

The
Postage Stamps
of
TIBET.

By
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THE land of Tibet, its people and their customs have been so much written about since this century opened that it would seem that little or nothing remained to be discovered concerning them. But Tibet is still practically an unknown country and remains the "Forbidden land." For, although Lhasa, the capital, has been in direct telegraphic communication with India since 1922, and therefore indirectly with almost the whole world, the Tibetan Government endeavour to maintain their traditional isolation and do not encourage unofficial travellers within their domains. In this attitude they are supported by the Government of India. Nature, too, combines to keep all but the most hardy and intrepid from venturing into the country and, even of those who penetrate the frontier, few succeed in reaching Lhasa, the principal objective of the curious. Not that the Tibetans nowadays completely shut themselves off from Western influences, for in recent years the sons of several high officials have been sent to England to be educated, and the Tibetan Government have on many occasions invited the assistance and advice of officials of the Government of India. Among those invited to Lhasa have been the late Sir Henry Hayden, who, in 1922, advised the Tibetans on the mineral resources of their country and other geological questions; the late Sir Charles Bell, who spent a year in Lhasa as the guest of the Tibetan Government; and Colonel F. M. Bailey. General Sir George Pereira was, although not officially invited, hospitably received in Lhasa during his walk from China to India, via Mongolia and Tibet, in 1922. This walk was historic, for Sir George was the first European to enter Lhasa from China since the Abbé Huc accomplished the journey in 1845. Father Huc described his experiences in a charming travel book—*Souvenirs d'un Voyage en Tartarie et Thibet*. The Tibetan authorities last year sent a warm invitation to the British Government to be represented at the enthronement of the 14th reincarnation of the Dalai Lama (a six-year-old boy). The ceremony took place at Lhasa on 22nd February and the British Government were represented by Mr. B. J. Gould, Political Agent in Sikkim, who had already paid an official visit to Lhasa previously in 1936.

Prior to the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa in 1904 very little progress had been made in properly mapping the country. Indeed, Perceval Landon, the *Times* correspondent with the Mission, expressed the opinion that Samuel Turner's 1783 map of the Phari-Gyantse road was "better than the best London maps of 1903." Turner was a cousin of Warren Hastings, and was one of three Englishmen who explored parts of Tibet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; he was sent to Tibet in 1783 as the accredited agent of the East India Company and he published his observations in book form on his return to England. His predecessor as the Company's agent had been George Bogle, who visited Tibet in 1774. The third English explorer was Thomas Manning, an eccentric Oriental scholar, the only one of the three to reach Lhasa, which he accomplished in 1812. Sir Clements Markham edited Bogle's journal and Manning's diary and they were published in 1875. No two records could be more dissimilar. Bogle's is a shrewdly written account of his experiences, while Manning's is a completely useless document, which, having regard to his great achievement in reaching Lhasa, can be looked upon only as a literary curiosity. Actually, the first reasonably accurate map of Tibet was the work of the pundits "A." and "A.K." (Nain Singh and Rai Bahadur Kishen Singh Milanwal), who were sent to Tibet by the Survey of India during the years 1856-93. This map was later amplified and corrected by Sarat Chandra Das, who wrote a record of his sojourn in Tibet during 1881-82 which was published in 1902 under the title *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*.

The writings of the explorers mentioned above are the chief sources of information concerning Tibet before 1904, though an account of the ill-fated expedition, in 1891-92, of M. Dutreuil de Rhins, who was murdered by the Tibetans, was published in England in 1904 by his second-in-command, F. Grenard. The published accounts of the travels in Tibet of W. W. Rockhill, Sven Hedin and the Littledales are also invaluable in studying the country and its inhabitants in the years immediately preceding 1904.

The entry into Tibet of the Mission led by Sir Francis Younghusband ended an era. Thenceforth a regular means of postal communication was available between Tibet and the outside world, at first through the field post offices set up by the Mission on its route to Lhasa and afterwards by means of the British-Indian post offices established at certain places within Tibet as a result of the Treaty negotiated by the Mission. Previous to this date there had been no properly organised system of postal communication with foreign countries, though there had been since early times a very efficient courier service between the principal towns of Tibet and a courier line was also in operation between Lhasa and Peking. This courier service continued after the establishment of the British-Indian post offices, which were really opened only for the benefit of Indian traders. Actually the courier service ceased to exist only when an internal Tibetan postal service was organised on the return of the Dalai Lama from exile in India in 1912. The published accounts of the travels of the early explorers are the chief sources of present-day knowledge of this courier service and they are, therefore, severally indicated above as an acknowledgment of the information I have extracted from their writings.

I was led to enquire into the postal history of Tibet consequent on the acquisition of a small collection of Tibetan stamps, which contained some unusual items. To this collection I was able to add a number of Tibetan covers which had come unsought into my possession some time before, and had been retained as objects of philatelic interest from a strange country. The enquiry resulted in the accumulation of a quantity of notes embodying the information I had been able to extract from various sources as well as that derived from studying the stamps. The pages that follow consist of these notes arranged so as to tell a connected story of the stamps of Tibet. The story is one that I trust will be read not without interest even by those philatelists who look askance at all except the old classic issues or, possibly, by those who prefer the lure of the modern pictorial issues.

No attempt is made to deal either with the history or the geography of the country, except in so far as an event or a place has some relation to the postage stamps or postmarks that are described. The book is divided into the following sections:—

- I.—The Early Courier Services.
- II.—The Tibet Frontier Commission, 1903-4.
- III.—British-Indian Post Offices in Tibet.
- IV.—Chinese Post Offices in Tibet, 1909-13.
- V.—The First Issue of Tibet Postage Stamps, 1912.
- VI.—The Second Issue of Tibet Postage Stamps, 1933.
- VII.—The Mount Everest Expedition Stamp, 1924.

I. THE EARLY COURIER SERVICES.

THE story of organised postal communication in Tibet cannot start at the beginning, for it is not known with any degree of certainty when it commenced. That its origins go back several centuries cannot be doubted and it seems probable that the Chinese provided the earliest service of which information is available. This was *I Chang*, or the Government Service of Couriers, and the operations of this service were, for the most part, at first, restricted to the transmission of official despatches. Later, private communications were also allowed to be carried by the couriers. An account of the working of *I Chang* was published as an appendix to the Report on the Chinese Post Office for 1904, but it does not give any particulars especially relating to the service in Tibet, though it is of some interest in considering that country's postal affairs as it deals with a system that embraced Tibet.

Several of the early travellers in Tibet spoke highly of the efficient manner in which *I Chang* carried out its functions. Père Huc (1845) refers to this courier service in his writings, and Sarat Chandra Das (1881-82) gives the following account of the working of this and other postal services:—

“Letters are carried by messengers and special couriers called *chib-zamba* (or *ta-zamba*), meaning, literally, ‘horse-bridge.’ The couriers generally discharge their duty with admirable efficiency, and every one assists them with great promptness. All Government messengers are provided with the best and swiftest ponies, and at every halt are furnished with lodgings, water, firewood, and a man to cook their victuals. Couriers on foot usually travel from 20 to 25 miles a day, while those who ride do from 30 to 35 miles. The latter is the express

rate, for which the Government generally gives an extra remuneration. Government couriers alone get *ta-u*, or ponies for travelling; private letters of officials are carried by them, while common people make their own arrangements for the conveyance of their letters, which are not, however, numerous.

"The express couriers, or *te-tsi*, on the road between Lhasa and China are dressed in tight blue-coloured gowns, the tape fastenings of which are tied on their heads, and the knot sealed. They are required to subsist daily on five hen's eggs, five cups of plain tea, a pound of corn-flour, half a pound of rice, and a quarter-pound of lean meat. They are forbidden to take much salt and are strictly forbidden to eat onions, garlic, red pepper, butter, or milk. At midnight they are allowed to sleep in a sitting posture for three hours after which they are awakened by the keeper of the stage-house. It is said that these couriers are in the habit of taking certain medicines to give them the power of endurance against fatigue. The letters are enclosed in a yellow bag, which the courier carries on his back, generally using some soft feathers to keep it from coming into contact with his person. They get relays of ponies at the end of every five *lebor*.* Arriving at a stage-house, they fire a gun as a notice to the keeper of the next postal stage to make ready a post-pony. At every such stage a relay of five ponies is usually kept ready. The courier is allowed to change his dress once a week.

