

# NI Bulletin

A Publication of Numismatics International Inc.

Volume 58 Nos. 1 / 2



**NUMISMATICS INTERNATIONAL**

FOUNDED 1964

**January / February 2023**

**\$5.00**

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Numismatics International  
P.O. BOX 570842  
Dallas, TX 75357-0842

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## *From the Editor...*

Your editor is now back from an intense (and somewhat indulgent) trip to photograph the dies of Jacques Wiener held by the Royal Library of Belgium, and it is now time to turn attention to our publication - welcome to the first issue of the *NI Bulletin* for 2023. Sadly, we start this issue with a memorial to the loss of one of the pillars of our organization – John Vandigriff. John was not only a founder of NI, but gave it his unwavering attention for nearly six decades. He was also a man of many passions and talents – and will be greatly missed.

We span many centuries and cover a wide variety of interest areas in this issue. John Stich returns with the final installment of his Twelve Caesars article. Michael Shutterly provides us glimpses of two medieval issues – the Venetian grosso (a personal favorite of your editor) and the gold tremisses of the Merovingian Franks. Herman Blanton returns to pull the thread on a Santa Fé two Escudos specimen issued by Philip IV. Alan Luedeking provides a fascinating glimpse into a medallic legacy from colonial Spain. Lastly, David Wolfer returns to provide a summary of the challenges still present in establishing the veracity of late 19<sup>th</sup> century RA-countermarked coins of the Galapagos Islands.

As always, if you have an idea, a draft, a finished article – or anything in-between, please consider submitting it for a future issue of our *Bulletin*. I have a few submittals for the March/April issue, but can always use more just to be on the safe side.

Happy collecting and Happy New Year!

MR

**In Memoriam - John Vandigriff  
1931 – 2022**



With a heavy heart, we learned that John Vandigriff passed away on November 18, 2022. A man with many talents and passions, John was a founder of Numismatics International in 1964, some 58 years ago. Throughout those 58 years, he was actively involved in NI. In addition to being a leader of the organization, if there was a job to be done, he often volunteered to do it. NI benefitted greatly from the tremendous amount of dedication, time and service avidly given by John over nearly six decades.

John’s many services to NI included:

- Using his role as a lawyer to spearhead the incorporation of NI and lead the way for NI to become a non-profit 501(c)3 organization,
- Serving as an Editor of the NI Bulletin,
- Developing the first NI website,
- Printing the unique NI books which have been available on the NI website,
- Printing the envelopes to mail the NI Bulletins and the Mail Bid catalogs to NI members.

John was active in NI in many ways, and always considerate of the members. He was the “rudder” of the organization and had many good suggestions. He was a very dear friend to many of us, and will certainly be missed.

**The Twelve Caesars: Part 3 of 3****By John Stich, NI#2714**

This is the final installment of the article which first appeared in the July/August 2022 issue of the *NI Bulletin*, illustrating pieces from the author's collection along with background for each of the emperors based on the text appearing in *Roman Coins and Their Values*, Volume 1, by David R. Sear. – editor.

**Vitellius (15 - 69 A.D.)**

**Obv.: A VITELLIVS GERMAN IMP TR P. Laureate Head of Vitellius right.**

**Rev.: IVPPITER VICTOR. Jupiter seated left holding Victory and scepter.**

**Silver Denarius. 69 A.D. 19 mm. Sear #2197.**

Aulus Vitellius was the son of the illustrious Lucius Vitellius who had been one of Claudius' principal advisors. Aulus thus moved in elevated circles and was a close friend of all the emperors from Caligula to Nero. Towards the end of 68 A.D., Galba appointed him to the important military command of Lower Germany, believing that his reputed indolence made him less of a threat in this important posting. At the beginning of 69 A.D., the legions of the German frontier refused to take the oath of loyalty to Galba and on January 2, 69 Vitellius was proclaimed emperor by his troops. Two weeks later Galba was overthrown in Rome and his place taken by Otho. The army of Vitellius, under the command of two of his principal generals, advanced slowly on Rome and was eventually victorious against the forces of Otho at the battle of Bedriacum (April 16). Vitellius was now undisputed master of the Empire and proceeded in a leisurely manner to the capital, not arriving there until July. It was only then that he assumed the title of Augustus. In the meantime, however, T. Flavius Vespasianus had been proclaimed emperor by the legions in the East (July 1) where he had been sent by Nero to quell the First Jewish Revolt. Vitellius' unpopular regime was finally overthrown towards the close of the year when forces loyal to Vespasian invaded Italy and advanced slowly on Rome. The emperor was arrested in his palace, dragged through the streets of the city and brutally murdered by the mob (December 20, 69).

## Vespasian (9 - 79 A.D.)



**Obv.: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG. Laureate Head of Vespasian right.  
Rev.: PON MAX TR P COS V. Winged caduceus (symbolic staff representing Mercury). Silver Denarius. 74 A.D. 18 mm. Sear #2299.**

T. Flavius Vespasianus rose from relatively obscure origins to enjoy a most successful military career, playing an important role in the Claudian invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. as commander of Legion II Augusta. At the time of the Jewish Revolt in 66 A.D., Vespasian was already in his late fifties and living in semi-retirement. Nonetheless, the following year Nero appointed him to supreme military command in the East with orders to put down this serious uprising. With the help of his elder son, Titus, he achieved great success in this task, but in the meantime the Julio-Claudian dynasty had been overthrown and the Empire plunged into civil war. After three emperors had been proclaimed in rapid succession (Galba, Otho and Vitellius), Vespasian decided to use his power base in the East to make his own bid for the throne. Leaving Titus to prosecute the Jewish War, he returned to Rome where his authority had already been established following the collapse of Vitellius' regime before the advance of armies loyal to the Flavian cause. The accession of Vespasian saw the rise of Rome's second great imperial dynasty and his decade of power (69-79 A.D.) marked a return to strong government after the disruption occasioned by Nero's misrule and the ensuing civil conflict. Discipline was restored to the armies and the Praetorian Guard was reduced to its old size. The year following his capture of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Titus returned to Rome and celebrated a magnificent joint triumph with his father. He became a full partner in the government of the Empire, receiving the tribunician power and sharing the office of censor with Vespasian. This led to the recruitment of many new Italian and provincial members of the Senate. The emperor's younger son, Domitian, remained very much in the background, though he was accorded a not inconsiderable share in the coinage. Vespasian's industry and simple lifestyle made him popular with the people and on his death in 79 A.D. there was genuine public sorrow. His deification the following year was the first such honor bestowed on an emperor since Claudius in 54 A.D. and only the third in the history of the Empire. The succession of Titus was smooth.

## Titus (39 - 81 A.D.)



**Obv.: IMP TITVS CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M. Laureate Head of Titus right.  
Rev.: TR P IX IMP XV COS VIII P P. Wreath on curule chair. Silver Denarius.  
80 A.D. 18 mm. Sear #2516.**

Titus Flavius Vespasianus, the elder son of Vespasian and Flavia Domitilla was a close boyhood friend of Britannicus, son of the Emperor Claudius, with whom he was educated. During the reign of Nero, he served as a military tribune in Germany and Britain, and in 67 A.D. accompanied his father to Judaea, where he commanded Legion XV Apollinaris. When his father made his bid for the imperial throne in 69 A.D., Titus was given supreme command over the Jewish War. In September 70 A.D. he captured Jerusalem, thus effectively ending the Jewish Revolt, which had begun four years earlier during the reign of Nero. Although he bore only the junior rank of Caesar throughout Vespasian's reign, Titus was his father's colleague in the government of the Empire. They celebrated a magnificent joint triumph in Rome for the Jewish victory (June 71 A.D.) and Vespasian accorded Titus a considerable share in the imperial coinage, with large scale issues in all metals. The share of his younger brother, Domitian, was considerably smaller and there can be little doubt that the latter felt bitterly resentful of his inferior status (a resentment which was to find expression in the tyranny of Domitian's own reign a decade later). Titus succeeded to the imperial throne on the death of Vespasian on June 24, 79 A.D. He reigned for a little more than two years, but this brief period witnessed a series of natural disasters. Most famous is the eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 A.D., but in the following year the capital suffered from both plague and a devastating fire. It was in connection with these disasters that Titus issued a series of coins commemorating the services of prayer and reconciliation through which he attempted to allay public alarm. One of the rare highlights of the reign was the dedication in June 80 A.D. of the great "Amphitheatrum Flavium," better known today as the Colosseum. This magnificent arena, still one of the principal landmarks of modern Rome, had been commenced by Vespasian in 71 A.D. on the site of the stagnum (pool) formerly in the gardens of Nero's Golden House. The dedication by Titus was accompanied by lavish celebrations for the Roman people. Probably exhausted and depressed by his ordeals, Titus died on September 13, 81 A.D. at the age of forty-two. He was succeeded by his younger brother Domitian who, as an heir to the throne, had been accorded a considerable coinage in all metals during the reign of Titus.

**Domitian (51 - 96 A.D.)**

**Obv.:** IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM P M TR P VIII. Laureate bust right.  
**Rev.:** IMP XIX COS XIII CENS P P P. Minerva, left, holding thunderbolt and spear, shield at side. Silver Denarius. 89 A.D. 19 mm. Sear #2732.

