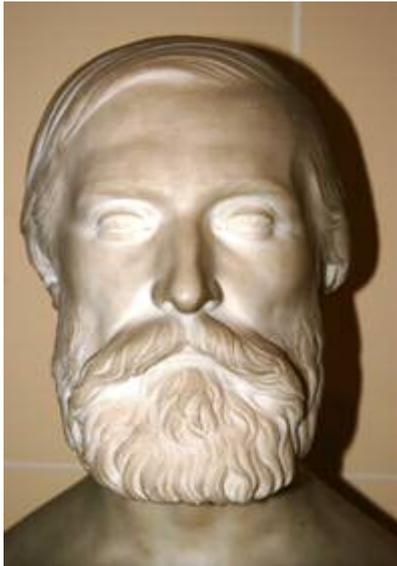


The Dies and Proofs of the "Large Hermes Head" of Greece by Louis Fanchini

I) Introduction:

The Kingdom of Greece decided to introduce postage stamps for its postal services in 1855 by the law of May 19th. This law was placed in force by the Royal Decree of May 6th, 1858 but was not published until December 31st, 1859¹.

After some unsuccessful attempts by the firm Perkins, Bacon & Co. of London, the Greek Administration, by the intermediary of Dimitri Kalergis²,



Minister Plenipotentiary of Greece in Paris, wrote on July 17th, 1860 to Théophile-Jules Pelouze³, president of the French Commission of Money and Medals in Paris from 1848 to 1867. This request concerned the furnishing of dies, printing plates and tools necessary for the fabrication of the first Greek postage stamps, as well as the supply of a certain number of stamps. An exchange of correspondence followed, to define the exact specifications of the future postage stamp. By his letter⁴ of July 31st, the Greek Minister ordered to the President of the Commission of Money, the necessary materials for the fabrication of the seven values of the first Greek postage stamp, as well as some desired quantities of stamps⁵.

The next day, Pelouze notified the Chief Engraver of the Mint, Désiré-Albert Barre⁶ (Figure 1), to begin the engraving of the die of the first Greek stamp, consistent with the mockup (Figure 3) and specifications were accepted by the two parties a few days earlier.

Figure 1: Bust of Désiré-Albert Barre (Musée de la Monnaie, Paris).

We shall try in this article to partially restore the manufacturing process of the three different punches of the "large Hermes head" known as of today. This is a delicate exercise because the techniques of engraving punches, as well as the various stages of manufacture to arrive at the final punch, were not documented by the Chief Engravers, who jealously guarded their knowledge. To rebuild the main steps of the

1 Tryphon Constantinidis, *Etude sur les timbres-poste de la Grèce*, Société Philatélique Hellénique, Athènes 1933, pages 29/30.

2 Dimitri (or Demetrios) de Kalergis (1803-1867), Cretan, had studied medicine in Paris before assuming important political responsibilities (Minister of War,...). He became, at the end of his career, Minister Plenipotentiary of Greece in Paris.

3 Théophile-Jules Pelouze (1807–1867), eminent chemist and member of the Academy of Sciences, was president of the French Commission of Money and Medals in Paris from 1848 to 1867.

4 All these letters are visible in the archives of the Monnaie de Paris and in the Désiré-Albert Barre diaries in l'Adresse – Musée de La Poste in Paris (<http://www.ladressemuseedelaposte.com/>).

5 See article by the author, *Tirages de Paris de la « Grosse tête d'Hermès » : Quantités exactes commandées et livrées à Athènes*, to be published in the journal of the l'Académie de Philatélie, *Documents Philatéliques* n° 211 of the 4th quarter of 2011.

6

Désiré-Albert Barre (1818–1878) had been Chief Engraver of the French Mint in Paris from 1855 to 1878.

manufacturing process of the punches, we shall therefore use all elements known to date, and we shall also utilize the research of philatelists who have worked on the same subject but applied to other stamps produced in France at that time by the same Chief Engravers. Effectively, the creation and manufacturing methods of the punches, and the printing plates, in the 19th century were totally home-made and were known, in details, only by the creators and their closed staff. In particular, it does not make sense to think that the methods used in United Kingdom, or in United States, at that time, were in all aspects identical to those in practice in France. The world of the 19th century was not yet global at all...

Nevertheless, we will make a number of assumptions, because many elements have been destroyed, lost or not yet found... We hope that these missing elements will be found in the future, allowing us to validate, reverse, or redefine more accurately, the manufacturing process to finally understand how the Chief Engraver arrived at the final punch.

II. The Function of the Chief Engraver of the French Mint:

The function of Chief Engraver of the French Mint was established in France in 1547 by King Henri II, who reigned from 1547 to 1559.

Following is an extract from a note of Désiré-Albert Barre in 1864 describing the functions of the Chief Engraver of the French Mint in the nineteenth century: "*...the functions of the Chief Engraver of the French Mint created by Henri II involve the reproduction and the provision of all the coins of money used in the monetary workshops of the Empire. These monetary workshops numbering 13 under Napoleon Ist are now reduced to three: Paris, Strasbourg and Bordeaux... ...He (the Chief Engraver) engraves and provides the State Seal. The Chief Engraver is located in the central office of the Mint in Paris. He enjoys no stipend, the workshop premises are provided by the State, the material for these workshops is supplied by him, the costs of staff, foreman and workers are borne by him... ...The supply of the coins is therefore an enterprise entrusted to an artist-engraver who has the title of Chief Engraver of the Mint ...*"⁷

⁷ Henri Regnoul-Barre, *Les Barre, graveurs généraux des Monnaies, créateurs des premiers timbres-poste français et grecs*, Paris, 1978, pages 23/24, and Archives at l'Adresse – Musée de La Poste in Paris.



