The
Quarterly Circular
of

THE
EGYPT
STUDY CIRCLE
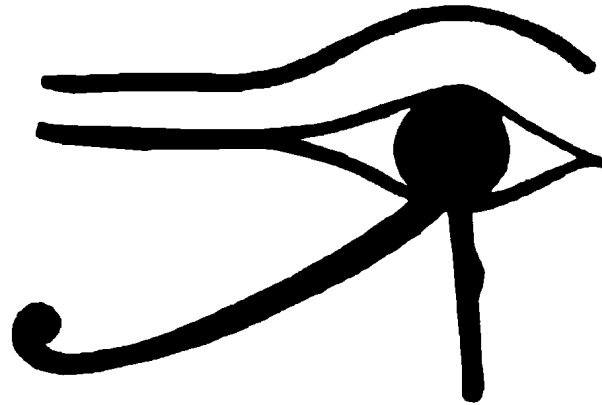
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ARTICLES.

Carmichael
&Todd
P H I L A T E L I S T S
—— PTS ——

GREGORY C.G. TODD

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EGYPT STUDY CIRCLE OFFICERS

President: Mr. J. Sears, FRPSL
                     496 Uxbridge Road, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 4SL.

Chairman: Mr. P. R. Bertram, FRPSL
                     11 Bishop's Way, Buckden, St Neots, Cambs PE19 5TZ.

Deputy Chairman: Mr. J. S. Horesh, U.K.

Secretary: Mr. J. M. Murphy.
                     109 Chadwick Road, Peckham, London SE15 4PY.
                     egyptstudycircle@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Mr. G. A. Jeyes
                     4 Ravine Court, Meridan Close, Canford Cliffs, Poole,
                     Dorset BH13 7JU

Editor: Mr. E. Hall
                     6 Bedford Avenue, Little Chalfont, Amersham, Bucks HP6 6PT
                     edmund.hall@virgin.net

Librarian: Mr. D. J. Davis
                     Church View Cottage, Church Road, Upton Snodsbury,
                     Worcestershire WR7 4NH

U.S.A. Agent: Mr. C. F. Hass
                     P.O. Box 3435, Nashua, NH 03061-3435, United States

Egypt Agent: Professor N. El-Hadidi
                     The Herbarium, Faculty of Science, University of Cairo, Giza, Cairo 12613,
                     Arab Republic of Egypt

Committee: Mr. D. H. Clarke.

Forthcoming Meetings.

October 6th.   Visit to Egypt, 10 Sheets   Visiting Members

November 10th   King Fuad, Second Issue   K. Pogson

Meetings are normally held at the Victory Club, Seymour Street, Marble Arch, London. Members usually congregate in the bar from 1.00pm onwards and meetings commence at 2.00pm.

Report of the Meeting, July 7, 2001

PRESENT: John Sears (President), Robin Bertram (Chairman), Stanley Horesh (Deputy Chairman); and Peter Andrews, Mike Bramwell, Dennis Clarke, John Clarke, John Davis, Peter Grech, Edmund Hall, Alan Jeyes, Mike Murphy, Lewis Said, Tony Schmidt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from John Chellingsworth, Cyril Defriez and Peter Feltus.

The Chairman opened the meeting by announcing the sad news of the death on May 8 of Nancy "Tex" Schaefer, of Clearwater, Florida (ESC 141), a long-standing member whose boundless energy and vitality made her one of the undoubted stars of the visit to Egypt for Cairo 1991. Tex, who was in her 90s, had been in ill-health for some time, and her collection was dispersed some years ago.

Visit to Egypt, October 2001: The Secretary announced that passports of most of those attending had been received during the past ten days and more had been handed over at the meeting. Visas will be arranged during the coming ten days. The Treasurer reminded those visiting Cairo that final cheques must be paid before July 23.

Auction 32: Mike Murphy reported that completion of the Auction had been delayed because one vendor had been unable for four weeks to send in his material; but it was expected any day. John Sears had circulated to the committee members notes of response to his note on the future of the Auction, and said he had been pleased and surprised to see so many ideas. The Auction committee will meet to complete a series of proposals for improvement; and reversion to two auctions a year will take place in 2002.

Website: The website sub-committee had enjoyed a cordial and instructive meeting at Edmund Hall's house, and Edmund was congratulated on the hard work he had put into the concept and development of the project. The sub-committee reported to the full committee proposing that the venture be followed through, with certain provisos, on the basis that a) it be an information site, intended to make collectors aware of the Circle and to attract new members; b) that the site contain nothing not available to non-Internet members; c) that anonymity be preserved on the site; d) that costs be kept within reasonable bounds. The sub-committee will investigate further the question of costs and fine-tune the text of the site, and then report again to the committee.

Bill Andrews (ESC 132): The Secretary reported having received a letter from Bill's widow, Pam Andrews, in which she thanked all Circle members for their kind thoughts and letters and cards of condolence, and apologised that not all had had replies: she had been overwhelmed by the volume of correspondence. She said that Bill had requested that his catalogues and reference books be donated to the Circle Library, and will arrange to have them transported from France. The Secretary was instructed to write to thank Pam Andrews for this most thoughtful and generous offer.

Quarterly Circular: As we are rapidly approaching Whole Number 200 of the series, it was suggested that this should be made a "special issue", with colour illustrations and preferably many more pages. The idea was greeted with acclaim, and the Editor called on members - present or not - to get to work to produce their finest research papers for the Special Issue.

Display Topic - Instructional Markings: Robin Bertram introduced the subject/display by giving his interpretation of an instructional marking as "a handstamp/mark placed on an item of mail by a post office official **after** the item has been posted/handed in for posting - the mark indicating a course of action, type of mail or reason for non-delivery", and covered various areas such as the 'R' and boxed 'R' markings, AR markings, Insured markings, charge marks, 'T' (tax) markings, 'O' markings, Dead Letter Office markings, non-delivery markings, airmail markings, and a miscellaneous group (eg 'Found in mailbag without contents'). He did not cover military, censorship, manuscript markings or labels.

Much discussion followed on what could or could not be considered to be an instructional marking.

Robin provided an illustrated list of the markings (both Consular Post Office and Egyptian Post Office) and gave a comprehensive display. This was supported by material from members present. He specifically thanked Mike Murphy for his assistance with research and contributing some of the marks.

It was noted that some marks ('Refusé par le destinaire', for example) were quite scarce. Robin said he appreciated that this was not an in-depth study but a superficial display of marks available. Members decided that some of the markings could be broken down into smaller groups for study - 'Dead letter office markings' for example. These could form the subjects for future meetings.

On behalf of the members, Peter Grech thanked Robin for his interesting and comprehensive display and the depth and breadth of knowledge shown in an area little studied, with rare and sought-after material from all periods of Egyptian philately. Members showed their appreciation in the traditional manner.

New Members (some entries amended: apologies to Mr Kossmann, Mr Wagner & Mr Abd el-Mageed)

ESC 544　　　　Dieter **Kossmann**, Rembrandtstrasse 55, 53844 Troisdorf, Germany
　　　　　　　　(Interests: Egypt, Ethiopia, Australia, Malayan States)

ESC 545　　　　Mahmoud Abd el-Azim **Abd el-Mageed**, 8A El Saryat, Abassya, Cairo, Egypt
　　　　　　　　(Interests: Military postal history of Egypt)

ESC 546　　　　Frank R **Wagner**, 3132 Rebecca Drive, Chesapeake, Virginian 23322, United States
　　　　　　　　(Interests: Egypt first to fourth issue)

ESC 547　　　　Brian D **Lukanic**, 2051 West Farragut Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625, United States
　　　　　　　　(Interests: Egypt, Morocco, Poland)

ESC 548　　　　Magdy Hanafy **Arafa**, 26 Adly Street, Flat No 203, Niaza Building, Cairo, Egypt
　　　　　　　　(Interests: Egypt postal history, FDCs, Revenue documents)

Change of Address
ESC 403　　　　P J **Beckett**, 58 Main Street, Higham on the Hill, Nuneaton, Nr Coventry CV13 6AH
ESC 450　　　　Osama A **Sidhom**, 4786 Wheeler Avenue, La Verne, CA 91750, United States
ESC 458　　　　Rafik **Balian**, # 458 300 Van Gogh, DDO H9A 3J6, Quebec, Canada

Deceased
ESC 141　　　　Nancy "Tex" **Schaefer**　　　　ESC 511　　　　Norman **Layton**

Resignation
ESC 158　　　　Jürgen **Settgast**

Lapsed due to non-payment of subscriptions for 2001
Victor Bierna (418), Ahmed El-Seroui (459), Michael Goodman (509), M. McKabbatty (488), Fredrik Olsen (530), Eric Parkes (437), Mohammad Safdar (362), Magdy Soliman (503), Jurgen Zahn (519), Abbas Zaki (539).

