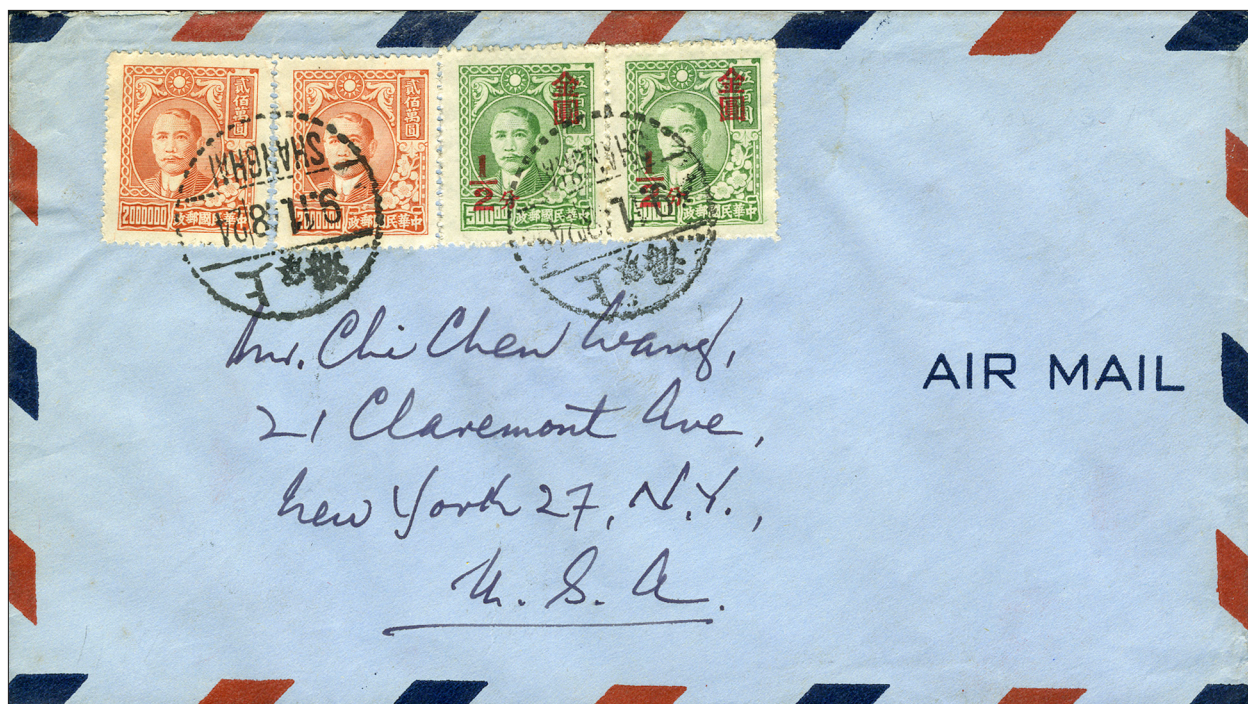




Chinese International Air Mail to 1949



1948 Shanghai to New York. Rate paid \$4,000,000.01.

Frank Walton RDP FRPSL

The Royal Philatelic Society London

8 June 2017

Plan of Display

Frame	Section	Topic
1	1.1	Pre-War Imperial Airways Service
2	1.2	Pre-War KLM Service
3	1.3	Pre-War Air France Service
4	1.4	Pre-War North American Service
5	1.5	Pre-War Russian Service
5	1.6	Other Pre-War Services
6	2.1	Wartime Services to Europe
7	2.2	Wartime Services to North America
8	2.3	Wartime Services to other Destinations
9-10	3.1	Post-War Services CNC \$
10-11	3.2	Post-War Services CNC \$ unified rates
11-12	3.3	Post-War Services Gold \$
12	3.3	Post-War Services Silver \$

Commercial Airlines

	Nationality	Name
AF	French	Air France
BOAC	British	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CNAC	Chinese	Chinese National Aviation Corporation
EAC	Chinese-German	Eurasia Aviation Corporation
IAL	British	Imperial Airways
KLM	Dutch	Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij
PAA	American	Pan American Airways
QANTAS	Australian	Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services
SABENA	Belgian	Société Anonyme Belge d'Exploitation de la Navigation Aérienne
TWA	American	Transcontinental and Western Airlines

Front Cover Illustration

The franking totalling \$4,000,000.01 is completely correct. From 6 Nov 1948 to 19 Nov 1948 (14 days), the surface first 20g rate was \$0.35, and air surcharge \$1.00 per 10g. Although the Gold Dollar currency was introduced on 19 August 1948 to replace the Chinese National Currency Dollar, postage rates were not quoted in the new currency until 6 November 1948. \$CNC adhesives were valid at the official exchange rate of \$CNC 3,000,000 = \$Gold 1.

This letter was posted on 9 Nov 1948 with a mixed franking of stamps from different currencies: a pair of CNC \$2,000,000 and a pair of Gold \$ ½c adhesives. Applying the 3,000,000:1 exchange rate, each \$2,000,000 stamp was worth 67c, hence a pair was worth \$1.34 and, when added to the 2 x ½c, a total of \$1.35 has been paid. This was the correct postage for a single rate air mail letter to the USA.

Introduction

Background

In September 1966 I started senior school and joined the School Stamp Club. In the first term there was an auction: just a few lots, but I remember being the only bidder on a packet of about 200 mixed Chinese stamps for the princely sum of one shilling. At the time I was still collecting the whole world, but with a growing focus on a few favourite countries. As most of my peers were only collecting GB and Commonwealth I hoovered anything Chinese that came up. A specialisation was thus founded that prevails half a century later. Although I still have all of my Chinese stamps, that particular collection has never really extended any further than a basic 'one of each mint and used as listed in SG Part 17'.

Decades later, I was fortunate enough to be invited to join the Society of Postal Historians, and my many friends there encouraged me to expand my horizons from being a 'one trick pony' in postal history terms where I was seen only as a collector of Sierra Leone. I had inevitably acquired a number of stamps on cover in my decades of collecting Chinese material, and I decided to focus on the covers that were flown out of China.

This collection grew as I started displaying portions of it to local societies, and I decided to exhibit competitively. But which class was it in? Despite the title indicating that it would be aerophilately, the write-up and treatment were definitely postal history and not aero, so this is where it was entered. This collection did receive an FIP Large Gold medal in the postal history class at London 2015.

Structure of Display

The first covers that were carried by air from China were dispatched during 1931, and that marks the starting date for this collection. The end point of the display is the Communist regime that came into effect in October 1949. This date range is broken down into three time periods which offer different key aspects for study:

1. Pre-War The different European airlines had fierce price competition as they fought to obtain sufficient market share to make their services viable. The marginally different rates cause difficulty to the Chinese PO to ensure correct price was paid. This situation was resolved when the rates to Europe were unified in Spring 1939.
2. Wartime Many pragmatic routes were sought and developed to enable the services to avoid flying over territories which were experiencing hostilities. This period extends well after the end of the war as it took a long time to re-establish civilian services due to the shortage of aeroplanes and personnel.
3. Post-War Although the routes settled down and flights became much more frequent, the devastating problem of hyperinflation and currency revaluations caused the rates charged to be frequently increased.

Throughout the two decades that are covered, only commercial mail is shown; philatelic first flight material is banished! Not all routes and rates can be shown in 108 sheets, so more unusual routes and/or short-lived rates are favoured. These rarer items are highlighted with **red text**. The definition of 'wartime' does of course vary by geography.



Frank Walton RDP FRPSL

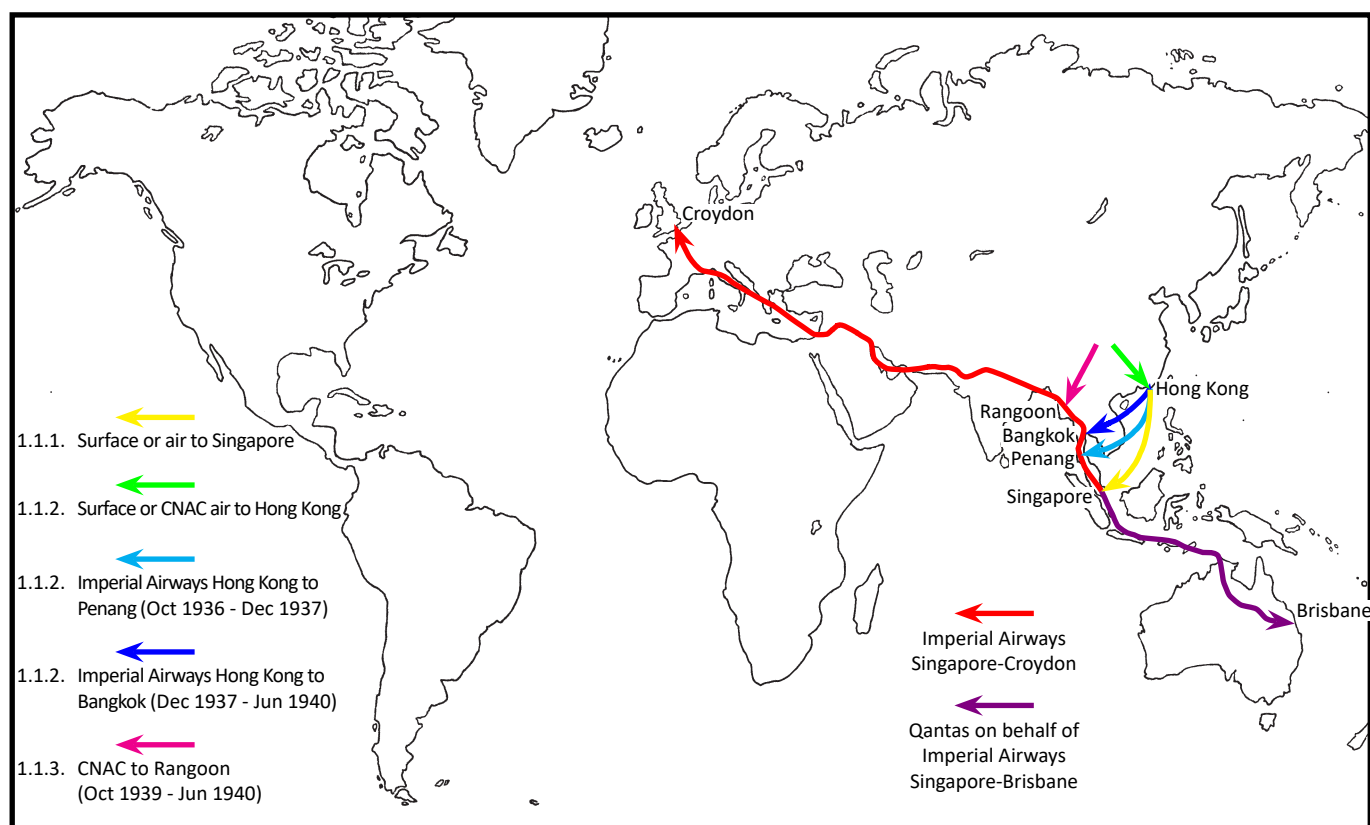
1. International Services prior to World War II

1.1 British Imperial Airways Empire Service

The first acceptance of air mail to connect with the British Imperial Airways service between the United Kingdom and Australia was on 19 May 1934. In the pre-war period, connections were made at Singapore, Hong Kong, Penang, Bangkok and Rangoon. This service was used until Italy entered the war in June 1940 and closed Mediterranean airspace.

