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Pocket-Sized Liturgy: A Fifteenth-Century Breviary from the Abbey of San Zeno Maggiore

Abstract: In the following contribution the author analyses a particular example of a type of liturgical book known as 'breviary'. First, the forms of Divine Office during the Middle Ages are briefly presented. Secondly, the author reflects on the nature and use of a portable breviary, using the late-fifteenth-century manuscript from the abbey of San Zeno Maggiore in Verona, Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60. The particular nature and form in which this breviary is used is analysed by comparing its format, layout, and contents to other types of liturgical books. The author then concludes by underlining how portable breviaries, like the one presented here, could be considered liturgical as well as devotional: they were used privately, but also reflected the liturgical forms and contents of the community in which they were embedded.

1 Introduction

Historians are usually interested in the origins and first developments of any given historical phenomenon. Medieval music historians, for instance, are often interested in the process in which melodies first became fixed in writing;[1] historians of liturgy are frequently concerned with the origins and early forms of Christian rites and rituals;[2] literary historians mostly ask when a text came into being and by whom it was written. However, in this paper I would like to start at an end: I will begin at the end of the process leading to the unification of many liturgical books in the Middle Ages that had previously been used by different ritual actors into one single book manufactured for a single person to use. I would like to talk about the so-called 'breviary', a type of liturgical manuscript used by Christian clerics and monks to perform the Divine Office. By way of example, I will focus my attention on a particular manuscript, namely Krems-

1 Recapitulated in Hiley 1993, 362–363.

2 See Dalmais, Jounel and Martimort 1985.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111343556-004

münster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60, a fifteenth-century breviary from the Benedictine abbey of San Zeno Maggiore in the northern Italian city of Verona.[3]

This paper will proceed in two directions. Firstly, using this breviary and, in particular, its transmission of the office for Saint Zeno, I will initially trace back some of the liturgical book types that preceded the breviary genealogically, and compare them to the breviary. The comparison will focus on codicology and the treatment of the liturgical texts. Secondly, I will explore the ritual performance in which this particular kind of liturgical book may have been involved.

2 The term 'breviary' and the forms of Divine Office

The Latin word *breviarium* used to define this type of liturgical book has a connection with the Latin adjective *brevis*, *breve* and indicates in general something *short* or *shorter*. In fact, the term was used to indicate any sort of textual abridgement; for instance, such made from a collection of law texts, or the shortened version of a historical or exegetical work.[4] It was only around the first half of the thirteenth century that the word *breviarium* was used to indicate the type of liturgical book in question.[5] Later, the term started to indicate the rite itself, namely the Divine Office that this book fixates in writing. Thus, the expressions 'curial breviary' or 'basilical breviary' also indicate the forms and structures of the Divine Office in a particular institution and not only the physical object 'book'.[6] Such forms and structure of the Christian Divine Office shall be briefly summarized here, so that some of the concepts used in the course of this article may become clear from the start.

The Divine Office is the second essential area of liturgical activity next to Mass, in which Jesus's death on the cross is re-enacted through the celebration of the Eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharist, during which another series of liturgical actions is performed, is not a part of Divine Office. The term 'divine office' is the translation of the Latin *divinum officium*, which means divine duty or service. It designates the cycle of prayers, chants and lessons that are to be performed as a service to God by monks and the clergy every day, both at day and at night. A reference to this duty can be found in the Bible in Luke 18:1: 'oportet semper orare et non deficere' ('It is one's duty always to pray and never

3 For a detailed description of the manuscript see Fill 2000, 301–308.
4 See Lehmann 1949, 11–16; Palazzo 1998, 169.
5 See Gy 1990, 117.
6 See Thiel 1967, 2380.

to stop'). This perennial praise is maintained symbolically in the practice of Divine Office, during which prayer takes place at each hour of day-time and night-time. The office of important feast days began on the previous day before sunset, at the so-called vesper, which is a practice still upheld nowadays at Christmas. On most days, however, the office begins at matins, which take place during the night. During matins the office is sung three times, each one of them called a nocturne. The matins are followed by lauds, which are sung at day-break. During the day, office is sung four times, at the so-called canonical hours. It is time to sing vesper again before dark, and compline also takes place before going to bed.[7]

Different items and elements also constitute this service, namely chants, readings and prayers.[8] The old-testamentary psalms were the spine of the liturgy of the hours: monks, for instance, had to sing the whole psaltery (150 psalms) every week. The psalms were accompanied by antiphons, namely short texts, in prose or in verse, drawn from the psaltery itself or from the Bible. They could also be non-biblical new compositions, mostly connected with the saint's biographical texts, called *vita*. Antiphons are only sung in connection with a psalm or a new-testamentary canticle (like the *Magnificat* during vesper or the *Benedictus* during lauds). Lessons also constituted one of the most important parts of the matins, and could also be taken from the Bible or from the saint's biographical text. A responsory, namely a chant with a text taken from the Bible or drawn from the saint's *vita*, was sung after a lesson. It consisted of two parts sung by different groups, namely the choir and the soloist.

