

Shah Jahan III and his copper coins from Shahjahanabad - Coinage and historical accounts

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Shah Jahan III is one of the ephemeral rulers of the Mughal empire. His reign represents a tumultuous phase of Mughal empire which was marred by intrigue and conspiracy by various factions in the Mughal court. His reign however forms the backdrop of one of the most significant events in Indian history, that is, "The third battle of Panipat". A brilliant account of the historical context and coinage was published in JONS 209 in 2011 by Shailendra Bhandare titled "The Marathas in Delhi in the 'Panipat' year- A numismatic insight"⁽¹⁾, however the article limited itself to the silver and gold coinage during the period. The aim of this article is to highlight the copper coins in the name of Shah Jahan III from Shahjahanabad mint specially the coppers coins minted during Maratha occupation which is so far unreported! I have used the detailed account by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in the book 'Fall of the Mughal empire' volume I & II⁽²⁾ and the above mentioned article in JONS 209 as reference for reconstructing the historical context.

Shah Jahan iii was born as Muhi-ul-millat. He was the son of Muhi-us-sunnat, the eldest son of Muhammad Kam Baksh who was the youngest son of Aurangzeb. For descriptive purpose, the historical and coinage is divided into 2 parts

Part 1- Shah Jahan III (29th November 1759 to 3rd August 1760)

The central character in the historical events is 'Imad ul- Mulk' who was not only the 'wazir' but also 'mover and shaker' of this period. Imad ul-Mulk Ghaziuddin II, was the grandson of Nizam ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I by his eldest son Ghaziuddin I Firuz Jang. Imad ul-Mulk rose into prominence during Mughal emperor Ahmed Shah's reign when he was Bakshi (Paymaster General). However he always aimed to be the Wazir and to realise his ambition, he had to seek the help of the Marathas. His efforts bore fruits and with Maratha help, Ahmed Shah was deposed 2nd June 1754 and he along with his then wazir Intizam ud-Daula was sent to prison. Imad ul-Mulk was made wazir and Alamgir II ascended the Mughal throne. Another character in this historical context is Najib Khan, who was among the most prominent 'Ruhela' chieftain who also coveted the high post of the 'Wazir'. The relationship between Imad ul-Mulk and Alamgir II was not amicable and inability of the Imad to pay the Marathas for their help resulted in plunder of the areas around Delhi by the marathas. Najib stood in open defiance to Imad and his defiance was mostly due to his ambition to become 'Wazir' himself. Imad too in order to teach Najib a lesson, attacked Najib Khan but this campaign was a failure. On the other hand this attack on the Afghan Najib Khan elicited a response from Ahmed Shah Durrani and he started his fourth invasion of Punjab. Ahmed Shah plundered Delhi in early 1757. While returning, Ahmed Shah reinstalled Alamgir II and wazir Imad ul-Mulk but made Najib Khan as supreme commander of affairs. As soon as Ahmed Shah departed, Imad again managed to gain the support of Marathas against Najib. The Marathas helped Imad and Dattaji Sindhia in April 1759 after securing Punjab, laid siege to the fort of Shukartal where Najib had entrenched himself. Najib again appealed to Ahmed Shah Durrani for help. Ahmed Shah responded and took back first Lahore and then Sirhind on 27th November 1759 from

Marathas. Meanwhile, the mistrust between Imad ul-Mulk and Alamgir II deepened. Alamgir II had begun ambitious and began to question Imad ul-Mulk. Imad ul-Mulk thought it is better to get rid of the emperor and he murdered Alamgir II on 29th November 1759 and placed Shah Jahan III on throne. Thus began the reign of Shah Jahan III. Dattaji lifted the siege to help the fleeing Maratha army from Punjab. The Afghans crossed the Yamuna and joined their 'Ruhela' kinsmen and their joint army defeated the Marathas in Thanesar on 22nd December 1759. Dattaji fell back and camped in Burari ghat (10 miles north of Delhi). However by stroke of luck, an Afghan marksman shot Dattaji dead and Afghan army launched an attack on the leaderless Maratha army. Jankoji, Dattaji's nephew managed to escape to Jat territory of Surajmal. Afghans occupied Delhi by end of January 1760. Ahmed Shah installed Yaqub Ali Khan in charge of Delhi. Imad ul-Mulk fled Delhi to escape the Afghan onslaught towards the Jat territory. However Shah Jahan III was still recognised as the Mughal ruler. Meanwhile, Malhar Rao Holkar was sent by the Peshwa to aid Dattaji. But on learning about his death, he joined Jankoji in Jat territory. Ahmed Shah Durrani launched a campaign against the Jats and Marathas and defeated the combined Holkar-Sindhia army on 4th March 1760. After this victory, Ahmed Shah camped in Aligarh within Najib Khan's territory to tide over the hot Indian summer. Peshwa learnt about the death of Dattaji and defeat of combined Holkar-Sindhia army. He wanted to get rid of the Afghan menace once in for all. He gathered a huge army summoned from every Maratha noblemen and feudal lord and summoned Sadashivrao Bhau, his cousin to lead the expedition to get rid of the Afghans. Accompanying him was Vishwasrao, Peshwa's eldest son (though a teenager at that time) along with Malhar Rao Holkar and Jankoji Sindhia. Sadashivrao Bhau left Deccan to oust the Afghans on 13th March 1760. The finances for this huge expedition was however precarious to say the least. The Marathas heavily depended upon revenue collectors like Govind Ballal and Naro Shankar who faltered when in need. Bhau and his large retinue managed to cross Chambal river on 8th June 1760. In the meanwhile, Bhau tried to forge alliances to augment his efforts. He secured the help of Jat Raja Surajmal but Nawab of Awadh Shuja ud-Daula was not committal. Bhau seeing that the flooded Yamuna had cut off the Doab, turned his attention to Delhi. In Delhi, Shah Jahan III was in throne with Yaqub Ali Khan in charge of affairs. Bhau attacked Delhi on 22nd July and by 3rd August Delhi was once again under Maratha control.

