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International Journal of Clinical Epidemiology

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Research Article

Alexander Yersen's Scientific Contribution to The Fight Against a Number of Infectious Diseases - In the Mirror of a Number of Collection Tools

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Received Date: May 25, 2023| Accepted Date: June 05, 2023| Published Date: June 26, 2023

Citation: Bugaevsky KA, (2023), Alexander Yersen's Scientific Contribution to The Fight Against a Number of Infectious Diseases - In the Mirror of a Number of Collection Tools, *International Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 2(3); **DOI:**10.31579/2835-9232/025

Abstract

This article presents research material on Alexander Jersen, a bacteriologist, epidemiologist, scientist, and researcher. His biography is presented through a variety of means of collecting - in philately, medal art. The text is provided with rich illustrative material, explanatory descriptions and comments.

Keywords: alexander yersin; bacteriology; infectious diseases; plague; philately; postage stamps; postal envelopes; cardmaximum; commemorative medals

Introduction

When presenting heroes of medicine in the means of collection, one cannot pass over in silence the Swiss and French bacteriologist - Alexandre Emile Jean Jersen (1863-1943). This man devoted his life to the fight against many infections, made a significant contribution to bacteriology, microbiology, epidemiology. But his name is not so well known to the general public, but not all medics can immediately remember his scientific and medical services to mankind. And they are not few. Here is a small list of them. Together with Emile Roux, he discovered diphtheria toxin, the first identified microbial toxin, in 1888 [1-4, 6, 7].

In 1894, in Hong Kong, he discovered (independently of S. Kitazato) the plague pathogen Yersinia pestis. After A. Jersen are named several species of bacteria (Yersinia), one of which causes Yersinia enterocolitica, an acute human infectious disease with gastroenteritis and enterocolitis, Yersinia pseudotuberculosis, which causes pseudotuberculosis, the author of works on serology [1-4, 6, 7]. In 1895 he developed an anti-plague serum [1-4, 6, 7].

Born and raised in Switzerland, educated in Lausanne, Marburg (Germany) and Paris. He worked in the famous Pasteur Institute, where he studied and worked since 1885. In 1888 he was awarded the title of Doctor of Medicine and became a French citizen [1-4, 6, 7].

He worked in China, Vietnam and India. In Vietnam he began working in 1890, and in 1895 Jersen established a branch of the Pasteur Institute in Nha Trang (French Indochina, today's Vietnam), where he worked on production of anti-plague vaccine and studied plague of animals.

From 1902-1904, Jersen was director of the Medical College in Hanoi. From 1904 to 1924, Jersen headed the Pasteur Institute branches in Saigon and Nha Trang. Since 1934, Alexander Jersen has been Director Emeritus of the Pasteur Institute in Paris [1-4, 6, 7].

Alexander Jersen died in Nha Trang on March 1, 1943, and is buried in the village of Shuoizai. The epitaph on his tombstone translates as "A benefactor and humanist before whom the Vietnamese people bow. Many Vietnamese cities have streets, educational institutions named after him, in Nha Trang there is a museum of Jersen. A national hero of Vietnam, streets and a number of public institutions in Vietnam are named after him [1-4, 6, 7]. The year 2018 marks the 155th anniversary of the birth of this great scholar and the 75th anniversary of his death.

Aim of the work

The purpose of this article is to reflect the memory of the famous scientist epidemiologist and infectious disease specialist - Alexander Jersen, his scientific activities, and his contribution to world medicine, in such means of collecting as philately and numismatics.

Material and Methods

When writing this article, its author used such methods of research as the selection and literary-critical analysis of all available sources on the subject, both domestic and foreign. Basically, the means of the Internet, professional sites for collectors, thematic articles devoted to the life and scientific activities of the scientist were used. Screenshots of collection materials were

used as illustrations to the materials of the article, with mandatory observance of the copyright of their owners.

