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## Reconsidering the Smallest of Artifacts: On the Origins of Philatelic Collecting

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### Résumé

*Le monde de la philatélie a ses propres lois, valeurs et normes, son appareil conceptuel, sa structure économique (économie de don, de troc et d'échanges monétaires), ses conflits idéologiques (au sujet de la valeur philatélique de timbres fiscaux, par exemple), sa propre histoire ainsi qu'un riche réseau de relations institutionnalisées et informelles. Dans cet univers, qui représente une sous-culture plutôt qu'une culture sur le plan anthropologique, on retrouve des philatélistes amateurs et professionnels (généralement des marchands) ainsi qu'un chevauchement évident de ces deux catégories. Toutefois, pour la majorité de ces personnes, la philatélie est plus ou moins une activité requérant du temps, des efforts et de l'argent – des « sacrifices plaisants » d'après Christian Bromberger<sup>1</sup> –, en marge de leurs principales occupations professionnelles, familiales ou autres. Par leurs collections, les philatélistes créent leurs propres microcosmes d'éléments provenant de différentes périodes et régions géographiques. Ils constituent ainsi des trésors personnels et personnalisés. L'auteur relie l'origine culturelle de la philatélie au développement des services postaux et de l'activité générale de collection.*

### Abstract

*The realm of philately has its own laws, values and norms; conceptual apparatus; economics (both gift and barter as well as monetary economics); ideological conflicts (about the philatelic status of revenue stamps for example); its own history; and, a rich network of institutionalized and informal relationships. In this universe, which represents a subculture rather than a culture in anthropological terms, we encounter amateur collectors and professionals (usually dealers) as well as a clear overlap between these two categories. For most participants, however, philately is more or less a time, energy and money consuming activity — “pleasant sacrifices”<sup>1</sup> — marginal to their professional, familial or otherwise principal occupations. Through their collections, philatelists create their own microcosms of elements originating from different periods and geographical regions. Thus, they construct their personal and personalized treasures. In dealing with the question about the cultural origins of philately, we link these to the development of postal services as well as the origins of collecting in general.*

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### Both Narrative Fiction and Material Reality

Over half a century ago, Douglas and Elizabeth Rigby wrote the following lines in the foreword of what may now be called one of the literary classics on collecting:

*There is nothing puzzling about the fact that collectors have limited their descriptions of the vast house of collecting to the single rooms enclosing their own favorite specialties. On the other hand, in exploring that house, it must strike the investigator as increasingly strange that its domain*

*should have been so sparingly reported by anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists; for the roots of the phenomenon of collecting are the roots of man himself, and they nourish many of us today through the practice of this ancient pastime.<sup>2</sup>*

Meanwhile, the situation has changed, since there is a growing sociological and psychological literature on collecting in general, and there are some fine specialized historical studies of philatelic collecting.<sup>3</sup> Apart from instructive exceptions,<sup>4</sup> anthropologists still seem to limit their contributions to the collection of “tribal” or “primitive” art<sup>5</sup> —

or, in a euphemism nowadays in vogue in France, *des arts premiers*.<sup>6</sup> Here, we define a collection as a set of objects beyond a utilitarian context, with a personal leitmotif defining the collection. Because of the latter aspect, the value of the collection exceeds the sum of the value of the individual objects, at least for the owner.<sup>7</sup>

This value may be measured and expressed in historical, cultural, scientific, technical, aesthetic, emotional, financial or, in our case, philatelic terms. According to Eugenio Donato, this value would be based on the fiction that the collection "somehow constitute(s) a coherent representational universe," and not only holds for private collections, but also for museums: "should the fiction disappear, there is nothing left of the *Museum* but 'bric-a-brac,' a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects which are incapable of substituting themselves either metonymically for the original objects or metaphorically for their representations."<sup>8</sup> I do not agree with this reductionist perspective. The coherence of a (serious) collection may be based on fiction but, then, it is a fiction that corresponds to a certain reality which is not only individually, but also socially and culturally defined. Thus, from my point of view, the representational coherence of a collection, of the kind we are discussing, is both (narrative) fiction and (material) reality.

A serious (private or public) collector is not a simple accumulator of similar objects but, in the words of Rigby and Rigby, "searches out the origin and meaning of his 'curios' and preserves his items according to a well-conceived plan."<sup>9</sup> However, a passionate collector also seems to be "caught in a constant vacillation, between the hankering for perfection and the need to tolerate imperfection, between an ideal of wholeness and the anxiety of incompleteness, between mature composure and the immature thrills of hunting and scrounging."<sup>10</sup> Collectors are, indeed, "people with a tactical instinct; their experience teaches them that when they capture a strange city, the smallest antique shop can be a fortress, the most remote stationery store a key position."<sup>11</sup> For real collectors, in my view, their collecting activities are not only statements of consumption,<sup>12</sup> but also of production and creation.

Most philatelic collectors start at a young age (7 to 10 years, both boys and girls) with an open world collection, that is, of all stamps of whatever country coming within reach. The acquisition (or receiving as a gift) of the first album or first catalogue usually is the reason to limit the collection to one's own country, eventually combined with former colonies or contemporary overseas territories. Generally after a lapse of several years — adolescents and young adults tend to have other

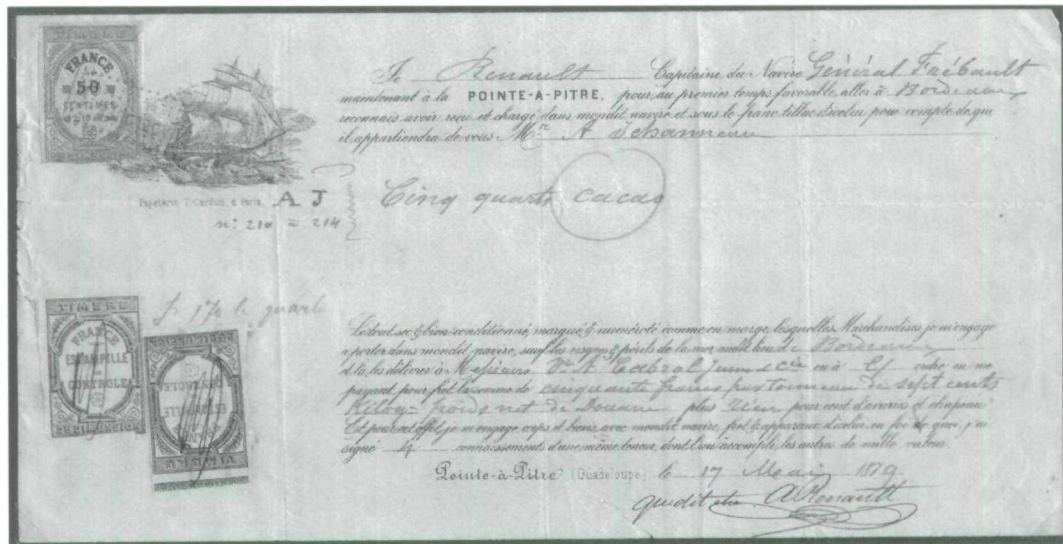
preoccupations — a number of male philatelists (around age 35 is quite common) resume their youth collection in order to complete it.<sup>13</sup> When this is almost accomplished by means of an adult and thus larger budget, the philatelist is confronted with the choice either to spend much money for the most expensive, missing stamps, or add another country to his (or her) elementary collection, for example a favourite holiday destination, or to start a specialized collection of one series, or even of one single stamp. Philately is particularly apt for specialization by "typologists" (the use of different printing plates for the earliest stamps resulted in different types), "varietists" (collection of printing errors and varieties), and those who are commonly known as postal historians (reconstruction by means of used covers on postal trajectories within a certain region and period), marco-philatelists (focus on cancellations), fiscal philatelists (collection of revenue stamps and stamped paper), and thematic philatelists (construction of a coherent discourse about a self-chosen topic via philatelic elements), just to name some major branches. Walter Benjamin, for example, had the following impression of marco-philatelists:

*To someone looking through piles of old letters, a stamp that has long been out of circulation on a torn envelope often says more than the reading of dozens of pages... There are collectors who concern themselves only with postmarked stamps, and it would not be difficult to believe them the only ones to have penetrated the secret. They confine themselves to the occult part of the stamp: the postmark... The pursuer of postmarks must, like a detective, possess information on the most notorious post offices, like an archaeologist the art of reconstructing the torsos of the most foreign place-names, and like a cabalist an inventory of dates for an entire century.<sup>14</sup>*

Philately, indeed, cannot be reduced to the collection of stamps only, but also includes elements such as postally used covers (also from the time before the very existence of adhesive stamps), postal stationery (covers or postcards with imprinted stamps), cancellations, and also even among professionals less well-known philatelic elements such as bills of lading (contracts for maritime transportation of merchandise). This article deals with the cultural origins and development of stamp collecting or philately, starting with a debate on what these origins would be, either postal or fiscal, followed by a more conventional chronology of events and, in doing so, also inserting philately in the history of collecting in general, of which philately is a

Fig. 1

Bill of lading (or *connaissance*, i.e., a contract of maritime transportation) for a cargo of cocoa on the ship *Général Trébault* (captain: A. Renault) on 17 May 1879, from Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, to Bordeaux, France. The total for the 2F40 was the ocean-going tariff.



particular subset. Three case studies of contemporary philatelic collectors illustrate our reconsideration of the smallest of artifacts.

### Origins of Philately: Two Competing Versions

Previous to the introduction of adhesive postage stamps one and a half centuries ago, sending or receiving a letter used to be expensive. Often, it was the addressee who had to pay postage for the delivery of the mail, not the sender, since the latter had no certainty that his letter would actually be delivered. The postage rate was calculated in terms of distance, weight and number of pages. The early private postal services such as that of Thurn und Taxis operated internationally. State services did so only up to their frontiers. There, the mail had to be transmitted to the neighboring state postal service and for each item a complicated calculation had to be made.<sup>15</sup> In his report *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability*, published in 1837, Rowland Hill, a young retired (for health reasons) teacher, made a study of the existing postal system, criticized it and formulated proposals for improvement. The calculation of the postage rate in terms of distance and number of pages was too complex, according to Hill, the system of payment at delivery did not function well, the postage costs were too high, and the system actually was only accessible to well-to-do people. Hill proposed a uniform postage tariff for the whole of Great Britain, a drastic reduction of the tariff, a calculation in terms of weight rather than number of pages, and the postage being paid not by the addressee, but by the sender.

The proposals were well received by the House of Commons and Hill was appointed secretary

and advisor of the director-general of the British Mail with the special mission to realize his own ideas. On 6 May 1840, on the initiative of Hill, the first adhesive stamp was issued. This stamp, the Penny Black, portrays the head of Queen Victoria with no indication of the country of origin.<sup>16</sup> The Penny Black was accompanied in the same emission by a higher rate, the Twopenny Blue. The number of letters handled by the General Post Office in Great Britain rose from 75.9 million in 1839 to 168.7 million in 1841.<sup>17</sup> Although the postal tariff was lower, the British Mail was set to making more profit than previously.<sup>18</sup> The example of adhesive stamps was followed by Brazil in 1843, the United States and Mauritius in 1847, and by France in 1849.<sup>19</sup> Most other countries followed between 1850 and 1879.<sup>20</sup> Soon, the attractively coloured little pieces of paper with representations of different countries were initiated as collector's items and a new hobby was born: philately.

In this version of history, which is reproduced in most specialized philatelic literature of all times, the introduction of the Penny Black in 1840 at the initiative of Rowland Hill would mark the origin of stamps and philately.<sup>21</sup> There is, however, a competing version, mainly diffused in circles of fiscal philatelists. This version holds that the postal reform marked by the Penny Black in 1840 would only consist of an inclusion of postage in an already existing stamp system:

*Both postage stamps and fiscal stamps specify the payment of a tax [une taxe], i.e. according to financial law, the direct payment of a particular public service, in contrast to the taxation [l'impôt] which is the contribution roughly paid to the state, in order to allow the functioning of all its services (and which may also be received by means of*

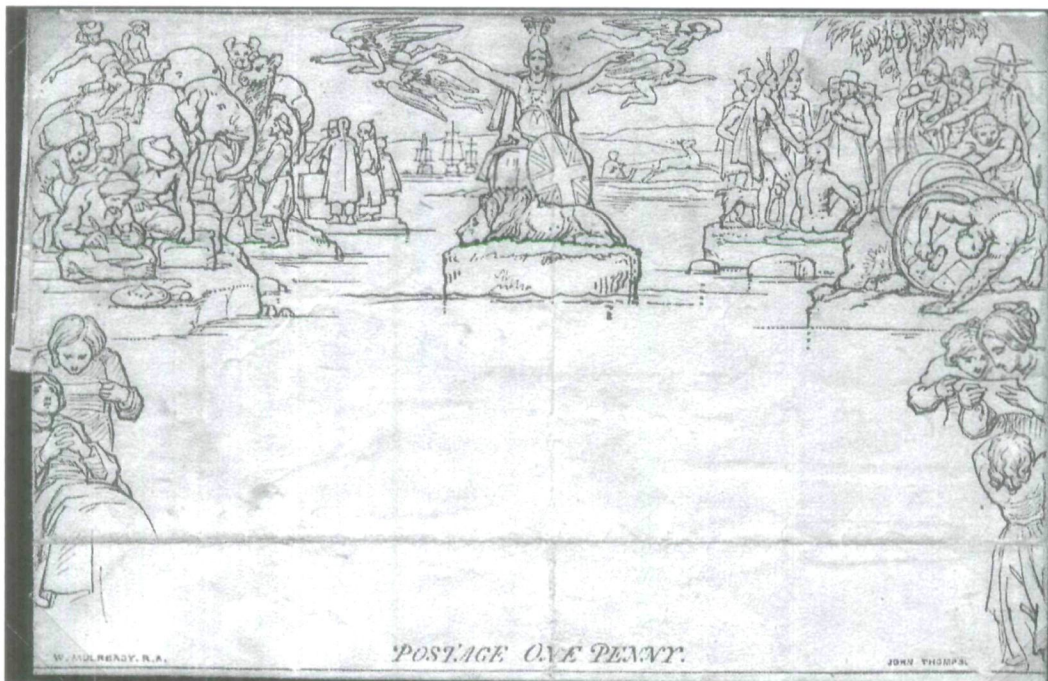
fiscal stamps). This allows us to ensure that, in a strictly legal sense, postage stamps constitute only one particular category of fiscal stamps.<sup>22</sup>

Still within the same perspective, it is no mere accident that ancient, typically fiscal expressions such as *stamp*, *timbre*, *zegel* and *stempel* were taken over to indicate postage stamps in the different European languages. Yves Danan, the president of the French Society for Fiscal Philately, emphasizes that, initially, Hill's postal reform did not include the adhesive postage stamp, but the introduction of a postally stamped paper, the Mulready envelope.<sup>23</sup> In this, Danan is right. Hill's initial idea, indeed, was to use this kind of envelope with imprinted postage value, and he had asked William Mulready to make a design for the cover. The so-called Mulready envelopes, belonging to the category of postal stationery (that is, with an imprinted or "embossed" postage rate), were issued in two denominations and colours: one penny printed in black for letters up to half an ounce, and twopenny in blue for letters up to one ounce. These Mulready envelopes, however, were not a success with the British public and were even ridiculed in the form of cartoons imitating and distorting the original design.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously, James Chalmers, a bookshop proprietor and printer from Dundee, suggested to Hill the idea of adhesive stamps. Against the background of the Mulready envelope failure, Hill welcomed the integration of this idea in his postal reform, which resulted in the Penny Black of 1840.