Imperial Airways west-bound service: Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Bangkok, Rangoon, Calcutta, Karachi, Bahrain, Baghdad, Alexandria, Athens, Rome, Marseilles, Paris to Croydon.

Imperial Airways east-bound service: Singapore, Batavia, Darwin to Brisbane. Operated by Qantas Empire Airways.



Numerous different route and rate combinations were used on this service between May 1934 and June 1940:

An extra \$0.25 (per 20g route 1.1.1, or per 5g routes 1.1.2 & 1.1.3) was payable if the CNAC connecting air mail service was used.

In the late 1930s there was much competition between IAL, Air France and KLM to provide an air mail service to Europe. All had different rates and the postal authorities struggled to validate a rate and to sort the mail by the service requested. This situation was resolved on 19 April 1939 by the unification of rates to destinations irrespective of carrier.

Rate	Start date	Surface first 20g	Surface +20g	Air per 5g	Reg Fee	Express Fee
1.1.1.1	19 May 1934	0.25	0.15	0.49	0.25	0.50
1.1.1.2	19 May 1935	0.25	0.15	0.46	0.25	0.50
1.1.1.3	1 Jun 1935	0.20	0.12	0.37	0.20	0.40
1.1.1.4	1 Feb 1936	0.25	0.15	0.46	0.25	0.50
1.1.1.5	26 Aug 1936	0.25	0.15	0.45	0.25	0.50
1.1.2.1	15 Oct 1936	0.25	0.15	0.55	0.25	0.50
1.1.2.2	19 Dec 1937	0.25	0.15	0.55	0.25	0.50
1.1.2.3	8 Mar 1938	0.25	0.15	0.45	0.25	0.50
1.1.2.4	19 Apr 1939	0.25	0.15	0.50	0.25	0.50
1.1.2.5	1 Sep 1939	0.50	0.30	1.00	0.50	1.00
1.1.2.6	1 Nov 1939	0.50	0.30	1.75	0.50	1.00
1.1.3.1	30 Oct 1939	0.50	0.30	1.00	0.50	1.00
1.1.3.2	1 Nov 1939	0.50	0.30	2.00	0.50	1.00
13 Jun 1940 route ceased						

1.1.2 IAL Hong Kong to Penang or Bangkok, IAL Empire Service to Europe



27 Feb 1937 - Hankow to Linköping, Sweden. Hong Kong (4 Mar) backstamp. Handstamp 'VIA HONGKONG AND I.A.L.' applied at Shanghai. Quadruple letter (Rate 1.1.2.1) \$0.25 (Surface) + 4 x \$0.55 (Air) = \$2.45.
Paid \$2.65; the further \$0.20 paid for the additional connection to Sweden.



28 Dec 1938 - Shanghai to Brussels, Belgium. Hong Kong backstamp (3 Jan 1939). 'By I.A.L.' applied in Shanghai. 'BY AIR TO LONDON ONLY' applied in Hong Kong. Double letter (Rate 1.1.2.3) \$0.25 (Surface) + 2 x \$0.45 (Air) = \$1.15.

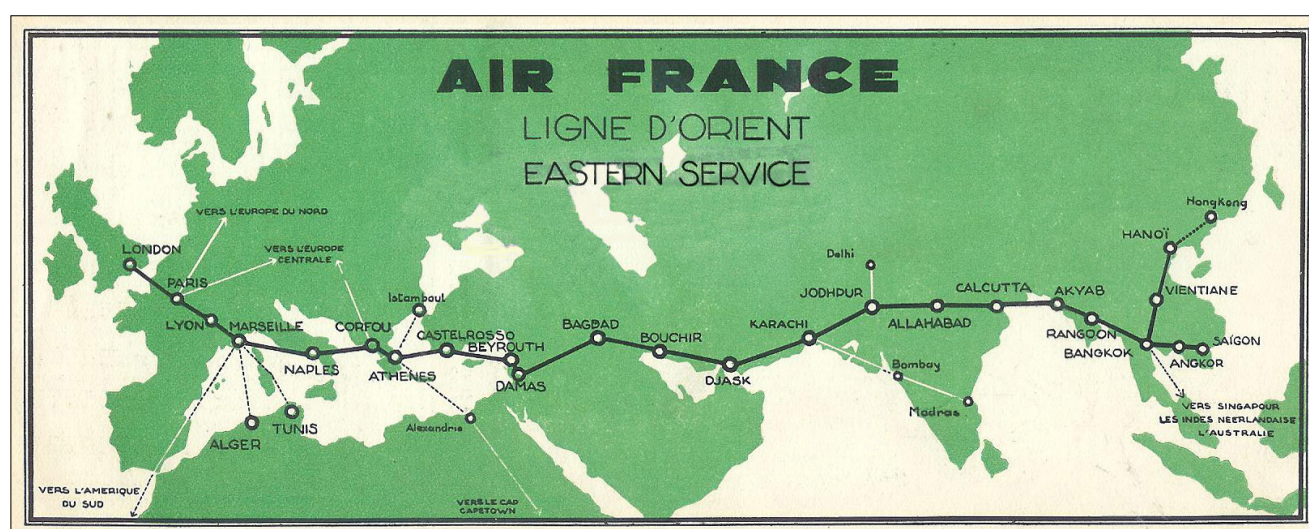
1.2 Air France Eastern Service

The French service from Saigon to Marseilles was operated weekly from April 1931, and began to be used by the southern Yunnan province from September 1931. It was not used generally by the Chinese Post Office until 31 December 1932. Mail destined for Europe had to be endorsed "Via Saigon-Marseilles Air Line".

Initially all mail was sent to Saigon by sea, but feeder services were developed over the next few years:

Jan 1935	Air France	Hanoi to Bangkok
10 Jul 1936	CNAC	Canton to Hanoi
16 Dec 1937	Eurasia	Kunming to Hanoi
10 Aug 1938	Air France	Hong Kong to Hanoi.

Air France Eastern Service: Saigon, Angkor, Bangkok, Rangoon, Akyab, Calcutta, Allahabad, Jodhpur, Karachi, Djask, Bouchir, Baghdad, Damas, Beyrouth, Castelrosso, Athens, Corfu, Naples to Marseilles. Onward links became available to Paris and London.



Air France route taken from Summer 1935 timetable.

The rate depended on the country of destination, although the rate to Western Europe was unified in April 1939. Some examples:

Start date	Surface	Marseilles	Rest of France	Europe to Marseilles	Europe from Marseilles
	first 20g	Air per 10g	Air per 10g	Air per 10g	
2 Aug 1932	0.25	3.00			
31 Dec 1932	0.25	1.48	1.58	1.58	
		Air per 5g	Air per 5g	Air per 5g	Air per 20g
3 Jun 1933	0.25	0.69	0.74	0.69	0.19
19 Mar 1935	0.25	0.61	0.65	0.61	0.17
1 Jun 1935	0.20	0.49	0.53	0.49	0.14
1 Feb 1936	0.25	0.61	0.65	0.61	0.17
14 Feb 1936	0.25	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.00
1 May 1936	0.25	0.61	0.65	0.61	0.17
10 Jul 1936	0.25	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.00
19 Apr 1939	0.25	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.00
1 Sep 1939	0.50	1.25	1.25	1.25	0.00
1 Nov 1939	0.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	0.00
17 Jul 1940	route ceased				

An additional fee was payable if the internal Chinese air mail service was used. \$0.15 per 20g until 31 Jan 1933, \$0.25 after.

1.2.1 Surface to Saigon, Air France to Marseilles



20 Oct 1934 - Shanghai to Geneva, Switzerland. Paid \$0.97 (\$0.52 on front and \$0.45 on back). Single rate letter should have been \$0.25 (Surface) + \$0.69 (Air to Marseilles) + \$0.19 (Air from Marseilles) = \$1.13, i.e. underpaid \$0.16. The shortage was recognised in Shanghai where the boxed T Ctmes handstamp was applied and marked double the deficiency at 32c. The cover also has the rare *Par Avion Saigon-Marseille et au delà de Marseille* handstamp, indicating that the letter was intended to be flown beyond Marseilles.

