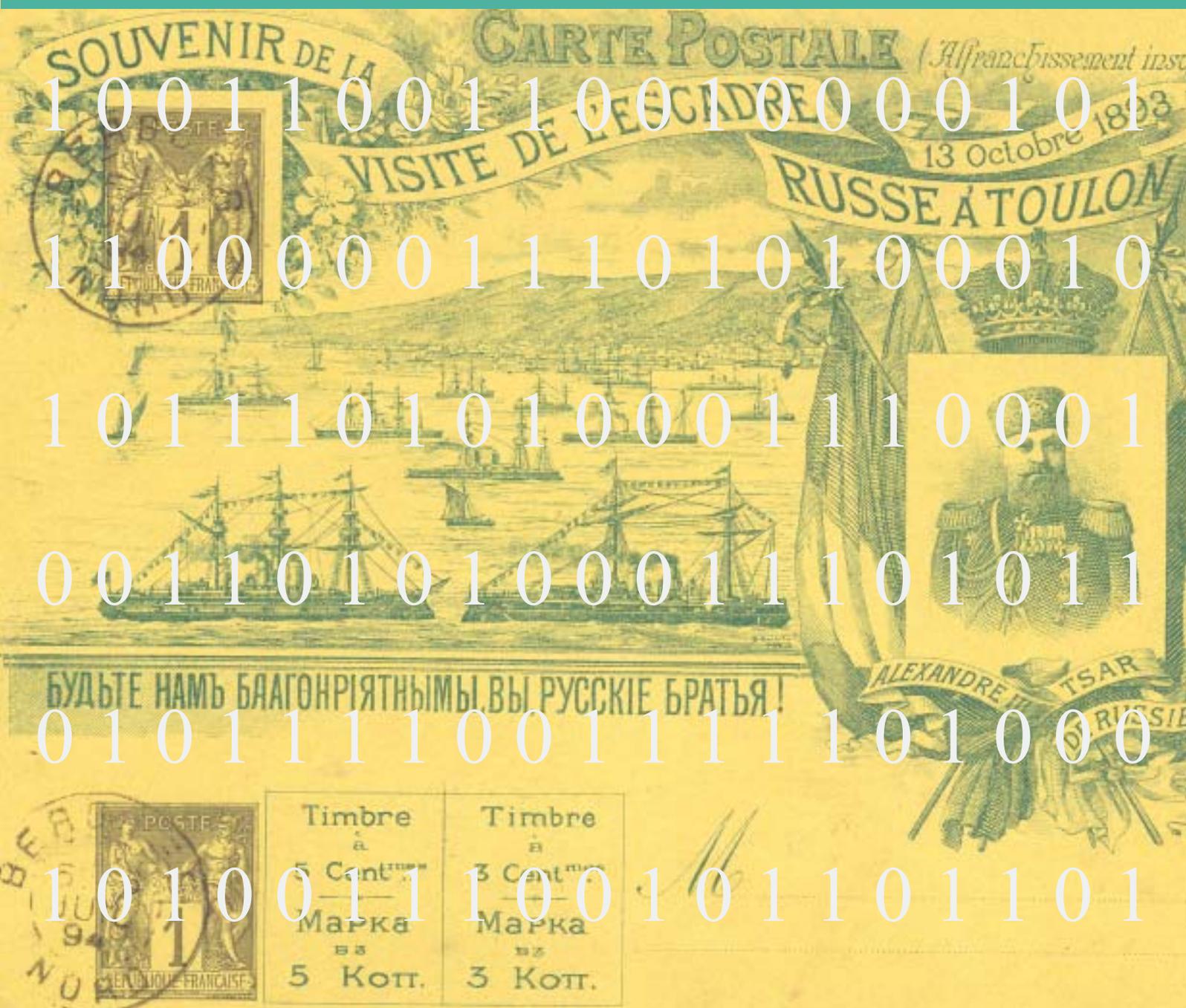


A Certain Look at Philately

Luis Eugénio Ferreira



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Preface

The book and the e-book (electronic book) are two social realities that crystallise uses and customs, one of immutability, the other of innovation.

They are two realities that are indissolubly linked by their function: to transmit in writing certain information, serving as a link between the author and the reader. Both are a perennial representation of the author's view, witnesses of an era and a social group.

This intrinsic link provides more complementarities than conflicts between these diverse forms of communication. Some readers will prefer one form of reading; others will prefer the other. One is better for sequential reading; the other seems particularly suited to searches and thematic reading. One conveys all the seriousness of the word, while in the other, open to the world of multimedia, it is the presentation that stands out. One associates the visual with the smell and touch of the paper, reminding us of our childhood stories, while the other is much more visual and can be associated with listening. One is the companion of our bedside table, the park bench or bus, while the other is the friend that is always available at the touch of the computer.

However, since they are social realities, our relationship with the book and the e-book is at the same time our relationship with culture, an exteriorisation of practices, habits and uses that we have interiorised over many years of socialisation. The book bears the centuries-old weight of a well-rooted practice, shared, stimulated or repressed; it is a symbol of civilisations and peoples. The e-book, on the other hand, is the new-born tentatively taking its first steps, seeking to conquer the acceptance that it still does not have. It looks to the future with the arrogance of the technological field, which to most mortals is still so much less appealing.

It would be as impossible to predict the inexorable victory of

the e-book as it would be to predict the immortality of the book. We are not in a position to make scientifically valid predictions. What we can say is that they co-exist at present, and they will continue to do so in the near future. That is why we cherish both forms of writing.

Regardless of these considerations, electronic books offer great advantages. The production cost of an electronic book is far less than that of a book, its distribution costs are practically free and it can reach readers that would never know of its existence in another form, they would never buy it and would never read it.

In this country, philately is a shadow of its former self: most companies (public or private) associated with the business are unassertive and have little capacity to take an interest in a long-term strategy; the stamp is distanced bureaucratically from its use on correspondence; part of the political class is unaware of the importance of leisure as a meeting point between social dynamics and personal idiosyncrasies and may even have to look up the meaning of 'philately' in the dictionary. This is a country in which the philatelic institutions of the so-called "civil society" are incapable of finding a course, of joining efforts, and of putting collective interests above individual pettiness and personal projects of ephemeral power. It is in a country like this that it's important to support the production of electronic books. The popularity of this series show it unmistakably.

We take this second edition to thanks to Luís Eugénio Ferreira that had the courage to write this book specifically for the electronic edition. He was the first to accept the invitation and hand in an example ready for publication. Not without a certain feeling of nostalgia that it was for an e-book and not a book, he responded quickly to the challenge. The number of downloads gotten during the previous edition prove that its enthusiasm was rewarded.

In the second place, he deserves our thanks because he is an illustrious philatelist, a true friend, an assiduous collaborator, who has accompanied us with dedication, enthusiasm, pedagogy and quality throughout the already long history of philatelic writings. We always learn from reading his work.

This special thanks to the author, given in great friendship and sincerity obviously requires us to extend our thanks to

all those who have collaborated with us in this epic task of putting a collection of philatelic e-books on line. Thank you all.

And we are persuaded that the project is still alone in the beginning.

Carlos Pimenta

Introductory Note

A certain look at philately is basically a compilation of the notes I have been making over the past thirty years, sporadic work with several magazines and philatelic periodicals (some of which no longer exist), concerning some of the pertinent issues of the philatelic phenomenon. Above all, what I have aimed to do is support the idea that philately is essentially a powerful aid to History.

I also maintain that the stamp, apart from its postal function as a corollary of the organisation proposed by Rowland Hill, has also functioned as one of the fundamental elements in affirming the sovereignty of modern States, and there are numerous examples that uphold this idea.

In many other notes, I propose consideration of the problems inherent in philatelic collecting, taking, as far as possible, a sociological view in its various aspects. We cannot ignore the extent to which philately brings people together and improves relations, helping to overcome the differences that may separate us in terms of race, religion or political beliefs.

I also propose some, perhaps marginal, considerations concerning the technical aspects of philatelic collecting. These have been covered by illustrious authors, and reference may be made to them when appropriate.

All the notes and articles in this compilation have been reviewed and amended in order to create some homogeneity in the work presented here.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the **Filatelia Portuguesa** in which I have published most of my work, and its current director, **Mr. Carlos Pimenta**, who has always honoured me with his support.



Luis Eugénio Ferreira

Santarém, winter 2001

Luís Eugénio Ferreira

A Look at History

The stamp and History – Definition of philately as an historical aid – Historical inroads into 19th century Europe – Notes on the history of philately

1.

In a broad sense, all stamps are historical documents and philately, the branch of knowledge that studies postal stamps and/or studies all forms of franking used in the postal service, is clearly an auxiliary science of History.

In reality, however, things cannot be seen in such simple terms since it is impossible to say how far “collecting”, that is to say, “the passion for collecting” may have superimposed the basics of philately and made it a category of historical knowledge.

A butterfly collector does not necessarily need to be an entomologist in the sense that his deep motivation may not



Mr. Houlbrique, a resident of Le Havre, France, writes to G.B. Solary of Alexandria with the suggestion that they exchange stamps from their respective countries. As the reference to the country of destination - Egypt - was crossed out, the letter went around the world. Posted on February 26 1897, it arrived in Beira, Mozambique in the same month. Only then did it continue to Cairo, arriving on March 7, the date on which it also arrived in Alexandria. It is interesting to note the reference to “Philatélite” below the addressee’s name, indicating that the occupation of philatelist was worthy of mention.



Instructional and attractive stamp and postmark.

be based on the systematic and scientific study of insects, but may be based simply on a criterion of pure aesthetics, for example.

The postage stamp collector may therefore approach his activity in two ways.

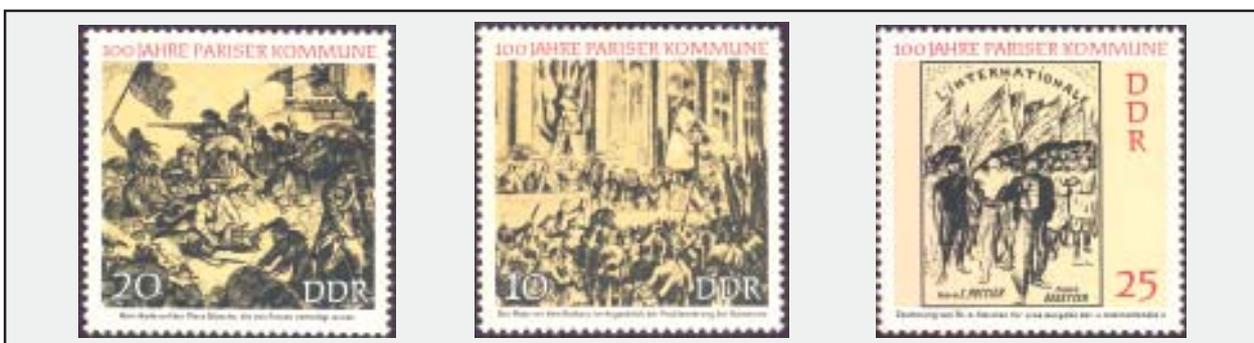
The first is to see it as a “scientific” act involving research and historical and documentary systemisation. The second is to see it for its aesthetic and creative aspects or even for its pedagogic and didactic potential.

I leave out those that consider philately as a form of investment (at times rather lucrative), from which I logically exclude philatelic traders, who consider it a licit aim of their business, enabling the creation of stocks that they would otherwise be unable to obtain.

We thus begin these notes by noting the two fundamental currents of stamp collecting, which we should keep separate.

Clearly, one does not exclude the other; instead, they establish a complementary relationship. The collection of butterflies, organised by the amateur for reasons of an aesthetic nature, in which he is concerned solely with the colour and exoticism of the different samples, is most certainly a precious help for the entomologist that wishes to find information on Lepidoptera. Great collections of stamps and other postal documents are always, whatever their reason for being, safe sources of historic study.

Arthur Maury, known as one of the fathers of philately, had a clear understanding of philately’s close connection to the surprising twists and turns of History. He left us with precious notes on his experience, including those related to the troubled time of the Paris Commune, which he experienced first-hand.



The Paris Commune on stamps of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)

Maury, who accompanied the first steps of stamp collecting, was most reluctant to accept the so-called commemorative issues that then began to appear, considering them to be an unwanted introduction or addition in terms of philately. We will correct this opinion of his with a contemporary view of theme collecting: in the search for a solution to the problems facing the collector, theme collecting has created new paths for philately, now considered not only as a clear auxiliary science of History, but which also takes History as its own aid.

We will return to reflect upon this matter in due course.

Let us now turn to the first postal issues.

The creation of the first adhesive stamp by Rowland Hill is undoubtedly one of the great contemporary historical events and the fact that it is not included in the pages of most Historical Compendiums, does not imply that it is any less significant.

In this sense, the first postal issues (so-called historic) have an unquestionable documentary value.

It would be important to undertake a critical historical study, which has yet to be done, considering the numerous determining co-ordinates that would arise, from a point of view not necessarily merely philatelic.

The technical and administrative issues are clear – they are based on the publication of decrees, which laid out various aspects leading to the postal practice. These include: the details of the design and its printing, the various phases of its introduction and the structures necessary to put the new system into practice. But the deep motivations that the stamp reflects as a document – taken as the essence of its own History – are rarely mentioned. As far as I am concerned, this is the real starting point.

Léon Salefranque, in his “history of the stamp”, over-concerned with the etymological evolution of the term, indicates that the stamp, *now considered as a tax, would be secularised in the sense by which we consider it today*. I will correct this observation on two points. I rectify the tendency (perhaps logical) to consider the postage stamp (along with the fiscal stamp), as an instrument of perception of a tax.

I disagree. The postage stamp is only the mark that formalises and is proof of the tacit contract between a sender of a missive, or any other postal object, and a public service that takes responsibility for transporting and delivering this



Sir Rowland Hill 1795-1879
Source: *The Guinness Book of Stamps. Facts and Feats*



Great Britain – Penny Black
One Penny Black was officially issued on May 6 1840



1842 – Mulready postcard (complete) of 1p.
Source: *Afinsa Auction Catalogue: Colección 20 Aniversário*

missive or postal object to an addressee.

We could obviously call it *vinheta móvel* (removable vignette), *recibo de porte* (receipt of postage), *porte pago* (postage paid) as was suggested and maybe then Salefranque would be correct in terms of motivations. However, on the second point, he lacks careful consideration. The postage stamp does not take its early figures solely from the *selos* (*siggilus*), or from crests (heraldic coats-of-arms, upper part of the shield), which would be confirmed by a simple analytic study of the first issues.

In fact, only through determining historic circumstances did these first issues invariably find their graphic motives, not only in heraldry (weapons and coats-of-arms) but also in the motives consecrated by numismatics, in the absence of any other models available at the time and, from there, images of the reigning sovereigns, perhaps certain mythological figures or even abstract concepts anthropomorphised by convention (Peace, Justice, the Republic, etc.), which cover practically all the issues during the first 50 years of the history of philately.

Let us take a look at the following table:



Examples of stamps with sovereign heads: Spain and Portugal.

Sources: Afinsa Auction Catalogue: Colección 20 Aniversário and Carlos Kullberg's Album of Portugal (Vol. I)

1– Series with images of reigning sovereigns:

(Unified monarchies with strong centralisation. Sovereigns descended from the traditional European aristocracy):

Bavaria / Prussia / Saxe - Austria / Belgium / Spain / Great Britain / Hungary – Sardinia / Italy – Luxembourg – Netherlands – Portugal.

2 – Arms and coats-of-arms – Various heraldic motives: (Countries subject to occupation or in systems of union of kingdoms, with no corresponding ethnic or political suitability):

Bade – Bergedorf – Bremen – Brunwik – Hamburg – Lubeck – Oldenburg – Holstein – Austria – Bosnia – Bulgaria – Finland – Two Sicilies – Lombard Rep. – Modena – Norway / Sweden – Poland – Romania (under occupation) – Switzerland (cantonal post service) – Russia.

3 – Mythological motives:

France (a specific case that we will analyse later), Greece (recently independent).

The stamp was immediately seen by all as a defining sign of a State's sovereignty and, in a way, as its closest diplomatic representative.

All the states that promptly issued their own postage stamps saw the stamp as a way of asserting themselves through the consensual show of their sovereignty.

Allow me some brief historical meanderings on this point:

We can see that all the States that would later constitute the German Empire affirmed themselves through their own postage issues. A close study of these will allow us to follow the historic evolution of these struggles, until German unification became a reality.

In May 1849, at the invitation of Prussia, the representatives of the German State met at Erfurt with the aim of changing their federal constitution. The limited union was then formed, which did not include Austria (Imperial Austrian stamps), Bavaria (Bayern stamps 1849) and Wurtenburg (1851 stamps – kingdom).

Then, under threat from Austria, Frederick William IV agreed to an intermediate regime in September 1849 (first issue from Prussia), while Hanover (kingdom, stamps 1850) abandoned the union.

In 1868, the Confederation of Northern Germany was formed (1st issue 1868) and from December 1870 the unification of a German Empire was consecrated.

The issues of these States endure as witnesses of the Empire's History, and here it would also be appropriate to mention the issues of Tour and Taxis, which, due to certain ancient privileges (under their aegis the first and most complete postal network was organised in Central Europe), maintained their issues until Prussia bought their rights in June 1867. By coincidence, the appearance of the first issues of stamps following the new postal reform, accompanied the troubled events taking place all over Europe both in the sense of the centralisation of power and in the re-establishing of a new map of borders and consequent territorial occupation. This was obviously reflected in the structure of the stamps issued, as we have shown.

The former Italian States also left the marks of their dissensions, until they achieved unity under the authority of Victor Emanuel II (1st series of Italy 1862). This union then absorbed, but not always peacefully, the kingdom of Naples (1st series 1851), Sicily (1st series 1859), Lombard-Venice



Examples of "Arms and Coats-of-Arms": 1st stamp of Norway, 2nd stamp of Romania, Swiss stamp from the Zurich canton, 4th stamp of Sweden.

Source: *J. Robineau Auction*



Example of "Mythological Motive". Greek stamp catalogued in YT as the third.

Source: *J. Robineau Auction*



The German Empire in 1871



Map of part of the Italian States in 1811.

(Austrian province, using Austrian stamps, suppressed by Italy in 1866), the duchy of Modena (1st series 1852), the duchy of Parma (1st series 1852), the kingdom of Sardinia (1st series showing the figure of Victor Emmanuel II) and the grand-duchy of Tuscany (1st series 1851).

Similarly, we have the first issues of Hungary, which could simultaneously be used in Austria (with the difference that they bore no inscription other than their value in kreuzer), even after the independence of Hungary, proclaimed by the Agreement of 1867. In fact, only after 1871 did Hungary issue its first stamps, thus consolidating the consensual idea of its sovereignty.

There is also the example of the stamps of Bulgaria, divided between the principality of Northern Bulgaria and Rumelia, including Thrace and Macedonia, which used Turkish stamps until Rumelia was united with Bulgaria and began to use the Bulgarian stamps with the Lion overprint and Bulgarian arms. The adoption of common stamps in 1885 historically confirms the new sovereignty and political unity.

It is therefore natural that the choice of the early graphic motives or figures for postage stamps was not always an easy task.

The stamp was closely linked to the historical event, which is why it was in fact seen more as a document than it is today, when a certain fetishist alienation makes us see it in several completely different ways.

In their chronicles and observations, philatelists and authors of the time therefore talk about the political conditions that surrounded their creation and consequent issue. If we fail to understand this fact and interpret the original philatelic phenomena in the light of modern concepts, this may lead to false ideas and hastily drawn conclusions.

This is the case of the statements made by Pierre Yvert in a small commemorative brochure of the Centenary of the French Stamp, published in 1949 under the somewhat pretentious title: *The issues of France and the evolution of the spirit*. He said that: *We (the French), record everything, we react to everything. Look at the phlegmatic English – there is surely no country where the taste for debate has developed so much; like us, the English feel and react, yet we do not find the materialisation of their feelings on their stamps.*

From queen to king, the image of the reigning sovereign,

we can see their patriotic fidelity; no country has used the stamp less as a means of propaganda or commemoration.

It is an observation of a psychological nature, but based on the primacy that the stamp must necessarily be a means of propaganda and commemoration, reflecting pure patriotic feelings.

Such a concept post-dates the historic advent of the postal phenomenon and it only assumed its present concept at the beginning of the century.

At the time of the first issues, when each country was faced with the problem of postage, according to the new system, the considerations to be made invariably concerned the determining political aspects. The postage stamp had still not been seen as a collectable item, nor had anyone considered the aspects resulting from its internal and external circulation as a vehicle of ideologies.

It was not easy for us to gather the texts and interventions produced by the issuing departments up to the definitive project for the first postal vignettes. In innumerable cases, however, the graphic representation of the sovereign (for example) seemed so obvious and logical that there could be no doubts as to its use.

The project and decree that instituted the first Portuguese stamp are perfect illustrations of this. Controversies only arose when it was no longer possible or was politically inadvisable to use the image of the sovereign for necessarily historic reasons. Such was the case of France, when the second republic put an end to this possibility.

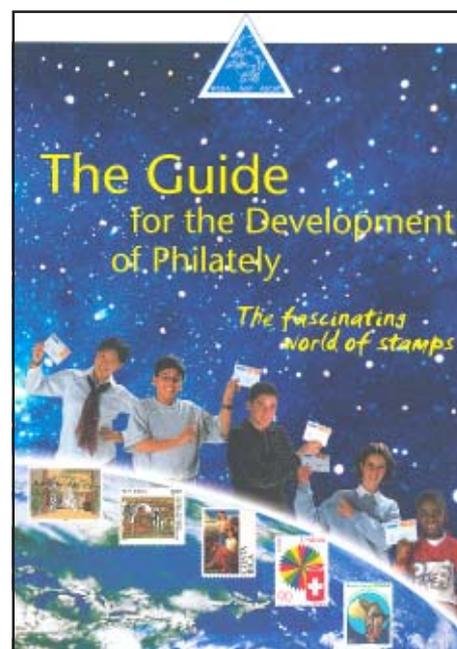
The decree of April 30 1848, which authorised the production and sale of stamps from January 1 1849, does nothing to elucidate this point, but previous texts make direct reference to it.

