

The senatorial mint of Rome and the big silver

Translated from: La zecca senatoriale di Roma e il grosso d'argento

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Panorama Numismatico n. 297

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The senatorial mint of Rome and the big silver

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Abstract

Describing in a nutshell a complex issue such as the production of large money in Rome during the senatorial period is a difficult task. The risk is that of disappointing: experts on the subject may consider things that have been confirmed trivial and less experienced readers may not accept having taken for granted things that in reality are not. The purpose of the article is to trace a dissemination path through a general exposition of the subject, using the main studies published in print and turning particular interest to some unclear issues that in our opinion are still under study. The issue relating to the coins minted by the Roman Senate has also been addressed in the past and as a whole has always proved to be insidious, generating lively debates among scholars (

The "big" money was introduced in central Italy in different phases during the first half of the thirteenth century, adding to the small coins in the monetary system of the time in terms of theoretical value in the many current lire and proposing itself as the basis of a monetary reform that for many aspects proved to be revolutionary. The bulk was a multiple of money and was made essentially to facilitate trade; for the goodness of the silver and for the high liberating power it stopped in a short time, becoming an appreciated pass in the international commercial circuits. At the same time, money continued to play a primary role mainly in small-medium transactions, giving rise, together with the bulk, to a double monetary system used in accordance with the needs of different exchanges. However, as can be seen from the data of the findings and from some documents (see Baldassarri 2010, pp. 445-448), since the mid-thirteenth century the bulk was also and above all used for "internal" payments.

The simultaneous presence of the Roman Church, of the imperial power, of the emerging secular aristocracy and of the rebirth of the myth that passed in the consciences of the

Capitoline citizens, produced an extremely articulated political and socio-economic framework, which largely conditioned the historical processes of Rome, generating significant elements peculiarities in the Italian medieval panorama.

The rigorous pontifical program of affirming one's own political supremacy towards the Roman noble and popular regimes, oriented in the opposite direction towards the most total autonomy (*prurium dominandi*) - which did not differ much from the *plenitudo potestatis* of Innocent III (1198-1216) - represented for the medieval history of Rome a substantial obstacle that conditioned the social and economic life of the city.

We are aware that, from the mid-twelfth century to about 1230, Rome turned out to be a city with a very strong commercial-mercantile vocation, comparable to the main centers of Mediterranean Europe. The relative "delay" by Rome in the production of large coins with respect to other contemporary mints was significant and it could be hypothesized that this contingency was to be attributed, in addition to the continuity of the use of gold minted by Arab and Byzantine mints, also to the luxury of precious metal in brands derived in particular from credits and royalties from the subalpine bishoprics; there was also a large mass of foreign and national coins coming from the incessant movement of pilgrims arriving in Rome.

The different numeraries, added up in accounting currency, were presumably reused for actual payments in mixed prices or were melted and transformed into silver ingots functional to trade (Romanesque silver). The failure of Rome to adapt to the new "high" monetary reference standard did not initially represent an impediment to the successful outcome of transregional and international commercial transactions. However, with the death of Gregory IX (1227-41), the pope who offered greater "protection" to Roman merchant-bankers in exchange for large loans of money, due to a renewed and conditioning policy by the subsequently elected popes, the trust that had favored the Roman mercatores at the time, especially in their credit traits in the sphere of the pontifical Curia, ceased; consequently also the mercantile activities underwent a decisive downsizing.

In addition to this, the social turnover that took place with the institutional rise of the *Urbis barones*, which heavily penalized the economic dynamics of the city (*Regimen monstruosum*), and the inclusion in the Roman circuit of the inances of Sienese bankers and later, led to Rome, pressured by economic-structural needs, to implement a vigorous monetary policy maneuver through the issuance of large money.

In Rome, the new issues, mentioned as *romaninis grossis*, *romaninus vetus*, *romaninus reinforcedatus* or *romanini de peso* and *romaninus parvus* in the documentation of the time, began in 1253, in the values of gross and half gross, "reigning" Brancalone degli Andalò. The election of the Ghibelline senator of Bolognese origin, instigator of a popular regime and *rigidissimus executor iustitiae*, was firmly claimed by the Roman citizens who thus tried to

remedy the frequent riots that troubled the city in that period and, at the same time, of reacquire a socio-economic order such as to restore prestige and credibility in financial relations with other commercial centers. In concrete terms, Brancaleone's new monetary policy turned out to be a guessed as well as necessary strategy, thus creating an instrument more suited to the economic needs of the period in the trading circuit.

