

A full moon is visible in the dark sky above a beach at night. The moon's light reflects on the water and the sand. In the foreground, a small boat is beached on the sand. The overall scene is serene and atmospheric.

**FIRST MARITIME CONNECTIONS
WITH MADAGASCAR
UNDER THE FRENCH FLAG 1881 - 1888**

**Luc MONTERET
september 2021**

THE ENGLISH ROUTE

Until the early 1880s, the small number of French people living in Madagascar did not justify a direct connection with the home land. The mail was delivered to merchant or war ships for Saint-Denis de la Réunion. It then followed the English route (either via Mauritius and India, or through Aden or, in the case of Nossi-Bé and Mayotte, via Zanzibar).

*Letter from Nossi-Bé to Hamburg, via Brindisi (handwritten mention "Mail Via Brindisi"). Franked 70 cents (current tariff), by a rare combination of three stamp issues of the general colonies: n°5 (vermilion eagle at 40c), n°17 (Ceres at 5c green on azure) and n°36 (type Sage I at 25c outremer). Cancellation MAYOTTE ET DEPENDANCES 25 JANV 79 * NOSSI-BE. At the time, Nossi-Bé was postally, a dependency of Mayotte and the mail followed the English route. The letter was routed via Zanzibar and Aden by the British India Steam Navigation Cy.*

From there, an English liner transported the letter to the stopover of Brindisi from where it was routed to France by the itinerant from Modena to Paris following the drilling of the Montcenis (Red Round Stamp COL.FR. V.BRIND A.MOD / 28 FEVR 79, type Salles 1.893, in force from 1872 to 1880 and marking the delivery of mail from Reunion, Mayotte and Dependencies or Noumea, transported by the English route). Arrival at destination 3 days later (cancellation HAMBURG 2-3-79 on the back).



From 1864, a connection could be established in Saint-Denis with the liners of Line T, under its various routes.



British India Steam Navigation Company

Merchant or war ships

T Line

COMPAGNIE VALÉRY

To get rid of the English lines, a French line was granted in 1880 to the Compagnie Valéry Frères of Bastia which, in the auction of July 3, 1873, had lost the concession by the Post Office, of the lines of Corsica, cradle of the company and then again lost in 1880, that of the lines of North Africa due to fierce competition and above all, of a black series of 6 shipwrecks in the Mediterranean.

The new line connected Mayotte, Nossi-Bé and Sainte-Marie (also a colony at the time) to Saint-Denis de La Réunion.

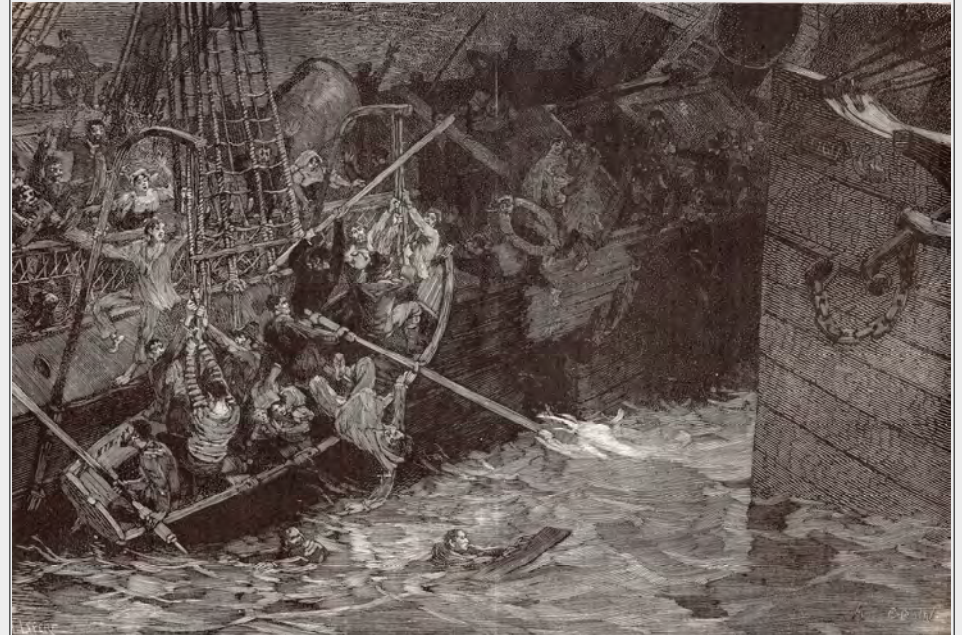
The steamers ONCLE JOSEPH and COLOMBA, survivors of the bankruptcy of Valéry who had sold the rest of his fleet to the Cie Générale Transatlantique, arrived in Saint-Denis on May 5 and September 8, 1880 after 41 and 43 days at sea from Marseille. They had to ensure a departure every four weeks.

But the COLOMBA broke down in October. He had to be taken in tow by the military transport La Nièvre who recovered the mail to deliver it on October 25 to Mahé where the Dupleix picked it up on November 10.

UNCLE JOSEPH bore the memory of Joseph Valéry, founder with his brother Jean-Matthieu of the company in 1840 in Bastia. His first two voyages of May and June 1880 were already behind schedule.

According to Raymond Salles, the last voyages ended in January 1881, the bankrupt Compagnie Valéry having terminated its contract on November 12, 1880 with effect from the end of October 1881.

