

## XXXVIII

# Meters and Mechanical Franking

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## Background

Mechanical franking machines were first introduced in New Zealand in 1904 for internal use, but it was not until 1920 that the UPU, at its 7th Congress (Madrid), approved their use on international mail. A requirement was that the impressions be in red. Meter franks of all countries have been catalogued<sup>1</sup>. Commonly, the term “meter” is used to include all mechanical franking devices, even though not all are (or were) actually metered (some, for example, are coin-activated).

Mechanical franking in Egypt was first treated by Jean Boulad<sup>2</sup>, and was expanded by his cousin, Gabriel Boulad, nearly twenty years later<sup>3</sup>. The subject lay quiescent for another thirty years until Clarke<sup>4</sup> treated it comprehensively.

## Machines Used in Egypt

Egypt’s first venture into machine franking came in 1922 when a Moss machine was obtained from New Zealand. It was a hand-cranked machine, capable of imprinting only five different denominations: 2, 4, 5, 10, and 50m. (apparently chosen because any sum of postage from 4m. upwards could be produced by suitable combinations of these values). The machine was delivered to the National Bank of Egypt and put into use from February 27th to March 31st when it was abandoned because of major discrepancies in metering the amount of postage used. The five denomination dies were each of a different design (Fig. 1). The machine’s number ‘2’ was the most prominent feature; the face values were in such small characters that they were often illegible. The ink ribbon supplied was violet, but, even though it was not in accord with UPU regulation, some letters were sent to foreign countries without a problem. (In 1977–78 some meter

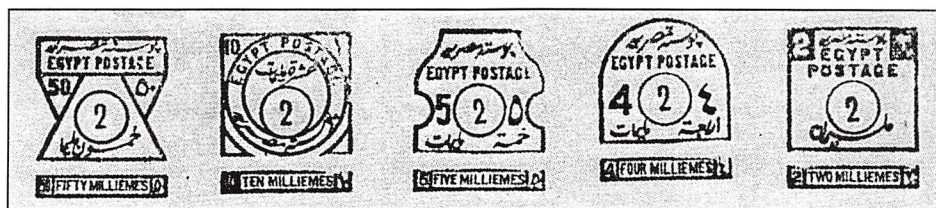


Fig. 1 Proof strikes of the five denominations of the 1922 Moss machine.

impressions of later types appeared in black, either for reasons of ignorance, or a shortage of red ink.) Covers franked by the Moss machine are quite scarce and the 4m. and 50m. impressions are rare.

In 1926 Universal Postal Frankers Ltd. prepared an essay for a meter frank to be used in Egypt, but it was not adopted. It was not until 1933 that a second meter machine was put into use. It was a Roneo-Neopost machine, assigned to the National Bank of Egypt. It had five fixed-value dies (2, 3, 5, 15, and 20m.) and showed the toughra of King Fuad in the center. It was operated from April 6th to June 9th 1933. It was then sent for repair and put back into use on March 3rd 1934. (A month later two additional, but unidentified, denominations are stated to have been added, but these may have been the 15m. and 20m. noted above.) The Bank acquired a second Neopost machine (No. 2), this time power-driven, which was put in use on May 3rd 1934 (October 8th, according to G. Boulad). The first machine was withdrawn and put into use by the Roneo-Neopost agent, A. Buccellati, in Cairo. The second machine differed from the first by having a single die into which six different denomination segments, each including part of the bottom frame-line, could be inserted. The small breaks in the bottom frame-line distinguish the impressions of the second machine from those of the first.