1.2.2 Eurasia feeder service from Kunming to Hanoi; Air France to Marseilles



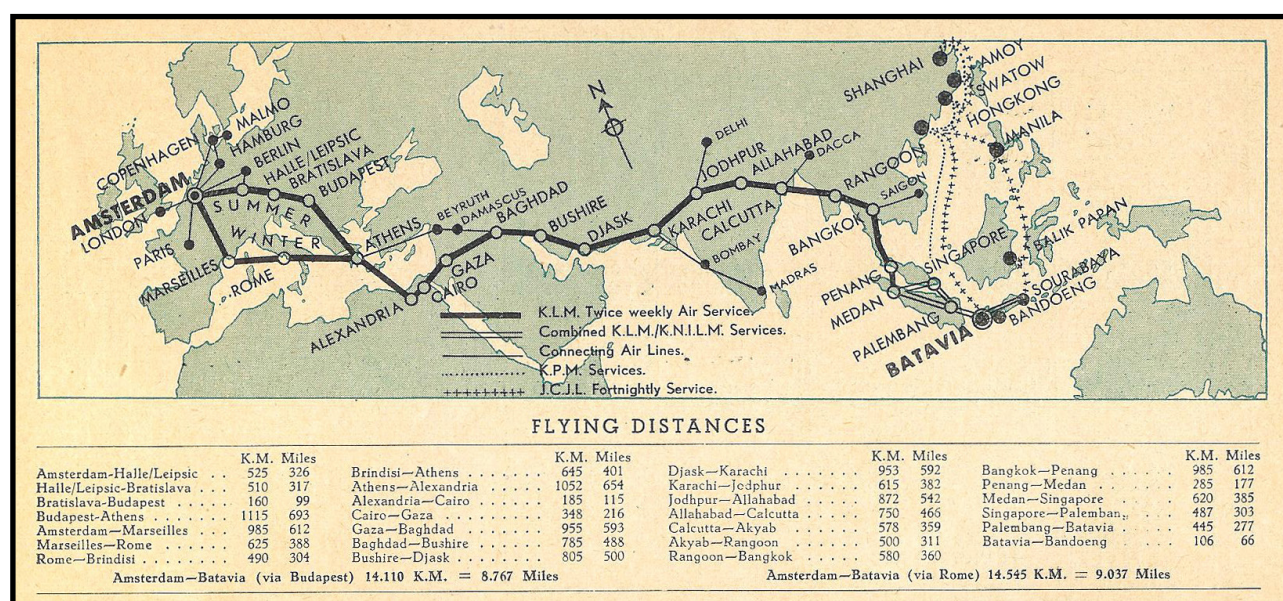
28 Dec 1938 - Kunming to Berlin, Germany. No backstamps. Single rate letter \$0.25 (Surface) + \$0.65 (Air) = \$0.90. Seldom encountered single adhesive paying correct rate.

1.3 Dutch Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (KLM) Service

Although the Dutch first flew the Amsterdam to Bandung route on 1 October 1924, the Chinese Post Office did not accept mail until August 1933. Initially mail went via Hong Kong and then by sea to Singapore.

KLM west-bound service in 1936: Bandung, Batavia, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Medan, Penang, Bangkok, Rangoon, Calcutta, Karachi, Djask, Bushire, Basra, Baghdad, Lydda, Alexandria, Athens and Amsterdam. The route between Athens and Amsterdam varied: Winter - Athens, Rome, Marseilles, Amsterdam; Summer - Athens, Budapest, Bratislava, Halle, Amsterdam.

In May 1940, following the German invasion of the Netherlands, the European terminus became Naples. As the war heightened in Europe, the Chinese Post Office ceased accepting mail for the KLM service from 17 June 1940.



KLM Bandung to Amsterdam Service as illustrated in the KLM 1936 Timetable.

From the first acceptance of Chinese mail in August 1933 until 20 October 1938, the exchange point was Singapore. From 21 October 1938 until 18 April 1939 mail was transferred at Saigon. A third transit place of Hanoi was used from 19 April 1939 until the route ceased in July 1940.

The rate depended on the country of destination, although the rate to Western Europe was unified in April 1939. Some examples:

Start date	Surface first 20g	Netherlands Air per 5g	UK Air per 5g	France Air per 5g	Germany Air per 5g
Aug 1933	0.25	0.45	0.47	0.44	‡
17 Aug 1934	0.25	0.45	0.47	‡	0.44
19 Mar 1935	0.25	0.42	0.43	0.40	‡
1 Jun 1935	0.20	0.33	0.35	‡	0.32
1 Feb 1936	0.25	0.42	0.43	0.40	‡
5 Jun 1936	0.25	0.40	0.45	‡	0.40
19 Apr 1939	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
1 Sep 1939	0.50	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
1 Nov 1939	0.50	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75
17 Jul 1940	route ceased				

‡ Direct mail to France or Germany was seasonal.

An additional \$0.25 per 20g was payable if the CNAC air mail service to Singapore was used.

1.3.1 China to Singapore by Surface, KLM to Amsterdam



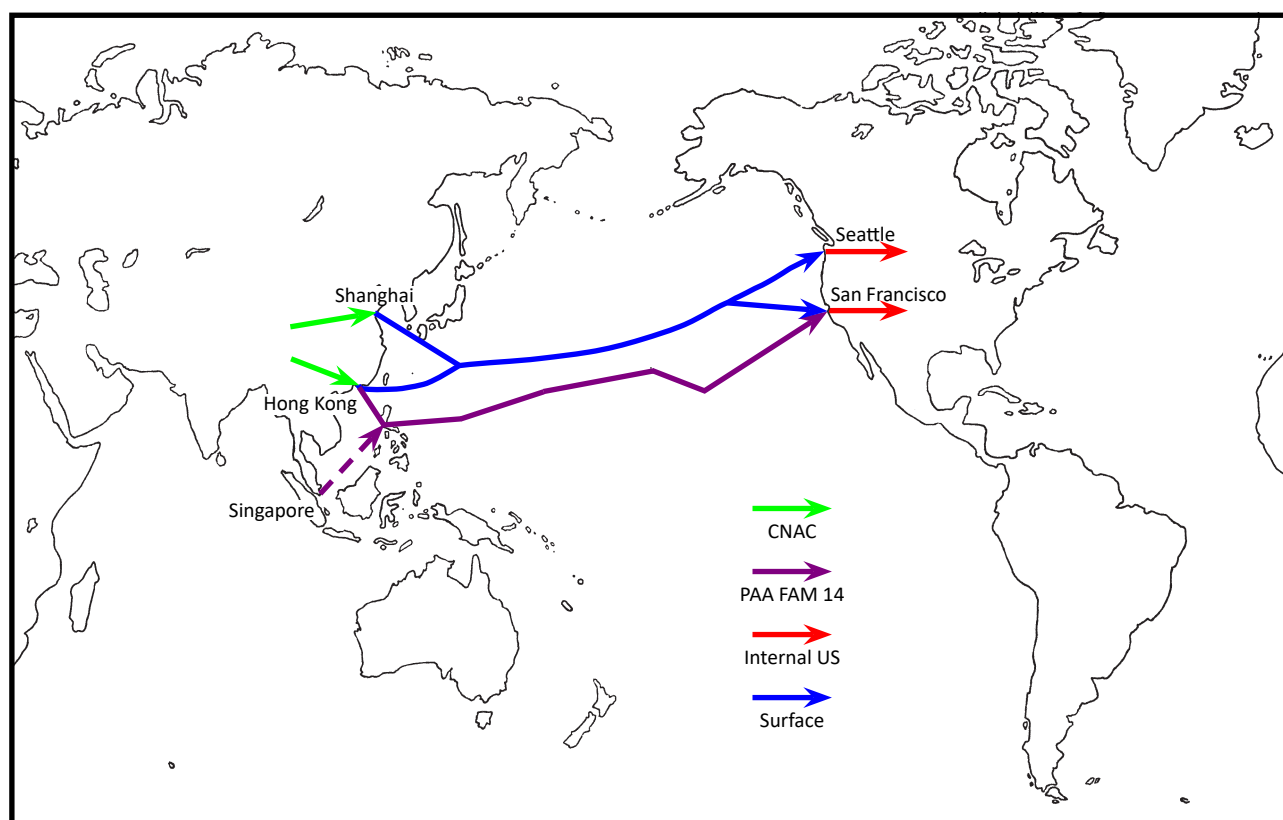
12 Jul 1934 - Canton to Harplinge, Sweden. Backstamped at Kwangtung (12 Jul) and Malmö (26 Jul).
Single letter \$0.25 (Surface) + \$0.45 (Air) = \$0.70.



30 Aug 1934 - Shanghai to London, England. No backstamps.
Quadruple rate letter \$0.25 (Surface) + 4 x \$0.47 (Air) = \$2.13.

1.4 Services to North America

This earliest trans-Pacific air mail was not introduced until April 1937. Prior to then, mail could be sent by air within China or within North America, or both. The main ports for surface mail leaving China were Shanghai and Hong Kong, and the entry ports into the USA were San Francisco and Seattle.



Pre-World War II Trans-Pacific routes from China to North America.

Before the PAA FAM 14 Clipper service, the rate to be prepaid was made up of three elements: the international surface; plus the internal Chinese air mail surcharge if used; plus the American air mail internal surcharge if used.

The frequency of the Clipper flights varied over time, but was typically once a week. The flights went from Hong Kong or Singapore to San Francisco via Manila, Guam, Wake Island, Midway Island and Honolulu.

1.4.1. Accelerated Surface Mail

(a) International Surface

Start date	surf 20g
1 Jul 1931	0.25
1 Jun 1935	0.20
1 Feb 1936	0.25
1 Sep 1939	0.50
1 Nov 1941	1.00
16 Dec 1941	route ceased

(b) Air within China

	km per Zone	Unit g	Per step
1 Dec 1931	1,000	20	0.15
1 Feb 1933	1,000	20	0.25
1 Mar 1936	n/a	20	0.25
1 Feb 1941	n/a	10	0.25
16 Dec 1941	route ceased		

(c) Air within USA

Start date	per ½oz	per 15g	per 5g
1 Dec 1931	0.50		
1 Jul 1933		0.54	
19 Mar 1935		0.43	
1 Jun 1935		0.35	
1 Feb 1936		0.45	
19 Apr 1939			0.15
1 Sep 1939			0.30
1 Nov 1939			0.65
1 Nov 1941			0.80
16 Dec 1941	route ceased		

1.4.2. Pan Am Clipper

Start date	Clipper Connection	Surface first 20g	Air per 5g
28 Apr 1937	Hong Kong	0.25	0.95
1 Sep 1939	Hong Kong	0.50	1.90
1 Nov 1939	HK or Singapore	0.50	3.75
1 Nov 1941	HK or Singapore	1.00	5.90
5 Dec 1941	route ceased		

An additional fee of 25c per 20g (per 10g from 1 Feb 1941) was payable if the Chinese internal air mail service to Hong Kong was used.

