

Spirit in a Carafe. Treasure Hunting Rites of a Castilian Hermit in Early Modern Catalonia

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ABSTRACT

In the early modern period, accusations of treasure hunting became increasingly common in Inquisition trials in the Principality of Catalonia. The reason for this shift was the Church's attitude towards judicial astrology, most notably after the bull of Pope Sixtus V, *Coeli et terrae creator*, was issued. This paper presents the facts and contexts of a treasure hunting trial that took place between 1641 and 1644 at the Tribunal of the Inquisition at Barcelona, with a special focus on various European practices of catoptromancy. Through contemporary parallels, we can see side by side the diversity of divination methods, witness the circulation and reproduction of manuscripts, and the popularization and practical use of an earlier, written body of knowledge.

KEYWORDS

early modern Catalonia, treasure hunting, inquisition, catoptromancy, magic history

INTRODUCTION

In 1611, Sebastián de Covarrubias – Spanish lexicographer, cryptographer, chaplain to King Philip II – published a monumental work in print: the opus titled *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Thesaurus of Castilian or Spanish Language). Covarrubias's work is not only the first Castilian (Spanish) monolingual interpretive and etymological dictionary but also a personal historical document, considering that the author did not merely accumulate dry linguistic historical

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data in it, but rather provided a diverse, encyclopedic interpretation of the phenomena and concepts of the reality around him. When reading the individual entries, we can see that he has often included information from folklore and literary works of the time. This authorial position and commitment is even more apparent when reading the preface, where Covarrubias parallels the diachronic exploration of the meaning of words with adventures awaiting treasure hunters:

“those who search for enchanted treasure often speak of how, when they stumble upon the entrance to the cave where they suspect the treasure lies, various fantastic monsters stand in their way to frighten, deter, and discourage them: they find themselves facing a fierce dragon spewing fire from its snout, an enraged lion ready to tear them apart, but they – with their courage and various spells – defeat each monster and succeed in reaching the door of the room where the enchanted Moorish woman, seated on a majestic throne, is waiting for them, surrounded by enormous jewels and a vast array of treasures, which she offers to them, but they approach with suspicion and fear, for they are afraid that as soon as they walk out the door with the treasures, all their acquisitions would turn to coal.” (COVARRUBIAS OROZCO 1611: fol s.n. Al lector. Translation by the author.)

And if we look up the entry for the word “treasure” (*tesoro*) in the same dictionary, we can see that Covarrubias also refers to the well-known proverb “*thesaurus carbones facti sunt*” – that is, “the treasure has become coal” – which was based on the same belief motif as the one the author used in the preface as an allegory.

With the concept of a treasure that becomes worthless once acquired, it is easier to imagine how many ordinary people in the early modern Spanish Monarchy might have fantasized about finding, by some lucky – or even more likely magical – means, an ‘enchanted’ treasure buried in a special place, hidden by the Moors, bandits, or a suddenly departed relative, and having their lives changed.

The desire to acquire treasure intensified even more after the discovery of the New World and the conquest of new territories. At the same time, the desire for gold was stimulated not only by the conquest but also by other local historical events in the Spanish Monarchy: wars, the need to exploit the natural landscape, the violent social mobilization and subsequent displacement of non-Catholics, which made the search for treasure increasingly popular among the lower classes in many geographical areas.

In addition to the favorable geographical and historical conditions (richness in precious metals and archaeological finds), the presence of Muslims in the Spanish Monarchy with whom the Catholics associated fabulous treasures provided a stable framework for the spread of stories about buried treasure for centuries. The Spanish idea that the territory of Galicia – the wider area of the pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela – was rich in treasures buried by the Saracens appeared in the medieval *Codex Calixtinus*, also known as the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* (1138–1145) (ORRIOLS 2020:55).

But this was not the only area of the peninsula where the specific geographical location of hidden treasures was also circulated among treasure hunters in writing, on various lists. In his *Regiment de la cosa pública* (1383), a work on good governance written for the leaders of the city of Valencia on the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula, the Catalan Franciscan friar Francesc Eiximenis claimed that the Moors had hidden a considerable amount of enchanted treasure in the territory of the Kingdom of Valencia, and even provided the exact location of these treasures. He believed that the “ancient Moors” might still remember all of this, and with a little torture, they would be sure to reveal these sites (ORRIOLS 2020:55). Reading Pere Anton Beuter’s



comprehensive chronicle (1550), it seems that the treasure hidden by the Moors had become an important and structural motif in the 'reconquest narrative' of the Valencian city of Dénia by the Christians. The author details how the fleeing Moors buried their treasures, and describes them as "superstitious sorcerers" who censed the possessions they left behind and entrusted them to the spirits so that no one else could lay hands on them. In the chronicle, the author also included a selection of tricks to fool would-be treasure hunters, such as burying bones or vessels containing fake treasure (ORRIOLS 2020:56).

These narratives, also known from historical and political works, have become more colorful over the centuries, ballooned into local legends, and became folklorized. Contemporary treasure hunters passed around both oral and written accounts of the likely locations of the treasures the Moors were forced to bury. It is no coincidence that in Covarrubias' introduction the enchanted treasure is guarded by a "*Moorish*" (i.e., Muslim) woman, since the Moor is a specifically Spanish figure of treasure keeper. Part of the notion of the "treasure of the Moors" is the idea that the Muslims and Moriscos expelled from the territory of the empire continued to live secretly, underground, in Spanish territory.¹

As far as Catalan territory is concerned, the treasure narratives here were enriched by another peculiar, local feature: stories about caves, castles, and bells where bandits hid their loot. For in this region, we must also consider the important local socio-historical factor that favored treasure hunting activities, namely the form of banditry the impoverished nobility was involved in, which was fundamentally different from the banditry that flourished in the 19th century, as studied by Hobsbawm. Early modern banditry in the Principality of Catalonia can be understood more as a series of aristocratic turf wars based on customary laws, imbued with the personal connections of late feudalism, in relation to which the long-term monopolization of justice and violence posed a problem for the state for a long time.²

In this period, the forcible expulsion of the Moriscos³ (1609–1613) gave rise to earlier ideas about fabulous Moorish treasures, and the effort to acquire assets left behind on Spanish territory can be interpreted as a desire to cross the boundaries of two worlds and symbolically annex the foreign world.

It is not a coincidence – though certainly not a single-factor causal relationship – that the number of treasure hunting cases known from Inquisition trials began to increase in the first decade of the 17th century, at least in the northwestern part of the Iberian Peninsula, in Galicia,⁴

¹In other parts of Europe, various mythical, supernatural, or otherworldly treasure keeper creatures, animals, and entities are typical. (For more on this, see DILLINGER 2012:56–79 and TAUSIET 2013:48–49.)

²This phenomenon was common in Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands from the late 15th to the late 17th century. The bandits were occasionally joined by the Huguenots living along the French border in the Pyrenees and kept the local population in fear by raiding and pillaging together. In order to control the situation, Philip II imposed strict control over immigrants, and the bishoprics of Solsona and Barbastro were established. The origin of the bandit has become an established cliché of the stereotypical representation of the classic bandit (not a robber) in early modern Spanish-language literature: in the relevant works of Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Tirso de Molina, the bandit was portrayed as a Catalan, giving room for the development of stereotypical (ethno)characterology. For more details, see: LEDROIT 2009 and REGLA I CAMPISTOL 1966.

³Muslims from the time of Al-Andalus who were baptized as a result of political and ecclesiastical pressure from above were called Moriscos.

⁴The peculiar and rich folklore and popular narratives of Galicia related to treasure are not discussed in this study.



as well as in the northeast, in the Principality of Catalonia, as the surviving sources also confirm.⁵ It was then that both the Church and the state began to pay special attention to the acquisition of treasures. By this time, the proliferation of European historical sources also shows that the search for treasure had become a magical enterprise involving all social strata,⁶ and treasure was posited throughout Europe as a magical object capable of independent movement and transformation, with a mind of its own and a relative sense (DILLINGER 2012:58).⁷ To discover and obtain this object, magical and sometimes astrological knowledge and the use of planetary magic were also required.

