

# Carto-philatelic time series and other oddities

Menno-Jan Kraak <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *University of Twente /ITC*

\* Corresponding author

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## Abstract:

This contribution will focus on geographical / geopolitical changes over time as depicted in maps on stamps. A traditional definition of a stamp would probably be ‘usually a rectangular piece of paper of varying colour and denomination, affixed to a letter etc. to cover the cost of postage’. Today, however, the word rectangular could easily be replaced by triangular, round or even map shaped. The paper could be cloth or even chocolate. Stamps even exist as crypto or non-fungible tokens, in other words a stamp with a digital twin. All these changes over time are new revenue models for postal authorities, as very few people use stamps to pay for postage.

Stamps, in whatever form, offer a small window into a nation's society, nature and culture. They aim to give a country a profile by depicting its people, identity and territory. People and identity are often linked to heritage. This leads to themes of monarchs and political leaders, flags and heraldry, traditional costumes, folklore, etc. However, when looking at the timeline of a country's stamp issues, the timeframe provides a context for the choices made regarding the themes.

In the case of territory, the nation or area is represented and identified by locational and boundary features. These could be typical landscape features and maps. The first stamp issues of a 'new' nation often include a map claiming the territory and a flag to emphasise identity. Figure 1a shows an example from the Faroe Islands. In such situations, stamps can become geopolitical tools. This can be harmless, as in Figure 1a, where the outline of a country is depicted. However, sometimes nations use the map on the stamp to claim part of the territory of neighbouring countries.

It is interesting for cartographers to look at the design of these carto-philatelic items. The maps depicted are not always designed with the medium, the small piece of paper, in mind. The maps could be reduced details of existing maps or they could be designed specifically for the stamp. In many cases, however, the rules of cartographic design are not necessarily followed. Figure 1b shows the outline of France on a stamp from Equatorial Guinea. In cases such as this, external organisations create stamp series for a postal authority on subjects that do not offer a window into a nation's society but have commercial objectives. There are also more sophisticated stamp designs (Figure 1c). Liechtenstein's First Day Cover shows a map of land use, which on the stamp is transformed into a schematic diagram symbolising land use. The cancellation stamp is also a map.

Time series of map stamps exist in many forms. The most common is a series of historic maps of a region, showing the evolving knowledge of the shape of the area as new surveying techniques became available. A series of four topographic map details was issued to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Ordnance Survey (Figure 1d). Canada issued a series of four stamps showing the expansion of the country over time (Figure 1e).

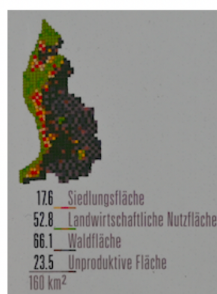
Comparing different map stamp issues of an area over time can show how the perspectives of the authorities have changed, introducing geopolitics in the time series. Several examples are shown in the figure. Figure 1f shows Panama, first as part of Colombia, as an independent nation, with a gap because of the Panama Canal Zone and the situation when the Canal Zone was returned to Panama. Pakistan, shortly after independence, showed the territory of Kashmir and Jammu as disputed, but more recently is seen as an integral part of the country (Figure 1g). Figure 9 shows Suriname. Its extent in the south-east and south-west overlaps with the claims of French Guiana and Guyana respectively. However, at the 15th year of their independence, the Surinam map inadvertently omits these claims, which are reinstated in later postage stamp editions. Sometimes the time series of stamps are issued to cover up mistakes. The stamps of Guernsey (Figure 1h) are such an example, which issued a map with an incorrect latitude, placing the island near Madrid. Other anomalies will be discussed in this paper with a focus on the influence of map design.



a) Faroe Island, 2015



b) Equatorial Guinea, 1973



c) Liechtenstein, 2017



d) United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, 1991



e) Canada, 1981



f) Panama, 1896, 1930, 1971 &amp; 1982



h) Suriname, 1983 &amp; 1990



g) Pakistan, 1960, 1999



i) Guernsey, 1969

Figure 1. Example of time series related map stamp