

World War Two Cross Border Censored Mail between Nepal and Tibet

Leo Martyn

With the outbreak of World War Two, censorship of cross-border communications between Nepal and Tibet was instituted. Although the two countries were not directly involved in the war (notwithstanding the participation of Nepalese Gurkha soldiers), because of their proximity to the countries that were, and their strategic location, the examination of their mail became a necessity. In fact, all of the countries related to the British Commonwealth were under postal censorship. The start of the war is generally accepted to be Sept 1, 1939 (invasion of Poland by Germany) and British censorship was instituted almost immediately.

The following conclusions are based on my collection and additional material from the collections of Jeremy Brewer and Dr. Wolfgang Hellrigl.

Darjeeling Station

The first censor station was established in Darjeeling, India. The censor devices were a printed re-sealing tape and a triangular shaped hand-stamp.



The date of the earliest examined cover is from Tibet to Nepal, April (day date is not clear), 1940.



May 17, 1940, Nepalese Postal Stationery envelope from Nepal to Lhasa.

The latest date recorded for Darjeeling Censorship is July 21, 1940 on a cover from Nepal to Tibet. (It appears that virtually all Nepal/Tibet cross-border correspondence during the war years was sent by Nepalese traders)



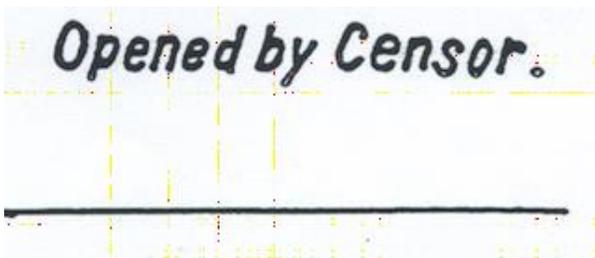
February (day date unclear), 1942, non-censored envelope posted at Kathmandu and received at the British Post Office in Pharijong, Tibet on February 23. A forwarding agent applied a local four thanka stamp for registered delivery to Lhasa via the Tibetan postal system.



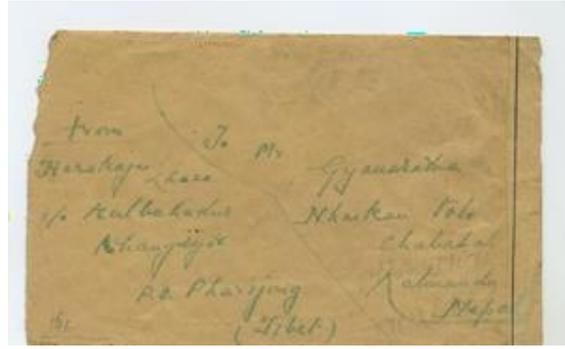
June 25, 1942, an unusually routed cover from Nepal addressed to Pharijong, Tibet, but it was transferred to the Dead Letter Office in Lucknow, India, on June 30. A manuscript notation indicates that the correspondence is to be forwarded to Gyantse via Darjeeling but no postal markings are present to indicate such a journey. It eventually reached Pharijong on July 6.

Gangtok Station

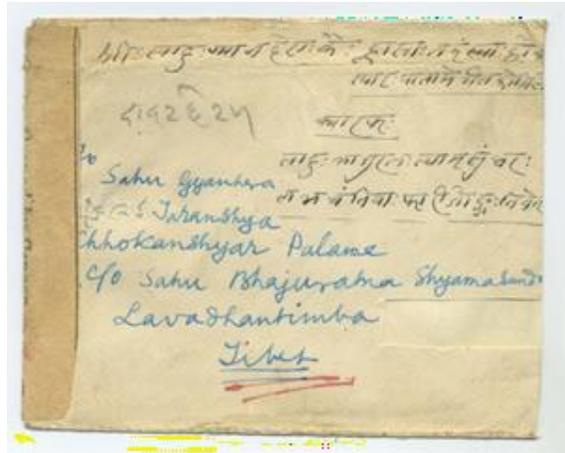
Sometime in August of 1942, the censorship of correspondence took place in Gangtok, Sikkim, using very unusual hand-stamp and re-sealing devices. The inscriptions on the re-sealing tapes and the hand-stamps exist both in English and Devanagari script (“JACH BATA KHOLIYAKO” - “Opened by Censor”). They were applied only in English, or only in Devanagari, or a combination of the two.