This is probably the reason why Uncle Joseph was on November 23, 1880 off La Spezzia in the Mediterranean. The night was dark; it was approached by the Italian ship ORTIGIA. There were 238 dead*!



Engraving of Le Monde Illustré of December 5, 1880.

The Ortigia inaugurated its series of collisions: there was, after Uncle Joseph, the Martignan in 1885 (12 dead), a Norwegian ship in 1890 (5 dead) and finally, the Maria P. in 1895 (148 dead).

** To determine who was responsible for the collision, the Court applied the principle of the “exclusive competence of the flag State of the ship approaching” (a principle widely recognized but now called into question by the practice of flags of convenience).*

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

The Bulletin des Postes of February 1881 took note that the liaison between Mayotte and Nossi-Bé with Saint-Denis had failed and announced the resumption of the English route. But the Ministry soon announced the restoration of relations with the two colonies. On July 24, 1881, the ANADYR (which will be sunk by the OXUS when it leaves the port of Marseille in 1889), brought the mail to Aden where it was transhipped on the Godavery (in Saint-Denis on August 18).

A new agreement was signed (April and May 1881) with MM Mante Frères and Borelli de Régis who formed a WEST-MARITIME COMPANY in Marseille. They joined forces with M. Armange, owner of the ship ARGO and formed in 1883, the COMPAGNIE MARITIME DE MADAGASCAR with, as director, Mr. ARMANGE.

The company first operated with a single ship, the ARGO, which made its first monthly rotation probably in September 1881.

The line connected Mayotte to Mauritius, via Nossi-Bé, Sainte-Marie, Tamatave (from mid-82) and Saint-Denis.

Departures from Saint-Denis took place between the 10th and the 14th of the month, 48 hours after the arrival of the mail from Europe by a line T liner, i.e, Dupleix and Godavery for the line from Aden to Reunion and Mauritius, then the liners designed from the end of 1882 for the Australia and New Caledonia Line (Natal, Caledonian, Melbourne, Sydney, Salazie, Yarra and Oceanian with punctual support of the Saghalien of the Yokohama Line).

Mail volume remained modest: around 600 local letters per month between Madagascar and the Mascarenes in each direction and 300 letters to Europe.



Itinerary of the company ARMANGE
September 1881 - June 1885

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

According to Salles, there is only one copy of the administrative stamp of ARGO (32mm circle), struck on a pair of 5c Colonial Ceres on a letter that left Mayotte or Nossi-Bé in 1881-82.



A cancellation stamp specific to the line should indicate the origin of the correspondence picked up en route and, in the meantime, that of Saint-Denis would be used (which does not allow certifying the "Malagasy" origin of the letters transported on the Line from October 82 to March 83).

This was especially true as the Mayotte and Nossi-Bé offices were making closed dispatches for Réunion and France, with the Postal Agent only accepting open letters at the last minute.



Fig. 2.301, Raymond Salles, Tome VI, p. 128

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

On October 18, 1882, the General Council of Reunion voted a credit for the installation aboard the colonial liner, of a Postmaster who would provide a mobile office service with installation , in Sainte-Marie (at the recently opened post office) and in Tamatave (at the office of the Consulate of France).

In fact, it appears that the Postal Agent did not operate in Sainte-Marie and stayed in Tamatave about ten days a month. There he processed the mail received (even that coming from Antananarivo which had to be franked at the external rate, since any original franking was only valid for transport to Tamatave).

In 1883, the Tamatave office was introduced into the Universal Postal Union insofar as it was an annex of the Saint-Denis office and was thus assimilated (postally) to the French colony of Réunion (the office will become independent in 1886).

The first date stamp must have come from Réunion at the end of the first quarter of 83, the first known dates dating from May 83.

The cancellation stamp used on the Compagnie Armange Line was a double circle of 29mm in diameter with inscription in the crown:

REUNION * LIGNE MADAGASCAR*



Photo n ° 2.302 by R. Salles which includes 31 points for the inside dotted circle instead of 29. Diameter 23 mm.

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

The colonial REUNION LIGNE MADAGASCAR stamp is rare. It mainly cancels 25c Sage colonial ultramarine (imperforated), supplied by Reunion Island and sometimes Cérés Colonial Alphée type.



On a 25c Sage colonial stamp (Argo in Nossi-Bé).



On an Alphée colonial stamp (Gyptis in Tamatave).

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

The Armange contract was cancelled on 5 May 1884 (with effect from one year later), well before the planned duration of the concession (July 88).

It must be said that the ARGO, far from deserving the name of its predecessor in mythology, had many breakdowns: service interrupted as early as April 1882; damaged at Nossi-Bé on 29 December 1882, forcing him to return to Port-Louis by sail; no service in December 1883; finally, broken boilers at Tamatave in December 1884. The Argo could not leave and the cyclone of 24 and 25 February 1885 sunk it on the spot.

Because the service had been irregular, several connections had been missed at Saint-Denis with the liners of the Australian line and the ARGO had to be supported from the middle of 1883 by the TOUAREG and, in 1884, by the GYPTIS.

Despite the short period of service, the stamps wore out very quickly.

1883



ARGO in Nossi-Bé on 30/11/83

The vintage is identified by an absence of wear of the outer circle. The liner is the ARGO, the only one serving in 1883. Raymond Salles reports the Argo was in Nossi-Bé on November 30.