Certain fiscal philatelists also claim that the expression *philately* explicitly refers to their own philatelic preoccupation: taxes. In the already cited introduction of the most recent catalogue of adhesive fiscal stamps in France, published by the long-standing philatelic publisher Yvert & Tellier, one may read that "the denomination of 'philately' itself, which etymologically means 'love of taxes' [sic!], is particularly apt for the collection of fiscal stamps."<sup>25</sup> In this case, however, in my opinion, the hobby of collecting stamps (in whatever form) would not have been called philately, but *philately* — although in combination with the adjective *fiscal* the translation *love of taxes* (*amour de la taxe*) does make sense (but this was not the argument in Yvert & Tellier). Etymologically speaking, the word philately is composed of the Greek words *philo* (I love) and *atelos* (exempt from tax), which is why, in my view, the neologism for "love of taxes" would have been composed of *philo* and *teli* (taxes) and would thus read *philately*, and not *philately*.

### Historical Precedence of Fiscal Stamps to Postage Stamps

The principal argument of fiscal philatelists is that the fiscal stamp preceded the postage stamp, and that the latter was only an extension or even just a particular variant of the former ("*le timbre a d'abord été fiscal*," as Yves Danan puts it<sup>26</sup>). We will take a closer look at this argument of historical precedence. On the one hand, taxation by means of stamps was



**Fig. 2**  
The Mulready envelope was the direct ancestor of the first postage stamp. The postal stationery envelope (here: 1 penny; real size: 8.5 cm × 13.5 cm), depicting Britannia sending messengers all over the world, was ridiculed by the British public.

practised in the Netherlands as early as 1624, in Spain in 1636, in the Spanish overseas territories in 1638, and in England and France later in the seventeenth century. In France, for example, the proposal in 1655 by Minister Fouquet to introduce taxation by means of stamps in order to finance the war against Spain did not obtain enough votes in the French Parliament. The reforms of the legal system by Louis XIV, however, resulted in the introduction of stamped papers and parchments in 1674.<sup>27</sup> The stamps in the heading showed a lily, representing the royal emblem, and mentioned the tariff in function of the size and character of the certificate.<sup>28</sup> Apart from the stamp, the papers and parchments remained virgin in order to be written on by hand. The watermarks (*filigranes*) in the paper usually showed an image corresponding to that of the stamp, and were a guarantee against fraud — as this was also the case, later, with ordinary adhesive stamps.

In France, fiscal stamps and their use may be divided into three categories and corresponding periods: first, the large variety of stamped papers and parchments known as generalities (*généralités*) as from 1674; second, the unified, embossed revenue printed papers (*papiers à la débite*) as from the departmental division in 1791; and third, the introduction of adhesive fiscal stamps (*timbres mobiles*) as from 1862, often used in combination with (that is, on) stamped paper. On the other hand, the oldest known postal hand stamps (postmarks) on letters are found in fifteenth-century Italy, followed by the Netherlands (the East Indies Company or

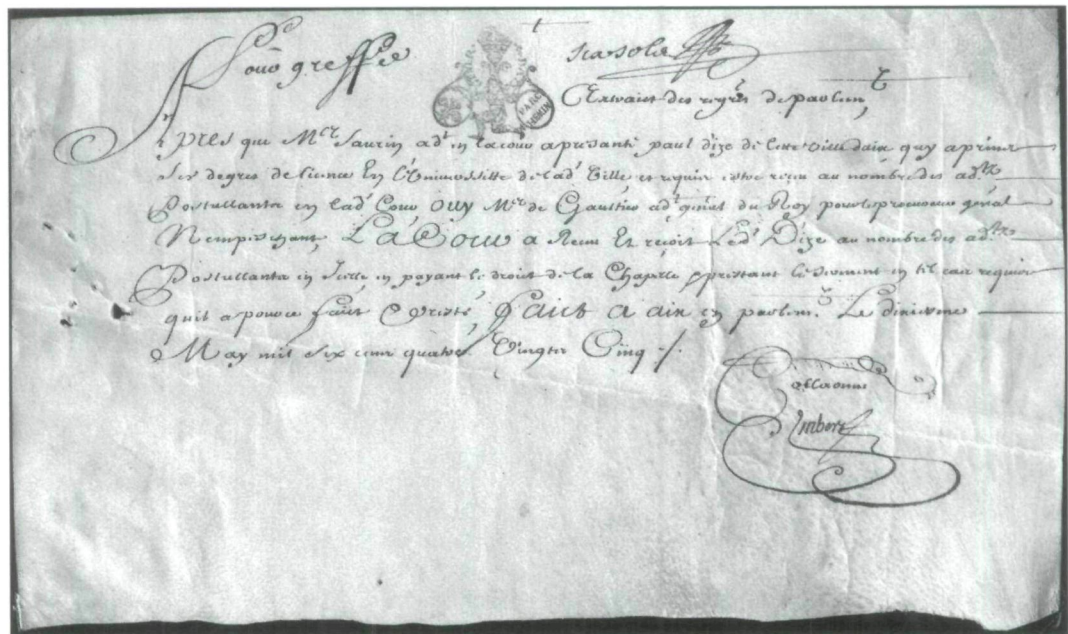
VOC) and England in the seventeenth century. These stamps would mention the place name where the letter was posted (an indication previously written by hand), the date and, later, when postage was paid in advance, “penny [postage] paid,” *port payé*, or other indications of this kind in the language concerned.<sup>29</sup> Nowadays, such letters with hand written or hand stamped indications or postmarks are important collector’s items and constitute the pre-philatelic or *eo-philatelic* period.

From this succinct comparison of fiscal stamps (stamped paper/fiscal stationery) and postal [hand] stamps we may conclude that both have a lengthy history of several centuries and originate at approximately the same period, with perhaps some precedence of postal stamps, as in the Italian case. We may even pursue the question further to the origins of postal services and taxes. Taxes originated in early state formation processes and became really established in more mature types of states, whereas courier services probably already existed.<sup>30</sup> The beginnings of postal services *avant la lettre* may be situated not long after the invention of writing. Sending a messenger used to be the prerogative of leaders, the messenger often being a well-respected person. The ancient Greeks even made him into a divine figure: Hermes with the winged heels. Modern Greeks, indeed, represented Hermes on their earliest stamps.

The ancient Greeks chose as messengers the fittest runners such as the famous messenger from Marathon who ran the exhausting 42 kilometres to Athens so fast that he was only able to utter the news of the victory before expiring. Courier services in

Fig. 3

A French parchment from 10 May 1685 issued in Aix-en-Provence (“généralité d’Aix”); real size: 16 cm × 27 cm. The stamp depicts a human figure with a (royal) lily on its head and a crown on top. In the circle on the left another lily is depicted, while in the circle on the right is the word *parchemin*, i.e., “dried animal hide.”



the early empires of China, Assyria, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Aztecs linked the political centre to governors in the outer districts and to the army at the front. Where possible, messengers made use of horses, camels, boats and other means of transportation. Since oral messages had the disadvantage that parts could be forgotten or distorted, written messages — letters — were soon preferred. In view of the military and political contexts of early letter circulation, secrecy was highly valued. One recorded method, I think rather anecdotal, was to shave the skull of a slave and write the message on his bald head.<sup>31</sup> The courier would not be able to see the message, and during the long journey, the slave's hair would grow and the words become invisible. On the slave's arrival, the addressee would shave the slave's head and read the message. Plutarch mentioned the Spartan method of the *skylates*, which involved two sticks of equal diameter, one of which remained with the sender and the other went to the receiver.<sup>32</sup> The sender would wind a strip of thin papyrus diagonally around the stick and write the message lengthwise on the wrapped stick. Then, only the papyrus strip, unreadable without the right stick, would be sent to the field commander abroad.

