

XXXVII

Traveling Post Offices and Rural Service

<i>Traveling Post Offices</i>	721	<i>Rural Service</i>	735
<i>Military TPOs</i>	724	<i>Forgeries</i>	739
<i>Listing</i>	724	<i>References</i>	740

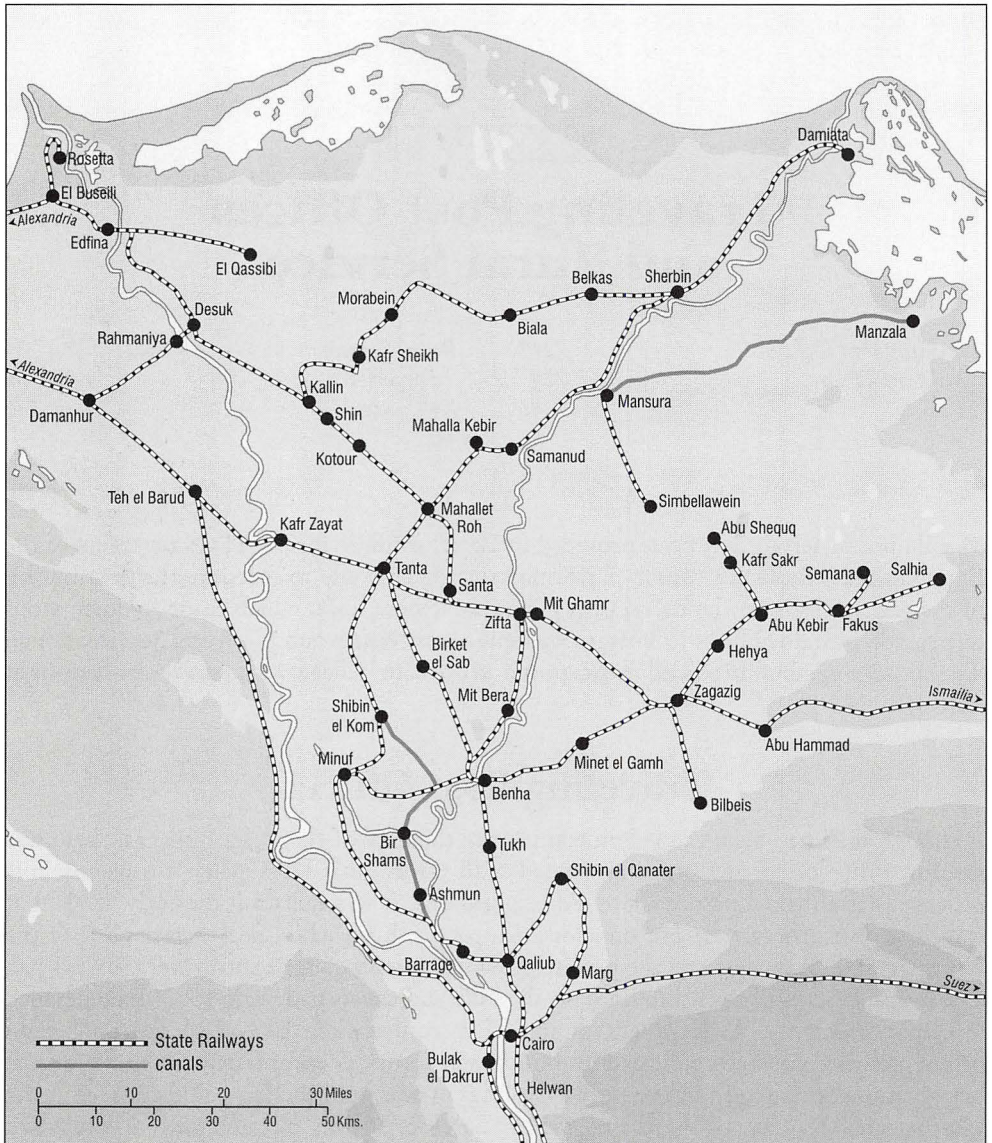
Mobile postal service has been provided in Egypt in three forms: TPOs on trains of the Egyptian State Railways, which performed sorting en route to speed up the distribution of the mails; TPOs on the light railways and some boat lines, which made frequent stops to provide postal facilities to villages without a post office; and the Rural Service, which did no sorting, but provided basic postal service to villages not served by the light railways.

Traveling Post Offices

Although mail had been carried on trains since the days of the *Posta Europea*, there was no post office or sorting office associated with trains until 1875, when a traveling post office was established on the Cairo–Alexandria line. It was not until the early 1880s that traveling post offices were put on additional routes. Eventually, nearly every line of the Egyptian State Railways and the privately owned narrow-gauge agricultural railways had a post office; several steamship lines on the Nile and canals had them too. Much detailed information on the development of the TPO routes, their period of operation, and postmarks used has been collected in monograph form¹. A comprehensive book² on the history and construction of the railways of Egypt was published in connection with the International Railway Congress of 1932. Therefore in this chapter only a condensed treatment is given, with new information to bring the subject up to date.

The Egyptian State Railways (ESR), built to standard gauge, developed an extensive network in the Delta extending from the Libyan border to the Palestinian border and from the Mediterranean shores to Cairo where several lines converged (Maps 1 and 2). A physically separated part extended up the Nile Valley to Shellal, somewhat short of the Sudanese border, where ferry connection was made to Wadi Halfa (Map 3). The two parts terminated at Cairo on opposite sides of the Nile and there was no connection until a bridge was built in 1892. Even then, all trains terminated at Cairo and consequently there were no TPO routes passing through Cairo.

The Delta Light Railways Co. (DLR) built a system of lines in the western part of the Delta to 0.75-meter gauge (Map 4), and the Société des Chemins de Fer de la Basse Egypte



Map 1 The Egyptian State Railway lines in the Delta.

(SCFBE) built lines of 1-meter gauge in the eastern part (Map 5). The Suez Canal Co. railway between Port Said and Ismailia was also built to narrow gauge, but was bought by the Egyptian State Railways and later converted to standard gauge. In the Fayum Oasis, south of Cairo, the Fayum Light Railways Co. (FLR) built a narrow-gauge network between 1900 and 1902 (Map 6), and the Corporation of Western Egypt (CWE) built a narrow-gauge line from Farshut in the Nile Valley to Kharga Oasis in 1908 (it was sold to the Egyptian Government in 1909). Traveling post offices operated at one time or another on all of these lines. The light railways served many villages that had no post

office, and the TPOs provided general postal service, even to accepting registered letters (Fig. 1) and, apparently, selling stamps at each stop (the schedules must have been very slow!).