One such text referred to an image of the Republic, another mentioned a head representing Liberty. However, the order placed with the engraver Barre refers to Ceres, goddess of agriculture and symbol of abundant harvests.

But did all of them recognise this?

The truth is that when Maury mentions this first issue in his texts, it is always as **Liberty**, and in his 1897 catalogue, this series appears under the title **Liberté à gauche**.

Here, though, Liberty on the left does not have the obvious political connotation that we may infer, as it only means that



In the work shown above (produced by the UPU, which was planned in 1994 but only published in 2000/2001, undated publication) several functions are attributed to the stamp in addition to its original purpose: its equivalent value to currency, the promotion of a country's image and its "ambassador", a declaration of sovereignty and of belonging to international institutions, the brand image of a service, a means of propaganda, a marketing tool, a gift and, obviously, a collector's piece, directly or indirectly. In fact, an economic, sociological, symbolic and political view of the stamp allows it to be given these various meanings. However, this often involves underestimating its true significance, which may be counterproductive.

the image of Liberty is in profile, looking left.

The significance of this observation is that, in spite of everything, considerations of a political and historical nature are at the bases of these issues.

Philately was still not understood in the precise sense that it is today and Pierre Yvert, in his previously quoted article, writes, with reference to the particular case of France:

Since it was common practice to use the image of the sovereign, what would France do seeing as it had no monarch?

The illustrious theoretician realises that the use of the sovereign's image is a mere habit. Yet habit is acquired through repeated acts, which invalidates his theory since he was dealing only with first issues, which therefore had no precedent. Perhaps fiscal stamps are an exception and these were often mistaken for postage stamps. There are many cases in which fiscal stamps were accepted for postage effects, with appropriate overprints, of which the New South Wales stamp of 1885 with the overprint Postage can be considered the prototype.

However, Yvert also forgot the dozens of issues from many Republics that already existed in the second quarter of the 19th century, just as he forgot the innumerable States in which it was politically impractical to have the image of a sovereign on their official documents, as we have already mentioned.

These are not habits, they are historic conditions. When these conditions are clearly understood, they raise considerations of another order, such as those raised invariably by Maury and perhaps that is why he was the first great theoretician of philately.

When the mythological arrangement Peace and Commerce, philatelically known as Mouchon, was introduced in France after a hard-fought competition, its printer, Maury, commented:

Many have suggested that the image of President Carnot should be put on a stamp. He represents France with such dignity that it would be pointless to look for a simple allegory. Unfortunately, however, the habits of a Republic are opposed to this – it is a posthumous honour like the raising of a statue.

Maury understood the historical conditions imposed here by a mere question of regime as the habits of a Republic.

We should honour M. Carnot, not only with splendid funerals,

monuments and statues, but also with a postage stamp that will remind us all of this sweet, benevolent figure.

Maury did not refute the uses imposed by a Republic and he gave us the examples to follow, in as much as a pure political act allowed an exception to be made and the image of a President was printed on the stamps.

He continues:

When Abraham Lincoln was killed in the theatre by an actor in 1865, and Garfield was hit by two bullets that led to his death in 1881, the United States reproduced the images of these presidents on its stamps, both of whom were assassinated by fanatics, and for the simple reason that they were the first magistrates of a Nation.

Political suitability was thus established, within the principles that we have defended.

Hailing the Spanish series of 1894, Maury makes this magnificent commentary:

King Afonso XIII is unrecognisable on his stamps. The child has grown up; he has become a young boy.

This change on the stamps is not, however, to displease us – each evolution must be marked in the collection, even though some old-fashioned thinkers may see it as no more than a mania in the passion of stamps. There is no better example than this Spanish collection, which summarised in a few pages the country's entire political history starting from 1850, with its revolutions, its insurrections, its changes of dynasty, etc.

These are the facts and the reasons that lead us to consider philately as a precious historical aid.

We therefore need to be clearly critical and attentive in relation to the world around us and recognise that philately has closely followed the tumultuous course of history.

Allow me, if you will, to talk about the disturbing events that took place in the heart of Europe in the first few years of the twentieth century, without losing track of the philatelic connection.

Wars always leave indelible marks on history, upsetting the normal life of the people and profoundly changing the relations between nations, or putting their co-existence at risk. The Great War (1914-18) can thus be seen to have profoundly altered the political structure of Europe, revealing its great structural problems, the solution to which would



Last representation of Lincoln before his assassination.

imply force, the sacrifice of human lives and the mobilisation of immeasurable resources.

It is therefore hardly surprising that many of these events have left marks on the stamps issued during this period, accompanying and documenting the great changes brought by the war.

Many of these structural problems (geo-political or even ideological) were superimposed at the time to erupt into a second war, when they once again left their marks on these small squares of paper, whose importance as definers of sovereignty or political charge comes to the fore decisively once again, as we mention further on.

We do not consider here the diachronic situation of serious problems that still subsist in the area, affecting the reordering of vast regions mainly in Central Europe, but we are sure that the resolution will always have a fitting philatelic equivalent that will be studied by future philatelists.

But let us now take a look at this tumultuous centre, from which all wars seem to emerge, forging the great political complexity in which Europe lived at the beginning of the century that we have recently left.

In fact, from 1918, European balance was based, perhaps too precariously, on solutions of compromise, either by the artificial creation of some states, or by the consensual union of some others, or by more or less consented territorial occupation.

We will obviously refer to some of these solutions in a superficial way through their more obvious philatelic equivalents.

Let us take Hungary as our first example, a country that has been independent for a thousand years, whose philatelic history begins with the first stamps of Austria, continuing through the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a name that still existed in 1912 on the stamps of Bosnia Herzegovina with the overprint KUK-FELDPOST.

After the 1918 war we see the north of the country, Slovakia, join Czechoslovakia (recently created at the expense of part of the Austrian provinces of Bohemia and Moravia), the east, Transylvania, join Romania and the south join the newly created Yugoslavia, incorporating Croatia, together with the other Slav provinces of the former kingdom of the Serbs-Croats-Slovenes, which used, as we saw, the stamps of Hungary overprinted SHSHRVATSKA. The city and port of

Fiume in its turn became Italian (overprint FRANFRANCO FIUME) and the French control of Arad, produced the overprint (OCCUPATION FRANÇAISE) on the stamps of the territory under its charge. The rest of the country, around 1/3 of the former national area, became a republic. The monarchy was only re-established in 1920, captioning its stamps with the words MAGYAR KIR-POSTA.

At the end of the 1945 war, the republic was re-established, known from 1949 as the Popular Republic.

Let us continue with the example of Czechoslovakia, which from October 28 1918 to February 28 1919 used the stamps of Austria and Hungary, with no overprint, the former in Bohemia and Moravia and the latter in Slovakia.

In 1939, however, the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was formed after Slovakia declared its independence. The Czech stamps in use were then overprinted SLOVENSKI STAT 1939. In 1945, at the end of the war, Czechoslovakia was reconstituted as the Democratic Republic. Its recent separation into the Slovak and Czech Republic will once again change its postal issues, interrupted by historical circumstances over the years.

The same problem will arise in relation to Yugoslavia, which is breaking up. As we know, before the 14-18 War, Yugoslavia was formed by part of the former Serbia, by Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, including Dalmatia, and the Slovenian provinces. Like this, the country formed the kingdom of the Serbs-Croats-Slovenes, with each of these states issuing its own stamps. After 1931, the fragile kingdom changed its name to Yugoslavia, which began to issue stamps with this same name.

Once again, the stamp can be seen as a defining standard of the sovereignty of a territory and faithful proof of this.

The Second World War changed this structural situation yet again. Croatia and Serbia then issued their own stamps independently; the Italians, as a result of their occupation overprinted those of Montenegro; those of Slovenia were overprinted by the Italians and the Germans, but in 1946, at the end of the conflict, Yugoslavia appears again as the Federal Democratic Republic, going back to common stamps for all its territory.

The fortunes of history do not allow this situation, however. The recent dissolution of Yugoslavia will once again enable the independence of Croatia and Serbia.



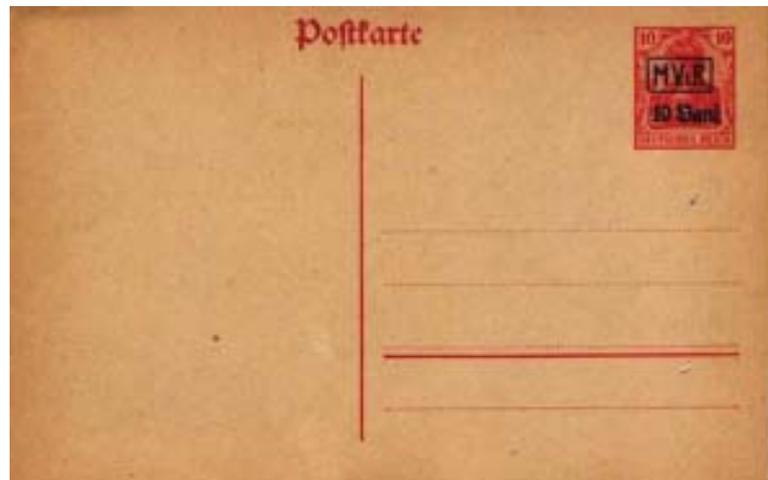
Block issued in 1991 to commemorate 120 Years of the First Hungarian stamp. The block shows the postmark with the first known date of circulation.

Source <http://vattepain.free.fr>



Map of Yugoslavia as a State.

Complete postcard of Romania in the period
of German occupation
Source: [http://postkort.topcities.com/
index.htm](http://postkort.topcities.com/index.htm)



The military occupation and territorial mutations caused by war are also, as we have seen, at the origin of innumerable postal issues. This is why, just in the case of Romanian territory, there is a series from Bulgarian occupation, two series from Austro-Hungarian occupation and several issues from the German occupation from the period 1917-1918. In its turn, in 1919, Romania issued series of occupation of Transylvania, Cluj and Timissoara.

The Balkan wars affected the Greek stamps from 1912-1913 with the occupation of Lemnos, Icarie, Cavalle, where a French office also operated, and Mytilene, where the 1908 stamps of Turkey bore the overprint of the Greek occupation of Mytilene, with the stamps bearing witness to the Greek occupation of the Aegean Sea islands. In 1940, Greece witnesses the occupation of Albania, with the overprint ELLENIKE DIOICCIC.

2.

If, as we have seen, the stamp is one of the symbols of the sovereignty of a State, it is natural to admit that it is also evidence of a political regime, above all when this regime has changed for historical reasons. It is therefore natural that a monarchy that becomes a republic does not continue to print the figure of the reigning monarch on its stamps, or at the very least, this evidence should be removed with the available graphic means.

The 1910 Portuguese stamps, with the overprint “República” over the image of King Manuel II, are a typical example of this situation. This extended to all the stamps in use in its colonial possessions, where the image of King Carlos was still possibly in circulation, overcoming the ambiguity of these stamps showing the word Colony and the overprint “Republic” to show their control by the Portuguese Republic.

It is also interesting to see how the excess of republican zeal led to the printing of the overprint on every kind of stamp in stock, even when the reference to the previous regime was not evident.

It is also hardly surprising that in 1919, the restoration attempt in the North was taken into account with the issue of a series of stamps with the royal arms and the title “Kingdom of Portugal”.

Let us look now at the stamps of the Company of Mozambique (and that of Nyassa), also covered by the republican overprint, placed discretionally over its beautiful indigenous motives or over inoffensive zoological species.

However, this philatelic event will allow us to recognise how the implantation of the republic in the colony occurred precisely at the time of the concession made to those companies and how this concession was respected till its end in 1941.

What is even more intriguing is the reason behind this concession to a majestic company, which allowed it to superimpose the State itself, using a privilege that expresses the concept of sovereignty in the complex international political context. Perhaps Dr. Maria Inês da Costa’s thesis from the University of Mondelane will help us to understand how the destiny and the strength of a private company exercised such a great influence over the preservation and

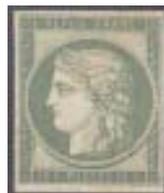


development of territory in the centre of Mozambique, affirming its identity as a place of Portuguese heritage following the redistribution formulated by the Conference of Berlin.

As far as I know, Dr. Maria Inês da Costa is not a philatelist. If she were, she would almost certainly also have mentioned the beautiful series of stamps that the company issued throughout its existence, which would entirely confirm the exemplary role of philately as an auxiliary branch of her historical research.

We know how the Conference of Berlin was settled by the victory of Bismarck's policy, making the Portuguese situation in Africa worse by instituting a new colonial law based on effective occupation of the territory and disregarding the historical rights that conceded priority to their discovery. It is therefore logical to consider the real importance of a majestic company that, although it expressed the reality of the new policy of the great European powers in benefiting from colonial Africa, constituted a decisive mark in Portuguese territorial occupation, as can be seen from the prerogative for issuing its own stamps, consensually accepted as the sign of its sovereignty.

Many other countries were much more subtle in indicating their regime on their postal issues. We know that the first French issue was at the height of the second republic, in 1849. Thus, the caption "Repub. Franc" appears on the Ceres stamps, which was maintained in 1849 on the stamps with the image of the prince-president Louis Napoleon, to then be modified into "Empire Franc" over the then Napoleon III, which Victor Hugo contested when he said that after Napoleon the Great, France would not tolerate a lesser



French stamps with the first two designations



Napoleon. In 1870, however, the caption became “Repub. Franc” on the constitution of a provisional government (Ceres de Bordeaux), and remained this way until 1876, when the famous Sage-type stamps appeared, with the caption “République Française” in full, which would become classic on the rest of the French issues.

In 1918, upon the implantation of the republic in Hungary, whose stamps boasted the image of king Charles, the Portuguese formula was repeated and the word “KOZTARSASAG”, Republic in Hungarian, was overprinted on the stamps.

Stamps are thus a reflection of the most perturbing events in history, especially when these result in changes to the political structure of the States themselves. This happened in all the lands that gained independence, rejecting the political and administrative control of the colonial powers, thus inaugurating a new cycle, which would enrich philately and provide a decisive aid in the interpretation of History.

The overprints “República Popular” or “Independencia Junho 1975” or even the change of the captions indicative of the new Portuguese-speaking countries, “Estado da Guiné” or “República Democrática de São Tomé e Príncipe”, as examples, illustrate for the future the moment of their independence, but also indicate the fact that Portuguese continued to be their official language, for which we should feel greatly honoured.

In the next chapter we will reflect on how wars are generators of change and how these changes can so clearly be conveyed on postage stamps, as we have shown.

3

From the point of view of collecting, philately also naturally has its own history.

I would say that it is a parallel history in relation to the postage stamp as a historical and political document. But let us accept that the two histories become one by identity. In fact, since the stamp is the fundamental object of philately, it is natural that its history is reflected in the history of its own collecting. But there are such clearly defined specific facts in each of the histories that, in order to relate them, we must always refer to them separately.

Collecting considered as a human activity has, as we know, a long tradition. We can also say that the passion for collecting, taken in its most generalised sense, is also an anthropological coordinate that has always accompanied Man in society. This is not the place to dwell on this fact, it is enough to say that stamp collecting, at the time of the first issues, was pre-dated by numismatics, in full swing in the middle of the 19th century, sphragistics, ex-librism as well as the collecting of fiscal stamps, which were practised in certain circles.

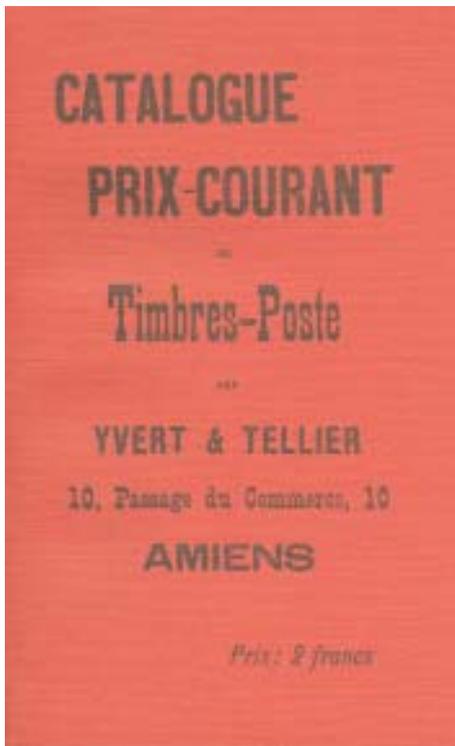
Normally, the first collector is considered to have been Vetzell, a citizen of Lille, who, from 10 May 1841 collected (in his own words), *the English vignettes created by Rowland Hill*.

Vetzell was in fact a renowned numismatic collector and this may explain his idea of collecting the first stamps, thus beginning, certainly unsuspectingly, one of the most sophisticated and wide-reaching hobbies created in the contemporary world.

Within a few years, in fact, Vetzell would see the beginning of the innumerable possibilities of a vast collection, when in 1843 the first Swiss stamps appeared, in 1845, Russia created its first stamp, in 1847, the United States, Belgium and France in 1849 and in the following years, successively, Spain, British Guinea, New Wales, Saxe, Hawaii, Portugal, etc.

Vetzell died in 1906 and at this time, the collecting of postage stamps was so widespread and so developed that we can firmly say that something new had happened in the long history of human society.

In 1860, there were already so many collectors in France



Cover of the 1st Edition of the Yvert and Tellier Universal Catalogue. Recent edition facsimiled. Original edition in 1897.

that the Stamp Exchange was created in the Tuileries Gardens, moving to the Champs Elysées in 1866, opposite the Guignol Theatre, where it still operates today.

In 1861, the first catalogue, *Potiquet*, was issued, followed immediately by the issues of Moens in Brussels, the second French catalogue of Vallete and the famous *British Stamps Catalogue* of Mount Brown, issued in London in December 1862, the date on which the first philatelic journal in the world, *The Monthly Advertiser* was issued.

It was also in 1862 that Pierre Mahé set up a house in Rue des Canettes with the aim of selling, no more no less, the postage stamp. Although this may not have been clearly understood at the time, it soon proved successful, and many other tradesmen set up shops with the same aim, which rapidly expanded.

Economics tells us that prices rise as demand increases, varying under certain conditions. Thus, from a certain time, the history of philately ran parallel to its expansion in terms of profitability and investment.

In 40 years of postal issues and given the different demand for certain items, it was possible to establish a table on degree of rarity or frequency with its equivalent value in terms of the market at the time.

This is how the 1895 edition of the Maury Catalogue indicates that the green 15 C stamp from the first French issue of 1849 was worth the extraordinary figure for the time of 150F. Maury remembered having exchanged them, when he was a boy, for the fictitious sum of 20 C, and for the used red franc, the sum of 200 francs, which we have to agree, represented a profitability totally unknown at the time for any other form of financial investment.

However, these prices meant nothing in relation to the exorbitant sums given for rarer and more sought after items. For example, in the same catalogue, the Guiana cent no. 9 is quoted at 10,000 francs and the 1 and 2 pence of Mauritius, nos. 6 and 7 of 1847 quoted at 12,000 francs. Yet in the preface of the very same catalogue, there is a warning that this price is relatively low, seeing that these stamps had been sold at an auction in Paris the previous year for 40,000 francs a pair.

Let us take a look at the following table:

Values 1st French series 1849 in 25 years

	New	Cancelled
The 7 Ceres stamps	Face value 3.35 F	
1872 Catalogue	108 F	86 F
1897 Catalogue	522 F	218 F
The series, without the red mark	Face value 2.25 F	
1897 Catalogue	222 F	18 F
1976 Catalogue	150,000 F	35,900 F

The values for 1976, even without taking into account the phenomenon of inflation, represent exceptional profitability. No investment has turned 3 francs into 150,000 in the space of 120 years. These considerations are confirmed by the First National Bank of New York, which indicates in its recent report that the postage stamp is in third place among goods that appreciated in value most between 1920 and 1970 and to obtain a clear picture of this fact, we just need to compare the values for Portuguese stamps (1st issue) in the space of 20 years.

	1953		1973	
	New	Cancelled	New	Cancelled
N.º 1	5,000\$	1,250\$	22,000\$	6,000\$
N.º 2	1,600\$	37\$	10,000\$	200\$
N.º 3	6,000\$	1,250\$	33,000\$	10,000\$
N.º 4	30,000\$	4,500\$	120,000\$	18,000\$

We are perfectly aware that in practice, things are not that simple. The values indicated in the catalogues are, in effect, if not mere formalities, then at least only a mere indication of the real value of the stamps.

Commercial prices oscillate generally around lower figures, with the exception of certain rare items, which may be even more highly priced.

These facts do not invalidate this line of reasoning, especially when the space of a century is taken as a term of comparison and if we do not need to be too rigid.

In fact, the stamp market is subject to many other factors,

which we will leave for later consideration.

The real fact is the rapid rise in the values of stamps, which is exceptional today, for obvious reasons, but already detected by the classics of philately.

An episode recounted by Maury himself (which could have happened to us), clearly shows how the value of stamps went up in his era, at times rocketing.

