



# Use of the French Franchise Militaire Stamps (F.M.) From the Colonies During the Era of the Group Type

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# The Franchise Militaire (F.M.) Stamps

- What are these stamps?
- Why were they created?
- When were they created?
- How were they used from the Colonies during the Group Type Era?
- Was the use abused?
- **Key Reference: F. Reichenheim, *The Franchise Military Stamps of France*, London Philatelist, 1906, Volume 15, pp 29-35**
  - Details on stamps and decrees
  - No postal history



# French Military Mail Prior to 1901

- **Occupation forces and soldiers on station received a special military concession rate of 15 centimes in lieu the regular 25c rate within the French Community**
  - Rate required validation by local commander consisting of unit cachet, manuscript endorsement and commander's signature
- **Forces engaged in combat received full franchise – their mail was sent for free**
  - Franchise also required validation by local commander consisting of unit cachet, manuscript endorsement and commander's signature
- **Both types of mail required significant time to process at the point of origin before being carried to nearest post office**

# Typical Military Concession Rate

- Sent from Papeete, French Oceania in 1894
- Concession rate of 15c in lieu of 25c French Community rate
- Octagonal **CORR D'ARMEES PAPEETE** military datestamp
- Unit cachet on front
- **Manuscript validation and signature on reverse**
- Paris arrivals on front and back





Via San-Francisco-New-York

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Monsieur l'Abbé Montaine aux Religieuses  
des Chartres de St Vincent de Lambourne Saint-Jacques



France

Paris



# Typical Military Franchise Letter

- Posted Sainte Marie, Saint Marie de Madagascar in 1898
- Military cachet (Marine Unit), manuscript endorsement and commander's signature at left
- Transit and arrival on reverse
- Possibly the only recorded military franchise letter from Sainte Marie



8



Monsieur le Dr H. Bernard  
à ~~Versey~~ (~~Ht-Marnay~~)

P. P. Dijon  
Poste Restante  
Côte d'Or





# Creation of the Military Franchise Stamps

- On January 1, 1899 the military concession rate of 15c in lieu of 25c ceased to exist because the French Community rate was lowered to 15c
- Ordinary military mail treated as ordinary mail at 15c rate without validation and signatures
- All military mail became military franchise mail
- Complex validation process continued for franchise mail
- How might the process be simplified?



# Creation of the Military Franchise Stamps

- In 1901 France authorized creation of the military franchise stamps and a system to go with it
- The existing 15c Type Mouchon (Designer) French Community rate stamps were overprinted **F.M.** for use in the world-wide French military system



# Rules Under Which the Stamps Were Used

- Each member of the military was allowed two free **F.M.** stamps to send two free letters each month not exceeding 15g (First weight level)
- For letters exceeding 15g additional postage and registration, if requested, was to be prepaid with regular postage
- Two franchise militaire stamps could not be used on a single letter
- If two stamps were not used in a given month, the right to use them was voided and did not carry over to the next month
- Use of the **F.M.** stamps replaced the standard validation procedures
- The stamps were considered to have no value and could be used only on French Community mail
- The stamps were not valid to non-French destinations
- The distribution and use of the stamps was to be handled by the local Quartermaster
- Details for ordering the new stamps were developed

# Reality of the Use of the F.M Stamps

- The success of the use of these stamps depended on the ability of the French to get them to soldiers around the world on a timely basis.
  - For troops on station and not engaged in combat this was not a problem
  - For troops engaged in combat and changing locations rapidly, the timely delivery of stamps was not at the top of the priority list

# Reality of the Use of the F.M. Stamps

- Since it was not possible to readily provide stamps to troops engaged in combat, the F.M. stamps were used as follows:
  - Troops not engaged in combat but doing occupation or police duties received and used the stamps
  - Troops engaged in combat continued use of the old military franchise free mail system with its standard validation procedures
- This had not been clearly realized prior to this study