Most of the steamer TPOs functioned over routes not yet served by rail, which was faster. As the railways expanded, the steamer routes contracted. One steamer route was

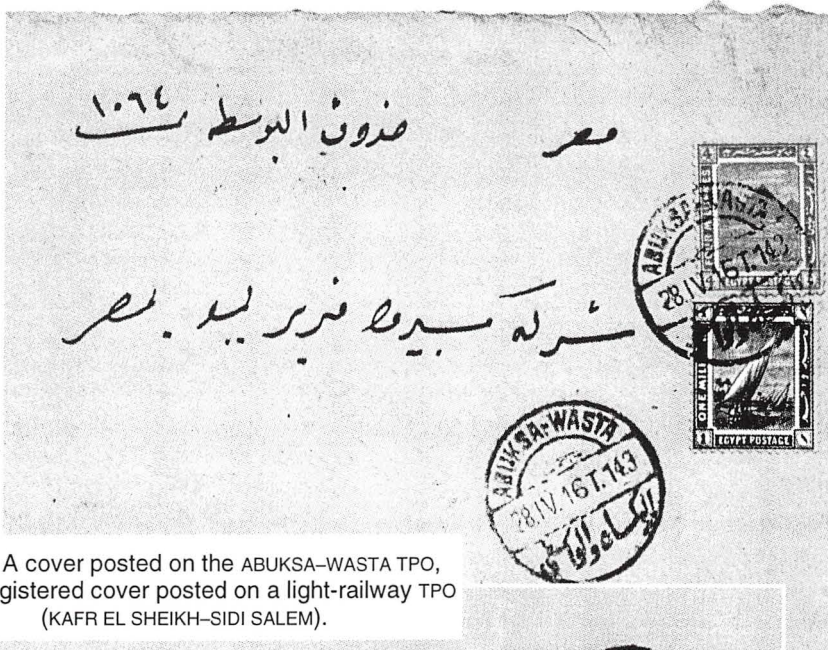


Fig. 1 A cover posted on the ABUKSA-WASTA TPO, and a registered cover posted on a light-railway TPO (KAFR EL SHEIKH-SIDI SALEM).



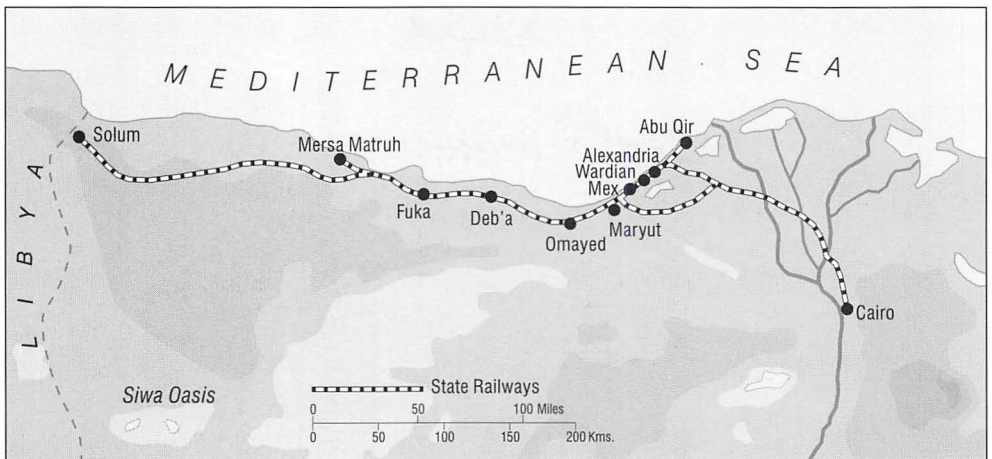
on the Bahr Shibin, a major canal northwest of Cairo, between Delta Barrage and Shibin el Kom. The Bir Shams–Qanater el Delta TPO was a shorter run on the same canal. The Rosetta branch of the Nile carried the Edfina–Kafr el Zayat TPO and the Atfe–Kafr el Zayat TPO for a short time in the late 19th century. The Bahr Saghir, a major canal running eastward from Mansura, was the location of the Mansura–Manzaleh TPO until about 1898, when the light railway was completed from Mansura to Mataria, paralleling the canal. In Upper Egypt a steamer TPO operated between Assiut and Aswan until about 1892, when the expanding railway line caused it to be cut back to Girga–Aswan (about 1894 to 1898). It was finally superseded by the Cairo–Girga railway TPO. The international Assuan–Wadi Halfa TPO, that soon became the Shellal–Halfa TPO, linking Egypt with Sudan, was also a steamer route (the latter should not be confused with the Sudanese TPO on the same route, which used a different style of date-stamp).

Military TPOs

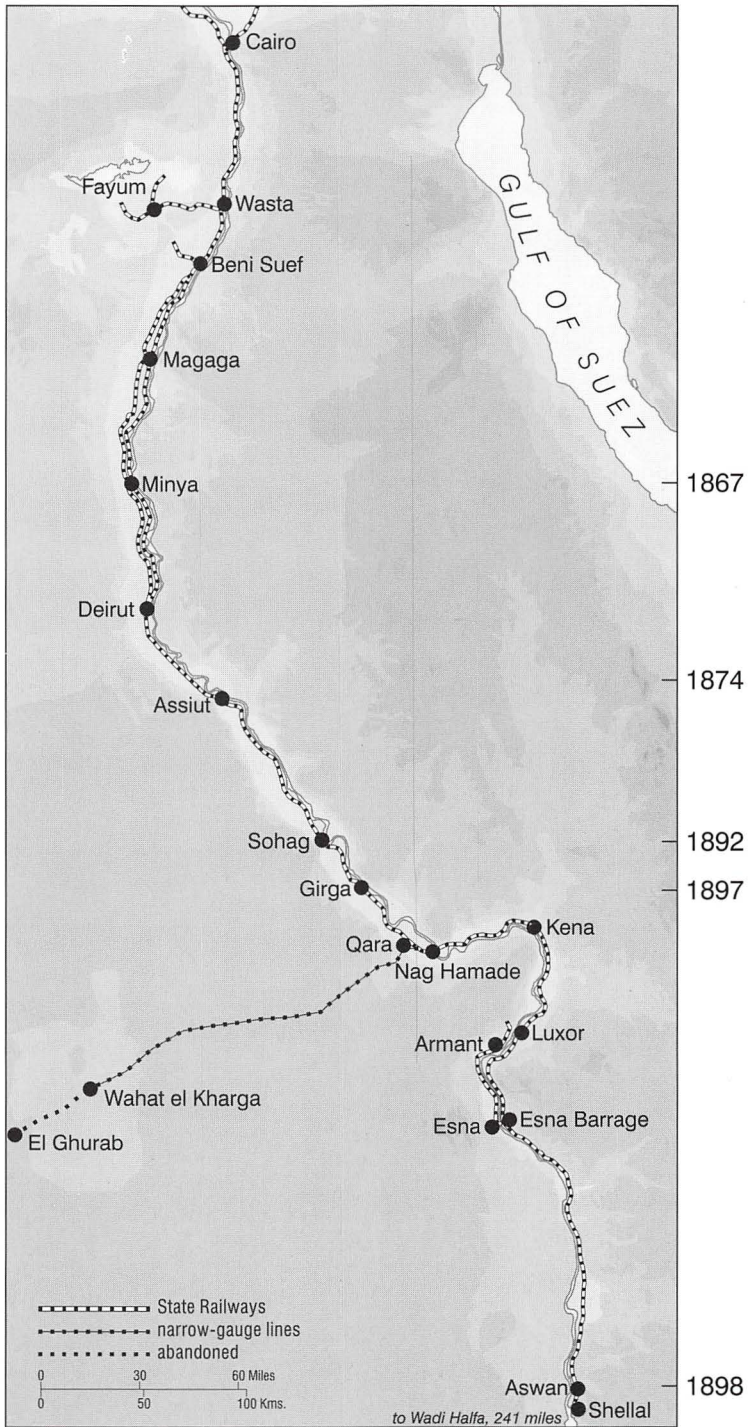
During World War I and into 1919 special traveling post offices were operated on trains serving the troops: the Western Desert line, the line across Sinai to Palestine, Cairo–Suez Canal, and Upper Egypt. These services were operated by the military and used skeleton date-stamps in which the routes were indicated only by initials, except that UPPER EGYPT was spelled out³ (TPO Routes, p. 729 and Chapter XLIV, Fig. 10).

