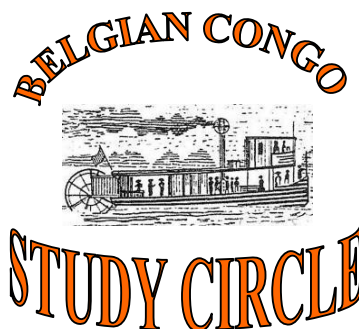


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**BULLETIN 162**

**November 2012**

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**The Study Circle website**  
**[www.belgian-congo-study-circle.be](http://www.belgian-congo-study-circle.be)**

## Annual Subscriptions – 2013

The following subscription rates approved at the March 2012 A.G.M. become effective 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

Those members having already paid in advance for 2013 at the previous rate will be credited as having paid in full.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Subscription</b>	
UK	£12	(£10 for those who receive the Bulletin, etc by e-mail)
Belgium	12€	
All other European countries	12€	
USA	\$22	(\$17 for those who receive the Bulletin, etc by e-mail)
Rest of the World	£15	(£10 for those who receive the Bulletin, etc by e-mail)

**Payment due** - 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

### **How to pay**

#### ***Members living in the UK:***

1. by electronic bank transfer to the Study Circle's account with the 'Halifax Bank':  
Belgian Congo Study Circle Account  
Sort Code: 11-01-26  
Account: 00647356

When using this payment method, confirmation of your transfer is presently necessary.

Confirm by e-mail to the Hon. Treasurer, Charles Lloyd ([charles.lloyd@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:charles.lloyd@blueyonder.co.uk))

or 2. By a cheque drawn on a UK bank and sent by post to the Hon. Treasurer, Charles Lloyd at 18 Linefield Road, Carnoustie, Angus DD7 6DP, Scotland, U.K.

or 3. As has been the practice, you can still send Pounds Sterling bank notes to the Hon. Treasurer, Charles Lloyd at the above address.

#### ***Members living in Belgium and other countries that are members of the Euro currency zone:***

By direct payment into the Study Circle's bank account with the "BNP Paribas Fortis":  
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#### ***Members living in 'Other European countries'***

Payment is to be made to the UK. You can use any one of the three methods available to the UK members. Payments made by electronic bank transfer must be made in Pounds Sterling. (Note that a *foreign bank* transaction charge may be applied by your bank). Cheques posted to the Hon. Treasurer, Charles Lloyd, must be drawn on a UK bank and be in Pounds Sterling. As has been the practice, you can still send Pounds Sterling or Euro bank notes to the Hon. Treasurer, Charles Lloyd. (Euro bank notes will be converted at the current exchange rate)

#### ***Members living in the USA***

There is no change to the existing arrangement and payment should be made to David Schaubroeck

#### ***Members living in the Rest of the World***

Payment is to be made by one of the options used by members living in '*Other European countries*'.

**Any problems should be directed to Hon. Treasurer. [Charles.lloyd@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Charles.lloyd@blueyonder.co.uk)**

## From the Editor



In the previous bulletin I said it was my intention to assemble all the information on the series just completed on *'Identification of the Mols plate combinations'* and present as a single volume book. Unfortunately the project involves more work than I anticipated and the work is still on my desk. Some interest in obtaining copy has been expressed and I will do my best to get it ready during the first quarter of 2013. It will then be available on request by any new members interested in this field.

**Help please! I make the proverbial plea for more 'bits and pieces' and 'articles' for inclusion in the bulletin.**

## Membership News

### New Members

We extend a warm return welcome to the following new members and trust they will enjoy and benefit from their association with us.

<i>Australia</i>	<b>Anthony L. Walker</b>	35 The Hill, Valentine NSW. 2280 <b>Email:</b> alwj1955@bigpond.net.au
<i>Belgium</i>	<b>Dominique Victor</b>	Allée E. Dhont, 3 Everberg
	<b>Eike Meyer Burckhardt</b>	Frans Maes Hof 12 3078 Everberg
	<b>Wim Dierickx</b>	Hauwerstraat, 41 9255 Buggenhout
<i>Germany</i>	<b>Harald Krieg</b>	Keltenstrasse 32 41462 Neuss <b>Email:</b> africacollector@googlemail.com

### New E-mail address

*U.K.*                    - **David Norton**                    **Email:** davidnorton33@btinternet.com

### E-mail changes

*Belgium.*                - **Thomas Lindekens**                **Email:** thomas.lindekens@philafrica.be

### **New and established members - receipt of the Bulletin by email**

Occasionally I do not receive details of new members E-Mail addresses and where that occurs it means that any distribution of the bulletin by email will not be automatically enacted.

If you are a new or established member wishing to receive copy by this means – please let me the Editor know that you would like to be included on my distribution list.

## Perth 2012

### The Association of British Philatelic Societies 2012 National Philatelic Exhibition and the 94<sup>th</sup> Philatelic Congress of Great Britain.

These events were held consecutively in the “Fair City” of Perth, in Scotland, from the 19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> of October. Each had a significant success and a highlight for a Circle member. At these events, I came across four other members of the Study Circle, Stuart Smith, Patrick Maselis, Gerald Marriner and Allan MacLaren but please excuse any omission from this list, if you were there and our paths did not cross.

At the Exhibition we were treated, amongst other gems, to spectacular items from the Royal Collection. I will mention just two: The Kirkcudbright Cover, a wrapper that held legal documents, posted from London to Scotland on the day that the *Penny Black* was first issued with its postage paid by a block of ten - by far the largest known block. On the next board to it there was an album page on which three of the 11 known *Bermuda Perot Provisionals* were mounted. Interesting as these were, it was Stuart Smith's ‘Traditional philately class’ competition entry “*Belgian Congo – Plates of the 15 centimes Mols 1896 – 1922*” that was for me, the star attraction. It is little wonder that Stuart was awarded a ‘Gold’. Congratulations and richly deserved. Whereas the panel of judges recognised the excellence of his display, BCSC members would have an additional appreciation of the philately in the context of the Congo and Stuart's labour of love. The result was announced on Saturday.

On Sunday, Congress' annual ceremony of signing the *Roll of Distinguished Philatelists* took place in Perth's historic St John's Kirk. Only those philatelists who are considered the most pre-eminent in the world are invited to sign. Since its creation in 1921, only 360 individuals from 38 countries have achieved this distinction. To be invited to sign is an international accolade, clearly demonstrated this year with four signatories from the USA, New Zealand, Belgium and the UK.

Some describe an invitation to sign as the Nobel Prize of philately. Fittingly, the first signature is that of King George V, the most prominent collector of his era. Our member Patrick Maselis had been invited to sign. The orator was fulsome in praise, noting that Patrick is not only a distinguished philatelist and philatelic author, but also one of the youngest ever to be recognised. There is no need for me to repeat to you Patrick's contribution to philately!



Patrick Maselis signing the ‘Roll of Distinguished Philatelists’  
St. John's Kirk, Perth. 21<sup>st</sup> October 2012

Following the signing, delegates were transported in a vintage double-decker bus to the Congress dinner to round off a memorable day.

Inspecting the roll before the start, I found that five other Belgians had signed before Patrick (in 1921, 1926, 1947, 1973 and 1987). In addition, Jean-Baptiste Moens' (1833 – 1908) name was inscribed in the side scrolls along with those of 41 other “Fathers of Philately” (who were deceased at the time the Roll was created).

### Advanced notice

The 2013 Philatelic Congress of GB will be held from the 27<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> June at Gloucester, England with Africa as its theme. I understand that Patrick will be presenting a major display. In 2014 the format will be totally different. On that occasion there will be a joint meeting with the Belgian Academy of Philatelists at Ypres from the 11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> July, commemorating the outbreak of World War I.

This is only the second time in 94 years that Congress will have been held outside the UK. Perhaps it will be a unique opportunity for the Study Circle's many Belgian members to attend such a meeting and I expect the theme will be of direct interest to them.

Charles Lloyd

## Something I had never thought about before. Assume nothing!

A recent acquisition was an overpaid postcard, written 20th March 1902 and posted the same day in Banana. The card is directed per the S.S. 'Albertville' to Rotterdam where it both arrived and was delivered 9<sup>th</sup> April 1902.



