

# RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA



Postcard from Segboroué representing two trains leaving the station of Pahou, on the Dahomey western line (Cotonou) – Pahou – Ouidah – Segbouroué (58 km) sent through the **mail agent on the railway line OUIDAH À COTONOU** (standard type ondulated postmark of 17/02/1908)

The **French Empire in Sub-Saharan Africa** extended over slightly less than 8 millions km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. about one third of that macro-region. Its colonization faced a number of obstacles: sicknesses, wild animals, resistance from the local populations, as well as huge distances combined with the lack of suitable links to the hinterland (with the exception of some navigable rivers). Thus, the realization of a number of **railway lines** was started, in order to ensure: independence from animal traction (impossible in some areas due to the presence of tsetse flies), as well as much higher transport capacity, speed and economic efficiency than traditional means. In order to lower the construction costs, such lines were built with **low standards**: narrow track gauge, relatively light tracks, tortuous alignments to avoid obstacles and limit major works, etc.

Despite this technical limitation, such railway lines have been for many decades the **backbone of the transport** in the area. They allowed the export of raw materials and the supply of all goods necessary to the settlers, as well the control of the large colonized territories. Among their key functions there was also the **carriage of mail**. In most territories **mail agents** (called “*convoyeurs*”) were travelling on the train to accompany mail bags, but also to ensure the collection of mail directly from customers (including the registered one), as well as from the stations’ and trains’ mail boxes. They were also usually in charge of the sale of postage stamps.

In several small stops along African lines the mail agents on trains represented the **unique available postal service**, so that posting letters directly to them was a common practice for the few able to write that lived in such remote places. On the other hand, they do not were travelling post offices with sorting facilities, so their cancel are found typically as cancellers of the franked mail, but not in transit. Typically *convoyeurs*’ **postmarks indicated the terminals of the lines** they travelled (with few exceptions), so they were modified as soon as the railways were extended further inland.

The story of their work is told here by presenting letters and postcard cancelled by such postmarks used during about one century of operations in the railway systems of Sub-saharan French colonies. Mail handled by *convoyeurs*’ in the period after the independences of such Countries are also exhibited.

In the case of Cameroun, that was a German colony before the First World War, the *Bahnpost* service run by German authorities in that phase is also examined.

## Plan of the exhibit

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### Notes on the philatelic description and presentation

- In the tariff description, the word “domestic” indicates the rates that were in force for all the French area (France & colonies)
- In the following pages full size reproductions of the postal markings are shown only when they are not easily readable on the covers



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

## 1.1 Dakar – Saint Louis: the first railway of West Africa

July 6<sup>th</sup> 1885 was the opening date of the last section of the **Dakar - Thiès - Saint Louis railway** (265 km, meter gauge), the first line of West Africa, in order to facilitate the trade of goods (as the peanuts) to be exported via Dakar port. Saint Louis was at the estuary of the Senegal river, so creating a multimodal connection to the inland.

The **convoyeur** service started from the first years of operation. Differently to the system developed in France where the convoyeurs were mail clerks working in a reserved compartment, the “convoyeur” service was similar to a travelling post office (i.e. an *ambulant*): a dedicated wagon was included in each train and the “courrier convoyeur” operating there was in charge of collecting and distributing mail at the stations along the line, but also of the sorting of it (Gouvernement Générale de l'AOF, *Les postes et télégraphes en Afrique Occidentale*, 1907).



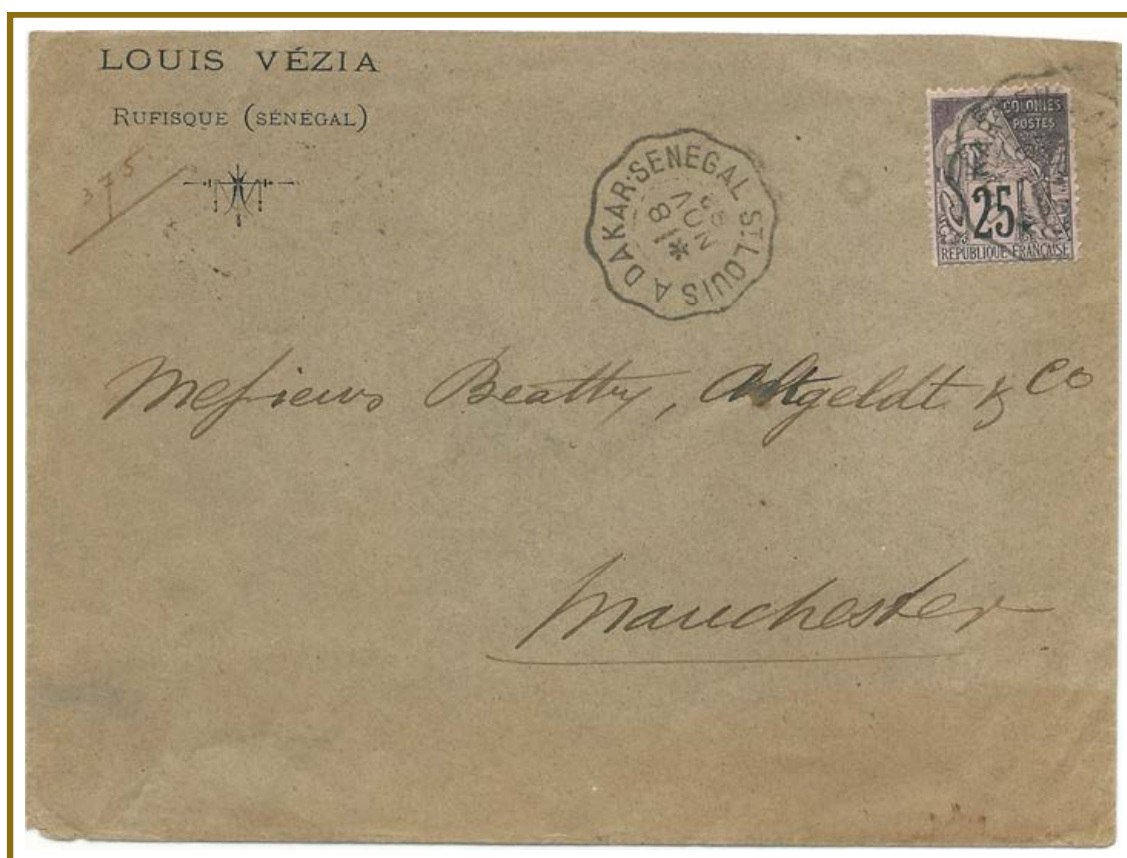
The clerks were equipped with their own cancelling postmark to cancel the mail that was directed consigned to him uncanceled. The *convoyeur* markings were of the same type of the ones used in France (i.e. **undulated circle**). On this line distinctive markings were used according to the direction of travelling (Dakar to Saint Louis or vice-versa).

first type of convoyeur marking

**UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME**

→SAINT LOUIS to DAKAR

(Known period of use: 1887-1903)



From Rufisque (as from the text on the back), to Manchester (UK), **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking of the first type used on the line in the southbound direction “SAINT LOUIS À DAKAR – SENEGAL” (8/11/1892). Cancelled in transit with Dakar datestamp (9/11) and Paris (18/11), and at the arrival in Manchester (20/11), all such markings on the reverse

**Senegal convoyeur postmark on 25 cent. Alphée Dubois not recorded on letter by Maury catalogue**

**Tariff:** Letter (up to 15 gr.) rate to UPU countries (25 cent.)

# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

The first type of markings are known accompanied by dated station markings (linear or circular), that are likely to have been used by station masters to indicated date and locality of origin (either for mail he sent, or for cards handed to him asking for transmitting it to the *convoyeur* when the train passed through the station).

Postcard to Paris, **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking of the first type used on the line in the southbound direction "SAINT LOUIS À DAKAR – SENEGAL" (date unreadable). Dated railway linear station marking ("griffe") of M'GUIK SAKÉ of 8/08/190?

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for postcards with date and signature only (5 cent.)



first type of convoyeur marking  
UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND  
COLONY NAME ("•" between city names)

→ DAKAR to SAINT LOUIS (Known period of use: 1889)

Piece of letter **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle marking of the first type used on the line in the northbound direction "DAKAR • SAINT LOUIS – SENEGAL" (18/11/1889).

Type with "•" not recorded in the literature

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 15 gr. (15 cent.)



"A" between city names

→ DAKAR to SAINT LOUIS (Known period of use: 1887-1904)

Postcard to Bordeaux (France), **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle marking of the first type used on the line in the northbound direction "DAKAR À SAINT LOUIS – SENEGAL" (date bloc missing). "Trouvée à la boîte" (found in the mailbox) linear boxed marking, probably indicating that – at the arrival in France – for some reason the postcard was posted in mailbox instead of being handled directly to the post office distribution service. Arrival postmark of Bordeaux (15/01/1906).

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for illustrated postcards (10 cent.)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In the following years the *convoyeurs* were equipped with several other types of markings, with or without the name of the colony.

## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI ONLY, large letters

→ SAINT LOUIS to DAKAR

(Known period of use: 1899-1906)

Letter to Paris, **consigned to the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking of the second type, southbound direction "SAINT LOUIS À DAKAR" (5/04/1900). Dakar transit postmark on the back (same date). Then sent by the French Paquebot n.1 on the Line J from Buenos Aires to Bordeaux (octagonal blue datestamp, same date) that called at Dakar. An exemplar of the fast transmission of mail between the different carriers.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for franked letter up to 15 gr. (15 cent.)



## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI ONLY, small letters

→ SAINT LOUIS to DAKAR

(Known period of use: 1899-1906)



Postcard from Saint Louis (16/02/1906) to Oloron Ste Marie (France), **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking of the third type, southbound direction "SAINT LOUIS À DAKAR" (16/02/1906). Arrival postmark of Oloron Ste Marie on the reverse (09/03/1906).

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for illustrated postcards with date and signature only (5 cent.)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI ONLY, small letters

→ DAKAR to SAINT LOUIS

(Known period of use: 1899-1907)



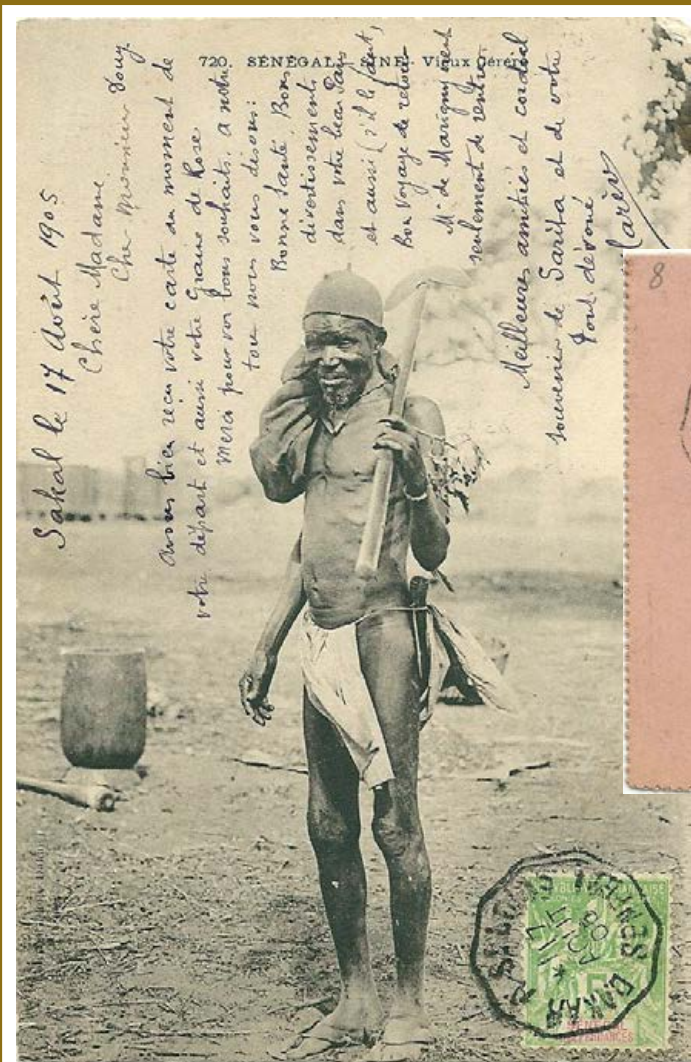
From Rufisque to Saint-Louis, **collected by the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking of the third type, northbound direction "DAKAR À SAINT LOUIS" (21/08/1918). **Last known date.**

**Tariff:** Military free franking (F.M.)

From 1902 it is known another type including again the name of the colony, but – differently from the first type – it is not written consecutively after the line termini.

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI ONLY AND COLONY NAME (not consecutive)

→ DAKAR to SAINT LOUIS (Known period of use: 1891-1907)



↑ Lettercard from Rufisque (as from the internal text), to Paris, **handed on the train postal clerk** who cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking of the 4<sup>th</sup> type "DAKAR À SAINT LOUIS / SENEGAL" (23/11/1891). **Earliest known date.**

**Tariff:** Domestic lettercard rate (15 cent.)

← Postcard from Sakal (as from the text of postcard), to Paris, **handed on the train postal clerk** who cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking of the 4<sup>th</sup> type, "DAKAR À SAINT LOUIS / SENEGAL" (17/08/1905). Partial franking on the back.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for illustrated postcards (10 cent.)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In the thirties of last century the line began to be seriously competed by road transport, especially for passenger movements. It remains however the transport means of the mail.

Marking devices used from several decades were retrieved, and the *convoyeurs* agents were provided with new postmarks characterized by the presence of a star in the lower part of the undulated circle.

UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH  
LINE TERMINI  
AND STAR

→ SAINT LOUIS to  
DAKAR

(Known period of use:  
1925-1936)

Air letter to Lyon, handed  
on the train postal clerk  
and cancelled by him with  
the undulated circle date  
marking of the fifth type,  
southbound direction  
"SAINT LOUIS À DAKAR /  
★" (16/05/1929).  
Marseille transit postmark  
on reverse (19/05/1929)

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate  
up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) +  
airmail surtax to France up  
to 10 gr. (3 francs)



UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH LINE  
TERMINI AND STAR

→ DAKAR to SAINT  
LOUIS

(Known period of use:  
1925-1936)

Letter to Saint Louis,  
collected by the train postal  
clerk and cancelled by him  
with the undulated circle date  
marking of the first type used  
on the line in the northbound  
direction "DAKAR À SAINT  
LOUIS / ★" (15/10/1936).  
Arrival postmark of Saint  
Louis on reverse (same date).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up  
to 20 gr. (50 cent.)





# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

## 1.2 From Dakar to Niger

The need of opening up the French Sudan colony (today's Mali) pushed for the construction of a railway line from **Kayes** (starting point of the navigable stretch of the Senegal river to Saint Louis) to **Bamako and Koulikoro**, on the Niger river (563 km, meter gauge). The line created a mixed river-rail-river connection between all the hinterland of French West Africa and the Ocean. It was completed in 1904.

The **convoyeur** service started as soon as the first stretch of the line were completed (even if postal history literature – as Waugh, 1987 and COL.FRA, 2000 – mention 1908 as starting year).

Their task was the same as on the Dakar – Saint Louis line. They were equipped with cancelling postmarks of different types. The termini of their service were indicated, so they varied with the extension of the railway. Distinctive markings were used according to the direction of travelling.



Extension of railway line in Senegal and French Sudan in 1912 (from: *Gouvernement général. L'Afrique occidentale française, ed. 1912*)

Sur le chemin de fer, un service de courrier convoyeur a été organisé. L'agent de la poste fait chaque semaine un voyage aller et retour de Kayes au terminus, et distribue aux arrêts dans les gares les correspondances et les colis postaux, inscrit et donne reçu des lettres et objets recommandés, vend des timbres, assure en un mot le service d'un bureau de poste mobile. Les voyages ont lieu : 1° le lendemain de l'arrivée à Kayes du courrier de France; 2° la semaine suivante pour que sa rentrée ait lieu la veille du départ de Kayes du courrier pour le Sénégal et l'Europe. Les habitants de la ligne ont ainsi le service postal à leur disposition.

Source: *Gouvernement général de l'Afrique occidentale française, Territoires du Haut-Sénégal Moyen-Niger. 1900-1903, ed. 1904*

first type of convoyeur marking

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND LETTER "A", small letters

→ KOULIKORO to KAYES

(Known period of use: 1908-1915)



From Kati, 10/12/1910 (as from the text on the back) to Ainay-Le-Vieil (France), **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking of the first type used on the line in the westbound direction "KOULIKORO À KAYES A" (same date). Arrival cancel of Ainay-Le-Vieil on reverse (04/01/1910)

**Tariff:** Domestic postcard rate (10 cent.)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

The first type of marking included a letter “A”, “B” or “D”, most likely to distinguish different brigades of convoyeurs.

The use of “KOULIKORO A KAYES” (and vice-versa) markings continued also when the line was extended westbound to Thiès on the Saint-Louis – Dakar line, indicating that some of the convoyeurs service were limited on the East section in French Soudan.

first type of convoyeur marking

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND LETTER “B”, small letters

→ KOULIKORO to KAYES

(Known period of use: 1908 - 1930)



Air letter to Le Canadel (France), **handed on the train postal clerk** that cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking of the first type, eastbound direction “KOULIKORO A KAYES / B” (7/07/1930). “Dakar Avion” transit postmark (10/08/30) e arrival postmark (unreadable) on the reverse. “Par Avion” etiquette cancelled by a crossing, since the *convoyeur* (or a postal agent that handled the letter after him) considered the franking not sufficient. One stamp removed.

**Tariff:** Correct rate was 50 cent. for domestic letter up to 20 gr., + the airmail surtax to France of 3 francs every 10 gr. Most likely the removed stamp was another 50 cent, so that the total franking was 3,50 francs, but the weight was higher than 10 gr., so the letter was not admitted by air transport.

On the French Soudan section of the line some trains were limited to Bamako, so also *convoyeurs* are known to be operated between **Bamako** and **Kayes** only. Based on the postal markings, such services shall have been activated in the 1920's.

UNDULATED CIRCLE  
WITH LINE TERMINI  
AND STAR

→ BAMAKO to KAYES

(Known period of use:  
1920-1926)



Letter to Le Paris, **collected by the train postal clerk** who cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking eastbound direction “BAMAKO A KAYES / ★” (20/09/1924). No markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr.



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→KAYES to BAMAKO

(Known period of use:  
1920-1928)

Black ink

Domestic letter from Kayes to Bamako consigned to the train postal clerk who cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking eastbound direction "KAYES A BAMAKO / ★" in black ink (29/09/1926). Bamako arrival marking on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (40 cent.)



## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→KAYES to DAKAR

(Known period of use:  
1932-1934)

Blue ink

Type unrecorded in the  
literature

Air letter to Nice (France) presented to the **convoyeur** on the train that cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking eastbound direction "KAYES A DAKAR / ★" in blue ink (11/01/1934). Marseille transit (21/01) and Nice arrival (22/01) markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) + airmail surtax to France up to 10 gr (3 fr.) = 3,50 francs



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

The river Senegal used by freight, mail and passenger between the Ocean and Kayes was navigable by large sea vessels only 3 months every year. Thus, in order to speed up the economic development of the internal regions, the line between **Thiès** (on the Sakar – St. Louis line) and **Kayes** was built and opened progressively. It was completed in 1924, creating a direct railway connection between Dakar and French Soudan (1241 km, meter gauge). The transport time for the mail between Dakar and Kayes was reduced from 10-15 days (by direct running couriers or by the railway to Saint-Louis and then the river up to Kayes) to 2 days.

Once the line achieved, several **convoyeur** services operated either on (almost) the full line between Dakar and Bamako, or on partial sections such as Dakar – Kidira (the station at the border between the territories of Senegal and French Soudan), and Kidira – Bamako or Kidira – Koulikoro, as well as the already mentioned services from Kayes to either Bamako or Koulikoro.

## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ KIDIRA to DAKAR

(Known period of use: 1934-1939)



Air letter from Tambaounda (on the Thiès-Kayes line) to Tonquedec (France) **consigned to the train postal clerk** that cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking eastbound direction "KIDIRA A DAKAR / SENE GAL" (27/09/1939). **Last recorded date of this postmark**. Redirected to Fontanès. Dakar transit marking on the front side (28/09), Tonquedec (8/10) and Fontanès (12/10) arrival markings on reverse. Red mark of the French censure (Commission A operated in Dakar).

