

Cinderella Time: **Azerbaijani Forgeries**

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One of the big problems in our hobby is the profusion of forgeries of older postage stamps. There are basically two types of forgeries. In the first instance, forged stamps were printed to defraud the post office. However, most forged stamps were produced to fleece stamp collectors.

The latter case is very appropriate in describing the forgeries of Azerbaijan's first stamp issue. In 1919, the country became an independent republic and this was celebrated by releasing ten different stamps (Scott 1-10). There were two printings. The one on thin greyish paper is quite common while the printing on white paper is rather scarce.

Azerbaijan's first stamp set remains plentiful and catalogue valuations are quite modest. It is thus rather surprising that it has been forged. The originals were lithographed by Derrndorf in Baku; it is not known who produced the forgeries.

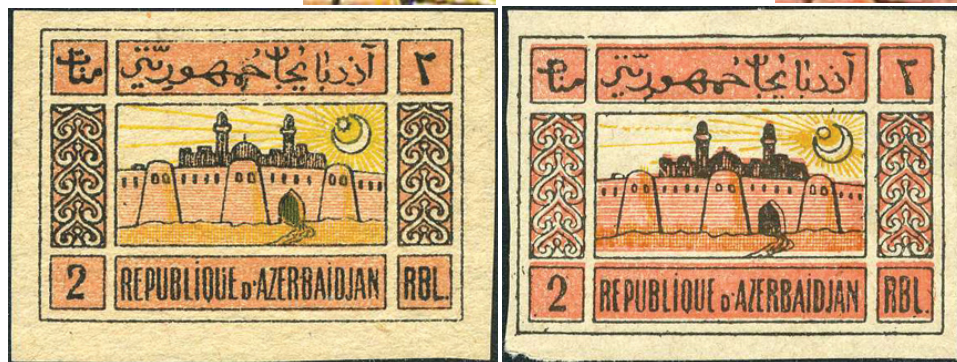
As is often the case stamp catalogues are not really helpful although they sometimes note that forgeries exist.

Shown here are two copies of the 2-rouble stamp which is supposed to depict Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

Figure 1



Figure 2



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The first stamp (Figure 1) shows all the characteristics of a genuine stamp. The easiest test is to check the star and crescent. The star is located right in the middle between the two tips of the crescent. Also the points of the star are clearly defined.

Figure 2 is a forged stamp. The star is now off centre and the star's points are blunt if they exist at all. [For an even closer look, please use your pdf magnifier tool. JFD.]

The forgeries were printed on white paper (most genuine stamps were printed on greyish paper).

The above characteristics are valid for the 2, 5 and 10-rouble values. If, when checking your own stamps, you discover that one of these values is forged it can be safely assumed that the remainder of the set is far from genuine.

Finding a genuine set is probably far more difficult than what most collectors expect, as the forgeries are extremely common. I suppose that the difficulty in deciding what is genuine and what is not certainly has affected the catalogue values negatively.

There is an excellent guide graphically illustrating how to distinguish between early genuine stamps and forgeries of Azerbaijan. It was compiled by Andrew Hall in 1983 as part 11 of the *Forgery & Reprint Guide* published by J. Barefoot Ltd, York, England.