

Indochina and World War I

World War I, also known as the First World War or the Great War, was a global war centered in Europe that began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918. More than 9 million combatants and 7 million civilians died as a result of the war, making it one of the deadliest conflicts in history. The war paved the way for major political changes, including revolutions, in many of the nations involved.

A total of 92,411 Vietnamese men from French Indochina were in the service of France in Europe. They were distributed in the following formations, of which around 3,000 died:

- 4,800 belonging to the 5 combat battalions
- 24,212 belonging to the 15 transit battalions
- 9,019 colonial medical staff
- 48,981 colonial laborers

With the outbreak of World War I, those serving in the military serving in Europe as well as in Indochina were granted the free franchise for personal letters. The franchise lasted from 2 August 1914 through 23 October 1919. A manuscript marking such as "Correspondance Militaire" along with a cachet of the sender's unit characterizes military letters of the period. There were no special military post offices in Indochina during World War I.

This exhibit is organized as follows:

Indochinese Soldiers serving in Europe

Military Unit Markings

Support Materials

Soldiers serving In Indochina

Types of Correspondence

Military Unit Markings

Workers in France

Censorship

Indochinese Censorship

External Censorships of Indochinese Mails

Third Battalion Indochinese Skirmishers
Marseilles

Colonial military units served as combat soldiers in France. The cachet identifies the sender as Commander of the Third Battalion Indochinese Skirmishers. The return address on the reverse locates the sender at Marseille. The addressee was a famous French stamp dealer.



POSTAL MARKINGS
MEDITERRANE A LYON C 11 SEPT 16

Commander 25th Indochinese Battalion
Saverdun, France

A postcard posted within France bears the cachet of the Commander, 25th Indochinese Battalion. The message is datelined 4 February 1919 at Vernot. A transit marking applied later the same day at Saverdun, a town south of Toulouse, France.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAVERDUN ARIEGE 4-2 19

18th Indochinese Skirmishers Battalion
Le Mans, France

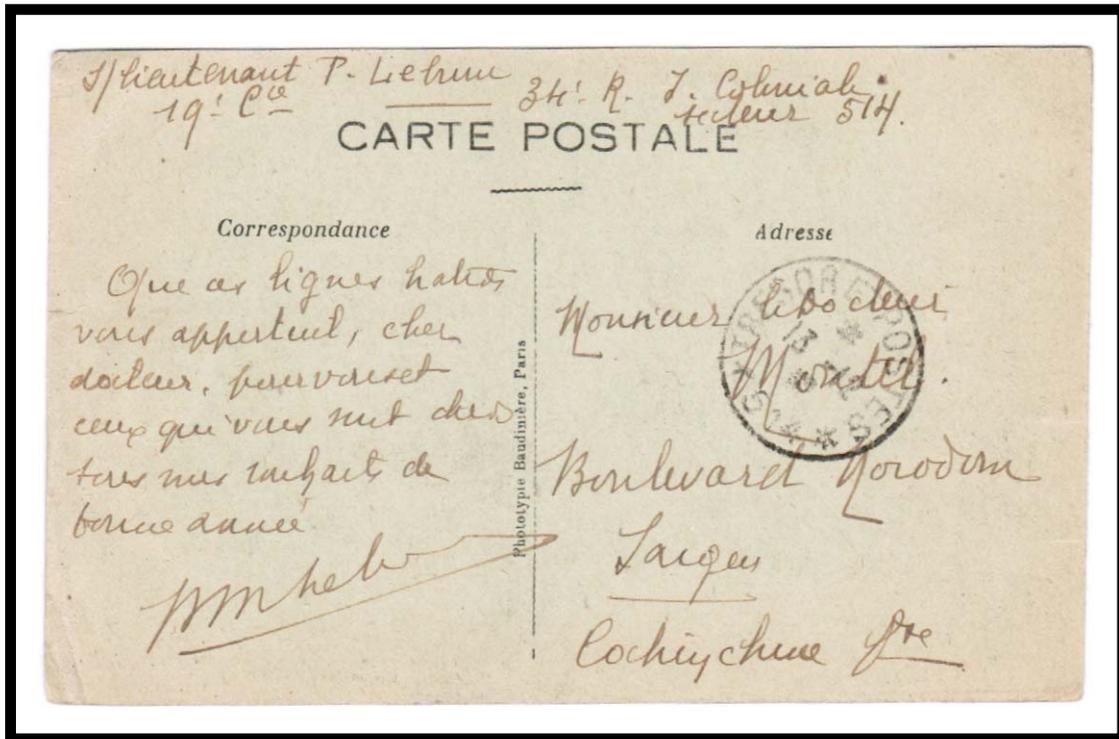
A letter from a captain serving with the 18th Indochinese Skirmishers Battalion near Le Mans went post-free to Paris by virtue of the military free franchise.



POSTAL MARKINGS
LE MANS-GARE SARTHE 6-6 17

Soldier's Correspondence
Salonkia, Greece

The TRESOR ET POSTES 514 postmark was assigned to the Eleventh Colonial Infantry Division. Posted by a second lieutenant from the 19th Company 34 Colonial Infantry Regiment, this picture postcard of Salonika carried a message home to Saigon.



POSTAL MARKINGS
TRESOR AT POSTES * 515 * 13-12 16

Annamite Soldiers Salonkia, Greece

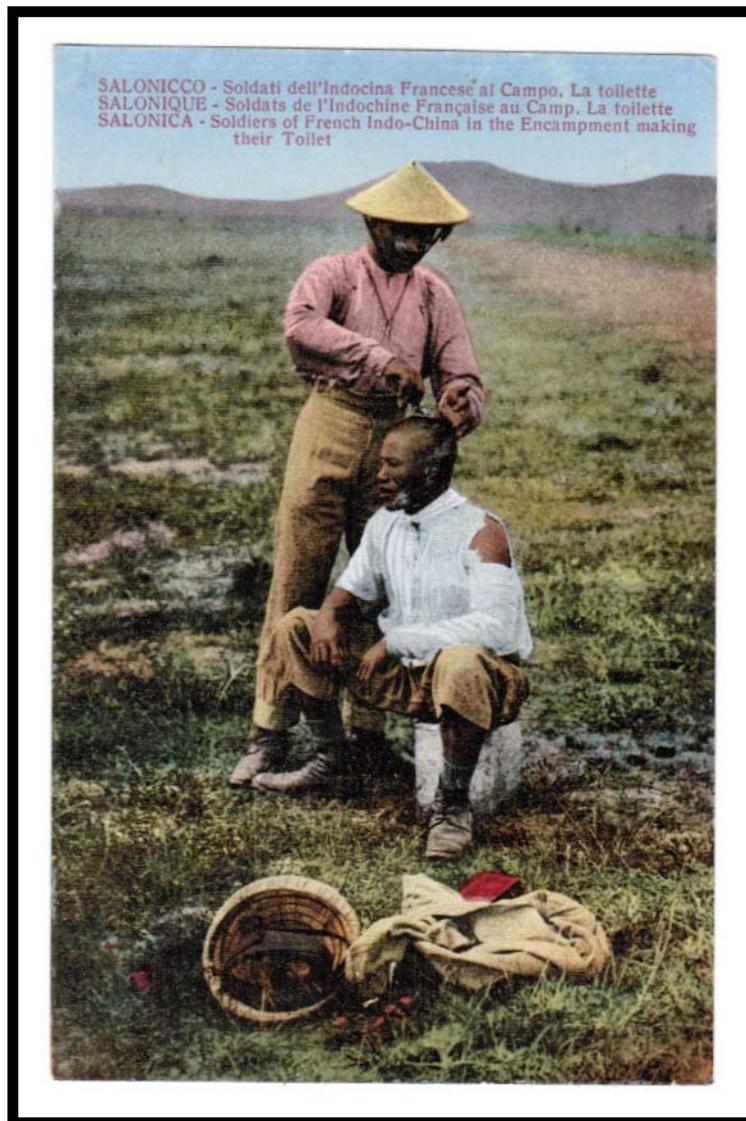
At the start of World War I, Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia. While Serbia tried to resist, the Allies (Britain and France) talked of sending a large-scale military force to assist the Serbs. When Allied troops were eventually sent in October 1915, they arrived too late in the Greek town of Salonika (now called Thessalonika) to affect the outcome.

As evidenced by this postcard, troops from Annam made up a portion of the French military contingent at Salonika.



Soldiers' Life Salonkia, Greece

An early color postcard shows Indochinese soldiers attending to personal needs at Salonika.



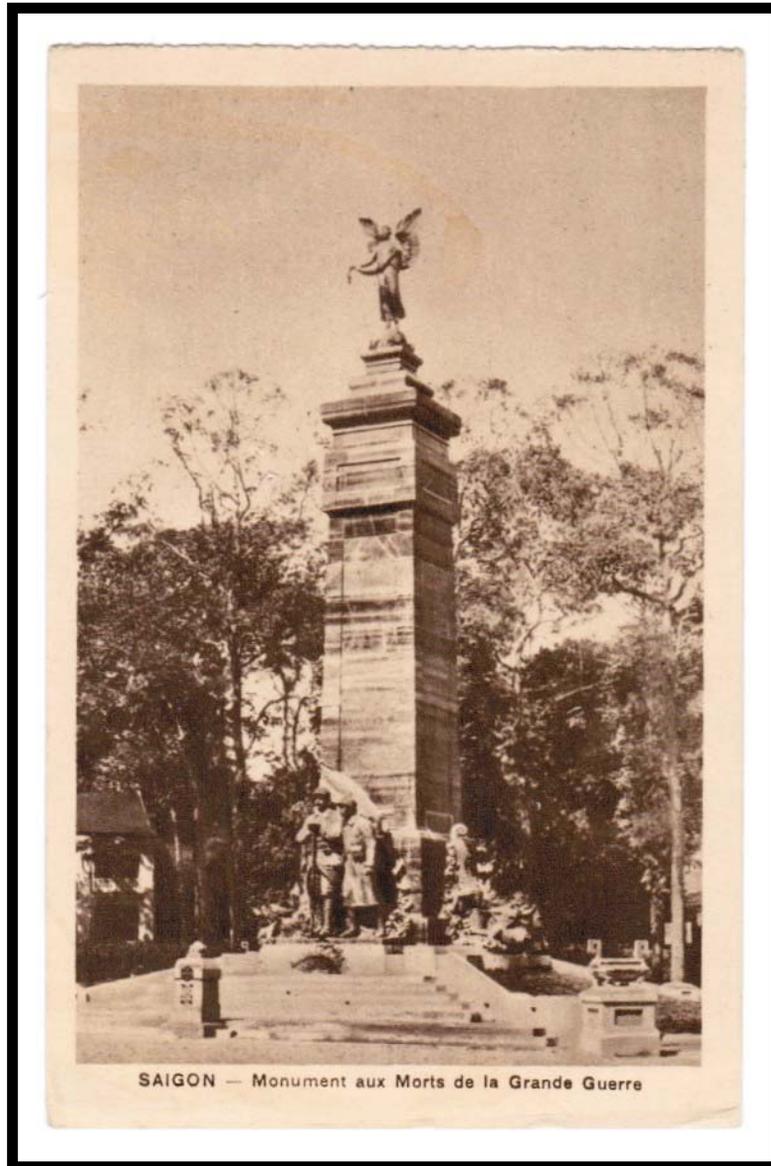
Vietnamese Soldiers

A postcard with both Vietnamese and Chinese text identifies the “Linh Tap” or “Vietnamese soldiers.”



World War I Memorial
Saigon, Cochinchina

An imposing monument to war dead from "The Great War" was erected at Saigon.



SAIGON — Monument aux Morts de la Grande Guerre

Indochinese Troops in Europe



Indochinese troops depart from Saigon for Marseille in 1914.

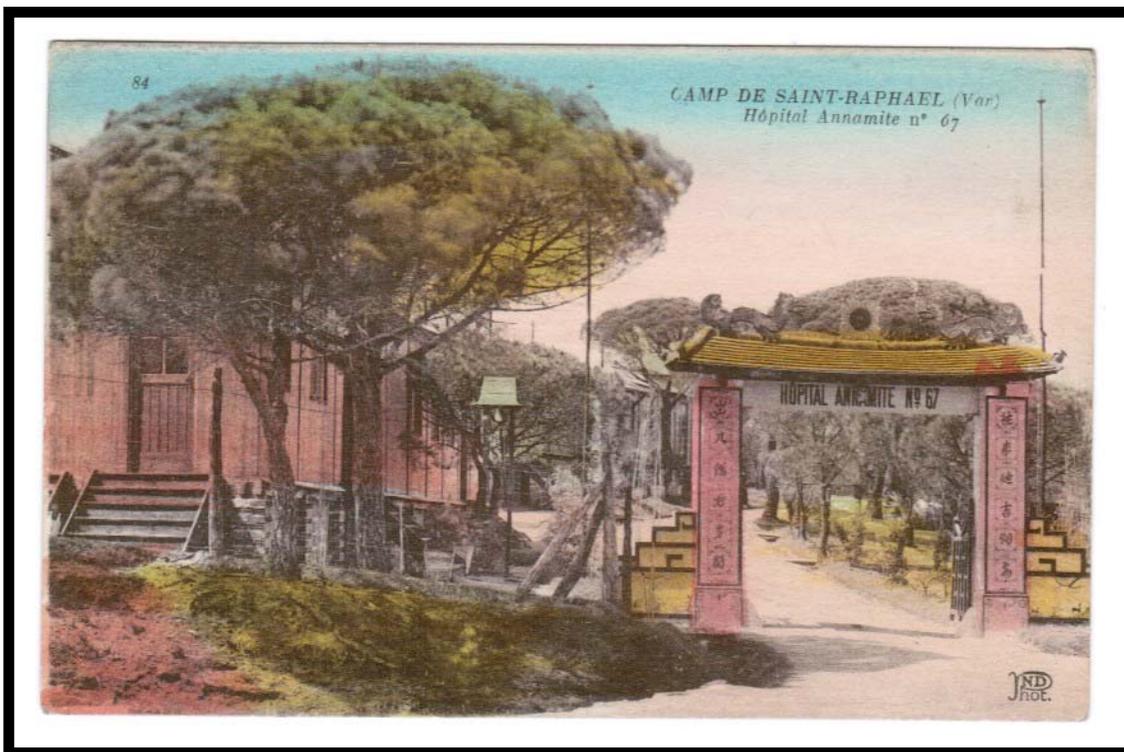


Annamite soldiers march at a Longchamp military review on Bastille Day.

