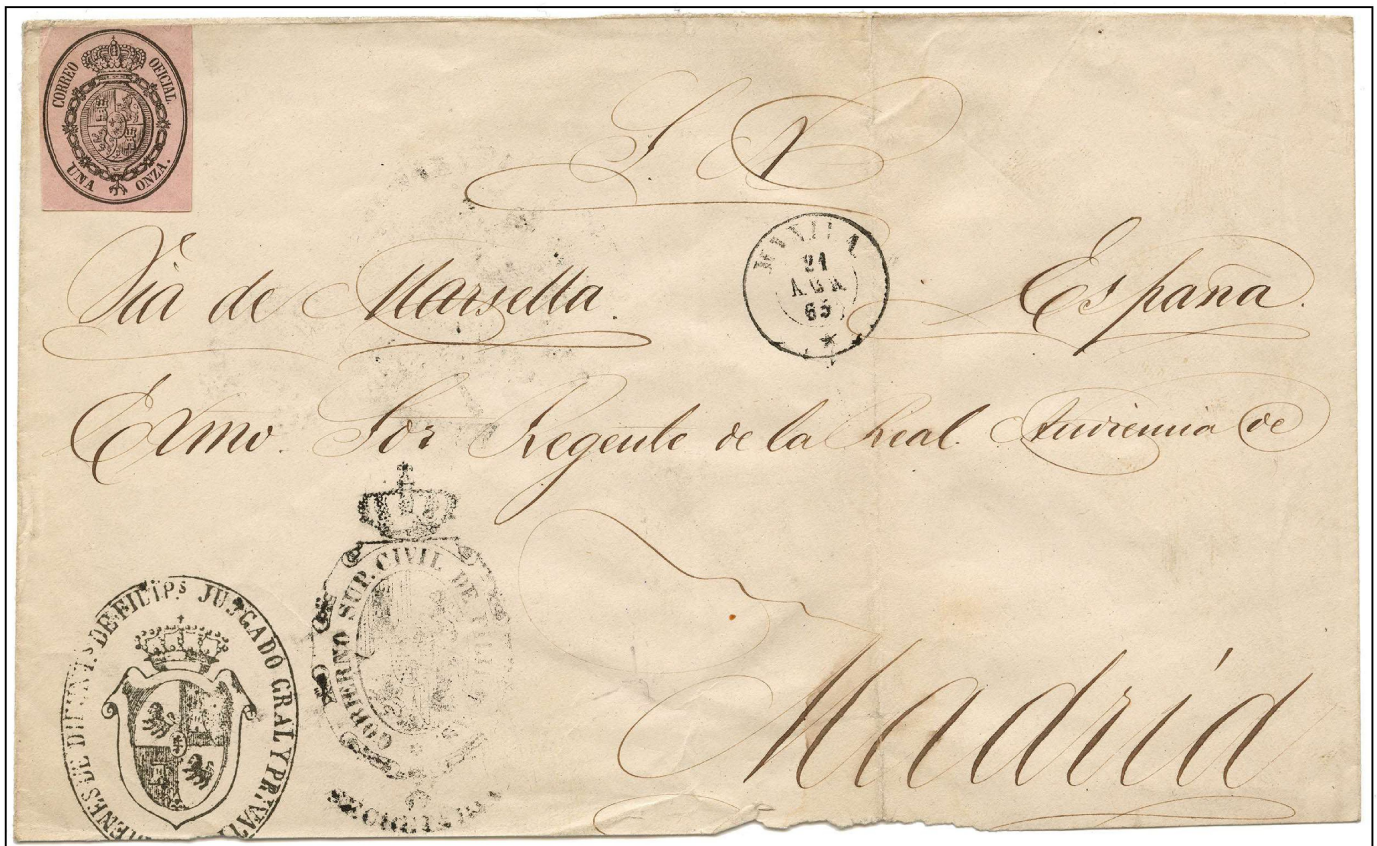


A free franking privilege was granted to government and ecclesiastical offices in 1846 and probably earlier. However, for a short period of time in the 1850s and 1860s, official stamps were used in rare cases. Four different official stamps, which had already been used in Spain since 1854, were introduced in the colonies three years later. The regulations stated that the stamps were to be used on all official letters on the Philippines, this was urged with a royal decree of February 24, 1858. Nevertheless, only very few official covers to Spain were franked with such a stamp as the decree was probably often ignored due to the additional effort.

Official covers to Spain could be sent on two routes, via the Isthmus of Suez and via the Cape of Good Hope. If sent via Suez route, the covers were sent beforehand to the government secretariat to be collected in a parcel. Due to the high cost of that route, mail should be sent via the Cape route unless there was a justified reason.

This was also considered when the official stamps were introduced. According to a decree of the government of the Philippines dated June 15, 1857, the stamps should be affixed at the government secretariat at covers that were routed via Suez. Otherwise, the stamps were to be affixed at the respective offices of origin, which should have previously ordered the stamps from the island government.

The use of the stamps was abolished in the Philippines in 1866 by a Royal Decree of September 4, 1866.



Envelope sent by the Property Court of the Philippines in Manila, where it was marked with an oval official seal and a note "S.N." (Servicio Nacional). It was postmarked by the Manila post office on April 21, 1865.

As the cover was to be sent via the Suez route, "via Marsella", it was forwarded to the Government Secretary's Office, where the secretary applied its official seal with crown on the front to confirm that the intended route of the shipment was in order. The cover was then transported to Spain in a larger parcel together with other official letters.

On the back an arrival postmark from Madrid was cancelled on June 18, 1865.

In accordance with the royal decree dated January 1, 1858, an official stamp was affixed to the cover. It was to be affixed by the secretary. However, due to the aforementioned procedure, the stamp remained uncanceled.

The stamp on the cover was designated for a cover weighing up to one ounce.