Indochina’s Viet Minh Overprints
1945-1950

At the close of World War II, the Viet Nam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi), made up of various nationalistic groups, had political control of all of Tonkin and parts of Annam and Cochinichina. A provisional government in Hanoi with Ho Chi Minh as president gave way to the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on 2 September 1945. The infant government survived largely because the Chinese Nationalist Army occupation force, which was stationed above the 16th parallel to disarm Japanese troops, tolerated it.

The restoration of French military strength (the first soldiers arrived in Saigon on 21 September 1945) signaled French intentions of reclaiming their authority over Indochina. With the withdrawal of the Chinese in March 1946 negotiations with the Vietnamese began in earnest but the positions of mother country and nationalistic colony were irreconcilable. On 8 November 1946, the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam adopted a constitution that asserted the unity of North, Central and Southern Viet Nam. Guerrilla clashes escalated to open warfare thus signaling the onset of the First Indochinese War.

Large stocks of stamps were available to the Viet Minh, which they overprinted to obliterate the hated French portraits and inscriptions. In all, 52 values of the wartime Hanoi printings and one Paris print were overprinted. The stamps of Indochina were overprinted by the Viet Minh at the Taupin printing house (Imprimerie Taupin) in Hanoi. The name of the printing house was changed after the August Revolution (19 September 1945) from Taupin to Viet Nam An Thu Cuc.

The stamps appeared throughout the 1945-46 era and remained in use for several years in regions controlled the Viet Minh. Although the earliest known genuine cancellations are 21 December 1945, precise dating of the issues is, as yet, impossible. Lacking a chronological basis, the stamps here are grouped by the type of overprint. Different denominations appear in the overprints. Increases in postal surcharges due to inflation caused changes of currency units from piasters to dongs to haos (a common subterfuge used by governments to disguise inflation).

Indochinese stamps of the World War II Vichy era were printed under trying conditions resulting in variations in the paper, inks, perforations, etc. The stamps of Indochina were then overprinted by the Viet Minh government using worn machinery in sub-optimal conditions, resulting in a further array of overprint varieties. Examples of both types of varieties are demonstrated in this exhibit.

All the overprints were genuinely used only in areas north of the 16th parallel (the area completely controlled by the Viet-Minh), and in all probability, only in larger cities. The postwar period 1945-1946 was a time of relatively little communication activity. Small amounts of letters were actually mailed. Official mail was sent post-free, and this type of mail constituted most of the written communication.
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam

Sports and Youth

Alexandre Yersin

Alexandre de Rhodes

Black Overprint

Green Overprint
Sports and Youth
Varieties

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Yersin
Varieties

Ascending Overprints

Perforated
12 x 12

Yellow Paper
Postmarks
Yersin

Sports and Youth
On the last day of 1945, five different stamps overprinted "VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA" were favor cancelled on this card made from the backside of ledger paper.
Sports and Youth
Use of 50 cents

The wording in the circular date stamp on this cover translates as “Hanoi Central Clearing Bank.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC NGAN PHIEU 17-12 45
REVERSE
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC NGAN PHIEU 17-12 45
In alternating columns, the alignment between the three rows of the overprint varies. In one case, the “D” in the second row is directly below the “V.” In the next stamp over, the “D” is between the “V” and the “I.”

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC NGAN PHIEU 17-12 45
de Rhodes
Varieties of Black Overprint on 15 cents

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Yellow Paper

Thin Paper

Overprint Shifted Right
de Rhodes
Varieties of Black Overprint on 15 cents

Overprint Shifted Up

Overprint Shifted Down
de Rhodes
Varieties of Black Overprint on 15 cents

“Black Box” created by overinked “IE” at upper right.