Figure 2: Workstation of the Chief Engraver of the Paris Mint in the 19th century (Museum of the Paris Mint). Thus, in France, and since the middle of the 16th century, the production of all the coins and medals of the Kingdom/State was the monopoly of the Chief Engraver. When in 1848, the French Government decided to introduce the stamp for postal service, the production of the first French stamps was entrusted to the Paris Mint, and in particular, the engraving of the dies of the first French type "*République*" stamp would be conducted by the Chief Engraver of that period: Jacques-Jean Barre.⁸

III. The Mockup of the "large Hermes head":

During the period of preparatory work, between July 17th and 27th, 1860, before the Greek Government had given the order to the Paris Mint, Désiré-Albert Barre designed a mockup in collaboration with Major Karpouni⁹. The mockup (Figure 3) had been drawn by Désiré-Albert Barre, in China ink starting from a black essay of the French 20 centimes stamp type "*Empire*".

⁸ Jacques-Jean Barre (1793-1855) was Chief Engraver of the French Mint in Paris from 1840 to 1855. He engraved the first French postage stamp type "*République*" in 1848. His younger son, Désiré-Albert Barre, succeeded him to the position in 1855. It should be noted that his son eldest, Jean-Auguste Barre (1811-1896) was also Chief Engraver of the Mint from 1878 to 1896.

⁹ Major Karpouni was the Director of the Royal Printing of Greece and of the Office of the Mint in Athens. He supervised in Paris, during the summer of 1860, all the technical aspects of the order for the first Greek postage stamps.

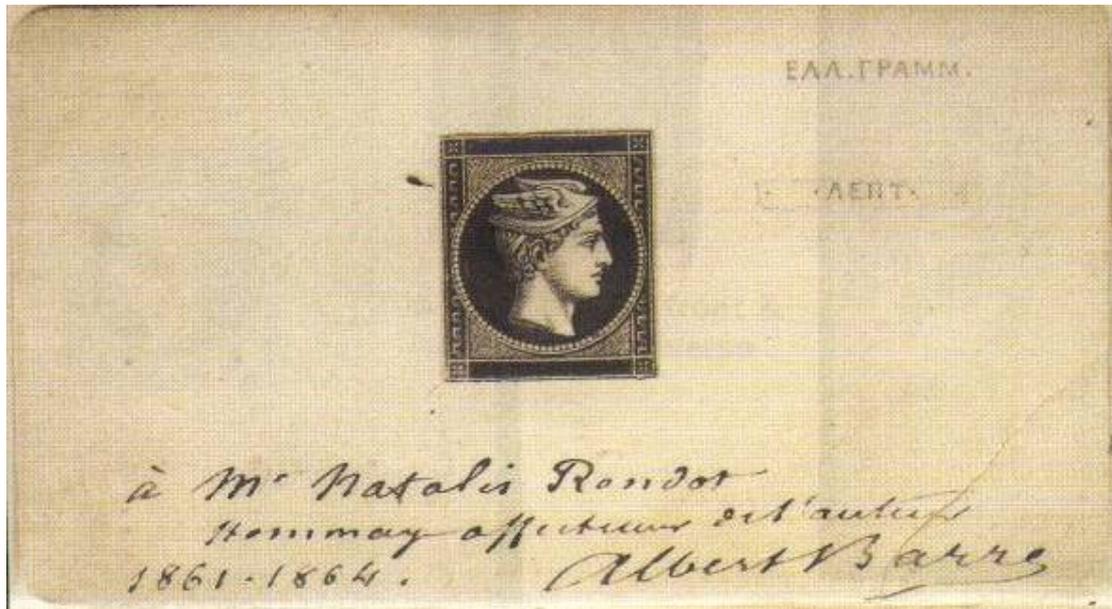


Figure 3: Mockup of the "Large Hermes Head" of Greece.

IV. The Medallion Punch of the "large Hermes head":

a. Engraving of the Medallion Punch:

As we saw in the introduction, Désiré-Albert Barre received the order for the punch needed for the manufacture of the typographical plates of the seven values of the first Greek stamp on August 1st, 1860.

Although no written comment of the Chief Engraver exists today it is accepted¹⁰ that Désiré-Albert Barre engraved the punch of the effigy, or medallion, of the head of Hermes, on mild steel, using the technique of engraving called "*taille de relief*", and also named "*gravure en épargne*". The engraver etched on each side of the line which he wished to get in order to obtain the line in relief.

The "*taille de relief*" method is used for the engraving of punches intended for the manufacture of plates for typographical printing; indeed, in typography, it is the projecting parts of the plate that print the sheet of paper, by pressure, after having been inked.¹¹

The medallion punch had two phases:

an intermediate one, which produced the provisional punch, and

a final one, after the engraving was retouched by the Chief Engraver, which gave birth to the final punch.

