

POSTAL HIMAL

QUARTERLY OF THE NEPAL AND TIBET
PHILATELIC STUDY CIRCLE



OH, NO,
NOT ANOTHER ONE?



Postal Himal is a quarterly publication of the Nepal & Tibet Philatelic Study Circle. Membership subscriptions run from January through December of each year. Dues should be paid in local currency at the prevailing exchange rate to the Society representative in your area.

Membership Dues:

	<u>One Year</u>	<u>Three Years</u>	<u>Life Member</u>
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1st & 2nd Quarters/2000

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HIMALAYAN VIEWS

by
Leo Martyn

This combined issue is late, as usual, but we will have a new Editor in January of 2001, who will get the issues out on a regular basis. Two more issues will be published by the end of the year and will bring the Postal Himal up to date. We also have a new auctioneer. For details see Colin Hepper's report on our London 2000 meeting in this issue.

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I reversed two pages of Sidhartha Man Tuladhar's article which appeared in issue 99/100. Enclosed are corrected pages to replace the original ones (I apologize to those who have bound these issues).

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An interesting article on the present-day postal system of Bhutan (which still uses postal runners) appeared in the January, 2000 issue of American Philatelist (pages 40-43). It is titled "These Bhutanese Are Made for Walking".

=====

I have set up a Web Site offering various Himalayan items. It should be noted that four other members have Web Sites offering material (any others?). Addresses in alphabetical order:

George Alevizos - <http://www.georgealevizos.com>
Geoffrey Flack - <http://tibetanpost.com>
Rainer Fuchs - <http://fuchs-online.com/lager/tibet.htm>
Michael Rogers - <http://www.michaelrogersinc.com>

Have you visited our website yet?

Rainer Fuchs maintains an excellent website for the Society at:
<http://fuchs-online.com/ntpsc>

The Decline and Fall of a Solvent Philatelist

by

Armand E. Singer

Like most collectors I started as a—"generalist" sounds so pompous; call it—"gatherer" of anything with a country's name and value printed on it (stamps off Father's letters, fiscals and revenues from his property registrations or cigar boxes, whatever I could tear off, grab, or trade for)—all this at the tender age of seven. I soon built a "world collection" (read: at least one stamp from most the countries pictured in Scott's *International Junior* album), especial strengths in the likes of Hungary, Mozambique Company, and post WWI Germany—stamp packet stuff.

Then, the bug really bit. It began, around age ten, to suck up my whole 50¢-allowance blood. My father passed away in 1927 not long before my thirteenth birthday, by which time I was being bled to the tune of my already augmented \$2.00 weekly take, principally by run-of-the-mill U.S.

By college age I was adding British North America, as my mother had finally remarried, this time to a Canadian, and we were living in Ontario. These were the bad Depression years, but somehow I managed to fill in a few older U.S., keep up with the current output (then but a few issues: compare with today's outlandishly numerous emissions!), both domestic and Canadian, and even get started on Newfoundland, my new favorite.

Fast forward to the 1950s. I had, in the album referred to above, hinged in one lone Tibet stamp (subsequently found to be spurious) but no Nepal. One day I caught sight, purely by chance, of an ad from some South African philatelist trying to unload his Nepal for \$50.00. By this time I was an assistant professor at WVU pulling down a princely several hundred a month. I could reasonably well finance said expenditure. I only had in mind filling a space or two. I didn't need a small collection. Oh, fatal step! I've never been completely solvent since. May I explain?

The collection in question, modest but worth its cost, included a cover sent from Kathmandu to Lhasa, and since neither Nepal nor Tibet was by then a member of the U.P.U., the cover necessarily bore stamps of both countries. Now I had a real Tibet stamp, not one of those ubiquitous forgeries. But, thought I, it might be nice to have a couple more genuine Tibet adhesives, or even . . . , etc. Be warned. Lifers languish in jails who started with one petty theft, murderers with a careless knife thrust. Yes, and bankrupt philatelists start with coveting a pretty picture on a piece of paper. Anyhow, this one did.

In my not too convincing defense I might plead that in the fifties, as we all know, both Nepal and Tibet were rather cool, that's to say inexpensive. It was anything but difficult to add stamps and covers from the frequent auctions of Robson Lowe and others. Today when Tibet material is astronomical and Nepal not all that far behind, I'm riding a Himalayan tiger and can't let go. Actually, I really don't want to. I can scarcely afford to add to either country's offerings, but continue, even-handedly, to favor both. In fact, I confess to a certain pride in what I've managed. I've gotten a slew of articles and two books out of them; they well may rank among the best collections anywhere. They're a real solace to my declining years. So, I'm satisfied. I'm not so sure I can say as much for my perennially deprived spouse!

* * * * *

New Tibetan "Officials" Discovery

Armand E. Singer

One of the intriguing facts about Tibetan philately is its unpredictability. You simply never know what finds, to-die-for or dubious, are likely to turn up at any given moment. Witness the latest: A sheet of six of a huge (ca. 74x76 mm.) first cousin of the "officials," herewith illustrated full size. The illustration is made from a black-and-white xerox copy, sent to me by the well-known Kathmandu dealer, Surendra Lal Shrestha, asking me to comment on his discovery. I understand that he does not have the original sheet himself, but tells me that it is chestnut brown (cf. Scott 03) denomination unknown. A rumor from another source has it that the asking price for the full sheet would be over three thousand dollars, U.S.

As self-styled expert on these vexing "officials," I make bold to offer the following observations:

- 1) They are more clearly printed than any of the seven previously known values, closest to the forgery of the large one-sang denomination (Scott 05; see my "officials" monograph, p. 19), although the one sang uses the same cliché for the whole sheet of eight, whereas this sheet of six features all individually drawn clichés. At a guess, I'd say a production by the same forger. Mr. Shrestha writes that he was told the sheet emanates from Tibet. The accurate, carefully drawn Tibetan characters seem to bear him out.
- 2) There *is* a value clearly delineated, near the bottom left ("sang") and bottom right ("two"). So we have a stamp of 13 1/3 trangkas, evidently supposedly dating from the 1950s, while Tibet was under its own sovereignty, the era when the other "officials" surfaced. We could scarcely conceive of this sheet's being produced, that is, a need for it, under later, Chinese rule. Quite a high value, greater alone than any combined franking I have run across on any native cover in over fifty years of collecting Tibet.
- 3) Three thousand, plus? Save your money! More of these curiosities will surface much sooner than later, at reduced asking prices. As for me, had I been shown the original, I would have been happy to suggest a hundred dollars, but then I am known as an easy mark.
- 4) Finally—could this sheet actually be "genuine," with at least as good credentials as the rest of the issue? Of course! There is even some evidence that the world is flat, though I have never heard of anyone's falling off it yet.

I had the foregoing page ready to send off when I received from friend and fellow member of our Circle Nickolas Rhodes a photocopy of part of a chapter from a 1995 book printed in Lhasa in Chinese. The pages he sent dealt with the "officials," including two items not in my monograph, *The "Officials" of Tibet* (Vancouver, B.C.: Geoffrey Flack, 1999). Like me, he does not read Chinese and was not sure what arguments were being offered. Since then I managed to obtain a copy of the book and had the chapter pages translated by Christine Chang, Associate Librarian, West Virginia Library, to whom I am greatly indebted.