Titus Flavius Domitianus, the younger son of Vespasian and Flavia Domitilla, was in Rome at the time of his father's rebellion against Vitellius in 69 A.D., and was lucky to escape with his life in the final days of Vitellius' regime. Although given the rank of Caesar, like his elder brother Titus, he was kept very much in the background during the 10-year reign of Vespasian. The bitter resentment which he felt over his treatment at this time and the inferiority of his status in the imperial family eventually found expression in the highly autocratic behavior which he exhibited when he succeeded to the imperial throne on the early death of Titus in 81 A.D.

Domitian has gone down in history as one of the worst of the Roman tyrants and his memory was condemned by the Senate immediately following his death. But this harsh judgment is not fully borne out by the facts and owes much to the bitter feelings of a resentful aristocracy. He certainly exhibited cruelty in dealing with those he considered to be his enemies and this increased with the discovery of plots against his regime. However, he exhibited some aptitude as a military commander during his Rhine and Danube campaigns and the frontier arrangements between the two rivers were improved. He was the first emperor since Claudius to campaign in person. He maintained high moral standards in public performances and showed respect for religious ritual. As a builder he was tireless, restoring the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill and adding significantly to the imperial palace on the Palatine. Domitian improved the weight and quality of the precious metal coinage and raised military pay by one-third, thereby ensuring his continued popularity with the army and the Praetorian Guard. The people were entertained with frequent public spectacles and banquets, and in October 88 A.D. the Secular Games were celebrated in Rome with great pomp and ceremony. Domitian's relations with the Senate, however, remained strained at best and were sometimes openly hostile. The executions of at least twelve ex-consuls are recorded during this reign, a state of affairs which led inevitably to further conspiracies and ultimately to the emperor's violent downfall. In the late summer of 96 A.D. a palace group, involving the court chamberlain and possibly the Empress Domitia Longina, hatched a plot against the emperor's life and on September 18 Domitian fell victim to the assassin's knife in his private apartments. Thus ended Rome's second imperial dynasty which had lasted a mere 27 years.

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## The First Venetian Ducat

Michael Shutterly, NI# 2703

At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the standard coin of the states in northern and central Italy was some form of the tiny *denaro*. The Venetian *denaro scodellato* struck during the reign of Doge Enrico Dandolo (reigned 1192-1205) measured about 14 mm and weighed nominally .35 grams – about the same diameter, but less than half the weight, of a U.S. silver three cent coin. The *denaro scodellato* was originally minted in fine silver, but the fineness was gradually debased until it was only about .250 fine, which meant that one contemporary English silver penny was equivalent to about 20 Venetian denari scodellati. Remarkably, Venice issued no larger coins at this point and needed to use the coins of other states – principally the Byzantine gold *hyperpyron* – to carry out financial transactions of any significant amount. A state built on a monetary economy could not thrive if it was forced to trade using such low value coins. Venice needed to do something.

Doge Enrico Dandolo responded to the need by ordering the launch of a new coin containing 2.2 grams of almost pure (.965 fine) silver (Figure 1). Fourteenth century records refer to the coin as a *grosso da 26 denari* (“large coin of 26 denari”), indicating that it was worth 26 denari scodellati. However, the silver content of the new coin suggests that it was probably originally intended to be worth 24 denari scodellati; as it happens, monetary calculations at the time were typically duodecimal (based on 12), which lends further support to the idea that the coins were originally valued at 24 rather than 26 denari scodellati.



**Figure 1: The first Venetian “grosso” issued by Doge Enrico Dandolo. AR, 20mm diameter, 1.89 g. Paolucci 1. Image enlarged 2x.**

(Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group LLC, [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

When Venice first launched the coin, it was known as the *ducatus argenti* (“silver ducat,” from *ducatus*, Latin for “duchy”). Venice began minting a gold coin, the *ducatus auri* (“gold ducat”) in 1284, and eventually the term “ducat” became associated solely with the gold coin. Because of its large size, this coin is more popularly known as the *grosso*, but it was in fact the first Venetian *ducat*.

The obverse of the coin depicts Doge Enrico Dandolo (on the left) and Venice's patron Saint Mark (on the right and holding his Gospel) together clutching a banner between them, with the inscriptions ✠ • H • DANDOL' ("Henricus Dandolo") to left, DVX ("Duke" or "Doge" in the Venetian dialect) down the center, and • S • M • VENETI ("St. Mark of Venice") to right. The reverse depicts Christ seated on a throne; the inscription IC ("Jesus") appears at the upper left and XC ("Christus") appears at the upper right, with a bar above each inscription<sup>1</sup>. The coin used this same design for generations, only changing the name as required to that of the new reigning Doge.

The design of the coin would have been familiar to Venetian (and other) merchants at the time: it imitated the contemporary Byzantine electrum *aspron trachy*, a coin valued at one-third of the Byzantine gold hyperpyron.



**Figure 2: Contemporary Byzantine Aspron Trachy minted by Isaac II Angelus (first reign 1185-1195). EL, 29mm diameter, 4.17 g. (Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC; [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))**

The obverse of the Byzantine aspron trachy depicts the facing enthroned Theotokos (the Virgin Mary, as the Mother of Jesus), holding the Infant Jesus on her lap, while the reverse depicts the standing facing figure of the Byzantine Emperor Isaac II Angelus holding a cross-tipped scepter and *akakia*<sup>2</sup>, being crowned and blessed by the Archangel Michael.

Most sources date the first Venetian grosso to c. 1202, when Venice agreed to provide ships to transport the knights and soldiers of the Fourth Crusade to Egypt and the Holy Land (the Crusaders never reached the Holy Land, instead, they detoured to Constantinople, which they sacked). It has been estimated that paying the wages of the ship workers and the costs of the materials for those ships would have required approximately 230,000,000 denari scodellati; the creation of the grosso, valued at 24 or 26 denari scodellati, significantly reduced the burden on the Venetian mint.

On the other hand, Doge Andrea Dandolo (reigned 1343-1354) wrote in his history of Venice that the grosso first appeared during the second year of the reign of Enrico Dandolo (to whom Andrea Dandolo was related, but who was not a direct ancestor). This would indicate a start date between June 1193 and June 1194. This seems more

<sup>1</sup> The horizontal bar was the standard way of denoting a contraction or abbreviation in medieval manuscripts, and was carried over to the coinage in this case. This was not typical practice for medieval coinage in general.

<sup>2</sup> A cylindrical silk roll containing dust – symbolizing the mortality of man.

likely to be the correct time of origin, and the availability of the coin at the time of the Fourth Crusade was a happy coincidence for Venice (if not for Constantinople).

The grosso was successful early on, and Venice's Italian rivals soon began issuing grossi of their own: Verona, Bologna, Reggio, Parma, and Pavia were all minting grossi by 1230, and in the mid-1250s the Roman Senate began minting grossi that were 50% larger than the Venetian coin. The Crusader State of Tripoli began minting its *gros* in the 1240s and French King Louis IX began minting his *gros* – a coin twice the size of the Venetian grosso – in 1266. In 1279 Edward I of England launched the even larger *groat*, and in 1300 the Bohemian *Prager groschen* made its first appearance. In an ironic twist, in the 1390s the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II launched the *basilikon* – a silver coin that closely imitated the Venetian grosso and was meant to be interchangeable with it.

Venice minted grossi in enormous numbers until the 1340s, when production dropped significantly as the price of silver dramatically increased (this coincides with the appearance of the Black Death, which struck Venice in January 1348). Grossi are rare or entirely non-existent for the first five doges who took office in Venice after the Black Death, and the coins only began to reappear in significant numbers in the 1370s during the reign of Doge Andrea Contarini (reigned 1368-1382). The size and weight of the grosso fell into decline thereafter, with the last grossi appearing during the reign of Cristoforo Moro (reigned 1462-1471); his grossi are extremely rare, and the few known examples weigh only .45 grams – barely one-fifth their original weight of 2.2 grams. It was a sad end to glorious coin.

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## War of Independence Loyalty Medal

Alan Luedeking, NI #2282

In 2006, I wrote<sup>1</sup> about a very rare loyalty medal of 1783 given to Indian<sup>2</sup> chiefs who supported the royalist cause in the uprising led by Felipe Condorcanqui Túpac Amaru II. King Charles III ordered this medal to be made after approving medals for a similar purpose that the regent of the Royal Court of La Plata in the province of Charcas, Don Jerónimo Manuel de Ruedas, had ordered to be made on his own initiative in 1781.

The practice of awarding a medal for loyalty and services to the crown proved extremely effective as a means of encouraging the Indians to remain loyal to the Spanish side, and these small tokens of appreciation and gratitude apparently motivated many Indians to try and earn their own. By 1817, these medals were highly prized by the Indians who received them and served as a great incentive to keep them loyal to the royalist cause. This led to the practice of awarding medals to loyal Indians and Creoles who supported the royalist side becoming almost customary. The practice of awarding loyalty medals became widespread during the war for independence in the territories of Upper Peru, which today comprise Peru and Bolivia. Many Indians and Creoles were so recognized, to such a degree that they came to be commonly known as “los amedallados,” or “the bemedaled ones.” In contrast, those who fought for independence and autonomy from the Spanish yoke, were called “patriots.” This is particularly evident in a very important document of the time, entitled *Diario de Un Soldado de La Independencia 1814-1825* (“Diary of a Soldier of Independence”) written by José Santos Vargas.<sup>3</sup> This gentleman became a commander of the insurgent warriors, and by good fortune his hobby was to write in great detail every day what happened in the battles in which he participated and the political context surrounding them. In this valuable diary we find numerous instances of the use of this terminology, for example:

Rafaela's son, named Tomás Ríos, found himself the right hand of Governor Sánchez Lima. When he went to plead for his mother, asking how he could shoot an elderly woman just for having given refuge to the uprisen only so that an officer of the homeland would not harm her few little animals, he said to him that she was herself an insurgent, and perhaps Lira's mistress, and so must die; but that he would now be decorated for his services to the king with a medal presented on the king's behalf. He made him an **amedallado** and very content he

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<sup>1</sup> Luedeking, Alan, “The Numismatic Legacy of the Insurrection of Túpac Amaru II,” *NI Bulletin*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (March 2006): 47-52.

