

A SKETCH OF THE COINAGE
OF THE
MEXICAN REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL
MORELOS.

BASED UPON AN IMPORTANT FIND.

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TO

BENJAMIN BETTS,

WHOSE ZEALOUS STUDIES AND UNTIRING INTEREST IN NUMISMATICS INCREASE WITH HIS YEARS,

AND WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF THE VARIOUS COINAGES OF MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

IS ONLY SURPASSED BY THE LIBERALITY WITH WHICH HE PLACES IT

AT THE DISPOSAL OF HIS FRIENDS

THIS BROCHURE IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

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A SKETCH OF THE COINAGE OF MORELOS.

JOSE MARIA MORELOS, whose full name was Jose Maria Morelos y Pavon, according to his baptismal registry in Valladolid (where the record is still preserved) was christened Jose Maria Tecló. He was born at the rancho Tahuejo el Chico, near Apatzingan, on the 30th of September, 1765. In October, 1810, when a curate in Nucupetaro, in Valladolid, he joined the insurgent General Hidalgo, against the Spaniards, and received commission to act as Captain General of the Provinces on the southwest coast. After the death of Hidalgo, who was shot on the 30th of July, 1810, at Chihuahua, each provisional leader acted independently, and, although Rayon, who was commissioned Commander-in-chief, was not generally acknowledged, he later became President, and was followed by Liceaga. At the Apatzingan Congress, October 22, 1814, Morelos was deputy for Nuevo Leon, and, with Liceaga and Cos, formed the executive, when the former attained to the Presidency.

Morelos was captured at Tezmalaca, Nov. 5, 1815, and shot at San Cristobal Ecatepec, a suburb of the City of Mexico, December 22, forty-seven days after his capture. Mr. Hubert Howe Bancroft, in his *History of the Pacific States*, makes mention of him as follows: "His countrymen have placed him next to Hidalgo in the rank of patriot liberators, and justly so, for, if the latter started the revolution,

Morelos nobly carried on the great work, and more ably, it must be admitted. While possessing little book learning, he had what far outweighed it — genius: which, when the summons came, transformed the benign *cura* into the greatest and most successful military leader among the insurgents, — at least till Iturbide joined them. He revived an almost extinct cause, found for it a new cradle in the mountains of Mizteca, laying at its feet the whole rich south: he raised it to the greatest height attained, ere came the end, crowning his work with the declaration of absolute independence from Spain, and the formation of a true republican government. His task was done. From that moment his star declined, to set within a year."

In August, 1885, a young American archæologist, while excavating a small tumulus near Tlacoahuaya, in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico, found a straw pouch or bag, containing four hundred and twenty-eight copper coins, all of the type issued by Morelos. The denominations of the coins, the number of each, with the year in which they were struck, were as follows: — 1811, 2-*Reales*, 4; 1812, 8-*Reales*, 31; 2-*Reales*, 258; 1-*Real*, 2; 1813, 8-*Reales*, 59; 2-*Reales*, 74; total, 428 pieces. These include the principal varieties known in this metal, and among them are several which the most careful researches on the subject warrant me in concluding are unpublished, if not altogether unknown. Such a hoard of these pieces has never before been found, and its discovery is therefore thought to be of sufficient interest and importance to form the subject of a paper. The issues in silver being few, it has been deemed better to include them also, and thus afford a general review of the coinage. For the purpose of description, a selection is made of thirty-one specimens, which represent the two types and all the marked varieties, and will serve as a basis for further and more extended observation. The types are fairly represented by the cuts above III, and XXIV, the numbers being arranged with reference to the dates when they respectively appeared: all other differences I classify as simply varieties.

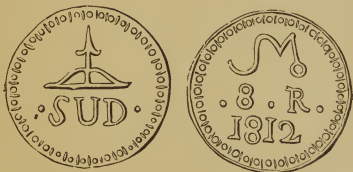
1811.

