



The Malayan Postal Administration in the Dutch East Indies during the Japanese occupation 1942-1945

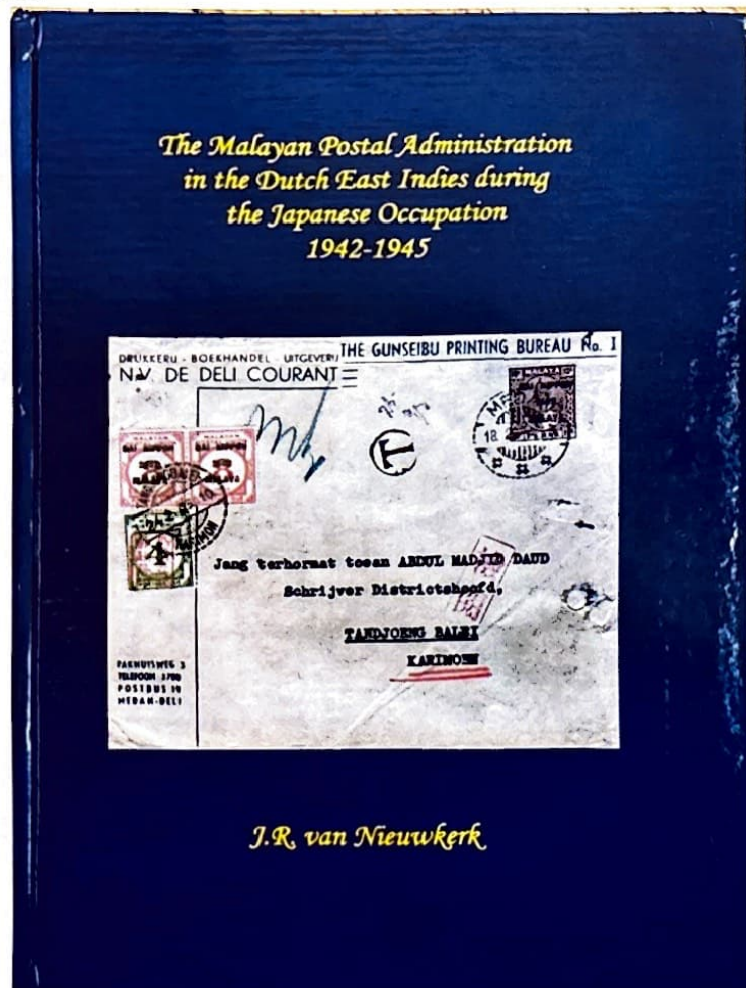
by J. R. van Nieuwkerk
Dai Nippon, February 2023

Reviewed by Stephan Busono, ISJP #6669

J. R. van Nieuwkerk deserves a commendation for tackling such a challenging topic, but he is an expert author and not new to challenges. There have been articles written about “the Malayan connection” but no one has attempted to write about this topic in great length and in as much detail as Rob van Nieuwkerk has done. It is understandable that no single volume has been written about this area because, as he put it in the foreword, “it was not considered really Dutch, Malayan, or Indonesian”. In this new book, the author documents the postal history of a long-neglected and unfamiliar area, even for serious Japanese Occupation collectors. It has taken the author more than five years of research in putting this book together, with the stated intention of making this book “a basis for further investigation and discovery” on this topic. He has accomplished his goal and more.

The book is organized into four parts. The first section comprises three pages of important background information on the Great East Asia War, the Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies, and the merger of Sumatra and Malaya in March of 1942 under the control of the 25th Army headquartered in Syonan. The Japanese had also split the Riau Islands from Sumatra and placed them under Syonan in February 1942.

