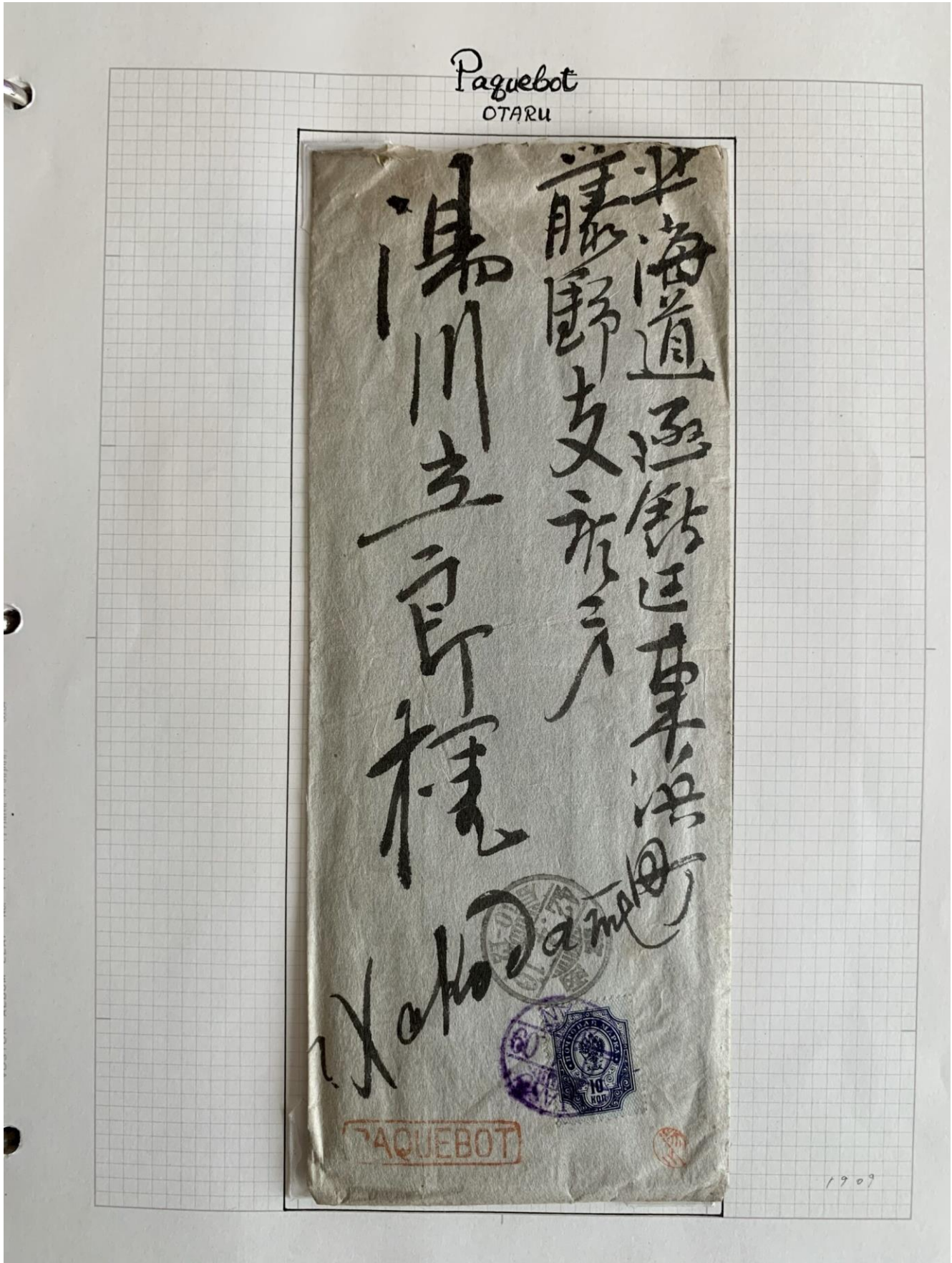
