

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS

by B.P. HUDSON

### Part 4: 15 centimes

#### Introduction

The 15 centimes is the third lowest of the ten Mols values, and is frequently found on mail, particularly postcards. It was the rate for an internal postcard between 1886 and 1889 and between 1921 and 1924; for an overseas postcard between 1886 and 1910; for an internal letter under 15 grams between 1896 and 1921; and for a letter to Belgium under 20 grams between 1920 and 1921.

The 15c was not issued in 1894 with the first five Mols values, but two years later in 1896. Unlike those five values, therefore, its design was not based on one of the Mols and Van Engelen paintings exhibited in Anvers in 1894. Instead it was based on a photograph which appeared in the magazine 'La Belgique Coloniale' in May 1896, showing a native climbing a palm tree to harvest its fruits, with a white settler standing at the foot of the tree.

#### 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. This is particularly true of the figures given for the unoverprinted 1910 and 1915 issues which are undoubtedly far too low.

#### Belgian Congo

20	Nov. 1896	15c ochre	État Indépendant	944,000
32B	Jan. 1909	15c ochre	Congo Belge Brussels	2,000
32L	Jan. 1909	15c ochre	Congo Belge local	114,100
42	Jan. 1909	15c ochre	Congo Belge typo	74,900
42P	Mar. 1909	15c ochre	Princes unoverprinted	100
42PB	Mar. 1909	15c ochre	Princes Brussels	250



PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

42PT	Mar. 1909	15c ochre	Princes typo	4,650
52	June 1909	15c ochre	Unilingual	100,000
56	Jan. 1910	15c ochre	Bilingual	305,000
66	Nov. 1915	15c green	Bilingual	190,000
74	May 1918	15c+20c green	Red Cross	200,000
88	July 1921	25c/15c ochre	Recuperation surcharge (on 56)	318,650

Ruanda Urundi

11	July 1916	15c green	Ruanda Tombeur (on 66)	2,750
18	July 1916	15c green	Urundi Tombeur (on 66)	2,750
30	Nov. 1916	15c green	Est Africain (on 66)	304,500
38	May 1918	15c+20c green	A.O. on Red Cross	200,000

Plate combinations

1896	I+A1a	Original frame and centre plates
	I+A1b	Centre plate corroded
	I+A2	Centres re-entered
	I+A3	Centres partly re-entered
1909	II+A3	New frame plate
1910	III1+A4	New frame plate; centres re-entered
	III1+A5	Centres re-entered
	III1+A6	Centres re-entered
	III1+A7	Centres re-entered
	III1+A8	Centres re-entered
	III1+A9	Centres re-entered
	III2+B1	Frames retouched; new centre plate
	III2+B2	Centres re-entered
	III3+B2	Frames re-entered
	III3+B3	Centres re-entered
1915	III4+B3	Frames re-entered
	III4+B4	Centres partly re-entered
	III5+B4	Hole drilled between 41 and 42
	III6+C1	Frames retouched; new centre plate
	IV1+C1	New frame plate
	IV2+C1	Frame lay marks added
	IV3+C1	Frames partly re-entered
	V+C1	New frame plate



## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

V+C2	Centres re-entered
Booklets (1)	Frame and centre plates for booklet panes
Booklets (2)	Frames retouched

Of all the Mols values, the 15c shows the most numerous plate combinations, some discovered only recently, and there have been many changes from the nomenclature first introduced by Du Four:

(1) Du Four did not recognise the re-entry which created centre plate A3 (see Bulletin 67), nor those which created A5, A8 and A9 (Bulletins 32, 37, 42 and 68). The combinations now known as III1+A5 to III1+A9 were described by him as III1+A4 and III1+A5.

(2) He was not aware of the relatively scarce combinations III2+B2 (see Bulletin 42), III3+B3 (Bulletin 37) and III4+B3 (Bulletins 72 and 73).

(3) The drilling of the hole in frame plate III4, which turned it into III5, was not recognised by him as creating a new state of the plate. It is now recognised as such because it was a deliberate modification of the plate (see Bulletin 73). III6+C1 was therefore described by Du Four as III5+C.

(4) Bulletin 67 reported the discovery of EAA stamps from frame plate IV without any lay marks. The plate from which these stamps came was therefore labelled IV1, and what previously were known as IV1 and IV2 became IV2 and IV3 respectively.

(5) Du Four described centre plate C2 as a new centre plate D; Bulletin 29 reported the discovery that it was a re-entered form of centre plate C.

### Identifying the plate combinations

1896. In I+A1a the centres of the stamps are clear, especially in the earlier printings, and the frames vary from yellow-ochre to ochre to brown-ochre. Most mint stamps from the 1896 issue without overprint come from this combination.

