

Postmarks of Indochina's Railroads

As early as 1873, colonial authorities invited bids for construction and operation of an urban railway that would connect Saigon with Cholon. After various misstarts, the Saigon-Cholon "high road" tramway opened to the public on 27 December 1881. Concurrent with tramway construction, plans were created for the colony's first railway. The Saigon-Mytho Line opened to the public on 20 July 1885.

After those successful efforts, plans proliferated around Indochina for railroads to take advantage of access to agricultural products and natural resources. A number of government-run construction projects were supplemented with concessions granted to companies to build and maintain sections of rail with a portion of profits going to the government. Indochina's golden age of railroad construction culminated with the completion of the Trans-Indochina Railway on 2 September 1936.

This exhibit is arranged geographically according to regions and the directions of rail lines extending from the major cities. Postmark types and periods of use are identified.

South Region	North Region	Central Region	Spur Lines
Saigon southward: Saigon - Mytho	Hanoi eastward: Hanoi – Haiphong	Hue northward: Hue – Dongha – Donghoi - Vinh	Thudaumot – Locninh
Saigon northward: Saigon – Bienhoa – Giaray – Pnantiet – Phanrang – Nhattrang – Dieutri - Tamky	Hanoi northward: Hanoi – Phu-Lang- Thuong - Lang-Son	Hue southward: Hue – Tourane – Quang Ngai	Toucham – Dalat
	Hanoi westward: Hanoi – Viettri – Yen Bay – Laokay		Pnompenh - Battambang - Mongkolborey
	Hanoi southward: Hanoi – Nam Dinh – Ben-Thuy - Vinh		

Types of Railroad Postmarks



Type D1



Type E1



Type E2



Type G



Type G1

Additionally, examples of Indochinese mail travelling via the Trans-Siberian Railway are presented.

MITHO A SAIGON COCHINCHINE

Opening on 20 July 1885, the My Tho-Saigon rail line was the earliest in Indochina. The first postmark used on the Mitho-Saigon line debuted at the end of the nineteenth century. In this example, the year portion of the postmark's date plug was missing.



POSTMARK TYPE: D2(fl)
PERIOD OF USE: 1891-94



POSTAL MARKINGS

MITHO-SAIGON COCHINCHINE 26 OCT. (94)

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 26 OCT 94

AUBIGNAN VAUCLUSE 27 NOV 94

MYTHO A SAIGON 19

The Mytho-Saigon line consisted of a short section of rail that was only 71 kilometers long. Type E2 postmarks on this line carried a number that identified the mail crew. In this case, the postmark exhibits the number "1°" for a 1904 postcard sent to Paris.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1903-07



POSTAL MARKINGS

MYTHO A SAIGON 19 11 SEPT 04
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 11 SEPT 04

MYTHO A SAIGON 2^e

The Mytho-Saigon Railway employed a number of different postmarks during its long history. The E2 postmark with the number "2" is only known from a three-year period with 1903 being the earliest known use.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1903-05



POSTAL MARKINGS

MYTHO A SAIGON COCHINCHINE 2^e 8 AVRIL 03

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 8 AVRIL 03

CLOYES S LE LOIR EURE ET LOIR 6 MAI 03

SAIGON A MYTHO 2°

The "SAIGON A MYTHO 2°" postmark has only been reported from 1902.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1902



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON A MYTHO 2° 3 SEPT 02
MYTHO COCHINCHINE 3 SEPT 02

REVERSE

SAIGON A MYTHO 2° 3 SEPT 02

MYTHO A SAIGON 3^e

The largest number used for the Mytho à Saigon postmarks was the number “3.” This mailing is the only known example of the number 3 postmark used in the Mytho-to-Saigon direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1898



POSTAL MARKINGS
MYTHO A SAIGON 3^e 9 DEC 98

SAIGON A MYTHO 1°



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1919-27

After World War I, postmarks on the Saigon-Mytho line adopted a new format with an asterisk at the base. The first year of use was 1919. In this example, the postmark was applied to a letter posted on the train and addressed to Cantho.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON A MYTHO 1° * 8-12 19
REVERSE
MYTHO COCHINCHINE 8-12 19

MYTHO A
SAIGON

The final postmark used on the Mytho-Saigon line was a type G device lacking any code letters for identifying the postal workers' shift. The first year of reported use was 1930. Service on this rail line continued well into World War II but ceased in September 1945.



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1930-43



POSTAL MARKINGS
MYTHO A SAIGON 24-9 30

SAIGON A
MYTHO

Postmarks from trains outbound from major cities are scarcer than the reverse. The "SAIGON A MYTHO" postmark is only known from 1931. Addressed to Paris, this letter would have had to turn around at the end of the line in order to return to Saigon for onward transmittal to France by ship



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1931



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON A MYTHO 5-10 31
REVERSE
PARIS XI RUE MERCŒUR 2 • XI 1931

BIENHOA A SAIGON 10

Bienhoa was the first major city leaving Saigon going northward. Postmarks from trains in the Bienhoa-to-Saigon direction carry the number "10."



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1905-06



POSTAL MARKINGS

BIENHOA A SAIGON 10 13 MARS 06
BORDEAUX GIRONDE 9-4 06

BIENHOA A SAIGON 2°

By road, the distance from Saigon to Bienhoa was approximately 20 miles. Proceeding north by train from Saigon, the first major town encountered was Bienhoa at the 29-kilometer milepost.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1924-25



POSTAL MARKINGS

BIENHOA A SAIGON 2° 22 MARS 25

REVERSE

ELBEUF SEINE-INFERIEURE 25-4 25

SAIGON GIARAY

Only a single type of postmark, a type G1 device, is known from this short section of the Transindochina Railroad. Train post offices used the postmark only in 1929 and 1930.



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1929-30



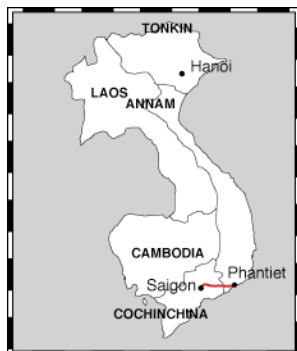
POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON GIARAY 3-4 30

SAIGON à PHANTIET
A



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930

Even though Saigon and Phantiet, which are separated by a distance of 134 kilometers, were connected by rail as early as 15 February 1910, postmarks are not known from the early period. This example from 1930 is the first recorded postmark from this service. It is one of the few Indochinese postmarks to employ a lower case "à" to denote "to" between towns.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON à PHANTIET A 1-8 30
REVERSE
PHANTIET ANNAM 1-8 30

SAIGON à PHANTHÉT
B

Besides "A," a second code letter, "B," is known for the Saigon-Phanthét service. Similarly, it too is only known from the year 1930.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON à PHANTHÉT B 1-8 30 (red)
REVERSE
PHANTHÉT ANNAM 1-8 30



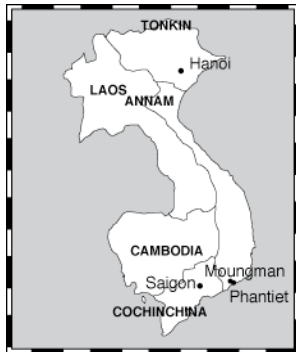
POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930

PHANTIET A MUONGMAN

Completed on 16 July 1913, the branch line from Phantiet to Muongman was only 12 kilometers in length. Since the two towns were located so close to one another, the Phantiet-to Muongman postmark was extremely short lived. It has only been reported for a single year.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930



POSTAL MARKINGS
PHANTIET A MUONGMAN 4-6 30
REVERSE
SAIGON NHATRANG 4-6 30

NHATRANG – SAIGON
COCHINCHINE

After joining several sections, through services between Saigon and Nhatrang were put in place effective 4 October 1913. The total distance from Saigon to Nhatrang was 409 kilometers. The type E3 style postmark was used only on this route and it is only known from 1920.



POSTMARK TYPE: E3
PERIOD OF USE: 1920



POSTAL MARKINGS
NHATRANG-SAIGON COCHINCHINE 1 MAI 20
HANOI TONKIN 22 JUN 04
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 1-5 20

NHATRANG A SAIGON

- 1 -

Starting in 1936, before the completion of the Trans-Indochina Railroad, postmarks from trains on the Nhatrang-Saigon section were in the type G format. Starting with "1," each shift was given its own code number.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1936-44



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG A SAIGON -1- 1-4 38

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 2-4 38

NHATRANG A SAIGON

- 2 -

Code numbers were specified at the base of the postmark. Code number "1" was used for both directions, but other numbers were only used in one direction on the rail line. The number "2" was assigned to trains southbound from Nhatrang to Saigon. Its earliest known use is from 1935.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1935-44



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG A SAIGON -2- 20-12 35

flight cachet
airmail label

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 20-12 35

PARIS VIII DISTRIBUTION 30 • XII 1935

NHATRANG A SAIGON

- 3 -

The use of the numeral "3" in the Nhatrang-to-Saigon postmark had not been previously recorded.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1937-44



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG A SAIGON - 3 - 21-11 36
framed Saigon-Marseille routing instruction

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 22-11 36
ST. ETIENNE LOIRE 30 XI 36

NHATRANG A SAIGON

- 5 -

The number "5" was the largest that appeared in the Nhatrang-to-Saigon postmarks during the period 1937-44.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1937-44



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG A SAIGON - 5 - 2-2 39

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-2 39

NHATRANG
SAIGON

A new format for the Nhatrang-Saigon railway postmark was introduced in 1924. It was the first that placed the destination at the base of the postcard.



POSTMARK TYPE : G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1924-31



POSTAL MARKINGS
NHATRANG SAIGON 10-6 24

SAIGON
NHATRANG

For the Saigon-to-Nhatrang direction, the type G1 postmark eliminated the French preposition "A" (meaning "to") after "SAIGON" at its top. The type G1 postmark is only known from 1932-34.



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1932-34



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON NHATRANG 7-4 34
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 7-4 34
PARIS VIII DISTRIBUTION 16 • IX 1934

NHATRANG A
SAIGON

In the 1930s, the post office introduced a new style of the G1 postmark that added the French preposition "A" at the end of the town name that appeared at the top of the postmark. In service for only a few years, it continued the practice of placing the destination at the base of the postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1931-33



POSTAL MARKINGS
NHATRANG A SAIGON 6-3 32

SAIGON A
NHATRANG

Based on mail volumes, the type G1 postmark for the outbound direction from Saigon toward Nhatrang occurs less frequently than the counterpart for inbound mail. This example is the only known example of this postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1933



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON A NHATRANG 3-6 33
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 5-6 33

SAIGON – NHATRANG ACCELERE

The SAIGON-NHATRANG ACCELERE postmark was only applied on northbound trains. "ACCELERE" referred to an express train.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1931-36

POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-NHATRANG ACCELERE 11-12 33
expedited service label
framed "BM" and framed "ADDRESS INCOMPLETE"

REVERSE

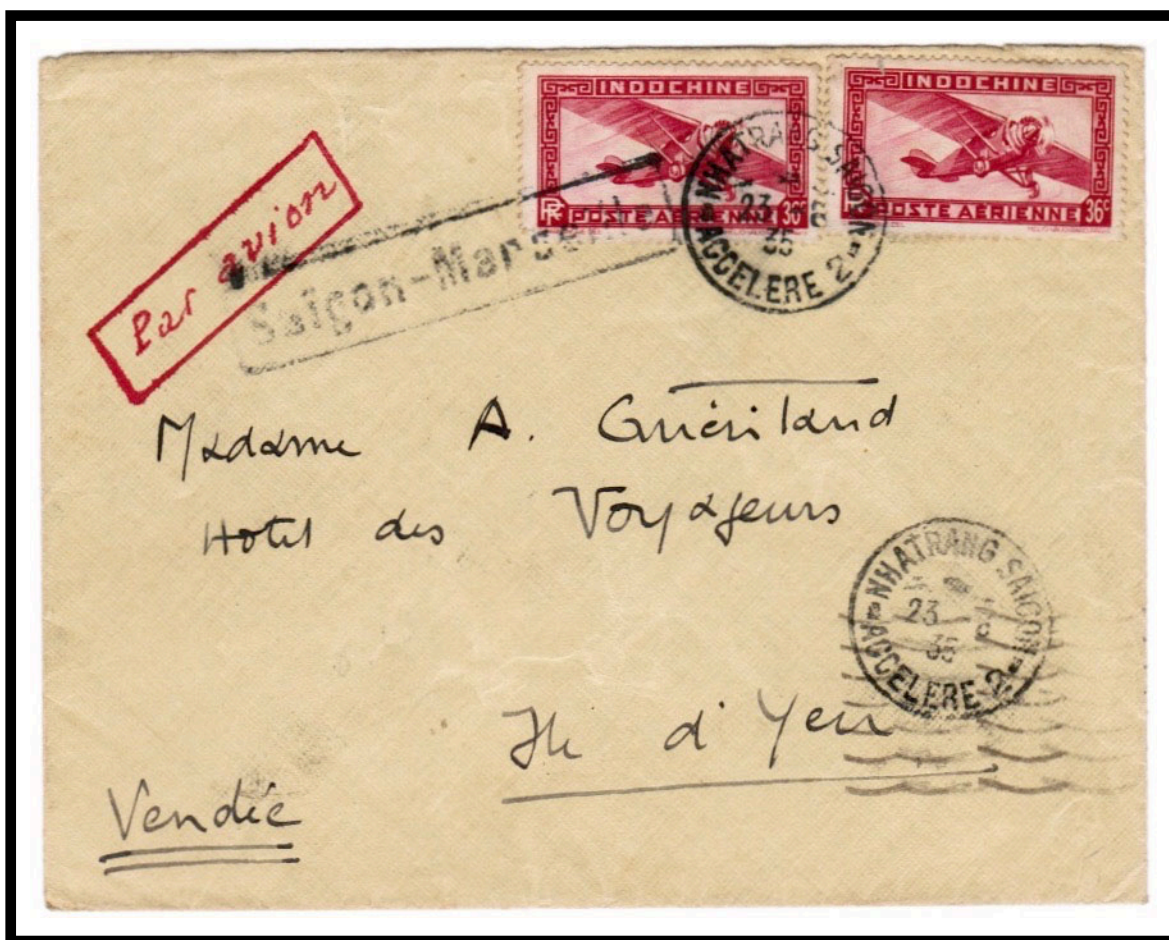
TOURANE ANNAM 12-12 33
VINH ANNAM 14-12 33
HANOI R-P TONKIN 21 DEC 33
unknown by Hanoi postmen handstamp
HUE ANNAM 10-1 34

NHATRANG SAIGON
ACCELERE 2

Here the type G postmark carries "ACCELERE 2" at its base denoting an express train. This was the only section of rail line in Indochina that utilized this particularly distinctive wording. While "ACCELERE" is known, "ACCELERE 1" is not known.



POSTMARK TYPE: G1
PERIOD OF USE: 1933-35



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG SAIGON ACCELERE 2 23-8 35
framed "Saigon-Marseille" route handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 24-8 35
MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION BÔCHES DU RHONE I • IX 1935

PHANRANG A NHATRANG



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1913-14

The 87-kilometer route from Phanrang to Nhatrang opened on 1 April 1912. This section joined with the Saigon-Phantiet rail line on 6 October 1913. The train's postmark is only known in the northbound direction (i.e., Phanrang to Nhatrang) and only for a short period of time. This October 1913 cover was posted shortly after the rail connection was completed with Saigon.



POSTAL MARKINGS
PHANRANG A NHATRANG 31 OCT 13
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-11 13

PHANRANG A SAIGON A
COCHINCHINE

The postmark for the Phanrang-to-Saigon direction employed the letter "A," while the reverse direction used the letter "b." The "A" postmark is only known from 1918.



