

LE DEVELOPPEMENT DES SERVICES POSTAUX DANS LA RÉGION VOLTAÏQUE AVANT LA CONSTITUTION DE LA COLONIE DE HAUTE VOLTA EN 1920

The purpose of this display is to show the development of the postal services in the Volta region up to 1920 when the decision was taken to ease the administrative function by splitting the enormous and overweight colony of Haut Sénégal & Niger.

The opening, initially of the telegraph and then the postal services, followed on closely behind the military expansion and stabilisation of French West Africa that started at St Louis at the mouth of the Senegal river and by progressive seasons of campaigning reached the Niger river and eventually the frontier of French Equatorial Tchad by 1900. Thus it took some 15 years following the Berlin agreement of 1895 and subsequent Treaties and Arrangements with neighbouring countries for France to take full control of the territories allotted to it.

As each campaigning season extended the areas that had been stabilised so it placed increasing pressure on the Administration based initially in Dakar and later, in Kayes in French Soudan. The chart that goes with this introduction shows how this expansion was linked with changes in the Administrative and Colonial structure.

The main emphasis on expansion had been eastward and perhaps because of this and the difficult terrain, the southern section of Haut Senegal & Niger in the headwaters of the Volta rivers had been left more or less untouched. A number of expeditions made forays into the area and, when it came, military occupation arrived from the direction of the Soudan for the main part and up from Dahomey, through Upper Dahomey, from the east. Where these two thrusts met made for an odd administrative position. The capture of the war lord Samory in September 1898 brought a degree of calm to the region, one of the final pieces in the jigsaw of French West Africa.

The situation in 1900 reflected this with the two main offices of Ouagadougou opened on 12.2.1898 and Bobo Dioulasso on 5.6.1899. Military and Administrative circles had been established based on Bobo Dioulasso, Koutiala, Sikasso, Koury, Diébougou, Kong and Bouna. From Dahomey the telegraph had reached Fada N'Gourma (Haut Dahomey and later part of Volta). It is at this point that a number of offices were opened in the region, considered as being Military Territory No. 2 and these were run by military and local staff under the supervision of metropolitan French post office employees based at Kayes and later, Bamako.

Regular postal services were developed with mail for Europe passing through Kayes to Dakar from the main part and through Fada N'Gourma and Dahomey to Cotonou for the eastern section. In the early stages most of the mail was sent under military franchise with a variety of different handstamps, often used indiscriminately. From 1.1.1899 the French colonies could correspond with France at the domestic inland rate.

POLITICAL CHANGES AND POSTAL CONSEQUENCES IN SOUDAN, NIGER AND LEADING UP TO CONSTITUTION OF VOLTA. 1890 – 1920

