

## The Forgotten AMGs

by Richard Pederson

Nearly all Allied Military Government (AMG) stamp and postal history collectors are quite familiar with the AMG issues for Germany, France, Italy (including Venezia Giulia and the Free Territory of Trieste), and Austria. Most are also aware of the stamps issued under U.S. administration for the Ryukyu Islands. This is largely because the company that dominated the U.S. market for AMG issues, the J. V. Bush Company, actively marketed and sold the issues of those entities. I would venture to say that a significant majority of AMG collectors in the U.S. got their start after responding to an advertisement from the Bush firm.

There is one other area considered to be part of the AMG collecting area that was not pushed by the Bush firm and has received much less coverage in the philatelic press. That area is South Korea. Immediately following World War II, upon defeat of the Japanese, U.S. forces occupied South Korea and assumed administrative control. In February 1946, a series of six stamps ranging in denomination from 5 Cheung to 5 Weun (100 Cheun = 1 Weun) was issued under U.S. military rule for use in South Korea. Those stamps were created by surcharging previously issued Japanese stamps. Figure 1 shows the high value in the set which, like most Korean issues from 1946 thru the early 1950s, had very crude perforations.



**Figure 1.** Japanese 17 Sen with 5 Weun surcharge.

Later, in May of 1946, a set of six stamps was issued to commemorate the liberation of South Korea from Japan. The four lower values of the set pictured a Korean family standing in front of a Korean flag (see Figure 2). The two high values in the set pictured the Coat of Arms of Korea (see Figure 3).



**Figure 2.** 20 Cheun stamp picturing Korean family and flag.



**Figure 3.** 1 Weun stamp picturing Korean Coat of Arms.

On August 15, 1946, a stamp was issued to commemorate the first anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan. This stamp was in a larger horizontal format and pictured a Dove to represent peace (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** 50 Cheun stamp picturing a Dove.

Next, on September 9, 1946, under the U.S. military government, a stamp was issued to commemorate the resumption of direct postal communication with the U.S. This stamp, also in a large horizontal format, pictured the crossed flags of the U.S. and Korea (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** 10 Weun stamp picturing crossed flags of U.S. and Korea.

Also, in 1946, a set of stamps was issued (see Figure 6) picturing various things related to Korea. Those stamps included an astronomical observatory in Kyongju (50 Cheun), hibiscus flowering plant (1 Weun), map of Korea (2 Weun), gold crown of the Silla dynasty (5 Weun), and Admiral Yi Sun-sin (10 Weun).



**Figure 6.** Set of Korean-themed regular issues.

The final stamp issued in 1946 came in October and pictured the Korean phonetic alphabet (see Figure 7). The stamp, which was in a large vertical format, commemorated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the phonetic alphabet to Korea.



**Figure 7.** 50 Cheun stamp picturing Korean phonetic alphabet.

The year 1947 only saw three new stamps issued for use in Korea. Two regular issue stamps picturing politician Yi Jun and Admiral Yi Sun-sin (see Figure 8) and a large horizontal format stamp picturing a globe and commemorating the resumption of postal communication with the rest of the world (see Figure 9).



**Figure 8.** Stamps picturing Yi Jun and Admiral Yi Sun-sin.



**Figure 9.** 10 Weun stamp commemorating resumption of worldwide postal communication.

April 1948 brought the last two stamps issued under U.S. military rule in Korea, after which the Republic of Korea was established and took over design and production of stamps for use in Korea. The final two issues under U.S. administration (see Figure 10) picture the Arch of independence in Seoul and the Tortoise Ship, which was the first ironclad war ship.



**Figure 10.** Final issue under U.S. military rule.

Although there were only 25 face different stamps issued for use in Korea under the U.S. military administration, it can still be an interesting and challenging area for the AMG collector. The basic set of stamps is affordable for most collectors, but there are certainly challenges for those wishing to delve deeper into this lesser-known collecting area. Not only are there surcharge and perforation varieties, there are presentation sheets available for some of the later printings, and most of the stamps after the first set are available in

imperforate and part perforate formats. An additional challenge would be to collect all the basic stamps on cover, used within period, since my experience seems to indicate they are quite hard to find.

**References:**

1. *Scott 2015 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*; edited by Charles Snee; published by Scott Publishing Co.; Volume II page 240; 2014.
2. *Wikipedia*; "United States Army Military Government in Korea"; last modified 25 March 2019.

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