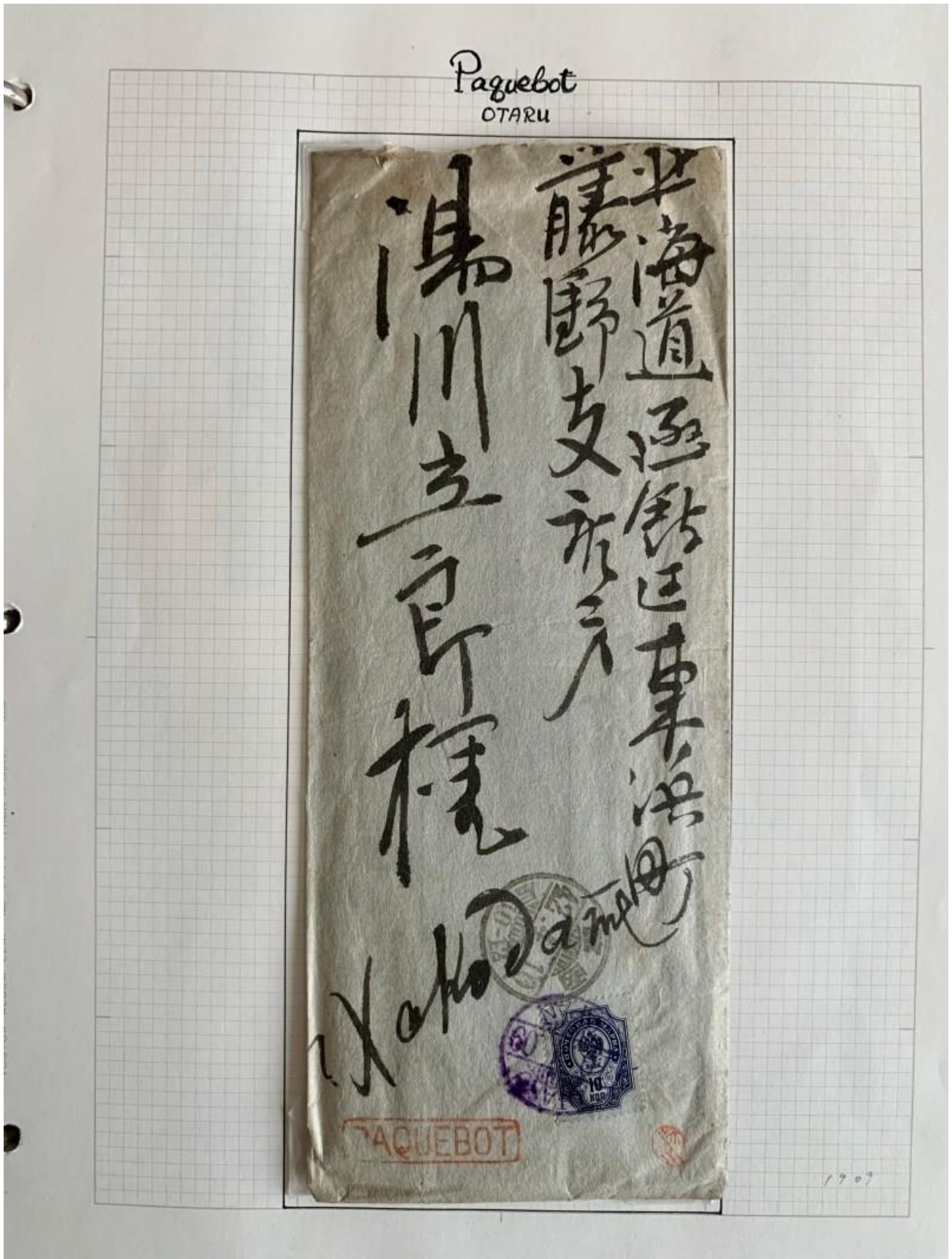


