

ENCOUNTERS

IN THE BALKANS, THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA, 12TH-16TH CENTURIES

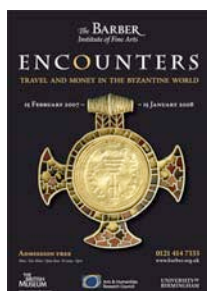
University of Birmingham, March 2007-March 2008




(The departure of Nicolò and Matteo Polo from Constantinople, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS Français 2810)

An international series of seminars, hosted by the University of Birmingham, which aim to discuss aspects of socio-economic, political, religious and artistic encounters in the late medieval and early modern Balkans, Anatolia, the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

All seminars are held in the Photograph Room of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts on Wednesdays at 17.00', and are followed by drinks and canapés and the chance to meet the speaker in an informal and collegial atmosphere. Abstracts and select bibliography are circulated before every seminar, so that participants can contribute with questions and discussion. Select papers will be published in a volume dedicated to the theme of late medieval encounters. For further information about the seminars, please contact E. Georganteli on: 0121 414 7332, e-mail: e.georganteli@bham.ac.uk



The seminars are part of activities around the exhibition *Encounters: Travel and Money in the Byzantine World*, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, 15.02.07-15.01.08. For further details on the exhibition, and to see the *Encounters* timeline, visit the Barber website at: www.barber.org.uk/coins

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First Seminar (28.03.07)



The Aleppo hoard (c. 1955) of thirteenth-century gold coins, the circulation of florins in the eastern Mediterranean, and the dating of Florentine florins during their first half-century

Speaker: **Dr William R. Day, Jr, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge**

Venue: **The Photograph Room, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Wednesday 28 March, 17.00'**

Abstract

The Aleppo hoard was reputedly discovered in early 1955 in the town of Aleppo in northern Syria. It consisted of about 630 gold coins, mostly Florentine florins with a small number of Venetian ducats and French *petit royals*. Evidence from the hoard itself and developments in the Latin East suggest that the hoard was removed from circulation or closed in connection with the siege of the crusader town of Acre, which fell to the Mamluks in May 1291, or else the capitulation of one of the other coastal towns that fell to the Mamluks in the succeeding months.

The importance of the Aleppo hoard is two-fold. First of all, it raises questions about the circulation of florins in the eastern Mediterranean in the later thirteenth century. The traditional view has long been that the Venetian ducat dominated the circulation of western gold coins in the region from the time of its inception in 1285. The discovery in the 1990s of another hoard of thirteenth-century florins in Acre's medieval harbour, evidently closed around the same time as the Aleppo hoard, now more clearly indicates that florins were indeed circulating in the eastern Mediterranean in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and other evidence suggests that they continued to circulate in the region in the early fourteenth century. This helps to explain the appearance of a few extremely rare imitation or hybrid florins struck in the eastern Mediterranean probably in the 1340s – those of the Turkish Emir Omar Bey of Aydin in Anatolia (1341-8), Robert of Anjou as Prince of Achaia and Taranto (1346-64), and Emperor John V of Byzantium (1341-91) – but it also throws up further questions about imitations of western gold coins in the Levant more generally and about the rise to dominance of the Venetian ducat in the region after about 1350.

The Aleppo hoard is also important because, when seen together with the *Logge de' Banchi* hoard of early Florentine florins and other gold coins found in Pisa in 1925 and datable to about 1260, it makes it possible to distinguish between three groups of florins from the so-called 'period of the unknown masters of the mint' (*maestri di zecca sconosciuti*). In 1317, the two masters of the mint in Florence, one of whom was the famous Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani, ordered the mint scribe to gather together the extant records of the mint and to collate them in a new book called the *Fiorinaio*, which has now come to be known as the *Libro della zecca*. The scribe was able to identify the masters of the mint and the respective *segni*, or privy marks, on the coins struck under their charge going back to the second semester of 1303, and he was able to describe many of the privy marks appearing on florins struck from 1252 when the coins was first introduced through the first semester of 1303, but he was not able to date them or identify the mint-masters under whom they were used. As a result, the coins of Florence from virtually the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards can be dated with a degree of precision unknown elsewhere in Europe, but the chronology of the earliest florins is still largely unclear.

The hoard evidence for florins of this period, though limited to the three hoards mentioned here, nevertheless makes it possible to identify three distinct chronological groupings: the first marked by the *Logge de' Banchi* hoard of Pisa and including only the earliest florins of Florence, from 1252 to

about 1260; the second marked by the Aleppo and Acre hoards and including florins dating from about 1260 to 1291; and the third including florins with privy marks not represented in the three hoards but known to belong to the period of the unknown mint-masters.

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About the speaker

Dr William Day is Research Associate in the *Medieval European Coinage* Project, based in the Department of Coins & Medals, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. He has studied at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC, and the London School of Economics. He is currently collaborating on the two remaining volumes in the *Medieval European Coinage* series that cover northern and central Italy, respectively, and is completing a book with Brill under the title *Florence before Dante: the early development of the Florentine economy, c. 1115-c. 1265*. He has published extensively on monetary history and numismatics. His teaching at Cambridge University focus on history and art history on Norman coinage, merchants and money in Italy during the commercial revolution of the Middle Ages, and the coinage of medieval Rome.



**THE BARBER INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS & THE SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

Second Seminar (2/05/07)



Thirteenth-Century Commercial Exchanges in the Aegean: Continuity and Change

Speaker: **Professor David Jacoby, Department of History, Hebrew University of Jerusalem**
Venue: **The Photograph Room, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Wednesday 2 May, 17.00'**

Abstract

The century following the Fourth Crusade witnessed major political and territorial developments around the Aegean, namely the dismemberment of the Byzantine empire after the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204, the Byzantine recovery of some territories culminating in the re-occupation of Constantinople in 1261, and the consolidation of Turkish emirates in Asia Minor in the early fourteenth-century. Research on the short and long-term impact of these developments on trade in the Aegean has so far focused on long-distance commercial exchanges between the West on the one hand, Byzantine and former Byzantine territories collectively known as Romania, on the other. Only minor attention has been paid in that context to short and medium-range trade and shipping in the Aegean itself, despite their contribution to trans-Mediterranean economic interaction. The aim of this paper is to examine developments in the production of foodstuffs, raw materials, semi-finished and finished products, as well as the supply of services to merchants and shipping within the Aegean region. In addition, it will attempt to assess continuity and change in these fields with respect to the twelfth century.

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David Jacoby has dealt extensively with various aspects of the Aegean in the thirteenth century. The following studies discuss the period covered by the paper or contain material relevant to its topic. Those listed with an * have been reproduced in the following volumes:

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About the speaker

David Jacoby, Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, has also served as guest professor at universities in the United States, France, and Italy. His field of research is western expansion in the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, with an emphasis on the encounters and interaction between the West, Byzantium, the Crusader states of the Levant, and the Muslims. He is the author of numerous studies dealing with the political, demographic, economic, social, and cultural aspects of this process. Collected studies have been published in six volumes of the Variorum Reprints series [*Société et démographie à Byzance et en Roumanie latine* (1975), *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XIIe au XV siècle: peuples, sociétés, économies* (1979), *Studies on the Crusader States and on Venetian Expansion* (1989), *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (1997), *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (2001), *Commercial Exchange Across the Mediterranean: Byzantium, the Crusader Levant, Egypt and Italy* (2005)].