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (90 cent.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr. (2,00 fr) = 2,90



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

## DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE

→ KIDIRA to KOULIKORO

(Known period of use: 1933-1934)

On some sections the convoyeurs were equipped with new type of postmarks, **double circle with inner circle of dashes**.



Air letter to Versailles (France) **consigned to the train postal clerk** who cancelled it with the double circle (with inner circle of dashes) date marking eastbound direction "KIDIRA A KOULIKORO / SOUDAN FRANÇAIS" (09/10/1934). Dakar Avion transit (11/10) and Versailles arrival (15/10) markings on reverse. This letter shows how the senders delivered the letter to the first available convoyeur, even if running in the direction opposite to the shorter one (the letter needed to be boarded on the plane in Dakar, that was on the westbound direction).

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) + airmail surtax to France for 10-20 gr. letters (3 fr. x 2 = 6,00 fr.) = 6,50 fr + 50 cent. of over-franking



→ KIDIRA to BAMAKO

(Known period of use:  
1935-1938)

Air letter to Montrouge (France) **consigned to the convoyeur** that cancelled it with the double circle (with inner circle of dashes) date marking, eastbound direction "KIDIRA A BAMAKO / SOUDAN FRANÇAIS" (31/07/1937). Dakar Principal (01/08) and Paris (04/08) transit markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr (2 fr.) = 2,50 francs. **Last date of the domestic letter rate at 50 cent, from 01/08/1937 was increased to 65 cent.**



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

The completion of the Dakar – Bamako – Koulikoro line in 1924 stimulated innovative mail transport projects towards internal Africa, such as the one started on 29 December 1925 (mail cancelled on the 28) from **Dakar** aiming at reaching **Zinder** (in the center of the southern part of Niger territory) and also Niamey through a “**fast mail connection**” using the rail, air and road transport.

In particular, Dakar – Bamako section was covered by express train, than the airplane travelled from Bamako to San – Ouagadougou – Fada N’Gourma – Niamey, and finally a truck connected by road Niamey with Zinder.

The mail successfully reached Zinder on 6 January 1926, eight days after the departure from Dakar. The cover were postmarked on arrival the day after, i.e. on 7 January.



Registered cover from Dakar (28/12/1925) to Zinder **travelled on the first experiment of the fast mail connection Dakar Zinder using railway, air and road transport**. Arrival postmark of Zinder (07/01/1926). The cover was then sent back to sender (Dakar end arrival postmark of 25/01/1926).

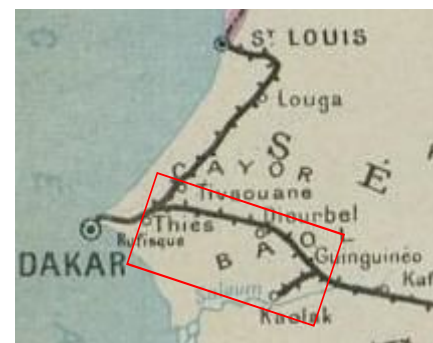
**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (90 cent.) + airmail surtax up to 5 gr. (2,00 fr) = 2,90



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

On the Thiès – Kayes railway a **branch line** of 22 km was opened between **Guinguinéo** and **Kaolack** in 1911 (port city on the Saloum river, whose region became then very important was the production of peanuts).

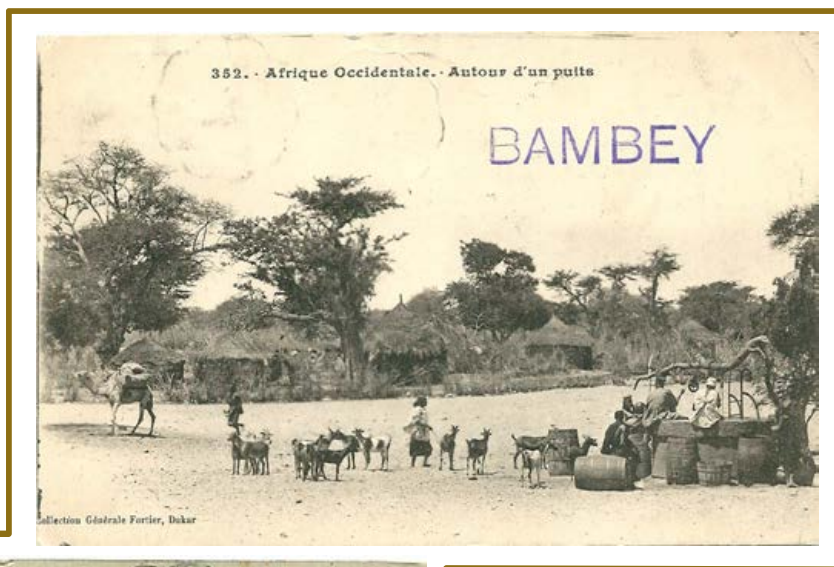
This allowed the creation of direct train services between Dakar, Thiès and Kaolack using the main lines and then from Guinguiné the branch line. **Convoyeur** services on such trains operated from 1920 (date based on the known postmarks) or even earlier.



## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

### →KAOLACK to THIES

(Known period of use:  
1920 – 1938)



Postcard from Bambey (linear marking on reverse) to Narbonne (France) **consigned to the train postal clerk** who cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking westbound direction "KAOLACK À THIES / ★" (27/01/1922). The linear marking "BAMBEY" is likely to be an administrative mark of the railway station, used here only to indicate the origin of the card sent by a railway man or from one of his relatives (see also letter in next page). Bambey was railway station between Thiès and Djourbel.

**Tariff:** Domestic illustrated postcard rate (10 cent.)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

## UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

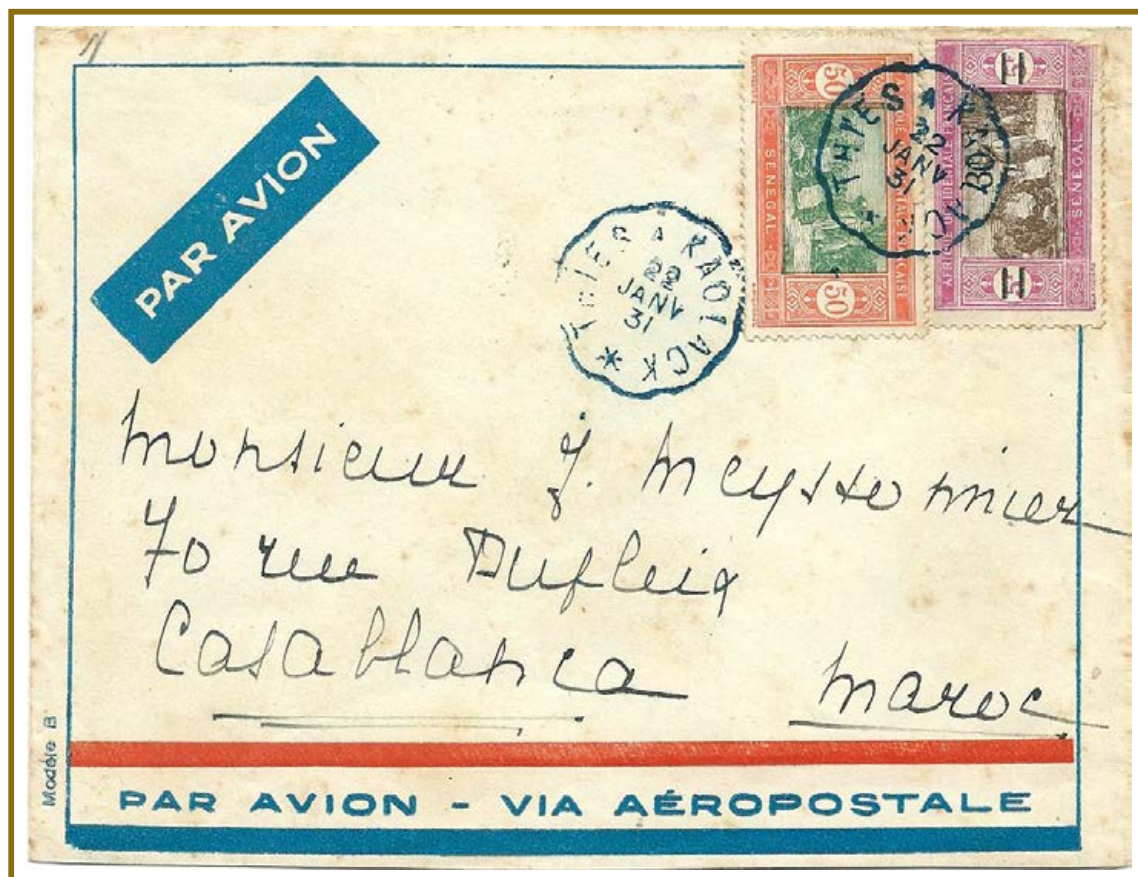
→THIES to KAOLACK

(Known period of use:  
1920 – 1938)

Blue ink

Air letter to Casablanca (French Morocco) **collected by the convoyeur** that cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking eastbound direction "THIES A KAOLACK / ★" (22/01/1931) in blue ink. Casablanca arrival postmark (26/01) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) + airmail surtax to French Morocco up to 10 gr (2,00 fr) = 2,50 francs. The letter was overfranked by 1,00 francs because the sender applied the surtax to continental France that was 3,00 fr.



Black ink



Letter from Djourbel (linear marking on reverse) to Amiens (France) **consigned to the train postal clerk** who cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking westbound direction "KAOLACK A THIES / ★" (12/04/1932). Amiens Gare arrival marking (23/04) on reverse. The linear marking "DJOURBEL" is the administrative mark of the railway station, since the sender was the station master ("Chef gare TN" where TN means Thiès – Niger).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate (50 cent.)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

On this section the convoyeurs were equipped also with a different type of postmarks, **double circle**, with either dashed or continuous inner circle.

## DOUBLE CIRCLE

→ DAKAR to KAOLACK

(Known period of use:  
1939 – 1940)



Air letter to Grenoble (France) collected by the train *convoyeur* that cancelled it with his double circle date marking (with inner dashed circle) eastbound direction "DAKAR A KAOLACK / ★" (18/08/1940). Arrival marking of Grenoble (28/09).

**Tariff:** Airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr (2,00 francs). Ordinary letter fee was not to be paid because the sender was a soldier (as stated by the letter FM = military franchise)



## DOUBLE CIRCLE

→ KAOLACK to THIES



Type unrecorded in the  
litterature



Letter to Chicago (USA) collected by the train *convoyeur* that cancelled it with his double circle date marking westbound direction "KAOLACK A THIES / ★" (03/01/year unreadable, month upside down). The rate applied and the type of stamps allow to identify the shipment year at either 1936 or 1937.

**Tariff:** Foreign surface letter rate up to 20 gr. (1,50 francs)



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

In the 1950's the date markings became probably too worn, so the letters collected by the *convoyeurs* began to be cancelled with **linear markings** with line termini and no date. All known markings are "Dakar à Kayes" (or "Dakar à Bamako") most likely used in both eastbound and westbound trains; the ones with text indicating the opposite directions probably did not exist.

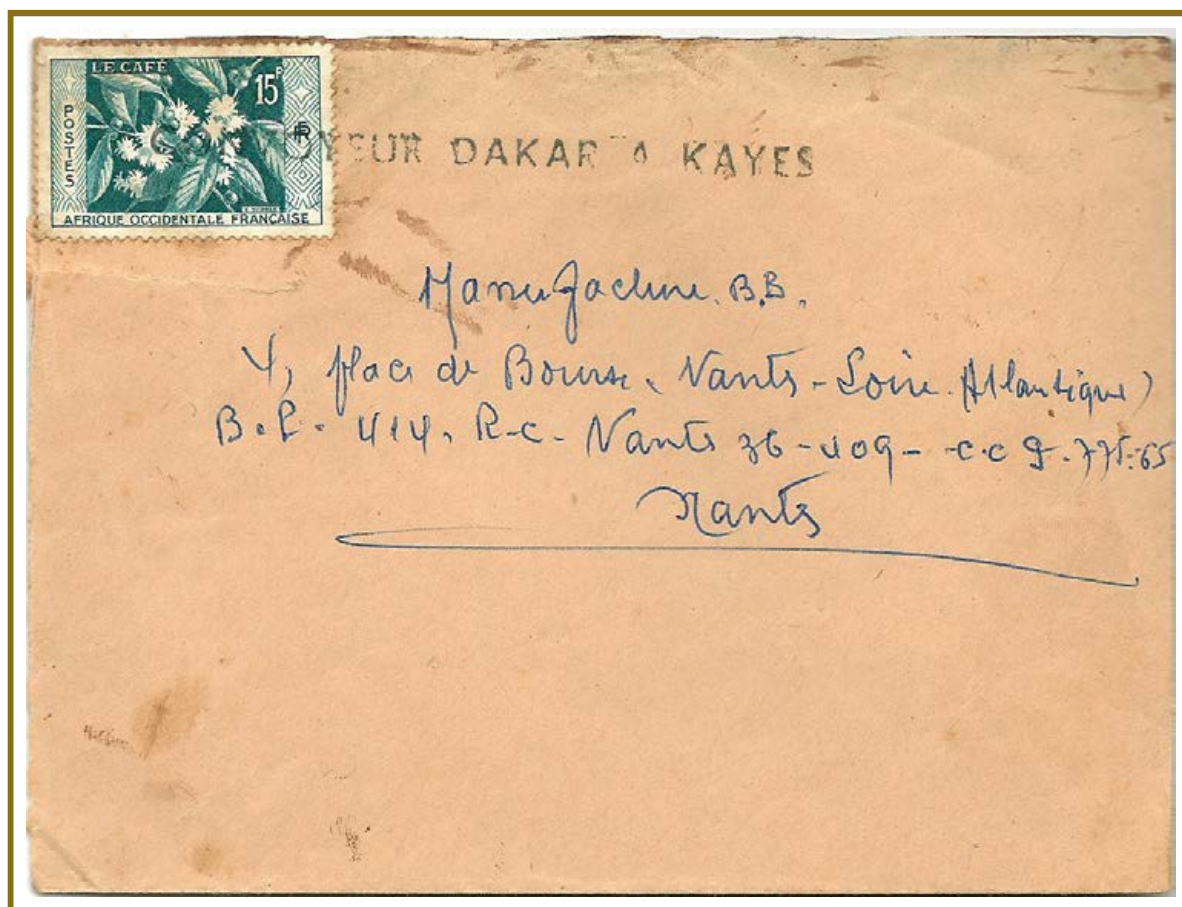
## LINEAR

→ DAKAR to KAYES

(Known period of use:  
1950 – 1957)

Letter to Nantes (France) collected by the train *convoyeur* who cancelled it linear marking eastbound direction "CONVOYEUR DAKAR À KAYES". No transit or arrival marking, but due to the stamp and tariff, the likely date should be between 10/1956 and 6/1957.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr (15 francs)



Due to its length, this marking is often partially impressed on the cover. This makes difficult to distinguish on which services was used (Dakar to Kayes or Dakar to Kaolack).



## LINEAR

→ DAKAR to ?

Air letter to Dax (France) collected by the *convoyeur* that cancelled it with his linear marking eastbound direction "CONVOYEUR DAKAR À ..." (03/01/year unreadable, month upside down). No transit or arrival marking, but due to the stamp and tariff, the likely date should be between 01/1949 and 6/1957.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 francs), no airmail surtax required after WW2



# 1. Railway mail on the Senegal – Mali system

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

On the long distance service between Bamako and Dakar in the same period (1950's) a boxed linear marking was introduced (few slightly different types are known). It is known stamped in different colors. The same cancel appear to be used in both directions.

## BOXED LINEAR

→ **BAMAKO to DAKAR**

(Known period of use:  
1956 – 1958)

Black ink

Air letter to Nantes (France) collected by the **Bamako-Dakar convoyeur**. Due to the stamp and tariff, the likely date could be between 1953 and 6/1957.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr (15 francs)



Blue ink



Local letter to Bamako collected by the **Bamako-Dakar convoyeur**. Due to the stamp and tariff, the likely date is between 10/1956 and 6/1957.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr (15 francs)

Black ink, heavily stamped

Air letter to Nantes (France) collected by the **Bamako-Dakar convoyeur**. Bamako transit postmark (22/10/1957)

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 francs)





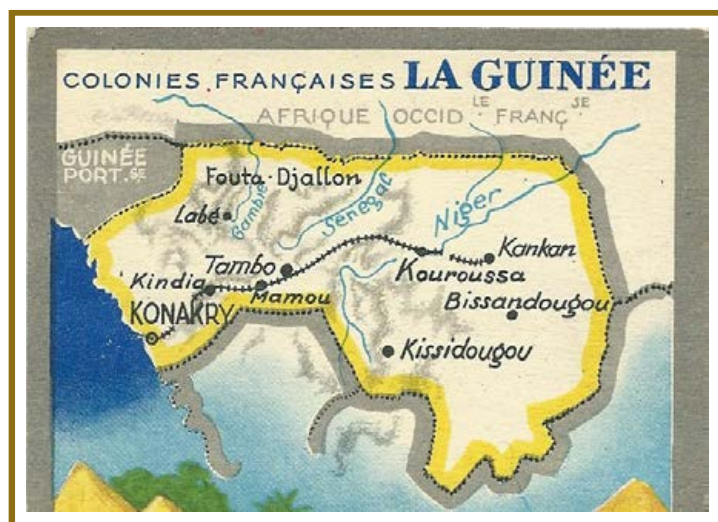
## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### 2.1 The Conakry – Kankan railway in Guinea

The second railway built with the aim of providing a penetration way towards the French Soudan and the Niger region was the **Conakry to Niger** line (662 km, meter gauge). Its construction started in 1900 from Conakry and was completed to **Mamou** in 1908, to **Kouroussa** on the Niger river in 1911 and finally to **Kankan** in 1914.

The *convoyeur* service started from the first years of operation, functioning similarly to the ones on the Senegal-Mali lines. The travel time on the whole line was 2 days with night break in Mamou, so also the *convoyeur* services changed in that city. Thus, the Conakry-Mamou *convoyeur* continued to operate also when the line was extended beyond Mamou.



Also the mail clerks on the trains on this railway were equipped with their own cancelling postmark. The *convoyeur* markings were always **undulated circle**, with distinctive markings according to the direction of travelling.

As for most of the African train markings, the ones on the service to the coast are more frequent than the one to the inland.

#### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ MAMOU to CONAKRY (Known period of use: 1923 – 1950)

Blue ink



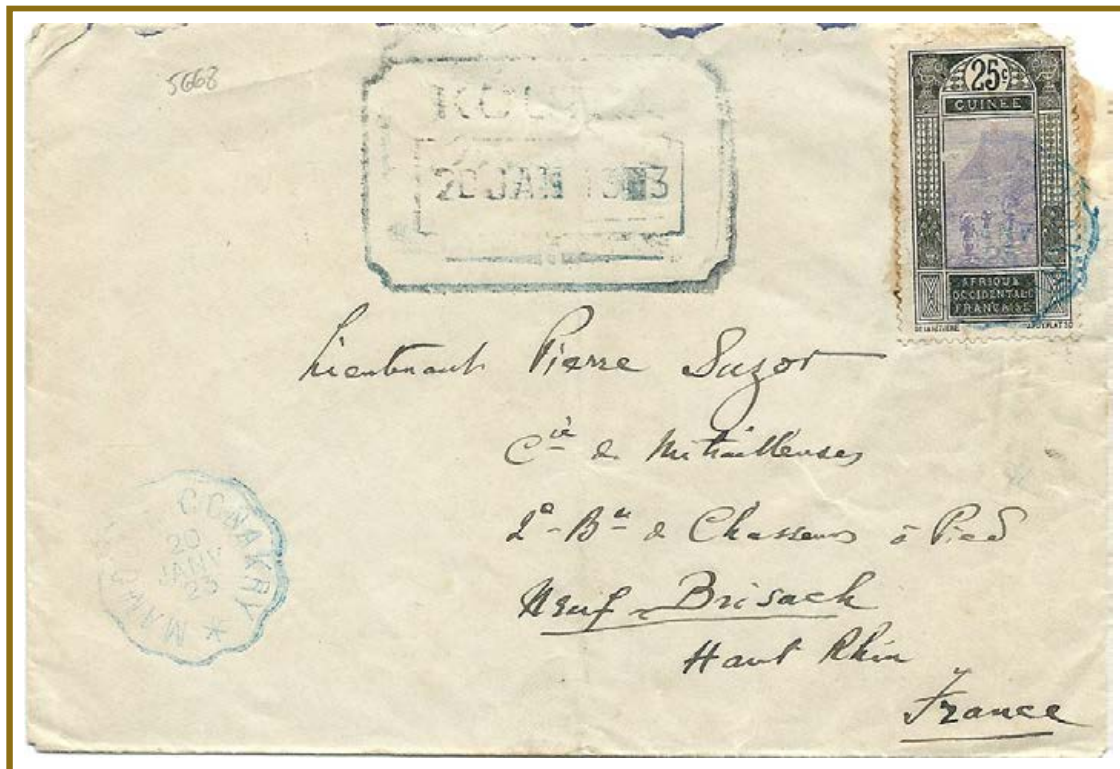
From Kankan to Toledo (Ohio, USA), **collected by the *convoyeur*** that cancelled the letter with the undulated circle date marking of the first type used on the line in the southbound direction "MAMOU A CONAKRY / ★" (3/01/1932) stamped in black. Cancelled in transit with only partially readable Conakry datestamp on reverse.