Results of the study and discussion

I would like to begin my description of A. Jersen's scientific exploits in collecting media with philately, where the scientist is most fully represented on postage stamps, first day envelopes, cartemaximums, mainly of three countries - France, Vietnam, including French Indochina, and Switzerland. The postage stamps of these countries are shown in Figure 1 [5, 10-15].

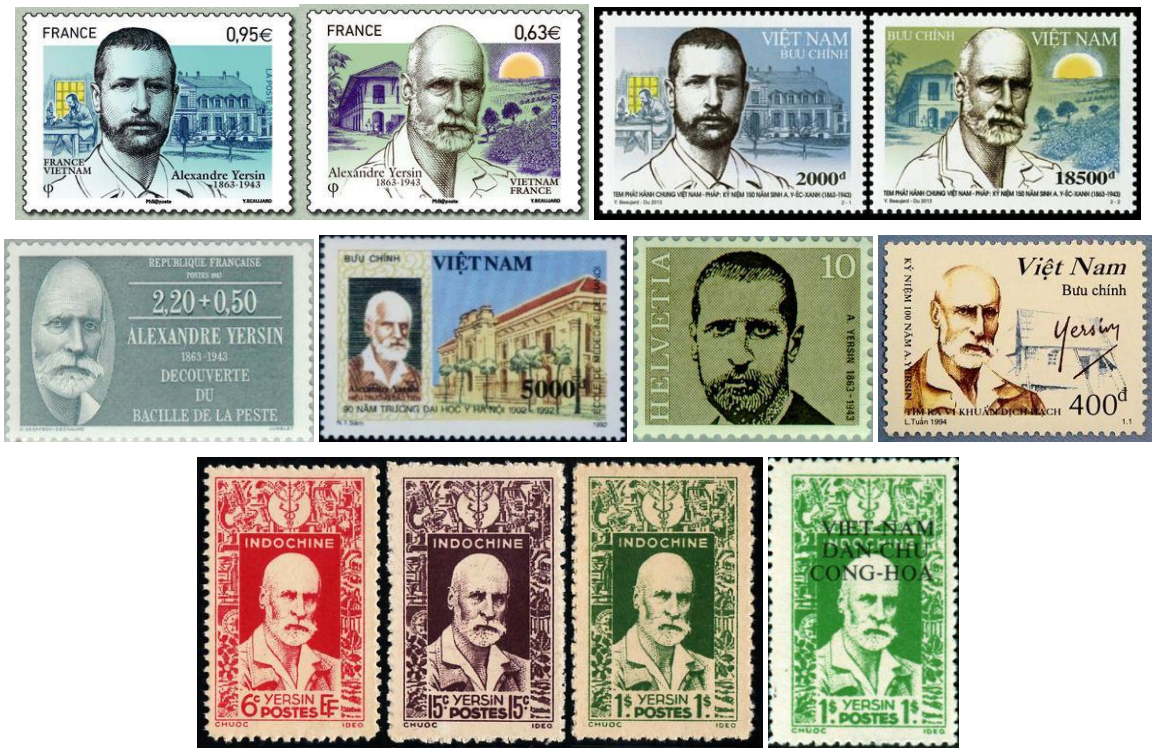
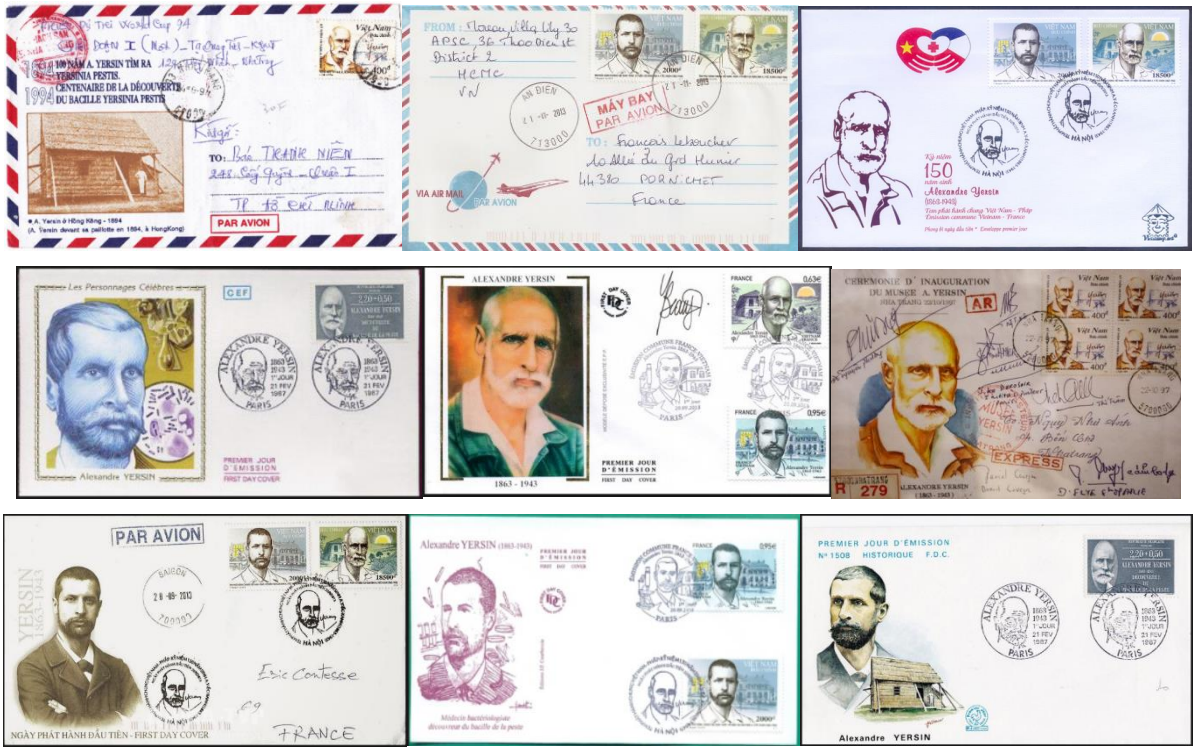


