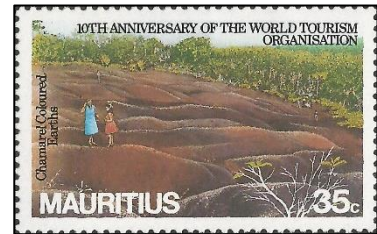


MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY

MID-YEAR ANNEX

A FOUR POINT COMMENT

- Du Benji's illustration of the insert is square not oblong nor vertical and shows more details such as a flame tree and additional mounds of earth and fencing but the "reworked" stamp shows only a bunch of flowers from the tree in the left bottom corner. The illustration does not bear the name or signature of the Chinese artist, painter and calligrapher. The stamp commemorates nothing in particular. However "Painted by Du Benji" in black is at the left of the stamp in small print.
- On 27th September 1985 the Mauritius Postal Administration (GPO) issued a set of 4 stamps to mark the Tenth Anniversary of World Tourism Organisation (WTO). The 35 cents stamp featured the Chamarel Coloured Earth which was described as: "This is a mound of undulating land stretching in contrasting layers of colour. The patches of red, yellow, brown and grey earth are believed to be the result of weathering". 33 years on the scene is shown again through Chinese eyes.
- On 30th May 2018 the philatelic bureau distributed a plain unheaded A4 handout listing the year's stamp programme. The 4th "theme" lists Scenery of Mauritius in the month of July boxed separately from and **after** two "Art and Science" stamps also programmed for July. The "Stamp Issue Programme" (Established by the Stamp Advisory Committee) of 30th May therefore contains erroneous data. Both the SAC, recently re-established, and Mauritius Post's contributions to the promotion of Mauritian philately are hopelessly wide of the mark.
- Why is the stamp issuing policy so out of step that today's stamps do not reflect nor cater for appropriate denominations to meet current postal rates. Why are the definitive denominations not aligned to meet the most in demand postage for postcards (Rs 25), standard inland letters (Rs 13), inland registration fee (Rs 20). The Du Benji stamp will be used almost exclusively on inland mail and will hardly be seen on overseas mail. For several years now Mauritius Post has been in effect operating **without** a definitive series of stamps. Yet unnecessary low Re 1, Rs 2 and other lower than the minimum inland rate commemorative stamps which will not be seen either locally or abroad on commercial mail have been released repeatedly. Some in Mauritius Post are not only out of step, they have lost their minds.



TECHNICALITIES

It is disturbing how lightly and very unprofessionally Mauritius Post treat their technical details listings in the data cards inserted in their OFDC. They respect nothing anymore not even long established philatelic specifications.

- The perforation 14 x 2 cm is a silly detail. Catalogues and other philatelic publications indicate perforation by the figure only without any 2 cm. All Mauritian perforations are measured and counted over a 2 cm space. Every philatelist and collector knows this – they do not need Mauritius Post to tell them that. Over the years Mauritius Post show the perforation details as 14 x 2 cm. When one consults Stanley Gibbons and other catalogues or even the UPU website one finds out that the perforation is shown as 13 and 13^{1/2} because the current standard Mauritius perforation is generally 13 or 13^{1/2} hardly ever 14.
- Recently Mauritius Post has resorted to rounding off the size of stamps data **without** the decimal point, unlike the past when the **actual** size was given. The society has reproduced Mauritius Post data in the past for information purposes. We will as from now stop using their data. The society suggests that our members and readers consult other sources before they write up their collection or even better wait until Stanley Gibbon publish their catalogues. Whilst the UPU website publishes details with their WNS numbering do not rely on their data either. MU011.17 lists the 11 Nov 2017 Maritime Zone stamp size as 45.0 x 30.0 mm on the UPU website at June 2018 when this stamp is in fact 50.0 x 45.0 mm.

RECENT CHINA-MAURITIUS POST OVERDO

We have been able to glean, locally, something about Du Benji as follows: According to Mauritius Post he came to “Mauritius in January 2017 and produced a large number of calligraphy and painting work featured with this beautiful island” sic.

On 15th April 2017 to commemorate the 45th Anniversary of China-Mauritius Diplomatic Relations Mauritius Post released two similar Special Commemorative Covers (SCC) affixed separately with the Rs 7.00 and the Rs 9.00 Ship Model stamp of 2005 (SG 1135/1137). Both covers bear the logo of Mauritius Post on their back flaps.

The Chinese apparently “released” in Mauritius on the same day two different types of SCC affixed with the Rs 8.00 and Rs 16.00 (SG 1136/1138) Ship Model stamps of Mauritius. All four covers are also adorned with the same ¥ 1.20 stamp of China (as shown) with Chinese vignettes of four Du Benji paintings of Mauritius sceneries. The Moka Range and a beach scene are on the the two Chinese covers and on the Mauritius covers the vignettes of Le Pont Naturel and Chamarel Coloured Earths. What four 13 years old Model Ship stamps found in “the vault” of which only one (Rs 8.00) shows a Chinese “Sampan” are doing on 2018 SCCs only Mauritius Post knows.

