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Original Research Article

Visual Analysis of the Writing System in the Stamps of the Pahlavi Era

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Abstract

Introduction: The visual elements and the writing system in the stamps of the Pahlavi dynasty reflect cultural-ideological symbols and signal the political, economic, and social relations of that era. This study aims to analyze the writing system (language-structure) in the stamps of the Pahlavi period and to evaluate the factors that influence it. In line with this aim, the study seeks to answer the following questions: «Into how many categories can the writing system of the stamps of Pahlavi I and Pahlavi II be divided? What structural features of the writing system (script and typography) appear in Pahlavi stamps?»

Research Method: This study employs a descriptive–analytical approach, focusing on the structural system of writing in Pahlavi-era stamps. The sample is purposefully and selectively chosen, consisting of 5 stamps from Pahlavi I and 21 stamps from Pahlavi II. Data were collected from library resources and a targeted selection of stamps from this period.

Findings: In these stamps, Nastaʿlīq, Shikasta Nastaʿlīq, Iranian Naskh, Thuluth, and Kufic scripts were used for Persian phrases, while Times and Helvetica fonts were applied for Latin inscriptions. In some cases, Latin letters and phrases were placed before Persian text, particularly in international contexts, where the main structural diversity is expressed through the use of Latin fonts. In the Pahlavi II period, asymmetrical composition in the structure of writing dominated over symmetrical layouts; consequently, in some stamps, the imbalance between visual and textual elements disrupted the relationship of positive and negative space, equilibrium, and smooth eye movement.

Conclusion: Stamps of the Pahlavi I period were designed based on simple aesthetic principles and showed little structural variety in writing design. By contrast, in the Pahlavi II period, the design of writing received particular attention, and the visual qualities of script were enhanced. The full utilization of the stamp space by writing signaled the recognition of writing as a visual element, a feature observable in part of the corpus of this period. Furthermore, the use of Iranian scripts such as Shikasta Nastaʿlīq was a distinctive feature of stamp design in this era. These developments produced diverse and prominent writing styles in terms of structure, letter usage, and grid-based layout in stamp design.

Keywords

Stamp, Writing System, Pahlavi I and II, Visual Analysis

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Introduction and Problem Definition

The postage stamp, as a medium of visual language, functions like a borderless international medium that is not dependent on translation and is thus readable across diverse human societies. The communicative power and message-transmitting capacity of the stamp are not confined to the borders of a single nation; rather, they extend into the lives of people with different cultures and at varying levels of knowledge. Stamps contain information that conveys the political, cultural, and social events of their nation through an unwritten visual language to societies and cultures worldwide. By studying visual texts, particularly the writing systems within stamps, one can discern the subject matter and nature of the stamps. The focus of this study is the analysis of the writing system in the stamps of the Pahlavi I and II periods, approached from a structural perspective and based on a descriptive-analytical method using a purposeful and selected sample population. In this process, the statistical population pertaining to the specifications and textual analysis of stamps from the two reigns of the Pahlavi dynasty is first presented separately in independent tables. Preliminary descriptions of each sample are then provided, followed by a final analysis. The purpose of this article is to identify how writing was employed in one of the functional media of the Pahlavi period. The research questions posed by the authors, to which the study seeks to respond, are as follows: «Into how many categories can the writing system of the stamps of Pahlavi I and II be divided? What are the structural features of the writing system (script and typographic design) in the stamps of the Pahlavi era, and what factors influenced them?»

Research Method

The present study employs a descriptive-analytical method with an emphasis on the structural system of writing. The statistical sample in this research consists of 5 stamps from the Pahlavi I period and 21 stamps from the Pahlavi II period, selected by the authors from a broader corpus. The smaller number of samples from the Pahlavi I era is due to the authors' focus on analyzing the stamps of the Pahlavi II period, as well as the limited variety and frequent repetition among the Pahlavi I stamps. It should be explained that the purposive selection was based on the function and breadth of the application of writing systems in the stamps. The analysis of the writing system in the stamps was conducted in a single table for the Pahlavi I period and, due to the greater variety of examples, in three tables for the Pahlavi II period, with a focus on the morphology and structure of the writing. In addition, the stamps were analyzed according to language type (Persian or Latin), including words, letters, phrases, and numerals, and further examined based on the structural form (script or typographic design) in the corresponding images. At the end of the tables for each period, descriptive and analytical commentary for each stamp is also provided.

Research Background

In the field of introducing and analyzing stamps, various studies have been published; however, none of these works have emphasized or scrutinized the structural aspects of writing on stamps. Although resources on writing systems exist, which will be discussed subsequently, they have not been applied to stamp analysis, a distinctive feature of the present research compared to earlier studies. «Jelodar» (2023), in his article entitled «A Comparative Study of Iranian and World Postage Stamps Depicting Endangered Animals Based on the IUCN Red List (Case Study of Eight Animal Species)», states that, despite Iran's long-standing tradition in the visual arts and its pioneering role in issuing postage

