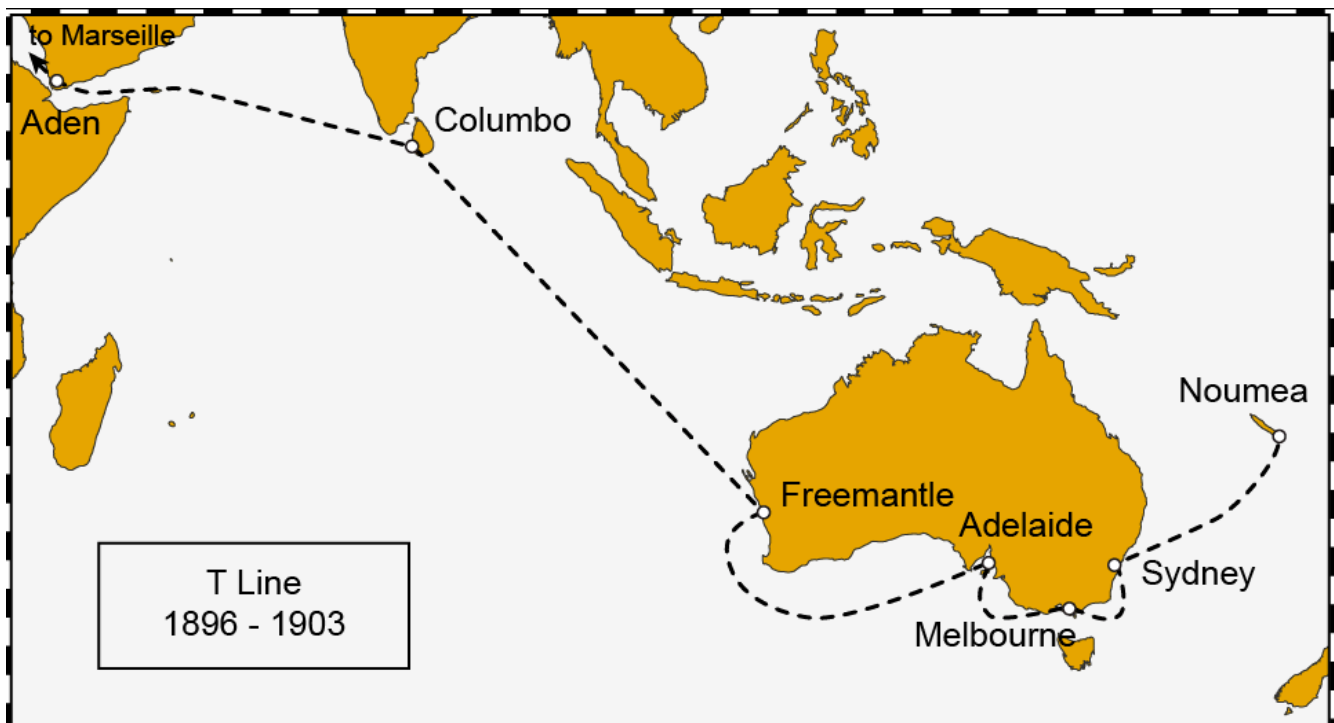# T Line

The Circular of September 1866 reported that code letter "T" was assigned to the independent shipping line that plied to route Suez to Reunion and Mauritius. Over time, the T Line dramatically changed routes.

By 1882, the T Line had become the "Australia and New Caledonia Line" with service every four weeks (convention of 15 January 1881). Its route was from Marseilles to Noumea by way of Reunion and Mauritius.

During the period 1888-95, the T Line had stopped serving Reunion and Mauritius and ran directly from the Seychelles to Australia.

