

# Madagascar & Dependencies The Group Type Postal History Part I

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## THE ERA OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL ALLEGORICAL GROUP TYPE PART II: MADAGASCAR & DEPENDENCIES

Madagascar & Dependencies represents one of the most complex and postally rich regions for exploration and study during the Era of the French Colonial Allegorical Group Type's use. The basic stamps (1c to 1F and 1c to 5F in some Colonies) were delivered in late 1892 as the first definitive issue for use throughout the twenty nine colonies comprising the French Colonial Empire. The names of each colony were printed separately on the basic Navigation and Commerce Allegorical designs. Original colors conformed to the current French choices, but new colors were issued in 1900 for some of the values to conform to UPU standards. Madagascar received its Group Type stamps in 1896 when it became a Colony. Surrounding Colonies received their own Group Type stamps on the indicated first date, and were subsequently placed under the administration of Madagascar on the second date: Anjouan – 1892/1911; Diego Suarez – 1892/1896; Grand Comoro – 1897/1911; Mayotte – 1892/1911; Moheli – 1906/1911; Nossi-Bé – 1894/1906; and Sainte Marie de Madagascar – 1894/1900. Nossi-Bé and Sainte Marie de Madagascar were administered by Diego Suarez from 1894. In 1898 Anjouan, Grand Comoro and Moheli were made dependencies of Mayotte. Ultimately all of these entities became part of Madagascar & Dependencies and are examined in this exhibit. As administrations coalesced, stamps were interchangeably used amongst all entities. In 1912 Group Type remainders were overprinted **05** and **10** in Paris in an effort to consume existing stocks. These were extensively used throughout Madagascar & Dependencies. A full array of Group Type postal stationery (envelopes, postal cards and letter cards) was also prepared for all entities.

This exhibit examines all aspects of the use of the Group Type stamps and stationery, plus related postal practices (i.e. franchise mail, due mail, etc.) in all of what ultimately became Madagascar & Dependencies. The postal history of the area reflects the extensive development of French influence therein, particularly on the island of Madagascar itself. The outer colonies of Diego Suarez, Nossi-Bé and Mayotte represent the areas of established French influence when the Group Type Era began, and serve to begin the exhibit. Examination of the Group Type Era of the remaining entities (Anjouan, Grand Comoro, Moheli and Sainte Marie-de-Madagascar) that ultimately became part of Madagascar & Dependencies follows chronologically.

Usage during the Group Type Era is developed via covers and postal stationery illustrating prevailing rates and postal practices within each of the subentities comprising the overall colony. The following standard UPU rates occur throughout the exhibit: 5c – printed matter including price lists, visiting cards, greeting cards, short message post cards (12 words or less), marriage and death notices, etc.; 10c – long message post cards, city until April 1906, return receipts and French Community from April 1906 until January 1917; 15c – military correspondence until January 1899, intracolony until April 1906 and French Community from January 1899 until April 1906; 25c French Community until January 1899 and foreign letter throughout. Multiple weights apply to all categories. Other rates are noted as encountered, particularly registration (normally 25c plus postage) and insured declared value letters (postage by weight, registration plus insurance based on value). The weight level was 15 grams until April 1906, when it became 20grams and 50 grams for the first two levels.

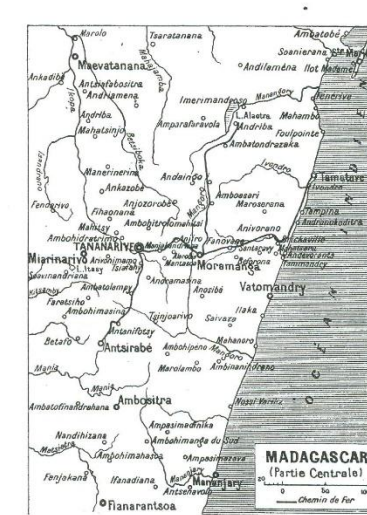
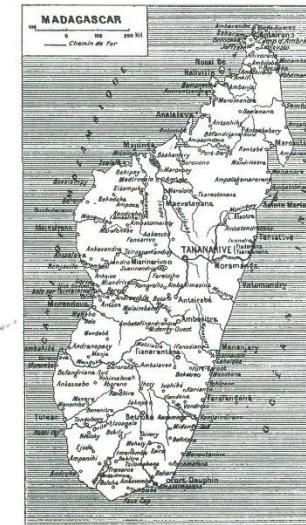
Mail from this area was typically carried to overseas destinations by the well-established Lines U and V of the French Packet service. Local wagon and motorized vehicle services, costal and river services, and limited rail lines carried the mails within and around the Colony. Since Madagascar is such a vast colony undergoing rapid development at this time, numerous examples of mail from the smaller villages are shown. This is most probably the largest accumulation of small village material ever assembled for the Era of the Group Type. A special section on Madagascar numeral cancellations is also presented. These were used provisionally as the colony was rapidly developing and the post office was unable to quickly provide datestamps in the standard village format. Reflecting the military's involvement in the developing colony, troops involved in combat prior to 1899 and all troops thereafter were entitled to military franchise privileges, and this example of non-use of the Group Type is examined very briefly during and at the end of the exhibit. Often this is the first category of mail from newly formed post offices. Misuse of the stamps as bisects (totally unneeded) and due stamps are noted. The exhibit concludes with a brief section on the use of the Group Type overprints created by the colony after World War I. These represent the latest official use of the Group Type stamps of any colony.

