

Unrecorded watermark, colour shade and perforation variation in philatelic issues commemorating the World Youth Stamp Exhibition (2014) from Malaysia

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A watermark is applied to an official paper document of value, such as postage and revenue stamps, bank notes and passports, as a device to reduce counterfeiting (Mackay, 2003). Typically, it comprises a pattern, image or letters that appear when viewed under transmitted light, or via reflected light on a dark background. Watermarks on postage stamps are often what differentiate a common stamp from a rare and valuable one, and recognition and study of watermarks is an active field of philately. Colour variation in stamps are more common and may be significant, especially in cases of missing colours. However, changelings (stamps that change colours due to condition of storage, etc) are of little philatelic value, and may be difficult to scientifically document (Guertin, 1965; Herendeen, 2013). Perforation types are also noteworthy, and recorded in detailed catalogues. As in watermarks, perforations can result in price differences between stamps, and fake perforations are common (Prill, 2011).

Stamps issued by Pos Malaysia, the postal authority of Malaysia, are printed on watermarked paper, bearing the letters “SPM” (abbreviation for Security Printer of Malaysia, in Bahasa Malaysia, Percetakan Keselamatan Nasional Sdn Bhd), since 1986, and rendered as a pattern of waves (Anonymous, 2013). Modern philatelic issues from the country have many examples of watermark varieties, these have been reported in international stamp catalogues (such as those of Stanley Gibbons), on account of different sources of security paper. The watermark varieties seen, thus, may be upright, inverted, sideways up, sideways down, inverted-reversed and sideways-up reversed, and some may even have two or three distinct watermarks on a single stamp.

Between 1–6 December 2014, Pos Malaysia issued seven miniature sheets to commemorate the World Youth Stamp Exhibition, held during the 29th Asian International Stamp Exhibition, at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), at the nation’s capital, between 4–6 December 2015. The seven miniature sheets, all designed by Reign Associates Sdn Bhd (according to Tan 2015), and both by this company and by Hazel Design Sdn Bhd (according to the website of Pos Malaysia). These were produced on phosphor coated paper by lithography, are Cancelled India ½ Anna and 1 Anna stamps, Flora, Fauna, Heritage Building, 160th Year of Postage Stamp Usage in Malaysia, Cultural Dance and Malay Folk Stories. Face values were Ringgit Malaysian (RM) 3 (for two sheets) and RM 5 (for the remaining five sheets). Details are in Table 1. Stamps were sold both at the exhibition venue and at major post offices throughout the country. Two of these show variation in watermarks, colour shade and perforations (Table 1). Variety 1 was obtained from the Kuching Post Office, Variety 2 from the Kuala Lumpur General Post Office, Dayabumi Complex, the latter type apparently from the lot sold at the KLCC venue, and are the types included in the Stanley Gibbons catalogue (Jefferies, 2015). Multiple examples of each variety were examined.

Some but not all of these variation have been recorded in the monthly catalogue of stamps published in the periodical, *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (and eventually accessioned in a database of Stanley Gibbons Group plc, that is reproduced in their periodically updated catalogue of stamps of Malaysia (i.e., Anonymous, 2013). Stanley Gibbons catalogue numbers for the set are SG MS2045–2051 (Jefferies, 2015). The Malaysia-specific local catalogue (Tan 2015) does not recognise variation, and the catalogue number given for the set is ISC MC-490M.