

# The Daily Stamps of the Independent Republic of Lithuania since 1990 - Introduction and Systematisation

Martin Bechstedt, Bargtheide (D) and Bernhard Fels, Soest (D)

Do you like playing detective? Well, collecting and sorting Lithuania's stamps from 1990 onwards requires detective-like verve. The variety of different types, local deviations from standard types and often unattractive, poorly legible cancellations challenge the detective in you.



Fig. 1 Clear and inferior strikes of standard stamps from VILNIUS

The confusing variety of stamps would be understandable for the first years of the regained independence, but not for the later years. Parallels to the flood of types of the first republic, which was difficult to sort out, suggest themselves.

Picture 2, A "colourful mixture" of modern Lithuanian stamps



The following presentation is intended to encourage you to occupy yourself with this field of collecting. In recent years, Bernhard Fels, Daumantas Kiulkys and other philatelists in particular have collected, sifted and processed material with the help of electronic data processing. The work is now well advanced and our goal partly realised: **An ordered digital database of Lithuania's modern stamp illustrations has appeared on the Internet.** It contains overview tables (Excel) of the postmarks of all Lithuanian postal locations in alphabetical order and, where available, usage data and images of postmarks as well as covers. First of all, the rubber postmarks from 1994 onwards are included, with more than 6000 images. This database can be viewed by anyone via a link on the website of the ArGe BALTIKUM and, if desired, downloaded to one's own hard disk. In the future, the database can be expanded indefinitely with images of newly discovered postmarks. If you find new stamps, please send images as scans of 300 or better 600 dpi to the authors at [bfels@gmx.de](mailto:bfels@gmx.de) or [m.bech@t-online.de](mailto:m.bech@t-online.de). We will take care of the insertion. This would create a basis and hopefully also motivation for philatelists to deal with the topic "Lithuanian postmarks from 1990 onwards".

This is a **brief introduction** to the subject of "Lithuania's daily postmarks since 1990". If you are interested, you can get more information on over 100 pages in our **handbook** (references at the end of this introduction).

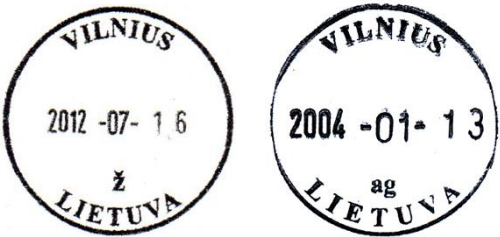
### **Systematization of Lithuanian daily postmarks from 1990 onwards**

For the typification of the day stamps, which we have carried out here for the first time, we have applied certain distinguishing criteria: Material of the stamping devices (metal or rubber), design, diameter, font and size, length of the country name LIETUVA, date lines, postal locations and distinguishing letters (Unterscheidungsbuchstaben=UB) of the stamps. On the basis of the large digital database of B. Fels, we were able to group the Lithuanian date stamps into seven types, each of which is distinguished from the others by clearly identifiable characteristics. What simplifies the classification: All Lithuanian day stamps are single-circle stamps. This article describes the characteristic features of each type of stamp that clearly define it and distinguish it from the other types. A complicating factor was that the rubber cancellations lost their shape slightly until about 2008. Figure 3 shows an extreme example. With the introduction of the new rubber stamp type 6 in the same year, the "wild time" of the stamp shapes seems to be over.



**Sub-types:** As with the stamps of the First Republic, variations occur within a type. Postmarks with characteristic, easily recognizable variations within a type are grouped together as subtypes a, b, c, d. The most frequent postmarks of a type have the letter a,

so to speak. The example in Figure 4 shows two rubber postmarks of type 5 with a diameter of 30 mm and hyphens in the date line, type 5a with normal figures (left) and type 5b (right) with an exchanged larger date line.



