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Those who are desirous of making collections of old Chinese curios and documents of historical interest can afford to turn their attention to Chinese postage stamps. During recent years there has been a great deal of interest displayed in the realm of philately. Among the ardent stamp collectors of today can be found no less a personage than the King of England himself. He is said to have one of the world's finest collections.

The resident in China, and especially the resident in Shanghai, has an unparalleled opportunity to build up a collection of Chinese stamps. In Shanghai there are a dozen or so Chinese and foreign dealers who have more or less complete stocks. The Philatelic Society of Shanghai frequently conducts stamp auctions. In addition to these there are a few public stamp auctions held each year. Sometimes as much as Tls. 15,000.00 worth of stamps are sold at such an auction. There is real sport in the pursuance of this study.

The postal system of China goes far back into antiquity. The Chinese Postal Department, of today declares that the first Government posts were established during the Chou dynasty (1122-255 B.C.). Only government messages were then carried. In about the year 1402 A.D. this postal system was extended to include private messages. In recent times the postal system of China came under the control of powerful letter *hongs* which seem to have given very faithful service. The existence of these letter *hongs* was one of the strong obstacles which Sir Robert Hart faced in 1861 when he first suggested the creation of a National Postal Service. These letter *hongs* together with the old official system continued as late as 1912. Their functions have finally been fully surrendered to the postal department of China.

Postage stamps came as a foreign innovation. The first postage stamp to be used in China was in 1862 when the French Government opened a post office in Shanghai using French stamps. The history of Chinese stamps, however, begins in 1865, when Shanghai brought



TOP ROW Samples of Local Post issues—Foochow and Shanghai.

2nd ROW Customs Post Issue. The three issues represented, the 24 candareen being from the “Jubilee” issue.

3rd ROW Provisional issues of the Imperial Post showing small and large surcharges over the last issue of the Custom’s Post stamps and the Revenue stamps.

4th ROW The \$5.00 is from the first regular issue of the Imperial Postal Department. Notice the words ” Imperial Chinese Post ” and how the first two words are transposed in the stamp representing the succeeding issue. The Temple of Heaven stamp is one of those issued in commemoration of Emperor Hsuan Tung.ⁱ

BOTTOM ROW Stamps from the Transition period, 1912. The 3 cent is surcharged “Provisional Neutrality” and bears the post mark of Foochow, The 1 cent bears the cruciform surcharge. The vertical surcharge says ” Republic of China.”

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out its first issue. These stamps bore the picture of a writhing dragon. They were given values in candareens i.e., 1/100 of a tael. The Shanghai municipality continued to issue its local stamps up till 1896, or the year before the first regular issue of the Imperial Government appeared.

In addition to the local post stamps of Shanghai, there were a number of treaty ports which also brought out issues. Most of these treaty port issues appeared in 1895. Chefoo was the earliest, coming out with its issue in 1893. The names of these port cities are Amoy,

Chefoo, Chinkiang, Chungking, Foochow, Hankow, Ichang, Kiukiang, Nanking, Weihaiwei, and Wuhu.

The postage stamp history of China following the treaty port issues can roughly be divided into four periods. The first period is that of the Custom's Post and extends from 1878 to 1897. During this period three separate issues appeared. These are roughly known as the issues of 1878, 1885, and 1894. They were all given candareen values.

The issues of 1878 and 1885 each had three stamps, 1, 3, and 5 candareen values. The issue of 1878 was re-divided into three different sets which appeared in the years 1878, 1882, and 1883. While the design and the colours were the same—thus making them all belong to the same issue—we find differences in perforations, width of margins, and weight of paper.

The issue of 1894 contained nine stamps, the values being 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, and 24 candareens. The last three stamps of this set were rectangular in shape. These stamps were lithographed in Japan and were issued in commemoration of the sixtieth birthday of the Empress-Dowager. This set is commonly known as the "Jubilee Issue."