Carried by Sea

John Davis (ESC 213)

[This is an extended report of the meeting held on May 12, 2001, in which the subject Carried by Sea continued through the four sections not completed at the meeting held on September 23, 2000, and provisionally reported in *QC 195* (December 2000). A provisional report of the May meeting appeared in *QC* 197 of June 2001.]

The various articles or sources of information were presented on one board for reference, while the remaining boards presented the four remaining sections as follows:

5. Official Sea Post markings
The September meeting had ended part-way through this section, which is of necessity the largest to date and reference was made to the results of a 1994 meeting which had been confined to this part of the study.

In addition to showing all the markings as illustrated in the data sheets and also in the 1994 meeting, paquebot markings struck on covers and cards emanating from Egypt, or having passed through it, were shown:

i. At Brindisi - Hosking type 489 was shown struck across two 5 milliemes first Fuad, the "Empire" postcard rate. Does anyone have a cover with this mark cancelling Egyptian stamps? Please advise.

ii. At Marseille - Salles Fig. 260 the "universal" French paquebot on a postcard to Scotland with an Edward VII 1 d cancelled Marseille Bouches du Rhone in 1903.

iii. At London - a 1934 Egyptian postcard posted on board *S.S. Laconia* with penny and a halfpenny George V stamps each cancelled London F.S. Paquebot with London datestamp and PAQUEBOT POSTED AT SEA.

iv. At Aden - Hosking 1389 was shown on Egyptian postcards franked 1d Edward VII dated, as in the Hosking example, 19 NO 10, and two George V halfpennies dated 25 MA 12.

v. At Sydney - two air mail covers franked 45 and 47 milliemes respectively, cancelled Sydney NSW Aust. and PAQUEBOT between two lines top and bottom. This is as Hosking 671 for Perth but Hosking does not show it as from Sydney. One had been thrice censored but both carried the tombstone censor From H.M. Ship prevalent at the beginning of World War II.

When the sections are agreed by those participating in the study, it may well he that this group may warrant a separate section. Please advise other examples of this grouping, preferably with photocopies.

6. Shipping Lines
The various shipping lines were then discussed, starting with the circular and octagonal datestamps of Messageries Maritimes. These were Ligne N, which sailed from Marseille to Yokohama and back via Suez, and which included Ligne N Paq. Fr. No. 7 (circular) which was introduced in 1870 and remained in service until 1907. Octagonal datestamps of Ligne N included No. 5, struck in red in 1894 and in black in 1910; No.6, struckinpurplein 1908; andNo. 8, in black of 1904.

Ligne T, which plied between Marseille and Noumea, and was designated the Australian and New Caledonian Line, was illustrated with Paq. No. 6 dated 28 Mars 91, while the La Réunion à Marseille Line was illustrated with a Suez Canal card franked 2 milliemes cancelled 8 Juil 07. In addition cards from *S.S. Oronique* and of *S.S. Lotus* were shown, as well as a circular cachet from *Paquebot Angkor*.

The Stoomvaart Company of Netherlands was mentioned and illustrated with its datestamps POSTAGENT ROTTERDAM BATAVIA, with either star or cross at the foot of the c.d.s. being displayed, followed by the N.Y.K. Japan Mail Steamship Co. It was rightly said that this shipping line postal stationery postcard could have been posted in Egypt itself rather than having been posted at sea.

The American Dollar Steamship Line was shown with its postal stationery from the *S.S. President Adams*, the Hamburg-Amerika Linie, Norddeutscher Lloyd Bremen and several other German Seepost lines, including the Ost-Asiatische, Australische Hauptlinie, the Ost-Afrikanische Hauptlinie and the Hamburg-Ostafrika lines all being illustrated with postcards. The back of a cover addressed to someone on board *S.S. Gneisenau* at Port Said was shown bearing a cachet shown NOT ON BOARD S.S. Gneisenau. The book *Norddeutscher Lloyd Bremen 185 7-1970* by Edwin Drechsel has just been purchased for the ESC Library.

Various British lines were illustrated, including Anchor Line, British India Line, Orient Line, and P&O, followed by the Alexandria-Constanta line to the Black Sea. The books by Reg Kirk will be purchased by the E.S.C. Library if they are still available from the Royal Philatelic Society, as they will greatly assist this part of the study.

Lloyd Triestino followed, with mail from Piroscafo *Conte Rosso, Helouan, Victoria* and *Vienna* illustrated, the latter with datestamps in both black and violet. The Sitmar Line (Societa' Italiana di Servizi Marittimi) was next up, with *Ausonia* and *Esperia* mail, followed by mail from several Italian ships whose ownership was not known. These included *Motonave Barletta* and *Citta di Bastia,* Piroscafo *Egeo, Giuseppe Mazzini, Marco Polo, Romolo* and *Umbria.* Clearly much research in *Lloyd's Register* is called for. Are there any London-based volunteers?

The Italian ships were followed by Khedivial Mail Line cachets from *S.S. Rashid* struck in both black and red, the *Fezara,* the *Roda* struck in both blue and black, and the *S.S. Mohamed Ali el-Kebir.* Mail from the *Taif* and the *Talodi,* which sailed the Red Sea ports, and the *Bilbeis,* which plied between Egypt and Cyprus, was shown.

So-called 'bottle mail' was illustrated by both John Sears and Cyril Defriez ,with letters posted on the *S.S. el Malek Fouad* in 1956 and "posted by bottle in the Straits of Messina". Actually the bottle seems to have been a large metal container thrown over the side of the ship and from possibly the *S.S. Nefertiti* too. The Khedivial Line, having been bought by the Egyptian state, became the Pharaonic Line, shortly after the Revolution in 1953 perhaps. John Sears showed several of his Hendrey covers in this context, as well as some splendid colour postcards of the ships.

Mail from some more ships unattributed as to owners included the *S. Y.* (Steam yacht) *Argonaut* of London which plied the Norwegian coast but was known to have made the occasional trip to the Near East. Others included the *S.S. Heliopolis,* the *M. V. Nelly,* the *Lincoln Train, S.S. Egyptian Prince, S.S. Homsca* of Hull and *M. V. British Fortune,* and Cyril Defriez provided one or two more, including *M.V. Mivaga II Funafuti* from as recently as 1991, *R.M.S. Caledonia* from 1955 and *S.S. City of Baroda* with a beautiful Posted on the High Seas cachet from 1937.

7. Military Sea Post

The next section comprised post emanating from military situations and a front was displayed from a seaman on board *H.M.S. Monarch* which had been involved in the bombardment of Alexandria under Admiral Seymour six weeks before. The Tell el-Kebir campaign was shown by a cover from a seaman on board *S.S. Carysfoot,* which took part in the seizure of the Suez Canal in 1882.

H.M. T. Aragon housed Base Army Post Office Y at Mudros during the Dardanelles/Gallipoli campaign (Z was at Alexandria), and this was illustrated with a censored Egyptian postcard to England from July 1915.

Two boxed cachets RECEIVED FROM H.M. SHIP NO CHARGE TO BE RAISED were shown, together with London datestamps where these boxed cachets were applied. Postcards of hospital ships *Somali* (No. 5) and *Dongola* (No. 2) were shown, as well as the Australian requisitioned troopships *Ballarat* and *Berrima.* This rounded off World War I.

Naval mail followed from the late Concession period and mail from Royal Australian Navy personnel with the boxed cachet AIR MAIL From H.M.A. Ship to Sydney cancelled with the civil datestamp of Alexandria. This went some way to explaining the Sydney Paquebot mark shown in an earlier section, since it emanated from the early World War II period. Unlike Army personnel, the Royal Australian

Navy received no postal concessions, their airmail costing them the normal 47 milliemes in 1940 as opposed to the concessionairy 40 milliemes. The tombstone censor Benians N. 1 was illustrated by a 3d airmail rate, to England, the George VI dark coloured stamps cancelled Benians type 1 EPP 30.

Returning to World War I with French Marine Française Service a la Mer, two types of cachet were noted, without serifs on a card from *Transport Vinh Long* of 1915, another from 1918, and with serifs onacarddated 1915.

Presumably much more mail of a military origin that found its way routed from or through Egypt will expand this section enormously. Do you have anything to add?

8. The reintroduction of the Retta

The last section was reserved for the reintroduction of the use of the retta, the first being a dark George VI penny halfpenny cancelled unframed retta of 9x9 dots on a censored cover to Devon "dated" by the civil censor mark to early 1940. Three 5 milliemes Boy King stamps cancelled framed retta of 8x8 made up the 15 milliemes surface "Empire" letter rate in August 1940, again with civil censor mark, and lastly a cover with Channel Islands 2 1/2d cancelled with the same 8x8 retta had a nice oval H.M.T. Asturias Posted on the High Seas cachet dated 3 Nov 1948.

Much discussion showed that there may well be sufficient interest in the overall subject for a new study to be coordinated and put together.

