

Indochina's Participation in Fairs and Expositions

From the 1880s through the 1950s, French Indochina participated in local, French Community and international fairs and expositions. While some had specific themes along the lines of fine arts or aviation, many were more generally composed as colonial exhibitions. A colonial exhibition was a type of international exhibition intended to boost trade and bolster popular support for the various colonial empires during the New Imperialism period, which started in the 1880s with European nations scrambling for footholds in Africa.

Exposition officials distributed labels of all varieties to publicize their events. Through labels and postcards, this exhibit provides a chronological view of Indochina's participation in fairs and expositions large and small.

Hanoi Exposition, 1887



Troops at rest depicted on trade card for alcoholic beverage company

World's Fair Paris, 1889

Open from 6 May 6 to 31 October, the 1889 World's Fair was spread over 50 acres in central Paris. Even though the theme of the exposition was the one-hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution, the most memorable and lasting artifact of the fair was the Eiffel Tower.

A report in the 14 June 1889 British journal *Engineering* noted that the exposition would remain famous for four things, one of which was:

“... its Colonial Exhibition, which for the first time brings vividly to the appreciation of the Frenchmen that they are masters of lands beyond the sea ...”



Pavilion for Annam and Tonkin on trade card for boot maker

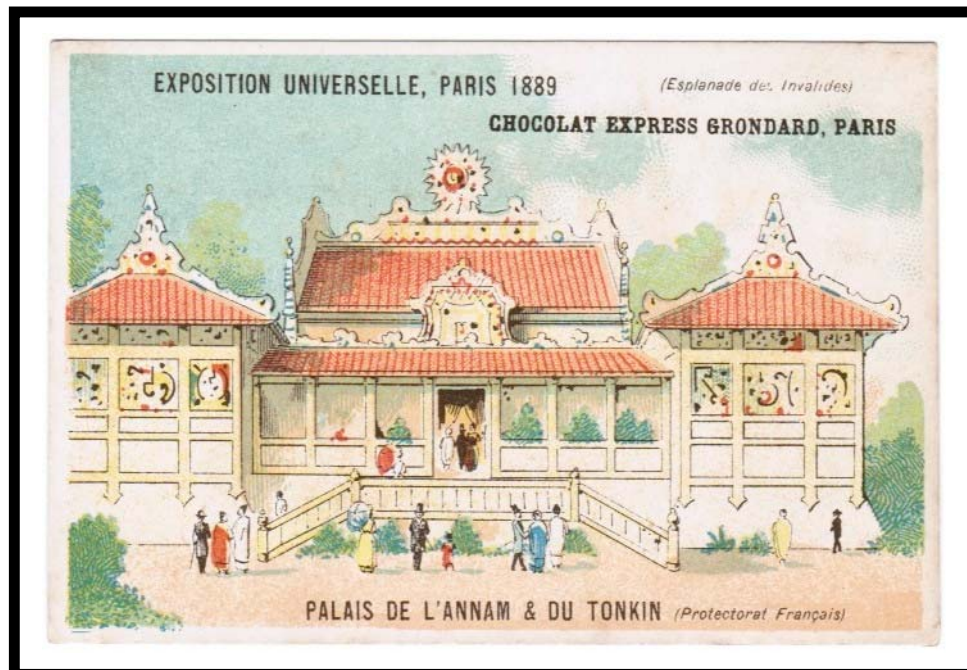
World's Fair Paris, 1889

Bon Marché Advertising Cards



World's Fair
Paris, 1889

Chocolat Express Grondard Advertising Cards



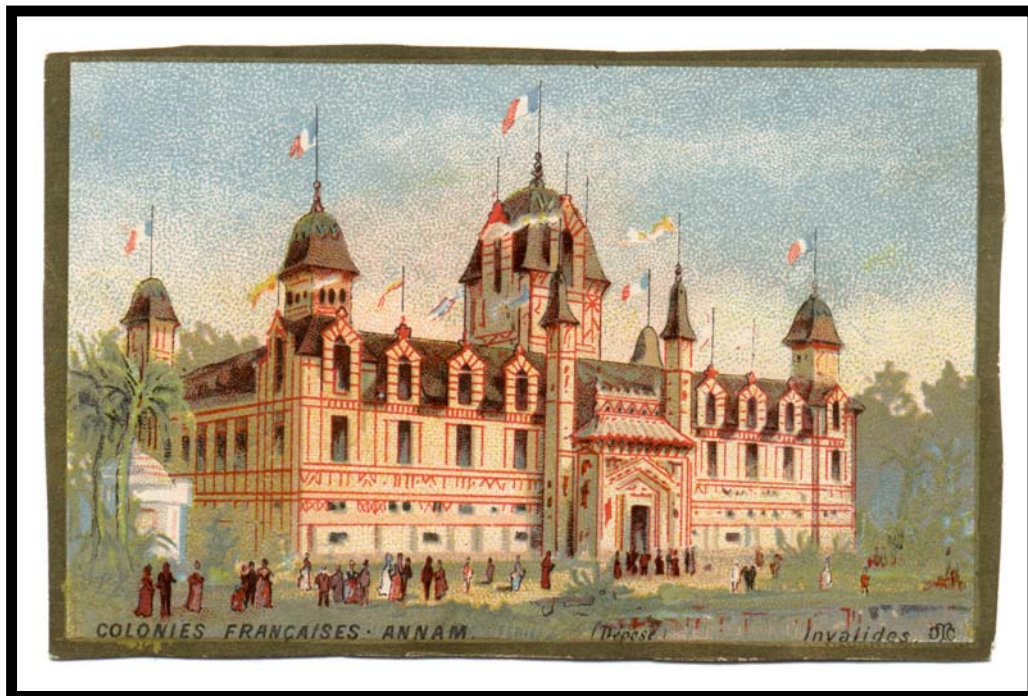
World's Fair
Paris, 1889

Indochinese Palace



World's Fair Paris, 1889

Many of the exhibits from the colonies were located on the Esplanade des Invalides. Advertisers took advantage by producing advertising cards with the same image and simply changed the name of the colony.



Fairs and Expositions



National and Colonial Exposition
Rouen, 1889



Colonial Week
Paris 1928



Colonial Exposition
Strasbourg, 1924



28 November –
13 December 1925



28 November –
12 December 1926

Hanoi Fair

International and Colonial Exposition Rochefort-sur-Mer, 1898

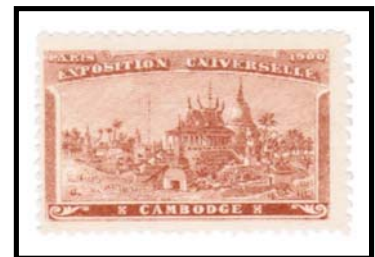
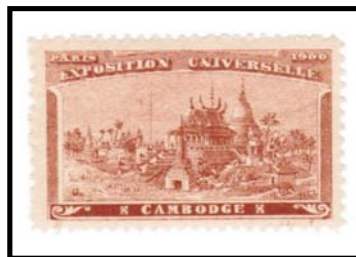
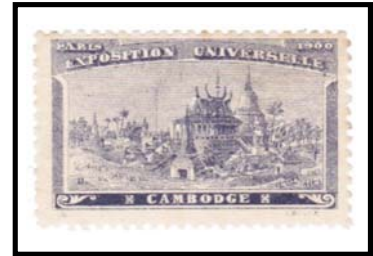
An International and Colonial Exposition was held at Rochefort-sur-Mer from June to October 1898. Labels advertising the fair featured a reclining allegorical figure. Promoters employed a variety of inks and papers for the labels.



International Exposition Paris, 1900

The Exposition Universelle of 1900 was a world's fair held in Paris from 15 April to 12 November 1900. The fair celebrated the achievements of the previous century and offered a preview of what was in store for the new century. More than 50 million visitors attended the four fair sites along the Seine River in central Paris.

Among the many items produced to promote the fair were labels for the various participating countries. Indochina was well represented with pavilions at the fair, but among the geopolitical divisions of Indochina, only Cambodia had its own distinctive labels.



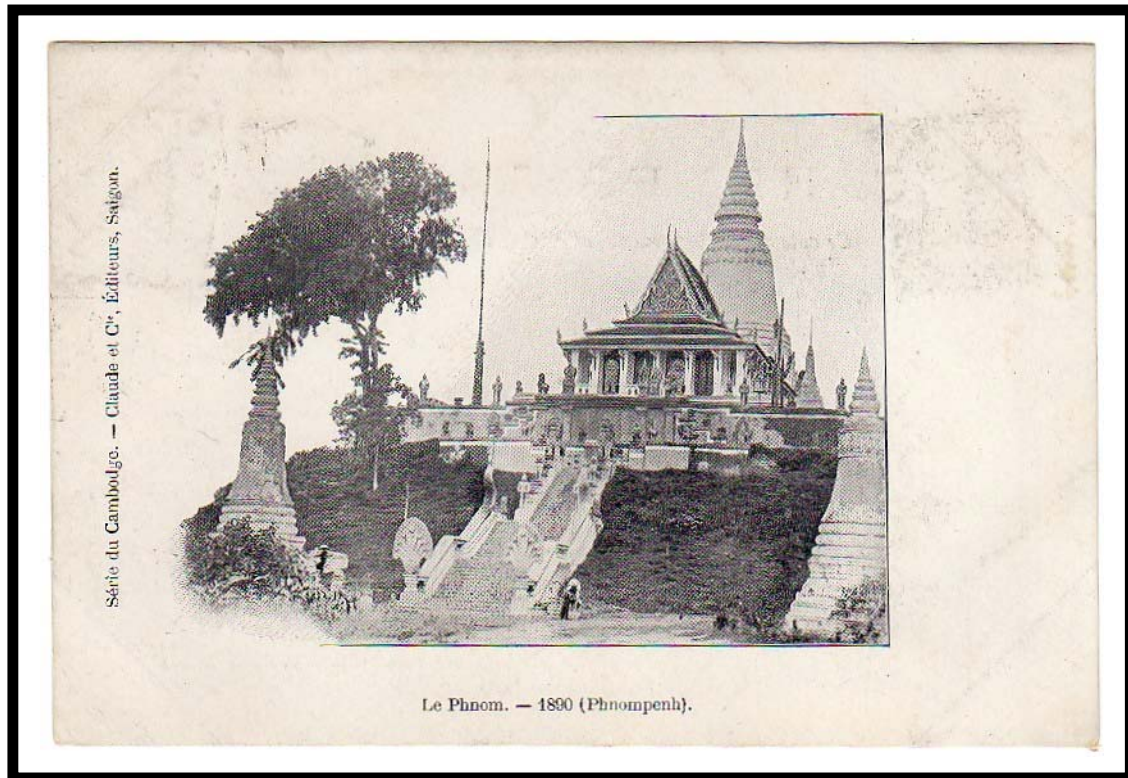
International Exposition Paris, 1900

The label's design was based on the *Wat Phnom* or Hill Temple, in Phnompenh. Legend has it that, in the Fourteenth Century, a Khmer women named Daun Penh found four (or five) statues of Buddha along the banks of the Tonle Sap. She built a temple to house them on a man-made hill and Cambodia's capital city grew up around it. Phnompenh, takes its name from the temple (*Wat Phnom Daun Penh*). A similar structure and hill were constructed as part of the fair.



International Exposition Paris, 1900

A structure and hill similar to the *Wat Phnom* were constructed as part of the fair.



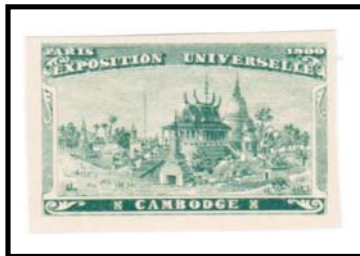
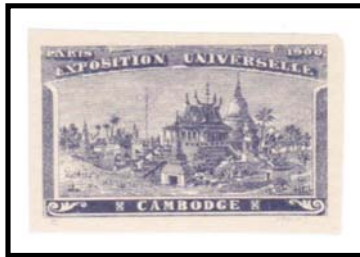
Original in Phnompenh



Reproduction in Paris

International Exposition Paris, 1900

The labels were produced in five basic colors (with some variations) in both perforated and imperforate versions.



International Exposition Paris, 1900

Another version of the label added ornate scrollwork below the words “PARIS” and “1900.”



The labels were also printed on colored papers. This example is violet printed on pink paper.



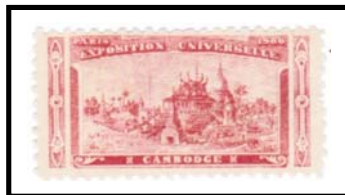
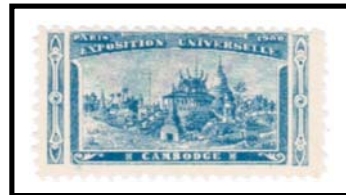
International Exposition Paris, 1900

A larger format label (Figure 7) added the words “QUI N'A PAS SON TICKET?” (Who doesn't have his ticket?). No doubt, this was a method of stimulating ticket sales. This version of the label was printed in five colors and exists both perforated and imperforate.