The book in question is *The History of the Postal Service and Stamps of Tibet* by Yuan Liu, Hsie Yue Shuen, and Aha Wang Shan Tsun, published by the Tibetan Peoples Publishing Co.

The authors discuss the new 13 1/3 tr. (two sang) "official" (now seen to have been known at least five years before my 2000 date), which they denote as two liang, not sang ("liang" is a word normally meaning a Chinese unit of weight, more or less equivalent to our "ounce," but which can also denote a unit of value) and measure it as 76 x 76 mm. (individual clichés vary by a millimeter or so; figures for the photo sheet in my possession vary from 73 to 77 mm). One of the authors, Yuan Liu, writes that he owns a pair, previously the only known examples being a pair kept in the Tibetan Postal Museum. The pair is illustrated in color (all the colors in the volume are poorly reproduced) as No. 43.

The authors go on to describe and list others in the "set" and detail why their issuance was necessary: A shortage of funds to pay the mailmen and long, difficult routes made for poor service. The Tsa-Kang system was established to improve the service. Its mailmen were dressed differently, paid 25 liang more than the usual 150 liang, and used these new official stamps. More mailmen and more horses were added. Official mail was wrapped in cloth ribbons to indicate different priority. Runners could receive twenty lashes if mail was an hour late. The special stamps originally differentiated the new system from the old, but eventually officials and the telegraph stamps as well were both used for regular postage. [ed. See front cover of this issue.]

A chart of the eight denominations the authors recognize (and state are in their collection) is provided. As follows:

- 1 1/3 tr. gray 39 x 28 mm., sheet size 3x3
- 2 1 tr. bronze 42 x 38 mm., sheet size 4x3
- 3 2/3 tr. reddish brown 25 x 33 mm., sheet size 4x3
- 4 1 1/3 tr. brass green 40 x 40 mm, sheet size 3x2
- 5 1 1/3 tr. olive green 43 x 45 mm., 3x2
- 6 3 1/3 tr. red 50 x 53 mm., sheet size 2x2
- 7 6 2/3 tr. stone blue 66 x 64 mm., sheet size 4x2
- 8 13 1/3 tr. soil yellow 76 x 76 mm., sheet size 2x2

The authors note that Scott and Michel list a 1/3 tr. bronze green (this would be Scott 01), but since they have never seen one, do not list it. They think the color suggests the stamp should be their No. 4, 1 1/3 tr. bronze green, above (Mr. Rhodes also denominates Scott 01 as 1 1/3 tr.). This is apparently what they illustrate at the start of the book as No. 41, in the unpaginated color section of the volume, but the picture, though close to what we call No. 1 is not the same stamp. Minor details differ. Another forgery?

A big problem with the chart I reproduce above is that, except for Nos. 7 (reasonably accurate) and 8, most of the dimensions do not fit either Scott's figures or the stamps I have measured myself and can vouch for as accurate for the singles I used (sheets as usual show slight variations). Tentatively I identify No 1 as Scott 02, 2 as ?, 3 as 03, 4 as 01, 5 as 04, 6 as my own 48 x 48 mm., sheet size unknown, and obviously 7 as 05 and 8 as the new one. No. 2 should be my 40 x 23 pale orange, the other one with no sheets recorded, but the dimensions do not fit, though like Rhodes' values, both read one trangka. The Chinese book makes the stamp almost square, where our example is clearly horizontally rectangular. The new 2 sang is also shown as a single on unpaginated "p. 16," dark blue

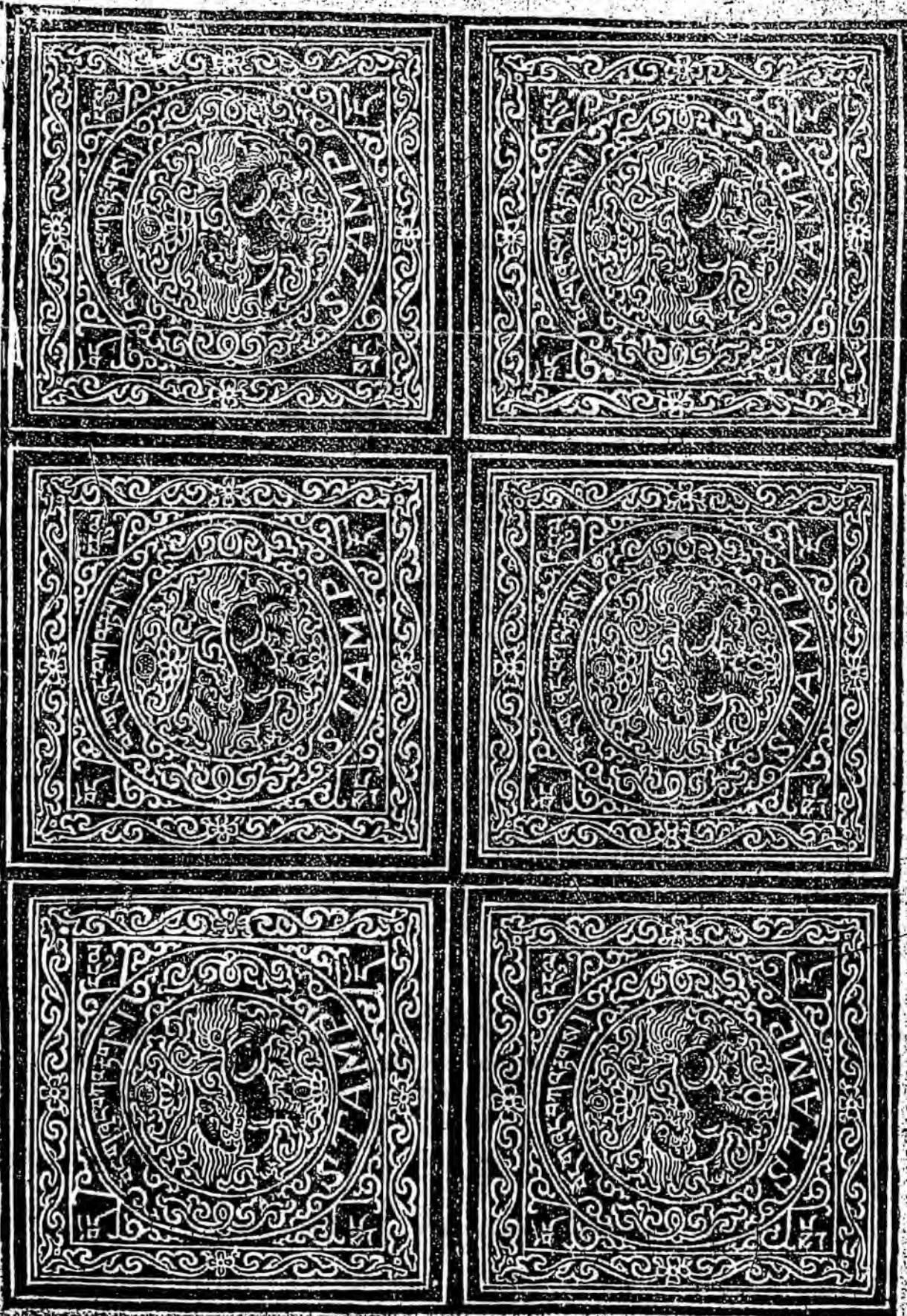
The authors illustrate Scotts 01 (unpaginated color pages at the start of the book, what I count as p. 16, but the reproduction is not quite like the 01 we know, though the geometric border is similar). They show 02 on unpaginated "p. 13," a pair on cover and a block of four on another cover and a single on still another cover, "p. 16," and as an uncolored part sheet, p. 87. 03 is reproduced on "p. 13," single on cover, and as a sheet of 12 on p. 87, uncolored, inverted, and a mirror image. 04 may be seen on "p. 16" as a part sheet, much reduced, and on p. 89 as an uncolored part sheet, mirror image. They speak, p. 88, of two different designs of the 1 1/3 tr. stamps, their Nos 4-5, our 01 and 04 (both shown on "p. 16") and correctly note that 01 is rare ("worth more") than 04. What they do not say, even though writing that more than one designer seems to have done the stamps, is that 01 is the only one in the original set or later additions to be drawn with straight, geometric border designs, not rounded, rather more floral in nature.¹ Geometric designs are seen in Tibetan philately, but to my recollection, only on seals, occurring as Horyig inscriptions, certainly not on stamps of any nature. Some collectors have considered 01, which predates by at least five years all the others in the "set," as having nothing to do with the rest. 05 is shown, much reduced as a full sheet, mirror image, on "p. 15," on a much reduced cover, as a single, the cover being a mirror image, and as a part sheet, uncolored mirror image, p. 89.