It was suggested that, at least in the first instance, anyone who has information to offer should contact John Davis, Hon. Librarian, whose address can be found at the front of *QC,* and a small study group of correspondents can be formed to divide the subject into sections each of which could be the subject of a future meeting of the Circle. The results of these more in-depth studies could then be published as articles in future *QC*s.

Editorial

Not the usual plea for articles this time as thankfully there seems to be a steady flow of them being sent to me. Keep them coming. There has been a good response to the Hotel articles of late and I have several held back in order that they can all be published together, so please be patient if your article does not appear immediately in the next *QC*. My own self-indulgent article has absorbed perhaps more *QC* space than warranted but I can assure you it has gone through several pruning's. It also acts as a pre-amble to further articles on Gaza/Sinai that may one day appear. Perhaps the last few pages may be of interest to a few members and I would welcome any additions or corrections to it.

With the September meeting and the visit to Egypt requiring ten pages it was suddenly brought home to me that I had nothing new to show, as I have not had time to mount anything these last three years. This coincides with becoming the editor of our illustrious *QC* which has used up all my 'stamp time'. It therefore occurred to me that I am perhaps being a little selfish in hogging it all to myself, so if any member feels he would like to take the baton, or should that be quill, please don't be shy in putting your name forward.

Two fake covers at auction, Spring 2001

Peter A. S. Smith (ESC 74)

These covers appeared at different auctions in the Spring of 2001. One of them first appeared among a dealer's offerings at a bourse (in San Francisco or Chicago, as I recall) about two or three years ago. I pointed out the discrepancies, and the dealer seemed to accept them, and agreed to remove it from sale. Nevertheless, it found its way back on the market (as such items often do), and it reappeared in Switzerland. It realised a substantial sum. It is illustrated in Fig. 1, which was made from the auction catalogue illustration. Let us consider its features.

The cover is franked 1 piastre 30 paras, 10 paras more than the 1 piastre 20 paras that was required at the date. This is cause for suspicion, although such overfrankings sometimes happen out of convenience. Examination of the 20-para stamp reveals that it is apparently not cancelled; the date-stamp appears to be underneath the stamp. and there is no overlapping on to the stamp. It thus seems that the stamp does not belong. The circumstances strongly suggest that there had been a 10-para stamp at that place on the cover originally, but it had fallen off or been removed. The faker had stuck an irrelevant 20-para stamp in its place. Furthermore, the "tax" marking, in red crayon, T.15, makes no sense; it would not have been warranted on a single-weight letter, and for a double-weight letter, requiring 3 piastres postage, it would have been too little. The faker simply wrote a made-up tax marking over the stamp so as to "tie" it, without any thought as to the rate.

Fig.1

The second cover appeared in an auction in France. The illustration, Fig. 2, is not of optimum clarity, because it, too, was made from the catalogue illustration, which also had to be enlarged. The cover purports to show the printed-circular rate, which would indeed be a rarity from Constantinople. The illustration in the catalogue just didn't look right, but I could not specify why until I enlarged it on the computer and compared it with a genuine. This cover is a total forgery, but a dangerous one, which looks very convincing against genuine strikes of the COSTANTINOPOLI cancellation for comparison.

Fig. 3 shows an enlargement of a genuine strike (on an interpostal seal, because it is the sharpest of the examples I have), alongside an enlargement of the cancellation on the cover (the scales are not exact, for the catalogue illustration was in reduced size, but the enlargement is, I think, sufficient). Look at the PO of POSTE, and compare those letters to the PO in COSTANTINOPOLI. In the genuine, the sizes match fairly closely, whereas in the forgery, the letters of POSTE are noticeably too large, and of different shape.

Another difference is in the closeness of the inscriptions to the circle; in the genuine, the lettering is farther from the surrounding circle than in the forgery. There are other differences, but they are smaller. (One might argue that more than one date-stamp might have been issued to Constantinople, but no evidence exists to support that supposition, and all strikes that I have, on loose stamps and several covers, agree precisely with the illustration of the genuine in Fig. 3.)

These covers were probably consigned to the auction firms; it will be interesting to see if the consignors attempt to sell them elsewhere at a later date – watch out for them!
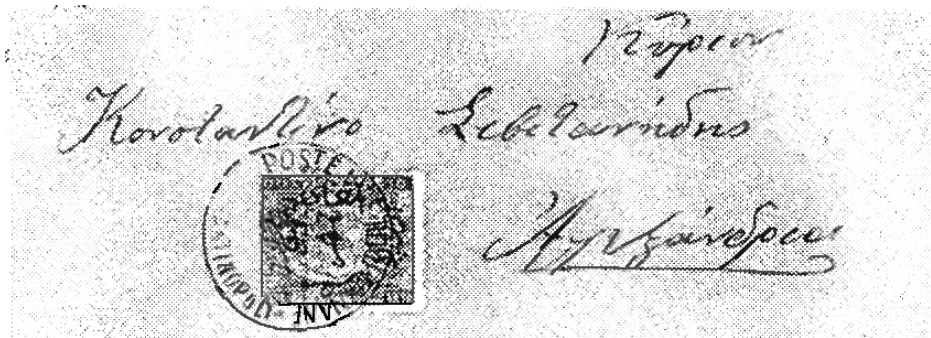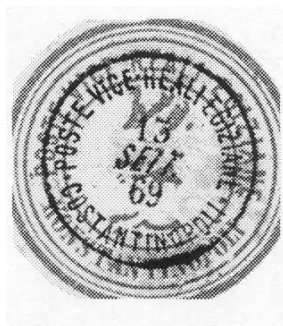

Fig 2.

Fig 3 / 4

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Answer to Query 197/1: Maritime Mail

Mike Murphy (ESC 240)

In response to Anatole Ott's query about the possibility of maritime mail shipped by an Egyptian-Belgian shipping company in the post-1855 period (based on *The Ghost of King Leopold*, by Adam Hochschield), I refer members to the penultimate paragraph of Khetcho Hagopian's article in *QC* Whole Number 187 (Vol XVI No 12, December 1998, pages 294-295), in which he quotes an article from *Le timbre-poste* newspaper/magazine of April 1866.

The article lists seven post offices operating in Egypt (Egyptian, French, British, Italian, Austrian, Russian and Greek), and describes with wry amusement the consequent confusion. The penultimate paragraph states (in full):

> There was formerly a Belgian post office, but it has ceased operations since the suppression of the boats from Alexandria to Antwerp.

And the final para states (in part):

> We shall soon have the establishment of a Spanish post office with a service of boats uniting Egypt with Barcelona, the Balearic Islands, Cadiz, etc., etc.

So Khetcho's 1998 question - is there any physical evidence for these two consular post offices? - remains unanswered. But Anatole has provided another clue that perhaps that at least one of them did in fact exist….

————————————————————————

Civilian postal markings of Heliopolis.

D.R.P. Glyn-Jones (ESC 231)

With reference to the article by Vahe Varjabedian (ESC 390) in the last issue of the *QC* (whole series No 197 of June 2001), I have the following to report:

Additional types: Double ring machine frank with Heliopolis at the base, and "T" in semicircle above, Arabic inscriptions in upper half. Dm 28mm, black. Dates 28.4.83.10 and -1.4.87.10.

Single ring with Heliopolis in straight line at the base and "T.2" beneath. Arabic inscription in two straight lines in upper half. Dm 26mm. Dates in a boxed slug -9 5 68.9M and -5 I2 88.9M.

Type		Date	Further information
3A	Latest	7.IV.16 3-4 PM	26mm dm, in black
6	Latest	23 XII.20 8-9 PM	27mm dm, in black
12	Latest	13 AU 45 8-9 A	30mm dm, in black
19	Latest	23 DE 53 ?6.30	28mm dm, in black
20	Earliest	22 NO 39 4 30P	29mm dm, in black (or is it perhaps Type I4? But it is certainly 29mm and the Arabic above is similar to that shown for Type 20)
19	Sub-type	3 AP-48 8 ?? -P	26mm dm, in black

<u>**W. C. "Bill" Andrews (ESC 132)**</u>

The Circle is sorry to have to record the passing of Bill Andrews, one of our best respected and most warm-hearted colleagues over many years of membership.

Always willing to take time to help the less experienced members (as I can personally vouch), always willing to pen a quick note to answer a *QC* query from his enormous fund of knowledge, Bill impressed with his high good humour and - just as important - a willingness to listen.

His long-held philatelic love was the pioneer air mail service between Egypt and Iraq, and his move from Winchester to Normandy on his retirement allowed time to complete his research and publish the magisterial *The Royal Air Force Cairo-Baghdad Air Mail Service 1921-1927*, which was reviewed in *QC* 194 by John Sears.

Our President described the book as one of supreme importance to collectors of Egyptian postal history and described Bill's treatment of one of the most romantic episodes in the history of the early Air Mails as fascinating and comprehensive in bringing together in one volume the various aspects known only from little-known part-publications.

