

POSTAL HIMAL

QUARTERLY OF THE NEPAL AND TIBET PHILATELIC STUDY CIRCLE



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COVER ILLUSTRATION: We wish to thank our Nepal Representative, Mr. Surendra Lal Shrestha, for a view card depicting Mt. Everest, Lhotse & Nuptse as seen from the Thyangboche Monastery. The photo credit is to B. M. Chettri & the card is No. 93 in the "Visit Nepal" series. Mr. Shrestha's message on the card reads: "Christmas Greetings and All Good Wishes for the coming New Year." While the card was addressed to the editor, the message is for all members of our Study Circle.

Dear Friends,

We begin the year with enthusiasm and confidence stemming from the excellent response to our questionnaire, which is reported on page 6 of this issue. We thank Frank Westbrook for preparing the questionnaire and wish to apologize to him for crowding his original onto both sides of a half sheet -- and thank all of you for using limited space so effectively.

With this issue we include the 1988 Membership List -- offered regularly in the even numbered years. For new members we will mention that a bibliography Supplement is enclosed with the first issue of POSTAL HIMAL in odd numbered years. For back issues, write to Roger Skinner, our USA Representative, for information and prices.

Our President, Dr. Pierre Couvreur, and your editor have agreed on the recipient of the President's Prize for 1987. The winner is Mr. F. A. Westbrook, Jr., for his series titled: "Building A Nepal Collection", which is designed for Beginners and Intermediate collectors. Eight sections -- one in each issue -- have appeared over the past two years, with the ninth in this issue. See pp. 7-8. Frank's flair for writing, coupled with his ability to condense complicated topics using a smooth, flowing, understandable prose, has been appreciated by a number of members who have written to us. -- We extend an Honorable Mention to two of our 'regulars', Dr. Wolfgang C. Hellrigl (first President of our Study Circle) and Prof. Dr. Armand E. Singer, both of whom submitted short but useful research-type articles which appeared during 1987.

New publications of importance are mentioned in this issue. See Lewis Blackburn's announcement on page 2, telling of a plan to reprint "Chiu's Supplement". Michael Rogers (also a Study Circle member) has arranged to produce this valuable reference work, long out-of-print. Portions of it will be of special interest to all Tibet collectors.

For Bhutan enthusiasts, see the review of an important paper titled: "The Postal-Fiscal Covers of Bhutan". See p. 3. We thank Nildo Harper for sending us a copy of this fine paper.

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To calculate the number of lines your adv will require, count 39 characters per line, including all letters, numerals, punctuation marks and blank spaces between words. Ads will be placed under appropriate headings as needed. See the Classified Ad section in the final pages of any issue of The AMERICAN PHILATELIST for typical adv headings -- or simply send your own ad, asking the editor to place it under an appropriate heading (at no extra cost).

DEADLINE: Ad and payment in USA dollars, must reach the editor by the first day of one of the following months -- February, May, August, November -- in order for ad to appear in issues mailed about one month later. Any change of copy after the first insertion will be counted as a new ad.

WANTED

Perforation varieties of natively-printed Nepal stamps of 1958-61 (Scott Nos. C1, 102, 118, 119, 120, 121-23 & 125 / SG Nos. 115, 116, 118, 119, 134, 135-37 & 137a) in pairs, blocks & sheets perf, imperf & imperf between. Do not send material before writing, giving details & prices. Westbrook, 245 Unquowa Rd. - #11, Fairfield, CT 06430, USA.

Finally, we regret the necessity of informing you that we have lost another long-time member, Arthur Brown of Argyll Etkin Ltd., who died at the beginning of October 1987 -- the second in a month.

On the positive side, we welcome the new members listed on the back of the cover page. Two of these have waited a very long time to see their names on the list and we apologize for the unseemly delay in reporting. -- We ask all members, old and new, to check their entry on the enclosed Membership List and to report any errors they may find, so that your editor can correct them.

J.aster A. Michel

EXHIBITION NEWS

Dick van der Wateren reports that he attended the week-long stamp exhibition in Assen -- a regional exhibition in the Netherlands. His first experience at exhibiting was quite successful as his "Classic Stamps of Nepal" was awarded a VERMEIL and a Medal of Honour from the "Bond van Nederlandse Filatelisten Verenigingen" (the League of Dutch Philatelic Societies), plus an invitation to exhibit in April 1988. Dick observed that it was the first time that the judges had seen a Nepal exhibit in the Netherlands! (Congratulations, Dick. Keep up the good work.--Ed.)

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NEPAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY MEETS

On 16 January 1988, the Annual General Meeting of the Nepal Philatelic Society was held. The newly elected Officers & Executive Committee Members are:

President - The Right Honourable Mr. Omkar Prasad Gauchan
Vice President - Mr. Nanda Govinda Rajkarnikar
Secretary - Mr. Shyam P. Nhuchhe Pradhan
Treasurer - Mr. Deepak Man Manandhar
Publicity Secretary - Mr. Ramesh Shrestha
Organisation Sec'y - Mr. Jaya Hari Jha

Executive Committee Members are:

Mr. Bishnu Lal Shrestha
Mr. Ghana Shyam Rajkarnikar
Mr. Hari Prasad Duwal
Mr. Dwarika Bhakta Joshi
Mr. Ishwar Man Singh

Nominated Members are:

Mr. Madan Bahadur Shrestha
Mr. Tirtha Raj Onta

See the newspaper report on page 3 for more information concerning this important annual meeting. We wish all success for the Nepal Philatelic Society during this new year under the leadership of this fine group of members, many of whom are also members of our Study Circle.--Ed.

