

The production of Philippine postage stamps was authorized by a circular from Madrid, dated January 12, 1853, and subsequently by a December 7, 1853, order from Juan Antonio de Urbiztondo, Governor-General of the Philippines. The first postage stamps of the Philippines, issued February 1854, had the following denominations: 5, 10 Cuartos de Plata Fuerte, 1 and 2 Reales de Plata Fuerte.

The design of this issue was based on the Spanish stamp issue of 1853. The differences being the alteration of the date to read "1854 Y 1855" instead of "1853", and the change in the value tablets to reflect the colonial currency. In addition, it may be noted that the depiction of Queen Isabella II of Spain is relatively primitive, reportedly much to the displeasure of the depicted person.

The stamps were hand-engraved on copper plates in Manila, by an Artillery Corps Sergeant in the Spanish Garrison. Being hand-engraved, each stamp in the sheet differs in detail. Therefore, it is possible to plate the stamps of this issue.

However, the copper plates used for this issue wore out rapidly and underwent a re-engraving for a second print run. The retouched plates often produced stamps with coarse lines of shading on the background around the Queen's head. The stamps were printed by Plana, Compañía Jorba y Cia, Plaza de Binondo, Manila, in sheets of forty stamps, (eight horizontal rows of five).



Cover to Malate (Manila). It was franked with a 5 Cuartos de Plata Fuerte imperforate stamp of the 1854 issue. It is a stamp from the "redrawn plate", position 22. The adhesive was tied by a circular dotted cancel, most likely applied at non-Manila origin. The cover was stamped on front by a large Baeza (receiving) circular cancel "MANILA / 31 / ISLs. FILIPs." on July 27, 1856.

Franked with 5 Cuartos de Plata Fuerte. This corresponded to the rate of a cover weighing up to 8 Adarmes (½ ounce) valid from February 1, 1854 to February 17, 1871. This rate was also established by Royal Decree on December 7, 1853 and has been confirmed by several subsequent Decrees.