That same move to France, however, removed from Bill any chance of attending our meetings, where his wit and fund of stories had been a cherished and respected part of the established pattern for many years.

Both he and Pam, his beloved wife of 59 years, had earned the chance to take a rest, and so well did they fit in in their new life that almost the entire population of St Bomer les Forges turned out for the funeral. His ashes were scattered in a forest in Normandy on his birthday, June 17.

Mike Murphy

<u>**Norman Layton (ESC 511)**</u>

Norman Layton, a member for only three years, was a lifelong collector and enthusiast for Egypt and all things Egyptian who developed an interest in the Circle only recently and was one of the first to confirm that enthusiasm by putting forward his name for the forthcoming trip to Egypt. Living in Scarborough, he had had few opportunities to meet fellow members and was looking forward to making their acquaintance in the appropriate surroundings. Sadly, illness forced his withdrawal from the trip, and he died early in August. Our sincere condolences go to his wife Margaret.

Belgica 2001

The recent Belgica 2001 show in Brussels was a successful one for Egyptian philately, with the following medals awarded. Our congratulations go to our successful members.

Postal history section:

Richard Wilson (USA, ESC 230),	Egyptian postal history covers 1866-87 - Vermeil
Giorgio Khouzam (Italy),	Posta Europea in Egypt 1840-65 - Large Vermeil
Samir Fikry (Egypt, ESC 305),	Postal history of Egypt 1419-1879 - Large Gold and Special Prize (this was the first time the display has been shown in 128 sheets).

Aerophilately section:

Lucien Toutounji (Egypt, ESC 264),	Egypt airmail 1870-1939 - Large Vermeil
Jeanne Fikry (Egypt),	Egypt airmail 1910-1940 [The Nefertiti collection] - Gold

Sinai & Gaza - Part 1: Introduction & pre World War I

Edmund Hall (ESC 239)

Over the last 20 years or so I have attempted to collect material relating to Gaza and the Sinai. This was born out of an interest in military history, particularly ancient and twentieth century. I naively thought that as the wars of 1948 to 1973 were recent events philatelic material would be plentiful, easily found and above all cheap.

While attempting to acquire material I have squirreled away various articles and notes with the intention of writing a series of articles, breaking up the various aspects of the combined philatelic information into historical sections. This is the first, covering the period up to the start of the First World War. I say Sinai and Gaza, but have used this as quite a loose definition, taking my cue from the Red Queen: "It means anything I say it means, and leaves out anything I say it's not". For instance, I have not included Kantara in the Sinai, while others do, as I have assume that the post office is on the west side of the Suez Canal and so in Egypt proper. By this measure, then, should Kantara Sharq (Kantara East) be included?

Introduction

One question that arises is how do Sinai and Gaza relate to Egyptian philately? Other than the Egyptian occupation of what has been come to be known as the Gaza Strip, I think there is little argument to include Gaza. But what then of the Sinai? Some may even think this an odd question, as the Sinai now constitutes two of the provinces of present-day Egypt and warrants its own chapter in Peter Smith's book. I ask it because from the collecting point of view I find more Holy Land collectors express an interest in the Sinai then do Egyptian collectors. I also have heard the view, from more then one collector, that it is more part of the Holy Land then of Egypt. The important point here, of course, is that if it is not Egypt, then some of my material is Egypt used abroad. If it is Egypt, then material not emanating from an Egyptian post office is Foreign Post in Egypt. In either case, doesn't this mean the value of my collection must be seriously increased!

Gaza probably gets its name from the Semitic root for *fortified town* (castle). The meaning of Sinai is uncertain. The peninsular, or parts of it, is referred to in the Bible as Sinai, Sin, Tsin, Shur, Pharan and Choreb. The name Sin (and hence ultimately Sinai) possible originates with the early Mesopotamian Semites, originating in Ur, who worshipped the *moon god Sin*. After their conquest of Syria, Palestine and Elam, which was considered to have been due to the favours of the moon god, they named the extremity of their new empire after Sin in gratitude.

There is no distinct natural line dividing either the Negev and Sinai or the Isthmus and the eastern part of the Delta (unless the Suez Canal be regarded as such). Southern Sinai, on the other hand, though geologically a continuation of both the Arabian Peninsula and the eastern portion of Africa, is separated from both by the two arms of the Red Sea: the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Eilat.

As far back as the first dynasties, in the third millennium BC, the Egyptian pharaohs aspired to exploit Sinai minerals, and exercise political control over Palestine and southern Syria. Though later their endeavours were often successful, Sinai was never considered an integral part of Egypt. Nevertheless, the eastern borderline of Egypt was well defined and defended by "The Wall of the Ruler" - mentioned in contemporary Egyptian literary documents (The Tale of Sinuhe; The Prophecy of Nefer-Rohu, Papyrus Leningrad 116A) and archaeologically confirmed for the period of the New Kingdom by a line of fortifications running more or less parallel to the present-day Suez Canal.

On the other side of the peninsula, the territories of Canaan, and thereafter Judah and Israel, never included Sinai, for their southern limit was "the river of Egypt" (Wadi Arish). The victories of Alexander the Great put an end to the Persian Empire and united the whole Near East - including Palestine, Sinai and Egypt - under his rule. It was only during the incessant wars among his successors that a border between Syria and

Egypt, west of Rafiah, was established. The short-lived Hasmonean kingdom of Alexander Jannaeus extended west beyond this line and included El Arish, but when Pompey (63BC) established Roman supremacy he annexed all the coastal cities east of El Arish to Syria. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods the border seems to have been between El Arish and Rafiah, which was considered the first city of Syria. During the Roman and Byzantine era the Sinai grew in military commercial importance, with the Romans building military posts every 22km (14 miles), the length of one day's march of a Roman legion. The exact frontier kept changing its location: in the Hellenistic and again in the Byzantine period it was *Bitylon,* whereas in the Roman period it was *Bethaffu.* From there it made a sharp bend south, toward Suez. The coastline, including El Arish (then called *Rhinokolura*), *Osracina* and *Mons Casius*, belonged to Egypt, whereas the remainder, the bulk of central and southern Sinai, was part of Palestina Tertia.

The Arab occupation of the Near East did not basically change the Byzantine administration and the division of provinces remained almost the same as before. There are minor differences of opinion among Arab medieval geographers as to where exactly Palestine ends and Egypt begins. When Amr ibn al Aas set out in 639 with a band of 3,500 to conquer Egypt, by way of Gaza, at Rafiah he received post haste a dispatch from Umar ibn al Khattab, leader of the Muslims (caliph). According to tradition, Amr ibn al Aas suspected the purport of this despatch, and did not open it until the next day, when he had reached Al Arish. When he did so, he found that the caliph had ordered him, if he received the letter while he was still in Palestine, to abandon the operation. If, however, the despatch reached him when he was already in Egypt, he was to proceed. He then enquired innocently from those standing near, whether he was in Egypt or in Palestine. When they replied that they were in Egypt, he ordered the continuation of the march. This letter could possible claim be the most important piece of postal history in the history of Egypt. But like the Byzantine concept of Palestina Tertia, the Tih plateau (central Sinai) is regarded as belonging to the Negev.

From the end of the 13th century, during Mameluke as well as Ottoman rule, Egypt, Sinai and Palestine again constituted part of one empire, borders being of minor importance. Administratively, the status of Sinai was not clearly defined; parts were sometimes attached to the province of Damascus or Gaza, sometimes to the Hedjaz or Egypt. It never became a *sanjak* (province) in itself, always being part of two administrative divisions.

Egypt was a province of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Mohammad Ali seized power (1805-1811) and was appointed by the Sultan as Pasha of that province. In 1830 he rebelled against his Turkish overlords, his son Ibrahim Pasha invading Palestine (October 1831). In 1839 the European Great Powers, fearing the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, decided to intervene in the Turco-Egyptian conflict and called a conference in London. Mohammad Ali agreed to withdraw from all the territories he had occupied and to accept the authority of the Sultan in exchange for the hereditary government of Egypt. The Treaty of London (July 15, 1840) contained a demarcation of "Southern Syria", which included Sinai in that province. The Sultan granted Mohammad Ali a firman in February 1841 in which he promised him succession to "the government of Egypt within its ancient boundaries, such as they are to be found in the map which is sent unto thee by my Grand Vizier". This included a line drawn from east of El Arish to Suez as the boundary of Egypt.

Turkey remained the suzerain power, it being laid down that each hereditary governor of Egypt upon his succession must obtain a firman of investiture from the Sultan. This definitive statement of the Ottoman Government on the subject declared explicitly that Sinai was not part of Egypt. All the firmans of investiture granted to Mohammad Ali and his successors contained a reference to the territory in respect of which the grant was being made, but none of them included Sinai either specifically or inferentially.

