

## Forgery – 35 sen Shōwa Series Definitive

by Ron Casey



Although forgeries of other stamps issued during the Shōwa era (1926-1989) exist, it is the imitations of 11 Japanese definitive stamps from the Third Shōwa series and First New Shōwa Series that have been colloquially referred to for many years as “The Shōwa Forgeries”. These forgeries have been reported a number of times in JP, most comprehensively in ISJP Monograph 20 published in 2005. The monograph’s introduction (page 4) notes that the forgeries were produced in the early 1960s, primarily for sale “to large foreign wholesale firms, specializing in assembling and selling cheaper stamps from all over the world.”

Due to this production purpose, it was very quickly established at the time that there were 11, and only 11, different stamps for which imitations had been made. Consequently, it would seem that there is no possibility of a similar forgery for one of the early Shōwa definitives being identified and added to the list. Therefore, the recent discovery of the subject of this report is rather intriguing, despite the fact that there is no clearly defined reason to suggest that it is a previously unidentified “Shōwa Forgery”.

Eleven examples of this newly identified imitation were unearthed by ISJP Expertizing Chair, Florian Eichhorn, who in turn sent them on to me for reference. As can be seen from the accompanying illustration of one of these forgeries next to the genuine stamp, it is an imitation of the 35 sen definitive from the Second New Shōwa Series issued on 1947.4.15. This visual comparison quickly identifies the key difference between this imitation and the 11 “Shōwa Forgeries”, all of which were imperforate imitations of imperforate issued stamps. However, the stamps in the Second New Shōwa Series were all issued with perforations, and so this new find is an imperforate imitation of a perforated stamp, a characteristic that rules out any possibility that it would be mistaken for the genuine.

In common with the “Shōwa Forgeries”, this 35 sen forgery is printed on unwatermarked paper without gum. The printing method appears to be offset lithography, and the design is very close to that of the genuine.



One interesting characteristic from the examination of the 11 known copies (admittedly a small sample) is that a number of them have what appears to be a very fine rouletted perforation along one (only) of the vertical (i.e., long) edges. Examples of these (both left edge and right edge) are shown at left. This prompted me to have another look at my Shōwa forgeries, and noticed that a small number of them share this same characteristic, a fact which seems to have not been previously identified. It is difficult to draw any conclusion from these observations, especially when there is no consistency of application. However, it does point to a possible common means of separation for some of the forgeries, and vaguely suggests a common source of production.

I would welcome any additional information or ideas that any member may have about this newly discovered forgery. ■