According to the sailing schedules summarised by Gudenkauf in 'Mailboat Services from Europe to the Belgian Congo', the S.S. *Albertville* departed the Congo on 17<sup>th</sup> March and docked in Antwerp on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1902.

The puzzle I had was that if my card travelled on that vessel, which seems likely as it definitely arrived in Rotterdam on 9<sup>th</sup> April, how had it received the Banana 20<sup>th</sup> March cancellation mark - apparently three days after the S.S. *Albertville* is said to have set sail for Antwerp.

Whilst Gudenkauf often names Banana or others as the Congo port of arrival, he never names the place of departure, only gives a date. Until now and without any consideration, I had always presumed that Gudenkauf provided departure dates, always referred to the stated arrival port.

Albeit only manuscript directed to be carried on the *Albertville*, I am fairly confident that the card would in fact have travelled on that ship. Consequently it is reasonable to deduce that in this instance the original departure port was further upstream, probably Matadi, and the first three days of its journey were spent on the river Congo in getting to Banana where it picked up the final collection of mail from there.

Stuart Smith



## Private labels of the Upper Ubangi 1898 – 1899

Luc Vander Marcken

### Preface

In the late eighteenth century, private arrangements for the management and conveyance of mail were an ambitious requirement. Such aspirations were not confined to the 'Independent State' side of the River Congo boundary.



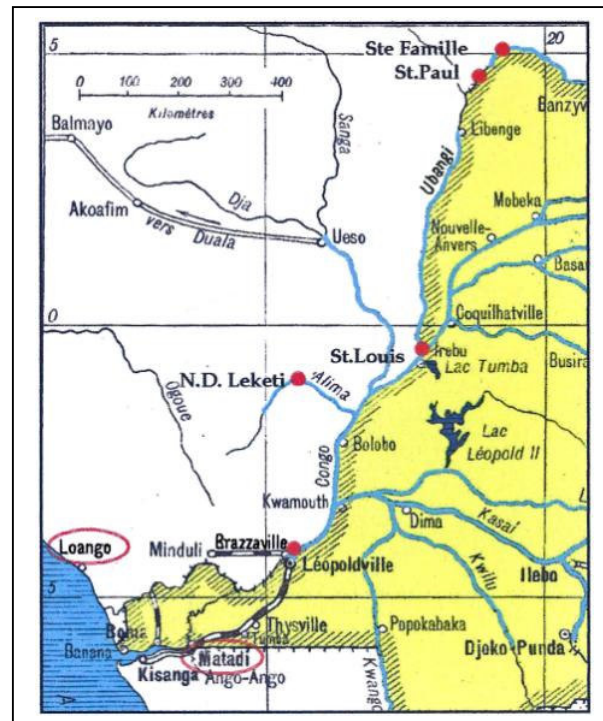
Here we examine stamp like labels prepared by the *Ste Famille Mission* for use in support of their operational needs that included directing mail from the colony via Matadi and Loango. Coincidental with the inclusion in this bulletin of Laurent Bierny's article and new findings on the 'Mitacos' labels, we have another related example of well intentioned self help, in this instance on the French side of the border.

These privately produced stamps were only printed in very small numbers and probably created on the initiative of Bishop Prosper Augouard, who was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Upper Ubangi in 1890. They were to have been issued as a means of charging a fee for the transport of mail aboard steamers belonging to the missionary organization *Pères du Saint-Esprit*, the so-called 'Fathers of the Holy Spirit', and also known as the 'Spiritans'.



Bishop Prosper Augouard

The St. Famille Mission established a series of stations on the French side of the river and at the time their steamer fleet consisted of two vessels, the 6-ton *Diata-Diata* and the 24-ton *Léon XIII*. These boats were used to ferry passengers and supplies between the various 'Spiritan' missions, stretching from Brazzaville, on the Pool and still known then as Stanley Pool, to Notre Dame de Lékéti on the river Alima, which was a tributary of the Congo; Saint-Louis, at the confluence of the Congo and the River Ubangi and St. Paul des Rapides and St. Famille on the Upper Ubangi.



● Spiritan Missions

Bishop Prosper Augouard aboard the Steamer 'Diata-Diata' – *Quick-Quick!*

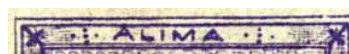
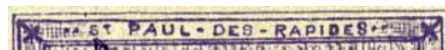


### The Labels

As illustrated, the stamp format 'labels' bear the Episcopal coat of arms of Mgr. Augouard along with the denomination (*centimes or francs*) in the centre.

The following inscriptions surround the frame: 'St. PAUL DES RAPIDES', 'ALIMA', 'STE FAMILLE' and 'NAVON VAPEUR de la MISSION'.

Of particular interest they are overprinted with either 'VIA LOANGO' in black or 'VIA MATADI' in red.



**VIA MATADI**

**VIA LOANGO**

The overprint 'VIA MATADI' comes as no surprise since this was the normal route for mail at the time. The 'VIA LOANGO' overprint is less obvious, but is due to a desire to link up with the French shipping line operating between Loango and Bordeaux.

To date, we know of 4 examples of the 5 c. light blue, 2 examples of the 10 c. green, 4 examples of the 25 c. yellow-orange, 3 examples of the 50 c. violet and a single example of the 1 Franc red-brown.



'VIA MATADI'



'VIA MATADI'



'VIA LOANGO'

The stamp like labels were probably created between 1898 and 1899 with the intension of bringing some extra money into the coffers of the organization. Unfortunately for the Spiritans, the scheme was completely scuppered when the French colonial authorities issued a decree in 1899 stipulating that all private organizations and companies would henceforth transport mail free of charge.

### Acknowledgments:

Illustrated labels are from the Maselis collection

Bibliography: Balasse Magazine, vols 235-246. Various articles by Dr Grasset.

Mouvement Géographique 1895

Abbé Gudenkauf (1985). *Mailboat steamers on Congo rivers & lakes*,

# Edouard Mandouau and the Mitacos vignettes

## - further findings and clarification

Laurent Bierny

### Introduction

It is exactly fifty years since General Du Four published his monumental work on the philately of Belgium's former colony 'Congo - Cinquante Ans d'histoire Postale'. On page 366, he shows us a reproduction of a square vignette (25 x 25 mm) showing an elephant, with its trunk raised, against a background of the setting sun, a hill and a palm tree.

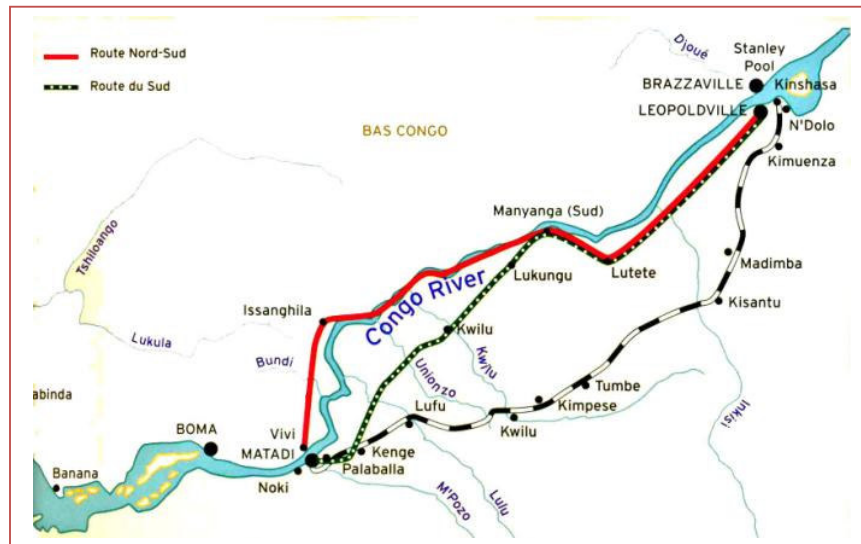


These small vignettes were produced in a variety of different colours and struck with the word 'CONGO' in black or red. Although their existence had been known for quite some time - Moens mentions them in the December 1885 issue of the philatelic magazine *Le Timbre-Poste* – it was General Du Four who first offered a suggestion as to who might have made them. The General attributed their origin to Edouard Mandouau, because Mandouau's grandson Robert came across them in an album that had belonged to his grandfather. Robert Mandouau met General Du Four in early 1956 and gave him a large number of letters that his grandfather had written and received whilst in the Congo, as well as these vignettes. Later that same year, on 18 October to be exact, the *Musée de l'Afrique* acquired Edouard Mandouau's complete archive. Among his papers were very many notebooks that provide a great deal of useful information, allowing us to take a fresh look at the Mitacos vignettes and now challenge General Du Four's views on this subject.