The one-sang 05 is again shown in color, almost black, at the top of unpaginated "p. 17," but details of the cliché differ from the 05 in Scotts or my 1999 monograph or even my so-called forgery, or their photo, "p. 15." They recognize the differences, observing on p. 88 that there are actually three carvings of the one sang, two with 4 stamps to the sheet (one 66 x 64 mm., the other 58 x 57 mm.), and one with 8 to a sheet. The reason for three carvings was that the stamp was so popular, the plate wore out. The two sang is shown below it, deep blue, on the same page, though the authors themselves describe it on p. 86 as "soil yellow."

Final comments: The mirror images suggest these pictures may have been lifted from some other book (note that some have a slash line across one corner to present illegal reproduction, some don't). The incorrect stamp dimensions the incorrect sheet sizes for several of the series, and the lack of photos of their own Nos. 2 and 6, argue for a lot of material unseen, in spite of their claim, p. 88, that the eight types are all in their (royal plural?) collection. The account of why the "officials" were instituted in the first place is plausible enough, if undocumented, but it would be much more credible if they showed even one cover supposedly sent by this special postal service. They illustrate two covers in color on "p. 13," one on p. "15," and a fourth on "p. 16," all of the kind we have seen in countless European and U. S. auction catalogs.

I am not inclined to change the basics of the account I penned before being apprised of this 1995 Lhasa volume, nor anything in my 1999 monograph. We do need, of course, to read the rest of this 186 p. book, which could include valuable new discoveries, if the new two sang and the two slightly different 01 and 05 photos are any indication. Tibet philately as always continues to amaze and confound all its devotees.

¹ I must admit that the design difference had never struck me before now.



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The Web Site of the Nepal and Tibet Philatelic Study Circle
and Its Future

Rainer Fuchs

For almost three years the Nepal and Tibet Philatelic Study Circle (NTPSC) has been on the World Wide Web. During this time our Study Circle has found several new members through the Home Page, and I, as the Web Master, have earned a lot of praise, little criticism but almost no help from other members.

It is nice to receive praise from others who appreciate one's work and efforts. Criticism is also important as long as it is constructive - but none has been received. Except for a contribution by Colin Hepper no help has been received what so ever. Why?

I love working on the Home Page but I am not willing to handle the work load alone anymore. What I will do is to make the regular updates, like indexing the Postal Himal and keeping the list of officers up to date, but I will not add new features to the Home Page.

The Internet is a powerful tool to share and spread information, irrespective of time and distance. But why are the features on our Home Page so neglected by our members? Take, for instance, the Discussion page. This is an online forum to share opinions; but is totally neglected. Non-members post questions but there are no responses from members who have the knowledge to answer. These non-members could possibly have become members of the NTPSC if some information had been offered.

I used to post questions to encourage others to do the same, but again no response. I offer free advertisements for members (except for one paid ad and my own ad) but there are no takers. The topic, "Subject Index", could be a powerful online resource, but except for the default pages I have created initially, nothing was added. The "Catalogue" was planned as a cross reference for the areas we deal in, but again, except for my pages, no additions or even a reply has been offered.

So far I bear all the expenses relating to the NTPSC's Home Page. Okay, you can say I have the equipment necessary to support the Home Page, but I need some feedback to make the time and effort I put forth meaningful. For the ones who do not know, I maintain the Home Page in my free time, which is very limited. I am married, have three children and am very busy with my full time job as Site Manager for the German company, Siemens, at our Control Centre Projects in Kuwait, as well as maintaining the Home Page here.

It is up to you to help shape the future of the NTPSC on the World Wide Web - it can be bright or dull. How can you help as members? I would like to make a face lift of the Index page but have limited graphic skills. We need someone with fresh ideas to help promote the Home Page. We also need contributions of articles. These do not have to be large or deep in scope (although these also would be welcomed) - just something for the Subject index. All I request is that the reports be submitted in electronic form so that I do not need to retype them (even with OCR some re-typing is necessary).

Now, for those who do not know, the Internet address of "OUR" Web Site is:

<http://fuchs-online.com/ntpsc/>

Please take a look,

Rainer

* * * * *

NEPAL – NEW ISSUE,
30 June 2000

Visit Nepal Series

R12 – Tchorolpa Glacial Lake, Dolakha

R15 – Dakshinkali Temple, Kathmandu

R18 – 50th Anniversary. Of 1st Asent of
Mount Annapurna I

Designer: K.K.Karmachatya

Printer: Austrian Government Printing
Office, Vienna, Austria.

Quantity; One Million each value.

F.D.Cancel:



Regular Series

7 July 2000.

Title: Rani Pokhari, Kathmandu

0.50P – Orange and Black

R.1 - Blue and Black

R.2 - Brown and Black

Designer: K.K.Karmacharya

Printer: Helio Courvoiser S.A.
Switzerland

Quantity: Five million each.

F.D.Cancel:



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REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE STAMP SHOW 2000 IN LONDON
ON FRIDAY 26 MAY AT 10:30 AM

Colin Hepper

The meeting was attended by the following members: Armand Singer, Colin Hepper, Dick van der Wateren, Leo Martyn, Wolfgang Hellrigl, Al Zuluetta, Richard Hanchett, Nick Rhodes, Peter Planken, David Crocker, Derek Pocock, Bernard Lucas, Geof Rosamond, David Froud, Geoffrey Flack, plus eight visitors.

The meeting opened with Colin Hepper first introducing himself, and giving appologies from Derrick Dawson, Jennifer Broad and Bruo Le Peut. The other people attending then also introduced themselves.

Armand Singer then talked about the future activities of the Circle and in particular was keen to promote more publications from members. He thought that it would be worth investigating the help that might be available from the Stewart Rossiter Fund which had been set up in the UK for help in publishing books.

Armand then presented his talk 'The Penultimate Quest' which was illustrated by slides, showing some of the fine covers and pieces from his collection.

This was followed by a talk from the very enthusiastic Tibet collector Geoffrey Flack, who has done much to promote the collecting of Tibet. He first showed a selection of books that he had helped to publish or was available from him.