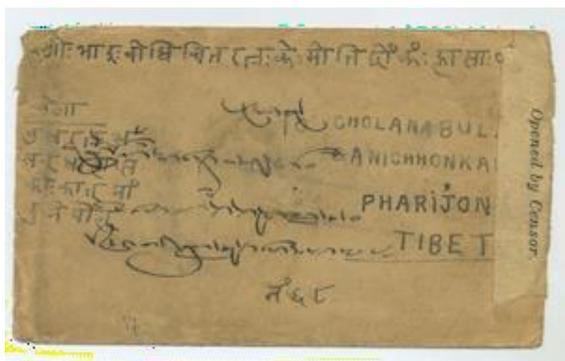
जाँचवाट खेल्निएको.



September 8, 1942, earliest recorded Gangtok censored cover, with all Devanagari script.



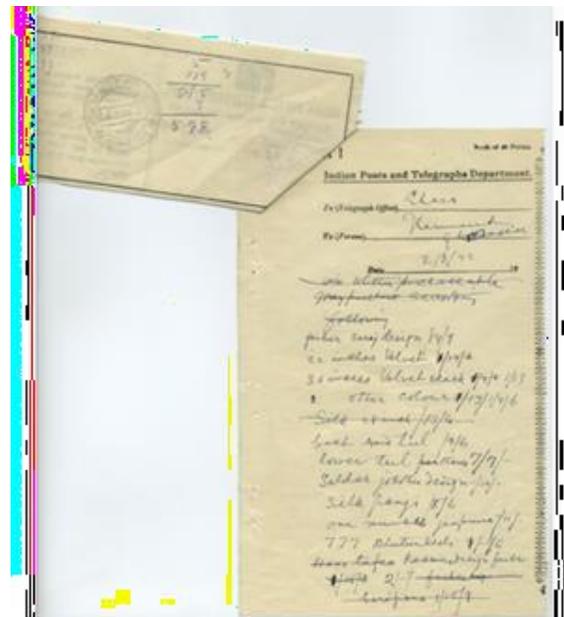
January 6, 1943, forwarded cover from Nepal to Lhasa via Pharijong with a mixture of an English re-sealing tape and Devanagari script hand-stamp.



February 6, 1943, double weight forwarded cover from Nepal to Lhasa via Pharijong with all English script.



June 15, 1943, forwarded cover from Nepal to Tibet without any censor markings. Apparently censorship had ended for mail between the two countries.



Regarding telephone/telegraph communications, no material has been discovered from those periods except a non-censored receipt attached to a sending copy of a telegram dated August 2, 1942 (same date of the earliest recorded Gangtok censor). It was transmitted from the British Legation in Kathmandu for receipt in Lhasa.

Time Table

	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
Darjeeling Censor Office	April/1940	July/1940
“NOT OPENED BY CENSOR”	June/1940	September/1940
	(Morenweiser lists May as the only month of use)	
Period of non-censorship	October/1940	June (July?)/1942
Gangtok	August (July?)/1942	June 1943

Of course, the dates cited are based on what has actually been examined and, invariably, new findings will refine the periods presented. Additional references are welcomed.

For additional information see Zivil [sic] Censorship In British India, 1939-1945, by Konrad Morenweiser.

All illustrated covers are from the collection of Leo Martyn.

Leo Martyn
P.O. Box 49263
Los Angeles, CA 90049
U.S.A.

himalayan@att.net