

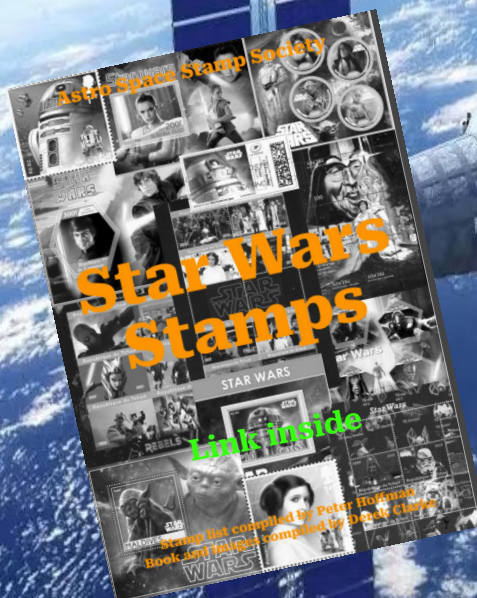
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Space Mail from Shenzhou 2 Unmanned Spacecraft

By Lin Da An

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Shenzhou 2 is China's first official sample of unmanned spacecraft, with technical performance improved so that its technical state and structure are basically the same as that of the eventual manned spacecraft.

The Shenzhou 2 spacecraft was launched by the LM-2F rocket at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre on January 10, 2001, 01:00 AM, and recovered at Si-zhi-wang-qi, Inner Mongolia on January 16, at 17:22 PM. The spacecraft was launched into a 200 by 351 km orbit, with an inclination of 42°, and a period of 5392 seconds (approx. 1,5 hours)..

On Shenzhou 2, for the first time, China carried out experiments in the fields of space life science, space materials, space astronomy and physics in the microgravity environment spacecraft. All kinds of instruments and equipment had stable performance and worked as expected, and a lot of data were obtained. Compared with the Shenzhou 1 test spacecraft, the system structure of Shenzhou 2 has been expanded and the technical performance has been improved.

Shenzhou 2 successfully landed at the scheduled location. Unfortunately, however, a very unexpected accident occurred during landing of Shenzhou 2. As a result, most of the items (Covers, cards, stamps, etc.) that were flown along with the Shenzhou-2 spacecraft were burned or severely damaged.

All philatelic items were embarked on the spacecraft in two different dates and locations.

The covers issued by the military postal administration of the China Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center (CJSLC), were loaded into Shenzhou 2 at the launch site on November 20, 2000. A total of 441 covers (numbered from 0001 to 0441) were flown.

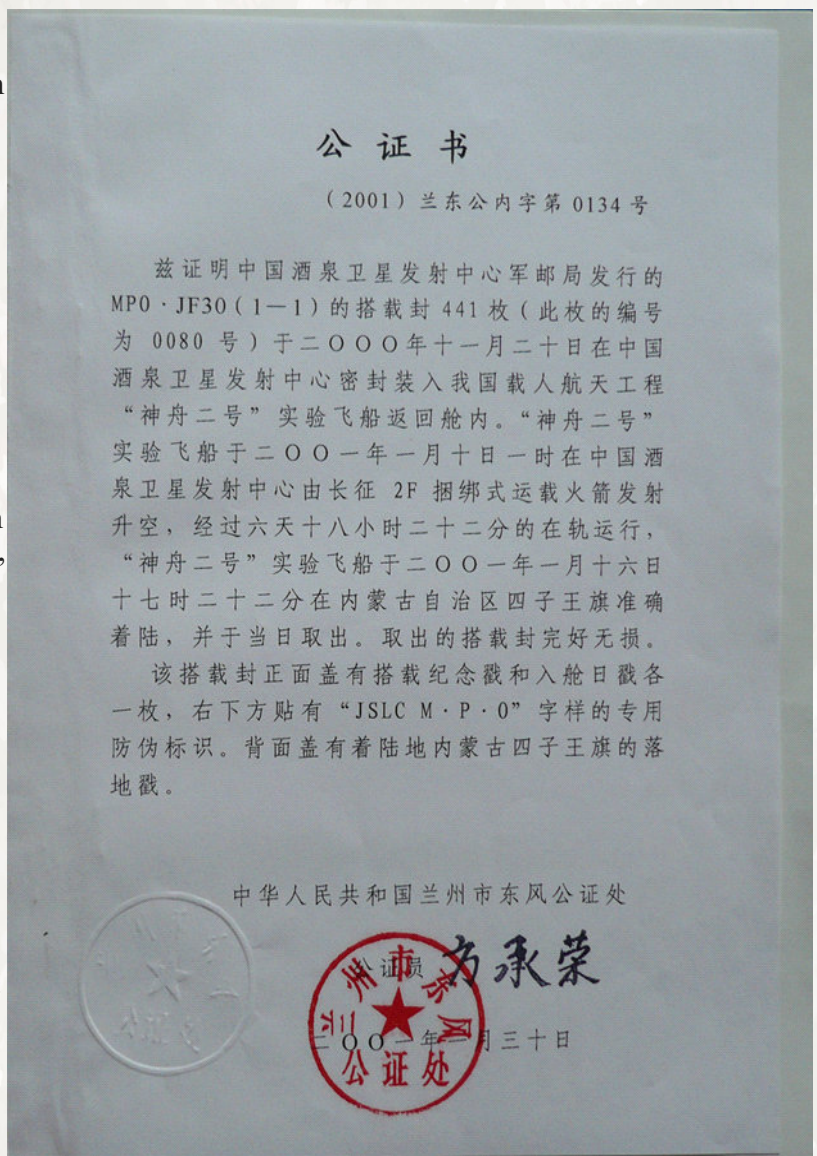
But on the day the spacecraft returned to land, only a few flown covers could be recovered from the landing site. These flown covers were first notarised by the "Lanzhou City Dong-Feng Public Notary Office". But only 15 flown covers were provided with a notarised CoA (see Fig. 2).

