

Forbidden Fruit:
An Analysis of Prohibited Literature
in the Order of Saint John's
Biblioteca Pubblica
(1760 – 1798)



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Forbidden Fruit:
An Analysis of Prohibited Literature
in the Order of Saint John's
Biblioteca Pubblica
(1760 – 1798)

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406292M

A dissertation presented to the Institute of Maltese Studies in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master in Maltese Studies

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For my Parents;
who taught me the love of
Books, History, and being Maltese

Preface

Books have always been an important part of my life, from the novels on my nightstand, to the textbooks I studied from, to the hundreds of unread books scattered across my room. Conscious of the power of the written word, and in the wake of rife deliberate disinformation in today's world, I chose to analyse prohibited literature within our National Library.

The aim of this dissertation is twofold; firstly, to analyse the presence of forbidden works within the *Biblioteca Pubblica* founded by the Order of Saint John in Malta in 1760, until the departure of the same Order in 1798. Secondly, to show to what extent European cultural influence impacted the local scenario in terms of literature, and how the presence of a cosmopolitan entity such as the Hospitaller Order enabled such cultural stimulus on the Maltese Islands.

This dissertation would not have been completed without the help of a number of people. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my tutor, Prof. William Zammit, for his constant guidance, understanding, kindness, and availability throughout the past year.

I would also like to thank the Institute of Maltese Studies, and Prof. Henry J. Frendo, the Director of this Institute, for providing us students with the opportunity to further our studies in such a diverse field. My gratitude also extends to the lecturers who mentored us throughout the course.

I am also obliged to the staff at the National Library in Valletta, who helped me as best they could on my multiple visits to the Library.

A fond thank you goes to my friend Mr Glen Bonnici, for proofreading my work and for always being there to offer his help and suggestions without fail. All the best of luck with your Ph.D., I have no doubt you will excel.

Finally, my warmest appreciation goes to my family, in particular to my parents, Joanne and Joey, my sister Naomi and my brother Isaac, for their love and support throughout all my endeavours. My thanks also extend to all my friends and colleagues, for their constant encouragement and for all the little things they do to keep me going. I am forever grateful.

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List of Abbreviations

A.O.M. - Archives of the Order of Saint John, Malta.

Libr. MS. – Library Manuscript Collection.

NLM - National Library of Malta.

Vol./s – Volume/s.

Introduction

Introduction

This dissertation aims to analyse the presence of prohibited printed literature within the National Library of Malta, emphasising on the earliest years of the *Biblioteca Pubblica* of the Order of Saint John in Malta, starting from its birth in 1760, until the Order was driven away from the Islands in 1798. This dissertation will deal with printed literature, thus entailing the exclusion of manuscripts, leaflets, and other similar material.

The nature of mankind has always been to fight that which is viewed as different, dangerous and unorthodox. But what led to a work becoming prohibited? Traditionally, books were considered offensive when they undermined the authority of the Monarch (or the Government if taken in a more recent context), the Church, or conventional morality. Heresy and unorthodoxy have always been elastic terms, and books supplied arguments to those who read them, with Protestantism being the first religious movement to fully utilise the possibilities brought by the printing press.¹ The sinister hand of the censor can never be ignored, and this will be investigated in the context of prohibited literature within the local scenario. However, strict as it was, censorship in Malta could never completely halt the literate from obtaining the printed works it tried so hard to block.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The eighteenth century was described by the *Bibliotecario* Rev. Agius de Soldanis as being “*Il Secolo delle Biblioteche*”, owing to the establishment and enrichment of numerous libraries during this century.² This brings us to the first chapter, which retells the history of the origin of the *Biblioteca Pubblica*, starting with the various attempts by the Order to set up a public library, and culminating in the establishment of the *Biblioteca Tanseana* through the collections of Cardinal Portocarrero and Baillif de Tencin in 1760. The important role played by Agius de Soldanis is also discussed, as is the addition of private collections, the building of a new home for the library, and its survival from the tumultuous French blockade into the British Protectorate.

The heart of this dissertation lies in the second chapter, in an analysis of the prohibited works within the founding collection of Baillif de Tencin. An examination of the entire collection of

¹ Eisenstein, Elizabeth L., *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009).

² W. Zammit, ‘Notizie sopra l’origine ed avanzi della Biblioteca della Sagra Religione Gerosolimitana: *An Unknown Work by Agius de Soldanis*’, in *Essays on de Soldanis: Journal of Maltese Studies*, Olvin Vella (ed.), Midsea Books, Sta Venera, 2010, 118.

prohibited literature within today's *Biblioteca* would be a herculean task, one which would be difficult to condense into a taught Master's dissertation. As such, for the purpose of this dissertation, the greatest emphasis has been placed on Baillif de Tencin's library. The Bailiff's collection is an extensive one, dealing with various subjects, and forming part of the foundation of today's National Library.

Alternative sources of prohibited literature did exist, and are laid out in the third chapter. The main sources for books within the Order's Public Library, be they prohibited or not, were twofold. Firstly, bequests from individual Hospitallers, such as *Commendatore* Joseph de Fassion de Sainte-Jay, or associations like the *Camerata*, were crucial in the fleshing out of the *Biblioteca*'s collection. Secondly, the transfer of books to the Library following the death of members of the Order, and the sale of duplicate books obtained therefrom, were great contributors to the aggrandisement of the Public Library's collection.

Moving onto the fourth chapter, the presence of best-selling prohibited French literature within the National Library is investigated. A list of 35 best-selling forbidden books, obtained upon consultation with the studies of cultural historian Robert Darnton, was analysed against the National Library's manuscripts, in order to establish which of these works appear to have been ever present within the *Biblioteca*.

This leads us directly to the final chapter, which investigates the prohibited French best-sellers mentioned in Chapter 4 which still survive at the National Library. The surviving forbidden works were perused in order to ascertain whether they had any marks which could shed light upon their provenance or previous ownership. The prohibited works which seem to have never made it into the Library are also discussed.

Maltese Identity has always been characterised by its reality as a small archipelago, which however never limited its cultural history. On the contrary, European cultural influence always pervaded the Islands, even in the case of literature, and this dissertation aims to show to what extent this was so.

Chapter 1

The Origin of the *Biblioteca Pubblica*

Chapter 1

The Origin of the *Biblioteca Pubblica*

1.1 - Introduction

Mention of the National Library of Malta, more commonly referred to simply as the *Biblioteca*, brings to mind the majestic building in Valletta's Republic Square. While the edifice has become such an essential part of the *Biblioteca*, that to speak of one is to speak of the other, this has not always been the case. In fact, the founding of what later became the National Library of Malta precedes the construction of its present-day home by centuries.

The *Biblioteca's* history as a *public* library dates back to 1776. The present library building was built in 1796, and only became occupied during the British Protectorate in 1812.

1.2 – Birth of the Library

The first idea of setting up a Hospitaller library goes back to 1555, when a resolution passed by a Chapter General of the Order under Grand Master Claude de la Sengle decreed that all books in the legacy of deceased Hospitallers were to pass to the Common Treasury of the Order. This was reinforced in 1612 when another Chapter General approved a statute preventing the sale of books of deceased knights. Even though the ultimate aim of these provisions was the setting up of a library of the Order, neither Chapter General managed to bring this into fruition.¹

It was only in 1649 that the crux of the present Library was formed following a petition to Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris by Frà Luca Buenos, Prior of the Conventual Church of St John, to enforce the 1612 statute.² Initially, the Library was located in a room over the oratory of St John's Co-Cathedral but was moved to another room over the sacristy in 1680.³ Its growth was somewhat sluggish in the early stages and it would take another century until the library became public.

¹ Albert E. Abela, *A Nation's Praise: Malta - People, Places & Events – Historical Sketches* (Valletta, Progress Press Co. Ltd., 1994), 63-82.

² Albert E. Abela, William Zammit, *Guide to the National Library of Malta* (Valletta, Department of Libraries & Archives, 2000), 7-18.

³ Albert E. Abela, 'The National Library', in *Treasures of Malta*, Vol. v, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 25-30.

1.3 – The Portocarrero Collection and Bailiff Frà Jean Louis Guérin de Tencin

Whilst sojourning in Rome in 1742, Frà Jean Louis Guérin de Tencin, a Bailiff Grand Cross of the Order belonging to the Langue of Provence, made the acquaintance of another member of the Order, Cardinal Joaquín Fernandez de Portocarrero belonging to the Langue of Castile and Portugal, who resided in the eternal city.⁴ The role of these two members of the Order would be fundamental to the setting up of the public library in Malta, with de Tencin being regarded as the father of Malta's Public Library.

Cardinal Portocarrero, a scholar and an avid book collector, had amassed an extensive library over the years, and it was this library that piqued the interest of de Tencin, who in turn was also compiling a book collection of his own. Perusal of de Tencin's catalogue of his own collection - which was not limited to books exclusively but also contained periodicals, journals, and prints - shows that it included works dealing with a myriad of topics, including Religion, Philosophy, the Order itself, History, *Belles Lettres*, Arts and Sciences, Politics, Commerce, Natural History, Medicine and Surgery, War, Navy, Mathematics, Architecture, Geography and Travels, Comedies and Novels.

Following the death of Cardinal Portocarrero in Rome in 1760, the Order was bequeathed with his library, numbering at 5,570 volumes,⁵ many beautifully bound and adorned with the Portocarrero coat of arms. The collection also included a good number of scientific instruments.⁶ Scrutiny of the inventory of mathematical instruments compiled by Portocarrero himself shows us that the collection included, amongst others, a pneumatic machine, a portable *camera obscura*, as well as numerous compasses, microscopes, measuring instruments and solar clocks.⁷

De Tencin, having viewed Portocarrero's collection himself while in Rome, petitioned to the Procurators of the Treasury of the Order. He outlined his intention of founding a public library in Malta and of obtaining Portocarrero's books under a number of conditions. It was his wish that Portocarrero's books, along with his mathematical instruments, be delivered to him against a sum

⁴ E. R. Leopardi, 'Founder of the Public Library', in *Malta's Heritage* (Valletta, Progress Press Co. Ltd., 1969), 97-107.

⁵ Abela (1999), 26.

⁶ Robert L. Dauber, *Bailiff Frà Joaquin de Portocarrero (1681-1760): Co-Founder of the Library of Malta* (San Ġwann, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd., 2003), 146.

⁷ William Zammit, 'A Treasure Lost: The Portocarrero Collection of Scientific Instruments and Interest in the Sciences in Hospitaller Malta', in *Symposia Melitensia No.2* (2005), 5-6.

of 7,000 Maltese *scudi*, which would be divided into seven consecutive annual payments of 1,000 *scudi* each. The first payment was to be made at the turn of the year in 1762. Furthermore, de Tencin stipulated that he would be the keeper of the books acquired and would be allowed to use them during his lifetime in order to be able to form a public library. Upon his death, if any items were to be found missing, payment would be made to the Treasury out of his estate for their replacement. The Venerable Procurators of the Treasury ultimately accepted de Tencin's offer and its conditions.⁸ Robert L. Dauber argues that the purchase of Portocarrero's collection from the Order by de Tencin can be considered as a "very generous donation to the Order", as following the demise of Portocarrero, the collection would still have passed into the Order's possession and become part of de Tencin's new Library.⁹

Just a couple of weeks following the Treasury's acceptance, the Procurators of the Common Treasury issued an order to the Librarian of the Conventual Church of St John, at the time Frà Jean Baptiste Gras, to compile an inventory of the books existing in the Library under his care. In 1761, de Tencin identified a building suitable for the housing of his newly acquired collection as well as his own. This house, located in Strada Reale corner with Strada Santa Lucia and commonly referred to as *Il Forfantone*, was let to de Tencin.¹⁰ Compellingly, even before Portocarrero's death, it was rumoured that the Cardinal was bent on donating his collection to Grand Master Pinto. The latter intended to have the Armoury transferred from the Palace in Valletta to the foundry in Floriana, in order to house Portocarrero's collection where the Armoury once was, making it available for use by the general public ('*ad uso commune*').¹¹ This donation, however, never came to pass, and the Portocarrero collection would only find its way to Malta owing to de Tencin's labours.

It was within *Il Forfantone* that de Tencin received the late Cardinal's collection, and from whence he proceeded to reorganise the library.¹² De Tencin then made arrangements for expert book

⁸ Leopardi (1969), 101-102.

⁹ Dauber (2003), 147.

¹⁰ Victor F. Denaro, 'Houses in Kingsway and Old Bakery Street, Valletta', in *Melita Historica: Journal of the Malta Historical Society*, Vol. ii, no. 4 (1959), 202-215.

¹¹ W. Zammit, 'Notizie sopra l'origine ed avanzi della Biblioteca della Sagra Religione Gerosolimitana: *An Unknown Work by Agius de Soldanis*', in *Essays on de Soldanis: Journal of Maltese Studies*, Olvin Vella (ed.), Midsea Books, Sta Venera, 2010, 102-103.

¹² Abela (1999), 26.

binders to come to Malta from France, commissioning them to bind and decorate the volumes in the French style popular at the time.¹³

In his *Malta Illustrata*, Count Giovanni Antonio Ciantar details the integration of Portocarrero's instrument collection within the public library. Ciantar explains that the *Forfantone* included six rooms, one of which was home to the antiquities and instrument collections, with the instruments being stored in a large cupboard. Ciantar confirms that the collection included celestial and terrestrial globes, armillary spheres, the previously-mentioned pneumatic machine, telescopes, microscopes, sundials, and compasses, amongst others.¹⁴

In 1763, Frà Jean Baptiste Gras finally submitted a report to the Treasury, stating that the compilation of an inventory of his library would not be feasible, as many of the books were worm-eaten. A good number of books were also considered to have been stolen or unreturned following their loan. In order to avoid any future such neglect and deterioration, the Treasury Commissioners consigned the books to de Tencin. He was requested to check their condition, to retain those in good constitution in order to incorporate them into the new library, and to discard those which could not be saved. Any duplicates were to be sold in order to generate funds for the upkeep of the new Library, or else exchanged for new works to make the Library more respectable.¹⁵

In the same year, de Tencin formally donated all his books, totalling to 9,700 volumes, to the library of the Order, which at the time possessed no more than 2,000 volumes. The donation was made on the understanding that the libraries should be merged into a *Biblioteca Pubblica*, making them national property. It was also implied that suitable premises would be prepared for the growing Public Library.¹⁶ The collection would continue to grow once the Order took over de Tencin's library. This is evidenced by the addition to the library of the scientific collection of the recently deceased prominent member of the Order, Balí Jacques Armand de Vachon Belmont in 1766.¹⁷

¹³ Leopardi (1969), 102.

¹⁴ Zammit (2005), 6.

¹⁵ Donald Sultana, 'An English Antiquary in Malta in the Eighteenth Century – The Visit of Sir Richard Colt Hoare', in *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, Vol. ii, no.2 (1962), 93-105.

¹⁶ Abela (1999), 26.

¹⁷ Zammit (2005), 7.

Several rare books, all handsomely bound, were sent by Louis XV of France to de Tencin. The French King also granted the Order the privilege of being sent free copies of all new French publications *ex typographia regia* from the Royal Printing Press.¹⁸

Henceforth, as Commissioner of the Library, de Tencin was committed to the setting up of a fine public library the likes of which Malta had not yet seen. This new Library was to be accessible to both the Hospitallers as well as to the general public without restrictions.¹⁹ It is noteworthy that, down to this very day, the emblem of the National Library is emblazoned on one side with the coat of arms of de Tencin, highlighting his crucial role in the setting up of the Library itself.

1.4 – Rev. Gian Pietro Francesco Agius de Soldanis

As the collection grew to over 10,000 works in 20,000 volumes, de Tencin sought expert assistance in curating the books.²⁰ The appointment of the *Biblioteca's* first librarian (perhaps the first national librarian and archivist of Malta)²¹ fell upon the Gozitan scholar Rev. Gian Pietro Francesco Agius Sultana (more commonly referred to by the Latinised form of his name, de Soldanis).

De Soldanis was given accommodation in the *Forfantone* itself, and immediately set upon the task of shaping the new Public Library. His primary task was that of compiling an index of author and subject.²²

The recently discovered manuscript penned by de Soldanis, entitled *Notizie sopra l'Origine, ed Avanzi della Biblioteca della S.R. Gerosolimitana, eretta in Malta al 1761, ed aperta al 1766*, sheds light on the initial years of the *Biblioteca*. Interestingly, de Soldanis did not consider either 1555, 1612 or 1649 as the inception of the public library. According to him, the earliest definite confirmation of the presence of a library under the responsibility of the grand prior dated back to 1636.²³ He was referring to the *Biblioteca di San Giovanni* which remained in existence until 1763, when it was incorporated into de Tencin's collection.

¹⁸ Abela (1999), 26.

¹⁹ Leopardi (1969), 103.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ J. Bezzina, 'Canon Francesco Agius: The Erudite Priest from Gozo', in *De Soldanis – An Eighteenth Century Intellectual*, G. Vella and O. Vella (eds.) Heritage Malta and Gutenberg Press, Tarxien, 2012, 13.

²² Leopardi (1969), 105.

²³ Zammit (2010), 95-97.

In 1650, the Assembly of the conventual chaplains petitioned to Grand Master Lascaris to endorse a set of new regulations which aimed at the improved running and care of the collection. A new location free of dust and humidity was to be found to house the library, and a trustworthy person was to be appointed custodian. This same custodian was to be forbidden from removing any book from the library, or to enable others to do so without a receipt or without a deposit of at least double the value of the tome taken out. Failure of the custodian to abide by these rules would result in excommunication. The grand prior was also to inspect the library on an annual basis, while a register listing acquisitions was to be kept.²⁴ Even though the proposals of the petition were indeed implemented as rules, in 1704, around half a century later, the Assembly lamented the severe impoverishment of the collection brought about by a great number of books and manuscripts which had been loaned (without a record of such loans actually being kept) and which had never been returned to the library. This resulted in a limit being imposed on the number of books which could be taken out on loan; three books or manuscripts could be loaned, and they would need to be returned within five days.²⁵

The *Bibliotecario* detailed how the book-selling process worked. Duplicates and other items regarded as unsuitable were auctioned off regularly, and this was one of the foremost means through which literary works were disseminated across Malta. It was also a means of generating the income required for the purchase of other works to be amassed to the Library's collection as well as of covering the *Biblioteca's* expenses. This system would remain in place until the expulsion of the Order of St John in 1798.²⁶

The regulations governing the library's operations were revised anew in 1705 by Grand Master Perellos. This reform gives us further insight into the subject matter dealt with by the volumes within the library, since the seventh of the newer directives forbade the incorporation of volumes of poetry, novels and comedies into the collection, as these were deemed unsuitable for an ecclesiastical library. Any such works were to be sold, and the money garnered was to be used for the purchase of more appropriate books which would be of utility primarily to conventual

²⁴ Ibid. 97-98.

²⁵ Ibid., 98-99

²⁶ W. Zammit, 'The Notizie Sopra l'Origine: de Soldanis as Librarian', in *De Soldanis – An Eighteenth Century Intellectual*, G. Vella and O. Vella (eds.) Heritage Malta and Gutenberg Press, Tarxien, 2012, 87-88.

chaplains. Hospitallers were allowed to borrow books, whereas Maltese who were not conventual chaplains were not given this same concession.²⁷

Of particular relevance to this dissertation is de Soldanis's reproduction of the document granting permission to the *Biblioteca Pubblica* to retain prohibited books in its collection. The Congregation of the Holy Office granted de Tencin with this consent in 1761. Zammit argues that this justifies the existence of a considerable number of prohibited literature within the Library 'at a time when control over locally-printed and imported publications was still exercised'.²⁸

In his manuscript, de Soldanis acknowledges the fact that the Island's library was relatively new when compared to other libraries overseas, but he was also aware that its collection was a varied, extensive one built from the amalgamation of separate collections:

[...] questa nuova Biblioteca progettata, fondata, alzata, aumentata, ed aperta sempre illustre e dalla cura e dall'unione di molte Biblioteche, onde aperta la prima volta appare non bambina, ma già grande, giacche era ripiena di diciottomila volumi di Lingua Latina, Italiana, Francese, Spagnuola, Portoghese, e Tedesca, senza contare i molti volumi manoscritti, di Lingua Turca, Araba, Persiana, Coptica, antica Provenzale, che si ritrovano tutti collocati alla Stanza I.²⁹

The emphasis here lies upon the phrase '*non bambina, ma già grande*' as it illustrates the fact that the value of the local collection did not rest on its size or age, but rather on its contents.

The concession to read prohibited books could be general, covering all condemned publications, or tied to specific works as outlined by the Sacred Congregation. Other books could be consulted after being expurgated by the *Congregazione dell'Indice*. The Inquisitor intruded in such matters only if instructed to do so by Rome. The license to read prohibited works was renewed periodically, either by cardinals or else by the Inquisitor himself, and such an allowance is testimony to the rigidity of the *Index* itself.³⁰

Following the death of de Soldanis in 1770, Frà Gioacchino Navarro was appointed librarian. Navarro would go on to serve in this appointment under three administrations which followed each

²⁷ Zammit (2010), 99-100.

²⁸ Ibid., 89.

²⁹ De Soldanis' *Notizie*, as reproduced in W. Zammit, 'Notizie sopra l'origine ed avanzi della Biblioteca della Sagra Religione Gerosolimitana: *An Unknown Work by Agius de Soldanis*', in *Essays on de Soldanis: Journal of Maltese Studies*, Olvin Vella (ed.), Midsea Books, Sta Venera, 2010, 134-135.

³⁰ Frans Ciappara, *Society and the Inquisition in Early Modern Malta* (San Ġwann, PEG Ltd., 2001), 109-111.

other in quick succession, namely the Hospitaller, French and British administrations, until his death in 1813.

1.5 – Other Bequests and Collections

Reception of varied bequests and collections, other than the books received from deceased Knights, further added to the *Biblioteca Pubblica*. Such collections included those received from the library of Commendatore Fassion de Sainte-Jay in 1764, as well as a number of books from the *Camerata* in 1773.³¹ The addition of books belonging to deceased Hospitallers was in adherence to the 1776 stipulation whereby books of the Order's deceased members had to be transferred to the *Biblioteca*.³²

One of the *Biblioteca*'s greatest benefactors was Frà Dr Giuseppe Zammit, a Maltese physician and prelate who founded the library within the Order's *Sacra Infermeria* in 1687. Frà Dr Zammit bestowed 15,000 volumes upon this library for the benefit of medical students. These volumes were later added to the collection within the *Biblioteca Pubblica*.³³ Chapter 3 of this dissertation will discuss these various alternative sources of prohibited literature into the *Biblioteca*.

1.6 – A New Home for the *Biblioteca Tanseana* and its increasing Collection

Ten years following the death of de Tencin, the Public Library was formally founded in 1776, and was christened *Biblioteca Tanseana* in his honour.³⁴ A Chapter General held in the mentioned year under the auspices of Grand Master de Rohan recognised de Tencin's philanthropic purpose and decreed the raising of a *Pubblica Biblioteca*.³⁵ The same Chapter General ensured the enrichment of the library by outlining that books and instruments found in possession of deceased Hospitallers were to be passed on to the Public Library collection, rather than to be sold off (unless the late Hospitaller had died in debt).³⁶

The great number of tomes which had been amassed over the years could no longer be housed within the *Forfantone* building, primarily due to its limited size but also due to the need for

³¹ Abela (1999).

³² W. Zammit, in *Journal of Maltese Studies*, (2010), 108-109.

³³ Abela (1999).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Leopardi (1969), 106.

³⁶ Zammit (2005), 10.

structural repairs. Following a petition of Frà Paolino du Guast, the building of the premises for the new library was decreed at the Chapter General of the Order convened by Grand Master de Rohan in 1776.³⁷ This new building was meant to enhance the Public Library of the Islands.

It was also decided that all mathematical and astronomical instruments (including Portocarrero's), as well as medals, statues and items of natural history inherited by the Order would henceforth be preserved in the Library. A cabinet attributed to *Commendatore* Gian Francesco Abela, the Maltese historian of the Order, is also believed to have been intended for the preservation of local antiques and was added to the Library in the late eighteenth century.³⁸

By 1778, the *Biblioteca* appeared for the first time in the balances of the Order's Treasury, both in terms of income as well as expenses. While in this first fiscal appearance the *Biblioteca* had 2,381 *scudi* in its favour, ten years later its expenses would surpass its income by 850 *scudi*.³⁹

The year 1781 saw a further addition to the *Biblioteca Tanseana* with the merger of the Hospitaller Order of St Antoine de Viennois with the Order of Malta and of their respective libraries. This elevated the Library's worth by adding venerable masterpieces such as the *Life of St Anthony the Abbot*, which dated back to the 15th Century. The *Biblioteca* became home to other such treasures directly related to the history of the Order of St John, including; the Charter of King Baldwin I of Jerusalem which granted casals in Galilee to the Hospitaller Order back in 1107; the 1113 Papal Bull of Paschal II which confirmed and consolidated the Order; as well as the inscription granting Malta to the Order dating back to 1530 in the name of the Emperor Charles V and his mother Queen Juana, amongst many other prized possessions.⁴⁰

The Library is also home to books printed before the sixteenth century, referred to as *incunabula*; one such example being the *Moralia Sancti Gregorii* of 1475. Numerous manuscripts consisting of unpublished diaries, dissertations and scientific treatises are also found here.⁴¹

In 1782 *Commendatore* Gaetano Bruno bequeathed the sum of 10,000 Maltese *scudi* to the Library, which was to be invested in *massa frumentaria*. The interest accrued was to be used for

³⁷ Abela, Zammit (2000), 9.

³⁸ Abela (1999).

³⁹ E. R. Leopardi, 'Dawra mal-Bibljoteka', in *Lehen il-Malti* (1947) Ghadd 197-199 (July-September), 23-28.

⁴⁰ Abela (1999).

⁴¹ Ibid.

the purchase of books. A translation of the Latin inscription on the marble table located upon entrance into the Library (which was installed in 1930), further details how Commendatore Bruno was crucial for the preservation of the archives of the Order during perilous times, making his service to the Library inestimable.⁴²

In 1784, the Order invited the Polish-born architect Stefano Ittar, who at the time resided in Sicily, to design the new building meant to house the Library. The building was ultimately completed in the Neo-Classical style in 1796, a mere two years prior to the ousting of the Order from Malta as a result of Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign. The turbulent sequence of events which followed meant that the removal of books from the old building to the new library was delayed until 1812. It is interesting to note that around half a century later, on 6 June 1840, the *Malta Penny Magazine* stated that Grand Master de Rohan had ordered the building of the Library as his own *gioia*, which was the customary donation from the Grand Master to the Order made every five years.⁴³

1.7 – Surviving the French Blockade into the British Protectorate

Prior to the start of the French Blockade on the Maltese islands in 1798, the *Biblioteca Pubblica* was home to an estimated 80,000 volumes. This number, however, would decrease considerably to just around 30,000 on the opening of the new building in 1812. It is plausible that a portion of the books must have been plundered during the two-year French occupation, whilst the unstable period thereafter must have led another sizeable quantity of volumes to rot.⁴⁴

The loss of the scientific collection within the library may be logically attributed to this tumultuous two-year period. As late as June 1800, Navarro was authorised by the French administration to sell a number of gold and silver medals within the library's collection in order to obtain funds, perhaps indicating that the instrument collection suffered the same fate. Naturally, the collection might have been plundered by either the French, the British, or the Maltese themselves at the end of the eighteenth century. No reference is made to the scientific or mathematical instruments during the transfer of the library to its current location in 1812.⁴⁵

⁴² Abela (1999).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Zammit (2005), 11-12.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the physician William Domeier, while writing to provide information to ‘invalids’ who intended to travel to Malta for a change of air to aid their general wellbeing, outlined the amusement which could be offered by the Island’s public library. He stated that the collection within the *Biblioteca* dealt with a variety of subjects ‘in all branches of science and arts’, with Mathematics and *Belles Lettres* being particularly popular. He also maintained that any person, ‘whatever may be the degree of cultivation of his mind’, could find an appealing tome, as the collection contained books ‘from the slightest novel to the gravest mathematical works, journals, voyages; poetical, botanical, and military treatises; and, in short, publications in all sciences and languages’, as well as a number of classical works.⁴⁶

Domeier provides further insight by describing the building housing the collection itself, declaring that it was ‘old’ and incommodious’. Moreover, its small size was its greatest drawback as it proved insufficient in ‘containing all the volumes which belong to the library’.⁴⁷

At this point in time, the volumes within the *Biblioteca*, which now amounted to circa 39,000, were mostly in Latin, French and Italian.⁴⁸ We also find references to books written in Arabian,⁴⁹ as well as other European and Asiatic languages.⁵⁰

The building of the Library was officially inaugurated on King George III’s birthday on 4 June 1812. Dauber argues that, down to this day, the National Library in Valletta remains the most important, the most systematic, the most complete and the most voluminous stock of books and documents about the history of the Order up to 1798.⁵¹

⁴⁶ William Domeier, *Observations on the Climate, Manners and Amusements of Malta; Principally intended for the Information of Invalids Repairing to the Island for the Recovery of Health* (London, J. Callow, 1810), 37-42.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁸ Abela, Zammit (2000), 10.

⁴⁹ Domeier (1810), 38.

⁵⁰ Maturin M. Ballou, *The Story of Malta* (Cambridge, U.S.A., The Riverside Press, 1893), 111-112.

⁵¹ Dauber (2003), 149.

Chapter 2

Typology of Prohibited Literature:

The de Tencin Collection

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Typology of Prohibited Literature: The de Tencin Collection

2.1 – Introduction

While freedom of press and liberty of expression are nowadays considered crucial aspects of daily life, this was not always the case. It would be erroneously anachronistic to project these liberties on the period under study in the eighteenth century. Out of the many shapes which censorship has taken over the centuries, this dissertation aims to examine literary censorship, in particular censored printed literature within the library of Bailiff de Tencin. Down to the eve of the French Revolution, literary censorship by both Church and State was a given. In the eighteenth-century Maltese context, where the Hospitallers were both a Catholic, military order, as well as the ruling government, Church and State were knit perhaps tighter than elsewhere in Europe. The somewhat blurred distinction between the Order's dual role as a sovereign authority and as a self-regulating authority made it difficult to determine whether writings were detrimental to one aspect or the other.¹

Culture has always been considered a powerful tool; control of culture invariably enables control over the masses; a compelling attribute for those attempting to impose any form of political, civil or ecclesiastical control. Gutenberg's invention of movable type printing in the fifteenth century had enabled the circulation of texts on a scale hitherto impossible. Readers were becoming increasingly responsible for what they were reading, making them active readers, ones who assessed and interpreted their chosen reading matter. There is now a distinction between intensive and extensive reading. Prior to the advent of the printing press, readers read intensively, poring over their few available works and contemplating each word carefully. Now, with the ability to purchase several books, the reader could explore any given topic in the widest possible manner, and thus cover it extensively.²

¹ William Zammit, 'The Order of St John and its Controls over Reading Matter 1700-1798', in *Guardians of Memory: Essays in Remembrance of Hella Jean Bartolo Winston*, Charles J. Farrugia (ed.), National Archives of Malta, Rabat, 2008, 205.

² Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Reading* (London, Reaktion Books, 2003), 205, 255.