TREASURE HUNTING AND ASTROLOGY. METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

A fundamental reason for the increasing number of Inquisition trials in the Principality of Catalonia was the changing attitude of the Church towards astrology. Indeed, treasure hunters could also use divination techniques to find hidden treasure that fell within the realm of so-called *judicial astrology*.⁸ At the end of the 16th century, in parallel with the evolution of scientific thought, the Church took a firm stance against the use of astrological divination and setting up birth charts. The bull of Pope Sixtus V on this type of astrology, *Coeli et terrae creator* ("God, creator of heaven and earth..."), was issued on January 5, 1586, in the first year of his papacy, right on the feast of Three Kings. In the bull, the pope strongly urges Church leaders and inquisitors to begin immediately sanctioning divination practices that fall within the realm of judicial astrology, except for those related to agriculture, navigation, and medicine. After the promulgation of the bull, anyone could come under suspicion for practicing or even just observing the practices prohibited by Sixtus V, who intended to bring before the Inquisition tribunals a series of early modern magical specialists, mentioned in the sources as necromancers, wizards, fortune-tellers, quacks, sorcerers, matchmakers, healers, demon conjurers, tricksters, and heretics in league with the devil. Thus, their increased number in Inquisition trials does not represent a sudden increase in divinatory practices but rather a systematic enforcement and implementation of the intention to sanction.

As for the folkloristic use of the proliferating source material, it can be said that by exploiting these resources, some features of popular culture are revealed in more detail, not least the

⁵This is also true for northwestern Galicia. As far as Aragon is concerned, we know from María Tausiet's research that treasure hunting trials from a century earlier, the early 16th century, have survived. A substantial difference in the punitive attitude of the tribunals can be expected in the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁶On a related topic, on the thematic rearrangement of grimoires in Western Europe, see LÁNG – TÓTH G. 2009:11.

⁷Paracelsus, a Swiss physician and astrologer, indicated that the idea of a shape-shifting treasure was well known in the 16th century. See DILLINGER 2012:60.

⁸I follow the terminological taxonomy of the Middle Ages and early modern period, as used, among others, by Pietro d'Abano, the medieval physician and astrologer. *Judicial astrology* included three functional subfields based on the subject of divination: the first was secular (event) astrology, which was used to predict events of significance for the Earth or a community or state; the second was natal astrology (or *genethliology*), which was based on the establishment of a birth chart and studied the individual destiny of a particular person (*natal or genethliac astrology*); the third branch, *horary/questionary astrology* focused on specific events of an individual's life, within which there were elective astrological procedures for determining the auspicious start date of an action and its outcome (*elections*), as well as divinatory procedures (*interrogations*) that can be classified as horary astrology. See VANDEN BROECKE 2003:19.



diversity of divinatory procedures can be seen side by side, and we can witness the migration and copying of manuscripts, and the popularization of an earlier, written body of knowledge. In parallel, the ecclesiastical dilemmas and related aspirations also emerge, as the interpretation of the provisions of Sixtus V caused no small amount of controversy within the Church at the time.⁹ In fact, the bull of Sixtus V was not promulgated (in churches) in the Spanish Monarchy until 1612,¹⁰ but the Inquisition trials I have studied prove that even before the promulgation, astrologers were systematically persecuted for their divinatory activities, and confiscated astrological manuscripts and books were subject to Inquisition qualification proceedings. I already found an Inquisition case report from 1603 in the records of the Tribunal of the Inquisition at Barcelona in which heresy was suspected because the accused had violated Pope Sixtus V's rule of *motu proprio* [sic!]. Consequently, the conscious ecclesiastical sanction had already begun at that time, before the promulgation of the bull in Spanish territory. As for the related jurisprudential practice of the geographical area, namely the Principality of Catalonia, generally, the Inquisitorial provisions of Miguel Santos de San Pedro¹¹ can be considered as the guiding principle for the interpretation of the Inquisition trials with reference to the bull of Sixtus.¹²

THE TREASURE HUNTING ACTS OF A CASTILIAN HERMIT FROM 1641 TO 1644

In this study, I present the data, testimonies, and related manuscripts of an early modern Inquisition trial regarding treasure hunting, which took place in the Tribunal of the Inquisition at Barcelona, in the Principality of Catalonia, between 1641 and 1644, against a Castilian healer hermit.¹³ My aim is to provide a detailed case study prior to the publication of a forthcoming volume on treasure hunting based on early modern sources. In this period, the vulgarization of magical texts is evident; the knowledge that had previously been generated and used in a narrow circle was not being used by the classically and theologically trained wider social stratum, not just for their own purposes but also for the purposes of illiterate communities. In the Middle Ages, such magical texts were copied by respected monks, court intellectuals, and university students – not by outsiders but by recognized actors of scientific institutions, as confirmed by

⁹It is worth reading ALAN J. OUMET's article about the process. <https://doceru.com/doc/nen5vx1v> (accessed July 24, 2024).

¹⁰SARRIÓN MORA, Adelina 2006:85.

¹¹Miguel Santos de San Pedro, Spanish Catholic priest and statesman, Inquisitor of Aragon, Bishop of Solsona (1624–1630) and Abbot of Santa María de Gerri, Viceroy of the Principality of Catalonia (1627–1629), President of the Council of Castile and Archbishop of Granada (1631–1633).

¹²AHN INQUISICIÓN, Libro. 1265. fols. 222–261. In the document setting out the procedural guidelines for sentencing in cases of astrologers and judicial mathematicians, Miguel Santos de San Pedro proposes the burden of *abjuración de levi*, flogging and banishment, in inquisitorial proceedings. This source is important because Santos de San Pedro (c. 1563–1633) held key posts in the area under study: he was the Bishop of Solsona (1624–1627), and immediately afterwards (1627–1629) he was appointed Viceroy of Catalonia.

¹³Source: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona (AHCB) 16/1C. XVIII-9 Proceso de fe contra el ermitaño de San Bartholomé del termino de la ciudad de Solsona, Fra Hiacinto García (Religious trial against father Hiacinto García, the hermit of Saint Bartholomew hermitage near the town of Solsona). For more information on this case, see, e.g., SMID 2019.



research in the Western and Central European regions (LÁNG 2007:42, 119). However, as these magical texts found their way out of the universities and monasteries over time through various copies, their use has also taken new paths, reaching social strata that had never been educated.

The early modern Inquisition trial in which the presently analyzed case and the associated magical texts survive is well suited for a contextual study of the use of magical texts, which is quite rare. At this stage of the research, I am not able to determine how locally specific, typical, or widespread the texts and practices presented may have been in the Catalan language area or even in the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula—a socially focused combined examination of the various magical practices is the objective for the next phase of work. It is not my aim, however, to examine the history of magical texts; I present earlier examples in this study merely to provide a more thorough look at the functional textual units of the magical text type under study. From a methodological point of view, it is also important to note that the case presented in this study is not recorded in the case files of the *Consejo de la Suprema Inquisición* (Council of the Supreme Inquisition) and is therefore not part of the Spanish Inquisition statistics overview of case reports.¹⁴

What makes this source special is that, in addition to the testimonies, their ratification, and the correspondence between the local municipal Inquisition commissioner and the supervisory body during the trial, the magical manuscripts confiscated as incriminating evidence have also survived, thus providing a detailed documentation of the religiosity of the era in the form of prayers and other magical manuscripts written on separate sheets (though not always arranged in the correct order). The order of the pages of the magical texts can be determined with certainty in most cases, based on content features and other, similar texts. Although the case itself cannot be considered a treasure hunting case in its entirety, one of the content units of the case file, a set of documents, contains three treasure hunting texts previously unknown elsewhere. My primary aim in this study is to contextualize the three texts identified as treasure hunting rituals in the Inquisition trial of the Castilian healer hermit based on the testimonies of the proceedings, discussing the texts' modes of circulation, their content features, the individuals involved in the rite and their social status, and the dimensions of status that can be inferred from the trial. In doing so, I want to lay the foundations for more extensive research.

First, I would like to introduce the accused, Jacinto García,¹⁵ a hermit from Benavente, Kingdom of León of the Crown of Castile. Although he had no university education, he was a literate man and performed numerous procedures and rites combining the gestures and knowledge of the clergy and mages. Since the origin of the accused was always a fundamental question during Inquisition hearings, in this era, the accused already provided a brief account of his life. The hermit's account tells us that he was an "old Christian" from a good family, the son of a lawyer from Benavente, born in Benavente around 1604, and that few of his twelve siblings lived to adulthood. From the age of 18, he took up seasonal agricultural work and from then on led a wandering lifestyle. During his long journey, he arrived at the bishopric of Solsona in the Principality of Catalonia, which was at the time being transformed into a baroque scenario. He settled in the hermitage of St. Bartholomew on the outskirts of the town.

¹⁴Cf. with data from Gunnar W. Knutsen: KNUTSEN, Gunnar W. 2010.

¹⁵In the transcript of the trial, the name appears as Hiacinto, but in my study I use the Jacinto version, since it is the form in which the accused hermit signed his confession in the Inquisition trial.



