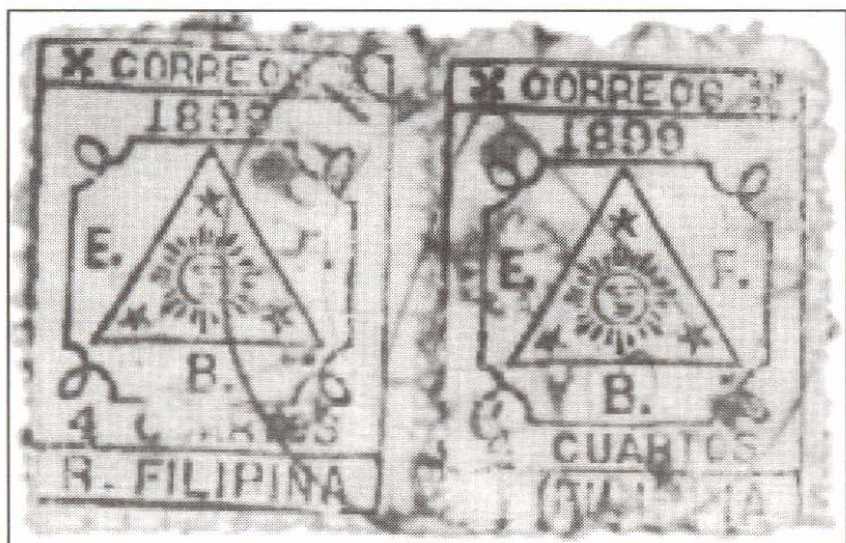




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Philippine Philatelic Journal

The Filipino American War:

The Federated State of the Visayas

by Bob Yacano

Collectors of Philippines philatelic material are familiar with the story of Admiral Dewey's defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1898. There are a number of collectors who have spent a great deal of time, money and effort to collect and study the stamps, covers and documents emanating from Dewey's action. As a result, there is a great deal of information available that helps explain the declining role of the Spanish Postal System and the creation and expansion of the United States Postal System in its place

Between 1898 and 1902, the date when the islands were considered "pacified", there were a number of parallel postal services in operation. Earlier philatelic writings together with a number of recent books dealing with the historical aspects of the period have given enough information to begin to understand the postal picture, accepting the possibility that additional information in the future may very well change that understanding.

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There are difficulties in dealing with this material. Covers of this period were not dated. It is not always possible to determine the succession of stamps or cancels. Equally important is that much of the material of this period has been destroyed. Possession of any document relating to the guerrillas was considered to be proof of compliance with the guerrilla cause and resulted in capture, interrogation, and possibly death. It is understandable that many destroyed this type of proof as soon as possible. Even captured material often was destroyed on the spot, with only those documents deemed relevant to guerrilla activity were retained and sent to military headquarters where they were later destroyed.

The attempt is to unify the material known, with examples, in the expectation that the readers will search their own materials and come up with supportive or contradictory information/material to add to the picture.

The Federated State of the Visayas was comprised of the islands of Cebu, Leyte, Negros, Panay and Samar. While declaring allegiance to Aguinaldo's Army of Independence, the local leaders considered the Visayan area as a separate entity determined to maintain its own independence. Bohol, Panay and Cebu are known to have had their own postal systems. Stamps are known from Negros: little else. No covers have been reported, nor any



Figure 1



Figure 4

information on its operation. (Fig. 1).

While no Panay covers have been reported, there is evidence of stamps and postal activity. Fig 2 (cover) is the only reported example of a postal cancel on Panay Provisional stamps. The cancel is from Iloilo, the largest town on the Panay Island. Estimates of the number of Panay stamps that exist have generally numbered under 20... until this partial sheet surfaced. (Fig. 3).

