

THE FRENCH OFFICES IN CHINA

By 1900 the French had established significant influence and commercial activity in a number of Chinese cities close to Indochina. Subsequent establishment of French post offices to support French activities followed beginning in 1901. To provide the initial postage stamps, the Group Type issues of Indochina were overprinted **CHINE** for general use, and specific overprints with the city names **CANTON**, **HOI-HAO**, **MONGTSEU**, **PAKHOI**, **TCHONGKING** and **YUNNAN-FOU** were prepared during the 1901 – 1906 period. Limited overprinting of Group Type postal stationery was also done for use from the Chinese offices. Use of these Group Type issues is explored in this section of the exhibit.

Canton



Letter card and post cards at regular UPU rates to Germany and Siam, the latter via Hong Kong.

Canton



Messieurs Godard & cie



Envoi

Mrs. Schweich

~~Vo Messrs. Tordin Matheson~~
Belmont — Montreal

~~Canada~~



Double French community rate of 30c on a 1902 letter to Hanoi followed by a letter posted from the German office at Tsingtau to Canton at 10pf and forwarded to Switzerland from the French Office with an additional 25c postage. Lastly, a 1c printed matter wrapper posted from Canton and returned as refused.

CANTON

From



Per French Mail

Registered

957



Schmidt

No. Per Str. Simla



250



Registered

1478

Bai Dinbai Dinshaw Mistry

From
A. Van
Canton

Per German Mail



122 Registered



Bai Maneckbai Burjorja Tattakia
C/o Maneckji J. Egar.

Opposite Gendalal Cloth Merchant,

Market Road - Camp,

Indore

(Central India)