Neopost machines were soon adopted by other firms (Fig. 2):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| No. 3 - Imperial Chemical Industries                         | No. 7 - "P. & O. and B. I." (Port Said)                           |
| No. 4 - Wm. Stapledon & Sons Ltd. (Port Said)                | No. 8 ?   |
| No. 5 - Worms & Co.  | No. 9 - Societ e Royale d'Agriculture                             |
| No. 6 - Agenzia Marittima Giulio de Castro & Co. (Port Said) | No. 10 - S equestre G n ral des Biens des Ressortissants Italiens |

G. Boulad lists the English Coaling Co. as using no. 7.

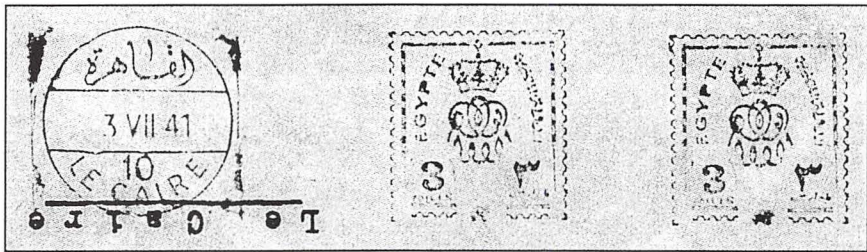


Fig. 2 A Neopost meter impression.

In subsequent years, still other organizations adopted Neopost machines, and the name of the firm became Roneo-Vickers, still later, Roneo-Alcatel Ltd.

In general, the meter machines put into use from the late 1930s were equipped with variable denomination dies, capable of producing any denomination from 1 to 99 (or 999) mills. The earlier machines that had fixed dies or limited-value dies had to use multiple impressions in combination when the required rate did not correspond to one of them alone (Fig. 3).

Meanwhile, the Postal Administration tried an experiment with a coin-actuated machine for use by the general public. It is known as the Nessim machine<sup>5</sup>, after its Egyptian designer, and was manufactured by Klussendorf in Germany. The toughra was placed between the date indicator and the denomination die, instead of inside the latter.



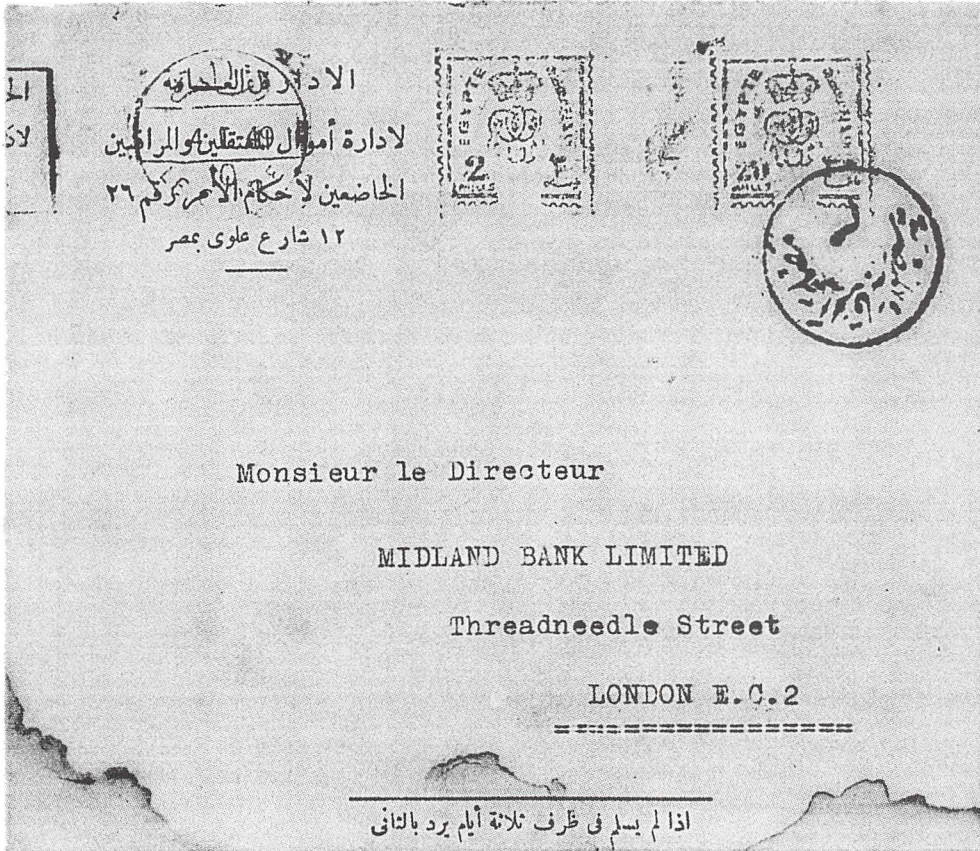


Fig. 3 A cover showing use of a combination of limited-value Neopost dies (a 22m. denomination was not available).