In Assyria, clay tablets were known to be used as letters. The letter was written on (or printed with carved cane ends into) the wet clay tablet before being baked. These clay tablets are now the object of private collections (besides museum collections), but are classified as archaeological rather than philatelic. This is also the case with other early letter supports mentioned here. Materials such as stone, wood and bark were also used, but in ancient Greece and Rome, it was papyrus, an Egyptian invention from about 3000 BC, that became the favourite means. In the second century BC, parchment was invented: soaked animal hide from which all traces of meat and hair were removed.<sup>33</sup> The paper we still use today is originally a Chinese invention associated with the name Ts'ai Lun from 105 AD.<sup>34</sup>

The Romans made use of horses and carriages in their postal services along the military roads of their empire. The system was called *cursus publicus*, and the stations where horses were changed *mansio* or *statio*. Our word post derives from *posta*, an abbreviation of the expression *statio posita in*, that is, "the station of the *cursus publicus* situated at..."<sup>35</sup> The word *posita* became *posta* and, then, *post*.

In the thirteenth century, Pope Honorius III would have used the word *post* in its present meaning, as did Marco Polo when he mentioned the Chinese courier service: *poesta*.<sup>36</sup> Courier services in the European Middle Ages were operated by monasteries, later followed by the early universities, who had

well-organized networks of messengers of students. The development of large towns and the increasing number of people who were able to read and write also resulted in the development of civil messenger services. Large trading houses such as the Florence based De Medici multinational, for example, used also to develop their own postal service. In 1505, the Italian nobleman Francesco de Tassis, also known as Torriani, had offered the emperor Maximilian I of Austria to carry all his messages from Vienna to the Netherlands free of charge, in exchange for the exclusive rights of postal services in the empire. In 1516, the imperial privilege was granted. The initial routes stretched from Vienna to Brussels, France, Spain and Italy. By the end of the sixteenth century, the postal network of Tassis' descendants, who had changed their name to Thurn und Taxis, covered a good deal of continental Europe.<sup>37</sup> In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Thurn und Taxis experienced increasing competition from local and state postal services and, in 1867, after 362 years of flourishing postal entrepreneurship, Prussia bought the remaining rights. This was a general tendency: when the development of postal services and its accompanying profits followed strong economic growth, then usually the state took over.<sup>38</sup> During the last years of its existence, the private enterprise Thurn und Taxis used adhesive stamps, which are highly prized by philatelic collectors today.

### Embodiments of an Encyclopedic Ideal

In order to contextualize the contemporary cultural phenomenon of philately, some markers of collecting-in-general, of which philately is a particular subset, should be noted. In ancient times, most early collections were those of kings and pharaohs, such as Tutankhamen's famous collection of whips and walking sticks with carved heads and handles of gold, gold-foil, ivory and ebony. There were, however, also common people — not slaves — who enjoyed the pleasures of collecting, as was shown by the discovery of an ordinary coffin at Ur, dated late fifth– early fourth century BC. At the time of discovery, the coffin had been plundered of everything of apparent value, but the body was untouched, and reposed on a collection of some 200 seal impressions on clay that the plunderers had overlooked.<sup>39</sup> The collection included Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Persian pieces and, according to Rigby and Rigby, "corresponded in its day approximately to our own collections of stamps, coins [et cetera]."<sup>40</sup>

More recent markers in the history of collecting are the curiosity cabinets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the time, in Europe, thousands of curiosity cabinets, precursors of our present

museums, would have existed. After some necessary specialization these cabinets, often materializations of an encyclopedic project, were also the starting point, or at least an accelerating factor of several natural and other sciences. We may divide the "curiosities" in these cabinets into two categories: *naturalia* and *artificialia*. *Naturalia* were exotic plants, animals and precious or rare stones; *artificialia* were objects made by men such as paintings, drawings, sculptures, pottery, coins, medals, optic lenses, antiquities, and ethnographic objects. Certain objects, such as painted landscapes or anthropomorphic stones, were both *ars* and *natura* and could be classed in both categories. "In containing samples of all that was to be found in the macrocosm, the greater world, the *Kunstammer* [or curiosity cabinet] can be thought to represent the world in microcosm."<sup>41</sup>

Later, in stamp collections, similar aspirations of the embodiment of an encyclopedic ideal would motivate the construction of philatelic treasures with a universal character: microcosms in a great variety of colours and images representing the world at large — and this not only in thematic philately. The particular thing about stamps and other philatelic elements is that they were (and are) officially issued by different, well indicated parts of the world called countries or states. Later, the Industrial Revolution with its corresponding mass production of commodities was followed by the steady growth of the middle classes, more shared wealth, less working hours, alienation from work, and expansion of consumption culture.<sup>42</sup> It was a time of increasing private collecting activity in all Western societies, and philately became very much part of this.

Philatelic collecting as the leisure activity known today, with tens of millions of adherents worldwide, was triggered by the introduction of the first adhesive postal stamps in 1840.<sup>43</sup> In the London *Family Herald* of 22 March 1851, the bookshop proprietor T. H. S. Smith published the first advertisement offering to exchange or buy stamps. The first known philatelic club was The Omnibus Club founded in 1856 in the United States, followed by the Excelsior Stamp Association in 1866 in St John's in Canada and, towards the end of the 1860s, the Süddeutscher Philatelisten Verein in Heidelberg and the Philatelic Society in London.<sup>44</sup> Again in the 1860s, the first illustrated stamp catalogues and pre-printed albums appeared.<sup>45</sup> At the time, it was still possible to — almost — complete a world collection (see Table 1).<sup>46</sup>

At the turn of the century, as two contemporary commentators had it: "Philately might claim a place among the Sciences side by side with Books, Prints and Coins."<sup>47</sup> The evolution of albums and stamp guides, as the same authors observed, are representative for "the gradual metamorphosis of the subject

**Table 1**  
**Total number of different adhesive postage stamps issued worldwide**

Year	Total stamps
1840	2
1850	154
1860	913
1880	4 848
1900	15 428
1920	< 38 000
1950	> 100 000
1970	> 150 000
2001	> 360 000

and subject matter from a very limited and desultory hobby into a field of employment, recreation, and rivalry for adults of both sexes and of all ranks... Philately has been elevated, step by step, into a quasi-archaeological science, with its own Societies, Bibliography, and Critical Literature."<sup>48</sup> At the same time, however, postal services started to issue the first commemorative stamps which, for many philatelists, marked the beginning of the commercial perversion of the same postal services.<sup>49</sup> In the euphemistic words of Hardy and Bacon, "the collector, as a rule, does not probably take as a compliment the recognition which he now receives at the hands of many stamp issuing governments."<sup>50</sup>