In 1641, however, several people went to the local Inquisition commissioner in the town and reported that Jacinto García was healing the locals with “strange” rites. The activity was confirmed by the local clergy, and exorcist activities were also reported. It was soon discovered that he had also used in his healing activities, among other things, an expurgatory prayer, the prayer of St. Cyprian. I have previously presented the case from this perspective (SMID 2019), discussing the diagnosis of the afflictions acquired through a hex, their cure, the social status of the patients, and the exorcist practice of the hermit in context. This time around I will limit myself to the subject of treasure hunting and present the related testimonies.

In the proceedings, which started over the healings performed with the suspicious prayer of St. Cyprian, a volunteer witness who turned up unexpectedly drew attention to the hermit’s treasure hunting rites. After an unsuccessful treasure hunting attempt, the 24-year-old Joseph Junyent the Younger, a wool carder, no doubt fueled by anger and frustration, testified against the hermit to the Canon of Solsona, Joan Codina, on March 20, 1642.¹⁶ To add further credence to his testimony, he stole the manuscripts describing the treasure hunting rite from the hermitage and gave them to the Canon, who also acted as the town’s Inquisition commissioner. The wool carder reported that fifteen days before Christmas he had been talking to Jacinto García, and as they got engrossed in the conversation, the hermit suggested to Junyent that he could go to Lleida to retrieve some papers that could be used to find hidden treasure and gold. The hermit offered Joseph that if he did go, he would write a letter to one of the Franciscan friars there, Francisco, the monastery’s cook. The young man did indeed take the hermit’s letter to the monastery, where the friar read it out loud after receiving it. After a few moments, he said that he was afraid that he had probably misplaced the requested treasure hunting papers. He then led the wool carder to his room, where he copied the text from a small book and gave it to him. Junyent also conveyed another message from the hermit to Friar Francisco, to accompany him back to the hermitage, if possible, but the cook declined the request, citing his busy schedule. He handed the papers to the young man, who read them, then headed back to Solsona. He climbed up to the hermitage situated on a hill outside the city walls with the newly acquired manuscript copy. After handing it over to the hermit, he asked if he could perform the rite, but Jacinto García replied that the alignment of the moon and the stars were not quite right.

If the testimony is to be believed, the hermit may have had a book on planetary magic or a manuscript copy of it, or possibly a calendar, because Junyent claimed that he then took out a book and read something from it that Joseph Junyent did not understand. The book said that the treasure hunting rite should be performed on the first day of the waxing moon. The hermit then promised Joseph that they would find a bell full of money during the treasure hunt. Thus, Joseph Junyent went home disappointed, but in January of 1643, shortly after the Feast of Three Kings, he went back up to the hermitage and camped out there for the night. Before dawn, the hermit set up a table and covered it with a clean tablecloth. He then placed a vessel half-filled with clean water (*rodona*) and prepared the other paraphernalia: an incense burner (*incensarium*), blood from a dog’s ear, young red wine, and wax, so that, in due course, the vessel could be sealed properly. He put words and drew different shapes on a piece of parchment, then placed it on top

¹⁶The following is based on his testimony.



of the water vessel.¹⁷ According to Junyent's testimony, the manuscripts that the witness later, in his trepidation, handed over to the Inquisition were also lined up in the prepared place. The hermit then asked Joseph to go outside and close the door behind him. And so he did, which is why he doesn't know what might have happened next, and – for the time being – neither do we. Jacinto García only told him that the censer was needed to cense the vessel with frankincense. The rite lasted until nine o'clock, and then the hermit emerged and said that, contrary to what had been expected, nothing at all appeared in the vessel. Joseph saw that the water was discolored, but he suspected that it was only from the blood and red wine. Nevertheless, Jacinto García encouraged him and promised to make another attempt at the next new moon. A few days later, he allegedly explained away the unsuccessful outcome by saying that there was a crucifix in the room.

This explanation, however, already leads to Junyent's self-defense narrative, as his testimony goes on to say that even before he went to the hermitage for the magical treasure hunting text, he asked the hermit whether what he had done was an offence toward God, to which he replied that that was not the case at all. In his testimony, Junyent laid it down in his self-defense that he did not believe him, so he stole the manuscript instead, and is now showing it to the Inquisition so that he might finally find out if he had been involved in an act that offended God. His testimony also reveals that when he visited the monastery in Lleida, he asked Friar Francisco if he thought there was gold buried in his vineyard on the outskirts of Solsona, because he had previously found some reals under a tree, and the hermit also mentioned to him that he had found money at a distance of six paces from one of the trees. To clarify the matter, the monk resorted to the usual divination technique: he took a sieve and a pair of scissors, which he inserted into the sieve, Junyent held one end of the scissors, and the Franciscan cook the other, muttering something under his breath that the carder could not understand. After the procedure, he swore to St. Peter and St. Paul that there was no money in the vineyard at all. Despite this, Junyent still asked the hermit to perform the treasure hunting rite. After all, he remembered well that he claimed to be able to unlock the enchanted treasure, and that to do so he only needed a few things, such as the consecrated bread from the first Christmas mass. As for physical evidence, two wooden censers and a parchment with circular figures that was used to cover the water vessel were presented to the Inquisition. The hermit later admitted to using them and claimed that they were from Junyent.

Two weeks later, another complaint was received by the Inquisition commissioner of Solsona. Antoni Rafart,¹⁸ a 36-year-old farmer, also testified against Jacinto García after a failed treasure hunt. The injured man had originally dislocated his arm, and the hermit told him a lot of things during the treatment. For example, he shared the story of a bell full of treasures hidden in the parish of Montpol near Solsona. Rafart confirmed that he had also heard of bandits hiding treasure there, so the narrative must have been part of local folklore. The hermit then told him that he knew how to find and get the treasure, and promised to help him retrieve it. He asked Rafart to come up to the hermitage, but when the man turned up, the first time he refused him, too, saying that the moon had already turned, so he could not perform the treasure hunting rite.

¹⁷The hand-made drawing was of key importance in terms of the expected successful outcome of the rite. Cf. VOZZA, Vincenzo 2022. Virgin parchment as a tool, on which images or text were placed, was common in magical practices.

¹⁸For local Catalan residents, I use the registered Catalan version of their name, despite the Spanish transliteration.



After a while, he went to see the farmer himself and locked himself in one of his rooms. But first, he asked the host for a vessel with water, a clean parchment, virgin wax, a vial, and some dog's blood, which he poured into the glass vessel, indicating that he would also need a table with a clean tablecloth. He drew two circles, a cross, and various symbols on the parchment, then locked himself in the room and did not come out for three hours. The attempt, however, failed again. The very next day, Antoni accused the hermit of having made a fool of him and deceiving him. As a consolation, the hermit gave him a manuscript, explaining that this was the greatest favor he could bestow on him, because by following all the instructions on the paper, with this text anyone could conjure a spirit helper ("*esperit*") and trap it in a carafe, a wide-mouthed bottle with a lip. And this detail also sheds light on the central element of the rite: the objective was to conjure and trap in a carafe a spirit helper, who would then lead the person to the treasure.

In the Inquisition proceedings, the witness' self-defense narrative continues with showing the paper to an herbalist ("*herbolario*"), who told him that this should not be done because it was nothing short of conjuring the devil. So, Antony handed the manuscript over to the Canon acting as the Inquisition commissioner, to dispose of it as he saw fit. This testimony also confirms that the hermit must have obtained other astrological books, as he told Antoni that he could predict the date on which he would make enemies and claimed that it did not require any special ability, anyone could do it.

From this point on, a new kind of "diagnosis" of the hermit emerges in the accusations: he was previously referred to as a healer, but following the failed treasure hunts and proliferating testimonies, witnesses have painted him in a different light. Jeroni Fàbrega¹⁹ said on July 23, 1642, during the ratification or confirmation of his earlier testimony, that the hermit was indeed using authentic divination techniques and that some people believed he was a male witch, a "*bruxote*", or perhaps an ordinary quack ("*embabillador*").²⁰ Fàbrega, however, added one more accusation to his January testimony: that Jacinto García told him which of his relatives, exactly how many times, and with what had cursed him. In January of 1642, Jeroni Fàbrega was staying with Antoni Rafart in his mountain house in Solanelles, and he saw with his own eyes that Jacinto García had a room whitewashed where he wanted to trap a spirit in a carafe. He covered a table with a new tablecloth, then sealed the vessel with parchment and drew three crosses and other symbols on it. He cut the ear of one of the dogs to draw blood from it. According to the testimonies, the hermit therefore performed the above described rite several times. Subsequent testimonies confirm that he had begun to be stigmatized within the community, of which he himself must have been aware by this time, despite the fact that the local testimonies conducted on behalf of the Inquisition were conducted in complete secrecy throughout all proceedings.