The front side of the cover was cancelled with the "flown-proof" postmark reading "China Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre, M.P.O., Lanzhou 27th Branch post office, 2000. 11. 20. 8, loaded in the cabin of spacecraft" and a "JSLC M.P.O." green genuine guarantee label was applied; the cover was also sealed with the steel seal of "Lanzhou City Dong-Feng Notary Public Office".



Fig.1 - Cover flown issued by the military postal administration of the China Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center

Fig.2 - Certificate of Authenticity issued by the Lanzhou City Dong-Feng Public Notary Office



The reverse side of the cover was cancelled with the recovery postmark “Siziwangqi, Inner-Mongolia 2001.1.16.20 Hongge’er 1” (Fig. 3).

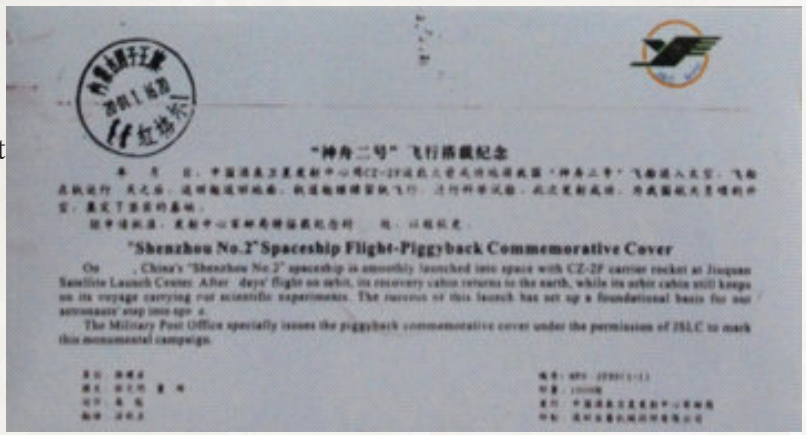


Fig.3 – The reverse side of the CJSJLC cover flown onboard the Shenzhou 2.

Other items were loaded into Shenzhou 2 spacecraft but they do not have the certificate of notary office. In the process of loading Shenzhou 2 spacecraft, the items were notarised by the Beijing notary office in accordance with the usual practice, and the total number of each stamp loaded into the spacecraft was registered. However, because of the accident when Shenzhou 2 landed, the follow-up notarisation process at the Beijing notary office for these flown items was not completed.

A very small number of covers recovered from Shenzhou 2 landing site was cancelled on the back with the postmark of the post office nearest to the landing site on the day of landing.

