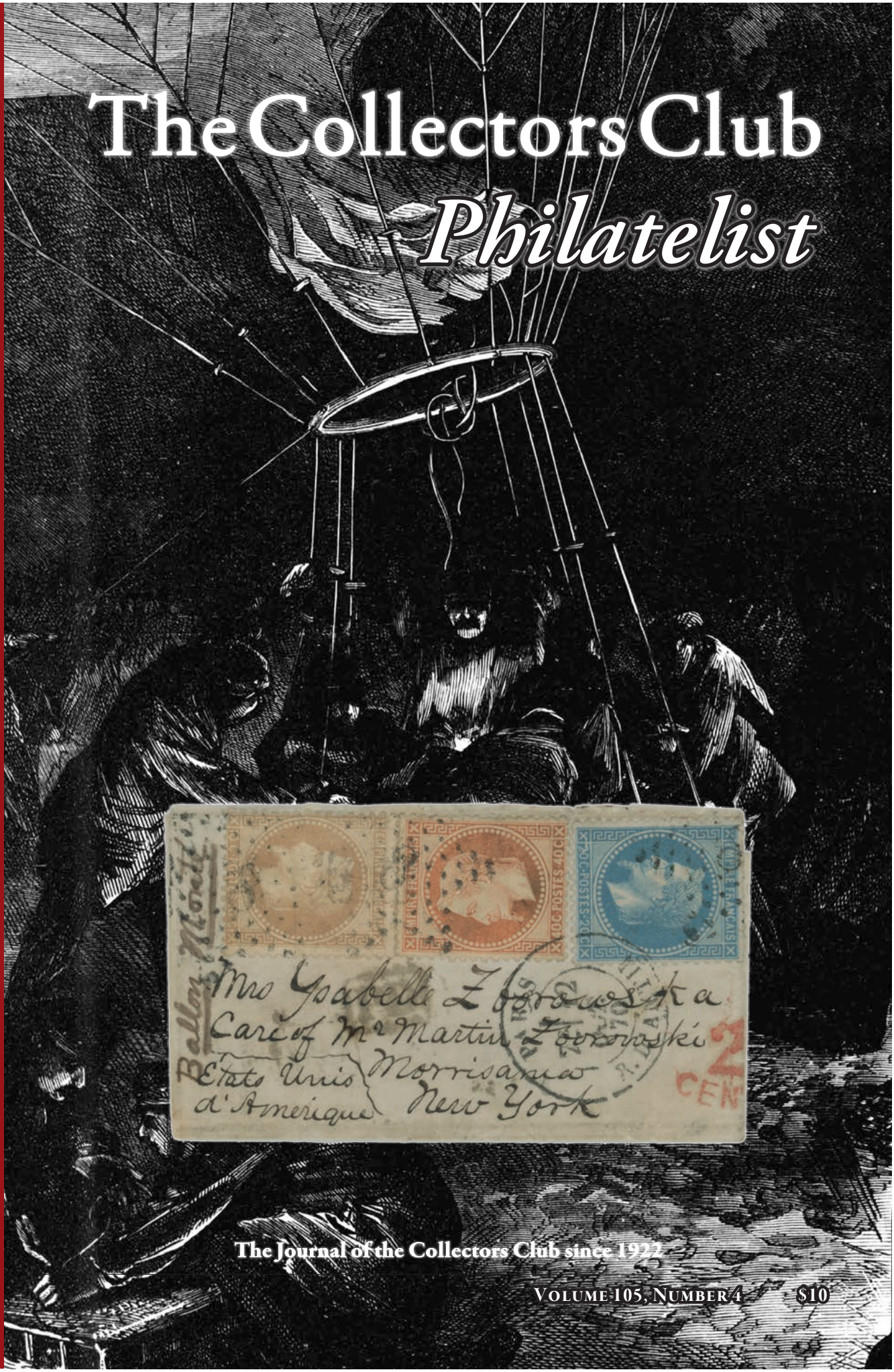
The Journal of the Collectors Club since 1922. July-August 2026

The Collectors Club Philatelist



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The Collectors Club *Philatelist*

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Front cover: 1870 Ballon Monté miniature envelope carried out of Paris on the balloon *Le Godefroy-Cavaignac*, and eventually delivered to what became the Bronx in New York City. The background image is derived from the front page illustration, *Night Ascent of A Balloon, Chemin de Fer Nord, Paris* of The Graphic, published in England on January 21, 1871. See page 204.