<sup>2</sup> This article was originally written in Spanish for a South American target audience where “indios” is common and a non-pejorative term; for consistency this form of reference will be retained in this English language version.

<sup>3</sup> Santos Vargas, José, “Diario de Un Soldado de La Independencia 1814-1825” in *Diario De Un Comandante De La Independencia Americana 1814 - 1825* del Archivo Y Biblioteca Nacionales De Bolivia, published in 1853, also known as the “Diario del Tambor Mayor Vargas”, published by Universidad Mayor de San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca, Sucre, 1952). There is a second edition edited and published by Gunnar Mendoza L., Mexico, 1982. It can be found at: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/129869908/Diario-de-Un-Soldado-de-La-Independencia-1814-1825>.

remained in the service of the king of Spain: he desired more to be **amedallado** than to feel for his mother.<sup>4</sup>

Here is another example of the use of this term:

On the night of January 13, the commanding general of Indians of the Homeland don Andrés Simón assaulted another Indian called Esteban Tola in a house in the Chapimarca ranch, hacienda of Sihuas. He took him up to the hill and heights of Rearrea where he beat him to death with sticks and spears because Tola was **amedallado** by the king, that Sánchez Lima had decorated him for his great services, very vigilant in delivering captains of the homeland and other merits earned in service to the royal crown.<sup>5</sup>

Here we see that the Indian named Esteban Tola was “bemedaled” by Sánchez Lima, for his “great services” in delivering to the Spaniards some “captains of the Homeland” (insurgent patriots) and for other “merits earned in service to the royal crown.”

Juan Sánchez Lima was an Infantry Sergeant Major of the Extremadura Regiment. By order of Viceroy Pezuela dated July 20, 1816, he was appointed Governor Intendant of the city of La Paz (today in Bolivia), replacing the cruel governor Mariano Ricafort Palacín y Abarca, and in the same order was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel of infantry. However, Sánchez Lima was not to take up this commission while Ricafort still filled his position and was to wait until such time as Ricafort saw fit to leave the post. In the meantime, Ricafort occupied Sánchez Lima in levying forced loans in Larecaja and in expeditions against the insurgents of the valleys. On January 31, 1817, Ricafort announced to the *Cabildo* (City Council) that he was leaving his command and ordered that they receive his successor. The following day, on February



**JUAN BAUTISTA SÁNCHEZ LIMA**  
Portrait of 1818 (anonymous)\*

1st, the *Cabildo*, in extraordinary session, agreed to receive Juan Sánchez Lima immediately with all customary formalities. On that day Sánchez Lima finally took possession of the government of La Paz, a post he held until 1822. Sánchez Lima was reportedly quite well liked by the population and carried out many public works for the benefit of the people and the beautification of the city, including “*the Alameda with its beautiful alabaster fountain in the center, the San Juan de Dios and Obrajes bridges and many others that attest to his enterprising and progressive spirit.*”<sup>6</sup> It was also

<sup>4</sup> Santos Vargas, *ibid.*, 180.

\*This portrait of Juan Sánchez Lima is the only one I have been able to find, courtesy of the Gobierno Autónomo Municipal De La Paz, at <https://www.scribd.com/doc/43635340/Paseo-El-Prado>.

<sup>5</sup> Santos Vargas, *ibid.*, 181.

<sup>6</sup> Sociedad Geográfica de La Paz, *Boletín*, Nos. 16-29, 1902.

said of him that “*Sánchez Lima has left in La Paz an imperishable memory. His name is the only one that we see engraved in marble and granite in the public works of that time (1817) and is also the only one that does not bear blood spatters on its aureate figures.*”<sup>7</sup>

Sánchez Lima enjoyed the friendship and protection of Viceroy Pezuela, and “...on May 21, 1817, the same Viceroy gave Sánchez Lima the rank of Colonel of the Army in reward for the distinguished services he has rendered to His Majesty and especially in the dangerous and daring expedition that with very advantageous success he has just executed against Lira and his henchmen in the valleys of La Paz, destroying them completely.”<sup>8</sup>

As we can see, Sánchez Lima was a skilled soldier in the service of the Spanish cause, and even after being named governor of La Paz, continued with his military functions, leading expeditions against the forces of General José Miguel Lanza, who supported the cause of independence in the provinces of Yúngas, Inquisivi, Larecaja and Ayopaya. The story of these battles, the capture of Lanza, his escape, and final defeat is itself a story that reads more like a novel. But let us return to the subject at hand, the medals which, according to the literature of the time, Sánchez Lima awarded to the Indians loyal to the Spanish cause against the patriotic rebels fighting for independence:

With the death of Muñecas in the altiplano, Warnes in Santa Cruz and Padilla in Chuquisaca, the only important adversary of the viceroy of Lima in Upper Peru was Lira and his battle-hardened army. The repressive actions were in the charge of Juan Bautista Sánchez Lima, governor of La Paz, supported by Francisco Bohorquez, subdelegate, precisely, of Ayopaya; Agustín Antezana, from Quillacollo and Francisco España, from Sicasica, who totaled 1,300 men. They won the adhesion of the natives by distributing **medals** or **decorations** to the most distinguished of them.<sup>9</sup>

We can see below that there were not a few “amedallados”:

All the Indians rebelled completely against us; so it was that groups of them were walking around (even the women) with certain disguises asking where Commander Lira and his officers were, that a son was with him or in his company. We had a great suspicion even to introduce ourselves to any woman. More so those of Cavari district. For this reason, many of them were **amedallados**, such as Don Carlos Apunte chief, Don Andrés Rodríguez who before was an officer of the homeland, Don Antonio Rodríguez, brother of the previous one, don Tomás Ríos, don Nicolás Ticona, don Lázaro Fresco, don Miguel Vinalgas, the son-in-law of the latter (Eusebio de tal) and others.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Valdés Julio Cesar, *Siluetas y croquis: artículos sueltos*, (La Paz: Imprenta de La Razón, 1889), 242.

<sup>8</sup> Acosta, Nicolás, *Guía del viajero en la Paz: noticias estadísticas, históricas, locales, religiosas templos, hoteles, edificios, antigüedades, etc.* (La Paz: Imprenta de la Union Americana, 1880), 99-100.

<sup>9</sup> Roca, José Luis, *Ni con Lima ni con Buenos Aires: la formación de un estado nacional en Charcas*, (La Paz: l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines, 2007), 246.

<sup>10</sup> Santos Vargas, *ibid.*, 181.

Further, we now see what kinds of services merited the awarding of a loyalty medal to the Spanish collaborators, which, from the point of view of the patriotic author, make us see that in times of war honor and magnanimity are not always triumphant:

On January 23 [1817] the commander Andrés Simón had been hiding in a river called Villinchayani in the district of Ichoca. He was accompanied by an assistant he had, named Manuel Mateo, an Indian from the annex of Sirarani in the same district. This man was the one who reported to the groups of Indians who were searching for the patriots. He met a fellow countryman from Oruro, Mr. Juan Montesinos (a.k.a. the Mana-micusca, which means without eating) who led a troop of Indians. The assistant undertook to deliver to him the Commander General of the [loyalist] Indians, Don Andrés Simon. He led them into an ambush. The [insurgent] leader, Don Juan Montesinos, put himself on a bay horse on the high ground, [with] about 100 men to grab him. The aforementioned assistant Manuel Mateo went on ahead. As he knew and saw everything he straightened up by the cave. He shouted at him that he was bringing him food and good news from the homeland. The commander Don Andrés Simón, hearing and recognizing the voice of his assistant, came out of the forest where he was, met him and told him: - Son and companion, how are you doing? You have given me a lot of sorrow. I thought you had been caught by the enemies or at least that something had happened to you. Around here I think they walk a lot. It will be necessary that we retire to other places. The assistant then replied: - We will later go to remote places, so much so that we will no longer see or be seen. He made the sign. The others, who were observing everything, crowded around. Andrés Simón turned and said to his assistant: - Ah, ungrateful man, how do you betray me to my enemies? Is that how you repay me for the favor of liberating you from conscription and all that I have appreciated you? This is the food and the good news of my homeland that you have brought me? With a stone they made him fall to the ground, where they lifted him up and they carried him to the Sacasaca ranch, they tied him up and took him to where he was killed. Then Don Juan Montesinos from on high commands that his head be cut off, and he carries it to Oruro. Montesinos then wins his **medal** as does the assistant.<sup>11</sup>

Generally, in previous decades, instead of formally minted medals such as the one from 1783 mentioned earlier, silver bust-type coins of 8 Reales, or of 4 or 8 Escudos in gold were given, hung by a ribbon around the neck of the recipient. However, one must assume that something else must have been done to the coins to turn them into real medals. While these loyalty medals were awarded quite frequently, and to many Indians, they are virtually unknown today. Why, if there were so many “*amedallados*,” are these pieces so very rare today?