"A special class of trained men are employed on this service. The distance between the Tibetan capital and Peking is divided into a hundred and twenty *gya-tung*, or postal stages, of about 80 to 90 *lebor* each. This distance of nearly 10,000 *lebor* is required to be traversed in seventy-two days. Couriers are generally allowed a delay of five days, but when they exceed that they are punished. On occasions of very great importance and urgency the express rate to Peking is thirty-six days. During the last affray between the junior Amban and the people of Shigatse the express took a month and a half to reach Peking."

Captain A. E. Stewart, writing (on information supplied from an official source) of the postal arrangements in existence just prior to the establishment of the offices of the Chinese Imperial Post in 1909 (*Philatelic Journal of India*, October, 1914), said:—"A letter posted say at Lhasa and addressed to Peking, was sent by the customary *I Chang* system, and on arrival at the frontier it had the required stamps affixed and was treated as an unpaid letter on arrival in China or India. As one can imagine, the route between Peking and Lhasa (the capital of Tibet) for years has lain through a dangerous country, and during the antiquated 'Imperial Relay Service' (*I Chang*) many a mail was lost through brigands. But in 1900, postal lines were established and Lhasa was brought to within fifty to fifty-five days of Peking overland via Chengtu, and from forty to forty-five days via Calcutta by sea."

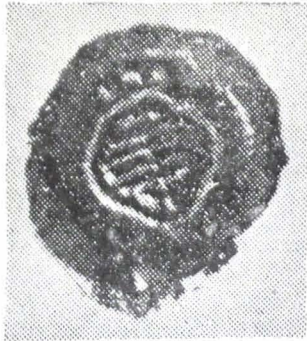
The official courier service was in operation only between the larger towns and was centred on Lhasa. From Lhasa the courier route to Peking was through Szechuan province by way of Chabdo and Batang. For those parts of the country that were not covered by the service letters could be sent by private messenger while the numerous lamaseries had their own system of communications. There could not, however, have been any great demand for a postal service as far as most Tibetans were concerned, and the courier service was used mainly by Chinese officials and traders.

A seal that was said to be employed similarly to a postage stamp was described and illustrated in the *West-End Philatelist*, of May, 1904 (Volume I, page 42), and I reproduce on next page an enlarged illustration of this fanciful object. According to the description, three specimens of this so-called stamp were received from a missionary in Tibet, and "it consists of a roughly shaped diamond frame enclosing a device composed of a native character (or characters) looking something like a Chinese letter." Above the frame are three small dots, and the whole is impressed in red sealing wax. The writer continued: "When a letter requires posting in Tibet, the sender takes it to the nearest official post office and pays the amount due for postage. Then this postage stamp seal is impressed on the envelope, and the letter is treated as a fully paid one, and is safely carried to its destination. Letters that do not bear this seal do not receive this polite attention." Several other philatelic writers refer

*A *lebor* is a Chinese *li*, which equals about 600 yards.—B.R.H.

to these seals and Mr. T. Fred. Marriner (*Philatelic Journal of Great Britain*, Volume XLVI, page 162) gives the following additional description of their supposed use:—

" . . . The communication was written on a native paper and was folded in the same way as our own early letter sheets. When folded it was taken to the person in that particular place who was responsible for taking charge of, and despatching letters to their destination, no doubt when a trading caravan was passing that way. When the letter was handed to this 'postmaster,' he assessed the amount payable for its carriage, and when the amount had been



The so-called seal "stamp" (greatly enlarged).

handed over he sealed the folder with red wax, stamping upon the wax the 'amount of the postage.' So far, I believe my information to be accurate, but I have only seen three of these seals. In two the device on the wax was identical, in the third it was different. None of them could be easily deciphered, but, after careful examination, I came to the conclusion that the device had in it a Chinese numeral, on two of them a 4, and on the other a 3, but what these figures represented I could not discover. Further, since the weight of the sheets would be the same, and assuming my reading of the seals to be correct, it would appear that the amount paid varied with the distance the communication was to be carried, or with the difficulties of the route to be traversed."

Both the foregoing accounts of the supposed use of these seals as postage stamps agree on their main points, but unfortunately neither writer gives the name of his informant or of any other confirmatory source for his statement. None of the published accounts of Tibetan life that have been available to me makes any mention of a postal system such as that described by these two writers. I have seen only one letter of the period when these seals were supposed to be prepaying postage (1887-1904) and that one letter was embellished with three seals. In my opinion, these seals had been applied to the letter to fasten it and there was no question of them masquerading as postage stamps. Furthermore, I have in my collection several covers franked by specimens of the 1912 postage stamps of Tibet which have impressions of seals similar to those mentioned above. In these circumstances it is not possible to regard these wax impressions as anything more important than seals used for their usual function of fastening letters.

When the collection of the late Mr. G. B. Routledge was dispersed I acquired from it an item which was described as a Tibetan "Post paid" mark of 1906. Mr. Marriner mentioned this mark in his article (*Philatelic Journal of Great Britain*, Volume XLVI, page 163), and referred, in particular, to this specimen from the Routledge collection, but he was unable to give any particulars of its use. The mark is struck, in grey-black, on a strip of native hand-made paper measuring 19½ inches in length by 2 inches in width. This paper is similar in quality to that used for the Tibetan postage stamps of 1912 and 1933, and the writing on it is in Tibetan characters. The item is actually a letter written by a Tibetan layman, and the

so-called "Post paid" mark is his seal. A similar letter is illustrated in *The Land of the Lama* (1929), and the author (Mr. David Macdonald) gives the following account of Tibetan letter-writing:—

"Tibetan letters are written on large sheets of paper sometimes a yard square. The style is flowery, opening with much compliment to the person addressed and abasement of the writer. Letters to the Dalai Lama are addressed in the highest terms of flattery: 'To the lotus foot-stool of the high golden Throne,' 'To the pure toe-nails of Your Holiness,' 'To the All-seeing, All-knowing Saviour.' When writing to a superior it is customary to leave a much



A Tibetan layman's letter, showing the seal of the writer.

larger blank space at the top of the sheet than at the bottom; when to an equal in rank, the same space is left at either end; when to an inferior, very little space indeed is left at the top, not more than an inch or two. Then follow the subjects of the letter, with the date, and the writer's name and the place from which it is sent, and the writer's seal, the impression being made with Chinese ink. The letter is folded into a packet about nine inches long and a couple broad, and wrapped in a scarf, the whole being enclosed in coarser paper sealed with wax impressed with the private mark of the sender.

"Those Tibetans who have come much into contact with the West, often use small sheets of paper and an ordinary envelope. Before fastening the latter, however, five dried and pressed petals of the Champa flower are put in, in place of the bulkier scarf.

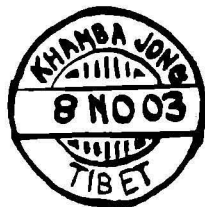
"Each official in Tibet has his own distinctive private seal, as well as the seal of his office. Only incarnate lamas, Terton lamas (those who have discovered hidden revelations), and the Khenpos are permitted to use red ink on their seals, while the only layman with this privilege is the Prime Minister in his official capacity."

A point of interest, and a field for enquiry, in connection with the early postal history of Tibet, is indicated by the existence during the middle 'nineties of last century of a Customs house of the Chinese Imperial Customs at Yatung. This Customs house was opened in 1894, and, apparently, continued to function until the withdrawal of the Chinese from Tibet in 1912. During the time that the Chinese posts were controlled by the Imperial Customs it was usual for a post office to be an adjunct to the Customs house, and if this practice was followed at Yatung it would mean that a post office of the Imperial Customs Post operated there from 1894 until (at least) 1896, when the direction of the posts passed to the Chinese Imperial Post. I have never heard of any of the Customs Post stamps existing with a Yatung postmark.

