




# THE COLLECTORS CLUB

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<b>THE COLLECTORS CLUB</b>		
	<b>PHILATELIST</b>	
	Volume 38, No. 5 September, 1959	
	<b>CONTENTS</b>	
	EDITORIAL . . . . .	207
	PRESIDENT'S LETTER . . . . . Overseas and Resident Member Dues	208
	SECOND DINNER DANCE, December 5, 1959 . . . . .	209
	UNCOMMON USES OF COMMON STAMPS . . . . . Canada 2c Registration Stamp on "Drop" Letter	210
	SOUTH BULGARIA (Herbert P. Woodward) . . . . . The Lion Overprints	211
	PRINTING EVIDENCE (Ernest A. Kehr) . . . . .	229
BOOK REVIEWS . . . . .	231	
C. C. LIBRARY WANT LIST . . . . .	232	
LIBERIA (Cornelius W. Wickersham) . . . . . The 1892 Numeral Issue	233	
THE CLUBHOUSE . . . . . Meeting Reports, New Members and Coming Meetings	248	
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## Table Of Contents

*items marked with \* cannot be viewed as an individual PDF document*

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 38 No: 5 Philatelist: 038-05](#)

	<u>Starting Page</u>
<a href="#">Front Cover</a> (1 page)	Front Cover
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Harmer, Rooke & Co., Inc.	Inside Front Cover
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Raymond H Weill Co	I
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: H.E. Harris & Co. Inc.	II
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Minkus	III
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: The American Stamp Dealers' Association, Inc.	IV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Corinthila	V
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Irwin Heiman	VI
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: H.E. Wingfield & Co.	VI
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Wakefield, Fortune Inc.	VII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: J. N. Sissons Inc.	VIII
<a href="#">Editorial</a> (3 pages)	207
<a href="#">Uncommon Uses of Common Stamps - Canada 2c Registration Stamp on "Drop" Letter</a> (1 page)	210
<a href="#">South Bulgaria - The Lion Overprints</a> (18 pages) <i>Herbert P. Woodward</i>	211
<a href="#">Printing Evidence</a> (3 pages) <i>C.W. Wickersham, Ernest A. Kehr</i>	229
<a href="#">Book Reviews</a> (2 pages)	231
<a href="#">C.C. Library Want List</a> (1 page)	232
<a href="#">Liberia - The 1892 Numeral Issue</a> (16 pages) <i>C.W. Wickersham</i>	233
<a href="#">The Clubhouse</a> (12 pages)	248
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Robson Lowe Ltd.	IX
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Alex S. Juliard	IX
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Higgins & Gage, Inc.	IX
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Richard N. Cone	X
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: John A Fox	X
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: General Stamp Co.	XI
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Linn's U.S. Stamp Yearbook	XI
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: New England Stamp	XII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Nicolas Sanabria Co., Inc.	XII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Scott Publishing Co.	XII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Paul Goldsmith	XII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Billig & Rich, Inc.	XIII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: G.S. Manners	XIII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Bruce G. Daniels	XIII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Penny Black Stamp Co.	XIII
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Douglas Roth	XIV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Mercury Stamp Co., Inc.	XIV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Douglas P. Ball	XIV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: The Westminster Stamp Co. Ltd.	XIV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: Edgar Mohrmann & Co.	XV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: The Collectors Club	XV
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: W.E. Lea (Philatelists) Ltd	Inside Back Cover
<a href="#">Display Advertisement</a> (1 page) Advertiser: H.R. Harmer	Back Cover

*A fascinating and unusual study of a little-known issue that should attract many new collectors to a hitherto unpopular field . . .*

# SOUTH BULGARIA

## The Lion Overprints

By HERBERT P. WOODWARD

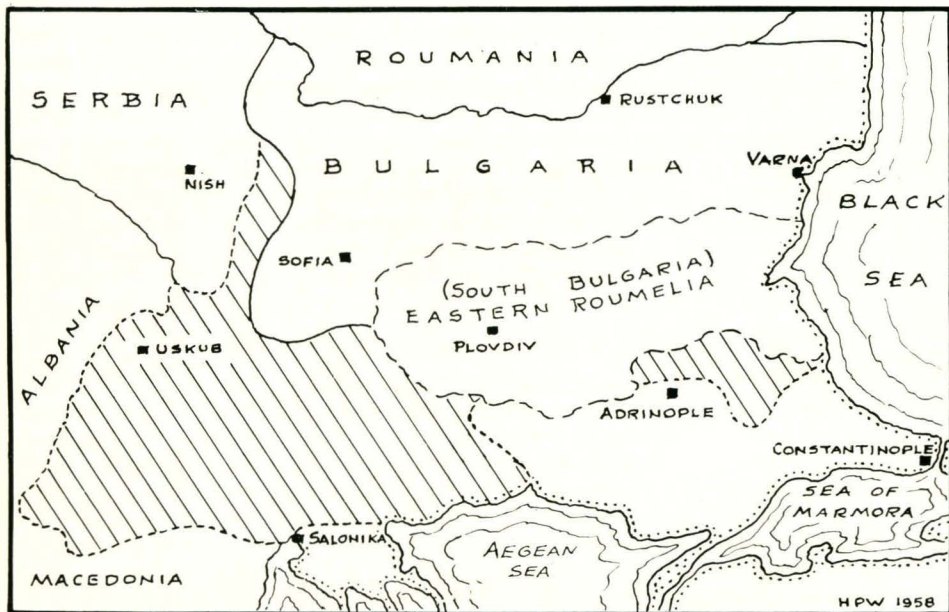


Fig. 1. Map showing Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia (South Bulgaria) in the period 1881-1885. The shaded area was awarded to Bulgaria in the Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878 but was taken away by the Treaty of Berlin in July 1878. Because of this "theft," Bulgaria has always been territorially unhappy.

### Introduction

The Lion Overprints of South Bulgaria, listed by Scott as Nos. 20-40 of Eastern Roumelia,<sup>1</sup> constitute an unfamiliar and obscure group, avoided or unsought by most American collectors. The stamps are unpopular partly because they are not intrinsically attractive, partly because they are dubiously expensive, and partly because dangerous counterfeits\* saturate the market. Too, most collectors eschew them because so little is

1. The writer prefers the spelling "Roumelia" to "Rumelia." All contemporary maps of the region and practically all stamp literature (except Scott) use ROUMELIA, a spelling authorized by the country itself.

\* See Editorial page.

written in English to assist their identification. The present paper is planned to fill this lack.

Printed in September 1885 with imitations appearing before 1886, these stamps have outlived the person who could validate his stamp by having purchased it at a South Bulgaria post office. Contemporaneous experts, who knew these stamps first-hand are dead, and the modern expert must make comparisons with copies authenticated long ago by someone else.

The writer has had the unusual opportunity to examine a large lot of South Bulgarian overprints—more than 1,500 copies—part of which he assembled himself, and part of which was donated for this study by Robert W. Lyman of Marblehead, Massachusetts. From this large quantity of stamps at hand, the author has been able to make a fairly exacting study of both genuine and counterfeit copies, bringing much internal evidence to bear upon the authenticity of the stamps. This study is not intended to be exhaustive, but it is hoped that it will assist other philatelists to verify their holdings of this country. A fairly comprehensive description is made of identifying features of the genuine overprints—a subject avoided by most previous authors who felt that to do so would enable the modern forger to produce a more dangerous replica. The writer believes that most of his conclusions regarding these stamps are reliable, although he does not consider his opinion infallible for every copy.

In pursuing this study, he has drawn upon information and aids accumulated from many sources, including selected copies regarded as genuine by Alexander Bisk of New York and by Franz See of Vienna, an early collection of false overprints and other fraudulent material by the late Otto Friedl, and a comparison set supplied for this project by Herbert J. Bloch of the Mercury Stamp Company. In addition he has examined many copies previously authenticated by Messrs. Thier, Richter, Köhler, Karaivanov, and others, so that he has had ample material for comparison purposes, as well as an extensive lot of false overprints from the Ferrari collection. He is particularly grateful to Herbert J. Bloch for his interest and assistance in the study, and to Robert W. Lyman for more than half of the material studied.

