

# The “da Luz Covers”

Philippe Orsetti

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## Introduction

During the December 16, 2021, HKSC/HKPS join Zoom meeting presentation on the Hong Kong Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong, the subject of da Luz cover created a controversial discussion.

The sheer quantity of this covers production had raised already justified suspicions over the years. This paper which combines the studies of the author to most of the critics is intended to present as many information as possible, leaving the reader to decide according to his own judgment.

Henri da Luz was a real person, he had the privilege to meet in the late 60' during meetings of the HKPS at the Club Lusitano. He had friends and family in Hong Kong and Macau with whom he was corresponding. He was an avid philatelist and had a large collection. Part of it being sold before, during and after the war and the balance being disposed from his estate by his son, then resident of Canada.

He was an employee of the Hongkong Canton & Macau Steamboat Co. Limited. As a neutral Portuguese who did not join the Hong Kong Volunteer Defense Corps, he was not interned in POW camp, (contrary to his philatelist compatriot Christopher d'Almada who, as member of the Portuguese Machinegun Company, was interned in Sham Shui Po POW camp).

He wrote a diary "H da Luz Wartime Memoirs", that were given by his son to Ming Tsang, who in turn published them in his "*Hong Kong Japanese Occupation*" book in 1995. This diary is still questioned, but if authentic, it would give unvaluable information on the daily life in Hong Kong during this period and Henri's philatelic activities.

## Exhibits

At our knowledge, it has been at least two exhibits of da Luz covers:

- Philippe Orsetti “Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong exhibit” which received a Gold Award in Stampex Texas 1998. This exhibit has been later modified to eliminate and replace all philatelic material, including all the da Luz covers.
- Winson Ng, collector/stamp dealer in Hong Kong, who is holding regular online auctions. Through his business, he has been able to select better da Luz covers to develop a 16-pages exhibit that received a “Large Silver” award in Hong Kong Stampex 2017 with the following comments:

Jury President: Malcolm Hammersley (HK)

Jury Secretary: Stephen Chan (HK)

Jury Members: Mak Che King (HK), Daniel Szeto (HK), Michel & Jenny Roland (Australia),

Apprentice Jurors: Juai Wai Chung (HK), Danny Wong (HK)

### Report of the Expert Group

The expert team made a review of all the exhibits in the competitive classes. Judging team was also asked to refer any doubtful items for review. Ten doubtful items were found, certificates are needed for future exhibitions.



Juai Wai Chung, Expert

# Cancels

## Post Offices Cancels



Cut squares from da Luz covers

*Provenance: N.C. Yang, 1970*



## Kowloon City

Another cut square cancelled Kowloon City with the same an only date of 17.11.10, with a certificate of authenticity from Lois Evans, Chairman of the Expertizing Committee of the International Society of Japanese Philately (ISJP) and critic of da Luz covers.



This office closed 4 days later, on November 14, 1942

Use the No. assigned here →  
when referring to the opinion  
rendered by the Committee.

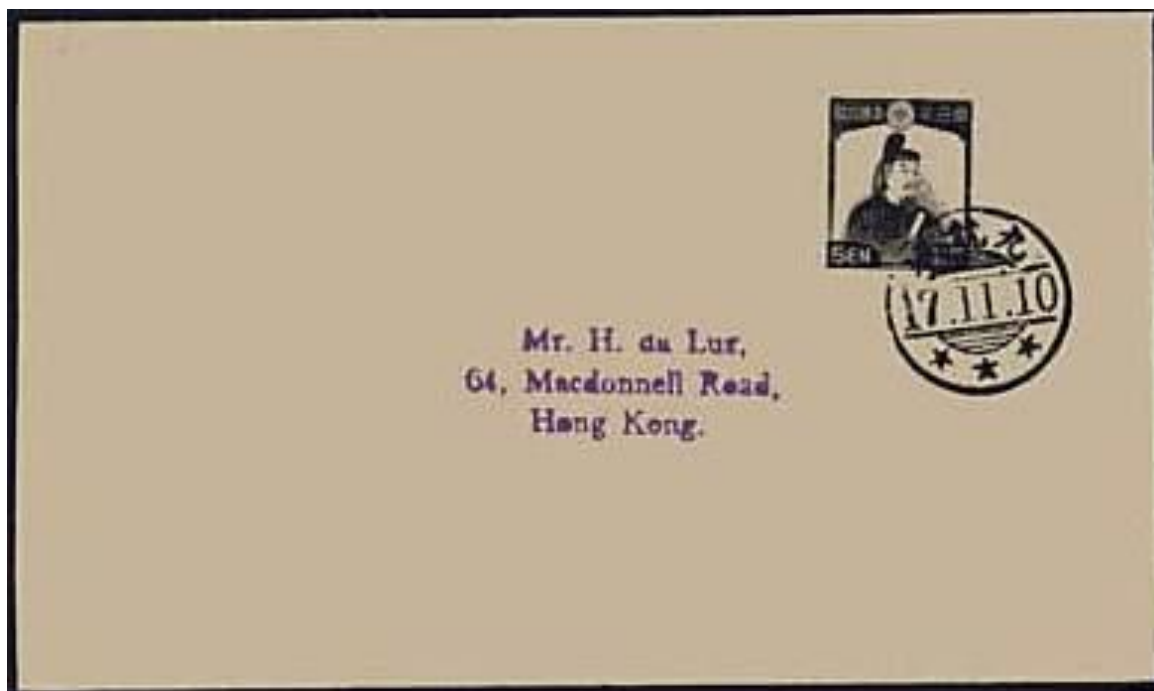
MOUNT ONLY ONE STAMP, PAIR, BLOCK OR COVER IN  
THIS SPACE. MOUNT ITEM SO IT CAN BE EASILY REMOVED  
FOR EXAMINATION, BUT BE SURE THE MOUNT IS CLOSED  
OR FOLDED SO THE ITEM WILL NOT ACCIDENTALLY SLIDE  
OUT. A SMALL ACETATE OR GLASSINE ENVELOPE IS  
RECOMMENDED.

