

BURMA CIVIL CENSOR HANDSTAMP TYPES 1939-1943

Purpose and Scope: This exhibit presents every civil censorship handstamp type used by Burma on regular mail during World War II, explaining where and when they were used. The Not Opened by Censor handstamp is excluded. Censor numbers are mentioned when important, but this is not a detailed study of every censor number. The time frame is from the beginning of the War in 1939 until their last censor station fell to the Japanese in 1943.

Reference: British Empire Civil Censorship Devices World War II British Asia 6th Edition 2011, Civil Censorship Study Group.

Importance: The material and knowledge in this exhibit is comprehensive and **adds to and updates** much of the information found in the standard reference.

Exhibit Plan: Single Line Triangle Handstamps pp 1-5
Double Line Triangle Handstamps pp 6-12

Organization: Items in the sections are grouped by censor station.

Treatment: An information box is at the top of each page that contains the type of information listed in the standard reference. **My study and research information that differs from the standard reference is in dark red.**

Research: 🔍 Indicates discovery or research. Many earliest (EKU) or latest known uses (LKU) are presented. LKUs and EKUs refer to the basic hand stamp type irrespective of the censor number.

Rarity: **Write ups about rarity are in dark red.** Many unusual items are shown. Covers with the rarest markings are double framed in **dark red.**



Map showing the five censor station locations in Burma where civil censor handstamps were used. →

WORLD WAR II CIVIL CENSORSHIP BEGINS IN BURMA

SINGLE LINE TRIANGLE HANDSTAMPS

RANGOON LARGE NUMERALS

At **12:00 AM September 3, 1939**, Britain declared war on Germany. Under the Defence of Burma Act, censorship began immediately on foreign mail to, from, or through Burma.

Within a few hours the first civilian censors were appointed in Rangoon. Mail at the censor station was marked with a hand stamp when processed.



←Rangoon-**September 3, 1939 4:00 PM** (Burma 7 hours ahead of England)
Single line red triangle with **6 cm** censor number in the center
Location of censor station at the triangle base – Rangoon

🔍 **EKU.**

SYNOPSIS:

BURMA CIVIL CENSOR HANDSTAMP TYPES 1939-1943

Purpose: This one frame exhibit completely fulfills the purpose and scope as stated on the title page.

References: British Empire Civil Censorship Devices World War II British Asia 6th Edition 2011, Civil Censorship Study Group, pp 87-92, p 89 being the most important. There is a 2017 CD available to members only with some updated information, much of which I provided, even though it still says 6th edition:

Historical and Strategic Importance: When World War II began in 1939, Burma's population was the third largest of any British colony, territory, or dominion, comparable to Egypt, exceeding that of either Canada or Australia, and only trailing Nigeria and India. The Burma Road, completed in 1938, connecting Lashio in Burma with Kunming in China, became vital to the allied effort to supply China. In 1939 China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) began to fly from Burma to China. The allied goal was to keep China in the war so the Japanese troops there could not be used elsewhere. Japanese activities in Indochina caused Burma to become an all-important route for much of the increasing allied mail to and from China and beyond. After Japan entered the war, the British tried to defend Burma to keep it as a buffer between the Japanese and their prized colony of India.

Exhibit Importance: This is the most important exhibit of Burma Civil Censor hand stamps ever shown. Numerous items are included that correct and update the information currently found in the above CCSG publication, including the 2017 CD. The exhibit includes discoveries and information I have provided to the entire Burma collecting community by a series of articles in the Burma Fantail, the quarterly journal of the Burma Myanmar Philatelic Study Circle (UK), of which I am the Secretary.

Treatment: The exhibit is divided into two chapters as listed on the title page. The exhibit consists of twelve pages. To tell the story in a more logical order, I do not show the handstamps in exactly the catalog order. At the top of each page is a text box with censor handstamp information like that in the CCSG catalogue: color, known censor numbers, known period of use, and number of covers I have documented if the mark is somewhat rare. I used to list everything the catalogue has in their listing and then list what it should say. I now just put down what I know in the box and put everything in red that differs from the catalogue. I never mention the catalogue after the title page.

When appropriate, pages provide information about why handstamps were introduced or changed and why certain censor stations existed and were changed. The covers are described in some detail including pertinent route information in italics. If the postmark is not on the same side as the censor mark, a scan of it is shown as the date is part of the story. At times interesting information not directly related to the story is shown in italics. Although I am quite knowledgeable about the rates of the period, I do not discuss them in the exhibit. I wanted to hold down the amount of text and consider the rates not to be an important part of the story.

Rarity: Some of the handstamps exist in very small numbers, and this information is shown in dark red. The exhibit would be impossible to duplicate given the large number of EKUs and LKUs shown. Many significant and interesting covers are shown, but I only call attention to those covers with censor handstamps known in quantities of four or less by double framing them in dark red.

Exhibitor Study, Research, and Discoveries: I have been collecting and studying Burma for over 30 years. I have scoured books, articles, auction catalogs, and other collections. I have maintained a database of the rarest handstamps. My study and census work has enabled me to determine the dates of usage more precisely. The CCSG 6th Edition page 89 shows nine markings with rarity level 10, defined as four or fewer in existence. I have all of them and it was easy to get points for rarity when I first started showing this exhibit. Unfortunately for me, my census work has determined some of these don't deserve rarity level 10. The exhibit shows my actual census numbers for these markings. My research is indicated by a red magnifier.



Condition: The wartime material shown is drawn from a large holding of Burma censored covers. The covers are in remarkable condition given that some were opened and censored in more than one country. A big consideration was to show the finest covers with exemplary strikes of the hand stamps. An even bigger consideration was to show the rarest markings on the most interesting and significant items to best tell the story. I am willing to show an EKU or LKU even if the cover or the strike is not perfect.

CCSG Item Not Shown: The purpose stated on the title page is to show “civil censorship hand stamps used by Burma on regular mail during World War II.” One catalog item does not appear in the exhibit as it did not go through regular mail after the hand stamp was applied. 2C is unique. It last sold as lot 311 in the Spink London auction of April 6-7, 2005. The envelope is unstamped or postmarked, and appears to have gone through diplomatic mail, and thus is not in the scope of this exhibit.

The Not Opened by Censor hand stamps, CCSG 3, are excluded from the scope on the title page to keep this a one frame subject, although I have plenty of those and have written about them.

Closing Stages of Burma Censorship: On page 88 CCSG correctly states that after April 3, 1942, a censor party left Mandalay for Myitkyina. They arrived and began censoring mail on April 15, 1942. In 25 years of collecting, I have seen no evidence of censor handstamps being used.

Page 88 also states that “censorship in Burma ended on 30th April 1942.” That is not true, and they even discuss on page 91 the “Use of Censor Handstamp Type 2 X after April 1942.” This is about the uses at Falam in the Chin Hills, which is covered on the last page of the exhibit.

New Since Last Showing: The cover with CCSG Ret.1 has long been thought to be unique. This discovery cover is shown on page 8 of the exhibit and is now the second known cover with this handstamp.



References: [MSE 2025 References.pdf](#)

Clicking this will bring them up.

The references show the Burma section of the 2011 6th edition CCSG catalogue, which has many mistakes. This is the last printed edition. The references then show a draft of page 89 for a 7th edition that has never been printed. It uses some of my information, but it still has many errors. This is followed by page 89 from the 2017 CD that still purports to be the 6th edition but has more of my information but is still not completely accurate. Finally, my articles that have so far appeared in the Burma Fantail are shown. These articles show what the catalogue should contain to be accurate. When the series is complete, CCSG will likely release it as a monograph with all my information.