

Philately – an historic adventure

Papua Large the 2/6 Debate

Have you ever tried to classify the Papua Large 2/6 Type B and Type C listed by Stanley Gibbons as SG 82 and SG 83 and remained in a cloud of doubt? Considering the value of these stamps you would want to be sure wouldn't you? The problem is not just you, these classifications are still held in conjecture, so let's examine the issue together.

The 2/6 value of the Papua Large series is one of the most intriguing and controversial stamps of the Papua Large series. To start with although Stanley Gibbons only lists two basic printings there are in fact three. But this is another story and not the intrigue to which I refer. All the stamps of the Papua Large series were printed from plates developed from the original BNG series of the same value except for the 2/6 which was developed from 3 different BNG frame plate values, the ½d, the 1d and the 2/6 resulting in the 3 printings of 1907, 1910 and 1911. The ½d frame plate produced the 1st Printing in 1907 and the 2/6 frame plate produced the 3rd printing in 1911. While the discussion concerning the reasons for the 3 printings is interesting in itself I aim to focus on the controversy surrounding 2nd printing using the 1d frame plate and the debate over the description of the 2/6 value figures and assertion of the classification of the Type B and Type C ascribed to the 2/6 figures of this particular printing.

The two most eminent scholars of the day Croaker and Rosenblum held opposing opinions over what occurred in the process of the printing and the validity of the classifications currently presented by Stanley Gibbons. That being said lets begin by examining what each said.

Rosenblum states that “the values inserted on the stone were taken from three original drawings, which differ slightly in the shape of the numerals, etc, as follows:

Type A:

Thin top to 2 and small ball. Thin 6 and small ball. Thick uneven line.

Type B:

Thick top to 2 and large, badly shaped ball. Thick 6 and uneven ball. Thick 6 and uneven ball. Thick uneven line.

Type C:

Thin top to 2 and large, well shaped ball. Thin 6 and large ball. Very thick line, nearly even¹”.

Illustration: Type B and C



SG 82
Black & Brown
1st Printing
1910

Type B from

Vignette Stone IV / 1d frame plate

Thin top to '2' and large, well shaped ball. Thin '6' and large ball. Thick uneven stroke.



SG 83
Black & Brown
1st Printing
1910

Type C from

Vignette Stone IV / 1d frame plate

Thick top to '2', and large, badly shaped ball. Thick '6' and uneven ball. Thin even line

¹ A.A. Rosenblum, "Stamps of Papua". p 24

He ascribed Type A to the 1st printing and Types B and C to the 2nd printing. The type A is easily discerned by its distinctive Chocolate Brown frame colouring.

Rosenblum continues to describe the plating position of the various Types as mixed throughout the sheet.

Illustration: Rosenblum’s Plating of the Papua Large 1910 Printing²

| | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| BB | BB | BB | BC | BA |
| CC | AB | AB | AC | CB |
| CB | CC | CC | BB | BC |
| CC | CC | CC | CC | CC |
| CC | CC | CC | CC | CC |
| CC | CC | CC | CC | CC |

Rosenblum’s Plating of 1910 2/6
 Displays the sheet position of the 2/6 figure form types A, B and C

Consider the illustration for position 15 described by Rosenblum as Type B on the left and Type C on the right. The illustration shows clearly the sheet printer’s marker indicating position 15 on the sheet for this stamp.

Illustration: Position [15] Printing 1910



Black & Brown
 1st Printing
 1910
 [15] Type B & Type C
 As positioned in table to RH

Croaker in contrast to Rosenblum states that “the value tablets “B” and “C” as illustrated in Gibbons (1976 edition) do not occurred “mixed” in the sheet of the above. All are type “C” (with variations referred to above) and Gibbon’s Type “B” is the fraction as transferred from the De La Rue engraved plate with very thin even fraction bar (described by Gibbons as thick, uneven)³”.

In answer to the irregularities Croaker says that “a good deal of work was done by hand on the stone, as there is considerable irregularity in the shape of the numerals and the fraction bar. I cannot say of these values were transferred from the copper plate, prepared by Reading and used for Series (1) 2/6 (the

² A.A. Rosenblum, *ibid.* p 26

³ H. Croaker, “Lakatoi II & III, Territory of Papua”. p 23,24

first printing in 1907), or if new means of obtaining transfers was made. The figures of value vary so greatly that one wonders if all were drawn directly on the stone by hand.⁴”

Both these researchers tried to reach back using the information available at the time and both were dependant on the pioneers like W.T. Elliot and F.J. Melville. They tried to draw reasonable deductions based upon logic and evidence available.

So, if you've read carefully, and examined the illustrations you are probably somewhere between confused and angry because you've just realised that philately is not always black and white. I haven't given you a definitive answer only raised the question and doubt. Philately is about getting to the truth whether it is postal history or stamps, and sometimes it takes diligence and detective work to get to the bottom. Enjoy the journey.

⁴ H. Croaker, *ibid.* p 24