

Prayer in verse (*goigs*), dedicated to Saint Francis Xavier (1667)
which was usually recited in processions and liturgical celebrations
in Catalonia

[*GOIGS DEL GRAN APOSTOL DE LAS INDIAS SAN Francisco Xavier* (Incipit: PUIX que à Deu ha conquistat / las Indias vostre valor...), Barcelona: en Casa de Lacavallería, undated.]

[A sheet of laid paper of approximately 320 x 215 mm (printed area: 285 x 160 mm), retracted in the margins around some parts of the perimeter. Text in octosyllabic verses, in Catalan, contains a hymn of exaltation, of the *goigs* genre, dedicated to Saint Francis Xavier (1506-1552), a member of the Society of Jesus, and a Catholic evangelizer in the Far East between 1541 and 1552. Typographic border, text in two columns, separated by a decorative bar with symmetrical motifs of Arabic inspiration. The header features a xylographic engraving, with the portrait of Saint Francis Xavier. In good condition. Published in Barcelona in 1677, according to Palau¹, in the printing house of Antonio Lacavallería Dulach².]

Goigs is the Catalan equivalent of the Spanish *gozos*, and the English *joys*. It is used in the tradition of Book History to refer to a type of *flyer* that was especially popular in Catalonia, though not only there, during the 16th and 17th centuries. These are one-side printed sheets featuring an exaltation poem dedicated mainly to the Virgin Mary, but also to Jesus Christ, and other emblematic saints. They were used in processions, pilgrimages and religious celebrations, contemplating specific moments for those types of exaltation. Their rather circumstantial nature has meant that few, among the many printed *goigs*, have reached the present day. Since the popularization of the printing press at the beginning of the 16th century, this kind of texts were frequently required by religious corporations and parishes in Catalonia, where a singular Culture of the *Goigs* developed centred around these prayers. This phenomenon has not been recorded with equal intensity in other regions of the Iberian Peninsula, nor, more broadly, of Europe³.

The origin of this practice, however, goes back centuries. As early as the 12th century, songs of the sort circulated in verse and prose, exalting the Virgin Mary's *joys* or *moments of plenitude*

1 Antonio Palau y Dulcet, *Manual del librero hispanoamericano*, Barcelona, Librería Palau, 1953, Volume VI (GH), No. 103304.

2 The printing press of the Lacavallería Dulach played a leading role in Catalonia during the second half of the 18th century. Antonio Lacavallería Dulach used to print alongside his brother Pedro. In turn, Pedro's son, Juan, continued the printing business, despite being a lawyer, a great Latinist and a philologist. He left, as result of his personal research, some relevant works: *Bibliotheca Musarum sive Phrasium poeticarum epithetorum, synonymorumque cum interpretatione hispana thesaurus* (1681), a treatise on poetic rhyme, and the *Gazophylacium Catalano-Latinum, dictiones phrasibus illustratas, ordine literario comprehendens, cui subijcitur irregularium verborum elenchus* (1696), a Catalan-Latin scientific dictionary.

3 At present, there still exists in Catalonia a society called [Amics dels Goigs](#) (Friends of the Goigs Society), dedicated to gathering and collecting this type of pieces.

(Annunciation, Visitation, Birth of Jesus, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation of the Child in the Temple, Descent of the Holy Spirit, Assumption, etc.), and that same model was, since the twilight of the Middle Ages, applied to other characters of the Catholic liturgy.

Two important general consequences follow from the fact that these pieces circulated as flyers and make them an especially valuable item. In the first place, their ephemeral nature has not favoured their conservation, which is why few copies of each *goigs* edition remain today. Secondly, their circumstantial and utilitarian character was conducive of the introduction of slight variations from one edition to another, thus creating different versions of the same exaltation, a fact that increases the possibility that extant pieces are *unique*.

