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COVER IMAGE

The cover shows an example of a Republic of Mexico 'Facing Eagle' 1/2 real. These were struck at 11 mints (12 if you count Alamos) during the period from 1825 to 1869.

This example is a 1834 MoML from the Mexico City mint (KM370.9). It was graded by PCGS as MS67 and described as "An absolute gem of a 1/2 Real enveloped by an allover vivid tone most abundant to the obverse, made even more apparent at the turn of the wrist. A premium selection that shares the top spot with one other between the major grading parties." It sold as Lot #39448 at Heritage Auctions on 25 June 2021 for \$3,840.00 (including Buyer's Premium).

In his article in this journal Bill Sigl considers the current market conditions for this coin and offers a detailed description of their rarity by DAM (Date/Assayer/Mint).



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INSURGENT CAST COINAGE - SUPREME JUNTA ARMS, MORELOS AND Lva, 1811-12

by Max A Keech

Summary

Prior to obtaining minting equipment in mid-1812, the primary circulating coinage of the Supreme Junta Insurgent Government and its allied forces was a cast silver issue. Sand casts were made of struck Mexico City bust type coins and then validated with various combinations of Supreme Junta Arms, José Morelos, Lva and other casting stamps applied before the metal was allowed to cool. You can think of these stamps like a mintmark indicating the source of the cast coinage. Insurgent casts with multiple casting stamps identify coinage jointly cast by, or distributed to these allied regional Insurgent forces. These Insurgent type casts (i.e. casts from Mexico City bust type coins) are important as the Insurgents' first widely circulating medium. A small number of coins were also cast using Supreme Junta Eagle on Bridge Divided Legend (Zitácuaro) coins as casting models with applied Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos and Lva casting stamps. By mid-1812 the Supreme Junta leadership separated and Insurgent cooperation declined sharply. Minting equipment was also acquired in Talpujahua and, from this time forward, Insurgent coinage was not cast in any discernable quantity. The "Supreme Junta Arms" casting stamp has been previously described as the "Chilpancingo A" counterstamp based on a mistaken attribution that is corrected below.



Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos & Lva Cast 8 Reales, Obv & Rev photo, 1.5x

Background

The armed forces of the Supreme Junta were in constant need of coinage to pay troops and to buy supplies. Most of the silver obtained by the Insurgents in the early part of the revolution was in the form of captured silver bars which contained approximately 1,100 pesos of silver each. With each peso equivalent to an ounce of silver or one US dollar, these large bars represented a huge sum of money, too big for most commercial transactions and certainly for the payment of troops. Hence, silver bars were melted and cast into coins. Following the formation of the Supreme Junta in August 1811, the Insurgent Government began casting silver coinage from their newly created Eagle on Bridge Divided Legend (Zitácuaro) design. Apparently, these cast quantities were inadequate, probably due to a shortage of struck *madres* (i.e. "mother" coins used as the models for casting). The solution to their need for additional coinage was simple and familiar. The Supreme Junta created a casting stamp based on the reverse image of their Divided Legend coinage and then cast silver from sand molds made from the readily available Royalist Mexico City bust type coins. This casting stamp is designated the Supreme Junta Arms stamp rather than the misattributed Chilpancingo A stamp for reasons that are explained below. The application of a casting stamp acted as a seal of the issuer and to designate legitimacy. The casting stamp was applied after casting but before the silver was allowed to cool. This is similar to Royalist cast coinage of this period from Chihuahua and Monclova which were validated by applying Royalist casting stamps at the mint.



Insurgent Strongholds, circa 1812

Insurgent Casts were the Common Currency of Supreme Junta Forces

Other Insurgent forces pledged to the Supreme Junta followed their example and also cast silver from sand molds made from Mexico City bust type coins. To differentiate themselves as issuer, they applied their own casting stamps. It is important to recall that following formation of the Supreme Junta National Government in August 1811, all Insurgent forces were pledged to and under the authority of the Supreme Junta. The Supreme Junta in Zitácuaro, and its subsequent locations, was the political and administrative voice of the Insurgents, while Insurgent armies located elsewhere served as military divisions of the Supreme Junta. These Insurgent forces generally followed the commands of and reported to Supreme Junta leadership. This cooperative and congenial relationship generally held until the leadership's separation in June 1812 following major strategic disagreements. In the era preceding mid-1812 cast silver was jointly produced with the casting stamps of two, and sometimes three, of these related forces. In fact, more cast silver was produced jointly than produced individually by these Insurgent entities. This collaboration involved at least six different Supreme Junta aligned forces. The primary three; the Supreme Junta, Morelos and an unknown authority utilizing the "Lva" monogram, accounted for the majority of this cast coinage and are the focus of this article. The majority of their cast production consisted of silver eight reales but some minor silver and copper coinage is also known. The cast coinage of these allied Insurgent forces is closely related and, hence, should be treated as a group. These casts made from Royalist bust type *madres* are collectively referred to as "Insurgent casts". Traditionally, this cast coinage and its stamps have been cataloged as independent counterstamps which on occasion occur together. Krause, the primary reference catalog, treats them as the independent counterstamps "Chilpancingo", "LVS" and "Morelos" (the Chilpancingo and LVS misattribution is addressed below). Krause numbers these coins based on the coin used to create the sand mold for casting.



Insurgent Cast Combinations of the "Big Three" Casting Stamps

By collectively considering this cast coinage as a single type, the significance of the Insurgents primary circulating coinage during its infancy is better understood. This was the workhorse currency of Insurgent forces before mid-1812 with the various casting stamps serving as an identifying mintmark. Multiple casting stamps identified money jointly cast by or distributed to multiple Insurgent forces. This cast coinage far outnumbered casts made from Supreme Junta Eagle on Bridge Divided Legend (Zitácuaro) coins and preceded any significant struck coinage. It also proceeded, at least initially, Morelos' SUD type casts which would first appear in 1812 during his second campaign. It is likely that Insurgent casts with any of these allied casting stamps was treated as legal tender in all Insurgent held areas. The three casting stamps most often encountered in various combinations on casts from struck Mexico City bust type coins are the stamps of the Supreme Junta Arms, José Morelos and Lva which are each reviewed in detail on the pages that follow. Each casting stamp was also used individually, creating seven different combinations for these "Big Three" casting stamps.



Villagran & "H" Joint Casts with Supreme Junta Arms

While Insurgent casts are most often found with the casting stamps of Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos, and/or Lva, other Insurgent forces in this early period participated in this joint casting effort. Rare combinations include Supreme Junta Arms and Villagran casts, and casts of the Supreme Junta Arms with the unknown Insurgent force represented by an "H" encircled by dots. Of the major casting stamps, only Vicente Beristain's "S.M.V.B." has not been recorded in a joint cast with the Supreme Junta Arms. Beristain's "S.M.V.B." is, however, known in a combined cast with "H" confirming its participation in joint Insurgent casts.¹

Important Distinction between Casting Stamps and Counterstamps

The Supreme Junta Arms, Lva, Villagran, H and Beristain's S.M.V.B. stamps only occur as **casting stamps used in the production of cast coinage** and were never used as counterstamps. We want to emphasize that these are only found on cast coins and where multiple stamps of these authorities occur on the same cast; they were applied at the same time, immediately following the casting process before the metal was allowed to cool. Conversely, **counterstamps were used to validate provisional coinage already in circulation**. Of the stamps considered in this article, only Morelos' stamp served as both a casting stamp and a counterstamp.

Casting Ceased in Mid-1812

Insurgent casts (i.e. casts from Mexico City bust type coins) lost favor and appear to have ceased by mid-1812 due to a variety of reasons;

- Ability to strike coinage: In June 1812 the Supreme Junta leadership separated with President Ignacio Rayón relocating to Tlalpujahua. Here he obtained minting equipment and began a significant and sustained production of struck coinage in both silver and copper based on the new Supreme Junta Continuous Legend design.
- Morelos on campaign: From around November 1811 thru mid-1812 Morelos conducted his second Southern campaign focused on Cuautla. The start of the campaign appears to be the end of Morelos' participation in joint Insurgent casts in favor of casting his own SUD style coinage. His absence also removed a mediating influence among Insurgent forces and perhaps precipitated their deteriorating cooperation.
- Declining cooperation between Insurgent forces: Following the separation of the Supreme Junta's leadership in June 1812, disagreement and competition increased dramatically between various Insurgent forces with each acting more and more independently of the others.
- Less silver available for coinage: Following the early months of the revolution, the Royalists took steps to improve security, including the garrisoning of major towns and mining centers, decreasing opportunities for Insurgent plunder.



*1811 Supreme Junta Divided Legend (Zitácuaro)
Cast with Supreme Junta Arms and Lva Casting
Stamps*



*1812-13 Continuous Legend Style Coinage Never
Found with Casting Stamps*

1. Tomás Dasí, *Estudio de los Reales de a Ocho* (Valencia, Spain, 1950-1951), page 223, figure 1.381.

These events appear to mark the termination of any measurable casting from Mexico City bust type coins by any force aligned with the Supreme Junta after mid-1812. This chronology can be verified in other ways. First, 1811-12 Supreme Junta Divided Legend (Zitácuaro) coins were also used to create sand molds for Supreme Junta Arms and Lva cast coinage. However, the subsequent 1812-13 Continuous Legend type coinage introduced in mid-1812 was never used for casting. If casting continued after the move to Tlalpujahua in June 1812, we would expect these new Continuous Legend style coins to be used for the creation of sand molds. Second, the dates of the Mexico City bust type coins used for casting provide important information on when casting occurred. No casts using 1813 dated coins are known. Casts using 1812 dated coins are rare, representing just five percent of all examples. If casting had continued into 1813, we would see coins dated 1813 and a higher percentage dated 1812 used for casting. Finally, Morelos alone continued to cast silver after mid-1812, but not with Mexico City bust type coins. Instead, Morelos used his own SUD style *madres* as casting models.

Chilpancingo Misattribution



In September 1813 Morelos convened the Congress of Chilpancingo where he assumed leadership of the Insurgent Government. In 1938 Dr. Alberto Pradeau's *Numismatic History of Mexico* incorrectly attributed the Supreme Junta Arms casting stamp and the Supreme Junta Eagle on Bridge counterstamp as counterstamps of the Congress of Chilpancingo. Pradeau stated that the Congress had chosen them "as its own", apparently ignoring that the stamps mirror the reverse and obverse of the 1811 Divided Legend Eagle on Bridge coinage produced at Zitácuaro. Future authors followed this Chilpancingo misattribution. In 1951 Dasí differentiated between the two presumed "Chilpancingo" counterstamps giving them their Chilpancingo A (Arms) and Chilpancingo B (Eagle on Bridge) designations. Authors, reference books and auction catalogs since have followed these misattributions. As the casting chronology above demonstrates, the Supreme Junta Arms stamp has nothing to do with the September 1813 Congress of Chilpancingo. Casting with the Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos, Lva and other casting stamps began shortly after the August 1811 Congress of Zitácuaro, before minting equipment was obtained and when cooperation among Insurgent forces was at its greatest. Casting ceased by mid-1812 following the separation of the Supreme Junta's leadership. The misattribution of the Supreme Junta's casting stamp as a counterstamp used more than a year later hides the importance of the Insurgent casts which were the workhorse currency of Insurgent forces during the first ten months of the Insurgent government's existence. It obscures the related nature of the Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos, Lva and other casting stamps used to produce this coinage. In what is admittedly a heavy lift, this article attempts to correct this 84-year misattribution by designating the entire cast series as "Insurgent Casts" and reassigning the Chilpancingo A counterstamp as the "Supreme Junta Arms" casting stamp.