**Type 1: Provisional stamps, apertured exclusively by removing Soviet features**

In 1990, **Soviet stamps continued to be used unchanged.** As long as Lithuania belonged to the USSR under international law, uniform stamps with Soviet state symbols were to be used in accordance with the rules of the Universal Postal Union. On March 3, 1990, the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport issued the first official regulations on the use of Soviet state symbols. The **adaptation of stamping devices** was explosive because the Soviet postal administration could have declared the stamps to be counterfeit or illegal if the sovereign symbols had been removed and thus had a reason to stop foreign postal traffic



Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1990, the state symbol with hammer and sickle in a five-pointed star and the designation CCCP were removed from the stamps in some places as a provisional emergency measure, as were other Cyrillic inscriptions to varying degrees (Figure 5 and Figure 6). This adaptation, i.e. adjustment of stamps, was obviously not subject to any standard. There are numerous variants of stamps with different degrees of adjustment.



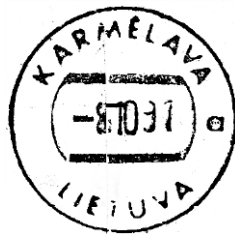
**Type 2 and 3: Standard stamps reworked (altered) from former Soviet metal stamps**

In 1990, during the transition period to Lithuanian independence, the state postal administration had a large number of old Soviet steel stamps with a diameter of 30 mm radically reworked by completely removing all inscriptions and inserting new Lithuanian designations.

All that remained of the original stamp plate was the outer ring and the date line enclosed by a **shield, type 2, or short bars, type 3.** Now you can read Lithuanian place names and the country name LIETUVA in Latin script and in two different fonts, Fig. 7:



**Type 2a**  
BLOCK PICTURE



**2b**  
CHALKBOARD



**3a**  
BLOCK PICTURE



**3b**  
CHALKBOARD

Special features such as an unclear adjustment, a twisted outer ring or a smaller diameter can occur. In the transitional period, variants with a different appearance were also produced. For example, various departments of the Kaunas post office used special office stamps. Occasionally, stamps of types 2 and 3 also appear with remaining Cyrillic distinguishing letters.

**Type 4: TRODAT rubber stamp from 1994, date line without dashes, LIETUVA 17-20 mm long, diameter 29-30 mm**



From 1994 onwards, the reworked metal stamps were replaced by rubber stamps from the TRODAT company, Figure 8. They have a uniform format with serif lettering, a diameter of 29-30 mm and initially also a clear, easily legible stamp mark. The country name LIETUVA is 19-20 mm long. In contrast to the following type 5, there were hardly any variants. Soon, however, these stamps deformed during use and produced the notorious "eggs". Experts suspect that oil-based ink was used for the rubber stamps, which is only suitable for steel stamps. Oil causes rubber to swell gradually. Ovoid stamps and divergent stamp colours (violet, green) occur in types 4 and 5.

Figure 9 Defective and deviating stamp colours for type 4



**Type 5: From 1999 / 2000, newly produced rubber stamps similar to type 4, now with hyphens in the date line before and after the month.**

Figure 9 Defective and deviating stamp colours for type 4 While type 4 postmarks have a uniform appearance, type 5 postmarks - with the same layout - **vary more in individual pictorial elements.** These differences suggest that the **purchasing was mostly decentralised.**

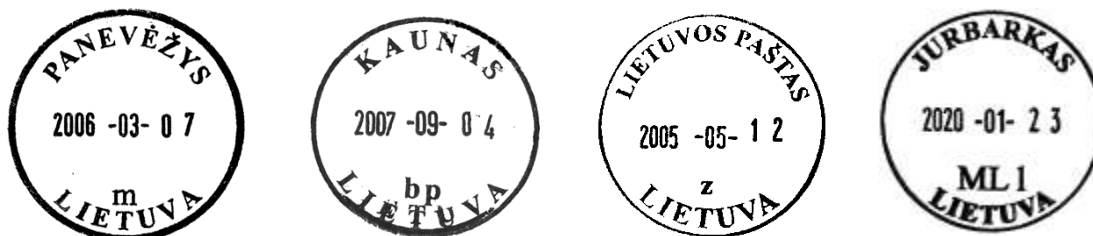
All three subtypes 5a, 5b and 5c occur simultaneously after 2000.

