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tion: Japanese

Postcards



Stockholm museum exhibition: [Japanese Postcards from the late 19th century to the early 1950s](#)

This exhibition will be held at the [Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities](#) (Östasiatiska Museet), Stockholm, [Sweden](#) until October 2013.

The Meiji era (1868–1912) saw the start of Japan's modernization, a part of which was the establishment of a state postal service in 1871 based on the English model. During the same period, the first postage stamp was issued. A few years later [Japan](#) joined the Universal Postal Union (UPU) that regulated, amongst other things, the terms for postal service between the UPU's members. In 1873 the first Japanese postcard was printed, which became immensely popular and was reprinted in large editions. During the 1890s the first illustrated postcards started to appear, so called picture post cards. At the beginning, the state had a monopoly on printing postcards but from 1900 on private postcard publishing was allowed. That signaled the start of the Japanese picture postcard's golden age that according to many lasted up until the beginning of the 1940s.

The Russo-Japanese war (1904–05) was of great importance for the popularity of the picture postcard. Roughly one million soldiers used the picture postcard to communicate with friends and family and vice versa. As an example of this "postcard craze", it is believed that at the issuing of a series of official postcards in Tokyo, the two parallel queues leading to the selling point were nearly three kilometers long.

Many famous artists were involved in postcard design. In this sense, postcards became a popular form of art collecting. Graphic designers were hired by department stores, shipping companies, newspaper publishers, hotels and other companies to come up with selling subject matter for postcards. Many of these were produced for the growing stream of foreign tourists that came during the end of the Meiji era and the following Taisho era (1912– 1926). Parallel to these private editions, the official state issued ones composed a large part of the postcards in circulation. These official editions were often printed in connection to the issuing of a new postage stamp. Towards the end of the 1930s military motifs dominated postcards. From 1945 and on, though, the interest for postcards subsided.

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