stamps, the country has not effectively utilized this cultural and artistic capacity to influence the public and authorities toward the adequate protection of natural species. Between 1941 and 2021, only three Iranian stamps addressing endangered species were issued. «Ahmadian and Zangi» (2024), in their article entitled «Analyzing the Visual Capabilities of Persian Letters in the Cultural Written Signs via Studying Selected Works of Four Decades (1971-2011)», argue that the capacity and visual character of Persian letters in logotypes are shaped by meaning and content. The letterform, like a vessel for meaning, undergoes structural and formal transformations during the design process. These transformations, in addition to pursuing aesthetic exploration, aim to harmonize script, form, meaning, and content. «Mahmoudi and Yazdani» (2021), in their article entitled «Discourse Analysis of Postage Stamps with Cultural Themes in the Pahlavi and Islamic Republic of Iran Periods», conclude that cultural and political stamps have always been directly tied to power and ideology. In the Pahlavi era, the dominant discourse revolved around archaism, royal power, and the reproduction of cultural and national identities in modern forms; in the Islamic Republic, the discourse was grounded in Islam, martyrdom, and the safeguarding of Islamic and revolutionary values. «Fathi et al.» (2020), in their article entitled «Reflection of Historical, Political, Economic, Cultural, and Social Transformations of Iran in Reza Shah Pahlavi's Stamps (1925–1941)», employed a descriptive-analytical method to examine these transformations, finding that political events were given far more emphasis than other themes. Changes in clothing and cultural shifts were represented, while historical and economic subjects appeared less prominently. «Rahimi and Fathi» (2017), in their article entitled "History in the Frame of Stamps of the First Reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi with Statistics," emphasized that political objectives and the proclamation of Pahlavi achievements constituted the central aim of stamp issuance during that era. This emphasis was so strong that themes of nature, culture, and Iranian art were effectively excluded, reducing the stamp to a purely propagandistic instrument of governance. By contrast, what distinguishes the present research from previous studies is that the authors focus on analyzing the writing system of Pahlavi II stamps, evaluating language and structure, and even treating writing as a visual element, analyzing it across three categories.

Theoretical Structure

Writing is an act through which unstable and fleeting linguistic expression is transformed into stable, lasting, and enduring expression. Without concern that linguistic productions will be subject to the constraints of time, place, or memory, writing allows their continuity of existence. Writing converts the oral system into a visual system. Writing extends across artifacts and thus may be called a kind of «semiosphere»[1] This semiosphere possesses specific strategies, including: Selection and foregrounding; punctuation marks; markers of reduction or magnification; spatial arrangement; traces of the enunciator; the possibility of combining with another genre, such as painting; adherence to sensori-motor characteristics (the involvement of body and hand and the movement of the pen on paper). Hence, it bears corporeal qualities; registration and retrievability. Considering all these features, the act of writing can no longer be regarded merely as the transfer of information and communication. Rather, it is a mode of presence, or a process, in which presence occurs with all the conditions of its emergence (Shaeiri, 2012, 126). «Following the semiotic process of writing and its unique mode of expression, it may be claimed that nearly all scripts, and by extension their derivatives, are inspired by and derived from geometric shapes or naturally occurring forms, which appear as bodies in diverse configurations» (Ahmadian & Zangi, 2024). «To understand this process, visual tools exist for assessing writing and letters, which may be

explored within the framework of the study of writing systems and used to analyze the structural foundations of script. These visual tools include: 1. The frame: Each written character is akin to a completed artwork that embodies all visual qualities, yet cannot move freely beyond its limits and is compelled to be reflected within a confined frame» (Taheri, 2018, 18). «Visual qualities such as balance, symmetry, visual rotation, and positive and negative space become meaningful within this framework. 2. Positive and negative space: The characters of writing systems are assessed in terms of the visual frame, with the body of the character and its accompanying dots evaluated relative to its positive and negative space. 3. The baseline: A straight horizontal line upon which characters are positioned; in analyzing typographic forms and visual qualities such as visual rotation, balance, and equilibrium, it plays a crucial role. 4. The grid: A network of vertical, horizontal, and oblique lines intersecting one another, employed as guiding lines and measurement aids in character design» (Taheri, 2018, 18-24). In the present article, the writing system will serve as a primary keyword alongside the visual system. That is, all letters and numerals appearing on the stamps, regardless of their script style or quality, are considered part of the writing system, while other visual elements within the image belong to the visual system.

The Pahlavi Era

1. Stamps of Pahlavi I (Reza Shah): «After the fall of the Qajar dynasty, the Pahlavi dynasty was established in 1925, and Reza Shah, the first monarch of the Pahlavi line, ascended the throne. During his reign, eleven series of official stamps and eleven series of provisional stamps were issued. The underlying inscription on the stamps of this period was based on the phrase 'Government of the Imperial State of Iran.' The dedication of the Shah's image to the stamps of the Pahlavi era was among the most prominent features of the stamps of that time. Alongside these images, depictions of the Shah's economic and social reform programs were also included» (Beynabadi et al., 2018, 83). «In total, over the course of his sixteen-year rule in Iran, 24 series of postage stamps, comprising 271 individual stamps, entered the country's postal circulation. These stamps were printed in the Tehran Majles Printing House, as well as in the Netherlands and Switzerland» (Novin Farahbakhsh, 2001, 88-104). «In Reza Shah's reign, the promotion of the prevailing political climate of the country constituted the principal theme of the imagery on the stamps, overshadowing other topics (economic, cultural, and social). The general themes of the stamps issued during this period included: 'Surcharged[2]' Qajar stamps; Ahmad Shah's fiscal stamps; Constitutional era Lion-and-Sun stamps; portrait stamps of Reza Shah with crown, cap, and columns; airmail stamps; commemorative stamps; and special occasion stamps» (Fathi et al., 2020).

