

‘NORTH-CHINA HERALD’ PERFINS.

Roy Gault

I’ve had a recent request from an ex-member of the Perfin Society, ***Ton van Doornen*** in the Netherlands, enquiring if an “N.C.H” Perfin appears in any of the Sloper ledgers we have in our archives. Ton told me that for over 30 years he’s been studying *the “N.C.H” Perfins used by the ‘North-China Herald’, which can be found on old stamps of Japan, China, and Hong Kong.* However, the only clue as to date I was given was that the Perfin is known only on one series of Chinese stamps - the second issue of the China ‘Large Dragon’ stamps with distinct printings issued in **1882** (thin paper) and **1883** (thick paper).

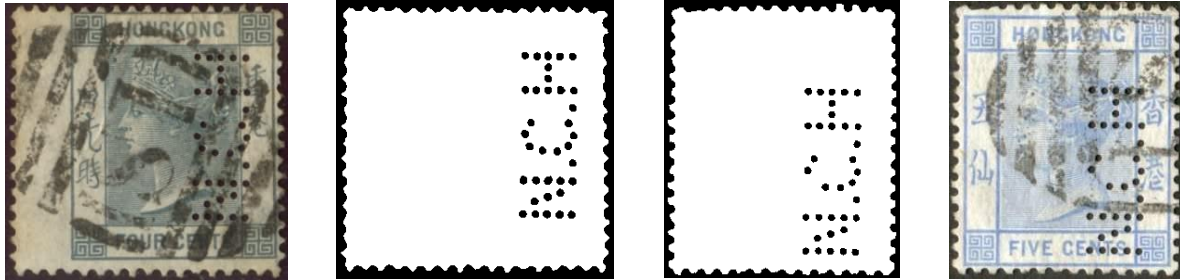
Armed with this information I looked through all the Sloper ledgers we have dating from 1862 to 1910, and I had to report back to Ton that I could find no occurrence of any “N.C.H” die, or anything remotely like it. It doesn’t prove they didn’t make the perforating press & die, it’s just that it doesn’t appear in their existing records.

As I knew next to nothing about the stamps of Japan, China, and Hong Kong, nor indeed the “N.C.H” Perfin and the ‘*North-China Herald*’, I had to use the Internet to see what could be established prior to the search. Now, rather than leave it at that with a simple report back that ‘*nothing was found*’, I thought I’d share with you my findings.