Note: The special cancel shown at right came to us on an aerogramme from the Nepal Representative of our Study Circle, Mr. S. L. Shrestha.--Ed.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

George Bourke asks: "My question has to do with the "squashed reverse S" variety on the 3 Annas mentioned by Waterfall in his handbook, "The Postal History of Tibet", 1981 edition, pp. 44 & 49. To the best of my knowledge this error has never been illustrated in any of the literature on Tibetan Postal History. I have recently purchased a stamp that I think may be this variety. I sent this stamp to an expert on the stamps and postal history of Tibet. He thought it may be this rare variety. The problem is that he had never seen one. If one of our members has knowledge of this item and could send the editor a photo or a drawing of it which could be published in POSTAL HIMAL, I am sure it would be a service to Tibet collectors, both presently and in the future." -- (We look forward to the opportunity to publish such an illustration, together with any appropriate comments.--Ed.)

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CHIU'S SUPPLEMENT TO BE REPRINTED

J. Lewis Blackburn, President of THE CHINA STAMP SOCIETY, INC., and a member of our Study Circle, reports:

"Michael Rogers in Winter Park, Florida (and a member of our Study Circle), has obtained rights to republish "Chiu's Supplement". He apparently will issue it in sections, combining Chiu's articles that he ran sometimes over many issues. When Tibet & related areas is to be done is unknown, but I will see him at SESCAL where he will have a booth." (We will alert our readers when we get more information from Mr. Blackburn.--Ed.)

A RECENT SPECIAL CANCEL OF NEPAL





हवाई पत्र AEROGRAMME

NEWS FROM KATHMANDU

(We thank our Nepal Representative -- Mr. Surendra Lal Shrestha -- for this newspaper clipping from THE RISING NEPAL for 18 January 1988.--Ed.)

DEVELOPMENT OF PHILATELY STRESSED

Kathmandu, Jan. 17 (RSS):

Minister for Communications, Works & Transport Hari Bahadur Basnet inaugurated the 10th (tenth) general conference of the Nepal Philatelic Society here Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Basnet said that the philatelic sector should be steadily developed as important events and personalities of the country could be introduced through the medium of postage stamps.

Noting that the philatelic sector was not very popular in Nepal, he stressed the need to arouse the people's interest in it.

Minister Basnet also pointed to the need for strong and cordial relations between the Postal Services Department and the Nepal Philatelic Society for the development of philatelics in the country.

On the occasion, president of the Nepal Philatelic Society & RP member Omkar Prasad Gauchan suggested that a philatelic advisory board be formed and requested His Majesty's Government to extend support in participation of international philatelic exhibitions.

Earlier, society vice-president Nanda Govinda Raj Karnikar said that the society, which was established in 1966, had been contributing in the national & international philatelic sectors.

Secretary Bishnu Lal Shrestha presented the society's report.

Treasurer Madan Bahadur Shrestha presented the budget estimates for the second half of the current fiscal year.

Meanwhile the tenth general conference of the Nepal Philatelic Society has constituted the executive committee of the society under the chairmanship of RP member Omkar Prasad Gauchan.

Nand Govind Ramkarnikar, Shyam Prasad Nhuchhe Pradhan, Deepak Man Manandhar, Rajesh Kurmar Shrestha & Jaya Hari Jha are the vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer, secretary for publicity and secretary for the organisation.

Members of the committee are Bishnu Lal Shrestha, Ghanashyam Rajkarnikar, Hari Prasad Duwal, Dwarika Bhakta Joshi and Isworkman Singh. (We note that many of the people mentioned in this article are also members of the Nepal & Tibet Philatelic Study Circle, and we trust that the efforts of the committee will be successful in increasing local interest in Nepal philately.--Ed.)

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AN IMPORTANT PUBLICATION

One of our members, Nildo Harper, has sent us a copy of an article by Linda L. Robinson titled, "The Postal-Fiscal Covers of Bhutan", which appeared in the POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL, Number 77, October 1987.

This in depth article (13 pages) has built on the work of Harrison D. S. Haverbeck in 1967. The author gives much credit, not only to the "giants of Central Asian philately" including Haverbeck, Russell, Raymond, Waterfall & Robert D. West, but also mentions later contributors such as, George Alevizos, Nildo Harper, Nicholas Rhodes and Peter Haubner, all of whom are members of our Study Circle.

With the aid of some dozen or so illustrations and a two-page table which summarizes the details of 57 postal-fiscal covers which are "well enough known to be included here".

The significant conclusions are summarized clearly and succinctly -- followed by a useful appendix and a 30-item bibliography.

This outstanding piece of research should be in the hands of every serious student of Bhutan postal history and we have written to inquire about the possibility of reprinting this fine article in POSTAL HIMAL at some future date.--Ed.

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NOTE CONCERNING REVIEW ON PAGES 4 AND 5

Those interested in reading previous segments of this review should see the following issues of POSTAL HIMAL:

- No. 32, pp. 58-59 for Introduction & Chapters 1 & 2.
- No. 33, pp. 9-10 for Chapter 3.
- No. 37, pp. 8-11 for Chapters 4, 5 & 6.
- No. 40, pp. 48-50 for Chapters 8 & 9.
- No. 43, pp. 31-32 for Chapter 10.
- No. 44, pp. 39, for Chapter 11.

THE POSTAL SERVICE OF NEPAL

Chapter 12 - Technical Assistance (5 pages) with 8 items.

1. Experts. The Nepal Postal Services Department has had the continuous assistance of foreign experts since joining the UPU in 1956. Until 1965 the Indian administration provided a senior official as adviser under the Colombo Plan. Since 1965 the adviser has been provided by the Universal Postal Union under the United Nations Development Program.