## THE ERA OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL ALLEGORICAL GROUP TYPE: MADAGASCAR & DEPENDENCIES

The French Colonial Group Type was the first definitive stamp and postal stationery issue created for use in all of the French Colonies. Distribution began in late 1892. This exhibit examines its use and related postal history of the period from the eight entities that ultimately became Madagascar & Dependencies. The colony of Madagascar & Dependencies was officially established in August of 1896. However, a number of the colonial entities that became part of it were established prior to the creation of the overall colony. The exhibit is organized chronologically to reflect this history. The dates after each entity below indicate when it received Group Type stamps and when it became part of Madagascar & Dependencies. Military postal history is usually presented as encountered and not as a separate category except where noted. The exhibit is organized as follows:

1. Diego Suarez & Dependencies: Diego Suarez-1892/1896; Nossi-Bé-1894/1906; Sainte Marie de Madagascar-1894/1900
2. Mayotte & The Comoro Islands: Mayotte-1892/1911; Anjouan-1892/1911; Grand Comoro-1897-1911; Moheli-1906-1911
3. Madagascar & Dependencies: Madagascar-1896/1896
  - a. Mail from the principal cities of Tananarive, Tamatave and Majunga
  - b. Small village use
  - c. Numeral and other provisional postmarks
  - d. Numeral datestamps on military franchise letters
  - e. Military franchise postal stationery
  - f. Use of French *franchise militaire* stamps from Madagascar
  - g. French Packet Service mail and Paquebot mail
  - h. The bisects of 1904
  - i. The overprints of 1921

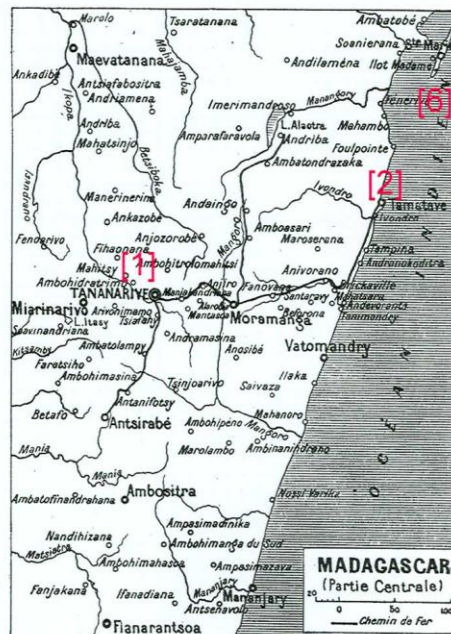
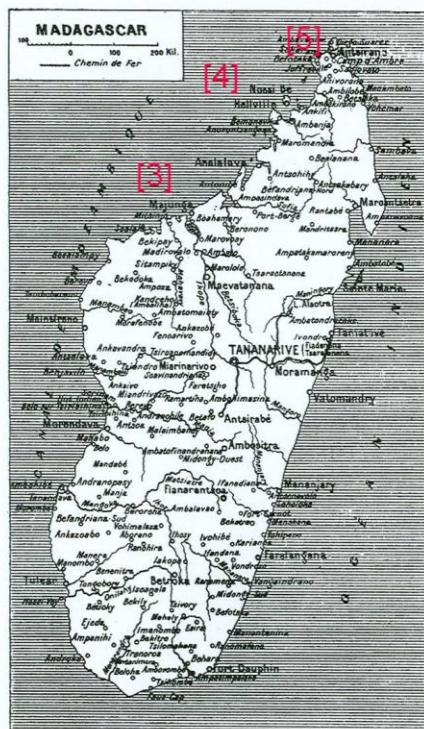
The following UPU rates occur throughout the exhibit: 5c – printed matter including short message post cards; 10c – regular post cards, return receipts, and French community from April 1906; 15c – military concession rate until January 1899 and French community until April 1906; 25c – French community until January 1899, overseas and registration. Other rates are described as encountered. The standard weight level was 15g. Mail from this era was typically carried on French Packet Lines U and V which made regular stops in eastern and northern Madagascar.



