

## Japanese Occupation 1941 to 1945

In 1941 the four neighbouring territories of Sarawak, Brunei, Labuan and British North Borneo all employed different stamps. The Japanese occupied these territories with landings on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1941. The Japanese for administration purposes fused the four territories into one country known as North Borneo. Existing stocks of stamps were placed in common pools under the Japanese postal administration and with or without overprints were freely used over the whole of Japanese North Borneo, the exception being the stamps of Sarawak with the image of the Rajah. The following explains the known phases of the use of different stamps.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Phase – Initial stamps

For the first few weeks after the invasion there were no postal services available. During the period from March to October 1942 there was little mail and this mail being within a town. Stamps used during this period were the current prewar issue of Brunei and British North Borneo with no overprint, whilst the postmark was the normal English one with the appropriate date which ranges from March to Nov 1942.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase - Japanese stamps

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1942 most of the local stamps were withdrawn and replaced by the current stamps in use in Japan, still without overprint. These values were up to 8 Sen. The postage rates were maintained at the same rate as before the war. English pre-war cancellers were still in use.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase - Japanese canceller introduced plus single line Sarawak stamps

On 21<sup>st</sup> October 1942 an important change was made with a new Japanese canceller with the wording in Japanese. The date was Japanese style, ie year first, followed by month and day. The year is calculated from 1926, when the present Emperor succeeded and the Showa era began, Hence 17 is the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Showa, which was 1942 and the 17.10.21 is 21<sup>st</sup> October 1942. For a few months from November 1942 there was a Sarawak single line overprint used in Miri only.



### 4<sup>th</sup> Phase - Brunei Stamps, First single line issue

Early in February/March 1943 a few sheets of Brunei prewar stamps overprinted in Japanese with what has been known as the "single line" overprint appeared in post offices. Translated it reads 'Dai Nippon Gun' – Japanese Imperial Government.

The overprinting was done with one or more handmade rubber stamps and affixed by small boys in the Japanese Education Department in Kuching and the post office in Brunei. Given that unskilled hands were doing the overprinting instead of machines, many variations are evident; exceptions and double printing, smudges and ink variations are observed.

Hand stamps range from dark blue to violet, with the rare red ink overprint.

The initial stamps overprinted were 1 c black, 2 c green, 3c green, 6 c scarlet, 6 c greenish black, 8c grey black and 30 c purple and orange. Also small quantities of the 4c orange and 5c brown which appeared later in large quantities.

1 cent Black



RARE Red overprint

Violet overprints



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It is felt that the Japanese overprinted the stamps which were readily available in post offices in the 4<sup>th</sup> Phase. There were more stamps discovered later and brought into use. As more pressure was applied to shipping by the allies there was less supply of Japanese stamps and hence the need to overprint local stamps.

Fourth Phase continued

3 Cent Green



2 cent Green Scarce



3 cent Green used in combination with Japanese unoverprinted stamps

4 Cent Orange



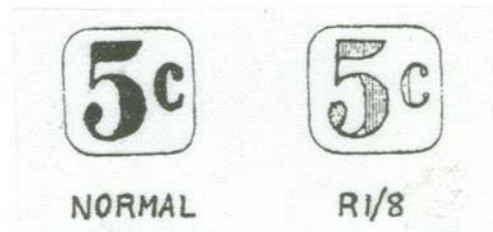


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Phase 4 continuing

5 Cent Chocolate

The retouch on the 5 cent at position R 1/8 continued to be seen throughout the Japanese occupation where the 1933 5 cent chocolate was overprinted



VERY RARE

Certificate



VERY RARE

6 cent Greenish Grey

Note printers guide mark below where right hand vertical row has been removed



Double overprint top left stamp  
First impression very faint,  
second impression to reink

Double overprint top right stamp





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Phase 4 continued

### The 8 cent Red

The Japanese overprints on Brunei stamps were carried out by schoolboys at the Japanese education Department in Kuching. They used a single chop manually applied. This meant both omitted and double overprints were experienced. The 8 cent red was in the new colour which was not issued locally and is only seen with the Japanese overprint. The full sheet on the left shows the Plate 2 at the bottom. Note that the central printers alignments top and bottom which have been changed from the reduced panes of 60 to 50 to the centre in the second plate.



Block of the 8 cent red double overprinted on the bottom right hand stamp.