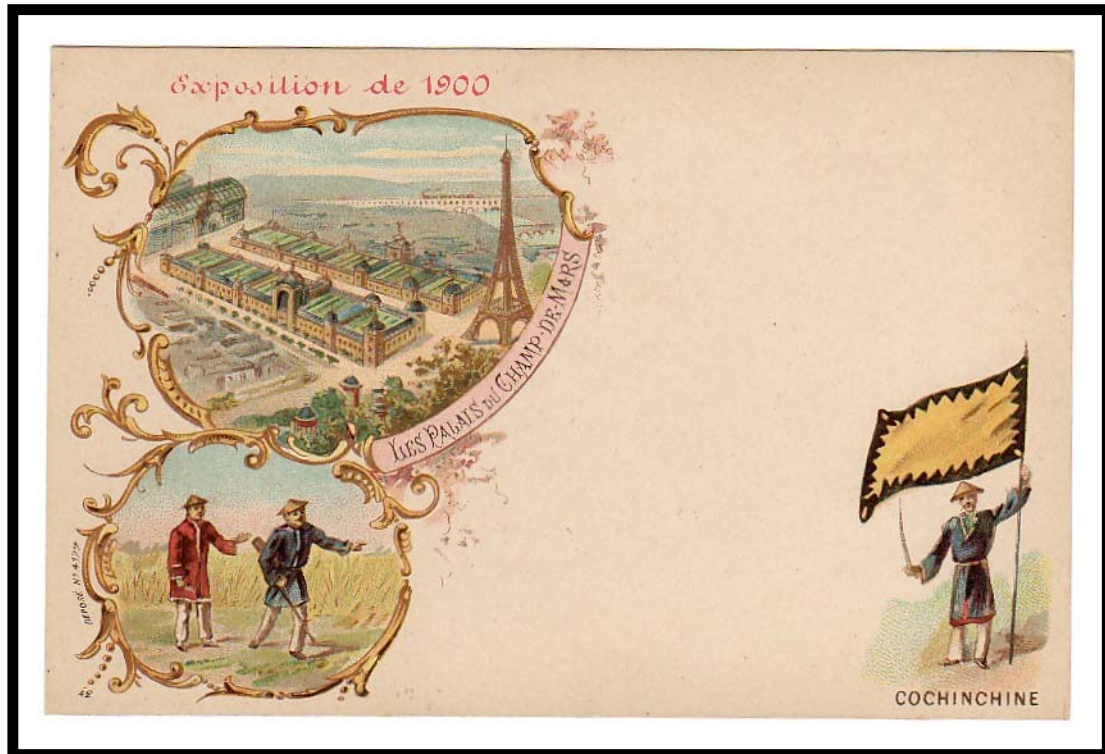
International Exposition Paris, 1900

A smaller variety of the label used the same central image, but added decorations to both sides. Five colors were used for printing these labels. The smaller label is only known perforated.



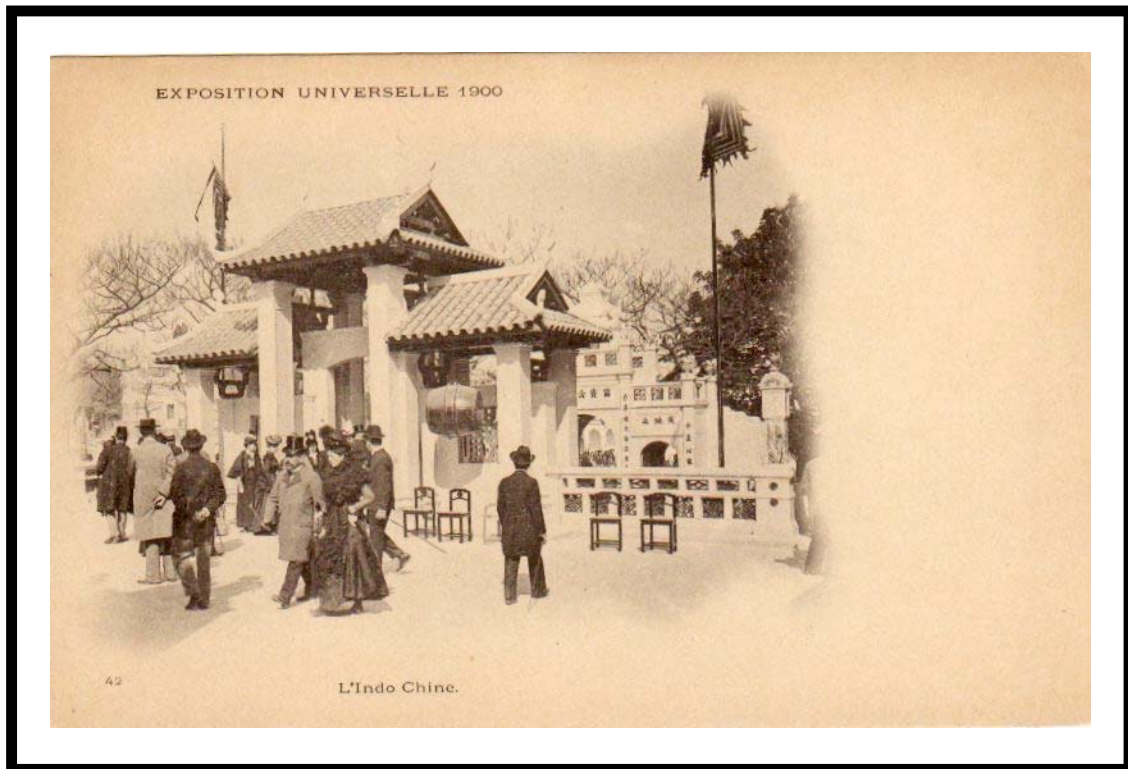
International Exposition Paris, 1900

A veritable flood of mementos was produced in connection with the fair. For example, the souvenir card shown here is emblazoned with the flag of Cochinchina at the lower right. Another example adds advertising.



International Exposition Paris, 1900

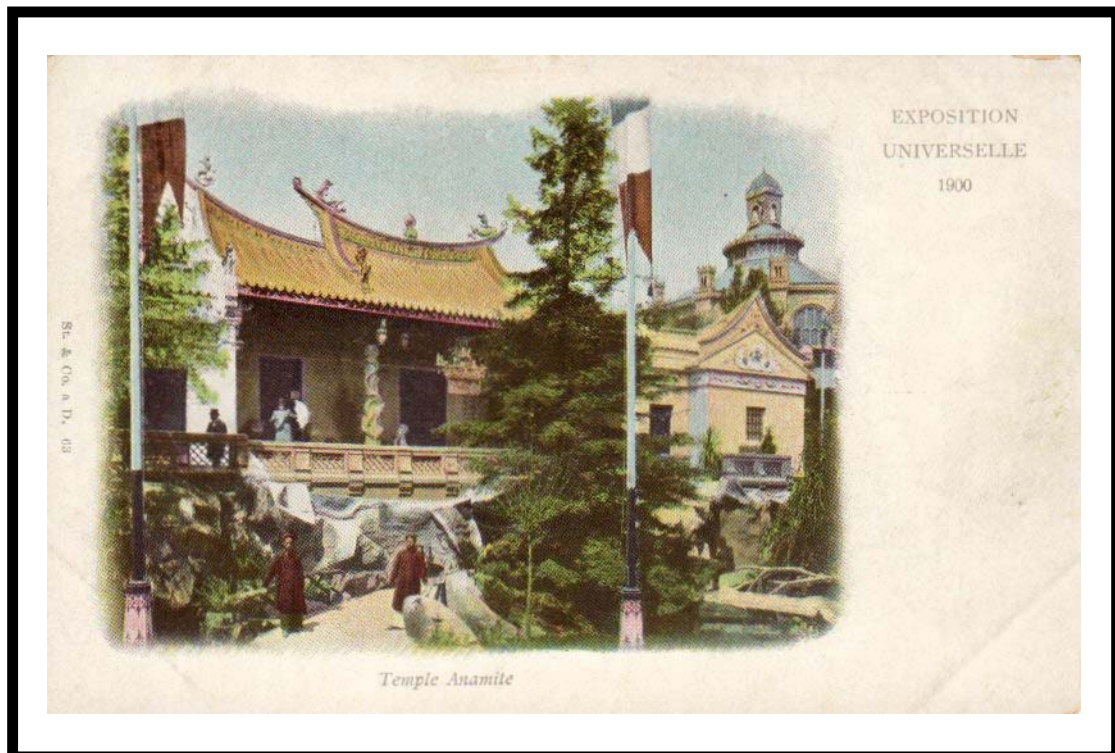
The other parts of Indochina were represented by their own impressive pavilions.



International Exposition
Paris, 1900



The Annamite Temple is depicted on a colored postcard. Colored souvenir postcards were uncommon at the time.



International Exposition Paris, 1900

Besides the pavilions, trading cards showed some of the cultural aspect of colonial peoples' lives. This Felix Potin card illustrates Annamite theater as presented at the exposition.



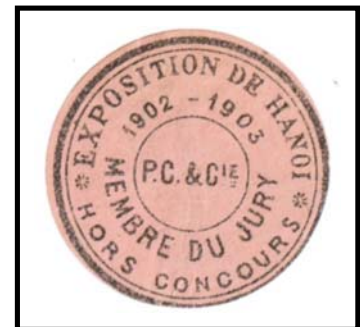
International Exposition Hanoi, 1902-03

The International Exposition at Hanoi from November 1902 to January 1903 was the creation of Paul Doumer, who was Governor General of Indochina from 1897 until 1902. Its purpose was to showcase the overall French Colonial effort highlighting French economic, industrial, scientific, cultural and political successes throughout its empire. But it was also international having exhibits from other Pacific nations.

Gold foil labels publicized the exposition. The label's design simulated the layout of the medals minted as commemorative coins for the fair.



Paper labels are printed “EXPOSITION DE HANOI HORS CONCOURSE” inside the outer circle. Around the inner circle, they say “1902-1903 MEMBRE DU JURY.” At the very center is the cryptic abbreviation “P.C. & C^{IE}.” They could have served the purpose of temporarily marking an exhibit until ribbons arrived. Or maybe, they served as badges for judges.



International Exposition Hanoi, 1902-03

The principal building and main architectural feature of the exposition was the Grand Palace. It represented the grandeur and power of France, but unfortunately it collapsed during a typhoon. This postcard shows the opening of the exposition on 16 November 1902 and is postmarked 12 December 1902 suggesting that the postcard was produced in short order.