3 Types of liturgical books and examples from the liturgy of Saint Zeno of Verona

In the Middle Ages, all these different textual and musical items were transmitted in different types of liturgical books. There were books for chanting, books for reading and books for prayer.[9] The books were not only divided according to the type of items they contained, but also with regard to who was supposed to actually perform those items during the service. That's why they are sometimes

7 A complete account of the forms of medieval liturgy, both of Mass and Divine Office, is given by Harper 1991.

8 The most complete overview is found in Hiley 1993, to which I refer for the following paragraph.

9 See Heinzer 1995.

called *Rollenbücher*,[10] role books. Some of these book types will be discussed in the course of this paper starting from the example of the manuscript Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60. As a breviary, this manuscript contains all items that were needed for the celebration of the office, which were at this point no longer scattered in different books but collected in one single volume. The advantage of such a liturgical book is evident: all material needed for the ritual performance is summarized in a single manuscript and is often organized following the yearly liturgical cycle of the feasts.

While the breviary is much handier for its medieval user, it is also less easily studied by the modern researcher. The form and content of a liturgical *Rollenbuch* clearly reveal for which group of ritual actors it was intended to be used, but for whose use was a breviary intended? And how? The answers to these questions lie in the manuscripts themselves. To answer them by way of example the mentioned breviary Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60 shall now be studied in more detail.

The reproduction of the manuscript (Fig. 1) almost accidentally reveals the manuscript's dimensions. The thumb of the curator on the top left corner of fol. 240^{v} gives an idea of the size of the book, which measures *c.* 18 ×13 cm and contains 386 pages, making it a thick but compact portable breviary.[11] The illuminated initial C in colour and gold leaf gives a good impression of the care with which this manuscript had been manufactured and of its material value.

The manuscript can be dated precisely thanks to some computistical texts that it contains. With these texts, the owner was able to calculate, among other things, the dates of the year's Sundays. The Sunday, or *dies dominica* ('day of the Lord') was of particular liturgical importance, and the liturgical service on this day was more elaborate than the one on a ferial day. Since these tables enable us to calculate the dates of the Sundays for the years 1467–1494, the codex must have been produced in 1467. The manuscript can also be localized thanks to its calendar, which was written by the main hand of the codex. The feasts listed here are typical for a Benedictine house (for instance the feast of Saint Benedict), and there are also some regional and local peculiarities that allow to determine precisely where it had been produced and used: namely in Verona, and, specifically, in the Benedictine abbey of San Zeno Maggiore.

10 Heinzer 2008, 301.

11 Another form of breviary is known and was studied in Gy 1963. In this case, the breviary is called *à sections juxtapposées* or breviary of the first type. It was not intended to be carried around by the single priest or monk, but rather to be used in choir, see Gy 1963, 109.

