

## Knowledge of the Amur Region Zemstvo Post Office exchange tokens of 1919.

At the end of 2021, I prepared for publication the 1st volume of "Kardakoff's Heritage". It was dedicated to Nikolai Kardakoff - a man of many talents: entomologist, lepidopterist, collector, eminent authority and dealer in Russian paper money, and his main work in numismatic field: "The catalogue of banknotes of Russia and the Baltic countries of 1769-1950."

The circulating PDF copy of this catalog was very low quality, despite the fact that it's still a rarity. Those I tried to restore it by making analogous translation into English, so it can be published as a first ever e-catalog.

The 2nd volume, which will be published in a few months, is a tribute to Kardakoff's life. It will contain of analogous translation to English of his articles, memorabilia items and articles dedicated to him.

One of them was found in the Rossica archives and presented to me by Steve Volis [Rossica Society] and made the foundation for the following piece.

### Knowledge of the Amur stamps of 1919 based on a letter from Nikolai Kardakoff to Carl Schmidt.

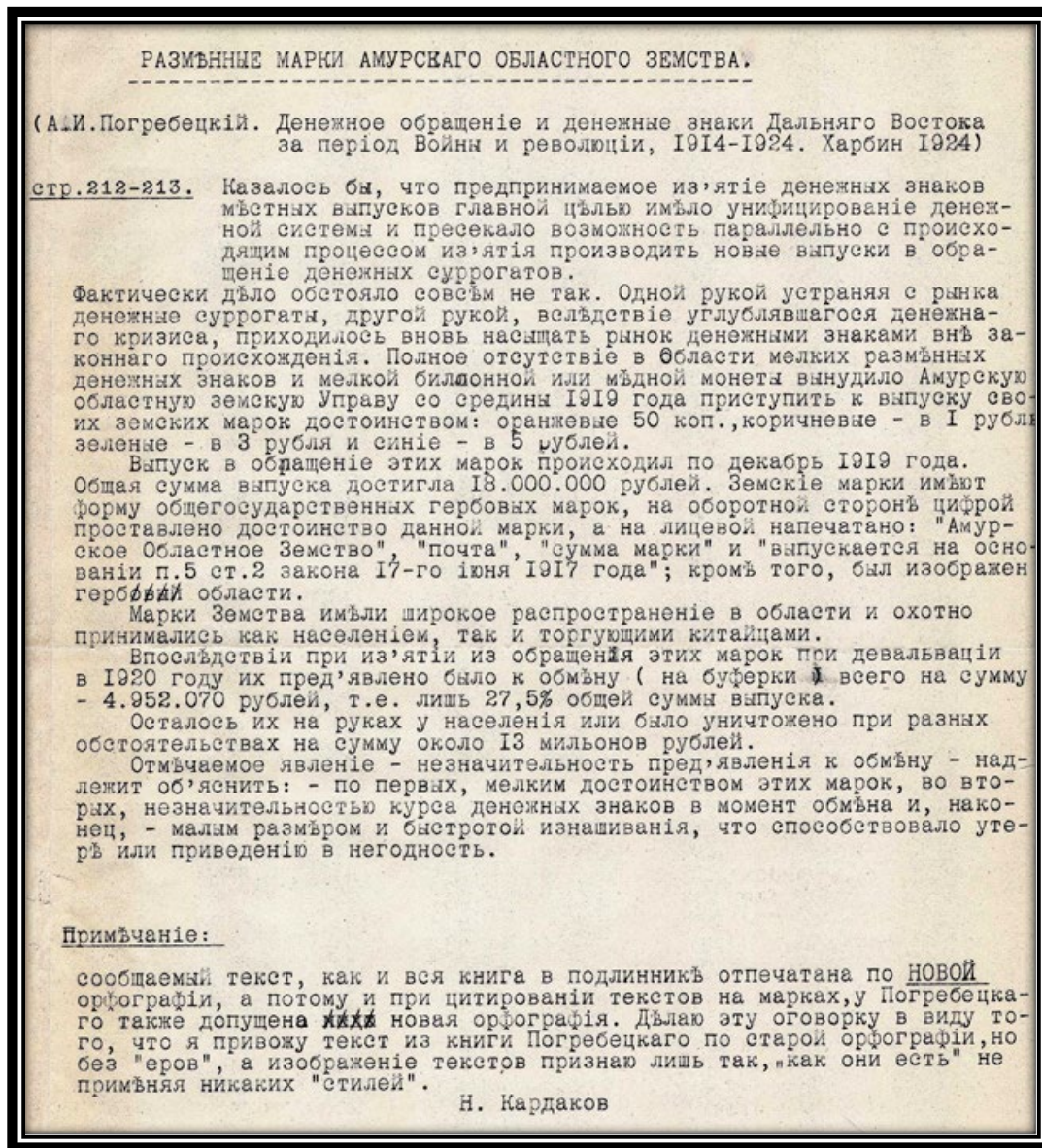
Translated from the article by Ortwin Greis "Knowledge of the Amur stamps of 1919 based on a letter from Nikolai Kardakoff to Carl Schmidt":