DO NOT USE SCOTCH TAPE OR STAPLES

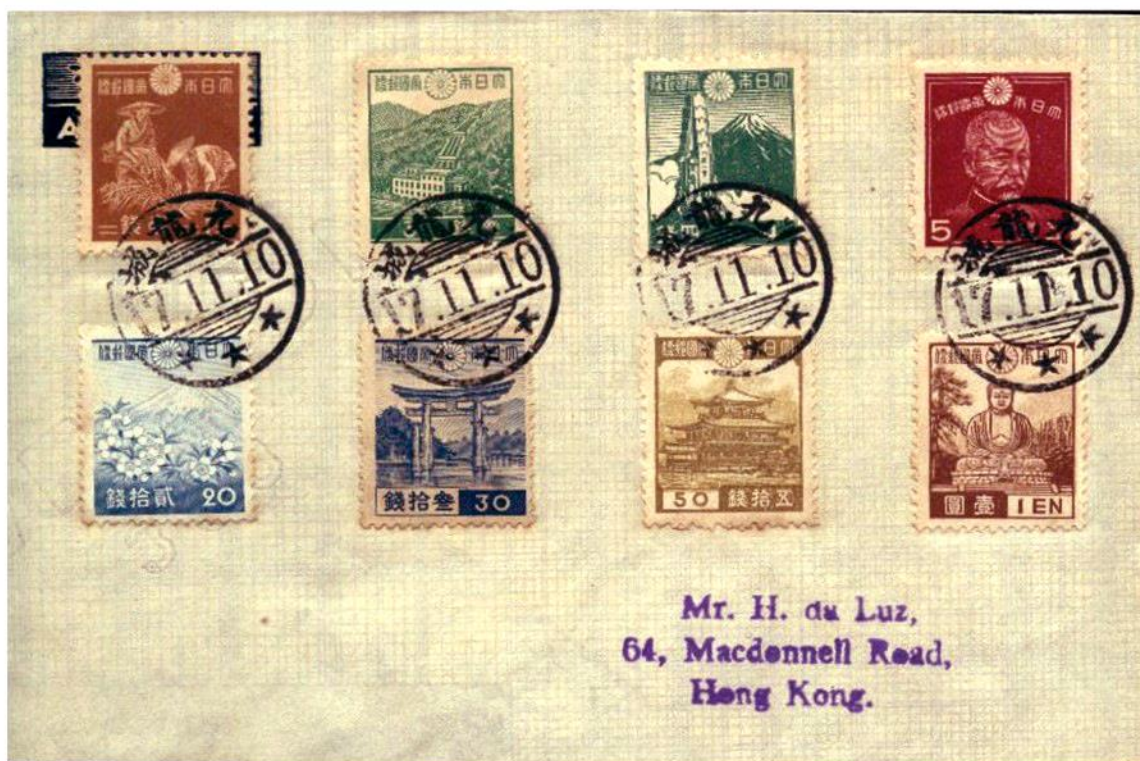
ISJP  
Expertizing Service 2051

Members of ISJP Expertizing Service have examined the item  
submitted and it is their opinion that it is  
*Piece with genuine  
postmark Kowloon City  
10 November 1942, Japanese  
stamps used in Occupied  
Hong Kong*

Date *5/2/84* *L. M. Evans*  
(ISJP Authorized Signature)



Very doubtful cover. Very expensive franking for the time, unusual envelope stock



17.11.10 is the only date known from Kowloon City in da Luz covers



## Commemorative cancels

First Anniversary of the “Greater East Asia War”, December 8, 1942



*Spink auctions, September 2008, John Bull auctions January 2021*

### First Day Cancellation (Tuesday December 8, 1942) at Hong Kong General Post Office.

**Red** ink was used on that first day, but due to blurred impression.

Ink color was changed to **violet** for the balance of the week

*It was physicaly possible to visit on that same day HK General Post Office, Kowloon and Kowloon Tong Post Offices, but it may have been a performance. The purple color was easier to obtain throughout the following days at any of the three above post offices.*



Violet cancel used for one week



**First Anniversary of the "Greater East Asia War", December 8, 1942**



**First Day philatelic cancellation (Tuesday December 8, 1942) at Kowloon Post Office.**

**Blue** ink was used only that day at this counter as an experimental color.

Then, in line with other post offices, **violet** ink was used during the balance of the week



**First Day philatelic cancellation (Wednesday December 8, 1943) at Kowloon Tong.**

**Black** ink was used in error because the violet inkpad was not received on time at this counter.



# Covers

## Covers and address formats

### Horizontal airmail (14.6 x 9 cm)



Manuscript address



Label address

**Address:** Critics have pointed out that many cover did not abide by the rules requesting that address and nationality of the sender was mentioned on the cover.

However, several covers displayed stickers to this effect. The glue being very weak, many of these stickers have been lost and many cover are showing only stamps and c.d.s.

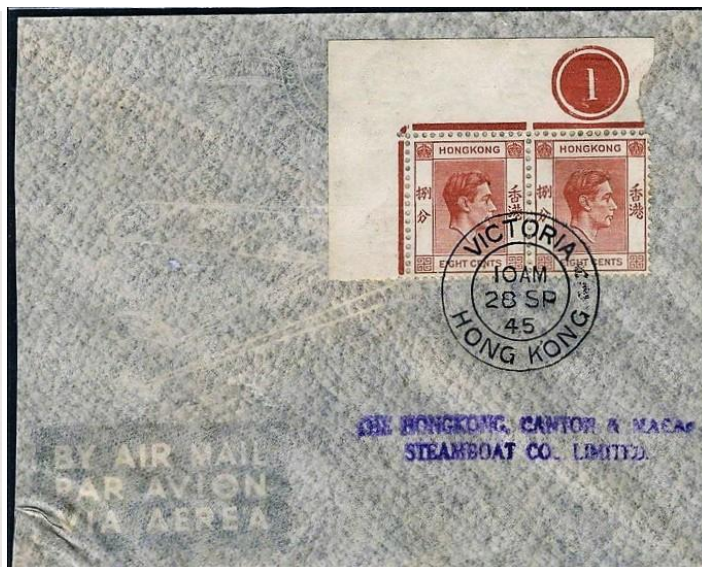
### Small airmail format (11.6 x 9.2 cm)

It constitutes the bulk of da Luz covers. Being an employee of the Hongkong Canton & Macau Steamboat Co. Limited, da Luz had access to office supplies or suppliers, and he could get them in quantity.