Per the Convention of 5 November 1894 (which became effective on 5 January 1896), a stop at Columbo, Ceylon replaced the stop in the Seychelles. Ships departed every 28 days with the last departure on 17 May 1903 when the presence of postal agents on T Line ships was abolished.
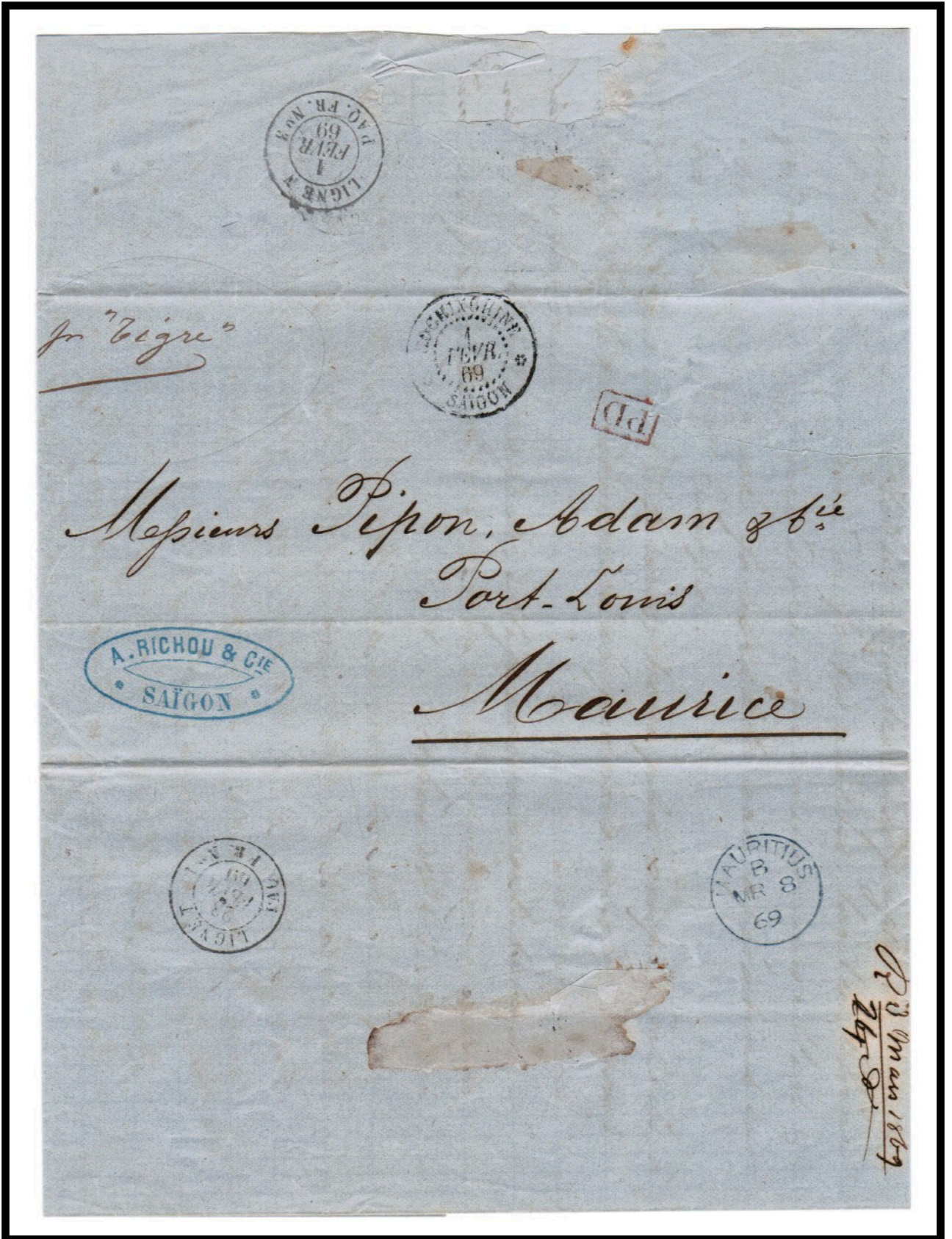
Interactions with mail to or from Indochina typically occurred when ships of the N Line and ships of the T Line were in port at Columbo at the same time. Postal agents would exchange mail sacks to ensure that letters reached their intended destinations as quickly as possible. Both civilian mail and military mail were handled in this manner resulting in the need for several series of specialized numbered postmarks.