The next 65 pages are dedicated to Sumatra. The author first discusses the reorganization of Sumatra residencies, and then goes into detail on the postal service in Sumatra between 27 April 1942 until its sudden separation from Syonan in April of 1943. Meticulous details of the overprints of the different residencies are presented, with clear examples in full colors. He then discusses the postal stationery types used, followed by a large section on the usage of known Malayan stamps in Sumatra (Figure 1). There is a section on postal tariffs, with a concise table and examples (Figure 2). The author then describes in several sections the aspects of the 1 October 1942 general postal administration office regulation which implemented common policies and practices in Malaya and Sumatra such as tariffs, stamp issues, censorship, cancellations, and



J.R. van Nieuwkerk

The Dai Nippon 2602 Malaya overprint

Applying overprints by hand was not very efficient, hence, the Dai Nippon 2602 Malaya overprint was introduced. The Nippon means Great Japan in the same of Great Britain, and the date 2602 is the Japanese dynastic calendar equivalent of 1942. Hence, the overprint can be read as meaning Great Japan 1942 Malaya. According to Permal, the stamps were first issued in Perak around 7 May 1942. The first usage on Sumatra is the 10-cent Pahang or Palembang on 1 July 1942. The following stamps are known to have been used in Sumatra: 10c Pahang; 10 and 50c Perak; 10 and 50c Negri Sembilan; 40c Selangor; and 2, 8, and 15c Straits Settlements.



Dai Nippon 2602 Malaya overprint	Perf	Security
2 cents Straits Settlements	Orange	13% 14 RRR
8 cents Straits Settlements	Grey	13% 14 R
10 cents Negri Sembilan	Dull purple	13% 14 u
10 cents Pahang	Dull purple	13% 14 u
10 cents Perak	Dull purple	13% 14 u
15 cents Straits Settlements	Ultramarine / dark ultramarine	14% 14 u
30 cents Negri Sembilan	Orange and dull purple	13% 14 u
40 cents Selangor	Seriseit and dull purple	14 13% u
50 cents Perak	Black on emerald paper	13% 14 RRR

Malayan stamps overprinted with Dai Nippon 2602 Malaya used on Sumatra.

Because 10 cents was the tariff for a letter, the 10-cent Pahang and 10-cent Perak are quite common used on Sumatra, the 10-cent Negri Sembilan less so. On the other hand, very few examples are known of the 2-cent Straits (RRR), 8-cent Straits (R), and 50-cent Perak (RR).

The Dai Nippon Yubin overprint (大日本郵便 印附)

This overprint was applied in December 1942 when Japanese replaced Latin script overprints. Stamps with this overprint were commonly used in Malaya, including in the Riau Islands, but not on Sumatra. The 10-cent Perak was only recently discovered on a letter from Meulaboh (Aceh) to Djakarta sent on 25 August 1944.²²



10c Perak

²² The letter, which also has a pair of the 2-cent Straits Settlements with Dai Nippon 2602 Malaya overprint affixed to it, can be found in the Appendix on page 231.

↑ Figure 1
↓ Figure 3



Postcard revealed to 2 cents, sent from Tampung-Earang (Langkat residency) to the Simeas Gema (Rubber) Company in Tokyo, Japan, 21 December 1942.



Letter sheet revealed from 3 cents back to 7% cents, sent from the Bukit team Coal Mines at Tampung Eritit (Palembang residency) to Japan on 21 May 1944.

POSTAL TARIFFS

Postal tariffs and plans

In point 2.1 of the postal regulations for Sumatra issued by the Malay Military Administration at the end of April 1942, it mentions that the postal rates of Malaya will be implemented on Sumatra as soon as it is feasible. In point 2.5 it says that the postal rates will remain at current levels, but that rates to Japan should be set at the lowest feasible level.

With regard to the Postal System Management Regulations for Sumatra, the following general policies will be followed in addition to the requirements of the Transportation Management Regulations:

2.1 Measures will be taken to enable the postal system management apparatus on Sumatra to conduct its operations jointly with the postal administration in Malaya under the direct control of the Malay Military Government.

2.2 As it becomes feasible, the postal rates prevailing on the Malay Peninsula will be implemented.

2.3 Postal Rates: Postal rates will remain at current levels. However, rates to Japan will be set at the lowest feasible level.

The postal regulations for Sumatra under the Malay Military Government (27 April 1942).²³

Before the Japanese occupation the more common postal rates were as follows:

Correspondence / destination	Sumatra		Malaya	
	Pre-war	New 1942	Pre-war	New 1942
Postcard - domestic	3% cents	3% cents	4 cents	4 cents
Letter - domestic	10 cents	10 cents	8 cents	8 cents
Registration fee	20 cents	20 cents	13 cents	15 cents
Postcard to Malaya	10 cents	3% cents	-	-
Letter to Malaya	13 cents	10 cents	-	-
Postcard to Sumatra	-	-	6 cents	4 cents
Letter to Sumatra	-	-	15 cents	8 cents
Postcard to Japan	10 cents	3% cents	6 cents	4 cents
Letter to Japan	15 cents	10 cents	15 cents	8 cents

Postal rates on Sumatra and in Malaya.

