The new specialised catalog of Lithuanian stamps from 1918 to 2024 by Antanas Jankauskas – an outstanding work

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Jankauskas, Antanas 2024: Lietuva. Specializuotas Pašto ženklų katalogas (1918–2024), Special Lithuanian Postage Stamp Catalogue (1918–2024). Lithuanian / English.

A4 format. 752 pages with approx. 12,000 illustrations. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-609-08-0362-2

Order for €127 plus shipping from the author at http://www.lituanica.eu/contactform.htm.

Antanas Jankauskas from Kaunas (Fig. 2, photo: Giedrė Jankauskienė), honoured in 2020 by the Lithuanian Postal Administration with the title "Philatelist of the Year," [1] has not rested on his laurels. After many years as editor of the magazine "Phillit," he published his comprehensive catalogue of Lithuanian stamps in 2012.

In 2019, he achieved a second major success with an unprecedented work on the forgeries of Lithuanian stamps, postmarks and postal items[1] (Fig. 3). So it is not just anyone who has now presented a brilliant work that can rightly be described as a life's work (how many of this ever-active, friendly philatelist's works are there actually ...?).

The new book is a version of his 2012 catalogue that has been expanded by a third. Several chapters, texts and countless illustrations have been added, bringing the total to around 12,000 (!). Jankauskas has obviously made extensive use of the collections of renowned philatelists such as Charles Matuzas and Jonas Grigaliunas, which have come onto the market in the meantime.

It is difficult to describe this weighty work, which at 752 pages weighs in at 2.5 kg, as a catalogue. It is more of a comprehensive encyclopaedia of Lithuanian philately, covering all aspects of the hobby and unrivalled in its field.

The author really provides everything that falls within the scope of Lithuanian collecting or is related to it, regardless of the classification we are used to; for example, the postal area of the Commander-in-Chief of the East is generally included under Germany, as is the Memel area, and the Warwischki issues are assigned to Poland. Of course, the principle applies here that everyone can collect what they want!

[1] See original article in BALTIKUM 11/2021, pp. 62–63

What readers can expect in detail: An introduction to the stamps of the independent Republic of Lithuania from 1918 to 1940/41 and from 1990 to June 2024, personalised stamps, local issues 1919/20 (Telšiai, Grodno, Raseiniai, Warwischki), postal area of the Commander-in-Chief East 1916–18, Central Lithuania, Memel region, occupation and local issues 1941 (so-called 'June issues'), Ostland, DP camps, vignettes, postal stationery from all areas including the provisional issues of the early 1990s, perforations and miscellaneous items such as airmail labels and various tables of postage rates, catalogue synopses and, of course, a bibliography.

All of this is presented with incredible accuracy and thousands of colour illustrations, each stamp with known varieties, plate errors, printing irregularities and trial prints. This sometimes covers several pages for a single stamp. The amazing thing is that there is a specific price quoted for each item! Determining these prices has been a truly Sisyphean task and testifies to the author's enormous experience. Renowned philatelists in Lithuania say that Jankauskas was already an expert on all kinds of Lithuanian stamp varieties in his youth and documented them. So, what we have here is truly a life's work!

Particularly noteworthy are numerous illustrations of essays, proofs and maculature, which are being seen for the first time and are not available anywhere else. One can only admire the author's dedication in tracking down these illustrations!

Another big plus of this work is that the author has not succumbed to the temptation to assign the stamps their own main numbers; instead, they correspond to the Michel numbers. This makes working with the book much easier.

All criticism should really fall silent in the face of this new standard work. But where there is light, there are also shadows, albeit small ones: this catalogue is a third larger than the first one from 2012 and weighs 2.5 kilograms, so your desk had better be sturdy. Given the size of this book, I would like to note that dividing it into two volumes would have made it easier to handle. The following division of the 752 pages would make sense, for example: Volume 1 with 348 pages (introduction and stamps of independent Lithuania from 1918 to 1940/41), Volume 2 with 403 pages (Republic of Lithuania from 1990, neighbouring areas, postal stationery and miscellaneous).

Furthermore, the incredible abundance of variants can sometimes be somewhat overwhelming. The reason for this is that many are listed as plate errors, but no distinction is made between genuine printing variants such as typesetting and plate errors on the one hand, and printing irregularities and platemarks on the other. All such stamps are uniformly given the letter suffix 'v' for variantai (Lithuanian).

