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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Our fourth annual convention is now less than six months away and I want to encourage all of you to participate either by attending or by making a contribution to the Association.

We have a great lineup of speakers including round two of the counterfeit detection seminars and many other new and interesting topics. If you attend the convention, be sure to show up in time for the Welcome Party on Thursday night, which has become a highlight of the event.

WE NEED HELP WITH THREE THINGS!!!:

EXHIBITS. We would like to have around six displays on the convention floor. So far we have several excellent proposals. If you are interested in setting up a display, give me a call. Once again, we will be judging and giving out awards for the best displays.

BOOK SALE. We have received donations of books and auction catalogs from generous members and will be setting up a large table to sell these items at very reasonable prices that will benefit the Association. If you have excess books and auction catalogs in your library that you would like to donate, please send them to me at my office address.

SILENT AUCTION. The silent auction is made up of donations of coins, currency, books and other items from our various members and supporters to raise funds for the organization. It has been a resounding success and is a major source of income for the Association. Last year 25 donated items realized over \$6,000 for the Association. Please consider making a donation to this worthy cause.



Cory Frampton
Executive Director
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P.S. On another note, our editor, Simon, is intending to spend the six months after the convention doing further research in Mexico. As it will be more difficult to edit the journal whilst he is on the road, he wants to get as much of the December and March issues as possible "under his belt" before he leaves. So please let him know about any articles you are thinking of contributing.



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COVER IMAGE

The cover image is an extremely rare 1732 8 Escudos, type without denomination or assayers letters. This is one of the most important and highly sought after 8 Escudos of the entire Mexican series - the first milled 8 Escudos of Mexico, considered by some to be a pattern or trial piece as the reverse is absent the assayer and denomination in a similar manner to the 1729 patterns sent from Madrid.

One such pattern (a 1729 Pillar 8 Reales that bears the Madrid mint mark) is housed in the Banco de México museum.

This coin is part of the legendary Rudman Collection of Mexican Coins, Part I of which will be sold by Heritage at the ANA Convention on 13 August (for further details see Carlos Jara's article on page 19 and Heritage's advert on page 21).



BANCO DE MÉXICO

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NEWS

1715 Fleet Society

The 1715 Fleet Society is holding a Conference to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the loss of the 1715 Plate Fleet, at the Vero Beach Museum of Art, Vero Beach, Florida on Tuesday and Wednesday, 28-29 July, 2015. The schedule is:



Tuesday, 28 July, morning session: recent archival work on the 1715 Fleet

- 9:45 AM. Introduction to the Conference by Ben Costello
- 10 AM. Dr. John De Bry – New Research on the French frigate Le Grifon and other ships of the 1715 Fleet
- 11 AM. Dr. Tim Walton – The World in 1715: the political, economic, and military context of the 1715 Fleet

Tuesday, 28 July, afternoon session: the Florida State Collection and other resources for Fleet Studies

- 1 PM. _____, Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research – Plans to develop the Florida State Collection
- 2 PM. Jorge Proctor – New Insights from the Archives: Mexican Assayers of the Fleet era and the Barefoot Carmelites.
- 3 PM. Roundtable: Alan Craig's studies of the Florida State Fleet Collection: Ernie Richards, Phil Flemming

Wednesday, 29 July, morning session

- 10 AM. Bob Evans – Deep water salvage and the 1715 Fleet
- 11 AM. Bob Westrick – Missing ships of the 1715 Fleet

Wednesday, 29 July, afternoon session: numismatic Fleet Studies

- 1 PM. Ernie Richards – Introduction to the coinage of the Fleet
- 2 PM. Dan Sedwick – The Impact on Spanish Colonial numismatics of the 1715 Fleet. Followed by roundtable with Tom Sebring, John Pullin and others
- 3 PM. Bill Moore and Ben Costello – Fleet salvors records 1964-2006 and the Fleet Society Collections
- 3:30 PM. John Brandon – "My work on the Fleet"

For more information and tickets:
www.1715fleetsociety.com
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P.O. Box 4263, Washington, PA 15301

LETTER

Kudos to Bill Sigl and the USMexNA journal

Hello Simon,

I had to write in after reading the March 2015 issue! I really enjoyed Bill Sigl's article, "Marketing Your Hobby: Why It Should be Important to You." He brings up a lot of good points about the long-term benefits of sharing our hobby with others. And on top of that, he maps out a strategy that anyone can follow, and illustrates it with real-world examples from his own experience. This makes for an engaging and thought-provoking article with practical application.

In fact, even though his article is addressed to collectors of Mexican coins in particular, every hobbyist would benefit from reading it, whether they collect Mercury dimes and Morgan dollars or Civil War tokens and British commemorative medals.

Thank you for publishing this article, and thanks to Bill Sigl for sharing his thoughts.

Dennis Tucker
Whitman Publishing, LLC

WHO WERE MEXICO CITY MINT ASSAYERS L AND J (1677-1723)?

by Jorge A. Proctor

Finding ourselves celebrating the 300th anniversary of the sinking of the 1715 treasure fleet off the coast of Florida, it only seems appropriate to write about the Mexican assayers whose initials are found on almost all Mexican coins recovered from this fleet. Initials L and J, according to most numismatic reference works dating back to at least 1975, identify assayers Martín López (L) and José Eustaquio de León (J).⁽¹⁾ But are these the correct identifications for assayers L and J? The research I present below says the answer is NO. So, if Martín López was not assayer L and José Eustaquio de León was not assayer J, who were assayers L and J? Fortunately, the true identities of assayers L and J were also uncovered in my research.

The key to the true identities of assayers L and J, I must confess, emerged somewhat serendipitously in the course of other research I was conducting. Several contemporary documents record the proceedings of a trial conducted in 1718 between the current assayer at the mint (assayer J) and the Carmelite Convent of the Holy Desert. The Carmelite order was, to my surprise, represented as the long-time owner of the office of assayer and smelter at the Mexico City mint.⁽²⁾ Assayer J had been appointed (in 1705) by the Carmelites as the working assayer. As part of this trial, the Carmelites presented a copy of the contract that had been given to assayer J's predecessor, assayer L. Assayer L was named. The name was not Martín López, but Manuel de León.



Typical assayer J Mexican 8 reales recovered from the 1715 Fleet.
(Image courtesy of The 1715 Fleet Society)

Somewhat startled by what I had just read, I immediately called a friend of mine with ample knowledge of the history of the Mexican mint and asked him, "what do we actually know about Martín López and where is the confirmation that he was assayer L?" A moment of silence followed, ending in a single question: "where are you going with this, Jorge?" That was good enough for me! I knew that I was on the right track and that I just had been given the green light to proceed.

I realized at once that the true story of assayer L now had two parts. If assayer L was in fact Manuel de León, then I should be able to find the confirmatory evidence of this in at least one document from the period that assayer L was in office. But Martín López also had to be dealt with. Who was he? Did any evidence support his association with the Mexico City mint, if not as assayer L, then in some other capacity? How had Martín López become identified as assayer L? My research uncovered the salient facts of Martín López's career in Mexico, but not a good explanation of why he was later identified as assayer L.



Martín López's signature, as found on a letter dated in Mexico on 15 July 1670.

This letter was Martín López's last attempt to regain the commission and foundry offices he had lost.
(Source: AGI: Patronato, 238, N. 2, R. 14)

Martín López was an assayer in Mexico. In 1656 he was appointed as Assayer and Weight Master of the Foundry of the city of Mexico (*Ensayador y Balanzario de la Real Caja de México*). On 22 November 1662 he signed a contract with the Mexican Viceroy Juan de Leyva de la Cerda, *Conde de Baños y Marqués de Leyva y de Ladrada*. López agreed to manage the extraction of the quicksilver deposits in the Chilapa area, located about 130 miles directly south of Mexico, under license from the Crown, but at his own expense. With little experience and a lack of knowledge in the field of quicksilver extraction, the project soon proved a disaster. It ended up costing him both this commission and also his job at the Mexican foundry in 1669. Dismissed from the foundry, López virtually disappears by the summer of 1669, although he is still writing correspondence in July of 1670⁽³⁾ and still attempting to regain his lost commission and foundry offices. In December of 1670 he is reported as unlawfully collecting tributes from the Indians. We last hear about Martín

López in January of 1671, when measures were taken to ensure that he would no longer receive any benefits he was not entitled to. With this notice his name vanishes from the records.⁽⁴⁾

Meanwhile, as Martín López vanishes from the historic record, the working assayer at the Mexico City mint is Gerónimo Becerra (assayer G). Gerónimo had been working as deputy to his brother Pedro Becerra (assayer P)⁽⁵⁾ since 9 April 1644. He was promoted to working assayer at the mint by Sebastian Carrillo Maldonado on behalf of the Carmelites in 1665, following the death of his brother.⁽⁶⁾ Gerónimo Becerra continues working the post until around 21 January 1677⁽⁷⁾ when, due to an ailment, Manuel de León, an assayer about 32 years of age,⁽⁸⁾ is appointed to serve as interim assayer while Gerónimo recuperates. By 12 February 1677⁽⁹⁾ it seems that Gerónimo's condition had taken a turn for the worst, and Manuel de León is now promoted to the rank of lieutenant assayer at the mint. Three days later, on 15 February 1677, Gerónimo dies.⁽¹⁰⁾ Manuel de León is confirmed as Gerónimo's replacement, again, on the following day.⁽¹¹⁾

Currently nothing is known about Manuel's life or career before he is appointed the new working assayer and smelter at the Mexican Mint. Although contemporary references to Manuel's quiet tenure are somewhat scarce, at least several documents do exist during the period that he served as the mint's assayer.

