

BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE

LAGOS

Issues Stamped in Brazil

Three stamps of the 1884-86 issue, values 2d, 4d. and 6d (S.G. Nos 23, 24 and 25) were purchased in a Robson Lowe Auction in 1971, with some other Lagos issues. These three stamps however bear part each of a cancellation which can clearly be identified as: NOVA FRIBURGO.

The cancellation comprises a double circle of 24 and 13 m.m. respectively, the area between (in the top two thirds) carrying the place name. The centre carries the date with day over abbreviated month over last two figures of year. The bottom third of the double circle is not reproduced on any of the stamps. However the following can be clearly seen

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presumably being 9th September 189.....

In 1893 the letter rate to Brazil was $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. It seems therefore that stamping of the cover(s) involved was at the earlier 2d per half ounce rate and therefore cancellation took place probably between 1890 and 1892 possibly nearer 1890 since the 1884/86 had been replaced by the 1887-1902 issue.

The interest lies in how these stamps came to be cancelled in Brazil, certainly indicating some trade links.

Gazeteer references give Nova Friburgo as a town some 2779 feet above sea level situated in mountains along the railway line some 60 miles N.E. of the port of Rio de Janeiro and lying inland from the coast. The town is in the province of Serra do Mar and currently is a popular mountain resort built in the Swiss Alpine style having its main industries based on textile milling, stone cutting and soap manufacturing.

The town was founded in 1818 by Swiss German settlers presumably from the area of Freiburg in S. Germany possibly seeking a new life following the unsettled state of Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the encouragement of European settlers with their skills by the Portuguese authorities then ruling Brazil. Trade had been blossoming in Brazil following the transfer there by the British Fleet in 1807 of the Portuguese Royal Family fleeing Napoleon. In 1822 the son of the Portuguese King was crowned Emperor of Brazil.

In the meantime Brazilian Indians proving unsuitable as labour for the plantations both coffee and cotton, African negroes had been imported at a high rate and continued thus until 1850. In 1852 the flow ceased as a result of British action. Further immigration from Europe was then encouraged - from Portugal and Italy and later from Spain, Germany and Japan. Slavery was not finally abolished until 1888 although in 1889 a military coup abolished the monarchy and declared a republic, the root cause being dissatisfaction by landowners that the Government had paid them no compensation to free their slaves.

Reports culled from British newspapers quoting, inter alia, local consul reports show that trade did indeed exist between Brazil and Lagos as under:-

	<u>1880/1</u>	<u>1881/2</u>	<u>1882/3</u>
Exports to Lagos	£7850	£9487	£15335
Imports from Lagos	12628	10475	13476
Exports covered items sugar, coffee, tobacco.			

Reference to Payne's Lagos and W. Africa Almanack and Diary would seem to indicate that while no British ships plied this route there was at least an occasional French ship sailing from France via Lagos to Brazil which also carried passengers, travelling via Montevideo and the River Plate.

In 1884 and in subsequent years it is noted that established in Lagos were three Brazilian Commercial houses and three traders.

e.g. Manuel George Fereira of Timubu Square
J. J. da Costa of Bamghose Street.

In the same year, for instance, three Brazilian vessels totalling 400 tons gross weight entered Lagos and four vessels of 553 tons cleared Lagos.

However by 1888 exports of Lagos produce had fallen to £6402 and included, inter alia, country cloth, Kolah nuts, palm oil, soap and spice, but, imports from Brazil had increased to £17761.

Yet again in 1892 trade had again fallen, exports to Brazil to £2933 and imports to £5583, and in that year only one French ship entered Lagos while two cleared it (total shipping clearing Lagos 458 ships of which 241 were British).

It would seem that no British shipping line from the U.K. to W. Africa continued their voyage to Brazil, both the two main lines, The British and African Steamship Co. and the African Steamship Co. quoted freight rates to W. and S.W. coast of Africa only.

By the early 1890's inter country trade had fallen to comparatively lower levels. However direct trading links were still extant and the following possibilities emerge:

a) Friburgo today has two industries which may be old established i.e. cloth or textile manufacturing and soap. Lagos exported not only country cloth in the period 1880/90 but also soap and soap making material. The Brazilian commercial houses and/or traders established in Lagos may have been buyers on behalf of Friburgo industry, thus necessitating one or more letters on each voyage which were handed to the vessel's captain and cancelled on arrival in Friburgo.

b). There may have been family or friendly connections between inhabitants of Friburgo and the Brazilians in Lagos resulting in correspondence.

c) Only remotely and perhaps a little too adventuresome, were a few slaves still being smuggled in for the cotton plantations near Friburgo?

The Portuguese nation had been one of the earliest to explore the Atlantic coastline of Africa and to establish trading posts at various points, e.g. El Mina (Gold Coast), Lagos, etc., which as the race for Africa got under way Angola developed as a colony. Meanwhile on the other side of the Southern Atlantic, Brazil, an erstwhile Portuguese colony was growing as a nation but still with strong links with Portugal. It is not surprising therefore that Brazilian ships and traders were to be found on the West African coastline developing the trade between them.

After contact with other B.W.A.S.C. members the following evidence has been produced confirming the direct shipping links and thus mail carrying links between the West Coast of Africa and Brazil:

- a) Mr. Colin McCaig holds a missionary letter of 1849 sent from Sierra Leone by ship to Bahia and thence to New York.
- b) Mr. R. B. Sanderson has a postcard despatched from Rio do Janeiro to Lagos of 15th October 1889 by French Paquebot via Senegal, Ivory Coast, Kotonou, Benin, arriving Lagos after 84 days in transit on 6th Jan. 1890. The stamp is a Brazilian (impressed) 60 Reis orange similar to the adhesives of the 1882 - 1885 issue.

Conclusion

It is surprising really that more stamps of the main exporting ports such as Lagos, cancelled in Brazil, have not come to light; or of those from Brazil to W. Africa. These cancellations certainly offer something to look for.