The covers issued by Beijing Aerospace Commanding and Control Centre (BACCC) were embarked on October 1st at the production base of the spacecraft in Beijing Space City, and cancelled with the postmark reading “Beijing 2000.10.01.20 (1 Oct. 2000 PM 20:00) Xibeiwang 1” and the special loading postmark “Beijing Space City 2000. 10. 1. 20 loaded in the cabin of space mail letter (exclusively use)” The reverse side of the cover was cancelled at the landing site with the recovery postmark of “Siziwangqi, Inner-Mongolia 2001.1.16.20 Hongge’er 1”.



Fig.4 – Flown cover No. 00177 issued by BACCC.

Among the recovered flown covers, some were burned out and the number on the cover could not be seen anymore. How to identify whether these covers were onboard Shenzhou 2 space flight? A thorough examination of the features of the covers is required.

Mainly must be checked postmarks, combustion and high temperature burns, creases, defacement and so on, even if it is impossible to artificially replicate conditions of Shenzhou 2 landing and the results under the influence of the objective conditions.

Non-flown cover

Because of the weight limits on the spacecraft, this cover was not loaded in the cabin of the spacecraft and was marked with a rhombic red stamp reading “non-flown cover” (Fig. 10).

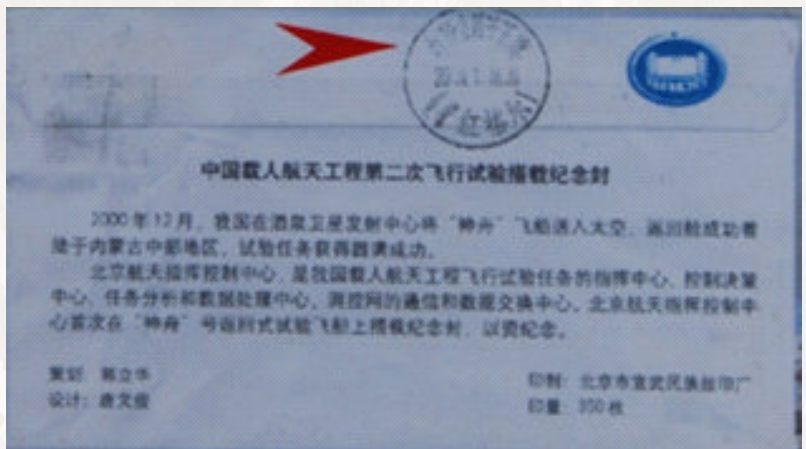


Fig.4A – Back of flown cover No. 00177 issued by BACCC.

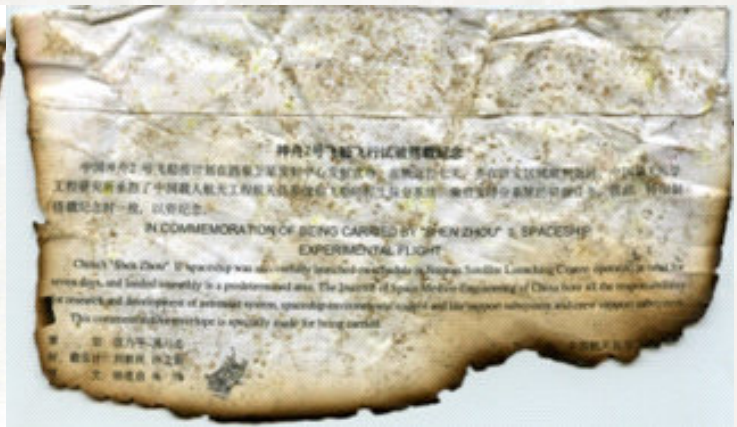
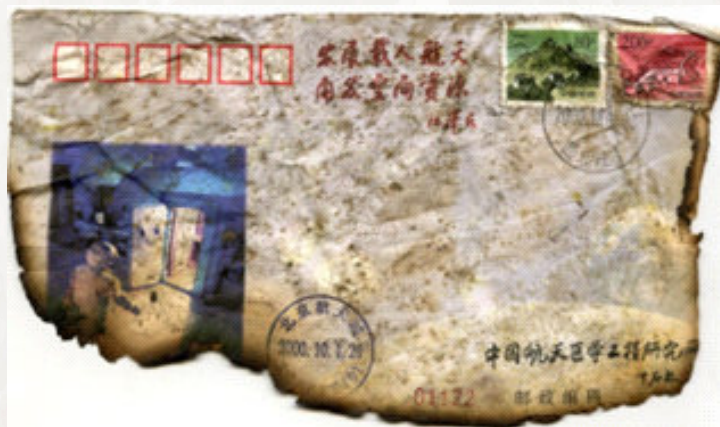


Fig 5 – On the left: the flown cover No. 01122 issued by China Institute of Space Medical Engineering (CISME). On the right: reverse side of the flown cover, damaged during landing.



