

# THE STAMPS OF HYDERABAD—I

By Gordon Roger, M.A.

Hyderabad State seems to be quite off the map so far as philately is concerned. For most of us it is one of those fourteen or fifteen stamp-issuing countries grouped collectively in our minds as the "Indian Native States" or, worse still, the "Indian Feudatory States"—a title which makes them sound more outlandish than ever. And so, since Hyderabad, like Great Britain, does not deign to inscribe its name on its stamps (with the sole exception of this year's Victory issue !), and since its stamps look uninteresting in the pages of our catalogue, and since, on top of all this, some stamps have inscriptions in no less than four languages, we shrug our shoulders and pass them by.

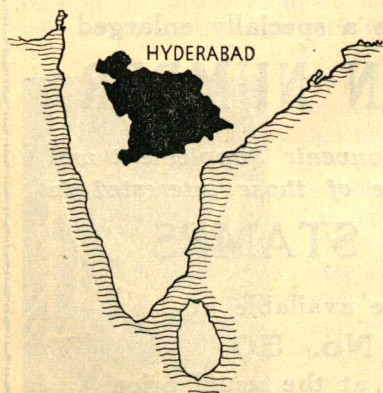
All of which is a great mistake. After a two years' study of these stamps under the able tutelage of Professor E. E. Speight of Ootacamund I am convinced that they present a fine field of study for those who welcome the chance of delving into comparatively unexplored ground. Major uncatalogued varieties are numerous, and minor varieties more so ; and for those who enjoy the task of putting names to divers shades of brown and green and blue it is a veritable goldmine.

It is hoped that this short series of articles on the stamps of Hyderabad will be of interest not only to those who already regard the Native States with a favourable eye, but to that large number of collectors who lack the resources necessary for a detailed study of the more popular branches of philately, and who would like to branch out into new ground where material is cheap and textbooks unknown.

## H.E.H. The Nizam's Dominions

Such is the official name for Hyderabad ! But it deserves a grandiose title, for Hyderabad is at once the biggest (both in size and population) and the most politically important of all the 600-odd Native States in India. Occupying a large tract of the Deccan plateau, it is sandwiched between Bombay Presidency on the West and Madras Presidency on the East. In size it is almost as large as the British Isles and although its population is barely a third of ours its capital, Hyderabad City, is the fourth largest city in India, with a population of nearly half a million souls.

Apart from its fine palaces, its mosques, and its famous Osmania University, Hyderabad State



presents the unique spectacle of a 90 per cent Hindu populace ruled over by the principal Moslem ruler in India, His Exalted Highness Sir Osman Ali Khan.

### Postal History

Although Lord Clive introduced a postal system in British India for official correspondence in 1766, Hyderabad did not follow suit until nearly 50 years later. Until that time the only method of sending letters in the Nizam's Dominions was by the hand of merchants and travellers. But about 1810 the Government arranged for the distribution of official—and later private—correspondence by a system of licensed carriers who contracted to deliver mail not only within the State boundaries but as far afield as Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. During the days of these postal carriers no stamps of any kind were used, but official correspondence—if report be true—was distinguished by attaching a feather thereto! Nor were there any Post Offices; the despatch of letters was effected by camel, horse or bullock according to the facilities available, and by this means all districts in the Dominions had at least one postal delivery a week. In 1857 the contract system was abolished and a Superintendent of Posts—Hyderabad's first P.M.G.—was appointed.

India by this time had been using postage stamps for three years, but they were still not considered a necessary adjunct to life in Hyderabad. However, the demand for them grew when, in 1862, the territories of Raichur, Lingsugur and Naldrug were restored to the Government of the Nizam. These areas had formerly been under British administration and had become accustomed to the use of stamps. Even so several years had to elapse before the appearance of the first Hyderabad stamps.

### The Postal System To-day

Little need be said under this head except to explain the rather limited use of Hyderabad's stamps. The postage, as distinct from the official, or "Service," stamps may be used on all correspondence transmitted from one place to another *within* the Dominions of the Nizam. Overprinted "Sarkari" (official) they may be used on all government correspondence from any place within the Dominions to any place within British India or in other Indian States. But this facility is not available to the general public, nor can official stamps be used on correspondence bound for destinations outside India.

Private correspondence from inside the State to all external destinations must bear British Indian stamps. There are over 1,000 State Post Offices in the Dominions, and nearly 50 Imperial Post Offices in the larger towns. In places where there is no Imperial Post Office British Indian stamps are on sale at the State Post Office for the use of those who correspond beyond the State boundaries.

Until they were increased at the end of 1943, Hyderabad's postage rates were remarkably low. A postcard, for instance, needed only a 4 pies stamp (approximately one-third of a penny) and a letter 8 pies.