T Line
1896 - 1903

LIGNE N
1
FEVR
69
PAQ. FR. N°3

COCHINCHINE
1
FEVR
69
SAIGON

PD

LIGNE T
23
FEVR
69
PAQ. FR. N°1

pr "Tigre"

LIGNE T
1
FEVR
69
PAQ. FR. N°3

COCHINCHINE
1
FEVR
69
SAIGON

PD

A. RICHOU & CIE
SAÏGON

LIGNE T
FEVR
69

MAURITIUS
B
MR 8
69

Messieurs Pipon, Adam & Cie

Port-Louis

Maurice

Pd 3 Mars 1869
26

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. № 2

  Posted from Saigon on 20 April 1898, this letter was carried by an N Line ship, the *Salazie*, to Colombo. There, the letter was transferred to the *Polynésien*, a T Line ship. The letter was likely transferred again at Aden in order to catch a southbound ship for Mauritius. The number 2 postmark was supposedly retired in 1888.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.141/2
PERIOD OF USE: 1866-88
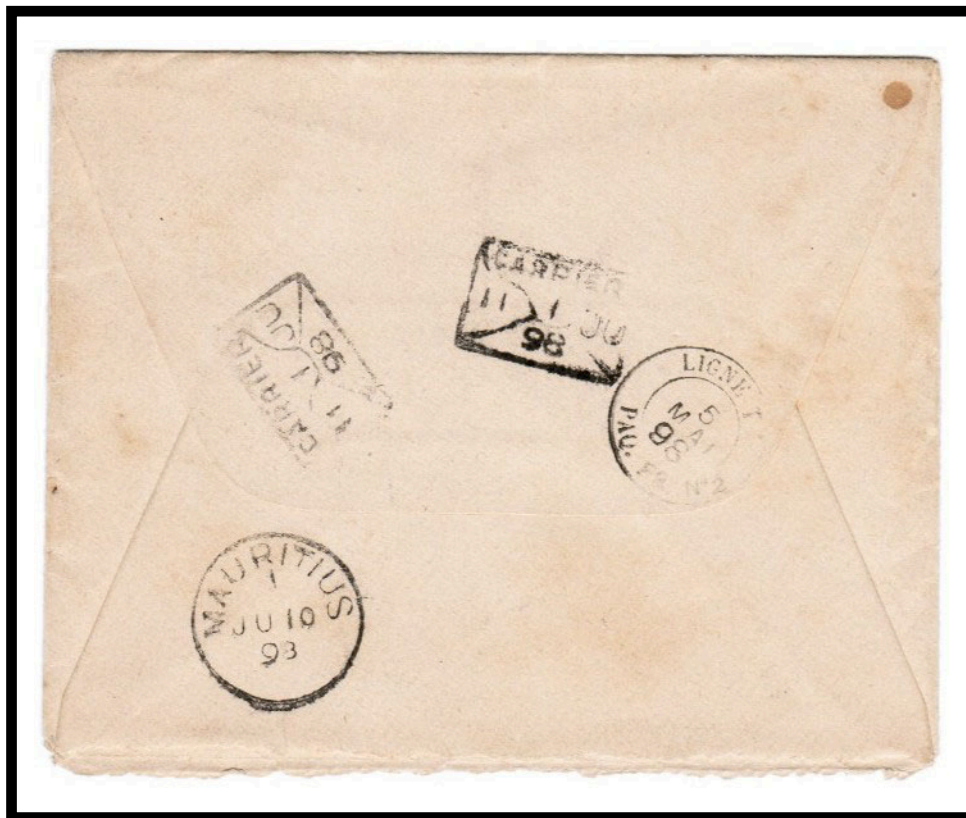
POSTAL MARKINGS

LIGNE T PAQ. FR. № 1 5 MAI 98
MAURITIUS JU 10 98
CARRIER 1   11 JU 98

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 28 AVRIL 98

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. Nº 4

     Mailed from Cholon, Cochinchina in November 1898, this letter to Germany was endorsed at the upper right as "p. French mail via Marseille." The *Sydney* carried the letter as far as Colombo, where it was transferred to the *Ville de la Ciotat* to Marseille arriving on 3 December.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.141/4
PERIOD OF USE: 1883-1902

