

a few of the modern botanical synonyms and common names suggested; for example, Betson's *Anagallis* would be recognisable as our Scarlet Pimpernel, not a synonym for Comfrey (*Symphytum*). However, Thomas Johnson, in the 1633 edition of John Gerard's herbal, gives a synonym for Comfrey of *Alus gallicus* related to the French use of the plant in leather tanning, which probably caused Betson's confusion. It seems likely that his and / or his source's (Bray) transcribing was inaccurate. Johnson is also equally clear that the sycamore should not be confused with the European sycamore. Unfortunately, the editors have accepted the insidious modern 'correction' of 'sycamore fig', rather than retaining the accurate Biblical sycamore. Similarly Adams and Forbes were unaware that smallpox was commonly known by its Latin name, *variola(s)*. Betson's recipe for the use of rose water on the burning *variola* facial pustules was probably soothing, and may have helped prevent damage to the patient's eyes.

These are only minor errors, but, sadly, the book suffers badly from poor proofreading and compilation. Apart from the 'typos', the illustrations have been inserted in the wrong place (instructions to the printer were retained), part of Appendix 3 is duplicated, Appendix 1 may be missing (p 33 n 36; p 213 n 1), the bibliography is incomplete and unaccountably some reference titles have found their way into the index. These errors should have been removed with proper proofreading and adherence to standard conventions.

While these criticisms may appear to be unnecessary carping, these presentational and technical errors, in the view of this reviewer, undermine the otherwise careful and mostly accurate preparation of the text. Nonetheless, if the reader can overlook such shortcomings, they will be rewarded with much that is useful and worthwhile.

MARY SOUTH

doi:10.1017/S0003581516000615

*Medieval Coins and Seals: constructing identity, signifying power.* Edited by SUSAN SOLWAY. 288mm. Pp iv + 547, ills (some col), maps. Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, 2015. ISBN 9782503543444. €175, £124 (hbk).

Two of the essays in this collection have been published before. One is Brigitte Bedos-Rezak's

seminal article 'Medieval identity: a sign and a concept', in which she demonstrates the lack of continuity in the function and use of seals between the Roman period and early medieval western Europe, in the context of contemporary theology and philosophy. The other is David J Wasserstein's account of 'Coins as agents of cultural definition in Islam' in which he examines the forms of early Islamic coins, how they were seen at the time and their role in the spread of Islam.

Both serve as important background to the other twenty essays, of which many were presented as papers at successive meetings of the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo. The whole book is divided into five sections. In the first, 'Sigillography, numismatics and art history', Lucia Travaini looks at the messages conveyed by the designs of a Merovingian tremissis and a Milanese ducat. In the second, 'Minting policies in medieval Europe and the Middle East', Guido M Berndt, Lisa Mahoney and Wayne G Sayles examine the coins of, respectively, the Vandal empire, the Crusader states and twelfth-century Jazira, that is, northern Mesopotamia, and Susan Leibacher Ward compares a small carved bust in the cathedral at Le Mans with the representation of kings on contemporary English coins. A section on 'Medieval women' brings together work by Liz James on the coins of the ninth- to thirteenth-century Byzantine empresses, by Anna Gannon on women on early Anglo-Saxon coins, by Erin L Jordan on the seals and coins of thirteenth-century countesses of Flanders and Hainault, by Kay Slocum on images of Anglo-Saxon saintly women on later English seals and by Susan M Johns on early medieval Welsh seals. In 'Sealing civic, urban, rural, and corporate identity' John Cherry looks at the images on town seals in general, Elizabeth A New at London's common seal and Markus Späth at French civic seals, while John McEwan and Phillip R Schofield both examine the increasing use of seals, respectively, in London and more widely in England and Marcher Wales. In the final section, 'Coins, seals, medieval art and material culture', James Robinson discusses the spiritual and secular power of seal images, Jesse D Hurlbut the figure of the Lamb on the city seal and altarpiece at Ghent and Janet E Snyder the clothes that appear on carved figures and on seals in the twelfth century. Susan Solway then looks at antique coins introduced into medieval jewellery and, finally, John Cunnally examines a sixteenth-century drawing of six Muslim coins of the twelfth century.