Supreme Junta Arms
Stamp, 2x & 1811
Supreme Junta 8 Reales
Reverse

Supreme Junta Arms Casting Stamp

The Supreme Junta Arms casting stamp originates from the central motif on the reverse of the 1811 Supreme Junta Divided Legend coinage. Native arms are displayed with an upraised fist grasping a bow and arrow above a sling, javelin, quiver and arrows. The stamp measures 15mm to 16mm in diameter. Like the Lva stamp, the Supreme Junta Arms stamp was only used as a casting stamp applied as the finishing step in the manufacture of cast coinage. It was not used as a counterstamp to validate coinage already in circulation and hence is only found on cast coinage. The Supreme Junta used different stamps for counterstamping provisional coinage including the related "Eagle on Bridge" stamp. Most Supreme Junta Arms casts are produced from struck Royalist Mexico City bust type coins; however, a few examples are known which are cast from Supreme Junta Divided Legend (Zitácuaro) coins.

Supreme Junta Arms casts from Mexico City bust type coins occur alone and in combination with Morelos, Lva and occasionally other casting stamps. The number of coins cast and validated with the Supreme Junta Arms casting stamp was large and likely occurred in numerous locations at various times between late-1811 and mid-1812. This is evidenced by the large number of Supreme Junta Arms punches used and by the widely variable quality of the cast coins themselves. Iron punches



Typical Filed &
Colonial Edges

used to create the Supreme Junta Arms stamp were not hubbed and hence each is unique.² Some examples of Supreme Junta Arms cast eight reales with a distinctive colonial style edge are known, often with what appears to be a Morelos counterstamp. An important variety of the Supreme Junta Arms stamp has a serrated border.



Supreme Junta Arms Stamp with Serrated Border, 2x



Morelos Casting Stamp, 2x

The circular Morelos casting stamp consists of the monogram "Mo" with a large star above and below. Morelos casting stamps occur alone and in combination with Supreme Junta Arms and/or Lva casting stamps. Morelos casting stamps in combination with Lva stamps alone are rare. The Morelos stamp measures from 12mm to 13mm in diameter. Unlike the Supreme Junta Arms and Lva stamps, the Morelos stamp was also used to counterstamp circulating coinage including most provisional Insurgent and Royalist issues. When found on struck coinage, the Morelos stamp is always a counterstamp but when found on an Insurgent cast it can be either a casting stamp or a counterstamp. Most often it is a casting stamp. There are two important rectangular varieties of the Morelos stamp measuring 7.5mm x 5.5mm, one with and one without a serrated border.



Square Morelos Stamp Varieties, 3x

Lva Casting Stamp

This 7-8mm circular stamp of unknown authority might display Lva in monogram. Like the Supreme Junta Arms stamp, the Lva stamp was only used as a casting stamp applied as the final step in the manufacture of cast coinage. It was not used as a counterstamp and hence is only found on cast coinage. The Lva casting stamp was generally used to validate casts in combination with the Supreme Junta Arms, both with and without Morelos. Lva validations which exclude the Supreme Junta Arms are rare. Solitary Lva casting stamps have been observed on both Mexico City bust type casts and on casts created from Supreme Junta Divided Legend (Zitácuaro) coins. There are two important Lva varieties with finely serrated borders. One occurs on a circular punch while the other punch is a slight oval.



Lva Serrated Border Varieties, 3x



Possible Lva Stamp Orientations, 3x

The Lva casting stamp has a monogram of uncertain translation. Even its upright orientation is in doubt. In 1938, Pradeau described it as "Lva" and that description has prevailed since. Pradeau did not suggest a meaning for the Lva monogram. It is possible that Pradeau was reading the stamp upside down. When rotated 180 degrees, the monogram could read "Tsm"/"Jsm", "Tsm"/"Jsm", "Ta"/"Ja" or ? Different punches have slight differences in lettering style so this range of styles must be considered in any translation. Unfortunately, the Lva casting stamp was applied in random orientations so the coins themselves do not tell us which direction is up. The Lva stamp does, however, contain what appears to be a "stop" or period. If this is a stop, placing the stop on the right would be conventional and a more probable orientation.

2. Punch refers to the entire iron rod used to impress the stamp while the stamp is the design on the end of the punch. Each individual punch/stamp is unique since they were individually made, presumably from segment punches and not hubbed from a master. Hubbing is the process of creating a punch from a master so that each punch is essentially the same.

Past authors have noted that “Lva” may be an upside-down reading and suggested an “aT” or “Ta” interpretation as well as other possibilities. A “J” rather than a “T” interpretation in this orientation is also quite possible. In cataloging the Pradeau sale of November 1971, Superior Stamp & Coin described it as “AT” and noted “Pradeau, p. 132, describes this c/s; but he reads it as LVA. His photo, PL.XXII #13 does not show the period. For this reason, he probably looked at this c/s from an inverted position.” In a lively series of articles and letters appearing in the *El Boletín Numismático* in 1994-95 translations ranged from Ta=Talpujahuá or Tixtla/Chilpancingo to Lva= José María Morelos in monogram. In an ambitious reading that would make Rorschach blush, one author visualized “Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez” in monogram!³ None of this speculation is supported by any historical evidence and each has major flaws⁴ Krause catalogs this stamp as an “LVS” counterstamp, apparently recognizing the “s” but not the “a” or “m” in the monogram.

What Insurgent Force does the Lva/Tsm Monogram Represent?

The short answer is we do not know. It is almost certainly an important Insurgent force closely aligned with the Supreme Junta and Morelos in the period of late-1811 to mid-1812. The most important Insurgent armies during this period were Osorno, Serrano, Villagrán and García. Osorno controlled the largest force in the plains of Apan, northeast of Mexico City. Serrano operated in the same region under Osorno’s command. Julián Villagrán operated just north, controlling the Sierra Madre from the town of Zimapan. The Bajío region of Guanajuato was controlled by Albino García. In trying to decipher the Lva monogram these leaders, geography and their historic records were considered. Unfortunately, I was unable to decipher the monogram. Given the large amount of Lva cast coinage (42% of all joint castings), my speculation, and I want to reinforce this is only conjecture, is an association with Osorno.

Osorno

José Francisco Osorno was the largest and most important of the somewhat Independent Insurgents. The next largest, Villagrán, cast coinage with a casting stamp bearing his name. Osorno joined the Supreme Junta upon its formation in August 1811, receiving the rank of Lieutenant General. Osorno’s forces were headquartered in Zacatlan, 120 miles (190 km) east north-east of Mexico City and controlled the plains of Apan and areas south to Puebla. His forces successfully preyed on the mule trains to and from the port of Veracruz as well as other towns in the area. Osorno was known to share resources with the Supreme Junta and Morelos. Alamán reports that in early 1812 the Supreme Junta, Morelos and Osorno divided captured booty.⁵ On 23 March 1812 Osorno’s lieutenants Serrano and Vicente Beristain captured over 200 bars of silver from the Real de Minas in Pachuca. Osorno provided a share to the Supreme Junta but failed to deliver the portion promised to Morelos. Whether the Supreme Junta’s share consisted of cast coins or bars is unrecorded. In October Morelos traveled to confront Osorno where he received his share, variously reported as 108 or 116 silver bars!⁶ A 22 bar portion of Osorno’s silver was cast and stamped “S.M.V.B.” by Vicente Beristain, reportedly at San Martín.

Stamp Positions



Normal Stamp
Positions

The Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos and Lva casting stamps were arranged in specific locations on the obverse side of the cast. The Supreme Junta Arms stamp was applied at the center of the obverse. Morelos’ stamp was placed at 12:00 over the King’s head and just above the Supreme Junta Arms stamp. The Lva monogram was set in the field at 3:00, just right of the Supreme Junta Arms stamp. This placement was generally observed whether the stamps were applied individually or in combination, but exceptions do occur. Morelos’ stamp is normally found in an upright position while the orientation of the Supreme Junta Arms and Lva stamps appear random.

3. *El Boletín Numismático* volumes 165, 169, 170, Sociedad Numismática de México.

4. Talpujahuá was not occupied by Insurgents until after mid-1812 when casting had ceased. Tixtla/Chilpancingo were occupied by Morelos on his first campaign before formation of the Supreme Junta and later after mid-1812. A Talpujahuá stamp would also be duplicative of the Supreme Junta Arms stamp and a José María Morelos monogram would be duplicative of Morelos’ stamp.

5. Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico desde los primeros movimientos que prepararon su Independencia en el año 1808 hasta la presente*, Mexico City, 1849-1852, vol. ii, 577-81, vol. iii 152-53

6. Juan E. Hernández y Dávalos, *Historia de la Guerra de Independencia de México*, vol. IV, Mexico, 1881 and Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Mexico*, vol. 13, page 477-478

Stamp Combinations and Rarity

Following is a tabulation of 140 Insurgent casts with casting stamps of the Supreme Junta Arms, Morelos and/or Lva from Mexico City bust type coins. This tabulation of cast eight reales, which includes major auction sales, private collections and Coin Archives records, gives us insight into the relative rarity of various combinations. 56% of this population contains multiple casting stamps and 44% has single stamps.

<u>Casting Stamps in Combination</u>	<u>Single Casting Stamps</u>
19% Supreme Junta Arms + Morelos + Lva	55% Supreme Junta Arms
58% Supreme Junta Arms+ Morelos	43% Morelos
20% Supreme Junta Arms + Lva	2% Lva
3% Lva + Morelos	

As the population above shows, the occurrence of an Lva stamp either individually or in combination with only a Morelos stamp is quite rare. Also, casts with all three casting stamps are underrated, occurring much less often than those of the Supreme Junta Arms together with just Morelos.