I. 8-REALES, *Silver*. Obverse, Monogram of Morelos | 8-R. | 1811 within a rude wreath of leaves and roses. Reverse, A bow with arrow resting perpendicularly on the bowstring: beneath, *SUD* (the Spanish for South) with a wreath similar to that on

the obverse, but without flowers. With a single exception, hereafter noted, this is the only piece in the series, in this metal, struck from dies.

II. 2-REALES, *Copper*. Both obverse and reverse similar in design to I, but without wreath; milled border. From dies, as are all in copper which are genuine. This variety prevails throughout the three years' coinage, and may be designated as the common or general one. The find produced four of these, all from different dies, and the first that I have met with.

1812.



III. 8-REALES, *Silver*. Same variety as II, but the border has a circle around it, formed by a dot and dash alternating. This peculiar variety of border was not in the find. My description is taken from the Fonrobert Catalogue.*

IV. 8-REALES, *Silver*. Design copied from I. The wreath on the reverse is here broken, a branch from each end of the bow meets above the arrow-point. Below SUD (which has a small Roman u instead of the capital letter) is an ornament and two branches. This piece and the preceding one are unlike other casts which are described below, in not having been finished by tooling.

V. 8-REALES, *Silver*. The obverse has a more perfect wreath, in which there are tulips and roses; the date is punctuated, which is not the case in other denomina-

* The cuts here used as illustrations, (with the exception of XXVIII, which was engraved especially for this paper,) are kindly loaned me by Mr. Benjamin Betts of Brooklyn, to whom my grateful acknowledgment is here tendered. The obverse, (contrary to the usual custom,) it will be noticed, is placed at the right instead of the left in the engravings, with the single exception of XXIV.

tions, with the exception of a single specimen of Two-Reales, 1812 (copper). The reverse shows equal improvement. Two long leaves nearly encircle the bow and arrow, their stems meeting above U in SUD. The borders have a broad milling (as is the case with all Eight and Two-Real casts hereafter noted), and they appear to have received a finish after having been taken from the moulds.



VI. 2-REALES, *Silver*. Same variety as V.

VII. 8-REALES, *Copper*. A similar piece to I. The only specimen of the variety bearing this date in the find, and the only one known to me.

VIII. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Variety copied from IV, and closely resembling it, with such differences only as would be likely to result from having been struck from dies instead of cast. There were two specimens in the find.



IX. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Same variety as II, with broad pointed milling around the border.

X. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Variety copied from III, its prototype (the same as IV is to VIII); not in the find. A small circular counterstamp on the obverse contains the monogram of Morelos, with a star above and below it as represented on cut XXVII. This impress obliterates the original monogram, and is in the same position on all that have received it. It is a fact worthy of notice that this denomination and type (already designated as the common one) occurring with the dates of 1812 and 1813, have alone been counterstamped. Of this date, so marked, there were five in the find.

XI. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Another marked difference in the border, which has a circle of dots, and a line formed of the same, beneath the bow. From the find, and nowhere duplicated.

XII. 8-REALES, *Copper*. A change in the form of the bow, the centre of which is straight, and the arrow feathered, extending below the bow-string, passing between the uprights of U in SUD. But two of this variety in *Eight-Reales*, were in the find, each from a different die, and both new to me.

XIII. 2-REALES, *Copper*. Variety same as VII. Four only of these were in the find, three of them clearly showing that they were struck upon planchets which had previously received an impression from dies. The specimen in my possession has A | HO on the reverse, plainly distinguishable, in the centre of the field: whether a coin or hacienda piece, is unknown to me.

XIV. 2-REALES, *Copper*. Another of the four, last referred to, but differing in the obverse. The monogram, value and date, are in the usual order, but a long inward curve, at either side, extends from the former to the latter, while from the curve to the edge are parallel lines resembling milling.



XV. 2-REALES, *Copper*. Same variety as IX, having broad pointed milling.

XVI. 2-REALES, *Copper*. Same variety as XI, and like that without a duplicate, if four others which I believe to be counterfeit are excluded.

XVII. 2-REALES, *Copper*. The arrow is the same as on XII; the bow of the usual form. Four of these were in the find, all of a low order of art and imperfectly struck.

