

THE POSTAL SERVICES IN TOGO

During the Anglo-French Occupation of 1914-1922

Introduction

TOGO before 1914

From the 17th century the Compagnie Française des Indes Orientales (The French East India Co.) had had trading posts along the coast of West Africa from Saint-Louis in Senegal to the town of Libreville in French Gaboon. These posts co-existed on the large curve of the coast forming the Gulf of Guinea, with those of the foreign companies: British, Dutch, Danish and Portuguese.

In the Gulf of Benin, the deepest indentation of the Gulf of Guinea, the French had established themselves at Catonou Ouidah, (previously called Juda or Whydah) Grand-Popo, Petit-Popo and Porto-Seguro, while the British had established themselves on the Gold Coast, further to the West, and to the East, at the mouth of the Niger. The rivalry between the native tribes supported the trading posts with a plentiful supply of prisoners destined for slavery in America, whence the name "Slave Coast" was given to this part of the coast.

The Germans established themselves on this coast in the second half of the 19th century and with the French soon exerted a dominating influence. This resulted in the signing, on 24th December 1885, of a Franco German agreement recognizing the rights of Germany on the territory which became Togo and which had a coast line from Lomé to Petit-Popo.

The Eastern frontier with the French settlements of the Gulf of Benin, later called Dahomey, was fixed by a new agreement of the 23rd June 1887 by the Ple-Brisson Mission; it followed for the most part the course of the river Mono.

To the West the frontier with the Gold Coast was drawn mainly along the Kouloukpene (or Dako) River, until it joined the Volta. It then followed the Volta before turning due East to reach the coast near Lomé.

The territory thus formed was rectangular with an average width of about sixty miles, although at the coast the width was only about fifty miles. It stretched three hundred miles inland to Mount Dolongolé on the edge of that part of the French Sudan which eventually became the Upper Volta.

Communications were quickly organised under German supervision, with the building of roads, one of which led to the North through Atakpamé, Sokodé and Sansané-Mangu, in the direction of the Niger, and another to the West in the direction of the Volta, through Palimé, Kluto and Kpandu.

Railways were constructed at the beginning of this century, the first along the coast from Lomé to Petit-Popo and then in 1907 between Lomé and Palimé. Finally in 1913 the line from Lomé to Atakpamé was opened. This line was extended to Blitta after the war under the French regime.

The opening of post offices accompanied this penetration into the interior. The first German P.O. was opened on the 1st March 1888 at Petit-Popo, taking the name of Anecho on the 1st January 1905. The office at Lomé was opened on the 1st March 1890, followed by the one at Missahoe, later transferred to Kluto, then finally those at Agomé-Palimé and Sansané-Mangu.

After 1900, the offices at Nuatja, Porto-Seguro, Atakpamé, Tokpli, Ho, Kpandu, Assahun, Noepe, Avhegame, Agu and Tsewie were opened.

The War Period 1914-1919

Such was the situation at the beginning of August 1914, at the opening of hostilities between Germany and the Allies: the Governor of Togo, only having at his command a few native troops officered by Germans, proposed unsuccessfully to his British and French neighbours, (in the Gold Coast and Dahomey) that they should respect his neutrality. The Allies invaded the territory and the British occupied Lomé on the 7th August 1914, whilst the French captured Anecho. The Germans retreated to Kamina, near Atakpamé, where they surrendered on the 26th August; this brief local campaign then finished and no military postal marking of this period has been recorded.

An Anglo-French agreement signed on the 30th August fixed the boundaries of the areas occupied by the British and the French: the British occupied the Western part bordering on the Gold Coast, comprising the capital, Lomé, with the area around it, Kluto, Kété-Krachi and Yendi, while the French occupied the Eastern part consisting of Anecho, Atakpamé, Sokodé and Sansané-Mangu.

After the treaty of Versailles (7th May 1919) Germany gave up her colonies, including Togo and the Cameroons on the West coast of Africa. A new agreement was signed on the 10th July 1919 between France and Britain; by this France received the administration of the areas around Lomé and Kluto, which placed under France's protection the capital Lomé and the whole of the railway system, consisting of the lines from Lomé to Anecho, to Palimé, and to Atakpamé. The French High Commissioner took over in Lomé on the 30th September 1920 and the French administration of Lomé and Kluto does not seem to have been organised before this date.

Finally, on the 20th July 1922, the League of Nations confirmed the agreement of the 10th July 1919, placing the Eastern part of Togo (the most important part) under French mandate, whilst the Western part remained administered by the Gold Coast.