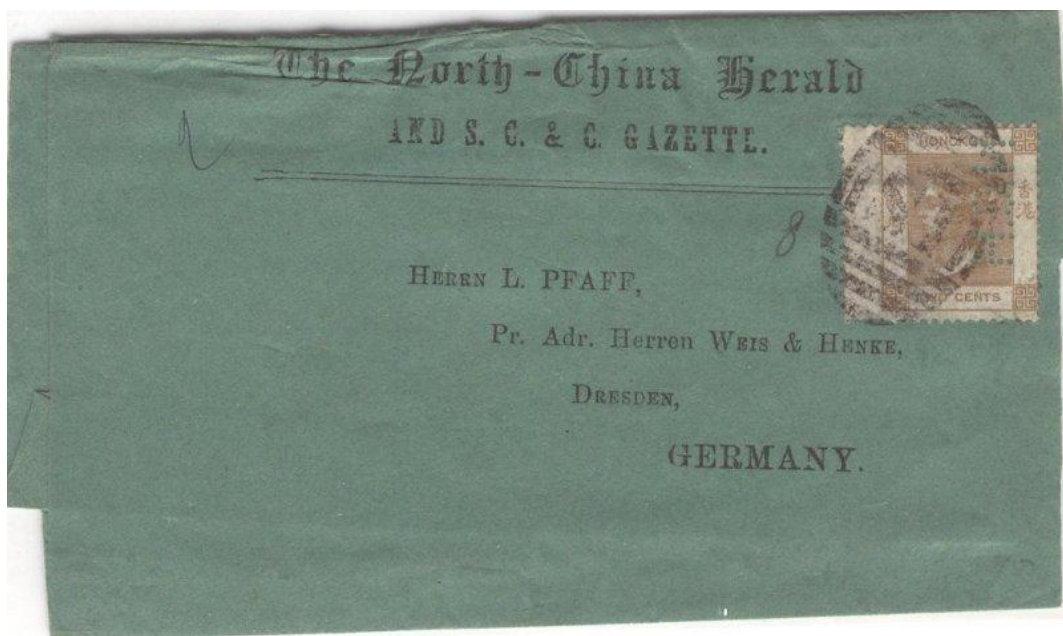


The ‘*North-China Herald*’ was an English-language newspaper published weekly in Shanghai, China, and often referred to as the most influential foreign newspaper of its time. The first edition was published **3rd Aug 1850**, and its final issue was printed **8th Dec 1941**. Steve Endicott has pointed out that this was the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour - almost certainly no coincidence.

Next we come to the Perfin “N.C.H”, which I’ve shown complete from a wing-margined example of a 4 cents **Hong Kong** stamp, along with an example showing a malfunctioning pin in the “C” on a 5 cents Hong Kong stamp. Examples are also known where there is ‘hanging chad’ still in the “C”, so it must be concluded that that particular pin was troublesome, and either eventually removed or simply broke.



The two stamps above show the ‘S1’ cancel of **Shanghai**, whereas the dated copy alongside for **FE 14/90** shows a full name **SHANGAE** cancel. {Images are courtesy of Rod Sell’s website page on the top row, and Ton van Doornen alongside}.



And from the Internet we have this ‘*North-China Herald*’ newspaper wrapper to Dresden, Germany, with a wing margin copy of a 2c Light brown first issued in 1862 (and not replaced until 1880 by the 2c purple-rose) with their “N.C.H” Perfin, tied by the ‘S1’ cancel used in **Shanghai**. I would date the wrapper to 1875-1880, say **c1878**.

Ton also talked about stamps from Japan and China appearing with the “N.C.H” Perfin, so let’s see what we can find out for those two countries, **Japan** first ...



Here we see two examples of the Japanese 2 Sen yellow ‘Cherry Blossom’ issue, with the “N.C.H” Perfin and **Shanghai** cancels - left is the early cancel from **1876**, and right is the later five-star propeller type first used in the 2nd half of **1877**. Note - the Japanese Post Office in Shanghai opened on 15th April **1876**, making the leftmost stamp very early use! {Scans courtesy of Ton, and D Feldman Auctions}.

And as for **China**, which is where we came in, ..., Wide Margins, Large Dragons - In **1882**, the 2nd set of ‘Large Dragons’ was issued. They were initially printed on thin or pelure paper, (i.e. crisp, hard, thin paper, sometimes used for postage stamps), using the same colours (green, red, & yellow) and currency (1, 3, & 5 Candarins) as previously, although the stamps were spaced 4.5 mm apart. Then, from **1883** they were printed on thick, opaque paper spaced 3.25 mm apart. Note that examples of the Perfin are *almost* always found sideways, partly ‘off-stamp’, and always missing a pin from the “C” so a *single headed* die. The sheets of stamps were folded both horizontally and vertically prior to perforation.

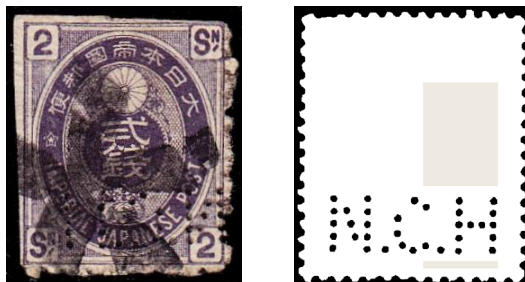


Ton has kept track of this issue with the “N.C.H” Perfin and can report that only **34 examples** have so far been reported

1 Candarin (30), 3 Candarins (3), and 5 Candarins (1)

A Codicil!