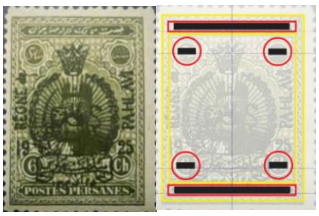
2. Stamps of Pahlavi II (Mohammad Reza Shah): «After the abdication of Reza Shah and the succession of his son Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1942, the first step in stamp issuance was taken by introducing the new monarch and commemorating the achievements of the former king» (Rahimi & Fathi, 2017). «The attempt to legitimize and promote Mohammad Reza Shah's rule and to reinforce his authority was clearly reflected in the selected images on the stamps of that period. The government's objective in this endeavor was to overcome existing crises and to attain political stability within Iran and the region. The allocation of the majority of stamps to portrayals of the Shah and his father's accomplishments functioned as a propagandistic visual element on the international stage. In an era when letters were considered the most common medium of communication across governmental domains, this practice served purely promotional purposes for the Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty beyond national borders» (Rahimi & Fathi, 2017). «In general, in terms of subject matter, the stamps of the Pahlavi II period (Mohammad Reza Shah) can be

categorized into various groups: 1. Royal themes: Coronation ceremonies, portraits of monarchs, coins, bas-reliefs, historic buildings, etc. 2. National and commemorative themes: Honoring Iranian and world luminaries, traditional costumes, the national flag, special occasions in the form of days, weeks, months, and years (e.g., Nowruz), etc.» (Mahmoudi & Yazdani, 2021). «3. Political themes: Coronation ceremonies, the White Revolution, meetings with foreign political leaders, the anniversary of the liberation of Azerbaijan, etc.4. Economic themes: Development of oil rigs, the World Forestry Congress, the expansion of telecommunications, etc. 5. Cultural themes: The fight against illiteracy, film festivals, Book Week, etc.6. Other themes: International conferences, global events, UNESCO World Day, preservation of migratory birds, eradication of malaria, the Institute for Plant Pests and Diseases Research, etc.» (Golshan, 2016). Due to the abundance, diversity, and variety of themes in the stamps of the Pahlavi II era, brief mention is made of them within each category.

Analysis of Writing in Pahlavi I Stamps (Reza Shah)

For the analysis of the Pahlavi I stamps, the authors first selected five representative stamp images from this period to examine their linear structure, as described in Table 1. Next, by drawing guidelines and decomposition markers (linear structure), the textual areas on each sample were identified. In the linear structural analysis of each stamp, the writing system was classified according to theme (cultural, political, social, etc.), year of issue, language type (Persian or Latin), textual units (letter, word, wordmark, sentence), denomination, type of writing (script or font), and their categorization and placement within the image. Subsequently, in the descriptive stage, the qualitative structure of the visual elements of writing was examined in relation to the overall stamp structure, including both text and image. In fact, the analysis of the works is based on tracing the morphology and form of the writing and how it is positioned within the confined space of the stamp. The researchers note that, due to the limited thematic variety in the stamps of the First Pahlavi period, only the political theme has been addressed in the statistical sample. As will be explained, the reason for this number of selected cases is the predominance and repetition of this format in the stamps of the era. The statistical sample prepared in Table 1 consists of 5 stamps extracted from among 81 stamps of this period. Here, first, the stamps of the First Pahlavi era, which are more limited in both number and thematic diversity compared to those of the Second Pahlavi era, are presented in a single table.

Table 1. Writing System in Pahlavi I. Source: Authors.

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
1	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 92.	The portrait of the Qajar king appears at the center of the stamp within a decorated circular frame, with the royal crown depicted above it. The main inscriptions, in Persian and English, are arranged symmetrically and parallel to each other at the top and bottom of the stamp. The denomination, positioned in the four corners of the stamp, follows a balanced and harmonious symmetrical composition. The observance of equal proportions,

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
Writing system	Subject: Political. Beginning of the Pahlavi Monarchy. Year of Issue: 1925. Titles (Persian): «Post of the Protected Territories of Iran», Shekasteh Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 6 Shahi, Shekasteh Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «POSTES PERSANES», Times font. Denomination: 6 ch., Times font.	together with the orderly distribution of textual elements, creates a uniform eye movement across the frame of the stamp.
2	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 94.	The portrait of Reza Shah appears at the center of the stamp, flanked on both sides by symmetrical decorative vegetal motifs, with the royal crown positioned above his head. The main inscriptions, in Persian and English, are placed below Reza Shah's portrait in a symmetrical arrangement and rendered in perspective. At the bottom of the stamp, the denomination in English font is positioned in such a way that, together with the denominations on the upper right and left corners of the frame, a triangular composition is formed. The symmetrical arrangement of textual elements and their parallel placement in relation to other visual components conveys balance and harmony across the entire stamp.
Writing system	Subject: Political. Retouched Series. Year of Issue: 1927. Titles (Persian): «Post of the Sublime State of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 6 Shahi, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «POSTE IRAN», Helvetica font. Denomination: 6 ch., Times font	
3	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 104.	The portrait of Reza Shah appears on the left side within a separate decorative frame, while the image of an eagle, a mountain, and a natural landscape is depicted in the right-hand frame. The main inscriptions and denomination in Persian are placed in the upper-right section, with their English equivalents positioned in the lower-right section. The denomination of the stamp, presented in both Persian and English, is arranged symmetrically on all four sides of the main inscriptions. The textual titles are set within horizontal frames at the top and bottom, symmetrically aligned in parallel placements.
Writing system	Subject: Political and Airmail. Year of Issue: 1935. Title (Persian): «Airmail of the Sublime State of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 2 Toman, Nastaʿlīq script. Title (English): «POSTE PERSANES», Times font. Denomination: 2 Ts., Times font.	
4	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 110.	The portraits of the Crown Prince and the Queen appear on the right and left sides of the stamp, with the royal crown placed between them within a horizontal frame. The main inscriptions in Persian are centered at the bottom in a symmetrical arrangement, while the denomination in both Persian and English is positioned on the right and left sides of the stamp. The textual titles are presented in their simplest form, with minimal writing placed at the lower section of the stamp. Their confinement within orderly frames, without extension beyond, emphasizes the fluid and unrestrained character of the writing.
Writing system	Subject: Political. Marriage of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and Fawzia. Year of Issue: 1939. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 30 Dinar, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «POSTE PERSANES», Times font. Denomination: 30 D, Times font.	

