

Ethiopia: Overprints on the 1919 Animals & Rulers Definitives

Objective

This exhibit presents the overprinted 1919 Animals and Rulers definitives and the postal rates used between 1919 and 1928.

Exhibition Plan

- 4 Guerche Overprint Substitution
- First Provisionals
- Provisionals without Rosettes
- Provisionals with Rosettes – Narrow Spacing
- Provisionals with Rosettes – Wide Spacing
- Postage Dues
- Officials

Historical Context

The overprints on the 1919 definitive stamps were produced by the A. Desvages Printing Press located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The workers running the press operations were literate, thus as individual type elements became loose and fell out, they were not necessarily replaced in the proper place. This gave rise to a variety of printing errors ... many of which saw legitimate postal usage.

The 4 Guerche Overprint Substitution issue was created to replace the 4 Guerche definitive stamps featuring then Crown Prince Ras Tafari wearing the Ethiopian gold crown. As Tafari was not yet crowned King, the reigning Empress Waizeri Zauditu had this stamp withdrawn from circulation and replaced it with a 4 Guerche provisional overprint on the 4 Thaler stamp bearing her image.

The First Provisional overprints were produced in response to a global silver devaluation resulting in new postal rates. In addition, many of the low value stamps that had little practical use were overprinted to make them postally usable.

The Provisionals without Rosettes overprints were generally produced on the higher value definitives that had little practical value as well as to make additional stamps available in values that corresponded to another rate change.

The Provisional with Rosettes – Narrow Spacing overprints were produced in order to maintain compliance with U.P.U. rules that required the original value of the stamp to be obliterated when revalued as well as to use higher value stamps that had limited postal usefulness.

The Provisional with Rosettes – Wide Spacing overprints were produced in order to use higher values stamps that had limited postal usefulness.

Payne Rarity Factors / Sciaky Registration Label Numbering

An Ethiopian postmark rarity scale of 1 (thousands existing) through 10 (100 or less existing) was developed by the Reverend Eric Payne during the 1970s. This scale as well as the Payne postmark numbering system are referenced throughout this exhibit. Sciaky numbering is used to describe registration label types.

Treatment & Display

Basic information is presented in regular text throughout this exhibit. For the adventurous reader, additional detailed information is presented within a black bordered box at the bottom of a page. Unusual items are displayed with a red colored border and header text.