2. There are no proposals for continuing the services of a general adviser after the end of 1970. There is, however, a training instructor provided by the Indian administration. It is understood that an Indian expert has also been requested specifically to assist in setting up a foreign parcel accounting section.

3. Undoubtedly the Department will encounter difficulty in the future because of the absence of a general adviser. This difficulty will have been intensified because of the failure of HMG to implement the recommendation to convert the postal service to a "closed" service (Chapter 1). Several of the senior officers who have been sent on overseas postal fellowships, or who have acted as counterparts to foreign advisers in the past, have since been transferred to other departments in complete disregard of the wastage of training and experience involved (Part II, Appendix 6).

4. The following are some of the specific fields in which assistance is likely to be necessary during the next few years:-

- (i) International Correspondence.
- (ii) International Enquiry Work.
- (iii) International Accounting.
- (iv) Statistics.

5. It is suggested that the subjects listed in the previous paragraph might be specifically mentioned in the terms of reference of any future general adviser.

6. Fellowships. During the last five years an average of two fellowships of six months each have been available each year for postal study with a foreign administration. Most of these have been taken in the UK, primarily because the

British administration offers a five months training course specially designed for visiting students. A similar course is now available at the Asian-Oceanic Postal Training School in Bangkok. It is desirable that one or two training fellowships, in addition to those available in India, should continue to be sought each year for senior officers.

7. The British postal administration periodically organises a course for training instructors, specially designed for developing countries. It is most desirable that Nepal should take advantage of this course as soon as a suitable candidate is available.

8. Equipment. Apart from motor vehicles and weighing machines the Nepal postal service has little need at present for the expensive machinery or for equipment which cannot be made locally. An electrically driven stamp cancelling machine, presented some years ago under an aid programme, is unusable because many stamps are stuck on envelopes in positions unsuitable for machine cancellation. Before the machine could be used a long process of public education would be necessary. The following are items which are required:-

- (i) Jeep-type vehicles with lockable van bodies for mail conveyance.
- (ii) Motor scooters or small vans for urban use on collection, delivery and conveyance of mail.
- (iii) Reliable weighing machines for use at public counters and in the largest sorting offices.
- (iv) A bag hoist for Mail Centre (Chapter 9, paragraph 9.).

Chapter 13 - Summary of Recommendations of Part I (9 pages) with 48 items.

(These recommendations need not be detailed here, but a few may be of interest.)

1. The Postal Service should be made a closed service and should have its own promotional structure. (Chapter 1, paras 1 to 4).

6. Accounting for government postings should be re-introduced. (Chapter 3, para 7.)

7. Official (Ka Sa) items should be treated as registered only when the nature of the item justifies such treatment. (Chapter 3, para 8.)

Editor, "THE POSTAL SERVICE...." (concluded)--

22. It should be the ultimate aim of postal development to have at least one post office in each village panchayat area. (Chapter 7, paras 1 & 2.)

23. To enable post office development to proceed as rapidly as possible, it should be normal policy for all new offices to be of agency status; i.e. extra-departmental or cooperative P.O.s. (Chapter 7, paras 3 7 4).

27. The main post office in each District should carry a post of not less than mukhiya rank specifically for the inspection and control of subordinate post offices and mail lines within the District. (Chapter 7, paras 11 & 12.)

39. Staff should be allocated to duties in accordance with the particular abilities, training or experience which is required. This applies especially to duties for which knowledge of English is required. (Chapter 10, paras 2 & 3; see also Chapter 1, para 4.)

42. Staff who have received formal postal training should not normally be available for transfer to other government departments. (Chapter 11, para 1.)

46. It is essential to obtain the services of an expert in international postal accounting from the Indian administration if Nepal is to be able to meet its obligations, and safeguard its revenue, in the international service. (Chapter 12, paras 2 & 4 (iii).)

(This ends the summary of Part I. Part II consists of eight Appendices, which will not be summarized here, but the titles are listed herewith:

1. Recommended Organisation of the Director General's Office.
2. Outline of the Three-Tier Structure for the Postal Service.
3. Long Term Plan for the Postal Service.
4. Statistics of the Postal Service.
5. Outline of a Training Course for Postal Controllers.
6. Careers of Overseas Postal Students.
7. Fellowships Awarded During the U.P.U. Project.
8. Audio-Visual Training Aids Provided under the U.P.U. Project.

Part III is titled: Detailed Recommendations. This section begins with the

statement that "In the course of five years some hundreds of recommendations have been submitted to the Director-General of the Postal Services Department and his officers."

This section lists some 70 recommendations of less general interest than those listed in Chapter 13 of Part I. Items of special interest to collectors and students of postal history are:

12., 13. and 14. give detailed recommendations for increases in various mail rates which were in effect at the time this report was written (Dec. 1970).

50. Many offices are still without proper date-stamps.

56. Post Offices should bear the name of the town in which they are situated, not the name of the district. For example, Palpa P.O. should be called Tansen and Dolkha P.O. should be called Charikot..... Spelling of names of offices should be standardised in both Devanagiri and Roman script.

59. A list of postal addresses should be published giving the name of the delivery post office for each of the 3,600 village panchayats.

(This ends the summarization of this exhaustive report submitted by Mr. W. R. Ward, U.P.U. adviser from 1 September 1965 to 31 December 1970 under the U.N. Development Programme. Newer members who may have missed the earlier sections of this summary may write your editor for information desired from this report.--Since this report was written some 15 years ago, it would be appropriate to note improvements & changes in the Nepal postal system, when and if they become available. In a brief summary of statistics on Nepal published by His Majesty's Government in July 1983 and provided to us by Mr. S. L. Shrestha, we note that the number of post offices in Nepal at that time was 1,590. It is doubtful that any nation in history has developed and expanded its postal service as rapidly as Nepal. This unusually rapid expansion has, as this detailed report indicates, been accompanied with many difficulties, all of which require patience and hard work to overcome as Nepal strives to make up for its many years of isolation from much of the world.--Ed.)