### Edouard Mandouau's period in the Congo

Mandouau was introduced to the AIC (*Association Internationale du Congo*) by General Chapelier and subsequently hired by the Association as a steam boat captain on 1 April 1884. He set sail from Liverpool on 17 April 1884 aboard the *Roquelle* bound for the Congo arriving in Banana on 26 May. From Banana he went on to Boma, where he was met by Delcommune whose job it was to receive all the AIC's new employees on arrival, before setting out for Vivi.

On 13 June 1884 he made his way to the station at Lukungu, and arrived on 22 June 1884. From there, he went on to the station at Manyanga-Sud, where he spent 12 days from approximately 25 June to 6 July and then left for Leopoldville, arriving on 14 July 1884.



The route followed by Mandouau

Mandouau was placed under the command of Captain Hanssens who arrived in Leopoldville in mid August 1884, having travelled from Stanley Falls. From this date onwards, most of Mandouau's time would have been spent maintaining, repairing and fixing sails of the AIC's fleet of steamers, the *En Avant*, the *A.I.A.*, the *Royal* and the great 'Whale boat'.



During his period here, he was sent to set up a 'Post' at the crossing point on the river Djoué, also known as the 'Gordon Bennett' but after only three days, his mission was cut short. The French garrison stationed on the other side of the river Congo explained that pending the final decisions of the Berlin Conference, which was still in session (15 November 1884 to 26 February 1885), neither the French nor the Belgians were permitted to establish 'Posts' on the river, as this would be in direct infringement of the agreement made between Francis de Winton, the Administrator-General of the AIC, and representatives of the French government. That agreement clearly stipulated that both sides must refrain from undertaking new work on their respective sides of the river, until they had received word from Europe.

On 15 September, Manduau was then sent to Kalina Point, a small island in the middle of the river Congo opposite Brazzaville, with instructions to build a 'Station'. He constructed a 'Fort' and an 'Avenue' before submitting his resignation on 14 November. On 12 December, he left Kalina Point for Leopoldville, where he remained until 29 December. On 11 January 1885, he was in Vivi and at the end of February boarded the SS *Lualaba* bound for England, arriving in Liverpool on 21 March 1885.

On his return to Belgium, he wrote a number of articles for *Le Moniteur du Congo*, a weekly magazine that existed briefly between 27 May - 11 October 1885 and published articles by former employees of the *Association Internationale Africaine*. The magazine was intended to provide an alternative voice and counteract the influence of the *Mouvement Géographique* magazine. The latter was managed by the geographer Alphonse-Jules Wauters and was little more than a propaganda tool created to promote the activities of King Leopold in the Congo. During his time in the Congo, Edouard Manduau took many photographs and made many sketches. On his return, his luggage included some 70 rolled-up canvasses, which were retouched by a professional painter before being displayed in the exhibition galleries of the Alhambra Theatre in Brussels in late 1885.

He later went on to work as a sketch artist for *Mouvement Géographique* and returned to the French Congo, as a trading post manager for the Grétry Company. After his final return to Belgium, he devoted himself mainly to painting and it is to him that we owe the first panorama of the Congo, which was exhibited at the Colonial Museum in Tervueren in 1899. Manduau is regarded as Belgium's first colonial painter.

#### **Edouard Manduau's contribution to philately**

Edouard Manduau wrote and received numerous letters when he was in the Congo. In particular, he maintained a regular correspondence with his mother and her second husband Joseph Mostinck. All of the letters he wrote bear 'straight line marks', of which there are four different types.

MANYANCA CONGO AFRICA	LÉOPOLDVILLE CONGO RIVER	LÉOPOLDVILLE CONGO AFRICA
CONGO RIVER		

If we compare the dates on which the letters were written, with the places where Manduau was stationed in the Congo, there is good reason to believe that he was the creator of these handstamps. In his travel notebooks, I have found examples of handstamps similar to those found on the letters that he wrote. This discovery has enabled me to confirm General Du Four's hypothesis that Edouard Manduau was indeed the creator of these handstamps and there can be no doubt about this.



### Historical aspects in the distribution of mail

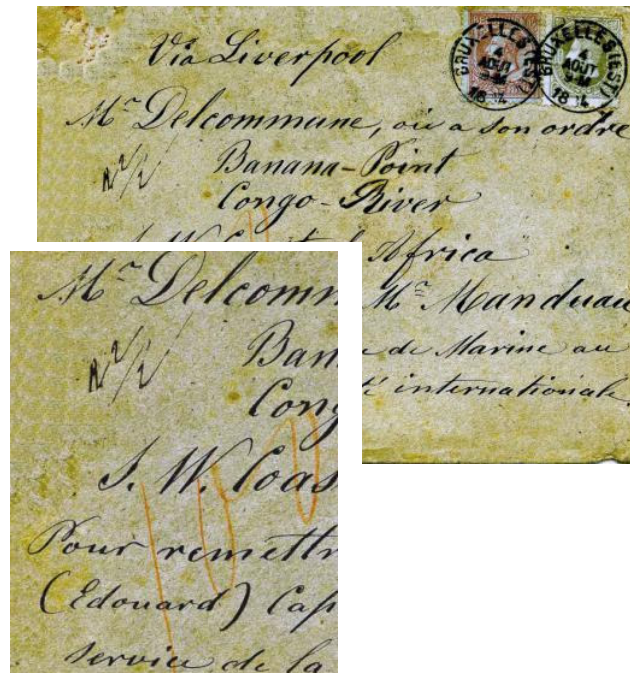
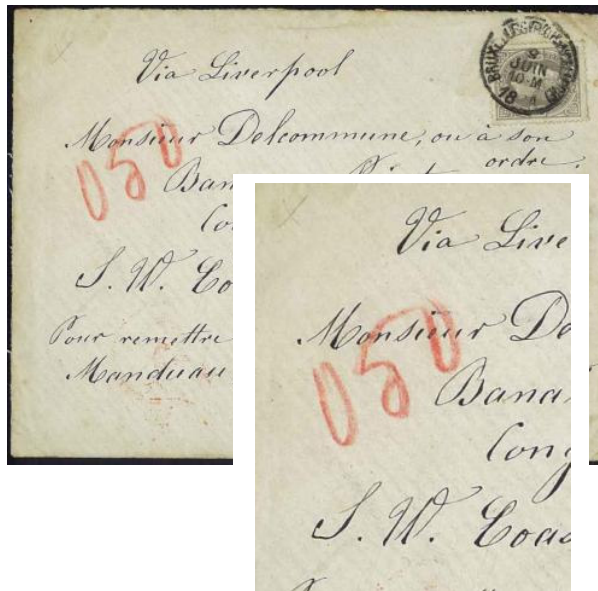
According to General Du Four, the 'Mitacos' vignettes must have been made by Edouard Mandouau as they were found among his papers. The General also says that they were worth 50 centimes, 1 Mitaco having he thought, a value of 10 centimes. He linked this value to a charge he also believed to have been levied by Delcommune for incoming mail, in return for forwarding these letters to their respective addressees in the Congo. We have now established that none of these statements is correct.