POSTMARK TYPE: E3
PERIOD OF USE: 1918



POSTAL MARKINGS

PHANRANG à SAIGON A COCHINCHINE 8 DEC 18

DIEUTRI A SAIGON

- 1 -

Only one postmark was used between Diuetri and Saigon in the southbound direction. The postmark saw service only for a single year, 1937.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1937



POSTAL MARKINGS

DIEUTRI A SAIGON 8-1 37

REVERSE

MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION BCHES DU RHONE 17 • 1 1937

PARIS VIII DISTRIBUTION 18 • 1 1937

SAIGON A DIEUTRI

- 2 -

In both directions, the type G postmarks used crew identifiers up to the number 2. This example from 1937 is the first known year of use, but later usages may exist.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1937



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON A DIEUTRI -2- 21-7 37
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 23-2 37

TAMKY A SAIGON
A

First recorded in the mid 1930s, postmarks for the Saigon-Tamky segment of the Transindochina Railway were some of the last to appear before World War II completely disrupted regular rail service. The Saigon-Tamky rail line segment only used postmarks with the type G format. Mail crews were identified by letters with "A" being the first letter employed in the postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1934-44



POSTAL MARKINGS
TAMKY A SAIGON A 24-2 39
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 25 FEVR 39
ASNIERES-CENTRE SEINE 4 MARS 39

SAIGON A TAMKY
A



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1938-42

This example of missionary correspondence, franked with a semi-postal stamp, was sent to Tourane on the northbound train. The code letter "A" was used on trains going in either direction. Upon arrival, a censor examined the contents, resealed the envelope and handstamped it with his signature consisting of a "B" over a "1" in a circle. The letter "B" was the censor code letter for Annam.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON A TAMKY A 25-10 39

B1 in circle

censor's resealing band

REVERSE

OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITÉ MILITAIRE football

HUE ANNAM 27-10 39

TOURANE ANNAM 28-10 39

TAMKY A SAIGON
C

The code letter "C" was used on both the southbound and northbound trains operating on the Saigon - Tamky route. When this letter arrived at Saigon, it was transferred to the airport for airmail service to France.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1934-44



POSTAL MARKINGS
TAMKY A SAIGON C 7-4 38

SAIGON A TAMKY
D

Northbound trains were believed to be the only ones on this line that employed postmarks with the code letter "D." If sorted near Saigon, this particular letter would have been dropped at Phantiet to transfer to the cog railway that went inland to Dalat.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1938-42



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON A TAMKY D 7-5 38
REVERSE
DALAT ANNAM 8-5 38

TAMKY A SAIGON
D

Dated 1938, this is the first example of the TAMKY A SAIGON postmark with the letter "D." Previously, the letter "D" was only known on northbound trains.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1938



POSTAL MARKINGS
TAMKY A SAIGON D 18-1 38
REVERSE
DALAT ANNAM 19-1 38

HANOI A HAIPHONG TONKIN

Before 1903, the service between Hanoi and Haiphong was performed by a combination of river boat and horse carriage. The transit postmark applied by this service really established the format for the railroad postmarks that were to follow. In this case, postmarks canceled the postage stamps indicating that the letter was mailed somewhere in route between Hanoi and Haiphong.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1891-1902



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A HAIPHONG TONKIN 9 FEVR 99
LIGNE N PAQ. FR. N° 10 15 FEVR. 99

REVERSE

DREUX EURE ET LOIRE 11 MARS 99
MAILLEBOIS EURE ET LOIRE 12 MARS 99

HANOI A HAIPHONG TONKIN

Usually, the HANOI A HAIPHONG postmark was applied as a transit marking as with this example of a picture postcard posted at Hanoi in 1900. In this case, the postmark had been struck with orange ink, an unusual occurrence.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1891-1902



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI TONKIN 17 NOV 1900
HANOI A HAIPHONG TONKIN 18 NOV 1900 (orange)
LIGNE N PAQ. FR. N° 4 25 NOV 00

HAIPHONG A HANOI TONKIN

As indicated by the backstamp, an incoming letter from France was transferred by the Haiphong-to-Hanoi service. Letters going toward Hanoi are seen much less commonly than outbound letters from the capital city. The HAIPHONG A HANOI / TONKIN postmark is only known from two years of service, 1893-94.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1893-94



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG A HANOI TONKIN 12 FEVR.
CORR. D. ARMEES SAIGON 28 JANV. 93

HANOI A HAIPHONG
A

Once the Doumer Bridge was completed across the Red River on 8 April 1902, true rail service was available between Hanoi and Haiphong. Different shifts working on the mail cars had identifying code letters. This example bears the code letter "A" at the base of the postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A HAIPHONG A 24 AVRIL 08

HAIPHONG A HANOI
- B -

In the early 19000s, the size of postmarks employed in each direction were different on the Hanoi-Haiphong line. In the Haiphong-to-Hanoi direction, the postmarks were larger, 25 millimeters in diameter. Code letters were the same: "A", "B" and "C."



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1902-32



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG A HANOI - A - 21 FEVR 03
NOISY-LE-SEC SEINE 23 MARS 03

HANOI A HAIPHONG
- B -

Letters were added as needed to identify individual postal crews. Type D1 postmarks that employed code "B" and later letters differed from "A" postmarks in that dashes were placed on each side of the letter.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A HAIPHONG -B- 12 DEC 06
SAINT HENRI BOUCHES DU RHONE 29-1 07

HAIPHONG A HANOI
- B -

For postmarks in the Haiphong-to-Hanoi direction, the code letter scheme mirrored that employed in the reverse direction. For all the type E1 postmarks, the code letters were set off with dashes to either side.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1902-32



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG A HANOI - B - 17 MAI 10
HANOI TONKIN 17 MAI 10
REVERSE
SINGAPORE MY 9 1910

HANOI A HAIPHONG
- C -

Like their "B" counterparts, the "C" postmarks employed dashes to set off the code letter identifying the crew on the mail car.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-28



POSTAL MARKINGS

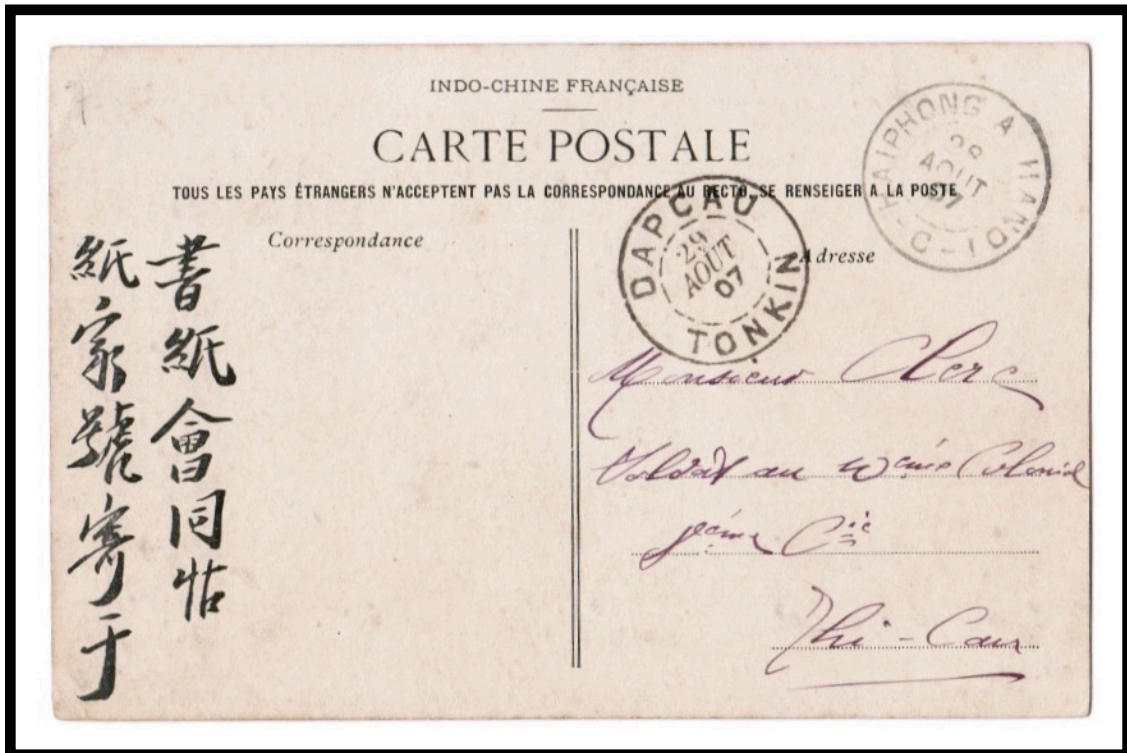
HANOI A HAIPHONG -C- 25 MARS 07
SOTTEVILLE-LES-ROUEN SEINE INFRE -5 07

HAIPHONG A HANOI
- C -

Inbound mail from Haiphong was scarcer than the reverse. Postmarks for the inbound direction, Haiphong-to-Hanoi, used the 24-millimeter type E1 format as compared to the type D1 postmark for mail outbound from Hanoi.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1902-32



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG A HANOI -C- 28 AOUT 07
DAPCAU TONKIN 29 AOUT 07

HAIPHONG A HANOI
- C -

Like postmarks on letters heading toward the port city of Haiphong, postmarks on letters going inland employed letters to identify the mail crew working on the train. Another trait shared with the type D1 postmark, the type E1 postmark set off the letter "C" with dashes.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1902-32

POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG A HANOI -C- 24 OCT 23
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 24-10 23

HANOI A HAIPHONG

1º

Gradually, type E2 postmarks replaced the type D1 and E1 postmarks on the Hanoi-Haiphong Line. Mail crews were designated by numerals instead of letters.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1909-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A HAIPHONG 1º 12 JUIL. 12

REVERSE

HANOI A HAIPHONG 1º 12 JUIL. 12

HANOI A HAIPHONG

20

Only two code numbers, "1" and "2," were used on the Hanoi-Haiphong rail line. Posted at Hanoi's train station, this postcard received the number "2" circular date stamp as a transit postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1909-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A HAIPHONG 20 21 AVRIL 11

REVERSE

HANOI-GARE TONKIN 21 AVRIL 11

Hanoi Railway Station
HANOI A HAIPHONG

20

After being posted at Hanoi's railway station ("GARE HANOI"), a postcard was struck with the Hanoi-to-Haiphong railroad transit marking in 1912.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1910-12



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1909-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

GARE HANOI TONKIN 4 JANV 12
HANOI A HAIPHONG 20 4 JANV 12

HAIPHONG A HANOI
A



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-34

In the late 1920s, the post office introduced an entirely new postmark with an undulating or scalloped border, the type OND1. For this letter, the sender paid an extra fee of 5 cents for the connecting automobile service ("SERVICE ACCÉLÉRÉ") from Hanoi to Saigon in order to connect with the weekly airmail service to France.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG A HANOI A 31 AOUT 31
expedited service label
airmail label

REVERSE

QUANG-NGAI ANNAM 1-9 31
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-9 31

HAIPHONG A HANOI
B

When Indochinese trains shifted to type G format postmarks, clerks apparently retired the letter "A" from postmarks. The first letter of the alphabet employed for type G postmarks was the letter "B."



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-45



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG A HANOI B 12-1 45
REVERSE
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 13-1 45

HANOI A HAIPHONG
C

Occasionally, the railway postmarks were applied as transit markings on the back of envelopes. Marked on the reverse "VOIE SIBERIENNE," this letter took 37 days to go from Hanoi to Paris.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1922-34



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A HAIPHONG C 25 FEVR 29
PARIS-R.P. 7 DISTRIBUTION 2 • IV 1929
REVERSE
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 25-2 29

HANOI A HAIPHONG
D

Type G postmarks used on the Hanoi – Haiphong route included a distinctive code letter at the base of the circular date stamp for each direction. Only the letter “D” was used by trains going in both directions.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1922-34



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A HAIPHONG D 19 AVRIL 32
REVERSE
TONKIN D 19-4 32
PARIS XX DISTRIBUTION 21 • V 1932

HAIPHONG A HANOI
D

The highest letter employed in type G postmarks for this pair of cities was the letter "D." Originally, trains were used principally to convey mail from Hanoi to ships anchored at Haiphong. In the age of airmail, routing was reversed to make air connections. Sent by rail from Haiphong via Hanoi and Tourane, this mailing went onward by air from Saigon to France.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-45



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG A HANOI D 29 NOV 33
airmail label

REVERSE

TOURANE ANNAM 30-11 33
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 2 DEC 33
PARIS VIII DISTRIBUTION 12 • XII 1933

HAIPHONG A HANOI
D

Usually, the date was specified in two lines. For the layout shown here, numerals made up all parts of the date and the components were presented in three separate lines.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-45



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG A HANOI 27 3 43

HANOI A HAI-PHONG
S

A distinctive postmark was employed when a special train was put into service from Hanoi to Haiphong. At the base of the postmark is the letter "S" that stood for "Special." This postmark is only known in the Hanoi-to-Haiphong direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930-32



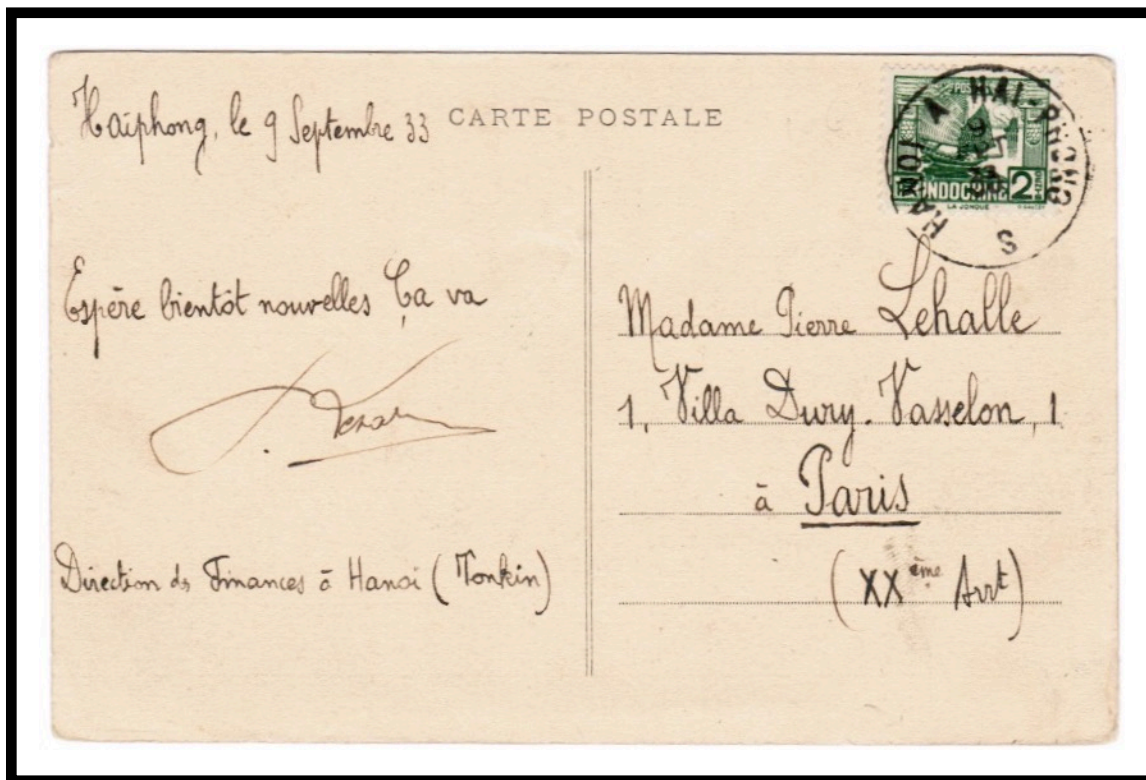
POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A HAIPHONG S 18 JUIL. 32

HANOI A HAI-PHONG
S

A distinctive postmark was employed when a special train was put into service from Hanoi to Haiphong. At the base of the postmark is the letter "S" that stood for "Special." This postmark is only known in the Hanoi-to-Haiphong direction. This example from 1933 is the latest known example of this railroad postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930-33



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A HAIPHONG S 9 SEPT 33

PHU-LANG-THUONG A HANOI

The Phu-Lang-Thuong to Langson route was called the China Gateway Line. It was conceived in the 1880s to facilitate the movements of troops and materiel during the campaign to pacify Tonkin.

Its immediate future was sealed when the controversial ministerial decision was made to use 0.6-meter track and rolling stock. The light rail concept featured ready-made sections that were portable facilitating wartime military operations. However, for a rail line of over 100 kilometers, wear and tear on the light-duty system proved to be a continued challenge.

Work began to extend and improve the line in 1899. The first train ran on the new 163-kilometer, 1-meter gauge line from Hanoi to Dong-Dang on 8 April 1902. The 0.6-meter locomotives eventually saw service on Indochina's tram lines.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1903-06



POSTAL MARKINGS
PHU-LANG-THUONG A HANOI 2 NOV. 06

HANOI A PHU-LANG-THUONG



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1905-06

After the Doumer Bridge was opened in 1904, the Hanoi-Langson Line was complete. Phu-Lang-Thuong had previously been a transfer point for mail to the river service. Only a single postmark is known from the short Hanoi-to-Phu-Lang-Thuong section. The first year of reported use was 1905.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A PHU-LANG-THUONG 6 SEPT 05

REVERSE

HANOI A PHU-LANG-THUONG 6 SEPT 05

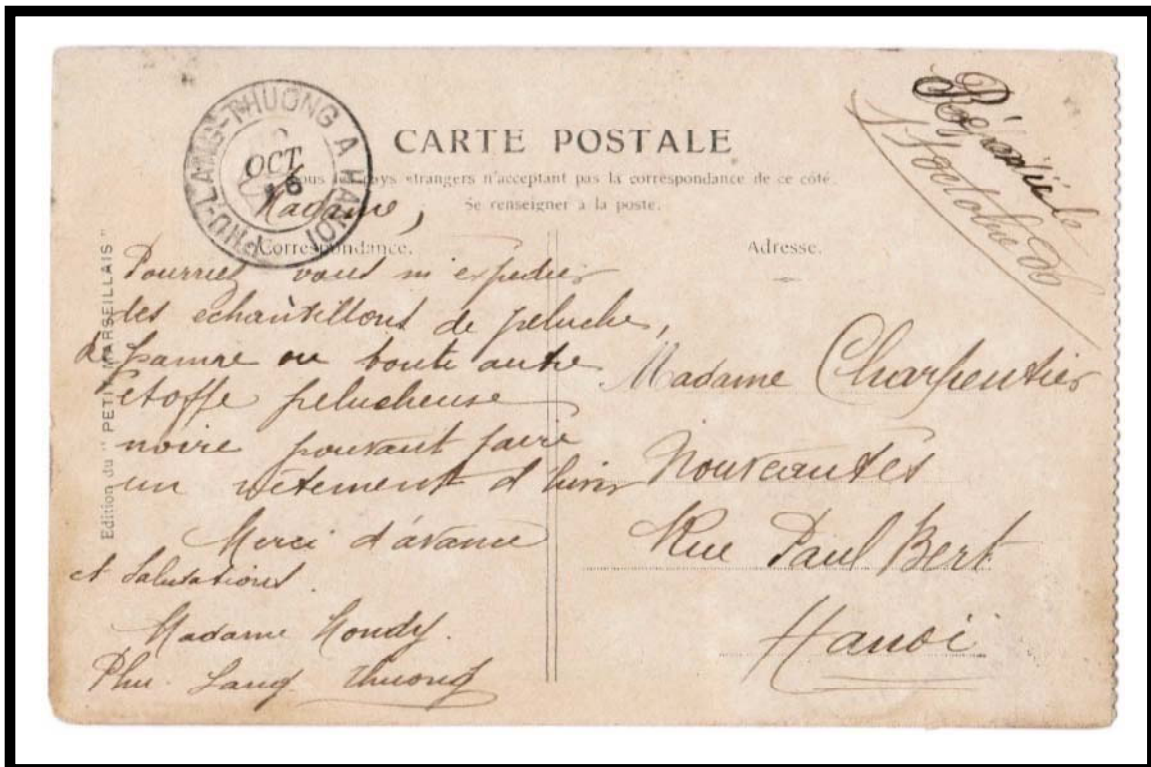


PHU-LANG-THUONG A HANOI

Like for the outbound route, clerks travelling in the Phu-Lang-Thuong to Hanoi direction used a type E1 postmark for postmarking mail.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1903-16



