



US Scott #1158 issued  
28 September 1960

# Japonica: What it's all about philatelically

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# **What is “Japonica”?**

**It is defined as  
non-Japanese postal issues  
that are somehow connected with Japan.**

# Categories of Japonica

(a)

**Non-Japanese issues  
with designs that  
relate to an event that  
did or will occur in Japan**

**Latvian stamp for the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics,  
Scott #461, issued 31 January 1998**



# Categories of Japonica



(b)  
**Non-Japanese issues  
with designs that  
are wholly or partially  
Japanese**

**Russian stamp portraying the Japanese artist Sesshū,  
Scott #1876 issued 17 October 1956**

# Categories of Japonica

**Other minor categories....**

**(c) Non-Japanese issues designed by a Japanese**

**(d) Non-Japanese issues printed in Japan**

**(These minor categories are hard to track, and are not considered any further in this presentation.)**

# Why is Japonica interesting?

- **Philatelists are a varied group.**
- **Stamp collecting interests track national matters, cultural matters, and key anniversaries, among many other topics.**
- **It's easy to imagine a collector of Japanese stamps who then will be pleased to add stamps from other countries that relate to the main topic of Japan.**
- **Indeed, topical collectors with some affinity for things Japanese would find that “Japonica” serves to broaden their perspective.**

# Why do countries issue items that we would consider to be Japonica?

## A myriad of reasons!

- To publicize an event in Japan in which the issuing country is participating, such as a summit meeting or an international congress
- To publicize an event in the issuing country that has Japanese participation, such as the visit of a Japanese sports team or dignitary
- To acknowledge or commemorate a joint event involving Japan and the issuing country, such as a treaty, or establishment of diplomatic relations
- To honor a world event with a Japanese connection, even if the issuing country is not participating
- And, there are also what might be considered by some as “less honorable” reasons...

# Why do countries issue items that we would consider to be Japonica?

## **“Less honorable” reasons?**

- **To curry favor with Japanese interests, perhaps for political or economic gain**
- **To increase postal revenue in the issuing country by:**
  - **- creating items for the Japonica collector**
  - **- creating items for other topical collectors that happen to include a Japanese theme**
- **“Wallpaper”**: Making a financial arrangement with a commercial firm to issue stamps for which there is little or no genuine postal need, but which will appeal to certain classes of collectors

# The first Japonica item



## Marienwerder Scott #1

**This is one of about 28 stamps of various denominations and similar inscriptions issued in 1920 in this small territory whose fate was going to be decided by a plebiscite managed by an International Commission that included Japan.**

# The next Japonica item



## Brazil Scott #442

Issued 19 January 1937  
to commemorate the  
9<sup>th</sup> Brazilian Esperanto Congress  
(in 1936)

...and a few more early Japonica items...



**People's Republic of China,  
(Northeast China  
regional issue)  
Scott #1L6**

**Issue 12 December 1946, part of a set of 4 with the same design, to note the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the capture of Chiang Kai-shek at Sian**

...and a few more early Japonica items...



## Poland Scott #B105

A semi-postal souvenir sheet  
issued 3 August 1955  
for the International Philatelic  
Exhibition in Warsaw

...and a few more early Japonica items...



## **Dominican Republic Scott #503**

**This 30 October 1958 issue shows Japanese athlete Sasahara Shōzō, 1956 Olympic Gold Medal winner in featherweight wrestling.**

**It's part of a longer set showing 1956 winners from other countries.**

# Common threads?

## Among these five early Japonica items...

- All have a representation of the Japanese national flag
- Three of them are for Japanese participation in an event in the issuing country
- One is intended as an embarrassment!
- One is to honor a Japanese athlete otherwise unrelated to the issuing country