Overprint Shifted Left  Overprint Shifted Right

Overprint Shifted Down
Light Violet-Brown Shade

Overprint Shifted Up
Light Violet-Brown Shade

Overprint Shifted Up
Dark Violet-Brown Shade
de Rhodes
Varieties of Green Overprint on 15 cents

Perforated 11 1/2 x 11 1/2

Ghost Impression

Light Shade

Medium Shade

Dark Shade

Overprint Shifted Left

Overprint Centered

Overprint Shifted Right

Overprinted Shifted Down

Overprinted Shifted Right

Overprinted Shifted Down
de Rhodes
Varieties of 30 cents

Ochre Shade
Orange-Brown Shade

Ochre Shade
Perforated 13 1/2 x 13 1/2

Ochre Shade
Perforated 12 x 12

Orange-Brown Shade
Perforated 12 x 12

Orange-Brown Shade
Double Overprint

Ochre Shade
Overprint Shifted Left

Ochre Shade
Inverted Overprint

Orange-Brown Shade
Ghost Overprint
de Rhodes
Varieties of 30 cents

Ochre Shade
Overprint Shifted Left

Orange-Brown Shade
Heavy Inking, Clipped Bottom Line
de Rhodes
Postmarks
Examples of each type of de Rhodes overprint were affixed to this local cover posted on Christmas Day 1946. The overprint on the 30-cent value is shifted noticeably downward.
de Rhodes
Use of 15 cents

Two examples of both the black and green overprints on the 15-cent value frank this local mailing in 1946.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN  22-1 46
REVERSE
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC GHI-SE12  23-1 46
De Rhodes
Use of 30 cents Variety

The 30-cent value on this cover canceled in 1946 was doubly overprinted.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN 8-2 46
REVERSE
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN 7-2 46
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
BUU-CHINH
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
postage

Rice Farmer

The 25-cent blue rice farmer was the only Paris-printed stamp that was overprinted by the Viet Minh. Two alternating settings (in alternating columns) were used for the top line of the overprint: 18 millimeters and 20 millimeters.
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
BUU-TIN
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Postage

Auguste Pavie

Marshall Petain
Pavie Varieties

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Perforated 11 1/2 x 11 1/2

Perforated 12 x 12

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Light Overprint

Dark Overprint
Pavie
Varieties

Missing “c” after “20” at lower right (position 37)

Petain
Varieties

Overprint Shifted Down

Overprint Shifted Right
Petain Varieties

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Perforated 11 1/2 x 12

Perforated 12 x 14

Overprint Shifted Left

Overprint Shifted Right

Light Shade

Medium Shade

Dark Shade
Pétain Varieties

White Paper

Yellow Paper

Light Overprint

Medium Overprint

Heavy Overprint
Blocked “C” and “B”

Ascending Overprints
Pavie
Use of 20 cents

Postage for a mailing from Thai-Binh Province to Gia-Binh in Bac-Ninh Province was paid with an overprinted 20c Pavie stamp and a Garnier stamp revalued to 30 xu. At the origination, the postmark was dated with a handwritten “5 2 49.” The 50 xu franking equated to the 5-dong postage rate that was in effect from 1949 through the beginning of 1950. While in route, the mailing received a transit postmark at Hung-Yen.

The cover was created from a form printed in Chinese. A plain piece of paper was pasted on and put to use as a address label.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HUNG-YEN BIEN DIEN CUC ?-2 ??
Pavie
Use of 20 cents

A mixture of contemporary Viet Minh stamps franks this local mailing at Hanoi. Evidence of postwar scarcities is demonstrated by this previously addressed cover which had been turned inside out and readdressed in order to be used again.
Petain
Use of 6 cents

Five 6-cent Petain stamps in combination with two 30-xu Garnier stamps frank a registered mailing within Hanoi in 1946 cover. Given that 1 xu was equivalent to 1 cent, postage was computed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>internal letter rate</td>
<td>30 xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registration fee</td>
<td>60 xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>90 xu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH THAU CUC BAC BO 10-10 46
REVERSE
HANOI CHANH THAU CUC BAC BO 10-10 46
registration label
Petain
Use of 40 cents blue
A pair of 40-cent blue Petain stamps combined with a pair of 5-cent de Genouilly stamps to pay the postage for a registered mailing from Hanoi to Haiphong in 1946.

