

“No-Value” stamp: Discovery or Controversy?

Mahmoud Ramadan (ESC 358)



According to *The Nile Post*, Egypt’s no-value “miri” stamp was reprinted in 1914 with plates (1), (2) and (3), watermark star-to-left. Then it was reprinted again in 1915 with plate (3) only, watermark star-to-right. All watermark orientations are for a front normal (horizontal) view. *The Nile Post* states: “We have seen only two examples of Control blocks from Plate (3). Both are thought to be from archival ‘Imprimatur’ sheets (one is handstamped ‘30 OCT 1913’, and has been initialed twice). It is possible that no issued stamps were printed from this plate.”

Under these listings the stamps from the three plates cannot be distinguished from each other, except by either a Plate number (1), (2), or (3), or by the watermark, star-to left for 1914, and star-to-right for 1915.

Peter Smith in *The Stamps and Postal History of Egypt* states that the 1914 reprints were made in sheets of 600 composed of six panes of 100 each, cut and supplied in two vertical-pane sheets. He also stated that the used plate was a composite one of three vertical plates. He saw them only with plates (1) and (2), but expected that plate (3) should also exist.

These statements raise questions:

1. Are there two plates (3), one for 1914 and one for 1915?
2. If a composite plate (1), (2) and (3) was used for star-to-left wmk, then why does the star-to-right wmk appear in plate (3) only?
3. Why is the star-to-right wmk so rare to find?

Research, recent acquisitions and discoveries have led me to reach the following conclusion, in support to Peter Smith’s statements.

- a. There was only one reprint, using the composite plate carrying plate numbers (1), (2) and (3), composed of six panes x 100 subjects.
- b. The two left-hand vertical panes always show plate (1). The central two vertical panes always show plate (2). The right two panes always show plate (3), with the plate numbers appearing above and below the two panes.
- c. The star-to-right wmk is not a new print but a rare variety of this single/composite reprint. Accordingly, the star-to-right variety must exist with plates (1) and (2) as well as (3).
- d. In this reprint, contrary to the earlier printings, the stamp was printed in a vertical orientation with “SERVICE DE L’ETAT” on the left, with the watermark facing either up or down. When the stamp is rotated for horizontal viewing [as normally seen] the star is to-left or to-right, depending on the placement/orientation of the printing paper.
- e. The common star-to-left watermark is actually inverted [star down] when printed vertically. The rare star-to-right is the correct watermark, with star up during printing.

The supporting evidence for this conclusion:

- All the marginal blocks with sideways watermark and showing plate numbers (1), (2) or (3), when viewed in the vertical printing orientation, confirm the position of that plate within the composite sheet of 600 subjects. (1) is from the two left-hand panes; (2) is from the central two panes; (3) is from the two right-hand panes. See *Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4*.
- *Fig. 5* below shows a marginal block from plate (1) with star-to-right. Treasure hunters and collectors, re-examine your stocks and search for a marginal block from plate (2) with star-to-right: it is waiting to be discovered.

