

PRESTAMP CANCELLATIONS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Part 1

by Nestor C. Nuñez

A review of the philatelic literature reveals that material on the prestamp Philippine period (1783-1853) postal history is sketchy, except for the period from the early 1820s. Organized information on prestamp postal markings was also unavailable for a long time¹. There have been early attempts to list such markings, but the resulting information is inadequate. It was not until 1971 that what could really be called a list was published by Tizon & Guinovart. It is indicative of the scarcity of surviving prestamp Philippine postal history material that when this list was revised just fifteen years later, the number of items listed almost doubled to thirteen, from the original seven². In the decade since the Tizon & Guinovart list was revised, some articles have been published on prestamp postal history and prestamp postal markings³. That list has since become obsolete as additional unrecorded markings have come to light. The present article attempts to update the 1986 list with additional information recorded by the author to 1997.

MAIL BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND EUROPE ⁴

As a Spanish colony, virtually all mail from the Philippines was bound for Europe. Up to the end of the galleon trade with Mexico, mail was transmitted to Acapulco, then overland to Vera Cruz and onward to Havana or Coruna, it was then carried to Spain. Incoming letters were carried in the opposite direction with occasional mails carried by Spanish naval vessels via Africa.

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The galleon route between Manila and Acapulco was a carefully kept secret primarily as a safeguard against the naval ships of Spain's enemies, which were often at war with Spain. The galleon usually left in June or early July from Cavite, bordering the southern coast of Luzon, and entering the Pacific Ocean off Cape Engano (Samar Island), to arrive at Cape San Lucas at the tip of Baja California, from where it would turn to Acapulco. Typical voyage time was seven months. The return trip left around February or March with favorable winds to the Ladrone Islands, so as to return to Manila, through the San Bernardino strait, passing off Cape Engano on the northern side of Samar Island.

The first galleon sailed from the Philippines in 1565. This voyage was repeated almost every year though there is no evidence of postmarks on Philippine mail until 1776. Due to seasonal weather conditions, the best time to depart Manila was June or early July. The last galleon left from Manila in 1811 and returned in 1815, marking the end of this service. Mexican independence in 1821 completely shut off this route for Philippine mails to Europe.

Communications after the end of the galleon era were carried on a few trips via the Cape of Good Hope. However, acquisition of Singapore by the British East India Company in 1819 and the expansion of British presence in Malaya resulted in the expansion of the East Indies route, giving the Philippines a good system for mail transmission to Europe, either via the Cape of Good Hope, or later over Suez to Alexandria.

THE BELLETTI CORRESPONDENCE⁵

The main reason why there is a lack of literature on prestamp postal markings is simply the paucity of postal material. Surviving correspondence during the 18th century and early 19th century between the Islands and Europe is very scarce. Thus, the existence of the Belletti correspondence is providential and very important in that the letters are the main source for information on very early postal markings and the postal routes from the Philippines to Europe.

Nicolo Belletti came from Rome and arrived in the Philippines in 1774. Apparently he committed some crime and was exiled from Italy. He became a merchant, making merchant voyages to China and India and buying merchandise which was then sold in Manila in order to be sent on the galleon trade with Acapulco. He regularly corresponded with his brother Francesco in Rome, using several means of transmission (Manila galleon to Acapulco, Spanish ships travelling westward via the Cape of Good Hope. French ships). The surviving correspondence (from 1775 to 1804) is believed to be the oldest surviving correspondence from the Philippines.

Because of the connection of many of these letters to early Philippine postal markings, and their overall importance in understanding early Philippine postal history, all Belletti correspondence known to the author and originating from the Philippines is enumerated here. Pioneering work on this correspondence was done by Lewis, and his designation system is adopted for this article, with the slight modification of adding the day, or the additional letter suffix to ? for incomplete dates when two or more incomplete dates were recorded in one year. Other Belletti letters listed by Lewis (mailed by Nicolo from outside the Philippines, or sent to him) have been excluded. The markings indicated include manuscript marks, usually of postage rates. Last known whereabouts or source(s) of information, including recent auction references (multiple references if the item had been handled more than once), are indicated. Auction houses are named in full, except for the following where initials have been used:

SL - Soler & Llach, Barcelona

GF - Galeria Filatelica de Barcelona

AT - Antonio Torres, London. Prior to moving to London, Antonio Torres held joint auctions with Galeria Filatelica de Barcelona. Items from these joint auctions are identified as GF.

