

Autonomous Cretan State

Errors and varieties of the 1908 ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint

The operation of the Postal Service of the Autonomous Cretan State (1898-1913) was accompanied by the circulation of common and due stamps, as well as stamps for official use.

In the fall of 1908, following the one-sided proclamation of Union with Greece by the Cretan Government, the latter proceeded with the overprinting of a series of stamp values with the word ΕΛΛΑΣ (Decree of September 26th, 1908, JD), and the first day of circulation of the new stamps was set for the 6th of October, 1908.



1dr. value, First Day of Circulation

The overprinting was performed by using two main **typographical plates**, the so-called **Plate A** and **Plate B**. Each Plate produced stamps with setting and printing errors, as well as overprint varieties.

The need for additional overprinted stamps, especially for those of low value, as well as the lack of sufficient number of unused types, led to the re-setting of Plate B twice. The corresponding plates are known as **Plates C** and **D**.


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Bibliography:

- R. Feenstra & Friends, *CRETE: Postal History, Postage & Revenue Stamps, Coins & Banknotes*, Collectio, 2001
- Konstantinos Choudalakis, "Trying to determine the position of a variety", *Philotelia* no. 736/2022
- Konstantinos Choudalakis, "Autonomous Cretan State: 'Small ΕΛΛΑΣ' overprint Varieties (1908)", *Philotelia* no. 739/2023
- Konstantinos Choudalakis, "Autonomous Cretan State: The 'mutilation' of a typographical character of the overprint 'small ΕΛΛΑΣ' (1908)", *Philotelia* no. 744/2024

Notes:

- The Plate and the position of each error or variety are indicated in brackets below each item.
- T. Karatzas certification marking: 

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Printing and setting errors

The composition of **Plate A** and the initiation of the overprinting process took place immediately after the Decree of September 24.

The first setting error that occurred was that of ΕΛΛΑΣ on **position 30**, which was noticed and corrected relatively quickly at the Government Printing House.

The first values that were overprinted and display the ΕΛΛΑΣ error are those of 5 and 10 lepta (1900).



5l. ΕΛΛΑΣ error (A30)



10l. (1900) ΕΛΛΑΣ error (A30)



During the overprinting process with Plate A the error **_ΛΛΑΣ** on **position 34** also appeared.



10l. (1900) _ΛΛΑΣ error (A34)



Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Printing and setting errors

The use of Plate A resulted in the **missing overprint** printing error on **position 55** as well.



2l. missing overprint error (A55)

In the above item, overprint varieties also appear on **positions 54** and **64**, which will be presented later in the exhibit.

Finally, the use of Plate A also resulted in the error of the **inverted overprint** on the 10l. value of the stamps used for the summon process for petty legal disputes.



10l. stamp for official use, inverted overprint error (A)

It is noted that as the stamps used for the summon process for petty legal disputes were channeled to the State's District Courts and Mortgage Offices for official use and were therefore not accessible to the philatelic public, we often find them in used condition with errors.

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Printing and setting errors

Plate A was used to overprint even the largest dimensional values, after necessary modifications, and was then dismantled. All errors had been corrected before the initiation of this overprinting process.

As the quantity of small values initially overprinted with Plate A was not sufficient for the postal needs of the time, a new plate was constructed with new printing elements (**Plate B**).

The 2 setting errors that resulted from the use of Plate B are those of the **inverted Σ** on **position 35** and of **ΕΛΛΑΣ** on **position 48**.



30l. stamp for official use, inverted Σ error (B35)



10l. (1907) inverted Σ error (B35) TK

It is noted that, unlike the postmark of the post office of ΣΟΥΔΑ (Souda) which appears very often on stamps with private ΕΛΛΑΣ (1908) overprints, the ΚΟΛΥΜΠΑΡΙ (Kolymbari) postmark appears in cases of stamps with genuine overprint errors.



10l. for official use (1908), ΕΛΛΑΣ error (B48)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Printing and setting errors



5l. ΕΛΛΑΣ error (B48)



2l. ΕΛΛΑΣ error (B48)

The use of Plate B also resulted in the following printing errors:

- the **inverted overprint** error on the value of the 30 lepta of the summon process for petty legal disputes stamp, and
- the **missing overprint** error on **position 66** of the value of 10 lepta (1907).



30l. stamp for official use, inverted overprint error and right leg of A cut variety (B25)

The overprint variety **right leg of A cut** will be presented later in the exhibit.



10l. (1907) missing overprint error (B66)



Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Printing and setting errors

The continuing need for overprinting stamps of low values combined with a possible lack of new, unused, typographical elements led to the resetting of Plate B twice, delivering what are known as Plates C and D, in which setting errors were corrected.

