

Reply Coupons of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland An Area for Study

Rhodesian Study Circle – North American Meeting
8th November 2025

Purpose of and Redemption of the Coupons

Exchangeable in an applicable country for a postage stamp or postage stamps representing the amount of postage for an ordinary single-rate letter addressed to an applicable country

The applicable country of issue or redemption could be

- a member country of the Universal Postal Union (U.P.U.)
- a member country within the British Empire (Commonwealth), defined by the U.P.U. as a restricted Union
- other restricted unions include the Arab

The Coupon Types for the Rhodesias and Nyasaland

- Imperial Reply Coupons – for redemption in any part of the British Empire
- Commonwealth Reply Coupons – for redemption in any part of the British Commonwealth
- International Reply Coupons – for redemption in any country of the U.P.U.
- International Reply Coupons had limited use in the Territories

The Foundation of Literature

- Rhodesian Study Circle Journal RSCJ **300**, March 2024 pages 78-79 - an article based on a presentation by Keith Brodovcky to the RSC Cape Town Chapter
- Notes in various issues of the RSCJ **138** pages 67-69, **139** 102-103, **146** page 74, **153** page 162, **157** page 70, **240** page 103, **253** page 155, and **277** page 12
- The Yao Catalogues Volumes I-III, recording types, earliest and latest known dates
- More study required

Coupons have Multiple Variations based on Postage Rate and other Changes

- Changing printers
- Postage rate periods
- Revaluations in manuscript or by handstamp
- Changing watermarks
- Changing designs for the International Reply Coupons

Introduction of Reply Coupons by the U.P.U.

- Based on the original idea of reply-paid postcards approved at the 1878 Postal Union Congress held in Paris
- The idea for Reply Coupons proposed by the British delegates to the 1906 Postal Union Congress held in Rome
- The concept based on British Postal Orders
- Coupons introduced in 1909
- To pay the U.P.U. 25 centimes or 2 ½ d letter rate
- Sold at a fee equivalent to 28 centimes

The Imperial Reply Coupons

- Proposed at the 1924 Stockholm U.P.U. Congress
- Introduced 1927 for payment of the 1½d Imperial letter rate
- To allow for the lower Imperial rates of postage
- Initial printings by Waterlow & Sons
- Later printings by Harrisons
- Watermarks GVR, GVIR or EIIR
- Eight basic types introduced

The Imperial Reply Coupons

Southern Rhodesia 3d
in black

Watermark large GVIR

India and Burma
inscription

Harrison & Sons

Imprint



THIS COUPON MAY BE EXCHANGED IN ANY PART OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE FOR A POSTAGE STAMP OR STAMPS REPRESENTING THE POSTAGE ON A SINGLE RATE LETTER TO A DESTINATION WITHIN THE EMPIRE. EXCEPTIONALLY THE EXCHANGE VALUE IN INDIA AND BURMA IS 2 1/4 ANNAS

Southern Rhodesia – Inscribed India and Pakistan

Southern Rhodesia 3d
in black

Watermark large GVIR
Harrison & Sons
Imprint



THIS COUPON MAY BE EXCHANGED IN ANY PART OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE FOR A POSTAGE STAMP OR STAMPS REPRESENTING THE POSTAGE ON A SINGLE RATE LETTER TO A DESTINATION WITHIN THE EMPIRE. EXCEPTIONALLY THE EXCHANGE VALUE IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN IS 2½ ANNAS

Revalued for Rate Change and Currency Change

Southern Rhodesia

2½d in blue,
revalued to 3d then
revalued to 2½c in
1970

Watermark multiple
small GVR sideways
Waterlow & Sons



Northern Rhodesia – Inscribed within the Empire

Northern Rhodesia
3d in Black
Watermark Small
GVR
Harrison & Sons
Imprint

THIS COUPON MAY BE EXCHANGED IN ANY PART OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE FOR A POSTAGE STAMP OR STAMPS REPRESENTING THE POSTAGE ON A SINGLE RATE LETTER TO A DESTINATION WITHIN THE EMPIRE.