When Maury was checking the work of a warehouse boy, who was tidying up old papers, he noticed that the boy suddenly interrupted his work. On asking why he had done so, the boy explained that he had noticed some loose stamps among the blocks of paper. Maury went over, looked at the stamps and giving him two silver coins, he thanked the boy, who was astonished by such sudden generosity. What Maury had realised was that it was a block of 10 stamps from Madagascar, which had been forgotten amongst old papers and which would fetch him around 600 or 700 francs.

These facts may be totally unknown to the general public, who know little of the still somewhat mysterious business of stamps.

The following excerpt from a narrative in which Maury recounts his experience during the tumultuous days of the Paris Commune, shows us perfectly that in 1871, philately was already, on the one hand, an activity full of potential, but, on the other, still sufficiently hermetic in relation to the general public.

He says: *The federate forces had left our neighbourhood; the cannon boomed further away towards Montmartre and Belleville. Fire was spreading everywhere. Miserable groups of prisoners went past each other in the streets, men and women covered in bloody wounds, taken from the hospitals on the way to Versailles.*

A known collector that we met told us that he had seen “père” Vallette (author of the second catalogue of stamps that we have already mentioned) dragged to the Lobau barracks along with a herd of unfortunates, where they were shot down.

As we approached our house, we saw a small group of neighbours that were reading our advertisement, (Maury is obviously referring to his stamp business) and one of them, pointing at us, said: “another one from the Commune; he was doing the postal service now, but before he was a Prussian spy”.

We cannot even hate these people –Maury continues – who, knowing nothing of the stamp business, attributed their **growing fortune** (the highlighting is ours) to incorrect and fantastic suppositions. Statements of this kind have led hundreds of unfortunates to the dungeons or had them shot immediately. May God save us from civil war!

As we can see from this statement, twenty years after the introduction of the adhesive stamp, philately could already be considered a prosperous business and this fact cannot help but be reflected in philately taken as a credible aid to History.

4.

The taste for collecting can be enjoyed in the silence of the winter nights, as a way of getting away from everyday life or as a pedagogical exercise, in fact for many different reasons. But relations with the “outside world” are essential. Apart from some cases in which the collection functions as a reward, the collector is on principle a gregarious man, who enjoys, above all, exhibiting his work. In other words, the collector collects for others.

If this were not the case, we would not understand the existence of the great museums, which are today national heritage, but began as a result of a private collection. In the specific case of philately, relations with “others” are even unavoidable. Many contemporary article writers are also of the opinion that this is one of the main reasons we should support this marvellous activity as a contribution towards good relations between all people.

However, these relations do not merely generate friendly gatherings. In fact, since philately can be seen as a competition, this predisposes the idea of competitiveness between the collectors, who argue over the rarest items that the wide philatelic market has under its control, as we have already mentioned.

This dispute was particularly dramatic at the end of the century, in which great collectors on the one hand, and extravagant men on the other, put their vanity and their fortunes at the service of a hobby in a sometimes rather less than edifying way.

This was perfectly understandable at a time when there were 4 or 5 thousand examples of postal issues, of which only the rarest items could offer any value.

In the same way, the trend for research into detail began to become commonplace, perhaps as a way of diversifying the still relatively restricted base of issues in progress. This can be illustrated by the collection of a certain Edouard N. de Baden, who, in 1891, sent a strange invitation to several personalities to consider his collection of “Turks”. The invitation warned the guests to go early, so that they would not be perturbed by nightfall. This was because the illustrious Mr. Baden’s collection of “Turks” had no less than 21,691 examples, attached to 1,683 sheets, forming 15 thick volumes.



First and fourth stamp of Turkey, Tete-bêche.
Source: *David Feldman Auction*

Critics were already airing views opposing these peculiarities, to a certain extent going against the idea of many other collectors.

Maury had this to say: *A great number of catalogues from abroad praise the limitless collection and give each example a sale price, transforming them into rarities and considering the collectors, even the average ones, as great specialists, making them focus solely on one or just a few countries, to which they expect to devote themselves heart and soul.*

...Just a moment – we can see a rock on which philately could flounder...

For Maury, and for many other critics and collectors of the time, it was impossible to foresee the paths that philately would take (and so quickly) as a way of overcoming their own contradictions, synthesised in these so frequently asked questions: What should we collect? What is a stamp collection after all?

Clearly, such questions did not raise great doubts for the collector that acquired the first album organised by Lallier in December 1862. All stamps, of course! By country of course! Logically, by chronological order of issue!

Yet in the last quarter of the century, it was already impossible to answer in this way from the point of view of the collector, even though the editors still persisted in the issue of universal albums, with consequent additions, year after year.

The Universal Album of 1897 from the house of Maury is still contained in relatively thin volumes, but twenty years later, such a way of dealing with collecting would have been impossible.

By the end of the century, all the dealers were questioning themselves on these phenomena. At this time, there was no demand for the rare, highly priced stamps, which mainly troubled the speculators that had invested sums that were too high in them.

In fact, the millionaire collectors were stocked up, the rest did not have sufficient revenue to purchase them in significant numbers.

These facts offered new openings to philately, which from this time began to feel threatened. The collecting of postage stamps could not be exclusive to the illustrious gentlemen of the *Société Française de Timbrologie*, created in Paris around 1874 by Dantis, Rothschild, Legrand, Durrieu and by the famous count of Ferrari.

The latter, who died suddenly in 1917, bequeathed perhaps the largest collection ever gathered to the Postal Museum of Berlin.

It so happened that Ferrari was a German by birth, so France confiscated all his goods in compensation for the 1914/18 war. The Ferrari collection was sold between 1921 and 1925, fetching, as far as we know, over two million dollars.

However, in 1897, Mahé, and Maury himself, affirmed the great difficulties that philately was going through, attributing the blame to the catalogues and albums that year after year were becoming a *monstrous complication*.

The problem, he said: is the triumph of the speciality, of the detail, which only great amateurs should ever cultivate. As for the nice, simple collection that the schoolboy begins with his parent's encouragement because it teaches him history and geography, it follows the ideas expressed in his albums and catalogues, in which clarity dominates and which do not drag the collectors down the slippery path of watermarks and perforations.

There are clear contradictions and ambiguities in these observations, but a dealer at the end of the 19th century can only very remotely have imagined the development of philately, naturally affected as a social phenomenon by the factors that characterise the world we live in today: demographic expansion, urban concentration, the great technological innovations, particularly in the field of communications, the progressive increase in the distribution of per capita income with the consequent rise in the standard of living, especially in the more industrialised countries.

It is within these conditions that great roads opened up to a modern philately, making it a diversified, and, we would say, multidisciplinary activity, which has led it to the important position it holds today, as one of the most popular leisure activities in the world.

Its great diversification can be seen through the innumerable philatelic exhibitions held regularly by every country, within an increasingly tight schedule.

We have been unable to find much information on the 1st exhibition of stamps, which we know took place in Vienna, Austria in 1881. However, we have gathered some information on the 1894 Exhibition, which was part of the International Book Exhibition held at the great Palace of Varied Industries in Paris.

“FERRARI DE RENOTIÈRE (MARQUIS): French diplomat and collector, took German citizenship in 1914. Lived in Paris, Germany, Switzerland and America. Created the philatelic collection with the highest number of rare examples ever known. Under the pretext of the 1914-1918 war, when FERRARI died, the French government confiscated and sold his collection at public auction in 1922. Sales raised over 6,000,000 francs. The best lots went to the USA and England” (*Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europea Americana*, Madrid, Esposa-Calpe SA, Vol 23, p. 906)

The programme divided the exhibits into six classes:

- 1°. – removable and fixed stamps.
- 2°. – telegraph and fiscal stamps.
- 3°. – philatelic journals.
- 4°. – blank albums and catalogues.
- 5°. – written works on philately.
- 6°. – various objects not covered by the above classes.

The exhibition ran from July 24 to November 29, devoting one month to each speciality described as follows: *Stamps of Europe, Stamps of Africa, Stamps of Oceania.*

In 1894, there was such little diversity and the exhibition planning was so incipient that they were all alike in some way. A critic of the time made reference to them, saying that the same exhibition presented the collection of Switzerland twice, the collection of England 3 times, the same rare stamp 20 times, in such a way that *the public walks indifferently by these rarities collected with an eye to detail that only comes with knowledge.*

Nevertheless, these observations in no way invalidate the fact that, despite everything, the general public attended this type of cultural event in large numbers.

A London chronicler gives us his particular view of the great jubilee celebration of 1890, to commemorate 50 years of the system proposed by Rowland Hill.

The exhibition, mounted at the Guildhall, which has been transformed into a giant museum, was opened in the middle of a great crowd, by the Prince of Wales. We would need an entire volume to describe the notable things we saw there: examples of the first English stamps, Mulready envelopes, portraits and autographs of R. Hill, etc.

Further on, the chronicler writes: *We could not reach the improvised post and telegraph offices, where there were hordes of people wanting to send letters and postcards with a special cancellation: a kind of star with commemorative inscriptions. These post offices sold 10,000 postcards of a special model on Saturday alone, with the common stamp on the right, with the arms of London on the upper part and the monogram VR superimposed by a crown and the inscription: PENNY POSTAGE JUBILEE GUILDHALL – LONDON.*

Among the great collections on show were those of Tapling,

whose general collection was the most important after that of Ferrari, Evans' former stamps of Guiana, M. Castle's Tasmania, Coleman's Cape of Good Hope, Harrison's Kabul, the Duke of Edinburgh's Antilles, the English examples of Pearson Hill, Rowland's son and finally the official examples of the British Crown. The stamp jubilee of 1890 in London was thus a landmark in the history of philately and one of its main chronicles.

Twenty years later, most of these collections had been split up and injected onto the world stamp market.

Philately was already a force on which States could depend and a way in which the postage stamp itself was structured as an historic document, within the view that we have outlined.

In 1897, at the opening of the work on the Postal Congress of Washington, an open letter to the Representatives was published in the *Collectionneur*, which said:

Stamp collectors are following the work of the Congress of the Universal Postage Union with great interest. They are the first to realise that the postal network is in expansion around the world and only a few spots remain where the stamp has not taken its civilising work. On the other hand, there are many countries that have been abusing stamps for several years, creating new editions and provisional stamps at short intervals, with the sole purpose of making money, which is totally deplorable.

In 1897, the collectors and dealers, who feared that philately would wither under its own contradictions, were afraid that philately would become impractical, given the excesses and abuses committed by the Postal Administrations, through excessive inflation of values, which no stock exchange could support, no space could contain, nor time would suffice.

It is true that many countries did seek marginal profits through issues that we could consider abusive as they exceed the limits of necessity (a practice that is still used), but such fears arose mainly from the lack of future vision for the world, which led the end-of-the-century man to see the things around him as absolute and unchangeable, safe from all contingencies.

The idea of total collecting, a habit essentially consecrated by the first albums and catalogues, to which we have already made reference, is what suffered the greatest shock, when man realised that the phenomena that were underway

overcame him irredeemably in time and space.

It was clearly no longer possible to put in one album all the philatelic examples, as it is equally impossible for the entomologist to gather all species of insect, or the botanist to organise a garden that has every type of plant. Accordingly, no collection can cover everything.

Clearly, some contradictions arise from this, which only time will resolve, which consist fundamentally in the response to the crucial question already posed: what is a stamp collection; what should be collected? It is not just the collectors that can find the answer to this, but also the organisations responsible for producing future stamp issues so that they meet not only the needs of postal circulation, not only in strict compliance with historical and political conditions (as was the case with the first issues), but also to satisfy an increasing legion of collectors and traders, who are becoming more demanding and respected.

Basically, as these sociological conditions, imposed on the phenomenon of postal circulation, alienate the figure of the stamp as an official document, they will open up new and fruitful perspectives.

Nowadays, no one raises problems of this nature. Stamps are considered for their graphics, for their aesthetic beauty, as drawings, for their structural elements such as colour, motive, design, or even as an idea, representation, originality and everything else, according to the parameters established by a society interested in the immediate, the sensual, and visual pleasures. We are a long way from the reasoning that Mesureur, the French Minister of Commerce, expressed in his famous and well-debated report in 1892: *In every country, the stamp bears the mark of the national character or the reigning political regime; in every place, one can see a logical relationship between the theme of the image and the country of origin. The French stamp is only distinguished by its banality. It is a trademark that could be used by any commercial or industrial enterprise and not the emblem of a great republican State like France.*

The illustrious minister was referring here to the Sage type stamp “Peace and Commerce allegory” in use from 1879 to 1900.

Mesureur also said that: *We would therefore like to propose for your appraisal, a public or restricted contest among French artists to choose a “vignette” that would make our stamp what it should be – modern, French, republican.*

We find Mesureur's intervention particularly significant, as well as the comments made by all the press at the time, not solely the philatelic press, seeing as the matter was discussed on several occasions by the Assembly itself and would have the privileges of a national business.

Mesureur's report perfectly illustrates the first great turning point in philately and reflects the exact moment at which the considerations of a purely philatelic nature were superimposed by the considerations of a postal nature, in other words, the historical and political considerations defended by the minister.

The interventions themselves, reproduced in the weekly *Rapide* by the journalist Roger Marx, in the *Petit Journal* penned by Thomas Grimm and in particular the notes by Pierre Véron, included in the renowned *Monde Illustré*, clearly show the problems that were raised to national awareness of launching a postal issue, which today is such a simple and commonplace act.

We do not wish to dwell on this point, though the exhaustive transcription of the commentaries is certainly of interest. These oscillate between the dramatic tone and the sarcastic and polemic intervention that each journalist used as an introduction to the proposals, which ranged from the systemisation of historical French motives to the exhaustive ordering of the great figures of France, divided into categories, from saints to heroes, as possible inspiration for the new stamps, under Mesureur's caption: modern, republican and French.

Once again, as good end-of-the-century spirits, these men saw the postage stamp as an authentic national document, a solemn piece, an institution representative of the State. It had never crossed their minds that the stamp would have to evolve according to various conditions of a psychological and sociological nature, and thus reflect these conditions at each historical moment.

Around 1900, at the turn of the century, France was still divided between these two concepts, dreaming of how it could commemorate its International Exhibition through a philatelic series, inspired by the example America had given in 1893, when it issued a long series for the 4th Centenary of Christopher Columbus.

The experience of the jubilee stamps is otherwise a much later event in the history of the stamp. In the following table, we show the first commemorative series, after a first attempt



Sage-type French stamps

in 1870:

We can see from this table that only in the years 1892/93 do the first jubilee series appear concerning historical events, which means that it is only after this date that philately frees itself from History as a conditioning factor and becomes, on the contrary, its precious aid.

From this time, and despite facing harsh criticism from the creators of the speciality, in 1894 Portugal inaugurates the European philatelic catalogue of jubilee and commemorative series, with the series dedicated to Saint Anthony of Lisbon, “or of Padua”, which raised such a controversy in philatelic circles, particularly in France, where Maury pontificated.

And Maury clearly did not like these stamps: *It must be said that they are deplorable; they are no more than religious images of poor quality. They are taken in poor lithography in one or two colours; the figures do not look right inside the overdone frames. The full series is too numerous and the Portuguese could not have done a better job of displeasing the collectors with these speculative issues (our underlining).*

To his even greater despair, in order to promote the series

YEAR	COUNTRY	COMMEMORATION	OBSERVATIONS
1892	SÃO SALVADOR	Discovery of the country by Columbus	Nautical motives
1892	NICARÁGUA	Idem	Idem
1892	ARGENTINA	Idem	Idem
1893	UNITED STATES	4 th Centenary of the discovery of America by Columbus	Series of 16 values with scenes from the life of Columbus and his voyage
1894	PORTUGAL	Henry the Navigator series	1st European jubilee series
1895	PORTUGAL	Saint Anthony series	Series of 15 stamps with allegories of the saint
1896	BELGIUM	Brussels Exhibition	Reproduction of a Flemish painting
1896	NICARÁGUA	Anniversary of independence	Images of its Presidents
1896	GREECE	Commemoratives of the Olympic Games	Various Greek statues

(and not only) the Portuguese Administration had created a square vignette in several colours, representing the saint on a background covered in small stars with the following inscriptions:

7th Centenary of Saint Anthony – Lisbon

From 12th to 13th June 1895 – Wonderful celebrations

Low price trips

These vignettes were placed on the correspondence going abroad, by the official services themselves, which raised violent protests, on the allegation that the Postal Convention forbade the attaching of anything onto correspondence, and the Portuguese Administration was contravening this.

These jubilee series were otherwise initially identified as a purely speculative idea that States used to obtain marginal profits, cheating collectors and traders.

History would refute Maury's prospective view, to which we



1894 issue. TSC – International Exhibition of Lyon. Issue of the Société Philatélique Lyonnaise. Printed by Grisard. Exhibition postmark. This is a complete postcard.



The four different images on the Portuguese issue of the 7th Centenary of Saint Anthony of Lisbon. Source: Carlos Kullberg's Album of the Stamps of Portugal, in the press.

will add the good group of Englishmen, who, in 1894 constituted the *Society for the Suppression of Stamp Speculation*, of which the great collector, Castle, would become the first chairman.

In the middle of this same year and commenting on the plan of the Portuguese Post Office to launch a new jubilee series on the Discovery of India, Maury commented: *It seems that the Portuguese Government was so enchanted by the idea that it has already issued the decree for its issue. But in five years' time, we sincerely hope that jubilee stamps will have gone out of fashion and then what will governments do for their expenses...?*

Maury established here a purely economic understanding, but even in this sense, he was entirely mistaken. From then until now, jubilee stamps have not gone out of fashion. On the contrary, they have become the great fashion of universal philately and its greatest money-spinner.

France stubbornly tried to resist this impulse, however. From 1876 to 1917, from report to report, from project to project, the panorama of the French stamp is a less than poor repetition of motives, with the Sage type dominating the last quarter of the century, to be followed by feminine figures of goddesses and republics (a France in anthropomorphic symbols), which ended with a sower in a Phrygian cap, in other words, a republican sower, within the good concepts legated by the minister Mesureur. It was only in 1923 that the great figure of Pasteur appeared, on a small stamp of the series in use, and only in 1924 did the first commemorative stamps appear for the inauguration of the Paris Olympic Games.

In 1924, the commemorative and jubilee series around the world surpassed in number and quantity all the issues produced since the first stamp.

This fact was a determining factor in the history of collecting, and Portugal was responsible not only for the discovery of India, but also for the introduction into Europe of jubilee and commemorative stamps, however much this may have bothered the French father of philately.

For 50 years, jubilee commemorations of stamps commemorating an event have accounted for 80% of the series made all over the world.

With just a little irony, we would say that the postage stamp today is a normal way of commemorating events.

Later, we will see how this fact has had great repercussions in the field of philately, allowing the creation of philatelic disciplines as diverse as thematic or maximophily. We should not disregard here the pedagogical aspects that philately provides, in as much as it provides important historic references and thus fulfils some ideas expressed by the very first philatelic commentators, who proposed the creation of a nice, educational philately that would lead young students to their first collections with the encouragement of their parents and teachers.

For our part, we can find no harm in that, though deep down we realise that the paths we follow as philatelic orientation are very different, in that the postage stamp has an historic dimension in itself, fulfilling, as we have shown, the function of affirming the nationality of a State, providing information on its form of government and on the historical incidents happening at that time.

Our main concern has been to show how philately must be taken in one of its important dimensions, as a powerful aid to History. We will continue to refer to this in the following chapters.



French stamps: Mouchon type (appeared in 1900), reaper with land type (appeared in 1903) and Merson type (appeared in 1900).

5.

If it were necessary, through lack of evidence, to show the importance of stamp collecting in relation to its economic value, we would only have to mention the forgeries that have created their own market since the very early days, involving collectors and traders in a complex web of intrigue.

It is obvious that the first forgeries detected would have had merely a postal objective. The payment of postage through fraudulent processes is still, as we know, counteracted by the first repressive laws that were decreed in this field, and deal with the most incipient processes of forgery, which have nothing to do with the powerful networks that were formed when certain items fetched the exorbitant prices on the philatelic market that we have already mentioned.

The law issued on October 16th 1848 concerning French postal legislation, 10 months after the launch of the adhesive stamp in that country, says that whoever uses a stamp that has already been used or imitated on the franking of a letter will be punished with a fine of 50 to 1,000 francs, and in the case of a second offence, this will be doubled and accompanied by a prison sentence of 5 days to one month.

As it would be logical to suppose, Portuguese legislation refers to the use of false stamps and in its regulating decree on the postal service in 1886, it states clearly in article 11 that letters that are found with stamps in these conditions, or from which the marks of use have been removed by any process, will be returned to the Administration where the signatory will be identified and a deed of notice drawn up, after three experts have acknowledged the falsification, and the whole process will then be sent to an appropriate judge.

It was therefore the courts that determined the sentences to be applied to falsifications, which did not exclude prison sentence, as well as heavy fines.

They are, in fact, cautionary laws from the public treasury, fiscal laws in their essence, which do not yet concern the interests of the collectors and traders, where falsification clearly concerns the crime of forgery. And it was not long before this happened; it was not long before the processes of fraud were gathered in the courts; it was not long before the stamp market became a dangerous path full of traps and surprises. It cannot fail to be symptomatic that the first work of a clearly philatelic nature dealt precisely with this



Spanish stamp forged by Fournier. Details of the forged and real stamp are shown alongside each other. The errors in the forged stamp are indicated with arrows.

Source: Article by Charles J. Peterson: "Forgeries and the Electronic Era", *Fakes Forgeries Experts*, no. 1

momentous problem. This was the booklet *Forgery of postage stamps*, by the philatelist Moens, which was published in Brussels in December 1862.

At that time, we can almost say that there was no item of significant value that did not have one or several duplicates created by the diabolic arts of the great forgers.