The machine was installed in the Central Post Office in Cairo on January 1st 1934 and withdrawn on May 25th. Any denomination from 1m. to 99m. could be produced. Examples are very scarce, those posted on the first day (Fig. 4) being less so than later, non-philatelic, examples.

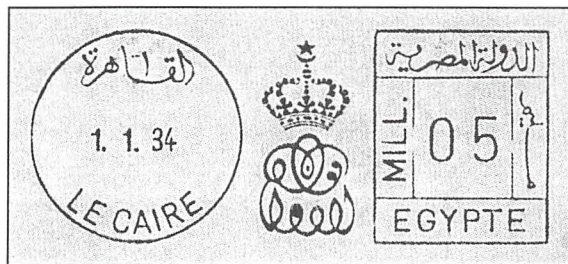


Fig. 4 A Nessim machine meter impression.

Over the ensuing thirty years meter franking machines manufactured by Universal Postal Frankers Ltd. (Great Britain), Francotyp (Germany), Postalia (Germany), Hasler (Switzerland), and Satas (France) were put into use in Egypt. In general, they all consisted of three parts: slogan or logo, place and date indicator, and a denomination die. The last was of a similar design, with some variations, for all manufacturers and it seems probable that the form of the denomination die originated with Egypt. This supposition is supported by the existence of artist's essays produced by



A.J. Hewett of the Survey Department (illustrated by Clarke). Until the overthrow of the monarchy the denomination dies always included a crown and the toughra of the King; these were removed after the revolution. The date indicators varied more substantially in form and may have been designed by the manufacturers.

Universal Postal Frankers prepared specimens of their meter machines in 1938 and they were put in use in Egypt at least as early as 1940. The first denomination dies are recognizable by the presence of two asterisks, one above the other, to the left of the denomination (this feature was not confined to UPF in later years); the date indicators were of the double-circle type, the inner circle on some being broken at the level of the date line (Fig. 5). The toughra of King Farouk was placed at the bottom of the denomination die. This firm also supplied meter machines for fiscal use, in which the denomination dies were inscribed "stamp duty" or "revenue stamp".

**THE MULTIPLE VALUE  
UNIVERSAL  
POSTAL FRANKER**

**“Slogan,,**

Dispositif de publicité  
interchangeable à volonté

**Date**

**Timbre**

variable de 1<sup>m</sup>/m à 999<sup>m</sup>/m  
en une seule impression.

**SPECIMEN**

Concessionnaire exclusif pour l’Egypte  
**MARC SOUSSI** - Téléph. : 26493  
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VION**

**EGYPT LTD**

**30 V 60**

**ALEXANDRIA**

**HILLS  
POSTES**

**SPECIMEN**

Fig. 5 Universal Postal Frankers impressions (reduced).



Francotyp machines (Fig. 6) appear to have been introduced in 1937; the first design incorporated the toughra of King Farouk at the top of the denomination die. Their multi-value denomination dies (001m. to 999m.), in which the denomination itself was enclosed in a rectangular box, exist both with and without simulated perforations. Two other dies came into use later (1950s?). The date indicators were at first very much like the Neopost date indicators and the circular date-stamps of Type VIII, but with Arabic at the top and European (English or French) at bottom, the cross-bars of the date band far apart (9mm), and without stops in the day, month, and year indicia. They were later (ca. 1950) replaced by a design having date indicators with straight vertical sides joined by an arc at the top and the bottom, and denomination dies with crown at the top and toughra at the bottom. Shephard's Hotel and the Semiramis Hotel used machines of this type. After the revolution the denomination dies continued in the same style, but without crown and toughra; the inscriptions at first consisted of EGYPTE, MILLS, and POSTES, and Arabic equivalents, later changed to POSTES, M/M, and R.A.U. or EGYPTE.