All line drawings of the overprints were newly prepared for this paper from the stamps themselves.

#### Historical Background

Prior to 1876 when most of southwest Europe was held by Turkey, the southern border of the Turkish *Vilayet* of Bulgaria followed the line of the Balkan Mountains, now situated in the middle of modern Bulgaria. All of the Balkan Peninsula south of these mountains and east of a line drawn from Kostenetz (southeast of Sofia) to Kavalla (on the Aegean Sea) comprised the *Vilayet* of Roumelia and was independent from Bulgaria. Like the Bulgarians, the Roumelians also assisted the Russians in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, and they were quite content to be included in the Greater Bulgaria of the Treaty of San Stefano, March 3, 1878. (See Fig. 1)

This treaty, however, was so repugnant to the great western powers, that a conference was hastily called at Berlin where the boundaries were completely redrawn. By the Treaty of Berlin of July 13, 1878, Bulgaria was greatly reduced in size, and a separate territory, known as Eastern Roumelia, was created out of the northern half of the former *Vilayet* of Roumelia. The first governor of the new country was Aleko Vogorides who remained in office until 1884 and was followed by Gavril Krestovich. All Russian forces had withdrawn from Eastern Roumelia by 1881, but they cunningly left behind them nearly 100,000 rifles with instructions for their care and use.

Between the time of its creation and 1885, two political parties wrangled in Eastern Roumelia, a Conservative or "Union-with-Bulgaria Sometime" Party, and a Liberal "Union Now" Party. The governor made every effort to keep order in the new country, but Bulgarian propaganda and the stock of Russian rifles were disturbing elements. So also were several hundred nationalist Bulgarians who fled to Eastern Roumelia between 1881 and 1883 while their own constitution was being overhauled. Finally, certain brilliant politicians, including the young Dmitri Rizov, were working desperately toward swift union of the two Bulgarias. Actually, Eastern Roumelia was merely an imperfect copy of its northern neighbor differing chiefly in having a Christian ruler appointed by the Sultan instead of an elected Prince of foreign birth.

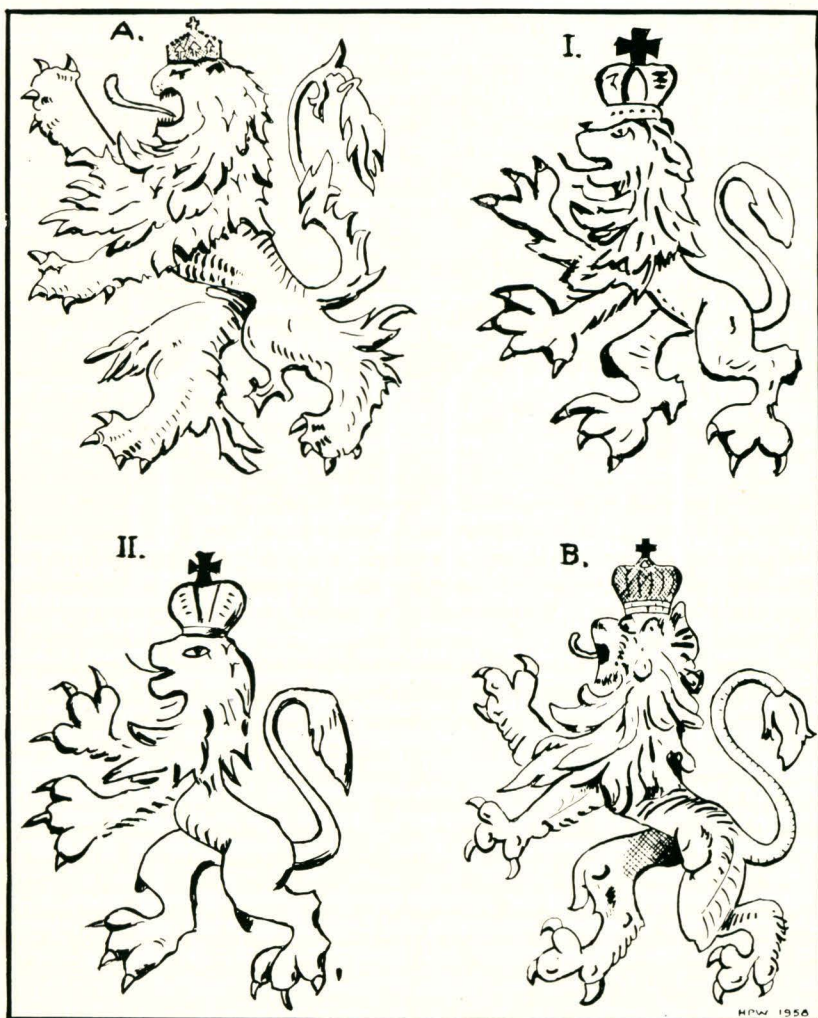


Fig. 2. The lions of Bulgaria. "A" is the ornate four-clawed lion of the Great Seal of Bulgaria. "B" is the lion with three claws on the First Issue of Bulgarian stamps. "I" and "II" are the first two types of the lion overprints of South Bulgaria.

In the summer and early fall of 1885, the political unrest finally burst into bloodless revolution at Plovdiv (Philippopolis), capital and largest city of Eastern Roumelia, where both independence from Turkey and union with Bulgaria were openly proclaimed by Major (later General) Nikolaiev on September 22, 1885.<sup>2</sup> Prince Alexander of Bulgaria had been secretly informed that such an event was likely to occur, and he hoped to refrain from taking any part in the celebration. Instead, he was strongly advised by his minister, Petko Karavelov, and the young nationalist, Stephan Stambulov, that if he failed to go to Plovdiv to receive the acclaim of the Eastern Roumelians, he had better entrain for Darmstadt, his former German home.

2. This date and all others used below in the text of this article refer to the Gregorian calendar in use today.

Wisely Alexander chose Plovdiv, where he was hailed with cheers as the first ruler of a united Bulgaria, and the term South Bulgaria was chosen as the substitute name for Eastern Roumelia. Perhaps feeling confidence in his new role, Alexander openly flaunted both the Tsar of Russia and the Sultan of Turkey by accepting consolidation of Bulgaria as an accomplished fact.

Immediately various western powers began gingerly to sound each other out regarding the situation. Germany remained neutral; Great Britain took no action; Turkey cautiously waited; and in October Russia called a conference at Constantinople to urge that the union be cancelled. This action offended the British who promptly adopted a favorable view toward the now-united Bulgaria. In November Serbia made an abortive move against Bulgaria's western front but was quickly repelled by Alexander whose united dominion thus won tacit approval of western powers. Hence after a formal agreement was reached early in April 1886, the new Bulgaria was established as fact and Eastern Roumelia ceased to exist as a principality.

For the short period between September 22, 1885 and April 6, 1886, Eastern Roumelia called itself "South Bulgaria," a term that was never officially recognized by any western European power, and one that would have been repudiated had union of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria been denied or undone.

#### Evolution Of The Stamps

While the political coup progressed toward proclamation of Eastern Roumelian independence, it was recognized by its postal authorities that the nation should issue new postage stamps to memorialize the change of status. Hence on recommendation of Dr. Stransky (slated for the presidency of South Bulgaria), Yordan Michailov, then Eastern Roumelian Postal Inspector, requested an engraver named Czaka to prepare a handstamp that would impose the lion of Bulgaria upon the current stamps of Eastern Roumelia. This handstamp was duly cut, and was delivered to the Plovdiv post office on September 20, 1885,<sup>3</sup> when sheets of stamps were struck with this design and were put on sale the following day.

