



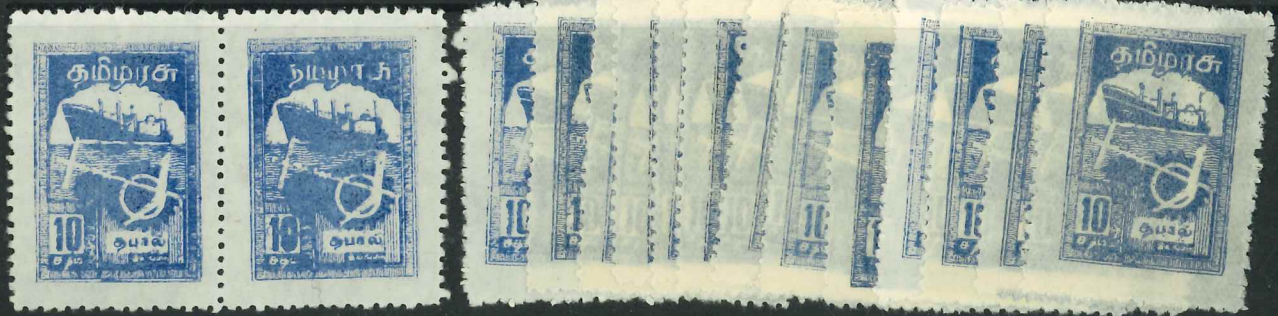
POST CARD

THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE

வெலியகைவ பவகங் வெபந்நெலியு  
மேல்வீலாசத்தமாத்தாம் இந்தப்பக்கத்த் லெழுதவும்

Messrs. *Eck Brothers*  
*Tea Plantation, "Palmgarden"*  
*Ratnapura*

NO POSTAGE  
GENUINE  
CENTS



## The Jaffna Rebel Stamps

Years ago I read about the so-called Jaffna stamp said to have been issued in 1961 by Tamil rebels in Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka). When I finally located a copy of the stamp the dealer was unable to confirm if it was genuine or not. I have since been able to add a few more copies including a block of four. They were all identical and printed in blue.

The Jaffna stamps are listed in A. Bourdi's *Les Timbres de Fantaisie*. He states they were released on April 14, 1961 by the Jaffna Federal Party. According to Bourdi the stamps were printed on thin ungummed paper and perforated 10 3/4. He further writes that 5,000 stamps were printed. Bourdi mentions two different versions of the stamp. The Kayts issue was printed in "bleu-outremer" and the Chunnakam issue in "bleu-outremer foncé". The design of the Chunnakam issue is said to be slightly different but he does not provide any details.



In 1996 I spotted an interesting lot in a New Zealand mail auction listed under the heading of Tanzania. It comprised an FDC and two mint stamps of the 1961 Tamil rebel stamps according to the description. My bid was successful. When the stamps arrived from New Zealand it turned out that they were different from the ones already in my collection. The items had been mailed by a Ceylonese collector to a NZ exchange partner in late

just north of Jaffna) described the enclosures:

"Some time ago one of our local political parties who were fighting for a federal form of government started a parallel (illegal) postal service as part of a civil disobedience campaign. A state of emergency was declared, the party proclaimed illegal & the leaders detained. The service or what little there was of a service lasted 3 days. For what it is worth I am sending you a FDC & a pair of mint stamps."

These stamps are printed in dark blue and thus belong to the Chunnakam issue described by Bourdi. The stamp image is 20mm x 31½mm. The top line of letters is 12 mm long. The top letters are small and there is stop after the last letter.



The more common Jaffna stamps printed in blue and thus correspond to Kayts issue. The stamp image is 22mm x 32mm. The top line of letters is 15 mm long. The top letters are big and there is no stop after the last letter. There are also many other differences notably in the design of the ship and the anchor.

I do not know why Bourdi chose to distinguish between Chunnakam and Kayts to distinguish between the two issues. Perhaps some reader can provide more information about this? What is clear however, is the fact that the dark blue Chunnakam stamp is far scarcer than the Kayts issue.

Let's now look at the historical context



Ceylon 1961 1st Tamil Revolutionary Govt Of Ceylon, Jaffna Based Tamil Eelaam 10Cent Stamp Showing Transport, Agriculture & Industries. Extremely Rare. On April 14, 1961, the Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi issued the Tamil Sate-Thamil Arasu, the national postage stamps, and Chelvanayakam took his seat behind the counter of the Thamil Arasu Post Office, as Post Master of Jaffna, and committed the first act of civil disobedience by selling the first 10 cents Thamil Arasu postage stamp to M Sivasithamparam, the Tamil Congress MP for the Udupiddy constituency. Also, with the view to continuing with the violation of the Postal Ordinance, the Tamil leaders launched the Thamil Arasu Postal Service. M Sivasithamaparam and V N Navaratnam, the Members of Parliament for Udupiddy and Chavakachcheri respectively, volunteered to be the Thamil Arasu Postmen and delivered letters, which amounted to running a parallel postal service

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are Sinhalese. The Tamils comprise some 20% of the population and they live in the northern part of the island where the Jaffna peninsula is located. Following the declaration of independence, the Sinhalese parties gained the political majority in the country favouring the Sinhalese people. The northern Tamils at first wanted Ceylon to become a federal state. Unrest started in 1958 and it developed into a full-scale war in 1983. This civil war is still going on when this is being written and no political solution to the problem seems to be possible at this time. The Tamils are now looking for complete independence.

The 1961 Jaffna stamps were obviously issued in a bid to mark the Tamil desire for independence within a federal state. It seems the stamps were actually used in Jaffna from April 14 until April 16, 1961. I have heard of no further Tamil stamps from the Jaffna area in spite of the fact that the Tamil separatists have controlled large areas from time to time.