POSTAL MARKINGS

CHOLON COCHINCHINE 8 NOV 98
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. Nº 4 17 NOV 98

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 8 NOV 98
WITTENBERG (B.Z. HELLE) 4.12.98

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. Nº 4

Posted at Saigon on 15 September for Germany, this postcard made its way westward on an N Line ship. The postcard was put aboard the *Ville de Ciotat*, which departed Colombo, Ceylon on 24 September 1900. Postmark number 4 was used exclusively by the *Ville de* Ciotat from 1893 to the beginning of 1901.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.141/4
PERIOD OF USE: 1883-1902
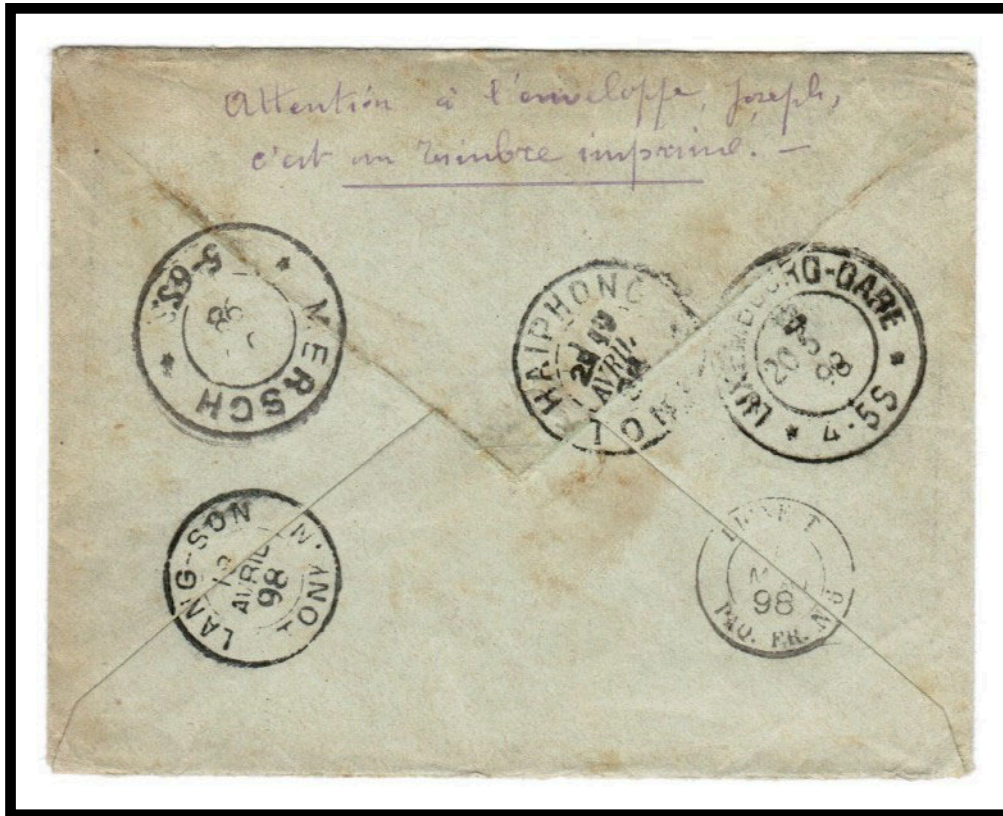

POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-PORT COCHINCHINE 15 SEPT 00
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 15 SEPT 00
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. Nº 4 24 SEPT 00
LIMBACH (SACHSEN) 14.10.00

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. Nº 6

   Posted to the unusual destination of the Duchy of Luxembourg, this letter reached the port city of Haiphong on 19 April 1898. The letter was carried from Saigon on the French N Line ship, the *Ernest Simons*, as far as Colombo, Ceylon. From there, the letter went to Marseille aboard a T Line ship, the *Polynésien*.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.141/6
PERIOD OF USE: 1883-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

LANG-SON TONKIN   18 AVRIL 98
HAIPHONG TONKIN   16 AVRIL 98
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. Nº 6 1 MAI 98
LUXEMBOURG-GARE 4-55 20 5 98
MERSCH 5-65 98