1688 Mexican 8 Reales with assayer mark L for Manuel de León.

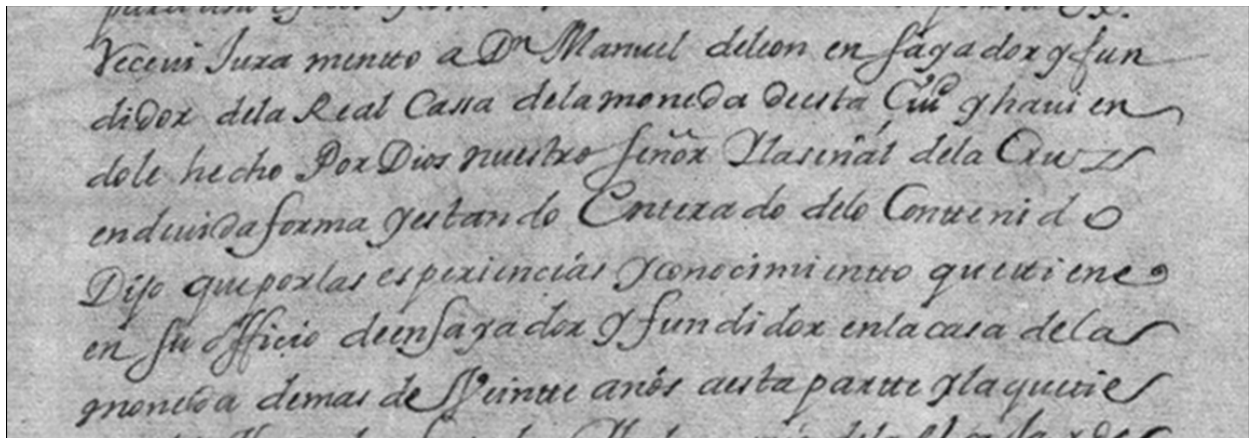
Images from the Baldwin's Auctions #71, 29 September 2011, Lot #1790. (Courtesy of A. H. Baldwin & Sons Ltd, London, www.baldwin.co.uk)



The first reference dates to 21 July 1691, when the construction of a new throne for the image of the virgin at the Church of Our Lady of the Remedies (*Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*) was being proposed.⁽¹²⁾ Manuel de León, described as the assayer of the mint, is credited with drafting the blueprints for this new throne. According to this document, the design from his registered blueprints had already been approved in 1690.

The second reference, which is the more informative, dates to December 1697, when Manuel was summoned by the City Council as part of a hearing for the selection of a new assayer at the foundry. Manuel is asked to provide testimony as to the competency of the nominee.⁽¹³⁾ According to minutes of the hearing, Manuel de León is brought in to testify on 11 December. Asked to state his qualifications as an expert witness, Manuel says he is qualified to provide such testimony "due to the experience and knowledge that he has had in his job as assayer and smelter at the mint for more than twenty years to these parts." This statement is a clear confirmation of the year in which he started his tenure as assayer L. As we saw above, Manuel was appointed to succeed Gerónimo Becerra in 1677.

Manuel de León continued as the mint's assayer until 1705. On 23 February of that year his brother, José de León, is brought in as an interim assayer, when Manuel is unable to continue due to an incapacitating illness.⁽¹⁴⁾ This José de León should not to be confused with José Eustaquio de León, about whom we will have more to say presently. José de León had already been working as Manuel's deputy at the time of his selection,⁽¹⁵⁾ making for a smooth transition in February. Not many days later, Manuel de León dies. José is promoted to the rank of lieutenant assayer at the mint by the Carmelites on 11 March 1705,⁽¹⁶⁾ and he is ratified on 9 April 1705.⁽¹⁷⁾ José was about 52 years old when he became the working assayer in 1705.⁽¹⁸⁾ At 52 José was already what would be considered an older man in this period. In 1715 he attempted to appoint his own son, Manuel de León, as his deputy. As his official deputy or lieutenant (*teniente*), Manuel could have continued to work the post if José were sick or absent.⁽¹⁹⁾ The appointment was rejected by the Carmelites due to Manuel's age at the time. Manuel was said to be under 25 years of age. A working assayer or his deputy had to be 25 years old to hold these posts at the Mexico mint.⁽²⁰⁾



recivi Juramento a Dn Manuel de Leon en Sayador y fundidor de la Real Cassa de la moneda desta Ciudad y haviendole hecho Por Dios nuestro Señor y la señal de la Cruz en debida forma y estando Enterado de lo Convenido Dijo que por las experiencias y conocimientto que tiene en Su officio de enSayador y fundidor en la casa de la moneda demas de Veinte años a esta parte ...”

Image of the portion of the very important document from 11 December 1697, identifying Manuel de León as the assayer at this mint by this date, and including that he had been working this post for the past 20 years. (Source: AGI: México, 202, N. 19)

By 1718 José de León had suffered an accident, when he fell off a ladder at the mint, and ended up as a convalescent.⁽²¹⁾ This time, rather than just appoint Manuel as a deputy, José decided that it would be best to transfer the office to his son, whom he saw as a good and capable candidate. José went before the head of the Carmelite convent, Prior Fray Martín de la Madre de Dios⁽²²⁾, to make his wishes known. The Prior immediately set a date for him or his son to return and present José’s formal letter of resignation and the birth certificate of his son Manuel, proof that he was now of the required age. When that day came and went with no sign of José or his son, Fray Martín de la Madre Dios wasted no time in appointing a new assayer. Don Juan de Cueva, a former assayer from the mines of San Luis de Potosí, was appointed to replace José at the mint. But José de León was not about to go quietly! Before Juan de Cueva could be ratified by Spanish authorities, José quickly filed a lawsuit claiming that there had been a misunderstanding. This action successfully blocked the appointment of Juan de Cueva by the Carmelites.⁽²³⁾ Ultimately, José de León won his lawsuit and remained in office until at least 1723, which is the last date attested by the coinage.

This brings us to José Eustaquio de León, a son of José de León, the mint assayer (1705-1723), and a brother of Manuel de León, the same Manuel to whom his father had attempted to give the office of assayer in 1718. Although José Eustaquio de León was trained in the family trade, which made him a skilled assayer in his own right, he chose instead to follow a different path, becoming a priest.⁽²⁴⁾ This prevented him from ever taking a post as a paid assayer. When he was called upon with his brother Manuel to assist during a 1729 mint investigation, José Eustaquio’s skills as an assayer became more than apparent.⁽²⁵⁾ Later on both brothers established successful mint careers, though in different ways. Manuel de León, rejected by the Carmelites as deputy assayer and successor to his father José, had become a *Contador* (accountant)⁽²⁶⁾ at the mint of Mexico City by 1730.⁽²⁷⁾ Ratified for this position on 2 August 1731,⁽²⁸⁾ he was later moved to the post of assayer by Royal decree signed in Seville, Spain on 14 July 1732.⁽²⁹⁾ Manuel (assayer M) worked as assayer with Francisco de la Peña y Flores (Assayer F) from 1733 until 1754 and with Manuel de Asorin (assayer M) from 1754 until 1769.⁽³⁰⁾ He died in 1769, at which time he was replaced by Manuel de la Iglesia (assayer M).⁽³¹⁾ José Eustaquio de León, although he could not work the post of assayer due to his priestly vows, did not have a restriction on performing a more administrative job. He agreed to become the new Director of the Mint of Guatemala at the time of its establishment.⁽³²⁾ Appointed in 1732,⁽³³⁾ he traveled from Mexico to Guatemala, where he oversaw the founding of the mint in 1733. José Eustaquio continued to manage it until 1767, when the post of Director was suppressed and he was finally retired.⁽³⁴⁾ The last we hear of José Eustaquio is in 1768, when he was reported as still receiving a pension.⁽³⁵⁾



1733 Mexican klippe (recortada) 8 reales with the marks of assayers Manuel de León (M) and Francisco de la Peña (F). (Images from the Daniel Frank Sedwick Treasure Auction #4, Lot #548, 6 November 2008. Courtesy of Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC)

On a final note, I would like to make mention that outside of the scope of this article we do have another member of the de León family that should be mentioned. This is José de León y Sosa, who worked the post of assayer in Guatemala from 1733-1759.⁽³⁶⁾ Again, as we see from the previous explanations, the fact that the director and assayer of the Guatemala mint had such similar names, and both were skilled assayers and worked at the same time, has caused confusion. Some writers have mistakenly thought that the director and the assayer were one and the same person. In fact, the Guatemalan assayer in this case is actually a nephew of the mint director, José Eustaquio de León.⁽³⁷⁾

Endnotes

- (1) J. Pellicer i Bru, *Glosario de Maestros de Ceca y Ensayadores*. 1st Edition, Barcelona, Spain, 1975, pp. 132 and 143. This 1975 book by Josep Pellicer i Bru is the earliest reference that could be found where these assayers are named as Martín López (assayer L) and José Eustaquio de León (assayer J).
- A. Herrera. *El Duro* (Madrid, Spain, 1914), Vol. 1, p. 213; A. F. Pradeau, *Numismatic History of Mexico from the Pre-Columbian epoch to 1823* (New York, NY, 1978). Updated reprint of original published in 1938, with annotations and revisions by Clyde Hubbard, Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1978, p. 33; T. Dasí, *Estudio de los Reales de a Ocho* (Valencia, Spain, 1950), Vol. III, p. XLIX, No. 1,120. It should be noted that although Adolfo Herrera (1914), Alberto Pradeau (1938) and Tomás Dasí (1950) never knew the name of assayer L, they all documented the identity of assayer J simply as José (or Joseph) de León.
- Casa de Moneda de México: Presencia en el Mundo 1535-1990*. Published by Miguel Angel Porrúa, Mexico (1990), pp. 79 and 82. Assayer L is correctly identified as Manuel de León, but without any reference to the source for this statement. Oddly enough, this book also offers no identification for assayer J. The lack of a single source or reference on this book to corroborate the statement that assayer L was Manuel de León seem to have been what has kept this name so hidden, as it could not be verified until now.
- (2) J. de Ordaz, *Por los Reverendos Padres Prior y Carmelitas Descalços, Hermitaños de el Santo Decierte de este Reyno, como Dueños de los Officios de Ensayador, y Fundidor Mayor de la Real Casa de Moneda de esta Corte en los autos con Don Joseph de Leon su Theniente, que ha sido en dicho Officios*. Con Licencia del Supremo Gobierno en México en Imprenta nueva Plantiniana de Juan Francisco de Ortega y Bonilla, 1721, fol. 1r.
- (3) Archivo General de Indias (AGI): Patronato, 238, N. 2, R. 14.
- (4) M. F. Lang, *Martin Lopez and the Chilapa Quicksilver Mines 1658-1670*. Pan American Institute of Geography and History, *Revista de Historia de América*, No. 69, Jan. - Jun., 1970, pp. 41-61.
- (5) Archivo General de la Nación (AGN): Instituciones Coloniales, Gobierno Virreinal, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados (100), Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, Vol. D48, Exp. 285, f. 191r-193r.
- (6) M. L. Rodríguez-Sala, *Tres Constructores de Obras Científico-Técnicas de Minería y Metalurgia en la Nueva España del Siglo XVII: Luis Berrio de Montalvo, Jerónimo de Becerra y Juan del Corro*. Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2000, p. 656.
- (7) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Gobierno Virreinal, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados (100), Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, Vol. D31, Exp. 176, f. 142vta.
- (8) AGI: México, 202, N. 19. While providing a deposition in December of 1697, Manuel de León's age is recorded as around 52 years old. This would make him around 32 years old by the time that he became the assayer on record at the mint in 1677.
- (9) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Gobierno Virreinal, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados (100), Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, Vol. D31, Exp. 177, f. 142vta.
- (10) Rodríguez-Sala (op. cit., n. 6.)