1987 QUESTIONNAIRE REPORT

--Lester A. Michel

As of this writing your editor has received 55 individual reports from members -- about 30% of the active membership, if we do not count officers & area representatives listed on our mast head. This is a remarkably good response compared with the 14 who returned our first questionnaire about 8 years ago. These recent ones provide information which we now share with you.

Question #1 shows that the majority of members responding are primarily interested in Nepal philately (42 of 52 responding) with six indicating Tibet and 4 preferring Bhutan. Perhaps more revealing is the fact that 42 members indicated a serious interest in more than one country -- either two or all three. Two indicated "philatelic literature" as their main interest.

Question #2 revealed that 14 considered themselves to be Beginners, while 20 selected the Intermediate category, with 17 specifying Advanced status, leaving one cautious person who chose not to answer this question. No matter which category you chose, each of you has much company.

Question #3 asked for your age category, with each spanning a 10-year interval. Interestingly, no one claimed to be younger than 21, but all six of the remaining groups were well represented, with the numbers being 4, 10, 12, 12, 11 and, finally, 4 in the "above 70" category. Indeed, exactly half of the respondees are under 50 years of age and the remaining half fall in the 'over 50' group -- unusual, to say the least.

Question #4 showed, as expected, that the large majority consider themselves to be collectors only, with only one dealer responding and only 4 claiming to be both a dealer and a collector.

Collecting interests were as varied as the options listed in the questionnaire. The very first item received the greatest response (over 90%), so that virtually all of us collect stamps, first & foremost. Of the 16 suggested collecting interests, item #9 (stamps to prepay telegrams) was checked least -- by only 15 -- which is more than one-fourth of the total reporting. You selected item #6 (mountaineering covers & cards) sixteen times and item #14 (modern issues)

seventeen times -- representing more than 30% of respondees. With all sixteen categories listed receiving from 25% to more than 90% positive responses, the breadth of your interests was positively staggering. And, despite the fact that a very small space was left for "Other suggested collecting interests", six people listed interesting ideas which your editor intends to take seriously in future issues of POSTAL HIMAL.

The other side of the questionnaire told a similar story, with the very first suggestion (Reports on philatelic research re Nepal, Tibet & Bhutan) receiving a check mark from 85% of members responding. Indeed, one serious student wrote a fine letter complaining about the scarcity of serious research articles in POSTAL HIMAL. The least interest was expressed for items #11 & 12 (News of upcoming stamp shows & Reports on past shows) -- with approximately one-third of respondees indicating interest. Item #10 (New post offices in subject countries) was almost as low, but still marked as an item of interest by 39% of those who returned questionnaires.

As on the other side of the form, a half dozen additional suggestions were made which demonstrate a broad and deep interest, not only in philately, but also in such areas as history, geography, re-runs of articles in other publications, personalities, etc. These suggestions will be considered very seriously by your editor as he plans future issues of PH.

We were pleased to receive so many positive and upbeat responses and constructive suggestions. And so many of you put interesting stamps on the covers that brought your completed questionnaires, as well as other philatelic items. Each cover is saved, as your editor collects stamps, covers and related items from around the world -- a habit started as a child, when stamp collecting literally 'opened the world' to a country boy. -- Thank you, each and every one, for your input -- the input we need to help us make POSTAL HIMAL an improving publication.

Remember that each of you has material, information & knowledge that no one else has. The more we can share our own unique material and experiences, the more satisfying our search will be for the understanding of culture, history and thinking of the people in the Himalayan Region of Asia -- our chosen area of study.

(concluded on page 9)

BUILDING A NEPAL COLLECTION

--F. A. Westbrook, Jr.

(Ninth in a series of discussions for beginners and intermediate collectors)

POSTAL STATIONERY:

Historically Nepal has followed the same policy of moderation in releasing postal stationery as it has in the issuance of stamps -- only more so.

Indeed, the number of basic postal stationery stamp designs since the first item was released in 1887 is astonishingly small -- not more than 25 or 30 over a period of 100 years. Even multiplied by the various denominations & colors in which the designs appeared, the number is still small. Nonetheless, the opportunity exists for putting together a substantial collection of Nepalese postal stationery, based not only on the basic designs, colors & denominations, but also on the numerous sub-varieties of the early issues, including a good many shades & errors, together with varying text & ornament arrangements. We are reminded again of the proliferation of the classic stamps of Nepal, due in large part to crude production equipment and virtually non-existent quality control. For fanciers of postal stationery, this study can be rewarding.

Before proceeding, it should be pointed out that an indispensable tool for building anything more than a representative collection of Nepal's postal stationery is the Higgins & Gage World Postal Stationery Catalog, Section 13/N,0. (See bibliography) We will refer further to this source in the following discussion.

The Beginning

Nepal issued its first postal stationery item in 1887 -- a postal card printed on thick native paper with a red stamp depicting a crown and crossed kukris, with text & ornaments printed in black to the left of the stamp. The prominent feature of the ornamentation is a trotting horse. It was natively printed, in a denomination of $\frac{1}{2}$ anna, shown in Nepalese characters.

The overall design of the card, which was in use for more than 30 years, is readily recognizable. At a casual glance one would believe the design to

have been constant throughout the period. But closer examination reveals quite the contrary. There are many variations in the dies from which the stamps were printed, involving primarily the horse & the text, which H.D.S. Haverbeck says indicate different printings. Higgins & Gage (H&G) lists 18 varieties based on these variables. Additionally, the cards vary in size, some significantly.

