

Coinage at Banāras

Summary

The activity of the Banāras mint can usefully be divided into five periods for the purpose of this summary. Firstly, from 1775 to 1805 the mint was farmed to local contractors, and there was little direct involvement of British officials, although in the early 1790s, the British Resident had nominal control. The coins produced during this period consisted of gold mohurs, silver rupees and fractions of both these, and also crude copper pice. In the early 1800s, complaints from a particular native official within the mint, concerning malpractices of the most senior native officials (the darogah and the assay master), meant that the management controls were reviewed and, in 1803, a European mint/assay master was appointed, although he did not take effective action until the end of 1804. This introduced the second phase of mint operations.

This second phase fell into the period c1805 to 1812, when the mint was directly under the control of a European mint/assay master, although the style of the silver coins produced did not change significantly. Copper coins were sent from Calcutta rather than produced locally, and very few gold coins were produced. By 1812, the desire to improve the coins, particularly the rupee, led to a distinct change in style, but the old hammered method of coin production continued. This constitutes the third period, with only silver coins being produced.

The fourth period began with the introduction of machinery into the Banāras mint, providing the ability to produce milled coins, starting in 1815, although the methods used still included manual production of the blanks. Rupees with the mint name Banāras continued to be produced, and machine-struck trisuli pice also began to be manufactured. Farrukhābād rupees were also struck during this period.

The final period, from about 1820 until the mint closed in 1830, saw the introduction of yet more machinery and the cessation of the issue of the Banāras rupee, leaving the Farrukhābād rupee as the only precious metal output of the mint. Throughout the fourth and fifth periods, Banāras continued to produce copper trisuli pice.

Introduction

The EIC first acquired Banāras in 1764 when Shāh 'Ālam II issued a firman assigning to the Company the Zamindari of Ghazipur, Banāras etc., held by Raja Balwant Singh, the Company having undertaken to put Shāh 'Ālam in possession of the kingdom of Awadh 1. However, by article 5 of the Treaty of Allahābād, 16th August 1765, the Zamindari of Banāras was restored to the Nawāb Vizier of Awadh, on condition that Balwant Singh was continued in its possession, paying the same revenue as before 2.

The first reference found to the British becoming involved with the mint was in 1766 when it became clear that a certain Mr Marriott had rented the mint, although he was not allowed to do so within the rules of the EIC 3:

73. In August last we received a letter from Mr Marriott, chief of the factory at Benaris, containing a representation and complaint against Mr Bolts, the second, in consequence of his having of his own authority confined a merchant of the city in his house for two days. Mr Bolts immediately gave in his answer and at the same time set forth many circumstances in complaint against Mr Marriott and his banian, particularly for renting the mint and exercising the offices of aumeeny, phousdarry and cutwall contrary to the orders of the Board.

75. Messrs Marriott and Bolt having accordingly repaired to Calcutta, were summoned before the Board and interrogated particularly on the subject of the charges exhibited against each other; the Board thereupon reconsidering the whole proceedings unanimously agreed that Mr Marriott was blameable in renting the mint knowing not only that it was against the orders of the Board for a servant of the Company to hold any post or employment under the country government but that it was included in the King's grant of the Benaris country and therefore that he should bring to the Company's credit the money he paid for it to the King together with the advantages arising on restamping the specie...

The EIC took more permanent possession of Banāras in May 1775, but the mint does not feature in the records of the regular meetings of the Calcutta Council, presumably because it continued to be run by native officials and there was no direct management from Calcutta. The only information found about the early years of British control, comes from a report prepared in 1787, by a Mr Barlow, which seems to have been used to some extent by Major Pridmore 4.

Gold Coins 1775-c1808



7.2

Gold mohur dated RY 18. The earliest date presently known

Barlow wrote 5:

The gold coin fluctuates in its price in the same manner as the copper, the princes of India having never fixed its proportion to silver, which they have always considered as the only measure of value. Accordingly, the quantity of silver coin which a gold mohur will exchange for in the market, varies daily in the same manner as the number of pice that will exchange for a rupee. An extraordinary influx of gold has been known to lower the price of gold mohurs upwards of a rupee each in the course of a few days.

The component parts of the gold weights are the same as the silver. Gold however is bought and sold by the tola. Silver, since the time of Chyte Sing, by the [bhurrcce] or its own sicca weight. In the Benares mint gold is assayed by the touch on the stone called [kissortee], a species of the saligram so celebrated in the shastirs of the Hindoos.

The weight of the gold mohur at the institution of the mint was 9-4. The present weight is two chowuls less, or 9-3-6, having lost two chowuls of its weight at the same time as the rupee, in the 8th year of the reign.*

It contains an alloy of 7 rutees per tola or per gold mohur 5 rutees 6 chowuls, that is in one gold mohur weighing 606 chowuls is 560 chowuls of pure gold & 46 of alloy of ¼ copper and ¾ silver [i.e. 92.4% gold].

He gave the number of mohurs issued from the mint in each year from the time the British acquired it 6. The data he presented is by RY of Shah 'Alām II, and the equivalent AD & AH dates have been added. It is also true that the numbers are given in whole mohurs, and there is no indication of what, if any, fractions were issued. A later report (see below) gives the mint output and contains fractions of a mohur (although the figures have been rounded for simplicity), indicating that coins of denominations below a single mohur were issued. However, this must have been a rare occurrence because only one half mohur is known to exist (see Cat. No. 7.24), and no other gold fractions have yet been discovered.

AD equivalent	AH equivalent	RY of Shah 'Alām	No.
1775/6	1189/90	17	16,108
1776/7	1190/91	18	3,719
1777/8	1191/92	19	15,469
1778/9	1192/93	20	10,122
1779/80	1193/94	21	7,131
1780/81	1194/95	22	7,141
1781/82	1195/96	23	14,988
1782/83	1196/97	24	5,333
1783/84	1197/98	25	15,716
1784/85	1198/99	26	19,909
1785/86	1199/1200	27	7,117
1786/87	1200/01	28	3,206

A later report gives the numbers of gold coins issued by AD date (the AH & RY dates have been added) 7:

Output of the Banāras mint (rounded to the nearest whole unit)

AD	AH equivalent	RY equivalent	Gold (mohurs)
1782	1197/98	24/25	15,111
1783	1198/99	25/26	Records incomplete or missing
1784	1199/1200	26/27	20,892
1785	1200/01	27/28	12,936
1786	1201/02	28/29	Records incomplete or missing
1787	1202/03	29/30	Records incomplete or missing
1788	1203/04	30/31	15,806
1789	1204/05	31/32/33	21,535
1790	1205/06	33/34	Records incomplete or missing
1791	1206/07	34/35	Records incomplete or missing
1792	1207/08	35/36	217
1793	1208/09	36/37	52
1794	1209/10	37/38	4,077
1795	1210/11	38/39	27,120
1796	1211/12	39/40	3,111
1797	1212/13	40/41	Records incomplete or missing
1798	1213/14	41/42	46
1799	1214/15	42/43	Records incomplete or missing
1800	1215/16	43/44	238

* 8 chowals (or grains of rice) = 1 ratti
64 chowals = 8 ratti = 1 masha (approx 17.7 troy grains = 1.15 grams)
768 chowals = 96 ratti = 12 masha = 1 tola

1801	1216/17	44/45	5
1802	1217/18	45/46	31
1803	1218/19	46/47	445
1804	1219/20	47/48	60
1805	1220/21	48/49	0

Under European Superintendence...

AD	AH equivalent	RY equivalent	Gold (mohurs)
1806	1221/22	49/50	0
1807	1222/23	1/2 (Muh Akbar)	251
1808	1223/24	2/3	12



7.24

Gold half mohur

No gold coins appear to have been produced after this and, in 1812, a regulation made it clear that no further gold coins would be produced 8:

...Section XXX, whereas the gold coin denominated gold mohurs has never obtained an extensive circulation in the province of Benares, in consequence of silver having been the general measure of value, and whereas the coinage of gold mohurs has accordingly been long since discontinued, it is therefore not judged necessary at present to establish a gold coinage at Benares, and the gold mohur shall continue to be circulated as heretofore, agreeably to the established usage of this country...

and this is confirmed in the following statement of January 1812 9:

...In reference to the small quantity of gold which has been brought to the Benares mint during twenty years, His Lordship in Council approves, as suggested by the Board of Commissioners, that the mint not be open at present for the coinage of gold bullion.

Silver Coins 1775-c1805



7.25

Silver rupee, AH 1190, RY 17

Barlow's report (1787) states:

In the 17th year the mint was transferred by the Company to Chyte Sing. The Rajah engaged to coin rupees of 9m 6r 6ch weight and 18 chowuls fine, and to continue the die of the 17th sun, in order to put an end to the confusion in the currency of the country occasioned by the annual alteration of the value of the coin. All rupees therefore, coined in the Benares mint since the 17th year of the present reign ought to be of the same weight and standard and to pass current as siccas of the present year.

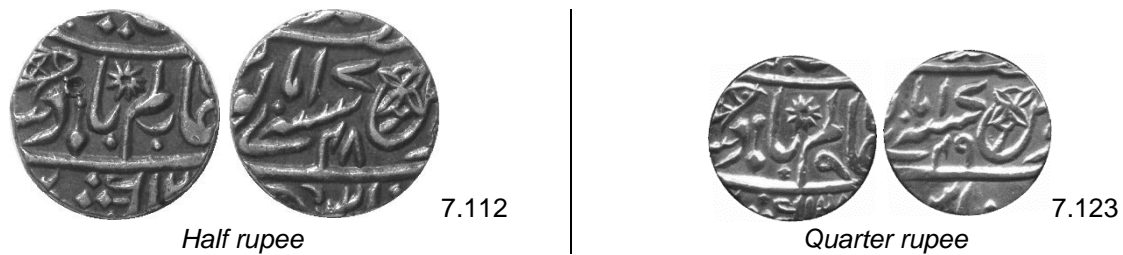
Upon the expulsion of Rajah Chyte Sing in the 23rd year, the mint remained for a month and a half under charge of Rajah Mahae Narain, after which it was delivered over to the Resident under whose superintendence it at present continues...

...The rupee current in the district of Benares may therefore be classified under the general heads of sunaut & sicca, the former coined under the Moghul provinces, and the latter since the 17th year of the reign of Shah Aulum, when the mint was ceded to the Company by the Vizier & then transferred to Chyte Sing...

...A reference to the records of the mint enabled me to ascertain the number of rupees coined since the 9th year of Shah Aulum, but no accurate judgement can be formed of the quantity of any particular species in circulation previous to the time of Farruckseer.

...Near two lack of rupees are annually melted down for the manufacture of lace and rich stuffs, for which Benares has for so long been celebrated. The revival of the old custom of collecting a batta on all rupees but those coined in the current year, in the time of Juggut deo Sing, late naib to Rajah Maheput Narain (though since abolished by Mr Grant) brought a considerable part of the sicca rupees coined between the 17th and 25th

years into the mint to be new stamped. If to which be added the amount of the specie sent annually to different places to answer bills of exchange, it will at once evince to your Lordship the impossibility of forming any just calculation of the quantity of the different specie of sunaut or sicca rupees now in circulation.



As discussed in earlier chapters about the Calcutta mint coins, the shroffs had a major impact on the circulation of the coinage:

The great influence which the bankers have acquired over the circulation of the country is founded on the fluctuation of the current value of the sunaut and sicca rupees. This value is regulated not only by the quantity of silver contained in the coin, but also by other adventitious circumstances, which the bankers, through the medium of their agents residing in every part of the country are enabled to convert to their own advantages.

The loss and inconvenience resulting to the public from the currency of these various kinds of rupees, early attracted the notice of Government. The superintendents of the mint were accordingly directed to continue the same die (at Calcutta the 19th and at Benares the 17th sun) it being imagined that in a course of time all the old rupees would be brought to the mint and be recoinced into siccās. This measure, tho' highly expedient, was of itself inadequate to the reform of all those abuses which had introduced themselves into the coin during the later periods of the Mogul government. In consequence, every part of the community is still subject to the impositions of the shroffs, whose exorbitant gains may be reckoned amongst the greatest impediments to the general prosperity of the country.

In order to explain this more fully, it is necessary to mention that in almost every pergannah or district in the Company's dominions, a particular species of rupee is current in which the Zemindars and husbandmen pay their rents to the farmer appointed by Government. In Gazipore, the revenues are collected from the ryots in the old debased rupees of the 4th, 5th & 6th of Aulumgur the second. In some parts of Behar, 10 sun rupees are current, in others, seven, five, 11 & 12 suns. These rupees, though sonaats of a very old date, being in constant demand for the circulation of these particular districts, always sell there for more than their intrinsic value. This value is in fact put upon them by the bankers, who by means of their agents buy up these sonaat rupees in different parts of the country, and send them to the districts where they are current. The ryot being obliged to pay his rents in the particular species of rupee current in his pergannah, the banker is enabled to rate it at what value he pleases. If the farmer has engaged to pay his revenue to Government in siccās, the banker charges him nearly the actual difference between sunaats and siccās. If in sunaats, the banker takes the same batta from the Collector for bills on Calcutta in siccās. In both cases the rupees are sent back again to the pergannah from whence they came, where the banker's agent again disposes of them at an enhanced price to the ryots.

Whenever one species of rupee is collected from the ryot & another paid into Government, the aumil's banker, who has the exchanging of them, will always contrive to take a considerable advantage for himself. The aumil being generally in his debt from kists advanced to Government, & ryots for money to pay the aumil, the whole circulation of the country is in his power. Such is the excess to which the shroffs have carried this trading in coin, that if a rupee is bought from a banker and sent to him for sale immediately after, he will [not] receive it back without demanding a profit between the sale and purchase. Accordingly in the Nirhnama's or price currents of the markets, there are two prices for rupees inserted, the price of purchase (what the banker will give), and the price of sale (the rate at which he will sell). So long therefore as the bankers are enabled to make such large profits on the buying and selling of sunaut rupees, it cannot be expected that they will ever carry them to the mint, where the quantity of alloy in the coin, and the duties on the recoinage would subject them to a heavy loss.

Not only did the shroffs make profits from currency exchange, but the fact that the Calcutta mint issued different rupees to those at Banāras, also caused problems. Barlow suggested that the two rupees should be reduced to one:

Government however sustain still greater losses by the currency of a variety of rupees. The principal of these is in the remitting of the revenue to the Presidency. Benares furnishes a remarkable instance. The difference of the intrinsic value between the Calcutta and Benares rupee is about 3-4 per cent. The exchange however between Benares and Calcutta often rises to 9 & 10 and sometimes even 12 per cent, as in the year 1784, Mr Grant, the late Resident, paid 9-4. This high rate of exchange is owing to the difference of weight and fineness of the Calcutta & Benares rupee, to the necessity of sending bullion to answer the better and to the charges of recoinage. In the Calcutta mint, 100 Benares mutchlydar [or fish] rupees produce only 91 Calcutta siccās. When the exchange therefore is at 109 Bs rupees for 100 Calcutta siccās, the bankers get nothing for the trouble and risk of transporting the specie. When any considerable sum is to be remitted to Calcutta, the

exchange will be seldom lower than 9 per cent, as a banker cannot send specie and pay the charges of recoinage for less. It is evident therefore that Government sustain a loss of near 5-12 per cent on the amount remitted because the money must pass through the mint before it can be paid into the treasury at the Presidency. If the Benares and Calcutta rupees were of the same weight, standard and impression, the rate of exchange [would] only vary according to the debts and credits of the two cities, which, from the extensive trade carried on between them, might often balance each other...

Barlow gave the number of rupees issued from the mint in each year from the time the British acquired it (AD & AH dates have been added) 10:

AD equivalent	AH equivalent	RY of Shah 'Alām	No. struck
1775/6	1189/90	17	1,693,421
1776/7	1190/91	18	1,078,012
1777/8	1191/92	19	988,118
1778/9	1192/93	20	965,757
1779/80	1193/94	21	447,180
1780/81	1194/95	22	669,764
1781/82	1195/96	23	2,209,544
1782/83	1196/97	24	252,614
1783/84	1197/98	25	1,784,178
1784/85	1198/99	26	1,350,330
1785/86	1199/1200	27	1,144,804
1786/87	1200/01	28	49,370

A later report gives the numbers of silver coins issued by AD date (the AH & RY dates have been added) 11



Output of the Banāras Mint (rounded to the nearest whole unit)

AD	AH equivalent	RY equivalent	Silver (Rupees)
1782	1197/98	24/25	1,171,165
1783	1198/99	25/26	Records incomplete or missing
1784	1199/1200	26/27	2,009,037
1785	1200/01	27/28	1,367,899
1786	1201/02	28/29	Records incomplete or missing
1787	1202/03	29/30	Records incomplete or missing
1788	1203/04	30/31	1,733,703
1789	1204/05	31/32/33	2,093,251
1790	1205/06	33/34	Records incomplete or missing
1791	1206/07	34/35	Records incomplete or missing
1792	1207/08	35/36	2,226,440
1793	1208/09	36/37	3,247,363
1794	1209/10	37/38	1,966,637
1795	1210/11	38/39	1,391,935
1796	1211/12	39/40	2,089,179
1797	1212/13	40/41	Records incomplete or missing
1798	1213/14	41/42	2,184,971
1799	1214/15	42/43	Records incomplete or missing
1800	1215/16	43/44	2,544,875
1801	1216/17	44/45	1,904,222
1802	1217/18	45/46	2,456,147
1803	1218/19	46/47	3,547,186
1804	1219/20	47/48	3,723,742
1805	1220/21	48/49	3,615,615

In 1791 there seems to have been a crisis in that the amount of bullion brought to the mint fell considerably and this caused much hardship to the mint workers. The proposed solution was to reduce the charges on coining and thereby encourage merchants back to the mint 12:

The mint receipts at this place have fallen this year so very short of what they have generally amounted to that I think it my duty to apprise the Board thereof that such orders may be passed upon the subject as may appear proper.

This diminution in the receipts being of course solely owing to the little recoinage and still less bullion that has been of late brought to the mint. This is again attributed by the natives to the difference that has taken place in the course of exchange and to the merchants finding their profit in carrying in their money and bullion to Nagpore and other places.

However this may be, I found it necessary in January last to make a considerable reduction in that part of the Mint Master's establishment that is paid in ready money to admit to the receipts of that department at all keeping pace with the required disbursements.

But this has only proved a partial alleviation of the evil, for most of the workmen in the mint are paid by a participation in the duties on the coinage, from the almost entire suspension of which they have with their families fallen into the greatest distress, in so much that they lately by their importunity prevailed on Bhewanny Doss (one of the most respectable bankers of Benares) to propose as the means of inducing the owners of bullion to bring it for coinage to this mint, and thereby to supply the workmen with their usual subsistence, that the coinage duties should be wholly given up...

...As however all duties on the coinage at the Calcutta mint are, I believe, excused, and as more bullion appears by the intimation in the late gazettes, to be brought to it than can readily be coined, it may perhaps be worthy the consideration of Government how far the 2 mints at the Presidency and at Benares should be placed on a footing with regard to the charges of coinage to individuals.

The proposal to reduce the mint charges for the time being was approved, although the Resident at Banāras, Mr Duncan, was not exactly sure by what amount he should reduce them 13. In the end it was decided that consideration should be given to putting the charges at Banāras on the same footing as those at Calcutta, a subject considered of sufficient import that London should be informed 14.

Fraud at the Banāras Mint

In December 1800 a letter arrived in Calcutta from the Collector at Banāras accompanied by the translation of a submission from a mint employee named Deriaoo Sing Chowdry, who accused the mint darogah and assay master of fraud 15:

Enclosed I beg to transmit to you a copy and translate of an arzee presented to me by Deriaoo Sing Chowdry of the mint and others belonging to that department.

On receipt of this representation I appointed an aumeen to enquire into the circumstances stated therein, and from his reports to me the greatest irregularities appear to have been committed by the Mint and Assay Masters, but I find without melting down some of the rupees it cannot be ascertained if more than the prescribed quantity of alloy has been mixed with the bullion, and for this purpose I am humbly of opinion that a scientific man should be deputed to Benares by Government, or that I may be allowed to send some of the rupees to Mr Blake, the late mint Master at Patna, for his report on them.

Should it be thought necessary to appoint an European Gentleman to the charge of the mint at Benares, I beg leave to suggest the advantage that in my opinion would ultimately result to Government by having rupees coined here of the same standard as the Behar sicca rupees...

Arzee of Deriaoo Sing Chowdry of the mint and others

You being desirous that no acts which may be for the disadvantage of Government be practiced in opposition to orders, on the contrary that in every case their advantage be considered, and I being an old and grateful servant with a view to their good, I now lay before you the following representation. That Omba Shunker, daroghah of the mint at Benares, Govind Doss, assay master, Bunseedhur Coiner (durab), have collusively peculated and embezzled public money to the amount of thousands of rupees and still continue such practices... I therefore hope that you will have the goodness to appoint a trusty aumeen together with your petitioner for the purpose of regulating the business of Government, and of enquiring into the abuses which have been committed and your petitioner will prove the amount of the money embezzled by the daroghah and the assay master as below stated, to the aumeen who will give a full report upon the case to you...