As a result of British pressure, Turkey also granted Mohammad Ali permission to man a small police post at Nakhl (Central Sinai) and to control the "pilgrims' road to Mecca". There was therefore a certain measure of Egyptian control over parts of Sinai, which were not included in its official boundaries. Sinai, in the first half of the 19th century, was of little importance to either Egypt or Turkey; but this changed radically with the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), and even more significantly when Britain purchased the shares of the Canal Company (1875) and then occupied Egypt (1882). It now became an important aim

of British policy to shift the boundary as far as possible away from the Canal The Turko-Britsh conflict came to a head in 1892. In that year the Ottoman Government granted a firman of investiture to the new Khedive, a title first granted to Mohammad Ali's grandson Ismail Abbas Hilmi, which contained a more specific definition of Egypt's boundaries (referring to the firmans of 1841 and 1865): Aqaba was removed from Egyptian control and annexed to the Hedjaz. The British, who understood this firman to determine the Egyptian frontiers from Suez to El Arish, delayed its promulgation.

On April 8, 1892, as a result of the intervention of the British Consul-General Sir Evelyn Baring, pressure was brought to bear on Turkey, the Grand Vizier sent an explanatory telegram confirming Egypt's right to administer "Mount Sinai", provided that the garrison towns along the Hedjaz route reverted to Turkey. This telegram was the first Ottoman document to grant Egypt authority in Sinai, but it was phrased in vague terms and did not specify any boundaries. There are discrepancies in the text: police stations and positions placed in Sinai for a specific purpose does not amount to administration.

In spite of this, the British Consul-General informed the Egyptian Foreign Minister that the telegram was to be interpreted as drawing the boundary of Sinai under Egyptian authority from east of El Arish to Aqaba. Turkey neither confirmed nor denied this.

Ten years later, on September 8, 1902, the Sultan confirmed the status quo in Sinai. Then, when in 1905 the Hedjaz railway reached Ma'an, only 125 km from the Red Sea, the importance of Aqaba was suddenly enhanced. Turkey intended to use the railway, with its branch line to Aqaba, as an alternative to the Suez Canal and therefore established a military presence at Aqaba, as well as at Taba, 10 km. to the south.

When Lord Cromer pressed the Khedive, Abbas Pasha, to claim southern Sinai for Egypt, he refused to do so on the grounds that it was not within the boundaries of his country. On January 10, 1906, a British officer, W.E. Jennings-Bramley (often known as Bramley Bey), commanding a small Egyptian force of five guards, pitched his tents at Umm-Rashrash (modern-day Eilat) and declared his intention of constructing a police post there and others all along the Aqaba-Gaza road. The Turkish Governor of Aqaba, Rushdi, claimed this to be trespassing. Bramley was forced to return to Nakhl, and the Turks immediately set up a police post at Umm-Rashrash (January 12,1906).

The second episode in the drama occurred ten days later, when a small Egyptian coastguard vessel. the *Nur-el-Bahr*, with a British captain, anchored at Coral Island and its men made an attempt to land at Taba. Turkish troops occupying Taba prevented the landing. Bramley arrived on the scene, but could not change the situation, though on the way he managed to put a post at Ras el-Naqeb, whereupon Rushdi stationed a few Turkish soldiers at the same place. In February the Turks increased the number of their troops in Aqaba and the British dispatched their battleship *Diana* to the Gulf of Eilat. During the next two months the Turks defied repeated British demands to evacuate Taba.

In the meantime, an attempt was being made in Cairo to settle the issue by way of diplomatic negotiations. The British Government protested against the Turkish occupation of Taba, declaring that it belonged to Egypt. Mukhtar Pasha, the Turkish delegate at these talks, on the other hand, claimed that the boundary line El Arish/Aqaba was in fact El Arish/Suez /Aqaba, i.e., dividing Sinai into three triangles, two of which were administered by Egypt, the third, including Taba, by Turkey herself. The British had to admit that this was the way the line was drawn in most maps. Mukhtar Pasha considered this triangle essential for the continuation of the Hedjaz railway as far as Suez, but was willing to compromise by bisecting Sinai along the line El Arish/Ras Mohammad. His argument was that administration of Sinai had been entrusted to the Khedive exclusively for the purpose of protecting the pilgrims' route to Mecca, and that when in 1892 Aqaba had been restored to Turkey, the eastern coast of Sinai, as far as Ras Mohammad, had similarly reverted to direct Ottoman rule, leaving only the western half of the Sinai peninsula under Egyptian administration. This proposition was rejected out of hand by the British, who concentrated troops and naval forces in Egypt as well as the Eastern Mediterranean, turning the local border clash into an international threat of war.

On May 3 the British Government presented the Sultan with an ultimatum, demanding that he evacuate Taba within ten days and accept the Turco-Egyptian boundary as running straight from Rafiah to Aqaba. All Turkish attempts to settle matters without complying fully with the terms of the ultimatum were fruitless and on May 14, threatened by the Royal Navy and intimidated by France as well as Russia, Turkey was compelled to accept the British terms.

When the joint Turco-Egyptian commission preparing the map found themselves disagreeing, Turkey had to give way once more to British pressure. Though the oases of Kuntilla, Ein Qdeis and Qseima along the Gaza/Aqaba road should, according to a straight line drawn from Rafiah to Taba, have been on the Turkish side of the line, they were included on the Egyptian side because Britain threatened that otherwise she would insist on including the Arava valley and Aqaba in Egypt as well. The agreement was signed on January 1, 1907, with the line drawn from Rafiah to Taba. Turkey's only achievement was the retention of Umm-Rashrash, as a defence for Aqaba.

There are therefore basic differences between the Rafiah-to-Taba border and all the other borders of Palestine. (a) It is earlier, fixed in 1906, whereas the other lines were negotiated only after World War I. (b) It was originally not an international border, but an administrative demarcation line, a division within the Turkish Empire. When, in 1922 Britain was granted a mandate over Palestine, this line was automatically taken over, and at the end of the Arab-Israel war in 1949 was accepted as the ceasefire line by both Egypt and Israel. After World War I there was a notable failure to define the status of Sinai. As early as 1914, Britain declared Sinai to be a "protectorate", while Egypt continued to act as administrator, but without ever formally annexing the area to the Egyptian kingdom established in 1922. Under the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 Turkey gave up its colonies, but southern Sinai was not included in the list.

The British judiciously decided to hold on to the peninsula as a separate province, part neither of Egypt nor of the Palestine Mandate. It was administered under an organisation called the Occupied Enemies Territory Administration, with Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Parker as governor until 1923 and his deputy, Major Claude Jarvis, taking over the command from 1923 to 1936. These functions of government were administered by a body of about 300 officials, including a Sudanese Camel Corps, which watched over four administrative districts (Northern, Central, Southern, and Kantara). The British plan in the Sinai was to maintain the status quo until some permanent solution could be found for the troublesome peninsula. It is worth noting that the railway across northern Sinai was entrusted to Palestine Railways after WWI with the line ownership being retained by the British Army. The Kantara-Rafiah line was finally handed over to the Egyptian state railway on April 1, 1948.

But then the Second World War turned things around and made the area militarily significant once again. The British Army occupation swelled for the second time in 25 years. Most of the action was, of course, in the Western Desert of Egypt, holding back the Axis forces at El Alamein, so the Sinai was spared another round of war's ravages, reverting to its role as strategic buffer and logistics base. With the end of the war, however, the complexion of the entire Levant changed radically. The old, tired colonial powers gave up one by one their Middle Eastern possessions; and Egypt, the most populous and most modern of all the Arab states, took undisputed control of the Sinai, with the blessing of the British, right up to the Palestine border.

On May 14, 1948, after the United Nations General Assembly had endorsed a partition plan for Jewish and Arab states in Palestine war-weary Britain had decided to throw up its hands and end its Palestine Mandate, the State of Israel was declared. Israel was almost immediately at war from all sides, with Egypt sending her army through the Sinai to occupy the Gaza Strip and put pressure on the Israeli settlements in the Negev. After a short UN-arranged truce, the Israelis took the offensive, and by January 1949 they had driven the British-equipped and advised Egyptian Army out of the Bir Asluj-Auja El Hafir area on the Negev-Sinai frontier and were poised to take Rafiah, El Arish, and the Gaza Strip from the Egyptians.

The great powers, alarmed at this totally unexpected turn of events, put heavy pressure on Israel to withdraw its forces from the Sinai. Israel complied, stating for the record that it didn't covet any Egyptian territory. In February 1949 Egypt signed an armistice agreement with Israel in which Egypt retained the

Gaza Strip and all of the Sinai. The Sinai had become recognised, by the parties involved, as an integral part of Egypt with the 1906 border from Rafiah to Taba as the demarcation between Sinai and the Negev. The anomalous position of Sinai as a territory that locally had never been part of Egypt was brought to the attention of the British Parliament in December 1956, following the Sinai Campaign. While, therefore, Egypt has long had a recognised right to administer the Sinai Peninsula, she has never acquired sovereignty over the area. There has been no *de jure* recognition of the annexation of Sinai to Egypt. However this was not pursued and Israel withdrew her forces form Sinai according to the 1906 Rafiah-Taba line.