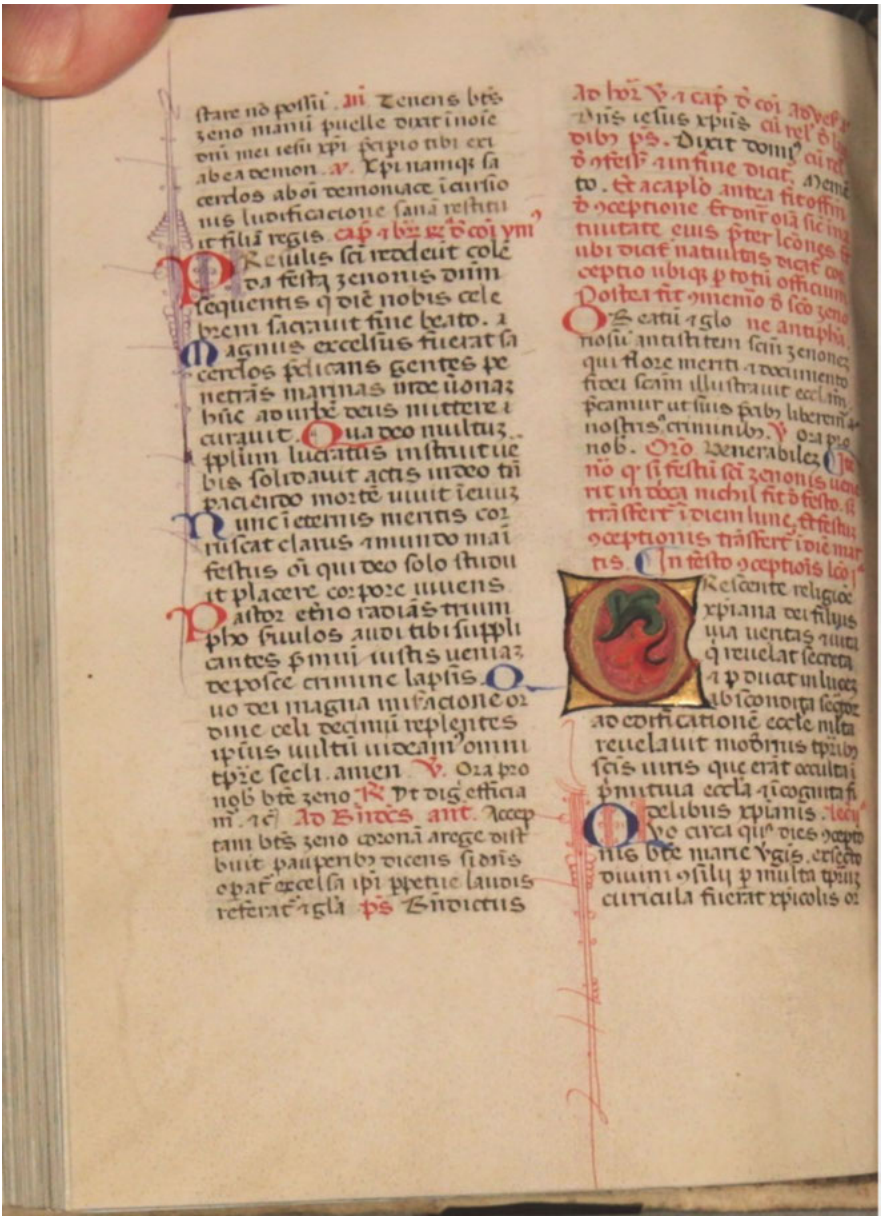

Fig. 1: Breviary, Verona, 1467. Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60, fol. 240ᵛ.

A closer look at the feast of San Zeno, the most important saint for the monastery, allows a more in-depth analysis of the manuscript. Zeno was the protector of the monastery, which literally belonged, with all its monks and its goods, to the saint himself. It was extremely important for the cloister that Zeno was buried here because it made the monastery the institution that could uniquely claim to possess the saint's earthly remains. Many texts composed in San Zeno Maggiore, liturgical and non-liturgical, state this repeatedly. They also add that the monastery had been built by Zeno himself, who, after converting the pagan city to Christianity, started building churches and preaching to the masses.[12] In this breviary, Zeno's physical presence in the monastery also plays a role. The *suffragia*, short prayers to be recited in a fixed order every day that changed from institution to institution,[13] include an 'Oratio pro sancto Zenone, qui in presenti requiescit ecclesia' ('A prayer for Saint Zeno who lies in this very church').[14] Furthermore, on the day of the feast for Zeno, the monks visited the crypt's cloister in procession. The tomb of the saint was placed there, so the monks performed some chants literally in front of the saint.[15]

The rubric on fol. 238^{v} (Fig. 2) reads 'In ordinatione sancti zenonis episcopi et confessoris', meaning that these elements were to be performed for the feast of the episcopal ordination of Zeno, namely on the 8 December. Here the text is distributed over two columns and the spaces between the lines are tight, while the margins, especially the bottom margin, are quite generously left blank. Furthermore, the scribe or decorator worked with three colours to mark the layout of the page: the texts indicating the feasts and elements of the office, for instance 'Ad vesperum hymnus' ('The hymn for vespers') or 'Ad Magnificat' ('[Antiphon] to the *Magnificat*), are red; the texts of the chants, readings and prayers are written in dark brown ink. Initials are also marked by pen-flourished initials, which alternate in blue and red. Both the generous blank space at the bottom of the page as well as this elegant decoration reveal that the small codex was expensive.

12 For the cult of Saint Zeno in Verona, see Ferro 2022.

13 See Harper 1991, 131.

14 See Fill 2000, 303. English translation: author's own.

15 This is testified by an almost contemporary liturgical book from the same abbey, namely the choral antiphonary Verona, Biblioteca Civica, 739 I, fol. 107^{v} which prescribes that a procession to the altar of Saint Zeno in the cloister's crypt has to be made after the first vesper.