One reason for their scarcity is the precious metal intrinsic to them, which undoubtedly resulted in their being melted down in later times for reasons of economic necessity. But the main explanation, in my considered opinion, is this: After the victory of the

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<sup>11</sup> Santos Vargas, *ibid.*, 184-185.

rebel “patriots” over the royalists, and the consequent expulsion of the Spanish forces from Upper Peru, these medals, commemorating loyalty to the king and to the losing side, would constitute irrefutable proof of treason to the cause of independence, and be seen as evidence of enmity to the cause of liberation. Wearing them would no longer entail any benefits or privileges whatsoever; rather, they would subject the wearer to all kinds of dangers and accusations. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that almost all of these medals would have disappeared very quickly upon the final triumph of the patriots.

Such rapid vanishment is not unprecedented: during Augusto César Sandino's uprising in Nicaragua in 1927, he had cast lead coins made, with which he paid his henchmen and townsfolk in the Segovias. These Sandino coins were entirely fiduciary in nature; necessity coins or vouchers for “10 Pesos Oro” that Sandino imagined he would be able to redeem in gold after he had won his war. To supply himself with money and other needed goods, he took what he required by force, such as the coffee he stripped from the haciendas of the Segovias and sent to Honduras to be sold for \$10 a sack, and paid the hacienda workers with his lead coins. After the definitive defeat of Sandino and his men, these coins disappeared almost immediately from the scene. The reason for this, as explained by Rivo Molina and myself in our paper presented before the second Numismatic Congress of Central America, and in our article published on the Nicaraguan Numismatic Association’s website,<sup>12</sup> is as follows:

After the death of Sandino, whoever still had any [of Sandino’s coins] would have lost all hope of being able to redeem them, transforming these pieces into just objects of curiosity with virtually no intrinsic value. The scarcity of these coins in the present is undoubtedly a consequence of the fact that possessing them could [and was] interpreted by the Guardia as a sign of support for Sandino’s cause, and this in turn carried with it a threat of death for the possessor.

Returning to our subject of the loyalty medals, as we mentioned, these were awarded quite frequently, and to many Indians. Having been large in number, but with no formal documentation authorizing them or ordering them to be made at the mints, it is to be expected that they were not very sophisticated pieces, and were fashioned relatively quickly. Nevertheless, some significant effort must have been made to convert these pieces into something more than a simple coin; that is, to convert them into a true award medal, with some attention to detail. And indeed, we now have proof that this was the case. The specimen presented below, though rather crude in appearance, is nevertheless witness to the fact that it was made with great care but with only the few means that were available.

This beautiful example was commissioned by the governor intendant of the city of La Paz, in what is now Bolivia, Juan Bautista Sánchez Lima, in 1817, and we are pleased to present it now for the first time in its true historical context.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Rivo Molina Zambrana and Alan Luedeking, “10 Pesos Oro de Sandino” (paper at the second Central American Numismatic Congress (II COCENU), San José, Costa Rica, September 25, 2014) and “Las Monedas “10 Pesos Oro” de A.C. Sandino” at <https://anunic.org/las-monedas-10-pesos-oro-de-a-c-sandino/>.

<sup>13</sup> This piece was first published by me in “A Proclamation Piece of La Paz, Bolivia, 1817,” in the *NI Bulletin* Vol. 42 No. 6 (June 2007): 127-128. In that article, I mistakenly described it as a proclamation



### Loyalty Medal Awarded by Juan Sánchez Lima in 1817

The medal was fashioned from an 8 Reales bust-type coin of King Ferdinand VII, whose mint of origin and date can no longer be distinguished. The coin has been meticulously erased, leaving only the bust of the king, and then re-engraved. At 12 o'clock on the obverse, the piece shows a suspension hole made by a square-shaped nail contemporary to the period, with the perforation strike imparted on the obverse side and piercing the coin from obverse to reverse. The edge, quite raw, no longer shows any traces of its original chain link design. The piece weighs 22.35 grams and measures between 38.7 and 38.9 mm in diameter.

On its obverse side, the medal shows a garland of laurel leaves on each side of the bust, with the characters **F 7º** (for Fernando Séptimo, or Ferdinand the 7th) engraved below the trunk of the bust and just above the intertwined laurel branches. In the recesses of the engraving, one can clearly distinguish the remnants of the gilding that the piece once enjoyed, whose wear shows that it was worn for many years on the chest by its owner. We believe it is important to highlight these laurel branches: they are a very particular characteristic of Spanish medals of merit and fidelity; see for example the medals of Charles III, Charles IV, and Ferdinand VII illustrated in Medina.<sup>14</sup>

The back of the piece presents a hand-engraved inscription that reads: “*For Love, Constancy and Loyalty to his King. The Governor Intendant Don Juan Sánchez Lima, Year of 1817.*” The inscription is arranged in six lines thus:

*Por  
Amor const.  
y lealtad á su Rey  
El Gôv. Yn<sup>te</sup> D<sup>n</sup> Ju  
an Sánchez Lima  
Año de 1817*

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medal or oath of allegiance to his king by Juan Sánchez Lima. But in the light of the research conducted for this article, I am now certain that this piece is one of the many medals awarded by Sánchez Lima to the “amedallados” for their services to the Spanish crown. The current article seeks to rectify that mistake.

<sup>14</sup> See Medina, José Toribio, *Medallas Coloniales Hispano-Americanas* (Santiago: Medina, 1900), 16, No. 5; 60 (No. 39); 72, No. 49; 80, No. 58; 98-99, No. 74; 101-102, No. 80. Also Medina, José Toribio, *Medallas Coloniales Hispano-Americanas - Nuevos Materiales para su Estudio* (Santiago, Medina, 1919), (7) No. 1; 14-15, No. 9; 18, No. 12.

Most regrettably, we have no way of knowing now, at this great remove, who the loyal Indian was, to whom Juan Sánchez Lima originally awarded this precious medal, nor for what specific services it was awarded.

The piece first surfaced in 2007. It is the only example of this type of “amedallado” medal that we have seen to date, and we consider it an important artifact of the bloody chapter in history that culminated in the independence of the peoples of South America from Spain, made by one of the great personages directly involved in the events of the time.

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## The Merovingian Gold Tremissis

Michael Shutterly, NI #2703

The Franks were a group of Germanic tribes who first appeared in history in the mid-Third Century as raiders on the northern frontier of the Roman Empire. In the middle of the Fourth Century the Roman Emperor Julian began settling them as *foederati* (“allies”) in what are now Belgium and the Netherlands. Over the next century the Franks spread throughout Roman Gaul. From time to time, they served as auxiliaries in the Roman army, and in 451 Frankish units fought together with Aetius’ army against Attila the Hun in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains.

Roman power in the West ended with the abdication of Emperor Romulus Augustus in 476. The Franks, as “the last men standing” in Gaul, filled the vacuum. Clovis I united the Frankish tribes and became the first king of all the Franks in 509. He is also considered to have been the first king of France, which takes its name from his kingdom of *Francia*. The Merovingian Dynasty takes its name from (the possibly legendary) Merovich, Clovis I’s grandfather.

The Franks did not recognize primogeniture (first born gets everything) as a guiding principle, and generally regarded the Frankish kingdom as the personal property of the king, who was theoretically free to dispose of it as he pleased. Clovis died in 511, dividing his kingdom among his four sons. The youngest son, Chlothar I, outlived his brothers and reunited Francia in 558 ... only to die three years later, whereupon the kingdom was re-divided among *his* four sons. This pattern of unification followed by division followed by reunification, to be followed again by division, would persist throughout the Merovingian period and even into Carolingian times. This instability set the stage for much of the conflict and disorder that marked medieval Europe.

One major consequence of this instability and the dispersal of royal authority is that the Merovingian kings exercised relatively little control of the coinage in their realm, leaving matters in the hands of the moneymen or the local lords in whose domains the mints operated. This seems to have led to the coins rarely naming the king under whose authority the coins were struck.

Clovis’ sons launched the first royal Frankish coinage. The earliest Frankish coins imitated the Roman gold *tremissis* (one-third of a solidus) and named the Emperor in Constantinople as the ultimate ruling authority. There was also a small mintage of gold *solidi* but these are quite rare, with most known examples coming from a single hoard found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A few coins were also minted in silver and copper, but how they fit into the monetary system – presuming that there was a “system” – is uncertain. Most specimens have been found in Provence in southeastern France, in lands previously occupied by Burgundians and Ostrogoths, and the coins themselves tend to imitate Ostrogothic and Burgundian coins. In any event, the Franks ceased minting copper coins and temporarily ceased minting silver coins in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 7<sup>th</sup> century the gold content of the tremissis was gradually reduced and replaced with silver, and by about 690 the Merovingian coins were silver, with no gold at all. The elimination of gold coinage in Francia mirrored what was happening in the rest of Northern and Western Europe. The primary source of gold for the region had

been the Roman Empire, which had delivered large sums of gold coin to the various Migration Peoples, sometimes in payment for their services as military auxiliaries, at other times as protection money. With the dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West, and then the successor Eastern Roman Empire's increasing focus on the threats from the Arabs and Persians in the East, the gold supply to the Germanic peoples in Northern and Western Europe dried up, forcing them to rely on silver as precious metal.