From
A. Van
Canton

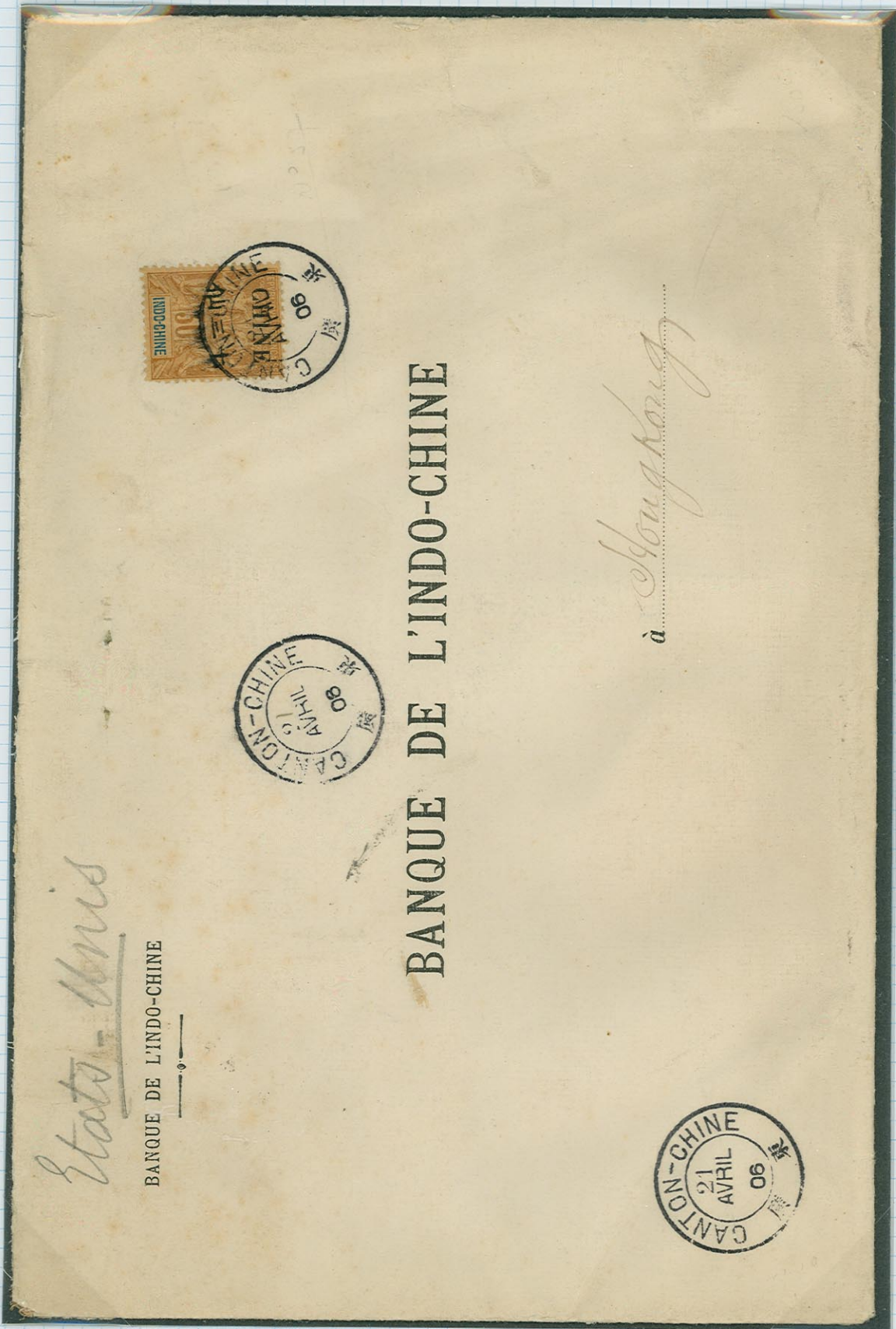


Single, double, triple and double weight registered letters from Canton illustrating the CANTON-CHINE; CANTON CHINE; CANTON and C CANTON C datestamps used from this office. The latter is from a subsidiary office, and the only recorded example of this datestamp used on the Group Type issue.



Letters from the French Offices to nearby major Chinese cities suggest that special rates existed in lieu of the standard international rates. The two registered letters from Canton in 1907 and 1901 to Hong Kong suggest this situation with frankings at 30c and 35c, respectively. The most likely explanation for these rates is that there was a special 20c registry charge for mail to Hong Kong with the additional charges of 10c and 15c being comparable to the prevailing French Community rates. The literature is silent on this

Canton



Letter from Canton in 1906 to Hong Kong franked at the 30c rate – this is a triple weight letter at 10c per 15g, comparable to the French Community rate at this time. This is an exceptionally rare franking.

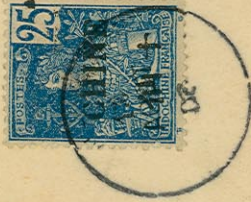
From SOCIETÀ COLONIALE ITALIANA, CANTON.



The SOCIETÀ COLONIALE ITALIANA



REGISTERED



SHANGHAI



Registered letter from Canton on August 13, 1906 to Shanghai franked at 2.95F. This is an eighteenth weight level letter (2.70F postage on a weight of <270g plus 25c registration) received in Shanghai on the 17th. It is franked with a combination of Group Type and Grasset Type CHINE overprints.