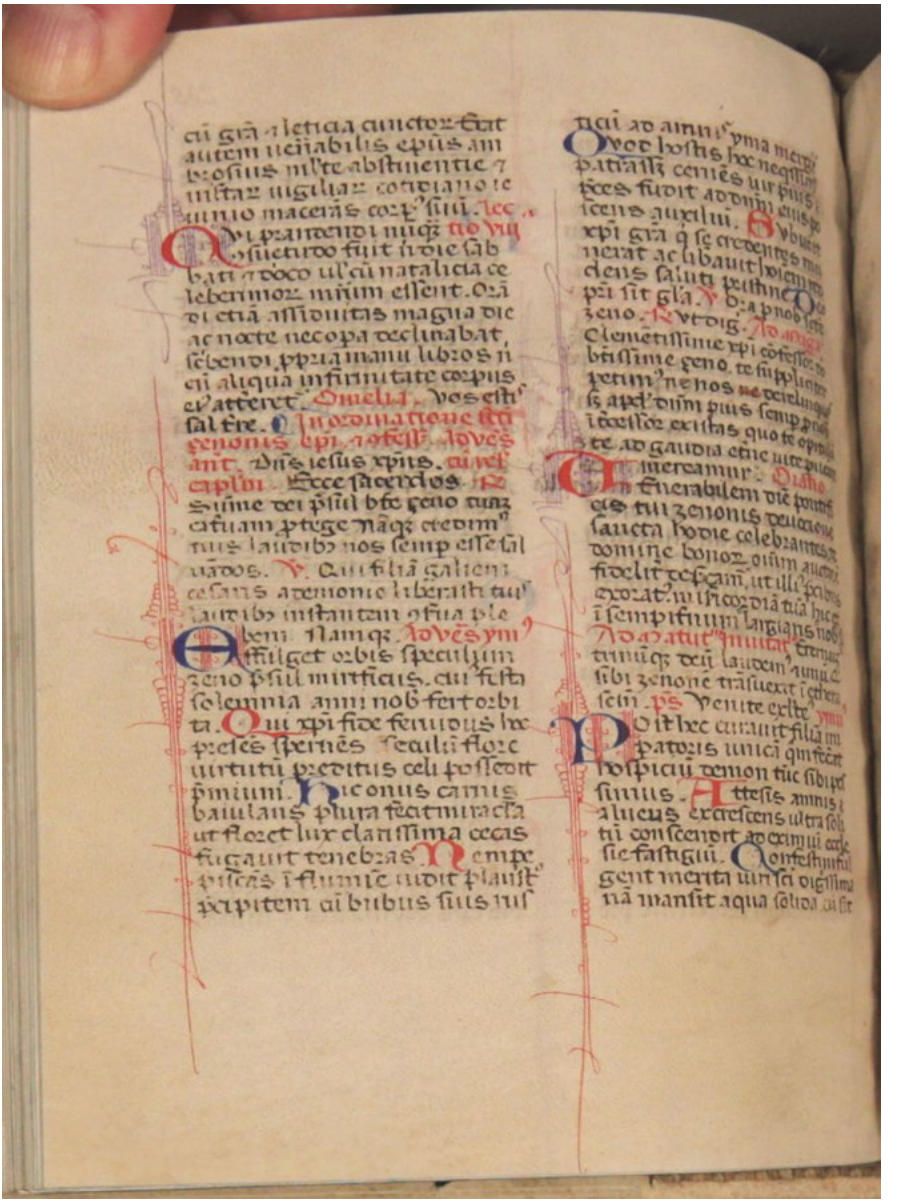

Fig. 2: Breviary, Verona, 1467. Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60, fol. 238ᵛ.

