

**Number 27**

**Summer 2024**

***15th Century Venetian Letters  
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Duloz and Empire: 25 Piastres on Cover  
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İstanbul Views on Ottoman Postcards: Ministry of War  
Ottoman Postmarks in Transjordan  
Overprinted Private Postal Wrappers  
Postage Due Covers of (Trans)Jordan  
The Diplomatic Struggle for Muscat and Oman's First Stamp Issue  
plus Book Reviews, Reactions, Comments, Queries, and more!***

**THE MIDDLE EAST PHILATELIC BULLETIN**





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## The Genesis of the First Iranian Stamps: New Discoveries

by Mehrdad Sadri

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More than 150 years have passed since Iran joined the club of the countries that issued postage stamps. Although the Iranian philately is one of the most fascinating in the world, regrettably, it is among the least researched and studied after all these years. Unlike most other countries, not many records have been kept, and after all these years, there have been more questions than answers due to two illnesses:

*Ignorance and arrogance are two illnesses that cause all failures and even demise.*

Postage stamps are not worthless pieces of paper but are considered official securities such as banknotes. Postage stamps issued by countries pay for the delivery of letters and packages through official governmental organisations such as post offices worldwide, and these little pieces of paper represent the art and culture of the nations.

However, in my homeland, Iran, collecting stamps was considered a children's play. The adults were buying stamps for their children as child playthings while buying jewellery, carpets, land, and other more expensive items for themselves as an investment. Adults preferred coins and banknotes even when they decided to collect something as a hobby. Therefore, collecting stamps, as it was called, was not crucial for the public. Keeping records of the printing, the quantities, and other information was not entirely essential, even for an official governmental organisation such as the Post Office in Iran.

The absence of an official postal records office and museum caused the lack of information for many decades. I must add that the existence of so many forgeries was due to the ignorance of the postal authorities.

The philately as we know it these days and the knowledge of postal history was a strange and unknown concept in Iran, and we must be thankful to many Westerners who collected Iranian

stamps, covers, and postal documents. Furthermore, we must appreciate their efforts in writing articles in the philatelic journals published in Europe and the United States. Most of our knowledge is learned from the existing invaluable foreign published articles; otherwise, we would have had no idea about the development of Iranian philately.

According to Xenophon, the Greek historian (ca. 430–354 BC), the first regular postal system was established in Iran during the reign of Cyrus the Great in the sixth century BC; however, the first step in modernising the Iranian postal system was taken during the reign of Nassereddin Shah Qajar (fig. 1, to the left) in the mid-1800s.

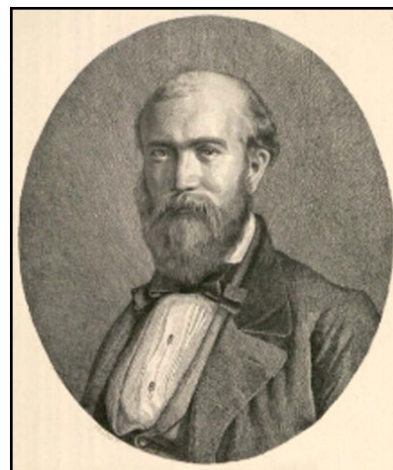




On 24 Shavval 1281 (lunar calendar) = 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1865, Mirza Mohammad Khan Qajar, endowed with the title of *Sepah'Sâlâr Azam* (Grand Commander-in-Chief), was appointed the new Prime Minister. He followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Mirza Dja'far Khan Moshir-ol-Dowleh, in modernising the country. Accordingly, he dispatched delegations to Europe to acquire knowledge, information, and technology. One of the achievements of these contingents was the printing and use of postage stamps, which already revolutionised the universal postal system.

Martin Riester (*fig. 2*) was a talented French draftsman and engraver who designed ornaments for many decorative objects, including firearms, glassware, book bindings, jewellery, and stamps. He was born in Colmar, France, in 1819 and died in Paris in 1883. Martin Riester showcased his talents at international arts, crafts, and industry exhibitions. As Martin Riester was informed of the Iranian government's intention, Riester prepared a set of essays (*fig. 3*) adapted from the design of an obsolete coat of arms (*fig. 4*) showing a recumbent or seated lion with the sun rising in the background.