This account of the history of Togo, a little long perhaps, is however indispensable in order to understand the postal organisation which is now described.

The Organisation of the Postal Services during the Military Occupation

The Stamps Used

During this period from the end of the local fighting on the 26th August 1914 until the placing of Togo under the Anglo-French administration by the League of Nations on the 20th July 1922, the two countries exercised their authority concurrently. This is shown by similarities in the postal systems.

The major part of the stock of stamps issued by the Germans was seized at Kamina, where it had been hidden since the surrender. Several months later a small local stock containing a number of the higher values was found at Sansané-Mangu.

Both lots were divided between the French and the British who proceeded to make local overprints on their half of the stamps which had been seized at Kamina and Sansané-Mangu.

The stamps given to the French were overprinted

TOGO
Occupation
Franco-anglaise

A second printing was made in January 1915, but with a different setting of type from the one used in October 1914.

It can be said, that on one hand, the numerous varieties which the specialised collector will find described in the catalogues are worth as much for the French issues as for the British, on the other hand the considerable rarity of the overprints of January 1915 can be stressed since this overprint was only issued on a few stamps.

It is necessary to add here that apart from the stamps described in French and foreign catalogues several types of German postal stationery, such as the 5 pfennig post card, being part of the stock seized, were overprinted in the same way as the stamps. The stocks of German stamps overprinted TOGO were soon exhausted, the greed of collectors having absorbed many more stamps than the normal postal services would have used since they were reduced in this war period. This is why from 1915 onwards the British printed at Lomé, and later in London, the overprint

TOGO
ANGLO-FRENCH
OCCUPATION

on stamps of Gold Coast with the portrait of George V, while the French waited until 1916 to print in Paris the overprint

TOGO
Occupation
Franco-anglaise

on stamps of Dahomey of the type "Native climbing coco-palm", the first printings were on laid paper. (Forged overprints exist on stamps of Dahomey postmarked in the post offices of that colony. The forged overprints are larger than the normals.)

These overprinted issues, both French and English, were used until the League of Nations mandate came into force when they were replaced in the territory under the French mandate, whilst the British used in the area which they administered stamps of the Gold Coast which can only be distinguished by their cancellations.

But the stamps of Togo described below were not the only stamps used in this territory during the Anglo-French occupation, since, as we saw above, the first overprints dated from October 1914.

In the first months of the occupation it seems as though, even if accidentally, unoverprinted German stamps of Togo were used, but above all both the French and the British used stamps of the Neighbouring territories placed under their authority: for example, stamps of Dahomey were used by the French and stamps of the Gold Coast were used by the British. Subsequently, one meets with mixed frankings made up of these same stamps and stamps overprinted "TOGO".

Another period in which the same unoverprinted stamps were used was when the stock of overprinted German stamps became exhausted. In the area occupied by the French, stamps of Dahomey were used in 1915 and 1916, and sometimes even in 1917 before the arrival of the overprinted issue from Paris.

Postal Cancellations of Togo 1914-22

It is necessary to divide the occupation of Togo into two periods, the first from the 26th August 1914 to the 30th September 1920, the date of the implementing of the agreement of the 10th July 1919 between France and the United Kingdom and the second from the 30th September 1920 to the 20th July 1922; the beginning of the civil administration.

The First Period: 1914-20

The French Zone

The postal services in Togo were placed under the authority of the French High Commissioner in Togo.

After the rapid occupation of Anecho by the French a defaced canceller of Grand-Popo was used for a very short time in Anecho (Petit-Popo). It read "... POPO DAHOMEY ET DEPENDENCES" with the date in the centre (fig. a).

The date of the 19th September 1914 figures on a document having a definite postal validity. The date of 8th October 1914 has been noticed on a stamp of Dahomey. Since the postal administration of Togo was not subject to that of Dahomey, one can see the reason for the rapid discontinuation of the use of this peculiar cancellation, the only French cancellation used before 1922.

Besides this one exception, the French only used the German cancellers which existed at the time. These were the circular "HALF-MOON" types with 26 mm. diameters (fig. b).

They can be found used at the following offices:

- a. On the coast: Anecho and Porto-Seguro;
- b. Inland: Nuatja, Atakpamé, Sokodé and Sansané-Mangu.

They are found on duty-free letters from soldiers, or even on letters prepaid by stamps of different categories described as being valid in the French Zone.

A German office existed at Tokpli in 1914, on the frontier with Dahomey; it seems to have been closed by the French, since it was very near the office at Athiémé in Dahomey, a few miles to the south.

The English Zone

The British administration was based at Lomé.

