



US Scott #1158 issued
28 September 1960

Japonica: What it's all about philatelically

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What is “Japonica”?

**It is defined as
non-Japanese postal issues
that are somehow connected with Japan.**

Categories of Japonica

(a)

**Non-Japanese issues
with designs that
relate to an event that
did or will occur in Japan**



**Latvian stamp for the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics,
Scott #461, issued 31 January 1998**

Categories of Japonica



(b)
**Non-Japanese issues
with designs that
are wholly or partially
Japanese**

**Russian stamp portraying the Japanese artist Sesshū,
Scott #1876 issued 17 October 1956**

Categories of Japonica

Other minor categories....

(c) Non-Japanese issues designed by a Japanese

(d) Non-Japanese issues printed in Japan

(These minor categories are hard to track, and are not considered any further in this presentation.)

Why is Japonica interesting?

- **Philatelists are a varied group.**
- **Stamp collecting interests track national matters, cultural matters, and key anniversaries, among many other topics.**
- **It's easy to imagine a collector of Japanese stamps who then will be pleased to add stamps from other countries that relate to the main topic of Japan.**
- **Indeed, topical collectors with some affinity for things Japanese would find that “Japonica” serves to broaden their perspective.**

Why do countries issue items that we would consider to be Japonica?

A myriad of reasons!

- **To publicize an event in Japan in which the issuing country is participating, such as a summit meeting or an international congress**
- **To publicize an event in the issuing country that has Japanese participation, such as the visit of a Japanese sports team or dignitary**
- **To acknowledge or commemorate a joint event involving Japan and the issuing country, such as a treaty, or establishment of diplomatic relations**
- **To honor a world event with a Japanese connection, even if the issuing country is not participating**
- **And, there are also what might be considered by some as “less honorable” reasons...**

Why do countries issue items that we would consider to be Japonica?

“Less honorable” reasons?

- **To curry favor with Japanese interests, perhaps for political or economic gain**
- **To increase postal revenue in the issuing country by:**
 - **- creating items for the Japonica collector**
 - **- creating items for other topical collectors that happen to include a Japanese theme**
- **“Wallpaper”:** Making a financial arrangement with a commercial firm to issue stamps for which there is little or no genuine postal need, but which will appeal to certain classes of collectors

The first Japonica item



Marienwerder Scott #1

This is one of about 28 stamps of various denominations and similar inscriptions issued in 1920 in this small territory whose fate was going to be decided by a plebiscite managed by an International Commission that included Japan.

The next Japonica item



Brazil Scott #442

Issued 19 January 1937
to commemorate the
9th Brazilian Esperanto Congress
(in 1936)

...and a few more early Japonica items...



**People's Republic of China,
(Northeast China
regional issue)
Scott #1L6**

**Issue 12 December 1946, part of a set of 4 with the same
design, to note the 10th anniversary of the capture of
Chiang Kai-shek at Sian**

...and a few more early Japonica items...



Poland Scott #B105

**A semi-postal souvenir sheet
issued 3 August 1955
for the International Philatelic
Exhibition in Warsaw**

...and a few more early Japonica items...



Dominican Republic Scott #503

This 30 October 1958 issue shows Japanese athlete Sasahara Shōzō, 1956 Olympic Gold Medal winner in featherweight wrestling. It's part of a longer set showing 1956 winners from other countries.

Common threads?

Among these five early Japonica items...

- All have a representation of the Japanese national flag
- Three of them are for Japanese participation in an event in the issuing country
- One is intended as an embarrassment!
- One is to honor a Japanese athlete otherwise unrelated to the issuing country



Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

**First, we'll look at group (a),
non-Japanese issues that relate
to a Japanese event.**

Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Sports**

Romania

Scott

←#3698 #3703→

Issued 21 November 1991 for the
World Track & Field
Championships, Tōkyō
(from a set of 6)



Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Expositions**

Cameroun

Scott

←#C145

#C147→

Issued 1 August 1970
for Expo '70 held in Ōsaka
(from a set of 3)



Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Scouting**

Dominica

Scott

←#326 #327→

Issued 18 October 1971 for the 13th International Scout Jamboree held in Japan (from a set of 4)



Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Imperial family**



Djibouti Scott #723

Issued 10 January 1994
for the marriage of Crown
Prince Naruhito and
Princess Masako

Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Public figures**

Ecuador

Scott #C591a

issued in November 1976 to mark the centenary of the birth of Dr. Noguchi Hideyo, bacteriologist



Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Diplomatic relations**



Greece
Scott #1937

Issued 28 June 1999 to
mark the 100th anniversary
of diplomatic relations
with Japan

Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Philately**

Barbados

Scott

← #1006

#1009 →

Issued 1 August 2001
for Phila Nippon '01
(from a set of 4)



Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **World Heritage sites**



Germany
Scott #2610

Issued 3 February 2011,
showing the Yakushi-ji in
Nara (from a set of 3)

**Let's consider the various themes shown
on Japonica issues**

**Now, we'll look at group (b),
non-Japanese issues with designs that are
wholly or partially Japanese.**

Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

**This is a large, highly varied group, ranging
from topics that are clearly relevant to the
issuing country, to topics that are intended
purely to snare income.**

Examples of topics

Japanese art

Imperial family

Japanese trains, cars, ships

Projects done with Japanese aid

Japanese visitors (sports, politics)

Japanese non-visiting personalities

Japanese flora and fauna

The Japanese flag

Typically Japanese sports

Japanese crafts

Japanese military matters

Japan membership in treaties

Japanese geography

Japanese cartoon characters

Arrival of Japanese immigrants

Stamp inscriptions in Japanese

Japanese history & diplomacy

Japanese stamp-on-stamp

Japanese cinema

Japanese architecture

Let's focus on a few topics:

Projects done with Japanese aid



Laos

Scott #105

(part of a set of 4)

issued 30 March 1965

**to acknowledge Japanese aid
to Laos.**

**Others in the set acknowledge
British, French and American aid.**

Let's focus on a few topics:

Projects done with Japanese aid



Laos

Scott #1705-1706

issued 20 December 2006

to mark the opening of the
2nd Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge
built with Japanese aid

Let's focus on a few topics:

Projects done with Japanese aid



Honduras
Scott #378
issued 20 September 1995
(part of a set of 3)
to acknowledge the 20th anniversary
of the Japan Overseas Cooperation
Volunteers in Honduras

Projects done with Japanese aid:

**Regarding the prior group of slides,
it's rather clear the these issues are
highly relevant to the issuing country**

Let's focus on another topic:

Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō



**Czechoslovakia
Scott #2815
issued 10 January 1991
to publicize the
European Jūdō Championships
held in Prague**

Let's focus on another topic:

Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō



Tonga

Scott #1258e

issued 17 September 2014

**(as part of a souvenir sheet of 6)
to publicize participation in the
2014 Commonwealth Games**

Let's focus on another topic:

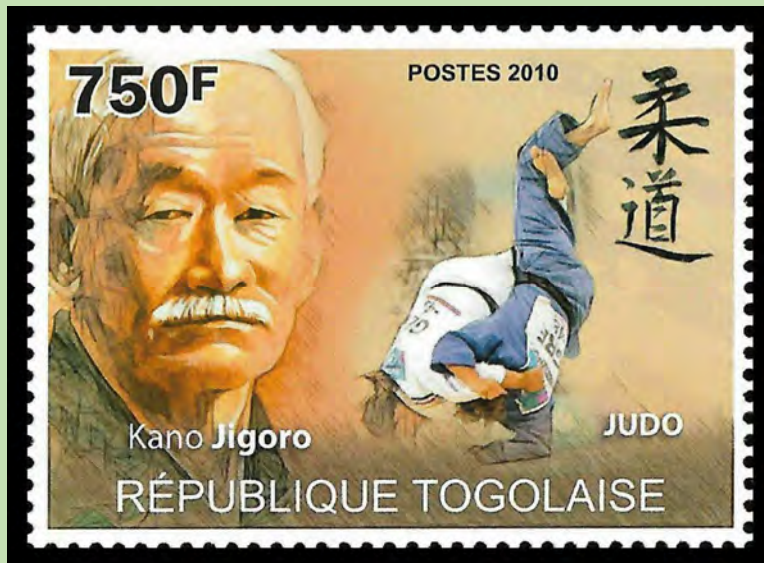
Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō



**China (Taiwan)
Scott #2420
issued 23 June 1984
(part of a set of 3)
to publicize participation
in the 1984 Olympic Games
in Los Angeles**

Let's focus on another topic:

Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō



Togo

Michel #3612

issued 2010

**(part of a souvenir
sheet of 4 on the
topic of Martial Arts)
honoring Kanō Jigorō,
originator of jūdō**

Comparison of these jūdō issues:

All are unquestionably “Japonica”, but how relevant are they to the issuing entity?

The item from
Czechoslovakia is for an
event occurring locally.

Highly relevant!



Comparison of these jūdō issues:

Did Tonga and Taiwan actually have jūdō athletes at these games?