All in all, this particular surcharged stamp is really one big night-

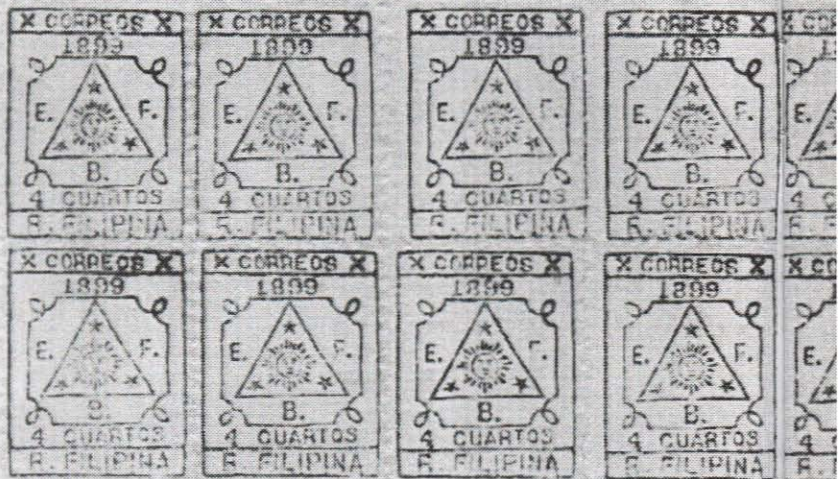
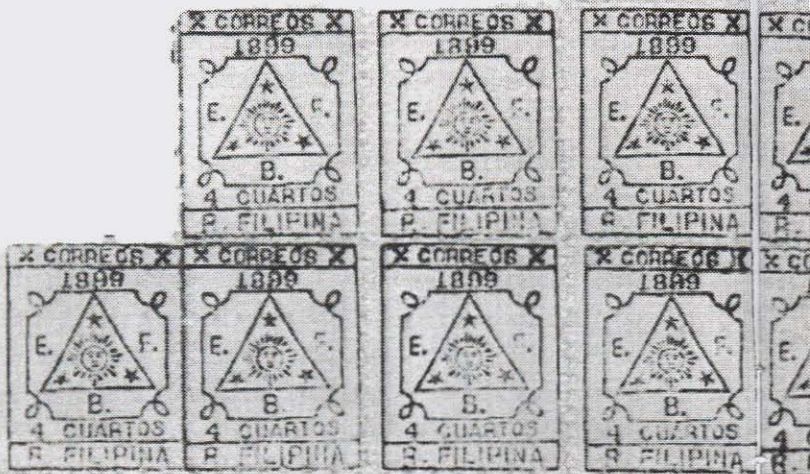


Figure 3





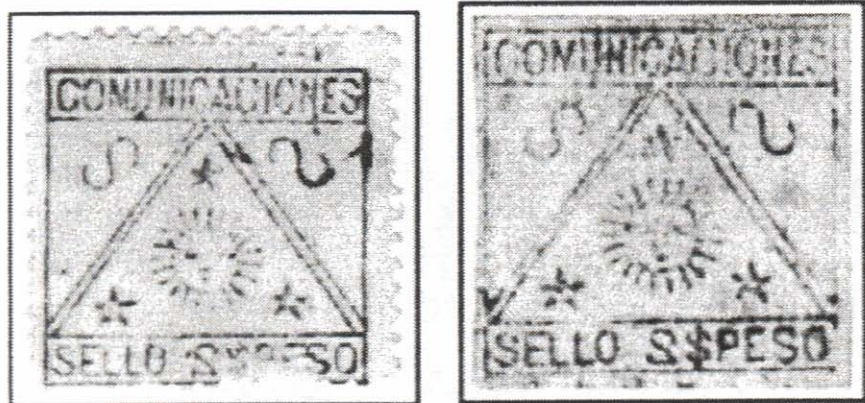


Figure 5

The first stamp of Bohol is believed to be an imprint made with a wood block (Fig 4). This was most likely followed by a set of two adhesive stamps (Fig. 5). Little is known of these fairly recent discoveries and nothing appears in philatelic literature of the period, but until more information is forthcoming, that is the most likely circumstance. The third adhesive has been documented. It is known in mint, on piece, and on cover. (cover, Fig. 6).

As US Military forces moved through the Visayas area, local guerrilla bands were driven onto the island of Cebu. Maintaining their postal system, they resorted to earlier Spanish period stamps canceled with a distinctive Cebu Revolutionary cancel. Earlier informational sources claimed that stamps and cancels were known only on piece. We now know that a few covers do exist.

The Visayas area was systematically overrun by US Military forces and assimilated into the expanding United States Postal System.