It used a certain number of German cancellers several of which were similar to those used in the French Zone (fig. b). They are known from Assahun and Noepe, as well as from Lomé, which is known with the word TOGOGEBIET (German for the "Togo area") instead of TOGO in the centre (fig. b1).

Lomé also adopted an older type of German Lomé cancellation 25 mm. in diameter, with the date in one line between two half-moons (fig. c).

Finally there are a certain number of British cancellations, no doubt locally made, like those used in the Gold Coast. These cancellations seem to have been made, perhaps to augment the existing ones, as at Lomé, perhaps to replace cancellers lost or damaged during the military action, as was the case at Ho, Agu (or Agbeluvhoe) (figs. d to h).

The cancellations known for the different offices are as follows:

Lomé

1. German canceller-LOME/TOGOGEBIET (fig. b1)-27 mm. diameter - seen on Gold Coast 16.9.14 and on optd. Gold Coast from 1915 onwards.
2. German canceller - LOME/TOGO (fig. c) - 25 mm. diameter - seen on optd. German stamps of Togo 23.10.14; on unoptd. stamps of Togo from 1915 onwards.

These two cancellers were probably in use during the first days of the British Occupation.

3. British canceller - LOME/TOGO - (fig. d) - Double circle 30 and 19 mm. - seen on optd. stamps of Gold Coast 31.8.15 to 11.11.15. Of a distinct type, this cancellation only seems to have been in use for a very short time: it is far from common.

4. British canceller - LOME/TOGO - (fig. e) - 28 mm. diameter - date in single line with the time of striking; it is very like the German canceller (fig. c) only a little larger (it has thus sometimes erroneously been taken for a German canceller) - seen on optd. Gold Coast 7.9.18 onwards.

Tsewie

1. English canceller-double circle 28/23 mm (fig. h) reading TSEWIE/GOLD COAST and incorporating a crown in the centre. (The authenticity of this cancellation has yet to be confirmed.)
2. English canceller - 28 mm. diameter like fig. e of Lomé seen on optd. stamps of Dahomey with dates of 1920 or after.

Agbeluvhoe

This office seems to have replaced the German one at Avhegame. English canceller - 30 mm. diameter (fig f): seen from 16.7.20 onwards - reads AGBELUVHOE/TOGO.

Another cancellation of the same type carries the name spelt "AGBELUHVHOE"; seen on optd. Gold Coast dated 10.1.19. Although seeming perfectly authentic, this last cancellation has only been seen once, on a single stamp off cover, and its true existence has yet to be confirmed.

Noepe

German canceller as in fig. c - seen dated 27.5.20 onwards on optd. Gold Coast.

Assahun

German canceller type as in fig. c - seen dated 25.5.18 onwards on optd. Gold Coast.

Agu

English canceller single circle 30 mm. in diameter identical to the one described for Agbeluvhoe (fig. f) reading AGU/TOGO seen after 1920.

Agomé-Palimé

1. English canceller with a single circle 30 mm. in diameter (fig. g) reading STATION/PALIME: station cancellation used at the terminus of the Western line; seen on optd. Gold Coast 30.10.15 and after.
2. English canceller like fig. e of Lomé and Tsewie 28 mm. diameter, reading AGOME.PALIME/TOGO seen after 1920. The station office of Palimé, the terminus of the western line, served Kluto, whose office had been transferred to Agomé-Palimé in 1903.

Ho

English cancellation - single circle 30 mm. in diameter (fig. f1) not differing from those of Agu or Agbeluvhoe except for the legend HO/TOGOLAND: seen on optd. Gold Coast 10.7.19. The office of Ho was situated in the Gold Coast to whom it remained attached after 1920.

Kpandu

No information is available on the canceller of this office, situated in the part of the territory retained by the Gold Coast after 1920.

The Second Period: 1920-22

By the agreement of the 10th July 1919 Great Britain - as we have seen - ceded to France the administration of the areas of Lomé and Kluto, only keeping under her jurisdiction a wide strip of territory bordering on the Gold Coast whose most important towns were Ho, Yendi and Kpandu. Ho and Kpandu had already been endowed under the German administration with a post office, whose former cancellations continued to be used.

Consequently, the French administration now covered the seven new offices of Lomé, Agbeluvhoe, Agu, Assahun, Noepe, Palimé and Tsewie, adding to those the offices of Anecho, Atakpamé, Nuatja, Porto-Seguro, Sansané-Mangu and Sokodé, making 13 in all.

