

Transformation of the Shangani canceller

The Shangani postmaster's shenanigans ended on 16 July 1912, after he transformed the layout of his single circle canceller during a process that lasted more than two weeks. Until the start of July, not only did the postmark have code 1, with a dot, which served no purpose, numerous errors constantly appeared on the postmark during the Double Head era.

An analysis of data from Memoir 34, Postmarks on the Double Head Issue, shows that the Shangani post office recorded easily the most postmark variations, notably from one canceller. Moreover, it was a relatively small office. The variations flowed mainly because of the postmaster's negligence, incompetence and laziness.

The postmaster made his first move to knock the canceller's layout into shape on 1 July 1912. He removed code 1, with a dot, sometimes used upside down, where it had been since the canceller was first used in the first half of 1901.

On 6 July 1912, he decided the postmark should show the full year it was struck in and introduced the year digits 12. However, he used small 1 and 2 digits, and placed them in the incorrect space, to the left below the Y.

On 16 July he had another go at sorting out the postmark by replacing the year digits with only a correctly sized single 2 digit, with a dot (from a different set of slugs). He realized that the postmark was still not quite right. Later that day he cleaned the canceller and inserted year digits 12 in the correct place. Previously, it was thought that he had done this on the next day.



Code 1, with dot, MR no day/2



JY 6/12 with small 12



JY 16/2 with dot



JY 16/12



JY 17/12