

World of Stamps: Occussi-Ambeno

By Geir Sør-Reime



A photo of Mr. Henderson as Sultan Michael Ismail I of Occussi-Ambeno and an August 16, 1989 issue with him in the same uniform.

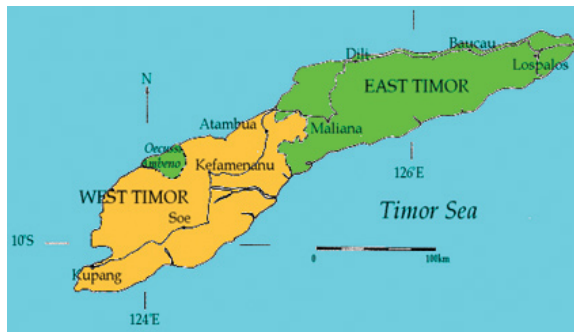
In reality, Occussi-Ambeno is part of the independent nation of Timor Leste as the province of Oecussi, but the stamps bearing its name emanate from the phantom or fictitious Sultanate of Occussi-Ambeno, the brainchild of Bruce R. Henderson of New Zealand.

The real Occussi-Ambeno is situated on the island of

Timor and has an area of 314.7 square miles and a population of approximately 58,000.

Portuguese missionaries established themselves on Timor and founded the mission station at Lifau in 1641. Gradually, people of mixed Portuguese-Indonesian origin, the so-called Topasses or black Portuguese, started to migrate to East Timor. Eventually, two Topasse kingdoms were founded in the area, Occussi and Ambeno. These were Christian.

Lifau, in Occussi-Ambeno, was the first capital of the Portuguese colony of Timor (but it was moved to Dili in the north in 1769 due to problems with the Topasses population). In 1859, Portugal and the Netherlands formally divided the island of Timor, and Occussi-Ambeno remained Portuguese albeit the rest of West Timor was recognized



Map of Timor, with Occussi-Ambeno an East Timor enclave within West Timor

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as Dutch. The definite border between Occussi-Ambeno and Dutch Timor was agreed on in 1916. At that time, a further Portuguese exclave, Noimuti, was exchanged with a similar Dutch exclave, Maucatar.

Pante Makassar in Occussi-Ambeno (which had replaced Lifau as the main town) was the first part of East Timor occupied by Indonesia, on November 29, 1975, but even under Indonesian rule, Occussi-Ambeno continued to be administered as part of East Timor. On November 11, 1999, Australian troops cleared Occussi-Ambeno of Indonesian troops and eventually, in 2002 the enclave became a province of the independent state of Timor Leste under the name of Oecusse.

Now, returning to Bruce R. Henderson's Occussi-Ambeno and his story, the Sultanate of Occussi-Ambeno (in reality, Occussi-Ambeno was two Christian kingdoms), became an independent state in 1968.

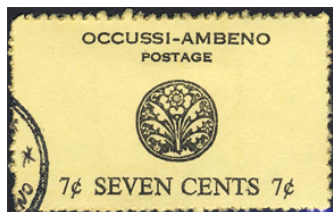
The first stamps in Henderson's story are Indonesian (sic!) stamps overprinted "Kantor Pos Jendral, Baleksetung, O-A" (in Bahasa Indonesia, a first language of only a very small minority of the actual population of Oecussi). These stamps were also surcharged in Occussi-Ambeno currency (dollar and cents). Issued in April 1968, these stamps were later additionally overprinted "Tahun Kemerdekaan/Independence" and issued in June 1968. In January 1969, this independence set was further surcharged with new values.



March 29, 1969
"Stoned Bears" definitives and souvenir sheet

Occussi-Ambeno's first distinct issue was the March 1969 "Stoned Bears" definitives. These were simple typographed stamps with sewing machine perforations.

A similar stamp, with a flo-



May 2, 1969 Floral emblem definitive

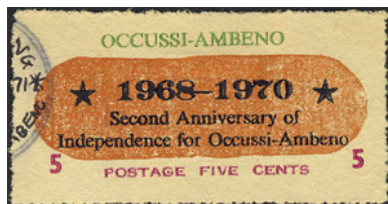
ral pattern in the centre, was issued May 1969.

In July 1969, one of the “Stoned Bears” stamps were overprinted to commemorate

the moon landing.



July 30, 1969 Lunar Landing overprint on “Stoned Bear”



April 7, 1970 stamp for 2nd anniversary of independence

In April 1970, a stamp commemorating the second anniversary of independence was issued, this stamp was also issued in a souvenir sheet.



February 1, 1971 Famine Relief overprint on “Stoned Bear”

In 1971, the “Stone Bears” were overprinted “Famine Relief/February 1971” and issued as semi-postals.