Let's consider the various themes shown on  
Japonica issues

**First, we'll look at group (a),  
non-Japanese issues that relate  
to a Japanese event.**

# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

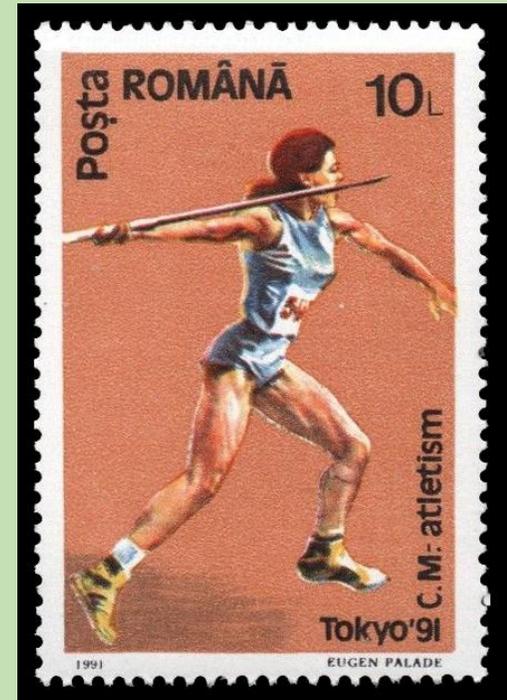
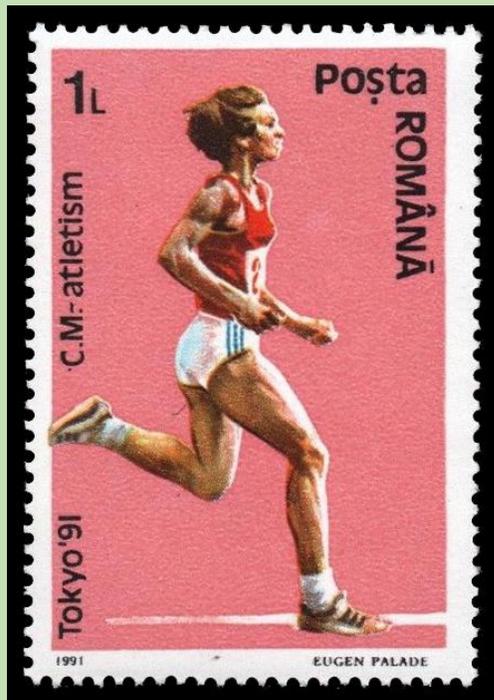
Typical theme: **Sports**

## Romania

## Scott

←#3698 #3703→

Issued 21 November 1991 for the  
World Track & Field  
Championships, Tōkyō  
(from a set of 6)



# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Expositions**

## Cameroun

### Scott

← #C145

#C147 →

Issued 1 August 1970  
for Expo'70 held in Ōsaka  
(from a set of 3)



# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Scouting**

## Dominica

## Scott

←#326 #327→

Issued 18 October 1971  
for the 13<sup>th</sup> International  
Scout Jamboree held in  
Japan (from a set of 4)



# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Imperial family**



## Djibouti Scott #723

Issued 10 January 1994  
for the marriage of Crown  
Prince Naruhito and  
Princess Masako

# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

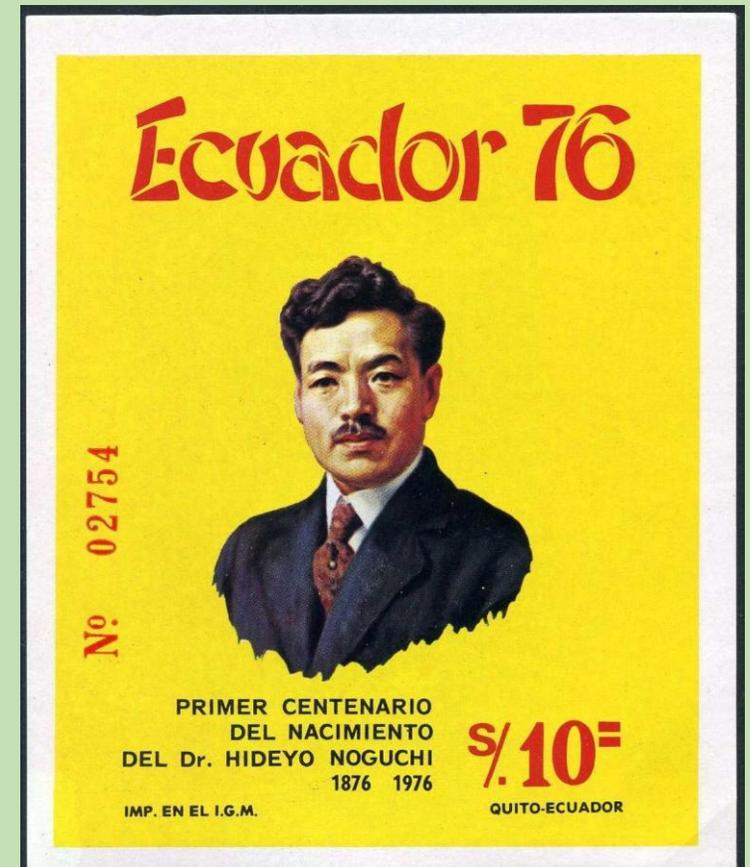
Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Public figures**