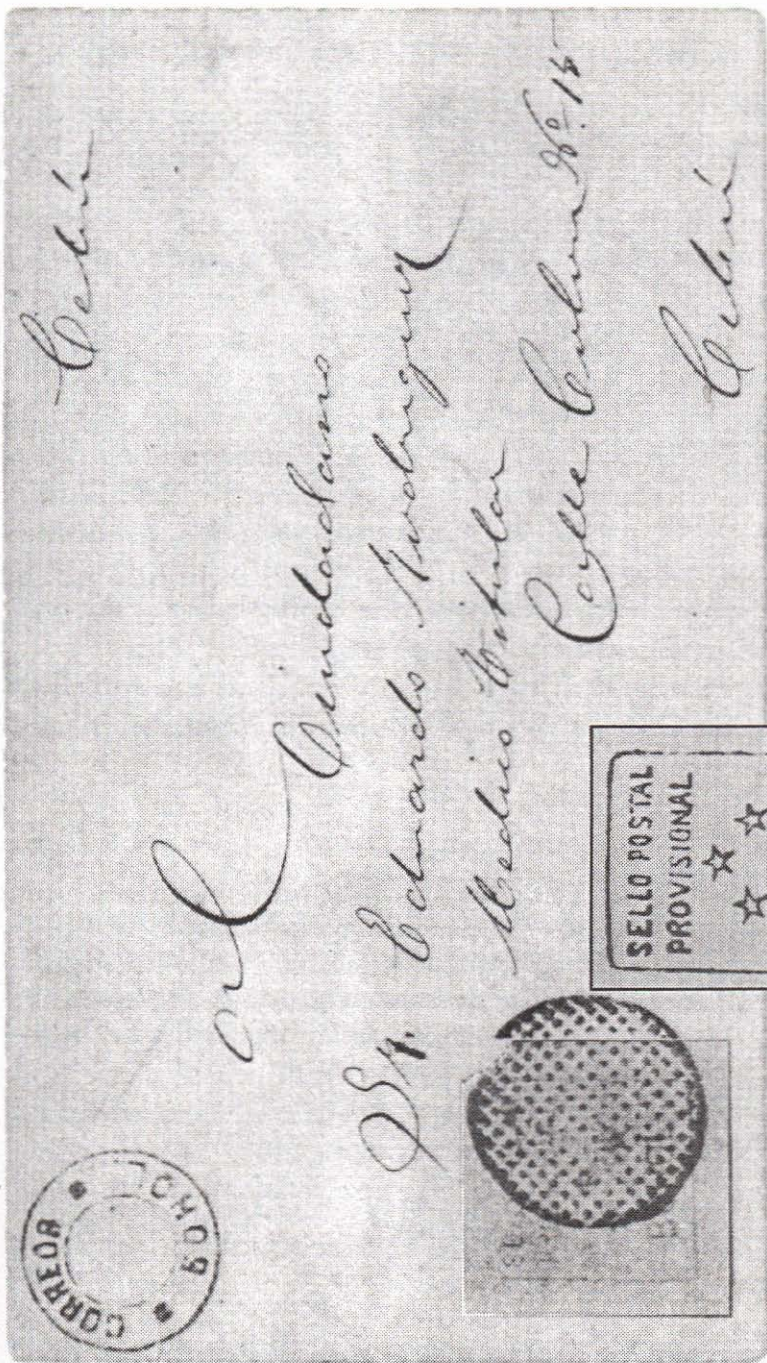


Figure 6

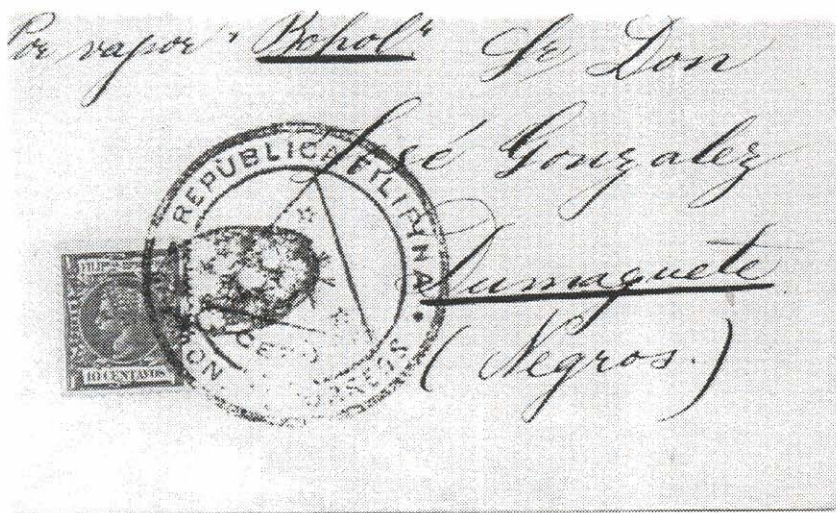


Figure 7

The Author's Note: This is the first article in a series on the Filipino American War. While information continues to be sparse, collectors have attempted to piece together information on various aspects of the period, trying to present a clear, concise philatelic history. I hope those of you who have information or further insight on the subject will share it.