He then proceeded to show unusual Tibetan items that he had discovered and various different aspects of Tibetan collecting. These were all illustrated in the form of large photographs on card, which made it easier for the audience to see.

Before starting the business meeting Leo Martyn showed some Nepalese 'Cavalry Stamps' and a stick that post runner would use to carry the sack of mail on their shoulders.

The business meeting then followed: -

Item (1). The position of President and Vice President.

Colin Hepper stated that when Wolfgang Hellrigl had to stand down as President, he had approached both Armand Singer and Dick van der Wateren to take over these posts. This they agreed to but there had been no voting of the members and the question was raised 'should voting have taken place'? Dr Hellrigl stated that he felt that members were more than happy with the two officers in question and that this meeting should formally approve it. This was done so unanimously.

Item (2). Publishing Postal Himal.

Colin Hepper stated that over a long period Leo Martyn had maintained an excellent standard of publication. However due to an increase in workload, publications had slipped behind, but with some help from himself this had now almost been corrected. Richard Hanchett had volunteered to take over the position of Editor from Leo. He would do this officially on 1 January 2001 but in the meantime would work with Leo so that there was smooth transfer of posts.

Item (3). Circle Auctions.

Al Zuluetta is taking over the position of auctioneer and he told the meeting that he thought it would be better to run one large auction each year, rather than a number of smaller ones. He suggested that this auction should be run in September each year. Members would then know the time of the auction each year and would have plenty

of time to prepare lots and send to him. Details of his proposals would be published in Postal Himal.

Item (4). **Financial report.**

Colin Hepper presented the balance sheets for all transactions except for North America for the last three years. Armand Singer then stated that he had some concerns about the USA accounts. He stressed that members must appreciate that all society officers worked for nothing in their own time, which was not always easy to do. However the balance sheet that he had received from Roger Skinner showed no funds at all which was a worrying aspect. It was possible because he had asked for this at a very late stage before he left for England that Roger had been unable to get a balance sheet together in the short time available.

There was some discussion as to the best ways to tighten up on our accounting procedures, and a suggestion from Wolfgang Hellrigl that the President, Vice President and Secretary look into our accounting and resolve the problem was agreed by the meeting.

The business meeting was then closed and members used the remaining short time for discussion and viewing of the items on display.



Nepal & Tibet Philatelic Study Circle

Accounts for the year 1997 (Europe)

INFLOWS

Interest Inc	120.93
Life Member Sub	2550.00
Opening Balance	2044.02
Subscription	559.00
Unknown	70.00

TOTAL INFLOWS £5343.95

OUTFLOWS

Affil. Subs.	-18.00
Bank Charge	-5.07
Bank Transfer	-250.00
Photocopying	-2.10
Stationery	-23.29

TOTAL OUTFLOWS £-298.46

.....
BALANCE £5045.49
.....

.....
Nepal & Tibet Philatelic Study Circle

Accounts for the year 1998 (Europe)

INFLOWS

Donation	5.61
Interest Inc	168.39
Life Member Sub	250.00
Subscription	196.00

TOTAL INFLOWS £620.00

OUTFLOWS

Affil. Subs.	-16.20
Stamps	-4.80
Stationery	-2.20

TOTAL OUTFLOWS £-23.20

.....
OVERALL TOTAL £596.80

BALANCE £5642.29

.....
Nepal & Tibet Philatelic Study Circle

Accounts for the year 1999 (Europe)

INFLOWS

Interest Inc	53.20
Misc. Cheques	350.00
Subscription	625.00

TOTAL INFLOWS £1028.20

OUTFLOWS

Advertisement	-30.00
P.H.Postage	-733.92
P.H.Printing + Envelopes	-875.07
Guillotine	-89.76
Postage	-23.63
Stamp Show 2000	-25.00
Stationery	-1.56
Subscriptions	9.00

TOTAL OUTFLOWS £-1769.88

.....
OVERALL TOTAL £-741.68
.....

BALANCE £ 4900.61

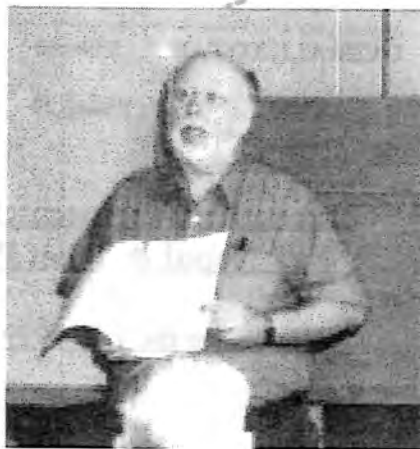
PERSONALITIES AT THE STAMP SHOW 2000 MEETING



Secretary Colin Hepper addressing the meeting with Armand Singer on the left and Dick van der Wateren on the right of the picture.



Leo Martyn



Geoffrey Flack



Richard Hanchett



Al Zuluetta

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THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION



President - Air Chief Marshal Sir Lewis Hodges KCB CBE DSO DFC ADC RAF

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
DHAULAGIRI EXPEDITION 1974

1. This Royal Air Force Expedition plans to attempt the unclimbed 25,133 ft peak Dhaulagiri 4 in April and May 1974. The peak is situated in the remote western area of Nepal. A programme of botany and zoology will also be undertaken by a party of 3 scientists from the British Museum of Natural History together with a research programme by a member of the Institute of Aviation Medicine into the high altitude adaptation of birds.
2. In order to supplement our funds an official Expedition postcard bearing the 1 Nepalese rupee "GORKHA" stamp will be despatched from our Base Camp in the Barbung Khola north of the Dhaul Himal. The postcard will bear a map of Nepal and a panorama of the peaks of the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna Range, with expedition members signatures.
3. Two post cards will be available. One at 30p with the single "GORKHA" stamp and one at 60p with three stamps (1R "GORKHA" - 25 pice "LUMBINI" - 50 pice "HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE KING OF NEPAL").
4. If you are a philatelic enthusiast or you have a son or daughter at school and wish to send them a card or to receive a card yourself, please complete the ~~order~~ slip below.

MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION

Leader	Wg Cdr D le R Bird HQSC	Cpl I R Jones RAF GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY
	Wg Cdr W B Russell RAF KINLOSS	SAC T A Taylor RAF LEUCHARS
	Flt Lt P J Addis HQSC	
	Flt Lt J R Smith ANZUK SINGAPORE	Capt M G Le G Bridges RE
	Fg Off M J Le Marie HQSC	Capt P W Gunson REME
	Ch Tech G P Armstrong RAF MASIRAH	Mr S C Nixon RAF IAM
	Flt Sgt P J McGowan RAF AKROTIRI	Dr G B Gorbet BRITISH MUSEUM
	Lt Col J O M Roberts KATHMANDU	Mr K H Hyatt " "
Climbing -	Sardah Ang Phu " "	Mr R Vickery " "
Zoological -	Sardah Kanchha NAMCHE	
Botanical -	Sardah Chettan Chumbi KATHMANDU	

* * * * *

The Vicar Apostolic of Tibet in Ta-t sien-lu Gets Mail from Rawalpindi
Armand E. Singer

Tibet ←



*The Right Rev. Bishop F. Biet,
Vicar Apostolic of Tibet,
Ta-t sien-lu*

The letter pictured here left the foothill town of Rawalpindi, India (then sheltering some hundred thousand inhabitants, but now crowded with a million, in N. E. Pakistan, not far from the disputed-border high country of the Karakorams) over a hundred years ago, June 29, 1896. The Tibet towns most of us collect wouldn't appear to present any special problems: S. E. to Calcutta, north by way of Darjeeling to Gyantse (most likely), destination Lhasa, with private hand delivery to the nearby village specified on the cover, where the Vicar would be enjoying whatever hospitality that almost hermetically sealed country might allow. We all seek out Younghusband or Bailey covers from less than a decade later, possibly a Sven Hedin example soon after. If 1896 seems a bit early, it is at least from the general era. But no. This cover is something possibly unique.