## Ecuador

### Scott #C591a

issued in November 1976 to mark the centenary of the birth of Dr. Noguchi Hideyo, bacteriologist



# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Diplomatic relations**



**Greece**  
**Scott #1937**

Issued 28 June 1999 to  
mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of diplomatic relations  
with Japan

# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **Philately**

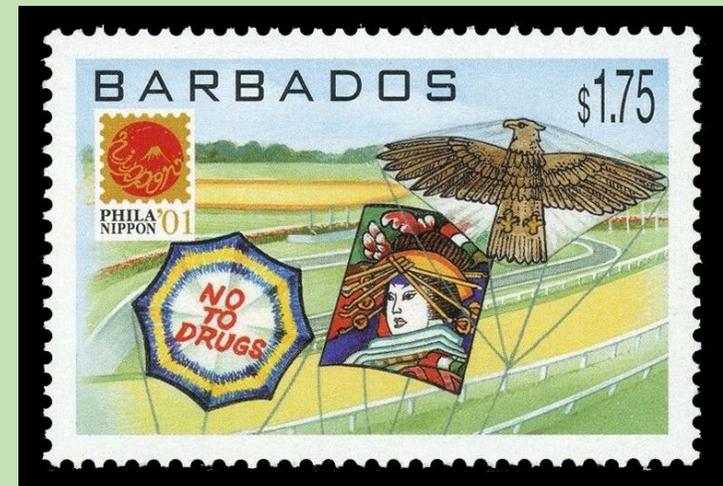
## Barbados

Scott

←#1006

#1009→

Issued 1 August 2001  
for Phila Nippon'01  
(from a set of 4)



# Let's consider the various themes shown on Japonica issues

Non-Japanese issues that relate to a Japanese event.

Typical theme: **World Heritage sites**



**Germany**  
**Scott #2610**

Issued 3 February 2011,  
showing the Yakushi-ji in  
Nara (from a set of 3)

Let's consider the various themes shown on  
Japonica issues

**Now, we'll look at group (b),  
non-Japanese issues with designs that are  
wholly or partially Japanese.**

Let's consider the various themes shown on  
Japonica issues

**This is a large, highly varied group, ranging  
from topics that are clearly relevant to the  
issuing country, to topics that are intended  
purely to snare income.**

# Examples of topics

**Japanese art**

**Imperial family**

**Japanese trains, cars, ships**

**Projects done with Japanese aid**

**Japanese visitors (sports, politics)**

**Japanese non-visiting personalities**

**Japanese flora and fauna**

**The Japanese flag**

**Typically Japanese sports**

**Japanese crafts**

**Japanese military matters**

**Japan membership in treaties**

**Japanese geography**

**Japanese cartoon characters**

**Arrival of Japanese immigrants**

**Stamp inscriptions in Japanese**

**Japanese history & diplomacy**

**Japanese stamp-on-stamp**

**Japanese cinema**

**Japanese architecture**

Let's focus on a few topics:

## Projects done with Japanese aid



**Laos**

**Scott #105**

**(part of a set of 4)**

**issued 30 March 1965**

**to acknowledge Japanese aid  
to Laos.**

**Others in the set acknowledge  
British, French and American aid.**

Let's focus on a few topics:

## Projects done with Japanese aid



Laos

Scott #1705-1706

issued 20 December 2006

to mark the opening of the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge  
built with Japanese aid

Let's focus on a few topics:  
**Projects done with Japanese aid**



**Honduras**  
**Scott #378**  
**issued 20 September 1995**  
**(part of a set of 3)**  
**to acknowledge the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary**  
**of the Japan Overseas Cooperation**  
**Volunteers in Honduras**

**Projects done with Japanese aid:**

**Regarding the prior group of slides,  
it's rather clear the these issues are  
**highly relevant** to the issuing country**

Let's focus on another topic:  
**Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō**



