

**Giovanni Battista Tedaldi, *Discorso sull' Agricoltura* (Discourse on Agriculture)
In Italian, manuscript on paper
Italy (Florence), dated 1569**

ii + 41 folios on paper, three unidentified watermarks, front flyleaves, a coat of arms a flower in bend and four volutes enclosing a letter 'A', on the paper used for the text, a star with 6 vertices surmounting a circle, contemporary foliation by the scribe of the text in Roman numerals, Ciiij-Cxxxxiiij [103-144], lacking c. 20 leaves from the beginning of Tedaldi's work, our manuscript was probably originally part of a composite manuscript in which 102 leaves preceded our text (collation i¹² ii¹⁶ iii¹³ [a singleton followed by six bifolia]), no signatures or catchwords, no visible ruling (justification c. 165 x 120 mm.), written by Cesere dell'Avacchio (who dated and signed the work at the end, on f. Cxxxxiiij) in brown ink in a very clear cursive hand, written in a single column on c. 24-26 lines, water stains in the lower margins of ff. Cv-Cxiiij and some other minor stains, the ink has somewhat stained the paper on ff. Cxvi-xviii but the text is perfectly legible, a few small worm holes on ff. Ciiij, Cxxxi, Cxxxiiij and Cxxxxiiij but very little loss of text, a small tear on f. Cxii, the outer edge of f. Cxv slightly worn, f. Cxxxi (singleton) detached from the lower sewing cords, but in overall very good condition. CONTEMPORARY BINDING of limp vellum, text block detached from the covers, some stains on the vellum, but in overall good condition. Dimensions 199 x 138 mm.

This is a fascinating and little-known practical agricultural treatise – on planting and caring for peach, apple, fig, chestnut, almond, apple, olive, orange, lemon and other trees, as well as fruits and vegetables like pomegranates, capers, and artichokes. The author presented a copy of this work to Cosimo de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Florence in 1571; our manuscript, signed by an otherwise unknown scribe and dated 1569, known in seven manuscript copies, appears to be an earlier version, never printed. Its keen observations and advice to the Renaissance scholar in the time of the Medici are also accessible in their practicality to today's garden enthusiast.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript is dated 1569 on ff. Ciiij (upper margin) and Cxxxxiiij (upper margin and colophon). The scribe provides his name and the date when he finished copying the text in a colophon at the end of the work on f. Cxxxxiiij: "C. A. fecit manu propria / Anno 1569 / Ceseri dell'Ariacchio." We have not been able to find further information about this scribe.
2. Gustavo Camillo Galletti (1805-1868), bibliophile and collector, of a noble Florentine family: his book stamp is on f. Ciiij; book number "150" inscribed in black ink on a pasted label inside the front cover. He gathered his important collection by acquiring entire libraries of illustrious bibliophiles, including the libraries of the Marquis Riccardi Vernaccia and the abbot Tommaso Gelli. In 1879, a large part of his library was acquired by Baron Landau (see below).
3. The manuscript was part of the famous collection amassed by Baron Horace de Landau (1824-1903): his engraved bookplate with the monogram of his initials is found on the front pastedown, with the number "3185" assigned to this book. Horace de Landau, a

Hungarian citizen, was named the Rothschild bank's representative in Turin in 1862. When he retired in 1872, he decided to devote himself to collecting manuscripts, books and art, and built a library with more than 60,000 volumes, considered one of the most beautiful in Europe (see "Villa Landau-Finaly," Online Resources). The collection included important illuminated manuscripts, incunabula, Bibles and liturgical books, first and rare editions, poetry collections, medical, surgical and mathematical treatises, miniatures, and engravings; a catalogue was published in 1885-1890. After Baron Landau's death, the collection was inherited by his niece, Florence Finaly (1877-1938), who continued to augment it. She was married to Henri de Cossette, Vicomte de Cossette, whose armorial bookplate is pasted on the recto of the first flyleaf. Selections of the Landau-Finaly library was sold at Sotheby's in 1948-1949.

TEXT

ff. 103-144, Giovanni Battista Tedaldi, *Discorso sull' Agricoltura*, chapters 23-69, incipit, "Instructione, e modo degli antichi per piantare arbori d'ogni sorte e d'ogni mese senza tener conto di luna crescente, o scema ... scemi al cuocere governo si gli ulivi per le stoppie, e dasci lor da coiacci a modo. Finis"; [f. 144v, blank].

Giovanni Battista Tedaldi, *Discorso sull' Agricoltura*, chapters 23-69; these chapters are found in Marco Lastri's 1776 edition on pp. 39-104 (see Literature). This text was first published only in 1776 on the initiative of the Florentine literary critic and botanist Marco Lastri, who was also passionate about agriculture. Lastri's edition is based on Tedaldi's final version of the text which he dedicated it to the Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574), Grand Duke of Florence; the edition includes this dedication dated February 2, 1571. Our manuscript provides an earlier version of Tedaldi's *Discorso*, as it was available to our scribe in 1569, when he made his copy. The overall content and chapter structure are the same, but the wording occasionally differs from the edition.

The existence of this early manuscript copy raises questions about the circulation of the text in the two centuries before it was finally printed. To our knowledge there is currently no scholarly survey of the surviving manuscripts. Five manuscripts are listed in Kristeller's *Iter italicum* (Online Resources), one in Modena, Bibl. Estense, Gamma V 4, 9, 1 (oddly listed as fifteenth century, and dedicated to Ant. de' Cambi; Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, MS 1464, sixteenth century; Dresden, Sächsische Labesbibliothek Ob 22, sixteenth century; Florence, Bib. Riccardiana MS 3944, seventeenth century, and Milan, Bibl. Ambrosiana, MS Z 187 sup., seventeenth century. The text appears to be very rare on the market; one copy was sold by Forum, "The Rothamsted Collection, day 1: Rarities from the Lawes Agricultural Library," July 10, 2018, lot 137, also from the second half of the sixteenth century.