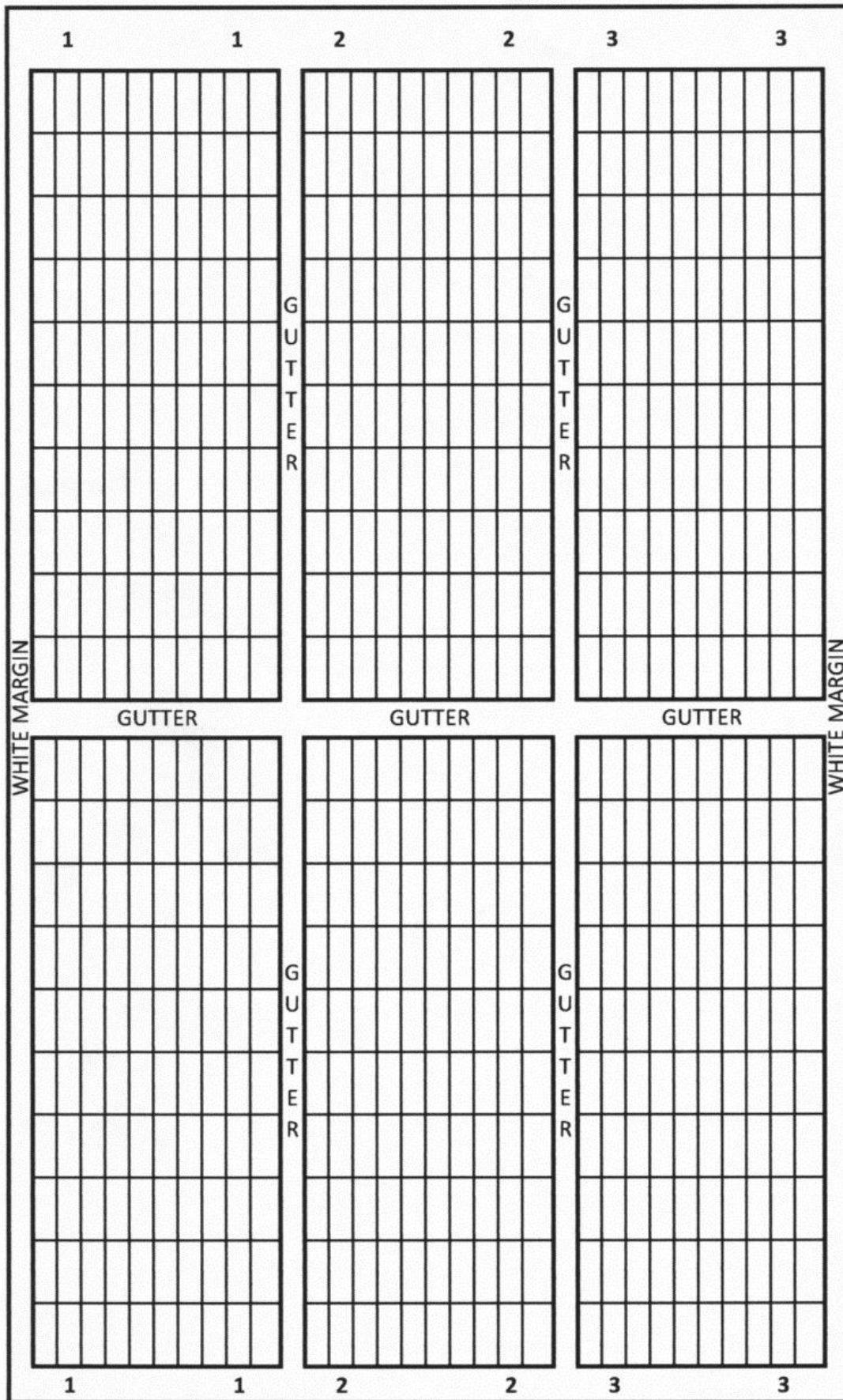


Fig. 1: A diagram showing the composite sheet of 600 stamps, and location of the plate numbers. Interpanneaux gutters are equal to stamp size and with multi-pillars.