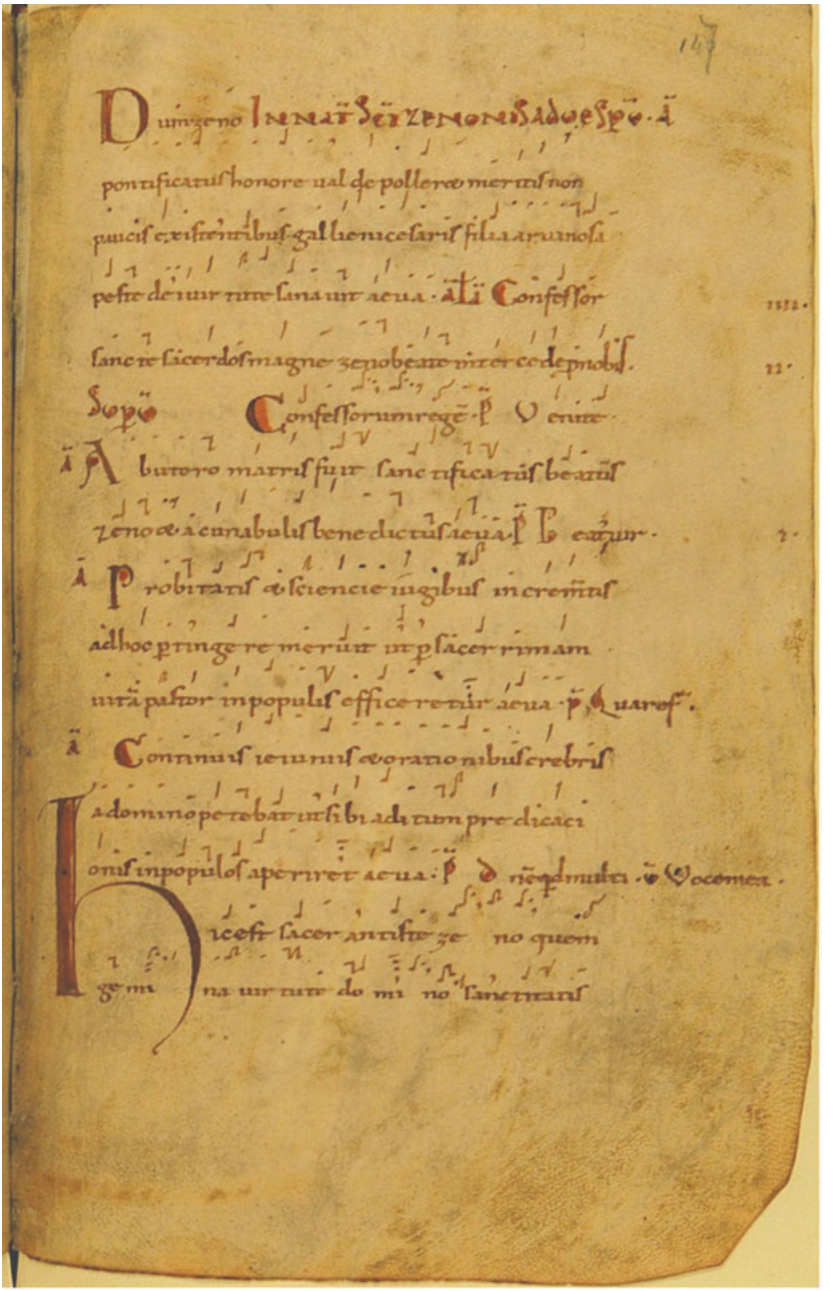

Fig. 3: Antiphonary, Verona, late eleventh century. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, XCVIII(92), fol. 147^{r}.

Furthermore, in this portable breviary, as in most manuscripts of this kind, the contents of the liturgy are fitted into the smallest space possible. In this case, on fol. 238^{v} for instance, one finds the incipit of the antiphons for the first vesper and of a short reading, a complete responsory, the hymn for vesper and the first half of the hymn for matins, the *Magnificat*-antiphon, the invitatory and a prayer. Precisely this layout and the compressed presentation of the liturgical material represent an innovation in the history of liturgical books. Take for instance the chanted elements of the office, namely antiphons and responsories. On fol. 239^{r} the manuscript transmits the responsory 'Hic est sacer antistes' and this responsory opens the series of the responsories of matins. Here no musical notation is registered, but on close inspection one can notice a slight difference in the script of the responsory in comparison to the one of the read or prayed elements.[16] Chanted elements such as responsories and antiphons were usually transmitted in the so-called antiphonary, like the late-eleventh-century antiphonary from Verona (Fig. 3).

Fol. 147^{r} includes the rubric 'In natale sancti Zenonis ad vesperum antiphona' ('The antiphon for vespers of the feast of Saint Zeno') and some lines later 'Alia antiphona' ('Another antiphon'). More antiphons, responsories and the incipits of psalms follow. It becomes clear that the antiphonary only transmits the chants and records their melodies, thus fixating the musical notation. The fact that only this particular content is transmitted in such a manuscript has a direct consequence on its layout, making it very different from the layout of our breviary. In the antiphonary one finds the script in a single column that extends over the whole page, not in two columns. Also, the interlinear spaces in the antiphonary are more abundant, and even the text that accompanies the melody must adapt its form to the musical notation: the single word is divided into syllables, and their position follows the distribution of the notes, or the groups of notes (*melismas*). Hence, the first important differences between a portable breviary and the liturgical manuscripts preceding its invention are that (1) the breviary transmits all material needed for the celebration of the office without distinguishing between different musical and textual genres, (2) it does not register the musical notation of the chanted elements and (3) its *mise-en-page* reflects the effort of transmitting as much text as possible in the smallest possible space.

