

**Display to Society of Postal Historians**  
at London 2010 Exhibition on 6.5.10

**FRENCH**  
**MESSAGERIES IMPERIALES / MARITIMES**  
**MAIL PAQUEBOT ITINERARIES**  
**TO, FROM, AND WITHIN THE FAR EAST**

**1862 – 1880**

**Far East Mail Ship Itineraries**  
**Volume 2**

© *by Lee C. Scamp*

This display is a little different than what you typically see: my new book is discussed and illustrated

Some of you have probably seen my previous book, Far East Mail Ship Itineraries, Vol. 1, P&O:  
An update and augmentation of Reg Kirk's P&O Lines to the Far East

My Vol. 2 is a similar effort for the French Paquebot Itineraries To, From, and Within The Far East

During 1862 - 80 period there was extensive expansion of the ocean mail service to and within the Far East

- In 1862 the French began operation of a mail packet line to Hong Kong in direct competition with the British P&O
- The MI Line was extended to Shanghai the next year,
- A branch service to Yokohama began in 1865, first via Shanghai, and then later directly from Hong Kong
- When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, the French Line (unlike the P&O) immediately began direct service between Marseille and the Far East via that canal,
- Messageries Imperiales (MI) became the Messageries Maritimes (MM) in 1871.

My good friend, and fellow SPH member, Dr. Andrew Cheung challenged me to have this book completed in time for publication at the London 2010 show

- Book has been completed (copy for viewing here), and should be published in next few months
- Book is over 400 pages with over 300 illustrations of covers, most in color, and other postal history artifacts

The majority of the information in this book was derived primarily from original research employing microfilms of contemporary newspapers

Many details borrowed from other authors, particularly Raymond Salles:

- Author of "The bible" of French maritime postal history
- Major contribution to the body of postal history knowledge
- However, there was some room for improvement
  - As in any research work, a few errors crept in
  - It appears that specific port call dates in Salles' route tables were sometimes scheduled dates vs. actual dates,
  - or were otherwise inaccurate; e.g., conflicting port call dates on the same itinerary
  - Omission of some major Far Eastern port dates, such as Hong Kong (my specialty), left the record incomplete
  - The "bare bones" chronology was provided, but there was little "flesh" to bring the postal history to life

My basic purposes for undertaking the FEMSI series of books:

- A desire to "fill in the gaps" and correct the records of previous authors in this field,
- To satisfy my own curiosity and needs through research and writing about Far East postal history,
- To preserve and disseminate what I believe to be important and useful information in this field,
- An effort to stimulate synergism among specialists in the various related areas on which this work touches.

Re. the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> purposes, this book should be useful primarily to postal history collectors and students of:

- Countries and colonies in the Far East:
  - mainly Hong Kong, China, Japan,
  - the British and French Treaty Ports and agencies in China and Japan,
- France and Britain

To a lesser extent this volume should also be of value to postal history collectors and students of:

- Other places such as Egypt, India, Ceylon, Malaya, Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines
- Other countries in Europe

This FEMSI French lines volume provides:

- Tabular itineraries (see 1<sup>st</sup> page of display) of the French mail ship lines to, from, and within the Far East, 1862 - 1880
  - Comprehensive Oriental itineraries between Hong Kong, Shanghai and Yokohama,
  - Eastward and westward dates at Marseille for these voyages (many from M. Salles),
  - Some more limited information concerning the rest of the port calls between France and the Orient:
    - Messina / Naples, Alexandria / Port Said, Suez, Aden, Galle / Colombo, Singapore, and Saigon.
- Notes explaining and expanding upon the tabular itineraries
- Illustrations to tell the postal history stories associated with these mail voyages (please see display)
  - Reproductions of excerpts from the contemporary newspapers,
  - Paintings and photographs of a few of the ships
  - Covers carried on the listed voyages selected to illustrate some point(s) of postal history significance, e.g.:
    - First voyages, unusual routings, problems encountered by the ships, e.g., wrecks and other mail delays,
    - Other similar points of interest, such as rates and markings.
    - Illustrations adapted from:
      - Auction catalogs, books, articles
      - Collections of Dr. Andrew Cheung, Jeffrey Bohn, Tony Ganendran
- Descriptions of the illustrations have been provided, where appropriate:
  - Postal rates, which were closely tied to the mail routes during the period covered by this work
  - Postal markings, often related to the specific mail lines and routes, particularly in the case of the French service
  - Changes in postal administrations, their regulations, and their procedures
  - Names of and information about postal and mail line officials
  - Facts about the ship lines, and the vessels employed by those companies, e.g., ship construction details
  - Other related historical and postal history facts