Figure 1: Postage stamps dedicated to Alexander Jersen

At the next exposition there are envelopes of the first day of Vietnam and France, with original stamps of special stamping, devoted to scientific and research activity of Alexander Jersen, presented in Fig. 2 [5, 10-15].



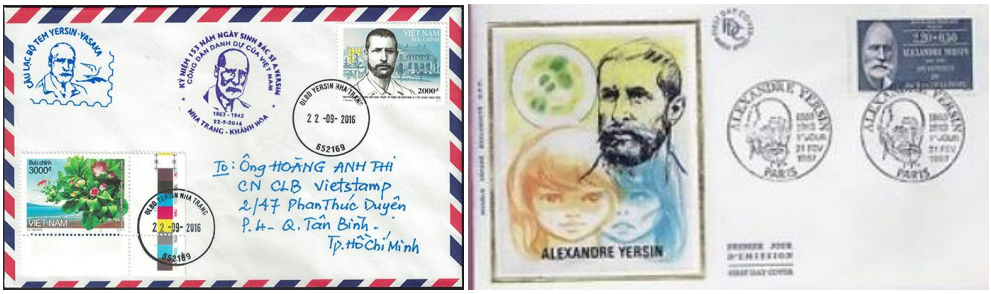


Figure 2: Envelopes of the first day of Vietnam and France dedicated to Alexander Jersen

In addition, there are French and Vietnamese cartomaxims issued in memory of the scientist. Some of them are presented in Fig. 3 [5, 8, 10-15].