The adoption of the iconic type for both sides of the coin, lion passing and Rome seated on the throne with globe and palm, involved a very specific choice on the part of the Capitoline mint, aimed at spreading, through the coin, a vigorous political message to the eyes. of contemporaries. The lion was a symbolic expression of the free people of Rome, the female figure was the real personification of the city and the epigraphic imprints S.P.Q.R. / ROMA CAPVT MVNDI expressed a tested formula with specific historical traditions; therefore, in terms of self-representation, a numismatic lexicon of great symbolic strength, accompanied by external signs showing a strong conception of institutional power belonging to a secular authority. It appears clear, in the style of the figure seated on the throne, a reference to the Byzantine coinage, as are also evident signs of imperial origin. Generally, in numismatics, the part in which the issuing authority is highlighted is considered as the obverse of the coin and in this way the face of the large Roman is evaluated with the depiction of the lion and the epigraphic imprint SENATVS in the main reference catalogs. However, if we undertake an analysis in parallel between municipal seals (see Regesto Margarita Cornetana) and money, it is clear that the image imprinted in the former coincides with the female figure seated on the throne present in the large ones, underlining their iconographic relevance. It is legitimate to ask whether the circumstance could represent a starting point for a re-examination of the distinctions present in the catalogs (see Travaini 2007b, p. 298). The obverse and reverse differentiation of a coin is a current convention and period documents always pronounce on both sides (Giuliani-Fabrizi 2014, p. 229).

The first large coin coined by the mint of Rome had a weight of about 3.45 g with a fineness of 938 thousandths, that is, eleven ounces and six deniers per pound, for a total of 3.24 g of ino per piece (Stahl 2008, p. 160); its initial theoretical value, in line with the broader contemporary types, was twelve denarii which constituted a Capitoline Wolf, bronze, XIII century, Rome, Capitoline Museums (from Wikipedia).

Numismatic Panorama 07-08 / 2014 | 27 penny in the local unit of account (in Rome, provisini lira). Due to the debasement of the provisino money, probably also determined by the rise in the price of silver, documented at the beginning of the second half of the thirteenth century, the value of the bulk was soon unhooked from the rate of the penny, therefore passing from twelve to sixteen provisini and rapidly increased in succession until reaching that of forty-eight denarii between 1342-59.

The "generic" characteristics valid for distinguishing the different values of the types are

made evident by the different portrayals of the lion in the "obverse" of the coins: passing on the left with proilo head in the normal large ones, passing on the left with the head of the elevation in the reinforced large ones and passing on the right with the head of a proilo in the large means (in some particular cases in the anonymous types on the left: CNI, vol. XV, p. 104

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Some epigraphic-iconographic elements in the imprints of the coins can facilitate, even if in principle, the identification of a certain chronological sequence. The figure of Rome seated on the throne is engraved in different styles: in the most ancient period (about 1253-1282) he holds the globe with his right hand and the palm with his left and the throne is in columns while in the second period (about 1282- 1363) the opposite occurs and the throne is conceived by two lions. The overall picture of the epigraphic letters in the second period has a mixed character in uncial and semi-Gothic style and the use of capital letters, specific to the previous issues, is reduced. In the first period the accuracy of the design, on the whole of the coin, determines a meticulous style in the details, while during the second, the neglect of the engraving shows a stylistic simplification that becomes more and more accentuated with the passage of time. In this last phase, the big one coined by Guelfo de 'Pugliesi in 1363 is an exception, which offers a more accurate invoice in the imprint of the coin which probably testifies, together with new and rigorous political parameters of "recovery", an attempt to give new impetus to a senatorial authority now bleached.

Overall, the large senatorials can be grouped into three main categories, in turn distributed in numerous groups (see Grierson 1956): the first includes anonymous issues (CNI, vol. neither the name nor the coat of arms of a senator; the second includes the issues of large and medium-sized ones with the title of Brancalone degli Andalò (CNI, vol. XV, pp. 105-106, nn. 40-55) and of Carlo I d'Angiò (CNI, vol. XV,; the third brings together the productions with an imprint in the exergue of the heraldic signs (CNI, vol. XV, pp. 119-133, nn. 156-262) concerning some baronial families.

The series of large senatorials would have been interrupted for a short period with the production of large so-called "samperini" (CNI, vol. XV, pp. 115-118, nn. 128-155), anonymous semi-papal coins, which they flaunted a first attempt at political change by the Roman Church. If these are generically dated between 1265 and 1303, in reality it seems reliable that the issue took place during the pontificate of Boniface VIII (1294-1303), probably designed and issued for the Jubilee of 1300 (Travaini 2000, p. 122).

