

THE POSTMAN CHOPS OF TAIWAN

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The purpose of this article is to identify the various types of hand stamped chops used by the postal workers in the processing of mail. There is very little domestic mail of Taiwan in the 1950s to late 1960s that did not have a numbered chop to indicate the person(s) that handled the piece of mail. As the volume of mail increased, the practice of applying the chop to each item was discontinued. However, in the case of Registered, Prompt Delivery, Legal Attest Letters and money remittance envelopes, it was necessary to show who processed the item.

BASIC TYPES



TYPE 1
Circle



TYPE 2
Tombstone



TYPE 3
Square or rectangle



TYPE 4
Numbers only

These are the basic types, however there are many variations to be found for each type. Keep in mind that most of the chops shown are connected with the delivery or return of mail. These chops have in many cases been tied with various types of Return to Sender markings. Some by the individual chops used and others with the postman chop number becoming part of the return chop. We will provide examples of this type of usage after the discussion of various Types.

TYPE 1 CIRCLE



Type 1a



Type 1b
Double Circle

Type 1a. This type of chop was in use by some Post Offices for a very long time. During this long period, the numbers varied from single digit to as high as the 724, and in 1969 the series “7600” numbers to “7658” is known used from Taipei. This later usage of the higher numbers was from the period of 1969-75. During this long period, the majority of numbers used was for the tombstone cancels. It is possible to find numbers used with Type1a, then later the same numbers with the tombstone cancel. It is interesting to note, that when a chop is re-issued during the earlier period, a “0” was used before the number. i.e. “20” became “020”. This could be the chop was lost or perhaps damaged. Since the chops was assigned to specific Post Offices, they did not move when an employee was transferred to another Post Office.

Type 1b. The double circle chops are known for the period of 1972-76 in Taipei. So far, the numbers found are 329, 351, 382, 389, 423 and 623. No doubt others exist.

TYPE 2 TOMBSTONE



Type 2a
Single Line



Type 2b
Incised number



Type 2c
Double Line



Type 2d
Town Name



Type 2e
Town Name



Type 2f
Delivery



Type 2g
Prompt Delivery



Type 2h
Branch Number



Type 2i
Military Bureau



Type 2j
Checked



Type 2k
Checked Line

Type 2a. Single line tombstone chop. This type chop has been in use for a very time with usage from around 1949 until present time. However, the use was greatly reduced with the usage of the Type 2d-g chops.

Type 2b. The incised number chop is only known from the Ilan Post Office, earliest 1977.

Type 2c. The double line tombstone chop came into usage around 1972. The only examples seen were from the Taipei area.

Type 2d. The chop with the Post Office name at the top and the clerk number at the bottom came into usage around 1980. It appears this change was for the individual Post Offices to control the clerk assignment numbers, rather than from Taipei. These have greatly expanded in recent years.

Type 2e. This type of chop from the Taitung Post Office has a blank space at the left. Possibly for the inclusion of the type of service at a later date, or to fill in by hand.

Type 2f. This type of chop has the character “zi” 子 for Delivery Section.

Type 2g. This type of chop has the character “geng” 庚 for the Prompt Delivery Section.

Type 2h. This type of chop has the Post Office Branch number on the left, i.e. Branch 30 in the shown example, then the clerk number.

Type 2i. Military usage for Bureau 1 located on Kinmen. This Bureau or base post office is responsible for the receipt, and distribution of military mail on Kinmen and surrounding areas. This has the character 子, for Delivery Section. This example was used in 1995. There is probably one for the Bureau 2 located on Matsu, but it has not been confirmed.

Type 2j. This chop has two characters at the top meaning – checked. This is a supervisor chop and is used when taking action to return a piece of mail, write a note to the receiver/sender. This is usually used in conjunction with the postman chop. The postman annotates/stamps the reason for return, it is then verified by the supervisor as approving the action. In some cases, the supervisor will send it back for re-check, or provide possible address to check for delivery. The top two characters may read either right to left or left to right. The later chops read left to right.

Type 2k. This is the same as Type 2j except there is horizontal line separating the top two characters and the number.

TYPE 3 SQUARE OR RECTANGLE



Type 3a
Square or rectangle
with number



Type 3b
Vertical box

Type 3a. The square or rectangle chop has just the number, no characters. Used during the period of 1949 to about 1970. Only seen from Taipei for the earlier usage and from Chungli for the period of about 1973-78 with four digits in the 2708-33 series.

Type 3b. This vertical box has the “checked” two characters at the top, vertical row of characters for the Post Office, and the clerk number at the bottom.