I also solicited the help of Perfin Society members, *Mike Behm* in Canada, *Philippe Antheaume* in France, and our Auctioneer *William Hall*, all three of whom I know collect world-wide Perfins, to see what they had in their collections. By and large they substantiated what has already been presented, although *Mike* did include three Japanese stamps which I would like to show you.



First we see a 2 Sen Violet (1879 Koban) with an upright-reversed strike of the “N.C.H” Perfin missing a pin from the “C”. The stamp colour changed to carmine in 1883, dating the stamp to **c1881**.



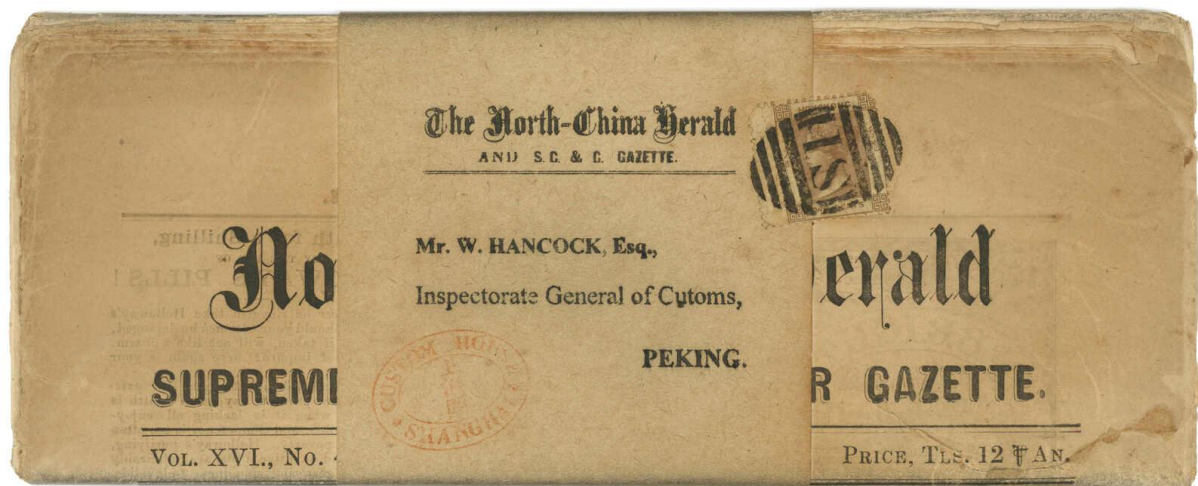
However, the Perfin on the two *mint* ‘Chrysanthemums’ overprinted ‘*China*’, shown above, are subtly different and date to the very early **1900s**. They show a full strike, but with a *pointed* top to the “C”, so could this be a **New Die** or is the Perfin a **Fake**? Methinks a Fake!



And finally, we have an example (one of two or possibly three known) on a **US postage stamp** courtesy of *Doug Turner* (scan expedited by *Steve Endicott*), which is on an 1870 2 Cents ‘Jackson’. The third example is thought to be on a ‘Lincoln’ from the same series. It’s been assigned N048.5I in Steve’s ‘*Catalog of United States Perfins*’.

Never opened!