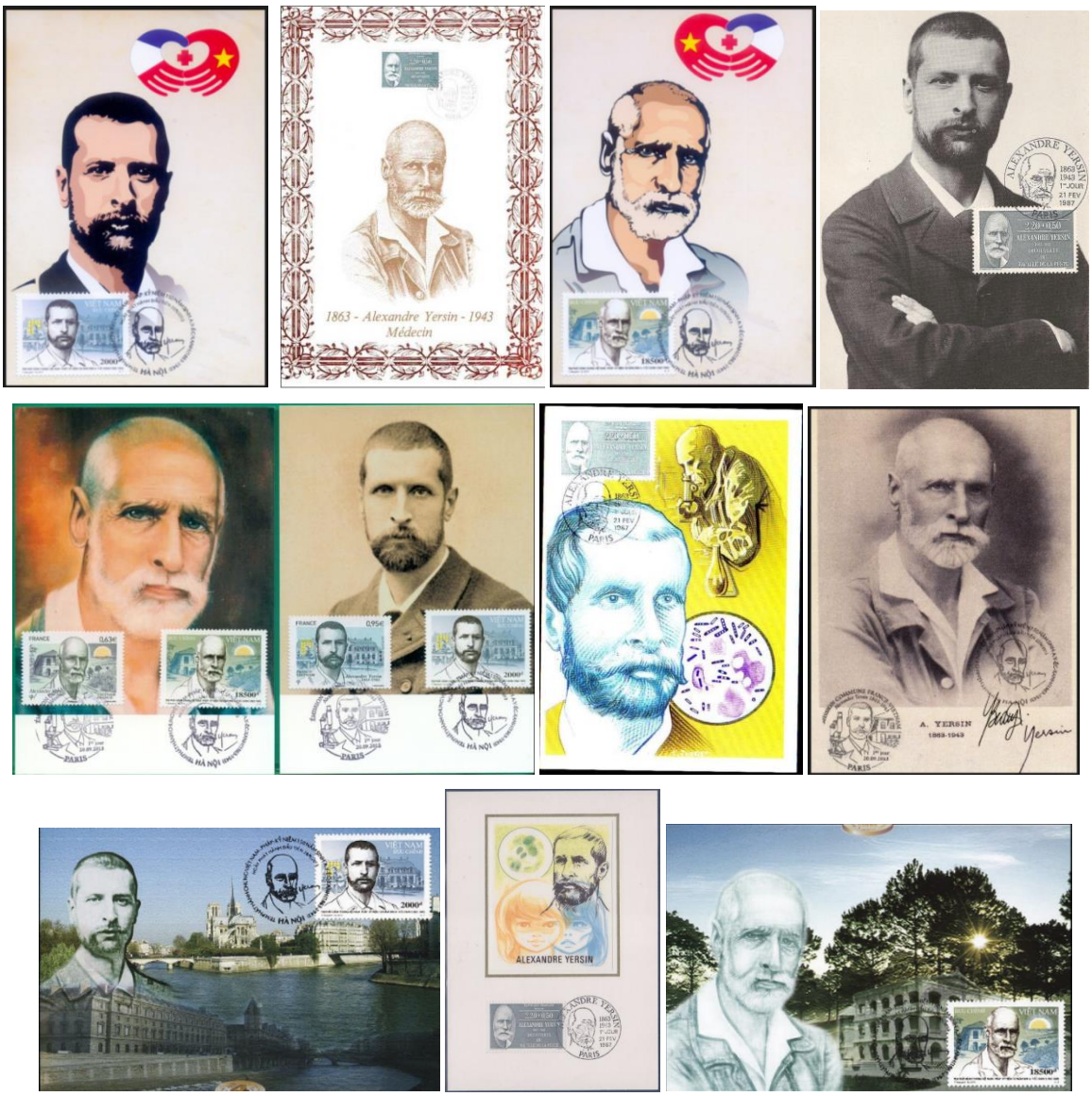


Figure 3: Cartmaxims of France and Vietnam dedicated to Alexander Jersen

Also, I would like to present commemorative medals dedicated to Alexander Jersen. They are presented, in obverse and reverse) in Fig. 4 [9, 16]. On the obverses of both commemorative medals a portrait of the scientist on the background of a Buddhist deity with the head of a dragon and many hands, on the reverse of the bronze medal 4 a - the inscription on the circumference, around the cross, "Pasteur Institute - Colony", in the middle - a cross, in 4 parts of which are depicted microscope, mosquito, rat and flea. These are the objects of research, which A. Jersen was engaged in. The cross is framed with the name and scientist in French "DOCTEUR YERSIN". In the center of the cross there is a palm tree above the hut [9, 16]. On the obverse of the second bronze medal, minted in France in 1893, during its domination of Indochina, and presented in Fig. 4b, shows the portrait of the scholar and the inscriptions "A. YERSIN," "INSTITUT PASTEUR," and "D'INDOCHINE." and on the reverse is the National Quarantine Station in Shanghai. It was here that Dr. Yersin first isolated and described Pasteurella pestis (the old term used for Yersinia pestis). A photo of this station was taken in 1936, by photographer Antoine Dancin [9, 16]. Also along the rim of the reverse of this medal goes the inscription in Latin "HIC. INVENIT. PESTIS. CAUSAM", which translates as "I have found the cause of this mortality". This refers to A. Jersen's discovery of the discovery of the plague