Listing

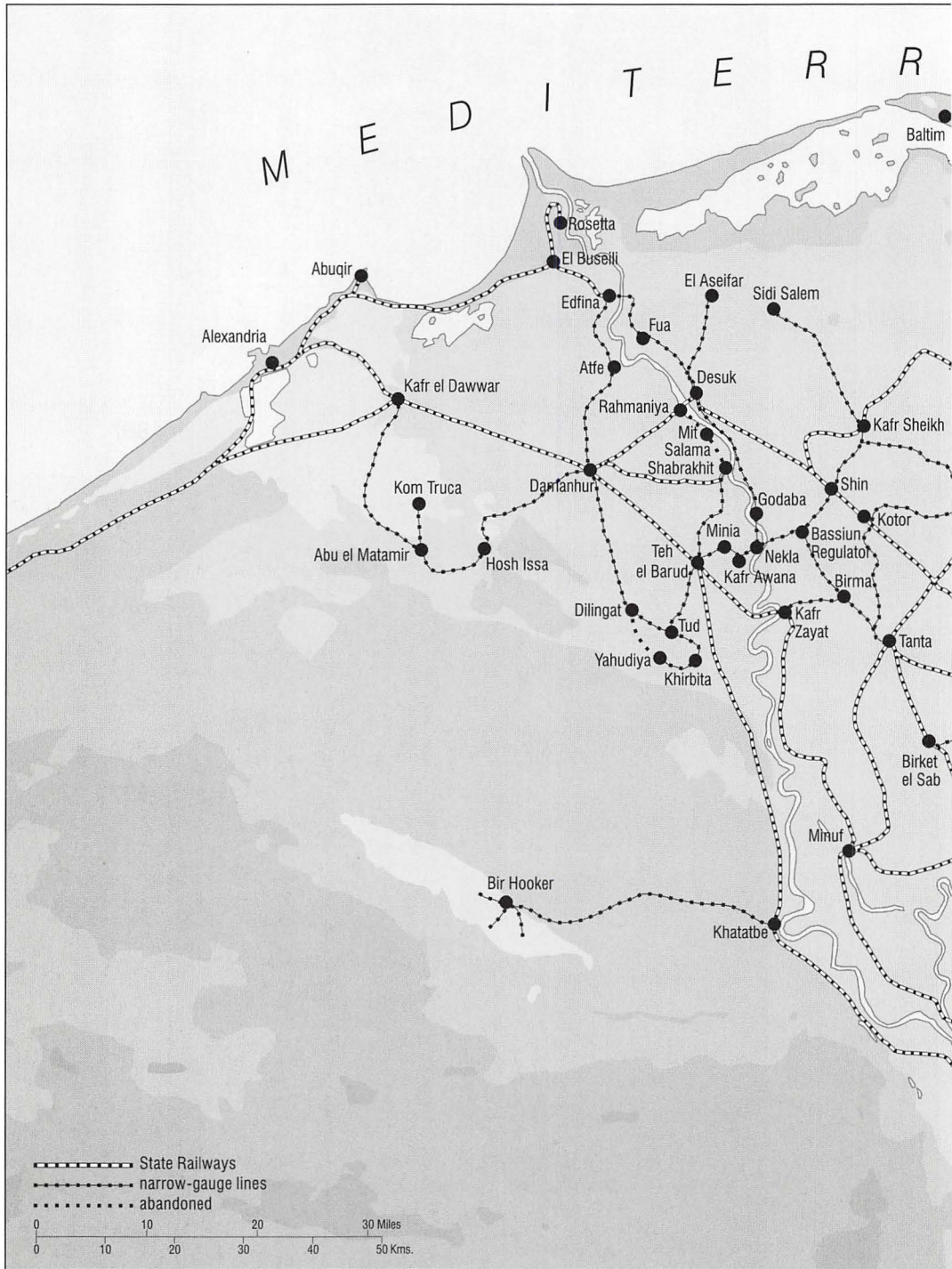
All of the known TPOs of Egypt are listed in the following table. A problem that made composing the table difficult can also make using the table confusing: names of places in Egypt may have several spellings depending on the system used to transliterate the Arabic name. In many cases different initial letters are used and constructing a list in alphabetical order is impossible without setting some arbitrary rules. The problem may be appreciated by considering that “Chine”, “Shin” and “Sheen” are the same place, as are “Qaliub”, “Kaliub”, and “Galiub” (the Arabic spelling of most of the names can be found in Appendix 3, in Reference 1 and in Birken⁴); even more extreme is the equivalence of “Ityai el Barud” and “Teh el Barud”. Vowels are somewhat variable in Arabic and more