XVIII. 1-REAL, *Copper*. Similar to II. Two of these were in the find, and another is known, much superior in workmanship to either of them.

1813.

XIX. 8-REALES, *Silver*. Same as V, but with 2 in date altered (in the mould) to 3, with a period following.



XX. 8-REALES, *Silver*. Similar to V, but here a second and more successful attempt to change the figure 2 to a 3 has been made, and the punctuation and period after the date have been removed. Otherwise as the last.



XXI. 1-REAL, *Silver*. The general design as the preceding, but the obverse has a fairly executed wreath of small leaves of uniform shape around the border.

XXII. 1-REAL, *Silver*. Here the letter M takes the place of the monogram, with a wreath similar to the last. Reverse, Design the same as V.



XXIII. MEDIO-REAL, *Silver*. As the last; M | M. R. | 1813. The reverse has a wreath the same as that on the obverse; the other leaves and ornaments are omitted.



XXIV. MEDIO-REAL, *Silver*. (The second type.) Obverse, AMERICA MORELOS; a lion rampant to the left. *Ex.* 1813. Reverse, PROVINCIAL DE OAXACA; in the field a bow and arrow. Struck from dies. No varieties known (unless the cut above, which is from the Fonrobert Catalogue, is an exact copy of the piece in that sale, which I regard as somewhat doubtful). The only appearance of this type.



XXV. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Same variety as VII, and there appears to have been a plentiful issue of this date, as demonstrated by the find. Only four of them, however, had the figure 3 with a round top.

XXVI. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Similar to IX, differing only in date.



XXVII. 8-REALES, *Copper*. Variety similar to IX. Counterstamped same as X. There were six in the find.



XXVIII. 8-REALES, *Copper*. We now come to the most perfect work, both in die cutting and striking, found in the copper pieces, if not in the whole coinage. The reverse has a straight-top bow (not unlike XII) and beneath * T * C * | * SUD * . The borders have a circle composed of eight-pointed stars and nopal leaves in line of circle, alternating, * * * * *. Stars are also used for punctuations. There were four of these in the find, a variety before unknown to me. I find in *Biographie Générale*, Vol. 36, p. 543, the statement that "Morelos received the command of a corps of 7,000 men, destined to propagate the insurrection in the 'Tierra Caliente'

(warm land), which extends along the coast of the Pacific in the western part of Mexico." From the letters, I think it possible this type may have been issued for *Tierra Caliente*.

The superiority of workmanship indicates an organized force and proper appliances for coining. It seems fair to consider this as the last coinage.

XXIX. 2-REALES, *Copper*. As the last; five in the find.

XXX. 2-REALES, *Copper*. Same variety as IX.

XXXI. MEDIO REAL, *Copper*. From the same mould as XXIII, but not in the find, and not believed to be a piece of the period. The edge shows a perfection of finish found in none of the preceding. This is a cast, all of which in this metal, as I have already stated, I regard as counterfeits. A place is given to it here, merely as an example of a modern imposition.

An attempt to note further, in this paper, the numerous trifling differences of the various dies, would, I fear, be trespassing upon time and patience, and I shall content myself with brief remarks upon the principal features of the coinage.

The monogram of Morelos is certainly original and most peculiar in construction. It appears to be a combination of the letters MOS, or, if mentioned in the order they are used, SMO. It is not difficult, however, on a well executed piece, to find all of the letters in the name of Morelos, and the word is completed by repeating the letter o.

The value and date have many variations, in the position, size and formation of the figures and letters, and in punctuation, whether preceding, intervening, or following. Again in some instances, all or part are omitted. On one of the Two-Real pieces of 1812, there is a colon (:) between 2 and R., and the same mark in one other instance follows SUD.

The bow has many changes from the narrow and long to the short and almost oval or semi-circular form, while at times it simulates a pair of slender wings.

The bow-string is found both plain and feathered, sometimes to the right, again to the left; it is usually straight, but on a few pieces, where the ends of the bow turn up, the centre is slack.

