

The Charles and Joanna Silver Coinage of Santo Domingo, 1542-1552  
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Collecting Santo Domingo coins from the earliest days of the mint under Spanish rulers Charles and Joanna is a daunting challenge. Fewer than 100 are known from the study of sales through public auctions, although there are likely many more in private collections that have not seen the light of day for many years. This study was undertaken to compare the coins from the so-called “Pewter Wreck” with the currently known specimens. Even though many colonial Santo Domingo coins are one-of-a-kind, there are trends that allow for comparison and contrast.

The earliest Spanish colonial silver coins struck under Charles and Joanna in Santo Domingo are much rarer than their counterparts from the Mexico City mint, and while their designs are fundamentally the same, the execution of design on Santo Domingo’s products is generally much cruder. Our Treasure Auction #14<sup>1</sup> features an offering of tenshipwreck<sup>2</sup> Charles and Joanna Santo Domingo coins—more coins of this type than have ever been offered in one place. The last major auction of these coins was *Coins, Token and Medals from the West Indies*, the 1975 Jess Peters, Inc., auction of the Ray Byrne collection, which presented nine specimens, two of each known denomination—½ real, 1 real, 2 reales, 4 reales—plus a controversial 10 reales.<sup>3</sup> Treasure Auction #14 on October 30, 2013, features one ½ real, one 1 real, five 2 reales and three 4 reales, a distribution of denominations that mirrors the total population of known examples, which so far number less than a hundred in all.

The Santo Domingo mint began operating about six years after the start of the Mexico City mint and produced silver coins from 1542 to 1552. The paucity of coins compared to the thousands known from the Mexico City mint over the same time period may be due to lack of native silver and/or demand. The design of the coins was based on those used in Mexico City and followed the same royal decree: On one side was a simple crowned castles-and-lions shield with a pomegranate at the bottom of the shield, assayer and denomination to the right and left of the shield, legend lettering with stops to separate the

<sup>1</sup>For conciseness we refer to each Sedwick auction as “Treasure Auction #X,” even though the actual titles might include U.S. and World Coins.

<sup>2</sup> The shipwreck has not been positively identified but for now is known as the mid-1500s “Pewter Wreck” for the large cargo of English pewter yielded to salvagers with Anchor Research and Salvage in 2011. All but one of the Santo Domingo coins offered in Treasure Auction #14 were recovered together in one small conglomerate.

<sup>3</sup> There is one more rare “silver” denomination known, the billon (copper-silver mix) 11 maravedís, an example of which appeared in our Treasure Auction #7 (lot 1135). A contemporary series of pure copper coins from Santo Domingo is common and not considered worthy of advanced research. The one-of-a-kind 10 reales is almost conjectural, as the Byrne specimen is believed to be counterfeit and no genuine specimens have appeared on the market for several lifetimes; at least three specimens exist, however, proven genuine by their appearance in publications dating back as far as 1576. See the article “Paper Chase: The 10 Reales of Santo Domingo” by John M. Kleeberg in *Money of the Caribbean* (ed. by Richard Doty, ANS, 2006). Also, there are reports of ¼ reales, particularly in the Isaac Rudman collection, but we have not seen them to confirm.

words; and on the other side weretwo crowned pillars of Hercules with a banner running between the pillars, inside of which was some form of the word PLVS, mintmark on either side of the pillars, and legend lettering with stops to separate the words.

Unlike the coins from the Mexico City mint, there seems to be no consistency in placement of devices such as assayer, denomination, or mintmarks on the Santo Domingo coins; placement of castles and lions in the quadrants (“proper” being castles top-left and bottom-right, “transposed” being lions top-left and bottom-right); style of lettering (Gothic, modified Gothic, Latin); or even what the lettering spelled out. For example, of the twenty-nine known 2 reales, there are fifteen different legends on the pillars side of the coins. And, curiously, the Santo Domingo mint chose to spell the co-regent’s name as IHOANA or IYOANA (or variants thereof) instead of IOHANA, as was the convention in Mexico City. Even the predominant stop of ♣ used in Santo Domingo was unknown in Mexico City.<sup>4</sup> Apparently the mint was given some leeway in its creation and use of design features not spelled out in the royal decree.