Mexico City Bust Type Coins and Rarity

Utilizing the same tabulation of Insurgent casts, the following table details the Mexico City bust type coins used for casting:

<u>% by Date of Coins Used for Casting</u>	
5%	1812 Ferdinand VII draped bust
2%	1811 Ferdinand VII draped bust
61%	1808-11 Ferdinand VII Armored bust
29%	1789-1808 Carlos III
3%	1772-1789 Charles III

The most common coins used for casting are 1810 and 1811 Ferdinand VII Armored bust coins which are represented on almost half of all cast coins. This shows either a preference for casting from newer coins or that 1810-11 coinage represented a high proportion of the coins in circulation during late-1811 to mid-1812. Coins dated 1812 are rare which attests to the near elimination of casting by mid-1812. All of the observed casts dated 1812 are either Supreme Junta Arms alone or in combination with Lva only. The lack of any Morelos casts from 1812 Mexico City bust type coins is probably due to Morelos' transition to SUD type casts following the start of his second campaign around November 1811.

In conclusion, the Insurgent cast coinage of late-1811 to mid-1812 is an important and largely misunderstood issue. Created with the casting stamps of various Supreme Junta forces, this foundational issue served as their primary circulating coinage during this formative period.

[Author's note. This article is a chapter in a long-term War For Independence book project. I would like to thank Mike Dunigan and Cory Frampton for reviewing and providing invaluable expertise, comments and editing. Readers' comments are also appreciated and can be emailed to max@worldnumismatics.com]

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THE ASSAYERS OF THE MINT OF MEXICO DURING THE 16TH CENTURY PILLARS COINAGE, - LATE SERIES, ASSAYERS G, R AND A (PART 1)

by Jorge A. Proctor

As mentioned in my article in the March 2022 issue, a new series of coins known today as the Late Series or the pillars and waves design started to be minted in 1542 under assayer Juan Gutiérrez. As an added modification by Viceregal order of 28 June 1542 for the mintage of copper maravedí coins in Mexico, a lower-case “o” was directed to be added above the M mintmark, as a supplementary mark. Although the M-alone mintmark continued concurrently with the new one, as demonstrated by coins minted after 1542.⁽¹⁾



Two 4 reales coins from Mexico's assayer G. Juan Gutiérrez, minted between 1542 and 1548. The coin to the left includes the addition of the lower-case "o" above the M (M), as mandated by the Viceregal order of 28 June 1542, whereas on the coin to the right, the M-alone mintmark remained unaltered. The use of both mintmarks continued concurrently with each other until the coins with the new design, mandated by the decree of 8 March 1570, were minted.

(Images courtesy of Bowers and Merena Auctions)

The City Council of Mexico, by 28 November 1542, had heard news of Spain's plan to institute a comprehensive administrative reform for its New World colonies, known today as the New Laws of 1542, for which they gave a commission to Francisco de Loaiza, *Oidor* of the *Audiencia*, and to Pedro Almindez Cherino, Overseer of Smelting (*Veedor de Fundiciones*), so that they could travel to Spain to react against Spain's new reform.⁽²⁾ The new laws, designed to ensure fairer treatment for the Indians, while weakening the King's more ambitious Spanish subjects, were in fact enacted, sparking serious resentment when the colonial authorities were notified.

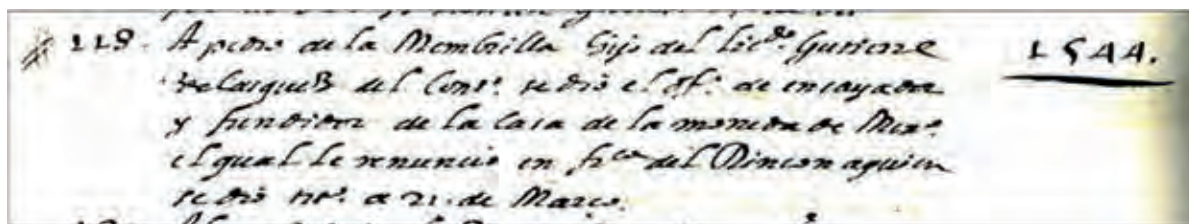
In 1543, it seems that Juan Gutiérrez's most recent tenure was coming to an end, for which Francisco de Loaiza, prior to his departure for Spain⁽³⁾ and while still holding the power of attorney to lease the office on behalf of Pedro de la Membrilla, attempted to lease the office to Francisco del Rincón, most likely the cousin of the first assayer by the same name.⁽⁴⁾ But this was not to be, as, according to Loaiza, the Viceroy of New Spain and the Treasurer of the mint rejected this lease, saying that they would not accept Francisco del Rincón for that office. No explanation is given for the rejection, but if we are talking about the cousin of the first assayer, this could have simply been due to a perceived inexperience in his skill.⁽⁵⁾ At the end, Francisco de Loaiza, saying that he did not want to leave the office vacant, agreed on 17 January 1543 to give the lease again to Juan Gutiérrez, for a period of two years to begin on 1 August 1543.

With the departure of Francisco de Loaiza from Mexico, a new representative had to be selected. This responsibility now fell on the newly appointed *Oidor* of the Mexican *Audiencia* Licentiate Hernando Gómez de Santillán,⁽⁶⁾ who, like his predecessor had done, under a new power of attorney drafted on 29 September 1543 in Valladolid, could appoint someone to this office, or, as an added provision, sell the office outright.⁽⁷⁾

With this power of attorney in hand Gómez de Santillán retained Juan Gutiérrez under lease, that is until a sale contract for 1,500 Pesos in mined gold (*Oro de Minas*),⁽⁸⁾ was initiated on 22 April 1544,⁽⁹⁾ with Juan Gutiérrez, as the primary holder, and Alonso de Villaseca,⁽¹⁰⁾ as his trustee (*fiador*). As part of this sale contract Juan Gutiérrez and Alonso de Villaseca paid

in silver a deposit valued at 750 Pesos worth of the mined gold, for which Gutiérrez Velázquez would then guarantee that he would send to Mexico, within a two-year time, the provision signed by the King naming Juan Gutiérrez as the owner of the office, or, if for some reason he was not approved for this office, he would then give him his deposit back. As an added provision of the sale, Juan Gutiérrez was told that while the provision was being signed the office would remain in the name of Pedro de la Membrilla and his administrator, Gutiérrez Velázquez, but that he would still be allowed to continue working the office without having to pay any rent.

Now, as this was going on in Mexico in 1544, in Spain the former first assayer of the mint, Francisco del Rincón, appeared before Gutiérrez Velázquez and persuaded him to sell the office of assayer and smelter owned by his son, Pedro de la Membrilla, for 550 ducats, claiming that it was not worth more than that, and that no one in Mexico would be willing to buy it.⁽¹¹⁾ But once news of the sale in Mexico arrived back in Spain, Gutiérrez Velázquez realized that Francisco del Rincón had deceived him. In fact, Gutiérrez Velázquez no longer had the title, which had already been transferred to Francisco del Rincón on 21 March 1544,⁽¹²⁾ and if he wanted to do business with Juan Gutiérrez, he now needed to first have the sale to Francisco del Rincón annulled and the title transferred back to his son, Pedro de la Membrilla.



Renunciation of the office of assayer and smelter by Gutiérrez Velázquez, on behalf of his son, Pedro de la Membrilla, to Francisco del Rincón: (Right margin) "1544" Transcript of central text: "A pedro de la Membrilla hijo del licenciado Gutiérrez Velasquez del Consejo se dio el oficio de ensayador y fundidor de la Casa de la moneda de Mexico el qual le renuncio en Francisco del Rincon a quien se dio titulo a 21 de Março."

Source: Document 9/5705, f. 353v - General Index of the papers of the Council of the Indies, Library of the Royal Academy of History, Madrid, Spain.

Based on the erroneous statement that Francisco del Rincón had purchased the office of assayer and smelter on 21 March 1543 (the correct year is 1544), the appearance of coins with an assayer mark R in Mexico around this time prompted some to attribute this mark to Francisco del Rincón (the first assayer of the mint), and others to his brother Alonso del Rincón, serving as his lieutenant.⁽¹³⁾ But, the shift in years from 1543 to 1544 has now made this attribution questionable. With Francisco del Rincón (the first assayer) remaining in Spain after the 1544 sale, at which time Alonso del Rincón, his brother, was exercising the post of die-sinker at the mint in Mexico, a fact that is fully documented in the Tello de Sandoval investigation of 1545, then the possibility remains that the identity of this assayer could then be that of Francisco del Rincón (their cousin).⁽¹⁴⁾ Although Francisco had been denied the post in 1543, his character had not come into question since he remained as a mint employee. By 1544 whatever objections prevented him from being ratified by the Treasurer and the Viceroy in 1543 might have been resolved, or it might just be that as a temporary replacement for Juan Gutiérrez, conceivably due to illness, his ability might have been considered good enough. In any case, with the current documentary evidence not providing any further clues to help confirm the identity of this official, I will retain Francisco del Rincón (the cousin of the first assayer) as a possible candidate.



*Late Series 4 reales coin minted in Mexico with the mark of assayer R
(Coin images courtesy of Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC)*

On 4 December 1544 Gutiérrez Velázquez, acting as the administrative representative of his son Pedro de la Membrilla, presented a complaint through Sebastián Rodríguez,⁽¹⁵⁾ Solicitor in the Council of the Indies (*Solicitador en el Consejo de las Indias*), claiming that although Francisco del Rincón had already paid 400 ducats of the 550 initially agreed upon under the premise that no one would pay more for it, he had now been made aware that the office was really worth 1,800 ducats,⁽¹⁶⁾ which clearly showed that the purchase had been done through fraud and deceit. On the same day a copy of Gutiérrez Velázquez' complaint was presented before the court, which ruled in favor of Pedro de la Membrilla. With this ruling, on 5 December, Prince Philip (*Felipe*), as Regent and on behalf of his father King Charles I of Spain,⁽¹⁷⁾ ordered that this decision be presented to Francisco del Rincón, who, from the date that he was made aware of it, directly or indirectly, was given 15 days to appear before the Council of the Indies in person or by proxy to present his arguments. As part of this ruling, Francisco del Rincón was given the option to take his deposit back from Diego de la Haya, Purser (*Cambio*) of the Court, and return the title that had been given to him, or to pay the additional money owed to bring the sale price now to the 1,800 ducats, the amount that the office was said to be worth. Failure to comply with the mandate to appear before the Council would result in the loss of his rights and the title to this office.⁽¹⁸⁾

The King's scribe, Juan de Lezcano, by request of Juan Lobo on behalf of Gutiérrez Velázquez, found Francisco del Rincón in Seville on 16 December, and served him with the summons in person. But by 2 January 1545 no answer had been received, so on 7 January del Rincón's default was registered in Valladolid⁽¹⁹⁾ and with the case closed, Pedro de la Membrilla received the office back a month later, on 7 February.⁽²⁰⁾

With the office now back in the hands of Pedro de la Membrilla, Gutiérrez Velázquez completed the sale to Juan Gutiérrez by transferring the office to its new owner. Juan Gutiérrez was ratified on 22 February 1545.⁽²¹⁾ But with slow communication between Spain and the Indies, we know that news of the ratification of this sale in Spain had not yet been received in Mexico by the time of the Tello de Sandoval investigation, as between 27 May and 15 July 1545, this office was still being reported as owned by Gutiérrez Velázquez or his son, Pedro de la Membrilla.⁽²²⁾

Juan Gutiérrez, as the owner of the post of assayer and smelter, had the right to appoint a lieutenant who could exercise the post on his behalf. But instead, he opted to continue working it himself. That is until, due to worsening indispositions ("*yndispusiciones que tiene las quales se le an rrecrecido*"), in late 1547 he realized that he needed help. Promptly, he sent a letter to Spain requesting for his brothers, Alonso Gutiérrez and Hernando de Peralta, to make the journey to Mexico so that they could assist him with the execution of the post of assayer.⁽²³⁾

The letter arrived in Juan Gutiérrez's hometown of Fuensalida (located near Toledo, Spain) around December 1547.⁽²⁴⁾ Preparations were quickly made by Alonso to travel to the city of Seville, where he was to deliver a bill of exchange (*una cédula de cambio*) sent with the letter and addressed to Francisco Gómez, a merchant from the city of Seville, so that he could give Alonso 50 ducats to assist with the expenses in preparations for the journey.

