

This is an extract from:

Dumbarton Oaks Papers, No. 55

Editor: Alice-Mary Talbot

Published by

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection
Washington, D.C.

Issue year 2001

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Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

The Normans between Byzantium and the Islamic World

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When dealing with the subject of monetary transactions and exchanges involving the Normans of Italy, Byzantium, and the Islamic world, scholars have been cautioned to use care when discussing terms such as *influence* (was there a donor culture?), *borrowing* (was it residual, recent, or antiquarian?), and *propaganda* which certainly played a role in Norman thinking and practice.¹ What do we mean by “the Normans in Italy”? There were at least three or four Norman Italies: Byzantine, Lombard, Muslim, and French-Norman, each having its own monetary tradition, different from each other and well documented in charters and finds. The many frontiers of medieval Italy are particularly mobile and certainly existed in the period under examination, the eleventh and twelfth centuries.²

Cécile Morrisson read a first draft of this paper; Vera von Falkenhausen and Jonathan Shepard helped me with precious references; Philip Grierson revised my English in the final version. I am very grateful to all of them for comments and discussion.

¹M. McCormick, “Byzantium and the Early Medieval West: Problems and Opportunities,” in *Europa medievale e mondo bizantino. Contatti effettivi e possibilità degli studi comparati*, Tavola rotonda del XVIII Congresso del CISH-Montréal, 29 agosto 1995, ed. G. Arnaldi and G. Cavallo, *Nuovi Studi Storici* 40, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo (Rome, 1997), 1–17.

²G. Arnaldi, “Italia,” in *Enciclopedia dell’arte medievale*, vol. 7 (Rome, 1996), 451–56; J.-M. Martin, “Les problèmes de la frontière en Italie méridionale (VIe–XIIe siècles): L’approche historique,” in *Castrum 4, Frontière et peuplement dans le monde méditerranéen au moyen âge*, Actes du colloque d’Erice-Trapani, 18–25 septembre 1988, ed. J.-M. Poisson, Collection de la Casa de Velasquez-Collection de l’Ecole Française de Rome 105 (Rome-Madrid, 1992), 259–76, and J.-M. Martin, *Italies Normandes* (Paris, 1994). The different monetary traditions of Norman Italy have long determined the slow development of numismatic research in this field: Arab coins of Sicily were studied separately from, e.g., the copper follari of Salerno or other series. The first comprehensive study including Sicily as well as southern Italy was by G. Sambon, *Repertorio generale delle monete coniate in Italia e da Italiani all’estero dal secolo V al XX. Periodo dal 476 al 1266* (Paris, 1912; repr. Modena, 1975); see now L. Travaini, *La monetazione nell’Italia normanna*, *Nuovi Studi Storici* 28, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo (Rome, 1995), and P. Grierson and L. Travaini, *Medieval European Coinage with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*, vol. 14, *Italy (iii) (South Italy, Sicily, Sardinia)* (Cambridge, 1998), (hereafter *MEC* 14). A clear and comprehensive overview of the economic relations of the Normans with their different counterparts is not easy when one considers the tendency of historical scholarship to increased specialization: see comments in P. Magdalino, *The Byzantine Background to the First Crusade*, *Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies* (Toronto, 1996), 5.

MONETARY TRANSACTIONS AND EXCHANGE IN NORMAN ITALY

I begin with a brief summary of the monetary areas in southern Italy in the eleventh century and how these changed in the twelfth. At the time of the Norman conquest of south Italy and Sicily there were essentially three different areas: Apulia, Campania, and Calabria. In Apulia, Byzantine coins were used more consistently than anywhere else, though their use was challenged by Lombard coins of Salerno and by silver denari of the north. By the mid-eleventh century, Lombard coinage was used in northern Apulia; a hoard from Ortona contained only one histamenon of Basil II and Constantine VIII as against 147 taris of either Amalfi or Salerno, the early types of which cannot be easily distinguished from each other.³ Denari of Pavia appear in charters from the 1060s onward as well as in finds, although finds cannot be precisely dated since immobilized types such as these *papienses* remained long in circulation. Far more numerous in finds are Byzantine folles, as we shall see later. One may note in passing the need to differentiate between the two gold coins in circulation, the heavy histamenon, weighing ca. 4.5 g, and the lighter tari, or quarter dinar, weighing initially just over a gram, but later dropping to 0.89 g.

In Campania the local mints of Amalfi and Salerno had been minting taris from the late tenth century, but Byzantine folles were in general use and were only gradually replaced by the Salernitan follari, which were issued from the mid-eleventh century, as Philip Grierson showed more than forty years ago on the evidence of overstriking, a practice borrowed from Byzantium.⁴ Finally, in the Byzantine theme of Calabria, Byzantine folles were widely used until at least the end of the eleventh century, but by the end of the tenth century Sicilian gold taris with Arabic legends had become the favorite gold coin. This appears from the written evidence, which shows taris being hoarded in the treasures of Calabrian monasteries and the value of landed property being expressed in them.⁵ Taxes and penalties were expressed in nomismata, but this does not mean that such coins were used in actual payments.⁶

³For the hoard, see R. Gurnet, "Le trésor d'Ortona," in *Ortona II. Les campagnes de 1964 et 1965*, ed. J. Mertens, *Etudes de Philologie, d'Archéologie et d'Histoire anciennes*, Institut Historique Belge de Rome 9 (Brussels-Rome, 1967), 155–71, and comments below.

⁴For an updated discussion of this practice at Salerno and a full bibliography, see *MEC* 14:61–67; also Travaini, *La monetazione*, 15ff. Before Philip Grierson's first study of the overstriking, the first Salernitan follari had been dated to the 10th century.

⁵V. von Falkenhausen, "La circolazione monetaria nell'Italia meridionale e nella Sicilia in epoca normanna secondo la documentazione di archivio," *Bollettino di numismatica* 6/7 (1986): 55–79, esp. 57; J.-M. Martin, "Economia naturale, economia monetaria nell'Italia meridionale longobarda e bizantina (secoli VI–XI)," *Storia d'Italia. Annali 6: Economia naturale, economia monetaria* (Turin, 1983), 181–219. This is a detailed overview of the monetary situation of southern Italy, but now in need of some revision; for example, Martin's insistence (pp. 208, 219) on the absence of local coinage and on the foreign character of coins used in south Italy should be more nuanced, as suggested in L. Travaini, "Romesinas, provesini, turonenses . . . : Monete straniere in Italia meridionale ed in Sicilia (XI–XV secolo)," in *Moneta locale, moneta straniera: Italia ed Europa XI–XV secolo. The Second Cambridge Numismatic Symposium. Local Coins, Foreign Coins: Italy and Europe, 11th–15th Centuries*, ed. L. Travaini, Società numismatica Italiana. Collana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini 2 (Milan, 1999), 113–34. Also the presence of silver denari from the north in 11th-century Benevento and Avellino attributed by Martin to the scarcity of gold coins (p. 208) may be read as a preference for a medium-value denomination added to a system based on gold and copper.

⁶Von Falkenhausen, "La circolazione monetaria," 75–76, and 57 n. 15 for the Calabrian monastery. For solidi in Calabria, see below and note 43.

A study of the distribution of Byzantine coinage in these areas brings to light some surprising facts. Byzantine gold coins are virtually nonexistent in finds despite the many references to them in written records, especially from Apulia. There are few gold nomismata in finds or collections, in contrast to the many finds of anonymous folles that have been recorded. The last type of nomisma to be represented in Italian hoards is a histamenon of Basil II and Constantine, and even it has so far occurred in only three hoards, each time as a single specimen, and in two cases obviously an outlier, possibly treasured not for “monetary” reasons but for “religious” ones, as discussed below.⁷

This paucity of material evidence contrasts with the many Byzantine gold coins described, often in full details, in south Italian charters. Cécile Morrisson wrote an excellent essay on the *michaelaton* and related coins,⁸ and there is a useful compendium of similar names in volume 3 of the *Dumbarton Oaks Catalogue*.⁹ One explanation is that progressive debasement would not encourage hoarding, for we know how Byzantine gold was debased in this period.¹⁰ Owners would want to get rid of debased coins in their possession, though one would expect some hoarding in anticipation of worse to come, despite a novel of Leo VI (886–912) having laid down that all official coins issued by an emperor, whether ancient or recent, should be accepted as legal tender.¹¹ Another reason for not finding more Byzantine gold coins in eleventh-century Italy would have been that the tari, of lower value and more flexible use, had become the most acceptable higher-value currency in the area, though for Apulia taris seem to appear mainly in the northern part (Capitanata); even Byzantine Calabria was consistently using Sicilian taris well before the Norman conquest.¹² A smaller gold denomination such as the tari was indeed a more suitable coin for a flourishing economy, evidence for which is provided by monuments such as the Romanesque churches and sculptures of the time.¹³

⁷Travaini, *La monetazione*, 11 n. 4.