In addition to these aspects, the treatment of the transmitted textual material also distinguishes a breviary from its ancestor book types, which is also evident in the breviary from San Zeno Maggiore. In column b of fol. 239^{r}, the

16 See, for instance, the text following the rubric 'Lectio II'. On this aspect see also Gy 1990.

rubric 'Lectio II' introduces a text of a different genre, namely a reading, in this case the second lesson of matins. As in the case of Saint Zeno for the Veronese abbey, the textual material for such readings was often provided by the biography of the saint. During the liturgy on his or her feast day, and especially during the night office (matins), a long portion taken from the text of the saint's life, or *vita*, was read aloud to the members of the cloister that were gathered in the choir of the church to perform the office. In this way the life and deeds of an exemplary individual, who in this case was also patron of the cloister, were meditated upon by the group. Furthermore, the significance and 'formative force'[17] of such a liturgical practice was enhanced by the chants (antiphons and responsories) that accompanied the readings and that were also mostly taken from the *vita* of the saint in question.[18]

Another earlier manuscript from the abbey of San Zeno Maggiore transmits the same *vita* of Saint Zeno, Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, XCVI(90*). The manuscript can be dated to the late twelfth century and contains a collection of *vitae* of saints venerated in Verona at this time. But the manuscript did not only collect these texts, it was also used in liturgy, and can thus be categorized as a hagiographical lectionary for the office. This is indicated by a series of marginalia inscribed in the manuscript.

Firstly, at least two series of roman numerals in brown and red ink can be traced in the lectionary's margins (Fig. 4).[19] These indicate in which part of the night service these lessons were to be read. The *vita* of Zeno and other hagiographical texts transmitted in the codex are divided into eight or twelve lessons, which correspond to the number of readings required by the structure of the monastic night office. Hence, the codex was used by a monastic community, the abbey of San Zeno Maggiore, as a second set of marginalia indicates, and not by an episcopal church, like the cathedral of Verona, despite the fact that the manuscript ended up in the library of the episcopal chapter. As to the second set of marginalia, these comprise short rubrics written by a hand contemporary to the main text that indicate on which occasion the biography of Saint Zeno was to be read aloud. In the left margin of p. 282, for instance, the rubric reads 'In translatione sancti Zenonis', thus prescribing that this portion of the text was to be read during the feast of the so-called *translatio*, on the day (namely the 21 May) that the

17 Johnson 2011, 134.

18 See Heinzer 2011, 234.

19 The fact that different sets of numerals are to be found indicates that the length of the readings was modified during the Middle Ages. They also stand for the fact that this particular volume was continuously being used in the cloister over many years.

medieval monastic community celebrated as the date of the entombment of the saint's bodily remains into the crypt of the abbey. Also, not accidently, this topic is narrated in the portion of text in question (ll. 3–5: 'Nunc necessarium nobis videtur translationis eius seriem notificare' ('Now we think it is necessary to report what happened when his [Zeno's] body was translated')).