On 8 April 1548, having returned from Seville, Alonso Gutiérrez appeared before Cristóbal López, the Municipal Magistrate (*Alcalde Ordinario*) at Fuensalida, where, in front of the Scribe, Juan Alonso, and some witnesses he pleaded for the required permit needed to obtain the license to travel to New Spain. But, unable to present, as evidence, the letter from Juan Gutiérrez, which Alonso had left in Seville, the magistrate opted to conduct an examination, interviewing witnesses, before granting approval.⁽²⁵⁾ At the end Alonso Gutiérrez did get his approval, receiving his license to travel to Mexico in Seville on 7 May 1548.⁽²⁶⁾

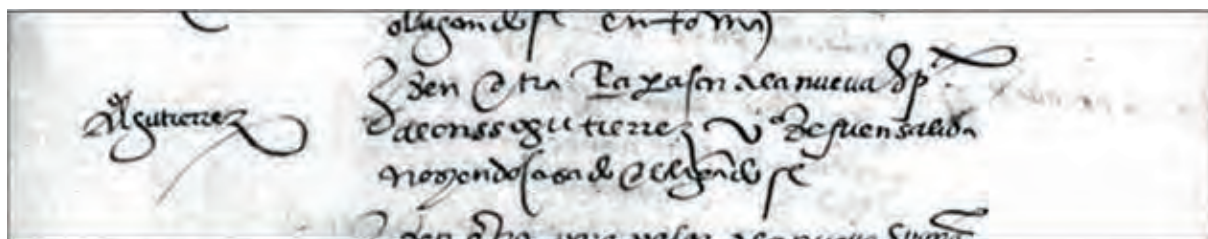


Image of the portion of the page from 7 May 1548 containing Alonso Gutiérrez's license to travel to New Spain. The text reads as follows: Left margin: "Alonso gutierrez" Central text: "I den otra Para pasar a la nueva España alonso gutierrez vecino de fuensalida no siendo Casado obligandose"

(Source: AGI: Indiferente, 1964, L. 10, F. 364R)

Although the date of Alonso's arrival in Mexico is currently not known, the appearance of coins in Mexico with an assayer-mark A at this precise time seems to indicate that his departure took place shortly after receiving his license; after all, the sole purpose of his trip was to assist his brother by taking on the post of assayer.⁽²⁷⁾



*Late Series 4 reales coin minted in Mexico with the mark of assayer A
Coin image courtesy of Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC)*

The involvement of assayer A should have been the solution so eagerly awaited by Juan Gutiérrez. But this was not to be the case. New unforeseen complications ("*justos ynpedimientos*") arose shortly after, and Juan Gutiérrez was left with no other choice than to renounce the office of assayer in favor of a more capable individual. And so it was that on 2 November 1548 Juan Gutiérrez initiates the transfer of the post of assayer in favor of Luis Rodríguez, a silversmith (*platero*) from Mexico and former assistant assayer at the foundry,⁽²⁸⁾ while still keeping the post of smelter under his control. Unknown at the time, the split of the posts of assayer and smelter into two separate offices would come into question at a later date, as it was said that these were considered one joint office, and not two separate ones.

Initial	Name	Began on	Left office on
R	Francisco del Rincón (?) (cousin of first assayer)	Probably in late 1544 (?)	Probably in late 1544 or early 1545 (?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner of the office: Juan Gutiérrez. Very brief interim replacement for assayer G, probably in late 1544 (?). 			
A	Alonso Gutiérrez	Fall of 1548	Before 8 Nov. 1548
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner of the office: Juan Gutiérrez. Arrives from Spain in the Fall of 1548 to assist his brother Juan. 			

Endnotes:

- (1) T. Dasí, *Estudio de los Reales de a Ocho* (Valencia, Spain, 1950), Vol. I, p. CCXXIII, No. 263. A Viceregal order from Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, dated in Mexico on 28 June 1542, ordered the mintage of 12,000 marcos in copper coins (or, as the document states: "*bellón sin ley de moneda*"). Among their design, it includes the use of the Mo mintmark variation for the first time, saying that the coins should have: "...una M devajo con una O encima del nombre de Mexico..."
- (2) G. Porras Muñoz, *La Fusión de la Factoría y la Veeduría de la Real Hacienda de México*. in *Memorias del III Congreso de Historia del Derecho Mexicano*. México 1984, pp. 535-536; S. Méndez Arceo, *La Real y Pontificia Universidad de México: antecedentes, tramitación y despacho de las reales cédulas de erección*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades, Centro de Estudios Sobre la Universidad, 1990, pp. 80-81.
- (3) Méndez Arceo (op. cit., n. 2). Francisco de Loaiza arrived in Spain in November 1543.
- (4) A. F. Pradeau, *Don Antonio de Mendoza y la Casa de Moneda de México en 1543*. Documentos inéditos publicados con prólogo y notas. Biblioteca Histórica Mexicana de Obras Inéditas No. 23, México, Antigua Librería Robredo, 1953, pp. 90-95; Archivo General de Indias ("AGI"), Justicia, 277, N.5.. The lease given to Juan Gutiérrez on 17 January 1543, with Alonso de Villaseca as his trustee, explains that the initial intent was to give this lease to a Francisco del Rincón. But, since the Viceroy of New Spain and the Treasurer of the mint did not approve him for this office, it was instead being given to Juan Gutiérrez, as not to leave the office vacant. At no point does the document say that these are events taking place in 1538. What has created this

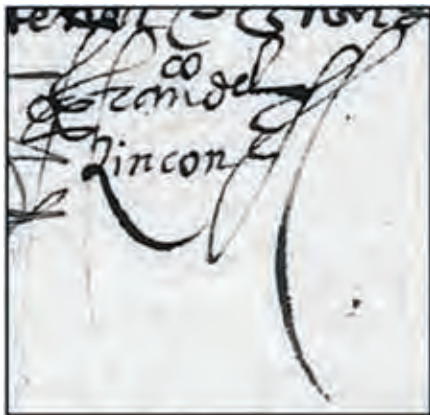
confusion is that as part of the legal process, Licentiate Francisco de Loaiza presented a copy, verbatim, of his 1538 power of attorney, and the rest is history.

- (5) I say that his inexperience might have just been a perception of the Viceroy's and Treasurer's, as Francisco del Rincón, the cousin of the first assayer, had previously served as smelter of the mint, serving side-by-side with his cousin, and could have very well had the required skills and knowledge to serve as assayer himself. For more on this see Pradeau (op. cit., n. 4)
- (6) R. Martínez Baracs, *Convivencia y utopia. El gobierno indio y español de la "ciudad de Mechuacan" 1521-1580*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005, p. 253; M. León-Portilla, *Códice de Coyacán – Nómina de Tributos, siglo XVI*; Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl, Volumen IX, 1971, publicación eventual del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, p. 63; AGI: Contratación, 5787, N. 1, L. 4, F. 123r-124r. Hernando Gómez de Santillán was appointed on 1 March 1543 as replacement for another *Oidor*, Alonso Maldonado.
- (7) Gómez de Santillán (erroneously called Rodrigo) was previously thought to be assayer S. It seems that since Gómez de Santillán was given a power of attorney similar to that given to Francisco de Loaiza at an earlier date, it was believed that he could have worked the office himself, temporarily, while making the proper arrangements to transfer the office back to assayer G. But, not only do the coins of assayer S demonstrate that they were minted much later than previously believed, but Gómez de Santillán was a government official executing specific judicial duties and not a mint employee or an assayer for that matter.
- (8) The *Oro de Minas* was worth 450 maravedis per peso, whereas each ducat was equivalent to 375 maravedis. This makes 1,500 pesos in *Oro de Minas* equivalent to 1,800 ducats.
- (9) Pradeau (op. cit., n. 4), pp. 99-103; AGI, (op. cit., n. 4.)
- (10) Alonso de Villaseca, as Juan Gutiérrez's trustee at the moment that the office was bought, had previously been proposed as a possible candidate for assayer A. But, not only does the Tello de Sandoval investigation clearly dismiss this idea, describing Alonso de Villaseca as a merchant who was bringing silver to the mint, but new information now shows that Juan Gutiérrez later called on his brother Alonso Gutiérrez, so that he could take on the post of assayer.
- (11) AGI: Justicia, 1008. This document states: "...francisco del rincon vecino dela dicha çiudad de mexico vino al dicho mi parte a le persuadir que le vendiese el dicho ofçio de fundidor y ensayador y afirmandole que no avía alla quien le comprase y que no valía mas de quinientos y çinquenta ducados..." AGI, México. 169. N. 6. Letter to the King from Gutierre Velázquez, on behalf of his son, renouncing the post of assayer and smelter and requesting that this be transferred to Francisco del Rincón. Although this letter is undated, it is clearly drafted in connection with the 1544 sale, to ensure the issuance of the new title in Francisco del Rincón's name; event which we know to have taken place on 21 March 1544.
- (12) R. I. Nesmith, *The Coinage of the First Mint of the Americas at Mexico City 1536- 1572*, Reprint of original published in 1955 by the American Numismatic Society as Numismatic Notes and Monographs #131, Rockville Centre, NY, 2001, pp. 18-19 (and footnote 27); *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de Ultramar*, Segunda Series publicada por acuerdo de la Real Academia de la Historia, Tomo XVIII, V Consejo de Indias, Madrid, Spain, 1925, p. 65. Nesmith, who is said to have found the date of purchase of the office by Francisco del Rincón in the General Index of the papers in the Library of the Royal Academy of History, Madrid, Spain, erroneously documented this as occurring in 1543. In fact I have been able to examine the original of this General Index and the correct year is 1544. This is something that had been correctly published in 1925, when the Academy published its Index as part of the *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de Ultramar*. The entry on the original of this Index, which corresponds to document 9/5705, f. 353v, states the following: (right margin) "1544" - (text): "A pedro de la Membrilla hijo del licenciado Gutierre Velasquez del Consejo se dio el oficio de ensayador y fundidor de la Casa de la moneda de Mexico el qual le renuncio en francisco del Rincon a quien se dio titulo a 21 de Março."
- (13) Kent Ponterio (personal communication, 2 September 2014). With no contemporary source that provides the year of mintage of the assayer R coins, I have relied on the direct observations of numismatic expert Kent Ponterio, to tentatively place their year of mintage in 1544. Kent Ponterio, who has studied these coins for many years, shared the following observations: "generally the crown used on top of the pillars for most R coinage is not used for A. The crowns are similar to some of the coins that fit into the middle of the late series G coinage." Also: "stylistically the coins of R fit into a similar era as those of assayer A, but the planchet manufacture is not as good. In my opinion, the peak of planchet manufacture occurs during the time of the Tello de Sandoval investigation. This is when you get really well-made coins on fully round and broad planchets." Taking Kent Ponterio's observation, I immediately narrowed down the years of production to somewhere between 1542 and 1545, or somewhere between the times when the pillars and waves design started to be minted and the start of the Tello de Sandoval investigation. Furthermore, the difference in design in the crown above the pillars between the coins of assayer R and those of assayer A, further helped to narrow down their date of mintage. Since this is a die-sinker variation, and we know that Francisco del Rincón replaced his cousin Alonso as die-sinker in February of 1545, and he was still serving as die-sinker at the time that the coins of assayer A were minted; therefore, I suggest that the dies for assayer R could have been produced during the tenure of Alonso del Rincón (1542-1545), which might explain the difference. Now, since Kent Ponterio

