Wealth in Words. Vernacular Political Economies in Italian Dialect Proverbs

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Abstract
This paper undertakes a preliminary examination of how Italian proverbs in different regional dialects conceptualise wealth. The analysis centres on a collection of 159 proverbs published in a small volume entitled Proverbi dialettali sulla ricchezza*, printed in 1987 by Vanni Scheiwiller (1934-99), director of the historic Milan-based publishing house* All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro*. The examination of this corpus will illustrate how notions of wealth are formulated, expressed, and represented across different dialect communities, often using similar rhetorical figures and semantic nuances. This study will not only offer a geographical characterisation of the concept of wealth but also shed light on these communities' 'vernacular political economies'. These economies comprise the sets of ideas, notions, images, and expressions that, while not aiming at the construction of 'scientific' economic theories, articulate popular economic wisdom, beliefs, and worldviews. By injecting economic meaning into social values, these proverbs share an aversion to* laissez-faire *market ideology and a strong emphasis on the morality of redistribution.*

The impact of globalisation on the vitality of languages is complex and multifaceted[1]. Over the past two or three decades, the 'expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space'[2] have increased the need for people from different linguistic communities to speak a common language whenever they wish to communicate with others. While this has led to the dominance of English as 'the lingua franca of the global network'[3], so much so that international business, media, and diplomacy – to name but a few – are conducted in this tongue, an increasing number of other languages and dialects are in danger of extinction. Despite being spoken by more people than ever before, national languages, including French, German, Italian, and so on, are losing their importance as means of international communication. In today's globalised world, they increasingly resemble 'local' languages as their speakers shift to more dominant and powerful tongues. Linguistic homogenisation is nothing new: the birth of nation-states entailed the adoption of a single national language. And yet, the acceleration with which this phenomenon

1 Globalisation even changes the conditions in which languages are learned and taught; Block, Cameron 2002.

2 Steger 2013: 15.

3 Hjarvard 2004: 76.

is occurring today is unprecedented. According to recent estimates, 50 per cent of the world's 7,000 or so languages will be seriously under threat or gone by 2100[4].

The disappearance of a language is a dramatic event: what is lost is not just another means of communication, whose syntax and other aspects could still be studied by linguists through what, if anything, survives in written documentation. Rather, it is the human cultural heritage, the knowledge and wisdom accumulated by generations of speakers, that vanishes forever. This also includes cultural traditions and genres expressed through spoken language, such as folk narratives, poetry, songs, and so on, which collectively form the oral literature of a people. Proverbs, concise and memorable sayings shared within a community, conveying messages held to be self-evident or deducted from everyday experience, are but one example[5].

Proverbs exist in many languages and comprise different types of sayings dealing with the most diverse topics: one can distinguish between rules of behaviour or 'precepts', rules concerning the practical aspect of life or 'maxims', metaphorical statements expressing a general truth or 'adages', simple platitudes without metaphors or 'truisms', and sarcastic exclamatory statements against persons or objects known as 'bywords'[6]. To make them easily recognisable, proverbs are usually stated in a fixed form that seldom changes, but their meaning varies depending on the context in which they are used. This is why proverbs can be mutually contradictory: they do not represent universal truths or indisputable principles but are correct and applicable in specific situations. Proverbs also 'come and go', i.e., old sayings with contents that people no longer relate to go out of fashion and are abandoned, while new ones are invented to better suit modern times and habits[7]. Some only exist in certain geographical areas, while others are spread internationally and are reproduced in different languages. For these and other reasons, scholars still debate whether and to what extent proverbs reflect the cultural values of a particular linguistic community[8]. Nevertheless, imperfect as these pithy statements of popular culture might be, proverbs continue to be ever-present in our oral and written discourse, serving us personally and professionally.

On this basis, this study undertakes a preliminary examination of the conceptualisation of wealth in today's Italian dialect proverbs. The investigation aims to illustrate how notions of wealth are formulated, expressed, and represented

4 Austin, Sallabank 2011: 2; Onadipe-Shalom 2015. More pessimistic is Krauss 1992: 10 (90% of the world's languages).

5 This is a working definition; on the difficulty of defining a proverb, see Mieder 1993: chapter 1.

6 Gordon 1968: 1. In the present study, 'proverb(s)' is used as a generic expression including all these categories.

7 Mieder 1993: 14.

8 There are opposing views in Tavernier-Almada 1999 and Grauberg 1989, for instance.

across various linguistic communities employing languages particular to their specific regions. In so doing, the analysis will furnish an initial and partial account of the prevalent images, metaphors, and semantic nuances that characterise the discourse surrounding wealth as articulated within the diverse linguistic fabric of Italy.

Focusing on the wide array of Italian dialects yields manifold advantages: besides providing a varied picture of the lexical and cultural richness and diversity of the Italian peninsula, this approach offers a geographical characterisation of the concept of wealth as understood by different dialect communities. Moreover, the comparison of proverbs from distinct dialects makes it possible to highlight any lexical and semantic similarities and differences and demonstrate the spread of specific conceptualisations between dialects spoken even at a considerable distance.

Finally, since reflecting on wealth, its essence, and causal factors has historically been a foundational moment in the emergence of modern political economy, grounding the most influential works in the field[9], the analysis of how wealth is conceptualised in different dialects can take on a deeper significance. It has the potential to illuminate the principles underpinning what may be termed the 'vernacular political economies' of distinct dialect communities, by which I mean the ideas, notions, images, views, and expressions that are rarely geared towards the construction of economic theories and ideologies in the scientific sense we understand today, due to their limited theoretical ambition. Even so, they produce and carry 'economic' meanings that are comprehensible to most people – at least in Western Europe – who have now introjected them and made them their own. This is because these aspects constitute 'the emotional and figurative universe'[10] that accompanies economic, scientific knowledge today, making its concepts more understandable and palpable to the masses, who have their own set of economic beliefs and social values, which can also be averse to *laissez-faire* market ideology[11]. Rhetorical figures such as metaphors, similes, and analogies thus become the vehicles through which complex economic theories and ideas are divulged in proverbs, although the latter may also have a life of their own and not necessarily a popularising role.

An Unusual Collection of Proverbs

The main source for the following analysis consists of a tiny volume (9 x 12 cm, 72 pp.) with the Italian title *Proverbi dialettali sulla ricchezza* ('Dialect

9 Classic references are, among others, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mills, and Karl Marx.

10 Todeschini 2021: 15.

11 Thompson 1971.

proverbs on wealth')[12]. This is a collection of 159 proverbs that its editor, Vanni Scheiwiller (1934-99), put together and printed in Milan in 1987 with his publishing house, *All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro* ('At the Banner of the Golden Fish'). The publishing house was created in 1936 by his father, Giovanni Scheiwiller (1889-1965), a Milan-based publisher, bookseller, and art critic, who named it after a Tuscan trattoria on via Pattari, near the cathedral, where he used to meet with his artist friends, including Lucio Fontana and Gio Ponti[13]. In a few years, the fledgling publishing house catalysed much of the production of poems and artistic writings which had hitherto been scattered among various publishers[14]. The distinctive features of Scheiwiller's publications were the small size of his books, which made their contents accessible on the go, and the very limited print run, almost as if they were collectors' items[15].