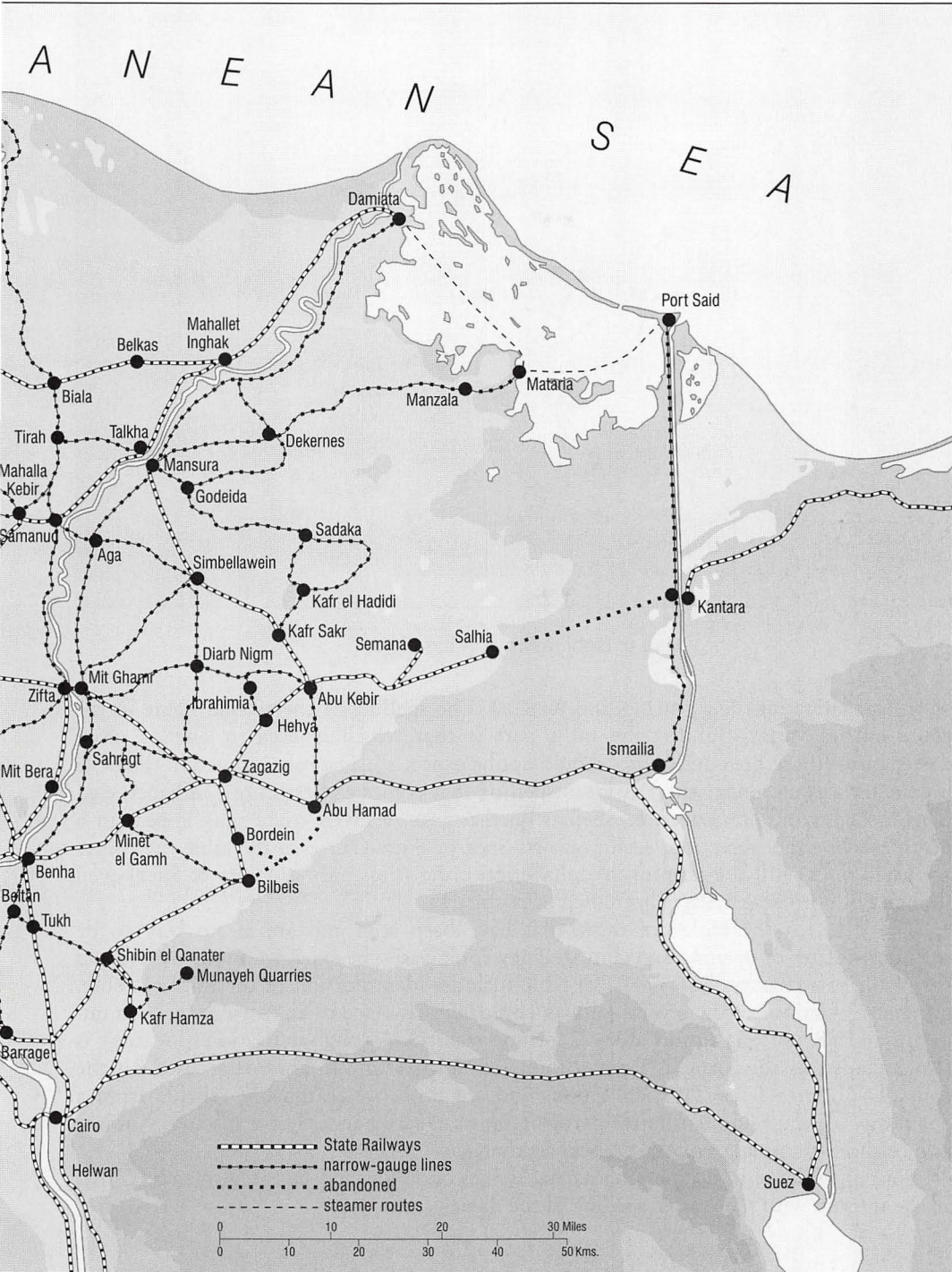
Map 2 Railways near Alexandria and in the Western Desert.



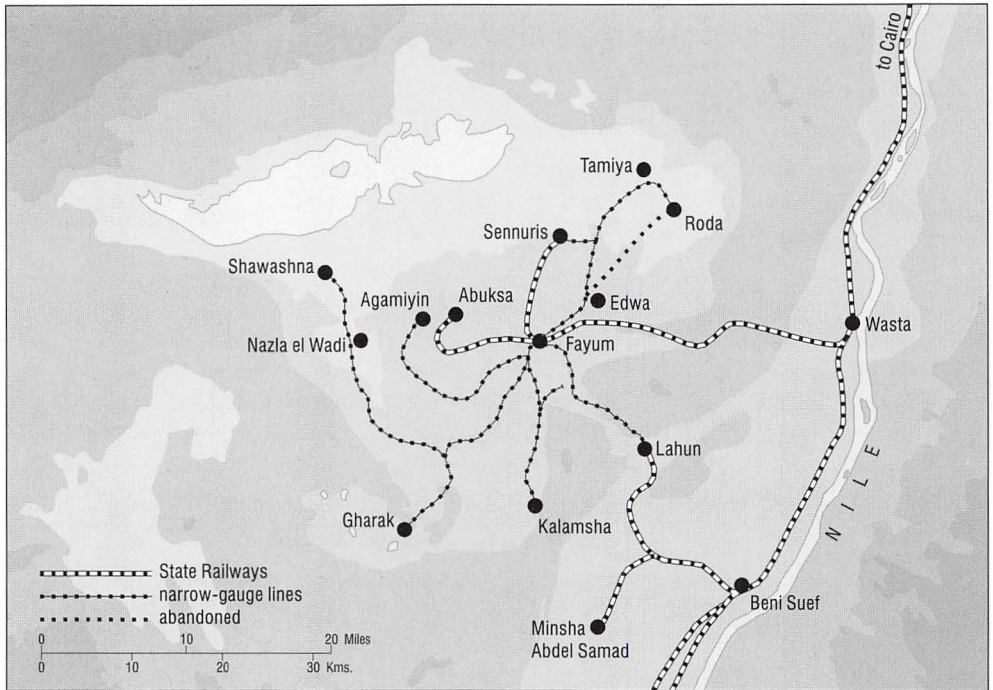
Map 3 Railways in Upper Egypt.



Map 4 Light railways in the western Delta.



Map 5 Light railways in the eastern Delta.



Map 6 Light railways in the Fayum.

so in transliterations (e.g., BILBES and BILBEIS). The spelling of the second name in the route entries varies, but for the most part is that which is used in one or more date-stamps (therefore consistency should not be expected). The rule adopted in the table is to enter a route under the European spelling that comes earliest in the alphabet; e.g., Chellal & Luxor, not Luxor & Shellal. Furthermore, a given route may appear in a postmark in either direction, such as Cairo–Suez or Suez–Cairo. In the table the routes are listed only with the termini in alphabetical order (thus only as Cairo & Suez) even though both orders may have been used in postmarks.

The dates in the table are those that have been seen and are in no way to be considered dates of opening and closing. They could easily be extended by many years as the result of a chance discovery. The table includes identification of the kind of route, using abbreviations of the several railway companies (absence of an entry in this column means an ESR route in almost all cases, or uncertainty). A rough indication of scarcity is also included in the form of Roman numerals from I to VI. These are based on the contents of three large TPO collections and are probably reasonably reliable from a qualitative aspect, but quantitative perturbations can easily arise by the discovery of just two or three examples of one of the scarcer routes.

For convenience in deciphering partial strikes of TPO handstamps, Appendix 3 lists all the termini with the Arabic spelling of the names.

