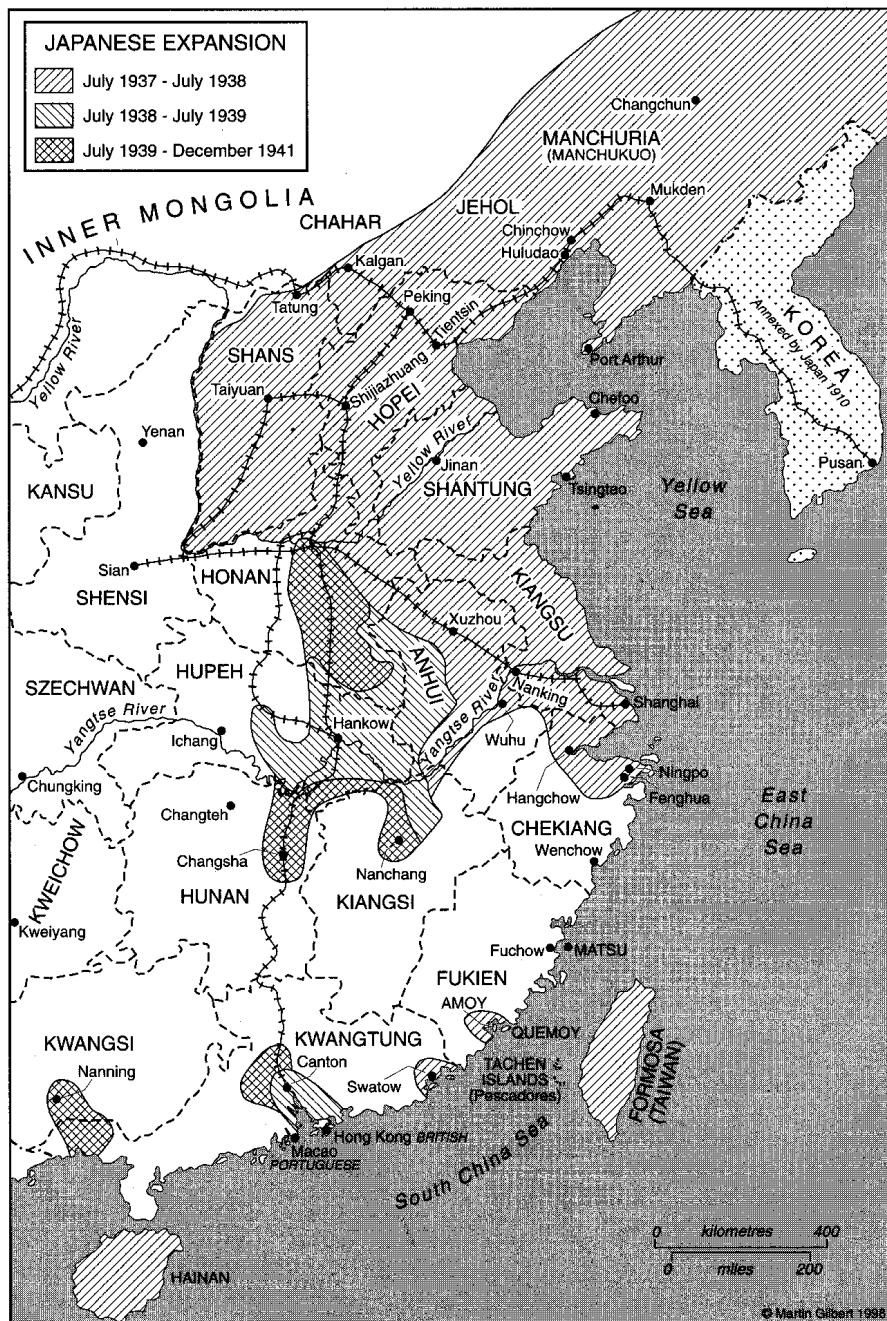


# China's U. S. Constitution Commemoratives: Through-the-Line Usages

On July 4, 1939 China issued four stamps commemorating the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. This exhibit focuses on the use of these stamps even though the Japanese despised them, attempted to prohibit their use in occupied areas and, after Pearl Harbor, even visited stamp shops and collectors to confiscate the stamps for destruction.

The stamps were a response to New York Congressman Sol Blum's suggestion that nations operating under constitutions issue stamps honoring the 150th anniversary. China was the 15th nation to do so, even though it was at war with Japan. In 1931 Japan had conquered the northeastern provinces of China and established the puppet regime Manchukuo. What angered the Japanese most was the map on the stamps which still showed Manchukuo as part of China and the presence of the U.S. flag.



Japan's full-scale invasion of China was launched on July 7, 1937. Shanghai fell on November 8, 1937, and Canton, the last remaining seaport, fell on October 21, 1938. Taking all the seaports was the first step towards isolating China from the rest of the world. After 1932 the availability of the Trans-Siberia RR was problematical. The Japanese made every effort to deny China any access to Hong Kong. The railroad route through Indo-China was closed by the Vichy French in June 1940. The Burma Road had opened in March 1938, but even the British yielded to Japanese demands and closed it from July to October 1940. China's isolation was made complete by the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941.

By the time these stamps were issued China was divided into "Occupied China" and "Free China." In a somewhat unusual arrangement, the Japanese let post offices in Occupied China continue to be administered by the Directorate General of Posts (DGP) from Free China.

Most covers are international as this did not endanger the recipient. What follows are covers mailed from within, or that evaded or transited, Occupied China.

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