

## Identifying the 3d Lakatoi of the three Printers

One of these stamps is scarce, while the other is common. Which one is? Can you pick the difference?



98b  
Sepia & Emerald  
Harrison Printing  
1925  
(80)



98c  
Grey-black & Bright-green  
Ash Printing  
1927

The 3d Lakatoi is the most interesting stamp among the Bi-coloured issues with various Printers, and multiple issues, and then there are the overprints. There are several reasons for this, but the significance is that specific issues are quite scarce, and even rare, while others are very common. Added to this, there is the controversy surrounding certain 3d Cooke prints, which are seen as almost the Holy Grail of the Bi-coloured Lakatois. Identifying any of these stamps requires an understanding of certain factors. The aim of this article is examine how you can differentiate between the various printings, in particular the 3d issues.

Initially, let's examine some of the background which has provided the basis for much of the controversy. The 3d was one of the three initial values printed by Cooke, and was later printed by Harrison (one printing) and Ash (four printings). As with the colours of other stamp values, each printer, and in many cases each printing issued, possessed slightly different shades of the base colour, in this case, blue-green.

After being appointed but before commencing printing Cooke made a number of colour printings using different proportions of the two colours, Prussian-blue and yellow, to produce a range of colours from yellow-green to blue-green. After the decision was made to print using the blue-green, the printer ran off a few sheets using the wrong colour. This reportedly resulted in up to five sheets of an 'Error of Colour', a "deep greenish Prussian-blue" being brought into stock. There is no record of what happened to the colour trials other than that they were initially preserved at the Printing Office<sup>1</sup>. It is possible that they were issued when the decision was made to issue all remaining stock to be overprinted for airmail purposes.

According to Croaker, Cooke produced two prints, one in "Bright blue-green & grey-black", the other is an "aniline green & black" with its distinctive penetrating colour that appears clearly on the reverse side. The aniline was added to the ink so that a stamp once used and soaked off a letter would be colour affected. It use was abandoned and only ever used in this second printing.

<sup>1</sup> A.A. Rosenblum, "Stamps of Papua", p. 39

The catalyst for the debate over whether a particular stamp is an example of one of the missing colour trials or an “Error of Colour” is that the blue-green ink used by Cooke was fugitive by nature. The yellow pigment could be readily bleached out when exposed to sunlight reducing the blue-green colour to various shades of a dull Prussian-blue. These have been confused with the “Error of Colour” printings, or even the missing colour trials. Compare the two Cooke prints illustrated on page 4. One is a certified colour trial, the other a colour affected example. Croaker is rightfully cautious in approaching this particular stamp. But I have seen a 3d by Cooke in Jerry Blair’s collection that is as fresh as the day it was printed with the distinctive “Prussian blue colour”.

There is some evidence to suggest that the missing colour trials may have been overprinted for airmail purposes. In 1929 the 3d was overprinted to produce airmail stamps. There were two types. One with the words “AIR MAIL” in black ink, the other with the image of an aeroplane with the words AIR MAIL across the wings in carmine-red ink (Refer to Airmail Overprint Series, p 5). Essentially, all the printings by Cooke, Harrison and Ash were overprinted with the words AIR MAIL, but only the Harrison and Ash printings were overprinted with the aeroplane. In a Prestige Auction #145 [Lot 224] on 13 Jun 2009 an incomplete sheet of 3d Cooke overprinted AIRMAIL in an unrecorded shade of ‘black & deep dark bluish green’ with the JCB mono-gram was listed. The sheet was certified by Jerry Blair (2009) wherein he states, "This block is fresh as issued and has not been altered in any way. The colour is similar to that of the 3d colour error SG 98a...This block shows that the full story of the shades/colours of the 3d Cooke printings has yet to be told as this stamp [the overprint] should not exist in this colour.. .. This is a spectacular & intriguing block of stamps that is worthy of a place in a specialised collection of these issues" (Refer to “Illustration: Cooke Colour Trails”, p. 4).

The facts surrounding the printing and then overprinting of the 3d have made philatelists look carefully at the 3d issue. The existence of the colour trial printings, the issuing of the “Error of Colour” printings, and the fugitive nature of the blue-green ink used pose a challenge to identification.

