

= Gian Gastone de ' Medici , Grand Duke of Tuscany =

Gian Gastone de ' Medici ( Giovanni Battista Gastone ; 24 May 1671 ? 9 July 1737 ) was the seventh and last Medicean Grand Duke of Tuscany . He was the second son of Grand Duke Cosimo III and Marguerite Louise d 'Orléans . His sister , Electress Palatine Anna Maria Luisa , arranged his marriage to the wealthy and widowed Anna Maria Franziska of Saxe @-@ Lauenburg in 1697 . The couple despised each other and had no children . As Grand Prince Ferdinando , Gian Gastone 's elder brother , predeceased Cosimo III , Gian Gastone succeeded his father in 1723 .

His reign was marked by the reversal of his predecessor 's conservative policy ; he abolished taxes for poorer people , repealed penal laws which restricted Jews and discontinued public executions . The Medici were wanting in male heirs ; his father , Cosimo III , wanted the Electress Palatine to succeed Gian Gastone . However , Spain , Great Britain , Austria and the Dutch Republic disregarded Cosimo 's plan and appointed Charles of Spain ? whose mother , Elisabeth Farnese , was a great @-@ granddaughter of Margherita de ' Medici ? Gian Gastone 's heir . Charles later transferred his claim to Francis Stephen of Lorraine pursuant to a preliminary peace that was finalized in 1738 . Francis Stephen duly succeeded at Gian Gastone 's demise , on 9 July 1737 , ending almost 300 years of Medici rule over Florence . For the latter part of his reign , Gian Gastone chose to remain confined in his bed , tended by his entourage , the Ruspanti .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early years ( 1671 ? 1697 ) = = =

On 24 May 1671 , the first anniversary of his grandfather Ferdinando II 's death , Giovanni Battista Gastone de ' Medici was born in Florence to Grand Duke Cosimo III and Marguerite Louise d 'Orléans . He derived his baptismal name , Giovanni Battista Gastone , from his maternal grandfather , Gaston , Duke of Orléans . Cosimo and Marguerite Louise frequently quarreled . As a result , four years after his birth , Marguerite Louise returned home to France . Gian Gastone and his siblings were left in the care of their grandmother Vittoria della Rovere .

Gian Gastone was tutored by Cardinal Henry Noris , whose company the prince hardly left . The Tuscan prince was an avid intellectual , being an antiquarian , a botanist and an amateur scientist . In addition , he could speak English , among other languages . However , it was these traits that earned Gian Gastone the disdain of his father and of his elder brother , Grand Prince Ferdinando ; Gian Gastone was thus granted a scant allowance by his father and therefore could not enjoy the " dissipations " of court .

Cosimo III considered compelling Gian Gastone to become a cardinal . In order to rally Gian Gastone to its cause , Spain , concerned that another Medicean cardinal ? Gian Gastone 's uncle , Francesco Maria de ' Medici , Duke of Rovere and Montefeltro , already enjoyed that dignity ? would tip the scales in favour of France at a Papal conclave , offered to create him " General of the Spanish Seas " . Peter II of Portugal , however , had other things in mind for him : he wanted Gian Gastone to marry his only daughter , Isabel Luísa , Princess of Beira . To marry her , Gian Gastone would have to convince his father to allot him an allowance of " adequate stature " . However , the Grand Duke refused and neither the cardinalate nor the Portuguese marriage ever materialised .

Out of sympathy , Gian Gastone befriended his unhappy sister @-@ in @-@ law , Duchess Violante Beatrice of Bavaria . Her husband , Grand Prince Ferdinando , thought her too ugly and too dull for him . At the same time , Gian Gastone sank into a state of melancholy . In an attempt to rouse him from this condition , Cardinal Francesco Maria often summoned Gian Gastone to festivities at his villa , Lappoggi . However , these soirées had no effect and Gian Gastone continued to weep unceasingly in his private rooms .

= = = Marriage and Bohemia ( 1697 ? 1708 ) = = =

By 1697 , Violante Beatrice and Ferdinando had been married for eight years and still lacked issue , as did Gian Gastone 's sister , the Electress Palatine . Concerned for the future of the dynasty , Cosimo urged the Electress to find Gian Gastone ? currently the only one of his siblings unmarried ? a suitable bride . She put forward Anna Maria Franziska , her brother @-@ in @-@ law 's widow and potential heiress of the Duchy of Saxe @-@ Lauenburg . The bride @-@ to @-@ be was hailed as " more like a Bohemian peasant than a princess " by a contemporary . They were married in Düsseldorf , the capital of the Electorate of the Palatinate , by the Bishop of Osnabrück on 2 July 1697 . As she did not like cities or courts , Anna Maria Franziska demanded they establish themselves in her Bohemian residences , Ploskovic Castle and Reichstadt , post @-@ haste .