⁸C. Morrisson, “Le michaélaton et les noms des monnaies à la fin du XIe siècle,” *TM* 3 (1968): 369–74.

⁹P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. 3, *Leo III to Nicephorus III, 717–1081* (Washington, D.C., 1973), pt. 1, 44–62 (hereafter *DOC* 3).

¹⁰C. Morrisson et al., *Lor monnayé, I. Purification et altérations de Rome à Byzance*, Cahiers Ernest-Babelon 2 (Paris, 1985), 127–53.

¹¹C. Morrisson, “Découverte de trésors à l’époque byzantine et monnaies inconnues: Le *pantalaïmia*,” *Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique* 37 (1989): 150–52, esp. 152 (repr. in C. Morrisson, *Monnaie et finances à Byzance: Analyses, techniques* [Aldershot, 1994], VIII).

¹²For the treasures of Calabrian monasteries see above, note 6. According to J.-M. Martin, *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle*, Collection de l’Ecole Française de Rome (Rome, 1993), 453, in ca. 1050 African-Sicilian taris disappeared from Tyrrhenian southern Italy and “l’or ne circule presque plus en Italie méridionale,” but 11th-century Sicilian taris, pre-Norman and Norman, were even found on the shore of Salerno and payments in taris *de lu cuntle* (i.e., of Count Roger I of Calabria and Sicily) are mentioned in Salernitan documents of 1125–49: see Travaini, *La monetazione*, 107 n. 24, 173 n. 62, 208 (the latter possibly a false quarter-dinar of al-Mustansir from Salerno). Phases of introduction, circulation, and withdrawal of coinage in southern Italy in the 11th century until 1140 are still to be clarified.

¹³The economic level of Norman Italy has been the subject of much discussion recently. For a view of an economic backwardness in south Italy reflected by the coins used, see Martin, “Economia naturale, economia monetaria,” 210, and Martin, *Italiés Normandes*, 331 ff. Other scholars, however, insist on the high economic standard of south Italy and Sicily in the 11th and 12th centuries. For example, G. A. Loud, “Coinage, Wealth and Plunder in the Age of Robert Guiscard,” *English Historical Review* 114, no. 458 (September, 1999): 815–43, concludes by saying that “for churches to raise ready cash, a world of markets and exchange was necessary, and this was the context within which the Norman conquest of southern Italy took place.” For a discussion of coins and the economy in Norman Italy, see Travaini, *La monetazione*, 88–97, with bibliography. A positive view of the economy of Byzantine Calabria, particularly for the production of wine and silk, was given by A. Guillou, “Production and Profits in the Byzantine Province of Italy (Tenth to Eleventh Centuries):

Charitable payments in gold could be very large. Vast sums of Byzantine gold coins were offered by Robert Guiscard to the abbey of Montecassino, up to a total of 149 pounds of gold.¹⁴ In contrast, the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX used to give annually to Montecassino only two pounds of gold. In 1076 Michael VII Ducas increased the donation to 24 gold pounds annually, but unfortunately for the abbey he was deposed two years later.¹⁵ In the sums paid by Robert Guiscard to Montecassino, Byzantine coins still take pride of place. It is likely that Robert was able to put together large amounts of Byzantine gold, at least after his plunder of many rich monasteries in south Italy.¹⁶ But the gold coins actually circulating in the lands he had conquered were taris, and he did not try to restore a larger gold coin in his mints, but went on issuing taris after he took Amalfi in 1073 and Salerno in 1076, as he had done in Palermo in 1071.¹⁷ Much later, in the twelfth century, King Roger II undertook to pay the sum of 600 squifatos to the pope as his feudal lord, but presumably he paid the sum in his own Sicilian taris, counting them 4 to 1 scyphatus.¹⁸ Sicilian taris had by then become a well-established currency in the Mediterranean and were also being used by north Italians trading with Sicily.¹⁹

Byzantine copper coins, in contrast to gold ones, have come to light in substantial numbers, with clear regional differences. Folles of Romanus I (920–944) are most numerous in Campania, anonymous folles of Class C (ca. 1034–41) in Calabria, and folles of the period 1057–71 in Apulia. These regional differences seem to correspond to different phases in the political and military history of Byzantine Italy. Romanus I's folles found in Campania must have remained in circulation for a long time, although they were eventually replaced by the local follari issued by Gisulf II. Those of Class C in Calabria, reflecting the military operations of George Maniakes in the late 1030s, likewise remained in circulation until the introduction of the issues of Roger I in ca. 1085–87, his first type of follaro being an imitation of the Byzantine type. Nor is it surprising that the latest

An Expanding Society," *DOP* 28 (1974): 89–109, repr. in Guillou, *Culture et société en Italie byzantine (VIe–XIe s.)* (London, 1978), XIII.

¹⁴Loud, "Coinage, Wealth and Plunder," 823 ff; V. von Falkenhausen, "Aspetti storico-economici dell'età di Roberto il Guiscardo," in *Roberto il Guiscardo e il suo tempo*, Relazioni e comunicazioni nelle Prime Giornate normanno-sveve (Bari, maggio 1973) (Rome, 1975), 115–34, esp. 132 n. 56; *Leonis Marsicani et Petri Diaconi Chronica monasterii Casinensis*, MGH, SS, vol. 7 (Hannover, 1846; repr. Stuttgart-New York, 1963), 743 (by Petrus Diaconus). For more details see below.

¹⁵H. Houben, "Roberto il Guiscardo e il monachesimo," in *Roberto il Guiscardo tra Europa, Oriente e Mezzogiorno*, Atti del Convegno internazionale, Potenza-Melfi-Venosa, 19–23 ottobre 1985, ed. C. D. Fonseca (Galatina, 1990), 223–42, esp. 233.

¹⁶Loud, "Coinage, Wealth and Plunder"; von Falkenhausen, "Aspetti storico-economici," 132; Houben, "Roberto il Guiscardo."

¹⁷For the coinage of Robert Guiscard, see *MEC* 14:81–87. A look at the penalties in Norman diplomas can be interesting. At the time of Robert Guiscard in the 1070s there are still many spiritual penalties (*anathema*), but gradually monetary penalties became the rule, expressed in *libras auri*, usually 50 in Robert's time, later 100: H. Enzensberger, "Roberto il Guiscardo: Documenti e cancelleria," in *Roberto il Guiscardo e il suo tempo* (as above, note 14), 61–81, esp. 73–77. Penalties cannot always be used as evidence for coins in actual use but are often a mirror of past uses.

¹⁸*Le Liber Censuum de l'Eglise Romaine*, ed. P. Fabre and L. Duchesne, vol. 1 (Paris, 1910), 16. The tari was a quarter-dinar, and considering 1 dinar = 1 scyphatus (i.e., solidus) we arrive at 4 taris = 1 scyphatus, as it became in Roger II's monetary system of 1140 with 4 Sicilian taris = 1 solidus regalis (Travaini, *La monetazione*, 59).

¹⁹See the still fundamental study by D. Abulafia, *The Two Italies: Economic Relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes* (Cambridge, 1977), 217 ff; Travaini, *La monetazione*, 88, 101.

folles are those found in Apulia, where the final Byzantine resistance took place.²⁰ These data require updating (which I have not been able to do systematically), but new material for Calabria, put together by Ermanno Arslan, seems to confirm the pattern for the eleventh century while incorporating a larger number of finds of Norman copper coins,²¹ though the figures for these remain much below those of Byzantine folles. Presumably a change in the stock of coins in circulation was taking place, for as they consolidated their power and control over their territories, the Normans would have been able to introduce their own new coins and gradually demonetize old currency. They also introduced copper coins into Sicily, which under the Arabs had used only gold and silver coins.

The Normans in varying ways tried to control the internal circulation of gold coins. The evidence from hoards in Sicily and south Italy shows successive demonetizations. First the use of Islamic quarter-dinars was abolished, leaving only Norman coins, either ones with Arabic legends only or those with a *tau* as their main type; later only taris with a cross were left in circulation.²² It is important to note that these are never found mixed with foreign gold coins. We know that Arab merchants in Palermo in the 1140s were supposed to change their Almoravid dinars or dinars of Tripoli at the local mint.²³

Palermo and Messina were the only mints producing Sicilian taris, which were used all over the kingdom up to its northern borders, as a hoard from Montecassino shows.²⁴ Foreign merchants landing in other ports of Sicily or southern Italy must have changed their coins locally. It is likely that each major trade center had facilities for money changing and weight control, and these centers may have been controlled by the crown.²⁵ The

²⁰See the graph in Travaini, *La monetazione*, 389–91; *MEC* 14:401.