In I+A1b the centres are corroded with scattered clouds of black spots. In most positions the corrosion is heavy but there is relatively little on nos 1, 4-6, 11, 12, 21, 31, 39 and 50. I+A1b can also be recognised by the colour of the frames



#### PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

which are a distinctive orange shade of ochre which is not found in the other combinations of the 1896 stamp.

I+A2 is less common than I+A1 without the Congo Belge overprint. The centre plate re-entry which made it removed most of the corrosion dots of I+A1b and produced doubling of the roof of the hut in about half of the fifty positions in the sheet. I+A2 can be identified by this doubling where it occurs, and in all positions by the pale yellow shade of the frames, which is more yellow than the most yellow-ochre of the shades of I+A1a.

I+A3, which is found both with and without the Congo Belge overprint, is hard to distinguish from I+A2. It has the same yellow shade of the frames, and in most positions of the centre plate there are no visible differences in terms of doubling marks etc. My article in Bulletin 67 described sixteen positions where centre plate differences can be detected. Most of these are rather inconspicuous; the most visible, which led to the discovery of this plate combination, is an oblong black rolling mark made by the transfer roller which appears above the left end of the hut in positions 2 and 12 of I+A3. Clearly, A3 cannot be distinguished from A2 without positioning the stamp.

Princes printings, which are always I+A3, can be recognised by the brighter shade of the frames and by the centres which are brownish-black. Princes typo stamps can also be recognised by constant varieties in the typo overprint - see page 10 of part 1.

1910. A book could be written about this difficult (and therefore interesting) stamp which went through no less than ten different plate combinations, several of them uncommon and only discovered in recent years. Unfortunately many of them can be identified in single copies only by positioning the stamp, and even then identification can sometimes be difficult. Where a complete sheet is available, it can be allocated to the correct combination by means of Ray Keach's guide in Bulletin 68.

Stamps from III1+A4 show little doubling but in most positions have some black corrosion dots round the edges of the vignette. The early printings can be distinguished easily enough by the characteristic deep yellow frames and deep black centres, quite unlike any subsequent plate combinations. The later printings of III1+A4 are ochre-yellow with more or less yellow in them, and the centres are brownish or grey-black.

Similar shades are found in III1+A4 to III1+A9, which were produced by successive re-entries of the centre plate. All show doubling of the hut, the standing figure or the sitting natives in some or many positions. The differences between A4 and A5 are generally rather slight. In many positions of A6, which have characteristic pale yellow frames, there are fine corrosion dots at the left and right ends of the horizontal sky lines; in several positions there are little clusters of short near-vertical black lines under the climbing native. This latter feature is also found, though less clearly, in A7, where the frames tend to be a 'biscuit' shade. In A8 and A9, which in many positions are similar to one another, there is generally more doubling and the centre plate presents a more worn and corroded impression, with the heaviest corrosion along the bottom of the vignette. Stamps from A9 are a characteristic brownish shade of ochre, which is often the easiest way of distinguishing them from A8.

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

With III2+B1 a new centre plate was introduced and can be recognised easily by its lack of blemishes - it is far clearer than any of the re-entered states of plate A. In addition the frame plate had been getting worn, particularly in the shading in the top right corner, and for III2 was retouched here in a few positions. The frames are still ochre or brownish yellow and the centres are brownish black.

B1 was re-entered to make B2, but whether this was a complete or partial re-entry is hard to say, because in many positions, particularly in the right half of the sheet, differences are difficult to detect. In the left half differences can usually be seen in the doubling of the roof lines of the hut, or in the curly shading lines at the bottom right of the vignette which are sometimes doubled in B2 but not in B1. Stamps from III2+B2 are the same shade as III2+B1.

III3+B2 can be identified quite easily. The centres are still clearer and less doubled than the various versions of centre plate A, though coarser than III2+B1 and III2+B2. The wear in the top right corner of the frames has disappeared, though some traces of the retouching are still visible, and the shading here is now strong and continuous. III3+B2 can also be recognised by the yellow-orange shade of the frames, quite different from the shades associated with previous combinations.

Finally a few stamps have been found with III3+B3, ie with the re-entered centres previously associated only with the first printing of the 1915 issue. They have the same shade and frame plate features as III3+B2, but the centres show additional doubling, particularly of the horizontal sky lines.

1915. The 1915 stamp went through nearly as many different plate combinations as the 1910 stamp, but fortunately they are much easier to tell apart.

The first thing to look for is the third palm frond from the left in the big tree. If it has no central spine ('palmier coupé' in the Officiel catalogue), the centre plate was made with the unretouched die and the plate combination is therefore III4+B3, III4+B4 or III5+B4. In all probability, it is one of the latter two combinations; very few examples of III4+B3 have been found, so far only from positions 10 and 45, so it is not known how many positions of the sheet were re-entered when B3 became B4. The two centre plates are differentiated by comparing doubling marks in the settler, ground lines and sky lines with a reference sheet.