B 1775/11/18

No Philippine marking. Other marking: **COL PAR LORIENT** in black; manuscript French rate "36." Addressed in French. Sent by trading ship from Manila to Canton, then handed to the French ship Alexander, which carried the letter to the French port Lorient in Brittany. (Lewis collection; Lewis article).

B 1775/12/30

No Philippine marking. Other marking: **ANDALUCIA ALTA** in red; manuscript "3" applied in Manila. Addressed in French. Believed to be earliest known existing mail item sent directly from Manila. Carried by Spanish naval frigate, via the Cape of Good Hope to Cadiz, a port in the province of Andalucia Alta. (Lewis collection; Lewis article).

B 1776/08/02

MA/NILA in oval in red, **4.U.** inside fancy oval. Other marking: manuscript "3" applied in Manila. Addressed in Spanish. Presently known to be the earliest recorded item with a Philippine postmark. Most likely travelled the Manila - Acapulco route. (George Alevizos auction, Dec. 1993, Fritz-Walter Lange collection).

B 1776/?/?A

No Philippine marking. Addressed in Italian. **ANDALUSIA ALTA** in red; manuscript "3" applied in Manila. (Information from Don Jose Llach, Jan. 1997).⁶

B 1778/07/06

No Philippine marking. Other marking: manuscript "3." Addressed in Italian. Manila - Acapulco route, then to Vera Cruz and by Spanish ship to Cadiz. (Lewis collection; Lewis article)

B 1780/10/14

Franca Vega inside circle. Other marking: **NUEVA ESPANA** in red; manuscript "Pago 6rs" at the back, "Franca Panelo" and "80" in front. Addressed in Italian. Manila - Acapulco routing⁶. (David G. Phillips, May 1994, Lot 611; AT, Oct. 1995. Lot 3047 states this to be 1781).

B178 ? A

No Philippine marking. Other marking: **ACAPULCO** in black (boxed) and **NUEVA ESPANA** in black, believed applied in Vera Cruz manuscript "3;" handstamped "6" in red. Addressed in Italian. Manila - Acapulco routing (Sr. Backal collection, Lewis article. SL, Nov. 1992 Lot 3269; International Philippine Philatelic Society Newsletter, Vol. 11, First Quarter 1991).

B 1781/12/30

No Philippine marking. Other marking: **COLON. FRANC/ PAR MARSEILLE.** in black; manuscript French rate "37." Addressed in French. Carried by French barque which called in Manila, travelling via Mauritius (then Ile-de-France). (Lewis collection; Lewis article).

B 1783/07/06

Italic **FILIPINAS.** in red, **MA/NILA** in oval in red. Other marking: manuscript "3" applied in Manila. Addressed in French. Manila - Acapulco routing. (Author's collection).

B 1786/06/10

Italic **FILIPINAS.** in red. Other marking: manuscript "3" applied in Manila. Addressed in French. Carried on the return trip of the first voyage of a ship of the Royal Philippine Company, via the Cape of Good Hope. The earliest recorded item with Philippine postmark when Lewis article was written in 1991. (Lewis collection; Lewis article; ex Gilbert Plass [see Philippine Philatelic Society Journal, London. Vol. 3 No. 2:6, Dec. 1977].)

B 1787/?A

Italic **FILIPINAS**. in red. Other markings not recorded by Lewis. Believed Manila Acapulco routing. (Mario Que collection; Lewis article).

B 1787/?B

Italic **FILIPINAS**. in red, **Franca Azas** (inside plain circle) in black. Other marking: manuscript "3". Addressed in Italian. Manila - Acapulco routing. (David G. Phillip May 1994, Lot 612; AT, Oct. 1995, Lot 3048).

B 1787/?C

Italic **FILIPINAS**. in red, **Franca Azas** (inside scalloped circle) in black. Other marking: diagonal cross drawn across the front. Addressed in Italian. Believed to be Manila - Acapulco routing. (SL, June 1991, Lot 2287; Nuñez article).

