DUTTIA STATE: AN UNRECORDED VARIETY HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

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The Collectors Club Philatelist, Vol. 105, No. 4, July–August 2026, pp. 212–215

SYNOPSIS

Purpose and Importance

The early stamps of Duttia State are among the most distinctive and challenging issues of the Indian Princely States. The first typographed stamps appeared in 1894 and featured the Hindu god Ganesh. Produced in very limited numbers, these early issues have long attracted specialist interest and include some of the great rarities of Indian States philately.

This article was prompted by the re-examination of an exceptional **1896 ½ Anna black on blue-green stamp**, sold by Stanley Gibbons in May 2021 for **£69,600** and certified as **SG5**. Despite its established identification and remarkable realization, close comparison with other Duttia material revealed a small but significant design difference that had previously escaped recognition. The purpose of the study was therefore to determine whether this celebrated stamp was actually a normal SG5—or evidence of an **unrecorded printing variety**.

The Discovery

The key evidence lies in the orientation of the **trefoil or clover ornament in the upper-left corner**. On the recognized Trefoil issues, including SG5, this ornament is upright, while the ornaments in the other three corners are positioned at approximately 45 degrees. On the 2021 example, however, **all four corner ornaments are angled at approximately 45 degrees**.

Comparison with other Duttia material revealed something particularly significant: this symmetrical arrangement corresponds to the design found on **Duttia postal stationery indicia**. Further examination identified another distinguishing feature. The Hindi characters forming the denomination “Anna” are evenly aligned on the newly identified variety and the postal stationery indicium, whereas the lettering on the regular Trefoil issue is unevenly aligned.

The paper provides an important distinction. Duttia postal stationery was printed on **laid paper**, while the newly identified adhesive is printed on **blue-green wove paper**, consistent with the Trefoil adhesive issues. This supports the interpretation that the item is not simply a postal stationery cut-out, but a genuine adhesive produced from a different or modified die.

Why the Discovery Matters

The evidence suggests that a die prepared or modified for postal stationery may subsequently have been used for a **small printing of adhesive stamps**. At least two additional examples exhibiting the same characteristics were examined, demonstrating that the 2021 stamp was not an isolated anomaly. The authors therefore propose recognition of the stamp as **"SG5 var."**, arising from the use of a modified or transferred die—a **"cliché error."**

The significance of the discovery is amplified by the rarity of the underlying issue. The article notes that **fewer than four examples of SG5 are believed to exist**; an identifiable variety arising from a separate or modified cliché must consequently represent an exceptionally scarce element of Duttia's early printing history.

Contribution to Duttia Philately

This study demonstrates how even a celebrated rarity—expertised, catalogued and sold at a major international auction—can reveal new information when examined through comparative philatelic research. The discovery resulted not from a dramatic difference in denomination, color or paper, but from careful observation of **corner-ornament orientation, lettering alignment, paper and related postal stationery designs**.

By bringing together adhesive stamps and postal stationery, the article proposes a previously unrecognized relationship between the two and identifies a distinct variety that had remained **"hidden in plain sight."**

More broadly, the study illustrates an essential principle of specialist philately: **catalogue classifications are not necessarily the end of the story**. Careful observation, comparison of surviving examples, and willingness to reassess accepted identifications can continue to reveal new discoveries even among some of the best-known rarities of the Indian Princely States.