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***Saints and Sinners: Coins in Medieval Italian Graves\****

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"... but here we are touching on a very obscure past, and we shall have to resign ourselves in advance to giving considerable place to hypotheses. The historian may legitimately make use of them, provided he does not put them forward as certainties".

March Bloch, *The Royal Touch* (p. 12)

*Introduction*

When discussing coin finds in Italian graves it is best to study the phenomenon across the entire medieval period, from the sixth to the fifteenth century. Only by comparing poorly documented periods with those for which the written evidence is more plentiful is it possible to appreciate continuities and disjunctures over time. It is also helpful to consider coins in graves in the wider context of the ritual use of coins. Few coins are found in ancient and early medieval graves compared to other artefacts. In the later middle ages, when graves did not normally contain grave-goods, an occasional coin is the only object that may have caused that grave to be recorded.

This paper will discuss grave finds of coins from different periods, but will make no attempt to give a full inventory of coins found in graves in medieval Italy. It will simply examine a number of cases and offer some tentative interpretations and also refer to non-Italian examples. Coins in graves are considered as "normal" by most archaeologists and numismatists, both for the middle ages and later periods. Folk-stories tell us about "dead man's treasures" and these are indeed found ecclesiastical and social historians have not yet taken these matters sufficiently into account.

There is also the question of the relationship between coins in graves and Christianity. From the beginning of the period under examination Christianity, albeit in a form perhaps best described as "immature", was already established in Italy, so what links can be made between religious belief and a coin in a grave? Coins in medieval graves have often been explained as a more or less conscious continuation of "Charon's obol": the traditional fee for the ferryman Charon who carried the souls of the dead across the river Styx. Even in Greek and Roman contexts, however, the term has been too loosely applied. It is only when one coin is found in the mouth that we are entitled to refer to it as a Charon's obol<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore best to abandon this idea and consider coins in medieval graves within a wider framework. Coins in graves have been interpreted as offerings of the dead to the gods, offerings of the living to the dead<sup>2</sup>, as a gift to the deceased to use in the

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\*This is a revised and much updated version of the paper read at the Third Cambridge Numismatic Symposium, dedicated to "Gods, Graves and Numismatics", 12-13 March 1999, organized by Mark Blackburn. I am very grateful to Giulia Barone and Neil Christie for reading a draft and for offering valuable comments. After the Cambridge symposium I discussed some aspects of my paper in a seminar on "Moneta e riti nel medioevo" for the Dottorato in Agiografia of the Università degli Studi di Roma "Tor Vergata", and I wish to express my warmest thanks to Sofia Boesch Gajano and Francesco Sforza Barcellona for their attention and advice. I am also most grateful to the anonymous referee who spent much time improving my text with valuable comments and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> S.T. Stevens, 'Charon's obol and other coins in ancient funerary practice', *Phoenix* 45 (1991), pp. 215-29 (I am most grateful to Professor Donald T. Ariel for this reference); G.E. Thüry, 'Charon und die Funktionen der Münzen in römischen Gräbern der Kaiserzeit', in *Trouvailles monétaires de tombes*, Actes du dixième colloque international du Groupe Suisse pour l'étude des trouvailles monétaires (Neuchâtel, 3-4 mars 1995), eds O.F. Dubuis, S. Frey-Kupper and G. Perret (Lausanne, 1999), pp. 17-30. for grave coins in Hellenistic Crete: M.I. Stefanakis, 'An inexpensive ride? A contribution to death-coin rites in Hellenistic Crete', *QT* 31 (2002), pp. 171-89. The first Italian study to stress the presence of coins in 'Christian' (i.e. medieval) graves seen as possible 'Charon's obol' was C. D'Angela, 'L'Obolo a Caronte. Usi funerari medievali tra paganesimo e Cristianesimo', *Quaderni medievali* 15 (1983), pp. 82-91. The so-called Charon's obol has been discussed in two symposia both held in 1995. The first was held at Salerno in February 1995, and published as *Caronte. Un obolo per l'aldilà*, ed. R. Cantilena, *La Parola del Passato*, 50, nos 3-6 (1995): in this volume medieval graves are discussed by P. Peduto, 'Osservazioni sul rito in epoca medievale', pp. 311-18, and C. D'Angela, 'Contesti tombali tardoantichi e altomedievali', pp. 319-26. The second was published as *Trouvailles monétaires de tombes*.

<sup>2</sup> Stevens, "Charon's obol", p. 229.

afterlife, as symbolic dowries constituting “a *pars pro toto* which transferred the belongings of the dead to the bereaved without having to offer a large number of graves gifts” and also as a means to avoid haunting<sup>3</sup>.

Most of the literature on the topic deals with early medieval graves, due to the greater interest of archaeologists in the documentary value of grave-goods, as against the virtual lack of grave-goods in later periods<sup>4</sup>. Later medieval graves need more attention. The study of the late Italian middle ages is either blessed or cursed, depending on one’s view, by the quantity of written records. Because of the wealth of documentary evidence, historians of the period have tended to neglect non-literary evidence and the often different story it has to tell. Coins in saints’ graves, for example, are by no means rare but they have hardly been noticed by modern church historians<sup>5</sup>. Later medieval graves have sometimes only been recorded because one or two coins were found with the remains. This superficiality precludes statistical analyses<sup>6</sup>. Although it was often not even noted whether the body was that of a man or a woman, the issue of gender may be important. In early medieval graves coins are more often associated with women and children, and this has also been noted in antiquity in some areas<sup>7</sup>. Does the presence of these coins show women as more superstitious than men? Did they invoke magic more? This is certainly suggested by St John Chrysostom’s specific condemnation of women’s use of magic in the fourth century<sup>8</sup>.

There are five main questions that need to be addressed in connection with coins in medieval Italian graves:

1. Why were coins deposited with ordinary people?
2. Why were coins deposited with saints and with other important people?
3. Why were coins *not* deposited in many or most graves?
4. Was there a difference between early medieval and later medieval graves? If so, why?
5. How were the coins deposited in graves selected? Were they currently circulating coins or not? If not how far removed in time and place?

In discussing these questions, I will focus on two main hypotheses:

- 1) coins offered as tokens of memory;
- 2) coins as a sin or as a possible danger for the soul.

We must be aware of two important issues. First, we do not know how common the phenomenon of coins in graves within a given population or region was. We only have some figures for early medieval cemeteries in which probably 5% of graves included a coin. Second, a distinction must be

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<sup>3</sup> K. Grindler-Hansen, “Charon’s fee in Ancient Greece? Some remarks on a well-known death rite”, *Acta Hyperborea*, 3 (1991), pp. 207-18, at pp. 213-16.

<sup>4</sup> For comments on the rarity on good excavations of the late medieval cemeteries in Italy see the survey by H. Blake, “Sepulture”, *Archeologia Medievale* 10 (1983), pp. 175-97, though he does not mention coins. Given the cost of archaeological excavations, and the number of important archaeological sites in Italy, it is easy to see why there is less interest in excavating a late medieval cemetery containing just human bones and no grave-goods (but see below n. 87 for one remarkable exception at San Vito di Calci). For coins in early medieval graves outside Italy see S. Suchodolski, “Le début de l’obole des défunts en Europe centrale au haut Moyen Age”, in *Homenatge al Dr. Leandre Villaronga Acta Numismatica* 21-23 (1991-3), pp. 347-54, and id., “Absence of mind or magic? A few remarks on the so called small or single coin finds”, *QT* 25 (1996), pp. 317-27. Coins in graves have also been discussed in the literature of folklore. See *Münzen in Brauch und Aberglauben. Schmuck und Dekor “Votiv und Amulett” Politische un religiöse Selbstdarstellung* (Mainz, 1982), pp. 94-105. For coins in German graves over the period 750-1815, see W. Hävernack, “Münzen als Grabbeigaben 750-1815”, *HBN* 27/29 (1973-75), pp. 27-51.

<sup>5</sup> A. Saccocci, “Ritrovamenti monetali in tombe di santi nell’Italia centro-settentrionale (VI-XV)”, in *Trouvailles monétaires de tombs* (n. 1), pp. 82-96, is a pioneering survey of coins in saints’ graves, mainly based on evidence from the Veneto area.

<sup>6</sup> For general comments on anthropological studies in Italy, or rather the lack of them, see the survey by M. Ginatempo, “Corpi e uomini tra scienza e storia: studi di osteo-archeologia umana per l’Italia medievale”, *Archeologia Medievale* 15 (1988), pp. 7-64.

<sup>7</sup> Grindler-Hansen, “Charon’s fee in Ancient Greece?” (n. 3), pp. 210-11. Gender was also discussed in the papers read by Mark Blackburn and Tukka Talvio to the Cambridge Symposium in 1999.

<sup>8</sup> H. Maguire, “Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages”, *Speculum* 73 (1997), pp. 1037-54, at p. 1038.

made between the presence of one, or just a few, low-value coins and the inclusion of a parcel, a so-called “dead-man’s treasures”. Not only are these separate phenomena but there is also the question of the Church’s teaching, particularly if the coins were of high value.

### *The Early Middle Ages (Sixth to Ninth Centuries)*

There are number of excavation reports and some good regional surveys for the early middle ages. Coins were deposited in late Roman, Ostrogothic and Lombardic, as well as Byzantine Italian graves<sup>9</sup>. During the course of the eighth century grave goods gradually disappeared from cemeteries as the deceased came to be buried with just a shroud, although, occasional deposits of coins persists<sup>10</sup>.

Extensive research on early medieval graves has proved that we can no longer simply associate the presence of grave-goods with pagan/Germanic peoples or their absence with Christians, and the same applies to coins<sup>11</sup>. It has been assumed that Lombards and other Germanic populations derived the practice of depositing coins in graves from the Romans, dropping it gradually with the diffusion of Christianity yet the practice remained common among Christians<sup>12</sup>. The graves at Nocera Umbra (Umbria, near Perugia) have more coins than those at Castel Trosino (Marche, near Ascoli Piceno), a site that is supposedly more indigenous in character and is more closely tied to the Byzantine world, but there are coins in graves in the cemetery of Cornus in Sardinia and in Sicilian graves of the ninth century<sup>13</sup>. We therefore cannot generalise.