**Czechoslovakia**  
**Scott #2815**  
**issued 10 January 1991**  
**to publicize the**  
**European Jūdō Championships**  
**held in Prague**

Let's focus on another topic:  
**Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō**



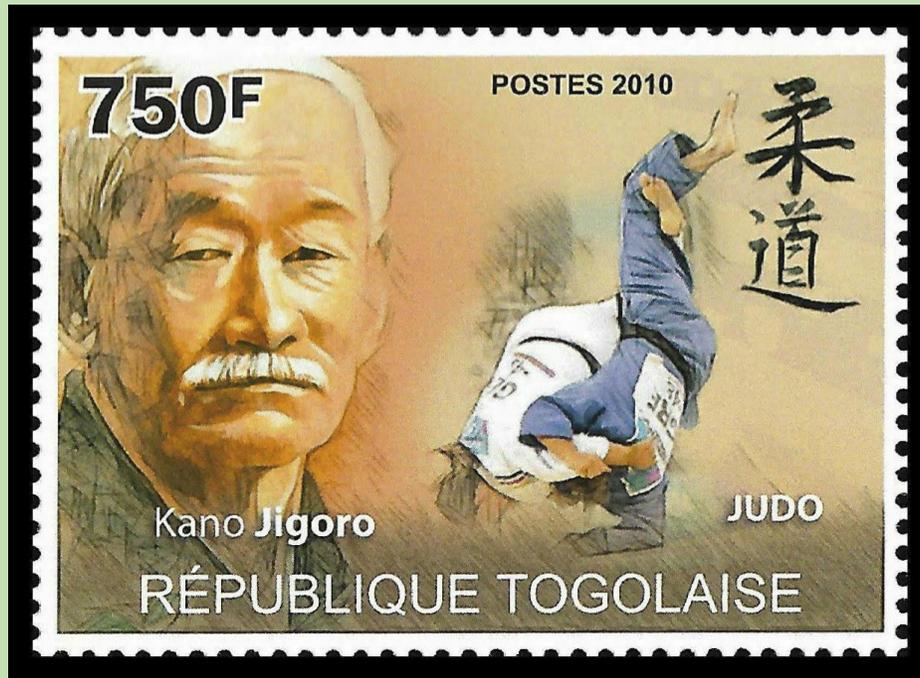
**Tonga**  
**Scott #1258e**  
**issued 17 September 2014**  
**(as part of a souvenir sheet of 6)**  
**to publicize participation in the**  
**2014 Commonwealth Games**

Let's focus on another topic:  
**Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō**



**China (Taiwan)**  
**Scott #2420**  
**issued 23 June 1984**  
**(part of a set of 3)**  
**to publicize participation**  
**in the 1984 Olympic Games**  
**in Los Angeles**

Let's focus on another topic:  
**Typically Japanese Sports: Jūdō**



**Togo**  
**Michel #3612**  
**issued 2010**  
**(part of a souvenir**  
**sheet of 4 on the**  
**topic of Martial Arts)**  
**honoring Kanō Jigorō,**  
**originator of jūdō**

# Comparison of these jūdō issues:

All are unquestionably “Japonica”, but how relevant are they to the issuing entity?

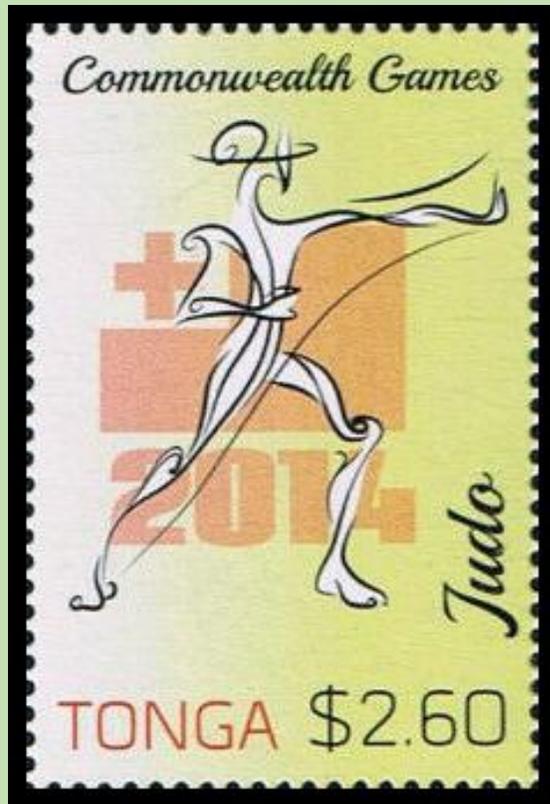
The item from  
Czechoslovakia is for an  
event occurring locally.

