Exchanging Values: Coins, Magic, Relics and Reliquaries

Mark A. Hall
Perth Museum. Collections Officer & Stirling University, Hon. Senior Research Fellow
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6118-5609

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Abstract
This contribution explores the use of coins both as relics and as elements of reliquaries. The focus is medieval Europe, but comparisons are drawn with Buddhist, Islamic and Jewish practices spanning late antique to post-medieval times. It delights in acknowledging and developing the foundational contributions in this area by professor Lucia Travaini.

This contribution sits at the intersection of cultural biography, the meanings of coinage and the cult of saints. It explores the use of coins both as relics and in reliquaries, primarily in Christian, medieval Europe but also drawing on some Late Antique Buddhist examples and some allied material of medieval and post-medieval Islamic and Jewish practices. It deploys the cross-cultural theory of holy relics developed by Stephen Hooper, which draws on ideas of the supernatural and the social beyond any one religious outlook[1]. The dynamics of re-using coins in the creation of relics and reliquaries will be explored with a view to seeking to understand why coins were so used. In addition to Hooper's theory there are two other inspirations: Firstly, Prof Travaini's recent wok in this area, exploring the manifestations of the Thirty Pieces of Silver, for which the apostle Judas betrayed Christ. From there we will broaden out into other apostolic connections and the reflection of both pragmatic and symbolic values and their magical underpinnings. Secondly, the insightful commentary by Philippe Cordez[2] on the intersection of coins and the development of Christian church treasuries in Carolingian France, whereby «churches became the custodians par excellence of the Carolingian 'treasures', which continued to be used in the service of imperial power whilst also moving closer to the 'spiritual 'treasures' endorsed by the churches»[3]. In part, this was demonstrated by the issue of the temple/*religio christiana* silver coins, showing the king in the garb of the Roman emperor and with his titles and on the reverse a church/temple with

1 Hooper 2014a; Hooper 2014b.
2 Cordez 2020: 26-28.
3 Cordez 2020: 26.

a cross inside and also crowning the roof[4]. In part this contribution also arises from the groundwork laid by my triptych of papers exploring biographical trajectories of coins in medieval Scotland and in a European context[5].

In one of those papers[6], I noted that the link between coins and ritual/magical/religious practices is almost as old as coins themselves – some of the earliest examples of coins found beneath the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, Turkey[7]. A notable reference to gold coins in Greek myth is potentially that of Dánaë, the mother of Perseus, born after she is raped by Zeus/Jupiter in the form of a shower of gold. The scene is referred to in various literary accounts (including Ovid's *Metamorphosis*) and depictions in art. The earliest depictions (e.g., on fifth century ceramics) do appear more drop-like than coin like but given the earliest Lydian gold coins (actually of electrum a naturally occurring pale yellow alloy of gold and silver) were quite crude in form perhaps leaves this open to interpretation. The depiction in the first century AD fresco from Pompeii (now in the Naples Archaeology Museum) has the gold falling in a liquid-like form but pooling into coin-like droplets on Dánaë's clothing. Certainly, by the later Middle Ages and beyond both literature[8] and paintings (including works by Titian and both Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi) depict the shower as falling coins and other objects of gold.

Coins then, have supernatural agency long before the development of Christianity and that religion's co-option of coinage into the cult of saints[9]. We can see something of its performance before conversion to Christianity in Late Antique/Early Medieval Europe. The early fifth century CE Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Mucking, Essex, England included several burials with Roman coins as grave goods[10]. The coins were found in both male and female graves with clear implications of amuletic use underpinning a jewellery function. There is surely validity in seeing this as a proto form of relicisation and can be compared with other examples such as the ritual deposition of Roman coins at Sculptor's Cave, Covesea, Moray, Scotland[11]. On the Continent, towards the close of the fifth century, in Tournai (present day Belgium), the Salian Frankish king Childeric was buried with massive ceremony. The status differentiation between Mucking and Tournai is clear, but they share in their performed funerary rite the selection of Roman coins to be committed to the grave. Childeric's burial is the only known inhumation burial with a mixed gold and silver coin hoard of 300