The Governor General asked for samples of Banāras rupees to be sent to Calcutta for assay, to check the claims that too much alloy had been mixed with the silver:

That the Acting Magistrate of the City of Benares be directed to send down to the Presidency specimens (taken indiscriminately) of the coin at present in circulation at Benares, transmitting three or four of the coins issued in each year for some years past...

Several lots of coins, both silver and gold, were sent to Calcutta and by February 1801, the assay master was able to report that he could find no difference between the lots that were supposed to be adulterated and those that were supposed to be normal 16.

The collector of Banāras continued to investigate the matter, although he found great difficulty in getting access to the necessary papers 17 and the Governor General decided to appoint a committee to review the general state of both the mints, at Calcutta and Banāras 18. A report from the Collector of Banāras stated 19:

...but I am still of opinion that some regulations ought to be formed for the mint department and beg leave to take this opportunity of representing that the imperfection in the construction of the Benares rupee and the coarseness of the workmanship of its die, greatly facilitate the means of introducing adulterated rupees into circulation, and it therefore appears necessary that the same precautions which were adopted at the several mints within the Provinces in respect to milling etc. the 19 sun rupees, should hereafter take place in regard to the Benares gold and silver coinage.

a further committee was established in Banāras specifically to investigate the operation of that mint 20:

Resolved that Mr J Neave, Mr JT Grant and Mr JD Erskine be constituted a committee for the purpose of corresponding with the committee appointed at Calcutta to report upon the state of the mints of the Presidency & at Benares & for the purposes of obtaining and furnishing such information regarding the Benares mint as the committee at Calcutta may require.

In May 1802, the Committee reported their findings 21:

...It appears from the Committee's report and from their correspondence with the Collector, that these officers have, since the abolition of the Residency, been left without the superintendence of any European officer of Government, and as this created a solicitude in us to ascertain the state of the coin struck since that period, we thought it advisable to procure a specimen of it on a large scale. For this purpose we procured to be sent down from Benares, sicca rupees 50,000 in a manner unlikely to lead to any suspicion of the use for which they were intended, and as these rupees were taken indiscriminately from the Collector's treasury, and a sufficient number of each year were selected for trial, the result of the assay may be considered a fair test of the coinage of the several years to which the trial refers. The result as reported to us by the Assay Master will be found in the accompanying paper No 1 and though it represents the coin from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent below the proper standard, it does not represent to have been lowered since the superintendence of the late resident over the mint ceased in 1795, and considering that the native officers of the mint have since that time been left to themselves, we shall not have been surprised to have found a greater variation in the value of the coin. It does not from this specimen appear to us that the state of the coin is so far in point of standard worse than it ought to be, as to require the interference of Government to correct what is in actual circulation, but we deem it of the utmost importance that measures should be taken to prevent its further debasement, and to keep up the coinage to its proper standard in future.

The committee discussed the possibility of stopping the production of the Banāras rupee, as had been suggested by Barlow many years before (see above & below), but concluded that this would be impractical, and that consequently the Banāras mint should be kept open:

Were the same species of coin current in Benares, which circulates through Behar and Bengal, we apprehend that the whole coinage necessary might easily be supplied by the same mint, at whatever place that mint might be established, but as long as money of a different standard and value shall be required for Benares, we are of opinion that it can no where with so much public convenience be coined as in the district where it is to circulate. We observe in Mr Barlow's report above mentioned, a proposition for introducing the same coin into Benares as circulates through the lower provinces, and for abolishing the circulation of all other coin, but this not having been then adopted, and a permanent settlement having since been concluded with the landholders under engagement for the payment of their revenue in the Benares coin, we apprehend that the measure recommended by Mr Barlow in 1787, could not with equal facility be introduced now; and therefore under an idea that Benares rupees such as are now in circulation, will still be wanted, we recommend that they continue to be coined at the Benares mint.

In recommending a continuance of the Benares mint as long as a particular species of coin may be required for that district, we no doubt meet the wishes of the merchants and bankers of the very flourishing and opulent city of Benares, who would experience great inconvenience in having to send their bullion for coinage to a distant province, but besides this a connexion has always subsisted between the mint and the manufacturers of gold and silver wire and thread, and the weavers of the rich cloths, and embroideries made at Benares, on which the prosperity of the trade in those articles appears so much to depend, that in the event of the abolition of the mint, the manufacturers might require some similar establishment to supply its place...

The committee offered recommendations as to how the mint should be run in future. These included the appointment of a European superintendent, and the continuance of the hammered method of coin production because machinery would be too expensive. They also suggested that the dies should be produced in Calcutta:

...Being of opinion as above expressed, that the continuance of a mint at Benares is at present indispensable, we proceed to offer our sentiments on the establishment necessary for conducting the business of it.

For conducting the business of the mint while the same kind of specie which now circulates in Benares is coined there, the present establishment of native officers appears to be fully adequate, though we are of opinion that European superintendence is necessary over the officers of the mint, and this we think might be introduced without any additional expense to Government. In the event of an improved form of coin being introduced by the European process such as has been introduced in Calcutta, a very different establishment would be necessary, and instead of Government deriving a profit from the mint as at present, a heavy expense

would unavoidably be incurred although the duties and fees should continue to be levied at the same rate as at present. We have endeavoured to estimate what this difference of expense might be, and on finding that it will be considerable (as will appear in the accompanying paper No 2) we cannot recommend that it should be incurred for the sole purpose of obtaining a coinage certainly preferable in point of form and workmanship, but no wise different in its intrinsic value. In other words we do not think the difference in appearance between the Calcutta and Benares coinage is such as to be worth purchasing, at so high an expense, and in regard to the advantage the Calcutta coin has over the Benares coin in being less easily counterfeited, and less easily excavated and filled up with lead, we think the same advantage might be given to the Benares coin by having the dies cut in Calcutta, and the coin made so much broader and thinner as to receive the whole impression of the die upon its surface.

They further recommended that the method of paying the mint workmen, from the duties levied on coinage, should continue. They also suggested that the mint should be overseen either by the Governor General's Agent at Banāras, or by a committee composed of the senior judge, the magistrate and the Collector:

With respect to the duties levied on the coinage, and the established fees paid to the officers of the mint, as detailed in the accompanying letter and its enclosures, they appear to be the same that were authorized by the late Resident, Mr Duncan. Out of these the expenses of the mint are defrayed, and an annual surplus, averaging about 10,000 rupees per annum, has been derived by Government. Although the support of establishment by fees is not a mode that has commonly been resorted to, yet in the present instance we are not aware of any important objection of the continuance of this mode, to which the merchants and bankers at Benares who send bullion to be coined, have so long been accustomed, provided means be adopted which we think might easily be devised to prevent any undue exaction of them.

For ensuring the due execution of the duties of the mint, and for guarding against the issue from thence of coin defective in workmanship or deficient in weight or standard, it appears to us that the European superintendence which ceased on the abolition of the Residency, should be restored. This might be effected without any expense to Government either by vesting the authority formerly exercised over the officers of the mint by the Resident, in Your Lordships agent at Benares, or in a permanent committee formed by the senior judge of the court of appeal, in his capacity of your Lordship's agent, the magistrate, and the Collector. A superintendence of this nature, though sufficient for the purpose proposed, would not we conceive occupy more time than might easily be spared from the present official avocations of any one of those officers (and much less so were it to be divided among them all), since it would only require an occasional visit to the mint for the purpose chiefly of selecting from the coinage, specimens to be forwarded to Calcutta for examination into its weight and standard, and a monthly audit of the mint accounts. The Committee or superintendent might be desired to ascertain and hereafter report to your Lordships, any alterations necessary to be made in the duties and fees at present exacted on the coinage, and likewise on the connexion that subsists between the mint and the manufacturers of gold and silver articles at Benares, and to propose any modification that might be found expedient in the latter...

The committee also reported on their investigation of the alleged frauds, and found no evidence to support them:

The charges brought against the principal officers of the mint at Benares by Durreya Sing, and communicated to the Board of Revenue by the Collector in his letter of the ... may be comprised under two heads:

1st embezzlement of part of the duties receivable by Government

2nd debasement of the coin by the admixture of an undue proportion of alloy

The Collector was directed to institute an enquiry into the truth of these charges, and from an attentive perusal of his report under date the 5th March, and of another report from the Acting Collector under date the 21st April, it appears to us that the several sums specified in the first charge, were either accounted for by the principal officers of the mint, and claimed by him by virtue of his sunnud, or not sufficiently established on evidence to fix any criminality on the persons accused. It must however be observed that the Acting Collector has acknowledged 'his inability to prosecute the enquiry to a decisive result', owing partly to the intricacy of the accounts kept at the mint, and the irregularity with which the business of the mint has of late been conducted, and partly to the disinclination to come forward shown by those from whom evidence was expected in support of some of the charges.

The charge of debasing the coin was not proposed to be established by a reference to any transaction known to have taken place at the mint, but by an examination of some coin ascribed to the Benares mint, which was produced by the accuser as deficient in standard. Adverting to the uncertainty which exists in regard to the real origin of these coins, and to the doubtful assay which appears to have been made of them at Benares, we do not think that any satisfactory conclusion can be drawn from them in support of the charge, and regard to the rupees afterwards selected by the Acting Collector, and sent down for examination in Calcutta, they have been found to correspond exactly with the specimens of the same coin on a larger scale which we caused to be procured from Benares and assayed in Calcutta, the result of which assay we have already mentioned.

As part of this investigation, in May 1802, the Calcutta Council duly passed a resolution on the matter:

Benares mint to be kept open and a Committee composed of the Agent to Governor General, the Magistrate of the city, and the Collector be formed to control the mint.

One of the attachments shows that various officers of the mint had to pay an entrance fee for their jobs. The amounts paid are presumably per annum, although the record is not clear about this:

Entrance money paid at the mint by various workmen Viz:

Derrab Dookandar

Government	40-0-0
Darogha & Rowenna	4-2-6
Assay Master & Wozunkush	4-2-6
Tekveeldar	0-3-6
Mushriff	<u>0-3-6</u>

Rs 50

Derrab Assamy 18 and 10 Rupees

Government	15-0-0
Darogha & Rowenna	1-4
Assay Master & Wozunkush	1-4
Tehveeldar	0-4
Mushriff	<u>0-4</u>

Rs 18

Government	7-0-0
Darogha & Rowenna	1-4
Assay Master & Wozunkush	1-4
Tehveeldar	0-4
Mushriff	<u>0-4</u>

Rs 10

Gudasgeer

Government	100-0-0
Darogha & Rowenna	6-4
Assay Master & Wozunkush	6-4
Tehveeldar	1-4
Mushriff	<u>1-4</u>

Rs 115

Punna Saz

Government	20-0-0
Darogha & Rowenna	2-1-3
Assay Master & Wozunkush	2-1-3
Tehveeldar	0-4-9
Mushriff	<u>0-4-9</u>

Rs 25

Tickleesaz the whole to Government

12-8

Also in May of 1802, the mint master of Banāras, Rajah Amba Shunker, died 22, and the Collector appointed Lolla Rampershand as his temporary replacement 23. In June, the mint committee, now in charge of the mint, appointed Sheikh Ally Ahsun to the position 24.

In October 1803, Dureeao Sing Choudree renewed his attack on the most senior officers of the mint, stating that the affair had not been properly investigated and that he could provide proof of the fraud 25.

This was sent to the mint committee at Banāras asking them to investigate further but no records relating to their investigation have been found. It can only be assumed that at least one result of their investigation was the appointment of a European as overseer of the mint, because by 1804, Mr Burges had arrived to fill this role (see later).

Copper Coins 1775-c1805

Barlow reported 26:

...The coinage of pice was [again] discontinued till the 17th year of Shah Aulum, when Doorgah Chund Metre obtained permission from Rajah Chyte Sing to re-establish it. The new pice were 10 maasheh 3 rutees [~11.96g] in weight, and passed current in the bazar at about 50 or 51 per rupee.

In the 18th year, Kashmiree Mull brought a large quantity of copper from Calcutta and farmed the coinage of pice and the exclusive privilege of buying and selling copper in the city of Benares from the Rajah, for 5000

Bengal Presidency, Banāras Mint

rupees. The weight of the pice continued at 10-3 and passed in the bazar or market at about 52 or 53 per rupee.

In the 19th & 20th year the coinage was declared free, and those who brought copper received pice in return, after paying the customary duties. For one maund of Kodaleah copper (Benarain weight) 84-6 to the seer, the merchant received back from the mint 3250 pice each weighing 10-3 after deducting all charges, which amounted to 7-12 per maund...

In 1779/80:

In the 21st year a considerable revolution took place in the copper coinage. The Nawab Vizier issued orders to the officers of the Allahabad mint to reduce the weight of the pice to 9-2 [~10.64g]. The merchant finding that their maund of copper yielded 3650 pice at Allahabad whereas at Benares it produced only 3250, carried all their copper to the former place. The coinage of pice in the Benares mint was in consequence at a stand, only 29 maund being coined during this year. Large quantities (sic) of the new Allahabad pice were brought down by the merchants to Benares. Rajah Chyte Sing at first refused to authorize their currency but at length gave his consent at the solicitation of some of his dependents, who were to share the profits with the merchants. The Allahabad pice of 9-3 were accordingly declared current, and ordered to be received in payment in common with the old pice of 10 maashehs 3 rutees. It is here necessary to mention that under the native Governments it is customary to proclaim the value of all new money issued from the mint, and it is deemed an high offence to demand a batta on a coin stamped with the name of the Emperor. Hence the facility with which the farmers of the mint circulated their debased coin, the merchants not daring to refuse the receipt of it during the year of its currency. When Rajah Chyte Sing therefore declared the Allahabad pice current at Benares in common with the old pice, the bankers, unable to make any distinction between them, contrived to lower the value of pice altogether, in which they were assisted [by] the large importations from Allahabad.

It is not clear exactly what these Allahabad pice were, but in 1780/81 Banāras pice were produced at a reduced weight:

In the 22nd year, Rajah Chyte Sing, at the representation of his Mint Master whose profits were diminished by this discontinuance of the copper coinage, ordered pice to be coined of the same size and weight as the Allahabad pice, which contributes greatly to our stock [in] circulation.

In the 23rd & 24th year, after the expulsion of Chyte Sing, the same weight of 9-2 was continued, and the price of pice continued to fall till the late famine in the 25th year, when they sold at 93 for a rupee. About this period Mr Hastings arrived at Benares. The poor complained that the cheapness of pice, added to the dearness of grain, rendered them unable to subsist on the wages they received for their labour. The Collector of the Customs at Benares, represented that a considerable part of the duties were paid in pice, & that he lost near 50 per cent in exchanging them for rupees. Mr Fowke was in consequence directed to enquire into the state of the copper coinage, but it does not appear that either in this or the following year any measures were taken to complete the reform.

The light-weight pice were banned in 1785/86:

In the 27th year the late Resident, Mr Grant, forbid the currency of the old pice of 9-2 [~10.64g], and ordered that no pice should be issued from the mint under 10 maashees 3 rutees [11.96g], and that Goorackpore pice weighing from 10 maashees to 10-3, and Benares pice of 10 maashehs 3 rutees, should pass at the same value. The price immediately rose to 58 [per] rupee.

In the 28th year, when it was supposed that a sufficiency of the new pice had been coined for the circulation of the city, the Goorackpore pice were also forbidden, and only the new Benares pice stamped with the tirshool or trident and weighing from 10 maashehs to 10-3 and the Goorackpore pice restamped and not under 10 maasheh, were declared current. From the commencement of this year to the present time, the price of pice has fluctuated between 56 & 58 per rupee. These regulations have not yet extended to the interior parts of the country, where the old pice of different weights are still current...

...At present the coinage of pice is almost at a stand. The Kodaleah copper from which they are made, now sells for about 56 rupees per maund and the market price of pice is 58 per rupee, so that the dealers in copper would sustain a considerable loss by sending it to the mint...

The fluctuating price of copper caused severe distress to poorer people, who earned only about four pice per day:

...Should the price of copper fall, or the value of pice rise, the merchants will again bring their copper to the mint. This fluctuation however in the copper coin is a constant source of oppression to the poorer part of the community. In order to explain this it is necessary to mention that the rupee is considered as the measure of value of all other metals and articles of merchandise. When grain therefore sells for 50 seer per rupee, and pice pass current in the market at 50 for a rupee, the labourer who receives four pice per day can purchase two seer of grain with the produce of his days work. But if pice should fall to 75 per rupee, he can only purchase half that quantity. During the late famine in the year 1783, grain rose to 15 seer for a rupee, and pice (owing

to the deficiency in the weight, and circulation being over stocked) fell to 90, so that the calamities of the famine were much increased by the diminution of the value of the copper coin.

From the above account, your Lordship will perceive that the pice, instead of being a medium of commerce, are more variable in their value than the articles they are made use of to purchase. The shroffs who trade in the coin are the only gainers. Government itself often sustains a considerable loss on such part of its revenues as [are] collected in the pice, but the poor on whose ease and happiness the prosperity of the country must depend, are the great and constant sufferers...

Barlow gave the number of pice issued from the mint in each year from the time the British acquired it (the AD & AH dates have been added) 27:

AD equivalent	AH equivalent	RY of Shah 'Alām	No
1775/76	1189/90	17	2,307,500
1776/77	1190/91	18	11,421,250
1777/78	1191/92	19	4,858,000
1778/79	1192/93	20	319,500
1779/80	1193/94	21	94,250
1780/81	1194/95	22 (9 months only)	2,854,300
1781/82	1195/96	23	1,865,150
1782/83	1196/97	24	-
1783/84	1197/98	25	2,737,500
1784/85	1198/99	26	27,056,950
1785/86	1199/1200	27	5,690,750
1786/87	1200/01	28	384,800

A later report gives the weight of copper coins issued by AD date (the AH & RY dates have been added) 28:

Output of the Banāras Mint (rounded to the nearest whole unit)

AD	AH equivalent	RY equivalent	Copper (maunds)
1782	1197/98	24/25	2232
1783	1198/99	25/26	
1784	1199/1200	26/27	128
1785	1200/01	27/28	0
1786	1201/02	28/29	
1787	1202/03	29/30	
1788	1203/04	30/31	755
1789	1204/05	31/32/33	580
1790	1205/06	33/34	
1791	1206/07	34/35	
1792	1207/08	35/36	0
1793	1208/09	36/37	377
1794	1209/10	37/38	369
1795	1210/11	38/39	71
1796	1211/12	39/40	203
1797	1212/13	40/41	
1798	1213/14	41/42	0
1799	1214/15	42/43	
1800	1215/16	43/44	148
1801	1216/17	44/45	0
1802	1217/18	45/46	0
1803	1218/19	46/47	175
1804	1219/20	47/48	59
1805	1220/21	48/49	0



Copper pice, RY 17

7.153

Conclusion of Barlow's Report

Barlow's report ended by proposing that a single currency should be established for the whole of Bengal:

From the above account, your Lordship will perceive that the disorderly state of the coin has proceeded from four great causes. First the farming of the mint. Second the annual alteration of the value of the rupees. Third the proportions between the three metals in coin not being fixed and enforced by Government. And lastly the receiving engagements from the farmers of the revenues in other species besides the established currency. I have endeavoured also to shew that it is for the interest of all orders of the state (the shroffs excepted) that one uniform currency should be established throughout the country, that there should be but one species of gold mohur, rupee & pice, and that the proportionate value of each should be fixed by Government. That the Company and their subjects have suffered by the debasing of the copper coin. That it is an advantage of the state that the money should be kept up to its proper weight & standard, and that the mint should never be looked to as a source of revenue. The measures I have presumed to recommend for remedying these evils have been founded on the principles of doing justice to the public, & which I trust will be a sufficient apology for any errors I may have committed in treating of a subject of so much intricacy and importance.

However, nothing was done about this recommendation and the production of the Banāras rupee continued until 1820.

Appointment of a European Mint/Assay Master

The second period of activity of the Banāras mint, under the British, began with the appointment of a European official to oversee the mint. Mr Burges appears to have been appointed from 13th October 1803 but did not arrive at Banāras until August of 1804. As he was ignorant of the ways of operating a mint, he asked if he could go to Calcutta to see how assays should be performed, as well as reminding the authorities about his salary 29:

I have the honor to inform you that I gave over charge of the Dinapore pay office to Captain Palmer about the 6th or 8th of May last and that I arrived at Benares in the month of August, but as from the date of your favor of the 13th October 1803, announcing to me the honour that His Excellency the most Noble the Governor General in Council had conferred upon me in appointing [me] Assay Master to the mint of Benares, to the present period, I have not received the smallest intimation in regard to my salary, or establishment. Will you therefore have the goodness to submit this circumstance to his Excellency the Most Noble the Governor General in Council.

Allow me further to request you will do me the favor to solicit for me His Excellency's permission to attend the assays at the Calcutta mint for a little while, before I commence upon the duties of the Benares mint, and as I am now on the river for the benefit of my health, pray indulge me with His Excellency's sentiments at the first convenient opportunity.