Highly relevant!



# Comparison of these jūdō issues:

Did Tonga and Taiwan actually have jūdō athletes at these games?

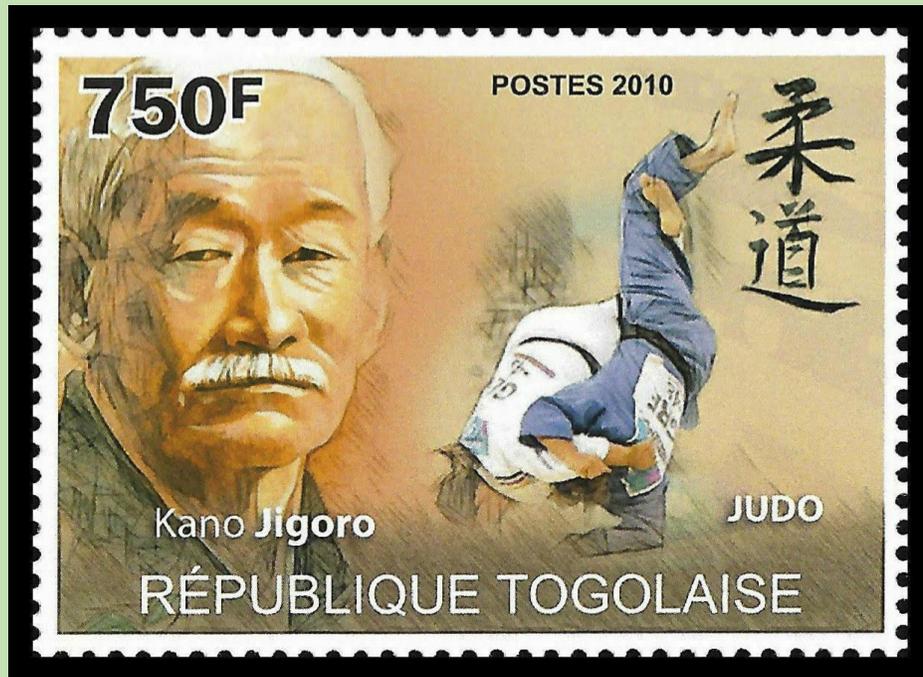


Maybe, so the relevance of these issues might be a bit uncertain.



# Comparison of these jūdō issues:

But what prompted Togo to issue this stamp? Was there any direct or indirect connection, or was this simply an effort to earn revenue from the sale of new issues? The Michel catalogue recognizes it, but Scott does not.



Relevance is probably low.

**So, while there is no argument that these jūdō issues are all “Japonica”, and all of them are probably legitimate issues of their respective postal authorities, whether their relevance is strong enough for a specialized collection is a factor for the collector to decide.**

# Example of tenuous relevance:



**Saint Vincent  
Scott #1708  
issued 10 August 1992  
to note Kristi Yamaguchi's  
Gold Medal in the 1992  
Albertville, France  
Winter Olympics**

# Example of tenuous relevance:



**Bhutan**  
**Scott #1137**  
**issued in 1997**  
**to note Kristi Yamaguchi's**  
**Gold Medal in the 1992**  
**Albertville, France**  
**Winter Olympics**

# **Tenuous relevance? Why?**

- **The event did not take place in Japan.**
- **Figure skating is not specifically a Japanese sport.**
- **The Gold Medal winner is American, not Japanese.**
- **But, she has a Japanese family name.**

**Is that alone enough to qualify as Japonica?**

**Let's take a look at just a few more of the many Japonica topics that are in the category of “Non-Japanese issues with designs that are wholly or partially Japanese”.**

- 1. Living Japanese personalities**
- 2. Japanese diplomacy**
- 3. Stamp-on-stamp**

# **Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries**

**It's the policy in Japan not to illustrate living people on Japanese stamps, with the exception of the Imperial Family, although this seems to have been relaxed in recent years.**