Coins in graves have been used to date other grave-goods, sometimes without due caution, and certainly without considering the reason for their presence. For the Lombards, Neil Christie states that the “general lack of coin evidence in graves means that the chronological context for many of the invisible changes is not secure”<sup>14</sup>. A coin in a grave can only provide a *terminus post quem*. The selection of coins for depositing in graves may sometimes have depended on iconography or other reasons<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See S. Uggeri Patitucci, “Indicazione numismatiche convergenti per la datazione delle ceramiche del nono secolo in Sicilia”, *Archeologia Medievale* 2 (1975), pp. 462-7. For the Byzantine world there is a good survey by E.A. Ivison, *Mortuary Practices in Byzantium, c.950-1453: An Archeological Contribution* (unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Birmingham University, 1993). I owe this reference to Philip Grierson. According to Ivison the distribution of coins is uneven, with worn and low-value coins, and sometimes ancient Roman and even Greek coins, appearing in both modest and richly built graves. The coins therefore have no value in terms of wealth, but are considered as probable apotropaic charms, some possibly chosen for their Christian iconography. (See Ivison chap. 13).

<sup>10</sup> See the example of Piedmont, in A. Crosetto, “Sepolture e usi funerari medievali”, *Archeologia in Piemonte*, vol. III, *Il Medioevo*, eds. L. Mercado and E. Micheletto (Turin, 1998), pp. 209-32: grave-goods here disappear in the eighth century but the body is dressed in rich clothing (p. 218).

<sup>11</sup> One of the first analyses of such finds in an archaeological context in Italy is by C. Amante Simoni, “sepoltura e moneta: obolo viatico-obolo offerta”, in *Le sepolture in Sardegna dal IV al VII secolo* (IV Convegno sull’archeologia tardoromana e medievale, Cuglieri 27-28 giugno 1987) (Oristano 1990), pp. 231-42. She makes a plausible distinction between pierced coins, used for ornament, and unpierced ones, and considers only the latter to have been deposited as a ritual offering. For a different opinion, see D’Angela, “Contesti tombali” (n. 1), p. 321.

<sup>12</sup> N. Christie, *The Lombards* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 128-9; Blake, “Sepolture” (n. 4), p. 176, and C. La Rocca, “Morte e società. Studi recenti sulle necropoli altomedievali”, *Quaderni medievali* 26 (1988), pp. 236-45.

<sup>13</sup> For Cornus, see Amante Simoni, “Sepolture e moneta”, p. 240. For the Sicilian graves, see Uggeri Patitucci, “Indicazioni numismatiche” (n. 9), pp.462-7. There are coins in graves at Trezzo sull’Adda but not at Calvisano. For the absence of coins in graves at Calvisano, see P. M. De Marchi, “Calvisano e la necropoli d’ambito longobardo in località Santi di Sopra. La pianura tra Oglio, Mella e Chiese nell’altomedioevo”, in *L’Italia centrosettentrionale in età longobarda*, Atti del Convegno, Ascoli Piceno, 6-7 ottobre 1995, ed. L. Paroli (Firenze 1997), pp. 377-411, at p. 405. Nocera Umbra, Castel Trosino and Trezzo are discussed below.

<sup>14</sup> Christie, *The Lombards*, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> For selection based on iconography in Byzantine contexts, see Ivison (n. 9); in a Siculo-Punic context, see S. Frey-Kupper, “La nécropole de *Lilybeum* (Marsala) en Sicile: hasard ou exception?”, in *Trouvailles monétaires de tombes* (n.1), pp. 31-41; and in a Roman context, see C. Perassi, “Monete nelle tombe di età romana imperiale: casi di scelta intenzionale sulla base dei soggetti e delle scritte?”, in *ibid.* pp. 43-69. Some coins were thought to have magic powers. A Greek twelfth century text claims that a gold coin of Constantine the Great was effective against all evils. Maguire, “Magic and Money” (n.8), pp. 1044-5. The coin described was not one of Constantine the Great and St Helena, but more likely one of Basil II and Constantine VIII (L. Travaini, “La terza faccia della moneta. Note per lo studio dell’iconografia monetale medievale”, *Quaderni medievali*, 52, (2001), pp. 107-24, at 121-2; Id., “The Normans between Byzantium and the Islamic World”, *DOP* 55 (2001), pp. 179-96, at p. 195-6).

An important example of a tomb with coins is that of St Ambrose of Milan. This is one of the best documented early tombs of a saint<sup>16</sup>. When Ambrose discovered the bodies of SS Gervasius and Protasius in 386, he decided that he should be buried in the same grave under the altar saying that “it is proper for a priest to be buried where he used to make offering”. Ambrose died in 397 and was duly buried in a tomb parallel to that of Gervasius and Protasius (the altar in gold was added in the ninth century). During the survey of the tombs in 1864 coins of Flavius Victor (387-8), Theodosius (379-95), Arcadius (383-408) and Honorius (393-423) were found in the tomb of Ambrose which must have been deposited with him. All the tombs contained coins of the fifth and sixth centuries from the time of Bishop Laurence, who surveyed all the bodies about a century after the death of Ambrose<sup>17</sup>. The coins are all small denominations, as it is the case in most graves of saints.

If the coins were indeed deposited in two different periods, then they were the coins currently circulating during the two periods involved, that of the death of Ambrose and of the survey by Laurence in Theodoric’s time (493-526). But why were the coins put there? Ambrose did not need coins to pay his passage to heaven or to serve as a talisman against evil; the coins in his grave may reflect the continuation of a classical tradition just as saints in the first five centuries of Christianity still Belonged to the classical civilisation<sup>18</sup>. But the saints had broken “most of the imaginative boundaries which ancient men had placed between heaven and earth, the divine and the human, the living and the dead, the town and its antithesis...For the cult of the saints...designated dead human beings as the recipients of unalloyed reverence...”<sup>19</sup>. By the end of ancient Christianity, the centre of cities was dominated by “the church or cathedral containing within it the memorials or shrines or graves of the saint of the church, and surrounded by the graves of lesser people”, whilst the dead of all other religious cultures were kept outside the city walls<sup>20</sup>. We should then distinguish saints’ graves from those of ordinary people when considering the contents. Coins found in a saint’s grave were probably offerings, but what kind of offerings? Coins had been offered to pagan gods, springs, waters and shrines, and coins were offered into the Lacus Curtius in Rome as a place revered as an opening to the underworld<sup>21</sup>. The function of the link between living and dead provided by the latter can be compared to the same function of Christian saints. The outside of a grave needs to be distinguished from the inside, as different aspects of the funerary rite were involved<sup>22</sup>. In considering the interior of a saint’s grave I would like to examine the element of “memory”.

Could the opening of the tombs of SS Ambrose, Gervasius and Protasius under Theodoric, only a century after Ambrose’s death, have been motivated by the desire to authenticate the bodies, and a

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<sup>16</sup> Although the presence of coins in this grave is well known, it is not recorded in the otherwise extremely comprehensive book by J.-C. Picard, *Le souvenir des évêques. Sépultures, listes épiscopales et cultes des évêques en Italie du Nord des origines au Xe siècle*, (Rome 1988, Bibliothèque de l’Ecole Française de Rome, 268); for St Ambrose, p. 45. Saccocci, “Ritrovamenti monetali in tombe di santi” (n. 5), p. 84 refers to this grave as ‘tomba dei SS. Gervasio e Protasio’.

<sup>17</sup> S. Lusuardi Siena, “I corpi dei santi Gervasio e Protasio e la sepoltura di Ambrogio”, in *La città e la sua memoria. Milano e la tradizione di sant’Ambrogio* (Venezia, 1997), pp. 98-103, at p. 100 (the coins were found together with other objects, such as gold buttons and textiles), and p. 101, where drawings of eight coins are reproduced: among them a nummus of Ricimer (d. 472), another of Odovacar (476-93) monogram type, a quarter-siliqua of Theodoric (493-526), type as *MEC 1*, no. 119. All bear on the obverse a bust of the ruler, and on the reverse either a Victory dragging captive (Arcadius), a city gate (Flavius Victor), or monograms; the only Christian element in the iconography is a small *Chi-Rho* by the Victory on a coin of Arcadius.

<sup>18</sup> P. Delooz, “Per uno studio sociologico della santità”, in *Agiografia altomedievale*, ed. by S. Boesch Gajano (Bologna, 1976), pp. 227-58; P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago and London, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 21-2, also quoted by J. Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London and New York, 1999), p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth*, p. 194.

<sup>21</sup> Stevens, “Charon’s obol” (n.1), p. 228.

<sup>22</sup> Coins offered outside the grave were considered by St Augustine to be alms if distributed to the poor on the spot: Stevens, “Charon’s obol” (n. 1), p. 229. External offers of low-value coins to relics was a common practice. See N. Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints. Formation coutumière d’un droit* (Paris, 1975), pp. 275-96 (“Donations et oblations aux reliques dans les sanctuaries”); but see also the review by J. Dubois, in *Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des Chartes* 134 (1976), pp. 449-52.

memento of the survey been left leave for posterity? At the time a good number of sacred bones were being moved from one place to another in a formidable hunt for relics and this might have suggested the need for authentication<sup>23</sup>. The miraculous discovery by Ambrose of the bodies of SS Gervasius and Protasius in 386 had had obvious political value and many more such “politically convenient” discoveries were taking place which needed authentication!

It is generally thought that coins were placed in saints’ graves as memory tokens<sup>24</sup>. It is still the custom today, during the survey of saint’s tomb, to insert a contemporary coin in the roll of parchment testifying to the act<sup>25</sup>. The question then arises as to the distinction between coins as memory tokens in the graves of saints and other people of high status, and coins deposited in the graves of ordinary folk: were the latter amulets for protection, offerings, or perhaps also memory tokens?