- (11) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Gobierno Virreinal, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados (100), Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, Vol. D31, Exp. 178, f. 143.
- (12) G. Ramos de Castro, *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios de México: aportaciones al estudio de su orfebrería*. Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología: BSAA, Tomo 62, 1996, pp. 478-481.
- (13) AGI (op. cit., n. 8.)
- (14) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Real Hacienda, Casa de Moneda (021), Vol. 6, Exp. 87, f. 253-256.
- (15) AGI (op. cit., n. 8). José de León is recorded as already serving as deputy of his brother Manuel de León by December of 1697.
- (16) de Ordaz (op. cit., n. 2.)
- (17) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Real Hacienda, Casa de Moneda (021), Vol. 6, Exp. 89, f. 261v-264v.
- (18) AGI (op. cit., n. 8). While providing a deposition in December of 1697, José de León says he is about 44 years old. This would make him approximately 52 years old by the time that he became the assayer on record at the mint in 1705.
- (19) *Por el Alférez Don Joseph de Leon Ensayador, y Fvndidor Mayor de la Real Cassa de Moneda de este Reyno, en el Pleyto con el P. Prior, y Comunidad de el Santo Desierto de Carmelitas Descalços*, Con Licencia: en México, Por los Herederos de la Viuda de Miguel de Ribera, 1721, fol. 2v, 5th numbered paragraph.
- (20) *Por el Alférez Don Joseph de Leon...* (ibid, n. 19.)
- (21) *Por el Alférez Don Joseph de Leon...* (ibid, n. 19.), fol. 1v, 1st numbered paragraph.
- (22) *El Santo Desierto de los Carmelitas de la Provincia de San Alberto de México*. Revisión Paleográfica Introducciones y Notas por Dionisio Victoria Moreno y Manuel Arredondo Herrera. Biblioteca Enciclopédica del Estado de México, México, 1978, p. 580. Martín de la Madre de Dios became the Prior of the Carmelite Convent of the Holy Desert in 1713 and remained in office until 1720.
- (23) *Por el Alférez Don Joseph de Leon...* (op. cit., n. 19.)
- (24) de la Encina y la Carrera, Juan Ignacio. *En la Causa que Pende en Dicha Real Junta contra el Thesorero, Ensayador, y otros Oficiales de la Casa de Moneda de Mexico. Sobre Falta en la Obligación de sus Oficios*. Circa. 1735. By 1729 we already have José Eustaquio de León, the son of the former assayer at the mint, José de León, described as a presbyter (a priest).
 Archivo General de Centro América (AGCA), A1.4, Protomedicato, Leg. 4026, Exp. 30997. Pamphlet titled: *Uirtudes de la Essencia Tinturada de el Bálsamo Virgen* (printed in 1756 in Guatemala at the printing press of Joaquín de Arévalo, printer for the Ecclesiastical Tribunals). Written by José Eustaquio de León himself, this pamphlet informs us that besides being Director of the Guatemala Mint he became a domiciliary of the Archbishopric of Mexico (*Domiciliario de el Arzobispado de México*).
- (25) de la Encina y la Carrera, Juan Ignacio (op. cit., n. 24)
- (26) G. Céspedes del Castillo, *Las Casas de Moneda de los Reinos de Indias*, Vol. 1, *Las Cecas Indianas en 1536-1825* (Madrid, 1996), p. 90; M. P. Pérez García, *Regulación Contable en las Ordenanzas de las Casas de Moneda y Praxis Habitual*. Revista Española de Financiación y Contabilidad, Vol. XXVIII, n. 56, 1988, pp. 351-372. The position of *Contador* (accountant) was first added to the list of mint positions by the Spanish code of laws regulating mining operations known as the *Ordenanzas* of 26 January 1718. Included again in the *Ordenanzas* of 9 June 1728, this position quickly gained importance. The *Ordenanzas* of 16 July 1730 includes this position among the three highest at the mint, being placed below that of Superintendent and yet above that of Treasurer.
- (27) Herrera, *El Duro*, Vol. 1, Madrid, Spain, 1914, p. 213.
- (28) Herrera (ibid, n. 27.)
- (29) Herrera (ibid, n. 27.)
- (30) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Gobierno Virreinal, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados (100), Reales Cédulas Originales, Vol. 234, Exp. 78, f. 2. This document, from 18 October 1755, confirms the approval of Manuel de Asorin as the new working assayer of the mint due to the death of Francisco de la Peña y Flores. Manuel de Asorin had already started working in place on Francisco de la Peña y Flores sometime in 1754, as the coins confirm.
- (31) AGN: Instituciones Coloniales, Real Hacienda, Casa de Moneda (021), Vol. 45, Exp. 24, f. 80. On December 1, 1769 Manuel de la Iglesia is assigned as a working assayer of the mint in place of Manuel de León who has just died. No numismatic text known to me correctly identifies the name of the new assayer M who followed Manuel de León in December of 1769 as Manuel de la Iglesia.

J. Pellicer i Bru (op. cit., n. 1), p. 154. Josep Pellicer i Bru claims that Francisco Pradeau documented an assayer who worked concurrently with Francisco de la Peña by the name of Manuel de la Rivera. This has caused some to believe that the assayer who followed Manuel de León was in fact this Manuel de la Rivera. Searching through Pradeau's *Numismatic History of Mexico from the Pre-Columbian epoch to 1823*, I have not been able to uncover any statements regarding an assayer named Manuel de la Rivera, and other documents from the archives make it clear that the new assayer was Manuel de la Iglesia, not Manuel de la Rivera.

- (32) C. Jara M. *Historia de la Casa de Moneda de Guatemala 1731-1776*. Impreso por Andros Impresores, Santiago, Chile, 2010, pp. 12-13.
- (33) Jara M. (ibid, n. 32), pp. 16-17.
- (34) Jara M. (ibid, n. 32), pp. 147-148.
- (35) Jara M. (ibid, n. 32), p. 149.
- (36) Jara M. (ibid, n. 32), pp. 15.
- (37) Jara M. (ibid, n. 35).

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HENRY MIDDLETON, THE BANCO DE JALISCO FORGER

by Simon Prendergast

Henry L. Middleton was a lovable twenty seven-year-old con man involved in the counterfeiting of Banco de Jalisco banknotes. In the best tabloid tradition the *Washington Times* of 9 August 1910 reported that "H. L. Middleton, handsome, debonair, and evidently a fair-haired child of fortune, appeared in New Orleans last April and almost immediately was admired by men and beloved by women.



A genuine Series B five peso note

"Smiling always and content only with the best that life afforded, he wandered down the primrose path of dalliance hand in hand with mirth. Money was nothing to him. No pleasure or luxury cost so much that it was beyond his reach. He tickled his palate with the best of wine, and charmed his ears with the sweetest music to be heard in the best cafes of the city.

"He used the money not only to buy the good things of life, but also to deal extensively in real estate and in stocks on margins. The swath he cut in society was not wider than the row he hoed in business."

One source for Middleton's fortune was to attempt to cash counterfeit Banco de Jalisco notes with various brokers in New Orleans. His downfall came because of a simple mistake.

One such broker received a note from Middleton by messenger boy, enclosing 200 pesos in five peso notes, to be exchanged for dollars. The broker spotted that the signatures had been left off several of the notes and he handed all the money back to the messenger boy. Later, thinking the matter over, he noticed Pat Looby, the Secret Service agent stationed in New Orleans, and told him. Looby got onto Middleton's trail, but found nothing on which to arrest him until two days later, when another broker received a letter through the post from Middleton, who, signing a fictitious name, asked that \$150 be mailed to him at a certain post office box in exchange for the pesos he enclosed. Looby waited at the post office and nabbed Middleton as he called for his mail.

When cornered, Middleton took Looby to a safe deposit vault and gave up seven unbroken packages of 500 notes each and 115 notes lying loose. He also took Looby to a broker's office, where two packages of 500 notes each were found.

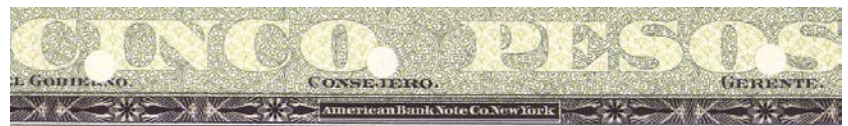
“Had he not forgotten to leave off the signatures on some of the notes, he might yet be dealing in stocks and real estate – might still be a commanding figure in the cafes of New Orleans, and might yet be admired by men and beloved by women.” In fact Middleton probably had a small window of opportunity for once one of his notes had been presented to the bank in Guadalajara the deception would immediately have been recognized and the bank would have put out a circular alerting everyone to the counterfeit notes. Moreover, given that Looby recovered 4,915 notes (assuming that 300 had been sent to the second broker), out of a print run of 5,000, only 85 at the most will have been passed. This did not stop the newspapers from embellishing the tale and on his conviction one wrote “Several bills had been successfully unloaded on innocent victims, and the scheme proved to work so easy that the slick swindler thought that he would go into the real estate business, and nothing less than a \$10,000 home would suit him as a first investment. Having surveyed the lower portion of the city, visiting numerous houses, he finally settled on the Dunbar home in Esplanade Avenue, which was then offered for sale. Negotiations were forthwith entered with a well-known agent, and the final word for the purchase of the property was left with a well-connected young lady, whom Middleton had promised to make his wife. Of course, Middleton counted on the lack of experience of the agent, but it happened that the latter was, in the contrary, fully alive to the situation, and was not of the kind to be taken in by the golden promises of the would-be purchaser. Middleton was made to give a deposit, and when he placed \$4,000 of the bogus Mexican money wrapped up in a sealed package in the hands of the agent the dig was up.”