Undoubtedly errors, inconsistencies, and omissions will be found in this work, for which I sincerely apologize in advance

- I do not read French, so had to attempt to translate portions of M. Salles information, I thought to be of relevance, on a word by word basis, which likely led to an inaccurate understanding, in some instances.
- I am certainly no expert on France and French postal history, either maritime, or the more broadly defined field.
- Similarly, I am not an expert on Chinese or Japanese postal history, but I attempted to touch on these areas where they directly tied in with the primary subject of the French maritime postal history.
- I made an effort to consult pertinent references, but there are undoubtedly others of which I was unaware, or which were unavailable to me.
- Many instances in the illustrative cover descriptions where I noted that a postal marking, rate, etc., is the earliest known
  - Experts in those specific postal history areas, having a broader range of knowledge of relevant references and extant covers, will be able to update the earliest known “target” dates which I have provided.

I invite your comments and corrections –

That is the way we move our body of postal history knowledge to greater breadth and higher levels of fidelity

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**MESSAGERIES IMPERIALES EASTWARD 1862-3**

MAIL STEAMER	MARSEILLE	EGYPT	HONG KONG	SHANGHAI	NOTES	FIG.
<i>Alphee</i>	via CGH		6.11.62		1	
<i>Neva Imperatrice (FV) Sphinx</i>	19.10.62	c.25.10 27.10*	2.12.62 12.12	c.15.12	MI MI 2 HMS 2	
<i>Dupleix Cambodge (FV) Cadiz (Mi) Benares</i>	19.11.62*	c.25.11 27.11*	6.1.63 s.10.1 11.1	---- 17.1	MI MI 3 P&O 3 P&O 3	
<i>Hydaspe</i>	via CGH		19.1.63		4	
<i>Dupleix Donnai (FV) Hydaspe (FV)</i>	19.12.62*	c.25.12 28.12.62	2.2.63 4.2	11.2	5 6	1
<i>LaBourdonnais Alphee (FV) Hydaspe</i>	(FV) 19.1.63*	c.25.1 27.1*	6.3 6.3	12.3	7 8	
<i>LaBourdonnais Imperatrice Hydaspe</i>	19.2*	c.25.2 27.2*	3.4 4.4*	8.4	9 10	
<i>LaBourdonnais Cambodge Alphee Hydaspe</i>	19.3*	c.25.3 27.3* (G) (G)	28.4 29.4	3.5	11 11 12	
<i>LaBourdonnais Donnai Hydaspe</i>	19.4*	c.25.4 27.4	27.5 28.5	3.6	13 14	



**Figure MI-63-2. Earliest known cover carried by French MI paquebot to Far East**

British mail had to be forwarded by special agents at Marseille for the first 18 months of French packet service to the Far East, since the British PO had not yet agreed to officially use the French service.

**The Figure MI-63-2 cover is earliest of only three known covers so forwarded.**



**Figure MI-63-6. Earliest known cover from Far East carried by MI: 2.63 from Hong Kong**

**"COL. F. V. SUEZ PAQ. F. / DONNAI" - Earlier than Salles 1.818**

Dr. Andrew Cheung collection



Figure MI-63-11. Earliest from Batavia by MI from Singapore; “2F 16c” accountancy mark  
 Only example Bohn recorded of this accountancy marking on mail from east of Suez



Figure MI-65-2: “3<sup>F</sup>38 <sup>4</sup>/<sub>10</sub>c” Accountancy mark cover per MI – Earliest of only 2 recorded  
 Rerouted from P&O to MI to provide more expeditious transmission.  
 Re-rated for French packet service: “FR./2F16c” mark over-struck by “3<sup>F</sup>38 <sup>4</sup>/<sub>10</sub>c” accountancy marking  
 Subject of Hong Kong Study Circle Journal and “Postscript” articles by Scamp & Bohn