### Handwritten inscriptions in red (0.50 Fr) and blue (1 Fr) on incoming letters.

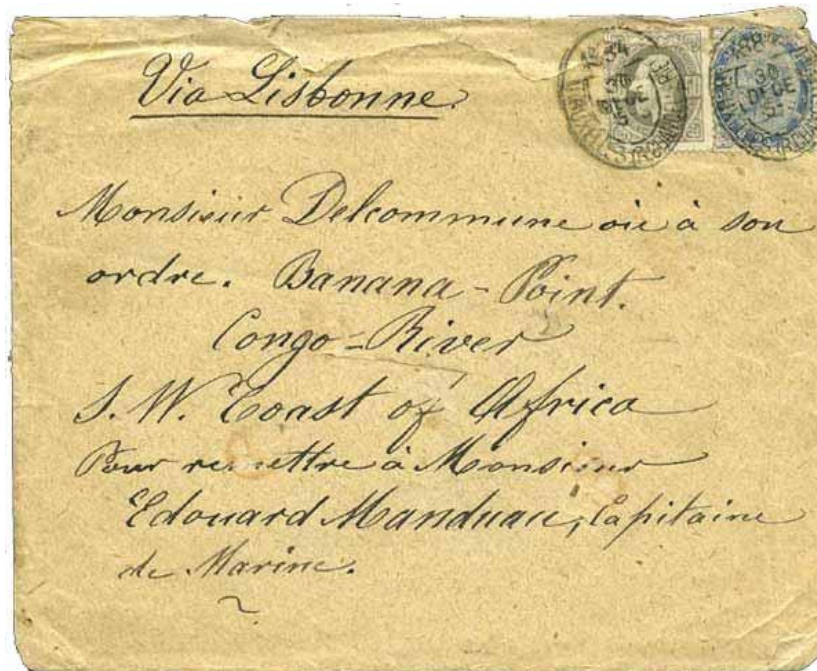
General Du Four also tells us that all the letters sent to Edouard Mandouau bore a handwritten numeral in red or blue on the envelope: 0.50 or 1.00, depending on whether the postal charge levied was a single or double rate. At the time of publishing his book in 1962, Du Four referred to half a dozen letters. As of now, I have counted eleven letters and only four of them bear an inscription of this kind. Dr Robert Abensur has provided a convincing explanation for such marks.

On mail travelling via the British route, the 0.50 Fr and 1.00 Fr charge represents the fee that had to be paid to the British postal administration for the dispatch or receipt of an item of mail addressed to or coming from a country that was not a member of the Universal Postal Union. None of the letters sent via the Portuguese route bear this inscription, because Portugal considered the Congo part of Angola and therefore did not apply this additional fee. It should be noted that these inscriptions on mail became optional from 1878 onwards, which explains their absence on some of the letters.

With regard to the colours, red was used by the exchange office of the country of origin for mail destined for a country that was not a member of the UPU and was therefore applied in Brussels to letters addressed to the Congo. Blue was used by the country of entry into the UPU on incoming mail from a country that was not a member of the UPU, and blue numerals were therefore applied in Britain on incoming mail from the Congo addressed to Belgium (see the article by Patrick Maselis in *Belgian Postal History*, No.69, 2010).

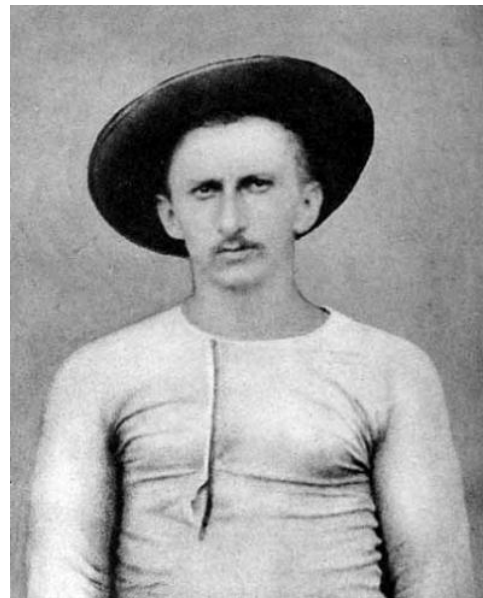


In addition to this incorrect interpretation of the handwritten inscriptions, General Du Four is also manifestly wrong about the need to pay a fee to Delcommune for the forwarding of items of mail addressed to AIC employees stationed in the Congo. Here is one such letter without hand written numerals.



### Alexandre Delcommune

Alexandre Delcommune, who arrived in Boma in 1874, was the manager of the trading post belonging to the French company Daumas-Béraud from 1876 onwards. On their recommendation, he was hired by Colonel Strauch in 1883 to work for the *Comité d'Études du Haut Congo* which at the end of that year became the *Association Internationale du Congo*. He later went on to manage the Belgian trading post in Boma, after Alphonse Gillis returned to Belgium for the last time. In *Les Belges dans l'Afrique Centrale*, we learn that 'Gillis' real job was to engage in trade and commercial transactions. However, there was also a reciprocal exchange of services between agents working for Belgian trading companies and employees of the *Société Internationale* (i.e. the AIC). Free of charge, Gillis undertook to provide transport on the Congo for the expedition, to meet the needs of explorers passing through Boma and to maintain the vessels and naval supplies of the exploration fleet.



Alexandre Delcommune

When Gillis left for Belgium, Alexandre Delcommune not only took over management of the Belgian trading post, but also inherited Gillis' mission for the AIC.



In his book, *Vingt Années de Vie Africaine*, Delcommune wrote:

*“All the goods, provisions and supplies destined to meet the needs of all the stations belonging to the Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo, as well as all the correspondence intended for the Committee’s numerous employees, came to my address in Banana. They were immediately shipped from Banana to Ingongolo, by the 300 tons steamer Heron, stopping only in Boma.”*

It should be noted that the *Heron* belonged to the AIC and never went beyond Ingongolo. Beyond Ingongolo and as far as Vivi, transport was provided by the *Belgique* and the *Espérance*, as well as a variety of launches and small steamers.

Finally, for the sake of completeness, we have an extract from what Commandant Louis Valcke had to say about the transport of mail, taken from a letter sent to André de Cock on 1 September 1930:

*“collected together into packets, these letters were sent to employees in Banana or Boma who entrusted them indiscriminately to the Captains of vessels belonging either to the Committee or to trading posts on the river, because all of them took mail up or down the river, without making any charge whatsoever.”*

On reading these three extracts, it is difficult to understand why Alexandre Delcommune, an AIC employee, would levy a charge on other fellow employees for carrying mail addressed to them aboard the organisation's own steamer *Heron*. I am afraid therefore, that General Du Four was also wrong about this famous fee. In this context it never existed.

While Alexandre Delcommune certainly acted as an intermediary in the transport of mail, he did so free of charge.

### **The Mitaco / Mitako**

Now that we have ruled out the ‘fee hypothesis’, for what other purpose could the 5 Mitaco vignette have been used? We should start by noting a spelling mistake in the word *Mitacos*. At first sight this might appear to be mere pedantry, but as we will see later on, it is of considerable significance when it comes to drawing our final conclusions. The correct spelling is *Mitako*, not *Mitaco*. All the examples found in the literature refer to Mitako with a ‘K’ and not with a ‘C’.

First of all, what were ‘Mitakos’ anyway? A Mitako was a coiled bar made of brass or copper used to make items of native jewellery such as necklaces or bracelets. These strips of metal were also used as a currency of exchange for the purchase of various kinds of goods or for paying dowries. The length and diameter of these strips varied considerably, according to the distance from the coast (the longest Mitakos being found on the coast and the shortest in the Uélé) and even within the same region, as bits were cut off in order to pay intermediaries.

These strips of metal were known by different names in different regions, but Mitako was the most commonly used term in the Middle Congo. The Mitako underwent a severe drop in value during the colonial period, due to a continual increase in supply: the Europeans paid the native labour they used in Mitakos and imported them in the form of coils that were 185 metres in length. These coils were loaded onto steamers going up the river Congo from the 1880s onwards.



Mitakos

The ‘Mission orders’ that Manduau received from Captain Hanssens, instructing him to accompany an expedition to the equator, also include a section which stated that he had to pay each native 3 Mitacos for 4 days. Much to Manduau’s consternation, a countermanding order was subsequently issued, which kept him in Stanley Pool.