**Consequently, stamps showing living Japanese are mostly from other countries.**

**Some examples follow, including one of the recent exceptions to the Japanese policy.**

# Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



**An athlete**

**Mongolia**

**Scott #522 issued**

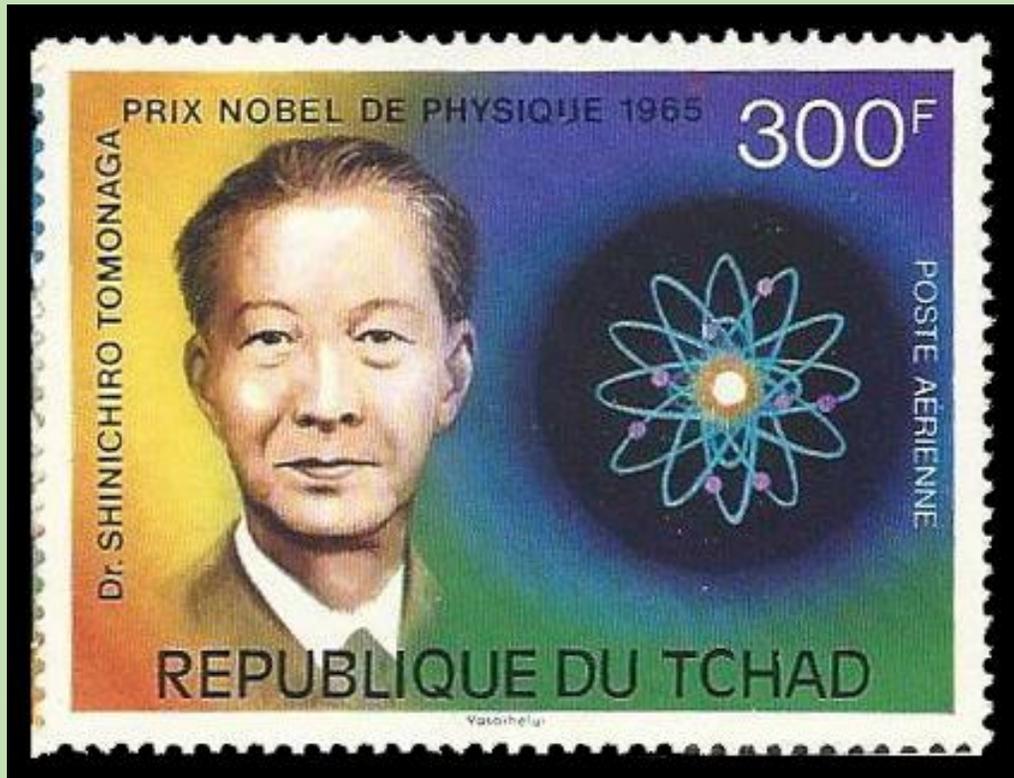
**25 March 1969 to honor**

**1968 Olympic Gold**

**Medal winner gymnast**

**Nakayama Akinori**

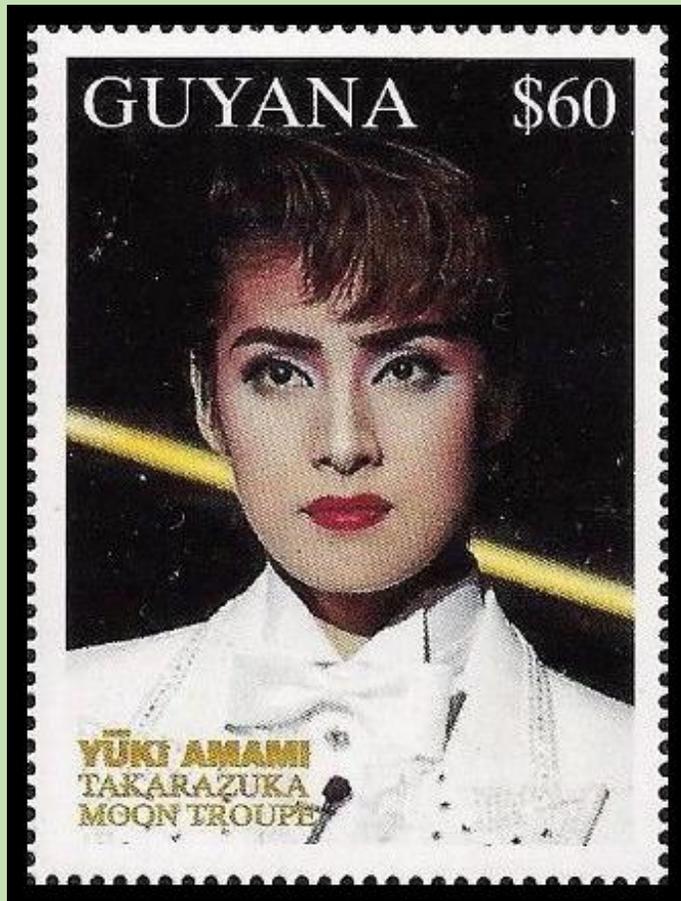
# Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



