

Nepal: The First Issue, 1881 to 1885

Nepal's first issue of postage stamps was printed between April 1881 and the end of 1885. Unlike later issues that were printed on domestic paper made from the bark of native evergreen trees, the first issue stamps were printed on white wove paper of European manufacture. Between April and June 1881 sheets were gummed and pin-perforated. Printings between June 1881 and 1885 were issued without gum and imperforate.

Stamps were printed in Kathmandu using flatbed, letterpress equipment from forms composed of 64 individual cliches locked in a frame. The forms used to print the first issue all included marginal inscriptions. The use of new form that included a variation in the inscription or in the position of a cliche, was deemed to be a new "setting" by Hellrigl and Vignola in their 1984 book. This nomenclature has become accepted in Nepal philately and is retained in this exhibit.

Pin-Perforated and gummed



1 anna

2 annas

4 annas

Imperforate without gum



1 anna

2 annas

4 annas

Complete Imperforate Set on Cover



ex Singer

October 1881 Jaleswar registered cover to Kathmandu, prepaid 7 annas
earliest of three known uses with complete set of the first issue



Pin-Perforated (1881)

Some of the initial sheets printed between April and June 1881 were pin-perforated and gummed. Three settings were used to print the one and two annas stamps while two were used for the four annas. Few of these stamps are known used and the four annas shown below is the only known according to Hellrigl.

shades with white gum



1 anna



1 anna



2 annas
frameline at left
(setting 3)



2 annas



4 annas

shades with brown gum



1 anna



2 annas



4 annas

Kathmandu cancels



1, 2 and 4 annas with Kathmandu cancels
the four annas is the only reported used example

set is ex Hellrigl



Pin-Perforated, One Anna



The first setting was the only one that included side inscriptions and ornamental borders.



1 anna, setting 1
positions 57-60, 63-64

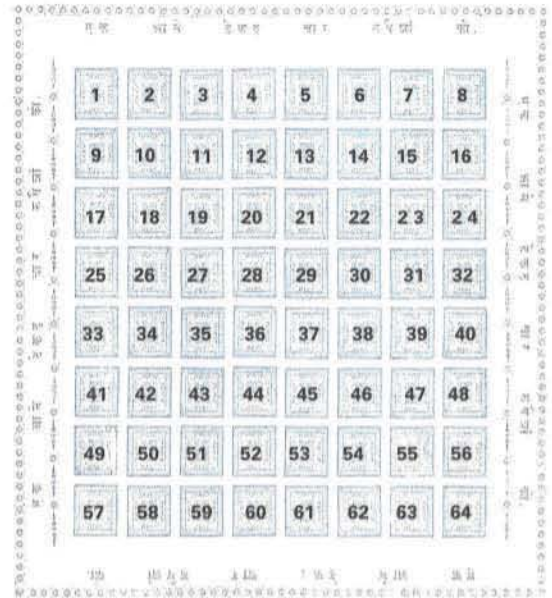


Diagram of sheet layout (64 stamps) annotated with position numbers.



constant flaw, split cliché
position 48, white gum



Pin-Perforated, One Anna on Cover



Kathmandu swirl cancel and dispatch backstamp
cancel with initial "Ne" (Nepal) used at the capital city



ex Singer

25 April 1885 Kathmandu to Kalaiya, prepaid domestic rate with 1 anna **pin-perforated** the stamp was partially separated from sheet by scissors rather than being pulled apart **the latest of the five reported uses of one anna pin-perforated on cover**

Uses of the one anna perforated on cover include three others from Kathmandu, dated between May 1881 and November 1883, as well as one from Jumla used in September 1881.

The one anna postal charge was for a letter weighing up to one tola in weight sent any distance within Nepal. The one tola weight was designated to be equal to the weight of an India one rupee coin.



Pin-Perforated, Two Annas on Cover



Registered Combination Cover with One Anna Imperforate



Rautahat (initial "Rau") cancel used at Kadarbin and dispatch datestamp



23 June 1881 Kadarban double weight registered cover to Kathmandu prepaid 7 annas rate (5 annas registry fee plus 2 annas double weight postage) prepaid with pair and single 2 annas **pin-perforated** plus 1 anna **imperforate**

the only reported use of two annas pin-perforated on cover

the only reported multiple of any denomination of 1881 to 1885 printings on cover

This cover, ex Gupta and Singer, has a paper pouch inner envelope. The pouch was hand-sewn to close it and the side back flaps were sealed with wax seals (note the small holes in flap where the wax was removed).