¹⁹The case files recorded in Spanish use the *Hieronimo* version of the name, but I use the Catalan version this time as well, because that is how the name appears in the Catalan registers of the time, so that is how the community itself used it. The difference is solely due to the use of the administrative language of the Inquisition, which was imposed from above, but by the end of the trial (1644), the records were in Catalan.

²⁰The letter of Inquisitor Domingo Abbad y Huerta arrived in Solsona on March 20, 1642. In it, he informed the canon, Joan Codina, who also served as the local Inquisition commissioner, that the prosecution of the Holy Tribunal was opening a criminal case against the hermit Jacinto García. The twenty urban witnesses who had already been questioned had to confirm their testimony first in the presence of the Rector of St. Michael's College and Father Pio Vives, a member of the Order of Preachers.



When the Inquisition Commissioner of Solsona, Joan Codina complied with the Inquisitor's order and went up to the hermitage of St. Bartholomew on April 14, 1642, to conduct a search, he found another hermit there, who told him that his predecessor had left for an unknown location. Jacinto García burned some of his books himself, taking only a few readings and manuscripts with him. He headed for Montserrat and then left for Balaguer.

He was well aware that the use of magical books and texts was considered an aggravating circumstance in his case, and after he was arrested by Inquisition familiars²¹ and had to answer for his actions before the Inquisition once again, he testified during interrogations that he had only spiritual readings (*libros espirituales*). Thus, his books themselves do not reveal the entirety of the treasure hunting rite, but the structure of it can be reconstructed from the content of the testimonies and the three surviving texts.

JACINTO GARCÍA'S TREASURE HUNTING SPELLS

Three manuscript texts from this 17th-century trial, seized as evidence by the Inquisition, are linked to the treasure hunting rite described in the testimonies presented above. These, along with the other texts, were acknowledged by the hermit as his own during interrogations, and this fact was also marked under the texts with the note “recognized” (“reconocido”) during the proceedings. For manuscript texts, there are no extended inquisitorial qualification reports, which might be expected when a manuscript or printed text is ordered to be investigated by the Inquisition. In a general sense, qualification is a censorship created by theologians, the object of which could be an act or even a statement during a trial.²² A more detailed explanatory report might help the researcher's interpretation of the social use of the texts, since not all texts “in use” are found in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, the list of banned books.

The inquisitors do not seem to have paid much attention to this source when organizing the case files. In some cases, the pages were mixed up, even though the lawsuit states that they were bound together: they still ended up in the wrong order. In any case, based on the content elements of the testimonies described above and other textual parallels, they can be logically and reliably reconstructed. Some parts are difficult to read, partly because the paper has been damaged over the centuries, and partly because Jacinto García's handwriting is not always easy to read, and in some cases, in both the Latin and the Catalan parts, it appears to be a mechanical, i.e., not an interpretive, copy, for example, with distorted proper names that have been copied incorrectly. In the following, I will look at these texts.

²¹In this context, the word *familiar* refers to the secular “associates” of the Spanish Inquisition who were informers. Their job in this early modern spy network was to report locally on anything that might be of interest to the Inquisition. They would sometimes benefit financially from their denunciations and at the same time enjoy greater immunity. The information they provided remained confidential (anonymous).

²²Objective qualification is one in which, regardless of the author's intention, certain actions and verbal expressions are qualified. Subjective qualification, on the other hand, is the opinion of the qualifiers about a person's internal belief system. In the course of qualification, the suspicion of heresy may have been brought up and ruled out, and different degrees of heresy were distinguished. Qualifiers were exclusively theologians. JIMÉNEZ MONTESERÍN, Miguel 2020:1140.



The first collection of manuscript texts [64–64v] is entitled “*Exersisi. Aliut experimentum per a tomar un sperito dentro de [une] una radoma de agua i tener por sierto que vendra ...*”,²³ that is, “Exercise. An experiment for putting a spirit in a water vessel and be certain that it will come...”. It is not elaborate, does not suggest an experienced scribe, and it appears to match the handwriting of Jacinto García’s signature on his testimony during the trial, so it is his handwriting that we can suspect in the case of this text. The language of the first part is Spanish, mixed with some Catalan and Latin words in the title line. In terms of its content, it describes the preparation for conjuring the “spirit”: the opening of the window to the east after dawn, the preparation for sealing with wax the water vessel placed in the middle of the table. This section is accompanied by further sections of text in Latin, separated by a line. They contain the *coniuratio*, that is, the exact text of the conjuring of the spirit. The name of the conjured entity is hard to make out (*Septigil?*), and the Latin text also asks for the intercession of the Virgin Mary and Jesus to compel the spirit to reveal to the magician the exact location of the treasure. After the Latin passages, there is another explanatory text that details what to do when the conjured spirit actually shows up, accompanied by a light phenomenon. The text also clarifies how to put the lid on the vessel with the wax and warns the person performing the rite that the spirit must be released after three days.

The second, Catalan text [65–65v] begins with *Primer experiment uerdador della anpolla*,” that is, “*First real experiment with a glass vessel.*” Above the text, on the left, are two figures. These drawings show the top of the water vessel, and the circle used to seal the vessel during the rite to prevent the spirit from escaping. The circle is divided into segments, in the four cardinal directions, with a cross next to each, and further markings lined up between them. Two larger versions of this illustration are included in the manuscript material attached to the case, on separate folios. In this case, the text is in Catalan; the first half is easier to read, and after the first section there is a dividing line, and again we see the hermit’s handwriting. The first, prescriptive part seems to be a slower, more elaborate piece of writing. This suggests that it may be the version that the hermit gave to Antoni Rafart so that he could go off on his own to find the treasure. The first unit of text explains the importance of keeping the site of the rite clean, and lists the equipment needed and the appropriate time to perform the rite. The second unit of text is a *coniuratio* that helps to invoke the prince of hell, “*Septigill*,” in the name of “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Then, the text of the second *coniuratio* [65v] calls upon this entity to tell only the truth in its answers to the questions, and to not lie. This text is more detailed than the previous one, with more instructions on how to perform the rite, and it also says that the person who wrote it is happy to give frankincense to the person performing the rite, but at the same time warns him to be careful with the spirit called *Alago*, whom he will invoke during the *coniuratio* and who will otherwise help him with all questions. Jacinto García, the presumed writer, encouraged the user to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the text, thus the hermit did not consider the magical process of putting a spirit in a carafe the property of a privileged class, and considered himself merely an anonymous intermediary, a copyist. This attitude did not bring about the expected reconciliation, nor did it coincide with the expectations of the townspeople, who expected the hermit to be a “service provider” with special knowledge and healing powers, and thus could not and, according to the testimony, did not

²³During the transcription, I preserved the wording and spelling of the manuscript, and I chose literal transcription.



want to do anything with the manuscript and the description of the rite itself. The gesture of handing over the text was merely seen as confirmation that the hermit had failed in his treasure hunting rite.

The third text in the Inquisition's case file is in Spanish, eight folios long. The writing is quite different from the previous two texts. It begins with an underlined heading clearly separated from the main body: "*EsPerimentación Berdadera Para hacer Benir un espiritu dentro de una Redoma de agua*," that is, "Real experiment to seal a spirit in a caraf of water." The title, which the copyist has rubricated on the paper, suggests that the text is either from a printed magic book, or perhaps from a precise manuscript copy or a chapbook publication. This can be seen in the lettering, in the way the text is structured, which is a visual forerunner of the printing process, and also uses the means of authentication to ensure good marketability. In terms of content and purpose, it is consistent with and complements the two texts presented above. Based on the testimonies of the trial, this third text is the one that Friar Francisco, the Franciscan monk working in the Lleida kitchen, might have copied for the hermit's "envoy." Junyent, the wool carder, also expected the hermit to perform the ritual, which put him in a difficult position, because if the rite failed, he would be forced to explain himself. In addition, the testimony suggests that the hermit referred to a passage from this very text when he claimed that the treasure hunt must have failed because there was a crucifix in the room. The prescriptive part makes clear the expectation that the experimenter should be alone in a whitewashed room in front of an east-facing window. A table should be placed in the center of the room, covered with a white tablecloth, with a glass water vessel in the middle, and before the rite begins, a wax patch should be prepared so that when the time comes, the vessel can be sealed with it. Three to four drops of dog or cat blood mixed with mature red wine had to be added to the carafe. The person performing the rite also needed a censer that was not from a temple and was not blessed. On the first day of the waxing moon, at dawn, the vessel was to be censured three times until and including ten o'clock. This part is followed in the text by a *coniuratio*, separated by a horizontal line, which the performer of the rite can also use to conjure the prince of hell, *Septigil*, whom he can eventually trap in the water vessel and ask him to answer all his questions truthfully. One can be assured of the fact that the conjured *figure* named *Alago* has appeared if he is accompanied by a light phenomenon.