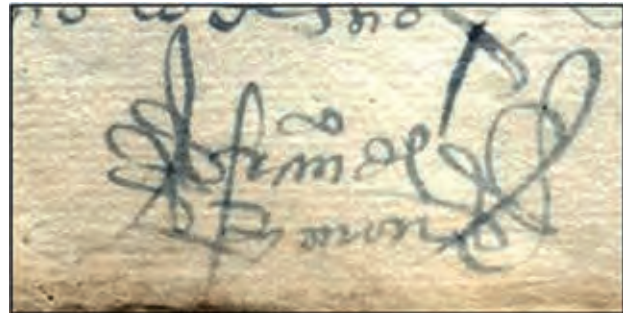
also noticed that the coins of assayer R fit around the middle of assayer G's tenure, and that their style is similar in era to that of assayer A, then we can say that the dies for assayer R must then have been produced during the later years of work of die-sinker Alonso del Rincón. Now, since the Tello de Sandoval investigation mentions that Juan Gutiérrez, serving as assayer, was present at the mint on 9 August 1544 and 17 February 1545, and we also know that the transfer of the office of die-sinker from Alonso del Rincón to his cousin Francisco took place in February 1545, then I suggest that assayer R might have worked sometime between August 1544 and February 1545.

Kent Ponterio (personal communication, 1 September 2014). It should also be noted that the existence of 4 reales with L over R (over assayer-mark) have been documented. At this time this appears to be more of a curious anomaly, rather than anything else. As Kent Ponterio explains: "...it is one sole die that was recut by assayer L (i.e. sort of a one-off, although 4-5 examples exist.)"

- (14) Nesmith (op. cit., n. 12), p. 25 (and footnote 44a). According to Nesmith, there was evidence that Francisco del Rincón was in Chachapoyas, Peru, in December 1544. Nesmith states that this conclusion is based on a document from the Harkness Collection, Library of Congress, manuscripts Nos. 1195 and 1196, where he said that: "(t)he signature on this document is identical with that of Del Rincón on the TSI [Tello de Sandoval Investigation] papers." If true, it would not have been possible for Francisco del Rincón to have served as the Mexican assayer R at virtually the same time. But comparison of the signature of Francisco del Rincón from the Harkness Collection Peruvian document with the signature of Francisco del Rincón (the Mexican Mint official) from the Tello de Sandoval investigation, just six months later, conclusively establishes that they are not the same person. The "Francisco del Rincón" working as the manager of mines in Peru in 1544 is not our Mexican die-sinker and perhaps assayer. We present the two signatures side-by-side for comparison. Careful inspections show that every letter is formed differently in the two signatures. Look especially at the F's and R's and the word "del". The superscript above "Fran" resembles a (sloppily drawn) mathematical symbol for infinity on the Peruvian signature, while our Francisco executes a tight, sharp "co". The elaborate flourishes to the left and right of the signature, which writers of this period practiced to deter the forging of their name, do not resemble one another at all.



*Signature of Francisco del Rincón
(AGI: Justicia, 277, N. 5: Tello de
Sandoval Investigation)*

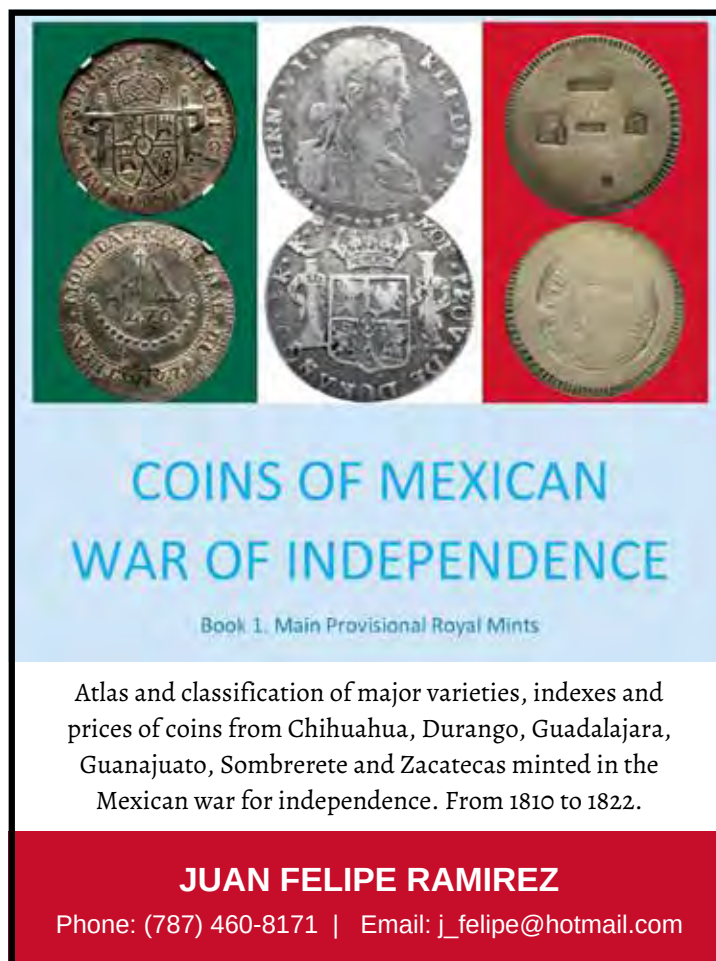


*Signature of a different Francisco del
Rincón (Document 1196 from the Harkness
Collection, Library of Congress)*

- (15) AGI: Justicia, (op. cit., n. 11). The letter from Gutiérrez Velázquez procuring the services of Sebastián Rodríguez is dated in Valladolid on 3 December 1544.
- (16) This was equivalent to the 1,500 pesos in *Oro de Minas* that Juan Gutiérrez had agreed to pay for this office. (For more on this see endnote no. 8.)
- (17) Archivo General de Simancas ("AGS"): PTR, Leg. 26, Docs. 67-78 and 83-88. Departing Spain in 1543, King Charles I of Spain named his son Prince Philip as his Spanish Regent under orders signed in Barcelona on 1 May 1543. Philip, the future king of Spain, remained as Regent between 1543 and 1548.
- (18) AGI: Justicia, (op. cit., n. 11)
- (19) AGI, (ibid, n. 18)
- (20) *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista, y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de Ultramar*, (op. cit., n. 12), p. 66; Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia, Índice General de los Papeles del Consejo de Indias, document 9/5705, f. 353v. The entry on the original of the General Index of the papers in the Library of the Royal Academy of History, Madrid, Spain, states the following: (right margin) "1545" - (text): "El oficio de Ensayador y fundidor q el licenciado Gutierre Velasquez renuncio d Pedro de la Membrilla su hijo en francisco del Rincon este le bolvio a renunciar en el

dicho Pedro de la Membrilla al qual se dio titulo a 7 de febrero y luego el dicho lic. Gutierre Velasquez le bolvio a renunciar en Juan Gutierrez y se le dio titulo a 22 de febrero."

- (21) *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista, y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de Ultramar*, (op. cit., n. 12); Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia, (ibid, n. 20). The entry in the *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista, y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de Ultramar*, when compared to the original, has one error in that it should say 22 February, rather than 20.
- (22) Pradeau (op. cit., n. 4), p. 53; AGI, (op. cit., n. 4). During the Tello de Sandoval investigation, the following was recorded: "*El (oficio de ensayador de la dicha casa / dixo que es del licenciado gutierre velazquez /o de su hijo / E que al presente . lo usa Juan gutierrez Ensayador por Renunçiaçion q en el hizo El liçenciado gomez de santillana /oydor desta Real abdiencia en nonbre y con poder del dicho licenciado gutierrez Valazquez E q primero antes de la dicha Renunçiaçion lo tubo por aRendamiento el dicho Juan gutierrez...*" (Transcript from the original.)
- (23) AGI, Indiferente, 2048. N. 16.
- (24) AGI, (ibid, n. 23)
- (25) AGI, (ibid, n. 23)
- (26) AGI: Indiferente, 1964, L. 10, F. 364r.
AGI, México 205. N. 27. Testimonies provided in this proceeding from early 1559 further confirm the arrival of Alonso Gutiérrez in Mexico around mid-1548, as one of the questions asked, for which a number of witnesses were able to confirm that it was true, was if they knew that it had been more than 22 years since Juan Gutiérrez had arrived in Mexico, and more than 10 years for Alonso Gutiérrez (this as of April 1559). To this, the original document states the following: "...dicho Juan gutierrez A mas de veynte y dos años que vino a esta nueva spaña y el dicho alonso gutierrez mas de diez..."
- (27) J. Olivella Gener, *Karolvs et Iohana. Carlos y Juana. La Ceca de México 1536-1557*, 2010, pp. 8 and 46, available at: <http://ebookbrowse.net/karolvs-et-iohanna-1536-1557-pdf-d145308411>.
It is important to mention that Mr. Joan Olivella in 2010 proposed that assayer A could be Alonso Gutiérrez, saying: "I believe that the letter 'A' corresponds to Alonso Gutiérrez, brother of Juan Gutiérrez... According to the document ES.41091. AGI/1.16403.13.205//MEXICO,205,N.27 from the General Archive of the Indies, it describes that Alonso Gutiérrez took the office by resignation of his brother Juan Gutiérrez, more than twenty days before he died." ("Yo creo que la letra 'A' corresponde a Alonso Gutiérrez, hermano de Juan Gutiérrez... Según el documento ES.41091.AGI/1.16403.13.205// MEXICO,205,N.27 del Archivo General de Indias, se describe que Alonso Gutiérrez asume el cargo por renuncia de su hermano Juan Gutiérrez más de veinte días antes de morir.") But, Mr. Olivella, who at the time only transcribed small portions of the front page of this 1559 document, had hoped that this document would be the key to unlocking this mystery; a fact that he acknowledged by saying: "with time and patience this transcript will be finished, and we will see if the office of assayer and smelter was awarded to him." ("Con tiempo y paciencia se acabará esta trascripción, y veremos si se le concedió el oficio de Ensayador y de Fundidor") In fact, this is not the case as the document mentioned by Mr. Olivella has nothing to do with the office of assayer, and only pertains to the office of smelter, which was the only office still being held by Juan Gutiérrez at the moment of his death.
- (28) AGI: México, 209, N. 58. A portion of Esteban Franco's testimony, dated 14 January 1568, states: "...luis Rodriguez estuvo en compañía deste testigo en la casa de la fundiçion desta çiudad de mexico donde le ayudava y hera y heran Conpañeros y despues a thenydo el oficio de la casa de la moneda desta çiudad sirbiendo en ella de ensaydor e a puesto thenyente por sus enfermedades..."