Otaru Paquebot dated January 10, 1909, cover research



Otaru postmark on Russian stamp (10 kopecks) dated April 9, 2010. Red PAQUEBOT frame postmark. Japanese arrival postmark from Hakodate (located, like Otaru, at the southern end of Hokkaido) dated April 42, 2010. Back mark Vladivostok, April 7, 1909, Tokunaga Ryokan. I recently began collecting data and conducting research.



Paquebot  
OTARU

+

明治  
三年  
七月  
七日



喜頻浦潮斯魂

徳永旅館

There is no data available in the HOSKING catalog. Fig. No. 1550 (new 3278) is similar in some ways, but the years of use are different.

Port	Fig. No.	Dimensions	Dates	Scarcity Rating	Remarks
Osaka	1549	40½ Frame 46½ x 9	1939-57	D	
Otaru	1550	32 Frame 37 x 9	1960	D	
Palembang	1551	34 Frame 40 x 10	1952	D	
Pelabohan Kelang	1552	42	1972-73	B*	Formerly Port Swettenham, q.v.
Pelabohan Kelang	1553	47	1974-75	B*	

PAQUEBOT

1549

PAQUEBOT

1550

PAQUEBOT

1551

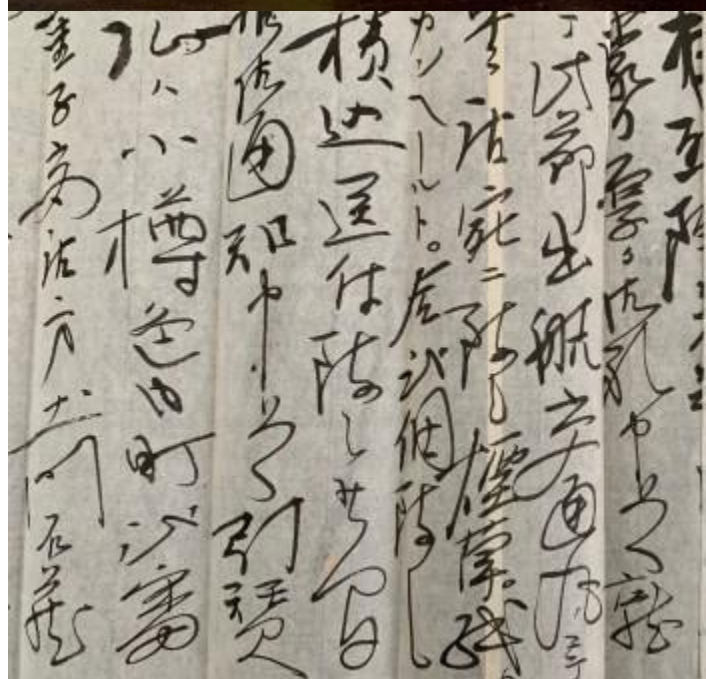
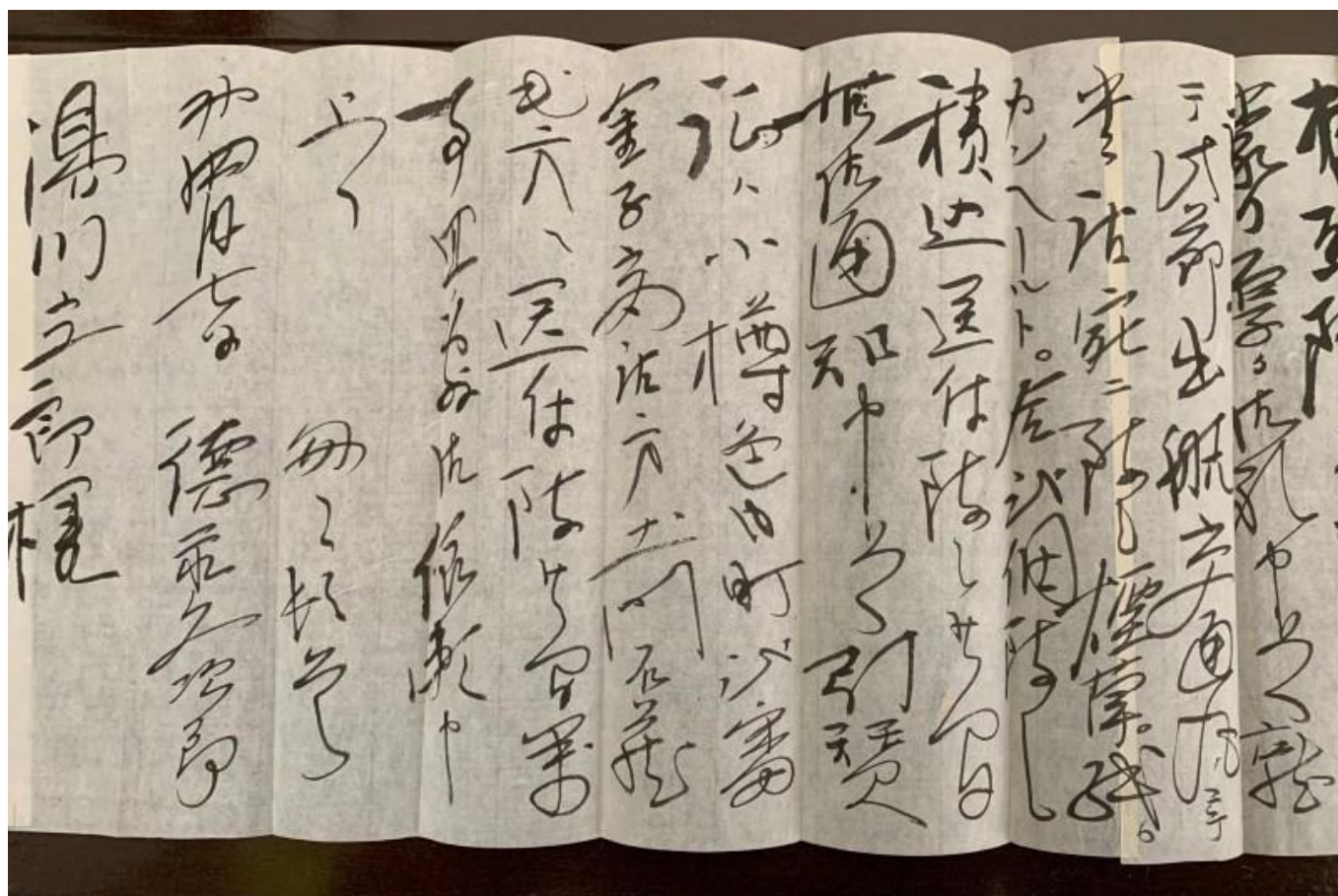
PAQUEBOT