Imperforate (1881 to 1885)

After June 1881 stamps were issued only imperforate and without gum. The same settings that had been used previously were also used for the imperforates.

One Anna



positions 20-22
position 20 flattened corner



position 39
corner dent

Two Annas



Four Annas





Imperforate



After June 1881 stamps were only issued imperforate and without gum.



1 anna, positions 2-3/10-11
constant flaw: position 3 corner dent



2 annas, setting 3
positions 38-40/46-48



2 annas, setting 2, positions 53-56/61-64

Setting two is without ornaments and the inscriptions are positioned closer to the stamps than those in setting three.



4 annas, setting 1
rejoined positions 17-19/49-51



Imperforate, Two Annas

The First Tête-Bêche

The first inverted cliche in Nepal philately occurred in the third setting of the two annas denomination. Two unused pairs and the used strip below are known. Surprisingly, a strip of three is the largest used multiple of any of 1881 to 1885 printings and no four annas used strips are known.

Inverted Cliche, Setting 3



<< inverted cliche >>



ex Singer

center stamp, position 22, the inverted cliche
only known used example
largest two annas used multiple



One Anna on Cover

Earliest Use of One Anna Imperforate on Cover

Postal service in Nepal only extended to domestic mail. Single rate uses of the one anna stamp account for about 50 of the 60 reported first issue stamp uses on cover.



Kalaiya datestamp on reverse and "Ka" in bars cancel



ex Pattiz

16 June 1881 Kalaiya to Kathmandu, prepaid 1 anna
earliest reported use of the one anna imperforate

Nepal postmark dates were rendered according to Bikram Sambat (B.S.) calendar. The roughly equivalent A.D. date may be calculated by deducting 56 years, 8 months and 17 days. This cover is dated (19)38/3/3 B.S. = 1881/June/16 A.D.



Two Annas on Cover

Earliest Use of Any Imperforate on Cover



Kathmandu swirl cancel



ex Hellrigl

13 June 1881 Kathmandu double weight cover to Gen. Shamsher in Palpa, prepaid 2 annas
earliest reported use two annas
earliest reported use of any imperforate issue on cover

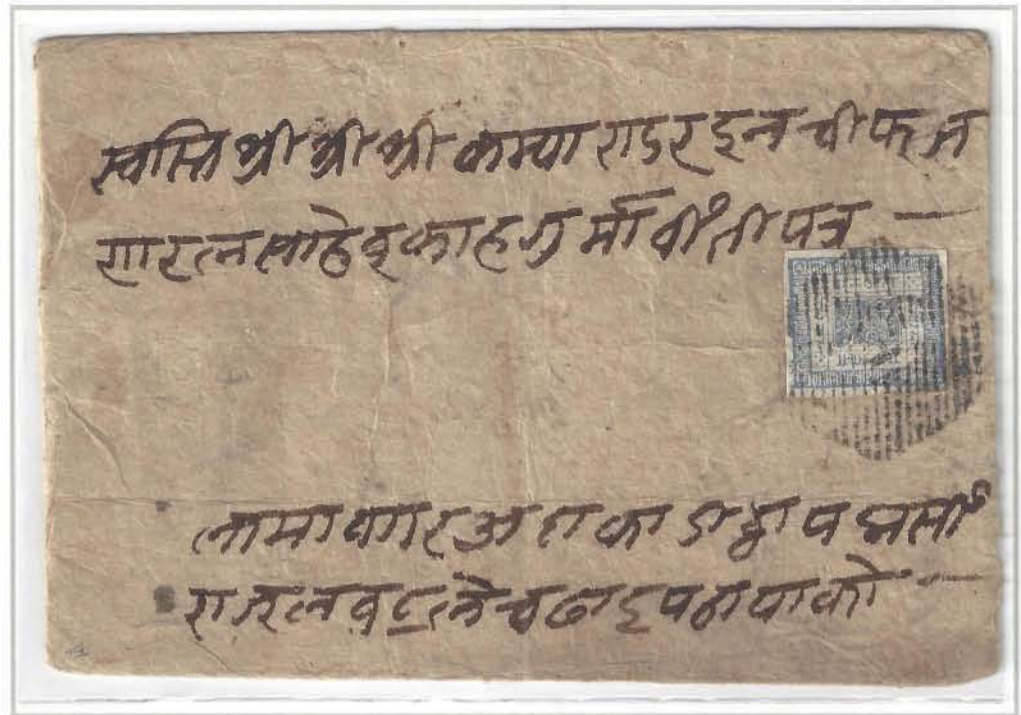
The rate for a double weight letter, weighing between one and two tolas, was two annas. There are six reported uses of the first issue two annas on cover paying the double rate.