Some comparison between the graves of influential people and those of lesser mortals is afforded by the two major Lombardic cemeteries at Castel Trosino (=CT) and Nocera Umbra (=NU) <sup>26</sup>. These sites which date from the last quarter of the sixth to the seventh century were long regarded as examples *par-excellence* of “barbaric” burial practices, but are now known to have been more mixed in character. For some time, the only coins to attract any attention from scholars were the gold solidi and the tremisses re-used as jewellery and considered important for dating purposes<sup>27</sup>. Lars Jorgensen, in his recent study of family burial practices in these sites, examined the grave goods and duly noted the “coin-dated graves” of CT 7 and 115, and NU 17, with their gold coin-pendants<sup>28</sup>. He nevertheless neglected to mention that old Roman bronze coins were found in these three as well as in other poor graves, either by the hands or pelvis of the dead or pierced as

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<sup>23</sup> Forms of authentication are documented since at least the fourth century. See M. Heinzlmann, *Translationsberichte und andere Quellen des Reliquienkultes* (Tournhout, 1979; Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, 33), pp. 83-8, and H. Leclercq, “Reliques et reliquaires”, in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, 14. II (Paris, 1940), col. 2294-2359, at 2338. See also P. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, (Princeton, 1978).

<sup>24</sup> G. Gorini, “Le monete rinvenute nella tomba di S. Antonio di Padova”, *Il Santo, Rivista Antoniana di Storia Dottrina e Arte*, 21 (1981), pp. 99-102, where the deposition of coins and medals in saints’ graves as memory tokens is compared to the use of foundation medals. Medals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were deposited, with coins, in the graves of St Luke and of St Matthias in Padua (cf. Saccocci, “Ritrovamenti monetali in tombe di santi” (n.5), p. 95). For St Luke, see now G. Gorini, “La documentazione numismatica”, in *San Luca evangelista testimone della fede che unisce. Atti del congresso internazionale*, Padova, 16-21 Ottobre 2000, vol II. *I risultati scientifici sulla ricognizione delle reliquie attribuite a san Luca*, eds. V. Terribile Wiel Marin and F. G. B. Trolese (Padua, 2003), pp. 577-96: coins here span from the fourth to the fifteenth century, and mainly coincide with the dates of known surveys; the date 1463 is engraved on the obverse of one grossone of Venice for Francesco Foscari (1423-57), coinciding with the survey of that year; the date 1562 is engraved on the reverse of another medal, and the same year appears in the legend of a cast medal, and both coincide with the survey documented in that year. The element of memory is therefore strictly proven by these materials. Gorini (p. 581) suggests that many more coins must have been deposited in the urn but were probably removed during the survey of 1562. One false lead coin was found. The obverse copied a denarius of Tiberius, the reverse a didrachm of Tarentum showing Tarasa riding a dolphin. Gorini thought it a renaissance work. Billanovich, however, believes it to have been produced and inserted in the urn in the fourth century to prove the date of Luke’s death, observing that the association between Tiberius and St Luke is better justified in the fourth century, when Luke was still believed to be a contemporary of Christ, and not, as later believed, that he was a disciple of Paul. See M.P. Billanovich, “La moneta falsa rinvenuta nella ‘tomba di san Luca’ a Padova”, in *Monastica et Humanistica. Scritti in onore di Gregorio Penco O.S.B.*, ed. F.G.B. Trolese, vol. II (Cesena, 2003), pp. 699-715. The piece deserves more investigation.

<sup>25</sup> Professor Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, personal communication, Rome 3 March 1999. This practice can be compared to that of placing coins in a casket in the ‘Porta Santa’ in Rome at the closing of a Holy Year, to be found at the next opening, and therefore giving a sense of continuity: see P. Cannata, “Monete e medaglie nel cerimoniale degli Anni Santi”, in *L’arte degli Anni Santi. Roma 1300-1875*. Catalogo della Mostra, Roma, Palazzo Venezia, 20 dicembre 1984-5 aprile 1985 (Milan, 1984), pp. 182-5.

<sup>26</sup> R. Mengarelli, “La necropoli barbarica di Castel Trosino”, *Monumenti Antichi della R. Accademia dei Lincei*, 12 (1902), cols. 145-380. U. Pasqui and R. Paribeni, “La necropoli barbarica di Nocera Umbra”, *Monumenti Antichi della R. Accademia dei Lincei*, 25 (1919), coll. 137-362.

<sup>27</sup> A. Alföldi, “Le monete delle necropoli barbariche di Nocera Umbra e Castel Trosino e la loro importanza per la cronologia”, *Atti e Memorie dell’Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 5 (1925), pp. 73-8; M. Brozzi, “Monete bizantine su collane longobarde”, *RIN* 73 (1971), pp. 127-3.

<sup>28</sup> L. Jorgensen, “Castel Trosino and Nocera Umbra. A Chronological and Social Analysis of Family Burial Practices in Lombard Italy (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.)”, *Acta Archaeologica* 62 (1991), pp. 1-58.

pendants<sup>29</sup>. At Nocera Umbra, Roman coins were found only eleven out of a total of 165 graves. Bronze or plated silver coins, Republican to post-Constantinian and unpierced, were found by the right hand (NU 4, 11, 39, 105, 107), by the left hand (NU 160), or above the pelvis (NU 68, 85, the latter a gold solidus). At Castel Trosino, Roman coins were found pierced and used in necklaces, though there was one exception. In CT 115, a rich woman found with two necklaces bearing 5 solidi and 4 tremisses also had on her pelvis a plated Roman coin. Similarly, the rich woman of NU 107, bearing a necklace with gold pendants, had two worn Roman coins by her right hand<sup>30</sup>. The presence of these old Roman coins probably had little to do with the status of the two women. Their value lies either in their symbolic or their magic significance. There is also an interesting gender pattern, with unpierced coins present only in the graves of women and children and mainly at Nocera Umbra, which was the more “Lombard” in character of the two sites<sup>31</sup>. The coins might have been seen as affording women and children help or protection that men did not normally require. This is not to say, however, that coins are found exclusively in the graves of women and children. On the Lombard site at Trezzo sull’Adda, at least two male graves each had one unpierced coin. Grave 1 contained a solidus of Phocas (c. 607-8), and grave 5 one of Heraclius (c. 613-29)<sup>32</sup>. In the recently discovered cemetery at Vicenne (Campochiaro in Molise), coins were found in 24 out of 167 graves, and in excavations in the nearby cemetery at Morrione (still in progress) coins have thus far been found in 24 out of 184 graves, sometimes in the mouth or below the skull, or pierced as ornaments. Ten unpierced gold tremisses were found at Vicenne, nine in male graves, associated with weapons and sometimes with a horse, and one in a female grave. Sixteen tremisses were found at Morrione, six in female graves, including one in a young girl’s, nine in male graves, including one with a horse, and one in a double grave with one male and one female. The tremisses were either Lombardic or Byzantine. One male grave at Morrione had one gold semisses of Justinian II, second reign (705-11) of Syracuse. Most of the other coins in the graves were silver siliquae, with occasional Roman Republican and later Imperial bronze coins. The finds at Trezzo and in Molise suggest that individual unpierced gold coins were more peculiar to male graves. The image of the ruler on these coins might have been the important factor because it symbolised “authority”, and thus the official position of the deceased<sup>33</sup>. The few women’s graves with unpierced gold tremisses, however, make it dangerous to generalise. At Vicenne contemporary Lombardic issues were found in graves together with old Roman coins. At Nocera Umbra and Castel Trosino, old Roman coins were associated with gold Byzantine ones. On another site, at Voghenza (Ferrara), Roman coins were the only coins deposited with other

<sup>29</sup> Such coins have been noted by D’Angela, “L’obolo a Caronte” (n. 1), p. 86, and D’Angela, “Contesti tombali” (n. 1), pp. 324-5. The Roman coins are also neglected by C. Rupp “La necropoli longobarda di Nocera Umbra (loc. IL Portone): l’analisi archeologica”, in *Umbria longobarda. La necropoli di Nocera Umbra nel centenario della scoperta*. Nocera Umbra, Museo Civico 27.7.1996- 10.1.1997 (rome, 1996), pp. 23-39.

<sup>30</sup> Also L. Paroli, ‘La necropoli di Castel Trosino: un riesame critico’, in *La necropoli altomedievale di Castel Trosino. Bizantini e Longobardi nelle Marche*, ed. L. Paroli, Cinisello Balsamo 1995, pp. 197-325, esp. p. 291, referring to M. Martin, *Das spätromisch-frümittelalterliche Gräberfeld von Kaiseraugst, Kt. Aargau* (Dereendingen-Solothurn 1991), p. 151, which I have not been able to consult. Unpierced Roman coins of the second and fourth centuries were found in mainly female early medieval graves near Ferrara: A.L. Morelli, ‘Le monete della necropoli altomedievale di Voghenza’, in *La necropoli altomedievale di Voghenza*, Supplemento al vol. 68 degli *Atti dell’Accademia delle Scienze di Ferrara* (1990-91), (Ferrara, 1992), pp. 45-53. Mainly female but also male graves with coins are listed by M. Brozzi, ‘Monete bizantine in tombe longobarde’, *QT 3* (1974), pp. 219-23.

<sup>31</sup> Jorgensen, ‘Castel Trosino and Nocera Umbra’ (n. 28), pp. 47-8; Paroli, ‘La necropoli di Castel Trosino’ p. 199.

<sup>32</sup> E. Roffia (ed.), *La necropoli longobarda di Trezzo sull’Adda* (Florence, 1986), pp. 23-4, 96-7 (coin descriptions by G.G. Belloni).

