

Kuwait Banknote with Two Twists

I chose the title of this little article about the Kuwait 5 Dinars, P14c/B215 banknote because there are TWO separate stories about the note. First. Some specifics.



Pick (SCWPM) categorizes three versions of this note, all with a minaret left, arms right on the front and the Seif Palace (the Amir's Administration Headquarters) on back with a dhow watermark.

- P14a has an ornate underprint and signature 2
- P14b signature 4
- P14c clear margins with signature 6

The Bank Note Book lists two separate catalog numbers, making a statement that the last note is significantly different than the first two. All notes portray minaret of Al-Hilali

mosque in Kuwait City; coat of arms with falcon and dhow on front and Al-Seif Palace on back with a dhow watermark.

- B209a prefix DC/1 to DC/7 This note was released in 1980.
- B209b prefix DC/8 to DC/17
- B215 prefix DC/18 to DC/20

The “clear margins” Pick refers to is not particularly helpful. The P14c/B215 notes have multiple colors in the top and bottom margin on the reverse. Also the patterns at the center of the top and bottom margins on the back of the earlier issues have wavy line underprinting while the later have a repeating square pattern.

Now, let’s talk stories!

Both catalogs refer to the DC/18 to DC/20 prefix notes as contraband. Invading Iraqi forces in 1990 robbed the Central Bank and looted the current 1, 5, 10, and 20 Dinar series. Once Iraq was repelled, the Central Bank of Kuwait declared these notes invalid and refused to honor them, but did honor the prior issues. I would venture well over half of world currency collectors are aware of this.

The second less known back story is somewhat embarrassing for De La Rue the banknote printer and the Central Bank of Kuwait. One of the other differences of the later issues was adding improved security features. A latent image on the lower right is one example. Unfortunately, the micro-print or microtext seen on the bottom of the note on the reverse (not mentioned by Pick) reads “البنك المركزي الـ بنك” (Central Bank of Yemen) repeated. The blame for this squarely points to De La Rue. The firm had recently made a new 20 rial note for the Central Bank of Yemen, which included a line of micro-printing. It would appear that the machinery, which applies the micro-printing to the printing plates, was prepared with the wrong string of text and the text prepared for the Central Bank of Yemen was applied to the 5 dinar note issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait. My ability to translate Arabic only applies to numbers (barely), but my trusty Google Translate App on my cell phone does indeed recognize the language and faithfully translates “Central Bank of Yemen”. Between the error being in Arabic and in micro-print requiring aid to read, the error was not in news of the day and the entire series was demonetized without replacement on September 30, 1991.