As previously stated, General Du Four thought that one Mitako was worth 10 centimes and therefore assessed the vignette at a value of 50 centimes. He was incorrect on this point and Manduau's notebooks contain very precise information on the subject. The text refers to a *table des blancs*, 'the white man's table', which must have been a conversion table for working out the value of the local Mitako currency, in relation to certain European currencies used in the Congo - probably Belgian and British. This '*table des blancs*' was used for bartering or paying the natives. Manduau says that the Mitako was worth '0.15' (sic) centime according to the *table des blancs*. This is a gross underestimate and must have been a slip of the pen. He actually means 0.15 francs or 15 centimes. I have found three reliable sources that confirm this value. The monograph *La Banque du Congo Belge 1909-1959* tells us that

*"as early as 1886, the government announced, by means of an instruction issued by the AIC's Administrator-General, that as the Mitako had to be considered more as a currency than as a trading commodity, government employees were forbidden from allowing it to be subject to an increase in price and that they were to handle the Mitako at a fixed price of 15 centimes in all the stations."*

This value is also corroborated by Albert Thys who built the Matadi-Leopoldville railway line, and in a letter dated 22 November 1887, he writes

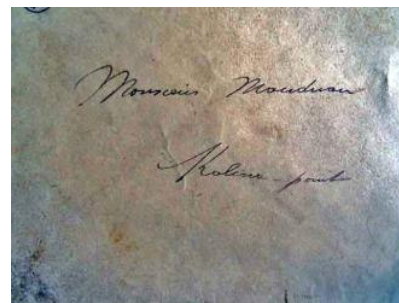
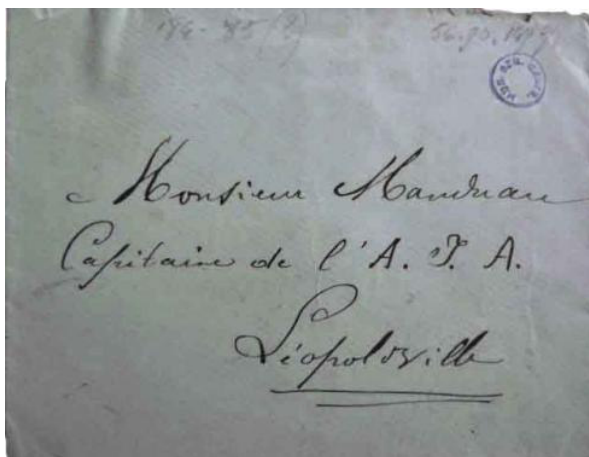
*"I charge 4 Mitakos for a knife, in other words 60 centimes."*

Finally, in his book *Les Bangalas*, Cyrille Van Overbergh tells us:

*"in 1890, one Mitako was officially worth 15 centimes, a value that was imposed by the Belgian authorities."*

As General Du Four was mistaken about the value of the Mitako, he was also wrong to attribute a value of 50 centimes to the Mitacos vignette. However, if we now consider the Mitacos vignette as a postal vignette born in the imagination of an employee of the AIC, based on the model of the vignettes created by Hertwig, its correct face value of 75 centimes points to it having had a very different purpose than the fee imagined by General Du Four. These 75 centimes are in fact, the value of the franking required on a letter sent between Belgium and its future colony, a franking that would drop to 50 centimes on 1 January 1886 when the Congo Free State joined the UPU.

However, given that to date no vignette has been found affixed to an envelope, we are still in the realms of hypotheses. Nevertheless, they might well have been stuck onto letters addressed to Europe, in order to distinguish them from incoming mail or inland mail exchanged between employees of the AIC. I have found a few letters in the Manduau archives to support this theory.



Inland mail letters sent to Edouard Manduau

Bearing in mind that mail was carried from station to station by native carriers who definitely could not read or write, affixing a distinctive marker like the Mitacos vignette on mail destined for Europe, which first had to be taken to Banana or Boma, would have made it easier to separate from local mail. Another hypothesis regarding the possible purpose of a vignette of this kind is that it might have been designed to make it easier to identify different types of mail. Based on the model of Hertwig's vignettes it would make sorting easier, or once again, possibly a desire to create a private postal vignette of a slightly *exotic* nature.

We should not forget that the range of leisure activities open to Europeans stationed in the Congo in these early years of its colonisation was very limited. When they had finished their day's work, there were very few distractions: hunting, sketching, photography and reading; but books were still scarce because they were an additional weight to carry. Manduau passed the time making 'stamps', Hertwig made sorting labels and in my opinion, it seems highly probable that these Mitacos vignettes were also made by an AIC employee to be affixed to mail to assist sorting and distinguish between different types. In giving them a value of 5 Mitacos (75 centimes), the person that made them might have intended them to be placed on letters addressed to foreign destinations.

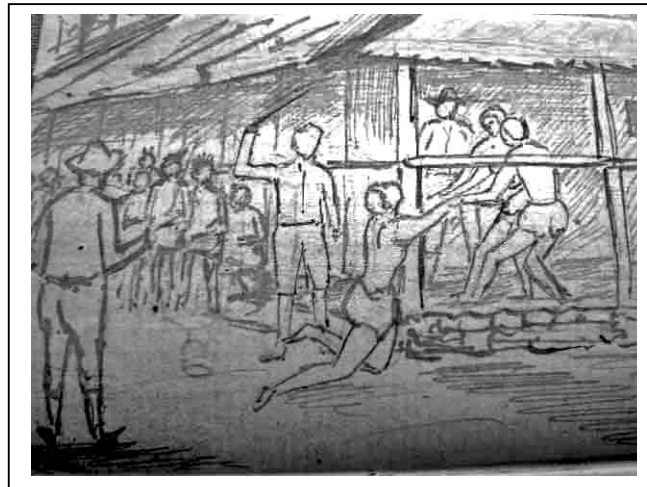
### **Who made the Mitacos vignette?**

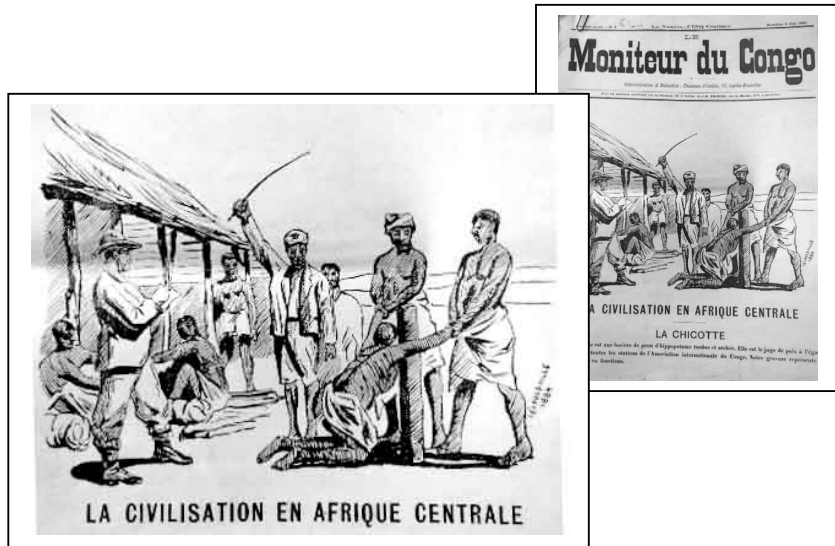
Although these vignettes have been known since 1885, it was not until they were discovered in the Edouard Manduau archives by grandson Robert, who then passed them on to General Du Four in 1956 for the latter to attribute their origin to Edouard Manduau. The rest of Manduau's papers – minus most of the documents of philatelic relevance that had been given to General Du Four – were donated to the *Musée de l'Afrique*.

It was whilst going through these other items that I came across two significant pieces of evidence which allows me to call into question the accuracy of Jean Du Four's view that Manduau was the creator of the Mitacos vignettes.

Firstly, Edouard Manduau makes frequent reference to the Mitako in his travel notebooks and on each occasion he writes the word with the correct spelling that is with a 'k'. Moreover, in all the literature that I have been able to consult, the word Mitako is always written with a 'k' and never with a 'c'. In one of the letters from Manduau to his father-in-law Joseph, he encloses an article describing what the Congo was like, which he hoped to have published in a journal. The language used is both precise and elegant. Manduau clearly had a certain literary talent and in all his various writings - his notebooks, letters, etc., he writes with style and spells all the words correctly!

Secondly, as already mentioned earlier in this article, his talent as an artist was sufficient to allow him to pursue a fairly successful career as a painter. During his period in the Congo, he made numerous sketches and took a large number of photographs with the intention of using them as the basis for future paintings. Illustrated is the sketch that served as a basis for the famous painting *La Civilisation au Congo*, which in its day fuelled criticism of Leopold II activities in his supposed attempts to civilize the Congo.





