

## MEDIEVAL TREASURE LISTS: AN UNEXPLORED GENRE

### GUÍAS DEL TESORO MEDIEVAL: UN GÉNERO INEXPLORADO

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#### ABSTRACT

Medieval and early modern treasure guides, though usually overlooked, can be highly informative. Most consist of lists of dozens or even hundreds of synthetic entries pertaining to hidden troves in various locations. The article begins with a brief overview of this textual typology, mapping the most important known examples in Europe and elsewhere around the Mediterranean. This sketch lays the foundation for an in-depth analysis of certain guides pertinent to the Italian region that show traces of reciprocal textual filiation. Philological, historical, and formal elements demonstrate that the nucleus of this group is the result of notary practices originating in medieval chancelleries, though the genre is also to some extent modeled on Late Antique precedents, which, in turn, appear to owe much to Hellenistic practices.

KEYWORDS: treasure guides, lists, pragmatic literacy, *notitiae*, temple inventories, epigraphy.

#### RESUMEN

Las guías de tesoros medievales y de la primera Edad Moderna, aunque suelen pasarse por alto, pueden contener una información muy provechosa. La mayoría ofrecen listas de docenas, o incluso cientos, de entradas sintéticas relativas a tesoros ocultos en diversos lugares. El artículo comienza con una breve visión general de esta tipología textual, trazando un mapa de los ejemplos más importantes conocidos en Europa y en otros lugares a lo largo del Mediterráneo. Este esbozo sienta las bases para un análisis en profundidad de algunas guías pertinentes para

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la región italiana, que muestran rastros de filiación textual recíproca. Los elementos filológicos, históricos y formales demuestran que el núcleo de este grupo de documentos es el resultado de las prácticas notariales originadas en las cancillerías medievales, aunque el género también quedó modelado -en cierta medida- por los precedentes de la Antigüedad Tardía, que, a su vez, parecen deber mucho a las prácticas helenísticas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** guías del tesoro, listas, alfabetización pragmática, *notitiae*, inventarios de templos, epigrafía.

Despite the great interest in the topic of treasures over the last thirty years by scholars of medieval and early modern art history,<sup>1</sup> one theme within this broad and polysemic field seems to have gone unnoticed: that of treasure guides. These texts enumerate hundreds of places associated with hidden treasures and are usually accompanied by instructions on how to retrieve the treasures. A typical entry in such a list includes the name of a geographical location, followed by a more specific landmark, then an indication of where and how deep the seeker must dig. Some lists provide further information—for instance, that a trove is guarded by a demonic entity. Though not entirely unknown to scholars, treasure lists have, for the most part, caught the attention only of anthropologists and folklorists, who have focused mainly on the lists' ethnographical, magical, and mythopoeic aspects.<sup>2</sup>

Treasure guides are difficult to date, of limited literary value, and subject to a high degree of interpolation. Notwithstanding the difficulty of contextualizing them, such lists have considerable potential as sources for the history of epigraphy, archaeology, art history, and toponymy, offering unexpected insights and interesting angles of comparison.

The following is a preliminary overview of the diffusion of this textual genre in various European countries and around the Mediterranean, then a closer look at examples in Italy.

### **TREASURE NOTING: THE *LONGUE DURÉE* OF A GENRE**

From a scholarly point of view, the best-known case is probably the so-called Copper Scroll found in 1952 in Qumran in the context of the Dead Sea scrolls finding.<sup>3</sup> The Copper

<sup>1</sup> *L'or au Moyen Age (monnaie, métal, objets, symbole)*, Aix-en-Provence, 1983; H. KLINKHAMMER, *Schatzgräber, Weisheitssucher und Dämonenbeschwörer: Die motivische und thematische Rezeption des Topos der Schatzsuche in der Kunst vom 15. bis 18. Jahrhundert (Studien zur profanen Ikonographie)*, Berlin, 1992; I. WALTNER-KALLFELZ, *Die Schatzsuche als religiöses Motiv*, Wiesbaden, 1993; *Treasure in the Medieval West*, E.M. TYLER (ed.), York, 2000; *Tesori. Forme di accumulazione della ricchezza nell'alto medioevo (secoli V-XI)*, S. GELICHI, C. LA ROCCA (eds.), Roma, 2004; M. HARDT, *Gold und Herrschaft. Die Schätze europäischer Könige und Fürsten im ersten Jahrtausend*, Berlin, 2004; Y.-M. BERCÉ, *A la découverte des trésors cachés du <sup>xv</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours*, Paris, 2004; *Le trésor au Moyen Age: Questions et perspectives et recherche*, L. BURKART et al. (eds.), Neuchâtel, 2005; *Die Macht des Silbers: Karolingische Schätze im Norden*, E. WAMERS et al. (eds.), Ratisbon, 2005; *Vom Umgang mit Schätzen*, E. VAVRA et al. (eds.), Vienna, 2007; *Le trésor au Moyen Age. Discours, pratiques et objets*, L. BURKART et al. (eds.), Florence, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> G. GIACOBELLO, *Oltre quel che c'è. Oracoli, giochi di sorte, tesori nascosti, incanti sotterranei*, Palermo, 2017, pp. 107-184, pp. 196-203.

<sup>3</sup> A. WOLTERS, "History and the Copper Scroll", *Annals New York Academy of Sciences*, 711 (1994), pp. 285-299; *The Caves of Qumran*, M. FIDANZION (ed.), Leiden, 2016.

Scroll's text, engraved on a metal sheet, points to sixty-four Palestinian hiding places of riches and temple implements. Various dated around the first and second centuries C.E., the Copper Scroll has been an object of a fierce debate about whether the list should be considered real or fictitious. Only recently, has Steven Weitzman tried to bypass this two-pronged dilemma by proposing a broader perspective, which looks at the texts in the context typical of Hellenistic accounting and inventory-making practices; in Hellenistic examples, the line between real and mythical objects (appearing frequently in sanctuary lists, which came also to include lost objects) was definitely blurred.<sup>4</sup>

The fate of the Jerusalem Temple treasure has, in fact, long been an object of intense speculation in the Semitic world.<sup>5</sup> This explains the nature of the literary *Massekhet Kelim* (Treatise of the Vessels), a list composed in Hebrew and variously dated between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which indicates several treasure caches of vessels from the Salomonic Temple located in the Holy Land and Babylonia.<sup>6</sup> Elena Dugan has demonstrated that the text represents a conflation of two separate recensions, adapted to the needs of communities that valued it for different purposes. Dugan's findings show that the motivation for drafting the list was not a neutral one: if the memory of highly symbolic treasures was involved, even the location in which they were supposedly found became relevant in political and religious interpretations.<sup>7</sup>

Although the *Massenet Khelim* constitutes a unique case in the context of medieval Jewish society, mentions of these topographies seem also to have been common in the Muslim world, where the topic of the book of treasures often recurs in texts that are rooted in oral tradition and folklore.<sup>8</sup> The most famous case is the so-called *Kitab-al Kanuz*, a compilation of roughly four hundred sites in Egypt taken from three fifteenth-century manuscripts held in the Cairo Library and published by Gaston Maspero. (In making this material easily available, Maspero hoped to discourage the activities of tomb-robbers, though his efforts had the opposite effect.<sup>9</sup> The *Kitab-al Kanuz* represents the most distinctive specimen of a genre known to circulate in North Africa as early as the fourteenth century, if not before. The historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) denounces the methods of treasure seekers and accuses them of forging lists and fabricating topographies to fool naïve customers.<sup>10</sup> Al-Maqrizi (1364-1442) also

<sup>4</sup> S. WEITZMAN, "Absent but Accounted for: A New Approach to the Copper Scroll", *Harvard Theological Review*, 198/3 (2015), pp. 423-447. The scholar considers the Copper scroll as part of a larger Hellenized Mediterranean culture and compares it with other temple inventories attested in Greece, Asia Minor and Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> For a full bibliography, see E. DUGAN, "Unearthing Babylonian Treasure Caches and Textual Fluidity within *Massekhet Kelim*", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 28 (2021), pp. 111-136, esp. footnotes 8, 11, 13.