4 Cordez 2020: figg. 3 and 4.

5 Hall 2012; Hall 2016; Hall 2021.

6 Hall 2016: 145.

7 For more detail see Kurke 1999: 5-10, 164-165; Konuk 2012; Kroll 2012.

8 Bly 1995.

9 See for example Burström, Ingvardson 2018 for a wide-ranging discussion and examples.

10 Hirst, Clark 2009: 543.

11 Hall 2021: 244-245; see also Knight *et alii* 2019 and Hahn, Weiss 2013 for the wider context of interpreting older objects in much younger archaeological contexts.

coins spanning five centuries. They were probably selected for internment by Childeric's son and successor, Clovis[12]. The ritual helped to demonstrate Clovis' legitimate right of succession, one that recognised Roman and German precedents. Later coins in the hoard clearly carried Christian overtones especially in the linking of divinely approved Imperial power but this Christian layer was probably only a minor factor in Clovis' selection of the coins – Clovis did not undergo formal baptism until 496 CE after a victory in battle over the Alemanni, with a key pressure the Christian piety of his queen, Clotilda: in a rather Constantinian gesture, Clovis promised to convert if his queen's God brought him victory in battle. The perceived importance of Roman coins as signalling authority and divine approval is not confined to Christianity and the transition to Christianity as we can see with the inclusion of Roman coins in Buddhist relic deposits (e.g. *Table 1, no. 7*) and discussed below.

LOCATION	COIN & DATE	RELIC/ RELIQUARY & DATE	FAITH GROUP	REFERENCE
1.Nin, Zadar district, Croatia (former Cathedral)	Silver didrachm of Rhodes, c. 345-330 BCE.	Arm reliquary holding one of the presumed Thirty Pieces of silver. 14th/15th c – listed in the cathedral's 1412 inventory.	Christianity (Catholicism)	Domijan 1983: 34; Travaini 2022: 110-113, app. 1, no. 21
2.St-Maurice d'Agaune, Valais, Switzerland (abbey)	Susa denarius of Amadeus III, count of Savoy, 1103-1148 CE; Half-denarius or obol of Geneva, early 13th century.	St Candidus head reliquary, c. 1165 CE. Amadeus III was a prime benefactor of the abbey and his coin may have been deliberately placed in the reliquary on its completion. The later coin may have been a pilgrim votive.	Christianity (Catholicism)	Schnyder 1966: 99-100, 118-119, 121, 127; plate 40 a and b.
3.Trier, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany (cathedral)	Justinian II gold solidus, c. 711 CE	Sandal of St Andrew and portable altar, c. 980s CE.	Christianity (Catholicism)	Head 1997; Nees 2002: 239-235; Hahn 2011: 165-67;
4.Stupa no. 2, Bimaran, Darunta, Afghanistan (ancient Gandhara)	4 tetradrachms (silver) of satrap Mujatria in the name of king Azes II, c. 127-150 CE	Figurative, damaged, gold container of c. 150 CE, set within an inscribed stone container. Originally made for a relic of the Buddha, initially for veneration, perhaps elsewhere, before deposit at Bimaran.	Buddhism (Gandharan)	Cribb 2018; Errington 2017: 32-40; Errington 2018