The initial overprint was a crudely drawn lion showing four claws on its left front paw and three claws on the other feet. This was a compromise between the lion of Bulgaria's own stamps (which had four three-clawed paws), and the lion of the great seal of Bulgaria which was four-clawed throughout. (See Fig. 2) This initial imprint is known as the Type I lion.

It was next realized that similar stamps must be supplied to other towns in the new country, hence another handstamp was prepared (Type II overprint) showing a three-clawed lion, from which stamps were overprinted and dispatched to other South Bulgarian towns.

3. The period of use of South Bulgarian stamps is complicated by the difference between the Julian (Old Style) and Gregorian (New Style) calendars. As is well known, the change from Old Style (O. S.) to New Style was adopted by Britain and her American colonies in 1752, at which time the day following September 2 became September 14, a loss of 11 days. Most of Europe followed suit at a later date, but Bulgaria had not done so in 1885, when the difference between the two calendars had grown to 12 days. So far as the writer can tell, Bulgarian post offices continued to use the Old Style calendar until January 1, 1890, although individual persons and most commercial firms had shifted to New Style before 1885.

Now the stamps in question reached the Plovdiv post office on September 20, 1885 and went on sale one day later, September 21. They remained valid for use through September 30 and this is known to be an Old Style date to be converted to October 12, New Style. But what was the date of issue? The bulk of the evidence is that this was a New Style date, and that the actual receipt of the stamps was on September 8, (O. S.). This would mean that the stamps were valid for 22 days (September 9/21 through September 30/October 12).

In the other side, however, is the fact that Brunei mentions a P. O. order of September 18/30 which he interprets as referring to the coming use of these stamps. Thus he gives them a use of only 9 days (Sept. 22-30).

The 10 days of September 21-30 are applicable to either interpretation and to both calendars. As Bulgaria was still on the Old Style calendar, there can be no legitimate cancellation dated after September 30. But whether or not an earlier date than September 21 is necessarily valid cannot be said at this time.

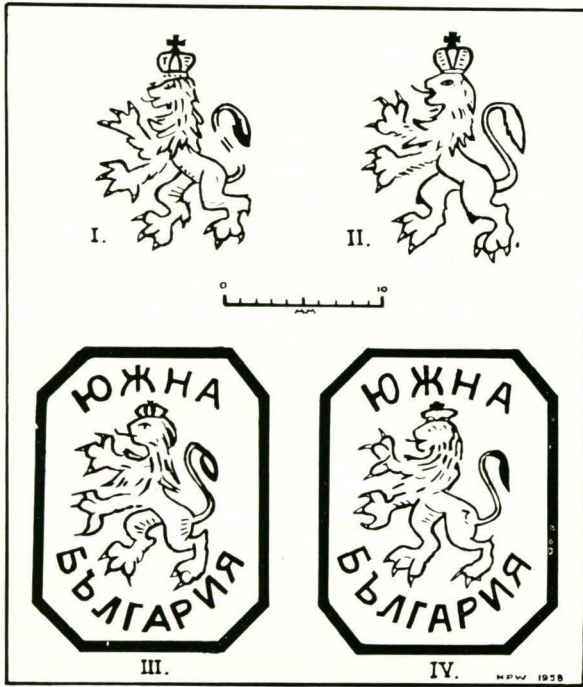


Fig. 3. The four Types of the Lion Overprints.

Almost immediately, however, it was remembered that neither of these overprints gave the name of the new country and officials were loath to authorize the stamps use for foreign mail. Hence still another design was called up and the same procedure was again followed on September 23, the handstamp this time showing a lion surrounded by an octagonal border with the Bulgarian word "SOUTH" above, and "BULGARIA" below, the lion. Again, one overprint was made for Plovdiv (Type III) and another (Type IV) for the outlying post offices. (See Fig. 3) Postal orders declared that only Types III and IV should be used for foreign mail, but all four overprints were used indiscriminately.

As union with Bulgaria moved more smoothly and swiftly than had been anticipated, Bulgarian officials recognized that continued use of stamps bearing the phrase "South Bulgaria" would be impolitic, because the true aim was complete consolidation of the two Bulgarias. Therefore all use of these stamps was prohibited after October 12, 1885, and the original dies from which the handstamps had been prepared were ordered destroyed.

It is thus evident that the stamps had authorized use for an extremely short period of time—only from September 21st (or 23rd for Types III and IV) through October 12, 1885. As this was not a literate country, the demand for stamps of any kind was unusually small. Furthermore, the period involved was one of great political tension, and external mail communication as well as internal need for postage were both temporarily curtailed. For all of these reasons, the numbers of stamps used legitimately was exceedingly meager. Finally, as many stamps that did attain genuine postal use were probably destroyed, the total volume of genuine stamps, either used or mint, to enter philatelic circles was extremely small.

It has been estimated that of all types and varieties, the probable number of overprinted stamps officially issued by the post office was:

5 paras .....	1,000 copies
10 paras .....	6,250
20 paras .....	3,000

1 piastre .....	3,000
5 piastres .....	400
Total	13,650 copies

As the available number of genuine stamps was far too small to fill the prompt philatelic demand, one can say that obliging persons supplied imitation copies as a necessary substitute. This is a generous explanation, and will be referred to below. The fact is that vast numbers of copies with counterfeit overprints now fill the market and have done so for nearly 75 years. For every genuine copy in the general collection, there are from 30 to 50 counterfeit copies most of which have been cleverly supplied with both counterfeit cancellations and contrived postal markings. On this score, public suspicion of these stamps has been justly warranted.

The number of persons who have hitherto been able to verify a South Bulgarian overprint has been extremely small, and many counterfeit copies pass back and forth in good faith between dealer and customer. In terms of the actual demand for copies of these overprints, the high prices quoted by domestic stamp catalogs are quite unrealistic. Nevertheless in terms of the actual numbers of genuine copies available, some of the lion overprints are exceedingly rare. This article, it is hoped, may make it possible to restrict the high catalog value to only genuine copies.

#### Postmarks, Cancellations and Inks

Town cancellations on the South Bulgarian stamps are mainly of a single type. The design involves two concentric circles, the outer circle having a diameter of about 30mm., the inner one being about 20mm. wide. The name of the town occurs between the two circles in Bulgarian at the top and in English at the bottom. A geometric design, commonly a star or a posthorn, is placed at right and left between the two town names. The month (September) is indicated by a Roman IX in the center of the inner circle, and the date (1885) is indicated by an underlined 85 beneath the IX. The day of the month appears with an underline above the IX. (See Figure 4a.)

The following towns (*vidé See*) had post offices in Eastern Roumelia during the period between 1879 and 1885, so that it is possible that any of these postmarks may be found on a lion overprinted stamp:

Aitos	Klissura	Plovdiv
Anchialo	Kotel	Schipka
Burgas	Kavalki	Sliven
Ichtiman	Karnobat	Stara Zagora
Haskovo	Kasal Agatch	Stanimaka
Harmanli	Kasanlik	T. Pazardjik
Hadji Elles	Nova Zagora	Tchepelare
Jambol	Panagiurische	Tschirpan
Karlovo	Peshtera	Trново Seymen

The town cancellations themselves have been skillfully counterfeited, and it would be tedious to describe the minute differences between each one and the genuine article. A type collection of legitimate postmarks must be assembled to distinguish true from false.

Almost all stamps were obliterated with the regular Eastern Roumelia grid cancellation, which also has been cleverly imitated. The genuine cancellation is circular with a diameter of about 23mm. It is formed by 12 narrow lines or grids that extend across the width of the circle, the ends of these lines forming the circumference of the circle which otherwise is unbounded. The two end lines at top and bottom are 8mm. or less in length and show a part of the perimeter of the circle. (See Fig. 4b.) Mostly the grids are of similar width, equally spaced, and do not thicken or thin at either end.