<sup>6</sup> For a full bibliographical overview, see *ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> On this theme, see also R. BOUSTAN, "The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple at Rome and Constantinople. Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire", in *Antiquity in Antiquity. Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, G. GARDNER and K. L. OSTERLOH (eds.), Tübingen, 2008, pp. 327-372.

<sup>8</sup> IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>9</sup> A. BEY KHAMAL, *Le livre des perles enfouies et du mystère précieux au sujet des indications des cachettes, des trouvailles et des trésors*, II Cairo, 1907.

<sup>10</sup> IBN KHALDUN, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, N.J. DAWOOD, F. ROSENTHAL (eds.), Princeton, 1989, pp. 301-304.

mentions a book supposedly brought to Hagia Sophia, which contained a list of all Egypt's hiding places of Christian riches concealed by refugees before the Muslim conquest.<sup>11</sup> The unique archaeological situation of the Egyptian territory has always encouraged intense treasure hunting continuing from antiquity to the present.<sup>12</sup>

The Iberian Peninsula, too, came to develop its own treasure-inventory tradition,<sup>13</sup> often based on the belief in the fabulous possessions supposedly hidden by Moors and *moriscos* before their expulsion, a popular topos in Spanish sources.<sup>14</sup> Treasure lists occur especially commonly in the regions of Asturias and Galicia, and in Portugal. The most famous of these was originally found in *los cimientos del castillo morisco de Don Gutierre de Altamira en el año 1065* according to the list's preface. Don Gutierre de Altamira's preface is usually circulated as an appendix to the grimoire known as the *Libro de San Cipriano*, although it was purported to be the transcription of a mysterious manuscript extant in the even more mysterious *Biblioteca Académica Peninsular Catalani de don Gumersindo Ruiz Castelejo y Moreno*.<sup>15</sup> The tradition of creating lists of this kind continued into subsequent centuries, and very similar *gacetas* have, until recently, come to be included in more modest handbooks for treasure seekers.<sup>16</sup>

The matter of dating, as shown below, is especially problematic. Without doubt, however, the original cores of many of these lists, despite later accretions, originated in the Middle Ages. A rare French specimen, preserved in the anonymous French-Occitan text known as *Chronique saintongeaise* (handed down in three different manuscripts, the oldest being Paris, BNF, MS fr. 5714, dated to the thirteenth century) describes events taking place during the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>17</sup> It contains an inventory of treasures belonging to French churches hidden away during Norman invasions: *en l'eglise de Talemunt qui est près de Gironde fu seveliz li braz sancta Reigun e li aneus et maintes autres vertus devant l'outer, equi or li prestress tent ses piez quant il chantet la Messa* ("in the church of Talmont, which is close to the Gironde, the arm of St. Radegund along with the rings and many other precious relics were buried in front of the altar, where the priest stands when he sings Mass"). Here,

<sup>11</sup> AL-MAORIZI, *Description topographique et historique de l'Égypte traduite en français par V. Bouriant*, Paris, 1895-1900, pp. 112-113.

<sup>12</sup> IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 5-18, pp. 228-229.

<sup>13</sup> According to Peter Missler, the introduction of these lists in the Iberian Peninsula depends on the influences of those produced in north Africa. However, the geographical area where these maps are more frequently found does not correspond to that subject to Muslim influence; to this purpose, it would be interesting to locate 'precedents' in Andalusia. P. MISSLER, "Tradición y parodia en el Millonario de San Ciprián, primer recetario impreso para buscar tesoro en Galicia", *Culturas populares. Revista electrónica*, 2 (2005-2006) [<http://www.culturaspopulares.org/textos2/articulos/missler.pdf>]; ID., "Las Hondas Raíces del Ciprianillo. Segunda parte: los grimorios", *Culturas populares*, 3 (2006) [<http://www.culturaspopulares.org/textos3/articulos/missler.html>]; ID., "Las Hondas Raíces del Ciprianillo. Tercera parte: las 'gacetas'", *Culturas populares*, 4 (2007) [<http://www.culturaspopulares.org/textos4/articulos/missler.pdf>].

<sup>14</sup> See IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, p. 253.

<sup>15</sup> MISSLER, *Las Hondas Raíces del Ciprianillo*, available at <https://ebuah.uah.es/dspace/handle/10017/19667>.

<sup>16</sup> See J.S. LÓPEZ, *Tesoros, ayalgas y chalgueiros. La fiebre de oro en Asturias*, Gijón, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> M. PEIGNÉ-DELACOURT, *Les Normans dans le Noyonnais, ix et x siècles*, Noyon, 1868, pp. 93-109; A. DE MANDACH, *Chronique dite Saintongeaise: Texte franco-occident inédit 'Lee'. À la découverte d'une chronique gasconne du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et de sa poitvinisation*, Tübingen, 1970.

as in other examples of this genre, there may be some historical truth behind the list of items enumerated.<sup>18</sup> The French list is uncommon in preserving traces of exclusively ecclesiastical treasures. It is also the most consistent: all its treasures were purportedly hidden away at the same time and for the same reason. Compared to others whose ultimate purpose is, at first sight, harder to pin down—why reveal the hiding place of a treasure? —the French specimen is crafted as an inventory of precious items that have been hidden away only temporarily for protection but that eventually must be retrieved.

This brief review cannot be exhaustive,<sup>19</sup> and it should be noted that a certain number of guides were produced as well, from the late Middle Ages on, in today's Austria, Germany, Tirol, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. Although no extensive publication of this material has yet appeared,<sup>20</sup> what can be gathered from preliminary data substantially confirms the results of other studies dedicated to intense treasure-hunting activity in those areas and to the presence of professional seekers.<sup>21</sup>

### TREASURE TOPOGRAPHIES OF ITALY: A MEDIEVAL ORIGIN

Traces of twenty-two treasure guides have emerged in Italy.<sup>22</sup> Five have been published, although the original sources of several have not been found; eight survive in manuscript form (with a few cases published as examples); nine are known only from indirect sources. This material is very difficult to date because it is, almost by definition, a genre in progress, open to constant interpolation. While it is sometimes possible to establish a safe terminus *post quem* for a compilation as a whole on the basis of internal textual evidence, it is very difficult to pinpoint a specific chronology for all single treasure entries, since each potentially constitutes a micro-text with its own history of composition and transmission. In these lists, in fact, medieval, Renaissance, and even modern mentions of treasures can coexist with little to distinguish them chronologically.

Moreover, this material has been subject to a certain degree of editorial revision. As such lists moved from Latin into Italian in successive redactions, there can be changes in the measures of weight cited, as well as differences in systems used to indicate location (palms, feet, etc). The sequence of entries can vary, too, with toponyms (re)numbered or

<sup>18</sup> DE MANDACH, *Chronique*, p. 98, relates that archaeological excavations have unearthed part of that treasury although he does not provide further details.

