

### THE FIRST ISSUES OF SERBIA — 1866-1867

The first issues of Serbia appeared in 1866, during the reign of Prince Michael Obrenovich III. Much of this article is based on the monograph *The Postal History and Postage Stamps of Serbia*, by Mirko R. Rasich (Collectors Club of New York, 1979) and *The Principality of Serbia: Postal History and Postage Stamps 1830-1882*, by Dr. Velizar M. Kardosch (self-published 1996). The prominent Spanish auction firm Soler y Llach ([www.soleryllach.com](http://www.soleryllach.com)) gave permission to use the illustrations which appeared in their “The Balkans” Auction of November 19, 2009.

The standard catalogs are quite confusing in how they order these stamps. Thus, I’ve supplied a numbering scheme which makes more sense. These appear in the left column; in the second column within square brackets appear Scott catalog numbers. Values are for hinged original gum or used, sound, very fine examples as of December 2009.

Prince Michael, who assumed the Serbian throne in September 1860, was educated in Paris and traveled extensively throughout Europe during his youth. After four centuries of Turkish rule, Serbia was quite backward in comparison with Western European countries, and Prince Michael wanted to modernize the country as he wrested progressively more autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. By September 1863, essays for postage stamps were submitted for approval. These essays, probably produced by the Printing Works in Belgrade, looked much like the coat of arms newspaper stamps, except they were lithographed and denominated in grosh instead of paras. It was pointed out that these lithographed essays would be easy to forge and so the designs were rejected.

In January 1866 Serbia passed a postal service reorganization act which called for prepayment of postal fees by stamps. Here are the rates:

- regular letters up to 5 drams (16 grams or about half an ounce) cost 20 paras;
- printed matter (which included books, circulars, catalogs, and musical scores) up to 10 drams (32 grams or about an ounce) cost 10 paras; overweight up to 40 drams (128 grams or about four ounces) cost 20 paras;
- the registration fee was 40 paras with an additional 40 paras for a return receipt;
- unwrapped newspapers that originated in Serbia were free of postage;
- wrapped newspapers from abroad to subscribers in Serbia were charged 2 paras for every 10 drams plus an additional 1 para for five drams, the postal fee to be paid in advance.



*The coat of arms issue.  
Two denominations: 1 and 2 paras.*



*The Prince Michael issues.  
Five denominations:  
1, 2, 10, 20 and 40 paras.*

## THE COAT OF ARMS STAMPS — MAY 1866

This last provision was the reason why Serbia issued its first stamps. Implementation of the law was painfully clumsy. A recipient in Serbia of foreign newspapers would forward funds or stamps to a transfer agent at the border. Stamps would be purchased over the counter at the Belgrade post office and several border post offices. The transfer agent would then purchase the stamps (if necessary), affix them to the incoming foreign newspapers, then deposit them in the Serbian mail system where, after having the foreign newspaper fee prepaid, they were carried to the destination city within Serbia. The newspaper stamps were not normally canceled: the law also required that the stamp(s) be affixed partly on the newspaper and partly on the wrapper and thus would be torn upon removing the wrapper! This state of affairs prevailed for several years.

Prepayment on incoming foreign newspapers became compulsory as of May 1, 1866. Since time was of the essence, the powers that be decided that the newspaper stamps would be printed by the State Printing Works in Belgrade instead of using stamps soon to be imported from Vienna, Austria. An engraving of each design was made in wood, then these were used to make 12 lead clichés, which were locked up in a 4 x 3 forme that included ruler lines, continuous from top to bottom and broken horizontally. There were no marginal inscriptions. The stamps were issued imperforate on unwatermarked paper, either colored through or surface colored.

The coat of arms newspaper stamps had four different printings:

- 1st printing: April 26, 1866
- 2nd printing: May 22, 1866
- 3rd printing: November 14, 1866
- 4th printing: December 14, 1866 (1 para only)

Few of the newspaper stamps were cancelled, only a couple are known used on newspapers and only one newspaper bearing a cancelled stamp survives..

