

Le Louvre des Antiquaires
2 Place du Palais-Royal
75001 Paris (France)
tel. +33 (0)1 42 60 15 58 • fax. +33 (0)1 40 15 00 25
info@lesenluminures.com

2970 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60657 (USA)
tel. +773 929 5986
fax. +773 528 3976
chicago@lesenluminures.com

EGIDIO DI ASSISI [AEGIDIUS ASSISIENSIS], *Dottrina e detti notabili di Frate Egidio*
In Italian, decorated manuscript on paper
Italy (Northern or Central), c. 1450-1470

ii (paper) + 18 + ii folios on paper, most folios are reinforced with modern paper, with the exception of the middle bifolia of each quire (ff. 5-6, 14-15) which have traces of earlier script possible offset from parchment reinforcement strips, now removed, watermark, round letter 'N' consisting of two lines, similar to Piccard 28952, Ravenna 1456, and Piccard 28955, Rome 1450, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, two quires from a longer manuscript, lacking the last two folios in the second quire, now bound out of order (reconstructed collation, i^o [10 is now f. 18 in quire 2] ii^o [-9 and 10, following f. 17, with loss of text; f. 18, now bound incorrectly as the ninth leaf, should follow f. 9 in quire 1]), horizontal catchword middle lower margin, f. 18, frame ruled in ink with the vertical rules full-length (justification 155-154 x 100-97 mm.), written in a gothico-antiquo script in twenty-three long lines, guide letters visible within initials, majuscules in text filled with pale yellow, red rubrics, two-line alternately red and blue initials, f. 1, darkened, f. 17v, quite dark with mold spots, lower margin, stained in the upper margins and top outer corner throughout, more extensive and darker stains in the lower margins, affecting the text on a few folios, although it remains legible throughout except for part of the last three lines on f. 17rv, where there is also a hole, resulting in a loss of a few words of text at the bottom of the folio, fore-edge and lower edge damaged and uneven. Bound in modern vellum over pasteboard, in excellent condition. Dimensions 244 x c. 170 mm.

This fifteenth-century Italian manuscript includes a copy of one of the most influential early Franciscan texts, the *Sayings* of Blessed Giles of Assisi, who was an early and important follower of St. Francis. The *Sayings* is uncommon in North American collections; there are no copies listed in Schoenberg Database in any recent transactions. As it stands, complete in itself, the manuscript may, however, have once been part of a longer manuscript, possibly including the *Fioretti* of St. Francis, a text which is also rare. Further study of its linguistic features would also be of interest.

TEXT

ff. 1-17v, *Incomincia una bella e sancta doctrina del beato fratre egidio terço compagno di sancto francesco. Digli uitii et del uirtu capitolo primo*, incipit, "Lagratia di dio et de le uirtudi. Sono uia eschala disalire e montare al cielo Et cosi simalemente se luomo auesse//"; f. 18rv, [one folio from chapter nine] "//opregato idio chemelalieui ... e si lo mangiare bbono. Onde secosi di//";

Aegidius Assisiensis (Egidio di Assisi, c. 1190-1262), *Dottrina e detti notabili di Frate Egidio*, chapters 1-18, ending imperfectly in chapter 18 on f. 17v.; Arrigo Levasti, ed. *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1935, pp. 121-69; the text in this manuscript ending at p. 158, line 12 of chapter 18; also edited, Vian, 1995, volume 1, pp. 65-169, and Vian and Bargiel, 2001 (not available for

consultation). First printed edition in Italian, Florence, c. 1493; GW 266; Goff A63. *The Golden Sayings of the Blessed Giles of Assisi*, translated by Paschal Robinson, 1907, is an English translation of the Latin version of the text (discussed below), but English translations of the Italian text are included in many of the English translations of the *Fioretti* (for example, Arnold, 1900).

The text is frequently included in the modern Italian editions of the *Fioretti* of St. Francis; see Cesari, ed. 1902, pp. 397-467, line 5; and Bonino, ed., 1964, pp. 231-273, line 11. Now bound out of order; the text should read: ff. 1-9v (ending in chapter 9, "... tentatione e molte uolte" [Bonino, ed., 1964, p. 252, line 9]); continuing f. 18rv [Bonino, ed., 1964, p. 252, line 9- p. 254, line 18], and then continuing, with no breaks on f. 10, and concluding on f. 17v in chapter 18.