1.4.1 Accelerated Surface Mail



17 May 1934 - Peiping to Brookline, USA. Flown in both China and the USA, surface across Pacific.
 Backstamped at Shanghai (18 May). China internal air surcharge \$0.25 per 20g per zone;
 USA internal air surcharge \$0.54 per 15g. Peiping to Shanghai less than 1,000 km, so one zone.
 Rate \$0.25 (Surface) + \$0.25 (Air in China) + \$0.54 (Air in USA) = \$1.04.

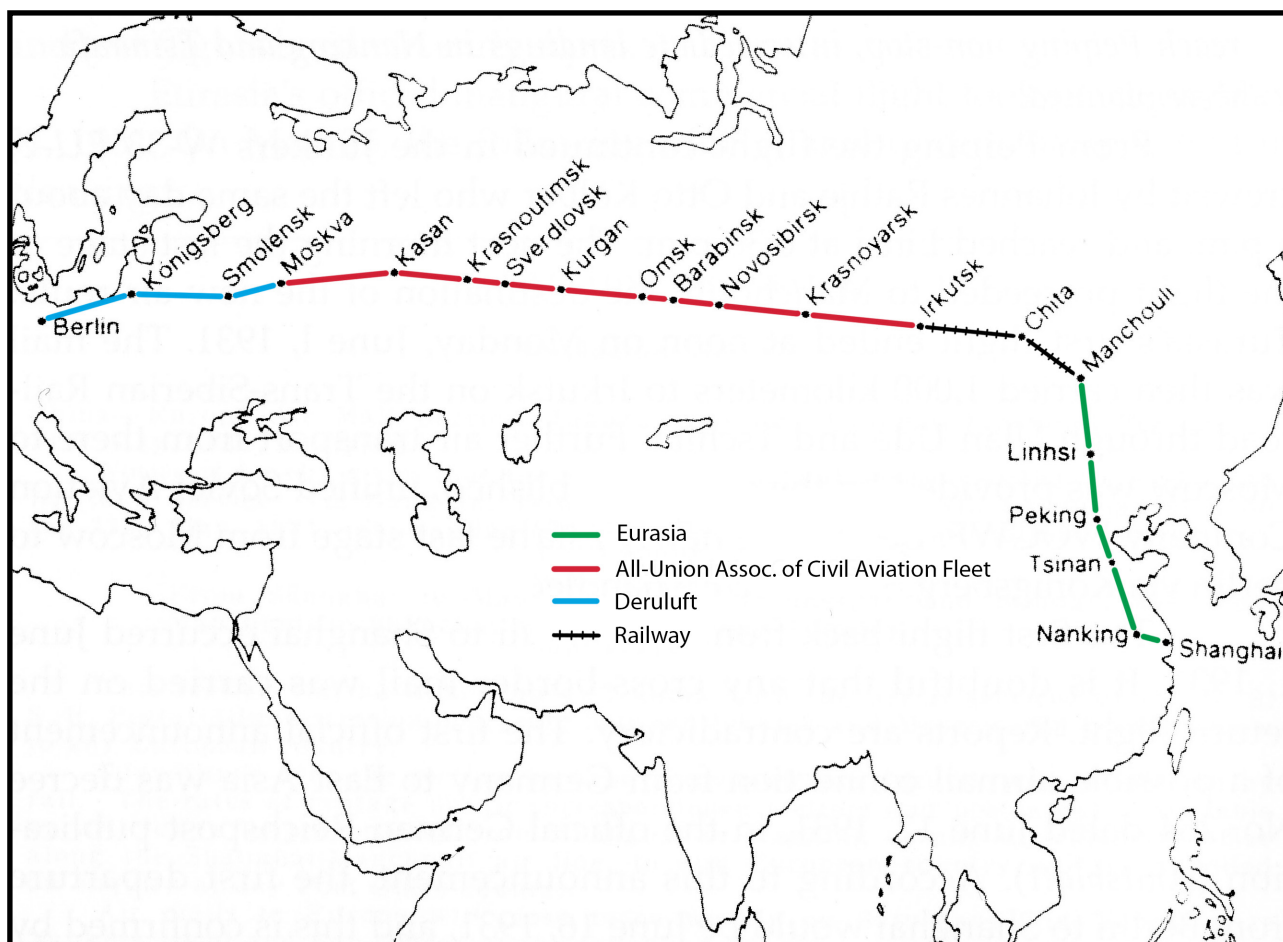
1.4.2 PAA Clipper from Manila to San Francisco



15 Jun 1940 - Shanghai to Wilmington, USA. By *Honolulu Clipper*, leaving Manila on 18 Jun 1940.
 Double rate \$0.50 (Surface) + 2 x \$3.75 (Air) = \$8.00. *Reduced.*

1.5 Russian Services to Europe via Irkutsk

From 31 May 1931 until the late summer of 1931 Eurasia flew from Shanghai to Manchouli to connect via the Trans-Siberian Railway to Irkutsk, where it linked with the Russian air service to Moscow for onward transmission to other European destinations.



Map based on *Eurasia Aviation Corporation* by Peter Moeller & Larry Sall (Jim & Me Inc, USA, 2007).

The air surcharge was \$2.00 per 20g for the Shanghai to Berlin route in addition to the 20c for 20g international surface rate. According to Starr & Mills, this \$2.00 fee was made up by:

Shanghai - Manchouli	\$0.60
Irkutsk - Moscow	\$0.80
Moscow - Berlin	\$0.60.

Commercial mail that has been carried on this service is not frequently encountered.

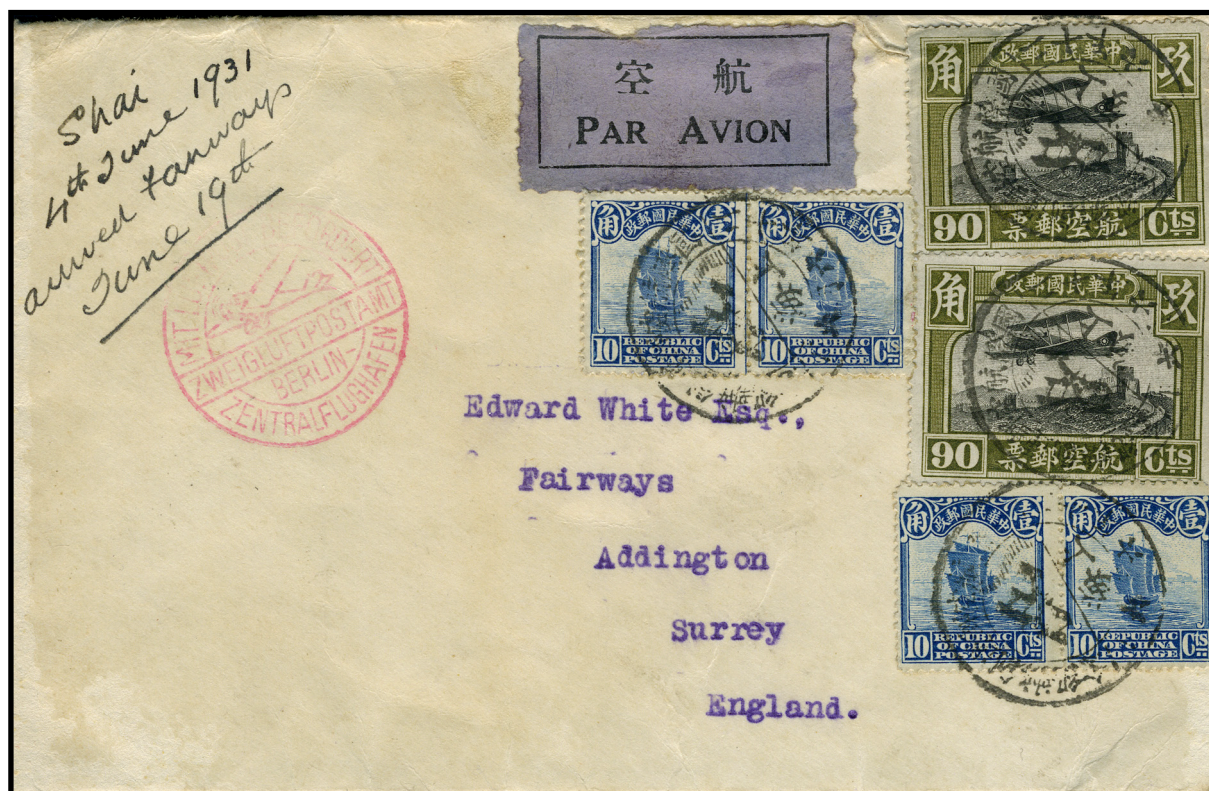
1.5 Eurasia to Manchouli, Trans-Siberian Railway to Irkutsk and then Russian Services to Europe



31 May 1931 - Shanghai to Hamburg, Germany. Berlin backstamp (11 Jun). **Carried by first flight.**

Rare PAR AVION DE IRKUTSK VIA MOSCOW handstamp.

Additional adhesives on reverse: \$1 and 2 x 30c. Single rate letter \$0.20 (Surface) + \$2.00 (Air) = \$2.20.