The Zemstvo collectors repeatedly take a critical and curious look at the Amur Region Zemstvo Postal stamps (Fig. 1): critical because of the late issue date of 1919 and because of the non-European place of issue in the Amur region, enquiring because the words "Амурское Областное Земство, ПОЧТА" (Amur Region Zemstvo. The POST OFFICE), " can be found on these stamps, but so far, we have not found any stamps or corresponding documents that have been mailed and cancelled by post office. Nevertheless, Carl Schmidt included these Amur stamps in his Handbook on the Zemstvo Stamps of Russia [1] but writes in the introduction that these stamps were probably prepared as postage stamps but were ultimately used only as emergency money.



**Fig. 1:** Front and back of the Amur Region Zemstvo Post Office exchange tokens (Pick S1-S4), 1919. From Ortwin Greis Collection

In Carl Schmidt's copy of his book [1], there is an original letter from Nikolai Kardakoff to Carl Schmidt as a supplement to the treatise on the Amur stamps, in which Kardakoff contributes to the explanation of the nature of these controversial "Zemstvo Post Office stamps" as small denomination paper currency exchange tokens by means of an essay from the work of Pogrebetsky [2]. Because of the importance of this typewritten letter in Russian, I would like to reproduce this letter directly below and attach a translation into English. [3]



**Fig. 2:** Letter from Nikolai Kardakoff to Carl Schmidt about the Exchange tokens of the Amur region Zemstvo

Analogous translation of the letter from Fig. 2:

### Exchange tokens of the Amur region Zemstvo

(A. I. Pogrebetsky, "Money circulation and banknotes in the Far East at the time of War and Revolution, 1914-1924", Harbin (1924)

pp. 212-213. Apparently, the main reason for the withdrawal of banknotes was the unification of the monetary system, while at the same time this process prevented the possibility of putting new money surrogates into circulation.

However, it was quite different. If, on the one hand, you take money surrogates off the market, on the other hand, you must supply the market with banknotes that are not quite legal, as (otherwise) the monetary crisis will intensify. The complete absence of small change in the form of alloy or copper coins forced the Zemstvo administration of the Amur region from mid-1919 to issue its own Zemstvo stamps with the following denominations: 50 kopecks - orange, 1 ruble - brown, 3 rubles - green and 5 rubles - blue.

These stamps were issued until December 1919, with a total value of 18 million rubles. These Zemstvo stamps are like the state revenue stamps. The numeric values are indicated on the reverse, while the following text is on the front: "Амурское Областное Земство" (Amur Region Zemstvo), "почта" (the post office); "сумма марки" (stamp valuation) and "выпускается на основании п. 5. ст. 2 закона 17 июня 1917 г." (issued based on paragraph 5, Article 2 of the Law of June 17, 1917). Furthermore, the coat of arms of the Amur region is depicted.

These Zemstvo stamps were widely used in the area and were willingly received by both the population and Chinese traders.

During the subsequent devaluation in 1920, only an amount of 4,952,070 Rubles, corresponding to 27.5%, was exchanged to money of the Far Eastern Republic when this transitional currency was collected and exchanged.

These stamps worth 13 million Rubles, either remained in the hands of the population or were destroyed on various occasions.

The fact that only such a small number of stamps were exchanged can be explained in this way: firstly, the low denominations of these stamps, secondly, the low exchange value at that time and, ultimately, small size and rapid wear and tear, which led to their loss or uselessness.

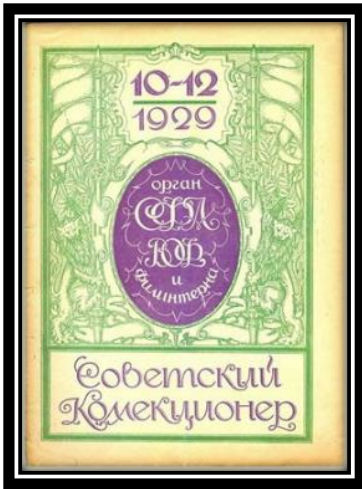
#### Note:

This excerpt as well as the entire book was originally printed according to the NEW orthography. Pogrebetsky therefore also used them when he reproduced the text on the stamps. I make this stipulation, since I cite the text according to the old orthography of Pogrebetsky's book, but without "еров" (ѣ). The fonts have been adopted as is, without applying any "styles".