POSTAL MARKINGS

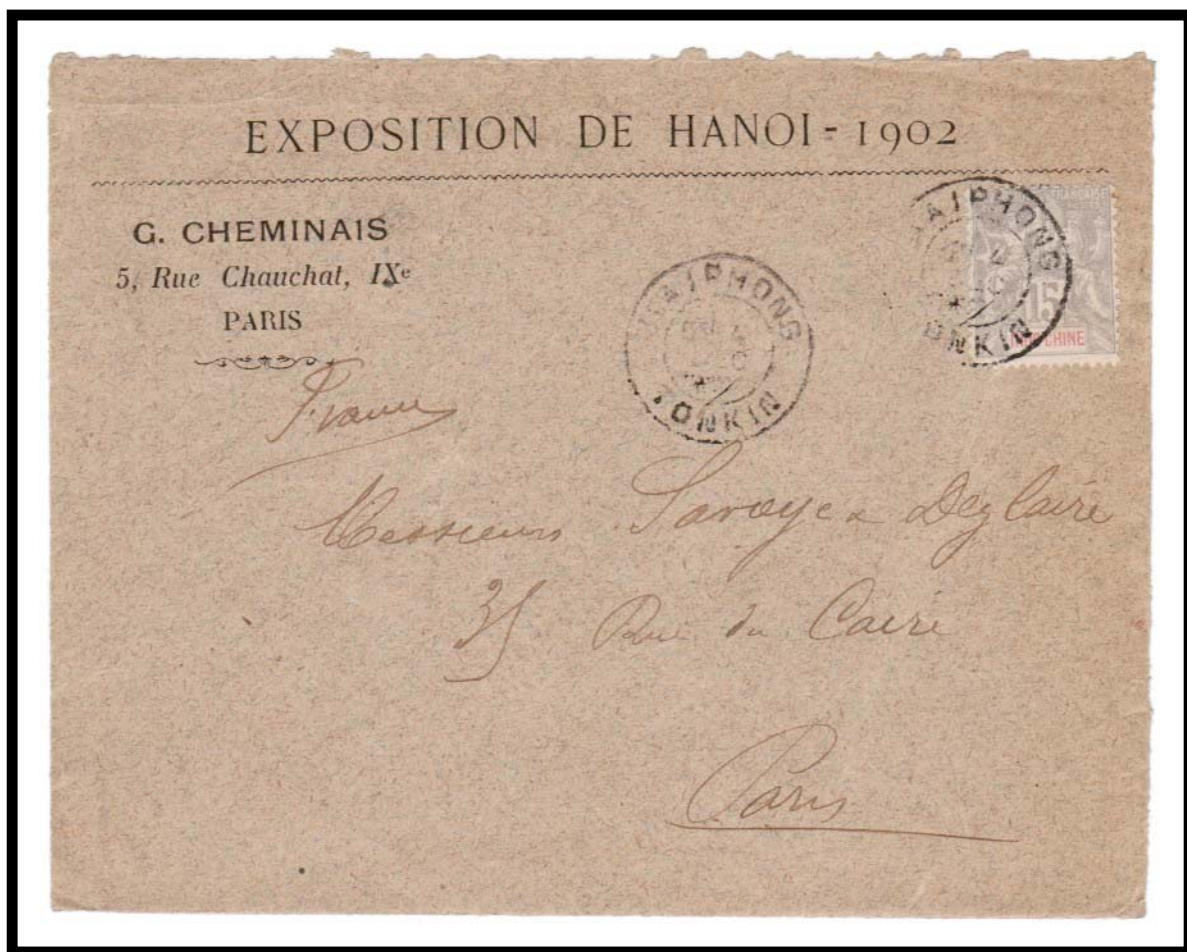
HANOI TONKIN 12 DEC 02

REVERSE

HANOI TONKIN 12 DEC 02

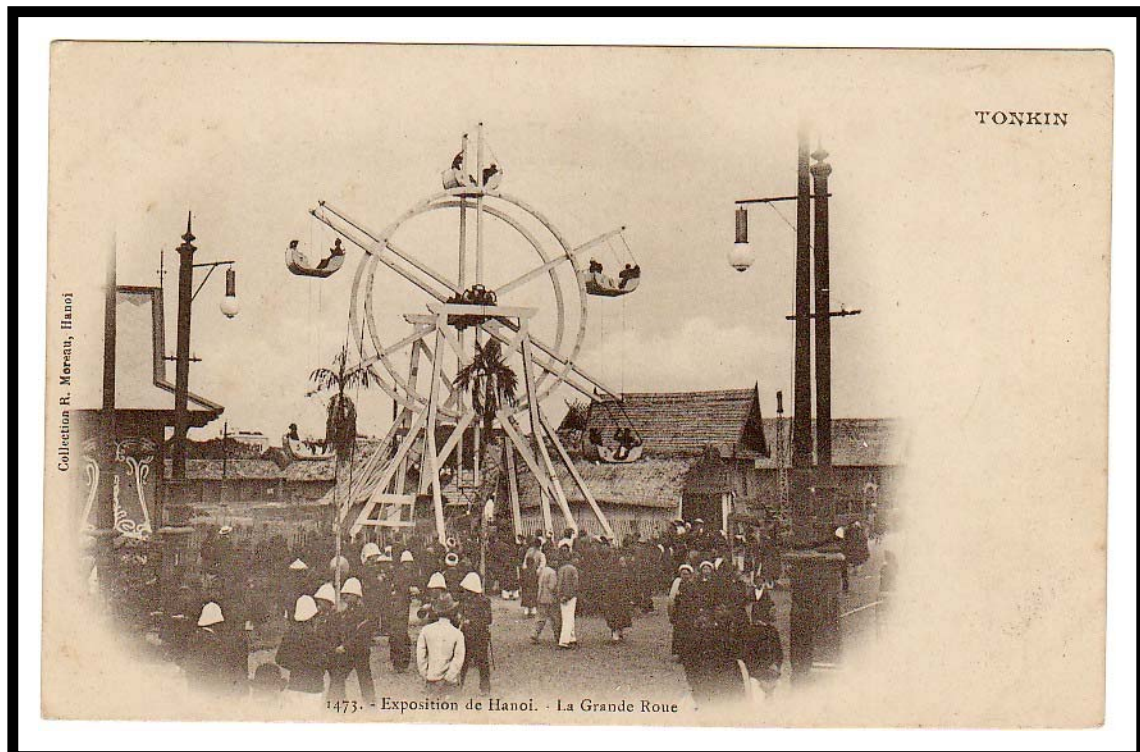
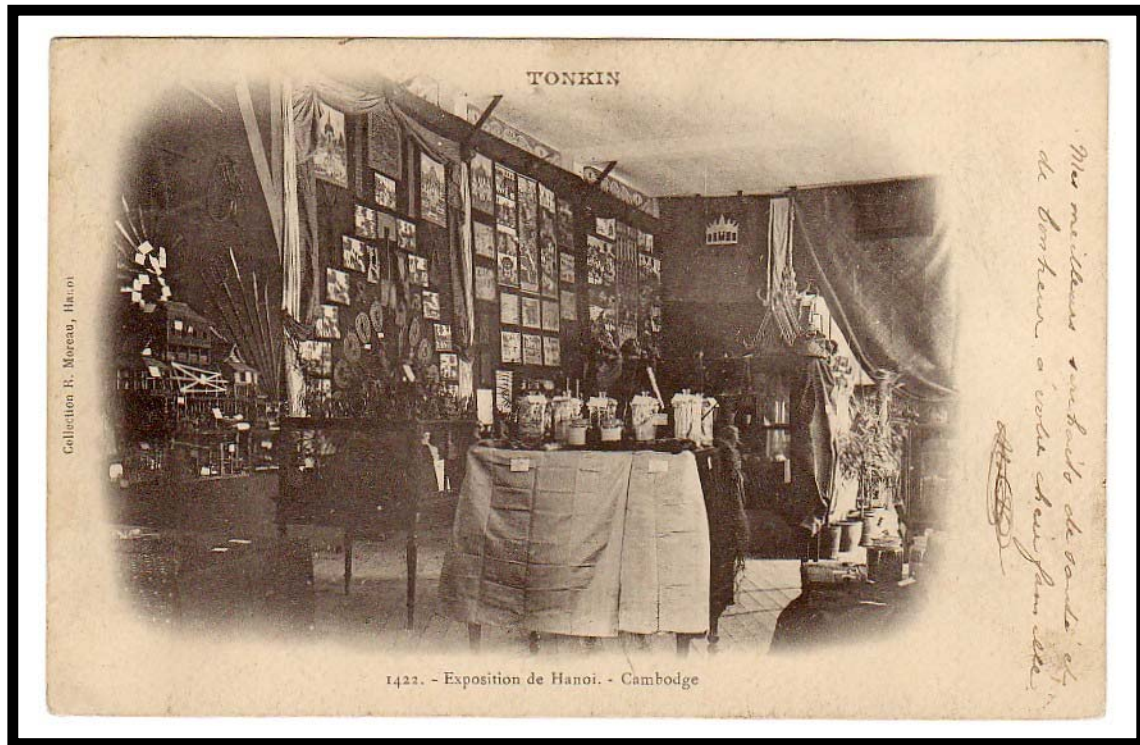
International Exposition
Hanoi, 1902-03

Stationery for G. Cheminais indicates that he was located in Paris. Likely Mr. Cheminais was one of the exposition's representatives who worked promoting and facilitating the fair.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG TONKIN 4 DEC 05

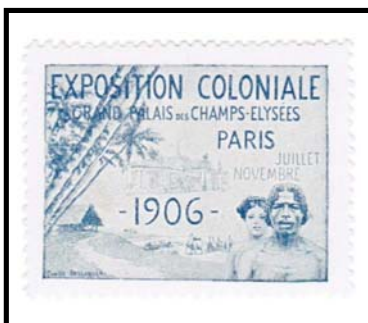
International Exposition
Hanoi, 1902-03



International Colonial Exposition Paris, 1906

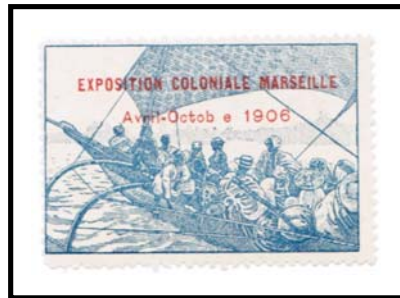
In March 1906, the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts issued a decree announcing an international colonial exposition to be held at the Grand Palais of the Champs Elysées from July to November 1906. The event never occurred as the city of Marseille hosted the colonial exposition during that year.

A label depicting various aspects of colonial life was prepared to promote the event. The label was printed in six different colors.



Colonial Exposition Marseille, 1906

Labels that promoted the 1906 Colonial Exposition at Marseilles depicted an assembly of colonial peoples aboard a sailboat with outriggers. The label was produced in bicolor and multicolor versions.



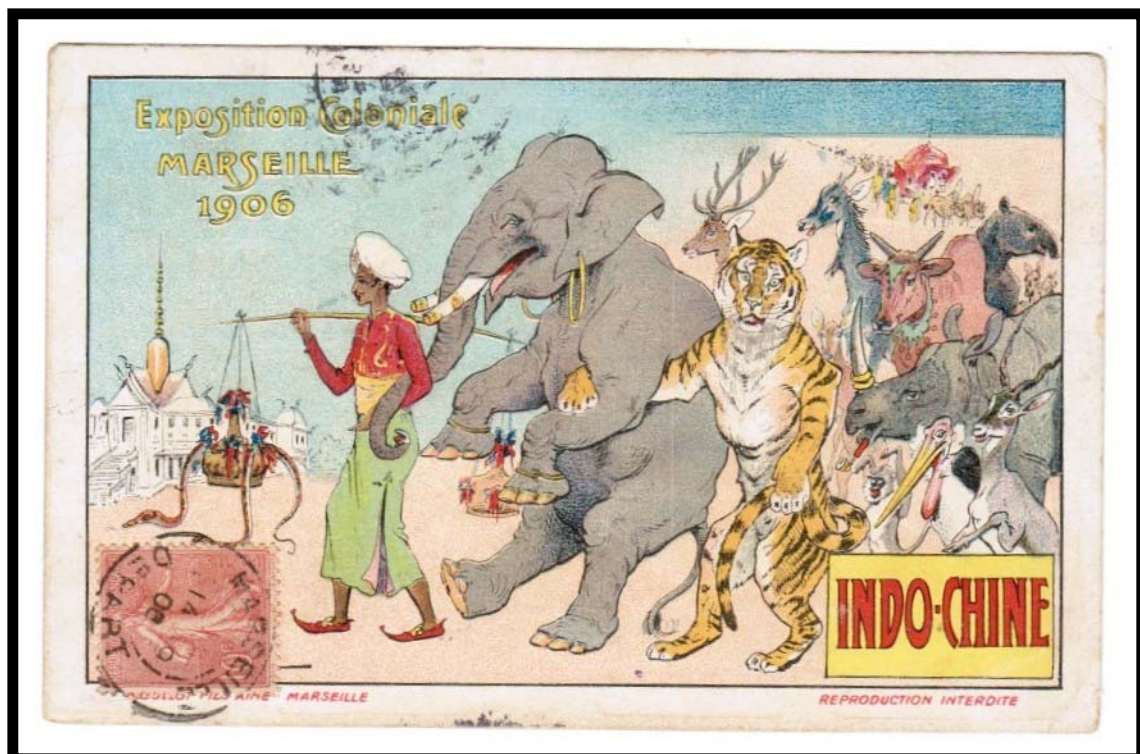
Postcard bears the image used for the exposition labels.

Colonial Exposition Marseille, 1906

Very similar to the label's composition, a souvenir postcard depicts colonial peoples aboard a sailboat.