For the sake of completeness of information, with regard to this period it is also worth mentioning a particular production of "large" coins with the bearded head of St. Peter on the obverse and keys on the reverse. In the literature there is no precise agreement in the assignment of the mint of origin: in particular the coin was attributed by Grierson (1956, new type of money) to the Roman oicina during the pontificate of Nicholas III (1277-1280), based

on stylistic and historical analysis, with juxtaposition to the "saint's provisini" noted in Pegolotti's market list (circa 1290). In reality, "di santo" could be compared to "di senato" (Travaini 2003, p. 119), so the reference to the classic provisino money remains in our opinion the information Fig. 7. Big anonymous, from mcsearch.info. Fig. 8. Heavy reinforced, from mcsearch.info. 28 | Numismatic Panorama 07-08 / 2014

more appropriate and the attribution of the "big" with keys to Viterbo, as suggested by the CNI (vol. XIV, p. 271, nn. 1-5), reasonably reliable. In any case, the question remains open and to be explored.

In addition to the weight aspects, greater than the contemporary nominal values of the other Italian and European mints, it is particularly interesting to note the concomitant production of a division of the bulk in the senatorial monetary system; probably this was due to the high value that the provisino had, despite some intrinsic and weight lexions that occurred previously, during 1253, which can be calculated in 307.2 thousandths (Finetti, Denari, p. 25), that is 3 ounces and deniers sixteen and a half per pound. In theory, the half-large could initially have facilitated medium-sized transactions with a nominal value less than the bulk. However, it is unusual that in some cases (CNI, vol. XV, p. 121, p. 123, the monetary production concerned exclusively the minting of the mezzo-grande; it is useful to underline that in these examples the lion proceeds to the left as in the canonical iconography referred to It is difficult, in our opinion, that no multiple example of the same type has reached us, while it seems reasonable to hypothesize that this circumstance is to be attributed to the theoretical value of twenty-four / twenty-six provisini that had reached the Romanino parvo at the beginning of the fourteenth century; the half gross thus became the penny with which it was counted, making the minting of the multiple probably "superfluous". involved a modification of the type of large money with relative reduction in value.

In addition to the debated "pontifical or municipal currency" issue, which could be resolved with a fair and changing gap that periodically increased or decreased between the two entities (see Carocci 2008), especially during the period of the "Avignonese captivity", it persists as an object of discussion what is the inality of the heraldic signs imprinted in the large ones. Grierson (1956) proposed to attribute the insignia to government officials in charge of the mint and belonging to the great families of Rome from which the senators came, while Carocci (2008) suggests essentially recognizing the heraldic weapons referring to the senators in office. Without entering here into an analysis of the details, in our opinion, the theories are otherwise valid and it will be the responsibility of the fans, after having read the positions of the aforementioned authors, which conceptual direction to accept. Unquestionably, the presence of family crests in Roman coins represented a completely exceptional peculiarity in a period in which this prerogative was generally absent in monetary iconography except in some issues of southern sovereigns (Carocci 2008, p. 161).

As regards the sign of the lily imprinted in the reinforced type of Charles (CNI, vol. XV, pp. 100-121) it should be noted that in many specimens the letters in the legends of the coin highlight epigraphic characters manifestly unrelated to the previous traditional ones (cut later, the closed Cs and Es, A and T with very elongated descending dashes, N always straight lines; Finetti 2000, p. 57). The stylistic affinities with the San Luigi gros tournois and the Naples pug are evident, suggesting that the coinage staff may have been of French origin. The lily, emblem of France, could be a direct reference to those workers or to regis officials; a reference to the Guelph party cannot be excluded (see Chimienti 2011, pp. 513, 520-521). It cannot be overlooked that the name of Carlo is always present in the epigraphy of the coins.