**Tariff:** Foreign surface letter rate up to 20 gr. (1,50 fr.)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

As for Senegal, Guinea's *convoyeur* markings are known accompanied by dated markings (boxed linear) that are likely to have been used by the station master to indicated date and locality of origin (for the same reasons illustrated in chapter 1.1). By the way, some stations were officially indicated in French Guinea's Post Office documents as "ensuring the collection of mail".



Blue ink

From Kouria to Neuf Brisach (France), **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle date marking in the southbound direction "MAMOU À CONAKRY / ★" (20/01/1923) stamped in blue. Dated linear marking ("griffe") of KOURIA, most likely used at the railway station, of 20/01/1923. Kouria was a station between Conakry and Kindia in the first section of the line; there was no post office, so the station ensure the collection of mail to then transferred to the *convoyeur* as unique postal service available.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter up to 20 gr. (25 cent.)

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ CONAKRY to MAMOU

(Known period of use: 1924-1950)



Undulated circle date **marking of the convoyeur in the northbound direction** "CONAKRY À MAMOU / ★" 16.04.1926 and ??/03/1928 (resp. blue and black ink)  
Being a very scarce marking, it is presented here on single stamps



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

As for Senegal, Guinea's *convoyeur* markings are known accompanied by dated markings (boxed linear) that are likely to have been used by the **station** masters to indicated date and locality of origin (for the same reasons illustrated in chapter 1.1).

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ KANKAN to MAMOU

(Known period of use: 1924-1943)



From Kankan to Chicago(USA), **collected by the train postal clerk** and cancelled with the undulated circle date marking in the southbound direction "KANKAN A MAMOU / ★" (5/??/1924, month not set but because of the tariff shall be between January and April). **Earliest recorded date.** Conakry transit marking on reverse (date unreadable)

**Tariff:** Foreign surface letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



Letter to Alger, **collected by the train postal clerk** and cancelled with the undulated circle date marking in the southbound direction "KANKAN A MAMOU / ★" (3/03/1943, with month correctly set). **Latest recorded date** Conakry transit (3/03) markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter up to 20 gr. (1,50 fr.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr. (3,50 Fr.)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The *convoyeur* markings of French African colonies, including Guinea, are normally used to cancel the franking of letter and postcards collected by them along the line including the ones posted in the *boite mobile* (travelling mailbox) usually attached to the mail wagon. Such markings stamped in **transit** are very infrequent.

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ MAMOU to KANKAN

(Known period of use: 1926-1939)



From Faranah (29/11/1927) to Kankan, **cancelled in transit by the train's *convoyeur*** with the undulated circle date marking in the northbound direction "MAMOU A KANKAN / ★" (30/12/1927). Kankan arrival marking on the same date. From Faranah the letter was transported by the road mail transport service (also managed by the Conakry Niger railway company) to Dabola on the railway line, and then by the train up to Kankan.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

After the second world war, direct convoyeur service between **Conakry** and **Kankan** were created. A new type of date marking – **single dashed circle** – was introduced.

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ CONAKRY to KANKAN

(Known period of use: 1948-1958)



Local letter to Kankan, **collected and cancelled by the train's convoyeur** with the dashed single circle date marking in the northbound direction "CONAKRY À KANKAN / GUINÉE FRANÇAISE" (07/05/1957). Kankan arrival marking on reverse (9/05). Forty years after the completion of the line, the travel time for the full trip was still two days!

**Tariff:** Domestic letter up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)

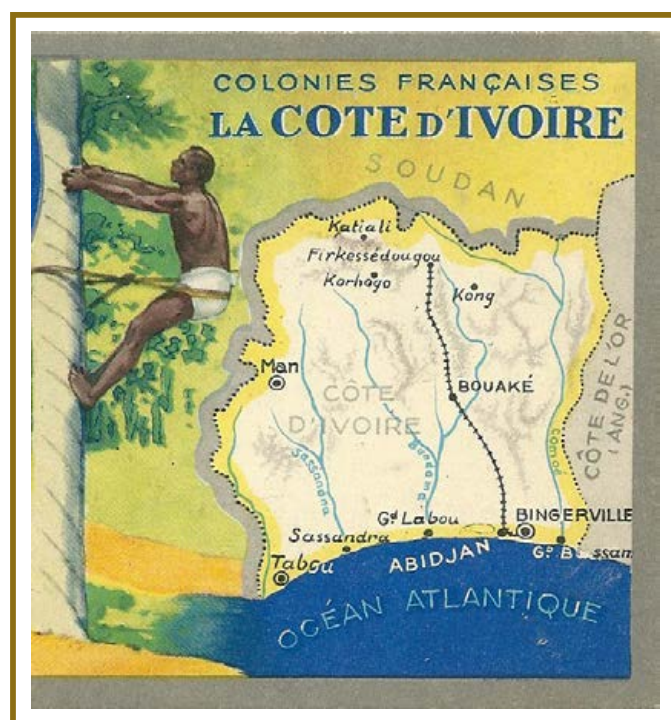


## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

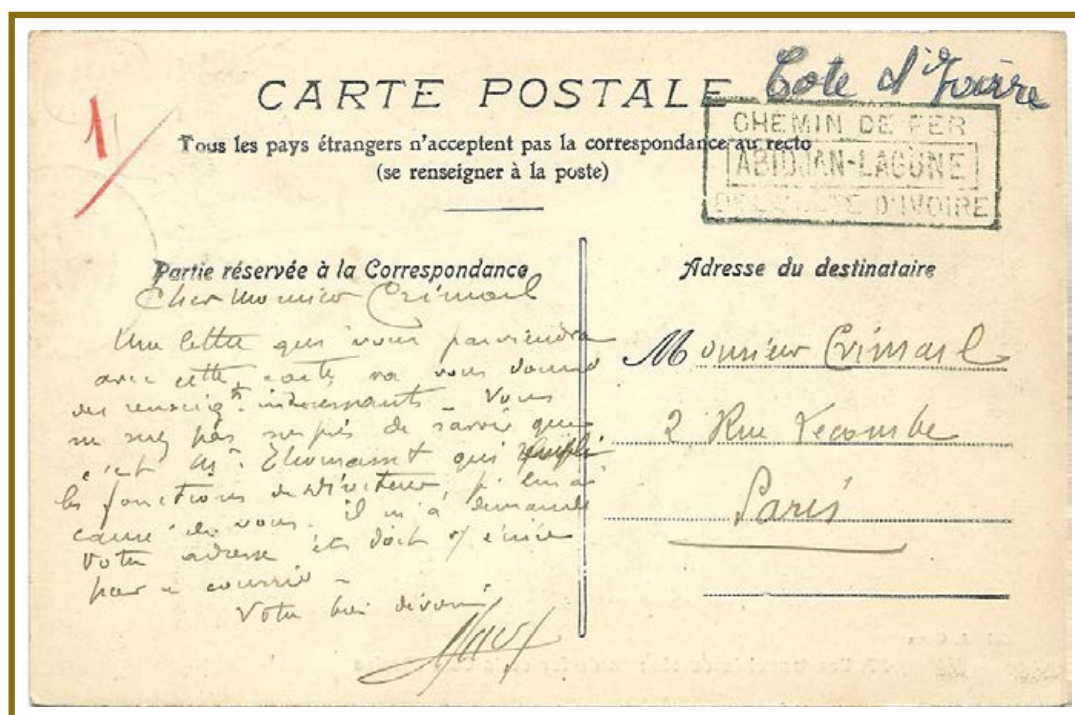
### 2.2 The Abidjan – Bobo Dioulasso railway in Ivory Coast

At the beginning of the XX century also the Ivory Coast colony started the construction of its first railway from **Abidjan** on the coast to inland. **Dimbokro** at km 183 was joined in 1910, and **Bouaké** (km 316) in 1912. Main purpose was to facilitate the transport of local productions such as rubber, palm-oil and (from the 1902's) mainly coffee, cacao and wood. The construction was then stopped by the war, but afterward it was resumed: Firkessedougou was reached in 1929, **Bobo Dioulasso** in 1934 and **Ougadougou** in 1954.

The *convoyeur* service started from the first years of operation, allowing the suppression of the mail runners on the main north-south connection through the colony. However, their specific markings are known only from the 1920's. Users may consign the letter directly to the agent, or post it on the mail boxes positioned in the railway stations and on the side of the mail wagon or compartment.



Before the *convoyeur* date markings came into use, **railway station markings** were occasionally used to cancel the mail or to indicate the locality of origin.



From Abidjan-Lagune to Paris, franked coté vue (stamp removed and cancel unreadable), with **boxed linear marking of the railway station**. **No other markings known of this station**. A similar marking is recorded from Agnéby, while straight line station markings are reported from Abidjan-Ville and Azagué.

**Tariff:** stamp removed, but it was likely to be franked as ordinary postcard i.e. 10 cent. If shipped until 1916, and 15 cent. between 1917 and 1/04/1920



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

**Bouaké** was the terminus of the line between 1912 and 1929, but it remained the terminus of most *convoyeur* services also afterwards.

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

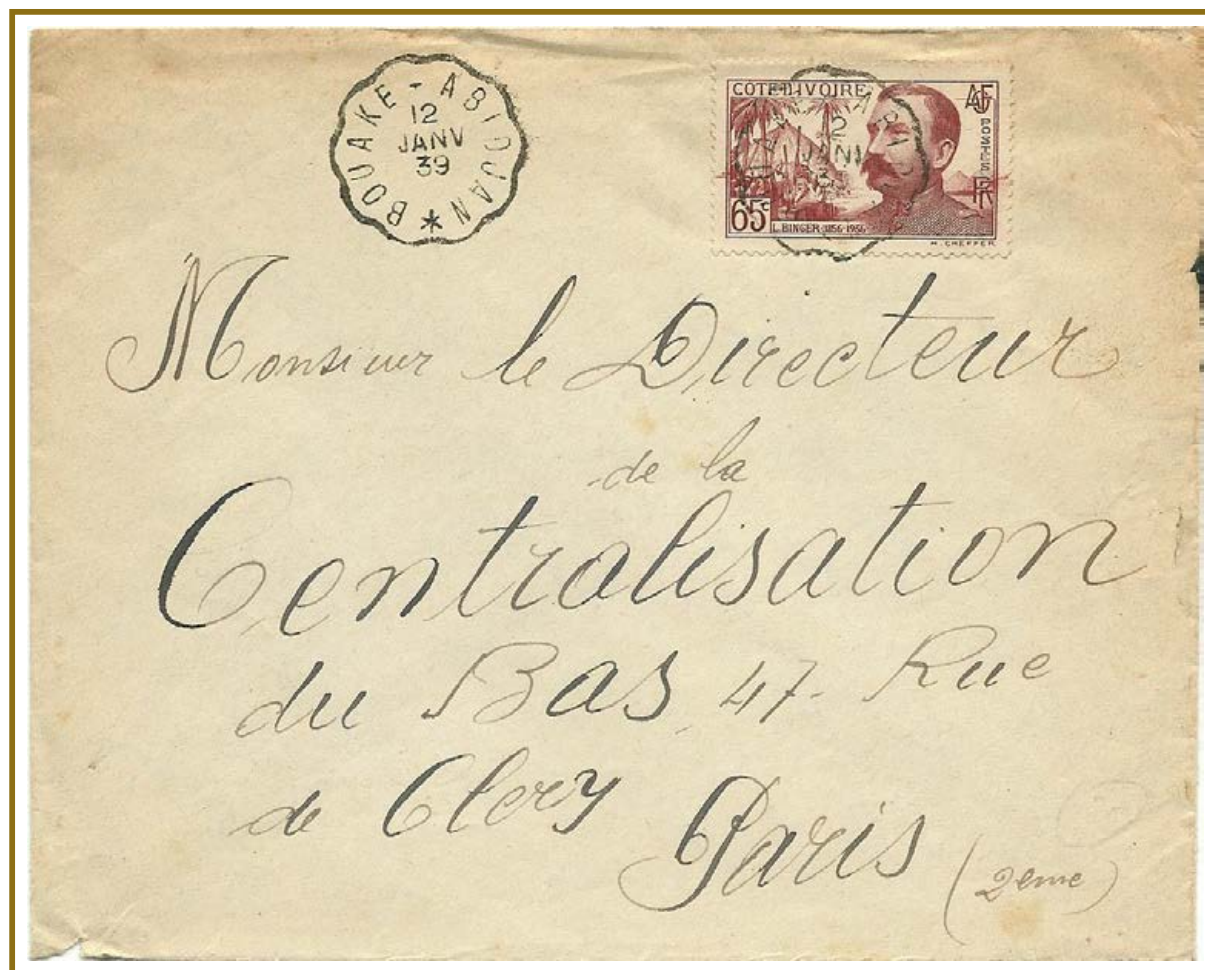
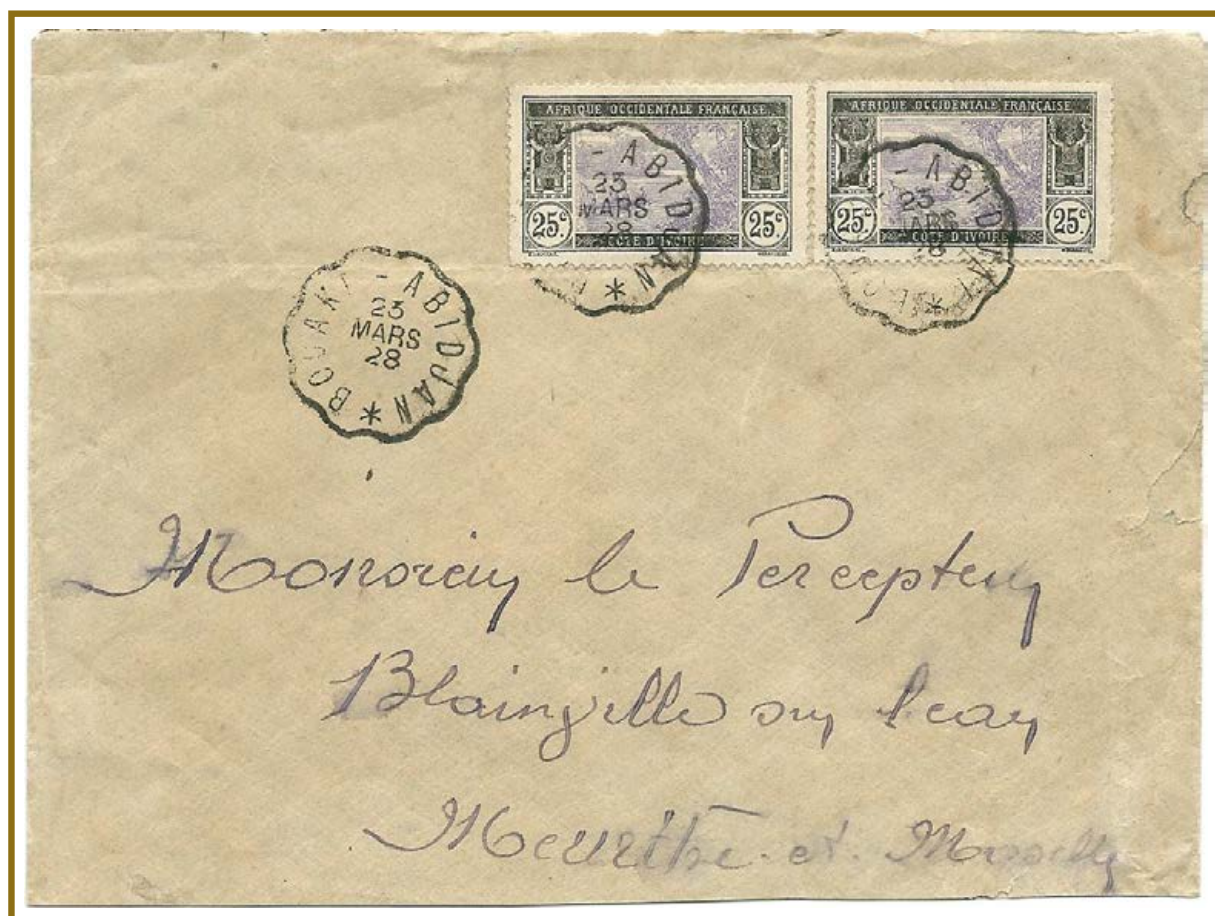
→ **BOUAKÉ** to  
**ABIDJAN**

(Known period of use:  
1928 – 1940\*)

\*According to C. Bouérat,  
past Post Office manager  
in French West Africa,  
such markings were still in  
use after the 2nd WW  
until 1964/65

Letter to Blainville sur  
l'Eau (France),  
**consigned to the  
train's convoyeur** that  
cancelled it with the  
undulated circle date  
marking, southbound  
direction "BOUAKÉ –  
ABIDJAN" (23/03/1928).  
**Earliest recorded date**  
of this cancel. Arrival  
marking of 11/04.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter  
rate up to 20 gr. (50  
cent.)



Letter to Paris, **handed on  
the train postal clerk** and  
cancelled by him with the  
undulated circle marking  
southbound direction  
"BOUAKÉ – ABIDJAN"  
(12/01/1939).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate  
up to 20 gr. (65 cent.); the  
rate was changed on  
1/01/1939 to 90 cent., but  
the older tariff was  
tolerated (as it was  
common on letter from the  
colony)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA



UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH LINE  
TERMINI

→ABIDJAN to BOUAKÉ

(Known period of use:  
1928 – 1940\*)

\*According to C. Bouérat, past  
Post Office manager in French  
West Africa, such markings  
were still in use after the 2nd  
WW until 1964/65

Letter to Paris, **collected by the train's convoyeur** that cancelled with the undulated circle date marking in the northbound direction "ABIDJAN – BOUAKÉ" (03/07/1928). **Earliest recorded date.** Paris arrival marking on reverse (25/08/1928)

**Tariff:** Domestic letter up to 20 gr.  
(50 cent.)



Letter from Dimbokro (as handwritten on reverse) to Bourges (France), **consigned to the convoyeur** that cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking, northbound direction "ABIDJAN – BOUAKÉ" (?/12/ 1934). Abidjan transit marking on reverse (22/12). The letter was transported on the French motor vessel *Iles des Los*, that sank near Casablanca on 2/12/1935 after going ashore on rocks. Mail was saved and then sorted and resent by the Casablanca post office as indicated by the linear marking "Courrier sinistré / réconstitué par les soins du / Bureau de Casablanca". Stamps washed off due by sea water.

**Only known mail item originated from French sub-Saharan Africa railway convoyeurs that then survived a sea wreck**

**Tariff:** cannot be established (stamps washed off), bust most likely franked for 50 cent. as domestic letter up to 20 gr.