The arrow being short and plain in construction, offers less opportunity for difference: in fact there is no portion of the device so uniform. The exceptions noted in XII and XVII are increased by two of the Two-Real pieces of 1812, where the arrow, although not feathered, extends below the bow-string. It may be proper here to note that on a few of the Eight and Two-Reales of 1812 only, the arrow has a dot at either side of it, above the bow-string.

The oddities selected for special mention are from the Two-Real pieces, which with two exceptions are dated 1812. This appears to be the eventful period in the history of the coinage, as will be seen by the find, two-thirds of the pieces being of that date. One has a star preceding, intervening and following the value, and two have arrow points between the value, with a period before and after the date: o in the monogram joining and forming a part of a well-defined RO, one: SUD in retrograde *i. e.* the letters reversed from the usual form and the word reading from right to left, two: the letter s on one, and the figure 2 on another are reversed: SUD is once found terminating beneath the centre of the bow, under the arrow. Two have the monogram low down in the field, dividing the value (and there are two of the Eight-Real pieces belonging to the same category). Three others have the bow separated in the middle, the ends curving in, with the arrow passing between them free from contact. I will mention two only of 1813, and conclude my references to the freaks of the engravers. One of these has an inverted figure 3, and the other has the date lengthened to 18813.

Some of these peculiarities may perhaps belong to a large class which have been branded as counterfeits. The issue of such pieces appears to have grown to alarming proportions, and I believe it to be the reason for the introduction of the counterstamp on the Eight-Real pieces, which probably began in 1813. The smaller values being so numerous, a check on the larger ones was in all likelihood thought sufficient to have a general effect, as few of the latter were imitated.

One of the Two-Reales, undoubtedly counterfeit, has also a fraudulent counterstamp, — the only instance where this denomination has received such an impression, and unlike the genuine it is placed on the reverse instead of the obverse.

It is plain that there were several mints in operation, and as to the number of workmen who practiced die-sinking, there are indications that the followers of Morelos

were constantly levied upon for skill or aptitude in this line of art. The number of dies appears to have been countless. Sixty-five Two-Real pieces revealed forty-seven different dies. The unevenness of the striking, by reason of inexperience and crude appliances, renders comparison difficult. I judge that nothing harder than copper was used to engrave upon, and to this must be attributed the almost total absence of broken dies, for in such metal a fracture means destruction.

A custom prevailed of punching over, with a hand-stamp, the letters or figures which had been imperfectly brought out. This occurs only on the Two-Real pieces, (and in each year of the coinage,) notwithstanding the larger values had similar and as frequent defects. To the softness of the dies may also be attributed the abandonment of striking silver, and the substitution of the method of casting, after the first attempt in 1811, as described under I, where the impression is weak and unsuccessful in the harder silver metal.

I can offer no satisfactory explanation for the issue of the same denominations in the same year in both copper and silver, although the fact indicates method. No die, however, is found to have been used on more than one metal.

Muling was practiced, but to no great extent. Size and weight demonstrate but little in this rude coinage, issued in times of dire necessity, for it is not plain that either was considered. This is most noticeable in the Eight and Two-Real pieces in copper, where some specimens of the same nominal value are fully double others in every measurement.

The following notes taken from Bancroft, Vol. VII, may prove to be of interest and value, and possibly lead to identification in some instances. They refer to coins, medals or tokens struck in the different parts of Mexico between the years 1810 and '15.

1. To inspire the fainting hearts of the people with some confidence, Venegas caused the sacred image of Los Remedios . . . to be conveyed from its shrine to the cathedral. The presence of this protecting image greatly allayed the panic, while the soldiery, confident of victory with the Queen of Heaven on their side, begged for medals stamped with her likeness. A private individual distributed 5,930 of such medals among the officers and soldiers of the line

regiments of New Spain, the provincial regiments of Mexico, Toluca, Quautitlan, Tres Villas and Tulancingo, and the city squadron (Mexico). 1810. (p. 187.)