Hospitals for Indochinese Wounded



Indochinese patients at Nogent-sur-Marne Hospital.



Color image of the Annamite Hospital at Camp de Saint-Raphael.

Official Mail

In Indochina, official mail did not need handwritten endorsements like personal letters. This type of mail always went post-free.

Here a 1916 letter to the French embassy in London was given the cachet of the arsenal in Saigon along with several others testifying to the official nature of the correspondence. Despite being sent internationally, the letter was accepted post-free.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 3-1 16

Usage to French Colonies
French India

The free franchise was valid for France and its colonies. Here a letter, posted from Cholon, was sent postage-free to Pondicherry, French India in 1917.



POSTAL MARKINGS

CHOLON COCHINCHINE 31-12 17

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 31-12 17

PONDICHERRY INDE 11 JANV 18

Registered Mail

At first, the sender had written "C.M." for "Correspondance Militaire" on this envelope. However, when a soldier sent a letter by registered mail, he had to pay all postage fees – 15 centimes for postage and 25 centimes for registration. Mailed from Ninh-Binh in 1917, this mailing was redirected several times in order to catch up with the addressee.



POSTAL MARKINGS

NINH-BINH TONKIN 8 NOV 17
framed R with manuscript registration number
15 in circle
handwritten forwarding addresses

REVERSE

HAIPHONG TONKIN 9 NOV 17
CASTRES TARN 2-2 18

Prepaid Postwar Mail

After October 1919, military personnel had to pay normal postage fees. Since this letter from Hongay to Haiphong was personal in nature, a 10-centime stamp was affixed to cover the regular letter rate. The cachet identified the sender as the commander of the Second Tonkinese Detachment at Hongay.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HONGAY TONKIN 25 NOV 19

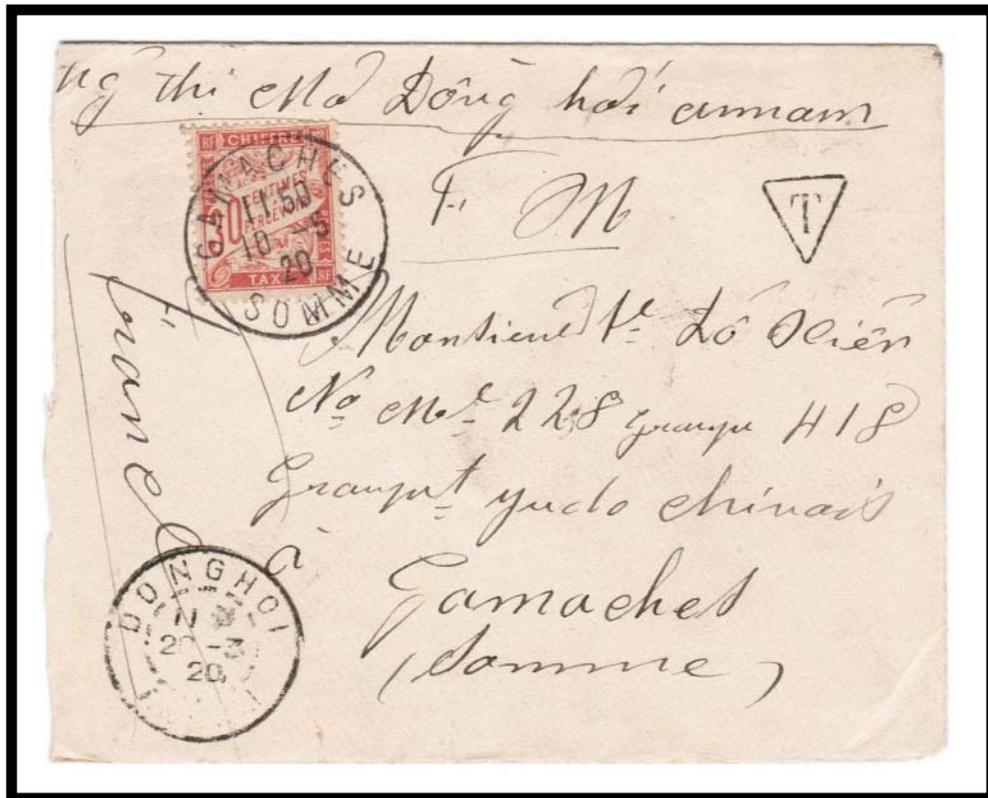
REVERSE

HAIPHONG TONKIN 26-11 19

Unpaid Postwar Mail

Even though the franchise had been revoked, the sender marked this envelope with "F.M." The letter identified as improperly unpaid and the recipient in France had to pay 30 centimes postage due, twice the regular letter rate.


POSTAGE DUE
MARKING



POSTAL MARKINGS

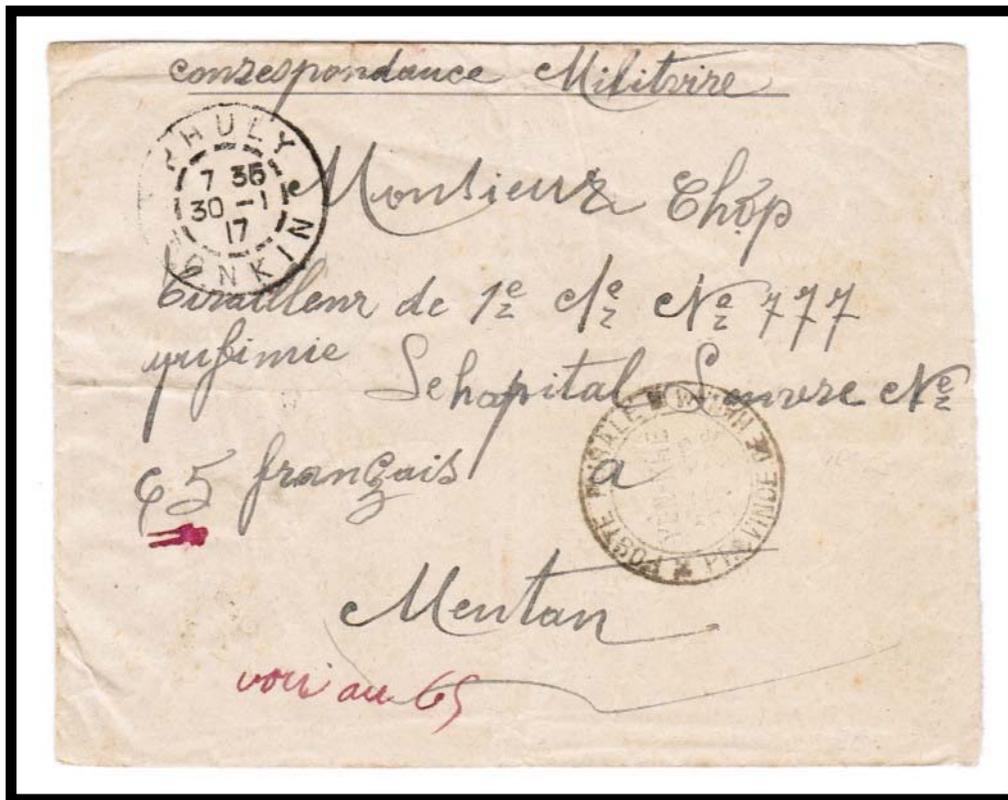
DONGHOI ANNAM 20-3 20
T in triangle
GAMACHES SOMME 10-5 20

REVERSE

VINH ANNAM 20 MARS 20
GAMACHES SOMME 10-5 20

Rural Post Office Postmark
Yen-Khe, Tonkin

Military units were widely dispersed across Indochina including the less populated areas. Rural post offices, which had been originally established for the citizenry, also occasionally served the military. This letter was posted from Yen-Khe in Hanam Province and then postmarked at Phuly. Postmarks from rural post offices lacked dates.

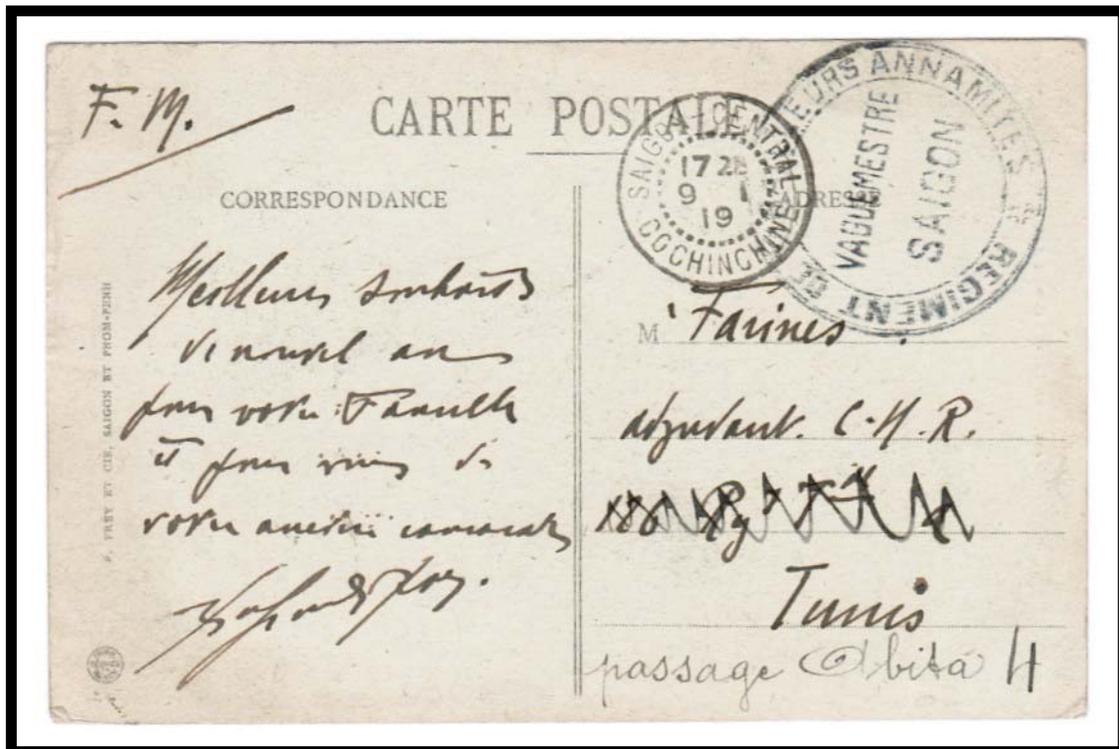


POSTAL MARKINGS

YEN-KHE PROVINCE DE HANAM
PHULY TONKIN 30-1 17

Annamite Skirmishers Regiment
Saigon, Cochinchina

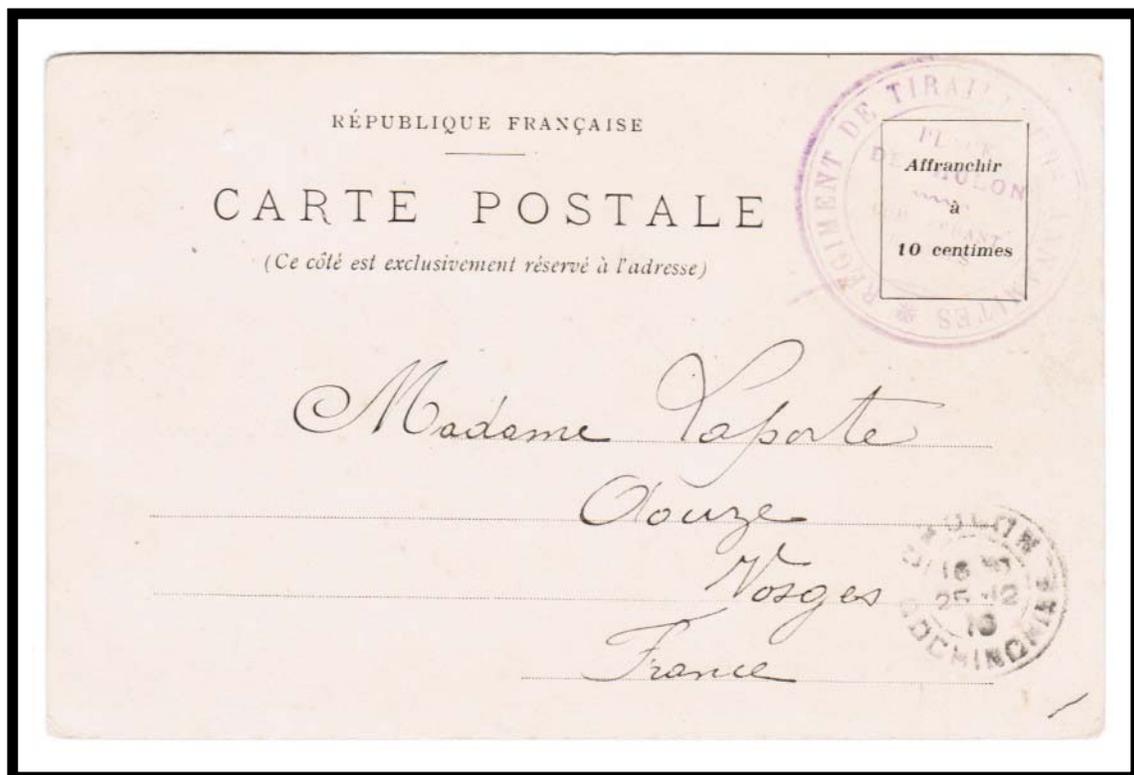
"Tirailleurs" was a name given to colonial infantry recruited from French colonies during the 19th and 20th centuries. Mailed as free soldier's mail ("F.M." at upper left), this postcard to Tunis, Tunisia bears the cachet of the post orderly ("vaguemestre") for the Annamite Skirmishers Regiment.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 9-1 19