The second period of the Chinese post proper extends from 1897 to 1912, and can be known as the period of the Imperial Post. In 1897 the values on the stamps were changed from candareens to cents. The stamps of the Jubilee issue were surcharged with the new values, which ranged from 1/2c. to 30c. At the beginning of this period a new set of stamps was ordered from Japan, but until these stamps were ready the surcharged "Jubilee" stamps had to serve.

The surcharges were made in Shanghai. A quantity of the stamps were surcharged with a small numeral. The supply of these gave out. The new stamps had not arrived. The postal authorities therefore rushed off a new set of the "Jubilee" stamps, which were to be immediately surcharged. These stamps, lithographed in Shanghai, are of a distinctly different shade from those lithographed in Japan. It so happened that a few of these were irregularly issued before they had received the proper surcharge. These are rare and hence are very desirable in the eyes of the collector. This new set was surcharged with numerals larger than the first set. Thus collectors will easily be able to obtain two sets of the surcharged "Jubilee" stamps : one set Japanese print with small numeral surcharge, another set Shanghai print with large numeral surcharge.

But there are still further distinctions which complicate the issue. When the second set of stamps was being surcharged a small quantity

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of the Japanese print was discovered unsurcharged, so these were given the large numeral surcharge. These are very difficult to find. Still another distinction appears when the distance between the Chinese characters in the surcharge and the numeral was changed from 2 1/2 mm to 1 1/2 mm. The change in width appears only in the large surcharge in

both the Shanghai and Japan print. The narrow surcharge is extremely rare.

The " Jubilee " set was not the only set surcharged. The issue of 1885 was also so treated with both large and small numerals. The large numeral surcharge is the most desirable. These three stamps sell for from \$4.00 to \$7.00 apiece in the local market. There was also a set of stamps, known as the Revenue stamps, which were also surcharged though, they were never used for the purpose designated. Some of these sell for hundreds of dollars today.

These provisional surcharged stamps were not in use for many months. Late in the year 1887 the new issue of twelve values ($\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 20, 30, and 50 cents and 1, 2, and 5 dollars) arrived from Japan. These stamps bore the words " Imperial Chinese Post." They were lithographed on paper watermarked with the Yin-yang symbol of Chinese geomancy. These stamps are rather erroneously referred to as the "Japanese plates." Being lithographed they were printed from stones and not from plates.

For various reasons this set was deemed unsatisfactory and after a few months use it was superseded by a new set which appeared in 1898. This set had the same values and the same design, but appeared in better colours. It was engraved and printed by Waterlow and Sons in London. Since this set appeared so soon after the set of 1897 it meant that few of the first set were sold. Consequently the 1897 set is today highly esteemed by collectors. It has also the honour of being the first regular issue of the Chinese Government.

The 1898 issue came out with the same type of paper having the same watermark. There was a change in the words, however. The new wording was " Chinese Imperial Post." The first two words were interchanged. In 1902 this set was reprinted on ordinary white wove paper. The beginner in Chinese stamp collecting will experience some difficulty in differentiating these two sets. The second set is printed on more opaque paper. In the first issue the design of the stamp can be seen through on the back of the stamp. The first issue also has a smaller number of perforations than the second. The 1898 issue is more expensive than that of 1902.

Between the years 1902 and 1907 there was considerable experimenting with the colours of the five cent stamp. One can pick up rather easily the following colours : light scarlet, yellow, dull, and light violet. It is easy to get at least twelve different varieties of this stamp.

During this same period three more stamps were added to the set. These were the 3, 7, and 16 cent values. China by this time had adopted the regulation colours of the Universal Postal Union, and therefore changed the colours of the 2, 4, and 10. This also accounts for the

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change of colours in the 5c. There are not the varieties in the 2, 4, and 10 that there are in the 5c.