There were many who recognised the ideological power of the press, and that interference in the spread of ideas through literature could prove useful in the strengthening of the absolute state. Yet, the risks of this increased literary accessibility soon started to be perceived.³ An illiterate crowd is easiest to rule, and just as books could spread heresy, they were also capable of spreading social dissent and of undermining political power. The book thus appeared dangerous in the eyes of Church and State if used as a tool for the diffusion of heresy, perverse doctrine or novel scientific ideas. Absolute power requires that all reading be official reading; instead of whole libraries of opinions, the word of the ruler should suffice.⁴

The primary tool in combating the spread of unorthodox ideas through literature was arguably the establishment in 1559 of the Holy See's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, literally an index of prohibited books to guide Catholics as to which books could be read and which could not. This *Index* would continue to be updated and printed until the mid-twentieth century and each edition reflected the fears and attitude of the Church vis-à-vis the philosophies and ideas prevailing at its time of print.

Until the mid-eighteenth century, the division of prohibited literature within the *Index* was threefold. The first category included non-Catholic authors whose entire collection of works was banned, including those works not dealing with religion. The second category included single works by an author, as well as entire genres such as magic, astrology, and alchemy. The final category dealt with works written anonymously, as well as those which forged their title page or gave fictitious printing locations and printers' names in order to make the identification of the document harder. The *Index* was also accompanied by a supplementary section listing unapproved versions of the New Testament. Perhaps the harshest ban, especially with the earlier versions, was that imposed on works written in the vernacular. Popular works, even those which did not discuss religious issues, fell under this ban as they were deemed to be anti-curial, obscene and immoral. This led to works by erudites such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Giovanni Boccaccio being included in the *Index*. It was ultimately the duty of all Catholics to deliver any books in the *Index* to the Inquisition. By the late seventeenth century, the increased number of

³ Mario Infelise, *I libri proibiti: da Gutenberg all'Encyclopédie*, (Bari, Editori Laterza, 2018), 6.

⁴ Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (London, HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 283.

books being published coupled with the rise of works dealing with Science and the Enlightenment led to even more prohibitions.⁵

2.2 – Prohibited Works within Bailiff de Tencin’s Collection

As highlighted in the previous chapter, Bailiff de Tencin’s collection was crucial in the setting up of Malta’s National Library. His assemblage included an interesting array of banned literature. An examination of de Tencin’s own library catalogue gives an indication of the genres of books present in his collection, including those which were prohibited; ranging from works dealing with Religion, Morality, the Arts, Science and Philosophy, Comedies and Novels, amongst others.

De Tencin divided his collection into carefully organised sections according to subject. The collection is divided into a total of 11 sections and 8 sub-sections. The sections, as listed in French within the catalogue itself, are: *Religion, Morale* (morality), *Ordre* (works dealing with the Order of St John), *Histoire* (history), *Belles Lettres* (essays and works on literary and artistic criticism, literally meaning fine, beautiful letters and writing), *Arts et Sciences* (arts and sciences), *Geographie et Voyages* (geography and travel), *Comedies et Romans* (comedies and novels), *Ouvrages Périodiques Journaux Mercure* (periodical literature and journals), *Estampes* (engravings), and *L’Atlas* (Maps). The Arts and Sciences category is further divided into 8 sub-categories: *Politique* (politics), *Commerce*, *Histoire Naturelle* (natural history), *Medicine et Chirurgie* (medicine and surgery), *Guerre* (warfare), *Marine* (naval and maritime affairs), *Mathematique* (mathematics), and *Architecture*.

The collection is a rich and varied one, boasting authors renowned across the European mainland; from classical authors like Aristotle and Ovid, to the sixteenth century’s Torquato Tasso, to the French *philosophes* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu. Authors dealing with the local history of the Hospitallers in Malta such as René-Aubert de Vertot are also featured. De Tencin did not own works written solely in his native French; works in Italian and Latin are common too. Others which were originally printed in German or English are featured in the collection as well, sometimes as translations, normally into French. The oldest tome, in terms of date of print, goes back to 1525, whereas the most modern is dated 1759. Works run into numerous

⁵ Chiara Rizzo, *Letteratura all’Indice: Boccaccio, Galileo, Tasso e la censura libraria tra Cinque e Seicento*, (Padua, Università degli Studi di Padova, 2016), 17-19.

volumes, and are at times described as having gilded page edges - *doré sur tranche* in de Tencin's own words.

Table 2.1 gives a clearer picture as to the amount of works found within de Tencin's library, as well as the number of prohibited works therewith. Prohibited works were easily discernible as they are indicated with a cross in the margins of the catalogue. Each section will be discussed in further detail in this chapter.

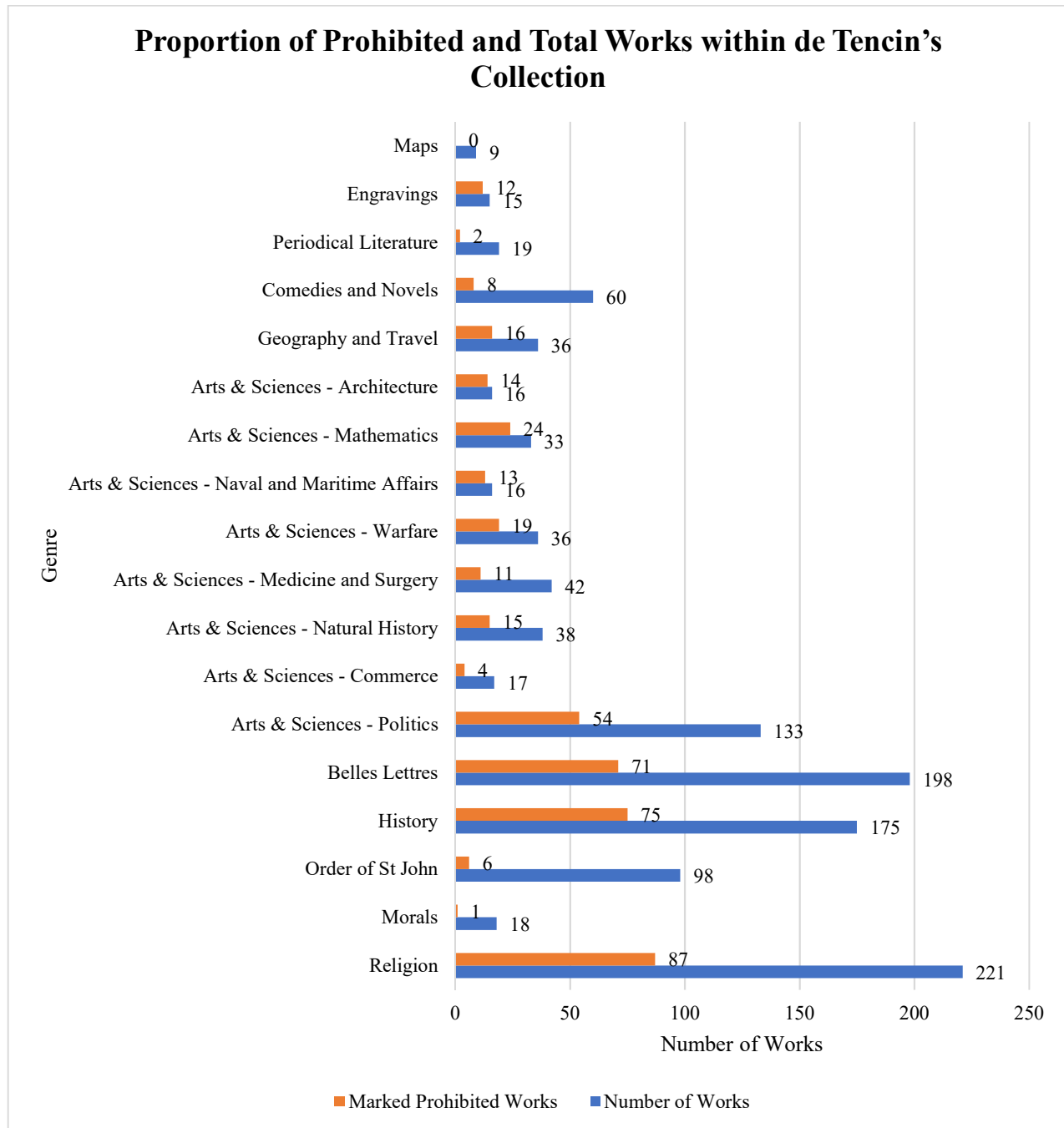
Table 2.1 – The Collection of Bailiff Frà Jean Louis Guérin de Tencin⁶

| Subject | Number of Works | Works Marked as Prohibited/% |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Religion | 221 | 87 (39.3%) |
| Morals | 18 | 1 (5.5%) |
| Order of St John | 98 | 6 (6.1%) |
| History | 175 | 75 (42.8%) |
| <i>Belles Lettres</i> | 198 | 71 (35.8%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Politics | 133 | 54 (40.6%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Commerce | 17 | 4 (23.5%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Natural | | |
| History | 38 | 15 (39.5%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Medicine and | | |
| Surgery | 42 | 11 (26.2%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Warfare | 36 | 19 (52.7%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Naval and | | |
| Maritime Affairs | 16 | 13 (81.3%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Mathematics | 33 | 24 (72.7%) |
| Arts & Sciences - Architecture | 16 | 14 (87.5%) |
| Geography and Travel | 36 | 16 (44.4%) |
| Comedies and Novels | 60 | 8 (13.3%) |
| Periodical Literature | 19 | 2 (5.3%) |
| Engravings | 15 | 12 (80.0%) |
| Maps | 9 | 0 (0%) |
| Total Number of Works | 1180 | 432 |

⁶ National Library Malta NLM Libr. MS. 265 - *Catalogue Des Livres Du Bailly De Tencin dressé en 1756 et continue depuis lors.*

Of a catalogue totalling over a thousand works, more than a third (36.6%) were prohibited. Graph 2.1 below illustrates the proportion of prohibited works within each genre of the de Tencin collection.

Graph 2.1 – Proportion of Prohibited and Total Works within de Tencin’s Collection⁷



⁷ Ibid.

It is interesting to note that the genres with the highest proportion of prohibited works (as a percentage rather than as a total amount of works) do not deal with Religion, History, or Politics, as one would be tempted to assume, but rather with Architecture (87.5%), Naval and Maritime Affairs (81.3%), and Engravings (80%).

When taking the entire de Tencin collection into consideration, it becomes overwhelmingly clear that de Tencin's own French nationality had a great role in the type of printed works he owned. This is reflected in a majority of French works, both in terms of authorship, as well as in location of publication.

As for authorship, 189 prohibited works (45% of the whole catalogue) credit French authorship, followed by 106 works (25%) that do not credit the author to make identification more difficult. Italian authors constitute 11% of the collection, followed by numerous other nationalities embodying the remainder of the catalogue. Table 2.2 gives an in-depth look at the authorship for the entirety of de Tencin's catalogue. For the purposes of this table and all upcoming graphs, there is a distinction between Italy and Rome; in this context, Rome refers to the Roman Empire, as opposed to the Italian nation as a whole or any other Italian city. Moreover, despite Italy not yet being formed as a unified nation in the period under study, the different states of the Italian peninsula have been grouped together when speaking of authorship, so for instance Naples, Florence, and Venice have been categorised under Italy. The same concept has been applied to the various German states which did not yet constitute the German nation we know today; to Castille, which has been categorised under Spain; as well as to Holland which in this context includes Flemish and Dutch.

Table 2.2 – Country of Origin (By Author) for de Tencin’s Collection⁸

| Country of Origin | Number of Works / % of entire Prohibited Works | Country of Origin | Number of Works / % of entire Prohibited Works |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| France | 189 (45%) | Scotland | 3 (0.7%) |
| Uncredited Authorship | 106 (25.2%) | Switzerland | 3 (0.7%) |
| Italy | 45 (10.7%) | Vatican | 3 (0.7%) |
| Holland | 14 (3.3%) | Ragusa di Dalmazia (Croatia) | 2 (0.4%) |
| Ancient Greece | 11 (2.6%) | Belgium | 1 (0.2%) |
| Spain | 11 (2.6%) | Jewish | 1 (0.2%) |
| Germany | 9 (2.1%) | Moldova | 1 (0.2%) |
| Ancient Rome | 8 (1.9%) | Portugal | 1 (0.2%) |
| England | 8 (1.9%) | Spain | 1 (0.2%) |
| Multiple Countries of Origin | 3 (0.7%) | | |

The same French predominance is visible in terms of place of publication. A staggering 185 of 432 prohibited works were printed in Paris, representing a 43% majority (another fourteen works which were also printed in Paris are listed separately as they were printed by France’s Royal Printing Press – Paris’ *Imprimerie Royale*). Attempts to evade censorship are once again evident in the considerable portion of works which fail to mention the place of publication. This constitutes the second-largest group of works (11%) in terms of location of publication in which prohibited works within de Tencin’s catalogue were printed, and is followed by publications printed in Rome, Amsterdam, La Haye, Venice, London, and Lyon, and more than thirty other European cities. Table 2.3 gives a comprehensive look at the place of publication of all the works listed within de Tencin’s catalogue.

⁸ NLM Libr. MS. 265 - For the purpose of this Table, the *Estampes* category was excluded, since none of its twelve works were clear in the mention of their author.

Table 2.3 – Place of Publication for de Tencin's Collection⁹

| Place of Publication | Number of Works / % of entire Prohibited Works | Place of Publication | Number of Works / % of entire Prohibited Works |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Paris | 185 (43%) | Antwerp | 1 (0.23%) |
| Unmentioned Place of Publication | 46 (11%) | Bordeaux | 1 (0.23%) |
| Rome | 44 (10%) | Brescia | 1 (0.23%) |
| Amsterdam | 38 (9%) | Civitavecchia | 1 (0.23%) |
| La Haye | 22 (5%) | Como | 1 (0.23%) |
| Venice | 15 (3%) | Geneva | 1 (0.23%) |
| <i>Paris de l'Imprimerie Royale</i> | 14 (3%) | Hanover | 1 (0.23%) |
| London | 12 (3%) | Lausanne | 1 (0.23%) |
| Lyon | 8 (2%) | Lucca | 1 (0.23%) |
| Brussels | 3 (0.69%) | Milan | 1 (0.23%) |
| Florence | 3 (0.69%) | Montefiascone | 1 (0.23%) |
| Leiden | 3 (0.69%) | Padua | 1 (0.23%) |
| Madrid | 3 (0.69%) | Paris and Amsterdam | 1 (0.23%) |
| Naples | 3 (0.69%) | Pesaro | 1 (0.23%) |
| Basel | 2 (0.46%) | Pisa | 1 (0.23%) |
| Berlin | 2 (0.46%) | Savoy Territories | 1 (0.23%) |
| Cologne | 2 (0.46%) | Seville | 1 (0.23%) |
| Rotterdam | 2 (0.46%) | Trento | 1 (0.23%) |
| Strasbourg | 2 (0.46%) | Verona | 1 (0.23%) |
| Vatican | 2 (0.46%) | Vienna | 1 (0.23%) |
| Amsterdam and Leipzig | 1 (0.23%) | | |

⁹ NLM Libr. MS. 265.

2.3 - The Most Populated Categories – Religion, History, *Belles Lettres*, and Politics

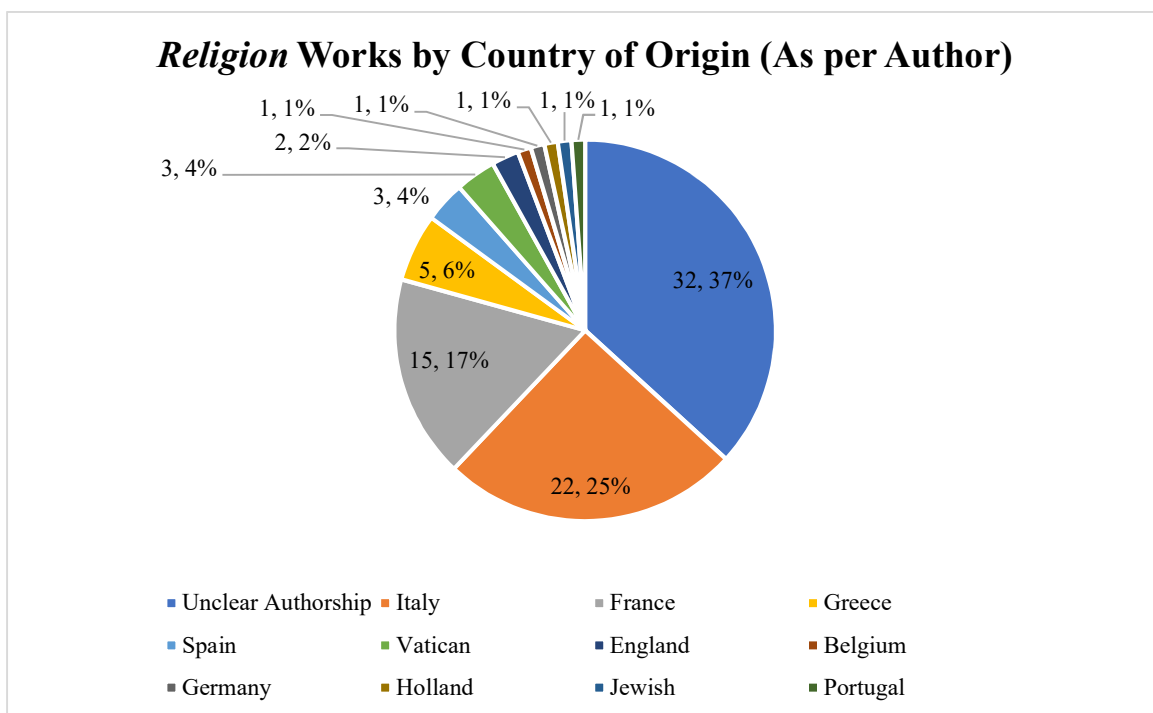
The four largest categories within de Tencin's collection, in terms of number of works, are those dealing with Religion, History, *Belles Lettres* and Politics.

2.3.1 - Religion

The first category within de Tencin's catalogue is also the largest – Religion. This is perhaps unsurprising in the library of a member of a sacred military order in an age still dominated by the power of the Church.

A total of 88 prohibited works are listed in this category, with the majority being penned by Italian and French writers. Crucially however, the largest proportion of works do not list the author (see Graph 2.2 below); this might either have been done deliberately in order to avoid identification, or else it was simply left out by de Tencin himself.

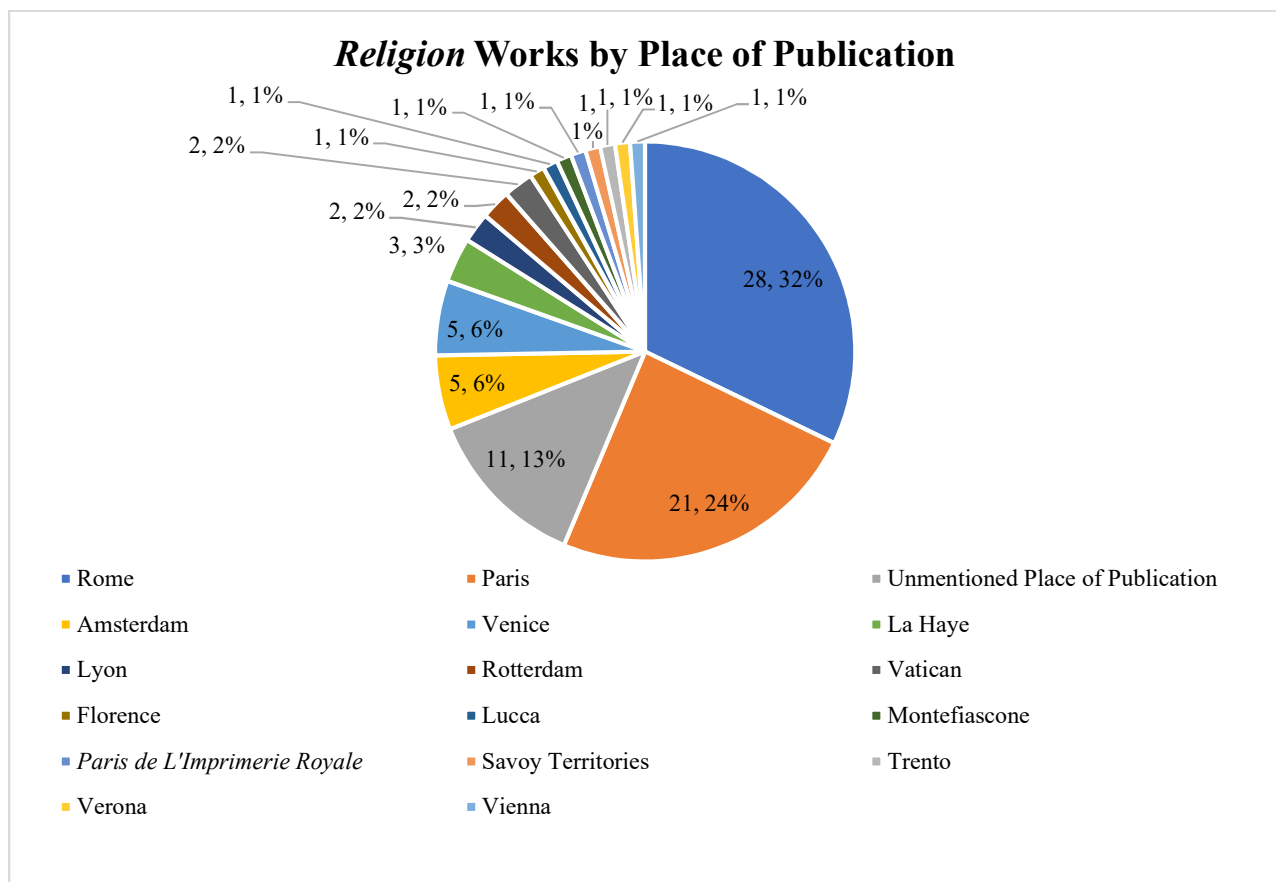
Graph 2.2 – *Religion Works by Country of Origin*¹⁰



¹⁰ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 1-52.

As seen in Graph 2.3, the majority of works were printed in Rome and Paris, a fact which is directly correlated to the high proportion of French and Italian authors. Yet, once again, works whose place of publication has been omitted comprise the third largest group in this category. Some authors are mentioned multiple times in a single section, such as Pere Berruyer who is featured thrice with his three-part work *Histoire du Peuple de Dieu depuis son origine jusques et la Naissance du Messie*, *Histoire du Peuple de Dieu depuis la Naissance du Messie jusqu'a la fin de la synagogue* and *Histoire du peuple de Dieu, ou paraphrase des Épitres des Apôtres*. Berruyer's works were condemned by the Catholic Church since in them he describes a number of Biblical events with an air of romance rather than as a historical narrative.¹¹ The third part of Berruyer's work is also one of the more recent in the entire collection, dating to 1757.

Graph 2.3 – Religion Works by Place of Publication¹²

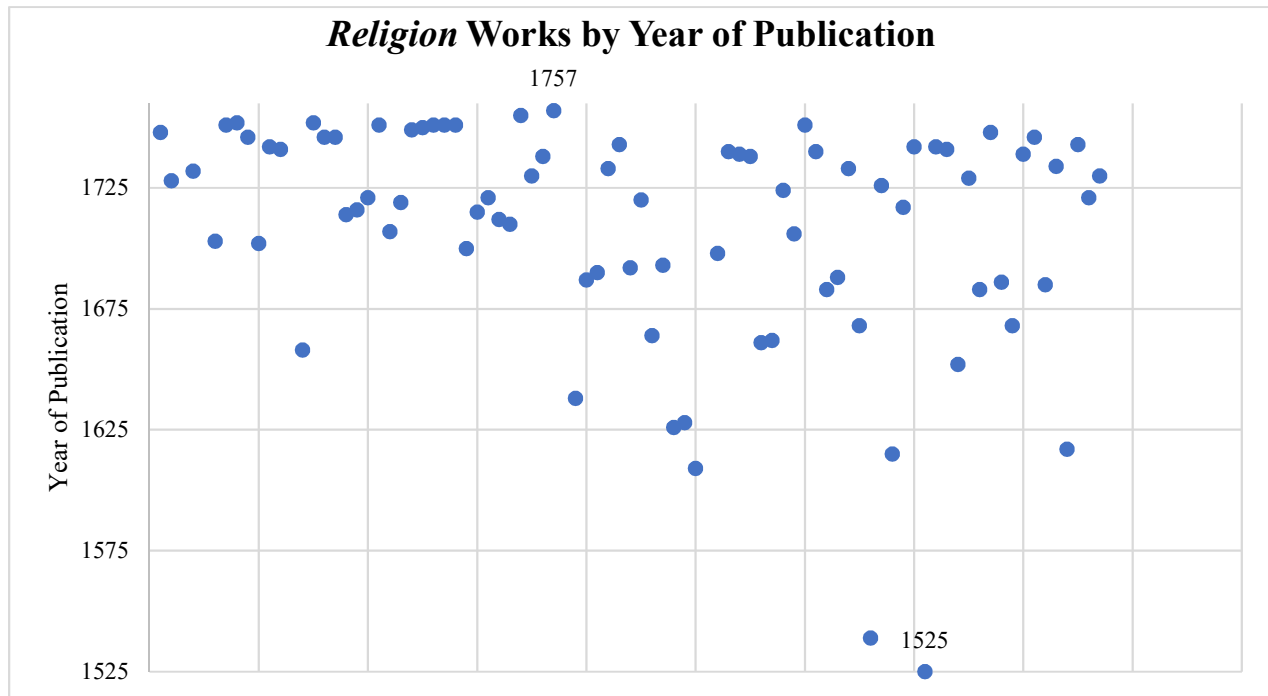


¹¹ *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, 1761 – The first part was placed on the *Index* in 1734, the second part in 1755 and by a Brief of Pope Benedict XIV in 1758, and the final part was banned in April 1758 and by a Brief of Pope Clement XIII in December of that same year.

¹² NLM Libr. MS. 265., 1-52.

As for the year of publication of these works, it is worth noting that the oldest tome in de Tencin's entire collection is found in this category; a Latin parchment edition of Theophylact of Bulgaria's commentary on the Gospels which dates back to 1525. Graph 2.4 offers an in-depth look at the publication dates of works within this category while highlighting the oldest and most recent published works.

Graph 2.4 – *Religion Works by Year of Publication*¹³



The Religion section of the catalogue lists numerous ecclesiastical histories, histories of popes and councils; treatises on ecclesiastical power, religious doctrines, feast days, tombs of the martyrs in Rome, Lent, the Eucharist and demonic magic; biographical accounts of saints and individuals deemed holy; Derham's *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* translated into Italian; and Maffei's works discussing the magical arts. Despite having existed since time immemorial, books dealing with magic underwent a marked increase in the eighteenth century, even though any attempt at controlling, influencing, or foreseeing the future was shunned. Attempts at improving one's own life while damaging someone else's implied an interference with God's plan for mankind, which was naturally illicit.¹⁴

¹³ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 1-52.

¹⁴ Infelise, 43-45.

French translations of the entire Bible as well as the New Testament are also listed. It is worth noting that the reading of sacred scripture in the vernacular was only permissible upon the issue of an explicit license from the Sant'Uffizio, and was issued solely to those who knew Latin, and never to women.¹⁵ The largest proportion of works in Latin across the entirety of de Tencin's prohibited collection is found in this section – 34 of 87 prohibited works (39%) - which is understandable seeing as Latin remains the official language of the Holy See down to this day.

2.3.2 – Histoire

The second largest category is that dealing with History, not just the history of individuals such as Genghis Khan, Philippe of Valois, Charles VI, Saint Louis, and Louis XIV, but also of entire peoples such as the Huns, Turks, Mongols, Jews, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. Possession of a history of ethnicities like the Hungarians, Macedonians, and Greeks, which were not independent nation states as yet, might have been believed to entice feelings of nationalism considered to be extremely dangerous and harmful to the *status quo*, particularly on the eve of the long nineteenth century, which would be greatly characterised by elements of nationalism and liberalism.

European territories such as France, Italy, Sicily, Cyprus, the Low Countries, Portugal and its conquests of the New World, the Roman Empire, the Republic of Venice, and Germany, are all to be found in de Tencin's historical category. Histories dealing with even more specific subjects, such as England and its naval history, or France and its militia were also extant within the collection. This section also presents histories (some even with maps) of non-European territories and peoples, such as the Incas, Peru and the conquest of Florida, Japan, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, China, Constantinople, Mexico, Madagascar, and Paraguay. In the case of these last histories, it is perhaps the absence of Catholicism in the respective regions that led to their prohibition.

Banned general and political histories are mentioned within this category. The German Samuel von Pufendorf's *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Univers* is listed as being a new edition and available upon subscription, as evidenced by the 1753 and 1755 copies present in de Tencin's library. Both copies were translations from the original German into French. Von Pufendorf was accused of

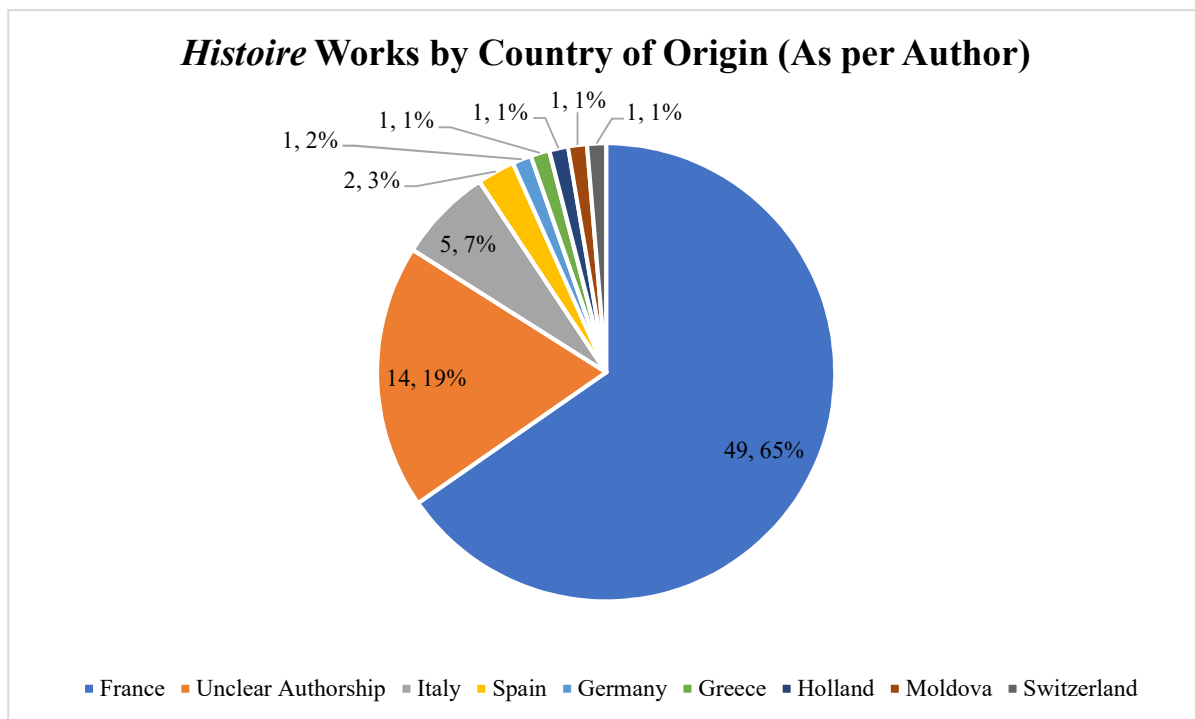
¹⁵ Ibid., 34.

spreading heretical beliefs through his works by stating that every individual has the right to equality and freedom on the basis of human dignity. His belief that the natural world of human affairs should be divorced from the spiritual realm of theology promptly placed his works on the *Index*.¹⁶

Personal memoirs were also categorised under histories by the Baillif. Examples of such texts include the commentaries by Michel de Castelnau, Louis de Bourbon Prince of Condé, Maximilien de Bethune, Duc de Sully, and Philippe De Conrines. Other biographers have a corpus of prohibited works in de Tencin's collection, such as L'Abbé de Choisy, who had little regard for historical accuracy and was more interested in spreading indiscreet revelations about his peers.

