

PLATING MOLS STAMPS

by B.P. HUDSON

Part 8: 1 franc

Introduction

The 1 franc is the fourth highest of the ten Mols values. It is found quite often on covers, particularly registered covers, between the Congo and Belgium or other overseas countries. The following are the weight ranges (in grams) in the period 1896 to 1924 for which the postal rate was exactly 1 franc:

	Belgium registered	Belgium unregistered	Other overseas registered	Other overseas unregistered
1894-1910	up to 15	15 to 30	up to 15	15 to 30
1910-1920	30 to 45	45 to 60	30 to 45	45 to 60
1920-1921	80 to 100	-	40 to 60	60 to 80
1921-1924	20 to 40	60 to 80	up to 20	20 to 40

Like the other values issued in 1894, the 1fr was based on one of the Mols and Van Engelen paintings exhibited in Anvers in that year. The painting showed an elephant waving its trunk in the air with, in the distance, further elephants and the tiny figures of natives. When this was converted into the stamp design a native was placed just in front of the elephant bravely brandishing his spear. The 1fr is a handsome stamp and many consider it to be the best of the Mols designs.

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

26A	Nov. 1894	1fr violet	État Indépendant	120,000)
26Aa		1fr lilac	État Indépendant	inc. lilac)



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26	(1900)	1fr carmine	Etat Indépendant	292,000
36B	Jan. 1909	1fr carmine	Congo Belge Brussels	1,000
36L	Jan. 1909	1fr carmine	Congo Belge local	39,100
46	Jan. 1909	1fr carmine	Congo Belge typo	72,900
46P	Mar. 1909	1fr carmine	Princes unoverprinted	100
46PB	Mar. 1909	1fr carmine	Princes Brussels	250
46PT	Mar. 1909	1fr carmine	Princes typo	4,650
60	Jan. 1910	1fr carmine	Bilingual	190,000
70	Nov. 1915	1fr olive	Bilingual	90,000
78	May 1918	1fr+1fr olive	Red Cross	50,000
91	July 1921	1fr carmine	Recuperation overprint (on 60)	162,000
101	Jan. 1922	10c/1fr olive	Boma surcharge (on 70)	112,500

Ruanda Urundi

15	July 1916	1fr olive	Ruanda Tombeur (on 70)	1,150
22	July 1916	1fr olive	Urundi Tombeur (on 70)	1,150
34	Nov. 1916	1fr olive	Est Africain (on 70)	170,000
42	May 1918	1fr+1fr olive	A.O. on Red Cross	50,000

Note: The 1fr violet, lilac and carmine of 1894 to 1900 were not separate issues in the sense of being the subject of separate decrees by the Postal Ministry, but rather were shade changes of the same issue. The changes were so marked that they have always been regarded as separate stamps.

Plate combinations

1894	I1+A1	Original frame and centre plates
1900	I2+A2	Frame lay marks added; centres re-entered
1910	II1+A3	New frame plate; centre lay marks added
	II1+A4	Centres re-entered
1915	II1+A4	
	II2+A5	Frames retouched; centres re-entered
	II3+A5	Frames re-entered (EAA overprint only)
	II4+A5	Frames re-entered
	II5+A5	Frames re-entered
	II6+A5	Frames re-entered
	II6+A6	Centres re-entered
	III+A7	New frame plate; centres re-entered

There have been the following changes from the nomenclature first introduced by Du Four:

- (1) For the 1894 violet, Du Four listed two states of frame plate I, the second



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(I2) caused when a scratch crossing nos 43 and 44 was partly burnished. It is now known that no burnishing took place (see Bulletin 35); even if it had, it would not now be regarded as creating a new state of the plate. Du Four's I1 and I2 have therefore been renamed I1, and his I3 (the frame plate of the 1900 carmine stamps) has been renamed I2.

(2) Du Four was not aware of the separate combinations II4+A5 and II6+A5 (see Bulletins 21 and 32), and described II5 as II4 and II6 as II5.

(3) He originally believed A7 to be a new plate rather than a re-entry of A6, and therefore described III+A7 as III+B, though this was corrected in the page of Errata which accompanied the published book.

Identifying the plate combinations

1900. Princes printings can be recognised by the brighter shade of the frames and by the centres which are brownish-black rather than grey-black as in the 1900 issue. Princes typo stamps can also be recognised by constant varieties in the overprinting plate - see page 10 of part 1.