POSTAL MARKINGS
PHU-LANG-THUONG a HANOI 10 OCT 06

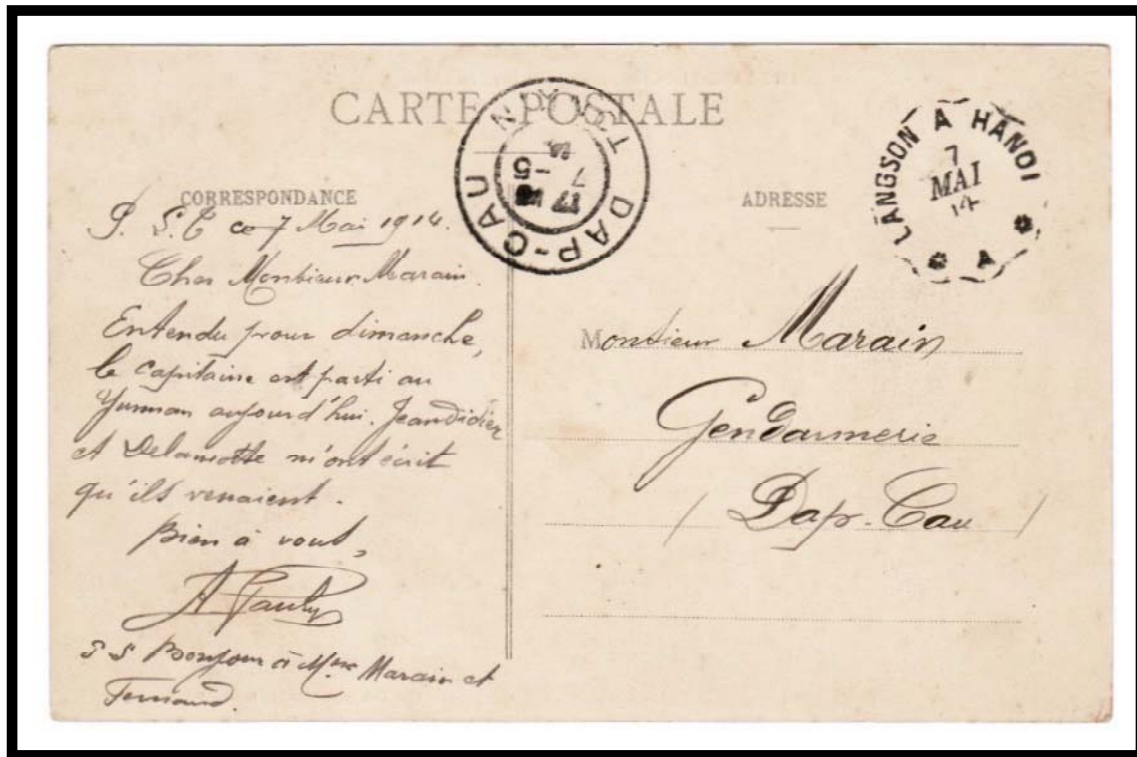
LANGSON A HANOI A

The Hanoi-Langson Line was complete with the opening of the Doumer Bridge in 1902. The first postmarks used on the route were in the type OND1 style.

This example shows a postcard, posted on board the train, which went to a member of the police force in Dap-Cau.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1900-32



POSTAL MARKINGS
LANGSON A HANOI * A * 7 MAI 14
DAP-CAU TONKIN 7-5 14
REVERSE
LANGSON A HANOI * A * 7 MAI 14

LANGSON A HANOI
A



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1900-32

The code letter "A", at the base of the postmark, was employed in both directions on the Hanoi-Langson Line.

This internal letter was franked with a soldier's stamp overprinted with the initial "F.M." Enlisted men were given two stamps a month for sending letters.



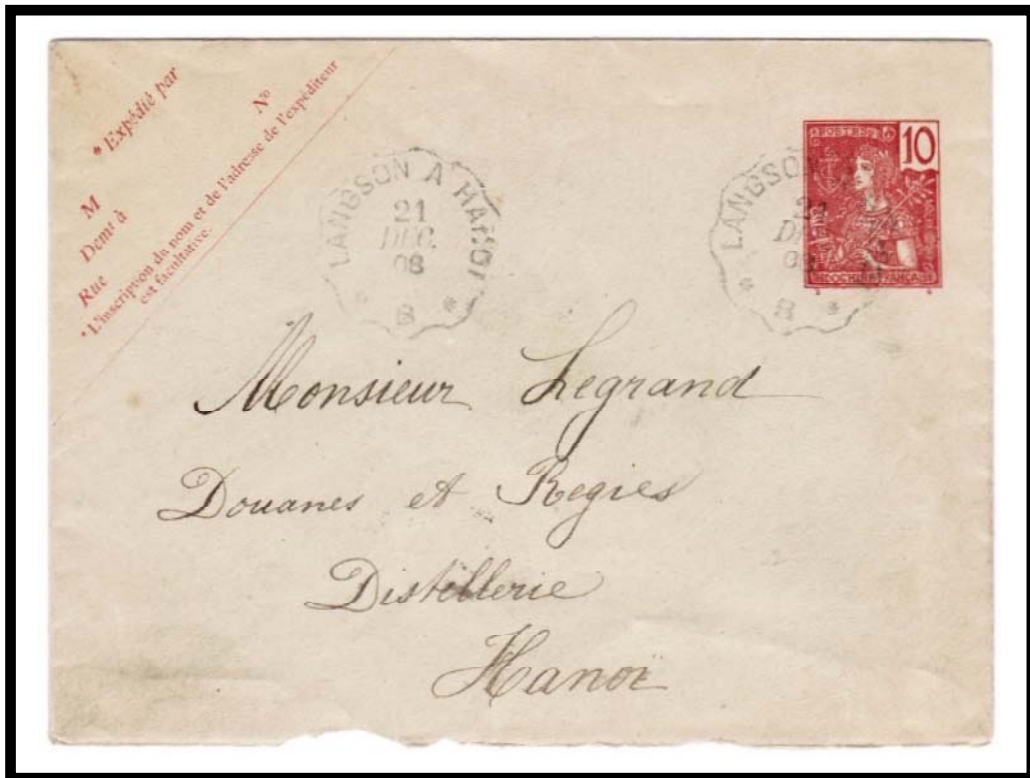
POSTAL MARKINGS
LANGSON A HANOI * A * 14 AVRIL 06
REVERSE
YENBAY TONKIN 15 AVRIL 06

LANGSON A HANOI
B

The letters at the base of the postmark identified the mail sorting crews working on the trains. On the Hanoi-Langson line, postmarks used the code letters "A", "B" and "C".



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1900-32



POSTAL MARKINGS
LANGSON A HANOI * B * 21 DEC 08

HANOI A LANGSON
B

Mail outbound from Hanoi was far less common than inbound mailings. The lettering on this type OND1 HANOI A LANGSON postmark is smaller than that in the postmarks from the opposite direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-29



POSTAL MARKINGS

SONTAY TONKIN 2 JANV 12
HANOI A LANGSON * B * 3 JANV 12
DAPCAU TONKIN 3 JANV 12

REVERSE

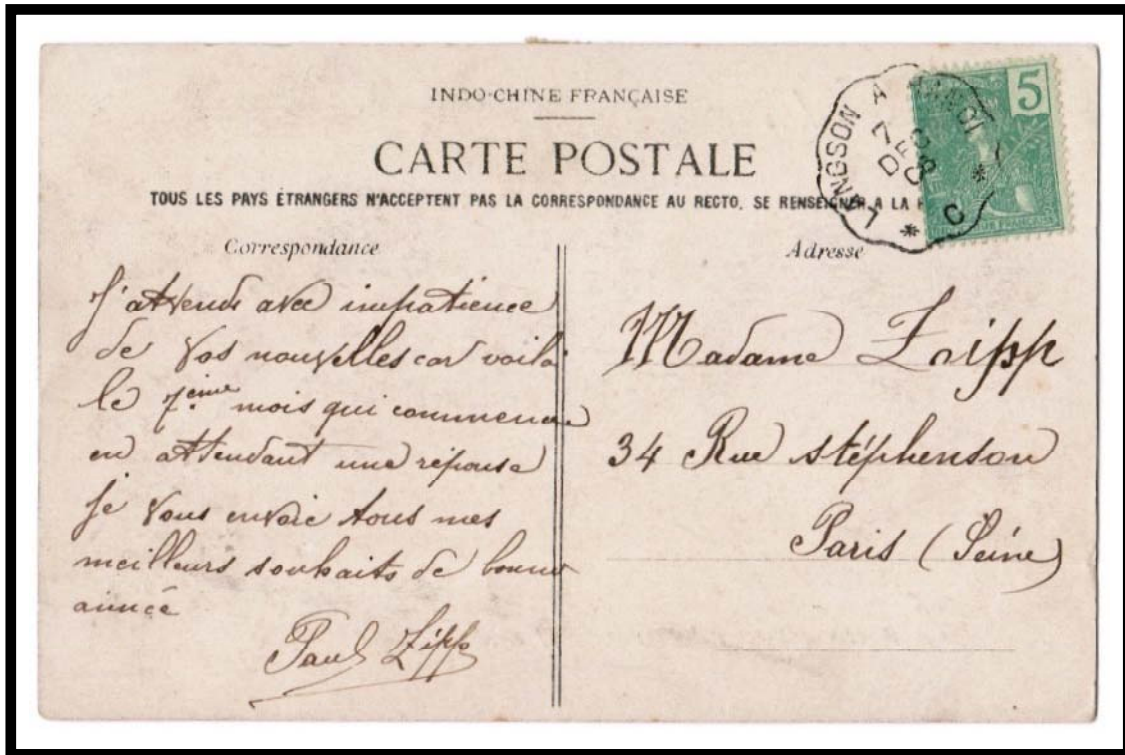
SONTAY TONKIN 2 JANV 12

LANGSON A HANOI
C

The last code letter used on the Hanoi-Langson Line was the letter "C." A stamp on the reverse of this picture postcard was cancelled "DAPCAU 7 DEC 06." The train post office cancelled the stamp on the address side because the post office at Dapcau had failed to cancel the stamp.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1900-32



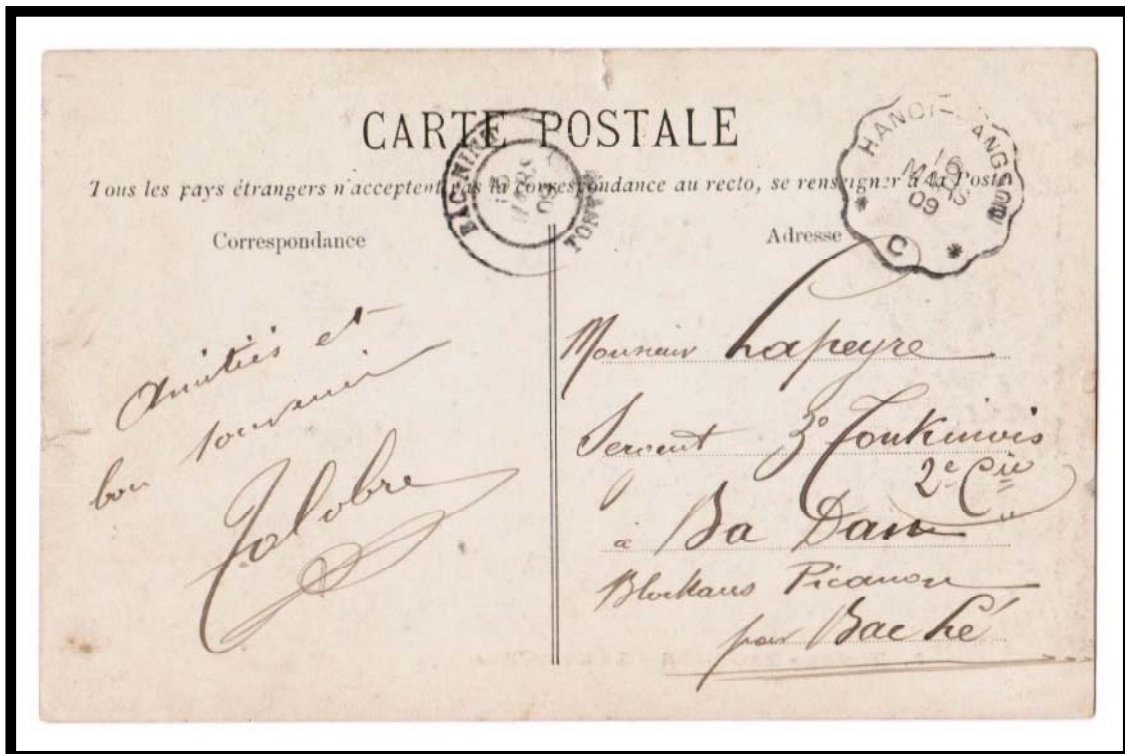
POSTAL MARKINGS
LANGSON A HANOI * C * 7 DEC 06
REVERSE
DAPCAU TONKIN 7 DEC 06

HANOI – LANGSON
C

Trains going north from Hanoi toward Langson also used the code letter “C.” Unlike other postmarks of the period, the end points of the line were separated by a dash rather than “A,” the French word for “to.” Only the type OND1 postmark with the code letter “C” going in the Hanoi-to-Langson direction utilized this specific format.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-11



POSTAL MARKINGS

BACNINH TONKIN 15 MARS 09
HANOI – LANGSON 16 MARS 09

REVERSE

BACNINH TONKIN 15 MARS 09

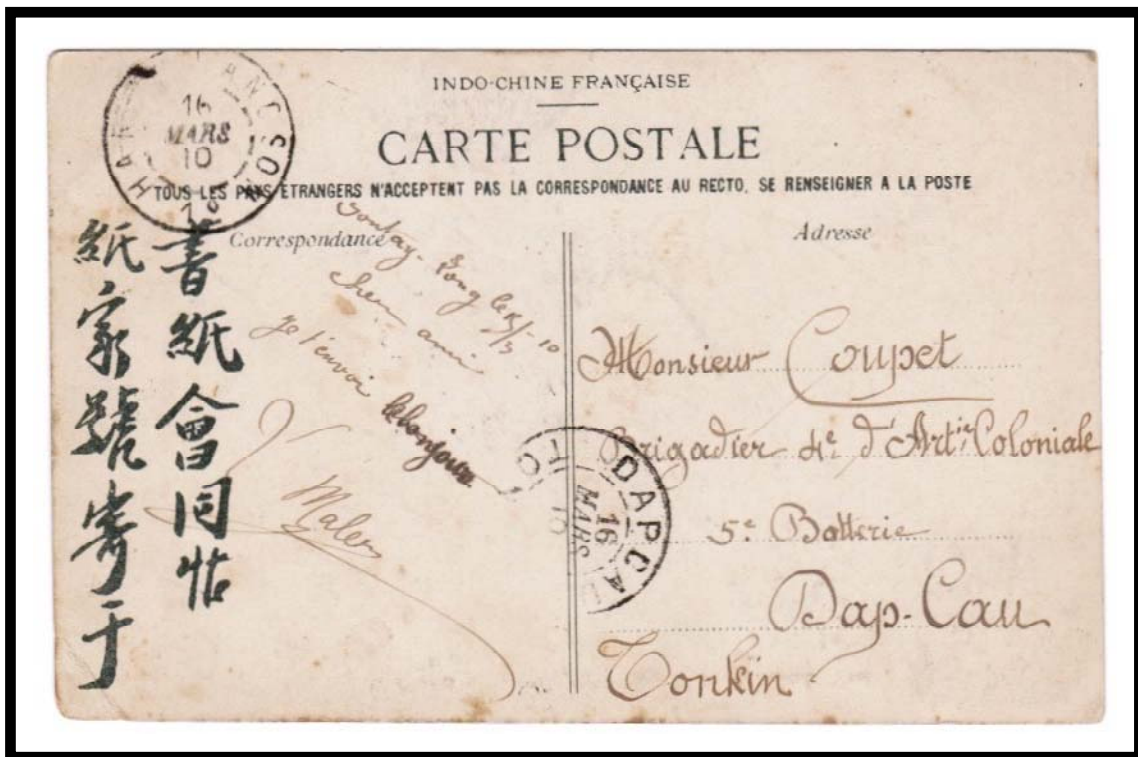
HANOI A LANGSON

10

Gradually, type E2 postmarks, similar to those used by regular post offices, displaced the scalloped postmarks on the Hanoi-Langson Line. Here the circular date stamp was applied to a postcard addressed internally to a soldier serving at Dap-Cau, Tonkin. This example from 1910 is the earliest known use of this postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1910-27



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A LANGSON 10 16 MARS 10
DAPCAU TONKIN 16 MARS 10

REVERSE

SONTAY TONKIN 15 MARS 10

LANGSON A HANOI

10

Previously the type OND1 scalloped postmarks on the Hanoi-Langson Line used letters to identify mail crews on trains. With the switch over to type E2 postmarks, only the numeral "1" was shown at the base of the postmark. Here the circular date stamp canceled the stamp on a postcard addressed to Algeria.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-28



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANGSON A HANOI 10 19 MARS 23

LANGSON A HANOI

1^o

Previously, three distinct letters were needed for identifying the mail crews. With type E2 postmarks only "1^o" is known. No "2^o" or any other number has ever been reported.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-28



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANGSON A HANOI 1^o 26 DEC 23

REVERSE

HANOI TONKIN 26-12 23

LANG-SON A HANOI

The final style postmark used on the Hanoi-Langson Line was the type G format. When the train post offices adopted this style postmark, they abandoned code letters and numbers entirely. The Hanoi-Langson line closed in 1946.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-44