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China: People's Republic brass Proof
Pattern Panda "Temple of Heaven" 100
Yuan 1982
PR69 Ultra Cameo NGC



China: Kwangtung, Kuang-hsü Specimen
10 Cents (7-3/10 Candareens) ND (1889)
SP64 PCGS



China: Republic Sun Yat-sen
"Lower Five-Pointed Stars" Dollar ND
(1912)
MS65 PCGS



China: Republic Li Yuan-hung
Dollar ND (1912)
MS62 PCGS



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RARITY SUMMARY BY MINT OF MEXICAN REPUBLIC ½ REALES

by William Sigl



1855 DoCP is a Very Rare coin in an exceptional grade, which is missing from most advanced collections

SERIES OVERVIEW

The 'Facing Eagle' variety of Mexican Republic ½ reales was produced from 1825 thru 1869, and was a replacement for the 'Hookneck Eagle' variety which had only been produced in 1824. The challenge of collecting 'Facing Eagle' ½ reales is undeniable, as there are a large number of hidden rarities and even more grade rarities. Those collectors who focus their attention on the series for a good number of years will ultimately be rewarded with a collection that is worthy of deep admiration.

'Facing Eagle' half reales were struck at 11 mints (12 if you count Alamos). Each mint struck half reales for a different subset of dates during this period. Republic ½ reales were made of .903 fine silver, and were supposed to weigh 1.69 grams. Mexican mints at this time were run for a profit, and production of half reales was an unprofitable (but mandated) denomination to produce. Due to this, quality control in the production of half reales was substandard, and as a result the weight of uncirculated half reales tended to vary slightly from coin to coin. It should be noted that the silver content and weight for Iturbide, 'Hookneck', and 'Facing Eagle' Republic ½ reales were all the same as was the case for earlier portrait Spanish Colonial ½ reales.

CURRENT MARKET CONDITIONS

Collector interest in 'Facing Eagle' half reales appears to have peaked around the time the Len Novotny collection was auctioned by Ponterio in March 2011. Since then collectors seem to have gravitated to other areas, leaving prices to drift downward slightly. A slabbed BU that may have brought \$200 in 2011 would probably bring only \$150 today. This is normal in many of the Republic series.

Many of the most active Republic of Mexico collectors enjoy the dynamics of competing with friends who also collect the same series. 'Action', 'Competition', and 'thrill of the hunt' are the motivators for these collectors. This is a relatively new style of collecting, and such collectors today represent a significant and growing portion of the market. This is the reason that today we see very noticeable and dramatic swings in popularity (and price) in certain series from year to year. At one point in time groups of collectors all want to collect one series, and then when choice pieces can no longer be easily found (due to the underlying rarity of most Republic minor series), they lose interest and renew collecting another series.

Collectors' interest cycles thru the various series over the decades. Ten years ago it was almost impossible to find a buyer for any coin from the decimal series (5 centavos thru 50 centavos), everyone wanted coins from the real series (¼ real thru 4 reales). Now it is hard to find an active collector of any of the real series. I suspect that very soon interest will return, as it always does.

INFORMATION VACUUM

New collectors of ½ reales are at a tremendous disadvantage because unlike experienced collectors, they rely heavily on the misleading information in current price guides. It is very difficult for new collectors to have courage to effectively compete with advanced collectors for choice ½ reales. Scarce and rare coins are often unrecognized by new collectors. When alerted to a coin's true rarity by the seller, most new collectors lack the confidence to pay a fair price because it may be many times what the price guide lists for it.

Advanced collectors of the series have a great advantage over new collectors because in many instances they possess detailed notes from years of observation. When questions arise, the advanced collectors have a good network of fellow collectors whose knowledge can be tapped.

In this article I will give you the benefit of the 20 years spent by me observing and taking notes on the 'Facing Eagle' ½ reales.

DETAILED RARITY BY DAM, WITH GRADE RARITY ESTIMATES

Rarity is not currently well recognized. Most collectors assume that coins from certain mints are rarer than others, thus deserving of a higher price. Given the same rarity, a Date/Assayer/Mint (DAM) from Guadalupe y Calvo will sell for more than a DAM from Zacatecas. Variable prices based on rarity are reasonable, but only if data on relative mint rarity is accurate.

I have produced a supplement to this article that lists each DAM in the series and gives a detailed rarity estimate based on grade. If you are a collector of ½ reales, or wish to be, send me an email at

os2guy1@gmail.com

and I will send you back the detailed rarity supplement via email.

There are many varieties, especially in the early DAMs. Some varieties may be rare, even though the normal DAM is common. For the sake of simplicity, the DAM supplement does not address rarity of varieties.

MINT NOTES

Where possible, I reveal the following information about the coins produced by each mint:

- 1) Number of DAMs produced, and the regularity of production
- 2) Number of common DAMs for the mint
- 3) Rarity estimation for the mint's coins
- 4) Strike quality by date range
- 5) Engraving quality
- 6) Available varieties
- 7) Availability of high-grade coins
- 8) Number of assayers.

Knowing relative rarity and various quirks from mint to mint will allow new collectors to more accurately determine which coins to buy, and which may be worth paying a premium for. They will be better armed to compete with other collectors for good pieces that may seem overpriced, but in reality are not.

I recommend printing out my notes on each mint and adding them to the data you use in making coin purchase decisions.

Alamos

The only date for this mint is 1862. All examples from this date are supposedly contemporary counterfeits, which does not matter much because they are Extremely Rare (XR). I have never seen one, but would still love one in my collection.

Chihuahua

Two DAMs were produced at this mint (1844 and 1845), and both are rare. Prices are far higher than the rarity alone would justify because of demand from mint type collectors (Prices are always higher for coins from mints that produced for very few years).

A type collector looking for a high-grade example from this mint would have to settle for an 1844 in XF. Be prepared to pay \$3,000 or more for such an example. In 2007 a few high-grade examples, previously unknown, appeared on the market. It may be another decade before they reappear for sale.

No varieties were produced for either of these two dates. The dies appear to have come from the Guanajuato mint as all have Soho design features. Coincidentally, by 1844 Guanajuato was well on its way to phasing out use of the Soho dies. (Soho dies refer to the design produced in England in 1835 for the Guanajuato mint. In addition to producing the design, it is also widely believed that at the time Guanajuato illegally smuggled hundreds of English made Soho dies into Mexico.)

Great strikes and high quality engraving make high-grade examples beautiful to look at. The trouble is most collectors will never see one available for sale from this mint.

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Culiacán

There was intermittent production of ½ reales in Culiacán. Between 1846 and 1869 there were only 15 DAMs produced. Intermittent production is usually an indicator of scarcity among its products, and such is the case here. Four of these dates are common, and coins from this mint can generally be considered Scarce.

It would be easy for a type collector to obtain an example of a Culiacán ½ real in high grade, but most dates are rarely if ever seen in high grade. Chances are good that if you have any Culiacán ½ reales they are dated 1860 or 1861.

Very few of the BU examples are spectacular looking, having subdued luster, and weak strikes. Strike quality is usually low to moderate, caused by weak striking pressure and rust damaged dies. Engraving quality of the dies and punches was generally very good.

Many DAMS have varieties, but few of them command a high premium. Some of the overdates from this mint are among the most obvious overdates possible, with no attempt to hide the old date. This mint never had a major style change. If it were not for the scarcity of coins from Culiacán and the audacious overdates, there are mints that are more fun to collect.

There were two assay initials used during this time by Culiacán (CE and PV), but no dates have more than one assayer.

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Durango

There was intermittent production of ½ reales in Durango. Between 1832 and 1869 there were only 28 DAMs produced. None of the Durango ½ reales are common, and coins from this mint can generally be considered Very Scarce.

The strike quality is low in the 1830s and most of the 1840s. The main problems are twofold:

- 1) the low relief of the Paris dies,
- 2) low striking pressure.

I suspect that they had acquired dies directly from Paris in 1832, and were never resupplied with more. Running the presses at low pressure was their attempt to preserve the dies. The low strike pressure is probably responsible for the unusually high proportion of low-grade coins from this mint, as their ½ reales wore out prematurely. Engraving quality of the dies and punches was generally very good.

It would be very challenging for a type collector to obtain an example of a Durango ½ real in BU, as only a handful or so BU examples exist. Most dates are rarely seen even in XF. Later date BU examples can have spectacular appearances. I have an 1864 in MS64 that is stunning to look at, but the cost was several thousand dollars.

Most DAMS have numerous varieties. There are so many varieties that few of them command a high premium. Overdating was so common in the 1840s that for some of the dates it is difficult to identify them without pictures of other coins of the same date.

There were five assay initials used in the production of ½ reales by Durango (RL, RM, JMR, CP, and LT). Coins with the RL assay initials were probably struck in Paris, and sent to Mexico as sales samples. Coins with the JMR assay initials sell at a substantial premium. Coins using two different sets of assay initials were struck in only two years.

Again, refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Estado de México

This mint produced coins for three years, but ½ reales were only produced in 1829. Due to demand from type collectors, and the coin's rarity, ½ reales from Estado de México are extremely expensive. This mint was owned by the state of Mexico, and was mere miles away from the Federal mint in Mexico City. The mint was closed prematurely by the state because it was losing money.

The strike quality is high, but for most people that does not matter because they are generally only available in Good or Very Good condition. AU grade examples exist, but are Very Rare and very highly sought after.

The single DAM has no varieties that I have ever seen.