1910. Since there are only slight differences between the two centre plates, the best way to differentiate III1+A3 and III1+A4 is by shade. Stamps from III1+A3 are pale to deep carmine or carmine-red, while those from III1+A4 are lake-carmine or carmine-lake. III1+A4 is uncommon without the 1921 overprint.

1915. The 1fr olive of 1915 is a complicated stamp which went through 8 plate combinations. Identifying them is not, however, as difficult as might be supposed.

The first place to look is the small circle and surrounding scrollwork at the centre of the top frameline. If the top lines of the circle and scrolls are weak or worn away, the plate combination is III1+A4. If they are continuous and thickened a little unevenly by retouching, it is II2+A5. If they or other parts of the top frameline show signs of doubling, the frame plate is II3, II4, II5 or II6. If the circle and scrolls are clear and neat the combination is III+A7, which is indicated also by fine, clear centres unlike the increasingly corroded centres of A4 to A6. If a stamp could be either III1+A4 or III+A7, but shows sections of vertical guideline in the left margin, then it is definitely III1+A4.

The shades of the frames can sometimes give a little help. III1+A4 are greenish olive, the later combinations range from pale to yellow olive, and III+A7 are a constant olive. II5+A5 tends to be a slightly yellower shade than II6+A5, while II4+A5 is more olive, ie closer to III1+A4.



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Centre plates A5 and A6 can be differentiated by looking at the small triangular area on the hillside immediately above the elephant's back to the right of his left ear (the right ear as we look at it). In later printings of A5 this area is worn and almost white; in A6 it is crossed by four faint but clear diagonal lines of shading.

It therefore remains to distinguish II3+A5 to II6+A5. II3+A5 is easy, because it is found only with the EAA overprint and shows some doubling of the horizontal framelines on all positions, unlike the other combination found with this overprint, namely II2+A5. To distinguish II4, II5 and II6, shade can be a guide, but to be certain of identification the stamp has to be positioned (which is quite easy given the amount of centre plate corrosion) and then compared with the corresponding position on reference sheets. Each of the three frame plate states shows different degrees of doubling or thickening, particularly in the vertical framelines, with the later states tending to show more doubling. The differences on some positions - particularly between II5 and II6 - can however be very slight.

Those with complete sheets which show doubling can identify them as follows. If the bottom right column base on 32 is not doubled, the frame plate is II3. If the right column base is doubled on 32 but not on 31, the plate is II4. If the left vertical framelines on 16 and 41 are doubled, the plate is II5 or II6. If the right frameline of 41 is doubled and the left column base of 48 is trebled, the plate is II6.

Varieties

The following sections list the varieties of plate combination, shade, overprint and perforation known for each issue of the 1 franc. The list covers 'normal' stamps only; errors and curiosities such as inverted overprints and imperf-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.

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

ca=carmine li=lilac vi=violet

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



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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

1894 violet

I1+A1 p14(BB), p15(BB), p12-14(DD), p14½-15(BC)

1894 lilac

I1+A1 li p15(DB)
 I1+A1 ca-li p14(DB), p15(ED), p12-14(ED)

1900 carmine

I2+A2 p13½(DA), p14(DB), p15(DB), p16(DB), p12-14(EC)
 I2+A2 Princes p14(EX)

1909 Congo Belge handstamp

I1+A1 vi	B2	p14½-15(DX)
I1+A1 vi	B6	p14½-15(EX)
I1+A1 vi	L1	p14½-15(DX)
I1+A1 vi	L2	p14½-15(DX)
I1+A1 ca-li	B1	p14(EX)
I2+A2	B1	p15(DE)
I2+A2	B2	p14(DE), p15(DE), p16(CE)
I2+A2	B5	p13½(DE), p15(DE), p16(CE)
I2+A2	B6	p13½(DE), p16(DE)
I2+A2	B7	p13½(DE)



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I2+A2	L1	p13½(CA), p16(CC)
I2+A2	L2	p13½(DC), p16(DD)
I2+A2	L3	p13½(DD), p15(DD)
I2+A2	L4	p13½(CB), p16(DD)
I2+A2	L5	p13½(CB), p15(ED), p16(DD)
I2+A2	L6	p13½(DD), p16(DD)
I2+A2	L7	p13½(CB), p16(DD)
I2+A2 Princes	B2	p14(EX)
I2+A2 Princes	B5	p14(EX)

