

EGYPT

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IBRAHIM BEY CHAFTAR, the enterprising President of the Philatelic Society of Egypt, has recently advanced our knowledge of these stamps by the discovery of a series of documents relating to their inception, production and use. He found, in the King Fouad I. Postal Museum, no less than fifteen items of great philatelic importance and from them he has written the story of how the first adhesive stamps of Egypt came into existence. Moreover he used them as the foundation on which to build the First Cairo Philatelic Exhibition. This outstandingly successful show continued for nine days, from 28th February to 8th March, 1946, and received the patronage of H.M. King Farouk.

In *L'Orient Philatelique*, July, 1946, Chaftar has published in English a full account of his find, including many excellent translations from the Italian with which he has combined transcriptions of letters and documents in the original. Chaftar's paper is designed to aid the postal historian but contains much of interest for the collector of the stamps of Egypt. I will now endeavour briefly to record the gist of the fifteen items.

There is a letter dated 7th June, 1864 from Giacomo Muzzi, head of the private courier service known as the *Posta Europea*, to the Viceroy of Egypt, Ismail Pasha, proposing the issue of adhesive postage stamps "to facilitate the payment by the public of the charges due for the franking of correspondence." In it was made an offer "to reduce the different taxes already in force to a uniform figure of 25 centimes per 10 grammes, without regard to distance or destination, for letters franked and of 50 centimes for letters unfranked." Attached is a List of Charges for correspondence in the interior of Egypt, fixed by the Act of Concession (5th May, 1861), ranging from 1 P.T. (the equivalent of 25 centimes) between Alexandria and Cairo, to 4 P.T. between Alexandria and Mansura, Sherbine and Damietta. Muzzi somewhat naively suggests that "the proposed alteration will result in a saving by the public of 0.51 centimes on each letter," on the assumption that the same number of letters would be passing between Alexandria and Cairo as between the former city and, for example, Minuf or Zefta a not very likely happening when the relative populations of Cairo and these much smaller towns is taken into consideration.



Fig. 1 Muzzi's essays for the *Posta Europa* adhesives

As is well known, the Viceroy regained control of the Posts on 2nd January, 1865, the deal being effected through the French banker, Dervieu for a sum of 950,000 gold francs. The *Posta Europea* was handed over to the Egyptian Government on the same day that Dervieu bought it. A Notice to the public announcing the liquidation of the *Posta Europea*, dated 20th November, 1864; a copy of the Contract handing over this organisation to Messrs. Dervieu & Co. and the Contract passing it on to the Egyptian Government, represented by Muzzi Bey, who by then (2nd January, 1865), had become the first Postmaster General of Egypt, are three of the outstanding items from Chaftar's cache.

Immediately, the Minister of Public Works issued an order for the preparation of postage stamps, and as the letter, signed by Nubar Pasha, is dated 3rd January, 1865, it seems obvious that Muzzi's idea had taken root in the mind of the Viceroy from the time it was proposed seven months previously. That it had occurred to Muzzi by 1863 is certain, for it was presumably then that he caused to be

prepared the essays for adhesive stamps, the only recorded set of which reposes in the collection of Mackenzie Low (Fig. 1). The design is a triple circle 31 mm. in diameter; POSTA EUROPEA above and MANSURA below, both in serif capitals; BONO PER and value in centre? Lettering in black. Lithographed on coloured card. Ungummed. The values are 10 Para, yellow-buff ; 20 Para, blue; 30 Para, pale green ; 1 Piaste Tarifa, pale pink. When writing to Ismail Pasha on 7th June, 1864, Muzzi suggested that the stamps might bear " the August effigy of Your Highness, or such other design as may appeal to Your Highness's wishes."

From the time the postal monopoly for Lower Egypt was granted to the Posta Europea, by the Decree (Firman) dated 5th March, 1862, the amount of mail increased enormously and to frank it by hand had become an almost impossible task for the staff at Muzzi's disposal. It was to overcome this difficulty that the introduction of adhesive stamps was envisaged, an innovation which at the same time was intended to allow prefranking to become optional.

In 1863, Muzzi called for tenders from various firms specialising in the printing of postage stamps and received offers from Pellas Brothers, of Genoa ; the Press of the Imperial Court of Vienna; and an English company, the name of which was not quoted but may have been Charles Skipper & East as the records of this firm, now lost as a result of the war, suggested that they tendered for stamp production for Egypt at an early date. The essays by Skipper and East, with which we are familiar, carry in the inscription the title Khedive (Fig. 2), and as this was not granted to the ruler of Egypt by the Sultan of Turkey till 14th May, 1867, it is safe to assume that these essays were not prepared in response to Muzzi's original request.



FIG. 2. *Essay by Charles Skipper and East. As this includes the title Khedive it cannot be earlier than May, 1867.*

Among the letters discovered by Chaftar are two written by the firm of Pellas to Mr. de Agostini of the Italian Public Works Department at Turin. They are dated 17th August and 31st December, 1863. The first quotes a price for printing the stamps required by Muzzi and states that it will " include the cost of perforating by a machine of modern design." The second discusses " a cheaper offer received from an English firm," and requests de Agostini to inform his Alexandria friend (Muzzi) that Pellas was " prepared to quote the same prices and even to offer a discount."