²¹E. A. Arslan, "Ancora sulla circolazione della moneta in rame nella Calabria di X–XII secolo," *Mél Rome Moyen âge* 110.1 (1998): 359–78; in Calabria, Classes D, E, and F remain rare (D, only 3 specimens from excavations; E, 2 in a hoard and 1 in a museum collection; F, no specimen recorded); see also F. Barello, "Riflessioni sulle monete dagli scavi di Gerace e Tropea," *ibid.*, 425–30, describing Anonymous A2 and C as "protagonisti assoluti" in find records; Anonymous folles were found here in later contexts, as well as at Otranto, until after the 13th century, but this can be a case of residuality: see for this A. Travaglini, "Le monete," in *Excavations at Otranto*, vol. 2, *The Finds*, ed. F. D'Andria and D. Whitehouse (Galatina, 1992), 241–78.

²²For the different types of crosses on Norman Sicilian coins, see Travaini, *La monetazione*, 39–40, 104; L. Travaini, "La croce sulle monete da Costantino alla fine del medioevo," in *La Croce: Iconografia e interpretazione*, ed. B. Ulianich, Atti del Convegno internazionale Napoli, 6–11 dicembre 1999 (Naples, in press).

²³A group of African merchants agreed to buy Sicilian grain, sending dinars that were of pure gold; once at Palermo, the dinars would have been sent to the mint to be transformed into local taris by alloying the gold with one-quarter of its weight in silver. H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirides, Xe–XIIe siècles* (Paris-Algiers, 1962), 2:666–67; reference from D. Abulafia, "Maometto e Carlo Magno: Le due aree monetarie dell'oro e dell'argento," in *Storia d'Italia. Annali* 6 (as above, note 5), 223–70, esp. 242 n. 21. These data correspond exactly with what we know of the tari alloy, which remained stable for more than two hundred years. The alloy is described in various documents from the 13th century: it was 16⅓ carats gold, i.e., ca. 68 percent gold, with silver and copper in proportion of 3 to 1: 24 percent silver and 8 percent copper (i.e., roughly ¼ silver of its weight, as in the document quoted above). Analyses by touchstone, specific gravity, and gamma rays have confirmed a gold content of ca. 68–70 percent, although the proportion of the minor elements remained variable: see *MEC* 14:449–51, and L. Travaini, "The Fineness of Sicilian Taris, and of Those of Amalfi and Salerno (11th to 13th Centuries)," *Metallurgy in Numismatics* 4 (London, 1998): 504–17. Hoard evidence shows that the weight standard of the Norman Sicilian taris down to the reigns of Roger II and William I was still the Fatimid standard of ca. 1.05g, while the continental taris of Salerno and Amalfi had shifted to a lighter standard of 0.89g: Travaini, *La monetazione*, 103–7.

²⁴For a list of hoards of Sicilian taris, see Travaini, *La monetazione*, 364–67.

²⁵D. Abulafia, "The Crown and the Economy under Roger II and His Successors," *DOP* 37 (1983): 1–14.

taris were spent by weight. The hoard from Montecassino, for example, shows how different in size and weight the taris were,²⁶ and it was crucial for good trade practices that measures and weights could be trusted and controlled. Sicilian charters often express sums of taris with such formulas as *ad pondus Panormi*, or *ad pondus Messane*. We know that there was a slight difference between the ounce of Palermo and that of Messina, but references to particular weights may also refer to the fact that the weights had to be guaranteed and protected by official control and certified balances.²⁷

In 1140 Roger II took steps to unify the different monetary traditions of his kingdom and established a new monetary system, as follows, with monies of account in italics.

<i>solidus regalis</i>	Sicilian tari	ducalis	tercia ducalis	<i>grain</i>	follaro
1	4	12	36	72	288
	1	3	9	18	72
		1	3	6	24
			1	2	8

The new monetary system was a mixture of Byzantine and Islamic elements. The new silver ducalis created in 1140 was one-twelfth of the solidus regalis of account, exactly the relationship of the Byzantine miliaresion to the nomisma.²⁸ Sicilian taris were the highest effective coin throughout the kingdom. The unit of account was the ounce of taris, worth 30 taris, and next was the solidus regalis, worth 4 taris.²⁹ While imposing throughout the kingdom a system based on the Sicilian tari, Roger retained local traditions, such as the base gold taris of Amalfi and Salerno circulating in Campania, worth about half the Sicilian tari. Amalfitan taris were slightly more valuable than Salernitan ones, but both functioned in Campania as coins of medium value, like the silver ducalis in Apulia.³⁰

The introduction of the silver ducalis fortunately provoked the fierce opposition of the historian Falco of Benevento, since his account is the only written source we have on the reform itself.³¹ He gives us some of the valuations before and after the reform, mak-

²⁶See the color photograph of the entire hoard, but without the brooch, in *Bollettino di numismatica* 6/7 (1986): 4, pl. 1, and L. Travaini, "Il ripostiglio di Montecassino e la monetazione aurea dei Normanni in Sicilia," *ibid.*, 167–98.

²⁷See also below and note 83.

²⁸In 12th-century Byzantium the miliaresion was a money of account and was later replaced by the keration (= 1/24th of the nomisma, but originally a weight): M. Hendy, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 1081–1261*, DOS, 12 (Washington, D.C., 1969), 26, and M. Hendy, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. 4, *Alexius I to Michael VIII 1081–1261* (Washington, D.C., 1999), pt. 1:58 (hereafter *DOC* 4). See L. Travaini, "Entre Byzance et l'Islam: Le système monétaire du Royaume Normand de Sicile en 1140," *Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique* 46.9 (1991): 200–204.

²⁹At the same time, Roger fixed the standards for the alloy of the local taris of Salerno and Amalfi, which had previously been in some confusion. Recent analyses have shown that Roger established for the Salernitan ones an alloy of gold, silver, and copper in equal parts, and for the Amalfitan ones an alloy of 41.6 percent gold, 41.6 percent silver, and 16.8 percent copper: Travaini, "The Fineness of Sicilian Taris," 509; *MEC* 14:451.

³⁰For the silver ducalis created for Apulia, see J.-M. Martin, "Le monete d'argento nell'Italia meridionale del secolo XII secondo i documenti d'archivio," *Bollettino di numismatica* 6/7 (1986): 85–96, and Travaini, *La monetazione*, 216–17.

³¹Travaini, *La monetazione*, 295–99; *MEC* 14:117–18; Falco's chronicle is edited by G. Del Re, *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni della dominazione normanna*, vol. 1 (Naples, 1845).

ing it possible to understand what was done. The new coin had been imposed at the value of 8 romesinae, which were then withdrawn from circulation. Roger also introduced a small copper coin valued 3 to 1 romesina.³² The romesinae thus abolished were formerly thought to be old Byzantine copper folles, assumed to be still circulating by 1140, but this interpretation is no longer acceptable. The Normans had introduced new coins and standards, and the weight of the copper coins had been greatly reduced in south Italy, as had happened in the Byzantine Empire with the reform of Alexios I in 1092. The “romesinae” were probably billon deniers of Rouen, as was first suggested by Grierson, and I have now accepted this view,³³ since in fact deniers of Rouen have been found in hoards and single finds in many parts of south Italy.³⁴ As for the ducalis, the new royal coin 60 percent silver fine, this was intended to replace foreign billon coins in the most rebellious province of his kingdom, Apulia, and the new coin was Byzantine in many ways. Like many Byzantine coins, it was concave; on the convex side it had a bust of Christ Pantocrator, and on the concave side King Roger attired as a Byzantine emperor and his son Duke Roger in military dress holding a long cross on steps. Michael Hendy was the first to compare the types of the ducalis to those of the debased concave histamenon of Alexios I, bearing a similar bust of Christ and showing St. Demetrios handing a cross on steps to the emperor.³⁵ This type was struck at Thessalonike ca. 1082–85, during the period of the Norman war led by Robert Guiscard.³⁶ Hendy suggested that the ducalis was a direct copy, supposing that the Normans might have obtained large amounts of these coins and kept them in quantity in some Norman treasury until they were copied in 1140.³⁷

The hypothesis of a direct copy, however, may not be correct, and cultural and image borrowing may be nearer the mark: by 1140 the Normans of Sicily would have been capable of creating their own images, borrowing elements from different cultures. Even before becoming king in 1130, Roger II had displayed his image in the costume of a

³²Falco's values are as follows, accepting *tres follares* as 3 follari worth one old romesina: 1 ducalis = 8 romesinae = 24 new follari.