<sup>33</sup> The male grave 33 at Vicenne had a horse and a seal-ring reproducing a copy of the reverse of a Lombard tremissis on the inside, for a personal and internal contact with the owner. See E.A.Arslan, “Monete ed anello con castone da Vicenne”, in *Samnium. Archeologia del Molise*, eds S. Capini and A. Di Niro, (Rome, 1991), pp. 344-5. For the graves see V. Ceglia and B. Genito, “La necropoli altomedievale di Vicenne a Campochiaro”, *ibid.*, pp. 329-34. For the coins, see E.A.Arslan, “Le monete delle necropoli di Campochiaro e la monetazione anonima beneventana nel VII secolo”, in *I Beni Culturali nel Molise*, Atti del convegno, Campobasso 18-20 novembre 1999, in the press. For such seal-rings see *I Signori degli Anelli. Un aggiornamento sugli anelli-sigillo longobardi in memoria di Otto von Hessen e Wilhelm Kurze*, ed. S. Lusuardi Siena (Milan, 2004).

early medieval grave-goods<sup>34</sup>. The old Roman coins might have been chosen for their link with the past. On the other hand, since they continued to circulate as small change into the eighth century<sup>35</sup>, they might have been selected for their low value. The “obol” of classical tradition was also a low-value coin, a symbol that death makes rich and poor equal<sup>36</sup>. This perhaps explains why coins in Christian graves in the middle ages were more commonly low-value coins. By the time of the Carolingian reform, which introduced the silver penny into Italy in 781 to replace gold coins, old Roman bronze coins had evidently ceased to circulate.

Between 507 and 511, King Theodoric had tried unsuccessfully to discourage the deposition of precious goods in graves<sup>37</sup> but in the time of the Carolingians there was a change in funerary practices and the custom of depositing grave-goods was gradually abandoned. Coins, however, were still occasionally left with the dead. In the Byzantine world, where coins of gold, silver and copper were issued, the coins mostly buried with the dead were those of copper (Byzantine) or bronze (Roman)<sup>38</sup>. The Carolingian evidence in Italy is particularly interesting. In general, single finds of Carolingian pennies are rare but they occur more often in graves than anywhere else<sup>39</sup>. Two early pennies of Charlemagne (768-814) were found in a grave near Mosciano Sant’Angelo in Abruzzo<sup>40</sup>, four papal silver *antiquiores* in a elite grave inside the church of Santo Stefano Rotondo in Rome<sup>41</sup>, one of Pope Adrian III (884-5) in a child’s grave at the Mola di Monte Gelato near Rome<sup>42</sup>, and a hoard in grave at Sarzana-Luni<sup>43</sup>. By the time of Charlemagne, the bronze/copper coins were no longer used and more valuable silver coins were offered<sup>44</sup>.

### *The Central and Later Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries)*

Philippe Ariès, in his history of death in the Western world, comments that, after the fifth century, graves were only rarely marked by a sign. Funerary inscriptions became more common again after the twelfth century renaissance and the attendant “re-discovery of the individual”<sup>45</sup>. When tombstones became more common, it was considered as a sign of humility to request not to have one. The Lord of Verona, Alberto I della Scala (d.1301), thus required that his tomb should not bear his

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<sup>34</sup> For Voghenza, see Morelli, “Le monete della necropoli altomedievale di Voghenza”, pp. 45-53, and *ibid.*, “Monete da contesti funerari dell’Emilia Romagna”, in *Trouvailles monétaires de tombes* (n.1), pp. 169-80.

<sup>35</sup> The most up-to-date contributions are L. Saguì and A. Rovelli, “Residualità, non residualità, continuità di circolazione. Alcuni esempi dalla *Crypta Balbi*”, in *I materiali residui nello scavo archeologico*, eds. F. Guidobaldi, C. Pavolini, Ph. Pergola, P.M.Barbini (Rome, 1998), pp. 186-95, and A. Saccocci, “Monete romane in contesti archeologici medioevali in Italia”, *QT* 26 (1997), pp. 385-405.

<sup>36</sup> Stevens, “Charon’s obol” (n. 1), p. 217.

<sup>37</sup> There was arguably an economic reason behind this. See, D’Angela, “L’obolo a Caronte” (n.1), p. 83, and D’Angela, “Contesti tombali” (n. 1), p. 321.

<sup>38</sup> For example, a single follis was found in each of three early ninth century graves near Vittoria in South-eastern Sicily. See Uggeri Patitucci, “Indicazioni numismatiche” (n. 9), pp. 462-6. Low denominations also predominated in the graves studied by Ivison, *Mortuary Practices in Byzantium* (n. 9), p. 217.

<sup>39</sup> A. Rovelli, “La circolazione monetaria in Sabina e nel Lazio settentrionale nel medio evo. Materiali dagli scavi di alcuni siti incastellati”, in *Une région frontalière au Moyen Age. Les Vallées du Turano et du Salto entre Sabine et Abruzzes*, ed. E Hubert, (Recherches d’Archéologie médiévale en Sabine. 1; Collection de l’Ecole Française de Rome, 263, Rome, 2000), pp. 407-22, at p.413.

<sup>40</sup> F. Savini, “Una tomba carolingia con un denaro di Carlomagno”, *Atti e Memorie dell’Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 5 (1925), pp. 85-7.

<sup>41</sup> The coins included two of Pope Gregory IV (840-4), one of Pope Sergius II (844-7) and one of Leo IV (847-55), all associated with Emperor Lothar I (840-55). See L. Travaini, “Monete medievali in area romana: nuovi e vecchi materiali”, *RIN*, 94 (1992), pp. 163-82, at p. 168.

<sup>42</sup> T. W. Potter, “The Mola di Monte Gelato: a microcosm of the history of Roman and early medieval Rome?”, in *La storia economica di Roma nell’alto medioevo alla luce dei recenti scavi archeologici*, Atti del seminario, Roma 2-3 aprile 1992, eds L. Paroli and P. Delogu (Florence, 1993), pp. 137-52, at p. 146.

<sup>43</sup> Rovelli, “La circolazione monetaria” (n. 39), p. 413 note 23; A. Bertino, “Monete attestate in Luni dal IV al IX secolo”, *Rivista di Studi Liguri*, 49 (1983), pp. 265-300, at p. 283.

<sup>44</sup> It has also been suggested that the practice of placing a single coin in the mouth of the deceased in Christian graves “may have been spread by the Church, a hint that the custom had long since been severed from its classical myth”. See Stevens, “Charon’s obol” (n. 1), p. 226, citing H. Steuer, “Zur Gliederung frühgeschichtlicher Gräberfelder am Beispiel der Münzebeigrabe”, *Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschung in Niedersachsen* 6 (1970), pp. 148-149, 156, which I have not been able to consult.

<sup>45</sup> Ph. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. H. Weaver (New York, 1981).

name, though it was nonetheless a grandiose monument bearing his arms and his image on horseback<sup>46</sup>.

Before indications of identity on the exterior of graves became more common, only the inside of a grave bore the occasional token or sign of identity. The funeral ceremony, however rich in candles and offerings, left no physical trace in the long term<sup>47</sup>. If a coin was the only long lasting object inside the grave and was intended as a memento, how did the memory work between the inside of the grave and the outside? A good case-in-point is the account of the death of Emperor Lothar III (1125-37) in the chronicle of Otto of Freising:

so that they could never be forgotten, the emperor's deeds were inscribed on sheets of lead and buried with him.

A survey of Lothar's grave in 1620 indeed recovered a lead plaque and a lead globe surmounted by cross, now in the Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Brunswick. Karl Morrison comments<sup>48</sup>:

Even taking the very long term into account, it is difficult to imagine circumstances under which those in charge of the Emperor's funeral would have anticipated the exhumation of body and plaque together. A second perplexity arises from the inscription itself, which is far from a comprehensive memoir. In eleven lines, the inscription records Lothar's name and titles, the length of his reign, the date of his death, and a brief eulogy. Perhaps Otto did not know the content of the inscription any more than he knew that there was only one lead plaque. But was there some connection in his mind between the memorial function of the record in the silence of the tomb and that of his own words in the silences of the codex?

There is surely no reason to suppose that the men in charge of Lothar's burial would not have foreseen an exhumation. In the twelfth century, as before, other tombs had been opened and their bones, particularly those of saints, relocated, thus justifying the "record" function of the plaque. Nevertheless, the possibility of an "internal" memory is also attractive.

As already emphasised coins deposited in elite graves, notably those of saints, tend to be low-value coins contemporary with the date of the burial, or to that of later surveys<sup>49</sup>. High-value coins are unusual but when they do occur in saints' graves it has been suggested that only high-value coins could be used as tokens of memory. An example is the tomb of St Bartholomew at Benevento. The body of the saint is said to have been brought from Lipari to Benevento in 838. The first survey of the tomb took place in 1338. The survey of 1698 found inside the grave two lead plaques, both bearing the inscription +SCS BARTHOLOMEVS APST, one from the ninth century deposition, the other, in gothic letters, from the survey of 1338, to which one coin was added: a silver gigliato, the

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<sup>46</sup> F. De Maffei, *Le arche Scaligere di Verona* (Verona, 1955), p. 13, pl. 1. On the mark of identification of Byzantine tombs, see P. Grierson, "The tombs and obits of the Byzantine emperors (337-1042)", *DOP* 16 (1962), pp.1-60, at p. 9, note 35: "It would probably be true to say that in antiquity the likelihood of a sarcophagus bearing a mark of identity is in inverse proportion to the importance of its occupant. Only a sovereign would take it for granted that his tomb would be generally recognized".

<sup>47</sup> Blake, 'Sepulture' (n. 4), p. 179.

<sup>48</sup> I quote from K.F. Morrison, *History as a Visual Art in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Princeton, 1990), p. 214. The original reads: ... honorifice sepelitur, [actusque eius, ut nulla possent aboleri oblivione, in plumbeis laminis descripti iuxta eum reconduntur]. According to the editor (but not noted by Morrison), the words in square brackets were added in the thirteenth century: cf. Ottonis Episcopi Frisingensis Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus, ed. A. Hofmeister (Hannoverae et Lipsiae, 1912), p. 340. The passage about the lead plaque may have been added in the thirteenth century, but the plaque found in the tomb was presumably deposited at the time of the original burial.