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
5	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 101. **Writing system** Subject: Political. Tenth Anniversary of Reza Shah Pahlavi's Reign. Year of Issue: 1934. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 1 Rial, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «POSTES PERSANES», Times font. Denomination: 1 RL., Times font.	The stamp depicts a bridge, a train with railway tracks, and an Achaemenid column. The main inscriptions and the denomination, in both Persian and English, are arranged from right to left in systematic and separate frames along the lower section of the stamp, laid out in a continuous yet segmented manner. The textual and pictorial elements on this stamp are divided into frames and aligned in both vertical and horizontal orientations, achieving a unity of expression. However, overall, none of these elements conveys a symmetrical composition in the stamp.

In the stamps extracted from Table 1, regarding script and writing system, a certain similarity can be observed within the statistical sample. That is, the pictorial system dominates the surface, while the writing system is employed only in a limited capacity to provide explanations for specific images. Apart from the fixed textual templates, such as the denomination (in two languages) and «Post of Iran», short phrases also appear on the stamps, all of which are written in Nastaʿlīq script. Moreover, the style of Nastaʿlīq used in these stamps corresponds to the customary Qajar style, characterized by dense strokes and associated with the Kalhor style. It should be noted that the quality of Nastaʿlīq in the earliest examples of the Pahlavi I period was relatively crude and unsophisticated. The minimal use of script and writing as a visual element, coupled with the emphasis on the pictorial system, represents the consistent approach of the stamps of the Pahlavi I period and reflects the dominant artistic orientation of that era.

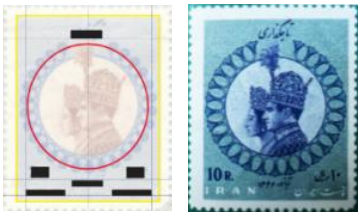
Analysis of the Writing in Pahlavi II Stamps (Mohammad Reza Shah)

In the analysis of the linear structure and description of Pahlavi II stamps, the same method was applied as in Table 1 for the Pahlavi I period, with the difference that, due to their far greater variety and abundance, the sample population of the authors for this era was organized into Tables 2, 3, and 4, comprising a larger number of examples (21 stamps in total). In the use of writing on the Pahlavi II stamps, several types of writing systems can be observed. This categorization is based on the degree and significance of the placement of writing on the stamp surface. The stamps of this period can be divided into three major groups: 1. The writing system based on the essential inscriptions of the stamps; that is, the administrative necessity of stamp design required a specific set of inscriptions, and writing was employed solely for that purpose. 2. The writing system based on information and communication; in this category of stamps, although images other than writing dominate visually, the inscriptions interact with those images and, from a semantic and informative perspective, complete them. 3. The writing system based on the dominance of script across the surface; that is, in some stamps, writing (including Persian and Latin scripts and numerals) assumes visual dominance over the surface, while the remaining visual elements are relegated to the margins. The statistical samples prepared in Tables 2, 3, and 4 consist of 7 stamps each, selected from a total of 103, 304, and 291 stamps, respectively.

Table 2. Writing System Based on the Essential Presence of Textual Messages in Stamps. Source: Authors.

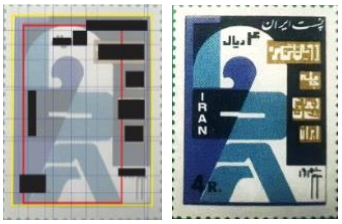
No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
1	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 210. Writing system Subject: Political. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Year of Issue: 1942. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 1 Rial, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): Denomination: 1 R., Times font.	The portrait of Mohammad Reza Shah is placed at the center of the stamp, enclosed within a decorative vegetal motif. The main inscription in Persian is centered at the bottom, while the denomination in Persian and English appears on the right and left sides at the top of the stamp, set diagonally at a 45-degree angle within a triangular decorative frame. The organization of textual and pictorial elements in a symmetrical, balanced, and simple arrangement conveys a sense of equilibrium and solidity.
2	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 117. Writing system Subject: Political / Economic. Qom Oil. Year of Issue: 1952. Titles (Persian): «Qom Oil», Naskh script; «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 1 Rial, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): Denomination: 1 R., Times font.	The stamp depicts an oil derrick and the cityscape of Qom in the right-hand frame, and the image of a Faravahar and an Achaemenid soldier in the left-hand frame. The main inscriptions in Persian are placed in separate boxes, divided into two sections, and aligned along the bottom of the stamp. The denomination, in both Persian and Latin, is positioned on the right and left sides at the top of the stamp, set diagonally at a 45-degree angle. The textual and pictorial elements, arranged in separate frames, vertical format for images and horizontal format for text, achieve unity of expression despite the absence of symmetry.
3	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 104. Writing system Subject: Cultural. Millennium of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. Year of Issue: 1950. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; «Millennium of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 2.50 Dinars, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «FARABI», Times font; Denomination: 2.50 R., Times font.	The portrait of al-Fārābī is placed at the center of the stamp against a plain background. The main inscriptions in Persian and English are centered at the top and bottom of the stamp, aligned in a way that they nearly touch. The denomination, in both Persian and Latin, is positioned on the right and left sides at the top of the stamp, creating a symmetrical arrangement in the writing. The central placement of al-Fārābī's image, together with the textual elements aligned above and below it, reflects a symmetrical composition in the visual design of the stamp.