Annamite Skirmishers Regiment
Cholon, Cochinchina

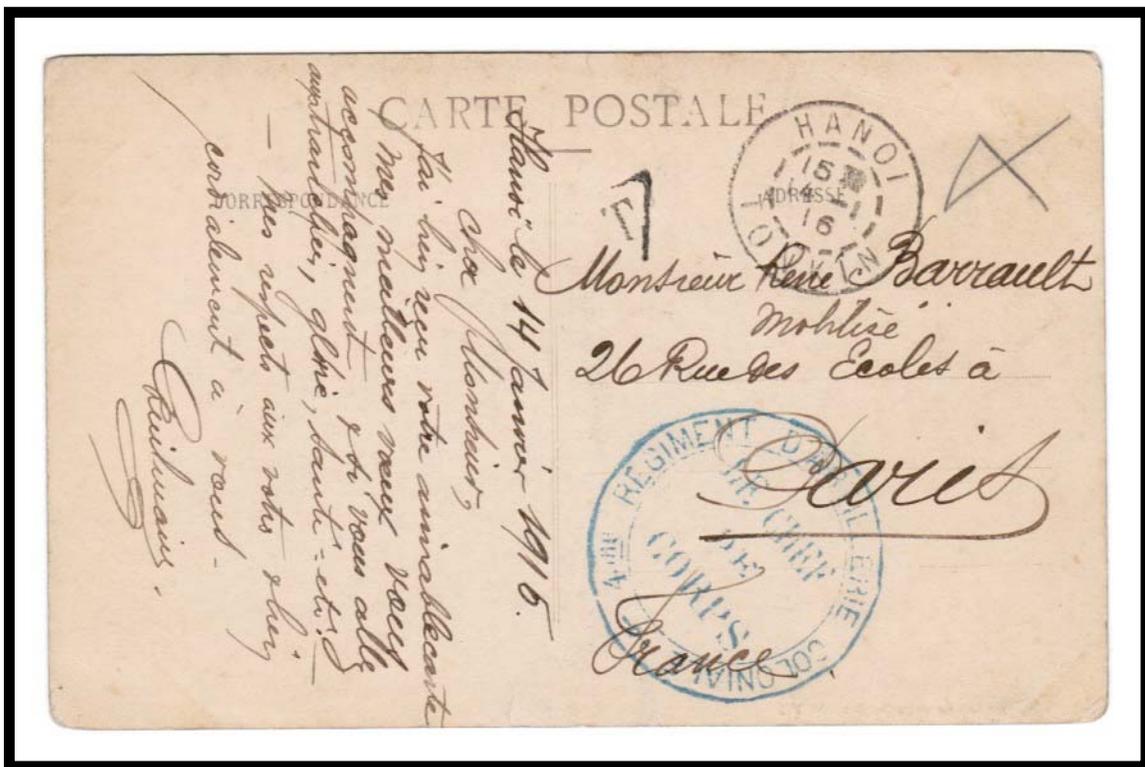
On Christmas Day 1916, the cachet of the Commander of the Annamite Skirmishers at Cholon was applied where a postage stamp would normally be affixed on this picture postcard. Addressed to France, the postcard was accepted into the mails with no other validation.



POSTAL MARKINGS
CHOLON COCHINCHINE 25-12 16

Fourth Colonial Artillery Regiment
Hanoi, Tonkin

Posted from Hanoi in January 1916, this picture postcard was cited for postage due ("T" in triangle). Despite the prominent cachet of the military commander, the card lacks a notation equivalent to "correspondance militaire," so the free franchise was not recognized.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI TONKIN 14-1 16

Fourth Colonial Artillery Regiment
Hanoi, Tonkin

Another cover from the Fourth Colonial Artillery Regiment bears the cachet of the "VAGUEMESTRE." The vague mestre was the clerk who handled mail for the unit.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI TONKIN 23-2 17
REVERSE
CHATILLON DE MIECHAILLE AIN 4-3 17

Fourth Colonial Artillery Regiment
Lang-Son, Tonkin

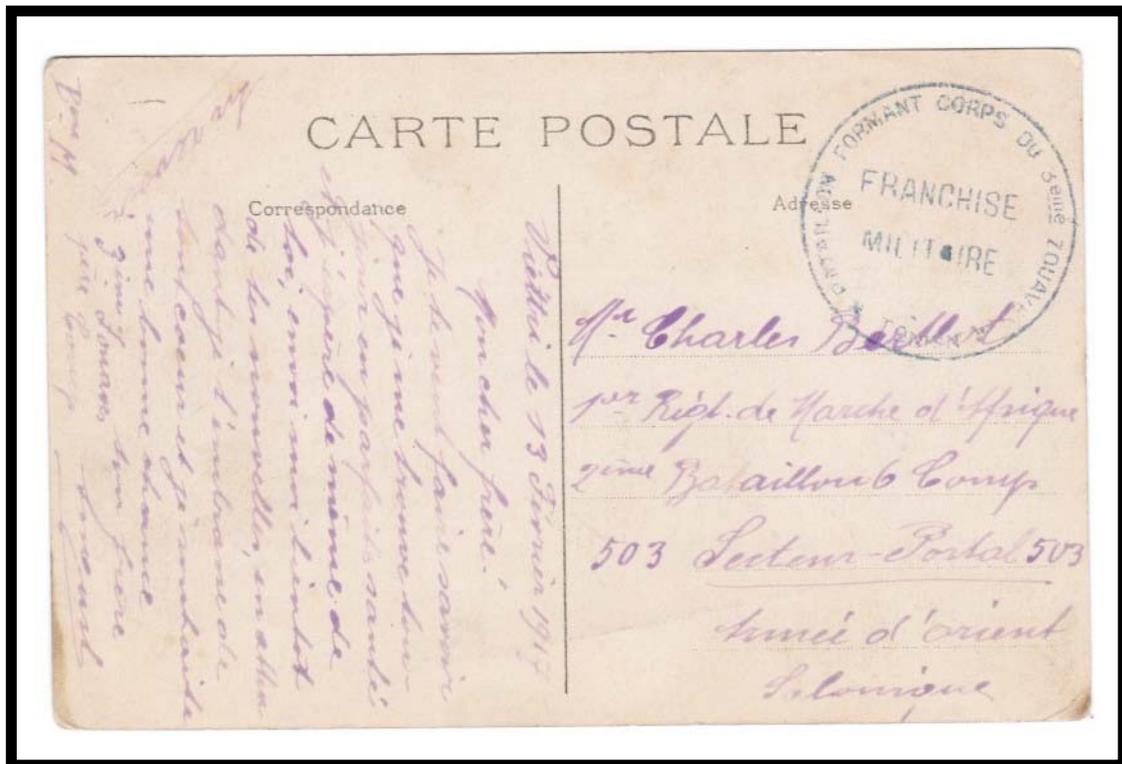
Here a letter was posted in May 1919 from Langson to Paris. The cachet, struck with blue ink, identifies the sender with the Fourth Colonial Artillery Regiment.



POSTAL MARKINGS
LANG-SON TONKIN 15-5 19

Third Zouaves
Viettri, Tonkin

Posted from Viettri by a soldier of the Third Zouaves, this postcard was addressed to another soldier located at Salonika, where many French Colonial soldiers served during World War I. The unit cachet of the sender reads "BATAILLON FORMANT CORPS DU 3^{eme} ZOUAVES FRANCHISE MILITAIRE."



POSTAL MARKINGS ON REVERSE
VIETTRI TONKIN 6 FEVR 17

3rd Brigade Indochinese Troops
Saigon, Cochinchina

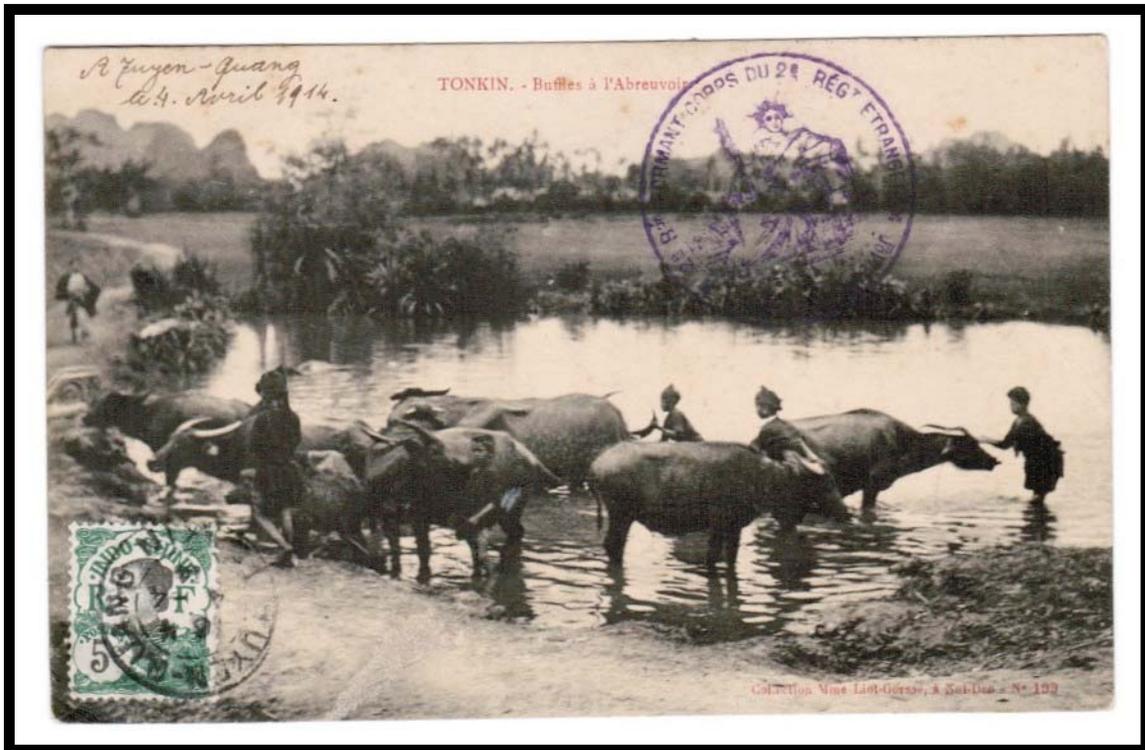
The sender of this postcard to Morocco endorsed it with the abbreviation "CM" for "Correspondence Militaire." The cachet shows that he was a member of the 3rd Brigade. The postcard was accepted for free transmission from Indochina to Morocco.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 25-9 18

Second Foreign Regiment Tuyen-Quang, Tonkin

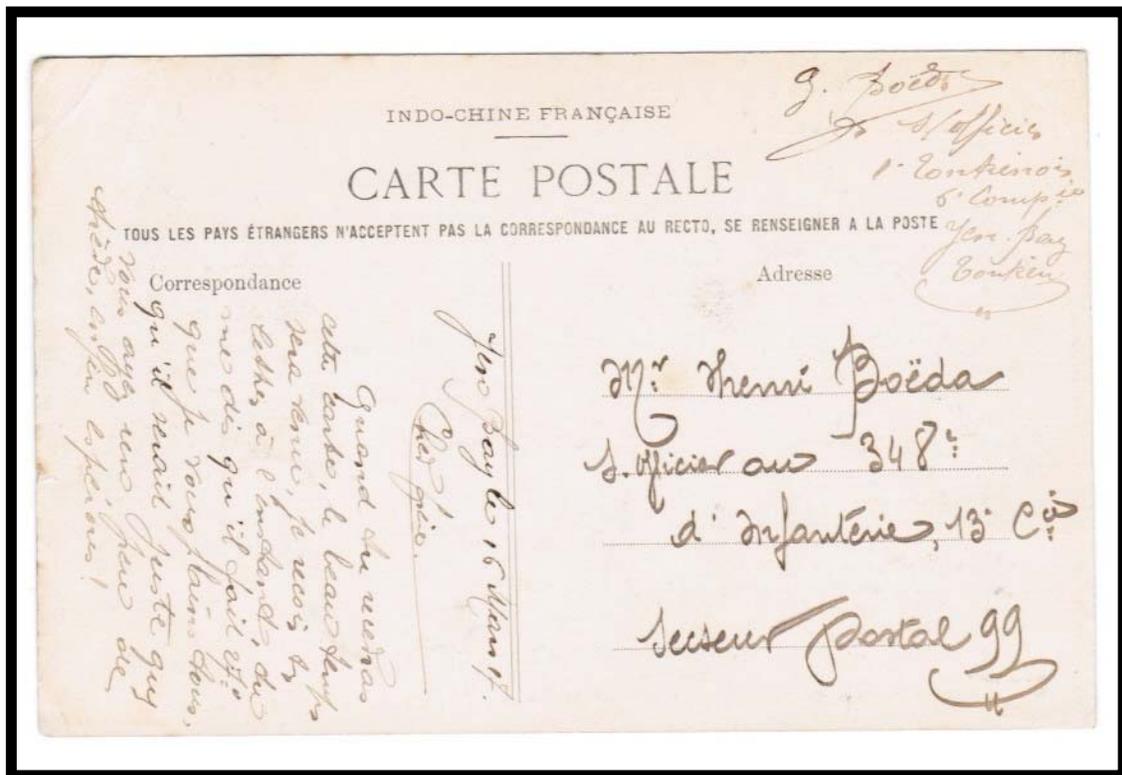
A postcard sent by a soldier to Austria received the handstamp of the Second Foreign Regiment struck with purple ink on the card's image side.