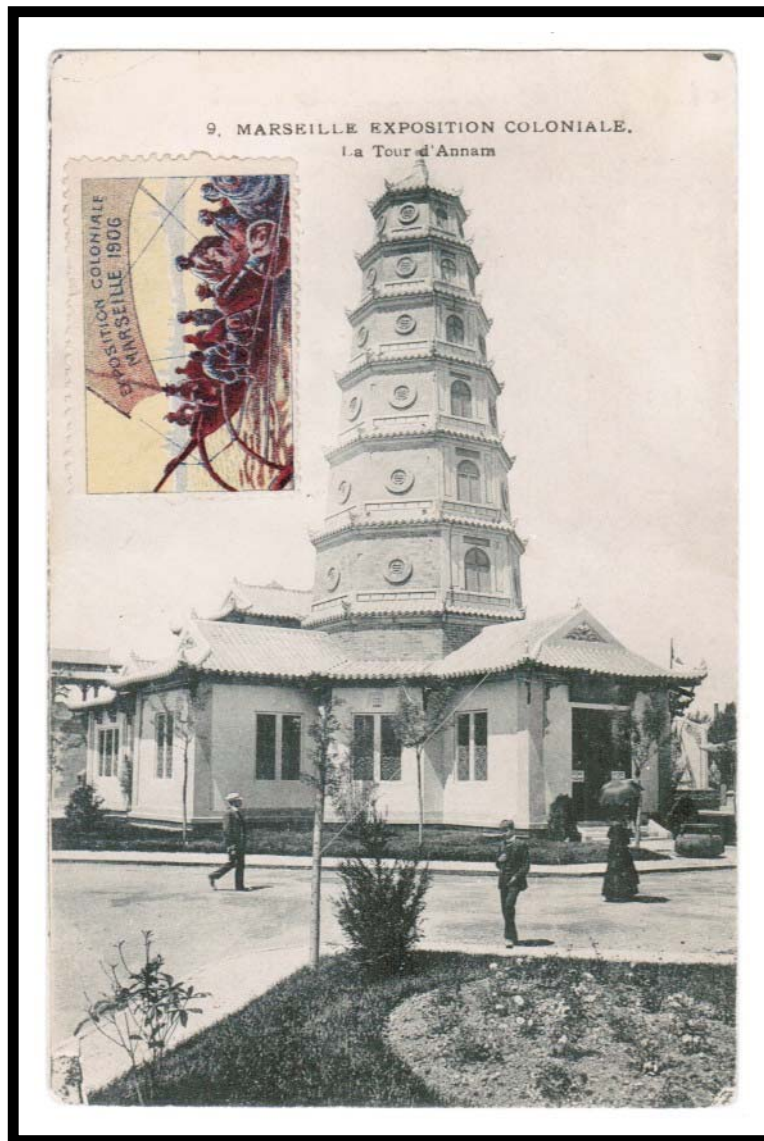


Another colorful postcard from a series shows animals arriving at the fair.



Colonial Exposition Marseille, 1906

The multicolor exposition label was affixed to a souvenir picture postcard showing the Tower of Annam.

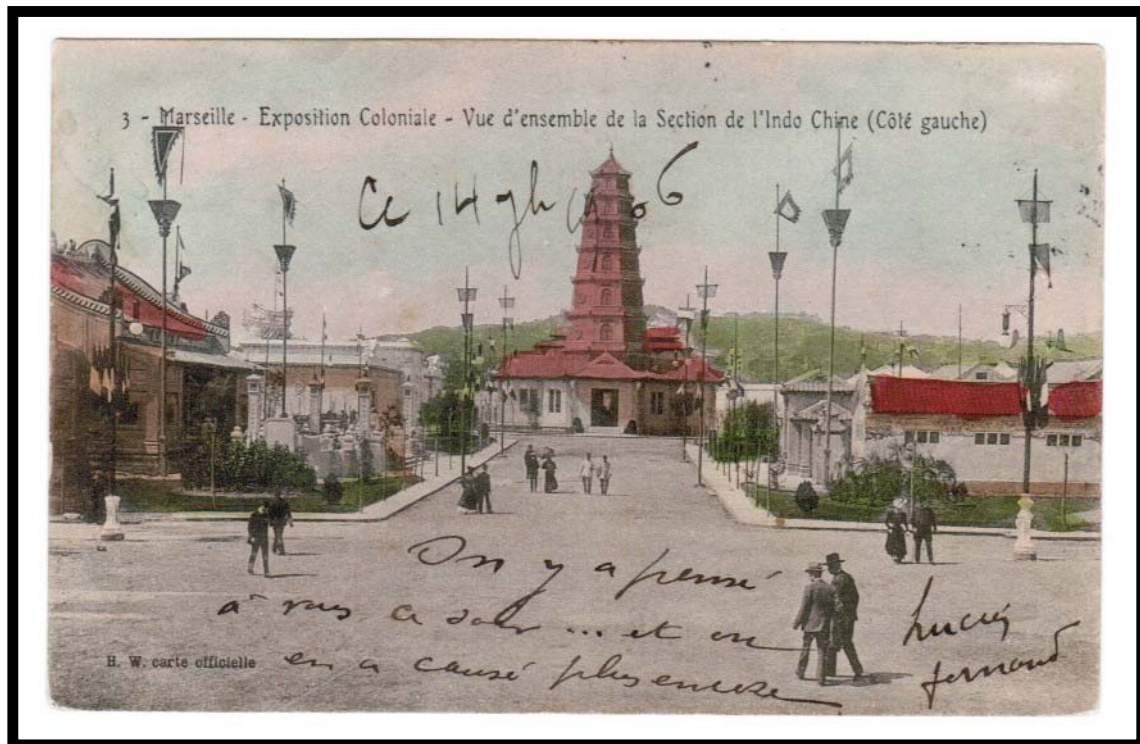


Colonial Exposition Marseille, 1906

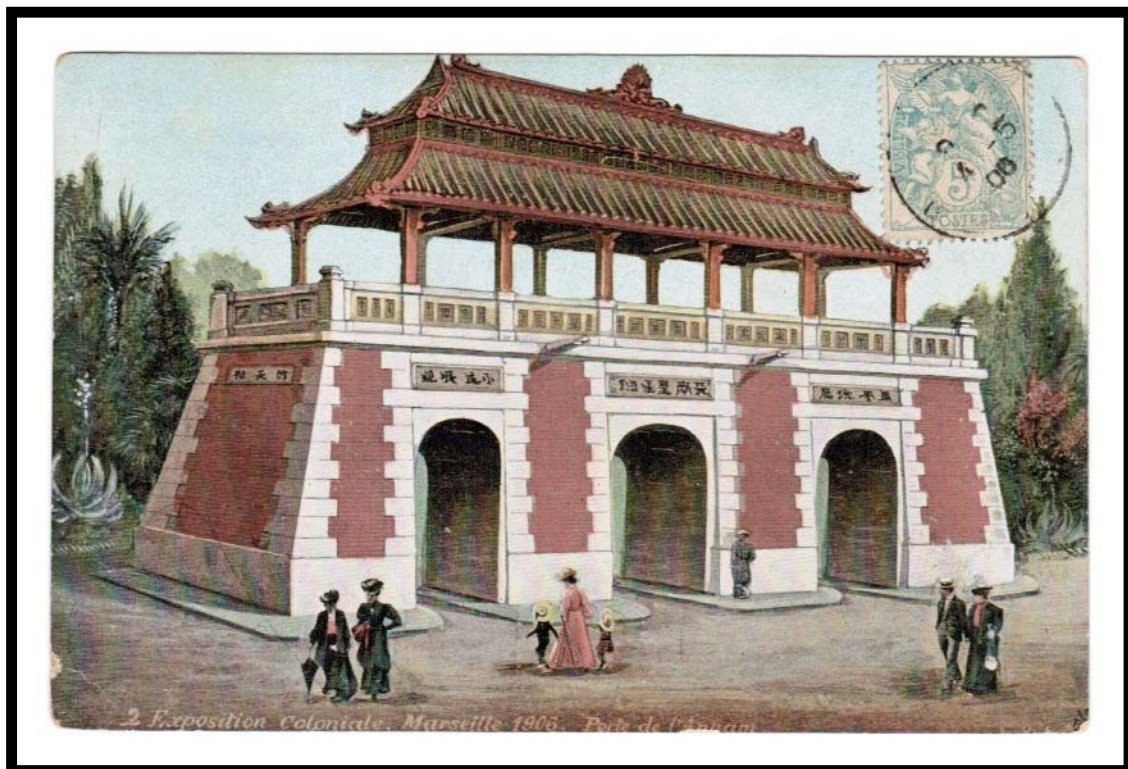
Frequently, officials prepared labels in order to promote the event or for distribution as souvenirs for attendees. At its base, this label bears “TIMBRE DES EXPOSANTS” while at the sides “Exposition Coloniale” and “Marseille 1906” are indicated. Clued by the large hat typical of northern Vietnam, this label depicts a Vietnamese woman who is displaying her woven tapestry. Presumably, a series of labels was produced to honor the colonial exhibitors.