More than half of the 74 works in this category were written by French authors (65%), with anonymous authors taking up 19% of composition, as shown in Graph 2.5. Other authors hail from Italy, Spain, Germany, Greece, Holland, Moldova, and Switzerland.

Graph 2.5 – *Histoire* Works by Country of Origin¹⁷

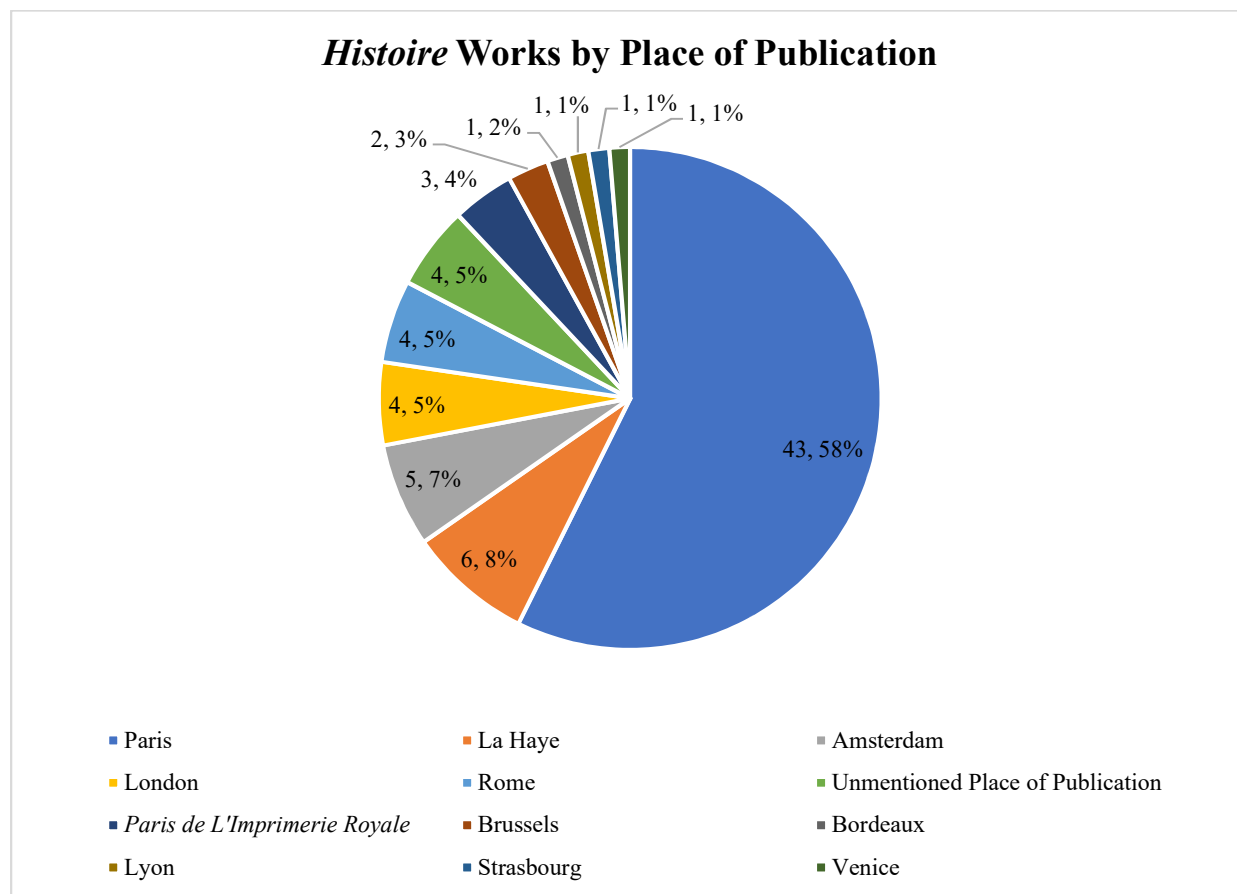


¹⁶ *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* 1761, 180.

¹⁷ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 59-81.

Unsurprisingly, considering the great number of French works, Paris is the city where the largest proportion of *Histoire* prohibited books were printed (58% of works). The remaining locations lag far behind the Parisian hub, all numbering below 6 books each, as evidenced in Graph 2.6 below.

Graph 2.6 – *Histoire* Works by Place of Publication¹⁸



2.3.3 – *Belles Lettres*

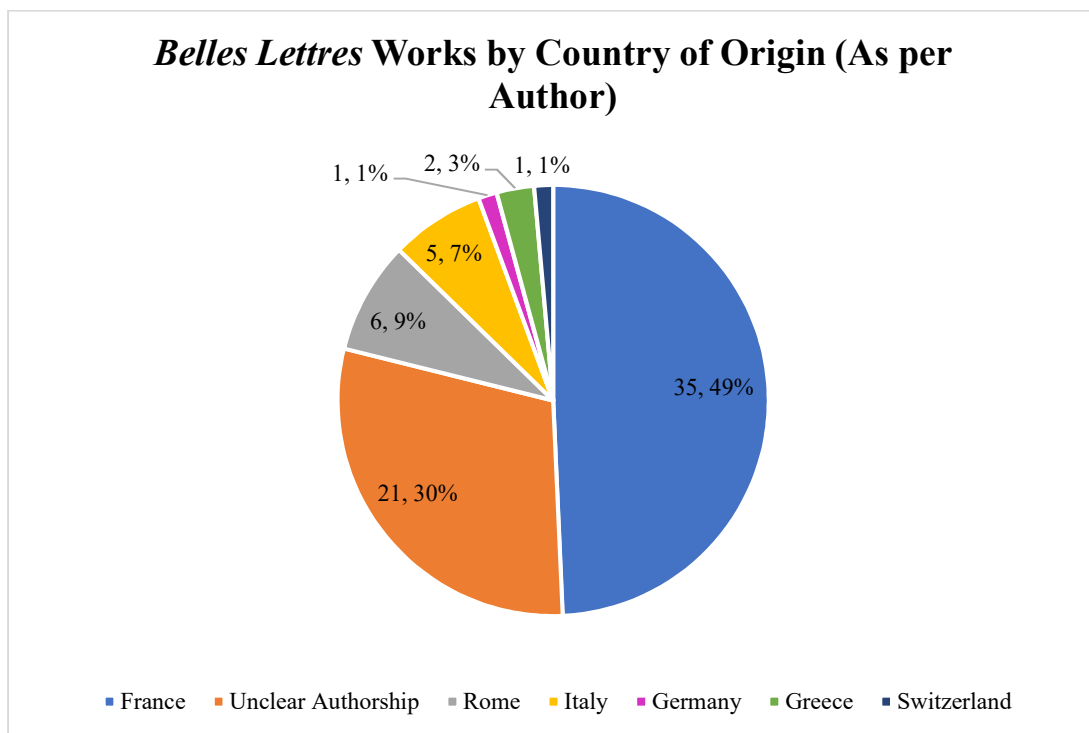
Following closely on the heels of the *Histoire* category, in terms of volume, is the *Belles Lettres* section. Traditionally, a work classified as *Belles Lettres* is literature that is an end in itself rather than an informative work, it is entertaining and often sophisticated literature. This section thus delved into various topics, ranging from philosophy, language, dictionaries, fables, poetry, and the social sciences, to numismatics and the classics. In the relatively more affluent eighteenth-century Europe, the increased ability to read ushered in the Enlightenment, which gave to the world, among

¹⁸ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 59-81.

other things, the three fundamental concepts of the free use of reason, the empirical method of science, and universal human progress. Where there was wealth and greater literacy, rapid advances occurred in all human endeavours.¹⁹

The majority of works came once more from French writers (49%), whereas 30% of works were not credited with an author. The third largest group was constituted by authors from Antiquity (9% from Rome and 3% from Greece). The remaining works originated from the Italian peninsula, Germany and Switzerland, as illustrated in Graph 2.7.

Graph 2.7 – *Belles Lettres* Works by Country of Origin²⁰



This is perhaps the category including the more traditionally famous authors. Classical Greek and Roman works by Aristotle, Plato, Ovid, Juvenale, Horace, Lucretius, and Cicero are featured. Of eight such works, five are translated into French, three into Latin, and one translated into Italian. As in previous cases, translations were deemed to be immoral, and thus banned. The Greek and Roman civilisations were a source of great inspiration for the Enlightenment and its followers, and

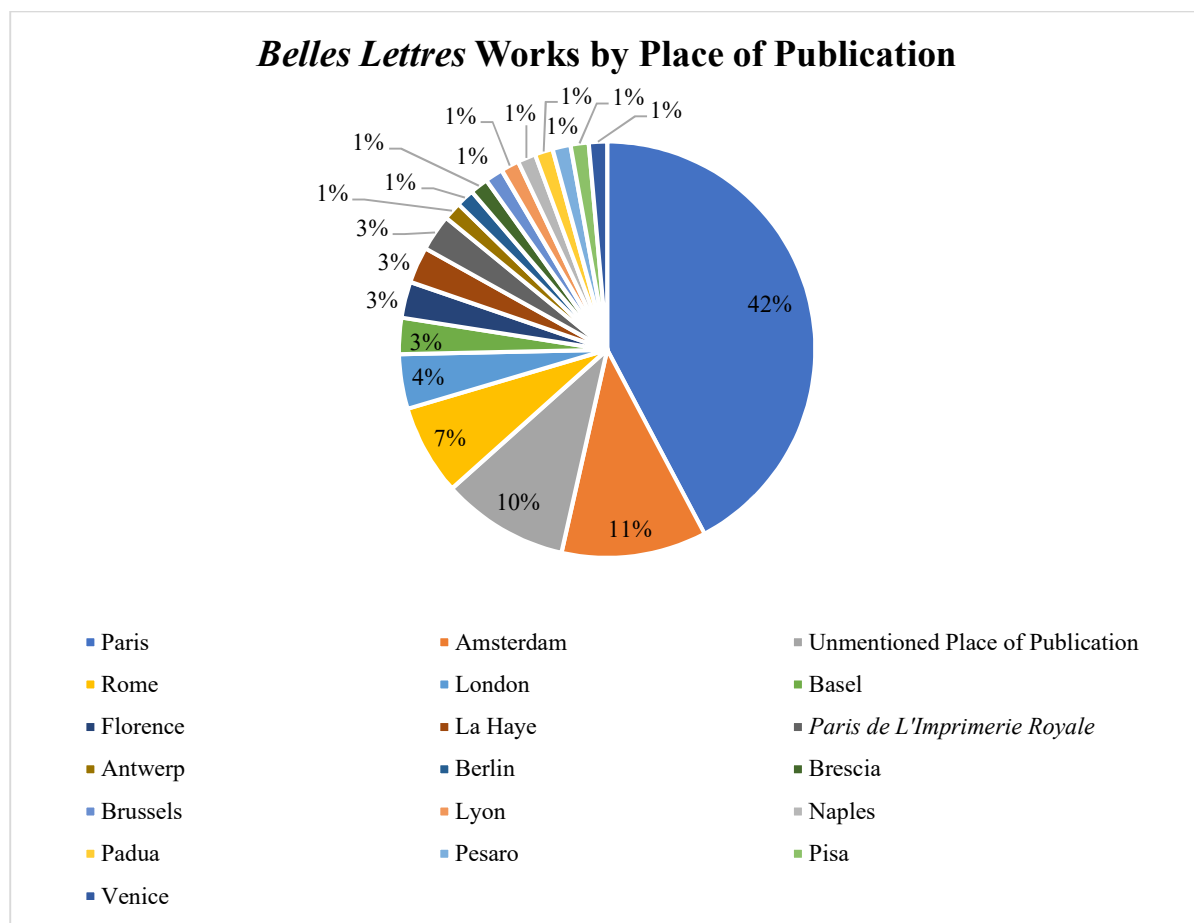
¹⁹ Fischer, 254-255.

²⁰ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 100-120, 165. For the purpose of this graph, only prohibited works bearing a cross were taken into consideration.

this percolates into de Tencin's collection through the presence of over 60 illustrations (printed in Amsterdam in 1749) by Bernard Picart depicting the Temple of the Muses, in turn representing the most remarkable events of Antiquity. Pere Bernard de Montfaucon's *L'antiquité expliquée*, published in Paris and running into over 10 volumes published between 1719 and 1724, was also illustrated by Picart. Multiple copies of the same work are once again present; the Comte de Caylus' *Recueil d'antiquité Egyptiennes, Etrusques, Grecques et Romaines* is listed twice, with both editions being published in Paris four years apart in 1752 and 1756.

The 72 works in this category were printed in 18 different locations, with 7 works (or 10%) not listing the place of their publication. 42% of de Tencin's *Belles Lettres* were published in Paris, followed by Amsterdam (11%).

Graph 2.8 – *Belles Lettres* Works by Place of Publication²¹



²¹ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 100-120, 165. For the purpose of this graph, only prohibited works bearing a cross were taken into consideration.

A clear indication of the eighteenth century's heightened interest in philosophy is the fact that 80% of the philosophical works found in de Tencin's collection were produced in this same century. Works by the German Christian Wolff, translated into French, discussing logic and reflecting on the strength of the human mind, were banned as they were considered impious and fatalist. His belief that morality did not depend on religion led to Wolff being branded as an atheist.

A collection of works printed in Brussels in 1743 and written by Rousseau, who impacted nations with his ideas about individual freedom, is included in de Tencin's list of prohibited *Belles Lettres* works. Curiously, de Tencin owned Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (categorised into the Politique section rather than Belles Lettres), but did not mark it as being prohibited. A similar case is that of Voltaire, himself an advocate of civil liberties, freedom of speech, and the separation of Church and State. De Tencin marked *La Mérope Française* and *Poème de Fontenoy* as being prohibited, however he was also in possession of a collection of *Oeuvres de Voltaire* (printed in 1751 without crediting the location of print) which were not marked as being banned. The same applies to his ownership of Torquato Tasso's *Opere con le controversie sopra la Gerusalemme liberata* printed in Florence in 1723, which was not marked as being prohibited within de Tencin's collection. Tasso had reported his own work to the Inquisition and later rewrote his *Gerusalemme* and removed all that which could have been considered as not being authentically Catholic.²² However, another copy of the *Gerusalemme liberata* printed in Paris in 1744 bears no mark. Another work which curiously does not carry a cross marking it as prohibited is Boccaccio's *Decameron*,²³ which was placed on the *Index* for objections centred around offensive sexual acts, and was edited so heavily by its censors as to become almost unrecognisable.

2.3.4 – Arts et Sciences - Politique

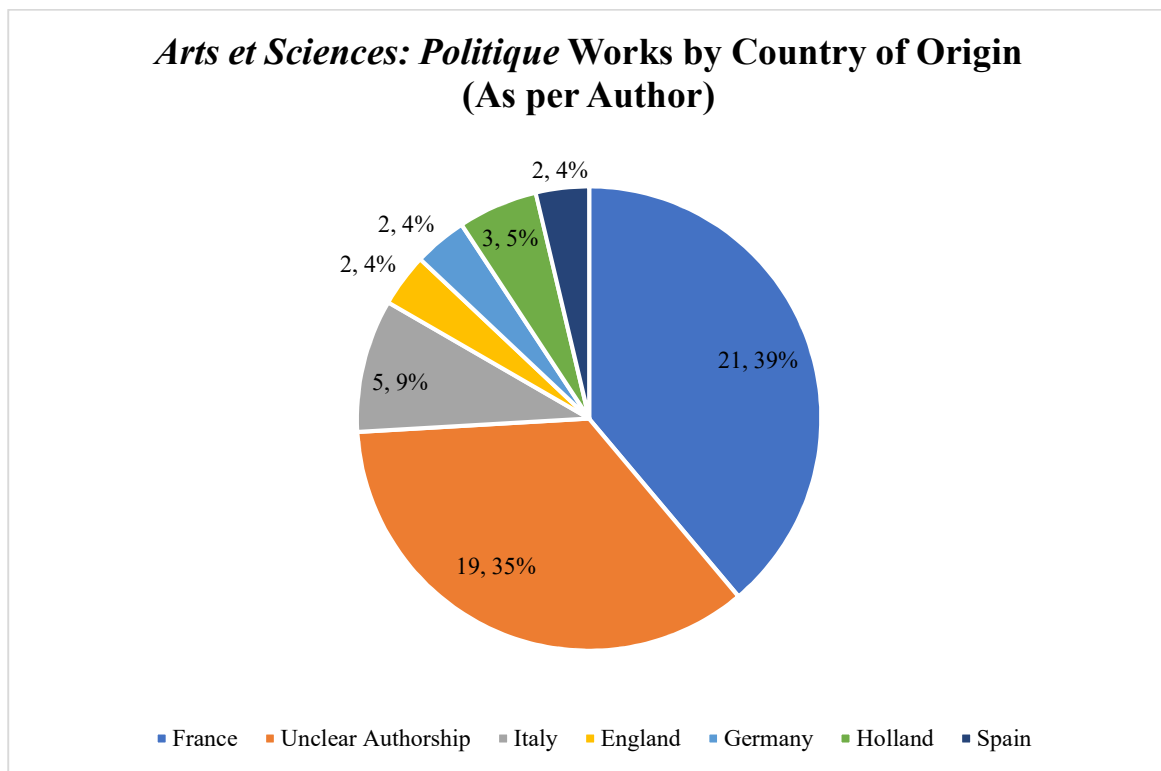
Closely associated with the *Belles Lettres* category, and the last in the most-populated sections, is that of *Politique* under *Arts et Sciences*. Politics are naturally deeply-rooted in affairs of the state, and draw heavily upon law, history, philosophy, sociology, and geography, tying this category to numerous others in de Tencin's library.

²² Infelise, 48.

²³ *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* 1761, 54.

Coinciding with the previously discussed categories, the greater part of the *Politique* works were published in Paris (30% of a total 54 works) owing to a majority of French authors (39% majority). Within the *Politique* section, anonymous authors amount to 35%, succeeded by authors from Italy, England, Germany, Holland, and Spain (see Graph 2.9).

Graph 2.9 – *Arts et Sciences: Politique Works by Country of Origin*²⁴

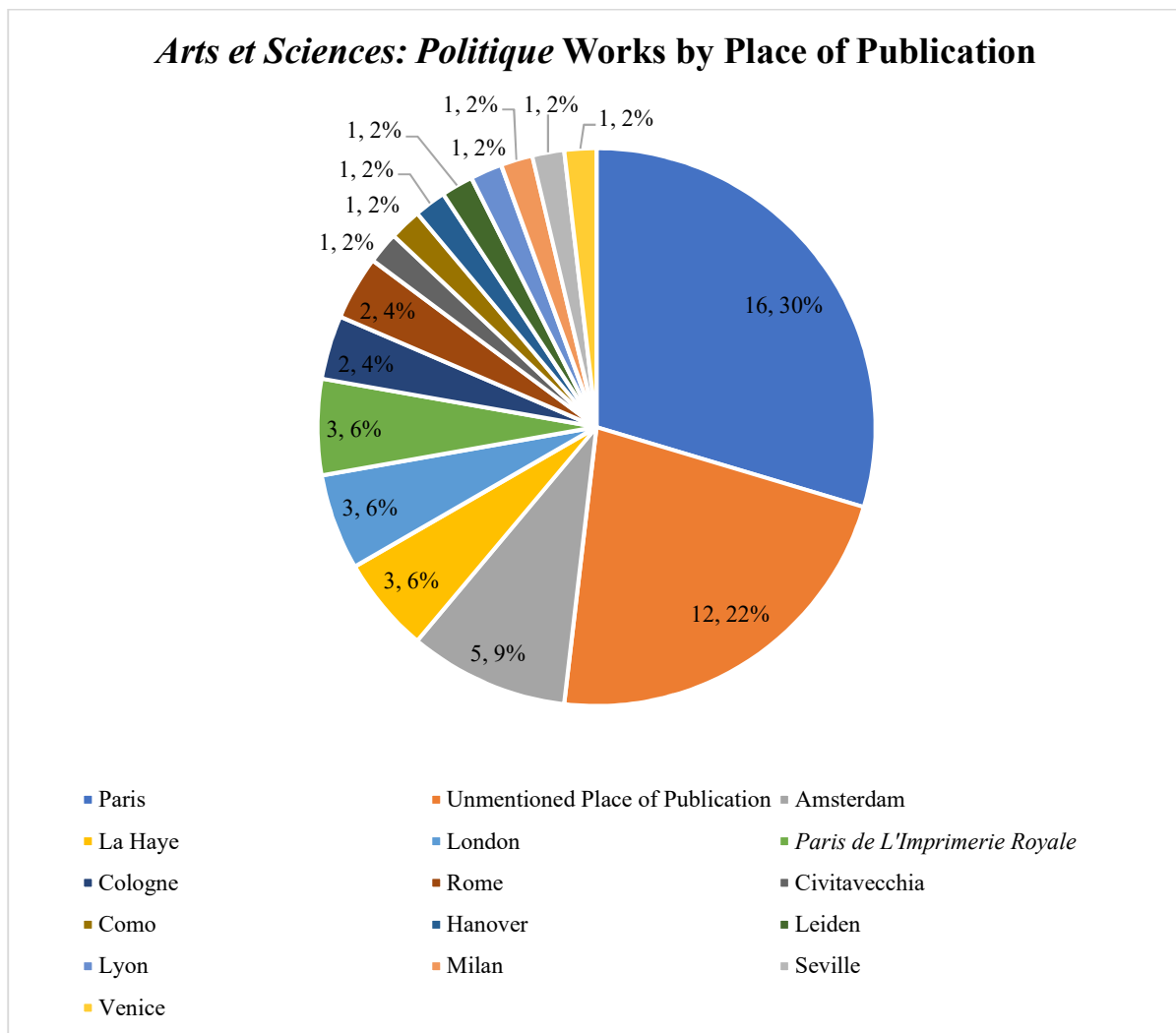


French authors also opted to have their works published in relatively close locations such as Lyon, Amsterdam, and The Hague. In terms of publishing location, 22% of the *Politique* prohibited works do not mention their publisher. An array of fifteen other cities from across Europe, are listed, as shown in Graph 2.10. In terms of language, more than half of the titles (64.8%) are in French, corresponding with the prevalent presence of French authorship. This is then followed by 18.5% of works in Latin, 14.8% in Italian, and a singular work in Spanish. Crucially, this is one of only three works in de Tencin's whole collection written in the original Spanish (the remaining two are found in the *Comedies et Romans* category).

²⁴ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 121-139. For the purpose of this graph, only prohibited works bearing a cross were taken into consideration.

Three works originated from the *Imprimerie Royale* in France, recalling the privilege granted by Louis XV to the Order to receive free copies of all new publications from the Royal Printing Press. One of these works, published in 1745, involved the memoirs penned by Étienne de Silhouette, retelling the recollections of royal commissioners to the British King about the possession of America. The American Revolutionary War was only thirty years away, making such a document in the hands of the French immensely powerful. Other works originating from France's Royal Printing Press included Ordinances of French Kings and collections of general regulations concerning manufacture within the country.

Graph 2.10 – *Arts et Sciences: Politique* Works by Place of Publication²⁵



²⁵ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 121-139. For the purpose of this graph, only prohibited works bearing a cross were taken into consideration.

As with the *Belles Lettres*, the *Politique* category has a number of books which de Tencin did not mark as prohibited, though they do appear in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. A case in point is Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Loix*, of which de Tencin owned two separate copies, one printed in 1750 in Geneva, and the other also printed in Geneva although without a publishing date. The work was banned by both Church²⁶ and State²⁷ for denouncing the abuses by the French monarchy. The same omission from de Tencin's marked prohibited literature applies to Machiavelli's *Opere* which appeared on the *Index*²⁸ and was also banned by the French state for its political views.

In a category which holds works spanning over 220 years, the most recent book in de Tencin's library is the 1759 edition of the memoirs of Joseph Marquis Dupleix, the Governor-General of French India; *Memoire pour le sieur Dupleix contre la Compagnie des Indes*. Graph 2.11 gives a clearer picture of the publication dates for works in the *Politique* category, highlighting how these works were spread over scantily more than two centuries.

This category contains a number of negotiations and discussions about treaties held after various wars, such as the Peace of Münster, the Peace of Utrecht, the Peace of Westphalia, and even a 1693 collection running into six volumes of peace treaties signed by the Kings of France with all the Princes and Powers of Europe in the previous 200 years. Works detailing the negotiations of individuals, such as those of a Cardinal Perron and the British Viscount Bolingbroke, or entities such as the Parisian police are also mentioned. A translation from Latin into French of Hugo Grotius' *De jure belli ac pacis*²⁹ (dated 1729 and published in Amsterdam) was also in de Tencin's possession. The role of the ambassador is discussed in a number of works, as were ecclesiastical laws and the nature of patriotism, the latter being particularly perilous at the dawn of the age of nationalism.

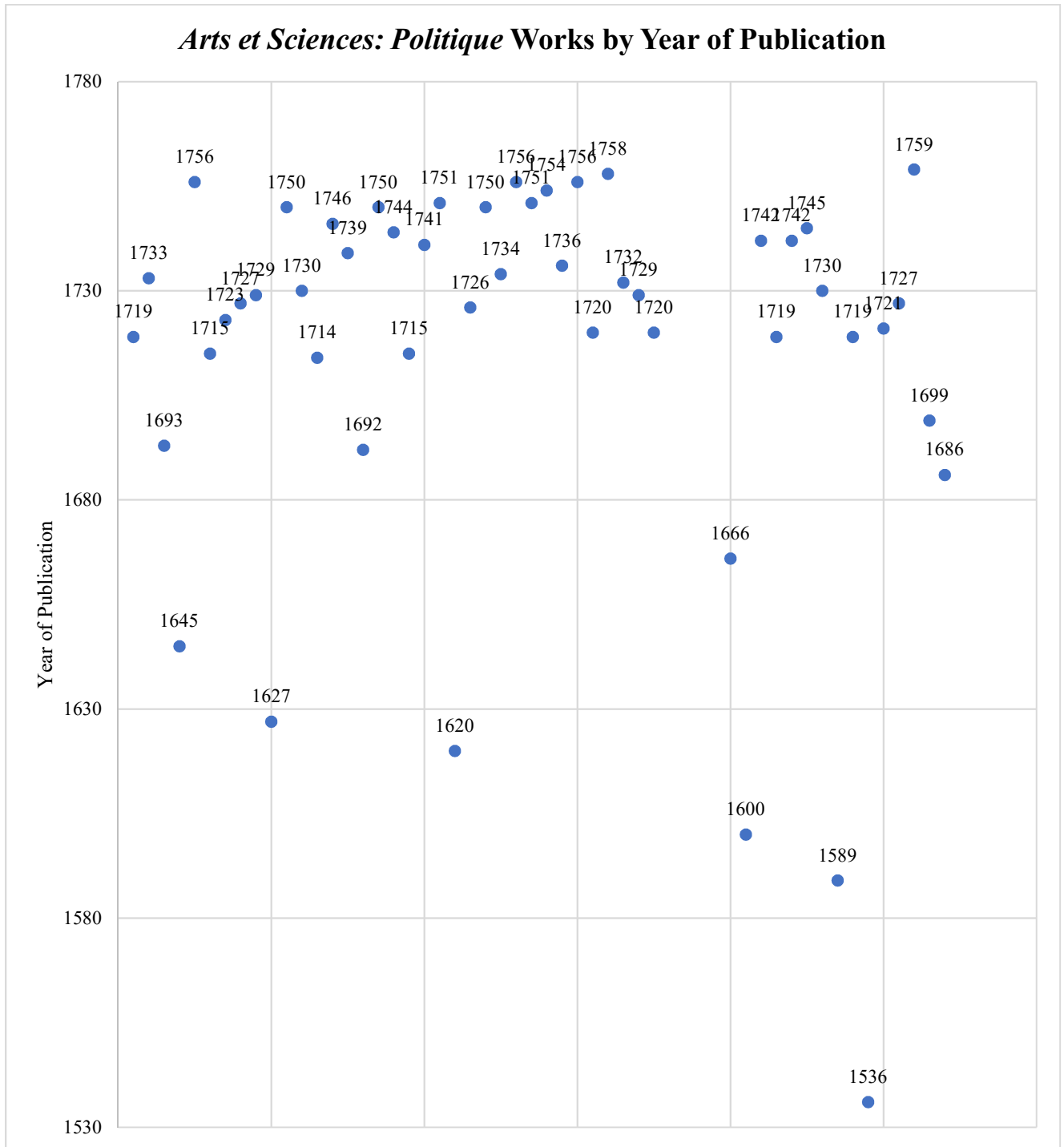
²⁶ *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* 1786, 101.

²⁷ Banned by the French State in 1751. (Source: Beacon for Freedom of Expression – Retrieved on 26 February 2019 from <<https://bit.ly/2T6EZIA>>).

²⁸ *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* 1761, 148.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Graph 2.11 – *Arts et Sciences: Politique* Works by Year of Publication³⁰



³⁰ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 121-139. For the purpose of this graph, only prohibited works bearing a cross were taken into consideration.

2.4 – The Minor Categories within de Tencin’s Library

The remaining eight categories (which include seven sub-categories within the *Arts et Sciences*) pale in comparison to the four larger categories discussed above. The 142 works within these eight categories comprise precisely a third of the collective prohibited works within de Tencin’s library, as opposed to the 287 works that make up the remaining *Religion, Histoire, Belles Lettres* and *Politique* sections. These eight categories investigate Morals, the Order of Saint John, Commerce, Natural History, Medicine and Surgery, Warfare, Naval and Maritime Affairs, Mathematics, Architecture, Geography and Travel, Comedies and Novels, Periodical Literature, Engravings, and Maps. In the case of this last category, no prohibited works were actually included therewith.

