

THE FRENCH CONGO 1900 PICTORIAL ISSUE

Engraved, Watermarked, Privately Printed

What Could Go Wrong?

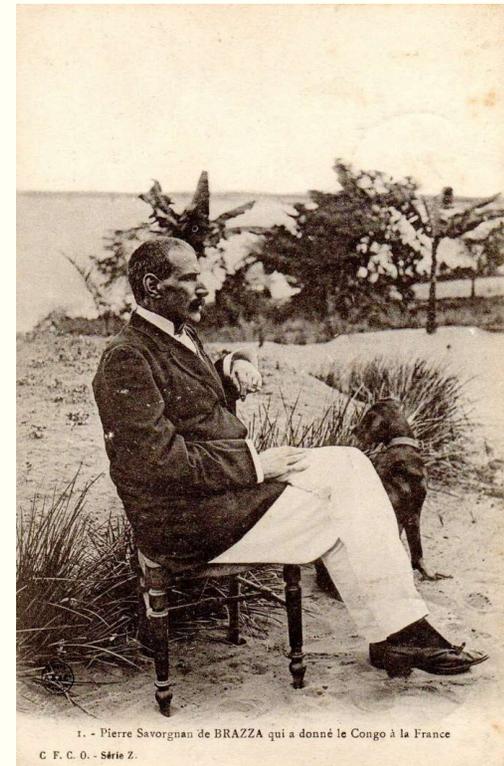


Agenda

- Context
- Design
- Production
- How the Stamps Were Used
- Promotion
- Using the Reminders
- After the Stamps

A presentation by Ken Nilsestuen with thanks to Barry Newton.

Between the two of us we managed to assemble a lot of stuff over 25 years or so.



Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza in the Congo

CONTEXT



Context

- All stamps to date were typographed
 - France proper
 - French Colonies
 - Exceptions for local issues
- French Poste et Telegraph could not produce engraved stamps
- A. Chassepot & Cie. had printed engraved stamps for Bolivia in 1894
- Chassepot was also printing engraved hydrographic charts for French navy



DESIGN



Design

- Designer – Paul Merwart
 - 1855 – 1902
 - Mother was Polish, father was French, serving in Crimean War
 - Raised in Lwow, now in Ukraine
 - Attended art schools in Vienna, Munich and Paris
 - Painted original art for all three designs
 - 1896 – appointed official painter for Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies
 - Sent to Martinique in April 1902, killed when Mount Pelée erupted in May



- Engraver – Benjamin Damman
 - 1835 – 1921
 - French painter
 - First exhibit of engravings in 1876
 - Etched J. F. Millet's paintings
 - Also etched Somali Coast 1902 and Madagascar Zebu issues



Very Large Die Essay

- Probably first effort
- Beautiful engraving
- Single die, image is nearly 5" x 7"
- Damman must have just been practicing



Die Essay

- So we want to make stamps, not just art
- Again, very fine engraving
- Single die
- Probably carefully inked with all three colors at once
- Too small and detailed, so rejected



Second Leopard Design

- Two dies
- Two colors
- Smaller than final design
- Relatively fine engraving
- Heavier inking
- Several trial colors



Third Leopard Design

- The final stamp
- Lots of trial colors, at first frame only
- Trial colors produced on card stock and paper thinner than stamp paper
- Two centimes stamp was original plate
- Master plate reproduced five more times
- Values etched separately in each position on subsequent plates



Leopard Background Proof

- Upper left corner of 100 image sheet
- Note marginal marking where plate attached to press
- See how “15”s move around in the tablets



Position 3

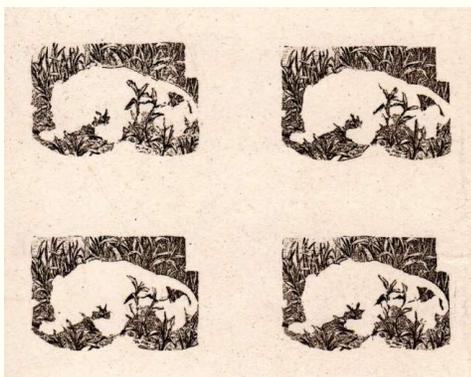


Position 6



Leopard Proof Sheet

- Final design
- On heavy paper
- Margins show where plate attached to press
- Constant variations on all plates
- Values etched separately in each tablet