POSTAL MARKINGS
TUYEN-QUANG TONKIN 4-4 14
REVERSE
TUYEN-QUANG TONKIN 4-4 14

Manuscript Designation
Yen-Bay, Tonkin

In this case, no unit cachet was stamped on the postcard. By hand, the sender wrote in the upper right that his unit was "1^e Tonkinois, 6^e Compagnie, Yen-Bay, Tonkin."



Military Territory
Laichau, Tonkin

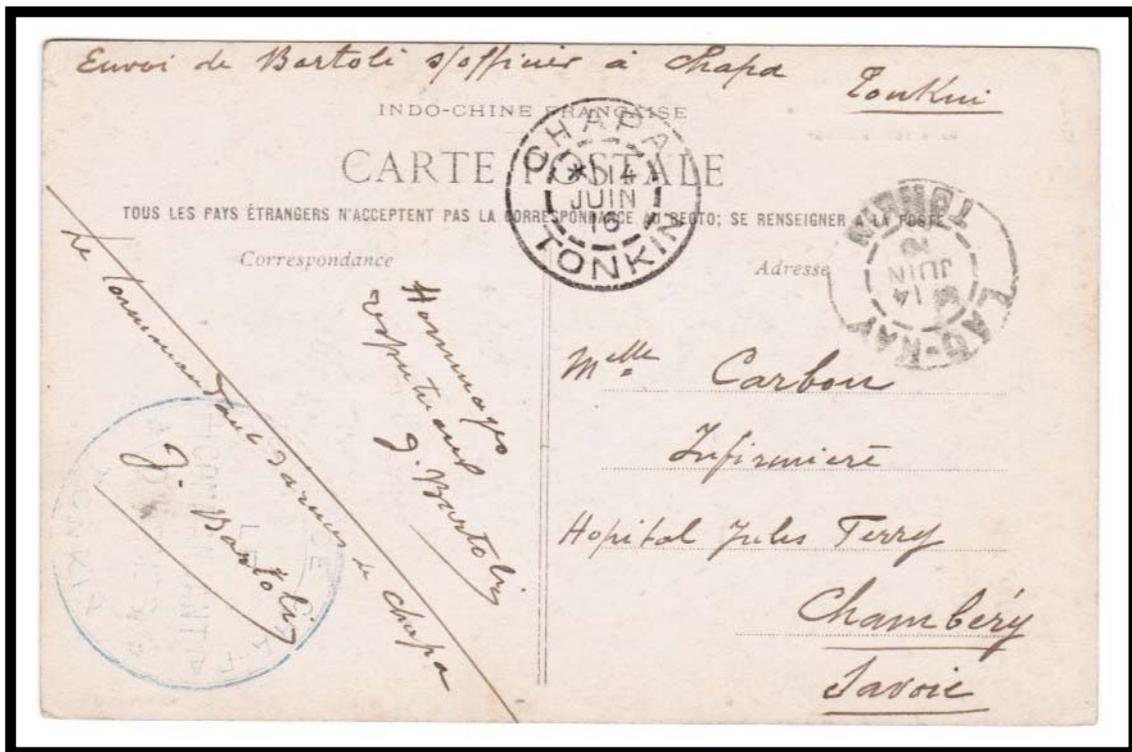
The chief doctor at Laichau, Tonkin endorsed his envelope by hand. As opposed to a specific military unit, the cachet only indicated the sender's geographical location.



POSTAL MARKINGS
LAICHAU TONKIN 24 MARS 17
REVERSE
LAOKAY TONKIN 4 AVRIL 17
HANOI TONKIN 5-4 17

Army Commander
Chapa, Tonkin

The sender of this unfranked picture postcard, J. Bartoli, was also the person that signed for the local commander at Chapa certifying that the mailing qualified for the military's free franchise.



POSTAL MARKINGS

CHAPA TONKIN 14 JUIN 16
LAO-KAY TONKIN 14 JUIN 16

Army Commander
Garrison at Dien-Bien-Phu, Tonkin

The message from a soldier stationed at Dien-Bien-Phu in 1917 reads:

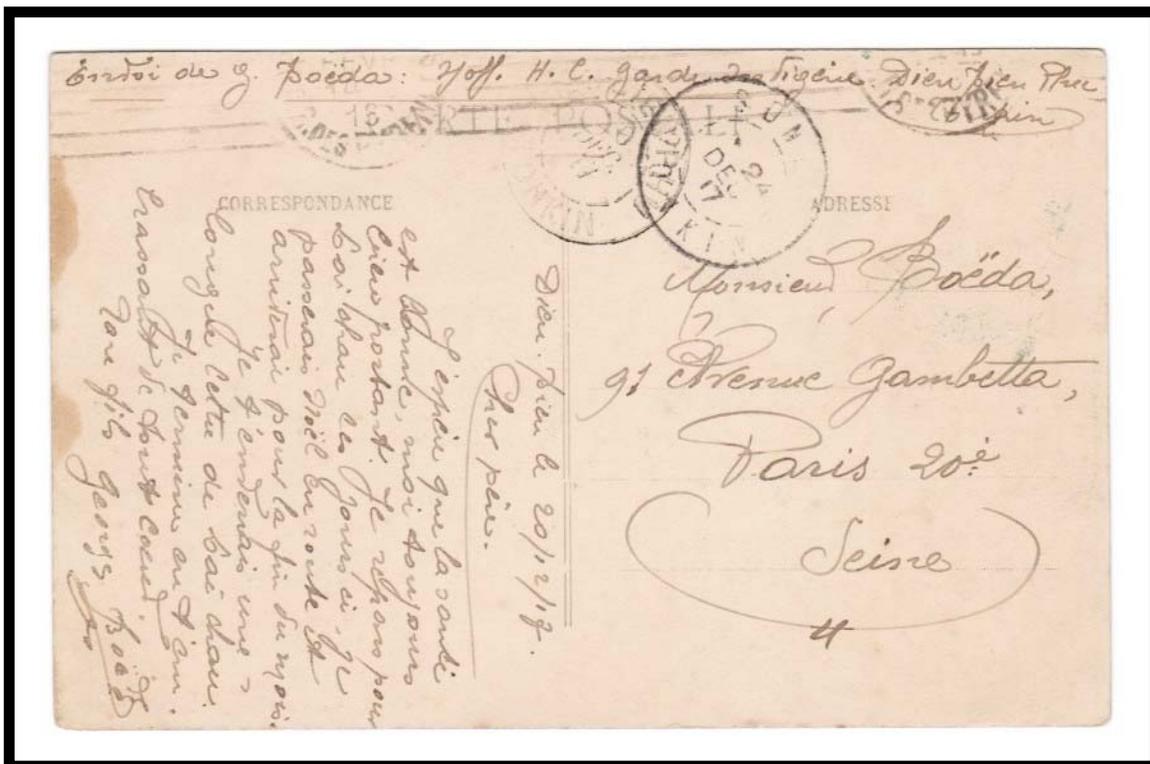
"Dear father,

I hope you're in good health. I'm always feeling well. I'll go to Laichau these days. I'll have Christmas on the road, and will be in Laichau at the end of the month. Then, I'll send you a long letter. I finish, kissing you with all my heart.

Your son, Georges"



(REVERSE)



POSTAL MARKINGS

DIEN-BIEN-PHU TONKIN 20 DEC 17
SONTAY TONKIN 24 DEC 17

Tonkinese Skirmishers Detachment Tien Tsin, China

In 1915, a battalion of the 3rd Regiment of Tonkinese Skirmishers (3rd R.T.T.) was sent to China to garrison the French Concession in Shanghai. Here a picture postcard from that era and endorsed "Correspondance militaire," was postmarked at Tien Tsin. At the lower left is the cachet of the Tonkin Skirmishers Battalion, China Detachment.



POSTAL MARKINGS

TIEN TSIN CHINE POSTE FRANÇAISE 23 AOUT 15
unit cachet

Harbor Boats
Saigon, Cochinchina

The red framed cachet "BATIMENTS DE SERVITUDE DE SAIGON" was for personnel who operated the harbor boats that served the port and arsenal of Saigon. The anchor cachet "MARINE FRANCAISE SERVICE A LA MER" was used by many naval units though it was not normally struck in red ink as it was here.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 18-1 15
REVERSE
DEUIL SEINE ET OISE 16-2 15

Defensive Flotilla
Cap Saint-Jacques, Cochinchina

Handstamped cachets identify a sailor's letter mailed to France in 1918. Because the sender had opted to register the letter, he had to pay both the letter rate and the registration fee.

Flottille de Défense
* du Cap Saint-Jacques *



POSTAL MARKINGS

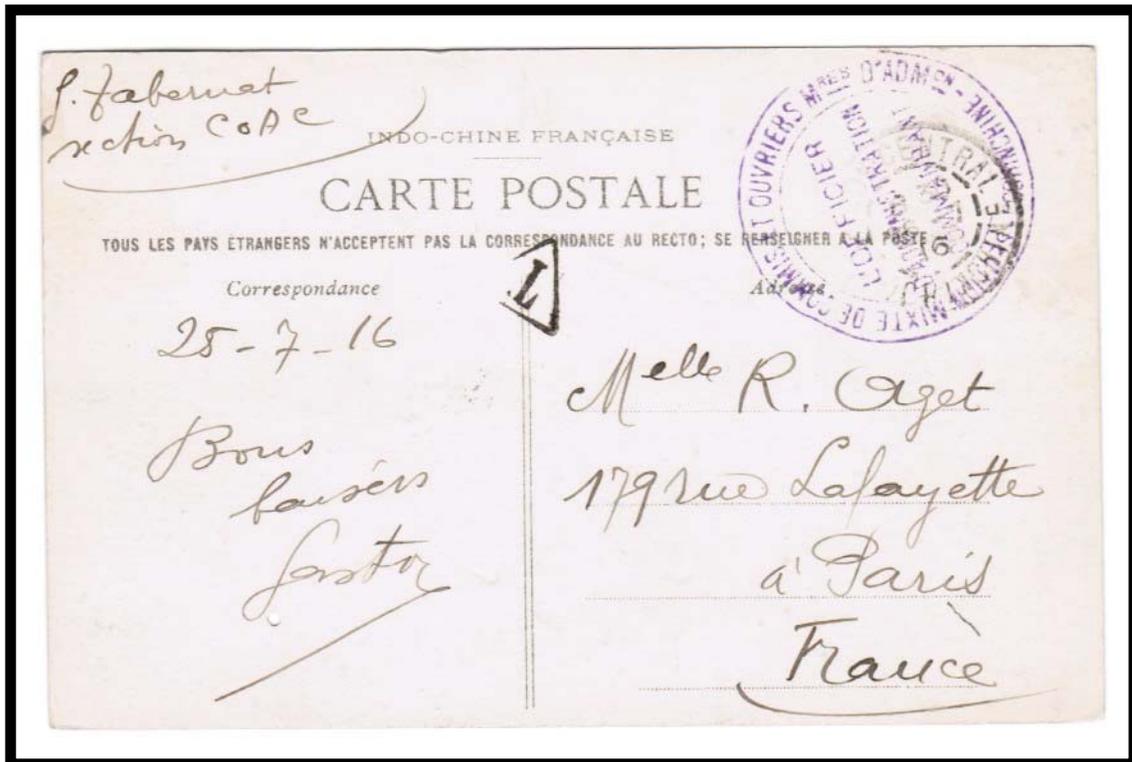
CAP SAINT-JACQUES COCHINCHINE 21-9 14
framed R with manuscript registration number

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 22-9 14

Officer and Enlisted Personnel
Saigon, Cochinchina

New organizational structures were created as evidenced by this cachet for the "mixed" officer and enlisted personnel section. Lacking any specific notation that the postcard was military correspondence, it was cited for postage due.



