

The Post in Spanish Guinea at the beginning of the 20th Century

Rodney Knight WASC 8 June 2024

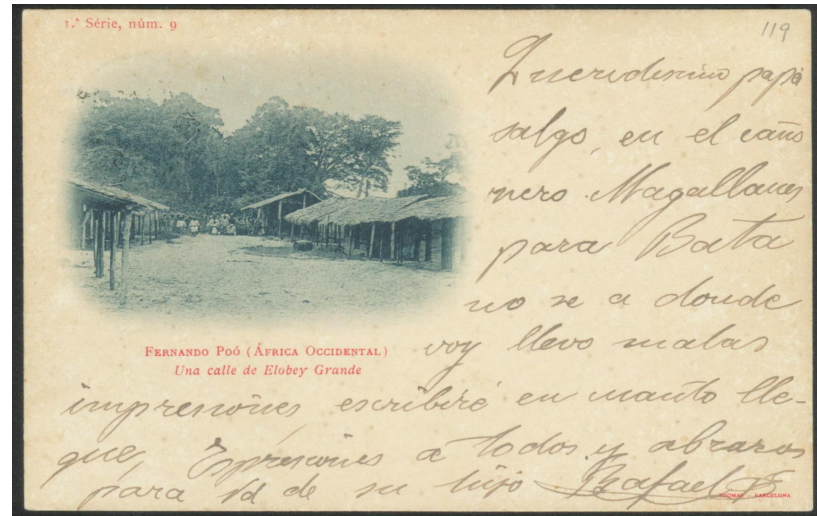
Early mail from the area is scarce, and envelopes rarely have the contents. Postcards, on the other hand, can sometimes add to our knowledge of the postal system from the messages.

The earliest postcards on sale in the area appear to be those published by Thomas of Barcelona. Starting in 1901, by 1905 there were at least 5 series, each of 10 cards.

The first two cards considered come from the same writer and are sent to different family members in Spain.



No 1 (Series 1 no 3 – typical people of Mendi and Monrovia), sent to Ferrol, is dated in manuscript 'Africa Occidental Bata 11 de Diciembre de 1901'.



No 2 (Series 1 no 9 – Fernando Poo, A street in Elobey Grande), sent to the writers father in Jerez, is undated. He says that he is going to get the gunboat 'Magellan' to Bata.



Both cards have a 10c Fernando Poo stamp of the 1901 issue (Ed 100), cancelled with the standard double ring cds 'CORREOS FERNANDO POO 30 JAN 1902'

Were the cards posted in Bata? There were no Spanish Guinea stamps in December 1901, but some Fernando Poo stamps had been overprinted locally, so there may have been unoverprinted stamps available. The cards would then have been sent back to Fernando Poo, being cancelled on arrival, but why not cancel in Bata?

Were the cards carried back to Fernando Poo for posting by the writer? This is the easier answer, but I would have expected the writer to have added something to the cards to account for the long time delay before posting.

Note stamp centering is different, so different sheets

The next two cards again come from one writer, and are sent to the same recipient in Copenhagen.



No 3: (Series 1 no 1 – Typical people of Corisco) is dated 16 September 1902, and has the 10c Fernando Poo stamp of the 1901 issue (Ed 100), cancelled with a blue cross.



No 4: (Series 1 no 8 – Settlement of Basile) is also dated 16 September 1902, but has a 10c stamp of the 1902 issue of Spanish Guinea (Ed 2), cancelled with a blue cross. Written on the front in Spanish is:

‘They were not willing to cancel the stamps in the Administration’

Were they posted in Spanish Guinea or Fernando Poo? Were the stamps bought in the same place?



No 5: (Series 2 no 1 – Partial view of Santa Isabel) is written in English and sent to France. It has a Great Britain 1d King Edward stamp (SG 219) cancelled with a pen cross, and the writer says:

' sorry there are no stamps from this country old chap but I couldn't get any'

There is a French arrival cancel of 16 Aug 1903.

Was the card was bought and posted in Fernando Poo?

The recipient of the card, Noel Thomas Sandford Exshaw was born on 14 April 1893, so he was 10. He was the son of William Exshaw and Lily Fleming. He married Viola Brown in 1918 and died on 1966 at age 73, with no children.



His father, William Exshaw lived at Villa Odessa, Arcachon, Gironde, France where he looked after the interests of the family firm of brandy producers. He was a prominent figure in local society and was Master of Arcachon otter hounds from 1888 to 1903. His yacht 'Olle' was the winner of both races in the 2-3 ton class at the 1900 Olympics.