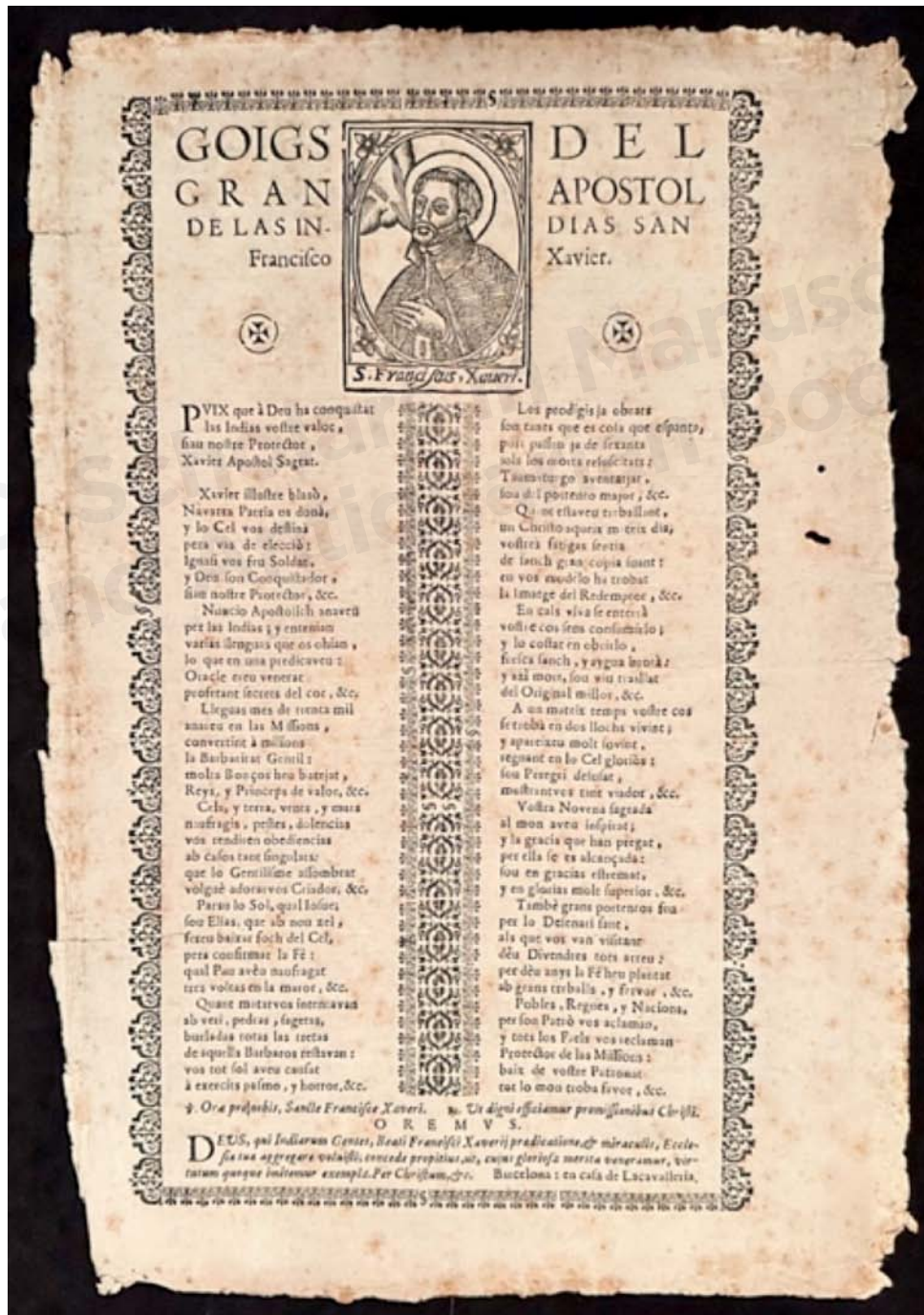
Moreover, the historical importance of the document is worthy of special attention. Francisco de Jasso y Azpilicueta was a Spanish missionary born in Navarra (Spain) in 1506, who died in Shangchuan Island (China) in 1552. He was canonized in 1622 by the Catholic Church under the name of Saint Francis Xavier. From 1528 he studied in Paris, where he met Ignatius of Loyola, whom he accompanied in the creation of the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuit Order. This was a religious corporation strongly oriented towards the evangelization of new territories, such as the Americas, Africa, or Asia, and later on open to acculturation. Therefore, soon after the European military success, it became a huge civilizing-religious international project. After attempting to travel to the Holy Land as a missionary, which he did not achieve, Francisco de Jasso y Azpilicueta was sent to Mozambique in 1541, from where he continued on to India, then to Malaysia, and eventually to Japan, where he would reside for several years, carrying out remarkable evangelizing work. Already into his mature years, in 1552, he ventured into Chinese territory, where, however, he failed to achieve his purposes and died in December that same year.

The poem printed in these *goigs* exalts the actions and deeds of Saint Francis Xavier: he was born in Navarra, where he is patron saint; he was apostolic nuncio in the Indies; he studied and mastered the languages of the peoples with whom he came into contact and through which he preached the word of God; he travelled more than 30,000 leagues in his pastoral work; he survived shipwrecks, plagues and diseases; he dodged stones, arrows and other dangers; he worked wonders everywhere, imitating Christ in all his actions, and that for all these deeds many peoples, kingdoms and nations claim him as their protector. The text culminates with a prayer in Latin, printed in italics, which reads: *Pray for us, Saint Francis Xavier, so that we may reach the promises of Christ with dignity. Let's pray. God, who wanted, through the preaching and miracles of Blessed Francis Xavier, to add the inhabitants of the Indies to your Church, favourably grant that, by venerating his glorious merits, we also imitate the example of his virtues. For Christ, etc.*

The musicality of the poem, by an anonymous author, deserves a separate paragraph. It made up of octosyllable sextets, in consonant rhyme, although with a somewhat loose structure and an ABBACD pattern. The sound plot is sweetly musical, which is why the document can be testimonial for the elusive field of studies of Past Orality, a topic that has always been explored by linguistics.