GIA-LAM TONKIN 27-12 35
airmail label

REVERSE

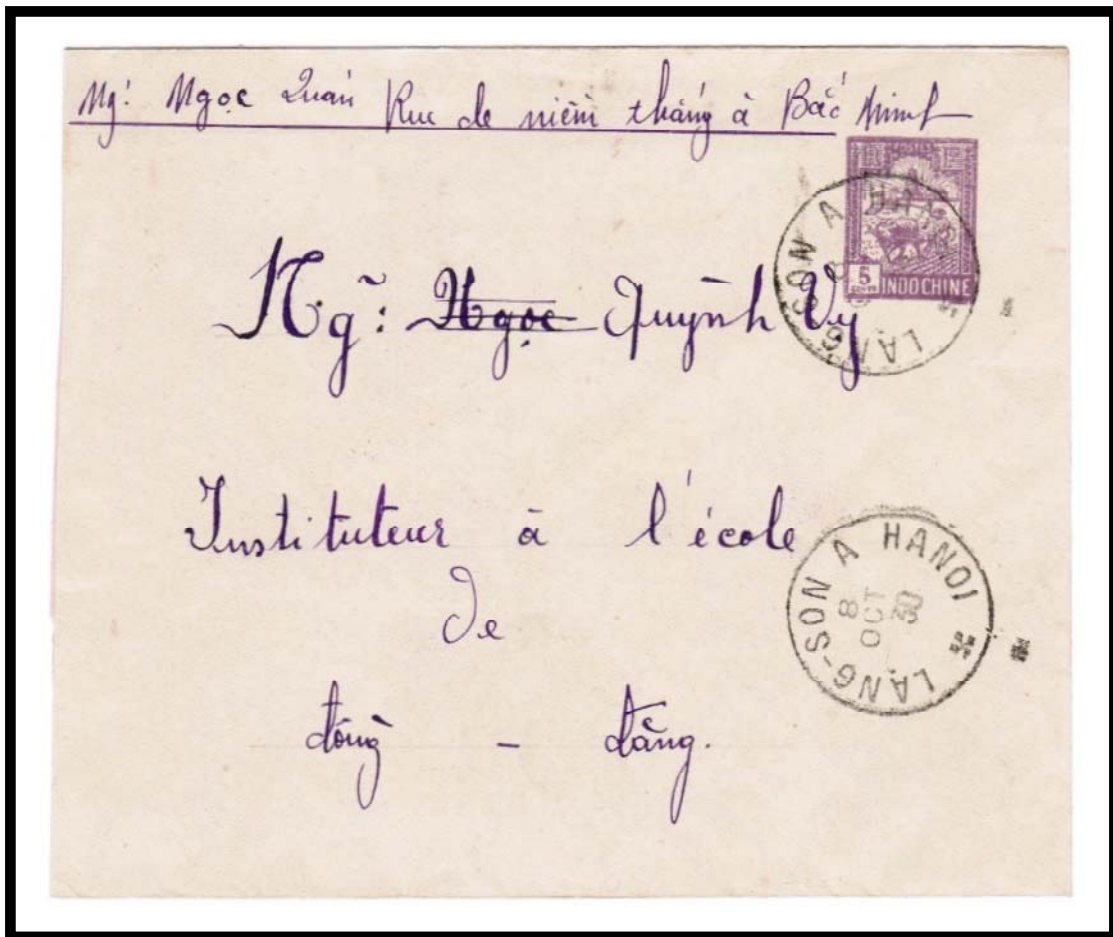
HA-NOI R.P. TONKIN 27-12 35
COURREVOIE SEINE 6 JANV 36

LANG-SON A HANOI

In previous postmarks the northern station was identified by "LANGSON." For the type G postmarks, a hyphen was inserted so that the town's name became "LANG-SON."



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-44



POSTAL MARKINGS
LANG-SON A HANOI 8 OCT 30

HANOI A LANGSON

The volume of northbound mail was far less than the volume of southbound mail. Even so, the style of the type G "HANOI A LANG-SON" postmark mimicked the format of the one applied on mail going in the opposite direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1929-43



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A LANG-SON 1 SEPT 31
REVERSE
HANOI A LANG-SON 1 SEPT 31
LANG-SON TONKIN 1-9 31

YENBAY A HANOI

– B –

The Hanoi-Laokay Line reached Yenbay, a distance of 156 kilometers, on 25 July 1904. Trains on this route originally used the type D1 postmark (recorded from 1904 through 1924). Curiously, this Yenbay-Hanoi postmark was dated 21 June 1904, fully one month before the rail line actually arrived at Yenbay.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-24



POSTAL MARKINGS

YENBAY A HANOI – B – 21 JUIN 04
HANOI TONKIN 22 JUIN 04



YENBAY A HANOI
– B –

The type D1 postmark only had two code letters “A” and “B.” While the “A” only appears plain, the “B” always appears with dashes on both sides “– B –”.

This 1913 picture postcard depicts the surroundings of the Yenbay railroad station.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-24



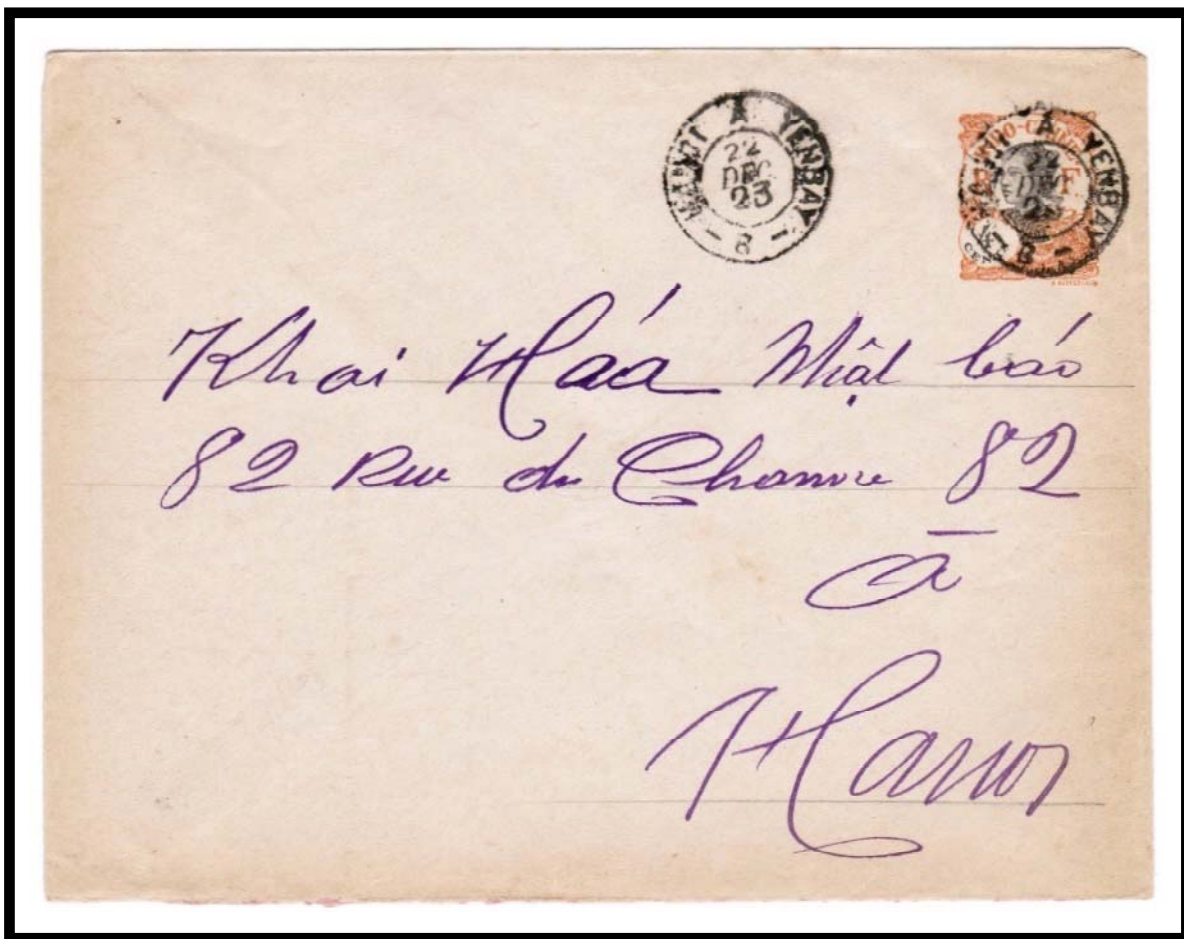
POSTAL MARKINGS
YENBAY A HANOI – B – 16 AOUT 13
REVERSE
DAPCAU TONKIN 17-8 13

HANOI A YENBAY
- B -

Mail outbound from Hanoi is certainly much scarcer than inbound mail. Posted on an outbound train, the receiving postmark on the reverse of this letter attests that it was returned to Hanoi on the same day.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-25



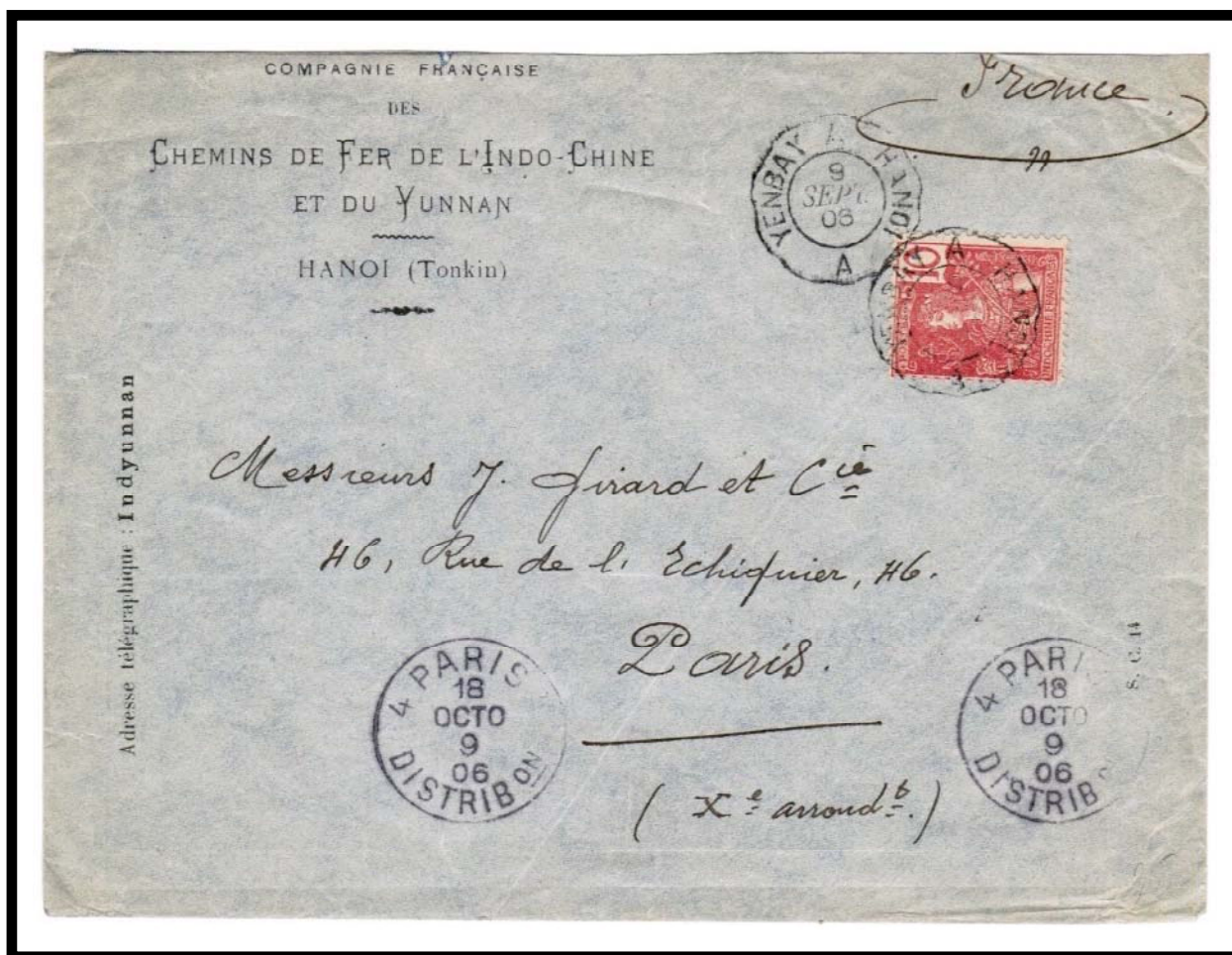
POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A YENBAY - B - 22 DEC 23
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 22-12 23

YENBAY A HANOI
A



POSTMARK TYPE: OND3
PERIOD OF USE: 1906-29

During the period that the type D1 postmark was in service, trains on the Hanoi-to-Yenbay route also used the type OND3 postmark. The OND3 postmark was used nowhere else on Indochina's railways. The first recorded year of use is 1906.

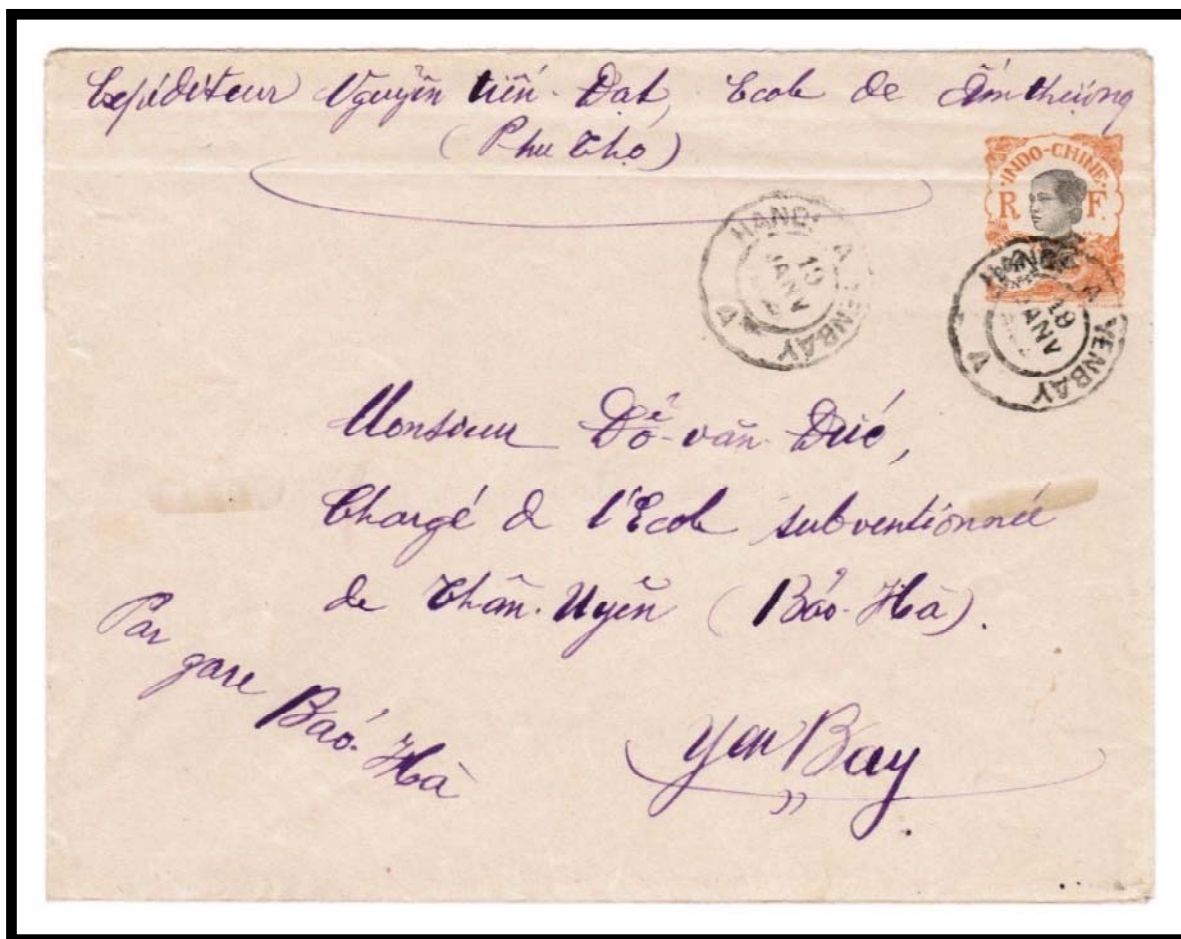


POSTAL MARKINGS
YENBAY A HANOI A 9 SEPT 06
4 PARIS 4 DISTRIBUTION 18 OCT 06
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 9 SEPT 06

HANOI A YENBAY
A

The OND3 postmark, only used by trains between Hanoi and Yenbay, always carried the code letter "A" in both directions. Over time, the undulations in the outer boundary wore down so much that shape appeared much like a simple circle.

Like other instances, letters going outbound from major cities are much less common than inbound letters. Interestingly, the address on this letter carries the instruction "via Bao Ha station." Bao Ha was further along the rail line about halfway between Yenbay and Laokay.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A YENBAY 19 JANV (24)
REVERSE
YENBAY TONKIN 19-1 24
BAOHA TONKIN 19-1 24



POSTMARK TYPE: OND3
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-28

YENBAY A HANOI
- B -

Yenbay was nearly the midpoint of the Hanoi-Laokay Line that went northwest to the Chinese border. The type G postmark only employed the code letter “- B -” at its base.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1921-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
YENBAY A HANOI - B - 1 FEVR 24
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 1-2 24

YENBAY A HANOI

- B -



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1921-28

With this example, the partial outline of the date plug almost forms an inner circle in the postmark. Type G postmarks only employed a single circle that formed the outer boundary of the postmark. The date plug is also missing the digits that represent the year.