An outcome of the 1967 war was again the Israeli occupation to the whole of the Sinai. In 1982, consistent with UN Resolution 242 and the 1978 Camp David Accords, Israel withdrew from almost all of the peninsula which it had occupied, but refused to cede to Egypt the Taba Strip, a small parcel of land along the Gulf of Aqaba. The strip was the site of a 326-room resort hotel, popular with Israeli tourists, built by an Israeli entrepreneur in the early 1980s for $20 million. Israel claimed sovereignty over Taba, citing as justification the 1906 British boundary maps showing the land to be part of Turkish-controlled Palestine rather than British-controlled Egypt. Egypt disputed Israel's claim, citing as justification the actual 1917 border demarcations (which put the Taba Strip in Egyptian hands), pre-1967 sovereignty over the strip, and the return of the strip to Egypt after the 1956 Arab-Israeli war.

Two years later, the arbiters (French, Swiss and Swedish international lawyers plus one representative from each disputant country) ruled in favour of Egypt. Final negotiations were settled on February 27, 1989, when Israel and Egypt signed an agreement that turned over the Taba Strip to Egypt. Egypt purchased the Aviya Sonesta hotel resort for $38 million and took possession of Taba on March 15, 1989.

It would seem, then, that El Arish has for the last few centuries been considered by most as part of Egypt, so from the opening of the first Egyptian post office in 1883 to the present we can fairly safely say it belongs to Egyptian philately. With Tor one can possible take a slightly different view, that until the drawing of the Rafiah/Taba line in 1906 few writers would have considered it Egypt as such. The Sinai was treated as an entirety in its own right, being nominally part of the Ottoman Empire - so from the opening of the Tor post office in 1889 until 1906 others may claim it as part of their philatelic sphere.

The Sinai was of course the main postal route between Egypt and Asia and the empires of Syria, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. To read the accounts in the book published by the Egyptian Postal Administration in 1934 and others published in *L'Orient Philatélique* and elsewhere about the posts of the Arab empires one can get the impression these were being invented for the first time. This is in fact not the case: it is quite amazing to see how people have dealt with the problems of long-distance communication throughout history. References to telegraphic/post systems can be found in almost every period from which written records survive. The ancient empires from Sumer onwards depended for their very existence on some form of message conveying system. The fact that the new empires as they arose seemed to inaugurate a new relay and/or pigeon service was simply either to repair those destroyed in the wars of conquest or where the preceding system, organised by a decaying and now defeated empire, had fallen into disrepair.

Postal Systems pre World War I

The Sinai was for most of its history part of some form of organised postal system, especially when the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and the Nile Delta were part of the same empire - starting with the Egyptian empire of Sesostris I, who reigned from 1971BCE to 1928BCE, and lasting right through to the British Empire ending in 1948. Nearly all forms for the conveyance of messages have been used during this time, including runners, donkeys, camels, horses and of course pigeons. The pigeon posts in the Sinai cover nearly 2,500 years from earliest times up to the last attempt between the two world wars. Other methods include smoke signals (beacon fires), flags and polished metal.
The earliest mention of domesticated pigeons comes from the civilisation of Sumer, in southern Iraq, from around 2000BCE. Most probably it was the Sumerians who discovered that a pigeon or dove will unerringly return to its nest and started the first pigeon posts. King Sargon of Akkad, who lived ca. 2350BCE in Mesopotamia, had each of his messengers carry a homing pigeon. If the messenger was

attacked en route, he released the pigeon. Its return to the palace was taken as a warning that the original message had been lost, and that a new messenger should be sent. The blue rock dove, *Columba livia*, originates from this part of the world and is the ancestor of today's racing pigeon. By the twelfth century BCE pigeons were being used by the Egyptians to deliver military communications and it was in the Near East that the art of pigeon rearing and training was developed to a peak of perfection by the Arabs during the Middle Ages. A pigeon can fly 60-100km/hr over distances of 800km or more.

Ancient Egypt, of course, had a post system in the delta and an early document (ca. 2000BCE) sent by a scribe to his son emphasises the importance of writing and the bright future of a scribe in government employ. In the reign of Tuthmosis IV (1401-1391BCE) relations between Egypt and Sumer changed from conflict to peaceful alliance which lasted for at least 40 years The period is documented in the diplomatic correspondence of Amenophis III (1391-1353BCE) and Amenophis IV (1353-1335BCE) of Egypt. Three hundred and fifty letters written in Babylonian cuneiform on clay tablets have been found at Tell el-Amarna, the capital of Amenophis IV, the heretic pharaoh better known as Akhenaten.

Many of the letters concern the government of Palestine and the Levant. Gaza then had an Egyptian governor, with some Egyptian garrisons up to Jaffa. Letters from these rulers and governors include professions of loyalty, requests for assistance and accusations against neighbouring city rulers. The Amarna letters also record diplomatic exchanges with the rulers of independent countries including Mittani, Hatti, Arzawa in the west of Asia Minor, Alashiya (Cyprus), Assyria and Babylon. These rulers treated with the pharaoh on equal terms, addressing him as their "brother", whereas a vassal ruler used language such as *"the king, my lord, my sun god, I prostrate myself at the feet of my lord, my sun god, seven times and seven times"*.

Compared with today's text messaging, one can have sympathy with the lament *"... the art of letter writing isn't what it used to be ..."*. I particularly like a letter from Tushratta, having given away his daughter Tatu-Hepa in marriage, suggest that the pharaoh might send him a statue of her cast in gold so that he would not miss her!

By the thirteenth century messenger services must have become quite routine. In a fragment of the log kept by an Egyptian guard during the reign of King Merneptah (successor of Ramses II), from 1237BCE to 1225BCE, we find a record of all special messengers seen at a guardpost on the Palestinian border with Syria: at least once or twice a day a messenger would pass through with either military or diplomatic missives. So the Sinai, for most of this period, probably had fortified post houses, most likely based on the wells, to support the mail service.

Egypt was conquered by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon in 671BCE and then by Cambyses of Persia in 512BCE. The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian kingdoms all supported post routes as an essential method of maintaining control. That knowledge is power is not a new concept.

We read in the Babylonian archives, found in Boghazkhöi, complaints about attacks by Bedouins on royal couriers. The early Babylonian kings placed royal guards at regular distances along the roads. They were originally intended only for the protection of travellers, but their presence led quite naturally to a number of major improvements in the messenger system. The first was the establishment of a relay system, where a message was passed from guard station to guard station, each time carried by a new runner. The second decision was to equip the guard posts with beacons, so that simple alarm or warning signs could be passed quickly from one end of the road to the other, without the need for a human runner. Every *bêru* [an Assyrian distance unit, corresponding to a two-hour journey] a beacon was set up. It can be assumed that the beacons referred to were not quickly improvised for the occasion, but were part of a permanent network of roads and guard posts. The Biblical book of Jeremiah, from ca. 588BCE, also contains a clear reference to the relay system. King Cyrus the Great, who lived from 599 to 530BCE and ruled Persia for the last 19 years of his life, was credited with improvements to the courier system. Xenophon (430-355BCE), writing more than a century later, described it in *Cyropaedia*, his biography of Cyrus, as follows:

"… we have observed still another device of Cyrus for coping with the magnitude of his empire; by means of this institution he would speedily discover the condition of affairs, no matter how far distant they might be from him: he experimented to find out how great a distance a horse could cover in a day when ridden hard, but so as not to break down, and then he erected post-stations at just such distances and equipped them with horses, and men to take care of them; at each one of the stations he had the proper official appointed to receive the letters that were delivered and to forward them on, to take in the exhausted horses and riders and send on fresh ones. They say, moreover, that sometimes this express does not stop all night, but the night-messengers succeed the day messengers in relays, and when this is the case, this express, some say, gets over the ground faster than the cranes."

The system lasted. In his *History*, Herodotus describes with admiration how the relay system functioned at the time that Xerxes ruled Persia, between 486 and 465BCE:

"This is how the Persians arranged it: they saw that for as many days as the whole journey consists in, that many horses and men are stationed at intervals of a day's journey, one horse and one man assigned to each day. And him neither snow nor rain nor heat nor night holds back for the accomplishment of the course that has been assigned to him, as quickly as he may. The first that runs hands on what he has been given to the second, and the second to the third, and from there what is transmitted passes clean through, from hand to hand, to its end."

The phrase "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor night …" is used in a slightly different, and not too literal, translation for an inscription over the width of the main US Post Office in Manhattan. It reads "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds". The Persian couriers, of course, did not walk rounds but ran a relay system.