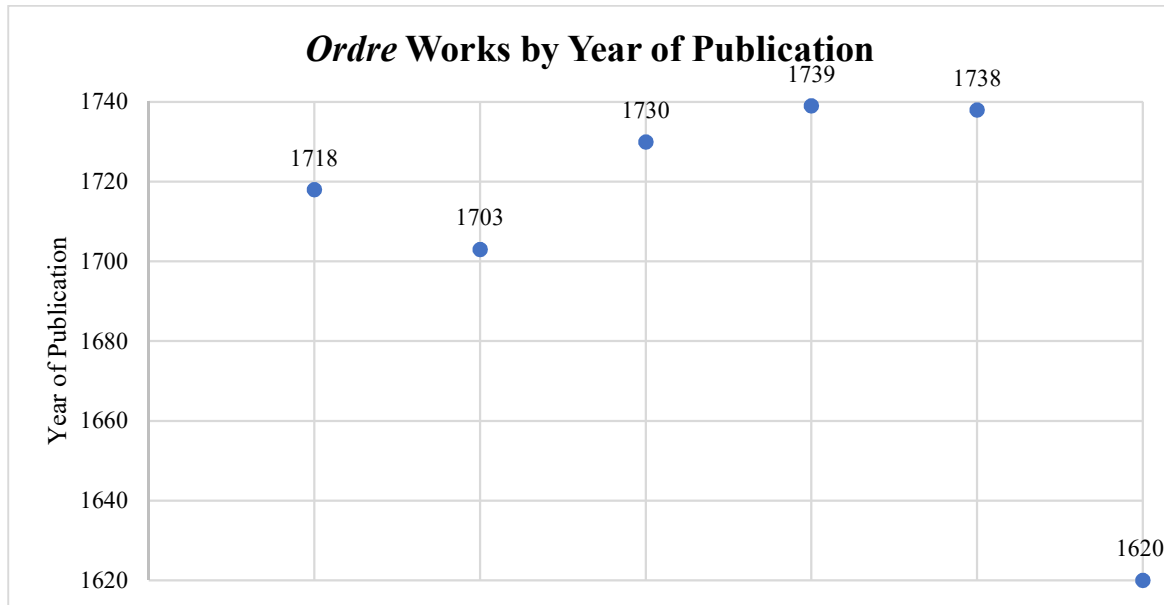
2.4.1 – *Morale and Ordre*

The smallest category is that dedicated to Morals, comprising a singular tome. Namely, Guillaume du Vair’s *Traitté Philosophique et Oratoire* published in 1606. This work, however, does not credit the place of publication. Du Vair was a counsellor of the Parliament of Paris, a political lawyer, and a student of philosophy, and was considered by nineteenth century French writers as an ancestor of Jansenism, perhaps shining a light as to why his work was deemed problematic.

Moving on to the *Ordre* category dealing with matters related to the Hospitaller Order and Maltese affairs, six works were marked as prohibited. Three of these works were written in Latin, two of which are credited to Ignazio Giorgi from Ragusa in Dalmatia, whereas the other work does not credit the author. All the Latin works deal with Saint Paul’s shipwreck on the Maltese Islands. The remaining three works were all composed in French by French authors. André Favyn discussed the history and genealogy of military orders, while Père Honoré de Sainte-Marie delved into ancient chivalry and modern secular orders.

The prevailing French authorship is reflected in the location of publication, with two works being published in Paris, and the *Statuts de L'Ordre de S.t Esprit* originating from the French *Imprimerie Royale*. The three works composed in Latin were all published in Venice. The entire prohibited collection covers just over a century, with the earliest work dating to 1620, and the latest to 1739, as illustrated in Graph 2.12 below.

Graph 2.12 – *Ordre* Works by Year of Publication³¹



An intriguing omission in this category is that relating to the Abbé de Vertot's *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de St. Jean de Jerusalem*, of which de Tencin possessed a 1726 edition published in four volumes in Paris. The Bailiff did not mark this copy, which had been originally officially commissioned by the Order itself, as being prohibited, even though it was placed on the *Index*³² and was examined both by an Order-appointed commission and by the Jesuit Domenico Maria Turano. While the commission commended Vertot for his erudition and literary style, the disrespect demonstrated towards various Popes, the Holy See, and other Christian rulers (in particular the memory of the Order's great patron Emperor Charles V) barred the same commission from giving the Order's approval to the work.³³ In his report dated 1728, Turano condemned the book, deeming it offensive to readers,³⁴ and the Order disassociated itself from the publication.³⁵ Nevertheless, Vertot's work went on to become a bestseller and remained popular with members of the Order. The lack of publication of a new history of the Order may have contributed to the

³¹ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 35-50, 93. For the purpose of this graph, only prohibited works bearing a cross were taken into consideration.

³² *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* 1761, 219.

³³ Zammit (2008), 213-215.

³⁴ Robert Thake, *A Publishing History of a Prohibited Best-Seller: The Abbé de Vertot and his Histoire de Malte* (Delaware, Oak Knoll Press, 2016), 86-89.

³⁵ William Zammit, 'Melitensia Curios: Decree prohibiting Vertot's *Histoire des Chevaliers* (1726)', in *Treasures of Malta*, Vol. 22, Issue 66 (2016), 80-81.

demand for Vertot's history.³⁶ The reason as to why Bailiff de Tencin did not mark this work as being prohibited remains elusive, especially when his membership in the self-same order which the publication dealt with must have ensured that he was aware of the sensationalism and prohibition surrounding Vertot's work.

2.4.2 – The Arts and Sciences

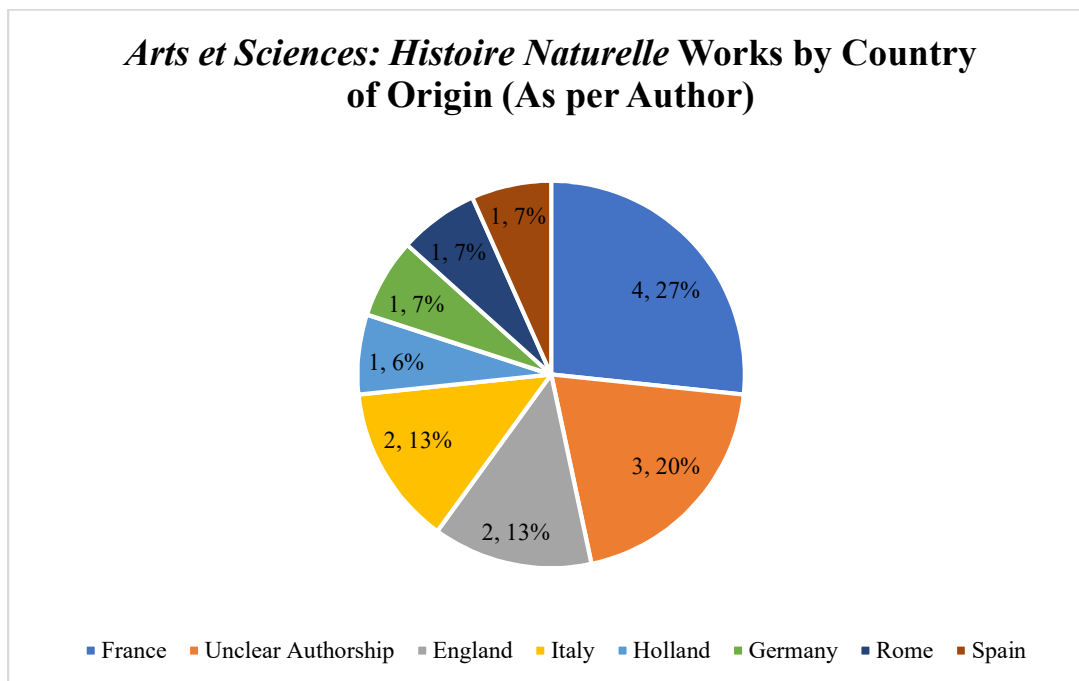
The *Arts et Sciences* is the only category within the library under study which comprises eight sub-categories. The seven categories which will be discussed here comprise 100 tomes, as opposed to the 54 works in the *Politique* sub-category, which also forms part of the Arts and Sciences category, and which was previously discussed in section 2.3.4.

The smallest of these sub-categories is that dedicated to *Commerce*, with just four listed works. Of these four, only two credit their author, one being French and the other Spanish. The Spanish work by Gerónimo Uztáriz is translated into French and is a second edition printed in Paris in 1753. The Frenchman Pierre de Rosnel's *La Mercure Indien ou le tresor des Indes* is a two-part work dealing with the value of Indian gemstones such as gold, silver, and pearls. The *Commerce* collection includes a dictionary of commerce, published in Paris in 1748. Thus, three of the four works in this category were all printed in Paris. The remaining work published in Rome in 1750 was composed in Latin and discussed commercial interactions.

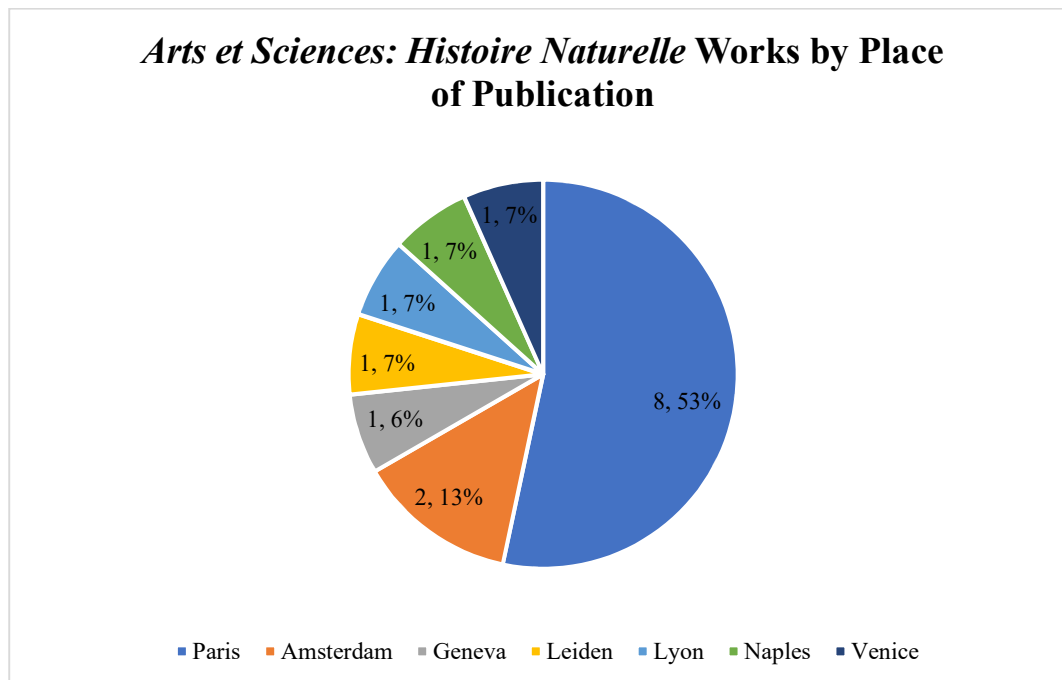
The subsequent section, entitled *Histoire Naturelle*, includes fifteen works, thirteen of which are written in French, and the remaining two in Italian. This does not necessarily mean that the authors were French themselves – while four of them were indeed so, another three authors were uncredited, two were English, two Italian, and the remaining four divided equally amongst Holland, Germany, Classical Rome, and Spain (see Graph 2.13). As for the city of publication, eight of these works were published in Rome, two in Geneva, and the rest of the documents were published in five other cities (see Graph 2.14). Moreover, one of the works in French was a translation from Dutch.

³⁶ Zammit (2008), 213-215.

Graph 2.13 – *Arts et Sciences: Histoire Naturelle* Works by Country of Origin³⁷



Graph 2.14 – *Arts et Sciences: Histoire Naturelle* Works by Place of Publication³⁸



³⁷ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 144-149.

³⁸ Ibid.

In the eighteenth century, observational natural history was on the rise across the continent. This is reflected in the curious themes dealt with in the prohibited books listed in this category, ranging from dictionaries on the animal kingdom to studies on insects, lizards, shellfish, and serpents, to glossaries of stones, plants, and air. These topics played out visually in the illustrations accompanying these texts, as in the case of the 1742 Parisian edition of *Histoire naturelle des pierres et des Coquillages* (author uncredited), and the 1739 French translation of the Dutch Pieter van Musschenbroek's *Essai de Phisique*.

The physical world came under study as well, as in Giovanni Maria della Torre and Giuseppe Raimondi's *Storia e Phenomeni del Vesuvio Napoli*, published in Naples in 1755. The same applies to the French translation of John Woodward's *Geographie Phisique ou Essai par l'histoire naturelle de la terre* published in 1735 Paris. Woodward attempted to prove the authenticity of the Biblical Deluge through his work, and this might have been what drew unwanted attention to his work.

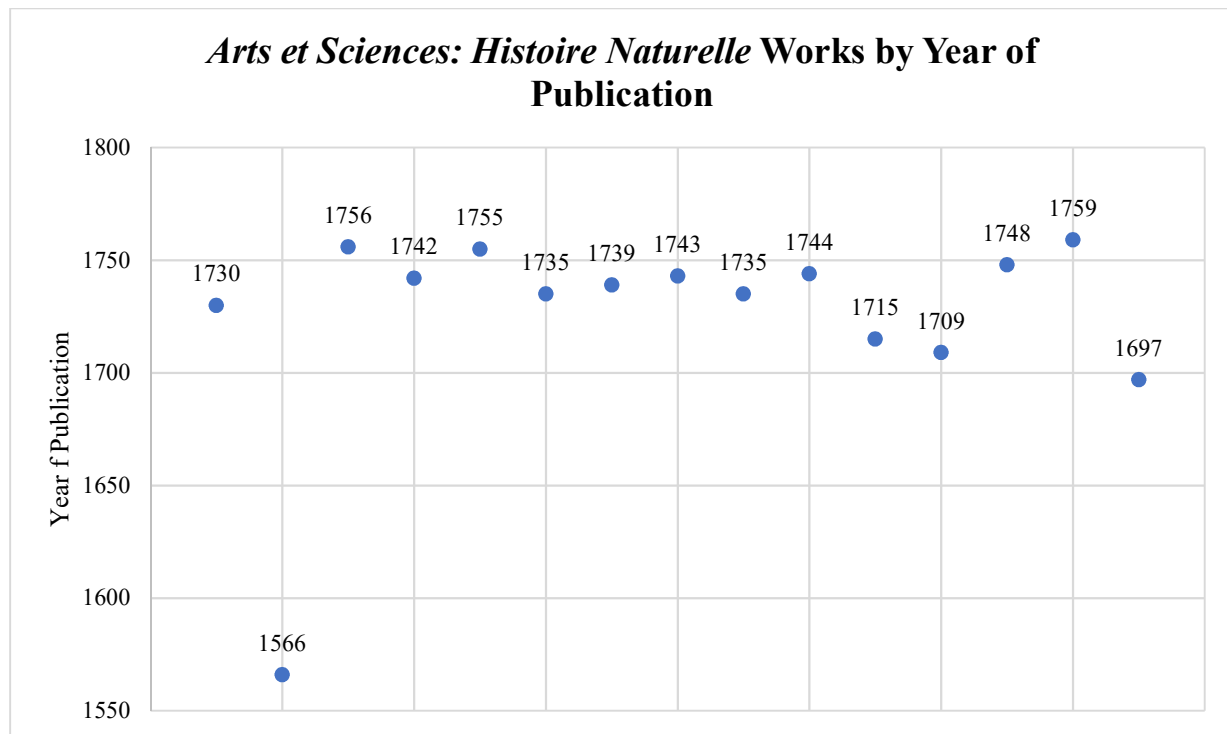
The study of the natural world and geography formed part of a continuing humanist tradition, even more so given the ability of *Histoire Naturelle* to intertwine itself with a myriad of other subjects, be it chemistry with its understanding of the elements, economics examining which nations traded with one another, or philosophy and its analysis of the responsibility men had to each other and to the Earth itself. These works tried to explain natural events such as earthquakes and thunder through chemistry and physics, an outrage at a time when God was still believed to control such phenomena. This element of renaissance humanism is perhaps evident in the presence of a 1566 edition of Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, translated into French and printed in Lyon.

Familiar names emerge in Louis-Bertrand Castel's *Le Vrai Système de physique générale*; in which the author compares the theories of Isaac Newton with those of Descartes. Parts of the former's work were deemed heretical by the Catholic Church, while the latter's work had been condemned by the same Church for his upholding of Copernican theories.

The dates in which the works within this sub-category were published tie into the hold that humanism and the Enlightenment held at this point in history. Only one of the works in this sub-

category dates back to the sixteenth century, the rest are all dated to the eighteenth century (or at the turn of the century in 1697), as evidenced in Graph 2.15.

Graph 2.15 – *Arts et Sciences: Histoire Naturelle* Works by Year of Publication³⁹



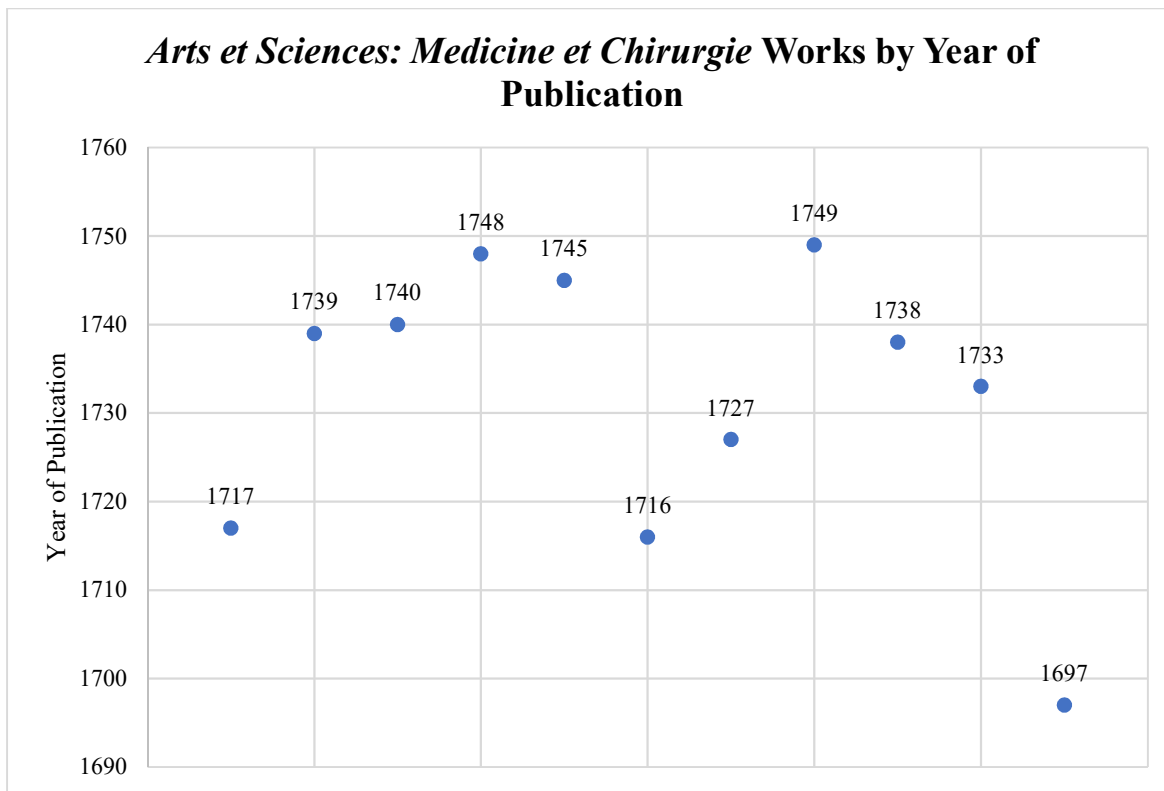
The study of the human body and its functions comes under study in the ensuing sub-category – *Arts et Sciences: Medicine et Chirurgie*. Medicine was making slow progress at this point, doctors and healers were still learning what caused disease, and some continued to uphold their beliefs in the four humours causing sickness (though belief in this theory would decline considerably in the eighteenth century).

Eleven total works are distributed into three different countries of origin; five from France, one from Holland and another from Italy. Anonymity remains a characteristic of prohibited literature, as is shown by the four works which do not credit an author. This element of secrecy is also visible in the place of publication, wherein four works do not mention a location of print. All five French works were printed in Paris. The remaining two works were printed in Naples and Rome. All works

³⁹ Ibid.

do however list a publication date, covering just over fifty years, from 1697 to 1749, as illustrated in Graph 2.16.

Graph 2.16 – *Arts et Sciences: Medicine et Chirurgie* Works by Year of Publication⁴⁰



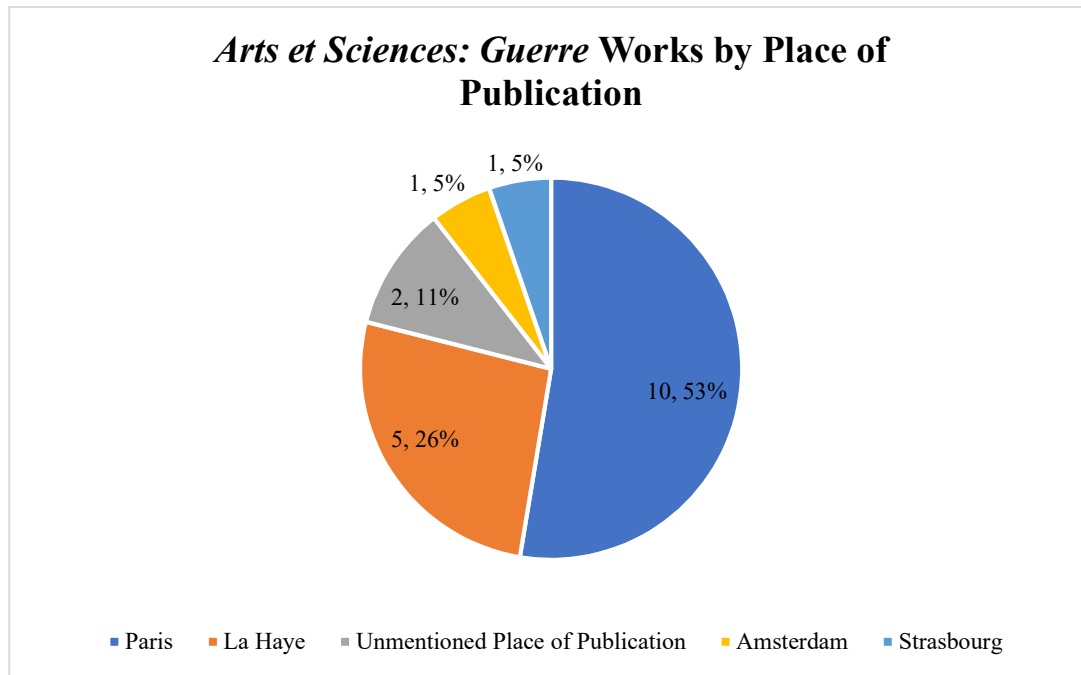
A look at the titles included in this section in de Tencin's library gives a clearer indication as to what interested those studying medicine. Printed literature dealt with the human anatomy, surgical operations, neurology and the brain, new medicine involving water (perhaps a primitive form of hydrotherapy), the structure of the heart and its maladies, pharmacy and its compositions, as well as studies about dissection. Nicolas Lémery's *Dictionnaire Universel des drogues simples - ouvrage dependant de la Pharmacopée Universelle*, a work dealing with the use of drugs, was also listed in this category.

Warfare is as old as man himself and is thus present in de Tencin's library, comprising nineteen works. Twelve of these works were written by French authors, with two works having unclear authorship, a further three from Greece, and the remaining three works coming from Germany,

⁴⁰ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 97, 154-157.

Italy and Switzerland. The language in which these works are written is also dominated by a French majority, whereby eighteen of the nineteen works are written in French. A singular tome is composed in Italian. Ten works were printed in Paris, followed by works printed at The Hague, Amsterdam, and Strasbourg. There are, however, two works which do not credit the place of publication (see Graph 2.17).

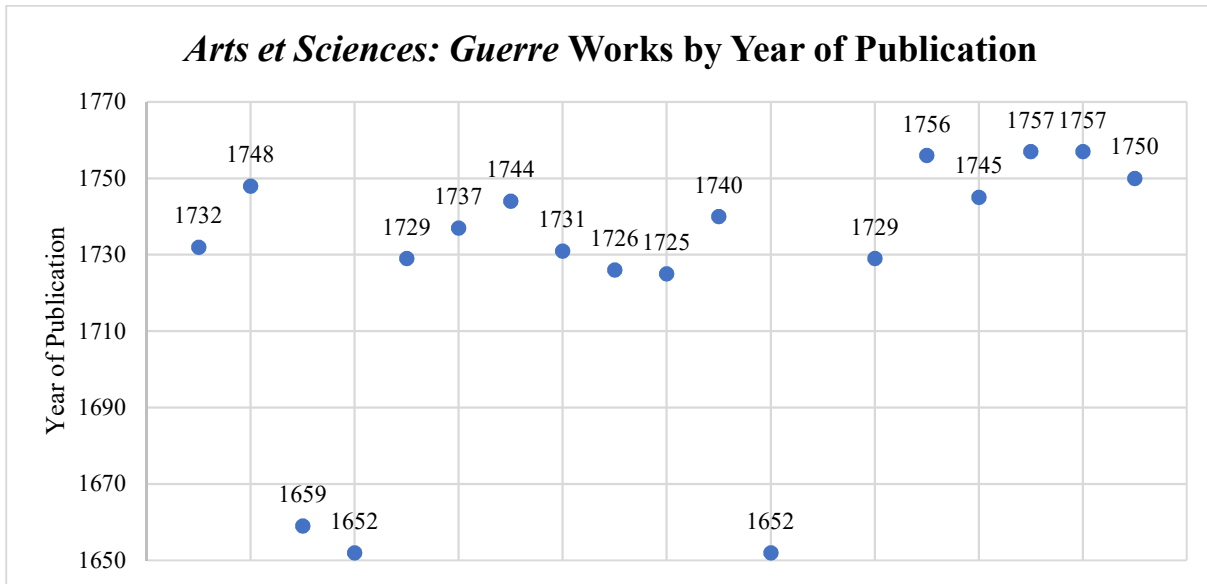
Graph 2.17 – *Arts et Sciences: Guerre* Works by Place of Publication⁴¹



One work in this category does not list the date and year of publication; François Nodot's *Le Munitionnaire des Armées de France*, though it is attributed to the early eighteenth century. The remaining works are spread across a century between 1652 and 1757, as per Graph 2.18.

⁴¹ NLM Libr. MS. 265. 97, 158-162.

Graph 2.18 – *Arts et Sciences: Guerre* Works by Year of Publication⁴²



The art of warfare and the defence of fortifications are dealt with in more than one publication. Illustrations accompanied a number of these works. Discussions of attack and defence, the use of infantry, artillery and cavalry are all investigated. The French engineer Bernard Forest de Bélidor boasts three works in this category; one comprising a mathematical course for the use of artillery, another delves into the engineering science behind the use of fortifications, and his final work describes the French bombardier and the correct method through which bombs were to be fired. His works were all printed in Paris, in 1725, 1729, and 1731 respectively.

The wars of empires as diverse as the Roman and Ottoman Empires are recounted in this category. One such retelling of the Roman wars was translated from Appian's Greek into French and was printed in Paris in 1659, one of the earliest works in this category. Military histories pertaining to individual historical figures are also featured, for instance through the Classical work detailing the wars of Alexander the Great. This, Appian's history, was translated into French and printed in Paris in 1652 – the oldest work in this category. A further instance is that of Charles Sevin de Quincy's 1726 military history of the Sun King, which also included all the necessary military plans and instructions to be applied in wartime. The battles and sieges commanded by Prince Eugene of Savoy, General John Churchill (Prince of Mindelheim), and the Imperial Prince William of Nassau-Dietz also formed part of de Tencin's collection. Individual countries were similarly

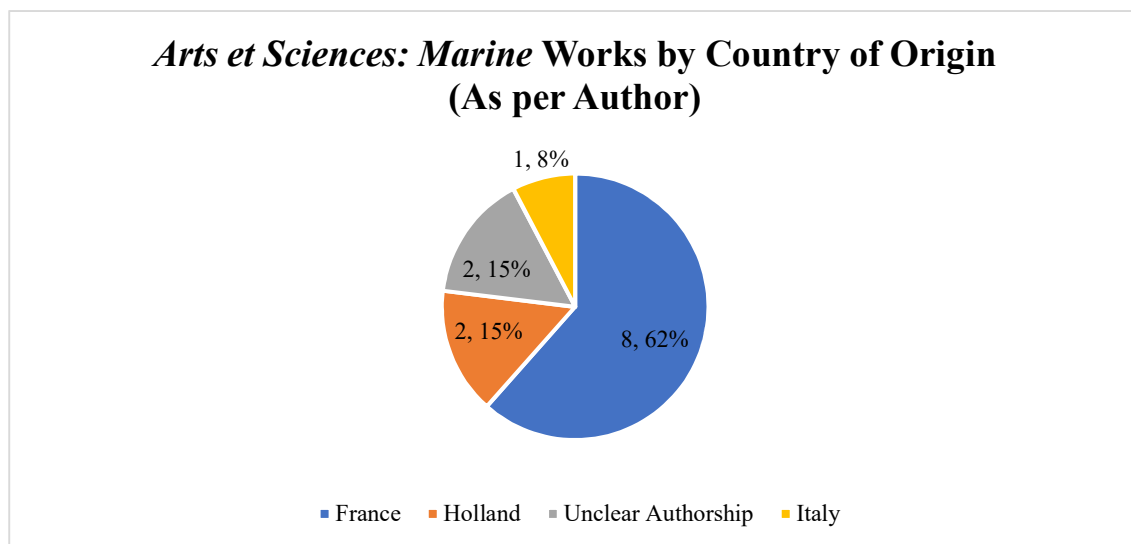
⁴² Ibid.

investigated in this category, none more so than France. Plans and journals of sieges gathered by French captains in the service of France published in Strasbourg in 1750 form part of the *Guerre* collection. Two of this category's works are memoirs, one penned by the Greek Aeneas Tacticus and translated into French (published in 1757 Amsterdam), and the other written by the French Pierre Surirey de Saint-Remy, and printed in 1745 Paris.

We come now to three sub-categories with some of the highest percentage per total of prohibited works in the entirety of de Tencin's catalogue; *Marine*, *Mathematique*, and *Architecture*, which collectively only form a third of the entire *Arts et Sciences* category (51 out of a total 154 prohibited works). In terms of number of works, the three sub-categories carry 13, 24, and 14 works respectively.