1552

PAQUEBOT

1553

Fortunately, a letter was found inside, allowing the historical background to be deduced by reading and understanding the entire handwritten Japanese text. However, the handwriting is not perfect. Nevertheless, it can be seen that tobacco was transported to Otaru on the "KOTSU MARU."



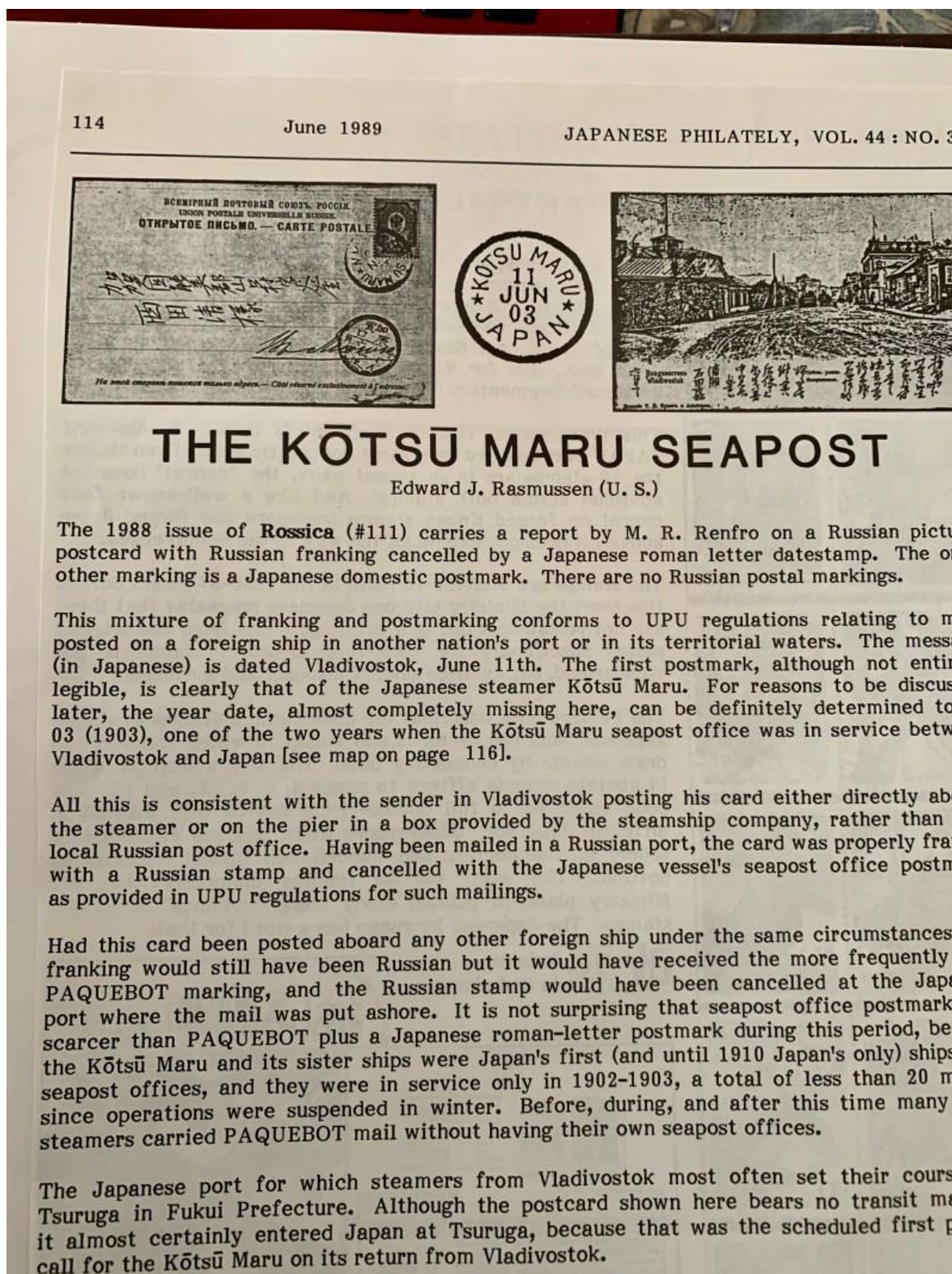
So I began my research using the KOTSU MARU data I had recently received.