The only difference between III4 and III5 is the hole drilled near the bottom margin between positions 41 and 42 to stop the spreading of the crack known as Balasse V10. Obviously, III4 and III5 can be differentiated only in these two positions.

If the third palm frond has a central spine, the next step is to look at the curved line in the 'stool' of the G in BELGE. If it is a strong, unbroken line the plate combination is III6+C1; if it is faint and broken - the result of a damaged transfer roller - the stamp comes from a later frame plate, ie IV, V or a booklet.

If the stool of the G is broken, one then looks for tiny green circles engraved in the left and right margins of the stamp, just outside the frames and about 1mm

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

from the top on each side. If these circles are present the frame plate is V; otherwise it is IV or a booklet stamp.

If the frame plate is V, V+C1 and V+C2 can be distinguished by shade. V+C1 are blue-green, much the same shade as IV+C1 and first printing booklet stamps, while V+C2 are a distinctive dark yellow-green shade which is not found with any other plate combination.

IV+C1 and booklet stamps from the first printing are hard to tell apart. The former tend to have a more bluish shade of the frames and fuzzier centres - the first booklet centres tend to be hard and clear - but this is not always a reliable guide. Another indication is that if there is a faint vertical guideline by the outer right frame, the stamp is likely to be IV+C1; if there is a horizontal guideline close to the outer bottom frame, it is likely to be from the booklets. However the only certain method of identification is by positioning the stamp.

IV1+C1 was turned into IV2+C1 by the addition of frame plate lay marks in the form of short horizontal lines between 12,13,22 and 23 and between 18,19,28 and 29, and large dots between 14 and 24 and between 17 and 27. The two combinations can therefore be distinguished only in these positions where the lay marks are visibly either absent or present. IV1+C1 has so far been found mainly with the EAA overprint; only one unoverprinted example has been recognised.

IV3+C1, a scarce combination, was formed by the re-entry of the five positions in the fifth column, ie 5,15,25,35 and 45, and shows as pronounced doubling of the top right corners of the frames. Stamps from IV3+C1 appear to be a brighter blue-green shade than those from IV2+C1, but otherwise IV2 and IV3 cannot be told apart in the positions that were not re-entered.

As with the other low values, there were three printings of the booklet stamps, and they are not hard to differentiate. Stamps from the first printing are dull blue-green (much like IV+C1, as has already been noted); those from the second printing are bright blue-green (sometimes called 'peacock blue') with deep black centres; while those from the third printing are dull green with grey centres, on grey as opposed to white paper.

Between the first and the second printings the frames were retouched, which shows in all positions in the form of burin escapes in various places in the cross-hatching of the upper panel. As well as assisting the positioning of the stamps, these irregularities help to distinguish second and third printing stamps from those of the first printing.

### Varieties

The following sections list the varieties of plate combination, shade, overprint and perforation known for each issue of the 15 centimes. The list covers 'normal' stamps only; errors and curiosities such as inverted overprints and imperfections between pairs are excluded.

The list is based on my own collection and that of Ray Keach. If members have varieties which are not on the list I would be glad to hear of them so that the list can be updated and made as comprehensive as possible.

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

Shades are given only where shade varieties are considered to be significant, and are listed in what is thought to be the chronological order of printing. Shades are abbreviated thus:

br=brown dp=deep oc=ochre y=yellow

The middle column indicates the overprint or surcharge type. For handstamped Congo Belge overprints, B = Brussels, L = Local. For Tombeur RUANDA and URUNDI overprints, K = Kigali, G = Grysolle and H = Havre. For the nomenclature of EAA overprints, see page 11 of part 1 and Bulletin 46.

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 cancelled by favour or 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

### 1896

I+A1a	p12½(DD), p14(AA), p15(AA), p16(BB), p12-14(CC), p14½-15(BB)
I+A1b	p13½(CA), p14(BA), p15(CB), p12-14(EE), p14½-15(CB)
I+A2	p14(DB)
I+A3	p13½(DC), p14(DB), p14½-15(DD)
I+A3 Princes	p14(EX)

### 1909 Congo Belge handstamp

I+A1b	B1	p14(EE)
I+A1b	B2	p13½(DE), p14(DE), p12-14(DE)
I+A1b	B3	p14(DE)
I+A1b	B4	p14(DE)
I+A1b	B5	p14(DE)
I+A1b	B6	p13½(DE), p14½-15(DE)
I+A1b	L2	p14(DD), p14½-15(DD)
I+A1b	L3	p14(DD)
I+A1b	L4	p14(DD), p14½-15(DD)
I+A1b	L5	p13½(DD), p14(DD), p15(DD), p14½-15(DD)
I+A1b	L7	p14(DC)
I+A2/A3	L1	p13½(DD), p14(AA)
I+A2/A3	L2	p14(BB)
I+A2/A3	L3	p14(DD)
I+A2/A3	L4	p13½(DD), p14(BB)
I+A2/A3	L5	p13½(DD), p14(CC), p14½-15(DD)
I+A2/A3	L6	p14(CC)

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

I+A2/A3	L7	p13½(DD), p14(CC), p14½-15(DD)
I+A2/A3	L8	p?(EE)
I+A3 Princes	B2	p14(EX)
I+A3 Princes	B5	p14(EX)

Because of the difficulty of differentiating A2 from A3, the above list does not distinguish between them. However the following have been confirmed: I+A2 p14 L1, L2, L4, L5, L6 and p13½ L5; I+A3 p14 L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L7 and p14½-15 L7.