Evidently, forgeries have existed since time immemorial and in various sectors. Coins, bank notes, objects of art, documents, furniture, jewels, in other words, anything that could be exchanged for profit or that justified a certain investment, even implying a certain degree of risk, had always been the object of forgers or forgery artists, skilled to a lesser or greater extent.

This would be a long, very long story that would have no shortage of complicated details and unprecedented adventures.

However, we do not want to dwell on this story, in relation to these small squares of paper that by chance, and in a very short space of time, became a document with a very relative value in a precious good, at times on a par with the weight of gold.

In fact, philatelic activity was threatened so much by the number and quality of the forgeries that were regularly injected onto the market that Maury commented with certain bitterness in his magazine in May 1896: *The stamp trade today is one of the most difficult to exercise seriously since authenticity is its first condition. However, this authenticity is not easy to discern as a result of the progress in the art of the forgers and what they earn from this counterfeiting, not to mention the relative impunity that is granted them by the French courts, as can be seen from the previous year (1895), in which eight frequenters of the Stamp Exchange were found innocent.*

The truth is that these frauds often raised real problems of a legal nature with judges and lawyers wavering, to the great despair of the cheated traders and collectors. In fact, in many courts, faced by the argument that the stamp is always an official document, representing an asset of the public treasury, whose forgery is severely punished, some judges claimed that since this was not the case and such stamps were no longer legal tender, they had therefore naturally lost their validity.

It was even more difficult to prove that the false stamp that

had been purchased was exactly the one that was exhibited in the complaint since it was always possible to suggest that it could have been exchanged in order to obtain compensation from a *supposed* forger.

Justice has these bizarre things, and it may sometimes seem that the law is made to protect the forgers rather than defending the interests of the victims. This contradiction was so stimulating for the swindlers that false stamps at low prices were freely advertised for collectors that wished to complete the pages of their albums at a relatively low cost.

Thanks to their great efforts and by using their influence, it was the traders that moralised the stamp market, relentlessly pursuing the forgers, denouncing their activities, making public the details that might lead to the discovery of fake stamps, for which purpose they created technical offices specialised in detecting forgeries.

The episode related by Maury, in his position as consultant, is truly significant as it allows us to see the extent of the problem of forgeries for collectors at the end of the century.

Having been called to pass an expert eye over the collection of a certain Baron de X., Maury affirmed that he had never seen gathered in one collection so many examples of “tricks”, “mountings and reconstructions” of stamps. He then indicated in a brief but systematic way, the main forgeries he had detected.

We will not attempt to transcribe Maury’s entire text, as it is too long and technical. On the other hand, we cannot fail to mention each of the points he referred to in terms of importance, since it demonstrates the main artifices practised at the time and how they were synthesised in the illustrious Baron de X’s famous collection (whom Maury elegantly does not refer to by name):

1. Non-perforated stamps – obtained by cutting out the perforated edge in off-centre stamps, leaf edges of later re-edged.
e.g. Queensland stamps, which were sold at 7 francs perforated and 250 non-perforated.
2. Falsely perforated stamps – from proofs or tests with or without thinning of the paper, e.g. Primitive stamps of Hungary, obtained from envelopes, thinned and perforated.
3. Fanciful alterations. Obtention of the 1 franc Imperial stamp by sticking onto an 80 C dark carmine stamp the lower paper of the 1 franc Republican stamp, after cutting this along the frame.
4. “tête-beche” – Obtained from a pair or strip, cutting one



The first issue of this magazine that publishes studies on forged editions.

of them along the inner thread, inverting it and sticking it with varnish or colloid.

5. Chemical discolourations, e.g. blue 10 C from Brazil, changed into a black 10 C, stamps from Australia, New Wales, Victoria, etc.

6. False cancellations. Particularly numerous in the Album in question.

7. False overprints.

Where could so many of these stamps have come from?

The press of the era clarifies this point for us, from which we have gathered a random list of comments:

A clandestine factory dedicated to the manufacture of postage stamps with a French colonies' overprint has been discovered in Marseilles. Furthermore, stamps and cancellations are also manufactured there, which makes these "fakes" highly dangerous. (1894).

Following several investigations to discover the forgers that have recently placed large quantities of counterfeit stamps in the main cities of Spain, particularly Seville, a clandestine factory has just been discovered in Madrid. It was the Inspector of rent and tobacco who, led by a collector, discovered fake stamps of 15C and 1 peseta in circulation. To be precise, the police went to the Calle Fuencarral, no. 144, to the



One of the items that has provoked great debate.

One Penny Black was officially issued on May 6 1840. This letter bearing the stamp dates from May 1st.

Article "1 May 1840. The Story of an Investigation", P.C. Pearson, *Fakes Forgeries Experts*, no. 1

home of Salvador Diaz Guerra, where an authentic arsenal was found: negatives, boards, types, inks, paper, presses, etc., etc., as well as a large amount of stamps ready to go into circulation. (Spanish press, 1894).

Obviously, we cannot dwell on this any longer. News of this type was very frequent at the end of the century. The philatelic and other press frequently echoed similar cases. New names and new scandals were revealed every day. Pressures and blackmail were parallel to a completely marginal trade, competing with the reputable houses that were trying to do honest business.

It was the golden era of the great millionaire collectors and the golden era of the great classic collections.

It is easy to imagine today how and to what extent the incidence of forgeries taken to the extremes we have seen limited and conditioned collecting, but we should also understand it as playing an equal role in this process. We cannot fail to mention here the legendary names of the forgery artists, Lagrange, Speratti, Fourrier, among others, whose pieces, through their perfection and beauty are still worth more than the originals themselves. It is often difficult to understand the world we live in.

6.

Let us interrupt for a while the somewhat calm trail of our brief look at philately, seen, perhaps, from a rather unorthodox point of view.

We have been concerned mainly with its historical aspects, but within a perspective that we have attempted to broaden, without spending too much time on unnecessary detail of erudition.

We have looked fundamentally at the declarations given by the first authors of philatelic theory and it could not have been done any other way. It was these men that launched the basics of this branch of knowledge, which we purposefully took to the sociological and historic field, without failing to mention the psychological aspects that underlie any human activity.

We have a great advantage over the good spirits of Mahé, Legrand, Moens and even Maury, in that we can see their errors of appreciation in prospective relation to their future and we therefore have a broad base of observation and a set of data that allows us, up to a certain point, to reformulate everything they said, reordering their concepts or rectifying their conclusions here and there.

We have done this as we have made these considerations, introducing whenever necessary a statistical reading of the most important facts in philately.

We therefore interrupt this path of historic considerations to find the support of some quantitative aspects, noting with a certain perplexity the extraordinary evolution that philately has undergone in the last few years.

Philately is so closely linked to the events that shape our social life that we cannot know how its problems will be resolved in the future, since they are linked to demographic explosion, urban concentration, the general aging of the population, earlier retirement, the recovery of huge populations that are still removed from the patterns and standards of modern industrial societies and concomitantly with the development in the area of their relations with each other (written and spoken).

It is important to consider these points, which in less than a century changed Man's view so profoundly and presented him with new concepts. The analysis of philatelic activity, or

rather, of the postal phenomenon could also constitute some of these indicators that help us to understand the life of society diachronically.

Let us use some statistics to help us.

The stamp, as we know, was introduced in Great Britain in 1840. Rowland Hill's fundamental idea to resolve the problem of postal circulation was based mainly on the creation of stamped envelopes, with the stamp itself being reserved for special cases. But here, as in many other fields, it is the People that make history. The stamp was quickly and definitively preferred as a system in such a way that every country in the world adopted it irreversibly.

There are, however, huge gaps between the dates of the first issues, in accordance with the deep differences between the various States.

Let us look at this (obviously not exhaustive) list that gives the dates of the issues between 1840 and 1878 and the names of the issuing countries.

Issue date	Issuing countries
1840	Great Britain
1843	Brazil, Switzerland
1847	British Mauritius
1849	France, Belgium
1850	Austria, Spain, British Guiana, Saxe, Victoria
1851	United States, Hawaii, Canada, Sardinia
1852	Tour and Taxis, Chile, Vatican, Luxembourg, Holland
1853	Portugal, Australia, Cape of Good Hope
1854	Norway
1855	Sweden, Spanish Antilles
1857	Ceylon, Peru, Russia
1858	Argentina
1859	Columbia, Venezuela
1861	Greece
1862	Dominican Rep., Nicaragua, Romania, Turkey
1865	Ecuador
1866	Eito
1867	Salvador
1868	Persia
1871	Imperial Germany, Hungary, Japan

Many other states are mentioned in the 1895 catalogue, which we have used, but they are either colonial territories or those about to be absorbed. We can therefore conclude that between 1840 and 1874 all constituted States began postal issues, which means that this was the number that adhered to the Universal Postal Convention of Berne.

Many others, for historical and political reasons, began their postal history at later dates, re-witnessing the political problems that were raised in relation to the first stamps, which is an issue we will deal with a little later.

Let us now take a look at the following relationship, where we can see the volume of “models” issued in each 40-year period. From it, we can see that the 16 countries mentioned produced 25, 358 different stamps in 120 years.

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1 st period - 1896	90 selos
2 st period - 1896 -1936	300 selos
3 st period - 1936 -1976	1,000 selos

Let us now take a look at the following relationship, where we can see the volume of “models” issued in each 40-year period. From it, we can see that the 16 countries mentioned produced 25, 358 different stamps in 120 years.

All the numbers indicated are quite low in relation to the real number of stamps produced by the world issues, of which these 16 European countries are only a tiny part.

In 1974 alone, Europe issued 1,360 different stamps. In 1976, the stamps in the world collection, excluding Europe, amounted to 82,500 examples, not including air mail stamps, franking or fine stamps, telegraphs and journals, which also numbered the thousands.

Issuing countries	1896	1936	1974	Totals
Great Britain	104	104	542	750
France	105	228	1,163	1,956
Portugal	145	439	661	1,245
Austria	178	316	808	1,738
Belgium	132	313	1,293	1,738
Bulgaria	64	225	1,833	2,122
Spain	180	395	1,319	1,894
Luxemburg	112	181	555	848
Norway	57	110	481	648
Holland	48	243	721	1,012
Romania	113	297	2,370	2,880
Russia	113	541	3,522	4,118
San Marino	30	178	674	882
Sueden	86	215	678	979
	50	791	1,242	

Everything leads us to believe that growth will be rapid over the next few decades, in spite of the strong competition from new communication technologies (a fact that we will analyse later), considering that the number of postal issues will rise as the population increases, at a proportional rate, in view of the phenomenon of recovery of vast areas of underdevelopment and the consequent broadening of relations between these zones. The independence of some ex-colonial states will also lead to a heavy increase in the number of issues, as a way of covering the ever-growing postal needs of these states as well as for the desire to affirm themselves as a nation, with the natural increase in commemorative and jubilee issues in relation to the figures and facts of their newly regained History.

Mauritius Islands	
1857 - 1966 (British colony)	291 stamps
1966 - 1976 (10 years independent)	106 stamps
Gabão	
1886 - 1959 (French colony)	146 stamps
1960 - 1974 independent)	195 stamps
+ air mail [14 years]	354 stamps
Madagáscar	
1889 - 1957 (68 years as a colony)	

For example:

Recent history has caught us unawares once again, giving philately great motives of recognition, and unquestionably justifying the point I made somewhere that we live in an “interesting” era in terms of philately. What I am trying to say is that the political changes that were underway and are perhaps still taking place in the geo-political space of Europe, particularly since the breaking up of the USSR, leading to the resurgence of different republics and the affirmation of some regions now subject to a process of self-determination, have extraordinarily enriched the philatelic field, confirming what we have said that the stamp is, or can be, one of the fundamental elements in the affirmation of a nationality.

This has also been happening as a result of the terrible difficulties for postal circulation within these territories, together with understandable and inevitable disorganisation, as a result of the deep political changes that have taken place there.

This theme was the object of a series of articles published in *A Filatelia Portuguesa* after this book was written.



Ukraine. Deux lettres de ROVNO:
 1) Cachet bleu (affranch. Payé). Surcharge = .32 K. Oblitération ex-URSS
 2) Cachet bleu (Affranch. Payé) 0.50 K. Oblitération ex—URSS

From this has come a wide variety of accidents with obvious relevance in the field of Postal History, now profoundly linked to the political history of these same peoples. Another look would be appropriate here at the possibility of revising some concepts of collecting, opening the doors to modern collecting, forsaking the prejudices of those that consider age is always a synonym of rarity. We will leave this reflection until later.

Let us list below the philatelic accidents that are underway, under the title of “Rebirth of the Eastern States”:

- a) Mixed franking, resulting from the superimposition of stamps issued by the new States to complement stamps issued by the former USSR.
- b) Use of local overprints, put on stamps from the former USSR as an affirmation of the political autonomy of the issuing territory, or confirming its independence.
- c) Printed, handwritten or rubber-stamped overprints, changing the face value of the postage.
- d) Use of marks (made by rubber stamp or possibly handwritten) of the type (OPLACHENO), (franking paid), as a way of overcoming the total or partial lack of stamps, or of the necessary franking rates.
- e) Use of cancelling marks (day marks) of the former USSR, necessarily showing the symbols of the Soviet State, which generally, only in 1995 began to be replaced by definitive local marks.
- f) Modification of the name of the country or autonomous region, substituting the Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin one or superimposing one over the other.

It is possible that such pieces will only become valuable over a long period of time when, for obvious reasons, time will make them “rare”.

All we wanted to do here was list these pieces from contemporary History under the concept I have so often mentioned that they will always be factual evidence of an extraordinary moment in the life of a Europe shaken by one of its greatest tremors, at the turn of the 3rd millennium of our historical existence.

Allow us at this point to take a prospective look at the future of philately, at a time at which no collector will be able to boast a world collection, nor will any museum contain such a collection.

Collecting by groups of countries and in some cases just one country is already an arduous task for any collector.

Thematic collections, in their turn, offer such vast and diverse

motives that it will be difficult to find two similar collections, even covering the same theme.

On the other hand, the classics and the pieces that were rare in 1895 will become so unattractive that they will no longer be of interest to the market. The discretionary power of choice, concerning such a large volume of series issued, will prevent the value of stamps from increasing by very much, except in occasional, rare pieces.

Philately will become easier as a hobby, as a pedagogical activity, as a group work, but perhaps far less interesting as an activity of historical research.

The mechanical franking that has now begun to penetrate postal habits will offset this increase a little, which, even so, will become more acute in the next forty year period, unless some other technological innovation radically modifies the situation.

At the opposite end, we can put the factors that will possibly have a negative effect on the philatelic panorama of the future. I have called them the “*enemies of philately*”, when I consider how to answer the question: What will philately be like in 50 years’ time?

This was a question I often asked myself, the response to which always perplexed me, perhaps as I was afraid my conclusions did not seem logical.

With the same presupposition, perhaps we could extrapolate the same question and ask: what will the world be like in 50 years’ time?

Fifty years is not, however, a very long time, especially for those of us who have already lived for well over half a century and have accompanied the events that have taken place within this period of time.

Yet the moment always comes at which we must stop a little and reflect. This is because the changes taking place in our society, now at the speed of seconds, change our behavioural patterns to such an extent that we may lose control of it. Let us then take a look at some of these factors under the presupposition of Marcel Mauss that everything interferes with everything else, focusing on those that, in my opinion, will interfere decisively with this wonderful activity of philately, and perhaps allow us to answer the question that I posed initially: what will philately be like in 50 years’ time?

I have called them “enemies of philately” and it was this that

I had in mind. I could be less “aggressive” or more complacent, but the truth is that I actually think that philately could now become extinct if it cannot defend itself from the terrible “enemies” that surround it.

The first enemy arrived in the subtle form of “mechanical franking”, and in fact everything stemmed from there. The use of the stamp became unnecessary as a way of franking correspondence, making it cold, automatic, without the historic referential that the stamp has, without concrete allusions to any factual motivation, other than speed, the reflection of expected productivity in the handling of correspondence. An antidote had to be found for this first virus. And here, curiously, mutual counterparts were established under the saying, “if you can’t beat them, join them”. Thus, collectors began to collect frankings, the authorities began to create motives and references, introducing graphics other than the normal indications such as the date, identification of the issuing State, etc. Interesting bands were therefore created that were also accepted at exhibitions, particularly within the thematic area.

But here philately trembled a little.

The second tremor came with the concession granted to private companies for the transport and delivery of mail, heretofore religiously maintained as a State monopoly, which through traditional right was responsible for the correct running of this service, giving credibility to the performance of this public mission. However, such companies or agents obviously cannot begin issuing stamps, so apart from its function as “receipt of paid postage”, the stamp constitutes, in its essence, an official element and one of the consensual symbols of affirmation of a nationality, as we have shown.

The companies in question will use any form, a sticker, or whatever, which are no more than internal documents relating to its organisational structure.

The International Philately Federation was right not to accept them as material to include in thematic collections. Philately is something more than a mere collection of loose vignettes.

However, the case will become much more complex in what I think will be the very near future, as the political desire to totally privatise the State Postal service is now foreseeable. When this happens, philately will lose the basic reason for its existence. We know that there are collections of letters sent before the creation of the stamp. This was how the not very correctly named area of “pre-philately” came about. It

is therefore natural that the slow disintegration of the stamp and its consequent disappearance may lead to the creation of “post-philately”, granting the stamp we have today a good place in typological archaeology, in other words, the role of a mere memory.

The third and, perhaps, the worst enemy comes in the form of advanced communication technologies. I am not even referring to the telephone, which is also now entering the archetypal zone, or to the popular mobile form, just as I do not refer to the fax, in which the communication is transmitted just as we process it. I am now referring to a much more worrying form, the 4th wave of the industrial revolution. The common use of the Internet in such a short space of time, which gives us a stable connection, within the small global village our planet has now become, will quickly make all other processes of communication obsolete, particularly written communication.

In 50 years' time no one will write – everyone will be on the Internet. We no longer address our communication to anyone, we just type out addresses on the computer such as www etc. or some e-mail, surfing as lonely cybernauts on the communication highways.

So what will philately be like in 50 years' time?

My perhaps somewhat disenchanted view is that it will be nothing but a fossilised activity that only a few die-hards may stubbornly continue, in a small corner of their fondest memories.

7

So far, we have referred to some circumstances that have determined, in one way or another, the postage stamp in terms of its “construction” as a document.

A historical document, a symbol of political regimes and their transformations, a document of the psycho-social evolution of different communities, a document and mark of technological evolution, etc. This means, therefore, that we have to admit that the postage stamp is of varying importance, depending on the extent of its documental use; in other words, we can divide it or classify it by degrees of historical importance.

Actually, this happens with all documents: some more than others reflect the historical and political conditions that led to their creation. This, however, does not invalidate the initial proposition that the stamp is, in certain conditions, an authentic historical document. I refer in particular to those on which the graphics, the model, the structure, etc. directly reflect the event itself since, as an authentic document, it would have to reflect the event that determined its form and origin, not underlying, but intrinsically.

This is not from the point that the whole stamp is an historical document, but from the point at which a certain stamp, through its form and content, is the product of a certain specific historical event, or of some relevant political change. From the point at which History is not determined, but rather determines. From the point that it is the historical events that condition and are inscribed on the stamp and not the stamp that is inscribed on the historical event, reproducing it or making some marginal reference to it, which only conditions it in its external form. From the point, then, at which there is a context that explains and conditions the document.

This is the case of all the issues made during military occupations, changes of political or social regime, overprints or surcharges, local or otherwise, originating from various events.

These are authentic historical documents, in as much as they arose from a determining historical or political fact.

The overprint *REPÚBLICA* on stamps with the figure of Don Carlos is a clear mark that is only understood historically, or

rather, it is the product of History itself. The French stamps with the figure of Napoleon, with the inscription in the upper corner varying from REPUB. FRANC to EMPIRE FRANC, are the direct reflection of great events and the product of them.

All the stamps of the military occupation of a State by another, at times co-existing on the same document with the current stamps, are also a product of History in motion.

The overprints INDEPENDÊNCIA or other similar ones on the colonial stamps of Angola, Mozambique, etc., are perhaps the most recent products of an historical event, upon which, given its importance and chronological proximity, we will refrain from commenting. Such philatelic facts are not, however, rare or haphazard – with a little effort, it would be possible to compile a catalogue of these stamps, captioning them with the description of their historical origin.

We could therefore say, somewhat precisely, that the postage stamp, given its aim and the way in which it was introduced, that is to say, qualified as a somewhat private official document, was highly conditioned, in terms of the first issues, by the presuppositions of an historical and political nature. Even when these issues were late in relation to the very first postage stamp, such presuppositions are evident and strictly adhere to this, as we have seen.

Later, we will see and refer to a whole series of facts and events that were responsible for the substantial change in these principles, amongst which we include stamp collecting, with all its areas and explosive evolution, of which the great exhibitions of the 19th century, the reputation of the great millionaire and extravagant collectors, the importance of the great philatelic dealers, the vast market of fake stamps, etc. are the evident historical and sociological proof.

We have seen how these facts will inevitably lead to the alienation of the postage stamp as a document, an historical fact standardised with the issue of the first stamps commemorating an event, of which the Columbus series from the United States and the Portuguese series of Henry the Navigator and Saint Anthony are worthy representatives.

In fact, at the beginning of the century, the stamp was already considered a source of income, a work of art, potentially capable of satisfying the aesthetic taste of demanding collectors and a vehicle for transmitting ideologies; in other words, it was seen as a way of commemorating certain historical facts or events.

The stamp can no longer be the mere reflection of History, but rather its most direct reflector.