³³For some of the arguments in favor of the old interpretation, see L. Travaini, “La riforma monetaria di Ruggero II e la circolazione minuta in Italia meridionale tra X e XII secolo,” *RIN* 83 (1981): 133–53, though I have now abandoned this view, as explained in Travaini, *La monetazione*, 295–99. Martin (*Italies Normandes*, 323 ff) still adheres to the interpretation of romesinae as old Byzantine folles, but in his book review of Travaini, *La monetazione* he accepted both the identification of Falco's romesina with the denier of Rouen and the need to differentiate between the abolished romesinae and the ramesinae of many Apulian documents (see J.-M. Martin in *RN* 151 [1996]: 361–66); many points still remain to be clarified, and more research needs to be done. See also *MEC* 14:118.

³⁴See lists of such hoards and finds in Travaini, *La monetazione*, 370, 387, and *MEC* 14:415, 424. Martin (*Italies Normandes*, 328, and *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle*, 457) refers to “miliaresia of good deniers of Rouen” in a document of Gravina (1139), implying a real use of such coins, which indeed Roger II intended to stop, together with the use of other foreign coins (see Travaini, “Romesinas, provesini, turonenses,” 113–33).

³⁵Hendy, *Coinage and Money*, 41–42 and *DOC* 4:189 and no. 5a; for the Norman ducalis, see Travaini, *La monetazione*, no. 241 and *MEC* 14:120–21.

³⁶Before the Norman campaign, Alexios sent money to Emperor Henry IV to encourage an invasion of southern Italy: a sum of 144,000 nomismata in worked silver and *romanata* (Hendy, *Coinage and Money*, 47 and *DOC* 4:188). References to diplomatic payments and booties are important: cf. M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 264–75, 314.

³⁷In *Studies*, 314, Hendy suggested that a large amount of such coins might have been seized by the Normans when they plundered Alexios I's baggage train outside Durazzo in 1081; however, in *DOC* 4, the type of coin that is supposed to be a model of the ducalis is dated ca. 1082–85.

Byzantine emperor, though avoiding contentious titles and describing himself simply as R/II.³⁸ An example of borrowing from classical literature is the use of the title *ANAE* (*anax*), never used before on coins, on a copper follaro of Messina of Roger II, issued soon after 1130, a time when it was necessary to find new titles for the new king.³⁹ A case of borrowing from an ancient coin of Rhegium, but with oriental borrowing as well, can be seen in the copper follari of Messina of William II, second coinage, bearing a lion's head.⁴⁰ Grierson suggested that the new concave ducalis created by Roger II in 1140 might have been produced by Byzantine workmen, but Roger had already issued a concave coin as count (ca. 1112–20?), and concave coins might well have been produced by local workmen inspired by Byzantine coins.⁴¹ Thus Norman Italy created through “borrowing” a complex and mature form of expression.⁴²

MONETARY TRANSACTIONS AND EXCHANGE OF NORMAN ITALY WITH BYZANTIUM AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Monetary transactions have often involved plunder and dowries, as well as gifts and donations, and on these we have probably more evidence than on trade. Robert Guiscard had earned a reputation as a bandit and kidnapper before he became a great and highly respected public figure.⁴³ Soon after the Byzantine defeat in Apulia in 1071, Emperor Romanos IV asked Robert to marry his son to one of his daughters, but nothing came of this; the same request was made by Michael VII more than once, with various diplomatic missions from Constantinople, all unsuccessful; only in 1074 did the emperor obtain a wedding contract from Robert including a treaty of alliance. Robert's daughter was sent to Constantinople in 1076 where she took the name Helena. These transactions involved large sums of money, with 1,200 pounds of gold being given by Michael VII to the Normans, a sum largely in the form of pensions for imperial offices of different values granted to the Normans.⁴⁴ This was an honorable way for the emperor to pay an annual tribute to Robert, as was clear to the Norman Amato of Montecassino: “Et ensi li empeor, liquel devoit recevoir tribut de tout le monde, rendi tribut a cestui duc. Car li empeor lui

³⁸For these images, see *MEC* 14:109, cat. nos. 162–69, and Travaini, *La monetazione*, 281–82.

³⁹Travaini, *La monetazione*, 51.

⁴⁰Travaini, *La monetazione*, 319, and L. Travaini, “Aspects of the Sicilian Norman Copper Coinage in the Twelfth Century,” *NC* 151 (1991): 159–74, esp. 166.

⁴¹Travaini, *La monetazione*, 233; P. Grierson, “Pegged Venetian Coin-Dies: Their place in the History of Die Adjustment,” *NC* (1952): 99–105.

⁴²W. Tronzo, “Byzantine Court Culture from the Point of View of Norman Sicily: The Case of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1997), 101–14, stressing the creation of something completely new using both Byzantine and Islamic elements, this time *imported* into Sicily. Tronzo concludes that “these expenditures represented a truly extraordinary effort, and that Roger's interests more than usually ran to the visual” (p. 113).

⁴³E.g., for the kidnapping of the governor of Bisignano in Calabria he received, according to Amato of Montecassino, 20,000 gold solidi: cited by Loud, “Coinage, Wealth and Plunder,” 827.

⁴⁴H. Bibicou, “Une page d'histoire diplomatique de Byzance au XIe siècle: Michel VII Doukas, Robert Guiscard et la pension des dignitaires,” *Byzantion* 29/30 (1959–60): 43–75; V. von Falkenhausen, “Olympias, eine normannische Prinzessin in Konstantinopel,” in *Bisanzio e l'Italia. Raccolta di studi in memoria di Agostino Pertusi* (Milan, 1982), 56–72; W. B. McQueen, “Relations between the Normans and Byzantium 1071–1112,” *Byzantion* 56 (1986): 428–37; Magdalino, “The Byzantine Background,” 11.

mandoit par se messages mille et dui cent de livre de or avec preciosissime pailles de or et autres dompz.”⁴⁵

This makes it easier to understand how Robert was able to present the following gifts to Montecassino on different occasions between the early 1070s and 1085:⁴⁶

600 bizantei, 5 pallia, and 1 navicula aurea
 1 pallium and precious stones worth 700 skiphati
 600 bizantei plus 2,000 tarenii africani, 13 mules, 13 saraceni, 1 carpet
 1000 skiphati
 from Gallipoli in 1076, 300 bizantei and 2,000 tarenii
 visiting Montecassino, 100 bizantei, and on the altar of St. Benedict 300 skiphati, 3 pallia, and other sums for the building, including 12 pounds of denarii for the hospital and 100 michalati for painting the chapterhouse
 at Aquino in 1073, 500 bizantei
 on his second visit to the abbey, 12 pounds of gold, with 100 skiphati and one large pallium deposited on the altar
 on his third visit in 1084, he gave 1,000 solidi amalfitani (= 4,000 tarenii of Amalfi) and 100 bizantei
 1,000 tarenii, one ship worth 1,000 solidi, and 400 solidi amalfitani
 from Romania, 1,000 michalati
 when ill, his wife sent 45 pounds of silver and 1 pallium
 after his death, she gave 300 skiphati

The diversification of sums is sometimes difficult to explain, but it certainly reflects the variety of coins that were offered, together with possibly ingots (12 pounds of gold) and nonmonetary items such as pallia, mules, and slaves.⁴⁷ Byzantine gold coins are referred to as *bizantei* or *skiphati*, while the term *solidus* is used as money of account; on two occasions *michalati* are mentioned, being either the still good solidi of Michael IV (1034–41) or more likely the debased ones of Michael VII (1071–78).⁴⁸ Given the correspondence of 4 tarenii to 1 solidus = bezant = scyphatus, Robert offered almost the same quantity of Byzantine and Sicilian-African gold. *Solidi amalfitani* are also mentioned twice, being almost certainly tarenii of Amalfi. As G. A. Loud suggests, they may also indicate full dinars, of African provenance via Amalfitan traders; in Loud’s words, “one would not wish to be too dogmatic about this interpretation, but it does raise a most important question: how did Robert Guiscard obtain such substantial amounts of wealth?”⁴⁹ The answer lies primarily in plunder and conquest, although trade must have existed in spite of the military instability, for Norman Italy remained a flourishing state.⁵⁰

⁴⁵Aimé du Mont-Cassin, *Ystorie de li Normant*, ed. O. Delars (Rouen, 1892), bk. 7, 26, 298, as quoted by Bibicou, “Une page,” 74.

⁴⁶See above, note 14.

⁴⁷Loud, “Coinage, Wealth and Plunder,” 830.

⁴⁸Loud, “Coinage, Wealth and Plunder,” 824; see also Morisson, “Le michaélaton,” Martin, “Economia naturale, economia monetaria,” 196, and Travaini, *La monetazione*, 151–52.

⁴⁹Loud, “Coinage, Wealth and Plunder,” 825.

⁵⁰See the surprised remarks in von Falkenhausen, “Aspetti storico-economici,” 134, and, for the discussion on the economic backwardness or splendor of Norman Italy, see above, note 13.

