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COURTESY LOCKHEED NEWS BUREAU

U. S. Post Office Department will pay tribute to famed American aviatrix Amelia Earhart with release of 8-cent commemorative airmail stamp July 24 at Atchison, Kansas. Miss Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, died in their plane crash while on historic 'round-the-world' flight in 1937. Above photo shows Miss Earhart framed in open door of her Flying Laboratory plane in 1936. Read special article, "Philatelists Will Always Remember Amelia Earhart," in this issue.

The Journal of The American Philatelic Society

Topical Themes



By David Torres, A. P. S.

Thailand's Scout's Fund Overprints

(NOTE: The following article is based on information supplied by Mrs. R. E. Nortum of Seattle, Washington, who owns one of the finest collections of Thailand in existence. Part of her collection was on display in the Government of Thailand's Pavilion at the Seattle World's Fair from August 1, 1962, until the closing day. As the only private collector with an exhibit at the Fair, Mrs. Nortum can be justly proud of this once-in-a-lifetime honor.

The Seattle philatelist has insured that every statement in her manuscript was historically and philatelically accurate. She has consulted not only the leading philatelic reference works in the field but also various reliable non-philatelic sources.

Readers may recall our earlier guest article describing Thailand's Scouts 50th Anniversary issue [AP, Vol. 75, No. 12, Sept. 1962, pp. 940-941]. This column is now pleased to present another authoritative essay on an equally appealing series—the Boy Scout semi-postals of 1920.)

The Organization

THE scout movement in Thailand was founded by King Vajiravudh in 1911. He maintained it out of his privy purse and members were recruited from civilian government officials and his personal courtiers and friends. The monarch felt that this would stir Thai nationalism and complement the regular army. The name "Wild Tigers," by which the scouts were known, was taken from King Naresuan's guerrilla troops (1584) who were called "Wild Tigers and Peeping Cats."

It was an adult scout movement with His Majesty as the Scout-General. The uniform at first was a copy of the European boy scout but was later changed to khaki. Part of the force was mounted and carried lances, and in 1920 the entire organization was armed with rifles purchased by public subscription. By this time the King's financial situation was becoming critical, as he was a very extravagant person. It is believed this was the reason he authorized the overprinting of the stamps in order to raise money for this movement which he had been supporting out of his own purse.

The "Wild Tigers" movement was never very popular and was reorganized by King Prajadhipok when he ascended the throne in 1925. The junior segment affiliated with the "Wild Tigers," and known as the "Tiger Cubs" or "Whelps" proved most popular and has done much for the boys of that southeast Asian country. It is controlled by the Ministry of Public Instruction and recognized by the world organization as true Boy Scouts. This junior section was and is patterned after Baden-Powell's Scouts. Every town and village in Thailand has some interest in the "Tiger Cubs," the cub leader generally being a school teacher.

The Stamps

DURING February, 1920, a notice appeared in the *Siam Observer* announcing that King Vajiravudh had authorized a series of postage stamps to be surcharged for the benefit of the Wild Tiger fund. They were to be on sale at the training camps of Ban Pong and Dusit Thani and elsewhere. The Nortum collection contains a first-day cover mailed from the Ban Pong camp by R. S. LeMay to himself at the British Legation. LeMay is the author of many fine books about Thailand (such as *An Asian Arcady*) and helped produce the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Postage Stamps and Post and Letter Cards of Siam*, published in Bangkok in 1920. At that time he was connected with the Legation, resigning on Jan. 29, 1922, to accept a post as acting advisor to the Siamese government in the Ministry of Commerce and Communications.

Types and Varieties

The stamps were not actually surcharged but were overprinted with a tiger's head and the words "Scout's Fund." There were three different types of overprints, listed in Scott's Catalogue as B12-17, B18-23, and B24-30. They were sold for an advance over face, as follows: the 2 and 3 atts values sold for 5 atts each, the 5 atts at double face, the 10 atts for 15, the 15-atts stamp for 20, and the 1-tical high value sold for 1.25 ticals.

The Type "A" overprint (Scott B12-17) was a rubber-type handstamp bearing a large tiger's head and the words "Scout's Fund" in the Thai language only. In the Nortum collection there is only a portion of a control, not enough to tell much about it except that it seems to have been applied once to a sheet.

Type "B" (Scott B18-23) is also a rubber-type handstamp with a much smaller tiger's head and the words "Scout's Fund" in both Thai and English encircling it. On this particular overprint, the control is applied to the center of every block of four stamps and is approximately one half inch in diameter, the Thai characters reading "Dusit Palace." (Dusit Palace was turned over to the Scouts for their headquarters by His Majesty.) The inverted overprint variety, listed as Scott B16a, is not recorded in any other catalog.