POSTAL MARKINGS

YENBAY A HANOI - B - 21 DEC (24)

REVERSE

HANOI TONKIN 21-12 24

YEN-BAY A HANOI

The last postmark for the Yen-Bay–Hanoi section of rail line replaced the letter “B” at the base with a stylized “X.” When the postmark was first introduced, the month was indicated with lettering. Later, numerals replaced the lettering for the month.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1929-43



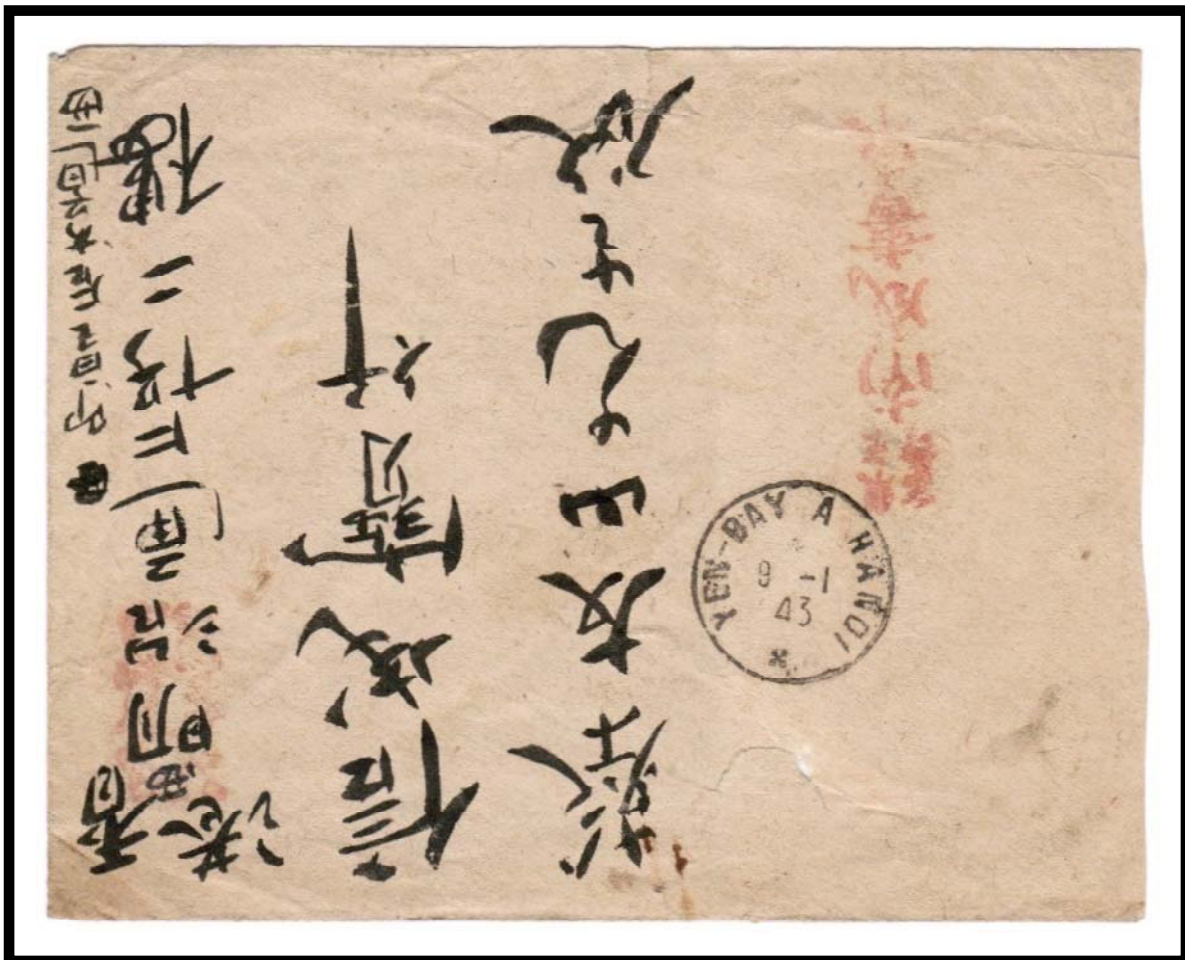
POSTAL MARKINGS
YEN-BAY A HANOI 6 AVRIL 30
REVERSE
HAI-PHONG TONKIN 6-4 30
NIMES GARD 10 • V 1930

YENBAY A HANOI

While some versions of the type G postmark indicated the month with letters, the month was usually with numerals. This practice was the same observed with town postmarks. The last year of reported use for the type G postmark was 1943.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1929-43



POSTAL MARKINGS
YENBAY A HANOI 9-1 43
REVERSE
YENBAY A HANOI 9-1 43

LAOKAY A HANOI

1^o



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1906-30

The rail line that went northwest from Hanoi beyond Yenbay reached Laokay on the Chinese border, a distance of 283 kilometers, on 24 January 1906. The first postmark employed on the train mimicked the circular postmarks of the period. It remained in use for a quarter of a century.



POSTAL MARKINGS
LAOKAY A HANOI 1^o 18 JANV 24
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 18-1 24



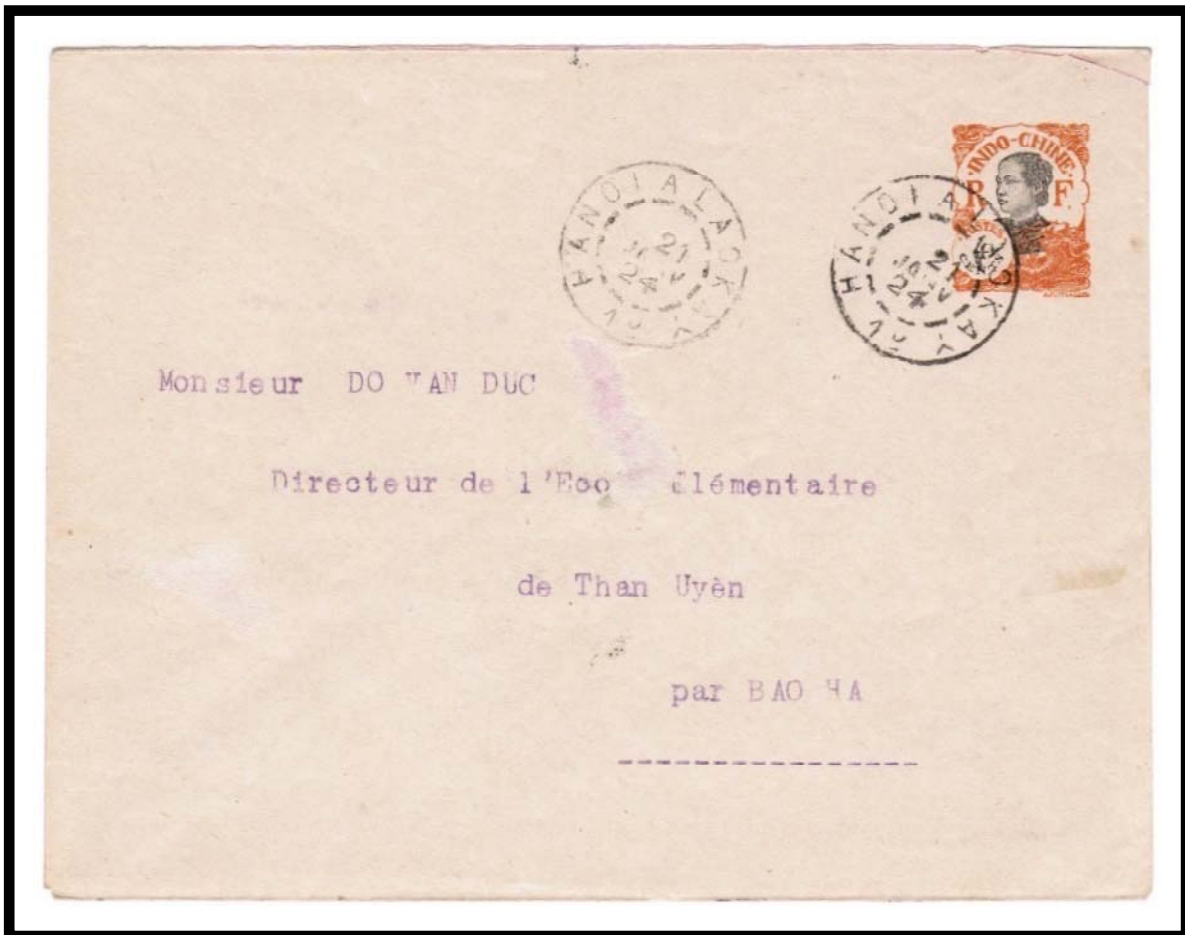
HANOI A LAOKAY

1^o



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1910-27

Outbound mail from Hanoi toward the border with China was of course much scarcer than the reverse. Here a letter was posted to the principal of an elementary school "near Bao Ha."



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A LAOKAY 1^o 21 JAN 24
REVERSE
BAOHA TONKIN 21-1 24

LAOKAY A HANOI

2^o

Like on other rail lines, each postal crew was assigned its own distinctive code number. This postmark shows the number "2" at its base.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1906-30



POSTAL MARKINGS

LAOKAY A HANOI 2^o 5 JUL 09

REVERSE

HANOI TONKIN 5 JUL 09

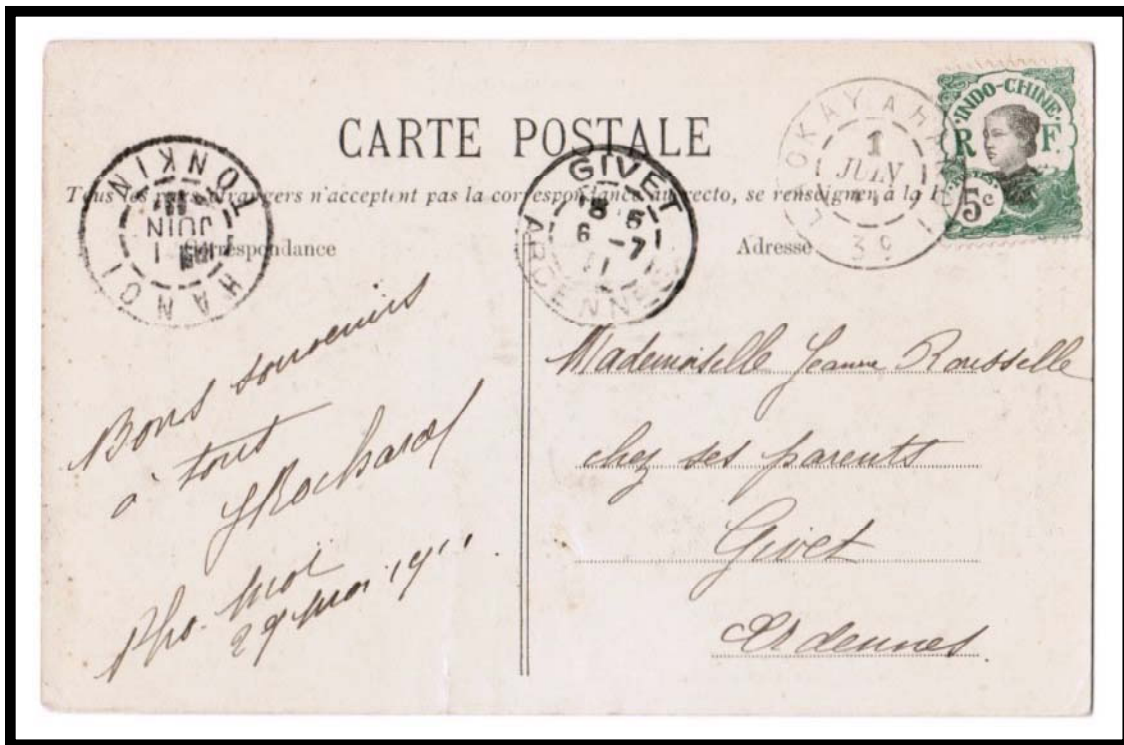
LAOKAY A HANOI

3º

The highest number used for the type E2 train postmarks on the Indochina-Yunnan Line was "3." The numbered postmarks were completely phased out by 1930.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1906-30



POSTAL MARKINGS

LAOKAY A HANOI 3º 1 JUN 11
HANOI TONKIN 1 JUN 11
GIVET ARDENNES 6-7 11

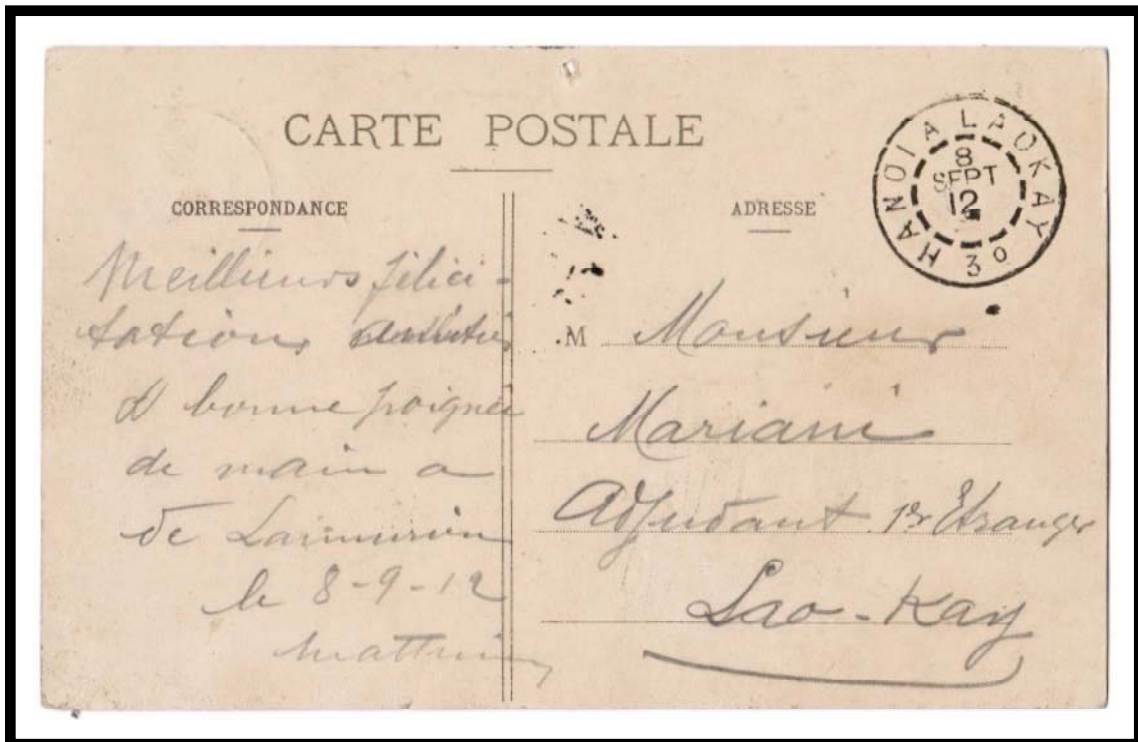
HANOI A LAOKAY

3^o

As in the opposite direction, "3" was the highest number used for postmarks on trains going toward Hanoi on the Indochina-Yunnan Line. While type OND3 postmarks used code letters, the type G postmarks that replaced both the type D1 and type OND3 postmarks bore no distinguishing code letters.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1910-27



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A LAOKAY 3^o 8 SEPT 12

REVERSE

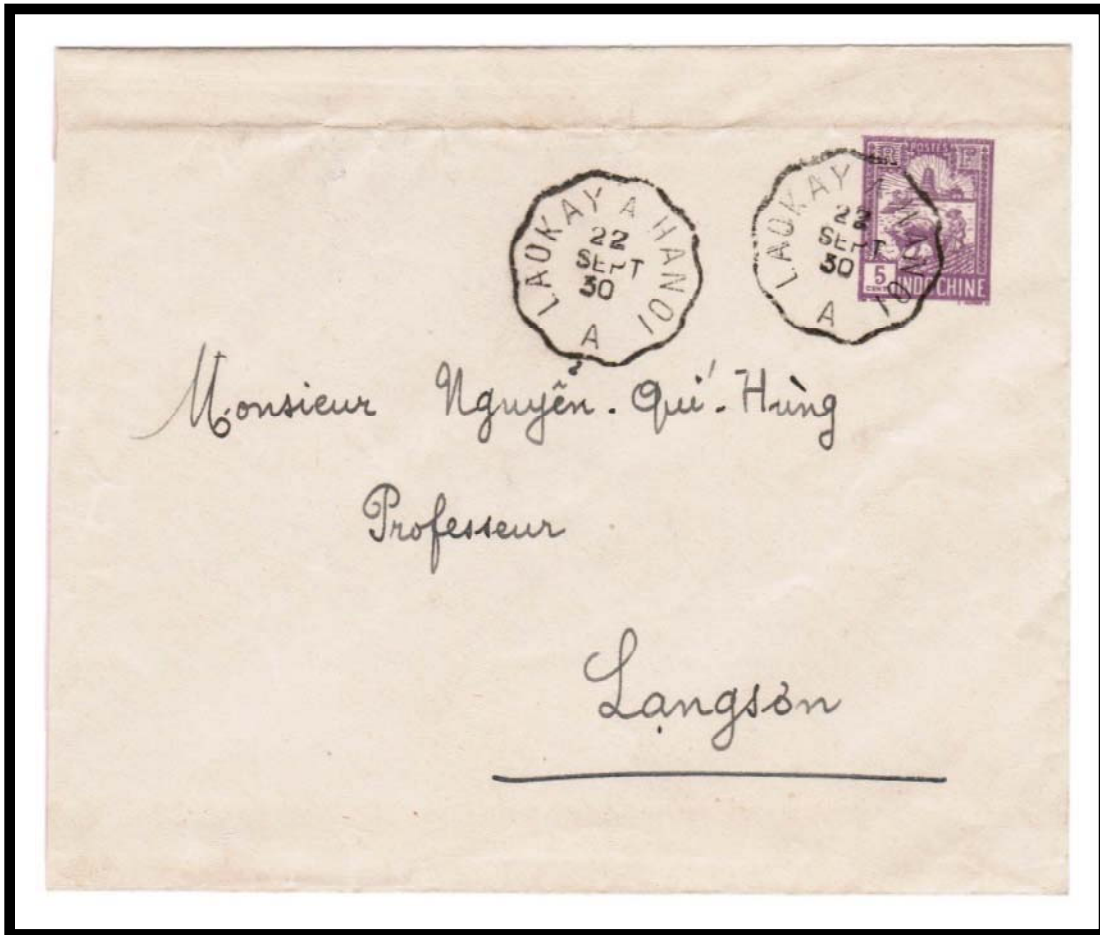
HANOI A LAOKAY 3^o 8 SEPT 12

LAOKAY A HANOI
A

In the 1920s, type E2 postmarks on the Indochina Yunnan Railroad were displaced by type OND1 postmarks with their characteristic scalloped borders. The letter "A" was only used in the Laokay-to-Hanoi direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1923-38