The five thousand counterfeit notes had been printed by the National Bank Note Company of Philadelphia and forwarded to the Bank of Jalisco, care of Thomas Marshall, New Orleans by the Southern Express Company. The company said that they had received the order from Middleton in New Orleans, who claimed to be a representative of the bank and said that the bank was unhappy with the American Bank Note Company and wanted to try another firm. He provided written authority of the Mexican officials for the printing, and instructed the printers to ship them to Thomas Marshall.



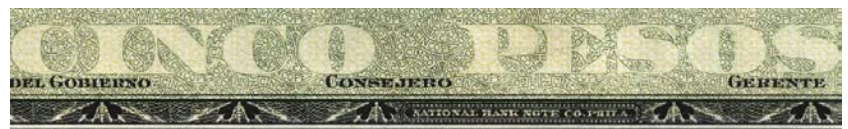
A counterfeit \$5 Banco de Jalisco note

In the National Bank Note Company’s defense it can be seen that there was no attempt to make a complete replica of the American Bank Note Company’s note, which would have made them complicit in forgery. As well as the obvious change in printer’s imprint on the front and absence on the reverse there are noticeable differences in the size of various elements, in the fretwork of the borders and surrounding the shield and denominations, in the text of the legend (different type, no accent on “PAGARA”, no comma after “México”) and in the date (“de de” instead of “de de 19”). The company was, however, probably too naïve and too keen to gain a march on the American Bank Note Company.



American Bank Note Company imprint

At first Middleton claimed that Marshall, whom he knew as vice-president of the bank from his own time in Guadalajara, met him in New Orleans and told him that the notes would arrive soon, and as he, Marshall, was in a hurry to leave for Mexico, he would give Middleton authority to receive them from the express company and thereafter take them by steamer, via Veracruz, to Guadalajara. Middleton told Marshall that he was in need of funds and so Marshall told him that he might use \$250 in gold of these notes for himself. Marshall had signed one of the notes, with the names of three bank officials, and told him that he could do the same on the other notes that he needed.



National Bank Note Company imprint

Middleton was brought before United States Commissioner Henry Chiapella and committed to the Circuit Court for trial, charged with having obtained money from Otto Maier, the Camp Street broker, and the Commercial-Germania Savings Bank and Trust Company. Judge Chiapella originally fixed Middleton's bond at \$1,000, but as there was a flight risk it was increased to \$2,250. On 23 August Middleton was released on bond.

On 15 November the Department of Justice asked the Secretary of State to instruct the appropriate United States consul in Mexico to secure a certified copy of the original charter or concession granted to the Banco de Jalisco and other documentation needed for use in the prosecution. However, on 14 May 1911 Middleton pleaded guilty to forgery and using the United States mails to defraud and was sentenced to two years in the Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, so the certified copies were no longer required.

It is obvious that Marshall (as portrayed by Middleton) did not exist, so the only question that some people consider unanswered is how Middleton paid the \$1,025 invoice for the notes. He probably did have an accomplice, possibly someone of high rank in the Banco de Jalisco, who could have ensured that the counterfeit notes were put into circulation in a brief space of time. However, although this venture was a failure, Middleton himself does seem to have access to funds. Perhaps the debonair organizer's appeal to young women (even though he seems to have had a wife and two children) might provide the answer.

As a postscript we should note that a set of front and back printing plates (measuring 8½ by 15 inches) and 15 sheets of uncut notes (59 notes in all) from this counterfeit issue were put up for auction by a lady in Philadelphia on ebay in January 2002 and sold for \$2,429. By now most of the sheets have probably been cut up into singles.



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THE FATE OF MEXICAN COLONIAL COINAGE

by Brian R. Stickney

The Mexico City mint produced some 68,778,441 pesos worth of gold coin during the colonial period according to official statistics. The amount of silver was much higher, tallying 2,082,269,657 pesos. These figures are subdivided below into three chronological groups based on major design changes and associated alterations in the quality and/or quantity of metal being used.

**Coinage Production, Mexico City Mint
By Year Group, Alloy Quality, Design Style
(in pesos; one peso = eight reales)**

Period	Gold	Silver
1537-1731	8,497,950	752,067,456
1732-1771	19,889,014	441,629,211
1772-1821	40,391,447	888,563,989
Total	68,778,441	2,082,260,657

(Source: Meek p. 51 as derived from Mexican mint reports (1935))

The decree establishing the mint in Mexico City and its operation (11 May 1535) provided for five denominations of silver coinage to include the one-quarter, one-half, one-, two-, and three-real coins. The crown directed that the silver alloy be eleven dineros, four grains (0.930 fine) with 67 reales being struck from each marco (eight ounces, 230 grams) of silver; essentially that used in Peninsular mints. Thus, a one real coin at full weight was 3.43 grams, gross, or 3.19 grams of pure silver. There was no provision for the striking of gold coins. By popular demand, the three-real denomination was quickly abandoned with the four- and eight-reales added.



*Three Reales, Carlos I, Assayer R
(Photo: Almanzar's Coins of the World; Aug, 1972)*

Gold coinage was not authorized to be minted in the New World until issuance of a decree on 25 February 1675 under the reign of Charles II. The law directed that gold coined in the Western Hemisphere mirror that of Spain, i.e. being 22 carats fine (0.916) with 68 escudos being struck from one marco of gold.

In Spain, the Austrian dynasty ended with Charles II, replaced by the house of Bourbon after the War of Spanish Succession. Many policy changes were instituted under the new reign to include a desire to harmonize coinage used throughout the empire and to align it closer to that found in Europe. To that end, a decree was issued on 9 June 1728 directing that the silver alloy be reduced to eleven dineros (0.916). The weight would be slightly decreased with 68 reales to be cut from a silver marco, essentially matching the specifications used for gold and more neatly establishing a gold-to-silver ratio of 1-to-16. The one-real coin, under the new arrangement, weighed 3.38 grams, gross, or 3.10 grams of pure silver. The law further provided that silver coins of lower denominations contain the same quality of silver and be of proportional weight to the eight-real. The 1728 decree prepared the way for the introduction of new technology, namely the introduction of round planchets allowing for the introduction of uniform, proportional weights for all denominations.



*8 Reales, 1735, Mexico City
(Photo: Mexican Coin Company)*

*Per the 1728 decree, pillar dollars contained 24.78 grams of pure silver,
vice 25.54 grams in full weight cob-style eight reales.*

In New Spain, orders were issued to retrieve the older silver coinage, beginning January 1752, the same year the crown also directed that port customs authorities begin registering the import and export of coin. Withdrawal of the older coins of higher purity was haphazard and delayed, given the overall demand for coinage in circulation throughout the New World.

A few years later, the first of several decrees appeared which effected even a more significant change in coinage throughout the New World. By official letter dated 19 September 1759, the crown directed that all mints in the New World begin preparing for the production of coins that would bear the bust or portrait of the king.

Under the rubric of effecting the portrait design change throughout the colonies, Spain again reduced the quality of its coinage, but this time, quietly. Authorities issued a decree dated 18 March 1771 which was not widely published, altering the purity of silver, changing it from 11 dineros (0.916 fine) to 10 dineros and 20 grains, effectively 0.903. Weight remained about the same. Gold coins also were reduced from 22 carats (0.916 fine) to 21 carats, 2.5 grains (0.901 fine). A public declaration issued about a year later on 8 April 1772 to announce the new coinage to the public indicated only that the weight and fineness of the new bust coinage was to conform to established standards (i.e. the new standards, not widely publicized before). In reality, the newly developed specie contained silver that was four grains less than coins produced the previous 40 years and eight grains less in fineness than those coins struck prior to 1728.



*8 Reales, 1786, Mexico City
(Photo: Mexican Coin Company)*

*Portrait pesos contained 24.43 grams of pure silver, .35 grams less than pillar dollars and 1.11
grams less than cob full-weight eight reales issued prior to 1729, a difference of 4.45 percent.*

The 1772 proclamation called for quick recall of the non-portrait coinage for purposes of re-coining, an understandable position, given the crown's ability to generate a profit from each peso (eight-reales) restruck¹. To that end, the older currency was to be collected within two years of the publication of the proclamation that also called for an expansion of production capacity in the colonial mints to carry out monetary reform.

1. From 1536-1729, a full-weight 8 real contained 25.54 grams of pure silver; 1729-1772, 24.78 grams; and from 1773, 24.43 grams. Thus, the realm theoretically could gain 1.11 grams of silver by collecting early pesos (0.930) and replacing them with those issued after 1773, a profit of some 4.45 percent. See Lazo, v. II, tables 35-37; Burzio, Vol. II, p.171.