1884



GYPTIS in Saint-Denis on 14/7/84

The degree of wear of the outer circle corresponds to the year 1884. On July 14, the GYPTIS arrived in Saint-Denis from Tamatave.

1885



GYPTIS in 1885

Despite a weak strike, the wear is of the type 1885, year when only the GYPTIS was operational, before returning to France at the end of June.

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

Letter dated Tamatave 21 Oct. 82.

Franked 30 cents by 3 colony stamps n ° 50 at 10c black on lilac, i.e. 5c more than the current rate.

Carried by ARGO, leaving Tamatave on October 29 and arriving in Saint-Denis on November 1. It was taken there the next day (according to R. Salles) by the DUPLEIX, liner N ° 1 (Godavery being the N ° 2), from the Aden line to Reunion and Mauritius, bearing the index T, 2nd variant and operational from April 1869 to the end of November 1882. The cancellation had to be carried out at sea two days later. Arrived in Aden on November 13, the mail was picked up by the ANADYR, an unnumbered liner from the N Line from Yokohama to Marseille where it arrived on November 26. The mail was delivered to Bordeaux the next day.

There is no REUNION LIGNE MADAGASCAR stamp which did not arrive in Reunion Island until March-April 83. Cancellations REUNION 1 NOV. 82 and octagonal stamp of Dupleix COL FR. PAQ. FR. T N ° 1/4 NOV 82. The cancellation in black on the stamps is illegible. On the back, cancellation BORDEAUX 27 NOV 82.



Collection Alain MILLET

COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

The marching tables indicated by R. Salles for the year 84 when three boats were in service (Argo, Touareg and Gyptis), show that the St-Denis - Mozambique - St-Denis rotations lasted on average 18 days with variations from 16 to 28 days! It ranged from 14 to 24 days for the Argo and 17 to 28 days for the Touareg; only the Gyptis was regular (18 to 19 days).

But R. Salles admits that he simply performed an "attempt to reconstruct the journeys of the Compagnie Armange".

The cancellations were made in Tamatave (where the postal agent resided while awaiting the return of the ship from Mayotte) or in Saint-Denis. Under these conditions, the routes are difficult to describe exactly (not even precisely).

Letter from Madagascar to the USA in April 1884.

Franked 25c by colonial stamp n° 26 ultramarine.

Even if this does not correspond to the indications of R. Salles, the postal marks on the letter allow us to suggest that it was taken on April 12 in Tamatave by the TOUAREG, the only operational vessel that month. He touched Saint-Denis 3 days later. The letter was picked up there the next day, April 16, by the SALAZIE (liner n° 6 of Line T), which arrived in Marseille on May 5. It then passed through Paris on May 7, before probably reaching Le Havre for the Cie Générale transatlantic weekly service to New York (without further details as there is no arrival cancellation).

*On the front, cancellation REUNION * LIGNE MADAGASCAR * 12 APRIL 84, extremely rare on letter; also, transit mark stamped in blue PARIS ETRANGER 7 MAY 84. On the back, transit cancellation SAINT DENIS 15 APRIL 84.*



COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

Letter franked 25 cents from Mauritius on May 13, 84, to a doctor returning to France and being on board the transport ship La Corrèze in the harbor of Tamatave.

Handwritten words "by La Réunion" and (forward). The trip from Mauritius to Saint-Denis lasted one day, which is compatible with transport by the YARRA (liner n° 1 of the T Line) which, coming from Australia, touched Mauritius on May 13 and Saint-Denis the next day.

The trip from Saint-Denis to Tamatave lasted 2 to 3 days. According to R. Salles, the Touareg was in Tamatave on May 24, the date of the Armange Line cancellation. But it had left Saint-Denis on May 1 (too early for the courier in question). As for the Gyptis (next boat of the Armange Line) it had left Reunion on June 5, which was too late. However, he passed through Tamatave on the 6th on the outward journey and probably on June 24th on the return. Could there have been an error in the month, May instead of June? Unless the letter has benefited at any time, from an exceptional transport, either by a war or a merchant boat which would explain the contradictions of dates.

On the front, cancellations MAURITIUS MY13 84 and REUNION * LIGNE MADAGASCAR * 24 MAY 84. There is only a commercial stamp on the back: L. EHRMANN CHIMISTE PORT-LOUIS Mauritius.

Exceptional document (that once belonged to Raymond Salles), kindly provided by Mr. Alain Millet, COL.FRA. Fellow.



COMPAGNIE ARMANGE

REUNION LIGNE MADAGASCAR
cancellations are extremely rare on letters. But one can induce transport by Compagnie Armange based on Transit or arrival stamps.

Letter of November 1884 from a soldier of the first expeditionary force.

Franked 15c, military concession rate as free postage was not yet in force.

According to Raymond Salles (Volume VI, page 43), the Melbourne, which arrived in Marseille on December 16, 1884, would have touched Reunion on November 27 and the ARGO was in Tamatave the day before. The mail was delivered to Lorient, its final destination, two days later. This letter probably followed this route.

Circular stamp COR. D.ARMEES 26 NOV 84 struck on board the Melbourne, liner n°3 of Line T.



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

The French Post Office had anticipated the collapse of the Armange Company and signed for 7 years, on June 16, 1885, an agreement with the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes providing for 13 annual trips.