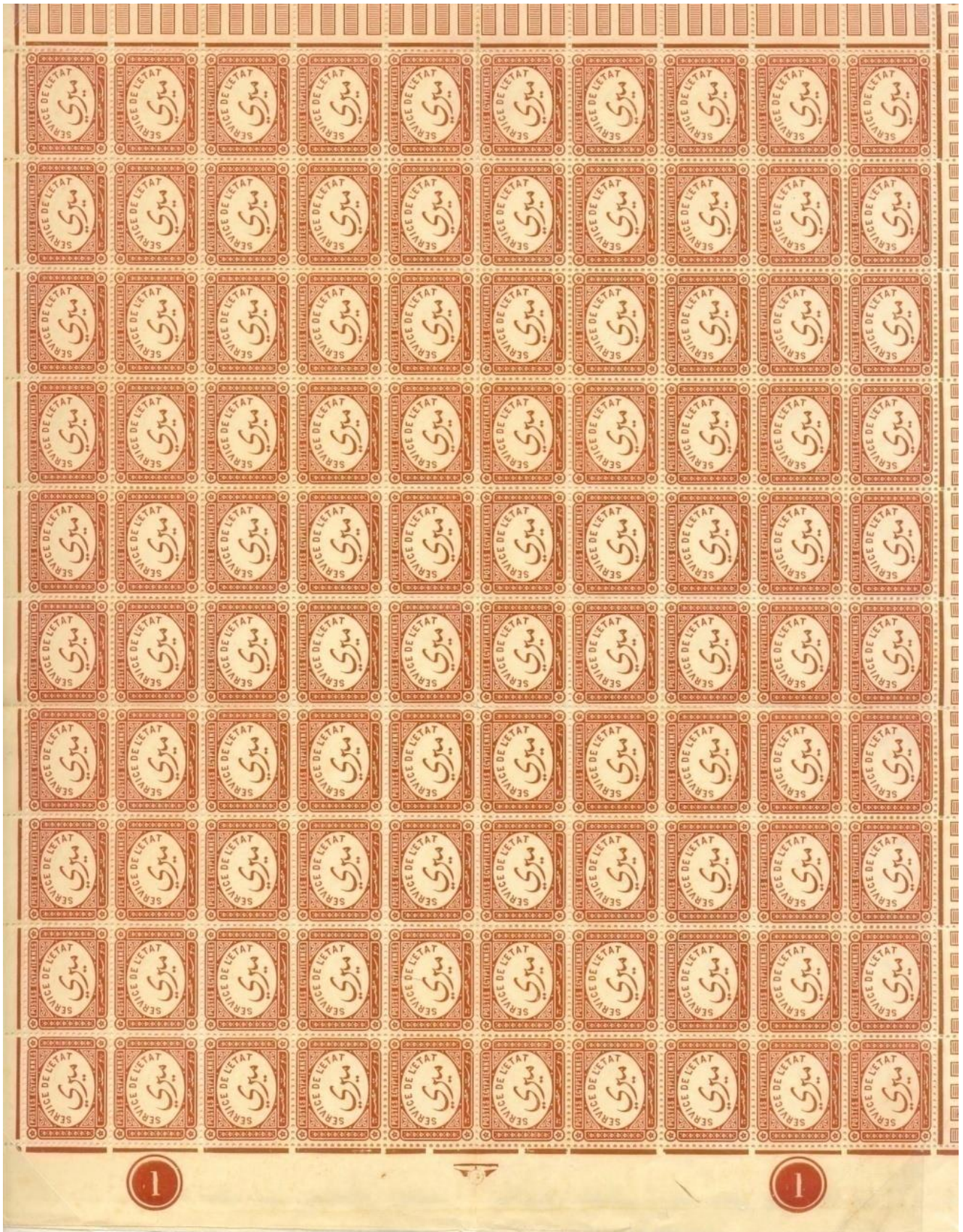


Fig. 2: Lower left pane [100 stamps] with plate (1). Scanned in the vertical printing orientation, with star pointing down.