Colonial Exposition Marseille, 1906



Indochinese Section

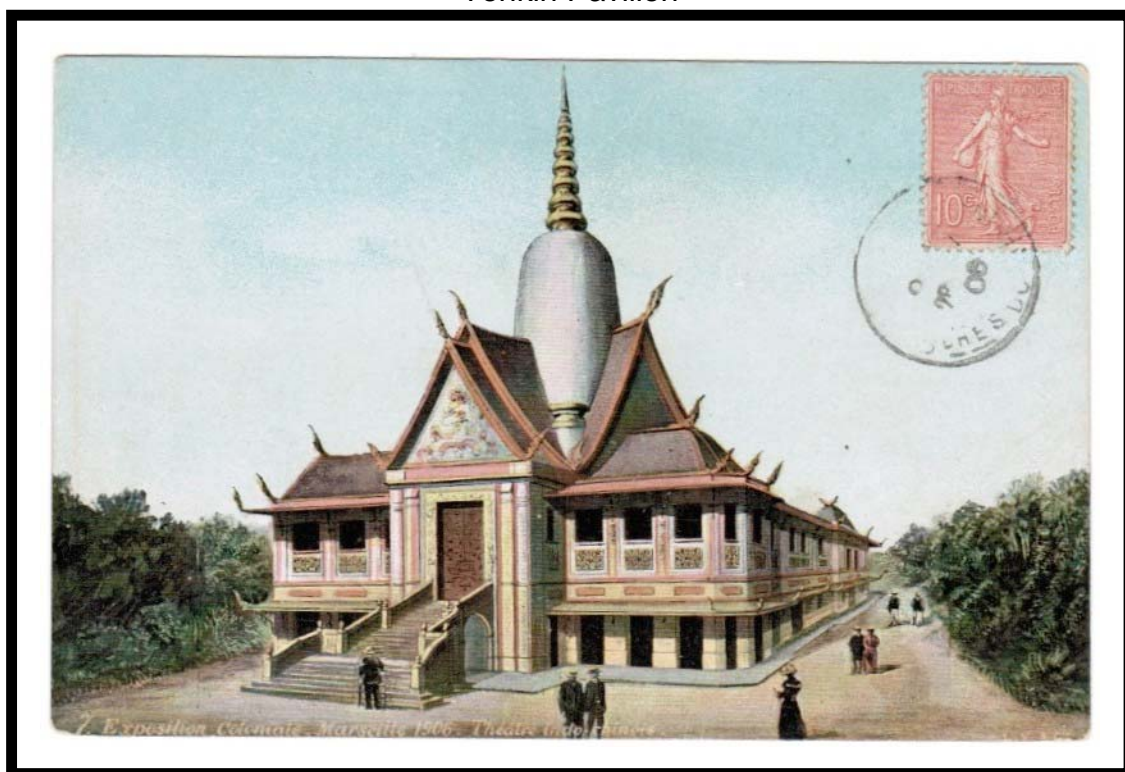


Annam Gate

Colonial Exposition
Marseille, 1906

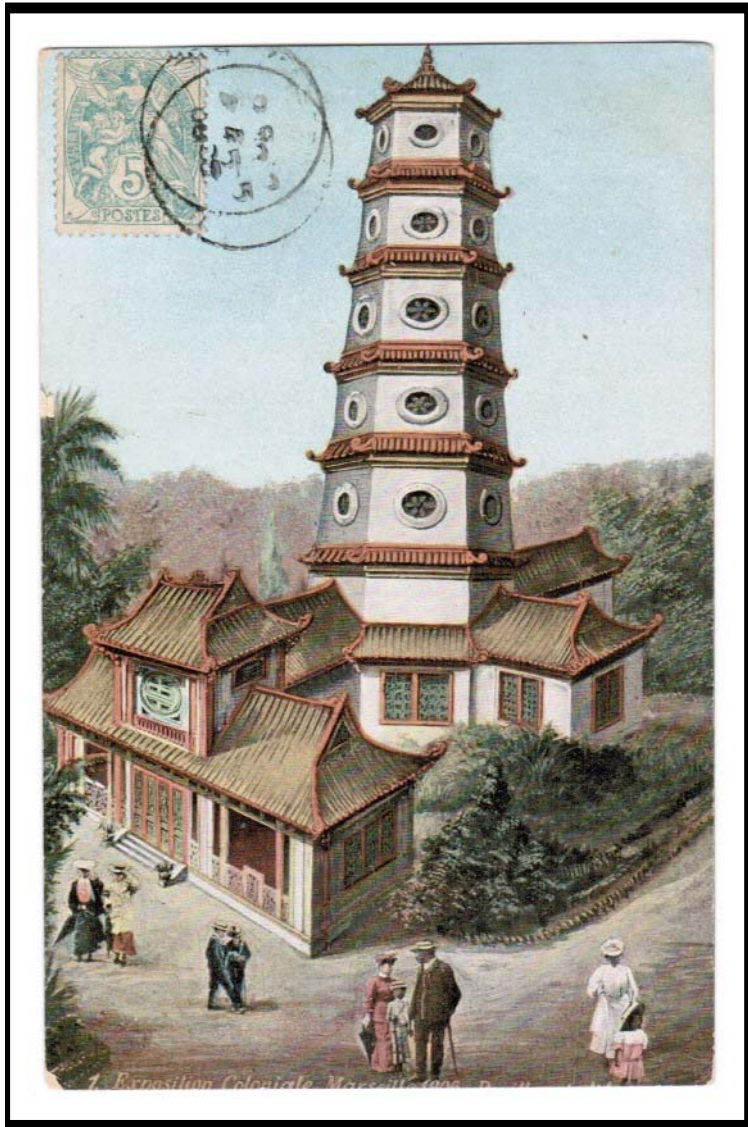


Tonkin Pavilion



Indochinese Theater

Colonial Exposition
Marseille, 1906



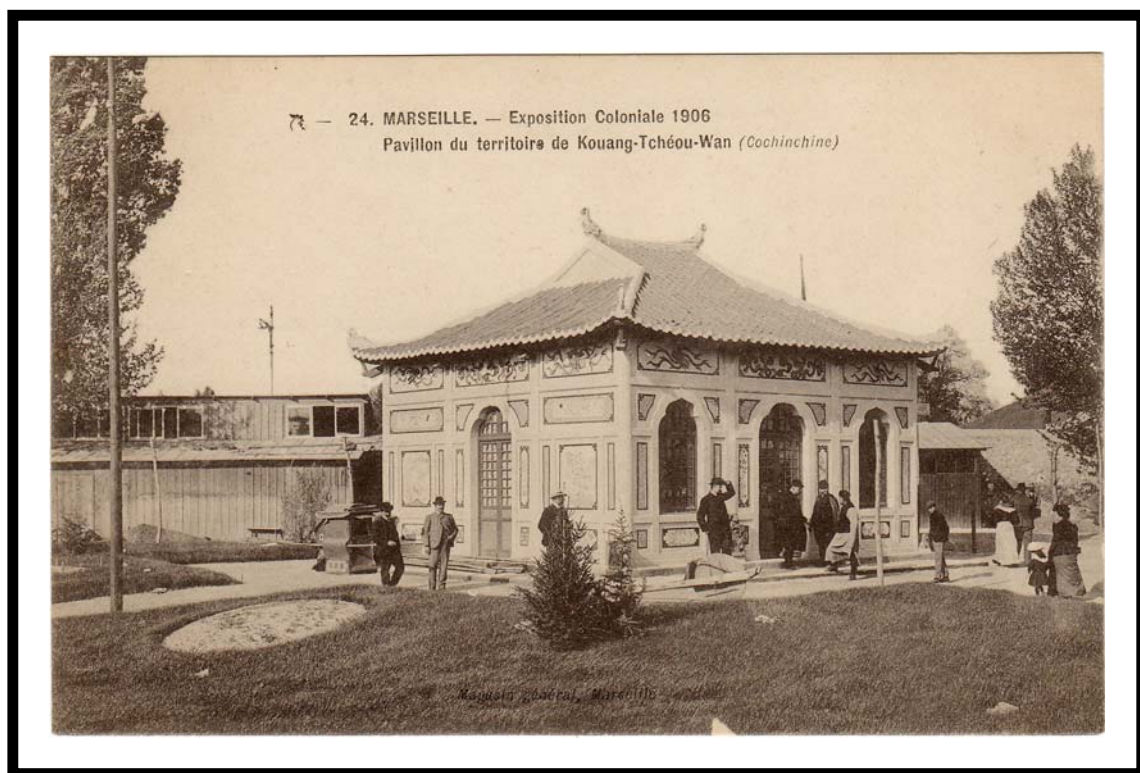
Tower of Annam

Colonial Exposition Marseille, 1906



Tower of Annam

Colonial Exposition
Marseille, 1906



Kouang-Tchéou-Wan Pavilion

Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Type I Labels

A series of labels promoting health (“hygiene”) were issued in conjunction with the 1907 Colonial Exposition in Paris. The labels were issued in ten colors and two printings. The background behind the word “PARIS” is either horizontal lines of crosshatch lines.



Type I



Type II



brown-violet



gray-violet

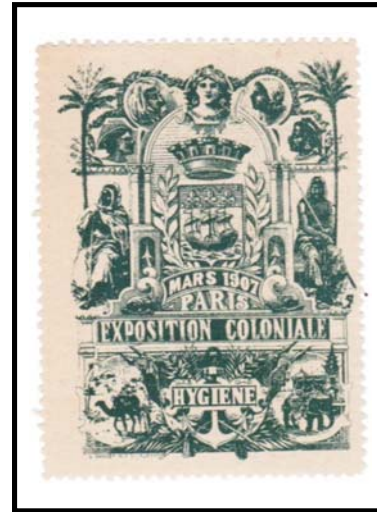


gray

Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Type I Labels



dark green



deep green



gray-blue



reddish brown

Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Type II Labels



gray-violet



deep sea blue



reddish brown



deep brown

Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Margin Labels



dark green



deep sea blue



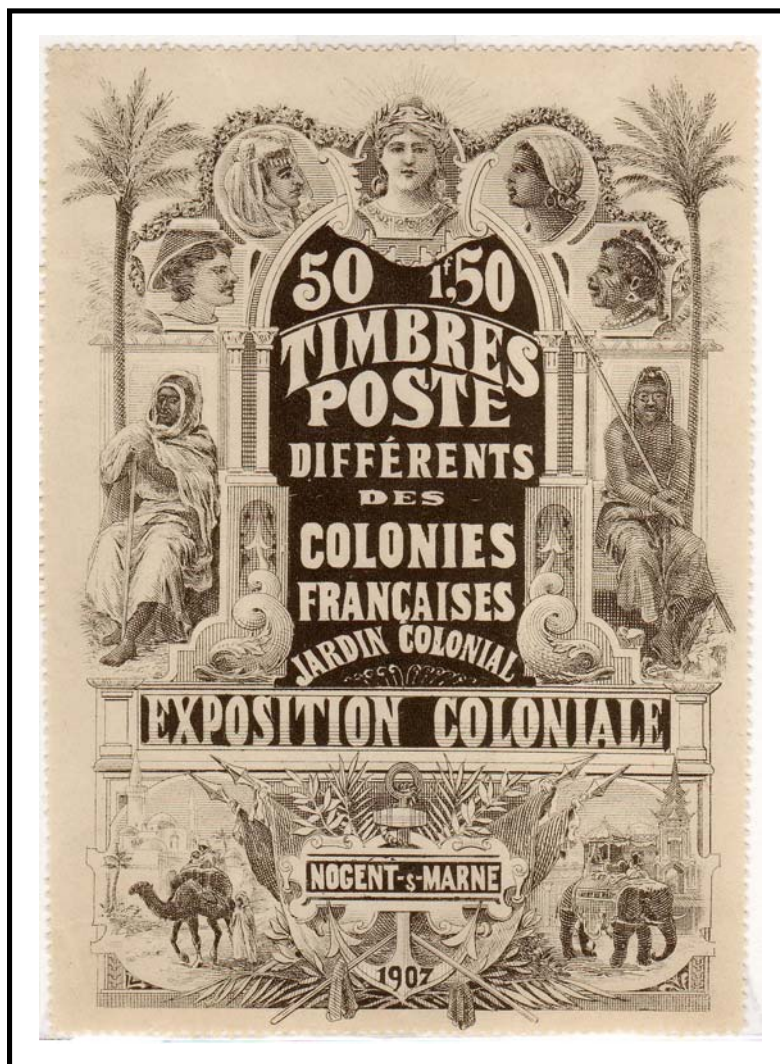
reddish brown



violet

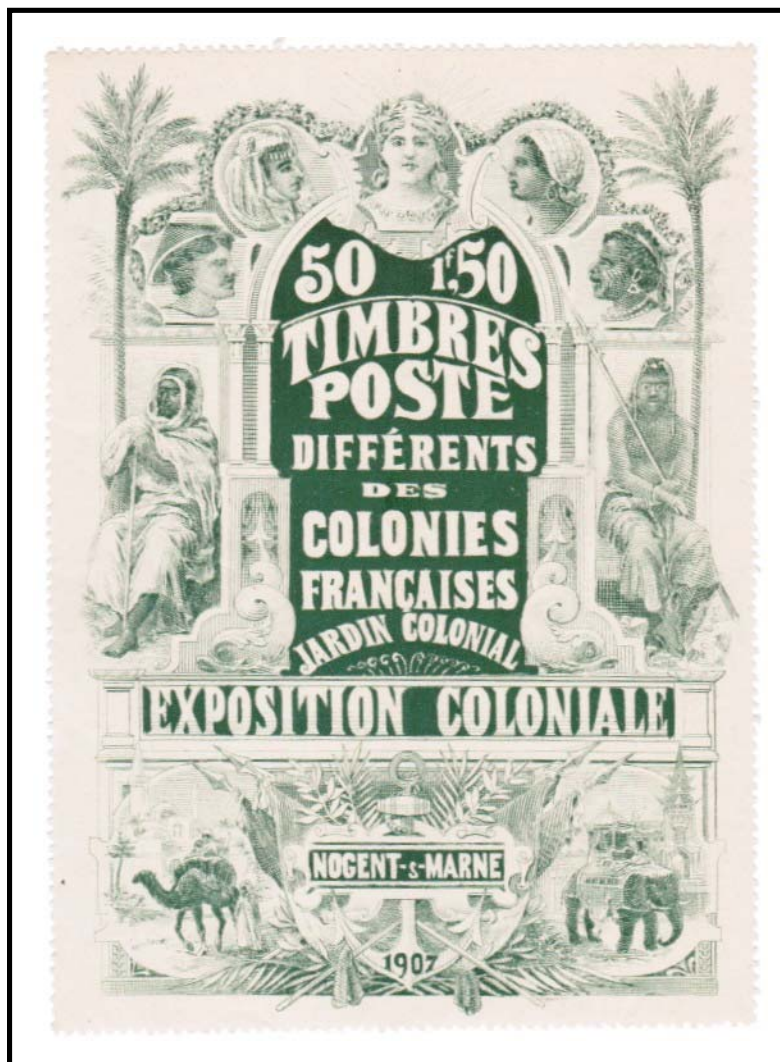
National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Large Format Labels

Large format labels appeared in connection with the 1907 Colonial Exposition. They advertised “50 different postage stamps from French Colonies” for a price of 1.50 francs. The large format labels were printed in the same colors as the stamp-size labels.



gray

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Large Format Labels



green

National Colonial Exposition Paris, 1907

A series of sheetlets of ten commemorative labels were distributed in conjunction with the 1907 National Colonial Exposition in 1907. Several formats were employed. Three labels pertain to Indochina: "COCHINCHINE," "INDO-CHINE" and "TOUR CHINOIS."



Carmine

National Colonial Exposition Paris, 1907



Orange-Brown



Light Green

National Colonial Exposition Paris, 1907



Blue-Green



Blue

The image displays ten vintage French colonial exhibition medals from 1907, arranged in two rows of five. Each medal features a central illustration representing a different colony and is surrounded by text including "EXPOSITION COLONIALE NATIONALE", "BOIS de VINCENNES", and the colony's name. The colonies depicted are Guinée Française, Côte Française des Somalis, Madagascar, Tour Chinoise, Madagascar (Décoration du Riz), Tunisie, Cochinchine, Indo-Chine, Indonésie, and Grande Océanie.