12 Fischer, Lind 2015.

5.Manikyala Great Stupa, Punjab, Pakistan (ancient Gandhara)	Relic deposit 1 including 8 gold & silver coins ranging from Huvishka (153-191 CE) to Yasovarman of Kanauj (c. 720 CE) and including Sassanian and an Islamic coin. Relic deposit 2 including 5 Kushan coins of Kanishka I – 127-153 CE – and Huvishka – 153-191 CE – and a gold coin of Huvishka.	Deposit 1 within a gold reliquary casket, cylindrical with lotus motif lid, 2nd century CE (or later). Sealed in an iron box. Deposited 8th century CE. Deposit 2 divided across a small gold, reliquary cylinder and a copper alloy lidded cylinder both contained by a larger copper alloy cylinder; 2nd or 3rd century CE. The gold reliquary contained a gold coin of Huvishka, a minute gold coin and an inscribed silver disc. The smaller copper alloy reliquary contained a gold coin of Huvishka, bronze coins of Kanishka I and Huvishka and an inscribed silver disc.	Buddhism (Gandharan)	Prinsep 1834: pl. XXI.1 and XXII.21; Zwalf 1985: 11; Zwalf 1996: nos. 660, 666.
6.Stupa, Wardak, Afghanistan (ancient Gandhara)	66 copper Kushan coins of Wima Kadphises, Kanishka I and Huvishka. 2nd century CE.	Globular reliquary vase of copper alloy, inscription gives date of 178 CE, under King Huvishka.	Buddhism (Gandharan)	Zwalf 1996: no. 680; Jongeward et al. 2012: 156-158, 245-246, 288-289, no. 345; Errington 2017: 203-204, fig. 307.1
7.Stupa, Ahin Posh, Jalalabad, Afghanistan (ancient Gandhara)	In the relic deposit compartment of the stupa: 10 coins of Wima Kadphises (c. 113-127 CE), 6 coins of Kanishka, 1 coin of Huvishka (c. 150-190 CE); 3 Roman aurei of Domitian, Trajan and Sabina as Augusta (117 CE), a gold and garnet amulet containing single coins of Wima Kapdphises and Kanishka I.	Octagonal amulet box of gold, garnets and one piece of serpentine. 2nd / 3rd century CE.	Buddhism (Gandharan)	Raven 2006: 286-287; Errington 2017: 156-159, fig. 242;
8. Netafim, Eilat, Israel	Copper alloy manghir minted Cairo under Sultan Ahmad I (1603-17 CE)	No shrine but interpreted as an element of a magical assemblage from a pilgrimage camp.	Islam	Taxel et al. 2022: 151, fig. 10.3.

9.Amsterdam, Netherlands	Heitjes made from a Zeelandic silver six-stiver coin of 1750-93 and a West Frisian VOC stiver of 1786.	No shrine but these Jewish amulets invoked God's protection for whoever wore them or wherever they were placed.	Judaism	Knotter 2023.
10. Palencia & Castille, Spain	28 Islamic silver coins of 10th-14th century date and 2 Moroccan coins of 18th century date.	Part of a luxurious leather and red velvet belt adorned with a range of amulets including coins, a rock crystal skull and rosary beads.	Christianity & Islam	Hahn, Chadour-Sampson 2018: 80-89; Beer 2023: 393-394

Table 1. Medieval and Later Use of Coins as Amulets, Relics & in Reliquaries.

With that background in mind, I turn now to *Table 1* and an examination of a limited number of examples of coins used as institutional relics, as reliquary elements, or as magically imbued amulets, which often worked as a personal form of relic, within Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. No doubt, this could be expanded both within those groups (e.g. Orthodox Christianity, where the link between coins and supernatural engagement has been so well explored by Henry Maguire[13]) and by looking at relic practices within indigenous practices from around the globe, but this paper is not the place for a full cataloguing exercise, which requires more space and time than is currently permitted. The cross-religious cult of relics as opposed to the mono-religious, insular one is that outlined by Hooper, who defined it as a cultural practice with deep roots, 'a fundamental mechanism by which humans have engaged with sources of supernatural power to derive benefit from them'[14].

Coin magic in Christianity

Certainly, in terms of surviving specimens, the silver relic and reliquary combination from Nin (*Table 1, no. 1*; Fig. 1a-d) can claim to be unique. Within an outer, monstrance casing (presumably added later) sits an upward standing arm (or rather forearm, the elbow replaced by leafy dagges. Its hand holds between its thumb and fingers a silver coin. We can imagine that this hand and forearm represents that of Judas, in the act of taking the money to betray Christ (albeit the Thirty Pieces were given as a group). The only other known reliquary, also 15th century (but no longer extant) that presented a coin in fixed form was that in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome. The coin was held in a

13 e.g., Maguire 1997.

14 Hooper 2014a: 190; for a medieval case study of this approach see Hall 2021a.

crescentic pedestal within in a temple-like reliquary[15]. Santa Croce was a centre of Passion relics (and the temple reliquary included a depiction of the Vernicle) so relics of the Thirty Pieces would be expected there. The Thirty Pieces as relics are also important in illustrating the darker side of religious belief, telling of an episode of betrayal in the grim story of a crucifixion. The relicisation of the story also helped to foster Jewish persecution in the medieval period. The coin in question in the Nin reliquary is a Rhodian didrachm (as it was in the Santa Croce reliquary), a type commonly selected as a Judas reliquary. Throughout the medieval period, various coins were co-opted into performing as one of The Thirty Pieces – including ancient Greek coins of various types, but also Jewish and Islamic coins deemed appropriate depending how the historical episode of Judas' betrayal was perceived and the knowledge of ancient coins[16]. Coins of course are intensely portable objects and so readily accommodate themselves to ideas of transmission and interchange, key facets of the ability of relics to move between religions[17].