Assayer F, for Francisco Rodríguez, was the only assayer of Santo Domingo Charles and Joanna coinage. His initial does not appear on the ½ reales, is sometimes missing from the 1 and 2 reales, and always appears on the 4 reales. The denomination on the opposite side of the shield from his initial follows the same pattern. On the other hand, S and P, the mintmarks for Santo Domingo, almost always appear on the pillars side of the coins, either as S-P or P-S (and often with retrograde S). Why S-P for Santo Domingo? No one knows for sure, the leading theories being that the original name of the city was Santo Domingo del Puerto and also bore the nickname Santo Domingo Ciudad Primada; but in any case the theory that Spain didn’t send a D punch is certainly not valid, as the letter D properly appears in the legends.

The following is a summary of variations on the coins by denomination and how Treasure Auction #14 coins fit within that context:

#### ½ Real (Treasure Auction #14, lot 332)



There are four die varieties for the fourteen ½ real coins studied with two varieties containing only one coin. Nine coins fall into the most common variety, and **Lot 332** falls into the less common variety of the four (of which there are three coins). The differences between the varieties are the types of stop between the lettering in the legends and the legends themselves (one of the unique coins also bears a different interior on the pillars side). The more common stop is ♣, which is typical of other denominations, while the less common stop is ◐ (unknown on any other denomination). The unique coins have stops with multiples of the ◐ ornament in different arrangements, some unseen elsewhere.

The legends of the most common variety read ♣C/R♣OLVS♣ET♣IHO/AN/RI✕ on the shield side and ♣C/R♣OLVS♣ET♣IHO/AN/R✕ on the pillars side. The legends of the less common variety read ♣C/ROLVSoEToIHoo/AN/◐REISIP/ on the shield side and ♣C/ROLVSoEToIHO/AN/◐REISIP on the pillars side. The legends of the unique coins have a motto all their own.

In general, the two more common varieties are characterized by Latin lettering in the legends with the use of a makeshift A created by inverting the letter V (here represented as /); crowned pillars containing a horizontal banner with only a P inside, flanked on the outside by mintmark P-S; and a crowned Gothic KY (although the initials more resemble modern RV) for the regents’ initials on the interior of the other side. The unique coins tend toward a more Gothic style of lettering or a mixture of Gothic and Latin. These coins are a virtual hodgepodge and may have been early experiments at the mint.

<sup>4</sup>For convenience, the Treasure Auction #14 catalog lot listings refer to the ornaments verbally and not symbolically, hence “cloverlike ornament” instead of ♣.

**Lot 332** has a variation seen on only one other coin (from the same shipwreck but not in the auction):beneath the KY on the interior of the shield side is a flower with petals.All other varieties have ♣♣(two clovers, one on top of the other, stem-to-stem), a device seen again as a stop on the 2 reales.

### 1 Real (Treasure Auction #14, lot 331)



Seventeen 1 reales were studied, one being **Lot 331**. These coins are characterized by hybridized lettering in the legends—partly Gothic and partly Latin.On the shield side, the legend reads CAROLVS ET IOHANA in some manner, and the only device used as a stop is the ♣, with the exception of **Lot 331** and another coin which reads CAROLVSETIHOANA : RE. There are five varieties of legend lettering (fewer than with 2 and 4 reales), with six coins falling into a single variety. There are ten varieties of legend lettering on the pillars side (more in line with the amount of variety with 2 and 4 reales), two of which are the most common (eight coins total) and the others unique or almost unique. Some legends bear a makeshift A by inverting the letter V.