Overall, what is clear from an overview of the content elements of the texts is that these three texts were not specifically and exclusively treasure hunting texts, but rather served a general divinatory purpose. Exactly what else this type of text could have been used for, I will show below on the basis of European parallels from near and far.

THE DIVINATION TECHNIQUE USING REFLECTIVE SURFACES IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

What is clear is that the three surviving versions of the texts from Jacinto García's trial that were used for the treasure hunt show similarities in content and function, the differences being in the details, the prescriptive passages on the performance of the rite, and the style of the texts. Where do these three texts come from? From what book could the monk in Lleida have copied his version? It is not easy to answer this question at the moment, because a satisfactory answer would require a thorough, systematic basic textual research, including a systematic review of the



Inquisition trials, which has not been done yet, but in any case, I will return to the issue later. It is important to point out that genetic textual relationships may not be established even after carrying out such basic research.

Divination was already a prominent activity in the Middle Ages: among the magical texts of the codices of that time, the most prevalent were those used for divination. These short texts, often only a page long, were mostly hidden between longer scientific or religious treatises (LÁNG 2007:83). Benedek Láng pointed out the fact that most of the data we have for historical research on various divination techniques come from the records of the inquisitors who convicted the magicians—the trial documents. They were the ones who had first-hand knowledge of the various magical activities that were being carried out, even if they were being indirect and reticent about it (LÁNG 2015). They often read, commented on, and qualified the manuscript and printed sources used by magicians. In some cases, the qualification report has survived alongside the Inquisition trial or in the trial itself, so even if we cannot identify the magical texts or their source, the content features that can be inferred from the qualifying commentaries may help. And even in cases where the inquisitors have destroyed the sources. In a few exceptional cases, objects that aided the divination process have also survived, and mirrors designed for this purpose are the most likely to be found in the context of the subject under study.²⁴ Accordingly, I will limit myself to the sources that are currently readily available, and with their help I will review the data on demons, spirits, and angels conjured via reflective surfaces, as a kind of first answer to the question of what written formal parallels to the divination technique using reflective surfaces can be found in early modern, late medieval Europe.

It is useful to start from the practice of elite magic, where crystal magic or mirror magic (collectively known as *catoptromancy*) is one of the most complex techniques of divination,²⁵ and can be described as follows: a supernatural helper is “captured” by means of a reflective surface (crystal, mirror, vessel filled with water, fingernail anointed with oil or bare, sword, ivory), using various *coniurationis*. Usually a virgin boy or girl, used as a mediator or medium, was involved in the divination and the conjuring of the helping entity. In the lower strata, for simplicity and accessibility, it was some kind of vessel filled with water that served as a reflective surface, as we saw in this early modern Catalan urban setting of a rural nature in the early modern example above.

As a first step, it is worth asking whether we can expect to find data on divination by means of reflective surfaces in the geographical area under study before the early modern period. One of the earlier relevant sources is the inquisitor’s manual, *Directorium inquisitorum*, compiled in 1376 by Nicholas Eymerich, a Dominican theologian and Inquisitor General of Aragon. It became the definitive procedural manual of the Spanish Inquisition until the 17th century and is considered one of the most important precursors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. It has been published in many editions, including in Barcelona in 1503 and in Rome in 1578. To write the book and demonstrate heresy, Eymerich used magical manuscripts that the Inquisition had confiscated from those who had been tried on suspicion of practices that were labeled as heresy (Cf. KIECKHEFER 2018:156–157). After studying these, the author wrote the manual, in which he described, for example, the medieval practice of baptizing images, censuring the head of the dead,

²⁴Benedek Láng cites two examples of magic mirrors in Europe: LÁNG 2015, 2007:96.

²⁵Cf. LÁNG, Benedek – Pöcs, Éva 2006b:8. On the various divination techniques for treasure hunting, see Id. 2006a:393–395.



throwing salt on fire, burning the carcasses of animals and birds, conjuring various spirits, the combined use of the names of angels and demons, and *chiromancy*, i.e., palmistry. The inquisitor devoted a separate section to the various forms of conjuring a demon, and as a third method, he describes a ritual in which the necromancer draws a circle on the ground, with a young boy standing in its center, places a mirror and a sword in front of him, and then takes the magic book and conjures the demon using the instructions it contains.²⁶ From this detail we can also see that the procedure was already known in the 14th century in the territories of Aragon and Catalonia. Eymerich's other work in which divination with water is discussed is the treatise *Contra astrologos imperitos atque contra nigromanticos de occultis perperam iudicantes* (Against Ignorant Astrologers and Against Nigromancers Who Wrongly Judge of Hidden Things). In it, he devotes a separate chapter to hydromancy, which was used to detect hidden things. It is not possible, however, to deduce from the work to what extent this procedure was common in the geographical area under study at the time the treatise was written, i.e., around 1395. The reason for this is that Eymerich summarized this passage on the basis of Augustinian demonology and Gratian's work on canon law (*Concordantia discordantium canonum*), citing classic examples of its harmful and destructive use, but did not address contemporary data²⁷ (cf. EYMERICH [MATTON] 2023:58).

Information about divination by water is already proliferating in the Spanish territory in the early modern period: the early modern spread of the phenomenon was thoroughly documented by Peter Burke.²⁸ In addition, the topic of divination by means of water surface also appears in Spanish demonological treatises at this time. In what follows, I mention some of these works, and seek to answer the question of what sources or social practices the Spanish authors reference in the relevant sections.

One of the treatises in which we can expect to find divination by means of reflective surfaces is the book on true and false prophecies by Juan Horozco y Covarrubias, brother of Sebastián de Covarrubias, published in 1588. In the fourth chapter of Book Two, he presents hydromancy as a type of diabolical divination invented to "deceive people." Horozco y Covarrubias follows the argument known even in the Middle Ages that the science of seeing into the future, of locating hidden things, has remained hidden from everyday mortals and was only accessible to God. Accordingly, the Church considers divination to be a misuse of knowledge given to God, and the term itself refers to the abuse of divine knowledge, which is not possible without demonic assistance (LANG 2007:84). Horozco y Covarrubias classifies *lecanomancy*, which is divination by the sound of precious stones thrown into a bowl or basin of water, as *hydromancy*. He cites the Bible; Cicero's *De divinatione* on Persian magic; St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* on divination with soldiers' sword edges, oil, and magic circles; Suidas, the Greek historian; and Pausanias, who writes about an Achaean soothsayer who performed healing activities with the help of a mirror. He mentions the example of La Coruña, where ships arriving from far away were predicted by means of a mirror. He also quotes from St. Isidore of Seville's work *Etimologías*, and

²⁶To describe the ritual, I cite one of the early modern reprints: see EYMERICH 1587:fol. 338.

²⁷The exploration of these is a task for the future.

²⁸BURKE, Peter 1991:130. In a paragraph on healers in popular culture, he mentions that "[some] were also engaged in fortune-telling and divination. They found lost money, recognized a thief's face in a tub of water (the crystal ball came into fashion much later), and even got their name by means of coscinomancy (turning a sieve)."



describes divination by means of oil drops, in which the oil drops form figures in a vessel of water and the magician can use them to get answers to the questions posed. In this context, reference is made to Fez, where a similar rite is known as a common magical procedure. He also mentions that the figures can be seen by innocent children and women whose nails are usually anointed with oil or soot and the answer appears when they face the sun (HOROZCO Y COVARRUBIAS 1588: fol. 85–86). In an appendix to the book on prophecies, the *Constitutio* of Pope Sixtus V, *De coeli et terrae*, can be found in Latin. However, even though in its topic the work is a quick and detailed response to the papal bull, as can be seen from the examples above, it does not take into account contemporary Spanish practices.

In the demonological work of the Jesuit Martín del Río entitled *Disquisitionum magicarum* (1599), in which he provides, among other things, a detailed typology of divination techniques in addition to historical examples, he also provides various data on *onimancy* or *onycomancy* (fingernail), *catoptromancy* (mirror), *cristalomancy* (crystal), as well as *hydromancy* (divination with water in its natural state). He links divination by means of a bowl of water with Fez, as does Horozco y Covarrubias (DEL RÍO [MAXWELL-STUART] 2000:156–157). In addition to the usual biblical and patristic sources, Del Río drew heavily on the lives of medieval saints and contemporary travel accounts (MACHIELSEN 2020:189); his Latin book on demonology is the work of a restless bookworm in pursuit of comprehensiveness, but it is also not based on examples from contemporary practice.²⁹

In his demonological work first published in 1618,³⁰ the Córdoba-born Francisco Torreblanca Villalpando (1580–1645) also suggests that a form of hydromancy with a virgin boy mediator is common in Africa (TORREBLANCA VILLALPANDO 1678: fol.103). He also provides a historical overview of the topic.