Fig. 1. a: Reliquary of Judas Thirty Piece, b: the arm and coin, c: detail of hand and coin obverse and d: detail of hand and coin reverse. Courtesy Lucia Travaini and Office of Tourism for the City of Nin and Museum of the Gold and silver of the City of Nin, formerly the Cathedral of St Anselm, Nin. Photography Marija Dejanovic, drawing Fabiola Malinconico.

15 Travaini 2023: 122-123, fig. 6.9.
16 Travaini 2022: 102-141, gives a comprehensive account of the varieties.
17 Hoffman 2001; Smith 2012.

Table 1, no. 2 summarises two medieval silver coins of the 12th and 13th century closely associated with the St Candidus head reliquary in the treasury of the abbey of St Martin d'Augaune, Switzerland. The reliquary was completed c. 1175 CE and the coins are examples of more informal additions to a reliquary that enact a manipulation of the relics power by the individuals placing the coins in the reliquary. The Amadeus III denarius was firmly embedded in a crack in the wood indicating its firm placement, perhaps in memory of Amadeus, a key patron of the Abbey or perhaps by the Abbey itself in thanks for his son Humbert III who paid off his father's debts to the Abbey and on the completion of the reliquary's making. It seems comparable in gesture to the placing of a silver groat of King Robert II of Scotland in the tomb of his son in Dunkeld Cathedral[18]. The second St Maurice coin appears to have been added in the 13th century, perhaps by a pilgrim, when the reliquary was on display (could it have been left to mark an early opening of the reliquary)? The coins lesser worth than the Amadeus denarius suggests perhaps that the votant was of a lower social class[19]. Both coins came to light in the 1960s when the reliquary was opened and conserved[20]. This identified at least two previous openings of the reliquary – the coins were treated very much as valuable aids to dating (cf. the similar treatment of coins in Buddhist reliquaries, discussed below).

Outside the context of The Thirty Pieces, perhaps the most significant Christian relic and reliquary relevant to this study is that of St Andrew's sandal, held in the treasury of Trier Cathedral, Germany (*Table 1, no. 3*; Fig. 2a-b). As I hope to show here, it may also be a further manifestation of the Helena cult.

Fig. 2a. St Andrew's sandal reliquary and portable altar.

18 Hall 2012: 84.

19 Blick 2014 explores the use of relics within lower social classes (distinguished by cheaper materials but the same beliefs).

20 Schnyder 1966.

Fig. 2b. End panel detail of Frankish brooch and Justinian solidus, treasury of Trier Cathedral, © Wikimedia Commons.

Well-known as a prime example of a 10th century/Ottonian work of religious art, the Trier piece is a skilful work of bricollage commissioned by Archbishop Egbert (r. 978-93 CE) that is both reliquary of St Andrew's sandal (specifically the sole of the sandal) and a portable altar dedicated to the saint (evidenced by an inscribed millefiori glass plate indicating its altar function and dedication to St Andrew)[21]. The upper surface is decorated with a be-sandaled gold foot and all the surfaces of the altar-reliquary are gilded and variously decorated with ivory, enamel plaques of the evangelists, gemstones and pearls. It has gold lion feet and suspension rings which would have facilitated both a stationary hanging display and processional display. A second inscription indicates it was also made to house the beard of St Peter[22]. It was likely made for the chapel of St Andrew on the north side of the Cathedral, also commissioned by Egbert, and where he wished to be buried. The short sides of the casket have further distinct decoration. The toe-end carries two pearl-studded St Andrew's crosses. The heel-end carries a centrally placed a garnet cloisonne disk brooch of 6th century, Merovingian date, with a gold solidus of the emperor Justinian I at its centre. The brooch then represents an initial appropriation of a Byzantine power dynamic, probably fully aware of the coin's issuing identity, perhaps as a consequence of the coin being part of an imperial gift into the Frankish