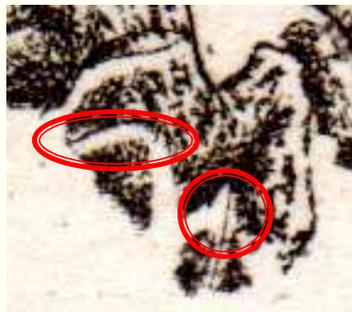


Leopard Proof Sheet

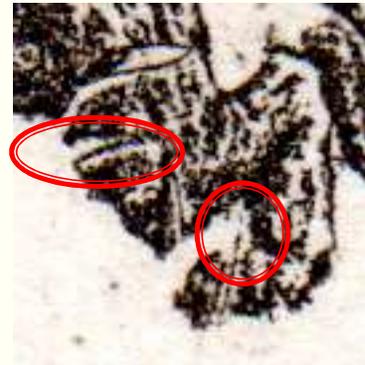
- Design variations on two and four centimes sheets
- Images on left are from two centimes sheet, on right from four centimes sheet



Position 7



Position 7



Position 36



Position 36

Bakalois Woman Essay

- Presumably this was the first engraving
- Fifteen centimes value eventually was leopard design
- Merwart probably copied this photo



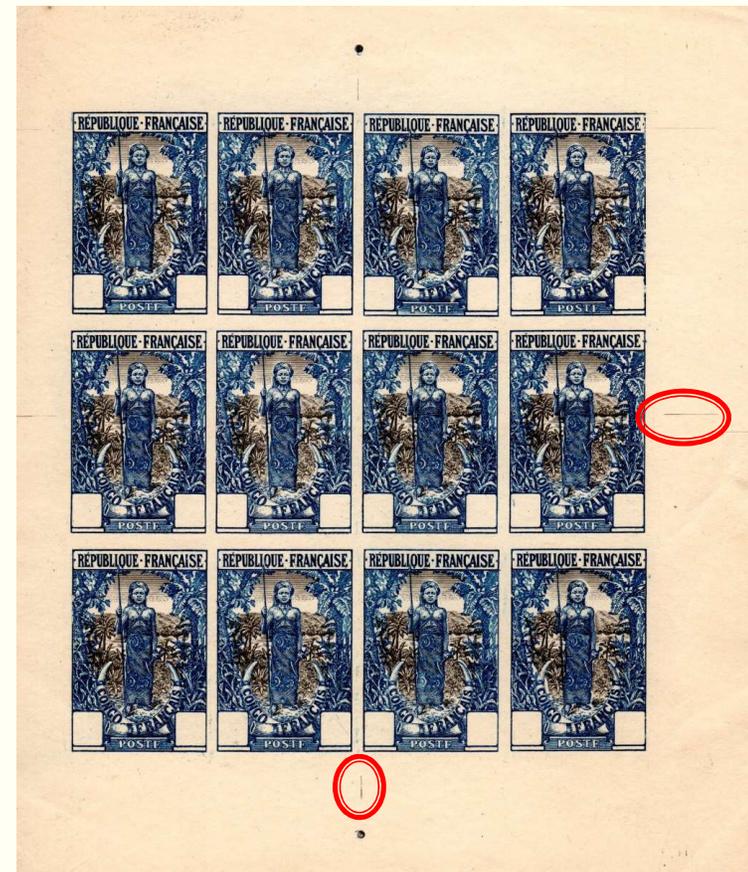
Bakalois Woman Small Essays

- Smaller than issued stamps
- No values in tablets
- Sheetlets of twelve
- Printed on newsprint – poor quality paper
- At least a half dozen colors
- Like with leopard, may have been testing ability to line up designs



Bakalois Woman Small Essays

- Background added, always black
- More frame colors – at least six different
- Vertical and horizontal dashes added in margins to aid registration
- Slight variations in background



Bakalois Woman Small Essays

- Even now there were problems
- Inverted background on sheetlet
- Incomplete design in position 12



Position 11

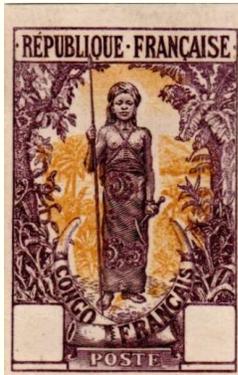


Position 12



Bakalois Woman Small Trial Colors

- Many possibilities
- Few in final colors
- Printed on card stock from same twelve image sheetlets



Position 12



Bakalois Woman Final Design

- Black proofs from full sheets
- Separate frame and background proofs
- Variations in design continue