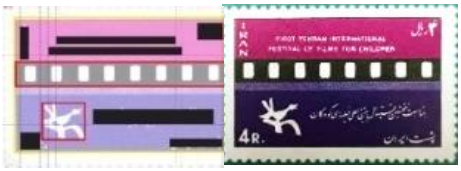
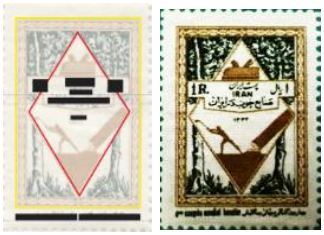
No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
4	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 117. Subject: Political. Marriage of Mohammad Reza Shah and Soraya Esfandiari. Year of Issue: 1950. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 50 Dinars, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Helvetica font. Denomination: 50 D., Times font. Writing system	The Shah's portrait appears on the right side of the stamp and the Queen's portrait on the left. The main inscriptions and the denomination in Persian and English are centered at the bottom of the stamp within three structured and varied frames, aligned sequentially in a symmetrical arrangement. The organization of textual elements across the horizontal axis, together with the placement of the Shah and Queen's portraits along that same line, emphasizes the horizontal orientation of the design composition in the stamp.
5	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 114. Subject: Cultural. Millennium of Avicenna (Abū ʿAlī Sīnā). Year of Issue: 1947. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; «Commemoration of the Millennium of Avicenna», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 10 + 5 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): Denomination: 10 RIALS + 5, Helvetica font. Writing system	The stamp depicts Darius seated on the throne accompanied by his attendants. The main inscriptions and the denomination in Persian and English are positioned at the top, bottom, right, and left of the stamp, aligned parallel to each other and centered. The placement of the textual elements around the four sides of the stamp, arranged symmetrically and parallel to one another in relation to the central image, creates a circular motion that guides the viewer's eye across the stamp.
6	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 128. Subject: Socio-Political. Refugee Year. Year of Issue: 1960. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script. Denomination: 1 Rial, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font. Denomination: 1 R., Times font. Writing system	The stamp features a tree at its center, framed by a column and decorative border in a symmetrical composition. The main inscriptions and denomination, in Persian and English, are aligned at the top and bottom of the stamp, parallel to each other in a single line. The concise and simple arrangement of the textual elements, in combination with the pictorial components, creates a symmetrical composition that evokes balance and harmony.

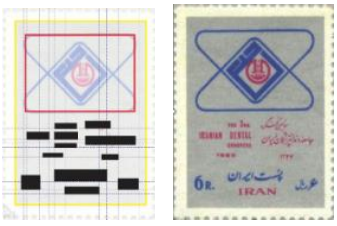
No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
7	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 154. Subject: Political. Coronation. Year of Issue: 1967. Titles (Persian): «Coronation», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 10 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script; Date, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font; Denomination: 10 R., Times font. **Writing system**	The stamp depicts the coronation of Mohammad Reza Shah and the Queen, enclosed within a decorative circular vegetal motif. The main inscription in Persian appears at the top center of the stamp in a symmetrical arrangement, aligned with the overall frame and serving as the focal point at the upper edge. The set of inscriptions at the bottom, including the denomination in Persian and English, left-aligned, right-aligned, and center-aligned, forms a triangular composition with the main title ("Coronation") at the top and the central pictorial elements. This arrangement conveys symmetry, balance, and harmony in the design of the stamp.

After examining and analyzing the writing system of the stamps in Table 2, one can trace the influence of the Pahlavi I period. In this category of stamps, the writing system employs the same quality of Nastaʿlīq script, confined to a specific space and used solely to fulfill the essential requirements of a stamp, such as the denomination, «Post of Iran», and similar inscriptions. The Latin phrases are rendered in the Times font. Most of these stamps date back to the early years of the Pahlavi II reign and reflect the dominance of design principles similar to those of the Pahlavi I period. However, as we move further away from the initial years of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule, a greater variety in the use of writing appears in the stamps, as illustrated in the subsequent tables.

Table 3. Informative Writing in the Stamp to Complete its Visual Message. Source: Authors.

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
1	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 139. Subject: Social (Medical). Second Congress of the Iranian Dental Association. Year of Issue: 1964. Titles (Persian): «Second Congress of the Iranian Dental Association», typography; «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; "Shahrivar 1964," typography; Denomination: 4 Rials, typography.Titles (English): «2-A&D», Helvetica font; «IRAN», Helvetica font; Denomination: 4 R., Helvetica font. **Writing system**	The stamp contains only textual elements and is devoid of pictorial components. The overall writing is centered on typography, with English letters arranged in a structuralist composition based solely on systematic grid lines. The main English inscriptions are placed in the background of the stamp, positioned on the left and in the center within the grid. The Persian inscriptions are typographically arranged from top to bottom on the right side. The intersecting and innovative grid-based structure of the textual elements and their placement within the stamp create a non-symmetrical composition, in which the deliberate absence of symmetry is evident across the entire set of visual components.