*Fig. 2: Martin Riester "graveur d'ornements".<sup>1</sup>*



Although the government of Iran did not accept Riester's essays, his essays were highly praised at the 1867 International Paris Exposition or *Exposition Universelle*. These *Recumbent Lion* or *Seated Lion* essays exist in various colours and on white and tinted paper varieties, which are very popular and in demand by many collectors worldwide. At the same time, Riester also made the seated Sphinx essays (*fig. 5*) for Egypt, which are very similar to the seated lions of Iran.

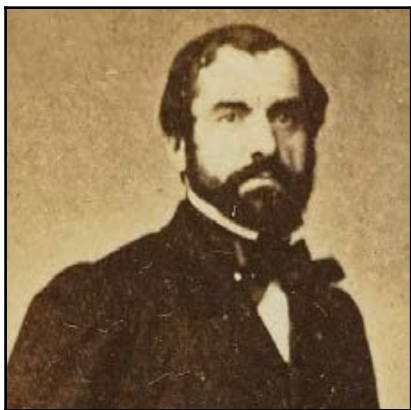
Although every collector of the Iranian stamps had known about the Riester essays for many decades, most of us had no idea of Monsieur Riester's first name or how he looked.



*Figs. 4 and 5: Other similar Riester essays with a seated lion and the Sphinx.*

<sup>1</sup> Source: *Martin Riester, graveur d'ornements : (portrait)*. Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art. In: Europeana. Online: [https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/829/https\\_bibliotheque\\_numerique\\_inha\\_fr\\_idurl\\_1\\_11880](https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/829/https_bibliotheque_numerique_inha_fr_idurl_1_11880). Public domain.





Reportedly, the Iranian delegation approached Albert-Désiré Barre (fig. 6, to the left), who had designed the clichés of the French 1849 *Cérès* stamps and 1860/61 *Large Hermes Head* stamps of Greece (fig. 7),<sup>2</sup> to create a postage stamp for Iran.

The first classic Lion stamps are depicted from the modern Iranian Coat of Arms, showing a standing Lion with a *Shamshir* and the rising sun in the background in a circle of pearls (fig. 8). However, in a letter from Mr. Jacques Morin to Mr. E. Fraser-Smith it is noted that Charles Trotin made the Iranian Lions clichés.<sup>3</sup>



1849 France  
*Cérès*



1860-61 Greece  
*Large Hermes Head*

Fig. 7: Barre's similar designs for *Cérès* and *Hermès*.



Fig. 8: The quite different Trotin essay.

As noted in this letter:

*Charles Trotin, born in Paris on September 23, 1833, was an engraver. He was part of the Commission Impériale des Monnaies et Médailles (the Imperial Commission on Coins and Medals), where he was appointed in 1860. Among many other works, we owe him the medal for the Inauguration of the Eiffel Tower in 1889 and that of the Post Office Building in Tehran, which takes up the theme of Lion and the Sun.*

It is, therefore, Charles Trotin who is the actual creator of the first Iranian stamps, and here is why: Points noted by Mr. Morin in this letter are that Albert Barre's method of printing plates was by galvanoplasty and electrolysis, which then transferred to plates of 150 and 300. At the same time, five clichés were engraved for each value of the *First Lion* stamps of Iran. Furthermore, Mr. Morin, in his letter, says:

*We found no trace of the order despite my research, combined with Mr. Andre Trotin's. It must be said that the archives have disappeared; at the Monnaie de Paris, there are no traces of this work either.*

Well, it is important that there was no official contract between the Iranian Government and Albert Barre or the France Imperial Commission on Coins and Medals. By comparing the design of the Lion stamps of Iran and the *Cérès* of France and the *Hermes Head* of Greece, except for the circle of pearls, there are no similarities.

<sup>2</sup> The design of the original *Cérès* stamps is attributed to his father Jacques-Jean Barre.

<sup>3</sup> Published in the Iran Philatelic Study Circle Bulletin, no. 35, August 1976, pp. 372–374.



### Jacques Morin (1976): The Lion Die

Here is this article you have been waiting for a long time, but before saying something, you still need to think and look for all possible reasons. I showed you and Mr. Lucas at the Congress of British Philatelic Societies in Enghien a piece from an electroplating test of the original die. I had this original cliché in my hands, as well as some tests.