Almost all counterfeit grids have 11 such lines, the two end lines being 11mm. or more long and do not reflect the curvature of the circle. (See Fig. 4c) Generally the lines are farther apart in the counterfeit grids than in the genuine cancellation. There is a common bogus grid that has a small central circular blank uncrossed by the lines.

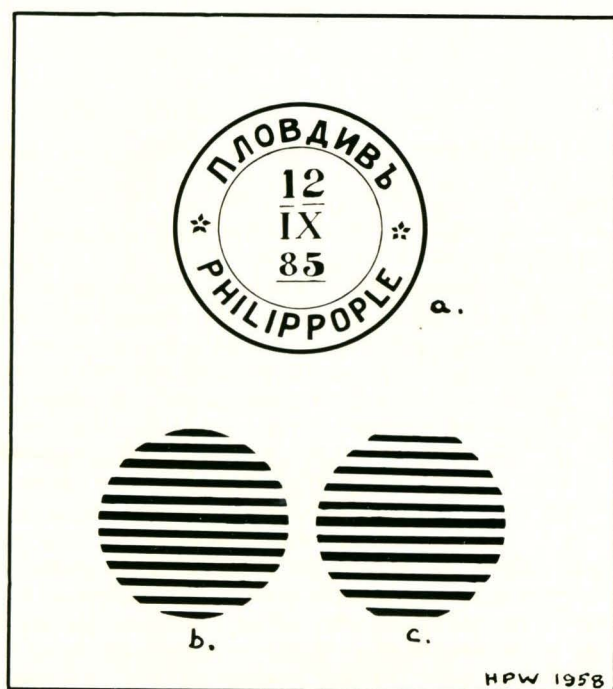


Fig. 4. Postal markings associated with the Lion Overprints. a) - the typical town cancellation; b) - the Eastern Roumelia grid; c) - counterfeit grid.

Inasmuch as the genuine cancellation contains 12 lines, there are two lines of equal length in the center of the circle, whereas in the counterfeit grid of 11 lines, there is only one central line. This difference, plus the greater lengths and different shapes of the top and bottom lines will normally identify a counterfeit copy. It is a fair rule that if the overprint itself is counterfeited, the postmark and grid also are. But this is not true, of course, if the counterfeit overprint was imposed upon a genuinely used Eastern Roumelia cover or stamp of the same general period.

It should be noted that most complete cancellations occur on post cards for the reason that the stamps were issued both loose or affixed to the regular Eastern Roumelia post card. For stamps on post cards, it seems likely that either of two circumstances was possible: (1) The overprint was applied in the post office to cards already bearing Eastern Roumelia stamps—possibly there were stocks of such cards made up in advance at the post office; and (2) overprinted South Bulgaria stamps were affixed at the post office window to previously unstamped cards. Thus, genuine overprints are found that go beyond the stamp itself onto the card, while other genuine overprints extend past the margin of the stamp without covering any part of the post card.

One must beware of cards bearing authentic town cancellations but having counterfeit overprints on the stamp. Usually in this case the day of the month is illegible, for the card was selected for the fraud because it had passed through the mails earlier than September 21.

Genuine covers (not post cards) carrying the stamps of South Bulgaria are very scarce, while any mail addressed outside the country is exceedingly rare.

Black or blue ink was commonly used for the town postmark, while the grid cancellations are found in these two colors and also in green.

A red color was originally authorized for the initial overprints of the lion and a few genuine copies struck with this color must be classified as essays. Otherwise only blue and black inks were used. Types I and II overprints occur with both blue and black inks, but

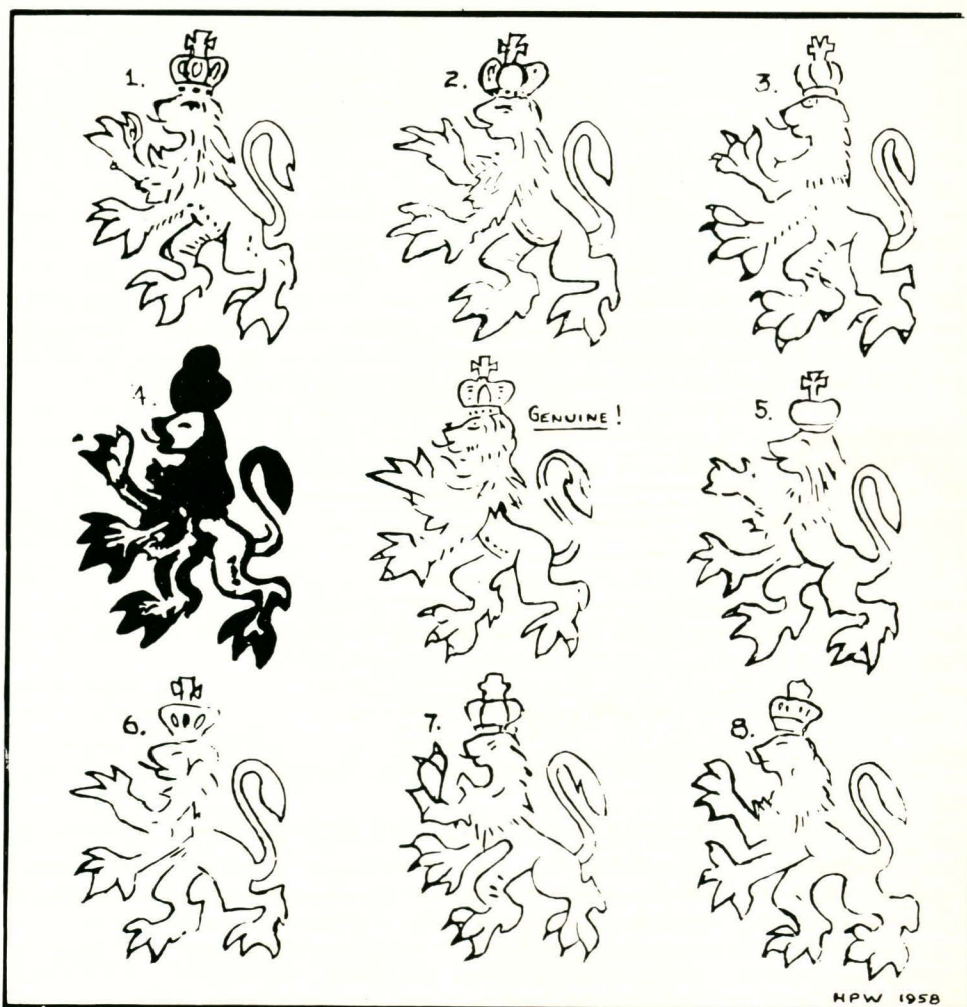


Fig. 5. The Type I lion overprint (genuine in center) and some of the more common counterfeits.

Types III and IV occur legitimately only in black. The first application of all overprints used a somewhat oily ink; later impressions were made with a less glossy one. Thus it is possible, at least with the Type I and II overprints, readily to distinguish two unlike impressions.

Among the counterfeited overprinted copies are many color shades—gray, brown, purple, plum, and red—all of which are bogus, as are blue impressions of the Type III and IV lions. It should be noted with the cleverly made counterfeits, that the forger matched the genuine ink so well that the color alone cannot be used alone to distinguish genuine from false.

There is reason to believe that black overprints were intended for domestic use and blue for foreign use, but the plan was apparently never followed.

#### The Basic Stamps

Eight Eastern Roumelian stamps were overprinted with South Bulgarian lions as follows:

*Issue of 1881, Perforated 13½*

SOUTH BULGARIA

Scott No.	10.	5 paras	black and olive
	11.	10 paras	black and green
	12.	20 paras	black and rose
	13.	1 piastre	black and blue
	14.	5 piastres	rose and blue

*Issue of 1884, Perforated 11½*

15.	5 paras	lilac and pale lilac
16.	10 paras	green and pale green
17.	20 paras	rose and pale rose

Stamps of the 1881 issue are known perforated 11½ and also 13½ by 11½ but these were not released for use by the post office. None of these irregular varieties was legitimately overprinted with the South Bulgarian lion save the 20 paras black and rose (Type II lion in blue) and the 1 piastre black and blue (Type II lion in black).