Manduau was an ambitious man possessed of considerable knowledge and multiple talents in the realms of science, literature and art. The ‘straight line’ stamps that he made are proof of his desire to make his mark - and perhaps show a certain interest in philately. However, when one looks at the Mitacos vignette, with its crude execution, the crass spelling mistake and devoid of any genuine artistic qualities, it is surely impossible to come to any other conclusion than that this cannot be the work of Manduau. If he had decided to make a vignette of this kind, the end-result would have been very different indeed.

On the other hand, we can state with a considerable degree of certainty that the word ‘CONGO’, applied in a different colour to that of the vignette, was made using a handstamp that was undoubtedly produced by Manduau. This handstamp appears in one of his travel notebooks and is reminiscent of the ‘CONGO RIVER’ handstamp that Manduau applied to some of his letters.



The photograph reproduced here shows us that the word ‘CONGO’ is strangely similar - both on the vignette and the handstamp. Perhaps of particular relevance is that the vertical left hand stroke of the first letter ‘R’ of ‘RIVER’ is also partly reproduced in exactly the same position on the label.

### Two different vignettes!

Surprisingly, none of the various authors who have written about the Mitacos vignette have ever mentioned that there are in fact two types. Could it be that no one has ever noticed this before?

The first philatelist to mention the vignette was Jean-Baptiste Moens, in the December 1885 issue of the *Le Timbre-Poste* magazine. However, the illustration accompanying his article is different from the vignette found in the Manduau archives.



Moens vignette



Manduau vignette

Before attempting an explanation, let me tell you how my interest was first drawn to this famous vignette. A short while ago, I chanced upon three Mitacos vignettes in different colours.



Each bear the inscription 'CONGO' in the same colour as the various motifs and value of the vignette, whereas the 'Manduau' vignettes have the word 'Congo' in a different colour - black and according to Du Four, sometimes in red. These three vignettes were obviously handled by Frederick Melville, a prolific and highly respected writer on philately, as he signed each on the back. As an enthusiast of his work, I came across this vignette in his book *Phantom Philately*, which was published in 1923. What first struck and surprised me was that the illustration used in Moens' article is the same as the one used in Melville's book.



As illustrated by Moens



As illustrated by Melville

However, the vignettes found in the Manduau archives exhibit certain slight differences:

1. The 'Manduau' bears an inscription which clearly says '5 MITACOS', whereas the inscription on the 'Moens' vignette could be read as 'SMITACOS'.
2. The last three letters 'COS' in the value tablet are slightly different on each vignette; yet if the two vignettes are superimposed on top of each other, it is astonishingly apparent that the dimensions of the two are absolutely identical and the various motifs included in the two vignettes are in exactly the same position.



Enlarged

*Le Timbre-Poste* magazine used electrotype clichés to create the illustrations shown on its pages. This technique produces an identical reproduction of the stamps in question, but requires the use of a reference 'model'. That being the case and except for the small detail of the 'S' instead of a '5', how can we explain the fact that Moens was able to reproduce the Mitacos vignette so precisely, not only in terms of its dimensions but also in the positioning of the different elements of the vignette – a vignette found decades later among the papers left as part of Manduau's estate?. The only possible answer has to be that he must have been given a vignette from which to make the cliché.

However, the vignette he used as a reference 'model' was not the one found in the Manduau archives, but rather another type, which was very similar but not absolutely identical. Where did it come from?

At this point we can only put forward certain hypotheses, which some day we may be able to confirm or refute. These hypotheses are based on the following known facts:

1. The vignette referred to as the 'Manduau' or the '5 Mitacos' was made before January 1885.
2. The 'S Mitacos' vignette was used as a 'model' to make the electrotype clichés used for the illustration in Moens' article in *Le Timbre-Poste*. This vignette, which we can call the 'Moens



*vignette*', was made before December 1885.

3. The fact that the dimensions of the two vignettes are identical and the various motifs can be superimposed on each other perfectly means that one must have been used to make the other. But which one was made first?

In my opinion, there must have been at least two and possibly three states of the vignette:

1. The first state, as yet unknown, must show the vignette as it was originally created by the person who made it and would be identical to the vignette found in the papers belonging to Manduau's estate, but without the inscription 'CONGO' added by Manduau, using the handstamp that he had made.
2. The second state is represented by the one found in the Manduau archives. It is very likely that Manduau met the creator of these vignettes when he was in the Congo and if we assume that this was a postal vignette, he must undoubtedly have added the word 'CONGO' using one of the handstamps he had previously made. This explains the difference in colour between the various motifs included in the vignette and the word 'CONGO'. Manduau more than likely took the handstamps with him when he left the Congo.
3. The third state would be the one that appears in Moens's article in the *Le Timbre-Post* magazine, which exhibits differences with regard to the 'Mitacos' value tablet and shows the word 'CONGO' printed in the same colour as the motifs.

We can postulate and with a bit of imagination arrive at the following explanation for these different states:

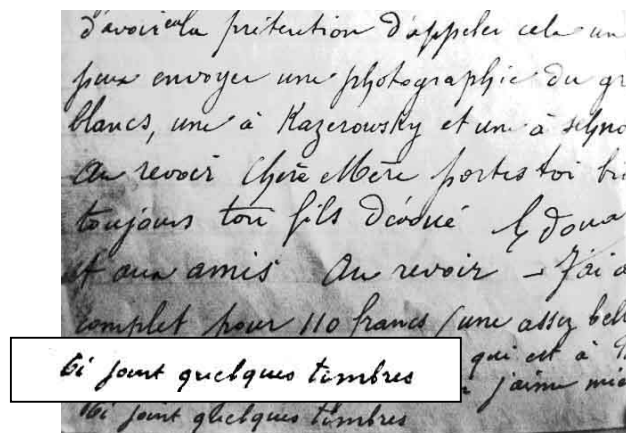
An AIC employee stationed in the Congo, decided on his own initiative to create a postal vignette in the same way as Hertwig. In fact, he may have even met Hertwig. In order to create the vignette, he produced a rather crude rubber handstamp. The impression of this stamp on the paper shows the vignette in its first state. Manduau subsequently acquired this vignette and added the word 'CONGO', using his handstamp. These are the vignettes found in the Manduau archives.

This then raises the question as to whether Manduau actually met the creator of the original vignette or whether he merely received the vignettes from a third person.

It should be remembered that in the pre-colonial period, other currencies of exchange were in use in the Congo basin as well as the Mitaco, such as pearls, handkerchiefs, cloth, kauris, etc.

The Mitaco was used in the Middle Congo, that is between Leopoldville and the Equator. It is therefore reasonable to presume that the creator of this vignette was stationed at Stanley Pool/near Leopoldville, when the handstamp was made.

We now come to a further and somewhat contentious piece of circumstantial evidence found at the bottom of a letter, sent by Manduau to his mother from Leopoldville on 13 October 1884, in which he says "I enclose a few postage stamps". Note he uses the word 'timbres', so he is referring specifically to postage stamps and not handstamps.



But which 'postage stamps' was he referring to? Were they mint stamps or cancelled stamps that he had removed from their envelopes?

I have come across a large number of letters that were sent to him while he was in the Congo, which still have the postage stamps on them. We can thus assume that he usually left any postage stamps that he received on their covers. If he is referring to new stamps, which stamps could they be? He went back to Brazzaville quite a few times, but there were still no postage stamps in the French Congo during this period as none were issued until 1891. If he is referring to Angolan stamps, the only opportunity he



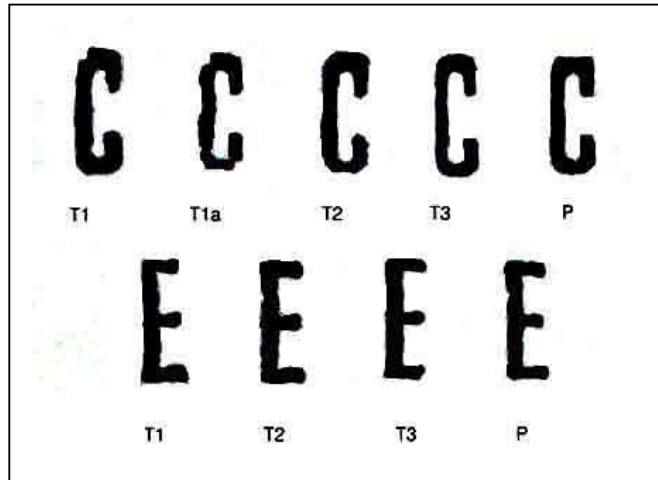
# CONGO BELGE typographic overprints on Postal stationery

## A new *Type* and varieties

Philippe Lindekens

On page 24 of his catalogue 'Les Entiers Postaux du Congo et du Ruanda-Urundi', Dr. Jacques Stibbe summarizes the discoveries made by Roland Ingels concerning the different types of CONGO BELGE overprints found on postal stationery cards.