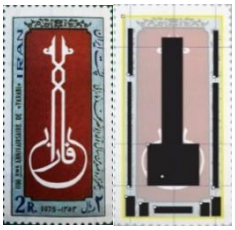
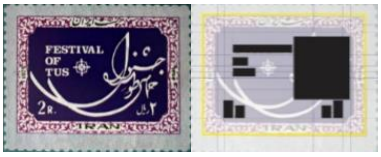
No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
2	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 149. Subject: Cultural. First International Festival of Children's Films. Year of Issue: 1966. Titles (Persian): «First International Festival of Children's Films» Nastaʿlīq script; «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 4 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «FIRST TEHRAN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF FILMS FOR CHILDREN», Helvetica font; «IRAN», Times font; Denomination: 4 R., Helvetica font. Writing system	The image of a film negative is placed along the horizontal axis at the center of the stamp, with the set of pictorial and textual elements separated into two distinct sections at the top and bottom. The main Persian inscription, positioned within a horizontal frame in the lower right third of the stamp and aligned with the image on the left, creates a sense of balance and stillness. The placement of the main titles and denomination in both English and Persian, parallel to one another at the top and bottom of the stamp, generates an even eye movement across the entire surface. The organization of textual and pictorial components in parallel alignment in the upper and lower portions of the stamp, together with their division into horizontal frames, conveys a sense of calmness and tranquility.
3	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 120. Subject: Economic. Fourth World Forestry Congress. Year of Issue: 1954. Titles (Persian): «Wood Industries in Iran», Naskh script; «Fourth World Forestry Congress», Naskh script; Denomination: 1 Rial, Nastaʿlīq script; Date, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN»; Denomination: 1 R., Times font. Writing system	The stamp depicts a forest scene with a figure cutting down a tree, placed at the center within a lozenge-shaped frame relative to the rectangular border of the stamp. The main inscriptions, in Persian (Arabized) and English, are located in the upper section at the center of the stamp. The placement of the denomination in both English and Persian on the left and right sides, along with the year at the center, creates a symmetrical composition along the vertical axis of the stamp. The positioning of the main Persian and English inscriptions outside the design frame at the lower edge directs the viewer's eye movement from the top to the bottom of the stamp. The arrangement of textual and pictorial elements in integration with one another intensifies visual focus on the central lozenge frame, while simultaneously conveying balance, harmony, and symmetry across the entire composition.
4	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 147.	Electricity pylons and the Persian Gulf shoreline are arranged in a regular, stepped rhythm descending diagonally from the upper-left corner of the frame, set apart from the textual elements by a diagonal boundary on the right. The main inscriptions, in Persian and English, are positioned at the top center of the stamp. The subsidiary inscriptions, in Persian (right-aligned)

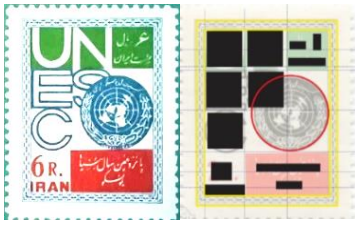
No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
Writing system	Subject: Economic. Establishment of Six Oil Companies in the Persian Gulf. Year of Issue: 1965. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; «Iran International Marine Company», «Persian Gulf Oil Company». «Continental Shelf Oil Company of Iran», «Fars Oil Company», «Lawak Oil Company», Titr font; «Persian Gulf», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 14 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font; «IMINOCO», Helvetica font; «PEGUPCO», Helvetica font; «IROPCO», Helvetica font; «F.P.C.», Helvetica font; «LAPCO», Helvetica font; «PERSIAN GULF», Times font; Denomination: 14 R., Times font.	and their English equivalents (left-aligned), are arranged sequentially from top to bottom along the right-hand side in a single line. The placement of the denomination in Persian and English on the left and right sides, together with the main inscription at the bottom center of the stamp, emphasizes balance and stability within the horizontal textual framework of the stamp.
5	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 139.	
Writing system	Subject: Social (Medical). Second Congress of the Iranian Dental Association. Year of Issue: 1964. Titles (Persian): «2», «Second Congress of the Iranian Dental Association», typography; Denomination: 2 Rials, typography. Titles (English): «IRAN», typography; Denomination: 2 R., typography.	The main inscriptions in Persian are typographically arranged in a structuralist manner, descending from the top around a semicircular grid toward the center and downward in a stepped composition. The letter design of this inscription is unique, indicating the recognition of type design in stamps as well as the interaction between writing and image. The denomination in Persian is placed at the lower right of the stamp, while its English equivalent appears at the upper left.
6	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 128.	The pictorial elements with medical and dental motifs are positioned in the upper section, while the textual elements are concentrated in the middle and lower parts of the stamp. The subsidiary inscriptions in Persian are right-aligned, with their English equivalents placed to the left in the center of the stamp. The main inscriptions and denomination, in both Persian and English, are arranged at the bottom, right-aligned, centered, and left-aligned. However, due

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
Writing system	Subject: Social (Medical). Third Congress of the Iranian Dental Association. Year of Issue: 1965. Titles (Persian): «Third Congress of the Iranian Dental Association», Nastaʿlīq script; «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 6 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN. THE 3RD IRANIAN DENTAL CONGRESS 1965», Times font; Denomination: 6 R., Times font.	to the small font size, despite the breadth of the text, they do not have a strong visual impact. Nevertheless, the concentration of inscriptions in the middle and lower sections directs the viewer's gaze to these areas, and in combination with the relatively passive pictorial element at the top, the stamp acquires a high degree of visual energy.
7	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 154.	The pictorial and textual elements are arranged in a combined and structuralist manner, intersecting along both horizontal and vertical axes. The concentration of the main and subsidiary inscriptions in Persian and English is organized on the right side of the stamp from top to bottom. The entirety of the textual elements is structured within vertical and horizontal grid lines, producing an asymmetrical composition. The dense placement of inscriptions on the right side of the stamp creates a visual balance and equilibrium in relation to the architectural pictorial elements on the left.
Writing system	Subject: Cultural. Tourism Organization. Year of Issue: 1964. Titles (Persian): «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; «Tourism Organization», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 6 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font; «ANNIVERSAIRE», Helvetica font; Denomination: 6 R., Times font.	

According to the visual data in Table 3, during the middle years of the Pahlavi reign, the writing system in this category of stamps converges with the pictorial system to achieve a unified visual language. For example, in Stamp No. 7 (apart from the obligatory inscriptions on stamps), a script in Kūfī Bannāʾī style is employed. These rectilinear lines establish a convincing interaction with the pictorial system of the stamp, which itself incorporates geometric lines. This occurrence indicates the involvement of professional designers familiar with visual principles in the production of stamps during this period. Nastaʿlīq, therefore, no longer constitutes the sole functional script within the writing system of stamps. In some stamps, type design has been employed; for instance, in Stamp No. 5 or Stamp No. 1, we encounter examples of letter design. The use of such stamps for themes related to scientific advancement and innovation is noteworthy. Familiarity with global artistic movements such as Lettrism, as well as the recognition of the visual potential of Persian letters during this period, may be considered among the contributing factors to these achievements.