All this is in the hands of Mr. André Trotin, Architect. His grandfather, Charles Trotin, born in Paris on September 23, 1833, was an engraver and part of the Imperial Commission on Coins and Medals, where he was appointed in 1860. One owes to him, among many other works, the medal for the Inauguration of the Eiffel Tower in 1889, as well as that of the Tehran Post Office, which takes up the theme of the Lion and the Sun.

It is, therefore, Charles Trotin who is the actual creator of the first Iranian stamps, and here is why:

Despite my research, combined with that of Mr. André Trotin, we found no trace of the order; it must be said that the archives have disappeared at the Monnaie de Paris, with no traces of this work either. Let's not forget that at that time, the big boss of printing postage stamps was Mr. Hulot and that all the equipment was used to print postage stamps, tax stamps, and receipt stamps! He did not have an engraver, and we remember the dispute between Albert Barre and him, whose last French stamp was the 5 Frs Empire. So, there was no question of working with the equipment of the Mint before this date. Albert Barre engraved the Greek stamps and printed them at Meyer, rue de Verneuil 1. He also engraved the Romanian stamps of 1871, and it was actually a private printing company that carried out the order.

Let's look at Albert Barre's way of working. Successor to his father, Jean-Jacques Barre, as a general engraver of the Mint, he began to deal in a precise way with the manufacturing processes of the plates in 1858; some tests remain, while he sought to replace the electroplating by stamping. On some sheets, we find the number 10 on the Greek stamps on the back.

All the following issues: Empire imperforate and perforated are obtained by electroplating in sheets of 300, that of Greece by the same process but in sheets of 150 for the 1st order and in sheets of 300 for the second, that of Romania in sheets of 150.

Why, in 1868, would Barre have changed his way of working and producing craftsman's work?

Let's first observe the punch, those of Barre are found at the Postal Museum. It is round and not cut out according to the engraving, according to the manner of Barre no space is provided at the 4 corners to insert the studs bearing the value, we therefore had to transfer to the gutta percha used for electroplating, the values in the 4 corners, they are all different, 2 galvanos were made of 20 stamps per assembly, 4 rows of 5 stamps, one value per line. These galvanos were independent and detachable and joined by a frame. If Albert Barre had been in charge of the work, he would have gathered galvanos of each value and would have reproduced a specific number to make a plate of x stamps multiple of 5 or 10 according to his habit. Nothing was achieved. So there is nothing in Barre's manner, nor in the making of the punch, which is in the style of a medal engraver, nor in the manufacture of the plates.

Therefore, Charles Trotin created Iran's first stamps because it would be extraordinary to see the punch and the electroplating test by the same hand. Mr. André Trotin also told me that as a child, these tests were used to play postman and to stamp the letters with these stickers. There were several hundred tests but no entire plate.

The printing process in Paris was done dry; it consisted of printing cushions made up of superimposed cutouts to relieve the white parts placed under the sheet. I also found cuttings used in their manufacture in a box.

The printing in Tehran was made using a blanket, that is to say, by placing a fine canvas under the sheet.

What press was used in Tehran? Presumably, a small hand press, operated by inexperienced workers.

I won't go into detail on this subject, which could be the subject of a very detailed study by determining the plates used in the blocks of 4 of the 1st issue, but these are very rare and difficult to collect for this study. I have identified all the constant defects on the test plates.

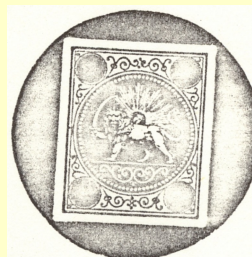
Comparing the examples in my collection, as well as others kindly loaned by other collectors, here is what I found.

1 CH.	violet	use of clichés	I, III, V
2 CH.	green	" "	IV, V
4 CH.	blue	" "	I, II, V
8 CH.	red	" "	IV, V

A note: The accident of the broken upper left corner in the First issue, and even in the tests, occupies position 4.

I hope that you will welcome this little study and that I will be able to convince the members of the Circle.

A communication will also be sent to the French Academy of Philately.



Print of the steel cliché of the first Persian stamp engraved by Charles TROTIN at the request of the Persian government in 1867

*The above letter from Jacques Morin, was received by E. Fraser-Smith. It is hoped to be able to provide an English translation next time.*

*Apparently a limited number of strikes have been made from this die, and one is reproduced on page 374; unfortunately the reproduction is not very good, but should give members some idea of the die.*



## Jacques Morin (1976): The Lion Die

Cher Monsieur

Voici quand même cet article que vous attendez depuis longtemps mais avant d'affirmer quelque chose il faut quand même réfléchir et chercher toutes les raisons possibles.