**Figure 1: Early Merovingian Tremissis. Uncertain ruler. AV, 14.0 mm diameter, 1.43 g weight. Image enlarged 2x. MEC I, 351**

The origin of the coin shown in Figure 1 is not entirely certain. It is most likely an early (circa 510-540) Merovingian imitation of an Ostrogothic imitation of a coin of the Emperor Anastasius I (reigned 491-518). The obverse displays an imperial bust with the inscription DN I ANASTASIVS P AVC (“Our Lord Anastasius Perpetual Emperor”). The reverse presents Victory holding a wreath and a globus cruciger with the inscription VICTORIA AVCOSTAVI (“Victory of the Emperors”).

During the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Tremissis gradually became more “Frankish,” as the moneys reduced the weight of the coins from the Roman standard (1.5 grams in modern terms) to the standard of the Germanic shilling (1.3 grams). The coins also no longer referred to the emperor, but instead typically named the responsible moneyer and the mint where the coin was struck. The moneyers seem to have been somewhat itinerant, as many of them are identified on coins struck at different mints (Philip Grierson estimated that the Merovingians employed at least 1,600 moneyers, working at over 1,200 different mints).

Merovingian coins bearing the name of a king are generally rare. Although coins naming the king are known for almost all of the Merovingian kings from the 570s to the 670s, for most of them no more than about five “named” coins are known, with the vast bulk of each king’s coinage being “unnamed.” The reason for this is uncertain. Given the instability of the times, and given the itinerant nature of the moneyers responsible for the coins, the omission of the name of the king from most of the coins may have been due to uncertainty as to which king actually ruled the region in which the mint was located.



**Figure 2: Merovingian AV Tremissis. 12.00 mm diameter, 1.22 g weight. Image enlarged 2x. Belfort 4989.**

The .480 fine gold content of the coin in Figure 2 suggests it was struck circa 620-640. The obverse shows a diademed head with the inscription +ELAMONIT (“Ela the Moneyer”), while the reverse features a cross potent and the inscription [QVCCI]VVICVS FIT (“Made in Quentovic”).

Quentovic was a major “vicus” (commercial town) and an important Merovingian mint. Quentovic was (probably) located near the mouth of the Canche River on the English Channel, a bit north of modern Dieppe. The town was repeatedly raided by the Vikings after 842 and was eventually abandoned, probably in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (when Dieppe was founded). Virtually all that remains of Quentovic today is its coins.



**Figure 3: AV Tremissis of Sigebert. 13 mm diameter, 1.25 g weight. Image enlarged 2x. Belfort 760.**

The coin in Figure 3 is an exception to the general practice of not naming the Frankish kings on the coinage. The obverse presents a diademed head with the inscription SIGIBE [RTVS RIX] (“Sigebert the King”) while the reverse depicts a two-handled chalice and the inscription GVALETANO BAN (“Gevaudan Banassac”). The coin was struck in .400 fine gold, suggesting that it was minted in the late 640s or the 650s.

Approximately 10% of all surviving Merovingian gold coins were struck in Banassac, a once-important town in southern France in the region known as Gevaudan. Today, Banassac and the area around it is comprised of small villages within the *Massif Central*, the highland region in south-central France. Merovingian moneyers regularly placed a Chalice design on the coins of Banassac, as a punning reference to Gevaudan. The Roman name for Gevaudan was “Gabalum,” based upon “Gabali,” the name of the Celtic tribe who occupied the area before the Roman conquest; “Gabali” was close (enough) to the Celtic word *gobel*, meaning “cup” or “chalice,” for an image of a Chalice to serve as a mintmark. The English word “goblet” also comes from “gobel.”

Sigebert III, the king named on the coin, was the great-great-great grandson of Clovis I. He became king of Austrasia in 633 at the age of three. Austrasia was the original territory of the Franks and comprised most of what is now northern France and Belgium. Sigebert spent most of his short life (he died at the age of 25) doing pious works, founding monasteries and hospitals, and building churches. He has been declared a saint in the Catholic Church.

Banassac was actually located outside of Austrasia, in what was then the kingdom of Burgundy, which was one of the possessions of Dagobert I, Sigebert's father. When Dagobert died in 539, Burgundy was added to Sigebert's domain. Although Sigebert was apparently never actually crowned king of Burgundy, most of his coins were struck in Burgundian towns.

Busy as he was with his pious works, Sigebert never really directly ruled his kingdom; instead, he let the manager of the royal household (the *major domo* or "Mayor of the Palace") rule in his name. He was thus the first of the Merovingian "Do-Nothing Kings." Every Merovingian king after Sigebert followed his lead, leaving control of the government to a Mayor of the Palace, a role which eventually became hereditary. By the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Merovingian kings were reduced to an entirely ceremonial role, with the Mayors of the Palace holding all real power.

In 687, Pepin of Herstal, Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia, won a major victory over Neustria, Austrasia's main rival, for rule over all of Francia. He gave himself the title "Duke" of the Franks, a title that literally meant "Leader." His son and successor, Charles Martel, ruled Francia from 718 to 741. When the Merovingian puppet king Theuderic IV died in 737, Charles named himself *Princeps et Dux Francorum*; ("Prince and Duke of the Franks") and did not bother to name a new king.

Charles died in 741 and was succeeded by his sons, Pepin the Short and Carloman, who ruled Francia jointly. In 743 they ended the interregnum by naming Childeric III as king, but they retained all real power. Carloman retired to a monastery in 747, leaving Pepin in control of Francia.

In 751, Pepin wrote to Pope Zachary, asking "*In regard to the kings of the Franks who no longer possess the royal power: is this state of things proper?*" The Pope responded "No," writing that the one who held the power should hold the crown. With the support of his magnates, Pepin deposed Childeric, packed him off to a monastery, and took the crown of Francia for himself as King Pepin I. Thus began the Carolingian Dynasty (from "Carolus," the Latin form of the name of Pepin's father Charles).

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## One Last Gasp for the Galapagos RA Countermark

David Wolfer, NI #2793



For thirty-three years, I have been privileged to follow the diligent research work of Dale Seppa in his effort to uncover evidence supporting either the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of the “RA” countermarked silver coins of Galapagos. My file on the subject is thick with correspondence between Dale and myself, along with the thoughtful contributions from a number of other well-respected numismatists who offered help along the way.

In 2015, Dale published a compilation of his research in the *NI Bulletin* (Volume 50, Nos. 11/12, November/December 2015). In his paper, Dale was careful to point out that his research to-date was still very much a work in progress. My opinion at the time was that the article cast a somewhat negative light on the emission, given the incomplete nature of the investigation at that point in time. Subsequently, I authored an opposing perspective on the subject in a two-part article on the RA countermark, published in the *NI Bulletin* (see *NI Bulletin* Vol. 52 Nos. 1/2, Jan./Feb. 2017 and Vol. 52 Nos. 5/6, May/June 2017).

After that, Dale continued his efforts to uncover definitive documentation on the countermark - all the while keeping me updated on any new discoveries. Unfortunately, the rigor he applied to this undertaking has so far proved futile. In apparent frustration, Dale recently penned a follow-up to his 2015 article (see *A LEGEND REVISITED: The “RA” countermarks allegedly from the Galapagos Islands*, *NI Bulletin* Vol. 56 No. 4, July 2021).

The text of Dale’s article suggests a desire on his part to put the research on this subject to rest once and for all. In a rather nostalgic reaction, I found myself thumbing through the old tattered Galapagos file containing our many years of correspondence. One email from December of 2019 caught my eye, which I would like to share with the *NI Bulletin* readership. The intent of publicly disclosing the email is a rather shameless attempt on my part to keep the door from closing on the RA countermark series.

Hello Dale,

Once again, you've asked me to outline salient points of discussion with regard to the Galapagos RA countermark controversy. This time, I'd like to approach it from a different angle. Let's review the details that caused certain opinions to turn against acceptance of the countermark as legitimate.

[1] "No primary documentation exists to prove the countermark is attributable to the Galapagos Islands."

[2] "There is no evidence of wear on the coins."

[3] "Examples did not begin to appear in the numismatic marketplace until the early sixties."

Item numbers 1 and 2 have been argued to the best of my ability in the two-part article published in the *NI Bulletin*, 2017. We know that primary source material was destroyed during worker revolts at Progreso on several occasions (1904 and 1924) and we know that specific RA die-punched coins exhibit undeniable evidence of circulation. In addition, the [countermarks] from this same group of coins can be punch-linked from the original worn dies through several re-engraved iterations. I don't believe anyone would expect a fantasy-maker in the 60's to show that kind of dedication to a single punch.

Dale, I know that item #3 was one of the main reasons you began questioning the authenticity of the RA [countermarks] back in the late 80's. I also know that to date, no explanation has been convincing enough to assuage your pessimistic opinion on the subject.