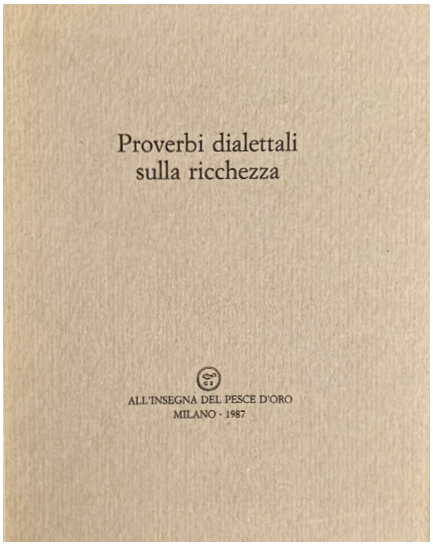

Fig. 1. Cover of *Proverbi dialettali sulla ricchezza*.

In 1951, Giovanni entrusted his 17-year-old son Vanni with the direction of the *All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro*[16]. While following in his father's footsteps, Vanni Scheiwiller succeeded in giving a new and innovative impetus to their literary

12 Novati 2013: 232.

13 Unfortunately, this was destroyed by bombs during WWII; Cadioli, Kerbaker, Negri 2009: 56.

14 Published authors include De Chirico, Montale, Ungaretti, Merini, Pound, Rilke, and Szymborska; Kerbaker 1999.

15 Interestingly, the original logo of *All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro* was designed by Roberto d'Aloi, who was inspired by the iconography of an ancient Sicilian coin; Cadioli, Kerbaker, Negri 2009: 56.

16 Kerbaker 1999: 52.

production, greatly enriching the catalogue with new titles and authors. Thanks to his original and modern choices, *All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro* became one of Italy's most respectable and well-known small publishing houses. As reported in his 'editor's note', it was Vanni who, 'after rummaging through library shelves and second-hand book stalls', chose the proverbs on wealth to be printed in *Proverbi dialettali sulla ricchezza*, which was donated as a Christmas present to Eurogest, likely a Milanese financial company[17].

Vanni also selected the dialects that appear in the book. Following a geographical order from the north to the south of the Italian peninsula, there are 11 proverbs in Piedmontese (Pied.), 12 in Milanese (Mil.), 11 in Venetan (Ven.), 9 in Genoese (Gen.), 12 in Bolognese (Bol.), 11 in Emilian-Romagnol (Emi.), 12 in Marchigiano (Mar.), 20 in Tuscan (Tus.), 11 in Romanesco (Rom.), 8 in Neapolitan (Neap.), 8 in Pugliese (Pugl.), 10 in Calabrian (Cal.), 12 in Sicilian (Sic.), and 12 in Sardinian (Sar.)[18]. With the exception of the Tuscan proverbs, which do not deviate much from standard Italian – historically originating from Florentine – the others are accompanied by translations into the national language to make them more understandable (see *Appendix*)[19].

Nevertheless, some inconsistencies catch the reader's eye. Firstly, the omission of certain dialects throughout the book. Notably absent are dialect proverbs from the Aosta Valley, Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Umbria, Abruzzo, Molise, and Basilicata regions. This prompts the consideration of a second aspect, that is, that the proverbs lack systematic organisation: some relate to superdialect areas (e.g., Piedmontese, Venetan, Pugliese, etc.), while others pertain to local varieties within those areas. For instance, Milanese is only one of the varieties that belong to the group of Lombard dialects, which also includes, but is not limited to, the Bergamo and Brescia dialects. These and many other varieties unfortunately remain unexplored in Vanni's publication.

A third significant limitation is that the proverbs appear in a straightforward list devoid of contextual information. In their actual use, proverbs are intrinsically tied to specific social situations, and vice versa – it is the surrounding social context that gives significance to the sayings[20]. Without knowing the circumstances in which proverbs are expressed, any attempt to examine their figurative uses and multiple meanings is futile. One can only treat them as textual sources

17 *Proverbi* 1987: 69-71. It is also said that the volume was out of print and had been printed in a limited run of 3,000 copies in Milan, at A.F. Lucini's graphics workshop, on 18 June 1987.

18 For a detailed analysis of Italian dialects, see Maiden, Parry 1997.

19 The tables in the *Appendix* at the end of the essay list all the dialect proverbs published by Vanni, along with their literal translations into English. Each proverb has an identification number in the order of its appearance in Vanni's volume, although the latter does not have any. All translations are my own.

20 Mieder 1993: 11.

and rely on their content, knowing that their actual use would not be limited to dealing with that content alone.

Finally, not only did Vanni derive his collection mainly from a curated selection of volumes on dialect proverbs printed in Milan in the 1960s and 1970s, but also his book was published almost forty years ago. Thus, the temporal distance between the compilation and the contemporary times raises a fourth and final concern about the topicality and applicability of those proverbs since it is not always clear whether they are still used in spoken language.

Despite all these limitations, an interesting taxonomy of meanings, images, and concepts of wealth can still emerge through the analysis of Italian dialect proverbs that, for this occasion, will be grouped into 'semantic families' dedicated to the most frequently occurring concepts pertaining to wealth.

«L'avaro xe 'l più pitoco» – *Human types*

The character of the rich man is the most targeted human type in Vanni's collection of proverbs. According to a Tuscan saying (79), this person is defined as the man – women are rarely contemplated, as will be seen – who accumulates wealth not only by avoiding superfluous expenditures but also through dishonest practices, including making promises that will never be kept, or borrowing from others without repaying debts. The idea that acquiring wealth may sometimes require compromises in terms of ethical choices is conveyed by another Tuscan proverb (86) that suggests how individuals in positions of power and authority often face a challenge when it comes to balancing the pursuit of financial success and the maintenance of wise decision-making. This is because becoming rich, retaining wealth, and enjoying it involve fatigue, fear, and sin, which may even turn into pain when wealth is lost or abandoned (82).

Thus, being rich has its advantages and disadvantages. In Romanesco, the rich man never makes mistakes (103), and similarly, in Sicilian, he can make presumptuous judgements about everything, often speaking with undue authority (142), which derives from his wealthy status within society. This is why a Sardinian proverb (159) warns against borrowing from the rich or even arguing with 'the powerful', as they are called. Yet, in both a Sicilian and a Sardinian saying, the rich man is depicted as a pensive man (146) with worries (148) and troubles, which increase as his wealth increases (139). Contrary to such a serious portrayal, a Venetan proverb reminds us that even among the rich, there are different personalities and behaviours (30). Moreover, there are things that their money cannot buy: kindness, a moral value that forms people's spiritual – not material – wealth, is one of them. But if in Tuscan, it is said that wealth does not make one kind (81), in Piedmontese, it is recalled that displaying the qualities of politeness and courtesy does not necessarily elevate a person to a higher social status (1).