Forged overprints are common. The following combinations were reported by Du Four but have not been confirmed by Ray Keach or myself:

I1+A1 vi	B4, L4	I1+A1 li	B6, L1, L5, L7
I2+A2	L8		

1909 Congo Belge typo

I2+A2	p13½(BA), p15(DD), p16(CE)
I2+A2 Princes	p14(DC)

1910 bilingual

III+A3	p14(AA), p15(CB)
III+A4	p14(CX)

1915 bilingual

III+A4	p13½(DD), p14(BA), p15(CB)
II2+A5	p14(BA)
II4+A5	p14(EC)
II5+A5	p13½(DD), p14(BA), p15(EE)
II6+A5	p14(CC)
II6+A6	p14(CC)
III+A7	p14(CB), p15(DD)

1918 Red Cross

III+A7	p14(AC)
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1921 Recuperation

I2+A2	Typo	p13½(DX)
I2+A2 Princes	Typo	p14(EX)
III+A3		p14(AA), p15(BB)
III+A4		p14(BA), p15(CB)

1922 Boma

II4+A5	p14(DE)
II5+A5	p14(AC)
II6+A5	p14(CC)

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Forged surcharges are common: I have examples on III+A4, II2+A5, II5+A5, II6+A5 and II6+A6 (all p14).

1916 Tombeur (Ruanda and Urundi)

III+A4	K	p15(EE)
II2+A5	G	p14(EX)
III+A4	H	p14(CX)

There are many forgeries.

1916 Est Africain

II2+A5	S	p14(DE)
II2+A5	L1(.)	p14(BE)
II2+A5	L1(o)	p14(AB)
II3+A5	L1(o)	p14(DE)
II3+A5	L2	p14(BB)

1918 Red Cross AO

III+A7	p14(AC)
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This gives a total of 87 varieties of the lfr.

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+A2

I will take these two combinations together, since the great majority of plate varieties are in the frames rather than the centres, and frame plates I1 and I2 are the same apart from the addition of lay marks in I2 in the form of a vertical line between 38,39,43 and 44, and a dot between 8,9,13 and 14.

A number of 'generic' varieties (ie varieties found in more than one position) make these stamps quite easy to position. There is prominent vertical doubling of both left and right column bases in 6 and 41 (6 is Balasse V6), and of the right base only in 7,11 and 42. There is slight doubling of the right base in 3,5,9,10,12,13,16,17,21,23,27 and 36. The leftmost vertical line in the left base is doubled in 6,7,11,12 and 29. The right vertical frame is doubled in 3,9,14,37,47 and 49 (49 is Balasse V8). The centre top framelines are markedly doubled in 35 (Balasse V7); the inner of them is partly doubled in 5. The horizontal lines to the left or right of ETAT are doubled in 4,23 and 36. The ANT of INDEPENDANT is doubled horizontally in the bottom row, positions 46 to 50. In numerous positions

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there are signs of doubling in the circle round the upper right 1. Doubling is visible inside the upper left 1 in 4, 20 and 34.

Of the centre plate varieties, the best known is the doubling of the native's spear in position 1 (Balasse V1), present in both A1 and A2. In 30, 31 and 32 of A2 there is a transfer roller flaw in the form of a black spot near the top of the mountain above the middle of the elephant's back. In A1 several positions show one or two black dots under the tip of the elephant's trunk, and others show faint vertical guidelines usually towards the left of the centre plate vignette.

The following positions are relatively difficult. In 15 there is doubling of the whorl under NGO and of the upper right circle, both of these features being found also in other positions; in addition, in A2, there are faint near-vertical black scratches in the right margin close to the frame. In 24 there is slight doubling of the vertical line to the right of the right FRANC, and (in A1 only) a vertical black guideline rising from the middle of the elephant's tail. In 25 there is a faint coloured horizontal line above the upper left corner, in A1 dots under the trunk and a short vertical black guideline through the left UN, and in A2 a black near-vertical scratch towards the bottom of the right margin. In 26 there is doubling of the upper right circle and the whorl under NGO, and doubling (most visible at the right end) under the upper but not the lower flange of the right column base. In 40 there is a horizontal coloured guideline in the right margin, joined to the frameline just above the top of the 'shell'; this line is hardly visible in I1+A1, which can be distinguished instead by the triangle of black dots above the left of the two trees under the trunk.