The role of Amalfitan trade has been briefly mentioned;⁵¹ that of Pisa and Genoa is also relevant for the economic history of Norman Italy and Sicily,⁵² though I cannot discuss them here with their imports/exports via Sicily and to and from the eastern Mediterranean, and with their competing ambitions.⁵³ The Crusades were the decisive development that gave the Italian maritime republics great economic power, and Venice played a prominent role in events.⁵⁴ In the twelfth century there are many references to Italians trading in Constantinople, mainly Venetians, Pisans, and Genoese. Amalfitans still held prominent positions but were acting in a private capacity, while the other Italians had the backing of their cities and formal treaties to help them. So, although the Amalfitans are described by Niketas Choniates as the best educated in Byzantine customs, the northern Italians took over.⁵⁵ Amalfitans remained in the East, but had to accept a minor role.⁵⁶ The northern Italians were also becoming more and more important in the kingdom of Sicily at this time. Coins of Genoa were brought to Sicily, and Sicilian taris were used by the Genoese. Although this is not apparent in finds, a trace of it may be seen in the gold coinage issued by Genoa.⁵⁷

Between the Normans and Byzantium lay the Adriatic. Oddly its existence seems to have been little known to Roger II's geographer Idrisi, though it bordered on his master's kingdom. Abruzzo and Molise do not appear in his mid-twelfth century map, which jumps from the Gargano to the Tronto and the Marches.⁵⁸ Adriatic relations were important: Ragusans had many contacts with ports in Apulia such as Molfetta, Monopoli, and Termoli, as well as in the north. In 1171 Ragusa seems even to have placed itself under the protection of King William I of Sicily instead of that of Byzantium, to prevent attacks from Venice.⁵⁹

⁵¹For Amalfitan trade, see Magdalino, "The Byzantine Background," 14; H. Bresc, *I fattori della distribuzione*, in *Storia dell'economia italiana, I. Il medioevo: Dal crollo al trionfo*, ed. R. Romano (Turin, 1990), 171–91, esp. 174; and below, pp. 189–90.

⁵²See Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 217 ff.

⁵³M. Tangheroni, *Commercio e navigazione nel medioevo* (Rome-Bari, 1996), 139. Pisa began the construction of its cathedral in 1064, making good use of the booty taken by sacking the port of Palermo, still in Arab hands.

⁵⁴Magdalino, *The Byzantine Background*, 13, notes that the success of the crusading movement could not have been sustained without *regular* sea communications between Europe and Syria.

⁵⁵V. von Falkenhausen, "Il Ducato di Amalfi e gli Amalfitani fra Bizantini e Normanni," in *Istituzioni civili e organizzazione ecclesiastica nello stato medievale amalfitano*, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Amalfitani, Amalfi, 3–5 luglio 1981 (Amalfi, 1986), 9–31, esp. 30–31, and eadem, "Il commercio di Amalfi con Constantinopoli e il Levante nel secolo XII," in *Amalfi, Genova, Pisa e Venezia. Il commercio con Constantinopoli e il vicino Oriente nel secolo XII*, ed. O. Banti (Pisa, 1998), 19–38.

⁵⁶V. D'Alessandro, "Amalfi in età normanna," in *Istituzioni civili e organizzazione ecclesiastica* (as above, note 55), 33–52.

⁵⁷But the chronology of the first Genoese gold is still debated: cf. L. Travaini, "Genova e i tarì di Sicilia," *RIN* 93 (1991): 187–94; for the use of taris in Genoa, together with bezants of Syria and hyperpera of Constantinople, see Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 225.

⁵⁸For Idrisi's map and treatise, see F. Gabrieli, "Storia, cultura e civiltà degli Arabi in Italia," in *Gli Arabi in Italia*, ed. F. Gabrieli and U. Scerrato (Milan, 1979), 15–269, esp. 188–203.

⁵⁹D. Abulafia, "Dalmatian Ragusa and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily," *SIEERev* 54 (1976): 412–28, repr. in Abulafia, *Italy, Sicily and the Mediterranean, 1100–1400* (London, 1987), X. On Adriatic relations in Norman times, see also idem, "Ancona, Byzantium and the Adriatic, 1155–1173," *PBSR* 52 (1984): 192–216, repr. in Abulafia, *Italy, Sicily and the Mediterranean*, IX; idem, "East and West: Comments on the Commerce of the City of Ancona in the Middle Ages," in *Città e sistema adriatico alla fine del medioevo. Bilancio degli studi e prospettive di ricerca*, ed. M. P. Ghezzi, Convegno di Studi, Padua, 4–5 aprile 1997, Atti e Memorie della Società dalmata

The variety of coins that could be carried across the Adriatic in 1177 is known in one case from the fact that some pirates from Dalmatia attacked a ship sailing north from the kingdom of Sicily to papal territory and robbed the papal legate on board, Raymundus de Capella. A clerk drew up a list of the missing goods, among which were various kinds of coins: Sicilian taris (*tarrenorum regis Siciliae*), *marboti*, *masmutini*, all of them gold coins, and four marks of silver pennies, which included English *sterlingos* and other coins such as *megulienses* (deniers and obols of Melgueil), *provinos* (deniers of Champagne), *puglios* (silver *apulienses* of King William II), and *igeunos*.⁶⁰ As to the *igeunos*, their identification is not certain, but most likely they were French feudal coins, possibly of Dijon, such as the twenty-three specimens found in a hoard from Samos (buried ca. 1182).⁶¹ These do not necessarily represent the circulating medium in the southern Adriatic provinces, but they give an idea of the kind of coins that were used and carried across for trade or taxes, and that could have been exchanged anywhere, at least for their bullion value, against locally accepted coins.⁶² Most of the silver currencies listed in 1177 were in fact currently circulating in southern Italy, especially deniers of Melgueil and Champagne, and show that the crown, while controlling the gold circulation and enforcing the use of Sicilian taris, was not able to ensure that foreign billon coins were always melted in the royal mints. Coins of Melgueil were found in excavations at Otranto and Castelfiorentino.⁶³ Deniers of Champagne are extremely common throughout southern Italy.⁶⁴ Even a few Norman copper coins crossed the Adriatic, for follari of all twelfth-century Norman rulers, mainly from the mint of Messina, have been found in excavations at Corinth and Athens, and even one from Salerno of William I. Whether these had fallen out of the pockets of soldiers, merchants, or pilgrims is impossible to say.⁶⁵ The same is true of Byzantine coins of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries found in southern Apulia, notably at Otranto.⁶⁶

Important examples of cultural and economic exchanges can be seen in works of art in Norman Italy: the Amalfitan Pantaleone Mauro, in the 1070s, was able to finance from

di Storia Patria 26 (Venice, 1997), 47–66. See also J.-M. Martin, “Recherche sur les relations politiques entre l’Italie méridionale et les Balkans pendant le haut moyen âge (VIe–XIIe siècles),” in *I rapporti politici e diplomatici*, Centro di Studi sulla Storia e la Civiltà adriatica, Congressi sulle relazioni tra le due Sponde adriatiche 5 (Rome, 1988), 49–72.

⁶⁰The document is quoted by D. M. Metcalf, *Coinage in South-Eastern Europe 820–1396* (London, 1979), 180; it is published in *Monumenta Ungariae Historica*, ser. *Diplomataria*, vol. 11: *Codex Diplomaticus Arpadianus Continuatus*, ed. G. Wenzel, vol. 6 (890–1235) (Budapest, 1867), nos. 77–78. Further study of this interesting document is needed.

⁶¹See D. M. Metcalf, *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford* (London, 1983), 94, no. 78; I am grateful to Michael Metcalf for suggesting this identification. More difficult would be an identification with deniers of Genoa, although a document of Molfetta of 1138 referring to “octo solidi boni Ian[uinorum]” has been quoted by Martin, *La Pouille*, 457 as a possible sign of the presence of Genoese deniers in Apulia before the official opening of the mint in 1139.

⁶²Foreign coins may have been used in current circulation but often were accepted on only a limited basis, e.g., for paying taxes or other marginal roles; see the essays in Travaini, *Moneta locale, moneta straniera* (as above, note 5).

⁶³*MEC* 14:426, 429.

⁶⁴L. Travaini, “Provisini di Champagne nel regno di Sicilia: Problemi di datazione,” *RN* 154 (1999): 211–29.

⁶⁵Travaini, *La monetazione*, 384.

⁶⁶Travaini, *La monetazione*, 381; Travaglini, “Le monete,” 261, nos. 213–18.