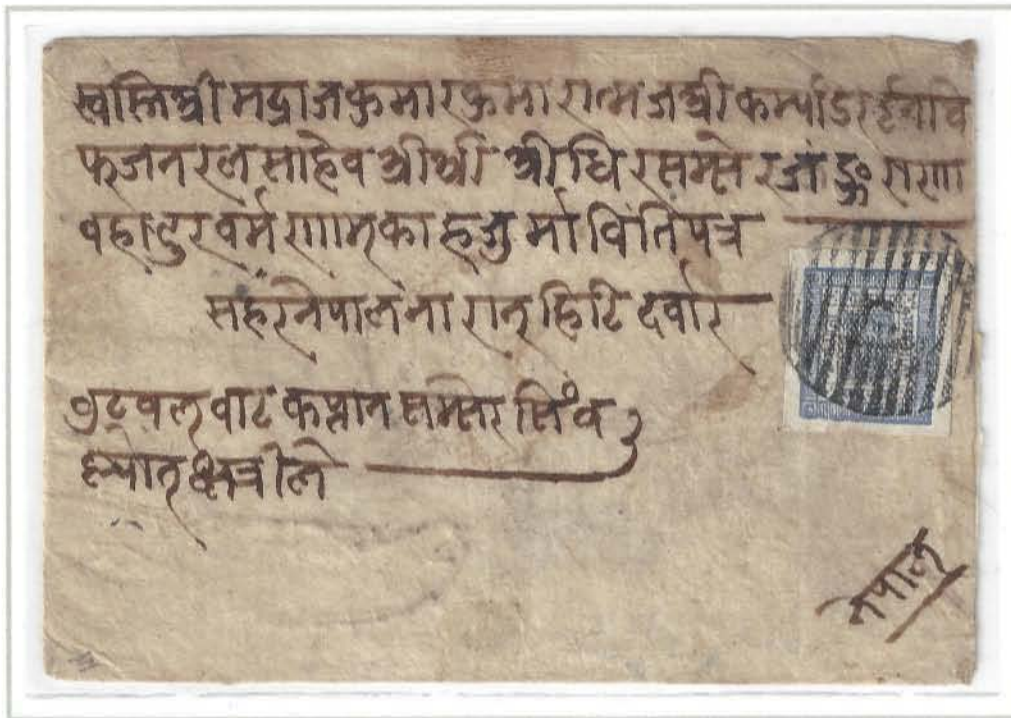
One Anna Uses on Cover



Dolakha



November 1883 Dolakha to Kathmandu, prepaid 1 anna

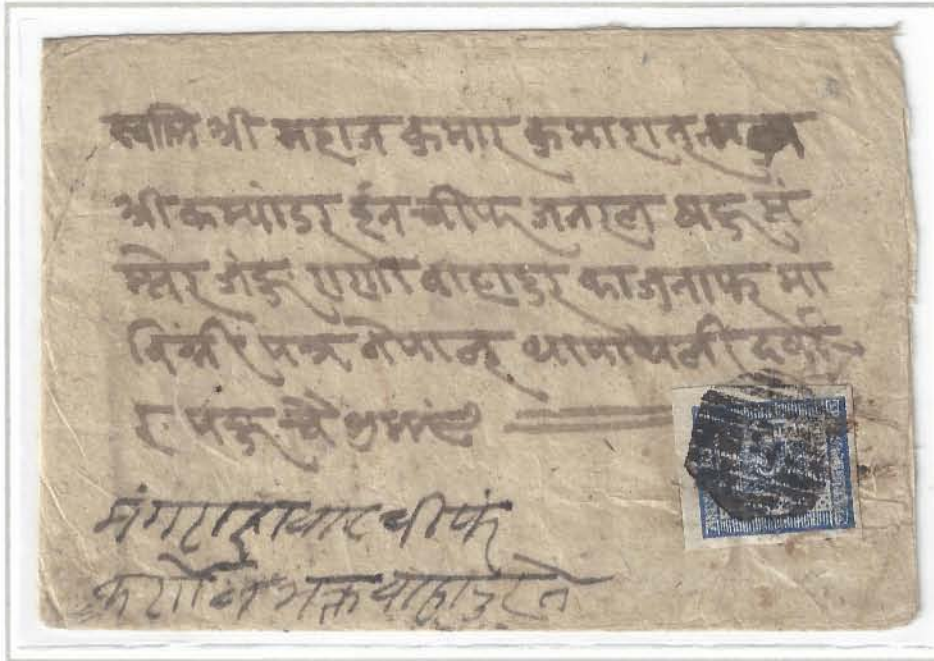


Butwal

January 1884 Butwal to Kathmandu, prepaid 1 anna



One Anna Uses on Cover

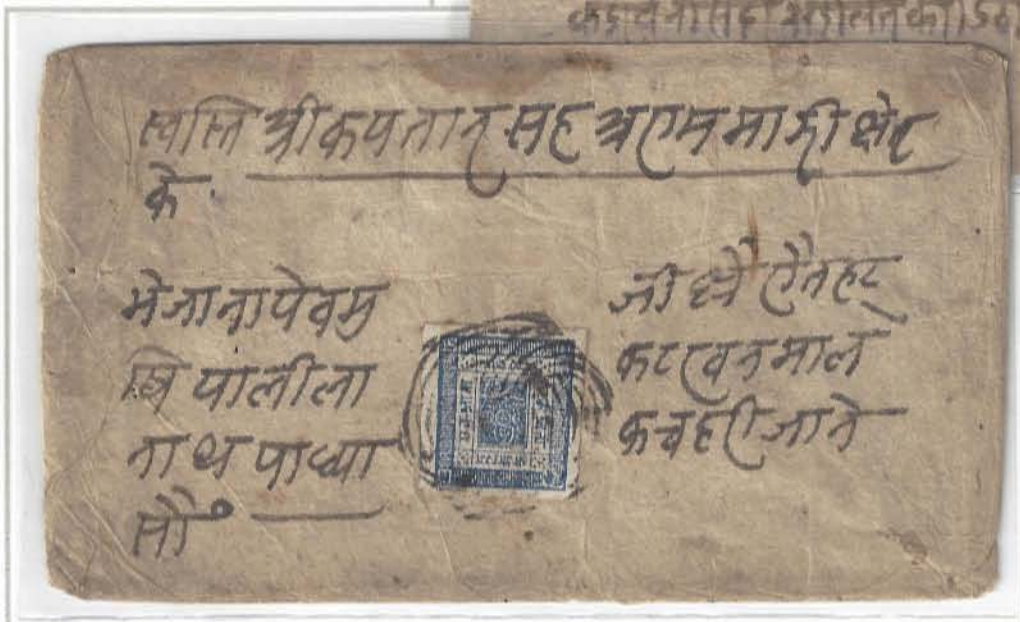


Siraha

March 1886 Siraha to Kathmandu, prepaid 1 anna



25 June 1881 Kadarban to Kathmandu, early use

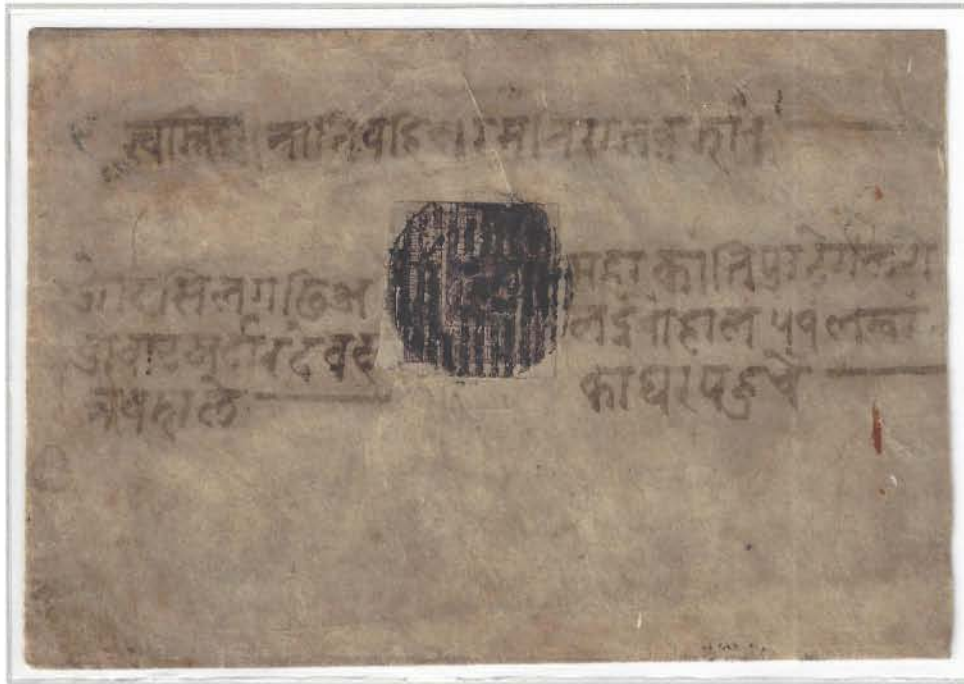


August 1883 Kathmandu to Kadarbin



Two Annas on Cover

Double Rate Uses



Doti