Postage for the mailing was determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>internal letter rate</td>
<td>30 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registration fee</td>
<td>60 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>90 cents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH THAU CUC BAC-BO
5-10 46
registration label
REVERSE
HAIPHONG BUU DIEN CUC
7-10 46
Petain
Usage

Five different Petain denominations frank a local 1946 cover. For the 1-cent stamp, the Viet Minh had applied a different overprint from the other Petain stamps.
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
DOC-LAP TU-DO HANH-PHUC BUU-CHINH
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Independence, Freedom, Happiness
Postage

Doudart de Lagree

VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
DOC-LAP TU-DO HANH-PHUC
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Independence, Freedom, Happiness

Admiral Andre A. P. Courbet
de Lagree
Varieties

Stamp Shades

Transferred Overprint  Partial Overprint at Right

F  Overprint Shades

Light Overprint  Dark Overprint
Admiral Courbet Varieties

Stamp Shades

Perforations

Perforated 12

Perforated 11 1/2
de Lagree and Courbet
Postmarks
VIET-NAM DOC-LAP TU-DO
HANH-PHUC BUU-CHINH
Viet-Nam Independence, Freedom, Happiness
Postage

Admiral L. V. J. Charner

Admiral Rigault de Genouilly

Governor General Paul Doumer

Marshall Petain
Charner Varieties

Light Shade  Dark Shade  Overprint Shifted Up

Postmarks
de Genouilly
Varieties

Light Shade
Dark Shade

Overprint Shifted Left
Overprint Shifted Up

Bottom of “BUU-CHINH” Missing
Bottom of “BUU-CHINH” Missing

Postmarks
Petain Varieties

Overprint Shifted Up

Ghost Impression

Overprint Shifted Left

Light Shade

Medium Shade

Dark Shade
Doumer Varieties

Light Impression

Overprint Transfer

Dark Impression

Perforated 11 ½ x 11 ½

Heavy Inking
Blocked “B” and “H”

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Double Overprint
Doumer
Inverted Line Varieties

In position 48 of each overprinted sheet of fifty Doumer stamps, the fifth line of the overprint, “HANH-PHUC,” was inverted. Position 48 is the lower left stamp in these blocks of six.
Charner Usage
All three denominations of the overprinted Charner stamps were affixed to this registered local cover posted at Hanoi in 1946.
Charner
Usage

This local cover from December 1946 illustrates the wide variety of propaganda markings used by the Viet Minh.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BAC-BO 18-12 46
various propaganda markings
de Genouilly
Use of 5 cents

Here a block of four stamps was favor cancelled with the date stamp from Hanoi's central post office.
de Genouilly
Use of 6 cents

A sender mailed a postcard locally with a handwritten note that translates “For your collection.” The postcard was franked with a 6-cent de Genouilly stamp on the address side and a 4-cent Pavie stamp on the picture side.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN 26-4 46
REVERSE
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN 26-4 46
de Genouilly
Usage

Both of the overprinted 5 and 6-cent de Genouilly values were used on a 1946 mailing from Hanoi. It is unlikely that the letter ever reached France.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN 28-10 46
New value in dongs with “X’s”

Coronation of King Norodom Sihanouk

New value in dongs with wavy lines and bars

King Norodom Sihanouk
Sihanouk Varieties

Broken wavy line

Light Shade  Dark Shade
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
with new value in donga

Festival of Nam Giao

Governor General Pierre Pasquier
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Varieties

Nam Giao

Spot on Blanket

Eye Patch

Pasquier

Perforated 11.5
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
BUU-CHINH
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Postage
with new value in dongs

Lieutenant M. J. Francois Garnier

Doudart de Lagree
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Postage
Varieties

Garnier

Perforated 11.5  Overprint Shifted Down

Light Shade  Medium Shade  Dark Shade

de Lagree

Light Shade  Dark Shade
Garnier
Use of 30 xu

A revalued 30-xu Garnier stamp was used for a local mailing from Dong-Ha to Quangngai.

POSTMARK TYPE: VN1
PERIOD OF USE: 1945-46

POSTAL MARKINGS
DONG-HA BUU-DIEN-CUC 19-1 47
Garnier
Use of 30 xu

Three revalued 30-xu Garnier stamps franked a registered mailing from Thai-Binh to Hanoi in October 1946. Postage was calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>internal letter rate</td>
<td>30 xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registration fee</td>
<td>60 xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>90 xu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POSTAL MARKINGS
THAI-BINH BUU DIEN CUC 1-10 46
registration label
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
BUU-CHINH
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Postage
with new value in dong

Governor General J. M. A. de l'Anessan

Governor General Joost van Vollenhoven

Admiral Pierre de la Grandiere
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Postage
Varieties

de l'Anessan

Light Shade

Dark Shade

de la Grandiere

Perforated 13.5 x 12

Paper Fold
La Grandiere
Use of 1 dong

A revalued La Grandiere stamp was used on a cover handcrafted from notebook paper. The cover was likely found when a mail courier was captured by the French military in 1950. As intelligence information, it should have been destroyed. Apparently, it was saved as a souvenir.