The Governor General replied, announcing his salary, but informing Burges that he would not be allowed to go to Calcutta:

The Governor General in Council on a consideration of the foregoing letter is pleased to fix the salary of the Assay Master at Benares at 2,000 Rs per month. Ordered that the Collector of Benares be directed to pay the above mentioned allowance and to discharge the arrears due to Mr Burgess according to that standard from the date of his appointment.

With respect to the establishment of the mint mentioned in the foregoing letter, ordered that the Assay Master be informed that the Governor General in Council desires that he will enter on a revision of that establishment and that he will submit his sentiments on the subject to Government thro' the Mint Committee at Benares.

Ordered that the Assay Master be at the same time informed that the Governor General in Council trusts that it will be found practicable to effect a considerable reduction in the present expense of the establishment.

With respect to the application contained in the foregoing letter from the Assay Master for leave of absence from his station, ordered that Mr Burgess be informed that the Governor General in Council deems it essential that he should take charge of the office to which he has been appointed without loss of time, and that under these circumstances, the Governor General in Council is precluded from complying with the Assay Master's application for permission to be absent from his station.

Mr Burges did not really get going in his new job until the very end of 1804, as shown by his reply to the above instructions, dated December 1804 30:

I have the honor to inform you that I have this day taken charge of the mint office, and have received from the darroga and assay master the undermentioned articles.

I have informed Baboo Govindoss, the late assay master, that the commencement of my authority terminated his, & that his services are no longer required in the mint department.

I have also informed the darroga that he may remain in the office till the pleasure of the Most Noble the Governor General in Council is known in regard to him, provided he conduct himself with the utmost propriety.

In another the letter tabled at the same meeting, he discussed the appalling state of the mint:

...Agreeable to your instructions I will immediately take charge of the mint department of this city and endeavour to adopt such measures as I conceive are most likely to meet the intensions and approbation of His Excellency the Most Noble the Governor General in Council.

As soon as I am able to ascertain the nature of the department and the full extent of the business connected with it, I will do myself the pleasure of addressing you on the subject.

Permit me to take advantage of the present opportunity to mention that the house hitherto employed by the natives for the mint, is not a place where an European could exist in, in the hot weather, and not accessible to a carriage at any time or season, and one part of the road to the native mint office is not even passable for a palenkeen. The streets in general are extremely narrow, and to add to the inconvenience, the lanes and small passages are all without drains and very much annoyed by rubbish, filth and nuisances of every description. Of course, in the hot weather and rains, they must be proportionably offensive and oppressive, and prejudicial to the health of an European to be obliged to pass daily through them or to breath for any time the air of their vicinity. Moreover those passages are so continually thronged with such an astonishing number of people of all ages and sexes, that it is very difficult to pass through them during the hours of business and particularly if there happens to be any laden carts or cattle in the way, which causes a general halt from one end of the street to the other, and sometimes to those immediately connected with it, of course liable to accidents, and a great and mortifying loss of time. These circumstances compelled me to secure a house that both the native merchants and myself could have access to, at least during the dry season, and I consider myself fortunate in having met with one belonging to a native that I am in hope will answer the purpose at one hundred rupees per month from the 13th November. This sum added to the 200 rupees per month I pay for the only house at [Secrole] that was not occupied on my arrival in August last, makes my regular disbursements for house rent, in consequence of my new situation, 300 per month, an unavoidable tho' unforeseen disbursement, and unfortunately as none are to be had at this station that would answer the purpose on easier terms (a dwelling house and a public office with a sufficient number of outhouses to accommodate some hundred workmen of every description, being indispensable for the duties I am ordered on), I therefore trust that the measure will meet with the approbation of His Excellency the Most Noble the Governor General in Council.

Mr Burges' inexperience meant that he needed information provided to him from someone with knowledge of running a mint 31:

As I have no guide before me for forming a mint establishment, will you have the goodness to request the favor of His Excellency's the Most Noble the Governor General in Council, directions to the Mint Master in Calcutta to furnish me with a copy of the establishments of the provincial mints at Dacca and Patna. It likewise may be of material use to me if his Excellency will also order me a copy of the instructions that was sent to Mr Blake and Doctor Davidson on their first taking charge of the provincial mints of Dacca and Patna, with a list of the English writers and workmen allowed, and the names of the workmen if they happen to be in the Calcutta mint office, to enable me to find them out in case I should have occasion for their services. Also a list of the machines, engines and coining implements they were furnished with, with a list of the articles they were authorized to indent for, and the form of the indent, with the name of the person or office on whom the indent is to be made with the allowance of, or for stationery.

As the mode of assaying gold and silver may materially differ in different mints, allow me to request an exact statement of the mode that is used in the Calcutta mint and the means of ascertaining if the lead is of a proper quality for assaying, and has never been used in that way before, and what sort of lead the preference should be given to, for I find the lead procured in this city does not always give the same result, and as the merchants furnish their own lead, they may play some tricks with it that may be out of the power of the Assay Master to foresee or to guard against, and if it meets with the approbation of His Excellency, I would recommend that this mint should be furnished with lead from Calcutta, but also with every article that Mr Blake was supplied with at Patna, which if not expended can always be returned to the public stores, and I understand Mr Blake when his appointment was annulled, returned to the Calcutta mint office every article that was sent to him. Of course, I conceive no difficulty or inconvenience can arise in furnishing this mint with the articles he returned...

...This makes me daily more and more sensible of the advantage of being an eye witness and master of the general mode of conducting business in the Calcutta mint, but I am all submission to the pleasure and convenience of Government.

I likewise wish that a coining, milling and laminating machine may be sent up, as soon as may be convenient, to enable me to ascertain by a course of experiments and fair trial what advantage may be introduced by the mode at present used in Calcutta, or continuing the native method of coining with the hammer only, tho' the whole figure of the dye is not impressed on the rupees that are made in any of the native mints.

Mr Burges also mentioned a problem encountered with lower quality coins that looked like Banāras rupees:

Allow me to mention in this place that Rewar Rupees, tho' of inferior value have to an inexperienced person very much the aspect of a Benares rupee and are sometimes passed as such. It may therefore be a matter worthy the consideration of Government to determine how far they may approve of the milling of Benares rupees of the present weight and value for the purpose of distinguishing them from the rupees of Rewar, or any other native mints. The difference of weight will prevent their ever passing for Calcutta rupees and the appearance of the milled edges may be changed to any other form that Government may think proper to direct and perhaps the milling on the Spanish dollars or any other Europe coin may serve as a guide.

In fact, the problem had already been identified because, in November 1804, the Governor General had sent a letter requesting the Banāras mint committee to investigate these rupees of Rewah, which were apparently being passed as Banāras rupees 32:

...The Governor General in Council however, desires that you will take this case in your consideration and that you will submit to Government such information as you may possess respecting the Rewah rupees. You will in particular be pleased to ascertain whether the rupees in question (specimens of which are herewith transmitted to you) are the established currency of the country of Rewah. You are likewise desired to ascertain whether that coin passes in circulation in the province of Benares at nearly its intrinsic value or whether attempts are made to pass the Rewah rupees for Benares siccas, and at the value of the latter rupees.

Having previously dismissed the native Assay Master, Burges next dismissed the incumbent darogah and appointed a new one 33:

Finding that I could not transact the business of the mint to the advantage of Government with Saik Ally Ahsun, the old Darroga who declines giving security for his future good behaviour, or to be answerable for the conduct of any of the officers of the mint, and showed an unwillingness to meet my wishes on any occasion, and being apprehensive that his long connexion with the late Assay Master might induce him to shelter or connive at attempts to introduce similar practices on some other occasion, I therefore conceive it for the interest of Government at once to remove him till the pleasure of His Excellency is known, and in his place and that of the late Assay Master, to appoint a darroga who would not only give ample security for his own good conduct, but who would jointly with his security be responsible for the good conduct of the principle officers of the mint, and, what I consider to be of very material importance, the new darrowga and his security, engage to be security for the good conduct of the chowkessy, or head assayer, and to indemnify Government for any loss by short weight or otherwise, or any excess of alloy above the allowed standard, a circumstance that is a very great relief to my mind, new and unexperienced as I feel myself in this department, where practical knowledge is everything.

The person who I have nominated to the duty of durrowga and superintendent of the mint is named Lutchmun Doss, a native of this district, by profession a shroff of some wealth, of opulent connexions and of good repute, and has a banking house in the city. His elder brother, Rammarain Doss, well known in the banking line who is also a shroff and of still greater wealth, with a separate banking house in the city, is his security, and jointly with Lutchmun Doss, security for the chowkessee or head assayer, and the principal officers of the mint.

In January 1805, he again requested to be allowed to visit Calcutta and see how the mint there operated. He recommended that Dr Yeld should take his place for the time being 34:

The mint office being now in a train of business that will admit of a temporary absence in consequence of a responsible shroff having engaged to be answerable for all short weight & excess of alloy, as mentioned in my different addresses to the gentlemen of the Mint Committee, I trust His Excellency the Most Noble the Governor General in Council will have the goodness to permit me to visit Calcutta for the purpose of settling some private concerns for the benefit of my family who embark this season for Europe, and as I have never had an opportunity of seeing any regular assays, it will be a great satisfaction and advantage to me if His Excellency will allow me to attend the mint during my stay in Calcutta.

Doctor Yeld, a gentleman much esteemed and respected at this station has had the goodness to offer to act for me should His Excellency approve of the measure and not think it convenient to appoint a gentleman in the civil service to superintend the mint during my absence.

and this time he was allowed to go:

The Governor General in Council having taken the above letters into his consideration, is pleased to comply with the application of the Assay Master at Benares for leave of absence from his station for the purpose of attending for a short period of time the conduct of the business of the mint at the Presidency.

The Governor General in Council is likewise pleased to empower Mr Yeld the surgeon at Benares to act as Assay Master during the absence of Mr Burges.

In December of 1805, a decision was made to abolish the post of Mint & Assay Master as it was then constituted, and make the position merely a part of Mr Yeld's job 35:

The Vice President in Council, having taken the foregoing extract into his consideration, is pleased to abolish the office of Mint Master and Assay Master at Benares (as it is at present constituted) and to determine that the office of Mint Master and Assay Master at Benares shall in future be held by the head surgeon attached to the civil station with a salary of 500 Rs per month.

The Vice President in Council is accordingly pleased to appoint Mr T Yeld to be Mint Master and Assay Master at Benares.

Ordered that the foregoing resolutions be communicated to Mr Burges, to Mr Yeld, to the Mint Committee at Benares and to the officers of account in the revenue department.

This came as rather a shock to Mr Burges, who asked to be allowed to continue to draw his salary until another position was found, but this was refused 36, although he was eventually allowed to draw a salary for being out of work and various of his expenses were paid 37. Mr (or Dr) Yeld continued as the mint & assay master at Banāras for many years.

Silver Coins c1805 to 1812

Mr Yeld quickly decided to start experimenting with improvements to the method of coin production, and in January 1806 he sent a list of articles that he needed from the Calcutta mint, to Calcutta Government 38. These included:

Two milling engines and some ring forms for making the counters uniformly round...

...These are intended to try how far it will be practicable, or expedient, to adopt milling in the Benares mint, and a further indent will be made or these articles returned, according to the result of the experiment...

The Mint Master at Calcutta was ordered to provide the articles requested.

Yeld also began to investigate various charges that were made for producing coins from metal brought to the mint. One of these charges was called "Gurreah Salamee", and he asked if he could keep the amount raised, for himself 39:

...On Mr Burges delivering over charge of the mint to me on his going away on leave of absence, he informed me that he had directed a perquisite to be held in deposit, under the head of Gurreeah Salamee, arising from the bit of silver cut from each crucible melted down and taken for the purpose of assay to ascertain whether the bullion is equal to standard, previous to its being struck with the Ballah Pie or stamp of impression. This, though the property of the person bringing bullion for coinage has from long acknowledged custom been considered as a private recompense from the merchant to the darogah...

Not surprisingly, he was told that the charge should be discontinued:

Ordered that the mint Committee at Benares be informed that the Governor General in Council is pleased to direct that the fee heretofore levied on the coinage at Benares be discontinued immediately on the receipt of the present order, and that the amount in deposit as stated in the letter from the Mint and Assay Master be brought to the account of Government.

By 1810, investigations into the requirement for the different mints within the Presidency (now Calcutta, Farrukhābād and Banāras) raised the question of whether or not the production of the Banāras rupee should continue 40. This eventually led to a change in the design of the Banāras rupee, but not its abolition, and the old style of silver rupee continued to be produced until 1812.



7.106

Rupee AH 1226, RY 49

The only information found in the records about the mint output, show an ongoing production of rupees for at least some years 41:

Under European Superintendence...

AD	AH equivalent	RY equivalent	Silver (Rupees)
1806	1221/22	49/50	5,790,758
1807	1222/23	1/2 (Muh Akbar)	4,183,308
1808	1223/24	2/3	2,085,013

Copper Coins Produced at Banāras c1806 to 1808

The Banāras mint continued to produce copper pice, but in small numbers as shown by the figures given below 42:

Under European Superintendence...

AD	AH equivalent	RY equivalent	Copper (maunds)
1806	1221/22	49/50	0
1807	1222/23	1/2 (Muh'd Akbar)	126
1808	1223/24	2/3	20

Yeld began to investigate the copper coinage soon after he took over as Mint & Assay Master and this seems to have been his main concern at first 43:

My attention has for some time been engaged into an enquiry into the currency of this province with a view to a report on the subject in general, but my investigation having as yet been more immediately confined to the copper currency, the evident abuses it admits of and which in daily practice, I deem it my duty to submit to Government without delay, and have to request you will please to submit this address to the Honble the Governor General in Council in such manner as you deem most proper.

There is no regulation for the weight, size, or impression of pice that can be the least check on any person making them privately without fear of detection, as the accompanying specimen will clearly evince. A great part of the pice now in circulation have been made in Oude, the Rewah Raja's country and other places out of the district and smuggled into circulation imperceptibly.

The weight of pice when made being in a great measure regulated by the then current price of copper, their relative value, instead of being afterwards reckoned by weight according to the present price of copper, is determined by number, and this is not only influenced by the price current of copper, but by other circumstances that will be detailed hereafter.

The present copper currency is a source of the greatest hardship and loss to that class of people least able to bear it. Their poverty obliges them to take their pay daily, which is always reckoned to them in the common divisions of a rupee, by annas and this is paid to them according to the current price of pice, by number. When they carry these pice to the bunyahs for the purchase of their daily food, they will not receive them according to the value of them in the anna, but at a rate by which the retail purchaser is imposed on, never less than one anna in the rupee.

But it is seldom the poor coolie who gets his anna and half, or two annas a day, is able to afford one article to the amount of one pice. He has therefore to undergo the further imposition of the budleeah, or money changers, by reducing his pice to gundahs of cowries, whose established custom is to make two pice per rupee profit. The bunyahs on this again lay a tax, by receiving the cowries at a less rate than they have been bought at, generally equalling the profit they make by receiving pice, so that the poorer class of the Honble Company's subjects in this district pay from near seven to upwards of thirteen per cent dearer, for the necessaries of life, than those who are able to go into the market with silver.

The rich are also not exempt from the operation of the price of pice on their daily consumption, since the rate of many things in the greatest demand, milk, eggs, some kinds of grain, and many other articles are regulated by the current number of pice in the rupee, but the greatest injury the rich suffer is at the season of marriages in their families, when if they have not had the precaution of laying in a stock of pice necessary for the occasion, the budleeahs and richer bunyahs make their harvest by previously hoarding their pice and raising the price of them at this season of the year from four to ten in the rupee. Altho' the rich by neglect may suffer equally with the poorer man, yet the poor one is not less exempt if he has a marriage in his family, as on these occasions they always borrow to the utmost extent they can get credit for, and the lender never fails to advance in silver, and receive back in pice, at a season of the year they are cheapest.

This latter being an imposition voluntarily entered into, may not present any very urgent claims for redress, but the daily sustenance of so numerous a body of subjects as constitutes the labouring class in this populous province, demands every amelioration that can be suggested for their relief...

Yeld then suggested that the solution to these problems was the production of a new copper coinage:

...Actuated by these considerations, a zealous discharge of the duties of the office committed to my charge, and that the relief required may be made a source of profit to Government, I venture to submit to the attention and consideration of the Honble the Governor General in Council, specimens of a new copper coinage, with such remarks as have occurred or have been suggested to me on each kind:

	Number to the rupee	Weight Grains Troy	Grams	Diameter Inches
No 1 A double pice	32	240	15.55	1¼
No 2 A single ditto	64	120	7.78	1
No 3 A half ditto	128	60	3.89	¾
No 4 A quarter pice	256	30	1.94	6/10

In fixing on these divisions I have been led to enquire into the bunyahs mode of keeping small accounts and have adopted their subdivisions of the anna as most likely to be convenient to them, and relieve those dealing with them.

I at first made but three divisions, from the fear of making the coin too small. The fourth was made at the suggestion of an intelligent native, who stated that it would in a great measure [address] all applications to the budleeahs and that recourse to them only on the lowest division of cowries would be required.

In fixing on the above rates of weight, I have assumed that the Honble Company are able to afford copper at forty rupees the factory maund, and have doubled the expense of making the old pice. This, according to my calculations will give the expense of a factory maund of new copper pice, fifty five rupees, and the number made, equal to sixty six rupees, leaving a profit of eleven rupees, about seventeen per cent. But in the expense of making the old pice, there being a russoom to Government of one rupee eight annas a maund reckoned, which on being doubled will add to the profit above stated somewhat above four rupees eight annas per cent. Should this rate require any reduction, I would recommend its being made by taking off forty, twenty, ten and five grains from each respective kind of pice.

The specimens sent by Yeld are presumably those identified by Pridmore (Pr 299-302, Cat. No. 7.175 to 7.178), although only the double and quarter pice have been found.



7.175

Yeld's pattern double pice

Yeld went on to suggest how the coins might be manufactured, with the blanks being prepared at Calcutta, and subsequently struck with the design at Banāras:

If the machinery of the Calcutta mint could be employed in laminating and cutting the durabs, it would greatly reduce the expense of making the pice, but I would no means advise the impression being stamped in Calcutta, as the prejudices of the natives in its being struck at Benares should in my opinion be conceded to, and the expense would be so little more than it could be done for in Calcutta as not to be [a] worthy consideration.

In issuing a new coinage it appears to me a serious object to Government to call in the old at the least expense possible. This has had its consideration with me in fixing the weight of the new, and on weighing a rupees worth of new pice, with a rupees worth of old, at the present rate of forty six to the rupee, the old exceeds the new at an average of three pice. In taking the old pice, therefore, at the medium rate of the year, of forty eight to the rupee, a great inducement would be held out to the holders of old pice to exchange them, and the loss to Government would not be quite two thirds of the expense of recoinage.

I cannot acquire any authentic data for the quantity that would be required, and on this head can only give the general result of various opinions of several intelligent natives asked on it, which is that three lacs of the different kinds should be prepared to commence with.

It would be as contrary to the liberal sentiments of the British Government in India, as to sound policy, to attempt to force a new coinage. I would therefore recommend to its being left to find its own way into circulation, with this only preference: that the old pice should not be taken or issued in any public payment, and that the prescribed number of either species of the new, should be a legal payment, either public or private, for a rupee or its divisions of annas, and that no pice should be made but on account of Government.

Pice Produced at Calcutta

The Calcutta mint Committee examined this proposal, and having asked for and received information about the price of copper in Banāras 44, they recommended a different set of denominations and weights for the new copper coinage for Banāras 45 (the "Grams" column has been added):

	Number to a rupee	Calcutta sicca weight	Grams
A double pice	32	1-1-6	12.39
A single ditto	64	0-8-9	6.2
A half ditto	128	0-4-4½	3.1

Bengal Presidency, Banāras Mint

The ¼ pice on the proposed reduction of weight we deem too small a coin to be struck in copper.

We have the honor to submit specimens of the proposed coins, for which the dies appropriated to the copper currency of the lower provinces have been used, no dies being at present prepared for the Benares coinages.

The Calcutta mint Committee recommended that the pice should be struck at Calcutta:

We are decidedly of opinion that these coins should be struck in the Calcutta mint. The coinage will afford employment to the establishment here, and render unnecessary any additional charges at Benares. The coins will be better executed than the coins sent by Mr Yeld and will, we think, obtain circulation notwithstanding the prejudice supposed by Mr Yeld to exist at Benares, against coins not struck in that city.

We recommend that the copper sizer of all pice coined in the Calcutta mint be disposed of by public auction in future.

The old copper coins in circulation at Benares should, we think, continue to be received in payment at the public treasuries in that province, for such period after the new coinage may be issued as the Mint Committee there may deem necessary for the accommodation of the inhabitants, and as soon as an adequate supply of the new coinage may be furnished to the Collector, the old coins should not be reissued, but be melted down and disposed of by public sale.

The Committee was also anxious to try to control the use of copper coins produced outside the boundaries of the Presidency:

We beg leave to suggest that individuals throughout the Company's provinces, may be interdicted from coining copper currency, and that the coinage of Government only be current. From Mr Yeld's letter it appears that the coinage of districts not subject to this Government has obtained circulation in Benares and its vicinity. We therefore recommend that the receipt of such coin at any of the public treasuries be prohibited.

