Lucia Travaini, *The Thirty Pieces of Silver. Coin Relics in Medieval and Modern Europe*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN and Routledge, 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158 (2022). ISBN: 978-0-367-68802-8 (hbk). ISBN: 978-0-367-68804-2 (pbk). ISBN: 978-1-003-13911-9 (ebk) DOI: 10.4324/9781003139119

Lucia Travaini is best known to the readers of this journal as one of the foremost numismatists and monetary historians of medieval Italy, especially of the south and centre of the peninsula. She has authored countless studies, which range from specialist treatments of coin issues, coin finds, coin collections, and of documents pertaining to monies and monies of account, to broader monographic expositions. We may single out her editorship of the monumental *Le zecche italiane fino all'Unità*, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 2011, or the volume *Medieval European Coinage with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge. 14, (Italy III) South Italy, Sicily, Sardinia*, Cambridge University Press, 1998 (co-authored with Philip Grierson). For a full list, see https://www.luciatravaini.it .

For more than two decades, Lucia Travaini has also researched the non-strictly monetary character of coins (although, as she says herself, the monetary and non-monetary usage of coins are often inseperable). What determined the iconographies which adorned them, according to which diverse criteria did contemporaries evaluate the coins they came in contact with, which usages did they find for them other than means of wealth storage and transfer, and what might be the (often prolonged) afterlife of different monetary issues, etc.? *The Thirty Pieces of Silver* begins with this backstory, particularly with the inherent religiosity with which minting and coins were imbued in the pagan and Christian traditions (Chapter 1, "From the ritual use of coins to their creation as relics", pp. 1-20).

The Thirty Pieces of Silver, which has now appeared as an English translation of the Italian original edition *I Trenta denari di Giuda. Storia di reliquie impreviste nell'Europa medievale e moderna*, Viella, Rome, 2020 (translated by Andrew D.R. Colvin) in Routledge's *Religion and Money in the Middle Ages* series (general editor: Svein Gullbekk) is a very poignant and masterly piece of numismatic historiography. The author takes as the book's subject matter a sum of money which is 'amongst the most famous … in Western culture' (p. xvii), and gathers systematically and meticulously the pertinent material and medieval textual sources for the payment which the Apostle Judas received for his betrayal of Christ to the priests. These appear in two appendices, Appendix 1, "Inventory of recorded specimens", pp. 176-217; Appendix 2, "Collection of sources", pp. 218-238 (the second of which edited by Francesco D'Angelo). Some other primary source materials are added in the main chapters. Perhaps it would have been useful to create a more systematic listing of the visual sources for the Thirty Pieces, which Travaini draws on in Chapter 5, "The Thirty Pieces of Silver depicted as instruments of the Passion", pp. 76-101, in the form of a third appendix? Whatever the case, the author manages not only to reconstruct and explain a devotional practice, but to set it in a wider contemporary religious, ideological, and social framework. She also points out some of the more modern antiquarian repercussions of the cult of the Thirty Pieces. For example on early research into Jewish numismatics (Chapter 7, "The Thirty Pieces of Silver as Jewish shekels", pp. 139-144), on research into authenticity and legitimacy of coins, or on the curious conflation of the Rhodian coin type of Helios with the

bust of Christ (Chapter 8, “Through the eyes of the antiquarian and those of the devout”, pp. 145-161).