Forged overprints are common; I have forgeries on I+A1a p14, p15 and p12-14 and I+A1b p14.

1909 Congo Belge type

I+A1b	p14½-15(EE)
I+A2	p14(CC), p14½-15(BB)
I+A3	p14(BB), p14½-15(CC)
I+A3 Princes	p14(DD)

Some forgeries are found, one of which is dangerously accurate. I have forgeries on I+A1a p15, I+A1b p13½ and 15 and I+A2 p13½.

1909 unilingual

II+A3 oc	p14(AA)
II+A3 oc-br	p14(CC)

1910 bilingual

III1+A4 dp y	p13½(DC), p14(AA), p15(BC), p14½-15(CB)
III1+A4 oc-y	p13½(DC), p14(AA), p14½-15(DD)
III1+A5	p14(DD)
III1+A6	p14(DB), p15(EE)
III1+A7	p13½(ED), p14(CB), p15(DC)
III1+A8	p14(BA), p15(BB)
III1+A9	p14(CB)
III2+B1	p13½(DC), p14(AA), p15(CB)
III2+B2	p13½(DD), p14(DC)
III3+B2	p14(AA)
III3+B3	p14(ED)

1915 bilingual

III4+B3	p14(DD)
III4+B4	p14(BA), p15(DC)
III5+B4	p13½(DB), p14(BA), p15(DC)
III6+C1	p14(AA), p15(CB)
IV1+C1	p15(EE)
IV2+C1	p14(AA), p15(CB)
IV3+C1	p14(DD)
V+C1	p14(DB), p15(EE)
V+C2	p13½(CB), p14(AA), p15(BB)
1st booklet	p14(AA)
2nd booklet	p14(AA)



## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

3rd booklet                      p14(AA), p15(CC)

### 1918 Red Cross

V+C1                              p14(AC), p15(BD)

### 1921 Recuperation

III1+A4 dp y		p14(CC), p14½-15(EE)
III1+A4 oc-y		p13½(DD), p14(DD)
III1+A5		p14(EE)
III1+A6		p14(DD)
III1+A7		p14(EE)
III1+A8		p14(AA), p15(DD)
III1+A9		p14(CC)
III2+B1		p13½(ED), p14(CB), p15(DD)
III2+B2		p13½(EE), p14(DD)
III3+B2		p14(AA), p15(EE)
III3+B3		p14(ED)

I have found the stamp with forged surcharge, on III1+A7, III1+A8 and III2+B1 (all p14).

### 1916 Tombeur (Ruanda and Urundi)

III4+B4	K	p14(EE)
III4+B4	G	p14(EX)
III4+B4	H	p13½(DX), p14(CX)
III5+B4	H	p13½(DX), p14(CX)

There are many forgeries.

### 1916 Est Africain

III6+C1	S	p14(BB)
III6+C1	L1(g)	p14(AC), p15(CD)
III6+C1	L1(t)	p14(BD)
IV1+C1	L2	p14(CD), p15(DE)
IV2+C1	L1(i)	p14(CD)
IV2+C1	L2	p14(AA), p15(CC)

### 1918 Red Cross AO

V+C1                              p14(AC), p15(BD)

This gives a total of 150 varieties of the 15c.

## 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'

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

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.

### I+A1

Distinctive plate varieties are found on both the frame and centre plates of I+A1, making many positions easy to identify, but there are also some difficult positions, especially on I+A1a before the centre plate was corroded and became I+A1b.

There are frame plate lay marks in the form of a dot between 12,13,22 and 23 and a horizontal line between 18,19,28 and 29. The top frame is clearly doubled up into the top margin over part of its length in 22,27 and 40; there is similar but less pronounced doubling in 42,44,46 and 48. One or more of the letters of INDEPENDANT show internal doubling in 8,15,22,23,27,28,43-6,48 and 50. The lower part of the right vertical frame is conspicuously doubled in 47 and 50 (Balasse V8) and slightly doubled in 5,12,18,20,25,28,35,40 and 46. The bottom horizontal frame is thickly doubled in 5 and 42-9, and the middle part of this frame is lightly doubled internally in 1,11 and 21 (in 21 this feature is hardly noticeable).