However, there was one immediate problem with the production of a new copper coinage, and that was the lack of any copper to make the coins:

PS On enquiry we find that there is not any sheet copper in store fit for the coinage of pice. We beg leave therefore to recommend that application may be made to the Government of Fort St George to send round by the first opportunity as large a supply of the above article as can conveniently be spared.

Nevertheless, their recommendation was approved 46:

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of a letter from you dated the 15th May last, and to acquaint you that the Honble the Governor General in Council has been pleased to approve the weight of the double, single and half pice proposed by you to be coined for the province of Benares, and the rate at which they are proposed to be issued as stated in Paragraph 6 of your letter. The Governor General in Council accordingly approves the specimens of the coins submitted by you with the exception of that part of the inscription which is in the Bengal character, and which the Governor General in Council is of opinion should be in the Nagree character.

The Governor General in Council approves your suggestion for coining the pice at Calcutta instead of Benares.

The Governor General in Council concurs in opinion with you that after the new copper coinage of Government shall have become current, no other copper coins ought to be received at the public treasuries.

An application has been made to Fort St George for the necessary supply of copper. The Governor General in Council however, desires that the coinage may be commenced in case copper can be obtained at a reasonable price in Calcutta.

You are desired to forward a copy of this letter to the Mint Master at Calcutta with such further instructions as may appear to you to be necessary with respect to the proposed new coinage for the province of Benares.

The Calcutta mint master, Forster, was concerned about the amount of copper that would be required to meet all of the requirements, not only for Banāras, but at the same time coinages for Bengal and Bihar 47 (see chapter 6, pp. 261-269). However, by June 1808 he was able to report 48:

...I have now the pleasure to inform you that I shall be able to remit to the Collector of Benares, whole pice, four lack, half pice, three lack and twenty thousand, Quarter pice, three lack and twenty thousand...and request the orders of Government to inform me what guard is to be sent with the above pice and by whom it is to be supplied...

and he was instructed to dispatch them without delay:

...that the pice which have been coined for the provinces of Benares...may be dispatched without delay.

Under the regulations passed by Government on the 29th January last, you are desired to apply to the officer commanding the corps of Calcutta Native Militia, for an escort for the coins

and more were sent later in the year 49.



7.180

Double pice c1807-1809

On 22nd August 1808, the Collector of Banāras asked the Banāras mint committee for their view on whether or not he should issue pice received from Calcutta at the rates stated in an attached invoice 50. The invoice states:

100 boxes of whole Benares pice each containing 4000, or total 400,000, @ 32 per rupee
 40 boxes of half pice each containing 8000, or total 320,000
 20 boxes of quarter ditto each containing 16,000 or total 320,000

Although this extract refers to pice, half pice and quarter pice, this presumably equates to the double pice, pice and half pice known to have been issued.



7.181

Copper pice produced in Calcutta c1807-1809

Response of the Banāras Mint Committee

The Banāras mint committee had been asked, sometime previously, to produce regulations for the operation of the mint there. In June 1808, they proposed a draft regulation, part of which referred to the copper coinage 51:

In obedience to the orders of Government we have the honor to transmit the draft of a regulation for the conduct of the duties of the mint at Benares...

...The state of the copper coinage, or rather the insufficiency of the quantity to meet the demand, calls for immediate attention. The distress so universally experienced falls more particularly on the middling classes and the manufacturers. The loss they sustain from this cause is the subject of much complaint and vexation.

The Pisa in currency at Benares, weighing 180 grains, now at the exchange of 44 to the rupee, were a few years back at 60, but, notwithstanding this material difference, all payment in pisa continue at the same rate as when they were at the lowest valuation. This has enhanced the price of labour at least 30 per cent, whilst the price of provisions has experienced no alteration to countenance this rise in the price of labour. The complaints are therefore well founded. A manufacturer now pays for eleven day labourers, the same hire for which he formerly procured fifteen.

The grievance admits of no other remedy than by a coinage of copper pisa. This was proposed by Mr Yeld, but by a reference to the orders of Government passed on the letter from the Calcutta Mint Committee dated the 15th June 1807, it is intended that a coinage of copper for the supply of this province shall be made in the Calcutta mint. The province has not yet derived any benefit from this intention.

The pise proposed to be introduced is a broad coin, which cannot be made of any copper of inferior quality to the Europe sheet copper. I do not know what may have been the price of that sort of copper when it was determined that pise should be made of it. Its present wholesale market price at Benares is now at 80 rupees the maund, and rising in value. In the retail the price is considerably higher. Consequently if the Calcutta mint send pisa made of this copper issued at the valuation proposed by the Committee, of 82½ rupees the maund, it would not operate to relieve the general distress, because it would be an object to buy up these pisa for the purpose of again converting them into sheet copper.

The Calcutta Mint Committee further objected to the coinage at the Benares mint from its burthening Government with an additional expense, and because the coin could be much better executed in Calcutta than the specimens sent by Mr Yeld. In answer to the first objection Government will observe from the

accompanying regulation which is formed on the practice of the mint from its original institution, that no additional expense would be incurred, and to the second, it is enough to say that if the community be relieved from the existing distress, no importance can attach to the beauty of a copper coinage.

The specimens sent by Mr Yeld were also made of sheet copper, but I know not on what copper his estimates were calculated, as there is not any sort to be now procured at the price of 57 rupees per maund. At any rate the pisa to be coined required sheet copper, and under existing circumstances, I apprehend that neither Mr Yeld's plan nor the plan proposed by the Calcutta Mint Committee can be executed, for it is stated by the Calcutta Mint Committee that there is no sheet copper in store, nor could any quantity be procured here, whilst the Acting Collector reports that the quantity of pisa necessary to be coined for the supply of this province will amount to nine lacks of rupees. It is therefore to be considered by what other plan the distress of the community can be relieved.

From the enquiries I have made I am of opinion that the lump and bar copper which comes from Nepaul, [Bootwul?] and from the westward would answer extremely well for pisa. It is in fact that which is now in currency. If the beauty of the coin can be dispensed with, and individuals be allowed to bring this copper for coinage, the trade would be so considerably encouraged that there can be little doubt of copper being soon brought in such abundance to the mint as speedily to bring down the exchange of pisa to its proper level...

...But the pisa to be made from this copper must still continue an misshapen sort of coin, the metal being too hard and brittle to allow of its being much flattened. The distress of the community would however be effectually relieved and that is the material object to which the views of Government will be directed. The shape size and stamp of the proposed pisa is specified in the regulation.

These thick sort of pisa are, I think, preferable to the other sort. The objection of the lower orders to the broad flat coin is not founded [on] idle prejudice. From the resemblance which the large pisa has in its size to the rupee, it is apprehended that the lonely traveller and pilgrim may be murdered from the belief that they possess silver. If there be foundation for this apprehension there remains no hesitation to which of the two sorts of pisa preference should be given.

It is likewise to be observed that pisa beaten in the way proposed saves all the heavy loss of sizer, which is calculated by the Mint Committee to be equal to one third of the quantity of metal coined in Calcutta. This is a material saving which more than compensates for any deficiency in the beauty of the coin.

It is in vain to regulate by fixed rules the market price of pice, as their value does not depend on the relative value of silver, but on other contingent circumstances not under control.

The pisa from the Calcutta mint issue at 64 for the rupee, but their currency in the market seldom exceeds 56. It will however be advisable for Government to give every encouragement towards keeping up the value of pisa, but which must still be left to find its own level in the market. On these principles the rules for the copper coinage have been introduced in the regulation now submitted for consideration.

AD 1808 Regulation

A regulation for the future management of the mint at Benares and for the coinage of a new copper pisa at that mint. Passed by the Governor General in Council

There then follow all the rules about the management of the mint and the coins to be produced:

...XXXVII The copper coin made at the Benares mint shall be of pure copper and denominated pisa and each pisa shall weigh 240 grains troy or in country weight [...]. The pisa are to be hammered and care is to be taken to make them as round as that process admits of. The diameter of the pice shall be six eighths of an inch

XXXVIII The copper pice shall be struck on one side with the words Benares mint in the Persian character and the figure of a fish, being the usual mark on the Benares coin. On the reverse side in the Nagree character shall be the English year, the word pisa and the Tirsool or the emblem of Mahdeo.

XXXIX Half pice of the same standard and proportioned size and weight are also to be coined bearing the same impression as the whole pisa. A smaller division of the pisa than the half pisa shall not be coined.

As can be seen, they proposed that the old style of dump pice should be continued, but this was overtaken by the events described above, and anyway, their argument was rejected by the Calcutta mint committee 52.

Problems with the New Pice

Minting the new double, single and half pice, and sending them to Banāras, was one thing, getting them into circulation proved to be quite another. The Collector of Banāras wrote in October 1809 53:

...I am sorry to state the the united endeavours of the Magistrate and myself to introduce this coin into circulation in this province have failed.

It is true that all the single pice in store (to the value of about 75,000 rupees) have been issued, but not one I believe has obtained currency here. They have been remitted to Patna where I understand the shroffs obtain by the exchange a profit of one anna in the rupee.

The double pice and half pice are not in demand and more than seven or eight thousand rupees worth have been issued, and I hear they are still in the hands of the persons who first applied for them, because they are unable to circulate or dispose of them.

I have made many enquiries of intelligent persons, shroffs and others, as to the best mode of throwing this copper coin into circulation and it appears to be the general opinion that until Government shall compel the

acceptance and exchange of the new pice as money, and until a penalty shall be imposed on persons refusing to take them at the established rates, in payment of purchase etc. the circulation never will be effected.

I think it would be expedient to declare the pice of the Government coinage to be the only legal copper money, but that for a certain period (perhaps 6 months) all other descriptions of pice may be given and received at the rates of the Government pice. Viz double 32 per rupee and single 64 etc, but that all persons whether buyers or sellers or money changers shall only give, receive or exchange at that rate, and that after the period above fixed, no other pice than that of the Government shall be permitted to be circulated as money. Such a measure will, I conceive, effectually stop the circulation of the old pice and lead to the introduction of the new, for the persons who have old pice by them, will rather melt them down and convert them to other purposes than dispose of or make payments with them at the rate of the Government coin which would subject them to a loss, for the old pice are now sold at 24 per rupee. Should this or any other mode be adopted to check the circulation of the old pice and to force that of the new, it would greatly facilitate the introduction of the latter to appoint treasury podars at different parts of the city of Benares and all other large cities in the province, as money changers to exchange with all persons copper for silver in any sums large or small..

The Calcutta mint committee seemed to be of the opinion that the inability to get the coins into circulation was caused mainly by the shroffs, although they did admit that other causes were possible:

...The difficulty of introducing the new copper coinage into circulation may be ascribed to the following causes operating, each of them independently, and some of them to a certain degree with united effect: the new coin not being properly adapted to the purposes of exchange; the old coin being sufficient to the requisite circulation; and the influence of the parties interested in preventing the introduction of the new currency.

The ready sale of the whole supply of single pice, while no demand appears to exist for the double and half pice, would make it probable that coins of the two latter descriptions do not possess the convenience which the former offers. For altho' the Collector reports that these have been purchased not for circulation in Benares, but for exportation to Patna, we conclude that if the double or single pice had been equally acceptable as a medium of exchange, the purchase in a view to a profit which the circulation of them at Patna might afford, would not have been confined to the single pice.

That the old currency is sufficient for the requisite circulation, or that the shroffs possess the means of supplying every deficiency in it, appears also evident, for had the embarrassments to petty disbursements been such as the Mint Committee conceived them to be, it is scarcely probable that the public should not have found means of availing themselves of the remedy offered to it.

With this power of supplying the demands of the market so far as still to retain the command of it in their own hands, it is however very easy for the persons interested in excluding the new currency to effect their purposes. A combination of the numerous classes who derive a profit from the fluctuating value of an arbitrary exchange, and whose profit would be annihilated by the introduction of a currency of established and defined value, will ever maintain its influence as long as its extortion is not carried to such lengths as to provoke opposition, and can in its usual operations be only encountered by the strong arm of the law.

We accordingly concur with the Collector that some legislative provisions are necessary for giving effect to the currency established by Government. But his propositions seem to go further than would be admissible consistently with the received principles and general practice. The baser metals could not we believe be made a legal tender of payment beyond the fractional part of a rupee, and to compel the receipt of a larger amount in so inconvenient a shape would not be reconcilable with either expediency or justice.

There appears however, no objection to adopting his proposition of reserving to Government the prerogative of the copper coinage, and of making it penal in any private person to manufacture and issue this instrument of exchange, as well as those formed of the more precious metals, and for this purpose it would probably be sufficient to enact in the province of Benares the same provisions as have been established by regulation XLV, 1803, for the copper coinage of the mint at Farruckabad.

The proposed limitation of six months for the discontinuance of the present currency seems to allow a period sufficiently ample for the security of the public from loss by the measure, particularly when it is recollected that the old pice, altho' prohibited as a coin, will not be left wholly useless on the hands of the possessors, their value being always procurable in the market as old metal.

Should Government be pleased to approve of the suggestion for restricting the copper circulation to the public coinage, it might be advisable to confine the future supplies to the single pice which alone appear to be in request.

The actual regulation authorising copper pice for Banāras was published in December 1809. This decreed that the coins should be struck in Calcutta of one denomination and specified the inscription etc. 54:

A. D. 1809 REGULATION X

A REGULATION for the establishment of a copper coinage in the province of Benares.— PASSED by the Vice President in Council, on the 15th December 1809

WHEREAS it is expedient, that fixed and defined rules should be established for regulating the copper currency of the province of Benares, the following rules have been enacted by the Vice President in Council, to be in force in that province from the period of their promulgation.

- II. *The copper coin struck for the province of Benares shall be of pure copper, and shall be confined to pice of one size only, to be coined at the Calcutta Mint.*
- III. *The pice shall be 19-20th parts of an inch in diameter, and shall weigh sicca weight eight annas nine pie each, and shall bear the following inscription, in the Persian and Nagree characters;*
On one side, in Persian,
"The 37th year of the reign of Shah Allum Badshah."
On the Reverse, in both Persian and Nagree,
"One Pie Sicca."
- IV. *The copper coin established by this regulation, shall be considered to be a legal tender of payment in all money transactions, whether between government and its subjects, or between individuals in the province of Benares, for any sum being the fractional part of a rupee, at the rate of sixty-four pice for one Benares sicca rupee.*
- V. *Persons charged with melting, counterfeiting, clipping, filing, drilling, defacing, or debasing the copper coin, established under this regulation, will be liable to be prosecuted in the criminal courts, and to be punished as the law may direct.*
- VI. *The copper pice of all denominations at present in circulation in the province of Benares, shall be received as heretofore in all public and private transactions for the period of six months, from and after the promulgation of this regulation; but after the expiration of that period, no copper coin, except that established by this regulation, shall be considered as a legal tender in payment of any proportion of any public or private demand.*

By 1810, the 1809 regulation meant that the old dump pice would no longer be acceptable as currency, and since none of the new pice had got into circulation, there was about to be a serious shortage of copper coins 55:

Regulation X, 1809, having restricted the circulation of the old pice now current in the province of Benares to a period of six months, after the expiration of which none but the copper coinage of Government can be legally passed, I am directed by the Board of Commissioners to beg the favour of your submitting to His Excellency the Vice President in Council the necessity of furnishing the Collector of Benares with a supply of copper pice equal to at least three lacks of rupees, to answer the above exigency.

and the mint master was instructed to supply the necessary coins. However, the Calcutta mint committee was not convinced that these coins were necessary 56:

...We beg leave to observe that at the suggestion of Mr Yeld, copper coins were struck in the Calcutta mint to the value of 110,000 rupees in the year 1806/7, and transmitted to Benares for the purpose of being thrown into circulation...

...We were certainly led to believe from the information received from the late [Benares] Mint Committee that the utmost distress was experienced in the province of Benares for want of a sufficient supply of copper currency, but so far from this being the case it appears from the Board of Commissioners report that the old currency is either sufficient for the requisite circulation, or that the shroffs possess the means of supplying every deficiency in it.

We should therefore [regret] exceedingly that we did not possess more accurate information on this subject at an earlier period. If we had not reason to suppose that nearly the whole of the copper money coined for the use of Benares had been exported to Behar, where it passes equally current and at the same value with the Calcutta pice and consequently answers the purposes of circulation nearly as well as if an equal amount of Calcutta pice had been issued...

...We shall not pretend to say that the shroffs may not make an undue profit from the traffic which is carried on by them in copper money, and which as the late Benares Mint Committee observe, may operate in some degree as a hardship on the public, but it is evident that it cannot be any serious grievance or the new copper money would have obtained as ready a currency as it has done in Behar.

If however a supply of copper money were more urgently required for the use of the province of Benares than appears to be the case, it would be impracticable to furnish it within the period which has been fixed by regulation 10 of 1809, as there is no copper in store fit for the coinage of pice, and we beg leave therefore to suggest that the provisions contained in that regulation may be postponed until circumstances will admit of the coinage being carried into effect with less inconvenience to the public service than it could be at the present moment, even if there were a sufficient supply of copper in store...

The Calcutta Council agreed that the minting of copper coins for Banāras should cease for the time being:

...and to inform you that Government concur with you in opinion with respect to the expediency of discontinuing the coinage of copper for supplying the circulation of Benares, and that it also appears to them expedient that the operation of regulation 10 of 1809, in that province, should for the present be postponed.

The copper coins produced for this coinage never got into circulation in Banāras (see pp. 355-361).

Silver Coinage 1812 to 1815

The Board of Commissioners for the Ceded and Conquered Provinces produced a report on the Banāras mint in 1810, although it was not considered by the Calcutta Council until January 1812. They recommended that the management of the Banāras mint should be the same as that at Calcutta and Farrukhābād, and that the rupee should be improved by the introduction of machinery 57:

...If we considered the mint at Benares what it has hitherto been, merely as a private accommodation to individuals interested in the local currency, we should observe that it was scarcely an object for the interference of Government by legislative provisions. As long as the superintendence of the Mint Master secures the individuals from any imposition on the part of the native officers in their levy of fees and in the charges and wastage of coinage, as long as the check of the Mint Master over the native assayers and artificers, and the further test of occasional examination of the coin in the Calcutta Mint, prevents all depreciation of the weight or standard, we are not aware of anything more being necessary.

The present constitution also of the mint appears the best adapted to the purposes of a mint of mere private accommodation. The proprietor of the bullion to be coined, or an agent on his part, attends it thro' every stage of progress, overlooks each process, and never loses sight or possession of it. The whole expense of each operation, the loss attending it, the remuneration to the native officers and to the artificers, the costs of materials, are all at his charge, and the small duty received by Government is more than sufficient to defray the only charge to which Government is liable in the salary of the Mint Master, and the hire of an edifice for the mint.

But as Government have on mature deliberation determined to recognise this local currency as the legal coin of a valuable portion of its dominions, the currency thus recognised should be guarded by similar provisions as the currency of the other parts of its territories, and the mint in which it is coined can no longer be considered in any other light than as an appendage of the general sovereignty of the British Government.

Thus the Board of Commissioners started by observing that the Banāras mint had hitherto been considered as more of a local mint whose objective was largely confined to providing private individuals with the ability to turn bullion into coins. Now that the authorities in Calcutta had decided that the Banāras coinage would form a part of the overall coinage of the Presidency, the Board felt that better coins and better control of the mint was necessary. Their letter went on:

In this vein of the question, we can by no means concur with the late Benares Committee, either in retaining the mis-shapen coin now in use, or in establishing by a legislative recognition, the principle of the native officers and artisans remunerating themselves by a levy of fees. On the contrary, it appears to us that Government should now assume itself the entire direction of this mint and assimilate it in every respect to the mints of Calcutta and Farruckabad...

They investigated the possibility of making the blanks the same size as those in the Calcutta and Farrukhābād mints, presumably so that the whole impression of the die would appear on the coins and suggested that, if a milled coinage was introduced at Banāras, then the dies should be provided from Calcutta:

...In one of our visits to the Benares mint, we brought away four rupees as they fell from the stamping die, and we now transmit them in this address with four other rupees, which by our directions and in our presence were flattened into the size of the planchets made in the Calcutta and Farruckabad mints. The only objection which we heard stated were on the part of the artificers themselves, the quantum of whose remuneration depends on the celerity of their operations, and who are, of course, averse to the additional labour of flattening the planchets, and of stamping a deeper impression from the die.

Government will observe from these specimens how very defective [are] the impressions on the dies now in use. And such will be the case while the fabrication of the dies is left to the common engravers who attend the mint. If therefore Government should deem it proper to authorise the introduction of a milled coin in Benares, it will be expedient that the dies should be furnished from the Calcutta mint.

As the machinery wanted for the improved fabrication of the coin can only be procured at the Presidency, it will also be requisite to supply the Mint Master at Benares with two milling presses for the whole rupee and two for half and quarter rupees, two presses for stamping dies, two for the concave dies, and three for the collar dies, similar to those used in the Farruckabad mint, and one spare machine to be applied to either purpose on emergency...

