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The Stamps of the Feudatory States

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Author's Preface

With this, the COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST will start a series of articles on the stamps of the Feudatory States of India written by me. This series will run for a period of several years to eventually cover the entire field of these little known stamps. Each article will be complete by itself, dealing with the stamps of one single State. In this way there will be no loss of continuity. Perhaps, when the series is completed, it can be presented in handbook form by The Collectors Club. This will rest largely with the response of the readers and the interest aroused in this esoteric branch of philately.

The lack of general interest in these stamps, although it has greatly increased in the last few years, still remains something of a mystery. Perhaps the fact that the stamps appear somewhat crude, and lack easily readable inscriptions is the reason; or perhaps the poor stamp press publicity that they have had over the past half century also contributes to this phenomenon. The fact remains, however, that most of the great students and collectors of the past have devoted much time to the study and collecting of these "uglies". The Tapling, Ferrari and Hind collections were particularly strong in these stamps. The interest shown in the rarities of the Indian States can best be shown by recounting the fact that Baron Ferrari traded a "Post Office Mauritius" to T. K. Tapling in exchange for a copy of Poonch No. 1.

The stamps of this Indian group have something for every type of collector. If he wants rarity, early Jammu and Kashmir boasts of seven stamps of which fewer copies are known than of "the Post Office Mauritius." If he wants inexpensive stamps, then

Hyderabad and Travancore, not to mention several other states, can be completed with a modest expenditure of money. If he wants to study, the field is wide, plating possibilities are abundant; Bamra, Hyderabad, first issues, Jaipur, local printings, Sirmoor Raja's heads, to mention just a few. It is a fact that all forms of production methods can be studied easily, and most of the material with this interesting group of stamps is available to collectors, who are forced to use caution with their stamp budgets. For the Postal Historian, this is a wide open field, in which little has been done. The postal markings are usually simple as well as many times decorative. Finding these stamps on cover is a fascinating chase, because even the most of the common and lowest priced stamps are practically unknown on entire envelopes. For the collector of Twentieth Century stamps, the Indian States also provide a fertile and rewarding field replete with rarities, varieties and interesting other philatelic studies. The Topical collector cannot neglect these stamps. Many of them are beautifully engraved and depicting all manner of animals, maps, bridges, desert scenes, ruins and fierce, mustachioed Rajput Princes. The collector of air mails is perhaps the only one who can find little in this group, except for a few flight covers or privately operated Rocket mails.

This series of independent articles also will serve as a listing and catalogue of these issues. They will attempt to contain the latest and most complete information, not only on the stamps themselves but also on their postal history and the postal stationery. The author intends to provide a complete bibliography with each article. The pricing function of a catalogue is the only place where the

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series will not be complete. It will be impossible to give prices in dollars and cents, not only because the very fluctuations of the market often make such an attempt obsolete shortly after it is published. Instead of giving actual prices, the author intends to indicate by symbols the comparative rarity of the individual stamps. The system used will be simple: (C) will indicate *common* (found in most collections), (S) will indicate *scarce* (found only in the better collections), (R) will indicate *rare*, (RR), (RRR) and (RRRR), following the Continental system, will indicate progressive degrees of rarity. This evaluation should be of some guidance to the beginner and advanced collector alike, as it will be based on over twenty years experience in searching for the stamps of these little known and less appreciated Indian States. For the collector of covers and multiple pieces the symbols will be based upon the normal stamp (N), thus (4N) will indicate four times the price of the single stamp is about what the collector should expect to pay, or, (N) would mean not to pay a premium for multiples or covers. In the case of covers, an additional symbol (U) will be used. This will indicate that the particular stamp is unknown on cover. Surprising is the fact that this symbol will be met with most frequently. For even the commonest stamps are sometimes practically impossible to find on covers.

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The State of Faridkot lies in the Cis-Sutlej area of the Punjab between Latitudes 30° 13' 30" and 30° 50' North and Longitudes 74° 31' and 75° 5' East. It comprises an area of 612 square miles (About one-half the area of Rhode Island), containing 168 villages with a population of 97,934 people. The state was founded by Bhahan during the reign of the Emperor Akbar. The Raja rendered good service to the British during the Sikh war and the mutiny of 1857, and received an addition to his territory. He is a Jat by caste. The annual revenue is Rs. 3,000,000. The State army consists of 200 Cavalry, 600 Infantry and 73 Field guns.

Postage stamps were first issued during the year 1879. The State post office continued

to provide its own stamps until the postal Convention with the Government of India came into effect on January 1, 1887. After that date Indian stamps with the name of the State overprinted were used. The scope of this article is concerned only with the locally produced stamps.

The stamps were all printed from single dies struck one at a time. The dies were handcarved by a local seal cutter and were probably made of brass or iron. The color for the impressions was a uniform ultramarine without any regard for denomination distinctions.

The most interesting impression is that of the ½ anna essay (Fig. 1). This die bears the date "1934" Samvet era (A. D. 1877). The state authorities found that this price was too high for the postal needs and the impressions from it were never placed in use. In July, 1884, Major E. B. Evans wrote to the Postmaster of the state enclosing copies of the various designs and questioning him about their use. The questions and the postmaster's answers are given as follows:



Fig. 1. ½ Anna Essay

Q. Were ½ anna stamps like this ever made or issued in Faridkot?

A. Yes, they were made, but they were not issued for use, as they were printed as a model only.

Q. When were they made?

A. In 1884, though the seal had been previously prepared.

Q. When were they issued for use?

A. No use whatever was ever made of them.

Q. In what colors were they printed?

A. In red color only."

From this we can establish that the essay had been properly prepared and that it was in red color. Impressions in other colors are

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Fig. 2. 1 Fulus Stamp

known and were reported during the life of the local post. These can at best be only color trial impressions and were not authorised. Reprint proofs are known perforated 12. These appeared in 1888.