Fig. 6 Francotyp meter impressions.

The Hasler machines (Fig. 7) came into use in 1949 (a proof exists with date of 24 IX 38, however) and remained in use up to 1965 or 1966. The date was shown by a circular device consisting of two close-set pairs of concentric circles with the post office name between and without a cross-bar. At least three types of denomination dies were used, one of which was square, but all of the same style, with simulated perforations, crown, and toughra until the Republic period.

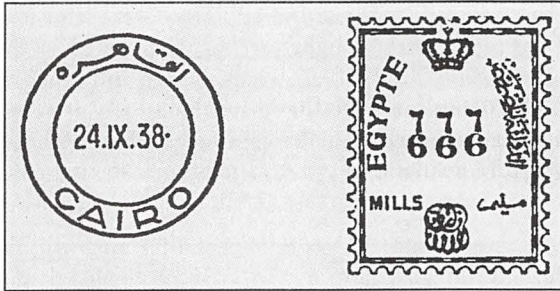
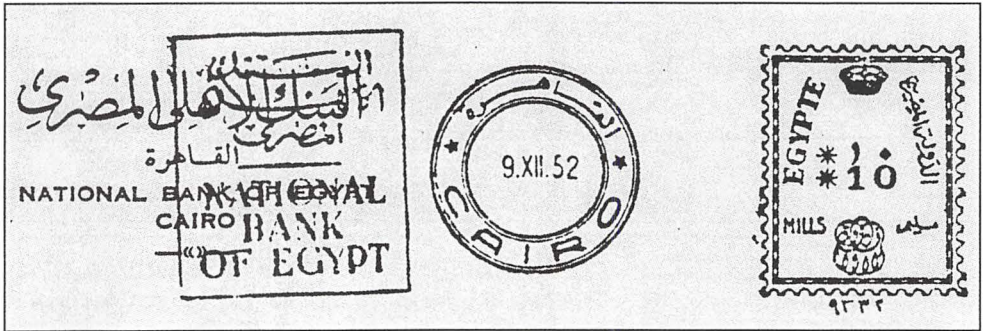


Fig. 7  
Hasler machine impressions.



The earliest known Satas machine (Fig. 8) dates from 1951. The early models were a departure from the conventional in that the date and post office name were not placed in a simulated postmark, but were set in a straight line below the slogan. Later (ca. 1977), a small circle was adopted in which the location was arranged bilingually at right angles to the date. Satas machines continued in use into the Republic period, without crown and toughra in the denomination dies, which were at first inscribed EGYPTE, MILLS, and POSTES, and the Arabic equivalents; then EGYPT, MILLS, and POSTES, or U.A.R., MILLS, and POSTES. Eventually (1977?), an entirely different design, a plain rectangle without simulated perforations, inscribed U.A.R. (later A.R.E.), MILLS, and POSTES, came into use. These no longer had a slogan or logo component.

A meter machine having denomination dies resembling the latest of the Satas dies, inscribed A.R.E., MILLS, and POSTES, is known from 1977. There is no slogan or logo and the date indicator is in the form of a conventional circular date-stamp (Fig. 9). Since it incorporates the French word *postes* rather than the English "post", even though the abbreviation A.R.E. is English rather than French (R.A.E.), it appears to be from a Satas machine.

The Postalía machines (Fig. 10) are first known for Egypt in 1960. The denomination dies are distinctive in having sloping instead of upright letters. Some of the date indicators were of the double-circle type, as used with Hasler machines, and some consisted of a single circle with hollow lunettes above and below the date.