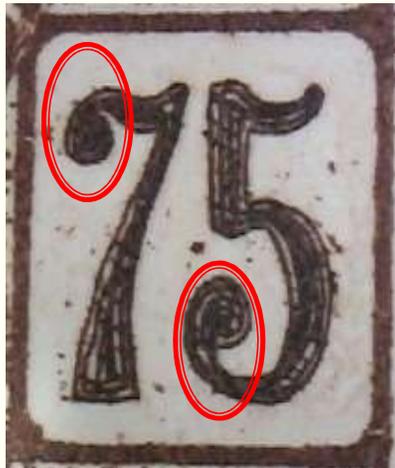
Bakalois Woman Black Proof Sheet

- One or more for each value
- Margins show where plate was fastened to press
- Consistent design variations on each value



Bakalois Woman Final Design

- More indications that values were etched separately in each tablet
- Small variations in other parts of frame, too



Bakalois Woman Color Trial Proofs

- Final design with values
- Colors closer to or same as final stamps
- On card stock, thick and thin paper



Card



Thick paper



Thick paper



Thin paper



Thin paper



Thin paper

Bakalois Woman Final Design

- Constant varieties in at least five positions
- One is new discovery

Scratch through
Merwart's name
below lower left
tablet



Position 28

Missing leaves

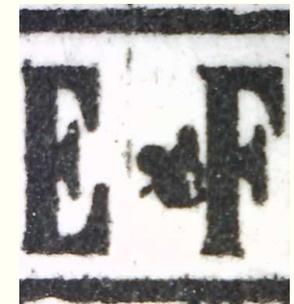


Position 91,
93 or 94

Splotch instead of dot
between words



20 centimes



75 centimes

Position 49

Coconut Grove Design

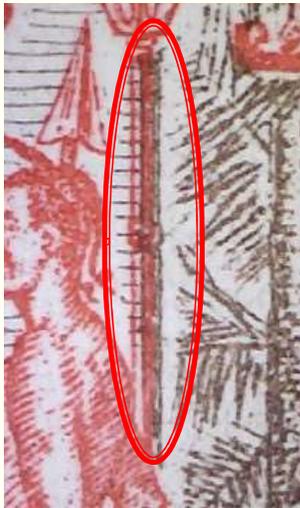
- Damman apparently made only one design
- Value is same color as vignette rather than frame
- Same process where 1 F was in original sheet, then 2 F and 5 F separately etched in each position
- No surviving sheets known, we believe they were fifty stamps (10 x 5)
- Two vignette errors



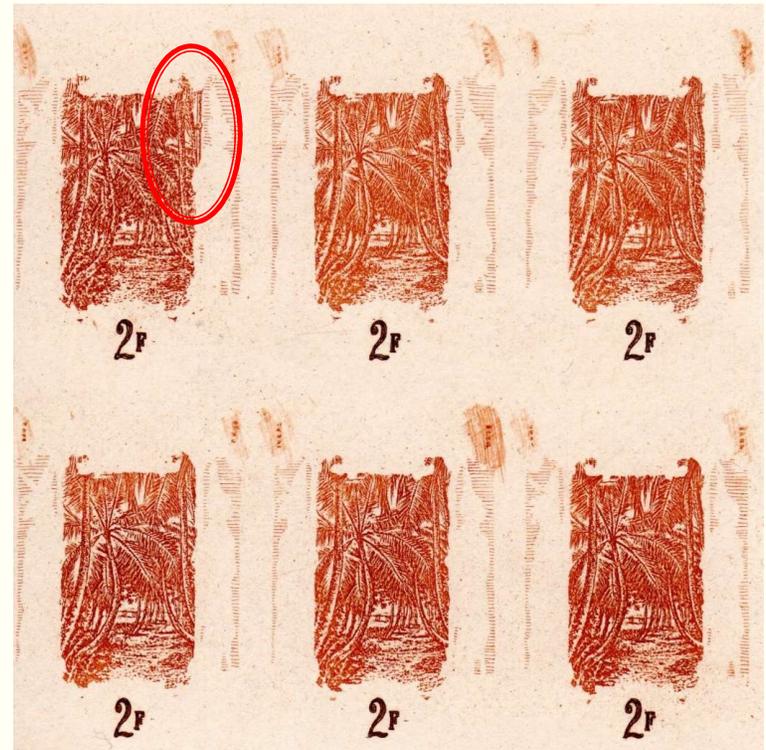
Coconut Grove Design

- Two design errors illustrated
- Not previously reported
- Third design variety was formerly cataloged in Yvert