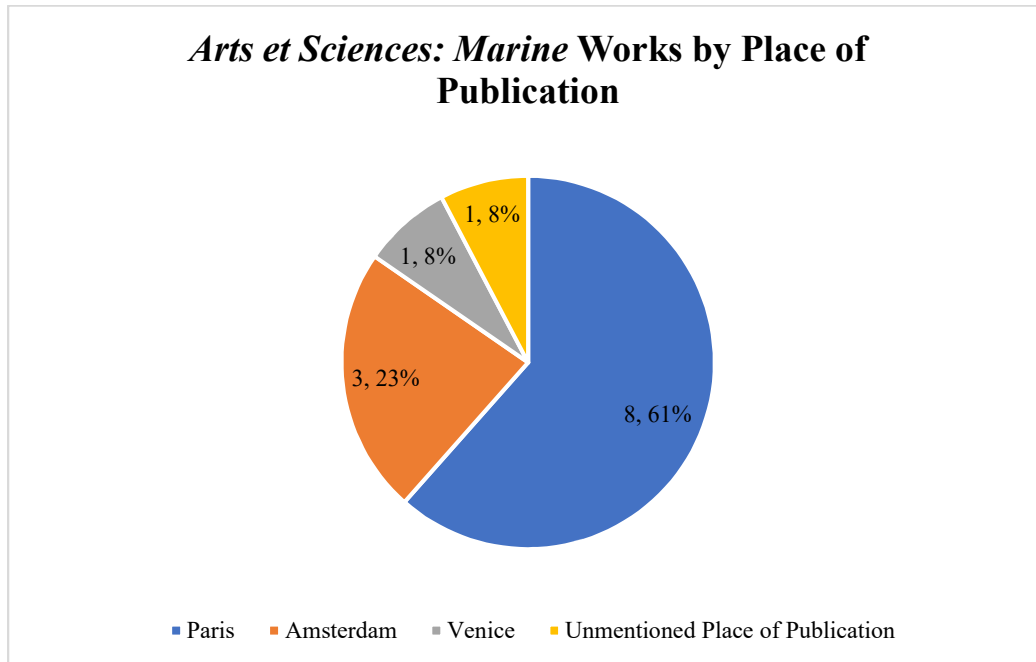
The *Marine* sub-category bears a majority of works coming from France – eight of thirteen publications. This is followed by two works from Holland, two of unclear authorship, and one Italian work. These figures are mirrored into locations of close proximity. Seven of the French works were published in Paris, whilst the other was printed in Amsterdam, as were the two Dutch works. The Italian work was published in Venice. The remaining work, which did not bear an author, does not mention the place of publication either. Both sets of data – country of origin, and place of publication – are illustrated in Graphs 2.19 and 2.20.

Graph 2.19 – *Arts et Sciences: Marine Works by Country of Origin*⁴³



⁴³ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 166-168.

Graph 2.20 – *Arts et Sciences: Marine Works* by Place of Publication⁴⁴



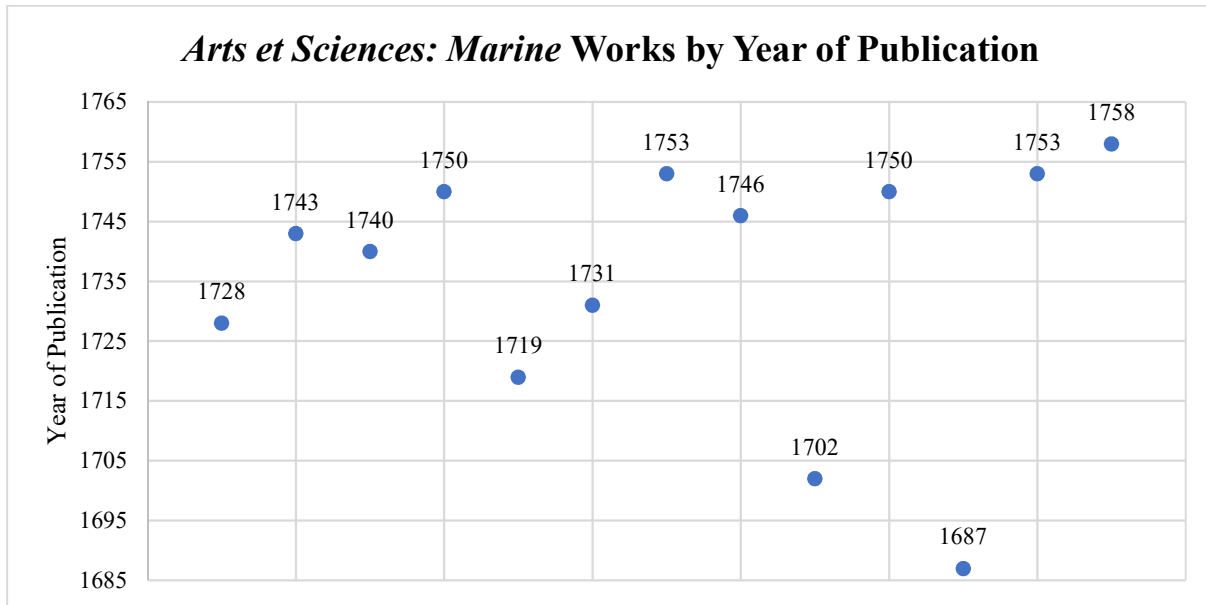
Coincidentally, the two works which do not credit the author are two different editions of the same work; *Orbis Marittimi sive rerum in Mari et littoribus Gestarum Generali Istoria Divione*. The first copy was published in 1743, though the location of publication was not mentioned, whereas the other copy was published in Paris in 1750 and ran into eight volumes.

When it comes to language, ten of the *Marine* works were published in French, two works were in Latin, while the only work published in Italy was written in Italian. None of the works in this sub-category are annotated as being translations.

These publications dealing with naval affairs were published over just seventy years. The earliest dates back to 1687, the only one within this sub-category dating to the seventeenth century. The rest of the works are dated between 1702 and 1758. Graph 2.21 gives a visual representation of the years of publication for this sub-category.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Graph 2.21 – *Arts et Sciences: Marine Works* by Year of Publication⁴⁵



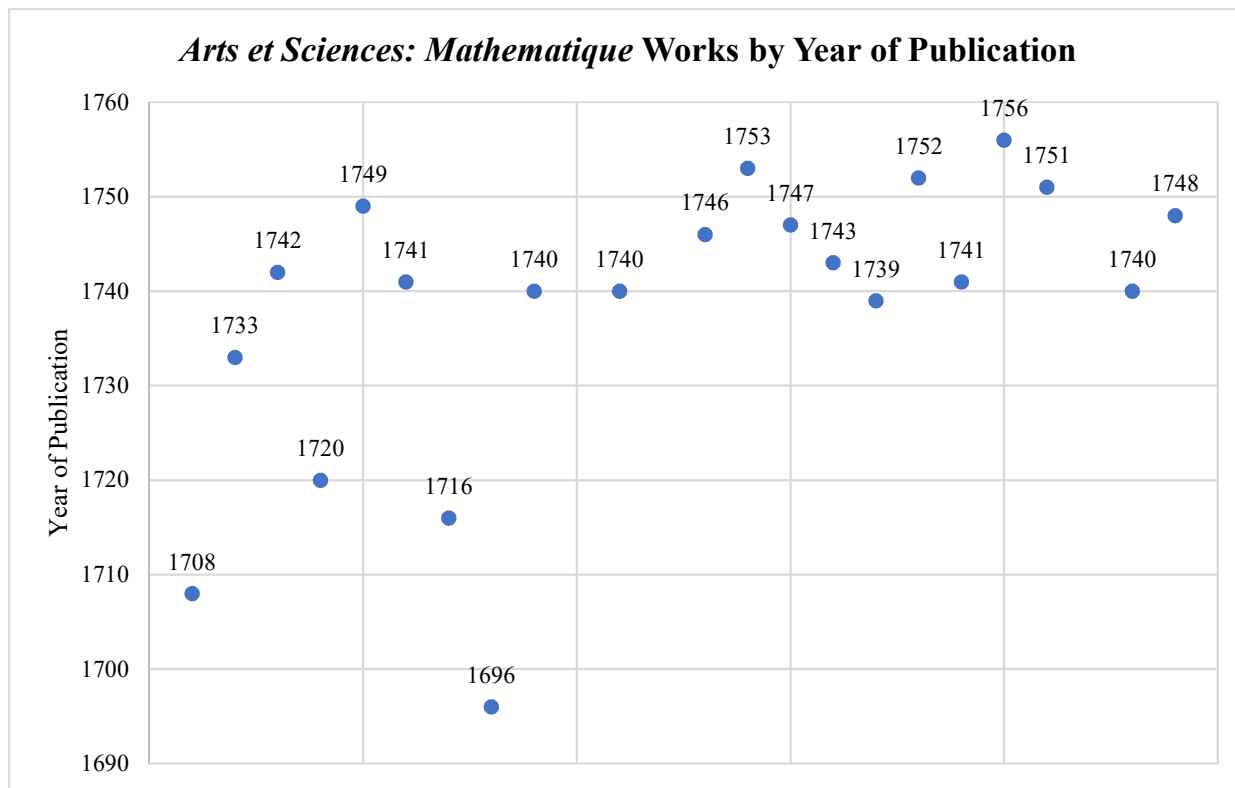
This sub-category includes sundry theoretical works. Theories relating to navigation and steerage were discussed in four of these works, three of which were composed in French, while the other was written in Italian by Giovanni Pagnini, a professor of hydrology in the Order's service, and published in Venice in 1750. The father of naval architecture, Pierre Bouguer, penned two of these works, one dealt with the theory and practise of pilotage, whereas the other detailed the construction and movements of ships. The manoeuvring of vessels was also discussed by Henri Pitot. The art of building ships and perfecting their construction was also examined by the Dutch Nicolaas Witsen, who also detailed the various state flags, and reproduced them in colour. Memoirs and voyages to North America formed an additional part of this sub-category.

De Tencin possessed three dictionaries relating to naval and maritime matters. Whilst all had French authors, two were printed in Paris and the other in Amsterdam. The latter was a naval dictionary containing terms of navigation and naval architecture, enriched with illuminated figures representing the various parts used for constructing ships, as well as different flags. The first Parisian dictionary defined marine terms and the 'pavilions' each country carried at sea. The final dictionary defined history, theories, and practices of naval affairs. Incidentally, the two Parisian dictionaries represent both the earliest and latest works within the *Marine* category.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The decades bridging the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were a time of scientific revolution championed by the work of mathematicians, such as Isaac Newton, who applied their ideas to solving a variety of problems in astronomy, engineering, and physics. De Tencin's collection contains 24 prohibited works within the *Mathematique* sub-category, all of which were printed in the mentioned period (see Graph 2.22 below).

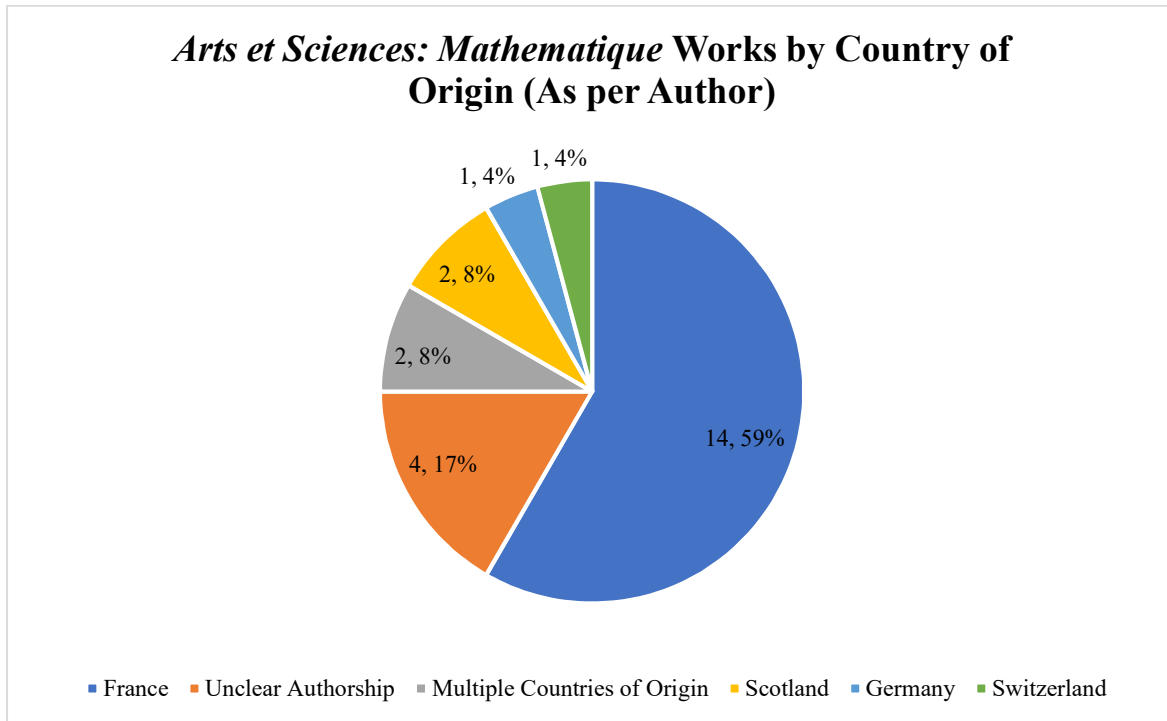
Graph 2.22 – *Arts et Sciences: Mathematique Works by Year of Publication*⁴⁶



14 of this sub-category's works were of French origin (see Graph 2.23). Mathematicians often worked in small groups, and the private correspondence of these networks of scientists was crucial in stimulating mathematical research at the turn of the eighteenth century. This is in fact one of only two sub-categories within the entire de Tencin catalogue that has works with multiple authors from different countries, bringing forward collaborations between French, Ragusan, and Dutch authors. Nationalities which were not featured in any other category, such as Scottish, also appeared in this sub-category.

⁴⁶ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 171-176.

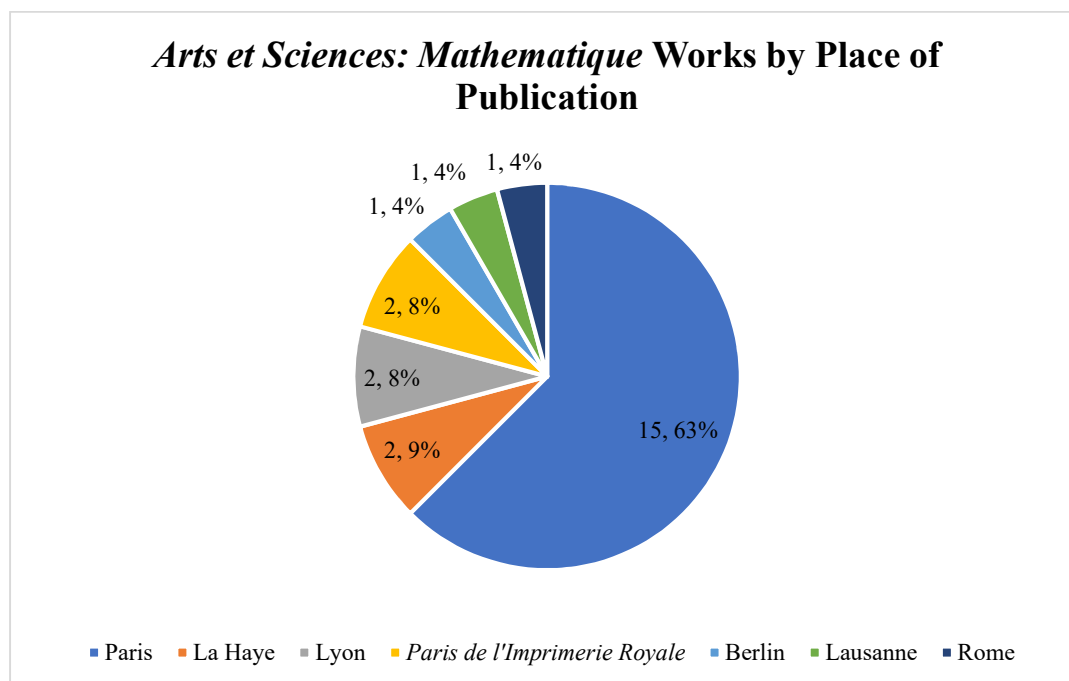
Graph 2.23 – *Arts et Sciences: Mathematique* Works by Country of Origin⁴⁷



Interestingly, both Scottish works were printed in Paris, as opposed to the French works which were divided amongst Paris, Lyon, The Hague, and the *Imprimerie Royale*. Collectively, French cities take up 79% of the locations chosen for publishing. Places of publication for the *Mathematique* section are illustrated in Graph 2.24; worth noting that all works credit the location of publication.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Graph 2.24 – *Arts et Sciences: Mathematique* Works by Place of Publication⁴⁸



Compelling topics were investigated in this sub-category, such as that of gambling in de Montmort's essay *Les jeux de hazard*. Other subjects which were delved into included trigonometry, curves, algebra, mechanics and mathematics, musical theory and practice, geometry, experimental physics, and arithmetic. Astronomy and physics were further analysed, in particular through John Keill's works which included an essay on the history of modern astronomy, and equations that facilitated the investigation of astronomical phenomena, including celestial physics, the science of longitudes, as well as the sun, moon, and satellites. The shape of the Earth was analysed by Clairaut. The theories and discoveries of Newton are investigated in three separate works, one of which was penned by Voltaire, and published in Paris in 1739.

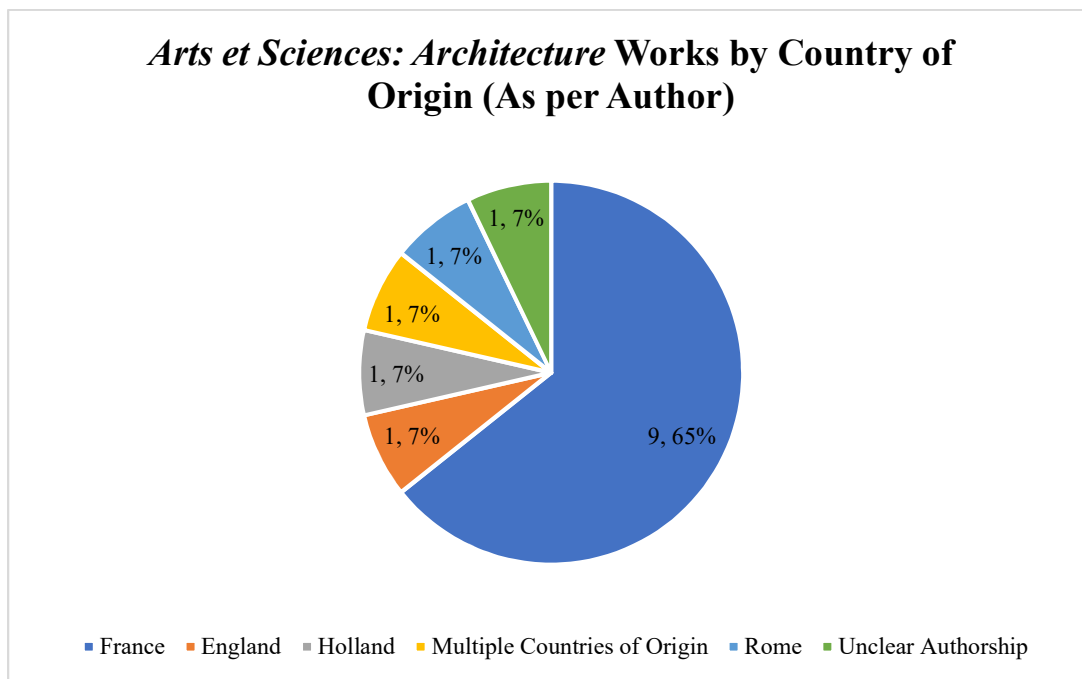
The histories of royal academies were also annotated in de Tencin's catalogue. The philosophical transactions of Britain's Royal Society were translated into French and published in Paris in 1740. The history of the *Académie des Sciences et des Belles lettres de Berlin* was also included in the prohibited collection, as was the history of the Académie Royale printed by France's Royal Printing Press. Studies on individual buildings and the reparations which needed to be applied following damages were also included in this sub-category, a case in point being a study of the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

repair of Saint Peter's cupola written by François Jacquier, Thomas Le Seur, and Ruggiero Giuseppe Boscovich.

The final sub-category within the *Arts et Sciences* category is also the one with the highest proportion of prohibited works within the entire de Tencin catalogue; the *Architecture* sub-category. Despite this sub-category only having sixteen total works, fourteen of these were marked as prohibited. Once again, the majority of works originated in France (65%), with the rest having authors of English, Dutch, and Classical Roman origin. A singular work does not credit the author, while another has both a French and an Italian author. Graph 2.25 illustrates these details.

Graph 2.25 – *Arts et Sciences: Architecture Works by Country of Origin*⁴⁹



The Classical world continued to exert its influence, as exemplified by Perault's translation of Vitruvius' works on architecture (published in Paris in 1684), as well as his work detailing the five types of columns according to Antiquity (published in Paris in 1683). France was once again the country which captured de Tencin's interest; numerous works within this sub-category studied France's architecture, ranging from Jacques-François Blondel's compendium of plans and

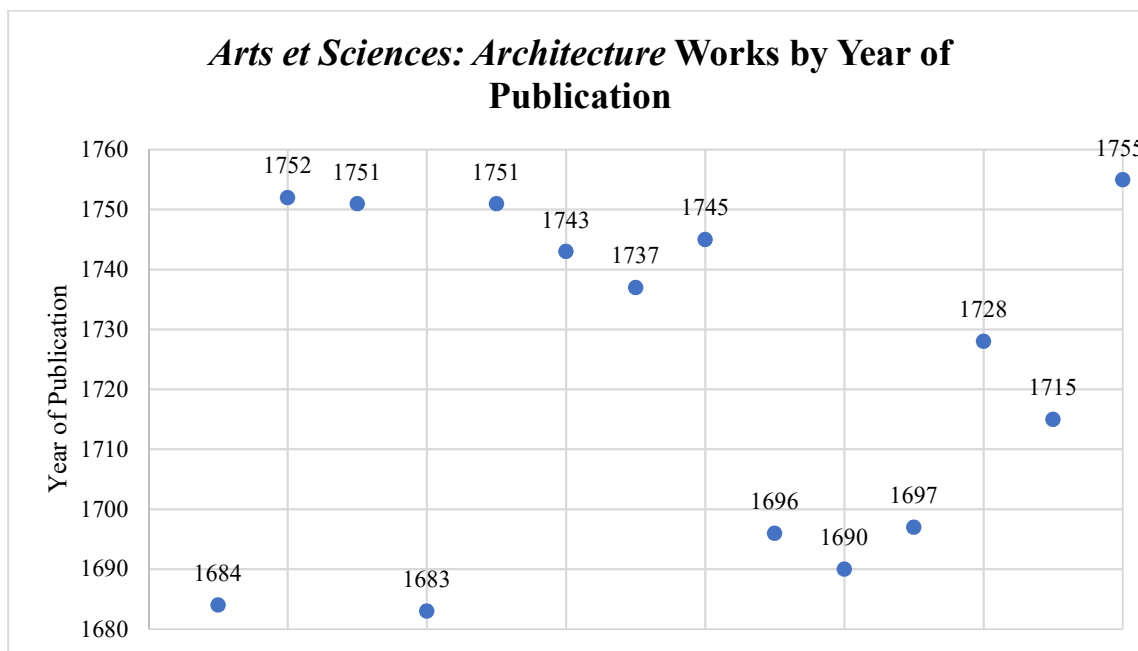
⁴⁹ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 181-183.

elevations detailing the profiles of churches, royal houses and buildings, to Jean le Pautre's studies of the interior ornaments within works of architecture.

Skilled trades and crafts, such as carpentry, the building of country homes, painting, and sculpture were discussed in a number of tomes. Some were even presented with a dictionary of the terms specific to each of these arts, as in André Félibien's work published in 1697 in Paris. Hydraulic architecture and the art of driving, rising, and saving waters appeared in a Parisian publication by de Bélidor. Félibien also discussed the lives and works of famous architects and painters, both from ancient and contemporary times. A similar work which detailed the lives of famous painters, was written by d'Argenville and also presented their engraved portraits *in intaglio*. De Tencin's library even included the plans done by the renowned Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens for the palaces and buildings of the city of Genoa.

All fourteen works were published in just three cities. Eleven were printed in Paris, giving the city a 79% majority, followed by two works published in Amsterdam, and another in Leiden. As for the date of publication, all works were published between 1683 and 1755, as shown in Graph 2.26.

Graph 2.26 – *Arts et Sciences: Architecture Works by Year of Publication*⁵⁰



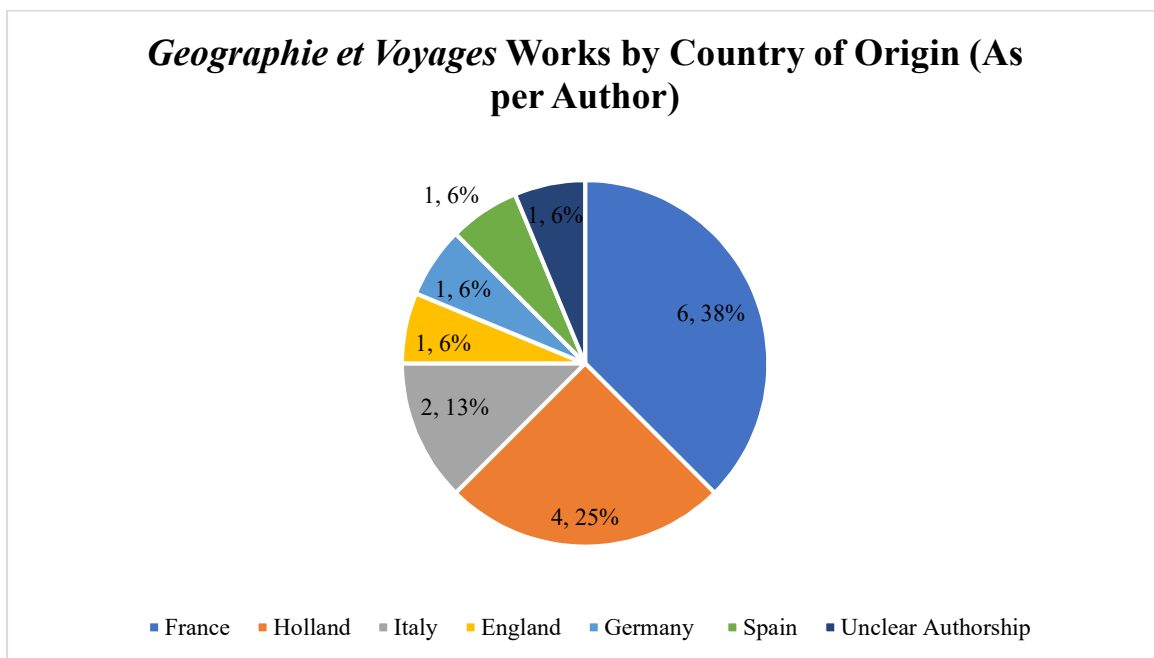
⁵⁰ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 181-183.

2.4.3 – *Geographie et Voyages*

The study of the globe and everything upon it was crucial in allowing the European powers to extend their global influence. Improved transportation, communication, and navigational technology played a crucial role in allowing empires, such as Great Britain, to govern the colonies which Europeans had established across all continents since the Age of Discovery. This is not to say that it was geography that ushered in the Colonial Age, but it did enable a deeper understanding of the planet on which these empires and their people lived. Within de Tencin's catalogue, geography and voyages come together to create the *Geographie et Voyages* category.

Sixteen prohibited works were included in the category dealing with geography and travel. Of these sixteen, a majority of six were of French origin, followed by four of Dutch and two of Italian origin. The remaining works came from England, Germany, and Spain, whilst another work did not credit the author. Interestingly, a number of these authors were merchants themselves, explaining how they were able to embark on such journeys. Graph 2.27 below lays down the details pertaining to this category's countries of origin in visual form.

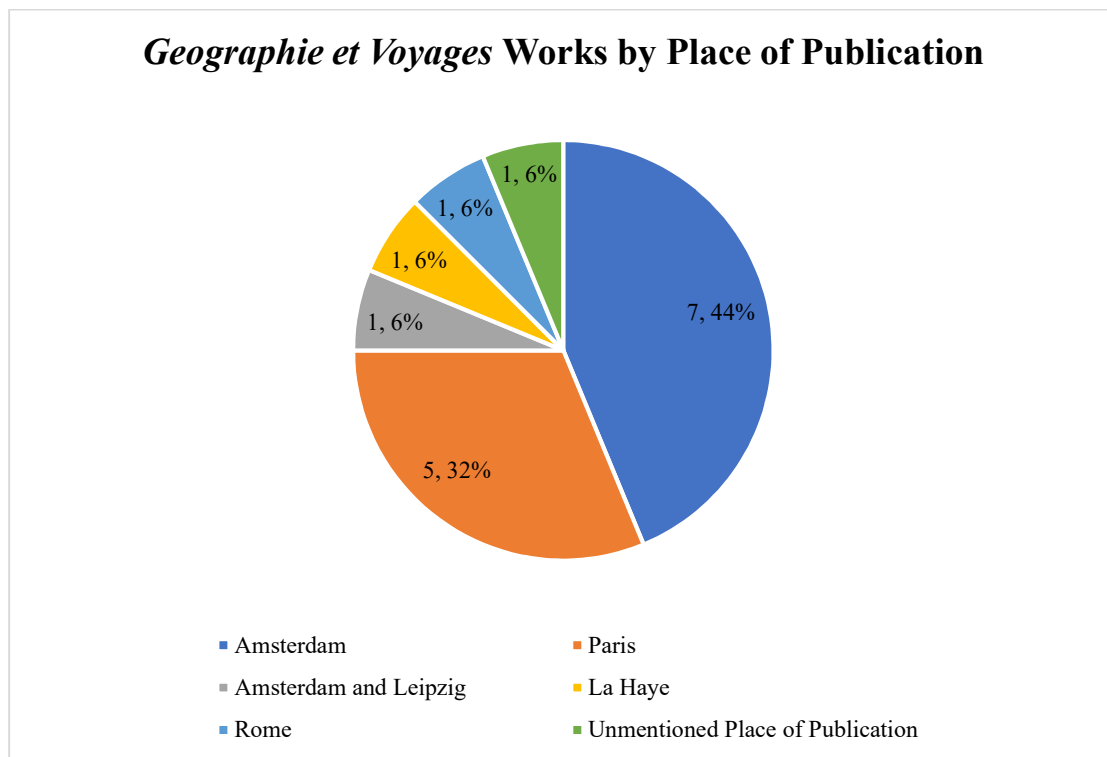
Graph 2.27 – *Geographie et Voyages* Works by Country of Origin⁵¹



⁵¹ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 187-191.

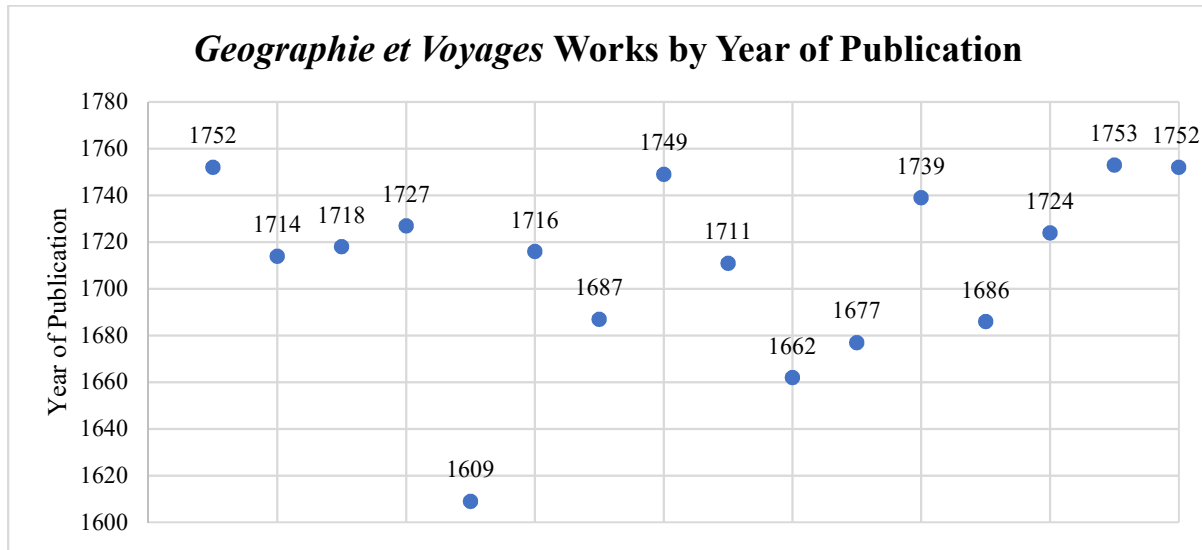
Deviating from what has been a dominating trend thus far, in this category a majority of French authorship does not translate into a majority of works published in France. In this instance, Amsterdam was the city in which 44% of this category was published, followed by 32% in Paris. The Hague, Rome, and Amsterdam/Leipzig published one work apiece. There was also one work which did not mention the location of print (see Graph 2.28). Covering more than a century of works, the earliest publication within this category was published in 1609, whereas the latest dates to 1753, further confirming public interest in travel in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Graph 2.29).