Figure MI-63-13. Earliest of only 2 known “Shang-hai Paq. F. / Hydaspé” on unpaid cover  
 Salles recorded only in 1863-64: rated “RR;” only recorded on letters franked with French stamps



Figure MI-64-13. Only recorded cover saved from wreck of French paquebot *Hydaspe*

MI *Hydaspe* transferred from Hong Kong–Shanghai branch line to Singapore–Batavia branch line. *Hydaspe* left Singapore on 24.11.64 on first voyage to Batavia; ran upon a reef about 25 miles out. Berberin, the French postal agent, was taken off the *Hydaspe*, along with the mails and passengers, by the crew of the Dutch packet *Java*, and transported on to Batavia.

Scan and information courtesy of Tony Ganendran, from Derek Clayton’s article in “Malayan Philatelist.”

SAIGON, (Cochin China), 1st July, 1864.



Figure MI-64-5. Earliest printed matter by MI; MI Saigon to Singapore, P&O to Foochow

- Only known printed matter carried by French paquebot at 2c rate
- Earliest known Far East printed matter carried by French paquebot
- Earliest known cover by MI steamer from Indochina to Malaya
- Earliest recorded cover from Indochina with Hong Kong stamp
- Earliest recorded 2c printed matter rate paid by Hong Kong adhesive
- Earliest known un-watermarked 2c deep brown on cover
- Earliest recorded cover paid by Hong Kong stamp to a Treaty Port.



Figure MI-64-8. Earliest French-franked imprime from Orient carried by MI to Europe  
No 20c imprime rate recorded by Salles nor Matsumoto, so this item was apparently overpaid.



**Figure MI-67-4. Earliest: by MI from Europe to Yokohama; 1 of 2 “Ligne V” to Orient**  
 Carried by Ligne V to Egypt, Ligne N to Hong Kong, Ligne R to Shanghai, Ligne S to Yokohama  
 ex-T.V. Roberts & John Gunn maritime mail collections



**Figure MM-79-1. Only known “Italie / Paq. Fr.” datestamp on cover to or from Far East**  
 MM *Yangtse* departed Marseille on 15.12, and picked up this letter at Naples



Figure MI-68-7. Highest known postage on cover by French paquebot:  $50 \times 80c = 40f$

Mr. Jun Ichi Matsumoto: **Largest known used block**

80c stamp highest available at Yokohama French PO until 1869

**Earliest known that was sent by Japanese to another country**

Dr. Robert Spaulding: “reasonable inference” for the 500 gram weight of the package was that it “**contained gold coins or bullion**, wrapped in cloth or paper, to pay the expenses of the Japanese delegation in Paris” (Paris International Exhibition).



Figure MM-72-15. Highest postage at foreign rate by French packet:  $12 \times 1f\ 20c = 14f\ 40c$

12 times the 1f 20c per ten grams rate for prepaid letters by French paquebots to foreign countries.

**Arrivals.**

JAN. 18, *Thabor*, French steamer, 480, Rival. Marseilles Nov. 6, Alexandria 11, Port Said 14, Suez Dec. 5, Aden 14, Galle 28, Singapore Jan. 9.—MESSAGERIES IMPERIALES.

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**Shipping Reports.**

The French steamer *Thabor*, Captain Rival, from Marseilles, &c., reports from Singapore to Hongkong fine weather and steady N.E. monsoon in China sea. The steamer *Thabor* came through the Suez Canal.

COMPAGNIE DES SERVICES MARITIMES DES MESSAGERIES IMPERIALES.

FOR SHANGHAI, NAGASAKI, HIOGO AND YOKOHAMA.

The Company's steamer  
"THABOR,"



Captain RIVAL, will be dispatched for the above ports, on SUNDAY, the 30th of January, at daylight, instead of at the time previously notified.