Position 49

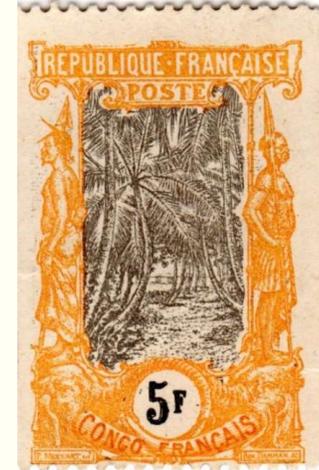


Unknown position



Coconut Grove Design Trial Colors

- Generally on card, some on paper
- Fewer different frame colors seen
- Some were perforated horizontally (coil experiment?)
- All of the below examples are on card



PRODUCTION



The Issued Stamps

- First printing on thick paper, perf 11
- Changed to perf 11½
- Second printing (May 1904) on thin paper, all perf 11½



The Issued Stamps

▪ Leopard Design

Value	Quantity	Sheets
1 centime	249,000	2,490
2 centimes	199,300	1,993
4 centimes	145,800	1,458
5 centimes	199,500	1,995
10 centimes	99,700	997
15 centimes	347,600	3,476

▪ Bakalois Woman Design

Value	Quantity	Sheets
20 centimes	99,700	997
25 centimes	99,800	998
30 centimes	99,800	998
40 centimes	49,800	498
50 centimes	49,900	499
75 centimes	29,600	296

▪ Coconut Grove Design

Value	Quantity	Sheets
1 franc	25,000	500
2 francs	15,000	300
5 francs	10,000	200

The Issued Stamps

- What could go wrong?
- Position 91, most well known variety
- Position 94, a minor item



The Rounded Tusk



The Missing Tusk

The Issued Stamps

- Color errors in two values
- The splotch continues
- A new variety on the 5 franc stamp



Printed in colors of the ten centimes stamp



Position 49



New dot between "5" and
"F" on stamp with
vignette error at top right

The Issued Stamps – More Production Problems



Frame shifted right
3mm, up 3.5mm



Frame shifted left
2mm, down 1.5mm

Frame ink
completely missing
at left



The Issued Stamps – More Production Problems

Inverted frames



Color error
"mustard
yellow"



Double
background,
one inverted



Inverted
vignette

Inverted
watermark
(5f)



The Issued Stamps – Fun with the Perforator

- No explanation needed
- Partial imperfs are hardest to find



The Issued Stamps

- All postal administrations had to send mint examples of their stamps to the UPU
- UPU then distributed to all member nations
- Stamps were defaced so they couldn't be used
- A few of these archives have been sold in the past twenty years or so
- This was sent to a Portuguese colony



The Issued Stamps – Surcharges

- Stamp shortage in July 1903
- Created local provisionals valid internationally
- 800 sent to UPU, about 2,000 sold
- Had to be applied to mail and canceled at post office to discourage speculation
- Mint stamps probably liberated from UPU (there weren't 800 postal administrations)