**Type 5a: Date line with hyphens, LIETUVA 16.5-22 mm long, diameter 29-30 mm**

Type 5a is the most common. Its characteristics correspond to those of type 4, only now with hyphens. The earliest known stamp is dated October 6, 1999, Fig. 10. The majority are found with stamp impressions from 2000 and later.



**Variants of type 5a** with slightly different letter shapes and sizes occur. A total of 11 variants are known, four of which are shown in Figure 11. The stamps for the courier service of the Post Office bear the lettering "Lietuvos Paštas", those of the mobile rural delivery service the additional identifier "ML" next to the place name.



**Type 5b: From 2003, date bridge with hyphens now higher and wider**



Figure 12 This type of stamp is also not dimensionally stable. Oval-shaped stampings are shape are frequent (right).



### Type 5c: Diameter of 32-33 mm instead of 29-30 mm

Uniformly larger diameter of 32-33 mm; dimensions of the date line, size and shape of the letters vary. Figure 13 shows three examples, varying in letter and digit sizes.



### Type 6: COLOP rubber stamps in new design with shorter country name from 2008 onwards

About two years after the privatisation of the Lithuanian Post Office (2.1.2006), new rubber stamps from the Austrian company COLOP came into use from 2008 onwards, more pleasing and modern in appearance. The distinguishing features of this type are shorter distances between the letters and thus a shorter length of the country designation **LIETUVA with 15 mm** instead of 18-20 mm as before. These rubber stamps are more dimensionally stable than their predecessors. Type 6 comes in the five subtypes 6a - 6e.

#### Predecessor from 2007:

In Veliuona, a stamp with the appearance of type 6 but with sans serif block letters and more widely spaced letters was used as early as January 2007, so far the only known example (Fig. 14.1):



**Self-inking stamp of the company COLOP (Wels/Austria) for new types 6 & 7**

Printer R 30 dater (diameter 30 mm), "Printer Line Dater Round" product series

Figure 14.3: Working method using the VILNIUS 61 g stamping device (photos Ž. Ledas)



**Type 6a: Standard stamp, circle and typeface strong, date bridge divided by hyphens**



Clear standard stamps also have the unusually thick, strong circle and larger distance between the text arcs and outer circle, the UB is positioned somewhat higher and the country name LIETUVA is 15-16 mm shorter than on the preceding stamps of TRODAT (types 4 and 5).

**Variants of type 6a:**



Courier service of the Lithuanian Post for documents      Express service of the Lithuanian Post

**Type 6b: Dates with dots (instead of hyphens)**



In the beginning, this stamp type tried to use dots instead of hyphens for the date. Only a few examples from 2008 are known.

**Type 6c: Rubber stamps from 2010 with thinner outer circle and finer letters**



As of 2010, these standard stamps are used with a much finer appearance. Compared to type 6a, the distinguishing letter is closer to the country name LIETUVA.



The two **types 6a and 6c** can be difficult to distinguish from each other when the rubber plate is heavily worn or the stamp pressure is too great. The outer circles are thicker and crushed letters do not allow an assessment of the distances between UB, LIETUVA and outer ring (larger for 6a, smaller for 6 c). Here is an example from Kaltanėnai without UB.



## New organisational structures - New stamps

The privatisation of the Lithuanian Post since 2006 has been accompanied by its restructuring. This is documented in the stamp inscriptions. You can find a more detailed description on our website [www.arge-baltikum.de](http://www.arge-baltikum.de) under the keyword "Lithuania, collecting area Independent Lithuania since 1990".

The main restructuring measures:

As in other countries, post offices have been and are being closed, especially in rural areas. In the cities, they are increasingly being moved to shopping centres to be close to customers.

As an additional replacement for the closed branches, from May 2017 onwards the service of **mobile postal delivery** with motor vehicles has been renewed and modernised, through which postal items in rural areas can be delivered more quickly or ordered individually. These deliverers use special stamps, recognisable by the **letters ML** ("Mobilusis Laiškininkas", mobile delivery), which precede the letter of distinction.