The Right Reverend Bishop F. (for Félix) Biet, Vicar Apostolic of Tibet, also known as the Bishop of Diana, was a most determined Catholic missionary (1838-1904), who assumed his exalted post near the end of 1877 and held it until his death on September 9, 1904.¹ And "Ta-t sien-lu," no village, but a commercial center in Eastern Tibet, with around ten thousand people, half Chinese, half Tibetan,² where the Bishop precariously resided (now part of China's Sikang Province and more commonly called Kangting, some 125 m. W. S. W. of better-known Chengtu) lies reasonably due east of Lhasa, about 650 miles as Tibetan ravens fly, but people need roads. To avoid over half a dozen precipitously steep, thousands-of-feet-deep valleys cut by raging rivers (think Tsangpo, Dikang, Salween, Mehong, Yangtse, Yalung) the road (read slippery dirt track) toward the eastern slopes of the Himalayas was routed over three hundred miles to the N. E. The whole passage probably entailed a journey of fifteen hundred miles (ten a day over mountain passes, etc., is a very good average), half a year from Lhasa.

That's why this rather plain cover tells such a fascinating story. I have enhanced the datestamps on the back. Let us trace its convoluted odyssey. (Common sense dictated avoiding the overland traverse.) July 7 found it in Tuticorin, way down on the southeastern corner of India, across the Gulf of Mannar from the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and its capital city of Colombo, where it received its next datestamp the following day. The stamp "Singapore to Hong Kong," July 20, is a ship's mark. The French Ligne N serviced Colombo on its way to Shanghai,³ but that line had its own postmarks; this letter would surely have been put aboard British vessels, Ceylon to Singapore to Hong Kong. In any event, we find it bearing a Shanghai mark July 29, obviously applied in the British-American International part of the city (see below).

To the left of the original Rawalpindi cancel is a somewhat faint postmark dated August 2, 1896, the last datable mark to be found. The letters above it do not spell out a town name but read "Customs." The town must be Tientsin, its postmark more fully reproduced here⁴: Tientsin is the logical jumping-off town for a routing to Tatsienlu, but I have not used mere logic for reproducing this particular datestamp. It is the only one that exactly fits celluloid overlays of all 41 similar stampings illustrated in Padget (pp. 18-19), including two other almost identical Tientsin examples, one earlier and one later. The other forty reproductions prove to be too large, too small, the letters differently spaced, the inner and outer rings too far apart, etc. Tientsin it is, with one small variation to be considered. Padget notes that Tientsin's datestamps are known in black, blue, and violet only (black the commonest). My cover has a pale red mark, possibly faded. "Violet" would be a stretch.⁵

This town is some seven hundred miles up-coast from Shanghai, slightly inland from the port city of Taku, a hundred miles or so S. E. of Peking, and a well-known headquarters for arriving Chinese mail. The Customs Houses in each town handled correspondence as well as packages at that time. So far, despite the enormous distance, the letter's routing was fairly standard, and quite rapidly consummated—under two months, even with the leisurely pace of packet steamers.

But now begins the really arduous part of its hegira overland to Tatsienlu, 1450 airline miles S. W. of Tientsin in the high eastern foothills of the Himalayas—this time there were more feasible roads, but the route would still add another thousand miles at best to this minimum. Even as late as its 1951 edition, the *Oxford Atlas* shows Tatsienlu served merely by dirt roads, "passable only in fair weather" (pp. 8 and 62), a route that wanders all over the map from Tientsin as well. Not an easy or a short destination. We need some explanation of postal realities in that area, 1896.

March 1896 saw the establishment of the new Chinese Imperial Post, still under the Englishman, Sir Robert Hart, now to be known as Inspector General of Posts as well as of Customs, though the "Customs" stamp would remain on letters for some time. Letters such as the present one would have arrived from the British P.O. in Shanghai to (port and) nearby port cities such as Tientsin, where the Chinese system asserted its authority, but only along or near the coast. Inland was no-man's land. No imperial system had as yet been instituted. The customs houses were, as the name suggests, part of the ports and harbors set-up. For transport of mail to the west—the frontier provinces, i.e.—varying amounts of candareens could be assessed as payment, Chinese stamps sometimes affixed. "Very few of these [covers from abroad] seem to have survived, and we have recorded only half-a-dozen," writes F. W. Webb, and the ones he had in mind happened to have gone from Ireland to Peking, not to an outpost like Tatsienlu, which Webb does not even mention.⁶

The present cover shows no evidence of fees paid, and obviously no stamps were affixed, but it surely arrived: there is no Dead Letter Office postmark to indicate "return to sender." And who was the sender, there being no return address? A tantalizing candidate might well be Bishop Biet's friend, William Woodville Rockhill, whose *Land of the Lamas* frequently mentions him.⁷

How did this much-travelled missive get to its destination, no small feat in itself? George Alevizos feels it may represent the farthest western delivery of a letter at that time. If the regular system did not extend very far inland, senders would have to avail themselves of some other means: Alevizos suggests private couriers, possibly traders. Tatsienlu had a flourishing trade with coastal populations in tea, etc.⁸ He even considered the missionaries themselves, porters having to bring supplies to the mission and having from time to time to renew them in towns like Tientsin. He added that the native Min Chu system might have carried the letter. In any event, there are no markings to provide clues; in fact there is apparently no known Tatsienlu postmark in use in 1896.

Interestingly, Chinese postal services to the frontier provinces and beyond have remained spotty even up to recent times, although China eventually got regular routes to the west. A Chungking *National Herald* newspaper story dated July 26, 1945 notes that postal routes and post offices for Sikang, Mongolia, Tibet, etc., are very sparse, beset with problems of deserts, high plateaus, mountain ranges, poor soil, consequent poverty, and meager populations. The mail is carried, writes the *Herald*, over primitive routes, by couriers, mules, or horses, etc., etc.