The use of **Plate C** did not result in setting or printing errors, only the error of the **inverted overprint** at the value of 1 lepton.



1l. inverted overprint (C), positions 66-67, 76-77

TK

Note that **Plate D** was only used to overprint the value of 5 lepta. There are no errors in this phase of the process.

A final printing error documented is that of the **misplaced overprint**, which appears in both small and large values.



1l. misplaced overprint



1dr. misplaced overprint

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties

With the term overprint variety we usually refer to the cases where the elements of a plate have some sort of deterioration.

Contrary to the errors, the varieties of the ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint of 1908 have not been forged (except in one case) and often help in proving the authenticity of the former.

Below are presented the most widespread varieties, categorized by printing plate.

Plate A

First Λ much broken at top, positions 38 (small sized values), 13 (horizontal stamps) και 70 (2 drachmae value)



50l. first Λ much broken at top
(A38)



1dr. first Λ much broken at top
(A13)



2dr. first Λ much broken at top
(A70)

First Λ less broken at top, position 64 (small sized values)



25l. first Λ less broken at top (A)



10l. (1907) first Λ less broken at top (A64)



1l. postage due stamp,
first Λ less broken at top (A64)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908) Overprint varieties

Head of Σ bending downwards, position 75 (small sized values)



10l. (1900) head of Σ bending downwards
(A75)



50l. head of Σ bending downwards
(A75)



1l. postage due stamp, head of Σ bending
downwards (A75)

Second Λ from a bolder font, position 20 (small sized values)



10l. (1900) second Λ from a bolder font (A20)



50l. second Λ from a bolder font (A20)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties

Top of first Λ split, position 54 (small sized values)



25l. top of first Λ split (A)



2dr. top of first Λ split (A)

Foot of E short, positions 60 (small sized values), 51 (horizontal stamps) και 38 (2 drachmae value)



10l. (1900) foot of E short (A60)



50l. postage due stamp, foot of E short (A60)



2dr. foot of E short (A38)



5dr. foot of E short (A51)

Plate B

The **foot of E short** variety also appears in values overprinted with **Plate B**, on **position 38**.

As far as the object below is concerned and given that:

1. the 10l. value of 1907 was also overprinted with Plate C, the typographical elements of which are the same as those of B, and,
2. the overprint is poor in quality due to wear of the elements from extended use,

the overprint may have resulted from the use of **Plate C**.



10l. (1907) foot of E short (B38/C)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908) Overprint varieties

Imprint of printers bit before E, position 39



5l. inverted Σ (B35) and ΕΛΛΔΣ (B48) errors; foot of E short (B38) and imprint of printers bit before E (B39) varieties



1l. with foot of E short overprint variety (B38) and 2l. imprint of printers bit before E (B39) overprint varieties

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties

Right leg of A cut, position 76



10l. stamp for official use, right leg
of A cut (B76)



30l. stamp for official use, right leg
of A cut (B76)



2dr. postage due stamp, right leg
of A cut (B76)

Second Λ wide, position 80



1l. right leg of A cut (B76) and second Λ wide (B80)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties

Plate C

Head of E cut, position 2 and series of dashes under the overprint, position 14



5l. head of E cut (C2)



1l. series of dashes under the overprint (C14)



10l. (1907) series of dashes under the overprint (C14)



1l. series of dashes under the overprint (C14)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties

During the 2 re-settings of Plate B (Plates C and D), the varieties in the typographic elements were not corrected. In some cases however, they appear in a different position compared to Plate B.

The variety **right leg of A cut** (B76) appears in the case of **Plate C** on **position 69**, but the position of the variety **second Λ wide** remains constant in relation to Plate B (**position 80**).



11. Plate C, right leg of A cut (C69) and second Λ wide (C80) varieties

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908) Overprint varieties

On certain stamp values, Plate C shows deterioration in its typographic elements compared to Plate B.



10l. (1907) right leg of A cut (C69)

Observing the clarity of the typographic elements in the case below, we understand that the quality of the Plate C overprints varies, depending on the sequence of values' overprint.



1l. postage due stamp, right leg of A cut (C69)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties



1l. right leg of A cut overprint variety (C69)

In the last phase of the overprinting process (plate D), the specific typographic element shows the image of 'mutilation' due to further wear.



5l. right leg of A cut overprint variety (D)

Autonomous Cretan State: ΕΛΛΑΣ overprint (1908)

Overprint varieties

In the following item overprint errors and varieties from the use of Plate B appear together.

The item also displays the unrecorded in the philatelic literature for Plate B variety **dot in the lower half of E**, on position 67.



101. (1907) missing overprint error (B66); dot at the bottom half of E (B67) and right leg of A cut (B76) varieties