TPO ROUTES				
Termini	Type	Dates seen	Scarcity	
ABOU HAMMAD & ABOU KEBIR	DLR	1914–1924	V	
ABOU HAMMAD & BILBEIS	DLR	1915–1916	V	
ABOU HAMMAD & DIARB NIGM	DLR	1908–1913	VI	
ABOU HAMMAD & MINET EL KAMH	DLR	1904–1912	V	
ABOU HAMMAD & SIMBELLAWAIN	DLR	1905	VI	
ABOU EL MATAMIR & DAMANHUR	DLR	1905–1949	III	
ABOU EL MATAMIR & KAFR DAWWAR	DLR	1916–1938	V	
ABOU EL SHEQUQ & SIMBELAWEN		1922–1923	VI	
ABOU KEBIR, IBRAHIMIA & HEHYA	DLR	1902	VI	
ABOU KEBIR & SALHIA		1887–1944	II	
ABOUKIR & RASHID		1905–1906	V	
ABOUKIR (ABU QIR) & ALEXANDRIA		1905–1945	IV	
ABUKSA & WASTA		1899–1940	II	
ABUKSA, WASTA & FAYUM		1922	V	
Abu Sir & Ashmant, presumably Rural Service, used a TPO-style date-stamp				
AGA & DIARB NIGM	DLR	1908	VI	
AGA & ZAGAZIG	DLR	1905–1936	V	
AGAMIN & FAYUM	FLR	1923	VI	
ALEXANDRIA TPO		1936–1937	V	
ALEXANDRIA & CAIRO		1875–1954	I	
ALEXANDRIA & DABA'A		1910–1920	V	
ALEXANDRIA & DAMANHUR		1886–1892	IV	
ALEXANDRIA & EDFINA		1908–1943	IV	
ALEXANDRIA & MARIUT		1936–1939	VI	
ALEXANDRIA & MERSA MATRUH		1960	VI	
ALEXANDRIA & MEX		1905–193-	VI	
ALEXANDRIA & PORT SAID		1904–1914	*IV	
ALEXANDRIA & RAMLEH		1888–1909	III	
ALEXANDRIA & ROSETTA		1883–1922	IV	
ALEXANDRIA & TANTA		?	V	
ARMANT & ISNA		1930	VI	
(EL) ASEIFAR & DISUQ	DLR	1936–1939	VI	
ASHMANT & ABU SIR EL MALIQ		1925	VI	
ASHMUN & TANTA		1898–1915	III	
ASSIUT & ASSUAN	boat	1883–1892	IV	
ASSIUT & CAIRO		1883–1949	I	
ASSIUT & LUXOR		1906–1993	II	
ASSIUT & MINIA		1893–1936	III	
ASSIUT & NAG HAMMADI		1909	VI	
ASSIUT & SOHAG		1906–1926	VI	
ASSUAN & GUERGA	boat	1894–1898	IV	
ASSUAN & LUXOR		1894–1933	IV	
ASSUAN & WADI HALFA	boat	1887–1888	VI	
ATFE & DAMANHUR	DLR	1904	V	
BAHR CHIBIN	boat	188–1898	III	
BALTIM AMBULANT		1893	VI	
BALTIM & BIALA	DLR	1915–1920	VI	
BALTIM & MAHALLA	DLR	1920–1939	VI	

Termini	Type	Dates seen	Scarcity
BARRAGE & BENHA	DLR	1905-1915	IV
BARRAGE & MANSURA	DLR	1901-1902	V
BARRAGE & QALIUB		1888-1901	II
BASSIOUN & KOTOUR	DLR	1899	VI
BASSIOUN REGULATOR & KAFR EL SHEIKH	DLR	1916-1923	VI
BELKAS & SHERBIN		1891-1895	V
BENHA, CAIRO & ZAGAZIG		1889	VI
BENHA & ISMAILIA		1908-1941	IV
BENHA & MANSURA		1890-1904	V
BENHA & MIT BERA		1906	VI
BENHA, MIT BIRA & MIT GHAMR		1929-1931	VI
BENHA & MIT GHAMR	DLR	1919-1937	V
BENHA, MINUF & KAFR ZAYAT		1940	VI
BENHA & SUEZ		1884-1904	IV
BENHA & ZAGAZIG		1902-1913	IV
BENI SUEF & CAIRO		1899-1907 &1943	*II
BENI SUEF & LAHUN		1921-1943	VI
BIALA & CHIRBIN		1905-1938	IV
BIALA & KALLIN		1902-1913	V
BIALA & MAHALLA	DLR	1907-191	IV
BILBES & MINA EL GAMH	DLR	1916-1928	V
BILTAN & KAFR HAMZA	DLR	1909	VI
BILTAN & CHIBIN EL QANATER		1942	VI
BIRKET EL SAB & SAMANUD	DLR	1923-1928	VI
BIRKET EL SAB & TANTA		1913	VI
BIRKET EL SAB & ZIFTA	DLR	1904-1911	IV
BIRMA & KAFR ZAYAT	DLR	1910-1939	V
BIR SHAMS & QANATER EL DELTA	boat	1908-1909	VI
BULAK EL DAKRUR & TEH EL BARUD		1894-1895	VI
CAIRO TPO No.24		1825-1940	IV
CAIRO & FAYUM		1886-1940	III
CAIRO & GUERGA		1893-1898	III
CAIRO & HELOUAN		1890-195-	III
CAIRO & ISMAILIA		1893-1904	II
CAIRO & ITYAI EL BARUD		1898-1951	III
CAIRO & LUXOR		1899-1904	III
CAIRO & MANSURA		1895-1940	I
CAIRO & MARG		1895-1940	V
CAIRO & MINIA		1894-1947	II
CAIRO & PORT SAID		1900-1947	I
CAIRO & SOHAG		1899-1905	III
CAIRO & SUEZ		1889-1905	II
CAIRO & WASTA		1890-1915	IV
CAIRO & ZAGAZIG		1883	VI
CHABRAKHIT & DAMANHUR	DLR	190--1943	V
CHABRAKHIT & ITYAI EL BARUD	DLR	1903-1925	III
CHALLAL & LUXOR		1900-1953	II
CHALLAL & (WADI) HALFA	boat	1889-1958	III
CHAWACHNA & FAYUM	FLR	1905-1916	IV