Turning to the centre plate, there is a black spot by the settler on 33 (Balasse V1). A number of positions show, to varying degrees, near-horizontal black scratches on the middle letters of CENTIMES, eg 26,34 and 36. In 4,17,19 and 38 there are traces of a vertical black line to the left of the small tree to the right of the big one. In 21 and 31 the shading lines in the bottom left corner of the vignette are slightly doubled.

I find that the most difficult positions in I+A1a are the following. In 2 there is a faint horizontal black scratch crossing the lower part of ANT. In 3 there is a black vertical line through the right 5. In 14 there is a horizontal black scratch crossing the left frame 3mm from the bottom. In 17 there is a tiny dot just to the right of the middle of the trunk of the tree to the right of the main one. In 19 the bottom frameline is thin from the left corner to the Q, then thicker. In 29 there is a near-horizontal black line under CE. In 37 there is a small black dot between the skylines two lines under the lower left frond of the leftmost tree. In 39 there is a short black vertical line crossing the shading 1mm to the left of the heads of the sitting natives.

The frame plate varieties in I+A1a are still clear in I+A1b, but many of the minor centre plate varieties are no longer detectable. However positioning of stamps from I+A1b is made easy by the black corrosion dots in most positions, which vary from position to position. There are few such dots on 1,4-6,11,12,21,31,39,42 and 50, but one or two small ones can be found on each of these positions, which anyway can be identified as A1b from the orange shade of the frames.

### I+A2 and I+A3

The frame plate varieties of I+A1 are present in I+A2 and I+A3 and give a good guide to many of the positions. In addition, numerous conspicuous centre plate varieties appeared with A2. In 4,5 and 27 the climbing native has a 'hairy back' (Balasse V3). 15 shows a long vertical scratch down the right hand side (Balasse

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

V2). Many other positions show scratches in various positions. The hatching of the hut roof is doubled in 9, 10, 15, 16, 18-20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31-3, 36, 38, 41-3, 45, 46 and 48, a feature not found on centre plate A1. None of the positions of A2 are difficult to identify.

Distinguishing A2 from A3 is another matter. On the majority of positions I have not been able to find any differences. Minor differences in positions 1, 2, 4, 5, 11-3, 15, 21, 31, 34, 35, 39-41 and 49 were described in my article in Bulletin 67.

### II+A3

The unilingual issue is again easy to position, because of the centre plate varieties which appeared in A2 and again without change in A3. Of the frame plate varieties, it is worth mentioning the doubling of the GO of CONGO in position 13 (Balasse V9), and the doubling of the bottom left corner in 21, 31, 46 and 48. The lay marks are in the same positions as in frame plate I: a dot between 12, 13, 22 and 23 and a horizontal line between 18, 19, 28 and 29. No positions of II+A3 are classified as difficult.

### III1+A4 to III1+A9

As noted above, early printings of III1+A4 can be identified by their shades, and the same is true (though with less certainty) of III1+A9. Stamps from later printings of III1+A4 can be identified by the relative lack of doubling in the settler, sitting natives and hut roof, and with practice, stamps from III1+A8 (and A9) by their worn, corroded appearance with much doubling. For the other plate combinations, identifying the combination almost always means positioning the stamp first, and a complete identification of both combination and position is hard without a good range of reference sheets or at least comprehensive notes based on a study of such sheets.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to give plating notes in such detail, but the reader might be helped by the following guidelines which concentrate on features which are common to all or most of this series of combinations, and which therefore help to identify the position if not the plate combination.

As with frame plates I and II, plate III has lay marks in the form of a dot between 12, 13, 22 and 23 and a horizontal line between 18, 19, 28 and 29. Centre plates A4 to A9 also have lay marks in these same positions, the result of Waterlow's experiment (soon abandoned) in 1910 to print the centres before the frames.

The following frame plate varieties are visible in all combinations from A4 to A9, though sometimes only barely so because of the pale colour of the frames. They divide into two groups, the first on or just above the top frameline, the second elsewhere in the stamp. In 1, 39 and 50 there is a small dot just NE of the top right corner. In 9 there is a dot resting on the top frame just in from that corner. In 11 the lower top frame is extended horizontally to the right. In 19 there is a dot between the top framelines over the left curl of the 'curlicue' above ON. In 24 the top right corner is doubled. In 28 there are two dots, one above the other, in the top margin over the G of GO, and a third dot close to the top frameline over the right curlicue. In 35 there are two dots close together, the second above and to the right of the first, in the top margin 2mm from the right

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

corner. In 36 there are two dots just above the top frame, and 1½mm apart, above the C. In 37 there is a dot just to the left of the top left corner.