### Type 6d: Mobile post offices with inscription KILNOJAMASIS

In order to maintain basic services in the countryside, the network of **mobile post offices** was expanded from 2008 onwards with small trucks that travel along fixed routes. Since then, letters posted there can be recognised by the stamp with a long upper line in smaller letters (2mm) and the addition KILNOJAMASIS / "mobile". This service is not to be confused with the individual mail carriers!



### Type 6e: Stamp with two-line text sheet on top for post office extensions, extra-long place names and other postal departments

partly newly founded, partly through the conversion of smaller post offices. As of 2010, these branches have a standardised 5-line stamp with the inscription "POSKYRIS" (= sub-department, branch). Example: Postmark of extension no. 1 of the VILNIUS 11 post office.



For long place names and special departments, these multi-lines are also produced. (Picture: Postal branch of the renowned Kėdainiai County Academy of Agriculture and Forestry).



### Type 7: COLOP rubber stamps with sans serif font from 2020 onwards

All rubber stamps from 1994 onwards (types 4, 5, 6) have **serif lettering**, which is more decorative and elegant, but also old-fashioned, conservative and backward-looking. Serifs are small horizontal strokes or squiggles at the ends of the letters. They can be curved or rectangular, which gives the individual letters the appearance of being connected. They also have different stroke thicknesses, which gives the serifs an "artistic touch". The new stamping devices are the same as for type 6 (COLOP Printer R 30-Dater). The difference is that the rubber plates of type 7 have a **sans serif font**:

#### Type 7a Letters without serifs

(Sans Serif)



#### Type 6 c Letters with serifs

(Antiqua)



#### Type 7a: Standard stamps with letters without serifs as of 2020

This latest type of stamp from COLOP from 2020 is in the same design as the preceding types 4 to 6, but now with a sans serif font. The country name LIETUVA is shorter, only 13.5-14 mm. A typographic turnaround has taken place!



Forerunner: Early strike of 30.12.2019 from Akmenė with UB b; the outer circle is already distorted! The letters are larger and further apart. This is probably a locally produced device.

## **Type 7b Stamp of the postal distribution centres with inscription Siuntų centras (dispatch centre) in sans serif letters.**

It remains to be seen how the stamps of the dispatch centres, which recently appeared for the first time, are to be classified. According to the Lithuanian postal administration, these are not post offices open to the public, but dispatch centres. Their function is therefore similar to that of German mail centres (photo).



### **Outlook: In the future without stamps ?**

Since October 2020, the Lithuanian Post has introduced a completely **new data processing system**: All data relating to an item will be stored digitally. End customers will notice the new system by a barcode sticker on each mailing. Even ordinary letters that cannot be tracked are affixed with a barcode (picture).



If stamps are no longer used to pay for postage, the letters will no longer receive a date stamp as of September 1, 2020, an instruction from the post office. This can be a problem for collectors because the processing date can no longer be determined without a reader. However, this regulation has not been applied consistently so far; there are still letters that were processed in the dispatch centres and still have date stamps.

Tips, hints and additions are very welcome! Please send your **stamp finds** to the authors at: [bfels@gmx.de](mailto:bfels@gmx.de) or [m.bech@t-online.de](mailto:m.bech@t-online.de).

This is only a brief introduction to the subject. On more than 100 pages, the daily postmarks of Lithuania since 1990 are presented in our **handbook** with detailed information and several hundred illustrations of the postmark types:

Bechstedt, Martin and Fels, Bernhard: Die Tagesstempel der unabhängigen Republik Litauen ab 1990 - Einführung und Systematisierung (The Daily Postmarks of the Independent Republic of Lithuania after 1990 - Introduction and Systematisation). Bargtheide/Soest 2021 (ISBN 978-3-942841-04-7). It can be obtained from the authors and from bookshops from autumn 2020.