

The Charles and Joanna Silver Coinage of Santo Domingo, 1542-1552

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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. Treasure Auction #14[1] featured an offering of ten shipwreck[2] 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.[3] The sale featured 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 words; and on the other side were two 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-seven 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 M used in Santo Domingo was unknown in Mexico City.[4] 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:

½ Real (Treasure Auction #14, lot 332) – October 30, 2013



There are two die varieties for the eleven $\frac{1}{2}$ real coins studied, and **Lot 332** falls into the much less common variety of the two (of which there are three coins). The differences between the two varieties are the type of stop between the lettering in the legends and the legends themselves. The more common stop is M, which is typical of other denominations, while the much less common stop is o (unknown on any other denomination).

The legends of the more common variety read MC\RMOLVSMETMIHO\N\RIX on the shield side and MC\RMOLVSMETMIHO\N\RX on the pillars side. The legends of the less common variety read MC\ROLVSoEToiHoo\N\oREISIP\ on the shield side and MC\ROLVSoEToiHO\N\oREISIP on the pillars side.

In general, both 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 Λ); 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.

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 MM (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) – October 30, 2013



Nineteen 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 M. There are five varieties of legend lettering (fewer than with 2 and 4 reales), with eight 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 (five coins each) 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). There is a 3-dot variety in which the dots are aligned vertically to the left and the right of the shield (six coins) or just to the left of the shield (one coin). 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 nine variations, most of them spelling out some form of CAROLVS ET IHOANA RE, preceded by the cross ornament X (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.

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.

There are two types of stops used in the legends on either or both sides of the coin to separate words: the predominant stop, M, and :, which is found on only three coins, one of which is **Lot 331**, which is the only specimen to show : on both sides. Also unique on this coin is the mistaken spelling CRAOLVS instead of CAROLVS in the pillars side legend.

2 Reales (Treasure Auction #14, lots 326, 327, 328, 329 and 330) – October 30, 2013



There are twenty-seven 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 M, MM (two clovers, one on top of the other, stem-to-stem), F, *, :, I, 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 MM (seven coins). The mixture of Gothic and Latin lettering reads CAROLVSMMETMM IYOANA. **Lot 328** bears this legend while the other four have four different legends. There are also coins bearing the lettering CHAROLVS on either the shield side or pillars side or both, and these are probably earlier types since they also have Gothic lettering. While several coins bear a retrograde S in CAROLVS, none bear the makeshift A made from an inverted V on 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, X or Q. There are misspellings and omitted letters on several. The unusual E appears on a few coins, including two of the auction coins, **Lot 329** and **Lot 328**, as does the retrograde S in REGIS and ISPANIARVM. A few coins bear the makeshift A.

There are ten crown-style variations above the Pillars of Hercules, the only clear favorite being a style shown by 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*, *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 (see census below).

4 Reales (Treasure Auction #14, lots 323, 324 and 325) – October 30, 2013



As with the 1 and 2 reales, the execution of design on the 4 reales is widely variable. Legend lettering can be Gothic, a mixture of Gothic and Latin, or Latin. Spelling errors are similar to 2 reales coins with instances of CHAROLVS and YOHANA. None of the ten lettering styles predominate on the twenty-seven coins studied, three of which are in the auction. Stops between words on the shield side are M, F and a cross made of four o's. The 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.

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.

Eleven lettering variations are found on the pillars side of the coins. Some form of C(H)AROLVS ET IHOANA RE or REGIS HISPANIA ET INDIARVN is spelled out with three different variations of stops between words: M, : 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 X or Q. 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.

Nine crown style variations are found with one style found on eight coins. 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, PLVS or PLVSV. Somewhat confusingly, three coins (including two auction coins, **Lot 324** and **Lot 325**) show 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)^[5] and Lot 1547 from our Treasure Auction #8. **Lot 324** is a probable die match with Estrella #2 (which is also Calicó #92).^[6]

Census of Charles and Joanna Santo Domingo Silver Coins Sold at Auction, prior to Sedwick's Auction 14 (October 2013)

½ Real

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1108

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1109

April 2010: Treasure Auction #7, Lot 1134

April 2012: Treasure Auction #11, Lot 872

1 Real

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1106

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1107

2 Reales

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1104

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1105

March 1998: Ponterio Auction #93, Lot 2335 (also Lot 1133 of Treasure Auction #7 of April 2010)

January 2004: Ponterio Auction #129, Lot 2139

January 2006: Ponterio Auction #137, Lot 2101

June 2006: Heritage #410, Lot 16860 (also Lot 728 of Ponterio Auction #147 of September 2008 and Lot 8230 of Ponterio Auction #152 of January 2010; note also this is the specimen with an arch connecting the crowns, a die-match with another example in the Isaac Rudman collection)

4 Reales

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1102

June 1975: Jess Peters (Ray Byrne), Lot 1103 (also Plate Coin in Estrella and Calicó and currently in the collection of Isaac Rudman)

September 1991: Swiss Bank Corporation Auction #27, Lot 12 (also Lot 1162 of Ponterio Auction #92 of February 1998, and the Plate Coin in Burzio, Calicó and the 4th edition of our Practical Book of Cobs)

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

[2] 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.

[3] 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.

[4] For convenience, the Treasure Auction #14 catalog lot listings refer to the ornaments verbally and not symbolically, hence “cloverlike ornament” instead of M.

[5] 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 moneda hispanoamericana* (1958).

[6] Estrella refers to Estrella Gómez, Miguel, *Monedas dominicanas* (1979). Calicó refers to Calicó, X., *Numismática española* (2008).

[7] Paoletti, Emilio, *8 Reales Cobs of Potosí* (2006).