<sup>49</sup> The recent survey of the tombs in the Church of San Nicolò al Lido in Venice, for example, shows that there were four chronological groupings of coins coinciding strictly with previous openings. See G. Gorini and A. Saccocci, 'Relazione degli esperti Prof. Gorini e Dott. Saccocci sulle monete trovate nelle tombe di S. Nicola Magno, S. Nicola Zio e S. Teodoro nella chiesa di S. Nicolò al Lido', in L.G. Paludet, *Ricognizione delle reliquie di S. Nicolò 1992* (Vicenza, 1994), pp. 28-9; Saccocci, 'Ritrovamenti monetali in tombe di santi' (n. 5), p. 87. Most of the coins found in the tomb of St Geminiano of Modena coincide with the survey of 1184, while 18 out of 19 pennies of Lucca can be better related to the *translatio* of 1106. See F. Missere Fontana and L. Travaini, *Monete medievali e materiali nella tomba di San Geminiano a Modena* (Nonantola, in the press).

main silver coin in southern Italy at the time<sup>50</sup>. This time the coin was not of low-value, but of good silver and contemporary with the survey. The placing of a silver coin in the grave of St Bartholomew can probably be compared to medals deliberately deposited in saints' graves during the renaissance<sup>51</sup>. Medals perhaps presented a step forward in the idea of "official memory".

The grave of the Lombard Queen Theodolinda (d. 628) in Monza is a somewhat different case. Theodolinda was venerated, almost as a saint, and a great ceremony took place in 1308 in the basilica when her bones were moved from a simple grave in the ground to a grand marble sarcophagus<sup>52</sup>. The chronicler's account of the ceremony does not explain why seventeen billion pennies of different mints were also deposited in the sarcophagus. Why was no gold florin put in the queen's tomb? Ermanno Arslan suggested that precious coins would have been more suitable to the 1308 ceremony and that the base coins probably belonged to an adjacent burial<sup>53</sup>. This seems unlikely in view of the official character of such ceremonies and the seventeen pennies were probably deposited as memory tokens at the time.

Andrea Saccocci has also rejected the traditional interpretation of low-value coins as memory tokens, believing that the authorities would have preferred to select more precious coins<sup>54</sup>. The low-value coins could have been offered by devout people outside the tomb or altar and placed in the urn as some kind of tithe. He also believes that a selection of contemporary as well as old offerings would have been gathered for the insertion during the survey<sup>55</sup>. Such offerings, however, were regularly gathered, recorded and cashed or spent and it seems unlikely that coins were kept available for the opening of a tomb which was hardly a routine event<sup>56</sup>. For the same reason concept of tithe, which implies a periodic taxation, does not seem pertinent to the survey of saints' graves. The lack of any written evidence on the deposition of coins in such graves on the occasion of surveys seems to prove that there was no regular prescribed rite<sup>57</sup>. Low-value coins in current use, which are generally found in these graves, bore witness to the time, as everyday objects did, and were entitled to be tokens of memory. These coins may have been deposited by dignitaries

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<sup>50</sup> D. Viva, *Effemeride di quanto è accaduto nella celeberrima ricognitione, e traslatione del Corpo del Glorioso Apostolo S. Bartolomeo* (Benevento, 1698). I am most grateful to Dr Beniamino Russo for this reference. The coin is described on p. 24 as bearing the legend K̄AROLUS DEI GR̄A HIE. R. eT SICILIE RE. for Charles I of Anjou (1266-85) but since the gigliato was introduced by Charles II (1285-1309) in 1303, this cannot be correct. It must have been either K̄AROLVS ScDVS DEI GR̄A... (for Charles II) or possibly RoBERTVS DEI GR̄A..., for Robert of Anjou (1309-43), whose coins would have been more common at the time of the survey. For South Italian gigliati of Charles II and Robert the Wise, see *MEC* 14, pp. 219-27.

<sup>51</sup> Two fine silver grossi of Bologna and Rimini, were found among low-value coins, in the tomb of St Severo at Ravenna (E. Ercolani Cocchi, 'L'agontano in Emilia Romagna: produzione e circolazione', in *L'Agontano. Una moneta d'argento per l'Italia medievale. Convegno in ricordo di Angelo Finetti*, Trevi (Perugia) 11-12 ottobre 2001, ed. L. Travaini, (Perugia, 2003), pp. 55-78, at p. 64. For medals see above n. 24.

<sup>52</sup> R. Mambretti, 'Il contributo dell'Obituariario e del 'Liber ordinarius' della chiesa monzese alla storia edilizia del Duomo', in *Monza anno 1300. La Basilica di S. Giovanni Battista e la sua facciata*, ed. R. Cassanelli (Monza, 1988), pp. 136-41. I am most grateful to Max David for this reference.

<sup>53</sup> Pennies of Cremona, Milan, Parma, Pavia, Novara, Piacenza. E.A. Arslan, 'Monete medievali', in *Monza. Il Duomo e i suoi tesori* (Milan, 1988), pp. 65-7: 'pare infatti poco credibile che venisse posto accanto alle ossa di Teodolinda un gruzzolo così modesto; più probabile quindi appare l'ipotesi di una derivazione da un'altra tomba collocata accanto o sopra quella di Teodolinda'.

<sup>54</sup> Saccocci, 'Ritrovamenti monetali in tombe di santi' (n. 5), p. 88: 'Se lo scopo era quello di offrire un ricordo del culto ... e di fornire ai posteri una testimonianza ... dovremmo aspettarci la presenza magari di poche monete, ma tutte di particolare pregio ...'.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>56</sup> See below, the report on the offerings at the altars of SS Peter and Paul in Rome, and above n. 22. For the accounts of the coins collected at the tomb of Beato Giovanni in Rimini, see P. Tonini, 'Della moneta forestiera in Rimini negli anni 1388-1393 (Documento inedito)', *Bollettino di Numismatica e Sfragistica per la Storia d'Italia* 2 (1869), pp. 187-218. The 'hands' *mani* of coins, recorded in the accounts, were not piles of coins, as Saccocci writes ('Ritrovamenti' (n. 5), p. 93, note 31), but units of account meaning four coins each. See L. Travaini, 'Un sistema di conto poco conosciuto: la 'mano da quattro'', *RN* 153 (1998), pp. 327-34.

<sup>57</sup> Recent research on the ritual aspects of such surveys shows that there was great variation in the ceremonies and that there was no written rule. See P.-A. Sigal, 'Le dérèglement des translations de reliques principalement dans les régions entre Loire et Rhin aux XIe et XIIe siècles', in *Les reliques. Objets, cultes, symboles*. Actes du colloque international de l'Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 4-6 septembre 1997, eds. E. Bozoky and A.-M. Helvétius (Tournhout, 1999), pp. 213-27, esp. p. 222.

responsible for the ceremony at the time of the survey, or by devout people who could have inserted them inside the tomb as long as it was accessible.

There was also a distinction between coins deliberately deposited inside a saint's tomb, at the time of burial, and coins offered to the saint's tomb either by being placed on the altar over the tomb<sup>58</sup>, or put inside when it was opened or else forced inside it. In the grave of St Francis of Assisi eleven pennies of Lucca, which would have been circulating in Central Italy at the time of his death in 1226, were found. There was also the ring and the beads of a necklace<sup>59</sup>. They were found when the grave was opened in 1819 and their presence raises obvious questions. St Francis loved poverty and detested money. He even ordered his friars not to accept it<sup>60</sup>. The saint's tomb remained accessible for some decades after his death before it was more securely sealed, and some of these coins may have been inserted by devout people in order to leave something of themselves near the saint. Alternatively the people who sealed the tomb may have left these coins, or even added some. The coins offered in this way were analogous to *brandea* as relics, pieces of cloth that, by virtue of having touched a holy place, became holy themselves<sup>61</sup>. As objects "offered" to a saint and placed as close to the body as possible, they constituted for the donor an extremely precious form of contact, more than just a simple offering and closer to the desire to be buried near a saint or his/her relics. Pilgrims offered coins to an altar either as gift of devotion or as a meritorious act<sup>62</sup>, but their gesture was sometimes so insistent, even violent in forcing a passage through to the tomb or the altar, as to suggest some other reason behind the offering itself: a reason related to a wish to leave a "personal memory".

I have meditated on this while watching tourists throwing coins into the Trevi fountain. Foreign tourists often throw coins of their own country, but some even choose personal objects, such as watches<sup>63</sup>. Particularly keen tourists try to throw the coin as far as possible, behind the stone horses and statues, so that it cannot be retrieved too easily, in the hope that their own "sign" will remain attached to the monument. An invisible line, tracing the trajectory to the thrown coin, remains as a persistent tie between the donor and the receiver. The tourist believes that he/she may return to Rome, in the same way that the donor of a coin to a saint's grave believes his/her prayers will be heard more clearly once a special contact is established through the offering.

In 1750 the sarcophagus of Catervius in Tolentino cathedral was opened and examined. A contemporary report stated that coins and other objects such as rosaries and belts had been forced into the narrow space between the sarcophagus and its heavy lid, breaking the plaster seal so that the objects would touch the holy remains<sup>64</sup>. The intention was probably to recover the rosaries and

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<sup>58</sup> A miniature showing coins offered on the altar is reproduced in L. Travaini, 'Le monete del primo giubileo', in *Anno 1300 il primo giubileo. Bonifacio VIII e il suo tempo*, a cura di M. Righetti Tosti Croce (Milan, 2000), pp. 121-5. For coins on altars see also M. Illi, *Münzen in der Kirche: Bild- und Schriftquellen*, in *Trouvailles monétaires d'églises. Actes du premier colloque international du Groupe suisse pour l'étude des trouvailles monétaires* (Lucerne, 19 novembre 1993), ed. O.F. Dubuis and S. Frey-Kupper (Lausanne, 1995), pp. 153-60. Coins and candles offered on the tomb of St Louis are illustrated in the Great Sacristy glass window in St Denis. See G. Sommers Wright, 'The Tomb of St Louis', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), pp. 65-82.

<sup>59</sup> I. Gatti, *La tomba di S. Francesco nei secoli* (Assisi, 1983), pp. 108-9, 267 and pl. 11. I am grateful to Rosalind Brooke for this reference.

<sup>60</sup> F. Guadagni, *De invento corpore Divi Francisci Ordinis Minorum Parentis* (Rome, 1819).

<sup>61</sup> R. Grégoire, *Manuale di agiologia. Introduzione alla letteratura agiografica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Fabriano, 1996), p. 314; Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte* (n. 23), p. 23.

