

## BOGUS "MUESTRA" OVERPRINTED KING ALFONSO XIII STAMPS OF 1898

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In a comprehensive survey of the literature, auction catalogs and personal collections, Peterson (1988) discussed and cataloged reported and extant copies of specimens of the postal and newspaper issues of the Philippines during the Spanish period. He described and characterized five types of "Muestra" and "Ministerio de Ultramar Muestras", i.e. "Specimen", overprints corresponding to specific "host" stamps or issues (see reference). In the case of the King Alfonso XIII series of 1898, only the Peterson Type 5 "Muestra" overprint is known to occur on all the values issued.

Although there have been occasional references in the literature of possible specimen forgeries on "host" stamps of other issues, nothing has been mentioned about the existence of bogus "Muestra" overprints on the King Alfonso XIII stamps of 1898. This article constitutes the first report of this type of specimen forgery. It is primarily intended to inform Philippine collectors and alert Spanish Philippine specialists about this counterfeit. This is quite timely, since classic and esoteric materials have recently become increasingly popular.

The bogus overprinted stamps known to date include: 1m, 2m, 3m, 8c, 20c and 60c denominations - Scott Nos. 192, 193, 194, 203, 206 and 208, respectively. These were obtained from two lots at a recent auction held in Manila. Interestingly, one of these lots also contained one copy of the Puerto Rican 5-milesima stamp (Scott No. 139) with the same bogus overprint as found on the Philippine counterparts. Perhaps the unknowing and careless counterfeiter failed to check this stamp, thinking it was Philippine Scott No. 196, and overprinted it like the rest.

As a rule of thumb, the genuineness of a stamp and, in this case, its overprint, can be ascertained by comparing the questionable copies with those known to be genuine, or by submission to and confirmation by an expert or experts. Both approaches were used in this situation.

By casual examination, the bogus "Muestra" overprints are fresher than the "host" stamps. This is an indication that the overprinting was

a more recent event than the production of the stamps themselves. By contrast, both overprints and "host" stamps looked equally fresh on the genuine specimens. There were no detectable differences between the bogus and genuine specimens in terms of the color of their overprints. The appearance of the gum, however, differed considerably. The bogus specimens showed wavy and yellowish to brownish gum, while the genuine ones consistently have homogeneous white gum. Although these observations may be subjective (condition of host stamps may vary according to age and care), these features may prove to be helpful in identifying the bogus from the real ones.

The length of the overprint was measured, using a 6X or 10X magnifier with millimeter calibrations or a combination of a millimeter scale and a magnifier. While the genuine overprint measures approximately 13mm across, the bogus one is a bit longer, 14mm from "M" to "A" at their outermost base tips. The most crucial part of the scrutiny, however, is the examination of variations in the forms and outlines of the letters comprising the bogus overprint when compared to the genuine, especially the letters "R", "A" and "M", in that order of importance. On the bogus specimen, the short leg of "R" emanates from the top loop as a straight diagonal line; on the genuine overprint, this same leg of "R" forms an arch before leaving the top loop on a downward stroke. The letter "A" of the bogus overprint has a large triangle in it. The letter "M" has less discernible differences. The inner right arm of "M" on the bogus is skewed more towards the left to form an uneven angle at the middle depression; the base of its right leg has a crude half-serif. These defects are absent on the genuine. (see Table I)

Using these as guides, collectors will find it easy to detect the bogus specimens. It is quite possible that these counterfeit specimens came into the market very recently; as recently as 1989 or 1990.

If anyone has any additional bogus specimens, please contact the IPPS.

### Reference

Peterson, Donald. "Specimens of the Spanish Philippines". Philippine Philatelic News, Vol. X, No. 2, April, 1988.



1 milesima stamp  
with bogus overprint



Genuine 3 milesima  
specimen



Puerto Rican 5  
milesima stamp with  
same bogus overprint

## MUESTRA

Bogus

## MUESTRA

Genuine

### Bogus

1. Measures 3mm X 14mm, from "M" to "A".
2. Middle depression of "M" unevenly angled; crude half-serif at bottom of right leg.
3. Short leg of "R" joins with top loop diagonally.
4. Broad letter "A" with large triangle.

### Genuine

1. Measures 3mm X 13mm.
2. Well-formed letter "M".
3. Short leg of "R" archs downwards.
4. Slim "A" with small triangle.