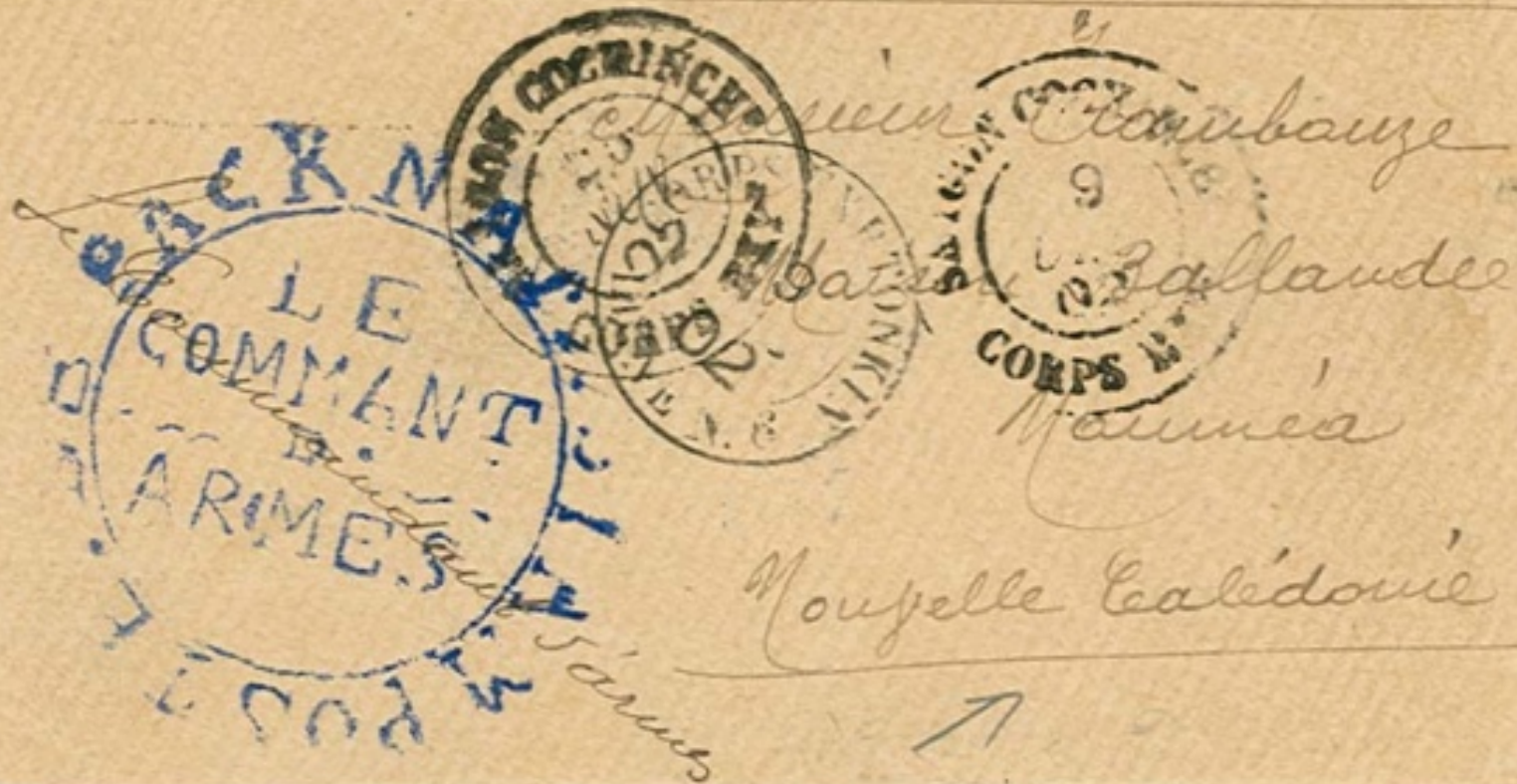


# Use of the Old System in Combat Areas

- Military franchise letter from November 1902
- French Indochinese forces attempting to conquer territory during the campaign in Siam
- Endorsement and military cachet used for validation
- Cachet: **POSTE DE PAK NAM SIAM**
- Mailed to Noumea, New Caledonia – Only example recorded
- This campaign failed



Troupes d'occupation de Chantama







occur until mid

- 15c Mouchon –
- Retouched 15c
- 15c Semuse (lig
- 10c Semuse (ro
- Rate change to



1903

1904

- 10c Semuse (vermillon) – August 1907

# Use of the Stamps

- The French American Colonies
- The West African Colonies
- The Indian Ocean Colonies
- Indochina
- The French Pacific Colonies
- **It is important to note that these stamps had no monetary value and were essentially labels to indicate a type of mail service. Thus, they were used until supplies were consumed, even when newer values were available or when the value shown on the stamp was no longer the valid French Community postal rate**



# American Colonies - French Guiana: Earliest Recorded Use August 2, 1901



# Guadeloupe: Small Village of Baie Mahault

## Gendarmerie Guadeloupe Handstamp



Guadeloupe: **GENDARMERIE DE LA  
GUADELOUPE** Handstamp January 11, 1908  
With 10c Sower