Per Meek, mint officials estimated the amount of older coin in circulation in New Spain prior to 1752 to be about 12,000,000 pesos. That figure was added to some 239,921,673 pesos produced in the viceroyalty from 1752 through 1771, for a total of about 252 million pesos. Most of these were pillar style coins, 0.916 fine, per changes effected by the 1728 decree. Customs officials at the port of Acapulco reported that some 18,100,346 pesos of coinage had been exported to Asia since 1752. Authorities in Vera Cruz calculated east-bound shipments, mostly to Europe and to a lesser extent the Caribbean, of a staggering 206,877,303 pesos. Total coinage exports to Europe and Asia, then, amounted to nearly 225 million pesos. The size of the cob-style and/or pillar money supply in New Spain in 1772, then, was determined to be 26,944,024 pesos. Of that amount, some 2,842,079 pesos already had been turned over to the mint for re-coinage as of 23 June 1772, the date that said calculation had been completed. Net, non-portrait, 0.930 and 0.916 fine coinage remaining in circulation in New Spain by mid-1772 was, thus, calculated to have been some 24 million pesos, in silver currency. Using a similar methodology, the amount of older gold coinage in circulation by late June 1772 was calculated to be 7,577,501 pesos². Because coinage remained in short supply, especially for smaller denominations, the viceroy periodically extended the timeframe allowing the older coins to continue circulating as legal tender. The last recorded extension for New Spain was published in Mexico on 8 and 12 February 1800.

Meek's observations of Spanish calculations are revealing. While it was obviously of interest to colonial authorities to melt and re-coin issues struck prior to 1773, the amount of coin then recalled and re-struck was probably relatively limited. Of greater interest is how little of the "pre-1733" coinage was believed to still be in circulation, i.e. only about 12 million pesos as of 1752. Most was probably pillar coinage. Even if all of it had been "cob" style coinage, it would amount to only about 1.6 percent of all the silver coinage produced in New Spain prior to 1733. It is impossible to determine the ultimate disposition of all that coinage. The vast majority likely ended up in Spain and other parts of Europe in the form of remittances, taxes and fees. As the data above demonstrates, the equivalent of nearly 90 percent of the coinage produced from 1752 to 1771 in New Spain was exported. Undoubtedly, most of that ending up in Europe and Asia was eventually melted, once it became more common knowledge that the earlier issues contained a higher silver content.

The pillar dollar and its subdivisions, of course, were destined to become "coins of the realm" circulating widely throughout the world, to include the United States. The coinage act of 9 February 1793 authorized the use of the Spanish milled dollar as legal tender in the United States on a par with the US dollar for an indefinite period of time. The same act allowed other foreign currencies to circulate as well, including gold coins of England, France and Portugal along with "crowns" of France....but only for three years. The continued use of Spanish silver in the United States was reinforced on 3 March 1843 when the Congress passed another act continuing the use of "Spanish pillar dollars" as money within the United States to which were added dollars of Mexico, Peru and Bolivia, not less than 0.897 fine. By the coinage act of 21 February 1857, the Spanish milled dollar and its subdivisions finally were demonetized in the United States. Even then, they were allowed to circulate until such time as they fell into the coffers of the post office, customs collection points, or banks which were responsible for forwarding them to the US mint which was instructed to melt and re-coin them. Even then, the Spanish coins represented a profit to government authorities since the US dollar contained 0.773 ounces of silver; the Spanish milled dollar 0.798 ounces, 3.2 percent more the US crown.

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2. Meek, pages 58 to 63.

MANUEL PELÁEZ , INDEPENDENT MILITARY COMMANDER IN THE STATE OF VERACRUZ

by Hannu Paatela

In 1911 Manuel Peláez, an influential oil broker and Municipal President of Alamo, Veracruz, was a supporter of Madero. However, when Madero's politics set restrictions on foreign company operations and Madero was also unable to quell the banditry and social unrest, Peláez distanced himself and in October 1912 joined in a revolt of the conservative politician, Félix Díaz. The revolt failed and Peláez fled to the United States. When he returned to the Huasteca region (the coastal area roughly between Tampico, Tamaulipas, and the port of Veracruz) in April 1913 he found the area controlled by revolutionary bandits. The oil industry interests were endangered and Peláez started, with their financing, to organize private military forces. In June 1913 Peláez also requested assistance from the Huerta government's War Department which commissioned him a Major in the Home Guard and gave him funds to arm a group of 500 men. Peláez campaigned against Carranza's Constitutionalist Army but later in the year decided to take an independent direction, following neither Huerta nor Carranza.

The political climate in Mexico was constantly changing and the uncertainty made the oil community and the Veracruz ranch owners very nervous. Therefore Peláez maintained a small home army for the protection of the oil field operations financed by forced contributions. In 1914 when the Convention at Aguascalientes confirmed General Eulalio Gutiérrez as Interim President of Mexico, Peláez visited him in the Federal District and considered himself a supporter of the Conventionalist Army.

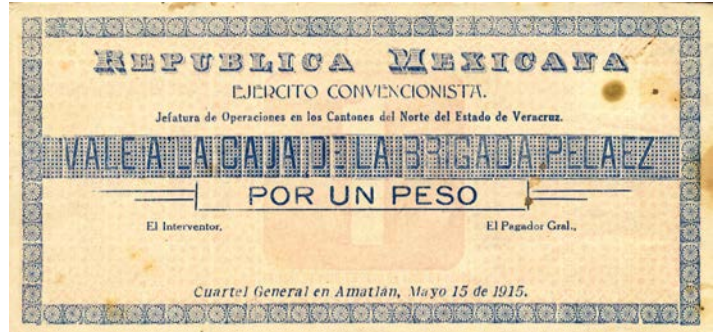
Peláez enjoyed the local population's full support. He could deliver food and other supplies through his foreign oil industry partners in times when the rest of the population had difficulties in surviving. In January 1915 when President Carranza imposed federal taxes on the oil industry, Peláez started his rebellion calling himself "the General who opposes taxes on oil companies". Between 1915 and 1920, Peláez and his forces held off several attempts by the Carranza government to control the Huasteca.

Peláez' first issue, for the Pagaduría General de la Brigada Paláez (General Paymaster of the Paláez Brigade), was datelined from his general headquarters on 23 January 1915 and refers to a military decree of the same date.



These notes were to be of obligatory circulation and acceptable by government offices in the payment of taxes.

This primitive issue was followed by a more professional one, from the general headquarters in Amatlán, dated 15 May 1915 and carrying the legend "EJERCITO CONVENCIONISTA – Jefatura de Operaciones en los Cantones del Norte del Estado de Veracruz (Conventionist Army – in charge of operations in the cantons in the north of Veracruz state)". These stated that they would be exchanged by the Paymaster General for notes of the Gobierno Provisional (without specifying either the Mexico City or Veracruz issue, though given Peláez' constant hatred of Carranza, presumably the former).



General Peláez is also attributed with 50c and \$1 pasteboard cartones of the Jefatura de Armas del Canton de Huatusco.

Peláez' 3,000-strong well-trained army and commando soldiers kept the Carranza troops on the defensive. His commando group robbed trains in Veracruz and all the way to Puebla including territories controlled by the Zapatista Liberating Army of the South. In 1918-1919 Peláez even had negotiations with Zapata but no specific agreement resulted from their meeting other than both generals confirmed that Carranza was their mutual enemy.

When in April 1919 General Obregón started his revolt against Carranza, Peláez supported Obregón. On 21 May 1920, whilst attempting to flee to Veracruz, Carranza was killed by one of Paláez' subordinates at Tlaxcalatongo. Obregón rewarded Peláez by confirming his military rank of General and appointed him commander of the military operations in the Huasteca region. Peláez was now an established and trusted military commander of the Federal Government but at the same time he lost his independence as the private oil industry protector and an army owner.

Peláez fell out of favor with the Obregón government, and so he moved to Los Angeles in April 1921. His lieutenants attempted to renew hostilities but they proved no match for the central government and were all disarmed by the end of 1921.

Peláez returned to Mexico in 1923 with intentions of joining the Adolfo de la Huerta rebellion, but he was arrested before he could participate. A few months after the rebellion was crushed, he was released and retired to his Tierra Amarilla ranch, where he lived peacefully until his death in 1959.

THE RUDMAN COLLECTION OF MEXICAN COINS

PART I: MILLED GOLD ISSUES OF COLONIAL MEXICO

by Carlos Jara

The Mexico City mint represents the most historically important minting facility of the Americas, having existed for nearly five centuries since operations commenced in 1536. Under Spanish dominance it was always the pioneering entity among its peers, as was fitting for the mint of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, and was therefore the first mint to implement the production of milled issues in 1732.

Although the early adoption of machine-minted coinage, and the massive production that it created, resulted in a number of issues that remain readily available today, the total number of different dates in any given series usually means that completing any such series is always challenging. Thus, say, the collector of bust 8 Reales will struggle to find a specimen of the few key dates in the series: 1783 Mo-FM, 1778 Mo-FM and the like. In addition, when analyzing general scarcity, it is necessary to distinguish between the silver and gold series, since Mexico City was essentially a silver-producing mint: while the mintage of silver 8 Reales usually exceeded 10,000,000 pieces per year, the number of gold 8 Escudos issued annually was usually in the tens of thousands. Mintage of the minor gold pieces was lower still, with some dates having less than 1,000 pieces struck. Logically, Colonial gold pieces of the Mexico City mint are thus scarce in general, with many denomination/date combinations being incredibly elusive in any grade.

All comprehensive groups of Mexican gold Colonial issues sold in the past century are lauded and remembered for either quality and/or completeness. Some of those assemblages included some exceedingly important pieces – for example, the Gerber collection which included both an excessively rare “royal” 8 Escudos 1717, a date obviously not included in the 1715 Fleet findings, and an attractive specimen of the emblematic and extremely rare 1732 milled gold 8 Escudos. Others housed several finely preserved type specimens, one being the famed Caballero de las Yndias group, a type collection which included several rarities in select quality. Only two collections - the Norweb group dispersed in 1985 and the Eliasberg collection auctioned in 2005 - represented a substantial array of dates in higher grades. Both are now justifiably considered landmark offerings and many of the specimens housed in those holdings were granted the



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usual "choice", "excessively rare", "superb" and other similar array of superlatives.


Incredibly, the soon to be offered Rudman collection trumps all of those legendary groups. While usually tending to be conservative in the description of any collection, the writer is fully confident to assert the following: the collection of Mexican Colonial gold issues formed by Isaac Rudman is the most important such gathering ever offered and likely the finest ever assembled, bar none. It is a remarkable achievement unlikely ever to be repeated, as will be illustrated by the following commentaries of a few of the incredibly important coins contained therein.