On August 24, 2015, I sent you an email with my thoughts on issue #3:

"Critics say that this [countermark] didn't show up until after the 60's. Has anyone considered the fact that these [countermarks] had been circulating in a regional backwater, 600 miles off the coast of South America, with the only transportation to and from the islands controlled by people who may have had a desire to see the [countermarked] coins stay local? What about the fact that the world was in the throes of two world wars and a worldwide depression from the purported time of manufacture up till the 1960's. Not the most conducive economic conditions for transfer of this [countermarked] coinage from its location of origin to the United States."

I thought these were good points at the time. Unfortunately, they were never going to come close to exceeding the bar of unassailable proof you had set for the issue by then.

It wasn't until last year, when I ran into a book - *The Holey Dollars and Dumps of Prince Edward Island* by Christopher Faulkner, that I was

reminded of my comments to you in 2015. Faulkner was discussing forgeries of the Prince Edward dollars, a Canadian coin that was produced nearly a century before the Galapagos RA pieces. He writes: “In point of fact, the first photographs [of authentic Prince Edward holey dollars] did not appear until 1920... Incredibly, the first plated sale is later still, Glendining’s auction sale... in 1951.” He goes on:

“Furthermore, in addition to this continuing confusion about attribution, from the late twenties, with the Depression and then the War, the demand for collectible coins reached an all time low as collector interest slumped badly...

With the post World War II economic boom and the emergence of a new consumer culture, however, coin collecting underwent an extraordinary renaissance in a very short space of time. A disposable income and attendant leisure opportunities were ideal conditions for the growth of the hobby among a flourishing middle-class... **Significantly, it was after 1960 that new Dollars, and occasionally Dumps, first appeared on the market, and continued to appear in increasing numbers through the 1970s, 80s and 90s.**”

Faulkner’s comments explain the breakdown in collector interest and availability of numismatic material during and after WWII. My discussion to you in 2015 hinted at this very same possibility. Back then, you were left unconvinced.

I believe Faulkner has confirmed that numismatic markets in the US were substantially affected by worldwide events during this period to such a degree that even a well-known and highly sought-after Canadian coin ended up showing identical patterns of availability now being used to support the bias that the Galapagos RA [countermarked] coins are nothing more than modern fantasies.

On June 7, 2016, I emailed Joe Lang of Stephen Album Rare Coins asking why a RA [countermarked] specimen was removed from an upcoming auction. He replied, “*We withdrew the piece because it [was] condemned via the article that Dale Seppa wrote as well as being condemned by [several well-known Latin American coin dealers].*” The negative bias you presented in the article and your highly regarded reputation effectively sealed the countermarked coin’s fate.

We both know it was [a well-respected American dealer specializing in Latin American coins] who first called your attention to the fact that RA [countermarks] only began appearing in US markets around the 60’s, and that it was this observation that began the process of negatively affecting your viewpoint on the subject. If Faulkner is to be believed, you may have hung your hat on an awfully narrow interpretation of world coin market conditions at the time.

After my rebuttal to your paper, individuals quick to condemn the issuance in private have provided no public feedback to support their opinions on the matter. Weigh that empty vessel against the effort you and I've put into attempting to clarify the controversy and you can understand my frustration with the naysayers.

We now have Faulkner's informative disquisition to apply to the question of why RA [countermarked] specimens were late to the US market. Add that to a mountain of circumstantial and empirical evidence, along with a first-hand account of use on Progreso, and, in my opinion, the RA countermark's potential legitimacy appears more plausible than ever."

David Wolfer

### **The Follow-up**

Dale's 2021 article found me once again in front of my laptop attempting to rebut his published opinion on the countermark. An open letter on the subject sent to the *NI Bulletin* and scheduled for publication in November of 2021 fell by the wayside with the untimely passing of the *NI Bulletin's* editor, Joseph Uphoff. I would like to include it here as an addendum to the above email. A response from Dale Seppa then follows.

### **An Open Letter in Response to Dale Seppa's "A Legend Revisited"**

Dear Dale,

Together, we have journeyed for better than thirty years on a seemingly endless search to unravel the secrets behind the RA countermarked coins. Up to now, it has gotten the better of us.

In your recently published *NI Bulletin* article- uploaded shortly thereafter onto Academia.edu- you presented a belief that the emission is a fantasy. This determination appears to be largely derived upon an investigative failure to find any primary documentation supporting the issuance; therefore, "... *I feel [it] is high time we review the evidence, issue a death certificate and move on to other things.*"

Your article concludes with a quote from Copi's *Introduction to Logic*- "*In some circumstances it can be safely assumed that if a certain event occurred, evidence of it could be discovered by qualified investigators. In such circumstances it is perfectly reasonable to take the absence of proof of its occurrence as positive proof of its non-occurrence.*" I would assume your intention in quoting this passage was to leave the reader with the idea that '*the absence of proof*' - the years spent searching unsuccessfully for documentation specific to the RA countermark - is proof-positive of its illegitimacy. With all due respect, I would have to disagree with this line of reasoning.

Foremost in the way of my rebuttal is the obvious fact that we do have evidence of ‘*a certain event*’ occurring - in this case, production of the actual RA countermarked coins themselves. Lack of documentation cannot be considered a legitimate argument in favor of their ‘*non-occurrence*’ since their existence is hard fact. For this reason, your quote appears inapplicable to the discussion.

In numismatics, the physical presence of an undocumented coin is invariably the starting point for any investigation seeking to reveal its identity and purpose. The simple fact that the coin exists at all becomes the motivation driving the research that follows. If, God forbid, research efforts fail to produce verifiable documentation, the coin is typically relegated to a numismatic backwater from which collectors are left to make up their own minds on the subject based upon any circumstantial evidence that may have been unearthed in the investigative process. Condemning the piece out of hand simply because documentation is lacking risks a premature falsehood that all options have been exhausted.

Proof of illegitimacy requires as much evidence as does proof of authenticity. Personal opinions cannot replace hard evidence when it comes to this burdensome responsibility.

A policy of condemnation based simply upon a lack of primary documentation would set a discouraging numismatic precedent, not only for the coin in question from the standpoint of its potentially unfulfilled heritage but also as a suppressive influence on any collector’s innate curiosity and compelling need for answers; in other words, stifling the very forces that drive the challenging field of numismatic research today.

Dale, a well-deserved legacy of dedicated research associated with the coins of Ecuador is the result of your hard work. This has been proven once again with your dogged determination to find answers regarding the RA countermark question. But why stop now? A huge void in data associated with the RA countermark and Galapagos currently exists between the years 1912 and 1918 - a timeframe directly associated with the period Rogerio Alvarado had complete control over the plantation *Progreso*. Doesn’t this currently undocumented stretch seem like the most logical period of time to be looking for telltale evidence of Alvarado’s potential participation in the RA countermark’s issuance?

Details of your research have effectively eliminated all the other rabbit-holes and informational detritus responsible for plaguing the RA [countermark] investigation in endless misdirection over the years. Due exclusively to your strength of purpose in this respect, we now know to focus future research specifically on the time period applicable to Alvarado’s short reign of power. This personal accomplishment deserves the highest commendation.

Some coins will always be a mystery, destined to tease us indefinitely with their unanswered secrets. Dale, having steadfastly led us up to this

crucial juncture regarding the RA c/m and Galapagos, I don't believe you can or should expect the numismatic community to close the door on this enigmatic coinage just yet.

Respectfully,

David Wolfer, NI#2793

Upon receipt of the above draft, Dale responded with the following email:

David, truly excellent rebuttal which I don't happen to agree with but such is life. That said you make at least a couple of excellent points. [T]he one I have handled thusly; *"been handled by me for a decade or more by simply NOT buying ANY counter marked coin with a very few exceptions. If legitimate non base metal and not much more than current value of metal I might buy it: if well documented counterfeit-fantasy-whatever and very, very, very cheap I might buy it. However, when I review my recollections I guess I have not bought a countermarked coin for over twenty years and at age 81 I suspect I will never buy another"*.

The "MdeQ" countermarks are a good example and I guess I have never bought one anyway. Some documentation exists but too complicated for me to figure out. And other than financial limitations I just never could see spending hundreds of dollars for a countermarked coin when one without the countermark sold for way less than a hundred bucks. But that is my opinion. The other problem was (when I was a real dealer) I just could not see trying to resell an item that I could not 101 percent guarantee was legitimate.

Anyway that is my biased viewpoint.

Your point about focusing on the 1914 - 1918 period is one hundred percent correct. Unfortunately, I **have** focused on trying to find newspapers from that period and they are virtually nonexistent. I have spent hundreds if not thousands of dollars acquiring the 3000 or so periodicals (and books) that I have and there is a veritable paucity of information from that period. Try looking and see what you find. I believe I sent you a disk with the periodicals I had a few years ago and I have acquired very few after that time.

Anyway, I no longer have any time to put into this venture and since you are considerably younger than me, I will leave it to you.

Hmmm...



Image by Charles J. Sharp <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q54800218>

At this point in the investigation, I must apologize to the reader for my inability to offer anything more to the discussion than the above correspondence. Hope has so far proven, and remains to this day, a fickle bedfellow in the search for irrefutable evidence associated with the RA countermark. Truly, Dale leaves the numismatic community with a fine challenge - locate the smoking gun that solves a longstanding riddle once and for all. Yet a mischievous destiny continues to dictate this particular countermark's narrative; leaving only slivers of hope that Dale's gentle provocation to future researchers might someday bear the sweet fruit of corroborating evidence.