Almost the same number of proverbs are dedicated to the antithesis of the rich man, namely the poor. In this case, too, there is no single interpretation of poverty. On the one hand, it reduces the status and dignity of a man to the point that, in a Milanese proverb (18), everyone is invited to laugh at the poor man for his 'ugliness', namely the effect of poverty on his body. The societal importance attributed to material wealth also emerges in another Tuscan saying (98), which encapsulates the idea that people's value and identity are often linked to their possessions – one must possess in order to exist. It is therefore not surprising if the ones to lose out are often – if not always – the poor, who are compared to rags that fly about in the blowing wind (27)[21]. The feeling of anxiety, which before belonged to the rich man, in a Venetan proverb (32), is the condition of the poor man, who metaphorically 'beats the moon', i.e., makes a thousand calculations and thoughts about his condition, thus living in a state of agitation[22]. Only a revolution could reverse the situation and allow the 'penniless' to gain some of the wealth the rich would lose, as an Emilian-Romagnol proverb (56) predicts.

On the other hand, poverty can also have a positive connotation, becoming almost a synonym for spiritual wealth, as shown by several dialect proverbs linking it to humbleness, contentment, and a sober lifestyle. In a Piedmontese saying (5), instilling in children the values of humility and appreciation for what they have is the key to raising them 'as if they were poor' in order to be rich one day. This echoes both a Pugliese proverb (119), in which only those who are content with little can become rich, and a Genoese saying (43), which invites people to appreciate the value of their possessions, because these are still wealth, even though at first sight they may not seem desirable, like a very small house. According to a Sicilian proverb (136), the alternative may be to despise the rich, thus giving due value to earthly goods without them becoming the ultimate goal of one's actions. This will make it possible to live a life without the obsession with material wealth and preferably with a good 'name' or reputation, which is worth more than all the money in the world (42).

Among the proverbs dedicated to the poor, there are interesting references to two of the most popular masked characters of the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*, Pulcinella and Pantalone. With his white clothes and a black mask with a prominent nose, Pulcinella embodies the plebeian of Naples, i.e., the simpler, non-wealthy man at the bottom of the social ladder who, according to a Neapolitan proverb (111), only becomes visible when he takes a carriage ride, namely when he is having a positive moment (also economically) – otherwise, no one notices him. Pantalone wears red and black and represents the figure of the old merchant, rich and stingy, who eventually finds himself having to pay huge expenses

21 This is also what the parish priest Don Abbondio exclaims in chapter 24 of Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*).

22 Bianchi 1901: 218.

for everyone, usually without his own knowledge and often after being cheated. In a Venetan proverb (29), he takes on a much broader meaning to symbolise the weakest, usually the citizens or the people deceived by the government and forced to pay for the mistakes and expenses of those in power.

A small group of proverbs is dedicated to the mutual relationship between rich and poor. In a Romanesco (106) and a Sicilian saying (144), these two human types are put on equal footing as they represent 'the powerful ones' in today's society, those who actually hold power despite the obvious disparities of wealth between them. Less optimistic is an Emilian-Romagnol proverb (60), which emphasises the difference between the two, in that the rich can eat whenever they are hungry thanks to their vast resources, while the poor are forced to eat even when they have no appetite since food is not always guaranteed. Similarly, the rich can behave like the poor whenever it suits them and flaunt their riches as often as they like (28). On the other hand, even if the poor try to emulate the rich and their lifestyle, they will never become like them but will die poor on a straw bed (24). Of the two, however, one must trust the rich man who has lost everything and beware of the poor man who has suddenly become rich, as expressed in a Romanesco proverb (102) and a Pugliese one (121). The former may appear more reliable than the latter if the new wealth has changed his character and motives.

In any case, it is important to treat both of them with equal respect and consideration, for instance, without making unnecessary promises or breaking one's word (137 and 157). Perhaps the best solution is what a Neapolitan saying (113) suggests, namely, to surround oneself with people of higher quality or greater success, even if this entails some costs or effort, as it may benefit the individual and lead to personal enrichment.

The type of the greedy man or, to quote a Pugliese proverb (118), the one who always wants more, and so much so that in a Calabrian saying (131), he does not even eat to avoid 'losing' his wealth when on the toilet, is the subject of various disparaging proverbs, some of which are common to different dialects. In Piedmontese (7) and Pugliese dialects (118), this person is compared to a pig, whose benefits to humans can only be appreciated after death. The same goes for a Sardinian proverb (150), in which the greedy man can only 'do good' when dead. This person is referred to as 'the poorest' in a Venetan saying (26), despite all the riches uselessly accumulated. There are cautionary proverbs in Bolognese (44 and 45) and Romanesco (107) about the negative consequences of accumulating or hoarding wealth, which not only bears no fruit if not spent but can also be suddenly eaten by the 'cat', a metaphor for death.

Not the cat but the spendthrift heir is the real threat of the usurer, who is yet another example of a greedy man whose only concern is the accumulation of money through loans with interest rates too high to ever be repaid. A Neapolitan proverb (117) and one from Calabria (130) emphasise that accumulating so

much wealth, often at the expense of the poor, is useless since there will always be an heir ready to 'devour' what the usurer father accumulated.

The typical victim of the usurer, the debtor, only appears in two proverbs: in a Sardinian saying (156), the dialect word 'debtor' (*depidore*) rhymes with the dialect expression for 'fugitive' (*fuidore*), namely, the condition of those who have no money to repay their debts and seek escape as their only way out. By inviting the creditor to look for him 'after Easter', a Neapolitan proverb (116) recalls the sarcastic expression the debtor would exclaim to keep delaying repayment.

Another recurring human type is the thief. According to a Piedmontese proverb (2), committing theft is dishonest behaviour, always wrong and never profitable, even when it may seem right, like stealing from other thieves' houses. Yet, even though it is immoral, people often resort to theft to acquire material goods, so much so that in a Marchigiano proverb (76), it is presented as an alternative path to wealth, along with finding things on the ground. Depending on the circumstances, the Tuscan saying that one must steal to accumulate wealth (88) could also function as a sarcastic comment on how an individual suddenly became rich. More positive, on the other hand, is a Romanesco proverb (100) that conveys the idea that a bit of cunning is necessary for good luck and success in business without it necessarily leading to theft.

The last human types we encounter in this selection of proverbs are the figures of the master and the labourer/servant, whose dialectic has been influential in various philosophical systems. In this case, they symbolise two distinct ways of living: the master, representing authority and control, and the labourer/servant, in a subordinate role. As pointed out in both a Piedmont (3) and an Emilian-Romagnol proverb (66), it is preferable to be a master, even a 'thin' one, thus with modest wealth and the possession of less significant goods (e.g., a wheelbarrow), rather than a 'fat' labourer with greater goods (e.g., a cart) but no ownership. However, this interpretation is reversed when it comes to money. According to a Milanese proverb (20), money is beneficial and serves one's purposes if spent wisely. If squandered or wasted, instead, it will act like a master, exerting control and power over individuals, thus becoming a burden rather than a resource.