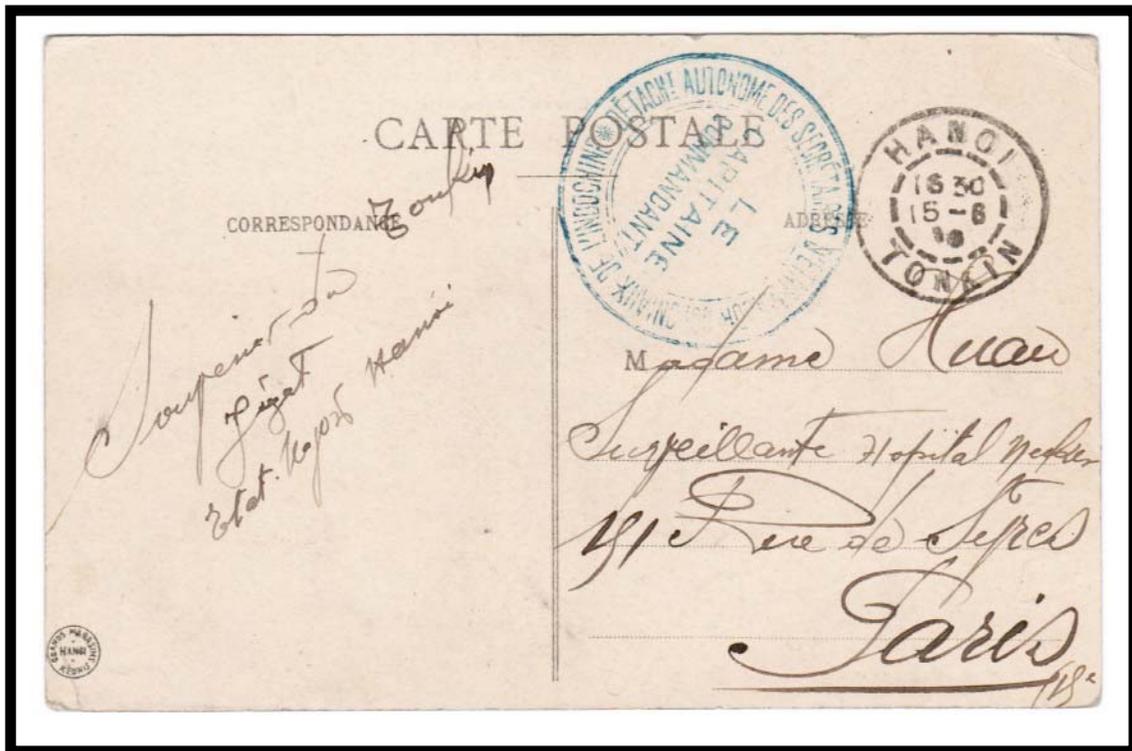
POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 26-7 16

"T" in triangle

Secretarial Detachment
Hanoi, Tonkin

Support units like combat units had their own cachets that identified the unit. All units had free mail privileges.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI TONKIN 15-6 18

Military Hospital at Hanoi

Personnel serving in military hospitals, as well as patients, could send letters for free. In this case, a letter from Hanoi to Paris received the cachet of the Chief of Medicine at the de Lanessan Hospital.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI TONKIN 13-8 15

REVERSE

PARIS X. DISTRIBUTION 28 SEPT 15

Field Hospital
Cao-Bang

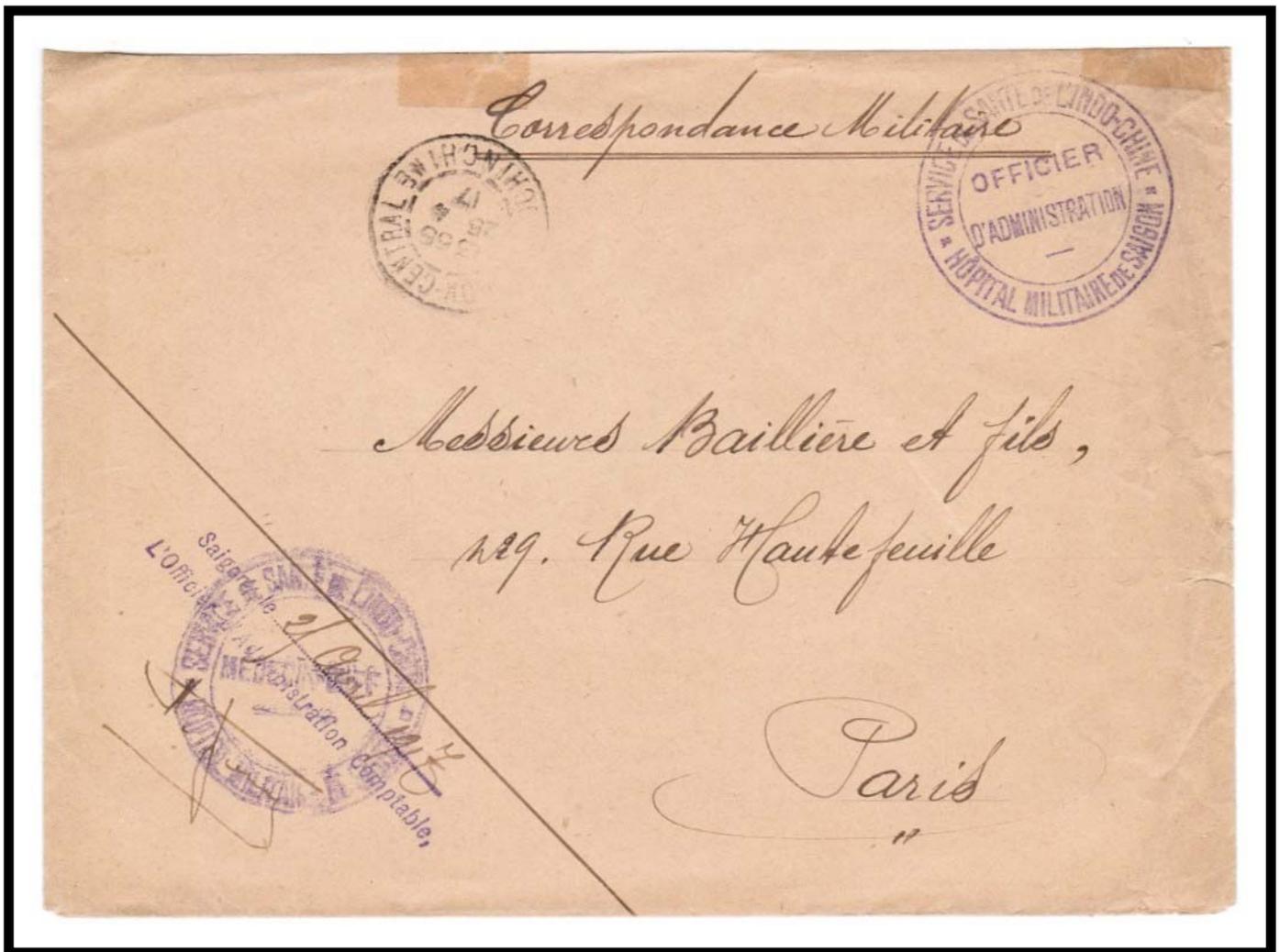
In addition to letters to Franc, internal mail could also be sent postage free. Here a letter with the blue cachet of the head doctor at a field hospital was sent within Tonkin from Cao-Bang to Hanoi.



POSTAL MARKINGS
CAO-BANG TONKIN 10-3 17

Public Health Service
Saigon

Cachets of both the head doctor and the administrative officer of the Indochinese Health Service were struck on this envelope. Additionally, a signature of an accounting official was affixed to the lower left all certifying that the letter should be transmitted free of postage.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 25 4 17

Indochinese Workers in France During World War I

In the first ten months of World War I, nearly 6 million Frenchmen were drafted into military service. The massive shift of workers from civilian jobs to military duty caused severe labor shortages. In the face of this deficit, the government needed to find civilian manpower to meet the growing demand for workers to produce weapons and ammunition. The global reach of the European powers ensured that the conflict was indeed a "world war." Although the Undersecretary of State for Artillery and Munitions proposed to hire women and European immigrants, France was the most aggressive in drawing from her colonial empire. Over the course of the war, the Colonial Labor Organization Service recruited 220,000 laborers from North Africa, Madagascar, Indochina and China. Of these, nearly 49,000 men from Indochina had agreed to serve in France as workers.

The men who went to France worked in factories, military industrial complexes, chemical plants, hospitals, military camps, offices, shops and stores; they also worked in the agricultural sector and on construction projects. Under the terms of their contracts, each volunteer received a bonus, food, lodging, clothing and a guaranteed return passage to his country of origin once his labor contract had expired. Initially, the length of the contract was only one year and one had to be twenty years old to volunteer. By December 1915, when the French government realized that the war would last much longer than originally thought, the length of service was changed to "the entire war years plus six months" and the age of eligibility was reduced to seventeen.

While in some sense, the colonial workers were volunteers, many had been pressed into service as a result of considerable pressure by local authorities. Legally, these workers were "soldiers" though they did no fighting. For this reason, they were given free mail privileges.

The extensive use of foreign workers triggered tension and conflict among different ethnic groups. Often workers from the colonies encountered hostility from native and other European workers, including labor unions, since many assumed that colonial labor drove down overall wage levels. French authorities did their best to keep colonial workers segregated from French society, housing them in guarded barracks and limiting their freedom of movement outside work hours (which were in any case quite long).

When the war ended, 3 percent or 1,797 of the Vietnamese workers had died. A small number decided to stay in France. For the majority who returned to Indochina, the Governor-General of Indochina implemented measures to help them reintegrate into society.

This exhibit is arranged alphabetically by the town name where the worker had posted a mailing. Since, a systematic listing of these quasi-military units does not exist, special effort was devoted to creating line drawings of the unit cachets that served to identify the worker units.

Indochinese Workers
Castres, Tarn

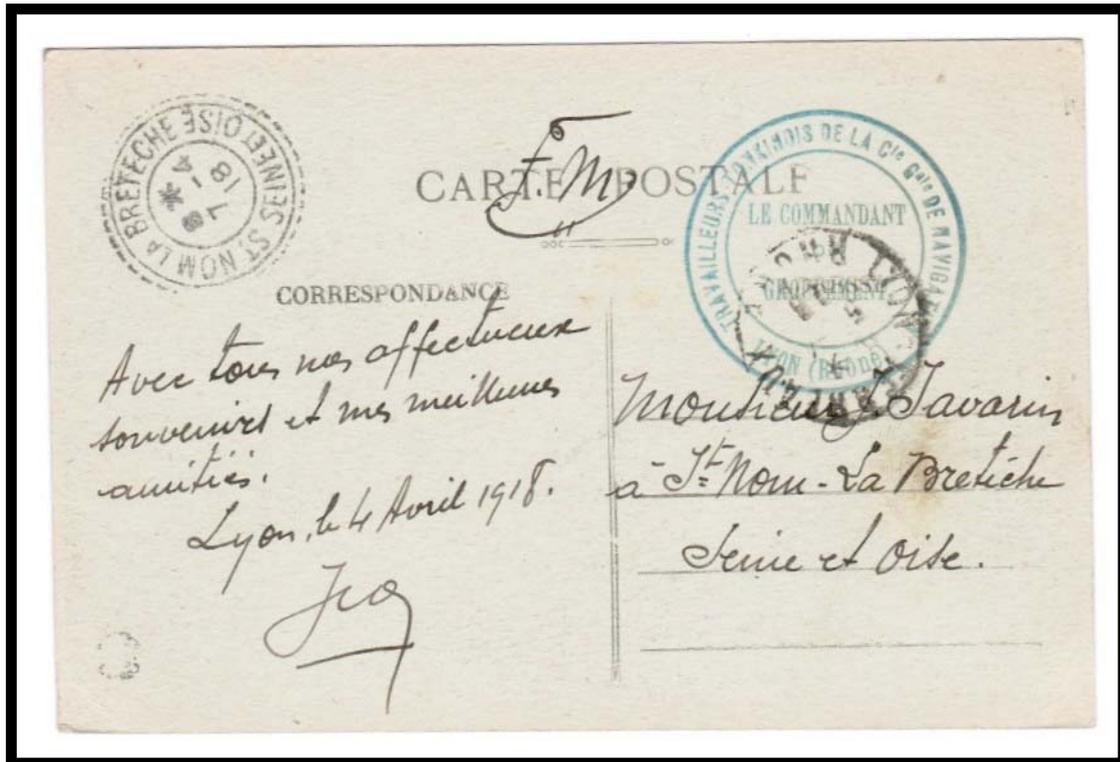
Rather than the usual "C.M." of "F.M.," the sender typed "Service Militaire" on this envelope giving it status as official mail as opposed to soldier's mail.



POSTAL MARKINGS
CASTRES TARN 4-7 19
REVERSE
BEZIERS HERAULT 5-7 19

Tonkinese Workers at Colonial Navigation Company Lyon, Rhone

The blue cachet on this picture postcard was for the commander of the Tonkinese workers assigned to the Colonial Navigation Company at Lyon. As usual, to obtain free service, the sender had handwritten "F.M." at the top, center of the postcard.