The Persian Empire gave way to the Ptolemaic and then the Roman, whose postal system was called the *cursus publicus*. As previously mentioned, the Romans had posts dotted across the Sinai as part of their post roads. Originally, they used human runners to transport the messages. Later, when the system became larger, they switched to couriers on horseback, as in the Persian system. Each of the Roman relay stations kept a reserve of not fewer than 40 horses and riders. The speed of the Roman relay system was approximately 80km (50 miles) per day for regular mail, and double that for express mail, although these numbers might be based on human runners rather than riders on horseback. In an attempt to curb abuse, messengers, called *strators*, were issued special licenses from the Roman emperor that qualified them for the free exchange of horses at relay stations.

Over the years, responsibility for the upkeep of relay stations became a hot political issue. Roman rulers alternately strived either to delegate the responsibility to local communities, in order to reduce the tax burden on the state, or to transfer the responsibility back to the state, in order to secure more consistent maintenance. In the end, neither the state nor the local municipality was willing to continue covering the expenses, and the system perished. Perhaps a familiar tale that many today will recognise.

Although mention is made of the Byzantine horse posts along the Nile I can find little mention of postal systems for Egypt and the Sinai during the latter part of the Roman period, and with Byzantium becoming the new Roman capital in 315 it would make sense that the only meaningful communications route would be by sea - Alexandria to Byzantium. No references to postal routes across the Sinai are found in the brief Persian incursion in Egypt in 616 or from the Arab invasions in 636. It seems highly likely, therefore, that the Roman postal stations across north Sinai had fallen into disuse and had to await the Arab empires for their reintroduction.

There was not a single Arab postal system, as these came and went with the dynasties and with the changing fortunes within those dynasties. This factor gives rise to the multiple claims of the "first" pigeon posts from the various Arab caliphs ether in Baghdad or Cairo.

The caliphs who ruled the early Muslim Empire, AD onwards, inherited the Byzantine postal services along with their bureaucracy, which would include the Byzantine *beredararioi* organisation of official government messengers of Egypt. In Arabic, as *barid* (post), the term itself is therefore possibly of Persian origin. The first Umayyad caliph of Baghdad, Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, 661, is said to have been the first to reintroduce (or, more likely, improve) a general postal system during Islamic rule.

The pigeon post developed into a regular airmail system in the service of the state. The postmaster general had agents in every town, who collected and sent him all public information, which he in his turn reported to the caliph either at length or in an abridged form. With these eyes and ears of the government, and with the local postal centres stocked with well-trained pigeons, there was little chance of the caliphs failing to be warned of potential troublemakers in the provinces. Even the overland mail routes ensured swift postal service. Deliveries between Cairo and Damascus normally took about a week. Riders changed horses at special stations which were located about 15 miles apart. This was called "express post", with ordinary post being carried by camels through the same stops where there were government servants whose job was to prepare fresh animals for the next leg. At one time there were nearly a thousand postal stations in the Islamic Empire.

The local postmaster's business was to inspect the various postmen appointed to his district, to report their number, their names and the cost of their maintenance, also to report the number of stations in his district, their distance from each other, and the names of the places traversed in the postal route. He was, moreover, bound to see that the mail-bags were duly transferred from one messenger to the other, and to arrange that each postman or courier started in sufficient time to reach the next station at the appointed hour.

It is recorded that Caliph El Mamoun, who died 833, felt so much pleasure in hearing news that in addition to the usual officers he kept a number of old women of Baghdad in his pay, in order that his court might be supplied regularly with all the town gossip. It seems pretty certain that the post under the caliphs did not leave or arrive at any stated time, but only when there were government despatches or noblemen's letters to be forwarded. The letters of private individuals had to wait for one of these opportunities. Merchants had to make their own arrangements. In Arabia and Syria the letter carriers rode on camels; but in Persia letters were conveyed from station to station by running footmen, through in cases of emergency couriers where despatched on horseback.

The first recorded example of airmail parcel post in history makes an interesting tale: Aziz, the Fatamid caliph (975-976), had cherries grown in Baalbek, Lebanon, delivered to him in Cairo by 600 homing pigeons, each with a small silk bag containing a cherry attached to its leg.

Postal services were carried out by the tax collecting office and the person in change was called *Al Dowidar* or the "Prince of the Mail". He had an assistant called *Katib al-Sir*, who distributed the mail personally. The postmen carried a brass badge about the size of one's palm engraved on one side, "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet". The other side has these words: "His Majesty the Sultan, King of the World, Sultan of Islam and Muslims, The Son of the Martyr Sultan." This brass badge was attached to a scarf round the postman's neck as a distinguishing badge.

Royal pigeons also had a distinguishing mark, and only the Sultan was allowed to touch them. If a pigeon arrived while he was eating he interrupted his meal, and if he was sleeping his retainers would wake him to receive the message. Nobody could touch a cable before he awoke. Training pigeons for postal work became a lucrative industry, as a pair of well-trained birds could bring up to a thousand gold pieces. These were thoroughbred pigeons, raised specifically to fly long journeys, and were given the special name of *Hawadi*, or "Express Pigeons", by the Arab authors.

The cables carried by pigeon were written on a fine paper, especially prepared and styled "Paper for pigeons postal service". Severe brevity was prescribed for the wording, even the preamble *Bismillah* (in the Name of God) being omitted. Only the date and hour were mentioned and the shortest expressions were used and unnecessary words omitted, in contrast to the accustomed flowery language. A special Arabic

script called *Ghubar* was invented in the eighth century in part for the pigeon post. Minuscule in size, it became known as the *Janah* (wing) script and was considered the handwriting of conspiracy.

Ancient and modern writers give different distances between relay stations and speed of messengers and mean of transport. Distances of only 4.24km (2 2/3 miles) for horse posts and pigeon stations of 11km (7 miles) are reported in the 1934 Universal Postal Union Congress book, but I find this hard to believe and tend to favour other reports of 24 and 36 kilometres. This would be a day's journey, though official *najjab* (couriers) went much faster, with distances of 150km (95miles) per day achieved. Besides horses, certainly camels and donkeys are reported as having been used, depending on the importance of the message or goods being carried. The pigeons themselves, for instance, are reported as having been carried by donkey to their release destination. The *barid* and its associated network of roads was considered second in importance only to the military in state expenditure.

Probably these postal arrangements operating across the Sinai were in operation to some degree through the Umayyad, Abbasid and Tulunid periods, as their empires always comprised at least Egypt and Palestine. It was not until the Seljuks conquered Syria and Palestine by 1079 that a definite disruption of the postal stations is recorded. The Seljuks deliberately destroyed the means of communication throughout Palestine in their war with the Fatamid Egyptian rulers and with the border between the two empires ending up similar to those of Egypt and Israel today there would have been no reason to maintain the post stations across the Sinai. Alp Arsalan, the Seljuk Sultan, in 1063 eliminated the Caliph's posts and abolished the position of director of information and posts (*Saheb al habar wal barid*).

The Middle East soon after endured the Crusades and Egypt was not united with Syria until Nureddin, the Zanagid Sultan, took Egypt in 1169. He established a government mail service with many pigeon posts along the principal routes of his Empire, which may therefore have again included the Sinai, though I suspect not. The Turkish commander of Egypt was accompanied by his nephew Salah al-Din, who became ruler of Egypt in 1171 and gave rise to the Ayyubids. One can only suspect that some form of postal arrangement must have existed throughout this period, and reports suggest that irregular messengers (*ressul*) used racing camels. The Ayyubids gave way to the Bahri Mamelukes, and it was under the Mameluke Sultan al Zahir Baybars that the Arab postal system reached its peak.

When Baybars became Sultan of Egypt he organised, in 1260, a postal service on all the roads of his kingdom, so that mail from Cairo reached Damascus without hindrance. The service functioned regularly twice a week from Egypt to Syria up to the Euphrates and back.

In creating his service, Baybars used as his model the postal organisation (*Ulak* and *Yam*) of the Mongols, created by Ogodai (Okday) in 1234. *Ulak* is the Turkish term for post messenger and *Yam* is the Chinese definition of post-horse.

Baybars' postal service was purely for governmental use, at the sole disposal of the head of the state, and the road was accordingly called the Sultan's Road (*Ed-Darb es-Sultani* or *Ed-Darb es-Sultan*). The mail consignments received the name *El Muhummatush Sherife* i.e., "important matters of His Sublimity". Baybars managed the postal directorate personally. The postal messengers who carried the mail to be forwarded were called *Beridi* and were selected from among the sovereign's court-pages. The *Beridi* carried a leather letter-bag (*Dsharab*), and a yellow silk scarf with its end hanging over the back. Yellow was the emperor's colour. The post messengers' superintendent, the *Mokadem ul-Beridye*, controlled the sequence of the departing post messengers and provided their passage needs. At each post-station there were post-horse attendants (*Sei'is*) and post-horse drivers (*Sawak*).

In Damascus was stationed a manager of the postal service (*Wali el-Berid*) directly subordinate to the Sultan. Post-houses were placed on the post-road by tribes controlling each area, and they were paid accordingly.