In the meantime, our luckless fate will be to patiently await its uncertain arrival...

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**Santa Fé Philip IV 2 Escudos (Gold Doubloon)**  
**Waldo Newcomer Specimen**  
**Herman Blanton, NI #LM115**

*Quién desee profundizar en el estudio de las series numismáticas ibero-americanas, tropezará con un sin fin de dificultades que pueden llevarle hasta el desánimo, haciéndole creer imposible el logre de resultados positivos. Para orillar este peligro, será necesario que el estudioso encuentre nuevas fuerzas en el entusiasmo que despertará en él, el extraordinario interés que presentan los múltiples problemas que plantean. - F. Xavier Calicó (1950: 1)*

*[Whoever wishes to study the Ibero-American numismatic series in depth will encounter endless difficulties that can lead to discouragement, making it impossible to achieve positive results. To address this danger, it will be necessary for the student to find new strength in the enthusiasm that will arouse in him, the extraordinary interest presented by the many problems they pose.]*

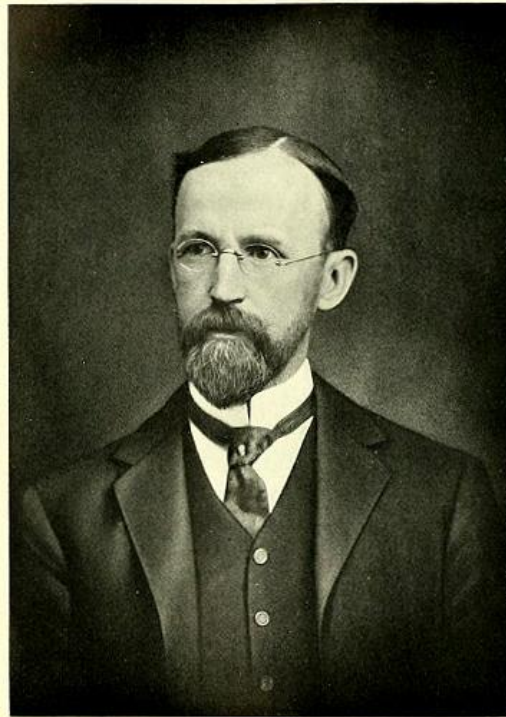
I certainly agree with Calicó. In my studies of Santa Fé (Bogotá, Colombia) cobs each step of progress leads to an intersection of more pathways of doubts and questions. Each of these new questions leads to even more new questions.

This current article is but a snippet of an expansive work underway that is intended to determine the state of numismatic knowledge of Santa Fé cobs before the discovery of the *El Mesuno* treasure in 1936. As former senator Howard Baker may have phrased it “*What did we know and when did we know it?*”



**J.C. Morgenthau & Co., Inc. Sale Number 345, lot 194**  
 (Maximum dimension 23 mm)

Waldo Newcomer was a well-known numismatist who assembled not only one of the finest collections of United States coins, but also world coins. The above illustrated coin was sold out of his collection in 1935 after his death in 1934. The Newcomer portrait comes from *Baltimore: It's History and Its People, Volume 2: Biography* by various contributors. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1912, plate between pages 168-69.



*Waldo Newcomer*

Provenance on Waldo Newcomer coins is hard to find, as explained by David Fanning in his Auction II, June 4, 2009 at lot 223 which was a collection of photographic prints and negatives.

The Waldo Newcomer collection was one of the finest of its day, and remains an important achievement in the history of coin collecting in the U.S. In some areas (such as private and territorial gold), it was magnificent. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most important collections of U.S. coins ever assembled for which a full catalogue was never written. No auction sale was held, no sylloge compiled: meaning that for provenance studies, the Newcomer collection is something of a black hole, with little certain information about what exactly it contained....

The Newcomer specimen is the third published Santa Fé 2 Escudos of the Habsburg period (Philip IV and Charles II). Those of the Bourbon dynasty (Philip V, Luis I and Ferdinand VI) were published in the 18th century and later, but not attributed to Santa Fé until Calicó in the early 1950s.

The first published Santa Fé/Habsburg 2 Escudos is Vidal Quadras (lot 8462) but the coin does not show the mint mark and he did not attribute the mint of the coin; he did, however, correctly attribute it to Philip IV. The second is Antonio López Villasante (lot 97). López Villasante correctly attributed his coin to Charles II but did not specify the mint even though the mint mark is visible. Medina (number 305, without photo) correctly attributed the López Villasante coin as Charles II, Santa Fé.

The Newcomer coin is (incorrectly) attributed in Morgenthau as Charles II following Medina and so cited.

The first published 2 Escudos attributed to Philip IV was also a Newcomer coin offered as lot 193 in the same Morgenthau sale. However, even though attributed as Bogotá (Santa Fé) Philip IV 1642, the coin is a fantasy dated 1492. That coin is a topic for another exposition....

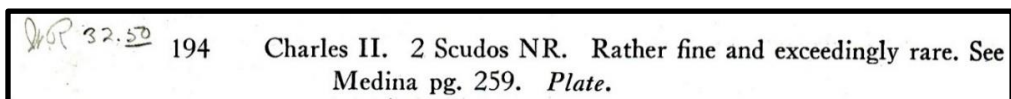
The Newcomer specimen 194 appeared at auction in 1935 and became the first Santa Fé (Colombia) 2 Escudos published in the United States. At the time there were only two others published, as listed above, but it seems the cataloger was not aware of the Vidal Quadras coin or did not recognize it as Santa Fé.

I don't know when Newcomer acquired his specimen but at the time it would have been a rare coin indeed.

The first Santa Fé 2 Escudos correctly attributed as Philip IV was published only one month after Newcomer. It was lot 110 in the Glendining & Co. sale of March 11-12, 1935. The coin is dated 1642 and currently resides in the Colombian National Collection.

#### **Historical account (provenance, listings, etc.) of the Waldo Newcomer specimen.**

- In my opinion, prior to 1932, the coin was discovered as shipwreck treasure hailing from the *Maravillas* which sank off the coast of the Bahamas in 1656. The coin has coral in the devices indicating seawater exposure. Where and how it was found is unknown but there are occasions when such a thing could happen.<sup>1</sup> This argument is further supported below. J. C. Morgenthau auctions with Newcomer in the title are June 1, 1932; June 14, 1934; Feb 12, 1935; May 9, 1935; Feb 23, 1939 and May 5, 1941. Newcomer was still actively buying in 1930 (see New Netherlands sale 59, lot 162) but it seems he started full disposition of his collection in 1932 or earlier and this was continued by his heirs after his death in 1934.
- J. C. Morgenthau & Co., Inc. Sale Number 345, *The Waldo Newcomer Collection, Part 1, Mexico, South and Central America, Tuesday and Wednesday, February 12th and 13th, 1935*. New York: J. C. Morgenthau & Co., lot 194 described "194 Charles II. 2 Scudos NR. Rather fine and exceedingly rare. See Medina pg. 259. *Plate*." Realized US \$32.50. My copy of the sale catalog is priced and named (see snapshot below) with the buyer identified as WR which is Wayte Raymond, who was a cataloger of this sale.



- *Spanish American Gold Coins* by Wayte Raymond, 1936. In the "Note by the Author" which follows the "Foreword," the author says "*One of the most interesting phases of Spanish-American numismatics, namely the so-called "cob money" or crude coinage beginning during the reign of Charles II and continuing through until the time of Ferdinand VI, I have purposely described very briefly as being worthy of special consideration at a later date.*" At page 29, Raymond begins the "Santa Fé de Bogota Mint" section. "*...gold coins were first made in 1756, although a few specimens are known of early crude type.*" The Raymond reference of 1756 is to the milled coinage. The Waldo

<sup>1</sup> For reference, the first modern salvage of the *Maravillas* was by Robert Marx in 1972

Newcomer coin is illustrated but not described; it is the only cob in the Santa Fé section.



Significant to the study of Santa Fé gold cobs is the fact that this book published in (March?) 1936 does not mention or even hint of the *El Mesuno* treasure or its treasure coins. It may seem obvious that since the treasure was reported in November 1936 that a book dated 1936 would not have such information. But, this helps confirm that, if *El Mesuno* coins were found and distributed before general awareness of the find, the coins had not found their way to the New York market. Six specimens were illustrated and identified as “El Mesuno” in the June 1937 edition of *The Coin Collector’s Journal* (Wayte Raymond editor). What does that mean in my research? It means that 1936 is a key year for categorizing the knowledge base of Colombian gold coins.