Graph 2.28 – *Geographie et Voyages* Works by Place of Publication⁵²



⁵² Ibid.

Graph 2.29 – *Geographie et Voyages* Works by Year of Publication⁵³



In terms of language, fourteen of the sixteen works were printed in French. The remaining two works were published in Italian and Latin. Published diaries, such as travel accounts, enjoyed great popularity in the seventeenth century, and interest continued well into the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ So much so, that the vast majority of works in *Geographie et Voyages* are indeed travel journals, describing the geography of the Earth, and expeditions in territories as far as apart as Siam, Persia and the Orient, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and the Americas. Other voyages described trips to the Low Countries, Moscow, Tartary, India, the African continent, South America, as well as journeys across the seas to the coasts of Peru and Chile. The Levant and Asia Minor are also described in travel journals detailing voyages to Rhodes, Cyprus, Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Land.

A number of these works were also illustrated, presenting maps and figures to better engross the reader in these foreign lands, or else presenting astronomical and physical observations made to determine the figure of the Earth. Collections of maps, be they celestial, terrestrial, or navigational, were also included in de Tencin's library.

2.4.4 – *Comedies et Romans*

A particularly conspicuous contemporary testimonial to the emancipation of the human intellect at the end of the eighteenth century was the sudden popularity of the novel in Europe and North

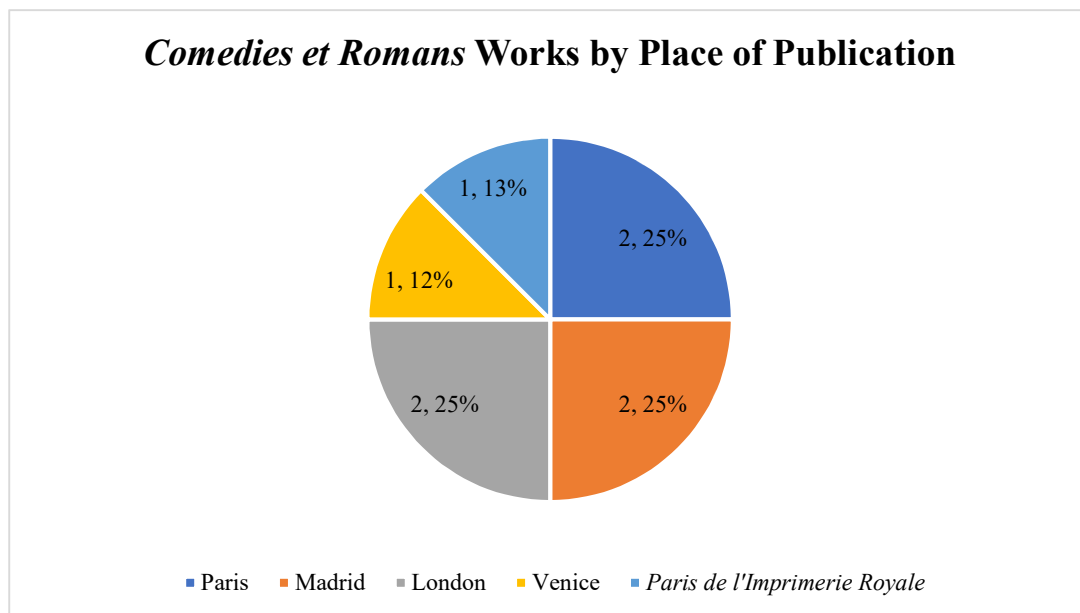
⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Fischer, 261-262.

America. It was the novel, above all, that made the coming nineteenth century the ‘century of the book’. Novels were already popular in Spain, France, Germany, and Italy, and it was at the turn of the nineteenth century that novels started selling in unprecedented numbers everywhere. The number of literates who did not regularly indulge in novel-reading was minimal, albeit in some quarters the reading of such works was still deemed corrupting or a frivolous waste of time.⁵⁵

De Tencin himself possessed eight novels which he marked as prohibited within his collection, in the category entitled *Comedies et Romans*. These works originated from France, Spain, Italy, and Scotland; with France holding the highest amount of publications (four as opposed to Spain’s two works, and Italy and Scotland’s one work each). This diversity in authorship meant that these novels were published in various locations. Graph 2.30 gives a clearer picture as to these locations, with works being published in Paris, Madrid, London, Venice, and France’s *Imprimerie Royale*. A variety of languages also came into play within this category, with five novels being published in French, two in Spanish, and one in Italian. None of the works are credited as being translations (though one is indubitably so), and all works list the author, place and year of publication.

Graph 2.30 – *Comedies et Romans* Works by Place of Publication⁵⁶

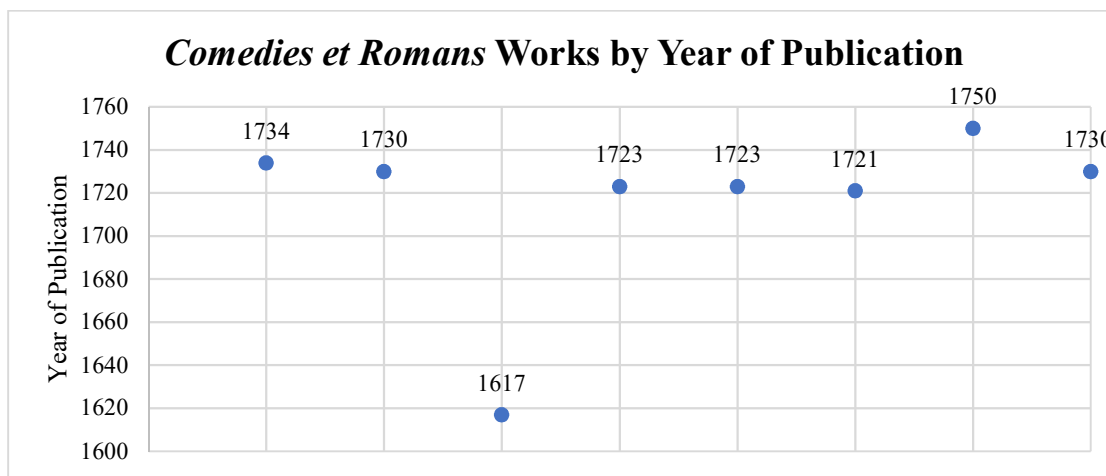


⁵⁵ Fischer, 261-262.

⁵⁶ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 193-198.

Seven of the novels within this category were published in the span of thirty years in the first half of the eighteenth century. The remaining work, the earliest, was published in 1617, as evidenced in Graph 2.31 below.

Graph 2.31 – *Comedies et Romans* Works by Year of Publication⁵⁷



A collection of Molière’s works was included in de Tencin’s collection, published in Paris in 1734. One work of Molière’s in particular, *Le Tartuffe ou l'Imposteur*, had been banned by Louis XIV in 1664, mainly for being a satire on religious hypocrisy, which earned Molière the nickname ‘demon in human flesh’ by the local Church. Molière’s theatre was also closed by the Chief of Police, and the Archbishop of Paris laid a ban of excommunication on anyone acting in the play.

Two novels by the Spanish Miguel de Cervantes were also featured in this category, including his most famous work *Don Quixote* which became an immediate bestseller following its publication in 1605. In 1640, it was however placed on the Spanish Inquisition’s *Index* for one sentence deemed to reflect Lutheran beliefs: ‘Works of charity performed negligently have neither merit nor value’. Moreover, the work advocated individual freedom and attacked authority. This sentence was removed from subsequent reprinted editions, and sales continued.⁵⁸

De Tencin was in possession of the works of other playwrights, such as the French Crébillon who delved into man’s perversity and atrocity. Other prohibited works included those of Jean Racine, also a French playwright, and Giovan Battista Guarini’s *Il pastor fido*. The latter raised controversy

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Heresy, Sedition, Obscenity: The Book Challenged* – University of Otago, New Zealand - Retrieved on 1 March 2019 from <https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/exhibitions/bannedbooks/banned_books_handlist.pdf>.

at the time of its publication for not respecting the Aristotelian precept through which tragic and comic elements could not be mixed within the same work. A French translation of Andrew Michael Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus* was also listed by de Tencin in his catalogue, though the translator remains uncredited. Ramsay's work was a bestseller in the eighteenth century, and propagated the belief that Britain should create a global empire, ensuring its status as the 'Capital of the Universe'. Pierre Brumoy's *Le Théâtre des Grecs* brought forward once more the allure of Classical Antiquity and helped in informing the public of authors whose works had only been accessible to elite scholars.

2.4.5 - *Ouvrages Périodiques Journaux Mercure*

From the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, many books were published by subscription in European nations on a periodical basis, at times even including lists of subscribers. In France, publishing by subscription flourished in the late eighteenth century, with French subscription lists generally favouring the wealthiest readers and the fanciest books.⁵⁹

De Tencin was no exception to this trend and in fact possessed 19 subscription works which ran into 210 volumes within the category containing Periodical Literature. Two of these nineteen works were marked as being prohibited. Both works originated in France and were published in Paris, one of which at the *Imprimerie Royale*. One of these works was the *Journal des Sçavants*, Europe's first academic journal, published by the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*. De Tencin recorded having all editions from the journal's inception in 1665, until the year 1754, amounting to a total of 65 volumes. The Bailiff also possessed a catalogue of the printed books within the French Royal Library; this was in fact the work printed at the French Royal Printing Press, with works being published in 1739, 1740, and 1744.

2.4.6 – *Estampes*

Engraving is one of the oldest techniques in print-making, and is a method through which images are produced on paper, be it used for mapmaking, historical retellings, illustrations, or commercial reproductions. Within de Tencin's library, the category which contained Engravings was the one

⁵⁹ Robert Darnton, 'History of Reading', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Peter Burke (ed.), Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, 146-147.

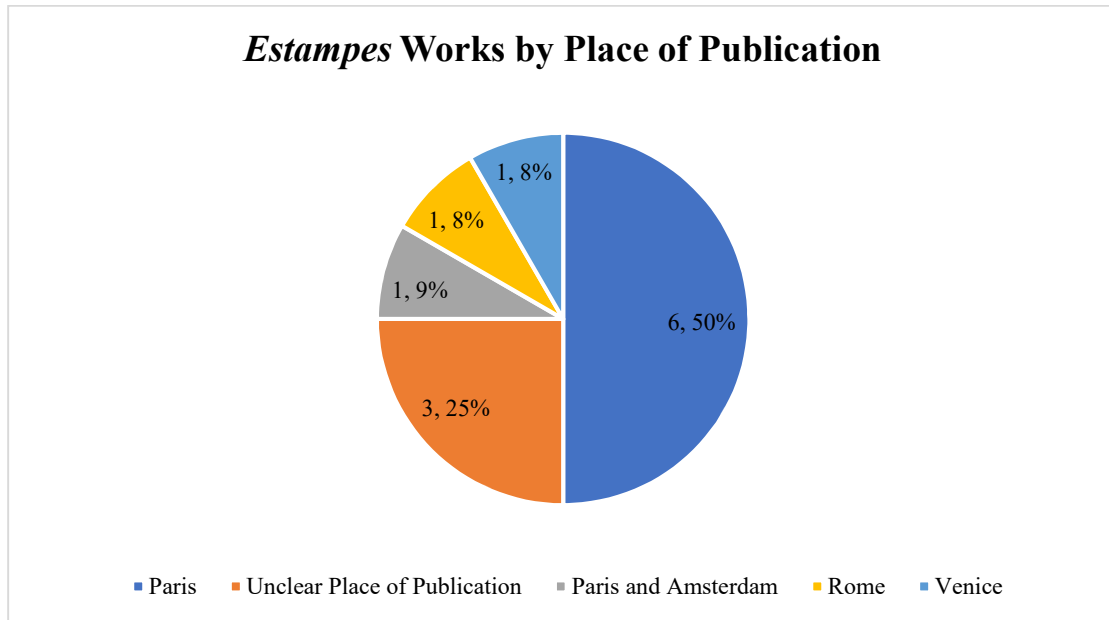
with the third-largest percentage per total of prohibited works, having a proportion of 80% (12 of 15 works were marked as being prohibited).

The *Estampes* within de Tencin's collection illustrated a variety of topics, the most popular of which seemed to be royal marriages. Engravings included those illustrating the festivities in Paris following the marriage of Philip of Spain and Princess Louise Élisabeth of France in 1739, the marriage of Louis, the Dauphin of France, to the Infanta Maria Teresa Rafaela of Spain in February 1745, followed by the second marriage of the same Dauphin to Maria Josepha of Saxony two years later in February 1747. Other engravings still dealt with royal themes, such as Louis XV's stay in Strasbourg in 1744, as well as a collection of prints described as being '*les plus beaux*', within the cabin of the French King and the Duke of Orleans. The engravings were divided according to their respective schools, with descriptions detailing each school, the lives of the artists themselves, and historical descriptions of each work.

Buildings were also shown through engravings, and de Tencin's collection included *Estampes* showcasing structures as diverse as the *Hôtel Royal des Invalides* in Paris' seventh arrondissement, and the gallery of the Palace of Luxembourg painted by Rubens. Further engravings demonstrated diverse nations or cultures, including a collection of prints representing the different nations of the Levant. Ancient Classical Greek and Roman civilisations came under study in engravings showing ruins of Greek monuments; statues found in Venice's *Biblioteca Marciana*; as well as engravings illustrating the remains of ancient buildings, sepulchres, and bridges in Rome.

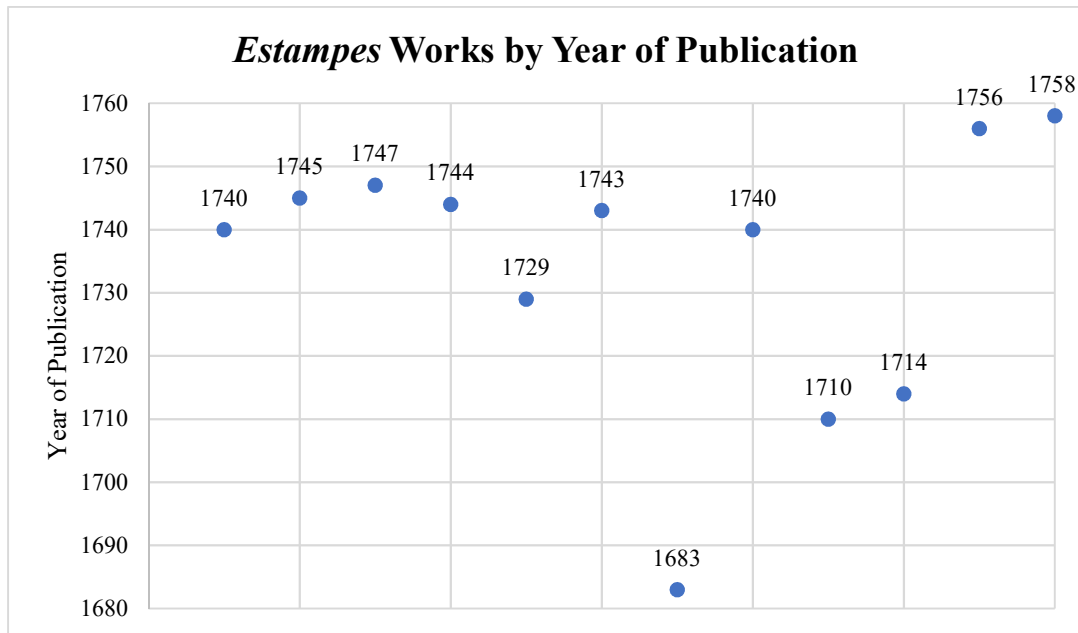
Half of the works within this category were published in Paris, while three works did not credit the location of publication. The remaining three works were published in Rome, Venice, and Paris/Amsterdam (see Graph 2.32). The medium used for the production of these engravings varied, some were finished in gold and in atlas form, whilst others were engraved on parchment, all varying in size.

Graph 2.32 – *Estampes* Works by Place of Publication⁶⁰



The entire 80 volumes comprising this category’s prohibited works were printed over 75 years. The earliest dated to 1683, while the latest was published in 1758, as illustrated in Graph 2.33 below.

Graph 2.33 – *Estampes* Works by Year of Publication⁶¹



⁶⁰ NLM Libr. MS. 265, 211-214.

⁶¹ Ibid.

2.5 – Conclusion

It is thus seen that, from the very beginning, the founding collection of the *Biblioteca* owned by de Tencin had quite an extensive collection of prohibited literature which covered various subjects, from the Arts and Sciences to Religion, History, Geography, and *Belles Lettres*, amongst others. This chapter was an analysis of this varied material, with particular emphasis on the country of origin, as well as the place and year of publication of these forbidden works. Illegal literature was thus seen to be embedded in the Library's founding collection since its inception; an important part of a greater whole.

Chapter 3

Alternative Sources of Prohibited Literature

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Alternative Sources of Prohibited Literature

3.1 – Introduction

While a substantial number of prohibited titles by different authors and in different languages are known to have formed part of the de Tencin collection, between 1760-1798 other alternative sources provided further prohibited literature within the *Biblioteca Pubblica*. These sources essentially consisted of two major types; firstly, a number of other large collections were added to the *Biblioteca* in the period under study, mostly through bequests from a single Hospitaller or from an entity. Secondly, the Library acquired a number of prohibited works following the death of members of the Order. The different instances contributing to these two alternative sources will be investigated in this chapter.

3.2 – Prohibited Literature within the Portocarrero Founding Collection

Cardinal Joaquín Fernandez de Portocarrero, belonging to the Langue of Castile and Portugal, was one of the most influential members of the Order of Saint John. His erudition and varied interests were evident in his library collection which, as discussed in Chapter 1, was bequeathed to the Order following his death in 1760. The majority of Portocarrero's books were in Latin (47%), followed by works in Italian (28%), French (15%), Spanish (7%), and other languages including Greek, German, Hebrew, Portuguese, Arabic, and Turkish (3%).¹

His library was continually used and consulted with; particularly the grammars, lexicons, dictionaries, and catalogues which were used to maintain personal relationships through epistles, to write official texts, or to preach. The collection verged between being both a library and a museum, owing to both its bibliographical legacy and the strong presence of mathematical and scientific instruments, once again reflecting the owner's refinement, culture, and eclectic pursuits.²

Being a man of the Church, his collection consisted of mostly religious works. This does not however infer that the Cardinal did not possess any prohibited works, as proved upon consultation

¹ Noël Caruana Dingli, *Les Livres Français de Malte: Bibliothèques, Langues et Société (XVIII^e Siècle)* (Malta, Portitor Books, 2008), 432.

² Federica Formiga, "In Perpetuum Publica": Il fondo del cardinale Portocarrero nella National Library of Malta', in *Nuovi Annali della Scuola Speciale per Archivisti e Bibliotecari*, Anno xxiii (2009), 46-51.

with the catalogue detailing his collection within the National Library.³ Portocarrero possessed a French translation of the Koran, as well as two Latin editions of Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (the first printed in 1637, the other in 1745), and his *Lexicon Iuridicum* printed in 1610. The Cardinal also perused a number of works dealing with heresy and dogma, such as Bernino's *Storia di tutte l'Eresie* (printed in Venice in 1717), a 1745 edition entitled *De l'infailibilité' de l'Eglise Romaine* printed in Avignon, a 1740 edition of *Catéchisme historique et Dogmatique* published at La Haye, as well as the *Bibliothèque Janséniste* (1735). Portocarrero was well ahead of his time, reading about controversial concepts such as the Church's infallibility more than a century before Papal infallibility was instituted as a dogma of the Catholic Church in 1870.

Portocarrero was familiar with a myriad of banned authors, ranging from Italian authors such as Boccaccio, Galileo, Leti, Machiavelli, and Maffei, to French authors which included Berruyer, Bossuet, Descartes, Diderot, Helvétius, Montesquieu, Rapin, Raynal, Rollin, and Voltaire. Other notorious authors such as Erasmus, Locke, and von Pufendorf, also found their way into the Cardinal's collection. Portocarrero sometimes owned more than one edition of a prohibited work, including two Italian editions of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, and three editions of *Don Quichotte* (in French, Italian, and Spanish). Other notable possessions included an Italian translation of Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*, Thomas More's 1631 *Utopia*, the forbidden biography of Elisabeth I of England, as well as the *Memoires du Regne de Louis XIV*. Vertot's prohibited *Histoire des Chevaliers de Malthe*, printed in Paris in 1726, also formed part of his collection.

The Cardinal appears to have possessed a number of banned philosophical works, such as Descartes' *Eléments de la Philosophie de Newton*, Malebranche's *Recherche de la vérité*, Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Locke's *L'entendement humain*, Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* and his *De l'Esprit de Lois*. He also owned d'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, printed in Paris in 1751. He also owned a 1715 edition of the *Thesauro Philosophia Moral*. Naturally, these are only a fraction of the prohibited works within Portocarrero's library.

³ All titles of works, prohibited or otherwise, within Cardinal Portocarrero's collection obtained upon consultation of National Library Malta NLM Libr. MS. 264 – *Descrizione della Libreria spettante all'eredità del Cardinale Portocarrero*.

3.3 – Prohibited Literature within the library of *Commendatore* Fassion de Sainte-Jay

The National Library boasts three catalogues pertaining to the library bequeathed by *Commendatore* Joseph de Fassion de Sainte-Jay, from the Langue of Auvergne, following his death in 1764. Considered by his colleagues as an exemplary Hospitaller, he preferred to devote himself to reading and enriching his personal library.

The first of Sainte-Jay's catalogues, written in 1714, is actually the oldest catalogue of an identified Hospitaller to have reached us, numbering at least 2,445 volumes, 52% of which were in French. The most populated categories were the *Belles-Lettres* (34%) and History (33%), followed by Theology and Religion (17%), Arts and Sciences (15%), and Law and Jurisprudence (1%).⁴ Prohibited works found their way into Sainte-Jay's collection,⁵ ranging from Vertot's notorious history of the Order, to histories of foreign monarchs such as England's Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, to histories of France.

Sainte-Jay was interested in ecclesiastical histories and heresies, as evidenced by the presence of Pere Louis Maimbourg's *Histoire de Luthéranisme* and *Histoire du Calvinisme*. The Hospitaller also owned works detailing the Inquisition (*L'Inquisitione processata, opera storica e curiosa*), as well as intriguing works such *Vita di donna Olimpia Maidalchini che governò la Chiesa durante il Pontificato d'Innocentio X*. A heavily banned French translation of the Koran was also annotated in the catalogue, as were bilingual versions of the Holy Scripture, and Bibles in the vernacular. Within his *Belles-Lettres* collection, Sainte-Jay owned a French translation of the *Decameron*, Brumoy's *Le théâtre des Grecs*, the works of Tasso, as well as a copy of *Don Quichotte*. Interestingly, his library was rather gallant, as none of the great classics of pornographic literature were mentioned within his catalogue. A familiarity with Classical authors is visible through the existence of authors such as Ovid, Homer, Socrates, Plutarch, Seneca, Socrates, and Plato. Philosophical works by Rousseau, Descartes, and Malebranche were also included.

The *Commendatore* appears to have been familiar with the workings of the ownership of prohibited literature, as shown by the presence of the 1713 edition of the *Index Librorum*

⁴ Caruana Dingli (2008), 335-336.

⁵ All titles of works, prohibited or otherwise, within this part of Sainte-Jay's collection obtained upon consultation of National Library Malta NLM Libr. MS. 510 – *Catalogue de livres de Chev. de Sainte-Jay, presented to the Library in 1714*.

Prohibitorum usque ad annum 1704, which was listed within the section pertaining to dictionaries. The same section included Joseph Le Roux's prohibited *Dictionnaire comique, satirique, critique, burlesque, libre et proverbial*, printed in Amsterdam in 1718. Sainte-Jay possessed works dealing with philosophy, theology, the scientific, and the divine. He owned articles dealing with chiromancy, physiognomy, talismans, astrology, and the interpretation of dreams; all practices deemed heretical. Political works by prohibited authors abounded, particularly through Gregorio Leti (*Dialoghi politici ovvero la politica che usano in questi tempi i principi e repubbliche italiane per conservare il loro stato e signorie*), and Machiavelli (*Discours sur d'état de paix et de la guerre*, and *Discours politique sur les décades de Tite-Live*, both works in French).

The second of Sainte-Jay's catalogues, commenced in 1739, details additions accrued to his collection over the years. Unfortunately, the second volume of this document appears to have remained uncompleted. The first volume lists 2,435 works, 85% of which were in French and 14% in Italian, all of which date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The contacts Sainte-Jay was able to sustain with French libraries ensured that his collection kept growing, amassing around 8,000 volumes up to his death, making it one of the more important personal collections in Malta under the Order.⁶

Within this catalogue, a number of prohibited works were once again present,⁷ ranging from *Don Quichotte* to a new edition of Boccaccio published in 1701 (annotated as being rare and beautiful), to twenty British plays, including a number of Shakespeare's most famous dramas translated into French (such as *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Henry IV*). The works of the prohibited author Gregorio Leti once again feature in Sainte-Jay's catalogue, counting, amongst others, works such as *Il nipotismo di Roma*, *Il cardinalismo di Santa Chiesa*, *La monarchia universale del Re Luigi XIV*, *Il puttanesimo moderno con il nuovo parlatorio delle monache*, and *La morale dei principi osservata nella storia di tutti gl'impertori romani*. Tomes dealing with heretical beliefs were represented in works as *Histoire du Calvinisme et celle du papisme mises en*

⁶ Caruana Dingli (2008), 354-356.

⁷ All titles of works, prohibited or otherwise, within this part of Sainte-Jay's collection obtained upon consultation of NLM Libr. MS. 584 - *Catalogue de mes livres tant français qu'italiens fait en 1739 par lettre alphabétique pour les articles mais non pas pour les ouvrages dont plusieurs ne sont pas encore notés pour divers motifs*.

parallèles, Histoire sante et des hérésies en divers temps, and Histoire des cinq propositions de Jansenius.

The most crucial of Sainte-Jay's three catalogues is the one which deals solely with prohibited literature within his collection, written around 1722.⁸ Sainte-Jay separating these works into their own catalogue might be explained by the fact that he was a member of a religious order falling under Papal authority. As a cultured man, Sainte-Jay believed in the importance of such works, and as de Tencin stated in his *Préface*, the possession of such heretical works without the Pope's permission could lead to imprisonment.⁹ A large proportion of Sainte-Jay's works dealt with religion, and included works discussing papal fallibility, indulgences, exorcism, ecclesiastical law, Lent, and the one true Religion. He also owned revised copies of the New Testament, as well as French translations of it enriched with notes, reflections, and discussions. The politics and religion found in the person of Christ were also featured in works by Gio Batta Comazzi, listed along Berruyer's forbidden *Histoire du peuple de dieu depuis son origine jusqu'à la naissance du Messie*.

Prohibited histories, such as those of Louis XIII and Louis XIV of France, Charles II of England, Pope Alexander VI, and Tito Lucrezio also featured amongst Sainte-Jay's books. Vertot's 1726 forbidden history of the Order of Malta was again nestled amidst the histories of a number of European countries. In terms of philosophical works, authors such as Descartes and Malebranche were listed alongside Locke's translated *Essai philosophiques*, and von Pufendorf's *Le droit de la nature et des gens*.

A particularly intriguing episode was Sainte-Jay's request to the *Camerata* in 1736 to integrate the prohibited books which the Baron Beueren had bequeathed to the *Camerata* into his own personal library. In the letter, pictured in Figure 3.1, he also stated that he had already obtained the authorisation from Rome necessary for the perusal of these works, while the *Camerata* itself was not in possession of the required authorisation. For this reason, he proposed to barter the

⁸ All titles of works, prohibited or otherwise, within this part of Sainte-Jay's collection obtained upon consultation of NLM Libr. MS. 564 – *List of Prohibited Books* – MS. in 16o bound in calf written about 1722 with Sainte-Jay's coat of arms on the inside cover.

⁹ Carmen Depasquale, *La Vie Intellectuelle et Culturelle des Chevaliers Français à Malte au XVIII^e Siècle* (Msida, Malta University Press, 2010), 92-94.

3.4 – Forbidden Works within the *Camerata*

The *Camerata* was an association of devout Knights, instituted in the second half of the sixteenth century, aimed at allowing its members to live a retired and contemplative life by giving pious examples of virtue, mainly through the care of the sick and infirm. The congregation had its own library, founded by Commander Giulio Sansedoni and augmented through the collections of Baron Beueren, Baillif de Dacie, Baillif Cavaniglia, and Baillif Chiurlia.

The catalogue detailing the collection held in the *Camerata*'s library amounts to 808 works, and lists books in French (74%), Italian (19%), Latin (6%), Spanish, Greek, and Turkish, with the most popular genre being Religion, covering 40.3% of works, followed by History (32.2%), Arts and Sciences (13.9%).¹¹ The library contained travel and geographical accounts, as well as works of mathematics, architecture, grammars and dictionaries. Having originally been located in the same dwelling where a number of Hospitallers of various nationalities lived, the catalogue gives us information as to the kind of books they read, perhaps more so than any other collection.¹²

The *Camerata* was in possession of prohibited literature, as evidenced by Sainte-Jay's request in 1736 to barter for these books. However, just a few years later in 1741, forbidden books once again infiltrated this institution's library.¹³ The collection did not only contain spiritual and philosophical works, but also linguistic readings and others dealing with law. Philosophical works within the *Camerata*'s collection included Bayle's *Lettres choisies*, Erasmus' *Colloques*, and *Lettres chrétiennes et spirituelles de l'abbé de Saint-Cyran*.¹⁴ Religious works included French editions of the New Testament and the Book of Genesis, and two vernacular editions of the Bible. Heresy was investigated through Maimbourg's *Histoire du Calvinisme*. Works discussing the Kingdom of Heaven, eternal justice, the Eucharist, the life, Passion, and Kingdom of Christ, and Church doctrines also abounded.

In terms of historical works, members of the *Camerata* appear to have been interested in the lives of a number of European monarchs. The majority of works dealt with French kings, treated in de Larrey's works discussing Louis XIII and Louis XIV, counterposed by his *Histoire d'Angleterre*,

¹¹ Caruana Dingli (2008), 410-417.

¹² Depasquale (2010), 63.

¹³ All titles of works, prohibited or otherwise, within this part of the *Camerata*'s collection obtained upon consultation of NLM Libr. MS. 266.