The growth of the number of philatelists and stamp dealers, indeed, stimulated many new emissions, in spite of the protests by philatelic organizations. There are two different kinds of stamps-made-for-collectors: those issued by would-be countries that have no legitimate use for stamps at all; and supererogatory issues by countries that have a perfectly legitimate use for stamps. An example of the latter occurred in 1948 on the occasion of the silver wedding anniversary of George VI, when Great Britain issued a commemorative stamp of one pound sterling, at the time quite a lot of money. Simultaneously, in eleven British colonies a similar stamp of equal value was issued, a so-called omnibus emission. The protest against the postal authority's policy of commercial exploitation of philatelists and favouritism of the "riches," the only ones able to afford this omnibus emission, marked the fact that philatelists came from all social strata of the population. However, the so-contested superfluous emissions without any postal function continued to flood the market. Some states became notorious, such as the Gulf states, Paraguay, and former French and British colonies. Serious philatelists restricted

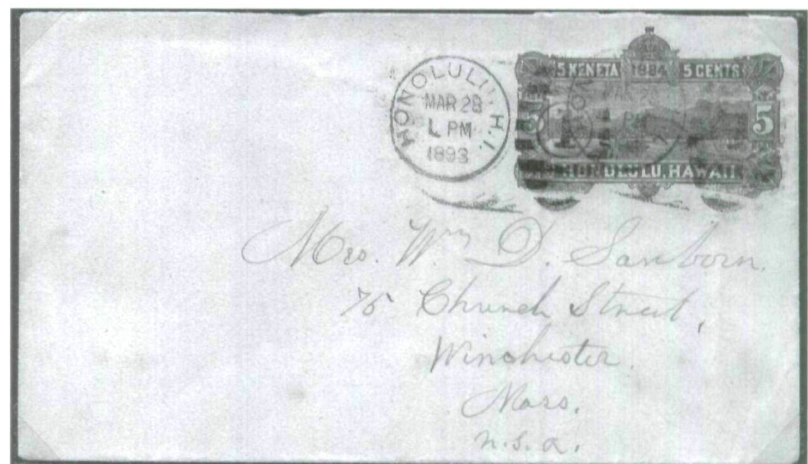
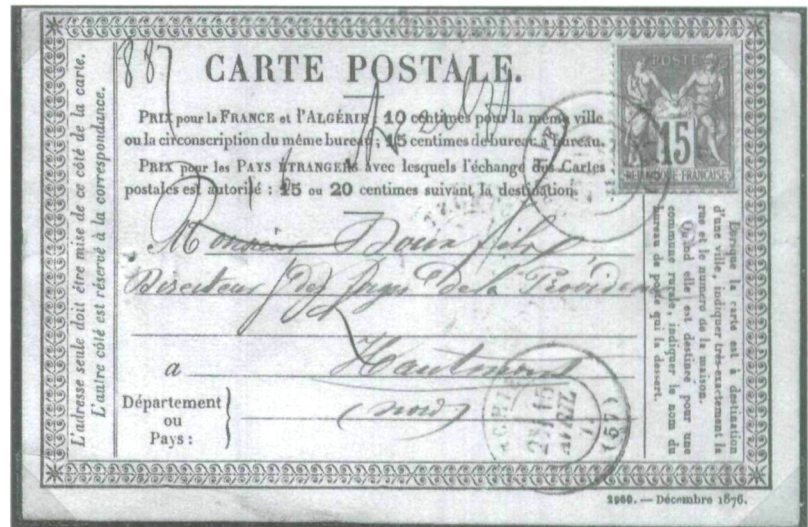
their collections to countries with a moderate emission policy corresponding to postal needs. These may also include countries that no longer exist.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, in postal circulation worldwide, the role of adhesive postage stamps diminished. A first development in this direction occurred in 1869 when Austria, soon to be followed by other countries, issued the first postcard in the form of postal stationery (that is, with an imprinted stamp). Although this new phenomenon in postal traffic implied a reduction in the use of adhesive stamps, it also gave a new impulse since it preceded — and probably suggested the idea for — the use of non-stationery picture postcards (with adhesive stamps), which we still use today.<sup>52</sup> Franking meters were internationally accepted in 1920, having been already in use by companies and institutions in various countries already. Postage by subscription is practised in the case of large numbers of uniform mail: a global calculation and payment to the postal service is based on total weight and there is no postage stamp on the mail, merely the indication “Postage Paid” or “PP”.<sup>53</sup>

Writing in the late 1920s, Walter Benjamin alluded to the decline of stamps and stamp collecting in view of the increasing use of telegrams: “There is...a stamp-language that is to flower-language what the Morse alphabet is to the written one. But how long will the flowers continue to bloom between the telegraph poles? Are not the great artistic stamps of the postwar years [after the First World War], with their full colors, already the autumnal asters and dahlias of this flora?”<sup>54</sup> In contrast to popular belief — and Benjamin is only an historical example — the competition by telegraph, telephone, fax and, more recently, e-mail, did not after all mean the end of postage stamps, but rather complementarity and an extension of the possibilities of communication. Moreover, the collection of postal stationery, franking meters, telegraph stamps and even entire telegrams constitute different domains in the realm of philately. In order to illustrate these general theses, we will give concrete examples of living collections of three male philatelists aged 68, 52 and 48 respectively, the first two born and living in the Netherlands, the third in France.

### Examples of Contemporary Philatelic Collectors

Joe (all names are pseudonyms), our first example, started work as a coal miner in the south of the Netherlands at age 18. The mine paid for his professional education two days a week. He was thus able to obtain a degree in mining engineering and became an underground mining overseer. After



having worked underground for sixteen years, the mine was closed down and he retrained as a hydraulic engineer. He found a job as project supervisor on the Maas River works. During a year-long illness, his wife suggested: “You still have your boyhood stamp collection, can't you do something with that?” He could, indeed. He subscribed to the local philatelic association and participated in the exchange circuit. After a few years, however, there was not much left to exchange and he was confronted with having to buy missing stamps for cash. For Joe the pleasure was over, until a fellow club member suggested: “You've been working in the mines, haven't you? That would be a nice topic for a thematic collection.” Joe adopted the idea. The president of his club took part in philatelic expositions, and this too gave Joe an idea, and he became an enthusiastic participant in competitive expositions. He specialized in the topic of mining extraction tools and, later, added other thematic collections such as the

Fig. 4 (top)  
One of the first French postal cards, printed in 1876 and sent in 1879. This kind of postal card preceded the illustrated ones. The front side, reserved for the address, includes information about the tariff.

Fig. 5 (above)  
Hawaiian postal stationery envelope (with embossed stamp) sent on 28 March 1893 from Honolulu via San Francisco to Winchester, Massachusetts. The royal crown appears above the date of issue of the (dark blue) stamp. Hawaii issued its own stamps from 1851 to 1898.



Brandenburger Tower and the Zambezi River. The latter collection pleased him most and also resulted in public appreciation.

Sean, our second example, started collecting as a boy when his mother put aside stamps for him:

*As a boy I could learn well, and my mother thought: "Maybe he can do something with these stamps, read about it and the like." At that time, everything I acquired was still fun. At first, my engagement in philately started with the idea that I had to fill the gaps in my album. The strange thing, however, was that not the album became alive, but the stamps, whether they were in the album or not. The stamps told me a story and they still do.*

When Sean went to university, he lived in lodgings and was occupied with his stamps for one or two hours a day ("maybe this was just a pleasant way to spend my time because, if I hadn't done this, I would have frequented pubs, but I didn't have the money for that every evening"). After marriage, his philatelic activities slowed down, but only for a while. From the moment he and his wife had a house, she took a job while he carried on studying and thus had "plenty of time" to continue his stamp collecting. Later, he became a high school teacher in geography. He constructed his collection in such a way that he is tracing imaginary lines on the world map bordering the different countries:

*I do this per continent and I'm not going to say: "England has colonies and, thus, I classify all those colonies behind England." There are also stamps belonging to two different countries, because they have a significance for both. I'm concerned with the transitions and links, for example of the Alsace and Saarland, which have been both French and German.*

Sean focusses on designs and prefers the classic ones. The first British stamps, for example, are classicist, those of Saxony Gothic, and there exist also Baroque stamps. Sean always stuck to the personal strategy that he should not aim at completeness. When, for example, the same king is represented on four different stamps, Sean only needs one of them. This held — and still holds — for postage stamps as well as revenue (or fiscal) stamps, for cinderella's and telegraph stamps ("in doing so, I always had a collection with a wider reach than others, because I included things which they'd never seen before"). He collects the world, classic, per type, until about 1900.