Stamps of the 1884 issue are known perforated 13½, and both perforation varieties of the 5 paras lilac are found with genuine lion overprints. Notice that the 20 para rose of 1884 was not released for issue as an Eastern Roumelian stamp but was overprinted and sold for use only as South Bulgarian postage. Two higher denominations (1 piastre blue and pale blue; 5 piastre brown and pale brown) of the 1884 issue were never legitimately overprinted for South Bulgarian use.

Copies are known of imitation overprints imprinted on counterfeit copies of the basic stamps, a refinement difficult to explain as Eastern Roumelian stamps have never been hard to obtain. Note that these are an unusual situation in which a counterfeit has been imposed upon another one.

The following analysis of the basic stamps as overprinted with the four types of lion overprints may be used for reference. Number assigned refer to no particular catalog listing.

Analysis Of South Bulgaria Lion Overprints

OVERPRINT	TYPE I		TYPE II		TYPE III	TYPE IV
	Blue	Black	Blue	Black	Black only	
Perforated 13½	Items marked X also occur Perf. 11½					
5 pa. blk & olive	20				44	52
10 pa. blk & green	21				45	53
20 pa. blk & rose	22	28	33 X		46	54
1 pi. blk & blue	23	29	34	39 X	47	55
5 pi. rose & blue	24		35	40	48	56
Perforated 11½	Items marked X also occur Perf. 13½					
5 pa. lilac	25 X	30 X	36 X	41 X	49 X	57 X
10 pa. green	26	31	37	42	50	58
20 pa. rose	27	32	38	43	51	59

## The Overprints

There are four types of lion overprints, numbered I, II, III and IV. (See Fig. 3) These may be separated on sight by several simple points of identification, as follows:

Types I and II show a lion without enclosing border.

Type I appears to slouch forward, whereas Type II stands more erect.

In Type I the lion's upper left arm ends in a four-clawed paw; in Type II the paw has three claws.

The crown of both lions is divided into three segments; in Type I the central segment tapers upward toward the cross; it tapers downward toward the head in Type II.

In Type I the lion's tail is bushy; it is thinner and more spearlike in Type II.

In Type I the crown seems not to rest directly on the head; it rests firmly on the head of Type II.

Types III and IV are enclosed in an octagonal border 15mm. wide and 19mm. high.

In Type III the "O" of the double letter I-O forming the first character of the top inscription is round; it is oval in Type IV.

The three claws of the outstretched paw of Type III are all straight and parallel; in Type IV they converge toward a point.

The adjacent sides of the 3rd and 4th letters of the bottom inscription are not parallel in Type III whereas they are parallel in Type IV.

The crown of Type III has no cross; in Type IV there is a low thick flat cross.

The mane of Type III lion is raised from the body; in Type IV it lies flat and is windswept across the lion's neck.

Note that most catalogs describe Type I as having four claws on each leg, which is erroneous. The Type I lion's ankles are so drawn as to simulate a pendant tuft of hair, but only the outstretched left paw has four claws.

The overprints were applied singly by hand, probably in haste. Hence they occur in various positions and rarely are well centered on the stamp. At the same time, they were seldom inverted, applied sideways, or doubled. Counterfeiters have conveniently supplied most of these off-position varieties, although a few genuine errors doubtless exist.

In view of the sequence of events surrounding the manufacture of the four overprints, it is extremely unlikely that there would be legitimate examples of multiple pieces bearing more than one type. The counterfeiter, however, has often let his imagination run riot, and the writer owns several blocks of four stamps each showing a different type of lion, each imprinted in a different position.

The callous counterfeiter has destroyed many excellent genuine copies in his attempt to give them added luster. An example is a fine copy of the rare 5 piastre rose and blue with a genuine lion overprint but with a counterfeit grid and town cancellation. Many fine covers carrying unoverprinted Eastern Roumelia stamps have been spoiled by the application of counterfeit lions. The writer owns two pairs that show one stamp with a genuine overprint while the other has a bogus inverted overprint lion. These could only have been manufactured from pairs only one of which was overprinted, a situation that would make the original pair much more valuable than its contrived counterpart.

*The Genuine Type I Overprint*

In clear impressions there is a small inverted triangular color spot just above the tip of the lion's nose; in blurred copies the spot is smudged but it is still there. In most (but not all) copies there are one or more strong breaks across the lion's tail opposite the left front paw. The central segment of the crown is an inverted V and is empty of ornamentation; there are three small horizontal shading lines in the outer segment. The lion's eye is close to the top of the head and the lion appears to be looking at the triangular dot above

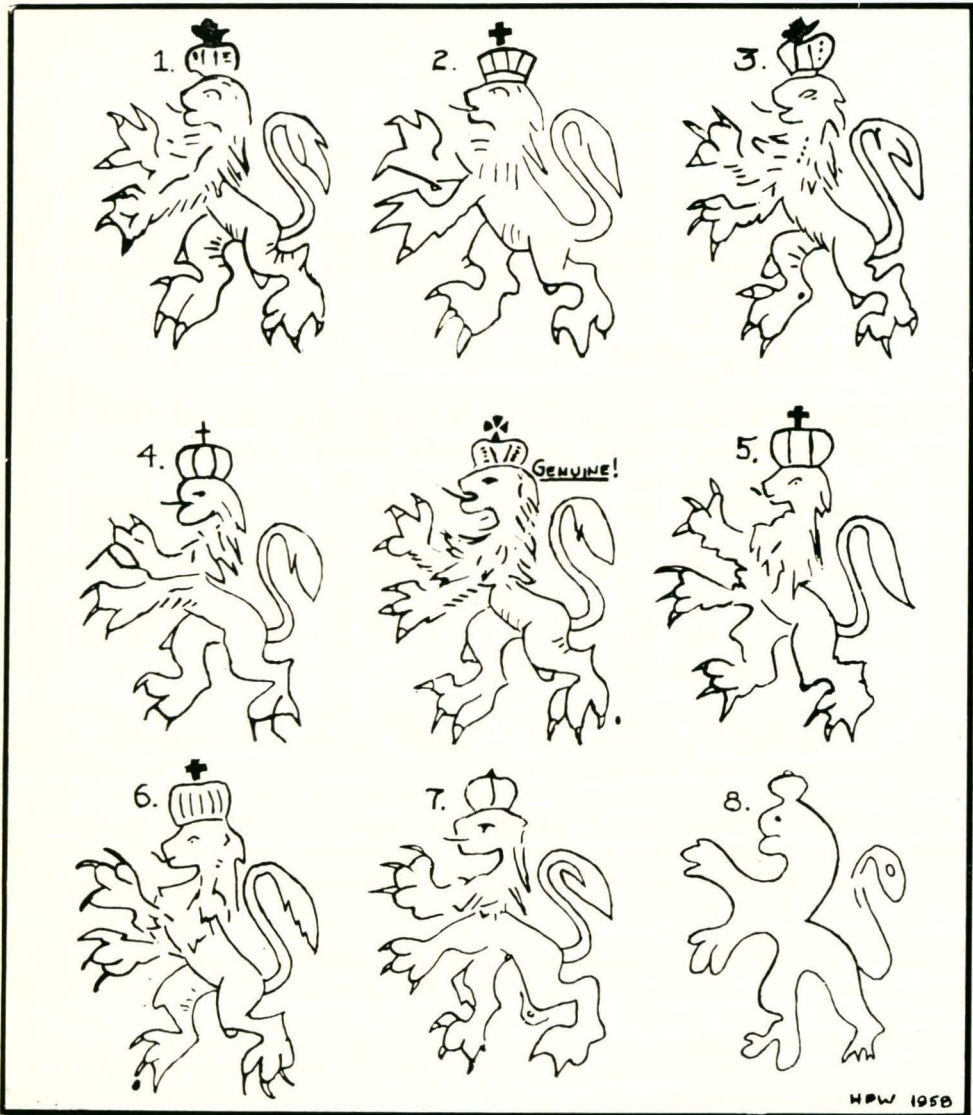


Fig. 6. The Type II lion overprint imitations. It is difficult to see how even the novice would confuse variety 8 with the original.

its nose. The latter is pointed but the nostril is not drawn in. The lower jaw ends at the right in several small vertical lines. The shading on the underbelly is formed by a row of dots. The crown is commonly attached to the head at the back but unattached at the front, and is separated from the top of the lion's head by a row of small dots. The top of the upper toe in the four-clawed paw is a straight line. From the top of the crown to the lower right-hand claw the lion measures 14mm.; it is 10½mm. from the outer edge of the tuft of the tail to the end of left-most claw of the outstretched paw.