In October, 1903, a special stamp appeared at Foochow which was issued because a typhoon delayed the arrival of a steamer bringing fresh stocks of stamps to that city. On the 2nd and 23rd days of that month the post office ran out of the 1c. stamp. The postmaster rose to the occasion and cut the 2c. scarlet diagonally and sold each half for 1c. These stamps now sell on their original cover for about \$12.00 apiece in the local market. There are many forgeries and the buyer must study very carefully the postmark, measuring the size of the letters and comparing the measurements with the standard, which can be found printed in various stamp catalogues.

In 1909 a beautiful set of three stamps, each in two colours, with the picture of the Temple of Heaven appeared. These were issued in honour of the accession of the Emperor Hsuan Tung.

We now come to the third period in the history of Chinese postage stamps. This can be designated the period of transition. It marks the time when the republic superseded the monarchy. The period falls in the year 1912.

The revolution began in November 1911. At first the postal department endeavoured to remain neutral. In pursuance of this policy the set issued 1902-10 was horizontally surcharged with characters meaning "Provisional Neutrality." All fifteen denominations of that issue were thus overprinted. Only four of them, *i.e.*, the 3c. and 1, 2, and 5 dollar, were sold and these at the city of Foochow. Hence this issue is known as the Foochow issue. Only a limited number were sold, therefore these stamps are very dear and really far beyond the reach of the average collector.

Due to the disapproval of the republican leaders this issue was immediately withdrawn. Some of the stamps which were surcharged horizontally with the characters meaning "Provisional Neutrality" were resurcharged, this time vertically with the characters meaning "Republic of China." Thus we find today these stamps with the cruciform surcharge. They, too, are very expensive due to the fact that so few were sold. The majority were sold at Nanking and hence this issue is known as the Nanking issue. However, this set also must have received the disapproval of the republican leaders, for it, too, was immediately withdrawn. It is reported that only two of these stamps—these of the 1/2c. values—were actually sold in Shanghai. Urgent telegrams arrived from Peking demanding their withdrawal only half an hour after some had been put on sale. Many a stamp collector has wondered where those two stamps now are. Perhaps some amateur has them in some small collection, little realizing the great value placed upon them.

Following the period of the transition we come to the period of the Republic—that in which we are now living. Even as in the days of the Empress Dowager, the postal authorities, on the declaration of the Republic issues immediately ordered a new issue, but until this could be ready, former issues were taken and surcharged. This time the ready, issue of

1902-10 was taken and surcharged vertically with the words " Republic of China." The surcharging was done both in London and in Shanghai. There is a noticeable difference in the shape of the characters in the two surcharges. The dash through the top character in the London surcharge is longer than that in the Shanghai one. Hence these two sets are commonly known as the long and the short surcharges. The Commercial Press in Shanghai put out a few surcharges of the 1 and 2c. values.

The first purely republican stamps appeared in 1912, when the two sets of rectangular stamps bearing the pictures of Sun Yat Sen and Yuan Shih-kai appeared simultaneously. The first set is designated the 'Revolution' issue, while the second is known as the 'Republic' issue. These each had twelve values as follows : 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 16, 20, and 50 cents, and 1, 2, and 5 dollars. These stamps were issued by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Peking. However, because of their largeness in size, they were not practical and were withdrawn after a few months' use. It is possible to buy these two sets today in the local market for about \$30.00. Large quantities, especially of the Sun Yat Sen set, were destroyed when withdrawn.

In 1913 the " junk, reaper, and temple " issue appeared. These stamps were printed in London and appeared in 19 values ranging from ½c. to \$10.00. When the world war came the postal authorities had considerable difficulty in obtaining delivery, so new contracts were let to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Peking. They brought out a set in 1917, which was remarkably similar in design and colour to the London issue. In 1919 three new values were added, the 1½c. 13c. and the \$20.00. In general the London engraving is softer.

In 1922 a second Peking issue of this stamp began to appear. New plates had been made. Some of the colours had been changed and the stamps were a little narrower. Two stamps were surcharged. The 3c. was surcharged with a red 2. A year or so later the new 4c. appeared surcharged with a small 3.