Arnaud, the third example, started collecting at the age of eight. In a catalogue he noticed that the first emissions of France, his native country, were

not as expensive as might be expected, and he developed a growing interest in them. He subscribed to a philatelic association, participated in the junior section of exhibitions, and even became president of his section of the association. His philatelic activities slowed down around the time of his high school exams and the first years of his medical studies. In his third year at university, he resumed these activities for a while and also started to buy at auction (*ventes sur offres*). He became a French naval surgeon and was twice stationed in French Polynesia and once in Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

As a philatelist, Arnaud showed particular interest in historical subjects. He had already made his mark in his academic studies with a thesis on medical problems encountered during the French military expeditions in Indochina between 1859 and 1861 under Napoleon III. His historical interest was allied to a search for the exotic and a preference for the beauty of engraved stamps. In philately, he was also attracted by the research aspect: "I really like to make a profound study of a single stamp." Arnaud did this with the 25 *centimes* Ceres blue. ("Many copies of this stamp were introduced into circulation, on different kinds of paper, in different colors, and with a rich variation in cancellations. The printing plates have been broken several times and, thus, three distinct types were generated.") Meanwhile, he amassed an important collection of classic French stamps, up to 1900, and postally used covers ("letters") as well as stamps of French colonies prior to their independence.<sup>55</sup> Although not part of his own (classic) collection, he appreciates the first French large format stamps with representations of historical monuments such as the Pont-du-Gard and the Eiffel Tower. After his final return to France (*la métropole*) a few years ago, Arnaud took the remarkable decision to sell his entire collection.

Our first example, Joe, is active in the branch of thematic philately, while our third one, Arnaud (including his one-stamp specialization), is active in traditional philately. Sean, our second example, is more difficult to classify. The ideas behind his particular collection are of interest to us because they raise questions and supply personal answers about the origins of stamps, postal services, and philatelic collecting. This is why, here, we take another look at his collection and the discourse of its owner. We are also informed about the material organization of his collection (the "vault of his treasures"). According to Sean, political changes are well represented on stamps and are an excellent indication of what happened in history. Whenever there was a *coup d'État*, for example, or a census, this was marked by a new emission. A new ruler,

indeed, had to know how many people he had under his reign. Any change in the constitution also used to be accompanied by a new emission, or at least an overprint. Thus, Sean follows the political transitions in all those countries and tries to find the accompanying stamps. He also looks for what he calls “curious” emissions:

*Yemen, for example, overprinted its stamps with swords and skulls of gas attacks in order to show what the revolting party did to them. Such interest, indeed, is linked to my profession, geography, but not directly because, in that case, I should collect maps on stamps. I'm interested in the political history of those countries, but also in their postal history when, for example, the Russians in their gigantic empire weren't any longer able to diffuse the mail everywhere, if they had to send a letter from Moscow to Vladivostok, this was complicated, these were enormous distances. When you also consider the climatic circumstances, you may well understand that all cities were allowed to organize their own postal service in the nineteenth century and issue their own stamps. In Denmark, however, it happened too but, there, this wasn't necessary. And in Germany, you can imagine that all constituting parts of the country wanted to organize their own postal service in order to express their own identity.*

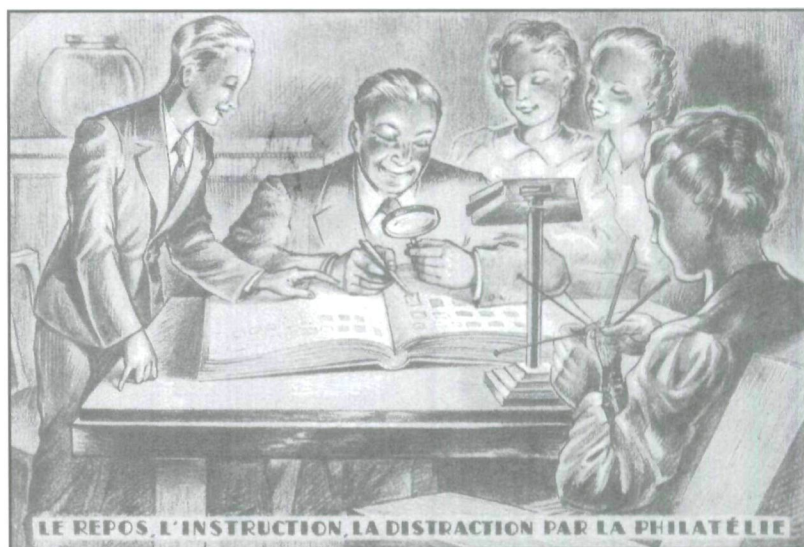
In the course of time, Sean extended his collection with new ideas. Once, he read about the Australian mining village of Coolgardie, southwest of the town of Kalgoorly, east of Perth. The question how to transport the mail from this outer mining village to the city was no major preoccupation of the postal service in Sydney. The people in Coolgardie resolved their own problem by buying some camels in order to transport their mail bags from their village to Kalgoorly twice a week, from where the mail was further handled by Australia's national postage system. These people also emitted their own stamps, which Sean enjoys very much — “emissions are of special interest to me as soon as they supply new solutions to the problem how to organize the environment.” Sean only appreciates cancellations when he knows that there are no stamps in the same period. He is, for example, still looking for the stiver marks of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (the East Indies Company or VOC). He integrates fiscal stamps in his collection by focussing on the graphic approach, whether the designs look alike, or are even made by the same designer: “If this is of the same order, for example near-Gothic, or classicist, or neo-classicist, or Renaissance, and when a new ruler is accompanied by a new emission,

new circumstances in the region with new values on the stamps, then I'm able to pick up my own collector's line.”

At the time that Sean as a young man still lived in lodgings, his stamps were kept in stock books, by country, until they were full. When he purchased his own house, he reorganized his stock books, but they soon became full again. He then started to add his new acquisitions as when they came in, but no longer by country or type. At present, he affixes his acquisitions on small “Hawid” stock cards (the size of postcards). He keeps these in iron and wooden boxes, and might have about four metres of these if placed end to end — “I've the most curious items in my collection; it will be my life's work to put some order in all that.” Sometimes, he shows part of his collection to friends and acquaintances, in particular the thirty pages he already filled for Germany and the ten pages for Belgium. He then says: “This is how it's got to be,” and points to the packets of paper he has in his cupboard in order to realize the new organization of his collection.

He tries to assemble the designs of each country, and link them to political developments. When he examines all his stock cards and stock books, he experiences huge satisfaction declaring, “I succeeded in gathering all this throughout my life time up to now.” Often, he remembers exactly the occasions of when and how he acquired a particular item, and with whom he was, and how much fun they had, “that whole period comes to life again.” He also becomes aware of what is lacking in his collection. Sometimes he is mistaken and already owns an item that he thought he lacked (“of the roughly fifty thousand items in my collection I

**Fig. 6**  
*Postal card issued at the occasion of a philatelic propaganda exhibition in Tourcoing, France, in 1938, one year before the Second World War. The illustration shows an apparently happy nuclear family. Note the father may be damaging the stamps with his left sleeve, thus not setting a good example. The text at the bottom summarizes the virtues of philately: rest, education, and relaxation.*



know most of them, but not all"). Thus, it happens that he occasionally buys something he already has. In which case he makes a present of it to a stamp-collecting friend.

