

# yerevan

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A MAGAZINE WITH AN ACCENT

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# WORLD THROUGH A MAGNIFYING GLASS

*Psychologists say that a memory retains more if the information is acquired in a deeply emotional state of mind. Hovhannes Koshkakarjian has a memory comparable to that of a powerful computer when it comes to his hobby, the passion of his life, and his favorite topic of conversation – philately: stamp collecting.*

TEXT : LIANNA ZAKHARIAN  
IGOR GRIGORYAN

Philately is a unique hobby. It can absorb the person completely, making him hunt for small colored pieces of paper all over the world, beg for an exchange, offer sums of money far in excess of its intrinsic value - sometimes bringing him to complete financial disaster. On the other hand, stamps bear colossal amounts of information about geography, beauty of nature, culture and art, science and persons of note. Many well known figures were stamp collectors. Franklin Roosevelt, Queen Elizabeth II, Jawaharlal Nehru, Albert Einstein, Gerald Ford, Anton Chekhov, and Arthur Chilingarov are among those affected by the ‘disease’ of philately.

In the 1990s, a group of stamp collectors who lived in Los Angeles County started to meet regularly with the goal of creating the first society of Armenian stamp collectors outside of Armenia. Subsequently, the Armenian Philatelic Association (ArPA) was formed in January 1997. Its first (and current) president is Hovhannes Koshkakarjian. ArPA has 70 members, most of them from the US with representatives from Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Egypt, and France. The main focus of ArPA is Armenia and related topics on stamps issued around the world. The points of interest for the collectors are the topic of the stamp, its circulation, and the manner of its production. There are stamps printed on cigarette paper, on gold or silver foil. There are stamps on envelopes that have traveled from various places bearing news and preserving memories. One might be surprised to discover

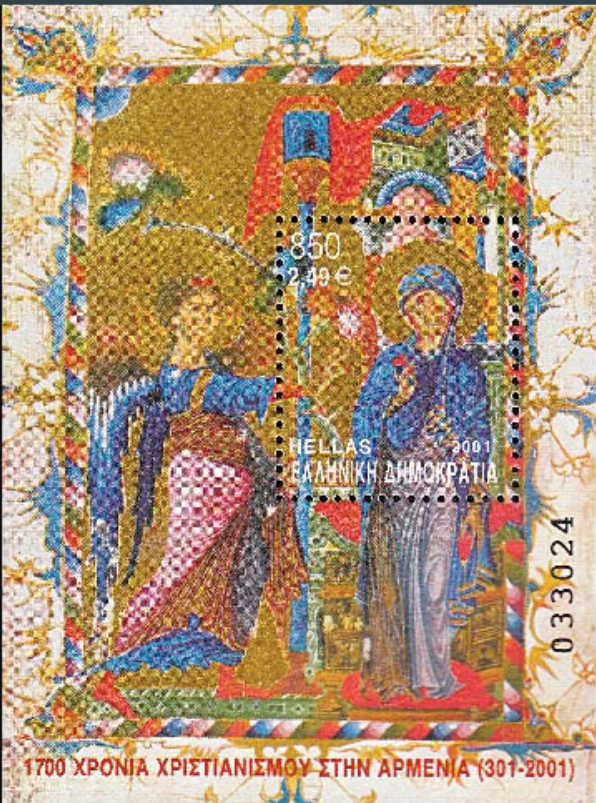
that Armenia-related stamps were issued all over the world, even in such remote and exotic locations as Granada, Singapore, Bangladesh, and Taiwan. For example, Singapore issued a stamp with the Armenian Church on it, the first Christian Church built in Singapore. Granada issued a stamp featuring the photograph of Cher (Cherilyn Sarkisian); Taiwan has a stamp with the picture of apricot blossom with a *Prunus Armeniaca* inscription. Many of the stamps issued in various countries were designed by Armenian artists. One courageous artist even sacrificed his life to commemorate the symbols of his Motherland. Mihran Demirchyan designed Turkish stamps from 1901 to 1905. In 1913 he designed a stamp with encoded vertical elements of Armenian letters. When Turkish officials discovered the trick, the designer was exiled. Later that same stamp was reissued without the Armenian letters; obviously it was so good that the Turks could not resist printing it. Another famous Armenian stamp designer is Aida Tasgian (Romania). She designed stamps not only for Romania (more than 400 stamps), but for Chad, Fujairah, and Oman as well. There are many well-known stamp designers of Armenian origin in the U.S. (Souren Yermoyan, George Semerdjian, Vahan Dinihanian). In the former USSR – Ter-Moroukov, Tirdatov, Mkrtychyan, in Lebanon – Akiskalian, Kufedjian, and in Dubai – Tchiterian. Works of talented Armenian photographers have been used on many stamps – works of Yousuf Karsh, Malak Karsh, Arto Gavouk, Vladimir Mousaelian, and Paul Kalinian to name only a few. Stamps often reflect a country’s history: its pride and achievements, or its unfortunate and