Of the issued stamps the earliest reported is the small oblong stamp (Figure 2). The design consists of inscriptions in Persi-arabic characters in two rows separated by a reticulated border, with a plain double line frame surrounding the whole. The inscriptions translate as follows: "Riyasat-i-Faridkot" meaning Principality of Faridkot in the upper line, and "Tikat-i ek folus" meaning stamp of one folus in the lower. The term folus is derived from the Greek "Obolus" meaning a small coin and was applied in Northern India to the 1 Paisa coin which had a value of $\frac{1}{4}$ anna. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cent at that time).

These stamps were printed singly by hand in ultramarine ink. The impressions were close together and tête-bêche pairs are not uncommon. The paper used at first was of native manufacture showing distinct laid lines. Later white, European laid and wove papers which were easily obtainable in the local bazaars were used without discrimination. Sometimes a rough gum was applied to back of the sheets, but this was not a constant practice. Proof impressions are known in black, green and red.

Sometime during the year 1882 a new design was adopted. (Figure 3) It is more elaborate than those of the first issue. The design again consists principally of inscriptions, which may be translated as follows: The Persi-arabic characters inside the central circle read, "Riyasat-i-Faridkot", the same as those in the upper part of the oblong stamp. In the circular band surrounding this inscription it is repeated in Devanagari Characters, except that the "D" of "Faridkot" is omitted so that this inscription reads, "Riyasat Faridkot". In the label at the bottom appears the inscription, "Tikat-i-khatt ek paisa" in Persi-



Fig. 3. 1 Paisa, Die I



Fig. 4. 1 Paisa, Die II

arabic only. This may be read as, "Stamp for letters one paisa."

Towards the end of the period of the local post the die for this stamp was lost or broken and new die was prepared. It was a close copy of the first die differing only in size. (Figure 4) It is distinctly larger, measuring 20 x 26 mm. as against $19\frac{1}{2}$ x $24\frac{1}{2}$ mm. for Die I.

The impressions of both Die I and Die II are found only handstamped singly in ultramarine ink. The papers used were European wove varying from white to a paper having a distinct yellowish tone. Die I also is found on laid paper. The largest multiple piece reported is a block of 66, six horizontal rows of eleven impressions. This is believed to have been a complete sheet.

There is a proof of Die I known impressed on stiff yellow card. The proofs of Die II exist in vermilion, black and green.

The commonest cancellation found is three confocal ellipses whose outer measurements are 30 x 19 mm, enclosing the word "Faridkot" in English letters. (Fig. 5). The only covers seen by the author all carry this obliteration. Mr. L. E. Dawson reports the

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Fig. 5. The Elliptical Cancellation

existence of three other cancellations, 1) a mark consisting of four concentric circles whose outer measurement is 22 mm. 2) a large, heart-shaped seal, and 3) a large circular seal. (Fig. 6). Occasionally these stamps can be found with the obliteration of the British Indian post offices at Ferozepore and Kharar.

On January 1, 1887, the postal convention with the British Indian post office was placed in effect. The local post ceased functioning as of that date. Sometime during the year 1888, there appeared a series of impressions purporting to be stamps available for internal postage in the state. These consisted of the designs of the 1 folus, 1 paisa and $\frac{1}{2}$ anna essay redrawn. The impressions were printed from a plate by photography. The plate of all denominations consisted of 80 impressions (10 x 8). Careful study has proved beyond all question that these labels were never used or intended for use as postage stamps. They were merely fancy reprints or bogus labels made to supply a growing philatelic demand. They can be found in shades of ultramarine, red, vermilion, blue, black, green and yellow both imperforate and perforate 12. Copies occasionally appear bearing the cancellations used by the state post office after the postal convention was signed. These cancellations were applied by favor and do not indicate any postal use. Some apologists for these labels have tried to prove that they were intended for revenue use. There is absolutely no evidence to support even this theory. To the best of our knowledge they are merely labels.

Issued Stamps**Check List**

1879. Handstamped from a single die. Imperforate.



Fig. 6. The Large Circular Seal Cancellation

1. 1 Folus Ultramarine on native laid paper (S)
2. 1 Folus Ultramarine on European laid paper with paper makers wmk. (C)
3. 1 Folus Ultramarine on European wove paper (C)

A. Tête-bêche (R)

1882. Handstamped from a single die. Imperforate.

4. 1 Paisa (Die I) Ultramarine on native laid paper (S)
5. 1 Paisa Ultramarine on European laid paper (S)
6. 1 Paisa Ultramarine on European wove paper (C)
7. 1 Paisa (Die II) Ultramarine on European wove paper (C)

All multiple pieces (4N) Covers (RRR) except No. 7 which is (U).

Essay

1884. $\frac{1}{2}$ anna Red on European wove paper (S)

Proofs of the Essay. (Color trials)

Ultramarine, Vermilion, Black and Green. Reprint proofs are known perforated 12. All on European wove paper. (S)

Proofs of the issued stamps.

- 1 Folus Red, Black and Green on European wove paper. (S)
- 1 Paisa (Die I) Blue on stiff yellow card. (RRRR)
- 1 Paisa (Die II) Vermilion, Black and Green on European wove paper. (C)

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