The itinerary was: Mauritius, Réunion, Tamatave, Sainte-Marie, Vohemar, Diégo-Suarez, Nossi-Bé, Mayotte, Majunga and Mozambique (According to Raymond Salles, this last stopover was necessary to ensure the supply of agricultural workers for Reunion).

As early as August 1886, the line was extended to Zanzibar to provide connections to the English route. But it was no longer just a question of securing the letters from Mayotte and Reunion (which were accepted in Zanzibar without surtax, unlike the freed but uncanceled mail collected between Tamatave and Majunga). The idea was to secure the transport of mail from the whole of Madagascar with which France was at war to establish a protectorate.

In Reunion, correspondence was made every 28 days with the liners of line T of Australia whose captains performed the functions of Postal Agent.

The two ships assigned to the service were the EBRE, which left Marseille on 18 June 1885 to make the first voyage from Saint-Denis on 22 July, and the TAGE, which left France a month later, and made the second voyage on 19 August. There were no postal agents on board.



Itinerary of the Colonial Company of Mozambique: July 1885 - August 1888

LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

The cancellation datestamp used on the Colonial Line of Mozambique was a continuous double circle of 21mm in diameter with inscription in the crown:

LIGNE (REUNION , MADAGASCAR)

Some vintages were not made (especially 86).



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

The stamp LIGNE (REUNION , MADAGASCAR)
has cancelled various types of colonial stamps:
25c Sage ultramarine:

Ceres at 40c (orange-red)

Overprinted Reunion (25c on 40c Aigle, 5c on 30c
lauré),

Alphée (yellow-bistre or black on pink).

EBRE
22 NOV 86 in Saint-Denis,
registered letter or second
weight.



*ERYMANTHE in Saint-Denis on 10 MAI
86 (and not 85, wrong vintage)*



*Strip of three
overprints 25 on 40c
Aigle stamps of la
Réunion. Triple
weight.
ERYMANTHE in St-
Denis.*



Ebre in Nossi-Bé.

LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE



Letter from Brest to Cherbourg then Tamatave in May 1885.
Franked 15c, current rate for the interior.

The letter was intended for the Lieutenant of the Navy commanding the Capricorne in Cherbourg (cancellation on the back, difficult to read CH (erbourg) ?? MANCHE).

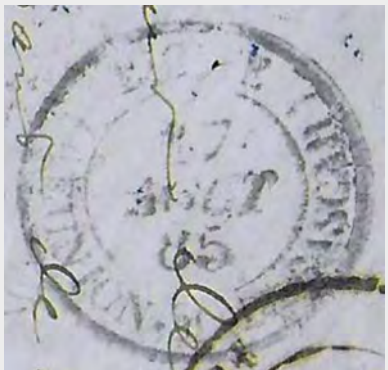
Monsieur de Chauillac had changed command, going from Capricorn to Scorpion and was to be in the “Sea of India” at Tamatave. The letter was therefore redirected to the Toulon naval base (partial cancellation on the back TOULON S MER 25), via Paris (cancellations. of the ambulant from Cherbourg to Paris on May 22 and transit datestamp in Paris on May 24).

The cancellation LINE (REUNION, MADAGASCAR) AUGUST 17, 85 can only be that of the TAGE (the EBRE being then in Mozambique).

It was undoubtedly struck in Saint-Denis because according to R. Salles, the departure for Madagascar took place on August 19.

The very long delay between Toulon and Saint-Denis is difficult to explain. A delivery in Marseille to the liners of the T Line would have brought the letter to Saint-Denis too early (June 24 for the Oceanian or July 22 for the Sydney and then, the letter would have taken the EBRE, during the first departure for Tamatave) or too late (August 22 for the Salazie).

We may then assume that the mail was routed to Saint-Denis, by a warship whose journey was longer due to the route followed or the length of stopovers.



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE



Letter franked 25c with a colonial stamp (Sage ultramarine). It does not have a date stamp but the cancellation LIGNE (REUNION, MADAGASCAR) 31 MAY 6.

This stamp is not listed by R. Salles which indicates "the absence of vintage 86, of which the stamp never arrived". However, a 6 id clearly shown here and the arrival cancellation on the back is dated 86. The postmark in red (quite rare): COL. FR. - JUNE 9, 86 - PAQ. FR. T N ° 3, is that of the Oceanian, liner n ° 3 of the line T of Australia.

The letter was picked up by the EBRE which reached Nosy-Be on May 31, 1886 and forwarded it to Reunion on June 8. The next day, June 9, the letter was delivered to the OCEANIEN which reached Marseille on June 29 and arrived at its final destination the next day. It is addressed to Mr. Augustin JORE, undoubtedly a relative of Mr. JORE who was then resident of France by interim in Tamatave.



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE



Launched on 6 December 1868 in La Ciotat, the EBRE was the last in a series of three small liners with TAGE and SCAMANDRE. From 1869 to 1884 it was placed on the Levant line and then assigned in 1885 as stationary on the Colonial Line of Mozambique.

The EBRE was 102m long by 9.6m wide and measured 1602 tons when it served in Madagascar, for a power of 1200HP and a speed of 11.5 knots. It was equipped with a propeller and a chimney. A reliable boat, it had no damage.