4 Jun 1931 - Shanghai to Addington, England. Berlin backstamp (18 Jun). **Carried by second flight.**

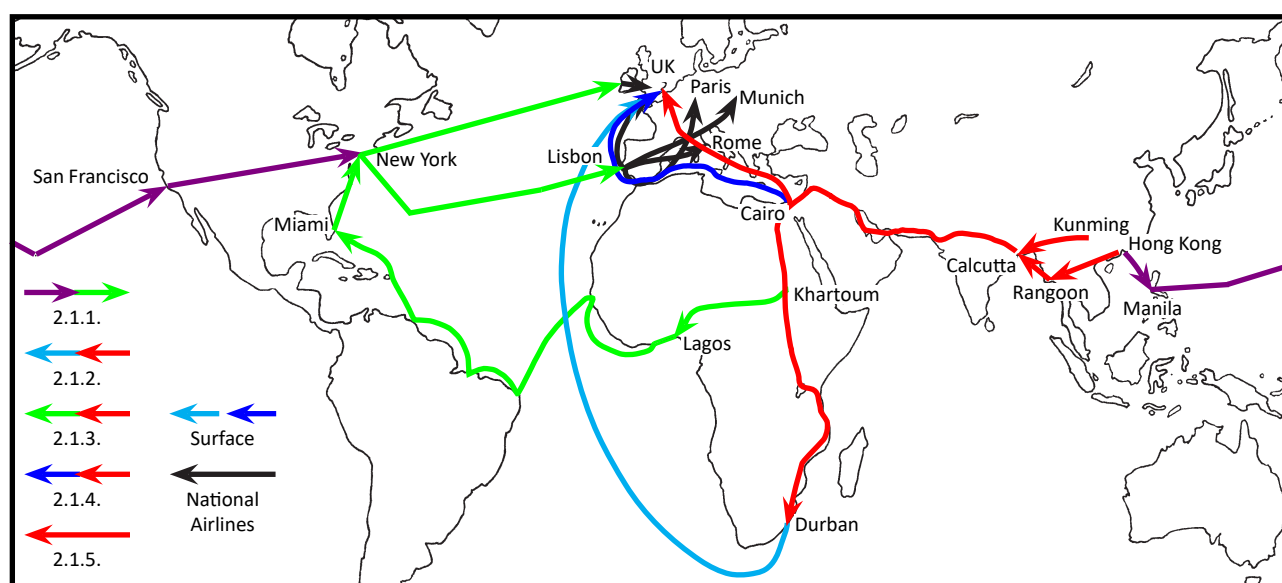
Single rate letter \$0.20 (Surface) + \$2.00 (Air) = \$2.20.

2. Wartime Disrupted Routes

2.1 Mail to Europe

On 10 June 1940 Italy declared war on the British, and on 16 June 1940 the French surrendered to Germany. These events had the immediate effect of closing the Mediterranean to Allied aircraft, forcing air mail carriers to seek alternative routes. A number of route variants were introduced during the difficult operational wartime years:

- 2.1.1 Trans-Pacific, across the USA and Trans-Atlantic
- 2.1.2 Horseshoe Route to Durban
- 2.1.3 'Over the Hump' to West Africa and Double Atlantic Crossing
- 2.1.4 'Over the Hump' and Horseshoe Route to Egypt
- 2.1.5 'Over the Hump' and Empire Route.



Wartime air mail routes from China to Europe.

The political and military changes over the period of World War II caused major changes to the routing of mail out of China. It is astonishing how the Chinese Post Office kept its numerous offices informed of the routes available and the rate to be charged. Despite the complexity of the rate structure, a very high proportion of the letters surviving are correctly pre-paid.

Most of the mail that flew 'Over the Hump' then carried on through the Middle East and to Lagos before being onward routed to destination. Searching for this material in dealers' stocks is always good fun, especially when I ask if they have any 'Chinese West Africa'!

Perhaps my favourite routing is what I define as Route 2.1.3: CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC Horseshoe Route to Khartoum, Trans-Africa to Lagos or Accra, PAA to Miami via Brazil, air within USA to New York, PAA to Lisbon, thence to England. And all for an air mail surcharge of \$13!

The flights over the Himalayas by CNAC were fraught with danger, with many instances of aeroplanes and crews being lost. As if the altitude and weather were not challenging enough, the pilots opted to make the journeys in the foulest weather conditions possible. This strategy was adopted as most of the enemy fighters could not operate under such circumstances.

2.1.1 Surface to Hong Kong, PAA to the Philippines, PAA to San Francisco, air to New York, PAA to Lisbon, Air France to Marseilles



7 Feb 1941 - Shanghai to Clermont-Ferrand, France. Arrival backstamp (3 Apr). **Rare Air Transit 6 handstamp** applied at Hong Kong, with **manuscript AV2** 13/2 on back. Single rate letter \$0.50 (Surface) + \$5.40 (Air) = \$5.90.

2.1.4 CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC Horseshoe Route to Cairo, Surface to Europe



13 Jan 1944 - Chengtu to Nottingham, England. No postal markings on back. Single rate letter \$2 (Surface) + \$5 (Air) = \$7.

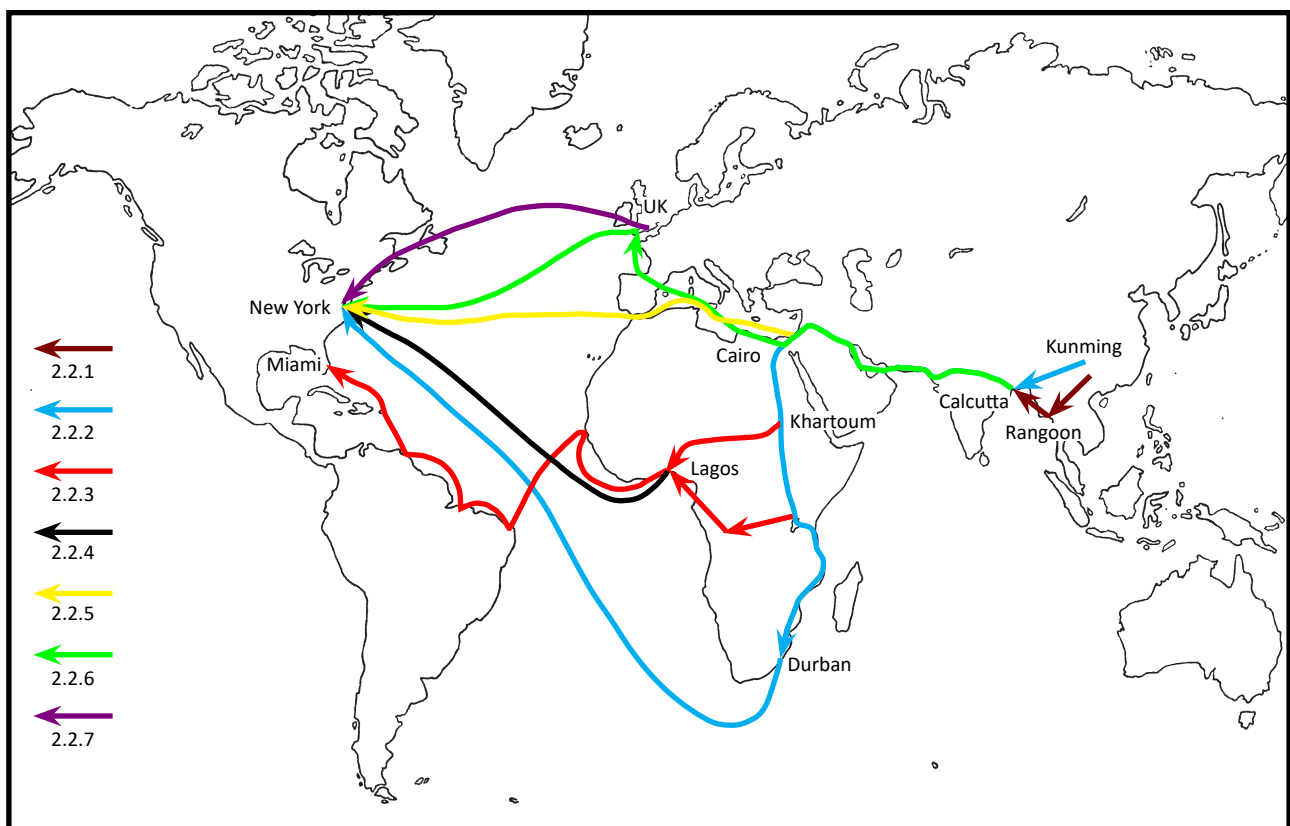
2.2 Wartime Disrupted Routes to North America

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 had an instant effect on air mail routes with the Pacific suddenly being closed to commercial aircraft. The wartime services to North America relied on cooperation with the British for mutual benefit, as most of the routes used were a combination of BOAC and PAA services.

Seven different routes were used, and were often in use concurrently:

Ref.	Outline of Route	Start Date	End Date	No. Rates
2.2.1	CNAC to Lashio, surface to Rangoon, BOAC to Durban, surface to USA	16 Dec 1941	4 Feb 1942	1
2.2.2	CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to Durban, surface to USA	30 Dec 1941	5 Nov 1943	6
2.2.3	CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to West Africa, PAA to USA			
	a. Transfer at Lagos	21 Jan 1942	May 1945	7
	b. Transfer at Accra	May 1945	5 Nov 1945	3
	c. Transfer at Port Bell, via SAA	30 Jun 1942	unknown	1
2.2.4	CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to West Africa, surface to USA	5 Feb 1942	1 Mar 1942	2
2.2.5	CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to Egypt, Surface to USA	6 Nov 1943	23 Jan 1945	3
2.2.6	CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to UK, Surface to USA	24 Jan 1945	5 Nov 1945	3
2.2.7	CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to UK, PAA to USA	6 Nov 1945	2 Oct 1946	5

Normal air mail communication across the Pacific was restored to North America from 3 October 1946 when the combined PAA/TWA service from Manila to San Francisco was inaugurated.



Wartime routes to North America.

2.2.3 CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to Lagos, PAA to Miami, within North America



26 Aug 1943 - Hingwa to Claremont, USA. Adhesives on back.
Privately pre-printed air mail envelopes with route instruction:
"By B.O.A.C to Lagos, Nigeria, via Calcutta and Cairo, and thence by P.A.A. to destination".
Single rate letter \$2.00 (Surface) + \$9.60 (Air) = \$11.60.

2.2.7 CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to Poole, PAA Hurn to New York



16 Jul 1946 - Shanghai to Chicago, USA. Los Angeles (27 Jul) and Chicago (28 Jul) backstamps.
Double rate registered express letter \$190 (Surface) + 2 x \$600 (Air) + \$270 (Reg) + \$400 (Express) = \$2,060.

2.3 Wartime Air Mail to Rest of World

Australasia: CNAC to Calcutta, then onward by surface or by QANTAS



30 Jan 1946 - Shanghai to Wellington, New Zealand. No backstamps. Double rate letter \$30 (Surface) + 2 x \$20 (Air) = \$70.

Latin America: CNAC to Calcutta, BOAC to London, PAA to USA, PAA to Cuba



18 Jun 1946 - Shanghai to Havana, Cuba. Backstamped in Havana on 4 & 5 Jul.

Carried on the then current service to North America, and then south by PAA to Cienfuegos in Cuba en route to Colombia.

