

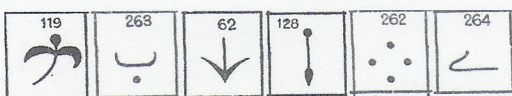
Some Late Benares Control Marks
By Alan S. DeShazo

The Paul Stevens book on the coins of the Bengal Presidency is a masterpiece of research and publication. Chapter 7 is devoted in great detail to the mint at Benares and it is with great pleasure that an important feature of the coins that were struck at the end of this series can now be further related to the historical record.

That record contains extensive quotations from the actual correspondence between the principals involved in the decisions that were made on the operation of the mint.





It began with the appointment of D. Burgess as Assay Master on 13 October 1803 but who was unable to arrive in Benares until August 1804. In October he wrote to the Government that he has not yet been informed about his salary or establishment. Since he was also uninformed about the operations of a mint, he also asked to be allowed to attend the assays at the Calcutta mint. He was then advised of the salary but refused the visit to Calcutta. By December of 1804 he reported taking charge of the mint dismissing as master assayer Baboo Gavindoss while retaining the old darogha, Shaik Ali Ahsun, for a short time. Subsequently he appointed Lutchmun Doss, a local shroff, whose symbol on the coins may have been 128 (see below) as the new darogha and superintendent. In a further letter Burges requested instructions for establishing a mint such as were previously sent to others for the mints at Dacca and Patna. In January 1805 Burges once again requested to go to Calcutta to see how that mint operated and requested that Dr Yeld take his place during that time. He was allowed to go but it was not to be to his advantage as Burges not only lost his salary and his position but Thomas Yeld was made master assayer in his place. Yeld remained master assayer and became the mint master for years.






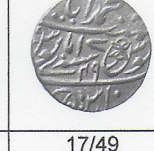
These events are clearly reflected in the coinage. The date combination AH 1219 and regnal year 47 spanned parts of AD 1804 and 1805. The Mark J coins referenced here were the last struck under Baboo Govindoss. The following Mark K issue displays the change in control by the replacement of symbol 119 with 263, 62 with 128 and the addition of 263 on the reverse just to the left of the regnal year. Symbol 263 is the Persian letter Be and refers to the surname of D. Burges. Symbol 262 that is immediately under the fish symbol on the Mark J coins is retained on Mark K and may reflect the last bit of control of the Mint Committee that was formed in April 1801 and was composed of the Agent of the Governor-General, the Magistrate of the City and the Collector of the Province of Benares.



In the transition from Mark K to Mark L, symbol 262 disappears and 264 replaces 263 on the reverse. This is the Persian letter Ye for the surname of Thomas Yeld. Burges is still indicated as the Assay Master and Yeld is the acting master assayer and that continues into AH 1220 (AD 1805/1806).

With Marks M and N symbol 263 is no longer recorded, Burges is out and Yeld still initials the reverse signaling his successful assumption of the office.

1219 Mark J	1219 Mark K	1219 Mark L
		
		
17/47 No reverse	17/47 Be	17/47 Ye

1220 Mark L	1220 & 1221 Mark M	1221-1227 Mark N
		
		
17/48 Ye	17/48 Ye	17/49 Ye

Not long after attaining the control of the mint, Thomas Yeld submitted some AH 1221 dated patterns. His initial letter Ye is entered below and between parts of the word 'Alam. The quarter pice is below and there is at least a double pice also known.



Stevens, Dr Paul The Coins of the Bengal Presidency Bengal Presidency, A.H. Baldwin & Sons Ltd, 11 Adelphi Terrace, London, 2012

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Thurston, Edgar Note on the History of the East India Company Coinage from 1753-1835, The Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta 1893