B 1790/?A

Italic **FILIPINAS**. in red, **Franca Azas** (scalloped circle) in black. Other marking, diagonal cross in red drawn across the front. Addressed in French. to Manila - Acapulco routing. (David G. Phillips, May 1994, Lot 612; AT, Oct. 1995 Lot 3049).

B 1792/10/25

No Philippine marking. Other marking: none. Believed to be carried privately. and not on the Manila - Acapulco route. Date of October 25 means the galleon was unlikely to have carried this letter. (Lewis collection; Lewis article).

B1793/11/21

Italic **FILIPINAS**. in red, **Franca Azas** in black. Other: large diagonal cross across front. Addressed in Italian. Date of letter rules out Manila - Acapulco routing; probably carried to Europe by Spanish ship via the Cape of Good Hope. (Mario Que collection; Lewis article).

B 1794/04/05

No Philippine marking. Other markings: **S. BLAS** in black (boxed) and **NUEVA ESPANA** in red; manuscript "3" applied in Manila. Addressed in Italian. Manila - Acapulco routing. (Information from Karl Sehimmer).

B 1796/05/04

Italic **FILIPINAS**. in red, **9.U.** in oval in red. Other marking: manuscript 'G'? Addressed in Italian. Carried by galleon on Manila - Acapulco route. Early date in May resulted from Belletti writing the letter before going to China on business. He left the letter with the post office to be sent by the next ship. (Lewis collection; Lewis article).

B 1796/?A

Italic **FILIPINAS.** in red, **Franca Azas** in black. Other marking: **FRANCA/HASTA ROMA** in black (three strikes); large diagonal cross in front. (Mario Que collection Lewis article).

B 1797/01/27

Italic **FILIPINAS.** in red, **Franca Azas** in black. Other: large diagonal cross in fro Addressed in Italian. (Lewis article; GF, January 1991, Lot 10; International Philippine Philatelic Society Newsletter, Vol. 11, First Quarter 1991).

B 1797/?A

Italic **FILIPINAS.** in red, **Franca Azas** in black. Other; large cross on front Addressed in Italian. (Information from Jose Llach)⁸.

B 1804/02/17

Italic **FILIPINAS.** in red, **Franca Azas** in black. Other: **FRANCA/HASTA ROMA,** in black; manuscript "38" at back. Addressed in Spanish. (Robins Auction, Fcb. 1990 Lot 1122; Lewis article; International Philippine Philatelic Society Newsletter Vo 10, No. 1, First Quarter 1990).

PRESTAMP POSTAL MARKINGS

Based on the Belletti correspondence and on a survey of auction catalogues and private collections, the author has assembled the postal markings listed hereafter. For the information of readers, they are described and illustrated and usage period is indicated. The author has arbitrarily used an alphanumeric classification system, with the first two letters designating the marking type as indicated: **OM** (origin marking), **PD** (postage due), **DS** (datestamp), **FM** (franking mark), **RG** (registration marking), **WM** (weight marking), and **TM** (tax marking), followed by a number, and **R**, **B**, or **BI** to indicate red, black; or blue if the postmark is known struck in more than one color. As the Tizon & Guinovart (1986) list is the most common reference used by European auction houses, it is being used here as the main reference. Scarcity ratings assigned by Tizon & Guinovart and mentioned in this article are **EXT** (1 or two known), **RRR** (5 to 10 known), and **RR** (scarce but more than 10). Auction house initials **SL**, **GF** and **AT** are used as previously explained.

ORIGIN MARKINGS

OMI. FILIPINAS. in italic seriffed capitals, in red, 8mm x 48mm (including stop). 1783- 1797

Not listed in 1971 by Tizon & Guinovart but listed as No. 1 in 1986, with 1787-1797 as usage dates, probably based on strikes in the Belletti correspondence recorded up to 1986 (see B1787/?A and B1797/01/27). This postmark appears almost identical to **OM4** (struck either in red or black). The almost unnoticeable difference is in the letter S. The Tizon & Guinovart illustration, which is used above, shows this marking to be thinner than **OM4**, slightly less slanted, and with shorter serifs. However, these are not readily apparent in the cover in the author's collection or in auction catalogue illustrations. Rated by Tizon & Guinovart as RRR.