Quadruple rate registered letter \$190 (Surface) + 4 x \$750 (Air) + \$270 (Reg) = \$3,460.

Africa: Surface from Shanghai to Rangoon, BOAC Horseshoe route to Durban

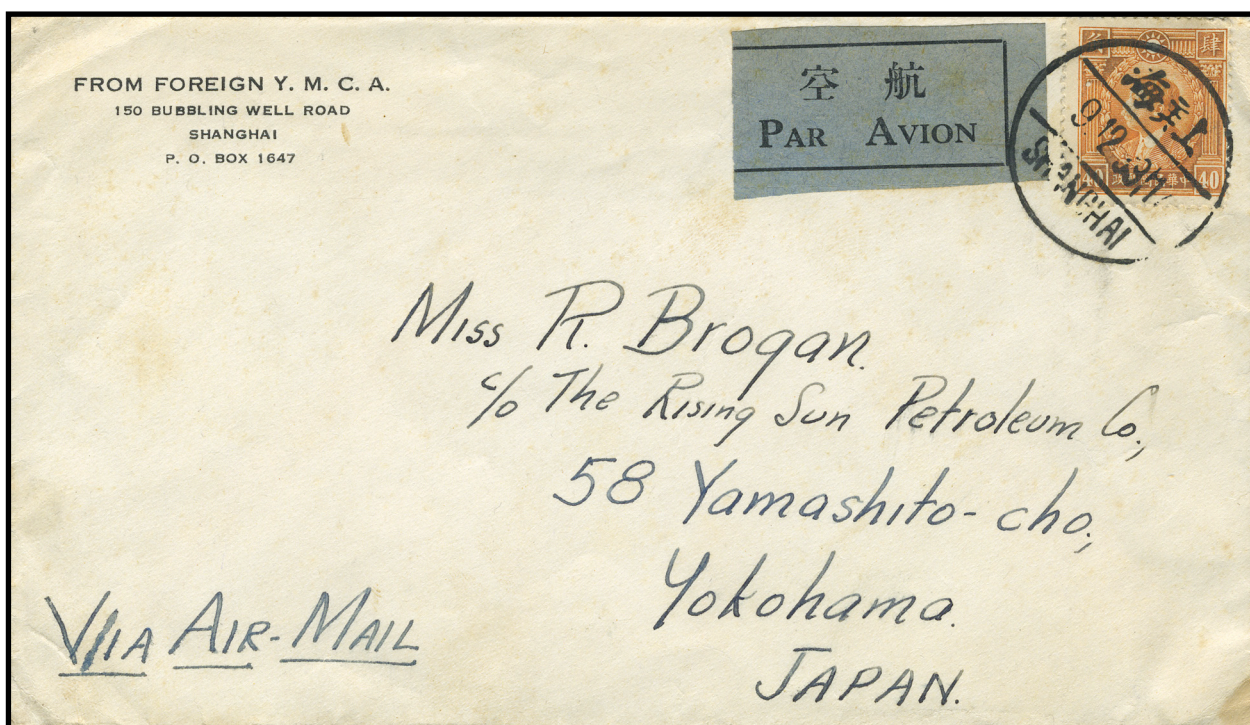


25 Jan 1941 - Shanghai to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. No backstamps.

After the suspension of acceptance of mail for the British service by the Chinese authorities in the summer of 1940, the service recommenced by using surface transport to Rangoon to link with the Horseshoe route. Censored in Singapore and Southern Rhodesia. The violet handstamp TO BE FORWARDED BY / AIR FROM SINGAPORE was also applied in Singapore.

Double rate letter \$0.50 (Surface) + 2 x \$3.40 (Air) = \$7.30.

Asia: CNAC to Japan



9 Dec 1939 - Shanghai to Yokohama, Japan. Backstamped at Yokohama on 11 Dec 1939.
Paid \$0.40 although the published rate was \$0.05 surface + \$0.40 air = \$0.45 per 20g.

3 Post-World War II Route Stability and Hyperinflation

It took some while after the end of World War II for airlines to replace aircraft and establish new permanent routes from China. This happened in the autumn of 1946 for the main routes. Section 3 illustrates great variation in rates as China struggled with hyper-inflation and two currency revaluations. There are four main sub-sections:

- 3.1 Chinese National Currency (CNC \$) destination specific rates
- 3.2 Chinese National Currency (CNC \$) unified overseas rates (UOR)
- 3.3 Gold Dollar unified overseas rates. Revaluation at CNC \$3,000,000 = Gold \$1
- 3.4 Silver Dollar unified overseas rates. Revaluation at Gold \$4,000,000 = Silver \$1

A significant change was introduced on 13 October 1947 when the weight unit for the calculation of the air mail fee was raised from 5g to 10g. A second important change came on 1 December 1947 when all of the rates to international destinations were unified irrespective of the distance to be carried.

Routes

Mail to Europe. Immediately following the cessation of hostilities, the air mail routes to Europe from China continued to be via Calcutta. On 27 August 1946, British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) commenced the Dragon Route, a direct service from Hong Kong to Poole in the UK via Bangkok, Rangoon, Calcutta, Karachi, Bahrain, Basra, Cairo, Augusta and Marseilles. Air France re-opened their route from Hong Kong to Paris in France via Saigon, Bangkok, Calcutta, Karachi, Bouchir, Bagdad, Beirut, Athens, Naples and Marseilles on 4 April 1947. The mail from this period onwards rarely has any indication of the carrier. The Chinese Post Office accepted mail from 26 September 1946.

Mail to North America. The first post-war route established from China to North America was on 26 September 1946 by CNAC to Manila and then by PAA or TWA to San Francisco using the FAM 14 route across the Pacific via Guam, Wake, Midway and Honolulu. From 7 June 1947 an additional option was available direct from Shanghai for connecting with FAM 14. A major change was made on 22 July 1947 with the commencement of the FAM 28 service from Shanghai to Seattle or Minneapolis via Seoul, Tokyo and Anchorage. This was operated jointly by CNAC, PAA, Northwest and TWA. Mail from this period onwards rarely has any indication of the carrier.

Mail to Other Destinations. Mail to the majority of countries was routed either through North America or Europe. The exceptions were Australasia where mail went south through Hong Kong and picked up the former British route, or Japan and Russia who were served by direct services.

3.1 CNC \$ Prior to Introduction of Unified Overseas Rates

Ref	Effective Date	Days	Surf 20g	Surf+20g	Air EU (5g)	Air NA (5g)	Regn Fee
CNC 1	26 Sep 1946	7	300	200	500	900	450
CNC 2	3 Oct 1946	50	300	200	500	1000	450
CNC 3	22 Nov 1946	40	300	200	650	1100	450
CNC 4	1 Jan 1947	59	300	200	650	650	450
CNC 5	1 Mar 1947	9	1100	700	650	650	1600
CNC 6	10 Mar 1947	113	1100	700	1900	1900	1600
CNC 7	1 Jul 1947	93	1100	700	2100	2100	1600
CNC 8	2 Oct 1947	11	1100	700	2300	2300	1600
CNC 9	13 Oct 1947	49	5500	3500	† 18500	† 12500	8000
	1 Dec 1947						

† air mail per 10g from 13 Oct 1947

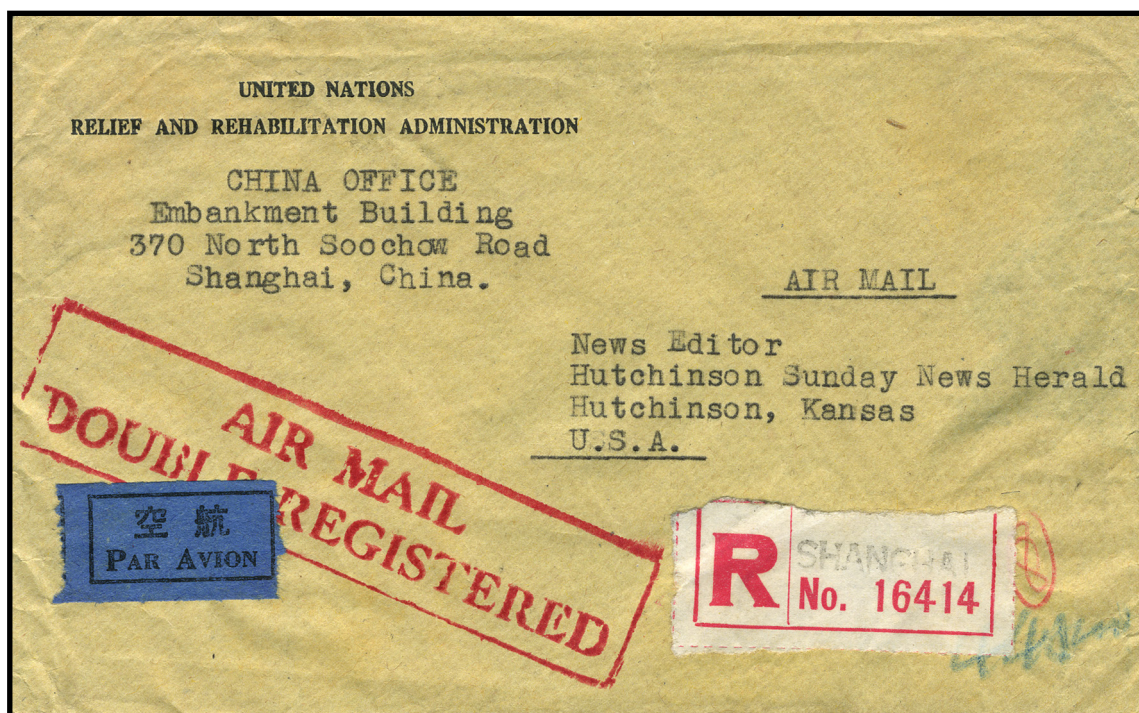
All rates are in CNC \$. Rates shown in *italics* are unaltered from the previous period.

3.1.1 Destination Specific Rate CNC 1: 26 Sep 1946 to 2 Oct 1946 (7 days)



26 Sep 1946 - Shanghai to Warwick. Posted on first day Chinese mail was sent on Dragon Route.
Single rate letter \$300 (Surface) + \$500 (Air) = \$800.