21 Head 1997; Nees 2002: 229-235; Hahn 2011.
22 Head 1997: 73.

kingdom. In his account, Nees particularly notes the use of the coin and the brooch as examples of *spolia* ('spoils' appropriated from one context for reuse in another) in which they provide imperial references as part of Egbert's elaborate programme to 'make Trier an imperial city by giving it relics associated with the apostles mostly strongly associated with the apostles most strongly connected with the traditional imperial capitals of Rome and Constantinople (where Andrew was the patron)'[23]. It's an acutely made observation that deepens our understanding of the dynamics of *spolia* and also of cultural biography, which underpin the memory work such relics were created to do for church institutions[24].

We can perceive further grain to this if we unpack further the treasury context and the coin context. Egbert, as the son of Theodoric II and Hildegard of West Frisia, would have been aware of his own imperial inheritance, which would have fused with the apostolic inheritance expressed through Trier's claim to have been founded by St Eucherius (said to have been sent to Trier, the former Roman imperial capital where Constantine's father had ruled, by St Peter; a claim heavily fuelled by Egbert's commissions[25]). The Trier Treasury also has a strong link to Constantine's mother, Helena, both in that same imperial past already mentioned and in the tradition that suggested Helena donated many of the early relics to Trier, also including Christ's Tunic, the Holy Robe, St Helena's amethyst drinking bowl of the 3rd/4th century and a 5th century ivory relief plate depicting a relic procession in a Byzantine court context, with St Helena the probable recipient of the relics[26]. The veneration of St Helena as the discoverer of the True Cross buried in Jerusalem, is well known (and signified by the later bust reliquary in Trier, used to house her presumed skull). It forms a further piece of connective tissue here which sheds further light on the potential meaning of the Trier sandal's use of the Justinian solidus. Within the cult of St Helena and the True Cross, Travaini identifies the practice of (re) identifying Byzantine gold coins as depicting Helena regardless of the actual minted attribution, specifically types showing two emperors on one side and Christ on the other[27]. The Christ identification remained but the two emperors invariably became Constantine and Saint Helena (*santelene*) and the coins were treated as relics and talismans.

Travaini cites there the earliest written description of this practice as 12th century, but we can presume that it was older before making this first textual appearance. In 10th century Trier, might Egbert have regarded the Frankish

23 Nees 2002: 231; Egbert also commissioned a reliquary for the staff of St Peter (now in Limburg cathedral) fully discussed in Head 1997.

24 On such memory work by relics see Hahn 2018.

25 Head 1997.

26 Schmidt *no date* 1 and Schmidt *no date* 2; Ronig *no date*; Angenendt 2011: 38, no. 14.

27 Travaini 2022: 22-40.

brooch, presumably already in the treasury (or perhaps a family heirloom), as depicting St Helena? and so apt to include in a larger reliquary in honour of St Andrew (like Christ, crucified) and deepen that imperial-apostolic fabric Egbert was weaving. There seem to be several elements of creating and maintaining memory here, some relying on inscription, others not. An example of the cultural creation of social memory[28] it nevertheless relies in part on the perceived understanding such objects as foci of supernatural engagement; the fragment of sandal, the gold, the coin and the various precious materials gather and multiply its magico-supernatural effects, creating a space for immanence[29].

Coin magic in Buddhism

In the first half of the first millennium CE, there was a strong tradition of treating coins – some of them bearing depictions of Buddha and some powerful leaders acting in his name – as relics and burying them inside reliquaries within monastic shrines ('stupa')[30]. They are represented here by *Table 1, nos. 4-7*. Much of the analysis of the coins has focussed on their dating potential and less on their social meanings within the rituals performed, though a renewed archaeological understanding of shrine function and dynamics in Gandhāra Buddhism[31] shows the potential. The complexity of the values they embodied is suggested by contemporary attributions of financial value to some of the relics. A 6th century text records that King Kanishka accepted in tribute Buddha's alms bowl, in lieu of a debt of 300 million pieces of gold[32].