### 1 1 para coat of arms:

- |           |   |                |      |
|-----------|---|----------------|------|
| 1.a. [1x] | 1st printing: yellow green on rosy mauve,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....      | 1,000.00 ..... | ---- |
| 1.b. [2b] | 2nd printing: yellow green on pink,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....            | 125.00 .....   | ---- |
| 1.c. [2a] | 2nd printing: olive green on pink,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....             | 175.00 .....   | ---- |
| 1.d. [2x] | 2nd printing: bronze green on pink,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....            | 225.00 .....   | ---- |
| 1.e. [2x] | 2nd printing (?): deep green on lilac rose,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....    | 600.00 .....   | ---- |
| ---       | [---] 3rd printing: dark green on violet rose,<br>thick surface-colored paper ..... | -----          | ---- |
| ---       | [---] 3rd printing: dark green on violet rose,<br>thin surface-colored paper .....  | -----          | ---- |
| 1.f [1]   | 4th printing: deep green on lilac,<br>thin hard paper colored through .....         | 75.00 .....    | ---- |

### 2 2 paras coat of arms:

- |           |  |                |      |
|-----------|--|----------------|------|
| 2.a. [3b] | 1st printing: grayish olive green on pale blue,<br>thick surface-colored paper ..... | 300.00 .....   | ---- |
| 2.b. [3b] | 1st printing: dull grayish green on pale blue,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....  | 1,500.00 ..... | ---- |
| 2.c. [3a] | 2nd printing: red brown on lilac gray,<br>thick surface-colored paper .....          | 1,500.00 ..... | ---- |



*1.f. 4th printing: dark green  
on dark violet rose,  
thin hard paper colored through*



*2.d. 2nd printing: copper red  
on lavender, thin surface-colored paper*

- [---] 2nd printing: chocolate brown on lilac gray,  
thick surface-colored paper..... -----
- 2.d. [3] 3rd printing: copper red on lavender,  
thin surface-colored paper ..... 250.00 -----
- 2.e. [3a] 3rd printing: copper red on lavender,  
thick surface-colored paper..... 350.00 -----
- [---] 3rd printing: red brown on lavender,  
thick surface colored paper..... -----
- [---] copper red on lavender,  
thin surface-colored paper ..... -----
- 2.f. [3x] 3rd printing: chocolate brown on lavender,  
thin surface-colored paper ..... 300.00 -----



*1.b. 2nd printing: olive green  
on pink, thick surface-colored paper*



*2.f. 2nd printing: chocolate brown on lavender, thin surface-colored paper (reduced image)*

**FORGERIES:** The known forgeries are lithographed, while the originals were typographed, so this is an easy way to tell good from bad. One of the forgeries was by Fournier; another, made by Engerlhard Fohl, is crude with a too-thick cross. A third forgery, a photo-lithographed affair, features murky printing and wrong colors.



## PLATING THE COAT OF ARMS STAMPS

The coat of arms stamps are eminently platable. Assembling singles of both denominations into reconstructed sheets is quite feasible and won't totally break your budget. These pictures are diagnostic only; they're not exact. Below the cuts I've noted the salient differences of each position. Also note that the positions are divided from each other by printer's rules. The vertical ones run continuously from top to bottom; the horizontal ones are broken by the vertical rules. See the 2 paras sheet on page 3.

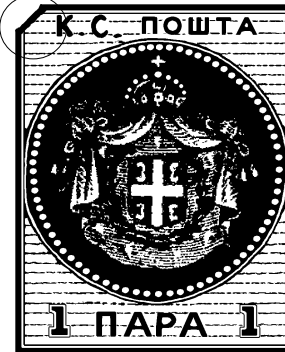
### ONE PARA POSITIONS



**position 1**  
period under left "1"



**position 2**  
inner frame line broken at  
upper right



**position 3**  
mashed upper left corner



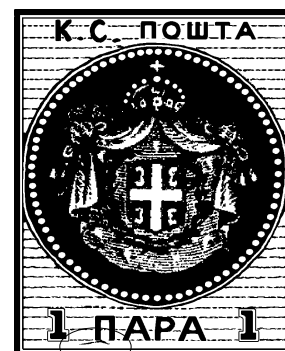
**position 4**  
inside of upper right  
frameline thickened



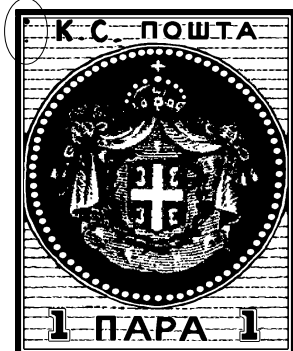
**position 5**  
upper right frameline broken