Dark Green

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Indochinese Pavilion Labels



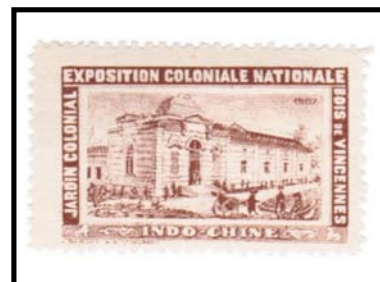
dark green



blue-green



blue



brown



violet



carmine



green

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Cochinchinese Pavilion Labels



dark green



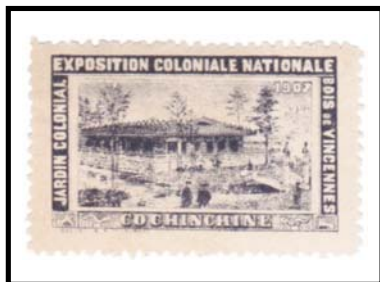
blue-green



green



brown



violet



carmine



blue

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Chinese Tower Labels



dark green



blue-green



violet



light blue



blue



olive-brown



orange-brown



carmine

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Imperforate Indochinese Pavilion Labels



dark green



blue-green



olive-brown



orange-brown



violet



carmine



green

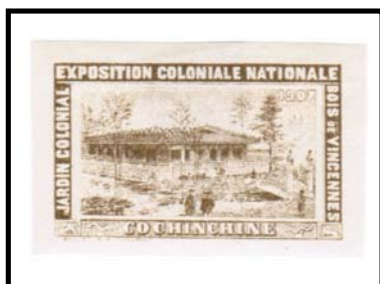
National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Imperforate Cochinchinese Pavilion Labels



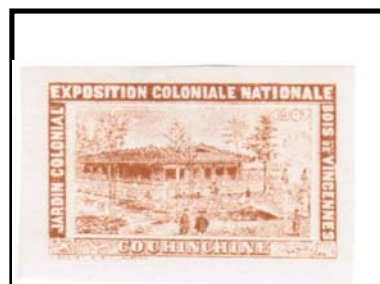
dark green



blue-green



olive-brown



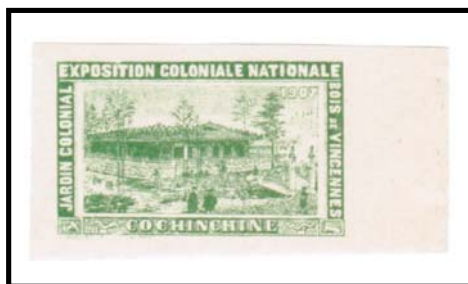
orange-brown



violet



carmine



green

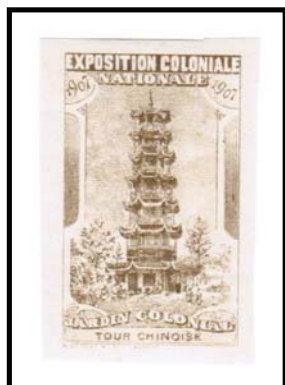
National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Imperforate Chinese Tower Labels



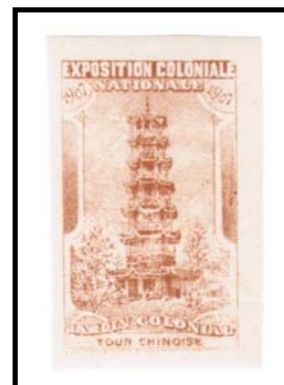
dark green



blue-green



olive-brown



orange-brown



violet



carmine

National Colonial Exposition Paris, 1907 Strips

One layout of labels had the three Indochina-related labels located adjacent to one another.



dark blue



brown

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Strips



blue



violet



carmine



olive green

National Colonial Exposition
Paris, 1907
Use of Cochinchinese Labels



Fairs and Expositions

Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908



International Exhibition for Northern France, Roubaix, 1911



National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

Large, multicolor labels advertised the 1922 Colonial Exposition at Marseille. The label identified the dates of the fair from 15 April to 15 November 1922. The city of Marseille is pictured at the center surrounded by small pictorial images of colonial cities and peoples.



Perforated



Imperforate

National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

A booklet of labels was issued for the National Colonial Exposition held in Marseilles in 1922. Twelve labels depict local costumes from different colonial areas. Three labels directly pertain to Indochina: Annamite soldier, Indochinese woman and Cambodian dancer.

Annamite soldier



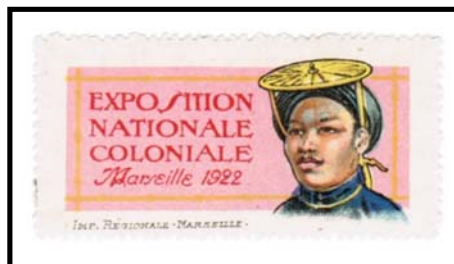
Dark blue background
with fancy text in rose,



Rose background
with regular text



Rose background
with regular text and elongated "S"



Rose background
with regular text, elongated "S"
and printer identification

National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922

Indochinese Woman



Cambodian dancer



Light blue
and printer identification



Light blue



Dark blue

National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

The Annamite soldier label was located in the center of the in the second row of label panes. In this case, the label employed plain lettering on a rose background.



National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

On this pane, the printer is identified at the base of the top, center label. With this version, the elongated “S” appears in the word “EXPOSITION” on the Annamite soldier label.



National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

The printer was identified under the middle stamp in the second row. Here the credit reads “IMP. REGIONALE, 12 Rue St. Jacques MARSEILLE.”



National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

The design for the Annamite soldier changed with the many of the printings of the labels. Here, the Annamite soldier label is the variety with fancy, rose-colored letters.



National Colonial Exposition Marseilles, 1922

At their bases, two of the Indochinese labels (the Annamite soldier and the Cambodian dancer) identified the printer as “IMP. REGIONALE MARSEILLE.”



National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Use of Annamite Soldier Label

An example of the Annamite Soldier label was affixed to a booklet cover for a pane of labels. The cover publicizes the 1922 Colonial Exposition.



National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Use of Annamite Soldier Label

An Annamite soldier label was affixed to a picture postcard mailed from the 1922 exposition



POSTAL MARKINGS
BOUGUENAIS LOIRE INF^{RE} 18-9 22
REVERSE
MARSEILLE DEPART 15-9 22

National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Use of Cambodian Dancer and Indochinese Woman Label

Similar cards were mailed as souvenirs of the exposition.



National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Use of Indochinese Woman Label

A label from the 1922 exposition was affixed to an envelope like a postage stamp for a mailing from Marseille in March 1922.



POSTAL MARKINGS
MARSEILLE-GARE B~~CHES~~ DU RHONE 21 • III 1922
REVERSE
DRAGUIGNAN VAR 22-3 22

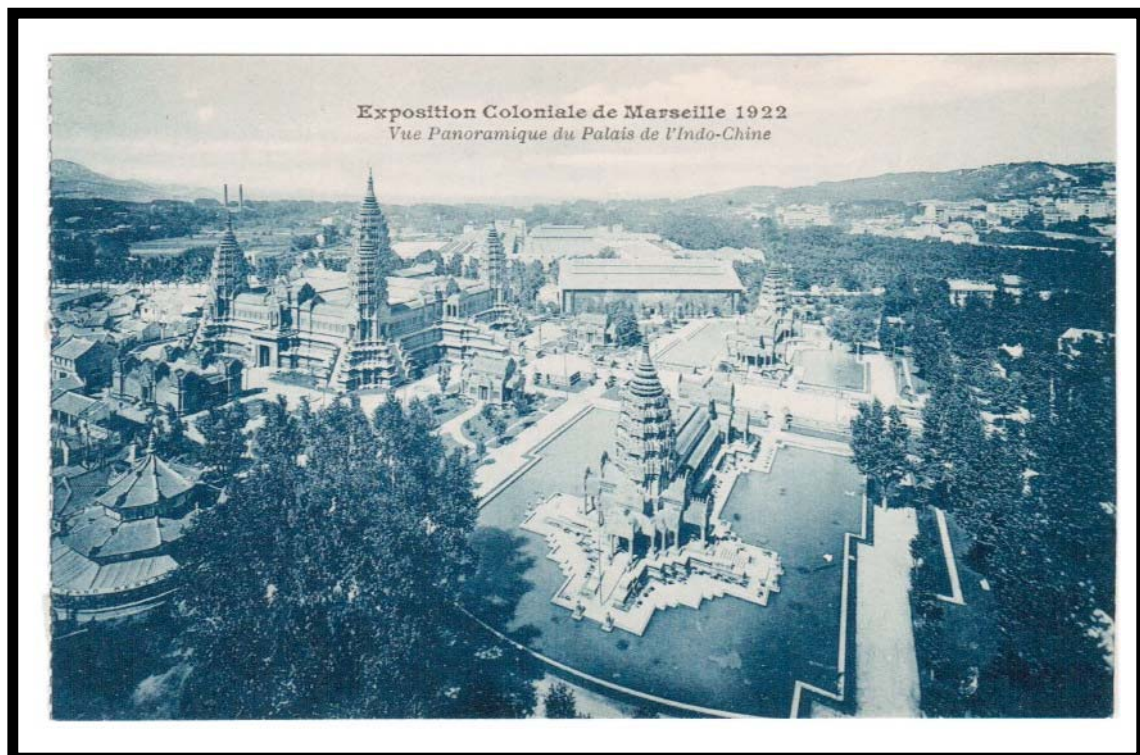
National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Use of Cambodian Dancer Label

A Cambodian dancer label was affixed to a picture postcard mailed from the 1922 exposition.



POSTAL MARKINGS
EXPOSITION NATIONALE MARSEILLE 7-9 22

National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Panoramic Views of Indochinese Palace



National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Views of Indochinese Pavilions

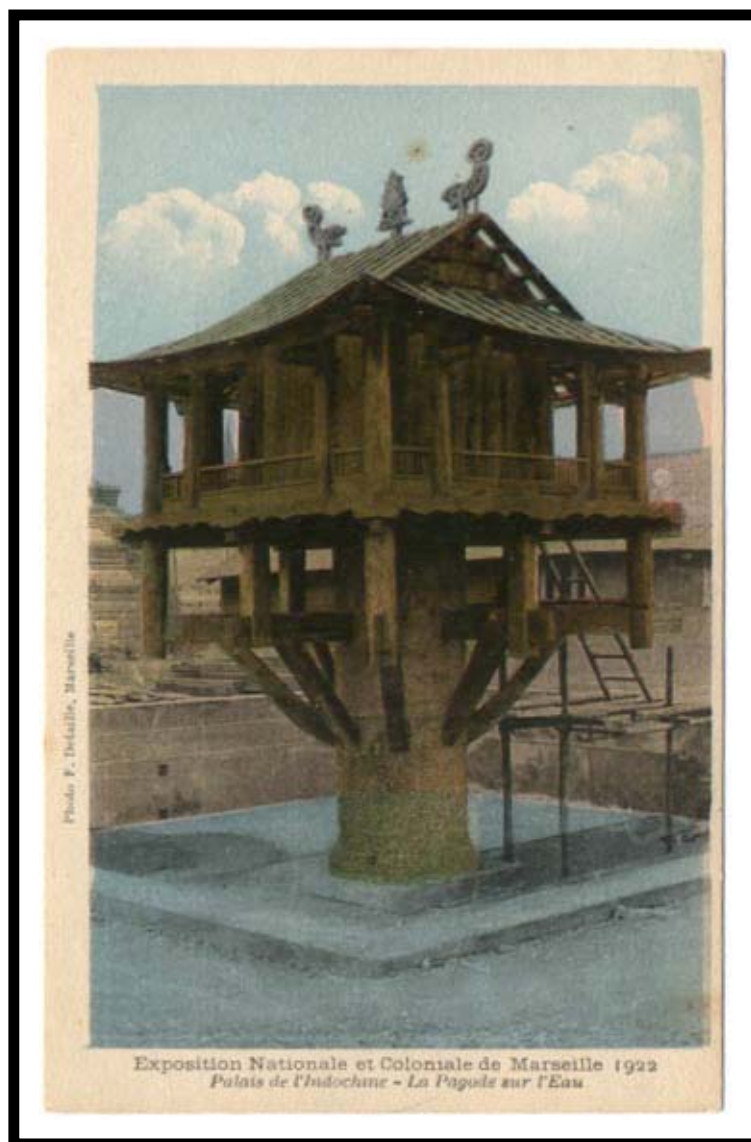


National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Views of Indochinese Pavilions



National Colonial Exposition
Marseilles, 1922
Views of Indochinese Pavilions

“Pagoda on Water” at the 1922 Colonial Exposition mimics design of “Pagoda on a Pole” in Hanoi.



International Exhibition of Decorative Arts Paris, 1925

Period postcard depicts French Asia & Indochina Pavilion for the Decorative Arts Exhibition held in Paris in 1925.



Colonial Exposition La Rochelle, 1927

The La Rochelle Colonial Exposition was held during the summer of 1927. A single promotional label is known for this fair. Here the label was affixed to a mailing that was posted from the La Rochelle train station on 13 July, two weeks before the fair opened on 31 July 1927.