The earliest known usage is in Belletti letter B1783/07/06 and the latest, in 1797 Belletti B1897/?A. Recent non-Belletti items auctioned with this marking are:

"ca. 1800" to Santiago de Ayala, Vitoria with **4.U.** (SL, Feb. 1992, Lot 3001; GF. May 1994, Lot 1)

undated ("end of 18th century") to Santiago de Ayala, "Victoria" with "por Vera Cruz a Cadiz" and "Fragata Sta. Rita" (SL, Nov. 1990, Lot 3269)

undated to Santiago de Ayala, Vitoria with "por Madrid" and "por la fragata Sta. Rita" with **4.U.** (GF, March 1989, Lot 3392)

"ca. 1800" to Francisco Gutierrez, Castilla la Vieja, with "fragata Rey Carlos 1" with **9.U.** (SL, Oct. 1992, Lot 940)

OM2. MA/NILA in irregular seriffed capitals, in red, letters 5 mm. tall. 1776 - 1790

Unlisted in 1971, but listed as No. 3 by Tizon & Guinovart in 1986, without usage date, and rated EXT. Only three examples have been recorded by the author:



Belletti B1776/08/02 (George Alevizos, Dec. 1993 auction)

undated fragment of letter to Ximenez de San- (partial name), Zacatecas, Mexico (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 12)

ca. 1790 to Manuel Letuna y Equizabal, Guatemala, with **3.P.** (SL, June 1991, Lot 2288)

OM3B. MA/NILA in irregular serifed capitals, in black, letters 5 mm. tall, oval 23 x 27 mm. Undated

Unlisted in 1971, but listed by Tizon & Guinovart as No. 2 in 1986, without usage date, and rated EXT. The only example recorded by the author is on an undated front to Domingo de Aresmendi, Lima "por San Blas, Guayaquil" (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 11).

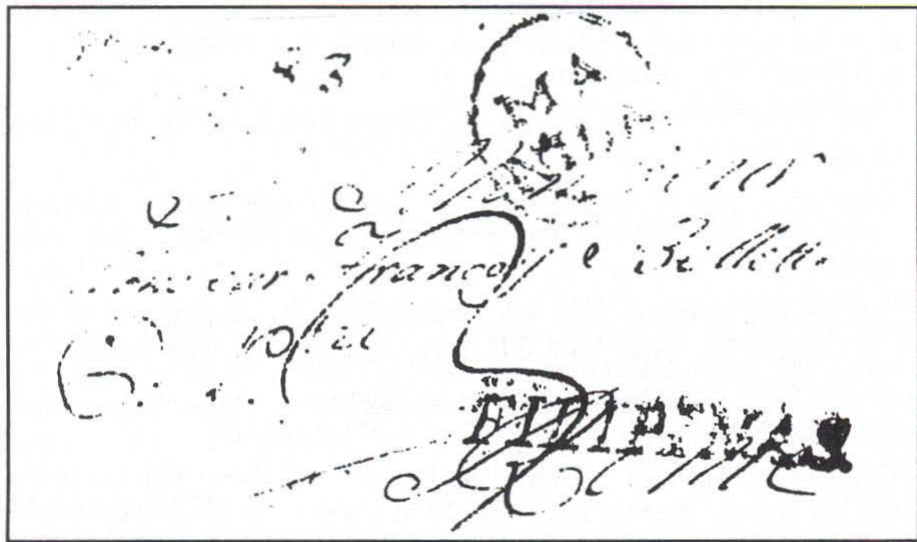


Figure 1 1783 Belletti letter to Rome (B1783/07/06) with earliest recorded OMI and only recorded OM3R postmarks.

OM3R. MA/NILA in irregular serifed capitals, in red, letters 5 mm. tall, oval 23 x 27 mm. 1783

Unlisted in 1971 and in 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart. The only example recorded is on Belletti cover B1783/07/06 in the author's collection (figure 1).



OM4R. FILIPINAS. in italic serif capitals, in red, 8mm x 48mm (including stop). 1802 - 1839

FILIPINAS.