February 1902 (Meiji 35): The Osaka shipping company Ooya Shichihei, commissioned by the government, begins operations on the route through the Sea of Japan.

Kotsumaru Route ONE ROUND 40 days:

Moji-Tsuruga-Nanao-Vladivostok-Tsuruga-Nanao-Hakodate-Otaru-Korsakov-Otaru-Hakodate-Vladivostok-Moji.

May 27, 1902 - January 9, 1904: The Shipping Office (SEAPOST) was opened for a short time as a mail processing office for the Hakodate Transport Bureau.



The distance between Vladivostok and Tsuruga is approximately 495 nautical miles. Lacking information on the Kōtsū Maru's average speed, it is difficult to estimate the time required for a voyage in 1903, but two or three days seems reasonable. Delivery three days after the Kōtsū Maru card was written testifies to expeditious handling.

The seapost offices on these Japan Sea routes were officially classified as "postal agencies" [yūbin toriatsukaisho] of the Hakodate Post & Telegraph Office, although they were on ships whose home port was not Hakodate but either Moji or Otaru. They handled ordinary domestic mail other than insured and C.O.D. mail, as well as international mail.

Because of weather, operations were suspended during the winter of 1902-03 and again during the winter of 1903-04. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904 made the suspension permanent. The last official reference to these seapost offices was Communications Ministry Notification No. 62 of 1906.2.20, which said they "will remain closed until further notice." In the following month, March 1906, scheduled voyages to Vladivostok were resumed, but the seapost offices were never reopened.