3.1.9 Destination Specific Rate CNC 9: 13 Oct 1947 to 30 Nov 1947 (49 days)



21 Oct 1947 - Shanghai to Hutchinson, USA. Handstamped by sender AIR MAIL / DOUBLE REGISTERED. Adhesives on the back totalling \$44,500. Double rate registered letter with Advice of Receipt: \$5,500 (Surface) + 2 x \$12,500 (Air) + \$8,000 (Reg) + \$6,000 (AR) = \$44,500 this is confirmed by the manuscript 44500 in blue crayon on the front.

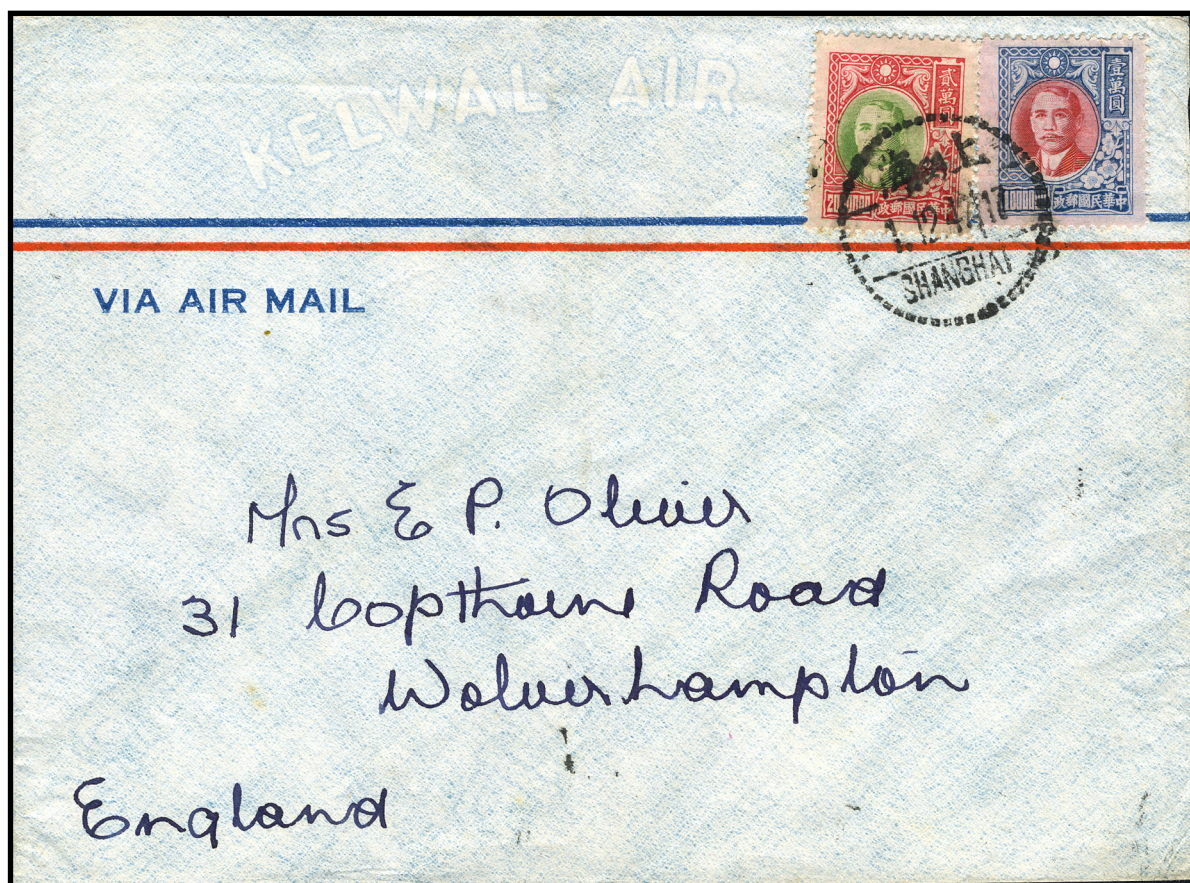
3.2 CNC \$ After the Introduction of Unified Overseas Rates

From 1 December 1947 the overseas air mail rates were standardised irrespective of country of destination, route or distance carried. This change dramatically simplified the rates to be charged on overseas air mail. Prior to the currency revaluation effective from 6 November 1948, inflation led to ten different rate periods. All prices in the table below are in CNC \$. Many of these Unified Overseas Rates (UOR) were very short-lived.

Ref	Effective Date	Days	Surf 20g	Surf+20g	Air / 10g	Single	Regn Fee
UOR 1	1 Dec 1947	31	8,000	5,000	22,000	30,000	11,000
UOR 2	1 Jan 1948	15	9,000	5,000	30,000	39,000	12,000
UOR 3	16 Jan 1948	45	11,000	7,000	40,000	51,000	15,000
UOR 4	1 Mar 1948	15	14,000	9,000	45,000	59,000	20,000
UOR 5	16 Mar 1948	16	20,000	10,000	50,000	70,000	25,000
UOR 6	1 Apr 1948	10	25,000	15,000	65,000	90,000	35,000
UOR 7	11 Apr 1948	38	30,000	20,000	80,000	110,000	45,000
UOR 8	19 May 1948	74	50,000	30,000	120,000	170,000	70,000
UOR 9	1 Aug 1948	20	150,000	100,000	400,000	550,000	200,000
UOR 10	21 Aug 1948	77	300,000	200,000	800,000	1,100,000	400,000

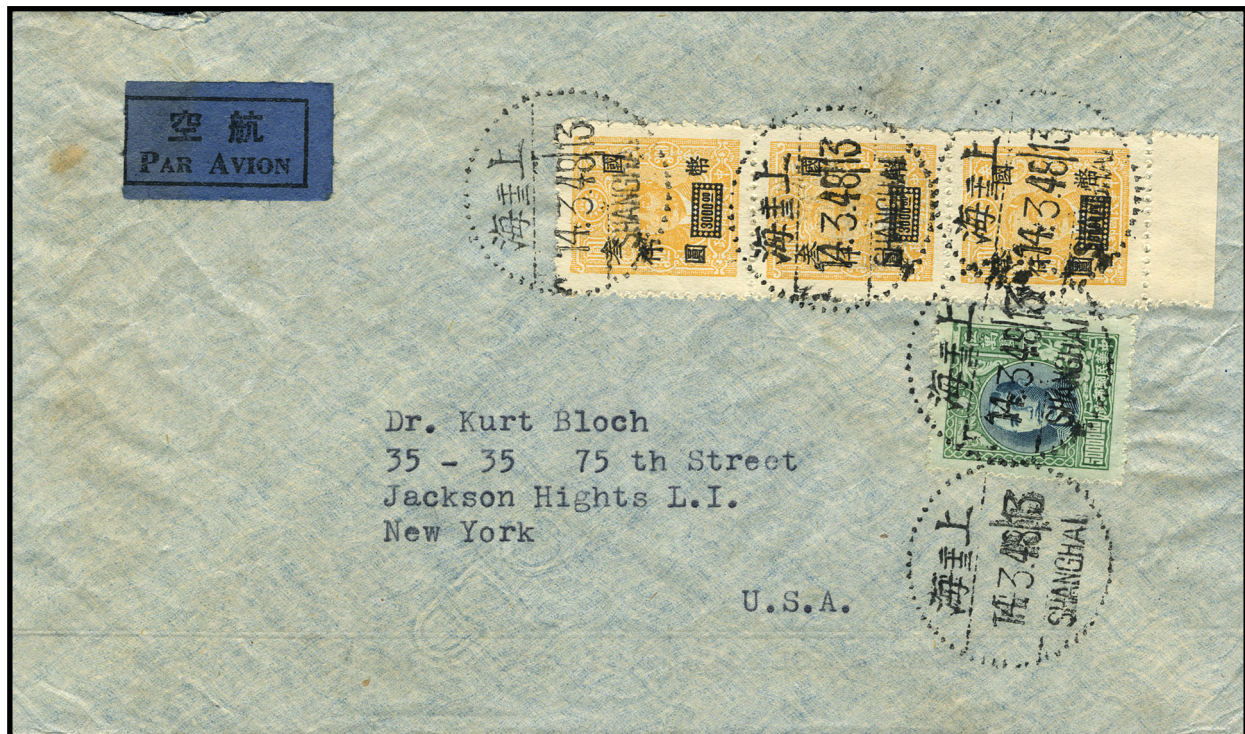
The routes flown remained as before: mail to the Americas went via FAM 28 from Shanghai, mail to Europe was carried by BOAC or Air France from Hong Kong, and mail for Australasia went by BOAC/QANTAS via Hong Kong.