Table 4. Writing in the Stamp as the Main Form, Either through the Design of Specific Letterforms or the Display of Calligraphy, Serving as the Stamp's Main Textual Message. Source: Authors.

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
1	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 193. Birth Anniversary of Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī. Year of Issue: 1974. Titles (Persian): «Fārābī», combination of Thuluth and Kūfī scripts; «The 1100th Anniversary of the Birth of Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī», Nastaʿlīq script; «Post of Iran», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 2 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «1100. ANNIVERSAIRE DE FARABI», Helvetica font; Denomination: 2 R., Helvetica font. Writing system	The most influential visual element of the stamp is the calligraphic emblem of «Fārābī» placed at its center. This inscription, rendered in a static and vertically oriented form, combines two Arabic scripts. Its stability and expressive power are accentuated by the vertical frame of the stamp, corresponding to the elongated strokes of the letter A, which at the top intertwine and are adorned with a vegetal motif. The elongated form of Fārābī further reinforces the vertical emphasis of both the emblem and the frame. The subsidiary inscriptions and the denomination, in both Persian and English, encircle the principal calligraphic emblem, producing rhythmic eye movement and visual regularity. The firm structure, cohesive composition, and symmetrical design of the calligraphic emblem, positioned against the background of the stamp, harmonize with its cultural message and exemplify the principles of balance and symmetry.
2	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 195. Subject: Cultural. Epic Festival of Ṭūs. Year of Issue: 1975. Titles (Persian): «Epic Festival of Ṭūs», Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 2 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «FESTIVAL OF TUS», Times font; Denomination: 2 R., Times font. Writing system	The phrase «Epic Festival of Ṭūs» is rendered as a calligraphic emblem in Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script. The principal Persian inscription, written in a continuous rhythm with overlapping and interwoven letters, is placed on the right side of the stamp and interacts contrapuntally with its English equivalent on the left. This creates a spiral, parallel, and asymmetrical overall composition that directs the viewer's gaze from right to left across the stamp. The subsidiary inscriptions in Persian and English continuously fill the horizontal frame surrounding the main calligraphic emblem. The denomination, in both Persian and English, is positioned symmetrically on the right and left, providing balance on either side of the emblem.
3	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 150.	The principal inscription of this stamp is a poetic verse rendered in a decorated margin (illuminated heading), composed diagonally in a chalipa arrangement and calligraphed in Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script. The chalipa style of writing constitutes the central textual element in relation to the cultural theme of the stamp (Book Week). However, despite the expanse of words, the small pen size diminishes its overall visual impact. The ensemble of textual elements, combined with the illuminated frame,

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
Writing system	Subject: Cultural. Book Week. Year of Issue: 1966. Titles (Persian): «Book Week», Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 8 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script; Date, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font; Denomination: 8 R., Times font.	functions as the dominant visual component of the stamp. Their arrangement covers the entire field of the stamp, upper, central, and lower sections, thus achieving balance, symmetry, and harmonious eye movement throughout.
4	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 171.	The phrase «Fifth Shiraz-Persepolis Arts Festival» is rendered as a calligraphic emblem, executed in a combination of Nastaʿlīq and Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq scripts. The strong and cohesive presence of the inscription at the center of the stamp reflects a graphemic or typographic approach by the designer. Organized in a continuous and orderly rhythm descending from top to bottom, the inscription introduces dynamism into the center of the stamp. The subsidiary inscriptions in Persian and English, arranged continuously around the space of the principal calligraphic emblem, fill the vertical frame of the stamp while remaining distinct from the main inscription. The grade of Shekasteh script employed in this stamp corresponds with the customary style of the Pahlavi II era.
Writing system	Subject: Cultural. Fifth Shiraz-Persepolis Arts Festival. Year of Issue: 1971. Titles (Persian): «Fifth Shiraz-Persepolis Arts Festival», Nastaʿlīq and Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq scripts; Denomination: 2 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script; Date, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «FESTIVAL OF ARTS SHIRAZ PERSEPOLIS», Helvetica font; «IRAN», Times font; Denomination: 2 R., Times font.	
5	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 131.	The English inscription «UNESCO», in uppercase Helvetica font, is positioned at the upper left of the stamp in a cohesive vertical structuralist composition. The final letter «O» in «UNESCO» is designed as a globe, offering a distinct modernist articulation that visually connects with the image. What places this stamp within this category is the expansive presence of the English letters, which occupy nearly half of the overall space. The subsidiary inscriptions in Persian and English are placed at the upper right and in the lower right corner of the stamp. Due to the predominance of textual elements, positive space outweighs negative space, and overall, the English inscriptions dominate over the Persian ones.
Writing system	Subject: Cultural-Social. Anniversary of the UNESCO Foundation. Year of Issue: 1962. Titles (Persian): «Anniversary of the UNESCO Foundation», Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 6 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «UNESCO», Helvetica font; Denomination: 6 R., Times font.	
6	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 156.	The portrait of Mohammad Reza Shah is placed on the right side of the stamp, while the textual element, a poetic verse in Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script, appears on the left, in a relationship of both contrast and complementarity. The placement of the textual elements in opposition to the image of the Shah conveys an asymmetrical composition. The