MAP OF MADAGASCAR & DEPENDENCIES FROM LANGLOIS & BOURSELET  
(Comoro Islands not shown)



## MADAGASCAR & DEPENDENCIES



Maps of Madagascar (1927 Langois & Bourselet) – highlights include: the capital at Tananarive [1] in the approximate center of the island; the principal port city of Tamatave [2] on the east coast which was serviced by the Reunion-Marseille Line of the French Packet system; the western port of Majunga [3] where the 2<sup>nd</sup> military campaign began in 1895; the older colonies/dependencies of Nossi-Bé [4] and Diego Suarez [5] in the north; and the island of Sainte Marie-de-Madagascar [6] on the east coast. Very little mail originated from the latter. The Comoro Island dependencies of Mayotte, Anjouan, Grand Comoro and Moheli are to the north, and are not shown. The railroad lines from Antsirabe to Tananarive and Tananarive to Tamatave can be seen in the detail map of the central portion of the colony. Numerous small village post offices can be seen. Not all post offices shown were in existence at the time of the Group Type's use.

## DIEGO SUAREZ - DIEGO SUAREZ & DEPENDENCIES

A French Protectorate from 1840, the area of Diego Suarez at the northern end of the island of Madagascar was ceded to France in 1855. In 1886 it became a colony of France, and in 1894 Nossi-Bé and Sainte Marie de Madagascar were made dependencies of Diego Suarez. In 1896 all of these entities were attached to Madagascar. Provisional stamps were first issued in 1890. The initial Group Type stamps of late 1892 bore the **DIEGO SUAREZ ET DEPENDANCES** name in the legend. In January 1894 this was changed to **DIEGO SUAREZ**. Proper use of stamps with the former legend during the first year of the Group Type's use is thus very rare.



Early use of Group Type stamps on registered letters from Diego Suarez: double weight registered letter (2 x 25c plus 25c registration, 5c overpaid) posted on Feb. 27, 1893, the earliest recorded use of Group Type stamps in this collection; and sixth weight registered level letter (6 x 25c plus 25c registration) franked with a 75c provisional and a 1F Group Type. Both show the **DEPENDANCES** version of the legend.





Until January 1899 a military concession rate of 15c existed in lieu of the 25c French Community rate for soldiers on station but not engaged in combat. Validation of the rate by a manuscript endorsement and commander's signature, a unit cachet or a military datestamp was required. Shown are two examples (stationery and stamp) with the **DEPENDANCES** legend from 1893, and one with the **CORR D ARMEES DIEGO SUAREZ** octagonal datestamp from 1894.



The above letter illustrates an extremely rare triple weight (3 x 15c for a 30 – 45 gram letter) registered (25c) military concession rate posted from Diego Suarez on February 29, 1897 to Rochefort where it arrived on March 18<sup>th</sup>. It shows use of the second style of octagonal military datestamp: **CORR D ARMEES DIEGO SUAREZ**, with proper validation on the front of the envelope.



Diego Suarez  
Military Origin Mail



Letter posted by a member of the Health Service to Germany to which the military concession rate did not apply since it was valid only within the French community. It traveled at the regular 25c foreign rate on February 4, 1894 via French Packet Line V (MARSEILLE A LA REUNION LVN°3, 5 FEVR 94) to Munich where it arrived on March 4<sup>th</sup>.



Letter posted on a ship of French Packet Line V bearing the rare CORR. DES ARMEES LV N°2, 29 AVRIL 93 datestamp, most probably applied in error. It should have been processed with a regular Line V datestamp, shown as a transit marking above. The simplest explanation for this occurrence is that this letter was mixed in with concession rate mail.