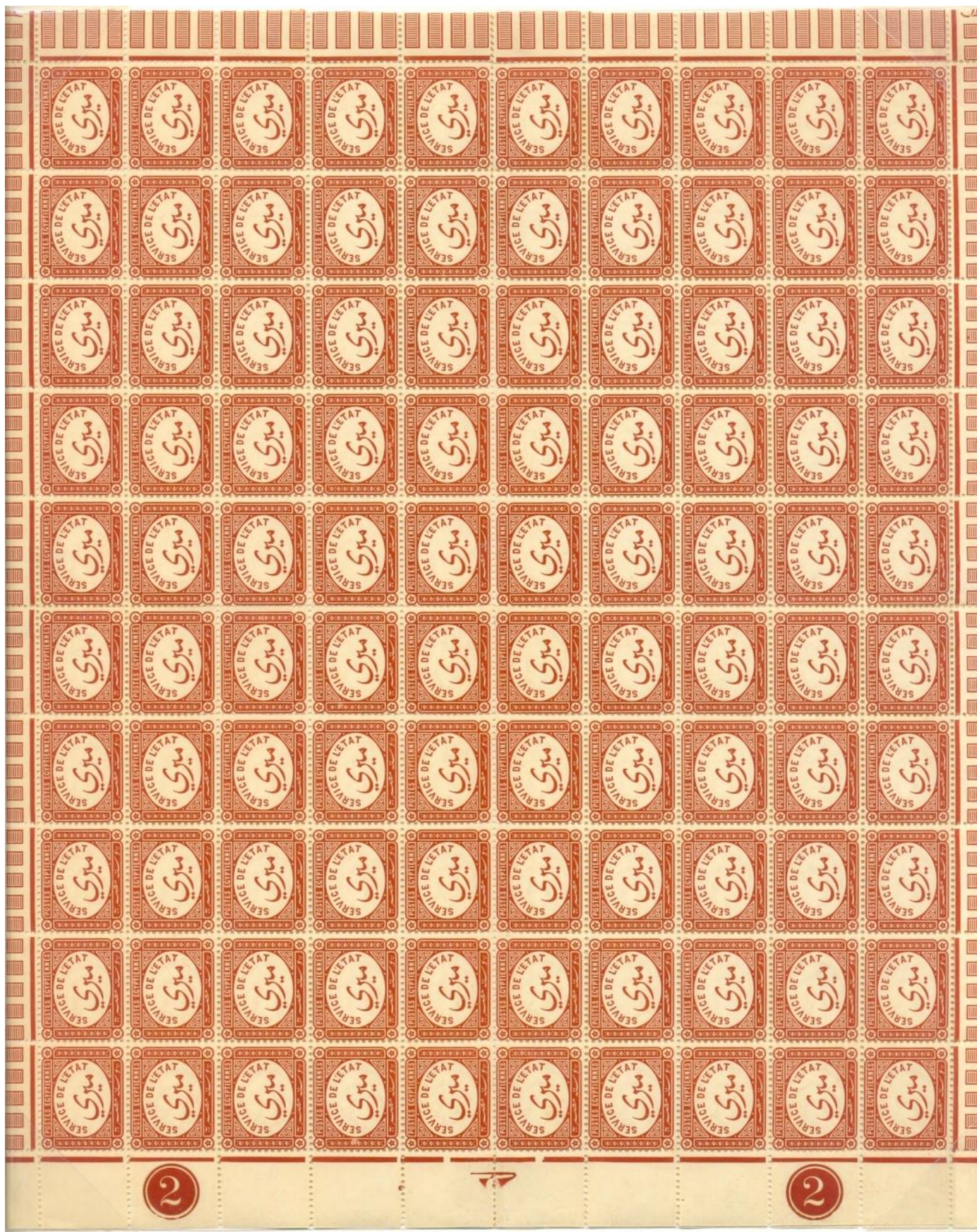


Fig. 3: Lower central pane [100 stamps] with plate (2). Scanned in printing orientation, star pointing down. The presence of gutters on three sides is proof of the presence of other panes in these locations.