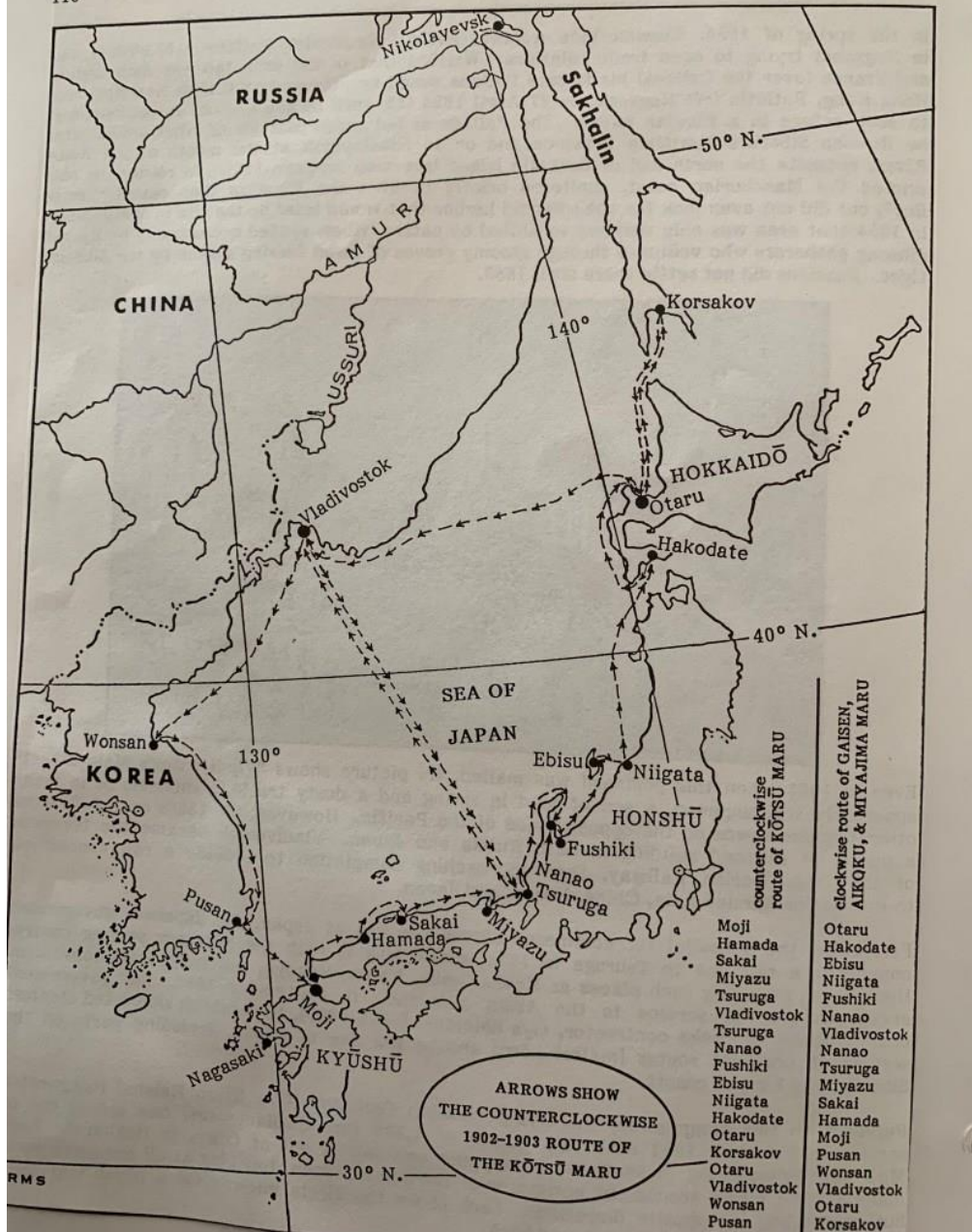
The Communications Ministry announced these official dates of opening and closing:

<u>seapost office</u>	<u>opened</u>	<u>closed</u>	<u>reopened</u>	<u>closed</u>
Kōtsū Maru	1902. 5.27	1902.12.17	1903. 2. 9*	1904. 1. 9
Gaisen Maru	1902. 5.21	1902.11.30	1903. 2.20	1903. 5.12
Aikoku Maru	1903. 5.12	1903.11.10**	Editor's note: These dates are from the official announcements. Japanese writers continue to reprint some inaccurate dates from Eguchi Hyōichirō's 1941 compilation.	
Miyajima Maru	1903.11.10	1904. 1. 9		

It appears that this route from Otaru via Tsuruga continued even after the closure of the onboard post office on the "KOTSU MARU." The letter shown above was posted in Vladivostok in 1909. Since Hokkaido was the destination, it was not processed in Tsuruga but brought ashore in Otaru, stamped with a PAQUEBOT stamp, and then delivered on to Hakodate. Given the route rotation, it is questionable why it was not unloaded in Hakodate. There are some inconsistencies, but since it clearly bears the Romanesque OTARU postmark and the PAQUEBOT postmark, it was undoubtedly landed in Otaru. It is also dated the same day in both Otaru and Hakodate. Was international mail transported particularly quickly? I will gather more information and do some research.

Is this a rare Otaru PAQUEBOT stamp that has not yet been classified philatelically?

I ponder this and that as I look at the card below.



Perhaps the bad weather in April caused delays in the schedule, meaning that the port of Hakodate could not be called at?

On regular routes, the schedule for each port is precisely defined and arrangements are made, for example, for cargo handling. If a ship falls behind schedule, it is common practice to skip ports in order to make up for the delay. This reminds me of my time as a sailor. I believe the 40-day route from Moji via Tsuruga and Hokkaido to Vladivostok and back was strictly adhered to.

Isamu Tanabe, November 2022