Listed as No. 3 in 1971 and No. 4 in 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart, with usage dates as indicated here. This is the postmark which Wellsted mentioned as being applied in Spain on mail from the Philippines. Tizon & Guinovart also mention that this postmark (red and black strikes) may be arrival marks on incoming mail. Rated only as R (less rare than RR), but only the following were recorded in recent auctions:

1802 (July 19) to Francisco Emparan, Aspeitia with 4.U. (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 13) cat 1802 to Juez General de Bienes, Guatemala with 4.U. (GF, May 1994, Lot 2) Belletti B 1804/2/17, with Franca Azas

OM4B. FILIPINAS. in italic serif capitals, in black, 8mm x 48mm (including stop). 1821 1842

FILIPINAS.

Listed as No. 3 in 1971 and No. 4 in 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart, with usage dates as indicated here. Rated RR, but with far more recorded examples than OM4R from recent auctions, of which the more remarkable ones are:

1821 (February 2) from Canton to Maria Antonia de Legaspi, San Sebastian "por el Navio Fernando" and "via America" (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 15). The auction catalogue stated that this is probably the last letter known to use the route via America because the route was interrupted by the Mexican independence.

1821 (January 25) from Canton to Maria Antonia de Legaspi, San Sebastian (SL, May 1996, Lot 1307; Lewis collection)

1840 from Edouard Genu to Henri Quatre, Nantes France (GF, May 1994, Lot 11)

1841 (September 27) to Jose Matia, Cadiz "por Colon" with 3/4 oz marking (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 16)

1842 (August 11) Manuel Perez Sevane, Madrid, endorsed "Fragata Zafiro" (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 19)

OM5. MANILA in serifed upright letters inside rounded box and oblong, in black, 5 mm high and 32 mm long⁹ 1819 - 1820

MANILA

Listed in 1971 as No. 2, and as No.5 in 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart, usage date 1820. rated EXT. Two covers recorded:

1819 (no date given) to Yturbe and Alvarez, Mexico "por La Espina" (SL, June 1991, Lot 2289 described as a "great rarity")

1820 (July 28) to Yturbe and Alvarez, Mexico "por Aventurero" (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 14 claimed in the catalogue as the only one known)

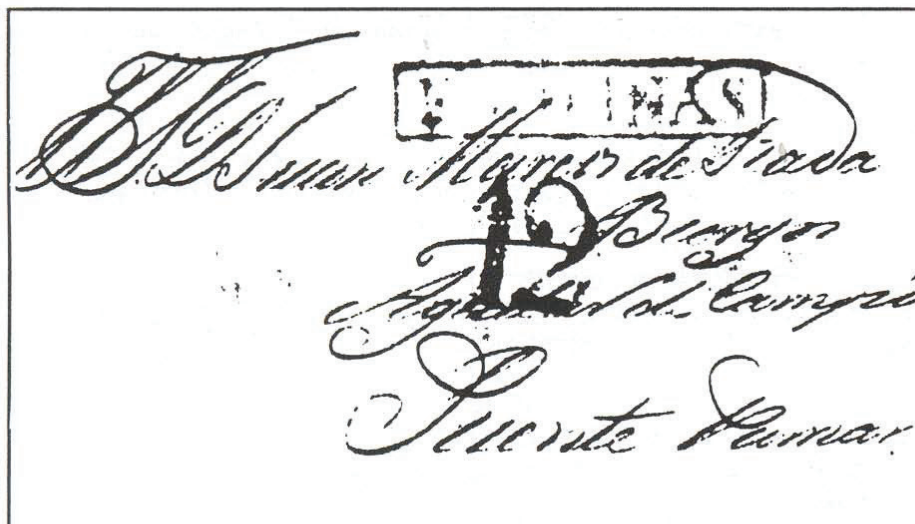


Figure 2 1830 letter from Manila to Puete Pumar, with earliest OM6R postmark

OM6R. FILIPINAS boxed seriffed upright letters in box, red, 6mm high and 46mm long. 1830 1850



Tizon & Guinovart first listed this postmark in 1971 (without usage dates) as No. 1. but as No. 7 in 1986, with usage dates 1843 - 1850, and rated RR. The author's collection has the earliest recorded use, on June 15, 1830, to Puete Pumar (SL, May 1996, Lot 1306) (figure 2). Other items at recent auctions are:

1835 to Astorga (SL, Oct. 1992, Lot 941) claimed in the catalogue to be the earliest known strike

1843 (February 20) partial strike, to Jose Matia, Cadiz (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 38)