POSTAL MARKINGS
LA ROCHELLE GARE CHARENTE-INFRE 13-7 27

Saigon Fair 1927-28

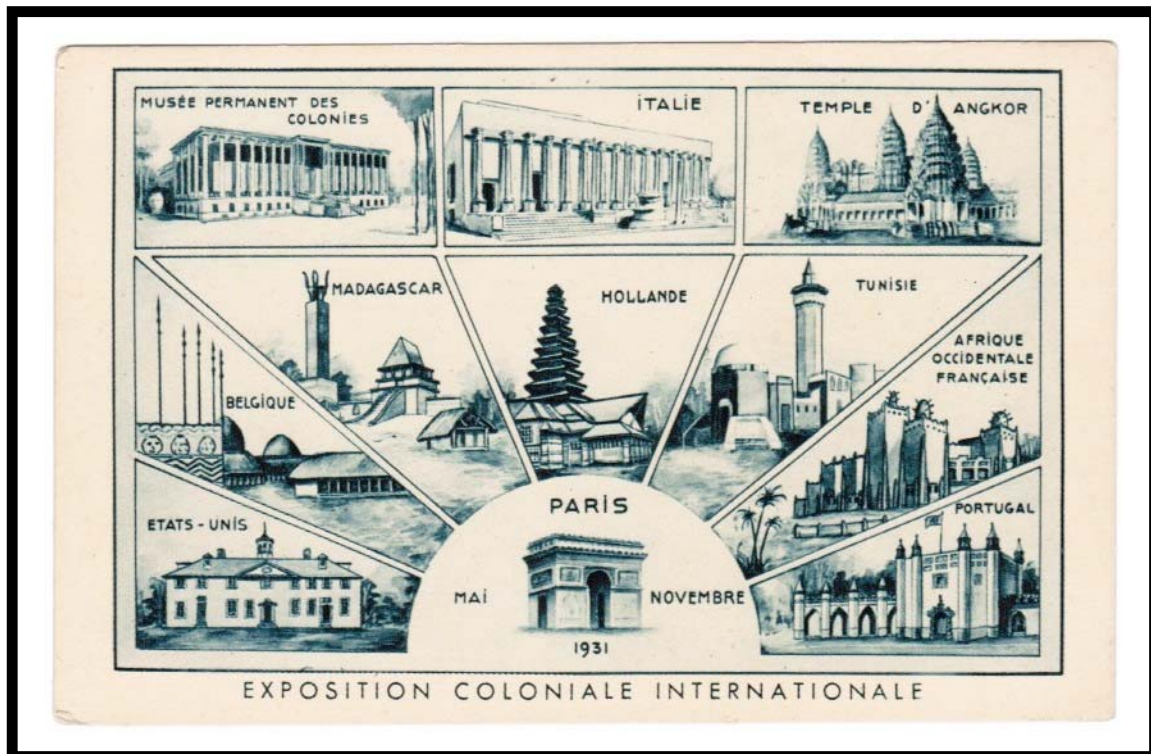
Labels in five different colors were prepared to commemorate the Saigon Fair from 17 December 1927 to 15 January 1928. The inscription at the bottom of the label indicates that this was the “First Saigon Fair.”



International Colonial Exhibition Paris, 1931

The International Colonial Exhibition was a six-month colonial exhibition held in Paris, France in 1931 that attempted to display the diverse cultures and immense resources of France's colonial possessions. Other nations participated in the event, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Japan, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The scale was enormous with some 33 million visitors from around the world.

Politically, France hoped the exposition would paint its colonial empire in a beneficial light, showing the mutual exchange of cultures and the benefit of France's efforts overseas. The exposition highlighted the endemic cultures of the colonies and downplayed French efforts to spread its own language and culture abroad, thus advancing the notion that France was associating with colonized societies, not assimilating them.



Postcard identifies some of the international participants as well as French colonies.

International Colonial Exhibition Paris, 1931

English language card shares common design with label promoting the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition.



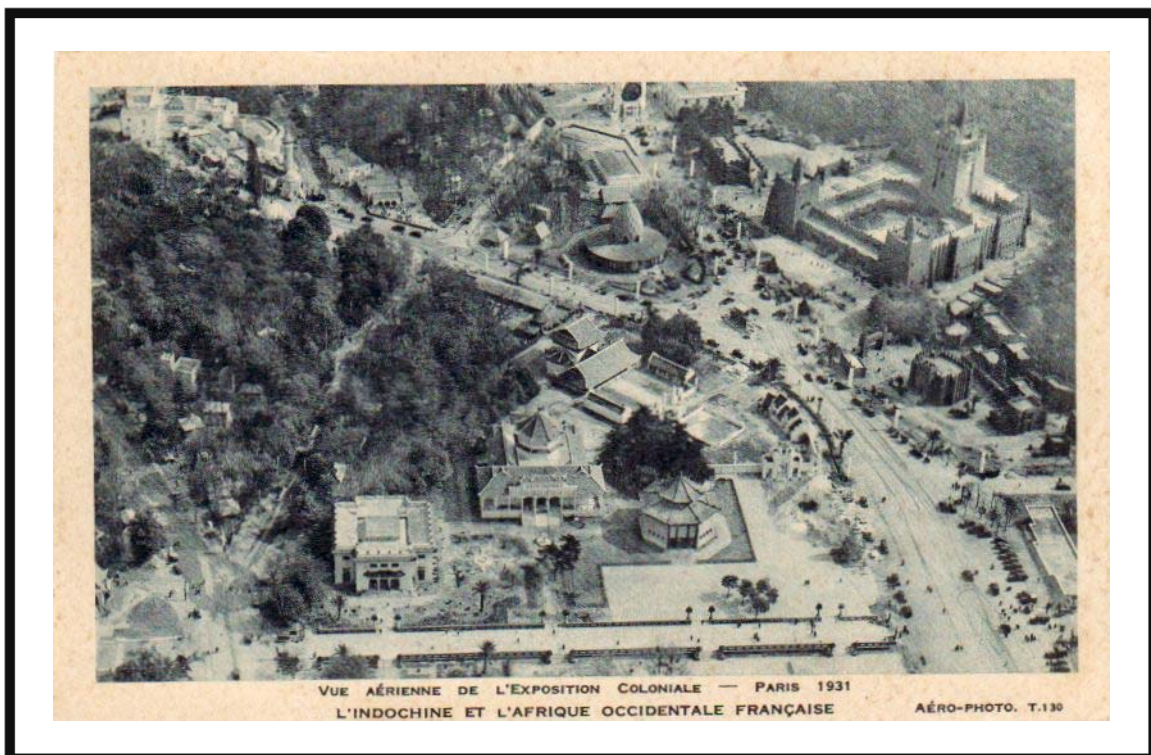
International Colonial Exhibition Paris, 1931

The entry ticket for the exhibition depicted a European wearing a colonial helmet. The price of the ticket was 3 francs. An English-language promotional label utilized the same image, but in a reduced size.



International Colonial Exhibition Paris, 1931

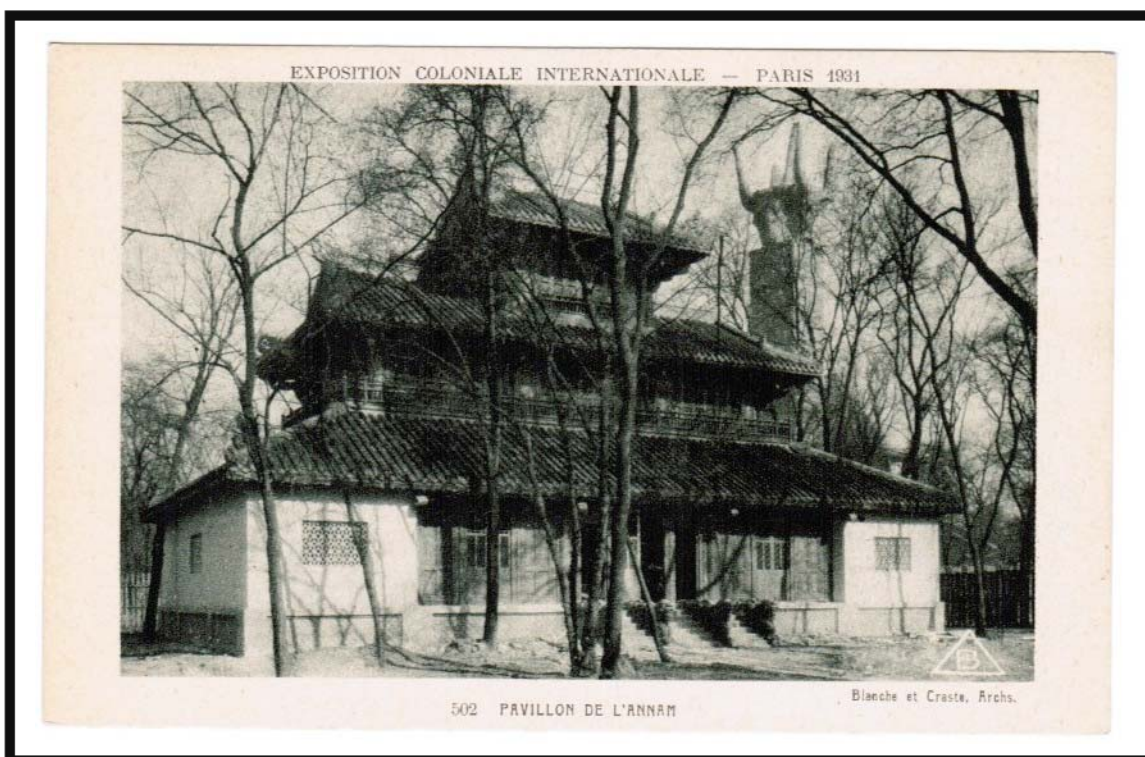
Views of the Indochina section show the grand scale of the exhibition.



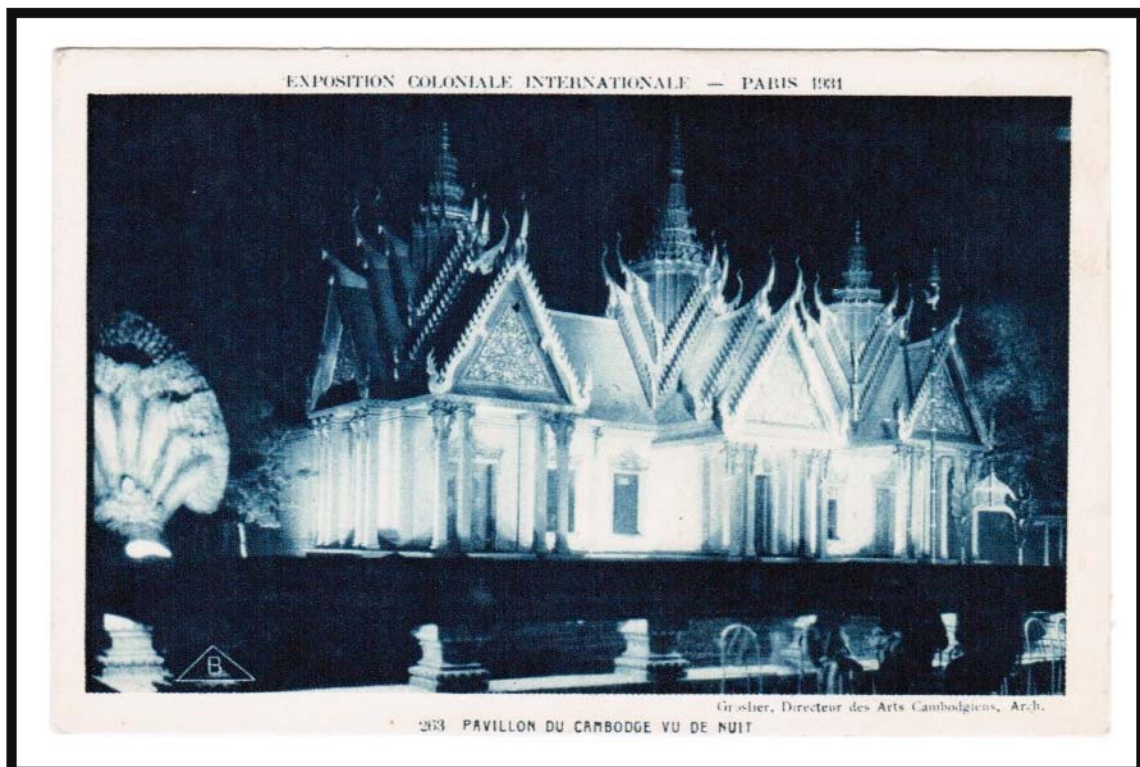
International Colonial Exhibition
Paris, 1931
Angkor Temple Replica



