Introduction

On December 22, 2016 the Dutch stamp blog www.postzegelblog.nl published an article about Congo (DRC) that the Société Congolaise des Postes et Télécommunications (SCPT) for the first time in 30 years would deliver mail in Kinshasa again. It concerns only shipments from and to Kinshasa but in times to come they have great plans.

Since 1986, the SCPT did not deliver mail any longer. The delivery was getting worse because the postal workers often had to wait for months to get their salary. Beside that the customers had lost confidence in the Post because most of the packages were ripped open or lost. This resulted in the end of the mail delivery at home in DR Congo.

In the past SCPT had 389 post offices which are still closed now and the plans are to (re)open 68 of them.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uC9T7kNNozM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fJcdkUOzeo

In the Netherlands the last post office closed on October 27, 2011. The years before service points were opened in shops and food stores and from January 1, 2014 there was no longer delivery on Monday. Perhaps it will be only three days in the near future.

These both facts were the reason for me to look after the situation from Congo in the past as it is one of the countries that changed their name very often. Of course this had influence on the stamps which were issued.

Congo

The country was discovered by Sir Henry Morton Stanley in 1877. In 1879-80 Stanley visited Congo again. He was approached by King Leopold II of Belgium, the ambitious Belgian monarch who had organized a private holding company in 1876 disguised as an international scientific and philanthropic association, which he called the “International African Association”. The king spoke of his intention to introduce western civilization and bring religion to that part of Africa, but did not mention the fact that he wanted to claim the land.
The country had the following (five) names:
Etât Indépendant du Congo (1885 – 1908)
Congo Belge (1908 – 1960)
(Premier) République du Congo (1960 – 1965)
(Deuxième) République du Congo (1965 – 1971)
Zaïre (Oct 27, 1971 – May 16, 1997)
Name change was to make a contribution to the authenticity of their own culture.

RDC has an area of 2.300.000 square kilometers (more or less equal to Western Europe).

IT IS NOT Republique (Populaire) du Congo with capital Brazzaville and a former French colony which was founded on Sep 5, 1964.

Capital

The first capital in 1886 was Vivi but in May 1886 Boma became the capital.
On October 31, 1929 there was a change again and Léopoldville became the capital. Léopoldville refer to King Léopold II.
In Léopoldville the military and administration center from Congo was situated and in Kinshasa the industry.
In 1910 Léopoldville and Kinshasa were connected by a broad way – nowadays Boulevard du 30 Juin - from 8 km.

In 1955 Kinshasa had 300,00 inhabitants and Léopoldville in 1959 400,000. The Léopoldville-Kinshasa agglomeration was renamed in Kinshasa in 1966.
In 2010 the city had about 8,000,000 inhabitants.

Currency (and inflation)

In 1960 the Franc Congolais was introduced. The value was equal to the Franc Belgium. In 1967 a new currency (Zaire) was introduced.

The Zaire (symbol: "Z" or sometimes "Ƶ") was subdivided into 100 Makuta (singular: Likuta, symbol: "K") or 10,000 Sengi (symbol: "S"). Likuta is derived from Kuta ("stone") in the language of the Nupe, an ethnic indigenous group in several African countries.

On the date of introduction the Zaire was 1,000 Francs Congolais = 100 Francs Belge = US$ 2,00. In February 1980 it was 1 Zaïre = 10 Francs Belge = US$ 0,34.
PHILATELIC NEWSLETTER VOLLEYBALL

In 1970 the highest banknote had a value of five Zaïre. In 1984 it was five hundred; in 1990 fifty thousand and in December 1992 it was five million Zaires and still two U$ dollar.

In March 1993 the Nouveau Zaïre was introduced. The Nouveaux Zaire = 100 Nouveaux Makuta = three million old Zaires. In June 1998 the Franc Congolais was introduced (again). One Franc Congolais was equal to 400,000 Nouveau Zaires or 14,000,000 old Zaires. In 2008 (credit crisis) 500 Francs Congolais was equal to one U$ dollar.

African Games

Between 1920 and 1950 the Soviet Union tried to play a role in developments in Africa. But some months before the opening of the Olympic Games in Paris (1924) Pierre de Coubertin wrote in an undated memo: “Le sport veut conquérir l’Afrique!” (The sport will conquer Africa).