I1+A3 and I1+A4

The frame plate has lay marks in the form of a vertical line between 38, 39, 43 and 44 and a dot between 8, 9, 13 and 14. Centre plate A3 has a vertical line in the same position and a dot between 13 and 14; in A4 the dot is still present but the line appears to have been erased.

Stamps in the first row, positions 1 to 5, can be identified by a transfer roller flaw on the outer right frameline. It takes the form of two flat 'bubbles' on the frame, one level with the FR and the other with the AN of FRANK. Interestingly, there are similar flaws in the bottom row, positions 46 to 50, but here the lower bubble has broken open and (in 46 to 49) forms a short line leaving the frame at an angle opposite the L of FRANK. It seems that part of the right frameline, in relief on the transfer roller, came adrift at these points, and that row 10 was impressed immediately after or immediately before row 1 - probably the latter, because slight traces of the flaw can still be seen on positions 6 to 9.

Row 10 of the frame plate also contains three notable varieties in the form of horizontal lines 2 to 3mm long scored in the bottom margin under the BEL of BELGISCH. There is one line under 48 (Balasse V9), two under 46 (Balasse V10) and three under 50 (Balasse V11). The lines seem to have been engraved deliberately, but it is not known why. There is a similar line, but vertical rather than horizontal, in the left margin of position 1.

For the other positions of the sheet, there are numerous frame plate varieties to assist positioning. In 6, 16, 25, 38, 39, 40 and 49 there is doubling of the upper left corner which takes the form of dots or short dashes just outside the corner. There is doubling in the left of the circle round the upper left 1 in 6, 24, 25, 38, 39,

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40 and 49. There is doubling in the left 'shell' in 6, 16, 26, 29, 35, 38 and 39. There are dots or other marks around the little circle to the left of the upper left 1 in 9, 14 (A4 only), 21 and 35. In addition, numerous positions show sections of frame plate guideline, sometimes doubled, in the top or left margins. The most useful of the latter are the short sections of vertical lines at varying distances from the left column base.

41 shows doubling of the left column base. This is the only position on III (and II2) which shows such doubling, and it is important for the plater to be aware of it since otherwise it could lead him to believe that the stamp comes from II3 to II6 where doubling like this is present on almost all positions.

Centre plate varieties are less numerous than those of the frame plate. Balasse V1, the doubled spear, is till partly visible in position 1. In 46 there are three horizontal lines above the head of the elephant (Balasse V2), prominent in A3 but barely visible in A4. In 6 there is a curved black line 2½mm above the head (Balasse V3), but only in late printings of A3. In 43, 44 and 45 of A4 there is a roller flaw in the form of a black spot against the left of the trunk a little above the tusks (Balasse V4); a similar spot, but fainter, is visible in 41. In 30, 31 and 32 the spot on the mountain described above for A2 is still visible, though only faintly in position 30 of A4.

I classify two positions in these combinations as difficult. In 12 there is a coloured dot in the E of LGE. In 17 there is a black dot, quite faint in A4, in the triangular space between the elephant's trunk and his ear, a little to the left of the centre of this space.

II2+A5

Frame plate II2 was formed by retouching of the outer lines of the top central ornament. There was no re-entry of the plate, so that all the frame plate varieties described above for III1 are still present (though the guidelines are somewhat fainter), and are the main aid to positioning single stamps.

In the re-entered centre plate A5, Balasse V4 (the spot against the trunk) is still visible, and Balasse V1 can just be detected in the form of a dot adjacent to the bottom end of the spear. A new transfer roller variety, an elongated vertical spot towards to bottom of the left margin, appears in positions 5 to 9. The centre plate does not show signs of doubling but shows numerous flaws in the form of dots and scratches which were not present on A4. The centre plate lay mark in the form of a dot between 13 and 14 is still present on A5.

The more difficult positions of II2+A5 are the following. In 17 there are four or five black dots above the trees under the trunk. In 19 there is one such dot. In 22 there is one such dot, a faint vertical guideline against the left 'shell', and slight doubling of the curved line to the left of the top central circle. In 28 there are two dots placed diagonally under the trunk, and black corrosion in the bottom margin under BELGISCH.

II3+A5

This combination, found only with the EAA overprint, shows many of the frame and centre plate varieties found in II2+A5. In particular it shows Balasse V4 and V9 to 11, the numerous doubling marks around the upper left corner, and

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the centre plate roller flaw on positions 5 to 9. However it does not show the frame plate roller flaws on the right frameline in rows 1 and 10.