Northern Rhodesia – Inscribed India and Pakistan

Northern Rhodesia
3d in blue
Watermark large
GVIR
Harrison & Sons
Imprint



Nyasaland – Inscribed within the Empire

Nyasaland 3d in
Black
Watermark Large
GVR
Harrison & Sons
Imprint

THIS COUPON MAY BE EXCHANGED IN ANY PART
OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE FOR A POSTAGE STAMP
OR STAMPS REPRESENTING THE POSTAGE ON A
SINGLE RATE LETTER TO A DESTINATION WITHIN
THE EMPIRE.



Commonwealth Reply Coupons

- 1953 Commonwealth Reply Coupons supersede Imperial Reply Coupons, omission of the term British from the text
- Serving precisely the same purpose
- The selling price of the coupon remained at 3d each
- A coupon exchangeable for stamps to the value of $2\frac{1}{2}$ d,
except where stated
- In Great Britain Commonwealth Reply Coupons were put on sale on Monday, 23rd February 1953 and stocks of Imperial Reply Coupons on hand were withdrawn from sale. This did not apply in the territories where Imperial coupons remained in use

Federation 3d Commonwealth Reply Coupon

Federation established
1st August 1953

Inscribed India 2 ½
annas Pakistan 1 anna
9 pies

Watermark large GVIR

Faint security