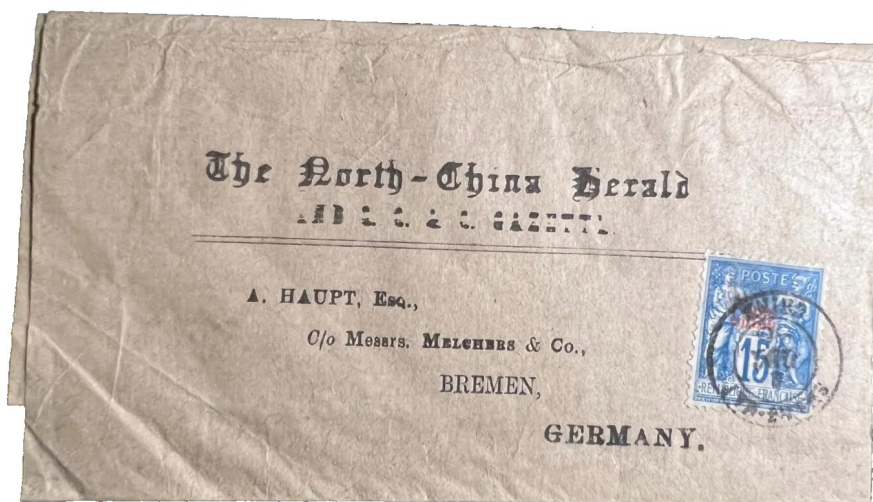
I couldn't resist showing you this item, a wrapper containing a copy of the '*North-China Herald*' for 6th January 1876, addressed to Mr W Hancock Esq. who was the Inspectorate General of Customs in Peking. By chance this is the edition that immediately preceded the newspaper 'masthead' I illustrated at the beginning of the study. A Hong Kong QV 2 cents light-brown stamp (with wing margin, but *without* Perfin) has been affixed across the paper and wrapper, tied by an 'S1' Shanghai killer cancel, and then forwarded with bilingual '**CUSTOMS HOUSE * SHANGHAI**' hand-stamp in red to Peking.



{Courtesy of AVA Auctions Ltd - July 2022}.

This is good evidence (but not proof) that the Perfin "**N.C.H**" *wasn't in use at the time*, although that probably happened later on that year.

Next we see a wrapper addressed to Bremen, Germany, but with a French stamp (without a Perfin) applied. {eBay - September 2024}.



Stamp Gallery - organised under the postage stamp country of origin.

I guess it goes without saying, but if you can add anything more to either the story or know of more stamps for the stamp gallery, ***please let me know***, so that I can update the study as well as letting interested parties know of any new developments.

China

What follows are the scans painstakingly taken by [Ton van Doornen](#), of the ***thirty-four*** known examples of the “N.C.H” (N2) Perfin die on the ‘Large Dragon’ stamps of China. They represent 30 years of searching! The index numbers are the chronological order in which the scans were taken, along with their source or current location.



01-Zhao online



02-Interasia



03-Zhao online



04-eBay



05-Spink



06-China Clipper



07-Germany



08-USA



09-Chinese website



10-Taiwan



11-Spink



12-USA



13-Spink



14-France



15-UK



16-Belgium



17-Kelleher-Rogers



18-Netherlands



19-UK



20-Singapore



21-Spink



22-Spink



23-Spink



24-Taiwan



25-Zhao online



26-Netherlands



27-eBay



28-Cherrystone



29-Zhao online



30-Zhao online



501-Spink



301-eBay (Repaired)



302-UK



303-Taiwan



FGH - Dec 2024

As stated in the article, the sheets of stamps were folded about both the horizontal and vertical axes prior to initialling with the “N.C.H” perforating press. This is borne out by the distribution of sideways, sideways-reversed, sideways-inverted, and sideways-inverted-reversed strikes - see table below. The ‘+1’ in the table is from scan #15, which is the scan that ‘proves’ that the sheets were folded about a vertical axis, as on this occasion it was badly folded giving the partial mirror image strike. The 5 Chandrins example alongside *without* a Perfin has a Hong Kong receiving date or [MR 24/83](#).



15-UK



Note that **all** the examples are missing the pin from the “C”, proving a *single headed die*, and that all strikes were sideways bar one, (#19) which is upright-inverted.

Totals	12	5+1	8+1	7

In passing, a rare find - examples of the 1 Candarin and 3 Candarins stamps *without a Perfin* have been found with part of a watermark which shows the paper maker’s name (MONCKTON KENT). This would be the well known ‘Basted Mills, Kent’ paper maker,

Walter Monckton J.P. (1827-1900).

The Large Dragons of China

Imperial China had a long history of an organised postal system. The Imperial government developed a system of routes, messengers and post-houses over centuries. Until 1878, that system was used only for government purposes while messages for citizens were carried by private couriers.

