

# What is This Mess?

An Interesting Adventure.  
by Norman Hinds

I didn't know where these were from and was afraid, I would be spending an hour finding out. Well of course I used my AI buddy and all the below info came back in **5 seconds**. I just don't know how it's possible to analyze all the stamps that I had arranged carelessly on the card.



I asked the question: “can you tell me what country are these stamps from and maybe a Scott catalogue #.”

The reply was -- These items are **revenue/fiscal stamps** from the **Ryukyu Islands** (Okinawa and surrounding islands) issued during the post-WWII period of [U.S. Civil Administration](#). [1, 2]

Because they are revenue stamps used to pay taxes and fees rather than postal charges, they are not listed in the standard regular postage sections of catalogs. Instead, they are classified in the “**Back-of-the-Book**” (**BOB**) **revenue section** of the Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers (under the Ryukyu Islands section). [1, 2, 3, 4]

## Stamp Classifications

The stamps in the selection belong to two distinct series:

1. First Surcharged Revenue Series (Top Row)

These feature traditional Japanese kanji denominations overprinted or inscribed with the text 琉球政府" (Ryukyu Government) and "収入印紙" (Revenue Stamp). [1, 2]

Scott Catalogue Prefix: R (e.g., Scott #R1 to #R8 for the early configurations).

**Left Stamp: 1 Yen Brown ("壹円" – Ichi En).**

**Right Stamp: 5 Yen Green ("五円" – Go En).**

## 2. 1958–1959 U.S. Dollar/Cent Denominated Series (Bottom Row)

Following the currency conversion to U.S. Dollars in 1958, a new set of pictorial revenue stamps was issued featuring values denominated in cents ("phi"). [1, 2] Scott Catalogue Prefix: R (continues later in the numerical section for Ryukyu Revenues).

**Designs Highlighted:** The building depicted on the 1phi, 3phi, 20phi, and 30phi designs is the former Ryukyu Government Headquarters building in Naha. The bright red stamp on the far left shows a 3 Yen value ("参仙" – San Sen) from an earlier local yen-denominated series. [1, 2]

### Value & Collecting

These are highly sought after by collectors of both Japanese regional philately and United States administration history. While standard common values can be modest, complete or well-preserved vintage sets of Ryukyu revenues often command a premium among specialist buyers compared to common regular postage. [1, 2]

If you would like to examine the collection further, please let me know:

- Do you want to see the exact chronological issue dates for each cent denomination?
- Are you looking for information on how to identify their specific wavy-line watermarks?
- Would you like guidance on assessing their mint vs. used condition to determine market value? [1, 3]
- BTW Ryukus stamps sell at a decent % of CV.

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Associate Editor's Note. This real-life example done by Norman Hinds gives one a good idea of the benefits of using AI – and the limitations of that use. Scott's 2026 showed basic information on the series. The first series which is found on the top row and includes the left most stamp on the second row, come from R9-R16 issued in 1958 and have a CV of around \$300! The six stamps on the second row appear to be R17-R23 issued 1959-1969 and have a CV of around \$135.

I am very happy to be retired from the academic world as I can see AI use causing chaos for faculty, staff and students. The only thing that I can say is – trust and verify!

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