¹⁴ Caruana Dingli (2008), 417.

d'Ecosse et d'Irlande, followed by de Limiers' *Histoire du Regne de Louis XIV, Roy de France et de Navarre*. The historical works of Antoine Varillas, detailing the lives of the French monarchs Charles IX and Louis XII also featured in the *Camerata*'s collection. *Vita della Regina Elisabetta d'Inghilterra* appears to have been a tome which was included in all the collections under study.

Two works in French about heretical beliefs, *Jansénius condamne* and *Les prétendus réformés convaincus de schisme*, were attributed to Chiurla's collection. Cavaniglia owned Vertot's history of the Order, as well as Racine's *Poème*, the Marquis d'Argens' *Le Philosophe amoureux*, La Bruyere's *Caractères de Théophraste*, and works by Bossuet (*Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, *Continuation de l'histoire universelle*, and *Histoire des variations des Eglises Protestantes*). Works like Boccaccio's *Decameron* and de Cervantes' *Don Quichotte* feature in this collection as well.

3.5 – The Library of the *Sacra Infermeria*

The hospital of the Order, located at the *Sacra Infermeria*, was endowed with its own library, founded by Frà Dr Giuseppe Zammit (the first Director and Lecturer of the School of Anatomy and Surgery) in 1682 and containing books dealing with medicine and surgery. Frà Dr Zammit bestowed 15,000 volumes upon this library for the benefit of medical doctors and students.¹⁵

In 1797, what remained of these volumes was transferred to the Public Library within the *Forfantone*. It was at this point that Zammit's books were amalgamated with the *Biblioteca*'s general stock of the new library, causing the loss of the identity of Zammit's collection as a medical library.¹⁶ Canon Agius de Soldanis commemorated Zammit's donation to the Public Library, and reproduced an inscription in Latin which is still found in front of the *Biblioteca* and which recalls this gift to the reader.¹⁷

¹⁵ Albert E. Abela, 'The National Library', *Treasures of Malta*, Vol. v, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 25-30.

¹⁶ Paul Cassar, *The John Hookham Frere Memorial Medical Library and the Origins of the Malta Medical School Library* (Malta, The University Press, 1985), 9.

¹⁷ Depasquale (2010), 64-65.

3.6 – Acquisition of books from deceased Hospitallers and the sale of duplicate books from the *Biblioteca Pubblica*

Following the foundation of the *Biblioteca Tanseana* by a Chapter General held under the auspices of Grand Master de Rohan in 1776, a set of ten regulations was drawn up to ensure the proper governance of the Public Library. These regulations would remain in place until the Order was driven away from the Maltese Islands in 1798.

The most central of these regulations was the first; this regulation decreed that all books, whether they dealt with any science or art, as well as all machines, mathematical instruments, medals and items dealing with natural history, left by defunct members of the Order (wherever they hailed from) were to be left to the *Pubblica Biblioteca*.¹⁸ In an attempt to reduce the depletion of the collection itself, the loan or removal of any books from within the library was strictly prohibited.¹⁹ The regulation stipulating the transfer of books left by deceased members of the Order ensured that a vast amount of works was added to the public library's collection. A number of prohibited works which were left to the *Biblioteca* and survive down to this day, some bearing signs of previous ownership, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Collections which had been added to the *Biblioteca* and which preceded the 1776 Chapter General, such as the transfer of the *Camerata*'s collection in 1773, included libraries which had in fact been contributed by members of the Order during the preceding years.²⁰ Following the transfer of the *Camerata* collection into the *Biblioteca Tanseana*, the secretary of the *Comun Tesoro* signed a declaration in May 1773 authorising the sale of a number of duplicate works from this collection.²¹

The benefits of this first regulation were twofold. Firstly, the maintenance of the library collection itself would be aided through these bequests, be it through the addition of books which were not present within the library, or else through the barter of old, worn copies with newer ones. This would thus ensure the augmentation as well as the renewal of the collection.²² These bequests

¹⁸ Archives of the Order of St. John, Malta, A.O.M. 309 – *Capitulum Generale Anni 1776*, 102r – 102v.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ W. Zammit, 'Notizie sopra l'origine ed avanzi della Biblioteca della Sagra Religione Gerosolimitana: *An Unknown Work by Agius de Soldanis*', in *Essays on de Soldanis: Journal of Maltese Studies*, Olvin Vella (ed.), Midsea Books, Sta Venera, 2010, 108-109.

²¹ Depasquale (2010), 62-63.

²² A.O.M. 312 – *Rolli e Memoriali presentati al Sagro Capitolo Generale del 1776 con alcune relazioni originali di Commissari approvate dallo stesso Capitolo Generale*, 375v.

could however contribute to a lack of diversity, perhaps even repetitive titles, within the new public library, since the deceased members providing these books all belonged to the same Order and thus had the same interests.²³ This leads us to the second advantage pertaining to the sale of any such books which were already present with the public library. This was in turn directly tied to the fifth regulation as decreed by the Chapter General, namely that any books received through the *Spoglio* proven to be duplicate copies were to be sold. The money derived from these sales was then to be used to cover the salaries of the library's three employees, as well its daily expenses. The profits were also to be used for the purchase of new books for the *Biblioteca Pubblica*.²⁴

Two sets of records were to be kept by the library's *Commissario*, who was charged with ensuring the proper custody of the library itself. The first catalogue should list the books destined to be sold (with their price and number), while the second catalogue should list those books which were amalgamated with the library's already extant collection. Receipts detailing the amalgamation or sale of any books were to be presented to the *Comun Tesoro*. The sales of duplicate works were held on a regular basis; every Saturday according to the *Bibliotecario* Agius de Soldanis, and were well attended owing to the prospect of purchasing rare material.²⁵

The sale of duplicate books ensured the diffusion of books across the Island. The supply of books which the *Biblioteca* received from personal libraries of Hospitallers and members of the conventual clergy is further proof of the circulation of books within the Order of Saint John. In this context, "duplicate" was not used in the broad sense of the term. Translations, different works of the same author, books on a given subject and bearing the same title were not considered as duplicates. Only identical copies or different editions were in fact considered as being duplicates. Different editions, while containing variations of form, nevertheless represented reworked versions of the basic text elaborated upon by an author. The sale of such books was not necessarily a simple task, as there existed a politics within the sale itself, a system which was dictated by practical, financial, and market considerations, tied to the social life of the book itself as well as to its economic value. The *Biblioteca* did not automatically retain the most recent edition of a work, but rather the one which was best annotated, the most legible, or the one in better condition. The

²³ Formiga (2009), 38.

²⁴ A.O.M. 1663 – *Codice del Sacro Militare Ordine Gerosolimitano Riordinato per Comandamento del Sacro General Capitolo Celebrato nell'Anno MDCCLXXVI*, 205-206.

²⁵ Zammit (2010), 112.

pace with which duplicates were sold appears to have slowed down at the end of the eighteenth century. The sale of books which discussed subjects of particular interest for the Order, such as navigation, naval construction, and the history of the Order itself, seems not to have been particularly widespread. Conversely, the sale of medical books was quite common, perhaps because the University's Medical School already owned its own copious medical library,²⁶ meaning that the books sold by the Order could still be perused elsewhere.

In the case of prohibited books, one would assume that these would have been more difficult to sell, as any individual who wanted to keep or read these forbidden works was required to obtain the necessary authorisation to do so from the ecclesiastical authorities. The catalogues of sales do however show that the *Biblioteca* did manage to sell such banned books, such as Gregorio Leti's work detailing the life of Oliver Cromwell, of which the library owned another two or three editions. There were however other instances when the library preferred to keep every copy or edition of a particular work within its collection, as was the case for authors including Vertot, Locke, Boccaccio, and Bayle, amongst others. In exceptional cases, the library sold all its copies of a given work; this was the case for 167 books of which the *Biblioteca* owned only one copy, and which could thus not be considered as duplicates.²⁷

The adherence to the regulations laid out by the 1776 Chapter General guaranteed that the new Public Library was well governed and well maintained. Its advancement also ensured the appreciation of the general public, which visited it daily. The establishment of the *Biblioteca* was considered as not having been carried out solely for the good of the Order and the general public, but rather for the good of the library itself. The protection of its merits and values was paramount; the lack of such protection would have led to the destruction of a myriad of rare and valuable items which had been amassed over a long series of years, as had happened to other similar establishments.²⁸

²⁶ Caruana Dingli (2008), 450-455.

²⁷ Ibid., 455-456.

²⁸ A.O.M. 312, 376r – 377r.

3.7 – Conclusion

Apart from the fact that since its foundation, the *Biblioteca* did hold prohibited literature, the system through which the National Library acquired more books allowed for further acquisition of such forbidden works. The license which the Library had obtained from the Holy Office in November 1761,²⁹ which allowed it to hold such prohibited material, ensured that the collection within the Order's Public Library continued to grow, both through the acquisition of books from the collections of deceased members of the Order, as well as through the sale of duplicate copies obtained from these same bequests, and others by private Hospitallers or associations.

²⁹ Zammit (2010), 106-107.

Chapter 4

Prohibited Best-Selling French Literature in Malta

Chapter 4

Prohibited Best-Selling French Literature in Malta

4.1 – Introduction

The Maltese experience has always been tied to its status as a group of islands, yet this does not infer that its cultural reality was an insular, limited one. A Hospitaller who was interested in literature, even if he resided in Malta, was not far removed from the fashionable readings of his compatriots on the European continent.¹ This chapter will investigate the presence of the top prohibited literature in France here in Malta. France was chosen as both the founder of the *Biblioteca*, as well as a considerable number of members of the Order were French themselves. This meant that a large number of French publications found themselves incorporated into the Public Library's collection until 1798. Moreover, detailed studies on the popularity and dissemination patterns in eighteenth century France have been conducted by Robert Darnton, amongst others. The manuscripts which still survive within the National Library today, as well as the catalogue detailing de Tencin's library, highlight how French Hospitallers in Malta shared with their fellow nationals in France not only tastes, but also the means to satisfy them.²

It is easy to underestimate the power of the book, more so today when the printed word has lost its place at the centre of society's communication system. In the seventeenth century, however, literature was turned into an instrument of absolutism by the most eminent writers. The authors of the eighteenth century scrambled for patronage, but more often than not they operated outside the state, and proceeded to turn literature against it. In an era when television, radio, and internet did not challenge the supremacy of the printed word, books aroused strong emotions and stirred thought with a tremendous power. The role of forbidden books in the moulding of public opinion was twofold; firstly, by fixing disaffection in print, and secondly, by transforming loose talk into coherent discourse and fitting it into narratives.³

¹ Carmen Depasquale, *La Vie Intellectuelle et Culturelle des Chevaliers Français à Malte au XVIII^e Siècle* (Msida, Malta University Press, 2010), 72-85.

² Ibid., 82.

³ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 191-196, 217.

The corpus of forbidden literature in France at the end of the eighteenth century did not only include Enlightenment works, but covered a myriad of subjects, containing something to offend everyone in power and to challenge everything in the value system inherited from Louis XIV. The authors of these forbidden works had separated literature from the state, culture from power, and ushered in a new ethos which threatened the orthodoxies of the old. This new ethos envisaged a cultural life no longer synchronised with political power. Literature, which was crucial in legitimising absolutism in the seventeenth century, now became the principle agent of its delegitimization.⁴ Catalogues of private libraries and book registers dating to the mid-eighteenth century show a decline in religious works, as opposed to increased works of fiction, history, science, and travel literature⁵ – the same increase was witnessed in de Tencin’s own collection.

4.2 – Dissemination Patterns of Prohibited Literature in Malta

The significance attached to a book extends far beyond its functional role as a vehicle for text: the circulation of printed matter has a direct impact on the cultural equilibrium. If a Hospitaller had prohibited works which he read in the privacy of his own home, he would then be bound to share the ideas he took from these books with his peers. The direct influence of the book may be found in the reactions of a small intellectual elite, who then transmit and transmute knowledge and concepts to the mass of the people.⁶

Not all members of the Order who had private libraries resided in Malta, a case in point being Portocarrero, the co-founder of the *Biblioteca*, who lived in Rome. Yet others, like de Tencin, did live in Malta. The books which would eventually form part of the National Library had a life before they joined the *Biblioteca*. The Order’s library did not only purchase books, but rather books were amassed to its collection following the death of members of the Order, as discussed in Chapter 3. The *Biblioteca* was, above all, a public library, open not just to members of the Order of Saint John, but also to the literate Maltese people. Naturally, borrowing a book from a library does not imply that the borrower actually read it, just as purchasing a book does not entail so either. However, the mere act of borrowing the book displays a sense of interest in the work itself.

⁴ Ibid., 191-197.

⁵ Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1982), 176-181.

⁶ Feather, John P. ‘The Book in History and the History of the Book’, in *The Journal of Library History* (1974-1987), Vol. 21, No. 1 (1986), 14.

A number of forbidden works came into contact with the local Inquisition before they joined the *Biblioteca*. One of the many direct consequences brought by the dissemination of printing in the fifteenth century was the development of stricter controls over what could be written and circulated across Europe. As seen in Chapter 2, pre-publication censorship came to be enforced throughout the continent via a combination of ecclesiastical and secular authorities.⁷ In the case of Malta, in the second half of the eighteenth century, a total of 3049 cases of heresy were brought before the Holy Office, 21 of which concerned cases of forbidden books. This equalled a meagre 0.7% of the total cases of heresy.⁸ Taking a broader look at the entirety of the eighteenth century, the number of cases dealing with prohibited literature rose to 35 inquisitorial cases (0.5% of all cases). A further 21 cases dealt with the reading or possession of prohibited literature coupled with multiple other transgressions. This infers that a total of 56 cases (0.8% of all cases) investigated prohibited literature in the eighteenth century.⁹ In the latter part of the previous century, accusations of dealings with prohibited literature had been the fifth most common type of transgression.¹⁰

Illicit literature was not limited solely to members of the Order, but was also perused by the local literate Maltese population as well as other non-Maltese individuals. In the case of members of the Order, throughout the eighteenth century, 19 of its members were accused of retaining and/or reading prohibited works. Sixteen of those accused had read the works themselves, either in full or in part. Two of the accused had passed the works onto others, enabling the influence of these books to reach even further and to spread purported heretical beliefs. Crucially, not all the forbidden works had been bought by those accused, many had been borrowed; a striking case was one in which a copy of the Koran had been borrowed from a Maltese conventual chaplain.

Sixteen non-Maltese individuals were similarly accused by the Inquisition; 9 of which were confirmed to have read the prohibited literature in question themselves, with two of them passing the works onto others. Perhaps more grievously, another of the accused had read excerpts from prohibited literature aloud to other soldiers and, in a different case, had made manuscript copies

⁷ Feather (1986), 20.

⁸ Ciappara, Frans, 'Disciplining Diversity: The Roman Inquisition and Social Control in Malta, 1743-98', in *The 2005 Summer Meeting and the 2006 Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds.), The Ecclesiastical History Society by The Boydell Press, United Kingdom, 2007, 356.

⁹ William Zammit, *The Dissemination of Unorthodoxy and New Ideas in Malta, 1700-1798* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, University of Malta, 2001), 144.

¹⁰ Carmel Cassar, 'An Index of the Inquisition: 1546 - 1575', in *Hyphen*, Vol. vi, No. 4 (1990), 165.

of the works. The non-Maltese accused appear to have been a bold assemblage; one of those accused expressed his admiration towards the authors who penned prohibited works and proclaimed that he was sceptical of ecclesiastically-imposed prohibitions on literature. A different individual was accused of impeding the conversion of protestants to Catholicism.

Finally, 30 cases dealt with Maltese individuals, 22 of whom had read the works in their possession, while others had passed them on to their peers. Interestingly, three of the accused had used the works for magical practices, with one of the individuals being a conventual chaplain himself. An interesting case is that of one Pietro Gaetano Perdicomati Bologna, a 38-year old nobleman from Valletta, who was accused of perusing no less than 44 prohibited works, works he had purchased from spoils of defunct Hospitallers, from bookdealers, and from Naples, while borrowing others from third parties.¹¹

The Inquisition is ultimately seen to have been ineffective in halting the spread of prohibited literature on the Island. There are no indications that the Inquisitors visited bookshops or ordered booksellers to be annotated in a register indicating those who exhibited their wares in their shops.¹²

4.3 – Prohibited Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France

Most of the eighteenth-century French literature which is nowadays considered canonical originally circulated on the illicit side of the law following its creation. To the eighteenth-century reader, then, virtually all contemporary literature was illegal. C.G. de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the official in charge of the French book trade, found the task of suppressing modern literature impossible, and wrote that ‘a man who had read only books that originally appeared with the formal approval of the government would be behind his contemporaries by nearly a century’.¹³

Illegal literature did not only deal with the philosophical, but also attacked the French King and his Court. The demand for political works was high, with a public hungry for bawdy, defamatory, and seditious literature.

¹¹ All data pertaining to Inquisitorial cases obtained from Zammit (2001), Tables VII – IX.

¹² Frans Ciappara, *Society and the Inquisition in Early Modern Malta* (San Ġwann, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd., 2001).

¹³ Darnton (1996), xix, 15.

Table 4.1 – Prohibited Best-Sellers in France (1769-1789)¹⁴

| No. | Author | Title |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mercier | L'An 2440 |
| 2 | Pidansat de Mairobert? | Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri |
| 3 | d'Holbach | Système de la nature |
| 4 | Mercier | Tableau de Paris |
| 5 | Raynal | Histoire philosophique |
| 6 | Pidansat de Mairobert and Moufle d'Angerville | Journal historique... par M. de Maupeou |
| 7 | Du Laurens | L'Arrétin |
| 8 | Anon | Lettre philosophique |
| 9 | Coquereau | Mémoires de l'abbé Terray |
| 10 | Voltaire | La Pucelle d'Orléans |
| 11 | Voltaire | Questions sur l'Encyclopédie |
| 12 | Anon | Mémoires de Louis XV |
| 13 | Pidansat de Mairobert | L'Observateur anglais |
| 14 | trans. by Lambert? or Fougeret de Montebun? | La Fille de joie |
| 15 | d'Arles de Montigny? or d'Argens? | Thérèse philosophe |
| 16 | Anon | Recueil de comédies et... chansons gaillardes |
| 17 | Linguet | Essai philosophique sur le monachisme |
| 18 | d'Holbach | Histoire critique de Jésus Christ |
| 19 | Trans. By Bérage?, Ed. By Koeppen | Les Plus Secrets Mystères... de la maçonnerie |
| 20 | Linguet | Requête au conseil du roi |
| 21 | Aretino or Niccolò Franco? | La Putain errante |
| 22 | d'Holbach | La Christianisme dévoilé |
| 23 | Rousseau | Œuvres |
| 24 | Restif de la Bretonne | La Paysan pervers |
| 25 | Milot | L'École des filles |
| 26 | d'Holbach | Le Bon-Sens |
| 27 | Linguet | Lettre de M. Linguet à M. le comte de Vergennes |
| 28 | Helvétius | De l'Homme |
| 29 | d'Holbach | Système social |
| 30 | Lanjuinais | Le Monarque accompli |
| 31 | Voltaire | Dictionnaire philosophique portatif |
| 32 | Moufle d'Angerville? or Laffrey? | Vie privée de Louis XV |
| 33 | Anon | La Lyre gaillarde |
| 34 | Rochette de la Morlière | Les Laurier ecclésiastiques |
| 35 | Gervaise de Latouche? or Nourry? | Histoire de dom B..., portier des Chartreux |

¹⁴ Source for Table 4.1: Adapted from Darnton (1996), 63.

The variety of topics covered in prohibited literature is evidenced in Table 4.1. This table lists the foremost thirty-five best-sellers from the illegal trade in France between 1769 and the start of the French Revolution in 1789.

Darnton's list of the foremost prohibited best-sellers in France at the end of the eighteenth century showcases a number of famous authors, so the presence of works such as Voltaire's *La Pucelle d'Orleans*, Rousseau's *Œuvres*, and Raynal's *Histoire Philosophique* comes as no surprise. A number of works at the top of the list, such as Mercier's *L'An 2440*, Pidansat de Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri*, Du Laurens' *L'Arrétin*, d'Holbach's *La Christianisme dévoilé*, Moufle d'Angerville's *Vie privée de Louis XV*, and d'Argens' *Thérèse philosophe*, were also among the books confiscated most often by French customs official and by the police. A good number of works had unclear authorship or were credited anonymously, with some authors appearing with a single work, such as Raynal, while others like Voltaire boasted several favourites. Despite their popularity on the eve of the Revolution, some of these best-sellers have been almost completely forgotten today, a little over two centuries later.¹⁵

The best-seller list is indicative of what contemporaries considered to be a threat to the regime, be it slanderous works detailing the lives of the French royals, bawdy social commentary, political polemics, Utopian fantasies, or pornographic classics. All forbidden works fell under the umbrella of the *livres philosophiques*, which was arguably the favourite genre of the eighteenth century. It was through this kind of philosophy that the Enlightenment reached the general reading public. All these themes came together to contest the authority of the Old Regime, leading to widespread sympathy for Enlightenment ideals, as well as a general disenchantment with the regime and loss of faith in its legitimacy. These political *libelle* works reproached the monarchy for degenerating into despotism, a concept which had acquired a powerful meaning at the end of the seventeenth century. Both the monarchy, as well as despotism, would soon come to be associated with the abuse of power. In the case of the former, the removal of the individual monarch ruling the system would solve the problem of corruption and absolute power. Naturally, with pre-Revolutionary France being an absolute monarchy, the situation was quite delicate.

¹⁵ Darnton (1996), 62-64.

Many aristocrats responded passionately to the works of the *philosophes*. This would prove to be detrimental to the *status quo*; a political system may be most endangered when its most favoured elite ceases to believe in its legitimacy. The now-frequent condemnations of dissolute sovereigns and the ministers that surrounded them eroded the layer of sacredness that made the monarchy legitimate in the eyes of the people.¹⁶

The greatest decline in religious works in private libraries occurred in the thirty years preceding the French Revolution, with the nobility brutally detaching itself from its former religious devotions. While historical works remained popular, the nobility soon started to abandon traditional works, such as Greek and Roman literature. Across the entirety of France's Second Estate, the Arts and Sciences experienced a marked upsurge brought by increased book production. Ultimately, the genre with the greatest readership proved to be the *Belles-Lettres*, evidencing the success and popularity of relatively new genres among the traditional elites.¹⁷

Readers appear to have been fascinated by the opportunity of seeing atheism brandished openly in print. In the 1760s and 1770s numerous atheistic works flooded the market in relatively cheap editions, and these were promptly snapped up by the French public. While freethinking was not free, by 1770 it had come within the purchasing power of the artisan and middle classes of France. The libraries of merchant classes were rife with books on commerce, law, geography, accounting manuals, dictionaries and almanacs, as well as escapist literature. The number of texts available for the private perusal of these readers increased as the eighteenth century progressed, affecting the way people read.¹⁸ Significantly, these new works could be carried in pockets and consulted in private, as opposed to the unmanageable folio volumes of orthodox theology.

Forbidden literature brought outwardly trivial elements into large-scale narratives, endowing them with the power of print. Hearing an anecdote in the street was one thing, reading it in a printed book was quite another. Readers could then spread the material they had encountered in print. Public opinion was thus radicalised through the reading of prohibited literature. In Darnton's own words:

¹⁶ Ibid., 194-196, 216.

¹⁷ Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1987), 193-195.

¹⁸ Ibid., 189, 196-197.

It is not that the themes of the books determined the motifs of “public noises”, or vice versa, but rather that the two forms of communication worked together, defining, transmitting, and amplifying messages that undercut the legitimacy of the regime.¹⁹

4.4 - The Presence of Prohibited French Best-Sellers within Malta’s National Library

Prohibited literature existed not just within de Tencin’s collection in the *Biblioteca Pubblica*, but also extended to other catalogues. As previously indicated, this chapter and the next aim to be a case-study which analyses the presence of popular prohibited French literature in Malta, whether these works could be found within the Order of St John’s collection, and whether they still survive today.

Darnton’s list of prohibited French best-sellers most popular between 1769 and 1789 was analysed against eight of the National Library’s manuscripts, which detailed the collections found within the same library. These manuscripts included, amongst others, the catalogues detailing the founding collections belonging to de Tencin and Portocarrero.

Table 4.2 details which forbidden French best-sellers were mentioned within these eight manuscripts; green annotates books which were mentioned directly, be it by the name of the book itself or that of the author. Yellow refers to books which were not mentioned directly, even though the manuscript contained different works belonging to the same author. Black denotes books which were not mentioned in the manuscripts at all.

¹⁹ Darnton (1996), 191-193.

Table 4.2 – An Analysis of the presence of Robert Darnton's List of Prohibited French Best-Sellers within the National Library of Malta

| No. | Author | Name of Book | LIBR. 264 | LIBR. 265 | LIBR. 266 | LIBR. 602 | LIBR. 603 | LIBR. 604 | LIBR. 605 | LIBR. 606 |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Mercier | L'An 2440 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Pidansat de Mairobert? | Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | d'Holbach | Système de la nature | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Mercier | Tableau de Paris | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Raynal | Histoire philosophique | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Pidansat de Mairobert and Moufle d'Angerville | Journal historique... par M. de Maupeou | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Du Laurens | L'Arrétin | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Anon | Lettre philosophique | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Coquereau | Mémoires de l'abbé Terray | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Voltaire | La Pucelle d'Orléans | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Voltaire | Questions sur l'Encyclopédie | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Anon | Mémoires de Louis XV | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Pidansat de Mairobert | L'Observateur anglais | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | trans. by Lambert? or Fougeret de Monteburn? | La Fille de joie | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | d'Arles de Montigny? or d'Argens? | Thérèse philosophe | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Anon | Recueil de comédies et... chansons gaillardes | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | Linguet | Essai philosophique sur le monachisme | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | d'Holbach | Histoire critique de Jésus Christ | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | trans. By Bérage? ed. By Koeppen | Les Plus Secrets Mystères... de la maçonnerie | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Linguet | Requête au conseil du roi | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Aretino or Niccolò Franco? | La Putain errante | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | d'Holbach | La Christianisme dévoilé | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | Rousseau | Œuvres | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | Restif de la Bretonne | La Paysan pervers | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | Milot | L'École des filles | | | | | | | | |

Table, the other two being Voltaire and Linguet. This means that even though not all their titles included in Darnton's list of prohibited French best-sellers could be found within the National Library, other works of theirs were available. For instance, Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*, and his *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* might not have been included in the *Biblioteca*, but other titles were indeed included, such as his *Œuvres*, as well as his contentious *La Pucelle d'Orléans*. Individual titles such as these two mentioned works might have been included in the author's collected works. There seems to be a pattern with regard to that prohibited literature referred to by Darnton which seems to have never found its place within the *Biblioteca*. These works will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Interestingly, six of the ten foremost forbidden best-sellers were mentioned directly in the National Library's Manuscripts. Both of Mercier's works, *L'An 2440* and *Tableau de Paris*, were present at one point at the *Biblioteca*, as were Pidansat de Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri*, Raynal's *Histoire philosophique*, Du Lauren's *L'Arrétin*, Coquereau's *Mémoires de l'abbé Terray*, and Voltaire's *La Pucelle d'Orléans*.

4.5 – A Brief Overview of the Top Four Prohibited French Best-Sellers present within the National Library of Malta

L'An 2440, a utopian novel set in the year 2440, shines as the foremost best-seller on the list. The novelty of Mercier's work lay in its dabbling into science fiction and the future, and his description of a completely different world in a Paris of the future. In Mercier's work, the judicial system and public spaces have been reorganised, attire is practical, medicine is based on science, and there is no class distinction or privilege. Crucially, Catholicism and the Old Regime have collapsed, largely through the work of 'men of letters working by means of the printing press'.²¹ The greatest dangers lay in Mercier's challenge of religion and government, and in his advocating the belief that the printed word was the supreme force in history. *L'An 2440* was considered so treacherous that the author did not acknowledge his authorship of the novel until 1791 - twenty years after the first edition was published. Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*, another work among Darnton's top five prohibited best-sellers, described the Paris of his lifetime, while greatly criticising numerous

²¹ Darnton (1996), 115-136.

aspects of the Old Regime. *Tableau de Paris* was also published without the author's name, with the first edition being printed in 1781.

Pidansat de Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri* was the second-most popular prohibited book in pre-Revolutionary France. The work was set in a completely different world than that of *L'An 2440*, a world in which the men and women on the higher rungs of the social hierarchy came onto the stage. This was not just a work detailing the inner workings of the French court, but, above all, a work of political slander and serious reflection on the contemporary governmental situation. Pidansat de Mairobert's ultimate message was that the monarchy had shifted into a vile ministerial despotism.²² The *Anecdotes'* attack on the legitimacy of the Bourbon monarchy was treasonous, radical, and dangerous, particularly at a time when the role of the divine monarch came increasingly under scrutiny.

Raynal's *Histoire philosophique*, Darnton's fifth prohibited best-seller, was received with great enthusiasm in France. The work, an encyclopaedia detailing commerce and trade between the Far East and Europe, was a seminal one, advocating anti-colonialism in the age of the Enlightenment. It was seen by contemporaries as enabling the people to see the truth by tearing away the 'the fatal blindfold that covers the eyes of the human race'.²³

4.6 – Conclusion

The strong political, military French influence experienced in Malta under Hospitaller rule thus permeated onto the cultural level. One can confirm that the considerable presence of French literature in Malta did indeed include literature of a prohibited nature.

The next chapter will present a deeper look at the copies of these illicit works, and others, which survive down to this day at the National Library. Chapter 5 will also be investigating those works which appear to have been omitted from the *Biblioteca's* collection.

²² Ibid., 137-166.

²³ Ibid., 221.

Chapter 5

An Analysis of Surviving Copies and Omissions

Chapter 5

An Analysis of Surviving Copies and Omissions

5.1 – Introduction

Unfortunately, not all the prohibited books mentioned within the National Library's manuscripts and catalogues, discussed in Chapter 4, have survived to our day. The turbulent period which saw Malta pass from Hospitaller to French rule in 1798, and then into the British Protectorate in 1800, brought a marked decrease in the number of books present within the *Biblioteca Pubblica*. The estimated 80,000 volumes which existed prior to the French Blockade plummeted to just around 30,000 on the inauguration of the new building in 1812.¹

Of the 35 prohibited French best-sellers mentioned in the previous chapter, only 11 titles survive at the *Biblioteca*, confirming that a number of the books must either have been lost, stolen or plundered in the fourteen years between the departure of the Order of Saint John and the opening of the National Library's new building. Alternatively, the missing tomes might have been lost in the decades and centuries that followed. Sadly, there were also instances when the books could not be retrieved, or when the tomes had been so severely worm-eaten that they were not available for consultation. The prohibited books which did survive to our day, and which were available for consultation, were studied so as ascertain whether any information could be gained as to their location of print, date of publication, as well as to their ownership.

5.2 – Surviving Copies of the Prohibited French Best-Sellers at the *Biblioteca Pubblica*

Three editions of the foremost best-seller, *L'An 2440* were mentioned in the National Library's catalogues, all of which could be viewed. One of these editions ran into three volumes; the first volume was printed in French in 1786, but bore neither the location of print, nor the name of the author in print. The name of the author was however added manually, presumably after Mercier had acknowledged his authorship of the work. The frontpage was also accompanied by an illustration, however no sign of *ex-libris* was visible on the book.