August 1884 Doti double weight parchment cover to Kathmandu, prepaid 2 annas
six reported uses of the two annas on double rate covers



Kalaiya



October 1889 Kalaiya double weight cover to Kathmandu, prepaid 2 annas
latest of six reported uses of the two annas on double rate covers



Kalaiya Cancels



inked "tree" in stamped rim, 1 and 4 annas



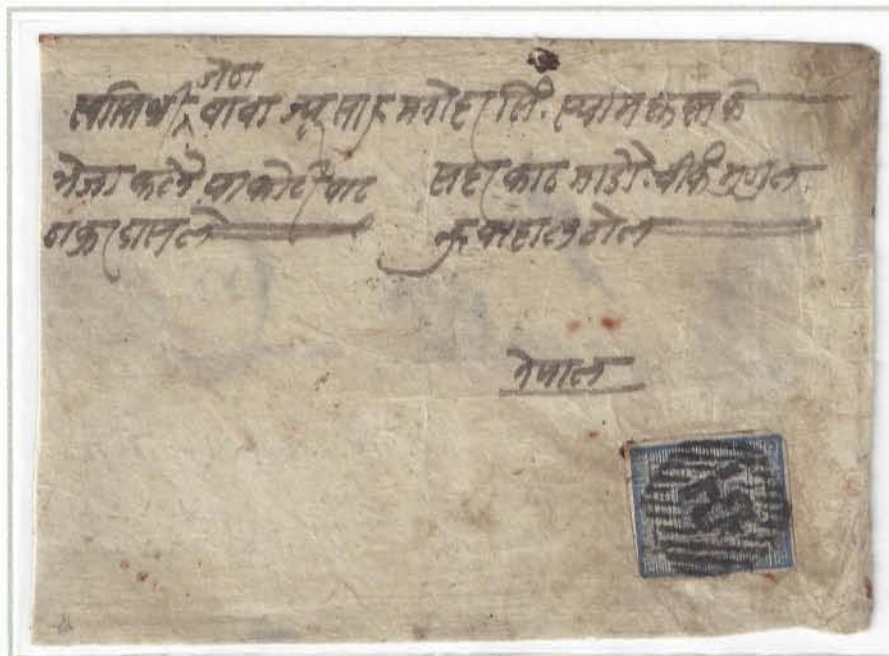
inked "Ka" on 1 anna



blue postmark used as cancel
also Kathmandu swirl cancel
1 anna **pin-perforated**



"Ka" in bars struck in blue-green
1 anna **pin-perforated** and 2 annas imperf



"Ka" in bars
in black

December 1884 Kalaiya to Kathmandu, prepaid 1 anna



Kathmandu Cancels



1 anna
the largest reported used multiple



July 1883 Kathmandu to Trisuli, prepaid 1 anna



2 annas



Uncommon Cancels



manuscript cancels, 1 anna
fewer than ten known



Bhagwanpur, 1 anna

Taulihawa, 1 anna

Dhankuta, 1 anna

The use of blue ink for cancels was generally abandoned by 1883.



Taulihawa post office seal cancels, 1 and 2 annas
fewer than ten known on first issue stamps



Lyanglyang, 2 annas

Jaleswar, 2 annas



Sarlahi, 4 annas