2. Hidalgo is said to have worn, suspended from his neck, a large gold medal, bearing the image of the Virgin of Guadeloupe.

3. The establishment of a Mint was found necessary, and, on the 5th of October, 1810, the work of constructing the machinery and dies was commenced at Guanajuato, Jose Mariano de Robles being made Superintendent. The establishment was almost completed by the 25th of November, when the Spanish army, under Calleja, entered the city and took possession of it. The artisans displayed great skill in the construction of the machinery and implements, and in the engraving of the dies; they were so perfect as to rival those in the Mint at Mexico, to which city all of the appliances were carried as trophies. (p. 166.)

4. Venegas, in a letter to Calleja, dated December 16, 1810, replies to request from the Brigadier that a medal be presented to his soldiers. (p. 237.)

5. A medal was struck in commemoration of Trujillo's asserted victories in defending Hidalgo's attack on the capital, and the success of the royal arms. This medal was presented February 3d, 1811. (p. 184.)

6. Villagran held sway at Zimapan in semi-independence of other revolutionary chiefs, under the pompous title of Julian I, Emperor of the Huasteca (Calleja declared). Alaman had heard that he even coined money with this inscription. 1813. (pp. 508, 526.)

7. Liceaga established a mint at Yuriria. 1812. (p. 393.)

8. The troops of Calleja were rewarded with medals and promotion. The medal bore the name of Fernando VII, supported by a dog and a lion, symbolical of faithfulness and courage, and, on the borders, the words "VENCIO EN ACULCO GUANAJUATO Y CALDERON." 1812. (p. 359.)

9. Coins were made by Osorno under Beristain's direction at Zacatlan, April, 1812. (p. 406.)

10. Ignacio Lopez Rayon caused silver to be coined at Zacatecas during his stay of less than a month; although the coins were of inferior workmanship they were preferred at Vera Cruz, their value being at the rate of 9 reales to the peso fuerte; they bore the initial L. v. o., which, according to Bustamante meant *Labor Vincit Omnia*. Negrete suggests *Levantaos Vivientes Oprimidos*. One-third of the metal mined went to the laborers,—it is said thousands toiled night and day. April, 1811. (p. 309.)

11. Vargas figured as Commandante-General of the Province of Nueva Galicia, for Rayon. 1813. (p. 538.)

12. The 10,000 and more pesos in copper, held by the treasurer Berazaluze, had to be abandoned for lack of mules on the road to Tlacotepec, where Congress was re-opened January 29, 1814. (p. 576.)

13. Alvarez marched unmolested to Oaxaca, which opened its gates with ovations, March 29, 1814. Assuming the Government of the Province, he began at once a series of reforms, by reinstating former officials and appointing new incumbents, *withdrawing the copper coinage* introduced in the Constitution of 1812. (p. 581.)

14. A medal of the Apatzingan Congress (Liceaga, President) was struck to commemorate the installation of the Deputies at Ario, October 22, 1814, at an expense of \$8,000. Morelos was Deputy for Nuevo Leon. (p. 604, where there is an engraving of the medal.)

15. Calleja ordered a new copper coinage, to replace the immense variety of copper tokens circulated from every large store under the name of *tlacos* and *pilonas*, the former the term used for an eighth-real, and the latter, piles, evidently an ironic expression. Each store had its own stamp, which was also placed on pieces of wood and soap. The issue was also to remedy the growing scarcity of small silver money, such as half and quarter-reales.

At first the coinage fell into discredit through the objections raised by merchants, but the issue being restricted to prudent limits, and its proportion in payments being regulated, a decided benefit was experienced. 1814. (p. 594.)

In conclusion it is hoped that some new light has been thrown upon numismatic science by this fresh store of coins. A more extended and detailed account might be proper and opportune to form a record ; but, with the limited time at my disposal, only a cursory glance has been given. This simple array of facts may, however, suffice to lead to further investigation of this interesting coinage of the western world, and thus form a basis for a more exhaustive study, which, from its closely allied associations, cannot fail to attract the attention and excite the interest of all lovers of the science.