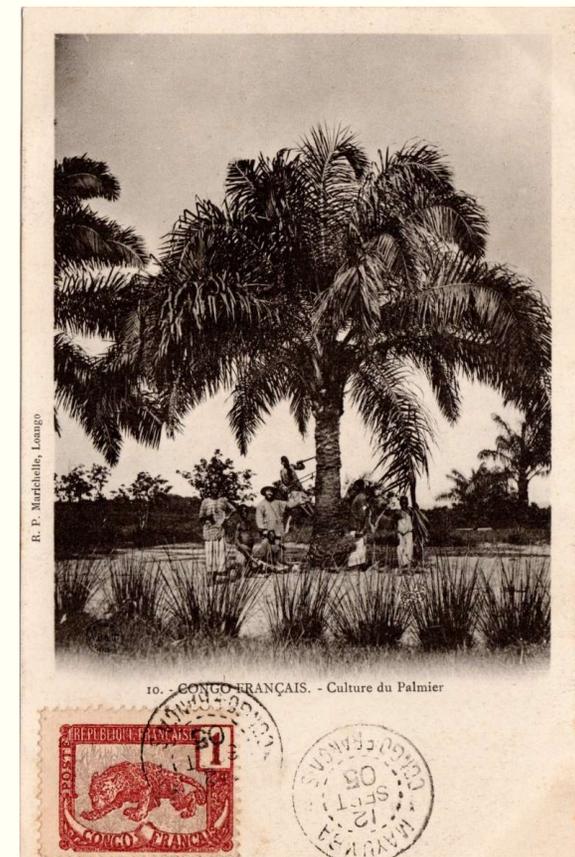


HOW THE STAMPS WERE USED



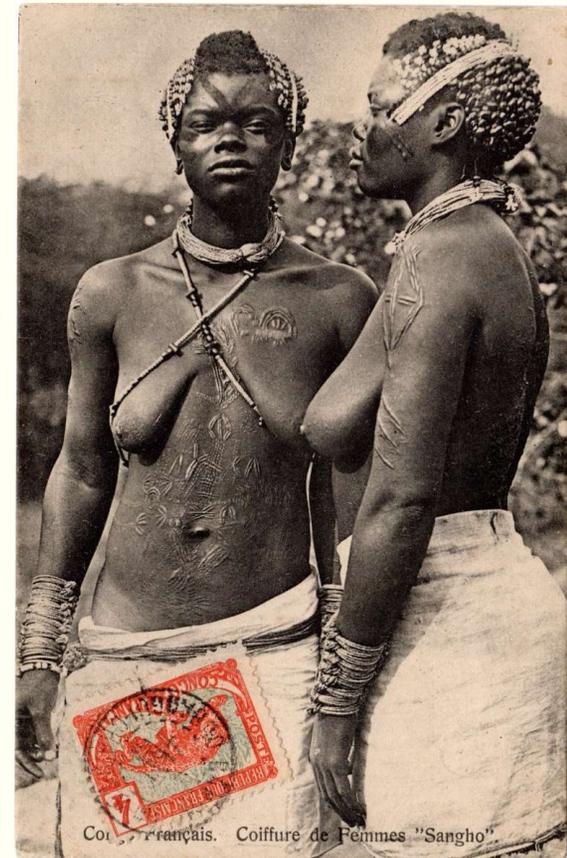
Used as Souvenirs

- Often just a low value stamp and cancel
- Great to find small towns – Mayumba and Ouesso



Used as Souvenirs

- More outpost cancels – Bangui and Loukolela
- Less common to find stamp on address side



Used as Souvenirs

- Very unusual to see higher value stamp on souvenir
- Double the normal ten centimes postcard rate
- Catches the dancing topless woman nicely as it shows local cultural event



Postcards Sent Home

- Missing tusk position 91 is left stamp.
- Otherwise unremarkable



Postcards Sent Home

- Proper rate – ten centimes postcard rate, 25 centimes registered
- Acknowledgement of receipt would have its own ten centimes postage
- Sender was sending a series of cards and wanted to be sure they all arrived
- Ex-Grabowski



Imprimés Rate

- Five words or less excluding address
- Valid for UPU as well as French community



To The Hague,
Netherlands

To Chicago,
Illinois

Foreign Destinations

- Who even cares what the pictures are on these cards?
- One of only three uses I have seen of the 10 centimes surcharge



To Brussels,
Belgium



To Vologda,
Russia

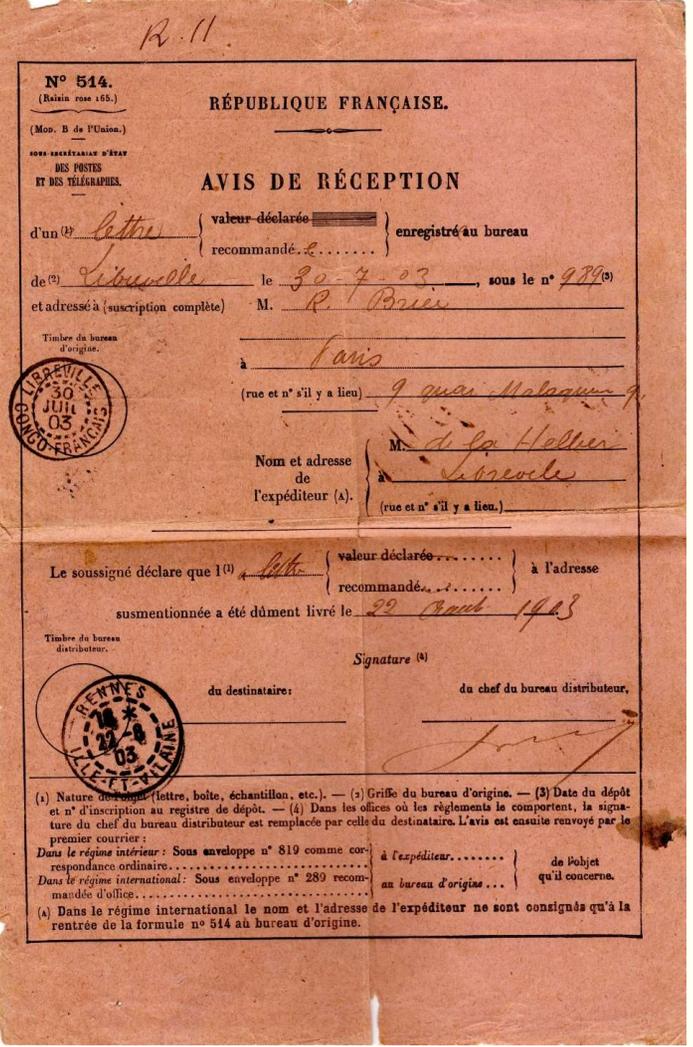
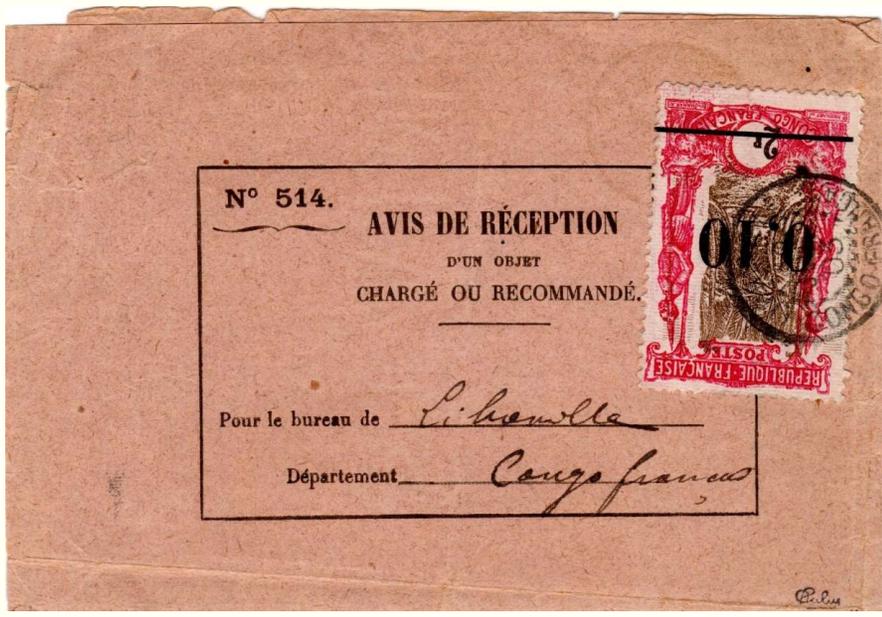
Letters