Clearly the intent was to harmonise postal rates. However, practicality dictated that rates would remain at current levels, with two major exceptions:

1. The postal rates for mail between Sumatra and Malaya were set equal to domestic rates. This was logical given that the regions had been merged. This did not mean that the rates became the same. The rate for a letter from Sumatra to Syonan would now cost the same as a letter to a destination on Sumatra itself, which was 10 cents. Similarly, a letter from Syonan to Sumatra would cost the same as a domestic letter in Malaya, which was 8 cents.

2. Rates to Japan were to be set at the lowest feasible level. These were determined to be the same as domestic rates.²⁴

²³ Status of Transportation Administration in Malaya and Sumatra, Transportation Department, 23rd Army Control Military Administration, 13 August, Series 17 (1942), Appendix 4.

²⁴ Postcards and letters sent by Japanese companies and citizens from Malaya to Japan initially had a special use of 2 cents for a postcard and 3 cents for a letter until 30 September 1942. See Riau Islands chapter on Tariffs.

Figure 2 ↑
Figure 4 ↓

1-cent Straits Settlements (Overprint - Malay Military Administration Postal Department Sent)

The tariff for sending a newspaper was 1 cent, and there are several newspaper wrappers franked with 1-cent Netherlands Indies and 1-cent Japanese stamps. However, so far we have yet to find a newspaper wrapper franked with a 1-cent Straits Settlements stamp. The 1-cent was used as top-up value, mostly on money orders. The stamps are Die 1, and both Gullately types B and C, are known. See page 98 for a description of the types.

This stamp is quite scarce used on Sumatra and has so far only been found in the Palembang and Sumatra West Coast residences. Note that it was not shown on the East Coast validity sheet (see article on page 232 of this Appendix). The examples below show that they were also distributed to the smaller post offices such as Ajer-Bangis and Labat.



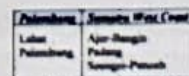
Palembang, West Coast Gullately type C 12 May 1942

Sempajeneh, West Coast Gullately type C 20 August 1942

Labat, Palembang Gullately type B 20 June 1942



Ajer-Bangis, West Coast Gullately type B, 3 June 1942



Post offices known to have used the 1-cent Straits Settlements with Malay Military Administration Postal Department Sent.

languages, as well as reestablishment of postal connections beyond Malaya-Sumatra. A particularly interesting topic discussed is the short-lived new postal tariffs which were falsely introduced in South Sumatra in October 1942. It was a mystery how this rate change came about, since no official announcement could be found in the newspaper. The tariffs reverted to the old ones after a little more than 3 months. This chaotic period in tariffs did not take place in other parts of Sumatra and Malaya. As a result, these revalued postal stationery items are very rare and highly sought after by collectors (Figure 3).

The Riau Islands are discussed next. The author starts by giving a historical background of the islands and describes their administrative and postal organization, the postal tariffs, and when services were restored to different destinations (with the reference to the dates the announcement were published in *Syonan Times*). He goes on to describe the postage stamps used on the islands, including detailed explanations of the different types of overprints. Postal stationery used on the islands is discussed, with examples and variations if known, such as for the definitive postcard of 1943 (paper, color, designs, size, and watermark). Cancellation and censorship on the islands are also clearly illustrated.

In the following subchapters, he delves deeper into individual island groups and the post offices following the same format (historical background, postage stamps, cancellations, and postal stationery). Postwar postal situations and items are also included in the discussion when pertinent.

The last section of the book is The Appendix (pages 195-274). It opens with important information on each known Malayan stamp with usage in Sumatra and the Riau Islands. He lists each stamp individually and provides examples of usage, with a table of known post offices where the stamp was known to have been used. The commentary on each stamp is worth noting since the author with his extensive knowledge informs us why, for example, there was not a single franking use for 1c Straits Settlements stamps in Sumatra (Figure 4). The occupation definitive issues of Malaya and Sumatra, as well as the Postal Savings Bank and the Commemorative Second Anniversary of Reborn Malaya issues, receive attention as well. Usage of the Malayan Postal Union Postage Due Stamps rounds up The Appendix.

