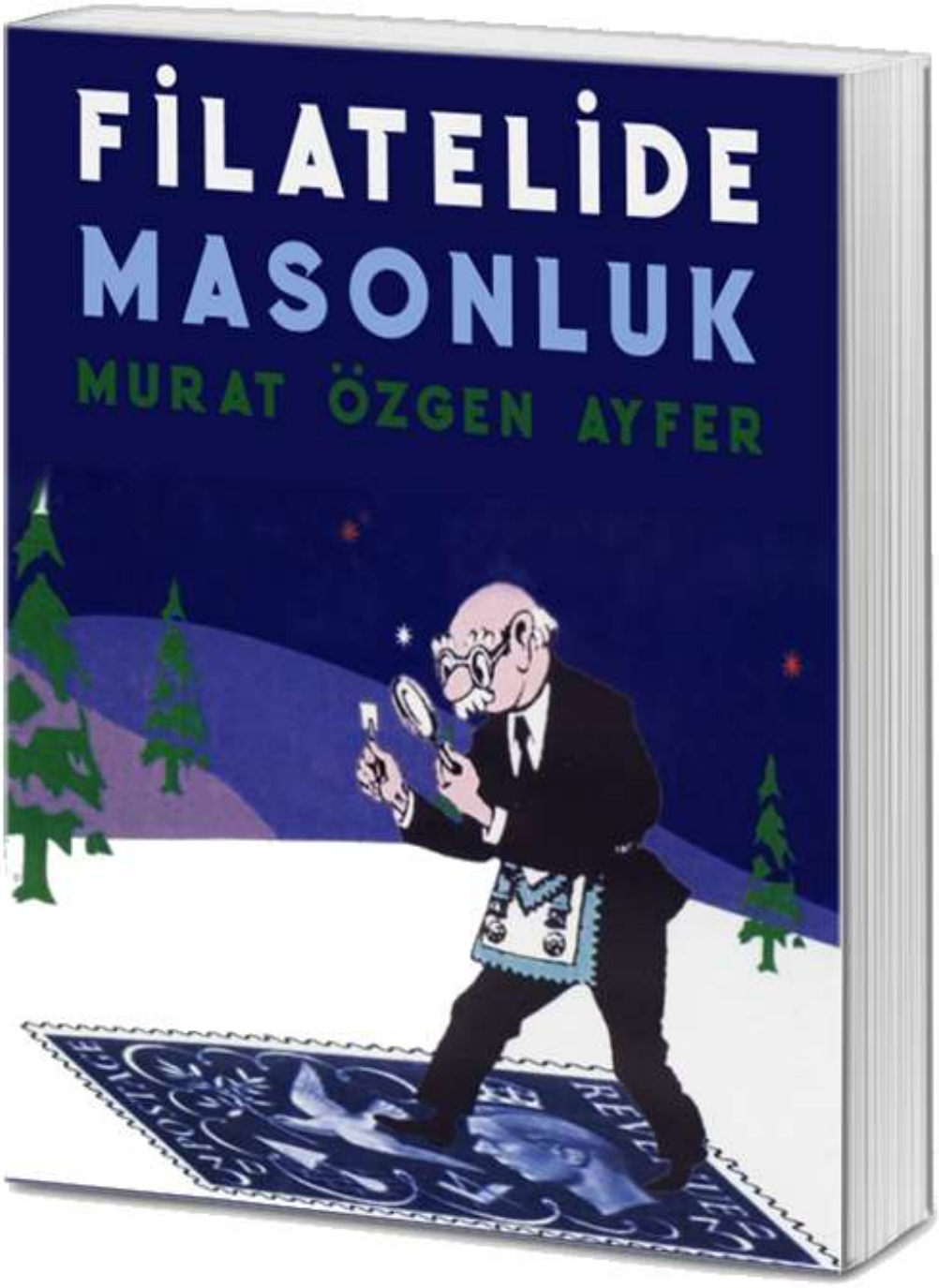
Freemasonry in Philately – Introduction



This is a translation from the Turkish assay issued in www.masonpedia.com

Source of the picture: Masonic Philatelic Club (UK)



Short History of Postage Stamps

Narrated by Derya Gül

Years ago, when we arrive in home after school or work, the first question we asked was most probably *«Is there a letter to me?»*.

We used to wait for the answers to the letters we wrote for days with great excitement.

