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Swiss and Italian Monetary relations: The Early Middle Ages (VI–XI cent.)

The Circolo Numismatico Ticinese organized on Saturday September 29th the first of a cycle of conferences entitled *Swiss and Italian Monetary relations* on the coinage of the Middle Ages between the current borders of Switzerland and the Italian Peninsula. The first of the three expected meetings was devoted to *The Early Middle Ages (VI–XI cent.)* and hosted at the cultural centre LAC in Lugano.

The congress offered the opportunity for specialists on early medieval coinage, coming from five different countries, to get together and present an overall and yet articulated framework of the complex monetary relations existing at the early medieval period within the subalpine region, which included northern Italy, present-day Switzerland and Central European states on the northern side of the Alps (Fig. 1). Early byzantine, lombard, merovingian and carolingian coins were presented in connection with new and old coin hoards as well as recent archaeological surveys. Stylistic enquiries, coin finds and archaeological contexts helped to spread light on coins' circulation, money usage, as well as on the large and little-known mints for the historical period considered.

The congress was structured in two sessions, morning and afternoon, including four speakers each, chaired by Giovanni Staffieri, CNT vice-president (Muzzano, CH) and Ermanno Arslan, Accademico dei Lincei (Rome, I).

The conference was officially opened by the welcoming remarks of CNT president, Fabrizio Rossini and a brief salute by the Canton Ticino Departm. of Culture representative, Raffaella Castagnola. Then the first speaker, Paolo Ostinelli (Universität Zürich, CH), aptly illustrated the geopolitical and historical framework necessary for putting into context the period relevant for the conference topics (*La regione subalpina nell'alto medioevo, secoli VI–X: un inquadramento storico*). He stressed in particular the important role of the regional dioceses (such as Como, Milan and Chur) as well as the understanding and location of the "border" in that time.

Arent Pol (Universiteit Leiden, NL) followed up providing an overview of the princi-

pal Frankish coinage in the Merovingian period struck in the area of today-Switzerland and northern Italy (*Coinage in transition: the Frankish experience, 6th–7th centuries*). His undertaking, i.e. the creation of a *Corpus des monnaies mérovingiennes*, is an important but difficult one, due to the extreme rarity of the issues, the coins often been known in only a few examples.

Giorgio Fusconi (Piacenza, I) spoke about the stylistic evolution on the tremissis of the Lombard King Liutprand, suggesting the presence of small, possibly unofficial mints in northern alpine Italy. Moreover, his analysis of some 400 known coins of Liutprand spread light on a group of coins bearing, on the reverse, with all probability, the name of local bishops – showing the power held by the local dioceses (*Evoluzione stilistica nei tremissi di Liutprando e probabile attività di zecche periferiche longobarde nelle zone alpine*).

The last speaker of the morning session was Guillaume Sarah (IRAMAT-Centre Ernest Babelon, CNRS Orléans, F), who presented the current status of research on the pre-reform Carolingian hoard found at Ilanz (Graubünden, CH) (*The Ilanz hoard: a reappraisal*). He managed through the study on the original material in Chur to confute some old established but wrong observations. Due to the utmost importance of this hoard further analysis should be done (also metallurgical ones); these are the challenges for the future.

The afternoon session saw as first speaker Simon Coupland (McDonald Institute of Archaeological Research, Cambridge, UK) who brilliantly illustrated some methods to assign to specific mints unattributed Carolingian coins of Louis the Pious, belonging to the XPISTIANA RELIGIO issues (e.g. to certain mints in North Italy) (*The coins of the Hermeneches hoard and the Italian mints of Louis the Pious*). The results of his methodology enable us to sort the content of the coin hoards (such as the Hermeneches hoard), providing thus a better understanding of the monetary circulation in general.

Monica Baldassarri (Università di Pisa, I) offered an overview of coin finds on the thyrrenian coast of Tuscany and on the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, with particular emphasis on the archaeological contexts in which they were found, crucial to deliver relevant data and information for a better

understanding of the historical period they refer to (*I ritrovamenti monetali in area alto-tirrenica tra il VII e il X secolo d.C.: tipologie, contesti e distribuzione*).

Michael Matzke (BHM Basel and IFS Bern, CH) focused in his presentation on the early medieval coins from northern Italian mints found in archaeological contexts of the central and north-eastern areas of today's Switzerland. His intervention provided a refreshing perspective about the circulation of those coins in the northern alpine region (*Tra Po e Reno: le monete italiane altomedievali in Svizzera centrale e settentrionale, secoli VII-X*).

Federico Pigozzo (Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie, I) drew an interesting picture of the trade routes in and around Venice and how commerce along those routes impacted the production of coins in the XI and XII centuries, suggesting convincingly the existence of auxiliary mints, flanking the activity of the principal mint located in Venice (*Dalle Alpi agli emporia dell'Adriatico settentrionale*). His suggestion is supported

by coins of the Italic kings Berengar I and Hugh of Italy bearing very singular characteristics, which distinguish themselves from those coins struck in main mints from Milan or Venice at the time.

The conference ended with an intensive and stimulating discussion, kindly chaired again by Ermanno Arslan. The conference organisation was carried out by the CNT, with Fabrizio Rossini, Luca Gianazza, Fabio Luraschi and Andrea Casoli among the main referents.

The event received financial support by the Canton Ticino as well as the International Numismatic Council, represented at the conference by François de Callatay. Three Swiss numismatic firms also provided generous financial sponsorship, namely Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Numismatica Genevensis SA, and Erwin Dietrich AG.

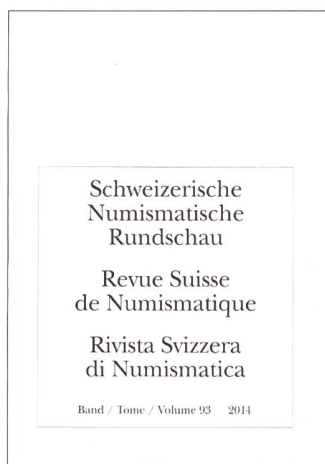
A volume containing the conference proceedings is in the making and scheduled to be released by Spring 2020.

Andrea Casoli

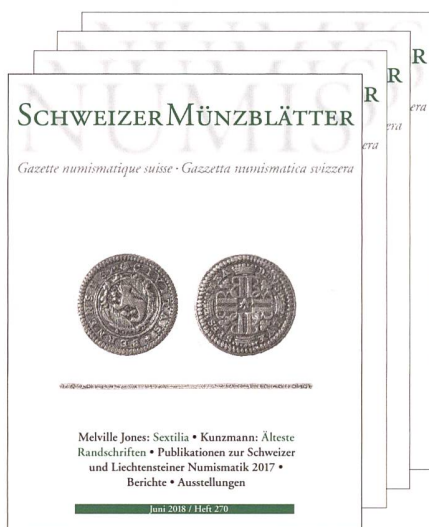


Fig. 1: Speakers and participants of the 1st conference on Swiss and Italian monetary relations.

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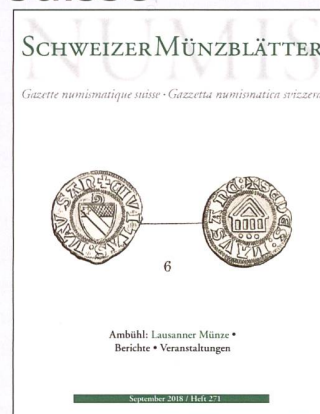


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