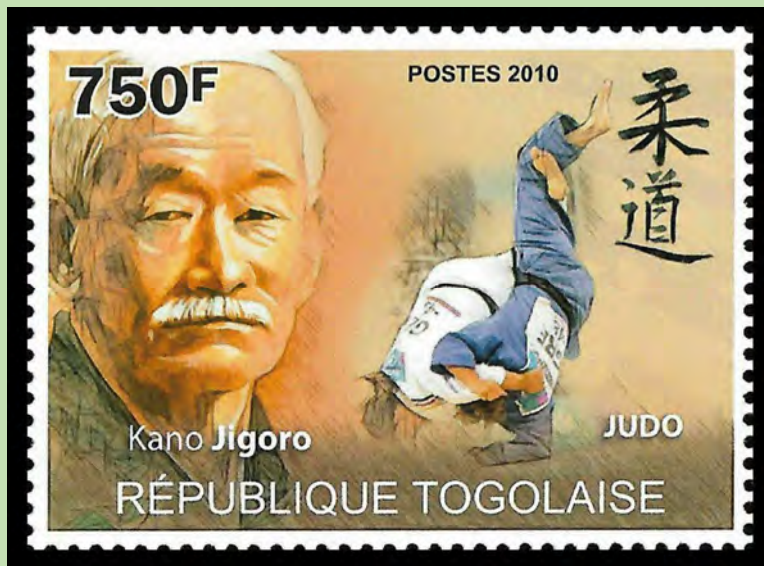


Maybe, so the relevance of these issues might be a bit uncertain.



Comparison of these jūdō issues:

But what prompted Togo to issue this stamp? Was there any direct or indirect connection, or was this simply an effort to earn revenue from the sale of new issues? The Michel catalogue recognizes it, but Scott does not.



Relevance is probably low.

So, while there is no argument that these jūdō issues are all “Japonica”, and all of them are probably legitimate issues of their respective postal authorities, whether their relevance is strong enough for a specialized collection is a factor for the collector to decide.

Example of tenuous relevance:



**Saint Vincent
Scott #1708
issued 10 August 1992
to note Kristi Yamaguchi's
Gold Medal in the 1992
Albertville, France
Winter Olympics**

Example of tenuous relevance:



Bhutan
Scott #1137
issued in 1997
to note Kristi Yamaguchi's
Gold Medal in the 1992
Albertville, France
Winter Olympics

Tenuous relevance? Why?

- **The event did not take place in Japan.**
- **Figure skating is not specifically a Japanese sport.**
- **The Gold Medal winner is American, not Japanese.**
- **But, she has a Japanese family name.**

Is that alone enough to qualify as Japonica?

Let's take a look at just a few more of the many Japonica topics that are in the category of “Non-Japanese issues with designs that are wholly or partially Japanese”.

- 1. Living Japanese personalities**
- 2. Japanese diplomacy**
- 3. Stamp-on-stamp**

Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries

It's the policy in Japan not to illustrate living people on Japanese stamps, with the exception of the Imperial Family, although this seems to have been relaxed in recent years.

Consequently, stamps showing living Japanese are mostly from other countries.

Some examples follow, including one of the recent exceptions to the Japanese policy.

Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries

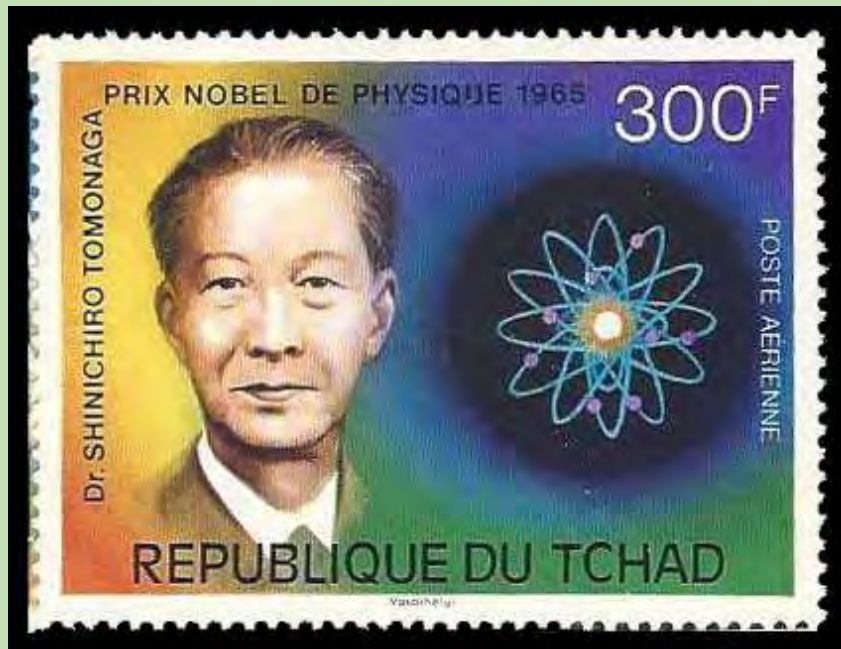


An athlete

Mongolia

**Scott #522 issued
25 March 1969 to honor
1968 Olympic Gold
Medal winner gymnast
Nakayama Akinori**

Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



A physicist

**Chad Scott #C198 issued
15 December 1976
to honor
Tomonaga Shin'ichirō,
winner of 1965 Nobel
Prize for Physics**

Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries

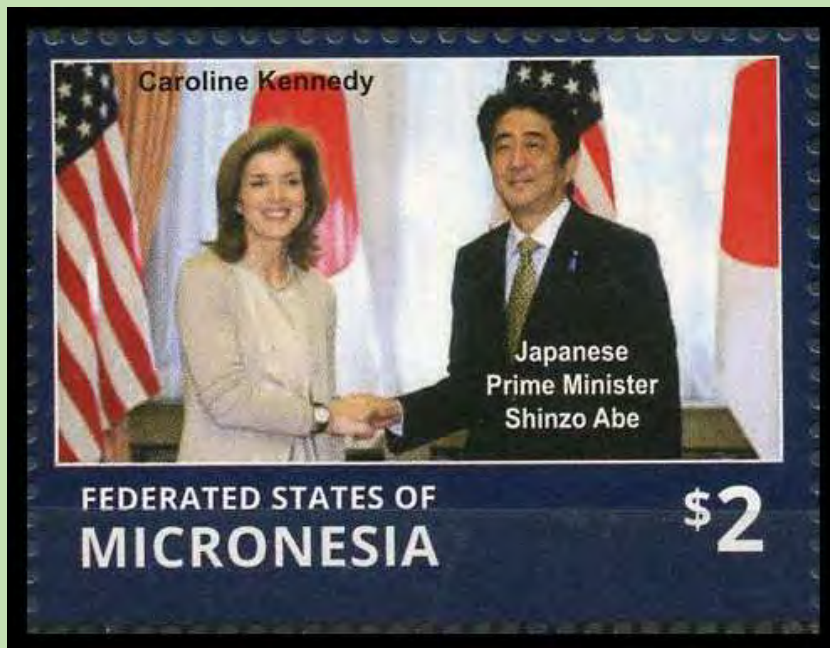


An actress

**Guyana Scott #2845b
issued in 1994
for the 80th anniversary of
the Takarazuka Revue.**

**The actress is
Yūki Amami.**

Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



A politician

**Micronesia Scott #1089a
issued 30 June 2014
showing Japanese
Prime Minister
Abe Shinzo**

Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



A musician

**Austria Scott #1946
issued 16 January 2004
to note the appointment
of Ozawa Seiji as Music
Director of the Vienna
State Opera**

**In a break with normal Japanese policy,
Ozawa Seiji was portrayed twice on Japanese stamps.**



**← Sakura #R196
issued 22 August 1996
in which he was not specifically
identified**

**Sakura #C1740f →
issued 22 September 2000
in which he was identified**



Another topic: Japanese diplomacy



**Lithuania Scott #771
issued 19 June 2004 to
honor Sugihara Chiune
(1900-1986), Vice-Consul
for Japan in Lithuania
who issued visas that
allowed people to escape
the Nazis**

Another topic: Stamp-on-stamp



Wallis & Futuna Islands
Scott #C93
issued 7 May 1979
on the centenary of the
death of Sir Rowland Hill

Stamp-on-stamp



Italy
Scott #1761
issued 9 December 1988
for Italy's Stamp Day,
showing Edoardo Chiossone,
an Italian engraver
who went to Japan where he
designed many Japanese stamps
and banknotes

**One last group worth mentioning:
Joint issues with common designs**

There are cases of Japan and another country issuing stamps with essentially the same design to commemorate some joint event. Clearly, then, the other country's issue is an example of Japonica.

**Joint issue example:
150th anniversary of the Japan-Portugal friendship treaty**



**Portugal Scott #3271a-b
issued 22 October 2010**



**Japan Sakura #C2087a-b
issued 22 October 2010**

**Joint issue example:
100th anniversary of Japan-Chile diplomatic relations**

**Chile
Scott #1217
issued
1 September 1997**



**Japan
Sakura #C1599
issued
1 September 1997**



Concluding remarks

- **Japonica is an interesting and challenging field.**
- **If it's too broad for a selective collection, then it's easily narrowed by considering the relevance of the issues collected, or by narrowing the criteria for what constitutes Japonica.**
- **It's a great opportunity to create a personalized and specialized hobby.**

Access

- **“Japonica” is a column that appears regularly in the journal *Japanese Philately*, published by the International Society for Japanese Philately (ISJP).**
- **Available images (more than 2,000) of Japonica issues are being placed in an online archive. Access can be obtained by e-mail contact to publisher@isjp.org.**

Acknowledgements

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- Most stamp images were obtained on the internet, often from items being sold on eBay, and sometimes from postal administration websites.