<sup>19</sup> An extension of this research to other areas of Europe would be interesting. I know no example of treasure guide pertinent to England, where, however, treasure hunters were certainly active. See the recent F. KLAASSEN, S. HUBBS WRIGHT, *The Magic of Rogues: Necromancers in Early Tudor England*, University Park, 2021, pp. 83-142.

<sup>20</sup> G. OTT, *Die Entdeckung des Altertums*, Kallmünz, 2002, pp. 60-62 has discussed the interesting case-study of the Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, Münchner Handschrift, Cgm 5443 relative to Tirol treasures; on other lists pertinent to the same territories, see also G. ROBERTI, "L' 'auri sacra fames' nelle leggende e nelle credenze trentine", *Lares*, 4 (1933), pp. 26-47. Dr. Klaus Graf is currently conducting a specific research on the topic of 'German' lists (provisional title: *Schatzphantasien*) but he is not ready to share his results yet.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 252-253, see also K. GRAF, "Kaiser Karl V und das Schatzgraben", available at <https://archivalia.hypotheses.org/122977>.

<sup>22</sup> For a full list of these topographies, see IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 189-221, 254-258. To those mentioned there, I add two more, hitherto unknown.

(re)arranged according to alphabetical criteria, to a tendency to merge multiple lists, or to shorten them.

Except for a few cases —typically, those located in marginal geographical areas such as the treasures noted in Sicily, in the Alpine Piedmont valleys, and in Sardinia, which are marked by a very distinctive local style—<sup>23</sup> there are a few guides pertinent to mainland Italy that evince reciprocal textual contacts, although none is identical to another with regard to the number, order, and exact content of entries. The guides discussed here, indicated with abbreviations, are:

Vt: list appearing as an appendix to the fifteenth-century chronicle of Viterbo written by Giovanni Iuzzo and Nicolò della Tuccia.<sup>24</sup>

Sc: published in an abridged version at the end of the 1673 *Scutum inexpugnabile fidei, et confidentiae in Deum*, it is based on a lost source, supposedly dated to 1390.<sup>25</sup>

Vr: fragment of Verona, Biblioteca Civica, MS 3117, fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

A: Roma, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 1907, sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

DR: Rome, British School, Manoscritti Diego De Revillas, scatola 3, fasc. 123, seventeenth century.<sup>28</sup>

St: Archive of the Castle of Strozzevolpe (Poggibonsi, Siena), seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup>

B: Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 3892, eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

F1+F2: two lists, both preserved in Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Rossi-Cassigoli, MS 429, eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

R: Roma, Archivio di Stato, *Camera II, AA BB AA*, b-6, “Roma—Scavi e tesori—1801-1804”.<sup>32</sup>

S: list transcribed by G. Libertini di San Marco from a worn booklet he was given by a man he encountered during World War II in the area of Sabina.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>23</sup> M. DI MARTINO, “Tesori nascosti da ritrovare indicati e descritti in un antico manoscritto”, *Archivio per la storia delle tradizioni popolari*, 20 (1901), pp. 323-339 and 540-550; A.A. HUGON, “Tesori nascosti e minerali preziosi in Val Pellice”, *Bollettino della Società degli Studi Valdesi*, 129 (1971), pp. 71-83; G. BOTTIGLIONI, *Leggende e tradizioni di Sardegna*, Geneva, 1907.

<sup>24</sup> I. CIAMPI, *Cronache e statuti della città di Viterbo*, Florence, 1872, pp. 332-334.

<sup>25</sup> G.B. PASQUALI, *Scutum inexpugnabile fidei, et confidentiae in Deum, vel in potentissimum nomen Iesu*, Mediolanum, 1673, pp. 241-255.

<sup>26</sup> A facsimile of this fragment has been published and partially discussed by A. BUONOPANE, “Due iscrizioni romane in una pagina inedita di Felice Feliciano (Verona, Biblioteca Civica, ms 3117)”, in *L’“antiquario” Felice Feliciano veronese tra epigrafia antica, letteratura e arti del libro. Atti del convegno di studi Verona 3-4 giugno 1993*, A. CONTÒ and L. QUAGLIARELLI (eds.), Padua, 2000, pp. 109-115, figs. 20-21.

<sup>27</sup> The codex is mutilated; the text would have probably continued. It shows striking similarities with F1.

<sup>28</sup> Unpublished, with the exception of a few entries in M. SCIÒ, “‘Cerca una pietra con un Riccio e scava sotto’. Racconti di tesori sepolti nel Carseolano, Marsica e media valle dell’Aniene”, *Foglio di Lumen*, 15 (2005), pp. 25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Partially published by G. BATINI, *Italia a mezzanotte: storie di fantasmi, castelli e tesori*, Florence, 1968. I could not consult this list in full, but even from a partial comparison it is evident that it should be included in this group, having some entries in common with F1 and A.

<sup>30</sup> Unpublished, with the exception of a few entries in C. RICCI, “Alla ricerca di un tesoro”, *L’illustrazione italiana*, 35/17 (1890), pp. 135-13.

<sup>31</sup> Unpublished, with the exception of a few entries quoted by L. GAI, “L’immaginario nella storia: cercatori di tesori a Pistoia nel ‘700”, *Bullettino storico pistoiese*, 87 terza serie-XX (1985), pp. 67-86.

<sup>32</sup> Unpublished.

<sup>33</sup> Published by G. LIBERTINI DI SAN MARCO, “Guida segreta inedita per il ritrovamento dei tesori nascosti”, *Lares*, 20 (1954), pp. 12-29.

Two interesting examples merit a closer look—one from a sacred context, the other from a secular context.

The first is pertains to Carsoli, a small town in today's province of L'Aquila. Carsoli began as a key fortified Roman town, which became one of the most important centers for the Duchy of Spoleto during the high Middle Ages, then of the county of the Marsi (ninth-twelfth centuries). It was included in the possessions of Subiaco as part of the gift made by Count Rinaldo to the powerful abbey, which, around 1010, received various Carseolan territories, including the church of Santa Maria in Cellis, around which medieval Carsoli developed.<sup>34</sup> The entry as it appears in the fifteenth-century chronicle of Viterbo (Vt) says the following:<sup>35</sup>

*In civitate Carsolii que fuit civitas antiqua reperies fabricam; quere ibi est lapis cum dracone. Fode subtus pedes X et invenies thesaurum. Tolle secure quia non custoditur. In partibus Carsolii, prope Castrum de gelis ibi est platea, in quo est lapis cum capite hominis. Fode subtus pedes quinque. Ibi est caput sancti Blasii, et omnia ornamenta auro et argento, et super cate-dram invenies centum laminas auri.*

(In Carsoli, which was an ancient city, find a building; look there for a stone with a dragon. Dig ten feet under and you will find a treasure. Take it without worries because it is not protected. In the area of Carsoli, close to the Castle de gelis, there is a square, where there is a stone marked with a head of a man. Dig five feet under it. There is the head of Saint Blaise and all his ornaments in gold and silver and on the seat you will find a hundred gold sheets).