POSTAL MARKINGS
TAINGUYEN BUU-DIEN-CUC 29-6 50
BAN-GIIAO-THONG HAI-PHONG
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
CUU-DOI
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
Famine Relief
with new value in piasters

Cathedral of Orleans

VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
BINH-SI BI-NAN
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
War Causalities
with new value in piasters

Cathedral of Orleans
Cathedral of Orleans Varieties

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Ghost Impression

Overprint Transfer
Cathedral of Orleans
Usage

In 1946, both revalued semi-postal stamps were favor canceled on this unaddressed cover.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN 4-3 46
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
plus various slogans

QUOC-PHONG
National Defense

Festival of Nam Giao

DAN SINH
Mass Help

Empress Nam Phoung
Emperor Bao Dai
Bao-Dai and Nam Phuong Varieties

Partial period after “3 d” (bottom row, second stamp from right, position 42)
No period after “3 d” (bottom row, third stamp from right, position 43)

Last line of overprint with hyphen in “DAN-SINH” (position 50)

DAN-SINH
VIET-NAM DAN-CHU CONG-HOA
Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam
plus various slogans

BINH-SI BI NAN
War Casualties
Bishop of Adran

CHONG NAN MU CHU
Campaign against Illiteracy
Saigon Fair

BAO-ANH
Child Welfare
Alexandre Yersin

DOI SONG MOI
New Life Movement
National Revoltion
Overprint Varieties

Missing hyphen in “VIET NAM” (Left Stamp)

VIET NAM

Dot instead of hyphen in “Bao-Anh”
Top Left and Bottom Right

Bao Anh

Missing hyphen in “Bao-Anh”
Bottom Right

Bao Anh
Slogan overprint varieties

Rider with wide waistband

Elephant with eye patch (right stamp)

Perforated 12

Perforated 14

Missing period after "3 d"
Postmarks

de Genouilly

de l’Anessan
TOURANE BUU.DIEN.CUC
Favor Cancels

The TOURANE BUU.DIEN.CUC postmark was frequently used to favor cancel Viet-Minh stamps and postal items.
HANOI CHANH-THAU-CUC BUU-TIN
Favor Cancels
Postmarks
Luang-Prabang, Laos
Ho Chi Minh

The first new definitive stamps honored Ho Chi Minh, who was proclaimed president of the Democratic republic of Vietnam after the general election of 6 January 1946. The series, issued on 10 May, included two semi-postal stamps for support of the national defense effort.
Ho Chi Minh
Varieties

Light Shade

Medium Shade

Dark Shade

Light Shade

Dark Shade

Broken “9”
Ho Chi Minh
Use of 1 hao on Maximum Card

The image on this postcard appears to be identical to that on the stamp making the item a “maximum card.” A postmark reading “HAIPHONG BUU DIEN CUC 20 10 46 ties the stamp to the card.

“Ho Chi Minh” is scrawled at the lower right of the card. Ho went by several names during his lifetime. In an case, the signature was a part of the printing on the card.
Ho Chi Minh
Use of 1 hao and 3 hao

Ho Chi Minh stamps totaling 5 hao frank the reverse of an envelope fashioned by hand from crude paper. Postmarked at Vinh-Yen, the envelope was addressed to NAMDINH.

POSTAL MARKINGS
VINH YEN BUU-DIEN-CUC  18-5 46 (?)
Ho Chi Minh
Use of 4 hao + 6 hao

Posted from Thai-Nguyen in 1950, this cover bears the cachet of one of the revolutionary organizations. It translates as follows:

UY-BAN KHANG-CHIEN HANH-CHINH = The Resistance and Administration Committee
LIEN-KHU VIET- BAC = Viet-Bac Joint Section
TRUONG KHANG CHIEN HANH CHINH = Resistance and Administration School

POSTAL MARKINGS
THAI-NGUYEN BUU-DIEN-CUC 25-1 50
REVERSE
THAI-NGUYEN BUU-DIEN-CUC 25-1 50
Ho Chi Minh
Usage

All five values of the Ho Chi Minh series were used on this local cover in 1946.