To summarize, the 18 varieties of this card are the result of the use of three different dies for printing the stamps, six horse varieties, different spacings of the text, the number of words into which the principal text line is divided and differences in the slant of a vowel mark. The intermingling of these variables seems almost random, but it is these differences among the many printings that intrigue the collector.

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to detail this array of printings. The beginning collector may be satisfied with a few representative cards. Those wishing to dig more deeply will find the information needed in the H&G catalog. Many of the cards are scarce and expensive, but some can be found at quite affordable prices.

The Second Issue

In 1925, the layout of the card was modified, using one of the dies from the previous issue, but printing stamp, ornaments and text in blue. The other major change involved rearrangement of the text and ornaments relative to the horse. The card's valuation remained at $\frac{1}{2}$ anna.

This design was in use for about eight years, with five basic varieties, or printings, based on differences in the horse & text arrangement. Cards of this issue are costly.

New Stamp Design

In 1933 Nepal introduced a quite different card, valued at 2 pice (Nepal switched to the decimal system in 1903.), bearing a rectangular stamp depicting the Goddess Shiva among the Himalayas, with the horse & text appearing in the same arrangement as on the previous card. It was printed in blue on thick native paper. There are three varieties, the differences being small changes in the text and its position relative to the

Westbrook, BUILDING.....(continued)--

horse. Again, the cards are costly -- mint copies rare.

These blue rectangular Shiva cards were followed two years later by cards bearing brown vertical oval stamps -- again showing the Goddess Shiva among the Himalayas. However, the horse has been replaced by a Crown & Crossed Kukris design, with further modification and simplification of the text. The cards, still valued at 2p, were printed on native paper in Kathmandu. There are three varieties, based on differing stamp dies and positioning of the text relative to the stamp. All are available at moderate cost.

In 1959 a new design featuring a brown vertical oval with a plumed crown succeeded the former brown Shiva card. Its denomination was 4p, natively printed on Indian paper. Perhaps its main distinction is that it was the last postal card printed in Nepal.

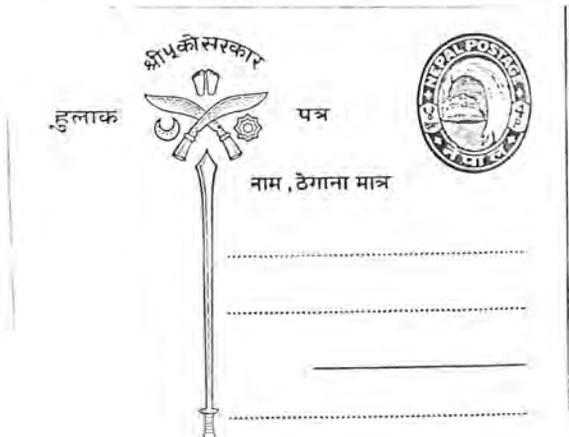
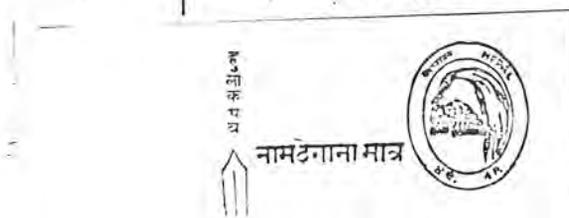
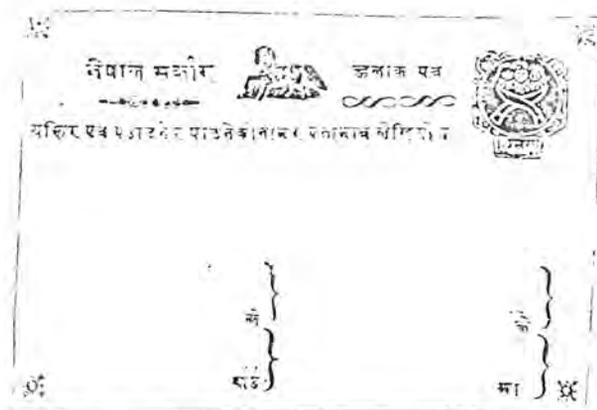
It was followed in 1962 by four and eight pice cards, still with vertical oval stamps featuring a somewhat different plumed Crown & Crossed Kukris for ornaments. These two denominations and designs also were issued as message-reply cards -- Nepal's first and last. They were printed in India. The stamp and ornaments on the 4p card were purple -- green on the 8p value.

Nepal has continued its policy of restraint in the issuance of postal cards. Those printed over the past decade can be counted on the fingers of one hand, with some fingers left over!

The beginning postal card collection likely will start with mint and/or used copies, perhaps mixing in various cancellations. As the collection advances in depth, attention will be turned to the many varieties of the early issues. There have been some outright errors, but errors will become more important in a discussion of stamped envelopes. These will be covered in the next instalment -- along with aerogrammes.

Bibliography:

- Higgins & Gage World Postal Stationery Catalog, Section 13/N,0. P.O.Box 5637, Huntington Beach, CA 92646.
- "The Postage Stamps of Nepal" by Harrison D. S. Haverbeck, published by The Collectors Club, New York (1960).



A VISIT TO LHASA IN AUGUST OF 1986

--Lester A. Michel

As a few of you know, my wife, Martha, was born in China of American missionary parents. As I put it, her 'great sorrow' has long been that her parents brought her back to the USA about 1 January 1923, when she was only 18 months old, so she has no personal memories of the country of her birth. For many years we have dreamed of taking a trip to China, and, during the month of August, 1986, the dream was finally realized.