THOMAS DE LA RUE & COMPANY, LIMITED LONDON



The top two rows of the full sheet with the right-hand selvedge missing. The stamp at position R 2/3 has the overprint omitted. VERY RARE





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Phase 4 continuing

10 cent Purple on yellow

Note the printers mark at the top and bottom showing 2 vertical rows removed.



12 cent Blue



Overprint in RED  
VERY RARE

25 cent Slate-Purple



Wet Perf 14 x 13 ¼



Dry Perf 14 ¼



Overprint in RED  
VERY RARE



Overprint in violet

50 Cent Black on Emerald



Overprinted in RED  
VERY RARE



Double Overprinted in RED  
and VIOLET VERY RARE

30 cent Purple and Orange yellow





## Japanese Occupation 1941 to 1945

Phases 5, 6 and 7

### 5 th Phase Emperor's Birthday stamps

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 1943, the anniversary of the birth of Emperor Hirohito in commemoration of Meiji Day, there was issued a short set of stamps. These were the only ones during the occupation in North Borneo to be especially printed. They were printed in offset litho at Batavia, Java. They are inscribed "Japanese Imperial Post" at the top and "North Borneo" at the bottom. They were on sale intermittently until the end of the occupation.



### 6 th Phase - North Borneo three-line stamps

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1944 the stamps of Japan were withdrawn and replaced by the Borneo three-line overprint. The stamps were those of pre-war British North Borneo from 1 cent to \$1.00 only. The overprints read "Japanese Imperial Post" for the top two lines and "North Borneo" underneath. The overprinting was done by the Chinese Press in Kuching to a high standard.



### 7 th Phase - Brunei Stamps, Second single line issue

At the beginning of December 1944, a second issue was made of pre-war Brunei stamps, with the same single line overprint as previously. Additional stocks of some that had already been issued were distributed as well as some stamps which had not previously appeared with the overprint.

2 Cent Orange



15 cent Ultramarine



Double overprint



## Japanese Occupation 1941 to 1945

### Phases 7 and 8

The Japanese Post Office closed down just before the Australians landed as part of Oboe 6 on 10 th June 1945 and burnt all their records and stamp stocks. It is very difficult to then ascertain how many Japanese Occupation stamps were ever issued,

### 7 th Phase Brunei stamps overprinted for airmail charges

The rarest stamp of the Japanese Occupation



\$3 on 1 cent Brunei Black  
Orange red surcharge  
RPSL certificate

Early in May 1944 there was issued a short series of 3 stamps for payment of telegraphic mail transfers to Japan and to cover airmail charges for a privately operated company flying between Borneo, Phillipines and Japan. The need for airmail communications at this period of the Occupation was due to the virtual isolation of North Borneo and Brunei by the intensity of the Allied blockade which made sea communication virtually impossible.

Three denominations \$2, \$3, \$5 were produced by overprinting two BNB stamps and one Brunei stamp. \$3 was overprinted on the 1 cent black Brunei stamp.

The overprinting was carried out by the Communication Department of the Japanese Army H.Q. at Jesselton and stamps both with and without the single line overprint were used. Overprinted by hand it is believed the 'chops' were hand made wooden ones and that the rather oily ink, orange-red on the Brunei stamp was the same as that for impressing signature seals.

It is almost certain that the two large characters representing the value were impressed separately from the two lines of Characters which signify 'Dai Nippon' and 'Imperial Post' so that each stamp was overprinted by hand in two operations.

It is believed that there were only 200 overprinted of each value and these were distributed to Kuching, Miri, Sibiu, Jesselton, Sandakan, Labuan and Brunei.

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\$1.00 Black and red on blue



\$5.00 Carmine on green



\$25.00 Black on red



### 8 th Phase - Japanese stamps overprinted

Early in 1945 a third set of Japanese stamps appeared with new values and bearing the overprint "North Borneo". This comprised the stamps of Japan similar those in Phases 2 and 3. The overprinting was carried out by the Kuching Press. Note that the original 7 cents has disappeared from the set distributed.