Even without reference to the second treasure, we find a similar indication in *Scutum inexpugnabile fidei, et confidentiae in Deum* (Sc).<sup>36</sup> The reading of Carsoli must have been problematic, since it bears traces of the copyist's indecision: *Corzoli, vel Carzoli, sive Conzoli*. A third mention is in Florence's Biblioteca Nazionale, Rossi-Cassigoli, MS 429 (F2),<sup>37</sup> in which the head of Saint Blaise is instead mentioned in relation to Chiusi.<sup>38</sup> Another occurrence of the toponym (in the form *Cossalto, Carcali o Carcoli*, which mirrors the doubt of Sc) is in Libertini di San Marco (S), from which the treasure located under the stone with the dragon is missing but in which the relic is mentioned as the cranium of Saint Basil.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the British School's, Manoscritti Diego De Revillas (DR) preserves the memory of a third treasure; in addition to the

<sup>34</sup> M. EBOLI, *Carsoli e il suo territorio nella storia medievale della Marsica*, Rome, 1977; C. DE LEONI, "Sull'antica toponomastica del Carseolano-Piana del Cavaliere. Ipotesi di un Registro storico-toponomastico del territorio", *Foglio di Lumen*, 43 (2015), pp. 8-11.

<sup>35</sup> See Vt, p. 332.

<sup>36</sup> *In civitate Corzoli, vel Carzoli, sive Conzoli, quae fuit antiqua Civitas, invenies veterem Palatij Regis fabricam ipsius Civitatis ibi est lapis cum Dracone, fode sub ipso pedes 4 invenies thesaurum*, see Sc, p. 248.

<sup>37</sup> "Nelle porte di Chiusi presso il castello di colle vi è un pratarello con una pietra in esso con capo d'huomo, cava sotto di essa piedi 5 et ivi troverai il capo di S. Biagio e tutti li suoi adornamenti, cava sotto di esso altri piedi 5 troverai lamine 100 di oro et argento", F1, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Even list F2 seems to keep trace of Carsoli (indexed as 'Cersoli') at p. 79, although the rest of the entry is completely different.

<sup>39</sup> *Cossalto, Carcali o Carcoli [...] nella sovradetta parte, in un luogo di Tivoli, Castello del Re, ci è un sasso con un capo d'uomo; sotto esso piedi dieci ci è il capo di S. Basilio con molto tesoro e quattro colonne d'argento con un vaso di balsamo*, list S, p. 21.



two mentioned, the body of the saint also can be found.<sup>40</sup> The example of Carsoli illustrates well the difficulty of giving a precise order to this kind of textual material: over time, names and toponyms get modified to the point of utter obscurity. The treasures identified vary. Information may be expanded or erased.

The case reviewed here is nonetheless interesting because, despite the apparent haphazardness of surviving elements, some hypothesis can still be made. I have concentrated on the vicissitude of the saint's severed head, because it offers definite elements of comparison with historical facts. Despite the problematic readings, it seems that the Castrum "de gelis" should be understood as that castrum "de Cellis" around which medieval Carsoli developed. What is particularly interesting is that the Carseolan area (as well as the Tiburtino and Sublacense) hosted, in the course of the Middle Ages, various communities of Basilian monks.<sup>41</sup> And what is even more striking is that, according to a tradition described in the *Chronicon sublacense*, a group of these monks fled from Grottaferrata (near Rome), probably in 1163, absconding with the head of St. Basil. Then, the chronicle says,<sup>42</sup> the relic was allegedly hidden away in the Sacro Speco and not brought to light until more than two centuries later, around 1388.

The treasure tradition handed down in the lists, however confused, would therefore seem to bear witness to a sort of subterranean hagiographical narrative centered on the treasure constituted by the lost head of St. Basil,<sup>43</sup> which, at least according to this central Italian tradition, had gone missing for two hundred and twenty-five years. It is not surprising that in a place like Carsoli—an area known to have hosted Basilian monks and to have been directly under the aegis of Subiaco (to which the head allegedly had been brought)—the memory of such a relic was kept alive. These list entries therefore could have been written down at any time after about 1163.

This hypothesis is not contradicted by what we know about the chronology of the two earliest sources that preserve mention of such treasure. The whole Viterbo list (Vt) must have been put together some time after 1217, when the toponym *Balneum crociatis* (near Viterbo) is first attested.<sup>44</sup> The list of Sc was published in 1664 but is based on a manuscript supposedly extant in 1390.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> 4 = Carsoli cerca il luogo del vecchio palazzo di d.<sup>a</sup> città ivi una pietra con un dragone scolpito, cava sotto 10. piedi e troverai un gran ripostino.

5 = Da d.<sup>o</sup> Carsoli a dritta linea verso Castro vi è un praticello piccolo ove vi è una cappelletta dirupata, in essa una pietra ove vi è scolpita una testa di uomo, cava sotto piedi 5 = e troverai la testa di S. Basilio ornata di oro, e di argento.

6. Così da Carsoli a Castro de Colli e Celle vi è un orticello ove è una pietra scolpitaci una testa, cava sotto piedi 5. e qui giace il corpo di S. Basilio ascoso con 100. lamine di oro, nascoso da cittadini, list DR, fol. 2r.

<sup>41</sup> L. BRANCIANI, "Origine e sviluppo dell'eremitismo nella valle sublacense", in *Le valli dei monaci*, L. ERMINI PANI (ed.), Spoleto, 2012, pp. 586-635, esp. 620-622.

<sup>42</sup> "Hi inter caetera, quae salva cupiebant et secum attulerant, praecipue fuit ipsorum legislatoris ac patris Basilii Magni caputium", *Chronicon sublacense*, C. MIRZIO (ed.), Rome, 1885, pp. 262-263.

<sup>43</sup> Even the confusion between the two saints is easily explained if one considers how close the two names 'Basilius' and 'Blasius' are in Latin, especially if noted in an abbreviated form.

<sup>44</sup> F. ORIOLI, *I bagni di Viterbo*, Rome, 1850, pp. 10-11.

<sup>45</sup> See Sc, p. 241.



The other site to appear most often in the Italian lists is, unsurprisingly, Rome, cradle of treasures *par excellence*, which is associated with a recurring nucleus of entries that were constantly repeated (with slight variations): the Colosseum, Monte Cavallo (i.e., the Quirinal hill), the church of Santa Maria in Portico, Trastevere, an area near the Campidoglio, and Santa Maria Rotonda.

*In urbe Romae in Culiseo est lapis cum + et serpe. Sub ipso mille laminae auri [...] In Monte Cavallo reperies lapidem cum istis litteris S.B.E.P.M.O.T.Q.S.Z.R. fode sub ipso pedes 12 et invenies thesaurum in tumba, lapides pretiosos et coronam imperatoris. In [S. Maria in] Porticu invenies lapidem, cum love, et +, et pede mulae [...] In Transtiberim reperies lapidem cum istis litteris [...] Prope Capitolium est lapis cum litteris [...] Prope S. Mariam rotundam est lapis titulus, fode sub ipso [...] Item est lapis cum pede mulae [...].*<sup>46</sup>

(In the city of Rome in the Colosseum there is a stone with a + and a serpent. Under it are a thousand golden foils [...] On the Quirinal hill find a stone with the following characters S.B.E.P.M.O.T.Q.S.Z.R. Dig twelve feet under and find a treasure in a tomb, precious stones and the crown of an emperor. In the church of S. Maria in Portico find a stone with Jovis and the hoof of a mule [...] In Trastevere find a stone with the following characters [...] Close to the Capitolium there is a stone with characters [...] Close to S. Maria Rotonda there is a stone with a *titulus*, dig under it [...] Then there is a stone with the hoof of a mule [...])