tragic events. Armenia is no exception.

With the establishment of the First Armenian Republic, the need for postal stamps was evident, and during the short period of its existence, one set of stamps was issued. It did not enter circulation because of the political changes that occurred shortly thereafter. Soviet Armenia issued its own stamps from 1920 – 1923. There were approximately 200 stamps printed over that time period – with original printings and surcharges. In 1923, during the period of the Transcaucasian Republic, over 34 stamps had designs that contained symbols and inscriptions of all three Transcaucasian Republics – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

As we looked at the World Map with Armenia-related stamps printed in every corner of our planet, Hovhannes Koshkakarjian, a true enthusiast of philately, described various stamps, revealing his encyclopedic knowledge of the subject. Later he looked through the pages of Yerevan Magazine and automatically connected many subjects of our articles to certain stamps issued around the world. Evidently, Hovhannes has a unique way of perceiving the world around him – he sees it through the magnifying lens of a stamp collector. ■





1. A stamp issued in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal)

2. A stamp designed by Aida Taschyan (Romania)

3. A souvenir sheet dedicated to the acceptance of Christianity in Armenia (Greece)

4. A stamp with the Armenian church - the first Christian church in Singapore (Singapore)

5. A stamp in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide (Uruguay)

6. The Apricot Blossom: Prunus Armeniaca (Taiwan)

7. The Armenian Church (Bangladesh)



**"INCORRECT" STAMPS**

Stamps with misspellings or errors in the text or in a subject are considered to be most precious for collectors worldwide. It is these items that are valued over all others and are most expensive to purchase. One of such items is a so-called "Blue Maverick" stamp, issued in 1847 that happens to be the first postage stamp of Maverick that in these years was a part of Great Britain. A profile of Queen Victoria is depicted on the stamp. On the left appears an incorrect text reading - "Post Office" instead of "Post Paid". From this edition only 29 single stamps have been discovered. One of these rarities was purchased by the Prince of Wales (future King George IV) in 1904 for 1,450 pounds sterling. At the end of 2007 another "incorrect" postage stamp was sold for \$825,000 in the United States - the so-called "inverted Jenny". On this stamp, issued by the United States in 1918, an image of the Curtiss JN-4 airplane is inverted. 90 items of this edition have survived since the time of its issuance.



**STAMP RECORDS**

The Mark Haas stamp collection, 3000 American postage stamps and pre-postal envelopes of the United States issued before 1869, was purchased by a London based company Stanley Gibbons Ltd. in 1979 for 11 million dollars.

A Swedish stamp named Treskilling Yellow is the most expensive stamp in the world. On November 11th, 1996 it was purchased for 1.45 million pounds sterling in Zurich. It is the only stamp of its type issued in 1895 that has been discovered.

To celebrate its ten year anniversary Hong Kong post office has assembled a world's biggest mosaic panel. It is 6.45 meters in width and 3.97 meters in height and depicts the Hong Kong panorama. This unique creation was assembled from 69 thousand used stamps from 98 countries. 1,500 Hong Kong postal workers and their families worked on creating the panel.