N. Kardakoff.

But now I would also like to take the opportunity to inform the readers about Kardakoff, who was also proposed as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in 1956 [4]. Here is also some information about Iol'son and Pogrebetsky, who are certainly among the greatest connoisseurs of Russian banknote science (bonistics).

Nikolay Ivanovich Kardakov in Russia 1885-1921; and Nikolai Kardakoff, in Germany 1922-1973, was born on 01.01.1885 in Kardakovskaya, Vyatka Governorate. Nikolay Kardakov studied biology at Perm University with a focus on entomology and butterflies. In 1909 he became a member of the Russian Entomological Society. In 1917-1918 Kardakov was a member of the military units under Admiral Kolchak. From 1919-1921 he was again professionally active in the establishment and expansion of the entomological collections of the Far East (Khabarovsk State Museum).



In his spare time, he also dealt intensively with paper money or banknotes (bonistics, notaphily). It was precisely this knowledge that enabled him to be sent to Berlin in 1922 on the instructions of F. Chuchin as a representative of the Soviet Philatelic Association (SFA=СФА) of the All-Union Society of Philatelists (VOF=ВОФ) and Philintern (Philatelic International). His task there was to establish contacts in order to find sales markets for all kinds of collectible items such as stamps, banknotes, postcards, etc. The reason for this was the procurement of foreign currency for the ailing system of Russia's post-revolutionary government. [9]

**Fig. 3: Journal "Soviet Collector" #10-12, 1929 of the SFA of VOF and the Philintern (Советский Коллекционер #10-12, 1929. Орган СФА ВОФ и филинтерна).**

For Kardakoff, the assignment to Berlin was the stroke of luck of his country par excellence. Soon he was able to regain a foothold in Berlin, working mainly at the Entomological Institute of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft in Berlin-Dahlem, at the Berlin Natural History Museum and later at the German Academy of Sciences. He retired in 1951 for health reasons but remained in Berlin and died there in 1973. In addition to his professional activities, he always found time for his hobby, the banknote study of Russia and the Baltic States. Particularly well-known in these two catalogues [5, 6]. Among his Berlin acquaintances was Carl Schmidt. When he was working on the chapter on Amur stamps for his Handbook of Russian Stamps [1], he received from Kardakoff the letter shown above.

The destiny of his co-author Iol'son of their catalogue [5] was far worse than Kardakoff's. Leo Maksimovich Iol'son (Лев Максимович Иольсон) was born in Vilnius in 1891. After his university studies, he became a professor at the Institute of Nonferrous Metals in Moscow. In his hobby – banknote study – he became the authority par excellence in Russia in the 1920s, documented by numerous publications (including [5]). Unfortunately for Iol'son, he did not emigrate but stayed behind in Vladivostok, a decision that would cost him his life during the Great Purge. He was charged with espionage and executed on April 8, 1938 – and rehabilitated post-humous in 1957.

We know even less about Alexander Illarionovich Pogrebetsky (Александр Илларионович Погребецкий) [4], although his work [2] is the best that can be read about banknotes in the Far East. Pogrebetsky (1891-1952) held important positions: Head of Banking and Financial Administration in Irkutsk, Manager of the Financial Authority of the Provisional Government of the Far East, member of the Zemstvo Administration of the Coastal Region and member of the Finance Committee and the Constituent National Assembly of the Far Eastern Republic. This shows the competence on which his work [2] is based.

Whatever one thinks about the Amur stamps, they are always worth collecting. At the same time, they also open the door to bonistics for us philatelists, an area that attracts far more attention in Russia than in Germany.

[Respond to the article by A. Maslov.](#)

#### **AMUR.**

by A. Maslov.

I have in my collection a 5-ruble Oblasts (territory) stamp, having the following inscription "Amur Oblast Zemstvo Post. Five Rubles 1917 Issued, as based on point 5, p2, Law 15 June". It is printed on typography, lightly on thick paper, with design on the reverse side, and numeral 5 rubles, and of the size of the Russian revenue stamps. This issue was based on the following reasons. The territory was still under the control of the old regime and the communications between various points and the value of the currency were still good. K. Schmidt states that there was an issue from 50k. [kopecks] to

5 rubles in 1919, but from 1918 to 1920, while I lived in this area, control of this section passed through various hands, namely - Eseri, Temporary Government, Japanese Occupation, Partisans, etc. then Bolsheviks, and back to Japanese and others. Thus, if another issue was made, as stated by Schmidt, these stamps of 1919 had very little rhyme or reason, and the 50k. stamp was useless, as the amount was of no use or value at all.