### Conclusion

The material condition for the existence of philately is the development of postal services that are much older than adhesive stamps. Moreover, the cultural phenomenon of philately can only be understood as being part and parcel of a long tradition of collecting in general. Philately is a democratized form of collecting, probably the most widespread in the world, accessible for everybody, although mostly practised by certain age classes and corresponding to gender. Our examples are representative for adults (including their youth memories) in this respect. The men in the first two examples developed into dedicated philatelists; the third one was that too but, recently, made a commercial turn, abandoning his collection or, at least, using it in a non-collector's way for financial gain.

Contemporary adult philately has developed into a multifaceted phenomenon that no longer corresponds to the image outsiders have, an image often based on their own youth-collecting activities as well as on the commercial shambles produced by postal services. Many dedicated philatelists, sick of being exploited through the commercial perversion of these postal services (often, like in The Netherlands, privatized), leave their contemporary country collection for what it is, a particular phase in their personal philatelic development, and start to explore other domains in the realm of philately such as postal history, fiscal philately, or thematic philately.

Fiscal philatelists have good reason to defend their stance against the dominant interpretation of philately, which often implies a neglect of the

historical depth and rich philatelic potential of this only recently internationally recognized branch of philately.<sup>56</sup> Only in 1991, at the conference of the Fédération internationale de philatélie (FIP) in Tokyo, fiscal philately, although already in existence for more than a century,<sup>57</sup> was internationally recognized as a full branch of philately.<sup>58</sup> In my view, however, we cannot deny that philatelic collecting as the leisure activity we know today, with tens of millions of adherents worldwide, was triggered by the introduction of the first adhesive postage stamps in 1840 but, at present, the object of philately also implies previous periods as well as philatelic elements other than adhesive stamps. Philately has special attraction because the stamp collectors seem to have the whole world in their grasp with their collection of little stamps that have moved bureaucratically between parts of the globe and also tend to signify entities such as kings, nations and empires that do the same and, in doing so, bring together disparate parts.

To quote Benjamin once more: "On stamps, countries and oceans are merely the provinces and kings merely the hirelings of numbers that steep them in their colors at will. Stamp albums are magical reference books; the numbers of monarchs and palaces, of animals and allegories and states, are recorded in them. Postal traffic depends on their harmony as the motions of the planets depend on the harmony of the celestial numbers."<sup>59</sup> Stamps and other philatelic elements have the "semiological" quality to signify almost anything and, through the re-assembly of the chaotic world in meaning, they signify signification. Stamps represent the process of signification in the smallest of artifacts, and the stamp collector himself, being — in Mauss's terms<sup>60</sup> — the node of many levels of signification that seem to run through him, reassembles meaning via his collection.

### NOTES

1. In the words of Christian Bromberger, "Introduction," in *Passions ordinaires: Du match de football au concours de dictée*, ed. Christian Bromberger (Paris: Bayard, 1998), 5–38.
2. Douglas Rigby and Elizabeth Rigby, *Lock, Stock and Barrel: The Story of Collecting* (Philadelphia, New York and London: Lippincott, 1944), xviii.
3. Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Steven M. Gelber, "A Job You Can't Lose: Work and Hobbies in the Great Depression," *Journal of Social History* 24 (1991): 741–766; and "Free Market Metaphor: The Historical Dynamics of Stamp Collecting," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (1992): 742–769; Jonathan Grant,

"The Socialist Construction of Philately in the Early Soviet Era," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1995): 476–493; Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting, An Unruly Passion: Psychological Perspectives* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harvest, 1995; repr., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation in the European Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). See also Paul van der Grijp, "Passion and Profit: The World of Amateur Traders in Philately," *Journal of Material Culture* 7, no. 1 (2002): 23–47; and "Stamps and the Art Metaphor: Motivations and Strategies of Philatelic Collectors," (unpub. ms.).

4. Yves Delaporte, "Des insectes et des hommes," *Les Temps modernes* 450 (1984): 1235–1263; Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Stuart Plattner, *High Art Down Home: An Economic Ethnography of a Local Art Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and "A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Market for Contemporary Fine Art," *American Anthropologist* 100 (1998): 482–493.
5. Raymond Corbey, *Tribal Art Traffic: A Chronicle of Taste, Trade and Desire in Colonial and Post-Colonial Times* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2000); Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).
6. Bérénice Geoffroy-Schneiter, *Arts premiers* (Paris: Assouline, 1999); Laurence Faure-Rouesnel, "French Anthropology and Material Culture," *Journal of Material Culture* 6 (2001): 237–247.
7. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63; James Clifford, "On Collecting Art and Culture," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 141–169.
8. Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes toward a Contextual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structural Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 213–238; quoted on p. 223.
9. Rigby and Rigby, *Lock, Stock and Barrel*, 64.
10. Roger Cardinal, "Collecting and Collage-Making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 68–96; quoted on p. 70.
11. Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library: A Talk About Book Collecting" (orig. 1931), in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970; used here: the Fontana edition of 1992), 61–69; quoted on p. 64.
12. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London: Verso, 1996; repr., Paris 1968); Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society*; Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).
13. Adult females are a growing group, particularly within thematic philately, but remain a clear minority.
14. Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," (orig. 1928), in *Selected Writings: Volume I, 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 478.
15. Alvin F. Harlow, *Old Post Bags: The Story of the Sending of a Letter in Ancient and Modern Times* (New York and London: Appleton, 1978).
16. Today, not mentioning the country name on its internationally used stamps is still the exclusive privilege of Great Britain. See J. C. Hemmeon, *The History of the British Post Office* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912); Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948); and *Carrying British Mails Overseas* (New York: New York University Press, 1964); M. J. Daunton, *Royal Mail: The Post Office Since 1840* (London and Dover, New Hampshire: Athlone Press, 1985).
17. Otto Homung, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Stamp Collecting* (London: Hamlyn, 1970), 46.
18. *Ibid.* This did not happen at once. Actually, the net profit of the General Post Office of £1,634,000 in 1839 decreased to a mere £501,000 in 1841, the first year after the postal reform. The British people, however, were pleased about the reform and, politically speaking, there was no way to return to the old system. Only in 1874 did the profit of the General Post Office start to exceed that of 1839.
19. Marshall Cushing, *The Story of Our Post Office: The Greatest Government Department in all its Phases* (Boston: Thayer, 1893); Alexis Belloc, *Les postes françaises: Recherches historiques sur leur origine, leur développement, leur législation* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1886).
20. Among the early starters were also the Swiss cantons of Zurich and Geneva in 1843, and Basel in 1845. (For a detailed overview see W. J. Hardy and E. D. Bacon, *The Stamp Collector: A Treatise on the Issue and Collecting of Postage Stamps of All Nations, Art, History and Market Value* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1898), 56–57.) In 1863, in Paris, an international post conference was held on the international calculation of postage and the various weight units in different countries. No decisions were taken, only recommendations. In 1874, the Union Postale Universelle (UPU) was founded and decisions were made about a uniform postage tariff with some margins for individual countries, a simplification of the calculation of transit costs, and the agreement in line with Hill's original proposals that all postage should be paid by means of postage stamps and only paid in the country where the mail was issued. The idea behind the latter was that almost every letter is replied to, thus both the country of the sender and of the receiver will in the end obtain an equal share. In the beginning, not many countries were UPU members, but their number increased steadily. Meanwhile, some dozens of UPU congresses were held: on tariffs, color uniformity in international mail, and the allowance of special emissions, to give just a few examples. In 1947, the UPU became an organ of the United Nations.
21. Hardy and Bacon, *The Stamp Collector*; Charles J. Phillips, *Stamp Collecting: The King of Hobbies and the Hobby of Kings* (New York: Lindquist, 1936); Georges Olivier, *Le timbre: Valeur de placement* (Paris: Payot, 1941); R. J. Sutton, *Stamps are Money* (London: Stanley Paul, 1959); Colin Narbeth, *Investing in Stamps* (London: Stanley Paul, 1968); Dominique Buffier, Roland Granier and Pierre Jullien, *La philatélie: Collections et placements* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).
22. Yvert and Tellier, *Catalogue des timbres fiscaux et socio-postaux de France* (Paris: Yvert & Tellier et Société française de philatélie fiscale, 2000), 5; my translation.
23. Yves M. Danan, "Preface," in A. Devaux, *Papiers et parchemins timbrés de France* (facsimile edition in two volumes by the Société française de philatélie fiscale, Paris, 1993; repr., 1911), iv–v.

