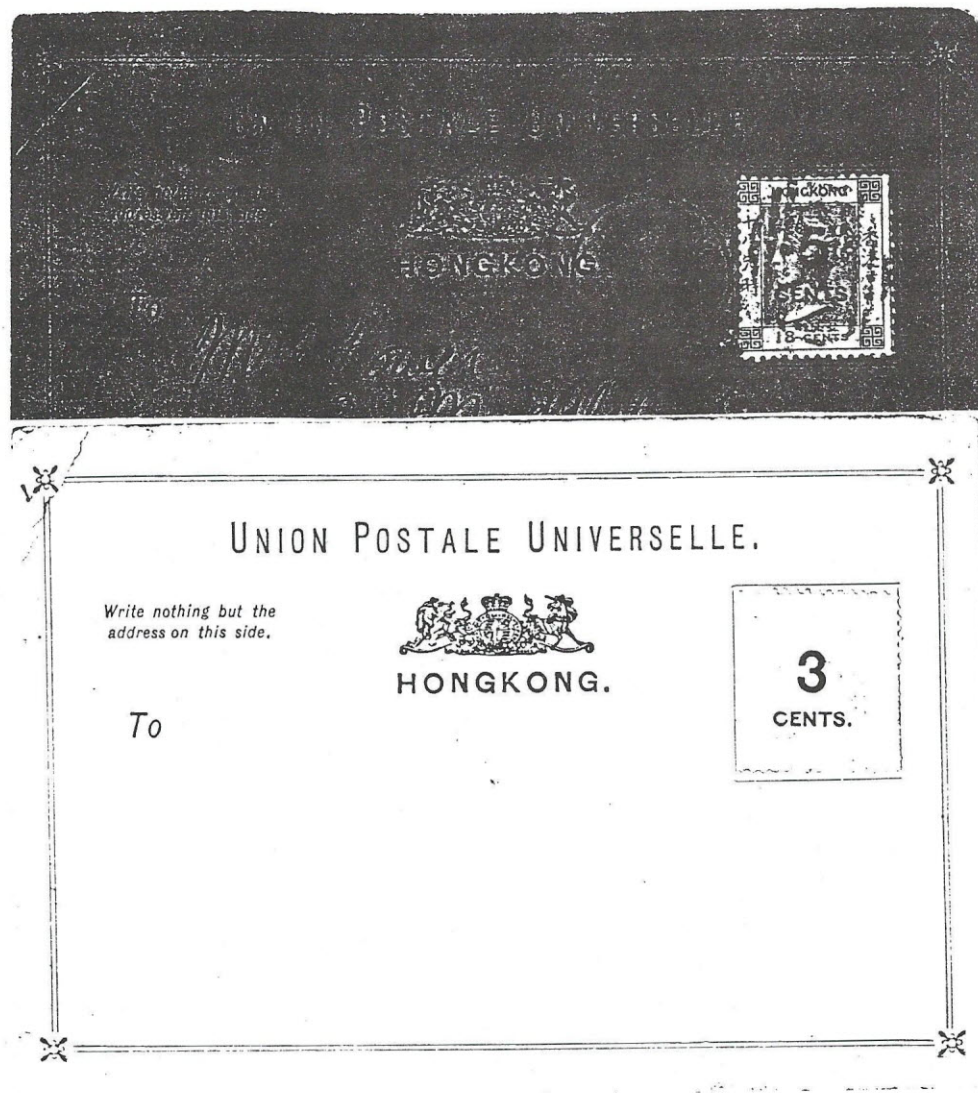


**HONG KONG
1879-1880: POSTAL STATIONERY CARDS WITH AFFIXED STAMPS**

Richard Gurevitch

Hong Kong was the first country to have stamps specially overprinted for use on postal stationery cards. Two values were initially overprinted - 3 Cents on 16 Cents, and 5 cents on 18 Cents, see Figures 1 and 2. Further overprinting with 'THREE' occurred on the 5 Cents (on 18 Cents) value. The stamps were used on two styles of formula cards for each of the original values.



Figures 1 & 2. Coloured formula cards: 5 Cents on 18 Cents on blue card (top) and 3 Cents on 16 Cents on yellow (bottom)

An obligation under the UPU Regulations enacted in 1878 was that member countries should have available stamped postal-cards. As none existed for Hong Kong when it joined

the UPU on 1 April 1877 nor at the time the regulation came into force, an order was eventually placed with De La Rue, possibly towards the end of 1878, for their production. Originally it was thought that the first postal-cards, and affixed overprinted stamps which denoted the duty, were produced in Hong Kong pending the arrival of permanent postal-cards from Britain (1)(2). However, De La Rue essays (3) proved that these 'interim' postal-cards and their affixed overprinted stamps were produced by De La Rue. Indeed, the essays for all four cards [3 Cents on yellow and white cards, and 5 Cents on blue and white cards] state within each value tablet 'To be printed upon a 16 Cents [or 18 Cents] Hong Kong stamp', and show the respective values in the style of printing adopted for the final stamp. However, the further overprinting of the 5 Cents value with 'THREE' (see Figure 3) must have been performed in Hong Kong by hand. Two values were initially overprinted, viz. to produce the 3 Cents and 5 Cents duties for the Marseilles and Southampton routes and the Brindisi route respectively, the latter attracting a postage premium of two cents.



