

Vichy Period in French Indochina 1940- 45

After the collapse of France in June 1940, government authority resided with the Vichy regime. With the demise of the Third Republic came creation of the French State. Most of the colonies came to rally around the Free French cause. There often was a blurred distinction between official government positions and the day to day realities of wartime.

Indochina posed a special case. After France's defeat the Japanese pressured local French authorities to accept the establishment of military installations in Indochina. It was evident that to resist or to join the Free French would have lead to immediate occupation. Thus a strange balance existed during the wartime years when the local French, who harbored resistance in their hearts, made a grand show of embracing the Petainist National Revolution.

The display of French unity was reflected by the postal issues of the period. The stamps, for the most part printed in Hanoi, portrayed the ideological themes of the Vichy government. Early French military officers who had contributed to the conquest of Indochina were honored, as were former governors of the colony. Local royalty was also depicted on stamps to instill a sense of regional patriotism. The pattern was so consistent that almost every issue contributed to the overall propaganda campaign. Each new issue publicized the peculiar concept of French unity, which had evolved.

The fragile state of affairs ended in March 1945 when Japan overtly occupied all of French Indochina.

This display is organized in terms of the various themes of the stamp issues as follows:

First Day of Issue Collection and Perfins

Angkor Wat and Marshall Petain

Coronation of Norodom Sihanouk

Royalty of Annam, Cambodia and Laos

Marshal Petain

Admirals

Explorers

Governors-General

Missionaries

Fairs and Ceremonies

Patriotism

Alexandre Yersin

Semi-Postal Stamps

Famous Aviators

University City

National Relief

Cathedral of Orleans

Defense and Welfare Funds

French State Postage Dues

Vichy Period in French Indochina First Day Postmarks

These three pages show a curious assembly of Indochina's Vichy issues, the issues printed locally during World War II. Each stamp had been affixed to lightly quadrille pages and struck with a clear Saigon postmark. Clearly the product of philatelic motivations, the items become even more interesting when one recognizes that the stamps are in the order issued by the government and are postmarked with the first day of issue circular date stamps.

The prevailing theory is that these sheets were prepared by a clerk in the Saigon post office who, despite the privations of war, continued to indulge his hobby by saving the new stamps as they appeared in his personal album. One may also theorize that the sheets were simply fabricated by someone who had gained access to a Saigon postmarking device. However, the bottom of the first page reveals a "SAIGON-FOIRE-EXPOSITION" postmark. Furthermore, at the upper right of the second page, the postmarks transition from "SAIGON-CENTRAL" on 10 May 1943 to "SAIGON-PRINCIPAL" starting on 1 June 1943. The latter postmark was used exclusively from that point forward until the latest postmark of 1 December 1943.

Probably the most comprehensive catalog as far as first day of issue information is the 2009 Europe and Asia Maury catalog, which combined the short-lived Dallay catalog and the Ceres catalog. For convenience in comparing to the dates in the postmarks, Table I is organized by catalog day of issue according to Maury.

With two exceptions, the postmark dates agree with those given by Maury. The first exception is the 40-cent slate blue Petain, which is listed by Maury as 15 January 1943, but the example here is postmarked 25 January. While the two agree on the 2 and 3-cent Vichy postage dues, the postmarked values from 6 cents through 30 cents are postmarked 26 August, one day later than Maury says.

The third page of the accumulation is only about half-filled. The collection apparently stopped there. Perhaps wartime conditions ultimately prevailed upon the clerk's pastime.

Table I. Chronological Listing of Vichy First Days of Issue

Scott	Maury (Ceres)	Dallay	Description	First Day of Issue
210	224	228	1c Sihanhouk	25-10-41
211	225	229	6c Sihanhouk	25-10-41
211	226	230	25c Sihanhouk	25-10-41
209	222	226	10c Angkor Wat & Petain	10-11-41
209a	223	227	25c Angkor Wat & Petain	10-11-41
213	227	231	3c Nam Giao	13-3-42
214	228	232	6c Nam Giao	13-3-42
B20	278	233	6c + 2c City University	1-6-42
B21	279	234	15c + 5c City University	1-6-42

Table I (continued). Chronological Listing of Vichy First Days of Issue

Scott	Maury (Ceres)	Dallay	Description	First Day of Issue
	20	23	15 + 35c green Orphan Fund	22-6-42
	21	24	20 +60c brown Orphan Fund	22-6-42
	22	25	30+90c red Orphan Fund	22-6-42
	23	26	Fifth Empire blue	22-6-42
219	245	237	6c Petain	1-7-42
B23	281	239	6c + 2c Coat of Arms	1-8-42
B24	282	240	15c + 5c Coat of Arms	1-8-42
216	230	243	6c Nam Phuong	1-9-42
224	239	242	6c Bao Dai	1-9-42
217	243	235	1c Petain	8-9-42
223	236	241	1/2c Bao Dai	1-11-42
215	231	244	6c Saigon Fair	20-12-42
222	248	238	40c slate blue Petain	15-1-43
225	237	249	1c Sihanhouk	10-3-43
227	238	250	1c Sisavang Vong	10-3-43
226	240	251	6c Sihanhouk	10-5-43
228	241	252	6c Sisavang Vong	1-6-43
233	289	256	20c de Behaine	10-6-43
239	290	257	30c de Rhodes	15-6-43
218	244	236	3c Petain	29-6-43
J75	76	76	2c Vichy Postage Due	15-7-43
J76	77	77	3c Vichy Postage Due	15-7-43
B26	274	258	6c + 2c Do Huu Vi	1-8-43
243	263	253	1c de La Grandiere	15-8-43
J78	79	79	6c Vichy Postage Due	25-8-43
J79	80	80	10c Vichy Postage Due	25-8-43
J80	81	81	12c Vichy Postage Due	25-8-43
J81	82	82	20c Vichy Postage Due	25-8-43
J82	83	83	30c Vichy Postage Due	25-8-43
230	267	255	6c de Genouilly	1-9-43
232	266	254	6c Courbet	1-9-43
237	262	260	1c Garnier	15-9-43
231	268	261	6c Chasseloup-Laubat	5-10-43
234	286	262	6c Yersin	5-10-43
229	242	263	6c National Revolution	5-11-43
B28	275	259	6c + 2c Garros	15-11-43
220	246	264	10c Petain	1-12-43

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First Day Postmarks