Je vous ait montré, ainsi qu'à Monsieur Lucas lors du Congrès des Sociétés Philatéliques Britanniques à Enghien, une pièce provenant d'un essai galvanoplastique du coin original.

J'ai eu entre les mains ce coin original ainsi que des essais.

Tout ceci est entre les mains de Monsieur André Trotin, Architecte. Son grand père: Charles Trotin, né à Paris le 23 Septembre 1833 était graveur, il a fait partie de la Commission Impériale des Monnaies et Médailles, où il fût nommé en 1860. On lui doit parmi beaucoup d'autres œuvres, la médaille de l'Inauguration de la Tour Eiffel en 1889 ainsi que celle de l'Hôtel des Postes de Téhéran qui reprend le thème du Lion et du Soleil.

C'est donc bien Charles Trotin qui est le véritable auteur des premiers timbres d'Iran, et voici pourquoi:

Malgré mes recherches, conjuguées avec celles de Monsieur André Trotin nous n'avons retrouvé aucune trace de la commande, il faut dire que les archives ont disparues, à la Monnaie de Paris aucune traces non plus de ce travail. N'oublions pas qu'à cette époque, le grand patron de l'impression des timbres-postes était Mr. Hulot et que tout le matériel servait pour imprimer les T. P., les timbres fiscaux et les timbres quittance! Il ne disposait pas de graveur et l'on se souvient du différent qui a opposé Albert Barre à celui-ci, dont le dernier timbre français a été le 5 Frs de l'Empire. Donc pas question de travailler avec le matériel de la Monnaie déjà avant cette date Albert Barre avait gravé les timbres de Grèce et les avaient fait imprimés par Meyer, rue de Verneuil 1, il grava également les timbres Roumains de 1871, et c'est surmonte une imprimerie privée qui exécuta la commande.

Regardons la façon de travailler d'Albert Barre. Successeur de son père, Jean-Jacques Barre, comme graveur général des Monnaies, il commença à s'occuper d'une façon précise des procédés de fabrication des planches en 1858, il en reste des essais, alors qu'il cherchait à remplacer la galvanoplastie par l'estampage. Sur quelques feuilles on trouve au verso le chiffre 10 des timbres grecs.

Toutes les émissions suivantes: Empire N.D. et dentèles, Empire lauré sont obtenues par galvanoplastie en feuilles de 300, celle de Grèce par le même procédé mais en feuilles de 150 pour la 1<sup>re</sup> commande et en feuilles de 300 pour la seconde, celle de Roumanie en feuilles de 150.

Pourquoi, en 1868, Barre aurait-il changé sa façon de travailler et réaliser un travail artisanal?

Observons d'abord le poinçon, ceux de Barre se trouvent au Musée Postal, Il est rond et pas détourner suivant la gravure, selon la manière de Barre aucun vide n'est prévu aux 4 angles pour y insérer les goujons portant la valeur, on a donc dû reporter sur la gutta percha servant à la galvanoplastie, les valeurs dans les 4 angles, ils sont d'ailleurs tous différents il a été fait 2 galvano, de 20 timbres par assemblage 4 rangées de 5 timbres, une valeur par ligne. Ces galvanos étaient Indépendants et détachables et réunis par un cadrat.

Si Albert Barre avait été chargé du travail il aurait réuni des galvanos de chaque valeur en aurait reproduit un certains nombre pour faire une planches de x timbres multiple de 5 ou de 10 selon son habitude il n'en a rien été.

Donc rien n'est dans la manière de Barre, ni dans la confection du poinçon qui est bien dans le style d'un graveur de médailles, ni dans la fabrication des planches.

C'est donc bien Charles Trotin qui est l'auteur des 1<sup>re</sup> timbres d'Iran car il serait bien extraordinaire de voir réunis dans une même main le poinçon, l'essai galvanoplastique et plusieurs centaines d'essais mais aucune planche entière.

Monsieur André Trotin m'a d'ailleurs confié qu'étant enfant ces essais sont servis à jouer au facteur et à timbre les lettres avec ces vignettes.

Le procédé d'impression à Paris a été fait à sec, il consistait en coussins d'impression composés de découpages superposés pour donner du relief aux parties blanches et que l'on posait sous la feuille.

