

An 1846 letter from Manila to Cadiz, Spain  
By Lee Scamp, Geoffrey Lewis and edited by Andrew Cheung



The entire shown here is lot 3350 from Interasia June/July 2013 sale and it has aroused a lot of interest among postal historians. Although there are plenty of mail from the José Matia correspondence, most are known via forwarding agent in Gibraltar [1] and it is uncommon to find a letter that went to England first and then to Cadiz.

Origin of the letter

The item is actually a "wrapper" i.e. originally with contents inside, sadly it does not bear any indication of the origin. It could have come from any of the China Treaty Ports or Manila since in addition to the m/s rate mark 3/2, the packet rate to Spain per HK Post Office Regulations 5 April, 1844 and there is a "Pd 8" on the left, which appears to be a ship letter charge. [2]

Furthermore, the inscription "Por el Ytsmo de Suez" is Spanish and translates as "Via the Suez Isthmus" except the sender made a spelling mistake in Spanish for the word "Ystmo". Geoff Lewis is confident that the cover originated from Manila, because if it had come from Canton, Shanghai or Macao the instruction would not be in Spanish, even if the letter itself was in Spanish.

Rates and itinerary

Both the 4d and the 3/2 rates were per half ounce, so there a quandary is presented, since the "8"d indicates double weight. Given that those two rates appear to be in the same ink, and probably in the same hand, it seems unlikely that one or the other was in error. The only thing that comes to mind is the possibility that the letter was received at the British Agency Office in Macau, so was charged 4d Manila - Macau and 4d Macau - HK.

The closest date to the 22.6.46 HK cds in the 1846 ship arrivals was the *Sil*, which reached Macau on 18.6 from Manila. This seems to supports the theory re. the 8d ship letter fee being comprised of two legs: 4d Manila - Macau and 4d Macau - HK.

Ship	Manila	Macau	HK	Galle	Egypt	GB	Cadiz
<i>Sil</i>	c.13.6	18.6.46 [3]					
Post boat or private ship		c.19.6	22.6				
<i>Lady Mary Wood</i>			24.6	16.7			
<i>Hindustan</i>				16.7	7.8		
<i>Ariel</i> [4]					10.8	25.8	
<i>Queen</i> [5]						27.8	4.9

On arrival, the Spanish authorities charged 16 reales for a letter of 6 ardames.

[1] Rated 1/10 per 1/2 oz or multiple thereof, sent via Gibraltar, rate introduced in 1847.

[2] Although the 4d per 1/2 oz. ship letter charge had been previously applied by the local authorities to letters between HK and the Treaty Ports, it was not until HK Post Office Notification of 20 October 1847 officially adopted the 4d per 1/2 oz. ship letter charge (FEMSI 1 pg 150).

[3] 18.6.46 was a Thursday, so the HK c.d.s. indicates that mail from Macau apparently did not get processed until Monday, 22.6.

[4] First of only two voyages by the P&O *Ariel* from Alexandria to Southampton (FEMSI 1, pg 134, Note 4).

[5] The *Queen* was a ship of the P&O Peninsular Line serving Southampton, Portuguese, Spanish ports and Gibraltar.

#### Boxed Hong Kong PAID handstamp

Proud shows a split in periods of use of the "PAID" handstamp: 31.1.45 - 27.9.46, then again 1856 - 64. Mail during the first period tends to originate at Hong Kong, and during the second period from places outside of HK. Figures PO-46-4 and 5, FEMSI 1, pg 135, give evidence of the first period. This cover is an exception of the handstamp usage during the 1845 - 46 period.

#### Known covers sent via GB to Cadiz by the P&O Peninsular Line

Geoff Lewis records three letters from Manila sent **via Hong Kong** in his book "Postal History of the Spanish Philippines 1565 - 1898" dated 1850 - 1854.

A 1845 cover from Manila sent **via Singapore** is shown as Figure PO-45-9, FEMSI 1, pg 130

Further Comments are most welcome; kindly contact Lee Scamp, Geoff Lewis or the editor by mail or email.