II. THE TIBET FRONTIER COMMISSION, 1903-4.

A TREATY signed in 1890 between China, acting as the suzerain of Tibet, and Great Britain regulated, among other matters, the conduct of trade between India and Tibet through Sikkim and provided for the right of free access to British subjects at a trade mart that was to be opened at Yatung. Unfortunately the Chinese Government, despite their asserted suzerainty, were unable to persuade the Tibetans to recognise the agreement and it proved useless in practice. In 1899 the Viceroy of India (Lord Curzon of Kedleston) endeavoured to treat directly with the Tibetan authorities, with a view to their agreeing to the provisions of the Treaty, but letters which he addressed to the Dalai Lama were returned unopened. This diplomatic discourtesy, by itself, would not have been a serious matter, but during 1901 it was rumoured (and certain actions gave credence to the report) that a Treaty had been concluded between the Dalai Lama and Russia which virtually placed Tibet under Russian protection. The idea of the Russians having access to the Indian frontier was one that the British Government could not entertain and they therefore determined to discuss their grievances directly with the Tibetan Government. As the first step it was decided, in agreement with the Chinese Government, to endeavour to arrange a meeting with the Tibetan authorities at Khamba Jong, fifteen miles north of Sikkim on the Tibetan side of the frontier. These, briefly, were the events which led to the appointment of the Tibet Frontier Commission.

Sir Francis Younghusband was the leader of the Commission and as the British representative he was instructed to negotiate an agreement with the Tibetans. With his staff and an escort he arrived at Khamba Jong on 7th July, 1903. For the convenience of the Mission the Government of India opened a number of temporary post offices. These were under the control of the postal superintendent of the Jalpaiguri Division, but only one of these temporary post offices was actually on Tibetan soil. This was at Khamba Jong and Indian postage stamps and a distinctive postmark



were employed there. I have seen only one specimen of the Khamba Jong postmark and from the circumstances of its use it must naturally be extremely scarce. The specimen mentioned is in my collection and cancels an Indian $\frac{1}{2}$ anna yellow-green Queen Victoria (S.G. No. 23). The stamp is on a piece of the original envelope, which also shows the postmark of Ranchi (16 NO 03), and the Khamba Jong postmark is dated "8 NO 03" (*see illustration*). Sir Francis Younghusband waited at Khamba Jong for just over five months, but the Tibetans made no attempt to negotiate with him and in this inaction they were encouraged by the Chinese, who outwardly pretended to support the meeting. The British Mission therefore withdrew from Tibetan territory on 13th December, and the temporary post office ceased to function after an existence of only five months.

The withdrawal of the Mission from Khamba Jong was only the prelude to its re-entering Tibet with a stronger escort and advancing through the Chumbi Valley towards Gyantse. The Tibetans became extremely hostile to the advance and endeavoured to obstruct the progress of the Mission. Severe fighting occurred at Tuna and also in and around Gyantse. The Lhasa Government still would not send any responsible official to negotiate with the Mission and it was therefore decided to proceed to Lhasa. A point of interest to philatelists is that the officer commanding the Mission's escort was Brigadier-General J. R. L. Macdonald, who a few years earlier—in 1901—had signed the circular authorising the issue of the British Railway Administration's 5 cents stamp at Peking.

When it was decided to advance into the Chumbi Valley, the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department instructed Mr. H. Tulloch to accompany the Mission and

Sir Geoffrey Clarke, in *The Post Office of India and Its Story*, gives the following account of the field postal service accompanying the Mission:—

"The rapid development of field post offices necessitated the appointment of a second superintendent, and Mr. A. Bean was deputed for field service. On the 6th January, 1904, Mr. Bean took over charge of the Base Division, but shortly after died of heart disease on 3rd March, 1904. The entire arrangements then devolved again on Mr. Tulloch until the 1st April, 1904, when Mr. C. J. Dease took over charge of the Base Division.

"The Mission advanced on Gyantse on the 4th April, 1904. From Tuna to Gyantse the mail arrangements were in the hands of the military authorities, and only one postal clerk, whose duty it was to distribute letters, was sent up with the escort. The Mission reached Gyantse on the 14th May, and a field post office had to be opened there and at several other places on the lines of communications. The force remained at Lhasa from the 3rd August to the 23rd September and returned to Gyantse on the 6th October, 1904. There was by this time at Gyantse an accumulation of over 1,100 parcels addressed to the members of the Lhasa column, but Mr. Angelo, who was then placed in charge of the advance division, disposed of them in three days before the troops left on their return march. The demobilisation of the force began by the end of October, and the postal officials were ordered to leave Chumbi on the 26th and to close the field post offices between Chumbi and Gangtok on their way down. Mr. Tulloch relinquished charge of the F.P.O.s on the 28th November, 1904."

The despatch of Brigadier-General J. R. L. Macdonald, dated 9th October, 1904, refers to the work of the postal service in the following paragraph:—

"The field postal service had many difficulties to contend with, but carried out its work satisfactorily. From Siliguri to Tuna the mails were carried by departmental agency, and thence on to Lhasa by military agency. Up to Gyantse a daily service was maintained latterly, and between Gyantse and Lhasa mails were carried by Mounted Infantry every three days."

The work of the Mounted Infantry in carrying the mails between Tuna and Lhasa was not accomplished without some exciting incidents, for the route was sometimes through hostile country and on several occasions the mail and its escort were attacked. Major W. J. Ottley in his book *With Mounted Infantry in Tibet* frequently alludes to the carriage of the mails. On page 88 he says: "The Mounted Infantry had plenty to do nowadays. They were out every day reconnoitring. Four men used to go daily half-way to Kangma to fetch the post—sixteen miles out and back, carrying up to 30 pounds (sometimes more) of mails on their saddles, and doing their journey nearly always in six hours. The post was now being carried by the 1st Mounted Infantry all the way from Tuna to Gyantse, a distance of about eighty miles." Later on he writes: "The three men who were carrying the mail were fired on by a few Tibetans about eight miles out. The men let them have it back, and captured one of their transport ponies laden with barley-flour and their extra wardrobe. The mail escort was increased to eight men after this."

On 20th May, 1904, occurred the most determined attack on the mail, more than 1,000 Tibetans ambushing it. Describing the fight, Major Ottley says: "The Mounted Infantry mail escort on their way back to Gyantse were passing between one of these villages and the thicket on the left bank of the river, when the Tibetans, having cleverly ambuscaded them, opened fire from all sides. One man and five ponies were killed on the spot, the Lance-Naick in command was hit through both arms, rendering him useless, another man was wounded in both legs and could not



stand up, and two out of the remaining three ponies were so severely wounded that they had to be destroyed afterwards. The Tibetans got so close that they used their swords on the ponies. The Lance-Naick got his men together in the thicket, whence they retaliated on the Tibetans, and shot them down so quickly that they drew off a bit, though still keeping up a steady fire on them. The Lance-Naick behaved most gallantly, and though unable to use his rifle, opened the packets of cartridges with his teeth and passed them round to his men to fire. The wounded man crawled behind a tree, whence he kept up a vigorous fire on the enemy; and thus, true to their duty, they defended the mail-bags on their killed and wounded ponies so successfully that out of the seven mail-bags in their charge only one fell into the hands of the enemy."

No information is available of the number of field post offices that were opened and in operation on the route to Lhasa, neither does there seem to be any record of their locations. I have seen only three different field post office postmarks; F.P.O. No. 70, F.P.O. No. 81 and F.P.O. No. 84. Of these, No. 70 was used at Yatung, No. 81 at Pharijong, while field post office No. 84 was apparently located either in or near Gyantse. The post office that was opened at Lhasa when the Mission reached that secluded city on 3rd August, 1904, was supplied with the well-known postmark with the erroneous spelling "LHASSA." This postmark was used right through the stay of the Mission in Lhasa, but at the beginning of September another one was also



employed with the name spelled "LHASSA." The field post office at Lhasa was closed when the Mission withdrew on 23rd September. Indian postage stamps were used throughout the period of the Mission's sojourn in Tibet and most of the stamps then current in India, "On H.M.S." as well as ordinary, were available to members of the Mission and its escort.