Sources of Information:

Arnold, Richard, Section 21: Filipino Revolutionary Government or the "The Aquinaldo's", Articles from various Journals in compilations.

Lange, Fritz Walter: The Philippine Revolution—an exhibit

BENIGNO AQUINO HANDSTAMPED SURCHARGES

by Dr. Ngo Tiong Tak

For the past 2 years or so, there has not been many exciting new issues from Philpost, but a few collectors do know that late in 2000, there was a really unbelievable and controversial new issue that more than makes up for this lack of excitement lately...

Most collectors know that due to the tight financial situation at Philpost, stamp production was drastically affected. Since the last quarter of 1998, commemorative stamps are usually issued in quantities of 50,000 only. The postal officials want such "expensive stamps" (cost of production is at 65 cents per stamp each now, compared to less than 15 cents for small-sized definitives) to be primarily sold to collectors and not used for postage. They want the entire printing to be sold within 6 months (now the sales period is further reduced to a ridiculous and unimplementable 3 months only)!

Years before, there was excess printing of most issues, and with each new postage rate hike, many values became obsolete. Unless such stamps are surcharged, they usually end up stocked in the vaults for many years. Compounding the problem of obsolete stamp stocks are the huge quantities of stamps being held as evidence in cases filed against previous chiefs and custodians of the Philatelic Section. In recent years, many of these obsolete stocks were taken out of storage when the denominations happen to conform to new postage rates, or when they can be used as "make-up" stamps and/or in combinations with others to come up with the current rates. However, there are still a lot that remain unuseable.

For years, there were suggestions to destroy these obsolete stamps. Unfortunately, the Commission on Audit (COA) re-

fuses to approve the destruction of undamaged or "good" stamps; therefore, the most sensible way to get rid of such stocks would be to surcharge them. However, some are in such limited quantities that if they are surcharged, they will become instant rarities! Many others cannot be machine surcharged because the sheets are "repaired". (When APO-NEDA was the printer, they often delivered sheets with one or more stamps removed due to some misprint and they replaced these by pasting an equal number of stamps on the sheet margins. At first, Amstar continued this practice, but later on, abandoned this annoying method of salvaging misprinted sheets.) For stocks that are impractical or impossible to machine surcharge, they can be cancelled-to-order and sold on a per-piece basis, regardless of face value. Philpost can then sell large quantities of "collections", generating more philatelic revenues and at the same time, supply the philatelic market with cheap stamps for beginners, giving the hobby a muchneeded boost. Unfortunately, such suggestions were never heeded.

Then, the unbelievable happened! The Postage Division personnel recommended the manual surcharging of obsolete stamps with the use of rubber stamps to the Postmaster General; and, wonder of wonders... this crude method of surcharging, reminiscent of the handstamped "K.P." official stamps during the Japanese Occupation and the handstamped "VICTORY" stamps of 1944, was almost instantly approved!

The plan was to surcharge all obsolete values in "repaired" or partial sheets, and loose stamps, and those with quantities of less than 20,000. All such stamps with denominations lower than P5 will be surcharged to P5 and those above P5 but below P10 will be surcharged to P10. This involves literally hundreds of different stamps from several decades!

When I first learned of their plan to recommend such to the PMG, I strongly objected and cautioned them against this. And even

without the knowledge of the Philatelic Division, they still went ahead with their recommendation and got the approval quickly.

Realizing that there seemed to be no way of stopping this, I suggested that they record the quantities of each stamp surcharged, and control their sale strictly. Starting late October 2000 (?), the 8 or so employees of the Postage Division started surcharging the first 4 stamps taken out from the vaults: P2.30 Abelardo definitive of 1982, 60s Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" of 1986, P3.60 Aquino stamp of 1986 and 75s Christmas stamp of 1988. Each of these stamps are to be surcharged to P5 with the use of 2 rubber stamps, one for the 2 deleting bars and the other, the new value.