Frame plate varieties elsewhere in the stamp, and common to III1+A4 to III1+A9, are as follows. 1: dot just to left of left frame 1mm below upper left 'T-junction'. 4: dot to left of climbing native. 10: spot above curved frame just over G of LGI. 18: bottom frame thickened under BEL. 27: small dot above 'bubble' under first E of BELGE. 32: faint diagonal line in upper left T-junction. 33: dot in top of S of GIS. 38: lower left vertical frameline weak in places. 40: short vertical line between framelines in bottom left corner. 41: diagonal line resting against left vertical frameline, 4½mm from bottom. 43: dot in left 1. 47: ring between two trees on right, and dots in bottom margin under C, O and NG.

I have listed a number of frame plate varieties, but in fact clearer guides to positioning are provided by the centre plate, because of its darker colour and the extensive corrosion, doubling or scratches which are present in most locations of all plate combinations. Firm identification of a stamp from this issue is usually achieved by matching up the pattern of corrosion dots with a position on the reference sheet. Most of the centre plate varieties vary from A4 to A9, but this is not true of all of them.

The following Balasse centre plate varieties are present in III1+A4. V2: long near-vertical black scratch to right of palm (15). V3: 'hairy back' on climbing native (4,5,27). V4: parallel black diagonal lines over rightmost tree (10,18). V2 is visible in A5 and A6 but not in later combinations. V3 disappeared after A4. V4 is visible throughout the series, but only just so in A8 and A9.

Because of the amount of centre plate doubling and corrosion, I do not classify any of the positions of III1+A4 to A9 as difficult, since once the position is found it is usually not hard to confirm it, though finding the position can be far from easy with so many combinations to consider.

### III2+B1 and III2+B2

Easily recognisable by the clear centres, it is not difficult to identify stamps from these combinations or to find the sheet position. To differentiate B1 from B2 it is however necessary to position the stamps and compare the centres carefully with a reference sheet, looking for small differences in doubling particularly in the hut roof and in the wavy lines at the bottom of the vignette.

Frame lay marks are the same as before: a dot between 12,13,22 and 23, and a horizontal line between 18,19, 28 and 29. The cross-hatching in the top right corner is visibly worn throughout the sheet and is retouched in positions 21,27-9 and 50 (Balasse V11). Slight retouching is also detectable in 1,2 and 7, and (in the top left corner) in 3. The hatching is doubled, sometimes only slightly, in 11,12,21 and 32. The top right vertical frames are doubled in 11 and 21. A number of frame plate varieties survive from III1, such as the small dot off the top right corner in 1,39 and 50.

It is the centre plate however which provides the best guide to position. There is little doubling, but scratch marks and a few corrosion dots appear in a number of positions, particularly at the top or bottom of the vignettes. A useful recurrent mark is a horizontal guideline, typically 2mm long, which appears a little above the left or right 15, or both. It appears on the left in 16,22,24,27,41

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

and 45; on the right in 1, 3, 8, 11, 18, 23, 31, 39; and on both left and right in 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12-5, 17, 19, 26 and 28.

Apart from the difficulty of distinguishing B1 from B2, no positions in these combinations are classified as difficult.

### III3+B2 and III3+B3

These combinations with their distinctive yellow-orange frames are again easy to position. The frame lay marks are in the same location as before. The weakness of the cross-hatching in the upper right corner has been corrected by re-entry throughout the sheet, but the retouching (V11) is still visible in 29. Another Balasse variety, the famous 'lézarde' or crack crossing the lower right vertical frame (V10), makes its appearance in position 41 of III3+B2.

Other frame plate varieties to note are the doubling of the upper left vertical frames in 11, 15, 19 and 35, and the doubling to the left of the upper left corner in 4, 12, 14 and 21. The small dot off the upper right corner is still visible in 1, 39 and 50.

The best guide to position comes once again from the centre plate. In most positions there is a cluster of small black dots above the tip of the central frond of the big tree - sometimes only two or three, sometimes many more. These could have been made by the engraving tool, or by the transfer roller being dropped onto the plate during re-entry; whatever the explanation, the pattern of dots varies from location to location and provides an easy means of positioning.

Once the position of a stamp is found, it is not hard to determine whether the centre is B2 or B3, provided a reference sheet of B2 is available. B2 centres, although coarser than B1, are generally clear and free of doubling. B3 are thickened and often doubled, particularly in the shading of the sky. Almost all 1910 and 1921 stamps with III3 are B2 and the plater who finds III3+B3 has discovered a significant rarity.

### III4+B3 to III5+B4

The 'palmier coupé' issue of 1915 (which incidentally is much commoner than its enhanced catalogue price suggests) presents no great difficulty to the plater. Whereas in previous plate combinations more assistance is given by the centre plate than by the frame plate, with III4 onwards the reverse is true, due partly to the change of colour to green, but also to the presence of retouching and other varieties and (from IV onwards) to the vertical and horizontal guidelines which do not seem to have been used for frame plates I to III.