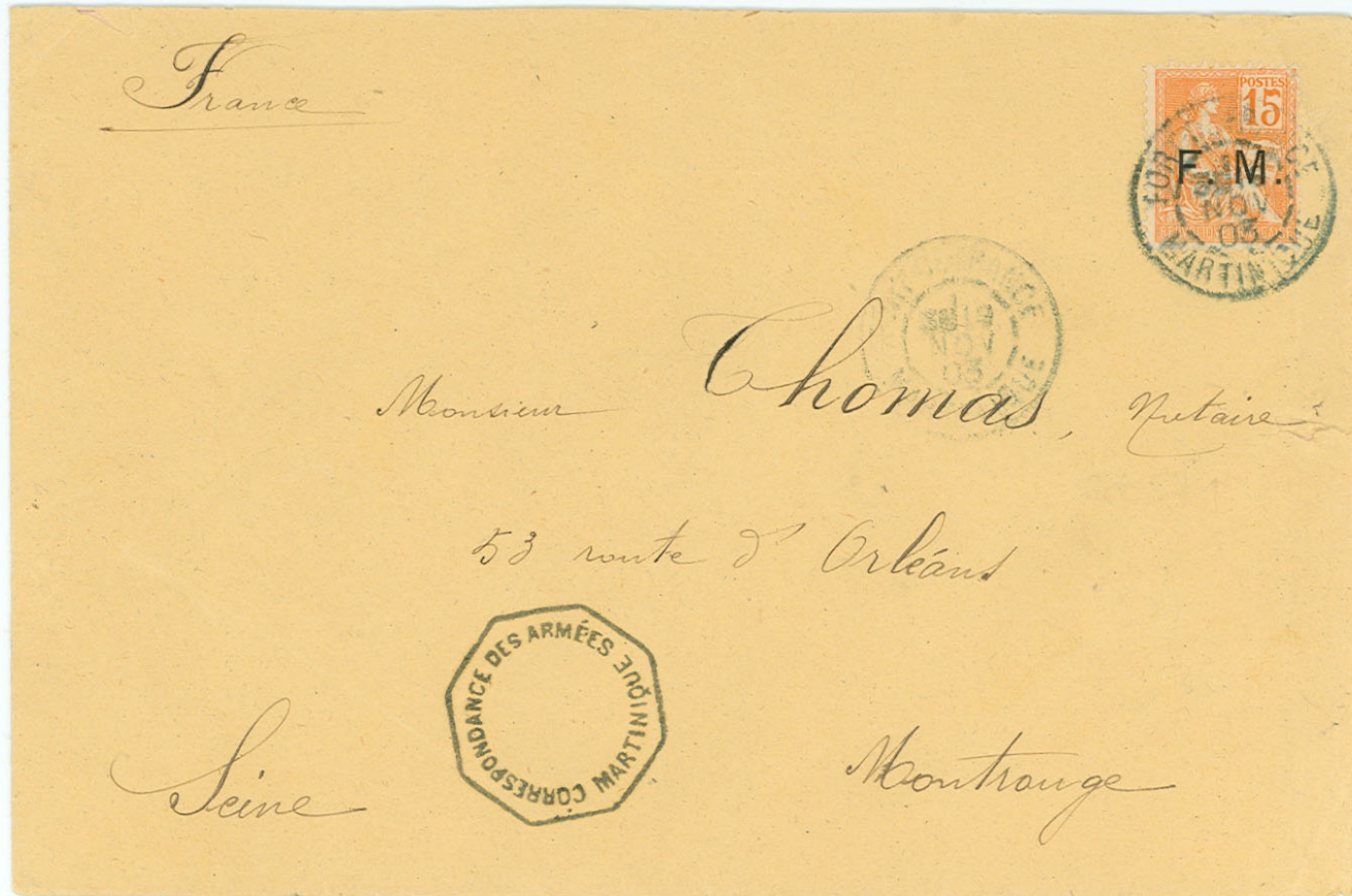


Guadeloupe: Improper Use of Two Stamps, Not Caught by  
Originating Office at Saint Claude, Thus Incorrectly Allowed



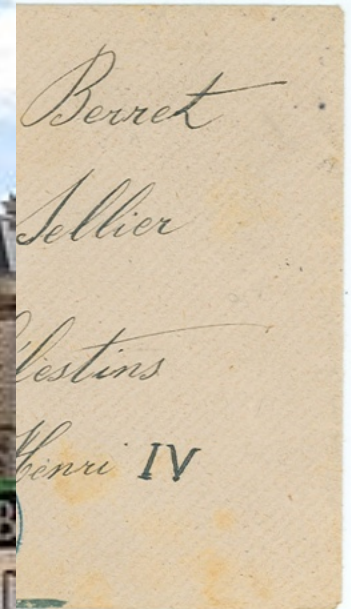


Martinique: Fort-de-France, November 19, 1903  
With Octagonal Military Handstamp (Not Required)



# Martinique: Riviere Pilote

- Posted from the small village of Ri
- February 8,
- **Use of the  
Franchise M  
stamp**
- Incomplete  
delivery not  
until August  
Paris







Monsieur Berret  
Maître-Sellier

Caserne des Célestins

16 Boulevard Henri IV



# Saint Pierre & Miquelon

- Originated in little village of Miquelon
- From the Gendarmerie
- Registration required prepayment with regular 25c stamp
- Major rarity on all accounts
- Only recorded example







# West African Colonies

- Senegal – Limited use as not lots of troops stationed there
- French Sudan – extensive use as extensive military campaigns and occupation underway during the 1902 – 1915 period
- French Guinea and Dahomey – have not seen use from these colonies
- French Congo and Ivory Coast - Limited use

# French Sudan: Sikasso (Small Village)

## August 6, 1904 to Lyon

- This is a properly franked registered double weight letter (15 – 30 g)
- Franking:
  - F.M. stamp for the first 15g
  - 15c Group Type for the next 15g
  - 25c Group Type for registration





*Madame*



*4/9*

*Madame et Monsieur Frantz Canisiat  
8 Rue Servians 8*

*Amur*

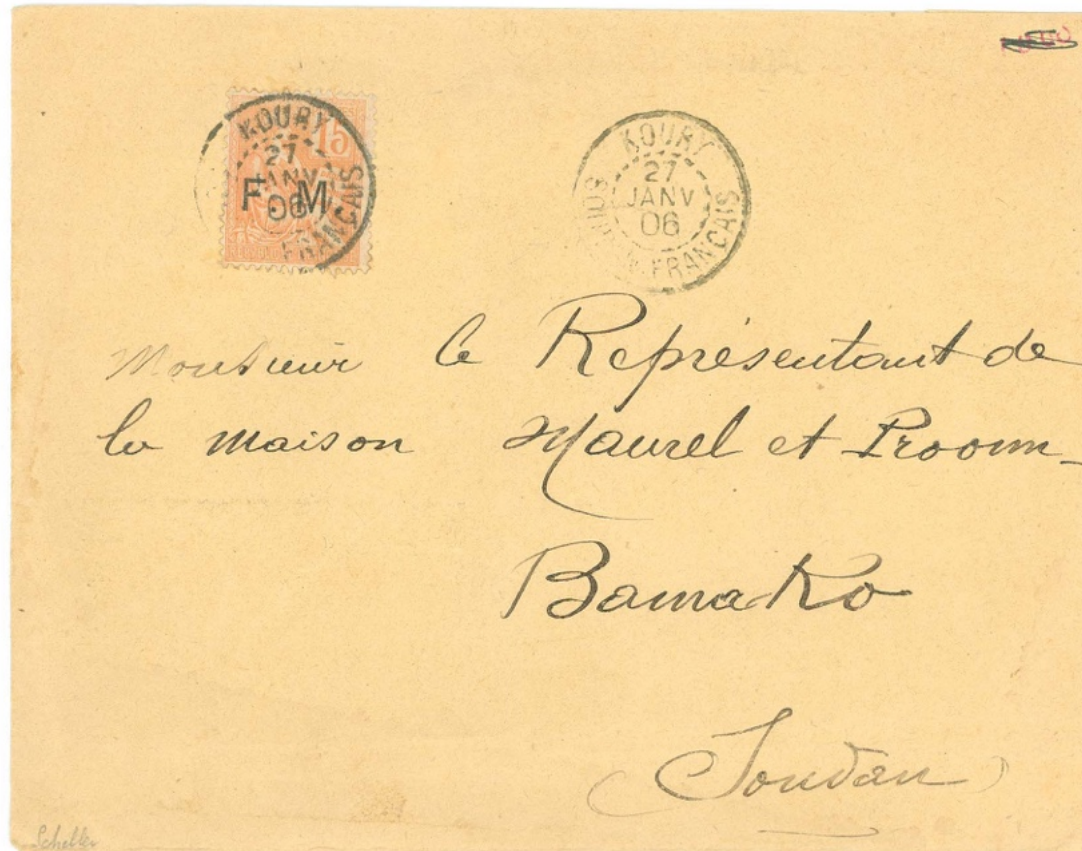


*Lyon  
Rhône*

*inst. G. J. G. J. G.*



# French Sudan: Koury (Small Village) January 27, 1906 Local Use to Bamako, the Capitol



**Note: At this time the 15c Semuse F.M. stamps were available, but use of the existing stock of older stamps continued until they were consumed.**