<sup>62</sup> See A. Frugoni, *Il giubileo di Bonifacio VIII*, ed. A. De Vincentiis (Bari, 1999), p. 124.

<sup>63</sup> Foreign coins make about 20% of the total. The fountain is cleaned every Monday and the coins are collected in bags, with Italian coins going to the City Treasury and foreign coins to the Red Cross. See L. Travaini, 'Le monete a Fontana di Trevi: storia di un rito', *RIN* 101 (2000), pp. 251-9.

<sup>64</sup> G. Alteri, 'Il sarcofago di Catervio', *BollNum* 26-27 (1996), p. 7: '... Vi si trovarono anche alcuni denari d'argento e rame buttati dentro all'Arca da devoti per la fessura che unisce il coperchio di sopra con l'Arca, qual fessura è chiusa con gesso nulladimeno spesso si trova aperta dalli devoti che ebbero a buttarvi dentro danari e medaglie o per calarvi dentro corone, cinture, cordoni o cose simili per farle toccare i corpi dei Santi come di fatto vi si trovarono molte corone, cinture, cordoni.' The three local saints in this sarcophagus were buried in the early fifth century, but they became objects of cult worship only in the twelfth century. Earlier surveys of the tomb took place in 1450, 1576, 1750, 1822 and 1992. In his catalogue Alteri describes 1,872 coins, dating from the thirteenth century to 1810, and two religious medals.

belts after they had come into contact with the sacred bones, but they accidentally slipped out of reach. Coins and other smaller objects were, however, deliberately left inside. They were the offering of devout donors who sought to establish a long-lasting tie of personal memory<sup>65</sup>. In this case the insertion of coins in the sarcophagus was continued from the thirteenth century to 1810 and such coins cannot be distinguished from those deposited on the occasion of the surveys.

Coins have been used at various times as link between the divine and the human worlds in a form of exchange, of *do ut des*<sup>66</sup>. A link between divine and human can be seen in offerings made to saints<sup>67</sup>. Those who were devoted to a particular saint can be defined as his or her clients, in a relationship that was essentially feudal<sup>68</sup>. The calibre of the offerings, however, was not based on monetary value. It is useful here to bear in mind the biblical parable where the poor widow's mite was considered far more valuable than the coins offered by the rich<sup>69</sup>. This perhaps explain why precious coins were not usually deposited in graves: only small coins were appropriate because only the smaller denominations would have been used by the poor and the rich alike<sup>70</sup>. These were the coins of everyday life, used for buying bread and for pious offerings, and they were therefore acceptable as "memory tokens"<sup>71</sup>. Gold and silver coins and other precious objects, on the contrary, were in some way seen as sinful and might have offended the saint or constituted a risk for an ordinary soul.

It was common to offer coins at an altar built over the grave of a saint, as we know from many examples, one of which is given by the coins found during excavations at the *Confessione* of St Peter's in the Vatican<sup>72</sup>. These were typically low-value coins, as cardinal Stefaneschi observed on the occasion of the Jubilee of 1300<sup>73</sup>. We may compare the presence of coins "from all provinces" as described by Cardinal Stefaneschi to the *cumulus diversorum numismatum* offered by people gathered at Soissons in the tenth century for the translation of St Sebastian<sup>74</sup>. The interpretation of foreign coins in any local or regional context is a complex task<sup>75</sup>. The presence of a foreign coin in

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<sup>65</sup> A number of seventeenth century coins were found inserted under the lid of the marble sarcophagus of San Giuliano in Rimini, showing the same obstinate determination to leave a coin as near as possible to the holy body, while many other coins dating from the sixteenth centuries were found in the urn. See G. Gerola, 'La ricognizione della tomba di S. Giuliano in Rimini', *Bollettino d'Arte* 5 (1911), pp. 106-20.

<sup>66</sup> C. Grottanelli, *Il sacrificio* (Rome and Bari, 1999). Marc Bloch gave many examples of the sacred role of coins. English royal cramp-rings in the middle ages had to be forged using the metal from melted coins that had been offered on the altar on Good Friday. This sanctified the metal and made it more likely to produce healing rings. See M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch. Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. F.E. Anderson (London and Montreal, 1973), pp. 93-8, 105. For the use of 'angels' as ritual offerings, see pp. 247-50.

<sup>67</sup> S. Boesch Gajano, *La santità* (Rome and Bari, 1999).

<sup>68</sup> E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven and London 1992), p. 160.

<sup>69</sup> Mark 12:38-44.

<sup>70</sup> Tournois pennies of Frankish Greece were found in the urn containing the relics of SS Menna and Bricio in Sant'Agata dei Goti (Benevento). See Matteo Egizio, 'Sopra alcune monete ritrovate fra le reliquie di alcuni SS. Martiri. Al Signor canonico D. Alessandro Puoti a S. Agata de' Goti', in *Opuscoli volgari e latini del Conte Matteo Egizio Napoletano Regio Bibliotecario* (Naples, 1751), pp. 11-14. I am most grateful to Dr Giuseppe Ruotolo for this reference.

<sup>71</sup> See also the coins deposited in the urn of St Servolo in Trieste during the survey of 1929 (a nickel piece of 1918 and a copper one of 1927: not coins of 1929, but coins circulating in that year): G. Paoletti, 'Monete medioevali rinvenute nell'urna di San Servolo', in *La tradizione martiriale tergestina* (Trieste, 1992), pp. 385-92.

<sup>72</sup> C. Serafini, 'Appendice Numismatica', in *Esplorazioni sotto la Confessione di San Pietro in Vaticano*, eds. B.M. Apollonj Ghetti *et al.* (Città del Vaticano, 1951), pp. 225-44, pl. 89-103. See also above, n. 22.

<sup>73</sup> '... In this Jubilee the altars of St Peter's gathered 30,000 gold florins and those of St Paul's 20,000, made up not of large sums of gold or silver, but of many petty local coins from all provinces'. See P. Fedele, 'Il giubileo del 1300', *Gli Anni Santi* (Rome, 1934), pp. 7-25. See also Travaini, 'Le monete del primo giubileo' (n. 58), pp. 121-5.

<sup>74</sup> H.-W. Nicklis, 'Nahmarktlandschaft und Fernhandelslandschaft. Über die unterschiedliche geldgeschichtliche Entwicklung in Frankreich und Deutschland (10.-12. Jhd.)', *HBN* 36/38 (1982/84), pp. 15-33, at p. 19.

<sup>75</sup> See L. Travaini (ed.), *Moneta locale, moneta straniera: Italia ed Europa XI-XV secolo*. The Second Cambridge Numismatic Symposium. Local Coins, Foreign coins: Italy and Europe 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Milan, 1999); P. Spufford, 'Local coins and foreign coins in late medieval Europe', in XII. Internationaler Numismatischer Kongress Berlin 1997, ed. B. Kluge and B. Weisser, vol. II (Berlin, 2000), pp. 1078-84; L. Travaini, *Moneta locale e moneta straniera nell'Europa medievale: risultati, problemi e prospettive della ricerca*, in *Circulation monétaire régionale et supra-régionale. Actes du troisième colloque international du Groupe suisse pour l'étude des trouvailles monétaires* (Berne, 3- 4 mars 2000), ed. H.R. Derschka, I. Liggi and G. Perret (Lausanne, 2002), pp. 57-76. Debate on the interpretation

church offerings can have various meanings. It might have simply been the smallest denomination that the donor had available at the time, or it may reflect the intense circulation of foreign coins in the area or perhaps the drawing power of the church. It also might have been left as a token by a foreign pilgrim who travelled to the church and wanted to leave a personal trace at the shrine<sup>76</sup>. A coin of Livonia from the fifteenth century found during excavations in the Vatican might well have been a personal token from a Livonian pilgrim. It would have been easy for a Livonian pilgrim to Rome to keep just one specimen of little value from home to offer upon arriving at his her destination<sup>77</sup>.

For the clerics in charge of gathering the offerings at Rome or elsewhere all coins had to be counted, and foreign coins eventually had to be exchanged against local ones. The religious authorities in charge of the survey of the tomb of a saint may have gathered a sample of the most recent coins offered to the tomb to deposit inside. It is, however, virtually impossible to differentiate between the two at least until medals were struck specifically for the purpose.

Coins were deposited in the foundations of temples in antiquity and foundation medals were purposely struck in the Renaissance. The reason for doing this may have been different in different periods, but when the great Torre del Mangia in Siena was built in 1325 coins were deposited in the foundation “for memory” during a great ceremony, as clearly stated by an anonymous contemporary chronicler<sup>78</sup>. The coins officially offered as token of memory of the foundation of the tower were probably taken from the coins circulating in Siena at the time but they bore no special sign to differentiate them. We know of the “memory” value of these coins thanks only to the anonymous chronicler.

Few other cases are supported by such explicit chronicle references but archaeological evidence can sometimes tell us when a coin was intentionally meant to remain tied to a monument or a tomb. A Lombard silver coin was found deliberately inserted in the mortar inside a seventh century tomb in the church of St Zenone at Campione d’Italia<sup>79</sup>. Other later examples of this sort are known from France. In the abbey church of Notre-Dame de Corheta, in the French region of Landes near the Pyrenees, a number of aristocratic tombs were excavated. One of these, the tomb of Adelaide of Anjou (d. 1215), contained three English short-cross pennies placed between stones. The tomb of Louis I d’Aspremont and of Isabelle of Lancaster- Somerset (d. c.1441-2) contained a Portuguese coin of Edward (1433-8) inserted, together with a reckoning counter, in the foundation of the tomb itself<sup>80</sup>. A sign of personal memory attached to a coin offered in a grave can be seen in the coin found with the skeleton of Albert the Bear, margrave of Brandenburg (1124-70), whose

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of ‘church finds’ has progressed particularly in Scandinavia and Switzerland: cf. Trouvailles monétaires d’églises, eds Dubuis and Frey-Kupper (n. 58).