Fig. 6 The flown cover issued by BITTT.



Fig.7 The flown cover issued by CAST.

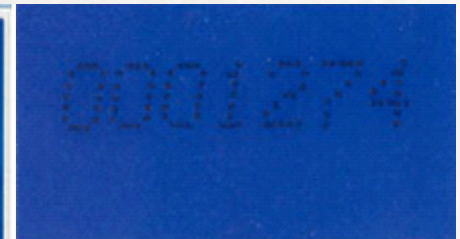
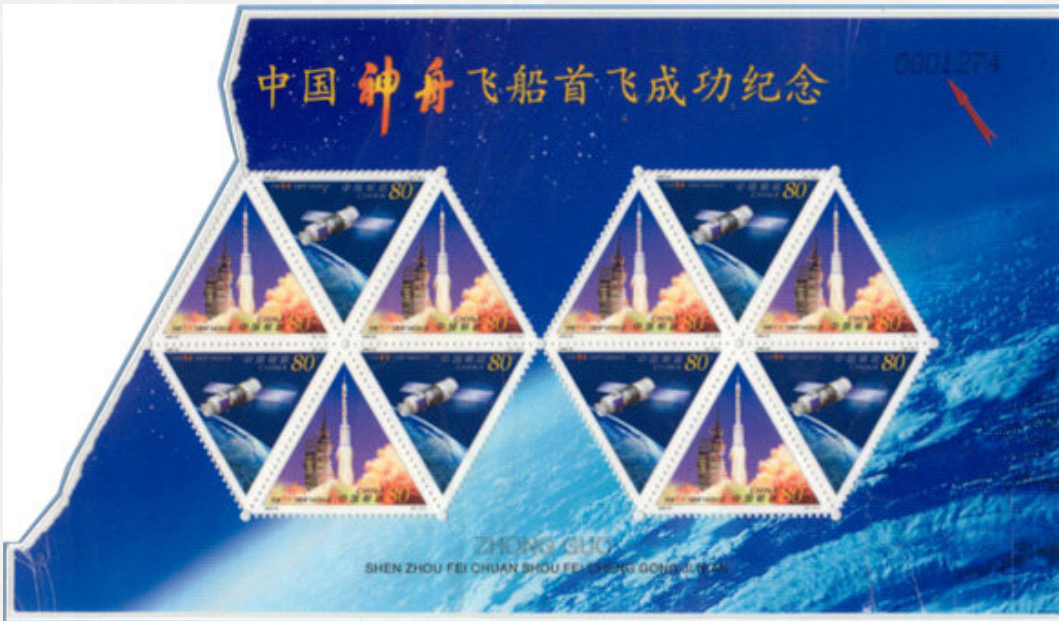


Fig. 9

Fig. 8. Left: A flown stamp sheet, issued by China Philatelic Corporation to celebrate the first successful flight Shenzhou-1. This sheet stamp bearing the number 0001274 (see Fig. 9) was loaded onboard Shenzhou-2 spacecraft in Beijing Space City.



Fig. 10: non-flown cover.

Soviet at Kourou



The Soyuz VS 26 launcher launched from the Guiana Space Center (CSG), 2 satellites of the European navigation system Galileo. They will thus bring to 28 the number of components of this constellation, capable of giving positions of the order of a meter.

Among the Galileo satellites already in place, 14 were transported by the Russian launcher and 12 by Ariane 5s. Ultimately, the constellation will include 30 satellites. From 2024, new generation Galileo satellites will be launched to continue to compete with the American GPS system, in particular for questions of strategic sovereignty.

This shot is also loaded with symbolism since the year 2021 corresponds to the tenth anniversary of Soyuz's presence in Guyana. Since 2011, the year of the first launch, 26 launchers of this type have taken off from Sinnamary, a town near Kourou. The mission, carried out by the European Space Agency.