# Goumbou, Upper Senegal & Niger

## April 18, 1907 (RRRR)



First example of the use of a 15c stamp  
when the French Community rate was 10c



# Ivory Coast – Bouake 1914



# French Congo: Impfondo February 13, 1913 Village Deep Within Congo – 10c Sower Stamp



# The French Indian Ocean Colonies

- Madagascar
- Reunion
- French India
- There was no significant military activity or presence in Obock/Djibouti/Somali Coast during this period

# Madagascar: Diego Suarez - January 21, 1908 to Bel Abbés, Algeria a Small Village

Note use of the second F.M. stamp (revised Mouchon design) nominally valued at 15c when the French Community rate was only 10c. Still valid usage.

Bel Abbes was a center of the French Foreign Legion and its activities.



# Use With Provisional -56- Numeral Cancel From the Newly Opened Office at Sitampitky



# Posted on the Reunion – Marseille French Packet While at the Port of Diego Suarez



# Posted at Diego Suarez With Request for Registration (25c) in 1908



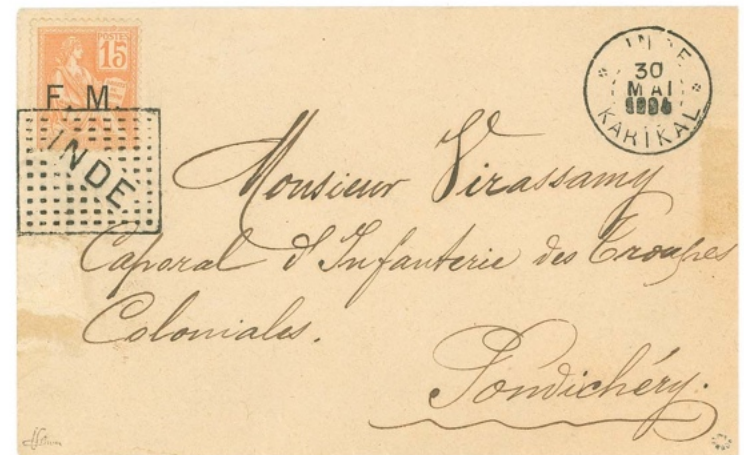
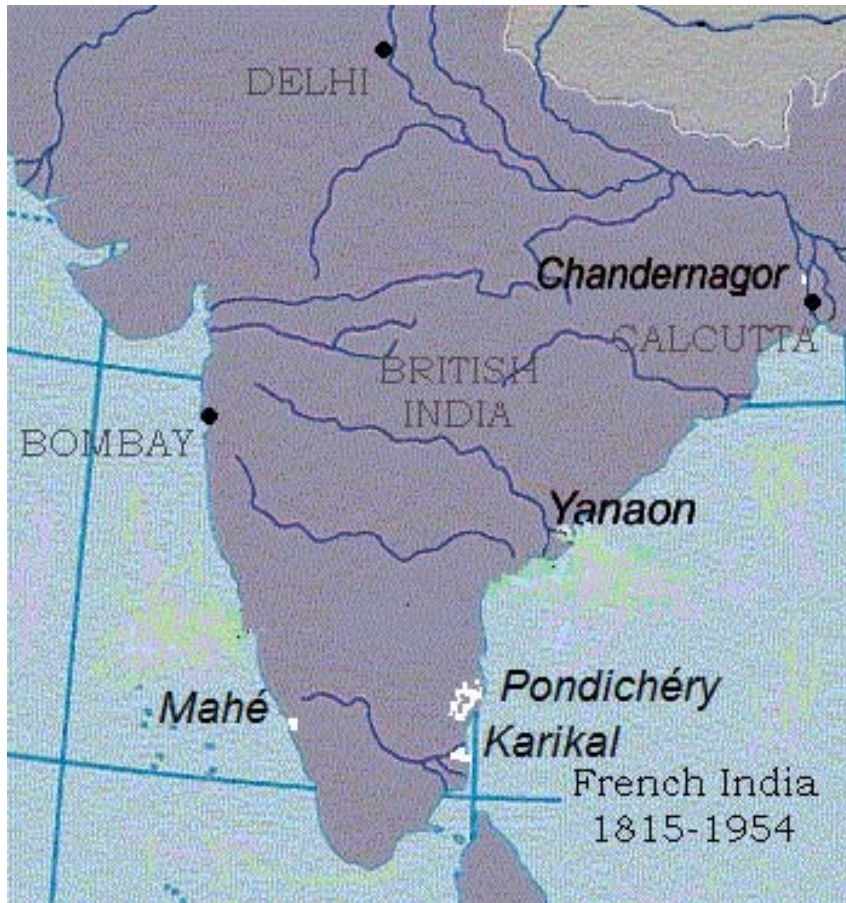