REVERSE

CAO-BANG TONKIN 15 AVRIL 98

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. Nº 6

Posted from Saigon on 12 June 1900, this picture postcard, addressed to Germany, was transported as far as Ceylon aboard an N Line ship. There, it was transferred to the *Polynésien*, which departed Colombo on 30 June. In this case, the "0" in the date "30" was missing from the maritime date stamp.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.141/6
PERIOD OF USE: 1883-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 12 JUIN 00
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. Nº6 3 JUIN 00
RORSCHACH BRIEFPOST 1 7.VI1.00

LIGNE T (Final Voyage)
PAQ. FR. N° 6

This postcard, posted by a soldier at Bac-Quang, departed from Saigon. Curiously, he had franked his card with a 10-centime black Navigation and Commerce stamp although his mailing qualified for free franchise mail. The free mail exemption did not expire until November 1903.

At Columbo, the postcard was transferred to the *Néra*, where the T Line postmark was applied. She departed Columbo on 26 July 1903. However, because of damage, she was forced to stay at Aden and mail was transferred to the *Ernest Simons*, which had departed Saigon on 18 July. The *Ernest Simons* arrived at Marseilles on 16 August. This was the last voyage for the *Ernest Simons* on the N Line – she was transferred to the Q Line, which served Australia. In fact, this was the last T Line voyage with a postal agent on board.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.141/6
PERIOD OF USE: 1883-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

BAC-QUANG TONKIN 30 JUIN 03
TUYEN-QUANG TONKIN 4 JUIL 03
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. N° 6 26 JUIL 03
CLUNY SAONE ET LOIRE 17 AOUT 03

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. № 1

Beginning in November 1887, the French post office introduced octagonal maritime postmarks for use by agents on French liners. Device number 1 was in service from 1887 until 1901. From 1892 through 1901, the *Armand Behic* was the exclusive user of the number 1 date stamp. This postal card, posted from Hon-Gay on 6 September 1898, was transferred to a T Line ship, the *Armand Behic,* at Colombo on 2 September. The ship arrived at Marseille on the 8th of October.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.142/1
PERIOD OF USE: 1887-1901

POSTAL MARKINGS

HON-GAY TONKIN 6 SEPT 98
HAIPHONG TONKIN 7 SEPT 98
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. № 1 22 SEPT 98

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. № 3

    The *Australien* departed Colombo on 20 October 1898. An official letter posted from Hanoi earlier in the month was struck with the LIGNE T postmark as a transit marking. The postal clerk aboard the *Australien* had both the number 3 and number 5 postmarks on this voyage.

**POSTMARK TYPE: 2.142/3**
PERIOD OF USE: 1888-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI TONKIN 5 OCT 98
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. № 3 22 OCT 98