3.2.1 Rate UOR 1: 1 Dec 1947 to 31 Dec 1947 (31 days)



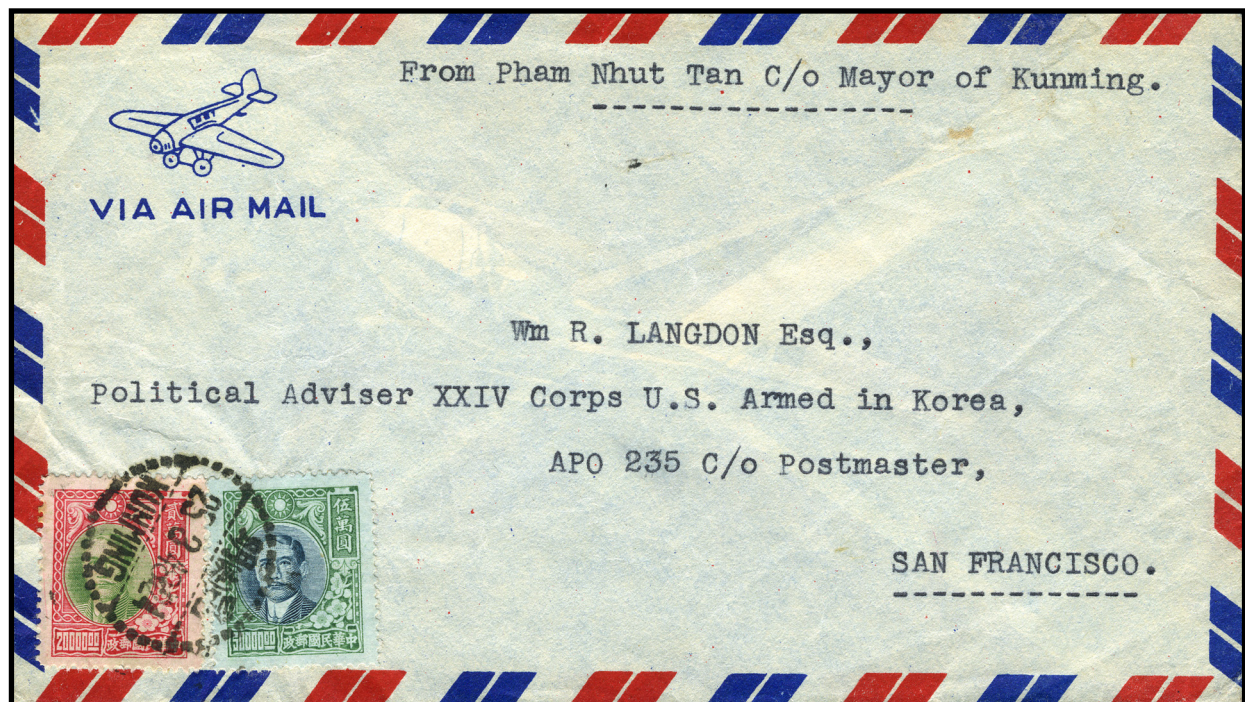
1 Dec 1947 (**First Day**) - Shanghai to Wolverhampton, England. No backstamps.
Single rate letter \$8,000 (Surface) + \$22,000 (Air) = \$30,000.

3.2.4 Rate UOR 4: 1 Mar 1948 to 15 Mar 1948 (15 days)



14 Mar 1948 - Shanghai to Jackson Heights, USA. No backstamps.
Single rate letter \$14,000 (Surface) + \$45,000 (Air) = \$59,000.

3.2.5 Rate UOR 5: 16 Mar 1948 to 31 Mar 1948 (16 days)



25 Mar 1948 - Kunming to San Francisco, USA. No backstamps.
Single rate letter \$20,000 (Surface) + \$50,000 (Air) = \$70,000.

3.3 Uniform Overseas Air Mail Rates in Gold \$

Rampant inflation caused a currency revaluation in August 1948. A new currency of Gold Dollars was introduced with an effective exchange rate of 1 Gold \$ = 3,000,000 CNC \$. Old adhesives were valid at this exchange rate. The Post Office quoted rates in the new currency from 6 November 1948. All prices in the table below are in Gold \$. Despite the revaluation, inflation continued and rate changes had to be made rapidly.

Ref	Effective Date	Days	Surf 20g	Surf+20g	Air / 10g	Single	Regn Fee
UOR 11	6 Nov 1948	14	0.35	0.20	1	1.35	0.60
UOR 12	20 Nov 1948	22	2	1 00	5	7	3
UOR 13	12 Dec 1948	20	4	2 50	14	18	6
UOR 14	1 Jan 1949	15	10	6	30	40	15
UOR 15	16 Jan 1949	22	20	12	60	80	30
UOR 16	7 Feb 1949	22	80	50	250	330	100
UOR 17	1 Mar 1949	10	300	150	800	1,100	400
UOR 18	11 Mar 1949	10	450	250	1,200	1,650	600
UOR 19	21 Mar 1949	11	800	500	2,300	3,100	1,100
UOR 20	1 Apr 1949	10	1,500	900	4,300	5,800	2,200
UOR 21	11 Apr 1949	6	4,400	2,600	12,600	17,000	6,300
UOR 22	17 Apr 1949	12	11,000	6,400	30,000	41,000	15,000

The routes flown remained as before: mail to the Americas went via FAM 28 from Shanghai, mail to Europe was carried by BOAC or Air France from Hong Kong, and mail for Australasia went by BOAC/QANTAS via Hong Kong.

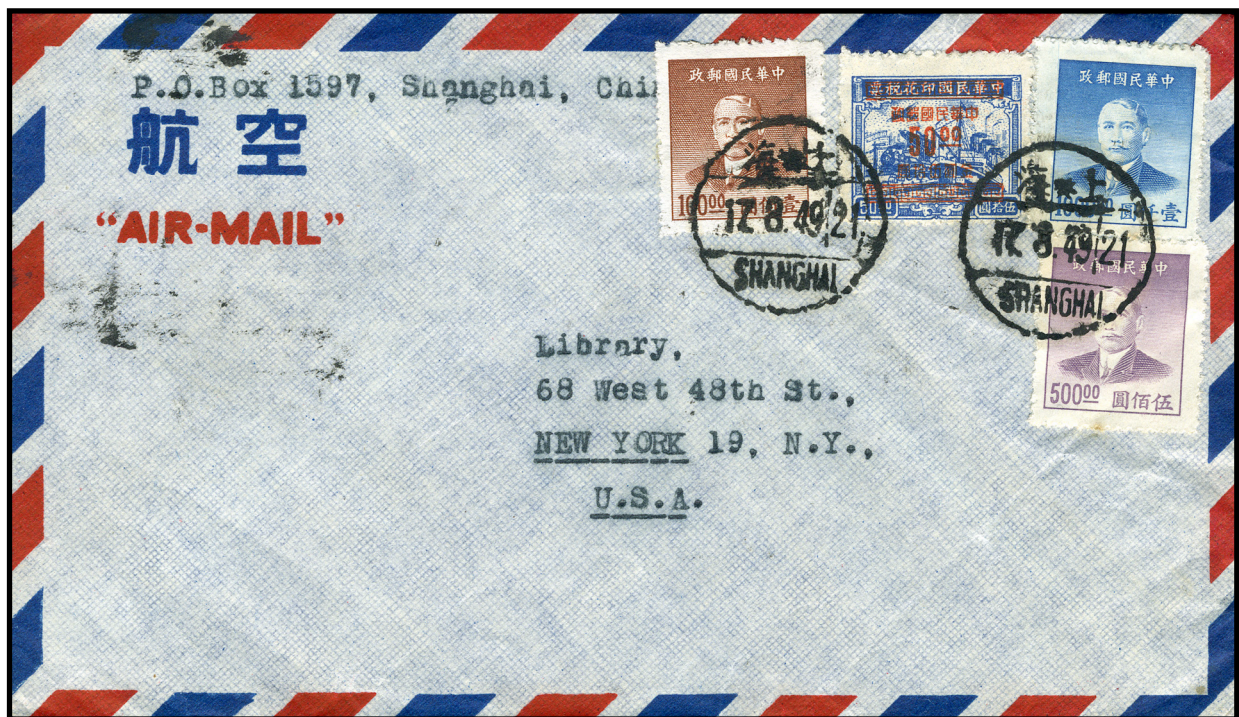
3.3.3 Gold \$ Rate UOR 13: 12 Dec 1948 to 31 Dec 1948 (20 days)



31 Dec 1948 - Shanghai to Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Printed matter single rate \$1.50 + \$14.00 = \$15.50.

3.3.8 Gold \$ Rate UOR 18: 11 Mar 1949 to 20 Mar 1949 (10 days)



17 Mar 1949 - Shanghai to New York, USA. No backstamps. Single rate letter \$450 (Surface) + \$1,200 (Air) = \$1,650.

3.3.11 Gold \$ Rate UOR 21: 11 Apr 1949 to 16 Apr 1949 (6 days)



12 Apr 1949 - Kunming to New York, USA. There are 11 additional Gold \$1,000 adhesives on the back.
Single rate letter \$4,400 (Surface) + \$12,600 (Air) = \$17,000.

3.4 Uniform Overseas Air Mail Rates in Silver \$

The Chinese economy was still subject to hyperinflation, forcing another currency revaluation in April 1949. The new currency called Silver Dollars was introduced with an effective exchange rate of 1 Silver \$ = 4,000,000 Gold \$. Old adhesives were valid at this exchange rate.

The Post Office quoted rates in the new currency from 29 April 1949. All prices in the table below are in Silver \$. Despite the revaluation, inflation continued and rate changes had to be made frequently. The Silver \$ currency was still in place when the People's Republic of China was declared on 1 October 1949.

Ref	Effective Date	Days	Surf 20g	Surf+20g	Air / 10g	Single	Regn Fee
UOR 23	29 Apr 1949	67	0.10	0.06	0.30	0.40	0.20
UOR 24	5 Jul 1949	136	0.15	0.10	0.40	0.55	0.20

The routes flown remained as before: mail to the Americas went via FAM 28 from Shanghai, mail to Europe was carried by BOAC or Air France from Hong Kong, and mail for Australasia went by BOAC/QANTAS via Hong Kong.

3.4.1 Silver \$ Rate UOR 23: 29 Apr 1949 to 4 Jul 1949 (67 days)

Gold Dollar stamps were accepted at a rate of 4,000,000 to 1.



18 May 1949 - Shanghai to Holte, Denmark. No postal markings on front.

Single rate letter \$0.10 (Surface) + \$0.30 (Air) = \$0.40.

Rate paid with 16 \$100,000 adhesives, total Gold \$ 1,600,000 = Silver \$ 0.40.

Chinese Air Mail

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CNAC baggage labels from the 1930s. The first one features a stylised flying boat, whereas the second shows a land plane.

Reading Chinese Characters in Postmarks

一 二 三 四 五 六 七 八 九 十 廿 卅 日 月 年
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 20 30 day month year

Reading Dates in Chinese Postmarks



Straightforward datestamp in Western script and format.

27 September 1946



Chinese characters in date portion read:

8 10 30
 <day> <month> 6

Should be read as:

8th day of 10th month of
 36th year of the Republic.

Year 1 was 1912, so 36 is 1947.

8 October 1947



Datestamp in Western script, but '37' is year of Republic rather than a Western calendar year.

4 August 1948



6.9.47
 6 September 1947



9.7.37
 9 July 1948

Two different Kuling postmarks used within a year of one another. The earlier one shows the year according to the Western calendar, but the second one uses the year of the Republic.