POSTAL MARKINGS
TOURANE BUU DIEN_CUC 10-11 46
Ho Chi Minh
Independence Anniversary Usage

All five Ho Chi Minh stamps were affixed to this commemorative cover marking the first anniversary of Indochina’s proclaimed independence on 2 September 1946. A pictorial postmark, struck with red ink, canceled the stamps.

POSTAL MARKINGS
HA-NOI TONKIN 2-9 1946
NAM NGAY THANH LA P NUOC VIET-NAM D.C.C.H HA-NOI
REVERSE
HA-NOI TONKIN 2-9 1946
NAM NGAY THANH LA P NUOC VIET-NAM D.C.C.H HA-NOI
NGA-KHE Overprints

The postmaster at Nga-Khe misinterpreted instructions about efforts to overprint contemporary stamps and took it upon himself to overprint the Vichy era commemorative stamps. When the central government learned about the overprinted stamps, the postmaster was ordered to cancel them.

In the genuine overprint, the capital “A” appears as a triangle. In the genuine postmark, a hyphen appears in “NGA-KHE.”

![Image of overprinted stamps and postmark]
NGA-KHE Overprints
Fakes

Both the overprint and the postmark of the Nga-Khe stamps were faked. In the fake overprint, the letter “A” in “DAN” and “HOA” have a crossbar at middle height, which is distinctly different from the genuine overprint. Unlike the genuine postmark, the fake postmark lacks a hyphen in “NGA KHE.”
Nga-Khe Overprints
Use of Fakes

Two of the fake Nga-Khe overprints were employed on this 26 July 1946 cover. It is evident that the stamps, including the 20-cent Pavie stamp, which lacks any overprint, had been favor canceled prior to being affixed to the envelope. The sock-on-the-nose postmarks lack the hyphen in “NGA KHE,” which the genuine postmark possesses.
Independence Day Overprints

To celebrate the Proclamation of independence on 2 September 1945, commemorative stamps were overprinted “Chỉ đứng trong ngày Độc Lập” in red, blue or black. Money raised from the sale of these stamps was designated for hunger relief. Alas, all of this was a scam to separate collectors from their money.
Independence Day Overprints
Usage

To celebrate the proclamation of independence on 2 September 1945, commemorative stamps were overprinted “Chi dụng trong ngày Độc Lập” in various colors. Money raised from the sale of these stamps was designated for hunger relief. The inscription on the envelope reads “Greetings to Independence Day.”
Central Vietnam
LK 4 Overprints

Regions outside Hanoi were divided into numbered administrative zones. Lien Khu 4 extended roughly from just south of Hanoi as far as Da-Nang. Officials overprinted stamps for their individual areas.

Red Overprint | Red-Brown Overprint | Black Overprint

Original Black Overprint Shifted Down

Blue Overprint | Green Overprint | Blue Overprint
Central Vietnam
Fake LK 4 Overprint

With this example, the ink is pink and bled into the paper resulting in a blurry overprint.
Central Vietnam
LK 4 Overprints

Norodom Sihanouk

Hand-Applied Overprint in Red

President Ho Chi Minh

Small Text
Plain “5”
Ball on Tail of “5”
Central Vietnam
Zone LK 4 Ho Chi Minh Overprints
Independence Anniversary Usage

Three copies of the Ho Chi Minh stamp overprinted for Zone 4 were employed on this cover that commemorated the second anniversary of Vietnam’s independence proclaimed on 2 September 1945.

POSTAL MARKINGS
BU’U ĐIỆN LIỄN KHU 4 2-9 1947
2-9 1945-1947 BU’U ĐIỆN LIỄN KHU 4
REVERSE
BU’U ĐIỆN LIỄN KHU 4 2-9 1947
2-9 1945-1947 BU’U ĐIỆN LIỄN KHU 4
Although the stamps on this cover had been overprinted with “LK 4,” the letter was posted from Quang-Ngai in Zone 5 as indicated by the “LK V” in the postmark.
Central Vietnam
LK 5 Overprints

Zone LK 5 used overprints of a completely different style. The original denomination was obliterated and a new value was a part of the overprint.

LKV

0°300THDC