«Chi disprezza vo' cumbrà» – *Business & Market*

A significant number of dialect proverbs adopt expressions and images from the business world, most frequently evoking the marketplace to convey their advice and lessons for everyday life. The marketplace is described as a very informal and often unethical context, where important transactions can also occur 'in the street' (4), and one must be ready to cheat to not be cheated (135). There, individuals are the creators of their own prosperity and success that, according to two Tuscan sayings (89 and 92), should neither depend on nor be

shaped by their activities and material goods. On the contrary, a Piedmontese proverb (6) emphasises the mutual relationship between personal development and professional gains.

Financial dealings can also put a strain on human relationships. While it may lead to successful deals, conducting business transactions on credit can turn into a loss of money, if debtors fail to fulfil their obligations, and friends, if a bond of friendship binds them to creditors (11 and 151). Losing friends is also what happens to those who lack money, according to a Sicilian saying (141), which stresses the impact of financial status on social relationships, often conditioned by material wealth. Lending money creates new enemies, in a Sardinian proverb (152). Conversely, the rich find themselves surrounded by new friends, or even new relatives such as 'cousins', who try to take advantage of their wealth, as a Tuscan proverb (87) says.

A series of proverbs is dedicated to specific gestures and actions related to economic activity. The first group concerns the act of spending that, according to a Sardinian saying (158), must be balanced and proportional to what the individual has earned. Sometimes, however, overspending can be advantageous, as more expensive things, due to their higher quality, are less likely to encounter problems leading to further expenditure (155). Even 'paying first', i.e., promptly, can bring some benefit according to a Marchigiano proverb (77), which echoes the Latin aphorism *Bis dat qui dat celeriter* ('he gives twice who gives promptly') by Publilius Syrus (1st century BC), meaning that something given expeditiously, such as a payment, is preferable to the same thing given late[23].

In contrast, both a Bolognese (49) and a Sardinian proverb (154) warn against rushing into spending or purchasing without due consideration, as such choices may result in a waste of money and regret. Things acquired hastily and without care risk being lost or wasted just as quickly, according to a Tuscan saying (90). One must also avoid using or investing money without clear plans (74), although taking risks and experiencing failure are often necessary to achieve success and wealth (91).

Still in Latin, but from the Book of Proverbs of the Christian Old Testament, is the saying *Malum est malum est dicit omnis emptor* ('It is bad, it is bad' says every buyer), from which the Neapolitan proverb (115) in Vanni's collection is derived[24]. It means never trust anyone who despises or criticises a product, as they may be hiding a desire for it. A rather obscure Calabrian proverb seems to refer to the practice of selling at interest (128).

Earning is the subject of a Milanese (21) and a Pugliese proverb (122). The first invites individuals to be content even with a small income, as long as it can be obtained quickly; the other equates earning with saving, defined as 'first

23 Giancotti 1968.

24 *Old Testament, Proverbs*, 20:14.

profit'. This is also how the recovery of expenses is presented in a Marchigiano saying (75). Saving is also discussed in two other proverbs, one in Bolognese (47) and one in Emilian-Romagnol (64).

A second large group of proverbs deals with the important act of taking care of accumulated wealth, which 'comes and goes' (54) and thus can be gained and lost over time if not properly managed. This is something that concerns everyone, including those with little wealth, as cents after cents and penny after penny, they can add up to large sums, as a Bolognese proverb (48) implies. Individuals who do not care about their money – perhaps because they have none – are worthless in both a Piedmontese (10) and a Calabrian proverb (127), and so are the poor in one of the Tuscan sayings mentioned above. In Bolognese, people must be content and make plans with what they have rather than waiting for future profit (50); only by understanding the value of their current wealth and enjoying it will they truly possess it (55).

Finally, a recurrent image associated with business is that of the sack of money, already popular in medieval iconography[25]. Depending on the positive or negative outcome of the business conducted, it appears either full or empty in a Genoese saying (38) or hanging from a 'bad' hook in a Calabrian saying (129).

«Lavor fat, qautrèn aspëta» – *Work*

Five proverbs deal with wealth associated with work, understood here as a generic profession. In Piedmontese, having a good job is worth twice the wealth one may inherit (8) because working also implies acquiring skills and knowledge that an heir would never have. Inheritance is also the topic of a Sardinian proverb (153). An Emilian-Romagnol saying (65) reminds us that, once completed, every type of work 'awaits money', so payment is expected. Gritting one's teeth to endure fatigue while working can lead to greater profit, represented by silver coins known as *terrìse* or taris in a Pugliese proverb (125). Conversely, those who 'rise' in society and become rich make little effort because work is not their main source of wealth, as a Romanesco saying (101) seems to suggest. The lack of context does not help us understand the meaning of a Calabrian proverb (132) that, according to Vanni's notes, may convey the idea that everyone must provide for themselves what they need.

«I guadrin en apuzzen mei» – *Senses & Body*

Many proverbs speak of wealth through images, concepts, and metaphors based on the human senses and body. Hearing is the most commonly

25 On this topic, see Milani 2017.

represented sense: in a Neapolitan proverb (112), money becomes 'the voice' of a man, meaning that in today's society, a person's opinion carries more weight if he is financially successful. In contrast, in Sicilian (143), those who do not have money 'cannot be heard' – thus, their ideas and opinions are not considered or respected. Both a Bolognese (52) and a Tuscan proverb (84) suggest that those who 'count their coins', i.e., manage their wealth prudently, end up living their lives 'singing', thus enjoying a more harmonious existence. The dichotomy of counting/singing also appears in a Neapolitan saying (110), for which 'counting' money – for those who have it – is as pleasant as having a beautiful wife and 'singing' with joy. This is also the only proverb that mentions a female figure. In Genoese (35), it is the chaplain's money that arrives and leaves 'singing', which might emphasise the transitory nature of the Church's wealth, although, without the right context, it is difficult to understand the metaphor behind it.

Sight appears together with hearing in a Genoese proverb (41) and a Milanese one (17), both conveying the same message: money is so powerful that it makes a blind person sing with joy. This is reminiscent of the figures of beggars, often invalids, who performed as a gesture of gratitude to their benefactors whenever they received money. In other words, people are willing to do anything for money, especially those in need.

The only proverb that has to do with smell is a Marchigiano variant (69) of the well-known Latin saying *pecunia non olet* or 'money does not stink', a paraphrase of the reply that, according to Suetonius, the emperor Vespasian gave to his son Titus after the latter had complained about a tax his father had imposed on the urinals in Rome[26]. More generally, both the 'Vespasian's axiom' and its dialect variant convey the idea that money always holds the same value, regardless of its origins.

Taste and touch are not expressly addressed in the selected proverbs, but some refer to parts of the body or describe actions that evoke these two senses. A Marchigiano proverb (78) seems to suggest that any relationship of friendship or kinship is an obstacle to the accumulation of wealth, called here 'the stuff that pleases the teeth.' Hands appear both in a Neapolitan saying (114), which uses the different lengths of the fingers as a metaphor for the economic inequality between people in society, and in a Tuscan proverb (95), which invites individuals not to throw gold away with their hands, thus squandering wealth, for they will regret it to the point of searching for it with their feet.

