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BELMONTE, GERACI, SAN GIORGIO AND VASTO: IMPERIAL ISSUES IN THE KINGDOMS OF NAPLES AND SICILY

With the collaboration of Domenico Luciano Moretti

Edizioni D'Andrea

CONTENTS

Imperial Issues in the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily 4
Le emissioni imperiali nei Regni di Napoli e di Sicilia 6

1 Historical Overview and Coinage of Belmonte 8
Cenni storici e monetazione di Belmonte 10
Monetary catalogue 12

2 Historical Overview and Coinage of Geraci 13
Cenni storici e monetazione di Geraci 14
Monetary catalogue 15

3 Historical Overview and Coinage of San Giorgio 16
Cenni storici e monetazione di San Giorgio 17
Monetary catalogue 18

4 Historical Overview and Coinage of Vasto 21
Cenni storici e monetazione di Vasto 24
Monetary catalogue 27

Bibliography 34

Index of illustrations 35

Historical Overview and Coinage of Geraci

Historical Overview

The site of Geraci (or Geraci Siculo) has been continuously inhabited since the Magna Graecia period and has remained so to the present day.

It was only under the Swabians that the fiefdom came under the control of the Ventimiglia Family. Enrico II was its first Count, and from this base he began to expand its borders until they encompassed a large part of the Madonie mountains.

The county grew in importance, including in terms of the political influence it wielded over the Sicilian crown, reaching its height under the reign of Alfonso.

Among the most important figures was Giovanni VI, born in 1678, who also held the titles of Prince of Castelbuono and Belmontino. From the very outset, he supported King Philip V of Bourbon, openly siding with his entire family in his favour during the War of the Spanish Succession[1]. On 22 July 1710, the Queen of Spain, Maria Luisa of Savoy, acting as regent, granted Francesco V, Giovanni VI's father, the "Grandeza de España para vostra persona y casa"; his son succeeded him in November 1712.

Under the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, Sicily passed to Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy. Giovanni VI left Palermo on 10 September 1713 to travel to Turin and pay homage to the new Monarch. Vittorio Amedeo II travelled to Sicily with his wife, Anna, on 11 October of the same year to be crowned, together with his consort, on 24 December; on that occasion, Giovanni VI swore allegiance to them. On 22 March 1714, he was appointed a Knight of the Supreme Order of the Most Holy Annunciation (*Ordine supremo della Santissima Annunziata*) and, by an Imperial Charter dated 27 September 1723, under his successor Charles III, was created Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. He subsequently went on to hold the office of President of the Royal Council of the Supreme Council of Sicily (*Presidente della Reale Giunta del Consiglio Supremo di Sicilia*), a position he held until his death.

With the return of the Spanish to Sicily, the ancient privileges were reaffirmed, allowing the family to continue its rise alongside the Sovereigns of Sicily, eventually representing the island at the Congress of Vienna.

Coinage

The coinage issued by Giovanni VI dates from 1725, during the reign of Charles III in Sicily, two years after his appointment as Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. It is interesting to note that the coins feature on the reverse, alongside the family coat of arms surmounted by a princely crown, the collar of the Supreme Order of the Most Holy Annunciation, with which he had been invested by his predecessor, Victor Amadeus II of Savoy.

To date, two denominations are known: the gold double zecchino (no. ***1***) and the silver half thaler (no. ***2***), both issued by the Vienna mint. According to the mint records, the data from which were reported by HOLZMAIR (1969, 77), 58 double zecchini and 335 half-thaler coins had been minted by 12 June 1725.

[1] The Ventimiglia Family was in fact present at the acclamation bestowed upon the Sovereign in January 1701 in Palermo as "King of Spain and Sicily".



3

3 Silver thaler

1732

Obv.\ IOAN : DOMINIC MILANO • D • G • S • R • I • P • (*Giovanni Domenico Milano by the grace of God Prince of Holy Roman Empire*)
Bust right of the Prince.

Rev.\ MARCH : SANGEORGII & POLISTINAE : 1732 (*Marquis of San Giorgio and Polistina 1732*)
Heraldic shield of Milano Family, surmounted by a princely crown.

Edge\ Smooth.

Ag - 29.03-29.40 g - ø 42 mm - R4

CNI XVIII page 351 no. 2; CAGIATI 1913-1916 page 227 no. 1.



4

4 Silver half thaler

1732

Obv.\ IOAN : DOMINIC MILANO • D • G • S • R • I • P (*Giovanni Domenico Milano by the grace of God Prince of Holy Roman Empire*)
Bust right of the Prince.

Rev.\ MARCH : SANC : GEORGII & POLISTINAE • 1732 (*Marquis of San Giorgio and Polistina 1732*)
Heraldic shield of Milano Family, surmounted by a princely crown.

Edge\ Foiled.

Ag - 14.45-14.60 g - ø 38 mm - R4

CNI XVIII page 351 no. 2; CAGIATI 1913-1916 page 227 no. 1.