### A Note on Calendars

One of the major stumbling-blocks to the student of Hyderabad stamps, especially if he is interested in postmarks, is the question of calendars ; and mention must be made of this before we come to a discussion of the stamps themselves. In Hyderabad to-day there are two distinct calendars in use : the Muslim religious calendar, the " Hijri," once used in State affairs, and the " Fasli," the present official calendar of the State. Inscribed in the design of each stamp, in Urdu numerals, is the year, according to the Hijri era, in which the plate was laid down ; but in all modern postmarks, on the other hand, the Fasli calendar is used, the date again appearing in Urdu numerals.

The Hijri, or Hejira, era dates from July 19th, A.D.622, when Mohammed fled from Mecca to Medina (Hijri means " migration " or " flight "). The Hijri year is purely lunar, and in each cycle of 30 years 19 are " common " years of 354 days each and the remaining eleven are " leap " years of 355 days. With the aid of a somewhat formidable formula we can calculate that the Hijri year 1283 inscribed in the design of Hyderabad's first stamp corresponds to the period 16.5.1866 to 4.5.1867 of the Christian era—hence the doubt expressed in the second article as to the correctness of the catalogue's assertion that the year of issue of that stamp was 1869.

The Fasli, or Persian Harvest, calendar, though rather more obscure in its origins, is at least more easily converted into our own as it has the same number of days as the Gregorian calendar—the year 1356 Fasli, for instance, started on 6.10.46 and will end on 5.10.47.

*(To be continued.)*

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### NEW DISCOVERIES—G.B. STAMPS

Mr. H. Crabtree, of Goole, has shown us a further variety of the 2½d. Great Britain Peace Issue. On the fifth stamp from bottom of sheet Control S/46 cylinder 11, left-hand vertical row, is plainly shown a small white dot after the two anchor dots on the ship's bow—" third porthole."

# THE STAMPS OF HYDERABAD—II

By J. Gordon Rodger, M.A.

(Continued from page 10 of the December No.)

## Indian Stamps Used in Hyderabad

British India's first postage stamps appeared in 1854 (if we exclude the famous "Scinde Dawk" stamps of 1852), and in that year India was divided, for postal purposes, into four "postal circles":—

1. North India : N.W. Provinces, Punjab, Indore, parts of Central Provinces, etc.
2. Bombay : Bombay, Sind, *parts of Hyderabad (Deccan)*, parts of Central Provinces, etc.
3. Madras : Madras, Mysore, *parts of Hyderabad (Deccan)*, Travancore, etc.
4. Bengal : Bengal, Assam, Lower Burma, Singapore, Penang, etc.

Many changes were made in these postal circles after about 1860, and by 1880 the original four had increased to fifteen. As a result of these changes the majority of Post Offices in Hyderabad State were apparently absorbed into the modified Madras Circle, while a few others were transferred to the new Central Provinces Circle.

But in the days before Hyderabad itself issued stamps the State was divided between the Bombay and Madras circles, and British Indian stamps obliterated with postmarks issued to Hyderabad Post Offices during this period necessarily form the beginning of a collection of the stamps of Hyderabad. It is not proposed to give a full account of these postmarks here—any interested reader will obtain all the information he wants from Mr. W. Renouf's masterly work on *Early Indian Cancellations*—but mention may be made of the three main types of obliteration found on British Indian stamps used in Hyderabad before that country issued its own stamps.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

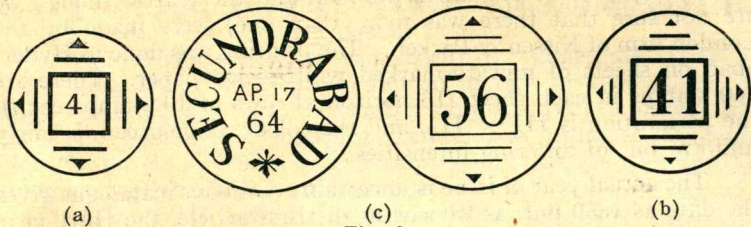


Fig. 3

(Illustrations by courtesy of W. Renouf & E. E. Speight.)

First, there is the "numeral" cancellation of the Bombay circle which was in use from 1855 to 1873 (Fig. 1). This consists of a diamond composed of parallel lines framing the Post Office number. The number of lines, their thickness and the direction in which they run vary considerably, as do the size of the obliterator and the numerals. Numbers so far identified as having been allocated to Post Offices in Hyderabad State are 65, 66 and 67.

Secondly, there is the Madras circle cancellation of 1856-73 (Fig. 2). This consists of a diamond composed of dots framing a capital "C" and a number. It occurs in two sizes, one with a large "C" (7mm.) and large numerals, the other with a small "C" (4½mm.) and small numerals. The numbers 41 to 56 inclusive are believed to have been allotted to Post Offices in Hyderabad State.

The third main type, in double obliterator form, is known to have been used in Hyderabad between 1866 and 1873, and appears to have been used in most parts of India concurrently with other obliterations. The numeral half of this cancellation consists of a circle enclosing a square framing the office number; in addition, there are a number of parallel lines of gradually diminishing length parallel to the sides of the central square and themselves forming a square. The office numbers 41 to 56 in this series were allocated to Hyderabad State Post Offices, and the cancellation occurs in three sizes in which the numerals are 3mm., 5mm. and 7mm. high respectively (Fig. 3(a), (b) and (c)).