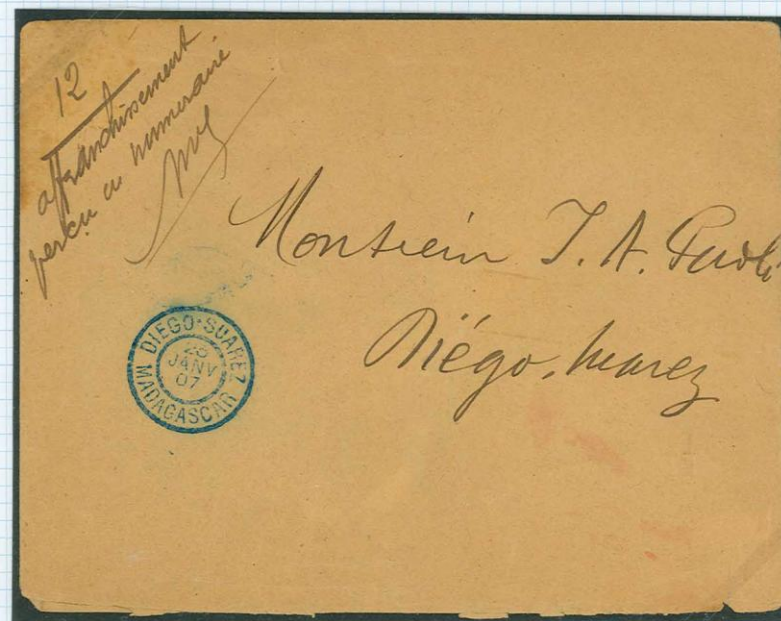
Diego Suarez  
Registered French Community Rate



In January 1899 the French Community rate became 15c and the military concession rate ceased to exist. Mail originating in military areas was still frequently marked with manuscript endorsements as these letters endorsed *Corps d'occupation de Madagascar* show. They are from the same correspondence and illustrate two ways for prepaying the 40c registered French community rate (15c postage and 25c registration).



Diego Suarez  
Absence of the Group Type



Letters sent unpaid from Diego Suarez were treated as standard due mail as this local letter from 1902 shows. Possibly the sender thought that the addressee was due full military franchise, but such was not the case. The local rate was 15c, so the letter was charged 30c due with a strip of three of the 10c Duval issue. There was an apparent and undocumented shortage of stamps in January 1907 in Diego Suarez, and it was apparently possible to prepay the postage in cash. This letter is marked in manuscript: *12/affranchissement perçu a numeraire* indicating prepayment in cash.

Diego Suarez  
Advertising Covers

Because Diego Suarez was a long-standing French Colony on the island of Madagascar, had a strong French military presence and was one of the regular French Packet stops, it became the island's initial commercial center. It is the only French controlled area during the Group Type's use from which one sees a variety of advertising covers. These are examined in this section of the exhibit.



Commercial covers to the island colony of Nossi-Bé. The first is at the 15c local rate in December 1898. As an intercolonial letter it could have traveled at the 25c French community rate, but since Nossi-Bé was under the administration of Diego Suarez at this time, mail traveled at the local rate. The second letter traveled at the registered (25c) triple weight French community/local rate (3 x 15c) to Nossi-Bé in 1903.