POSTAL MARKINGS
LAOKAY A HANOI 22 SEPT 30
REVERSE
HA-NOI R.P. TONKIN 22-9 30

LAOKAY A HANOI
D

The letters "A," "B." and "D" have been seen for the OND1 postmarks on the Indochina Yunnan Railroad. Only the letter "D" was used in both directions. The first year of reported use in the Laokay-to-Hanoi direction was 1923.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1923-38

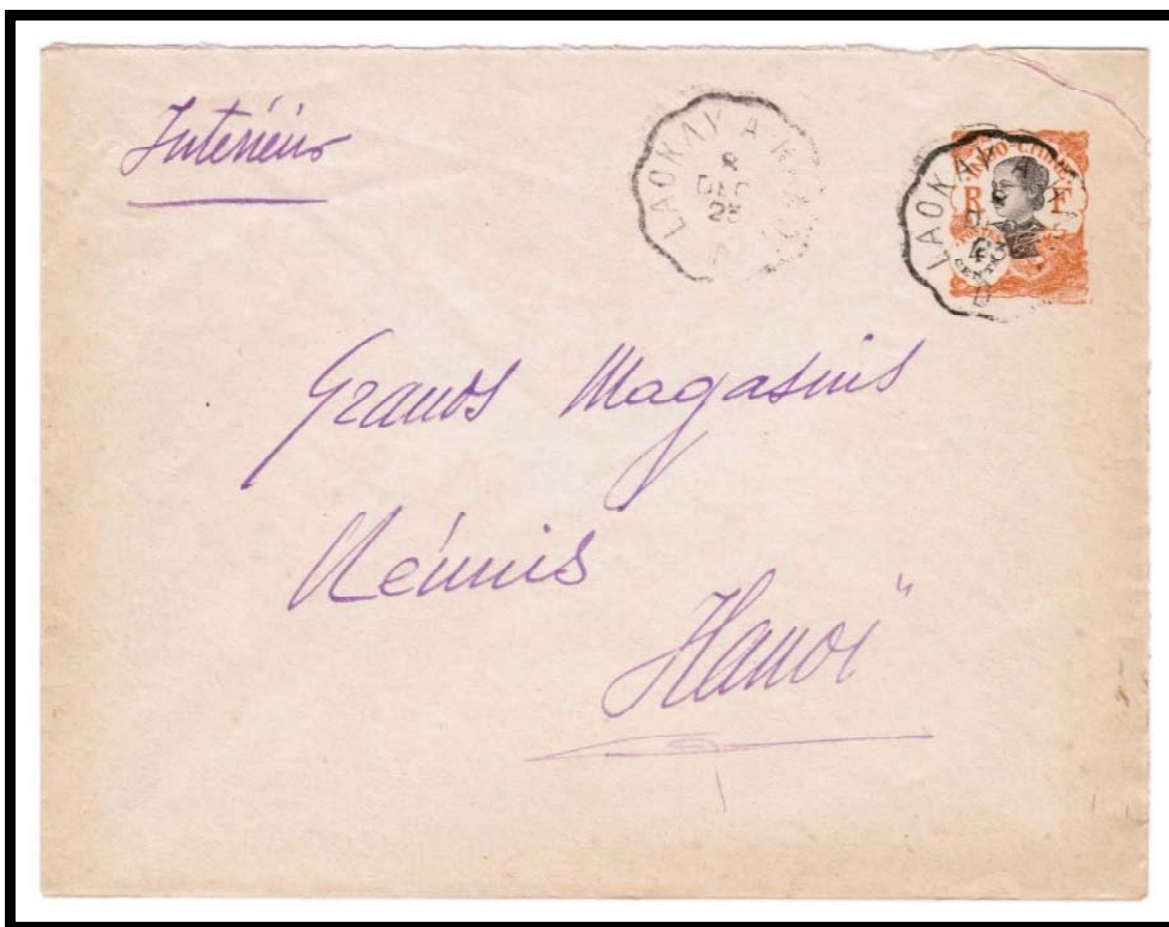
POSTAL MARKINGS
LAOKAY A HANOI D 8 DEC 23
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 8-12 23

HANOI A LAOKAY
D

The letter D was the only letter used for both directions on the rail line. For mail outbound from Hanoi, the type OND1 postmark is only known from 1923.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1923



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A LAOKAY D 7 DEC 23
REVERSE
BAO-HA TONKIN 7-12 23

HANOI A LAOKAY
TONKIN



From approximately 1925 until well into World War II, the Hanoi-Laokay line employed a postmark style that emulated the contemporary circular date stamps used by community post offices.

POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1925-43



POSTAL MARKINGS
LAOKAY A HANOI TONKIN 9 AVRIL 40
REVERSE
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 9-4 40
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 10-4 40
HANOI R.P. bis TONKIN 10-4 40

LAOKAY A HANOI
N

The postmark for a night train on the Hanoi-Laokay route is distinguished by the letter "N" at the base, which stood for "nuit." It is only known on the inbound direction to Hanoi.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1925-43



POSTAL MARKINGS

LAOKAY A HANOI N 10 OCT 34

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 10-10 34

MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION B^{CHES} DU RHONE 23 • X 1934

YUNNANFOU A AMITCHEOU
A

On the Chinese side of the frontier, the connection between Amitcheou (now Kaiyuan) and Yunnanfou (now Kunming) was made in 1910. Until the end of 1922 when Indochinese auxiliary post offices in china were closed, Indochinese stamps were accepted on letters posted on the train.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1913-22



POSTAL MARKINGS
YUNNANFOU A AMITCHEOU 4 AOUT 17
REVERSE
AMITCHEOU A LAOKAY B 5 AOUT 17
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 15-8 17

YUNNANFOU A AMITCHEOU
B

Besides the code letter "A," the only other code letter used in the YUNNANFOU A AMITCHEOU postmarks was the letter "B." The first year of reported use of this postmark was in 1913.



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1913-22



POSTAL MARKINGS
YUNNANFOU A AMITCHEOU B 22 JUL 13

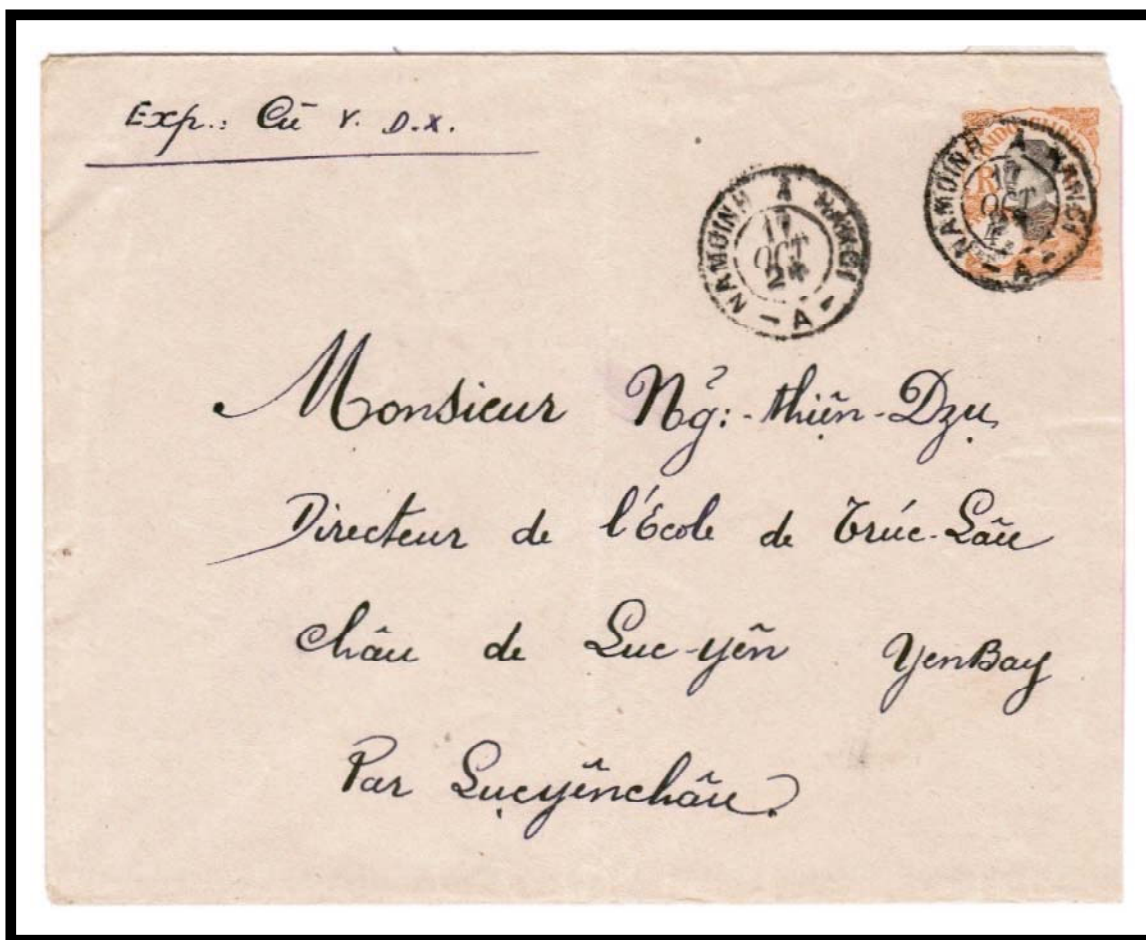
NAMDINH A HANOI

- A -



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1909-24

From Hanoi, the Transindochina Railroad starting inching south with the 6 January 1903 opening of the Hanoi - Nam Dinh - Ninh Binh section of 114 kilometers. The train post office's postmark has only been recorded for northbound trains. The last known year of use is 1924.



POSTAL MARKINGS
NAMDINH A HANOI -A- 17 OCT 24
REVERSE
LUCANCHAU TONKIN 19 OCT 24

NAM-DINH – HANOI



The last postmark employed on the Hanoi-Namdingh section of the Transindochina Railroad was a type G format. It is only known from a two-year period. The last year of reported use was 1932.

POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

NAM-DINH A HANOI 14 SEPT 32

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 15-9 32

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 15-9 32

BENTHUY A HANOI
F

Benthuy was the port city for Vinh. The rail line from Hanoi reached the Vinh/Benthuy area in March 1905. Only a single postmark was used for this rail connection and only in the northbound direction. The earliest known use of the postmark is 1924.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1924-30



POSTAL MARKINGS
BENTHUY A HANOI F 10 MARS 24
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 11-3 24

VINH A HANOI
- A -



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-28

The type D1 postmark appeared almost simultaneously with a number of different formats on the Hanoi-Vinh route was the type D1 postmark. Code letters "A" and "B" identified mail crews working on this section of rail.



POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE RURALE PROVINCE DE THANH-HOA VAN-THAI
VINH A HANOI - A - 28 OCT 23

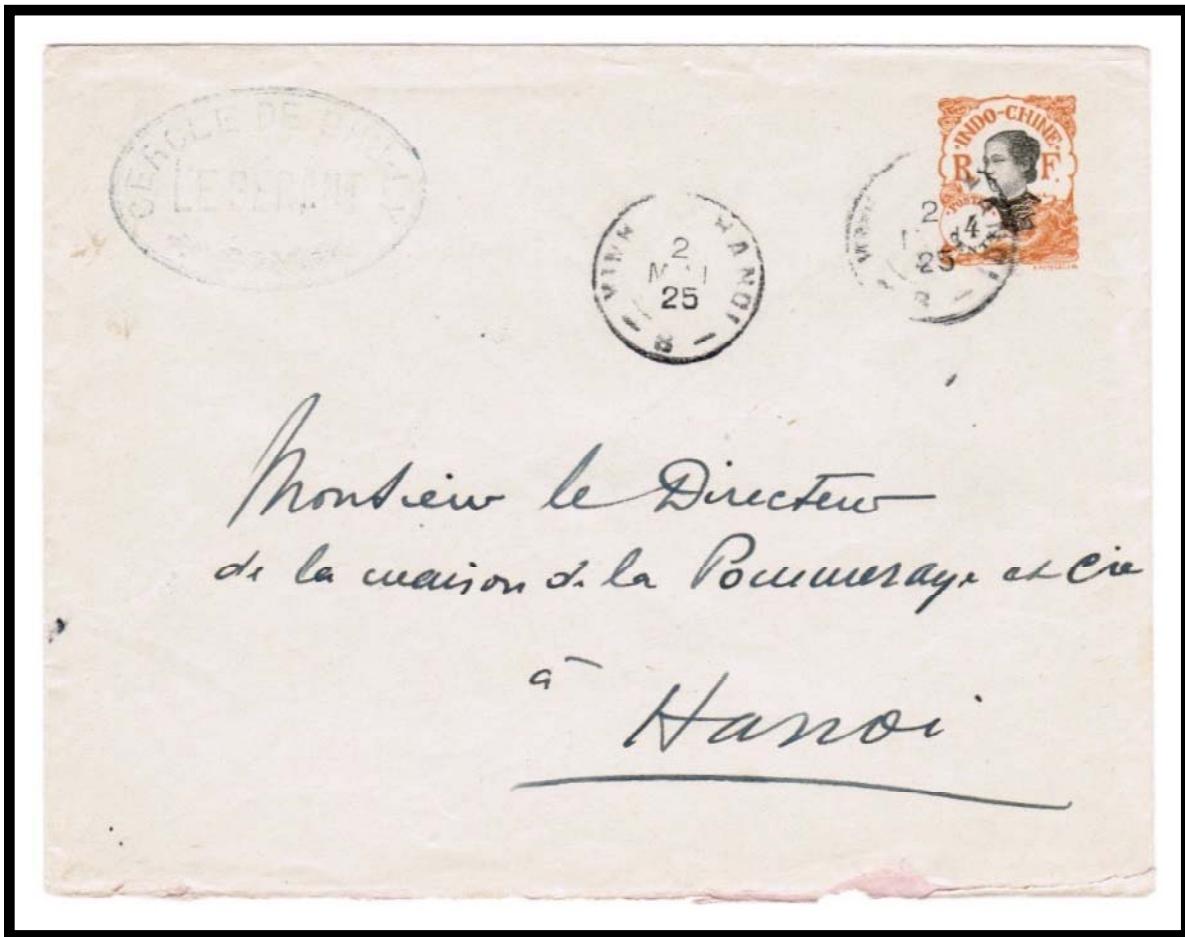
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 28-10 23

VINH A HANOI
- B -

Trains serving the Hanoi-Vinh section employed postmarks with code letters to identify which mail crew was working on each train. This postmark includes the code letter "B" at its base.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1904-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH A HANOI - B - 2 MAI 25
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 2-5 25

HANOI A VINH

– B –

Apparently, the only code letter used in the Hanoi-Vinh direction was the letter “B.” A HANOI A VINH postmark with the letter “A” has not been seen. Previously, this postmark had only been known from 1929.

Mailed on a southbound train and marked for transport on the Transsiberian Railway, this cover had to reverse direction via a northbound train to make connections at Haiphong for onward transport by sea.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1914-29



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A VINH – B – 7 MAI 14

REVERSE

POSTE RURALE DUAN-HANH PROVINCE DE NGEE-AN
THANH-HOA ANNAM 7-5 14
VINH A HANOI – B – 7 MAI 14
HAIPHONG TONKIN 8-5 14

VINH A HANOI
C

An early example of the type OND2 postmark exhibits the scalloped border that was the distinguishing characteristic of this railroad postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND2
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-2



POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH A HANOI C 19 JUN 12
HANOI TONKIN 19 JUN 12

VINH A HANOI
C



POSTMARK TYPE: OND2
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-28

Over the two decades of its use, the characteristic scalloped edges of the postmark eroded away. By the 1920s, the worn postmark could be confused with circular postmarks typical of the period. Undulations were especially muted on the code letter "C" postmarks.



POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH A HANOI C 6 MAI 28
REVERSE
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 6-5 28

HANOI A VINH
D

The Hanoi-Vinh type OND2 postmarks only employed the letters “C” and “D” to indicate mail sorting crews working on the trains. Outbound letters from Hanoi are much less common than inbound letters. The OND2 postmark’s first year of use was 1905 when the rail connection was established with Vinh and rail service began.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND2
PERIOD OF USE: 1905-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A VINH D 1 NOV 05
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 3 NOV 05
PARIS 1 DISTRIBUTION 5-12 05

VINH A HANOI
D

Vinh was approximately 300 kilometers from Hanoi. Among other formats, train post offices on this route employed the distinctive type OND2 postmark. The first recorded year for the type OND2 postmark on the northbound service is 1908.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND2
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH A HANOI D 19 JUN 08

HANOI A VINH
D

Outbound letters from Hanoi are much less common than inbound letters. Posted on a train southbound toward Vinh but addressed to Hanoi, this letter had to reverse direction in order to reach the addressee in Hanoi.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND2
PERIOD OF USE: 1905-28



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A VINH D 6 MARS 11
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 6 MARS 11

VINH A HANOI

10

During the period 1906-1938, the post office employed type E2 cancellers simultaneously with other types of devices. However, these were the only postmarks from the Hanoi-to-Vinh section that ever used numbers ("1" and "2") instead of letters to identify the mail sorting crews.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1906-38



POSTAL MARKINGS

VINH A HANOI 10 5 NOV 18

REVERSE

HANOI TONKIN 5-11 18

HAIPHONG TONKIN 6-11 18

VINH A HANOI
2^o

The highest number used with type E2 postmarks on the Vinh – Hanoi section was “2.” At the end of the 1920s, type E2 postmarks were gradually phased out in favor of type G postmarks.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1906-38



POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH A HANOI 2^o 30 JUIN 14
REVERSE
HANOI TONKIN 30-6 14

HANOI A VINH
A



POSTMARK TYPE: E1
PERIOD OF USE: 1903-29

Another postmark variety put to use by the Hanoi-Vinh train post offices was the type E1 device. It is known with two different shift code letters "A" and "B." This postmark remained in service for a quarter of a century.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A VINH A 1 MARS 05

REVERSE

HANOI A HAIPHONG – B – 1 MARS 05

HAIPHONG TONKIN 1 MARS 05

CHAMBERY SAVOIE 5-4 05

VINH A HANOI

The final postmark employed on the Hanoi-Vinh section of the Trans-Indochina Railroad was in the type G format. It remained in service until the middle of World War II.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1929-43



POSTAL MARKINGS

VINH A HANOI 16 AOUT 32
HAI-PHONG TONKIN 17-8 32

REVERSE

HAI-PHONG TONKIN 17-8 32
EPINAY S/ SEINE SEINE 19-9 32

TOURANE A HANOI

The northern and central sections of the Transindochina Railroad were connected in 1927. An express train from Hanoi to Tourane covered 795 kilometers.

Only a single style postmark, a type G device, was put into service for this section. The first year of its use was 1930.



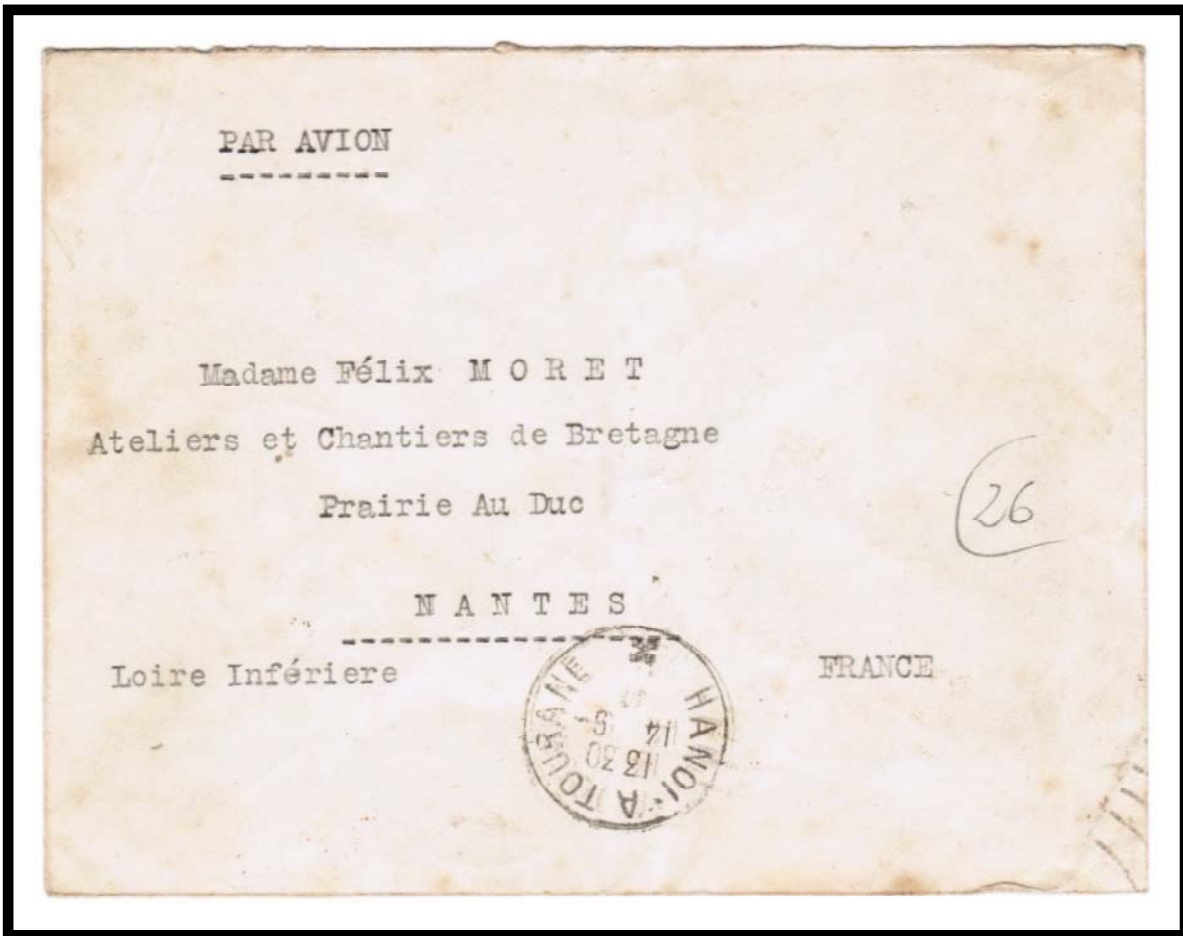
POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930-35



POSTAL MARKINGS
TOURANE A HANOI 25-9 30
REVERSE
TOURANE ANNAM 27-9 30

HANOI A TOURANE

In the southbound direction, only a single postmark was employed on the Hanoi-Tourane railway segment. It is known to have remained in service for a decade.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1925-35

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A TOURANE 14-9 32
REVERSE
HANOI A TOURANE 14-9 32
TOURANE ANNAM 14-9 32
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 16-9 32
NANTES R.P. LOIRE INFRE 17 • X 1932

QUANG-NGAI A HANOI

The northern section of the Transindochina Railway continued to push south connecting with Quang-Ngai, 135 kilometers south of Tourane, on 27 June 1935. Only a single postmark is known and only from a single year, 1935.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1935



POSTAL MARKINGS

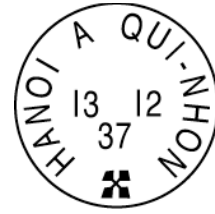
QUANG-NGAI A HANOI 28-6 35
Hanoi-Marseille route instruction

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 28 JUN 1935
PARIS R.P. AVION 7 • VII 1935

HANOI A QUI-NHON

The southbound Hanoi-Tourane service was extended 317 kilometers more to Quinhone on 1 July 1935. Only a single postmark, in the type G format, is known from train post offices on this route.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1935-43



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI A QUI-NHON 13 12 37
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 15-12 37
LISIEUX CALVADOS 12. 1. 38

QUI-NHON A HANOI

Like the outbound trains from Hanoi, trains in the Qui-Nhon-to-Hanoi direction only used a single postmark type, the type G device.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1935-43



POSTAL MARKINGS

QUI-NHON A HANOI 14-10 37

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 14-10 37

PARIS XX DISTRIBUTION 23 • X 1937

HANOI A TUY-HOA

- I -

Only a single postmark is known from trains on the long route from Hanoi to Tuy-Hoa. This segment was the only to use Roman numerals for designating its mail crews. The type G device with crew number "I" has only been recorded for a single year, 1936.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1936



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI A TUY-HOA -1- 28-2 36

REVERSE

NHATRANG SAIGON ACCELERE 28-2 36
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 28-2 36
LILLE R. P. NORD 9 • III 1936

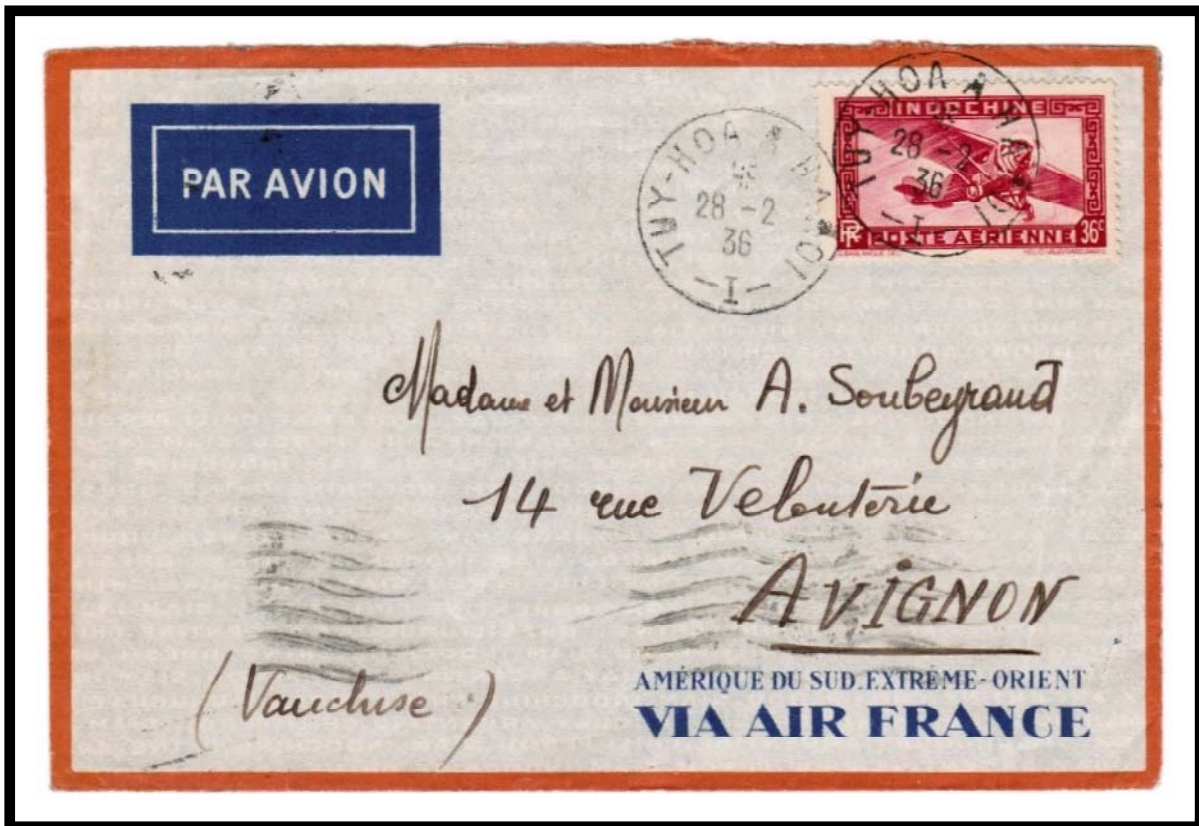
TUY-HOA A HANOI

- I -

In the northbound direction from Tuy-Hoa to Hanoi, the railway postmark's format was the same. The code number "I" was employed in 1936.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1936



POSTAL MARKINGS

TUY-HOA A HANOI - I - 28-2 36

REVERSE

MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION BCHES DU RHONE 8 • III 1936

HANOI A TUY-HOA
- II -

The highest number appearing at the base of the postmark was "II." The type G postmark with "II" was only used on southbound trains and was never used in the reverse direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1936



POSTAL MARKINGS

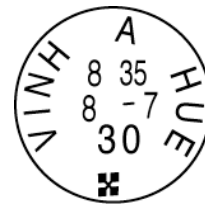
HANOI A TUY-HOA - II - 18-6 36
framed "Saigon-Marseille" route handstamp

REVERSE

NHATRANG ANNAM 18-6 36
SAIGON CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 19-6 36
MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION B^{CHES} DU RHONE 28 • VI 1936

VINH A HUE

The northern and central portions of the Transindochina Railroad were joined in 1927. Only a single postmark is known from the Hue-Vinh section, a type G device.



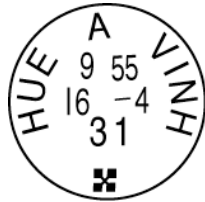
POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1928-37



POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH A HUE 8-7 30
REVERSE
TOURANE ANNAM 8-7 30
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 11-7 30

HUE A VINH

As with the southbound direction, only a single postmark was used in the northbound direction on the Hue-to-Vinh route.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1929-41



POSTAL MARKINGS
HUE A VINH 16-4 31
REVERSE
TOURANE ANNAM 18-4 31

HUE A TOURANE 1^o

The first part of the central section of the Trans-Indochina Railway connected Hue and Tourane, a distance of 107 kilometers, on 15 November 1906. Through their first two decades of service, the traveling post offices on this rail line applied the type D1 style postmark.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1907-26



POSTAL MARKINGS

HUE A TOURANE 1^o 11 OCT. 08
TOURANE ANNAM 11 OCT 00
HAIPHONG TONKIN 14 OCT 08

REVERSE

HUE A TOURANE 1^o 11 OCT. 08

HUE A TOURANE 1^o

Curiously, no other number other than "1^o" was ever used in the type D1 postmarks. In this particular example, the month "NOV." was inverted in the central date plug.



POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1907-26



POSTAL MARKINGS
HUE A TOURANE 1^o 7 NOV. 21
REVERSE
TOURANE ANNAM 7-11 21
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 20-11 21

TOURANE A HUE 1º



The same style postmark was used in the northbound direction from Tourane to Hue. In both directions, postmarks carried the code number "1" in the outer ring.

POSTMARK TYPE: D1
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-24



POSTAL MARKINGS

TOURANE A HUE 1º 25 OCT 23

REVERSE

HUE ANNAM 28-10 23

HANOI TONKIN 30-10 24

HUE A DONGHA
ANNAM

The Tourane-Hue line was extended to Dongha, 175 kilometers from Tourane, in December 1908. Only a single postmark has been recorded for the Hue-to-Dongha service. Its first known use was in 1923.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1923-25



POSTAL MARKINGS
HUE A DONGHA ANNAM 19-11-23
REVERSE
BENTHUY A HANOI F 19 NOV 23
VINH ANNAM 19 NOV. 23
HANOI TONKIN 20-11-23

HUE A QUANG-NGAI



A single postmark is known for the Hue-Quang-Ngai segment of the Trans-Indochina Railway. Only the Hue-to-Quang-Ngai direction has been recorded and it has only been seen in the years 1938-40.

POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1938-40



POSTAL MARKINGS

HUE A QUANG-NGAI 7-3 38

REVERSE

QUINHONE ANNAM 8-3 38

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 9-3 32

LISIEUX CALAVADOS 9 IV 38

QUINHON A NHATRANG

- 1 -

The only postmark known on the southbound Quinhon-Nhatrang rail section was in the type G format.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1939



POSTAL MARKINGS

QUINHON A NHATRANG -1- 24-1 39

REVERSE

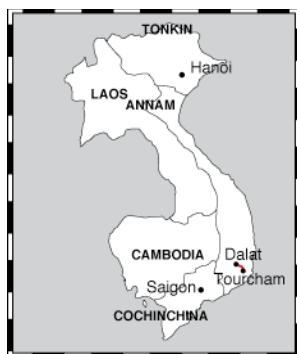
NHATRANG ANNAM 24-1 39

DALAT – TOURCHAM ANNAM

Dalat, located at an altitude of 1,500 meters, was served by a cog railroad that started from Tourcham near Phanrang on the Trans-Indochina Railway. The service to Dalat started in 1932 and operations ceased at the time of the political upheavals in 1945. The railroad never reopened. The last year recorded for the postmark with "ANNAM" at the base is 1937.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1930-37



POSTAL MARKINGS
DALAT-TOURCHAM ANNAM 15-4 37
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 16 AVR 37

LOCNINH A THUDAUMOT COCHINCHINE

The Locninh-to-Thudaumot Line was built to serve the rubber plantations in northern Cochinchina. The route employed a single type G postmark. No postmark has been seen for rail travel in the opposite direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1935-40



POSTAL MARKINGS

LOCNINH A THUDAUMOT COCHINCHINE 10-6 40

REVERSE

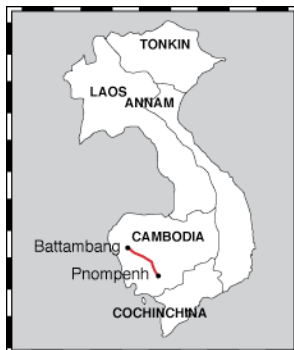
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 11 JUN 40
AIGURANCE S/ GOUZANNE INDRE 20-6 1940

BATTAMBANG à PNOMPENH

The proposal to build a railroad in Battambang Province was meant to counter Thailand's extension of rail lines from Bangkok to the Cambodian border. The Pnompenh – Battambang segment was completed in 1932. Only the type G postmark is known and only in one direction.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1934-41



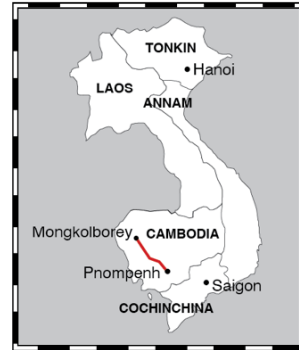
POSTAL MARKINGS
BATTAMBANG à PNOMPENH 10-2 41
REVERSE
PNOMPENH CAMBODGE 10-2 41
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 13-2 41
HANOI R.P. BIS TONKIN 13-2 41
NICE R.P. ALPES-MES 13-6 41

PNOMPENH à MONGKOLBOREY

The Indochinese government built the railroad from Pnompenh to Poipet on the Thai border between 1930 and 1940. Mongkolborey was the last major town before Poipet.