During the 4th year of the Emperor Guangxu, a modern postal system was set up and in **July 1878**, the first set of three stamps was released.



Thin Paper, Large Dragons

The stamps had a design of a large dragon in the centre, surrounded by a boxed frame with a bilingual inscription of "CHINA" and the local denomination "CANDARINS". Stamps were in different colours: 1 Candarin in green, 3 Candarins in red and 5 Candarins in yellow.

This first issue was on thin, hard unwatermarked paper. The stamps were in sheets of 25 (5x5), spaced 2.5mm apart on all sides and perforated 12½.



Wide Margins, Large Dragons

In **1882**, the second set of Large Dragons was issued. They were printed on thin or pelure paper, using the same colours and currency. This time, the stamps were spaced 4.5mm apart and arranged in sheets of 15 (**5X3**) for the value of 3 Candarins, while the other values were arranged in sheets of 25 (**5X5**).



Thick Paper Large Dragons with Clean Cut Perforations

In **1883**, a set of Large Dragons was issued, printed this time on thick, opaque paper with the stamps printed 3,25mm apart arranged in sheets of 20 (**4X5**) with clean-cut perforation. The 1883 set is known as “Thick Paper Large Dragons with Clean Cut Perforations.”



Thick Paper Large Dragons With Rough Perforations

In **1885**, the perforation machines, due to the mechanical wear, gradually started to have their needles blunted. The result was that the stamps began to appear with rough perforation, a subtype of the previous issue so can be distinguished.



The wide range of cancels, shades and variety opens up various possibilities for collectors to study and collect this fascinating first issue of China.

This article was written by Specialist Auction Describer Michele Martini and reproduced here with full acknowledgement.

Hong Kong

Before we get started it should be noted that the stamps are printed ‘**HONGKONG**’ without a gap between the two words, whereas in the text I’ve used ‘**Hong Kong**’. The simplified name Hong Kong was in use by 1810, although the name was also commonly written as the single word ‘**Hongkong**’. This changed in 1926, when the government officially adopted the two-word name ‘**Hong Kong**’.

The Perfined stamps of Hong Kong are the most plentiful and will give us the best chance of understanding what went on with the “N.C.H” die. I believe that the die was *single headed*, and that only one die was ever involved. All the examples on the Chinese Large Dragon stamps shown previously have a pin missing from the “C”. The pin is also missing on the stamps of **Hong Kong**, although complete strikes, and examples with ‘hanging chad’ (or simple indentations) can be found suggesting that that particular perforating pin was troublesome. In what follows, I’ve separated the ‘complete’, ‘hanging chad’, and ‘missing pin’ varieties to illustrate the point.

Entry from ‘Security Markings’ by Philippe Orsetti and P Pugh (Oct 1992) says the “N.C.H” die had earliest/latest dates of **1868** and **1888**. We will be putting these two dates to the test in the following pages!

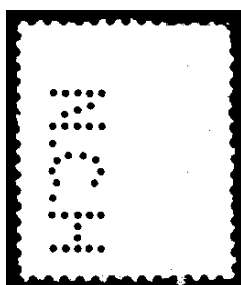
***** * Group III : Perforated Initials * *****							
Type	Tiles	Frame	Perfins	Name	Letter Height	Number Holes	Source Dates earl. lat.
46	N- 3	Perfins	N.C.H	North-China Herald	5	35	Shanghai 1868 1888

HONG KONG PERFINS			
<u>NORTH CHINA HERALD</u>			
N. C. H	13, 8, 12	S.G. 10	6c. lilac.



There is also a manual note of a 6 C Lilac (SG 10) which was issued from 1863. This would have been in use for a very long time as the denomination wasn’t re-issued until 1907. Also, without an illustration, we don’t know what state the “C” was in - ‘missing a pin’, ‘hanging chad’, or ‘complete’.

Die 'complete'.