Typically in West Africa before WW1 50% of the countries income came from taxes on alcohol

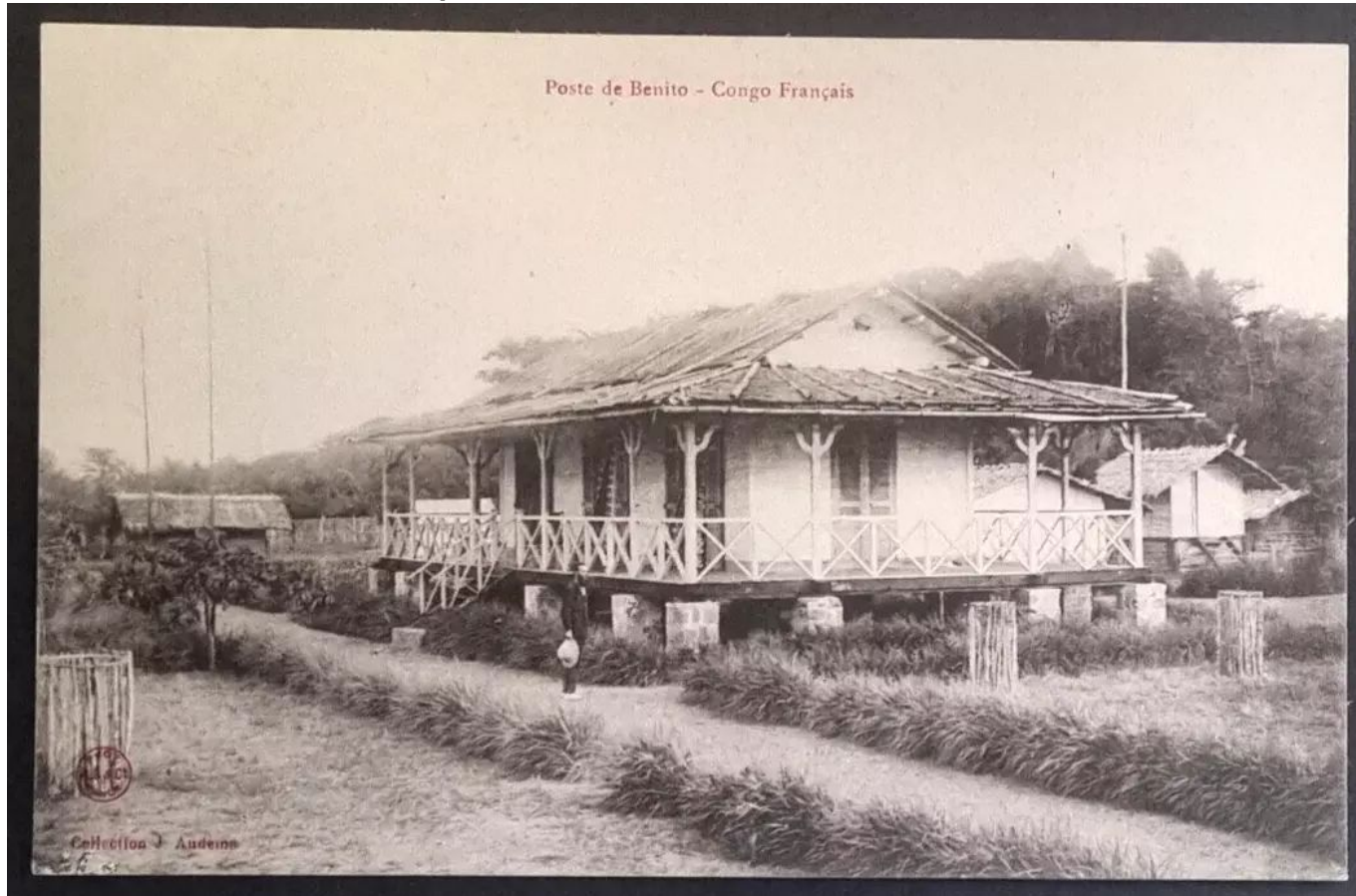
Advertisement for brandy circa 1895

**GABON AND RIO MUNI:
FRENCH POLITICAL AND POSTAL ACTIVITY
IN SPANISH EQUATORIAL AFRICA 1839-1906**

Bill Mitchell

2016

The French post Office in Benito, circa 1899



Photograph by Jean François Audema (1864-1921)