The medallion punch was the unique engraving work done by Désiré-Albert Barre himself. Indeed all other punches were produced from this final medallion punch, as we shall see below.

¹⁰ French philatelic literature has accepted this hypothesis for decades (Dr. Robert Jouany in 1971). Nevertheless, Chief Engravers were first engravers of medals and coins, which they engraved "*en creux*". The Barre's would have therefore changed their technique for engraving the dies of the effigies of the stamps which were to be printed by typography.

¹¹ In France, in the 19th century, all the classic French stamps were printed in typography, with the exception of the provisional Bordeaux issue, which was printed in lithography during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870.



Figure 4: The medallion punch of the "Large Hermes Head"¹².

b. **The Proof¹³ of the Medallion Punch:**

A proof of the medallion punch in its final stage would have been printed. It is, in fact, mentioned in the book by A. Reinheimer, *Concise Description of the Collection of Essays of Martin Schroeder* - Leipzig, which appeared in Leipzig in 1903¹⁴. In 1929, the Kohl Stamp Handbook¹⁵ also refers to this item, but referring to the work of A. Reinheimer. Similarly, in 1933, "*l'Etude*" classifies this proof (ES. II)¹⁶, but still with reference to the works of Alex G. Argyropoulos & Dr. Herbert Munk as well as to the book of A. Reinheimer..

This proof (Figure 5) has never, to my knowledge, reappeared since this very early date (1903)... and therefore remains a mystery to everyone...

¹² The medallion punch that is shown here is in its final state, after all the retouching was made by the Chief Engraver (see paragraphs V and VI). It is from this same punch, but before retouching by Désiré-Albert Barre, that the provisional punch was produced.

¹³ See the author's article *Definitions of the Terms Proof and Essay and their Application to the Large Hermes Head Stamps*, which appeared in *Philotelia*, n° 644 of May/June, 2007, published by the Hellenic Philatelic Society in Athens.

¹⁴ Page 22 and figure 176 (page 28).

¹⁵ Elias Silberstein & Robert O. Truman, *Translation from the Kohl Briefmarken Handbuch of Alex G. Argyropoulos & Dr. Herbert Munk of 1929*, Collectors Club Philatelist, New York 1943/1944 & 1950, pages 5/6.

¹⁶ Tryphon Constantinidès, *Etude...* pages 52 & 119.



Figure 5: Illustration of the proof produced from the medallion punch
(*Concise Description of the Collection of Essays of Martin Schroeder*)

V) The Provisional Punch:

During the engraving of the medallion punch (Figure 4), Désiré-Albert Barre, wanted to know the status of the progress of his work and produced an almost complete provisional punch with the frame (but without inscription and value, without the Greek design and without the florets of the four corners) from which he struck a cliché; this cliché was used to print a few provisional proofs¹⁷.

a. Manufacture of the Provisional Punch:

When an engraver works on the engraving of a punch, he needs to verify the status of his work and to see it rendered in two dimensions. To do this, he prints some provisional proofs from his punch. He can then observe on a flat sheet that which would appear in a printing from his punch.

In the course of the engraving of the medallion punch, the Chief Engraver decided, not only to review the status of the engraving of the effigy of the head of Hermes, but also to evaluate the general appearance of the finished stamp.

Désiré-Albert Barre thus undertook the production of a nearly complete punch. Had he perhaps thought, at that time, that he had completed his work? To produce this punch, the Chief Engraver assembled in a ferrule the intermediate medallion punch in its condition at this point, and an intermediate punch of the frame. This intermediate punch of the frame, without the medallion, included:

¹⁷ See the author's article *Definitions of the terms Proof and Essay...*

the four spandrels with their wavy lines and dots,
 the empty side bands for the Greek design,
 the inscription blocks without captions and values,
 the four corners without florets.

The intermediate punch of the frame was engraved, not "*en relief*" as the medallion, but by "*gravure directe*", also called "*gravure en creux*". In this case, to obtain a line, the engraver etched directly a groove in the soft metal. The "*gravure en creux*" is used for the engraving of the punches to make plates for "*taille douce*" printing; in fact, in "*taille douce*" printing, it is the recess parts of the plate, full of ink, which print the sheet of paper by capillary action¹⁸.

To obtain an identical punch of the frame, not in recess, but in relief, it sufficed to strike a matrix¹⁹ from the punch of the frame as all the elements of the frame are symmetrical in the three axes (vertical and horizontal, and diagonal).

The assembly of these two intermediate punches (medallion and matrix of the frame) in the ferrule gave birth, once struck, to a provisional punch of the "*large Hermes head*" of Greece (Figure 7)²⁰.

This technique, similarly, has been used for the creation of the French stamps as brilliantly demonstrated by Michele Chauvet, RDP, a few years ago, in her article dedicated to the punch of the French colonies stamp, type "*Aigle*"²¹, done at the same period (1860's).

This discovery finally clarifies a mystery that has tormented all lovers of classical stamps, French and Greek, for generations: how Chief Engravers, Jacques-Jean Barre and his son Désiré-Albert Barre, could obtain such fineness of wavy lines and dots in the spandrels of the French stamps, types "*République*", "*Présidence*", "*Empire*" and "*Aigle*", as well as the first Greek "*large Hermes head*" stamps, using only "*taille de relief*" engraving method?