Residence of France for Paris. Letter from Antananarivo “sent on March 27, 1888 (handwritten note in red), carried by runners to Tamatave where it must have arrived around April 3. The letter was taken there by the EBRE, arriving in Saint-Denis de la Réunion on April 5. On the 7th, OCEANIAN, liner n ° 3 of Australia's T Line, cancelled it with its octagonal stamp. The letter arrived in Marseille on April 25, 1888. Not franked because perhaps of the sender, it was marked on departure for taxation (triangular stamp T, point down and mention in red of the Postmaster: 0f50c) and taxed on arrival at the office of rue de Bagnole, double the shortfall, i.e. 50 centimes. On the back, round purple stamp "RESIDENCE GENERALE DE FRANCE * MADAGASCAR" and arrival in Paris: PARIS RAYON CENTRAL 26 AVRIL 88 and PARIS 59 R DE BAGNOLET of the same day.

LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

Launched on May 3, 1868 in La Ciotat, the TAGE (second of the name), was the eldest of a trio of sisterships with SCAMANDRE and EBRE. 100m long, with a gross tonnage of 1691 then 1854 tons, the TAGE had a power of 1,200HP and a speed of 11.5 knots. Placed at the beginning of his career on the Levant line, he was lengthened and re-engined in 1885 for the Madagascar station, which he ensured for a few months alongside the EBRE.

On two occasions already (on 16 and 22 November 1885), the TAGE had run aground, nevertheless managing to break free each time.

But in the early morning of January 14, 1886, he ran aground on a rock bottom near Vohemar on his return journey. Having followed the same route as on his previous voyages, Captain Girard attributed the disaster to the violence of the currents as well as the state of the very dark horizon, even if the sea was calm.

The transport ship Capricorn was passing by and rescued the passengers and recovered a very large part of the cargo.

The mail was then carried to Saint-Denis by La Romanche, transport ship of the Naval Division who ensured all the postal rotation from February 4 to March 16.

At the end of 2004, two French divers, Eric Gilli and JC Peyre found the wreck of the Tagus, in bottoms of 4 to 10 meters north of Vohemar.



*The rudder of the Tagus at a depth of 10 meters off Vohemar
(Photo E. Gilli).*

LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

The ERYMANTHE* replaces the Tagus. Leaving Marseille on February 28, 1886, he ensured the departure from Saint-Denis on April 3.

94.8m long and 8.96m wide, the ERYMANTHE gauges 1793 tons then 1939 tons after 1888. Equipped with 4 boilers developing 1075 hp, it can carry 80 passengers in the cabin and 750 rations, at a speed of 12.5 knots.

Launched at La Ciotat on 17 February 1862, sistership of the ALPHÉE, launched the previous year, the ERYMANTHE initially operated the Suez-Hong Kong line (taking passengers transshipped by train between Alexandria and Suez).

From 1867 he was assigned to Line T (in its first version) from Suez to Reunion and Mauritius, via Aden and Mahé (after having made an exceptional trip on this route in August-September 1865 between two stays in Suez for repairs while serving on the Annex of Calcutta).

In 1869, he was part of the inaugural procession of the Suez Canal. The Erymanthe was placed in 1873 on the South American line to replace the Gambia, shipwrecked and then it ensured from 1875 to 1886 the lines of the Levant.

The Erymanthe then remained stationary for two years in Madagascar, from April 1886 to September 1888, on the Colonial Line of Mozambique.



Launch on February 17, 1862 in La Ciotat, Erymanthe, intended for mediterranean voyages, by Mr. Armand Behic, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the maritime service of the Imperial Couriers. In front of all the notables of Marseille, the ceremony was presided over by the senator de Maupas, in charge of the administration of the Bouches du Rhône and by the bishop, Mgr O'Cruice, both newly installed in Marseille (L'Illustration, February 1862).

LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

Letter from Madagascar to Besançon in May 1886.

Franked at 25c (current rate), by a stamp of France (Sage II type).

Arrived in Saint-Denis on May 10 by the ERYMANTHE, the mail was taken during its passage on the 12th by the CALEDONIEN (T.2) which arrived in Marseille on May 31st. In Paris, the letter was redirected to Besançon.

Cancellation by blue circular stamp LIGNE (REUNION, MADAGASCAR) 10 MAY 86.

On the back, transit cancellation in Paris on May 31 and arrival cancellation BESANCON DOUBS JUNE 2, 86.

Former Edward Grabowski collection.



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

Many letters were carried to and from Saint-Denis by the ships of the Mozambique Colonial Line, but often without striking the stamp of the line. They are identified on the dates and on the transport by liners of line T from Saint-Denis to their destination.

British mail from Antananarivo to Calcutta in March 1887.

Franked 25c in Tamatave by a stamp of France (Sage type). At the end of 1886, Paris had mistakenly delivered to Madagascar Sage stamps of the metropolitan type (10,200 stamps at 25c and 2,100 at 1F). Only 196 stamps at 25c and 27 at 1F were used, the rest being returned to Paris in March 1887. This document is particularly rare (2 known copies according to Alain Millet). Then, adequate stamps reached Antananarivo on February 19, 1887.

Letter carried by runners of the British post from Antananarivo to Tamatave (BRITISH ANTANANARIVO / CONSULAR MAIL stamp). Then taken by the EBRE from TAMATAVE 9 MARCH 87 to Saint-Denis, which on 13 March touched the NATAL, liner n° 3 on Line T of Australia, coming from Sydney (Octagonal cancellation COL.FR. PAQ. FR. TN° 3/13 MARCH 84). Letter left in Aden on March 22 for delivery to a Peninsular & Oriental steamer serving the Indies.