They went on to propose a new establishment for the mint:

...In fixing the establishment which may be necessary for the Benares mint in the event of Government approving of the suggestion for assuming the entire direction of it, we have endeavored to limit it as far as on a comparison of the mint at Farruckabad, appeared practicable with due attention to the principal object of ensuring a regular discharge of official duties. The following is the establishment which in such case we should propose:

	Rs
Mint & Assay Masters	1200-0-0
House rent as at present	110-0-0
A foreman	100-0-0
An English writer	100-0-0
Darogah of the bullion Department	100-0-0
Ditto of the Coinage ditto	100-0-0
Sorter of Specimens	70-0-0
Two Weighmen at 10 rupees each	20-0-0
Five Superintendents of the presses at 10 rupees each	50-0-0
Two adjusters of the planchets at 10 each	20-0-0
Five Lascars at 5 ditto	25-0-0
One Jamadar at 6, & 10 Peons @ 4 ditto	46-0-0
One Godown Mutsudee	8-0-0
[Dufree] 8 rupees, Bheesty 4, Sweeper 3	15-0-0
Two chowkydars @ 4 Rs each	8-0-0
One Carpenter	16-0-0
One bricklayer	10-0-0
	1998-0-0

The Commissioners also proposed the following draft regulation, which, *inter alia*, fixed the weight of the Banāras rupee at 175 grains and specified the fineness:

AD 1810 Regulation

A Regulation for the future management of the mint at Benares and for preventing the debasement of the manufactures in which the precious metals constitute the principal materials

Preamble, Whereas it has been deemed expedient to continue the mint at Benares, and to assimilate the internal management of it to the rules already in force in the mints of Calcutta and Farruckabad, and whereas it is of importance to secure the purity and prevent the debasement of the precious metals employed in the various manufactures of the city of Benares, the following rules have therefore been enacted to be in force from their promulgation

Section II, The silver coin current in the Province of Benares, under the denomination of the Muchleedar Rupee, shall continue to be the established coin of the province, and shall be received as such in all public and private transactions

Section III, The Benares rupee is to continue of the following weight and standard, and half and quarter rupees are to be coined of the same standard and proportionate weight

Troy weight grains	175
Touch or pure silver	168.875
Alloy	6.125
Touch or parts of pure silver in 100	96.5
Alloy	3.5

Section IV, The Benares rupee shall be of the same size and form as the nineteenth sun sicca rupee struck in the mint of Calcutta and shall bear the same impression as is now in use

Section V, The half and quarter rupees shall be proportionately less than the rupee, according to their respective value, and shall have the same impression as the rupee

Section VI, To guard as far as possible against the counterfeiting, clipping, drilling, filing, defacing or debasing the coin, the edges of it shall be milled and the dies shall be made of the same size as the coin, so that the whole of the impression may appear on the surface of it.

Section VII, The dies for striking the silver coin at the mint of Benares shall be cut in the mint at Calcutta, and shall be sent by the Mint Master at Calcutta to the Mint Master at Benares. When the dies are broken or no longer serviceable, they shall be returned to the Calcutta mint.

Section VIII, The immediate conduct of the mint at Benares shall be committed to an officer to be denominated the Mint and Assay Master with an adequate establishment of native officers. The Mint and Assay Master shall be subject to the authority of the Board of Commissioners for the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, and of the Mint Committee at the Presidency, and the native officers shall be subject to all the rules of the existing regulations in common with all other natives in the employ of Government.

Section IX, The Mint and Assay Master and the native officers of the mint, shall be amenable to the Dewant Adawlat of the city of Benares, and shall be liable to be sued for damages for any breach of this regulation, or of any other regulations which may be enacted respecting the coin.

Section X, It shall be the duty of the judge of the Court of Circuit for the district of Benares, who may hold each monthly jail delivery for the city of Benares, to visit the mint during such jail delivery and to make such

enquiries as he shall consider necessary to satisfy himself of the manner in which the business of the mint is conducted, reporting the result of his enquiries to the Governor General in Council. He shall at the same time take indiscriminately out of the heaps of coin at the foot of the striking presses, three pieces of each description of coin which may have been struck off, and transmit them to the Mint Committee at the Presidency, who shall send the same to the Mint Master at Calcutta, in order that he may cause the coin to be examined and assayed. If the specimen of coin so transmitted shall be found to be not of the proper standard, and if the coin shall be defective in the workmanship, or in any other respect, the Mint Master shall report the circumstances to the Mint Committee at the Presidency for the orders of the Governor General in Council.

Section XI, The Mint Master at Calcutta shall cause a private mark to be put upon all the dies which may be prepared for the mint at Benares, but in such a manner as not to be distinguishable by the naked eye, or by persons unacquainted with it. These marks shall be varied as often as the Mint Master at Calcutta shall judge proper upon new dies being made and he shall keep a register of them in order that he may be enabled to discover any debased or defective coin which may be hereafter found in circulation.

Section XII, Persons charged with counterfeiting, clipping, filing, drilling, defacing or debasing the silver coin of Benares, shall be committed for trial to the criminal courts and shall be punished as the law may direct.

Section XIII, The Benares rupees of the prescribed weight and standard shall be considered to be a legal tender of payment in all public and private transactions, throughout the province of Benares. If a native officer of any public treasury shall be convicted before the court of Adawlet, to which he may be amenable, of refusing to receive in payment any such rupees or the halves or quarters of such rupees according to the established value, the court shall adjudge the offender to be dismissed from his office and shall further compel him to pay to the complainant the cost of the suit, and such damages as the court may deem proper upon a consideration of the circumstances of the case.

Section XIV, All officers agents, gomastahs or others employed in the collection or payment of the public revenue, or the rents of individuals, or the provision of the investment, and all proprietors and farmers of land, dependent Talookdars, under farmers of ryots, and all persons whatsoever are prohibited affixing any mark whatever to the silver coin, and all rupees or halves or quarters of rupees which may be so marked are declared not to be legal tender of payment in any public or private transactions, and the officers of government are directed to reject any rupees or halves or quarter of rupees so marked which may be tendered at the public treasuries in Benares.

Section XV, All Benares rupees which shall not have lost by wear a greater proportion of the full weight than 6 annas per cent or six sixteenth of a rupee in one hundred rupees, shall be considered as of standard weight and shall be received as such in all public and private transactions...

These proposals were accepted by the Calcutta Council in 1812, and the Calcutta mint master was directed to construct the machinery 58:

...The Governor General in Council entirely concurs with the Board of Commissioners in the expediency of placing the mint of Benares under the immediate control of Government and of assimilating it in every respect to the mints of Calcutta and Farrukabad...

...The Governor General in Council has been pleased to authorize the establishment recommended by the Board of Commissioners in their letter of 27th April 1810, for conducting the duties of the Benares mint, with exception to the wages of the foremen, which for the reasons assigned in the 35th paragraph of your report, it is considered advisable to fix at sicca rupees 250 per mensem.

As his Lordship in Council approves the introduction of the European machinery into the Benares mint, you are requested to issue the requisite instructions to the Calcutta Mint Master to have the necessary apparatus prepared.

The regulation that had been proposed in 1810 was apparently put into effect from 1st May 1812, and became known, in a slightly different form, as Regulation II, 1812 59:

I am directed by the Right Honble the Governor General in Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd ultimo requesting to be informed from what date the salaries fixed by the orders of Government of the 17th January last, for the officers of the Benares mint are to commence, and to acquaint you that the additional allowance is to be granted to Mr Yeld from the date fixed for Regulation II, 1812, to take effect by 1st May last, and the salaries of the native officers from the date on which they ceased to receive the fees formerly allowed to them.

This regulation also put the Banāras mint under the control of the Board of Commissioners of the Ceded and Conquered Provinces.

A rupee, with a different style of calligraphy, dated AH 1230 RY 49 (1812) may fit into this period:



7.136

Transitional type of rupee

By December 1812, a new foreman for the Banāras mint, Mr James Quin, had been identified 60 and, by January 1813, the machinery was ready for shipment from Calcutta to Banāras 61. However, when the machines arrived there were not enough of them 62:

I beg leave to state that there are three presses only forwarded with the present machinery, which are calculated for the proportionate work the laminating rollers can turn off. Three more therefore will be required for correcting the Derabs [Duraps?] planchets in the mode in use in the Farruckabad mint for effecting a coinage of 20,000 rupees per day and a spare one should be at hand to replace any one damaged or worn out.

The mint committee at Calcutta was ordered to supply the four machines requested. Mr Da Costa, the foreman of the Calcutta mint, had been instrumental in building the machinery, and hoped to receive some extra recompense for this work 63:

...copy of a letter and its enclosure from the Mint Master forwarding and recommending an application from the foreman of the mint, Mr DaCosta, to be remunerated for the extra duty of superintending the execution of two complete sets of machinery for the mints of Farruckabad and Benares.

The machinery intended for the Farruckabad mint was completed in February 1810, that for the mint at Benares in January last, and we have great satisfaction in being able to report that both sets were finished in a manner highly creditable to Mr DaCosta.

It having been usual to consider work of this kind as extra duty and to remunerate the foreman of the mint accordingly, and the sum of 6000 rupees having been granted to Mr Da Costa's predecessor on completing an extensive set of machinery for Madras in the year 1806, we beg leave to recommend that Mr DaCosta may be allowed the sum of 4000 rupees as a compensation for the extra duty of superintending the construction of the machinery for the mints at Farruckabad and Benares.

By September 1813, four more machines were ready for Banāras, and these are described as *collar and concave dye presses* 64. This implies that the manufacturing process involved production of blanks by hand, followed by striking of the blanks first with a concave die, followed by a collar die, before the impression was stamped on the coin (see chapter 4, p. 152, also chapter 6, pp. 270-273).

More buildings were needed to house the new machinery and, although this was authorised, the Banāras mint committee was warned not to enter into any long term commitment until more information was available about the renewal of the Company's charter 65.

In 1814 Mr Quin resigned as foreman of the mint after an argument with Mr Yeld 66. He was replaced by Mr Heatly 67.

Banāras Rupees c1815-c1820

By 1816 the new machinery for the Banāras mint was ready for dispatch from Calcutta 68:

I beg leave to inform you that the machinery ordered to be prepared for the mint at Benares in your letter of the 25th November 1815, is now completed. I therefore request a survey may be held on it on Saturday next at 12 O clock previously to its being dispatched.



7.142

Rupee pattern prepared in the Calcutta Mint



7.145

Currency rupee with mint name Muhammadabad Banāras

Farrukhābād Rupees Struck in the Banāras Mint

Yeld, the mint master, now (December 1816) suggested that Farrukhābād rupees should be struck in the Banāras mint 69:

The silver currency of Bundlekhund and Allahabad is by the regulations directed to be in the Furruckabad rupee.

In Bundlekhund very little of that coin has got into circulation; in Allahabad a somewhat greater proportion.

Most of the revenue in the first and much of the latter, is collected in rupees of sorts, principally of the kind Sreenuggur in Bundlekhund and different Corah sun rupees in Allahabad.

The Sreenuggur rupee is coined on the borders of Bundlekhund by an independent Mahratta chief, in a city, the name of which I cannot call to my recollection.

The Corah suns are struck in the Gohad country bordering on both.

On the British Government taking possession of these districts, old rupees of sorts were received in payment of revenue, at rates fixed by careful valuation of Mr Blake.

As these old rupees got out of circulation, new ones of similar import were struck of a depreciated value, which on a remittance of them coming to Benares for recoinage, I was obliged to call the attention of the Board of Commissioners to, and I believe a revised rate for their receipt in revenue payments was adopted.

A trade of a most extensive nature (particularly in cotton) is carried on with these districts by the merchants of Mirzapore and Benares.

Merchants importing bullion to Benares are unwilling to carry it to the great distance of Futty Ghur to get it coined and bring it back to Bundlecund for their disbursements. A great quantity of bullion is therefore sent from Benares to the Mahratta frontier and coined into depreciated Sreenuggur rupees. That part of these rupees paid into the treasury for revenue must by the existing regulations be sent to Furruckabad or Benares for recoinage into the respective currency of these mints at a very considerable expense.

It appears to me that much if not the whole of this might be obviated, by authorizing the new Furruckabad rupee being coined at Benares, for such merchants of that place and Mirzapore as may wish to have the bullion they import from the eastwards coined therein, and also the coinage of such rupees of sorts as may be sent to Benares, according to the instruction of the superintendent of resources, and either returned to Bundlekhund, or sent to Allahabad for the payment of the troops.

The advantage of this would be seignorage duties of the probably greater part of the bullion which is now carried from Benares into the Mahratta country, and introducing into the districts of Bundlecund and Allahabad generally, the legal currency established by Government for the receipt of their revenue and payment of their troops, with a positive saving of the expense of recoinage of that part now brought into the mint in rupees of sorts, and a facility would also be given to the great trade carried on to those parts, which would greatly convenience the merchants of Benares and Mirzapore, and by its encouragement increase considerably the revenue of the customs of those places.

The currency of Goruckpore and Azimghur (and I believe agreements for the payment of revenue) is in Lucknow rupees struck by the Nawab Vizier at Lucknow and Fyzabad of exactly the same intrinsic value with the new Furruckabad rupee.

A very large trade in cloth, sugar and salt petre is carried on in these districts by the Benares merchants who are obliged to send their bullion to Lucknow or Fyzabad and negotiate bills on those places to considerable disadvantage generally, and always with great inconvenience. A trade to a large amount is reviving with Bootwal and Napal, thro' these districts payable in their currency.

By the bullion employed in this anomalous currency of a coin not struck by the sovereign state, the seignorage and duties are totally lost to it, and its subjects paying its revenues as well as the merchants dealing with it, liable to great disadvantages, which it appears to me there are two modes of obviating. One by obtaining the consent of the Nawab Vizier for striking a Lucknow rupee at the Benares mint, and giving him credit for the supplies of the duties above the expense of the coinage. The other by declaring the new Furruckabad rupee the legal currency and allowing it to be coined at the Benares mint...

Bengal Presidency, Banāras Mint

The Governor General agreed in principal, but wanted to collect the views of the local authorities of the various districts. These views were summarized by the Board of Commissioners, who did not support the proposal to produce the Farrukhābād rupee at Banāras 70:

On receipt of the orders of Government under date the 10th January 1817, transmitting to us the copies of a letter from the Mint and Assay Master at Benares, and of a letter written to him in reply, we called on the Collectors of Allahabad, Bundelcund and Goruckpore and on the Mint Master at Furruckabad for their sentiments on the expediency of adopting Mr Yeld's proposition relative to the coinage of Furruckabad rupees at the Benares mint, and for giving currency in the three first mentioned districts to the Benares copper pice.

We now do ourselves the honor to submit copies of the replies which we have received from those officers and we beg leave to observe that from the explanations given by the Collectors of the three districts in question, it does not appear that the proposed measure of coining Furruckabad rupees at the Benares mint would be attended with any advantage to the public service or be productive of any convenience to the commercial classes...

Despite this, In 1817 a regulation for the circulation of Farrukhābād rupees produced in Calcutta and Banāras, as well as Farrukhābād, was issued 71:

Regulation XXVI, 1817, Authorizing the Circulation of Farruckabad Rupees coined in either of the Mints of Calcutta, Farruckabad or Benares or at any other mint, Established by Orders of the Governor General in Council

Whereas it may from time to time be found expedient to coin rupees of the weight and standard of the Farruckabad rupee at the mints of Calcutta or Benares, it has been deemed advisable to rescind so much of section 2 of regulation 45 of 1803, as tends to limit the coinage of Farruckabad rupees to the mint of Farruckabad, and to direct that the following enactment be henceforward in force:

The silver coin denominated the Farruckabad rupee and of the weight and standard prescribed by section 2 of Regn 3 1806, struck at the mints of Calcutta, Farruckabad or Benares or at any other mint established by order of the Governor General in Council is hereby declared to be the established and legal silver coin in the ceded and conquered provinces.

Exactly when Banāras began production of the Farrukhābād rupee is not clear, but probably not until 1819.

Abolition of the Banāras Rupee

In July 1819, the Calcutta mint committee gave consideration to the silver coinage in the expanded territories of the Bengal Presidency. Their recommendations included the following about Banāras 72:

...The considerations which we have now the honor to submit, combined with those already urged in our letter of the 20th July 1818, induce us to close the subject at present with expressing our opinion of the expedience of the following arrangements

1st The abolition of the Benaras rupee

2nd The limitation of the currency of the Upper Provinces to a rupee of the value of the present Farruckabad rupee...

...5th The coinage of the new Farruckabad rupee at the Benaras mint and consequent improvement and extension of that establishment. Should these arrangements meet with the approbation of Government, we conceive it would be found advantageous to give them as early effect as possible, as the difference of standard at present existing and the distant situation to which bullion is necessarily sent to be coined into Farruckabad rupees, entail much inconvenience and expense on the remittance of treasure to the Upper Provinces on public account....

...6th The substitution of the new Farruckabad rupee for the currencies of the newly acquired territory...

The output of the Banāras mint was given in a letter from the Calcutta mint committee in 1819 73, which was later updated 74.

Year	Total Output (Rs-An-P)
1813	3,358,216-3-7
1814	4,035,162-6
1815	6,221,817-3-11
1816	7,172,241-11-9
1817	7,320,959-3-10
1818	5,343,212-14-10
1819	3,382,628-5-3

Banāras was certainly coining Farrukhābād rupees by 1819 because a large amount of bullion was sent there for that purpose 75:

In conformity with the suggestion of the Accountant General, the Governor General in Council resolves that the Mint Master at Calcutta be instructed to effect a remittance of bullion to the extent of 30 lacs of rupees to

the mints of Benaras and Farruckabad in the proportions proposed by the Accountant General (10 lacs to Banaras, 22 lacs to Farruckabad), the whole to be coined into the currency of the last mentioned mint...

And soon afterwards the coinage of the Banāras rupee was stopped 76:

...In conformity with the suggestion of the Mint Committee the Governor General in Council resolves

1. *That the coinage of the Benaras rupee be discontinued.*
2. *That the Farruckabad rupee be declared the legal currency of the province of Benaras*
3. *That the standard of the Farruckabad rupee be assimilated to that of the present Calcutta rupee*
4. *That the Government will receive Farruckabad rupees at par with the present Benaras rupees in payment of the land revenue and in liquidation of all other public demands and will pay them at the same valuation within the Province of Benaras...*
- ...8. *That the mint at Benaras be constituted on an efficient footing in regard to establishment and machinery, particularly that a regular Assay Master be attached to it and that the manufacture be conducted in the manner followed in the Calcutta mint, with such alteration as more recent improvements may suggest.*
9. *That the Mint Master at Benaras be called upon to furnish a full report in the manner in which he now conducts the various operations of coinage and to state especially what alterations in regard to the building and machinery will be required for the purpose above indicated, and with the further object of rendering the powers of the Benaras mint adequate in their ordinary operation to the entire coinage of the Western Provinces, and capable of meeting the occasional emergencies of the public service.*
10. *That the Farruckabad mint be continued only during such time as may be found requisite for effecting the arrangements necessary to the full efficiency of the Benaras mint. The Farruckabad rupee of the new standard to be in the mean time coined at both mints with such separate private marks (not discoverable by the naked eye) as may serve to distinguish the coinage of the several mints...*

The new Farrukhābād rupee issued from all the mints of the Presidency was to be 77:

<i>Weight</i>	<i>Troy grains</i>	<i>180,234</i>
<i>Pure Silver</i>		<i>165,215</i>
<i>Alloy</i>		<i>15,019</i>

and secret marks were added for each mint (marks shown on pp. 296, 396 & 461) 78:

...It is understood that the dies recently sent by the Mint Master at Calcutta to the Benaras mint (being the same that Mr Saunders had himself used) have a distinct private mark from that borne by the dies in use at the Farruckabad mint.

You will be pleased to instruct Mr Saunders to be careful to preserve the same distinction in all dies, which he may hereafter furnish to the Mint Masters at Benaras or Farruckabad respectively, distinguishing also by different marks those which he may himself eventually hereafter use, or which he may have occasion to send to the mint at Saugor or elsewhere.

Assay Master at Banāras

In 1819, James Prinsep was appointed Assistant Assay Master at Calcutta. This allowed Mr Wilson, the Assay Master, to be transferred to Banāras to act as Assay Master 79 and he was duly sent there in October 1819 80. This was all summarised in a report to London in October 1819 81:

...In addition to the above measures, which had reference chiefly to the mint immediately under their superintendance, the Committee you will perceive, suggested the expediency of abolishing the mint establishments in the Western Provinces, and rendering the Calcutta sicca rupee the general currency of the territories subordinate to this Presidency.

The last measure, involving an important change in the value of the currencies of Benares and the whole of the Western Provinces, we deemed it advisable, before passing any final orders on the subject of it, to consult the Board of Commissioners, and the agent to the Governor General at Benares...

...In the reports subsequently received from the Board of Commissioners and the Agent to the Governor General at Benares, a decided opinion was expressed against the expediency of altering the currency of the Western Provinces, and on a reconsideration of the subject, with reference to those reports, and to the further information before them, the Mint Committee at the Presidency concurred in the expediency of at least postponing the adoption of the measure to the full extent contemplated. They renewed however the expression of their opinion that it was equally unnecessary and inexpedient to maintain a separate coinage for the province of Benares, and proposed that the Farruckabad rupees assimilated in respect to standard with the Calcutta rupee, should be declared the legal currency of that province, and of the provinces to the west and north. With this suggestion, which involved of course the discontinuance of the coinage of the Benares rupees, the Committee united a proposition for abolishing the mint establishment of Farruckabad and for conducting the coinage of the Western Provinces at Benares, the establishment of that city to be proportionally improved and extended.