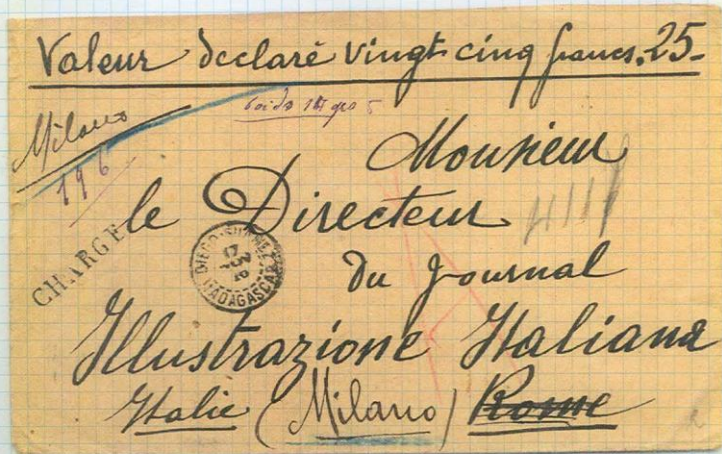




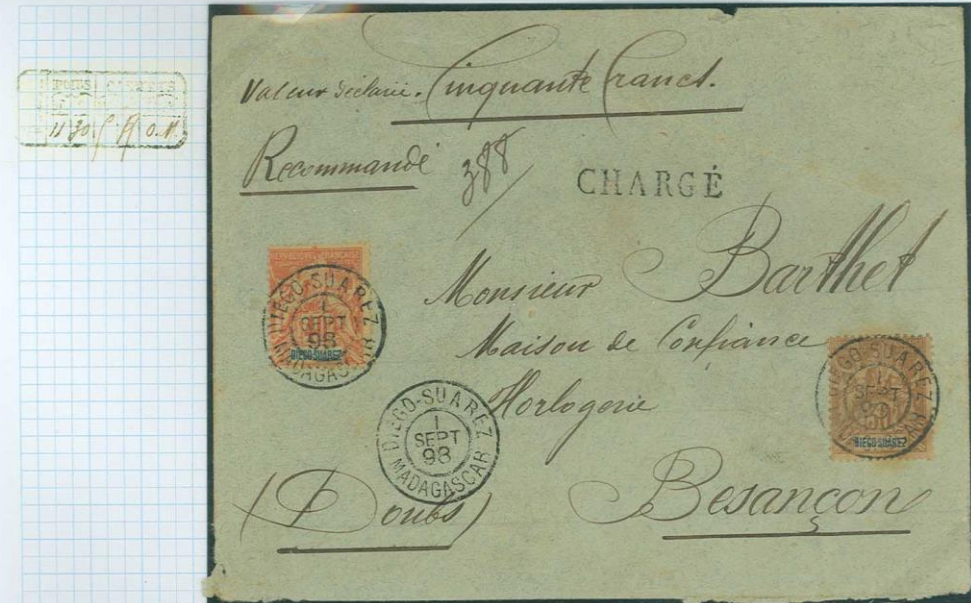
Advertising envelopes showing the changes in design over time from the firm of G. Roubelat in Diego Suarez in 1907, 1908 and 1913 at the 10c French community rate (effective in 1906) and the 35c registered French community rate. By 1913 all entities were now under the Madagascar administration and all of their stamps were valid for use. Shown are examples of the 1912 revaluations of the Group Type and Zébu issues.

Advertising covers at the registered French Community rate to Nîmes with a 5c pictorial issue to complete the rate, and the overseas rate of 25c to Mauritius franked with a 1900 25c blue stamp of Mohéli.





Unusual declared value letter showing late use of the 40c Group Type issue on a letter posted from Diego Suarez on Nov. 17, 1916 to Rome, but forwarded to Milan. Apparently no declared value cachet was available, so the charges were verified by the postal clerk at departure. Prepaid at 75c, the charges were: 25c for overseas postage on 14.5 grams weight; 25c for registration and 25c for international insurance on a declared value of 25.25F.



Insured money letters from Diego Suarez: the first franked at 70c to Besancon, France in 1898 with charges as follows – 25c postage on a weight of 11.30 grams (from declared value cachet on reverse, see above); 25c registration; and 20c insurance on a declared value of 50F. The second is franked at 1F35c posted to Bastia, Corsica in 1908 with charges as follows: 10c postage on a weight of 13.00 grams; 25c registration; and 1.00F insurance on a declared value of 2200F.





Parcel tags are rarely seen during the period of the Group Type's use, as they were kept by the post office upon delivery of the parcel. This one is franked at 60c which includes 25c for registration and 35c for the parcel based on weight. Additionally, two 5c printed matter rates are presented: the first from 1894 based on a postal stationery envelope; and the second employing the rare 1902 overprint with the DIEGO SUAREZ legend.

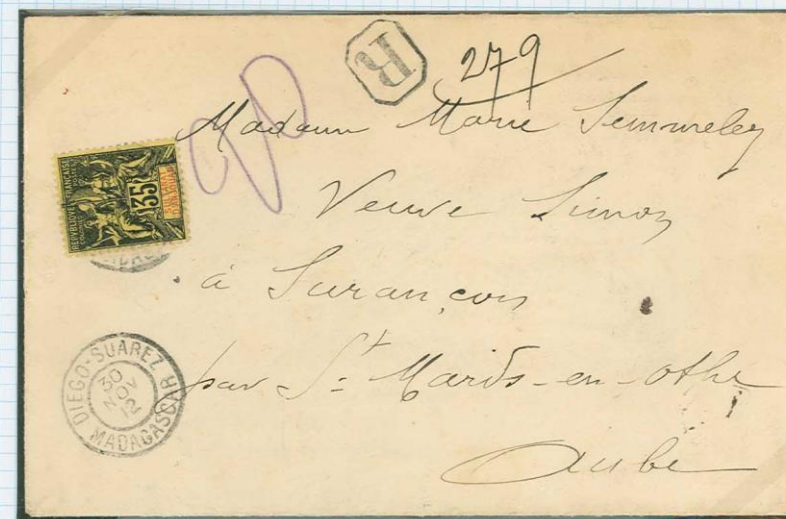


Occasionally, a printed matter piece survives that represents both postal and cultural history. The mourning notice above was posted from Diego Suarez on July 29, 1914 to the German colony of Tanga properly franked with a 5c 1912 overprint on a Grand Comoro stamp. The reverse shows a very late October 7<sup>th</sup> Zanzibar transit, but no Tanga arrival. Given the destination, this represents a very desirable piece of postal history. The nature of the notice is classically French in character, announcing the death of a member of the missionary group at Diego Suarez. Few of these large-format death notices survive from the French colonies.