In III4 and III5 frame lay marks are in the same positions as before: a dot between 12, 13, 22 and 23, and a horizontal line between 18, 19, 28 and 29. Most positions can be identified from the frame plate by looking at the upper left corner, the mid-point of the left frame by the 15, the lower left corner and the upper right corner. The upper left corner is partly doubled by re-entry or retouching in 4, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 40, 43, 45, 47, 48 and 50, with the characteristics of the doubling different in each location. The mid-point of the left vertical frame shows thickening in many positions, but with a gap between the thickened portion and the outer edge of the cartouche round CENTIMES in 6, 22, 23, 33 and 45. The outer bottom left vertical frame is doubled or thickened in

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

1, 4, 16, 24-7, 29, 30, 41, 44 and 45; in 11, 21 and 31 the doubling is found here on the inner frame. The top right corner is thickened or doubled in 1, 11, 20, 21, 26, 29, 31, 32, 39, 40, 46, 49 and 50. Once again a small dot appears off the upper right corner in 1, 39 and 50. A number of positions show green dots in one or more of the letters of BELGISCH CONGO.

With one important exception, there are few centre plate varieties. The exception is Balasse V5, the horizontal doubling of the settler and the sitting natives, which is found on centre plate B4 in 20 and 44. Slight doubling of the settler alone is found in 3, 10, 15, 22, 30, 34, 35, 45, 49 and 50.

Little is known about the differences between B3 and B4, since as noted above no complete sheets are known of either III3+B3 (the 1910 stamp) or III4+B3 (the 1915 stamp), and only few single copies. So far only two positions of III4+B3 - 10 and 45 - have been confirmed; both lack the doubling of the settler which is found on III4+B4.

As already noted, the only difference between III4 and III5 is the drilling of the hole between 41 and 42 to stop the spreading of the crack known as Balasse V10.

The difficult positions in these plate combinations are the following. In 36 there is a green dot in the upper right margin 1mm outside the frame and 2mm below the top corner, and black dots on the first E of BELGE; in addition, the inner frameline above the C of the left CENTIMES slightly overlaps the cartouche surrounding CENTIMES. In 37 there is a slight trace of doubling in the upper left vertical frameline, and some black dots on the right ME. 38 also shows slight doubling in the upper left frameline, and a faint black vertical line in the upper left margin.

### III6+C1

Although III5 was re-entered to make III6, in practice there are few differences between the two, and the frame plate varieties noted above for III4 and III5 survive and are the main guide for positioning stamps from III6. Obviously the centre plate varieties of III4+B4 are no longer present, and C1 presents a clean plate with few flaws. The main centre plate variety worth mentioning is the short vertical guideline which appears in many positions above the top of the big tree, usually on top of the first E of BELGE.

The difficult positions in III6+C1 are again 36 to 38. As well as the frame plate varieties noted above, 36 shows a short near-vertical black scratch in the upper right margin. 37 shows slight doubling of the right frame just below the central cartouche - one of the signs of the re-entry that produced III6. 38 shows a faint horizontal black line in the upper left margin, level with the T-junction.

### IV1+C1 to IV3+C1

Generally these are more difficult plate combinations to position, with few centre plate flaws and fewer frame varieties than III4 and III5. Fortunately, however, there are horizontal and vertical guidelines on the frame plate which appear not to have been used in earlier combinations of the 15c, and which are of great assistance to the plater.

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

There are no lay marks on IV1. On IV2 and IV3 they take the form of horizontal lines between 12,13,22 and 23 and between 18,19,28 and 29, and dots between 14 and 24 and between 17 and 27. The only difference between IV2 and IV3 is that in the latter, there is conspicuous doubling of the right frames near the top in 5,15,25,35 and 45.

The first step in positioning stamps from IV+C1 is to look at the right framelines. If there are stretches of vertical guideline between these framelines, especially in the lower half or on either side of the middle, the position is 2,5,11,12,15,16,21,23,25,29,31,32,39 or 49. If the lower of the top two framelines is extended to the right in the top right corner, it is 3,4,6,13,22,33 or 44-6. In 27 and 50 there is downward doubling of this frameline into the cross-hatching, for a length of about 7mm from the right end. In 9,23-7,42-4,46,48 and 49 a faint horizontal guideline is visible just over the top left corner. In 27,37 and 47 there is a green dot in the bottom margin under the left leg of the N of CONGO.

Several positions are difficult to identify. In 10 there is green dot in the top margin 3mm from the right corner, but this dot is often off the edge of the stamp, in which case the only indicators are two tiny green dots at 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock in the white circle round the left 15. 14 has a green dot in the left margin a little above the level of the head of the climbing native. 20 has a black dot just under the lower right corner. 38 has a small faint green dash in the left margin level with the base of the tree, and a cluster of black dots usually a little to the right of the left 5.

### V+C1

V+C1 is another difficult combination where, but for the presence of guidelines, the plater's task would be virtually impossible.