These examples also show that, with the re-reading of ancient authors, the theological and ecclesiastical reinterpretation of judicial astrology and divination has reappeared in demonological treatises in the Spanish Monarchy, starting with the work of Eymerich and then in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, mostly with a thematic listing of ancient examples rather than a need to show contemporary usage. Therefore, this source material does not provide any help in terms of practice. However, it is clear from the cited material that water gazing was generally used for the purposes of uncovering hidden things, with a variety of intentions, and was not exclusively linked to treasure hunting. Before presenting the European parallels of the texts examined in this study, I would like to address a problem related to early modern sources, which may also provide lessons for the interpretation of the ritual of using a glass vessel. To get closer to the practice, it is worth looking at the grimoires that were used by magicians, priests, or lay people using this divination in the early modern period.

²⁹For more details, see: MACHIELSEN 2015.

³⁰He had already received the bishop's and treasury's permission and the Inquisition's approval for publication in 1612, but an anonymous petition entitled *Advertencias contra los libros de Magia de Francisco Villalpando* was submitted to the Council of Castile, which resulted in the author being exiled and fined. After his sentence had expired, Villalpando drafted a formal reply, which he submitted to the council, and the book was published in 1618, with the two polemics included in the treatise as appendices. The volume was published years later in Mainz under a different title (*Daemonologia siue De magia naturali, daemoniaca, licita & illicita, deque aperta & occulta, interuentione & inuocatione daemonis libri qvatvor*).



AN EARLY MODERN MAGIC BOOK, THE *CLAVICULA SALOMONIS*

In their book on treasure hunting, Benedek Láng and Péter G. Tóth wondered why treasure hunting texts were preserved in manuscripts rather than in printed magic books (LÁNG – TÓTH G. 2009:25). Obviously, questions of content and the secret nature of the texts cannot provide a satisfactory answer to the question, since, as the two authors write, in the early modern period, numerous printing houses published a plethora of magic books on ritual magic and talismanic magic, despite all kinds of ecclesiastical prohibitions. So why would there have been fewer treasure hunting texts? The ecclesiastical ban is not in itself a reason for not publishing treasure hunting texts in print. It is not uncommon, however, for treasure hunters or those who have used rites that fall into the category of demonic magic to declare during the Inquisitorial interrogation that they have used the text of a certain book but have burned the book itself or the manuscript copy.³¹ In the book of Inquisitor Nicholas Eymerich we can read that in the Middle Ages, when forbidden codices were burned, those standing near the fire could hear the screams of demons trying to escape from the books (LÁNG 2007:105). With this story, we can also better understand the power of magic books and magical texts. Eymerich presented magical books as having a personality of their own, and burning them was tantamount to an exorcism, which the authors themselves, and sometimes their users, would have deserved (LÁNG 2007:105). It is enough to remember that the possession of *grimoires* and magical manuscripts was considered a more dangerous factor before the Inquisition than practicing magic, because it was already encoded in the books and manuscripts as objects that certain rites could be learned, repeated, and disseminated (BAMFORD 2023:51).

As this is a complex issue, I will not attempt in this paper to give a complete historical-philological summary, but I would like to mention divination rituals that can be interpreted as formal parallels to the texts presented above in the Catalan area, and which serve as examples of divination techniques using reflective surfaces that could also be used for treasure hunting. At the same time, these examples also contribute to outlining the process of the vulgarization of early modern texts and the spread of the ritual in manuscript form within Catalan and Spanish-language material. It is important to note that this ritual was not exclusive to the area under study in the early modern period, and is not the only form of treasure hunting, only one possible form.

As a first step, it is worth looking at what contemporary readings and sources can be found in the passages of the Inquisition trial cases that (also) included treasure hunting and mention the results of the qualification procedures for the theological examination of the manuscript and printed products seized by the Inquisition. The Tribunal of the Inquisition at Barcelona cites the grimoire *Clavicula Salomonis* as a text that violates the bull of Pope Sixtus V in several trial sources of magical treasure hunting rituals, along with other magical acts.³² At this point, one might be glad to have found the possible main source of the texts, but unfortunately it is not that

³¹This is what Don Campana, a treasure hunting priest from Modena, claims to have done in 1517, when he burned the *Clavicula* and the *Almandel* along with several manuscripts. Cited by DAVIES, Owen 2009:39.

³²The *Clavicula Salomonis* (*The Lesser Key of Solomon*) is a 17th-century grimoire, not to be confused with the 13th-century text *Clavis salomonica* (*The Key of Solomon*), described in Agrippa von Nettesheim's *De incertitudine et vanitate omnium Scientiarum et artium* (1531). The structure of the *Clavicula*, as a text mostly handed down in manuscript form, has been modified several times over time and through different traditions.



simple, because the texts of the *grimoires* bearing the title *Clavicula* that survived in European archives are quite diverse, and there are many versions that existed in parallel and at the same time.

According to Owen Davies, the earliest versions of the *grimoire* are in Greek and can be dated to the fifteenth century. The title *Clavicula Salomonis* became established with the appearance of Latin and Italian translations in the 16th century. Although some manuscripts have subsequently insisted that the original source was in Hebrew, there is no substantial evidence of an earlier Hebrew version before the 17th century (DAVIES 2009:15). By this time, King Solomon's name was not only associated with divine wisdom, but he was also regarded as the crowned master of popular practices, alchemy, and magical knowledge labeled as occult, used to unlock the hidden secrets of the universe (VOZZA 2022).³³

The *Clavicula Salomonis* is a textual-ritual European tradition that has evolved over a long process of development, blending cultural elements that flourished in late ancient Jewish, medieval Arabic, or late medieval European monastic contexts (BELLINGRADT – OTTO 2017:7). By the end of the 16th century, this particular textual complex could be interpreted as a *grimoire* in its own right in terms of its structure and general content, alongside the *Clavis Salomonica*, an earlier book of magic translated into several languages (VOZZA 2022).³⁴ Readers who became copyists regularly adapted the text, often translating and simplifying it to make it more useful for their own magical purposes. Thus, the *Claviculae* used in practice in the early modern period differed greatly from each other, and their content was adapted to the needs of the copyist of the moment. It is also clear from the Inquisition trials that these manuscript copies reflect the individual interests of the users or the needs of the patrons of magical services, and are therefore of mixed content and origin, meaning that it would be a mistake to expect a genetic urtext for each manuscript source. Moreover, in most cases, the emphasis in this *grimoire* was not on the search for treasure, but on individual prosperity, love magic, and health magic.

Nonetheless, the use of the *Clavicula Salomonis* at the Tribunal of the Inquisition at Barcelona became one of the important diagnoses of forbidden magical practices in the 17th century. Although the *Clavicula* has survived in many variants, and carries with it the *longue durée*, transcultural, and interreligious nature of Western learned magic, as well as the resulting hybridity and conceptual heterogeneity that it entails (BELLINGRADT – OTTO 2017:7), Owen Davies argues that some seemingly stable, common content features can nevertheless be identified in the manuscript versions: in addition to *coniurationis* for commanding and controlling the “angels of darkness” (the various demons), they generally contained rituals and symbols for personal rather than spiritual well-being, such as texts used for love magic, punishing enemies, becoming invisible, and dealing with thieves.

In connection with the different versions of the *Clavicula*, it is worth mentioning a problem of a textological nature, which is also familiar from the early history of folkloristics in the 19th century, although it was a matter of collecting and scientifically processing the variants that existed in oral tradition. The analogy lies in the fact that the different texts were viewed as fragments of a once larger whole, and the scholar's hand subsequently created the ideal version.

³³For more details, see: TORIJANO, Pablo A. 2002.

³⁴Regarding the *Clavis*, see Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum atque artium declamatio invectiva* (*On the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Arts and Sciences: An Invektive Declamation*), which was first published in 1530.



In the case of the *Clavicula*, this concept and procedure can still be traced in the various modernized *Clavicula Salomonis* publications, which are compilations of several manuscript magic books found in public collections into an imagined, more complete, idealized version, a textual complex—a completely debatable philological solution.³⁵ In terms of the material I am studying and the pragmatic approach I am taking, I reject this approach entirely, and my primary aim is to explore the functionality and the communal use of magic texts. After all, there were as many *Clavicula* texts as there were users, and magic books are open works in a constant flux, in Eco's sense of the word.