# Reunion: Posting from Saint Denis Principal Commercial Center

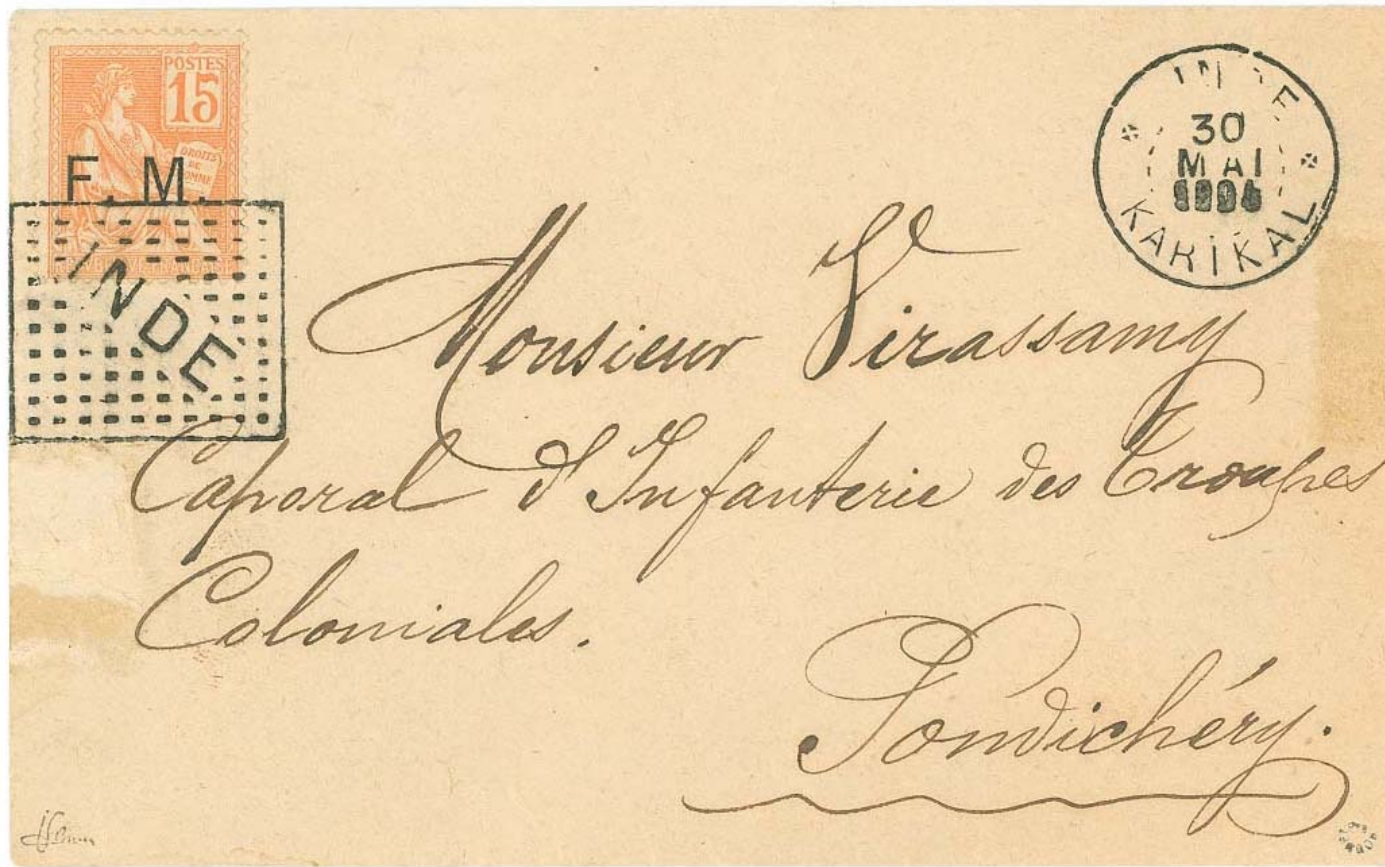




# French India



# French India: Posting From the Small Village of Karikal in 1906 – Boxed **INDE** Cancel



# Indochina

- Most Complex Colony
  - Cochinchina – Military Occupation
  - Annam – Military Occupation
  - Tonkin – Military Occupation and Active Combat
  - Cambodia – Active Combat
  - Laos – Active Combat
  - French Offices in China – Occupation and Combat depending on which office