**December 25, 1941, noon**

Last hour of British PO operations before Occupation



**September 28, 1945, 10 am**

Reopening of the British Post Office

**Address:** The Hongkong Canton & Macau Steamboat Co. name has been used without address. The covers could have been handed back at the counter of the post office, unless they were contrived?



Large airmail format (13.8 x 10.5 cm)

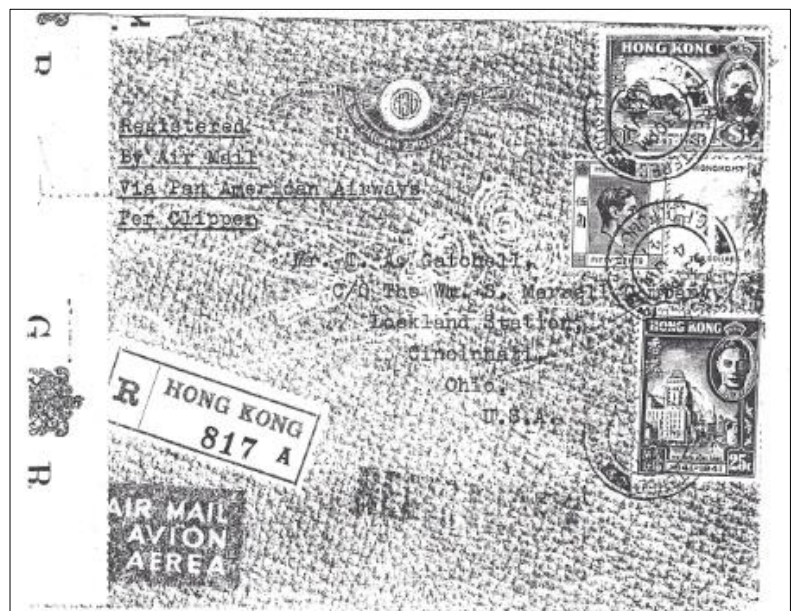
Small format for reference

Large format

*Address:* Most frequent  
Mr. H. da Luz”  
printed address.

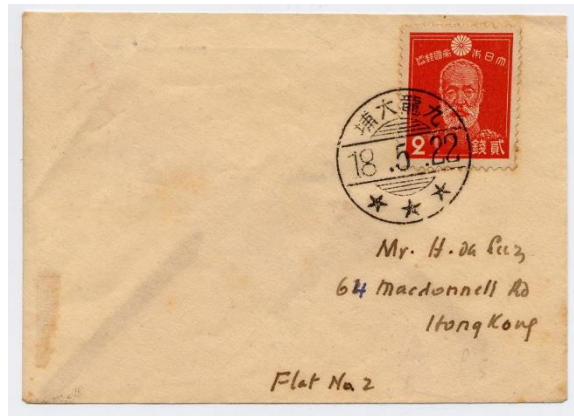


Critics have challenged da Luz blank covers in assuming that they had been manufactured after the war, this is a not. Identical and/or similar covers are known used before the war, as shown in this example dated 1941.





Plain paper very small format



*Address: Manuscript*

Seldom used cover formats  
(unlikely used by da Luz)

Wmk plane flying to the left  
(14.3 x 8.8 cm)

BY AIR MAIL  
May be on top or on bottom  
of left hand corner

*Address: Most frequent*  
*Mr. H. da Luz*  
*printed address.*



Registration covers

It is strange that not a single registration cover is known from da Luz body of covers.

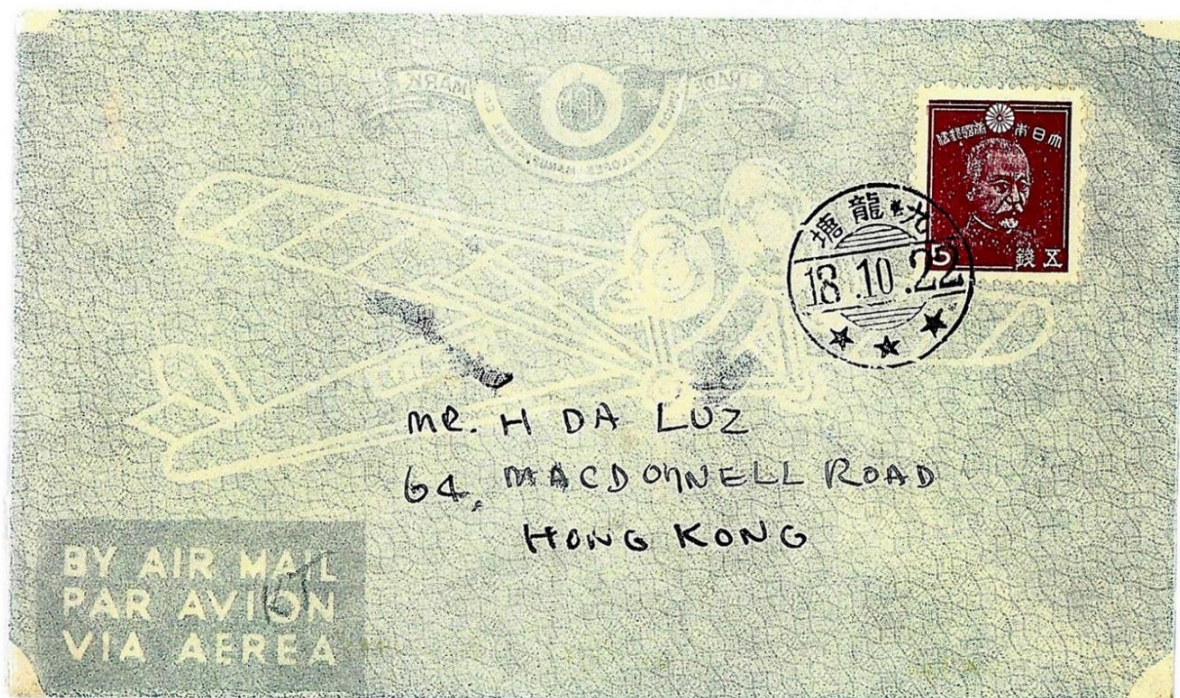
If we accept that the commemorative covers of the First Anniversary of the “Great East Asia” war, dated December 8, 1942, are genuine, it will mean that H. da Luz was actively visiting the post offices at that time.