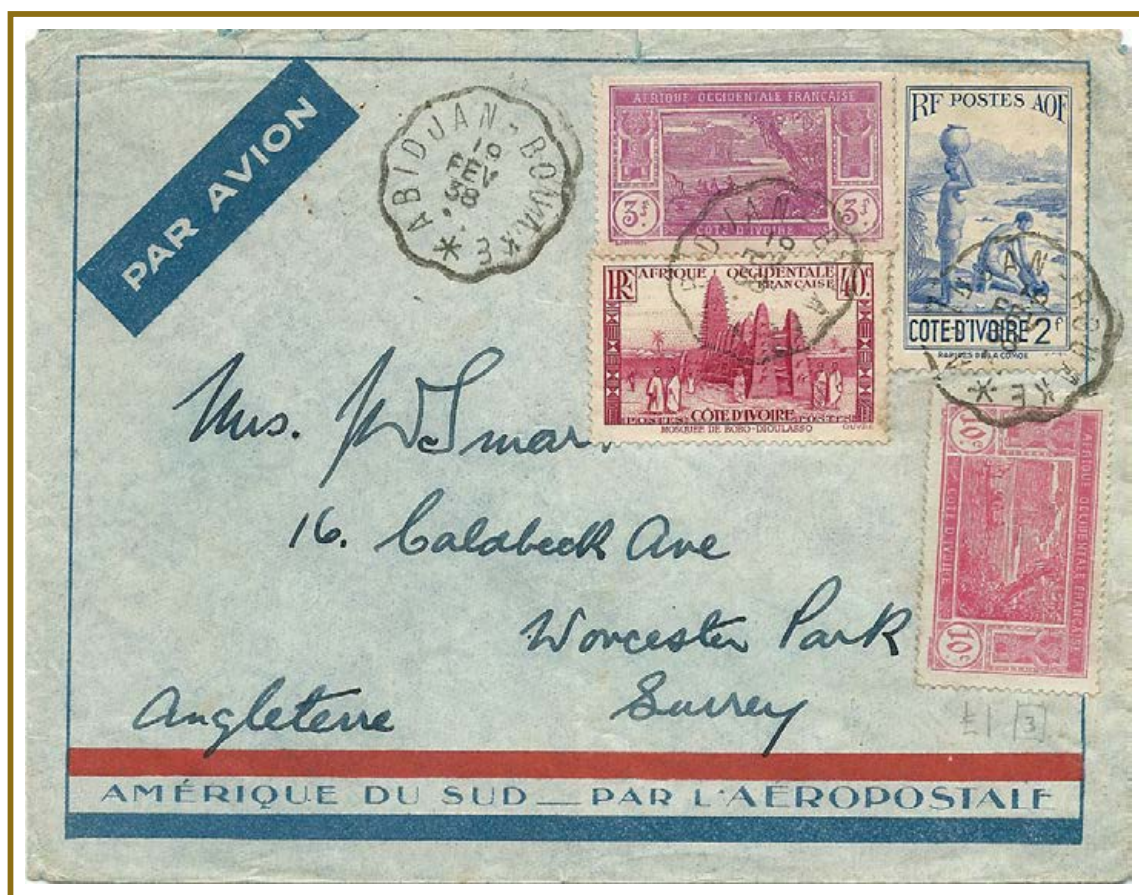


## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

Air letter to Worcester Park (UK), **consigned to the *convoyeur*** that cancelled it with the undulated circle date marking, southbound direction "ABIDJAN – BOUAKÉ" (19/02/1938).

**Tariff:** Foreign rate up to 20 gr. (1,50 fr.) + airmail surtax to France 5-10 gr (2 x 2 fr = 4 fr) = 5,50 francs. The basic letter was increase to 1,75 fr. from 1/09/1937, but the older one was applied by the sender and tolerated by the post office (as common on colonial mail in the first months until a tariff change). The letter travelled by surface from France to UK.



The utilization of the markings by the *convoyeur* marking did not always corresponded to the actual trip on which the mail was collected.

Air letter from Bobo Dioulasso to Paris, cancelled with the undulated circle marking southbound direction "ABIDJAN – BOUAKÉ" (12/08/1939). This letter originating from the north terminus of the line but cancelled with the marking of the **northbound *convoyeur*** limited to Bouaké, shows that the utilization of markings did not always corresponded to the actual trip.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (90 cent.) + airmail surtax to France for letters up to 5 gr. (2,50 fr.) = 3,40 francs





## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The *convoyeur* service continued **after the Independence** until 01/01/1975 (from that date only the bags of international letters have been carried by train). New type of **large linear markings** were introduced, most likely in the late 1960's.



LINEAR MARKING  
WITH LINE  
TERMINI

→BOUAKÉ to ABIDJAN  
(1972 - 1973)

Type unrecorded in the  
litterature

From Abidjan to Nantes (France), **consigned to the *convoyeur*** that cancelled it with its large linear undated marking, southbound direction "CONVOYEUR / BOUAKÉ - ABIDJAN". The stamp issued in 1972 allow to locate the letter between 1972 and 1974.

**Tariff:** Air letter rate to France  
(40 francs)



Letter to Nantes (France), **consigned to the *convoyeur*** that cancelled it with its large linear undated marking, southbound direction "CONVOYEUR / BOUAKÉ - ABIDJAN". The stamp issued in 1973 allow to locate the letter between 1973 and 1974.

**Tariff:** Air letter rate to France  
(40 francs)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

### RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### 2.3 The two lines of Dahomey with rail mail service

The third railway system developed in the French colonies on the Guinea was the one of Dahomey (today's Benin), that consisted of **three lines**, all of them at meter gauge at starting from Cotonou, main port of the territory and point of exchange with international mail services by ship. Only two of them, the central and the western railway, are known to be used by **convoyeur** services. No such services are reported instead on the eastern railway from Cotonou to Porto Novo, Saketé and Pobé

The western railway **Pahou – Ouidah – Segbouroué** (58 km) was completed to Ouidah in 1903 and to Segbouroué in 1905. It was the first one with convoyeur service operating until **Ouidah** (from the opening in 1903) and later extended to **Segbouroué**. It was a branch of the central line from Cotonou to the inland, so both trains and the related *convoyeur* services had Cotonou as eastern terminus



UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ COTONOU to OUIDAH

(Known period of use: 1903 – 1920's)

Stamped envelope to Agoué, collected by the westbound convoyeur service on the western line, and cancelled with undulated circle "COTONOU À OUIDAH" (date block not present). Given the tariff, it could be dated between 1917 and 1924.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (25 cent.) if 1920-1924, or 20-50 gr. if 1917-1920

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ OUIDAH to COTONOU

(Known period of use: 1903 – 1908)

Letter card from Ouidah to Cotonou (then redirected back to Ouidah), collected by the eastbound convoyeur service on the western line, and cancelled with undulated circle "OUIDAH A COTONOU" (16/05/1908, the day can be retrieved from the inner text). On reverse cotonou arrival marking of 17/05, then after redirection Cotonou departure and Ouidah arrival marking both of 18/05.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter-card rate up to 20 gr. (10 cent.)





## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

**Segbouroué** was the terminus of the line from the end of 1905. It became thereafter the terminus of some *convoyeur* services (the new end station was mentioned in the marking from the 1920's, but it is likely that they were extended before).

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ **SEGBOUROUÉ to COTONOU**

(Known period of use: 1920 (or earlier\*) – 1931)

\* See the description of the letter →

*Black ink*

Local letter to Ouidah, **consigned to the *convoyeur*** that cancelled it with the undulated circle marking with no date block, eastbound direction "SEGBOUROUÉ – COTONOU". No date block in the marking but stamps and tariff allow to position the date between 01/1917 and 03/1920. Thus, **earliest recorded date** of this cancel. Segbouroué was at the border with Togo, that explains the franking with a **Togo stamp** (Anglo-French Occupation).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



*Blue ink*



Letter to Elbeuf (France), **handed on the train postal clerk** and cancelled by him with the undulated circle marking eastbound direction "SEGBOUROUÉ – COTONOU" (25/12/1925). Cotonou transit (25/12) and Elbeuf arrival (22/01/1926) markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (30 cent.)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The *Central Daboméen* line was built from **Cotonou** to the inland, reaching **Paouignan** (1906), then **Savé** (1912) and finally Parakou (1936). Total length was 417 km. North terminus of the *convoyeur* service was first Bohicon (reported as end point in 1906) or Paouignan, and finally Savé.

The shorter services appear to have been operated also after the extension of the line (or at least their markings were maintained into use).

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE

#### → PAOUIGNAN to COTONOU

(Known period of use:  
1906 – 1910)



Postcard to Marseille, **consigned to the train's *convoyeur*** that cancelled it with the undulated circle marking, southbound direction "PAOUIGNAN À COTONOU" (13/06/1908).

**Tariff:** Domestic postcard letter rate (10 cent.)



Letter to Paris **collected by the train's *convoyeur*** that cancelled it with the undulated circle marking southbound direction "PAOUIGNAN – COTONOU" (24/01/1910 with reversed year, so that appear as "01" when the line was not open yet). Cotonou transit (24/07) and Paris arrival (??/08) markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (10 cent.)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ COTONOU to BOHICON

(Known period of use: 1920 – 1939)

Letter to Paris, collected by the **convoyeur** who cancelled it with the undulated circle marking northbound direction "COTONOU À BOHICON / ★" (13/09/1929). Cotonou transit (13/09) and Paris arrival (03/10) markings. Despite the letter shall have been directed to Cotonou to be boarded on the vessel to Paris, the sender consigned it to a northbound **convoyeur**, most likely because the first available from the village of shipment (trains were not frequent).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ COTONOU to SEVÉ  
(misspelling for SAVÉ)

(Known period of use: 1916 – 1931)



Blue ink

Letter to Casablanca (French Morocco), handed on the train postal clerk and cancelled with the undulated circle northbound direction "COTONOU - SEVÉ" (??/02/1926). Cotonou transit and Casablanca arrival markings on reverse (both with dates unreadable).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (30 cent.)



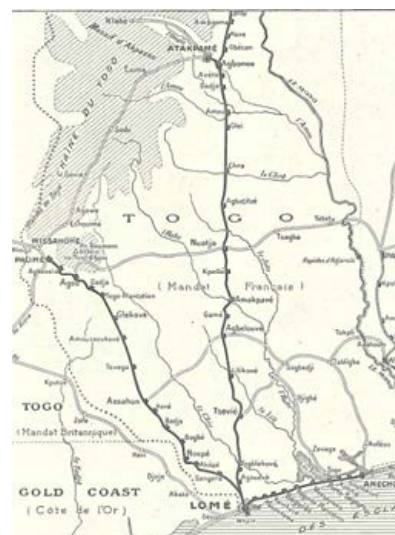


## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

### 2.4 The network of Togo

The railway network of Togo was initially developed during the German colonial period, with the completion of three lines from the capital city **Lomé** to **Anecho** (1905, 44 km), **Kpalimé** (1907, 119 km) and **Atakpamé** (1913). The latter was extended northbound up to **Blitta** (280 km from Lomé) in 1934 by French under whose authority most of the territory was assigned after the First World War. The lines were developed to boost the export of inland production such as cacao and cotton.

No travelling postal service on train with marking devices is known during the **German period**, even if certainly the lines were used at least to transport closed mail bags (mixed postal & luggage vans were already in operation). **Convoyeur services** came into operation on all three lines in the **French mandate period** (based in the known markings, this started in 1922 once the railway lines – damaged during the war – were repaired). The markings are not distinguished according to the direction of travelling.



The **Lomé – Anecho** railway was the coastal line connecting the capital with the South-Eastern part of the territory. As for the other lines, the convoyeur service started in 1922. It was discontinued in 1956.

#### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→ LOMÉ to ANECHO

(Known period of use: 1922 – 1951)

Dark blue ink



Local letter from Anecho to Lomé, **collected by the westbound convoyeur service on the Lomé – Anecho line**, and cancelled with undulated circle "LOMÉ À ANECHO / ★" in blue (23/08/1927, year block not centered). Lomé arrival marking (same date) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→ LOMÉ to ANECHO

(Known period of use: 1922 – 1948)



Black ink

Letter to Paris, consigned to the **convoyeur** that cancelled it the undulated date marking "LOMÉ À ANECHO / ★" (04/05/1929, year block centered). Part of the franking (25 cent.) and Lomé transit marking (04/05/1929) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ LOMÉ to ANECHO

(Known period of use: 1922 – 1948)



From Anecho to Besançon (France), collected by the **convoyeur** that cancelled it with its undulated circle marking with country name "LOME ANECHO / TOGO" (08/11/1952). Lomé transit marking (same date) on reverse.

**Tariff:** the domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. was 15 francs (air mail surtax not due anymore after WW2); as stated by the boxed linear marking, the franking was insufficient and, therefore, the letter was routed through surface mail





## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The **Lomé – Palimé** (or Kpalimé) railway was the coastal line connecting the main port with the western part of the territory where most of the local cocoa crop was grown. The operating period has been the same of the Anecho line (1922 – 1956)

SMALL UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH LINE  
TERMINI AND STAR

→ LOMÉ to PALIMÉ

(Known period of use:  
1922 – 1951)

Letter to Paris, **consigned to the convoyeur** that cancelled it the small undulated date marking "LOME A PALIME / ★" (??/04/1949). Lomé transit marking (20/04) and private (receiver's) arrival marking (25/04) on reverse. Boxed T marking stamped by the *convoyeur* or in Lomé to indicate the insufficient franking.

**Tariff:** The rate for domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. was 15 fr. (airmail surtax not due anymore after WW2), so the letter was under-franked by 3 fr.



LARGE UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH LINE  
TERMINI AND STAR

→ LOMÉ to PALIMÉ

(Known period of use: 1951 –  
1958)



Letter to Lyon (France), **collected by the convoyeur** that cancelled it with its large undulated circle marking "LOME A PALIME / ★" (03/01/1951). **Earliest recorded date.** Lomé transit marking (same date) on reverse.

**Tariff:** the domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. was 15 francs (airmail surtax not due anymore after WW2); the franking was insufficient (10 francs, corresponding to the tariff in force until 1.01.1949) but it appears to have been tolerated



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The central line was first opened from **Lomé** to **Atakpamé** in 1913. Atakpamé remained the northern terminus until 1934. The line termini indicate in the markings were not immediately updated, so the older markings remained into use after 1934.

UNDULATED CIRCLE  
WITH LINE TERMINI  
AND STAR

→ LOMÉ to ATAKPAMÉ

(Known period of use:  
1922 – 1946)

From Atakpamé to New York (USA), handed on the **convoyeur** on the central line who cancelled with undulated date marking "LOME A ATAKPAME / ★" (12/05/1928). Lomé transit marking (same date) on reverse.



**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 20 gr. (1,50 fr.), part of the franking on reverse



Letter to Accra (at that time Gold Coast, British colony), **collected by the convoyeur** who cancelled it with its undulated circle marking "LOME A ATAKPMAE" (09/01/1946). This cover demonstrates the use of this marking even when Atakpamé was not the terminus any more. Lomé transit marking (same date) on reverse.

**Tariff:** the foreign surface letter rate was 4 fr. up to 20 gr. and 6,40 fr. for 20-40 gr, so the letter was either over-franked or with slight (and tolerated) under-franking



## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

### RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The *convoyeur* service on the central line was prolonged to **Blitta** after the line was extended until there, but only after WW2 the markings were updated with the new terminus.

#### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→ LOMÉ to BLITTA

(Known period of use: 1946 – 1951)



Letter to Lyon (France), collected by the *convoyeur* that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "LOME A BLITTA / ★" (08/03/1949). Lomé transit marking (09/03). Postage due stamp cancelled in Lyon (03/04) for insufficient franking

**Tariff:** The rate for domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. was 15 fr. (airmail surtax not due anymore after WW2), so the letter was under-franked by 9 fr. The taxation is 10 fr. as it was the minimum postage due rate, but the correct taxation would have been 18 fr.

Letter to Chicago (USA), collected by the *convoyeur* that cancelled it with its undulated marking "LOME A BLITTA / ★" (17/05/1950). The train mail clerk also stamped the T indicating the insufficient franking, than expressed in US\$ cents by the Chicago post office as from the violet linear marking. Lomé transit marking on reverse (18/05).

**Tariff:** The foreign surface letter rate was 25 fr. up to 20 gr. + airmail surtax to France and from France to USA (resp. 15 fr / 5 gr and 23 fr. / 5 gr.). For a surface letter up to 20 gr the postage due was then  $(25 - 3,50) \times 2 = 43$  fr, corresponding approximately to 10 US\$ cents (the letter was likely not to have been sent by airmail)





## 2. Carrying the mail on the lines linking the Guinea Gulf to Niger

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In the 1950's new markings were introduced on the line **Lomé – Blitta**, distinguishing the direction of travelling of the *convoyeur* (from Lomé to Blitta or vice-versa). They continued to be used after the independence in 1956 (at least the southbound one).

### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COUNTRY NAME

→ LOMÉ to BLITTA

(Known period of use: 1952 – 1958)



Letter to Paris, **consigned to the convoyeur** that cancelled it the undulated date marking "LOME BLITTA / TOGO" (01/06/1955). Lomé transit marking (02/06). Stamp folded on the back

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.)



### UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COUNTRY NAME

→ BLITTA to LOMÉ

(Known period of use: 1957 – 1959)

Letter to Paris), **collected by the convoyeur** who cancelled it with its undulated circle marking "BLITTA LOME / TOGO" (01/09/1959). **Latest recorded date.** Lomé transit marking (same date) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (25 fr.)

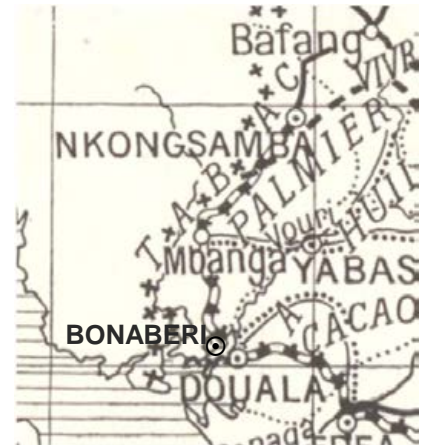


### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

#### 3.1 The German period

**Cameroon** was proclaimed a German Colony in 1884. The construction of the so-called Northern Railway Line **Bonaberi – Nkongsamba** started in 1906. Its first section (89 km) was opened in 1909, while the remaining part to Nkongsamba at km 160 was completed in April 1, 1911 and officially opened on May 24. Thanks to the new line, a large zone with fertile land became exploitable for agriculture and cattle raising.

The line was used for the transport of sealed mail bags, and also for the operation of a onboard rail postal service. **Postal officials travelling on the trains** were in charge of handling mails, and at stops of selling stamps and collecting correspondence including registered letters. They were equipped with postmarks to cancel the collected mail. That service started no later than January 1912, and ended on September 25, 1914.



Initially, the mail guards on trains used as temporary cancel the old **Duala single circle postmark**, withdrawn from its initial use in 1906. The year was separately stamped (probably no suitable year characters were available) so it is found in various position or totally omitted. It was impressed in violet or black ink

#### DUALA SINGLE CIRCLE POSTMARK

→ **BONABERI to NKONGSAMBANOIRE**

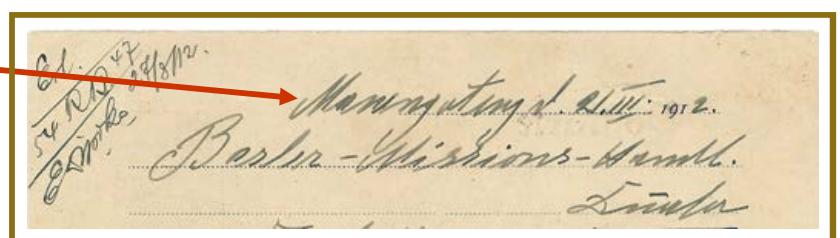
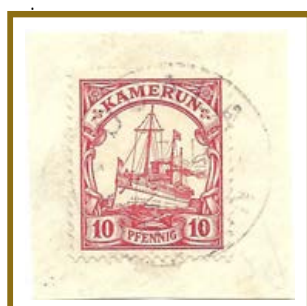
(Known period of use: 13/01/1912– 18/05/1913)



From Manengoteng (at km 125 of the *Nordbahn*), 21.03.1912, to Duala, **collected by the train postal agent** on 23.03 (the trains were running 3 times per week) and cancelled by him with the Duala postmark in violet, without year.