Some of us used to exchange letters with friends at home or abroad, others with family members, acquaintances, and relatives. On average, we would receive at least one letter within a week or two. I am sure that most of us still remember opening and reading that letter with enthusiasm as if it was yesterday.

Perhaps we would first draft what we would write in reply to the letter on an ordinary notebook paper, then we would carefully transfer these to a coloured letter paper, put them in envelopes and mail.

Sometimes we even sent small gifts that could fit in the envelope with the letter; a picture, a photograph, a thin bracelet or something like a tiny pendant…

Nowadays, correspondence, which occupies an important place in the lifestyle of people over the age of 50, has turned into a pleasant nostalgia for the younger generation, and an old form of communication that has completely been disappeared into the dusty pages of history.

Throughout history, there are numerous methods of communication. Today, which we call the "age of communication" or "information age" with the advancement of access possibilities and technology, communication is everywhere, anytime... There is no concept of distance!

Correspondence, which was once the most common means of correspondence, was not only a means of communication... It was also a part of literature and history. Today, what better way to tell us about Stefan Zweig's life, experiences, struggles, anxieties, pains and happiness than through his letters.... In the same way, the letters famous Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet wrote to the well-known writer Kemal Tahir while he was a prisoner, shed light not only on those years, but also on the art, political and world views of that period.

Not only letters, but also important documents, announcements, notices, magazines and even books were delivered by post.

Besides enveloped letters, there were also postcards. These were inexpensive because they were short and clear, and they conveyed another message or information with a picture on the front.

Apart from historical and literary memorabilia, stamps are all that remains of this nostalgia-flavoured communication method of those days. "Stamps", which were necessary for the mailing of this means of communication that had finished its life and lost its functionality over time, have now become a form of collection. As a matter of fact, the word "philately" was first used in the sense of a system of stamp collecting, to distinguish it from other types of collection, especially "numismatics", which means the collection of money and similar objects...

Of course, philately is not only the collection of stamps... The collection of all kinds of objects used for mailing purposes is within the scope of philately as well. However, stamps, whether alone or glued somewhere, whether clean or stamped, occupy a special place among all. As a matter of fact, the "masonic" nature of philately or the one related to Freemasonry in some way is just similar.

Considering that we are now in 2019, how did the stamp, which was issued approximately 179 years ago to prevent confusion in the postal system, turn into a historical symbol that documents the period, depicts important people, special and important days, and reflects the cultural, political, touristic and economic situation of the country?

As short as a quarter of a century ago, stamps were no longer in favour, and were replaced by machine stamping in post offices. Who knows, maybe because the tradition of sticking and stamping by hand became too tiresome for people!

Before the Letter Starts

Prior to the story of the stamp, it may be useful to briefly mention the development of communication and the postal organisation.

As far as we know, primitive people were able to communicate with signs and some sounds they made. As the distance between them increased, the "shouting" method of communication became very limited, so people looked for ways to carry it to greater distances.

Man began to explore other ways of making sound, and discovered how to send messages over longer distances with instruments that we can call "drums".

It can be said that "tam-tam", with its past dating back to the pre-written history, was a means of communication used by the first people. This is one of the oldest percussion instruments that was used even before spoken language. This instrument, which enabled communication between tribes, made it possible to communicate with coded beats.

In the Stone Age, it is thought that people communicated through paintings on walls of caves.

Together with the discovery of fire, smoke was also used among Indian tribes as one of the old means of communication. The tribes informed the other side by keeping a cover over the burning fire with the passwords they determined among themselves and sending signs of smoke. The other side could understand whether there was an emergency according to the frequency of the smoke.

The discovery of communication by fire and smoke is also regarded as the first step in the development of communication.



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As time progressed, people's ability to communicate also improved. Some of the sounds they used started to gain more meaning, to become more distinct and systematised, revealing the need to establish a structure of common language. Although simple sounds had the same meaning everywhere in the primitive environment, words were formed when definitions and concepts began to be conveyed by sound. When the words were also different in societies that had no connection between themselves, especially in societies that were very different in terms of climate and geography, a language unique to each environment was formed.

With the invention of writing in the history we know, communication converted to a completely different form.

The Sumerians used the first known writing, described as “the sound of the symbol”, in about 3500-4000 BC. Around 3000 BC, the hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt appeared.

With the invention of writing, one of the intermediaries that played the biggest role in communication was postage pigeons. After the discovery of light materials that could be written on instead of stones, communication was established with the other party. Communication was started with a note tied to the specially trained pigeon's foot.