Yet it will still be in this sense that the stamp will justify the reason for its “historical being”, since as a reflector, it will be able to show the predisposition or vocation of the States or regimes, in the face of determining facts or figures, in perfect accordance with its specific connotation.

The series commemorating fascism or liberation from fascism, the series dedicated to figures like Lenin, Hitler, Churchill, etc., or the Europe, NATO, SEATO series, etc, are not indifferent as reflectors of a certain internal structure of the countries responsible for issuing them.

We will refer to their suitability, to their semiotic meaning, with which we will determine a second degree of historical meaning, perhaps that most sought after by today’s collectors and the main reason that contemporary thematic philately exists.

We will consider parasite issues, most of which have no other use or aim other than that of exploiting the dealer and the collector, according to the concept of the consumer society. Such stamps can be seen as beautiful collectable objects in terms of design, composition, colour and everything else, but they are no more than small images, with no meaning in relation to History. We obviously dismiss the basic collections, with a purely postal sense, in which the images are entirely random, in the sense that we consider that there will have to be some.

We have begun now to defend ourselves from this alienation, and the International Federation prohibition of some issues that are considered abusive will be a step in this direction. This restriction will leave these series with no reason for being, since if they have no postal use and do not serve the legitimate interests of the collector, they will remain what they really are: small coloured squares with no place on the philatelic pages within the desired criterion of authenticity.



Stamp of the USSR commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lenin (1979 – YT 3619).

Stamp of the GDR with Mao Tse-tung, from the commemorative series of German-Chinese friendship (1951 – YT 40)



Some of the stamps of the first three years of the Europa – CEPT issues (1956-1958), associated with the idea of forming cooperation among some European countries.

8.

We will now try to outline a small table of the criterion of historical suitability, according to the fundamentals that are clear, though succinct, in the pages of this first approach.

We are aware that such a table will have no great practical value, at the same time as it does not intend to propose any standards of classification in relation to the criteria in force today.

We merely aim to give a view that transcends the personal point of view, basing it rather on a scientific premise. This is a conclusion that may do little to help the passionate philatelist who sees his chosen hobby as a retreat from the contradictions and difficulties of an overwhelming daily life, something we consider to be one of the specific dimensions of the philatelic phenomenon.

Yet it may also be a useful instrument of work for everything that he aims for, a way to go a little deeper from his hobby into one of the most interesting events in the contemporary world.

This table will at least help us to respond to the short questionnaire that every philatelist must formulate in relation to each example in his collection:

- What stamp is this?
- Why was it made?
- What event or fact did it arise from?
- What makes it different from other stamps?
- What is the meaning of its graphic structure?
- What was the motivation behind its postal origin?

In a second phase of ideas, we must consider points of a methodological nature:

- Where can I include it?
- What place should it occupy in the general context of my collection?
- What commentaries or caption will it be possible to give it?

If we cannot give a correct response to each of these items, all we will have is a square of little value.

This little “game”, which can be taken as a test or a pedagogical “trick” is, as far as I am concerned, the noblest part of the philatelist’s activity itself and one of its great reasons for being.

All we need to do now is outline some commentaries on “postal history”, within the same criterion of necessary suitability to the historical importance of the items to consider.

To do this, let us establish the following table, ordered by class, in which some issues are identified through a description of their graphics.

In the first group, let us establish the stamps with a clear suitability to historical facts or political incidents. In the second group, we will indicate those that have no suitability.

Classifying table according to a criterion of documental importance

In a 3rd group, I would put the thematic issues with no reference or suitability.

Group I – 1st degree suitability

CLASS	DESCRIPTION OF ISSUES	GRAPHICS
A	First issues (historical) – 1840-1890	Arms and coats-of-arms. Mythological and/or abstract figures.
B	Caption changes due to historical or political facts	Kingdom. Republic. Empire, etc. Changes of regime on a stamp of the same type.
C	Overprints indicative of change of regime. Military occupations.	Indicative overprint. Declarations. Inscriptions or texts printed on the stamp.
D	Indication: Colony/Protectorate or territory under mandate. Private company	Clear indication of the facts in the form of an overprint.
E	Indication of freedom or independence. Change of nationality.	Allusive overprints. Patriotic inscriptions or texts. Suitable symbols and graphics.
F	Provisional issues by military occupation. Strike. Suppression of franking.	Overprints or stamps with clear indication of the fact.
G	Changes in the value of currency for historical or political motives, valuation or devaluation of the current currency.	Indicative overprints or suitable surcharges.

Group II – not conditioned. 2nd degree suitability

CLASS	DESCRIPTION OF ISSUES	GRAPHICS
A	Commemorative issues for the occurrence of facts.	Allegoric motives. Suitable inscriptions or clear overprints.
B	Commemoration of past facts; jubilee stamps.	Dates. Thousandths clearly suited to the fact.
C	Representative of historical facts or personalities.	Suitability to the motive in a direct way. Image or photo of personalities.

Speculative issues. False commemoratives as a mere pretext for issues, excessive in terms of postal needs.

Issues banned by the IPF.

9.

One of the specialities of collecting, which to some extent preserves in itself the desired degree of history is undoubtedly the branch of “postal History”, which consists, as we know, of collecting and studying letters and their respective marks. We do not claim in any way to give precise definitions, so that, in this chapter, we do not leave out letters that pre-date the innovation of the adhesive stamp (or removable stamp), whose possible marks are the main object, though perhaps for reasons of a technical nature they have been sorted into a private area, controversially known as “pre-philately”.

Postal History therefore fundamentally involves letters and postal objects showing marks that justify their inclusion, or help to understand it in a given context.

It is a chapter of collecting that demands careful study and great historical knowledge and can be considered the most fruitful part of philately, in that we uphold a real auxiliary “science” for History, with all its implications.

As far as I am concerned, it is essential to include pieces of this type in any classic collection, in as much as they document a certain historical situation, limiting a period, giving the collection in question all the historical rigour required of it.

These postal documents are not rare, but are the product of extraordinary historical facts, allowing the normal or abnormal circuits of communication to be established. They are proof of the accidents that happened, within the best criterion of documentation, upon which History lays the foundations for its complex construction.

Understanding these facts has contributed towards making these documents rare and it is not by chance that the stamps on letters are an asset that can be worth many times more than their referential value in the catalogue.

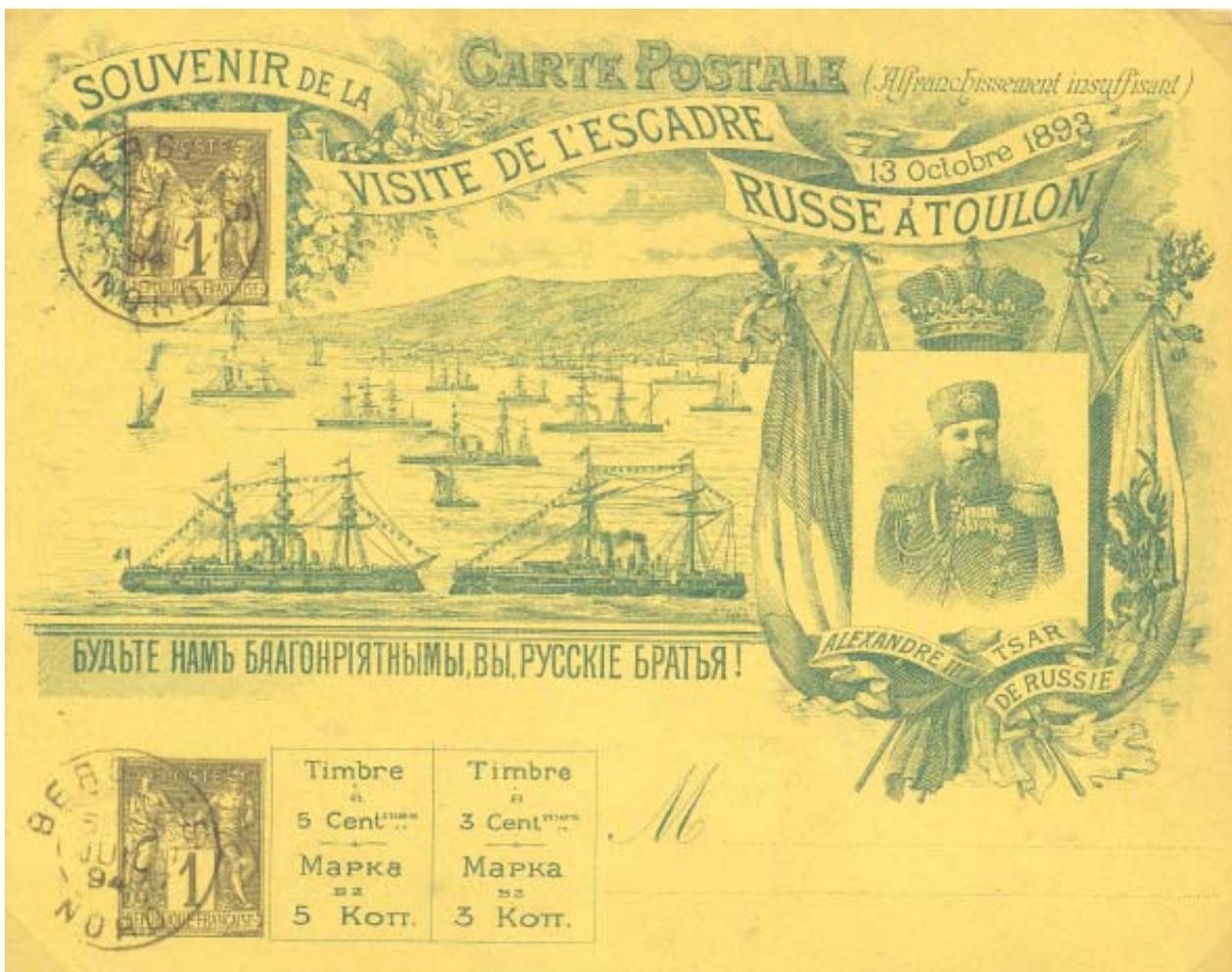
This criterion may perhaps be wrong, since it is not the stamp that is valued for itself, but we must admit that it may be a practical way of attributing value to the postal document, which in no way invalidates what we have been defending.

The truth is that the postal document in question is part of the stamp-postmark binomial and the value is attributed to the conjugation of these two elements.

In 1893, in one of his habitual “causeries”, Maury admits that he is amazed by the extraordinary number of customers and friends that ask him questions, not only about stamps, but also about the postmarks that may have been put on them and, moreover, on the marks themselves that can be seen on the correspondence, which certain circumstances have kept intact.

Maury foresaw that a new branch of philatelic collecting would stem from this and he was one of the first to advise collectors to preserve these pieces as much as possible, which the passion exacerbated by the stamp had often made worthless.

The archives would have remained, which constituted a



Example of a complete postcard. 1893 edition. Commemoration of the Russian squadron's visit to Toulon on 23 October 1893. Representation of two 1c stamps. Yellow card.

relatively limited stock of whole letters, until the time when the introduction of the envelope allowed the text to be separated, making the former irreparably worthless.

On the other hand, postcards were much more favourable for the collection of complete pieces. These were introduced in Austria on October 1 1896 by Dr. Herman and then spread to the entire world. The same was true of the letter cards, with or without reply, issued in France on June 15 1886, on which the stamp was normally printed, constituting an inseparable whole, hence the name “postal wholes”.

All the catalogues of the era refer to these pieces, on the same level as the stamps, giving them the same treatment and importance.

The inevitable collecting of picture postcards, an innovation for which Bernardeau was responsible, issuing the first in 1870, belongs on another scale, which can only very remotely be linked to philately. The truth is, though, that some old albums gave them a place beside the wholes and the envelopes, which conditioned the collecting of complete letters.

Interest in the marks became obvious through two events in the history of France, which highlighted the extraordinary importance of written communication and definitively consecrated the value of postal history and its documents.

I am referring to the siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 and later to the constitution of the Commune.

As we all know, in order to overcome the German siege of the city of Paris, and establish communications with the outside, a service of aerostats was created, carrying mail and all kinds of objects out of the city, passing over the besiegers' lines.

These objects, which bore from the simple *Par ballon monté*, to the special formulas, obviously became collectable objects of inestimable value, often, we believe, for not entirely philatelic reasons, but to which the collectors gave the greatest importance. (See development of this matter in a later chapter).

These objects, which document, together with the *carimbos*



These two paintings by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, the French painter who lived from 1824 to 1898, show respectively The Birds (1871) and The Balloon (1870), and refer to the means used to establish written communication at that time. The paintings can be found at the Orsay Museum in Paris.

de fortuna (occasional marks to substitute the official stamps, destroyed by the enemy) are living documents of the History of an ever-nervous Europe in search of stability.

The innovation of commemorative envelopes, immediately after the creation of special marks for the effect, contributed decisively towards the taste for collecting whole letters, authentic documents of Postal History.

Let us admit that they ran before they could walk, so to speak, and that the taste for the study of marks has since become more generalised, but there are no doubts that the detailed study of most of these authentic collection pieces is today one of the most exciting aspects of philately and undeniably a great contribution to the historic “science” in its more general context.

From the philatelic point of view, it is not rare for the complete piece to be considered, as one of the guarantees of the stamp’s authenticity and of its specific structure. Certain conditions also require that a particular stamp is found on the letter or, at least, on a large fragment. Such is the case of the stamps that were cut to be worth half their value, a fact that occurred in many countries as a way of suppressing the lack of postal vignettes; such is the case of the irregular perforations: Susse, Clamency, Avalon, in a row, serrated, etc.; such is also the case of certain overprints or cancellations that can only be seen partially on the small space of the postal vignette.

The stamp-letter agreement is, in fact, definitive proof of its authenticity as a document, which is one of the great reasons for keeping these philatelic items intact. They are rare today, not only because of their real value, but also as there is so much demand for them.

Without taking too much trouble to systemise this matter, below, as an example, we have shown a classification of marks on letters in which their historic and documental value is undeniable:

Military post	Fields, armies, battalions, campaigns. Military post.
War post	Censors. Letters from and to prisoners and the sick or injured from war.
Occupation and Liberation	Allusive marks. Occasional marks. Patriotic inscriptions. Symbols and emblems.
Maritime post	Lines. Liners. Identified boats. Quays. Maritime messageries. Maritime companies.
Air mail	Normal. Special flights. Routing.
Post suffering accidents	Zeppelins. Balloons, etc., Fire. Shipwreck. Lost.
Mail-vans	Lines or stations. Routing. Transfers. Termini.

We will add to these the marks of special postal services:

Origin and destination
 Rural - mobile post-boxes
 Mail-vans
 Internal post – official post
 Auxiliary income
 Poste restante

Indications made by the service:

Fined – overcharged
 Declared value
 Registered
 Returned
 After hours
 Fraudulent rate
 Wrongly forwarded
 Annulled
 Insufficient franking
 Postal refuse

In an almost marginal sphere in relation to this classification, we can place the items produced by the modern Administrations themselves. These are collected whole, since their sole objective is to satisfy the taste and demands of the collectors.

It is an ambiguous practice. Producing the items specifically so that they can be collected is eluding nature somewhat, as the philosopher would say.

World War I. CORFOU post. Back of an envelope "Semeuse Lignée". Corfou (France) – Aveiras de Cima (Portugal), 15 April 1917. Military censors. Military post control.



We have said as much about stamps, but now it is worse since these pieces only very marginally serve truly postal purposes.

We will come back to this subject.

10.

Rather marginally related to the postage stamp, in its connection with historical problems, as we have developed in these brief notes, we could not fail to mention the marks and processes used in the stamps' cancellation.

We do not refer here to the marks indicative of services in the area of postal technology, as we mentioned above, though not particularly systematically. We will concern ourselves only with the specific marks, created to put over the vignettes that frank postal objects, although different marks from these may often be put over them.

There are always cases due to lapses, service errors or negligence, which are generally unpremeditated. The collecting of these marks, *marcophilia* or *marcophilately*, (a matter we will deal with in good time), today holds a notable position, though we think that such marks, from the point at which we obviously refer to the so-called philatelic period, cannot be removed from the document that justifies this mark, in other words, from its essential physical support.

Let us discuss, however, and as a first aspect to consider, the cancellation marks, or rather those that arose as a result of the creation of the stamp itself, and are thus intrinsically linked to its beginning.

The postal issuing authorities understood that the greatest problem with the use of an adhesive stamp on correspondence as an indication that its carriage has really been paid by the sender, would be its possible reuse in a fraudulent manner.

These authorities had evidently still not obtained enough practice and experience, which comes from applying the method, but they felt, not without reason, that this reuse would be possible and they would have to combat it immediately.

Many ideas arose that would discourage this possibility in a drastic way and philately, like collecting, would have followed a very different path if some of these measures had been adopted.

All of these solutions were so drastic that they considered the best way to prevent this would be the total or partial cancellation of the vignette after its normal use.

One of these proposals referred to a complex system of

manufacture and printing of the stamps on extraordinarily thin and not very resistant paper, which post employees would destroy by simply rubbing the correspondence.

Maury says he saw one of these proofs, made from wafer-thin paper, which was extremely fragile and made its use highly problematic.

Another proposal consisted of a complicated process of introducing a small and very thin thread of silk into the middle of the stamp, which the employee would pull, thereby destroying the stamp by tearing it. This process was used in Afghanistan and some rare examples remain. If either of these systems had been adopted, it would have represented, as we can imagine, the death of philately.

Another system consisted of gumming the stamps just on a small margin at the top and at the bottom so as to leave the central body free to be torn easily. This would have reduced philately to a mere collection of small pieces of paper with no meaning.

The inventor Pichot de Poitiers, a chemist of reasonable merit, proposed another process as catastrophic as the others, which consisted of printing the stamps on paper that had been chemically prepared so that a small drop of acidified water would damage it irreversibly.

Yet the main obstacle that arose in using these methods was the time involved in handling them and we can easily appreciate this if we consider that in 1849 alone, the date the adhesive stamp was introduced in France, 158,268,000 different forms of correspondence were sent.

On the other hand, we will have to agree that a mail department is also not exactly a laboratory and the excessive zeal of the postal authorities was rejected through practice and the public's full acceptance of the new system, with so few exceptions that they did not justify any excess of zeal and such deep concerns. Philately was thus saved from its first scourge.

In this way, the simple "rubber-stamp type" mark was adopted, the day mark, as a way of cancelling postage stamps.

Suggestions were also made that these rubber-stamps should be able to cut or perforate, but the inconvenience that would result if the perforation or incision also touched the contents that the sender had entrusted to the postal Administration meant that this method was also considered

impractical.

The first marks of postal cancellation arose in this way, but, even so, they were very different from the normal stamps of the office and date used later on correspondence. These marks formed the beautiful series of classic cancellations that invalidated the franking of the first, so-called historic, issues and constitute one of the most amazing aspects of philately, from the point of view of the collector.

The word *obliteration* itself, used by the Latin languages, *cancellation* by the Anglo-Saxons, implies the sole reason for these marks: to invalidate, making the models on the correspondence unusable for their immediate purpose. To obliterate, to obstruct, to interrupt a circuit or the circulation, from the Latin *obliterare*, which gave rise to the “mute” marks, the grids, the diamond shapes with bigger or smaller points, the wavy lines, etc., whose purpose would still clearly be to mark the stamps, resisting, as far as possible, any reuse through washing, discolouration or any other process.

Many forms appear such as the Maltese cross, cartwheels, artistic flowers, bars, stars, geometric figures, abstract fantasies, etc., whose systematic study is made and every collector has to learn.

Only at a later stage would these cancellation marks receive numbers, letters or other codified identifications, indicating the expediting office, the date and possibly the symbols related to the type of postage service provided.

There are pointed lozenges or bars with the number corresponding to the code of the Postal Department, as can be seen on the raised Portuguese stamps, the French pointed lozenges, the English bars with similar indications, the anchors for the French maritime post, the combination of numbers and letters on the mail-vans, etc., whose interesting study is one of the most beautiful activities of stamp collecting.

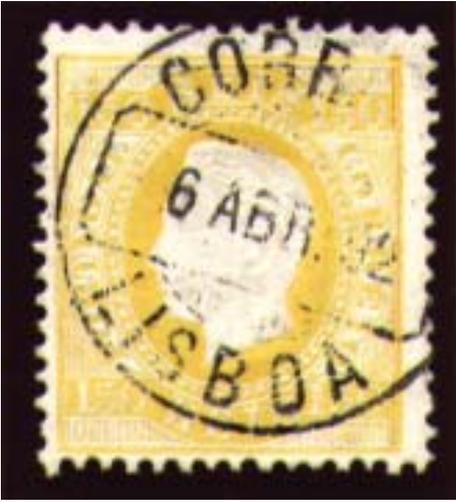
The simplification of the administrative processes, the growing and progressive increase in correspondence determined that the “date marker” was also used as a cancellation mark, with no other artifice.

At the beginning of the century, almost every country had adopted this procedure, which mechanical invalidation itself would respect, regardless of the specific graphic composition of its casts.

Not only was the historic course of philately unaltered by



Numerical cancellations from the British Isles in 1844. Source: *The Guinness Book of Stamps. Facts and Feats*



Example of cancellation of a Portuguese stamp with the date and place. Source: Carlos Kullberg's Album of Portugal, in the press.

violent total or partial invalidation of the figures, but it was actually enriched by the application of cancellation marks, a real chapter in philatelic study and one of its most enthralling aspects.

Perhaps the historic nature of these marks has determined the appearance in the contemporary world of marks forged by the Administrations to commemorate certain facts and events. The alienation that had reached stamps now went into the area of its cancellation marks. The historic cycle of philately is thus closed, by the clear separation of the classic era from the modern era, with all its implications and consequences.