Being entirely satisfied of the expediency of the measures suggested by the Committee, we have resolved to adopt them, and have accordingly instructed the Committee to prepare a draft of a regulation for giving them effect.

We are fully sensible of the advantages which would attend the complete assimilation of all the currency of British India, and still more of the inconveniences which result from the existance of different local currencies in the provinces subordinate to the same Presidency.

We have not therefore without considerable reluctance relinquished the object of reducing the coinage of this Presidency to one standard of value, but the attainment of it is undoubtedly opposed by formidable obstacles...

...Your Honble Court is aware that the duties of Mint and Assay Master at Benares have heretofore been confined to one officer.

Under the above resolution the operations of the Benares mint are likely to become considerably more extensive than they have hitherto been. The importance of securing the utmost accuracy in the coinage to be conducted there, is enhanced in a still higher proportion, and independently of any change, it appeared to us indispensibly necessary to vest the charge of the Assay Department in a distinct officer. No duly qualified officer was immediately available for the purpose, but on the arrival of Mr Prinsep, who had been appointed by your Honble Court, Assistant Assay Master at Calcutta, we resolved to depute Mr Wilson to assume temporary charge of the Assay Department at Benares and otherwise aid in the introduction into that mint of an efficient system of management...

...Concurring with the Committee in opinion, we resolved that Mr Wilson should be directed to proceed to Benares with all convenient expedition and have judged it proper to assign to him an extra allowance of rupees 400 per mensem to cover the extra charges to which he will be subjected by his deputation to Benares...

Arguments about Copper Pice 1811-1813

By 1811, the mint master at Banāras was proposing that copper coins might be produced in the Banāras mint to meet the needs of local individuals 82:

We do ourselves the honor of laying before your Excellency in Council, copies of a correspondence which has taken place with the Mint Master at Benares relative to applications which he had received from individuals for coining the copper in the Benares mint into pice of the currency established by regulation X 1809.

As it appears that no pice of this description have been yet thrown into circulation, and that none are likely to be soon received from the Presidency, and as the Mint Master's explanation would give us to conclude that the public might be accomodated by the proposed measure without entailing any risk or expense on Government, who would on the contrary derive a duty on the coinage, we are not aware of any objection to its adoption.

but in the same meeting, the Calcutta mint committee were sceptical about the needs for a copper coinage for Banāras and they suggested that the half pice left in the treasury from the previous Calcutta coinage, should be made legal tender and issued:

We have the honor to acknowledge Mr Secretary Rickett's letter dated the 19th July last, transmitting in original a letter from the Board of Commissioners in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, under date the 28th June 1811, forwarding a recommendation by the Mint Master at Benares that he may be allowed to comply with any applications made to him by individuals for coining their copper into pice of the currency established by Regulation X of 1809...

...It is very justly observed by the Board of Commissioners in the letter to Government of the 20th October 1809, either that the old currency was sufficient for the requisite circulation of Benares, or that the shroffs possessed the means of supplying every deficiency in it, since if the embarrassments to petty disbursements were such as had been represented it was naturally to be expected that they would have availed themselves of the remedy afforded them. But admitting that the supply of copper money thro' foreign channels should have ceased since the promulgation of Regulation 13 of 1809, the quantity of English Copper for which applications have been made to the Mint Master to have coined in the Benares mint is too insignificant to be of any essential use.

[There] are at present copper coins to the value of 45,006 [Rs] in the Benares treasury, of which it appears from the accompanying copy of a letter from the Collector to the Accountant General that 16,247½ consists of Moodhooshahi pice which have been called in in consequence of the above regulation. From the enclosed muster, Your Excellency in Council will perceive that these pice are not worthy of the name of coin, being merely dubs of copper. We beg leave to recommend that the Collector of Benares may be directed to remit the whole of the Mudhooshahee pice to the Calcutta mint for coinage and to save expense, we are of opinion that the Collector might be instructed to communicate with the Commercial Resident or Opium Agent, for the purpose of having them sent on one of his boats.

The remainder of the pice in the Benares treasury consist of half pice struck in the Calcutta mint amounting in tale to 3,681,088 or at 128 pice to a rupee, Bs Rs [28,602] and as these half pice are of the proportions of the coin authorized to be struck by Regulation 13 of 1809, and as Government has incurred a considerable expense in their fabrication, we conceive that they ought to be issued in preference to encouraging a new coinage in the Benares Mint and no doubt if any inconvenience is really experienced for want of a sufficiency of copper, they will be applied for to the Collector. If the Collector however, be not authorized to issue these half pice in consequence of section 2, Regulation 10, 1809, enacting that the pice shall be of one size only

weighing sicca weight 8 annas and 9 pie each, and 19/20th of an inch in diameter, we beg leave to observe that this difficulty may be easily removed by a regulation of Government, and we presume the large quantity of pice at present in the Collectors treasury, will appear to Your Excellency in Council to be a sufficient reason for making them a legal currency.

The mint committee were keen to point out that under the 1809 regulation, copper coins were to be produced in the Calcutta mint for use at Banāras, and not in the Banāras mint as requested by the Banāras mint master:

We beg leave further to observe that by the Regulation above cited, it is expressly declared that the copper coins struck for the province of Benares shall be coined in the Calcutta mint, and as the Mint Master at this Presidency, we have the satisfaction to observe, has at length overcome the difficulties which were formerly experienced from the copper not being of a determinate thickness, and by melting and laminating it will be enabled to make any quantity of pice that may be requested in future, we can supply any quantity of copper money which may be wanted for the currency of Benares, should the Board of Commissioners be of opinion that the coin will obtain circulation and not be exported as was formerly the case, or be left upon the hands of Government..

Mr Yeld, the Banāras mint master, did not accept the Calcutta mint committee's rather sceptical comments, and rebuffed their criticisms 83. Firstly:

...On the second paragraph of that report, which seems to me to imply that my representation of the distress of the lower classes of the community for want of an adequate copper currency at that period was not correct, the subsequent part of the report furnishes this conclusion: that however great the want of an adequate copper currency in the Benares province, there was so much greater a want in Behar as to render it profitable to the shroffs to export the new pice intended for Benares.

In venturing to again notice the great want of a copper coinage in the Province of Benares, and the impositions and hardship the lower classes of the community are at present subjected to by the monopoly and combination of the shroffs and money changers, I with confidence appeal to all the European Gentlemen who have resided a twelve month in any of its districts, whether in the service or out of it, for a confirmation of my former statements on that head.

Next he discussed why the coins had not got into circulation successfully:

On the endeavours of the Collector to introduce the new coin into circulation proving ineffectual, I beg leave to observe that his instructions were confined to the payment of claims upon the treasury to such as might be desirous of payment in that coin, or distributing it to persons wishing to exchange silver into the new coin. He accordingly issued an advertizement to that purport as per enclosure No1. The shroffs seeing no restriction to its exportation, soon discovered its value in Behar, and numerous applications were accordingly made for the exchange for silver for the single pice in the first instance, not for currency in Benares, but for exportation principally to Behar. By this means the shroffs reaped advantages in two ways. First, by the profit made on this exportation of from one to two anas per rupee, and secondly they kept their advantage in this province, which has long been so profitable to them and hard upon the community, of commanding the price of exchange in the old pice.

Thirdly, Yeld went on:

On the third paragraph of the report I have to remark that proper as was the Accountant General's intentions in granting bills payable in pice, on the supposition that by this means they would pass into circulation, these bills tho' unknown to him, were sought principally by the Behar merchants, for the express purpose on their part, of exportation, which led the Collector to make the subject known to the Accountant General, and to apply to the Board of Commissioners on the necessity of addressing Government on the subject of prohibiting the exportation of the new copper currency intended for the Province of Benares. No prohibition took place, and the following paragraph from the Accountant General's letter, to the Collector, dated the 9th of May 1810, gives his subsequent opinion on the subject: "With respect to the observation contained in the last paragraph of your letter, I beg leave to observe that it was only in consequence of the difficulty which you experienced in bringing the new pice into circulation that I granted those drafts payable in pice, and altho' I had no conception at the time that they were required for the remittances of Behar, yet as it appears that they circulate in Behar at the same rate as the Calcutta pice and that the Board of Commissioners are of opinion that there is either a sufficiency of old pice in circulation, or that the shroffs possess the means of supplying any deficiency, I think that it is not to be regretted that they have been exported by the shroffs".

And he wasn't finished yet:

In the fourth paragraph of the report on the opinion of the Board of commissioners "either that the old currency was sufficient for the requisite circulation of Benares, or that the shroffs possessed the means of supplying every deficiency in it, since if the embarrassments to petty disbursements were such as had been represented, it was naturally to be expected that they would have availed themselves of the remedy afforded them". I take the liberty of observing that as long as the shroffs and money-changers have command of the monopoly, and the community are obliged to resort to them for pice without fixed rates of exchange, it does not appear to me

possible to obtain any remedy to the embarrassments to petty disbursements, as the interest of the shroffs and money-changers, is at direct variance with the introduction of the new coinage, and until this interest shall be done away by legislative regulations, the inference of the Board of Commissioners, before cited, does not appear to me exactly consonant to the circumstances of the case. On the concluding sentence of that paragraph, that the quantity of English copper for which application had been made to be coined into the present currency was too insignificant to be of any essential use, I have to state that this was only employed in the first instance to put the question on, and I have no doubt, had the permission been granted, a very large quantity of copper would before this time, have been converted into pice.

Lastly, he added:

On the subsequent points of disquisition contained in the report of the Committee at Calcutta, my remarks must be general:

There can be no doubt that a copper currency struck for the Benares Province, which is equally current in the lower provinces with the appropriate copper coin of those provinces, can never yet get into circulation in the Benares Province without some legislative prohibition to its exportation, until the lower provinces are completely stocked, and also a regulation for its rate of exchange within the Benares Province, and either prohibiting the old pice as a legal payment, or that they shall be so, of the present weight, at the same tale with the new pice.

The issue of a new coinage confined to the Collector's treasury, must render its progress into the general use of the community very slow indeed. It appears to me therefore necessary that some more general means should be resorted to, and none better suggest themselves to me, than by the Collector placing such amounts of pice as he may deem proper with his aumulah, in all parts of the province to be exchanged for silver at fixed rates. Besides the facility this would afford the community at large, of getting the new pice, it would at once break the monopoly and combination of the shroffs and money changers. Its issue at the mint appears to me also to be advisable.

The extensive country below Benares to be supplied with such an addition to its copper currency from the Calcutta mint as shall stock its markets, must from its present well-known scarcity in the lower provinces, render it a very considerable period before the efforts of the Calcutta mint can be at all turned to the supply required for the province of Benares, and as Government have thought it proper to concede to the prejudices of the people of this province, the continuance of a mint for their silver and gold coinage, and being convinced the influence their opinion on this head would have in introducing a copper coinage into general circulation, I am led to hope Government will on reconsidering this part of the subject accelerate the introduction of a new copper coinage into this province, by allowing such copper as may be brought by individuals to be coined in the Benares mint, and that Government will also concede the stamping in the Benares mint as recommended in my letter of the 9th July 1806, such as may be laminated and cut into planchets in the Calcutta mint. For if laminated and cut into planchets in the Calcutta mint, the great object of constant employment of artizans of that mint will be obtained. The sizer will remain on the spot when wanted for the arsenal, the transportation of the planchets exactly the same as if they were struck there, and the hire of the class of labourers at the striking presses (which it is of no consequence to keep up, as it is that of laminators and cutters) less at Benares than at Calcutta, and the prejudices of the people here conceded to without inconvenience of any kind, with rather an abatement of expense to Government in the difference of the daily pay to coolies working the wheels of the stamping presses.

The Collector of Banāras was also in favour of pice being produced at the Banāras mint. In addition he pointed out that he still had the half pice from the 1806 coinage, as well as the pice called 'Mudhooshahee pice' in his treasury 84:

In reply to your letter of the 14th July last I request you will acquaint the Board that the quantity of half pice of Calcutta coinage stated in the account transmitted to the Accountant General under date the 16th September 1811 is still in the treasury undisposed of. No applications have been made, or are likely to be made, for this description of coin.

In like manner, the pice under the denomination of Mudhooshahee pice, called in from the pergannah of Gurwarah are still lying in the treasury, no orders having been received as to the disposal or appropriation of them.

It is universally acknowledged throughout the province of Benares that a copper currency of a fixed weight, standard and value is particularly wanted, and that at present all classes of the community are subject to great imposition and extortions from the shroffs and money changers in the exchange of silver for pice. [Just] at the present time the rates of exchange of pice in the bazar are from 23 to 23½ takas per rupee (nearly 9 takas less in value than the double pice of Government coinage which would be sold at 32 per rupee).

I humbly conceive the evil might be obviated in great measure by allowing the Mint Master at Benares to coin pice at the provincial mint both from copper brought by individuals and on account of Government, if copper can be furnished for the purpose.

I am of opinion (and I believe it also the opinion of the Mint Master who is better qualified to speak on the subject) that it would be much easier to maintain a copper currency of Benares than of Calcutta coinage. Such

a measure would be more consonant with native prejudices, and pice specially coined at Benares, and for the use of the province would acquire a local value which might be made to operate effectually against their exportation at the pleasure of the shroffs and thro' the present intrigues of the present monopolists, against whom the attempts of unsupported individuals are, and must be, useless. Thus the evil cannot be remedied but by the introduction and uninterrupted circulation of a copper coinage of a fixed weight standard and value, and by a legislative prohibition of other descriptions of coin as money payments, or if the benefit of the community in this respect be not a sufficient consideration for Government, that individuals of every description be at liberty to strike copper dubs for pice at their own pleasure and for their own convenience.

The Board of Commissioners sent the Mudhooshahee pice to Calcutta and proposed that the half pice should be sent to Bihar 85:

... We have instructed the Collector in conformity to the suggestion of the Mint Committee at the Presidency in their address to Government of the 11th October 1811 to concert measures with the Commercial Resident for the transportation of the whole of the Madhooshahee pice now in store, to the Calcutta mint in one of his boats.

As the Collector states that half pice still in store are not likely to be disposed of for circulation in the province of Benares, we beg leave to recommend that the Accountant General be instructed to endeavour to dispose of them for exportation into Behar in the same manner as the whole pice were disposed of on a former occasion.

Altho' we are not of opinion that any such prejudices exist as are alluded to by the Collector and Mint Master in regard to a local coinage, we take the liberty of suggesting that if the Calcutta mint should not be at liberty from its other operations, to furnish a sufficient and early supply of such pice as are likely to circulate in the province of Benares, the introduction of a copper coinage at the Benares mint, similarly to what is already authorized at the Farruckabad mint, might be experienced.

The half pice were duly dispatched to Bihar 86.

Copper Pice Produced at Banāras 1813 to 1830

The discussion about the production of copper coins continued. By 1813, the Calcutta mint committee were still unconvinced that a new copper coinage should be produced in the Banāras mint 87:

... In our letters to Your Lordship in Council dated the 30th March 1810 and 11th October 1811, we expressed our doubts as to the reality of the distress said to be experienced by the lower classes of the community in Benares from a deficiency of copper currency in that province, since it had been found impracticable to give circulation to 110,000 rupees worth of pice which had been coined and remitted to Benares for the express purpose of supplying that alledged deficiency.

The Mint Master at Benares, however, in his report to the Board of Commissioners, now referred to us again, urges the great want of a copper currency and the Collector concurs in his opinion that coin struck in the Benares mint would be most likely to find circulation in that province.

We are surprized to find that both the Collector and the Mint Master still persist in attaching so much importance to a local coinage on account of the prejudices of the people, after the opinion formerly expressed and again repeated by the Board of Commissioners that no such prejudices exist and more especially as the Mint Master himself has shown that the endeavours of the Collector to introduce the new pice into circulation proved ineffectual from other causes.

In the 8th paragraph of Mr Yeld's letter he observes that there can be no doubt that a copper currency struck for the Benares province which is equally current in the Lower provinces with the appropriate currency of those provinces can never get into circulation in the Benares province without some legislative prohibition to its exportation, until the Lower provinces are completely stocked. Now this cause we conceive sufficiently accounts for the copper pice coined in the Calcutta mint not obtaining circulation at Benares, without attributing it to the prejudices of the natives in favour of a local currency.

If a balance is due from one province to another the debtor will of course adopt that mode of remittance which is most advantageous, and whilst there is a call for remittances to Behar, and pice are in demand there, it may be expected that the Benares merchants will continue to export copper coins whether they are struck in the Benares or the Calcutta mint, if they equally pass in circulation, and under these circumstances we concur the remedy proposed by Mr Yeld of preparing the coin in the Calcutta mint, and stamping it at Benares would not have the slightest effect in checking their exportation.

However, they did not want to stand in the way of progress:

In offering these remarks we are far, however, from dissuading Your Lordship in Council from authorizing a copper coinage to be executed in the Benares mint. Circumstances are much altered since we gave it as our opinion that it would be preferable to fabricate these coins at the Presidency.

A complete set of machinery has been lately sent to the Benares mint for coining after the European method, and an experienced mechanic to superintend it, and therefore a copper coinage can now be executed at Benares with nearly the same facility as in the Calcutta mint.

Previous however to authorizing a copper coinage to be undertaken in the Benares mint, we are of opinion that the sentiments of the Board of Commissioners and of the local officers should be requested, as to the

alteration which may be advisable to make in the weight and inscription of the Benares pice, so as to answer the purposes of a local currency and prevent their passing current in the Lower provinces, for which purpose it may be necessary to raise their value, or in other words to reduce their weight more than at present below the weight (as per margin) of the pice coined for the Lower provinces, and as it will be necessary to issue another proclamation rescinding regulation X of 1809 and clause III regulation 12 of 1810, we would beg leave also to suggest that the Board of Commissioners may be requested to submit the draft of a regulation for the copper coinage of Benares in which the several provisions contained in regulation 45 of 1803 respecting the copper coinage of the upper provinces may be introduced as well as any other which may appear to that Board to be advisable for securing the objects intended...

and the Board of Commissioners was asked to put this into effect and produce a copper coinage in Banāras.

Meanwhile, in May 1813, the Magistrate at Banāras wrote to Calcutta to complain about the shroffs exacting an unwarranted batta on the trisuli pice 88:

Since the coin denominated tirsoolee pice was originally established as the copper currency of the city of Benares, no measures have been adopted to renew it, and the inscription on these pice has of course by process of time and circulation become more or less indistinct. In this inscription is a tirsool from which the coin takes its denomination, and the shroffs, availing themselves of the circumstance above mentioned, have lately altered the current value of the pice in which the tirsool is defective by reducing it 11 per cent below the pice in which the tirsool is found to be entire. This distinction set up by the shroffs is merely fictitious and does not arise out of any depreciation in the intrinsic value of the coin. I send by way of illustration specimens of both descriptions. A pice in which there is a defect in the tirsool tho' the rest of the inscription may happen to be perfect, and the coin itself of equal weight and real value with a pice bearing the mark of the tirsool in which there may be no such defect, loses 11 per cent in current value for no other reason than the defectiveness of the tirsool, with the distinction hardly perceptible in some instances to general observation. The shroffs alone are well acquainted, which enables them to impose on the ignorance of the public and derive an advantage by purchasing the pice in question at the nominal and selling them at their real value.

But the labouring class of people suffer most. They receive their daily wages in copper pice, and as the money price of labour is the same as it was before the shroffs made this innovation, the labourer, if he happens to be paid in pice containing a defect in the tirsool, loses 11 per cent of his earnings. The retail shop keepers, who deal chiefly with the labouring poor, are paid for their articles in pice, and are compelled to demand them from their customers at the rate which is required by the shroffs to whom they exchange them for rupees. This innovation accordingly presses most heavily upon those who, on account of their indigence, are the least capable of supporting it.

It has also introduced an uncertainty in the current value of the copper coin which serves as a cover to exaction. For instance, the agents for the Collector for the retail sale of stamp paper are paid for this commodity in pice, but being required to remit the amount periodically to the public treasury in rupees, they must dispose of their copper to the shroffs, and consequently indemnify themselves for the loss of 11 per cent to which they are liable, by raising the price of the paper to the purchasers. This, by leaving so much to the discretion of the agents opens the way of course, to unlimited abuse, for which there can be no effectual remedy without removing at once the evil in which it has originated...

...I recommend that Government authorize me to issue a proclamation declaring all tirsoolee pice, whether retaining the mark of the tirsool or not, to be current as heretofore at the same value and received at an equal rate in discharge of all public and private demands as the established copper currency of the place...

In 1814, the Banāras mint master had reviewed the proposal of the Board of Commissioners for a new copper coinage and made the following remarks 89:

...A very smart bilious attack has prevented me being able to give attention to anything since my receipt of your Board's letter until this day.