Another theme worthy of attention concerns the creation of the large coin coined by Charles, the so-called *rinfortiatus*, during the second senatorate (1268-78). These Numismatic Panorama 07-08 / 2014 | 29 coins have a diameter between twenty-five and twenty-seven millimeters, weigh approximately 4 g (theoretical unit weight of 4.15 g), an initial value of twenty-one-twenty-three *provisini denarii*, variable in relation to speculations in the various areas of circulation, and a silver of 944 thousandths. The Angevin presence for the history of Rome represented a substantially dominant character especially with Charles I, who, despite responding to a broad program drawn up by the Roman Curia, in conjunction with a vacant seat almost three years after the death of Clement IV in 1268, "abused" the mint right for the realization of his "personal" coinage; the reinforced could constitute an attempt at monetary alignment on the foot of the large *tornesi* weighing approximately 4.29 g and 958 thousandths of *ino*, valued at twelve *tornesi denarii*. The massive presence of large *tornesi* used in the payments of pontifical tithes, the trading lists and the frequency of the findings testify to the importance that these coins acquired in central Italy, to the point that calling it "foreign currency" could be improper. Technically, the reinforced changed the traditional exchange ratio with the small coin which had reached such a debasement as to make it necessary to increase the weight and intrinsic value of the bulk that was thus linked to the gold *iorino* in a precise ratio of 10 to 1 (Capobianchi 1895- 96, p. 90).

A striking fact in the context is determined by the "inspirations" that united the coinage of Rome and the Kingdom of Naples, where with a new mint during 1278 (Giuliani-Fabrizi 2014, p. 50) the greeting-type pug began to be minted (3.34 g) and in 1303 the lily-type pug (4.01 g) conforming respectively to the foot of the *romanino vetus* of sixteen deniers and of the reinforced ones of twenty-one; they circulated for a long time in the Lazio area, as written sources of the fourteenth century testify, and in the obverse of the lily the seated image of Rome was "imitated" even if with ideal contents referring to imperial power (fig. 11).

It is no coincidence, therefore, that the Statutes of the city (1358-1367) mentioned the *Romanino* with the names *carlino* and *gigliato* and if Martin V (1417-1431) coined a type of coin with identical iconographic characteristics (CNI, vol. XV „ recognizable by the presence of a whip to indicate the mint maker Domenico Gherardini (Fig. 12). The assumed monetary

relationship described above, supported by political ties and reciprocal exchanges, not only commercial but also cultural, could hypothetically give an explanation to the intervals of the senatorial sequences that occur between one coinage and another of the large Romans with family crests: occasionally and in certain periods the Neapolitan big money could have filled any gaps in the legal circulation of Rome and we cannot exclude a direct involvement of the Capitoline mint in the production of these coins (Capobianchi 1895, p. 92). In a document of the State Archives of Naples, dated 28 September 1344, it is noted that and the Curia pontificia contracted out to the Neapolitan mint the minting of 100,000 pounds of silver pugs (Giuliani-Fabrizi 2014, p. 124). We do not know which markets the numerary was actually destined for, but nothing prevents us from believing that this sum was used at least in part also in the city. The same exciting situation of cultural transmission through coinage was created for example with Florence and Venice (see Day 2011, pp. 237-261).

Another argument not yet definitively resolved concerns the assignment of precise dates (table 1) to groups of large heraldry in which eight Roman baronial families can be identified with "certainty" (see Grierson 1956, p. 154); in reality, overall heraldic signs are of little help for a chrono-typology of the large a priori. Grierson identified the successions of the series on the basis of the stylistic and technical analysis of the coins while Stahl proposes a chronology in accordance with 30 | Numismatic panorama 07-08 / 2014 mity to metrological data, trading lists and comparisons with the debasement of the provisini in relation to the gold iorino, which would suggest precise groupings in a general framework. It must be said that many types are so rich in variations in the punctuation, generally considered indicative of the turnover of mint, as to suggest a considerable period of minting and this contrasts with the duration of each senatorate which "normally" was six months, although often interrupted by civil wars. The only exceptions are reasonably constituted by the big ones of the tribune Cola di Rienzo (N of Nicola tra le braccia CNI, vol. XV, p. 131, coined in 1347, and of the foreign senator Guelfo dei Pugliesi (CNI, vol. XV, p. 133,) in 1363; for the moment only an approximate dating can be assigned to the other coins.

Regarding the phenomenon of hoarding, we have not been able to find findings recorded in the bibliographical literature and the particularity is also confirmed by Stahl (2008, p. 160) in his essay. If the lack of finds were proven, theoretically, and with particular reference to the issues of the first half of the fourteenth century, the reasons could be identified, as well as in a probable overvaluation of the coins that would have made it more convenient to use them quickly as a means of exchange. , also in the attempt by the public to realign the old silver pieces on the Bolognino's foot (Finetti 1999, p. 79). In fact, there is a very high percentage of specimens that show abundant shearing that testify to a reduction in weight and value; therefore, it would have been more profitable to recover the surplus silver than to hoard the nominal. However, there is a substantial list of Romanini in public and private collections or on sale in numismatic auctions that would not be explained exclusively with the complicity of single specimens from old collections; probably regular finds not inventoried or dismembered

in past times and the "suspicion" of clandestine recoveries negatively affect the speech.