Stibbe records three main types: T1, T2, T3 and also adds a sub-type for those examples affected by wear and tear T1a. He also recognises a further separate type for the 'Princes' printing, identified and catalogued as 'P'.



The distinguishing characteristics of the various types all relate to differences found in two letters: the 'C' in CONGO and the first 'E' in BELGE.

**T1.** The 'C' has a notched indentation in the top left-hand corner and the 'E' is normal.

**T1a.** This is a worn version of type 1. The lower part of the 'C' exhibits breakages.

**T2.** The 'C' shows a slight flattening on the top left-hand corner and the E has notched indents on the left side in the upper third of the vertical bar.

**T3.** The 'C' is normal, but the bottom bar of the 'E' is shorter and the end is truncated along a diagonal line.

**P.** The 'C' is flattened on the top and the upper right-hand corner has a rectangular shape. The 'E' has the same notched indentation as in type T2

### A new discovery? – T4

Recently and completely by chance, I came across two postal stationery cards bearing another type of overprint, which occurs only on the brown 'Reply' half of Stibbe 23 (15c blue +15c brown on azure).

Both examples exhibit an identical flattening or clipping of the tops of the letters, rather like the CUNGO variety found in position 1 of the horizontal plates used for the overprints of the Princes printing.



What also surprised me is that the overprint on the 'Demand' side is a different type from that on the 'Reply' card. As illustrated above and occurring on both of my examples, the overprint on the Demand card (15c blue) is type 'T1' with the notched indent in the top left-hand corner of the 'C' very clearly visible.

This overprint also exhibits a consistent feature, in the form of a dot in the bottom corner of the last 'E' of the 'Demand' card. A similar dot also appears on the 'Reply' card, but is less prominent and more difficult to distinguish.



Furthermore, the overprints were applied with great pressure, leaving a significant relief impression on the back of the cards, on both the demand and the reply cards, albeit this is difficult to see on the scan.



**Question** - could this overprint on the 'Reply' card be a distorted version of a 'T1' overprint?

However, before we start proposing a possible 'T4' overprint, it would be helpful if we could base this theory on further examples. I therefore ask readers to take a look at their own overprinted postal stationery cards and let me know of their findings!

Whereas fakes of local overprints are well known – to my knowledge there is no record of any faked typographic overprint ever having been found.

#### **An unrecorded variety - the mixed overprint types**

As referred to above, it surprised me to find that in the case of the two 'Stibbe 23' stationery cards found with the suggested new type 'T4' overprint, each side had been overprinted with a different *Type* stamp. This prompted a further investigation to see if it was indeed common practice and whether there are any other interesting features I had not previously been aware of.



Illustrated above is another example of 'Stibbe 23'; this time with a 'T2' overprint, confirmed with the 'C' showing a flattening on the top left-hand corner and the 'E' with notched indents on the left side in the upper third of the vertical bar. This overprint is thicker than usual and smudged, with ink streaks on several of the letters. There is also a dot above the 'B'.





After examining the overprint on the 'Demand' card, to see whether it was also smudged, I was surprised to find that not only was it entirely normal, but also that it was not type 'T2' but in fact a 'T1' - the 'C' has breakages and the 'E' has none!!!

This confirmed my previous observation - after all, has anyone previously reported or noticed that the overprint on the 'Demand' portion might be different to that on the 'Reply' part?

After this discovery, I decided to take another look at the cards in my collection and found the following:

Stibbe No. 23 with demand T2 and reply T1 (i.e. Stibbe 23 – T2 – T1)

Stibbe No. 31 LB with demand T1 and reply T3 (i.e. Stibbe 31LB - T1 - T3)

Stibbe No. 31 LB with demand T2 and reply T1 (i.e. Stibbe 31LB – T2 – T1)

Stibbe No. 31 TT with demand T2 and reply T1a (i.e. Stibbe 31 TT-T2-T1a)

Stibbe No. 31 TT with demand T1a and reply T2 (i.e. Stibbe 31 TT-T1a-T2)

This is obviously not an exhaustive list and I look forward to your added contributions!

### **Other variations**

Having made the previous findings as a result of looking at 'inking' related issues, here are other, albeit minor variations, that might stimulate further interest.

This type 'T3' CONGO BELGE overprint on the 10c green 'Reply' card [Stibbe 25T] shows a blurred inking, which has resulted in the 'B' with the top loop partly filled in, ink streaks in the 'NG' of CONGO and the 'G' in BELGE fully closed. However, the type 'T3' overprint on the demand card is perfect.



### **Misaligned typographic overprints**

Misaligned CONGO BELGE typographic overprints are unusual on imprinted stationery cards. Where they do occur, the misalignment has been created in one of three main ways:

- due to the cards being incorrectly cut out
- incorrect folding of the double 'Demand-Reply' cards
- the overprint being incorrectly applied.

Local overprints with the overprint misaligned are similarly unusual as are overprints aligned at an angle, whilst inverted varieties are very rare. Local overprints were applied with far greater care on stationery cards than on postage stamps. Moreover, and unlike the number of varieties

of local 'L4' overprints on postage stamps, overprinted cards are not plagued by 'created-to-order' bogus examples!!

Illustrated is a rare example of a seriously displaced type 'T1' typographic overprint.



### Mixed/compound types 'T1a' and 'T2' with misplaced overprint on one side

Illustrated is another example of an undivided two side Reply paid card (Stibbe 31TT).

On the 'Demand' side there is a very low but centrally placed 'T2' overprint whilst the 'Reply paid' half has a correctly centred type 'T1a' overprint.



## Postscript

Since starting to prepare the above article, your editor and two other members have already had an opportunity to examine our own collections of typo overprinted stationery cards. As a result it is possible to confirm that we have found examples of Philippe's type 'T4' overprint as well as examples of mixed overprint types, on 'Reply/Demand' undivided cards. Will all members please report their findings to Philippe or me, particularly the mixed combination types occurring together on the same undivided card e.g. 'T1a' and 'T4', etc. This will enable us to make an assessment of their commonality, or otherwise.

On a personal note, it is not apparent to me that there is any significance in the 'dot in E' variety. It would seem to be a simple '*pressure in application*' phenomena as I have examples occurring on all *types*.

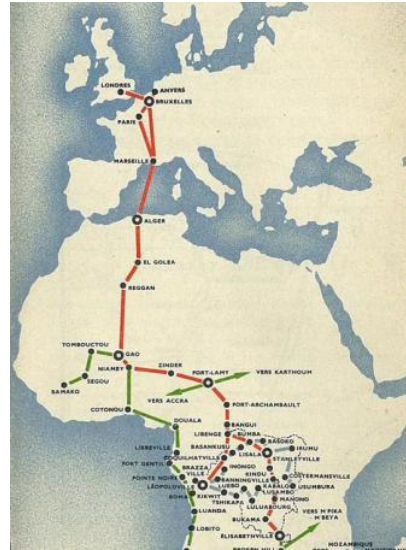
# Air-Mail Routes to the Americas The 1930 to 1940's transitional period

John Wilson

## Introduction

In Bulletin 160, John Wilson contributed the extensive and authoritative article '*Pan American, FAM-22 and Special Missions 1942 and 70 years of misunderstanding*'. Since then he has further written a short series of articles in the Airpost Journal and that appearing in their September issue is of particular interest to our members. The following is an amended and updated copy of that previously published in Air Post Journal.