<sup>76</sup> Foreign coins are sometimes found in saints’ graves. On German coins found in the grave of Beato Arrigo in Treviso, see Saccocci, ‘Ritrovamenti monetali in tombe di santi’ (n. 5), p. 94. On the Hungarian penny among Italian coins in the urn of St Silvestro at Nonantola, see F. Missere Fontana, *Tesoretto di monete tardo-medioevali rinvenuto a Nonantola nell’urna di S. Silvestro* (Nonantola, 1991), p. 20, no. 26; *ibid.* ‘Due monete tardo-medioevali rinvenute a Nonantola nell’urna di S. Anselmo Abate, Sant’Adriano III papa, martiri Senesio e Teopompo e Sante Fosca e Anseride’, in G. Marchesi, *I santi nonantolani. Cenni storici relativi alle reliquie conservate nella Abbazia di Nonantola* (Carpi, 1995), pp. 15-16.

<sup>77</sup> For the Livonian coin, see Serafini, ‘Appendice numismatica’ (n. 72), p. 243, no. 415. A register of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena describes in detail coins of gold, silver and billon which were deposited by pilgrims in the hospital with the intention of recovering them on their return journey. In most cases these were the coins of the pilgrims’ own countries and the pilgrims undoubtedly carried other such coins to Rome. On the coins deposited at Santa Maria della Scala, see L. Travaini, ‘La moneta in viaggio’, in G. Piccinni and L. Travaini, *Il Libro del pellegrino (Siena, 1382-1446). Affari, uomini, monete sulle strade d’Europa* (Naples, 2003), pp. 83-158.

<sup>78</sup> ‘... e l’operaio del chomuno di Siena mise in fondo di detta torre alquanta moneta per memoria di detta torre’: see ‘Cronaca senese dei fatti riguardanti la città e il suo territorio di autore anonimo del secolo XIV (a.1202-1331)’, in *Cronache senesi*, eds A. Lisini and F. Iacometti (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 15/6) (Bologna, 1939), pp. 129-30. I am very grateful to Gabriella Piccinni for this reference.

<sup>79</sup> E.A. Arslan, ‘Mutamenti di funzione e di struttura degli stock monetari in Europa tra V e VIII secolo’, ‘Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo’, *Settimana di Studio Del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo*, 45 (Spoleto, 1998), pp. 379-460, at p. 444.

<sup>80</sup> In both cases the coins were contemporary with the death though not local. See M. Dhénin, ‘Monnaies recueillies en l’Abbatiale Notre-Dame de Corheta’, *Bulletin de la Société de Borda* (1979), pp. [1-13 of the offprint]. I am most grateful to Marc Bompaire, Michel Dhénin and Cécile Morrison for their comments and references.

sarcophagus lies beside that of his wife Sophie (d. 1160) in the monastery of Ballenstedt. The coin in his tomb is a bracteate which bears the image of the standing margrave and his wife, issued in c.1155/60. Albert issued many different coin types from 1134, mainly bracteates, but this is the only one showing him together with his wife and this is the very type that was chosen to accompany him in his grave, now again near his wife, as depicted on the coin. Whoever was responsible for the selection of this coin must have understood the significance of the iconography to the context of this burial<sup>81</sup>. The bracteate depicts a human relationship which continued in the afterlife.

The interpretation of coins in the graves of ordinary people is probably even more difficult than that of those in the graves of important people. When coins are present in the late medieval graves there are often just one or two low-value, usually contemporary, pieces with the occasional single higher denomination<sup>82</sup>. In the late 1990s a number of fourteenth century rural cemeteries were excavated in the Salento, in southern Apulia<sup>83</sup>. In some of these cemeteries coins were found systematically placed in the mouth of the dead person, while in others no coins were found at all. These differences in a small area during the same period are unexplained, but prove again how unsafe it is to generalise. Most of the coins were tournois pennies of Frankish Greece, which then circulated widely in southern Italy. It seems unlikely that the placing of the coins in the mouth of the deceased was the direct continuation of a classical tradition but there may have been some sort of a “restoration” of an ancient practice. Ancient coins are of course frequently found in Italy and would often have been kept as charms. In a fifteenth century tomb excavated at Impruneta near Florence, a halved Republican bronze coin was found in the right hand of a female skeleton<sup>84</sup>.

### *Good Coins, Bad Coins?*

From at least the thirteenth century, friars used a wide repertory of anecdotes, known as *exempla*, to enrich and clarify their sermons. By virtue of these *exempla*, collections of which were compiled from the thirteenth century onward<sup>85</sup>, any late medieval man or woman in Italy knew that it was dangerous to have coins on their deathbed. A good death, as any good Christian knew, needed an uncompromising separation from earthly goods, which were a danger to the soul, and there was, therefore, no room for coins in the grave. This theme is also reflected in many medieval churches which display images of misers and usurers carrying their money-bags to hell or devils pouring gold from melted coins into their mouths<sup>86</sup>. We are therefore faced with a contradiction. On the one hand,

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<sup>81</sup> V. von Röder, ‘Über den im Grabe Albrechts des Bären zu Ballenstedt aufgefundenen Brakteaten’, *Blätter für Münzfreunde* 37, 4/5 (1901), cols 2747-9; E. Bahrfeldt, *Münzwesen der Mark Brandenburg* (Berlin, 1889), p. 79, pl. I, no. 20.

<sup>82</sup> See the two tournois pennies in a grave at Capaccio Vecchia, L. Travaini, ‘Deniers tournois in South Italy’, *The Gros Tournois*, ed. N.J. Mayhew, (Oxford, 1997), pp. 421-51, at p. 448 while there were 8 tournois pennies in a grave at Policoro (at p. 446). One Angevin penny was found in the woman’s mouth in a grave at Carpignano, near Lecce, which also contained two earrings and a pot. See D’Angela, ‘L’obolo a Caronte’ (n. 1), p. 87. At Cerreto near Pescia (Pistoia), two graves contained respectively one provisino of the Roman Senate (c.1300-1404) and one quattrino of Lucca (sixteenth century). See M. Baldassarri, ‘Reperti numismatici’, in ‘Storia ed archeologia di una chiesa rurale nella diocesi medievale di Lucca: San Lorenzo a Cerreto (Pescia, PT)’, *Archeologia Medievale* 23 (1996), pp. 423-6. Single coins were found in a number of late medieval graves from the Ticino. One grosso of Milan of Luchino Visconti (1339-49) was found in a grave at Maroggia, one penny of Mantua (1150-1256) at Mendrisio, and one sesino of Milan of Filippo Maria Visconti (1412-47) at Stabio. See P. Donati, ‘Monete medioevali da scavi archeologici nel Ticino’, *QT* 4 (1975), pp. 295-8.

<sup>83</sup> P. Arthur, ‘Il cimitero’, in *Da Apigliano a Martano. Tre anni di archeologia medioevale (1997-1999)*, ed. P. Arthur (Martina Franca, 1999), pp. 51-3; A. Degasperi, ‘Le monete’, *ibid.*, pp. 37-9. I am most grateful to Paul Arthur for these references.

<sup>84</sup> S. Gelichi, ‘Saggi archeologici presso la pieve di Santa Maria all’Impruneta (Firenze). Relazione preliminare’, *Archeologia Medievale* 8 (1981), pp. 451-66, esp. pp. 455 and 458 (tomb 10). The author also gives two further examples of ancient coins in late medieval graves, one a Roman imperial coin in a tomb at Bologna, and the other a pierced silver drachm of Taras in a tomb in Apulia. See *ibid.*, p. 458, note 25.

<sup>85</sup> C. Bremond, J. Le Goff, J.-C. Schmitt, *L’«Exemplum»* (Turnhout, 1982; Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, fasc. 40).

<sup>86</sup> See below Appendix of *exempla*. For church representations, see comments by M. Camille, *The Gothic Idol. Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 258-71, and the magisterial book by J. Baschet,

coins held a special position in the grave of St Francis and other saints, yet on the other hand they were seen as a tool of the devil. How can we understand this paradox? Perhaps the only solution is to look for some kind of distinction between “good” and “bad” coins, thus providing a compromise between the constraints of Church teaching and the beliefs and practices of ordinary people. Good coins, the ones most likely to pass through the hands of the poor, were small, low-value coins. These coins were good for alms, were accepted at saints’ shrines, were offered by pilgrims, and could be deposited in a grave. When a small coin was forced into a saint’s tomb by a devout pilgrim, its choice as an offering was probably based on it being thin and durable enough to fulfil the need for some kind of contact. It left the message “I was here and I left a memory of me, of my vow or of my prayer or request”. Such small coins were available to all, rich and poor, and thus were probably perceived as being inoffensive even in a saint’s grave.

### *Dead Man’s Treasure*

If placing anything more than a few low-value coins in a grave was sinful, what is the nature of the “dead man’s treasures” of the late middle ages? For example, a purse of very poor quality small change was buried with a woman in a mass grave near Pisa in the mid-fifteenth century. It may have been intended as a loving gesture, as a “larger” offering than usual, rather than attachment to worldly goods<sup>87</sup>. Or perhaps the purse was particularly dear to the deceased. Having died shortly after 1447, this woman, together with many other villagers, would probably have been familiar with the preaching of St Bernardino of Siena against superstition and usury<sup>88</sup>.