Termini	Type	Dates seen	Scarcity
CHIBIN EL KOM & TANTA		1883-1897	II
CHIBIN EL QANATER & EL MARG		1913-1937	VI
CHINE, BASSIOUN & TANTA	DLR	1905	VI
CHINE & GODDABA	DLR	1908-1910	V
CHINE & MAHALLA	DLR	1903-1907	II
CHINE, TANTA & KOTOUR	DLR	1901	VI
CHIRBIN & KALLIN		1900-1939	II
CHIRBIN & SAMANUD		192-	VI
DALANGAT & DAMANHUR	DLR	1914-1920	VI
DALANGAT & TUD	DLR	1909-1912	IV
DALANGAT, TUD & ITYAI EL BARUD	DLR	1916-1925	VI
DAMANHUR & EDFINA	DLR	1906-1928	V
DAMANHUR, EDFINA & FUWA	DLR?	1927	VI
DAMANHUR & FUWA	DLR?	1916	VI
DAMANHUR & HOCH ISSA	DLR	1903	VI
DAMANHUR, HOCH ISSA & KAFR DAWWAR	DLR	1902-1905	V
DAMANHUR, ITYAI EL BARUD & TUD	DLR	1904-1916	II
DAMANHUR & KAFR DAWWAR	DLR?	1904-1909	IV
DAMANHUR, TUD? & KHIRBITA	DLR	1917-1922	VI
DAMANHUR & MINIET SALAMA	DLR	1896-1916	IV
DAMANHUR & RAHMANIYA		1892	VI
DAMANHUR & TANTA		1900-1937	I
DAMANHUR & TUD	DLR	1935	VI
DAMIATA & MANSURA		1916-1937	V
DAMIATA & TANTA		1882-1960	I
DESSUK & TANTA		1883-1900	II
DIARB NIGM & MIT GHAMR	DLR	1908-1940	V
EDFINA & KAFR ZAYAT	boat	1893	VI
EDWA & RODA	FLR	1901-1909	V
EDWA & TAMIYA	FLR	1904-1909	IV
FAYUM TPO		1934	V
FAYUM & GHARAK	FLR	1902-1936	IV
FAYUM & KALAMSHA	FLR	1904-1936	IV
FAYUM & LAHUN	FLR	1904-1924	VI
FAYUM & NAZLA EL WADI	FLR	1905-1914	V
FAYUM & RODA	FLR	1901-1909	VI
FAYUM & SENNURIS	FLR?	1900-1927	IV
FAYUM & TAMIYA	FLR	1913-1920	V
FAYUM & WASTA		1885-1921	IV
FUWA & TANTA		1926	VI
GIRGA & WAHAT EL KHARGA	CWE	1914	VI
HAIFA & KANTARA		1920-1928	IV
HEHYA & IBRAHIMIA SHARQIA	CFBE	1914	VI
ISMAILIA & PORT SAID	boat?	1893-1901	III
ISMAILIA & PORT TAUFIQ		1907-1958	II
ISMAILIA & SUEZ		1904-1913	III
ITYAI EL BARUD & MINIA	DLR	1888-1917	IV
ITYAI EL BARUD & NEKLA	DLR	1915-1925	V

Termini	Type	Dates seen	Scarcity
KAFR CHEIKH & KALLIN		1888–1895	IV
KAFR CHEIKH & MAHALLA	DLR	1908–1923	V
KAFR CHEIKH & SIDI SALEM	DLR	1907–1936	IV
KAFR CHEIKH, SHIN & SIDI SALEM	DLR	1911	VI
KAFR HAMZA & TUKH	DLR	190–1916	VI
KAFR SAGR & MANSURA		1916–1937	V
KAFR SAGR & SADAQA	CFBE	1922	VI
KAFR ZAYAT & MINUF		1932	VI
KALLIN & MORABEIN		1898–1899	V
KANTARA & RAFAH		1934–1943	V
KOTOUR & MAHALLA	DLR	1903–1924	III
KOTOUR & TALKHA	DLR	1901	VI
KOTOUR & TANTA	DLR	1905–1915	IV
LUXOR & MINIA		1900–1905	V
LUXOR & SOHAG		1902–1937	IV
MAHALLA (EL KUBRA) & TANTA	DLR?	1947	VI
MAHALLA & MANSURA		1904	VI
MAHALLA & TALKHA	DLR?	1901–1906	IV
MAHALLET INGHAQ & MANSURA	CFBE	1900–1942	IV
MANSURA TPO		1938–1945	VI
MANSURA & MANZALEH	boat	1887–1899	IV
MANSURA & MATARIA	CFBE	1901–1940	II
MANSURA & MIT GHAMR	DLR	1909–1945	IV
MANSURA & TANTA		1888–1946	V
MANSURA & ZAGAZIG		1907	VI
MANSURA & ZEFTA BARRAGE	DLR	1902	V
MINET EL GAMH & SAHRAGT	DLR	1907–1920	IV
MINIA & SOHAG		1904–1942	V
MINUF & TANTA		1892–1916	V
(Mit Bera & Zefta, Rural Service route)			
MIT GHAMR & SIMBELAWEN	DLR	1906–1939	V
MIT GHAMR & ZAGAZIG		1906–1930	IV
MIT GHAMR, ZEFTA & TANTA		1905	VI
NAG HAMADI & SUHAG		1923–1925	VI
PORT TAUFIQ TPO		1910–1936	V
OMAYED & WARDIAN		1909	VI
QARA & WAHAT EL KHARGA	CWE	1908–1912	V
RIFAA EL BAHARIA & WAHAT EL KHARGA	CWE?	1914	VI
SA EL HAGAR & TANTA	DLR	1907–1939	IV
SAMANUD & SIMBELLAWEIN	DLR	1907	VI
SAMANUD & ZIFTA	DLR	1902–1923	III
SANNURIS & WASTA		1906–1914	IV
SEMANA & ZAGAZIG		1932	VI
SIDI SALIM & TANTA	DLR	1933–1942	VI
SIMBELAWEN & ZAGAZIG	DLR	1894–1910	V
SUEZ AMBULANT or TPO		1891–1909	V
TALKHA & TIRA	DLR	1911–1927	V
TANTA & ZAGAZIG		1907–1946	IV
TANTA & ZIFTA		1887–1913	II
TUD, ITYAI (EL BARUD) & YAHUDIYA	DLR	1927	VI

Termini	Type	Dates seen	Scarcity
Military TPOs			
CAT or TAC (Cairo–Kantara–Port Said)		1916–1918	IV to V
KAL or LAK (Kantara–Rafah–Lod)		1917–1920	IV to V
KAR or RAK (Kantara–Railhead)		1917	V
UPPER EGYPT TPO		1919	VI
Z and W TPO (Alexandria–Daba'a)		1916–1917	IV
DAL or LAD TPO (Kantara–Haifa)		1918–1920	V
SAT or TAS TPO (Port Said–Suez?)		1916	VI

* Much more common as a transit mark than as cancellation of origin.