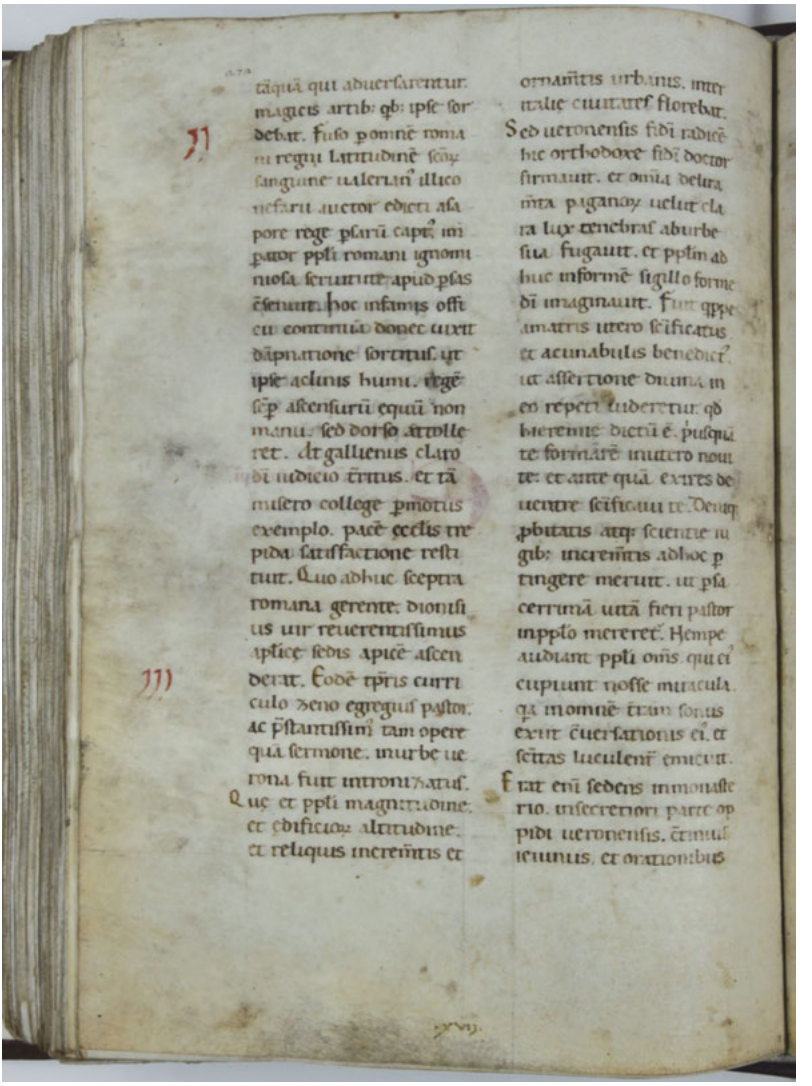

Fig. 4: Lectionary, Verona, late twelfth century. Verona Biblioteca Capitolare, XCVI(90*), p. 272.

Now that it has been established that both manuscripts are liturgical in nature, they can be compared with regard to the topic of this paper, namely the question of how the breviary is different from all the types of liturgical books that preceded it. This difference becomes evident not only with regard to the structure and layout, but also with regard to the fact that the treatment of the transmitted textual material differs greatly in the different types of liturgical manuscript. This especially concerns the material for the readings. While the lessons from the hagiographical lectionary Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, XCVI(90*) contain an average of *c.* seventy words, the lessons in the breviary are much shorter and contain an average of only thirty words, less than half. In Table 1, the first lesson in the lectionary is presented next to the first lesson of the breviary, exemplifying the difference in length:

Table 1: The first lesson in XCVI(90*) and CC60.

	Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, XCVI(90*)	**Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60**
Lectio prima	Eo tempore quo Valerianus cum filio Galieno fasces Romani imperii suscepit, prima fronte regiminis humanus et benignus existitit erga famulos dei quia mitissima sors regnorum solet esse sub novo rege. Sed postquam vetustari cepit in regno depravatus est et a veritate deiectus per quendam doctorem pessimum magistrum et principem Egyptiorum magorum, ut iustos et sanctos viros interemi iuberet. Tamquam qui adversarentur magicis artibus quibus ipse sordebat.	Eo tempore quo Valerianus cum filio suo Galieno fasces Romani imperii suscepit. Prima fronte regiminis humanus et benignus existitit erga famulos Dei quia mitissima sors regnorum solet esse sub novo rege. Tu au[tem …]

This means that the user of the breviary would have read much shorter readings and would have, in the end, known a much shorter portion of the saint's biography than somebody reading, or more precisely *hearing*, the lessons taken from the legendary.

4 The portable breviary Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60, and its owner

All the information gained through an analysis of the format, layout and content of the breviary as well as its comparison with other liturgical codices is fundamental to reach a deeper understanding of this particular type of liturgical book. In the case of the late medieval breviary from the abbey of San Zeno Maggiore, the analysis revealed that the manuscript can be categorized as a portable breviary and it contains all liturgical material for the celebration of the Divine Office. Additionally, it is evident that this material had not only been fitted into the smallest space possible, but was also transmitted without musical notation, and its contents had been, in some cases, heavily abbreviated. Still, the two following important questions remain unanswered: 'Who used this artefact?' and: 'How did he or she use it?'

Luckily, a number of liturgical materials recorded in the book can deliver an answer to at least the first of these questions. Firstly, on fols 14–19, a series of so-called *ordines* can be found. An *ordo* describes and regulates how special rituals should be performed. The breviary from San Zeno Maggiore contains *ordines* for monastic rites usually performed by the abbot, for instance one for the ordaining of a monk ('ordo ad faciendum monachum') and one describing how to welcome guests or pilgrims ('ordo ad suscipiendum hospites seu peregrinos in porta monasterii'). Also, an *ordo* containing instructions on how to bless the monks' refectory is transmitted in the codex and corresponds with a text used particularly in the southern German abbey of Tegernsee in Bavaria. It will be necessary to come back to this point further on in the article. Secondly, on fol. 90^{r}, the manuscript records a series of so-called *absolutions*, blessings. The abbot pronounced a blessing at the end of every hour during his office.[20] In this manuscript, the blessings are ordered following the hour of prayer during which they were delivered. Thus, they are introduced by rubrics like: 'In primo nocturno absolutio', 'In secundo nocturno absolutio', etc. The fact that the breviary transmits texts decidedly pertinent to the abbot reveals quite clearly that the book was intended for no less than the abbot of San Zeno Maggiore. The small codex supplied him with everything he needed to perform not only the daily office (e.g. the blessings for all hours of prayer), but also for a series of special rituals that were not performed daily (e.g. ordaining a brother-monk or the blessing of the monastery's living spaces).