If scratching is what those who have no money always do, according to a Milanese saying (16), in a Genoese proverb (40), it is instead how rich people spend their time since they do not have to work to earn money. Yet, as the proverb goes, excessive 'scratching' can lead to unpleasant effects since money is like scabies.

26 Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum* VIII, 23.

Other proverbs refer to parts of the body to convey their messages but do not seem to relate to specific senses. The Milanese term *tolla* (12), which literally means tin, indicates the brazen faces of those who, with bold defiance and lack of shame, manage to obtain what money cannot buy in certain situations. The image of the hump is a metaphor for hard work and fatigue in a Marchigiano proverb (72), but wealth can cover and compensate for any defect, as a Venetan saying (33) makes clear. In Milanese (22), a person's bottom is associated with luck, an idea that is also present in a Romanesco proverb (109).

Bodily fluids, such as tears (105) and blood, and execrations, such as faeces (25) and urine (58), are also mentioned in the proverbs. A Bolognese (46) and a Marchigiano saying (68), for example, draw parallels between the vital nature of blood and the need for money, which is defined as the 'second blood' of individuals in their daily lives[27].

Finally, the pursuit of wealth can lead to the loss of the soul or spiritual well-being, according to a Genoese proverb (36), whereas the lack of it can result in physical and spiritual suffering. It is to pain that money is also compared in an Emilian-Romagnol proverb (63), for which the possession of wealth is not a source of joy. This is the opposite of another saying (57) from the same linguistic community, namely that money, good times, and health never tire anyone.

«Denari e sanità, metà della metà» – *Religion*

The devil is the first religious figure to be found in Vanni's proverbs. In Piedmontese, it is said that 'fearing the devil' in doing business, i.e., feeling excessive fear or hesitation, prevents someone from accumulating great wealth (9). To achieve prosperity, one must have courage and be ready to step out of one's comfort zone. On the other hand, St. Anthony is the only saint to be mentioned. He appears in a Milanese proverb (23) of uncertain meaning, which seems to imply that those who donate little deserve little protection, here symbolised by the holy figure. Paradise is the metaphor used to describe the condition in which the rich live their earthly life, thanks to all their privileges and riches that, according to a Tuscan proverb (83), would be enough to attain paradise even in the afterlife, if they are believers. A final proverb, which exists in Genoese (39), Marchigiano (73), and Tuscan dialects (85), invites us to believe less than half of all the things people say when they tell everyone the greatness of their possessions and extol their 'sanctity', namely their virtues[28].

27 On the long tradition of this saying, see Todeschini 2021.

28 For more on this and other proverbs, especially on gold – also discussed below – see Soletti 2003: 35.

«L'oro no ciapa macia» – *Precious metals… and bread!*

In proverbs, gold and silver are obvious metaphors for wealth, money, and value. Nothing in life is as lasting and permanent as these; the rest is transitory and ephemeral, like smoke and wind (80). Of the two, however, it is gold that plays a greater role. This is the most valuable and powerful metal on earth, stronger than any bond, including love (34), and capable of overcoming every limit. In two Tuscan proverbs, gold is the key that opens all doors (93) and the grease that, when sprinkled on bolts, facilitates access to new benefits (94). And where there is grease, everyone wants to get greasy, as an Emilian-Romagnol saying (62) goes. In Calabrian dialect, gold also has the power to conceal any embarrassment (133), while in Sicilian, it can eliminate suffering and give comfort and security to those who possess it (140).

The fact that pure gold does not oxidize under normal environmental conditions becomes a metaphor for an upright and honest existence in a Venetan proverb (31). Individuals who lead this life are unassailable, and slander and denigration slip away without a trace. Finally, a Pugliese saying (124) suggests that true wealth is not based on gold kept in the coffers, which may run out one day, but on gold produced with hard work. Silver is mentioned in a Sardinian proverb (149) to symbolise a small sum of money that is preferred to gold (i.e., a larger sum) if it saves a person from debts and a bad reputation[29].

Not only precious metals but also bread, in all its forms, becomes a metaphor for wealth. According to a Milanese proverb, those who have it can stop worrying about their sustenance and devote themselves to other activities, such as trotting horses (15). Those who do not have it will experience what real pain is, as a Sicilian saying conveys (145). Grain and flour are the subjects of two other proverbs, one in Emilian-Romagnol (50), which stresses the importance of having resources to take action, and the other in Pugliese (123), dedicated to the art of saving.

«Li quatrini manda l'acqua pe' l'insù» – *Nature & animals*

Elements of nature and animals also appear among the images associated with wealth. In a Marchigiano proverb (67), water is said to flow uphill under the power of money, which is capable of extraordinary and unexpected results, even those considered impossible, such as the overthrow of the natural order. Despite this power, money is also compared to grains of sand flying away in gusts of wind in a Romanesco saying (108), emphasising its transitory and fleeting nature and suggesting that financial resources can disappear quickly if spent without judgment. The same idea, but with expressions used to describe

29 Ferraro 1891: 355.

the gait of horses, also appears in a Tuscan proverb (96), according to which money 'comes at a slow pace' because it takes time to be earned but 'gallops' away quickly if used inappropriately.

References to dogs are found in both a Romanesco proverb (99) and a Sicilian one (138). The former stresses that wealthy and powerful people, here metaphorically called 'big dogs' (*cani grossi*), do not harm each other but maintain mutual respect and understanding. The latter draws attention to the plight of people in poverty, who are so economically vulnerable and disadvantaged that they often become the easy target of criticism from those around them, including dogs, which keep barking at them.

Lastly, a bird of prey symbolises the individual who lives by stealing from others but will eventually die 'thin', i.e., with nothing left, in a Calabrian saying (126).

«Senza lilleri 'un si lallera» – *Coinage, its materiality & uses*

Before analysing the proverbs belonging to this semantic family, it is interesting to note the variety of dialect terms used to name money, which could not be rendered here in the English translations of proverbs.

The most frequently mentioned (22 times) are dialect variants of the Italian word *denaro/denari*, whose origins date back to Roman times. From north to south, this is called *danee* (Milanese)*, dinæ* (Genoese)*, denari* and *danari* (Tuscan), *renare* and *denare* (Neapolitan), and *dinari* (Calabrian and Sicilian). The Marchigiano term *'ndindiri* may have the same origin as the Tuscan *dindi*, a children's onomatopoeic expression for money already in use in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*[30].

The second most cited term (16 times) is the Italian word *quattrino/quattrini*, originally a 4-*denaro* coin that took the place of the debased *denaro piccolo* in many Italian states in the fourteenth century as the lowest denomination struck. Its dialect variants include *quattrin* (Milanese), *quatren* (Bolognese and Emilian-Romagnol), *quattrini* (Tuscan and Romanesco), *cudrini* (Romanesco), *guadrin* and *quatrini* (Marchigiano).