Constantinople the manufacture and shipment of “bronze doors produced by Syrian craftsmen in a workshop in the Byzantine imperial palace for churches throughout central and southern Italy,” at Montecassino, Amalfi, St. Paul’s in Rome, and probably at St. Michael’s on the Gargano.⁶⁷ One should not forget the role of pilgrims, since many crossed the Mediterranean using the same military and trade routes; St. Marina of Scanio, for example, went from Sicily to Jerusalem at least three times.⁶⁸ Very frequent in Campania is “the saint coming from the sea” (or his/her relics)⁶⁹ or brought by sailors or soldiers, for example St. Nicholas, brought to Bari in 1087 from Myra in Anatolia.⁷⁰

In addition to trade, diplomatic exchanges, and wars, which promoted the circulation of money, there is also the phenomenon of gift exchange, by which a number of objects moved from one cultural area to another, often in a situation of “shared culture of objects.”⁷¹ An exchange of gifts that took place in Sicily in November 1190 between the English king Richard Coeur-de-Lion and the Norman Tancred is particularly relevant. Richard, together with Philip II Augustus of France, had stopped in Sicily en route to the Holy Land at the invitation of King William II, who had promised money as well as food and a hundred armed galleys. But by then William was dead, and his successor, King Tancred, was reluctant to fulfill the engagement and to pay the dowry of William II’s widow, Joanna, who was Richard’s sister. Only after Richard attacked Messina did Tancred agree to pay the sum of 20,000 ounces of gold twice over, once as Joanna’s dowry and a second time as a contribution to the crusade. Since one Sicilian ounce was equal to 30 taris, twice the sum of 20,000 ounces would mean that 1,200,000 taris were given by Tancred and sent across the Mediterranean. The agreement was accompanied by an exchange of gifts. Tancred offered many personal gifts, such as gold, clothes, horses, and silks, but Richard accepted only a small ring “in signum mutuae dilectionis” and in return gave him nothing less than Excalibur, “the finest of swords which the British call Excalibur and which was that of Arthur, once a noble king of England” (“gladium illum optimum quem Brittones Caliburne vocant qui fuerat gladius Arturi quondam nobilis regis Angliae”).⁷² Many sources refer to the exchange of gifts (Richard of San Germano, Pietro da Eboli, the *Annales Morbacenses*⁷³), but only Roger of Hoveden mentions Excalibur.

⁶⁷Magdalino, “The Byzantine Background,” 15; M. E. Frazer, “Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise: Byzantine Bronze Doors in Italy,” *DOP* 27 (1973): 147–62; von Falkenhausen, “Il commercio di Amalfi,” 20–21; M. V. Marini Clarelli, “Pantaleone d’Amalfi e le porte bizantine in Italia meridionale,” in *Arte profana e arte sacra a Bisanzio*, ed. A. Iacobini and E. Zanini (Rome, 1995), 643–50; see also essays in *Le porte di bronzo dall’antichità al secolo XIII*, ed. S. Salomi (Rome, 1990), 310–13. But not all commissioned works of art remained at their intended destination; looting clearly played an important role in wars, and thus art objects as well as coins and jewels often changed hands and countries. See A. Cutler, “From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artefacts, ca. 1200–1750,” *DOP* 49 (1995): 237–67.

⁶⁸M. Stelladoro, “Agiografia e agiologia nel *BIOΣ* di S. Marina di Scanio (BHG 1170),” *JÖB* 48 (1998): 57–66.

⁶⁹A. Vuolo, “La nave dei santi,” in *Pellegrinaggi e itinerari dei santi nel Mezzogiorno medievale*, ed. G. Vitolo (Naples, 1999), 57–66.

⁷⁰See P. Geary, *Furta sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1978).

⁷¹O. Grabar, “The Shared Culture of Objects,” in Maguire, *Byzantine Court Culture* (as above, note 42), 115–29.

⁷²Roger of Hoveden: *Ex Rogeri de Hoveden Chronica*, ed. F. Liebermann and R. Pauli, MGH, SS, vol. 26 (Hannover, 1885), 133–83, esp. 153.

⁷³Riccardo di San Germano, *Chronica*, ed. C. A. Garufi, RIS, n.s., 7 (Bologna, 1937–38), 10; Petri Ansolini de Ebulo, *De rebus siculis carmen*, ed. E. Rota, RIS, n.s., 31, pt. 1 (Città di Castello, 1904), xxxiv, verses

The presumed bones of King Arthur had just been discovered at Glastonbury in about 1190. But if the mythical sword then recovered was in Richard's hands on his way to the Holy Land, it was indeed a most extraordinary gift, unless of course Richard was palming off on Tancred another sword of the same name.⁷⁴ Swords were important to medieval kings, but two more Sicilian examples point to a possible Sicilian peculiarity. According to Gervase of Tilbury, Roger II inscribed his sword with triumphal words: "rex Rogerius in gladio suo inscribi iussit istud triumphale ac apoforeticum: Appulus et Calaber, Siculus michi servit et affer."⁷⁵ In 1398 the Aragonese king Martin the Humane wrote secretly from Avignon asking his son in Sicily to send him the sword of Emperor Constantine, kept in the royal palace at Palermo;⁷⁶ we do not know whether the sword was sent or not, but future research on sword exchanges will be welcome.

Monetary exchanges with the Islamic world are largely known thanks to the Geniza documents. We have already seen how African merchants coming to Sicily had to change their gold coins into local taris. Sicilian taris have only occasionally been found in the Latin East, but we know that they were commonly used by the Geniza merchants.⁷⁷ The Normans held Ifriqiya for some years in the mid-twelfth century and issued full dinars there, but these, though of better gold, seem to have had only a limited circulation and possibly were only ceremonial.⁷⁸ The taris on the other hand were well-established coins, and some Geniza documents specify their type, such as "Rum quarters, arranged in three lines, good ones, weighing 100 mithqals of full weight and worth 58 Egyptian dinars."⁷⁹ A sale of pepper in al-Mahdiyya was paid half in Sicilian taris and half in Pisan currency, with an agio paid for the exchange.⁸⁰ The variety of actors in the Mediterranean economic world can be indicated by a few examples of sea-loans written in Judeo-Arabic

1061–64, p. 142; *Annales Morbacenses*, ed. R. Wilmans, MGH, SS, vol. 17 (Hannover, 1861), 142–80, esp. 164 ("Tancradus . . . plurima dona auri et argenti, frumenti et vini sibi misit, ne aliam partem Scylicie destrueret").

⁷⁴I first found a reference to the gift of Excalibur in the essay by S. Tramontana, "La monarchia normanna e sveva," in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 3, *Il Mezzogiorno dai bizantini a Federico II* (Turin, 1983), 437–810, esp. 651. No other historian so far, to my knowledge, has written about this extraordinary gift. I am grateful to Donald Matthew for discussing some of the aspects of the story and for references on Richard Coeur-de-Lion.

⁷⁵*E Gervasi Tillberiensis Otis Imperialibus*, MGH, SS, vol. 27 (Hannover, 1885), 359–94, esp. 381.

⁷⁶S. Fodale, "Le reliquie di Re Martino," in *Aspetti e momenti di storia della Sicilia (secc. XI–XIX). Studi in memoria di Alberto Boscolo* (Palermo, 1989), 121–35; I am most grateful to Salvatore Fodale for this reference.

⁷⁷"During most of the 11th century, the Italian city-states, with the exception of Venice, Lucca, Salerno and Amalfi, were still beyond the horizon of the Geniza papers. . . . The struggle for Sicily and Southern Italy, in which Byzantines, Muslims, local Italians, and Normans took part, as well as the successful attacks of the two latter on various points of the North African coast, is copiously reflected in the Geniza": S. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Community as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 1, *Economic Foundations* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1967), 40.

⁷⁸Travaini, *La monetazione*, 66–67; J. Johns, "Malik Ifriqiya: The Norman Kingdom of Africa and the Fatimids," *Libyan Studies* 18 (1987): 89–101; idem, "The Norman Kings of Sicily and the Fatimid Caliphate," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 15, Proceedings of 15th Battle Conference and of the XI Colloquio Medievale of the Officina di Studi Medievali, ed. M. Chibnall (Woodbridge, 1992), 133–59; D. Abulafia, "The Norman Kingdom of Africa and the Norman Expeditions to Majorca and the Muslim Mediterranean," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 7, Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1984 (Woodbridge, 1985), 26–49: a Norman trace in Majorca can be seen in the find of a billon kharruba (dirham fraction): Travaini, *La monetazione*, 191, and M. Barcelò, "El fals normand de Sicilia trobat al castell de Santueri (Felinitx-Mallorca)," in *Symposium Numismatico de Barcelona*, 2, Societat Catalana d'Estudis Numismatics-Associacion Numismatica Espanola (Barcelona, 1979), 356–37.