Thus the first French classic stamps and the first Greek stamp were manufactured mixing two different engraving techniques: the "*taille de relief*" for the medallion, and the "*gravure en creux*" for the frame!

18 Docteur Robert Joany, *Les outils de fabrication des timbres-poste*, Paris 1971.

19 By matrix we mean: a punch obtained mechanically by use of the original punch to press (or strike) a block of soft steel in a coining press. The matrix is thus the imprint of the punch, the recesses having become raised (in relief) and vice-versa.

20 As noticed by Louis Basel, the assembly of the circular medallion punch, in the center of the punch of the frame shows a slight offset of the medallion to the right relative to the frame. It is very visible on the lower part of the medallion. It is exactly the same offset on all of the proofs, essays and stamps of the "*large Hermes head*". These recurrent shifts exist also, but on different axes, on the French classical "stamps" of the types "*République*", "*Présidence*", and as well, "*Empire*"...

21 Michèle Chauvet, *Le poinçon au type Aigle*, an article which appeared in the review of l'Académie de Philatélie, *Documents Philatéliques*, n° 195 of the 1st trimester 2008.

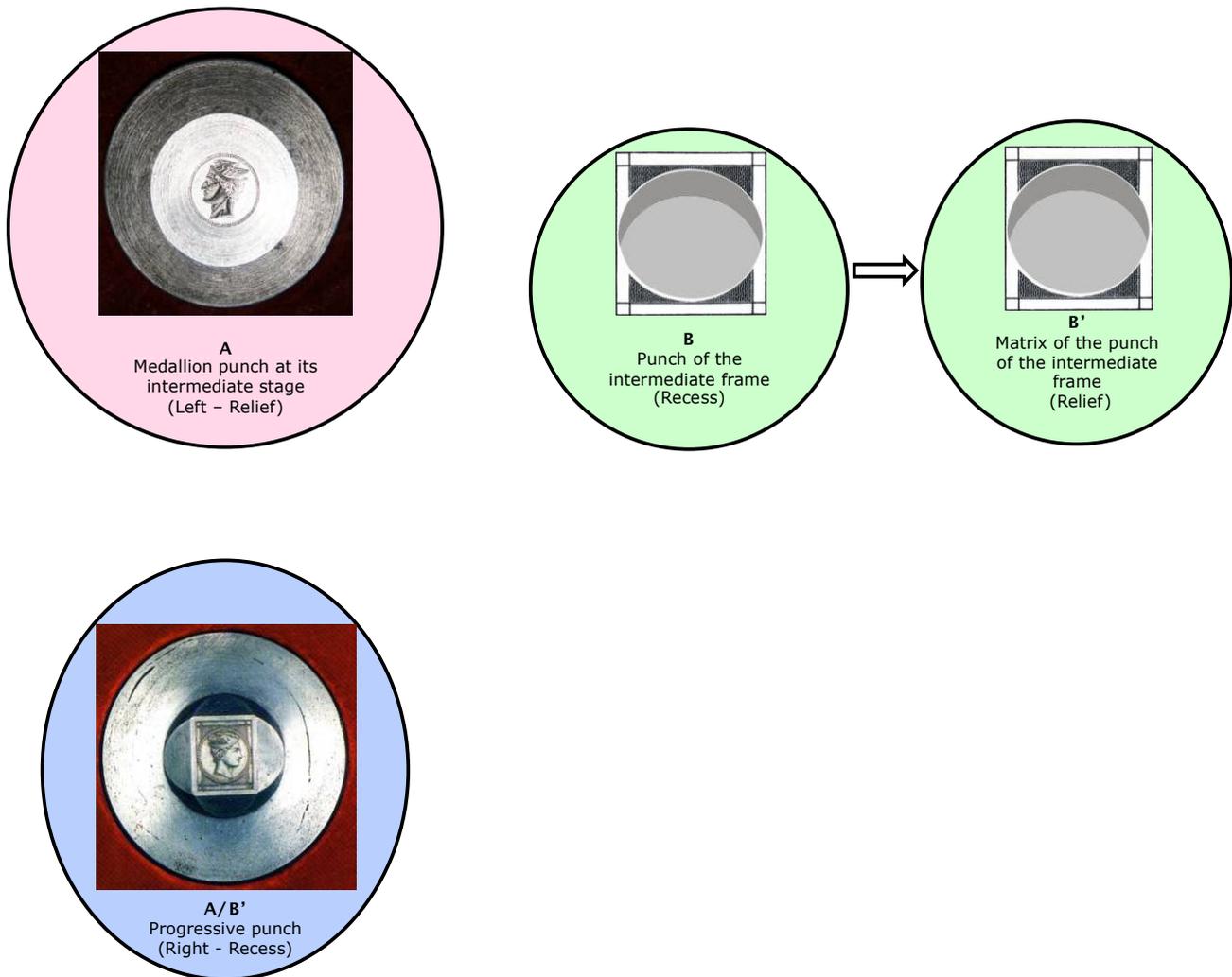


Figure 6: Process for the production of the provisional punch and its "cliché"²².