This is followed by the Italian word *soldo/soldi* (6 times), which is called *sold* (Piedmontese and Bolognese), *sordo/sordi* (Marchigiano and Romanesco), *sordu* (Calabrian), and *sou* (Sardinian); and by the dialect variants of the Italian *baiocco/baiocchi* (2 times), familiar in modern times as the main copper coin of the Papal States, here called *baiuc* (Bolognese) and *bajocch* (Emilian-Romagnol).

The terms *franc* (Bolognese), *fiorini* (Tuscan) or florins, and *terrise d'arggiinde* (Pugliese) or silver taris, all of medieval origin, appear only once, along with

30 Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio* XI, 105.

the modern *bezzi* (Venetan) and *lilleri* (Tuscan), perhaps a dialect variant of the Italian word *talleri*.

As for proverbs, the majority of them refer to money, its materiality, and uses to convey their messages. Both a Bolognese proverb (51) and a Romanesco one (104) emphasise the circular shape of coins to underline the dynamic and mobile nature of money, which can 'roll' away quickly when being spent, transferred, and passed easily from one hand to another. In this respect, an Emilian-Romagnol proverb (61) says that coins do not have 'handles' so that they can circulate easily. This is also one of the main purposes of money, i.e., a medium of exchange intended to be spent in economic transactions, but one must know how to do it well, as two Milanese sayings (19 and 13) remind us. Moreover, money attracts more money in a Marchigiano proverb (71) and wealth more wealth in a Bolognese one (53), suggesting that it is easier to accumulate money and wealth for those who already have them and who end up spending their existence favouring these aspects over others in life (14). It is also said that money can fix everything (37), as a Genoese proverb goes, and that nothing can be done without it, according to a Marchigiano saying (70) and a Tuscan one (97), both of which sound like nursery rhymes when spoken aloud.

Finally, it is difficult to explain the Sardinian proverb 'To be like a royal bank' (134), given the lack of context. One can speculate it may represent an ironic expression of those who are asked to provide economic assistance despite their limited financial resources.

Conclusion

This preliminary and non-exhaustive study has offered valuable insights into the ideas, images, notions, and expressions related to wealth and its conceptualisation in various Italian dialect proverbs. The examination of the distinct 'semantic families' identified has revealed a nuanced understanding of wealth that goes beyond the mere – albeit predominant – economic sphere. It has emphasised the significance of other values, such as moderation, generosity, moral integrity, and hard work, in defining and portraying wealth in different dialect proverbs, which at times resemble each other despite the geographic separation of the speaking communities. Other proverbs seem to contradict these values, but this is due – among other things – to the lack of specific details regarding the circumstances in which a given proverb may be applied. The interpretation of a proverb also depends on the cultural context in which it originated or is used, as well as the speaker's intention. Such factors have not been systematically addressed in this work. Nevertheless, despite these and other limitations (e.g., the translation of proverbs into English), the hope is that this analysis will inspire further research on wealth and related topics in economic, cultural, social, and linguistic studies.

Appendix

The Rich

No.	Dialect	*Proverbs* & Translations
1	Pied.	*A ese galantom as dventa nen sgnùr* Being a gentleman does not make anyone a rich man
30	Ven.	*Dei siori ghe n'è de tre sorte: sior sì, sior no e sior mona* There are three types of rich men: the yes rich, no rich, and rich "stupid"
79	Tus.	*Tre cose fanno l'uomo ricco guadagnare e non ispendere, promettere e non attendere, accattare e non rendere* Three things make a man rich: earning and not spending, promising and not fulfilling, borrowing and not returning
81		*Ricchezza non fa gentilezza* Wealth does not make kindness
82		*La ricchezza non s'acquista senza fatica, non si possiede senza timore, non si gode senza peccato, non si lascia senza dolore* Wealth is not acquired without fatigue, not possessed without fear, not enjoyed without sin, not left without pain
86		*I signori non possono avere due cose insieme, giudizio e quattrini* The rich cannot have two things at the same time, judgment and money
103	Rom.	*Chi ha cudrini nun ha mai torto* One who has money is never wrong
139	Sic.	*Cu' cchiù havi, havi cchiù guai* One who owns more, has more troubles
142		*Cu' havi dinari, sputa sintenzi* One who has money, spits judgments
146		*Omu dinarusu, omu pinsirusu* Rich man, pensive man
147		*Riccu si pò diri cui campa cu lu so' aviri* A rich man can be said to be one who lives off his possessions
148	Sar.	*Chie a' possessiones, a' chiltiones* One who has possessions, has worries
159		*De is arriccus non t'imprestisi, cun is potensisi no certisi* Don't borrow from the rich, don't argue with the powerful

The Poor

5	Pied.	*Anleva i to fieui da pover s'i-t-I veuli rich e cuntent* Raise your children as if they were poor if you want them to be rich and content
18	Mil.	*Guardéll ben, gaurdéll tutt, l'omm senza danee come l'è brutt* Look at him, look at all of him, the man without money is really ugly
27	Ven.	*Le strazze va a l'aria* Rags fly
29		*Pantalon paga per tutti* Pantalone pays for everyone
32		*Chi no ga bezzi, bate la luna* One who has no money, beats the moon (is unquiet)

42	Gen.	*Val ciû un bon nomme che tûtti i dinæ do mondo* A good name is worth more than all the money in the world
43		*Chi ha un garbi de câ è ricco e no sa* One who has a small house, is rich and doesn't know it
56	Emi.	*Al rivoluzión a gli è fati pr'i spré: chi ha quël u l' pò pérdar e chi n'ha gnint u l' pò acquistê* Revolutions are made for the penniless: those who have something can lose it, and those who have nothing can acquire it
98	Tus.	*Chi non ha, non è* One who has not, is not
111	Neap.	*Quanno Pulicinella và 'ncarrozza tutte o' vérene* When Pulcinella rides in a carriage, everyone notices him
119	Pugl.	*Ci non ze chendênde du picche non devende ma ricche* One who is not content with little never becomes rich
136	Sic.	*Accumincia ad arricchiri cu' accumincia a disprizzari li ricchizzi* One who begins to despise the rich begins to become rich

Rich vs. Poor

24	Ven.	*Chi va coi siori, more su la paia* One who goes with the rich, dies on straw
28		*I pitochi co i pol, i siori co i vol* The poor when they can, the rich when they want
60	Emi.	*È sgnor e' magn a qu nd ch'l'ha fan; e' puret quand ch'u n'ha* The rich man eats when he is hungry, the poor when he is not
102	Rom.	*Fidete der ricco impoverito; nun te fida der povero arricchito* Trust the rich man who has become poor, not the poor man who has become wealthy
106		*Dua so' li potenti: chi cià tanto e chi cià gnente* Two are the powerful: those who have a lot and those who have nothing
113	Neap.	*Fattélla cu chi è meglio 'e te e fance 'e spese* Hang out with people who are better than you and even spend money to be with them
121	Pugl.	*Uärdete do pezzènde arrecchesciùte!* Beware of the enriched poor!
137	Sic.	*A riccu nun prumèttiri e a poviru nun mancari* Don't make promises to the rich and don't break your word to the poor
144		*Dui sonnu li putenti: cu' havi assai e cu' 'un havi nenti* Two are the powerful: those who have a lot and those who have nothing
157	Sar.	*A riccu non débasta, a poburu no promittasta* Owe not to the rich, promise not to the poor