If Carsoli's precious find of St. Basil's head is associated with the sacred sphere,<sup>47</sup> the treasures evoked in relation to Rome evince a scholarly curiosity for the remains of the classical past. What characterizes them is their distinctive antiquarian flavor, the records of epigraphy, stone reliefs and land surveying markers (based on Roman *gromatici's* signs) as treasure indicators which seem to attract the interest of the compiler even more than the treasures themselves.<sup>48</sup> The tendency to associate treasures with letters marked on stones and stelae is a literary topos, circulating in Greek since Hellenistic times. This practice is, in fact, narrated in the Chapter XL of the *Life of Aesop*; the fabulist finds a treasure thanks to his decoding the mysterious epigraphical sequence of characters on a tombstone, which he solves as though it were an acrostic.<sup>49</sup>

The earliest source to preserve the "Roman group" is Sc. A very similar set is included in Vr,<sup>50</sup> a single manuscript folio, a fragment of a much longer text written in the hand of Felice Feliciano (1433-1479) and usually considered part of a lost original work composed by the humanist scholar.<sup>51</sup> From what is known now, however, it seems certain that he must have

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 243.

<sup>47</sup> For the substantial consistency between relics' *inventio* and treasures finding, see T. DI CARPEGNA FALCONIERI, "Reliquie nascoste, perdute e ritrovate a Roma nell'alto medioevo secondo il *Liber pontificalis*", in *Lost and Found. Storie di 'ritrovamenti'*, G. M. FACHECHI (ed.), Rome, 2019, pp. 115-133; IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 18-29, 229-232.

<sup>48</sup> The persistency of land-surveyor markers in territories where such conventions were no longer used could favor the creation of treasures tales; on the mythopoeic power of toponymy, see S. DEL LUNGO, *La toponomastica archeologica della provincia di Viterbo: origine e storia dei nomi di luogo nelle terre del Consorzio di Bonifica della Maremma Etrusca*, Tarquinia, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> See G. BARUCCI, "Un (nuovo) 'Esopo' cinquecentesco: la 'Vita di Esopo' del conte Giulio Landi", *Carte romanze*, 3/1 (2015), pp. 223-277.

<sup>50</sup> Vr is unfortunately in a fragmentary state; the *lectiones* it preserves are definitely more reliable than those in Sc.

<sup>51</sup> BUONOPANE, "Due iscrizioni romane".

only copied the list, probably because it preserved epigraphical material.<sup>52</sup> The Roman group resurfaces in many other treasure guides, which, despite many later additions, often preserve quite faithfully this original medieval stratum<sup>53</sup> (Figs. 1-5).

Focusing only on the features of this early “block” offers a better insight into the cultural context in which these lists were first compiled, a milieu in which the fascination with antiquarian themes was felt but where the knowledge of that very past was still characterized by a peculiar, fantastic nuance. The internal evidence of the Roman group offers only circumstantial *post quem* elements, such as the establishment of the church of Sta. Maria in Portico (1073).<sup>54</sup> The toponym of Monte Cavallo, which refers to the Quirinal Hill, is no more precise, since the term *caballo* as a name for the area is variously mentioned between the tenth century and the twelfth.<sup>55</sup> Such a chronology is not unlikely for the composition of the core nucleus of the list. In fact, even before the process of study and meticulous rediscovery of epigraphy was carried out systematically in the fourteenth century, such an interest is variously attested during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when collections and anthologies of classical epigraphs circulated in some learned circles<sup>56</sup> and when the underground of Rome sparked tales of hidden treasures and of subterranean adventures.<sup>57</sup> This brings us to the key question of authorship.

Crafted as impersonal collections, these texts do not seem to offer any clue as to who conceived them and why. The formula “fode...invenies”, which recurs in relation to every treasure, is perhaps an unconscious biblical reminiscence (Ez. 8:8–9)<sup>58</sup> and an indirect hint that their original compiler was used to meditate upon Scriptures.

Yet, in introducing the treasures appendix (list Vt), the author of the fifteenth-century Viterbo chronicle stated, *questa notazione de’ detti lochi è openione che sia stata nota da Rev.mo cardinale Capocia*<sup>59</sup> (“it is generally believed that the noting of these places has been recorded by the most reverend Cardinal Capocia”). Francesco Orioli suggested that the author must have been Pandolfo Capocci (?-1354), elevated to (pseudo-)cardinal by Antipope Niccolò V (ca. 1258-1333).<sup>60</sup> At a closer look, a different hypothesis seems preferable. Quite likely, the author of the list must have been Raniero Capocci (1180/90-1250), first a Cistercian monk,

<sup>52</sup> OTT, *Entdeckung*, pp. 60-62 had already expressed some doubts on Feliciano’s authorship.

<sup>53</sup> A, fols 1r-3r (some entries are duplicated by mistake and some later ones are also included); B, fols. 4v-5r; F1, pp. 53-62 (here the nucleus of Sc is enriched with more entries); DR, fols. 6r-v and 12r (it also includes later entries); R, fols. 1r-v (some of the entries of the early block are included along with later ones). F1, p. 30 and S, p. 98 each preserve a single entry which is totally unrelated with the usual Roman group.

<sup>54</sup> C. A. ERRA, *Storia dell’immagine e chiesa di Santa Maria in Portico di Campitelli*, Rome, 1750, p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> A. MICHAELIS, “Monte Cavallo”, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 13 (1989), pp. 248-274.

<sup>56</sup> I. CALABI LIMENTANI, “Sul non saper leggere le epigrafi classiche nei secoli XII e XIII; sulla scoperta graduale delle abbreviazioni epigrafiche”, *Acme* 23/3 (1970), pp. 253-282; M. PETOLETTI, “Appunti sulla fortuna delle epigrafi classiche nel medioevo”, *Aevum*, 76/2 (2002), pp. 309-323.

<sup>57</sup> M. OLDONI, “‘A fantasia dicitur fantasma’” (Gerberto e la sua storia), *Studi Medievali*, 21 (1980), pp. 493-622 e 24 (1983), pp. 167-245.

<sup>58</sup> Ezekiel is exhorted to dig in the wall which stands in front of him and look through the doorway which opens beyond it: there stand all the idols of Israel (*fode parietem [...] invenies abominaciones pessimas*).

<sup>59</sup> CIAMPI, *Cronache*, p. 332.

<sup>60</sup> ORIOLI, *I bagni di Viterbo*, p. 11. An information I repeated in *Cercar tesori*, pp. 190-191.