Tatsienlu was big enough center, but size isn't the whole story. A better picture of Bishop Biet's hardships there might be guessed in reading a letter written a few years earlier from that same mission and town (May 20, 1865),⁹ wherein the writer describes closed roads (consequently no funds arriving from France), persecutions, killings of Christian Neophytes, and the constant threat of enslavement of the victims' orphaned children. For Christian missionaries in the land of "pagans" (the writer's term for them) these were not the best of times. Bishop Biet must surely have received this letter from the outer world with great warmth. It takes a truly dedicated believer to have spent one's last forty years pretty well back of beyond, a virtual stranger in a strange land.¹⁰

1. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s. v. "Tibet," electronic ed.
2. *La Grande Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1886-1902), s. v. "Tatsienlu."
3. See my *Nepal 1772-1961 and Beyond*, p. 30, the 1888 cover from Peking to Kathmandu, via Shanghai, Colombo, Madras, etc., or my *Tibet 1809-1975*, p. 68, depicting a cover from Lhasa to Peking, which bears a Tatsienlu backstamp, applied en route. The cover travelled the fabled overland "silk route," one of a small handful so recorded. Normally, such mail went overseas, like the present cover.
4. See Peter I. Padget, *The Postal Markings of China* (The China Philatelic Society of London, 1978), p. 19.
5. Some others of the Chinese Customs datestamps are known in red, so the obvious conclusion is that I have lucked onto an unrecorded variety. But there is another possibility. Violet dies are normally various mixtures of red and blue. The latter is recognized as a fugitive color, easily oxydized, given to fading. If the blue component of a violet stamp sufficiently faded, we would be left with a more or less red remainder. I checked my theory with a West Virginia University chemistry professor friend, who agreed that it would stand as a real possibility. The black ink on the rest of the cover, however, remains quite fresh.
6. *The Philatelic and Postal History of Hong Kong and the Treaty Ports of China and Japan* (The Royal Philatelic Society, London 1961), p. 205. Webb is one of the standard authorities for this area of philatelic research. The curious may read a fuller account of this watershed year in Chinese postal history, pp. 205-07.

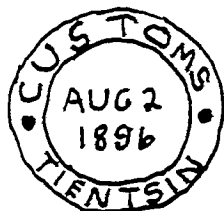
This may be the best place to admit to my great debt in composing the present article to the expertise of Leo Martyn and George Alevizos, especially the latter.

7. (London: Longmans, Green, 1891), pp. 227, 247, 270, 272-73, 285-87, 301. He actually cites a letter from the Bishop (p. 227), and visited him in Tatsienlu itself (pp. 270 ff.).

8. *La Grande Encyclopédie*, *ibid.*

9. Robson Lowe, *From China and Tibet* (London, [1981]), p. 18. The pamphlet treats of a dozen letters sent from 1844 to 1865 by Italian and French missionaries.

10. Rockhill, p. 272, in a remark that must date from ca. 1890, writes that his friend has been in Tibet for 26 years. He was still there upon his death fourteen years later.



(Enhanced cancel.)



"Covers From Nepal by F.H. Durkee"

Leo Martyn

The following newspaper clipping, sent in by Alan Warren, relates some early first-hand experiences of a collector. The article appeared in the June 14, 1947 issue of Western Stamp Collector.

Covers from Nepal

By F. H. DURKEE



Figure 1

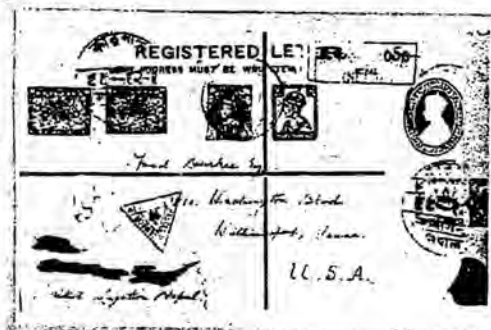


Figure 2

Situated on the southwest slope of the highest part of the Himalaya Range, north of India, east of Sikkim and south of Tibet, and bounded on the south and west by Bengal and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh is the independent kingdom of Nepal. Contained in its 54,000 square miles (about the size of Illinois) are some of the world's highest mountains. Just the opposite of the perpetually snow-covered peaks can be found in Southern Nepal where the land contains hot, steaming jungles, home of tigers, elephants and other mammalia as found in India itself.

Has a Maharajah

Although closely tied to India for the commerce it carries on, Nepal is a military oligarchy with a maharajah as the nominal head but having a prime minister as the real ruler. Its population has been estimated at 5,500,000 but this figure is considered to be a million more than what it actually is. Jealously guarding their freedom, the majority of Nepal is still closed to travelers but there is a British resident and a small detachment of British troops stationed at Khatmandu, the capital. In this city of 80,000 Europeans have traveled, but it is considered unlikely that this courtesy includes the next two largest cities of Falan and Bhatnagon, population about 30,000 each. As of 1938, Nepal contained but 25 miles of railroads and 27 miles of highways.

Fortunate indeed was I, when, in early 1941 I met a friend who was engaged in worldwide export and import trade and who had journeyed extensively in India. He had with him an address book

containing a list of individuals whom he had met in his travels. In Calcutta he had met Babu Amdur, a minor government official from Nepal. Babu, it developed, could speak and write English quite well and when my friend recommended him as one to become better acquainted with, by correspondence of course, I needed no further urging.

I Was Disappointed

At first I wrote only the general items of interest which I thought would appeal to him, not caring much what I discussed, only waiting for the day to get his reply and see what new cover I could add to my collection. Nearly seven months later his letter arrived and although having requested Babu to use a few Nepal stamps on the cover I was

disappointed to find merely a copy of the 2-anna pictorial series of India along with a half and one-anna George VI series franking the envelope. However, there was a beautiful postmark containing at the top of a double circle the word NEPAL, in the center the date, and at the bottom an ornamental four-dotted design. Then too on the face of the cover was a "Not Opened by Censor" marking in a rectangle. Babu did do himself proud, however, for he carefully pasted on a small card nice used copies of the 2, 4, 8 and 16 picce stamps of Nepal, series 1935-41.

Again I wrote him and this time requested that even though his former letter stated it was not possible to use Nepalese stamps outside of the country to put the required India postage on the next cover along with a few stamps of Nepal. Anything to see what that native postmark would look like on cover! To return the courtesy I sent him a nice lot of used U. S. stamps trusting that maybe we could add another philatelist to the ranks.

Success at Last

This second attempt proved quite successful. His reply was contained in the envelope as shown in Figure 1, the Nepal stamps being the 2p and 4p items. Very graciously Babu also enclosed a folded rice paper envelope containing eight used Nepalese stamps, a few on the original piece showing postmarks.

On the third try I went all out. I felt if Babu returned stamp for stamp he might also return cover for cover and postcard for postcard. Sending a varied lot of material I also included a number of International Reply Coupons

just to see what would happen.

After waiting the usual seven to eight months his letter came and, as shown in Figure 2 was franked with regular India postage along with copies of the 2, 4 and 16 picce stamps of Nepal. The registration is handstamped on the label in small blue letters. The Indian stamps are postmarked in a double-lined circle with British Legation at the top and at the bottom in parenthesis, Nepal. Babu informed me that registration is not available from Khatmandu and hence had to be registered from the British Legation.

With the exception of the first cover I received from my correspondent bearing the "Not Opened by Censor" marking, the others are censored in the triangular



Figure 3

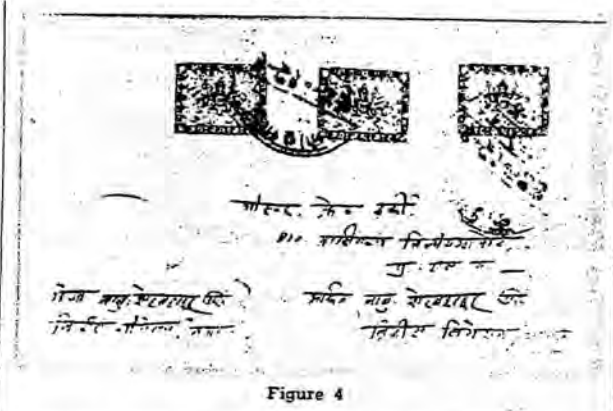


Figure 4

person by "outdoor" marking of India and as near as I can guess it I would say the letters were sent via Calcutta and to this country by way of New York.