The diagram in figure 6 provides a synthetic overview of the probable process used for the production of the provisional punch of the "large *Hermes head*". The background colors of the different elements signify:

Pink: elements known to this day, but in a different state,

Green: items not found to this day, and,

Blue: elements known to date and at this state.

The main stages are:

Step 1: Production of the intermediate matrix of the frame by striking the intermediate punch of the frame in a block of soft steel,

Step 2: Assemblage the two intermediate punches (medallion & matrix of the frame) in a ferrule and striking a block of soft steel to obtain the provisional punch,

Step 3: Striking of a blank piece of copper by the provisional punch to obtain a "cliché".

²² Indications in parentheses under the figures of diagrams 6 & 11 indicate:

- The direction towards which the head of *Hermes* is facing,
- The form of the printed parts: recess or relief.



Figure 7: The provisional punch of the "Large Hermes Head".

The provisional punch of "large Hermes head" remained in the archives of the Barre family until December 2002, the date at which the past archives of chief engravers of the Barre family were sold at auction by Claude Aguttes at its sales office in Neuilly, near Paris.

b. "Cliché" of the Provisional Punch:

From the provisional punch, the Chief Engraver struck a "cliché" in copper (figure 8). This "cliché" also appeared during the sale of the archives of the family Barre by the Claude Aguttes company in December 2002.



Figure 8: The copper "cliché" of the provisional punch.

c. Progressive Proofs Produced from the Provisional Punch:

From a "cliché", or a matrix, issued from the provisional punch, but which have not yet been recovered, Désiré-Albert Barre, printed a few progressive proofs on pieces of China paper. Some were mounted, probably much later, on cardboard media (Figure 10 b).

Among the six progressive proofs listed to date, all blue, some have been remarkably printed and are infinitely fine (Figure 10). They can really be considered as true works of art!



Figure 9: Progressive proofs from the provisional punch; the one on the right is mounted on a cardboard.

d. Progressive Proofs Printed in "negative" from a "cliché" of the Provisional Punch:

During the Claude Aguttes sale in December 2002, there also appeared three progressive proofs from the "cliché" of the provisional punch, which were unknown until then. These three provisional proofs, in black or sepia, were printed in "negative" on sheets of China paper (Figure 10).

The engraver filled the recesses of the punch with ink, probably with his thumb²³, and printed these three progressive proofs in "pseudo taille douce". The result appears in "negative" because the "cliché" was made for printing in typography...



²³ This technique of "fast inking" was also used by one of the most famous engravers of French stamps of the 20th century, Pierre Gandon (1899-1990), as described to me by the great French expert, Jean-François Brun, RDP, who have seen this type of operation in the workshop of the engraver.

Figure 10: Progressive proofs printed in "negative" (sepia at left and black at right).

VI. The Final Punch of "Large Hermes Head":

After viewing the different provisional proofs (Figures 9 & 10) produced from the provisional punch, Désiré-Albert Barre decided to retouch the engraving of the medallion punch. Changes made to the medallion of the head of Hermes are very precisely detailed in a remarkable study published in 2008, by my friend Louis Basel²⁴.

a. Manufacture of the Final Punch:

To produce the final punch, the Chief Engraver used the same techniques as those used for the design of the provisional punch (see paragraph V).

At this stage, the punch of the frame was complete; the florets of the corners, the Greek design in the vertical blocks and the legends of two inscription blocks had been added²⁵.

To describe the probable different stages of the production of the final punch, we shall use a diagram (Figure 11) as already done for the provisional punch.

²⁴ Louis Basel, *Retouching of the Progressive Die of the Large Hermes Head Stamps*, published in the magazine Lighthouse n° 5 of October/December 2008, published by the Philatelic Society of Patras, and available on the website of Louis Basel (<http://hermesheads.home.comcast.net>).

²⁵ The Chief Engraver focused on etching of the effigies of the medallions which was the artistic part of the engraving of the punch and which took the most time. It is likely that the engraving of different geometric patterns (circle of pearls of the medallion, wavy lines, Greek design and florets of the frame, legends and values), was carried out by other engravers or typesetters who assisted the Chief Engraver in his workshop in the Paris Mint. These last tasks could be performed with an "engraving and reducing turner machine" (pantograph).