**position 6**  
notch in upper left frameline



**position 7**  
"OAPA" and dash between  
left "1" and "O"



**position 8**  
colored dots at upper left,  
between lines 1 & 2  
and 3 & 4



**position 9**  
outer frame lines split where  
circle meets them



**position 10**  
dots in both "A"s of lower  
inscription; dots in most of  
the pearls



**position 11**  
thicker horizontal lines than  
normal which touch outer  
framelines; spur at lower  
right corner



**position 12**  
inner right frameline broken  
at several points at upper  
right

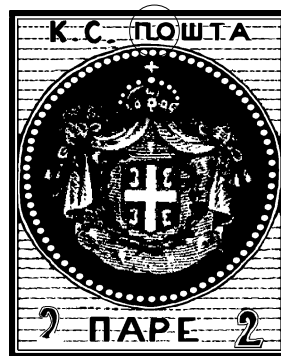
## TWO PARAS POSITIONS



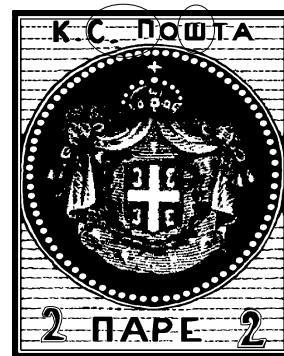
**position 1**  
dot between 5th & 6th letters  
in top inscription, broken  
lower right corner



**position 2**  
dot below 5th letter in upper  
inscription



**position 3**  
3rd & 4th letters at top  
connected



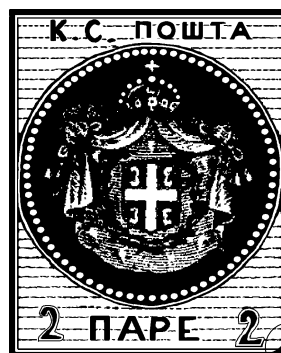
**position 4**  
3rd & 4th letters touch at top,  
top of 5th letter closed &  
looks like rotated "B"



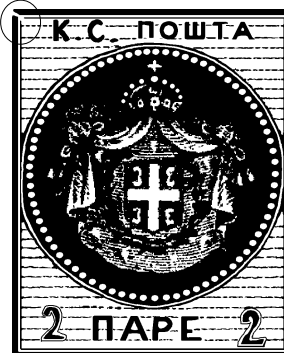
**position 5**  
upper frameline turns down  
at left



**position 6**  
dot before 3rd letter in top  
inscription, some dots in  
pearls



**position 7**  
lower right corner blunted



**position 8**  
framelines broken in upper  
left corner



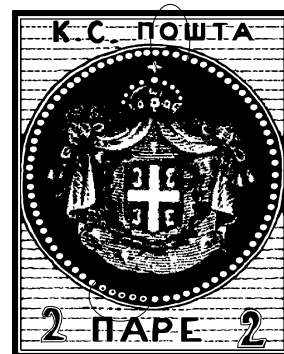
**position 9**  
right leg of "A" longer than  
left, pearl missing at lower  
right



**position 10**  
2 right bars of 5th letter  
connected, circle below "O"  
is broken



**position 11**  
2 first letters of lower  
inscription joined



**position 12**  
swelling of circle below "O,"  
some dots in pearls at  
bottom

## THE PRINCE MICHAEL POSTAGE STAMPS — JUNE 1866

The Prince Michael postage stamps (10, 20 and 40 paras) were designed and first printed in Vienna. They made their appearance in Belgrade sometime in June 1866 and thence were distributed to outlying post offices. The law said postage had to be prepaid starting July 1, 1866. Stefan Raichevich, of the State Printing Works, had the job of obtaining stamps. From Vienna, he brought back with him printed stamps (perforated 12), dies, a perforating machine (gauged 9½) and other equipment to produce subsequent printings in Belgrade.

The first Belgrade printings were made in October 1866 on pelure paper and perforated 9½. The second Belgrade printing (20 and 40 paras) happened between July 1868 and February 1869 and released for use no earlier than November 1868. Most of the second printing stamps were printed on medium-thick wove paper and were perforated 9½. A few of the 20 paras were printed on a soft porous yellowish paper. One hundred clichés of each denomination plus extras were made in Vienna. When the clichés arrived in Belgrade, they were reset with wider spacings between the stamps to accommodate the coarser perforation gauge.

### VIENNA PRINTINGS: all perforated 12 on soft medium paper

#### 3 10 paras:

- 3.a. [4] yellow ..... 1,800.00 ..... 900.00
- 3.b. [4] orange yellow ..... 1,800.00 ..... 900.00
- 3.c. [4x] “b” instead of first “K”  
in “K. СРБСКА ПОШТА” ..... 2,100.00 ..... 1,000.00
- 3.d. [4x] imperforate single ..... 5,000.00
- 3.e. [4x] single imperforate vertically ..... 2,500.00

#### 4 20 paras:

- 4.a. [5] pale rose ..... 900.00 ..... 60.00
- 4.b. [5] rose ..... 900.00 ..... 60.00
- 4.c. [5x] single imperforate vertically ..... unique?
- 4.d. [5x] imperforate single ..... unique?
- 4.e. [5x] perforated 9½ at left ..... unique?
- 4.f. [5x] perforated 14½ ..... unique?

