

COUNTERFEIT OR REPLICA?

“Proof of Jap plan to invade Australia claimed by army” by Tony James

The Press of 1942

The *Sun* newspaper of 23 September 1942 screamed “PROOF OF JAP PLAN TO INVADE AUSTRALIA CLAIMED BY ARMY” and then, “Says Banknotes Seized Were For Use Here”. The illustrations of the Japanese Invasion Money for Oceania were shown for each denomination: the One Pound (£1), Ten Shilling (10/-), One Shilling (1/-) and Half Shilling. The picture caption said, “Japanese banknotes seized by the military authorities and regarded by them as proof of Japan’s intention to invade Australia”.

The *Daily Mirror* of 30 September 1942 had a headline reading “Jap Finance is Skinning Her New Empire!” The picture caption said “Bundles of these Jap notes, for use IF THEY LAND IN AUSTRALIA, were recently recovered by Allied forces in the Pacific. The notes provide a grim warning as to Japan’s intentions.”

The writer for the *Sun* suggested that the notes could have been printed for distribution only in Australia or in New Zealand. This suggestion was particularly pertinent in light of the fact that similar notes had been issued in other countries overrun by the Japanese.

Commonwealth Bank involvement

The archives of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, which are now in the Reserve Bank of Australia, reveal correspondence that is very illuminating to the banknote collector and the cataloguer. It was in October 1942 that the Australian Army phoned the Commonwealth Bank and advised that they had received samples of banknotes that had been ostensibly for use in Australia upon occupation by the Japanese. On October 19 1942 the Army forwarded the notes to the bank for inspection and return. The Bank responded advising that the samples had been submitted to the Note Printer for

examination and would be returned to the Army on being received back from him.

Note Printing Branch reported to the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank that the notes had been produced by the offset lithographic printing process on good quality unwatermarked rag paper. The specimens were also compared to those examples of the Gulden denominated Invasion Money that the Bank had forwarded in February, for inspection by the Note Printing Branch. The pound and shilling denominated notes were photographically copied front and back and the copies and original notes returned to the Bank on October 22.

A year later, the Commonwealth Bank, Adelaide, sent a pound and a one-shilling note issued by the Japanese Government, to the Sydney Head Office “in case similar notes have not already come under your notice”. Sydney Office responded thanking Adelaide and advising that they had been seen before and were returned as requested.



Oceania £1 Japanese Invasion Money Pick R4 with 'Replica' overprint. Interestingly, this note bears graffiti "Brisbane, Australia Aug 1945."



Original 1/2, 1/-, 10/ and £1 of the Oceania series. Pick 1, 2, 3, & 4



Replica – Official viewpoint

A fascinating detail has been revealed when correspondence in the archives was recently discovered. The office copy of correspondence by the Commonwealth of Australia, Inspection Branch, to one of its inspectors, advised that “attached was a replica of a £1 note described as Japanese Invasion Currency that was being sold in Sydney by the Curio shop situated on the corner of Castlereagh Street and Martin Place”. It informed the investigation inspector that the proprietor of this shop, when interviewed, stated that he purchased the notes from a trader in Toowoomba named Brookman, and that he believed that the notes had been printed in Brisbane, where he has been assured that they were being freely sold.

The copy included a duplicate to the Deputy Crown Solicitor, which referred the matter for information and consideration as to whether the printing and circulation of this note was a breach of any Commonwealth law. If so desired, they would arrange for the Brisbane office to continue the enquiry.

The response from George A. Watson, Deputy Crown Solicitor, was that he knew of no law that was being infringed. However, if the Commonwealth Bank so desired, he would arrange for continued inquiries in Brisbane.

The response by the Secretary of Note Issue Department – Commonwealth Bank Sydney, dated May 29 1944, was to the Paper Controller, Division of Import Procurement, William Street, Sydney, which enclosed a copy of prior communication with the Crown Solicitor together with a copy of the note that was being sold. The Secretary of Note Issue Department considered that the reproduction and sale of this note was undesirable. Therefore it would be appreciated if steps could be taken to prevent its further production and sale!