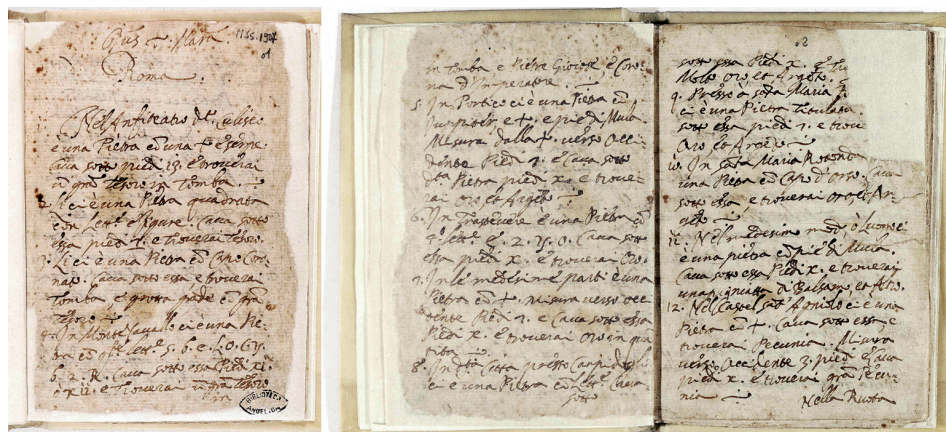


Fig. 1. Roma, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 1907, fols. 1r-v, 2r (list A), courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura

then a key figure in the Roman Curia, in which he began to operate as a notary at least since 1215. He was renowned as a great master of *ars dictandi* and for his vast erudition. Capocci administered, among other areas, the Viterbo territory and was later on *rector* of the Duchy of Spoleto, of the counties of Nocera, Assisi, and Gubbio.<sup>61</sup> His profile makes him a more likely candidate as the author of *Vt*. From a historical viewpoint, the discovery of a treasure would require the intervention of a notary, called upon to attest to the legal possessor of the trove and to register the finding.<sup>62</sup> The notary must have had firsthand knowledge of the territories he governed.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, as someone used to working in the papal chancellery, he had access to a great wealth of sources, including annals, administrative, fiscal, and cadaster records that provided precious information also pertaining to earlier periods.

From a historical perspective, in fact, the central centuries of the Middle Ages, the twelfth and thirteenth, do not correspond to a typical phase of hoarding, whereas this kind of practice is often attested during Late Antiquity, when political instability, frequent wars, and stagnant economies often necessitated hiding precious things for their protection. One of the epistles sent in 593 by Gregory the Great to Cyprian, *rector patrimonii beati Petri* in Sicily (*Ep.* IV, 16) is particularly revealing. The pope exhorts the deacon to do a survey of all *vasa sacra resque ecclesiarum* that had been dispersed by priests fleeing from Italy as a result of the Byzantine-Lombard wars. Gregory not only advised the deacon to collect the *vasa sacra* and entrust them to local bishops, but also to make a list (*notitia*) in double copy, to prevent misappropriation. This kind of inventory seems to correspond to that “book of treasures” that, according to al-Maqrizi, had been brought to Hagia Sophia after the Arab invasion of Egypt.

<sup>61</sup> N. KAMPF, “Raniero Capocci”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 18, Rome, 1975, pp. 608-616.

<sup>62</sup> IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 85, 177, 199, 202-203.

<sup>63</sup> The *Balneum crociatis* was established in 1217 when a man, searching for treasures, found instead a spring of water. The chronology of this discovery is consistent with the biography of Raniero Capocci who was certainly informed of this episode.

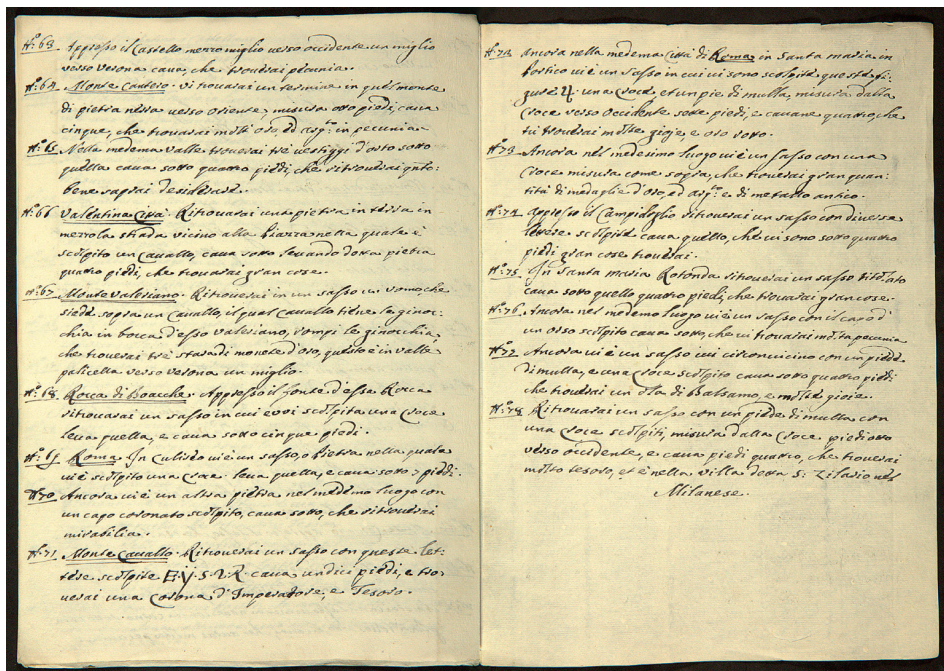


Fig. 2. Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 3892, fols. 4v-5r (list B), courtesy of the Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna – Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna

Despite the crisis, Byzantine bureaucracy kept doing its job, which, in turn, shows striking points of continuity and similarity with practices of temple inventories typical of the Hellenistic Roman world.<sup>64</sup>

*Notitiae* of this kind may well have survived for centuries in the archives—mines of information and a formal precedent for the lists discussed here (interestingly often rubricated *nota* or *notizia*). The only difference is that, while Late Antique lists were compiled in circumstances of warfare and potential spoliation, the medieval ones analyzed here seem to have been crafted—almost certainly by members of the chancellery élite—in a similar way but with a different purpose.

As is clear from various studies,<sup>65</sup> far from being a monotonous, mechanical genre, lists could achieve high rhetorical goals. This is especially so of lists from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards, which are both literary<sup>66</sup> and administrative productions—especially those

<sup>64</sup> For full bibliographic references, see WEITZMANN, “Absent but accounted for”, nn. 19, 20, 38, 39, 40.

<sup>65</sup> P. CHASTANG, C. ANGOTTI, V. DEBIAIS and L. KENDRICK, “La liste médiévale: une technique matérielle et cognitive”, in EAD. (eds.), *Le pouvoir des listes au Moyen Âge I*, Paris, 2019, pp. 5-13; *Le pouvoir des listes au Moyen Âge – II. Listes d’objets, listes de personnes*, É. ANHEIM, L. FELLER, M. JEAY, and G. MILANI (eds.), Paris, 2020; see also the rich bibliography available on <http://polima.huma-num.fr/>.

<sup>66</sup> M. JEAY, *Le commerce des mots: l’usage des listes dans la littérature médiévale (XII-XV siècles)*, Geneva, 2006.