Double weight registered letters (50c postage plus 25c registration) from Diego Suarez in 1894 and 1902 to Bucharest, Rumania, and Apolda, Germany. The former is a most unusual destination.

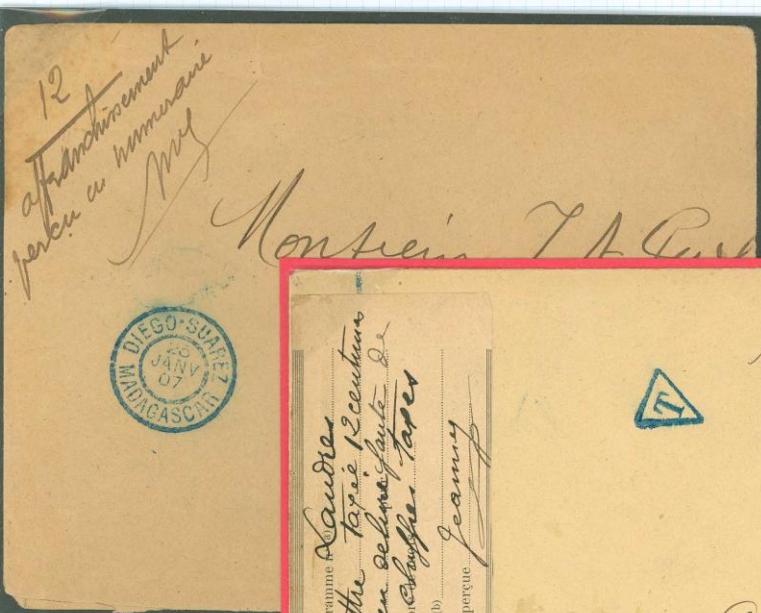


Late use of Group Type issues from 1912 – 1913, the first prepaying the 50c overseas registered rate to Reunion in combination with a 10c pictorial issue; and single use of the 35c Group Type stamp prepaying the French Community rate of 35c (10c postage and 25c registration). Single use of a 35c stamp for the later rate is uncommon.





Post card at the 10c rate from Diego Suarez in 1903 and franked with a 1903 overprint to the rare British Colonial destination of Saint Helena via Zanzibar and Lourenço Marques. Thus it was handled by French, Portuguese and British colonial administrations.



Unpaid 15c local letter from 1902 properly charged 30c due with Duval Type due stamps. There was an apparent shortage of stamps in Diego Suarez in January 1907, and mail could be prepaid in cash, 10c in this case, as the 12/affranchissement perçu a numéraire endorsement on the second letter indicates. The latter letter indicates that there was also a shortage of due stamps at this time, and special receipt etiquettes were used as the last letter shows. This was a double weight letter (2 x 10c) franked 6c short at 14c and charged double the shortage due via this etiquette.



While engaged in combat, colonial troops at Diego Suarez were entitled to full military franchise as this 1901 letter shows. It bears a **CORR<sup>DES</sup> D'ARMES DIEGO SUAREZ** octagonal military datestamp and a French Packet Line U transit military datestamp. The authorization on the reverse bears the cachet: **Bataillon Sénégalais de DIEGO SUAREZ: 1 Compagnie** indicating that troops from Senegal had been transferred to Madagascar.



# NOSSI-BÉ (UNDER DIEGO SUAREZ ADMINISTRATION)

Nossi-Bé, an island off of the upper north west coast of Madagascar, had a long-standing association with France that began in 1840. It was placed under the administration of Diego Suarez in 1881, and received its Group Type stamps in 1894. Prior to that, the Group Type stamps with the **DIEGO SUAREZ ET DEPENDANCES** were used. It became part of Madagascar in 1896 when Diego Suarez did.