On June 6 Mr. Cole, who was the Controller of Stores, handed into Secretary’s Department of the Bank 43 replicas of £1 notes of the Japanese Invasion Currency, which he had obtained from the Curio Shop at the corner of Castlereagh Street and Martin Place. He also advised that this was all the stock existing in Sydney.

Who, when and where!

On June 14 1944, the Division of Import Procurement advised the Secretary of Note Issue Department regarding the Reprint of Japanese Invasion Currency.

The Brisbane office of the Department of Procurement writing:

“Forwarded herewith as promised in teletype message of today’s date are three copies of Japanese notes printed by Economy Printers Pty Ltd for the Bulldog Casket Shop.

The director of Economy Printers now advises that the Censor did not insist on the inclusion of the word “Replica” but that they informed him that they were including it for their own protection. It is understood from Economy Printers that

quantities of these notes without the endorsement “Replica” are on sale in Brisbane, but the Printer of these has not been traced to date.”

Mr. A. J. Day, the Controller of Paper, added that:

“It will be noted that in the case of the currency printed by Economy Printers, the word ‘Replica’ is endorsed on the note and that the printing of the notes met with the approval of the Censor. If you think the matter of sufficient importance, consideration may be given to the prohibition of the use of paper for the purpose of producing these notes insofar as it is possible to trace the printer responsible. For your information, I might mention that Economy Printers have used not more than 5 lbs of paper for the printing of these notes.”

B. W. Latham, the Secretary of Note Issue Department, noted that no further action was to be taken and a letter to this effect was sent to the Controller of Paper – Division of Import Procurement on June 17 1944.

The Department of the Treasury took until December 5 1944 to respond to a June advice from the Attorney-General’s Department that this printing and sale of replicas was happening. As they had been unable to obtain further information, Treasury wondered if there was any more advice as a result of the Bank’s inquiry. The Secretary of Note Issue Dept replied three days later that further action had not been warranted and that the proprietor of the Curio shop had willingly handed over his remaining stock.

Collector Catalogues

The JIM paper money was intended for use in British Oceania, which consisted of the Gilberts and Solomons, New Britain and Papua/New Guinea, thus the need for the denominations to be in pounds and shillings. As the population of these islands is small compared to Malaya, Burma, NEI and the Philippines; the quantity printed was far less than for the other occupied countries. The relative value of the denominations, and curtailed use, resulted in the short series being less common than the others.

The original notes are lithographed with block letters in red, quatrefoil watermark and a shore scene on the right hand side of each denomination of the note series. The 1/2-shilling is purple in colour, the shilling blue, ten shilling brown and the pound green and blue. Specimens are found with the usual *Mihon* overprint

Collectors should be aware that fantasy 1/4-shilling notes have been seen for some years in yellow on a gray screen in the same design as fractional notes of other series. The note looks very, very similar to the 1/4 rupee of the Burma series. (P12)

Collector view

The serious student of this series and those who are military-minded should review the three major catalogues relating to this matter *The Standard Catalogue of World Paper Money*

– Vol. 2 *General Issues*, together with the *Standard Catalogue of Malaysia Singapore Brunei coins & paper money 1996-98* by Tan, and *World War II Remembered* by Schwan & Boling. These three books, all together, give a very good summary of the complexities of the originals and replicas that have become a fascinating series particularly for the Australian and military collector.

DENOMINATION	PICK	TAN	S&B
1/2 Shilling purple	1a-s	OJ1-1a	2216a&b
1/- Shilling blue	2a-s2	OJ2-2a	2213-s2J
10/- Shilling brown	3a-s	OJ3	2214-s1J
£1 Pound green & blue	4	OJ4	2215-s1J

The extra catalogue numbers such as Pick 1b of the 1/2 shilling or S&B 2213s1J of the shilling, relate to varieties of block numbers or specimens.