- Occasionally there was ordinary commercial mail
- This was again routed through Cabinda and Lisbon
- Ribeiro is a Portuguese name, so sender may have trusted that route more than the French route



Return Receipt

- Return receipt for letter sent from Libreville to Rennes, France
- A.R. would separately accompany letter, then be returned to sender



(1) Nature de l'objet (lettre, boîte, échantillon, etc.). — (2) Griffes du bureau d'origine. — (3) Date du dépôt et n° d'inscription au registre de dépôt. — (4) Dans les offices où les règlements le comportent, la signature du chef du bureau distributeur est remplacée par celle du destinataire. L'avis est ensuite renvoyé par le premier courrier :
 Dans le régime intérieur : Sous enveloppe n° 819 comme correspondance ordinaire. à l'expéditeur. de l'objet qu'il concerne.
 Dans le régime international : Sous enveloppe n° 289 recommandée d'office. an bureau d'origine

(5) Dans le régime international le nom et l'adresse de l'expéditeur ne sont consignés qu'à la rentrée de la formule n° 514 au bureau d'origine.

Registered Letters

- Registered mail was a way to improve deliveries if mail service was seen as undependable
- Allowed for lots of colorful postage
- These to appear to be commercial rather than philatelic mail



To Provins, France, to an employee at the mayoralty

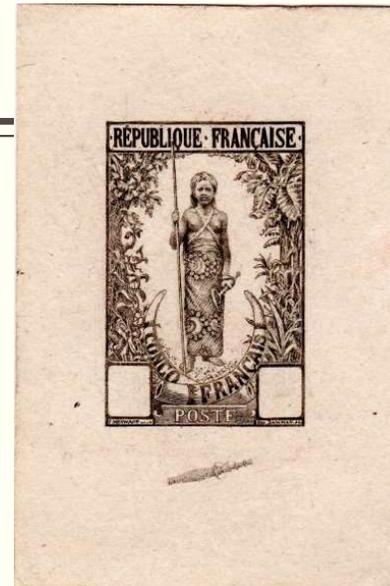
To Paris from postal official in Chad military district

PROMOTION



Damman's Sample Book

- Damman, the engraver, made a series of colored essays on card
- Not sure if before, during or after stamp production
- Serrated edges and sheathed dagger in margin set these apart
- Sheathed dagger was his “signature”



Black die proof



Damman's Samples

- Autographed for collectors? Friends?
- Serrated edges and sheathed dagger match items on previous slide
- Sheathed dagger was his "signature"