But the expansion of Soviet and African sports relationships started mid-1950. Beginning 1961 the Soviet Union lobbied the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to adopt a resolution to assist the development of amateur sports in Africa, Asia and South America. The resolution was finally adopted in 1973. The first "African" sporting event started in 1959 in Bangui (Central African Republic) and was called: "Jeux Inter-Africains” and was only open for French-speaking participants.

In 1960 (April 13-19) the “Jeux de la Communauté” in Antananarivo (Madagascar) -cosponsored by the French government – were held and sixteen former French colonies with 800 athletes participated in eight sports.

Final score volleyball was:

In the games - “Jeux de l’Amitié” - from 1961 (December 24-31) in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) English speaking athletes from Nigeria and Liberia participated also.

During these games the countries talk about the participation from women in track and field, basketball, swimming and volleyball.

Final score volleyball was:

The games – still “Jeux de l’Amitié” - in Dakar (Senegal) in 1963 (April 11-21) enjoyed 2,400 athletes from France and 24 independent nations, inclusive the English-speaking countries Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone but excluded South Africa and Rhodesia because of their apartheid regime.
PHILATELIC NEWSLETTER VOLLEYBALL

For the first time women compete in an international competition (only track and field and basketball). Final score volleyball is unknown.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-IjbyAsvEA
http://www.ina.fr/video/CAF95034780

The basis for the African Games was born. The first African Games were held in Brazzaville from July 18 till 25, 1965. Congo (DRC) issued two volleyball stamps to commemorate the preliminary round (Poule V) in Leopoldville. The 12th African Games will take place in 2019 in Equatorial Guinea.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKKrDqgzd98
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volleyball_at_the_African_Games

Congo Games

The first (National) Congolese Games took place in Kinshasa from June 25 till July 2, 1967 with 700 athletes. There is no confirmation found about the dates. Five years later (1972) the second Games took place again in Kinshasa with a participation of 900 athletes. In 1974 (October 5 – 13) the third Games were organized in Lubumbashi (Province Katanga) and this time with 1,335 athletes and officials.

The organization of the 4th Congolese Games was a never ending story.

They were scheduled from June 24 - July 6, 2003 in Kinshasa and were estimated at 683,950 US $ costs. But the Games were postponed.

The next games were scheduled in Kinshasa from April 7 – 15, 2011 than from August 15 – 20, 2011 and later on for August 20 – 25 and September 24 -30 but the Games were postponed due to financial reasons. The organizing committee expected to receive four million US$ and only 900,000 US$ was received.

In 2014 the 4th Games were scheduled to take place in Kinshasa from December 4 - 20, where more than 2,000 athletes and officials were expected. These games would host 13 disciplines with athletics, basketball, boxing, cycling, football, handball, judo, karate, lawn-tennis, wrestling, swimming, taekwondo and volleyball.

On January 9, 2015 The Secretary General for Sports announced that the 4th Games are postponed to the second half of February 2015.

Journalist Anthony Yebo wrote: Cette fois-ci ou jamais. (It’s now or never).

In the end he was right: It was never!!
Covers from Congo (DRC)

FD cover commemorating the playoffs of Poule V for the 1st African Games in Léopoldville. The FD cancel from April 26, 1965 has the text République du Congo – Léopoldville.

FD cover (almost four months after the Games) commemorating the 1st Congolese Games in Kinshasa. The FD cancel from October 16, 1967 has the text République Democratique du Congo – Kinshasa.

FD cover commemorating the Olymphilex 1985 in Lausanne. The FD cancel from April 19, 1985 has the text Olymphilex ‘85 Kinshasa.

I have chosen for a presentation in order of date of shipment and not date of issue of the stamps

1) Registered airmail cover (from internet) sent on November 9, 1965 from Bukavu-1 to Brussels-3 with Francs 28,00. The rate for registered covers to Belgium from May 1, 1964 was Francs 18,00 for covers till 5 gr + Francs 10,00 for registered.
2) Airmail cover sent on January 15, 1966 from Bukavu-1 to Brussels (Belgium) with Francs 18,00. The rate for airmail covers to Belgium from May 1, 1964 on was Francs 18,00 for covers till 5 gr.

3) Airmail cover sent on January 17, 1966 from Luluabourg (nowadays Kananga) to Nashville (USA) with Francs 60,00. The rate for airmail covers to USA from May 1, 1964 on was Francs 60,00 for covers till 15 gr.