1847 to Jose Matia, Cadiz "por favor de Sr. Major Cabreira" (SL, Feb. 1992, Lot 3005; GF, May 1994, Lot 42)

1850 (March 21) to Jose Matia, Cadiz (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 37)

1850 (April 18) to Jose Matia, Cadiz (SL, June 1991, Lot 2301)

OM7. MANILA in seriffed upright letters without surrounding border, in black, dimensions not known (probably similar to OM5)⁹ 1842 - 1845

MANILA

Not listed in 1971 or 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart. Three examples have been recorded by the author:

1842 to Federico (Frederick) Huth, London, in collection of Fred R. Stubens (International Philippine Philatelic Society Newsletter, Vol 10, No. 4, Fourth Quarter 1990)

1845 to Ramon Rodriguez, Macao (SL, March 1994, Lot 1496) with fancy datestamp (see DS1), described in the catalogue as the only cover known with both markings (OM7 and DS1)

1845 incoming letter to Joaquin Venancio de Bermingham, mayor of Bulacan province (SL, May 1996, Lot 1309)

OM8. MANILA in seriffed upright letters without surrounding border, in black, 6 mm high and 30 mm long in Tizon & Guinovart illustration 1845

MANILA

Not listed in 1971 but included in 1986 as No. 8 by Tizon & Guinovart, with 1845 given as usage date, and rated RRR. The letters are taller but narrower compared to **OM7**. Only one item has appeared in recent auctions: 1845 (February 23) to Pedro Rubio, Navarra Province (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 25), with DS2 marking. The auction catalogue states that only two examples are known.

OM9. MANILA in seriffed upright letters without surrounding border, in black, 5 mm high and 32 mm long. 1845

MANILA

At first glance appears to be **OM8**, but closer inspection shows that this is a different postmark. Similar styling as **OM8**, but the letters are shorter and the word is wider. The letters have pronounced differences compared to **OM7**. Only one example recorded (SL, Feb. 1997, Lot 758), on internal mail from Manila to Nueva Caceres, Camarines Sur province (figure 3).

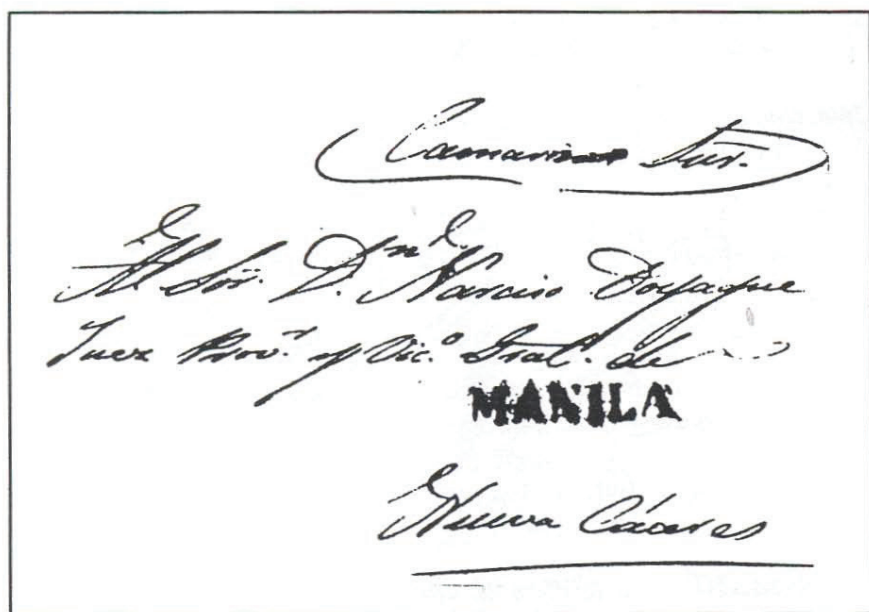


Figure 3 1845 internal mail from Manila to Nueva Cáceres, Canunmes Surprovincia, with OM9 marking.