Yet the historic nature of the cancellation marks of the first issues will remain in all its coherence an unrivalled document of the History of the technologies that Man has created in the field of his social life.

In part II we will deal with the issues of modern philately and its implications.

A look at Modern Philately

Collections and collectors – Notes on the problems of collecting – The graphic image (icon) and graphics in philately – Notes on thematic collections

1.

So far, we have only mentioned the problems related to thematic collecting very briefly. Our main concern has been to focus only on the historical aspects in which philately developed, searching for another way to explain its position as a social phenomenon in the permanent shifts in the History of Man.

Putting these concerns aside, we can now analyse the complex matter that has attracted so many fans: thematic collecting.

Let us first try to understand the motivation behind the collecting of postal elements according to the conventional criteria of a proposed theme, at the same time as looking at what its foundations are and what kind of problems it resolves (or not).

In the first place, and still within the field of History, we can say that this possibility arose with the appearance of the postal vignette, which besides the essential references to, or indications of, its function (name of the issuing country, value, possible indication of its specific purpose), has a for-

mal structure with figures, events, ideologies, diverse symbols in the form of graphic representations, which can be infinitely varied. We know that these first models were motivated by historical events. However, after the first example, which is generally considered to be the famous stamp of Peru issued to mark the inauguration of the Callao railway, but particularly the Columbus series of the United States or the Portuguese series of King Henry, the inclusion of pictures and images soon became common practice in all the issuing Administrations.

In a second phase, these figures detached themselves from any factual motivation and became concerned just with the graphic or symbolic image of the vignette, according to independent criteria, with little or nothing to do with any underlying reality.

Around 50 years after the creation of the first postage stamp, the available stock of figures was such that it was possible to catalogue them by types within each theme, giving them many different uses.

If this volume and this diversity are not determinants of thematic collecting, as a solution for the activity of the stamp collector, they are, at least, its most important elements.

From a different point of view, but converging to some extent on the phenomenon of increasing, and often disorganised, production of postal documents, it becomes impossible to collect them all.

All the classic collections shown today at exhibitions are confined to a single country, geographic region or certain linguistic zone but make up for this limitation with a varied level of detailed specialisation.

Any supposedly Universal collection would always be a disaster, since no modern collector could have a reasonable amount of pieces within the criterion of universality, or would not have enough space to house such a collection, if this were practical.

By limiting space and physical availability, the thematic collection conciliates the ambiguity created by the criterion of universality with the amount of space in which it must be housed.

It is essentially a complacent formula for collecting the whole postal Universe, within a criterion accepted by convention.

The third point I want to refer to comes implicitly from collecting itself. It concerns the praxis, the intimate motivation

of the collector, free of all circumstance and pressure. Philatelic motivation (the stamp continues to be its fundamental element) now moves somewhat into the field of alienation, to be centred on the theme, on itself, taken as its fundamental objective.

The stamp is no longer a private postal document, which is collected for its historic-documental purpose, but it is the accessory or elementary piece of a theme that is chosen, following the extrinsic criteria in terms of the reality that motivated it.

These criteria of choice stem from reasons that come from the deep area of the subconscious and a systematic study of them has yet to be made.

One of the main reasons is profession: a teacher or writer may collect famous men or universal writers; a doctor collects famous doctors, or themes related to his speciality; a soldier collects weapons, uniforms or battles, a sailor collects boats, etc., the list goes on indefinitely and I would really like to give some examples of these collections that have illustrated the panels of the great exhibitions.

Secondly, we have the collections, especially those of young people, adhering to the school classification of the kingdoms of Nature.

Then come the themes related to individual aesthetic tastes, from painting by eras or by schools or countries, to musicians, architecture, sculpture, etc. subdivided or otherwise by methodological criteria, or even the "nudes", we believe for equally aesthetic reasons.

A more elaborate level of motivations consists of the complex themes, the great metaphysical or simply historical-philosophical relationships, and here we will find the sophisticated collections of mythology as a precursor of the conquest of space, of vulcanology, of the flower related to different stages of life, or even, collections justifiably devoted to great historical events, including national Histories, respecting as far as possible the documentary nature of the pieces presented. Here, I recall one of the most complete collections exhibited in philatelic events, on the theme of the Second World War, belonging to a Spanish collector (gold medal).

All we intend to do here is outline a problem that involves a great degree of specialisation and quite detailed study. However, we could not fail to mention it as perhaps the

deepest justification for thematic collecting, conciliating in a clearly effective and attainable way, the taste for collecting postal objects (area of philately), with the taste for elements that are aesthetic, scientific or naturalistic (the field of science, technology, philosophy, history, in other words, of human knowledge with all its implications).

This aspect, which is fundamentally pedagogical, contributed towards launching philately as an out-of-school activity, when it is not part of the curriculum, as it is in some countries, somewhat successfully.

Here, philately is a propaedeutic instrument of inestimable value and this does no harm to philately itself. The use that Man makes of his technologies is always praiseworthy whenever this use leads to social improvement and elevation of the human being within his own real values.

But it would be very interesting if, together with this, let us say, marginal activity, reference were always made to its foundations, its real meaning, its historical origin, as a way of crossing the barrier that is often found, for example, between the bibliomaniac who esteems the book as an object in itself, and the real bibliophile, who loves and esteems the book for its contextual powers, as the most complete paradigm of cultural activity in the heart of societies in their historical career.

Apart from the evolving technical aspects, documental philately, linked to its historical appearance, would suffice in itself to justify the often frantic activity of its thematic collecting. However, it runs the risk of being considered an undoubtedly praiseworthy activity, but always from a scholarly, didactic, functional point of view.

The great thematic exhibitions would perhaps lose a little of their philatelic essence, as we would have to consider them through their themes or through the quality of their illustrations. We will return to reflect upon this matter from a different angle.

With this in mind, we will insert an appendix at this point in which we focus on the iconic parameters that the themes would follow on principle.

Faced with the conditions imposed by the qualitative evolution of the structures that regulate our activity, we have already seen how the thematic collection stopped being organised by reference to a purely philatelic principle and became organised by preferential reference to a local-for-



mal criterion.

The postal object becomes in this way an *iconic* object and, it is in this precise sense that we now see it.

Iconic in the modern sense of the term, as an image that represents or reproduces the outlines of a figure, or focuses on the reflexes of an idea on the spirit, in other words, the sensitive-emotional relationship that a given image can produce.

It is a different way of seeing, in as much as that picture image (sign/signal) dominates all the other aspects, which have now become secondary by definition, without losing the notion of its essentialness.

The support, in this case specific, will always have to be the stamp or full document (a postal document in the latent sense), or we risk leaving the field of philately altogether.

We thus take, as a reference point, the motive (sign/signal + sign/symbol) defining semiotically a given historical period, a personality, an ideology, a group of influence, etc., always through the postal significance (physical body of the support, stamp or other postal object) considered using a necessarily philatelic criterion.

It was thus possible to resolve the ambiguity that is always found when two concepts that may not exclude each other immediately always diverge on some essential points.

The efforts made by the IPF are otherwise symptomatic (guidelines for the thematic area) in the sense of conciliating these two concepts, establishing 45 points for *plan*, *ampli-*



Party congresses. Czechoslovakia. Congress of the KSC. Bulgaria, congress of the BKP. From the German Democratic Republic.

tude and development of the theme (iconic elements) and 45 points for *knowledge, state and rarity of the pieces*, (philatelic elements), the latter probably inherited from classic appreciation.

In terms of points, the two concepts are therefore tied: there is reference to the complex field of high philatelic competition, but the motive, in other words, the iconic essence of the document, will always be privileged.

In a systematic way, we can establish the forms used by the graphics with a semiotic criterion:

I – Real iconics

Photograph, portrait

Engraves medals

Images

Statues, busts, etc.

II – Contextual iconics

Onomographics

Monuments, related places

Ephemeris (thousandths)

Reproduction (facsimile) of works/texts.

From the careful combination of these elements will come a thematic collection, in the broad sense of the term, and thus, given the iconographic research work that it represents, it will always constitute an excellent reference for future generations, in as much as it can graphically document a given historical period, with all its troubles, traumas and moments of glory.

2.

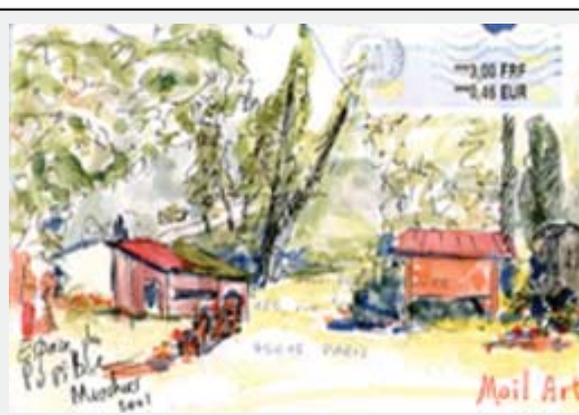
Not entirely unrelated to the didactic aspect we mentioned is the problem of **creativity**.

“Creativity”, a concept very much in use today in many sectors of human activity, is defined as the capacity to create new things. In practice, it includes a set of methods or procedures whose objective consists of the development of man’s inventive capacities, and functions, up to a certain point, as compensation for the heavy standardisation imposed by the pace of contemporary civilisation, totally geared towards productivity.

It is a form of release from the imperatives imposed by the kind of life that Man has created and in which hobbies, or space for leisure activities, have become very important.

Philately, as a vocational trend for a way of collecting with great tradition and strong antecedents, was thus considered one of the techniques to use within the great area of “creativity”, and it was destined for great things.

Philately, which may be an extraordinarily expensive and sophisticated activity, was seen, at the same time as a relatively accessible activity from an economic point of view.



The understanding of precisely what “postal art” is varies considerably. There are two extreme interpretations. For some, it is the use of the aesthetic in correspondence as an instrument for conveying a message. For others, it is producing works of art using materials used in correspondence, namely stamps. In some texts, a totally different meaning is found: art that is at the basis of stamp production.

1. Floral composition with stamps, by Robert Mauquest. 52000 stamps were used. On exhibition at the Postal Museum in Paris. Source: http://www.laposte.fr/musee/english/collperm/mu_collperm_f13.htm

2. Stamp collage on card. Same source.

3. Odilon DULAC, “L’entrée de l’Espace du Possible”, 16 x 23 cm, Aquarelle sur enveloppe – 2001. Source: <http://membres.lycos.fr/postalart/>

There are schools in several countries that organise the exchange of thousands of postage stamps as a way of fuelling this activity and acquiring the essential material for this kind of “creativity”. Certain international organisations practise this form of exchange and, as philatelists, let us be happy that this is true.

Sociologists even consider this exchange and the complicated network of related activities to be a highly creative form in itself.

For us, however, the fundamental problem lies in how the philatelic material acquired is put to use.

Evidently, we are not going to go back to Maury’s idea of 1876, which was to hold a contest for creating panels made entirely of stamps, placed on pictures, following artistically designed geometric layouts. These layouts were later published in his magazine, and the winning picture, “extraordinarily beautiful”, as Maury said, had used the magnificent sum of 12,000 stamps. All of us have seen “creativities” of the type expressed in jars, ashtrays, boxes, trays, files and goodness knows what other decorative material, formed by or using postage stamps, in which the tones and the pictures are sometimes combined into real masterpieces.

Just a minute! These “specimens” in no way reflect philatelic activity. What we have here is no more than the accessory application of a material, outside or beyond its real context.

We will not discuss its creative value. We only raise doubts as to its philatelic value.

Let us leave this point, since we did not want it to be controversial, and move to the central issue again. We are talking about the collection, and in this case, about the thematic collection in which the exercise of creativity is or can be applied.

The international authorities that pontificate on this matter consider it in this sense, and all we philatelists know from experience that one of the great chances to score points comes from the originality of the theme, development of the theme, presentation of the theme, therefore always awarded for creativity. In the same way the suitability of the stamp to the proposed theme is classified, by not always explicit criteria, but we will return to this matter a little further on.

The thematic collection is thus a real centre of “creativity” and is perhaps the only criterion for achieving the essential

unity of the whole work.

How can we conciliate the essential homogeneity of a collection with the volume and the “Babylonia” of postal issues in use around the world today?

Collecting by themes seems to be, if we consider it, the only possible path for mass philately and the great force of contemporary stamp-collecting, despite all the great objections that we ourselves have echoed.

The problem of unity is then the central problem of thematic collections. It is at least the problem that “thematics” resolves in the most efficient way, as the only alternative to “classic” collecting, in which the unity results from imperatives of an historical nature, as we have seen.

“Unity” is therefore defined as the perfect suitability of each element to the criterion of the “set taken as a whole”, to which these elements “belong” and it obliges us to take this set of different pieces as a single work, with no solution for continuity.

This unity, the “thematic unity”, is perhaps the most obviously valid element of modern collecting and would be enough to justify it in itself.

Now to the analysis of “suitability”. This is the criterion used as a unifying standard for items that are all different in relation to the central nucleus, and how individually they can interconnect to become a coherent whole.

Mathematically, the “theme” functions as a “group as a whole”, and the internal coherence of the collection is obtained through the integration in this “group” of all the elements that “belong” to it, or rather in a way that all the elements “belong” to it effectively.

We must now characterise the “whole” of the group in question, in other words, the identification of the theme to be dealt with. It is not easy to elucidate on this central problem.

From the analysis of the possible themes and, more objectively, in the presence of concrete examples obtained from catalogues of the most recent exhibitions, we can immediately reflect on two different types of criteria, each with its own articulation.

The “fixed” themes, of the descriptive catalogue type, are often opposed by the ideological themes, which are based on the development of a central idea whose characterisation

is not always explicit. In the first case, we have the generic themes: zoology, sports, vehicles, famous people, typology of the kingdoms of nature, in other words, all generically static themes. Here, it is easy to characterise the elements that “belong” to the “group”. These collections acquire the value of an illustrated catalogue in which the pieces to be included must only have suitable graphics for the “group proposed as a whole”.

These could include the creation of the World, the evolution of a branch, or defined area, of knowledge, the description of an industrial or other process, involving distinct phases, at times with a certain complexity. There are also the characteristically historic or social motives, wars, conflicts, eras taken in their diachronic sense, with their events generally interconnected for reasons close to cause, etc.

Here the creative power and the philatelic research surpass the problem of suitability and often constitute truly meritorious work.

We call the first type “logical suitability” and it is immediately understood in relation to the “group”. The second we will call “conceptual suitability” since apart from its immediately understood logical suitability, there is the whole problem of identification with the clear dynamic concept, of which the (postal) piece considered is only the immediate material form. For the judges, these criteria are only very possibly taken into consideration.

As a general rule, the judges are philatelists and it is as philatelists that they judge the collections exhibited.

It is essentially philately we wish to talk about, so that philatelic criteria will always have to superimpose any others. These problems only rarely arise, however. During a debate, a collector asked if he could include in his collection a document (text) that referred to a certain theme. It is clear that here the “documental nature” of the collection was superimposed on the mathematical concept of “philatelic group”. This document was not postal material, it could not be considered as a philatelic element, it would certainly be outside the “group”, though from the point of view of the “conceptual suitability” it could definitely be included.

Another participant asked if he could include in his collection a letter from the pre-adhesive period, which had as a mark the name of a city, which fit in the context of the theme that he wanted to develop.

Well, the letter is an indisputable postal element and thus, the piece would undoubtedly meet “philatelic suitability”. But should an element like this be included in a collection that lives on the graphic/symbolic factor, or in which this element is at least fundamental? Here “historic contextual suitability” comes into conflict with “logical suitability” and we would not know how to respond.

Other examples would show us that there is little agreement on the solutions to provide for the problem raised by thematic collecting, and we are a long way from finding an effective systemisation of this theme.

Exhibiting a thematic collection at a philatelic event is still an experience of calculated risk, given the innumerable doubts raised by the discrepancy between the collector’s criteria and that of the judges, for whose consideration such criteria are exhibited.

Perhaps with a view to overcoming the divergences I have mentioned, a new strategy has arisen for thematic collectors to follow. In fact, in some of the most recent world exhibitions, the inclusion of various documents has been accepted, even outside the area considered philatelic, as long as they were, obviously, suited to the proposed theme. In terms of depth and scientific objectivity, much is gained, but to the detriment of the philatelic aspects.

Now everything is changing. This new situation will require more careful consideration, but for my part, I think that the great and glorious cycle of the thematic collections as we know them will have gone forever.

3.

The obvious divergences in philatelic themes seem to be greater at the level of “contextual suitability”. In fact, the ambiguities raised in many other aspects of thematic collecting are still enormous, and we will discuss these.

As “contextual suitability” we consider the implicit relationship of causality with the issue of a stamp or postal series and the express motive that led to its production on the part of the issuing entity.

We obviously refer to the commemorative issues or the jubilee of events and personalities that mark the record of an event in a postal way.

The degree of historic suitability of such stamps is relatively important, as we have said in the previous pages.

Now, however, the suitability we refer to also involves the idea of the “group” and not only the production of the historical or political event on which it is based. As a general rule, the graphics of such models make direct reference to the reason that inspired them, but this is not always the case. The artist’s freedom of design often leads him to extrapolate the matter to the aesthetic field of symbology, creating graphics that are difficult to interpret or that could be included



Some stamps from the Europa-CEPT during the period in which the image was similar for all the countries involved in these joint editions. These come from the years 1964 to 1967, 1972 and 1973. This was the last year of a common image (though there were one or two later years in a similar vein). After this time, the theme was the common link.

in “groups” that are different from their central purpose. Let us take as an example those that pay homage to saints and heroes, whose graphics are based on burning bushes, diaphanous clouds, eagles, doves or simply angels, as the jubilees of events are conveyed by the reproduction of paintings or works of art copied from the artistic or cultural heritage of the country in question.

The last EUROPA stamps are clear and objective examples of the latter.

Yet the collector is rarely concerned with this kind of suitability in the research that he does into the graphics he needs, within the “reasoning” of his “group”.

In the meantime, let us analyse some of the present problems of thematic collecting, in terms of the aspect of suitability.

In the first place, we have the matter of whether to include (or not) a whole series whose motive is repeated (varying only in colour, or in value, sometimes only in the latter). Logically, the case is considered as the interception of the “group” $\{x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n\} \cup (x)$ in which (x) is the graphics and its inclusion does nothing for the reasoning of the “group”. In fact, if the stamp is considered only as an illustrative figure of an idea or concept of ordering, why illustrate the same idea with x number of identical prints? However, from the point of view of the stamp collector, would it be right to belittle “extension” in favour of “reasoning”? This conflict can only be overcome by the conventionalism of the solution to adopt and we will not be the ones to propose such a solution.

The case gets even more complicated when the same series has graphic elements of diverse “reasoning”, or graphic elements that could be divided into various criteria of “reasoning”. Could the series therefore be separated and divided into several themes according to the diversity of its graphics? Should the collector of mammals be obliged to ignore the fish in a zoological series?

The logical criteria and the philatelic criteria are in conflict once again, unless we allow logical criteria to prevail, because by definition it is logical to run the risk of falling into the contradiction of considering the stamp as a mere figurative element and this is, as far as we are concerned, the greatest attack there is on philately as we see it. Let us return now to “contextual suitability” as we outlined it at the beginning of these considerations, where the contradictions are even greater.

We wonder if it would be correct to include a EUROPA stamp in the theme of painting just because it has those graphics, removing it absolutely from its intrinsic motivation and forcing “contextual suitability” in detriment to the criterion “conceptual logic”. Can the stamp that glorifies the aviator Mermoz be included in the zoological theme because an eagle is the symbology chosen for this glorification? Can the stamps that commemorate the 10th anniversary of NATO or the 1st anniversary of the April 25th Revolution be included in a collection devoted to birds because their graphics include a dove? And can the stamp on the congress on rheumatology figure among the ophidians of a specialised collection just because it portrays a snake?

With each step we come across violations and similar absurdities, crass errors of interpretation, unawareness or indifference to the true motives of human activity. This is why we said, and say again, that as thematic collecting turns away from these essential problems, it may well be one of the most creative, didactic and occupational activities, but it must recreate concepts and establish correct methodological bases in order to merit the essential seal of a real philatelic collection. In other words, it must act in such a way that the philatelic criteria are integrally preserved and respected.

In a field that is somewhat marginal in relation to the problem of “suitabilities” are the observations of an internal nature in relation to the collection itself. These are problems concerning presentation, organisation and structure, from which we will choose the point concerning the captioning of the exhibited items.

Should we write a lot, a little, or what?

This is a matter that directly involves the “legibility” of the exhibited material and its coherence. This coherence is often sought through the captioning itself, which may be somewhat discursive, beyond the philatelic material, and its consequent topographic ordering.

The theorists recommend writing as little as possible, or only what is essential. It is obvious that what the “spectator” expects of a philatelic exhibition is postal material, particularly if the “spectator” is a beginner, but he also expects to be offered internal coherence, in other words, a certain “unity”. If this is easily possible in a “catalogue” collection in which “specimens” are exhibited and where the “unity” is the unity obtained by the repeated presence of the graphics in relation to the theme, then in the “thesis” collection, in which the

reasoning is dynamic and lives more through the concepts than from its graphic representation, language is absolutely essential.

It depends on the subtlety and skill of the exhibitor to make the captioning sufficiently synthetic, but clear enough for a correct understanding of the material on display. Considering another aspect, and to finish off, we will look at the collections of “subject”, where respect for “contextual suitability” and for the philatelic criterion can and must be paid with precision and where most of the conflicts are of a gentle nature.