We selected a Pacific Delight Company trip which included a 'Tibet Experience' -- just for my benefit. In addition, we were joined in our adventure by two couples with whom we had shared college days at Taylor University in the 1930s.

Leaving Seattle on 1 August, we flew to Shanghai via Tokyo, Japan, and, after three days in Shanghai, our group of 26 persons visited Beijing, Xian, Chengdu, Lhasa, Chengdu again, Guilin, Guangzhou (Canton) and, finally, Hong Kong, before returning to the USA via Seoul, Korea. I will limit this report to the four days we spent in Lhasa, capital of old Tibet.

The sky was clear when our plane (an American-made Boeing 707) left Chengdu about 9 AM, and began passing over mountainous terrain almost immediately. I was fortunate enough to get a window seat, although it was not long before a cloud layer began to build up below us at about the 20,000 foot level, I would guess. During the 2½-hour flight the clouds built up until, finally, even the peek holes closed, so that only an occasional sharp peak, glistening with ice and snow in the sunlight, pierced the cloud layer. I was unable to identify any of these under the circumstances.

Finally the plane began to descend and, as we passed through the cloud layer, we began to catch glimpses of the dry, desert-like landscape below. We found that we were following a deep valley, in which a wide river flowed, although it appeared rather 'braided' due to the many sandy islands in the river bed, as the water level was quite low. It was, clearly, a different world than the one we had left in Chengdu. The latter, though far from the sea, is only 450 ft. above sea level, while the airport at Gonggar is about 12,000 feet above sea

level. -- Although I have climbed to 14,000 ft. or more in the mountains of Colorado many times, and have even reached nearly 19,000 feet above the sea on Orizaba -- the magnificent volcanic peak in Mexico which is the third highest point in North America, I have never experienced such sensations in my body as I noted after stepping off that plane. Besides feeling somewhat light-headed and having a little difficulty with my balance, I felt a sort of prickly sensation on my skin at various places on my body, but particularly on my hands, face and back. We had been cautioned, of course, to avoid rapid movement and to rest as much as possible during the remainder of the day.

After arriving at Gonggar air-strip, our group was divided fairly evenly so that we could be loaded into two minivans, each holding a dozen or so, for the 1½-hour ride to Lhasa itself. Our local guide was a young Tibetan from Chengdu who was more interested in his cigarettes and his western-style suit than in answering questions. Fortunately, Chung Li, our Chinese national guide, had been to Tibet before, spoke excellent English and was able to answer most of our questions. -- Actually, the trip involved travelling the only paved road in the area downriver several miles to the only bridge across the river, then back upstream on the other side to the city. Bridges are rare in this country and the local people usually cross a river, when necessary, in a yak-skin boat which serves as a ferry. -- We did make one stop along the way -- a rest stop. The facility was so primitive, however, that nearly all declined to use it and asked how much longer it would take to reach our hotel!

Not long after, another stop was made, at the request of the passengers, when we passed a large Bhuddist figure carved into a mountain side and painted in bright colors. This figure, on a rock wall behind a small lake, excited our photographic instincts.

Although we got a glimpse of one snow-capped peak in the distance, upriver from the bridge we had crossed, the ca. 16,000 ft. peaks on both sides of the valley were completely devoid of snow. They did, however, protect the valley from the cold North wind, since the valley ran roughly East & West. -- We passed Tibetan settlements from time-to-time, saw people her-

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ding cattle in places and, what we assumed were barley fields -- some harvested and some approaching harvest-time. -- On one fairly sharp curve in the road (a blind curve, actually) we noted a row of stone blocks piercing the black-top at intervals of several feet, to keep a semblance of two lanes of traffic apart. The blocks appeared to be, perhaps, 6 x 8 inches in cross-section and about 8 inches high! It appeared that even large truck tires would take a beating if the driver strayed too far from his share of the road!

Arriving in Lhasa at last, we found ourselves entering from the West, past an area in which, we were told, the Fall Harvest Festival was being held -- the last two days of a week-long celebration coinciding with our first two days in the city. Although this was only the 11th day of August, we must remember that Fall comes early at 12,000 feet and, furthermore, that the Lhasa valley is about the lowest area in all of ancient Tibet. At any rate, this event brought many of the country people to the city and this gave us an opportunity to see native Tibetans who had hardly been touched by the changes that have taken place there in the past 10 years or so.

Suddenly we were at our destination, the Lhasa Hotel -- the only western-style hotel in Lhasa and one which is not fully operational yet. Indeed, it has been open for only about a year, to about 250 guests at a time, but will eventually provide accommodations to 1,000 tourists.

Our guides asked us to wait in the hotel lobby while they obtained our room assignments and attended to other details. We then went to our rooms to freshen up before going to a late lunch. All of our meals were taken in the 'grand ballroom' where round tables seating about 10 people each filled the room. Our group was assigned to 3 specific tables -- just enough for our group and our guides. The food was largely Chinese, although we learned later that the meat was yak meat, for the most part. Virtually all food for the hotel guests was flown in from Chengdu.

Of course, we did not yet have our luggage -- just our carryon items -- as it did not arrive until late evening, travelling on a slow truck from the airport I suppose.

Martha and I had a most conveniently placed room on the second floor, just across from the service desk and the elevators, which we quickly learned to ignore. It was easier and quicker for us to go down (or up) one flight of stairs near the elevators, since the elevators were temperamental and usually full, when on the way down, despite the fact that the building only had 5 or 6 floors. -- On the main floor there were shops of all kinds, a post office, a bank, the eating facilities, etc., as well as the main desk. We were in the central section of the building, which had two large wings, neither of which was open to the public due to their unfinished condition. -- Covered walkways provided short cuts to other areas of the sprawling hotel and we quickly learned how to use these to get to our dining room quickly.