Were coins ever primary relic deposits in Buddhism? Is a question yet to be fully answered, where coin studies don't focus on dating potential, they tend to focus on the iconography of the coins[33]. There is an implication that the coins, beads etc that are often found in the reliquaries in some way replaced bodily relics[34]. Perhaps the worldly value of this material marks out the intention in its placement as one of a donation to Buddha, to accrue merit[35]. The stupa at Ahin Posh, near Jalalabad, was excavated by William Simpson in 1879. A relic-containing amulet in the relic chamber was associated with 20 gold coins, including 3 Roman aurei, and itself contained 2 further Kushan gold coins (*Table 1, no. 7*; Fig. 3a-c). The amulet also contained remains of a small, dark substance. Simpson wrote a short note about this and placed it in the object; it reads:

28 Connerton 1989.
29 cfr. Sahlins 2022: 34-69.
30 Zwalf 1996; Errington 2017; Errington 2018; Cribb 2018.
31 Behrendt 2006.
32 Behrendt 2006: 87.
33 e.g., Cribb 2000; Raven 2006.
34 Brown 2006: 183.
35 Brown 2006: 192-193.

Within this Relic Holder - found at the Ahin Posh Tope near Jellalabad were 2 gold Coins - and a small dark Substance - to me indistinguishable as to its character. But being found in the Relic Holder I am inclined to think that it was the real object for which the Case was made - I cannot suppose that the Coins were the object of presentation. - The Relic may have been worn by the person whose Ashes were in the Cell - that is perhaps the most probable theory - but if we suppose that at the Consecration of the Tope which Ceremony no doubt took place when the Relics were deposited - (see Mahawamso for consecration of Singhalese Tope or Dagoba) - and the coins were thrown in as Votive offerings - It is a possible theory that this Relic-holder may have been deposited on the Ashes with this motive, - I think that the first theory is the most likely […][36].

Fig. 3. a: gold reliquary and b: gold coin of Kanishka I with 'BOBBO' (Buddha) reverse and c: aureus of Hadrian showing Empress Sabina (obverse) and Juno (reverse), from Ahin Posh, Gandhara, Afghanistan, in the collections of the British Museum. Courtesy and ©British Museum.

It has been suggested that these practices may relate to pre conversion to Buddhism practices of committing such treasures to the royal graves (noted as prevalent in dynasties living adjacent to Gandhāra)[37]. The two facets come together in some of the gold coins deposited at Ahin Posh – one of the gold coins of Kanishka I shows the king on one side making sacrifices and Buddha on the other side. Raven notes that this was the first and only use of Buddha imagery on Kusana coins and that it was 'just one of a wide range of deities

36 See accession record at: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-29; Zwalf 1996: no. 668; Simpson 2012: 29.

37 Brown 1996: 192-194.

from the pantheons of Iran, the Hellenistic world, Rome, and India, selected to express the king's concern for material abundance and prosperity of his realm, military triumph, legitimacy of rule, and divine sanction for his kingship'[38]. The Roman coins are three gold aurei of Domitian, Trajan and Sabina, empress of Hadrian. There is an obvious parallel here with royal (and other) pre-conversion-to-Christianity burials in pre conversion to Christianity polities (including the reuse of Roman coinage). It is certainly an area worth further investigation, but the practice of relic cults more generally suggests there is no problem in coins being secondary, votive additions and themselves touch relics associated with the figure commemorated (cf. the two coins from the head reliquary of St Candidus – *Table 1, no. 2* and the "relicisation" of the dinars made by Ibn Battutah, discussed below). There need be no fixed chronology to when the coins might be added, either at the creation of a shrine or after a period of display or as part of a redisplay.

Coin magic in Islam

Within Islam there is no longer any doubt about the depth and breadth of relic cults within that religion, many of them around cults shared with Christianity and Judaism[39] or overlapping sets of magical practices seeking to manipulate supernatural forces to the devotee's benefit[40]. What is perhaps still a matter of urgency is the cataloguing and communicating of the materiality of those cult practices. There are indications that coins could be co-opted into relic cults within Islam. In a previous paper[41], I noted Ibn Battutah's seeming act of coin-relicisation in the mid-14th century. Reaching South India, he encounters a Hindu holy man (whom he perceives to be a Muslim in disguise) and who performs miraculous acts; the encounter ends with the holy man giving to Ibn six gold dinars and Ibn comments: 'I was greatly astonished at our adventure with this person and kept with special care those dinars that he had given me'[42]. This has the hallmarks of a personal act of devotion to 'create' touch relics following a powerful encounter. This would put it in 'category 3 relics of other holy persons … group c. other portable objects', in the summary typology of Muslim relics suggested by Meri[43]. We may be seeing something similar, personal relic creation, in the provision of brooch-pin holes on an 11th century gold dinar[44]. For this pass, time did not permit the identifying of any coins directly