Han-Keou



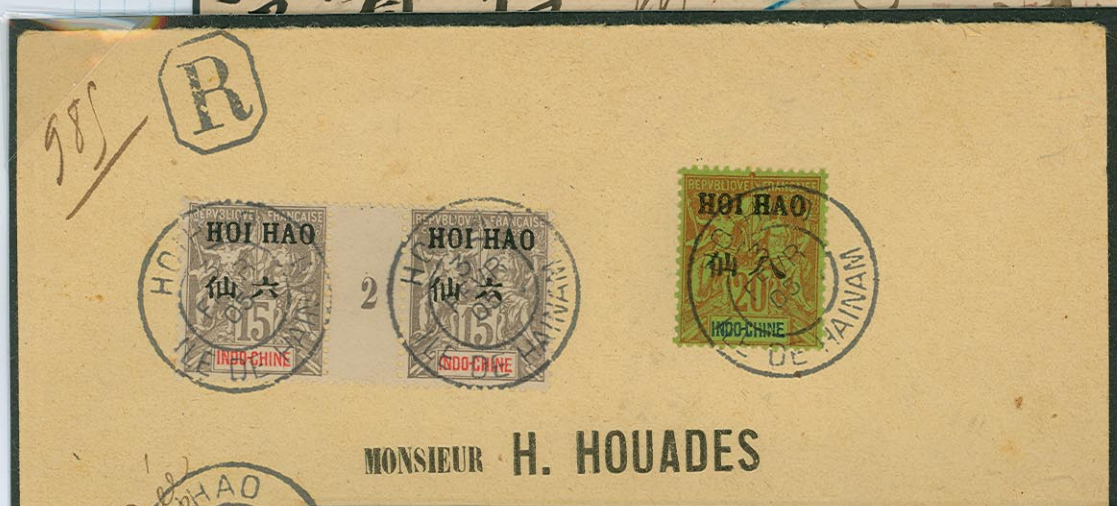
The French Office at Han-Keou was not part of the French Offices in the Indochina area for which Group Type overprints were created, but chance use of these overprints was possible as shown by this 1903 letter to France at the 25c UPU rate employing the CHINE overprint – not the 15c French Community rate.

Hoi-Hao



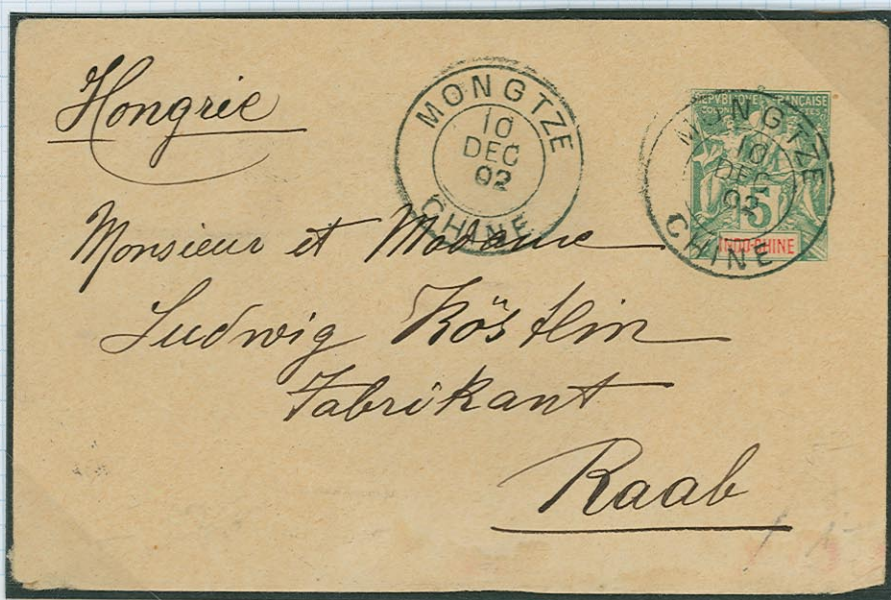
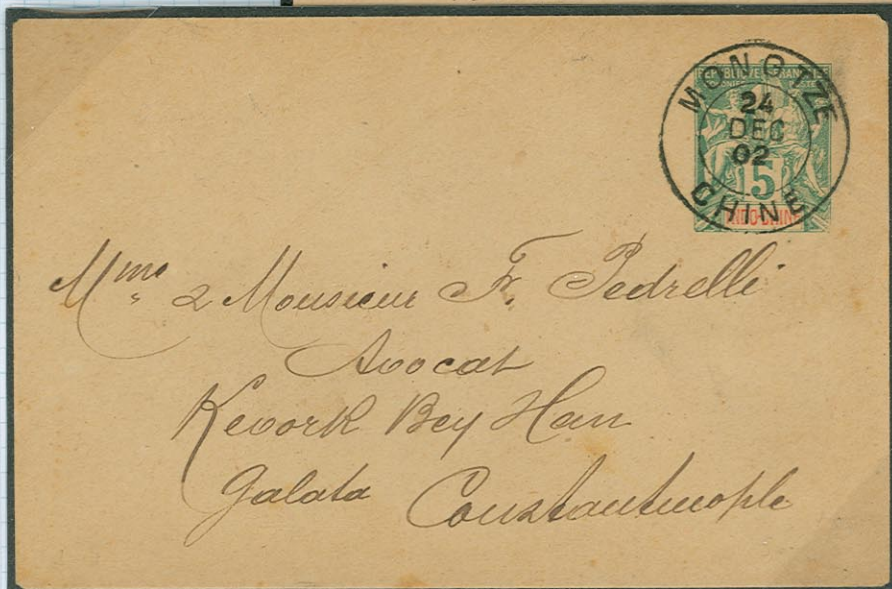
Letter from Hoi-Hao at the 15c French Community rate to Hanoi in 1904, and 1902 post card to Seoul, Korea via Japan.