No.	Image and Linear Structure of the Stamp	Description and Explanation of the Stamp's Writing System
Writing system	Subject: Political. The White Revolution of the Shah and the People. Year of Issue: 1967. Titles (Persian): «White Revolution of the Shah and the People», Nastaʿlīq script; poetic verse, Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script; Denomination: 14 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font; Denomination: 14 R., Times font.	inscription, rendered in the traditional manuscript style, lends a static quality to the stamp. The subsidiary inscriptions in Persian and English are arranged around both the pictorial element and the principal textual element situated at the central core of the stamp.
7 Writing system	 Source: Iranian Stamp Association, 2018, 144. Subject: Cultural. World Congress for the Struggle Against Illiteracy. Year of Issue: 1965. Titles (Persian): «National Campaign Against Illiteracy», Nastaʿlīq script. Inscriptions: Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave; Literacy for a better life; National Campaign Against Illiteracy, in Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq script and Iranian Naskh font. Denomination: 8 Rials, Nastaʿlīq script. Titles (English): «IRAN», Times font; Denomination: 8 R., Times font.	The inscriptions on the stamp function as promotional slogans, arranged in an innovative and novel composition aimed at attracting the viewer's attention and conveying educational objectives. The principal inscriptions are positioned at the upper center of the stamp in a diagonal, cross-like composition. The subsidiary inscriptions appear at the upper right corner of the frame, while the Latin text is placed on the left side of the stamp. Despite the large number of textual elements on the page, their visual presence is diminished due to the disproportion between the pen size and the overall surface of the stamp. Furthermore, although multiple scripts, including Naskh and Nastaʿlīq, are employed, the scattered distribution of the inscriptions prevents them from achieving compositional unity, thereby contributing to their weakened presence.

In Table 4, the independence of the writing system in stamps becomes evident. The recognition of the writing system as a visual element capable of functioning pictorially on its own is clearly observable in this category. The predominantly cultural and national themes provided an appropriate context for designers to utilize the full potential of traditional scripts in stamp design. Fully Iranian scripts, such as Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq, in some cases enhanced the dynamism and vitality of the stamps. The large-scale use of Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq in Nos. 2 and 4 of the table demonstrates how a script that until then had not been formally recognized for titles or large-scale inscriptions acquired a new and innovative application. This category, through the visual dominance of the writing system in stamps, reveals the capacity of script not only to generate visual appeal but also to embody the cultural identity of the product.

Conclusion

The identification and evaluation of the writing system in Pahlavi-era stamps was carried out across the targeted and selected corpus, comprising five samples from the Pahlavi I period (Table 1) and twenty-one samples from the Pahlavi II period (Tables 2, 3, and 4). The writing systems in these tables were analyzed by type of language (Persian and Latin), and further categorized into word, letter, phrase, and numeral. The stamps of the Pahlavi I period, due to their limited thematic variety, were designed with aesthetic simplicity, presenting minimal structural diversity in their writing system. In these stamps, only

Nastaʿlīq script was employed for Persian inscriptions, while the Times font was used for Latin inscriptions. From the perspective of visual principles in the relationship between text and image, symmetrical composition was preferred over asymmetry. Following this structure, and owing to the symmetry of both textual and visual elements, the stamps of this period exhibit a balanced distribution of positive and negative space, a sense of equilibrium, and uniform eye movement across the design. The stamps of the Pahlavi II period, by contrast, were classified by the authors into three categories based on the structure of the writing system: 1. Stamps in which writing was employed solely to fulfill administrative necessities, such as denomination and postal designation; 2. Stamps in which writing functioned as informational or declarative text, complementing and completing the image in semantic and communicative terms; and 3. Stamps in which writing itself (Persian or Latin scripts and numerals) assumed visual dominance over the entire design, with other pictorial elements relegated to a secondary role. An evaluation of their linear structures and qualitative elements demonstrates that, in line with the gradual processes of modernization and transformations in the cultural, economic, and particularly political spheres, advances in design and visual qualities imbued the writing systems of the stamps with significant cognitive and structural value. Notable reforms in script usage included structural innovations, diverse applications of letters, and systematic grid-based arrangements. During this period, Persian inscriptions employed Nastaʿlīq, Shekasteh-Nastaʿlīq, Iranian Naskh, Thuluth, and Kufic scripts, while Latin inscriptions utilized Times and Helvetica fonts. In some cases, Latin letters and expressions were given precedence over Persian, particularly in international contexts, where variation in Latin font usage was the sole marker of structural diversity. In the Pahlavi II period, asymmetrical composition became predominant over symmetrical arrangements in textual structure. As a result, in certain stamps, asymmetry between textual and pictorial elements disrupted positive and negative space, balance, and eye movement. In some cases, novel design structures diminished the role of pictorial elements and emphasized the textual components as the primary communicative vehicle, often serving propagandistic purposes. Designers of this era, in addition to these textual emphases, employed intersecting, vertical–horizontal, diagonal, circular, and triangular compositional schemes to structure their works. Parallel to this novel orientation in the writing system, and beyond the diversity of Persian scripts, they also pursued font design (typography) for principal inscriptions in both Persian and English.

Author Contributions

This research was carried out with the participation of all authors. All authors discussed the results, reviewed, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Appendix

1. Semiosphere: The most well-known theorist of cultural semiotics, Yuri Lotman, introduced the theory of the semiosphere (1984). According to him, culture consists of non-hereditary information and functions as a tool for organization, dialogue, and communication. In Lotman's view, every culture is regarded as a text that must be interpreted within the specific space in which it is produced.
2. Surcharge: (French: Surchargé; English: Overprint). The act of stamping or printing additional marks on a banknote or postage stamp. Surcharges appear in various colors such as black, brown, or green, each of which signifies a particular value. Overprinting is carried out either to increase the denomination of the stamp or to cancel/alter a design.

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