Guadalajara

Guadalajara was a consistent producer of ½ reales, missing production in only 1827, 1833 and 1836. Between 1825 and 1862 there were 39 DAMs produced. Only four of the Guadalajara DAMs are common, and coins from this mint can generally be considered Scarce to Very Scarce.

The strike quality for Guadalajara is great during the 1820s, 1830s and the first half of the 1840s. Starting in 1848 thru 1862 there were problems with rusty dies. High-grade examples from this period do not have cap or eagle breast details, only raised dots from rust pits.



1825 GaFS is one of the few early dates from this mint that can be found in high grade

It is easy for a type collector to obtain an example of a Guadalajara ½ real in BU, but the date will most likely be 1860 or 1861. The only high-grade DAM possible to get in the 1820s would be 1825. BU examples from the 1820s and 1830s exist, but I have never been offered one for sale. Even XF or AU coins from this period are Rare to Very Rare. It is not until the 1840s where BU examples can be found by the dedicated collector with average connections in the Mexican collecting community. My sincere advice to people wanting to pursue ½ reales collecting is to never pass up purchasing ANY high-grade Guadalajara example unless it is an 1860 or 1861.

Guadalajara varieties are numerous, mostly consisting of overdates and mid-year cap design changes. Unusually, some of the varieties that command the greatest premium are a few of the DAMs that do not have an overdate that year.

There were four assay initials used in the production of ½ reales by Guadalajara (FS, LP, JG and MC). Coins with the LP assay initials were only struck in 1831, and are VERY VERY RARE. Anyone trying to collect one coin from each assayer would probably NEVER get an LP example. Coins were struck four years using two different assay initials.

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Guadalupe y Calvo

Guadalupe y Calvo was a consistent producer of ½ reales during its short run from 1844 thru 1851. The collector community is confused about rarity from this mint, thinking that all dates are equally scarce. Despite this, the more available dates from this mint sell at a significant premium from what their actual availability would justify. My experience would lead me to believe that the 1845 and 1847 are the most available. Several of the other dates are far more difficult to acquire than are commonly thought. Coins from this mint can generally be considered Very Scarce. As with most of the other mints, ½ reales do not exist in as great a number as do 1 reales.

The strike quality for Guadalupe y Calvo is less than good. High-grade examples that I have seen exhibit weak cap and eagle breast details, indicating the use of lower pressure on the presses. In 1849 there appeared to be a small problem with rusty dies, but I do not see that in later years. Engraving and sinking of the number and letter punches seems to be a bit cruder than for the main mints.

It would be almost impossible for a type collector to obtain an example of a Guadalupe y Calvo ½ real in BU, but a small number of the dates are available in XF or possibly AU. A few BU examples do exist, appearing at auction every five to ten years.

As far as I know, there are only two varieties (both overdates) from this mint. These are generally worth buying if you ever see one, but at present do not command a premium.

There was only one assay initial used in the production of ½ reales by Guadalupe y Calvo (MP).

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Guanajuato

There was uninterrupted production of ½ reales in Guanajuato. The only break in production was during the years of Maximilian's reign, when the country produced decimal coinage. Between 1826 and 1868 there were 44 DAMs produced. As a rule of thumb, mints that have uninterrupted production of a series will usually produce coins in vast quantities. Of the Guanajuato ½ reales, 29 DAMs are common. Despite the number of common DAMs, ½ reales are probably only half as numerous as the 1 reales or 2 reales from Guanajuato for the same dates. Coins from this mint can generally be considered Uncommon.

The strike quality from 1826 thru 1843 was good. A surprising number of higher-grade example coins, even though in only XF condition, still have full details on the caps and eagle's breast. This is mostly lost on today's collectors because very few coins higher than XF still exist, except for just a few dates. Starting in 1844 and 1845 there were problems of low strike pressure and rusty dies. The Guanajuato eagle struck from 1844 to 1853 is especially beautiful if you can ever find an example fully struck. Such examples should command a significant premium, but today do not. Starting again in 1850 thru 1858 strike quality vastly deteriorated due to rusty and eroded dies. BU coins from this period are relatively available, but really well struck coins are scarce. Examples from 1859 thru 1868 are usually well struck.

Engraving quality from 1826 thru 1836 was poor. Once they started using the Soho dies in mid 1835 thru 1844, engraving quality was excellent but that is because most of the dies were made in England. Engraving quality after 1844 was far better than in the early years of the mint. In the last decade of production engraving was on par with Mexico City.

It is pretty easy for a type collector to obtain an example of a Guanajuato ½ real in BU, mainly because of the availability of the 1838, and the later 1850s and 1860s. Many BU coins from 1838 are stunning in appearance if they have not been cleaned, but those from the 1850s and 1860s often do not have an exceptional appearance. There are FAR FEWER BU examples from Guanajuato than there are from Mexico City.

Guanajuato is by far the most exciting of the mints to collect by DAM and variety!!! The number of years with multiple assayers, midyear design changes, and numerous varieties are unmatched in the series. Many of the varieties sell for large or small premiums, but most of the overdates do not. The thrill of the hunt for Guanajuato varieties cannot be overstated!



This is one of the most interesting and rare varieties of the series. Note the reversed 'N' in 'MEXICANA'

The five DAMS that have engraving errors all sell for a very high premium.

1829 reversed 'N' in 'MEXICANA'

1831 'II' in 'REPUBIIICA'

1832 'II' in 'REPUBIIICA'

1834 '10Ds 0Gs'

1839 'REPUBLIGA'

There were an amazing eight assay initial combinations used in the production of ½ reales by Guanajuato (MJ, JG, MR, PJ, PM, PF, YE and YF). Coins were struck in three years using two different assay initial combinations, and in 1828 three different assayer combinations were used.

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Hermosillo

There was very sporadic production of ½ reales in Hermosillo, caused by its late authorization to mint silver and the break in production during the years of Maximilian's reign, when the country produced decimal coinage. Between 1839 and 1867 there were only three DAMs produced. 1839 is generally considered to be a contemporary counterfeit, but due to its rarity it does not matter much to collectors. If I were offered the coin I would buy it. Half reales from Hermosillo can generally be considered rare. Far more 1 reales from this mint were produced than ½ reales.

The strike quality was good, but does not matter much since only low-grade coins can usually be found. A type collector would stand virtually NO CHANCE of ever acquiring a high-grade example from Hermosillo. Even many of the low-grade examples are pierced or damaged. If you could ever locate an example in VF, buy it without hesitation. My highest-grade example is in VF, but it has a hole at the top.

Engraving quality of the letter and number punches was very crude. These resulted in several varieties in 1867. Dies with the central design must have come from Culiacán because these features are well engraved.

There were three assay initial combinations used in the production of ½ reales by Hermosillo (PP, FM and PR). Again, refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Mexico City

There was nearly uninterrupted production of ½ reales in Mexico City. The only break in production was 1837. Between 1825 and 1863 there were 42 DAMs produced. Of the Mexico City ½ reales, 35 DAMs are common. Overall, coins from this mint can generally be considered Common.

The strike quality from 1826 thru 1838 was excellent. All higher-grade examples exhibit full details on the caps and eagle's breast. This is surprising given that the design in this period had a pretty high relief, which points to high striking pressure. Starting in 1839 thru 1844 there were sporadic problems of minor rust on the dies, but the strike pressure continued to be pretty good. Starting in 1845 there was a slight design change where the eagle and cap had a lower relief. From 1845 onward, it is relatively more uncommon to see full details on the cap and eagle. In the future fully struck BU examples from 1845 thru 1863 may command a slight premium. Starting again from 1854 thru 1860 there were sporadic problems with minor rust on the dies.

Engraving quality from Mexico City was Good to Excellent. The only imperfections I have seen are periodic repunched numbers or letters, and punching the letters and numbers in a nonperfect arch.

BU examples of Mexico City ½ reales are more widely available for most DAMs than is the case for coins from any mint for any of the 1, 2, or 4 reales. It is very easy for a type collector to obtain an example of a Mexico City ½ real in BU. There must have been numerous small hoards of ½ reales surfacing over the decades for so many dates to be still available in high grade.

I would highly recommend trying to assemble a collection of each of the Mexico City DAM in high grade (XF to BU). This is the only mint and the only denomination in all of the Republic era where such a collection would be possible for dedicated collectors. Granted that some of the dates are not available in BU, but you could still choose a well struck XF or AU. It took me over ten years to acquire every DAM in high grade from Mexico City in my collection. I do not believe it would be significantly more difficult today since many inexperienced collectors try to buy only the highest MS grades possible, rather than having an eye for condition rarities below MS60.

Mexico City has a moderate number of varieties, mainly due to short die life in the 1820s and early 1830s, and periodic mid-year style changes. If you want a challenge, try collecting 1825 and 1826 Mo half reales by die variety. It would be inexpensive and very enjoyable. I tried this and found close to 30 different dies from each date. Since many current collectors consider this a boring mint, most varieties currently sell for little to no premium.

Mexico City takes the record for the mint with the greatest number of different assay initial combinations used in the production of ½ reales. There were 11 different combinations used (JM, MJ, ML, MM, MF, RC, GC, GF, FH, TH and CH). Coins were struck in four years using two different assay initial combinations. In years where multiple assayers produced coins, there is a higher probability that one or more of them will be uncommon to rare.

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

San Luis Potosí

San Luis Potosí was a consistent producer of ½ reales, after its ten-year halt in production from 1832 thru 1840. From 1831 thru 1863 there were 29 DAMs produced. The number of DAMs from this mint was high mainly because of the number of years with more than one assayer combination. Only two of the San Luis Potosí DAMs are common. Coins from this mint can generally be considered Rare, mainly due to the large number of great rarities from this mint, and the small number of common and uncommon DAMs.

The strike quality for San Luis Potosí coins is very high during the entire production run. If you ever get a BU example from this mint, it will be beautiful with frosty cap and eagle on most examples.

It is possible for a type collector to obtain an example of a San Luis Potosí ½ real in BU mainly because of a hoard of BU coins from the early and mid-1850s that is now widely disbursed among collectors. The only high-grade DAMs possible to get in this series are from this period. BU examples from 1831 exist, but none have ever been offered to me. BU examples from the 1840s may exist, but I have never been offered one for sale. Even XF or AU coins from this period are Rare to Very Rare. It is possible to get high-grade examples from the 1860s but at a much higher price.

There are a moderate number of San Luis Potosí varieties, mostly consisting of overdates, over-assayers, and mint superscripts. Owing to the rarity of the average DAM, varieties usually do not command much of a premium.

There were five assay initial combinations used in the production of ½ reales by San Luis Potosí (JS, PS, AM, MC and RO). In 1842, 1843, 1857, 1858 and 1862 there were two combinations of assayer initials used. Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

Zacatecas

There was uninterrupted production of ½ reales in Zacatecas. The only break in production was during the years of Maximilian's reign, when the country produced decimal coinage. Between 1826 and 1869 there were 43 DAMs produced.