underprint
COMMONWEALTH REPLY
COUPON

Harrison & Sons St.
Martins Lane Imprint



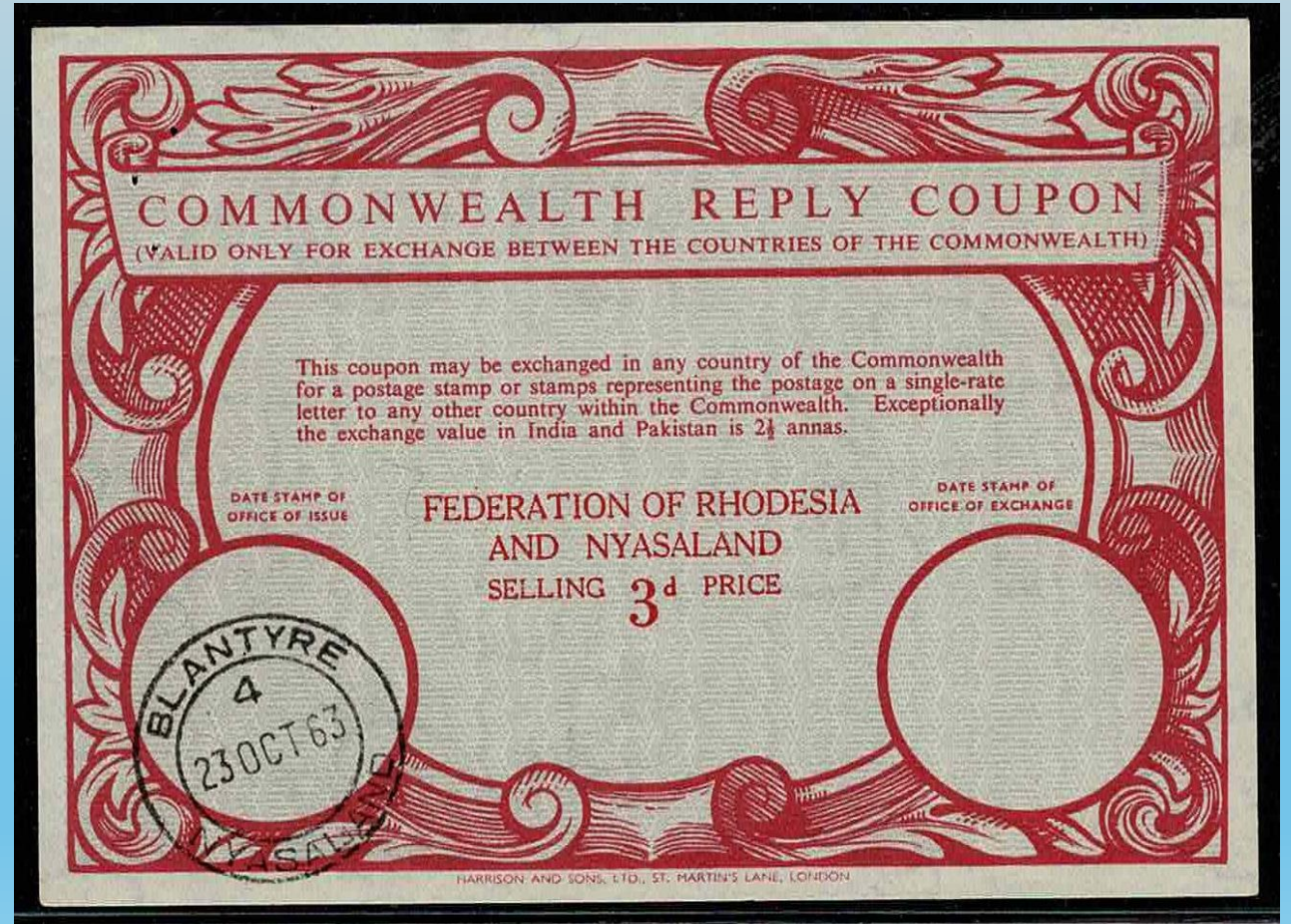
Federation 3d Commonwealth Reply Coupon

Inscribed India and
Pakistan 2 ½ annas
Watermark large
GVIR

Faint security
underprint

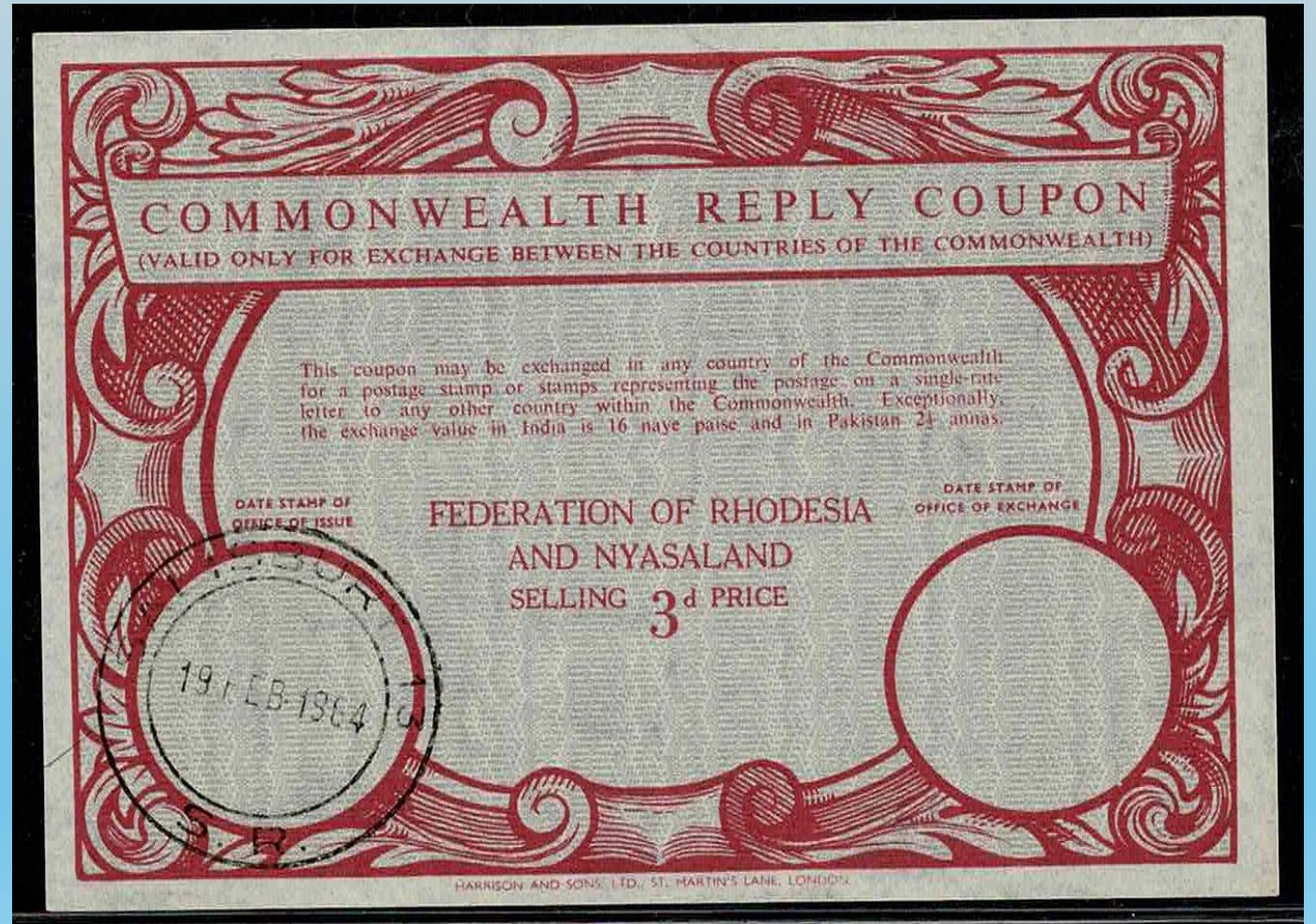
COMMONWEALTH REPLY
COUPON

Harrison & Sons St.
Martins Lane
Imprint

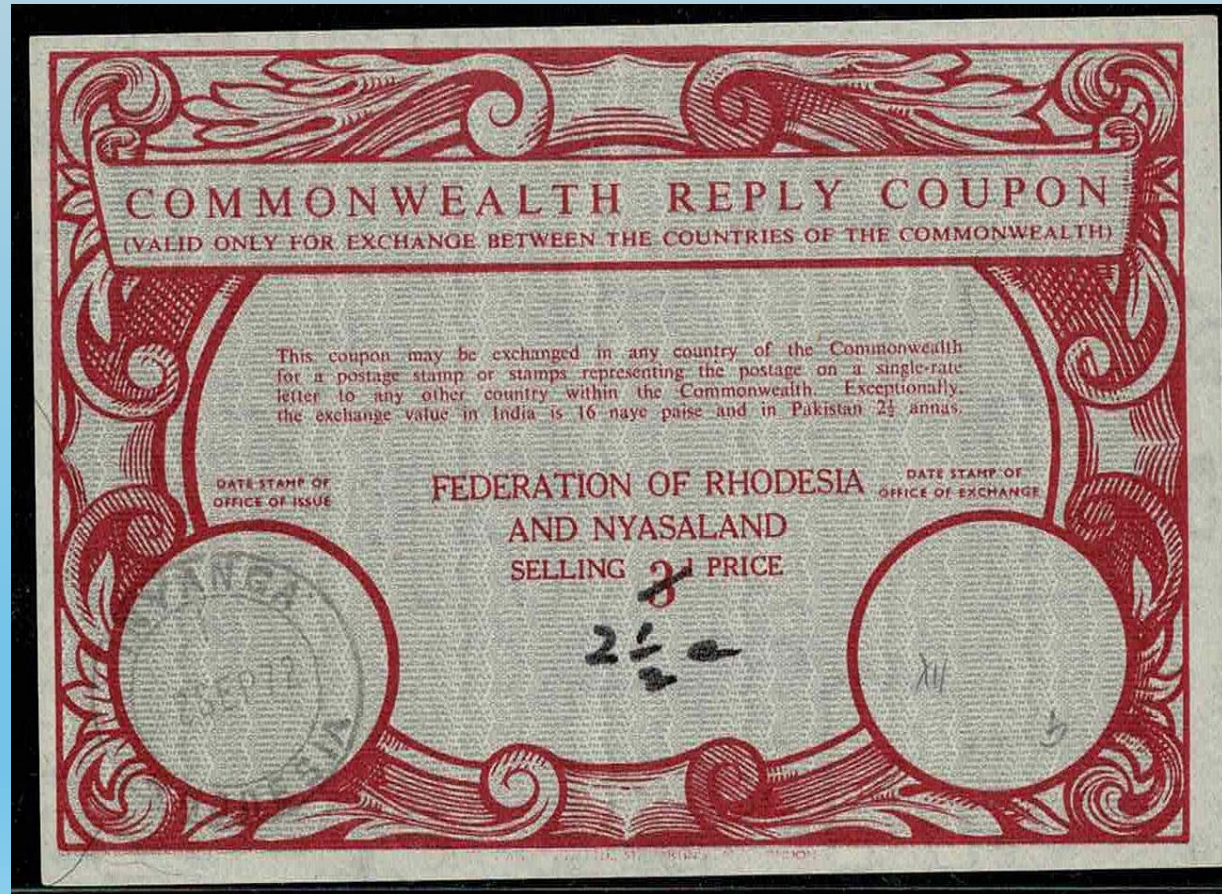


Federation 3d Commonwealth Reply Coupon

Inscribed with
Indian decimal
currency
Watermark large
EIIR
Faint security
underprint
COMMONWEALTH REPLY
COUPON
Harrison & Sons
St. Martins Lane