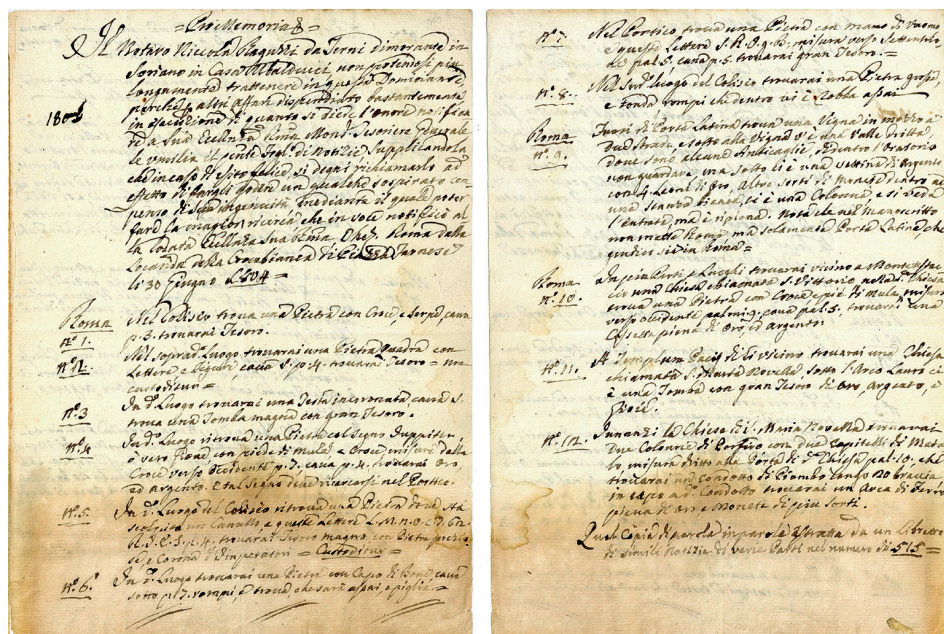


Fig. 3. Roma, Archivio di Stato, Camerale II, AA BB AA, b-6, “Roma – Scavi e tesori – 1801-1804”, fasc. 178, fol. 1r-v (list R), courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura

of notaries.<sup>67</sup> Through the figure of the *accumulatio*, lists could evoke a certain segment of the world in all its richness. Through insistent repetition of treasure findings, the compilers of these lists seem to be mapping an uncharted space – the subterranean—the equivalent below ground of the *mirabilia* and of the *laudes Urbis* which focused on monuments of the visible, above-ground urban landscape.<sup>68</sup> These treasure guides represent a learned, even poetic effort to invest the area in question with a kind of mythical resonance that blurs the line between the literary and pragmatic dimensions of the text.<sup>69</sup> But they are, at the same time, heirs to a long-lived administrative tradition.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the treasures *around* Rome—of which Carols constitutes the first entry—and the block of treasures *within* Rome belonged to the same archetype

<sup>67</sup> G. MILANO, “Il governo delle liste nel Comune di Bologna. Premesse e genesi di un libro di proscrizione duecentesco”, *Rivista storica italiana* 108 (1996), pp. 149-229; M. VALLERANI, “Logica della documentazione e logica dell’istituzione. Per una rilettura dei documenti in forma di lista nei comuni italiani della prima metà del XIII secolo”, in I. LAZZARINI and G. GARDONI (eds.), *Notariato e medievistica*, Rome, 2013, pp. 109-146.

<sup>68</sup> On the list as a typical memorial tool, particularly in relation to the case of medieval Rome, see T. DI CARPEGNA FALCONIERI, “Roma aeterna: the Synchronic and Diachronic Memory of the City” in *Through the Papal Lens – Shaping History and Memory in Late Antique and Early Medieval Rome*, D. VAN ESPELO, M. HUMPHRIES and G. VOCINO (eds.), Liverpool, forthcoming.

<sup>69</sup> See E. ANHEIM and P. CHASTANG, “Les pratiques de l’écrit dans les sociétés médiévales (VI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, *Médiévales*, 56 (2009), pp. 1-6.

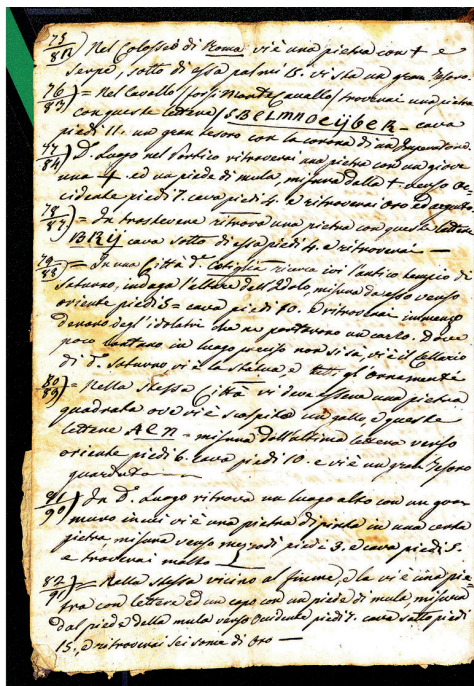
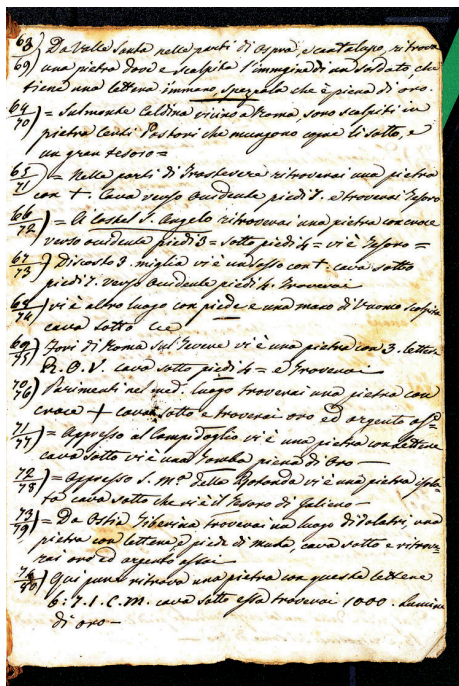


Fig. 4. Roma, British School, Manoscritti Diego De Revillas, scatola 3, fasc. 123, fols. 6r-v (list DR), courtesy of the Library of the British School at Rome

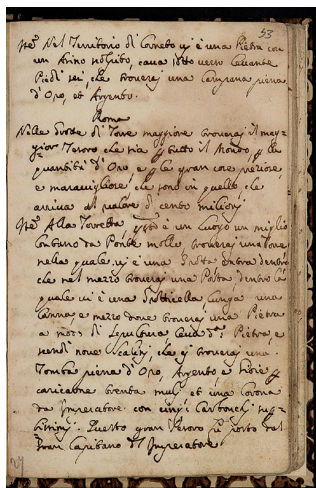


Fig. 5. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Rossi-Cassigoli 429, pp. 53-55 (list F2), courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura



or not. It would in fact be very tempting to see them as parts of the same list originally compiled by Raniero Capocci, but list Vt is missing the Roman block. However, given the freedom with which these guides could be expanded and/or abbreviated, the absence of certain entries does not necessarily represent evidence of their independence in philological terms. Arguably, in fact, the text of Vt could reflect an editorial choice, made by the authors of the Viterbo chronicle, who could have decided to include in the appendix only those entries that were specifically relevant for that territory, thus omitting Rome altogether.

As far as it is known, Capocci could have assembled a great number of entries, even drawing from earlier material (and it would be interesting to ascertain how much Late Antique entries are included in these lists...). Later compilers could, in turn, have distilled this large repertoire by selecting only certain material according to their specific geographical interests. In terms of style, the original stratum must in any case have set a standard. It is this tendency to preserve the same formal features and overall syntax (the toponym, the number of steps, the direction, the depth to dig, and so forth) that has granted the genre its endurance, its very *longue durée*.