In the seven new offices in which they had taken over in the last months of 1920, the French took possession of all the stocks left by their predecessors, consisting of the German cancellers and those made by the English which they had used themselves. Only the cancellers of LOME/TOGO (fig. d) and TSEWIE/GOLD COAST do not seem to have been used at all after 1920. All the others are found on the stamps of Dahomey overprinted: "TOGO - Occupation Franco-anglaise".

In these same offices, the overprinted stamps of the Gold Coast continued to be valid through the years of 1920 and 1921 (latest date seen 24.8.21 at Assahun) and they were used concurrently with the overprinted stamps of Dahomey. In certain cancellers the date plugs had worn away so that the real date of use could not be deciphered.

In the old offices, the German cancellations continued in use unchanged.

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What I am now going to say may perhaps give the reader an idea of the variety of items that with a little luck and plenty of patience he can find from this period of eight years, five of which were war years; what can be found out about the history of Togo, if the various cancellations are combined with the different issues of Togo, Dahomey and the Gold Coast, with or without overprint. Many points, however, still remain to be explained.

The number of items is very limited, for the population of the territory at that time was only around a million people, of whom just over a quarter were annexed to the Gold Coast, and of this total, the Europeans only numbered a few hundreds, mainly grouped around the coastal towns of Lomé and Anecho. The cancellations of these two offices are the commonest, together with those of the two railway termini, Atakpamé and Palimé. The other offices were only postal agencies with a very small trade which has left few traces in collections, but any correspondence can provide useful information, if only to confirm dates: any such information will be gratefully received.

This postal history of the period of the occupation can be completed with the following points;

Registered Letters

These were endorsed with German registration labels during the first years of the occupation: in 1915 perforated labels in blue on white paper were still in use in Lomé. They incorporated the letter "R" on the left-hand side and on the right the registration number, over which the name "Lomé (Togo)" was handstamped in Gothic letters in violet.

In 1918, French registration labels were used at Atakpamé. They were printed in black on white paper and stamped ATAKPAME in block capitals.

Censors

During the war, certain letters carried a censor mark; the commonest one, struck at Lomé, consisted of a handstamp, struck in violet, it read:

Passed by Censor
at
Lome (Togo)

it has been noted on letters dated October 1915 to April 1916.

Another Censor mark, also struck at Lomé, was in the form of a handstamp 82 mm. long, consisting of two lines of block capitals 3 mm. tall, reading:

CONTROLLING OFFICER GERMAN FIRMS
BRITISH ZONE TOGOLAND

This has been seen on a letter dated 28.2.1916.

Preparation of foreign mail

This preparation was done for the French Zone, either by Dahomey or by the Gold Coast where it connected with the British mail-boat. This mail, when it was bound for a European country, passed through London, where registered letters received a transit cachet (length of journey Lomé to London: 10 to 35 days in 1916). Sometimes the letters were opened in England by the censor and re-sealed with the well-known wrapper OPENED BY CENSOR accompanied by the number of the reader. (Numbers 459 and 478 have been seen.)

It does not seem that any other forwarding agents' cachets existed at that time.

Finally, no maritime cachet has been described on correspondence from Togo during the occupation.

The postal history of Togo, during the years 1914 to 1922 shows clearly that "Entente Cordiale" then still very young, sealed in 1904 between France and the United Kingdom, and which has been confirmed in the course of two wars in which the two nations participated side by side.

With the French and British issues of the New Hebrides, which, since the beginning of the century, have gone side by side, the postal documents of Togo present a typical example of philatelic interchanges which can attract the attention of curious collectors to the interesting issues of overseas possessions common to the two countries.

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APPENDIX A.

Summary of the Cancellations

<u>FIG.</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>PLACE(S) USED</u>
a	double-ring inner one dotted	Anecho
b	half-moon 26 mm. diameter	Anecho, Nuatja, Porto-Seguro, Atakpamé, Sokodé and Sansané-Mangu
b1	half-moon 27 mm. diameter	Lomé
c	25 mm. diameter	Lomé, Noepe, Assahun
d	double circle 30/19 mm. diameter	Lomé
e	28 mm. diameter	Lomé, Tsewie, Palimé
f	30 mm. diameter	Agbeluvhoe, Agu
f1	30 mm. diameter	Ho
g	30 mm. diameter STATION/PALIME	Palimé
h	double circle 28/23 mm with crn.	Tsewie



fig. a



fig. b



fig. b1



fig. c



fig. d



fig. e



fig. h



fig. f



fig. g



fig f1

SKETCH MAP OF
TOGO
 Approx. Scale: 32 miles = 1 inch