Registration was authorized starting December 1, 1942.

Then why da Luz did not do any registered cover that he knew, as a philatelist, that they would have been much more valuable than ordinary covers after the war ???

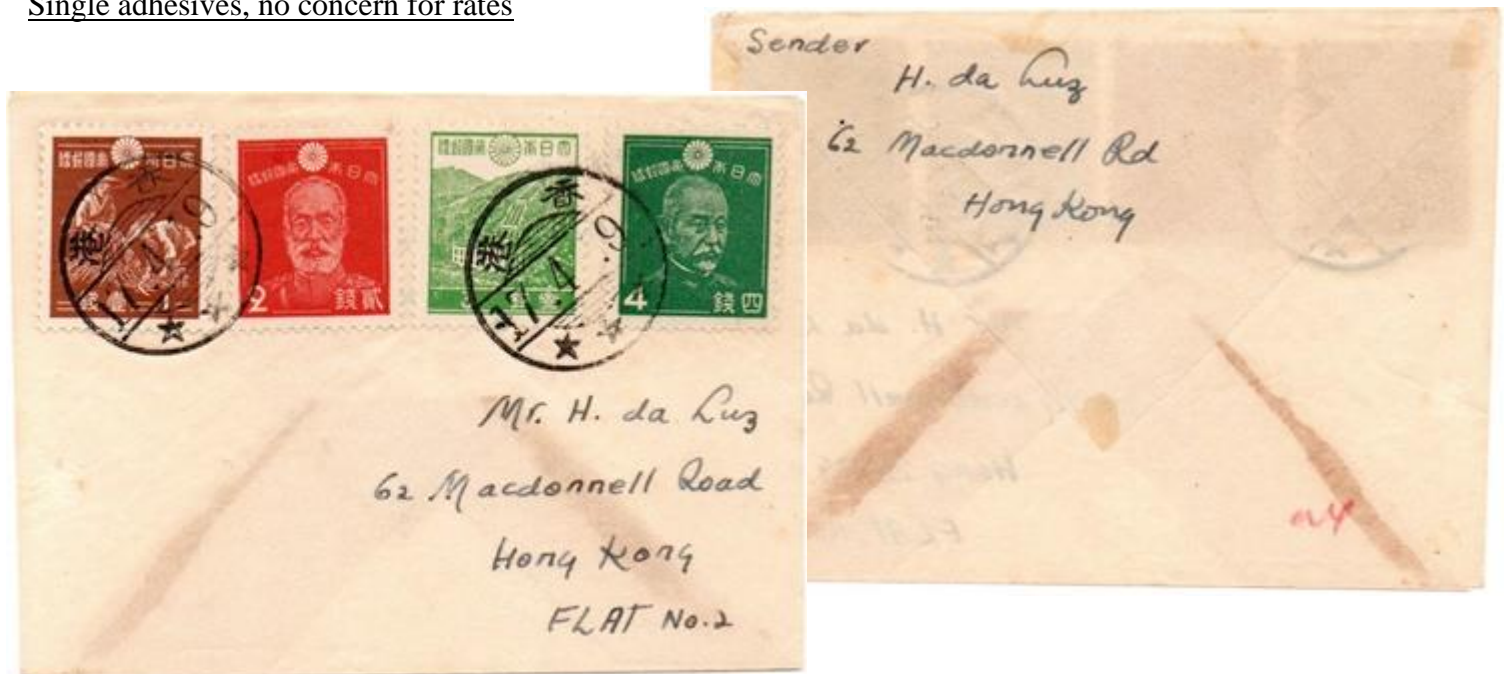
## Postage Combination

Single adhesive at correct postage rate



**Kowlonn 18.10.22**

Single adhesives, no concern for rates



**Hong Kong 17.4.9**

62 and 64 Macdonnell Road were two joined apartments belonging to H. da Luz brother-in-law F. Xavier.





Hong Kong 17.9.19



Kowloon 17.11.26

(Very rare use of the ½ sen violet stamp)



Same stamp pattern



19.3.30 SW, WC  
19.4.4 HK  
19.4.27 KL  
19.4.29 TP, YL  
19.5.2 HK  
19.5.3 HK, YM  
19.5.4 KT  
19.7.19 HK  
19.7.21 HK, KL  
19.7.24 YL

19.7.27 SS  
19.7.29 KT  
19.8.2 HK  
19.8.5 KL  
19.8.7 TP  
19.8.9 HK  
19.8.15 HK, YM  
19.8.24 HK  
19.8.26 KL



## Pairs



## Block of four



## High value stamps

were expensive during the war and are seldom seen on “genuine” covers, however they may be found on covers certainly produced after the war from worthless looted stamps.