However, similar to the invention of writing that revolutionised human history, the invention of the wheel changed many things as well. Especially in the years that follow, it enabled the first land vehicles to be used in social life, and travelling in long distances became easier. Thus, communication methods also progressed in parallel. In the meantime, of course, sea and river routes were also used, but they were not preferred because they were much slower compared to the speed of road communication.

The first organisation, which is considered to be the ancestor of today's communication system, in which messengers travelled a certain distance by changing riding animals or vehicles and staying, was first implemented by the Persian King Cyrus around 550 BC. Horse rider groups were used in this period. This communication organisation, which was inherited by Alexander the Great after he ended the Persian domination, was continued by the army commander Ptolemeus, who remained in Egypt after his death, and became pharaoh.

This organisation of communication in Egypt is also the first postal system that could have been document.

In Roman Empire, it was Julius Cesar who had the first postal stations established. However, the famous Roman postal system called **"Cursus Publicus"** was established during the reign of Emperor Augustus. On the main roads of the empire, a horse and cart changing station called "mutatio posita" was established approximately at every 6 kilometres and an accommodation station called "mansio posita" at every 37 kilometres. Each station was named after the place where it was located. It is accepted that the word "post" is derived from this word "posita".



"Raeda", the Roman postage cart

Postal organisations continued to spread and develop as time progressed. It started to become more systematic and faster according to the technological conditions of the period it was in.

Birth of Postage Stamp

Many countries regarded to conclude postal agreements between their postal systems as necessary, so that they can send mail to and from each other. However, due to the diversity of postal shipments, differences in weight and measures and monetary systems, great uncertainty arose. Tariff systems became difficult to understand, and disputes began to arise over who would pay the money.

The cost of delivery was generally paid by the consignee. However, the difficulties and inconveniences encountered on the postal route (accidents, thefts, robberies, uprisings, wars, invasions etc.) caused the fee to increase, and the recipient refused to accept the mail when it was inconvenient for him. In this case, not only was the service wasted, but the other party, unaware of the situation, kept waiting in vain for an answer. The service fee that couldn't be received was inevitably reflected in other postal charges, which were constantly rising. Due to high fees, it was very difficult for people other than the wealthy to use postal communication.

Consequently, due to all these and similar situations, the renewal of postal communication has become mandatory.

In 1835 in England, Rowland Hill was appointed to make the necessary innovations in the postage system. Rowland Hill, an English teacher and social reformer, wrote in his book named ***"Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability"*** in 1837, he argued that the postage fee should be paid by the sender instead of the recipient. He made some suggestions for this. He recommended that 1 penny should be charged for all shipments weighing 15 grams within England, and that a piece of paper indicating the cost should be affixed to the shipment. Rowland Hill's proposal was accepted in the parliament, and the use of the postage stamp showing the cost of shipment began.



Rowland Hill in a later postage stamp

Maybe you did not know this, and thought that the use of postage stamps started at a much earlier date!

Unfortunately it isn't... While the history of coin collecting is much older, philately only started in the second half of 19th century.

In 1840, the methods of renovation proposed by Rowland Hill were implemented by the British Postal Administration.

According to the regulation that was put in effect, domestic letters weighing up to "half an ounce" (14.2 grams) were to be charged 1 penny, regardless of the distance to be conveyed, and 2 pence if no postal service was established at the destination of the letter. This postage was to be paid by the sender by affixing the sold postage stamp on the envelope. With these innovations enacted into law, the world's first postage stamp **"one penny black"** was born on **6 May 1840**.

This stamp was black in colour, issued in sheets of 240, and featured a portrait of Queen Victoria and the denomination 1 penny. The second stamp was also worth 2 pence but was blue in colour.



Then, other countries started to employ postage stamps as well.

In the United States, the first stamp was issued in 1847 as the "Presidents Series". These stamps with the images of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington remained in circulation for four years.



In 1849, the "Ceres Series" stamps were issued in France and the "10 Kroner and 20 Kroner" series in Belgium.





The postal organisation of each country issued its first stamps and continued its postal services by keeping up with the era and its requirements.

By depicting important people, events and special days of the period, stamps became both historical objects and a means of communication on their own.

According to the traditional definition encountered almost everywhere, a first day envelope is a special envelope bearing a commemorative or permanent stamp series and stamped with the first day stamp of the subject and bearing inscriptions and motifs. A more detailed definition can be made as "the application of a stamp bearing the date of the first day of circulation of the stamp by the competent authority in the country or region to which the stamp belongs, to the envelope (postal card or letter) on which the stamp issued that day is affixed".