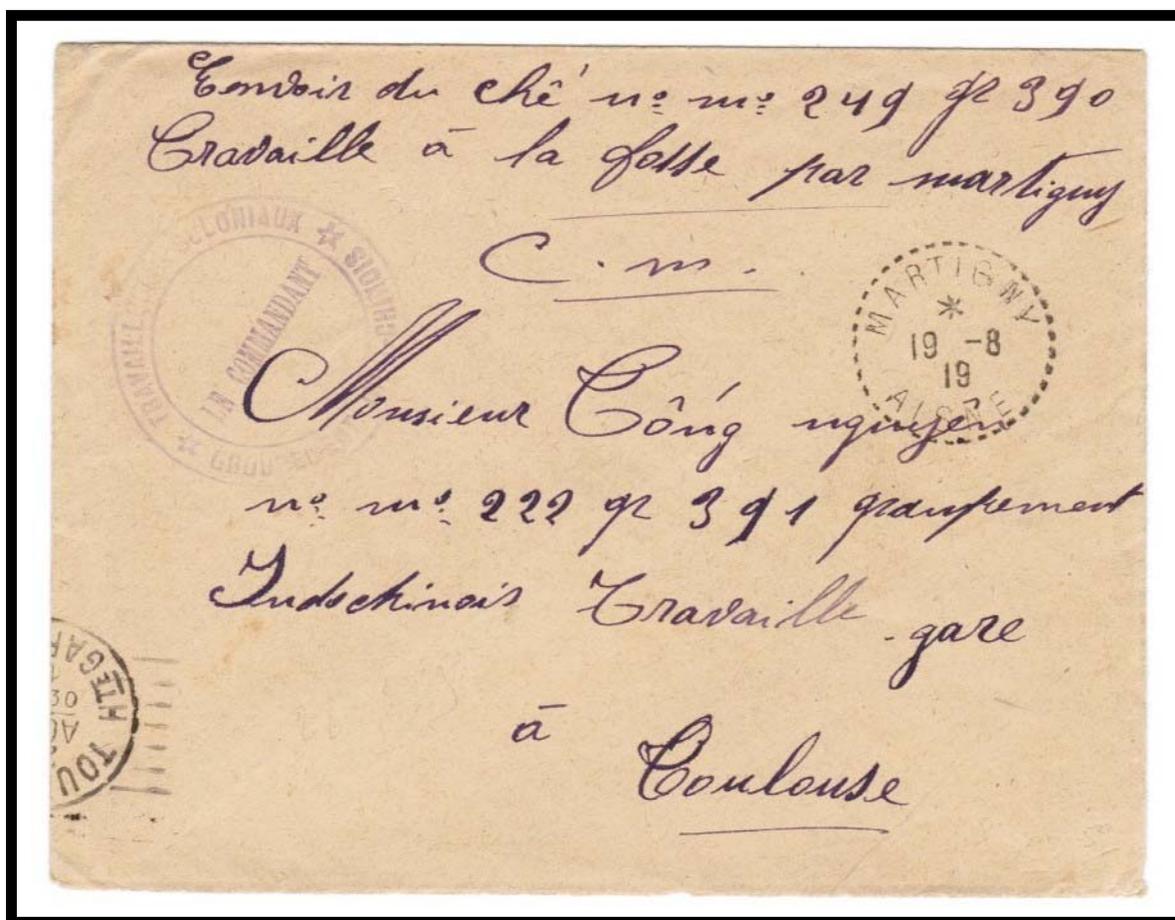


POSTAL MARKINGS

LYON FERREAUX RHONE 5-4 18
ST NOM LA BRETECHE SEINE ET OISE 7-4 18

Indochinese Group of Colonial Workers
Martigny, Aisne

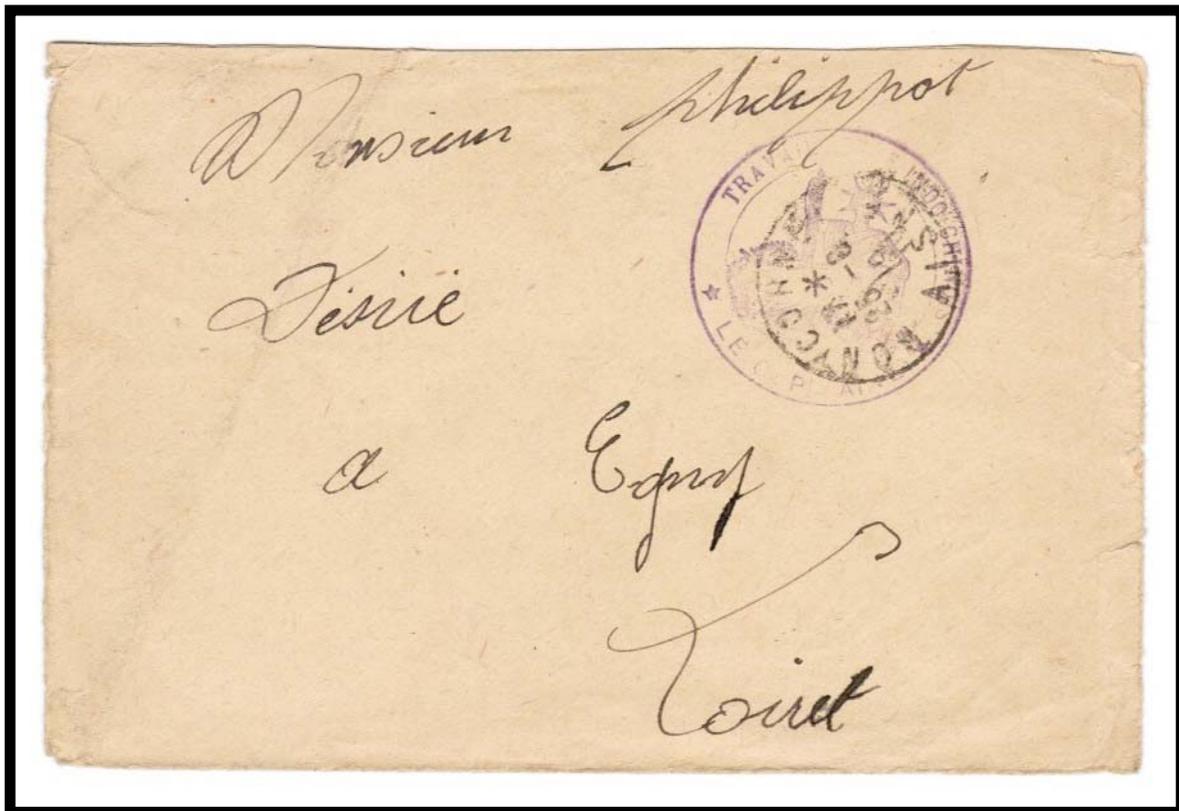
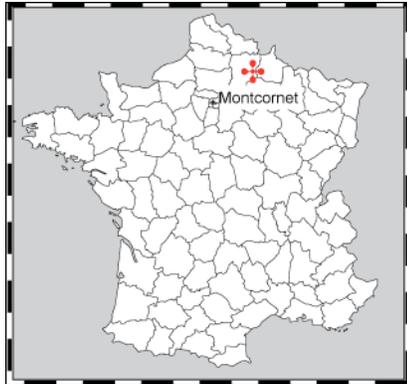
The cachet for workers at Martigny was similar to military cachets in that it did not identify the unit's location in any way.



POSTAL MARKINGS
MARTIGNY AISNE 19-8 19

Indochinese Workers in France Montcornet, Aisne

Normally a cachet was applied to the sender's envelope to certify validity for free handling. This cachet simply identifies the sender with the captain of the Indochinese Workers ("Travailleurs Indochinois"). Workers were under the command of a regular French military officers.



POSTAL MARKINGS
MONTCORNET AISNE 25-8 19

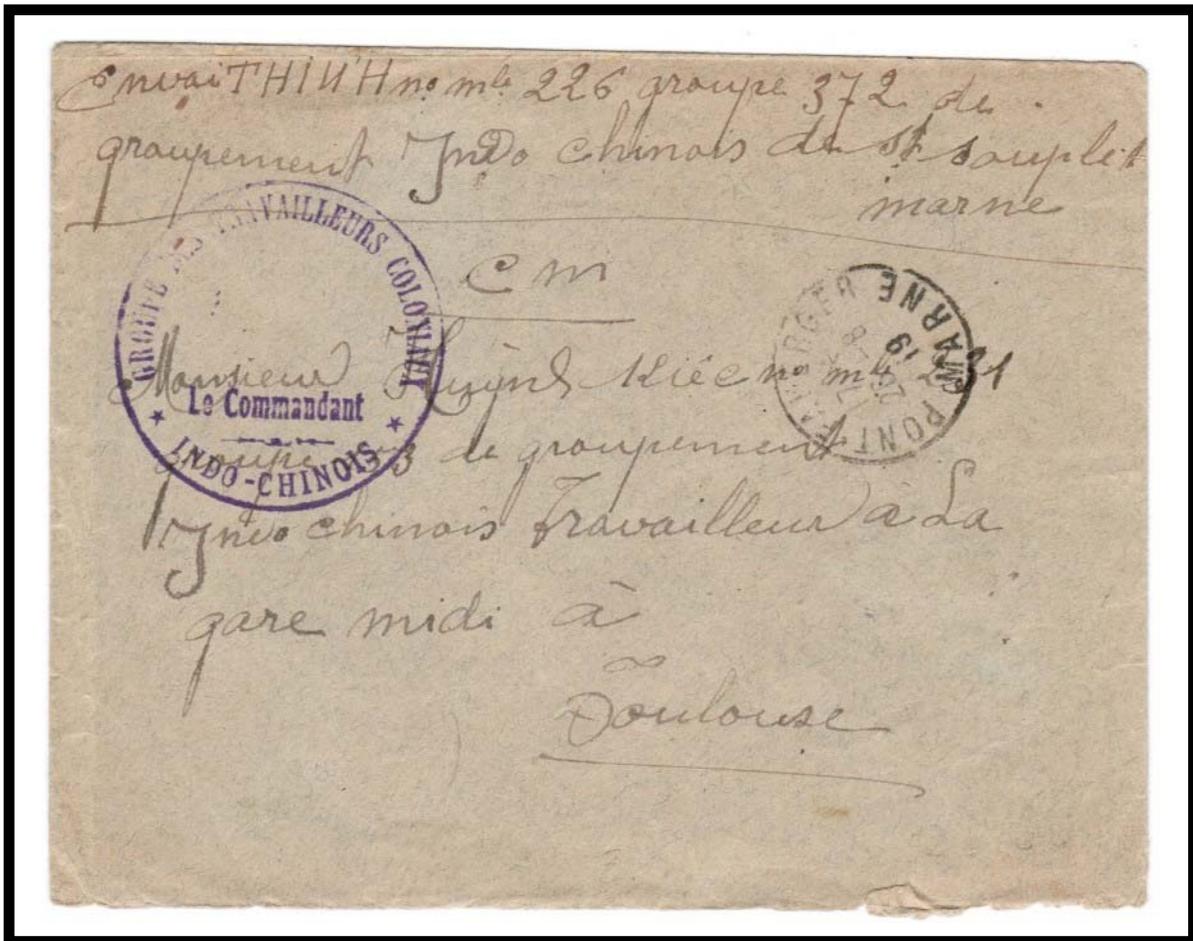
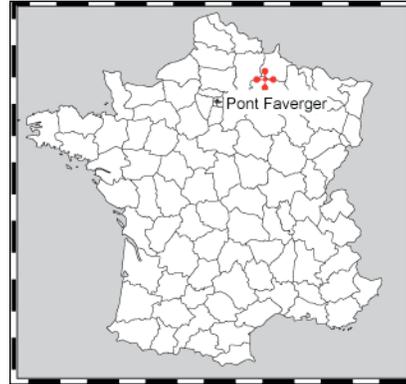
Indochinese Group, Eastern Network Montmeillant, Ardennes

A free postcard bears the cachet of the Commander of Indochinese Group, Eastern Network of Colonial Laborers located at Montmeillant, near the border with Belgium.



Indochinese Workers Pont Faverges, Marne

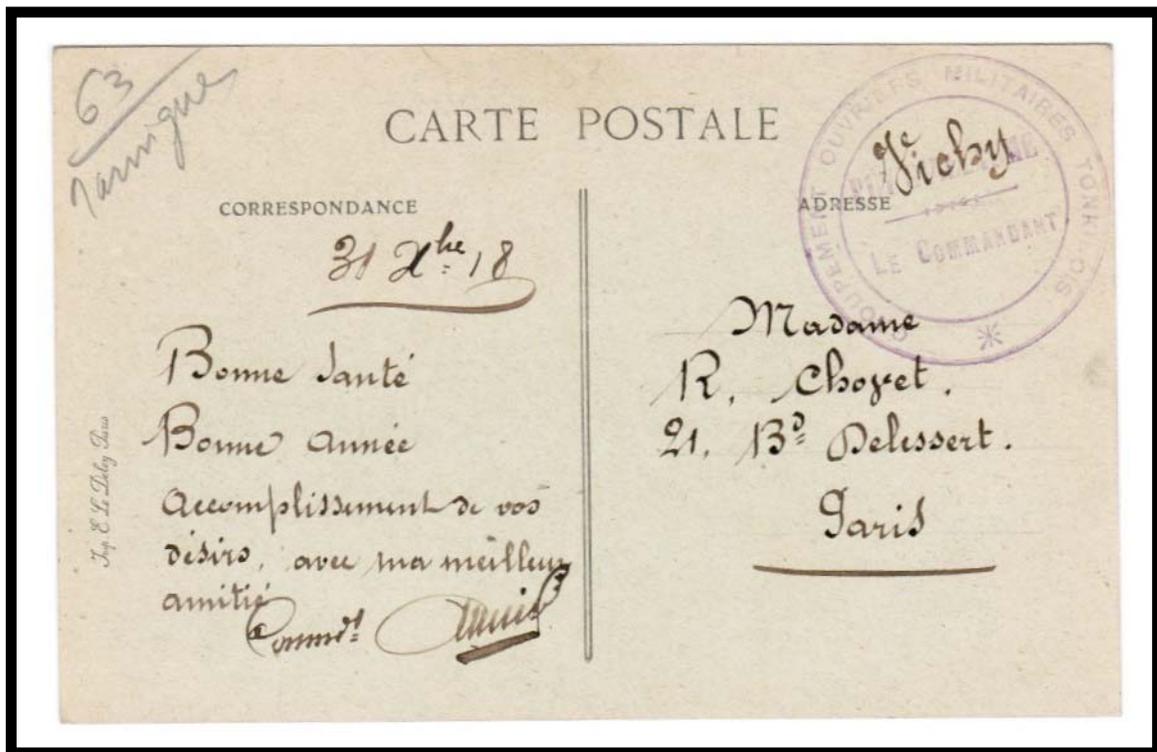
Deviating from the symmetry typical of the worker's cachets, "Le Commandant" is located below center with this format.



POSTAL MARKINGS
PONT FAVERGES MARNE 26-8 19

Tonkinese Military Laborers Group Puy-Guillaume, Puy-de-Dôme

In 1918, a picture postcard went by free mail to an addressee in Paris. The postcard carries the cachet of the commander of the “Tonkinese Military Laborers Group” located at Puy-Guillaume in south-central France.



Indochinese Group, Colonial Laborers
Toulouse, Haute Garonne

Here the cachet identifies the Indochinese Group as a subset of "Colonial Workers." The sender wrote "Ce Mrie" (Correspondance Militaire) in the upper right-hand portion of the envelope for free service.



POSTAL MARKINGS
TOULOUSE HTE GARONNE 30-6 18

Detachment of Annamite Laborers
Toulouse, Haute Garonne

The sender prominently wrote "Correspondance Militaire" at the top of this envelope even though he was a worker from Annam. The cachet indicates that the sender's unit was involved in arms manufacturing in the Toulouse region.