It is not possible to identify a text that is both used for treasure hunting and is also found in most *Claviculae*. Some motifs are worth examining, however, in order to get closer to the parallels with the hermit's texts. It was a common practice in *grimoires* to match treasure keeping angels with the spirits of the planets as well. According to the *Clavicula Salomonis*, the spirit of Saturn, and especially that of Jupiter, helps in the discovery of hidden treasures. However, this is not reflected in the sources examined in this study. The demon names mentioned in them could be taken as a starting point, but the manuscript texts of Jacinto García refer to *Septigil* – recorded in a likely distorted form – as the prince of hell, so the name does not provide any clues. The name of the other entity in the hermit's manuscripts is *Alago*, which is also likely the result of copying error or distortion from multiple copying. So far, other than the hermit's trial case, I have found a similar name in one source, the *Liber incantationum, exorcismorum et fascinationum variarum*, the Munich Manual of Demonic Magic, which Richard Kieckhefer has addressed in detail.³⁶ In the manuscript, in the list of spirits, Prince Alugor – described in the grimoire as a magnificent knight carrying a lance and banner and holding a scepter – answers occult questions and helps knights and kings (KIECKHEFER 1997:166). No similar awareness of the functionality of the name Alagor, known from the Catalan Inquisition trial, can be found. Although there is a similar list in *Lemegeton Clavicula Salomonis*, there is no such or at least similar name.

In the following, I present a type of text in which angels, rather than demons, are being conjured, but the text's other motifs and props can be paralleled with the texts that have been preserved in the trial, both in terms of their function and their purpose.

ANGELS IN DIVINATION PROCEDURES WITH REFLECTIVE SURFACES

Some copies of the *Clavicula* contain a ritual text in which divination with a helping entity is linked to the divination vessel of the angel Uriel,³⁷ through which all hidden things become visible. In terms of the use of the text, I'll start by citing an 18th-century French example, which, although 100 years later than the material under study, was also used for treasure hunting, according to the associated protocol.

On July 21, 1742, in the village of Caluire, near Lyon, 19-year-old Benoît Michalet was captured while he was trying to conjure the angel Uriel from heaven with the help of various

³⁵ Among these, there are some publications where it is ultimately not even transparent and verifiable which text comes from which manuscript.

³⁶ The source is in the Bavarian State Library in Munich, marked CLM 849. Critical edition: KIECKHEFER, Richard 1997.

³⁷ The archangel Uriel ("God's Light", "God's Fire") is one of the seven major archangels, and his feast day is November 8.



ritual paraphernalia, to show him the location of a hidden treasure, for which he had recruited a company. Uriel was expected to descend in the form of a mist onto a sacred stone, into a jar filled with water placed between two candles, while the armed magician dressed in priestly robes chanted the ritual text. Michalet ingeniously claimed that he had learned these practices from the book by Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, and although he carefully followed the author's instructions, fasting and praying, he did not achieve the expected results (BEAUNE 1868:21). In magical literature and inquisitorial manuals, the name of Agrippa (1486–1535) was often mentioned as the celebrated Archimagus, who sought to subvert the scientific system of his time, attacked scholastic philosophy, and sought to restore man's faculties of cognition and action through Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Kabbalah (COMPAGNI 2021). For him, magic was the deepest layer of natural philosophy and therefore perfection itself (Cf. CLARK 1997:216).

Although the 18th-century French magician caught in the act did not indicate exactly which Agrippa book inspired him, two years after the trial, in 1744, *Les oeuvres magiques de Henri-Corneille Agrippa: avec des secrets*, a book composed of Agrippa's works was published, which had already been published in 1547 in French. It contains a detailed description of the divination rite of the archangel Uriel, together with the text of the relevant *coniurationis* and prayers (ABAN 1744:99–101). Some copies detail the appropriate place and time for performing the ritual, the prayers and *coniurationis* to be said, as well as the personal ascetic and environmental preparation (fasting, praying) and dress required of the magician. Preparation of the site, as we saw in the early modern trial, involved cleaning, sanctifying, and censuring the room used for performing the rite, setting up a table covered with a white tablecloth, and closing the windows and doors. A carafe full of water, three wax candles, parchment, a quill for writing, an inkwell, and a fire-lighting tool were to be placed in the middle of the table, and then the candles were lit. The participant of the rite was a 9 or 10-year-old boy who, as a mediator, watched the vessel with hands clasped in prayer. Meanwhile, the specialist performing the rite would recite the ritual text, invoking Uriel, in some cases only as an intermediary, so that a spirit could appear to reveal the truth. After the text had been recited, the boy would report whether he has seen anything in the vessel, and if so, the visitor is asked to write down on the parchment the answer to the question or to reveal it in a dream the following night.

Also preserved in French territory was a copy of the *Clavicula* from the 1598 Lyon print, containing the invocation of the angel Uriel, followed immediately by the prayer of St. Christopher, also venerated by treasure hunters, which, based on the title, was taken from the German language area by the copyist (BEAUNE 1868:21).

For the time being, there is no suitable database to consult the surviving texts related to the angel Uriel and to answer the question of possible transmission and translation. I have not yet considered the lessons of the Inquisition trials conducted in the Spanish Monarchy in their entirety, so in this study I only cite one related example from the magic book *Dietario mágico* by Jaime Manobel, a priest from Sariñena (Huesca, Kingdom of Aragon), which has already been addressed by others.³⁸ On folio 33 of this manuscript is the rite of a jar or vessel filled with water

³⁸The magic book is available in digitized form at the following link: AHN, INQUISICIÓN MPD. 422. The *Dietario mágico* in the Inquisition trial of Jaime Manobel. <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/4836625?nm> (accessed July 12, 2024). The priest's Inquisition trial can be found here: AHN, INQUISICIÓN, 90, Exp. 6. Proceso de fe de Jaime Manobel [The trial of faith of Jaime Manobel] <https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/4439371?nm> (accessed July 12, 2024). For the source and the magic book, see, among others: MORALES ESTÉVEZ 2014.



on a white tablecloth, or mirror, or fingernail, which also requires the presence of a young boy. We can see that the handwritten *grimoire* is both permissive and practical as to the nature of the reflective surface, so it is doable even in a rural setting. During the *coniuratio*, the magician conjures the angel Uriel in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to bring the demons to his aid. The last section of the text describes the anointing of the fingernails of the boy who is used as a mediator. After the oil had been applied, a little ink was to be added with a quill. The final part of the *coniuratio* contains distorted word forms, including the name of God at the very end of the text in the form “*Tetegramaton*” rather than *Tetragrammaton*, which also indicates the literacy of the copyist.³⁹

The latter text was included in the manuscript collection for the purpose of general divination and not specifically for treasure hunting, but we can find a Hungarian example from the early modern period, more distant geographically, in which Uriel and the desire to find treasure are linked. In their publication, János Herner and László Szörényi cite a 17th-century Hungarian manuscript that is kept in the Great Library of the Transilvanian Church District of the Reformed Church in Hungary, in Debrecen. According to the instructions of this text, the treasure seeker must be a “pure, virgin boy or girl,” who, after due preparations, uses the treasure seeking methods of the elite magic of the time known throughout Europe: calling on angels for help (a different one on each day of the week: Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Uriel, etc.), then, by means of *catoptromancy* (mirror magic), s/he can see the treasure by looking into the crystal or mirror (HERNER – SZÖRÉNYI 1990:10–11; cf. LÁNG 2008:171). The technique of gazing into a bucket of water, also known from Transylvania, collected in the 20th century and carried out with a similarly pragmatic toolkit, is a late peasant parallel to the divination rituals using reflective surfaces, where the technique was mainly used for the communal identification of thieves and murderers.⁴⁰

DEMONS AND FINGERNAILS

Although this Hungarian example points to a much later application of the technique, based on the Anglo-Saxon parallels dating back to the 1400s we can safely say that this divination method may have been a common practice in many geographical areas of Western Europe, and that, in fact, its origins go back much further than the early modern period. If we start from the historicity of crystal magic, which has similar ritual elements – after all, magicians used it to discover the whereabouts of hidden treasures, stolen objects, and the ultimate truths about the world (LÁNG 2008:173, 2005) – then based on Benedek Láng’s research findings, it can be safely concluded that enlisting the help of angels was certainly an established procedure by the late Middle Ages.

In the same period, in addition to the invocation of demons, divination using other reflective surfaces also served similar purposes. The German Johann Hartlieb (circa 1400–1468) provides a

³⁹In Book III of the *Grimorium verum*, Uriel is conjured for the purpose of learning the future, using the following magical text: Uriel + Seraph + Josata + Ablati + Agla + Caila. Related to this are the four words Moses spoke to God: Josta + Agla + Caila + Ablati (LECOTEUX 2015:327).