POSTAGE DUE MARKINGS

We now come to the interesting non-origin markings found in early covers: the **4.U.**, **9.U.** and **3.P.** markings. The Antonio Torres/Galeria Filatelica de Barcelona auction of May 31, 1994 featuring K. Clark's collection, in describing for Lots I (1800 cover from Manila to Vitoria with **4.U.**) and 2 (1802 front of cover to Guatemala with **3.P.** corrected by **4.U.** with the "4" corrected manually to "6") stated that the "U" stood for "unidades" (or units) with a value of two reales per unit. Thus, the postal rate for the cover to Spain was 8 reales, and to Guatemala, 12 reales (nonSpanish destination). This does not, however, explain the **4.U.** markings on the early Belletti letters, nor the **9.U.** marking in B 1796/05/04. Neither has the author found any explanation for "P" in the **3.P.** marking.

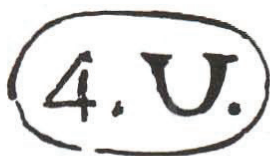
Lewis has advanced the theory that the U actually is a V representing "reales de vellon" as compared to P. representing "reales de plata"¹⁰. This proposition has also been stated by Don Jose Llach of Soler ~ Llach⁸.

PD1. 4.U. inside fancy oval with ornamentations, in red, dimensions not known 1776.



Unrecorded in 1971 and 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart. The only example recorded is on Belletti B 1776/08/02 with **OM2** (George Alevizos, Dec. 1993 auction)

PD2. 4.U. inside plain oval, in red, dimensions not known 1800 - 1802



Unrecorded in 1971 and 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart. Examples of recorded usage are:

ca. 1800 to Santiago de Ayala, Vitoria (SL, Feb. 1992, Lot 3001; GF, May 1994, Lot 1) with **OM1** "por el bergantin Felix," charged 8 reales in Spain.

undated ("end of the 18th century") to Santiago de Ayala, Vitoria (*sic*) (SL, Nov. 1990, Lot 3269 with **OM1** "por vera Cruz a Cadiz" and "Fragata Sta. Rita"

undated to Santiago de Ayala, Vitoria (GF, March 1989, Lot 3392) with **OM1** "por Madrid" and "por la fragata Sta. Rita"

ca. 1802 to Juez General de Bienes de Difuntos, Guatemala, with the **4.U.** struck over **3.P.**, and the "4" corrected to "6" in manuscript (GF, May 1994, Lot 2) with **OM1**.

1802 (July 19) to Francisco Amparan, Aspeitia (GF, Jan. 1991, Lot 13) with **OM1**

PD3. 9.U. inside plain oval, in red, dimensions not known 1796 - 1800.



Not recorded in 1971 and 1986 by Tizon & Guinovart. Two examples recorded: Belletti B 1796/05/04 with **OM1**

ca. 1800 to Francisco Gutierrez, Castilla la Vieja (SL, Oct. 1992, Lot 940) with **OM1** "fragata Rey Carlos 1"

PD4. 3.P. inside plain oval, in red,
dimensions unknown 1790- 1802



Not recorded in 1971 and 1986 by Tizon
& Guinovart. Two examples recorded:

cat 1790 to Manuel Letuna y Equizabal, Guatemala (SL, June 1991,
Lot 2288) with **OM2**

cat 1802 to Juez General de Bienes de Difuntos, Guatemala (GF, May
1994, Lot 2), with **PD3** originally struck, and superimposed with **PD2**
4.U., with the "4" in turn manually corrected to "6".

Continued Next Issue

PHILIPPINE MAIL OF THE FRENCH-SPANISH CAMPAIGN IN COCHINCHINA, 1858 - 1862

by
Don Peterson

One interesting historical event of the Philippines was the role the Spanish government played in the affairs of French Indo China in the mid- 1800s, then referred to as Cochinchina. One result of this involvement by the Spanish was the occurrence of mail from the Philippines to Cochinchina.

In July 1857, the Spanish missionary, Fray Jose Maria Diaz Sanjurjo, was beheaded in Tokin, Cochinchina. France, which had already pursued an expansionist policy in the Far East, decided on military intervention in order to obtain restitution from the Annamite Government in Cochinchina for the crime committed as well as to assure that similar acts would not recur. At the same time, France requested cooperation from Spain.

As a result, in 1858, a French-Spanish Expeditionary Force, consisting of 1,300 French soldiers and two Spanish convoys of 500 soldiers proceeded from Manila to Cochinchina. The 500 soldiers in the Spanish convoys were all of Philippine origin, except for the officers, who were Spanish. The Spanish contingent was under the command of Colonel