During all of 1919 and part of 1920, such stamps there used as currency for making change, and one could pay for a passage on a ship crossing Amur, either from Chinese or Russian side.

To call these stamps rare is hardly possible. Although, in Schmidt the emission is given at 18,000,000 and however, in view of their total loss of value in 1920 equally with other paper losses, in that territory and use of only the silver, gold, and gold nuggets, sand and bars, these stamps were discarded. It is doubtful if anyone was interested in saving these useless emissions. These could have been found only accidentally by the officials of the Far Eastern Republic, after the departure of the greater part of the population from Blagoveshchensk to the Chinese side, never to return. [12]

(The text is preserved in the original transcription. Published in Rossika journal, 1956 #48, p.49-50)

### The surviving letters of Kardakoff

Thanks to the surviving letters of Kardakoff [10], it is possible to dispel the established myths about his arrival in Germany and his disdain for the Soviet Philatelic Association (SFA).

First appeared in the publications by M. Gleyzer [9] in late 1970-s, this unfair information is still widely cited.

**Fig.4**

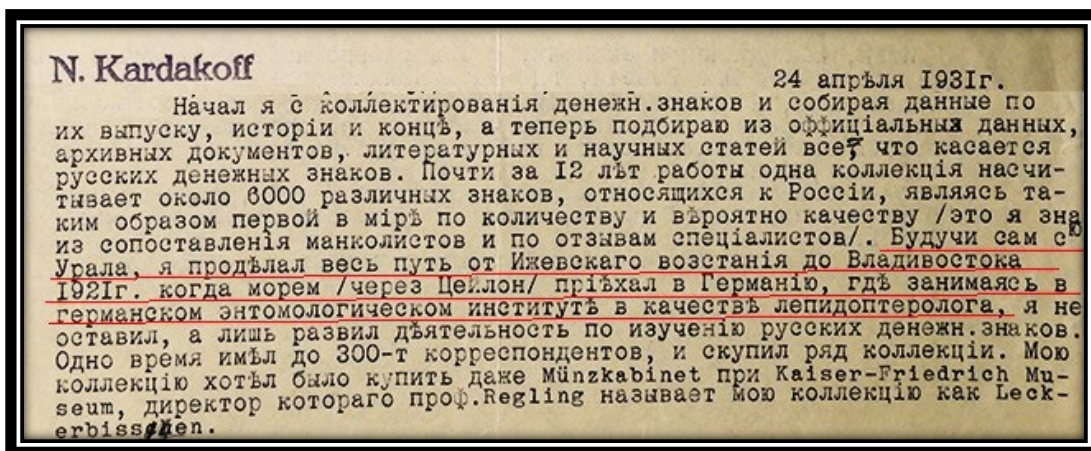


Fig. 4 shows the quote from first page of a two-page typewritten letter Kardakoff sent to Professor M. Bernadsky in Paris on April 24, 1931, where Kardakoff was going right to the source for information on some Civil War scrip he had in his collection.

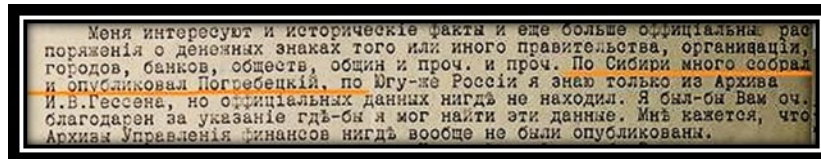
Professor M. Bernadsky was born in Kiev in 1876 and died in Paris in 1943. Bernadsky had served as the Minister of Finances of the Provisional Government, and later as the Chief of the Finance Administration in the Denikin's and Wrangel's governments. In 1918 he cooperated with the Central Rada in Ukraine. He was a signatory of the banknotes of the Highest Command of the Armed Forces of the South of Russia.

*Dear Professor! I always read your interesting articles in "Vozrozhdenie" (Renaissance) on financial subjects with great pleasure, and I completely agree with your thoughts on the Bolsheviks' financial-economic experiments, which will undoubtedly lead to the political collapse of the Soviets.*

By the time this letter was composed, Kardakoff's collection had reached approximately 6,000 items of Russian paper money, in addition to a large number of documents bearing on this subject. At one point he had up to 300 correspondents and had bought quite a few collections outright.