(Col. Alain Millet)

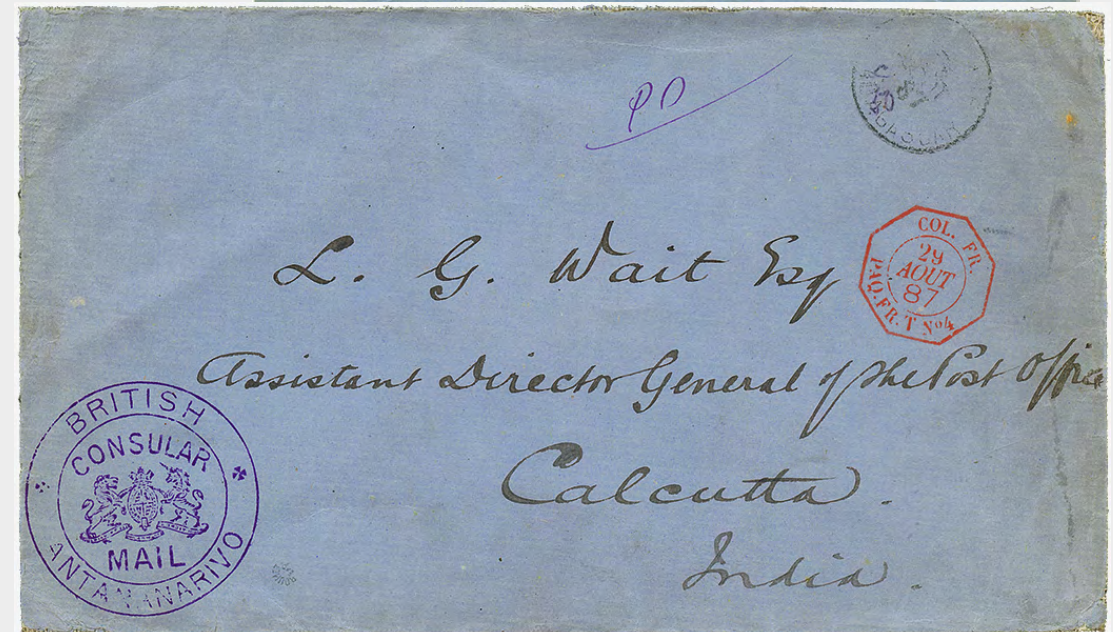
LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

English mail from Antananarivo to Calcutta from 1887 (same sender and same addressee as for the previous document).

The payment for transport from Antananarivo to Tamatave is certified by the BRITISH CONSULAR MAIL ANTANANARIVO stamp and was made by British runners.

Apparently there were still some stamps missing. The letter is not franked at the external rate. There are rather handwritten mentions made by the postal agent of Tamatave in purple ink: "c 50 c" (payment of 50 c in cash probably) and PD for "postage paid up to destination".

Letter taken by EBRE from TAMATAVE AUGUST 26, 87 for Saint-Denis, which the SYDNEY (liner n ° 4 on Australia's T Line) touched on AUGUST 29, 87. Left in Aden on September 4 or 5 for delivery on the 8th to a Peninsular & Oriental steamer serving the Indies (transit cancellation on the back SEA POST OFFICE (team) A / 8 SE (September) 87).



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE



Letter of 1885 from Madagascar for France. Free postage.

Transported from Madagascar to Saint-Denis on December 25, 1885 by the EBRE. Picked up the same day by the CALEDONIEN, liner No. 2 of line T of Australia which arrived in Marseille on January 16, 1886. The letter was delivered at Bléré the next day.

On the front, octagonal stamp CORPS EXP. MADAGASCAR L.T.2 25 DEC 85 struck by the CALEDONIEN. On the back, large circular stamp MARINE AND COLONIES SERVICE AT SEA marking the military origin (probably of Diégo-Suarez), justifying the postal franchise, confirmed by the signature of a first-class aspirant. Also, arrival cancellation BLÉRE INDRE-ET-LOIRE 17 JANV 86.

LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

Letter carried by runners from Antananarivo to Tamatave by English post.

Franked at the French office of Tamatave on July 28, 1887 by stamps of the general colonies Alphée Dubois, pair of 5c (n°49) + 15c (N°51), cancelled TAMATAVE (MADAGASCAR).

Letter taken the same day by the ERYMANTHE, which sent it to Saint-Denis de la Réunion the day after. On its passage on August 1st, the NATAL, liner N°3 of Line T cancelled it with the red octagonal stamp (type Salles 2.148/6): COL. FR. PAQ.FR. T N°3 (difficult to read), 1 AUGUST 87.

The letter was in Marseille on August 20, the next day in Paris, then in Calais and finally in England.

On the back, cancellation of the itinerant from Paris to Calais of August 21, 87 and arrival cancellation in Northampton: (?) AUG 87.



LIGNE COLONIALE DE MOZAMBIQUE

In August 1888, a new line was put into service by the Messageries Maritimes, connecting Marseille to Saint-Denis and Mauritius, via the east coast of Africa, Mayotte and the Malagasy ports of Nossi-Bé, Diégo-Suarez, Sainte-Marie (which are colonies) and Tamatave.

This is Line V.

But, by June 1888, the T Line of Australia had been modified accordingly: no longer serving the Mascarenes it only touched Mahé in the Indian Ocean.