- a full set of the issues of the first and very rare 1732 date, including both varieties of the doubloon (8 Escudos) and a superb Mint State 1 Escudo. The complete offering, the first this writer is aware of, is even more astounding when considering that the lowest graded coin in this group is a wholesome XF45 specimen!
- a complete set of the "Cara de Perro" 1747 issues, all in outstanding condition. Only a handful of collections have included this full set (the writer is aware of the Norweb and Caballero de las Yndias groups, the cataloger of the latter was apparently only aware of that offering since he called it "unprecedented") and the present one is probably unmatched in overall quality.
- an incredible array of the extremely rare Rat Nose 4 Escudos. Advanced collectors will undoubtedly marvel at the inclusion of six (!!) different dates of this legendary type of which a grand total of seven coins appear in NGC's census. To put this into perspective, the Rudman collection represents 85% of the current population of the type certified by NGC, including two specimens tied as the finest certified for the entire type in AU55 preservation.
- an unprecedented offering of the extremely rare minor Charles IV transitional issues of 1789-1790 showing the previous bust of Charles III. While not as famous as other types (think the 1747 Cara de Perro issues mentioned previously), these short-lived issues contain many extreme rarities of the entire milled gold Colonial series. The writer remembers being present at a 2008 public auction when a worn specimen of the 1790 2 Escudos hammered at \$28,000. That result indeed raised many eyebrows in the auction room, yet the competing bidders were all advanced collectors who were well aware of the rare opportunity represented by said offering. Thus, the Rudman collection's finely preserved example of that same date along with another of the even rarer 1789 date will undoubtedly be remembered as memorable offerings for the series.
- truly outstanding type representatives of all denominations in the series, including two Choice Mint State Philip V doubloons and a Mint State example of the very rare 1770 Rat Nose doubloon.

In addition, as delicious icing on an already impressive cake, the Rudman collection contains a full set of all confirmed issues of the War of Independence provisional Guadalajara mint, including the Norweb example of the legendary 1812 4 Escudos. The latter represents only the second public offering of the type in over 70 years, both being of this same coin!

The few previously mentioned highlights will give a glance of the importance of this stupendous group. Some numismatists will perhaps be more impressed by the fact that the milled 8 Escudos series is complete by date! In any case, it is hard to emphasize the importance of this offering. It is safe to assume that even decades from now, the Rudman holdings will be the yardstick by which any other significant collection of these issues will be measured.

**Conventional Wisdom says:
Buy The Book Before You Buy The Coin!**



MEXICAN BEAUTY
BELLEZA MEXICANA
UN PESO CABALLITO
BY ALLAN SCHEIN

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Charles III gold 4 Escudos 1763
Mo-MF AU55 NGC



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THE POWER OF WORDS: A TALE OF TWO DECREES

by Ricardo de León Tallavas

The subject of dating or even locating historically or geographically the validation stamps on coins during the Mexican War of Independence has been a dominant topic for the last two issues of this publication and shows how important and interesting this topic is among the Mexican numismatic community. I would like to elaborate on this particular subject, but first we need to understand what was going on in Mexico at that time.

In May 1808 Napoleon had kidnapped the King of Spain, Ferdinand VII, and his father (the deposed Charles IV) and imprisoned them in France. Bonaparte imposed his older brother Joseph as King but the Spanish immediately organized resistance through regional Councils in Seville, Granada and other places and ruled on behalf of the absent Spanish King, eventually consolidating all the regional Councils in the Cortes at Cádiz.

This division in legality of power in Spain set an example and gave the right for the Spanish colonies in America to do the same and this is the basic reason why the Supreme American Council happened to be organized on 19 August 1811 in the town of Zitácuaro, in the southern state of Michoacán. This Council was in Zitácuaro until 1 February 1812, when it was forced out by Calleja, and then began the transit to several places like Sultepec and finally to Tlalpujahuá by June 1812. Why was it called the Supreme American Council and not the Supreme Mexican Council? The term "America" was perceived since the middle of the sixteenth century by everyone around the globe as the name for the whole New World, and the citizens of this New World were called simply Americans, regardless of location, until around 1835. If in the period that we are covering (1810 – 1813) anyone would have talked about "the Mexican government" everyone would immediately have assumed that the one being mentioned was the one situated in Mexico City. The two Declarations of Mexican Independence state "Americanos" as their citizens and not "Mexicanos".



The first time that Mexico recognized in a medal a "Junta" or Council in Spain happened in 1809, when this medal was struck for this purpose

By the end of 1811 one of the prominent leaders in that region in Michoacán was José María Cos, a Doctor in Theology ordained in Guadalajara and well known for his intense and fluent rhetoric. Cos was born in Zacatecas in 1770 and was instrumental in helping some of the Northern provinces, such as his home state, to join the Insurgency. He was also a journalist and contributed to the most important newspapers of the movement for Independence, *El Ilustrador Nacional*, *El Ilustrador Americano* and *Semanario Patriótico Americano*. Later on he participated in the Chilpancingo Congress (1813) and the Apatzingán Constitution (1814).

Sometime in the middle of 1812 Cos must have been deferred as one of the leaders of the Northern Military Section of the Supreme American Council. The key members of that Council, José María Liceaga, Ignacio López Rayón (the President of this Council) and José Sixto Verduzco had profound disagreements that were eroding the Council and the spirit of a resistance against the Viceroy Venegas so Cos began a crusade of reconciliation that eventually proved unsuccessful. By January of 1813 he was facing battles in the region between Sultepec and the north of Michoacán (hence the name of his section), east of Mexico City.



The crudeness and faulty equipment to strike the early issues, such as this Durango piece, provoked doubt among the public

Since October 1810 the mints of Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, Monclova and Sombrerete had operated legally as "emergency mints" (the latter really operated from around the middle of November 1810 to about February 1811) but their crude designs and poor finishing caused the public immediately to reject their coinage. The currency was distrusted and only accepted with reluctance by both merchants and the public, with the result of abuses against the latter.

Pradeau specifies that José María Liceaga applied a validation stamp on the island of Yuriria between 9 September and 31 October 1812, and we know this information simply could not be correct because of the existence of this validation stamp specifically on Guanajuato coinage of 1813. This objective and concrete evidence shows that just because something is written, even by the hand of an expert, it does not necessarily make it real. Pradeau failed to mention in his work that when he stated the possibility

of a stamp **it was his supposition**, a good educated guess based on proven historical events, but his assertive conclusion cannot be taken as anything else but as a hypothesis.

The distrust in the new coinage and the issues with their circulation caused the authorities to do something. I have found a decree allowing coins with the José María Liceaga design to circulate, which also mentions that those of the “eagle” should be accepted as well. The text alludes explicitly to these stamps and their reasons for being on the coins as validation of them being genuine and to be accepted without any discount (and not because of a political platform as sometimes we tend to attach to these stamps and counterstamps). However it does not mention the reasons for the need of two different stamps. I have a theory. But first the text that allowed this stamp to exist.

Decree in regards to Circulating Coinage

Doctor José María Cos, Military Vicar General, Field Marshal of the American Armies, Commander in Chief of the Northern Department, Adviser to His Majesty (meaning member of the Supreme National Council), etc.

To root out the pernicious abuses which have been caused by the currency, and to support commerce that has stagnated because of this situation, in compliance with the order of the Superior American Government, I have resolved the following:

- 1st. All the genuine coins minted in Mexico City by that government will circulate as freely as has happened in the past.*
- 2nd. All the inferior coins from the mints of Zacatecas, Sombrerete, Durango and Guanajuato that are legitimately assayed and stamped by the Nation with the marks of an eagle or of a flag, and the initials of the name and the last name of his Excellency the Captain General José María Liceaga, must circulate and be received by all types of merchant and trader.*
- 3rd. Anyone who violates any of the previous articles will be treated as disobeying the dispositions of His Majesty (The Supreme Council) and will be severely punished with the appropriate penalties.*
- 4th. If anyone counterfeits or falsifies the said mark or stamp (marca o resello), he will be dealt as a counterfeiter and will suffer the punishment stated by law.*
- 5th. Every coin brought in will be assayed and stamped, without charging anything to those who present them, returning to them the ones that are not good for circulation [without the mark].*

And so everyone knows of this ruling and no one claims ignorance, I command for this notice to be printed in all the places in this Region of the North, and posted in the usual places.

General Headquarters in La Venta, 16 March, 1813.

Dr. Cos

(taken from Archivo General de la Nación, Operaciones de Guerra, Volume 334, File 233: cited in *Escritos políticos de José María Cos*, Ed. UNAM, Mexico, 1996, p. 129)

Note that the decree contrasts “*todas las monedas legítimas de los cuños mexicanos establecidas por aquel gobierno*” in the first article with “*toda moneda contrahecha de los cuños de Zacatecas, Sombrerete, Durango y Guanajuato*” in the second article. “*Contrahecha*” when applied to “*moneda*” normally implies “counterfeit” but here must refer either to all the issues as “improper”, “inferior” or “poorly designed” or to a sub-section of coins that were “defective” or “deformed”. In support of this interpretation, we should note that the stamps have never been seen on a contemporary counterfeit.

More than likely this decree (*bando*) was issued at La Venta, (today La Venta de Bravo) in Michoacán, north of Tlalpujahua where the Supreme American Council was established at that time. Why are the coins of the Chihuahua mint absent



Detail of the José María Liceaga stamp. Under his initials there is an intricate and undeciphered system of letters, in this case a “V”



The stamping of JML coins happened probably between October 1812 and February 1813. Stamped 8R from Durango (courtesy of Eduardo García Ramírez)

from this text? Why are they not stamping the ones from Guadalajara? After all, these mints were already opened and functioning by March 1813. A simple reason – circulation. Coins from Zacatecas, Sombrerete, Durango and Guanajuato were being used in the region of La Venta at the time when was a need to issue this decree to reassure the public of the validity of these marked coins.