Gian Gastone found life in the little village intolerable . Anna Maria Franziska was unpredictable and prone to outbursts of rage , she held " conversations in the stables [ i.e. with the horses ] " and would rather have remained a widow than have been married again . The lack of intellectual society there and his wife 's hostility towards him drove Gian Gastone into the arms of alcohol . Gian Gastone , unable to rein in his disgust , abandoned Anna Maria Franziska for Paris after one year in Reichstadt . When he arrived there , an enraged Cosimo , who had explicitly told his son not to leave Anna Maria Franziska without his prior consent , ordered him back to Reichstadt . Anna Maria Franziska made an effort to welcome him back ; however , her mood turned sour when Gian Gastone brought up the prospect of wintering in Prague . Thus , he went to Prague alone but for his suite and favourite attendant , Giuliano Dami .

Gian Gastone 's once acclaimed complexion and weight were ruined by the course of dissipation he pursued in Prague , becoming blotchy and bloated respectively . Dami acted as a pimp for the Prince , soliciting countless young men for his master 's enjoyment . The Prince frequently gambled , racking up exorbitant debts , losing , on one occasion , 150 @,@ 000 crowns . His ruinous behaviour was relayed to Florence by the Electress Palatine . Gian Gastone replied to Cosimo 's ensuing admonishments with an account of his married life , blaming Anna Maria Franziska 's " capriciousness , peevish faces and sharp words " for his desperate conduct . Considering summoning him to Florence , Cosimo sent the Marquis Rinuccini to scrutinise his younger son 's debts . Rinuccini was horrified to learn that the Archbishop of Prague was among his creditors . Anna Maria Franziska greeted Rinuccini warmly , and implied that Gian Gastone pawned some of her jewels to ameliorate his gambling debts . The Marquis concluded that nothing ? not even the Holy Roman Empress 's reproaches ? could compel Anna Maria Franziska to Florence , where Gian Gastone longed to be . Forced once again to quell his enmity towards his wife , Gian Gastone returned to Reichstadt as per the Holy Roman Emperor and Holy Roman Empress 's advice . Nevertheless , their reconciliation was brief , and Gian Gastone left for Hamburg in October 1703 , only to return to Prague the next February .

The Grand Duke tired of the Princess of Saxe @-@ Lauenburg 's stubborn ways . He requisitioned the help of Pope Clement XI , who sent the Archbishop of Prague to tell her she must go to Florence with Gian Gastone . The Princess was incensed , replying that there was no point going with him because he was " absolutely impotent . " Cosimo III conceded defeat and recalled Gian Gastone to Florence in 1708 ; he never saw his wife again .

= = = Return to Florence ( 1708 ? 1723 ) = = =

As Prince Gian Gastone disliked his father 's hyper @-@ pious character , he elected to stay away from him and the royal court . The closed court that Gian Gastone did keep was dominated by his favourite , Dami . Meanwhile , the Grand Prince Ferdinando was slowly dying from syphilis , making Gian Gastone 's immediate succession more likely . Ferdinando , nonetheless , was not alone in his suffering : Guyot de Merville , a French adventurer , took note of Gian Gastone 's mental decline : " He carries [ apathy ] so far that it is said he never opens a letter , to avoid having to answer . " Additionally , Gian Gastone 's fragile temperament required long periods of isolation ; he spent several hours alone each night , drinking and staring up at the moon .

The Grand Prince finally succumbed to syphilis on 30 October 1713 , sparking a succession crisis . Cosimo III deposited a bill in the Tuscan senate , the nominal legislature , provisioning for a male

line succession failure by making the Electress Palatine Gian Gastone 's heiress . It passed and was disseminated to chancelleries across Europe . Austria refused to sanction it , fearing that Tuscany would fall into the Bourbons ' hands . However , France and England did .

The Electress returned to Florence in October 1717 , following the death of her husband the previous summer . Violante Beatrice of Bavaria , to whom Gian Gastone had become quite attached , disliked the Electress and therefore left the grand ducal court for the position of governor of the town of Siena . The Electress , now the First Lady of Tuscany , and Gian Gastone were not on good terms : he scorned her for marrying him to Anna Maria Franziska , who , for eleven years , made his life unbearable .