- **2 cents Light-brown** - issued 1862 (No wmk), 1865 (Wmk), replaced in 1880 by the 2 cents Purple-rose.



- **4 cents Slate-blue** - series introduced 1863, Perf 14. The value was re-issued in Pearl-grey and a new watermark in 1896, giving us a wide 1863-1896, 33 year period of use.



- **6 cents Violet** - issued 1863, and not replaced.



Die with ‘hanging chad’ still in the “C”. I suspect the problematic pin was removed (or broke completely) **c1883**.

- **2 cents Light-brown** - issued 1862 (No wmk), 1865 (Wmk), replaced in 1880 by the 2 Cents Purple-rose. ‘Hanging chad’.



- **2 cents Purple-rose** - issued 1880. Example has ‘hanging chad’.



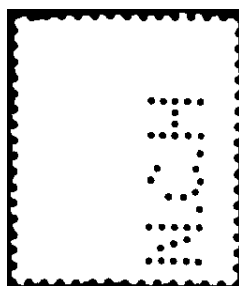
- **5 cents Ultramarine** - issued 1880. Example shows ‘indentation’.



- **6 cents Violet** - issued 1863, and not replaced. Pin missing.



Die missing a pin from the “C”.



- **2 cents Light-brown** - issued 1862 (No wmk), 1865 (Wmk), replaced in 1880 by the 2Cents Purple-rose.



- **2 cents Purple-rose** - issued 1880. CDS dated examples are known ranging from DE 16/85 through to FE 14/90.



- **5 cents Ultramarine** - issued 1880.



- **24 cents Green** issued from 1862 (No wmk), 1865 (Wmk) ..., and not replaced

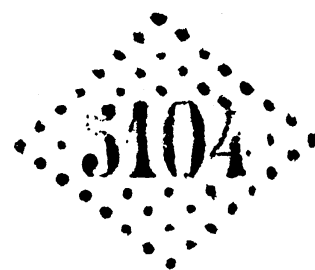


- **28 Surcharge on 30 cents** - issued 1877.



France - reported by Gustav Hansen, December 2024.

In 2015 I was fortunate to obtain the “N.C.H” Perfin on a French 40c CERES stamp (1870-71 issue, Michel 35). It has a clear **5104** cancel, used until 1876 by the **French Post Office** in SHANGHAI. I’ve dated the stamp to c1875.



Japan

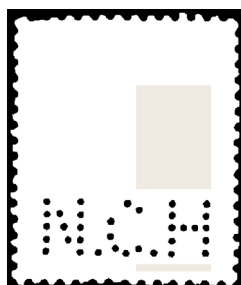
This section includes (with acknowledgement) a number of scans from the in depth study produced by Ton van Dooren. Note the mixture of complete, 'hanging chad', and missing pin strikes.

1875-6 Hand engraved, 1 Sen Light-brown, 2 Sen Yellow, and 5 Sen Blue-green.



1876-7 Koban series - No wmk, Perf 8½-14

2 Sen Olive

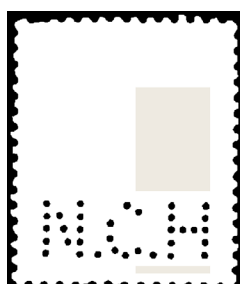


c1877

The example to the right shows 'hanging chad' in the "C".

1879 Koban series - No wmk, Perf 8½-13½

1 S Brownish-red, **2 Sen Violet**, 3 S Orange, and 50 Sen Rose.



c1881

Note: The 1 Sen, 2 Sen, and 50 Sen stamps had their colours changed in 1883 to comply with United Postal Union guidelines.

1883 - New Koban series.

1 Sen Green, 2 Sen Rose.



Note that both of these examples show 'hanging chad' in the hole that will eventually go missing completely **c1883**. I had originally thought it was c1881, but these 'dateable' stamps show it was a little later.

