

PLATING MOLS STAMPS

by B.P. HUDSON

Part 11: 10 francs

Introduction

The 10 francs is the highest of the ten Mols values. Although a large sum in present day terms - when it was introduced, it was one hundred times the rate for an internal postcard - it is not an uncommon stamp. As well as on mail it was used frequently on telegraph forms (where it would normally be cancelled by an octagonal telegraphic canceller) and on gun permits which cost 20 francs, and on which a pair of 10 francs would be cancelled by a manuscript signature. Although complete permits are now a valuable rarity, pen cancelled stamps are far from scarce.

As with the 5 francs, large multiples of the 10fr are known which were genuinely postally used, typically for sending high value registered packets from the Congo to Belgium.

The design of the 10 francs was based on a photograph published in 1897 in a book entitled "L'État Indépendant du Congo à L'Exposition Bruxelles-Tervueren". The photograph showed the steamboat "Baron Dhanis" at anchor on the river Lualaba in Upper Congo, a paddleboat of the type which in those days provided river transport. In the design of the stamp, issued the following year with the 3½fr, the boat has raised its anchor and is seen steaming proudly down the river.

Main issues

In the following table the number on the left is the Catalogue Officiel number. The right-hand column shows the number printed, excluding those that were subsequently overprinted or surcharged, as listed by General Du Four in 'Cinquante Ans D'Histoire Postale', and drawn from official and other sources. But as the General warns, these numbers have to be treated with caution and in many cases, as has now been confirmed by study of Waterlow's file copy sheets, understate the true figure.

Belgian Congo

29	May. 1898	10fr green	État Indépendant	58,000
39B	Jan. 1909	10fr green	Congo Belge Brussels	175
39L	Jan. 1909	10fr green	Congo Belge local	13,525



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49	Jan. 1909	10fr green	Congo Belge typo	19,300
49P	Mar. 1909	10fr green	Princes unoverprinted	100
49PB	Mar. 1909	10fr green	Princes Brussels	250
49PT	Mar. 1909	10fr green	Princes typo	4,650
63	Jan. 1910	10fr green	Bilingual	85,000
80	May 1918	10fr+10fr green	Red Cross	10,000
94	July 1921	10fr green	Recuperation overprint (on 63)	56,000

Ruanda Urundi

44	May 1918	10fr+10fr green	A.O. on Red Cross	7,500
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Plate combinations

1898	I1+A1	Original frame and centre plates
	I2+A1	Printers' name added in selvedge
1910	II+A1	New frame plate
	II+A2	Centres retouched
1918	III+B	New frame and centre plates

There has been only one change from the nomenclature first introduced by Du Four. He described frame plates I1 and I2 as I, not taking account of the addition of the printers' name in the selvedge.

Identifying the plate combinations

1898. Princes printings can be recognised by the brownish-black rather than grey-black shade of the centres, and by the darker green shade of the frames. In addition, Princes stamps are always p14, whereas virtually all non-Princes 10fr's with typo overprint are p12. Examples of ordinary typo p14 are known, but they are very rare. Another distinguishing feature is that the 1898 stamps are strictly p14½ while Princes are exactly p14.

1910. Traditionally 1910 stamps have been distinguished between those on yellowish paper and those on bluish paper. In my view this is a misleading distinction: while a few stamps with bluish paper are found towards the end of the later printings, the great majority of the stamps are on plain paper which is neither bluish nor yellowish. A more useful distinction lies in the shade of the frames, which are yellow-green in early and blue-green in later printings.

Yellow-green stamps are always II+A1; blue-green stamps are usually, but not always, II+A2. The retouching which created A2 is apparent in only about half a dozen positions in the sheet; in other positions, the two states of centre plate A cannot be distinguished.



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Varieties

The following sections list the varieties of plate combination, shade, overprint and perforation known for each issue of the 10 francs. The list covers 'normal' stamps only; errors and curiosities such as inverted overprints and imperforations between pairs are excluded.

The p12 issues of the 1898 stamp, printed from 1905 onwards, together with the Princes and 1910 issues, were printed on paper watermarked in large outline letters "JAS WRIGLEY & SON Ld - 219". Many collectors distinguish between stamps which show a portion of this watermark, which appears twice in each sheet, and those which do not. The listing below does not make this distinction.

Shades of stamps are given only where shade varieties are considered to be significant, and are abbreviated thus:

bl=blue g=green y=yellow

The middle column indicates the overprint type. For handstamped Congo Belge overprints, B = Brussels, L = Local.