III. BRITISH-INDIAN POST OFFICES IN TIBET.

WHEN the Dalai Lama heard that the British Mission and the accompanying forces had reached Gyantse and were marching on Lhasa he fled to China. The result was that when Sir Francis Younghusband arrived at the Tibetan capital he was faced with the position that the chief political power of the State was not there to negotiate with. However, after prolonged discussion with the Tibetan officials who had remained in Lhasa, a Treaty was drawn up and it was signed on 7th September, 1904, by the representatives of Tibet, who also affixed the seal of the Dalai Lama. Many of the provisions of the Treaty, for political reasons, were not accepted or enforced by the British Government, and practically the only tangible results of the Mission were the appointment of British Trade Agents at Gyantse and Gartok and the establishment of trade marts at those places in addition to Yatung. British-Indian postal agencies were opened at the three towns and also at Pharijong.

Several types of postmarks have been employed at these postal agencies and details of these are given below, together with a few particulars of the towns.

GARTOK.—This place is situate in Western Tibet (Nari) at a pass in the Himalayas connecting Tibet with India. The pass is open only during the Summer months—May to October—and is largely used by Buddhists on pilgrimages to Karlas. Gartok is about 15,100 feet above sea level and is very cold during the winter months. For this reason it is practically deserted in the winter. The first British Trade Agent at Gartok was Thakur Jai Chand, a native of good family.

A postal agency (with the status of a branch office) was opened about 1909. I believe it is now closed as it is not mentioned in the most recent editions of the *Indian Post and Telegraph Guide*. This postal agency functioned only during the Summer months and was closed between November and April. The only type of postmark that I have seen used at Gartok is the one illustrated



GYANTSE.—The first British Trade Agent appointed here was Captain (later Sir Frederick) O'Connor, at that time probably the only white man who could speak Tibetan fluently. To this accomplishment he added the ability to read and write the language. He had acted as secretary and interpreter to the Younghusband Mission and soon after the return of the Mission from Lhasa he took up his duties at Gyantse. A post office was opened and is still functioning. The first postmark employed was a single-lined circle inscribed (round the top) "GYANTSE-TIBET" and (round the bottom) "SILIGURI-BASE"; a cross on either side divides the two inscriptions, while the date is

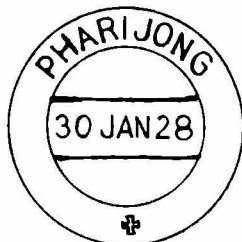


Three types of postmark used at Gyantse.

in two lines in the centre. Later types are larger and contain the words "GYANTSE" (at top) and "TIBET" (at bottom) between two circles, with the date between parallel lines in the centre. The second type of postmark has been forged and has been applied to Indian stamps stuck on envelopes, both separately and in conjunction with forgeries of the 1933 issue of Tibet. These envelopes have, of course, never been through the post, and they form part of a well-thought-out scheme for foisting the forged Tibetan stamps on collectors. This plot will be dealt with later (See "VI.—The Second Issue of Tibet Postage Stamps, 1933"). Gyantse lies on the trade route between India and Lhasa, being about 146 miles from the Tibetan capital and 184 miles from Gangtok in Sikkim; it is situate at more than 13,000 feet above sea level.

PHARJONG.—In Tibetan this town is called Phagri, meaning "the pig hill," and it has been referred to by some travellers as "foul Phari." It is a very dirty and evil smelling place, both Tibetans and foreigners seem agreed upon that, but dirt and smells did not deter the Indian Government from establishing a post office there.

Pharijong, situated at an altitude of 15,000 feet, is probably the highest (the *double entendre* is unavoidable) town, and certainly the highest permanent post office, in the world. When first opened, the post office was apparently mainly for the benefit of the small Indian garrison that was stationed at Pharijong, and it was classed as a field



Postmarks used at Pharijong.

post office. The earliest postmarks are inscribed "PHARIJONG-F.P.O. NO. 81" between the lines of a double circle, or within the circumference of a single-lined circle, the date being across the centre. Latter postmarks have only the name of the town and the date. This post office is still in existence.



YATUNG.—This place lies at the head of the Chumbi Valley, and the Indian post office that was opened here, at first, took its name from the valley; Chumbi. In 1909 the post office took the name of the town—Yatung—and this is the designation that has since been used. Like Pharijong, this office, at the beginning, was classed as a field post office and employed a postmark indicating that it was F.P.O. No. 70. With the change of name to Yatung a new postmark that read "YATUNG-TIBET/VIA-SILIGURI" was introduced. There are several different types of postmark with this wording. This office is still open.

All contemporary Indian postage stamps were available for use at these post offices, the stamps at present in use at the three offices still functioning being the current set.

IV. CHINESE POST OFFICES IN TIBET, 1909-13.

IN April, 1906, representatives of the British and Chinese Governments met in Peking to discuss the provisions of the Treaty that had been negotiated two years earlier in Lhasa by Sir Francis Younghusband. The principal result of these discussions was that China was given a free hand in Tibet, and within a few years was taking full advantage of the position thus created. During the second half of 1909 a large force of Chinese troops marched into Tibet, and in January, 1910, the Tibetan Army was defeated at Chabdo. Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama, who had fled to China in 1904 before the advancing British forces, had returned to Lhasa after an

absence of five years. He reached his capital in December, 1909, but within two months he was a fugitive again, this time from the Chinese invaders, who occupied Lhasa in February, 1910. He sought sanctuary on his second flight in India, at Darjeeling, and there he remained for more than two years as the guest of the Indian Government. Great Britain protested to China against the invasion, but before any stronger measures could be taken a revolution, led by Dr. Sun-Yat-Sen, had broken out in China, in October, 1911, the Emperor had been deposed and a republic proclaimed. These events naturally had their repercussions in Tibet. The Tibetans rose against the invaders, who, demoralised by the happenings at home, retreated and were ejected from the country.

One of the first things the Chinese did in their attempt to re-establish their hold on Tibet was to inaugurate a postal service. This new service was entirely distinct from the Government Service of Couriers (*I Chang*), which had existed within the Chinese Empire from time immemorial and has already been referred to (*cf.* page 2). The postal service inaugurated in 1909 organised Tibet as a postal district of the Chinese Imperial Post. The district thus created was in charge of a Postal Commissioner (Mr. Feng Weiping), with headquarters at Lhasa, and post offices were opened at Chabdo, Gyantse, Pharijong, Shigatse and Yatung. The administration of the Chinese postal service in Tibet was very efficient and progressive, and towards the end of its life a money order service had actually been started. There were two mail routes, both radiating from Lhasa; one to India through Gyantse, Pharijong and Yatung, and the other to China by way of Chabdo and Batang and through the province of Szechuan. The route to China was re-established in 1911 and covered a distance of 1,666 miles, the mails being carried the whole way by military couriers on horseback.

At first, ordinary Chinese postage stamps without overprint or surcharge were employed and most of the contemporary stamps of China are known to have been used in Tibet during 1909-11. Naturally, Chinese stamps with Tibetan postmarks are much sought after and are rare. During 1911 Chinese postage stamps (1902-10 issues) were surcharged with new values in Indian currency (annas and rupees) for use at these offices; they came into use, at Lhasa, at the beginning of March, and at the other offices a little later. The earliest record of their use that I have seen is a letter dated 17th April, 1911, from Lhasa, but Mr. Theodore M. Newman, of New York, tells me he has a cover dated from Lhasa on 9th March, 1911. The surcharging was the work of the printing office of the Customs Statistical Department at Shanghai, and very creditably it was done, one abnormal variety only occurring on the eleven denominations that were surcharged. The surcharges were in black, and consisted of the new values indicated in each of three languages—Chinese, English and Tibetan. The stamps so treated were as follows:—

"Three Pies" on 1 cent brownish orange.	"Four Annas" on 20 cents marone.
"Half Anna" on 2 cents deep green.	"Six Annas" on 30 cents vermilion.
"One Anna" on 4 cents scarlet.	"Twelve Annas" on 50 cents green.
"Two Annas" on 7 cents crimson-lake.	"One Rupee" on 1 dollar red and flesh.
"Two & Half Annas" on 10 cents sky-blue.	"Two Rupees" on 2 dollars claret and yellow.
"Three Annas" on 16 cents olive-green.	