Copper coins (29th November to late January 1760)

1173 AH commences from 25th August 1759 to end of January 1760 . So the copper coins found dated 1173 AH/ Ry Ahd were the coins minted when Shah Jahan III was the emperor with Imad ul-Mulk in charge.



Obverse- Falus Shah Jahan 1173AH

Reverse- Zarb Shahjahanabad ry Ahd

شاه جهان
فلوس سال ۱۱۷۳

Obverse

شاه عبدالی
ضرب اجد

Reverse

Copper coins (end of January 1760 to 3rd August 1760)

By the end of January 1760, forces of Ahmed Shah Durrani occupied Delhi and placed Yaqub Ali Khan in charge of Delhi. Although Shah Jahan III was still on throne but coins were minted in the name of Ahmed Shah Abdali. The reign of Ahmed Shah Abdali is reckoned from 10 Jumada II 1160AH (from the death of Nadir Shah). Hence the ry 14 of Ahmed Shah starts from 29th January 1760 to 17th January 1761. This period coincides with copper coins found in the name of the Durrani ruler with date 1173AH/Ry14 and represents the period in which Yaqub Ali Khan was in charge. These coins are rare and unreported yet.



Obverse- Falus Dur-i-Durrani 1173AH

Reverse- Zarb Shahjahanabad Ry14

دھری دُرانی
فکوسس ۱۱۷

شہجہان آباد
نصر علیہ

Obverse

Reverse

Part II- Shah Jahan III (3rd August 1760 to 10th October 1760)

While in Delhi, Sadashivrao Bhau's financial problems grew. Revenue collectors like Govind Ballal were not proving helpful in these tough financial crisis. On top of it, it was learnt that Shuja ud-Daula have decided to join the Afghan alliance of Najib Khan and Ahmed Shah Durrani. This added to the frustration of Sadashivrao Bhau. On 6th August 1760, on Bhau's orders, the thick beaten silver lining of 'Diwan-i-Khaas' was brought down and coined into 0.9 million rupee which could finance the campaign for hardly a month. On Bhau's coercion, Shuja ud-Daula presented a '3-point proposal' to give peace a chance. Shuja offered to broker truce if 1) Shah Jahan III is deposed 2) Shah Alam, son of Alamgir II is made the emperor and 3) Shuja ud-Daula is made the wazir. Facing such financial woes, Bhau decided to accept Shuja's proposal. On 10th October 1760, Bhau sent 2 Maratha agents who deposed Shah Jahan III.

Shah Alam II was declared as emperor and Shuja ud-Daula was named as wazir. Thus ended the reign of Shah Jahan III.

Copper coins (3rd August 1760 to 10th October 1760)

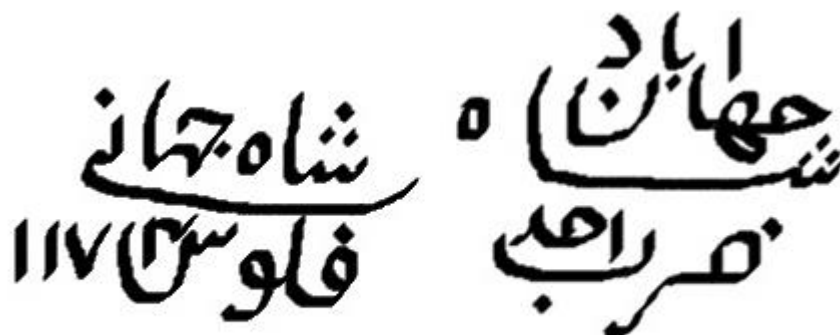
1174AH started on 13th August 1760 and ended on 3rd August 1761. So the copper coins in the name of Shah Jahan III dated 1174AH/Ry Ahd was minted when Delhi was under Maratha control. These were minted during the last 68 days of Shah Jahan III reign. These are also unreported yet and rarer to get compared to the 1173AH ones.

These also have different layout compared to the Shah Jahan III copper coins of 1173AH



Obverse- Falus Shah Jahani 1174AH

Reverse- Zarb Shahjahanabad Ry Ahd



Obverse

Reverse

Shah Jahan III was thus, used a pawn in the politics of Delhi and the copper coins aptly illustrates the story and political development.

References:

- 1) "The Marathas in Delhi in the 'Panipat' year- A numismatic insight". Shailendra Bhandare; JONS 209, 2011; pg 18-28 (London, U.K)
- 2) "Fall of the Mughal empire' volume I & II". Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Orient Longman, Mumbai, 1991.

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