J'ai d'ailleurs retrouvé dans une boîte des découpages ayant servis à leur fabrication.

L'impression de Téhéran a été faite au blanchet, c'est à dire en mettant une toile fine sous la feuille.

De quelle presse s'est-on servi à Téhéran? Vraisemblablement une petite presse à main, maniée par des ouvriers inexpérimentés.

Je ne m'entendrai pas sur ce sujet, qui pourrait faire l'objet d'une étude très poussée en déterminant les clichés utilisés dans les blocs de 4 de la 1<sup>re</sup> émission, mais ceux-ci sont très rares et difficile à réunir pour faire cette étude.

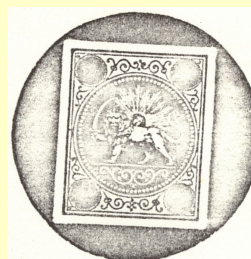
J'ai repérer tous les défauts constants sur les planches d'essais.

En comparant les exemplaires de ma collection, ainsi que d'autres obligeamment prêtés par d'autres collectionneurs, voici ce que j'ai trouvé.

1 CH.	violet	utilisations des clichés	I, III, V
2 CH.	vert	" "	IV, V
4 CH.	bleu	" "	I, II, V
8 CH.	rouge	" "	IV, V

Une remarque: l'accident du coin supérieur gauche cassé se trouve dans la 1<sup>re</sup> émission et même dans les essais, il occupe la position 4.

J'espère que vous ferait bon accueil à cette petite étude et que j'arriverai à convaincre les membres du Cercle. Une communication sera d'autre part envoyée à l'Académie de Philatélie Française.



Tirage du coin acier du premier Timbre de Perse gravé par Charles TROTIN à la demande du gouvernement Persan en 1867.

*The above letter from Jacques Morin, was received by E. Fraser-Smith. It is hoped to be able to provide an English translation next time. Apparently a limited number of strikes have been made from this die, and one is reproduced on page 374; unfortunately the reproduction is not very good, but should give members some idea of the die.*

Fig. 9:

The French and Greek stamps show the names of their countries at the top of their designs, and there is a space below their vignettes for their denominations.

Unlike these designs, the lion stamps have no space for the country's name, and the denominations are placed in circles in the four corners.



1849 France  
Cérès



1860-61 Greece  
Large Hermes Head

However, one may ask, why were five clichés of each denomination made? Was there an intention to create plates consisting of 50 or 100 stamps? Or possibly 150 and 300 stamps? Also, the question arises: Was Charles Troitin contracted officially to make the clichés for the Iranian Post Office?

It is always assumed that four clichés of the five clichés of each denomination were sent to Iran, and the *First Lion* stamps, presently known as the *Baqeri* stamps (fig. 11), were printed in Columbian Press (fig. 10, to the right). However, there is no evidence. Furthermore, if a Columbian press was used to print the *First Lion* stamps (the *Baqeri* issue), why not the other Lion stamps on later dates?

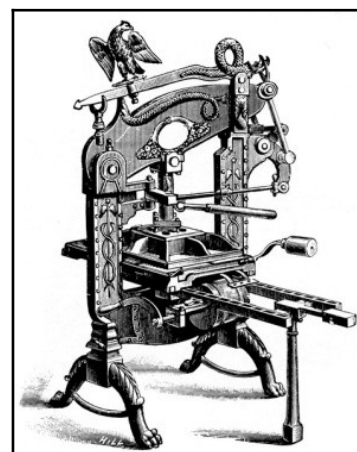


Fig. 11: The Baqeri stamps.



It is more likely that the clichés of the *Baqeri* stamps were made from the images of the essays received by the postal authorities in Teheran. Could that be why the 1876 portrait issue and the following stamps were commissioned to the Austrians?

Nassereddin Shah Qajar, on his official European visit on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1873, accompanied by Mirza Hosein Khan Moshir od-Dowleh Sepahsala (fig. 12, to the left), was impressed by what he had seen at the Vienna World's Fair and sought the help of the



Austrians in reorganising Iranian military and governmental administration.