The types of date-stamps used in the TPO routes are numerous, and it is not feasible to illustrate all of the varieties here. However, there are eight main Types, with many subdivisions:

Type 1 inscribed AMBULANTE and the route (ALES–CAIRO or CAIRO–ALES)	Type 5D inscribed T.P.O. / FOREIGN MAILS
Type 2A inscribed AMBULANT	Type 5E inscribed T.P.O. and a number, without an additional letter
Type 2B inscribed SERVICE AMBULANT	Type 6 inscribed T.P.O. & V.V.
Type 3A inscribed AMBT	Type 7 inscribed & V.V. without T.P.O.
Type 3B inscribed AMB	Type 8 inscribed only with the names of the terminal points connected by a hyphen (The Arabic text almost always uses the word <i>wa</i> (= and) between the names.)
Type 4 inscribed SERVICE AMBULANT & V.V.	
Type 5A inscribed T.P.O.	
Type 5B inscribed T.P.O. and a code letter	
Type 5C inscribed T.P.O. plus a number and a letter	

Within a particular Type there may be sub-types with single circles or double circles, with the Arabic at the top or bottom and with the names curved or straight, on one line or two, with or without ornaments (e.g., a crescent and star). The earlier date-stamps usually had a shift number in the date band; later date-stamps show the train number instead. A selection is shown in Fig. 2.

It is important to be alert to the fact that the presence of two words in a date-stamp is by no means an indication of a TPO. Apart from the obvious case of places having a name in two words (e.g., Port Said, Kafr Zayat), there are many sub-offices, such as Ghouria (Cairo). A date-stamp with two names in it that are not shown in the table should be considered critically in relation to geography, for it is very unlikely to be a new TPO route. In a few cases a short TPO route between a city and a suburb looks almost identical to the date-stamp provided to the suburb when it became a branch office, e.g., Ramlah / Alexandria. In such cases the Arabic text differs; in the TPO it includes *wa* و or *ila* الى between the names, whereas in the sub-office date-stamp the Arabic has the word *bi* ب instead. A good reference example is PORT TEWFIQ / SUEZ, which was never a TPO, but always a sub-office, and for which the Arabic reads “*bor tawfiq bi sueis*”.

Fig. 2
Representatives of the primary Types



Type 1



Type 2 B



Type 2 A



Type 3 A



Type 3 B



Type 4



Type 5 A



Type 5 B



Type 5 C



Type 5 D



Type 5 E

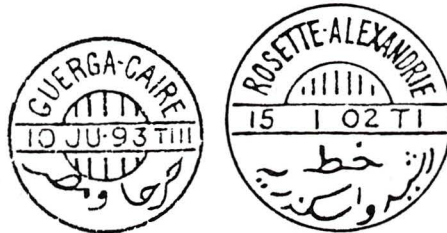


Fig. 2 contd.



Type 6

Type 7



خط = ligne

Type 8

Rural Service

The authorization of a "Service Rurale" (*bosta al tawaf*, later *barid tawaf*) was announced in the *Bulletin Postal* for October 6th 1887. It was proposed to start functioning on January 1st 1888 but, according to a brochure issued on the occasion of the International Railway Congress of 1932, actual operations did not begin until May 1st. A description of the activities of the Rural Service was included in one of the annual reports of the Postmaster General.

A postman was assigned a route consisting of a string of villages in the neighborhood of a regular post office. His job was to make the rounds of the villages, stopping at each to clear the mail from the letter box installed at the village gate, announcing his arrival loudly and clearly. Any letters addressed to a villager would then be handed over. In each letter box was a tampon having the name of the village in Arabic and European in a cartouche (Fig. 3). The postmen were instructed to impress it on each letter collected and to replace it in the letter box (it was not to be used to cancel stamps). Upon completion of the rounds, the letters were to be cancelled with the date-stamp designated for the route. The postman was expected to make the rounds on foot, but he was permitted to use a donkey or a camel if he wished to provide it at his own expense.

The Rural Route postman provided the basic services of selling stamps and handling

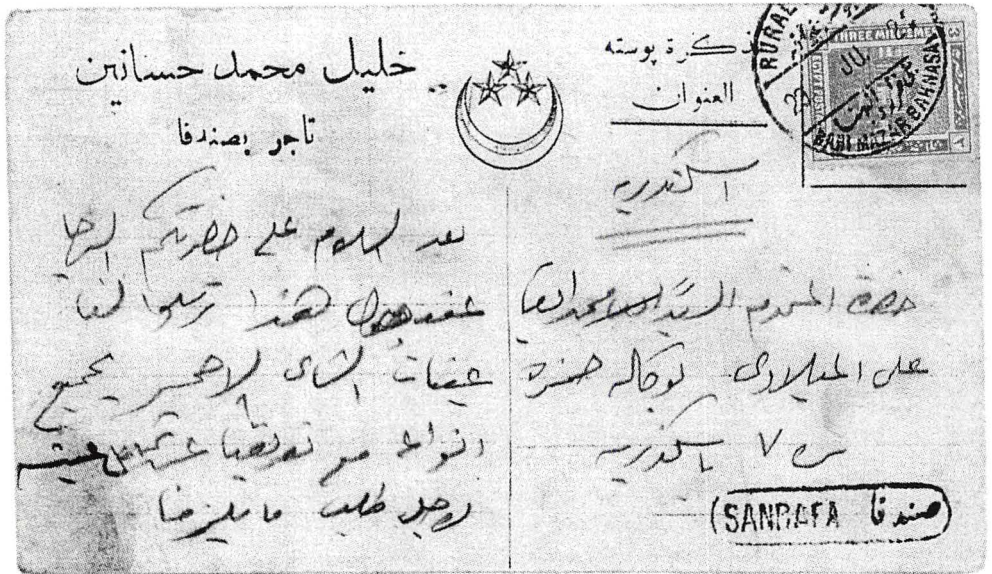


Fig. 3 A Rural Service village cartouche (Type RPS-1).

ordinary and registered mail, but did not provide other services, such as selling money orders.

The only moderately comprehensive study of the Rural Service was published in 1952⁵. Nine types of date-stamp were illustrated, but since then many more have been recorded. R.S. Blomfield made drawings of about thirty-five different types or sub-types (Fig. 4) which were provided to members of the Egypt Study Circle on request, but still more have since been discovered. The number of routes, designated by the name of the head office or the termini of the route, is itself quite large and the number of village names in cartouches is, of course, many times the number of routes. A complete list has never been disclosed, but a group of 213 different proof strikes of cartouches on Type XI interpostal seals was illustrated by Piperno⁶. These must have been struck about 1890 and many more routes were added in ensuing years. Proof strikes of Rural Service datestamps on Type XI interpostal seals also exist.