Also in 1971, a “Stoned Bear” stamp was overprinted to commemorate the third anniversary of independence.



April 7, 1971 for 3rd anniversary of independence

Further floral pattern stamps were added in 1972, and both “Stoned

Bears” and floral pattern stamps were overprinted to commemorate the raising of “The Imperial Dignity and Conferment on the Sultan of the Title of Guardian of the Eastern Seas”.



March 9, 1972 elevation of Sultan to Guardian of the Eastern Seas set on official FDC



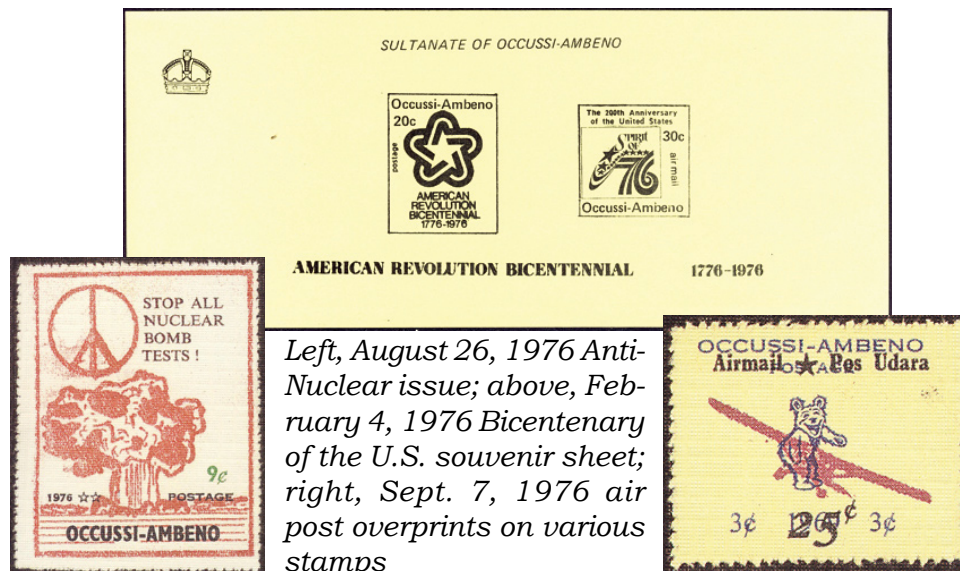
November 7, 1972 International Book Year

February 19, 1974 25th anniversary of Declaration of Human Rights

December 31, 1973 Famous Men of History, complete set

A typographed, but pictorial stamp was issued in 1972 for the International Book Year, and in 1973, a set portraying famous men of history and produced in a combination of electro-stencil and typography was issued. The 1974 set for the 25th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights was produced in a similar way.

In December 1974, two stamps were overprinted to mark the interregnum 1974-76, and overprints were also produced for the centenary of the Universal Postal Union and for the support of Sikkim.



Left, August 26, 1976 Anti-Nuclear issue; above, February 4, 1976 Bicentenary of the U.S. souvenir sheet; right, Sept. 7, 1976 air post overprints on various stamps

In 1976, stamps were issued for the bicentennial of the American Revolution, printed in offset. A combined electro-stencil/typography issue was again made 1976 for an anti-nuclear bomb test campaign. Also in 1976, several stamps were overprinted to convert them into air post stamps. (See page 4.)



Then, in May 1977, Mr. Henderson had succeeded in convincing the Philanumismatica Company May 26, 1977 Sailing Ships stamps and souvenir sheet



in Madrid of the existence of Occussi-Ambeno, and this Spanish firm started producing multicolored stamps for Occussi-Ambeno. Mailings with these stamps were also accepted by the Spanish post-office and delivered to philatelic publications. The first such issue was the Sailing Ships set in May 1977, followed in August by a set depicting exotic birds.



May 12, 1978 for 25th Coronation anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II

In December 1977, stamps were also issued for the Silver Jubilee of British Queen Elizabeth II. Stamps from the Sailing Ships set exist with a London 1980 overprint, and stamps from both this series and the Birds set exist with International Year of the Child overprints.



June 6, 1979 International Year of the Child overprint



December 24, 1980 BALPEX 1980 Stamp Exhibition overprint

In late 1978, a circular announcing several new pictorial issues was sent out, but these issues were apparently never printed: Opening of National Mosque, Death Centenary of Sir Rowland Hill, Famous Anarchists of the World and Legislation on Drugs. In 1980 and 1981, some stamps were overprinted for the BALPEX stamp exhibition and for the



February 17, 1981 10th anniversary of University of Baleksetung

10th anniversary of the University of Baleksetung.