POSTAL MARKINGS

TOULOUSE-GARE HTE GARONNE 29 JUIN 26

REVERSE

MERINDOL VAUCLUSE 1-7 16

Indochinese Workers Group
Toulouse Gunpowder Factory
Toulouse, Haute Garonne

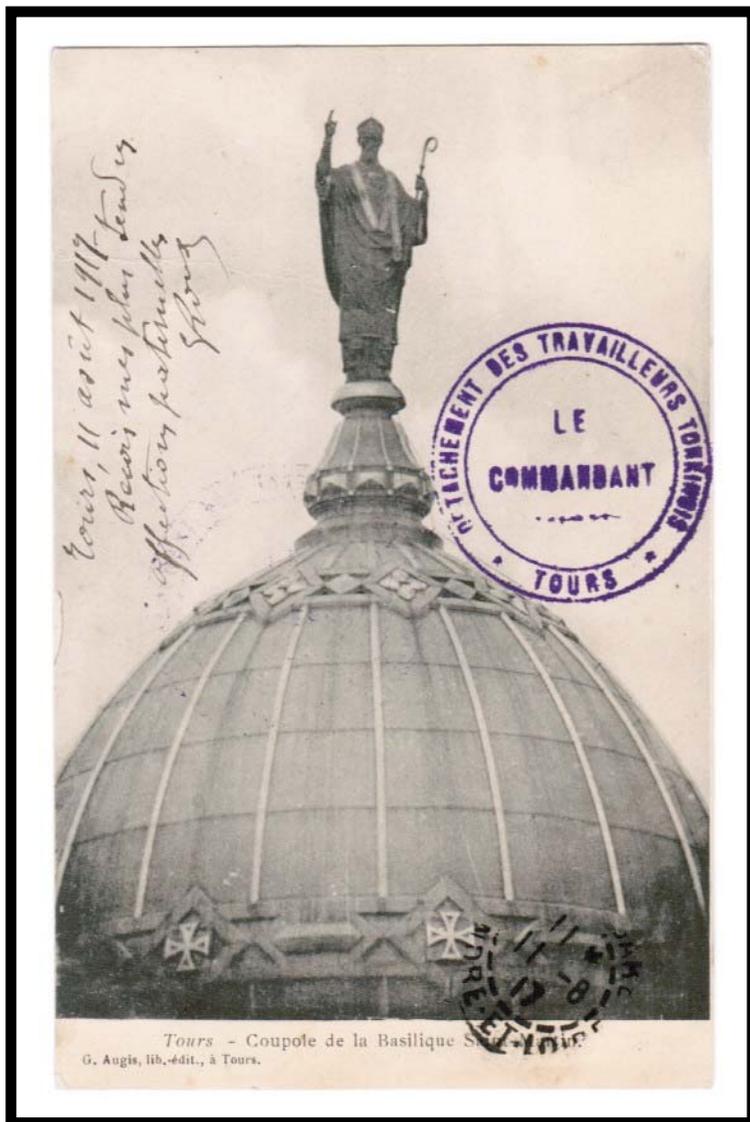
The oval cachet on this postcard identifies the sender was from a Worker's Group located at the gunpowder factory in Toulouse. The "vaguemestre" was the unit's postal clerk.



POSTAL MARKINGS ON REVERSE
TOULOUSE HTE GARONNE 9-7 18

Tonkinese Workers Tours, Indre-et-Loire

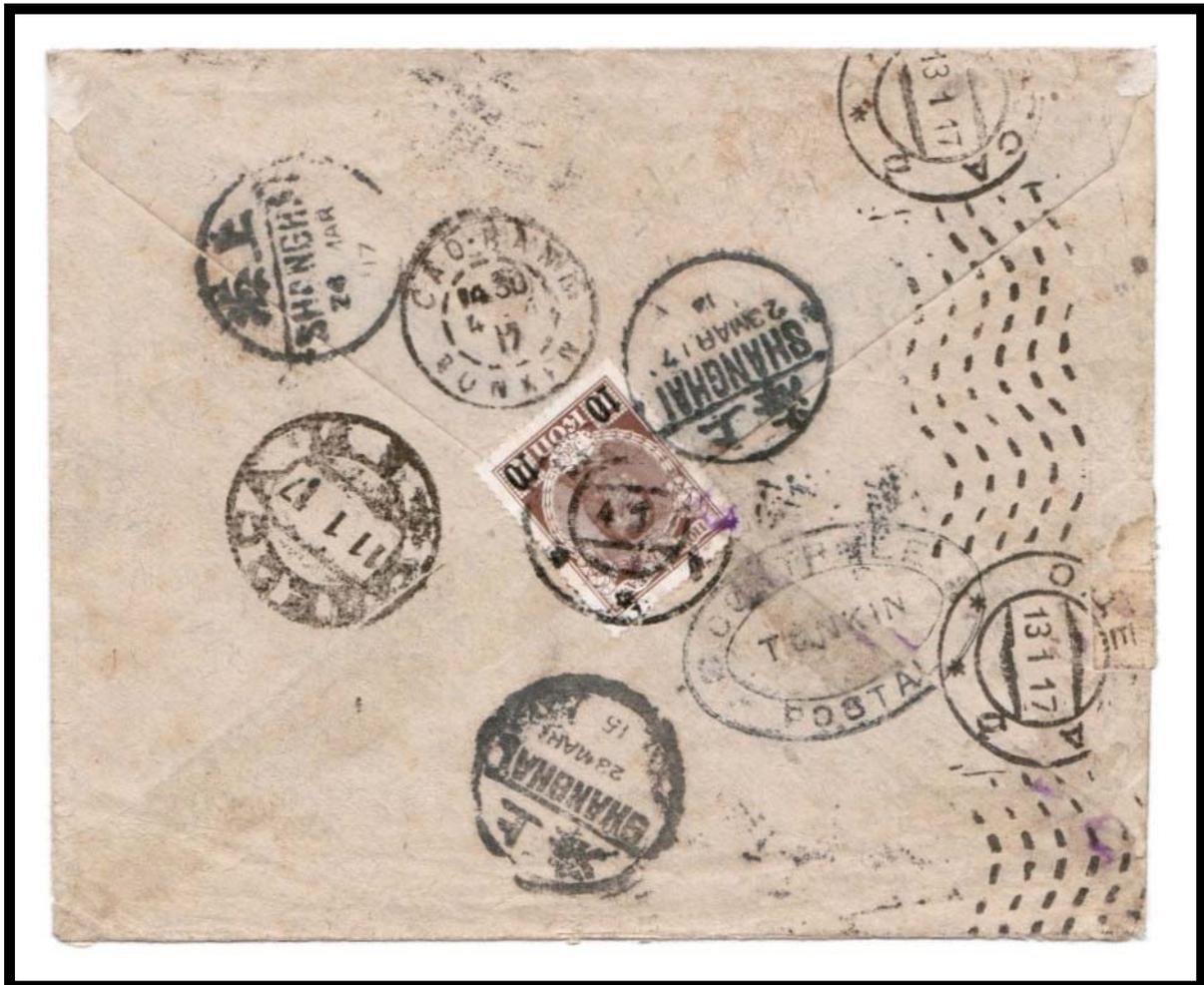
The cachet on this picture postcard shows that a detachment of Tonkinese workers was located at Tours during World War I. The cachet did not specify the function of these workers.



POSTAL MARKINGS
TOURS GARE INDRE-ET-LOIRE 11-8 17

Tonkin Receipt Censor on Mail from Russia to Indochina

Censor markings from within Indochina during World War I are extremely rare. Posted from Russia in 1917, a censor in Tonkin applied his marking to both sides of his cover addressed to a soldier stationed at Cao-Bang.



POSTAL MARKINGS

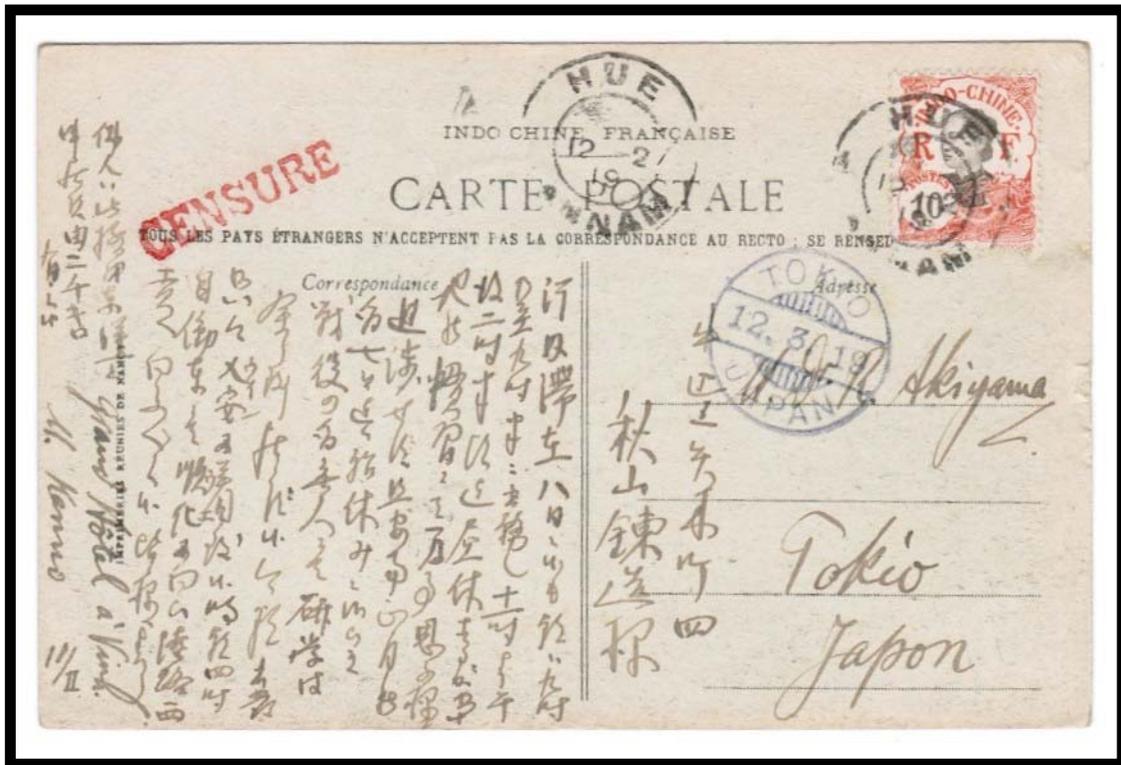
RECCA 11 1 17
SHANGHAI 23 MAR 17
SHANGHAI 23 MAR 17
CAO-BANG TONKIN 4-4 17

Indochinese Origination Censor on Mail from Indochina to Japan

Indochinese authorities censored a postcard written in Japanese sent from Hue, Annam to Tokyo in 1919. The “CENSURE” handstamp verified that the examiners had found the item allowable for transmission. The red marking alerted other censors that the item had already been inspected.

The postcard was in transit for a month.

CENSURE



POSTAL MARKINGS

HUE ANNAM 12-2 19

“CENSURE” (red)

TOKIO JAPAN 12.3.19

French Receipt Censor
on Mail from Indochina to France

A registered letter posted from Haiphong to France was censored upon arrival. The letter reached its destination on 11 November 1918, the day World War I had ended with Germany's signing the armistice.



censor's signature (France)



POSTAL MARKINGS

HAIPHONG TONKIN 6 SEPT 18

framed R with manuscript registration number
censor's resealing tape with censor's signature handstamp

REVERSE

THONON LES BAINS HIE SAVOIE 11-11 18

French Transit Censor on Mail from Indochina to the Netherlands

Because of German U boats, mail from the Far East was disembarked at the first possible port, usually Brindisi, Italy. This letter received red transit marking in Bologna where it was forwarded by rail to Dieppe. There the censor examined it and resealed the envelope with his paper band. The censor struck his official marking tying the band and the envelope. Since mail could not traverse German-occupied northern France, it went by ship, probably via London. The letter was received at Amsterdam on 19 December, some five weeks after being posted.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-PORT COCHINCHINE 10-11 15
BOLOGNA POSTA ESTERA

REVERSE

framed OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE
AMSTERDAM 19.XII 1915

French Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to the Netherlands

Censor number 20 examined a letter that transited Paris on its journey from Indochina to Amsterdam, the capital of The Netherlands in 1916.



censor's signature (France)



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 25-11 16
censor's resealing tape
oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 20

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 25-11 16
oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 20
PARIS R. P. ETRANGER 31 • XII 1916

French Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to the Netherlands

Traveling via France to Holland, French censors intercepted a letter for inspection. Satisfied that the contents offered no threat the envelope was resealed and forwarded to Holland



censor's signature (France)



POSTAL MARKINGS

BARIA COCHINCHINE 6-12 16

censor's resealing tape with censor's signature handstamp

French Transit Censor on Mail from Indochina to the Netherlands

Censor number 24 applied his "signature" handstamp to a postcard sent from Indochina to The Netherlands in 1917. Unlike envelopes, postcards did not require resealing tape.



censor's signature (France)



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 23-7 17
oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 24

French Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Sweden

This letter to Sweden was apparently opened and resealed twice by censors in Marseille before being allowed to go onward. Interestingly, even though two different resealing tapes were applied, the same official certification mark was used in both instances.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 17-8 18
censor's tapes