Fig. 4 Rural Postal Service

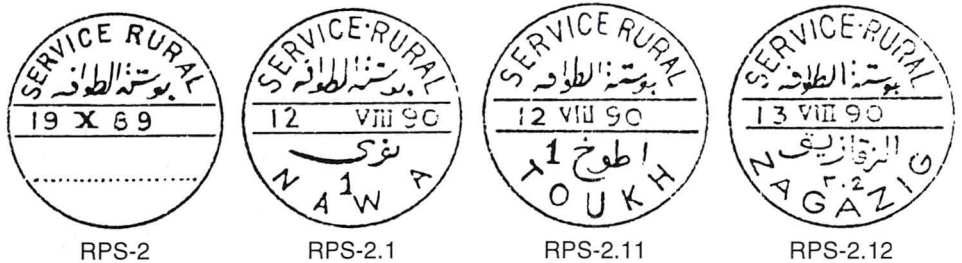


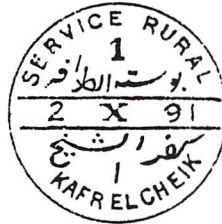
Fig. 4 contd.



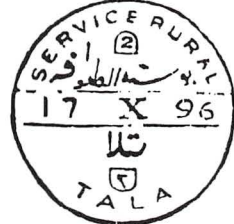
RPS-2.13



RPS-2.14



RPS-2.2: Also with 'T1' etc. after date & nos. at top & bottom: ③ ④



RPS-2.3



RPS-2.4



RPS-2.5



RPS-2.51



RPS-3



RPS-4



RPS-4.1



RPS-5



RPS-5.01



RPS-5.1



RPS-6



RPS-7



RPS-7.1

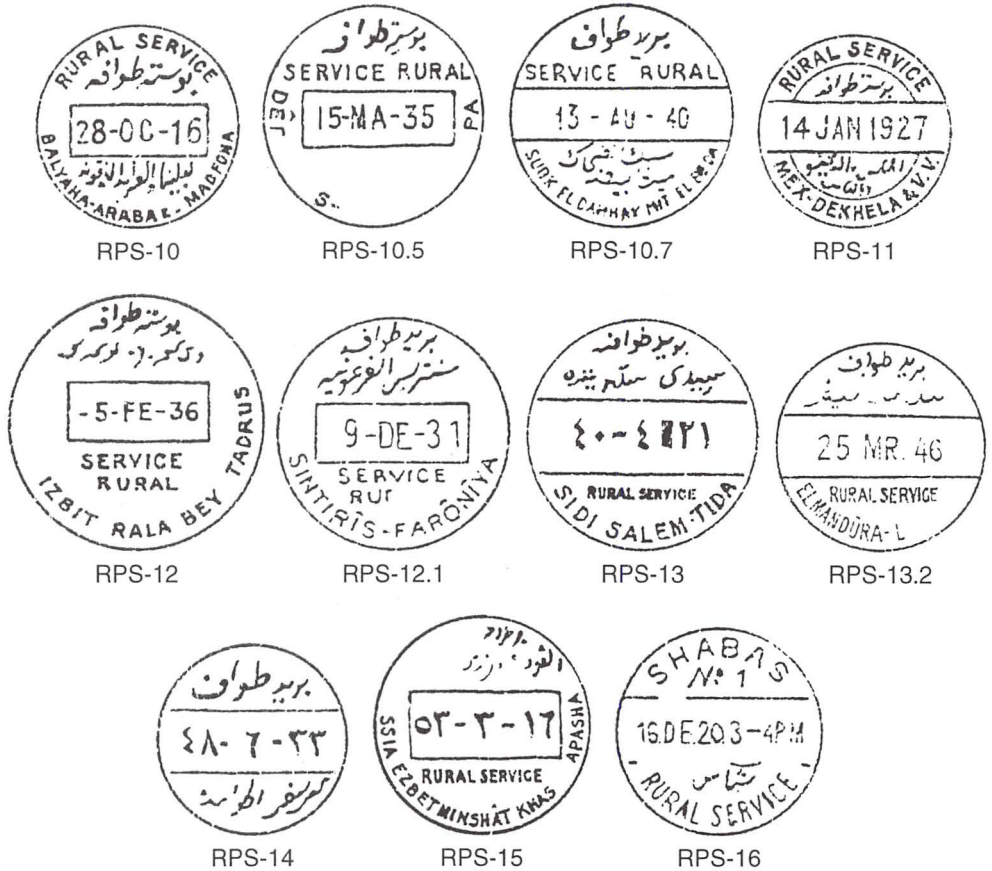


RPS-8



RPS-9

Fig. 4 contd.



The Type numbers are those assigned by Blomfield. The originally simple scheme had to be stretched to accommodate the ever-growing variety of types. Eventually a more systematic numbering scheme may be devised. The Types are in roughly chronological order. Types RPS-2 and RPS-3 were the first to be put in use and were intended to have the route written in by hand (Fig. 5). The labor involved must have become apparent quickly, for by 1890 date-stamps identifying the head office were produced. Later (early 20th century) date-stamps having the names of places on the route or the termini came into use, probably because more than one route was eventually based on the same head office. A transition from French/Arabic to English/Arabic began about the same time as English began to supplant French in the ordinary cancellations, but existing French/Arabic date-stamps were not replaced and have been seen at least as late as 1957. About the same time, some date-bands inscribed in Arabic made their appearance and in the 1930s some date-stamps inscribed entirely in Arabic were issued. The all-Arabic date-stamps became increasingly prevalent and by the 1950s they were the principal type in use. It is obviously essential to be able to read a little Arabic in order to distinguish such date-stamps of the Rural Service from the ordinary date-stamps, although very few of the ordinary ones are inscribed only in Arabic.



Fig. 5 A cover cancelled with Type RPS-3.

Forgeries

Only one kind of forgery, apparently of fairly recent origin, has been reported⁷. These appear to have been made from a possibly genuine date-stamp of SERVICE RURAL / BIBA-DASHTOUT, or by photocopying one, in order to apply a fraudulent backstamp to otherwise ordinary, genuine covers. They can be detected by the fact that the dates are not consistent with the other dates on the covers, as well as by the presence of the Rural Service backstamp which is totally inconsistent with the route taken by the cover and makes no geographic sense.

References

1. P.A.S. Smith, *The Travelling Post Offices of Egypt*, The Mobile Post Office Society, Chicago, 1983.
2. L. Wiener, *Egypte et ses Chemins de Fer*, Brussels, 1932.
3. Further details about dates of use, locations of routes, and relative scarcity are to be found in *History of British Army Postal Service*, Vol II, by E.B. Proud, Proud-Bailey Co. Ltd., Heathfield, East Sussex, 1980, pp. 303-7; M. Sacher, *The Postal Markings of Mandate Palestine 1917-1948*, The Royal Philatelic Society, London, 1995. pp. 51-5; N. Hill, *FPHS* No. 25, 1-5 (May/June 1957).
4. A. Birken, *Philatelic Atlas of the Ottoman Empire*, self-published, Hamburg, 1992.
5. G. Boulad, *L'OP* No. 80, 512-16 (Oct. 1952).
6. A.G. Piperno, *L'OP* No. 111, 185-95 (Oct. 1963).
7. J.M. Murphy, *QC XIV* (9), 266-7 (whole no. 161, Mar. 1992).