With exceptional courtesy, Emperor Franz Joseph I (*fig. 13*, to the right) agreed to the Shah of Iran's request and ordered several advisors to dispatch. One of these advisors was Herr Gustav Riederer (1830–1907), later knighted as *Ritter von Dachsberg* (Knight of Dachsberg), a senior official of the Austrian post office (*fig. 14*, below)



According to the Eminent Government of Iran official newspaper report, No. 249, Herr Gustav Riederer arrived in Teheran on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1875, and by 1876 he was appointed as the Postmaster General. In addition to many reforms, including a new set of regulations following the newly formed Universal Postal Union, Herr Riederer ordered a new set of postage stamps to be printed using the *Baqeri* clichés.

To make the stamps legible to Westerners, he had the clichés re-engraved and (Western) Arabic numerals (*fig. 15*) of their values added underneath the lion's body. Of course, four types of each value are recognised based on the shape of the numerals for each denomination.

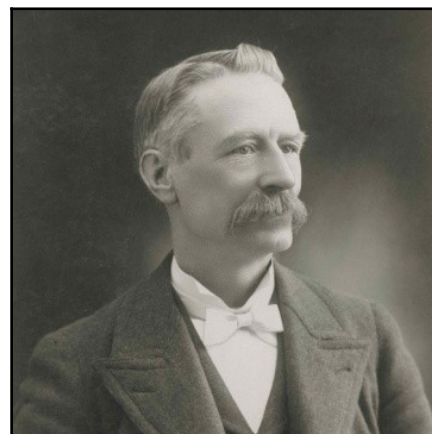


*Fig. 15: The Western Arabic numerals in types A to D.*

Mr. McLachlan was commissioned to print the new stamps, which were printed in horizontal strips of four on thick wove paper. Regrettably, we do not have much information about Mr. McLachlan. However, it seems he was a missionary working in Iran at the time. The only name found based on the missionaries' church records was William McLachlan (*fig. 16*, to the right), born 30<sup>th</sup> May 1840 in Gatelawbridge, Dumfriesshire, Scotland.

Apparently, he worked only for a brief period and printed the first printings of the new Lion stamps.

The reason that I noted the first printing is that there are several more printings in the same manner but with varying qualities that would tell us that several people took up the task of printing in horizontal strips of four during the 1875 and early 1876 era until two denominations of a One Shahi black and a Two Shahis black printed in vertical strips of four in around July of 1876.



The first stamps printed by Mr. McLachlan were incorrectly called the "rouletted" or "*kardi*" issue



in Farsi since many stamps remained imperforate. I believe the first issue stamps should be named after Herr Riederer and should be called the *Riederer* issue.

As I have noted, there were several printings of the first *Riederer* issue, and their printings are quite apparent that they were printed by others than Mr. McLachlan. Example of these printings is the Two Shahis cobalt blue printed with worn-out clichés (figs. 17 and 20). These other printings were never recognised for nearly 150 years.



Fig. 17: Various printings of the 2 Shahis stamp.

Further, as a discovery pointed out to me by Mr. Hadi Mirzai, a brilliant young scholar of Iranian philately, there is a variety of the *Riederer* Two Shahis stamp with a distinctive repair (fig. 18). After a close inspection of the Two Shahis type A, I realised that the damage was inflicted during the printing of the early 1876 vertical sheet issues. The repaired cliché was then used to print the blocks-of-four issues in 1876.

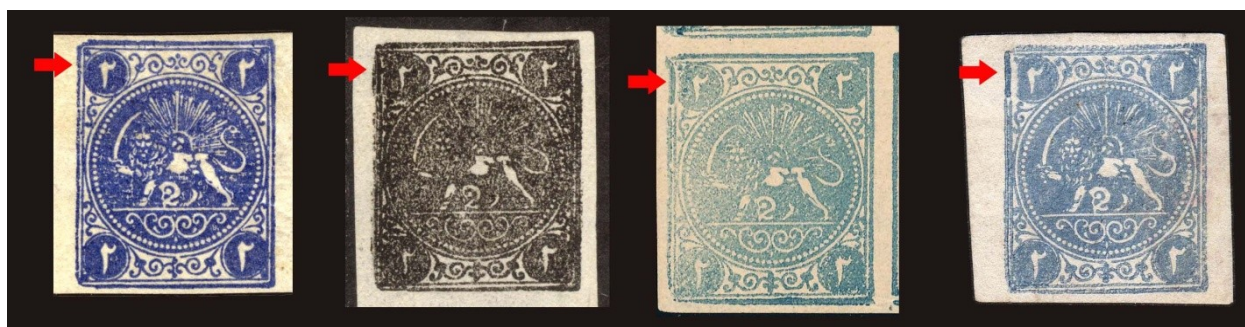


Fig. 18: 1875 issue – vertical sheet 1876 – block-of-four 1876 – New Discovery.