Hoi-Hao
Registered Letters



Overseas registered letters at the 50c rate showing different combinations of stamps to Germany, the United States, France and Japan. The letter to France bears a millésime 2 pair from the 1902 Group Type printing, and Japan represents a remarkable destination for mail from this office.

Mongtze
Printed Matter



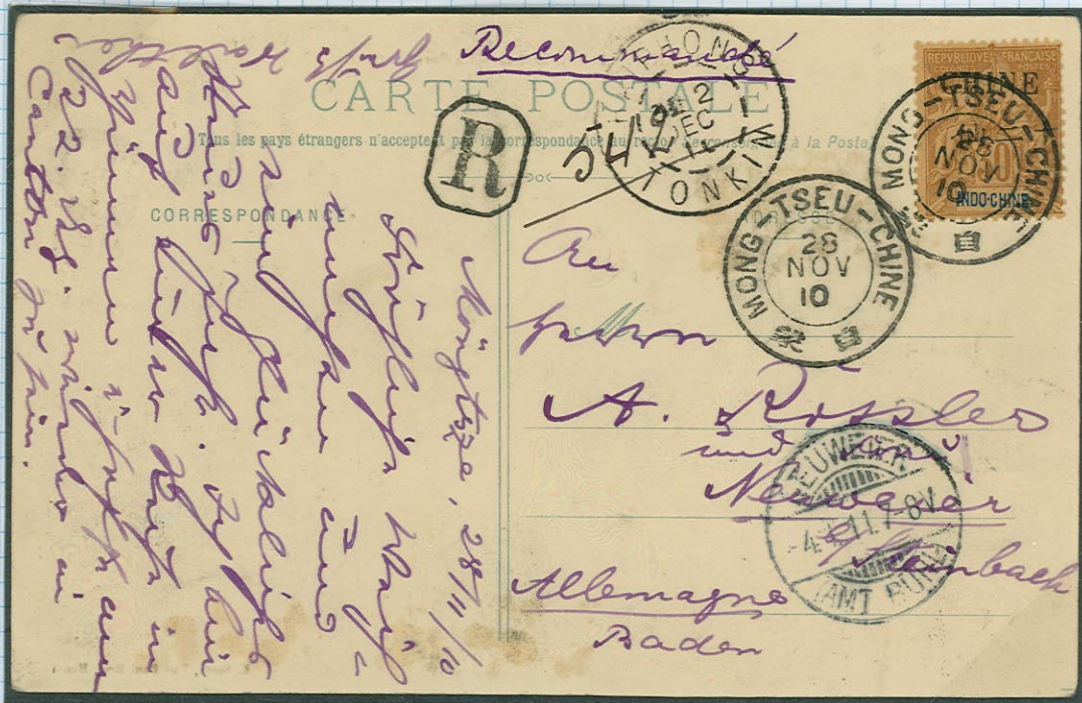
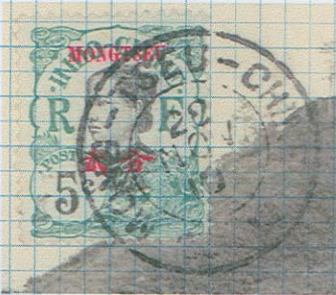
Overseas printed matter rates of 5c from Mongtze employing Indochinese stationery and stamps, which were valid from this office, to Paris and the unusual destinations of Constantinople and Hungary.