Figure 3. Type II 'white' formula card: local overprint of **THREE** cents on 5 Cents. On white card with blue overprint, 'Via Brindisi and London' deleted by hand.

The stamps were issued attached to postal-cards, although some copies exist with original gum and these are thought to have been sold 'by favour'. No multiples of the stamps are known to exist. All values of the 'stamps' exist with a 'Short T' of 'CENTS', illustrated in Figure 4. I have found that the stamps without the variety to be as common as those with it. I have hypothesised that an overprinting plate of 12 subjects was developed using the electro-type process from a primary forme of two subjects. No stamps are known with wing margins which occur on the parent stamps: rather, some stamps exist with one straight vertical edge. I have also hypothesised that stamps with single straight vertical edges are a result of wing margins being guillotined as part of the overprinting process, and sheetpanes of 60 stamps were broken down into sub-panes of 12 stamps for the overprinting process (4). There is no doubt that the further overprinting of the 5 Cents value, referred to earlier, was performed at the Hong Kong Post Office on individual stamps affixed to their postal-

cards.

The stamps were attached to coloured (yellow and blue for the 3 Cents and 5 Cents values respectively) formula cards with inscriptions and lettering in black for the initial issue. Subsequently the formula cards were replaced with new 'white' cards with inscriptions and letters in red and blue respectively. Two types of 'white' card exist which can readily be identified by the top right corner of the border for the stamp location on the card; in one type the border is closed, and in the other there is a gap. I believe that the 'stamps' were attached to their respective postal-cards in Kong Kong, where in some cases stamps of the wrong value were placed on postal-cards, and I noted in one instance that a 3 Cents stamp was attached in the inverted position on its postal-card (5). My investigations indicate that between 1,500 and 4,500 of the two initial values were overprinted, of which about 150 of the 5 Cents on 18 cents value were further overprinted 'THREE'.

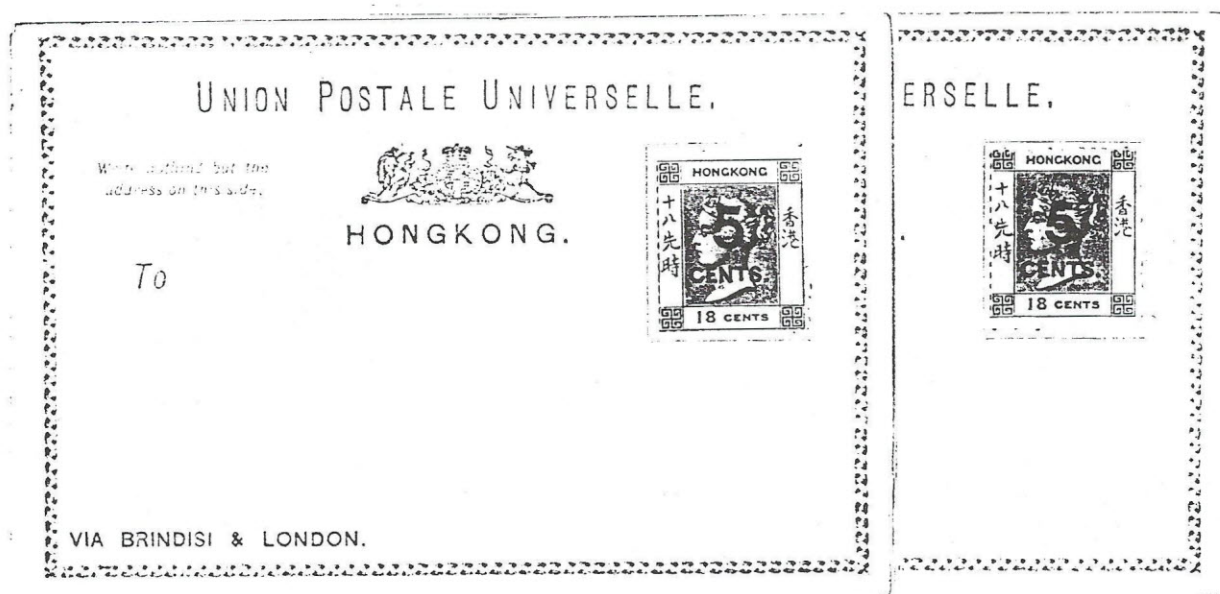


Figure 4. 'White' formula card 5 Cents overprint:
with short 'T' (left) and long 'T' (right).

Very many cards were bought by collectors and used cards are quite scarce. Only two used examples of the THREE on 5 Cents on 18 cents have been reported (6).

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