REVERSE

LYON RHONE 6 NOV 98

LIGNE T PAQ. FR. Nº 3
Military Mail

Sometimes franchise mail received the regular maritime postmark instead of the Expeditionary Corps postmark. Here the civilian marking was applied at Colombo when mail was transferred to the *Dumbea* for carriage to Marseille. This was the final voyage that employed the number 3 postmark.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.142/3
**PERIOD OF USE: 1888-1903**
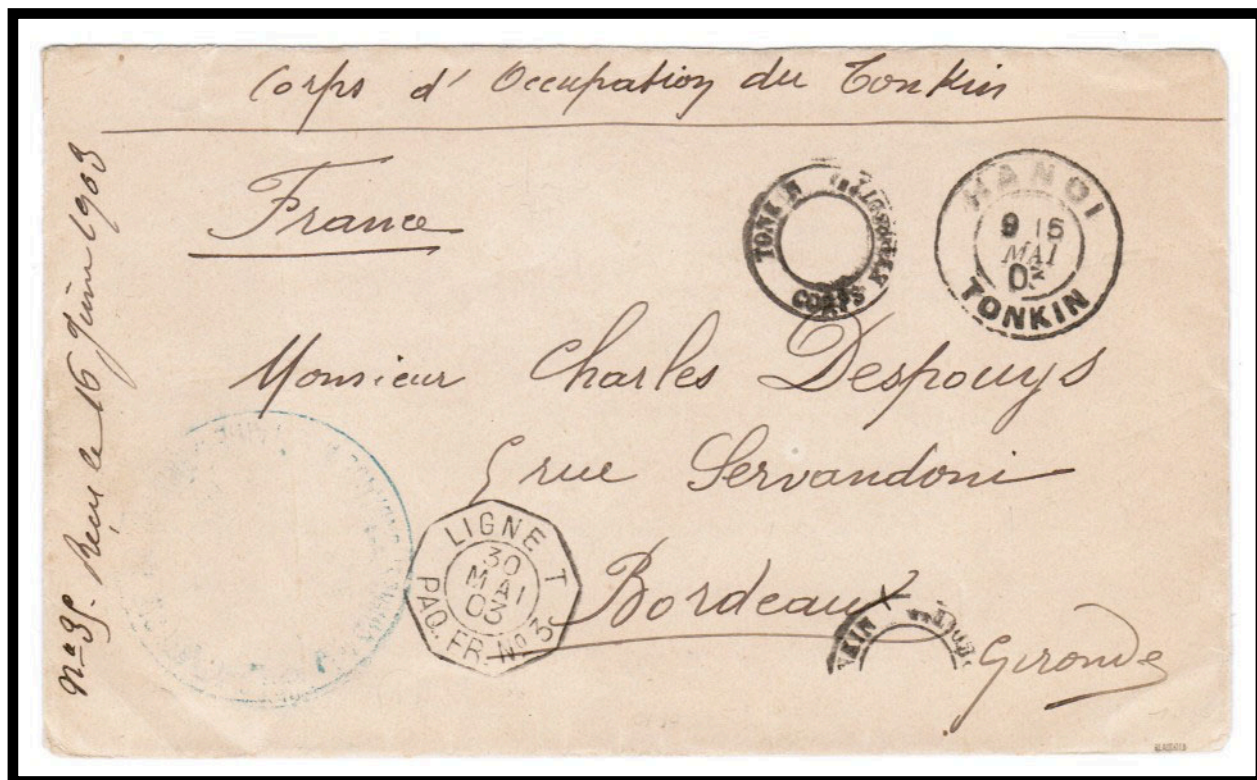
POSTAL MARKINGS

TONKIN CORPS EXPEDIT^{RE}
HANOI TONKIN 15 MAI 03
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. Nº 3 30 MAI 03