⁷⁹Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 237.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 44.

involving Jewish and Muslim merchants as well as Latin operators in Sicily and throughout the Arabic-speaking Mediterranean.⁸¹ A newly published document from Cefalu mentions a Latin investor named Ser William lending various sums to Sicilian Muslims, in three different contracts: the sums of money involved are mostly taris, but also 13 new *mu'mini* dinars (i.e., dinars struck in the name of the Almohad sultan 'Abd al-Mu'min, 1130–63).⁸² In spite of the gold coins involved, the loans are reckoned in pounds of silver with repayment fixed in Sicilian taris at extremely high interest: taris are specified to be “of the weight of Sicily,” “of Cefalu,” or “of Messina,” formulas commonly found in Norman Sicily. These formulas probably referred to the need to have the final sums verified by official authorities with official weights and balances.⁸³ Ser William, who was probably a Genoese, is another clear example of the economic interconnections of Norman Sicily.

Not many finds of Sicilian coins are recorded in the Islamic world or the Latin East, but a few copper coins of William I and William II have been found in Aleppo, Caesarea Maritima, and Tyre. These finds may demonstrate a link between Norman Sicily and the Seljuk Turks.⁸⁴ During the reign of William II local billon coins had been debased and scarce, and silver deniers from the north, particularly provisini of Champagne, which we have seen in 1177 among the coins stolen from Raymundus de Capella by Adriatic pirates, became increasingly common. At the same time copper coins, possibly more in south Italy than Sicily, became almost worthless because of inflation, and their production was reduced.⁸⁵ In the 1180s, however, William II introduced in Sicily a large copper coin without a legend and showing a lion's head and palm tree.⁸⁶ The new large copper denomination was probably introduced as an attempt to cope with inflation and the silver shortage. A remote predecessor was the Augustan monetary reform, when the small silver sestertius was replaced by the large sestertius of base metal. But William II's copper coin has a much closer link with the large copper dirhams of contemporary Turkoman states of Syria, for the name of dirham inscribed on some of them reflects their silver origin. Some of William's large follari have been found in the East, and a few specimens of the Turkoman copper dirhams were found in Sicily; these may be traces of a link that should be investigated.⁸⁷ The introduction of large copper coins was, however, an ephemeral phenomenon, and copper coins were eventually to disappear, with billon coins taking their place. The Sicilian taris, on the contrary, remained very popular, and increasingly so in the north of Italy. In 1231 Frederick II issued the *augustalis*, but taris remained in

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 256; Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 247–48.

⁸² J. Johns, “Arabic Contracts of Sea-Exchange from Norman Sicily,” in *Karissime Gotifride. Historical Essays Presented to Gotfrey Wetinger on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. P. Xuereb (Malta, 1999), 55–78.

⁸³ Johns, “Arabic Contracts,” 61; Travaini, *La monetazione*, 63.

⁸⁴ Travaini, *La monetazione*, 383–84; L. Travaini, “The Monetary Reforms of King William II (1166–1189): Oriental and Western Patterns in Norman Sicilian Coinage,” *SM* 46 (1996): 109–23.

⁸⁵ For the coinage of William II, see *MEC* 14:132–36.

⁸⁶ Since Roger II had introduced small follari in the kingdom, the coin has sometimes been attributed to Roger II before 1140, because such a large copper coin seemed incompatible with the coins of a later period. But now it is better regarded as a multiple of the smaller coin, its sixth, which bears the same lion's head but also the Arabic legend, “King William the Second.” For previous attribution to Roger II, see bibliography in Travaini, *La monetazione*, 319.

⁸⁷ *MEC* 14:135, with bibliography.

use, as they continued to be issued in Sicily under the Hohenstaufen and by Charles of Anjou until 1278, mixing deformed Arabic signs with the Greek legend IC XC NI KA.⁸⁸

The fame of the Byzantine and Islamic gold coins remained alive, but in Italy it was fame more than real use. In the 1240s a Sicilian lady might still pretend, in verse, to be worth “perperi” and “massamutini,” but her hand is won by a young man who owns real augustales, as recorded in *Cielo* (Michele?) of Alcamo’s *Contrasto*, written in Sicily, between 1232 and 1250:⁸⁹

Woman . . . if my father and other relations find you . . .

Man If your father finds me, what can he do against me?
I will pay a deposit to the emperor of two thousand agostari;
your father will not touch me for all the riches of Bari.
Long live the emperor, thanks be to God,
do you understand, my beauty, what I am saying to you?

Woman You pester me from morning to night:
I am a woman worth perperi and auro massamutino;
if you’d give me all the riches of Saladin,
and moreover those of the Sultan,
you still could not touch my hand.

Man Many are the women who are obstinate . . .

“Perperi” and “massamutini” might have been used as international currency, but they are not found in Sicilian hoards. Until the end of Charles I’s reign, Sicilian gold is the only kind hoarded in the kingdom; florins are to be found only later.⁹⁰

TRACES OF BYZANTINE COINS IN ITALY IN THE TRECENTO

In general terms the major legacy of Byzantium and the Islamic world in Italy was the continued existence of a complex monetary system, with the use of gold never being abandoned in south Italy and Sicily. There was also a legacy in mint organization and technology, though it is difficult to say anything precise about it. A certain connection to

⁸⁸MEC 14:152 ff. For the role of taris in the second half of the 13th century, see L. Travaini, “Federico II mutator monetarum: Continuità e innovazione nella politica monetaria (1220–1250),” in *Friedrich II. Tagung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom im Gedenkjahr 1994*, ed. A. Esch and N. Kamp, Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom 85 (Tübingen, 1996), 339–62.

⁸⁹ *Donna*: . . . se ti ci trova pàremo cogli altri miei parenti . . .

Uomo: Se i tuoi parenti trovannì, e che mi pozon fari?
Una difensa mettoci di dumilia agostari;
non mi toccàra patreto per quanto avere à ‘m Bari.
Viva lo ‘mperadore, grazi’ a Deo!
Intendi, bella, quel che ti dico eo?

Donna: Tu me no’ llasci viveri né sera né maitino:
donna mi son di perperi, d’auro massamotino;
se tanto aver donassemi, quant’ à lo Saladino,
e per ajunta quant’ à lo Soldano,
tocchème non potteri la mano.

Uomo: Molte sono le femine c’anno dura la testa . . .

⁹⁰Travaini, “Romesinas, provesini, turonenses,” 113–33.

the Islamic world is the origin of the Italian word *zecca* for mint, from the Arabic *sikka*, a term that entered the Italian language from the high quality of mint organization in the Regno, mediated from Arabic Sicily to central and north Italy via the Norman and Hohenstaufen tradition.⁹¹

In conclusion, I would like to discuss the traces of some mysterious Byzantine coins in thirteenth-century Italy, the *santalene* of gold or silver mentioned in a number of coin lists of ca. 1300, and also by Dante Alighieri in the *Convivio* written in 1304–7 (IV, 11.8):⁹² “buried riches, which are discovered or rediscovered, present themselves more frequently to the bad than to the good, and this is so obvious that it does not need proof. Indeed, I have seen the spot, in the side of a mountain in Tuscany named Falterona, where the meanest peasant of all the countryside, when digging, found more than a bushel of Santalenas of the finest silver, which had been waiting for him perhaps over two thousand years.” These coins have generally been regarded as old Byzantine coins, with the name “Sante elene” referring to St. Helena,⁹³ though she lived much less than two thousand years from Dante’s time. Some coin lists mention *santelene* of gold and of silver, and give their fineness, but so far no serious numismatic effort has been made to identify them. Coin lists of around 1300 refer to them as “vecchie” (“old”) and list them separately from the contemporary Byzantine perperi: (a) gold *sante Alene vecchie* “at 24 carats less $\frac{1}{3}$ ” and also silver *santa lena dagiento* “at 12 ounces less $\frac{1}{3}$ ” (Columbia University, ms. X511 Al 13);⁹⁴ (b) “sant’ Alene d’oro vecchie xxiiii meno $\frac{1}{4}$ ” (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, codex ital. Cl.XI, no. 98, fol. 22r, 1305);⁹⁵ (c) “sant’alene d’oro col taglo grosso a ka. xxiii e $\frac{1}{4}$ ” (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Racc. Tordi no. 139, codex Acciajoli, ca. 1311–15). They are not mentioned in later lists.

Their design must have had some connection with St. Helena, implying a female holding a cross, and possibly some connection with Constantine. The coin must also have been present in Italian finds, possibly until the thirteenth century given their presence

⁹¹L. Travaini, “Zecca,” in *Enciclopedia dell’arte medievale*, Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana 11 (Rome, 2000), 844–47; eadem, “Mint Organisation in Italy between the Twelfth and the Fourteenth Centuries: A Survey,” in *Later Medieval Mints: Organisation, Administration and Techniques. The Eighth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*, ed. N. J. Mayhew and P. Spufford, BAR International Series 389 (Oxford, 1988), 39–60; L. Travaini, “Zecche, monete e tesori per la storia della Sicilia araba e normanna,” *ASiSic*, 4th ser., 24.1 (1998): 35–60. The diffusion of the term *zecca* outside the Regno is still to be investigated, but such studies can bear interesting fruits. See the example of H. and R. Kahane, “The Western Impact on Byzantium: The Linguistic Evidence,” *DOP* 36 (1982): 127–53: most of the Italianisms are to be dated not earlier than the 13th century.

