

**GERMAN BOTENPOST IN MOROCCO
BY LARRY GARDNER**

For purposes of moving the German mail domestically in Morocco, couriers (Boten) were employed and the forms they used for documentation were labeled Botenpost. The form below shows the North-South route taken by the couriers (on the left) and the return route on the right. French and Spanish mail sometimes moved by the Bote as was the reciprocal case by the French Rekke (courier) or Spanish runner. The number packets of letters carried was indicated between the Agencies and a change of couriers took place at each Agency

When the German Post Office opened in 1899, mail basically moved by ships of the Woerman Line or the Oldenburg-Portugese Steamship Line on a monthly basis. Because of the infrequency of the movement of the mails, most mail had to move overland from Morocco to Germany via Spain and France. In order to facilitate a continuous flow of mail, a courier service (Botenpost), was established Tanger in the North to Mogador in the South with a returning service Mogador to Tanger. Those Postal Agencies serviced are listed on the form in descending order by delivery sequence. Tanger, Larache, Rabat, Casablanca, Mazagan, Marrakesch, Saffi, and Mogador.

This form is only known postmarked from Saffi. It wasn't until the 1970's that the whole grouping of Saffi forms was discovered thus leading to speculate other forms were used from other Agencies because unified guidelines were in place for all Agencies in Morocco. The form was first used in 1900 according to the

find. A 1901 example is shown below and shows a different form than above, covering only one leg of the route (Saffi to Mogador). The reverse side is used two days later Saffi to Mazagan.

Interpreting the form to English, I have broken down an alphabetical enumeration depicting the essential parts of the form:

- A) Courier mail from Saffi to Mogador
- B) Courier (Bote) arrival time at hour, minutes, midday
- C) Courier departure- 3 August 1901 12 hours 00 minutes midday
- D) Name of the Courier- Larbi
- E) Number of the clerk-blank
- F) The following letter packets are found in the letter pouch-left blank as only one was carried
- G) Aufgabeort-Place of origin-Saffi
- H) Bestimmungsort-Destination-Mogador
- I) Anzahl der Briefpackete-number of letter packets-1
- J) Bemerkungen-Remarks
- K) Post Office cancellation-Saffi August 3, 1901
- L) Postal Agent signature-Gerber

From the year 1904, money was carried by the courier and recorded on the form in manuscript as Spanish Alfonsa Peseta or Moroccan Hassani pesetas. These are entered in the first form at the bottom left by remarks (Bemerkungen) Hassani Peseta 2500 and Alfonso Peseta 2000. The peseta differentiation was necessary because the Spanish peseta was stable and the Hassani fluctuated wildly. Therefore reimbursement had to be in the pesata purchased.

It is not known why all post offices were not included on the postal forms. Yet, I find it plausible because they were not on the North-South route accessible to the Atlantic Ocean. This was the route the French Rekkas had used for many years prior to the German Agency openings. These other German Post Offices were not included in this routing because it stands to reason they had to travel overland by separate couriers as they were inland locations such as Meknes, Fez, and Alkassar. Tetuan was located on the Mediterranean coast and did not open until 1906 and probably operated more independently and relied more on sharing couriers with the Spanish post and Spanish shipping. The others were connected to Tanger either directly or intersecting at Larache.

If a Woermann line ship or any other approved vessel was setting out for the next Postal Agency, the courier was given passage with his mail and duly noted by which ship in the Bemerkungen section. Also, if there is evidence that the ship carried Spanish or French mail it was duly noted in the same section.

Marrakesch appears on the postal form for the first time in 1903 and is a contradiction to my above statement regarding inland posts. It was 205 km inland from Mazagan and it must have had its own Bote to connect in line with the others as it appears as a printed stop on the form.

Based on the ability to study and catalogue examples of this form by Mr. Robert Hocks, he was able to write and publish the book "Die Deutsche Botenpost in Marokko Von 1900 bis 1909" in 1973. It was through the efforts of Louise and Richard White who translated the book from German to English for me in 2003 that I was able to complete this story and write up the pages in my exhibit pertaining to my above examples.