⁴⁰See KESZEG, Vilmos 1992; 2001; SAVA, Eleonora 2007. In these examples from the 20th century, some collected in the field and some from the media, communities use this divination technique mostly to detect thieves and murderers.



clear example of invoking the help of demons and angels, who writes in *Das pūch akker verpoten kunst* (*The Book of All Forbidden Arts*) that, according to magicians, by sanctifying the steel mirrors used for divination, angels rather than demons would appear in them (2007:95).

Sometime in the early 15th century, at Byland Abbey in North Yorkshire, a Cistercian monk recorded twelve stories in Latin, likely told by the local peasants in the pub, on the free pages of an earlier (late 12th-century) collection of rhetorical and theological works (the *Eludicarium* and Cicero's treatises).⁴¹ The local context is made evident by the fact that in several stories, references are made to nearby geographical locations and contemporary personal names. The Cistercian friar gave the following title to the story related to our topic (10th in the series): "*Quomodo latro penitens post confessionem euanuit ab oculis demonis*",⁴² that is, "How a penitent thief vanished from the eyes of a demon after confession."⁴³ The protagonist of the story is a hard-working but extremely gluttonous member of a group of diggers, who would eat meat even during Lent: with this premise, one of the seven cardinal sins is associated with him from the very beginning of the text. He compounded his sin of gluttony by stealing a slice of meat stored in his employer's attic whenever his stomach so desired. When the master of the house discovered that someone had been pilfering his reserves, he questioned his workers. As they had all unanimously and under oath denied having stolen from him, the master threatened to go see a necromancer to get to the bottom of the matter. When the thief heard this, he was so frightened that he went to a priest to confess his crime. Meanwhile, the master also went to see the necromancer. And the divination procedure performed by the magician shows a close formal connection with the divination technique described in this study. The necromancer anointed a boy's fingernail with something, then recited some *incantationis*, and asked the mediator what he saw on his fingernail. The boy replied that he saw a servant with a short haircut. The magician then asked him to conjure him in his most magnificent form. The boy did so, and then he appeared to him accompanied by a horse. Then he saw the thief climb the ladder and cut a piece of the meat, and the horse followed. The servant then cooked and ate the meat. Then the mediator's vision continued, and he saw the man accompanied by the horse visiting a priest, entering the church, while the horse was waiting outside. Inside he kneels down, confesses, the priest puts his hand on his head, but from that moment on, the mediator boy no longer sees what is happening.⁴⁴

This is the final word of the recorded case, which is not without didactics, and whose main message is the individual confession of sins as soon as possible. Moreover, this example is a late medieval parallel to divination with fingernails, and although not in the text, the title indicates magical cooperation with demons, and consequently the influence of the demonic world over sinful souls is, according to the story, effectively and immediately remedied by confession and priestly absolution.

⁴¹British Library Royal MS 15 A XX (fols. 140v–143, fols. 163v–164v)

⁴²British Library Royal MS 15 A XX (fols. 163v–164). The first transcription of the text, accompanied by several similar stories: JAMES, MR 1922:420–421. The English translation of the Latin source was published two years later: GRANT, A. J 1924.

⁴³The recorder locates the story in *Exon*. The first English translator of the text, Grant, placed this location in present-day Exeter, a long way from the abbey where the manuscript was written. The other stories are mostly about the Yorkshire region.

⁴⁴The case is also described by Richard Kieckhefer in his contextual presentation of a 15th-century necromancer's magic book (KIECKHEFER 1997:96).



Several authors have referred to the fact that this divinatory technique can also be found in John of Salisbury's political theoretical work *Policraticus*, which he wrote around 1159 (KIECKHEFER 1997:97; LÁNG 2007:95). Salisbury recalls as a childhood memory the time when the priest who taught him Latin introduced him, along with another student, to the art of divination with fingernail. Besides him, Johann Hartlieb and Nicolaus Magni de Jawor also mention virgin mediators as mediators of the angelic message (LÁNG 2007:95). Sometimes a vessel with a shiny, reflective surface was used for the rite. This example shows that in the 12th century, in the Anglo-Saxon area, this technique was part of priestly divination practice.

Robert Reynes of Acle's (1445–1505) manuscript commonplace book also includes a procedure in which the mediator had to say the Lord's Prayer, while the leader of the rite had to say two Latin (optionally English) (prayer) texts, and according to the description, three angels would appear on the young mediator's fingernail.⁴⁵ Kieckhefer also compiled early regulations: the Council's prohibition of such procedures, known from the 5th century (KIECKHEFER 1997:97). In this, it was used for the ancient Roman *specularii*, that is Christians engaged in divination by means of a reflective surface. During this period, anyone who used this divination technique to identify a *striga* or *lamia* (female night demons) was subject to excommunication until the accusation, which was deemed false, was withdrawn.

The divination techniques of the Munich Manual, a 15th-century *grimoire*, are close parallels of the rite presented here, and the reflective surface could be a fingernail, a mirror, a vessel of water, or even a crystal (Cf. KIECKHEFER 1997:103–113). This magic book is an excellent example of the local coexistence of magical practices, that is, that divination with the help of angels, demons, and occasionally spirits existed side by side. In the examples above, the magic books suggest various reflective surfaces to implement the vision. These techniques are collectively known in the English literature as *scrying*.

EPILOGUE

In this study, I tried to provide an example of how ritual texts of divination with reflective surfaces were used for treasure hunting in the early modern period by examining and contextualizing three divinatory texts used for treasure hunting in a Catalan Inquisition trial. With the help of the testimonies, I also discussed how these three magical texts became vulgarized, and which social strata and occupational groups were involved in their distribution and use. I was able to start from three texts, copied with varying degrees of detail, in which a supernatural being, "figure," spirit, called *Alago* in one of the texts, was conjured and put into service with the help of a vessel of water and various *coniurationis*. In this sense, the texts can be classified as part of the demonic branch of ritual magic. From the other reviewed examples, it is clear that several supernatural beings and saints may have played the function of the helping entity in the early modern period: not only demons but also, for example (based on the lessons of other contemporary Catalan Inquisition trials) St. Cyprian or even the archangel Uriel. These texts served general divinatory purposes, and treasure hunting was only one of them. Their common feature is the use of some reflective water surface (and in several cases a mediator). As a parallel, I have

⁴⁵Louis, Cameron 1980:169–170. The two texts begin as follows: "*Domine Ihesu Christe, Rex glorie ...*" and "*Domini angeli, ego precipio vobis per Dominum...*" (170).



cited some texts related to the divination vessel of the angel Uriel, with the aim of showing the multiplicity of early modern practices living side by side and to give a sense of the cultural stratification of the texts and the ways in which they were actualized. The early modern example also showed how the monasteries also functioned as institutions for the preservation of magical texts, how the books kept there were copied, how the magical texts made their way outside the walls of the monasteries and were made available to a wider audience. The contemporary textual parallels allow us to conclude that several texts with a similar function existed in parallel in which the rite is carried out sometimes with demonic, sometimes with angelic help, and sometimes with the assistance of a spirit.

The testimonies and ritual texts of the examined 17th-century Inquisition trial do not reveal whether a mediator was needed to perform the divination used for treasure hunting, although other Spanish and European examples do in most cases address this detail.

Jacinto García, the hermit from Castile, embodied the integration of multiple types of magical knowledge and religious texts and gestures. As for his place in the community, it can be established on the basis of the testimonies that he used herbs, sacramentals, and *nominae* (demon exorcism cards) in his healings through *maleficium* exorcism and the prayer of St. Cyprian, and more than one witness testified that he was skilled in palmistry, in identifying witches, and according to some, he could even drive away storm clouds, as I have described in previous writings. In addition to the texts described in the study, during his interrogation before the Inquisition, he was shown the censer and the circle he used to seal the water vessel as evidence of the treasure hunting ritual he had performed. He was a man of letters who was in contact with a monk in Lleida (Principality of Catalonia), one of whom copied the ritual text for treasure hunting and sent it to him. We can conjecture about some of his readings based on the trial documents, but he destroyed most of his books when he came under the scrutiny of the Inquisition, so a search of his residence turned up no documents of any evidentiary value, and by his own admission, he only kept spiritual readings in the hermitage. His sentence began with the formula that had the Inquisition followed the law, they would have imposed a more severe punishment on him, but they were merciful towards him, and after he had attended mass as a penitent, he was sentenced to one hundred lashes and eternal exile from the territory of the Tribunal of the Inquisition at Barcelona.

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