I was surprised to see 2 kinds of new value, one with 2 zeroes after the decimal point and the other with a dash instead, so I suggested that they keep an accurate record of how many stamps were surcharged with each of the 2 types. What I did not know then was that there were at least 7 distinct types of the one with 2 zeroes, and 2 types with the dash.

It now appears that each of the manually-produced rubber stamps were intentionally made different. (Maybe this was to facilitate identification of the work of each employee, I am not sure, as I was unable to get definite answers to my queries.) They cannot even remember how many rubber stamps were made and can no longer find any for me to use for illustration purposes. I requested them to handstamp each type on a clean piece of paper so that I can include the clear impressions in my catalogue, but all they can find are the P10 rubber stamps, which have not been used yet. In fact, they claim that there is only one type and all the different rubber stamps are identical! This, even after I showed them the many disparities!

After they had finished surcharging the 110,000 pieces of P3.60 Benigno Aquino stamps, they decided to start the sale. In the afternoon of November 24, 2000, a Friday, sale of this stamp started without any prior announcement. As recommended, they tried to control the sale. Only 3 windows at the Manila Central Office were assigned to sell the stamps. They were intended only for regular local mails, and no mint copies were to be sold. These stamps were to be sold only to postal patrons with ready-to-mail letters. Letters with these stamps will be accepted by these 3 windows only. The tellers were even encouraged to place the stamps on the letters, which should be left at the windows, to be collected later in the day for processing as usual.

Unfortunately, as only very few collectors were aware that such an "exciting" stamp would be issued, sales to collectors, who still had to prepare covers for mailing, did not amount to much. Regular postal patrons must have found the "regulations" too bothersome and many refused to leave their letters at the windows, so sales were really slow. Starting Saturday, the tellers decided to sell even mint copies, disregarding the memo. Several collectors and dealers then took advantage and used them on letters to be sent abroad, and on registered letters, both local and foreign, all contrary to regulations set.

I had explained to Postage Division personnel before that any stamp officially overprinted and sold are needed in every Philippine collection. They insisted that these are not philatelic stamps, but rather for postage use only, so collectors should just ignore them and not complain. They insisted they were only doing their jobs and in the process, they are even helping Philpost make money out of obsolete stamps! I also explained that if they proceed with their plan to surcharge over a hundred different stamps to higher values, Philpost will end up losing money instead. With so many different kinds, who would know if a surcharged stamp is genuine or not? Unless they keep a very accurate record of which

stamps were surcharged, maybe they themselves will not know. Anybody can just have rubber stamps made and surcharge any low value, say 60¢ or less, to P5. Collectors and dealers can surcharge all their low value stamps, especially if they are from incomplete sets, damaged stamps, stamps without gum, badly stained or simply unsaleable or uncollectible stamps. And in the process, they can even create errors and varieties. Who will be the wiser? Philpost ends up losing more revenue instead of making a profit from this project. And this will also wreck havoc to Philippine new issues, causing many collectors to shy away from our stamps. No catalogue publisher will even want to touch these issues! In the end, all of us lose!

They were, however, not a bit convinced! They did not believe there are that many old stamps out there which people can use to create their own surcharges. And they even reasoned that since they use hard-to-find and expensive red ink from the meter machines, that should be enough of a deterrent already!

When the chief of the Philatelic Division learned about this, she prepared a letter of protest. The officers of the International Philippine Philatelic Society (IPPS) who happened to have a meeting that Saturday, also voted to write an official letter to the PMG to denounce the sale of such a stamp.

After receiving the 2 letters of protest, PMG Rodriguez decided to suspend the sale of the surcharges at around 11 a.m. of November 27, Monday. Therefore, these stamps were officially on sale for only about 2 1/2 days (Friday afternoon, Saturday and morning of Monday).

By the time the stamps were withdrawn and put back into the vaults, 2,065 pieces were sold, with maybe 2/3 in mint condition. Since the issuance was not announced, only a few collectors prepared and posted covers, making postally used (even

those philatelically inspired) covers very scarce. Furthermore, most of those posted on the first day of sale (November 24, 2000) received a November 27 postmark, so genuine "first day covers", specially those with proper backstamps, are really rare!