Owing to the differing size and make-up of the sheets of some of the values, the size and shape of the settings for the surcharges also varied. The 3 pies, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$, 3, 4, 6 and 12 annas were surcharged on blocks of forty stamps (two panes of twenty side by side, each of five rows of four). The 2 annas was surcharged on blocks of fifty stamps (two panes of twenty-five side by side, each of five rows of five). The two highest values, 1 rupee and 2 rupees, were surcharged on blocks of forty-eight (one pane, consisting of six rows of eight). In the setting of the surcharge for the 3 annas occurred the one abnormal variety of the issue—a wrong fount inverted "s" in "Annas." The position of this variety has been variously stated by philatelic writers, but from blocks of this stamp which I have examined I believe the correct position to be the third stamp of the third row (No. 11) of the right-hand pane. Mr. F. P. Renaut (*Stanley Gibbons' Monthly Circular*, June, 1923, page 312) stated that he had discovered a similar variety on the 3 pies, but I have been unable to obtain any confirmation of its existence; no such variety was present on the panes of the 3 pies that I have examined.



According to Juan Mencarini and M. D. Chow's *Descriptive Catalogue of Chinese Postage Stamps* (Shanghai, 1937), p. 20, the following quantities were surcharged:—

"Three Pies" on 1 cent ...	72,200	"Four Annas" on 20 cents ...	31,200
"Half Anna" on 2 cents ...	108,200	"Six Annas" on 30 cents ...	12,000
"One Anna" on 4 cents ...	108,200	"Twelve Annas" on 50 cents ...	12,000
"Two Annas" on 7 cents ...	65,200	"One Rupee" on 1 dollar ...	4,800
"Two & Half Annas" on 10 cents ...	72,200	"Two Rupees" on 2 dollars ...	3,704
"Three Annas" on 16 cents ...	30,200		

The use of these surcharged stamps was very restricted, and they were not recognised except in Tibet and China. Letters passing from Tibet to places abroad, by way of the Gyantse-Yatung route to India, had to be additionally franked by Indian stamps. The reason for this was a lack of agreement between the Chinese and the Indian Governments; later they tried to come to an arrangement on the matter, but before anything could be settled the Chinese postal service in Tibet had ceased to exist. Letters for abroad sent by the Chinese post were handed over to the Indian post office at Yatung where Indian postage stamps were affixed. The Chinese lost nothing by this practice, as they charged the sender the full postage plus the cost of the Indian postal rate. As examples of these charges I give particulars of some of the covers in my collection:—

1. Registered letter from Lhasa to Peking, via Yatung, Shanghai and Tientsin. Franked by surcharged Chinese stamps amounting to 9 annas and by Indian stamps totalling 4½ annas.
2. Registered letter from Lhasa to Ningpo, via Yatung and Shanghai. Surcharged Chinese stamps, 9 annas; Indian stamps, 4½ annas.
3. Registered letter from Lhasa to Darjeeling, via Yatung. Surcharged Chinese stamps, 6 annas; Indian stamps, 2½ annas.
4. Registered letter from Lhasa to Simla, via Yatung. Surcharged Chinese stamps, 6 annas; Indian stamps, 2½ annas.

With the outbreak of the revolution in China in October, 1911, and the precipitate withdrawal of the Chinese garrisons from Tibet, the position of the postal officials became highly dangerous. The Chinese Postal Commissioner at Lhasa and the Chinese clerks at the other post offices eventually having to fly for their lives. The post offices at Lhasa, Gyantse and Shigatse had ceased to function by December, 1911, but the post offices at Pharijong and Yatung continued to operate until the early part of 1912, while the office at Chabdo remained open until the beginning of 1914 and was still despatching letters at the end of 1913. Apart from Chabdo, however, the life of the Chinese postal service in Tibet was less than two and a half years and the period of use of the surcharged stamps was well under a year.

At least four different types of postmarks were employed during the short existence of the service and these are described in the particulars of the six post offices which follow:—

LHASA.—The headquarters of the postal district and in charge of a Postal Commissioner (Mr. Feng Weiping). Four types of postmark were used at this office. The first (Type I.) is a double-lined circle with the name "LHASA" across the centre between parallel lines, above is the name of the city in Chinese characters and below in Tibetan characters. The second (Type II.) is a double-lined circle with the English inscription "LHASA—TIBET" round the base and the remainder of the postmark filled up with the equivalents in Chinese and Tibetan. These two postmarks I have seen only on unsurcharged Chinese stamps. Type III. is the most usual type and is found on



Type I.



Type II.

Type I.—Postmarks of this type are known used at Lhasa, Gyantse, Pharijong (Phagri), and Shigatze.

Type II.—Only known used at Lhasa.



Type III.



Type IV.

Type III.—Postmarks of this type known used at Lhasa, Chabdo, Gyantse, Shigatse and Yatung.

Type IV.—Used only at Lhasa.

both the unsurcharged stamps and also those surcharged with values in annas and rupees. Type IV. was introduced about July, 1911, and was in use only during the period of currency of the surcharged stamps; it is similar to Type III., the principal difference being that the English inscription "LHASA-TIBET" is in serified capitals, whereas Type III. has sans-serifed lettering.

CHABDO.—This office was not opened until the middle of 1911 and the surcharged stamps appear to have been the only ones on sale there. It was not attached to the Lhasa area, but was controlled by the Chungking office (headquarters of the Szechuan province postal district). As mentioned earlier, it remained open until the beginning of 1914, and was still doing postal business at the end of 1913. There are several ways of spelling the name of this place—Chamdo, Chiamdo, etc.—but the one which is here used is that found on the postmark. The postmark is Type III. and it bears the English inscription, "CHABDO—TIBET."

GYANTSE.—Two types of postmark were used here—Types I. and III. Type I. has the name of the office across the centre—"GYANTSE"—while Type III. has the words "GYANTSE—TIBET" round the top. The first is found only on the unsurcharged stamps, but the second is found on both unsurcharged and surcharged stamps.

PHARJONG.—The only postmark I have seen used from here is Type I. and the name is rendered in the old spelling—"PHAGRI." A Type III. postmark was also probably used here.

SHIGATSE.—Two postmarks—Types I. and III. Both are found on the unsurcharged Chinese stamps, but on the surcharged stamps Type III. only is found. Type I. is inscribed "SHIGATSE" and Type III. "SHIGATSE—TIBET."

YATUNG.—Type III. only has been seen, and it occurs on both the unsurcharged and the surcharged stamps. The English inscription reads, "YATUNG—TIBET." A postmark in Type I was probably also used, but I have not yet seen a specimen.

V. THE FIRST ISSUE OF TIBET POSTAGE STAMPS, 1912.

ONE of the results of the sojourn at Darjeeling of the Dalai Lama and his staff was that they were able to obtain an insight into the advantages of a State controlled system of postal communications, and it was during this residence in India that the idea of establishing a Tibetan postal service was born. The Dalai Lama and his entourage left India to return to Lhasa towards the end of June, 1912, but for some time before then preparations for the inauguration of a postal service had been proceeding, and, in fact, a supply of postage stamps had already been printed. On the 6th June, 1912, the Kalimpong correspondent of the *Pioneer* (of India), writing in that journal, said: "The Dalai Lama's decision to start for Tibet on the 24th is causing a stir in our Tibetan quarter . . . The official in charge of the new postage stamps has prepared a number of sets of dies (in blocks of twelve) and has been busy experimenting with different colours of ink. The stamps will be issued shortly after the arrival of the party in Tibet." A sheet of twelve of one of these colour-trials reached England during September, 1912, and it was shown at the stall of Mr. W. T. Wilson at the Jubilee International Stamp Exhibition, held in London 4th-19th October, 1912. This sheet was printed in a rich violet on white wove machine-made paper and was of the one ka-kang value. It was imperforate and without gum. Later, another sheet turned up, similar in every respect to the first, and I believe that specimens from these two sheets are the only survivors of the colour-trials made in India. I have a photograph of the first sheet before it was cut up and the specimen of the proof in my collection is No. 10 from this sheet. While this work was in the press I had the good fortune to acquire a hitherto unrecorded Tibetan proof. It is of the one ka-kang value, and it is printed in bright violet on *hand-made native paper*, similar to that used for the issued stamps.