Federation Reply Coupon with Revised value for use in Rhodesia after decimalization (1970)



Rhodesia Commonwealth Reply Coupon

New Harrison &
Sons Cavendish
Square Imprint



HARRISON AND SONS, LTD., 7, CAVENDISH SQUARE, LONDON

Zambia Commonwealth Reply Coupon Introduced 1966

Watermark large
EIIR
Selling Price
6d



Zambia Commonwealth Reply Coupon Revalued for New Currency 1968

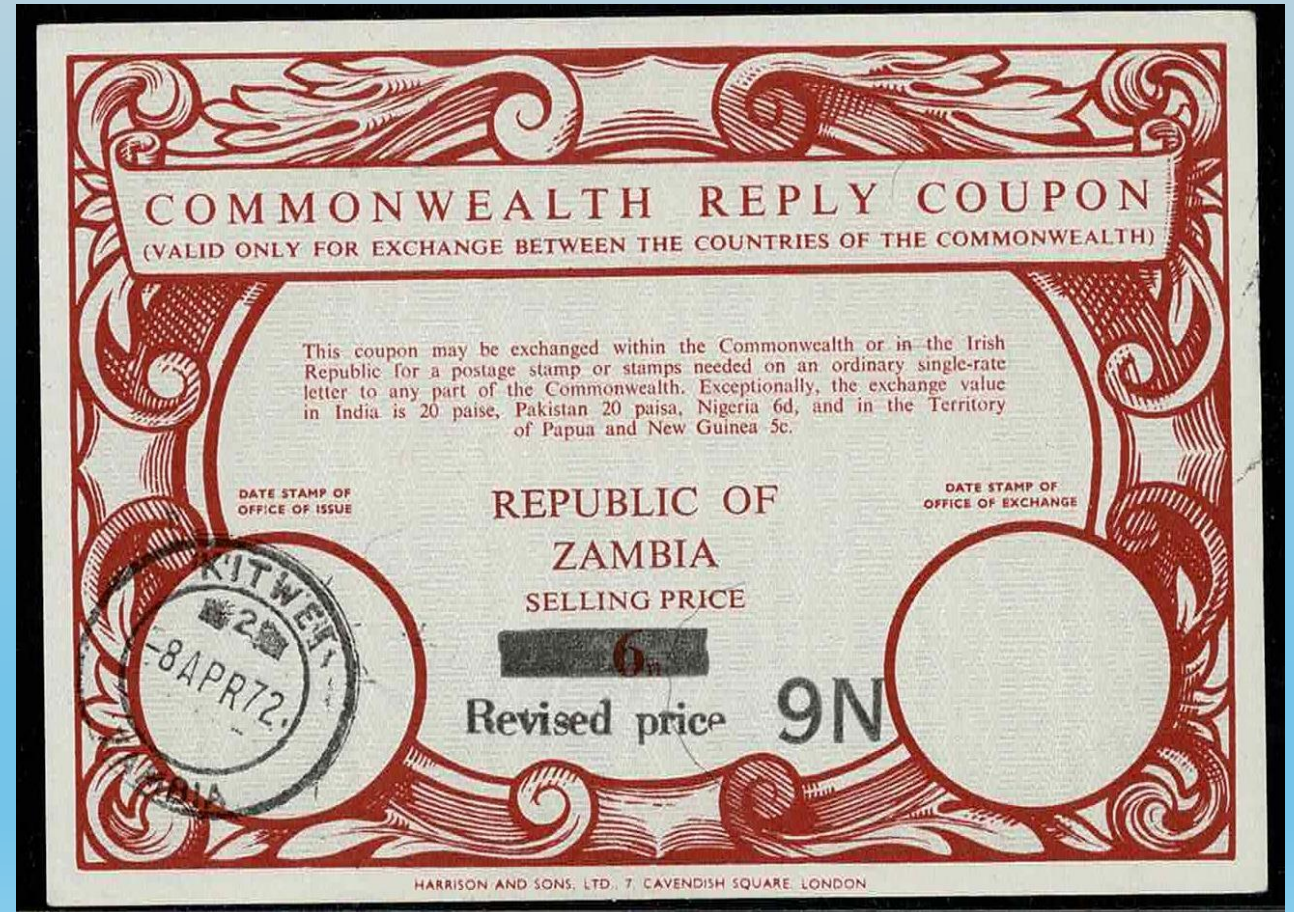
Watermark large
EIIR
Selling Price 9
Ngwee
Papua and New

This coupon may be exchanged in any country of the Commonwealth for a postage stamp or stamps representing the postage on an ordinary single-rate letter to any other country within the Commonwealth. Exceptionally, the exchange value in India is 16 paise, Pakistan 20 paise and in Territory of Papua and New Guinea 5d.