More valuable hoards have certainly been found in late medieval graves, such as the “many fourteenth century gold ducats of Venice” under the armpit of a body discovered near Panzano (Modena) <sup>89</sup>. This hoard seems to have been deposited with the body by design, but other cases, where the location of the bodies cannot be securely identified as a gravesite, must be treated with greater caution. High-value coins found in large numbers near human remains, in the absence of further archaeological details, can sometimes be regarded as the money of a traveller who died unexpectedly. This might have been the case with the one who died on the mountains near Pontremoli (Massa Carrara), found with at least 200 English pennies dating to the first decade of the thirteenth century<sup>90</sup>. If this traveller was in company and his companions were “good”, they would presumably have buried him with just one or two coins, a symbolic *pars pro toto*, and spent the rest of the money on pious offerings for his soul. If they were “bad” they would have taken the

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*Les justices de l’au-delà. Les représentations de l’Enfer en France et en Italie (XIIe -Xve siècle)* (Rome, 1993), p. 395: in Italian pictorial representations of the Last Judgment the typical punishment of misers and usurers is having coins or melted metal poured into their mouths. A list of such Last Judgements is given: Pisa, Camposanto, in the fresco by Buonamico Buffalmacco (1330-40); Florence, Santa Croce, c.1350; San Gimignano, Duomo, c.1400; Bologna, San Petronio, c.1410; Florence, San Marco Museum, panel by Fra Angelico; Campochiesa (Albenga), San Giorgio, c.1446; Bastia Mondovì, San Fiorenzo, c.1472; San Michele Mondovì, Madonna delle Piane, fifteenth century; Montegrazie (Liguria), Santuario della Madonna, 1483 (where the scene is accompanied by the inscription AURUM SITISTI AURUM BIBE, i.e. ‘you thirsted for gold, now drink gold’). Baschet also reproduced an illustration of hell that shows a devil pouring coins into a miser’s mouth, while another devil subjects a monk holding his money-bag to the same treatment.

<sup>87</sup> F. Redi, C. Amante Simoni, F.M. Vanni, S. Amici, ‘The cemetery of San Vito di Calci, near Pisa’, *Archeologia Medievale* 13 (1986), pp. 239-55. This is an excellent example of an excavation of a late medieval cemetery, situated next to a small church in a rural settlement. Walled graves were found inside and outside the church, but the most significant discovery, made in 1983, was a mass-grave under a layer of lime, with bodies buried without a coffin, aligned and on four layers, dated to the mid-fifteenth century. Women, men and children of all ages were buried with great piety and care, with arms crossed above their pelvis: most were dressed in a long buttoned shirt. Coins were also found: there are a few cases of single coins, but a parcel of 27 coins was found by the skeleton of the adult woman in the upper layer of bodies (no. 37). The parcel contained low-value coins, including 19 bianchi of Pisa issued before 1317, 2 sesini and 1 denaro of Milan of Filippo Maria Visconti (1412-47), 2 quarti of Amedee VIII of Savoy (1416-39), 1 petachina of Genoa of Doge Tomaso of Campofregoso (1436-42) and one of Doge Giano (1447), which is the latest coin.

<sup>88</sup> Bernardino preached from 1417 to his death in 1444 and Tuscany was his homeland.

<sup>89</sup> G. Gamurrini, ‘Loro Ciuffenna. Di un tesoretto di monete lucchesi scoperto in una tomba della diruta chiesa di S. Miniato’, *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1894), pp. 309-12.

<sup>90</sup> L. Travaini and M. Allen, ‘A short cross hoard from near Pontremoli, 1822’, *NC* 162 (2002), pp. 397-401.

whole lot for themselves. The presence of the coins suggests he fell in some inaccessible spot, or was alone.

It is also possible “the constraints of Church law and custom were perhaps less rigid in practice than in theory”<sup>91</sup>. Any “dead man’s treasure”, needs to be checked against the notion of coins that were considered good and bad for the soul. Were these parcels of gold coins or high-value silver really deposited with the body during the entombment, or were they hidden there later in completely different circumstances? After all, cemeteries have always been favoured places for hiding treasures, and thus far graves in late medieval Italy are insufficiently documented for us to know the original condition of burial. In many cases, we know only of the presence of a hoard near human bones<sup>92</sup>. In any event, the distinct possibility that precious coins, and hoards of them, were deliberately deposited in late medieval Christian graves at the moment of the entombment is something that ought to be of profound interest not only to numismatists but also to church historians, historical anthropologists, cultural historians of *mentalité*.

### Conclusion

Many of the question posed at the outset remain unanswered. We do not know why the majority of graves in all periods of the Italian middle ages contain no coins, or why there is a minority that do. There must have been an element of tradition in early medieval graves, where we often find old Roman bronze coins together with other grave-goods, sometimes even in the graves of the wealthy. Coins were probably offered to complete the set of goods to be used in the next world, but the choice of the choice of an old bronze coin for a rich woman with gold ornaments points to some special significance given to the bronze coin. The low-value coins deposited in the tomb of St Ambrose at his first burial and again during the survey a century later were probably intended as pious offerings and tokens of memory. A change in burial practices occurred in the course of the eighth century and precious objects ceased to be deposited in graves while at the same time personal ornaments began to be listed in wills. Valuable objects were thus handed down to the living instead of being buried<sup>93</sup>. Occasional coins were deposited, at first evidently only in the tombs of the wealthy, given the relatively high value of the new Carolingian penny. Coins begin to become more common in graves from the twelfth century onwards, when the fineness and value of the penny had diminished. The element of magic here may have been the same as in the early middle ages with, probably, some occasional individual memory tokens as well. Most of the coins seem to have been contemporary with the deposition, though we do not have a large number of graves to study. If there was a difference between early and later medieval graves, this was probably due to church teaching that coins could be “dangerous” for the soul, as illustrated by *exempla* of preachers from the thirteenth century. Of course, literary evidence may paint a picture that conflicts with actual practice, but medieval people could not entirely ignore the preacher, particularly on their deathbed<sup>94</sup>. One or two-value coins, however, were probably not a risk. More dangerous from the perspective of Church teaching were silver and gold coins. It seems that “dead people’s coins” in the late middle ages had to be low-value coins, or else the dead would risk appearing unwilling to be separated from their possessions<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> J. Gardner, *The Tomb and the Tiara. Curial tomb sculpture in Rome and Avignon in the later middle ages* (Oxford, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> The need for caution is emphasised by Suchodolski, ‘Absence of mind or magic?’ (n. 4), pp. 317-27.

<sup>93</sup> L. Passi Pitcher, ‘L’altomedioevo: caratteristiche generali’, *Riti e sepolture tra Adda e Oglio dalla tarda età del Ferro all’Alto Medioevo*, ed. L. Passi Pitcher, Rocca di Soncino (Cremona) 1990 p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> See the painting by H. Bosch of the miser at his deathbed, tempted by a small devil offering him a money bag (Kress Collection, now in the National Gallery, Washington).

<sup>95</sup> Coins continued to be deposited in post-medieval graves: the synod of Otranto in 1620 ordered *sub poena excommunicationis* that no coin was to be deposited with the dead (D’Angela, ‘L’obolo a Caronte’ (n. 1), p. 87) but it certainly did not end the practice. A parcel of 44 silver coins and one medal of Charles Borromeo was found in a seventeenth century grave in Sardinia: F. Guido, ‘Ritrovamenti monetali nella chiesa di S. Giovanni a Nulvi’, *Annotazioni Numismatiche* 28 (1997), pp. 622-7. In 1740 G. Catalani’s commentaries to the *Pontificale Romanum* reported that ‘against our faith some people put five coins on the breast of the dead for magic’: quoted by Gamurrini, ‘Loro Ciuffenna’ (n. 89), p. 312.

I have suggested that coins in saints' graves can be interpreted in terms of "memory". They may have been tokens of official memory, is sealed in an urn during an official ceremony; or they were private memory tokens deposited as signs of devotion or pilgrimage, particularly when they are obviously forced into the tomb and not simply deposited on the altar. Tokens of private memory established an invisible yet permanent tie between the donor and the receiver. It is important to observe that ordinary pennies could be used as tokens of memory, as an object of everyday use. There is an almost total lack of written evidence on the custom of depositing coins in medieval graves: hypotheses are therefore needed, and must be tested. For saints' graves the memory value seems proved by several cases of strict coincidence between the dates of coins or medals and the dates of burial or surveys.

#### *Appendix. Some Exempla on Coins and Death*

"A dying usurer ordered his wife and children to divide his money in three parts; one for his wife, one for his children, and one to be buried with him. Since the money buried was a lot, his children tried to recover it during the night. When they opened the grave they found devils pouring into dead's mouth his coins turned into burning coals. The children ran away in terror"<sup>96</sup>.

"A dying man tells his treasure that, since it cannot follow him, he must send it away, and so he gives all he has to the poor"<sup>97</sup>.

"In the grave of a usurer, who had insisted that a purse of money be buried with him, two toads are found feeding his mouth with money"<sup>98</sup>.

"A nun hoards money which is found after her death and thrown into her grave; a few days later the grave is opened and the money is seen pouring into her mouth"<sup>99</sup>.

"A corpse is flung on a dunghill because money has been found on it"<sup>100</sup>.

"A miser's body is opened after death and the heart is found missing. It is found in a chest with is gold"<sup>101</sup>.

"At his death an avaricious master of a mint was seen in a vision being beaten on an anvil into the shape of a penny by a Jew"<sup>102</sup>.

"Before his death a rich, unrepentant man commands his servant to put all his valuables in a chalice so that he can drink them"<sup>103</sup>.

"A hermit does not want to touch a coin because it is money"<sup>104</sup>.

"A saintly monk dies and angels carry his soul toward heaven but their way is blocked by a gigantic obolus, representing a forgotten debt contracted while he was a secular; he was allowed to return to make restitution"<sup>105</sup>.

"An abbot will not accept money, even for the poor"<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Th. Crane (ed.), *The 'Exempla' or Illustrative Stories from the 'Sermones vulgares' of Jacques de Vitry* (London, 1890), p. 72. See also J. Le Goff, *La bourse et la vie. Economie et religion au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1986).

<sup>97</sup> F.C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum. A handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki, 1969), p. 375, no. 4962.

<sup>98</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 369, no. 4889.

<sup>99</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 260, no. 3351.

<sup>100</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 101, no. 1255.

<sup>101</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 197, no. 2499. This story is illustrated in a painting attributed to Francesco Vecellio (c.1511-12) in the Scuola di Sant'Antonio in Padua in which St Anthony helps to find the heart of a miser inside his treasure chest. I am grateful to Marcus Phillips and Susan Tyler Smith for bringing the painting to my attention.

<sup>102</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 29, no. 296.

<sup>103</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 76, no. 930.

<sup>104</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 92, no. 1141.

<sup>105</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 123, no. 1496c.

<sup>106</sup> Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, p. 261, no. 3360.