# Incorrectly Applied to Post Card to Switzerland Not Valid and Corrected With 10c Group Type



Posted at Soctrang, Cochinchine



# Banghoi, Annam 1905



# Tonkin, Indochina



Village of Hon-Gay 1905

Village of Viettri 1906



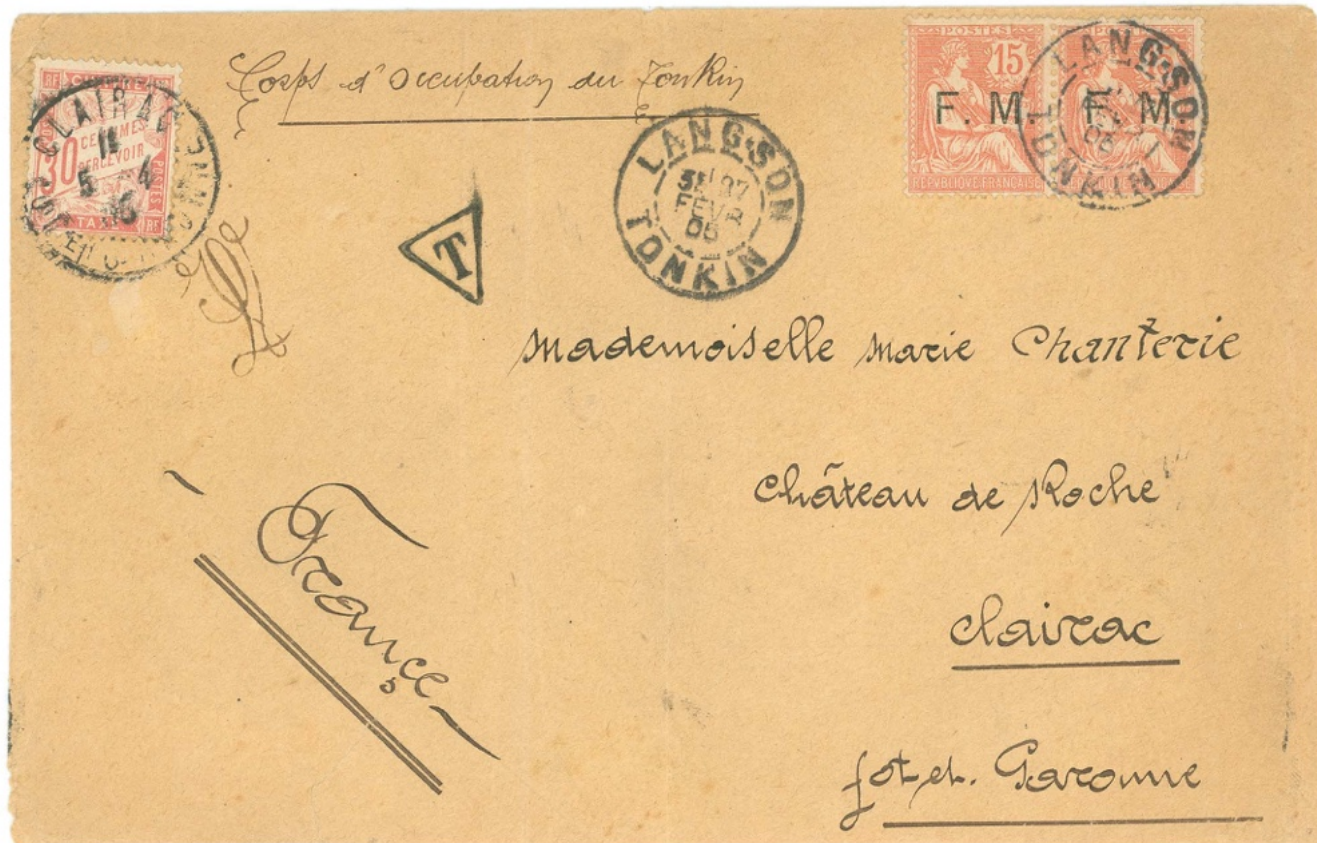


# Village of Cao-Bang 1905

Second Weight Level with 15c in Postage Stamps



Proper Treatment of Attempted Use of Two F.M. Stamps:  
Second Stamp Not Accepted, Letter Considered 15c Underpaid  
and Charged 30c Due at Arriving Post Office



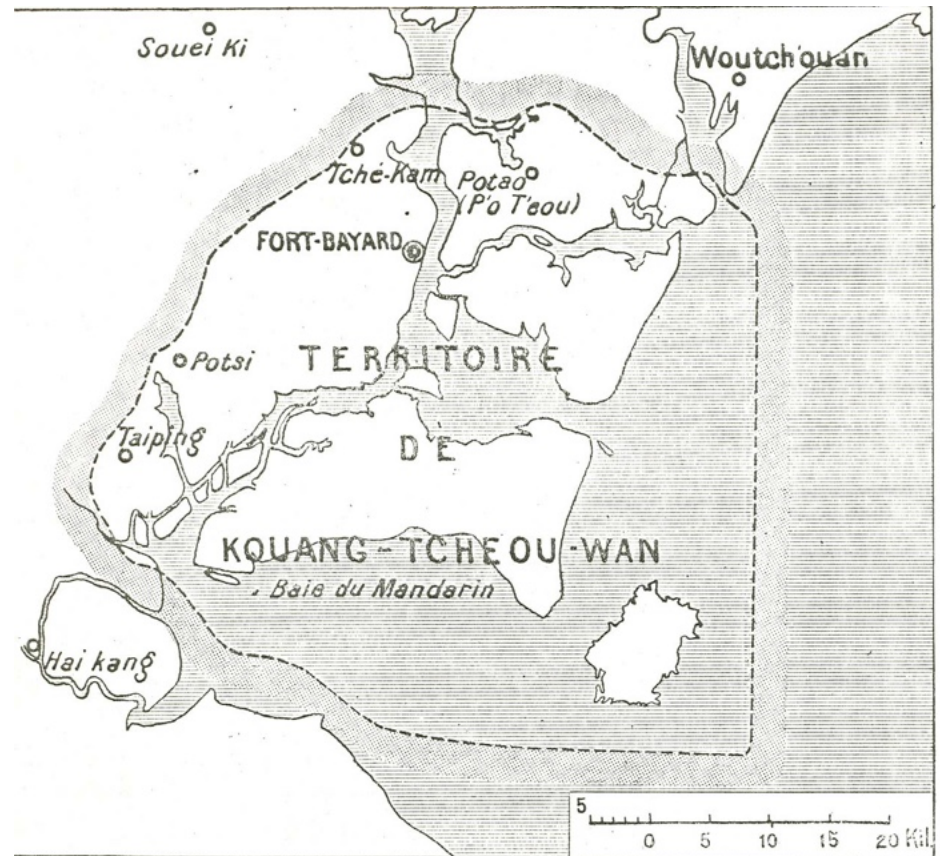
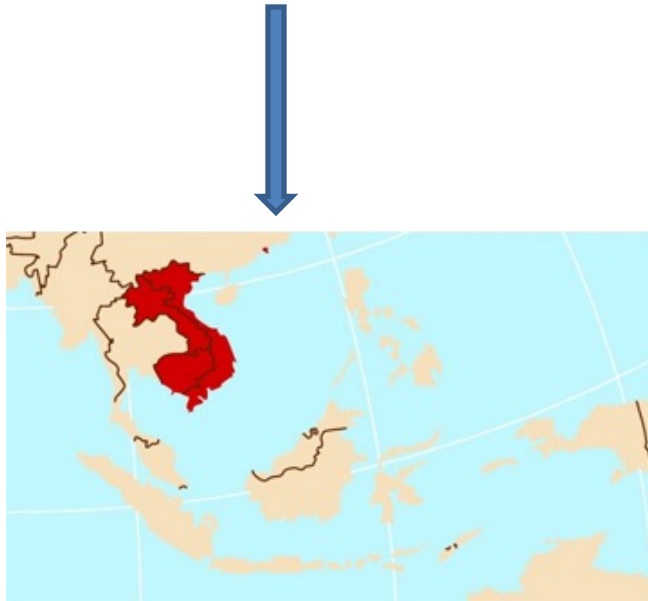