#### 5 40 paras:

- 5.a. [6] blue ..... 1,100.00 ..... 160.00
- 5.b. [6] dark blue ..... 1,100.00 ..... 160.00
- 5.c. [6x] black blue (indigo — rare) ..... 1,500.00 ..... 250.00
- 5.d. [6x] perf 9½ top & bottom, 12 at sides ..... unique?



3.d. 10 paras orange yellow,  
imperforate single



3.a., 4.b. and 5.a. Vienna printings. All have full original gum. As beautiful a set of these as I've ever seen.

## VIENNA PRINTINGS — SOME ERRORS



*3.e. 10 paras yellow,  
single imperforate vertically*



*4.d. 20 paras rose,  
imperforate*



*4.e. 20 paras rose,  
perforated 9½ at left*



*4.f. 20 paras rose,  
perforated 14½*



*5.d. 40 paras blue,  
perf 9½ top and bottom and 12 at sides*



*4.a. 20 paras rose, strip of five, only three strips of five recorded (reduced image)*



**BELGRADE PRINTINGS: all perforated 9½**

**6 10 paras:**

- 6.a. [11] 1st printing: orange, pelure paper ..... 150.00 ..... 200.00  
 6.b. [11] 1st printing: deep orange, pelure paper .... 150.00 ..... 200.00

**7 20 paras:**

- 7.a. [12] 1st printing: pale rose, pelure paper ..... 100.00 ..... 20.00  
 7.b. [12] 1st printing: deep rose (scarce),  
 pelure paper ..... 150.00 ..... 40.00  
 7.d. [9] 2nd printing: pale rose,  
 medium thick paper ..... 25.00 ..... 50.00  
 7.e. [9] 2nd printing: dark rose,  
 medium thick paper ..... 25.00 ..... 50.00  
 7.f. [9x] 2nd printing: dark rose carmine,  
 medium thick paper ..... 30.00 ..... 60.00  
 7.g. [9x] 2nd printing: rose, murky impression  
 on soft buff paper ..... 150.00 ..... 200.00  
 7.h. [9a] 2nd printing: pair, imperf horizontally,  
 medium thick paper ..... 2,000.00 ..... ----  
 7.i. [9x] 2nd printing: strip of 3 imperf between  
 stamps (3 known \*) ..... 4,000.00 ..... ----

**8 40 paras:**

- 8.a. [13] 1st printing: ultramarine, pelure paper ..... 100.00 ..... 50.00  
 8.b. [13a] 1st printing: pair, imperf between,  
 pelure paper (3 known \*, 1 known o) ..... 7,000.00 ..... 8,000.00  
 8.c. [10] 2nd printing: blue, medium thick paper ... 450.00 ..... 600.00  
 8.d. [10] 2nd printing: ultramarine,  
 medium thick paper ..... 450.00 ..... 600.00



*7.h. 20 paras 2nd printing:  
 deep rose red,  
 imperforate horizontally,  
 medium thick paper*

*7.f. 20 paras 2nd printing: dark rose carmine,  
 medium thick paper*



## THE PRINCE MICHAEL NEWSPAPER STAMPS — MARCH 1867

Along with the material for the Prince Michael postage stamps, Stefan Raichevich had brought back dies denominated in 1 and 2 paras for the Prince Michael newspaper stamps. Both printings were done by the State Printing Works in Belgrade. The first printing occurred in July 1866 but was not issued until March 1867. These were printed from formes of 50 (5 x 10) on smooth wove paper of medium thickness and perforated 9½. The second printing dated from sometime in November 1868. They were printed from formes of 100 (10 x 10) on medium wove paper and issued imperforate. One of the delights of the Prince Michael newspaper stamps is the presence of prominent plate flaws. I've included some of the more prominent ones in the listings below. Plate variety pricings are for the commonest shades.