**Tariff:** German Empire postcard rate (5 pfennige)

Date and location of origin may be verified on the back, they confirm that the card was consigned to the mail guard on the train



"Duala" temporary postmark of **train mail clerk** dated 7.11.1912, in black and with year separately stamped



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

From 19 May 1913 the mail guards on trains of the Nord libe were equipped with two **typical oval date markings used by German railway post offices and trains mail guards (Bahnpost)**. The postmarks explicitly mentioned the terminus of the line (Bonaberi – Nkongsamba) and have a movable part to indicate the train number (1 or 2, respectively for up-bound and down-bound trains, preceded by “Z.”, initial for Zug i.e. train in German) and the date.

The two postmarks differ from the **number of dots** in the filigree under the date line. They could be set with dots or solid square between train number and date (solid square used from end of 1913). The ink used was black or greyish black.



#### OVAL WITH LINE TERMINI AND TRAIN NR.

→ **BONABERI to NKONGSAMBA**

(Known period of use: 19/05/1913 – 25/09/1914\*)

\*(Duala and Bonaberi were occupied 2 days later by Anglo-French troops , imposing a momentary stop of mail guards' service on trains)



From unknown locality on the *Nordbahn*, 3.04.1914, to Hamburg, **consigned to the train postal agent** on 4.04 and cancelled by him with the oval date marking (type with two dots in the filigree), dots between train number and date, train n.2 from Nkongsamba to Bonaberi

**Tariff:** German Empire postcard rate (5 pfenninge)

Oval date marking of the **train mail guard** with 1 dot in the filigree, solid square between train number and date, train n.2 from Nkongsamba to Bonaberi, 29.05.1914





### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

The postal service on trains included – as stated – the **collection of registered letter**.

However, the travelling postal agents were not provided with specific registration label, so the registered letters handled by them have the label of the post office of Duala. Two possible explanations: either the travelling postal agents had some stock of such labels, or they were pasted at that office once the postal agents at the end of the service delivered the registered letters to it.



Registered letter from unknown locality on the *Nordbahn*, 3.04.1914, to Neu Staffurt, Kreis Calbe, **handed on the train postal agent** on 19.12.13 and cancelled by him with the oval date marking (type with 1 dots in the filigree), dots between train number and date, train n.2 from Nkongsamba to Bonaberi, greyish black ink. Arrival date marking on the back, 14.01.1914

Registered letter label of Duala

**Tariff:** German empire >20 g letter rate (20 pf.) + registration fee (20 pf.)

During the German colonial period it was started also the construction of the Central Railway Line **Duala– M'Balmayo** (286 km). The first section Duala – Edea (84 km) was opened to traffic in 1912, and other parts were opened progressively: in May 1915 the work reached km 219, while train operations certainly exist between Duala and Eseka (km 174).

No postal service were operated on trains of the Central Line during the German period.



# RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 15 gr. (1,25 fr.)



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

In 1931 a **new undulated larger date marking** was introduced, that remained in use until the end of the colonial period and beyond.

Two types are known. The **first type** was characterized by letter "O" of BONABERI at the same level of the dateline, and small distance (<2mm) between "B" of BONABERI and "C" of "CAMEROUN".

#### LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ **BONABERI to NKONGSAMBA**

(Known period of use: 1931 – 1959)



From unknown locality, to Besançon (France), **collected by the train postal agent on the Northern line** on 18.05.1938 and cancelled by him with the large undulated date marking, first type

**Tariff:** French domestic rate – applied also for mail to/from colonies – for letters <20 g (65 c.)



From unknown locality, to Perigueux (France), **collected by the train postal agent on the Northern line** on 10.11.1954 and cancelled by him with the large undulated date marking, first type

**Tariff:** French domestic rate – applied also for mail to/from colonies – for letters <20 g (15 Fr.); air surtax was not due for letter <20 g



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The **2nd type** had letter “O” of BONABERI below the level of the dateline, and bigger distance (>2mm) between “B” of BONABERI and “C” of “CAMEROUN”. It is known used in the post-independence period (see chapt. 3.3).

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ BONABERI to NKONGSAMBA

(Known period of use: 1931 – 1968)

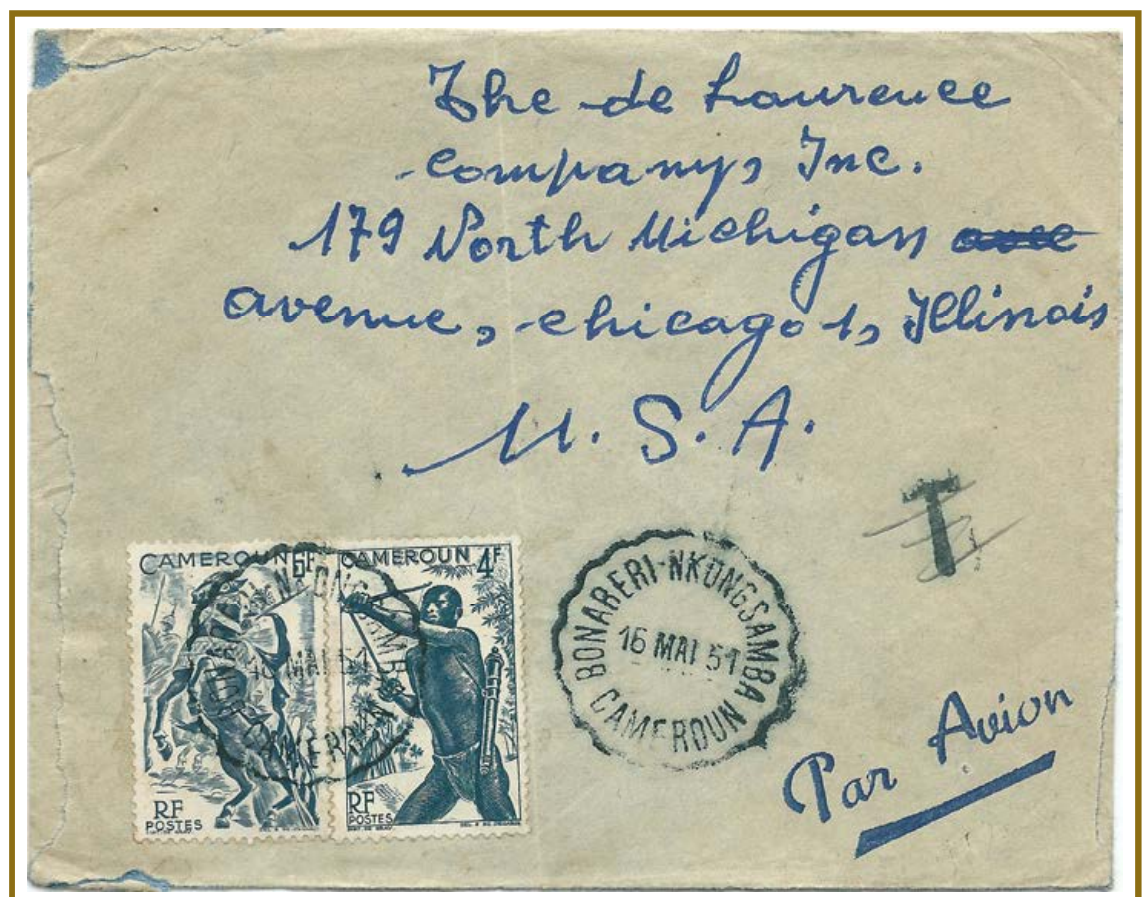


From Ndoungué, to London, collected by the train postal agent on the Northern line on 10.09.1941 and cancelled by him with the large undulated date marking, second type. Re-sealing label and marks of the French Military Censorship

**Tariff:** Foreign mail rate (letter <20 g) 2,50 Fr. No franking for the air surtax for the Douala-Lagos leg, so most likely carried by surface all the way, or by air mail to Lagos by courtesy

From Penja, to Chicago(USA), collected by the train postal agent on the Northern line on 16.05.1951 and cancelled by him with the large undulated date marking, first type

**Tariff:** the franking is largely insufficient for air mail to USA (basic foreign rate was 30 Fr. + 23 Fr. Every 5 g for airmail surtax), so the letter was taxed by the train postal agent (by stamping the “T” mark) but the tax was then cancelled, maybe because the letter was refused by the receiver





### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

In the late fifties, some time after the extension of the line to Doula thank to the opening of the Wouri bridge (inaugurated on 15/05/1955), a new **single circle date marking** with the indication of the new terminal was introduced, even if the large undulated marking with the old terminal's name remained also in use.

#### SINGLE CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ DOUALA to NKONGSAMBA

(Known period of use: 1957 – 1964)



From unknown locality, to Périgueux, **collected by the train postal agent on the Northern line** on 29.07.1957 (**earliest recorded date**) and cancelled by him with the single circle date marking.

**Tariff:** French domestic rate – applied also for mail to/from colonies – for letters <20 g (15 Fr.); air surtax was not due for letter <20 g. The rate was increase to 20 Fr. from 1.07.1957, but the old rate is accepted without taxation (this tolerance in the first weeks after a rate change is common for letters from the colonies)



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

As for the *bahnpost* in the German period, the *convoyeurs* of the French colonial postal service accepted also **registered letters**.

Again, the travelling postal agents were not provided with specific registration label, so the registered letters handled by them have the gummed label hand-stamped Douala, with usually the initials **CFN** (i.e. *Chemin de Fer du Nord*) handwritten.

According to Bratzel, gummed label are in some case tied by the *convoyeur* postmark, so it could be supposed that they were affixed by the train postal agents probably provided in advance with them (the labels are identical to the ones used by the Douala post office). However, evidence from one cover of the Central line (shown in one the next pages) holding a gummed registration label of another locality suggests that (at least) the local letter might have been registered after being disembarked at ground post offices.

After World War II, the label was replaced by a **R** hand-stamp followed by handwritten registration number



From unknown locality, to Marseille, **collected and registered by the train postal agent on the Northern line** on 25.06.1937, cancelled with the large undulated date marking (second type) and holding the Douala registration label with handwritten CFN letters. Marseille arrival date markings on the back (30.06.1937)

**Tariff:** French domestic rate – applied also for mail to/from colonies – for letters <20 g (0,50 c.) + registration fee (1,25 Fr.) + air surtax for letter weighing 5-10 g (2 x 2Fr. = 4 Fr) = total 5,75 Fr. (the letter is over franked for 25 c.)



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

#### The Central Line

The Central line, operating from **Doula** up to **Eseka** in the German period, was then progressively extended to N'Jock (1.04.1920), Malak (1.01.1926), Otélé (14.02.1927) and finally **Yaoundé** (12.03.1927, km 307). As stated above, the service of *convoyeurs* on trains started on September 1, 1919.

The first type of date markings provided to the postal agents were the **small undulated type** as for the Northern Line. Again, the same postmark. It indicates the “up” direction Doula (still spelled as in German) to Eseka but was used on both up and down trains. The year date it is sometimes inverted.

#### SINGLE CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ DOUALA to ESEKA

(Known period of use: 1920– 1930\*)  
\* 1936 according to Waugh



From unknown locality, to Besançon, **collected by the train postal agent on the Central line** on 20.04.1929 (and cancelled by him with the small undulated date marking. Letter not delivered because the receiver left without a forwarding address (boxed mark "PARTI SANS LAISSER D'ADRESSE" – and similar hand writing – on the back side). The letter was first meant to be mailed back to the sender (as from the "RETOUR A L'ENVOYEUR" mark, but because of lack of address of him it was then conveyed to the dead letters (handwritten "Rebut Bordeaux")

**Tariff:** French domestic rate – applied also for mail to/from colonies – for letters <20 g (50 c.)



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

#### RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

As for the Northern line, in 1931 the **undulated larger date marking** was introduced, correctly mentioning the new end station, Yaoundé, instead of Eseka. It is known used until the mid-50's.



**LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME**

→ DOUALA to YAOUNDÉ

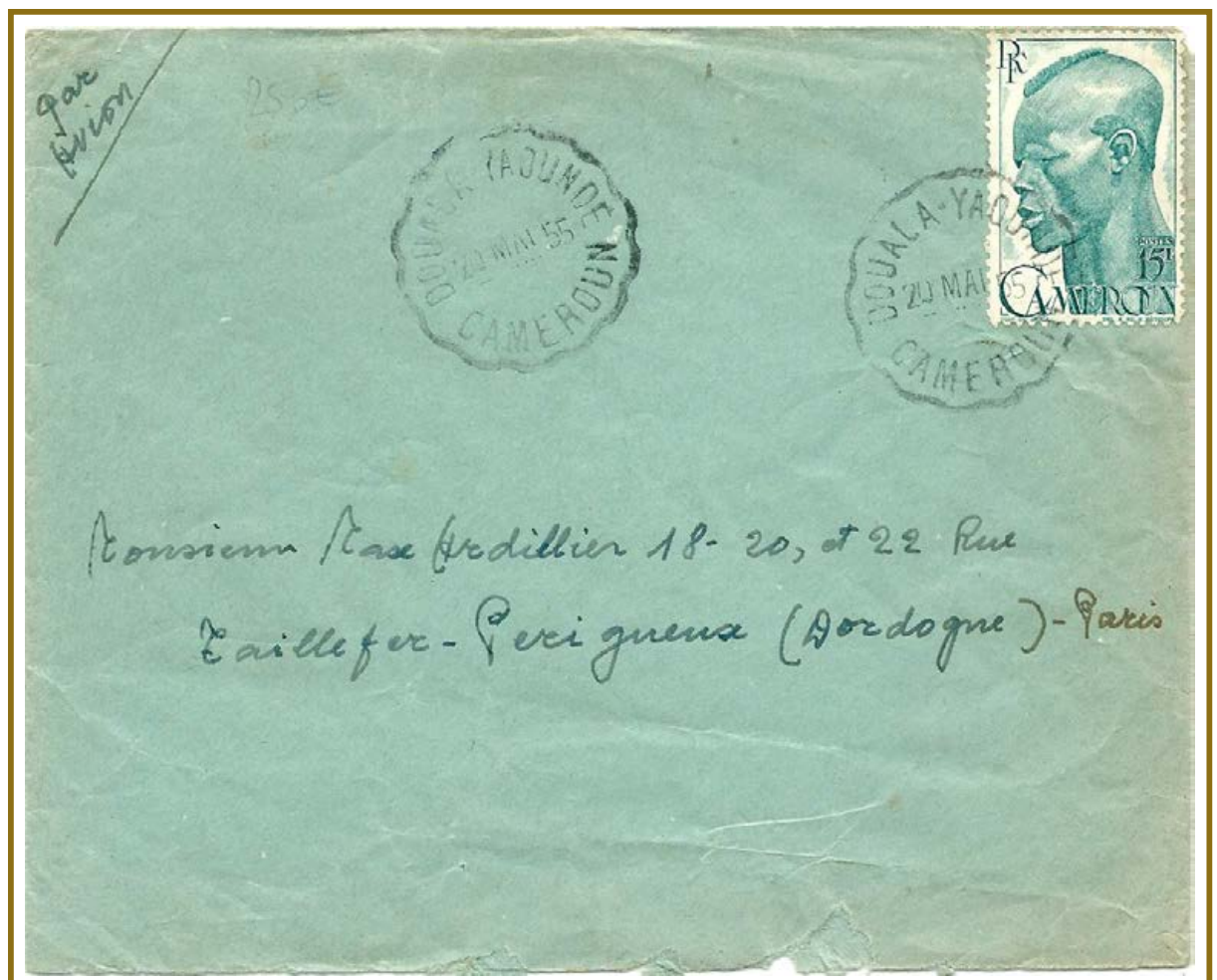
(Known period of use: 1931 – 1955)

From unknown locality, to Vienna, **collected by the train postal agent on the Central line** on 10.09.1936 and cancelled by him with the large undulated date marking.

**Tariff:** Foreign rate for letters weighing 20-40 g (2,40 Fr.: 1,50 Fr. for the first 20 g, and 0,90 Fr. for the second 20 g)

Domestic letter to Perigueux, **collected by the train postal agent on the Central line** on 20.05.1955 and cancelled by him with the large undulated date marking.  
**Last recorded date of this marking.**

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letters <20 g (15 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2





### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

From 1940 a new type of **undulated date marking** with “bridge” for the date line was also introduced.

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH  
LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME,  
with bridge for the dateline

→ DOUALA to YAOUNDE

(Known period of use: 1940 – 1957)



From unknown locality, to Lolodorf, collected by the train postal agent on the Central line on 27.03.1942 and cancelled by him with the undulated bridge date marking. Eseka transit (28.03) and Lolodorf (03.04) arrival date markings on the back (the mail carrier between these two places marched once per week, so this explain the time distance between the two strikes). Censorship mark on front.

Tariff: Domestic rate for letters <20 g (1,00 Fr.)



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

This undulated date marking with “bridge” is known used in parallel with the large undulated one until the mid-50's.



From unknown locality, to Chicago, **collected by the train postal agent on the Central line** on 23.09.1953 and cancelled by him with the undulated bridge date marking.

On the front also PAQUEBOT linear mark and traces of a mechanical cancellation. The presence of the **paquebot mark** is not easy to be explained: being the mark of the same type in use at Douala, it could be that was stamped by that post office to indicate the use of the maritime way (instead of the air one requested by the sender), and not as usual to identify mail posted at sea.

**Tariff:** Despite being a letter to foreign destination requested to be carried by airmail, is franked at the surface French area domestic rate (15 Fr.) but not taxed



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

As for the Northern lin, the *convoyeurs* of the Central line accepted **registered letters**.

As previously explained the travelling postal agents were not provided with specific registration label.

Some registered letter directed outside the colony hold the gummed label hand-stamped Douala with usually the handwritten initials **CCC** (i.e. *Chemin de fer Central du Cameroun*) or with a "R" marking followed by the DOUALA linear marking.

As previously stated, gummed label are known tied by the *convoyeur* postmark, implying – as stated in relevant literature (Bratzel, 2009) – that they were affixed by the train postal agents probably provided in advance with them (the labels are identical to the ones used by the Douala post office). However, evidence from one local letter (shown below) holding a gummed registration label of another locality (Eseka) suggests that (at least) the **local letter might have been registered after being disembarked at ground post offices**.

After World War II, the label was replaced by a **R** hand-stamp followed by handwritten registration number



Local registered letter to Eseka, **collected by the train postal agent on the Central line** and cancelled by him with the undulated bridge date marking (07.01.1942), and holding the Edea registration label. Eseka arrival date markings on the back (same date)

Also to be mentioned the handwriting "*À censurer à l'arrivée*" (clearly censorship cannot take place on the train, and – being the Eseka at km 174 of the Central line – the letter was not routed through the main post offices of Douala and Yaoundé where main censorship commissions operated)

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (1 fr.) + registration fee (2 fr.)



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The likely higher level of traffic required to equip the *convoyeur* with a third postmark, so in the late 40's a **single circle large date marking** was supplied.

It is known used initially in parallel with the two large undulated types, and then also in the post-colonial period.

#### SINGLE CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY (COUNTRY) NAME

→ DOUALA to YAOUNDE

(Known period of use: 1948 – 1974)



Letter to Marseille (France), collected by the train postal agent on the Central line who cancelled it with the single circle bridge date marking (29.04.1957).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (5 fr.)

Finally in 1955 also a **single circle small date marking** was put into use, similar to the one mentioned for the Northern Line. With this new postmark available, the undulated types appear to have been progressively retired, while the large single circle remained in use.

An exemple of such postmark is presented in chapter 3



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

#### The Branch Line Otélé – M'balayo

From November 1927 a branch line at 0,60 m gauge operated between Otélé, on the Central Line, and M'Balmayo. In 1933 the line was converted at the meter gauge like the rest of the network. Line length was 37 km.

The opening of the mail transport service on this line was not regulated by a specific Governor's Order (*Arrêté*). However, the *Arrêté* updating the annual reimbursement to the railways for carrying the mail of 20.11.1928 explicitly mentions for the Central railway that the amount to be paid includes the mail transport over the Otélé – M'Balmayo branch. *Conveyeurs* in service over this short line used a **double circle date marking**.



#### DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY NAME

→ DOUALA to YAOUNDE

(Known period of use: 1930 – 1951)

From Olama, to Elat, collected by the train postal agent on the Otélé – M'Balmayo branch on 12.11.1935 and cancelled with the double circle date marking. Eseka transit postmark on the back (12.11.35). The letter was probably handed over by the sender in N'Goumou station (30 km North from Olama) to the *convoyeur* on the branch line, then in Otélé transferred to the main line *convoyeur* to Eseka, where it was passed on the carrier Eseka - Ebolowa.