Our manuscript lacks chapters 1-22 (c. 20 ff.); since the foliation is evidence that 102 leaves are missing in the beginning of the manuscript, another work (or works) must have been bound before Tedaldi's treatise in what was originally a composite manuscript. The work, which includes the author's personal observations, is a comprehensive guide to horticulture. It begins with chapter 23, which offers instructions for planting trees in different months of the year. Chapters 24-26 continue with guidance on planting trees, chapters 27 and 29 discuss fig trees, chapter 28 includes advice on fig, apple and other fruit trees, chapter 30 offers advice for freeing apple trees of woodworm, chapter 31 concerns olive trees, chapters 32-34 treats peach

trees (how to plant them, make them last a long time, and grow big fruits), chapter 35 on orange trees, chapter 36 on orange and lemon trees, chapter 37 on almond trees, chapter 38 on hazelnut trees, chapter 39 on walnut trees, chapter 40 on plum trees, chapters 41, 43 and 44 on pruning fruit trees, chapter 42 discusses which fruit trees not to grow in greenhouses, chapter 45 tells how to produce fruit starting from the first year of planting, chapter 46 is on pomegranates, chapter 47 on chestnut trees, chapter 48 on blackberries, chapter 49 on roses, chapter 50 on artichokes, chapter 51 on capers, chapter 52 on espaliered trees, chapter 53 on spiders, chapter 54 on preventing birds from eating the fruit, chapters 55-56 on caterpillars, and chapter 57 on the weather and which phase of the moon is good for cutting down trees. These chapters on agriculture are followed by the final twelve chapters (58-69), each dedicated to a calendar month and containing information on the work that should be done in that month in the fields and gardens.

In his dedication to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo I de' Medici, Tedaldi explains the aim of his "brief discourse," which is to describe how all kinds of herbs, fruits and plants are cultivated, nourished and shaped in gardens and farms, and how, according to the fundamental principles of the science of agriculture, they are best made to grow and bear fruit:

"Io è fatto un breve discorso d'agricoltura, nel quale vi si trattano le maggiori importanze di essa, cioè; come si generano, si nutriscono e si formano nelle viscere della terra, come madre e principal fondamento di tale scienza, tutte quelle sorte di erbe, di frutti e di piante, che sono in uso così negli orti, come nei poderi coltivati, e similmente in qual lato, e con qual arte si facciano meglio crescere e fruttare"

He states that his work is based on several years of diligent study of writers on agriculture: "...le quali cose io ò con assidua lezione e studio di molti anni di tutti li scrittori d'agricolture, ritrovate e verificate." A much more substantial work on the subject, *La gran fonte dell'agricoltura*, which he planned in five volumes, was never completed.

Giovanni Battista Tedaldi (1495-1575) entered the service of the Medicis in 1522, when he was made undersecretary to the condottiero Giovanni delle Bande Nere (1498-1526), the son of Giovanni de' Medici and Caterina Sforza. After the condottiero's death, Tedaldi would serve his son, Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, to whom he dedicated his *Discorso on agriculture*. Tedaldi held several important positions, including vicar of San Giovanni Valdarno (1554), Vicopisano (1557), captain of Fivizzano (1559), consul of the sea at Pisa (1561), captain of Arezzo (1565-66), Pistoia (1569) and Pisa (1574-75); in 1562 he was elected one of the forty senators of Florence.

Tedaldi's treatise belongs to a long tradition of Florentine Renaissance works on topics related to gardening, horticulture, and agriculture. The Medici rulers of Florence from the fifteenth through the seventeenth century were enthusiastic supporters of natural history and the botanical sciences. Cosimo the Elder (1389-1464), for example, acquired a rare manuscript of Pliny's *Natural History*; and Landino's Italian translation of this essential work, published in 1476, was very popular in Florentine circles, as were classical texts praising the delights of pastoral life. Inspired by these ideas, fifteenth-century thinkers such as Leon Battista Alberti, developed new ideas on the importance of gardens in urban environments. The Grand Duke, Cosimo I, to

whom Tedaldi dedicated his treatise, is known to have been keenly interested in botany, and sponsored botanical gardens in both Pisa and Florence.

As far as we have been able to determine, the manuscript circulation of Tedaldi's *Discorso*, and the reasons why it remained unpublished for so long, have not yet been discussed in the scholarly literature. The manuscript would be of interest to anyone researching attitudes towards landscape and gardens within Florentine circles, and more generally during the Renaissance. Beyond its historical interest, this very practical treatise on gardening, also holds interest to modern gardening enthusiasts.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Tedaldi, G. B. *Discorso dell'agricoltura di Giovambatista Tedaldi, colla giunta di alcune memorie di Marco Lastri*, Firenze, 1776 (Google books)

<https://books.google.fr/books?id=eHRxo0Xd5ZAC&lpg=PA4&dq=tibaldi%20Agricoltura&hl=fr&pg=PR1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Franco Cristelli, "Giovan Batista Tedaldi," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 95, 2019 (Treccani)

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-batista-tibaldi_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/

Villa Landau-Finaly

<https://www.sorbonne.fr/en/the-chancellerie-universites-paris/la-villa-finaly/histoire/1864-1903-la-villa-landau-finaly-une-bibliotheque-de-60-000-ouvrages/>

Iter Italicum, an online edition available by subscription from Brill of Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter Italicum: A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other Libraries*, six volumes, Leiden and London, 1963-1992 (title varies)

<https://www.itergateway.org/resources/iter-italicum>

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