Du Benji took all the liberties an artist could with his “Scenery of Mauritius” paintings as all the paintings are typically Chinese. Mist on the Moka Range, a dark dawn/dusk beach scene (for which one has to use a magnifier to identify anything) colours other than those of the earth at Chamarel and a mass of charcoal volcanic basalt for Le Pont Naturel. With his overwhelming use of dark colors without much greenery he obviously has a rather dim view of Mauritius, definitely not the way to promote our sun, sea and sand scenery or message.

We show here the four vignettes* which are **not** postage stamps of either China or Mauritius. These vignettes are usually detached ending up on the post office floor, the waste-paper basket or the bin.



Five years ago on 17th May 2012 to “celebrate 40 years of diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Mauritius and the People’s Republic of China” Mauritius Post issued **ten separate** SCCs all with the logo of Mauritius Post on the back flap. All the covers bear the Rs 5.00 Indigenous Flowers of Mauritius definitive denomination (SG 1182) together with a series of various ¥ 1.20 flowers of China stamps with butterflies vignettes.

On 9th October 2012 a single stamp of Rs 14.00 (SG1242) was released to “Celebrate 40 years of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Mauritius and the People’s Republic of China”: five months after the event. This brings us back to 15th April 2017 with no 9th October 2012 Rs 14.00 stamp (SG 1242) to commemorate the 45 years of the Chinese-Mauritius event. An obvious Mauritius Post better late than never or whatever incredibly inept operation resulting in an overdone screw-up.

Whatever one’s view may be of the Chinese overdo there has been an inexplicable predilection for Chinese subjects in Mauritian philately since 2005. About the only thing left, after Chinese stamps and vignettes, is the monetization of Chinese stamps for use in Mauritius on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2022; a philatelic occasion in-waiting to be over exploited.

N.B. The four Du Benji covers appear to be of the Chinese “World Harmony” series inscribed on all the Mauritian covers in English and Chinese, whatever that maybe.

* Vignette The term has been debased ... now in use as a synonym for a pictorial label of no postal validity – also sometimes Etiquettes - French word for ticket or sticker applied loosely to any label. (Source: SG Philatelic Terms Illustrated)

2017-2021 RECONSTRUCTION PLAN

The Cabinet meeting of Friday 30th November 2017 took note of the 2017-2021 Restructuring Plan of Mauritius Post Ltd. The planned reconstruction measures are:

- (a) the introduction of money transfer services and acting as a Foreign Exchange Dealer
- (b) review of loss making post offices

(c) review of Free Franking Privileges.

The president commented on the three measures at the 2nd May 2018 members meeting as follows:

(i) Mauritius Post lost its Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) in 2004 and the CEO, an ex-banker who incidentally came to the Mauritius Postal Services to modernize the POSB, ended up investing post office funds in the new defunct Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank (MPCB). That did not stop him designating counter postal officers “Tellers” and making Mauritius Post an agent for both the MPCB and subsequently Maubank. 14 years later Mauritius Post comes up with a big bluff; now in 2018 he wants to go into the banking business via money transfer services, a foreign exchange dealer and as a money changer. The first two services are already existing Mauritius Post services so they are nothing new.

(ii) The only post office “closed” between December 2017 and June 2018 is the profitable (Port Louis) Waterfront post office. This was an unprogrammed forced closure because of the transfer of the Port Louis “Counter” post office from Dumas Street to Sir William Newton Street. This transfer rendered the Waterfront post office redundant. The list of post offices that should be closed immediately is long. Here are some unnecessary losers: Union Flacq, Roches Noires, Verdun or Dagotiere (or both), any one (or two) of the three post offices within two kilometres or so from each other at Gros Bois, Bois Cheri and La Flora, Boulevard Pitot, Midlands and Britannia. Moreover the politically enforced opening of Albion postal agency, after the closure of all other postal agencies and all the three expensive shopping mall complex concept post offices are not worth the costs for the volume and value of services provided. Whether or not the closure of some post offices is another of those unenforceable measures mainly because of socio-cultural, political and other whatever reasons and pressures that so often in Mauritius has nothing to do with economics is yet to be seen. We will check again in 2021 whether or not this reconstruction measure has been successfully implemented.

(iii) The review of Free Franking Privileges will not bring in any additional income of any significance. There are simply no other worthwhile sources left unless it is the removal of this privilege from the blind, the deaf, all religious and socio-cultural organisations, or any remaining NGOs, if there are any left. As it is, the Bishop of Port Louis and the Bishop of Mauritius benefit only for the inland standard rate and not for other charges and fees such as registration, express and AR. The withdrawal of the standard rate privilege from them and others in the same category is senseless unless of course a lean Mauritius Post gets really mean.

The basic fact is that the Mauritius Postal Services on 1st August 2003, before Mauritius Post came on the scene, withdrew Free Franking Privileges from all government and some quasi-parastatal organization after several years of hard work. The Cabinet meeting of 30th November 2017 “noted” nothing but more bull and bluff from a desperate Mauritius Post Ltd.

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Note: The material contained in this update has been compiled and collated in good faith for general information and no liability can be accepted for errors and omissions.