

THE CHINA MARTYRS STAMPS - 1932 TO 1949

The impact of war, politics, and economics reflected in the Martyrs Stamps of China

Purpose of the Exhibit: This is a traditional exhibit in which we bring together the Martyrs stamps organized in a time line following how, through two Chinese printings, one in Peking in 1932 and one in Hong Kong in 1940-41, and two Japanese imitative printings, these stamps framed the course of the history of the period. The Martyrs Stamps of China honor six men who died in the 1911 revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen. The use of these stamps in various forms spans the roughly 17-year period from 1932 to 1949. In that period, they were re-valued, surcharged, overprinted, captured and used as occupation stamps, and propaganda stamps. They were re-captured, used as new currency stamps, inflation stamps and stamps for restored territories until stocks were finally exhausted in 1949. This exhibit is the story of the way in which the Chinese Martyrs stamps were impacted by the largest war in human history.

Exhibit notes: During this period, there were changes in the Western spelling of some Chinese place names and changes in the names themselves. For simplicity, international postal spellings have been used here. Double-line boxes are placed around items of special interest; special items have a red dot. Upper left is year of issue or use. Upper right is issuing government or agency. Analytical and historical notes appear in Italics. Many of these are the result of extended research into rate, printings and technical matters, geography and history of the period.

Prologue to War: For thousands of years, China had been ruled by a succession of dynasties—families or clans that loosely governed the sprawling country. In 1911, under the leadership of American-educated Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown. The succeeding years were relatively chaotic as Sun Yat-sen attempted to unify the country into a single, stable political entity. During that period, in many parts of the region, local warlords held sway. The country was primarily agrarian and the people peasants. During the 1911 uprising and in the years of turmoil that followed, many leaders of the revolution lost their lives in the course of fighting or by assassination. These include the individuals recognized on these stamps as Martyrs. It was also during this period that the Communist movement took hold in the countryside. In 1925, Dr. Sun Yat-sen died of cancer. His disciple, Chang Kai-shek, slowly established himself as the head of a political party called the Kuomintang and established the Republic of China. In 1931, Japan, through a series of provocations, established an army in Manchuria (which it renamed Manchukuo) and began a systematic south and southwesterly movement (red arrow in map on right) capturing north and northeastern China in their wake. In addition, populous regions in the south fell under Japanese occupation. Stamp production was moved to Hong Kong (yellow arrow) and the government ultimately to Chungking (blue arrow). The production and use of the Martyrs Issues tracks this tumultuous era.

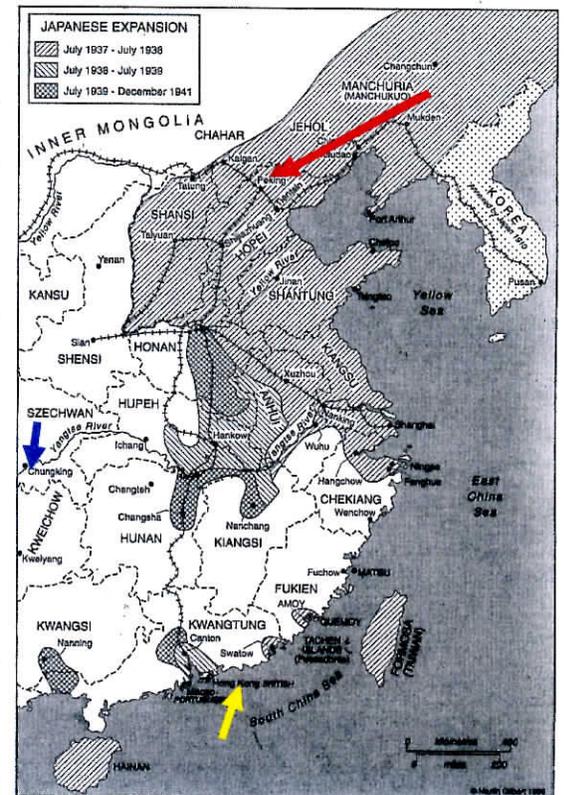


Figure modified from China Stamp Society Specialized Catalog of China to 1949. (2012) H.J. Maxwell, Editor. Used with permission

Exhibit Plan

| War/Political Status | F R A M E | Martyrs Stamps |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| | Year | |
| 1931 Japan annexes Manchukuo | 1 1932-1933 | 1932 Martyrs—Peking Printing, ROC. 1932 Martyrs—Peking Printing, Provincial overprints. |
| ~1935 Domestic airmail routes begun 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident 1937 Fall of Peking, Nanking & Shanghai Flying Tigers fly "Hump" to supply China 1938 Bombing of Canton | 2 1934-1937 | 1935-36 Martyrs used on first flight covers |
| 1940 Japan establishes puppet government in Nanking. 1940 Wartime mail censorship begins | 3 1937-1940 | 1938 Shanghai Overprint on Martyrs for Singkiang 1940-41 Hong Kong printing of Martyrs |
| Dec 1941 World War II begins 1941 to End of War Japanese control North China (Hwa Pei) and Inner Mongolia (Mengkiang) and move south along coast occupying urban costal areas but leaving China in control of back country and postal system. | 4 1940-1941 | 1940-41 Hong Kong Martyrs Overprinted for Singkiang 1941 Imitative Martyrs Issue by Japanese occupation government |
| Dec 1941 Fall of Hong Kong | 5 1941 | July 1941 Martyrs used as occupation stamps for Six Northern Districts Oct 1941 30th Anniversary of 1911 Revolution overprints |
| 1942 Japanese control of Pacific blocks eastward movement of mail 1942 Japanese close Burma Road shutting of supplies to China from India. General Joseph Stilwell begins building Ledo Road. Flying Tigers (now 14 th Air Force) operate from Kunming to supply China. | 6 1941-1942 | 1941-42 1¢ surcharge on ½¢ Martyrs 1942 Fall of Singapore/10th Anniversary of Manchukuo 1942 Japanese half-value surcharges for North China 1942 Japanese occupation overprints for South China |
| 1942-43 Allied victories in Pacific mark the beginning of the end of the war in the Pacific | 7 1942-1943 | 1943 Japanese occupation overprints for Central China |
| 1944 Death of puppet Premier Wang Ching-wei August 1945 Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki August 1945 Japan surrenders | 8 1943-1945 | 1944 Burial of Wang Ching-wei, Premier of puppet Government overprint 1945 First Chinese National Currency (CNC) Surcharge |
| 1946 Inflation rampant in China 1946 Return of Manchuria and Taiwan to China 1948 Communists make major gains in China 1949 Nationalist government retreats to Taiwan | 9 1946-1949 | 1946 Martyrs overprinted for Northeast Provinces & Taiwan 1946 Second CNC Surcharge 1948 Gold Yuan Issue 1949 Hong Kong printing Martyrs overprinted as Communist Liberation stamps |