Chaftar comments " It is obvious by these two letters that the preliminary negotiations were well advanced and Muzzi, in submitting his petition of 7th June, 1864 to the Viceroy of Egypt, had already made his choice and probably decided to entrust Pellas Brothers, his fellow countrymen, with the execution of the proposed postage stamps."

In a letter dated 19th April, 1865, the Egyptian Minister of Public Works, Nubar Pasha, instructed Muzzi to proceed to Europe in order to arrange for the manufacture of postage stamps. Specifications for the supply of watermarked paper were set out in detail, together with a drawing of the watermark as we know it. A rough sketch of the stamp design also appears in this letter and, alongside it, the lower words of the superscription appropriate to each of the proposed values. The choice of colours was left to the discretion of Muzzi ; green, however, was ruled out. A facsimile of this letter is given in *L'O.P.*

Muzzi seems to have remained in Italy till the end of September, as a letter from Giuseppe Pellas, dated at Genoa on 27th September, 1865, and sent to his address in Egypt, states " On your arrival in Egypt you will find this letter," and goes on to say " Abbas will sail on Saturday next, carrying all the postage stamps, by the English steamer." Then follow some of the most illuminating statements revealed in these letters. Pellas tells of an envelope he has previously despatched, containing " two copies of each type of postage stamp, to be submitted to His Highness." He mentions that one copy is on watermarked paper and the other on paper similar to that used for the 1 P.T stamps, and explains that he has taken this step because the paper supplied by the makers was of such poor quality that " the gum transpired so that the sheets looked oil stained." In order to avoid this, " I thought it better, as most of the postage stamps were already printed except those of 1 piastre to plunge the printed sheets of postage stamps in an alum bath to render them gum proof." This process was reported successful for some sheets, but a failure for others and " as a result, an enormous quantity of paper was lost, as Abbas can testify." (This paper was seemingly supplied by the firm of Bondi of Turin who forwarded samples of watermarked paper used for the postage stamps of Italy and offered to

manufacture for the Egyptian Government paper watermarked with whatever design might be required. This letter is dated 27th March. 1865.)

The next paragraph of the letter of 27th Sept., 1865 from Pellas at last clears up the mystery of why the 1 P.T. stamps of 1866 are on unwatermarked paper but throws no light on why the lithographic process was not employed for this value. It reads : " The plunging of the sheets in the alum-bath caused them to shrink while drying, so I decided to abandon this procedure for the 1 piastre stamps. The shrinkage of the paper caused serious damage to the stamps when the sheets were perforated. This was clue to the fact that the machine was constructed to perforate two sheets at a time, the result being satisfactory when the sheets were of equal size but not otherwise. " You will notice from the samples submitted that the 1 piastre stamps are the most beautiful and that they are correctly perforated.



" This change of paper caused me some loss and I was left with all the paper intended for the 1 piastre stamp, it being useless to me, owing to the fact that it was watermarked with the pyramid and star device."

FIG. 3. The upper illustration is of the 1 P. T. stamp, printed by typography, as issued. The lower illustration is the 1 P. T. essay printed by lithography on the normal watermarked paper. The background in the corners is composed of crossed lines. A complete printing stone must have been prepared as a block of six of this essay exists in the Byam collection. The incorrect superscription it bears is also lithographed



As can be seen from the illustration (Fig. 3), a design was prepared for printing the 1 piastre by lithography. This was modified slightly when the die for the typographed stamps was cut. The lithographs, which must be regarded as essays, are printed on the normal watermarked paper and closely correspond in colour to the issued 1 piastre stamps. Similar lithographed essays by Pellas; on the paper of the issued stamps are :5 para with lithographed 'superscription 10 piastres, and 2 piastres with lithographed superscription 20 para. C. D. Rawson has recently discovered a 5 para essay with the superscription of another value.

Other lithographed essays (Fig. 4), apparently by Pellas, are known printed on unwatermarked paper similar to that used for the 1 piastre stamps. It will be noticed that in every instance the superscription, which is also lithographed, is appropriate to the 1 piastre stamp.

Although the correspondence with Pellas puts on record that the stamps of this issue were perforated by him in Italy, there is no doubt sundry unperforated sheets were delivered in Egypt and it is almost certain that they provided material for trial of the perforating machine used by v. Penasson (122 by 15; for the stamps of the Second Issue (1867). Both the 10 para and 2 piastres of 1866 are known perforated with this gauge, as also the 5 piastres with superscription of 10 piastres. The first two varieties are among the greatest rarities of Egypt.