5 Yen on usual small format envelope with HKGPO cancel



10 Yen on very unusual format envelop with a Kowloon cancel





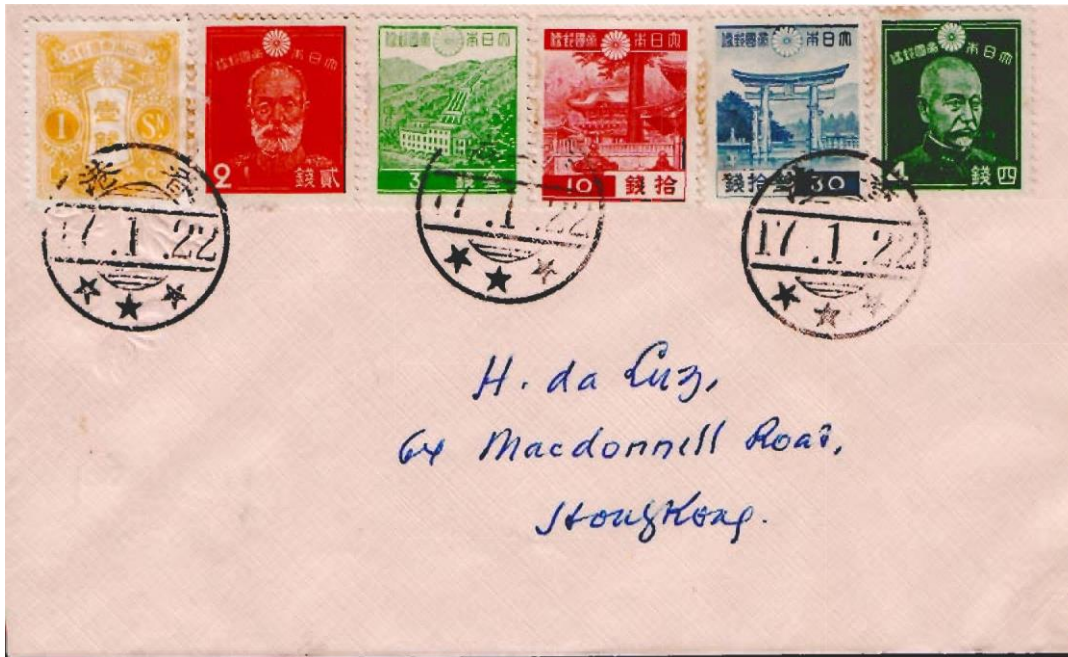
40 Yen on usual format, with Wantsai cancel

Extremely suspicious cover. It displays an expensive franking for the time, since devaluation occurred in April 1945. It is dated December 25, 1944 (3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the fall of Hong Kong) and the label is unusual, the lowered **u** is not consistent with da Luz printed address labels.



40 Yen on usual format, with Kowloon cancel

## First Day Covers



**Reopening of HKGPO, Type A cancel, with the 6 adhesive values that were issued on that day**  
(Rare use of the 1 sen yellow stamp that was quickly sold out).



**Reopening of Kowloon post office**  
(Seemingly not for H. da Luz, but with same 6 adhesives combination)

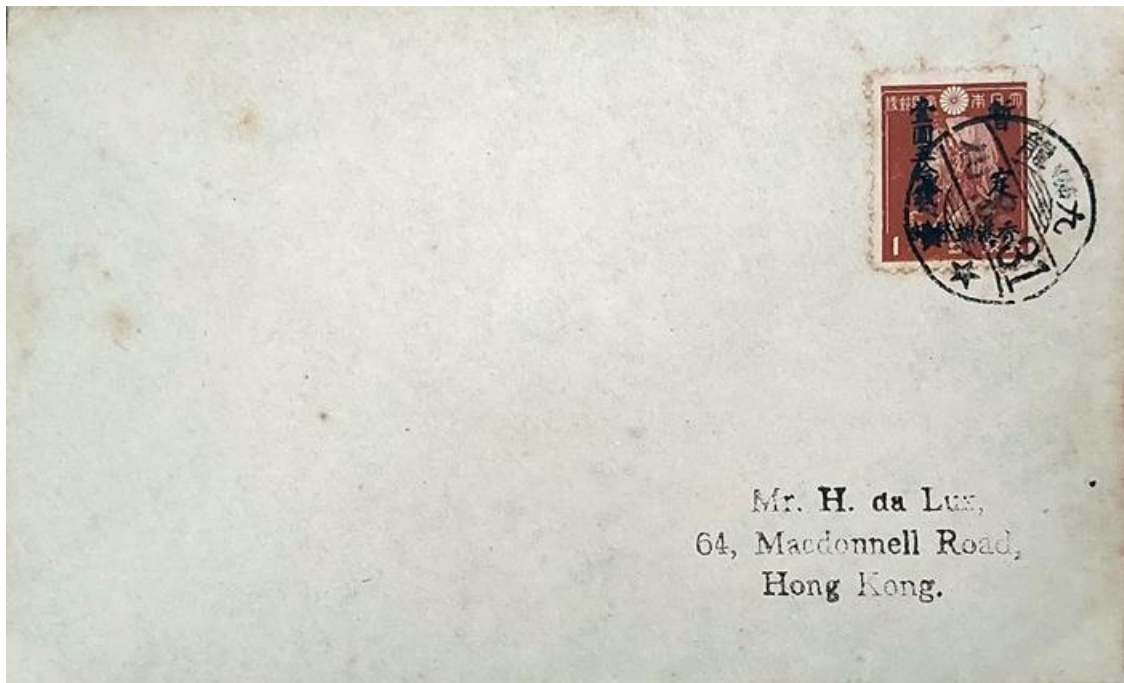




### Reopening of HKGPO, Type A cancel

Is there any reason for which the above covers would be forged? da Luz could have walked and visited the HKGPO, and Kowloon Post Office, on that day, like many other philatelists

## Last Day Covers



### **Kowloon 20-8-31 last day of Post Offices operations under the Japanese administration**

The Emperor of Japan had surrendered on August 18, from that date on, the Post Office must have been quite perturbed. The date of August 31<sup>st</sup> correspond to the day at which the British Military Administration took over. There is no known commercial cover cancelled at that date.