Hence the envelope letter or postal card bearing this feature is called "first day envelope". This may even be regarded as more important in philately than the relevant stamp itself.

Postcards

Postcards were invented not to be souvenirs, but as a means of communication in order to contact people more quickly. This was also the first example of personal mass communication.

In 1880s, the "postcard era" in written communication began with the introduction of pre-paid postcards by government postal administrations in Europe and the USA. In 1890s, the use of postcards became widespread as private printing houses began to print their own material.

At one side of the card was an inscription as "postcard" in the language of the country concerned, while the other side contained an illustration.

World postcard history has a long past. However, its widespread use began with the 1893 Chicago World Exhibition. After the exhibition, the US government, through the postal organisation, allowed publishers to print 1-cent postcards for the first time. On the back of the cards, space was allocated for the message to be written by the correspondent.

Consequently, postcards were not only a means of communication, but also played a role in publicising certain political events to the masses and creating an agenda.



One of the oldest postcards in the world (1905)

Philately

Today, letters, first-day envelopes and postcards, and therefore postage stamps, seem to have disappeared, but this indispensable item of the past century and a half has become a collector's treasure.

The globally recognised name of stamp collecting is "philately". People who are engaged in this business as amateurs or professionals are called "philatelists".

Philately is a combination of the Greek words philos (love) and ateles (tax-free). The term was devised by the French collector Georges Herpin in 1865 and has been used all over the world ever since.

However, philately is often confused with stamp collecting. Whereas, while stamp collecting consists of collecting postage stamps and items related to postage stamps, philately considers stamps, first-day envelopes and postcards, and even stampings (imprints) used for this purpose as subjects of study.

Philately, which also has an educational feature, gives those interested the opportunity to create a very valuable collection in both material and spiritual terms over time.

Today, there are many examples of thematic or themed philately. Thematic collections such as sports, flowers, insects, birds, paintings, clothes and people are of wide interest.



When we look at philately from the point of view of examining stamps, we can define it as a field that collects and documents many data from the history of stamps to the process of mailing and publishing this information.

Thematic philately is also known as "topical philately". This refers to what is depicted on the stamps. In other words, it can include any subject such as birds, ships, poets, heads of state, monarchs, soldiers, maps, aeroplanes, spacecraft, sports figures, plants and insects etc. In fact, considering our special interest, we can add "Freemasonry" to these as well.

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The study of "postal history" has an important place among philatelic studies. It includes studies on postal systems and how they work, the examination of postage stamps and covers, the introduction of structural stamps, and the historical parts of the postal system. In these studies, the process from the sender to the recipient such as postmarks, postal administrations, postal quantities, letters, shipping methods are examined.

The branch "aerophilately", which studies the history of mail by air, observes the development of air transport since the history of postal mail. All aspects of air mail are extensively studied and documented by specialists.

In philately, details such as stamped envelopes, postcards, letter sheets, reliefs, printed stamps and signs are also analysed. Propaganda contents, labels such as holiday seals are other details that are included in the field of philately.

The branch of philately that studies stamps used to collect taxes or fees in areas such as legal documents, court fees, receipts, tobacco and alcoholic beverages, drugs and medicines, playing cards, hunting licences and newspapers is also examined under the name "revenue philately". Such studies have been documented and published in many journals and books.

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Among stamp collectors and philatelists around the world, there are stamps that are considered valuable, rare and therefore highly prized. These stamps are described as "world classics" in the literature of philately. The details of this subject are very interesting but beyond the scope of this study. However, it is worth mentioning the following:

One of the rarest and most expensive German stamps, a 9 Kreuzer Baden stamp with a blue-green colour instead of pink (rosa), was sold at an auction in Wiesbaden, Germany in 1985 at a price of 2.3 million marks (approx. 1.1 million euros).



The famous "Tre Skilling Banco" stamp of Sweden issued in 1855, is the only one of its kind in the world and was printed in yellow orange colour instead of green. This stamp was sold at an auction in Switzerland in 1995 for 2.5 million Swiss francs (approx. 2.2 million euros).



This brief information on philately in general may be regarded as sufficient. Now let's move on to our special and main topic.