Type "C" (Scott B24-30) is quite intriguing. All available catalogs list it as having been issued at the same time as the foregoing Types "A" and "B". However, Mrs. Nortum believes that this overprint was issued in 1921, as the basic set of stamps overprinted (Scott A23) was issued in 1921, the 5, 15, and 25-satang stamps having been released on June 21, and the 2, 3, 10, and 50-satang values on August 6. The book *Postal Progress in Siam, 1885-1925*, prepared by the Siamese Ministry of Communications, confirms this theory, giving the date of issue as December, 1921. The overprint is of metal type printed on a printing press. None of the blocks in Mrs. Nortum's possession shows any sign of a control.

There is an error in the printing of Type "C" on the 3-satang value (Scott B25), in which the bottom line of the overprint reading "Scout's Fund" is missing in the last row of the sheet.

The *Thai Times*, official journal of the Thailand Philatelic Society, reports some sheets of these overprints recently coming on the market from a Bangkok speculator in which one sheet of Scott B22 has had bits of the margin stuck on the back of the sheet to join the partially separated perforations. This was done before overprinting and one stamp was put in upside

HARRY STEINBERG PHOTO

First-day cover, franked with surcharged stamps for benefit of Wild Tiger fund, and mailed from the Ban Pong camp by R. S. LeMay to himself at British Legation.



down, giving it an inverted overprint. The control was applied to each block of four stamps and in some places over the margin paper used to join the stamps together. As yet there have been no further details forthcoming.

Postal Cards

ALSO overprinted at the same time as the adhesives was a series of post cards which are rarely seen today. Types "A" and "B" overprints were applied to the 2 and 3-satang post cards of 1919 and the 5-satang on 4-atts of the 1899 issue. The 2, 3, and 5-satang post cards of the 1920 series were overprinted with type "C".

These post cards also sold at a premium over face. The 2 and 3-atts values each sold for 5 atts, while the 5 atts sold for 10 atts.

Catalogue Value

Ten years ago a complete set of Thailand's Boy Scout overprinted stamps could probably be purchased for \$15 or less. The 1953 edition of Scott's listed B12-

30, mint or used, at \$15.20, as follows: B12-17 \$5.35, B18-23 \$5.95, and B24-30 \$3.90.

The 1963 catalogue valuation is 12 times as high. Mint or used, Scott B12-30 is now listed at a total of \$184.50, type "B" still leading the other two sets: B12-17 \$44.50, B18-23 \$80.00, and B24-30 \$60.00.

Of course, catalogue prices are one thing and actual availability is another. The last time this writer saw B12-17 advertised was in October, 1962, and the asking price for a used set was \$14. Does this column need a new pair of glasses?

Auction Realizations

THAT THESE catalogue valuations are not exaggerated can be seen by comparing the prices that the coveted semi-postals have fetched at recent auction sales. For example, when the C. M. C. Symes collection was sold by Harmer Rooke of London on Dec. 6 and 7, 1962, a fine used set of Scott B12-17 valued at £7 realized £13, or the equivalent of \$37 in U. S. currency. The same set in mint blocks of four—with the high value described as "perfs clipped and heavily hinged"—sold for £60.



HARRY STEINBERG PHOTO

This illustration shows 5-satang post card of 1920 series overprinted with type "C". These overprinted cards are rarely seen today in "Scouts on Stamps" collections, or even in most Siamese collections.

At the same auction, mint blocks of four of Scott B18-23 went to a successful bidder for £60. A fine used set of singles brought £16 despite the auctioneer's valuation at £10.

Fine mint blocks of type "C", Scott B24-30, which were valued at £15, sold for the record price of £40, or about \$112. Fine mint and used sets of singles, each set valued at £8, fetched £11/10 and £14, respectively.

An air cover to London franked with single copies of Scott B24 and B25, and pairs of B26 and B27, which the famous auctioneers valued at £5, realized £15/10, or approximately \$44. Off cover, these six stamps have a catalogue value of \$24 in the 1963 edition of Scott's.

Obviously, if these semi-postal stamps had brought the price when issued that they do in today's market, the Thai Scouts would have been undoubtedly the best equipped in the world. As for an opinion on the "future" of these stamps, this writer hereby delegates that authority to the admirers of Thai philately and to "Scouts on Stamps" topicalists!