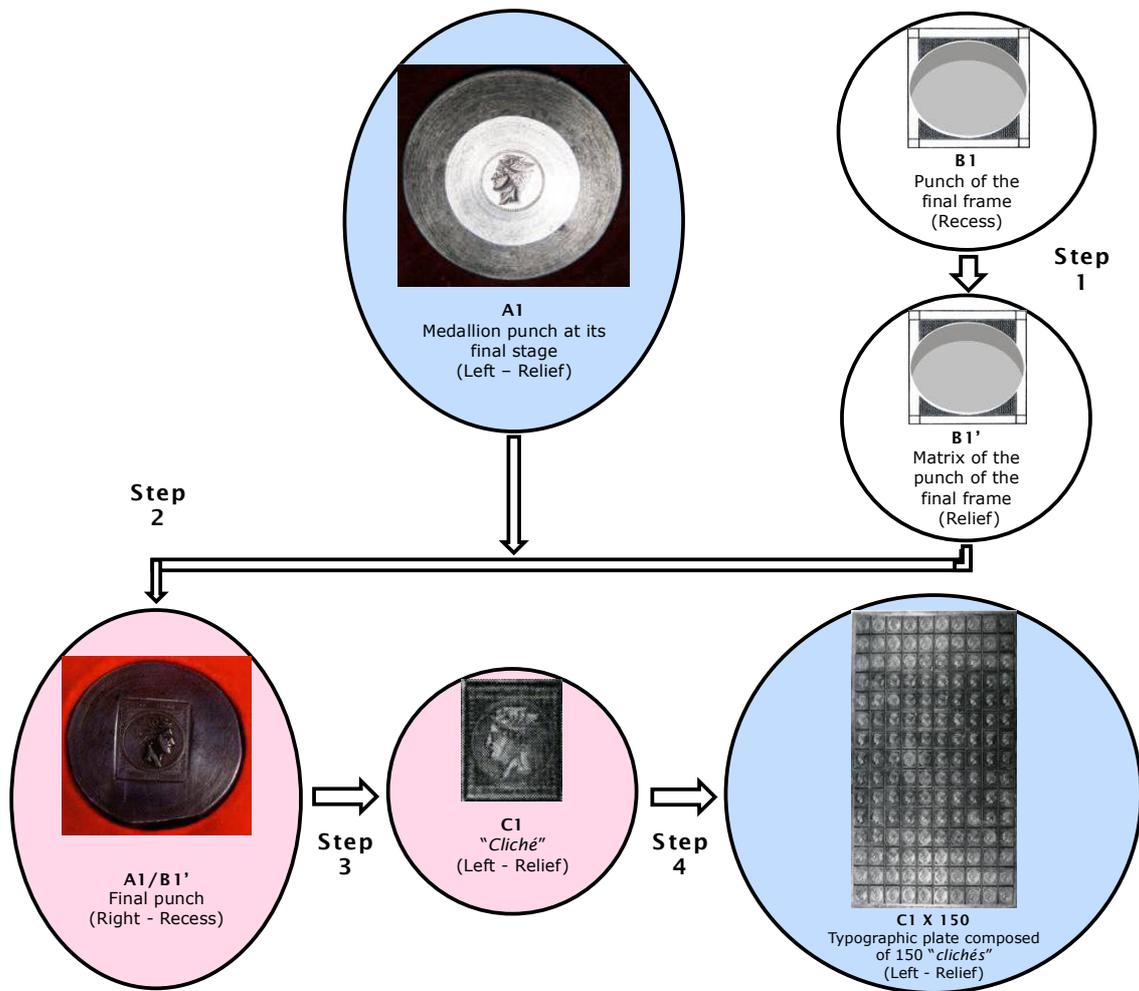


Figure 11: Process for the production of the final punch & its "clichés", and mounting of the printing plate.

The color code for the different elements remains the same as that used in the diagram of Figure 6.

In this case, the principal stages are:

Step 1: Production of the matrix of the final frame by striking a block of soft steel using the punch of the final frame,

Step 2: Assembly of the two punches (medallion at final stage and matrix of the final frame) in a ferrule and striking a block of soft steel to obtain the final punch,

Step 3: Striking pieces of copper using the final punch to obtain the "clichés",

Step 4: Mounting of the 150 "clichés", after individually percussion striking of the values on the face of each "cliché", to obtain a typographic plate of 150 "clichés" for each facial value, fabricated by the "direct striking in a coining press" method²⁶.

²⁶ See the study by the author of *The essays "Ceres" 1858: Why are they an integral part of Greek philately?*, published in the magazine *Philotelia* n° 652/653 & 654 from September 2008 to February 2009, published by the Hellenic Philotelic Society in Athens.



Figure 12: The final punch of the "Large Hermes head"²⁷.

b. **Final Proofs from the Final Punch:**

At the end of his work, and, before delivering the final punch to Anatole-Auguste Hulot²⁸ on February 1st, 1861, the Chief Engraver printed a series of final proofs from the final punch on sheets of China paper (Figure 13) from a matrix, or a "*cliché*" (which has not been recovered yet) of the final punch.

Then again, some of these final proofs were mounted, probably much later, on cardboard media. To date, twenty-nine final proofs have been reported:

Six in blue,

Ten in black, and

Thirteen in brown-red.

²⁷ The final punch also appeared in the sale of the Barre archives by the Aguttes company in December 2002.

²⁸ Anatole Auguste Hulot (1811-1892) was appointed Assistant to the Chief Engraver in 1848. He produced the printing plates and printed all of the French postage stamps produced from 1848 to 1876. He was promoted to Director of the Manufacture of Stamps on January 30, 1860, and was dismissed from his post on July 30, 1876.



Figures 13: Final proofs, printed from a "cliché" or from a matrix, of the final punch.

c. The Final Proof with Value Numbers:

The typographic plates and the printing of the first Greek stamp, the "*large Hermes head*", initially, were to be produced by the Director of the Manufacture of Postage Stamps, Anatole-Auguste Hulot, as were all the stamps produced in France at that time. After many difficulties, which we have detailed in a study published a few years ago²⁹, the printing plates of the seven values of the first Greek stamp finally were produced by Désiré-Albert Barre; the prints of the seven values of the Paris Issues of 1861 were printed by Ernest Meyer.