Noteworthy considerations emerge from Travaini’s inventory with respect to the coins that were gathered and kept in the in different parts of Europe as ‘actual’ pieces used in the original New Testament transaction. There is the geographical spread, from Ireland in the west, to Scandinavia and Russia in the north and northeast, to Rhodes and Palestine in the south and southeast, with a particular concentration in Spain, France, and Italy (see the map on p. 178). Most of the known coins are Jewish shekels or Greek issues. One coin is a Mamluk dirham. A high number of the Greek coins are issues of Rhodes, or indeed copies of Rhodian coins. Many of these coin relics are only known through historical observations rather than extant specimens, and most of these testimonies post-date the medieval period. This is not surprising, given on the one hand the general rise in travel and descriptive (religious) literature and the overall levels of literacy; on the other hand the fate in many modern European countries of religious institutions and of relics, especially those of more dubious character. The fact that most of the coins in question were considerably older than the medieval and modern periods adds to the overall chronological uncertainties. A Syracusan decadrachm, now in Limerick in Ireland, but of unknown provenance, may be considered the oldest extant coin relic of the Thirty Pieces, on account of its mount and inscription (‘QVIA. PRECIVM. SANGVINIS. EST’) which are stylistically datable to the thirteenth or fourteenth century (see no. 18). The now lost single Rhodian tetradrachm ‘unus ex trigintis’ from Brabant/Hainaut (both now Belgium) (no. 10), also has a reliable late medieval pedigree. Of some interest is also the fact that one lost Florentine specimen was apparently received from the Orthodox Patriarch on the occasion of the Council of Florence (no. 12). Generally, in the fifteenth century examples proliferate (see nos 20 and 24, perhaps 44, from Spain; no. 21 from Dalmatia/Croatia; no.4 from Palestine; no. 31 from Rome; no. 38 and maybe others from France). Copies made from known specimens, especially by Germans (see nos 22 and 9), add an interesting dimension to this spread. The coins at Malta and Rhodes (nos 19 and 30) were to some degree related, although the precise identity and status of some of the specimens remain difficult to reconstruct. Not only are we dealing here with another example of a transfer from East to West. In the view of the author, the coins at Rhodes (and Malta) reveal key episodes in the character and dissemination of the Thirty Pieces as relics, which considerably predate the expulsion of the Knights of St. John from the Greek island in 1522. As such, the Rhodian evidence is considered at length in the main chapters of the book.

With respect to the genesis of the phenomenon under discussion, in Chapter 2, “The coins of Saint Helena”, pp. 21-40, Travaini introduces the devotion and commemoration of the True Cross through Byzantine gold coins which were erroneously believed to depict Helena, mother of Constantine the Great and saviour of the Cross. The Knights of St. John took this western practice (back) to the East. Judging by many medieval testimonies, it was precisely at Rhodes that a conscious but gradual physical and semantic transition occurred in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This lead to the eventual replacement of one such Byzantine gold coin for an ancient Rhodian silver coin in the local church of St. John, in keeping with new devotional requirements.

Chapter 3, “Judas, the priests and the Thirty Pieces of Silver”, pp. 41-58, and Chapter 4, “The legend of the Thirty Pieces”, pp. 59-75, discuss some key ingredients to the rise of the Thirty

Pieces as relics in later medieval times. Respectively, the enigmatic figure of Judas and his deeds resonate with contemporary antisemitism, the importance of Christ's Passion, and the generally negative attitude towards money and monetary exchange; the prehistory of the actual coins, which take one back to Abraham and the Magi, receive some attention in the later medieval hagiographic literature which would in turn have enforced devotional practice.

These considerations, as much as some contemporary iconographical documentation for the Forty Pieces (Chapter 5, see above) lead on to Travaini's treatment of the primary record - material and written- in Chapter 6, "The Thirty Pieces as relics", pp. 102-138. This chapter is the core of Travaini's thesis, in which she pulls the different strands together, and interprets some of the lacunary pieces of information, to form a coherent picture for the emergence and dissemination of the Thirty Pieces in late medieval times. Absolutely central to this story is the Rhodian evidence (see above), which bears on many parts of Europe and involves some important ecclesiastical and lay agents. Stranger and more difficult to interpret are the outlying and rather early testimonies from 'Limerick' and Sens (respectively a Syracusan and Mamluk coin). As the author moves into the sixteenth century, the picture becomes more complex since different approaches co-exist: Christian devotion and scepticism, with a scientific and antiquarian frame of mind (see above).

Lucia Travaini needs to be applauded for this wonderfully researched and presented work, which has much to offer not merely to the medieval and early modern numismatist, but to people with a range of interests, for instance in popular religious history, in the history of numismatics, and in the non-monetary usage of coins, amongst others.

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