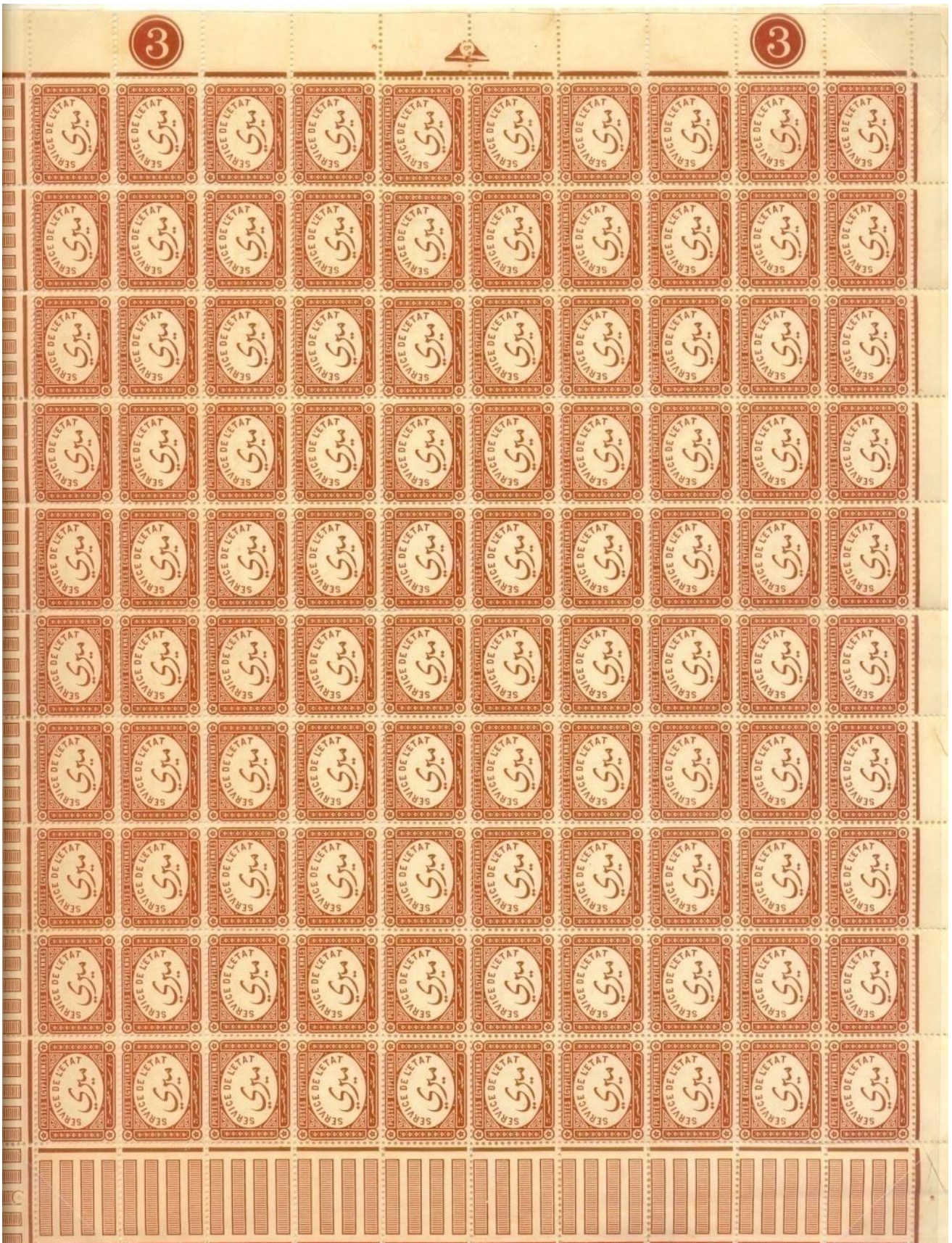


Fig. 4: Upper right pane [100 stamps] with plate (3). Scanned in printing orientation, star pointing down.



Fig. 5: Star-to-right plate block [6 stamps] with plate (1). Scanned in the vertical printing orientation, star pointing UP. This block is the upper left corner of the upper left pane of the sheet of 600 subjects. When it is viewed horizontally the wmk will be star-to-right. This is the only example I know of with plate (1). Thus unique to date. Star-to-right with plate (2) is out there waiting to be discovered.

There are also controversial issues with the reprint dates of this no-value “miri” stamp, which will be dealt with as the subject of my next article.