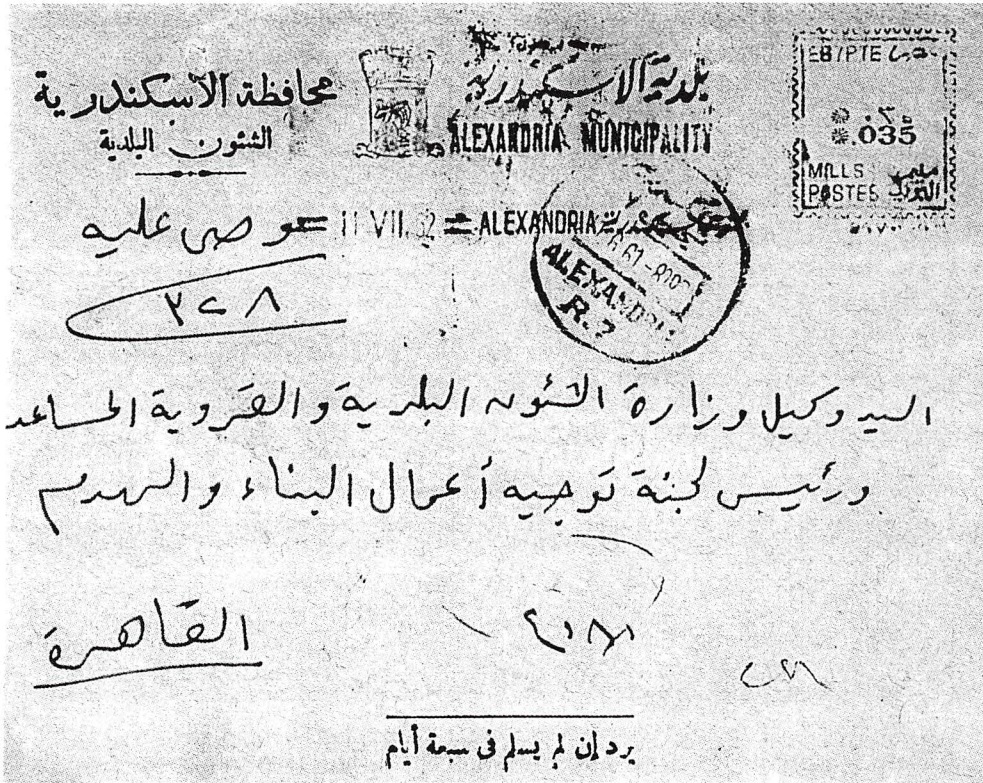


Fig. 8 A Satas machine Impression (reduced).

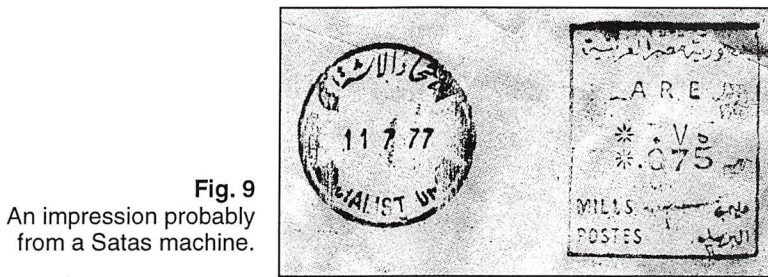


Fig. 9  
An impression probably  
from a Satas machine.

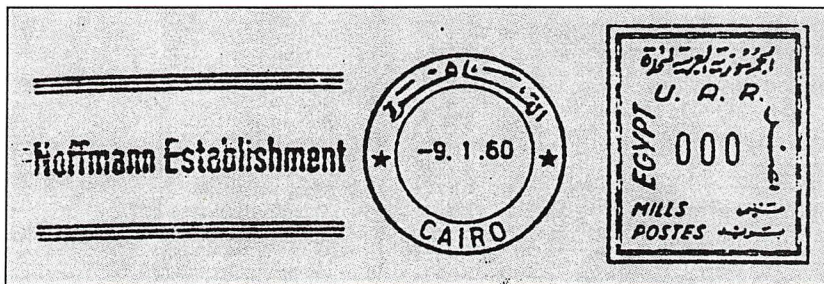


Fig. 10 A Postalia machine impression.