Mongtze
LOKAY A Cancel



Initially the cancellation **LOKAY A TONKIN** was used from Mongtze as this office was close to the Tonkin frontier at Lokay. Only 3-4 examples of this cancellation have been recorded. This letter shows a French Community rate of 15c to France, whereas the second letter posted in 1908 with a **MONG-TSEU-CHINE** datestamp shows the 25c overseas rate, also traveling via Lokay and Haiphong. The latter is franked with a **CHINE** overprint and a Grasset issue.

Mongtze
Registered Letter
Registered Post Card



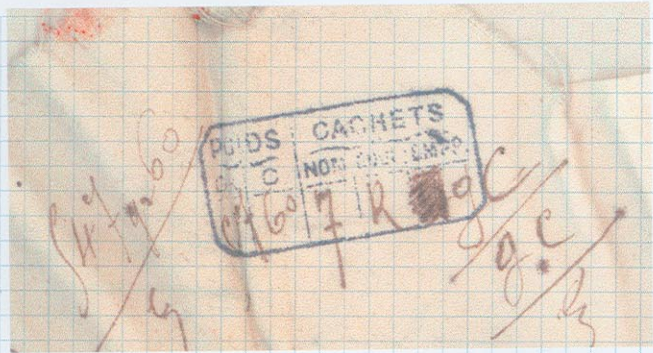
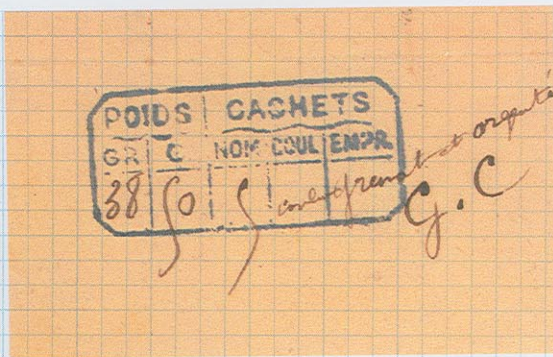
Registered letter from Mongtze to Hanoi clearly showing that the 50c rate was operable in 1905, and the French community rate of 15c not applicable. Also, a registered post card at the 35c rate showing use of the 30c Group Type **CHINE** overprint and a **MONGTZE** overprint on a 5c Native Woman stamp.

Pakhoi
Registered Letters



Registered letters at the single weight, part of the Motte correspondence to Algeria, and the triple weight to Paris illustrating some of the higher value Group Types available at this office.

**Pakhoi
Declared Value Letters**



Declared value letter of 900 francs posted from Pakhoi to Paris on August 24, 1906. Franked with **CHINE** and **Pakhoi** overprints at 1.60 francs, the cachet on the reverse (first cachet above) shows that the letter reached the third weight level weighing 38.50 grams. Thus, the postage breakdown for this letter is: 75c postage, 25c registration and 60c insurance on a declared value of 900 francs.

SEE NEXT PAGE: The most exceptional declared value letter in this collection, this letter was posted from Pakhoi on October 27, 1906 and franked at 10.00 francs with two 5F Pakhoi overprints. With a declared value of only 300 francs, this appears to be a philatelic letter, but a check of the cachet on the reverse shows it to have weighed 547.60 grams (second cachet above)! The envelope is a cloth sack that was used to carry coins, accounting for the heavy weight. Based on the weight, this letter reached the 37th weight level. Thus, the postage breakdown is 9.25F postage, 25c registration and 50c insurance.



