

THE WORK OF JEAN DE SPERATI II
MALAYSIA—THE MALAYSIAN STATES

In Sperati's archives two of the 1878 overprints for the Straits Settlements 2c brown were found, one for Perak and one for Sungei Ujong. There is also a third, SUNGEI over UJONG. They are illustrated in the December 1997 issue (No. 6) of *Arts et mémoire* (Aix-les-Bains). The article is by Lucette Blanc, a friend of Sperati's daughter, Yvonne. Unfortunately, none have been available for study.

The commentary which follows draws largely on the analysis of Andrew Norris who specializes in these issues and examined the illustrations.

PERAK

The overprint crescent and star over "P" in an oval, probably from a proof, is illustrated on page 6 of the article. This is an extremely good imitation of the handstamp genuinely used on the Straits Settlements 1867-72 Crown CC 2c brown to make the 1878 2c brown for Perak. There appear to be minor differences between the star of the genuine and that of the forgery; possibly also minor differences in the letter "P", but they might be due to the impression of the forgery.

SUNGEI UJONG

The overprint crescent and star over "SU" in an oval, again probably from a proof, is illustrated on page 7 of the above article. This imitates the genuine handstamp that was used on the same Straits Settlements 1867-72 Crown CC 2c brown to make the Sungei Ujong 1878 2c brown. It appears to match the genuine in size. There seem to be minor differences between this forgery and the genuine, notably the precise shape of the crescent and the U.

On Page 10 there is also an illustration of the overprint "SUNGEI" over "UJONG", again probably from a proof. "SUNGEI" appears to be 15.0 mm long and "UJONG" appears to be 12.1 mm long. For the forgery the vertical distance between "SUNGEI" and "UJONG" appears to be about three and two-thirds mm at the ends of "UJONG", but only three and one-third mm over the "O", since this letter is raised. Of course, in the genuine the vertical distance between the two words varies since they were applied separately. In the Sperati forgery this distance is an identifying characteristic, assuming that the two lines were printed as a single unit.

This is an imitation of an overprint which was used on three stamps, the 2c, 4c and 8c. There are three groups of these two-line sans-serif overprints which Norris describes as follows:

- Group A.* The letters of "SUNGEI" are close together, but the letters of "UJONG" are spaced widely so that the latter is longer than "SUNGEI".
- Group B.* The letters of both "SUNGEI" and "UJONG" are spaced more or less equally. "UJONG" is therefore slightly shorter than "SUNGEI".
- Group C.* The letters of "SUNGEI" are spaced normally, but the letters of "UJONG" are spaced close together so that this word is shorter than "SUNGEI".

The Sperati forgery imitates a genuine overprint from Group B with the two lines of the overprint spaced more or less equally. It has a wide letter "S" in "SUNGEI". This wide "S" occurs in five settings from Group B. A defective letter that can occur in either line and different spacings of "UJONG" eliminate four of these five settings, leaving just one.