## Code



Each cover is numbered in the back, diagonally along the glued selvage in different colors:

- HK until July 1944 usually **red**, then usually **black**
- Kowloon usually **red**
- Sai Ying Pun, Sham Sui Po, Sheung Wan in **red**, **blue**, or **green**
- Kowloontong, Tai Po, Un Long, Wan Tsai, Yaumati in **red**, **blue**, or **black**
- Kowloon City ?
- Stanley in **green**

The code is just in chronological order, but in three distinct groups: Hong Kong, Kowloon and all the other sub-offices. Chronology discrepancies indicate covers most probably not created by da Luz.

Covers from the same office with identical date usually bear the same number, but not always.

### Number of covers produced

We know from stamp dealers that da Luz tried to sell them a group of 10,000 covers.

Beyond this number, it is speculation. Number as high as 25,000 have been floating.

Da Luz in his Memoirs writes that he was preparing covers in batch of 50. It takes probably less than ½ hour to do one batch, so even if he produced 25,000 covers himself, it is around 250 hours of work, and over a 4 year period, it is roughly one batch every 3 days, not a big deal, no need for any outside help, and a plausible number.

# Problems

## Post Offices visits associations

Considering the transportation conditions in Hong Kong at that time, it was said that it was not possible to travel throughout this territory to visit the post offices. It may be so; however, it is interesting to notice that there is generally only one post office cancel for one given date, but in the rare occasions when there are two post offices for one given date, they are always geographically related:

|                        |          |           |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Kowloontong -- Yaumati | 18.06.09 | Wednesday |
| Kowloontong -- Yaumati | 20-02.10 | Saturday  |
| Kowloontong -- Yaumati | 20-02-28 | Wednesday |
| Tai Po -- Un Long      | 19.04.29 | Saturday  |
| Sheung Wan -- Wan Tsai | 19.03.30 | Thursday  |

Is it coincidental? If these cancels would have been mass produced after the war it is doubtful that the forger would have planned this timing. However, if da luz was actually in a specific area, he may have tried to maximize his travel and visit several Post Offices at the same time.

That being said, going the same day to Tai Po and Un Long with no public transportation seems to be an impossible journey, as shown by this clip:

2 月 25 日，港島巴士只有 2 條路線，分別為西邊街口至元香港（香港仔），以及八幡通（菲林明道交界）至赤柱，只限持有「出勤證」的公務員乘搭。九龍則只有尖沙咀至窩打老道一條路線。

4 月 1 日，只餘下一至兩輛巴士，於繁忙時間行走尖沙咀至窩打老道路線，每 30 至 40 分鐘一班，車費為 50 錢。

4 月 4 日，當局擬仿效廣州，改用木炭作汽車及巴士燃料以節省燃油，但車輛需改裝而且容易損壞。

5 月 8 日，尖沙咀至窩打老道路線的車費升至 1 円；旺角至粉嶺線全程收費升至 20 円。

11 月，尖沙咀至窩打老道線終點延長至九龍城。

港島方面，巴士 1944 年 8 月 18 日起恢復載客。東線由銅鑼灣區役所至畢打街，車費 2 円半；西線由畢打街至西邊街，車費 1 円半。由西邊街至元香港（香港仔）線照常行駛，但只限公務員乘搭。

25-Feb-1944 Only 2 bus routes remained in HK Island, and only Civil Servants on duty could get aboard. Only 1 route remained at Kowloon side, from Tsimshatsui to Waterloo Road.

1-April-1944

Only 1-2 motor buses remained, and was running in peak hours only. Frequency 30-40min.

4-April-1944

Coal was used as fuel, but vehicles needed to be modified and was easily damaged.

8-May-1944 Fare increased.

Tsim Sha Tsui to Waterloo Road: 1yen

Mongkok to Fanling: 20 yen

November 1944: Waterloo Road Terminus was extended to Kowloon City

18-Aug-1944 Hong Kong Island, bus service resumed. Only Civil Servants could use the bus service.

*Source: Cheng Po Hung*



## Cancel dates predating stamp issues

5 sen Admiral Togo



### Cover dated March 1st, 1942, Yaumati cancel

The 5 sen Admiral Togo was made available in Hong Kong on April 17, 1942 (issued in Japan on April 1, 1942). That kind of situation led to an vitriolic article from Robert Spaulding “*Stamps postmarked a year before they were printed*” published on *Japanese Philately* in 1995 from which contributed to cast a doubt on **all** da Luz covers.



### Same cover patern and cancel, unaddressed

(Chinese text “*To commemorate the opening of Yaumati Branch Post Office*” that opened on February 14, 1942 ???)

(To be noted that this specific cover does not correspond to envelopes usually used by H. da Luz.)

4 sen Hyuga Monument



**Sai Ying Pun 17.12.18 (18-Dec-1942)**

The 4 sen Hyuga Monument was issued in Kong Kong on 10-Sep-1943  
(Issued in Japan on October 1, 1942).



**Yaumati 19.10.13 (13-Oct-1944)**

Same patern cover with date consistent with stamps issues date



Adding to the confusion, this cover is not addressed to H. da Luz, while the format cover is the same. All that kind of covers have been generically attributed to da Luz.



**Kowloontong dated May 12, 1943**

The above cover is cancelled three months before the 4 sen Hiruga Monument was available in Hong Kong on September 10, 1943. But this adhesive had been issued in Japan on October 1, 1942.

There is an undoubtly genuine revenue deposit slip from the Bank of Asia dated June 11, 1943 with the same 4 sen stamps.