Although the main topic of the article is mainly directed towards the large silver coin, it is pertinent to make a quick note of the gold issues minted in Rome during the period in question; the "return to gold" played a fundamental role in medieval economic history, conditioning, due to the difficulty of maintaining a balance between the nominal values of gold and silver (Travaini 2007a, p. 55), silver emissions in the various systems monetary. The thirteenth-century gold Romanini (Travaini 2007b), whose dating is still uncertain and of which no specimen has survived, are known exclusively in written sources and were coined for a very short period; another type, known in a few examples and conventionally dated to 1305, followed the model of the iorino of Florence but was soon abandoned in favor of a regular use of the real gold coin of iorentina during the first half of the fourteenth century. The third and most important of the gold issues of Rome was the senatorial duchy, dated to 1350, which followed the model of the gold duchy of Venice.

After the large coin coined by Guelfo de 'Pugliesi in 1363, the issues of silver senatorial coins with coats of arms were definitively suspended and replaced by the Bolognino (CNI, vol. 1370 by Urban V (1362-1370), who returned to Rome from Avignon. The general debasement of the stalk in the sixties / seventies of the fourteenth century pushed the mints to an attempt to realign the large coin, albeit in the bolognini currency, on the traditional value of twenty-four / thirty denarii in a new small coin (Finetti 1999, p. 78). Numismatic Panorama 07-08 / 2014 | 31

As is known, during the pontificate of Boniface IX (1389-1404) the autonomy of the Capitoline municipality declined, reduced in 1398 to a purely administrative function and, later, the reform introduced by Eugene IV (1431-1447) prohibited any allusion to the institution of the Senate and definitively sanctioned the end of an era that lasted over two centuries.

Charles of Anjou Senator

Chimienti: 1265 or 1268 (type with VICARIVS legend), 1268-1274 (type with Angevin shield), 1274-1278 (large reinforced); CNI XV: 1266-1270 (normal weight type), 1270-1285 (thick reinforced). Grierson: 1270 -c. 1274 (1st group, normal weight type), 1274-1278 (2nd group, thick reinforced), 1282 (3rd group, type with VICARIVS legend). Muntoni: 1263-1266 (type with normal weight and type with VICARIVS legend), 1268-1278 and 1281-1284 (large reinforced). Seraini: 1266 (type with VICARIVS legend), 1266-1270 (type with Angevin shield); 1270-1285 (large reinforced). Stahl: 1263-1266 (1st group, normal weight type), 1268-1278 (2nd group, thick reinforced), 1281-1284 (type with F).

III series with heraldic signs

CNI XV: Caetani?, Orsini-Colonna around the 13th century; Savelli, Savelli? undated; Colonna-Orsini, Anibaldi-Savelliincerto, Savelli-Anibaldi, Anibaldi-Stefaneschi, Caetani, Anibaldi-uncertain, Orsini-Stefaneschi-uncertain first half of the 14th century; Orsini-N-Anibaldi 1345 ?; Anibaldi first half of the 14th century; Guelfo dei Pugliesi from 1363. Grierson: Caetani, Orsini-Colonna last quarter of 200; Savelli, Savelli-Conti, Orsini-Colonna, Anibaldi-Stefaneschi, Papareschi second quarter of 300; Cola di Rienzo 1347; Guelfo dei Pugliesi 1363. Muntoni: Caetani, Orsini-Colonna thirteenth century; Anibaldi-Stefaneschi, Annibaldi-unknown, Caetani, Colonna-Orsini, Orsini-Stefaneschi-unknown, Savelli, Savelli-Anibaldi, not identified in the 14th century; Guelph of the Apulians 1363; Seraini: Savelli (not identified), Colonna-Orsini, Anibaldi-Savelli-uncertain on the right, Savelli-Anibaldi, Anibaldi-Stefaneschi, Caetani, Anibaldi-uncertain, Savelli, Orsini-Stefaneschiincerto, Orsini-N-Anibaldi, Anibaldi? 1300-50; Guelph of the Apulians 1363; Stahl: 14th century, Cola di Rienzo 1347; Guelph of the Apulians 1363.

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