LIGNE T
PAQ. FR. № 5

Though the number 5 device was fabricated in 1887 like the other circle-in-octagon postmarks, it was not put into service until 1896. The device was usually used aboard the *Australien* along with the number 3 postmark. After this voyage in 1901, the two postmarks were transferred to the *S.S Armand Behic*.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.142/5
PERIOD OF USE: 1896-1903
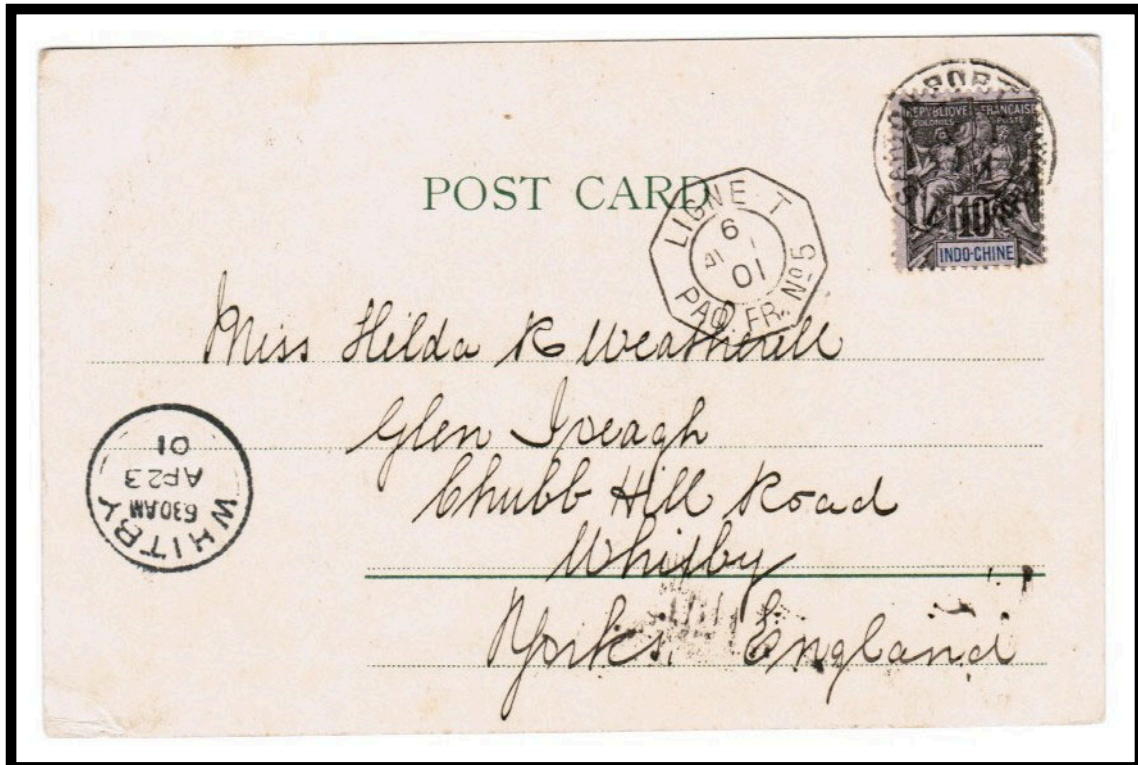
POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON-PORT COCHINCHINE 3 AVRIL 01
LIGNE T PAQ. FR. № 5 6 AVRIL 01
WHITBY AP 23 01

NOUMEA A MARSEILLE
PAQ. FR. № 1

 The "NOUMEA A MARSEILLE PAQ. FR. № 1" postmark was only used on five voyages in 1902-3. Mail from Indochina was carried on N Line ships and transferred to the T Line at Colombo, Ceylon.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.144
PERIOD OF USE: 1902-03

POSTAL MARKINGS

CORPS EXP<u>RE</u> ANNAM-TONKIN
MON-CAY TONKIN 13 MAI 02
NOUMEA A MARSEILLE PAQ. FR. № 1 31 MAI 02

REVERSE

MARSEILLE A NOUMEA PAQ. FR. № 1 31 MAI 02
BORDEAUX GIRONDE 18 JUIN 02
LYON RHONE 17-6 02

NOUMEA A MARSEILLE
LIGNE T № 4

Yet another style of maritime postmark was introduced in 1903. The Line T nomenclature was suppressed in favor of wording that explicitly identified the direction of each voyage. Thus, each Line T device had to be replaced by two new devices—one for Marseilles-Noumea and one for Noumea-Marseilles. Postmark number 4 was only used on two voyages of the *Australien*. In this case, the postmark was applied aboard the *Australien* at Colombo on 7 March 1903.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.146
PERIOD OF USE: 1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 26 FEVR 03
NOUMEA A MARSEILLE LIGNE T № 4 7 MARS 03
BRUXELLES ARRIVEE 23 MAR 03

AUSTRALIE
PAQ. FR. T № 1

Another type of maritime postmark was introduced starting in 1898 with "AUSTRALIE" at the top of the octagonal format. This marking was applied when the *Armand Behic* departed Colombo on 28 July 1900.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.158/1
PERIOD OF USE: 1895-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 19 JUIL 00
AUSTRALIE PAQ. FR. T № 1 28 JUIL 00