Guidelines for submitting articles for publication in *The Collectors Club Philatelist* are available from the Editor.

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Duttia State: An Unrecorded Variety Hidden in Plain Sight

Vivek S. Chopra and Danforth Walker RDP FRPSL



Figure 1. Duttia State location.



Figure 2. The Duttia 1896 ½ Anna black on blue-green wove paper with control handstamp, SG5, which was sold as lot 272 in the Stanley Gibbons auction on May 11, 2021. All corner shamrocks are set at 45 degrees angles. (Image source: Museum of Philately, https://www.museumofphilately.com/rarity/315)

The former Princely State of Duttia (today known as Datia), located in central pre-1947 India (Figure 1), is believed to have first produced stamps in 1893, based on four examples in the H. D. S. Haverbeck sale, which consist of the state's control stamp applied within a red ruled outline with manuscript inscriptions. The first typographed stamps appeared in 1894, and these as well as all subsequent issues feature the Hindu god Ganesh. The first typeset issues, which were produced in very limited numbers, have fascinated and intrigued collectors of the Indian Princely States.

In May 2021, a remarkable Duttia stamp achieved a record realization of £69,600, establishing a benchmark for the Indian States. Accompanied by a BPA certificate identifying it as the 1896 "½ Anna Black on Blue-Green, SG5", the stamp was widely accepted as a classic rarity within the established framework of Duttia philately (Figure 2).

Yet, as is often the case in our field, closer scrutiny reveals that even the most celebrated items may warrant re-examination. This paper revisits this important example and proposes that it is not a standard SG5, but rather a previously unrecognized die (cliché) variety—SG5 var. SG5 is believed to be extremely rare, with fewer than four examples known to exist, so one can only imagine the rarity of this SG5 var.

The starting point of this reassessment lies in a seemingly small, yet highly significant detail: the orientation of the "clover" (or "trefoil") ornament in the upper left corner. In the accepted "Trefoil" series (so called because of the use of repeated three-leaf ornaments to form the stamp's border), the second issue design of Duttia which includes SG5, the upper left clover is aligned vertically, while the other three corner ornaments are positioned at approximately 45 degrees (Figures 4a-4d show various examples from the same series). However, the 2021 example clearly shows the upper left clover also inclined at 45 degrees (Figure 3), i.e., matching the orientation of the other three.



SG5 alignment



Regular Trefoil issue alignment

Corner ornament upright.



"SG5 var" alignment



Stationery indicium alignment.

Corner ornament at 45°.

Figure 3. Corner ornament alignment varitions



Figure 4a.



Figure 4b.



Figure 4c.



Figure 4d.

Figures 4a--d Trefoil issues. (a) SG4a, ¼ anna without control handstamp, black on orange wove paper. (b) SG5a, ½ anna without control handstamp, black on blue green wove paper. (c) SG6, 2 annas black on yellow wove paper. (d) SG7, 4 annas black on rose wove paper. All show the original trefoil alignment to be at 45 degrees angles in three corners except for at top left which is upright at 90 degrees. Also note the deeper shade of blue-green in the stamps in Figures 2 and 7.