From this April 24th letter we learn the following: [Coming from the Urals, I traveled the entire route from the Izhevsk Uprising to Vladivostok in 1921. Thence by sea /via Ceylon/ I came to Germany, where I work as a lepidopterist for the German Entomological Institute...](#) (see Fig.4)

Fig.5



Kardakoff also appreciated Pogrebetsky's work: [I am also interested in historical facts and even more official orders on the banknotes of a particular government, organizations, cities, banks, societies, and so on. Pogrebetsky collected and published a lot about Siberia region, and about Southern Russia region only from the I. V. Hessen archive...](#) (See Fig 5.)

In another letter to Bernadsky dated May 18, 1931, Kardakoff shared his disdain for the Soviet Philatelic Association (SFA) and its money-grubbing nature.

He had given two Russian paper money bills to Bernadsky in his previous missive as a gift, but the latter had returned it, so Kardakoff sent them right back along with a copy of his dog-eared, notated Catalog of Russian Paper Money. Then he proceeded to unload on his former Soviet "employer."

[This catalog was my work, \[compiled\] when I received from the SFA \[authorization to be\] the representative for paper money sales. This catalog cannot be trusted, because I did not write it \(the valuations\) in the interests of the SFA; in any event I just completely used the Association. The fact is there are many utter idiots sitting there in the SFA. They failed to understand that I could not put in valuations that would benefit their interests, and soon they sold off all of their rare items for mere pennies. Now the SFA has nothing left in the way of material \[to sell\]. Either by means of some investigation or they just found out that I wasn't their "field of berries," they roughly stripped me of the representative job. In any event, this catalog can serve as a brief handbook of sorts for those groups and formations that emitted "their own money" from 1915 to 1927. \(N.B. Emphasis by the author.\)](#)

At first glance, this activity might seem rather duplicitous on Kardakoff's part, but he had absolutely no love for the Soviet regime, and no compunction about selling the SFA down the river to avoid furthering their own ends.

A few years later, he would have cause to love the Soviets even less. Nikolai Kardakoff had a younger brother, Andrey (also an entomologist), who in 1938 was accused of spying for the Japanese and executed. In addition to that, his friend Leo Iol'son was also shot that same year for the same "crime."

In 1930, after the Rossika Society first emerged in Yugoslavia Kardakoff joined it and began writing for its journal on paper money topics, using the pseudonym "Rosber," standing for "Российский Берлинец" (a Russian Berliner). Nikolai Ivanovich Kardakoff (Head of the Numismatic and Scrip Section) was made as Honored Member of Rossika by Eugene Arkhangel'skiy on 14 April 1937 for his contributions to Russian scripophily. [11]. He passed away, still in Berlin, on 7 March 1973.

## References

- [1] Schmidt, Carl: "Die Postwertzeichen der russischen Landschaftsämter – Beiträge zur Kunde dieser Marken", Volume I, page 32, Berlin-Charlottenburg (1932).
- [2] Pogrebetsky, A. I.: "Money circulation and banknotes in the Far East at the time of war and revolution, 1914-1924" (Russian), pages 212-213, Harbin (1924).
- [3] Translation to English by author. Originally, this letter was translated to German.
- [4] [www.bonistikaweb.ru](http://www.bonistikaweb.ru) - the website of the Russian Federation Bonistics Society [Союз Бонистов]
- [5] Iol'son, L. M.; Kardakoff N. I.: "List of banknotes issued and circulating on the territory of the former Russian Empire in the years of war and revolution, 1914-1923", 28 pages, Berlin (1923).
- [6] Kardakoff, N.: "Katalog der Geldscheine von Russland und den Baltischen Staaten, 1769-1950", 444 pages, Berlin, 1953.
- [7] Ortwin Greis (Seefeld): Knowledge of the Amur stamps of 1919 based on a letter from Nikolai Kardakoff to Carl Schmidt. // Zeitschrift für Klassische Russland-Philatelie 11 (2011).
- [8] David M. Skipton and Steve Volis „The Watch on N.I. Kardakoff “. Rossika No. 168, Spring 2017.
- [9] Gleyzer, M. M. „Nikolay Ivanovich Kardakov - The greatest Russian foreign bonist of the XX century“ <http://www.bonistikaweb.ru/STATYI/kard-gleizer.htm>
- [10] “Two personal letters signed by the Dean of Russian paper money Nikolai I. Kardakoff. Typed, 8 ¾ x11“, Berlin, 18 March and 24 April 1931. Writing to M.B. Bernadsky – the ex-Minister of Finance of General Wrangel’s Army. Kardakoff discussed curious paper money issues. Central fold, staple stain on one of two pages “. Sold at NumisBids, January 2021. Lot#1501.
- [11] David M. Skipton, *A Short History of the Rossika Society, 1929-1968*, 140 and 163.
- [12] A. Maslov “AMUR” // Rossika journal 1956, #48, p49-50.

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