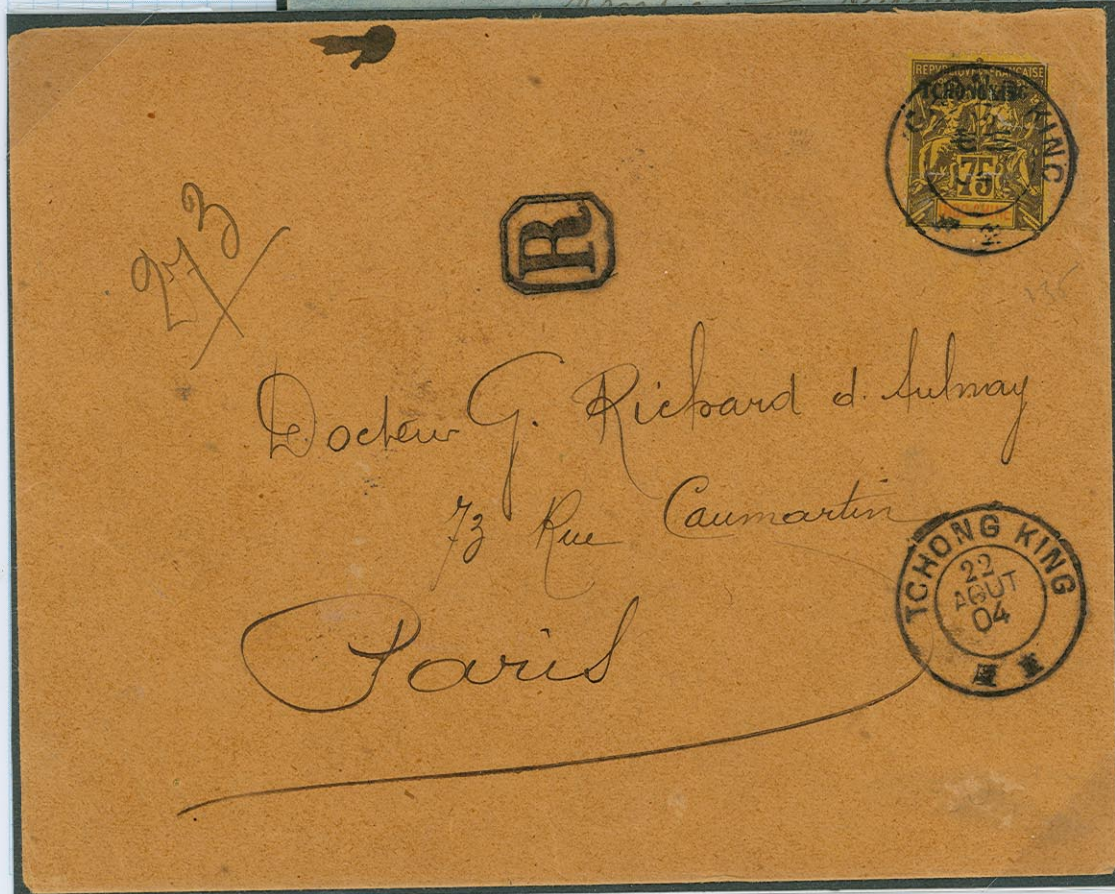
CHARGÉ 1/9/11

Valen de la... Bois Cents francs - 800.^{fr}

Monsieur L^e Boell

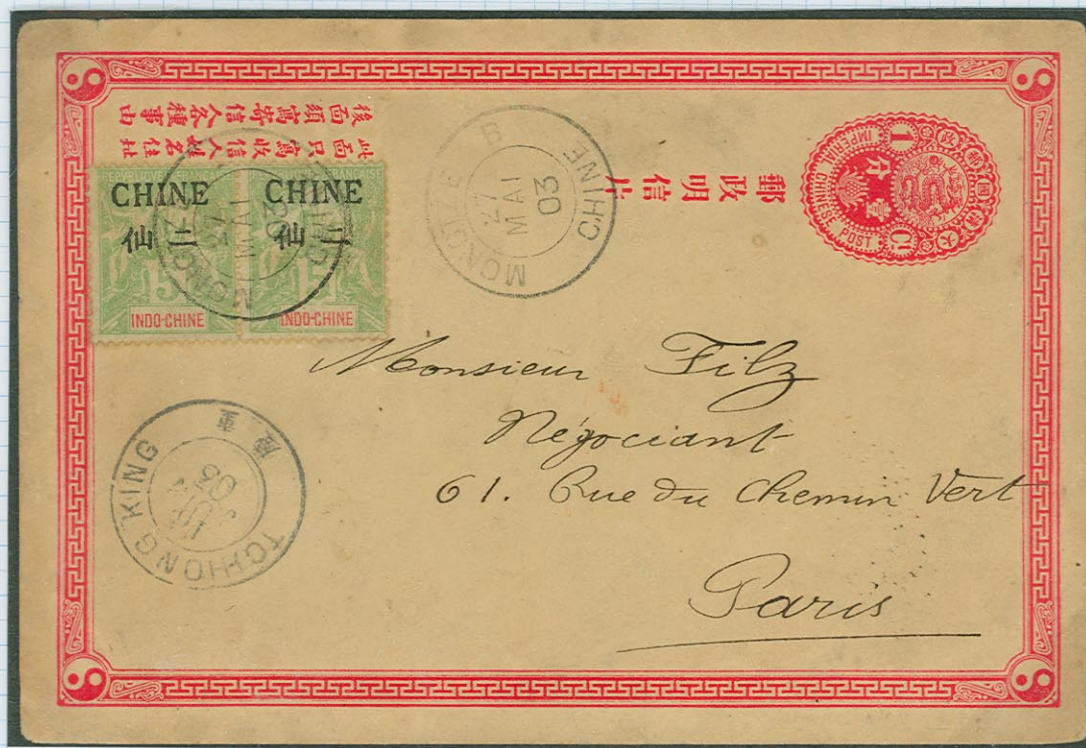
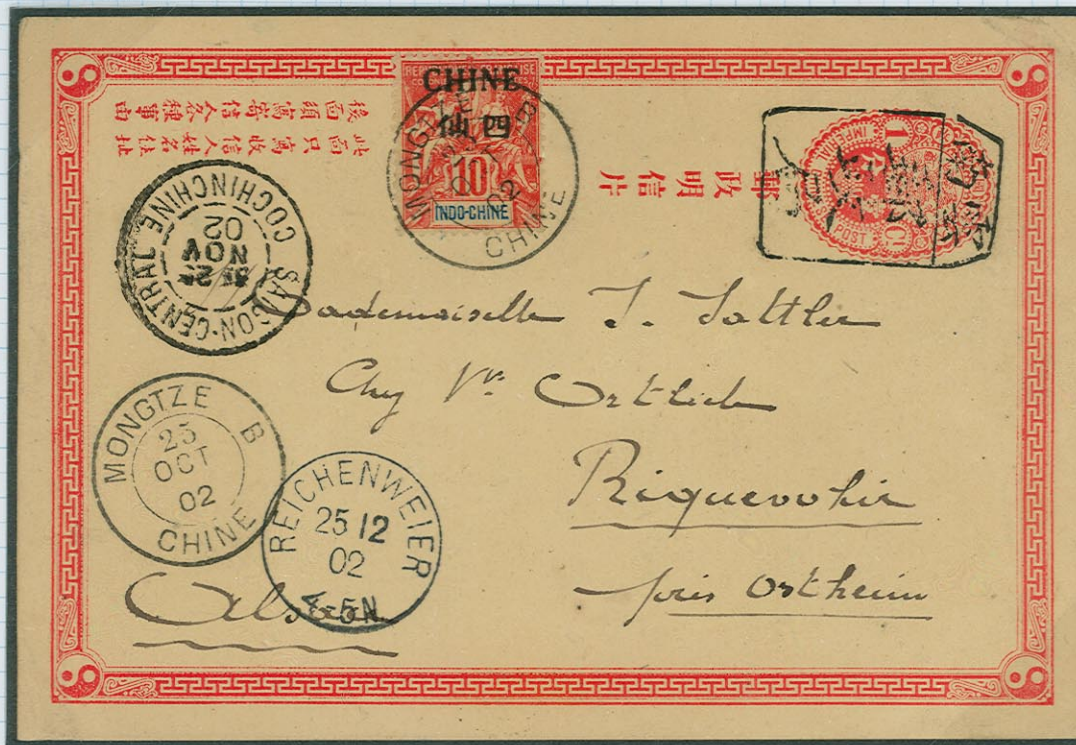
17 Rue Charrelon Targache

Paris 16^e



Various rates from Tchongking: overseas with a CHINE overprint stamp; registered post card; double weight registered; and quintuple weight registered.