C. BERTRAND,  
Principal Agent.

•Hongkong, January 26, 1870. ja30

Figure MI-70-1. Notices re. *Thabor*, first MI ship through new Suez Canal to Far East

From the 18.1.70 and 26.1.70 "China Mail" (Hong Kong)



Figure MI-70-2. Only known cover by *Thabor*; 1<sup>st</sup> through Suez Canal; only trip to Orient

First known French paquebot to make scheduled stops at Nagasaki or Hiogo  
Franked 10c and 20c French stamps, but Mr. Matsumoto recorded no such 30c rate

ex-Ishikawa; ex-Davies



**Figure MI-70-12. Earliest from Orient by MI paquebot: 1) registered, 2) to Scandinavia**

If 20c / 10 grams postage from Japan to Europe + 50c registration: 1866 -71

Balance of franking apparently paid for insurance

**5f value issued 11.1869; earliest known use in the Orient**



Dr. Andrew Cheung  
collection



**Figure MM-74-19. Earliest known registered in Hong Kong and sent by French paquebot**

Addressee determined as deceased, cover so annotated on the back, and sent back to Hong Kong.

Given the 5.1.75 "Returned LR Office / Hong Kong" c.d.s., return by French paquebot seems most likely.



**Figure MI-70-16. Earliest by MI from Batavia; “Ligne P / Paq Fr. No 1,”** piece d’amateur

Transported by MI *Capitole* from Batavia (12.9) to Singapore (c.14.9, then by the MI *Donnai*  
**Earliest use of the “Ligne N / Paq Fr. No 8”** c.d.s. recorded by Salles (Type 1.921/8).

**Only Ligne P cover included in T.V. Roberts collection**  
 ex-Bernard Berkinshaw-Smith; scans courtesy of Tony Ganendran



**Figure MM-77-25. “Ligne P”:** 4 years earlier than recorded canceling stamps on cover

Salles recorded that the French paquebot *Emirne* operated on Ligne P from 1876 to 1882.



Figure MM-71-2. Only cover to China that escaped Paris per “Ballon Monte;” then by MM

Carried over the German lines by the balloon "Ville de Paris."

Possibly sent to connect with the P&O at Brindisi or Suez, but most likely carried by the MM *Hoogly*  
 1 Ballon Monte cover to Hong Kong, and 3 to Japan are also known



Figure MM-71-9. Balloon Monte returned to France on 1st Westward voyage of *Provence*

Transported out of Paris by the balloon "Victor Hugo"  
 Carried by the P&O from Marseille to Yokohama, returned by MM  
 ex.- Ryohei Ishikawa



**Figure MM-72-11. Ava “arrested” due to collision with Rona; earliest 30c rate by MM**

MM *Ava* was detained at Hong Kong by an official inquiry into her collision with and sinking of the *Rona*. The Hong Kong Marshall “arrested” the *Ava* as security against any damages which might be awarded. After a near international incident, also involving the French iron-clad *Alma*, the situation was resolved.

Rate to GB for letters by French paquebots lowered on 29.4 to be same as if sent by British packet: 30c. This 3.5 cover represents the earliest possible use of the new 30c French paquebot rate to GB.



**Figure MM-75-22. MM *Anadyr* collided with *Teviot*; Unique "GB/40c" from Far East**

MM *Anadyr* collided with the *Teviot* on her way down river from Shanghai. “GB/40c” accountancy mark believed applied at Hong Kong, although Mr. Bohn shows Shanghai.