38 Raven 2006: 287, and see fig 13.1 and Cribb 2000.
39 Meri 1999; Meri 1999a; Meri 2010; Robinson 1999.
40 Leoni 2016; Akrap *et alii* 2018; Rassool 2019; Knotter 2023.
41 Hall 2012: 73.
42 *IB Travels* transl. Mackintosh-Smith 2003: 218.
43 Meri 2010: 119-120.
44 Porter 2012: fig. 111.

associated with a formal relic shrine. Instead, *Table 1, no. 8* summarises a coin which may have been utilised in magical practices at a pilgrim's camp – Netafim 2 – on the hajj route (the Darb al-Hajj) from Cairo to Mecca and Medina. The coin was part of a broad assemblage (including clay rattles, votive clay incense burners, clay figurines, seashells and coloured quartz pebbles) identified as of magical purpose, perhaps used on more than one occasion and possibly expressing the desire of pilgrims to have safety and security on their journeying. The practices may have been formed by one of the travelling group or by a professional sorcerer; in either event it was a common role for female practitioners. These rituals operated at a more personal level than the formal invocation of protection ceremonies held in major pilgrimage cities and often led by the pasha or governor[45]. Magical money is a notable strand of thing magic in the *Arabian Nights* corpus of folk tales the post-medieval impact of which, in Europe, is charted by Maria Warner[46]. She observes that the talismanic quality of coins act as a sort of bodily credit vouchsafing a ruler's authority and attributes the enthusiastic reception of the *Nights'* magical money to the fact that such talismans 'speak of the future not the past'[47], a contrast to relics, which she suggests were perceived as backward looking (by the 18th and 19th centuries), though they have a long history of eternalising the past and expecting it to act in the now and the future.

Coin magic in Judaism

For our final examples (*Table 1, no. 9*) we remain in the more quotidian, personal end of the spectrum of magical coin usage. Excavations at the Rokin end of the river Amstel in advance of the construction of a new Metro line im Amsterdam recovered thousands of objects thrown into the river and reflecting daily practices. The finds included two eighteenth century silver stivers which were converted to protective amulets or 'heitjes'. This involved cutting into a coin the Hebrew letter known as the 'hei' which is the *monogrammaton,* or single letter that represents God's name and so carrying very special sacred meaning and power in Judaism. They are a particularly common form of amulet in Western Europe and older examples are known. *Heitje* is also an abbreviation of 'heitbas', colloquial Dutch for 'five stivers', a reference to the 25 cents quarter-guilder coin, linking into the fact that 'hei' is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and has 5 as its numerical value[48]. There are layers of magical reinforcement here linking several sets of values. The role of coins, coin-like

45 Taxel *et alii* 2022: 166-167.
46 Warner 2011: 252-261.
47 Warner 2011: 261.
48 Knotter 2023: 400.

objects, indeed other forms of money – including a dollar bill[49] continues to play a role in Jewish Kabbalah practices[50]. The dollar bill fits all the characteristics of magical money and credit cards discussed by Maria Warner[51].