In 1977 Pitney Bowes machines began to be used. With them, a totally new concept of denomination die appeared: a horizontal rectangle with a frame made up of very coarse simulated perforations. The earlier ones had a semicircular cut-out at the left end into which a double-circle date indicator fitted (Fig. 11). Among the users were the Nile Hilton Hotel and the United States Library of Congress in Cairo. About 1983, or earlier, new versions without the semicircular cut-out on the left side and in various dimensions, all inscribed A.R.E. EGYPT, came into use; one of them had the misspelling ALEXANDREA in the date indicator.

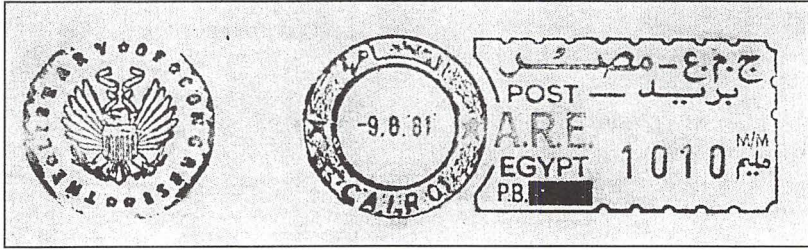


Fig. 11 A Pitney-Bowes machine impression.

Other types of meter franks came into use in the 1980s and afterwards, but they have not been studied sufficiently to allow the manufacturers to be identified reliably. An example is shown in Figure 12.

Since 1980 there have been mergers and take-overs, some of which may be reflected in Egyptian meters. In 1980 CIT-Alcatel acquired the Roneo division of Vickers that marketed Roneo-Neopost meters, which became Fridén-Neopost (1992) and then simply Neopost (1995). Francotyp eventually merged with Postalia.

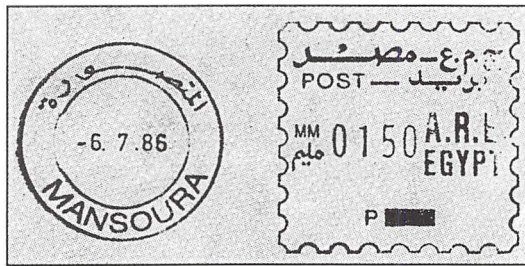


Fig. 12 A later type of meter frank.

## Use

When meter franking was first introduced in Egypt, the impressed franks were regarded as postage stamps and consequently were cancelled in the same way, by handstamp or machine. Beginning about 1940 cancellation of meter impressions became infrequent, no longer punctilious; although the requirement was abandoned, occasional instances of cancellation persist.

Whereas the initial interest in meter machine franking was entirely commercial,



agencies of the Egyptian Government eventually made use of meters, probably following the overthrow of the monarchy. In a curious manifestation of regulations, the Information Department (Cairo) made use of a Hasler meter frank to pay the air mail surcharges on its official mail which, however, was required to have official adhesive stamps to pay the basic postage charge (seen Dec. 1956). Many meter frankings in the post-Monarchy times are without a logo or flag; they may have come from machines in use at post-office counters.

Machine franking other than by a meter machine has also been used in Egypt, but the circumstances have not been reported. A repeating machine cancellation, applied in magenta, exists with a bilingual slogan AFFIX POSTAGE STAMP AT / EXTREME TOP RIGHT-HAND / CORNER OF ENVELOPE alternating with a circular date-stamp inscribed ALEXANDRIE / TAXE PERCUE (seen April 1936 to September 1937); it was used without other means of franking (Fig. 13). Another frank, handstamped in magenta, is a circular date-stamp inscribed CAIRO / POSTAGE PAID, and Arabic at top (seen dated 3 JU 37).



Fig. 13 Non-metered mechanical franking.



## References

### Special Acknowledgment

For a large part of the information and the illustrations in this chapter I am indebted to Dennis H. Clarke, who graciously supplied photocopies of his extensive collection and notes.

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2. J. Boulad, *L'OP* No. 22, 8-9 (Oct. 1934), No. 23, 6-7 (Jan. 1935).
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5. Anon., *The International Post*, *XXI* (2-6), 1-2 (whole no. 188/192, Mar./Dec. 1937).