The most reliable criteria of the genuine print are the dot above the nose plus the breaks in the tail, together, of course, with conformity to the general design as indicated in Figure 5.

*Imitations of the Type I Overprint*

Variety 1. (The commonest counterfeit.)

The crown is ornamented into three empty oval segments and there are three large square dots between the base of the crown and the top of the head. The outstretched arm is exactly parallel with the shank of the adjacent leg and the two paws of these legs are similarly aligned. The lion's nostril is emphasized, the nose is sharp, and the face is dog-like. The eye is formed by a crescent with the pupil below it whereas in the genuine print the crescent is concave upward. There are four prominent color spots on the lion's left shank.

Variety 2.

The chin retreats so that the face is like that of a woodchuck. The toes of the upper paw are long and the middle one is irregular. The central segment of the crown converges both up and down. The outstretched paw resembles a three-fingered hand with the thumb pointing down.

Variety 3.

Prints are very clear. The paws are neatly drawn with hollow fleshy pads and sharp curving talons. The face resembles that of a collie dog. The top arm of the cross is usually open vertically and the crown is unmarked save for two meridional lines.

Variety 4.

This impression has the same outline as Variety 1 and may be an overinked print save that the eye appears simpler.

Variety 5.

The deformed upper paw has two claws that are small and one that is very tiny and embryonic.

Variety 6.

The lion has a rounded snout and the two lower claws of the left hind leg are set wide apart something like the opposing claws of an ice-tong. The knee of the same leg is a sharp right angle.

Variety 7.

This print is neatly drawn and most impressions are sharp and clear. The upper paw is extended vertically and is bent back nearly to the lion's face as if held in benediction.

Variety 8.

All paws have four claws. The upper paw is nearly vertical, and the two outside claws on the outstretched paw are essentially in a straight line. The nose is sharp and the expression dreamy.

*The Genuine Type II Overprint*

A distinguishing characteristic of the genuine overprint is a distinct hump or thickening of the body outline on the lower part of the lion's back just left of the tail. This bump is unknown on any counterfeits and is invariably present on genuine impressions. The cross is sharply maltese and lies flat on the crown. The ornamentation of the latter is dominated by two lines that start at the top and converge downward to form a normal "V". There are four tiny horizontal shading lines on either side of the central V which is unshaded within. The middle claw of the uppermost paw is bent downward as if sharply broken. The lion's face is jolly but pugnacious, and he looks slightly upward. His upper and lower jaws protrude about the same distance to the left. The upper right wrist is short and terminates in shading lines slanting to the lower left parallel with the left front leg. The middle toe of the lower left leg curves slightly to the right but the claw to its right curves slightly back toward the central toe. Shading in the lower right foot is by tiny vertical lines. The shading lines under the lion's left front arm slant downward to the right. In-

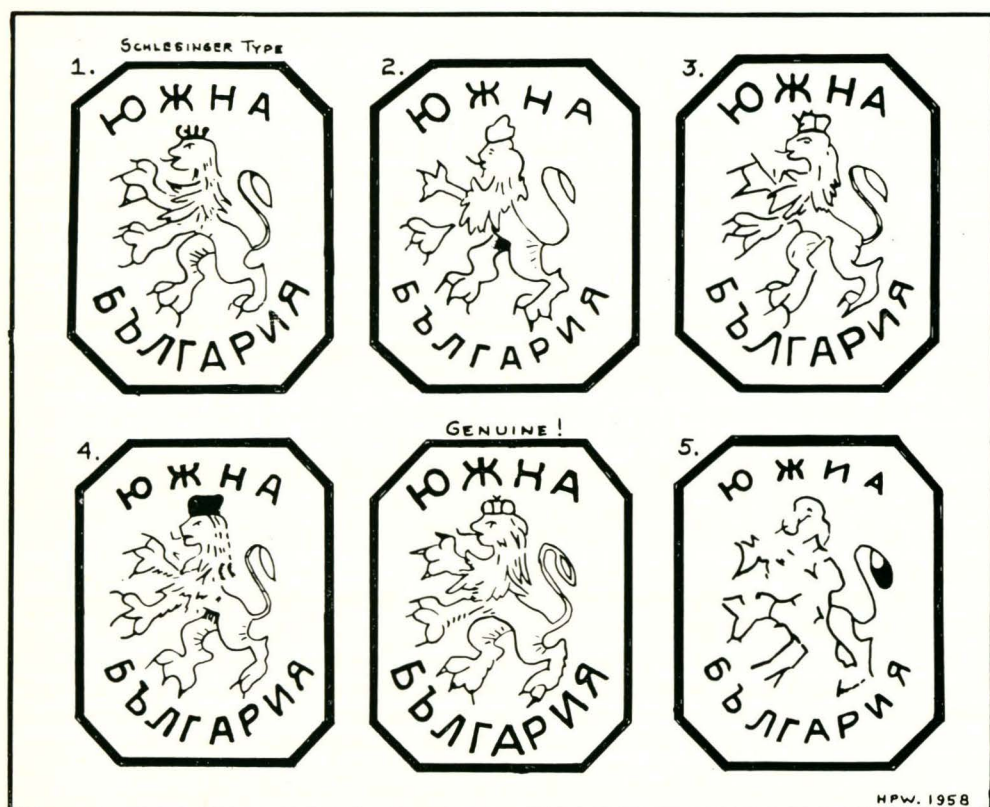


Fig. 7. The Type III lion overprint (genuine in lower center) and some of its more common counterfeits. Note the "Schlesinger Type" at upper left.

variably there is a small spot of color just to the right of the lower foot as shown in the illustrations. (See Fig. 6)

In general the impressions are fairly clear and almost all genuine copies are authenticated by one of the more reliable European experts. The hump on the lion's back and the color spot back of his left foot are the simplest criteria of authenticity.

#### *Imitations of the Type II Overprint*

##### Variety 1. (The Schlesinger type)

This is by far the most prevalent counterfeit being more common than all of the other types (including the genuine) together. It is particularly interesting when it carries the imprint, J. SCHL. on the back. Its most distinctive identification is the curious cross which resembles a cocked hat with the left brim high and the right one nearly touching the crown. The central lines in the crown are vertical and do not converge. The space at the right of the crown contains two dots; the left space is always blurred. The lower right foot is poorly shaded with irregular dots. The impression is usually clear and the outline and general configuration of the lion are much like the original.

##### Variety 2.

The crown is ornamented by three evenly spaced lines. The lion looks sad and the cross resembles a three-leaved clover. The profile of the face is sharp and slants to the lower right from the nose. The knee-cap on the lower right leg is often open at the end.

## Variety 3.

The crown resembles a cocked hat but is reversed from that of the Schlesinger type, the right brim being high, the left brim slightly lower. There is always a color spot in the heel of the lower right foot. There is a right angle at the upper part of the "fist" of the lion's left forearm.