As a specialist collector in Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies and a student of the era, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, which is the most comprehensive reference available in this topic. The writing style is clear, engaging, and accessible. The organization of the book is logical, and he clarifies a mystery that has long puzzled collectors of the era regarding the revalued postal items found used in South Sumatra.

I hope that a second edition will be published in the future with fresh knowledge and new findings. This is a formidable area to collect, since there is not an abundance of materials available on the market. Nevertheless, this book has filled a void in the Japanese Occupation Philately of the Dutch East Indies. This book belongs on the shelf of every serious Japanese Occupation collector, especially for the specialist in the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, and Indonesia areas. To obtain a copy, you may contact Dai Nippon (www.dai-nippon.nl) or the author at rvnieuwkerk@gmx.net. ■

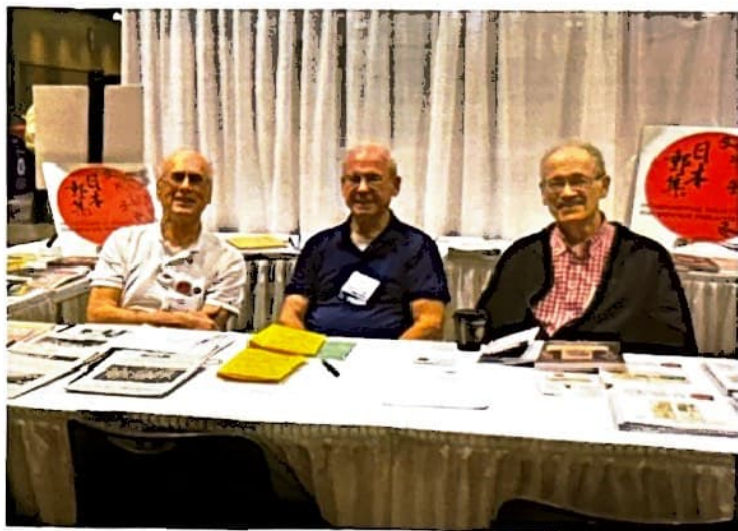


Correction to past issue of Japanese Philately

JP 16/116 In the first full paragraph, 4th and 5th lines, change "In 1810 tobacco was made a state monopoly, following a system originated in France that same year." to "The first monopoly was in France in 1810, but not in Japan."

ISJP participation at the Great American Stamp Show in Hartford CT 15 to 18 August 2024

Early in 2024, the officers of ISJP decided to secure a society booth at the Great American Stamp Show (GASS) that was to be held in the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. Editor Ken Bryson, Publisher Ken Kamholz, and Assistant Publisher Lee Wilson staffed the booth.



Left to right: Ken Bryson, Lee Wilson, Ken Kamholz

We distributed sample copies of *Japanese Philately*, and showcased our entire series of monographs. A number of show attendees brought Japanese philatelic items for identification as well as advice on collecting Japanese stamps, and numerous ISJP members stopped by to chat and share stories. We enrolled several new members, as well as reinstating a former member, and handed out quite a few membership applications to interested visitors.

Attendance at GASS also provided an opportunity for the ISJP team to brainstorm about the society's future, as well as do some benchmarking on participation in upcoming shows.

On Saturday evening, we hosted a society dinner at the Feng Chophouse in Hartford. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know fellow members in a convivial setting.

On Sunday, member Harold Krische presented his study of "The 1919 Ninoshima POW Camp Exhibition and its Postcards", and Ken Kamholz gave his talk on "Japonica: What it's all about philatelically".

The fine turnout encourages us to consider attending more such national events. Shows in 2025 are currently under consideration, and we are already committed to being present at the Boston 2026 World Expo (see JP 79/52). ■



Left to right: Jonathan Johnson, Charlie Nelson, Lee Wilson, Ken Bryson, Terri Bryson, Winston Marshall, Stephan Busono, Ken Kamholz, Harold Krische, Michael White