⁹²“Veramente io vidi lo luogo, ne le coste d’un monte che si chiama Falterona, in Toscana, dove lo più vile villano di tutta la contrada, zappando, più d’uno stajo di santalene d’argento finissimo vi trovò, che forse più di dumilia anni l’avevano aspettato.” For the English translation, see *Dante’s Convivio*, trans. W. Waldron-Jackson (Oxford, 1909), 230–31, who translated Dante’s “più di dumilia anni” as “a thousand years or more.” For the reference to the English translation I am grateful to Nora Berend.

⁹³Most recently F. Melis, “Santalena,” in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, vol. 5 (Rome, 1976), 10. Not directly concerned with our topic, but of general interest is A. Carile, “Dante e Bisanzio,” *StMed*, 3d ser., 40 (1999): 535–58.

⁹⁴This mathematical book was edited without any numismatic comment: *Ein Italienisches Rechenbuch aus dem 14. Jahrhundert*, ed. K. Vogel, Veröffentlichungen des Forschungsinstituts des Deutschen Museums für die Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik, Reihe C, Quellentexte und Übersetzungen 33 (Munich, 1977); I am currently studying the section related to the coin list and hope to publish it soon.

⁹⁵This manuscript and the following one are still unpublished, but are being studied by R.-H. Bautier, who kindly gave references from them to Philip Grierson via Cécile Morrisson; to all of them I am most grateful.

in the merchants' lists and in Dante. The latest Byzantine gold coins recorded in Italian finds so far are ones of Basil II and Constantine VIII, from three hoards: (1) the Ortona hoard, from northern Apulia: one histamenon of Basil II and Constantine VIII with 147 taris of Amalfi and Salerno, deposited ca. 1025;⁹⁶ (2) the Rome (Torre delle Milizie) hoard, one histamenon of Basil II and Constantine VIII with 1,370 billon denari of Lucca, Pavia, and Provins in Champagne, deposited ca. 1185;⁹⁷ (3) the Pisa (Logge dei Banchi) hoard, one histamenon of Basil II and Constantine VIII with 119 Hohenstaufen taris, 16 augustali, and 1 half-augustale of Frederick II, 91 gold florins, and 1 gold "grosso" of Lucca, deposited ca. 1266.⁹⁸ I previously suggested that the presence of single specimens of the histamenon of Basil II and Constantine VIII in these hoards was due to debasement of later issues; they were thus probably the last good ones to be hoarded. I no longer favor this view, and I am inclined to accept that these coins had an added religious/magical value.

The Pisa hoard is the nearest to Dante, who was born in 1265. The specimen in the Pisa hoard⁹⁹ belongs to type 6 of the classification in *DOC* 3, as does the specimen in the Ortona hoard.¹⁰⁰ I have not been able to check the one in the Rome hoard. The coins have on the obverse a bust of Christ, with two crescents in the upper quarters of the nimbus cross, and the legend +IHSXISREXR̅E̅GNANTIM; on the reverse there are two busts holding a simple cross, with a suspended cross above Basil's head, and the legend +BASILICCOMSTATI b R . The reverse may well have been taken as a reference to Constantine the Great and his mother St. Helena, given that the junior bust might have been taken as a female bust by thirteenth-century Italians. We know that "histamena of this class are extremely common, and their issue forms a landmark in the history of Byzantine gold coinage" (*DOC* 3.2: 607–8). Grierson has also pointed out that the two crescents in the nimbus cross were "popularly supposed to represent the sun and the moon, thus giving rise to the name *helioselenata*" for coins of this class, a term known from two references in documents from Mount Athos, one of 1030 and the other of 1034, and from a bronze weight bearing the inscription "This is a helioselenaton: a lighter than this is not valid" (*DOC* 3.1: 57).

Although no Italian document of the eleventh century refers to *helioselenata*, the Italians may have used the term, and in the course of time something like *selenata* might have been attached to St. Helena, thus becoming *santalena*. We cannot prove that the term *santalene* derives from *helioselenata*, but the link between this class of histamena and St. Helena is very likely. Thus the gold *santalene* would be the class 6 histamena of Basil II and Constantine and the silver *santalene* possibly coins of Basil II and Constantine as well, although for these we have no find evidence. According to the analyses carried out at the Centre Babelon, the gold content of the class 6 histamena is ca. 23 carats, while the lists give gold *santalene* as 24 carats less $\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$,¹⁰¹ higher, but not impossible; even

⁹⁶Gurnet, "Le trésor d'Ortona," 155–71.

⁹⁷E. Dupré-Théseider, "Il tesoretto medievale della Torre delle Milizie," *BullComm* 60 (1933): 249–52.

⁹⁸L. Lenzi, *Il ripostiglio di monete auree scoperto in Pisa sotto le logge dei Banchi* (Pisa, 1978).

⁹⁹Ibid., no. 1, weighing 4.40 g.

¹⁰⁰Gurnet, "Le trésor d'Ortona," no. 1, weighing 4.38 g, but worn.

¹⁰¹Morrisson et al., *Lor monnayé*, 216–17.

the Sicilian tari, known from our records to be 16 carats and $\frac{1}{3}$ fine, is given as 16 and $\frac{2}{3}$ carats in later lists.¹⁰² We should also note that the Florence manuscript describes “sant’alene d’oro col taglo grosso” (“large cut”), which most likely refers to the large diameter of these coins.

The identity of the silver *santalena* is more debatable since we have no Italian finds at all. The fineness of 12 ounces less $\frac{1}{3}$ given by the lists corresponds to 95 percent silver, and the silver content of Basil II and Constantine’s *miliaresia* bearing two busts is between 90 percent and 97 percent.¹⁰³ But the two figures holding a cross, and the name of *basileus Constantinus*, even if he was not “the Great,” to be read on the coin—assuming it was read at all—must have resulted in the identification. Whether such coins could have been still around because of the good quality of their gold or silver or because they were very early associated with the cult of the Cross and St. Helena is, of course, debatable. But the fact that the three gold specimens so far known from Italian hoards are each present in a single specimen suggests a reason other than a monetary one for their survival. V. Laurent, T. Bertelé, and most recently H. Maguire, have noted the letter written by Michael Italikos in the mid-twelfth century celebrating the prophylactic virtues of a gold coin bearing images of Christ and Constantine and Helena.¹⁰⁴ Michael Italikos was a literate and cultivated member of Byzantine society but was not able to read the Latin coin legend around the image of Christ; he thus confused the images of two emperors holding a cross with those of Constantine and Helena, given the fact that no gold coins had been issued with the joint images of the latter.¹⁰⁵ The need of prophylactic icons was strong, and if Italikos was capable of such an interpretation, the more so for medieval Italians. We should remember how important the cult of the Cross was in medieval Italy as well as in Europe, with a strong revival in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in connection with the crusades and increased pilgrimages.¹⁰⁶ Coins were thus also icons and magical objects, a field of research in need of more collaboration among numismatists and historians in various fields.¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰³T. Bertelé, *Numismatique byzantine*, ed. C. Morisson (Wetteren, 1978), 64–65, corresponding to types 17, 18, and 20 of *DOC* 3 (2:628–32).

¹⁰⁴V. Laurent, “Numismatique et folklore dans la tradition byzantine,” *CNA* 119/20 (1940): 3–16; T. Bertelé, “Costantino il Grande e S. Elena su alcune monete bizantine,” *Numismatica* 14 (1948): 106; H. Maguire, “Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1037–54, esp. 1044 for the letter by Michael Italikos, which was also commented on by the two previous authors. See also A. Linder, “The Myth of Constantine the Great in the West: Sources and Hagiographic Commemoration,” *StMed*, 3d ser., 16 (1975): 43–95.

¹⁰⁵Bertelé, “Costantino il Grande e S. Elena,” 92, with transcription of the letter. For coins bearing an image of Constantine, with or without Helena, see *DOC* 5.1:78; all such coins are later than Italikos’ letter, and therefore the coin he referred to must have been an older Byzantine coin.

¹⁰⁶G. Vitolo, “Santità, culti e strutture socio-politiche,” in idem, *Pellegrinaggi e itinerari dei santi*, 23–38.

¹⁰⁷I presented some of these topics in a lecture, “Moneta e riti nel medioevo,” during a seminar for the Dottorato in Agiografia of the Università degli Studi di Roma “Tor Vergata.” I am most grateful to Sofia Boesch, Francesco Scorza Barcellona, and Vera von Falkenhausen for their comments and suggestions.

¹⁰²L. Travaini, “The Fineness of Sicilian Taris.”