The Greedy

7	Pied.	*L'avar a l'è cum 'l crin, a serv dop mort* The greedy man is like the pig, he serves after death
26	Ven.	*L'avaro xe 'l più pitoco* The greedy man is the poorest
44	Bol.	*Quatrén in casa e aldàm in masa, in daṅ frut* Money in a coffer and dung in abundance do not bear fruit
45		*Quatréṅ suplé, in frûteṅ* Buried money does not yield
107	Rom.	*Sparagna, sparagna, arriva er gatto e se lo magna* Save it, save it, the cat comes and eats it all

118	Pugl.	*Ci cchiù ttène, cchiù vvole* The more one has, the more one wants
120		*U-avare iè ccome o puèrche ca iè bbuêne dope muèrte* The greedy man is like the pig, which is good after death
131	Cal.	*L'avaru 'u' mangia ppè nu cacàri* The greedy man does not eat to avoid going to the toilet
150	Sar.	*S'avaru non faghet bene si non quando morit* The greedy man only does good when he dies

The Usurer

117	Neap.	*E denare d'ausuraro, s' e' mmagna 'o sciampagnone* The usurer's money is devoured by the spendthrift heir
130	Cal.	*A robba 'e l'asuràdu s'a mangia lu sciampagnunu* The usurer's stuff is devoured by the spendthrift heir

The Debtor

116	Neap.	*A Ppasca, viéneme pesca…* After Easter, come look for me…
156	Sar.	*Depidore, fuidore* Debtor, fugitive

The Thief

2	Pied.	*A fa' cativ rubé a cà d'i lader* You don't steal from the thieves' house
76	Mar.	*Chi s'arricchisce o a da rubbà o a da trôà* Whoever gets rich, has to either steal or find things on the ground
88	Tus.	*Chi non ruba, non ha roba* One who does not steal, has no wealth
100	Rom.	*Per avé sorte bisogna èsse birbanti* To have luck, one must be cunning

Master & Worker

3	Pied.	*A l'è mei ese padrùn magher che lavurant gras* It is better to be a thin master than a fat labourer
20	Mil.	*Spenduu ben i danee hin servitor, ma se t'ei traset, padron deventen lor* Spent well, money serves you, but if you squander it, it becomes the master
66	Emi.	*Mej patron dla cariôla che sarvitor de' carr* Better to be master of the wheelbarrow than servant of the cart

Business & Market

4	Pied.	*J afé es rangiu per stra* Deals are made in the streets
6		*J afé a fan j omini e j omini j afé* Business makes men, and men make business
10		*Chi a guarda nen i sold, a val nen un sold* One who does not take care of money is not worth a penny
11		*Chi vend a credit a fa un bùn afè, ma suvens a perd l'amis e i dnè* One who sells on credit makes a good deal, but often loses both friends and money
21	Mil.	*Pochetti ma tocchetti. Pocch e mondaj* Few [coins], but immediately
38	Gen.	*A borsa sensa dinæ a se ciamma chéujo* A sack without money is called leather

47	Bol.	*Arspèrmia quand t' guadàgn, spand quand t'an guadàgn* Save when you earn, spend when you do not earn
48		*Con zéncv zentésum as fa un sóld, e con vént sóld as fa un franc* Five cents make a penny, and twenty pennies make a pound
49		*Chi spand in furia, stanta adèsi* One who spends quickly, struggles slowly
50		*Fa' i cónt con quall t'hè, brisa con quall t'arè* Deal with what you have, not with what you will have
54		*La róba, la va comm la vén* The stuff goes as it comes
55		*La róba n'è 'd chi l'ha, l'è 'd chi la sa gòder* Stuff does not belong to those who possesses it, but to those who know how to enjoy it
64	Emi.	*La culumì la s' fa da par lì* The economy makes itself
74	Mar.	*Chi ha i guadrin e 'n sa csa sn' fé, s' métt a fabriché* One who has money and does not know what to do with it, starts building houses
75		*L' spes èn el prim salèri* Recovering expenses is the first profit
77		*Chi pèga prima, pèga do volt* One who pays first, pays twice
87	Tus.	*Abbi pur fiorini, ché troverai cugini* Have plenty of florins, and you will find cousins
89		*Fatta la roba, facciam la persona* Made the stuff, let's make the person
90		*Quel che vien di ruffa raffa, se ne va di buffa in baffa* Things badly acquired, badly vanish
91		*Chi non fallisce, non arricchisce* One who does not fail, does not become rich
92		*Gli uomini fanno la roba, non la roba gli uomini* It is men who make the stuff, not the stuff that makes men
115	Neap.	*Chi disprezza vo' cumbrà* One who despises wants to buy
122	Pugl.	*U sparàggne iè u prime uadàggne* Savings are the first profit
127	Cal.	*Chi 'un cunta 'nu sordu un và 'nu sordu* One who does not count his money, is worth no money
128		*U scartu è a dinari* The difference is in deniers
129		*Appiccari 'a viertula a 'nu malu 'ncinu* Hanging the sack on a bad hook
135		*Allu mercatu o frichi o sì fricàto. 'A fera o a 'feri o ti feri* At the marketplace you either cheat or get cheated. The fair, either you hurt it or it hurts you
141	Sic.	*Cu' havi dinari, campa filici, e cui nun n'havi, perdi l'amici* One who has money, lives happily, and one who has none, loses friends

151	Sar.	*Quie donat at s'amigu su sou, perdet s'amigu et i su sou* One who gives his friends his own [money], loses his friends and his own [money]
152		*Dai sa die qui prestas has unu inimigu de pius* From the day you make a loan, you have one more enemy
153		*Sos benes, a quie ruent* Goods to whom they fall [i.e., belong]
154		*Qui queret irrichire ind'unu annu, morit in bator meses* One who wants to get rich in a year, dies in four months
155		*Qui plus ispendet mancu ispendet* The more one spends, the less one spends
158		*Segundu s'intrada faghe s'ispesa* Spend according to your income

Work

8	Pied.	*N bùn mestè val dui patrimoni* A good job is worth two inheritances
65	Emi.	*Lavor fat, qautrèn aspëta* Work done awaits money
101	Rom.	*Chi s'arza, poco sforza* One who rises, makes little effort
125	Pugl.	*Stringe le diinde ca fasce le terrise d'arggiinde* Grit your teeth and you will have many silver coins
132	Cal.	*Si 'un 'mpichi un spichi* If you do not hook, you do not unhook