For details of the perforation varieties, see page 13 of part 1. Each perforation variety is followed by a two-letter code in brackets. This code gives my judgement of the relative scarcity of the variety in question. The first letter indicates the scarcity of unused copies of the stamp, the second the scarcity of postally used copies. Stamps with forged cancels are not taken into account in arriving at the scarcity factor for used stamps. The codes are as follows:

- A: Very common
- B: Common
- C: Fairly uncommon
- D: Scarce
- E: Rare
- X: Probably unknown

1898

I1+A1	p14(CA), p11x14(EF), p12x14(EF), p14x12(EF)
I2+A1	p12(DB)
I2+A1 Princes	p14(EX)

The statement that the stamps with compound perforation are I1+A1 rather than I2+A1 is plausible but cannot be confirmed. None of the examples in Ray Keach's



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or in my possession show portions of a watermark.

1909 Congo Belge handstamp

I1+A1	B1	p14(EE)
I1+A1	B2	p14(DE)
I1+A1	B5	p14(DE)
I1+A1	B6	p14(DE)
I1+A1	L1	p14(EE)
I1+A1	L3	p14(EE)
I1+A1	L4	p14(DD)
I1+A1	L5	p14(DD)
I2+A1	L1	p12(CB)
I2+A1	L2	p12(DC)
I2+A1	L3	p12(ED)
I2+A1	L4	p12(DC)
I2+A1	L5	p12(DC)
I2+A1	L6	p12(ED)
I2+A1	L7	p12(ED)
I2+A1 Princes	B2	p14(EX)

Du Four also reports B3, L2 and L6 (p14) and L8 (p12), but these cannot be confirmed by Ray Keach or myself. Forged overprints are common.

1909 Congo Belge typo

I1+A1	p14(EX)
I2+A1	p12(CA)
I2+A1 Princes	p14(DC)

1910 bilingual

II+A1 y-gr	p14(BB)
II+A1 bl-gr	p14(DE)
II+A2 bl-gr	p14(CE)

1918 Red Cross

III+B	p14(CD)
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1921 Recuperation

I2+A1	L1	p12(EX)
I2+A1	Typo	p12(EX)
II+A1 y-gr		p14(BB)
II+A1 bl-gr		p14(CC)
II+A2 bl-gr		p14(BA)

1918 Red Cross AO

III+B	p14(CD)
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This gives a total of 35 varieties of the 10fr.

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GUIDES TO POSITIONING

The following pages assume that the reader has a complete sheet of the plate combination he wishes to reconstruct, and will make his own plating notes as he studies individual positions. The guides do not list all the constant plate varieties, but describe the more important ones, particularly the 'generic' varieties which appear in more than one position in the sheet. They also describe the more difficult positions in each sheet where the plater is most likely to experience problems.

I1+A1 and I2+A1

There are few centre plate varieties on these plate combinations. On the other hand frame plate I is easy to position. When Waterlow Bros and Layton impressed the plate - with the 3½fr, their first assignment for the Belgian authorities - they cannot have been satisfied with the result, because almost all positions were retouched by hand to strengthen the shading in various parts of the design.

The plater should start by looking at the small dark triangle in the upper left corner of the stamps. Only in positions 1,2,4,5,10 and 25 was this triangle left unretouched. In these positions the upper part of the triangle shows irregular white blotches. Everywhere else it was crudely retouched with (usually) 6 or more short, heavy lines. In 13-24,28-30,39,40,44,45,47,48 and 50 these lines are horizontal. In 3,6-9,11,12,27,37,41-43,46 and 49 they are nearly horizontal, sloping upwards from left to right. In 26,31-34 and 36 they are more steeply diagonal, again sloping upwards from left to right. In 38 they slope the other way, while 35 has a criss-cross of near-horizontal and near-vertical lines. The number of lines and their placing relative to one another vary throughout the sheet. In position 15 (but only this position) the top right triangle is also retouched.

In many positions there is some strengthening of one or more of the upper horizontal framelines, especially at the left or right corners. In some positions the printers were also dissatisfied with the bottom shading. The double line below the left 10 was retouched into a single thick line in 39,44-47 and 49. The diagonal shading immediately above the bottom frameline was retouched, and extends in places into the bottom margin, under the right corner in 24,26,33 and 38, and under both corners in 20,28,29 and 36. Through lack of retouching there is a thick white line under the left 10 in 1 (Balasse V4), and a smaller white mark in the same place in 25.

Several positions were re-entered as well as retouched. In 2,18,41 and 43 there is doubling in the bottom right corner, in or around the 10. In 41 (Balasse V6) the bottom left corner is also retouched. In 34 the upper right lettering is doubled (Balasse V4).

The only centre plate variety of note is the 'white sea' variety in 10 and 35 (Balasse V1). In these positions the little vertical squiggle 2mm below the stern of the boat is almost invisible, and the horizontal lines under the middle of the boat are faint. During the 1910 issue these lines were retouched to form centre plate A2 - see below.