**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 r. (50 cent.)



From unknown locality, to Périgueux (France), collected by the train postal agent on the Otélé – M'Balmayo branch on 15.03.1951 and cancelled by him with the double circle date marking. One of the last dates known for this postmark.

**Tariff:** Domestic rate for letter up to 20 g (10 Fr.), airmail surtax not required for letters up to 20 g



## 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

### 3.3 After the independence

The **independence of Cameroon** was declared on January 1, 1960. After that, the **railway network was extended**: on the Northern line, a branch between Mbanga and Kumba (29 km) was opened in 1964 to facilitate export from Western Cameroon through the Douala port, while the Central Line was prolonged from Yaoundé to Ngaoundéré (628 km) between 1964 and 1974. The Douala – Yaoundé section was completely rebuilt from 1975 to 1983.

The **convoyeur service** continued resp. until 1968 (Northern Line) and 1974 (Central Line). Exact dates are not known, dates above are based on observed postmarks. No postmarks are known for the extension opened after 1960.

In the post-independence period, the following *convoyeurs* postmarks are known:

a) **Central line:**

- large undulated date marking (type 2, up to 1968)
- single circle date marking (up to 1964);
- on this line it is also reported a new postmark unrecorded in the pre-independence period, the single circle date marking with “NKONGSAMBA À DOUALA” line indication (reported in 1966)



From N'Lohé (station at km 115 from Doula), to Niort(France), **collected by the train postal agent on the Northern Line** on 23.09.1963 and cancelled with the large undulated date marking, type 2.

**Tariff:** Airmail rate to France for letter up to 5 g (25 Fr.), 3 Fr. over franked



### 3. From Bahnpost to Convoyeur: railway mail in Cameroun

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

b) Northern line:

- large single circle date marking (up to 1974)
- small single circle date marking (up to 1970)\

SMALL SINGLE CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COUNTRY NAME

→ DOUALA to YAOUNDE

(Known period of use: 1955 – 1970)



From unknown locality, to Niort (France), collected by the train postal agent on the Central Line on 18.04.1968 and cancelled with the small single circle date marking.

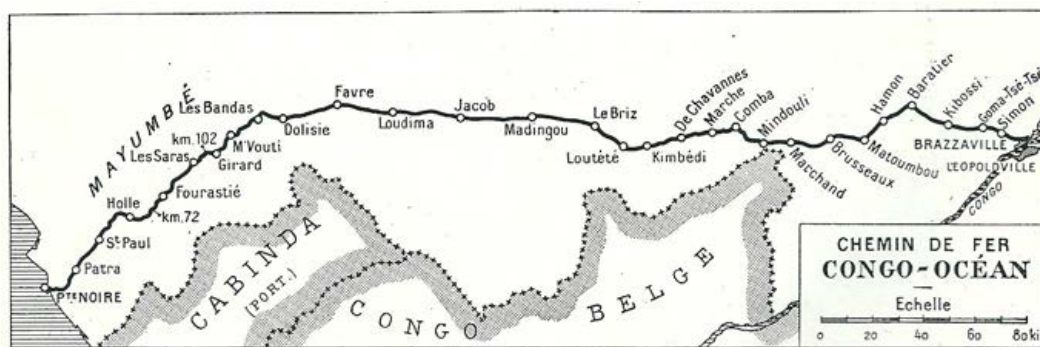
\*N'Lohé (locality indicated in the sender's address) is on the North line, but most likely the sender had also a factory on the Central line.

**Tariff:** Airmail rate to France for letter weighing up to 5 g (30 Fr.)



## 4. Railway mail on the Congo – Ocean line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA



The French Congo was the last colony of Sub-Saharan Africa to be equipped with a railway. The construction started in 1921 and were completed only in 1934, with a huge loss of human lives among the workers. The line (512 km) connected the territory's main port **Pointe Noire** with the capital **Brazzaville** on the Congo river, that was the link to the rest of French Equatorial Africa: The main objective was to create a connection fully on French territories, so avoiding the Belgian Congo, even if the choice of "Cape" track gauge (1067 mm) allowed a future link (that actually was never realized) to the network of Southern part of Africa.

Evidence from *convoyeur* marking suggest that the **railway mail service** was activated few years after the completion of the line, in **1938**, or even earlier. The markings of Congo's convoyeurs are quite peculiar compared to the ones of other colonies.

Marks used at the beginning were single circle with indication of the line termini preceded by the word "Ligne" and with the acronym A.E.F. (*Afrique Equatoriale Française*) on the lower part. Two distinctive marks were used for the two directions, but they seem to have been both used in both directions.

### CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COLONY'S ACRONYM

→ BRAZZAVILLE to POINTE NOIRE

(Known period of use: 1938 – 1951)



Letter to Paris, collected by the Congo – Océan railway's *convoyeur* and cancelled with the circle date marks "LIGNE BRAZZAVILLE À POINTE NOIRE / ✕ A.E.F. ✕" (14/05/1940). Brazzaville transit marking (15/05) on reverse. Despite being directed to the eastern terminal Brazzaville, the letter was cancelled by the marking of the westbound service, demonstrating that the postmarks were not always used in coherence with the direction of travelling.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (1 fr.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr (3 fr.) = 4 fr.



## 4. Railway mail on the Congo – Ocean line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

These two covers, despite senders from stations along the line and same receiver in Pointe Noire, appear to have been consigned to *convoyeurs* travelling in opposite directions. This either demonstrates that the two markings were not always used on the corresponding train, or (less likely) that the second letter was given to the eastbound service because was the first available.

From Dolisie (167 km from Pointe Noire) to Pointe Noire, collected by the *convoyeur* who cancelled it with the circle date marks "LIGNE BRAZZAVILLE À POINTE NOIRE / ✕ A.E.F. ✕" (04/07/1941). Pointe Noire arrival marking (06/05) on reverse. Marks of the French Censor in Pointe Noire on both sides.



**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (1 fr.)



CIRCLE WITH  
LINE TERMINI  
AND COLONY'S  
ACRONYM

→ POINTE NOIRE  
to BRAZZAVILLE

(Known period of  
use: 1938 – 1951)

From Hamon (53 km from Brazzaville) to Pointe Noire, collected by the *convoyeur* cancelled with the circle date marks "LIGNE POINTE NOIRE À BRAZZAVILLE / ✕ A.E.F. ✕" (18/07/1942). Pointe Noire arrival marking (20/05) on reverse. Departure and destination sites would have suggested the transmission through the *convoyeur* travelling on the opposite direction. Marks of the French Censor in Pointe Noire on both sides.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (1 fr.)



## 4. Railway mail on the Congo – Ocean line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA



Letter to Detroit, **collected by the convoyeur** who cancelled it with the circle date marks "LIGNE POINTE NOIRE À BRAZZAVILLE / ✕ A.E.F. ✕" (21/02/1942). Brazzaville transit marking (23/02) on reverse. French censorship marks of Brazzaville, and British censor label.

**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 20 gr. (2,50 fr.) + airmail surtax 5-10 gr (15 fr. x 2 = 30 fr.) = 32,50 fr.

In the 1950's a new type of marking was introduced, **double circle** with the simple indication of the line termini.

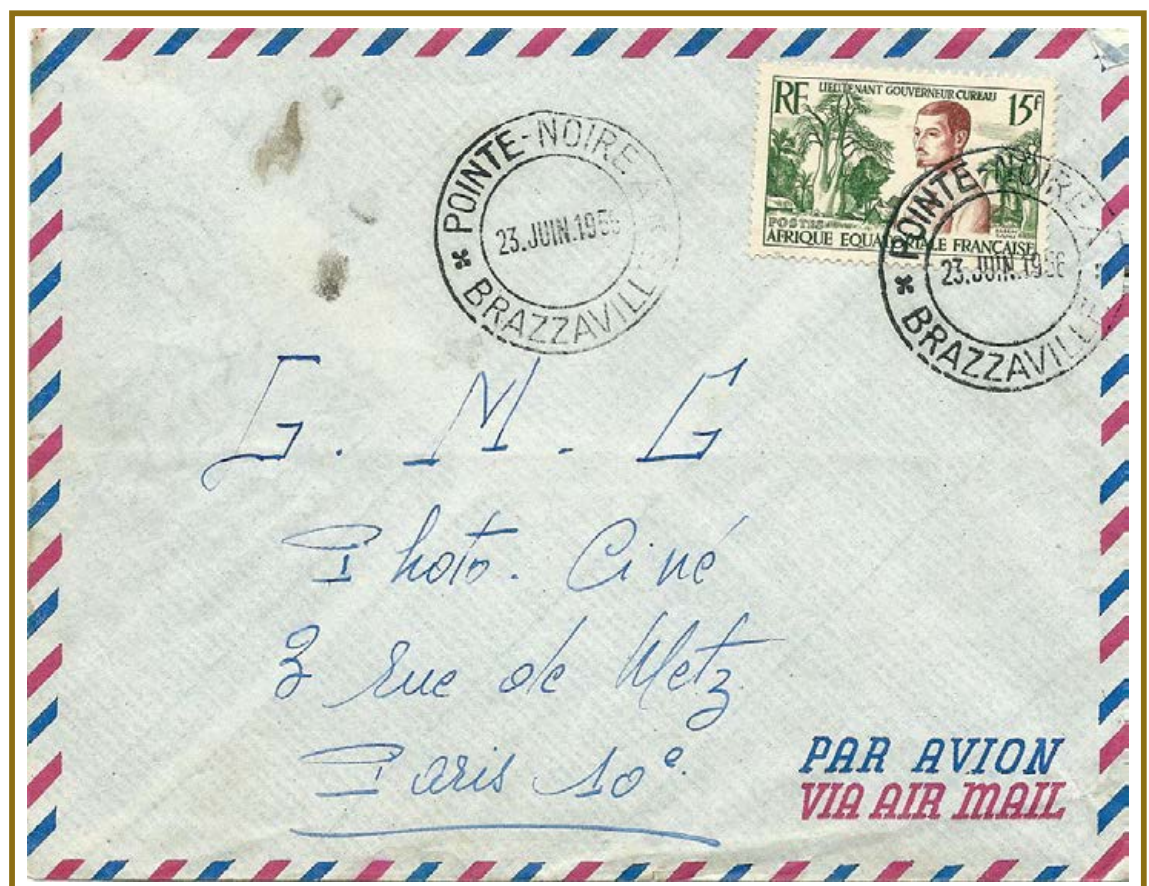
### DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI

→ **POINTE NOIRE to  
BRAZZAVILLE**

(Known period of use:  
1952 – 1963)

Letter to Paris, **collected by the train's convoyeur** who cancelled with the circle date marks "✕ POINTE NOIRE À ✕ / BRAZZAVILLE / A.E.F." (23/06/1956).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2





## 4. Railway mail on the Congo – Ocean line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

This postmark remained until the **end of the service** (based on recorded dates, the *convoyeur* was likely to have been discontinued few **after the independence**, i.e. in the **mid-1960's**), showing a progressive **deterioration**.



Letter to Nantes (France), cancelled with the double circle *convoyeur* marking of 19/11/1958.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr.



Letter to Nantes (France), cancelled with the *convoyeur* circle date marks "× POINTE NOIRE À × / BRAZZAVILLE / A.E.F." (28 or 30/01/1961, day wrongly set at "38"). **Latest recorded date** of the *convoyeur* marking.

**Tariff:** Letter rate to France up to 20 gr. (25 fr.), no airmail surtax due



## 5. The Reunion island: “convoyeurs” service on the circular railway line

The Indian Ocean island of Réunion was equipped with two meter-gauge railway lines from the capital city:

- **Saint-Denis – Saint-Benoît** (also indicated as *Ligne du Vent* i.e. Windward Line)
- **Saint-Denis – Saint-Louis – Saint-Pierre** (*Ligne Sous-le-Vent* = Leeward line).

The lines had a total length of 126 km, creating almost a circular railway around the island.

Their main purpose was to facilitate the transport of sugar cane to the ports.

The construction started in 1878, and both lines were opened in 1882.



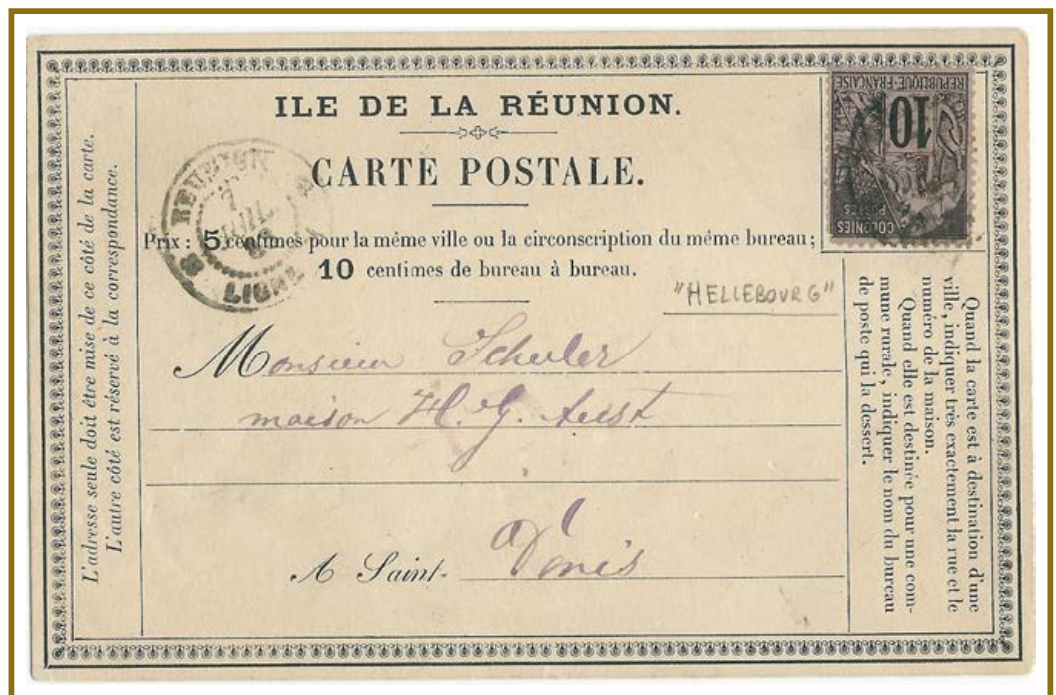
On July 15th **1882** the railway mail service was organized, and the **convoyeur** service officially stated on **July 30<sup>th</sup>** on the **Leeward Line**, and on **August 1st** on the **Windward Line**. For a couple of decades the services remained distinct on the two lines, and this was reflected in the convoyeur markings.

*Convoyeur* clerks were in charge of collecting the mail posted on the stations' and train's mail boxes, as well as directly from customers during station stops. It was the first convoyeur service on French Sub-Saharan Africa.

### DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE, WITH LINE ACRONYM

#### → LIGNE du VENT

(Known period of use: 1882 – 1897)



#### → LIGNE SOUS-LE-VENT

(Known period of use: 1882 – 1900)



Postcard to Saint-Denis, cancelled with the double circle with dashed inner circle of the *convoyeur* "REUNION / LIGNE V", 07.07.1883

**Tariff:** Domestic postal card rate (10 cent.)



## 5. The Reunion island: "convoyeurs" service on the circular railway line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

From January 1<sup>st</sup> 1888 the **convoyeurs** brigade were doubled, becoming 2 on each line, so new markings were necessary. The new type was differentiated by the inner circle (continuous instead of dashed).

### DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH CONTINUOUS INNER CIRCLE, WITH LINE ACRONYM

→ **LIGNE SOUS-LE-VENT**  
(Known period of use: 1888 – 1897)

*Blue ink*

Postcard from Le Port (handwritten indication on the back) to Saint-Denis, cancelled with the double circle with continuous inner circle, of the *convoyeur* "REUNION / LIGNE SV" 21.03.1894,

**Tariff:** Domestic postal card rate (10 cent.)



### DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH CONTINUOUS INNER CIRCLE, WITH LINE ACRONYM

→ **LIGNE du VENT**  
(Known period of use: 1888 – 1901)

*Blue ink*

From Saint-André to Paris, cancelled with the double circle with continuous inner circle, of the *convoyeur* "REUNION / LIGNE V" 24.04.1891,

**Tariff:** Domestic letter card rate up to 15 gr. (15 cent.)

Further marking with full line name were introduced in 1893 when the *convoyeur* brigades grew from 4 to 6.



### DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH CONTINUOUS INNER CIRCLE, WITH FULL LINE NAME

→ **LIGNE SOUS-LE-VENT**

(Known period of use: 1893 – 1902)

*Blue ink*

Postcard from Saint-Leu (handwritten indication on the back) to Saint-Denis, cancelled with the double circle of the *convoyeur* "REUNION / LIGNE SOUS-le-VENT" 2.12.1893,

**Tariff:** Domestic postal card rate (10 cent.)



## 5. The Reunion island: “convoyeurs” service on the circular railway line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

From February 1<sup>st</sup> 1902, **convoyeur** markings were **harmonized** adopting new type simply indicating the brigade (distinguished by letter from A to B, since in that year *convoyeurs* were reduced to 4). In 1903 they became again 6, then 4 from 1910 to 1919, 5 from 1920 to 1923, and again 4 from 1924 to 1930. When the number of *convoyeurs* was higher than 4, also markings with letter “E” and “F” were used.

DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE + letter distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR A

(Known period of use:  
1902 – 1928)

Local postcard to Saint-Denis,  
**collected by the train's *convoyeur***  
who cancelled it with the double circle  
with inner dashed circle *convoyeur*  
marking “CONVOYEUR A /  
REUNION” (08/04/1904). Arrival  
marking of same date.

**Tariff:** Domestic postcard rate (10  
cent.)



DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE + letter distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR B

(Known period of use: 1902 – 1928)



Local postcard to Avirons, **collected by the train's *convoyeur*** and cancelled with the double circle with inner dashed circle *convoyeur* marking “CONVOYEUR B / REUNION” (23/11/1904). Saint-Louis transit (23/11) and Avirons arrival markings (24/11).

**Tariff:** Domestic postcard rate (10 cent.)



## 5. The Reunion island: “convoyeurs” service on the circular railway line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE + letter distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR C

(Known period of use:  
1902 – 1928)

Letter to Besancon (France),  
**cancelled by the train's  
convoyeur** with the double  
circle with inner dashed circle  
convoyeur marking  
“CONVOYEUR C /  
REUNION” (16/06/1905).  
Arrival marking (15/07) on  
reverse.

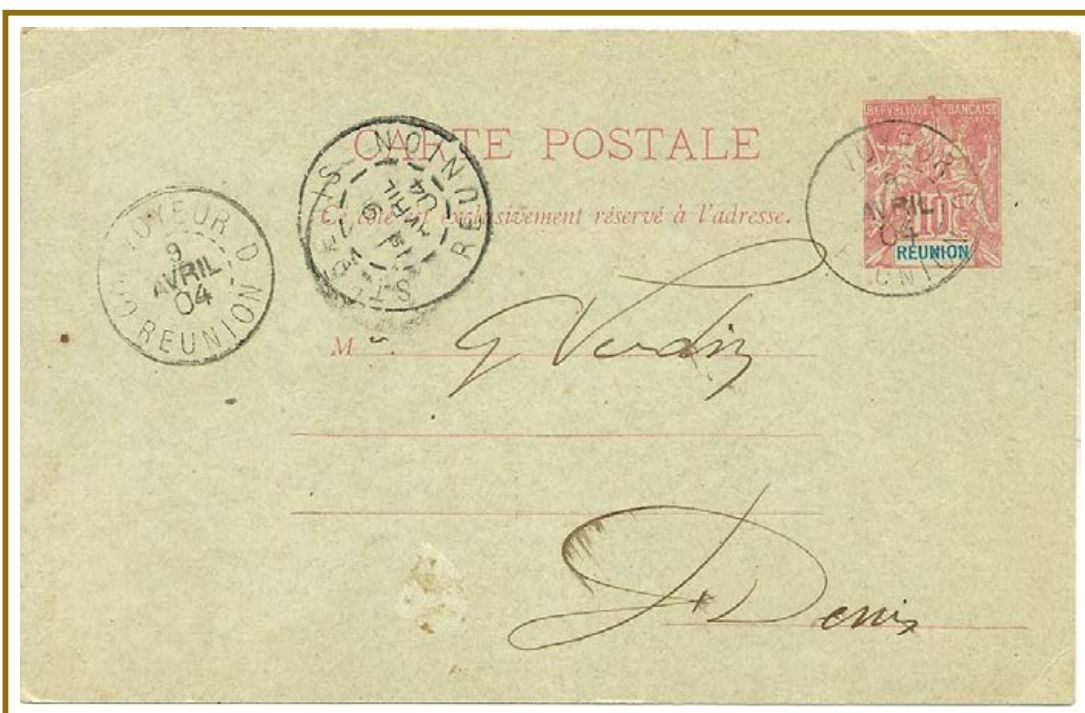
**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up  
to 20 gr. (15 cent.)



DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE + letter distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR D

(Known period of use: 1902 – 1928)



Local postcard to Saint-Denis,  
**cancelled by the train's convoyeur**  
with the double circle with inner  
dashed circle **convoyeur** marking  
“CONVOYEUR D / REUNION”  
(09/04/1904). Arrival marking of same  
date.

**Tariff:** Domestic postcard rate (10  
cent.)



## 5. The Reunion island: “convoyeurs” service on the circular railway line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In 1929 the Reunion’s *convoyeurs* were equipped with large **undulated circle markings** as in most French metropolitan and colonial railways. In that year the convoyeur brigades were 4, with a **distinctive marking specified by figures “1” to “4”**.

**LARGE UNDULATED  
CIRCLE + number**  
distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR 1

(Known period of use:  
1929 – 1952)

From Saint-Denis (as from sender's mark on reverse) to Paris, **handed on the convoyeur** who cancelled it with the large undulated marking “REUNION / CONVOYEUR 1” (17/11/1934). Arrival marking (19/12) on the back.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate (50 cent.)



**LARGE UNDULATED  
CIRCLE + number**  
distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR 2

(Known period of use: 1929 – 1952)



From S.te Marie to Arcueil(France), **collected by the train’s convoyeur** who cancelled it with the large undulated marking “REUNION / CONVOYEUR 2” (16/05/1947).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate 20-40 gr. (4,50 x 2 = 9 fr. CFA), no airmail surtax due after WW2

**LARGE UNDULATED  
CIRCLE + number**  
distinguishing the brigade

### → CONVOYEUR 3

(Known period of use: 1929 – 1952)

Front of cover to Perriers-sur-Andelle (France), **collected by the train’s convoyeur** who cancelled it with the large undulated marking “REUNION / CONVOYEUR 3” (02/01/1949).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (8 fr. CFA), no airmail surtax due after WW2





## 5. The Reunion island: “convoyeurs” service on the circular railway line

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

At mid-1930's the *convoyeurs* received a different type of large undulated circle marking, where the *convoyeur's* number were indicated before and after the word “CONVOYEUR”. This type remained in use until the 1950's, except the one of *convoyeur* 4 that is known only until 1939, when the *convoyeurs* were reduced to 3.



**LARGE UNDULATED  
CIRCLE + number**  
distinguishing the  
brigade (before and  
after “CONVOYEUR”)

→ CONVOYEUR 1

(Known period of use: 1935  
– 1956)

Letter to Paris, then redirected to Ploujean (France), collected by the train's *convoyeur* who cancelled it with the large undulated circle with “CONVOYEUR / 1-REUNION-1” (07/07/1936). Pointe des Galets transit (07/07) and Paloujean (12/08) arrival marking.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate (50 cent.)

**LARGE UNDULATED  
CIRCLE + number**  
distinguishing the  
brigade (before and  
after “CONVOYEUR”)

→ CONVOYEUR 4

(Known period of use: 1935  
– 1939)

Letter from Saint-Denis to Troyes (France), collected by the train's *convoyeur* who cancelled it with the large undulated circle marking “CONVOYEUR / 4-REUNION-4” (25/01/1936).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)





## 5. The Reunion island: “convoyeurs” service on the circular railway line

On December 1<sup>st</sup> 1952 the mail service on the section Saint-Denis to Saint-Benoit was transferred to road transport, because of the **suppression** of that railway section.

The same happened on the section Pointe-des-Galets – Saint-Pierre on **Mars 15th 1956**, so limiting the *convoyeur* service at the Saint-Denis – Pointe-des-Galets line.

Only one *convoyeur* agent remained in service, but since that date it **did not cancel the mail** consigned to him anymore (cancellation took place on the post offices of the end stations).

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE + number distinguishing the brigade (before and after “CONVOYEUR”)

→ CONVOYEUR 3

(Known period of use: 1935 – 1956)



Letter to Besancon (France), **collected by the train's *convoyeur*** who cancelled it with the large undulated circle *convoyeur* marking “CONVOYEUR / 3-REUNION-3” (22/07/1955).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate (8 fr. CFA)



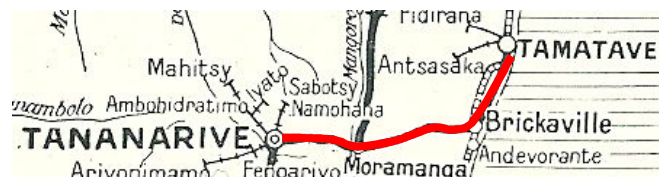
## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

Between 1901 and 1936 more than **800 km of meter gauge railways** were built on the biggest island of the Indian Ocean. The main promoter of the construction was the governor general Gallieni, in order to both improve the control of the territory (anti-French riots were not infrequent) and to stimulate the economic development of the countries.

All four lines were interested by mail services operated by clerks travelling in a special compartment of wagons. As in other French colonies, apart of transporting mail bags and collecting the mail at the station along the line (from station mail boxes or directly from customers), the convoyeur agents were in charge of selling postage stamps, as well as accepting registered letter

### 6.1 The Tananarive – Tamatave line

The line from **Tananarive** (the capital city, today Antananarivo) to **Tamatave** (port on the east coast, today Toamasina), also called *Tamarive – Côte Est (TCE)*, was completed between 1901 and 1913. The first section of 102 km was opened to traffic in 1904. The total length was 371 km.

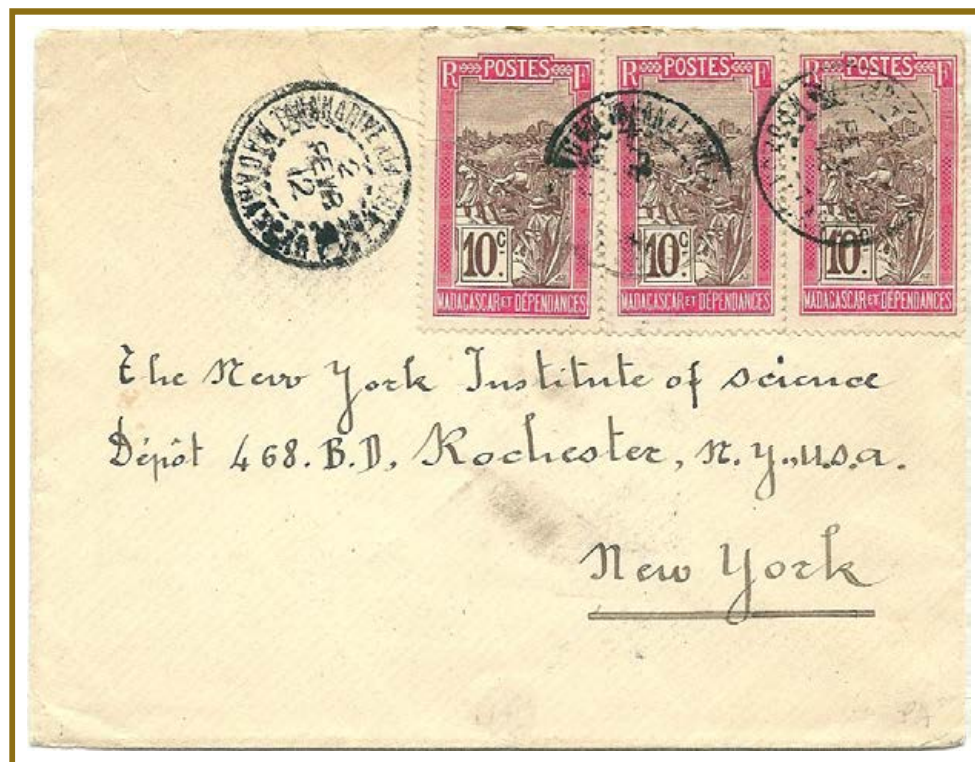


The **convoyeur** service is known to have started in 1907 when most of the Tananarive – Brickaville section was in operation (but transport of mail bags on the train commenced as early as 1904). The markings mentioned the name of the line “**TANANARIVE À LA COTE EST**” and the indication of mail clerk brigade (A or B). This first type of postmarks remained in use until 1917.

DOUBLE CIRCLE WITH DASHED INNER CIRCLE, WITH LINE AND COLONY NAME  
+ letter indicating the brigade

→ TANANARIVE to EAST COAST A

(Known period of use: 1908 – 1917)



Letter to New York, **collected by the TCE railway's convoyeur** and cancelled with the double circle marks with dashed inner circle “TANANARIVE A LA COTE EST A/ MADAGASCAR” (02/02/1912). Tamatave transit marking (03/02) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 20 gr. (25 cent.), with 5 cents of over-franking



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

From 1917\* the typical **undulated convoyeur** postmarks were introduced, with line termini explicitly specified. Different markings were available according to the **direction of travelling** and the mail agent's **brigade** (identified by letters A to D). The D brigade was probably introduced later (marking known only from 1930). This type of markings remained in used until 1931\*\*.

\* One source (C.W. Spong) mentions 1911, but is likely to be a 1917 with 7 confused for 1, since no other markings are known for all years between 1911 and 1916.

\*\* Same source reports a 1939, again it is likely to be a earlier year incorrectly read, or wrong setting of the postmark's date, since no other markings are reported after 1931.

UNDULATED CIRCLE  
WITH LINE TERMINI  
+ letter indicating the  
brigade

→ TANANARIVE to  
TAMATAVE A

(Known period of use: 1917 –  
1931)

Letter to VivarParis, **collected  
by the railway's convoyeur**  
and cancelled with the  
undulated circle marks  
"TANANARIVE A TAMATAVE /  
A" (27/08/1927).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to  
20 gr. (50 cent.)



→ TANANARIVE to TAMATAVE B

(Known period of use: 1917 – 1931)



Letter to Vivario (Corsica, France), **collected by the  
railway's convoyeur** and cancelled with the  
undulated circle marks "TANANARIVE A  
TAMATAVE / B" (24/06/1917). Tamatave transit  
marking (25/06) on reverse. In 1917 the full-line  
travel time was 14h and one of the regular  
passenger trains made the trips overnight, so this  
explains the different date of the two markings.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 cent.)



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI  
+ letter indicating the brigade

→ TAMATAVE A TANANARIVE A

(Known period of use: 1924 – 1931)

As already reported, *convoyeurs* agent were entitled to accept **registered letters** from the public during the stops at stations.



Registered local letter to Anfahibé, collected and registered by the railway's *convoyeur* who cancelled it with the undulated circle marks "TAMATAVE A TANANARIVE / A" (25/11/1930). He also stamped the boxed R indicating the registration, while "10" is probably the registration number. Tananarive transit marking (26/11) on reverse.

**Tariff:**  
Domestic letter rate 20-50 gr. (75 cent.) + registration fee (1 fr.) = 1,75 fr.



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In the 1930's a **numbering system** (1 to 4) was applied to **differentiate the *convoyeur* brigades**, instead of the letters A, B....

Thus, new undulated markings were introduced, including brigade numbering. Line termini were separated by a hyphen ("-") instead of "à".

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ TANANARIVE to TAMATAVE – Brigade 1

(Known period of use: 1931 – 1955)



Letter to Clavette (France), **collected by the *convoyeur* on the Tananarive to Tamatave line** (eastbound direction, first brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TANANARIVE – TAMATAVE / N° 1" (11/04/1933). Tamatave transit marking (12/04) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ TAMATAVE to TANANARIVE – Brigade 1

(Known period of use: 1931 – 1955)

Letter from Mangoro (as indicated in the sender's address), 104 km from Tananarivo, to Paris, collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarivo to Tamatave line (westbound direction, first brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TAMATAVE – TANANARIVE / N° 1" (02/05/1933). Tananarive transit (02/05) and Paris arrival (29/05) markings on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



Letter to Lyon (France), collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarivo to Tamatave line (westbound direction, first brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TAMATAVE – TANANARIVE / N° 1" (26/04/1954). Complementary franking on reverse (not cancelled)

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.)





## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI  
+ number indicating the brigade

→ TAMATAVE to TANANARIVE – Brigade 2

(Known period of use: 1930 – 1956)



Air letter from Tamatave to Paris, collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarivo – Tamatave line (east direction, 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TAMATAVE TANANARIVE / N° 21" (30/03/1937). Tananarive transit marking (30/03) also cancelling the complementary franking on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) + airmail surtax to France 5-10 gr (2 x 4 fr. = 8 fr.) = 8,50 fr.



Air letter to Etampes (France), collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarivo – Tamatave line (westbound direction, 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TAMATAVE TANANARIVE / N° 2" (12/08/1939). Complementary franking and Etampes arrival marking (20/08) on reverse

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (90 cent.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr (3 fr.) = 3,90 fr.





## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ TAMATAVE to TANANARIVE – Brigade 3

(Known period of use: 1931 – 1955)



Letter to Paris, **handed on the convoyeur on the Tananarivo to Tamatave line** (westbound direction, 3rd brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TAMATAVE TANANARIVE / N° 3" (08/08/1932). Tananarive transit (09/08) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.)



Letter to Berlin (Germany), **collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarivo to Tamatave line** (westbound direction, 3rd brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated date marking "TAMATAVE – TANANARIVE / N° 3" (06/05/1939). Postage due marking and handwritten taxation of 0,30 fr).

**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 20 gr. (2,25 fr.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr (3 fr.) + airmail surtax from France to Germany up to 5 gr. (75 cent.) = 6,00 fr, i.e. under-franked by 0,40 fr and therefore taxed for  $0,40 \times 2 = 0,80$  fr converted in 0,31 German pfennig



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ TAMATAVE to  
TANANARIVE  
Brigade 4

(Known period of use:  
1931 – 1958)

Letter to Brette-les-Pins (France),  
**collected by the convoyeur on the  
Tananarivo – Tamatave line**  
(westbound direction, 4th brigade)  
that cancelled it with the undulated  
date marking "TAMATAVE  
TANANARIVE / N° 4" (28/07/1935).  
Complementary franking,  
Tananarive transit (28/07) and Paris  
arrival (10/08) markings on reverse.



**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (50 cent.) + airmail  
surtax to France up to 5 gr (4 fr.) = 4,50 fr.



Soldier's local letter to  
Tananarive, **collected by the  
convoyeur on the Tananarivo  
to Tamatave line** (westbound  
direction, 4th brigade) that  
cancelled it with the undulated  
date marking "TAMATAVE –  
TANANARIVE / N° 4"  
(19/02/1948). Handwritten FM  
(Military Franchise) + mark and  
signature of the sender (a  
military doctor) to state the right  
to the free franking. Arrival  
marking of the field post office  
(TOE = Théâtre d'Opérations  
Extérieures i.e. External  
Operational Theater). French  
army intervened in Madagascar  
in 1947 due to armed  
nationalists' actions.

**Tariff:** Free franking granted to  
French army on the field



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

A **fifth brigade** appears to have been operating since late 1940's. It received at first the same type of undulated markings used by the other brigades.

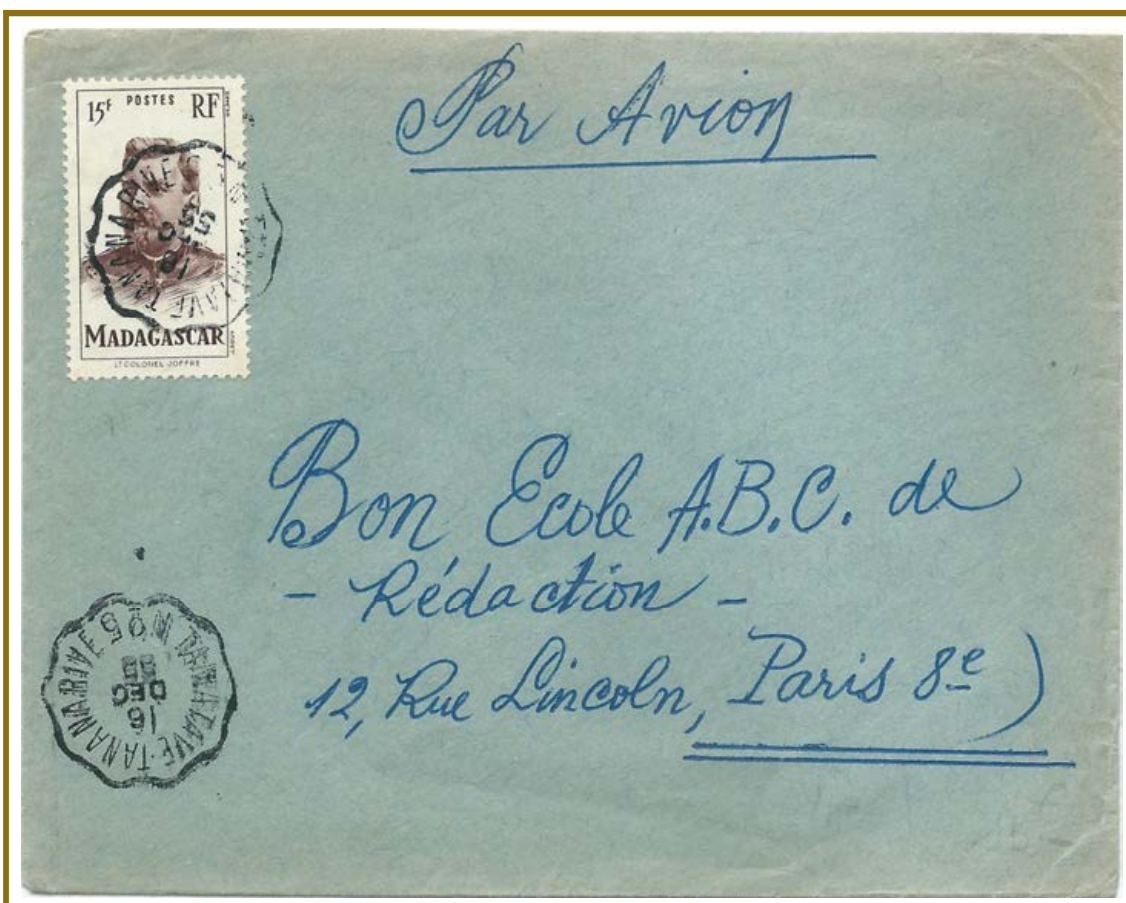
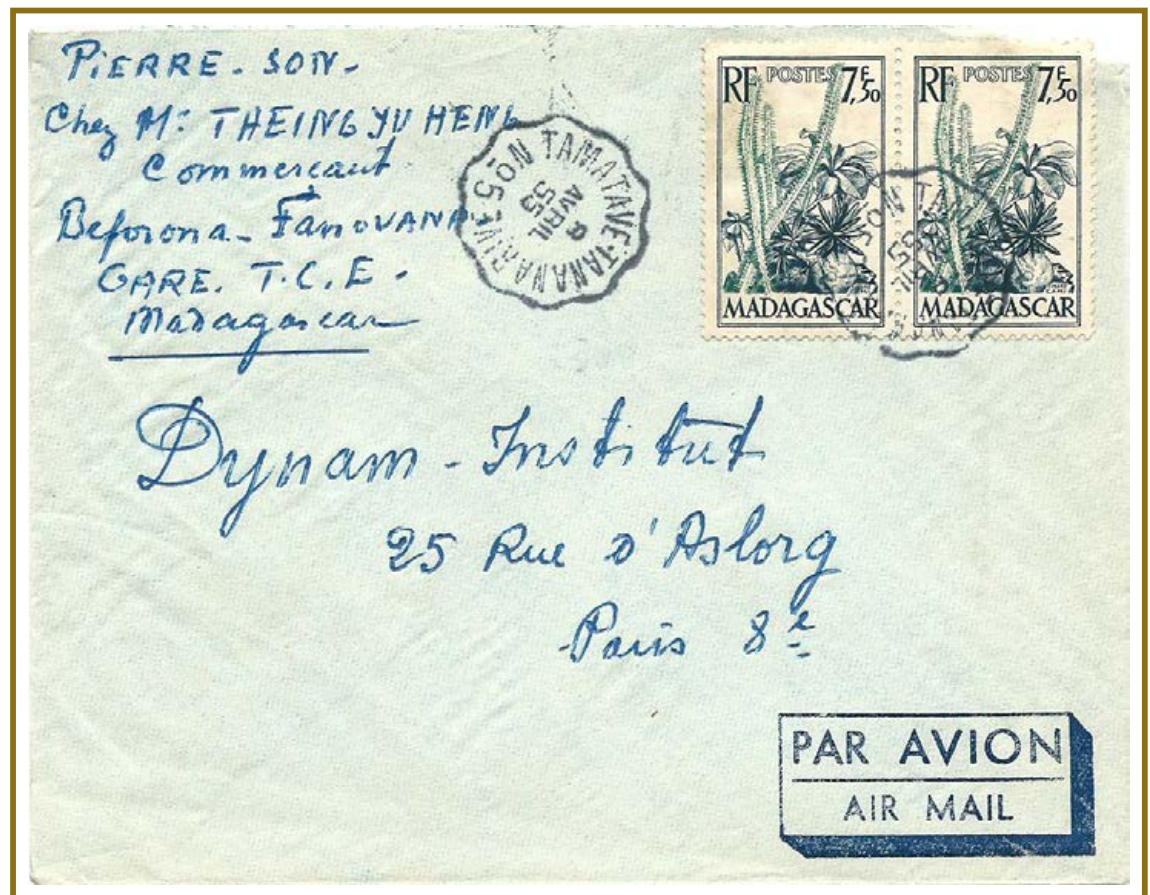
UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ TAMATAVE to TANANARIVE – Brigade 5

(Known period of use: 1952 – 1955)

Letter to Paris, collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarive to Tamatave line (westbound direction, 5th brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated circle marking "TAMATAVE · TANANARIVE / N° 5" (08/04/1955).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2



Letter to Paris, collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarive to Tamatave line (westbound direction, 5th brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated circle marking "TAMATAVE · TANANARIVE / N° 5" (16/12/1955).