The postage stamps were eventually issued in Lhasa in December, 1912, but they were not put on sale in other parts of the country until the following year. The issue consisted of five denominations and the design is the same for all values. Evidences of the designer's residence in India are apparent, for the frame and the spandrel ornamentations were obviously copied from the King Edward VII one anna Indian postage stamp. The central part of the design shows a lion—the White Lion of Tibet, symbolical of the Dalai Lama. Surrounding the lion are inscriptions in Tibetan and English, reading "Tibet Postage," and the value (in Tibetan only).



1 karma-nga (one-third of a trang-ka), blue.

The stamps were printed from woodblocks, each block consisting of twelve engravings (in three rows of four) of the design. As each engraving was done separately by hand it follows that each of the twelve stamps in the printed sheets differs in greater or lesser degree from its fellows, but it is not proposed to tabulate the differences here. Printing from woodblocks is the usual method of typography in Tibet and all the holy books are produced by the xylographic process, which was introduced into Tibet not earlier than the middle of the seventeenth century.

The paper used for these stamps is of native manufacture and it varies in thickness and quality to a very marked degree. One writer on Tibetan stamps (T. F. Marriner, *Philatelic Journal of Great Britain*, Volume XLVI, pp. 162-164) endeavoured to distinguish between the various printings by the variations in the paper, but I am certain that it is not possible to make any classification by this means. The quality of the paper ranges through all the degrees from pelure to near-cardboard, and there is no particular thickness that can be described as normal. Several travellers in Tibet have referred to the Tibetan method of paper manufacture and on this subject I cannot do better than quote two recent writers, who, although they differ slightly in their descriptions, agree in substance. David Macdonald, writing in 1929 (*The Land of the Lama*, page 243), said: "All operations in its (i.e. paper) manufacture are performed by hand For making coarse paper the bark of a tree of the genus *daphne* is collected, steeped in water for several days, and then pulped by wooden mallets till it reaches the consistency of a thin paste. The pulp is then spread over muslin sheets fastened in wooden frames. To give evenness to the paper, these frames, muslin, pulp, and all, are gently agitated in water, then drained and placed in the open air to dry. When dry, the sheets of paper are stripped from the frames, trimmed, and become ready for use. The size of the sheets is roughly thirty inches square, and an average paper like this will cost about one penny per sheet. Finer paper and more expensive is made in exactly the same way from the roots of a poisonous plant, found in the country All Government records are still kept on the old-fashioned material. Insects never attack this as there is a poisonous substance incorporated therein, and it is extremely tough and durable."

F. Spencer Chapman, a member of the British Mission to Lhasa in 1936-37, in his book (*Lhasa: The Holy City*, page 176) writes: "Tibetan paper is made of the bark of the *daphne* or other shrubs. We would often see it being prepared, usually by a man out of doors. He would pound up the bark with water by spreading it on one flat stone and beating it with another. The resulting mixture was then spread on a wooden frame four feet square, over which was stretched a fine wire gauze. When dry it was removed from the frame and trimmed. The paper is very tough and coarse and resembles cream coloured cardboard. Troughs are also used in which the pulp is pounded underfoot. Owing to the poisonous nature of one kind of bark used, no insects will attack Tibetan paper."

The inks used for printing these stamps are of rich colour, and, taking into consideration the number of different printings that would be necessary during the long period the stamps were current, 1912-1933, there is surprisingly little variation in shade. The stamps are imperforate and were issued without gum.

The five values are as follows:—

- 1 *ka-kang* (one-sixth of a *trang-ka*): green, pale green, deep green, emerald green. It was from the printing block of this value that the colour-tries in violet, referred to above, were struck.
- 1 *karma-nga* (one-third of a *trang-ka*): blue, deep blue, ultramarine.
- 1 *tscha-ky* (one-half of a *trang-ka*): deep purple, violet, pale mauve. The pale mauve shade is the most marked colour variation that I have found among the stamps of this issue. It was in use during the period 1929-33. I have a single on cover dated 16th August, 1929, an unused sheet of twelve that came from Tibet in 1931, and an unused pair received from Tibet in 1933.
- 1 *sho-kan* (two-thirds of a *trang-ka*): red, carmine, scarlet, brown-red, rose. This is the most interesting value in the set. Not only are there more shade and colour variations, but there are two errors of engraving on the printing block as well as a variety caused by wear. The errors consist of the word "POSTAGE" spelled "POSTAGE" on the two middle stamps on the sheet (Nos. 6 and 7). These errors were never corrected and persisted for the whole life of the printing block. The variety caused by wear is on the last stamp on the sheet (No. 12) and also affects the word "POSTAGE." In the later printings the "P" of "POSTAGE" became worn and damaged so that it appears as an "E"—"POSTAGE."
- 1 *trang-ka*: vermilion, orange-vermilion.

Double prints of all values occur and also varieties caused by folds and creases in the paper, but these, while of some interest, are of no philatelic importance.

POSTMARKS.

In collecting the stamps of a country like Tibet, where the number of letters written and received is extremely small, the acquisition and listing of all the different postmarks employed by the postal service is absolutely impossible of achievement, and the notes that follow probably touch no more than the fringe of the subject.

According to Francis P. Renaut, writing in 1923 ("Tibet," *Stanley Gibbons' Monthly Circular*, No. 46, pp. 310-314), there were at that time eleven post offices in existence in Tibet as follows:—

Lhasa.	Pai-Li.	She-Tang (on the Brahma-
Cho-Mo-Rak.	Pe-Nam (20 miles east from	putra, 70 miles south-east
Gna-Shi.	Shigatse, on the Nyang	of Lhasa).
Gyan-Die	River).	Shigatse.
Gyantse.	Pharijong.	Ta-Chan.

Mr. Theodore M. Newman (*Collectors' Club Philatelist*, July, 1940) supplies the information that a post office was opened at Nangartse in 1912, and that others were inaugurated at Medagongkar and Ghamthia in 1931 and 1932 respectively.

The postmarks in use at the more important offices, e.g., Lhasa and Gyantse, have the name of the office in English as well as in Tibetan characters, but the inscriptions on the postmarks of the smaller offices are in Tibetan only. The following descriptive list of the various postmarks used to cancel the first issue of Tibetan stamps includes all types that have come to my notice, supplemented by the particulars given in Mr. Renaut's article.



Genuine postmark (1).



Forged postmark (1).

(1) This is the type usually found on these stamps and it was apparently issued to the principal offices. It is known used at Lhasa (English inscription: "LHASA, P.O."), Gyantse ("GYANTSE, P.O."), Nangartse (NANGARTSE, P.O.), Pelti ("PELTI, P.O."), Pai-Li and Gna-Shi. Usually struck in black, but Lhasa occurs also in blue and greenish-blue, and Gyantse in violet. The Lhasa postmark has been forged and applied to genuine stamps. Genuine postmarks measure $1 \frac{5}{16}$ inch in diameter, while the forged ones measure $1 \frac{3}{8}$ inch. Another point of difference is the outer circle, which is much thicker in the forgery than in the genuine. (*See illustrations.*) The forged postmark is found struck in a variety of colours that is lacking in the genuine—violet, purple, marone, red, etc.

(2) A large postmark, measuring just over $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. (*See illustration.*) I have only seen this type used from Lhasa. The English wording reads "LHASA P.O." Struck in black.

(3) A double-lined circular postmark with the name of the office in both Tibetan and English between the two circles, the date, in Tibetan, being in the centre. The diameter of this postmark is about 1 3/16 inch. So far I have seen this type used only at Lhasa. It is worded "LHASA, P.O." I have been unable to get a satisfactory illustration of this type. Struck in black.



(2)



(5)

(4) This is similar to (3), the principal difference being that it is worded "LHASA, P.O." The "L" in "LHASA" is deformed and looks like an "E" with the middle stroke missing. Struck in black. (See illustration page 21).