The above brief catalogue does no justice to the collection. All the authors have something new and interesting to say about their subjects, and to extract a common theme is not so much difficult as impossible. All the same, most of the essays reflect the book's subtitle: they are looking at the designs of seals and coins with a view to bringing out the unspoken messages they conveyed; above all, statements of personal or corporate identity and statements of power over those who saw and handled them. Implicit in what several of the authors say, and set out explicitly by Susan Leibacher Ward (p 178), is that while we are accustomed to replicated objects in a vast variety of contexts, they were most unusual in the Middle Ages, and it was in seals and coins that most people would come across them, giving these objects a peculiarity, even a status, that is now difficult for us to grasp.

While the book's subject is coins and seals, nearly every contribution deals with only one or the other. Eleven are about seals, nine about coins; only two, by Lisa Mahoney and Erin L Jordan, discuss both, though several other authors make valuable cross-references. Thus, Guido M Berndt lists fifth-century rulers portrayed on seals as well as those on coins (p 89) and Susan Solway describes the 'long tradition' of medieval seal designs copying those of Roman coins (p 426). More, however, could be said of the relationship of coins and seals, not only in their impact on those who saw or used them but also in similarities or dissimilarities of design or wording. Stuart Rigold (Rigold 1974, 99–100) suggested that the design of Anglo-Saxon pennies was taken from contemporary royal seals, and that from 'all positive evidence, throughout history ... the seal-type has the priority and the coin-type is derivative'. It would be very interesting to know how far – if at all – this was a general rule: was the authenticating power of the seal used to validate the coinage by copying its design?

Other unanswered questions will occur to every reader of this book. But this is praise, not criticism: the essays are as stimulating as they are informative. They are superbly illustrated, with black-and-white pictures, mostly much enlarged, at the end of each piece, and nearly fifty of them are repeated in full colour at the end of the book. It is an important contribution to work on both numismatics and sigillography.

Rigold, S E 1974. 'Seals and titles', *Brit Numis J*, 44, 99–106

P D A HARVEY

doi:10.1017/S0003581516000469

*Seals and their Context in the Middle Ages*. Edited by PHILLIPP R SCHOFIELD. 290mm. Pp ix + 205, ills (some col), genealogical table, maps. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2015. ISBN 9781782978176. £90 (hbk).

This volume of essays arises from a conference sponsored by the Seals in Medieval Wales project to coincide with an exhibition at the National Library of Wales. The papers necessarily include a range of apparently disparate and unconnected studies, but as well as the three themes under which the editors have grouped their papers – Status and Power; Law and Practice; and Sources and Their Content – they also demonstrate the uncertainties and paradoxes in the use of medieval seals.

Some papers focus on the ways in which motifs on seals were expressions of power and personal authority. Nicholas Vincent's article on the seals of Henry II and his court considers how those seals explore the nature of twelfth-century kingship and Adrian Ailes revises the date of Richard I's second seal, demonstrating how its iconography reflected shifting networks of power. Brian Kemp demonstrates how one noble family – the Longespees – used the family's devices and arms on the seals of both men and women to express their authority, while Jörg Peltzer suggests that English aristocratic seals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries demonstrated family rather than rank within the aristocracy, in contrast to contemporaneous and comparable seals of the Empire.

Dealing with more problematic aspects of seals are papers by Elizabeth New, Daniel Power, John Cherry and Brigitte Bedos-Rezak. New's careful and detailed study of radial motifs on a selection of Welsh seals from around Kenfig demonstrates that it is dangerous to make generalisations. She argues that the use of a standard motif chosen by individuals of all social statuses and by communities cannot be dismissed as all alike, as what seem to be simple geometric designs actually divulge a range of detail which can reveal family networks. Power provides a detailed analysis of the seals on one document, the declaration on the Norman church of 1205, which reveals increasing innovation and experimentation in seal motifs that reflected the status of the sigillants much less simply than seals of the mid-twelfth century. Cherry's paper is a reminder that the seal was not the only possible form of legal authorisation for a document. He explores the ways in which late medieval Italy made use of the notarised as well as the sealed instrument. Bedos-Rezak considers the place of learned