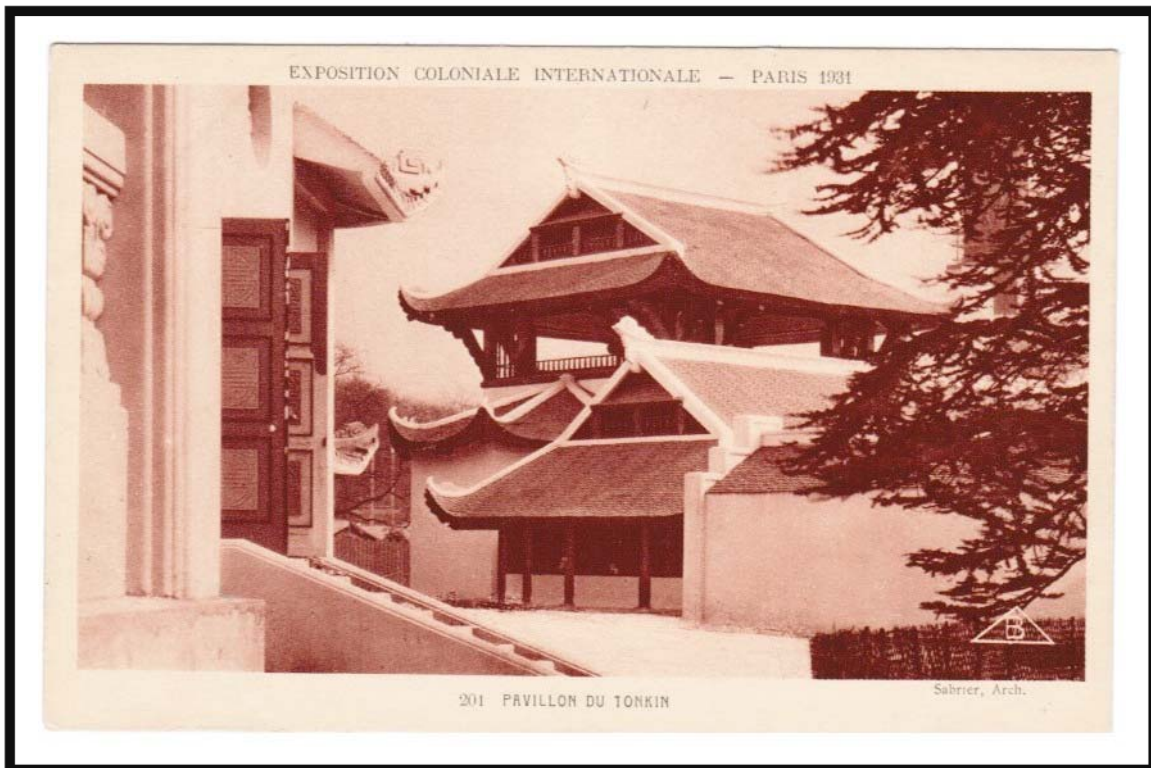
International Colonial Exhibition
Paris, 1931
Pavilion of Annam



International Colonial Exhibition
Paris, 1931
Pavilion of Cambodia



International Colonial Exhibition
Paris, 1931
Pavilions of Tonkin and Cochinchina



Hanoi Fair and Exposition 1938

A two-color label promoting Hanoi's 1938 Fair was affixed to Chamber of Commerce stationery for a mailing to Austria in 1938.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 5-8 38

REVERSE

PORT-TAUFIQ 26 AU 38

10 WIEN 76 6b 31.VIII.38

Air Days Strasbourg, 1946

A series of labels were issued in conjunction with an aviation conference in Strasbourg in 1946. The 10-franc value reportedly depicts air ambulance services in Indochina.



Air Days
Strasbourg, 1946



Air Days Strasbourg, 1946

The 100-franc souvenir sheet indicates that the commemorated event was the “Congrès Régional d’Aviation Sanitaire” held at Strasbourg on 29 June 1946.



1948 Saigon Fair Labels

A pair of labels was privately prepared in conjunction with the 1948 South Vietnam Exposition. Two denominations, 10 cents and 2 piasters, were printed locally.

The labels depicted an entrance gate in oriental style. Inscribed "FOIRE EXPOSITION DU SUD VIETNAM 1948 SAIGON," each denomination was enclosed in a flaming circle at the lower left.



1948 Saigon Fair 10 cent Label

The 10 cent label was printed in ochre in sheetlets of 10. The styles of paper and perforations were very similar to the locally printed commemorative postage stamps of World War II.



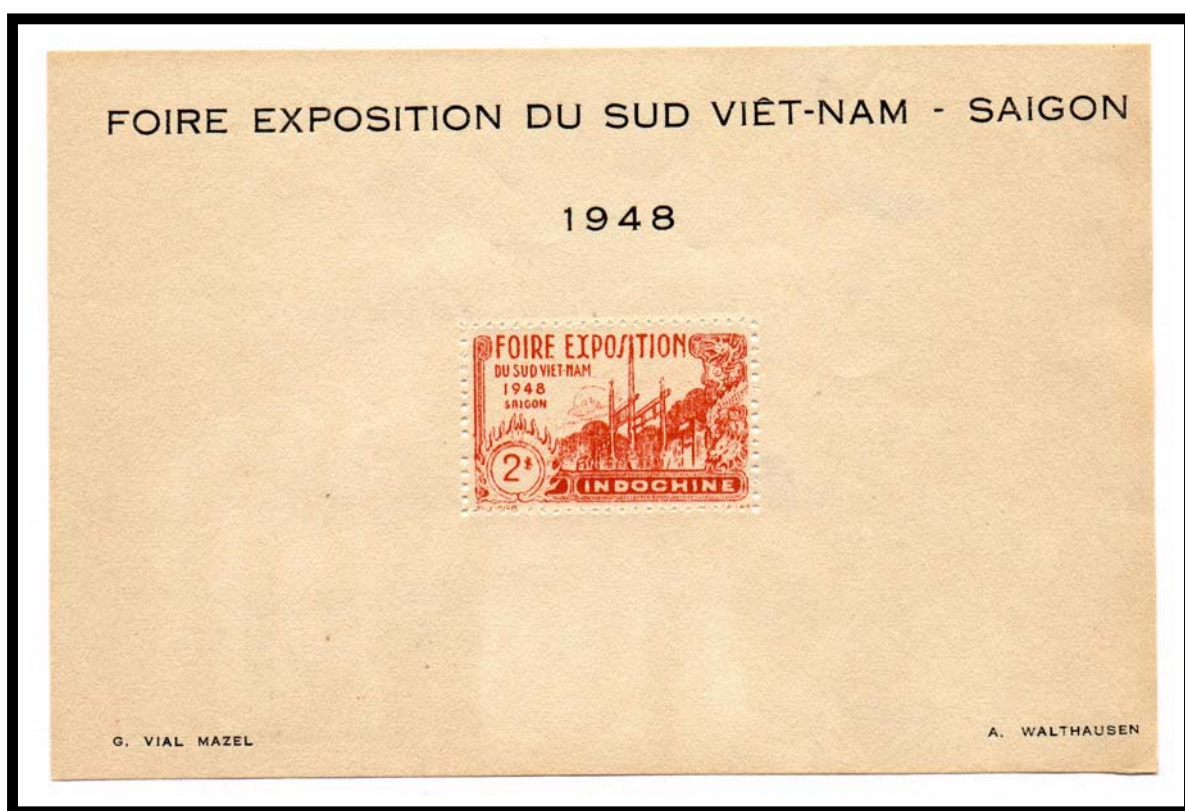
1948 Saigon Fair
10 cent Label
Exposition Handstamp

The special exposition handstamp for the opening day of the fair was applied to this sheetlet of 10 cent labels.



1948 Saigon Fair 2 piaster Label

The design of the 2 piaster label was the same as the 10 cent label. However, the 2 piaster denomination was only printed as a souvenir sheet.



1948 Saigon Fair
Essay of 2 piaster Label

The notations in ink written on this essay were later printed in black ink on the 2-piaster souvenir sheet.



1948 Saigon Fair
2 piaster Label Proof

A proof printing of the label lacks the black lettering that was part of the issued souvenir sheet.



1948 Saigon Fair
2 piaster Label
Exposition Handstamp

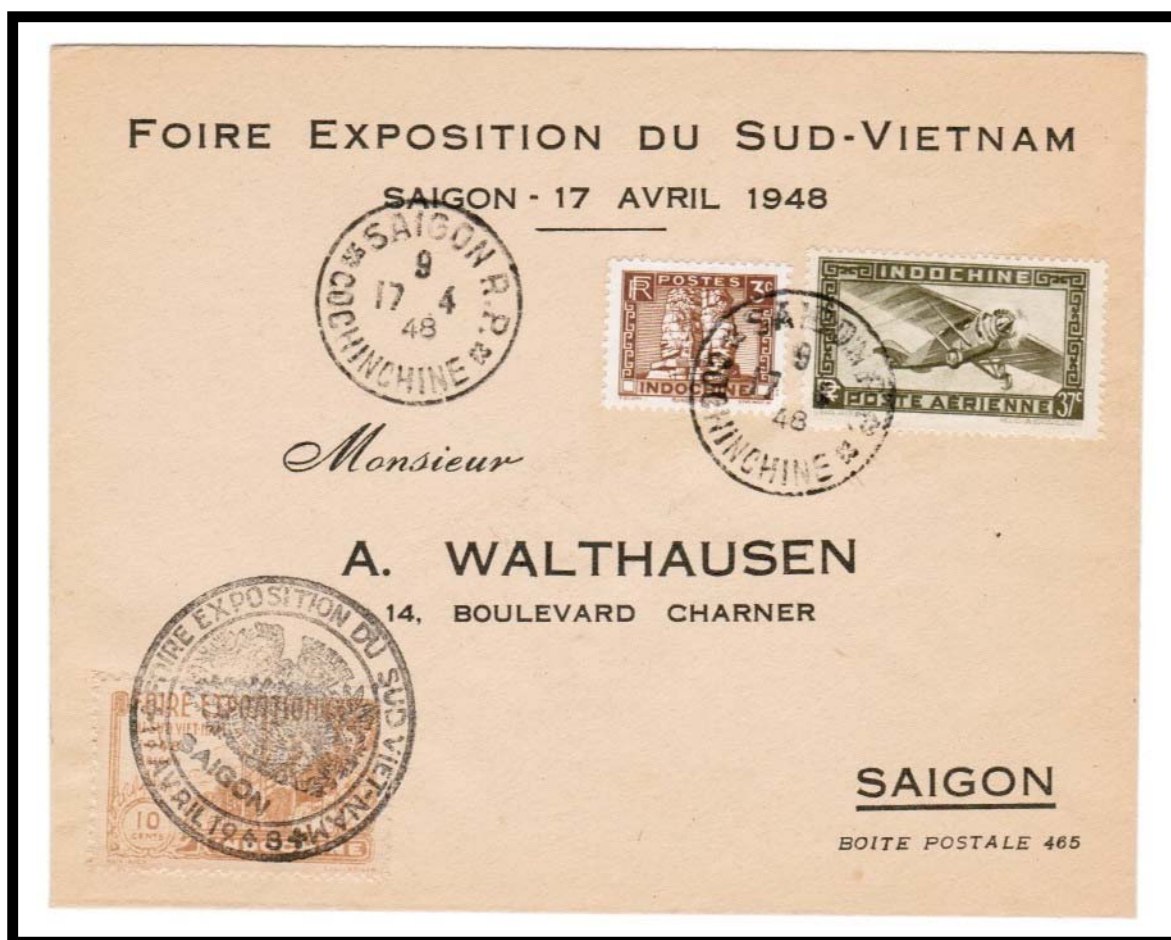
The exposition handstamp was struck in black on this 2 piaster souvenir sheet. Both the labels and the handstamp resulted from the efforts of A. Walthausen, an avid philatelist in lived in Saigon. His name appears at the bottom right of the souvenir sheet.



1948 Saigon Fair
Use of 10 cent Label
Commemorative Envelope and Exposition Handstamp

A special postmark to covers with the exposition labels. It depicts a coat of arms with the border inscription FOIRE EXPOSITION DU SUD VIET-NAM 17 AVRIL 1948.

The marking was applied to a label affixed to an envelope specially printed by Arthur Walthausen for the 1948 fair. Forty cents worth of postage franked the cover, which was postmarked on 17 April 1948.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 17 4 48
slogan handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 19 4 48



1948 Saigon Fair
Use of 10 cent Label
Exposition Handstamp

Here the 10 cent label was used on a local letter undoubtedly prepared as a souvenir of the fair.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 17 4 48
slogan handstamp

REVERSE

CHOLON COCHINCHINE 18-4 48

1948 Saigon Fair
Use of 10 cent Label
Exposition Handstamp

For this mailing, the 10 cent label was intermixed with the regular postage stamps. At the time, the internal letter rate was 40 cents, which had been fully paid with the legitimate postage stamps on this letter.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 17 4 48
slogan handstamp

1948 Saigon Fair
Use of 10 cent Label
Exposition Handstamp

The Saigon Fair labels had no postal validity. Typically, the labels were used to create souvenirs or to decorate letters. In some cases, such letters were posted on the first day of the fair, 17 April 1948.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 17 4 48
slogan handstamp

1948 Saigon Fair
Use of 10 cent and 2 piaster Labels
Exposition Handstamp

Both the 10-cent and 2-piaster Saigon Fair labels that were favor canceled with the exposition handstamp and favor postmarked on the opening day of the fair.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 17 4 48
slogan handstamp

1948 Saigon Fair
Use of 10 cent and 2 piaster Labels
Exposition Handstamp

Both the 10 cent and 2 piaster Saigon Fair labels that were used on a letter to France were canceled with the exposition handstamp.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON R. P. COCHINCHINE 17 4 48
slogan handstamp