Service, generally speaking, but particularly in the dining room, was lackadaisical. At meal time, the waitresses would bring dishes of food to the tables from the kitchen. They were all trim, young Tibetan girls dressed in black & white uniforms. They also brought the drinks, usually Chinese beer and soft drinks in glass bottles, and simply laid an opener or two on the table before rushing off to the doorway into the kitchen, where they stood, visiting and laughing together, while totally ignoring our attempts to get their attention. They obviously had no idea of the kind of service expected by most American and European tourists!

Tippling is forbidden in China, as all services are provided by the government which assigns jobs and pays workers. -- Once Martha noticed a group (apparently hotel service people) gathered around a young Chinese man in a business suit, who was obviously demonstrating how to use a vacuum cleaner. Martha said that, from the looks on their faces, most of the observers had probably never seen a vacuum cleaner before!

The rooms were comfortable and well-equipped with western-style bathrooms, good beds and fine, heavy wool blankets on the beds. Oxygen was piped to a small table between the two beds and one of our guides demonstrated to us how to use the oxygen if we had any breathing difficulty. We tried it out, being the curious type, but never felt the need

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for it. Our home in Colorado Springs is more than 6,000 feet above sea level and we spend as much of our summers as possible at our summer home, situated nearly 9,000 feet above the sea, so we were probably better acclimated to Lhasa's elevation than most. Trying to go up a flight of stairs briskly, however, quickly reminded us that we were at an unusually high altitude. That was hard to remember when we were in a modern hotel and could look out the windows and see deciduous trees and mountains without snow rising above us for another 4,000 feet.

By the time we had taken a nap, we found that the sun was going down. I hurried up the stairs to the top floor (the fifth) and found my way out onto a deck on the East end of the building. There I took a picture of the famous Potala, using a 135 mm lens, as the setting sun illuminated that remarkable edifice. Thus I ended my photography for that day.

Interestingly, all of China, including the far western regions, is in a single time zone, so, Lhasa, the westernmost capital in China has the same time by the clocks as the cities on the sea coast of this huge country. We found it curious, but realized that the country people of Tibet probably do not have timepieces anyway and simply use 'sun time' in carrying out their activities.

Just across the street from the Lhasa Hotel, in the Chinese section of the city, stands an imposing building -- the new fine arts theatre. When Martha asked our local guide if we would get to see any performances there, he answered vaguely, suggesting that performances were given only occasionally and that we would probably not get to see one during our brief stay. Fortunately, our national guide was not so ignorant and secured seats for us at an evening performance -- but more about that later.

Next morning, our first full day in Lhasa, we had breakfast in the ballroom and, a few minutes before 9 AM, gathered at the hotel entrance for our bus ride to the Jokhang temple.

Nothing quite prepares one for that initial walk across the plaza in front of the Jokhang, as this is a favorite area for the Tibetan entrepreneurs -- and particularly the women. They are bold,

open, curious, mischievous and shrewd. They also have a great sense of humor, but they are determined to sell you something. Martha saw a necklace on one woman -- one of several necklaces -- and one which she liked very much -- a 3-strand affair, with coral beads separating polished pieces of turquoise, and with a small, almost dainty, silver box at the bottom. She bartered some and finally struck a deal with the owner, apparently paying a fairly high price for the item, as immediately, several other women crowded around them both, pressing all sorts of necklaces and other items on Martha. Most of the necklaces were rather heavy and unappealing to her, but it took some time to convince these ladies that she would buy nothing more. During the rest of our stay we never saw another necklace like the one she bought, so she has been very satisfied with her purchase.

We were finally able to focus our attention on the Jokhang temple itself, and upon the variety of people around its main entrance. -- An excellent guide book, which I picked up later in a book shop in Hong Kong ("A Guide to Being There" by Elizabeth B. Booz, Shangri La Press, Hong Kong (1986)), states: "The Jokhang is the spiritual centre of Tibet, its most holy place, the destination, over time, of millions of Tibetan pilgrims.

"The oldest part of the Jokhang dates from the 7th century A.D. It was one of two temples built by King Songtsen Gampo to house the statues of Buddha that his two foreign wives brought to Tibet from China and Nepal."

In the outer courtyard we observed many pilgrims performing various acts of piety. Plant material was offered in 'ovens' which smoldered continuously, sending smoke 'up to heaven.' Before the main entrance we observed many pilgrims prostrating themselves on the rough stone floor, which had been worn smooth by many years of such activity. Monks and novices of every age, from small boys to old men were seen engaged in a variety of activities. -- I happened to see one pilgrim -- a youngish man, perhaps 25-30, who was roughly dressed and looked as though he had not had a bath in years -- approach a monk who was sprinkling holy water on the faithful. The man folded his hands and inclined his head in appropriate fashion, getting the attention of the man of God, who sprinkled water on his fore-

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head. Then, quick as a flash, the man turned toward me (away from the monk), reached up with both hands and gave his face a vigorous scrubbing with the water that was running down toward his chin, then scrubbed his hands against each other. At that moment he looked up, saw me watching and burst out laughing -- as if to say, "I saw no harm in making this precious water do double duty!" -- Of course, all of this happened so fast that I had no chance of trying to take a picture, even if I had wanted to do so. But I will have that picture etched in my 'mind's eye' for as long as I live.

Martha took a picture of another young man who was carrying the skin of some sort of wild animal -- possibly a leopard. At first the young man thought Martha was interested in buying the skin, but turned away in evident disgust when he realized that all she wanted was a picture!