The final factor that impacted on the scarcity and quantities of the various printings was the decision to use up remaining stocks of 3d, 6d and 1/- sheets for airmail by having them overprinted at the Printing Office in Port Moresby. For example, most of the Harrison 3d was overprinted with the word AIR MAIL making the non-overprinted 3d Harrison scarce and the 3d Harrison aeroplane overprints exceptionally rare. In all, there were only 10 of the Harrison sheets ever overprinted with the aeroplane, of which 8 sheets were destroyed leaving only two sheets in existence.

So, now with an understanding of the background of how the various printings that were made and the impact of the airmail printings on their scarcity lets turn our attention to the process of identification. There are four factors that can be used to determine the identity of a printing. These factors are:

- Colour of the paper
- Colour of the vignette
- Fullness of the impression of the vignette
- Colour of the Frame

In many cases, it may be a process of elimination. Starting with the paper, consider the freshness and colour of the paper. For example, printings produced by John Ash are distinguishable by their distinctive whiter coloured paper. The paper used by Cooke or Harrison has a creamy white texture. A white paper would clearly indicate a printing by Ash. However, in the case of toning due to age or exposure, this may be difficult to discern.

If the paper colour can not be discerned easily because of the effects of toning, then next consider the colour of the vignette. The 3d printing produced by T.S. Harrison was the only 3d printings made with the vignette printed in "sepia". All the others were printed in "black". In addition to this, the Harrison vignette is slightly smaller with softer edges and more white spaces between the vignette and the frame when compared to the Ash and Cooke vignettes. The vignette produced by Cooke and Ash is wider, with a firmer, sometimes crisp edge. Finally, consider the colour of the frame. The Harrison print has a distinctly softer shade of green than the Cooke and Ash prints.

The colour shades of the 3d Lakatoi series (Papua Typographs) are fascinating and an adventure in philately. By going through this process of elimination, by considering the colour of the paper, the colour and width of the vignette, and finally the colour of the frame you will be able to spot a Harrison. If you are trying to determine a particular issue of a Cooke or Ash printing then the fresher the stamp the more likely you are seeing the original colour. It represents a challenge to identify correctly and, with the Cooke printings, a mystery yet to be fully answered. While there are colour descriptions for Cooke (except the colour trials) and Harrison, unfortunately Croaker's only description of the Ash colours is "Bright-green & Grey-black and various shades". Collecting various shades of Ash might allow you to determine the four shades through comparison. Identifying these stamps can be difficult, but if the effects of toning or bleaching by sunlight can be discounted due to the freshness of the stamp then you can have reasonable confidence in the colours presented.

Illustrations 3d Bi-coloured Lakatoi Issues including Airmail and Aeroplane Overprints

1916- 1931 3d Bi-coloured Typographs



98  
Grey-black & Bright blue-green  
Cooke Printing  
1<sup>st</sup> Printing 1918



Unlisted  
Black & Aniline-green  
Cooke Printing  
2<sup>nd</sup> Printing 1918



98a  
Black & deep greenish Prussian-blue  
Cooke Printing  
1918



98b  
Sepia & Emerald  
Harrison Printing  
1925



98c  
Grey-black & Bright-green  
Ash Printing  
1927

1929 3d 'AIR MAIL' Overprint



112  
Black & Bright blue-green  
(30,000)  
Cooke Printing



Unlisted  
Black & Aniline Green  
Cooke Printing



113  
Sepia-black & Bright blue-green  
(6,000)  
Harrison Printing



114  
Black & Blue-green  
(36,000)  
Ash Printing

1930 3d Aeroplane Overprint



115  
Sepia-black & Bright blue-green  
(80)  
Harrison Printing



118  
Black & Blue-green  
(29,520)  
Ash Printing

Illustration: Cooke Colour Trials



Cooke Printing  
 "deep blue darkish green & black"  
 Tony Williams collection  
 certified Jerry Blair (2009)  
 Prestige Auctions (2009)



Cooke Printing  
 Coloured affect

(Above) The colour affected example of the 3d Cooke which has had the yellow pigment removed by sunlight results in a washed out appearance. These are often presented by the unwitting and/or unscrupulous as the scarce "Prussian blue", which neither are examples of.

(Left) The colour of the genuine colour trial will be fresh. This is not the "Prussian blue" listed by SG, but a different unrecorded colour trial.