## Variety 4.

The crown is trisected by two meridional lines and the cross is very slender being formed by two single strokes neatly crossed. The face is poorly drawn. The claws are single lines and the central claw on the lowermost foot is bent sharply to the right as if broken at the middle.

## Variety 5.

The crown is also trisected by two lines that are straight and heavier than in Variety 4. The cross is not maltese and is well centered. The tuft of the tail is long and its tip is sharp and pointed slightly to the right. The lion's left front paw tapers to his arm without making a "fist."

## Variety 6.

The crown is ornamented by 5 closely spaced curving lines, and the cross is not maltese. The claws are all long and each curves counter-clockwise. The tuft of the tail is slender and long but does not swerve to the right at the end as in Variety 5.

## Variety 7.

This impression is shorter and more squat than the others. The crown has only a single thick central line. The forepaw on the lion's left arm tapers into his arm much as in Variety 5. The face is poorly drawn and the impression is poor.

## Variety 8.

This crudely drawn figure looks like a child's impression of a tiptoeing bear.

This list does not include all observed false overprints of the Type II lion. There are at least two other varieties found only on the 5 piastre stamp. One of these has a very heavy mane something like Variety 3 but lacks the dot in the heel; the other has a very large left paw with long toes; its mane is also very bushy. The writer has identified 16 separate imitations of Type II.

*The Genuine Type III Overprint*

Genuine copies of the Type III lion may be distinguished by several criteria. The back claw of the lion's right leg slopes obliquely to the right, pointing at the angle between the two limbs of the letter immediately left of the center "A" in the lower inscription. If extended so that they would join, this claw and the vertical limb of the letter form part of the arc of a circle, convex toward the right. A similar arc, convex toward the left is formed by the back outline of the lion's right leg and the diagonal of the "N"-like letter. The lion's face is pointed and his lower jaw recedes badly. His tongue aims along the line of the top toe of his right paw, and the crown is separated into three equal openings by two vertical lines. All three claws of the outstretched paw are straight and parallel, pointing in a direction parallel with the edge of the first letter of the lower inscription. In most copies, the vertical lines of the "H" of the upper inscription curve slightly in toward the central bar. The upper bend of the tail is a segment of the end of an oval, not an arc of a circle. The cross consists of two short strokes in a wide-open "V," the general effect of the cross and crown looking like an ice-bag on the lion's head.

The receding lower jaw and the three parallel straight claws on the right paw generally serve to identify this lion. (See Fig. 7.)

*Imitations of the Type III Overprint*

## Variety 1. (The Schlesinger type)

This by far is the commonest counterfeit and is easily recognized by the crown which has no upper outline; the left margin of the crown forms a hook curving upward that is detached from the right-hand portion of the crown. The back claw of the lion's right paw is slightly curved to the left, and points between the 3rd and 4th letters from the left end of the lower inscription. The claws on the outstretched paw are not quite straight or parallel, the bottom claw curving slightly upward. The upper stroke of the "N"-like character is weak, almost pointed.

## Variety 2.

This is a poor imitation, characterized by small letters in the lower inscription. All paws are poorly drawn, the top two being almost separated from the body.

## Variety 3.

This is also a common counterfeit characterized by an open crown and by an angularly bent middle claw in the left front paw. All claws point in different directions.

## Variety 4.

Also a common variety. It is identified by the claws of the outstretched paw which are scraggly and erratically pointed. The crown is squarish, and there are two heavy shading marks like parentheses in the lion's mane left of the bend in the lion's tail. The bottom toe points at the top of the third letter of the lower inscription.

## Variety 5.

Included only to indicate how poorly some counterfeits are made. The lion is barely outlined; limbs and paws are sketchy lines, the face is hardly suggested, and the ensemble does not at all resemble what it is intended to show. Yet a blurred copy, not closely examined, might confuse the novice.

There are many other fakes of this type. Some of these occur on the overprinted issue of 1881 where the dark colors of the stamps make it difficult to categorize varieties. Note, of course, that blue prints of either the Type III or Type IV lions are *ipso facto* bogus.

*The Genuine Type IV Overprint*

This is the most difficult overprint to categorize; it is also the least common, and genuine copies are usually over- or under-inked. Four critical areas require study: (1) the "O" of the letter I-O and the letter next to its right; (2) the markings on the lion's left flank; (3) the claws of the outstretched paw; and (4) the shading lines of the lion's mane at the level of his throat.

The letter "O" is not symmetrically oval but is slightly canted. If a line is drawn so as to divide the oval into a right and left half, it will be seen that the left half is drawn in the same plane as the adjacent "I," whereas the right half of the oval is drawn along a more truly vertical plane. The effect is to skew the upper right "corner" of the oval. With a hundred mixed stamps spread out on a desk, genuine and false, one can readily spot the genuine copies by this irregularity. Also, the left and right halves of the middle letter of the top inscription are not symmetrical. There is more of a crevice or recess where the two arms meet on the left side than on the right. Just to the left of the point of attachment of the tail, there are a few shading lines on the lion's left flank. On genuine copies the topmost of these markings is a short line (not a dot) that is nearly horizontal. Finally, counting the outer lines, from the upper part of the lion's throat behind his chin, there are six shading lines to the back of his neck, but only five such lines in a direction lowered slightly at the right. The claws on the outstretched paw all converge toward a point located just beyond the middle claw; but this characteristic is less easy to verify than those noted above. The two back claws on the lion's right foot are straight and vertical.

Note that most counterfeit Type IV overprints on the 5 paras lilac were imprinted on copies perforated 11½. All overprints seen by the writer on the 5 paras lilac perforated 13½

turned out to be genuine. *Blue* impressions are not. (See Fig. 8.)

#### *Imitations of the Type IV Overprint*

Variety 1. (The Schlesinger type)

The middle claw of the top paw is bent down; there are only 5 poorly drawn shading lines at the level of the lion's throat (instead of six); the shading lines on the lion's flank are squarish dots; the "O" is symmetrical; the left claw on the lion's left leg flares out somewhat; the middle character of the top inscription is symmetrical. In short, the impression looks quite like the genuine variety save for specific identifying points listed here.

Variety 2.

This variety is easily identified by the difference in height between the letter "A" (bottom center) and the letter next left, above which the flat top of the "A" rises at least 0.5mm. All 3 claws on the right leg look as if the lion was going to clench its fist. The eye slopes down to the left.

Variety 3.

This is a close copy of Variety 1 (the Schlesinger type), and differs chiefly in the shape of the middle character in the top inscription. When correctly made this character consists of two quarter circles back to back with a straight line bisecting them. In Variety 3, the character is formed by a central cross with only slightly curving vertical lines at right and left.

Variety 4

Again the distinguishing criterion is in the central character of the top inscription. This is drawn as an "H" to which added at the left a short extension bar plus an angular vertical line. Also, the middle toe of the lion's right leg is mis-shapen; indeed the whole paw is incomplete. The crown is squarish.

Variety 5.

The distinguishing feature of this variety is the under surface of the outstretched arm which is essentially a straight line from the end of the claw to the lion's body. The two lower legs are partially incomplete.

#### **Imitation Overprints**

Almost before the small issue of genuine stamps became exhausted at the post office and devalued by the authorities, large quantities of mint sheets began to appear in the European philatelic market. It is likely that these were supplied with the knowledge and perhaps with the cooperation of higher postal officials. Apparently a new set of hand-stamps was prepared—possibly even by the original engraver, Czaka—and the resulting mint stamps were released under such conditions that the chief outlet, a stamp dealer named J. Schlesinger, was able to insist that they were genuine. These stamps have been later called "Schlesinger Types."