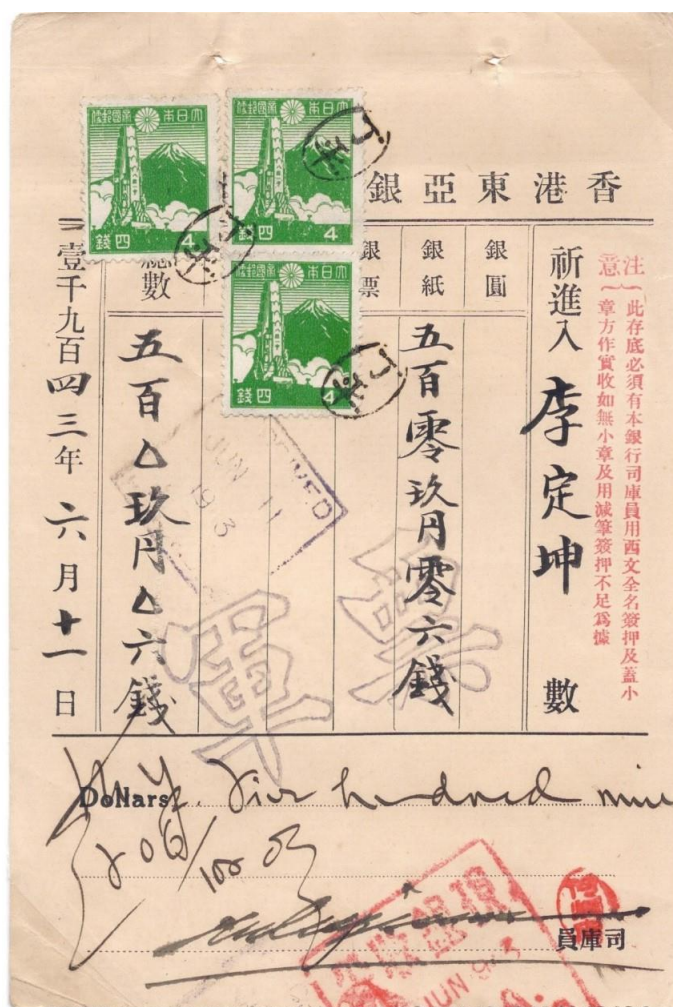
This proves that this adhesive was available in Hong Kong long before the official issue date. Thus two possibilities:

- 1/ Stamps were brought privately to Hong Kong,
- 2/ The official date of issue is uncorrect. If so, it would explain the da Luz 4 sen anomaly, (but not the 5 sen discrepancy for which the cancel predates the issue in Japan.).

#### Other Japanese adhesives

In addition to the 6 adhesive values that were issued on 17.1.22 (January 22, 1942), 14 values were issued at subsequent dates. Still, only 2 values are known with predating cancels i.e. the 4 sen Hyuga Monument and the 5 sen Admiral Togo.

Why no other values with similar pre-dating anomaly are known?





## Sunday cancels

Were branch offices open on Sunday?



Sunday 19-2-20

### The Hong Kong Philatelic Society

If these covers were canceled after the war, dates should have been struck randomly and we should find one seventh, or 14%, of them cancelled on Sunday.

According to the enclosed sampling, published by Simon Choi on the HKPS Journal # 10, there are 8 covers cancelled on Sunday out of 97 or 8%.

Unfortunately, 8% it is neither close enough, nor far enough to 14% to be conclusive.

| Date     | Branch | Day | Holidays in Japan           | Date     | Branch | Day | Holidays in Japan                |
|----------|--------|-----|-----------------------------|----------|--------|-----|----------------------------------|
| 17.1.22  | HK     | Thu |                             | 19.5.4   | KT     | Thu | Citizen's Day                    |
| 17.9.18  | HK     | Fri |                             | 19.7.19  | HK     | Wed |                                  |
| 17.11.10 | KC     | Tue |                             | 19.7.21  | HK     | Fri |                                  |
| 17.11.26 | KL     | Thu |                             | 19.7.21  | KL     | Fri |                                  |
| 17.12.8  | HK     | Tue |                             | 19.7.24  | YL     | Mon |                                  |
| 17.12.18 | SY     | Fri |                             | 19.7.27  | SS     | Thu |                                  |
| 18.3.19  | SY     | Fri |                             | 19.7.29  | KT     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.5.8   | ST     | Sat |                             | 19.8.2   | HK     | Wed |                                  |
| 18.5.12  | KT     | Wed |                             | 19.8.5   | KL     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.5.12  | SS     | Wed |                             | 19.8.7   | TP     | Mon |                                  |
| 18.5.24  | KT     | Mon |                             | 19.8.9   | HK     | Wed |                                  |
| 18.5.24  | SS     | Mon |                             | 19.8.15  | KL     | Tue |                                  |
| 18.5.25  | KL     | Tue |                             | 19.8.15  | YM     | Tue |                                  |
| 18.5.26  | SY     | Wed |                             | 19.8.24  | HK     | Thu |                                  |
| 18.5.28  | WC     | Fri |                             | 19.8.26  | KL     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.5.29  | HK     | Sat |                             | 19.8.29  | SS     | Tue |                                  |
| 18.6.5   | HK     | Sat |                             | 19.8.6   | HK     | Wed |                                  |
| 18.6.9   | KT     | Wed |                             | 19.9.16  | YL     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.6.9   | SS     | Wed |                             | 19.9.17  | KL     | Sun | Sunday                           |
| 18.6.9   | YM     | Wed |                             | 19.9.19  | TP     | Tue |                                  |
| 18.6.19  | HK     | Sat |                             | 19.9.25  | HK     | Mon |                                  |
| 18.7.6   | KL     | Tue |                             | 19.10.13 | YM     | Fri |                                  |
| 18.7.24  | HK     | Sat |                             | 19.10.14 | HK     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.8.20  | WC     | Fri |                             | 19.10.14 | KT     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.8.29  | SS     | Sun | Sunday                      | 19.10.15 | KL     | Sun | Sunday                           |
| 18.9.10  | HK     | Fri |                             | 19.10.15 | SS     | Sun | Sunday                           |
| 18.10.13 | SW     | Wed |                             | 19.10.31 | HK     | Tue |                                  |
| 18.10.13 | SY     | Wed |                             | 19.12.25 | HK     | Fri |                                  |
| 18.10.19 | ST     | Tue |                             | 20.2.7   | HK     | Wed |                                  |
| 18.10.22 | KT     | Fri |                             | 20.2.7   | KL     | Wed |                                  |
| 18.10.22 | SS     | Fri |                             | 20.2.8   | TP     | Thu |                                  |
| 18.10.22 | YM     | Fri |                             | 20.2.10  | KT     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.10.24 | TP     | Sun | Sunday                      | 20.2.10  | TM     | Sat |                                  |
| 18.11.2  | HK     | Tue |                             | 20.2.12  | WC     | Mon | National Foundation Day Observed |
| 18.12.8  | HK     | Wed |                             | 20.2.16  | SS     | Sun | Sunday                           |
| 19.2.8   | YL     | Tue |                             | 20.2.18  | WC     | Sun | Sunday                           |
| 19.2.20  | SW     | Sun | Sunday                      | 20.2.19  | SS     | Mon |                                  |
| 19.3.16  | YL     | Thu |                             | 20.2.20  | SS     | Tue |                                  |
| 19.3.18  | HK     | Sat |                             | 20.2.21  | WC     | Wed |                                  |
| 19.3.18  | KL     | Sat |                             | 20.2.27  | HK     | Tue |                                  |
| 19.3.30  | SW     | Thu |                             | 20.2.28  | KT     | Wed |                                  |
| 19.3.30  | WC     | Thu |                             | 20.2.28  | YM     | Wed |                                  |
| 19.4.4   | HK     | Tue |                             | 20.3.1   | ST     | Thu |                                  |
| 19.4.27  | KL     | Thu |                             | 20.3.14  | KL     | Wed |                                  |
| 19.4.29  | TP     | Sat | Emperor Hirohito's Birthday | 20.3.15  | HK     | Thu |                                  |
| 19.4.29  | YL     | Sat | Emperor Hirohito's Birthday | 20.3.15  | SS     | Thu |                                  |
| 19.5.2   | HK     | Tue |                             | 20.3.16  | TP     | Fri |                                  |
| 19.5.3   | KL     | Wed | Constitution Memorial Day   | 20.3.23  | YM     | Fri |                                  |
| 19.5.3   | YM     | Wed | Constitution Memorial Day   |          |        |     |                                  |