The perforating done by Pellas in Italy was performed by two single line machines, gauging 12½ and 13, which seem to have been used indiscriminately on the same sheets of stamps. In this way arose the many combinations with which we are familiar and which therefore do not constitute evidence of separate printings. All stamps with such compound perforations can be found used from the commencement of the issue. As a simple practical classification of these perforation varieties the following is suggested by the Egypt Study Circle :-

- (a) 12½ (the normal perforation) : all values.
- (b) 13 : all values.
- (c) compounds of 12½ and 13 : all values.
- (d) imperforate : all values.
- (e) partially perforated : all values.
- (f) 12 by 15 (trial perforation) : 10 para, 2 P.T., and 5 P.T. with error of superscription 10 P.T.

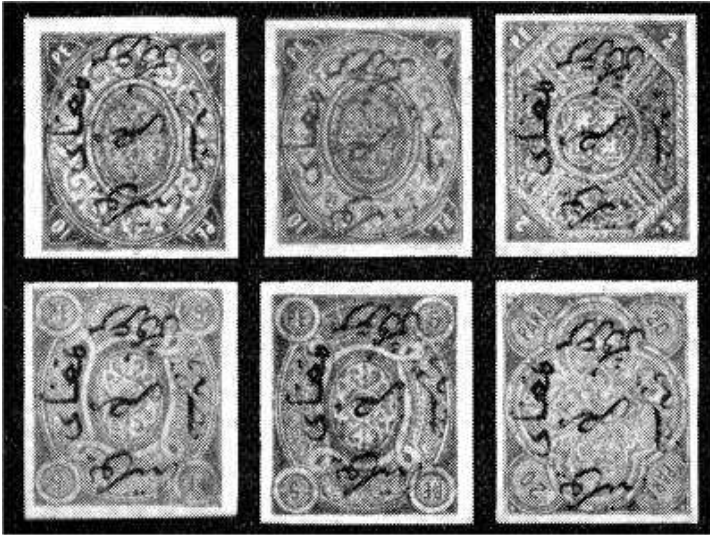


Fig 4. Six hitherto unrecorded essays apparently by Pellas, printed by lithography on unwatermarked paper. The superscription in each instance is appropriate to the 1 P. T. stamp ; 20 para, blue-grey; 5 P. T., blue; 5 P.T., rose-pink; 2 P.T., blue; 10 P. T., yellow ; 10 P.T. , blue. The three blue essays resemble in colour the proofs of the issued 20 para. The 5 P. T., rose-pink, closely resembles the colour of the issued stamp.

(Stamps bearing other gauges are either proofs, with trial perforations, or forgeries.)

To return to the evidence discovered by Chaftar. In a letter dated 2nd October, 1865, Pellas states that with the stamps were despatched " the plate of the watermark used for the production of the paper; the plates for the typograph superscription of the 2 piastre stamps, and the original designs used for the superscriptions of all values." He adds that the " designs of the other stamps were not sent to Egypt as, having been lithographed the stones were defaced when the printing was complete. The originals (the dies) having been engraved on a stone bearing other designs it was not considered expedient to send them to Egypt unless expressly requested."

Finally we are given the invoice submitted to Muzzi Bey by Pellas on 30th September, 1865, and a document dated Alexandria, 25th August, 1868, signed by Muzzi, giving a detailed statement of the stamps of 1866 issued, used postally, and also the residue returned to the Ministry of Finance (Fig. 5). It is interesting to notice that the figures of Pellas and of Muzzi do not correspond Pellas stating that 1,000 sheets of the 10 P.T. value were sent to Egypt (a total of 200,000 stamps), whereas Muzzi claims to have issued 23,000 stamps, of which only 7,600 were actually used.

From all of which it can be seen that Chaftar has greatly extended our knowledge of the First Issue of Egypt, but this is still a field which offers ample opportunities for research.

FRANCOBOLLI RITIRATI DAL MINISTERO DELL'S FINANZE
DAL 17 DICEMBRE 1865 AL 24 GIUGNO 1867

	<i>PARA</i>			<i>PIASTRE</i>			
	5	10	20	1	2	5	10
1865							
17 DICEMBRE	12000	20000	20000	40000	30000	20000	8000
1866							
4 GENNAIO				100000			
12 GENNAIO	100000	100000	100000				
10 FEBBRAIO				100000	60000	10000	10000
8 APRILE	20000	20000	20000	100000	20000	20000	5000
1 GIUGNO			50000	150000			
8 AGOSTO	100000	60000	60000	100000			
4 OTTOBRE				200000	20000		
9 NOVEMBRE		40000		200000	40000		
1867							
14 MARZO	67800	9800		209800			
24 GIUGNO					3000		
<i>RITIRATI—TOTALE</i>	299800	249800	250000	1199800	200000	50000	23000
<i>CONSUMATI</i> ..	254400	238600	240199	1190657	165400	18400	7600
<i>RESTITUITI</i> ..	45400	11200	9801	9143	34600	31600	15400

ALESSANDRIA, LI 25 AGOSTO, 1868,
IL DIRETTORE GENERALE.

FIG. 5 Statement signed by Muzzi, giving the number of stamps of the first issue distributed to P.O.'s ; used postally ; and returned to the Ministry of Finance.