REVERSE

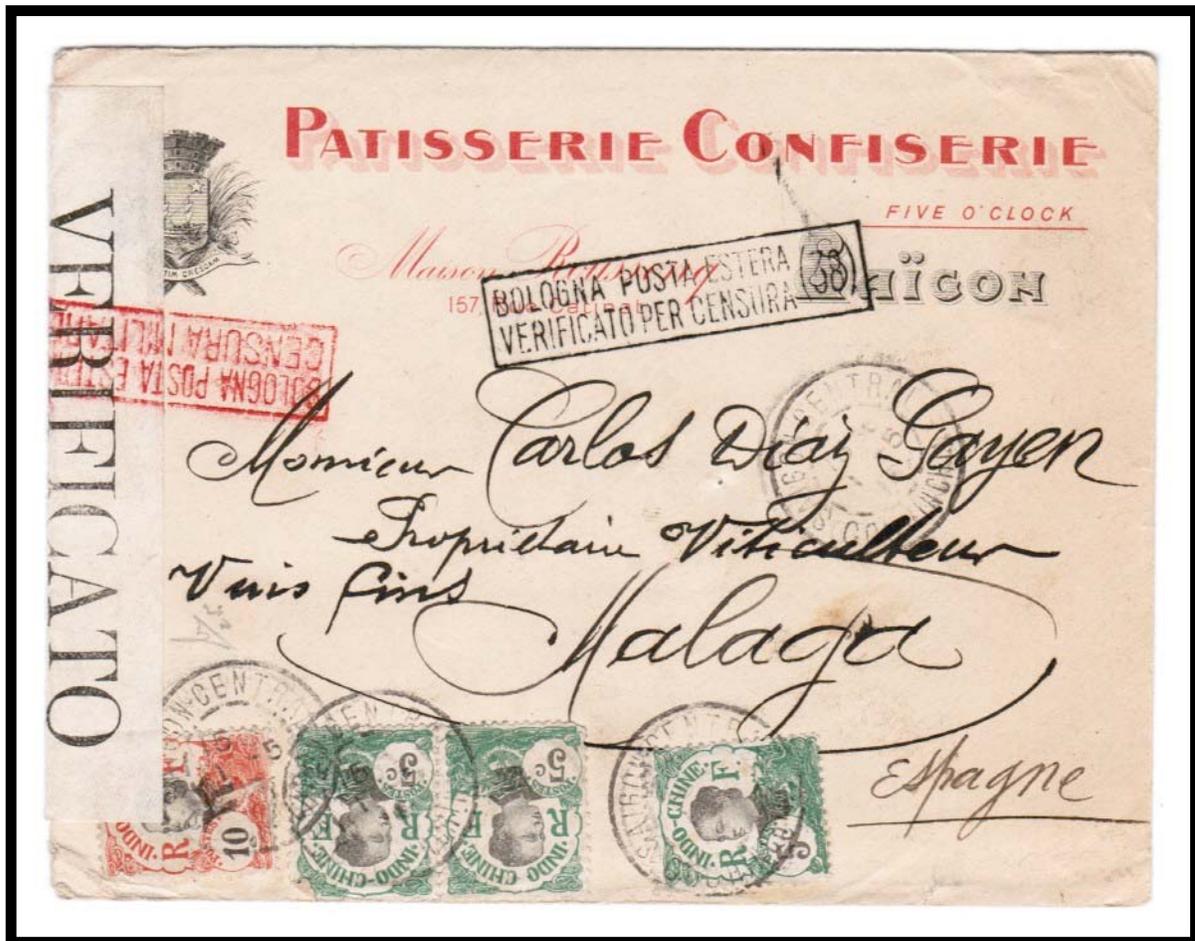
oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 4
oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 15
framed CENSURE

Italian Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Spain

After coming ashore in Italy, this letter was examined by Italian censors. The envelope was resealed and marked as censored by the Italian officials before being sent on to Spain.

BOLOGNA POSTA ESTERA
CENSURA MILITARE

BOLOGNA POSTA ESTERA (38)
VERIFICATO PER CENSURA



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 1-5 15
censor's tape

REVERSE

red famed BOLOGNA POSTA ESTERA CENSURA MILITARE
MALAGA (30) 28.06.15

Italian Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Switzerland

Letters from Indochina addressed to central Europe could reach their destinations faster if offloaded from packet boats prior to reaching Marseilles. This example of business correspondence came ashore when the ship stopped at Milan, Italy. An Italian censor examined the mailing before it was transported onward to the addressee in Switzerland.

(85) VERIFICATO
PER CENSURA



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI TONKIN 18 MAI 16

framed R with manuscript registration number
censor's signature handstamp (Italy) and resealing tape (Italy)

REVERSE

censor's signature handstamp (Italy)

MILANO-POSTA ESTERA RACCOMANDATO 11. 7. 16

LUZERN BRIEF ETRAGER 7. VII. 16

Indian Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Switzerland

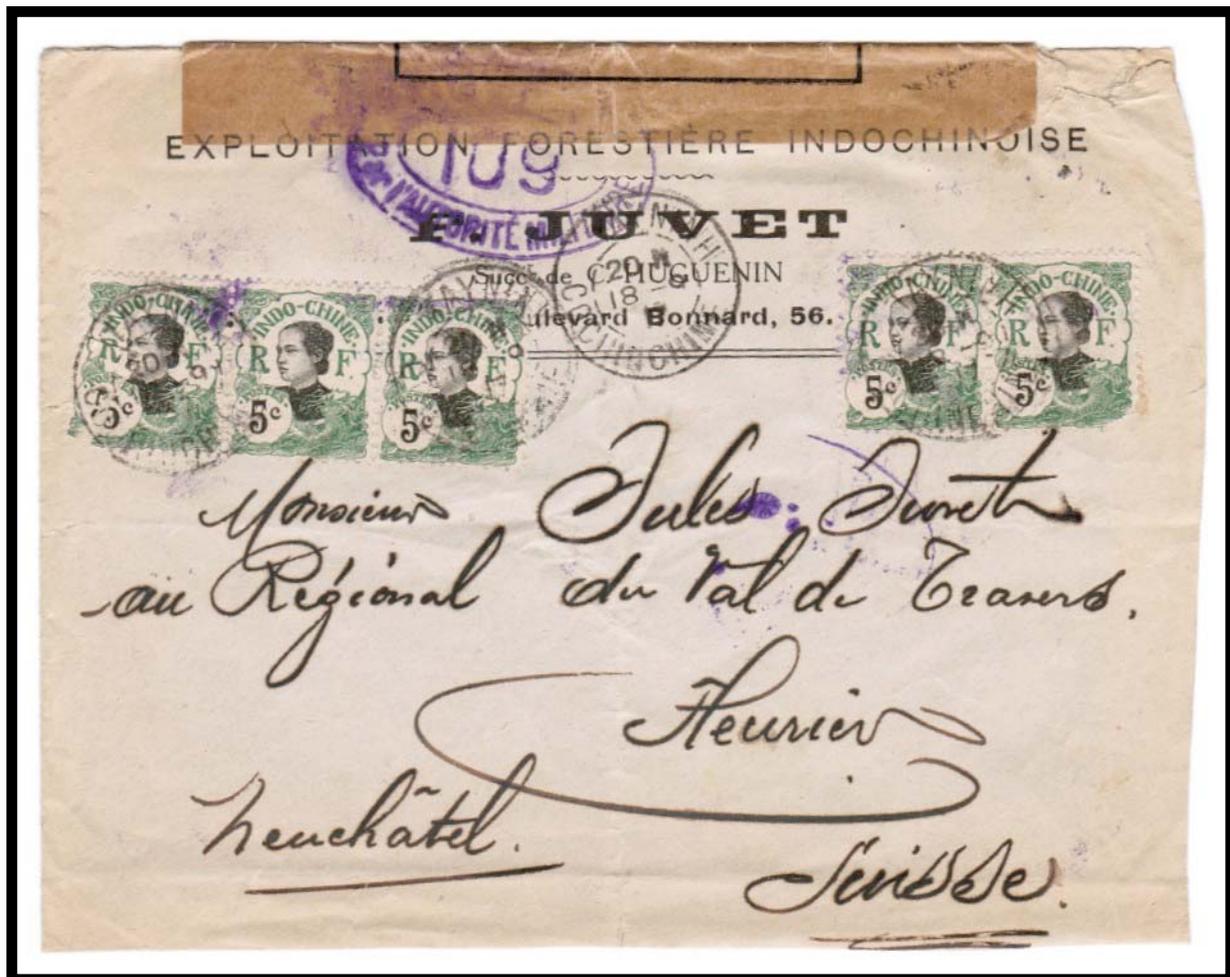
The marking applied by the censor at Madras on this mailing to Switzerland allowed the letter to continue onward. There is, however, no indication that the envelope was opened for examination.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HUE ANNAM 22-9 16
REVERSE
ACACIAS (GENEVE) 2.XI.16

French Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Switzerland

When passing through France, censor number 109 examined a 1917 letter to Switzerland. Finding it acceptable, he resealed it and applied his signature handstamp.



POSTAL MARKINGS

TAYNINH COCHINCHINE 18-9 17

censor's resealing tape

oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 109 (purple)

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 19-9 17

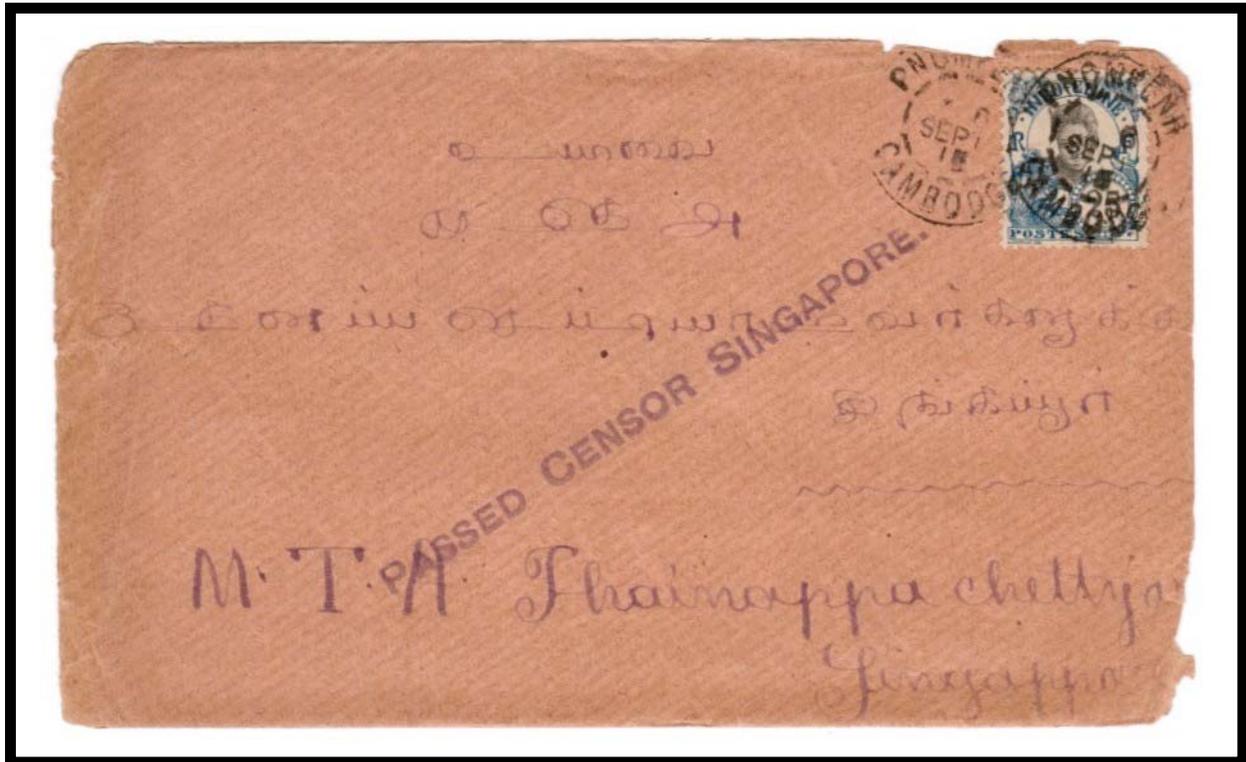
oval OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE 109 (purple)

FLEURIER 22. XI. 17

Malayan Receipt Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Malaya

Sent from Phnompenh, this letter mistakenly went to India. After being redirected, it arrived in Singapore where it was given the bold "PASSED CENSOR SINGAPORE" straight-line handstamp.

PASSED CENSOR SINGAPORE.



POSTAL MARKINGS

PNOMPENH CAMBODGE 6 SEPT 15
censor handstamp (Singapore)

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 7-9 15
DHANUSHKODI-F 16 SEP 15
SINGAPORE 25 SE 1915

Malayan Receipt Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Malaya

Censor's tape with the inscription (on the reverse) "STRAITS SETTLEMENTS No 13945 OPENED BY CENSOR" was used to reseal this envelope at Singapore.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SADEC COCHINCHINE 22-9 16

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 25-7 16

SINGAPORE 31 JY 1916

SINGAPORE 2 AU 1916

TAIPING F.M. B. 3 AU 1916

American Transit Censor
on Mail from Indochina to Costa Rica

An American censor examined a registered letter sent from Indochina to Costa Rica in 1918. The censor applied his signature handstamp to the resealing tape on the reverse side of the envelope.



POSTAL MARKINGS

CHOQUAN COCHINCHINE 28-9 18
framed R with manuscript registration number
plain "REGISTERED" (purple)
censor's resealing tape

REVERSE

REGISTERED G.P.O. HONG-KONG 5 OC 18
SEATTLE (TERM. STA. WASH.) REGISTERED NOV 4 1918
PASSED BY CENSOR 1132 (purple)
NEW ORLEANS LA. REGISTERED NOV 9 1918

Japanese and American Censor
on Mail from Indochina to the United States

Posted from Saigon's central post office, the sender's routing instructions were for this mailing to travel via Hong Kong. The censor chop on the front and the transit marks on the reverse demonstrate that the letter went via Japan. After arrival in the United States, the letter was examined and the envelope resealed by censor "2283".



reverse



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 5-8 18
Japanese censor chop and American censor's label

REVERSE

SHANGHAI CHINE 13-8 18
NAGASAKI JAPAN 23. 8. 18
American censor handstamp

Fake Singapore Receipt Censor on Mail from Indochina to Singapore

Starting with a 1910 letter from Saigon to Singapore, someone altered the date by striking a line through the "0" to make it appear as an "8." Then the forger applied a triangular censor's handstamp more typical of the World War II era.



Fake Singapore censor handstamp



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 10 JUIN 10

REVERSE

SINGAPORE JU 13 1910