It appears that to those with the wider general interest in airmail philately, little detailed attention has apparently been paid to transatlantic airmail from the Belgian Congo prior to 1941. As a Belgian colony, mail routes were naturally concentrated mainly on those by Sabena from the Congo and back to Brussels. The illustrated map shows the northbound route terminating in London and from there, mail for United States was directed via Marseilles and later to Lisbon, to connect with the Pan American transatlantic route. This of course only applied prior to the German invasion and occupation of France.



One should not forget that before the impact of World War II on previously existing services, there were other more expensive alternatives which included the German or French South American routes via Natal in Brazil. Both of these predate the Pan American South Atlantic route via Lisbon and Bolama.

Figure 2 illustrates a cover to the United States from Port Franco dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 1937 and endorsed '*PAR AVION / jusque Paris*'. It travelled by air to Paris and then by surface to New York. The surface rate paid to France at Fr 2, 50 should have been Fr 3, 50 and was taxed accordingly.

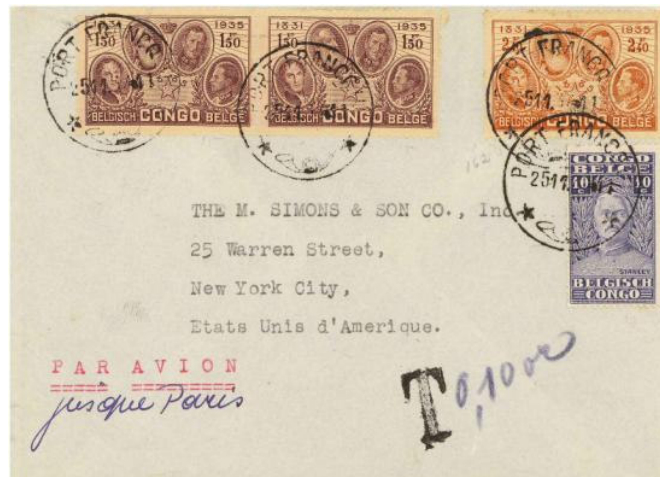


Figure 2



Figure 3 is a letter from Coquilhatville dated 27<sup>th</sup> October 1940. The 'Par Avion' printed envelope was further endorsed 'TRANS-ATLANTIQUE' and 'PAR AVION A PARTIR DE LISBONNE'; in other words by air only from Lisbon on the Pan Am Clipper service, but by surface mail from Leopoldville to Lisbon because the airmail service to Europe had by this time been terminated.

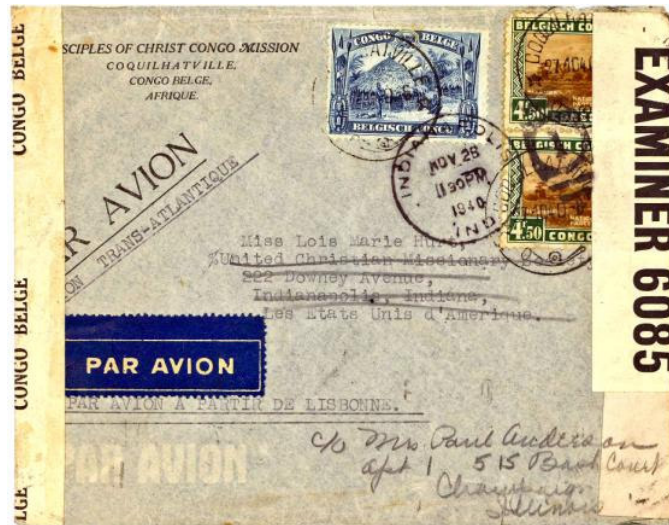


Figure 3

The air mail postage rate from Lisbon is not given in the Belgian Congo rate tables <sup>[1]</sup> but must have been known to the Congo postal clerk; *however an explanation of the Fr 9, 25 paid remains unresolved*. The cover shows transit marks for Leopoldville 28<sup>th</sup> October, Lisbon 21<sup>st</sup> November (surface route) and Indianapolis 28<sup>th</sup> November (air route). Censorship was carried out in Leopoldville and by the Bermuda Examiner 6085.

The introduction of a direct airmail service from Leopoldville to Miami must have seemed a great relief, but as it turned out, with only twelve direct flights from Leopoldville in the period December 1941 through October 1942 <sup>[2,3]</sup> it could have been a disappointment. However, thanks to the Pan American 'Special Mission' flights, mail could still be carried on an 'all-air' route via Lagos and that is what appears to have become normal practice.

Given the prospect of mail lying uncollected at Leopoldville for a month until the next Route 6 (Miami → Leopoldville → Miami) collection, and probably knowing that there were very frequent Special Mission flights leaving Lagos at intervals of a few days, it is easy to speculate that the Leopoldville postmaster would send the mail to Lagos using the twice-weekly BOAC flying boat service from Cairo to Lagos calling at Leopoldville, to be transferred at Lagos to the Special Mission flights to the United States.

Primary documentary evidence <sup>[4]</sup> shows that in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> August 1942, the income from Foreign Mail derived from the direct Pan-Am flights from Leopoldville was only 0.6% of the total revenue generated by the Special Mission flights. This suggests that the practice of shipping mail from Leopoldville to Lagos using BOAC's Cairo to Lagos flying boat service via the Congo was the norm, and 'through mail' on a Route 6, so-called FAM-22 flight, from Leopoldville was almost non-existent, if indeed any existed at all except for the philatelic mail carried on the first flight leaving New York on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1941. The 0.6% revenue could easily have been generated by non-Congo mail taken on board when the Route 6 aircraft was in transit at Lagos.

Further evidence in the Pan American Archive at Miami <sup>[4]</sup> allows us to put accurate dates on the first Leopoldville to Miami flights on Route 6, together with the details of mail carried and it has thus been possible to locate covers that were genuinely carried on the flights from Leopoldville. These covers are not easy to find and some may well lie unsuspected in collections of Belgian Congo postal history.

#### Route 6 - the Miami to Leopoldville Service

The 'Route 6' service used the Pan American practice of numbering outward flights with odd numbers, 1, 3, 5 etc. beginning at 6001. The return flights used even numbers, thus 6002 was the first and 6014 the last.



Figure 4 is a typical example, posted in Leopoldville on 27th December 1941 and censored on 30th December. It was flown from Leopoldville on the first return flight of Route 6 (flight 6002) leaving on 7th January 1942. Mail was off loaded at Trinidad for censorship, with a Trinidad censor label dated 9th January 1942. All details are confirmed by the flight records held in Miami. This flight started out as Special Mission 6 from New York to Calcutta but became flight 6002 on return from Calcutta-Karachi-Khartoum-Leopoldville.



Figure 4

Figure 5. Some mail from the Congo was carried on one non-certified Special Mission flight that passed through Leopoldville on its return from Bombay. The flight records for Special Mission 8 record that it carried 5.2 kg of mail from Leopoldville to Trinidad, and the cover shown below is one carried on that very flight.



Figure 5

It was posted in Leopoldville on 12th January 1942, picked up by NC-18611 "Anzac" on Special Mission 8 in Leopoldville 15th January 1942, flown to Trinidad and off loaded for censorship (Examiner 8018) before forwarding to New York and arriving there on 22nd January.

Identifying these rare covers can only be achieved by an accurate knowledge of the flight details and although some flight records have been located in the Pan American Archive, they do not cover all the flights in the 'FAM-22' period from December 1941 to October 23rd 1942. However, one thing is certain in that genuine FAM-22 flights numbered only twelve round trips and there were no Route 6 flights after 6013/6014 in October. Most of the mail between the United States and West Africa was carried on the frequent Special Missions and not on the twelve so-called 'FAM-22' flights.

#### References

- [1] Stockmans, Gallant. *Arrêtes et Ordonnances concernant les Tarifs Postaux au Congo Belge et au R-U.*
- [2] *Ibid.* No. 160 p. 9
- [3] Wilson. *Ibid.* No. 160 p.10-19
- [4] ASM 0321 Box 105 Folder 26

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## Auctions

#### *Lots for sale to -*

Thierry Frennet  
Rue la Rue  
1420 Braine l'Alleud

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