The shields contain castles and lions in proper or transposed quadrants, beneath which is a pomegranate whose compartment is either wide or narrow. Most of the time there is no assayer or denomination to the left and right of the shield (eight coins, one of which is **Lot 331**). There is a 3-dot variety in which the dots are aligned vertically to the left and the right of the shield (five coins). It is unknown why this convention was adopted and it certainly doesn't fit with the type of denomination marks found on the 2 and 4 reales.

The pillars-side legends contain ten variations, most of them spelling out some form of CAROLVS ET IHOANA RE, preceded by the cross ornament ✠ (note the 2 and 4 reales have two types of cross ornament), while the others show some form of REGIS ISPANIARVM INDIARVN. Misspellings abound. Retrograde S's in REGIS and ISPANIARVM are found on a few coins. Two coins bear a makeshift A made by inverting a V. The legend on **Lot 331** reads CRAOLVS ET IHOANAREGESIS.

On the pillars-side interior, crowned pillars contain a banner with initials P or S (or retrograde S) to the left, P or S to the right, and PL, PLV or LV within the banner. Sometimes the S and P are larger than the other letters, and sometimes they are positioned above the banner. There are eight crown styles, with two the most common and the others unique or almost unique. This is similar to the number of crown styles on 2 and 4 reales. **Lot 331** falls into a style shared by only one other coin.

There are two types of stops used in the legends on either or both sides of the coin to separate words: the predominant stop, ♣, and :, which is found on only five coins, one of which is **Lot 331**, and is the only specimen to contain : on both sides. Also unusual on this coin is the mistaken spelling CRAOLVS instead of CAROLVS in the pillars side legend; there is only one other coin with this mistake and two are known on the 2 reales.

## 2 Reales (Treasure Auction #14, lots 326, 327, 328, 329 and 330)



There are twenty-nine 2 reales in the population census, five of which are included in this auction. These and the 4 reales are the most common denominations of Santo Domingo silver coinage. They also have the largest variety of lettering styles, stops used between words in the legends, and pillar crown types. Some of the legends contain primarily Gothic lettering while others are a mix of Gothic and Latin lettering and all spell out CAROLVS ET IOHANA in some manner on the shield side. The types of devices used for stops on both sides include ♣, ♣♣ (two clovers, one on top of the other, stem-to-stem), ▲, \*, ∴, ●, a triangle made of o's, and a cross made of four o's (a unique variety). By far, the most common shield-side stops are the ♣♣ (nine coins). On this variety, the mixture of Gothic and Latin lettering reads CAROLVS ♣♣ ET ♣♣ IYOANA. **Lot 328** bears this legend while the other four auction coins have four different legends with two being unique. There are also two coins bearing the lettering CHAROLVS on the pillars side, and these are probably earlier types since they also use Gothic lettering. While several coins bear a retrograde S in CAROLVS (including **Lots 327** and **328**), none bears the makeshift A made from an inverted Von the shield side. Only one coin bears a different style of E from the norm, more like a modified Gothic letter. One auction coin, **Lot 330**, is probably an early type given that the lettering on both sides is Gothic.

The shield contains castles and lions in proper or transposed quadrants, beneath which is a pomegranate whose compartment is either wide or narrow. The assayer's F is either to the left or right of the shield and the denomination (ii) is on the opposite side. Two of the coins bear neither F nor ii. Of the two predominant styles, four out of five of the auction coins fall into one or the other. The fifth, **Lot 328**, contains a unique combination.

Pillars-side legends are quite variable with fifteen different legends recorded. None is a clear favorite. Even what the legend says is capricious, with nine legends containing some form of CAROLVS ET IHOANA REIS and six containing some form of REGIS ISPANIA INDIARVN. Two cross types appear before CAROLVS or REGIS, ✠ or ✣. There are misspellings and omitted letters on several. The unusual E appears on a few coins, including two of the auction coins, **Lot 328** and **Lot 329**, as does the retrograde S in REGIS and ISPANIARVM. A few coins bear the makeshift A.