When the sale of the Aquino handstamped surcharge was suspended, further surcharging of the other stamps were also stopped. By that time, the following 3 stamps were already surcharged in these quantities: P2.30 Abelardo definitive of 1982 - 25,270; 60s Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" of 1986 - 60,000 and 75s Christmas stamp of 1988 - 20,000. These were sent back into the vaults too.

As more collectors learned about the unannounced issuance and sudden withdrawal of this surcharge, there was a unanimous cry for the continued sale of the Aquino stamp. Since some collectors were able to buy even mint stamps contrary to regulations, it had become speculative. This can, in turn, only hurt Philippine philately. Many collectors complained to the chief of the Philatelic Division, and some collectors even sent letters to the PMG requesting that he put that particular stamp back on sale (but to avoid approving the sale of the other 3 surcharged stamps). The PMG however, did not act on this matter right away.

When it was noted that Scott's and Minkus had listed this stamp, which was also reported in Linn's Stamp News, the chief of the Philatelic Division wrote a letter to the PMG recommending the reissuance of this stamp. After over a month, the request was finally approved and the stamps were put back on sale on December 27, 2001.

20,000 pieces were given to the Philatelic Division for sale to collectors, and the balance (87,935) were sold at the windows of the Manila Central Post Office (only). But since most collectors do not like such "controversial" stamps, which they also find very

"ugly and messy", philatelic sales remained very, very poor. In fact, many were later sold to big mailers for postage use. When the Internal Audit Service (IAS) people recommended that the Philatelic Division custodian return all her stocks of old stamps to the Postage Division for subsequent distribution to the window tellers and regional post offices for postage use, many of these surcharged stamps were included too. What most collectors failed to realize was that this stamp, an unbelievable piece in this day and age, is actually an extremely interesting stamp. Since it was officially issued, it is needed in every Philippine collection, and it will definitely be elusive in a few years' time.

What adds to the fascination for specialists is the fact that there are at least 9 distinct varieties to collect! When the stamp was initially put on sale in 2000, some collectors noticed that there are different sizes of the surcharge. However, since so few were sold before they were recalled and put back into the vaults, the complete picture was not known until much later, when they were put back on sale.

In order to document all the different types that may exist, and to later publicize all the officially-prepared types (so any new "finds" later will be suspect), the entire stock of these surcharges were examined before they were put back on sale. To our total surprise and amazement, 9 distinct types were identified.

Aside from the size of the overall overprint, the shape of the peso sign and/or numerals are different on each of these 9 types. They can be identified most conveniently and logically by the peso sign and new value. Although there are long and short bars, uneven bars, rectangles and blocks in place of the 2 bars, these deleting bars are terribly difficult to differentiate, so it would be best not to use them as basis for classifying. In fact, I would rather ignore the differences in the deleting bars except when they are omitted.

Since the surchargings were done manually by the many employees at the Postage Division, the placement of the deleting bars, the new value and the distance between the two vary a great deal. In fact, there is no "normal" position. Some deleting bars are placed diagonally instead of horizontally, and since the surcharges are done in 2 steps, a number of errors are known. Some have the deleting bars omitted, others have no new value. Some have the deleting bars doubled because the first strike missed the old value. Others have doubled or inverted new values too. A few sheets even have 2 different types of surcharges together! Another rubber stamp was used when the employee resumed the surcharging after leaving part of the sheet unfinished when she stopped. (They usually do the surcharging during lunch break, and before or after office hours.)

The poor quality of the manually-manufactured rubber stamps caused them to deteriorate quickly, so impressions from a particular rubber stamp made later are less distinct than those prepared earlier. The deterioration of the rubber stamps for the 2 deleting bars caused later impressions to become a rectangular or irregular block instead of 2 lines. Some may even appear like they were done with a brush or other means, but the ones who worked on them assured me only rubber stamps were used. Obviously also, even if the same rubber stamp was used, the amount of pressure used, angle of application and amount of ink picked up, all contributed to the different appearance of the surcharges.

Despite such a scenario, we can still confidently identify at least 9 types. (I will give a brief description of each type, which I hope, will help others to identify the stamps they have.)