Military Concession Rate  
Overseas Rate



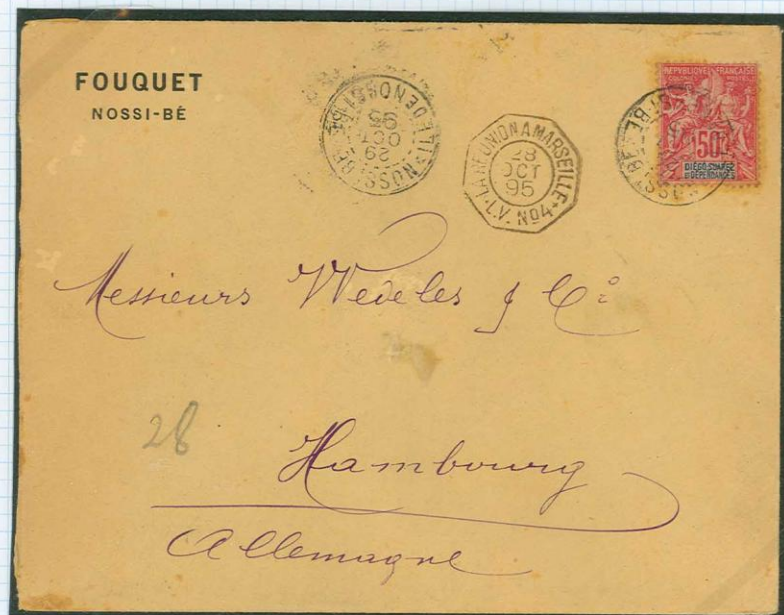
Rare early use of the **DIEGO SUAREZ ET DEPENDANCES** stamps from Nossi-Bé in 1893 at the 15c military concession rate, and at the 25c overseas rate to Paris and London. During this early period the **NOSSI-BÉ ILE DE NOSSI-BÉ** datestamp was in use.

Nossi-Bé  
Overseas Rate  
Registered Overseas Rate



Overseas single weight postal stationery envelope posted from Nossi-Bé in May 1894 the first year in which Nossi-Bé stamps and stationery were available. The letter initially traveled with French Packet Line V which connected with Line T. The subsequent 25c envelope was brought to the 50c registered rate in September 1896 with a 25c stamp with the **DIEGO SUAREZ ET DEPENDANCES** legend in 1895.





Although **NOSSE-BÉ** stamps became available in 1894, **DEPENDANCES** remainders can still be found used as these examples of a military concession rate and double weight foreign rate to Germany from 1895 show.

The principal village on the island of Nossi-Bé was Hellville and it received its datestamp in the late 1890's. Shown are three postal cards showing use of this datestamp in black, blue and red on cards to India (1897); Germany (1902) and Russia (1902) employing Nossi-Bé and Madagascar stationery. Also shown is a 5c Madagascar envelope with late use of the datestamp (1910). All examples are from the Madagascar administration.



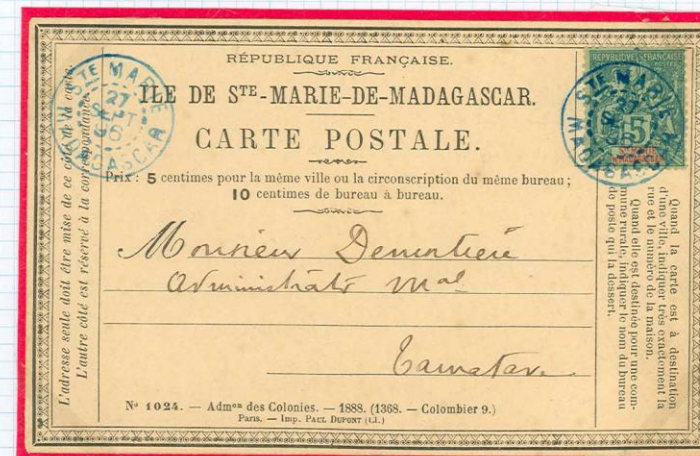
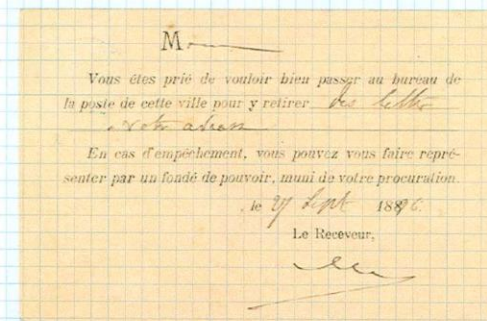


Military franchise letters from Nossi-Bé during the 1895 – 1898 period illustrating the cachets from different military units present in the area (Marine, Medical and Government) along with the **NOSSI-BE ILE DE NOSSI BE** and **HELVILLE NOSSI-BE** datestamps. French Packet Madagascar Expeditionary Forces datestamps are also present on these letters.