The Cambodia and Laos collection of S. Chazen (CEO of Occidental Petroleum in his day) was just sold by Cherrystone Auctions in May 2021

A number of exceptional Cambodia and Laos military pieces were included in this collection, but no uses of the **F.M.** stamps from Cambodia or Laos during the Era of the Group Type were included. If Chazen did not have any of these, I seriously doubt they exist.

# Kwangchow-wan, China

## French Territory in China Administered by Indochina



# Fort Bayard, Kwangchow-wan 1907

## CHINE Datestamp





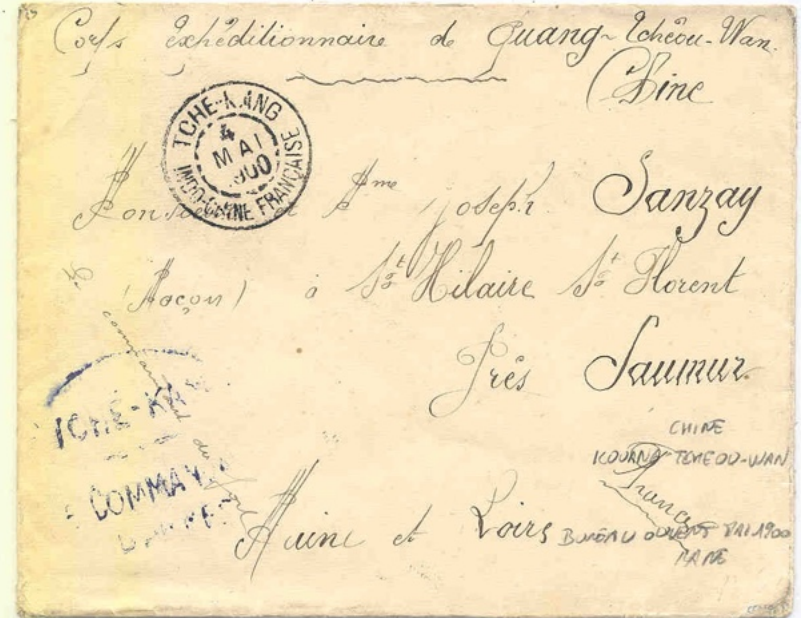
# Fort Bayard, Kwangchow-wan 1910 INDOCHINE Datestamp





# A Quick Break in the Action

- In Nov 2019 I sold the Group Type Collection (about 2700 covers) via SPINK
- They prepared 3 catalogs for three sessions over two days with about 1500 lots
- The most surprising lot in the sale was a military franchise cover from Kwangchowan
- I purchased this cover from David Wrigley in 2003 for \$3500



This Cover Realized 26,000 Euros in the Sale: The most expensive lot and the greatest appreciation in value



