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A COMPLETE MILANESE TAROT OF 1880: EDOARDO DOTTI'S WOODCUT PACK FOR THE GAME OF TAROCCHI, NO COMPLETE EXAMPLE TRACED IN A PUBLIC COLLECTION

78/78 CARDS, WITH THE DUTY STAMP DATED 1880

[Tarocchi, Lombard pattern]. Milan: Edoardo Dotti, [1880].

78 cards (106 × 56 mm), woodcuts coloured by stencil in light and dark blue, crimson, orange and pink; single-ended figures; the back paper folded over the edges of the face in the Italian manner; square corners. Backs printed in pink and yellow with an interlace pattern, four corner ornaments and «MILANO» in a cartouche at the foot. Ace of Coins lettered «EDOARDO DOTTI / MILANO» round the octagonal 50-centesimi duty stamp of the Kingdom of Italy, with the dated handstamp of the stamp office, 1880; Two of Cups lettered «FABBRICA DI MILANO».



Il Matto and the back of the cards,
printed in pink and yellow with «MILANO» in a cartouche.



Detail under magnification: the blue laid by stencil over the black woodcut line.

The pack is complete: fifty-six cards in the Italian suits of Coins, Cups, Swords and Batons, each of ten numerals and four full-length courts, Fante, Cavallo, Regina and Re, with swords and batons interlaced on the numerals; twenty-one trumps numbered in Roman figures and titled in Italian, from I *Il Bagattel* to XXI *Il Mondo*; and the unnumbered *Il Matto*.



The twenty-one numbered trumps, from I Il Bagattel to XXI Il Mondo.



The sixteen court cards: Fante, Cavallo, Regina and Re of each suit.

The maker signs the Ace of Coins, «EDOARDO DOTTI / MILANO», round the duty stamp, as the Italian law of 1862 required; the Two of Cups reads «FABBRICA DI MILANO», made in Milan, and «MILANO» is lettered again on the Empress's seat and on the backs.



The Ace of Coins, signed «EDOARDO DOTTI / MILANO» round the duty stamp, and the Two of Cups with «FABBRICA DI MILANO».

The pack can be dated precisely. The duty stamp on the Ace of Coins, an octagonal 50 centesimi with the head of Mercury turned to the right on a lined ground, printed in black, is the type issued only from January 1880 to December 1882; the crowned date stamp above it, «Ufficio del Bollo Str[aordinari]o», was struck by the stamp office when the stamped aces were released to the maker, and it reads 1880. The stencil colours lie over the date stamp: the ace was coloured after it had been stamped.



Detail of the Ace of Coins: the 50-centesimi duty stamp with the head of Mercury, and above it the crowned date stamp, under the stencil colours.

On the Empress and the Emperor the shields bear the white cross of Savoy on red in place of the imperial eagle, as on Lamperti's woodcut tarot of 1859–61, after Lombardy passed to the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1859. Trump XIII is titled *La Morte*, where some earlier Dotti packs read *Uguaglianza*.



III L'Imperatrice and IIII L'Imperatore, with the white cross of Savoy on their shields, and XIII La Morte.

The design is the Lombard pattern, as Michael Dummett named it, a narrow-format Italian derivative of the Tarot de Marseille, classified by the International Playing-Card Society as Pattern Sheet 3 (formerly IT-1.1); the Society's list of Milan makers of the pattern includes «Eduardo Dotti (c.1880)».

French captions on the earliest Italian packs of this kind point to French influence behind the eighteenth-century revival of tarocchi, which took hold at about the same time in Piedmont and in Lombardy. The Lombard cards were made in the narrow Italian format, almost invariably with the back paper folded over the edges, and followed the Tarot de Marseille closely, with a few features of their own; French-captioned examples of the eighteenth century are recorded from Bologna, Modena, Padua, Gorizia, Trieste and Wels, and from Serravalle in Piedmont. In Milan, where the game was played from about 1740, the cards were later printed with Italian captions until the last years of the nineteenth century.

Two Gumppenberg tarots of the Napoleonic years read «Regia Fabbrica di Milano», the state card factory he was called to run in 1809. The words «Fabbrica di Milano», made in Milan, recur on the Two of Cups of woodcut tarots by Gumppenberg, by his son-in-law Lattanzio Lamperti, by Teodoro and Edoardo Dotti, by their contemporary Giuseppe Sironi and later by Bordoni. Under Austrian rule the Lombard duty stamp on Milanese tarots was struck on the King of Batons, which often carried the maker's name as well; the Italian law of 1862 moved the stamp to the Ace of Coins and required that card to bear the maker's name, as here.

This was a pack for play. In Lombardy the seventy-eight-card tarot served the four-handed partnership game of tarocchi, as well as Reseghino and the Tarocc'Ombre bidding games; in these Lombard games, unlike those of Piedmont, the World ranks above the Angel.

EDOARDO DOTTI (born 1836) was the son of the Milanese card maker Teodoro Dotti (born 1805); both dates come from Alberto Milano's research in the Milan population

registers. Teodoro is listed in the Milan directories as a card maker by 1839, at Ferdinando Gumppenberg's address in piazza San Paolo, and from 1841 at his own address nearby; an engraved Dotti tarot of the 1860s is signed both «Fabbrica Fratelli Dotti» and «EDOARDO DOTTI». From 1870 the directories list the firm under Edoardo's name, in via Borghetto 16 and, by 1879, in via Stella 16 («Dotti Edoardo, fabbr. di carte da giuoco»); as a copperplate printer of playing cards he won a bronze medal at the Milan printing exhibition of 1879, and he received an honourable mention at the Esposizione Nazionale of 1881. In the 1880s the business passed to E. Colombo & C. at the same address. Besides this woodcut tarot, the Dottis issued an engraved version of the Soprafino tarot that Carlo Della Rocca engraved for Gumppenberg.

CENSUS: no complete example of Edoardo Dotti's woodcut tarot has been traced in the public collections whose catalogues can be searched. The packs recorded at the British Museum (Schreiber bequest, 54 cards), the MAK in Vienna (two packs of 62 and 40 cards, the first stamped 22 June 1880), the Beinecke Library at Yale (64 cards in nine incomplete sets) and the Penn Museum in Philadelphia (76 cards) are all incomplete; a further 78-card Dotti tarot at the Penn Museum is catalogued without description or image.

CONDITIONS: complete, 78/78, in good condition. Light soiling to the six of Cups and the three of Swords; small brown stains and a crease to the seven of Batons; a small raised daub of green paint, applied by hand, on one of the dogs of trump XVIII.



The seven of Batons, with small brown stains and a crease,
and trump XVIII, with the daub of green paint on the left-hand dog.

REFERENCES: S. R. KAPLAN, *The Encyclopedia of Tarot*, vol. I, New York: U.S. Games Systems, 1978, p. 160, and vol. II, New York: U.S. Games Systems, 1986, pp. 220–221, 371–373; F. M. O'DONOGHUE, *Catalogue of the Collection of Playing Cards bequeathed to the Trustees of the British Museum by the late Lady Charlotte Schreiber*,

London: Longmans & Co., 1901, p. 6, no. 6; M. DUMMETT, *The Game of Tarot*, London: Duckworth, 1980, pp. 196–198; M. DUMMETT and J. MCLEOD, *A History of Games Played with the Tarot Pack: The Game of Triumphs*, Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004, vol. I, pp. 111–124; International Playing-Card Society, *Pattern Sheet 3*, «Unnamed (IT-1.1)», https://i-p-c-s.org/pattern/ps-3.html.



Il Matto, XV Il Diavolo, XIII La Morte and X Ruota della Fortuna.

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