(5) and (6) These are the postmarks that have Tibetan characters only. No. (5) measures 1 1/4 inch in diameter, and is illustrated above. No. (6) is 1 1/8 inch in diameter, and except for its size, it is similar to (5). These two postmarks, and similar types were issued to the smaller offices: Pe-Nam, Gyan-Die, She-Tang, Shigatse, Cho-Mo-Rak, Ta-Chan and Pharijong. I have seen these struck only in black.

FORGERIES.

The difficulty of obtaining adequate supplies of these stamps from Tibet, to satisfy the demands of collectors, soon led to forgery on a large scale. No fewer than three different attempts have been made to produce counterfeits for the deception of collectors and these attempts have not been entirely without success. The first forgeries made their appearance about 1920 and in the succeeding years the Continental market was flooded with these productions. Owing to the difficulty of getting any official information from Tibet it was at first believed by some collectors that they might constitute a new printing from re-engraved blocks of the actual stamps, as the differences between the original stamps of 1912 and these productions were obvious on comparison, though not so easily detected otherwise. However, the fraud was soon exposed, and shortly afterwards another attempt was made at forging these stamps, but this time the forgers were not so successful in marketing their wares and specimens of this second lot of forgeries are relatively scarce. The third set of forgeries appeared on the European market about 1937 and probably emanated from India, but it was a poor production and deceived few. A description of these three sets of forgeries follows.

The first set of forgeries.—All five values were forged and, so far, I have not seen them without a fictitious cancellation, though they probably do exist "unused." The genuine stamps measure 19-19 1/2 mm. in width, and approximately 22 1/2 mm. in height, while the forgeries are 18 1/2-20 mm. wide and 23-24 mm. high. As each stamp on the sheet was separately engraved, it naturally follows that there is some variation in the measurements, and the same observation applies to the forgeries, but in the genuine stamps the variation in size is slight, while in the forgeries it is much more marked.

Like the genuine stamps, the forgeries were printed in sheets of twelve (three rows of four), but in the sheets of the forged one *sho-kan* there are no "POSTAGE" errors; on the other hand, a new variety was invented and *tê-tê-bêche* pairs occur of the forged one *tscha-ky* violet. The method of printing these forgeries was by lithography and compared with the originals printed from woodblocks the resulting impressions are dull and "flat," while the inks employed have not the richness of colour that is associated



Forgery of 1 sho-kan (1st set).

with the genuine stamps. The forgery of the one *sho-kan* which is illustrated is typical of the remainder of the set, and it should be observed that the shape and position of the lion on the forgeries is a good test, as the animal never attains the same form and place on the genuine stamps. The "postmarks" found on these forgeries seem to be of three sorts: one is a copy of the postmark of the British Indian post office at Gyantse, similar to the second type illustrated on page 9, while another is a copy of a Tibetan postmark with the inscription, "LHASA P.O." in English and the remainder of the lettering in badly formed Tibetan characters; the third is shown in the illustration, with the word "POSTAGE" between two circles and the rest of the postmark filled up with various pseudo Tibetan characters.



Forgery of 1 sho-kan (2nd set).

The second set of forgeries.—The only values that I have seen of this set are the one *tscha-ky* and the one *sho-kan*. As can be seen by the illustration of the latter, these forgeries are not so dangerous as those of the first set. The space between the top of the forgery and the outer circle is much greater than in the genuine stamps, and this difference by itself is sufficient to distinguish the bad from the good.



Forgery of 1 ka-kang (3rd set).

The third set of forgeries.—Only the three lowest values—one *ka-kang*, one *karma-nga*, and one *tscha-ky*—are included in this set of frauds. They were poorly produced by lithography and are easy to distinguish from the original stamps. The forgeries are much larger, measuring approximately 24 mm. high by 20 mm. wide, and they are printed on thick machine-made laid paper, similar to that used for the forgeries of the 1933 issue. The colours of these forgeries are totally unlike those of the genuine stamps.

VI. THE SECOND ISSUE OF TIBET POSTAGE STAMPS, 1933.

THE postage stamps issued in December, 1912, continued in use for more than twenty years, but during 1933 there were rumours that a new issue had been made. As with most occurrences in Tibet, it was with difficulty that confirmation of the appearance of the stamps could be obtained, and it was not until the middle of 1934 that supplies of the new issue reached London. The first definite intimation in the philatelic Press of the existence of the stamps was made in *Gibbons' Stamp Monthly* for June, 1934, wherein was told a story of the difficulty Messrs. Stanley Gibbons had experienced in obtaining a supply of the stamps and the intrigue necessary for success. A writer in that journal said:—"It was over eight months ago that we first heard rumours of a new stamp issue for Tibet, that mysterious, forbidden land that lies 'on top of the world.' This was certainly interesting news, but it was by no means complete; how to confirm it, what the stamps were like, what were the values and how many of them, how could we get them—all these questions had no immediate answers.

"But our Publishers' New Issue Department was instructed to get the stamps At first only one or two sets came through, and with very little relative information. There were five different colours and so we presumed that there were five different values, although we could not be sure and we did not know their currency nor of any way of translating the Tibetan inscriptions which would have told us. We were, however, now assured that the issue was, in every way, a genuine one, emanating from some primitive workshop in Lhasa. Another interesting fact that we learned was that a letter took one whole month on its journey from Lhasa to the Indian border. . . .

"More enquiries were made, together with remittances in Indian bank-notes (since bankers' drafts, mail and telegraphic transfers and cheques are useless in such circumstances). . . .

In these days when Governments announce impending issues by Press notices and use every other means of publicising their philatelic products, such reticence is refreshing as well as being characteristically Tibetan. That the stamps should have been issued on 1st May, 1933, and that they were not known to philatelists until a year later gives this issue a unique position among modern postage stamps, although, of course, similar and greater lapses of time between issue and philatelic recording frequently occurred in the early days of philately.

The issue consists of five denominations, each of which was printed in sheets of twelve stamps in three horizontal rows of four. In contrast to the printing surfaces used for the issue of 1912, which consisted of twelve engravings on one piece of wood for each value, the printing surfaces used for the issue now being described are of brass and are composed of twelve units, each separately engraved, clamped together. The design is the same for all five values, the only differences being in the Tibetan inscriptions, and the central figure represents the engraver's version of the White Lion of Tibet, portrayed as a fearsome and extraordinary monster. According to F. Spencer Chapman (*Lhasa: The Holy City*), the stamps are printed at the Lhasa Mint. The paper used for this issue is similar to that used for the stamps of the 1912 issue, but the extremes of thickness and thinness do not now occur, though there are marked variations in quality, as is only to be expected in a native hand-made paper. All the values have been issued both imperforate and perforated, and the absence or addition of the perforation seems to depend on the whim of the Lhasa postmaster, who is in charge of the archaic perforating instrument—a spiked metal wheel attached to a wooden handle. The stamps are without gum.

The five values are as follows:—

1 *tscha-ky* (one-half of a *trang-ku*): orange, yellow, pale yellow, yellow-orange.

The Postage Stamps of Tibet

- 1 *sho-kan* (two-thirds of a *trang-ka*): blue (dull and dark). On all the sheets of this value that I have seen, except those of the first printings, the seventh stamp of the sheet is noticeably out of square with the rest of the sheet, sloping downwards to the left.
- 1 *trang-ka*: lake, carmine, bright carmine, rose-carmine.
- 2 *trang-ka*: scarlet, vermilion.
- 4 *trang-ka*: green, emerald green, olive-green. The olive-green shade appeared during 1939, and for part of the printing, at least, the printing surface consisted of only eleven clichés, the top right-hand corner cliché being absent. Whether the missing unit fell out during the course of the printing, or whether it was deliberately omitted because of damage, is not known, but before the sheets containing the vacant space were put on sale, single stamps cut from other sheets were affixed lightly over the blanks—a proceeding unique in philately, but in accord with the habitual unusual of this surprising land. It may be remarked that a similar variety to that of the one *sho-kan* also occurs on sheets of the four *trang-ka* in the olive-green shade, stamp number seven twisting downwards to the left, but not to so marked a degree as in sheets of the lower value.