#### The Tughra Stamp of 1869 (S.G. 1)

Hyderabad's first postage stamp (Type I) is known as the "Tughra" stamp because its inscription is in the Tughra script.



Type 1

It was engraved by Rapkin of London and the plates (though we are not sure that there was more than one) were made by the London firm of Nissen & Parker. The printing was done in Hyderabad on sheets of unwatermarked white wove paper. There are 160 stamps in each sheet (16 horizontal rows of 10 stamps each), the perforation is  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ , and the colour, olive green, is fairly uniform but of differing intensities.

The actual year of issue is uncertain : Gibbons' catalogue gives the date as 1869 but, as we saw in the first article, the Hijri year 1283 engraved in the design of the stamp corresponds to the period 1866-67. Perhaps Scott's American catalogue is nearer the mark when it gives the date of issue as 1866. However, for the convenience of readers, and to lessen the risk of being charged with *lèse majesté*, we will continue to refer to the Tughra stamp of 1869. Owing to the absence of a sufficient number of covers bearing this stamp it is not possible to say just how long it remained in use, but Holland records a pair used in Degloor in 1897.

The Tughra script used in this stamp is perhaps the most ornamental of all scripts in Muslim caligraphy. Lack of space forbids a detailed examination of the script itself ; it will suffice to say that, translated into English, it reads : " Government of Asaf Jah, year 1283, one anna." (Asaf Jah is the title of the founder of the dynasty of the Nizams of Hyderabad, the present Nizam being the tenth of the line.) It may be convenient, though, to illustrate here the Urdu numerals which appear on all Hyderabad stamps, and to remind readers that they are read from left to right.

۱ ۲ ۳ ۴ ۵ ۶ ۷ ۸ ۹ ۰

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Although this stamp is fairly common, it is by no means easy to obtain in good condition, for the obliterators supplied to the post offices provided for very effective cancellation, amounting in many cases to total eclipse. The stamp is occasionally found part-perforated both horizontally and vertically, and is also known imperforate ; but I am not aware of any other varieties having been recorded. The Rev. W. B. Earée, in his book *Album Weeds*, gives a very full description of a forgery of the Tughra stamp, but whereas he quotes the perforation of the forgery as  $13\frac{1}{2}$  my copy has the normal  $11\frac{1}{2}$  perforation.

The Tughra stamp was re-issued in 1880 on unwatermarked white wove paper, but perforated  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  and printed in a number of different colours. Both Major Evans, a former editor of Gibbons' *Monthly Magazine*, and Mr. Hurmuz Kaus maintain that the re-issue in olive green was the only stamp authorised for postal use, and that the stamps in various shades of grey, brown, blue and vermilion were intended for fiscal purposes. The fact remains,

however, that a number of these stamps in what our catalogue calls "fancy colours" are known postally used.

The 1880 re-issue was inscribed with the same date (1283) as the original issue, but a further reprint in 1905 or 1906 shows the Hijri date altered to 1323. The latter stamps appear in more or less the same colours and shades as before, but, although they are plentiful on Bills of Exchange, receipts, etc., there is no record of them having been seen postally used.

It is intended to conclude each article with a list in catalogue form of the stamps referred to in the course of the article, but it must be understood that the varieties so listed are only those which the writer has himself seen.

(?) 1869. Type I. Perf.  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ . No w'm'k.

1. 1a dark olive green

2. 1a olive green

(a) imperforate

(b) imperf. between pair

(c) perf.  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  (1880)

3. 1a pale olive green

(a) imperf. between pair

(b) perf.  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  (1880)

(To be continued.)

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## EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN 1882—85

### First part of campaign 1882

Post Office established during last week of August, 1882. For first week current Penny stamp (1881) was used with a small "E" written across it in red ink and obliterated by a penmark. Afterwards a narrow lozenge of small dots was employed, probably a local postmark. Eventually a circular date stamp was used, inscribed BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE EGYPT with date.

1d. lilac 1881 is also known with upright oval postmark with seven horizontal thick bars, the middle parts of 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th being cut away, to allow insertion of BA and E.

The operations of the Army Post Office were suspended as soon as first active service ceased at end of 1882.

Stamps were in use only about six months and are scarce.

$\frac{1}{2}$ d. Rose-red Plate 20

1d. Lilac (16 dots)

$\frac{3}{4}$ d. Green

$2\frac{1}{2}$ d. Blue Plates 22, 23

### Second part of campaign 1884-85

Hostilities, owing to action of the Mahdi, broke out afresh in 1884, and another Army Post Office Corps was sent out.

The Circular date stamp was used.

$2\frac{1}{2}$ d. Lilac.

5d. Green