## Public Holiday Cancels



### Un Long & Tai Po 19.4.29 (29-Apr-1944) Birthday of Emperor Hirohito

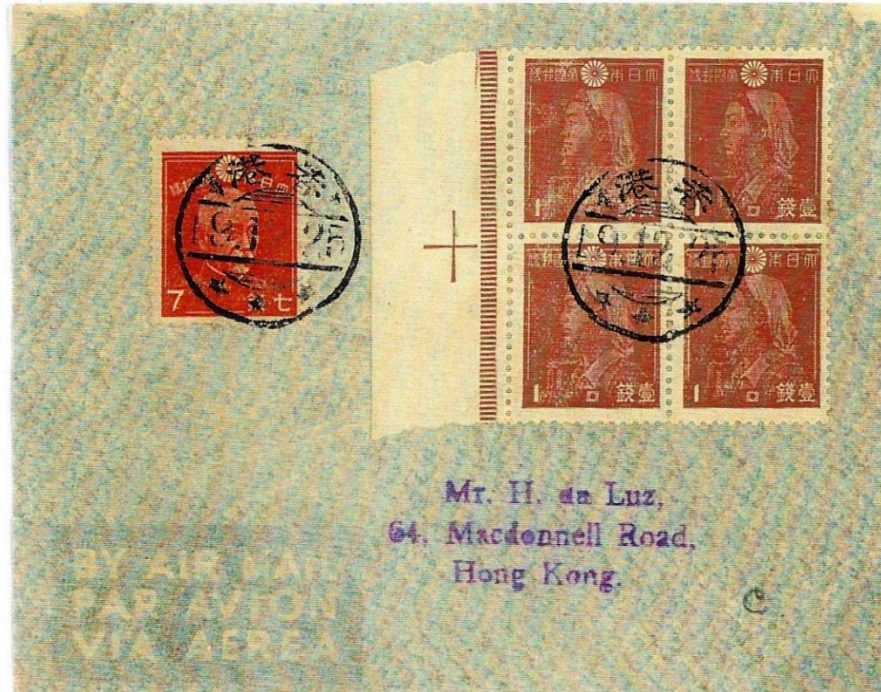
- Were Branch Post Offices open on a holiday?
- How could da Luz obtain covers from both Un Long and Tai Po on that same day?



Other specific dates may be found, were they public Holidays?



Hong Kong Type 2, December 8, 1943.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Greater East Asia War.



Hong Kong Type 5, December 25, 1944.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Japanese takeover of Hong Kong.



## Conclusions:

- **In the opinion of the author, there are several categories of “da Luz” covers:**

Category 1: Genuine, struck during the war and mailed, with more focus on the stamps than on the rate in force.

(Genuine commercial covers were mailed and there is no reason that da Luz who was free of movement could send some mail, albeit philatelic)

Category 2: Genuine. Struck during the war, no regard for rates or regulations and immediately handed back over the counter.

Category 3: Struck during or after the war from genuine cancelor (bought or looted) with stamps purchased in bulk or looted and produced by H. da Luz in quantity. (Those he tried to sell to stamp dealers after the war)

Category 4: A mixture of covers attributed to da Luz but likely engineered by third parties with correct or fake cancels, same or odd format envelopes, and with printed or manuscript da Luz address, Chinese address, all with code numbers inconsistent with da Luz chronology, very unlikely to have been produced by da Luz, and which contributed to ruin da Luz reputation.

- **In the opinion of critics, most of the covers, if not all, are fake:**

- Visiting the branch office by himself, posting some covers through the mail system, handing back the philatelic products after obtaining the postmarks, were all impractical and close to impossible.
- The social conditions during that period did not allow visiting of those places at one wished.
- There exist so many flaws, although not applicable to all covers
- No explanation to those flaws are convincing.
- There may have some covers genuinely produced – those in manuscript address
- Most Da Luz covers – including all those in the normally seen airmail covers are FAKE. They were produced in huge quantities in early 1950s with genuine datestamps and adhesives acquired after the war – but all the dates were counterfeited.

**This matter is now probably academic, these covers cannot be displayed in any serious postal history exhibit, they have now become anecdotic.**

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