The Latin version of the text is known as *Aurea Verba* or the *Dicta beati Aegidii*; edited, *Dicta Beati Aegidii Assisiensis*, Quaracchi, 1905. The Latin text circulated in a number of different versions, with as many as thirty-three chapters, discussing topics including grace, the virtues and vices, faith, love, humility, penitence, prayer, and the reminder of the good death, among others. The Latin sayings were probably collected during Egidio's lifetime by Brother Leo (author of his *Vita*), or by Egidio's companions. The Italian translation is attributed by some authors to the noted Florentine religious poet Feo Belcari (1410-1484) (Robinson, 1907, p. lix). The editors of the Latin text of the *Dicta* list eight manuscripts of the Italian translation (*Dicta*, 1905, pp. xv-xvi; also listed in Robinson, 1907, p. lix, note 125). To my knowledge, the text of the Italian translation, and its relationship to the various Latin versions have not yet been completely studied (the most recent editions, Vian, 1995, and Vian and Bargiel, 2001, were not available for consultation). This manuscript includes the same eighteen chapters as the modern editions of the *Fioretti* printed by Cesari and Bonino, and in the edition printed by Levasti, 1935.

The Blessed Egidio (Aegidius or Giles of Assisi; c. 1190-1262) was the third and most important companion of St. Francis, joining the brothers in 1208. St. Francis called him "our knight of the Round Table," and he followed Francis faithfully. He was known for his simple, heartfelt preaching; at the end of his life in a hermitage at Monteripido near Perugia he devoted himself to mystical contemplation. His sayings, circulating in several versions, deal with the virtues and vices, solitude, patience, prayer and contemplation, and have been compared with the Sayings of the Desert Fathers. Giles was uneducated, but his oral teachings were treasured by his companions and recorded in a Latin version, which was subsequently translated into Italian and other languages. St. Bonaventure held these sayings in high esteem, and they have been an influential text in the Christian mystical and ascetic tradition, treasured in particular for their faithful reflection of early Franciscan life and teachings.

The *Detti* of Egidio often circulated in manuscripts of *Fioretti di Santo Francesco d'Ascesi* or the Little Flowers of Saint Francis. This is one of the best known of all Franciscan sources, many of which, like this one, have their basis in the oral tradition. Not a formal biography as such of Saint Francis (c. 1182-1226), the *Fioretti* is composed of a large collection—a "garden of flowers" or florilegia—of Franciscan stories and legends, some directly concerned with Francis himself and some concerned with the second or even third generation of his disciples and followers. In the preliminary census of *Fioretti* manuscripts by G. Petrocchi (Petrocchi, 1957, pp. 311-325), based mainly on manuscripts in Italian collections, nos. 8, 24 and 32, include the *Detti* of Egidio.

There are no manuscripts of the Italian version of this text in the Schoenberg Database, and very few copies of the *Aurea Verba* in Latin listed (one copy was listed by Quaritch, 2010; see also Textmanuscripts archive, no. 191). There is one manuscript in Lawrence, Kansas, Spencer Research Library MS A35, which has been described as including Franciscan writings in Italian that may include a copy of this text. Even manuscripts of the *Fioretti*, which may or may not include the *Detti*, are surprisingly rare; only two copies are recorded in North American collections in De Ricci's *Census* and its *Supplement*, one in the Scheide Collection (Princeton) and another in the Boston Public Library (II, p. 2129, and Faye and Bond, Supplement, p. 213). Surprisingly few examples occur in the Schoenberg Database and none at all among recent transactions.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Piccard Online:

<http://www.piccard-online.de/ergebnis1.php>

Research Instruments for the Study of Franciscans

<http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm>

S. Vecchio. "Egidio di Assisi," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, L'Enciclopedia Italiana*:

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/egidio-di-assisi_\(Dizionario_Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/egidio-di-assisi_(Dizionario_Biografico)/)

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