The liners EBRE and ERYMANTHE then provided in July and August, a shuttle Port-Louis – Saint-Denis – Mahé to ensure in the Seychelles, the connection with the liners of line T for passengers and mail.

This shuttle will then be made for mail, under the name of Annex U of the Mascarenes, by the liners of Line V during the fortnight where they remained in the Mascarenes, before making their journey back to France.



EBRE AND ERYMANTHE CARRY THE FIRST MAIL FOR LIGNE V

The EBRO and ERYMANTHE rendered a final service by transporting mail from the Mascarenes to France on their final return via the west African coast.

Letter of September 1888 from Diégo-Suarez to Angoulême.

Postage free letter from a soldier of the occupation corps stationed in Madagascar following the first Franco-Malagasy conflict of 1884-85.

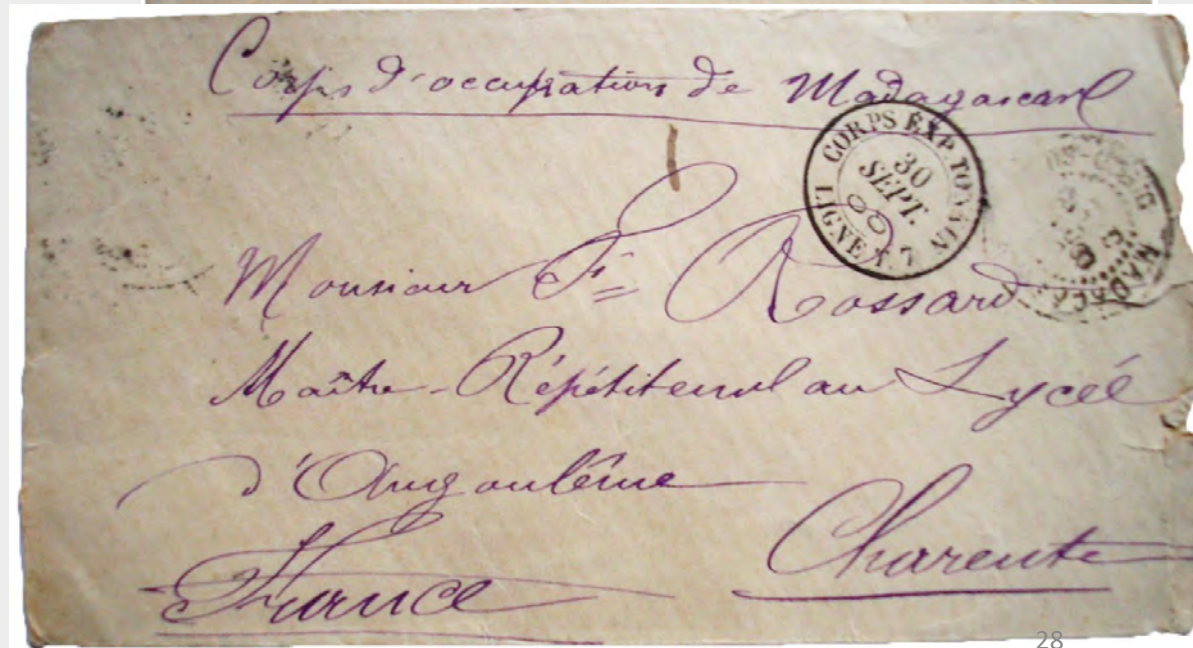
Endorsed "Corps d'Occupation de Madagascar" on the front and "le s(ou)s lieutenant C(ommand)ant le détachement" on the back.

On the front, cancellations MADAGASCAR DIEGO-SUAREZ 28 SEPT 88 and CORPS EXP. TONKIN 30 SEPT 88 LIGNE T.7. On the back, cancellations of the itinerant CETTE A BORDEAUX 27 OCT 88 and arrival ANGOULEME CHARENTE 28 OCT 88.

The date of arrival in Angoulême does not correspond to the journeys of the postal liners of Line T whose route through the Mascarenes, had stopped the month before. As for Line V, it did not enter service until the following month. One must assume that the letter was transported by the ERYMANTHE. Raymond Salles notes (Volume VI, p. 133) that before the first rotation of the PEI-HO on line V on 12 August 88 from Marseille, the EBRE and then the ERYMANTHE had provided, on their final return trip to France, "intermediate services" referenced S.2 and S.3. For the ERYMANTHE (S.3), He indicates: Réunion on 24/9, Tamatave on 27/9 (hence Diégo on the 30th because it took 2 to 3 days of sea) and Marseille on 27/10. This perfectly fits the cancellations.

Then we are left with the circular cancellation CORPS EXP. TONKIN 30 SEPT. 88 LINE T.7. Salles (Volume VI, p.69), illustrates the stamp relating to the expeditionary force of Tonkin: it was used only in 1888 and only by the liner n°2. Moreover, there was only one steamer bearing the number 7 on Line T, from 1866 to 1893: the CALEDONIEN, during its rotation from December 81 to April 1882.

