



2017.11.1 New Year stamps

The New Year stamps produced for 2018 (Heisei 30), the year of the Dog, comprise the four separate designs and a souvenir miniature sheet which have been traditionally identified with this issue for many years. The small (21.5 x 22.5 mm) ¥52 and ¥82 designs were both printed in 5 offset inks – the ¥52 in sheets of 50 (5 x 10) and the ¥82 in sheets of 10 (5 x 2). The larger ¥52+3 and ¥82+3 designs (25.5 x 48 mm) were both printed in sheets of 20 (4 x 5) in 6 gravure inks with the lottery numbers applied by letterpress. The ¥52 and the ¥52+3 designs were the work of Kaifuchi Junko, and Maruyama Satoru was responsible for the ¥82 and the ¥82+3 designs. The issue quantities produced were: ¥52 –

16,000,000; ¥82 – 1,800,000; ¥52+3 – 12,200,000; and ¥82+3 – 1,100,000. The JSCA/Sakura catalogue numbers are N161 (¥52), N162 (¥82), N163 (¥52+3) and N164 (¥82+3).

The ¥52 and ¥52+3 designs depict a small Edo handcraft toy called *Zaru-kaburiinu* (“Dog wearing a basket on its head”). These small toys are said to have originated in the 18th century with a Shogun’s edict forbidding ostentatious displays of wealth. These are now made by “Sukeroku” in Asakusa, Taitō City, Tōkyō. The image is a play on words: when a part of the character for “basket” is combined with the character for “dog”, the resulting combination resembles the character for “laughter” and thus embodies the wish for children to grow up strong and happy.

The ¥82 and ¥82+3 designs depict a Toyama clay doll called *Kodai-inu* (“Ancient Dog”). Toyama clay dolls are said to have their origin in the late Edo period (mid-1800s) when a potter named Hirose Yasujirō presented a figurine of a reclining auspicious ox to the lord of Toyama domain. They have flourished ever since as representative folk crafts of Toyama, serving as objects of folk religion, as good-luck charms, and as children’s toys.

Souvenir sheet

As was the case in past years, the principal availability of this souvenir sheet is its distribution as a New Year lottery prize. This year the sheet was third prize in the lottery, available to holders of New Year stamps or postcards with a six-digit lottery number ending in either 27 or 86. However, as was the case last year, this time 10,000 sheets were officially issued, available only through online shopping at Japan Post’s “Kitte Shop”. The date of issue was 2018.1.15.

The sheet, again in common with the precedent set last year, contains stamp designs that are completely different from those in the stamp issue described above. In keeping with 2018 being the year of the Dog, the ¥62 stamp depicts a small dog and the ¥82 stamp a large dog. As well, the framed pictures in the sheet’s background depict the rooster (left) and hen that respectively comprised the ¥82 and ¥52 designs in last year’s souvenir sheet. The dimensions of each of the two stamps are 18.5 x 22.5 mm. The two horizontal inscriptions above the stamps read **Otoshidama/2018 Heisei 30 nen** (New Year gift 2018).





The sheet (80 x 70 mm), above left, was designed by Hoshiyama Ayaka and printed by Joh. Enschedé Stamps in 4 offset inks as well as glossy ink called “pearl” applied in a repeated pattern over the entire background of the sheet. The enlargement, above right, shows a small part of that repeated pattern, which is quite reflective when viewed at an angle. There are also areas of this pearl ink in a varied pattern on each of the stamps. ISJP member Mr. Y. Suzuki advises that many collectors have complained that cancellations applied to the sheet have not been clear due to the pearl ink.

A further unusual characteristic of this sheet is the perforation pattern below the stamps. At the bottom left of the ¥62 stamp, and at the bottom right of the ¥82 stamp, there is an enlarged perforation that looks somewhat like a bone that a dog might enjoy chewing upon.

The JSCA/Sakura catalogue number for the sheet is N165, while the individual stamps are numbered N165a (¥62) and N165b (¥82).

First-day cancellations

Examples of the first-day datestamps are shown. Both the hand (framed) datestamp, below left, and the machine (unframed) datestamp, below right, depict both of the dog figurines featured on the New Year stamps. The officially designated first-day post offices were Nihonbashi and Tōkyō Central, at the latter of which optional office name imprints of Toyama Central (富山中央) could also be obtained. ■