As a rule of thumb, mints that have uninterrupted production of a series will usually produce coins in vast quantities, but here is an anomaly. Half reales from Zacatecas are almost unobtainable compared to its other minor denominations. A possible reason for this scarcity was proposed to me in a conversation with Dave Busse about ten years ago. He said many of the Zacatecas ½ reales were slightly overweight by his measurements, and he accounted for their scarcity due to melting at the time by people who wanted to make a bit of money.

Only five of the Zacatecas ½ reales are common. Overall, coins from this mint can generally be considered Scarce to Very Scarce. At the current time very few people are aware of this and the prices do not adequately reflect their scarcity.



Early dates from Zacatecas in high grade are a rare find. Note the full detail on cap and eagle despite only being in XF condition

The strike quality from Zacatecas was good. There does not seem to be a problem with striking pressure on the vast majority of high-grade examples I have seen. I see no evidence of rusty dies except in 1869. It is likely the case that after 1863, with a five-year period without use, they let the half real dies deteriorate.

Engraving quality was always average or less, especially in the early years thru 1836 when the punches were sometimes pretty crude. There is an interesting feature with the production from 1860 thru 1863, when the assayer was 'VL'. In every instance that I have seen the 'V' is always an upside down 'A', showing a reluctance to invest in punches when needed.

It is possible for a type collector to obtain an example of a Zacatecas ½ real in BU, mainly because of the availability of 1860 ZsVL and 1869 ZsYH examples. BU examples of other dates are very difficult to find. You would have to build a lot of relationships among fellow collectors and dealers to stand any chance of obtaining a few examples. There are FAR FEWER BU examples from Zacatecas than there are from any of the other major mints.

Zacatecas produced fewer varieties than many other mints did. Most are overdates, and a few punch varieties. Due to the scarcity of coins from Zacatecas its varieties do not command premiums.

There were seven different assay initial combinations used in the production of ½ reales by Zacatecas (AZ, AO, OV, OM, MO, VL and YH). Coins were struck in four years using two different assay initial combinations.

Refer to the supplement to this article for detailed DAM rarity data.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have produced a supplement to this article that lists each DAM in the series and gives a detailed rarity estimate by grade. Here is a sample of what it contains:

Date	Mint/Assyr	G to VF	XF to AU	Mint State
1831	GoMj	C	VS	R
1832	GoMj	C	S	S
1833	GoMj	C	U	U
1834	GoPj	U	R	R
1835	GoPj	S	-	-
1836	GoPj	VS	R	-
1837	GoPj	C	U	S
1838	GoPj	C	C	C
1839	GoPj	C	R	-

If you are a beginning collector or wish to revisit the series be sure to email me and request the supplement to this article which reveals rarity by DAM and grade. I am making it available in order to allow all collectors to compete on a more even level and popularize collecting the series. I will not be releasing the supplemental data publicly.

I love to correspond with other ½ reales collectors. It is one of my great pleasures in retirement. If you are an experienced or new collector of ½ reales, send me an email at os2guy1@gmail.com and feel free to ask questions, or just brag about your collection to me.

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AN UNLISTED GUERRERO COIN

by Terence Stoddard



Reverse



Obverse

Unlisted 1915 Guerrero 10 Centavos

This unlisted Guerrero coin is a coin that my records show I bought from Harvey Bruns on 15 December 1969. I have long known it was unlisted but only recently discovered the connection with the state of Morelos. On the obverse, the left cactus branch and two leaves form a distinctive equilateral triangle. Recently while surfing the internet for revolutionary coins for sale, I noticed that triangle on a coin offered and thought "finally a second example". But upon viewing the reverse, I saw that it was a Morelos 1916 10 centavos (GB 276).



Reverse



Obverse

GB 276 1916 Morelos 10 Centavos

I had never picked that up before during all these years. Both Morelos and Guerrero are small adjoining states but this was a very surprising and exciting discovery. In many ways it is similar to the relationship of the extremely rare Suriana two peso (GB 223 & 224) and the extremely rare Campo Morado two peso (GB 177) except that both of those coins show the date 1915.

If you look at the similarity of both 10 centavos coins, it seems reasonable to believe that the same engraver created all the dies. This the same area (Campo Morado) where several "Guerrero" one peso obverse dies were defaced (although

not totally removing the “UN PESO”) and combined with C.M.GRO reverses. All the large eagle examples seem to have these defaced peso obverses.

I guess my question is: were the coins listed as “Guerrero” also minted in Campo Morado if the defaced pesos listed under “Guerrero” were combined with Campo Morado 50 centavos? Then by extension, were the 10 centavos under “Guerrero” and “Morelos” as per the first paragraph also minted in Campo Morado?

Finally, David Hughes has suggested that, given their rarity, these might be trial strikes. Perhaps, when Severo Hernández was cutting dies, he made a pair of eagle dies for Morelos, Emiliano Zapata’s home state, and conducted a few trial strikes. Interestingly, these coins are dated 1916, a time when the Zapatistas retrenched into Morelos.

NEW UNLISTED CARTONES OF HUIXQUILUCAN, ESTADO DE MEXICO

by Ricardo de León Tallavas

and Emilio Javier Ramírez García



Last September of 2021, a very small group of an unknown issue of Mexican Revolution cartones surfaced. All together this group is a mere 15 piece set in two denominations: one and two pesos. The serial numbers for the one peso are 66, 171, 202, 246, 251, 304, 318, 329, 401, 464, 550 and 756. The two pesos are just three: 178, 198 and 277. All of them are handwritten, all the one peso read: “SA. \$1. Un Peso. No. ____”. Possibly the “S.A.” meant Serie A as the two pesos notes bear the wording “Serie JM”, possibly being the initials of the author of this particular denomination or issue. All 15 cartones bear a rubber stamp in violet ink reading: EJERCITO LIBERTADOR - REPUBLICA MEXICANA - DIVISION PACHECO REGIMIENTO “MANUEL GOMEZ” (LIBERATING ARMY – MEXICAN REPUBLIC – PACHECO DIVISION “MANUEL GOMEZ” REGIMENT). Their size is about 111 x 63 mm and all of them are made in regular cardboard: cream color for the one peso and red for the two pesos. All are also embossed with the wording “AYUNTAMIENTO DE HUISQUILUCAN” (sic) (Town Council of Huixquilucan). They are missing a date and bear no signature.



Francisco Vargas Pacheco

was then in charge of the general area adjacent to Toluca. Huixquilucan is located about 40 kms (25 miles) northeast of Toluca.

However, in our opinion, these cartones cannot be earlier than 1915 as it was not until 13 June of that year that he informed that he was finally in charge of the general area of Texcoco “stopping any enemy (Carranza) advancement to the zone”, and mastering the area for his direct influence.³ On 15 October 1915 the Zapatista governor of the State of Mexico, Alejo G. González, declared all enemies (Carranza) issues to be void and null.⁴ This could have been a good reason for these cartones to have been issued, namely the perennial lack of money.

There is evidence that Francisco V. Pacheco requested permission to produce money of his own even before gaining control of the Huixquilucan region. The reason was the quick depreciation of the state paper money issues in some parts of his military jurisdiction. Pacheco asked Zapata at least to issue a decree to either dictate the regulation of prices to the “abusive merchants” or command the compulsory acceptance of their Zapatista paper money at full face value “because it is impossible to face the enemy if defeated by hunger beforehand”.⁵

In the 1910 Census Huixquilucan appears as part of the District of Tlanepantla. This district included the towns of Tlanepantla (the administrative centre),



Huixquilucan

1. *Diccionario histórico y biográfico de la Revolución Mexicana*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Secretaría de Gobernación, 1991, pp. 791 – 792.

2. John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, US, 2011, p, 251.

3. Archivo Histórico de la Defensa Nacional, XU481.5/304, ff. 89-91.

4. www.papermoneyofmexico.com/documents/estado-mexico/estadomexico-19150713

5. letter from Pacheco to Zapata, at his headquarters in Huitzilac, Morelos, 5 August 1915, AHUNAM, Fondo Gildardo y Octavio Magaña Cerda, caja 77, expediente 67, foja 5.

Coacalco, Ecatepec, Jilotzingo, Naucalpan, Iturbide, Zaragoza, Huixquilucan and Nicolás Romero. It is recorded that the whole district then had 60, 302 inhabitants. The area of this region was made of four small towns and 58 villages, with Huixquilucan as one of them. Even though Huixquilucan was a village, by 1914 it counted with a steam powered mill as one of the principal industries, with the male operator earning 50 cents daily and each of the two female laborers 25 centavos. The businesses recorded mentioned that Huixquilucan had four general stores, 16 neighborhood grocery stores, five meat markets, four bakeries, two riggings, one clothing store and 34 pulque bars. Also, the settlement had two pharmacies and four enterprises producing bricks.⁶



Manuel Gómez

As for Manuel Gómez, the leader of the brigade or regiment that stamped these issues, we have very little to go on. Merely a citation that he was born in the State of Mexico. Also it is noted that Gómez eventually was in charge of the Toluca Brigade, which leads anyone to believe that these self-made generals were leading one small military group after another.⁷

As for the issue we could deduce a couple of things: first, that this was a military issue that was backed by the Huixquilucan (*sic*) Town Council as it bears its name embossed on each carton. Second, the total issue should have been very small because of the numbers found on the notes themselves. They range up to 756 for the one peso and 277 for the two pesos denomination. A conservative assumption would probably be \$1,000 in the one peso denomination and maybe \$500 for the two pesos, making the total issued of no more than two thousand pesos.

These cartones are written by seven different people. The first writer made the one peso notes 66, 177, 304, 318, and 329; the second did cartones 202, 246 y 251; the third was the author of note 464; the fourth wrote 401 and the fifth the one numbered 550. A sixth writer is distinguished by the style of his calligraphy in 756. The two pesos bear two distinct penmanship styles, one for 178 y 198 (very possibly done by the first writer), and another one for the 277 carton (the seventh writer).

So far there has been one precedent for the mention of a Pacheco military unit on paper money. Three notes (\$1, \$2 and \$10), modelled

on the Tesorería General del Estado de Chihuahua issue dated 10 December 1913 bear the stamp of the "Detall" or Archival and Legal Processing Office of the Brigada Pacheco.⁸ However, the provenance of these stamps is very debatable because the range of operations of the Pacheco Brigade was very flexible.

In conclusion, these 15 cartones that have just arrived to our numismatic world are exciting news and proof that not everything has yet been found.

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6. Amada Esperanza Baca Gutierrez, *Huixquilucan*, Monografía Municipal, Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura, 1998, p. 144.

7. *Diccionario de Generales de la Revolución*, Instituto Nacional de Estudios de la Revolución Mexicana, México, DF, 2014, v. I, p. 435.

8. www.papermoneyofmexico.com/history/morelos/morelos-sabanas



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