**A physicist**

**Chad Scott #C198 issued  
15 December 1976  
to honor  
Tomonaga Shin'ichirō,  
winner of 1965 Nobel  
Prize for Physics**

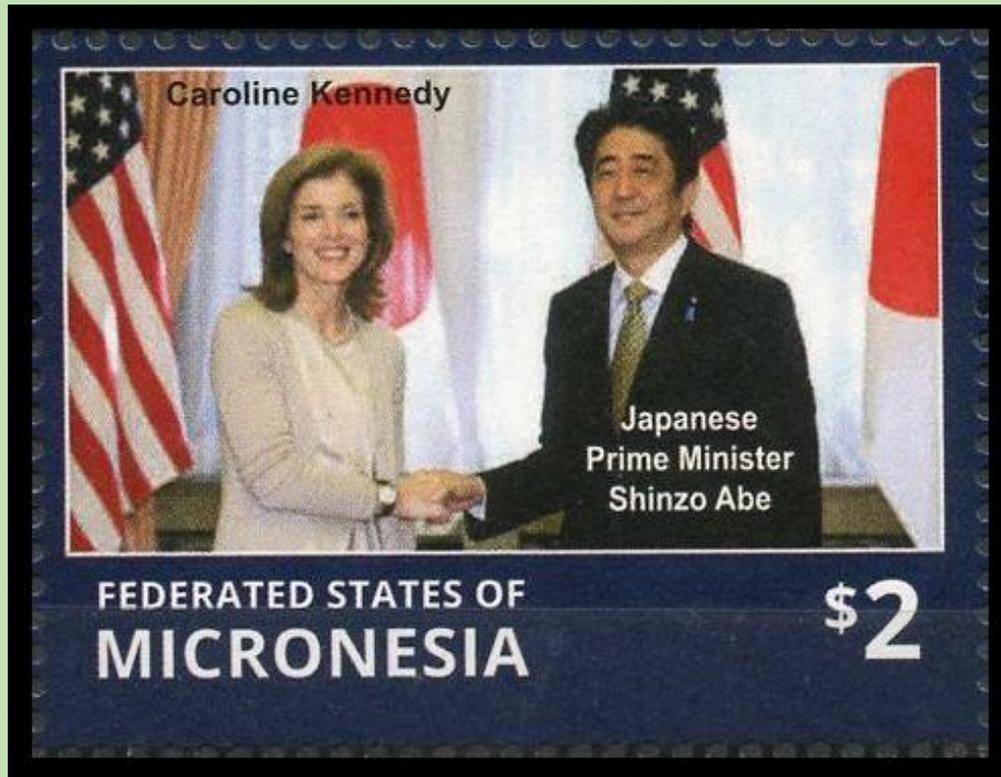
# Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



**An actress**

**Guyana Scott #2845b  
issued in 1994  
for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
the Takarazuka Revue.  
The actress is  
Yūki Amami.**

# Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



**A politician**

**Micronesia Scott #1089a  
issued 30 June 2014  
showing Japanese  
Prime Minister  
Abe Shinzo**

# Living Japanese people on the stamps of other countries



## A musician

**Austria Scott #1946  
issued 16 January 2004  
to note the appointment  
of Ozawa Seiji as Music  
Director of the Vienna  
State Opera**

**In a break with normal Japanese policy,  
Ozawa Seiji was portrayed twice on Japanese stamps.**



**← Sakura #R196  
issued 22 August 1996  
in which he was not specifically  
identified**

**Sakura #C1740f →  
issued 22 September 2000  
in which he was identified**



## Another topic: Japanese diplomacy



**Lithuania Scott #771  
issued 19 June 2004 to  
honor Sugihara Chiune  
(1900-1986), Vice-Consul  
for Japan in Lithuania  
who issued visas that  
allowed people to escape  
the Nazis**