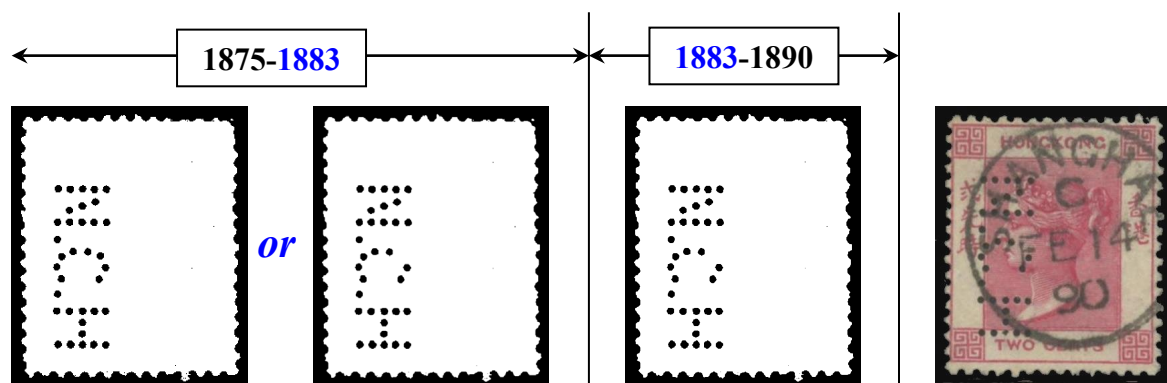
United States of America



Here we have an example (one of two or three known) on a US postage stamp. Two are on an 1870 2 Cents 'Jackson' (one of which is shown), but stamp details of the third are unknown other than it has an **1888** date. {Bob Szymanski tells me he once had a 'Lincoln' with this Perfin, so that may well be the elusive *third example*, the one with the 8/1/1888 date}. The non-perfined centre stamp illustrated above shows use by the Japanese Post Office in Shanghai from a similar early period.

In conclusion, I believe there was only ever one *single headed* die which was in use **1875-1890**. However, almost from the outset, a pin in the “C” proved troublesome which either broke or was removed completely around **1883**. I say this because prior to the mid 1880s, postage stamps of all *Four* countries (China, France, Japan, and the United States) along with the overseas territory of Hong Kong all exhibit strikes with a *full complement* of holes, strikes where the hole is completely missing from the “C”, and strikes where ‘hanging chad’, or at least an indentation, has been left in the stamp. For example, the 2 cents Purple-red Hong Kong stamp (introduced in 1880) can be found with all three scenarios. However, by 1883 when the Large Dragon China stamps were introduced, only the ‘missing pin’ scenario can be seen *in all 35 known examples*. The use of Perfinned stamps fell out of favour around 1890 - the latest known example dating to **FE 14/90**.

The sequence of events is thought to be ...



Perfin Forgeries.

- **Japan - 1900 & 1901 Chrysanthemum issues**

½ Sen Grey issued 27th March 1901 - No wmk, 12-13½ Perf.

1½ Sen Ultramarine issued 1st Oct 1900 - No wmk, 12-12½ Perf.

3 Sen Carmine issued 15th May 1906 - No wmk, 12-13½ Perf.

All three were issued with overprints for use in China as shown below. Images courtesy of *Mike Behm*.



The colour of the 1½ Sen was changed to purple, 15th May 1906. All three denominations were replaced by the 'Tazawa' series on 31st August 1913.

At first sight, this appears to be a New Die, with a 'pointed' top to the "C". All three are mint and probably date to **1905/6**. However, it's 'suspicious' that no used examples have been reported, pointing to the possibility that the Perfins are 'Fakes'.

- **China - various issues.**

While on the subject of forgeries, *Ton van Doornen* has details of two more, one on a 3 Chandarins 'Chinese Large Dragon', and the other on a 10 cents Ultramarine 'Chinese Imperial Post' issue, dated 25th March 1911. Both Perfins are different and much larger than the genuine "N.C.H" Perfin.



Stamp details taken from StampWorld - www.stampworld.com/en/stamps