REVERSE

BUCHHOLZ (SACHSEN) 16.8.00

CORPS EXP. TONKIN
LIGNE T.1

As with the N Line, the T Line employed separate postmarks for soldiers' mail. In this case, postmark number 1 was carried by the *Armand Behic*, which departed Colombo 17 November 1900 and arrived at Marseilles on the 3rd of December.
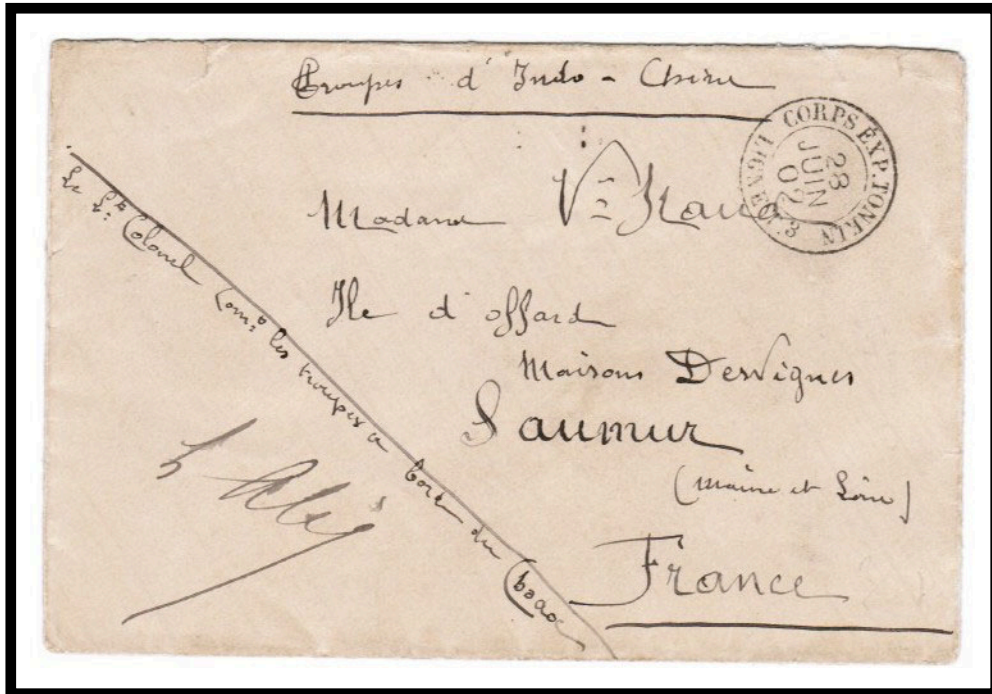
POSTMARK TYPE: 2.167/1
PERIOD OF USE: 1896-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS
CORPS EXP. TONKIN LIGNE T. 1 27 NOV 00
REVERSE
BORDEAUX ARRIVEE 4 DEC 00

CORPS EXP. TONKIN
LIGNE T.3

     Curiously, the *Armand Behic* carried both number 3 and number 5 postmarks for civilian mail. For military mail, however, there was only a number "3" postmark. Here that postmark was applied aboard the *Armand Behic* on the day she departed Colombo, Ceylon.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.167/3
PERIOD OF USE: 1896-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

CORPS EXP. TONKIN LIGNE T. 3 28 JUIN 02

REVERSE

LAUMUR MAINE ET LOIRE 16-7 02

CORPS EXP TONKIN
LIGNE T. 4

With its block lettering and outer circle diameter of 21 1/2 millimeters, the number "4" canceller differed from the other T Line military postmarks.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.168
PERIOD OF USE: 1896-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

TONKIN CORPS EXPEDIT<u>RE</u>

HANOI TONKIN 20 FEVR 03

CORPS EXP. TONKIN LIGNE T.4 7 MARS 03

REVERSE

BORDEAUX GIRONDE 23 MARS 03

CORPS EXP TONKIN
LIGNE T. 6

The highest number employed with this postmark format was the number "6." (The number "5" was never used.) In this case, the date plug was inserted upside down one day after the *Indus* departed Colombo on 24 August 1902.

POSTMARK TYPE: 2.167/6
PERIOD OF USE: 1898-1903

POSTAL MARKINGS

CORPS EXP. TONKIN LIGNE T.6 25 AOUT 02

REVERSE

BREST FINISTERE 14-9 02
BREST FINISTERE 15-9 02
BORDEAUX GIRONDE 16-9 02
MOULIS ARIEGE   17 SEPT 02