pathogen. This is followed by the inscription "HONG-KONG" and the date "MDCCCXCIII" [9, 16].

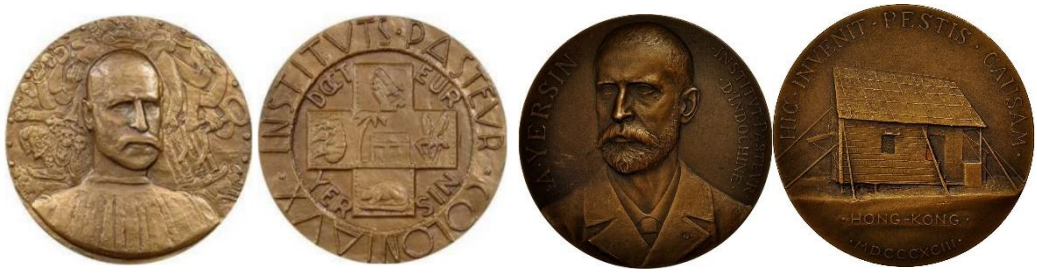


Figure 4: Commemorative medals dedicated to Alexander Jersen

In conclusion of the article, we would like to present an interesting philatelic material - postmarks of special cancellation, with which philatelic production and postal correspondence were cancelled (postmarked) during the anniversary and memorable periods in the life of Alexander Jersen. Some of them are presented in Fig. 5 [5, 8, 10-15].

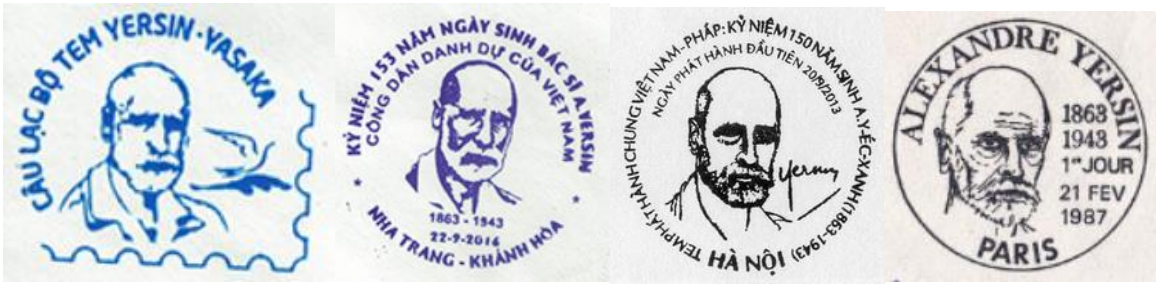


Figure 5: Special postmarks dedicated to Alexander Jersen

Conclusions

1. In this article as much as possible (taking into account available sources of information), the collection materials devoted to the memory of Alexander Jersen are presented.
2. Philately and numismatics, in all their diversity, are a remarkable means of studying the history of medicine.
3. The memory of Alexander Jersen's scientific and research activities is quite fully, colorfully, and informatively represented in a variety of collection media.
4. This article will help teachers, students, and all who are not indifferent to the history of medicine to obtain new, unconventional information about Alexander Jersen.

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