In return for the covers and postals which I sent Babu he in turn sent me in this last letter two envelopes and a Nepalese postal card. The one envelope contains a pair of the 4p green Nepal stamps with the Nepal postmark with a backstamp of "Forges-ganj, 26 Feb 42." All searchings of atlases have failed to turn up just where this town is and it is unlikely that it is in Nepal for the postmark is in English whereas the native postmark is printed in Nepali.

The second cover is franked with the 4p and two singles of the 2p. As can be noticed in Figure 3 it is addressed in Nepali and on the reverse is a handstamp measuring roughly 1 by 2 inches reading "Buy Defence Savings Certificates, Delivery Mar 14, 8:30 AM, British Legation (Nepal)." On both covers with this stamping the word "certificates" has the "r" omitted, and are similar with the exception of different dates.

Postal Masterpiece

The postal card Babu sent is really a masterpiece from any collector's viewpoint. Apparently

it is cut by hand for its measurements are quite a bit off on either end. It is printed in a reddish brown, picturing the Siva Mahadeva. The design in the upper center is apparently some type of symbolic seal with crossed knives, a pair of footprints at the top, above it being a native inscription. Perhaps enough detail will show up in Figure 4 for you to see what I mean. The card is written entirely in the native language and this writing is certainly in a class all by itself. The card is of very rough stock and must certainly be nine-tenths hand made.

The Siva Mahadeva mentioned above is pictured on the Nepalese stamps from 1907 on. Literally it means Great Lord; it represents the presence of destruction, has 5 heads, 3 eyes. On his head he bears the Ganges, carries a garland of human skulls and wears a necklace of serpents. In his other hand he holds a trident resembling in form the breastbone with ribs adjoining. His legendary home is on Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas. Siva is the god of asceticism but also of all the arts, especially of dancing. Although Scott's design to label this design as the Siva Mahadeva, he is generally known as Lord, Mahasevar or Sankara, Beneficent or Pasu-

pati, King Lore or simply Great One.

Many Varieties Scarce

Scott lists but 37 varieties of Nepalese stamps; many varieties are difficult to come across. Apparently some source of supply is opening up for the later issues, as one sees them advertised now and then. If one can but find these items it would cost very little to complete a collection of this country for their catalogues run from the minimum of 6¢ to the high of \$4.00 with the exception of the tete-beche pairs when it begins to cost a little more to obtain examples of these "one right and one upside down" pairs.

One can readily tell the difference between the 1907 issue and the 1931-35 issues as the former contains nine characters in the bottom panel, the latter having but five characters in the bottom panel. There are also slight variations in the shading but usually these are too minute to bother with. When one has copies of the 1931-35 issues and compares them with the 1935-41 issues here again he finds shading differences and will note that the previous issue is on a whiter and thinner paper than the latter issues. But the main difference, as pointed out by Scott, in the latest issue of Nepal's stamps is that the char-

acters in the lower right and left drawn. Although I doubt if many hand corners have been with- out this magazine's readers can decipher Nepali, the values are in the left and right outer panels of the stamps, but usually it is best to go by the colors of the issues and by the perforation and size differences.

From my own experience I

find there is quite a dearth of dealers in this country who can supply items from Nepal and from the Indian Native States. Naturally, there is no philatelic agency in Nepal and sources of supply of any sizeable quantities of these items are rare indeed. Perhaps for the average dealer who can buy truckloads of Vatican City and the San Marino labels to sell to his customers it is wiser to do so than to risk tying up any great amount of cash in the off-the-beaten-track countries.

Following the trail of issues from the mid-Asiatic countries is exasperating at times, especially with the Native States. You see

them listed in the New Issue columns, but you very rarely ever see them in the dealers' ads. However, with the Hyderabad Victories and the Bahawalpur Peace larger supplies must have been obtained but why just these and not the others that are regularly issued from the States? Many dealers, when they do obtain some of the Native States issues, are glad to sell them at a very low price, especially if they are regularly dealing in something else. I still have to smile

when I remember a few years back, for \$4.00 I obtained several hundred stamps of the India States still mounted on old approval sheets and there along with the Jammu and Kashmir water-colors, the eye-straining Bhopal embossed centers and the others, was a nice copy of Peru No. 3N2, an issue from the city of Arequipa, with figure of value omitted from the upper left panel. But of course anything that looks like an Indian Native State issue, throw it into the lot! Even Peru. India no doubt could use a press agent for its issues. This particular dealer's specialty was first day covers and it turned out that his loss was my gain.

Requires Some Planning

Everyone can't pick up an address of a correspondent in Nepal but if one desires to obtain strictly philatelic covers from this country and from the Native States, with a little experimentation, these items can be had quite easily. First, it should be remembered that many of the States listed in Scott's have ceased issuing their own stamps and this fact is noted after the listing of the issues themselves. Although I have never tried experimenting with putting obsolete issues on cover and mailing them to the respective states maybe something unusual would turn up. In making up your covers, address the envelope to yourself, affix the necessary postage in Indian stamps and preferably in the left portion of the cover place copies of that particular state's issues. Then address another envelope to the Postmaster, capital of the state, and name of the state, India. Enclose your self-made cover and then forget about it for months and months. And many times, after you have done all the messy work of addressing covers, finding the stamps to affix and sweating it out, you will never hear from them, but the cost is very reasonable and the results are sometimes unusual.

In many cases striking postmarks are obtained for the Native issues while the regular issues are sometimes canceled with the usual circular Indian postmark. As for finding the capitals of the different states, it used to be quite a task, leafing through countless reference books of India to find what town is where, but today it is as simple as checking with your catalog, for they are now listed along with other pertinent information about each particular state.

Varying Results

At first, to obtain covers not only from India but from other out-of-the-way spots, I used the lowly International Reply Coupon, inclosed a self-addressed en-

velope and left it to the individual postmasters to decide what stamps should be affixed. With the Indian States and Nepal the results were miserable. But during the years of censorship and before Uncle Sam tapped me on the shoulder for a four-year hitch, I obtained some very nice covers from Ruanda and Urundi, some few of the British Colonies such as St. Helena, St. Kitts, Ascension, Gilberts and the like, some censored, some not; from the French possessions such as New Hebrides, Camerouns, Martinique, Equatorial Africa, etc. In nearly every case where I contacted the French Colonies the covers were censored, but many of the British Colonies wouldn't play ball and so I received such items as the handstamped Tulagi postmarked cover from the British Solomons with a copy of the 3d enclosed in return for the Reply Coupon. The fact that the gum on this stamp was badly deteriorated and it had a tear in it made no difference to the postmaster. I sent a coupon, he sent me the equivalent in mint stamps, although the chances are I won't dash to the South Pacific to use this item for postage which is seemingly the only thing it is good for, not for a collection piece. But again in this experimentation I found India is a tough nut to crack. Witness the one year and four months I had to wait after sending a self-addressed cover and Reply Coupon to the postmaster at Pondichery, French India. Keeping my fingers crossed, hoping to receive a cover franked with the Free French overprints for this possession, I was somewhat disappointed to receive the cover franked with the good old stamps of British India, again! But there was a nice censor marking, quite unusual, so I figured it was worth the effort.