POSTMARK TYPE: G
PERIOD OF USE: 1933-41



POSTAL MARKINGS
PNOMPENH à MONGKOLBOREY 29-2 40
REVERSE
PHNOMPENH CAMBODGE 29-2 40

Phu-Lang-Thuong to Paris Via Multiple Railroads

Posted from Phu-Lang-Thuong, this postcard first went by rail along the Hanoi-Langson line. It then went via the Haiphong-Hanoi line where it connected with the maritime mail service to France.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1900-32



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1909-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

PHU-LANG-THUONG TONKIN 12 OCT 11

LANGSON A HANOI * A * 12 OCT 11

HANOI A HAIPHONG 2° 12 OCT 11

REVERSE

PHU-LANG-THUONG TONKIN 12 OCT 11

Lang-Son to Prague Via Multiple Railroads and Trans-Siberian Railway

Starting from Langson in 1913, this postcard first went on the Hanoi-Langson railroad to Hanoi. There it transferred to the Haiphong-Hanoi line. At Haiphong, it connected with a ship. According to the handwritten directions at the top of the postcard, it was to go to Europe by the Trans-Siberian Railway. The Shanghai postmark indicates that various the postal services did indeed abide with the sender's instructions.



POSTMARK TYPE: OND1
PERIOD OF USE: 1900-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANG-SON TONKIN 4-6 13
LANGSON A HANOI * C * 4 JUN 13

HANOI A HAIPHONG
SHANGHAI CHINE 12-6 13

REVERSE

LANG-SON TONKIN 4-6 13

Bacninh to Haiphong Via Multiple Railroads

Posted from Bacninh, Tonkin, this letter first traveled on the Hanoi-Langson Line and then transferred to the Hanoi-Haiphong Line. Travelling across Tonkin, the letter reached its destination in Haiphong in one day.



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1908-28



POSTMARK TYPE: E2
PERIOD OF USE: 1909-32



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANGSON A HANOI 10 7 JUL 24
HANOI A HAIPHONG 10 7 JUL 24
HAIPHONG TONKIN 8-7 24

REVERSE

BACNINH TONKIN 7-7 24

Indochina's Mail on the Trans-Siberian Railroad

The official start date of the Trans-Siberia Railway's construction was 31 May 1891, when the heir to the Russian throne and future emperor Nicholas II laid the first stone of the Ussuri Railway near Vladivostok. In the first phases, about ten thousand laborers were involved in the construction. At the height of building activity, some eighty-five thousand people were engaged in what was to become the longest railroad in the world at 9,289 kilometers in length. A large portion of the laborers were soldiers and exiled prisoners, transferred to the Far East as a punishment.

The first trains began to transfer passengers from Moscow to Vladivostok in 1903, even before the entire construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway was completed. Although there was a gap in the railroad - in the region by Lake Baikal - people overcame this obstacle by transporting trains over the lake on a special ferry.

By 1914, ten million people were using it regularly. Its specialty was the transport of grain and agricultural products over immense distances, providing for example both Moscow and St. Petersburg with more than half the fresh meat eaten there. Socially too, the Trans-Siberian Railway vastly improved communications within Russia.

The newly built Trans-Siberian railroad celebrated its official birthday only in the year of 1916, then the construction was completed on the territory of the whole Russian Empire from start to finish. During the time of the Second World War, the railroad served as the main transportation for the evacuation of the civilian population from the occupied territories, as well as the uninterrupted delivery of cargo and military forces to the war zone, still continuing the inter-Siberian traffic. Afterward, in the post-war years, the Great Siberian Railway was actively rebuilt and modernized.

In the East, the Trans-Siberian Railroad provides access to the rail networks of North Korea, China and Mongolia. From Indochina, the principal connection to Europe was via ship. Mailboats regularly departed from Saigon. Letters posted from anywhere in southern Indochina routinely made the connection. For mail from the North, it was a different story. If a letter missed the ship's departure, it would be nearly another month until the next ship. For urgent mail, senders in the North of Indochina had the option of sending mail via China to the Trans-Siberian railway.

The outbreak of World War I severely reduced the volume of mail as allegiances waxed and waned. Mail connections between Indochina and Europe shifted profoundly to a reliance on sea mail in World War I, which remained prominent until the airmail age.

In this exhibit, examples of mail are arranged chronologically.

Soctrang, Cochinchina to Belgium
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

Normally, it only made sense for letters from northern Indochina to go westward via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Nonetheless, this 1910 mailing from Soctrang, Cochinchina had the proper indication of service; "Par le Transyberien" was written at the top of the envelope. In 1910, the Trans-Siberian Railway was not yet complete. Over Lake Baikal, trains were transported by ferry.

The letter went to Shanghai and then connected with the railroad. Franked at the 25-centime foreign letter rate, it arrived at its destination in Belgium in 26 days. Normal transit time by ship from Saigon to Marseille was 25 days.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SOCTRANG COCHINCHINE 14 DEC 10

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 15 DEC 10

SHANGHAI CHINE 23 DEC 10

QUIEVRAIN 9 JANV 1911

Saigon, Cochinchina to Aix, France Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

Use of the trans-Siberian route made sense for letters posted from the North of Indochina because they could often reach Europe faster than the steamers leaving from Saigon. The postcard shown here differs from the norm in that it was posted at Saigon on 24 February 1911 and had to traverse the length of Indochina before going on to the trans-Euro-Asian railway. The postcard reached Shanghai on 3 March. Evidently, the postcard was an experiment in travel time as the message was

“I am sending you on 2 February this card by way of the Siberian railway. You'll tell me on what date it arrives at home. We are still in Saïgon, doubtless for some time yet. I embrace you all.

“Amaury.
Saïgon 2 February 1911”

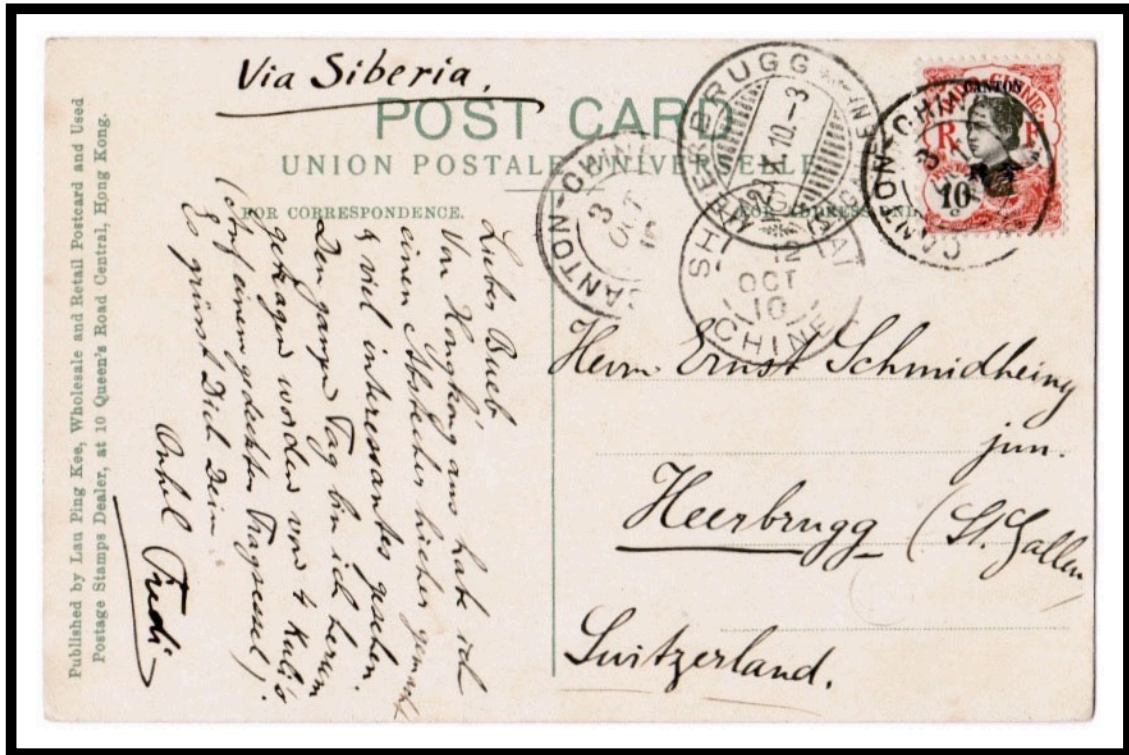


POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 24 FEVR 11
SHANG-HAI CHINE 3 MARS 11

Canton, China to Heerbrugg, Switzerland
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

In 1910, a picture postcard posted at Canton, China and addressed to a small town in Switzerland was marked "Via Siberia."



POSTAL MARKINGS

CANTON-CHINE 3 OCT 10
SAHANG-HAI CHINE 12 OCT 10
HEERBRUGG (St. GALLEN) 23.X.10

Haiphong, Tonkin to Grasse, France
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

Before 1913, letters to France via the Trans-Siberian Railroad had to carry postage equivalent to the foreign letter rate. In this case, the postage was 25 centimes for railroad service to France and 25 centimes for registration. Even though it was registered, there was only limited safety because of the number of postal administrations involved in handling the letter.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG TONKIN 21 MARS 12
framed R with manuscript registration number

Lang-Son, Tonkin to Prague, Austria
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

This postcard shows a posting from Lang-Son on 12 March 1913. Prague's receiving postmark was dated 13 April 1913 giving a total transit time of 33 days. Typical time for sea mail to reach Marseille from Saigon was 25 days. Allowing for several days at each end of the route, it appears that this postcard may have gone by sea even though the sender had marked it for carriage by the Trans-Siberian railroad.



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANG-SON TONKIN 12-3 13

PRAHA 14 PRAG 13. IV. 13

REVERSE

LANG-SON TONKIN 12-3 13

Lang-Son, Tonkin to Prague, Austria
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

From the same correspondence, this 1913 postcard was addressed to Prague (then in Austria). Mailed from Langson, located northeast of Hanoi on the Chinese border, it was marked "Voie Transsiberienne." The postcard was received at Shanghai nine days after being posted. After reaching Shanghai, it would probably take three more weeks to arrive in Europe. On the reverse, the postcard is franked with 10 centimes worth of postage – the correct postcard rate for the period.



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANG-SON TONKIN 11-4 13

SHANGHAI CHINE 20-4 13

REVERSE

LANG-SON TONKIN 11-4 13

Liege, Belgium to Hanoi, Tonkin Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

In 1913, a postcard posted from Liege, Belgium traveled by the Trans-Siberian Railroad via Shanghai to Hanoi. The card was in transit for approximately 3 weeks. Although the card lacks explicit routing instructions, the Shanghai transit postmark establishes that it was carried on the Trans-Siberian Railway.

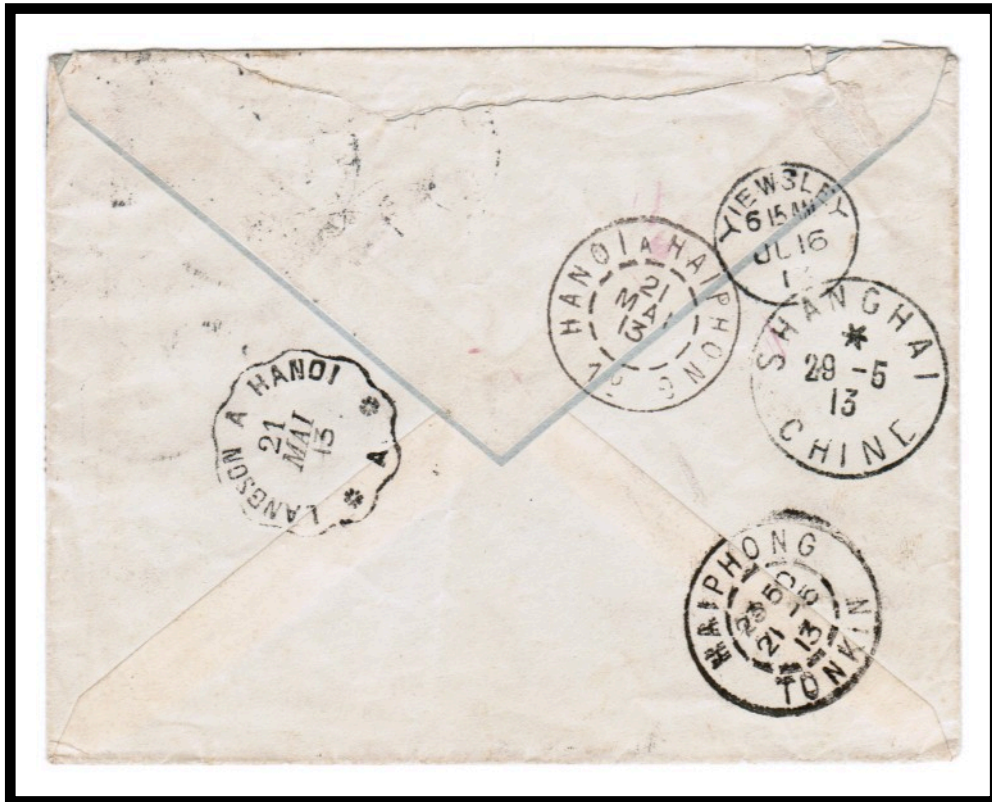


POSTAL MARKINGS

LIEGE LUIK 23-3 1913
SHANGHAI CHINE 8-4 13
HANOI TONKIN 15-4 13

Phu-Lang-Thuong, Tonkin to Yiewsley, England Via Multiple Railroads and Trans-Siberian Railroad

This envelope experienced a large amount of railroad travel. Posted from Phu-Lang-Thuong, Tonkin to England, the letter first went via the rail line from the Chinese border (Langson to Hanoi) and then onward from Hanoi to the port city of Haiphong. Marked for the Trans-Siberian Railway, the mailing went by ship to Shanghai to make that rail connection for eventual transport to Europe. Total transit time was approximately seven weeks.



POSTAL MARKINGS

LANGSON A HANOI A 21 MAI 13
 HANOI A HAIPHONG 1^o 21 MAI 13
 HAIPHONG TONKIN 21-5 13
 SHANGHAI CHINE 29-5 13
 YIEWSLEY JL 15 13

REVERSE

PHU-LANG-THUONG TONKIN 21-5 13
 YIEWSLEY JL 15 13

Haiphong, Tonkin to Brussels, Belgium Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

A postcard was posted at Haiphong on the third of November 1913 with a "Via Transiberien" notation. The card passed through Shanghai on 13 November. Ultimately, the card reached the addressee in Brussels on 29 November – a total transit time of 26 days.



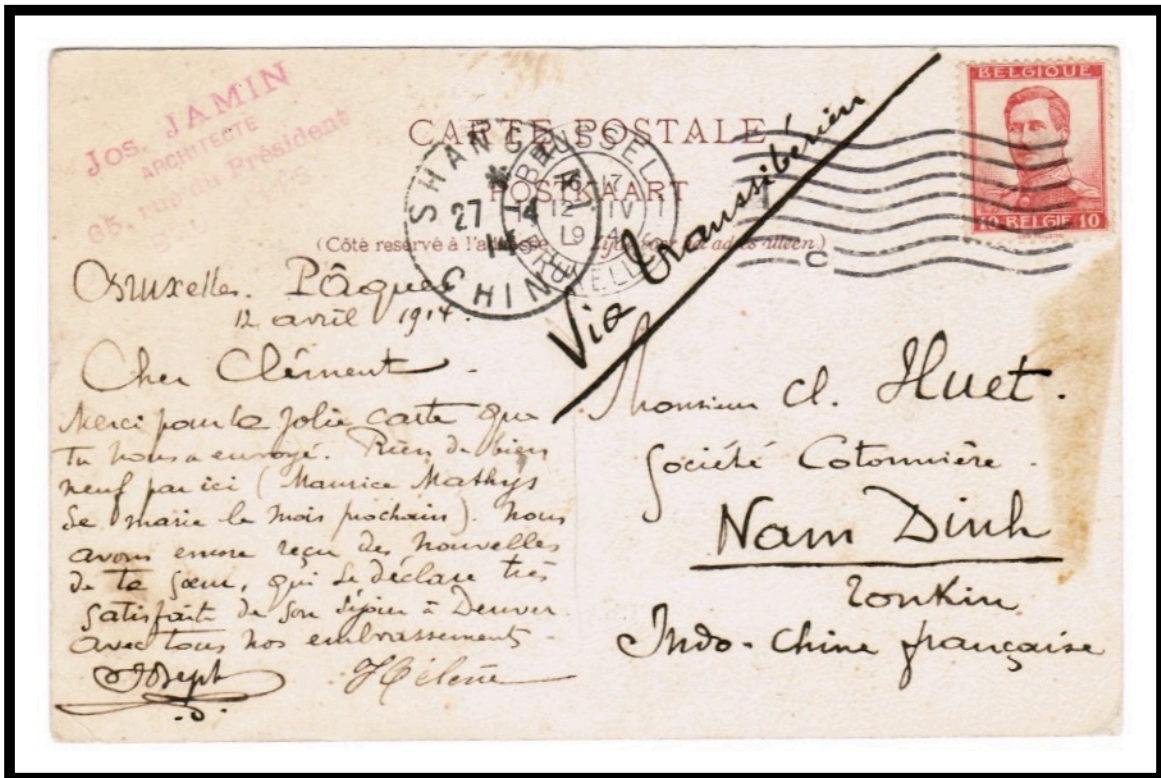
POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG TONKIN 3-11 13
SHANGHAI CHINE 13-11 13
BRUSSEL BRUXELLES 1 29 • XI 1913

Brussels, Belgium to Nam-Dinh, Tonkin
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

Mail addressed from Europe to Tonkin could also achieve a transit time faster than sea mail by using the land route across Siberia and China.

Here a postcard posted from Brussels on 12 April 1914 and addressed to Nam-Dinh, Tonkin transited Shanghai on 27 April, a period of only 15 days.



POSTAL MARKINGS

BRUSSEL- BRUXELLE 12 • IV 1914
SHANGHAI CHINE 27-4 14

Dapcau, Tonkin to Basel, Switzerland
Via Trans-Siberian Railroad

Sent from Indochina to Switzerland, a handwritten "Via Transsibérien" notation directed that this postcard travel via the Trans-Siberian Railroad service. Posted from Dapcau, Tonkin on 8 April 1914, the postcard did not reach Shanghai until 10 days later.



POSTAL MARKINGS

DAPCAU TONKIN 8-4 14
SHANGHAI CHINE 13-4 14