Thus, given its rarity and uniqueness, along with its value as a testimony of Catholic religiosity in Early Modernity, its role in reviving buried forms of orality, its standing as cultural testimony of Catalan identity, and its impact in revealing interesting aspects of European religious

expansionism in its contact with the Otherness of the Far East, this document deserves to be housed in specialized libraries or protected by a private collection that recognizes its intrinsic value, and its future significance.



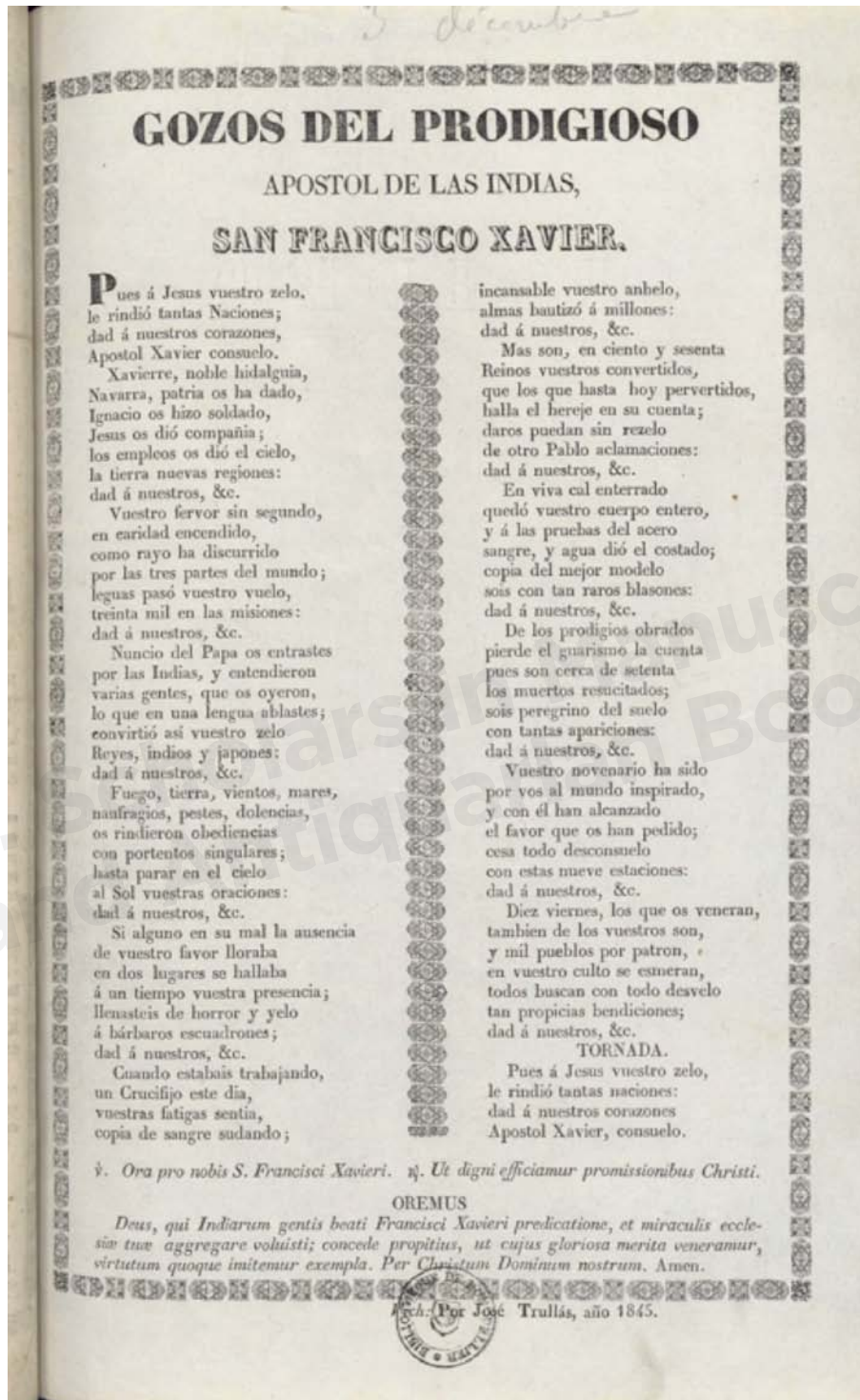
Goigs del Gran Apostol de las Indias San Francisco Xavier (in Catalan)
 Barcelona: Antonio Lacavallería Dulach, [1677].
 Engraving, 285 x 160 mm.



Goigs del prodigios apostol de las Indias Sant Francisco Xavier (in Catalan)
Vich: Ignasi Valls, 1833.
Xylograph, 315 x 214 mm (BNF®).



Gozos del prodigioso apostol de las Indias, San Francisco Xavier (in Spanish)
[s.n.], 18th Century.
Xylograph, 316 x 205 mm (BNF[©]).



Gozos del prodigioso apostol de las indias, San Francisco Xavier (in Spanish)
Barcelona: Josep Trullas, 1845,
313 x 196 mm (BNF©)