4 *trang-ka* green.

Three of the five values exist in "miniature sheets" of two, that is in horizontal pairs with narrow margins between the two stamps and wide margins around them. These are probably proofs which have been put into use. The three values known in this condition are: one *sho-kan* blue, one *trang-ka* carmine and two *trang-ka* scarlet.

The most recently published account of the Tibetan postal service is that of F. Spencer Chapman, the distinguished traveller and explorer. In his book, already quoted, he says: "The Lhasa Postmaster also spoke English, as he was trained in telegraphy at Kalimpong. The postal and telegraph system is most efficient. The line was laid from Kalimpong over the Jelep La, as far as Gyantse, during the 1904 Mission. After Sir Charles Bell's visit to Lhasa in 1920, it was continued to the city. It is maintained by Nepalese line-men, with occasional visits—usually no farther than Gyantse—from British engineers. The muleteers sometimes take the posts for firewood, and amuse themselves by throwing stones at the insulators, but during our visit we were always able to telegraph messages to India. The Potala is connected by telephone with the post office. Stamps in five values and colours (green, yellow, blue, and two shades of red), are . . . current only within Tibet. Post-runners carry the mails to Gangtok (our letters were re-stamped at Gyantse). Running from dawn to dusk in relays of about eight miles they covered the 330 miles from Lhasa to Gangtok in from eight to ten days. Our record time for getting an answer from Calcutta was seventeen days."

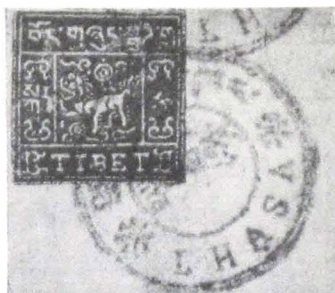
The post office at Lhasa is housed in what remains of the Tengyelung Monastery, the main part of which was demolished by the Chinese during the 1912 war, and has not since been rebuilt.

POSTMARKS.

When the new stamps were issued in 1933, a new type of postmark was also introduced. This consisted, for the principal offices, of an inner circle, containing the date in Tibetan characters, with the name of the office (in Tibetan and English) surrounding it, and the whole enclosed within a double-lined circle. (*See illustration.*) Postmarks of this type are employed at Lhasa, Gyantse, Pharijong (inscribed "PHARI"), and Shigatse. For the smaller offices of Medagongkar and Ghamtha similar postmarks are used, except that they have no English inscription.



(4)



(7)

At the Lhasa post office, Type 4, described when dealing with the 1912 issue, continued in use until quite recently, and is frequently found on stamps of the current issue. (*See illustration.*)

FORGERIES.

During 1937, some clever forgeries of the 1933 issue of Tibet appeared on the London market. They came from India, and, at first, only comparatively few sets were offered for sale, but in the succeeding years the trickle became a deluge, and not only London, but other philatelic centres, were flooded by the impostors. The scheme for foisting these forgeries on to collectors was cleverly laid, and, for a short while, some collectors were even persuaded that they constituted a distinct Tibetan issue. All five denominations were forged, and they were printed in the same sized sheets as the originals. In addition to forging the stamps, two postmarks were also counterfeited—those of the Tibetan post office at Gyantse, and the Indian post office at the same town.

Along with the sets of forgeries, both "unused" and "used," were marketed some covers which ostensibly had emanated from Tibet, and until carefully examined, appeared to be genuine. These covers are ordinary thin, cream-coloured, envelopes, invariably addressed to somebody in Sikkim, with one or more forged values affixed at the top right-hand corner, and cancelled with the forged Gyantse (Tibetan) postmark. At the bottom left-hand corner are affixed one or more genuine Indian postage stamps, and these are cancelled with a forged Gyantse (Indian) postmark. One such cover that I have in my collection is "franked" by forgeries of the one *traug-ka* carmine, the one *tscha-ky* orange, and the one *sho-kan* blue, and a



Forgery of 1 sho-kan.

pair of genuine $\frac{1}{2}$ anna King George V. Indian (S.G. No. 232). The forged postmark on the Indian stamps is dated "18 JLY 38," and all the forged Gyantse postmarks that I have seen bear that date. In addition to the covers bearing forged Tibetan stamps, others were marketed that had only Indian stamps affixed (cancelled with forged postmark), but struck also on the covers was the forged Tibetan-Gyantse postmark.

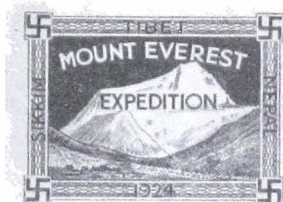
Below I give a brief description of the forgeries. When compared with genuine stamps these forgeries are not dangerous, but when seen alone they are likely to deceive any collector who is not on his guard.

Genuine.	Forged.
Typographed	Lithographed.
The paper is native hand-made wove, it is rough and fluffy, and the fibre is silky.	The paper is machine-made laid, and is usually smooth and shiny, with a semi-glaze.
The colours are bright, and the impressions are clear and distinct.	The colours are dull, and the impressions are indistinct, and sometimes oily.
The colours are as listed above.	The colours and shades differ from the originals.
The Tibetan characters are well formed.	The Tibetan characters are not well formed.

The forgeries, like the originals, exist both perforated and imperforate.

VII. THE MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION STAMP, 1924.

MOUNT EVEREST, the highest mountain in the world, is named after Sir George Everest (1790-1866), the eminent British surveyor and geographer of the nineteenth century. According to the most recent and reliable surveys, it rises to a height of approximately 29,002 feet above sea level. It is situated within the territory of Nepal, but the easiest approach, from a mountaineering standpoint, is from Tibet by way of the Rongbuk Valley. Several attempts have been made to scale the peak, but none has been successful, though climbers of the 1924 expedition got to within less than 1,000 feet of the summit. The Mount Everest Expedition of 1924 was under the command of Brigadier-General the Hon. C. G. Bruce, but owing to ill-health he had to retire, and the command devolved on Lieutenant-Colonel E. F. Norton.



It was for this expedition that the stamp now to be described was prepared. The stamp shows a view of the base camp at Rongbuk Glacier with Mount Everest in the background, and is inscribed "MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION 1924"; at the top and at the two sides are the names of the three States in whose territory the expedition travelled: Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal. The colour of the stamp is dark blue and it is perforated 11. No value is indicated. As far as one can gather the stamp was prepared as a souvenir, and to raise funds towards the expenses of the expedition. All letters from the expedition were franked by Indian postage stamps, but this special stamp was also stuck on the letters of members of the expedition despatched from their various camps by postal runners to the nearest Indian post office. The expedition stamps were cancelled at the camp of despatch by large double-circled cachets with the name of the expedition between the circles: "MT. EVEREST EXPEDITION 1924." The cachet used at the base camp was further inscribed across the centre: "RONGBUK GLACIER BASE CAMP" (*see illustration*); this was usually struck in red. The cachet used at another camp, near Pharijorg, was struck in grey, and has the name "TIBET" across the centre.



Whether this label, from the fact that it did carry letters from the expedition's camps to the nearest Indian post office, can be considered a postage stamp (albeit a "local") is, of course, open to serious question, though its claims are probably as good as many, and better than some, which are accepted. That it is an interesting philatelic souvenir of a notable achievement, and a memory of two brave men, there can, however, be no doubt.

On 3rd June, 1924, Colonel Norton and Dr. T. H. Somervell climbed to 28,126 feet, only 876 feet from the summit, the highest point ever reached; there they pitched camp, and later descended. Three days later another attempt to conquer the mountain was made, this time by G. L. Mallory and A. C. Irvine. They left camp at 25,000 feet, and commenced their ascent. On the morning of 8th June, N. E. Odell, who had climbed to 27,000 feet to watch the progress of his two comrades, caught a glimpse of them high up the mountain, then mists blew across, and he saw them no more. Mallory and Irvine did not return. Did they reach the summit? Everest holds the secret and it lies buried with Mallory and Irvine, deep in the Himalayan snows.

[FINIS.]

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