The replicas, which are not mentioned in Tan, are a little more difficult.

PICK

- R1 1/2 shilling with 'REPLICA' on the back and block letters OC
- R2 1/- shilling with 'REPLICA' on the back and block letters OC
- R3 1/- shilling without overprint block letters OC
- R4 £1 pound with overprint on back and block letters OA
- R5 £1 pound without overprint 'REPLICA'

The shilling and pound denominations come in varying shades and modified guilloches.

SCHWAN & BOLING

- 2216 1/2 shilling with 'REPLICA' in red on the back and poor printing.
- 2217 1 shilling design as original
 - a) bright blue and green guilloche 'REPLICA' in red on the back
 - b) dark gray-blue guilloche omitted. Without 'REPLICA' on the back.
- 2218 £1 design as original red block letters
 - a) front green without blue background but with blue guilloche different shape to original having been copied from the back. Back dark green and 'REPLICA' in red
 - b1) as above but guilloche a paler blue, face and back dark green. Without 'REPLICA' in red
 - b2) same but light, bright green
 - b3) same but olive green
 - c) As b2 but guilloche in same green as remainder of the face (no blue used)

These are from October 1977 Guadalcanal veterans' reunion.

History has revealed

Schwan & Boling have indicated that the 10/- (ten shilling) note does not appear to have been prepared as a replica and that this is probably due to the relative scarcity of this denomination and therefore not available to be copied. Official records show that early investigations uncovered replica notes that were printed both with and without the word 'REPLICA' on them. Also that the important Kozono collection contained a "short snorter" of 2218b3 endorsed "Leyte PI 20 Nov '44" showing that the replicas had already been distributed as souvenirs at that time.

The examples of the 1/2 shilling and £1 in the author's collection have graffiti on the back showing "Brisbane, Australia Aug 1945". These have 'REPLICA' on them so there were copies still being produced at the end of the War.



Backs of 1/2 shilling & 1/- 'REPLICAS'. The half shilling bears the graffiti "Brisbane Australia Aug 1945".

Interestingly, the Note Printer did not mention the quartrefoil watermark in the originals examined, in his reply to the Commonwealth Bank and neither does he refer to the comment in Schwan & Boling regarding the watermark "524 BOND" that has been observed in the replicas. Although it should be mentioned, that both watermarks are often extremely difficult to see.

Summary - copy or not

The letter from B. Latham, Secretary of Note Issue Department to the Secretary Department of the Treasury, Commonwealth of Australia Canberra, dated December 8 1944, summarised the official viewpoint that the proprietor of the shop in Sydney purchased copies from Toowoomba and believed that they had been printed in Brisbane. The Crown Solicitor believed that no law had been infringed, however, if required, the Paper Controller might be in a position to deal with the matter as the sale of these reproductions was viewed with disfavour by the Bank. However investigation had revealed that one lot of replicas printed by Economy Printers Pty Ltd of Brisbane had been referred to the Censor and that although the Censor did not insist, they took the precaution of overprinting the notes with the word 'Replica'. There were, however, other notes on sale in Brisbane and those under notice in Sydney that did not bear this overprint and it was not learnt who printed them. (Note Issue to Treasury December 8 1944)

Another of the great unsolved mysteries of banknote collecting that will continue to provide conjecture and material for research for years to come.

Acknowledgment

Virginia McDonald, Archivist, Reserve Bank of Australia Sydney

References

- Standard Catalogue World Paper Money Vol. 2 General Issues 2003* by Shafer & Cuhaj
- World War II Remembered 1995* Schwan & Boling
- Standard Catalogue of Malaysia Singapore Brunei coins & paper money 1996-98* by Tan.
- Reserve Bank Archives Note Issue Special Currencies Japanese Invasion Money 1942-1945* P.NID N-a-676