

# Foreword

**T**he Taxis postal empire that began in the 14th century in northern Italy flourished in the social and cultural transformations of the Renaissance. Timely, reliable communication - the hallmark of the Taxis system and a transformative force throughout history - still underpins civilization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the Renaissance and in the ensuing centuries, the Taxis system spread throughout Europe and the family's rise to the highest ranks of nobility made them prominent personages in the history of their respective countries.

Thanks to research by European scholars during the last 120 years, the Taxis family boasts a rich bibliography. During the last decades of the 20th century, the growing popularity of postal history generated greater interest and the information gathered by earlier scholars has been supplemented by new research in archival sources.

The book you hold in your hands is the result of just such new, in-depth research carried out by the co-authors in archives in Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria over a span of three decades.

In 1991, under the auspices of the local municipality, a Taxis Postal History and History Museum was opened at Cornello dei Tasso, near Bergamo - the cradle of the dynasty. The Cornello museum has gathered a remarkable quantity of documentation on the Taxis family - as postmasters general, art collectors, and members of the European nobility - that makes clear their vital and varied contributions to economic life, culture, religion, and diplomacy. Torquato Tasso, a relative of Simon Taxis and best known for his epic *Jerusalem Delivered*, remains to this day at the pinnacle of Italian poetry.

Among its many praiseworthy initiatives, the Cornello museum has been instrumental in publishing an impressive series of volumes on major personalities of the Taxis family. The museum has also established an ongoing cultural collaboration with the princely family of Thurn und Taxis, who own and oversee a prestigious postal museum at Regensburg.

With its array of detail on rates and routes and relationships, this new volume brings to life the colorful, challenging world of the Taxis postal couriers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

BILL WELCH

## Translator's Note

Parts I and II of this volume are presented here in English, without footnotes, for the benefit of English-speaking readers. The scholar can easily refer to footnotes by carefully perusing the Italian version. The iconographic section has been enriched by bilingual captions, and it is hoped that this effort will considerably augment the reader's appreciation and enjoyment.

My translation work has been made easier by true friends, and I am greatly indebted to Bill Welch, Kelly Snyder, and Jeanne Dixon, for their invaluable assistance and sage advice.

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