24. E. B. Evans, *The Mulready Envelope and its Caricatures* (London: Stanley Gibbons, 1891).
25. Yvert and Tellier, *Catalogue des timbres*, 5; my translation.
26. Danan, "Preface," iv.
27. Decrees of 1667, 1669 and 1670, declarations of 19 March and 10 July 1673.
28. In line with the declaration of 19 March 1673, the tariff for papers varied between 6 *deniers* for a quarter paper to 16 *deniers* for a large paper, and for parchments from 5 *sols* a roll (*le rouleau*) to 20 *sols* a hide (*la peau*).
29. As from 1781, in England the hand stamp *franco* was added to indicate that postage was paid in advance.
30. Henri Claessen and Peter Skalnik, eds., *The Early State* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978); Henri Claessen and Pieter van de Velde, eds., *Early State Dynamics* (Leyden: Brill, 1987).
31. Arthur de Rothschild, *Histoire de la poste aux lettres et du timbre poste: Depuis leurs origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Genève-Paris: Slatkine, 1984; repr., Paris: Calman Lévy, 1880), 8.
32. Hornung, *Illustrated Encyclopedia*, 12.
33. The hide was stretched, dried, and could be written on both sides and was more durable, but also more expensive than papyrus. The word parchment refers to the Greek city-state in Asia Minor, Pergamon, the site of one of the two largest (competing) libraries at the time, the other being that of Alexandria. The latter produced and stocked mainly papyrus rolls.
34. As late as the fourteenth century, the first paper mills were built in Europe. For a history of writing and related subjects see Jack Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Georges Jean, *L'écriture, mémoire des hommes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).
35. de Rothschild, *Histoire de la poste aux lettres*, 2.
36. Jean-Pierre Drège, *Marco Polo et la Route de la soie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).
37. At the time, post coaches (or *diligences*) also became an important means of travel, later replaced in its double transportation function (post and persons) by railways and airplanes. See Dorian Gerhold, *Road Transport Before the Railways: Russell's London Flying Waggons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
38. In Great Britain, the state-owned General Letter Office already had a monopoly as from 1657.
39. "That these were really a collection was evident, for the lumps of soft clay had been pressed against the gems (the finger marks were plain on the backs and there was no hole in any of them through which a string could have been passed) and had afterwards been baked so as to make the record permanent." (Woolley cited in Rigby and Rigby, *Lock, Stock and Barrel*, 106).
40. *Ibid.*
41. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "From Treasure to Museum: The Collections of the Austrian Habsburgs," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. Elsner and Cardinal, 137–154, quoted on p. 142.
42. Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1962); Marie-Françoise Lanfant, *Les théories du loisir* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972).
43. In the permanent exposition of the museum of stamps and philately in Luc-en-Provence, the total number of philatelists in France is estimated at more than 3 million, in Germany at 6 million, in the USSR at 12 million, and in the United States at 20 million.
44. The latter, founded in April 1869, was granted the right to add the prefix *Royal* to its name by King Edward VII in 1906. In 1896, The Duke of York became the president of this (later Royal) Philatelic Society until his accession to the throne in 1910 as King George V, when he accepted the function of patron of this society, a patronage which is continued by the British sovereigns until now, and which added to the popular prestige of the hobby at least in Great Britain.
45. For example, Fredk. Booty, *The Stamp-Collectors' Guide: Being a History of English and Foreign Postage Stamps, With 200 Facsimile Drawings* (Brighton: Treacher, and London: Hamilton and Adams, 1862); Alfred Potiquet, *Catalogue des timbres-poste créés dans les divers États du globe* (Paris, 1862).
46. Sources of Table 1 for 1850–1970: Hornung, *Illustrated Encyclopedia*, 61; for 2001: *Stamps Magazine* cited in *Philatelie: Maandblad van de Nederlandse Filatelisten Vereniging* (2002), 260.
47. Hardy and Bacon, *The Stamp Collector*, 9.
48. *Ibid.*, 12.
49. The first period, when adhesive stamps were still only used for postal needs, is called the classic period, and runs from 1840 (or the year of the first emission in the country concerned) till the 1870s according to some, and till the turn of the century according to others. For the first position see, for example, James A. Mackay, *The World of Classic Stamps, 1840–1870* (New York: Putnam, 1972).
50. Hardy and Bacon, *The Stamp Collector*, 77.
51. Les Harding, *Dead Countries of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Aden to Zululand* (Lanham, Md. and London: Scarecrow, 1998).
52. Postcards appeared to be a success from the start. In 1870, the first year of their issue in Great Britain, for example, 76 million postcards passed through the post. In 1896, this number had increased to 336 million (Hardy and Bacon, *Stamp Collector*, 229; for more recent case studies see Naomi Schor, "Cartes Postales: Representing Paris 1900," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 188–245; and "Collecting Paris," in *Cultures of Collecting*, 252–274).
53. Michael A. Crew and Paul R. Kleindorfer, eds., *Competition and Innovation in Postal Services* (Boston, Dordrecht and London: Kluwer, 1991).
54. Benjamin, "One-Way Street," 480.
55. Arnaud excluded the North African countries from the latter, since they would justify a separate collection.
56. This rich philatelic potential is also emphasized by fiscal philatelists in other parts of the world, for example in the United States: "No field of philately comes close to offering the variety, beauty, and economy of acquisition that revenues do. Yes, there are classic rarities which bring thousands of dollars. But there are more opportunities for discoveries than in any other area of philately" (Bill J. Castenholz, *An Introduction to Revenue Stamps* (Pacific Palisades, California: Castenholz, 1994), v).

57. Léon Salefranque, *Le timbre à travers l'histoire* (Rouen: Émile Deshayes, 1890).
58. The FIP itself was founded in 1926 in order to defend philatelic interests and promote activities such as international philatelic exhibitions. Again in 1996, in a leading article in one of the major French philatelic journals, fiscal stamps were classified as "extra-philatelic," that is, without any link to philately ("aucun rapport avec la philatélie"; Claude Jamet, "Postal ou 'philatélique': Sachez faire la différence," *Timbroscopie* (June 1996): 52–59; quoted on p. 59 and 53 respectively). To give another example, the integration of fiscal philatelic material in thematic collections, although officially allowed since 1991, is still frowned upon and devalued by certain jury members in national and international competitive exhibitions.
59. Benjamin, "One-Way Street," 479.
60. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1954; orig. in French 1923–24).