As far as we are concerned, there are certain collections that can best conciliate between the conflicts set off by the opposition of the criteria between thematic collecting and the specific aspects of stamp-collecting itself. These include series devoted to the perpetuation of a figure or event of universal projection; treaties and agreements; political or economic blocks; ideologies universalised by theory and by praxis; religious, sporting and military events; the joint actions of countries or groups of countries; associations of various natures, in favour of common objectives; defence of architectonic or cultural heritage; protection of resources; preservation of the environment, ecological groups, etc.; celebration of inventions or inventors; technological discoveries with social value, the telephone, television, computers, etc.

These are at least the kind of collection that are more effective at historically reflecting the predisposition of States and societies to the aspects of their life, their evolution, the connotation of their greatest concerns, and are therefore the collections that best serve the historical and political documentation of their time.

Unfortunately, there are always few of these collections compared to the more popular complex themes, perhaps because of their originality or the opportunity they offer to demonstrate a concept of scholarship and culture, not always taken in the best sense and almost always sacrificing the true factors that made stamp-collecting one of the consequential creative activities of contemporary Man.

Looking at the internal issues of the collection itself, we should briefly mention the details of structure, the topography of the material to be exhibited, the number of items to place on each sheet, the number of sheets per subject, the division of the theme into chapters or sections, etc.

For a question of methodological probity, we will avoid giving

opinions on matters that result from the field of pure conventions. From the start, we have sought to support ourselves by being as rational as possible and we will not stray from that now. These issues are involved with the “legibility” that we can demand from all human achievement, from the exhibitor’s aesthetic concepts, from the way in which he resolves for himself the problems with which he is faced.

In fact, any philatelic guide will approach these issues in the form of advice and we have seen some in which these objectives are clearly developed.

We cannot say as much about the problem that consists of selecting the material to exhibit, not exactly its rational suitability in the terms we have already discussed, but particularly in terms of the specimens to use besides the stamps. As we all know, the philatelic collector today has the discriminatory power to use an “arsenal” of objects called “postal” by definition (above all by convention) and it is on this material that the exhibitor focuses his attention.

We do not know how to predict today the destiny of our collections over the next century. A century from now we will all have ceased to exist.

However, from our critical point of view, we still put our money on philately, linked to its presuppositions of an historical nature, as we have said throughout these carefree, yet not always dispassionate, pages.

Perhaps the Man of the future will consider these collections to be the mere remains of a past that he simply inherited, just as we inherited our grandparents’ old albums, together with the bead pictures or old ink prints that they made with all their charms. Let us honour, then, the PHILATELY that Man will know how to save and to receive, as authentic documents of History, through its relationship with the great events, dramas and glories of contemporary Man.

A Look at Other Pertinent Aspects

Post under pressure – Post at the limits - Brief linguistic inroads into Philately – Philatelic charity – The Post of the future

Post under pressure

We can say with certain propriety that the Post has always been connected to means of transport, of which it was necessarily a subsidiary. As philately is concerned with systemisation, it considers the different methods and distinguishes between normal post, maritime post, rail post, air-mail, etc, as possible forms for his collection. Nevertheless, we know how certain historic incidents can alter the conditions of the means of transport and channels of communication to such an extent that they make normal development impossible. This is particularly true in the case of wars, which introduce profound changes in terms of occupation, organisation and control of large geographic spaces, creating very specific conditions in terms of the transport and circulation of correspondence.

Let us pause here for a moment on the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871) which led to the long siege of Paris and left us with the best examples of the difficulties posed for the transport of communications, as well as the originality of the means used to overcome these. In fact, to support the besieged troops in the capital, as well as to maintain the morale of the Parisian people, it was necessary to organise, as early as possible, a service that would prove effective for the exchange of correspondence between besieged Paris and the free province.

After the fall of Metz and the capitulation of the Emperor Napoleon III in Sedan, where he placed around 86,000 men in the hands of the enemy, the 3rd German army force-



Ballon monté addressed to Monaco. Source: inside cover of the *Philatélie Magazine*, no. 9, November 2002, from Boule, Paris

marched towards the capital, which it besieged on the night of 18th to the 19th September 1870. A relevant role was played here by the Post Administration, headed by its former director *M. Rampon-Léchin*, while inspector *M. Steenackers* led its organisation in the unoccupied territories.

The first idea to break the siege proved disastrous. It consisted of sending out under cover of the night, the “*coureurs de la poste*”, which we will translate as running couriers, whose speedy recruitment took place at the end of August 1870. Their sacrifice, however, was as heroic as it was dramatically ineffective. Not only could they only carry a small amount of correspondence, but tragically, as far as we know, only one successfully made it through the German lines.

Another method was therefore sought to deal with the terrible conditions. The idea arose to use balloons, which had already been tried in Metz during the French army blockade. This process, known as “*les papillons de Metz*”, consisted of launching small balloons filled with hydrogen, Mongolfière type, carrying small blocks of sheets of very thin paper measuring 9x5 cm, containing the message on one side and on the other the following inscription: *Armée du Rhin – poste aérostatique*. However, for the needs of a population as large as that of Paris, such a measure, of rather dubious success, proved unsatisfactory.

It was thus that on September 23 1870 a balloon belonging to *M. Nadar*, with the aeronaut Durouf aboard, carried a consignment of letters and dispatches from Paris, and was able to make a controlled landing in Evreux. Spurred on by this experience, director Rampon took charge of organising a postal service suitable for the exceptional conditions. The great workshops devoted to the construction of balloons were thus created, at the Du Nord and Orléans railway stations, which had become inoperative with the suspension of the entire rail service. The history of the balloons is not entirely without incident, which is only natural considering the extraordinary risks that they undertook. Between September 23 1870 and January 28 1871, 65 lifts were recorded. Rampon himself made his initiative official, publishing a decree for the occasion:

Art. 1 – The Postal Administration is authorised to expedite by manned aerostats ordinary letters destined for France, Algeria and abroad.

Art. 2 – The weight of the letters expedited by the aerostats

must not exceed 4 grams. The franking charge for the transport of these letters remains at 20 centimes. Franking is obligatory.

The list of failures includes:

“*Le Galilée*”, Nov. 4, landed at Orléans on the exact day that the city was taken by the Prussians. The sailor *Husson* and the engineer *Vidal* were taken prisoner.

“*Le Daguerre*”, Nov. 12, landed in Ferrières and its crew were taken prisoner.

“*Le Jacquard*”, Nov. 28, manned by *Pierce*, was lost at sea with the crew and cargo.

“*La Ville de Paris*”, Dec. 15, landed in Nassau where its 3 aeronauts were taken prisoner. Only *Delamorre* managed to escape and return to Paris.

“*Le Richard Wallace*”, piloted by *Locage*, was lost at sea.

Obviously, technological development did not allow the aerostats an entirely safe and precise flight, and they were almost entirely dependent on meteorological conditions, which were not always favourable.

The “*L’Archimède*” balloon, with 220 kg of post, landed in Holland. The “*La Ville d’Orléans*” with 250 kg of post landed in Norway, etc. One of the greatest dangers facing the balloons was, in fact, Prussian fire, to such an extent that after November 18, balloons could only be launched at night and with no previous warning.

How much correspondence was transported by this singular means of transport? The records indicate the figures quite precisely. Let us take a few balloons as examples:

“*Le Neptune*”, Sept. 23, carried 103 kg.

“*L’Armand Barbès*”, led by *Trichet*, only carried 10 kg of correspondence. However, it carried *Gombetta* and *Spuller*, who left Paris to organise the army in the free province.

“*Le Washington*”, transported 300 kg, “*Le Victor Hugo*” 440 kg, and finally “*Le Garibaldi*”, which beat the record by carrying 550 kg of correspondence.

The success of this exceptional service can be seen in the warning made by the Postal Administration, indicating that the sealed letters, reserved to be transported by the aerostats, had to bear the clear message: “Par ballons montés”.

If all the letters gathered could not be expedited on the

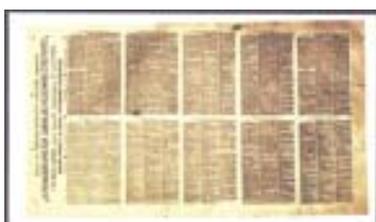
balloon leaving, preference was given to the lightest ones.

Another of the concerns raised by the service of manned balloons was the investment necessary to cover the expenses that such a service would necessarily imply. However, all things considered, we are forced to conclude that the Administration must have received considerable benefits.

Let us see: the cost of a balloon, already full and ready to be launched, was around 5 to 6,000 francs. However, considering the relation between weight (2 grams) and franking (20 centimes), (art. 2 of the Rampon decree), we can conclude that 100 kg of correspondence equalled 10,000 francs. It is easy to calculate the combined profits of this operation, knowing that, on average, each balloon carried between 200 and 500 kg of correspondence...

While this method resolved the problem of the correspondence leaving Paris, there still remained the no lesser problem of how to get messages from the outside into Paris. Using the same balloons was out of the question. The prevailing winds did not allow precise control of the balloons, which often drifted, at a time when technology still did not possess the instruments that would allow greater accuracy for calculated landings.

However, it was highly important to receive news from the outside, as well as personal letters between those that the war had separated.



Mail pigeons were therefore used, which were carried out in the manned balloons and brought back the messages by means of what came to be known as "**Pigeongrammes**". The first pigeons were transported by "*La Citta di Firenze*", piloted by *M. Mangin* and taken out of Paris on September 28, in other words, only one week after the siege began.



We will describe some of the technical details used to maximise the service performed by these magnificent fliers, which for good reason, are one of the symbols of the postal service. By coincidence, even before the siege, *M. Ségalas* had had the idea of installing a large pigeon coop in the General Administration Tower of the Post Office, in Grenelle Street, and a large number of pigeons were requested from around the city. The truth is that, whether calculated or not, when *M. Steenackers* arrived in Tours, where he installed his general barracks, his baggage contained several boxes with a large number of these beautiful birds. These were the pigeons that took the first messages to Paris, which were

Two examples of Pigeongrammes, auctioned by J. Robineau.

hand-written, in the smallest writing possible and, obviously, on the thinnest paper.

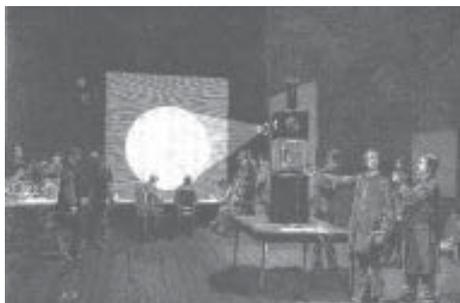
On their arrival in Paris, they were taken to the Governor, who, with the help of magnifying glasses, had them read and transcribed, then forwarded to the addressees. It is understandable that the messages did not always arrive in very good condition. They were often illegible, given that their fragile bases got crumpled or torn, or the writing was smudged by the rain, etc.

As a result of this, it was resolved that the processes of printing the messages should be more sophisticated so as to overcome these inconveniences.

A technological race began, in which several systems were proposed, especially based on the photographic work done by *Barreswil*. The organisation of this entire process was given to *M De Lafollye*, inspector of the telegraph lines, who was, apart from anything else, a distinguished amateur photographer.

In 1871, *De Lafollye* published a memoir from which we were able to glean all the information relating to this process.

To summarise, and without paying too much attention to the subtleties of a technical nature that were tested, let us focus on the photographic operations performed by *M. Blaise*, which basically consisted of reducing the size and weight of the supports at the same time as attempting to increase the quality of the information. The normal damp process, which was used predominantly, consisted of extending a colloid preparation on a glass plate, sensitising and developing it while the sensitised layer was still damp. Later, *Blaise* had the idea of printing the messages, which were now typed and allowed greater reduction and more precision, not only on the albuminous (shiny) side of the photographic paper, but also on the back, after being heavily pressed. Supports of 3 or 4 centimetres were thus obtained, which were perfectly legible with the help of a simple magnifying glass. Thus, between October 4 1870 and February 3 1871, thanks to the process of microphotography, thousands of succinct messages, reproduced on colloid films, entered Paris, where they were projected onto a screen, transcribed on special forms and forwarded to their addressees in the form of telegrams. We should also mention the attempts, which were exceptional for the period, to apply a system of micro-points of around 1 millimetre. It was therefore necessary to decode them with the help of a microscope, which proved highly



The reading of messages received using pigeons.

Source: Pascal BEHR et al. *Timbres de France. Le Spécialisé 1849-1900 (Vol.1)* Paris, Yvert et Tellier.

impractical. The Postal Museum in Paris has a small display of these trials, in positive proofs on film.

It was, however, the process of photographic reduction that was adopted. After being suitably treated, the films were rolled up and placed in the small cut tube of a feather, which was then attached with silk thread to the longest feathers of the pigeon's tail. The balloons from Paris always carried pigeons, very often the same ones. One of them was known as *Gambetta*, which apparently made four return journeys over enemy lines.

Many did not have the same fate and were either blown off course by meteorological conditions, particularly during the winter of 1870-1871, or they may have succumbed to the intense German fire. But that was not all. On November 27, general Trochu received a Belgian hawk, which, apparently, had devoured five pigeons. But it was a known fact that the Germans brought several birds of prey to the outskirts of Paris, and these did a great deal of damage. According to a report by *M. Blay*, 248 pigeons were released on 47 different occasions. *Blay* says that only 59 arrived as they should have done. Yet *M. De Lafolnye* states that from November 10 to December 11, the sheets micro-photographed by *M. Mamme* and *Blaise* numbered 64 and contained around 9,800 messages of about 16 words each. In the precious notes left by Maury, who lived through these events, he says:

"I believe I can safely say that most of the messages brought by pigeons arrived quickly in Paris, where they caused an indescribable sensation".

The "**Pigeongrammes**" service was made official by Steenackers, who, on November 4 in a decree published in Tours said:

Art. 1 – Anyone resident in the territory of the Republic can correspond with Paris using the pigeons of the Post Office Administration, at the rate of 50 centimes a word, to be agreed according to the determined limits.

Art. 2 – The telegrams for the special transmission will be received at the telegraph office and transmitted when the demands of the service so permit.

Art. 3 – The State assumes no responsibility for this special service. Under no circumstances will payment be reimbursed.

We end these notes with reference to another process used to get messages into Paris from the outside. This was known

as the “**Boules de Moulins**”, which consisted of launching small, cylindrical, floatable boxes upriver on the Seine, outside the German occupied territory, but as close as possible to the city. Correspondence weighing a maximum of 4 grams was placed within the boxes, upon which were written the words: “*Paris Par Moulins*”

This process of entering Paris soon proved impractical due to the rigours of the winter of 1870-1871.

We will consider the importance of these events for stamp-collecting elsewhere, now that we have seen their importance in historical terms.



Boule de Moulins
Exhibited at the Postal Museum in Paris
Source: http://www.laposte.fr/musee/collperm/mu_collperm_f5.htm

Post at the Limits

1. It is during long periods of war, when the phenomenon of disorganisation subverts all principles and divides every institution in the heart of a community, that the post is most definitely operated at the limits. There are innumerable historical examples of this fact. At these crucial times, postal circulation, or, from our particular point of view, philately, aimed, as we admit, at the documental collection of the incidents that occurred during this period, is forced to operate at the limits. In order to illustrate this theme, I will take the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71, as well as the period of the Paris Commune, with its disturbing consequences.

It is these precise moments that philately is enriched, accompanying the historic events that it illustrates and in which, to some extent, it plays a central role.

Let us consider the fact, which may not have been confirmed, that wars are responsible for the sometimes chaotic increase in the volume of correspondence, or at least, and of this I have no doubts, of its importance, motivated by obvious psycho-emotional reasons. The volume of post transported under anomalous conditions by manned balloons during the Paris siege represented, in its totality, 2 or 3 times the volume expected during the same period under normal conditions.

The second factor upsetting normality is the fact that disorganisation of the postal services reaches its essence especially when there is an invasion and consequent



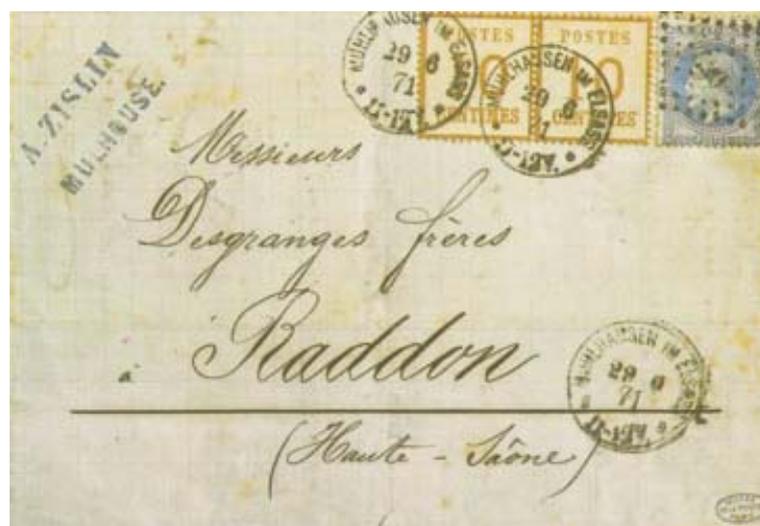
At the beginning of 1870 stamps in centimes printed in Berlin went on sale. Here is a letter that circulated with one of these 20c stamps. Source: Annette APAIRE et al, *Le Patrimoine du timbre-poste français*, Paris, Flohic, p. 87

occupation of the national territory.

To the invader, since the stamp represents and always symbolises the essence of a nationality, he will have to occupy the postal services, modifying or annulling the normal elements and making changes that witness these historic circumstances.

It was in this way that the German invader in 1870, demonstrating a great degree of foresight, brought with him not only his highly organised military machine, but also printed stamps that were used in the Alsace-Lorraine territory, a territory that they thought they would occupy definitively. They also made the most of the chaos into which the French postal service fell, despite the efforts of Steenackers or the good will of the French representatives. Gambetta, taken out of Paris on board the balloon "l'Armand Barbès" on October 7, also issued a circular prescribing that the postal service would have to be maintained at any cost, both by conserving the trains that were affected by it and establishing a mail-van service on special trains. But the rail service out of Paris had been paralysed for a long time. The *du Nord* station itself had been transformed into an enormous factory where they made the manned balloons, the only way correspondence could leave Paris.

It was therefore impossible to fulfil the terms proposed by Gambetta. As we know, the diversions of the railway were long and complicated, since, in order to escape from the German siege, they were obliged to take alternative routes, via Poitiers, Niort, Saint-Lô, Cherbourg, etc.



Double franking. A French stamp and two German stamps.

Source: Annette APAIRE et al, *Le Patrimoine du timbre-poste français*, Paris, Flohic, p. 87

The exchange of correspondence in the invaded territories also suffered great difficulties, and transit through Belgium and Switzerland was used.

A Prussian official administered the post in the occupied *départments* and he issued regulations requiring, for instance, that all letters delivered and received must be opened. Due to these difficulties, the post accumulated to such an extent at certain points that it was decided that most of the letters should be returned to their expedients, therefore contradicting all the legal and moral principles that must in all cases preside over a postal service.

The truth is that each German artillery or cavalry corps was always accompanied on its travels by a mobile post office, supplied with all the accessories, including day marks, rubber stamps and special postage stamps in French currency.

On September 6 1870, Berlin issued a document ordering the administration of the post office in Nancy to issue stamps printed with the designation Postes and the value in centimes. However, on October 26, it was the Governor General of German Alsace-Lorraine that issued the



Letter with a Swiss postmark and the French military vignette "Gratis".



Correspondence via the "Victor Hugo" balloon. Letter addressed to a prisoner of war in Mogaburgo. Large German postmark: "Auswärtiges Amt Des Norddeutschen Bundes", Confederation of Northern Germany.

complementary values of 5 and 25 centimes, as a way of allowing the Germans to confine the profits of the French post in their favour, which, as we know, was a considerable amount. During the occupation a higher department of the German post was therefore organised, continuing to use German stamps in French currency. On 13 February 1871, the representatives of the French and German administration established an agreement whose first article stated that normal letters from Paris to the French territories occupied by German troops and vice-versa, would bear a franking charge of 40 centimes, and there would never be any discount for the exchange of correspondence. Such an unusual fact was conveyed in philatelic terms by the existence of letters containing a French stamp of 20 centimes and a German one of the same value. This abnormality ended on September 16 1871 when the occupied territories were entirely liberated.

On January 23 1871, a forced armistice was established, given that no other solution had been found by Paris after all its resources were exhausted and after the rest of the French army had been forced to take refuge in Switzerland. Here, they were given complete hospitality, including exemption for soldiers from the franking charge through the use of a rubber stamp saying: French military interned in Switzerland.

On February 26 1871, France capitulated, having been forced to hand over Alsace-Lorraine and obliged to make an unbelievable payment of 5 thousand million francs.

The marks of war are still visible in philately in the way that the correspondence is franked. These markings are even more important in as much as they indicate the place and date of their expedition.

The truth is that the German authorities always demanded that the franking marks of the post offices they occupied should be handed over. On the other hand, the French agents in the cities that were still free systematically destroyed all the equipment that they could not save from the hands of the enemy. Yet the Germans, on entering these cities, demanded that the city councils reinstall the post offices, where they often found the material that had been hidden. It is therefore natural for us to find normal frankings, such as Soissons, Amiens, etc. Nevertheless, the Germans tried to overcome these difficulties as quickly as possible by providing these post offices with German day stamps, such

as Strasbourg, Elsass, etc. Some of these marks were in the form of a horseshoe with the name of the city in large letters.

We will now mention another historic situation in which the postal service operated at the limits: the Paris Commune, which, as we know, occurred during the same period: 1871.

It would be unnecessary to mention anything else to prove that philately is so close to History.