These magical coins of Islamic and Jewish practice brings us back to a further, final Christian amulet, now part of the collections of Museum Schnütgen, Cologne. It is the so-called Magic Belt, made in the 17th century, in Castille, Spain and using medieval materials of the 10th century and later, with additions down to the 19th century[52]. The belt is made of leather and a red velvet brocade patterned with gold discs (suggesting both the sun and coins) consistent with Islamic-Mongol manufacture in the 14th century. Dangling from the belt are a series of amulets including rosary beads, a crystal skull, a tropical nut, and a *figa* or hand. Along the length of the belt is sewn a 19th century silver St Anthony (?) medal, two 18th century Moroccan coins and 28 silver coins, mostly Islamic in origin and from al-Andalus, mostly 14th century and one of the 10th century. They are fixed by thread through holes piercing the coins, some with single holes and some with two holes, suggesting they may have had a previous reuse as brooches and pendants, presumably as amulets in either an Islamic or a Christian context. The whole gathering of materials that make up the belt have a history of use and the medieval date of many of its elements means they could well have been elements of personal/church relics/reliquaries. Its initial publication describes them engagingly as an assemblage of familial amulets, treasures and tools for prayer suitable for wear by a young adult/child[53]. That assessment also describes the coins as being re-purposed as emblems of Christian victory through the *Reconquista* in 1492, thus the coins signify Muslim culture becoming a client culture under Christian control[54]. If the belt was only created in the 17th century this idea seems a bit of a stretch – more likely is that the coins, already pierced indicating existing amuletic use, were reused because of this and because of their use of god's name in Islamic script. The wealth exhibited by the belt suggests that the young adult/child for whom it was made was of high status[55]. Equally one might expect if such a belt to be made for a holy statue that it displays such a wealth of materials in typical reliquary fashion. Before being acquired on the art market it apparently was offered as a votive to the Virgin in the Church of Herrera de Pisuerga (Palencia), possibly as a consequence of such belts being used in family situations being condemned

49 Akrap 2018a: 186.
50 Akrap 2018: 137; Davidowicz 2018: 98-99; Leoni 2016: 81, no. 71.
51 Warner 2011: 254-255.
52 Hahn, Chadour-Sampson 2018: 77, 80-89; Beer 2023: 393-394, fig. 381.
53 Hahn, Chadour-Sampson 2018: 82.
54 Hahn, Chadour-Sampson 2018: 85.
55 Hahn, Chadour-Sampson 2018: 80.

as superstitious, becoming, as ex-votos, "Virgin belts"[56]. There is a longer tradition of such magical belts, including those for use by pregnant women to protect them, and kept in the parish church, usually around a statue of the Virgin Mary[57]. Such dressing of medieval statues has been described as a 'medieval strategy for "keeping-while-giving"[58], which rather recalls the Carolingian treasury policy noted at the start of this paper. The Castilian Magic Belt may have been returned to the private domestic realm in the 17th century, but the magic of coins as amulets was still perceived as effective.

Fig. 4. The Castillian Magic Belt, festooned with coins, inventory number G699, © Museum Schnütgen, photo: Stephan Kube/SQB.

Conclusion

This discursive essay owes its inspiration to Prof. Travaini's ground-breaking work on The Thirty Pieces, prompting a broader, cross-cultural, cross-religious look at how coins were used in relic cults (both institutional – where they are always driven by a powerful individual – and personal, where the signature of magic is often more transparent), embodying religious experience at a social and institutional level and at an individual level, making them ideal as vehicles of collective and individual memory. They preserved tangible links between believers and the supernatural and created opportunities for spiritual and magical manipulations of the supernatural. Especially at a personal level, the fluidity of coins as manifestations of exchanging values[59] appears to have made them particularly fitted to help with this work of engagement with supernatural entities. What is perhaps surprising, given the widespread and socially diverse nature of practices deploying coins in various magico-religious performances, is why, outside the relative profusion of the relics linked to St Helena and to the Thirty Pieces, that there are so few coin relics/reliquaries in Christian practice. No doubt several have been lost due to destruction (including the Fourth Crusade sacking of Constantinople and the Reformation) and many votive additions

56 Hahn, Chadour-Sampson 2018: 87.
57 Gilchrist 2013: 176-178.
58 Gilchrist 2013: 178 and quoting Weiner 1992.
59 Hall 2012, Hall 2016, Hall 2021.

have been removed but the disparity merits further investigation. The practice within Buddhism seems to have been commoner, certainly within Gandhāra Buddhism, how widespread the practice was in the rest of Buddhism has not been explored in this paper. Additional, possible directions for further work in this area might include analysis of the cultural interchange of coins when fulfilling relic and magical practices. Several examples have been given in this paper of such socially diverse reuse of Roman coins, as well as cross-cultural appropriations (with Roman coins relicised in Buddhist practices) and the later medieval Christian appropriation of a range of ancient and contemporary coins of Classical, Islamic and Jewish origin.

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