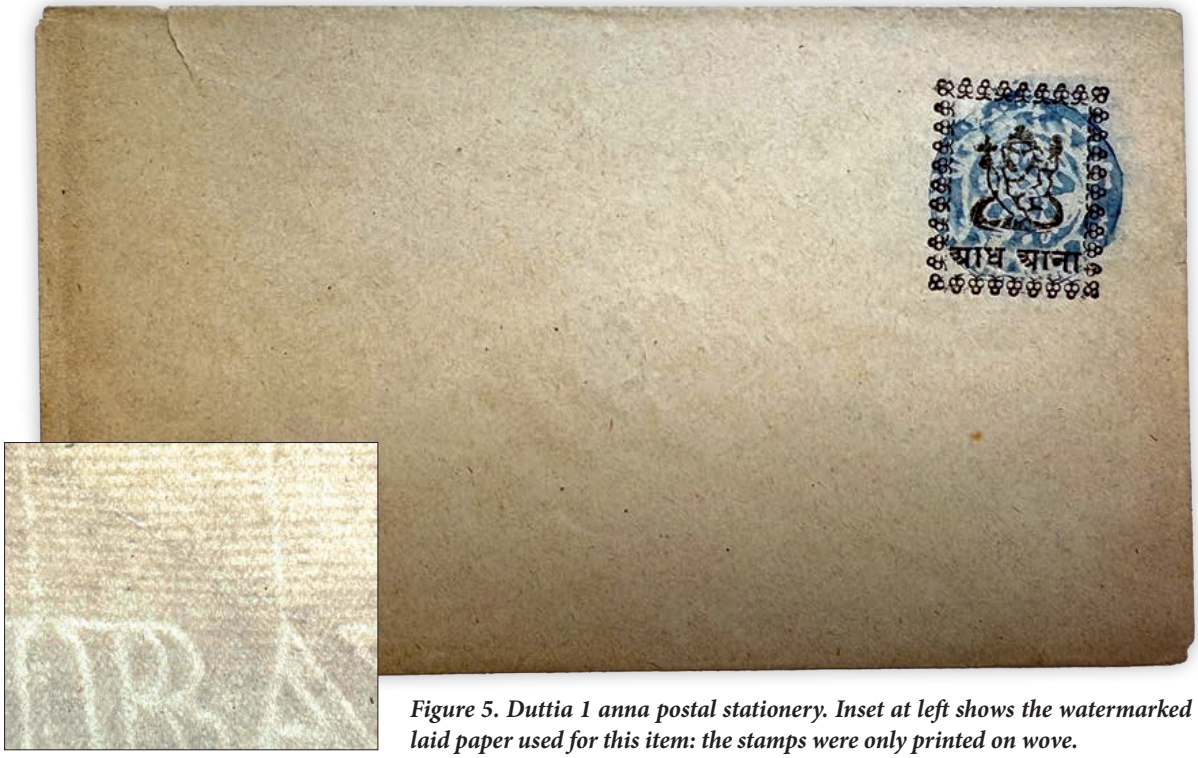

Figure 5. Duttia 1 anna postal stationery. Inset at left shows the watermarked laid paper used for this item: the stamps were only printed on wove.

This feature corresponds precisely with the design seen on Duttia postal stationery indicia, where all four corner ornaments are symmetrically angled. Duttia stationery (Figure 5), however, was printed on laid paper (Figure 5 inset), unlike the wove paper used for the stamps.

Several points support the interpretation that the die originally prepared (or modified) for postal stationery was later used to print adhesive stamps:

- Duttia postal stationery is consistently found printed on local foolscap laid paper, typically watermarked (Figure 5 inset).
- The postage stamp under discussion is printed on bluish-green wove paper, consistent with the Trefoil issues (SG4a to 4d).
- Examples of Duttia postal stationery bearing the above design printed on wove paper have not been recorded.
- The last four Hindi characters for the denomination "Anna" are perfectly aligned at the top, whereas the first two of these characters of the word in the Trefoil issues are out of alignment with the others (Figure 6).



***SG5 recorded** example.* *Regular Trefoil issue.* *Lettering not level at top.*

"SG5 var" new discovery. *Stationery indicium.* *Lettering level at top.*

Figure 6. The distinct differences in lettering alignment.



Figure 7. One of the two other recorded examples of SG5 var, showing the angled top left corner ornament and the even alignment of the Hindi characters for "Anna".

It should also be pointed out that the blue-green shade of paper used for SG 5var is a deeper shade than that seen on typical SG5 and SG5a printings.

These features are consistent across at least two additional examples examined by the author (one of them shown in Figure 7).

It is plausible that the original die used for the second issue exhibited an asymmetrical clover design, later corrected for postal stationery use. This corrected die appears to have been reused for a small number of adhesive printings, giving rise to the variety now proposed as SG5 var.

It is important to acknowledge that the original classification of the 2021 example as SG5 was intuition and experience based on paper and denomination. However, philately evolves through careful observation and comparative study.

The new discovery sold in May 2021, and with the additional examples now known it should therefore be regarded as a distinct variety—SG5 var.—arising from the use of a modified or transferred die, a "cliché error".

This reassessment underscores the importance of specialist philatelic knowledge and a keen eye for detail!

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