Sunken die proof



Presentation Folder

- Prepared in 1902 or later
- Damman and Chassepot engraved and printed both stamp issues
- Characteristically, there was lots of hanky-panky with the Somali Coast stamps, too

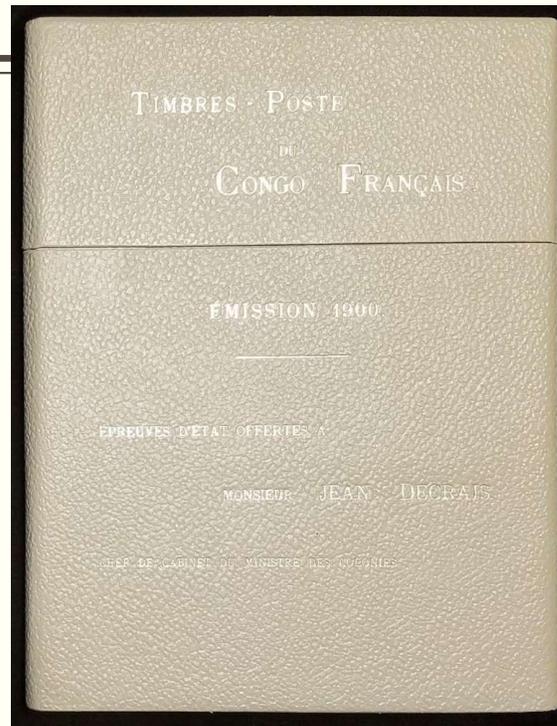


Presentation folder stamps printed from original plates. Observe design varieties on 5f.

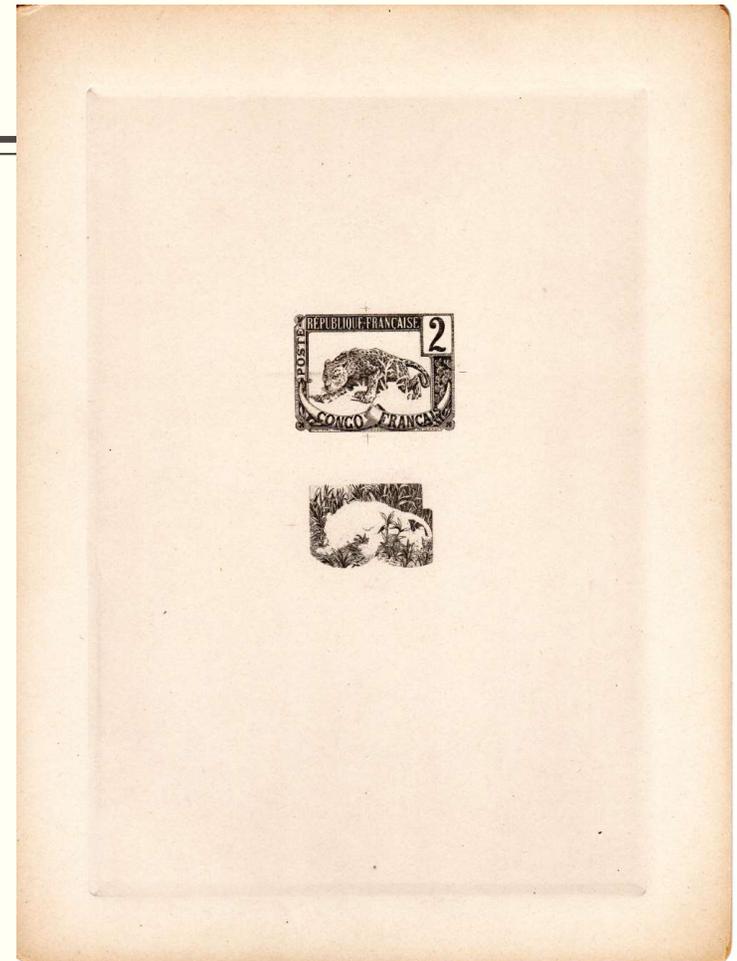


Presentation Box

- Unknown number of boxes prepared for dignitaries
- Contained three black sunken die proofs of oversized stamp designs and all 15 labels in issued colors
- Three values
 - Leopard – 2 centimes
 - Bakalois woman – 20 centimes
 - Coconut grove – 1 franc



Box - reduced



Leopard die proof

Progressive proof

- For whom did Merwart autograph this?
- Purchased as separate item

Bakalois woman
progressive die proof
(center only)



Presentation Box

- Damman engraved an oversize set of labels
- Centime values printed in various colors on thin paper
- These dies then used to prepare box contents in issued colors