## Another topic: Stamp-on-stamp



Wallis & Futuna Islands  
Scott #C93  
issued 7 May 1979  
on the centenary of the  
death of Sir Rowland Hill

## Stamp-on-stamp

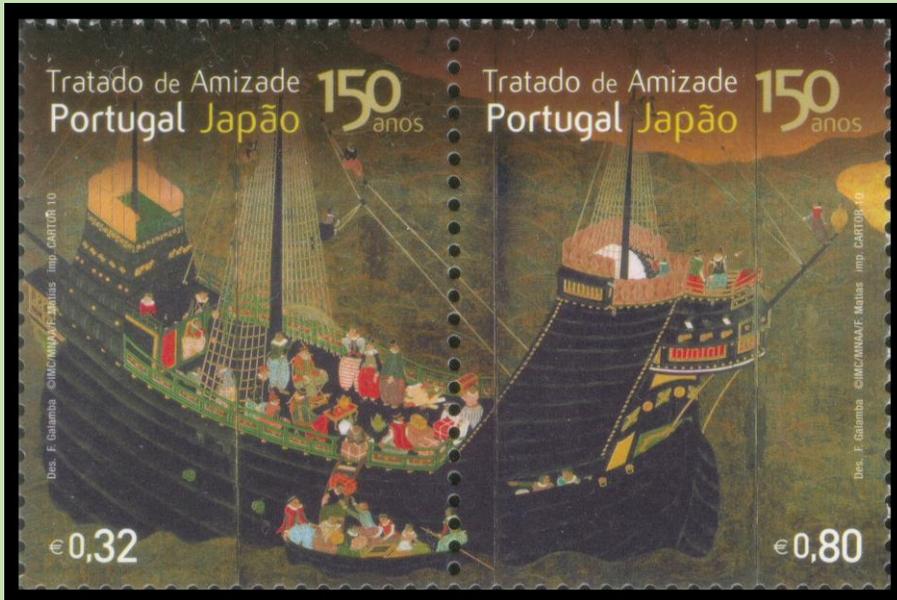


**Italy**  
**Scott #1761**  
**issued 9 December 1988**  
**for Italy's Stamp Day,**  
**showing Edoardo Chiossone,**  
**an Italian engraver**  
**who went to Japan where he**  
**designed many Japanese stamps**  
**and banknotes**

**Another group worth mentioning:  
Joint issues with common designs**

**There are cases of Japan and another country issuing stamps with essentially the same design to commemorate some joint event. Clearly, then, the other country's issue is an example of Japonica.**

# Joint issue example: 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japan-Portugal friendship treaty



**Portugal Scott #3271a-b  
issued 22 October 2010**



**Japan Sakura #C2087a-b  
issued 22 October 2010**

**Joint issue example:  
100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-Chile diplomatic relations**

**Chile  
Scott #1217  
issued  
1 September 1997**



**Japan  
Sakura #C1599  
issued  
1 September 1997**



**And, one final category:**

**A unique example of  
“Japonica on Japonica”!**



**Serbia Scott # 1017 issued  
30 March 2022 for the  
140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
bilateral relations with  
Japan**



**Serbia Scott # 415 issued  
23 December 2007 for the  
125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
bilateral relations with  
Japan**

# Concluding remarks

- **Japonica is an interesting and challenging field.**
- **If it's too broad for a selective collection, then it's easily narrowed by considering the relevance of the issues collected, or by narrowing the criteria for what constitutes Japonica.**
- **It's a great opportunity to create a personalized and specialized hobby.**

# Access

- **“Japonica” is a column that appears regularly in the journal *Japanese Philately*, published by the International Society for Japanese Philately (ISJP).**
- **Available images (more than 2,000) of Japonica issues are being placed in an online archive. Access can be obtained by e-mail contact to [publisher@isjp.org](mailto:publisher@isjp.org).**

# Acknowledgements

- This presentation benefited greatly from underlying research performed by **Toni Lumsden** (Australia) at my request. Thank you, Toni!
- Most stamp images were obtained on the internet, often from items being sold on eBay, and sometimes from postal administration websites.