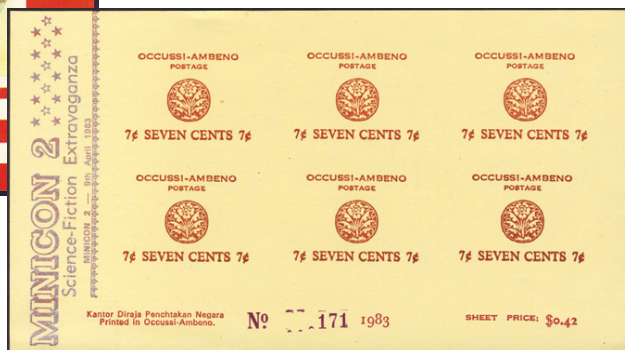
Apparently without the consent or knowledge of Mr Henderson, the Philanumismatica Company tried to capitalize on its investments in Occussi-Ambeno and released stamps in 1984 for the Sarajevo Winter Olympics and Los Angeles Olympics.



April 9, 1983 MINICON Exhibition sheetlet with commemorative inscription in margin



June 17, 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics souvenir sheets and July 22, 1984 Los Angeles Olympics souvenir sheets





November 21, 1983 200th anniversary of manned flight souvenir sheet



December 12, 1983 2nd anniversary of desalination plant

In 1983, the floral emblem stamps were reprinted page 6), followed by stamp series with very coarse perforation: Science-fiction Convention, Bicentennial of Manned Flight, Solar Desalination Plant, Artworks by Picasso.



June 4, 1983 WINDYCON Science-fiction convention



December 14, 1983 45th anniversary of Spanish revolution and birth centenary of Pablo Picasso



June 1, 1989 for 5th anniversary of ICIS

Then followed a number of pictorial, but typographed issues with normal perforations, including a 1985 set for the first anniversary of the founding of the International Council of Independent States (ICIS), a 1986 set for the 15th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Mevu and Occussi-Ambeno,



December 16, 1985 admission to International Council of Independent States



October 22, 1986
for 15th anniversary of diplomatic relations Mevu-Occussi-Ambeno



November 5, 1986
Heb-Sed Festival



December 10, 1987
ICIS Year of Housing

and
a



February 17, 1987
Appropriate technology



October 14, 1988
ICIS Year of Food

1986 set for the Heb-Sed Festival (the first Occussi-Ambeno issue of many with inscriptions also in hieroglyphs). In 1987, stamps were issued for the ICIS Year of

Housing and for appropriate technology. In 1988, the ICIS

Year of Food was celebrated with two stamps, and there were four stamps celebrating 20 years of independence.



April 7, 1989
Preserve the Sphinx



1988 20th anniversary of independence set on cover to Norway, missing New Zealand stamps noticed (per postmark of Dunedin and postage due rubber stamp), but no postage due collected

From 1989, stamps were produced in a combination of color copying and let-



1990 for 150th anniversary of 1st postage stamps



1990 for 20th anniversary of Republic of Mevu

terpress. That included a 1989 set portraying Mr. Henderson as the new Sultan, Michael Ismail I (page 1). In 1990, stamps



1990 ICIS Year of Plankton



2006 airships



2010 for alleged visit of US President Obama to Occussi-Ambeno



2008 for 40th anniversary of independence, included stamps reproducing Occussi-Ambeno coin



were issued for the 150th anniversary of the first stamps, and for the 20th anniversary of the

Republic of Mevu and for the ICIS Year of Plankton.

From around 2000, Mr. Henderson started producing Occussi-Ambeno stamps in multicolor copying. Those include a 2003 stamp for the centenary of the first powered flight, a 2006 set with airships, a 2008 set for the 40th anniversary of independence. A recent stamp is a 2010 stamp for the alleged visit of U.S. President Obama to Occussi-Ambeno.



1977 postal fiscal

Occussi-Ambeno has also issued two sets of postal fiscals, the first in 1971, when the 'Stoned Bears' stamps were overprinted S.D. and surcharged in new, higher values. Similarly, the Sailing Ships set was overprinted

CHUKAI SETEM/STAMP DUTY' and surcharged in higher values in 1977. These revenue stamps, although primarily intended for fiscal purposes, were also valid for postage.



March 28, 1989 ICIS Year of the GPTO (General Postal Treaty Organization, a parallel to the UPU for micronations) on official FDC along with one stamp from the 1988 20th anniversary of independence set



2001 cover (also franked with New Zealand stamps, at left, that have remained uncanceled), Occussi-Ambeno stamps include, from left to right, first row, 2000 Heroes of Ecology, 2000 Michael Bidner (mail artist) commemoration, second row: 1999 Lunar Year of the Rabbit, Undated Lady Diana commemoration, 1993 Henderson as printer

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