¹ Albert E. Abela, 'The National Library', in *Treasures of Malta*, Vol. v, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 25-30.

Another copy of *L'An 2440* was available for viewing. This version was in fact a second edition printed in London in 1772, with the author being once again added by hand onto the frontpage. Written in French, this edition did not bear any illustrations or indications as to its ownership. Curiously, the catalogue which listed this publication remarked that it was a clandestine edition.

The most interesting case is that of the third copy of this novel. Published in London in 1774, this was annotated as being a new edition at the time of print. Written in hand on the book's title page, is the first instance of *ex-libris*. The owner of the book is recorded as being the Knight Bourgoing of Aquitaine, as per Figure 5.1. Chev. Bourgoing also listed the year 1774 in his own writing below his name, perhaps indicating that he purchased the book immediately after it was published.

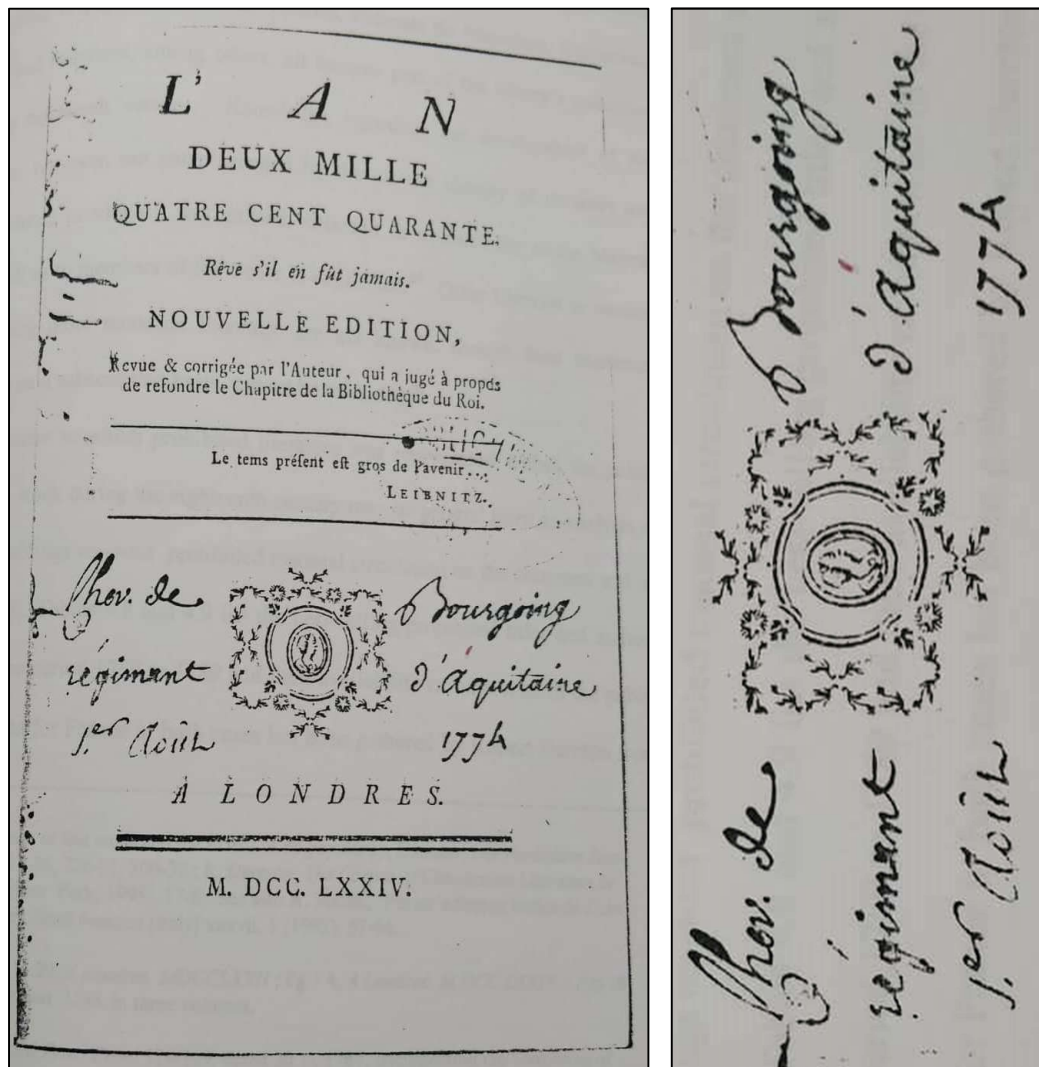


Figure 5.1 – Title page of *L'An 2440* indicating ownership of novel by Knight Bourgoing

Another work annotated as being a clandestine edition was that pertaining to *L'Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri*, printed in the original French and published in London in 1775. Pidansat de Mairobert's name was written in hand on the frontpage. The spine and cover of the book were falling apart, but one element did stand out. The book bore a golden coat of arms embossed onto both the front and back covers. As illustrated in Figure 5.2, the coat of arms shows two birds resting their claws on what is perhaps a flower or plant (similar to the clubs in a set of playing cards), surrounded by a number of similar plants or clubs, as well as what appear to be two T's at the top. The rosary beads with the Order's eight-pointed cross surrounding the crest, coupled with the Order's state flag showing a Latin cross (which takes up the uppermost portion of the crest) indicate that the owner of the book occupied a high position in Hospitaller society. The use of the rosary beads together with the Latin cross of the Order indicate that the owner was a *Bali Professo*. The use of the particular open crown at the top of the crest is also normally associated with a Marquis.² The ownership of such a book in a personal collection leads to the speculation that the Hospitaller in question was prosperous enough to actually have purchased the book, as well as others, since the same crest will appear on a number of forthcoming prohibited printed works.



Figure 5.2 – Coat of Arms embossed onto *L'Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri*

² Giacomo Bascapé, *L'Ordine sovrano di Malta e gli ordini equestri della Chiesa nella storia e nel diritto* (Milan, Casa Editrice Ceschina, 1959), 10, 20.

Unfortunately, this particular coat of arms was not present upon the tombstones at Valletta's Saint John's Co-Cathedral, implying that its owner was not buried within. However, a number of coats of arms bearing a striking resemblance to the above figures were identified within J.B. Rietstap's volumes detailing the heraldry of European families. A selection of these are visible in Figure 5.3. The first three coats of arms, for the families Gaggi, Uccellini, and Polini, bear the greatest resemblance to the golden coat of arms present on the National Library's copy of *L'Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri*. Bascapé states that crests having an oval shape (similar to the one pictured in Figure 5.2) have Italian origins.³ This would make the possibility of the golden coat of arms in question belonging to the Gaggi, Uccellini, or Polini families more credible, as all are attributed to Bolognian families.



Figure 5.3 – Coats of Arms bearing the greatest resemblance to the Golden Crest embossed onto *L'Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri*⁴

³ Bascapé (1959), 2.

⁴ Source for Figure 5.2: Rietstap, J.B., *Armoiries des familles contenues dans l'Armorial general* (Paris, Institut Héraldique Universel, 1903).

Two copies of Mercier's second best-seller, *Tableau de Paris*, were also present at the National Library, both available for consultation. The first copy which could be consulted was published in Amsterdam between 1782-88, running into twelve volumes. At print this had been a new edition, augmented with a number of corrections. Similar to Mercier's other works available at the *Biblioteca*, the name of the author was written in hand on the title page. No sign of ownership was visible on either volume of this work. The second copy of this work by Mercier was printed in Hamburg in 1781, and offers the most intriguing *ex-libris* in the entire collection of prohibited French bestselling literature at the National Library. In truth, the bookplate indicating the ownership of the book was blotted out (see Figure 5.4) so as to hide the name of the owner of the book, showcasing the fear of the owner at being discovered in possession of such a forbidden work.



Figure 5.4 – Title page of Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* showing *ex-libris* with name blotted out

A closer look at the book plate, shown in Figure 5.5, also leads one to speculate that the owner of this work possessed a great number of other books. Below the part bearing the owner's erased name, the book plate bears a quote from Seneca's *Epistulae*, stating that a multitude of books distracts the soul. It goes on to state that even if one cannot read all the books in his possession, it is enough when one has all the books he would like to read. Is this an indication that the anonymous bearer of the book had numerous other works, perhaps even forbidden works?

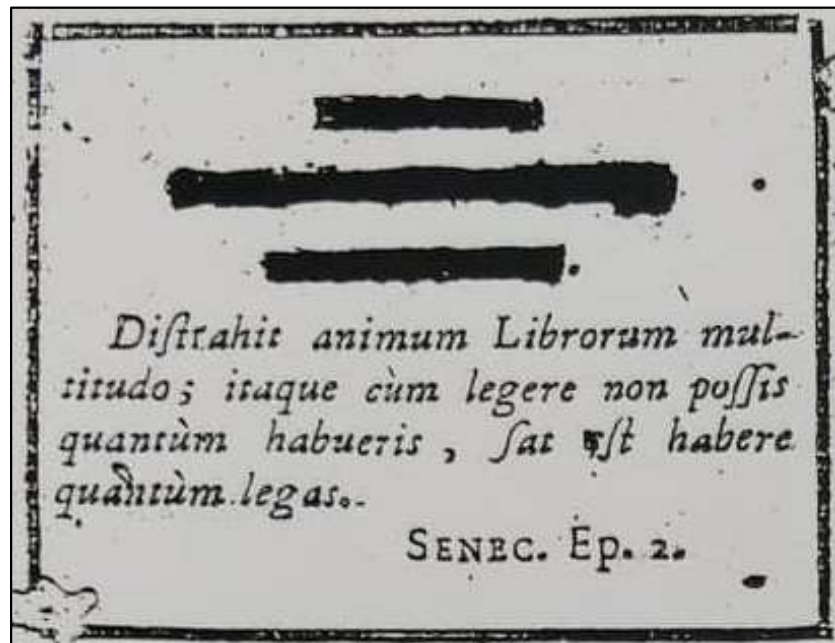


Figure 5.5 – A closer look at the Book Plate featured on Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*

The fifth prohibited best-seller, Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, featured twice in the *Biblioteca's* records. Neither of the two editions featured signs of its proprietor. The first edition, printed in seven volumes, was published in 1774 at La Haye. The author was added manually to the title page of the work, with the volumes containing multiple foldable maps to enable better understanding of the trade under study. The other available edition of this work was a relatively more recent one, printed in 1780 in Geneva, and published in five volumes. This was also the first instance where a portrait of the author was found next to the title page.

Moving further down the list of forbidden French works, we encounter a number of best-sellers which, albeit being mentioned in the National Library's manuscripts, were not listed in the sheaf catalogues giving their shelf-marks, and could thus not be retrieved. Such works included Du

Laurens' *L'Arrétin*, Voltaire's *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, Milot's *L'École des Filles*, and d'Holbach's *Système Social*.

The ninth prohibited best-seller, *Mémoires de M. l'Abbé Terrai Contrôleur General, contenant sa vie, son administration, ses intrigues et sa chute*, penned by Coquereau was published at La Chancellerie in 1776. The author remained uncredited on the front page of both volumes pertaining to these memoirs. Both volumes were embossed with the same elusive golden coat of arms as *L'Anecdotes*. Interestingly, these volumes are smaller than the other books consulted, in that they are small enough to fit into the owner's pocket, enabling greater mobility and making the forbidden literature harder to detect if carried by the owner.

Voltaire appeared thrice on the list of forbidden French best-sellers; back in France his works were in great demand, particularly due to their elements of anti-clericalism.⁵ In the case of *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, and *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, the former was listed in the Library's catalogues but was not available for consultation, whereas the latter was not mentioned in the catalogues. *La Pucelle*, a bawdy and licentious satirical poem discussing Joan of Arc, was full of impious blasphemies that mocked the mysteries of religion and the Catholic Church. Its most obscene and impure descriptions were considered by contemporaries to be able to corrupt the habits of any reader,⁶ making its disappearance from the *Biblioteca's* collection quite curious as perhaps this might have been done deliberately. The catalogues did however mention a collection of Voltaire's *Œuvres*, as well as his *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (both were on the list of the prohibited French best-sellers). These were unfortunately unavailable for consultation.

Two editions of Pidansat de Mairobert's *L'Espion Anglois, ou Correspondance Secrétée entre Milord All'eye et Milord All'ear* survive at the National Library. One edition was printed in London, spanning ten volumes between 1779-1784. Neither of these volumes bore any sign of *ex-libris*, with the name of the author being added manually to the front page. The other copy of this work was a first-edition published in two volumes in London in 1777, which did not credit the author in any way. This last version was also the smallest book to come under study (measuring just 15cm in length, against 9cm in width), once again enabling the reader to carry the work with

⁵ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 222.

⁶ Frans Ciappara, *Society and the Inquisition in Early Modern Malta* (San Ġwann, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd., 2001), 107.

them more easily. This edition is another bearing the golden coat of arms, further highlighting the purchasing power of its owner, who could clearly afford to own a number of prohibited publications.

The pre-eminent French *philosophe* Rousseau featured just once on the best-seller list; however, it was through the entirety of his *Œuvres*. The boom in Rousseauism following the author's death in 1778 ensured that his works flooded the market. His collective works were listed in the National Library's catalogues no less than six times, four of which were available for consultation. The first *Collection Complete des Œuvres* containing fifteen volumes was published in Geneva in 1782, and was marked as being a clandestine edition, though it contained no hints pertaining to the identity of its owner. A further set of Rousseau's *Œuvres* survives in the National Library, an edition which was printed in Paris in 1839, and thus falls outside of the period under study. Nevertheless, the edition contained no signs belonging to the original reader's identity.

Another clandestine collection of Rousseau's works, running into twenty-nine volumes, dates back to 1782 and was published in Geneva. This particular collection is credited as having been bequeathed to the National Library by Magistrate Edgar Parnis upon his death in 1913. Parnis bequeathed a total of 2,744 publication to the *Biblioteca Pubblica*, including his complete library consisting of pamphlets, manuscripts, books, and sundry printed material relating to the Hospitallers.⁷ These volumes contained no further indication of any previous ownership, though naturally they preceded Magistrate Parnis' birth by over a century. Strangely enough, a page was removed from the volume dealing with Rousseau's political works, between the title page and the *dédicace*. The cut seems to have been a precise, clinical one, making it unclear whether the page in question was removed to conceal any details considered dangerous, or whether the removal of the page was wholly unimportant. The Magistrate also left a small, pocket-sized edition of Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social* to the *Biblioteca*, published in Angers in the Third Year of the First French Republic.

The second instance in which the ownership of a prohibited book by a Hospitaller could be proven was that of Helvétius' *De l'Homme, de ses Facultés Intellectuelles et de son Education*. The edition

⁷ Galea, Michael, 'Edgar Parnis's bequest to the National Library', *The Times of Malta* 25 January 2015. Retrieved 21 April 2019. < <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150125/life-features/Edgar-Parnis-s-bequest-to-the-National-Library.553516>>.

still available at the National Library was published posthumously in London in 1774. The work's two volumes were written in French, with the book being almost pocket-sized. Both volumes bore an illustration of the same coat of arms on the inside of the front cover, shown in Figure 5.6.



Figure 5.6 – Coat of Arms illustrated and affixed onto the inside front cover of both volumes of *De l'Homme, de ses Facultés Intellectuelles et de son Education*

Upon consultation of the tombstones at Saint John's Co-Cathedral, the illustrated coat of arms may be attributed to a tomb bearing the Latin name *Johanni Antonio de Ildaris*.⁸ Further research revealed that three men were buried in this sepulchre, the tombstone of which is shown in Figure 5.7. The first was Giovanni Antonio de Ildaris, a Hospitaller and a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, Knight Commendator Grand Cross, and a nobleman of the ancient clan Bitonto.⁹

⁸ Pietro Paolo Caruana and Raffaele Caruana, *Collezione di Monumenti e Lapidi Sepolcrali dei Militi Gerosolimitani nella Chiesa di San Giovanni in Malta* (Valletta, Litografia P. P. Caruana, 1838-41).

⁹ Dane Munro, *Memento Mori: A Companion to the Most Beautiful Floor in the World* (Valletta, MJ Publications Ltd., 2005), 14, 55.

However, given that the prohibited work in question was published in 1777, it is impossible for the work to have belonged to Giovanni Antonio, as he died in 1749. The book is more likely to have belonged to one of his nephews, both interred in the same tomb. Frà Lorenzo de Ildaris and Frà Antonio de Ildaris were both Counts of the Holy Roman Empire and Knights Commendator of Jerusalem. Lorenzo, Count of Ildaris, died in June 1772 while exercising his maritime command as Admiral, while Antonio, Grand Prior of Capua, died in August 1783 at the age of 83.¹⁰ The National Library's copy of *De l'Homme* may thus have belonged to either of the two brothers. Despite not being French themselves, the work was written in French, highlighting the erudite nature of these two men, as well as the ability afforded to them by their noble birth to actually learn the French language. Perhaps more crucially, this is evidence of the ability of Hospitallers residing locally to maintain contact with the European mainland and its culture.



Figure 5.7 – Tombstone of Giovanni Antonio, Frà Lorenzo, and Frà Antonio de Ildaris ¹¹

¹⁰ Munro (2005), 18.

¹¹ Source for Figure 4.4: Munro (2005), 219.

The final prohibited work available for consultation was an edition of Lanjuinais' *Le Monarque Accompli*, published in Lausanne in 1774. Despite the three volumes of this work being heavily worm-eaten, its cover breaking at the seams, and having a number of pages stuck together, one feature remained prominent; the presence of the same golden coat of arms as was previously seen on other prohibited works. This infers that the holder of this coat of arms originally owned no less than four forbidden French bestsellers; *L'Anecdotes*, *L'Espion Anglois*, *Mémoires de M. l'Abbé Terrai*, as well as this edition of *Le Monarque Accompli*. The Hospitaller is assumed to have been affluent enough to be able to purchase this number of books, and presumably more, at a time when reading for leisure was a luxury only the literate elite could afford. His coat of arms could regrettably not be accurately attributed to a single individual, but its existence still proves that members within the Order possessed forbidden works, evidencing that these books infiltrated the sovereign institution despite their illegal status, wherever their owners came from. This further proves the ineffectiveness of the local Inquisition against members of the Order in the eighteenth century, and also that the policy requiring that the possessions of deceased Hospitallers should pass to the *Biblioteca Pubblica* upon their death was strictly adhered to.

5.3 – Omissions from the *Biblioteca Pubblica*

Ultimately, a number of forbidden French best-sellers were omitted from the *Biblioteca* and seem to have never found their way inside it. These works, numbering more than fifteen titles, were broadly anti-Christian, anti-political, or rabidly obscene.

Some authors, like the Baron d'Holbach, had the majority of their works barred from entering the Library. Four of his five works listed amongst the prohibited French bestsellers, namely *Système de la Nature*, *Histoire critique de Jésus Christ*, *La Christianisme dévoilé* and his *Le Bon-Sens*, did not make it into the *Biblioteca*. His *Système social* was listed in the National Library's catalogues, though the book did not survive to our day. What made d'Holbach so dangerous was his promotion of a rational and enlightened materialism, inspired by the teachings of Locke, Newton, and Descartes. The Baron attacked religion more openly than ever before, and 'rained bombs upon the house of the Lord', stating that it was 'irrational, dysfunctional, and worthy of deprecation'. He moreover rejected some of the fundamental cornerstones of Catholicism, such as original sin and miracles, while also being severely anticlerical by painting the history of Christianity as being 'a

phantasmagoria of cruelty, superstition, and socially harmful intolerance'.¹² His *Système de la Nature* went so far as to state that man was a product of nature, and seeking a supernatural entity for man's wellbeing had only brought misery to mankind. For d'Holbach, as advocated in his *Bon-Sens*, the existence of man encouraged empirical enquiry, rather than an argument for the cessation of such investigation. Together with Helvétius, d'Holbach damaged the belief system of educated readers considerably by propagating heretical beliefs through reasonable arguments, while exposing the numerous contradictions present in Christian teachings.¹³ This was once again taking place in print; loudly and openly, not in hushed conversations between conspirators.

Notorious pornographic works such as *Thérèse philosophe* were crucial in spreading attacks on Christianity by bringing forward libertine arguments which highlighted the falsity of all religions. The work also challenged the accepted values of the *Ancien Régime*, religious doctrines, and sexual habits, while promoting free thinking and free living. Since the dawn of time, religion had helped restrain the masses, so the spread of anti-religious ideas to the majority of the population was critical and signalled a drastic change. The ingenuity of this work lay in its presentation of philosophy as a story, one which was easy to follow. Eighteenth-century works often amalgamated pornography with political, philosophical, and anticlerical notions.¹⁴ Bawdy verse, evident in *La Lyre gaillarde*, provided the people with an inside view of the private lives of the great. Other popular erotic works omitted from the National Library include Niccolò Franco's *La Putain errante*, Restif de la Bretonne's *La Paysan perverti*, Rochette de la Morlière's *Les Laurier ecclésiastiques*, and *La fille de joie* (a translation of Cleland's *Fanny Hill*). One of the more scandalous, and most frequently reprinted erotic works, *Histoire de dom B..., portier des Chartreux*, never found its way into the *Biblioteca Pubblica*, possibly owing to its irreligious anti-clericalism. For these works, nothing was sacred and everything was questioned, ultimately conveying the same message that the Church and the Monarchy had been corrupted through the general deprivation of the Court.

Forbidden works which attacked the monarch himself, such as *Vie privée de Louis XV*, and *Mmoires de Louis XV*, were not recorded within the National Library's collection. Contemporary

¹² A.C. Kors, 'The Atheism of d'Holbach and Naigeon', in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, Michael Hunter and David Wootton (eds.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, 274.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 276-285.

¹⁴ Robert Darnton, *A Literary Tour de France: The World of Books on the Eve of the French Revolution* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018), 291.

history did not exist as a genre in the eighteenth century, as it was too much of a sensitive topic to evade censorship, so works of this kind took the form of defamatory biographies and scandalous political narratives. Cultured, sophisticated readers would recognise the gossip for what it was, but the innocent saw them as authoritative, historical accounts of the lives of the royals and of the past, as well as a warning of what might come.¹⁵ None of Linguet's three works mentioned in Darnton's list could be traced at the National Library; the political voyeurism present in his *Essai philosophique sur le monachisme*, his *Requête au conseil du roi*, and his *Lettre de M. Linguet à M. le comte de Vergennes* revealed the inner workings of a France painted as a police state, and helped in promoting the image of a country fearful of the *lettres de cachet* and the Bastille. Other libelle works which never made it into the *Biblioteca* included Pidansat de Mairobert's *Journal historique de la révolution opérée dans la constitution de la monarchie française par M. de Maupeou, chancelier de France*, the anonymous *Recueil de comédies et... chansons gaillardes*, and Bérage's translated *Les Plus Secrets Mystères... de la maçonnerie*.

5.4 – The Pull of Forbidden Literature

Forbidden literature, be it in Malta or in France, attracted different kinds of readers for different reasons, who in turn read and interpreted these works in different ways. What is interesting to one reader may be the different to another reader. Prohibited literature was smuggled into the market, but who read these works?

Precisely those who by their birth, their position, their knowledge, and their attachment to religion should be the first to condemn them. But on the contrary, if they merely hear something mentioned in a hushed tone about a new work of this kind, they run after it.¹⁶

Prohibited Literature was thus tempting, attracting even the men in the holiest of vocations, as alluring as the Biblical forbidden fruit. The ownership of illegal literature was almost fashionable, but this did not reduce the attention devoted to them by the highest officials as a serious matter. The situation was also true in the case of Malta; the Hospitallers, who ultimately fell under the leadership of the Pope, were not immune to the lure of these forbidden works.

We have seen that the danger in reading these works lay in the reaction they could incite, perhaps proving to be more dangerous in France than in Malta. The local situation was a unique one, the

¹⁵ Darnton (1996), 78.

¹⁶ Ibid., 223-224.

Maltese people were largely illiterate. It was the ruling Hospitallers and the few local educated elite who could read the prohibited French best-sellers rather than the majority of the Maltese population. This is not to say that the message these books sought to spread was not delivered, but the ground in which the seed was sown was different. In the case of France, ‘reading these bad books produces a disturbed spirit among the citizens and provokes them constantly to shake the yoke of submission, of obedience, and of respect.’¹⁷

5.5 - Conclusion

Forbidden literature had saturated the system, threatening domestic tranquillity and the submissive spirit of the people. No one was ashamed to be occupied with a so-called bad book which attacked the orthodox system of the Old Regime in France. These works then enabled the reader to discuss governmental issues and think philosophically. It is not easy to determine whether forbidden literature affected public opinion at all. Perhaps illegal literature was a reflection of the opinions and beliefs of the public itself, rather than vice-versa.¹⁸

The crucial characteristic underlying this chapter is the reality of Malta’s cosmopolitan nature in the eighteenth century, aided by the presence of the Order of Saint John on the Islands. Malta was not divorced from the European mainland. The Hospitallers residing locally held strong ties to their counterparts on the continent. The cultures, ideas, and philosophies gaining ground across Europe found their way to the Maltese Islands as well, and this has always been a key feature of Maltese identity. Despite being a set of minuscule islands, the situation was, and is, never insular.

¹⁷ Ibid., 223.

¹⁸ Ibid., 232-233.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The history of the book is a vital part of the history of any culture, and the history of the book ties directly into the history of libraries. Consequently, the history of the National Library of Malta, and its status as the Order's *Biblioteca Pubblica*, is crucial to the identity of the Maltese Islands and what it means to be Maltese. Even more critical are the books contained within, particularly the prohibited books which are indicative of what was considered a threat to the *status quo* and its survival.

The books of ancient libraries speak of the great social adventure of ideas. Beyond individual choices, they answer questions about social choices.¹ How much more important must the books of what was to be the Island's first public library be then? The wealth of a library is not the sum of the volumes it holds. It is rather the accumulation of all productive endeavours, historical or contemporary, made by authors, printers, binders, publishers, booksellers, collectors, librarians, funders, and readers.²

The European cultural influence permeated into the Maltese Islands through de Tencin's establishment of the *Biblioteca* in 1760, during a century similarly characterised by the founding of libraries across mainland Europe. The Order's attempts to establish a public library date back to the mid-sixteenth century, but it would take two centuries for their endeavours to be successful following the Chapter General of 1776. The *Biblioteca*'s collection would grow to include thousands of books, including prohibited works, on a variety of subjects in all the branches of the arts and sciences in a number of languages, with a strong presence of Italian, French, and Latin works, accompanied by works in a number of other European, Asiatic, and Arabic languages.

The dualistic nature of the Order of Saint John as a sovereign military and Christian order meant that the Hospitallers were wary of works attacking both Church and State. Ecclesiastical censorship was initially aimed at fighting heresy, but soon spread outside its own confines to attack works from a myriad of genres. Books were dangerous because they could spread heresy, perverse doctrine, and novel scientific ideas. Control of books enabled the control of culture, which in turn

¹ Noël Caruana Dingli, *Les Livres Français de Malte: Bibliothèques, Langues et Société (XVIII^e Siècle)* (Malta, Portitor Books, 2008), 334.

² Robert Darnton and Stephen Ferguson, 'Collecting and Researching in the History of Books', in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, Vol. lxvii, No. 1, (Autumn 2005), 56.

facilitated control of the masses, be it in Malta or abroad. Knowledge is power, one which we often take for granted today.

Analysis of de Tencin's own collection showed how forbidden works discussed various topics; from the more popular works about Religion, History, Politics, and the *Belles-Lettres*, to tomes dealing with Architecture, Naval and Maritime affairs, and Morals to name but a few. In the *Préface* of his own catalogue, de Tencin disagreed with his fellow Hospitallers who believed that science and literature should be divorced from soldiering and military career. De Tencin stated that it would be dangerous to leave prohibited books in the hands of everyone, rather than in the hands of people who knew how to separate the venom found within, and who could make good use of them.³ This justified the presence of such a large amount of forbidden literature within de Tencin's library; works which were penned by a variety of authors from across Europe and which still found their way to a small Island in the middle of the Mediterranean.

Prohibited literature within the Order's Public Library was not only found within de Tencin's founding collection. The transfer of books to the *Biblioteca* from the collections of deceased members following the 1776 Chapter General, as well as from bequests from individual Hospitallers such as Portocarrero, Sainte-Jay, or associations like the *Camerata*, all ensured that more books were amalgamated to the ever-growing collection, including forbidden books. This also ensured the maintenance of the Library's collection, as well as the sale of duplicate books, which would in turn garner finances for the purchase of further works for the *Biblioteca*.

Malta's ties to the European mainland came to the forefront in the study pertaining to the presence of prohibited French best-sellers within the Order's *Biblioteca Pubblica*. The Hospitallers shared the same tastes with their compatriots across the continent, and were able to obtain a number of prohibited books which were popular abroad, particularly French works. However, the most dangerous tomes, mostly political works which attacked monarchs, social commentary, and pornographic classics, did not find their way into the Library. The *livres philosophiques*, the genre considered as the favourite of the eighteenth century, did find its way into the *Biblioteca*. Indeed, thirteen out of thirty-five prohibited French best-sellers could be traced within the National Library, six of which were among the top ten French best-sellers.

³ National Library Malta NLM Libr. MS. 265 – *Préface of Catalogue Des Livres Du Bailly De Tencin dressé en 1756 et continue depuis lors.*

The eleven of these top prohibited French works which survive to our day helped prove the extensive connections which the local Hospitallers had with the continent. The few prohibited works which bore clear signs of previous ownership did not belong to a singular Langue, but rather came from Hospitallers hailing from Aquitaine and the Holy Roman Empire. Other works did bear signs of *ex-libris*, however these could not be attributed to an individual Hospitaller, though the Hospitaller in question appears to have hailed from Italy. Signs of attempted evasion from identification of the owner of a book were characteristic of the period under study, as were the omissions of the location of print and the name of the author.

Prohibited literature is thus seen to have attracted people from all walks of life, a temptation which could not be resisted, despite the danger it posed, despite the reactions it could incite. The confirmation that some Maltese elite themselves were familiar with prohibited literature can be confirmed through the cases brought in front of the local Inquisition. Forbidden works enabled their readers to think critically, to question their predicament, and to discuss the ideas these books brought forward. The cosmopolitan nature of the Maltese Islands, and the unique situation brought by the presence of the ruling Hospitallers, their members from various European countries, and their connections with Europe, proved to be the ideal location for the importation of prohibited works into the local *Biblioteca Pubblica*.

What people read has always been important to the development of culture and identity, and will continue to be important. The perusal of works which challenged the prevailing *status quo* enabled growth in the face of censorship and helped give a voice to the disaffection of the people. Malta was never just a backwater; an isolated group of islands at the edge of the European continent, but a dynamic centre of culture, populated by the same trends and fashions which were spreading across mainland Europe. The local Hospitallers, as well as the resident educated elite, emulated these trends and enabled their spread across the Islands. The development of the *Biblioteca Pubblica*, and the presence of prohibited literature within, played a crucial role in this. The Maltese culture remains influenced by foreign trends today; not just European, but global fashions. This is a feature which remains central to the Maltese Identity; the Islands may be detached geographically, but this detachment never hindered cultural development, and it is fair to believe that it never will.

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