Frame plate lay marks are in the same positions as in IV: horizontal lines between 12,13,22 and 23 and between 18,19,28 and 29, and dots between 14 and 24 and between 17 and 27. The lower top frame is extended to the right in the top right corner, in the same way as in a number of positions of IV+C1: here the positions are 6,22 and 49, and (with a only a slight extension) 38 and 41. Apart from the guidelines, there are few other important frame plate varieties; minor varieties consist mainly of small dots in the left or right margins.

There is a vertical guideline in the lower part of the right margin, just outside the frameline, in 1-4,13,18,19,23-5,28,29,31,33-5,39,45 and 49. In the ninth column the space between the guideline and the right margin is rather wider than in the other positions. In 1,4,11,13,14,18,25,35 and 39 the guideline also appears in the upper part of the right margin, running up to the dot off the upper right frame. The guideline stops dead at the bottom frameline in 13,23,31 and 33; in the other positions it extends beyond it.

There is a guideline in line with the right frame, and appearing above it, in 2,3,5,7,12,15,21,26,36,48 and 50; a short guideline appears in the same position above the top right corner, but right of the line of the frame, in 4,13,14,18,25,34,35 and 39. Short sections of both horizontal and vertical guideline appear off the upper right corner, forming an 'L' shape, in 7,15,21,25 and 26. There is a horizontal guideline between the framelines in the top left corner in 1(faintly),8,22,23,32 and 42. A similar line appears just above the top left corner in 10 and

## PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

46 and above the top right corner in 3, 18 and 26. No guidelines are visible at all in 6, 9, 11, 17, 20, 27, 30, 37-8, 40-1, 43-4 and 47.

The exact position of a stamp can be determined by comparing the guidelines, which vary slightly in their length and distance from the frameline, with a reference sheet. In many positions, a short stretch of guideline is visible crossing the end of the cartouche containing CENTIEMEN; its lateral displacement is also a guide to position.

There are no major centre plate varieties on V+C1 worth mentioning. I find that the most difficult positions in this combination are 20, 27 and 37. 20 has a small green mark in the left of the H of BELGISCH, close to the bar. 27 has a dot in the left upright of the H. 37 has a faint dot in the right margin level with the centre of the 'star', and a slight overhang of the upper right corner.

### V+C2

After V+C1, V+C2 comes as something of a relief for two reasons. Almost all positions have a few green corrosion dots on the design, mostly in the top or bottom tablets, and the re-entered centre place shows doubling in nearly half the positions. At the same time the guidelines mentioned above are still visible. These features make positioning straightforward.

I will not list all the frame plate corrosion dots, but the places to look for them are in the letters of CONGO BELGE and (to a lesser extent) of BELGISCH CONGO. On the centre plate, the trunks of the right trees are doubled in 6, 16, 25 and 47 (Balasse V6), while the settlers and sitting natives, and the tree trunks behind them, are doubled in 1-3, 5, 12, 13, 22-4, 26, 32, 33 and 42-4 (Balasse V7). The spine of the third frond from the left in the big tree is doubled in 47 and 48.

No position is classified as difficult.

### Booklet stamps

Although sometimes difficult to distinguish from IV+C1, stamps from the first printing of the booklets are not hard to position. Most positions show noticeable varieties. There is a green guide dot just above the top left corner in  $\gamma$ 2, 3 and 4 and  $\delta$ 2, 3 and 4. There are similar but smaller dots under the bottom left corner in  $\alpha$ 8 and 9 and  $\beta$ 8. There is a horizontal guideline between the bottom framelines on the left in  $\alpha$ 1, 2,  $\beta$ 6, 9,  $\gamma$ 1, 5 and  $\delta$ 1, 2 and 5, and a guideline just under the bottom frameline in  $\gamma$ 7 and  $\delta$ 6. Many positions show guideline extensions, both horizontal and vertical, in line with the framelines in this corner. Many positions also show horizontal and vertical guidelines at the top left corner. There are few significant centre plate varieties in the booklet stamps.

Second and third booklet stamps are easy to position because as well as the varieties described for the first booklets, there are numerous burin retouches which are visible in the cross-hatching of the upper panel, and which vary from location to location. Every position has them. In  $\alpha$ 2, 4,  $\beta$ 6, 8,  $\gamma$ 4, 5, 9, and 10 the retouches include a line crossing the left end of the curlicue above LG. In  $\alpha$ 5 and  $\delta$ 4 a line crosses the top right corner of the L, in  $\alpha$ 10 and  $\gamma$ 10 the upper left curve of the C, in  $\beta$ 4 the top of the C, in  $\beta$ 5 the lower left of the C, in  $\gamma$ 4 the right end of the right curlicue, and in  $\delta$ 6 the upper part of the C. There are small green



#### PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 4

corrosion dots around the top framelines in all positions of pane  $\beta$ , particularly noticeable in  $\beta 1$  to 3.

None of the booklet stamp positions are classified as difficult.

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