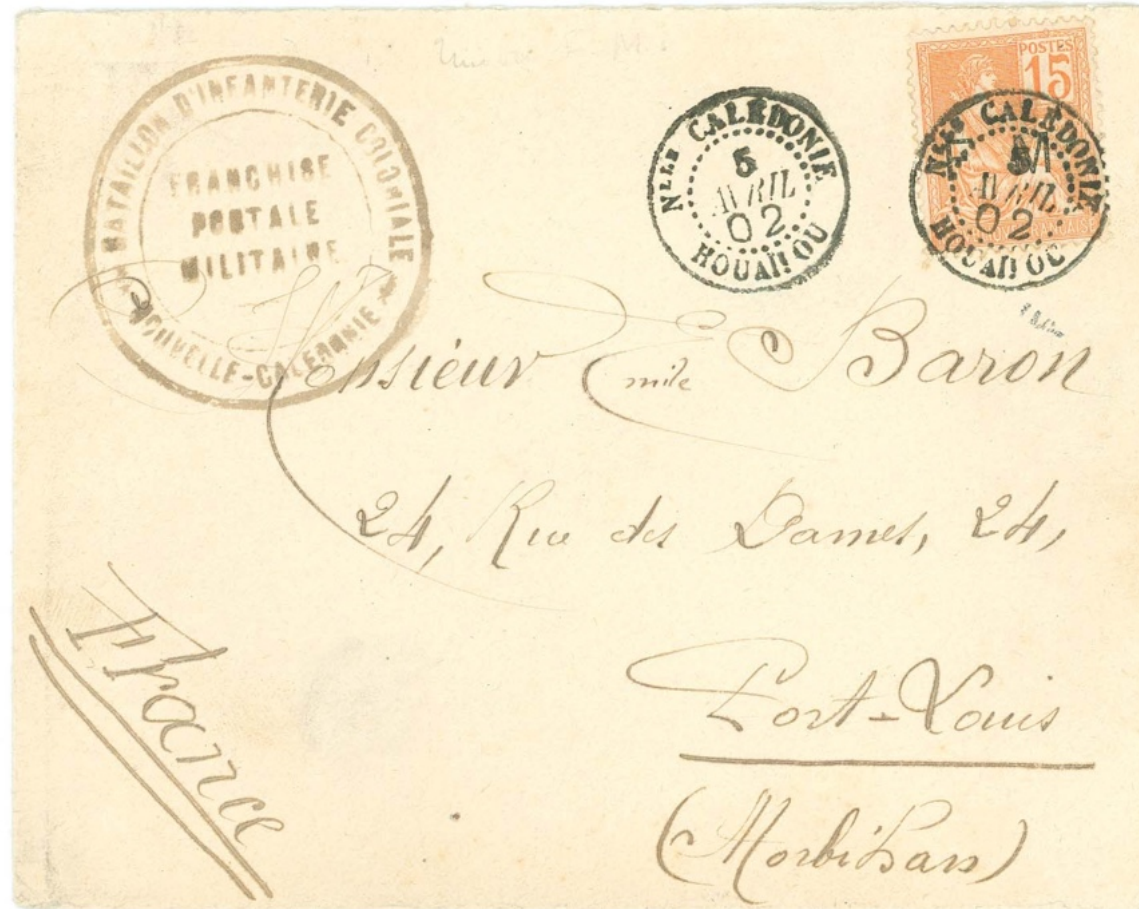
# Tchong-King-Chine

## February 20, 1914





# New Caledonia: Small Village at Houailou – April 1902





Nouméa, New Caledonia - USA: Illegally Used in Combination with 10c Group Type to Prepay 25c Rate – Not Noted in Nouméa or Napa (Alain Millet Collection)



# New Hebrides: Use From Port Villa January 7, 1904 (corrected) Under New Caledonia Administration

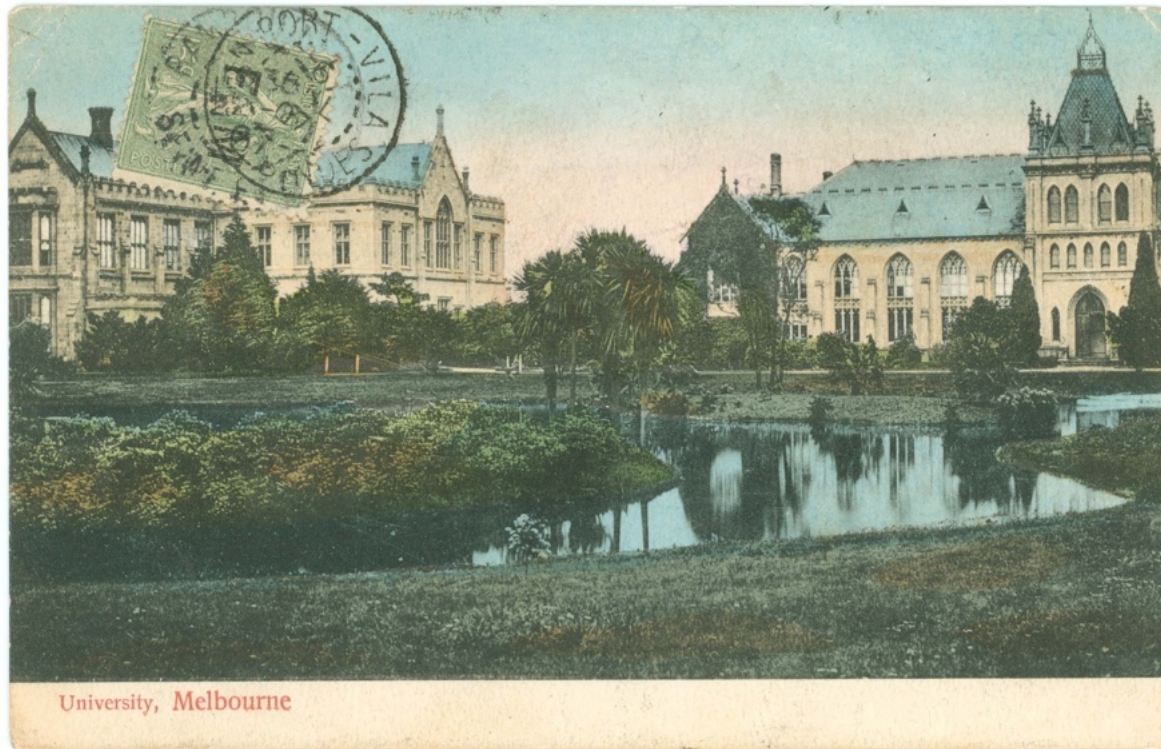




# New Hebrides: Use From Port Vila 1907



# New Hebrides: Use From Port Vila on a Post card in 1907





# Papeete, Tahiti 1903

## Two Examples Recorded



# Conclusions From this Study

- The F.M. stamps were used only by troops on station and not engaged in combat
- The regular military franchise system continued for those troops engaged in combat
- Although the stamps were to remove the need for standard endorsements and cachets for military mail, such continued to a small degree
- Not all military postmasters were completely familiar with the rules governing the use of the F.M. stamps, and errors (use of two stamps and use to foreign destinations) occurred
- The stamps were used as available and not according to the most current or those corresponding to the current French Community rate – 15c stamps continued to be used when the French Community rate dropped to 10c
- It has taken 30 years to assemble the ~50 covers in this collection
- Key Reference: E. Grabowski, *The Era of the French Colonial Group Type: Use of the French Franchise Militaire Stamps From the Colonies*; 2015, OPUS 15, **European Academy of Philately**, pp 171-188.
  - New details on the use of the stamps
  - Large amount of postal history in support of new conclusions

# Remembering the FCPS Circa 1980 ASDA Show October 1980 FCPS Booth

- **George Guzzio:** Renown Topical Collector – Penguins, Mozart, Wagner
- **John Lievsay:** Former FCPS President, Plater of the 25c Ceres of 1871 (LG – Tokyo), National and International Judge, Commissioner, AIEP Expert
- **Ray Gaillaguet:** Heart of the RIPEX Show, acknowledged expert and exhibitor of the Bordeaux and Sower Issues
- **Bob Stone:** FCP Editor for 20 years and winner of the Lichtenstein Medal
- **Ira Zweifach:** NYC Program Chair and Banquet Chair for 30 years – he never missed a meeting or a dinner!
- All have left this world, with John the most recent: April 2021