When the Chief Engraver delivered the final punch to Hulot on February 1st, 1861, the punch had not yet been hardened and included the two notches for the insertion of the value slugs in the lower inscription block (see the final proofs of Figure 13).

Hulot kept the punch for only two months and was forced to return it to the Chief Engraver on April 11th, 1861. In his letter³⁰ of April 4th, 1861, Hulot indicated, without further details, that during these two months he had begun several tasks: "...*The order for these stamps was given in August, 1860, but I had the type (die) in my hands only two months ago, during which quite special and preparatory work for the multiplication of this type have been very advanced...*". Although the exact nature of the work is not mentioned, we can imagine that he began initial operations, namely the tempering of the punch, which would be used to strike some 1,050 lead "*flans*", necessary for the manufacture of seven printing plates by gavanoplasty. He would then have to begin the work of inserting the value slugs, starting with the 1 Lepton.

Therefore, it is more likely that the final punch that Hulot was forced to return to Désiré-Albert Barre on April 11th, 1861 contained the value slugs of the 1 Lepton and had been tempered. The Chief Engraver wanted to assess the condition of "his" punch, which had remained in the hands of Hulot for two months, before starting the operation of striking the clichés required for the manufacture of seven printing plates with his own method of "*direct striking in a coining press*", and he therefore printed a proof of the punch on China paper (figure 15).

²⁹ See the study of the author *The Essays "Cérès 1858"*...

³⁰ All these letters and internal notes are visible in the archives and minutes of Désiré-Albert Barre, in the Postal Museum in Paris.

This final proof is, to date, unique and only appeared very recently. The specialists and experts to whom I showed this piece are unanimous as to its authenticity.

In 1954, Jos Symens found³¹ that all the "*large Hermes head*" proofs of 1861³², unlike all the essays and all the issued stamps, did not have the well known break at the lower end of the first wavy line in the upper-left spandrel.

However, on this numbered final proof of the 1 lepton, the first wavy line, as well as the tenth, of the upper-left spandrel are broken at the base as in all the essays and all the issued stamps of the "*large Hermes head*" of Greece.

Thus, these two breaks could have occurred accidentally, either when struck by the punch or during the tempering of the punch³³ when it was in the hands of Hulot between February 1st and April 4th, 1861.

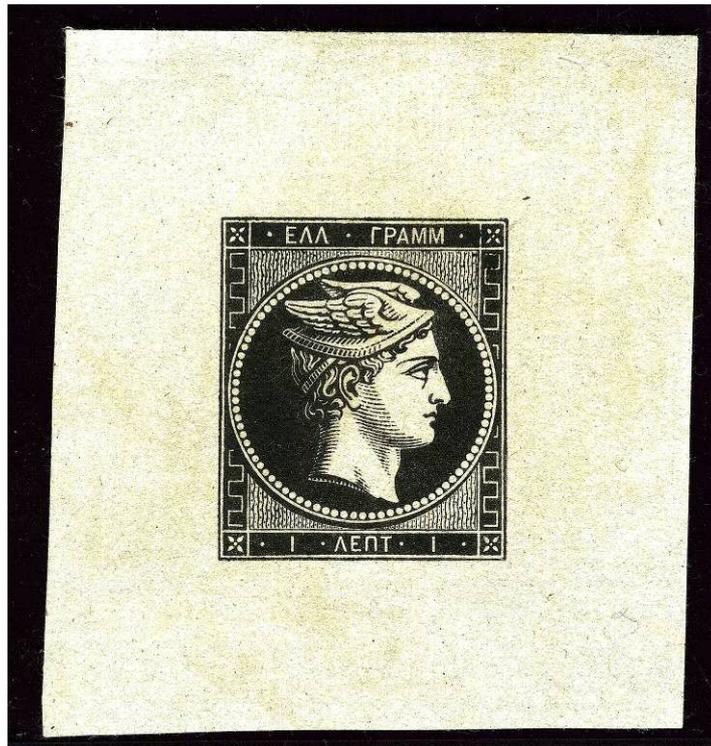


Figure 14: Final proof with value numbers of the 1 Lepton.

VII) The Matrix of the Final Medallion Punch:

When Désiré-Albert Barre had finished the engraving of the medallion punch, he struck a matrix (see foot notes n° 19) of this punch as its final stage (see paragraph IV).

After a few early unfortunate experiences, this operation was made almost systematically by Chief Engravers to enable them, if necessary, to recreate, or modify the original punch. Indeed, the punches were subject to enormous mechanical forces

31 Jos Symens, *La gravure du coin de la grosse tête de Mercure*, Philotelia n° 328 of November/December 1954, pages 92/96.

32 This is not true for the proofs of the 30 and 60 lepta of 1875/1876, which were printed from the final punch after it was hardened. So, like all the essays and all the issued stamps they have then, the wavy lines 1 & 10 of the upper left spandrel broken at their base.

33 This type of problem is known to philatelists of French classical stamps and occurred with other punches. See for example the essays "*Cérès 1858*" or the "essays without inscription" which have a notch in the outer ring of the upper left spandrel, between wavy lines 2 & 3.

during the tempering and/or striking operations which could alter their design or even cause breaks³⁴ in the engraving. Thus, if an original punch was broken or damaged in an operation, it was sufficient to recreate a new punch from its matrix which was retained for this purpose.