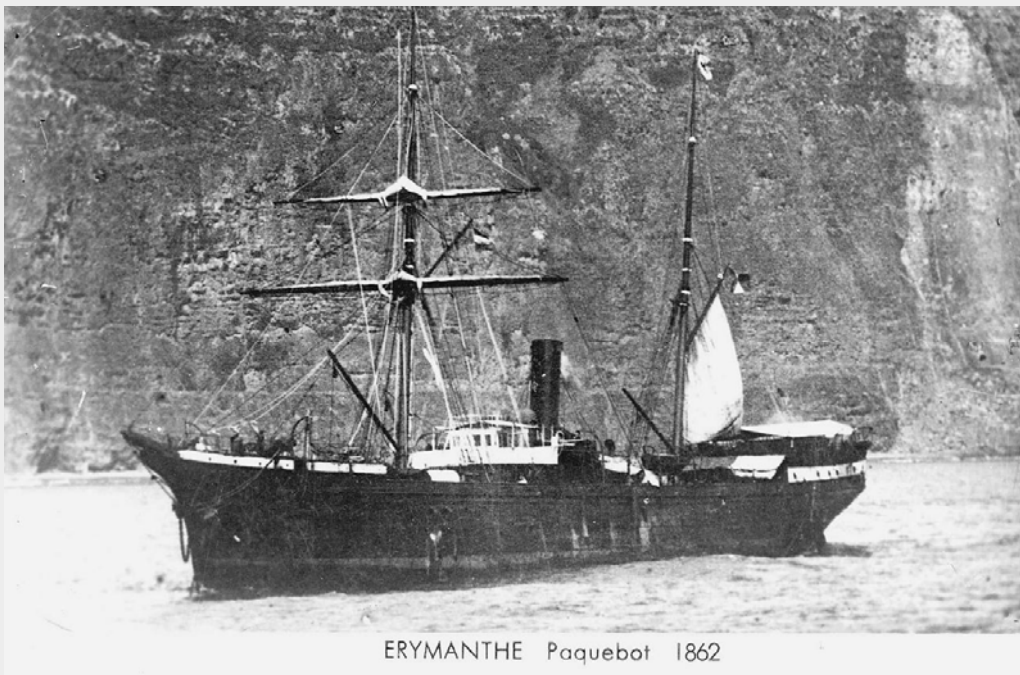
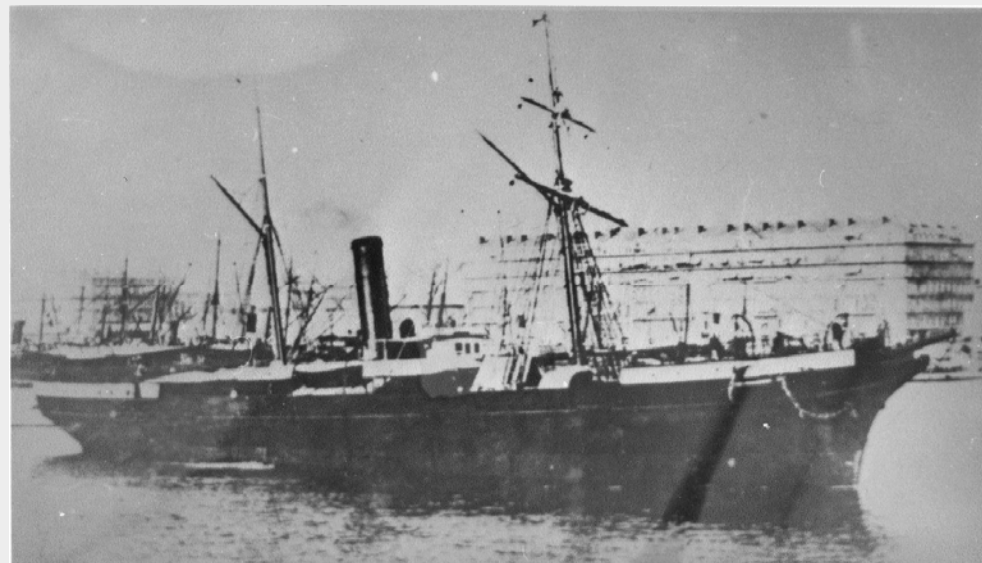
It is not known how this stamp was on board the ERYMANTHE.



EBRE AND ERYMANTHE AFTER MADAGASCAR

The Ebro returned at the end of August 1888 and touched Marseille on 23 September.

She was then recast (removal of the mizzenmast and the yards of the mainmast) and transformed into a cargo ship for the London - Black Sea line, on which she finished her career before being demolished in Marseille in September 1893. (Philippe Ramona photo collection).



The ERYMANTHE returned at the end of September 1888 and arrived in Marseille on 27 October.

It was then lengthened, equipped with more powerful machines and placed on the London-Levant line until its sale in 1895. Then shortly after, the Compagnie de Navigation Mixte bought it for its African lines. Approached in front of Carro (near Martigues) on November 19, 1898 by the BERRY of the SGTM, the ERYMANTHE ran aground, broke and was permanently lost (photo collection Dr Paul Bois).

FIRST MARITIME CONNECTIONS WITH MADAGASCAR UNDER THE FRENCH FLAG 1881 - 1888

The illustrations not specifically attributed come from the author's collections or from screenshots on auction sites, mainly www.delcampe.net , with special thanks to Alain MILLET, COL.FRA fellow.

MAIN SOURCES

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SALLES Raymond: The First Maritime Postal Liaisons in Madagascar and the Beginnings of the Tamatave Post Office 1880-1886-1887, Extract from the Philatelic Documents of the Philatelic Academy Review, n ° 11, January 1962 (14 pages)

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www.messageries-maritimes.org



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september 2021

(Translated from french into some english by the author)