
Further Commentary on a French Airmail Perfin

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Recently I was looking back through some issues of The Perfins Bulletin and I noticed “Commentary on an e-Bay Lot” on page 102 of the June 2005 issue. Mr. Tauber’s comments on the E.I.P.A.30 perfin on the carmine airmail stamp of 1930 (Scott #C5; hereinafter called “the red EIPA perfin”) were interesting but I believe that additional information is available.

Although Mr. Tauber did not find the red EIPA perfin listed in Scott or in the Yvert & Tellier catalog, it is listed in:

- the 2006 Scott Classic Specialized Catalogue. (as #C5a; mint value \$2,750)
- Volume 1 of the 2000 edition of Yvert and Tellier (as #6d; mint value 27,500 French francs). This not a specialized catalogue of airmails, but the regular Y & T catalogue.
- Ceres (1996; as #5C mint value 25,000 French francs)
- Dallay (2004-2005; as #5A mint value €3,750)

It is not listed in:

- the D – I volume of my 1997 Scott catalogue
- the 1966 Sanabria catalogue, which while valuable, was always a bit subjective with respect to what it did and didn’t list
- the “Catalogue International de la Poste Aérienne” (Inapress, Netherlands; 1934-1935)
- Field’s world airmail catalogue (1932)
- the “Catalogue de la Poste Aérienne” (Silombra, 1950), and
- “Catalogue de Timbres-Poste France” (Storch, Françon, Brun; 1982-1983)

The third and fourth of the above listed catalogues are early enough that word of the unofficial red perfin may not have reached them at the time of publication, but Silombra, in 1950, and Storch et al. in 1983, should have been aware of it.

It is intriguing that the four catalogues that list and price this perfin are all from the last ten years. Does this mean that the story of these stamps is being forgotten, or that, for other reasons (unstated), it is becoming accepted as a genuine item? Certainly, as I have observed and as Mr. Tauber points out, it is appearing in major sales with starting prices similar to the above catalogue values. However, the catalog

prices may simply reflect the selling price of the stamp. Who needs to be reminded that the price of any collectible is what someone will pay for it, and that the price ultimately becomes the value of the item.

“Airmail Stamps: Fakes and Forgeries” (Alexander Newall, Newall Consultants Ltd., 1990) states:

“Unknown to the Organising (sic) Committee [of the Exposition Internationale de la Poste Aérienne (EIPA), the International Airmail Exhibition] under whose control the perforation took place, some persons perforated [with E.I.P.A.30] deep carmine 1.50F stamps. These are treated as fakes and are barred from Exhibitions under FIP jurisdiction. The fake can be recognised in the perforated E.I.P.A.30. In a genuine stamp the central spot in the letter “A” is exactly in the middle. In a fake it lies somewhat to one side.”

Aside from the propriety of the FIP barring *any properly described* stamps from an exhibition, this warning suggests that the red perfins were made with different equipment (or at least a die with different pin spacing) than the blue perfins.

I have copies of both the blue and the red EIPA perfins in my collection. Within the limits of my old eyes and a magnifying glass, the central spot (crossbar) of the “A” looks a bit off center on both stamps! Based on the sources and prices paid for the two stamps, I’m inclined to think that the perfin in the blue stamp is “genuine” while that in the red one is either an old or modern “fake”. Scott notes, however, that “ ... forgeries abound ... ” of both #C5a and #C6b. I should probably have both of them expertized, but how good are the data on which the experts base *their* decisions?

So where does that leave us? The information on the website cited by Tauber essentially paraphrases the FIP position described by Newall. Tauber’s subsequent statement that “ ... there are many more

copies floating about than were actually produced!” appears to be based solely on the website statement that “Everyone agrees that 5 sheets of 25 stamps were thus punched, ... ” I visited the ASPPI site and, although I don’t read French, saw no evidence of any citations supporting (or refuting) this claim. This is, unfortunately, a common situation in philately. Opinion and speculation are passed along without any substantiating data until they become “fact”. For what it’s worth, the central spot on the copy of the red EIPA perfin shown on the ASPPI site appears to me to be slightly off-center to the left when the stamp is viewed from the face.

I think, at the end of the day, the important thing for any purchaser of any collectible from any source to know is “caveat emptor” (“Let the buyer beware!”) Always use caution when buying stamps or covers. Articles such as that by Tauber and the online information provided by the ASPPI are of value

because they make collectors aware of potential problem areas – but don’t take all that is said as fact unless corroborative data are provided.

I don’t know whether the red EIPA perfin was originally legitimate (although I suspect it wasn’t) or whether more recent fakes have been created to further confuse collectors (it wouldn’t surprise me if they had, considering the published “value” of the stamp). I do know that I am willing (and able) to pay perhaps \$100, but not \$2000, to have a copy in my collection. This is a decision that each of us must make when contemplating a philatelic (or any other) purchase. Whoever, eventually, buys my collection must make the same decision.

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