I now beg leave to submit to you that the IV section of your projected regulation appears to me the only part that any suggestion can be added to. It is therein proposed that the impression of the copper coin shall be the same as the rupee. The old copper pice had a different one, which I think the prejudices of the people would prefer and of which I furnished your Board with an exact copy divested of all but the Rajah's ensigns in the specimens of pice forwarded with my letter of the 4th November 1813...

and the Board agreed with his views

...We beg to explain that we are not aware of any objection to the impression proposed by Mr Yeld and approved by the Board of Commissioners, and that it was in compliance only with the tenor of their draft of the regulation, that the Mint Committee drafted the section which it is now proposed to modify. We therefore take the liberty of submitting the following modification of it:

IV The form and size of the copper coin established by the foregoing section, shall correspond with those prescribed by section XII, Regulation 2, 1812 for the Benares rupees. The impression also shall be the same, omitting the ornamented flowers and Darogah's marks and the edge of the copper coin shall not be milled nor have any mark or impression

This discussion presumably represents the production of the copper pattern that Pridmore attributed to 1813:



7.185

Copper pattern pice of 1813

The new copper coin required copper of a different thickness and this was requested from Calcutta in July 1814 90:

The copper coinage of Benares having undergone some modifications by which the copper normally required for that mint is now no longer adapted to the dimensions of the coin, and as that mint is not in possession of the means to reduce it to the proper thickness, it will be necessary to substitute other copper to that now under consignment to Benares, and you will accordingly stop its transmission or send in its place sheet copper of the thickness of the Calcutta pice

In 1815 there was a further proposal to alter the copper coins of Banāras but this was opposed by the Magistrate there 91:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a letter from you dated the 14th of October last with its enclosures, desiring me to report how far the regulations in force regarding the copper coinage in the mint at Benares have answered the purpose intended by them, and whether in my opinion any material advantage would be derived from adopting the alterations proposed in the draft of the regulation submitted by the Mint Committee.

The proposed alterations are as follows: 1st with respect to the established weight of the coin. 2nd as to its form size and impression. In regards to the first point, there is in fact no real difference between the weight of the coin in question and that which is proposed by the Committee in their projected regulation. On examining a number of pice formerly coined at Calcutta for circulation at this province under section 3 regulation 10, 1809, none of them were found to correspond with the rule therein prescribed. The weight of some of them did not exceed 91 grains troy, while others exceeded 105. It was resolved in consequence by the Mint Master and myself to make the weight in the scales 100 grains troy, so as to render the coins when stamped something above 99. A regulation thereof, merely for the purpose of doing what has already been done, would perhaps be superfluous.

As to the form, size and impression of the coin, the Committee appear to have suggested the alteration under the supposed existance of a prejudice in the minds of the people of this province in favour of certain devices, alledged to be the distinction of the Rajah. No such prejudices in fact exist. The form, size and impression prescribed by section 3, regulation 10, 1809, is just as acceptable to them as any other, and the pice ordered to be struck in conformity to it in the Benares mint, would have been long ago in exclusive circulation had the Mint Master been able to furnish an adequate supply. The endeavour to introduce the pice bearing this impression, which was formerly sent up from Calcutta, did not fail in consequence of any prejudice against the form, size or inscription of the coin, but from the causes pointed out in the 9th paragraph of my letter to you dated the 21st April last, in short, from omitting to make the coin a local currency. Section 3 regulation 7, 1814, having supplied this omission by superadding to the established impression, the figure of a tirsool, every object of the proposed alteration is at once provided, for the coin cannot circulate in any other province and the prejudices of the people, if any were ever entertained by them, are completely obviated.

For these reasons alone I should be of opinion that to alter the form, size and impression already established, is entirely unnecessary. But there is another circumstance which renders such an alteration altogether impracticable.

Under the promises held out by the orders of Government dated the 29th April last, the merchants of this place brought to the mint a quantity of copper amounting to twelve or fifteen hundred maunds, of which part has been coined in conformity to the provisions of Regulation 7, 1814, and delivered to them. To alter therefore in any material degree the nature of those provisions would be attended with the very objectionable effect of exposing the merchants to a certain and severe loss and of diminishing, at the same time, the public confidence in the consistency of Government.

The established form, size and impression of the coin, ought therefore I think on no account to be altered. The weight is already, as above stated, almost in exact conformity to what the Committee propose. If however it should be considered desirable to enact a rule fixing unquestionably the latter point, a regulation such as I shall take the liberty to subjoin, would be sufficient for this purpose.

Copper Coins Produced at Banāras

The first copper coins were not issued until 1815 because the entry in the records quoted above goes on:

Although it has not yet been within the power of the Mint Master to furnish the district with a supply of the new coinage sufficient to allow of introducing it, yet the knowledge it is upon the point of being introduced keeps the rate of the old pice within reasonable bounds, and prevents the shroffs from attempting any sort of imposition. The introduction of the new coin is so eagerly desired and so much benefit do the public expect from it, that it is to be regretted the general wish on this head has so long been disappointed. In justice however to Mr Yeld, I deem it necessary to state that the silver coinage on account of Government and individuals has for some months past pressed so heavily upon him and so great has been the difficulty of procuring hands capable of working at the coppers, that no blame is imputable to him for the disappointment. He now says that the machinery sent from Calcutta for coining after the European method, will in a few days be erected and that the new coinage will then be executed at the rate of eight maunds per diem. Under these circumstances, I request that His Excellency the Honble the Vice President in Council will be pleased to order the proclamation prescribed in section 3, Regulation 12, 1810 to be transmitted to me, with authority to issue it as soon as the new coin may be supplied from the mint in sufficient abundance to be introduced as the established currency.



7.186

The first machine-made copper pice of Banāras

There then follows a proposed regulation about the weight of the copper coin, rescinding that part of Regulation X 1809, which made the weight eight annas, nine pie each, and issuing a new order that they shall weigh 100 grains each.

The Calcutta Council agreed with this proposal and the new coinage continued at such a rate that more machines were requested from Calcutta 92:

I have the honor to state to your board that the demand for the new pice increases on me beyond what the presses can possibly be equal to throw off. When the new dies arrive and the silver coinage, as bullion may come in, is to be regulated and stamped by them, it appears to me that for the next three or four years (if not permanently) there will be full employ for eleven presses worked as hard as they can daily, and I therefore beg leave to submit to your consideration your Board's ordering four more presses from Calcutta to be permanently fixed, and two in addition to replace any one that may get out of order, that no delay or inconvenience may be experienced in that case...

At the end of 1816, Yeld suggested that the circulation of the Banāras copper coins should be extended to other provinces 93:

...The want of a new copper currency in the zillahs of Bundelkhand and Allahabad, as also in that of Goruckpore, is not less felt than was long the case in the zillahs proper of Benares, and as these zillahs now form a part of the judicial division of the court of Appeal and circuit of Benares, I beg leave to suggest the regulation establishing the Benares copper currency being extended to those zillahs, as one of the greatest blessings and favors the British Government can bestow on the lowest order and the poorest classes of their subjects in them.

On my way down to the Presidency I saw (what I had long before heard was the case) that the Benares new pice had become almost exclusively the copper currency of the Arrah zillah. I have been informed it is nearly the same in the Ramghur zillah, being carried down to both by bullock loads, principally in exchange for Ghee bought in the city of Benares. I have also heard they are in equal request in the upper part of the Saruer or Chupra district and I witness [and] in person their being equally common with the Bengal pice in the Patna bazar.

This demand for an additional copper currency in Behar, with the nature of the trade between Behar and Benares making the extension of the currency of the Benares new pice a great convenience to both districts, and being of opinion the Benares mint is fully equal to furnishing the supply required, I venture to submit to the consideration of Your Lordship, whether a regulation making Benares pice (which are of exactly the same intrinsic value with those of Bengal) an equally legal tender with the Benares pice for the fractional parts of a rupee in the whole province of Behar, would not prove of great advantage by increasing the consumption of Government copper at highly profitable rate, and also become a great convenience to their subjects in those districts.

and this proposal was accepted. Consequently, In 1817, pice issued from the mints of Calcutta, Farrukhābād and Banāras were all declared legal tender anywhere within the Presidency 94 and the Banāras mint continued to issue these trisuli pice until the mint was closed in 1830.

Regulation XXV 1817

A regulation for fixing the weight of the pice struck at the Calcutta mint and for giving general circulation to pice struck at any of the mints subordinate to this Presidency...

...V. The pice struck at the mints of Benares and Farruckabad agreeably to the provisions of Regn 10 1809, Regn 7 1814 and Regn 21 1816, shall also be considered as circulating equally with the pice of Calcutta coinage throughout the above mentioned provinces and shall in like manner be received as a legal tender in payment of the fractional parts of a rupee of the local currency at the rate of 64 pice for each rupee.

Mode of Mint Operations in 1820

In 1820, the Banāras mint committee made a detailed report on the operation of the Banāras mint, and included recommendations of how they should be improved 95:

Receipt of Bullion

Bullion, when brought to the mint of Benares for coinage into Benares rupees, on individual account, is usually standard fineness, the merchants of the city preferring to refine the various sorts of inferior silver, which they import from Calcutta as dollars etc, by means of the bazar refiners, to incurring the high rates of refining charge levied at the mint, as fixed by the table of rates attached to Regulation 2 of 1812, under which the business of the Benares mint is conducted.

The silver thus refined is brought to the mint in the form of Takas or thick cakes, generally weighing something less than 2000 Benares sicca weight each. The weight of the specific importation is determined in the presence of the proprietor or his agents, and the Darogah of the bullion department of the mint, or his people. A note of the amount is made by the owner and is also entered in the Darogah's accounts, whence it is subsequently transferred to the English register of the mint. The standard value of silver is estimated in general by its appearance, and is accordingly admitted by the Darogah, with the concurrence of the owner. Should any doubt on this head exist in the minds of the proprietor or Darogah, the question is settled by an assay and the metal is received accordingly, and further, should no assay have been made and the outturn of the bullion upon melting, prove from the assay which is always made of the melting, less than its estimated standard value, it is remelted with the requisite addition of finer metal to bring it to standard, and the whole cost of remelting as well as the additional fine metal, repayed by the proprietor.

When the bullion brought to the mint is the property of the Company, it is regularly assayed, and mixed for coinage, or refined according to its quality, and the use to which it may be applicable in the course of its conversion into Benares rupees

Refining

The silver bullion brought to Benares, being almost exclusively in the form of dollars, or foreign coin of similar standard, it is necessarily refined. This operation as affecting private importations is performed as already observed by the merchants on their own account, but it may be here added that for their convenience and security, they are permitted to carry it on within the mint.

The expense of the process of refining is three annas per cent, for which consideration the refiner furnishes all the materials except lead. The produce of the refined bullion is whatever the merchant can realize, as he makes no agreement with the refiner for any fixed wastage, but employs his own people to superintend the operation throughout, to the final working up of the nearah. It has been stated to us by respectable native authority, that the ordinary average return to individuals is about 216 Benares rupees 6 annas, for 100 dollars, but it may be doubted whether this information is perfectly accurate, for as 100 dollars of full weight and standard are equal to Benares rupees 220-2-10, it may be presumed that the difference between this amount and that above stated exceeds the wastage that actually occurs together with the ordinary deficiencies of standard and weight.

The cost of refining bullion on the Company's account, is the same as the above, or 3 annas per cent on dollars silver, or in like proportion according to the inferiority of the silver. The outturn is expected to be as near as possible to the amount of standard metal which the bullion contains, subject to the necessary deduction for wastage and loss in the course of the refining process, a deduction which is allowed for, upon Spanish dollars, at the rate of one per cent. The nearah remains in the mint where it is worked upon public account. It yields in general a produce of 1 anna or 1½ anna per cent, and consequently reduces the aggregate amount of cost and loss upon refining dollar silver, to about one rupee one anna six pies per cent, giving a net produce in refined silver of Benares standard of between 217 and 218 Benares sicca weight per 100 dollars.

Melting

When the bullion has been made standard, and has assumed its customary form of thick cakes, it has to be cleaned from the lead or dross adhering to it and to be cut into pieces suitable to its subsequent fusion, and from which, when considered necessary, the interior angles are cut off for assay. The charge for these operations is 10 rupees the lac or one anna seven pies per cent. The silver is then melted in open fires, made upon the ground, in a hole in which rests an uncovered shallow earthen crucible or cup, in which and over it,

the metal and charcoal are piled. The fire is then excited by means of the common native bellows, and the metal in fusion collected in the crucible is poured out into small earthen moulds, which form it into such ungot as are best adapted to the fabrication of blanks by the hand. The process of fusion, we understand, is analagous to the method of melting dollars for refinance, as practised in the Calcutta mint, and the moulds are similar to those in use there for casting the rough assay or muster ingots. The cost of melting and including labour and materials, is one anna six pice per cent, being in fact a contract to that effect with the melters, who, although they work in the mint, form no part of either its fixed or fluctuating establishment. The loss of silver in melting is allowed for at the rate of four annas six pie per cent. Should it exceed that limit, the difference is made good from the melting charge, and when the return is completed within that extent, the melters are allowed to carry away with them the rest of the nearah. The meltings are effected in open sheds, and are equal with the present accomodations, to the daily fusion of about 40,000 sicca weight of silver.

Making the Blanks

Upon the metal being cast into ingots, one ingot from each crucible is selected by the assorter of specimens, and carried to the assay office where it is submitted to the necessary examination. Upon its being reported Benares standard, the whole melting is delivered to the Durabs, who beat out the ingots, and with the chisel, hammer & tongs, form from them the blanks or planchets of the proper size and weight. The labour and cost of this part of the coinage amount to four annas six pie per cent besides which half an anna is allowed to the durabs in the first instance, to meet the waste of metal in the repeated annealings, which it must undergo, and half an anna more upon the settlement of their accounts to cover the loss occasioned by the small chips and dust which disappear in the progress of adjustment. The planchets when received from the durabs are weighed singly by regular examiners and the deficient ones returned to them, and finally each durab brings as much of his days work as has been so checked, to the Mint Master for his examination and approval, both as to workmanship and weight, several pieces being taken indiscriminately from each parcel and compared with the standard weight, and the whole being carefully inspected. The durabs with the exception of the two head men, are not upon the fixed establishment of the mint, but are engaged as required. With the present accomodation for them, about 30,000 blanks per diem may be prepared.

Milling etc

The want of uniformity and unfinished execution, which are defects inseparable from the above described method of fabricating the planchets, render it necessary to submit them to some preparatory manipulation to fit them for being milled and stamped.

In order to bring their edges to a uniform thickness, they are struck with a blank concave die, in the same kind of press that is used for striking the impression. As this however is apt to add to the roughness of the edges, it is next necessary to strike them in a collar die, to give a smooth surface to the rim, and produce a more exact uniformity of circumference. After this the blanks are milled in a machine made at the Calcutta mint, after the model of that in use there, and worked in the same manner.

Stamping

The last observation applies equally to this process. As now effected in the Benares mint, the presses in use having been sent from Calcutta and being similarly worked, a fly-wheel being substituted for the loaded lever. The presses now erected in this mint are equal to a daily coinage of from forty to forty five thousand pieces.

Delivery

Upon the final conversion of the bullion into coin, which on a quantity not exceeding 30,000 sicca weight, is usually effected in about seven or eight days, the rupees are remitted forthwith to the Collector's Treasury, and when it is private property the remittance is usually accompanied by the proprietor or his agent, who, being furnished with a certificate of his being entitled to the amount, then receives it, almost always in the very specie into which his bullion has been coined.

Mint Establishment & Expenses

The native establishment of the Benares mint, consists of the following persons

	Rupees
3 English Writers	180
1 Darogah of the Bullion Department	100
1 ditto of the Coinage Department	100
1 assorter of Specimens	70
2 Weighmen @ 10 rupees each	20
5 Superintendents of the Presses @ 10 rupees each	50
2 Adjusters @ 10 rupees each	20
1 Head artificer or Foreman	100
5 Lascars at 5 rupees each	25
1 Jemadar	6
10 Peons at 4 rupees each	40

1 Godown Mutsaddy	8
1 [Destery]	8
1 Bihishtee at 4 rupees and 1 Furash @ 3/-	7
2 Bhow keedars @ 4 ea	8
1 Carpenter	16
1 Bricklayer	10
	768

In addition to these are to be accounted the workmen of the Assay Office, and sundry artificers as smiths and carpenters who have always been included amongst the mint contingencies, the Mint Master's salary, house rent, and such charges as are truly contingent. The amount of these added to the cost and charges of coinage appear, from an account laid before us by the Mint Master, and which we understand is already in possession of the Mint Committee at the Presidency, to have made the expenses of the Benares mint, something more than 1½ per cent upon the coinage of five years or from 1813 to 1818 inclusive.

Buildings etc

The Benares mint is situated close to the town, and on the road leading to the cantonments. The buildings are for the most part, and the ground is entirely, the property of a native individual, and is rented by the Government for the term of the Company's charter, at a monthly rent of 160 rupees. Some of the buildings are the property of the Mint Master, having been erected at his private expense...

Having described the way the mint operated, the Committee went on to discuss how it could be modernised:

Remarks

It is evident from the description above submitted, that the mint of Benares has been hitherto conducted chiefly according to the native system and through the means of native agency. The European portion of the establishment having been indeed placed upon too restricted a footing to have been ever capable of more than partial checks and general supervision. It is to be presumed however, that a more efficient and immediate interference with every department of the mint, is in future to be exercised by European officers, proportioned to the duties to be performed, and that the native methods of conducting or executing any part of the business are to give way to the more regular and scientific details adopted in the mints of Europe, as far as they shall be found locally practicable or expedient. Without such alteration, indeed, we are of opinion that it will not be possible to give the Benares mint that augmented activity and power which will enable it to meet the increased demands upon it, likely to arise from the encouragement afforded to the importation of bullion by the alteration of the standard of the currency, and still less will it be practicable to raise it to that degree of efficacy and credit which shall render it, what we conceive it may easily be rendered, the chief, if not the sole source, of the supply of the currency of a very extensive portion of British India...

The committee went on to suggest many possible improvements, one of the main ones being the introduction of machines to rollout the silver and then cutout the blanks. This would require the erection of new buildings:

... In the mean time in addition to the alteration we have generally suggested in the bullion office, and the employment of two head melters, we beg leave to recommend that the following new establishment for the assay office be forthwith sanctioned, and that a die cutter be added to that of the mint.

Present Establishment		Proposed Establishment	
Fixed			Rs
	Rs	1 Assorter of Specimens or Muster Sircar	50
Assorter of Specimens	70	1 Assistant Weigher	50
Contingent		1 Writer	30
1 Assay Man	10	2 Assay Mistrees	20
1 Smith	10	1 Fireman	5
1 Carpenter	10	1 Coolie	4
1 Bellows Man	5	1 Armourer or tool cleaner	6
1 Coolie	4	1 Furash	6
		1 Bihishtee	4
		1 Mehtur	3
		4 Peons	16
	109		194

The Calcutta Council agreed with these proposals 96.

Mr Wilson, who was a member of the committee that advanced the above proposals, considered, by August 1820, that he had completed his work at Banāras, and, in September, James Prinsep was appointed the new Assay Master. Wilson handed over to him in November 1820 and returned to Calcutta 97. Prinsep was to remain Assay Master at Banāras until the mint closed in 1830.

The New Banāras Mint

Work now started on improving the Banāras mint. A few years previously, a proposal to produce Farrukhābād rupees at a new mint in Dehlī had led to new machinery being shipped there. However, the mint never started production and eventually some of the machinery was moved from Dehlī to Farrukhābād (see chapter 8, p. 372). Banāras now sent a letter to Farrukhābād asking if any of this machinery was still available 98:

Government have resolved to put the Benares mint on a more efficient footing by introducing the same machinery as is now employed at Calcutta, I am directed by the committee for superintending the affairs of the mint at this Presidency to request that the Board of Commissioners will have the goodness to ascertain from the Mint Master at Farruckabad whether any part of the apparatus recently received from Delhi can be spared for the use of the Benares mint. Laminating mills are at present the most urgently required.

However, the Dehli machinery was found to be totally useless 99 and it was determined that new equipment would have to be manufactured including 100:

*4 sets of laminating machinery with a large proportion of spare rollers
300 iron melting pots to contain 200 sicca weight each
25 sets of ingot moulds, 12 in a set
6 sets of tongs for using melting pots
2 machines for straightening the straps
2 adjusting tables fitted up complete for musters
A supply of files for adjusting 60,000 blanks per day
2 load stones for cleaning the filings
2 large shears for cutting sizer*

The Calcutta mint committee suggested that they could send the machinery that they had built for Saugor, to Banāras, since the building for the mint at Saugor was not then ready 101. This was agreed 102.

The necessary improvements to the Banāras mint were estimated to cost 31,689 rupees, but the existing site of the Banāras mint was not considered suitable for the new ways of working 103. It was therefore agreed that a new site should be found, and a complete new mint constructed 104. In May 1821, the Governor General gave his agreement 105:

His Lordship in Council entirely concurs with your Committee in regard to the expediency of constructing a new mint at Benares, as proposed by you, and the officiating barrack master will be instructed to submit through the regular channel a detailed estimate of the expense to be incurred in erecting the several buildings.