Type 4. The numbers only chop is known to have been used as early as 1961, this being number 2410 from the Fengshan Post Office (Kaohsiung Hsien). The number 2706-2713 is known from the Chungli Post Office, starting from 1963. Other numbers are known to be used until at least 1977.

OTHER CHOPS



“Yu” circle



“Yu” square



Chungho



Postman name chop

The “Yu” symbol of the post office is often seen tying a note to a cover or postal form. A few of the chops as Chungho Agency 3 have been seen on Post Office business envelopes. This new type of postman name chops began to appear in the 1980s. The square chop, usually with the four characters is still sometimes seen. The square chop goes back to 1949 with usage often seen with slips of paper attached to a cover, or at the end of the script written on the cover.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE USAGE



Figure 1

Figure 1 is an example of the use of the rectangle chop, on the back of a parcel tag 1965.



Figure 2

Figure 2 is an example of the usage of the double line tombstone chop. Also an example of the use of a return to sender box, with the chop of “Checked Taipei 47” as a part of the chop, used 1977.



Figure 3

Figure 3 is an example of the town chop, Lukang, Delivery Section number 28. It has been annotated with a “finger” chops with the “Checked 461” as part of the return chop.



Figure 4

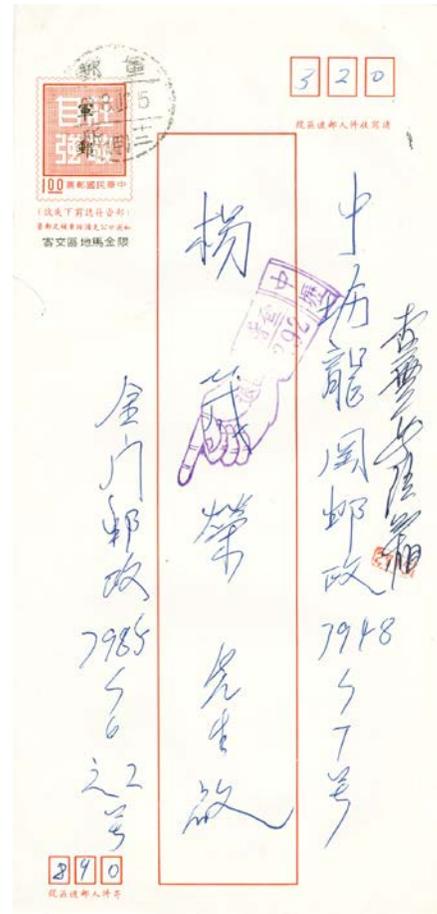


Figure 5

Figure 4 is an example of the usage on a Return to Sender form attached to the cover. Used 1955. Figure 5 is an example from Chungli, dated 1973 with the “Checked” 292 incorporated into a return to sender “finger”.

EXAMPLES OF THE CLERK AND CHECKED NUMBERS INCOPORATED IN OTHER CHOPS.



a.

Blank space left for “checked” chop. Kaohsiung 1995.



b.

“Checked” 262 with space at top for clerk chop
Taichung 1995



c.

Erhlin at top, “Checked” 472 1995



d.

Sinwu town name on right,
"Checked" 595. Sinwu 1995



e.

Clerk 200, Checked by 185. Used
February 10, 1955 at Wuku (Taipei Hsien)



f.

Clerk 248, Checked by 585. Used
March 1977, at Keelung.

The box chops were widely used, many without the Clerk or Checked by numbers. They were then tied by Clerk or checked by chops, or elsewhere on the cover. Every post office designed their own chops. There are hundreds or perhaps thousands of different examples. All have one characteristic, the reason for return is shown, the checked or circled. The last number for the reason to be written in if the others do not apply.

Return .. Clerk 248 checked 585

1. Address no such person or company
2. Moved, new address unknown
3. Original address not clear
4. No such address
5. Claim period expired- unclaimed
6. Closed business
7. Receiver refused
8. Poste Restante - claim period expired
9. (write reason in script).

Translation of the reasons for return on figure f.

This is only a small sampling of the various chops that include the postman or "checked" numbers. The variety of return to sender chops is almost endless. With each post office preparing their own chops, they are indeed varied and does not include the early postal forms that was also used for that purpose.

The data provided in this article is from a single collection of postal markings of Taiwan. The dates given is just for reference on the usage and should not be considered the earliest or latest dates. We no doubt can expect new types in the future, and no doubt other major types used in the past, will surface. Such is the joys of collecting postal markings!