In 1921 a set of four rectangular stamps appeared in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the national postal system. These bore the pictures of the President, the Premier, and the Minister of Communications.

Two years later another commemorative issue appeared bearing the picture of the Temple of Heaven. This issue of four values, 1, 3, 4 and 10c., was brought out in commemoration of the promulgation of the constitution.

In 1921 an airmail set of five values, 15, 30, 45, 60, and 90c. appeared. These are beautiful stamps bearing the picture of an aeroplane flying over the great wall. These stamps were used very little. It is reported that the mail made six flights between Tsinanfu and Peking. A few letters were also carried between Peitaiho and Peking.

The territorial issues of China include the stamps of the current issue which were surcharged in 1911 for use in Tibet. These were surcharged in three different languages,

Chinese, English and Tibetan. We may well wonder if there are any other stamps in the world surcharged



TOP ROW First two stamps of the Imperial Post surcharged "Republic of China." The long stroke in the top character is the London surcharge, the short stroke is the Shanghai print,. Compare the 16 cent cent Sun tat Seri with the same stamp in the second row which bars the picture of Yuan Shih-kai. Besides the difference in the picture there is also a difference in the printing under the picture. The top is in commemoration of the Revolution, the lower in commemoration of the Republic.

2nd ROW First three stamps are of the "junk, reaper, and temple" set, representing respectively the 1st Peking, London, and 2nd Peking Prints.

3rd ROW First an aeroplane stamp, second one of the 1921 set issued in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the postal service, and the third issued in 1925 in commemoration of the promulgation of the new constitution.

4th ROW One of the first postage due stamps issued, bearing the current issued surcharged. The second is one of the imperial post due surcharged republic. The third stamp is one of the latest surcharges to appear in the post office.

BOTTOM ROW First stamp surcharged to sell for famine relief purposes, Second stamp issued for Tibet, surcharged in three different languages. Third surcharged for use in Sinkiang province.

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in three languages. Currency in Tibet is very scarce, hence we have very few used copies of this set.

Since 1915 all of the current issues have been surcharged for use in Sinkiang province. The first set was surcharged in Shanghai, the second in Peking. There is a distinct difference in these surcharges. Money is so depreciated in Sinkiang that unless the stamps used there were especially marked, they could be purchased and resold in China at considerable profit, sometimes as much as 40 per cent. Hence the need of the surcharge.

Among the special issues are the postage due stamps which first appeared in 1904. The first six values of the current issues were surcharged with the words Postage Due. This was followed by a series of eight blue postage due stamps. In 1911 the first two values of this issue were changed from blue to brown. Foochow, Shanghai, and London issued special surcharged "due" stamps. The Foochow set is very rare, being worth from \$3,000.00 to \$4,000.00 in the opinion of one of the best known of the local dealers. In 1923 a new set appeared which is still being used.

In 1919 the three stamps, 2, 4, and 6 cent values, were surcharged with values one cent less than the face value. The postal value was the surcharged value. The purchaser paid the old face value, thus voluntarily giving one cent for each stamp purchased for famine relief purposes.

It is possible for a moderate sum to build up a fairly complete collection of Chinese stamps. And of what other large country is this true? It takes almost the pocket-book of a millionaire to complete a collection of United States stamps. At present interest in Chinese stamps is largely monopolized by foreigners. However, the number of Chinese collectors is rapidly growing. When China begins to have a real interest in her own stamps, then it will be extremely difficult to build up a collection, for the supply of old Chinese stamps is decidedly limited.

Collecting Chinese stamps is real sport. There is genuine pleasure to be found in searching through the dealers' books for old Chinese stamps and in attending the stamp auctions. And in addition to the appeals of pleasure, one may be sure that money well spent in Chinese stamps is an investment. The values are rising every year. The present is the time to begin a collection.