His Lordship in Council approves your proposal for the purchase of the premises belonging to Mr Hasleby for the sum of sonaut rupees 2,250, and the Honble Company's attorney will be instructed immediately to prepare the necessary deeds for the conveyance of the property to Government. The Mint Master and Mr Hasleby will of course furnish Mr Poe with all papers and information required by him.

With respect to the compensation to be assigned to the Mint Master on account of the buildings constructed by him on the present mint premises, His Lordship in Council agrees with you in thinking it proper to appoint a committee to determine the amount, and has accordingly been pleased to determine that the Collector, the Judge & Magistrate, and the Barrack Master shall be associated for that purpose...

...The Governor General in Council is disposed to think that the present mint premises when vacated by the mint officers, might be advantageously appropriated to the use of the College. But before passing any final orders on that subject, His Lordship in Council would wish to learn distinctly the sentiments of the college committee, in regard to expediency, or necessity, of affording the accomodation to that institution, and to ascertain the probable rent to be obtained by letting the premises to an individual.

The cost of constructing the buildings was initially estimated at 21,831-10-7 rupees 106, but by 1823 the building was still not complete and additional expenditure (11,615 rupees) had to be approved 107. Work was slow and a certain frustration with the delays began to creep in. Captain Lucas had just taken over responsibility for the building and wrote to Yeld in January 1823 108:

...I regret it is not in my power to fix any period as the probable time of its completion. The buildings (including the houses and offices for the Mint and Assay Master) is so extensive, the materials required so numerous, and the regular supply of these dependent on so many contingencies, that judging from the progress made in the short period (not 3 months) I have had charge, I fear to hold out any hopes to the Committee of any early completion of the whole.

In reply to the 2nd paragraph, I have to acquaint you that the centre buildings, viz the laminating mills, the stamping and adjusting sides, with those for the treasury and native offices have been commenced on, and had I been desired to devote my attention and the materials to those alone, might have been finished, I imagine, by this time, as I trust they now will in the space of 3 months. These however form but a small part of the extensive range of buildings the plan exhibits.

No answer has been received from the Superintendent to the application and estimate for verandahs alluded to in the concluding para of your letter, but I will again bring the subject to his notice.

By October 1823, completion was promised in November 109:

I beg to acquaint you that I have inspected the new mint now building at Benares. It is in very considerable forwardness and the whole of the working part will, I conceive, be finished in all, November next.

The building appears strong and substantial but I would recommend that the whole be plastered, or at least the whole front of the building and verandah facing the interior of the square, which is stated to have as yet been sanctioned only for the laminating, stamping and adjusting offices. The additional expense of plastering the whole of the outside will amount to about sicca rupees 1000, and without this the buildings certainly will have rather an unfinished appearance when completed.

There appear to have been sundry omissions in the estimate of doors, drains, flooring etc. I have directed the Barrack Master to concert with the Mint and Assay Master to make statement of these, which shall have the same hereafter to forward to you.

The Mint and Assay Master are now receiving charge of the dwelling houses intended for their accomodation which they have undertaken to complete agreeably to your letter of the 7th July last

And by April 1824 all the equipment had been removed from the old mint building, which was to be rented out 110:

I beg leave to state to you for the information of the Calcutta Mint Committee that I have removed all the articles of coinage etc from the old to the new mints, and that I am filling up the holes in the floors of the old mint, occasioned by the removal of the timbers of the presses etc, [so] that I shall be ready to deliver the premises on the 1st proximo to any person appointed to receive charge of them.

I have for some months repeatedly made known that these premises were for hire for the term of Government's lease for anyone to rent them

The machinery that was installed in the new mint came not only from that built for Saugor, but also from the mint at Farrukhābād 111 and also new machinery built at Calcutta 112:

I am directed by the committee for superintending the affairs of the mint at this Presidency to inform you that two sets of laminating machinery for your mint have been put in hand in the Calcutta mint and two other mills have been ordered to be sent from that of Farruckabad. A set of ingot moulds is likewise in the course of preparation in the Calcutta mint.

Should any other articals (sic) be required you will apprise the committee and also inform them at a convenient opportunity of the period when it is expected the new Benares mint will be ready for the acception of those now in course of fabrication.

The Mint Committee have lately received a letter from the Assay Master of the Benares mint suggesting the preparation of your dies at Benares instead of Calcutta. The same suggestion was formerly made by the local committee and then referred to Government. The decision of Government was adverse to the measure and it therefore does not seem expedient to renew the proposition, the advantage to be gained from using the collar die milling not appearing to be a sufficient ground of revision, nor, if adopted, incompatible with the fabrication of such a die in Calcutta...

Two particularly interesting points to note from the above extract are, firstly, about the die production continuing to be undertaken in Calcutta and, secondly, the reference to collar die milling. The milling on the edge of the coin had been applied after the coins had been struck, in all the mints in Bengal except at Banāras, where it was apparently applied before the final stamping with the letter die. Presgrave, who eventually became Mint and Assay Master at Saugor (see chapter 8), had been experimenting with a collar die that would add the milling when the coins were struck. As can be seen, this innovation was rejected when it was proposed for use at Banāras.

In October 1825, Yeld sent a letter to the board of revenue explaining why some rupees appeared to be below the official weight. In the letter he describes some aspects of the operation of the mint 113

On the coin being carried from the stamping presses, it undergoes the following examination. The first an inspection of every rupee by the eye to reject such as are not struck even and well. The second is by weighing each to see that none of light weight pass. They are then packed into bags which in most cases a handful or two are looked over by myself, and lastly they are carried into the assay room for Mr Prinsep's taking out such as he may wish for a further assay. The issue of them in this state I did hope would have prevented the passing of any defective ones that might be taken up from the presses. The laminating rollers, there in numbers, have not yet been put into operation on the silver coinage and I trust the reasons for it will prove full satisfactory.

The copper last sent up was so very thick that without being considerably laminated it could not have been coined. According to the orders of Government the three sets of rollers have therefore been fully employed in this work but in consequence of the intimation I have received of twenty lacs of bullion being near at hand from Lucknow, I last week gave instructions for their use in the copper coinage to cease on Saturday and everything to be in readiness for their employment on the silver when it comes. I have also ordered the durabs anvils [and] hammers to be put in the best order so that I may work the bullion as quickly as possible, and I trust by the greatest personal attention to every process that it goes through, I may venture to assure the Board that

nothing (that lies in my power) defective shall pass into circulation, and that the greatest possible care shall be taken of the beauty and perfection of the coinage of this mint.

In the same letter, Yeld also revealed a very human side of himself:

I hope I shall be excused saying a few words on not having ceased the employment of the durabs independent of the occasion stated for the use of the laminating rollers. I could not but feel the hardship of dismissing, all at once, a numerous class of workmen who have been under my eye almost daily for twenty years, and many of whom have double that time in the employment of the mint. On removing into the new mint I retained only the old hands until the laminating machinery should be ready, and when ready, finding full employment for it otherwise, I confess, I wanted the heart to turn the old durabs adrift with the only resource in their power that of going as hammermen to blacksmiths, in which such a number could have hardly got employment. This however whenever the copper now in store is worked up, must be done and I beg to state that two more sets of laminating machinery will be necessary to keep up anything like an efficient silver coinage equal to the general demand of this mint.

1826 – New Mint Committee

Since 1812, the Banāras mint had been under the control of the Board of Commissioners of the Ceded and Conquered provinces. In June 1826 a new committee was established to oversee the mint 114:

...That the Governor General's agent at Benares, the Magistrate and the Collector be constituted a committee to superintend the affairs of the mint, and to discharge with such other duties as may appear necessary, the functions now belonging to the Board of Revenue and the Magistrate.

That the Assay Master be secretary to the committee

That the Committee be particularly required to examine and verify the mint balance from time to time and see that the above resolutions are strictly complied with.

The committee will also consider whether any and what further precautions can, without inconvenience to the public service, be taken for the security of the balance not immediately in course of coinage...

The new committee undertook a long and detailed review of the operation of the Banāras mint and found that the laminating machines, in particular, gave cause for concern 115:

...It was anticipated in the report so often alluded to, that four laminating rollers would be capable of performing all the business of the Benares mint. Three have been erected but the number of blanks furnished by them daily hardly form a tenth of the actual coinage. The reasons for this great deficiency must be sought for principally in the great imperfections of these rude machines. The planchets delivered by them are of most irregular thickness and hardly a day passes without some part of the apparatus being put out of repair. Putting the wear and tear of machinery out of the question however, the expense of this department exceeds that of the durab system as 3 to 2 and between 2/3rds and ½ of the metal is returned to the melters, whereas when vigilant rejection of all imperfect durab's blanks is kept up, seldom more than one fifth of [reza] is brought back to the melting pot.

There can be no doubt whatever of the superiority of the blanks prepared by rolling and punching, but to render laminating machinery effective, it should be constructed in the most perfect way and should have the constant supervision of an able engineer, the other important occupations of the Mint Master preventing him bestowing sufficient attention upon such objects.

While on this subject we may take the opportunity of stating that the room now occupied by the durabs is totally unfit for such purpose. 300 men are closely huddled together in a dark godown without the least means of ventilation and the atmosphere impregnated as it is with the fumes of numerous charcoal fires, is not fit to be breathed...

...The milling of the Benares rupee will always have [a] rough burred appearance on account of the compression of the edge by the after operation of stamping in the die press. We are informed that a plan was submitted in November 1822 to the Calcutta Mint Committee for introducing the collar milling as practiced in Europe. It appears however to have been without result...

The Calcutta mint committee could not understand why Banāras was having a problem 116:

...We are rather at a loss to understand the inefficiency of the laminating machinery of the Benares mint, however imperfect the construction of the mills. They are of the same manufacture as those in use in the Calcutta mint and should therefore be equally productive. The committee state that three mills are erected and furnished hardly a tenth of the actual coinage, but each mill should at least yield from 10 to 12,000 pieces a day and the aggregate work of three would in that case we believe be fully equal to the average coinage of the Benares mint. Why there should be so great a falling off in this respect is therefore quite unaccountable and we require more specific information on this head before we can offer any opinion. That the machines are rude and defective we may admit, but we apprehend that there is no want of mechanical skill in the Benares mint to render them much more efficacious than they would seem to be from the report of the committee. The objections to the system of coining by the hand are obvious, and the number of men required, the tediousness of the process, and defective form of the blanks, the extreme difficulty that is sometimes experienced in procuring workmen and, we apprehend, the greater cost of the operation, leave us still of opinion that with the

exercise of some activity and ingenuity, the laminating process may still be found entitled to the preference in the Benares mint.

The use of collar milling in the Benares mint we have reason to consider as inexpedient on account of the delay it causes in the striking of the coin, but more especially in the great expenditure of dies which it occasions. The use of dies with circular necks was attempted in the Calcutta mint subsequent to the suggestion of the Assay Master of the Benares mint adverted to by the Committee, and it was found that both in tempering the dies and stamping the coins, so many cracked that it was absolutely necessary to relinquish the practice...

1827 – Shortage of Copper Coins

In 1827 the Magistrate at Banāras reported that there was a shortage of copper coins which were needed, particularly because the marriage season was upon them 117:

...This being the season during which the native marriages are chiefly celebrated, such an immense demand is created for copper coin that a regular traffic takes place in pice. The inducement of profit held out is so great that the shroffs purchase up in anticipation the whole of the pice procurable and establish a retail price differing from that authorized by the regulations. Hitherto it has always been the custom for a shop to be established in the choke on the part of the mint, at the request of the magistrate, to counterbalance and counteract the effects of the monopoly. Until this year this method has answered every purpose, but at present, from some cause which I know not, there is no copper pice to be had at the mint or treasury, and the greatest possible inconvenience exists, so much so indeed, as not to admit of supply for the daily allowance of prisoners.

I am led to believe that a profit arises from the purchasing of pice for the sake of the copper, which is employed to an immense extent in the making of the common household utensils of the natives. These causes united, and the more extraordinary one of no copper coin being procurable from the mint and treasury, appear at present to be without relief since the Mint Master does not seem likely to render any material [...] and perhaps Government may have larger supplies of copper coin ready for circulation in some of the treasuries, which cannot be disposed of, in which case if it could be transported to the Benares treasury, a considerable benefit would be conferred on the community...

A statement of the amount of copper coin produced was sent to the Banāras mint committee 118:

		Maunds
1826	August	2500
	September	5210
	October	5000
	November	5910
	December	4450
1827	January	12610
	February	16530
	March	7140
	April	13560
	May	21412

Closure of the Banāras Mint

Discussion of the closure of the Banāras mint started in 1829 and included discussion of Mr Yeld's retirement 119:

...We presume that the long services of Mr Yeld will be thought to entitle him to the liberal consideration of Government, and with respect to his salary therefore, we do not estimate any reduction. The services of Mr Prinsep will be highly valuable in the Calcutta mint as assistant assay master, and the salary of the latter as distinct from that of the Benares Assay Master, will cease, furnishing a saving of 12,000 rupees a year. The charge of perhaps half the establishment may also be retrenched, which will effect a reduction of about 10,000 rupees a year, and as the cost of coining generally is a trifle in favour of the Calcutta mint, some saving will be derived from this source. We calculate that the abolition of the Benares mint will be attended with a saving of 25,000 rupees a year, from which however the expense of remittance from distant Collectors of species for recoinage will have to be deducted.

If the Benares mint be abolished, it will be necessary to coin Farruckabad rupees in Calcutta for individuals taking or sending such currency up the country, and it will also be requisite to guard against any disappointment or unusual delay in finishing such rupees [from] bullion delivered for the purpose of being coined into them, or serious inconvenience may result to the merchants and bankers in the upper provinces and much dissatisfaction will be consequently excited.

The Governor General endorsed the proposal to close the Banāras mint in April 1829 120:

...to inform you that His Lordship in Council has, in pursuance of your recommendation resolved to discontinue the coining of money at the Benares mint...

At least six months notice should be given, and the Committee is asked to submit what changes would be necessary in the regulations to effect such a change

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and a draft notice of the closure was prepared in May 121:

It having been resolved to abolish the Benares mint, notice is hereby given that at the expiration of six months from the present date, no bullion will be received at the Benares mint for coinage. In order to provide for the currency of the Western Provinces, it is hereby announced that from and after the present date, all individual proprietors of silver bullion shall be permitted to have their silver converted into Farruckabad rupees at the Calcutta mint, conformable to the provisions of Regulation XI of 1819.

Before the mint closed, 1000 maunds of copper had been dispatched for use at Banāras. Prinsep, who was now in charge of the mint, suggested that the shipment should be stopped but it was decided that it should go ahead and be coined at Banāras 122. This was the final output of the mint there and was completed in January 1830 123. It is also clear from Prinsep's letter that the dies for the copper coins were prepared at Banāras, and not sent from Calcutta:

...The charge of die cutting has been augmented as I attempted by employing more engravers and of a superior class, to improve this hitherto defective branch of the fabrication of pice...

This shows that dies for copper were produced locally. Once the production of pice was completed the mint was closed 124:

...As the operations of the Benares mint have now terminated, the Committee desire me to suggest the expediency of the establishment being discontinued and the machinery, apparatus and other property of the Benares be disposed of...

The mint buildings were mainly put to other public services and the machinery was broken up, except for the dies, which were sent to the Saugor mint 125.

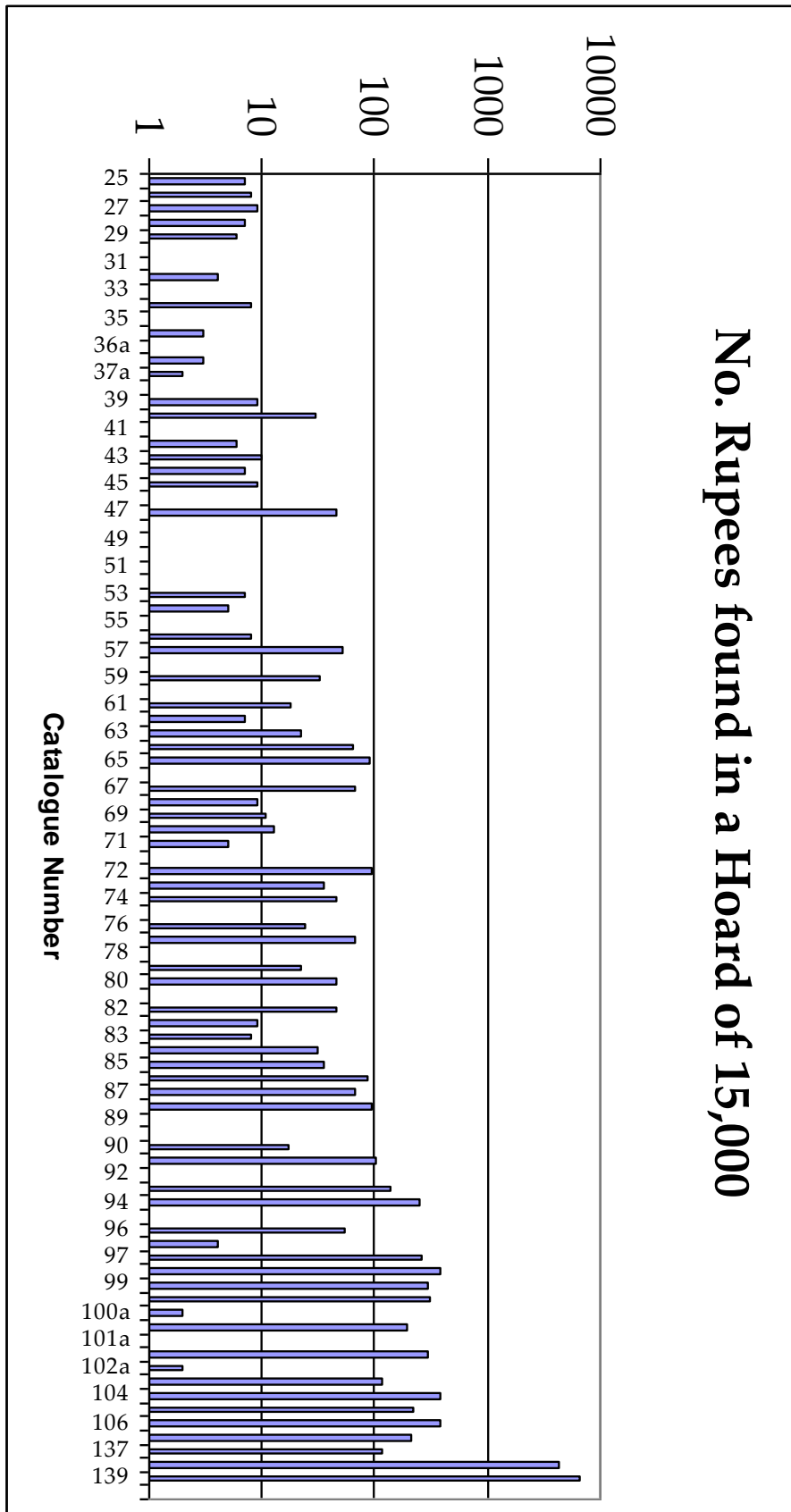
The output of silver from the Banāras mint for the previous 15 years was stated (values have been rounded to the nearest rupee) 126:

	Value in Sicca Rs
1813/14	3,358,216
1814/15	4,035,162
1815/16	6,221,817
1816/17	7,172,241
1817/18	7,320,959
1818/19	5,343,212
1819/20	3,963,302
1820/21	11,948,908
1821/22	8,436,317
1822/23	4,939,082
1823/24	2,901,781
1824/25	2,558,542
1825/26	4,991,172
1826/27	7,794,236
1827/28	4,112,392

Rarity of Rupees

Most date combinations (AH/R.Y.) of rupees are not too difficult to find. The graph below shows the distribution of dates found in a hoard of more than 757 coins with clear dates. The logarithmic scale allows the portrayal of the fact that the later dates, and particularly 1229/49, are much more common than earlier dates. This might be expected of a late hoard, but is indicative of the availability of the coins for the collector.

Number of rupees by catalogue number in a single hoard. N.B. logarithmic scale



Rupees – Frequency Distribution by Date

Date Distribution of Banāras rupees from a sample of 771 coins studied (data provide by P. Kulkarni)

AH	RY	No.	AH	RY	No.
1190	17	1	1213	41	1
1191	17	1	1213	41	1
1192	17	3		41	1
1193	21	1	1214	42	2
1195	23	2	1215	42	3
1196	24	1	1215	43	2
1199	26	1	1216	43	2
1199	26	2	1216	44	4
119x	26	2	1217	44	1
1198	26	4	1217	45	2
1199	27	1	1218	45	5
1200	27	3		46	2
1202	29	1	1218	46	5
1203	30	2	1219	46	6
12xx	32	1	1219	47	4
1206	34	2	122x	47	1
1207	34	3	1220	47	3
1208	35	2	122x	48	1
1208	36	2	1220	48	2
1209	36	1	12xx	48	3
1209	36	1		48	3
1209	37	2	1221	48	4
1210	38	1	1221	49	12
	38	1	1222	49	13
1211	39	1	1223	49	3
1211	40	1	1224	49	14
121x	39	1	1225	49	34
1212	39	2	1226	49	10
12xx	40	1	1227	49	5
1212	40	5	1228	49	29
			1229	49	541
			TOTAL		771

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