An example: On page 175 (Fig. 7), 32 variants are listed for stamp no. 136 (depicting President Smetona, value 8 auksinas), most of which are actually insignificant printing accidents. The reason for this is well known: the lithographic printing process used for

most Lithuanian stamps from 1919 to 1937[2] tends to produce smudges and holes because the dispersion printing ink cannot be distributed completely evenly on the printing stone. This means that during the printing process, a large number of such temporary printing irregularities, also known as ''plaster marks', usually occur. Among the 32 variants of No. 136, there is one genuine variant, 136 v5, which has a T in the president's collar. According to Norton, this appears repeatedly in every 10th stamp of the transfer stone[3], i.e. a genuine plate error, which is likely to be a printer's mark.

I would like to emphasise that this often lack of differentiation does not make the work any less significant. It can also be seen in a positive light: every collector can ultimately go on a journey of discovery here and choose for themselves what they find important and worth collecting! The author has also made some improvements to the 2012 catalogue, e.g. in the description of No. 181 Airmail stamp 20 CENT on 2 auksinas with the well-known typesetting error 'missing CENT under 20'. Previously classified as v3 alongside various plaster marks, it now has the sub-numbers 181 s19 and 181 s29 for two perforations (information on pages 195/196, s stands for spausdinimo variantai / printing variants).

Conclusion: The author has presented a new work that is unrivalled and, as a new standard work, indispensable for serious Lithuanian collectors. An infinite wealth of new variants is offered; it is also a book to browse and discover, but less to read.

If you would like to learn more than just technical details about the stamps, their postal history, the historical background of individual issues, their creation, designers, printers or the history of forgeries, then two other books are highly recommended: the comprehensive two-volume work by V. Bubnys and J. Normantiene on the postal history of Lithuania in Lithuanian[4] and the handbook of Lithuanian stamps in German[5]. If you have 'the Jankauskas' and these books at hand, and a modern translation programme if necessary, you are well equipped for collecting Lithuanian stamps. However, if a 'Hall of Fame' for philately were ever to be established, Antanas Jankauskas would undoubtedly deserve a star for this publication!

Notes: A preview of the catalogue is available on the author's website at https://issuu.com/lituanica/docs/slpzk-2.

[2] A few stamps were also printed in high-quality intaglio printing by Harrison & Sons in England during this period, but these are not the subject of this article.

[3] Norton, Walter E. 1988: Lithuania´s "De Jure" Recognition Commemorative Issue. In: LPS New York Journal 148/ Juni 1988 S. 8834–8838

[4] Bubnys, Vygintas und Normantiene, Julija 2014: Pastas Lietuvoje 1918–1940 metais: valstybes pasto kurimas ir veikla, zenklu leidyba. 2 knyga. *(The Post in Lithuania 1918–1940: Establishment and Activities of the State Post, Issue of Stamps. 2 books)*. Vilnius.

[5] Bechstedt, Bechstedt, Martin 2025/2011: Lithuania – Handbook of Stamps of the Independent State 1918–1940. Part 1: The stamps of the Auksinas currency 1918–1922 (2nd edition to be published in 2025), Part 2: The stamps of the Litas currency 1922–1940/41.

Jankauskas himself presented his work in English at an online meeting of the Lithuanian Philatelic Society of Chicago (LPSC). This can be viewed on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSMF9a4mAMqEgKHyFzRAswdc4QaqunyMl.

Fig. 1: The front cover of the special catalogue

Fig. 2: Antanas Jankauskas

Fig. 3: The front cover of the counterfeit catalogue

Fig. 4: Jankauskas 2024, page 285 (cutout); variants of the Tubelis issue Mi–No. 310–313

Fig. 5: Page 285; Head of Prime Minister Tubelis (Michel No. 309) on a corner pair of the double cross 3 ct issue (Michel No. 309) – a never-before-seen printing sample

Fig. 6: Page 189, varieties of the CENT overprint issue Mi No. 168–170

Fig. 7: p. 175 Variants of No. 136, v5 with T in the collar (marked in red)

Fig. 8: No. 181 s29 'missing CENT under 20'