On the interior of the pillars side, there are ten crown-style variations above the Pillars of Hercules, the only clear favorite being a style found in five coins, three of which are in the auction: **Lot 327**, **Lot 328**, and **Lot 329**. The mintmarks and banner mottos begin with S or retrograde S, P, oPo, \*P\* or \*P followed by PLVS, PLV, LVS, PL, LV or PV within the banner. To the right of the banner is P, S, oSo, \*S, or oP. Sometimes the S and P are much larger than the other lettering, and sometimes they are positioned above the height of the banner. The auction coins fall within three crown styles, the most common of which is what the three coins mentioned above fall into. Curiously, one pillars-side die shows an arch linking the tops of the crowns, with \*-P to left, \*-S to right and a row of three \*'s at bottom (four coins bear this, none of which is an auction coin).

## 4 Reales (Treasure Auction #14, lots 323, 324 and 325)



As with the 1 and 2 reales, the execution of design on the thirty 4 reales studied is widely variable. Legend lettering on both sides can be Gothic, a mixture of Gothic and Latin, or Latin. There are five census coins (but no auction coins) which contain Gothic lettering on both sides, clearly early mint products. Spelling errors are similar to 2 reales coins with instances of CHAROLVS and YOHANA. On the shield side, only one of the twelve lettering styles predominates (with six coins), and the three auction coins are not of this style. Stops between words on the shield side are ♣, ▲ and a cross made of four o's. The shield-side legends read CAROLVS ET IHOANA RE with several variations. Some legends bear a retrograde S at the end of CAROLVS and some bear the makeshift A (all three auction coins have one or more of these characteristics).

Just as with the 1 and 2 reales, the shield is composed of either proper or transposed castles and lions, with a pomegranate inside either a wide or narrow compartment below, and the assayer F and denomination to either the left or right of the shield. There is also a probable early type of assayer-F mark on three coins—an F with an elongated tail. The denomination invariably appears as oiiii. The predominant two designs are: F-oiiii, proper castles and lions, wide pomegranate (**Lot 323** and **Lot 325**); and F-oiiii, transposed castles and lions, narrow pomegranate. **Lot 324** is one of two coins with the denomination to the left and F to the right.

Ten lettering variations are found on the pillars side of the coins. Some form of C(H)AROLVS ET IHOANA RE or REGIS ISPANIA ET INDIARVN is spelled out with three different variations of stops between words: ♣, : and a cross made with four o's. Lettering is Gothic, a mixture of Gothic and Latin, or Latin. The cross before the lettering is either ✕ or ✚. No one style predominates and some of the coins bearing Gothic lettering are unique. These coins, combined with the elements on the shield side, were clearly made early in the minting process. These are also the coins that bear the early style of assayer mark. The auction coins fall into the later styles.

There are nine crown style variations on the pillars side with one style found on eight coins, one of which is **Lot 323**. As with the other denominations, the mintmark can be S or retrograde S to the left and P to the right of the pillars, or the opposite. In some cases, the S and P are elevated above the banner between the pillars. In the earliest coins, there are three o's in a triangle above and below the S and P. Within the banner are PL, PLV, LV, or PLVS. Somewhat confusingly, three coins (including two auction coins, **Lot 324** and **Lot 325**) bear P and S within the banner (motto) and to the left and right of the pillars (mintmark). **Lot 325** is probably a die match with two other coins studied: VQR #6831 (which is also Burzio #824)<sup>5</sup> and Lot 1547 from our Treasure Auction #8. **Lot 324** is a probable die match with Estrella #2 (which is also Calicó #92).<sup>6</sup>

The following is a list of Charles and Joanna Santo Domingo silver coins sold at auction. It is not exhaustive or complete but gives the reader an idea of how few coins ever reach the market. The other coins used for this study are listed in general reference works such as Burzio, Calicó, Estrella, Paoletti, and VQR. A few others were from the collection of Isaac Rudman, who kindly allowed them to be studied.

