gold undergarment and the reverse of her rich blue mantle merges with the draped background to create a patterned interplay of figure with ground. The chanted text continues on the verso.

The large size of the initial (three staves high) on the Lilly leaf and the full border decoration along the left and bottom margins make it one of the most elaborately decorated of all the known Seitenstetten antiphonary sheets. Only the Nativity in Montreal (L.V. Randall Collection) is as large or more elaborately decorated. The gold leaf of Ricketts 97 is fully tooled and pearly, indicating that it was an important page found early in the manuscript (at January 6) since, as has been suggested, some of the miniatures appearing later liturgically in the book, such as the Stoning of Christ or the Flagellation, have no tooling and were never finished (National Gallery of Art, 159, n.13).

Stylistically the Ricketts leaf is similar to the other Seitenstetten folios. The initials are framed by a square two-color illusionistic band; the interstices of the letter frame are filled with fleshy acanthus leaves. Like Isaac Blessing Jacob (National Gallery of Art, colorplate IX), the Lilly page is bordered by decorative foliage sprouting from the tip of the initial. The rich, vibrant colors in the leaves are also similar. Some unique features of the border decoration include the gold teardrop shapes found between the acanthus leaves and stem, gold spheres terminating some leaves, and a pearly gold or gold net pattern in the negative spaces around the leaves. Many of the historiated initials have delicate gold filigree backgrounds which are common in Bohemian illuminations. The figures are finely modeled of feathery brushstrokes, with long oval-shaped heads and heavy-lidded eyes. The faces of the three magi have expressions similar to the two figures stoning Christ in the Stockholm leaf (Stockholm, National Museum, cod. N.M.B. 1714; see National Gallery of Art, fig. 41h, 158).

Otto Pächt has assigned several leaves of this antiphonary to the Bohemian Master of the Golden Bull (Vienna, National Library, Codex 338) which has many stylistic similarities of facial features, a distinctive beehive flower type, and the dragon motif on the king's collar (National Gallery of Art, 159, n.8). The Golden Bull was

produced in Prague in 1400 for King Wenceslas IV, whose portrait appears on folio 37r of the manuscript. The king sports the same dragon motif on his collar, a similar crown, and facial features similar to the Magus immediately at the Virgin's right in the Lilly miniature. This not only suggests a connection to the Master of the Golden Bull, but that the work may have been commissioned during the reign of Wenceslas as King of Bohemia (1363-1419).

It may be speculated that the younger king behind this figure depicts Wenceslas's younger half-brother, Sigismund, who attempted to depose him in 1402 and took over the crown upon his death. The older king kneeling in the foreground may portray their father, Emperor Charles IV. This speculation is made more intriguing by the fact that Wenceslas is removing his crown, while the older king is uncrowned and not wearing royal robes. Perhaps the miniature refers to that period when Sigismund had temporarily seized the crown between 1402-1405.

Gerhard Schmidt suggested a slightly later date for the published Seitenstetten leaves, a date near the middle of the decade based on iconographic and stylistic parallels which led him to associate the miniatures not with the Master of the Golden Bull but with a separate workshop operating in Prague at the beginning of the fifteenth century (Schmidt, 151).

With the opening of the University of Prague in 1348 by Emperor Charles IV, the city became a center of culture with a flowering in manuscript production and illumination which continued into the early fifteenth century and is exemplified by the exceptional quality of the Lilly antiphonal leaf.

PROVENANCE

Maggs Brothers, London, 1928; acquired by C.L. Ricketts from Maggs, 1930; Lilly Library, 1961

N.E.B.