So I would heartily recommend your trying this branch of collecting provided you are endowed with sufficient patience for the long waiting periods, and that your eye is not merely on the dollar sign if you intend to dispose of these items someday. In my own case, with the exception of the covers from Nepal which I still have, I traded off the self-made covers from the Indian States a few years back. Since then my interest has returned and I'm all set to again contact my Nepalese correspondent and to experiment again with the Native States.

I had hoped that the new airmail letter sheet would allow one to send a few inclosures along with the message, but unfortunately this will not be permitted. However, it will provide a quick means to contact personal friends in these countries and so cut considerably the long waits in between. In cases where you are

sending only a letter and no bulky inclosures, it will still pay to use airmail at the regular rates and inclose your reply coupons for the return postage for the few cents difference between the 5¢ international rate for regular postage and that of lightweight airmail can be overlooked when one considers the time saved. All in all, the covers cost but a few cents each and your biggest difficulty will be in obtaining mint copies of the parous States' issues to affix to your self-addressed covers. So if you start this and receive some of these covers, don't expect to retire from the proceeds of their sale in the event you intend to dispose of them in the future. For I have been talking to the stamp collector, not the dollar-sign boys. For the former, I say go to it and the best of luck; for the latter, consult the financial page in your local newspaper.

A MYSTERIOUS HIMALAYAN CANCEL

Armand E. Singer



(Missing part of cancel restored and enhanced-
"Mussoori" would neatly fill the blank space.)

Logo
(somewhat enlarged)



Himalaya Club, Aug. 28, 1930. This cancel was once in the collection of H. D. S. Haverbeck; I acquired it by auction in 1972. Neither Haverbeck himself, nor Holmes, nor Waterfall so much as mention the existence of this cancel. The cancel is unknown to any of the Tibet philatelists to whom it was shown, including Dr. Hellrigl. The auctioneer referred to it simply as "unusual." I have never run across another example. I wrote to the present-day Himalayan (with an "n") Club, located in Bombay, earlier in Calcutta with a branch in Darjeeling, which publishes the *Himalayan Journal*. The Hon. Editor, Harish Kapadia, for whom I supplied a rough drawing, said it was the logo or badge of a hotel (sic) in Mussoorie. I had called to his attention that the final "e" of what I supposed was the town name at the bottom was all that remained visible, since the pair of KGV one-anna browns had been removed from the putative cover. He referred me to two recent articles in his journal that discussed the hotel, as follows:

The articles (Colin Brand, "Collecting Books about Everest," vol. 54 [1998] 18-24, and William Aitkin, "Seen But Not Approved: Mussoorie's Himalaya Club," vol. 55 [1999] 204-09) discuss the hotel (Brand only briefly, pp. 23-24, though he illustrates the motto [not paginated]) but do not really solve the mystery. The motto (see above) has no connection with the cancel other than the club name. The motto is shown on the back flap of a cover with Queen Victoria stamps cancelled Mussoorie Aug. 31, 1880. Aitkin's article tells us that the modern version of the old Himalaya Club hotel (dating back to the late 1830s and enjoying a somewhat dubious reputation for gambling, "card-sharpping, deadly duels," and illicit romances) still stands, but he mentions nothing that would justify its use of an official government canceller.

The Himalayan (with an "n") Club (founded in 1928) has helped many a mountaineering expedition, recruiting porters, etc., even famous for being first to bestow the prized title "tiger" on the best of the Nepalese climbing sherpas. Its stated goal is "to encourage and assist Himalayan travel and exploration, and to extend knowlege of the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges through science, art, literature and sport" (quoted from their web page, <http://www.himalayanclub.com/advertising.htm>). As such it deserves space in an album of climbing covers. At this moment, unfortunately, I cannot say as much for its older sister. Mussoorie, to be sure, is a hill town (el. 2100 m., with a fine view of the ranges to the north, according to Aitkin), located in Uttar Pradesh, at a railhead, about 150 miles SE of Dharmsala (home in exile of the present Dalai Lama) and an obvious gateway to the Karakorams (Nanga Parbat, K2, etc.).

Tibet Officials: A Review
By Alan Warren

The "Officials" of Tibet, Armand E. Singer, 8 1/2 x 11 inches, comb bound, 40 pages, illustrated, Geoffrey Flack, Vancouver 1999. Available for \$35 U.S. by surface mail anywhere from Geoffrey Flack, Box 65987 Station F, Vancouver, British Columbia V5N 5L4, Canada.

This book is an expanded and revised version of a 2-part article that originally appeared in 1999 issues of the Collectors Club Philatelist, published by the Collectors Club of New York. This version includes many color illustrations, which enhance the original. The so-called officials of Tibet appeared around 1950 and have been the subject of many articles, which have all been carefully reviewed by Singer, one of the world's leading specialists on the stamps and postal history of Tibet. He has also reviewed many covers bearing these stamps, often in combination with other issues, which are in the collections of his own, of other collectors, as well as sold at auction.

In addition to the five officials recognized in the major catalogs, there are two others included in this review—the 1 Trangka with three copies known, and the 5 Shokang with about half a dozen copies reported. The stamps are described in terms of size (the largest measures 2 1/2 inches square!), color, and value. Singles as well as full sheets are illustrated along with many examples of usage on cover. A number of the latter were the inspiration of a Nepalese trader in Tibet during the 1950s—Pratek Man Tuladhar.

In fact most examples of these stamps on cover, whether alone or in combination, have a distinctly philatelic flavor and commercial uses are not readily seen. The rates are frequently overpaid as a result of use of these stamps. At times they were supposedly added to inbound letters arriving at Gyantse, for forwarding to Lhasa. The author reaches his conclusions on these "officials" after a review of the literature and examination of over 200 covers. Collectors of Tibet will no doubt want a few examples for their collections but must understand the non-commercial aura that surrounds these stamps. There are still unanswered questions concerning the issues, and the complete story of why they were issued and the purpose for which they were intended may never be fully explained.

The text and color illustrations are of excellent quality. The book joins many other monographs of Tibet that have been produced by publisher Geoffrey Flack, all of which are important resources for collectors. Recommended for the libraries of those who collect the Himalayan area.

* * * * *

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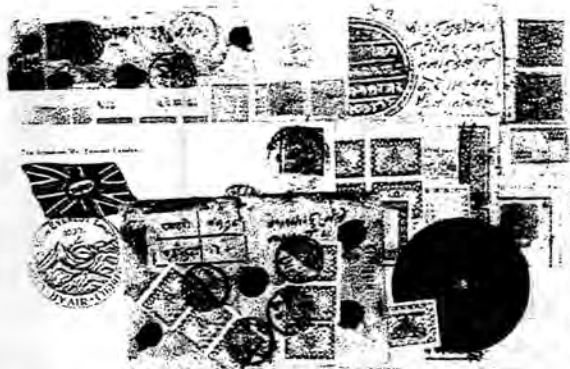
MEMBER'S E-MAIL ADDRESSES (if you want your email address published contact the editor):

Dr. Raj Grover - raj.grover@sk.sympatico.ca
Mr. Alan Warren - alanwar@worldnet.att.net

MEMBERS AWARDS:

Paul Hager received a Gold award, Best In Show and Best Research Awards at LOUIPEX in Louisville for his exhibit, "Study of the Pashupati Era of Nepal - 1907-1959", in June. He also received a Gold award at Indypex (Indianapolis, July 21-23) for the same exhibit.

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