The memory of treasures pertinent to a certain area tended to survive locally for centuries and to be progressively enriched with mentions of troves specific to the territories within which the lists ended up circulating. Capocci's list, from which Vt derives, was originally compiled in central Italy and must have remained in circulation there. DR, which has many entries in common with Vt, is found in the papers of Diego De Revillas, who is known to have conducted cartographical studies in the same area in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,<sup>70</sup> and S was transcribed by Libertini di San Marco when he was in Sabina. Finally, the short selection of entries pertinent to Rome of list R was transcribed in 1804 by the notary Nicola Raguzzi from Terni, who selected items from a booklet containing 515. Maybe it is not a coincidence that Raguzzi resided at the time in Soriano nel Cimino, not far from Viterbo. It is not impossible, after all, that he could still have had access to a list of which the nucleus was probably put together by another notary six centuries before.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Treasure guides are not an isolated phenomenon but should be framed in a broader discourse pertaining to different cultural and linguistic traditions. While a few of them are clearly part of the same chain of transmission (as it can be observed among *specimina* produced within the same limited geographical area), the phenomenon of lists as a whole seems to belong to a polygenetic scenario in which, nonetheless, some recurring elements can be observed. They can serve different purposes:

**Memory.** The entries sometimes preserve memory of actual finds, albeit distorted by the frame of oral tradition and folklore<sup>71</sup> but also of chronicles and hagiography.<sup>72</sup> In the Latin West

<sup>70</sup> M. PEDLEY, "The Manuscript Papers of Diego de Revillas in the Archive of the British School at Rome", *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 59 (1991), pp. 319-324.

<sup>71</sup> A. CHERICI, "Appunti per una lettura 'archeologica' di motivi novellistici e leggendari toscani", *Lares*, 56 (1990), pp. 43-56. For other archeological findings incorporated into treasure lists, see also SCIO, " 'Cerca una pietra con un Riccio e scava sotto'. Examples of this kind could be multiplied.

<sup>72</sup> S. GELICHI, "Condita ab ignotis dominis tempore vetustiore mobilia. Note su archeologia e tesori tra la tarda antichità e il Medioevo", in *Tesori*, pp. 19-45.



The earliest memories of treasures occur often in chronicles relating to miraculous events. The episode narrated by Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* (V, 19), in which Emperor Justin orders the removal from the floor of his palace of a large stone slab marked by a cross to avoid its being trampled upon and finds a large sum of money under it: this can be considered as a sort of "founding *topos*" for the point where to dig. The proverbial X that usually "marks the spot", in all likelihood, was originally a cross (+). Similarly, all the miraculous accounts in which a team of oxen, busily plowing, bow and refuse to move, thus revealing the presence of some relics in the ground, betray the memory of some archaeological finding. The animals in fact do not bow out of devotion but to maximize the effort necessary to free the ploughshare blocked by some underground obstacle.

**Administration.** *I.e.*, as typical instruments of inventorial control. The Copper Scroll, the *notitiae* of Late Antiquity, the *Chronique santongeneaise*, the lists crafted by notaries in medieval chancelleries are varied manifestations of a similar effort of accounting, which seems ultimately rooted in practices of temple inventories that date back at least to the Hellenistic times. It would be interesting, at this point, to investigate more in-depth this ideal line and its subterranean continuity but also underline the peculiarities of each specific tradition.

**Fraud.** Lists could be forged to fool gullible treasure seekers and to obtain money for fraudulent guides.<sup>73</sup> This belief is by no means a medieval one, and it resurfaces, uninterrupted, from Antiquity to the Modern Age. Lucian of Samosata (fl. second century) in his "Alexander the false prophet" told the story of a fake oracle in Paphlagonia that produced hundreds of invented prognostics in response to treasure queries.

**Literary value.** Treasure entries draw not only from reality but also from a large reservoir of established motifs. In addition to the *topos* of mysterious letters as treasure markers, another typical cliché, ultimately going back to an enigmatic response produced by the oracle of Asclepius in Epidaurus,<sup>74</sup> is that of the shadow of a statue hitting the ground on a certain date and time: For example, in *Ravenna alla porta Adriana vedrai sopra di essa una statua [sic!] antica e nel piede stesso in lettere saracene, che non s'intendono, da tutti, sappi che alli 25. di Marzo all'ore 15. ove dall'ombra della testa tu devi cavare ed avrai sotto 20. piedi tutto il tesoro de Romani, e de cittadini nascosto, per la venuta di Arderico*<sup>75</sup> ("In Ravenna at Hadrian's gate you will see overhead an ancient statue, with Saracen lettering at its feet that not all understand, be advised that on 25 March at 15 at the shadow of the head, you must dig 20 feet down, and you will find all the treasure of the Romans and the citizens hidden for the arrival of Arderico".)

**Compensation.** *I.e.*, treasures as products of sheer invention. The possibility that some entries represent the projection of hoped-for richness rather than of realistic wealth corresponds to a well-known phenomenon, typical of close or stagnant economies, in which the evocation of treasures serves as a sort of mythic compensation for a reality of poverty.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> For this and other examples, see IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, Rome, 2021, pp. 157-159, 198-201, 212.

<sup>74</sup> A. STRAMAGLIA, "Il leone, il tesoro e l'indovinello: IG IV2 1, 123, 8-21 e Giamblico, Storie babilonesi 3 e 21 Habr.", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 90 (1992), pp. 53-59 and C. BLINKENBERG, "Statuen med Guldhovedet", *Danske Studier*, 3-4 (1928), pp. 97-113.

<sup>75</sup> DR, fol. 3v.

<sup>76</sup> G.M. FOSTER, "Treasure Tales and the Image of the Static Economy", *Journal of American Folklore*, 77 (1964), pp. 39-44; Id., "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good", *American Anthropologist*, 67 (1965), pp. 293-315.

Some or all of these explanations can appear perfectly juxtaposed in a single list, as a result of the highly stratified nature of these texts. The difficulty of framing these texts in a precise way, perhaps, accounts for the tendency to set them against too simple a dual paradigm (real *vs.* invented, authentic *vs.* forged). These texts are complex artifacts, however, valued in different terms depending on when and by whom they have been handled or possessed. A story of their reception is still to be written, and it is clear that these preliminary remarks only begin to scratch the surface.

In methodological terms, such material seems to allow two different—and complementary—approaches. On the one hand, there is the study of *content* (treasures and their peculiarities), which requires analysis of single entries and their micro-history, along with the philological reconstruction of chains of transmission and contexts of compilation. On the other hand, these texts could be studied also in relation to their *form* (that of the list) which can be set in comparison with other genres on the basis of repetition and accumulation (inventories, land registers and cadasters, litanies, charms, other treasure guides, and so forth), a research angle that has never been applied to this specific case. It would be interesting to envision a research project combining these two methodological directions, aiming at the construction of a historical atlas of treasures, a comprehensive online database of list entries and their geo-location, a collective instrument annotated and updated by scholars in various disciplines.

Such an atlas, however, risks to turn into another *Kitāb al-kanūz*. It too could well suffer the same fate, inspiring scholars' curiosity but also whetting the appetite of seekers,<sup>77</sup> eager to follow the timeless advice pronounced by the Delphic oracle in response to a treasure hunt: "Leave no stone unturned".<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> These guides were actually employed by seekers, IAFRATE, *Cercar tesori*, pp. 33, 178-179, 196-197, 199, 208. See also M. LEZOWSKI, "Trésors cachés. Enfants et jeunes filles en quête de richesses invisibles dans la Toscane méridionale du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Dix-Septième Siècle*, forthcoming (2021).

<sup>78</sup> J.M. DIXON, *Dictionary of Idiomatic English Phrases*, London, 1891, p. 318 (*pánta kinēsai péttron*).