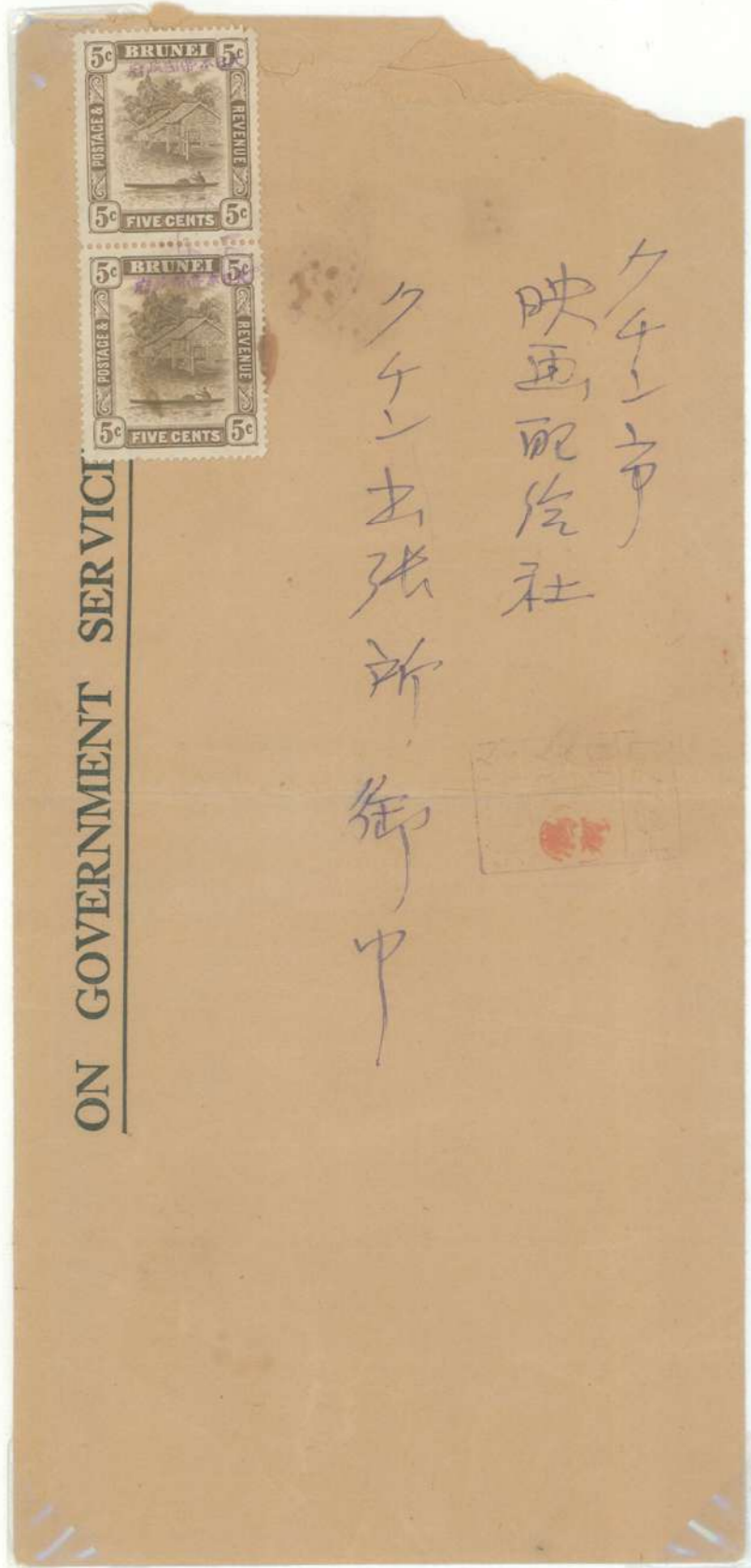




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Japanese Occupation Covers

The cover on the left has been Posted in Kuala Belait from the General Manager of the Kuala Belait Theatre to the film distributor in Kuching  
Covers posted in Brunei with Brunei Overprinted stamps are VERY RARE.  
Post card below is Military issue with 2 x 2 cent stamps Brunei and North Borneo combination.



The top cover was posted in Brunei Town on the first day of issue 30<sup>th</sup> September 2604 (1944). The cover was overpaid for local postage and is philatelic in nature. The bottom cover was posted in Tuaran North Borneo on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2605 (1945), just after the Australians landed in Borneo, to Beaufort with a combination of Brunei and North Borneo stamps overprinted 'Imperial Japanese Government' cancelled with the Japanese Tuaran canceller.