In addition II3 shows extensive doubling of the column bases (Balasse V12). The left base is doubled in 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 26, 32, 36, 41, 43 and 48, and the right base in 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 28, 29, 30, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47 and 48. Both bases are trebled in 46 - Balasse V13.

Apart from the Balasse varieties already mentioned, there is not much to note about the centre plate: the extensive corrosion to the left of the trunk which is present in II4+A5 to II6+A6 has not yet made its appearance.

I classify only one position as difficult - 28, which as in II2+A5 is characterised by two dots under the trunk and scattered dots in the bottom margin under BELGISCH.

II4+A5 to II6+A6

These combinations still show Balasse V4 and V9 to 11, but much more faintly. The frame plate lay marks are present as is the centre plate dot between 13 and 14.

Apart from additional doubling of the framelines, the main change from II3+A5 is the development of black corrosion dots, dense on many positions, less so on others, in the area around the end of the trunk and the two palm trees on the left. Caused no doubt by the plate becoming wet, a clear boundary to the corrosion indicates that in many positions it was burnished out, but not in the immediate vicinity of the palms and trunk since that would have risked burnishing out part of the design itself.

This corrosion is the key to plating and positioning individual stamps, since it enables the position to be found quite quickly, and once the position is known the plate combination can be determined by comparing the doubling or thickening of the framelines with the corresponding position on reference sheets. As noted above in the section on identifying plate combinations, in some positions the differences between II5 and II6 are rather slight. The best places to look are the left vertical frameline, which tends to be thicker in A6, and the vertical lines in the left column base and bottom central ornament, which can be doubled in A6 but not in A5 (or sometimes vice versa). To distinguish II5 from II6 it is essential to have reference sheets of both available; if the stamp's position is known, but its frameline doubling does not match either II5 or II6, then by deduction it can be assumed to be II4+A5, a combination which is rather scarcer than the others.

Because frameline doubling is so extensive in these stamps, it does not usually help much in finding a stamp's sheet position, though it is useful for confirming the position and identifying the plate combination. But it is worth noting the positions where the frames show trebling (Balasse V13). The left base is trebled in 47 and the right base in 29, 30 and 46. In II6 but not II5 there is also trebling of the left base in 48.

Identifying stamps from II4+A5 to II6+A6 can be a long haul, but the extent of frame plate doubling and centre plate corrosion means that no positions is classified as difficult.

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III+A7

Although centre plate A7 was a re-entry of A6 rather than a new plate, most of the flaws in A6, including Balasse V4 and the corrosion round the palm trees, have completely disappeared, and the plate presents a clean appearance. The lay mark dot between 13 and 14 is still present. The new frame plate III has lay marks in the same places as before: a line between 38,39,43 and 44, and a dot between 8,9,13 and 14.

The cleanness of the plates means that these stamps - and particularly the 1915 issue as opposed to the Red Cross and AO issues - can be difficult to position. Of great assistance however is a frame plate roller flaw which affects nearly half the positions of the sheet. This is a thickening of a line of horizontal shading in the right vertical panel, level with the top of the N of FRANK. If this line is thickened, the stamp comes from rows 1,2,3,9 or 10, or from position 36. This is another indication that for some reason the transfer roller did not go down the sheet from top to bottom, but impressed the bottom rows first and then moved to the top rows starting with row 1.

There are not many frame plate varieties. The right ends of the flanges (particularly the upper flange) of the right column base are thickened in 2,3,4,6,7,10,36,37,41 and 47 and doubled in 1. The flanges of the left column base are thickened in 16,17,36 and 41. There is a horizontal line - possibly a doubling mark - crossing the right side of the middle of the right base in 8.

In the Red Cross and AO stamps, but not the 1915 stamps, there is faint but discernible corrosion in most positions, in various places in the margins outside the framelines. These dots make characteristic patterns and are the reason why Red Cross and AO stamps are easier to position.

On the centre plate there are fine horizontal lines above the elephant's head in 1,2,4 and 5 (1 and 5 being classified as Balasse V5). In many positions there are one or dots between the trunk and the two trees, sometimes a useful aid to positioning. Otherwise centre plate flaws are few and far between.

The most difficult position in III+A7 is 29, identifiable by two tiny dots just above the left of the two trees under the trunk.