<sup>5</sup> VQR refers to Vidal Quadras y Ramón, Manuel, *Catálogo de la colección de monedas y medallas de Manuel Vidal Quadras y Ramón de Barcelona* (1892). Burzio refers to Burzio, Humberto F., *Diccionario de la monedabispánicoamericana* (1958).

<sup>6</sup> Estrella refers to Estrella Gómez, Miguel, *Monedas dominicanas* (1979). Calicó refers to Calicó, X., *Numismática española* (2008).

## Charles and Joanna Santo Domingo Silver Coins Sold at Auction

### **½ Real**

Lot 3722, Henry Christensen Auction of the Parsons Collection, March 1966  
Lot 1108, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 1109, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 476, Ponterio & Wyatt Sale #4, June 1981  
Lot 521, Freeman Craig & Co. Auction, November 1981  
Lot 1705, Ponterio & Associates Auction #61, February 1993 (Estrella #5 plate coin and Lot #1108, Ray Byrne Collection)  
Lot 1134, Sedwick Treasure Auction #7, April 2010  
Lot 872, Sedwick Treasure Auction #11, April 2012

### **1 Real**

Lot 1106, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 1107, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 1707, Ponterio & Associates Auction #61, February 1993 (Lot #1106, Ray Byrne Collection)  
Lot 16859, Heritage Auction #410, June 2006 (Lot#1106, Ray Byrne Collection)

### **2 Reales**

Lot 1104, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 1105, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 705, Henry Christensen Auction #79, December 1981 (Estrella #1 plate coin and Byrne #1105)  
Lot 162, Superior Galleries Auction of Paul Karon Collection, December 1992 (Paoletti #29 plate coin/Estrella #4 plate coin/Isaac Rudman #5672)  
Lot 1707, Ponterio & Associates Auction #61, February 1993  
Lot 1463, Ponterio & Associates Auction #96, September 1998  
Lot 2139, Ponterio & Associates Auction #129, January 2004  
Lot 2101, Ponterio & Associates Auction #137, January 2006  
Lot 8230, Ponterio & Associates Auction #152, January 2010 (pedigreed to Lot 728, Ponterio & Associates Auction #147, September 2008 and Lot 16860, Heritage Auction #410, June 2006)  
Lot 1133, Sedwick Treasure Auction #7, April 2010 (pedigreed to Lot 2335, Ponterio & Associates Auction #93, March 1998)

### **4 Reales**

Lot 3721, Henry Christensen Auction of the Parsons Collection, March 1966 (probably Isaac Rudman coin #4647)  
Lot 1102, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 1103, Jess Peters Auction of Ray Byrne Collection, June 1975  
Lot 161, Superior Galleries Auction of Paul Karon Collection, December 1992 (die match to Lot 323, Sedwick Treasure Auction #14, October 2013)  
Lot 1708, Ponterio & Associates Auction #61, February 1993 (Estrella #7 plate coin)  
Lot 2474, Swiss Bank Corp Auction #39, January 1996 (Calicó #94 plate coin)  
Lot 1488 Ponterio & Associates Auction #88, June 1997 (Paoletti #27 plate coin)  
Lot 1162, Ponterio & Associates Auction #92, February 1998 (Calicóand Burzio #825 plate coin and pedigreed to Lot 12, Swiss Bank Corp Auction #27, September 1991; Lot 837, Christie's Norweb Collection, May 1985, and Lot 422 Henry Christensen Auction, October 1959)  
Lot 87, Cayon Auction, December 2003 (Calicó and Paoletti #28 plate coin)  
Lot 739, Stack's Auction, January 2004  
Lot 740, Stack's Auction, January 2004 (Burzio #828 plate coin)  
Lot 1547, Sedwick Treasure Auction #8, October 2010 (pedigreed to Lot 598, Ponterio Auction #108, August 2000)

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