20 See Harper 1991, 85.

Furthermore, the owner of the breviary can be identified even more precisely. Since the beginning of the fifteenth century, around 1427, new monks had been called from Germany, and probably Tegernsee, to populate the abbey of San Zeno Maggiore.[21] However, a series of external abbots, not chosen among the monks of the abbey, were also put in charge of the institution.[22] These German monks were installed to restore the Benedictine way of life into the monastery. They did this and other things by acquiring new manuscripts for the monastery library and substituting the obsolete liturgical books with new ones. Some of these books were also aesthetically more to their taste, since they had hired German illuminators to decorate them.[23] The arrival of these German monks in San Zeno could also explain why some of the *ordines* in our breviary record southern German customs.

Furthermore, in the year 1464, the abbot Gregorio Correr, who had contributed to the renewal of the monastery by renovating the choir and commissioning famous artists like Andrea Mantegna, died.[24] The new abbot, who was nominated around 1465–1467, and therefore precisely at the time when CC60 was produced, may have needed a new personal breviary to become familiar with the liturgy of the abbey. Our breviary could not only give him an overview of the liturgical customs of the monastery he was to lead, but also, due to its small size, enable him to celebrate the Divine Office anywhere he wanted. To fulfil his administrative duties, the abbot was often unable to celebrate with his brothers in the choir. Not only did he often have to travel, he also even lived separated from the brothers in his private habitation when he was in the abbey. With this portable breviary, he could celebrate the office privately and also when travelling. Thus, this breviary was with regards to its format, layout, contents and function both a liturgical and a devotional book: it was, for its owner and carrier, a private book that contained the rituals that only he, the abbot, would need. But since it reflected the liturgical customs of the monastic community that the abbot directed, it also was a liturgical book. Thus, this breviary is a devotional book in the sense that it could be used for the private recitation of the office. However, it was also a liturgical book because, since its owner and user was an abbot, it contained the liturgical materials of his monastic community.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, precisely the layout of the scripts through which the read texts are graphically distinct from the chants indicate its

21 See Biancolini 1761, 66; Babcock and Cahn 1992, 109–110.

22 See Parolotto 2002, 14.

23 See Castiglioni 1985b; Castiglioni 1985a, 66–71.

24 See Parolotto 2002, 14.

double nature. One has to bear in mind that, even when performing the office privately, the abbot, or for that matter any other monk or cleric, would still have perceivably *vocalized* the texts. Many primary sources concerning the late medieval practice of private recitation of office,[25] and, interestingly, also sources concerning the use of books of hours, show that the private performance of Divine Office was never a silent mind-reading of texts. Instead, the words had to be pronounced loudly and possibly *tractim*, which means with the right pauses, neither too slow nor too fast, so that they were easily comprehensible:

> Private recitation in a low voice was known as reading done *privatim*, *secreto*, *tacite* or *in silentio*. Yet, since it was vocal, these terms occur with *legere* as well as *cantare*. Private diction of the Office, of psalms, prayers, and the private celebration of Mass still could not be compared with the reading of, say, a theological treatise or a poem. The reverence for such acts required that they should be performed *tractim*.[26]

This reverence for the liturgical acts not only determined the way they were performed privately, but also had an influence on the layout of breviaries, which, as in the case at hand, were often used by a single monk or cleric. The performative distinction between chants and readings typical of the earlier *Rollenbücher* is maintained graphically in these later books for private use, and with it the liturgical-communal performance of the Divine Office is emulated.

5 Conclusion

To conclude, in this article I illustrated the process in which the liturgy of the hours went from being codified in multiple liturgical books for multiple users to being condensed in one book used by a single, yet prominent, liturgical actor. I focused on the example on the late medieval manuscript Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60, a portable breviary from the north Italian abbey San Zeno Maggiore. Furthermore, thanks to the indications of this manuscript, it was possible to reconstruct the particular historical scenario in which such a book was needed and to reflect on its possible uses and actual performance. This leads to the conclusion that due to its contents and use, this portable breviary, like many others of its genre, can be characterized both as a liturgical and as a devotional book.

25 See the sources listed in van Dijk 1952.

26 Van Dijk 1952, 10. See also Flanigan 2014, 64–65.

Manuscripts

Kremsmünster,
  Stiftsbibliothek,
    CC60

Verona,
  Biblioteca Capitolare,
    XCVI(90*)
    XCVIII(92)
  Biblioteca Civica,
    739 I

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