- August 22, 1936 is the reported discovery date of the “*El Mesuno*” treasure on the banks of the Magdalena River in Colombia. This is the date according to the *Revista del Banco de la República*, Año IX, No. 109, noviembre 20 de 1936, “El tesoro de ‘El Mesuno’” p. 385.
- *The Gold Coins of North and South America* by Wayte Raymond, 1937. The illustrated cobs of Mexico (3), Lima (6) and Cuzco (1) are the same coins in Raymond’s 1936 *Spanish American Gold Coins*. No Colombian gold cobs are listed or illustrated, not even the Waldo Newcomer coin. I don’t know why the Newcomer coin was omitted but it may be that the 1937 book had been prepared before publication of the Newcomer specimen in 1935.
- Calicó (1953) *Aportación a la historia monetario de Santa Fé de Bogotá (Colombia)*. At page 25 does not cite any references prior to *El Mesuno* (1936) for 2 Escudos of Philip IV. Fortunately for us at page 32, under Charles II, he reproduced the López Villasante specimen. Calicó said this was the only Charles II NR gold known to him.
- “A Hoard of the First Silver Coins of Nuevo Reino de Granada (Colombia)” by R. I. Nesmith in *Centennial Publication of the American Numismatic Society* in 1958. At page 514 Nesmith recognizes the rarity of Santa Fé gold before the discovery of *El Mesuno*. “...This hoard received some attention as the coins were generally unknown except for examples in the American Numismatic Society and those mentioned by Heiss and Vidal Quadras.” Nesmith did not mention the Newcomer coin.
- Burzio, Humberto F. *Diccionario de la moneda hispanoamericana*, 1958, vol. II, pp. 323-25. Other than the López Villasante coin the only mention of Charles

II Santa Fé 2 Escudos is the Newcomer coin. There are no citations prior to 1936 for Philip IV Santa Fé gold except for the Waldo Newcomer sale lot 193, 1492 vs 1642, which I consider a fantasy. This means that as of the Newcomer sale (Feb. 1935) Burzio says only three specimens were published: Vidal Quadras, López Villasante (Medina) and Newcomer.

- Hans M. F. Schulman, March 18-19, 1955 lot 439: “439. Cob 2 Scudo at left of arm “N.R.” This is the coin pictured by Raymond Page 29 South American Gold Coins. V Fine ...PLATE (175.00).” Schulman organized the O. K. Rumbel collection in lots 1-661 inclusive. The Newcomer coin, lot 439, is therefore identified in the O. K. Rumbel collection.

**FIRST SESSION**  
**FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 18, 1955 — 1:30 P. M.**  
**Collection of O. K. Rumbel of Texas**

It is with great pride that we present to our patrons one of the finest specialized collections offered within many years. While we sell coins, decorations and paper money of all countries and all periods we know of none as eagerly sought as the cut and/or counterstamped coins of the West Indies. Next might properly come the counterstamped and obsidional coins of the World. It would be hard to find any series more interesting than the Spanish-American coins of the Americas. This offering exceeds any sale of these three series within the past 25 years.

**Lots 1 to 129** West Indies cut and/or counterstamped. Gold, Silver, Copper.  
**130 to 145** Uncertain and unattributed, possibly West Indies.  
**146 to 243** Counterstamped and obsidional coins of many countries,  
**244 to 287** Mexican Revolutionary coins 1811-14 and 1913-17.  
**288 to 349** More obsidional and counterstamped coins of the World.  
**350 to 423** Fine lot of coins of the British Isles.  
**424 to 480** Gold coins.  
**461 to 661** Coins of Mexico.

**437 Sante Fe de Bogoto, Colombia.** Crude cob 2 Escudos “I” to left of arms. (25.00)  
 Rev. Cross F

**438** — Same type cob but better struck. Rev. Has cross in cartouche VF (35.00)

**★439** — Cob 2 Scudo at left of arm “N.R.” This is coin pictured by Raymond Page 29 South American Gold Coins. V Fine ... PLATE (175.00)



Oliver Keith (O.K.) Rumbel (1896-1977) was an important collector with multiple interests in philately and numismatics including deep assets in United States Colonial and Spanish Colonial coinage. He is listed as a contributor in Nesmith’s seminal 1955 book *The Coinage of the First Mint of the Americas at Mexico City*.

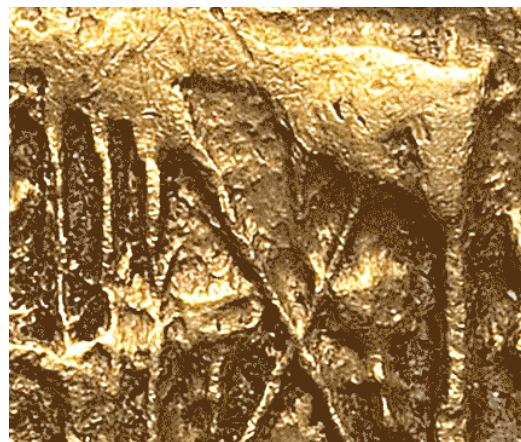
The Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary website notes that, “After spending his early life in Kansas, Rumbel moved to the Rio Grande Valley in 1928. Trained as an architect, Rumbel worked in the manufacture and distribution of lumber prior to an occupational shift to the growing citrus industry.”

- *Bowers and Ruddy Galleries Public Auction Sale February 17-19, 1977, The Harold A. Blauvelt, Iberoamerican and 1715 Spanish Treasure Fleet Collections*. Bob Korver’s article, “Spanish Colonial Coinage from the Mint at Bogota” is on pp. 169-170. According to the catalog introduction section, pp. 4-5, lots 5001 and forward are 1715 Fleet recovery items. Korver’s article is placed in the catalog as the lead into Santa Fé section (Bogotá in the catalog). Relevant for this study are the two lots of Philip IV 2 Escudos (5250 & 5251). Korver notes the relative lack of data and known specimens of Santa Fé gold cobs by revealing the fact that the ANS and the Smithsonian collections combined hold less than 10 specimens (all denominations, not just 2 Escudos). In his research he cites the Medina 2 Escudos Carlos II (López Villasante). He cites Burzio’s (1958, II: 324) listing of Carlos II in the Waldo Newcomer Collection. Korver was skeptical of the Charles II attribution (of the Newcomer coin) and through comparison with the 1715 fleet coins offered in that Bowers and Ruddy sale he thought it most similar to lot 5250 which is a Philip IV 1654-R. I am favorably impressed with Korver’s research, which I found after having nearly completed my own research on the Newcomer specimen; he found and used many of the same sources and reached almost the same conclusion that I do, but he did it 44 years earlier with much less documentation available.
- Heritage Auctions, *The Cape Coral Collection of Spain and Latin America*, August 19-20, 2021, lot 34504. “Philip IV gold Cob 2 Escudos ND (1642-1651) NR-R AU55 NGC, Bogota mint, KM4.1, Restrepo-M50.25. 6.69 gm. Borderline uncirculated in both appeal and appearance, it is evident that this specimen saw hardly any use in circulation, possessing surprisingly strong and discernible raised features struck just slightly off-center on an irregular, pale-gold flan. Always a popular Cob issue of Colombia when seen crossing the auction block. From the Long Island Collection.” NGC6057759-009 AU55.



Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions, [www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com) (Image enlarged ~2.3x)

Reverse image illustrated with design rotated 180 degrees which is the same arrangement as in original Morgenthau catalog. Standard Santa Fé design with Habsburg shield. The obverse shows mint mark NR left of shield and right of shield is the value II (horizontal) with assayer mark R below. Assayer R (Pedro Ramos) tenure 1642-1676 which overlapped the reigns of Philip IV and Charles II. The peripheral legend of the obverse is either PHILIPPVS • IIII • D • G or CAROLVS • II • D • G. Part of an S is visible at 6:30 o'clock and the final digit of the king's ordinal at 9 o'clock (final digit as it comes against the legend separator (•) between the ordinal and D of D G. This allows enough space for IIII but is not proof positive that it is not II widely spaced.



Large die chip in top right corner of shield. Widespread Coral visible on surface.

### Analysis

The Newcomer coin (Heritage 3094-34504) and another example, the Sedwick coin (Treasure Auction 18 lot 44, October 29, 2015), were struck from a common obverse die. The Sedwick lot description reads as follows: “Bogota, Colombia, cob 2 escudos, Philip IV, assayer not visible (R, ca. 1654), from the *Maravillas* (1656). S-B21; KM-4.1; Restrepo-M50.25. 6.69 grams. AU with grainy surfaces, good full shield with bold full mintmark NR to left, choice full cross. From the *Maravillas* (1656).”

All images below (~ 2.3x actual size) are scaled to the Newcomer coin with the shield width at 12 mm.



**Heritage 3094 lot 34504**



**Sedwick TA18 lot 44**

The Sedwick coin shows the king’s ordinal (I)III which is more than II so this proves the king is Philip IV. I compared the Newcomer coin with over a hundred of those from the *Maravillas* and in my opinion it is most similar to coins dated 1654 and 1655. It is the reverse that carries the date but unfortunately I was unable to identify an exact match of the reverse die.

For reference, Goldberg Coins & Collectibles Inc. sold some 130 lots of Santa Fé 2 Escudos in their Auction 28, February 20-23, 2005. The catalog identifies each of lots 2801-2930 as coming from the *Maravillas*.

The table below of six specimens show various states of the same obverse die. The Newcomer coin is a late stage strike. It is quite remarkable to have enough specimens to illustrate die states. By measuring the shield I adjusted images to same relative size.

### Conclusion

The Newcomer specimen is the 3rd published Santa Fé doubloon (2 Escudos) of the 17th century. It is the second Philip IV to be published. The coin is Philip IV, Santa Fé, mint mark NR, assayer R, c. 1654-55, Restrepo M50-25, ex. *Maravillas*, discovered before 1934.

Various States of the Obverse Die (all images ~2.3x actual size)



Goldberg 28-2855



Goldberg 28-2912



Goldberg 28-2908



Heritage 3094-34504



Sedwick TA18-44



Sedwick TA10-32, dated 1655

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