Chihuahua was by far the furthest mint of New Spain and their coins proved to have circulated through trade in the provinces of Durango, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. These coins are also found in Texas and California because back then these were parts of New Spain. Guadalajara coinage, in my opinion, did not leave the province of New Galicia (today the state of Jalisco) until much later because their production by March 1813 was probably right behind that of Guanajuato though it would surpass it later on that year. So far, not a single eagle or “JML” stamp has been recorded on a Guadalajara coin.



These stamped coins from Guanajuato dated 1813 prove that Pradeau was inexact in his description of the timing of the stamp

There are four stamps with “an eagle” that could fit the text’s description: the two on a bridge, the one above the word “ENSAIE” and the one above the legend “NORTE”. I agree with Max Keech that the “ENSAIE” design was applied by the Supreme Junta, as no one else could have made such a bold statement on coins, and, as he mentions, the earliest coins of 1810 and 1811 are the ones bearing this stamp so this could be the earliest one. The two on a bridge, as described by Keech, were also applied by the Supreme Council in my opinion and the “NORTE” might also have been added to this list of “the eagle stamp” designs referred by this document. Hence the need of no further clarification as all of the “eagles” might have been marked on coins by the authority of the said Council or Junta.

The “NORTE” stamp with the eagle, in my opinion, was more than likely applied by José María Liceaga and was probably done under the consensus and authority of the

Supreme Junta as Liceaga was the one in charge of the military theatre of operations “of the North”. It is also my assumption that the “JML” was applied by the same leader in an independent move to start tying his name to coins aside of the Suprema Junta and probably as a way to show that he was also working independently after the problems between the three leaders of the Council.

This decree about stamping of coins is rather unusual as the majority that I have seen are vague and barely describe the coins they are alluding to in their text. An example of this is an earlier decree which bans cast coins and allows copper struck coins to circulate at par with the silver ones (more than likely kept out of circulation), defining the legal and commercial implications of these struck copper coins.



This 8R from Zacatecas 1811 bears an unrecorded JML with the letters “C.R.” under the banner

Dr. José María Liceaga, Council Member of the Supreme Governing Council of America, General of its Armies, Inspector and General Commander of the Section of the North, etc.

That as the copper coinage is one of the most important affairs of His Majesty’s Council (...) and to avoid the usual problems tied to the severe lack in circulation of coins, and to stop the abuses of calculating all diverse coins to a fair price, I have resolved to publish and print the following decree to ratify that copper and silver will circulate at the same value:

- 1st. In every place where this note reaches is legal tender all copper coinage struck by the American Government.*
- 2nd. The said coins will be given and received at the same value, so the weight in copper of a peso in copper will be exactly as the one in silver. This rule goes also for all fractional coinage.*
- 3rd. Each and every merchant that refuses to receive copper as legal tender will be prosecuted as an enemy of the nation.*

- 4th. *All coinage made in silver or copper must be struck to be accepted for its full legitimate value.*
- 5th. *All cast coinage is hereby declared null and void; therefore it will not be admitted in any way.*
- 6th. *All copper coins will be temporary and they constitute national IOUs that will be redeemed at par when the calamities (of war) cease.*



Struck copper coinage of the Supreme American Council were of obligatory circulation according to this decree

So everyone knows of this rulings and no one alleges ignorance of these dispositions, I command for this notice to be printed and affixed in all usual public places.

General Headquarters, San Luis de la Paz, 30 September 1812.

On behalf of His Majesty the Supreme Government of America.

Fernando Hernández, Commander Colonel of the Army

San Luis de la Paz is a small town in the north east of Guanajuato state, close to Dolores, where the *Grito* of Independence started, and back then was a region that saw a profuse amount of battles.

The validation stamps were applied, at least in the case of the "eagles" and the "JML" as signs of the host coin being genuine and to stop commercial abuses and unfair discounts to the detriment of the public. The applying of these stamps ("*marcas*" or marks as they are called in the decrees) had the political statement of being able to validate or reject the public money. In doing so a fortune could be ratified as such or discarded as mere rubbish.



All cast coins were to be unacceptable, regardless of whether they had a validation stamp or not

The diversity of circulation was, in the opinion of the majority of the researchers, an eternal cause of confusion that permeates even today among us collectors and merchants equally. Let us dig in the old papers, the internet and books to see how many more decrees we can find the better to understand the location and timing of these interesting designs called back then "*marcas*" or "*resellos*". There

is no better thrill as a coin collector than finding something that everyone has overlooked or was hidden in a very obscure document.



Struck silver coins were going to be the only one circulating: however, I doubt anyone would have refused cast silver coins and received copper instead

What do you think?

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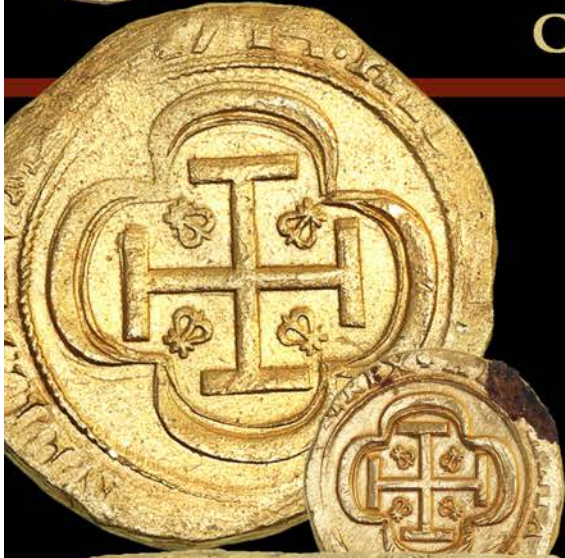
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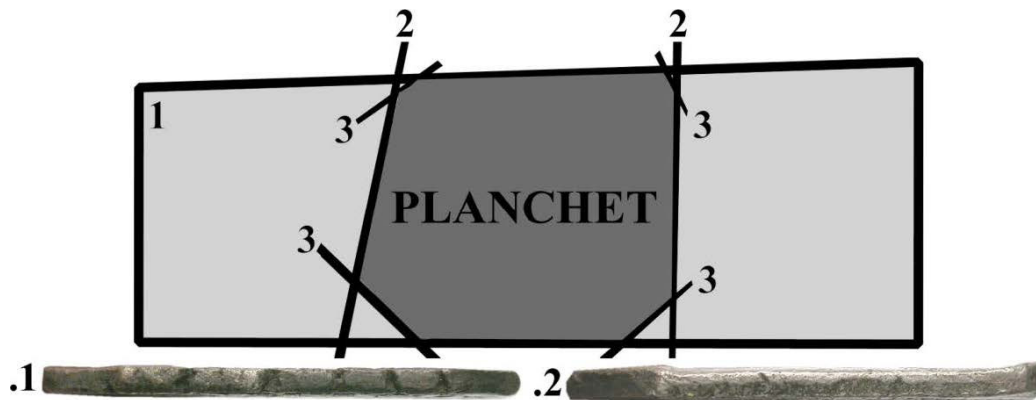
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COLONIAL "COB" COINAGE OF PHILIP II AND PHILIP III: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

by Kent Ponterio

"Cob" coinage

Although the origin of the term "cob" is not entirely certain, it is most likely an abbreviation that derives from the Spanish term "cabo de barra," meaning end of the bar, a name adopted due to method of manufacture for the planchets. Cobs were hand struck on crude planchets that were cut from the end of a silver bar, hammered flat and then weighed for correctness. If needed, adjustment cuts or clips were made until the planchet was of the correct weight. The diagram below is an example of how planchets were cut from sheets. All Mexican cobs have two opposing edges at the top and bottom showing signs of stress cracks or edge splits. These represent the original edges from the bar of silver from which the planchet was cut. True cobs also contain two opposing cut edges at left and right, showing evidence of sheer marks. These marks are where the initial cuts were made creating the planchet. Adjustment cuts were then made in the corners until the planchet was of the correct weight standard.



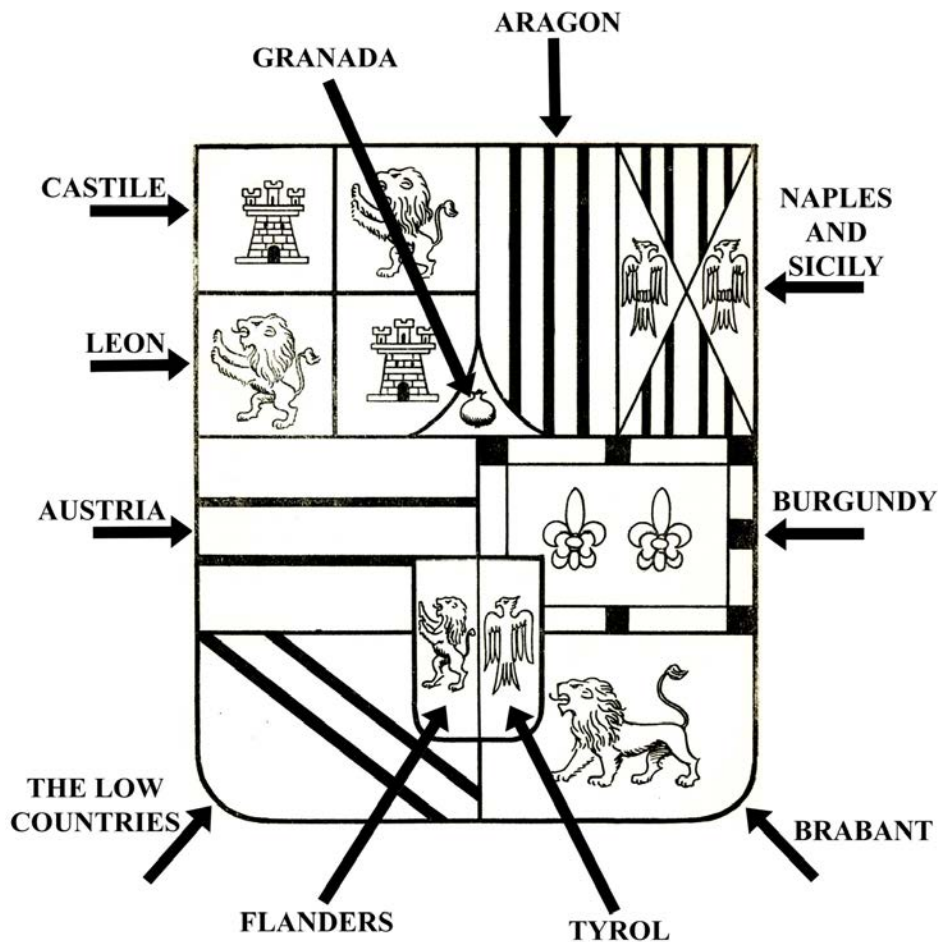
"Shield and Cross coinage"

During the reign of Philip II a new coinage design was adopted. For the obverse design the great shield of the House of Hapsburg was chosen. The reverse design bears the cross of Jerusalem with lions and castles in the quadrants. Although the coat of arms on the obverse shield or "shield" went through many changes over the years, this basic design type of "shield and cross" coinage remained the standard in Mexico until the introduction of "milled" coinage in 1732. In short "cob" coinage was the longest running type coin ever issued in Mexico, spanning the reigns of Philip II, Philip III, Philip IV, Charles II, Philip V and of course Luis I.