Inside the Jokhang, all sorts of religious activities were being carried out. A long table-like set of metal-covered shelves bore the ever-present yak butter lamps. Pilgrims walked along these rows of lamps, adding a bit of yak butter to each of the pots before rounding either end of the long table to enter the inner portions of the temple. Each lamp had a small flame burning above a wick which seemed to float in the melted yak butter -- much like a typical candle flame, but with an almost overpowering odor which is difficult to describe. In front of this long table (or bench) we noted another pilgrim, well-dressed and constructing a small tower about 3 feet high, using grain and paper money, primarily -- all of which seemed to constitute his offering. He did not seem to mind being photographed as the monks did. Indeed, he paid no attention to anyone, being totally engrossed in his act of religious piety while talking softly to himself, or to his God.

While many of our group spent considerable time in the inner rooms and galleries, with their ornate Buddhas, gods & demons, I hurried through and returned to fresher air and light to watch a group of workmen building something on one side of an inner courtyard which was open to the sky. They had a large

pile of lumber and, with an assortment of interesting handsaws, adzes, chisels, hammers and scrapers, were preparing beams that were obviously going to be fastened together without the use of nails or any metal parts. I wondered where the lumber came from, but was unable to make my question understood, and neither of our guides was available at that moment. But I am sure that, at 12,000 feet above sea level, such lumber must be very dear indeed.

The guide book I am referring to from time to time states that: "The Roof can only be visited with a CITS guide, for a fee, but photography is allowed...." Martha, from whom I had become separated, later told me that she had been up on the roof with Chung Li, our national guide, and had taken a few pictures, but was not aware that any fee had been paid for the privilege. It is quite possible, however, that Chung Li may have unobtrusively paid the monk who had accompanied them, without ever telling Martha -- another indication of the kind of leadership we enjoyed on this trip.

Of course, photography was not permitted inside the holy places of the temple, so we must rely on our own memories of those places, where we rubbed shoulders with pilgrims of all sorts, as well as with other tourists like ourselves. In most of those places, the only light came from the ubiquitous yak butter lamps. The smoke and odors in those enclosed places was nearly overpowering.

(to be continued)

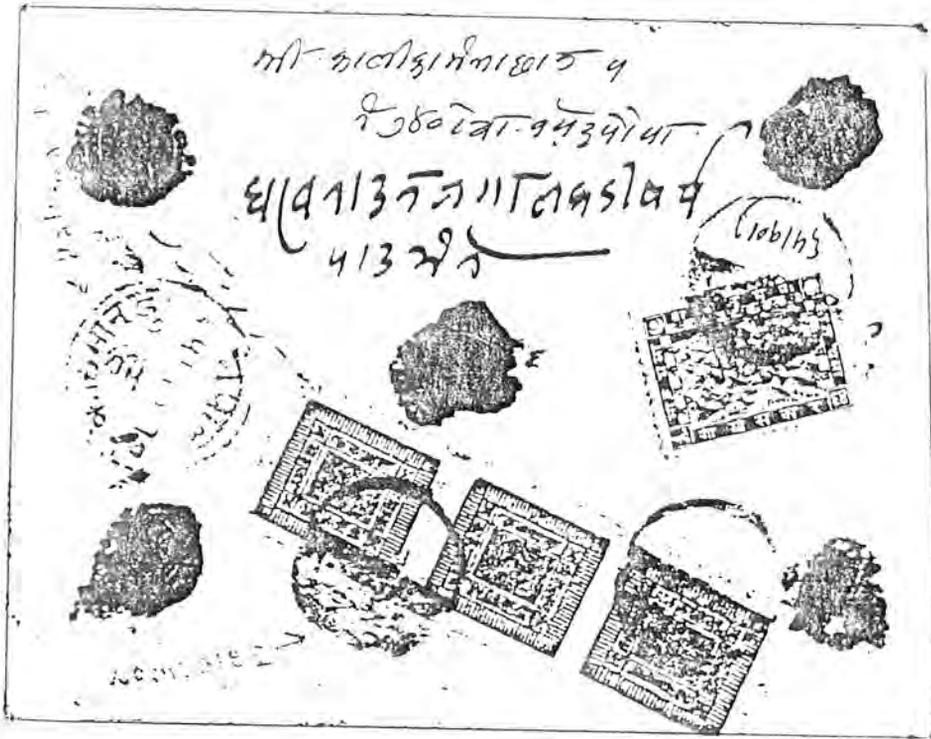
NO AUCTION LIST THIS MONTH!

--Colin Hepper

This is an appeal for lots to enter in our mail auctions. At this point we have only some 30 lots to offer -- not enough to justify an auction list to go with POSTAL HIMAL No. 53. Please check your holdings and send us materials you no longer need. Remember that you not only aid your own cash flow, but also support our Study Circle which receives a commission on sales, thereby helping to keep costs -- particularly membership fees -- to a minimum.

Unsold lots from our last auction -- Auction No. 43 -- are as follows:-
Lot Nos. 1, 2, 11, 14, 20, 21, 41, 50, 66, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 150, 153, 154, 156, 158, 163, 275, 276, 302, 303. As usual, these lots are available at 2/3 the estimate.

SHOWCASE



KATHMANDU

65 / 10 / 10 B.S.
1909 JAN 23 A.D.



JALESWAR

65 / 10 / 7 B.S.
1909 JAN 20 A.D.

A remarkable cover from the Leo Martyn collection:
"1909 (January). Registered cover from Jaleswar to Kathmandu
(late ornamental receiving CDS on reverse), bearing on reverse
1901-7 recut-frame one anna strip of three with one cliché in-
verted and 1907 Shri Pashupati sixteen pice tied by classic
negative CDS cancellations (one hand-dated), rate of 28 pice.
Covers bearing a combination of classic and Pashupati issues
are extremely rare.