Zambia – New Printing on Unwatermarked Paper

Selling Price 9 Ngwee
Commonwealth Reply
Coupons withdrawn
November 1975 and
exchange ceased January
1976



International Reply Coupons

- A series of eight major design types –
Rome, Stockholm, Vienna, Lausanne, Peking,
Nairobi, Doha, Istanbul
- Many variations in wording on the front and reverse
- Limited use within the territories
- Few examples survive

The "London" Type International Reply Coupon

Inscriptions in
French – the official
U.P.U. language and
English

Designed by Franz
Helbing

Introduced 1930 after
Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
the 1929 London
1st earliest known use 29th March 1962
Congress



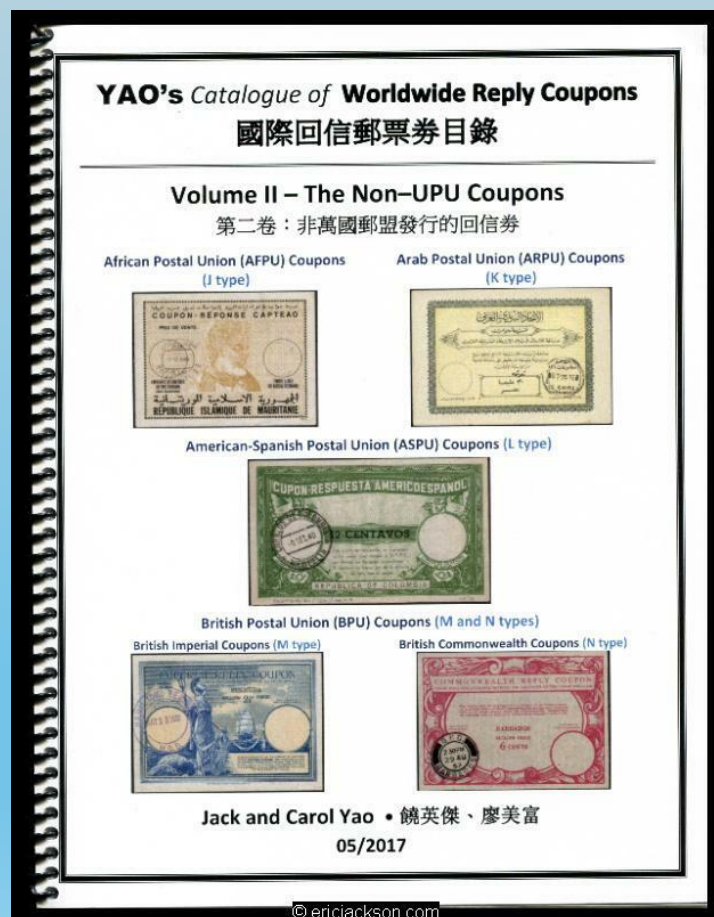
Future Study

- A census of the different Reply Coupons is needed
- Research when the coupons were first introduced in the territories
- A census of different coupons required with dates of issuance
- Many coupons show very late use – revaluations are frequent for rate changes and currency

The Infamy of International Reply Coupons

- Devaluation across Europe following World War I wreaked havoc with exchange rates and their postal equivalent
- Charles Ponzi of Boston, realized that based upon post-war exchange rates, International Reply Coupons purchased in many European nations were worth more in the US than their cost
- Ponzi convinced a few investors to give him start-up money, promising them a 50% profit in 45 days. This was the beginning of the pyramid scheme that bears Ponzi's name to this day.
- Ponzi was good to his word at first, using funds from new investors to pay off the old
- Postal inspectors investigated and showed that

The Best Reference Works



the work -
Volume I
covered the
U.P.U
Coupons
July 2016