On 4 April 1718 , England , France and the Dutch Republic ( and later Austria ) selected Charles of Spain , the elder child of Elisabeth Farnese ( a great @-@ granddaughter of Margherita de ' Medici ) and Philip V of Spain , as the Tuscan heir , the Electress 's rights to the throne being completely disregarded in the process . All his ambitions in regards to the succession being thwarted , Cosimo III distributed one final proclamation shortly before his death , on 31 October 1723 , decreeing that the Electress shall succeed Gian Gastone . Unfortunately for Cosimo , his declaration was completely ignored .

= = = Reign ( 1723 ? 1737 ) = = =

The Tuscany Gian Gastone inherited was in a pitiful state : the army numbered less than 3 @,@ 000 , the royal coffer was empty and Florence was full of beggars . The ramshackle condition of the capital was noted by philosopher Montesquieu five years into Gian Gastone 's reign : " There is no town where men live in less luxury than Florence " . Despite these hindrances , Gian Gastone , aged 52 , commenced his reign with a burst of ebullience , releasing prisoners , abolishing exorbitant taxes , " Pensions on the Creed " ( monies paid to converts to Christianity ) and public executions .

Gian Gastone recalled Governor Violante Beatrice to the royal court and banished his sister , the Dowager Electress , to the Villa La Quiete . The Governor reigned supreme over Tuscan society , and Gian Gastone delegated most of his public duties to her , and chose to spend most of his time in bed . Here , Gian Gastone was entertained by the Ruspanti , a team of poor , handsome young men assembled by Dami , who performed sexual acts for and with the Grand Duke . Loathing the aristocracy , Gian Gastone called the foremost Ruspanti by the names of prominent Tuscan nobles . A contemporary dubbed the head of the Ruspanti , Giuliano Dami , " the despot of Gian Gastone 's court " ; he exploited his influence with the Grand Duke by offering anybody who was willing to bribe him an audience with their monarch .

During the period 1723 ? 1731 , the powers @-@ that @-@ be busied themselves hammering out a solution to the " Tuscan question " . Spain zealously endorsed its candidate , Charles of Spain , who had been made heir by the powers in 1718 but did not enjoy universal recognition ; Austria would not accept another Bourbon monarch in Italy . Gian Gastone , knowing the Dowager Electress probably would never succeed , went about ensuring his sister 's inheritance of all the House of Medici 's private property . Thus , he separated Medici possessions from those of the state ; hitherto , there had been no distinction between the two .

Governor Violante Beatrice and the Dowager Electress , following the former 's sojourn in Rome , in spite of their mutual dislike of each other , attempted to ameliorate Gian Gastone 's decadent public image together . Violante Beatrice organised banquets to remove him from the sway of the Ruspanti . His behaviour at these sent guests running for their carriages : he vomited into his napkin , wiped his mouth with his peri @-@ wig and told rude jokes . These parties ceased when Violante Beatrice died , in 1731 ; Gian Gastone was devastated by the loss of his beloved sister @-@ in @-@ law . Rumours abounded that the Grand Duke had died , as the public never saw him . To discredit these , the Dowager Electress induced Gian Gastone to make a public appearance ? his final one ? on Saint John the Baptist 's day of 1729 . An alcoholic , Gian Gastone drank too much before the ceremony and vomited repeatedly throughout ; he had to be carried unconscious back to the Palazzo Pitti , the royal palace , on a litter . A sprained ankle incurred in July 1729 left the Grand Duke bed @-@ ridden for ? barring two occasions ? the rest of his life .

The " Tuscan question " finally seemed resolved by the Treaty of Vienna ( 1731 ) : in exchange for Spain and its allies ' recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction , Austria confirmed Infante Charles as Gian Gastone 's heir ? the Grand Duke wasn't consulted . He was , however , appointed joint @-@ guardian of the Infante with Dorothea Sophia of the Rhine , Dowager Duchess of Parma and the Electress Palatine 's sister @-@ in @-@ law . Thirty thousand Spanish troops occupied the Grand Duchy of Tuscany on Charles 's behalf in October 1731 . Charles , known as Duke of Parma since January , arrived in Florence the next March . Gian Gastone was taken with the Infante @-@ Duke , showering him with gifts . He even went so far as to have the Duke created Grand Prince of Tuscany , the title borne by the Tuscan heir @-@ apparent , against the wishes of the Holy Roman Emperor , Charles VI ; however , the latter soon had the grant revoked .

