

COCHINCHINA – Military Mail

Military Concession Rate of 15c

Saigon

A reduced military concession rate of 15c existed until 1899 throughout the French Community in lieu of the 25c UPU. It applied to occupation forces as opposed to those engaged in combat. This rate required validation via use of unit cachets, and/or manuscript endorsements with commander's signatures. Special military town and packet datestamps (**CORR D ARMEES**) were often created in support of this service, with Cochinchina the foremost amongst the French areas in illustrating the use of military datestamps.



Letters from Saigon illustrating the concession rate and the **CORR D ARMEES SAIGON** datestamp showing the registered concession rate, the concession rate with a Packet Line N military transit and the concession rate employing low value stamps – all reflecting rarer combinations.

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Saigon



Letters from Saigon illustrating the reduced military rate. The first is a properly used letter card with full message, and the second an underpaid letter to a member of the military forces in Madagascar. The letter was not charged double the deficiency, but simply an additional 15c. Note the French Packet Military transits of Line N and Line V, the latter serving Madagascar. Overall, with three different military datestamps and being underpaid and due, this is an exceptional combination.

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Small Village Use – Octagonal Military Datestamps

Cap St. Jacques
Chaudoc



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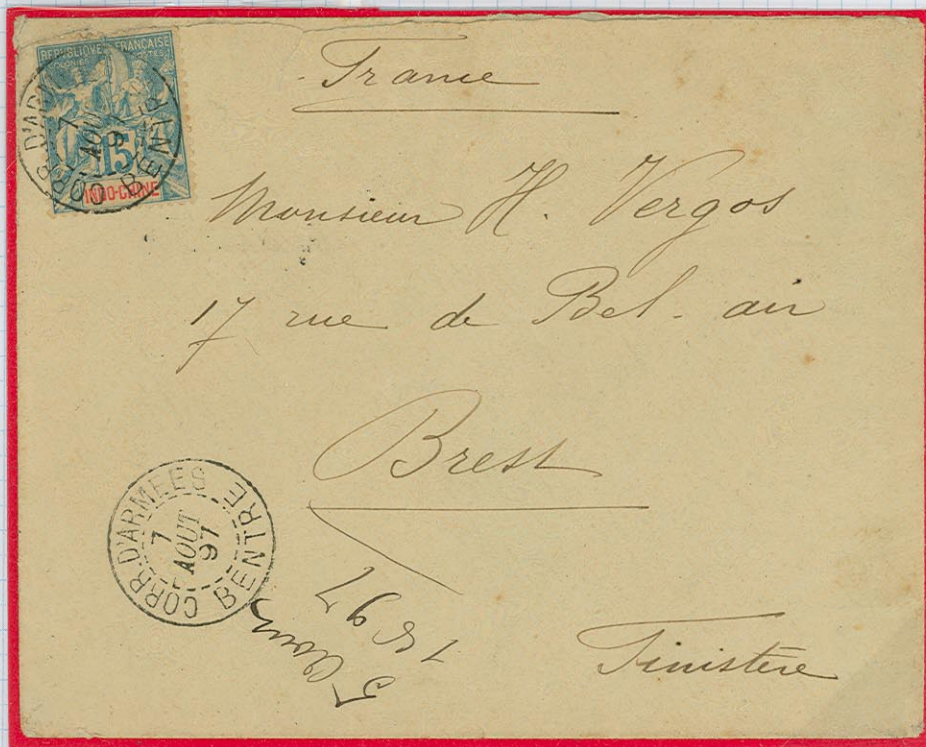
Longxuyen
Tan-an
Vinh Long



COCHINCHINA – Military Mail

Small Village Use – Circular Military Datestamps

Bentré
Soctrang



The rarest of the military datestamps from Cochinchina are those of Bentré and Soctrang, which were circular instead of octagonal. They are not recorded in the Indochina literature. Two have been noted from Bentré, the one shown being by far the better, and only this example has been recorded on Group Type for Soctrang. One other example on the a Type Dubois stamp is known.

COCHINCHINA – Military Mail
Military Franchise Letters
 Siam via Saigon

Military franchise letters (postage-free mail for troops engaged in combat) are rarely seen from Cochinchina during the period of the Group Type's use. French control was well-established at this time and there was little combat, as opposed to the situation in the other provinces. However, some military mail was channeled through Saigon as a means of getting it into the regular postal system.



Shown above are military franchise letters from the Indochinese troops engaged in combat in Siam during the 1902-1903 period when the French were attempting to control additional territory in the overall area. Three different cachets from the forces in Siam are shown: one from Chantaboun and two from Pak-Nam. All transited via Saigon. The first letter was posted to New Caledonia – a remarkable destination .

COCHINCHINA – Military Mail

Failed Military Franchise Letter

Saigon

Trouvé a la Boîte

Military mail of this period required some aspect of official validation to be recognized. Typically there is a manuscript indication written by the sender to identify this category of mail. Validation required a unit cachet and/or a commander's manuscript endorsement and signature for both reduced rate and franchise mail.



The letter above was placed in a military letter box in the Saigon area, with the manuscript indication **Corps expéditionnaire du Tonkin** applied by the sender. However, no validation was present on the letter, so it was not accepted as military franchise mail. Instead, the rare colonial handstamp **Trouvé a la Boîte** (Found in the box) was applied to the letter at the Saigon Central office, as was a T in triangle to indicate postage due. The regular **SAIGON-CENTRAL** datestamp was also applied (July 24, 1895), and the letter was sent to its destination in France. Upon arrival in Moulins s/ Allier the current 30c French due stamp was applied and cancelled indicating that the letter was being charged at the 15c reduced military rate because of its origin in the military letter box. The postage was doubled to 30c according to the then current rules for processing unpaid or short-paid mail.

Franchise Militaire Stamps F.M. Overprints on French Stamps

In 1901 France authorized the creation of *Franchise Militaire* stamps by overprinting the current 15c French stamps with the initials: F. M. Each regular soldier serving in the French forces throughout the world was provided with two stamps per month to support communication with persons within the French Community, typically relatives and friends back home. Mail was simply validated with unit cachets.



Shown are properly used examples from Saigon and Cap St. Jacques, and an incorrectly applied stamp to a post card at Soctrang to Switzerland. Franchise did not extend beyond the French community. Such was not recognized apparently until after the F. M. stamp was applied, and a regular 10c current Group Type stamp was applied along side it to prepay the proper 10c post card rate.