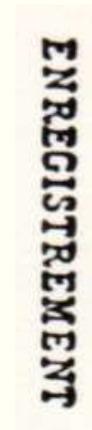


USING THE REMAINDERS



Revenue Stamps

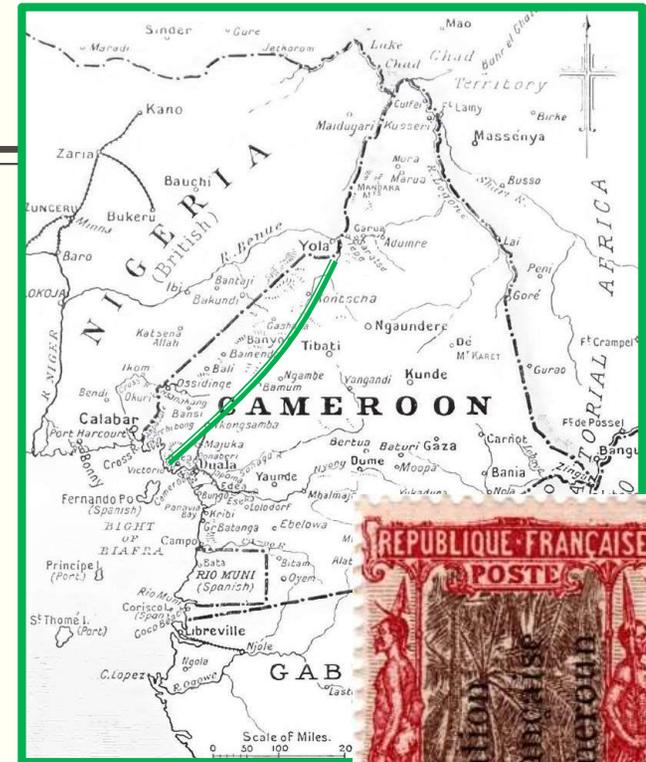
- French Congo overprinted and surcharged a half dozen stamps of this issue
- Printings were small – these three range from 500 to 1,250



Illustrations from Forbin's
1915 catalog

WWI Occupation of Cameroun

- British and French troops invaded Kamerun in 1916
- Partition ceded most to French Congo
- Each issued stamps for their occupied territory



British surcharge

Down



Up



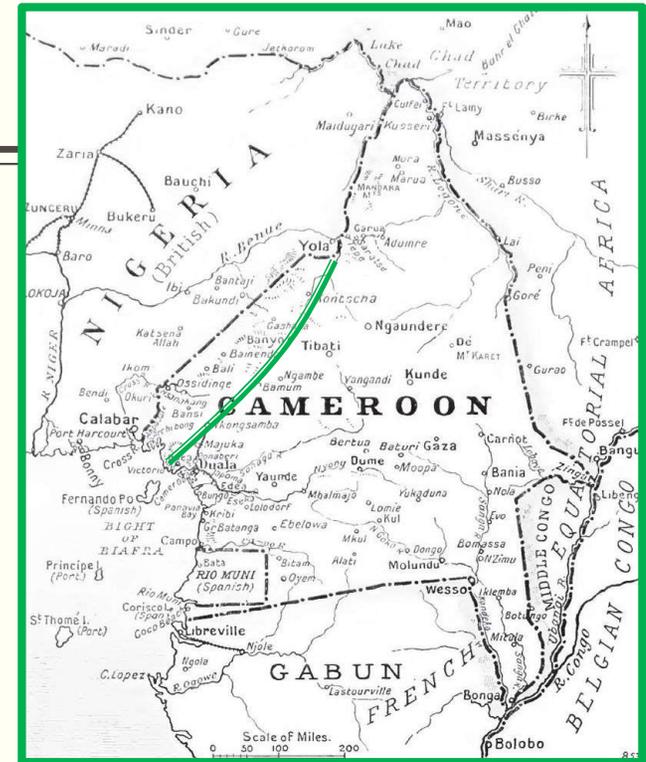
French overprint

1,000
overprinted of
each French
Congo stamp



WWI Occupation of Cameroun

- Overprints applied to half of sheet, then turned around for other half
- Many years ago I found auction with a tete-beche pair of each value



Better view of
Cameroun map

WWI Occupation of Cameroun

- Only known surviving cover with any of the French Congo overprinted stamps
- Final use of the 1900 pictorial issue
- Replaced by Middle Congo pictorial issue using similar design, standard sizes, typographed and unwatermarked



AFTER THE STAMPS



After the Stamps

- The Bakalois woman lives on
- 1928 share certificate



THE END!