Senses & Body

12	Mil.	*A sto mond var pussee la tolla che l'or* In this world, a brazen face is worth more than money
16		*Chi ghe n'ha ne god, e chi no ghe n'ha, se gratta* One who has it [money] enjoys it, and one who does not have it [money] scratches himself
17		*El quattrin l'è quell che fa cantà l'orbin* Money makes the blind sing
22		*Quand s'è fortunaa, piœuv in del cuu anca a vess settaa* When one is lucky, it rains on the backside even when sitting
25	Ven.	*Co la merda monta in scagno, o che la puzza o che la fa dano* When poop climbs onto the stool, it either stinks or causes harm
33		*La roba sconde la goba* The stuff hides the hump
35	Gen.	*I dinæ do cappellan cantando vegnan, cantando van* The chaplain's money comes singing and goes singing
36		*Chi ha di dinæ perde l'anima, chi no n'ha, l'anima e o corpo* One who has money loses his soul, one who has none, [loses] his soul and body
40		*I dinæ son comme a rogna, chi l'ha se a gratta* Money is like scabies, one who has it scratches himself
41		*Sensa dinæ l'orbo no canta* Without money the blind man does not sing
46	Bol.	*I quatrẽn, i ẽn al secànd sangv dl'ómeṅ* Money is the second blood of men
52		*Chi viv cuntànd, viv cantànd* One who lives by counting, lives by singing

57	Emi.	*Bon temp, salut e qautrén i n' stofa mai* Good times, health and money never tire
58		*Chi ch' sta ben 'd cà su e' pò pissêr a lët e pu dì ch'l'ha sudê* One who is comfortable at home can piss in bed and say he sweats
63		*I quatrèn j è coma ai dulur, chi ch'i ha i si ten* Money is like pain, one who has it keeps it
68	Mar.	*I guadrin èn el second sangv* Money is the second blood
69		*I guadrin en apuzzen mei* Money never stinks
72		*La robba fa la robba e la fatiga fa la gobba* Stuff makes stuff and fatigue makes the hump grow
78		*La roba che piace a li denti, non conosce né amichi né parenti* The stuff that pleases the teeth knows neither friends nor relatives
84	Tus.	*Chi vive contando, vive cantando* One who lives by counting, lives by singing
95		*Chi butta via oro con le mani, lo cerca co' piedi* One who throws aways gold with his hands, seeks it with his feet
105	Rom.	*Cent'anni de pianto, nun pagheno un sordo de debito* A hundred years of crying does not pay a penny of debt
109		*Quando la furtuna te vo' bene, puro a casa a ricercà te viene* When luck loves you, even all the way home it comes looking for you
110	Neapl.	*Chi tene' a mugliera bella sempe canta; e chi tene denare sempe conta* One who has a beautiful wife always sings; and one who has money always counts
112		*A voce 'e l'ommo so 'e renare* The voice of man is money
114		*E ddete d' 'a mano nun so' tutte eguale* The fingers of the hand are not all the same
143	Sic.	*Cu' 'un havi dinari, nun pò esseri 'ntisu* One who has no money, cannot be heard

Religion

9	Pied.	*Chi à paúra del diau a fa pa roba* One who fears the devil, makes little stuff
23	Mil.	*Pocch danee, pocch sant'Antoni* Little money, little St. Anthony [protection]
39	Gen.	*Dinæ e santitæ, meitæ da meitæ* Money and sanctity, half of half
73	Mar.	*Quatrini e santità, mità de' la mità* Money and sanctity, half of half
83	Tus.	*I ricchi hanno il paradiso in questo mondo, e nell'altro se lo vogliono* The rich have paradise in this world, and in the other [world] if they want it
85		*Denari e sanità, metà della metà* Money and sanctity, half of half

Gold & Silver

31	Ven.	*L'oro no ciapa macia* Gold does not stain
34		*L'amor xe potente, ma l'oro onipotente* Love is potent, but gold is omnipotent

62	Emi.	*In dó ch' u j è de' grass tot i s'onz* Where there is grease, everyone gets greasy
80	Tus.	*Tutto è fumo e vento, fuorché l'oro e l'argento* Everything is smoke and wind, except for gold and silver
93		*Colle chiavi d'oro s'apre ogni porta* With gold keys every door opens
94		*I chiavistelli s'ungon con l'oro* Bolts are greased with gold
124	Pugl.	*Iòre de cassce fernèsce e non iôre de vrazze* The gold in the coffers runs out, not the gold that comes from [the labour of] the arms
133	Cal.	*Nu mantu 'e oru ugni vrigògna ammuccia* A mantle of gold covers every shame
140	Sic.	*Cu' ha oru, nun ha dolu* One who has gold, has no pain
149	Sar.	*Dizzosa sa prata, si riscatta' s'oro* Lucky silver, if it redeems gold

Bread

15	Mil.	*Chi gh' ha pan de fà mangià, gh' ha cavaj de fà trottà* One who has bread to feed, has horses to trot
59	Emi.	*Chi ha de' gran e' va a e' mulén e chi ch'a n n'ha e' sta a guardê* One who has grain goes to the mill and one who has none stands by and watches
123	Pugl.	*Sparàggne la farìne quànne u sacche stà chìine* Save flour when the sack is full
145	Sic.	*Li peni cu' lu pani nun su' peni, li veru peni sunnu senza pani* Pain with bread is not pain, the real pain is [when you are] without bread

Nature

67	Mar.	*Li quatrini manda l'acqua pe' l'insù* Money makes water flow uphill
108	Rom.	*Li quattrini so' come la rena, na soffiata e voleno* Money is like sand, a gust of wind and it is gone

Animals

96	Tus.	*I danari vengono di passo, e se ne vanno via di galoppo* Money comes at a slow pace, and it goes away at a gallop
99	Rom.	*Li cani grossi fra de loro nun se mozzicheno* Big dogs do not bite each other
126	Cal.	*L'acièllu rapìnu mori sempri lientu* The bird of prey always dies thin
138	Sic.	*A un povir'omu, ogni cani cci abbaja* To a poor man, every dog barks

Coinage – materiality

13	Mil.	*Basta minga avegh i danee, besogna anca savé spendi polit* It is not enough to have money, one also has to know how to spend it well
14		*Chi fa i danee, adora i sò danee* One who makes money, adores his money
19		*I danee hin fa per spendi* Money is made to be spent
37	Gen.	*Co-i danæ s'arrangia tûtto* With money, everything is fixed

51	Bol.	*I baiùc, i éṅ tónd par vi ch'i rózzleṅ* Coins are round so that they roll
53		*La róba, córr dri a la róba* Stuff runs after stuff
61	Emi.	*I bajocch i n'ha e' mangh* Coins have no handle
70	Mar.	*Sinza 'ndindiri non ze 'ndandara, e se vôli 'ndandarà, ce vô li 'ndindirindì* Nothing can be done without money, and if you want something, you need money
71		*Li sòrdi va' co' li sòrdi* Money goes with money
97	Tus.	*Senza lilleri 'un si lallera* Nothing can be done without money
104	Rom.	*Li quattrini so' tonni e ruzzicheno* Coins are round and roll
134	Cal.	*Essari 'na banca regia* To be like a royal bank

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