The "Schlesinger" overprint was a very early impression, made perhaps in late 1885. Schlesinger claimed that he obtained his copies directly from postal officials and that they must be genuine on this account. Almost all contemporary experts—Köhler, Thier, Kosack, Glasewald and Ruhland—regarded the Schlesinger types as counterfeit, and this view is confirmed today by the number of copies on the market, because not that many original stamps were overprinted. Copies of the Schlesinger type bearing his imprint "J. SCHL." on the back have interest today because of the controversy but they must be regarded as wholly false. In this connection, the writer has not seen Schlesinger's mark on any copy of these stamps that he would classify as genuine; hence this mark is an indication of a counterfeit overprint.<sup>4</sup>

4. Very nearly the same can be said for stamps bearing the imprint of a dealer named Hermann, whose sign is an Old English "H". It is nearly always found on stamps that are not genuine although on occasion it marks a good copy. The chances are at least 2 and perhaps 5 to 1 that a copy marked with this sign is *not* genuine.

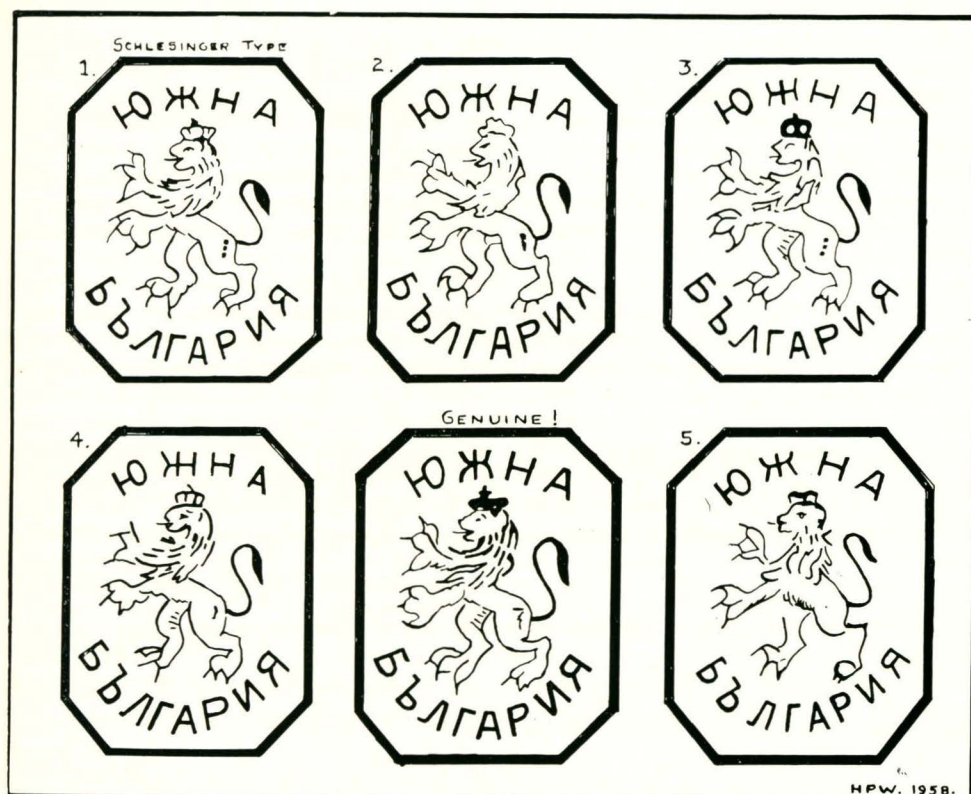


Fig. 8. The Type IV lion overprint (genuine in lower center) and a few of its common counterfeits. Note the common "Schlesinger Type" at upper left.

Many other imitations were produced besides the Schlesinger types. The writer has observed eight or ten for each of the four basic types and his list is by no means exhaustive; it is not surprising that most counterfeiters copied the Schlesinger type instead of the genuine variety. In particular, it should be noted that the counterfeit varieties listed in this article by no means are all of those known. Those illustrated here merely indicate the variety of impressions with which the genuine overprint must be compared.

Except for a few types of counterfeit overprints that are crudely and incorrectly drawn (e. g. Type II variety 8 in Fig. 6), most of the fraudulent lions were skillfully prepared and are difficult to detect unless one is thoroughly aware of the critical characters of the genuine impression. Even then not every copy can always be certainly categorized. Perhaps the most important generalization regarding false copies is that none of the counterfeiters seems to have been aware of the distinctive criteria here described for the identification of the genuine copies.

So far as is known there was only one die for each of the four overprints, and anything that varies from this genuine impression must be fraudulent. Differences in the angle of strike, in the amount of ink carried by the handstamp, and in the care with which it was impressed upon the paper, all provide minor irregularities in the resulting overprint and these create a certain tolerance that may be exercised in its identification. It is next to impossible to describe the limits of this tolerance on paper and it can be learned only by familiarity with the genuine stamps themselves.

Of the genuine copies examined by the writer, most carried an authentication mark on the reverse side. Thus if a stamp has reached the present period unsigned, the chances

are great that it is not genuine. Yet the presence of some expert's mark is no guarantee of authenticity as (a) even the experts were not infallible and (b) their signatures can be counterfeited. On the other hand, stamps signed by Richter, Thier, Köhler and Kosack were found to be genuine at least 80% of the time.

The more scrupulous dealers have taken pains to designate counterfeit copies on the reverse side with the words FALSCH, AUFDRUCK FALSCH, FALSE, FALSALINO, or with a script letter "F" (often written in pencil); but it is the writer's cynical observation that these words never appear on the back of the more expensive items.

There is no doubt that the large number of counterfeit copies in circulation seriously compromises the popularity of South Bulgaria stamps. Yet if all imitation overprints should be destroyed, the remaining number of genuine copies would probably not be enough to permit 100 collectors to own a complete set of all 48 impressions issued. Perhaps here is a case where the counterfeiter has made possible for most collectors the possession of a good facsimile of a scarce stamp—providing, of course, that the purchaser can obtain his imitation copy at a substantial mark-down from the price of the genuine article, and providing he knows full well that he is buying an imitation.

#### References

In addition to various standard catalogs<sup>5</sup> including "Kohl's Handbook", the writer has made use of two comprehensive Bulgarian specialized catalogs, both of which give additional information not elsewhere contained. These are:

- St. Drenkov, Krum, COOP(erative) Catalog of Bulgarian Stamps*; Bulgarian Coop. Assoc. "Postage Stamps," Sofia, 1947, 201 pp.  
*Tsonevski, T.K., Bulgarian Philatelic Encyclopedia*; "Kultura" Printing-house, Sofia, 1948, 192 pp.

The most inclusive reference is an article in German by Paul Orht, "Die Lowen-Aufdrucke von Sudbulgarien," published in 1907 in *Germania-Berichte*, Vol. 4, p. 152-3, 176, 238-41, and Vol. 5, p. 283-5. Much the same material appears in French under the title "Les Timbres de la Bulgarie du Sud," by Georges Brunei, published as a separate leaflet by *Publications Modernes*, Paris, 1917. There is a short English article by B. W. H. Poole, "Stamps of South Bulgaria," in the Oct. 21, 1940 issue of "*Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News*."

Other short notes are:

- Dresdener Philatelist*, 1885, pages 121, 135  
 1886, page 30  
 1887, pages 11, 45, 144-5, 147  
*Deutsche Briefmarken-Zeitung*, 1894, page 151  
 1898, page 176  
*Grazer Briefmarken-Zeitung*, 1906, page 12  
*Mitteldeutschen Philatel-Zeitung*, 1895, pages 28-9  
 1907, p. 25  
*Vereinigten Erdball-Merkur*, vol. 7, no. 51  
 vol. 44.

5. Note that of the six standard catalogs commonly used for reference by collectors, only ZUMSTEIN shows illustrations clearly drawn from genuine impressions of all four lion types.

## PHILATELIC LITERATURE

Over the years, THE COLLECTORS CLUB has published numerous Handbooks relating to almost every field of philately. Some have been sold out long ago, now only being obtainable at an auction sale at prices far above their original selling price.

See Page XV for the recently published books.