## SAINTE MARIE DE MADAGASCAR

Sainte Marie de Madagascar is a small island off of the northeast coast of Madagascar, and its history suggests that the French were not quite sure what to do with it. It was acquired by France in 1750, but abandoned from 1754 until 1818. It was attached to Reunion in 1818 and then to Mayotte in 1843. It was a separate colony from 1853 – 1876, reattached to Reunion in 1876 and thence to Diego Suarez in 1888. In 1894 it again became a separate colony and received a full issue of Group Type stamps. In 1896 it was attached to Madagascar.

The island was of no military importance and it had no significant commercial value. It had a very small literate population. In principal, letters franked with Diego Suarez et Dependences Group Type stamps should exist, but none have been recorded to date. The reasons for providing it with its own set of Group Type stamps and stationery appear lost to history. Given these circumstances, any mail from this entity, particularly from the 1894 – 1896 period prior to its attachment to Madagascar, is extremely rare.

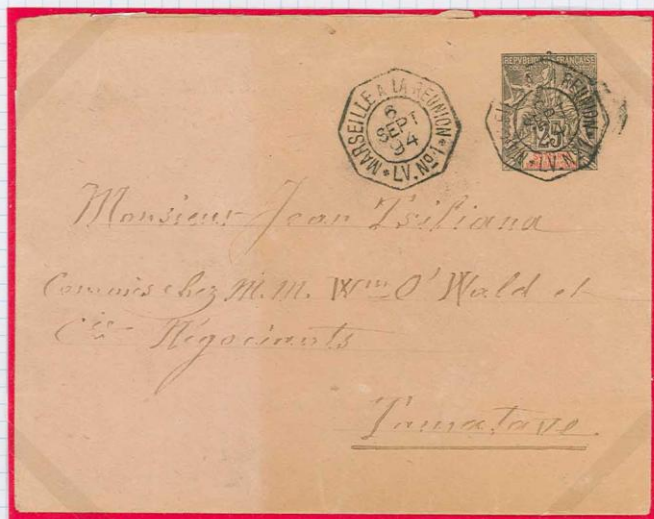


In 1888 the colony was provided with a single formula post card similar to ones in use in France and some of the larger colonies such as Guadeloupe, Reunion and Senegal. Why this was done remains uncertain, given the small size and lack of importance of the colony. The exhibitor is aware of two properly used examples of this formula card, one of which is shown above. It is franked at a 5c rate with a Sainte Marie Group Type stamp for an official post office notice. The reverse contains a notice of receipt of a letter at the Sainte Marie post office.



**Sainte Marie de Madagascar  
French Packet Letter**

Madagascar was served by the Reunion-Marseille/Marseille-Reunion French Packet Line. Typically the line used octagonal datestamps, and used the Line U or Line V identifier depending on the specific year in question. During the 1888 – 1896 period the ships from Marseille stopped at Mayotte (with auxiliary service to Majunga), Diego Suarez, Sainte Marie and Tamatave enroute to Reunion and Mauritius. Letters for the French Packets were typically collected and cancelled at the local post offices and brought to the packets, or they could be directly posted at the docks or on board the ships. In the latter cases the stamps were cancelled by the packet line datestamps.



Shown is a 25c Sainte Marie de Madagascar postal stationery envelope posted at or on board the French packet Iraouaddy at Sainte Marie enroute to Tamatave, the next stop on the line. The letter was cancelled by the Line V octagonal datestamp: **MARSEILLE A LA REUNION LV N° 1, 6 SEPT 94**. Given that Sainte Marie received its Group Type stamps in April 1894 this is an extremely rare, and possibly unique, combination. The packets ceased calling at Saint Marie in 1897 because of the low volume of mail. At first glance, the 25c rate seems incorrect. However, in 1894 Sainte Marie was under the administration of Diego Suarez, and the colony of Madagascar proper was still forming. Thus the applicable rate was the intercolonial or overseas rate of 25c as correctly shown.

**Saint Marie de Madagascar  
Military Concession Rate  
Military Franchise Letter**



The military concession rate of 15c in lieu of the 25c French Community rate was valid until January 1899. The only recorded example from Sainte Marie de Madagascar is shown above. It is based on a small format 15c Group Type envelope and was posted in January 1896 to the unusual destination of Tunisia. Since this was within the French Community, the rate was valid. Also shown, and of comparable rarity, is a military franchise letter from 1898 with a cachet of the local health service and a manuscript endorsement with signature to validate the franchise.