

Nigeria – Censor 21 at Kano

Peter Richards and Rob May

Neville Jones' piece in the last *Cameo* (Ref. 1) relating to the Nigerian Civil Censor number 21 set Peter thinking about a cover that appears in the new WASC book "West African Airmails" (Ref. 2). That cover was posted at Kano on 6 June 1940 to the UK and endorsed "Air Afrique" implying that it was meant to be sent via the French Trans-Sahara service. The cover is struck with the censor 21 mark. Martin & Walton (Ref. 3) state that number 19 of this series is known to have been used in Victoria, but make no claim for number 21. Our understanding seems to be that all other numbers in this series were applied at Lagos. However, to have joined the Air Afrique service a letter from Kano would have travelled north to Zinder or Fort Lamy, rather than south to Lagos.

We note with interest that Neville's example of number 21 is also postmarked Kano. So, is there a case to suggest that number 21 was used only at Kano? The question sent Rob off to look at his collection to find two censor 21 covers, both also postmarked Kano.

The cover at figure 2 has been seen and discussed by some WASC members interested in airmails. It is postmarked Kano 28 June 1940 and endorsed in red ink "via Air Afrique". It is addressed to Pointe Noire with a typed routing "via Leopoldville Fort Lamy". Due to the French surrender on 22 June the Air Afrique service had been suspended, so the cover could not take its intended route direct from Kano to Fort Lamy to connect with that flight. No alternative scheduled air mail service was available at that time and the cover seems to have passed casually between pilots on ferry trips, collecting back-stamps at Jos 17 July, Maiduguri 21 July, Fort Lamy 2 August, Brazzaville 26 August and Pointe Noire 28 August. It may eventually have travelled overland from Fort Lamy to its destination. The significance for the censor 21 issue is that it shows no evidence of having passed through Lagos, even though that would probably have been the best route in the unusual circumstances.

The cover shown at figure 1 takes the clock forward to 7 February 1942 and a surface mail letter from Kano to the USA, which must have passed through Lagos. Censor 21 could have been applied in either place. So, does anyone have a censor 21 that can be shown NOT to have any connection with Kano?



Figure 1

References

1. Jones N., "Nigeria – Censor 21", *Cameo*, Volume 7 p210, WASC, July 2002
2. Priddy B., *West African Airmails*, p120, WASC, Dronfield, 2002
3. Martin J.J. & Walton F.L., *West African Censorship*, pp55-59, WASC, Dronfield 2nd Edition 1999