### 9 1 para first printing, perforated 9½:

9.a.	[7]	olive green (yellowish shades)	20.00	----
9.b.	[7x]	"crescent flaw" from Prince's nose	30.00	----
9.c.	[7x]	damaged vignette background from bridge of Prince's nose	30.00	----
9.d.	[7x]	"ПАРА •"	25.00	----
9.e.	[7x]	"ПАРА . : "	25.00	----
9.f.	[7x]	"ПАРА . "	25.00	----

### 10 2 paras first printing, perforated 9½:

10.a.	[8]	yellow brown (shades)	45.00	----
10.b.	[8]	dark brown (shades)	45.00	----
10.c.	[8]	brown olive green (rare)	500.00	----
10.d.	[8x]	"ПАРЕ "	50.00	----
10.e.	[8x]	"ПАРЕ "	50.00	----
10.f.	[8x]	"2 . ПАРЕ"	50.00	----
10.g.	[8x]	"ПАРЕ . ' "	50.00	----
10.h.	[8x]	"ПАРЕ . . . "	50.00	----
10.i.	[8x]	malformed lower right "2"	55.00	----

### 11 1 para second printing, imperforate:

11.a.	[14]	dark green	60.00	----
11.b.	[14x]	dark olive green	65.00	----
11.c.	[14a]	yellowish olive green (rare)	8,000.00	----
11.d.	[14x]	brown olive green (rare)	8,000.00	----
11.e.	[14x]	"crescent flaw" from Prince's nose	65.00	----
11.f.	[14x]	damaged vignette background from bridge of Prince's nose	65.00	----
11.g.	[14x]	"ПАРА •"	65.00	----
11.h.	[14x]	"ПАРА . : "	65.00	----
11.i.	[14x]	"ПАРА . "	65.00	----

### 12 2 paras second printing, imperforate:

12.a.	[15]	yellow brown	100.00	----
12.b.	[15]	red brown	100.00	----
12.c.	[15a]	bister brown on soft yellowish buff paper (rare)	500.00	----
12.d.	[15x]	"ПАРЕ "	105.00	----
12.e.	[15x]	"ПАРЕ "	105.00	----
12.f.	[15x]	"П . ПАРЕ"	105.00	----
12.g.	[15x]	"ПАРЕ . ' "	105.00	----
12.h.	[15x]	"ПАРЕ . . . "	105.00	----
12.i.	[15x]	malformed lower right "2"	110.00	----



11.a. second printing, dark green



11.d. second printing, brown olive green, "ПАРА •" plate variety



12.a. second printing, yellow brown, exceptional condition & margins



*9.d. first printing,  
olive green, “ПАРА •”*



*10.d. first printing,  
yellow brown, “ПАРФ”*



*10.e. first printing  
yellow brown, “ПАРФ”*



*12.d. second printing,  
yellow brown, “ПАРФ”*

## QUANTITIES PRINTED

1 para coat of arms .....	34,300	10 paras Belgrade, perf 9½ .....	53,900
1st printing .....	2,040	20 paras Belgrade, perf 9½ ....	510,700
2nd printing .....	18,300	1st printing .....	309,900
3rd printing .....	6,000	2nd printing .....	200,800
4th printing .....	10,000	40 paras Belgrade, pef 9½ .....	149,700
2 paras coat of arms .....	30,304	1st printing .....	107,900
1st printing .....	1,944	2nd printing .....	41,800
2nd printing .....	18,360	1 para Pr. Michael newspaper ..	87,500
3rd printing .....	10,000	1st printing, perf 9½ ...	60,600
10 paras Vienna, perf 12 .....	12,000	2nd printing, imperf ....	26,900
20 paras Vienna, perf 12 .....	200,000	2 paras Pr. Michael newspaper	82,850
40 paras Vienna, perf 12 .....	20,000	1st printing, perf 9½ ...	59,050
		2nd printing, imperf ....	23,800

## FORGERIES OF ALL THE PRINCE MICHAEL STAMPS

Most of these are not particularly deceptive. All the genuine stamps were typographed, while the majority of forgeries were lithographed. Genuine stamps of all denominations show the “П” of “ПОШТА” in the top inscription joined, so it looks like “П” rather than “II.” If you’re patient, you can count the pearls: all genuine stamps have 77 pearls, a feature not duplicated on any of the forgeries.

On genuine 10 paras, the serif on the top of the “1” in “10” in the value tablet is usually missing or deformed.

On genuine 20 paras, there are often two tiny dots below the “2” in “20” in the value tablet. Some, however, only show one dot and a few positions show none.

On genuine 40 paras, the “4” in “40” in the value tablet is usually detached (so the number looks like “4 vertical dash 0.”) On later printings and on some positions, the malformed serif has worn away.

Cancelled 1 and 2 paras Prince Michael newspaper stamps should only be bought with certificates!