Figure MM-73-7A. Earliest known sent abroad through Japanese postal service

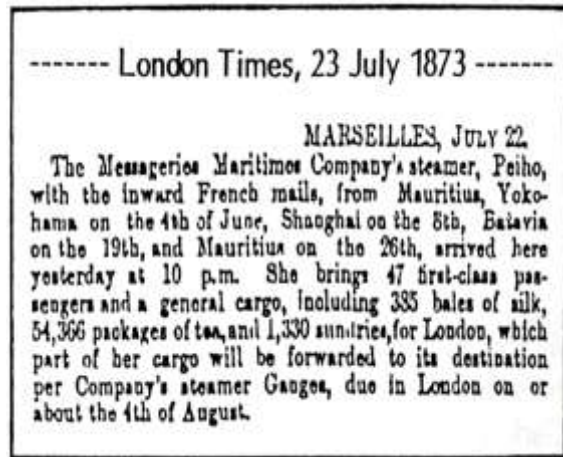
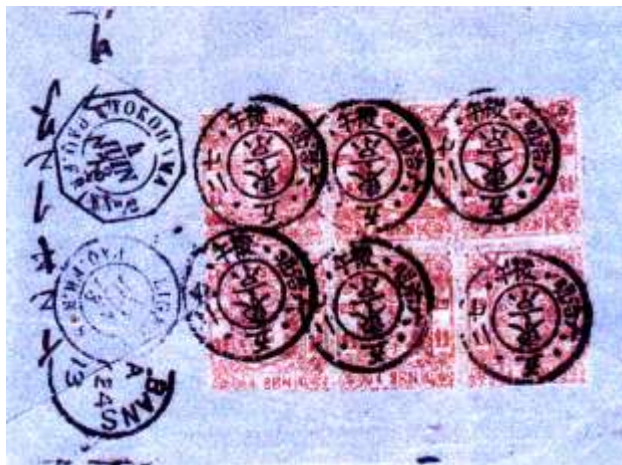


Figure MM-73-7B. “Paq Fr. S No 2” – 1 of 6      Figure MM-73-7C. *Peiho* arrival date (“LT”)

Analyzed by Messrs. Jan Simons, Phillip Kaye, and Ken Clark in the 8.1999 issue of “Kiku Shimbun.” Cover further analyzed by Mr. Matsumoto in the 2.2000 issue of “Japanese Philately.”

“Yokohama / Paq Fr. S No 2” on back is 1 of only 6 known examples of Salles 1.972/2 datestamp. Salles recorded this datestamp used only with anchor killer, not with the “5118,” as on this cover.

“Ligne N / Paq. Fr. No. 8” (Salles Type 1.921) applied on 14.6 when the MM *Peiho* left Hong Kong.

Datestamped on 24.7 at St. Albans, GB, 2 days before Salles recorded arrival of *Peiho* at Marseille on 26.7. Contradiction resolved by “London Times” notice, stating that *Peiho* arrived at Marseille on 21.7, vs. 26.7. This is an example of quite a number of instances that Salles showed scheduled vs. actual port dates.



**Figure MM-74-6. Only known “Hong Kong To Shanghai Marine Sorter” on cover by MM**

Marine sorting was normally done onboard the P&O packets between Hong Kong and Shanghai. It is believed that this mail for Shanghai was sorted in port on the day that the MM steamer left Hong Kong.



**Figure MM-74-24. 1 of 3 known with Marine Sorter marks sent from Shanghai by MM**

This 24.10 cover from Hankow was carried by the MM *Iraouaddy* from Shanghai 30.10 to Hong Kong 2.11. Only three known by French paquebot that bear “Hong Kong / Marine Sorter / Shanghai to / Hong Kong.” It is believed that this mail for Hong Kong was sorted in port on the day that the MM steamer left Shanghai.

Dr. Andrew Cheung collection



**Figure MM-76-9. Only known use of 2 different Japanese routing handstamps on 1 cover**

- 3 recorded Type 2 Degron-kun Japanese inland routing marks (wood block chops)
  - Directed letter by Japanese domestic mail from Tokyo to Yokohama
  - Only inland routing handstamp applied in red
- Franked 2 sen stamp for Japanese inland postal service
- 60c “China Sea” rate (franked two 30c French stamps)
- Captain Lebon apparently had already left HK, so letter sent back to Japan: “4”d due
- “Yokohama” BPO c.d.s. indicates P&O *Bombay* carried cover from Hong Kong
- “Tokyo Artillery Arsenal” routing mark applied to direct letter from Yokohama to Tokyo
- Another 2 sen Japanese stamp affixed for inland postal service



Figure MM-79-22. I. G. Customs / Peking by MM; earliest “ . . . Modane” c.d.s. from China

Cover paid at double the 8c per ½ ounce second UPU rate, but the 8 candarin franking was a single rate. Red “Poss Angl. / Paq. Fr. N” (Salles Type 1.933) applied onboard when MM *Iraouaddy* left Hong Kong. Red “Indo-chine / Paq. Fr. Modane” c.d.s. was applied to letters transported through the Mt. Cenis tunnel.