Masonic Philately

As previously mentioned shortly, a branch of Thematic Philately is "Masonic Philately", which includes masonic symbols, subjects and events of interest to Freemasonry, famous masons and many other phenomena.

Masonic Philately is actually a very wide-ranging field of interest and study. That is to say, it covers not only stamps, first day envelopes and postal cards with masonic symbols, people or events, but also the story of these in every respect. For example, we have already mentioned that the world's first postage stamp was a black stamp with a portrait of Queen Victoria. There are no masonic symbols or figures on this stamp, but since this stamp was issued by a mason named Jacob Perkins, it can be included in the scope of Masonic Philately.

As a matter of fact, this information was evaluated and a first day envelope was organised in 1958 in the UK in memory of Jacob Perkins.



According to what has been counted so far, a total of 1250 stamps with the portrait of a famous freemason, or more precisely a celebrity who is a freemason, have been issued in 83 countries. This number increases even more when it is taken into account that the same stamp has different colours and different prices at the time of use.



In the early days of Masonic Philately, the aim was to contribute to the dissemination of masonic research through the use of postage stamps as a means of mass communication, in addition to being an enjoyable hobby that provides a wide range of information. Nowadays, the field of philately covers a wide range of subjects, including stamps, first day envelopes, postcards, masonic seals and stamps, and postage stamps indicating special events and occasions with masonic context.

Masonic Philately is a very comprehensive field, which also contains a large number of details and requires a careful and meticulous study. Even a cursory glance at it reveals a marvellous treasure, as if the history of Freemasonry and the memories parallel to it are revealed.

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Explanations

When the term "Masonic Philately" is used, this refers to three items of collection:

1- A stamp having a masonic attribute…

a) A postage stamp in that feature,
b) A stamp similar to the previous, but has been issued with some other purpose (e.g. for a remembrance), and not used in postage.

2- A first day of issue envelope having a masonic attribute…

A special envelope issued for use in post, to celebrate or commemorate an event or a person... There are two types of such envelopes:

a) A postal envelope stamped with a newly issued stamp
b) An envelope on which any other stamp has been used for postage, and stamped in the relevant country.

3- A postcard having a masonic attribute in some manner.

This can also be in one of two types, such as the first day envelope. In addition, unprinted postcards were issued, especially in 19th century.

In the meantime, we can also mention stamps that can be referred to as *"conversion"*. This is when a symbol that can be associated with Freemasonry has artificially been stamped on any postage stamp. We will see some examples of this process that was applied in the past.

In this study, only a search has been carried out in the internet, and around 2500 stamps, first day envelopes and postal cards were collected by first searching the websites mentioned in the bibliography, then distributing these in accordance with countries in geographical regions, and further sorting with respect to dates they were issued. (Countries where no relevant material could be found have not been stated).

Undoubtedly, there are items of Masonic Philately that could not be found in this limited research. This study has been given book form only because of the length of its scope, and could actually be greatly enriched.

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Upon looking at Masonic Philately worldwide, we see that there are many more stamps in almost every country than those included in this study. This is because all stamps with images of famous or important people known to be "freemasons" are considered as "masonic".

However, while the pictures of these people are included on postage stamps, this practice is not due to them being freemasons, but because they are already famous or important persons in the relevant community. In other words, even if those people were not freemasons, their pictures would still be placed on postage stamps anyhow.

In such a case, for example, in the United States, any stamp having the image of George Washington on it is considered as "masonic" within the framework of Masonic Philately, even if there is no other masonic sign or indication.

As a matter of fact, this situation is just similar in some other countries as well. Although rare, the same situation applies to some first day envelopes and postcards. Such objects were not included in this study, though they may be observed in the worldwide Masonic Philately.

In this study, only items with a masonic inscription have been taken, on the grounds it would otherwise be "meaningless" and just cover space. This is also the reason in choosing the title of this work as **"Freemasonry in Philately"**.

Sometimes the words "mason" and "Masonry" are used corresponding to "freemason" and "Freemasonry" respectively. These should be regarded as synonymous.

After this introduction, sections of this study that will follow are:

1- Freemasonry in Philately 1 – USA & Canada
2- Freemasonry in Philately 2 – Latin America, Middle (Central) America, the Caribbean and Antilles (West Indies)
3- Freemasonry in Philately 3 – Britain and Western Europe
4- Freemasonry in Philately 4 – Northern, Central and Southern Europe
5- Freemasonry in Philately 5 – Turkey, the Middle East, Asia, Australasia, and Africa

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