

# ENCOUNTERS

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

University of Birmingham, 2007-2008

Sixth Seminar (28.11.07)

### BYZANTINE COINS AS ICONS AND RELICS IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ITALY



**Speaker:** Dr Lucia Travaini, Associate Professor, Università degli Studi, Milan

**Venue:** The Photograph Room, Barber Institute of Fine Arts,  
Wednesday 28 November, 17.15

#### Abstract

To complement the 7th-century Byzantine coin in the Wilton Cross on show in the *Encounters* exhibition, the present paper discusses the image of a similar coin, framed on a cross-reliquary of 1602 in the church of Sant'Alessandro in Milan: the coin was part of a hoard of gold Byzantine coins found in Rome in 1586 in the foundations of the Lateran Palace and then distributed to cardinals princes and noble people by the pope himself. The pope was so impressed by the find that he issued a *bull*a that effectively transformed each of those coins in relics with indulgences. The complex story of the Lateran find, however extraordinary its papal interpretation was, is part of a long tradition of ritual uses of Byzantine coins –as well as non Byzantine ones– in medieval Italy.

#### Bibliography

Lucia Travaini, 'La bolla numismatica di Sisto V, i riti di fondazione e due monete reliquie a Milano', *Sanctorum*, 4 (2007), pp. 203-40

Lucia Travaini, *Monete e storia nell'Italia medievale*, Rome (Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato), 2007

#### About the speaker

Lucia Travaini, Associate Professor, Università degli Studi, Milan. From 1992 to 1998 she served as Senior Research Associate at Cambridge University, studying with Philip Grierson the Italian medieval coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum for publication in the *Medieval European Coinage* series. Previous experiences include research on the collection of King Victor Emmanuel III in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome and collections in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, and Oxford, Ashmolean Museum. She organized several symposia dedicated to medieval European coins: 1: mints and production (*I luoghi della moneta. Le sedi delle zecche dall'antichità all'età moderna*, Milan 1999); 2: coin circulation (*Local coins, foreign coins: Italy and Europe 11th-15th centuries*, Cambridge 1997); 3: iconography (*L'immaginario e il potere nell'iconografia monetale*, Milano 2004); 4-5: ritual uses (*I 30 denari di Giuda*, Milan 2006; *Valori e disvalori simbolici delle monete nel medioevo*, Milan 2005) (proceedings of nos 1-3 have been published; 4-5 in progress). Among her books of particular interest to our discussion are *Monete mercanti e matematica*, (Rome 2003); *La monetazione nell'Italia normanna* (Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, Rome 1995); *Storia di una passione: Vittorio Emanuele III e le monete* (Salerno 1991; 2nd edition, Rome 2005); *Monete e storia nell'Italia medievale* (a survey of coins in Italy from the 5th to the 15th century, Rome, 2007), and more in [www.luciatravaini.it](http://www.luciatravaini.it) with details on current research.