Yunnanfou
MONGTZE B Cancel



The French office at Yunnanfou initially used a datestamp inscribed with **MONGTZE B** for mail from the French population. Shown are two Chinese post cards – the first originated in the Chinese office at Yunnanfou on October 25, 1904 (Chinese datestamp) and was transferred to the French Office on the same day (**MONGTZE B CHINE**) enroute to the Alsace via Saigon. This is, in effect, a combination Chinese – French Offices franking which are discussed in the last section of this exhibit. The second card originated in the French Office of Yunnanfou, thus the Chinese stamp was not required. Both cards show use of the **CHINE** Group Type overprints.

Yunnanfou



Indochina postal stationery envelope used to Hanoi in 1910, a very late usage, and registered letters to Germany and Italy employing YUNNANSEN overprints at proper 50c rates.

Yunnanfou
Via Burma



With the French Office of Yunnanfou being the northernmost of the Chinese Offices in the Indochinese grouping, use was occasionally made of the British route via Burma to get mail to European destinations. Thus, the manuscript designation *via Birmanie* on the items above. The Group Type postcard, brought to the 35c registered rate with Grasset **CHINE** overprints, bears a Burma **R BHAMO** registry handstamp and **BHAMO REG 20FE 06** datestamp enroute to Rangoon where it received a British **SEA POST MA 2 06** datestamp. It bears a British BPO arrival from March 19th on the reverse. The letter below, franked with two 25c **YUNNANSEN** overprints on August 31, 1905, shows the manuscript *via Birmanie* routing, but no Burma transits. The designated routing can be inferred from the Marseille transit on October 21st on the reverse.

Kouang-Tchéou-Wan

Kouang-Tchéou-Wan was a territory leased by the French in November 1899 as a result of military activities, and it was administered by Tonkin. Initially Indochinese stamps were used, and in 1906 overprints were prepared, but only two Group Type stamps were overprinted. Early datestamps reflect the Indochinese administration.



French Community registered letter from Fort Bayard, and registered letter from Quang Tcheou, both reflecting Indochinese administration of the territory with INDO CHINE FRANÇAISE datestamps.



Posting from the small village of Potsi on a 5c postal stationery envelope uprated to the 15c rate; registered letter at the 35c French Community rate in August 1906; and double weight registered letter to Tien-Tsin, China with one of the two Group Type stamps that were overprinted for use from this territory. Note change of datestamp to include CHINE and Chinese characters.

Kouang-Tchéou-Wan
Military Franchise Letters

Corps expéditionnaire de Quang Tchéou-Wan.
Sine

TONKIN
CORPS EXPÉDITIONNAIRE
FRANÇAISE
MAI 1900

Joseph Sanzay
à St-Hilaire St-Horent
Près Saumur
France

1018-1019
COMMANDEMENT
SAUMUR

Troupes de Quang Tchéou Wan

PROFESSEUR COLLEGE
Grasse

TONKIN
CORPS EXPÉDITIONNAIRE
FRANÇAISE
MARS 1900

POSTE DE LA
ANCIENNE
VILLE DE
GRASSE

Grasse à Miro-Chun

TONKIN
CORPS EXPÉDITIONNAIRE
FRANÇAISE
JUIL 05

BAYARD
23
JUIL
05
INDO-CHINE EXPÉDITIONNAIRE

Monsieur Bidal
Fournitures Militaires
Fonctionnaire
Paris

Military franchise was in effect until 1904. Shown are early letters posted from Tche-Kang (only two recorded) and Quang Tcheou in early 1900; and Fort Bayard in 1903.