Figure 15: The Matrix of the Final Medallion Punch.

VIII) The Final Proofs of the 30 and 60 Lepta of 1875/1876:

In 1875/1876, following the accession of Greece to the U.G.P. - Union Générale des Postes, (ancestor of the U.P.U. - Union Postale Universelle), the Greek postal administration asked the Chief Engraver to produce the necessary equipment for the printing of two new values (30 & 60 Lepta), and a number of stamps of these values. Désiré-Albert Barre asked the Greek administration on October 12th, 1875³⁵ to return to him the punches that had been shipped to Athens in September 1861. The purpose of this request was to economize the cost of reproducing a new punch and to render exactly the same effigy and the same design as those of the first seven values of 1861. After a few weeks of research, the Greek administration returned the final punch (Figure 12) to Paris, in December 1875.

After having reopened the two holes of the values, the engraver had to insert slugs bearing the value figures (30 or 60 Lepta) to make two printing plates³⁶ of these new values.

As the punch used to manufacture the plates of the two values had been the final punch (figure 12) after it was damaged when it was struck or tempered in February/March 1861, the wavy lines 1 & 10 of the upper-left spandrel are broken at their lower end.

To date, three copies of each value are known.

34 This incident occurred with the punch of the "Cérès" in 1872, which was broken when it was struck and which had then put the French Postal Administration in a real embarrassment...

35 These letters are visible in the archives and the minutes of Désiré-Albert Barre, at the Postal Museum in Paris.

36 Unlike the printing plates of the first seven values of 1861 (1 lepton, 2, 5, 10, 20, 40 & 80 lepta) which had 150 stamps, and which were manufactured with the "direct striking in a coining press" method, these printing plates with the two new values (30 & 60 lepta) had 300 stamps and were manufactured using the "galvanoplasty-type" method. See the article by the author, *Tirages de Paris de la « Grosse tête d'Hermès » : Quantités exactes...*

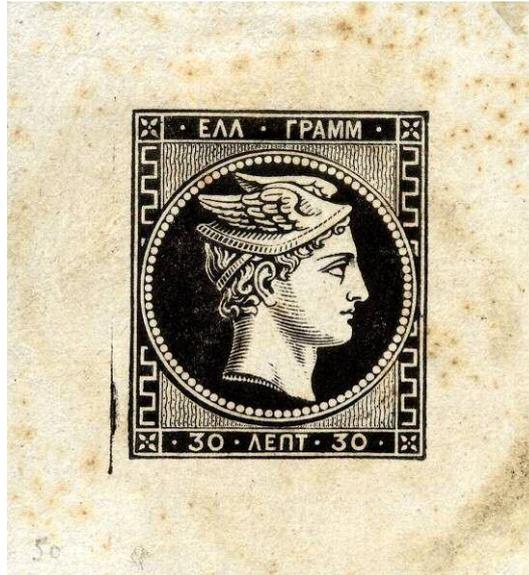


Figure 16: Final Proof of the 30 Lepta of 1875/1876.

IX) Proofs of the Postal Stationary of 1875/1876:

In 1875/1876, Désiré-Albert Barre also produced some postal stationary for the Greek Postal Administration. To produce the punch needed for the production of the printing plates, the Chief Engraver retrieved the medallion punch in its final stage (figure 4) and used the same technique to assemble it with a new frame. This frame punch has not been recovered to date.

He printed a few final proofs in black (two copies known to date) and grey-green (a unique piece known to this day), see figure 18.



Figure 17: Final proofs of the postal stationaries of the 15 Lepta.

X) Conclusion:

We wanted, in this article, to produce a body of knowledge on the processes used in the manufacture of the final punch of the "*large Hermes head*" taking into account all

the known pieces (punches, matrixes, "clichés", proofs...). A large number of pieces necessary for the production of the final punch have not yet been discovered. Also, we have reconstructed these processes for the first Greek stamp, by analogy, using existing knowledge of the methods used by father and son Barre to achieve the other French classic stamps. We have attempted to be as logical and rational as possible, but we cannot state positively that all the stages of these processes have been described completely. It's obvious that several phases of the manufacturing process of each of the three "large Hermes head" punches are missing in our descriptions and cannot be described yet as several intermediate elements have been either destroyed or not been yet discovered... We do hope, however, that we will see in the future some hitherto unknown elements, such as punches, matrixes, "clichés" or proofs that will allow us to understand even more precisely the techniques and the complete sequences used by the chief engravers to produce their punches.

We believe that, based on the elements available and knowledge of the techniques used by the Chief Engravers in Paris at that time, we have been able however, to present the most logical explanation possible of the methods used to produce the punches of the first Greek postage stamp including the main steps of these processes. The proofs which are illustrating this study also allows us to admire the work of the Chief Engraver and artist of the first Greek postage stamp in the mastery of the techniques of engraving and printing through the fineness of the proofs he produced which allowed him to control the progress of his work.

Finally, and once again, I would like to deeply thank my friend Louis Basel for the English translation of this study and for all his pertinent comments, advices and suggestions. I also express my gratitude to my friend François Casanova for having taken professional pictures to illustrate this study

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