

## Russia



**PT 18 (\*) 1856 Tiflis Postmaster's Provisional - One of Three Known of Russia's First Adhesive**

In the middle of the 19th century, Tsar Alexander II appointed Prince A.I. Baryatinsky as his deputy with wide latitude for the Caucasus region. In April 1857, he appointed N.S. Kohanov as the new post manager in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia districts. On June 14, 1857, "The Rules for city mail of Tiflis and delivering of magazines and newspapers to the house" were issued. City mail started to operate from June 20th within the city, and from July 15th between Tiflis and Kodzhory (the summer residence of the Caucasian deputy).

The Tiflis Postmaster's Provisionals - the first adhesive postage stamps of Russia - were issued for these purposes; they appeared half a year before the first National issue of stamps (Russia had issued postal stationery beginning in 1845). In official documents, they were called, "the paper stamp seals having quality of a paper seal." For letters within Tiflis, one stamp was required, and to Kodzhory (or back), three stamps. Prepaid with these "stamp seals," letters and packages were delivered, or could be put into mail boxes set up in various parts of the city and in Kodzhory. It is not known whether any form of cancel was used. The "stamp seals" were embossed and showed the Arms of Tiflis Province as well as the Russian Imperial Arms and small post-horns, together with inscriptions and a value of 6 Kopecks (which included 5 Kopecks for the local rate + 1 Kopeck for the manufacture of the stamp). It is believed that the stamps were produced in strips of 5.

On March, 1st, 1858, the Russian Imperial postage stamps reached the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, but the use of the Tiflis stamps continued on mail within the city, possibly as late as 1865-66. They were issued six months before the National issue ("Russia n° 1") and thus are parallel to the Postmaster's Provisionals of the USA or the Cantonal issues of Switzerland. Their limited use and regional usage in a relatively primitive area has resulted in their extreme rarity - ONLY THREE EXAMPLES ARE KNOWN.

Background & Provenance: the first mention of this issue, with some details, was published by Russian expert K.K. Schmidt in 1924. He had owned this stamp since 1913. Subsequently, it was sold to Agathon Fabergé, who had rescued a part of his collection during the Russian revolution, and took it abroad. Until 1917, Fabergé owned two of the Tiflis stamps - one from Agar Romanovich Kirchner, the second from V. Verhmeister. When Ferrary's collection was auctioned, Fabergé bought the third - and only other known - example. All three were shown at the inaugural philatelic exhibition in 1928 in Helsingfors, Finland, and again at the international exhibition WIPA in 1933 in Austria. They were sold at auction in London during World War II. Finally, all three were reunited in the collection of Zbigniew Mikulski, the foremost expert on Russian philately. Two of the stamps were publically displayed for the first time at the world philatelic exhibition "Moscow '97." The two best examples, including the one offered here, changed hands once again in 1998.

**A world-class rarity, and a "crown jewel" of Russian philately**

**Price on Request**

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