4) Airmail cover sent on July 4, 1966 from Kinshasa-1 to Marseille (France) with Francs 31,50. This cover has stamps with four different names of the country, so I think it is a cover between collectors. More or less it is a “postal history” cover.

5) Airmail cover sent on July 18, 1966 from M/S “Breughel” (Build in 1963 by Cockerill Yards in Hoboken, Belgium) at that moment in Matadi from Boma to BrusselsIII (Belgium) with Francs 24,00. Cover arrived July 22, 1966. The rate for airmail covers to Belgium from May 1, 1964 on was Francs 18,00 for covers till 5 gr. Francs 24,00 was the rate to all other countries in Europe.

6) Registered airmail cover by Express sent on November 7, 1966 from Bukavu to Chicago (USA) with Francs 90,00. Arrival cancel Chicago – Prudential Plaza Stat. from Nov 14, 1966 at backside. The rate for airmail covers to USA from May 1, 1964 on was Francs 75,00 till 20 gr. (Francs 60,00 till 15 gr.) The rate for Registered was Francs 10,00 and for Express also. Francs 75,00 + Francs 10,00 for Registered + Francs 10,00 for Express = Francs 95,00.
7) Airmail cover (from internet) sent on March 13, 1967 from Bukavu to Bujumbura (Burundi) with Francs 15,00. The rate for airmail covers to Burundi from May 1, 1964 on was Francs 15,00 for covers till 10 gr.

8) Airmail cover (from internet) sent on April 19, 1967 from Kinshasa to Bron (France) with Francs 43,00. The rate for airmail covers to France from May 1, 1964 on was Francs 42,00 for covers till 15 gr.

REMARK:
The rates for covers after the introduction of the Zaïre are unknown to me but it seems that covers till 20 gr. had a rate of Makuta 9,6 for destinations in Europe (see below).

9) Registered airmail cover by Express sent on March 5, 1968 from Kinshasa-1 to Differt (Belgium) and (arrival?) cancel March 7, 1968 at backside with Makuta 29,8 and Francs 26,00 = about Makuta 2,6. Volleyball in red.

10) Commercial airmail cover sent on March 6, 1968 from Mbandaka to Kiel (West-Germany) with Francs 96,00 equal to Makuta 9,6.

11) Registered airmail cover sent on March 9, 1968 from Kisangani-1 to London (UK) with Francs 180,00 equal to Makuta 18,00.
12) Airmail cover sent on March 19, 1968 from Kinshasa-1 to Gembloux-3 (Belgium) with Francs 96,00 equal to Makuta 9,6.

13) Airmail cover sent on March 28, 1968 from Luluabourg (nowadays Kananga) to Paranhos da Beira (Portugal) with Makuta 9,6 (in red). Arrival date April 5, 1968 on backside.

14) Airmail cover sent on April 4, 1968 from Kinshasa-1 to Gembloux-3 (Belgium) with Francs 96,00 equal to Makuta 9,6.

15) Airmail cover sent on April 18, 1968 from Kinshasa-1 to Gembloux-3 (Belgium) with Francs 96,00 equal to Makuta 9,6.

16) Airmail cover sent on April 23, 1970 from Kamponde via Luluabourg (nowadays Kananga) to Heemskerk (Netherlands) with Makuta 9,6 + Francs 5,00 = about Makuta 0,5.
17) Commercial airmail cover sent on January 2, 1979 from Kisangani to Frankfurt/Main (Germany) with Makuta 53,6. Volleyball in red.

18) Cover sent on July 12, 1985 from Kinshasa to Hannover (Germany). Collector sent his own covers to Postal Authorities all over the world for new issues.

19) Airmail cover sent (date = unknown) from Kinshasa to Biel (Switzerland) with Zaire 65,00. The rate for airmail covers to Europe from August 15, 1984 on was Zaire 30,00 for covers till 20 gr.

If you should be interested in stamps/covers from Congo - before 1960 - please visit this website with bulletins which can be downloaded.


Resources:
Congo, een geschiedenis, 2010 (Congo, a history) by David Van Reybrouck
Internet:
The autobiography of Sir Henry Morton Stanley.
Kinshasa Then and Now
Wikipedia
Toute l'information du Bassin du Congo
Congolese newspapers

MY THANKS GO TO: Philippe Lindekens (Belgium) and André Jungen (Germany).

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