P5.00

Type I

P5.00

Type II

P5.00

Type III

P5.00

Type IV

P5.00

Type V

P5.00

Type VI

P5.00

Type VII

P5.00

Type VIII

P5.00

Type IX

Type I – with the largest P5.00 (12 1/2 mm. long), with a line across the center P that extends out to both sides.

Type II – with the tall, narrow value (10 1/2 mm.), with 2 short lines on either side of P.

Type III – 11 1/2 mm. long, with 3 strokes (line or dot) at left of P, and with lower curve line of P open. There are 2 subtypes: one has the horizontal stroke of 5 straight, the other has it curved upwards.

Type IV - 10 1/2 – 11 mm. long, with 2 dots or lines at left of P plus horizontal bar at foot (like in serif type). This type includes at least 3 subtypes:

1) with top horizontal bar of 5 curved, slanted down towards right, so very close to the egg-shaped curve of lower part of "5"

2) almost identical to previous one, but with top of first zero open

3) top horizontal bar almost straight.

Type V – smaller version of type IV, measuring only 10 mm., the 5 and 2 zeroes are obviously smaller and shorter. This has 2 subtypes too. The first has the horizontal bar of 5 curved and the other straight. Properly handstamped ones do not show any zero with top open.

Type VI—10 mm., peso sign and numerals are all uniform and straight (looks sharp compared with others). There are also 3 strokes (line or dot) at left of P, but the bottom one is not connected to the end of the vertical stroke that extends out to both sides, like with types IV and V. It appears very near the edge of the vertical stroke, with some actually joined with the edge, but it does not cross over to the right. There seems to be 2 subtypes too, one with very thin lines, and the other, thick; but this could be due only to differences in pressure and/or the amount of ink applied.

Type VII—the smallest overprint at 8 1/2 mm. only. With a line or dot to the left of the vertical stroke of P near the center. The most notable feature is the "foot" of "P", which is an extension of the vertical stroke that goes to the right, creating an "L".

Type VIII—with a dash instead of 2 zeroes after the decimal point. 10 2 mm. long and 3 mm. in height. The P has extensions of upper and lower strokes of the curve line to the left of the vertical stroke. It has a short horizontal line in the middle of the half circle of the P.

Type IX—also with a dash, but much larger, measuring 11 mm. long and 4 mm. in height. The lower stroke of the curve line of P does not extend beyond the vertical stroke, but the horizontal line in the middle of the half circle extends out to the left of the vertical stroke. With all the lines so thick, the whole upper half of P appears like a solid half circle. Also, the top horizontal bar of 5 is very close to the upper curve so most will show the left side joined already.

Types VIII & IX were used initially, but discontinued and later used mostly on the other 3 stamps being overprinted. Only 3 sheets of type VIII and 9 sheets of type IX were prepared. The ones who did the surcharging did not believe that these 2 types were used on the Aquino stamp. They insisted that the one with the dash was used on the 3 other stamps only. Later though, one of them remembered

that they started with this, but decided to use only the one with 2 zeroes after a few sheets were done. Since all the stamps they requisitioned are accountable, they cannot just be set aside. They simply had to include every sheet, even these "trial sheets" and those with errors. They honestly believed that such stamps were not collectible and were for postage use only.

Types V and VI were never included in the stock of the Philatelic Division and they sold out quickly at the windows, so most collectors missed these.

Only about 50 sheets of **type II** were prepared, but they were all in the Philatelic Division stock, so many collectors got this scarce variety.

Due to the fact that the Philatelic Division was not informed about this issue, no official first day covers nor bulletins were prepared when the stamps were initially issued in November 2000. Of course when sale was suspended, such plans were also shelved. When sales were resumed, there were plans for official cacheted FDCs and at least a mimeographed bulletin, but somehow, they were delayed for too long. The first day cover envelopes were not ready by the end of April 2002, so the order was finally cancelled as it was already way past both "dates of issue" (November 24, 2000 or December 27, 2001), and very few collectors seem interested even with the mint stamps.

The first day cancel dated "November 24, 2000" was available since February 2002, but only a few collectors and dealers prepared FDCs on blank envelopes. Now, only a few FDCs exist, as the canceller was already withdrawn.

All in all, this particular surcharged stamp is really one big night-

mare, albeit, truth be told, to a few of us, it is one of the most exciting and interesting stamps to come about in recent years. Let us just hope no other similar stamp will ever be approved for issuance by any PMG in the future to cause more chaos to Philippine philately.





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