The intriguing question was, where has this variety come from? I remembered that in the collection of the late Mr. Edward Joseph FRPSL, which was awarded a Grand Prix in Istanbul '63, there was on page 24 an imperforate strip-of-three of a Two Shahis stamp (*figs. 19 and 19a*).

By comparing it with the rouletted sheets of the Two Shahis stamps, I concluded that the imperforate strip of three is actually from a different printing method, and the missing type A cut out of this sheet is the same repaired type shown in *fig. 18*.

Therefore, it seems that after the vertical sheets of 1876, there was an attempt to print the Two Shahis stamps in horizontal sheets, which was unsuccessful. The stamps were printed in blocks-of-four by tying the four clichés together with a string, placing the blocks on a platform, and then pressing the paper on the clichés.

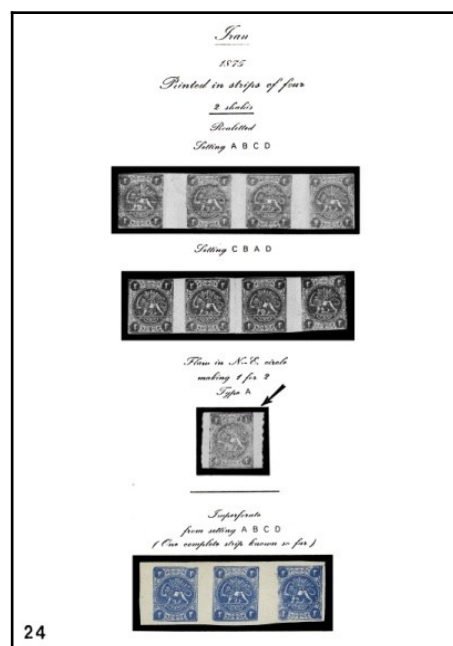


Fig. 19a: Detail from exhibit page 24.



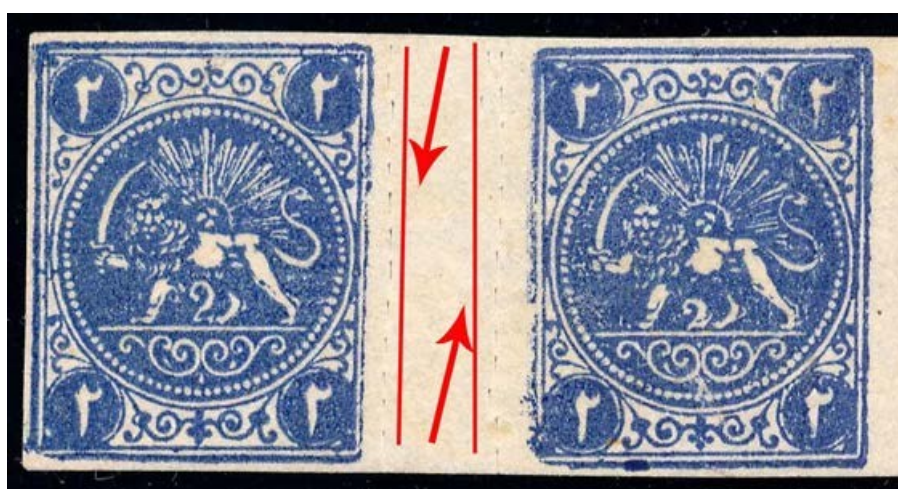
Fig. 19b: Montage of the exhibited strip with a type A stamp added: ca. 1876 unsuccessful experimental printing on thinner paper.





Fig. 20: 1875 McLachlan printing of the 2 Shahis cobalt blue with worn-out clichés on thick paper with gum.

In the following *figs. 21 and 21a*, setting CBAD, the top sheet shows a broader space between the clichés type C and B with two vertical rows of roulettes, while the bottom sheet has a narrower spacing and one vertical row of roulettes. The top sheet is the only one recorded to the present.



*Figs. 21 and 21a*: Setting CBAD: top sheet with broader space and two vertical rows of roulettes; bottom sheet with narrower spacing and one vertical row of roulettes.