Philip II

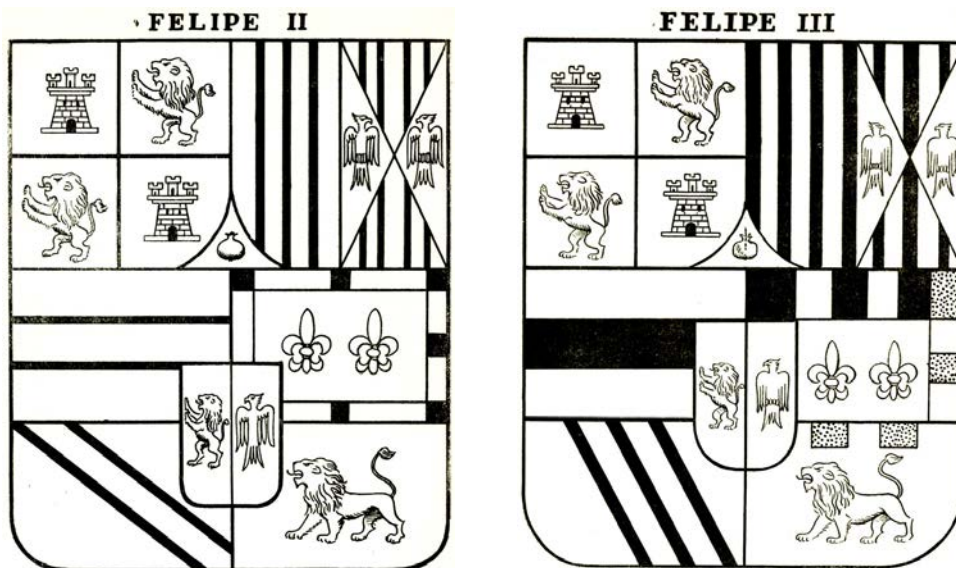
Philip III



The great shield of the House of Hapsburg

Philip II and Philip III

The basic design of the coinage of Philip II and Philip III is virtually identical with a few minor exceptions. Both kings used the great shield of the House of Hapsburg as the obverse and the cross of Jerusalem with lions and castles in the quadrants for the reverse. This raises a question that I have been asked on multiple occasions, "How do you tell the difference between a cob of Philip II and Philip III when there is no visible king's ordinal?" This can be somewhat confusing at times, especially with examples of assayer "F", which was used for both kings. In most cases there are a few diagnostic differences that once understood should make it fairly easy to make this determination.





Philip II



Philip III

Crowns



Philip II Crown



Philip III Crown

The first basic distinction to look for when determining whether a 1, 2, 4 or 8 reales is Philip II or Philip III is the crown. Most Philip II cobs exhibit a crown that is attached to the top of the shield without a lower arc. For Philip III most examples display a crown with a looped or arched bottom sitting above the shield. That being said there are a few minor exceptions to this rule. The first exception is that there are a few very late Philip II pieces that exhibit a hybrid arched crown similar to that of Philip III. These are quite rare and very seldom encountered. The second exception to this rule comes right at the transition from Philip II to Philip III. The last coinage of Philip II and the first coinage of Philip III exhibit an added mark of "oD" which is presumed by many to be a second assayer's letter. Coins bearing the mark of "oD" all exhibit a crown that is attached to the top of the shield without a lower loop.



Philip II "arched crown"



Philip II with "oD"



Philip III "royal" with "oD"
(image courtesy of Dan Sedwick)

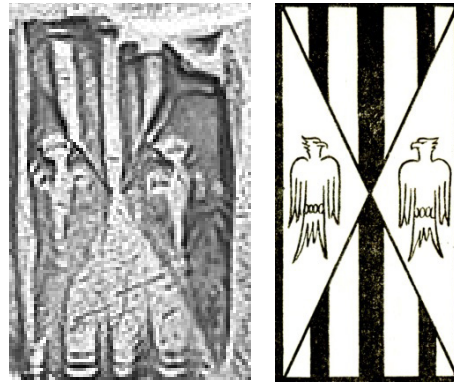
Arms of Naples and Sicily

The second major diagnostic in determining whether a coin is of Philip II or Philip III is the arms of Naples and Sicily present in the Hapsburg shield on the obverse. Close examination of the vertical lines present in these arms shows that they are placed differently for the coinage of these two kings. All of the coins of Philip II that I have examined exhibit

the arms of Naples and Sicily in the same manner with a set of four vertical lines. The coinage of Philip III differs in that the arms of Naples and Sicily are made up of three vertical lines with the central bar running directly through the center of the arms. For the vast majority of coin you can determine if they are Philip II or Philip III using this method. The exception to this rule comes right at the end of the rule of Philip II and overlaps with the first coinage of Philip III on the coinage that bears the "oD" mark. All of the coinage for Philip II and Philip III that bear the "oD" mark exhibit the arms of Naples and Sicily in the manner it was used for Philip II.



Philip II Arms



Philip III Arms

Half Reales

So, now that we have a general understanding of how to tell the difference between coins of Philip II and Philip III on the larger denominations, let us consider how to determine this on the half reales. The half reales differ from the rest of the series in that the obverse displays the king's name laid out in a monogram as the central design, rather than a shield. The monogram is an overlapping arrangement of letters simply spelling the king's name "PHILIPPVS". Since both king's names are Philip, this can be somewhat confusing for some. The simplest method in making this distinction is the placement of the "V" which is placed either at the top or the bottom of the monogram. For the coins of Philip II the "V" is placed below the central cross bar of the "H". For Philip III it is the exact opposite where the "V" is placed above the central cross bar of the "H". There is one very rare exception to this rule that I am aware of where a "V" is placed both above and below the cross bar of the "H".



Half reales Philip II



Half real of Philip III



*Half real transitional?
Possibly Philip II over
Philip III*

8 Reales

Documentation suggests that after the first 8 Reales of Charles and Johanna it was not until 1575 that 8 Reales would once again commence production. Before the existence of the Charles and Johanna 8 Reales was confirmed, it was generally accepted by the numismatic community that the first 8 Reales of Mexico were those produced during the reign of Philip II. The coin pictured here is one such coin. It exhibits a unique feature to Mexican coinage in that the denomination is a flat top or Spanish "8". This is the first 8 Reales of Philip II for which there is only one die known and should be considered extremely rare.

The 8 Reales of Philip II and Philip III can be tracked and sequenced through a slow debasement or digression of style. At the beginning of Philip II's reign the dies are neatly made with punches of good style. These punches were probably produced in Spain. Slowly this style begins to deteriorate. This is perhaps most notable when one examines the style of the lions on the reverse. Coins produced during the office of assayer "O" (the first assayer) exhibit well-designed lions standing upright on their hind legs. Continually during the reign of Philip II and entering the reign of Philip III, the style of these lions becomes debased to a level where they look similar to a monkey or dog. Over time



*Philip II Flat top "8"
The first 8 Reales of Philip II*

the entire style of these coins digresses, probably as a result of punches breaking and being replaced by punches that were produced locally by engravers who were completely unfamiliar with what a lion actually looks like.



Philip II 8 reales Assayer "O"

The coinage of assayer "F" continues in the same basic manner of assayer "O" with the style gradually becoming cruder.



Philip II 8 reales Assayer "F"

This rare and interesting type exhibits a small "O" below the mint mark, just above the assayer letter "F". Historically many numismatists (myself included), thought this to be a transitional coin showing the assayers letter of both assayer "O" and "F", the theory being that both assayers were working in office at the same time while "F" transitioned into the position of sole assayer. While this logically makes sense, the die style proves this theory to be incorrect. The style of the die work is far too crude to be a product of assayer "O" and appears to be much latter in the tenure of assayer "F".



Philip II 8 reales "oMoF" Assayer "F"



*Philip II 8 reales "oMF"
Crude style*

This coin is among the last coins issued under Philip II. It exhibits an added mark of "oD" which is believed by many to be a second assayer's letter. These are extremely rare and very seldom encountered. We know that the coins bearing the added mark of "oD" are the last 8 Reales of Philip II as the first 8 Reales of Philip III were produced in the same manner.

This coin was produced very late in the reign of Philip II. By this time the die style had digressed to a level where most pertinent aspects were produced with locally made punches.



Philip II 8 reales "Assayer "F" with "oD"

The first coinage of Philip III is virtually identical to the last coinage of Philip II. The only major difference was changing the king's ordinal from "II" to "III". These like the last coinage of Philip II all bear the added mark of "oD". All coins of this type are extremely rare and should be considered a transitional issue between Philip II and Philip III. Note the debased style of the lions. This was a temporary coinage until new punches arrived and regular coinage production began in a refined style.



*Philip III "royal" with "oD"
(image courtesy of Dan Sedwick)*

With the exception of the "oD" coinage of Philip III, most of the coinage produced during this king is from fairly well executed dies of a more refined style than the late issues of the previous king.



Philip III Assayer "F" New refined die style



Philip III 1607 - the first dated coin of Mexico



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