2. To begin with, we will admit that the postal service, especially after its systematisation, has always been a State monopoly. Let us call it “moral monopoly”, in as much as the safety, confidentiality and efficiency, attributes required of a postal service, naturally fall under the aegis and authority of the State, to whom we entrust our private letters or the transfer of our goods and money. It is based on this compromise that, for example, the postal agreements made



Labels used by various agencies: Denole, Moreau and Lorin.

under various circumstances by various nations have always been in the category of diplomatic agreements under official representation of the states involved in these agreements.

We will therefore admit, as an unusual factor, that the postal service may be provided by so-called “incompetent” representatives, in the sense given to the term by the original legislation, that is to say by agents that cannot be considered as having their competence sanctioned in any way to provide this service.

When this happens, we will say that the post is run at the limits, knowing that behind this occurrence, something abnormal is happening in a political-institutional sense, which is upsetting the natural order of things.

We saw how this happened during the Franco-Prussian war,



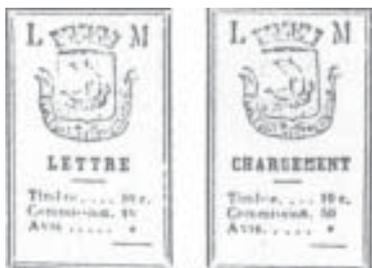
Envelope of the Moreau agency.



Advertisement placed in various newspapers for the Moreau agency's postal service.



The upper part was removed by the Lorin agency.



Stamps showing the fine to be paid.

as an example of all the historical situations in which there was territorial occupation with usurpation of powers, a situation in which the State transfers its functions to the usurper or, obviously, declines this responsibility. The postal service then appears among the list of superior functions taken beyond the sphere of state responsibility, but where someone or some institution has taken charge of this service under the pressure that the people normally exert in these extreme situations.

Such is the example of Paris, where, in 1871, following German domination, a terrible insurrectional uprising occurred against the central government, instituting the period known in history as the Paris Commune. As soon as the insurrection erupted, on March 18 1871, Mr. Thiers withdrew the army and its various administrations to Versailles, leaving the public treasury, the banks, the contents of its museums, etc. at the mercy of the revolutionaries. The Commune was therefore instituted as the government, nominating Mr. Theisz as director of the Post Office. On March 20, Rampon reluctantly handed over his position, not without first taking to Versailles all possible material, including the remaining stock of postage stamps.

Paris was thus isolated once again, while the population, the tradesmen and the industrialists, forcibly subjected to a sudden interruption in the post, blamed Thiers, who could do nothing. Now, only a couple of post offices operated within Paris, using the blue 20 centimes stamps with the Republic effigy, thus replacing the stamps with the effigy of the Emperor Napoleon III, which were uncomfortable and inappropriate for the Commune leaders.

On May 4, the official newspaper of the Commune issued the following statement: "From May 4, all tobacconists will be provided with stamps from 1 to 20 centimes and will be able to provide them in the quantities required by those interested". However, the demands of Paris commerce were heavily dependent on relations with the outside and as these were strictly controlled, it gave rise to the formation of intermediary correspondence agencies, which thus instituted their own methodology and their own procedures.

The first agency to be created was that of the Stock Exchange, which announced that all the letters handed in at its office in Paris would be transported to Saint Denis on the same day. Self-addressed envelopes were then provided, which had to be filled in by the Parisians so as to facilitate

the entry of the replies to these letters.

The normal commission received for each letter was 0.50 Frs, which enabled the agency to accumulate huge profits. The quickly established competition forced it to lower its commission to 0.25, and then to 0.10 for normal letters.

Thus began a rather unusual situation in terms of the postal service, though Rampon's tacit acceptance of it did give it a certain official character.

The public, however, always demonstrated great mistrust in the way the postal service was handled, even though it was dependent on the countless agencies that were set up: Messageries Meuret & Cie., Brunner & Cie., Paul Segon, Moreau & Osmond, Agence Générale des Courses, etc.

The procedure followed by the agencies consisted of sticking a label on the back of the letters, which demanded the inclusion of 20 C as commission for each letter. In the meantime, the Moreau agency had been authorised to place its letters at the tobacconists, selling envelopes at 15 C and therefore receiving the commission in advance. The letters taken from these envelopes were deposited at the Vincennes post office, indicating that to write to Paris, they would have to be addressed to the agency, after Moreau had stuck a label on the back.

In fact, Moreau became the agency that received the most letters, no doubt due to its relations with the provincial and foreign newspapers, in which it placed an advertisement on its activity.

Equal relevance was obtained by the agency founded by Mr. Lorin, who made the most of the fact that he was employed at the Gare du Nord and travelled twice a day between Paris and Saint-Denis. This agency stood out for another reason, closely linked to philately, since the reputable philatelic dealer, Mr. Maury, was a partner in the company. In fact, Lorin developed an idea put into practice by a "messagerie" in the street of the School of Medicine on the Boulevard Saint Michel. An unprinted label was stuck on the letters received by an intermediary, upon which was written the amount to be paid by the customer. Lorin therefore resolved to print special stamps to put on the letters in his charge. It was, as we can see, a somewhat complicated method and everything leads us to believe that its use was rather limited. The stamps used indicated the value at the top and were separated by perforations to enable Mr. Lorin to do his accounts in relation to the letters expedited. The



Picture of a demonstration during the Commune, in which women played an important role.

Realising that it is our weakness
That enables you to pass your laws
We resolve in future to abandon meekness
And the law hereon will justify our cause.

Realising that you hold us captive
With loaded pistols at our heads
We resolve in future not to fear your torture
Slavery is worse than death.

Realising that you keep us hungry
So that you yourselves have all the more
We resolve that all that keeps us from the
pantry
Can be overcome by breaking down the
door.

Realising that you keep us homeless
Whilst around us houses stand unused
We have now resolved to put an end to
trespass
From now on every worker will be housed.

Realising that we won't persuade you
Into paying us a living wage
We resolve that we will take the factories
from you
Realising that your loss will be our gain.

Realising that we can't depend on
All the promises our rulers make

We've resolved for us the Good Life starts
with freedom
Our future must be built by our dictate.

Realising that the roar of cannon
Are the only words that speak to you
We must prove to you that we have learned
our lesson
In future we will turn the guns on you.

Brecht, Resolution, *The Days of Comune*.

letters thus continued to circulate with the stamps of the ordinary post, but they all had to have the agency's vignettes as well.

The Commune leaders demanded that a 10 C stamp be placed on each letter distributed by the agencies. Nevertheless, this rule was so difficult for the users that they generally forgot and preferred to let the letter go with a fine, if the respective stamp was placed on it, where the rates were indicated. On May 27 1871, Thiers, who, as we have seen, had provisionally set up at Versailles, imposed a siege around the city of Paris and left the revolutionary government destitute. The Commune ended in this way. Rampon returned to the Post Office administration and institutionally normalised the service.

What remained was this agitated period led by the Commune, which tried desperately to organise a postal service provided at the limits.

Brief linguistic inroads into philately

All science, like any branch of human knowledge, is structured around a lexicological body, that is to say, based on a specific vocabulary through which it expresses its concepts and principles. Philately could not in any way avoid this phenomenon. Once the first hurdle had been overcome, which consisted of creating the name itself (given by Herpin), it immediately began to create its own body of vocabulary, facing a dual challenge.

The first challenge concerned the adoption of terms and expressions derived from postal technology that pre-dated, as we know, the creation of the stamp itself. The second challenge concerned the technical analysis of its structure and consequent collecting.

Let us take a look at the first set of terms, some consecrated historically, which concern the organic structure of postal handling. In philatelic terms these are part of the chapter of *marcophilia* or of postal History, in which these marks became more evident. Obviously, this vocabulary has to have a linguistic equivalent in different languages, a phenomenon that occurs with many other sciences, though the same terms are often used and are thus included in the particular lexis of each language, not just as a strange body, but rather as a factor of differed understanding. The purists deal closely with this phenomenon, as they see the invasion of countless terms of different linguistic origins that are brought in by new technologies. These same problems have occurred in philately, particularly as the same guidelines and principles have been followed, especially after the adoption of a universal system under the Geneva Convention.

However, there are differences from the linguistic point of view, depending, as we know, on the etymological bases of each ethnic group or linguistic area.

Let us begin with the word **selo** (*stamp*), which comes from the tradition of **sigilus**, a seal added or engraved in wax, as a way of authenticating official documents.

From **sigilus** comes the French **seau**, which in the 13th century changed to **sceau** as a way of preserving its meaning. The French disliked the term **sceau**, however, preferring to use the word *timbre*, which Larousse defines

as the “special mark that each post office prints on its letters”. Larousse refers here to what the Portuguese call the “ca-rimbo”, or more specifically, the “day mark”, which the Spanish know curiously as “stamp-killer”.

Larousse then adds **timbre-poste** to define the postage stamp itself.

In another area, the Anglo-Saxons gave it the term **stamp**, and this is how it is described in Rowland Hill’s first brochure. From this comes the verb **to stamp**, in the sense of to seal, put a seal on..., to frank. Franking comes from the root “**franc**” from the French (free, in the 13th century) and the postal sense “livre de porte”, as Larousse defines with the expression “lettres franches de port” indicating letters on which there is no postage to pay, i.e. franked.

Nevertheless, with the need for the current meaning of franking/franked, the French give us the term **affranchir**, which in Larousse we see means “to pay in advance the postage of a letter, of a remittance”. From this comes **affranchisement** – advance payment of the expenses of the respective postage. Portuguese uses the term **franque-ar**, of ancient origin, which in the 19th century was used to express “making free, duty-free” and which in Portuguese postal technology means “to seal”, i.e. “to pay in advance the postage of a letter”.

The term **franqueado**, with the spelling **franquiado** (14th century) means “free, duty-free” (... cada anno em essa villa fazedes feira ffranquiada”) (in: Chancelaria D.Diniz).

The English refer to it as **prepay**, precisely in the sense of “stamping, paying in advance” and **prepaid** as postage paid, free of postage.

Also from the root **franc** comes the word **franchise** in the sense of immunity, exemption. **Franchise postale** (Larousse), which we translate as “exempt from postage, or, as Bordalo Sanches says, “exempt from franking”, a matter this scholar analysed to the point of exhaustion.

Closely following the steps involved in the circulation of correspondence, we then have the word **taxa**, derived from *taxar*, from the Latin *taxare* (to put a price), which in the 14th century already meant “exact price for a service”) (... de taxa de quanto ham de leuar de frete) (cf. J. Pedro Machado).

In the French, there was no great deviation from the same etymon, in the form **taxe** – which Larousse defines as “exact price for a service, or price paid to regulate the cost of a

good or a service, in its totality”.

From this we get the interesting term *timbre-taxe*, defining “vignette or mark placed on correspondence not, or insufficiently, franked”. Spanish uses *tasa* for “the maximum or minimum price at which, by definition of the authority, a thing can be valued”. Different ways of saying things. In fact, we use this term to mean the procedural incidences on correspondence that has anomalies (insufficient or no franking), i.e. which represents a deficit in relation to the total price of the service required.

Taxar would therefore be “to complete by means of a stamp or appropriate mark, the amount in deficit” according to the legislation in force. I have had greater difficulty in finding an equivalent term from the linguistic point of view for the word **portear/porteado**.

It is true that, regardless of the meaning or sense that we give it today, as part of our own vocabulary, there is no exactly equivalent term in the languages of our linguistic area.

Portear, in Portuguese, comes from **porte** (16th century) “*porteam o Mayo à porta. Com mais versos...*” (cf. Sá de Miranda), i.e. in the immediate sense of carrying, transporting, etc. Modern dictionaries define it as “franking or duly sealing, letter or postal object” (cf. Cândido de Figueiredo/Torrinha). I therefore assume that postal technology admitted the term to indicate just this – i.e. “the payment of postage; of the value that corresponds to the price of the postage”. Spanish in fact uses the term *portear*, but in the sense of “transporting things for someone else”, which is not the same as the meaning in Portuguese. If we look up the term *portear* in Portuguese-French, Portuguese-Italian or Portuguese-English dictionaries (we resorted to encyclopaedic dictionaries here), we find the following meanings respectively: *affranchir*, *affrancare*, to stamp or to prepay, thus interestingly falling into a linguistic vicious circle.

It is a fact that the dictionaries give us the meanings not the equivalent terms so I therefore deduce that the term **portear/porteado** in Portuguese is rather like the word *saudade*, in other words, a term exclusive to Portuguese.

In order to avoid terminological ambiguities Bordal Sanches also includes **portear/porteado** as a mere para-synonym of **taxar/taxado**, “*Toda a correspondência que não é franqueada por meio de selos, será taxada (porteadada) pela Estação de Correio que as expedir*” (cf. Bordalo Sanches. *A Filatelia Portuguesa*, October 2000). This follows the warning

that: (ibid. p.11) “ there is an important detail in that the meaning of the designation “Franqueada e Porteada” in the pre-adhesive period does not have the scope that it assumed in the philatelic or Adhesive period”.

As we have seen, the languages of our linguistic area, avoided this ambiguity and the term **porteado** is translated by the term franked.

We admit that these linguistic studies are always boring, or rather unattractive. For my part, I do not share the ideology of the “famulli”, who sought to resolve the issues and problems of the world around us through their philological interpretation, though it is difficult to see how we can fail to mention this interpretation whenever we put our concrete reality in question.

Thus, philatelists/researchers have resorted to dictionaries to support their conclusion, or have referred to grammar for this purpose.

Yet in this case, the question is not exactly grammatical, but rather linguistic, and this was my main objective.

Philatelic Charity

Within the concept normally taken to designate philately, even in its most latent sense, the fact that we can associate it with a certain act of charity, or fund-raising for several social ends, does not fail to surprise us. In principle, we would admit that the stamp, through its graphics, could induce or promote awareness of charitable acts, as in fact it has done, or awareness of the induction of political ideas or various ideological records. Yet to mention the stamp associated with a practice of a fiscal nature is another matter



Stamps of the French Red Cross. Presented on a whole sheet (only part of which is shown here) in the *Afinsa Auction Catalogue: Colección 20 Aniversário*. Part of the description given then: "1939.90+35 COLOUR ERROR dark navy and red on 25-stamp sheet. Exceptional and UNIQUE piece."

Post with military franking. The stamp benefiting the Red Cross was attached voluntarily, therefore losing its postal value



altogether, which still, after a long experience may have created the bases of a sub-theme devoted to philatelic charity. This can be explained by the uncontroversial fact that there is great pressure for the need for interpersonal communication, which gave the use of the postage stamp irrefutable economic power. On the other hand, it can also be explained by the presupposition or real necessity to raise extra funds for various works (let us agree that they were not always worthy of such attention), as a complement to the State's budget, especially when, for various historical reasons, the State was faced with possible disastrous situations.

We will need at this point to consider the real beneficiary stamps, those that have no postage value but are added on certain occasions or at certain times to the face value of the stamp, the value of which goes to the work in question.

In philatelic terms, however, we will consider, in particular, the real postage stamps to whose face value a surcharge reserved for various purposes was added.

We thus have, as a first classic example, the Portuguese stamps of 1911, with the overprint **assistência** on the 10 and 20 reis D. Manuel, which, although they lost their postal value, constituted a supplementary charge reserved for social work. In 1915, there is another, classic example, also Portuguese: the carmine 1 C stamp with the caption "**Para os pobres**" (for the poor), which are, as we know, always in great number and always in need of assistance. Parallel to this are the great series of the Pre-paid Portuguese Red Cross, 1926/44, with various purposes and uses. The great philatelic examples are, however, provided by the series on



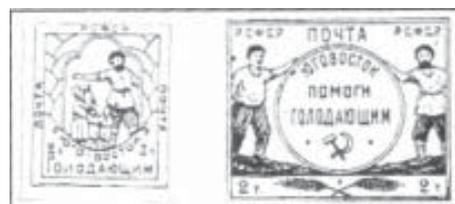
which the surcharges are explicit, and formally constitute a double charge, such as the method used by most States. Let us now take a look at the Swiss series of 1913 with the caption **For youth** and the Bavarian stamps of 1919 with the overprint "**Kriegschadigte**" which is difficult to read and means "for the victims of the war". These were stamps sold 5 p above their face value. In 1934, Germany inaugurated a series for winter aid, overprinted "**WINTERHILFE**", an example then followed by many countries subject to harsh winters: Austria 1936, Belgium 1941, pretty series of circumstance, illustrated with the figure of St. Martin.

Many other series were issued in the field of pure charity. In 1939, Belgium issued stamps for the reconstruction of the Orval abbey; in 1928, Spain issued the Toledo and Santiago series, sold for Spanish Catholic works aimed at subsidising the excavations of the catacombs of D. Damásio and St. Pretextat. In 1928, Portugal dedicated a stamp with a compulsory surcharge to benefit the Portuguese team for the Olympic Games in Amsterdam.

Then we have the stamps with surcharges proposed for the fight against tuberculosis, which were widely used during a period in which this disease was a great scourge, including the Belgian issue of 1939 and the Spanish issue of 1942. In 1965, Denmark issued a series in support of societies for the protection of children, followed by many other countries and in 1966, issued a series for refugees.

We will mention here the dramatic stamps of the USSR of 1921-22-23 for the starving of the Volga, or in favour of the indigent workers; stamps with the overprint "**Golodaiotchim**", that is to say, for the starving, sold at 25 rubles, 5 of which went to the families in need. They were issued in Rostov and were put over the ordinary postage value. As a more detailed reference, we also have the issues of double franking in support of the Red Cross, a practice followed by countless countries, but of which France is perhaps the most notable example. The issue of September 10 1914 inaugurated this magisterial theme, with France boasting an annual series since then devoted to this international institution of aid and charity.

In fact, France used this resource exhaustively for postal (I would say philatelic) means through series contemplating, for instance, unemployed intellectuals. These were normally very beautiful series, and illustrated with great cultural figures and the like. In 1937, it suppressed a stamp with the



Dramatic expression of a crisis situation under philatelic compromise.



Some of the stamps from the series dedicated to unemployed intellectuals.



To save the race. Aid for the child with philatelic help.

caption **Pour sauver la race**, which leaves us rather intrigued as to its real objective, and in 1938 issued a stamp in support of the repatriates from Spain.

We are aware that we have not been exhaustive in the examples we have given, but we do know that we have mentioned a philatelic theme of certain interest.

We do not have, nor was it possible to obtain, precise information on the amounts earned through the surcharges in each particular case, nor of the efficiency in the proposed cases. However, I suppose this practice is relatively attractive, given that it has been used so much by countless States, which made it possible through the fact that their postal services are a public service entirely under their responsibility.

But let us be coherent and use some scientific sense for our accounting. We will obviously not obtain an exact figure, but it will be reliable enough to serve as a reference. Let us take as an example the series “Pour les Chômeurs intellectuels”, of which 3 million copies were printed. If we multiply this number by the value of the surcharge (90 C), it gives us around two and a half million francs, 1939 value, assuming that the series sold out. The stamp for the Spanish repatriates (1938), numbered 717,800 copies, which, multiplied by (60 C), gives approximately half a million francs in usable funds. And so on and so forth. What I mean is that the process itself is not as negligible as we might think and in most cases represents a considerable financial amount.

The future will certainly dictate other ways. What we would wish for, perhaps, is that there would be no need for charity anywhere. But any reflection on this theme would obviously go beyond the scope of philately.

The Post of the Future

In no way do I wish to revive the recent controversy over the importance of the future of the post as we know it, that is to say, as the most popular means of exchanging written correspondence. I obviously refer to the implications for the field of stamp-collecting, a natural subsidiary of the system and its most visible reflection.

This is just because I am still reflecting on the recent declarations of the new Internet guru, who predicts that the network of electronic mail will triple over the next few years. I do not suppose that anyone has calculated the results of this impact. In many cases, such calculations would create a great sense of frustration among passionate philatelists, not to mention those who, like me, have always valued the written genre and the power of written communication as the centre of inter-personal relations. Today, communication adheres first to the criterion of speed, to the standardised formulas that dispense with those expressions in which we reflect our feelings, just as it dispenses with all those moments at the heart of the dialogues that Pablo Neruda had with his postman.

Human interference in personal communications has been lost, just as it went when the telephone service became automatic and we irredeemably lost the omnipresence of the telephonist that guided us.

We deal increasingly with machines. Machines that talk, that understand, that resolve, that decide. And we are growing more dependent on them. Of course, everything takes its course. Change is unrelenting. All we can do is adapt to the circumstances that are created, at the risk of living in the permanent anguish of those who fail to do so. In the automatic world that we are creating, will we dispense with a personalised mail service that allows us to ask the postman if he has any letters for us? Or is this becoming obsolete?

Will this be a world in which the small vignettes that document payment of postage cease to exist? Will philately have to be content with the stocks inherited from the good old days? Will modern philately get old with the last written documents that have survived electronic memories?

We are just at the beginning of an era. Many will be reluctant to accept such drastic conclusions, which are not taken entirely from the virtual field of speculations, but are based

on the extrapolation of a statement of our reality.

What we may lose, perhaps, and of this I have no doubt, is the historic force that the stamp represented in the past (and possibly still represents today) in as much as the stamp has always been considered one of the structuring elements of the symbolic affirmation of a nationality.

I have developed this theory several times and documented it with countless historical examples. It is perfectly natural that the globalising future that is coming, in which most of the elements that have always defined and consecrated nationalities are changing, includes the stamp on its list of dispensable items. We are left with the alternative proposed by Mr. Carlos Pimenta, organising cybernetic museums and virtual collections, hyper-modern sequels of that old activity that relieved our stress and nourished our free time.

