Introductory Bibliography on Medieval Numismatics

Whereas the numismatics of the ancient Greek world, or of the medieval Islamic world, for example, can be approached academically as somewhat coherent topics, the numismatics of the medieval Latin world is typically divided along national lines. The literature of medieval Spanish numismatics, for example, is largely separate from that of medieval French numismatics, even though some series of coins from various Pyrenean realms are included within both.

And numismatics in general tends to cross disciplinary boundaries, but in the case of medieval Europe there is less communication between, for example, archaeologists, historians, economic historians, and so on than there would be for the ancient Greco-Roman world. The study of the coins is often alarmingly disconnected from the study of the economic and political systems in which these coins were made and used. Like the strictly numismatic literature, the historical and archaeological literatures tend to be national rather than continental in scope.

As a result, beyond the relatively few general syntheses, medieval numismatics must be approached through the various national or regional specialist literatures in which the topic has been studied. This bibliography offers only a small selection of entrance points into these literatures, concentrating on relatively synoptic or recent works that will be most useful for starting research on a topic. Certain items marked with an asterisk (*) are particularly useful as general syntheses or introductions to the literature on a topic.

Overviews


Medieval monetary history


**The medieval economy**

These items, selected from a very large range of works in economic history, offer a mixture of grand syntheses with a few detailed views of how the medieval economy worked, something that is essential for understanding the role of money in it.


Money in medieval society

The social meanings of money can be complicated in any society, but they were perhaps more so in medieval Europe, when the dominant ideologies were profoundly anti-commercial. Nevertheless, money became increasingly indispensable, as buying and selling became an essential part of daily life.


Specific studies of coinage

In general, the coinage of medieval Europe is studied on a scale related to modern nation-states or smaller regions within them. This section is mostly grouped into slightly larger regions, with an exception for the early medieval period (roughly before the 900s), which differs in many ways from later regional trajectories.

The specifics of the many series of coins issued in medieval Europe are more than can be tackled by one author. The Medieval European Coinage project, initiated by Philip Grierson, is intended to provide overviews of all the regions of Latin Europe, but it is less than half-complete at this point. Where available, though, it provides a good overview with survey of the literature. Some regions, however, are only covered by a patchwork of more specialized studies. Some useful starting points are listed here, but more detailed study will require searching within the literature for the region.

Early medieval Europe


Morrison, Karl F., and Henry Grunthal. *Carolingian Coinage*. New York: American Numismatic Society, 1967. The most recent comprehensive study of Carolingian coinage; it has many errors but has not yet been replaced by anything better.


**Iberian peninsula**


**British Isles**


Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles. 64 (so far) vols. Various publishers. Large, long-term project to publish all major collections of medieval and modern British coins and tokens.

France


Poëy d’Avant, F. Monnaies féodales de France. 3 vols. Paris: Revue numismatique française, 1858–62. Out of date but not yet superseded as a comprehensive survey of coins issued within the bounds of modern France by non-royal (baronial, ecclesiastical, or municipal) authorities or independent states.

Low Countries


Holy Roman Empire and East-Central Europe

The many principalities of Germany are a difficult part of medieval Europe for numismatists, particularly because there is no modern overview but a vast literature on local series of coins. The book by Bernd Kluge in the Overviews section provides a recent bibliographical guide, and it is to be hoped that the projected three volumes in the Medieval European Coinage series will eventually provide a concise synthesis.


**Scandinavia**


**Eastern and South-eastern Europe**


**Italy**


*Corpus Nummorum Italicorum*. 20 vols. Rome: Reale Accademia dei Lincei, 1910–43. Massive publication of Victor Emmanuel III’s personal collection of about 100,000 medieval and modern coins of Italy, providing the most detailed compilation of examples in any single publication. Completed for the mainland, but vol. 20 is very rare and the volumes for Sicily and Sardinia were never completed.


* Travaini, Lucia, ed. Le zecche italiane fino all’Unità. 2 vols. Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2011. Encyclopedic inventory of places where coins were minted (or thought to have been minted) in Italy between 476 and 1860.

**Crusader states**