After the War of the Polish Succession broke out in 1733 , Charles marched a Spanish army south and defeated the Austrians holding the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily . Pursuant to preliminary peace terms negotiated in 1735 ( but not finalized until after Gian Gastone 's death with the 1738 Treaty of Vienna ) , Charles surrendered Parma and the claim to the Tuscan throne to Francis III of Lorraine in exchange for being crowned king of Naples and Sicily . ( Francis was forced to surrender Lorraine to Stanisław Leszczyński , the losing claimant to the Polish throne . ) Neither the Grand Duke nor Francis III were consulted . The latter was reluctant to cede his homeland to France , but the Holy Roman Emperor ( soon to be his father @-@ in @-@ law ) compelled him . Gian Gastone was angry ; he had become quite attached to the Infante @-@ Duke , and didn't like the prospect of a foreigner ruling Tuscany . Spain accordingly withdrew its troops from Tuscany in January 1737 ; 6 @, @ 000 Austrians took their place on Francis 's behalf .

= = = Death and legacy = = =

By the time of the Spanish withdrawal , the Grand Duke was dying from " an accumulation of diseases " . One of his final acts was to order the erection of a statue of Galileo Galilei , who was patronised by his great @-@ grandfather Cosimo II and his grandfather Grand Duke Ferdinando II , in the Basilica of Santa Croce . Anna Maria Luisa , the Dowager Electress Palatine , rushed to his bedside when it became apparent he would not recover . Gian Gastone could not eat anything , and his condition steadily worsened ; Anna Maria Luisa subsequently had him moved to a clean bed . Worried for her brother 's soul , the Dowager Electress had the irreligious Gian Gastone repent for his sins . On 9 July 1737 , in the fourteenth year of his reign , the last Medicean Grand Duke expired . The Electress Anna Maria Luisa inherited all of the House of Medici 's allodial possessions , but in accordance with the wishes of the great powers , Francis of Lorraine succeeded to the title Grand Duke of Tuscany .

Gian Gastone gave his all in reforming his realm , purging corrupt Churchmen from government , reversing Cosimo III 's ban of teaching " new ideas " , i.e. the philosophy of Galileo et al . , in the University of Pisa and abolishing the burdensome income taxes . As a result , he was sincerely mourned by his people . Charles de Brosses , a French politician and writer , wrote , in 1739 , " The Tuscans would give two @-@ thirds of their property to have the Medici back , and the other third to get rid of the Lorrainers . " This sentiment did not diminish much in 62 years , when , in 1799 , during the French occupation of Tuscany , the people called for the long @-@ dead Gian Gastone to ascend the throne . His remains were interred in the Medicean necropolis , the Basilica of San Lorenzo . His corpse was dressed in " black velvet " , according to Official Report on the Examination of the Tombs in the Medici Mausoleum of 1857 , " with , over this , the great cloak of Grand Master of the Order of Saint Stephen . On the head was the Grand Ducal crown , worn over a cap ; and by his side the sceptre . But the crown and sceptre were corroded by the acids which had been used in embalming the body . "

As of August 2015 , access to see his white rectangular marble tomb slab is denied . His remains are not under the white slab , they are under a grey circular stone near his slab . Under this grey stone is a red brick staircase which leads to an underground burial chamber that was studied for the 1st time ever in 2004 . In the chamber are many family members . Gian Gastone had a lead coffin in a wooden frame . It was replaced with a modern coffin . Near him are the remains of many De

Medici children who were buried in unmarked graves . Some of them still have their garments .

Unlike what some historians say , he was not descended from the line of Lorenzo the Magnificent . Gian Gastone is a descendant of Lorenzo the Elder , sometimes referred to as a cadet branch , whereas Lorenzo the Magnificent was descended from Cosimo de ' Medici . This becomes clearer when one understands their common ancestor : Giovanni di Bicci de ' Medici , father to both Lorenzo the Elder and Cosimo de ' Medici . Thus the kings of France from Louis XIII and on , are descended from the ' cadet ' branch , confirming that Gian Gastone was not the last Medici .

= = Titles , styles , honours and arms = =

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24 May 1671 ? 30 October 1713 : His Highness Prince Gian Gastone

30 October 1713 ? 31 October 1723 : His Royal Highness The Grand Prince [ of Tuscany ]

31 October 1723 ? 9 July 1737 : His Royal Highness The Most Serene Grand Duke [ of Tuscany ]

= = = Honours = = =

31 October 1723 ? 9 July 1737 : Grand Master of the Holy Military Order of St. Stephen Pope and Martyr

= = Ancestors = =