Last recorded date

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

### RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In the late 1950's **new type of postmarks** were introduced, always undulated but of larger size and with year at 4 figures. They remained in use after the independence (1958). In this period, the number of *convoyeur* brigades was apparently reduced again at 4.



**LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade**

→ TAMATAVE to TANANARIVE  
Brigade 1

(Known period of use: 1956 – 1972)

From Tamatave (as indicated in the sender's address on reverse) to Nimes (France), **collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarive to Tamatave line** (westbound direction, 1th brigade) that cancelled it with the large undulated circle marking "TAMATAVE A TANANARIVE / N° 1" (16/11/1958). Republic was proclaimed few days before (14/10/1958) but French colonial stamps were still the only available

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (20 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2

Because of being used also after the independence, such postmarks can be found on Madagascar Republic stamps as well.

**LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade**

→ TAMATAVE to TANANARIVE  
Brigade 3

(Known period of use:  
1957 – 1960)

From Moramanga (255 km east from Tananarive) to Nantes (France), **collected by the convoyeur on the Tananarive to Tamatave line** (westbound direction, 3th brigade) that cancelled it with the large undulated circle marking "TAMATAVE A TANANARIVE / N° 3" (5/09/1960).  
**Last recorded date.**

**Tariff:** Letter rate to France up to 20 gr. (25 fr.), no airmail surtax needed





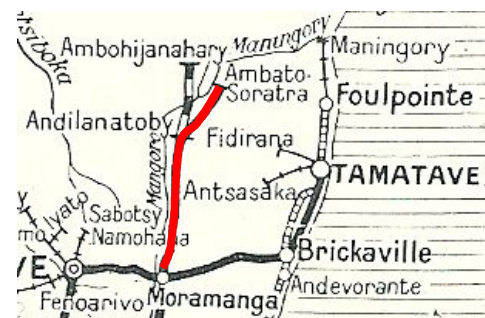
## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### 6.2 The branch line Lac Alaotra – Moramanga

A 168 km branch line starting from **Moramanga** on the Tananarive – Tamatave line to the **Alaotra lake (MLA)** was opened between 1915 and 1923, aiming at opening the lake region – known by the soil's fertility – to the development.

The **convoyeur** service is believed to have started since the line's completion in 1923, but its markings are known only used from 1933-1934.



UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH LINE  
TERMINI + number  
indicating the brigade

→ LAC ALAOTRA to  
MORAMANGA –  
Brigade 1

(Known period of use:  
1934 – 1951)

Letter to Alger, collected by the **convoyeur** on the Moramanga – Lac Alaotra line (southbound direction, 1th brigade) that cancelled it with the undulated circle marking "LAC-ALAOTRA · MORAMANGA / N° 1" (06/11/1938). Tananarive transit marking (7/11) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic – i.e. French area - letter rate up to 20 gr. (65 cent.)



Letter to Strasbourg (France), collected by the **MLA railway's convoyeur** (southbound service, 1th brigade) and cancelled with the undulated circle markings "LAC-ALAOTRA · MORAMANGA / N° 1" (15/12/1946). Tamatave transit marking (16/12) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (2 fr.) + airmail surtax to France up to 5 gr. (6 fr.) = 8 fr.



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ LAC ALAOTRA to MORAMANGA – Brigade 2

(Known period of use: 1933 – 1954)

Letter to Cahors (France) collected by the **convoyeur** on the **MLA line** (southbound direction, 2nd brigade) and cancelled with the undulated circle marking "LAC-ALAOTRA MORAMANGA / N° 2" (03/11/1936), then transported by the first Air Afrique flight Madagascar - Paris. Tananarive transit (3/11), Marseille transit (10/11), and Cahors arrival (11/11) markings on reverse.

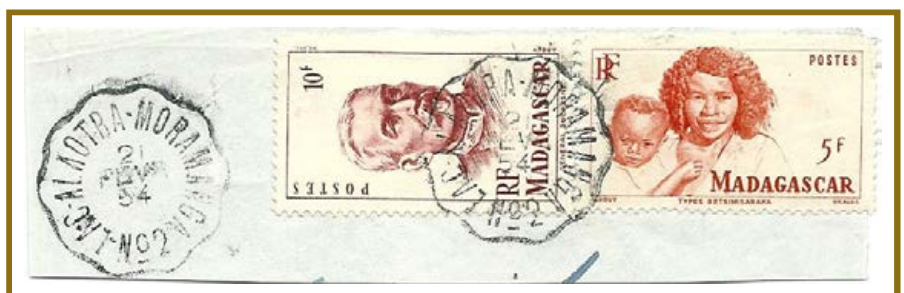
**Tariff:** Domestic – i.e. French area - letter rate up to 20 gr. (0,50 fr.) + airmail surtax to France (4 fr.) = 4,50 fr (6 x 50 c. stamps on reverse)



From Marovay (as indicated in the sender's address, 18 km from Moramanga) to Tananarive, collected by the **convoyeur** on the **MLA line** (southbound direction, 2nd brigade) and cancelled with the undulated circle marking "LAC-ALAOTRA MORAMANGA / N° 2" (20/03/1946). Tananarive transit marking (date unreadable) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Domestic – i.e. French area - letter rate up to 20 gr. (2 fr.) and 50 cent. of over-franking

Undulated circle markings "LAC-ALAOTRA MORAMANGA / N° 1" (21/02/1954) of the **train's convoyeur** of the **MLA line** on piece.  
Last recorded date





## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

As on the TCE line, in the late 1950's a **new type of postmark** were introduced, always undulated but of larger size and with year at 4 figures. Differently from the TCE convoyeur, this was without brigade number.

### LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→ LAC ALAOTRA to MORAMANGA

(Known period of use: 1957 – 1967)



From Vohidiala (as indicated in the sender's address, 123 km north from Moramanga) to Paris, **collected by the convoyeur on the MLA line** (southbound direction) and cancelled with the large undulated circle marking "LAC ALAOTRA - MORAMANGA / \*" (23/10/1957). **Earliest recorded date**

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

In the 1960's, after the independence, the *convoyeurs* were equipped with further type, again a **large undulated circle** including the country's name, and with the brigade number following the line termini. In the inner part of the marking above the date there was a star inserted into a circle sector.

### LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND COUNTRY NAME

→ LAC ALAOTRA to MORAMANGA brigade 2

(Known period of use: 1960 – 1961)



From Vohidiala (as indicated in the sender's address, 123 km north from Moramanga) to Nantes (France), **collected by the convoyeur on the MLA line** (southbound direction, 2nd brigade) and cancelled with the large undulated circle marking "LAC ALAOTRA - MORAMANGA / \*\*" (27/07/1961). **Latest recorded date**

**Tariff:** Letter rate to France up to 20 gr. (25 fr.)



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### 6.3 The Tananarive – Antsirabé line

Between 1914 and 1923 the third line of the colony was completed between **Tananarive** and **Antsirabé** (TA, 158 km) to serve the fertile and populous Howa plateau's region.

The **convoyeur** markings are known used from 1933, even if the railway mail service – at least for the transport of mail bags – should have started earlier.



UNDULATED  
CIRCLE WITH LINE  
TERMINI + number  
indicating the brigade

→ ANTISRABE to  
TANANARIVE –  
Brigade 1

(Known period of use:  
1933 – 19531)

Letter to Stavanger (Norway),  
**collected by the convoyeur on the TA line** (northbound direction, 1th brigade) and cancelled with the undulated circle marking "ANSTIRABE · TANANARIVE / N° 1" (05/04/1940). Tananarive transit marking (same date) on reverse.

**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 20 gr. (2,50 fr.) + airmail surtax to France (4,75 fr) = 7,25 fr + 1,25 fr over-franking (no surcharge was due from France to Norway from 1937)



Letter to Besançon (France),  
**collected by the TA railway's convoyeur** (northbound service, 1th brigade) and cancelled with the undulated circle markings "ANSTIRABE · TANANARIVE / N° 1" (12/02/1953). **Latest recorded date** of this marking.

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (15 fr.); 1 fr. over-franked



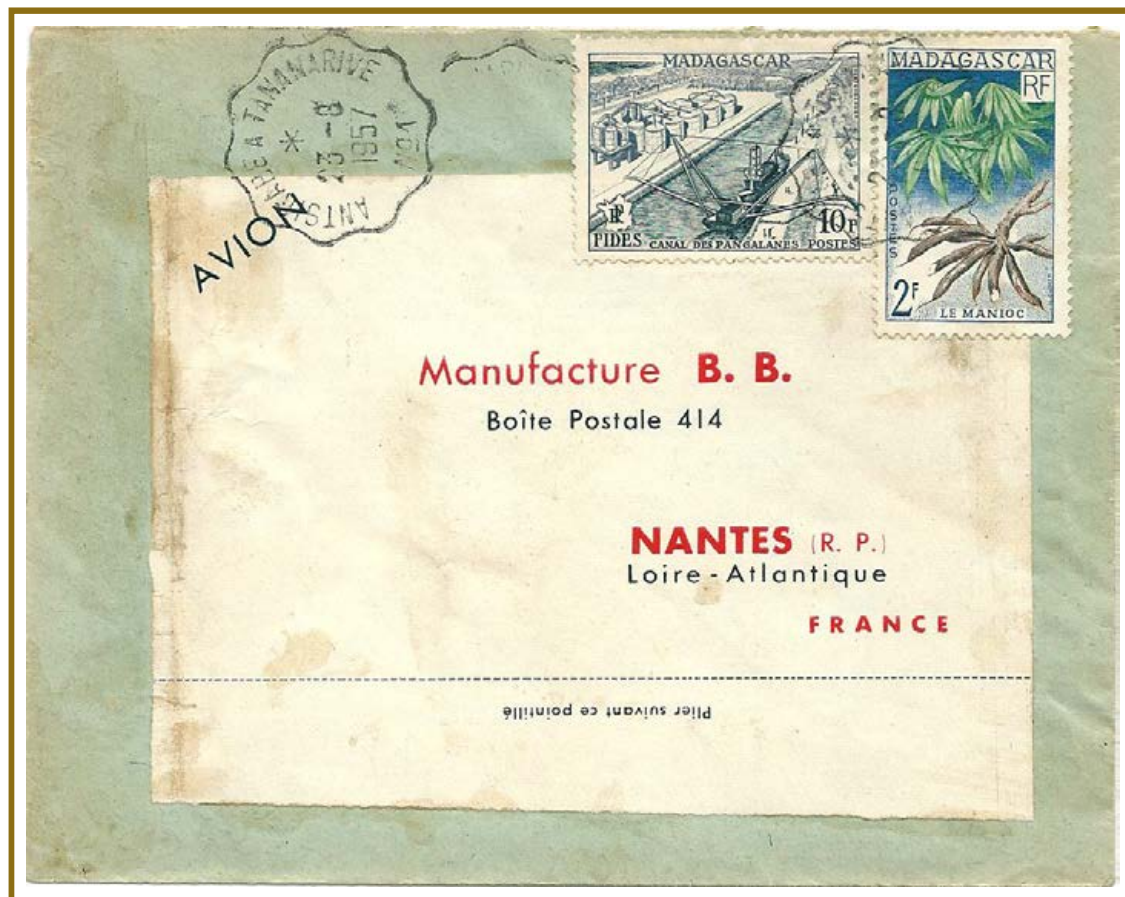
## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ ANTISARABE to TANANARIVE – Brigade 1

(Known period of use: 1957)



Two *convoyeur* **brigades** were in service, distinguished in the marking by the numbers “1” or “2”.

As on the TCE and MLA lines, in the late 1950's new **larger undulated markings** were introduced, with year at 4 figures.

*Brigade n.1 markings of this type supposed but unrecorded in the literature*

From Ambatofotsy (as indicated in the sender's address, 16 km south from Tananarive) to Nantes (France), **collected by the convoyeur on the TA line** (northbound direction, 1st brigade) and cancelled with the large undulated circle marking “ANTISARABE A TANANARIVE / N° 1” (23/08/1957).

**Tariff:** It appears to be franked as domestic printed matter rate 20-50 gr. (12 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ ANTISARABE to TANANARIVE – Brigade 2

(Known period of use: 1958 - 1971)

Letter to Paris, **handed on the convoyeur on the TA line** (northbound direction, 2nd brigade) and cancelled with the large undulated circle marking “ANTISARABE A TANANARIVE / N° 2” (21/07/1958).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (20 fr.), no airmail surtax due after WW2





## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

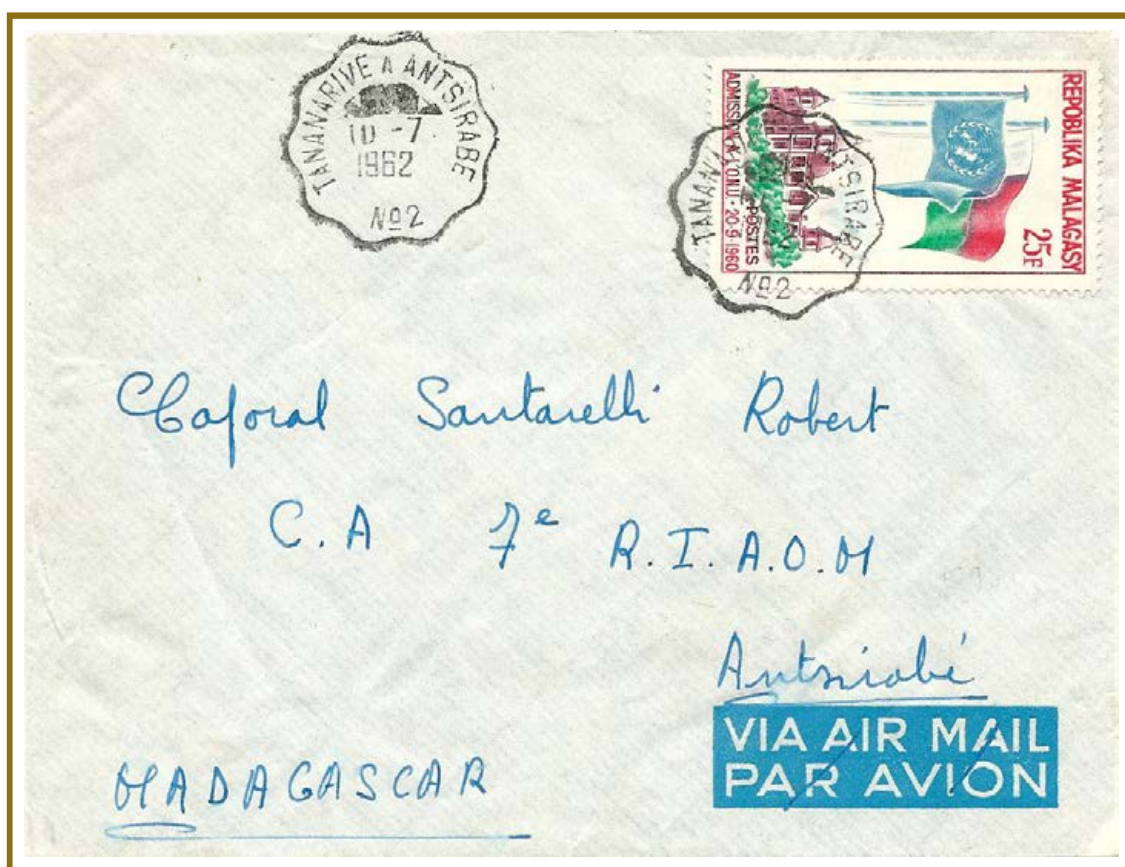
RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH  
COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

The use of the large undulated marks continued **after the independence** proclaimed in 1958.

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→TANANARIVE to ANTISRABE – Brigade 2

(Known period of use: 1959 - 1962)



Local letter to Antsirabé, **collected by the convoyeur on the TA line** (southbound direction, 2nd brigade) and cancelled with the large undulated circle marking "TANANARIVE A ANTISRABE / N° 2" (10/07/1962). **Latest recorded date.**

**Tariff:** Letter rate to France up to 20 gr. (25 fr.)

The southbound *convoyeur* service was essentially used for local mail to Antsirabé or further south of the island, so its markings are much scarcer than the ones of the northbound service.



## 6. Madagascar: four lines with mail transport service

RAILWAY MAIL IN THE FRENCH COLONIES OF SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

### 6.4 The Fianarantsoa to East Coast line

The coffee growing region around **Fianarantsoa** was connected to the port of **Manakara** in 1936 by the *Fianarantsoa à la Côte Est* railway (FCE, 163 km). The **convoyeur** markings are known from 1937 i.e. the service started from the completion of the line.



UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI + number indicating the brigade

→ MANAKARA to FIANARANTSOA – Brigade 1

(Known period of use: 1937 – 1955)

From Manakara (as from sender's address on the back) to Oslo (Norway), collected by the **convoyeur** on the FCE line (westbound direction, 1th brigade) and cancelled with the undulated circle marking "MANAKARA FIANARANTSOA / N° 1" (10/01/1938). Fianarantsoa (10/01) and Tananarive (12/01) transit markings on reverse. Poster stamp for anti-tuberculosis propaganda.



**Tariff:** Foreign letter rate up to 20 gr. (1.75 fr.)

**Larger undulated marks** with 4-digit year and without indication of the brigade were introduced in 1950's.

LARGE UNDULATED CIRCLE WITH LINE TERMINI AND STAR

→ MANAKARA to FIANARANTSOA

(Known period of use: 1957 – 1960)

From Tolongoïna (as from sender's address on the back, 101 km from Manakara) to Nantes (France), collected by the FCE line **convoyeur** (westbound service,) and cancelled with the large undulated circle markings "MANAKARA A FIANARANTSOA / \*\* (23/??/1958).

**Tariff:** Domestic letter rate up to 20 gr. (20 fr.) + inexplicable 2 fr. overfranking; airmail surtax not due after WW2