Mail-routes under Baybars in 1260 included three main schedules in the Nile Delta:

1. Cairo - Dumyat (Damietta)
2. Cairo - Iskenderiye (Alexandria)
3. Cairo - Iskenderiye through the desert parallel to route 2.
One route led across Gizeh, then along the Nile to the south.
Another route led cross Es Salahiye and Gaza into Syria.
Yet another route led across the Sinai peninsula, then via Medina and on to Mecca..

By the year 1273 the following post routes were established:

In 1261	From Damascus to Haleb (Aleppo)
In 1262	Haleb to El Bireh
In 1263	Gaza to Kerak
In 1264	Dimishk ush-Sham (Damascus) to Rahba
In 1266	Jenin to Safed
In 1268	Haleb to Baghras
In 1270	Homs to Masyaf.
In 1271	Homs to Crac (Kerak)

Horse centres (*Merakis*) were situated at intervals along the post routes. These sheltered essential personnel for the horses' care. The riding post messengers exchanged their tired horse at each centre for rested, well-attended and well-fed mounts. In between these stations there were halts (*Mavkif*) where drinking water was made available for man and beast.

The pigeon-post, which was secondary to the horse-post, maintained stations in Alexandria, Damietta, Gaza, Kerak, Cairo, Jerusalem, Nablus, Deraa, Damascus, Baalbek, Hama, Aleppo, Bireh and Rahba.

The transmission of information by means of visual signals was of purely. military character. The remotest signal stations. Bireh and Rahba (Rutba), passed their signals to Damascus and Gaza by double affirmation as far as Damascus and by single affirmation from Damascus to Gaza. These messages were then forwarded by pigeon-post or horse post from Gaza to Cairo. The signals were made with the aid of smoke or fire, and transmitted in accordance with a certain code from the. top of elevated buildings, hills and the like. These signal stations were installed along the horse mail-routes and came under the management of the horse-post; thus, the horse-post, pigeon-post and visual signals were united and co-ordinated in their service of forwarding information in the quickest way through the Mamelukes' state from its remotest borders.

A note of Taqi ad-Din Ahmad al-Maqrizi (the Arab historian, 1364-1442) describes the colossal number of pigeon messengers put at the disposal of the sovereign for the despatch of his cables. He reports that in the year 1288 no fewer than 1,900 pigeons were in the stations of Cairo alone.

After the death of Baybars the network of post routes was enlarged between 1291 and 1347:

In 1291 - route from Damascus to Saida-Beyrouth-Latakia-Sahyun

In 1292	Haleb to Kal'at ar-Rum
In 1294	Kerak-Tripoli
In 1334	Kal'at Dshabir Ras Ayas-Haleb-Ain Tab-Bihisni-Darende-Bihisni Malatya-Divrik-Kal'at ar-Rum-Kahta.

Through shortening the post-routes by adapting them to the commercial roads success was achieved in covering the distance between Cairo and Damascus in four days instead of eight and Cairo to Aleppo was reduced to five days.

When Timur the Mongol conquered Iraq in 1400, he tried to eradicate the pigeon post along with the rest of the Islamic communications network, as he realised its military importance, and by 1421 the postal system throughout Egypt and the Middle East had collapsed completely.

From 1517 to the French invasion Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire and with successive famines and plague from the 14th century onwards it was much in decline: I can find no reports on the postal systems, if any existed. The Portuguese opening of the trade routes, round the Cape of Good Hope to the Far East, had made Egypt an unimportant backwater in world affairs.

The *U.Heyd Ottoman Documents on Palestine* (Oxford, 1960), dated November 18, 1577, gives an order to the Beglerbeg of Damascus:

> *"You have sent a letter and have reported that the chaush Mustafa who went to Egypt on government business had this time come to Damascus on his return journey and has related that on the roads from Damascus to Egypt there are no post-horses and the horses seized on the roads and in the districts from Gaza to Qatya do not get back to their owners until ten days later and many of them are lost..."*

This would appear to indicate that some sort of system was supposed to exist but did not seem to function, or at least not well. A further outbreak of plague in 1719 left the country impoverished and the French traveller Volney, visiting around 1784, described a depopulated country and Cairo as crumbling.

Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798 and then attempted to march on Syria, but plague and other ailments decimated his troops and the expedition failed. The French postal system never included the Sinai but individual letters from Napoleon are known from this campaign, including one from El Arish (Fig. 1/2).
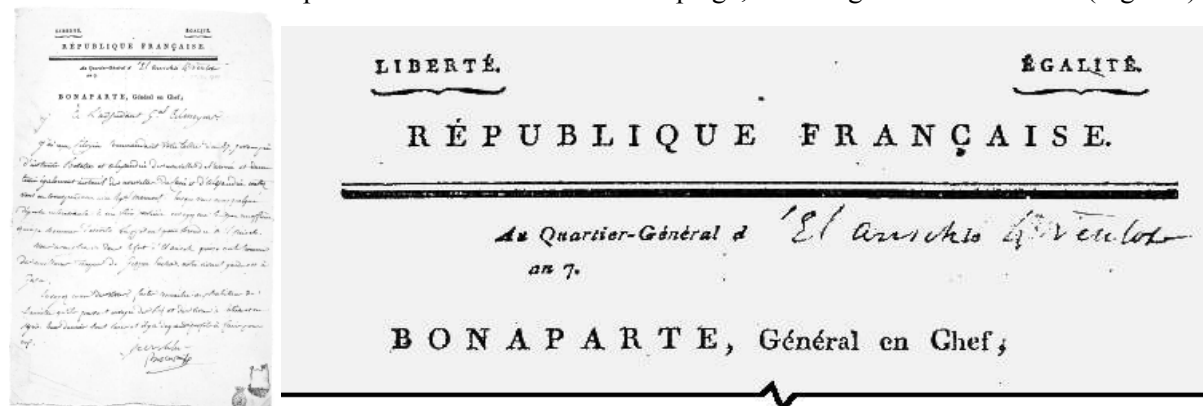
After French and British invasions the Middle East was opened up to European travellers to the Holy Land and several collections of correspondence from the Sinai are known from those doing the Grand Tour. Typical of these is that of Charles James Monk, in 1848-1849, son of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. Among the numbered letters (from "3" to "57") and with date and place of posting neatly and conveniently written at the foot of the address panel of each, are letters from Alexandria, Cairo and the "Sinai Desert". The letters, one assumes, were kept or forwarded by guides and posted at the main ports at a later date.

The other source of letters from the Sinai are those from St Catharine's monastery, with handstamped markings from the monastery. Such a letter of 1751 is shown in Byam's sale catalogue of 1961 (Fig.3). It is described as probably the earliest stamp applied in Asia. I have seen a similar piece at the Israel 1999 exhibition, and I possess a postcard of 1912 with a cartouche in Greek. The apparently good strike in black, however, is on a matching background, preventing me from making any sense of it.

The first proper post offices in the Sinai were opened by the Egyptian postal services El Arish (Ariche) in 1883 and Jebel el Tor (Djebel-el-Tor) in 1889. These were the only offices to operate in the Sinai prior to the First World War, as they were the only places with any reasonable number of settled population. The office at Tor was operated as a quarantine station for the pilgrims returning from the Haj and the post

office may have operated only during the quarantine periods. This could easily be checked by comparing the dates of use with the dates of the Haj, an exercise I have not attempted.

On November 2, 1914, Egypt was placed under martial law and a few weeks later was declared a British Protectorate, with war being officially declared by Britain on Turkey on November 5. At this time Egypt had only 5,000 British troops and it was estimated that the Turks could bring about 70,000 troops against the Sinai. Egypt immediately evacuated El Arish and Nekhl and the Turks crossed the frontier: by November 15 they had 5,000 infantry and 3,000 Arab auxiliaries in El Arish. Whether the handstamps were left, destroyed or taken back to Egypt I have no idea, but some time before November 15 the Egyptian post office at El Arish must have ceased to function. Tor was never taken by the Turks, although attempts to capture it were made, and as far as I can tell it continued to function throughout the First World War.

The postmarks as shown, fig.3/16, for El Arish and Tor are those I have covering the period up to November 15, 1914. The drawings have been taken from publications, auction catalogues, photocopies and a few from my own collection, either on cover or part strike on stamps. In this respect I would like to thank Robin Bertram, Mike Murphy, Tony Schmidt, Peter Smith, Alain Stragier and Denis Vandervelde, all of whom have generously helped in this endeavour.

This article has been taken from many sources, some of which are photocopies made from individual pages some time ago without my noting their origin. Individual references are not indicated within the text at their place of use, but some of those used or consulted include:

Arab Posts appearing in French in *LOP. 25* of July, 1935 from a book published by the Egyptian Post Administration, for the, tenth Universal Postal Union Congress hold at Cairo, on 1st, Feb., 1934.
Le Barid Sus Beybars Et Mohamed Aly *LOP 69* Jan 1950
The Post Office Under The Caliphs; *LOP 97* April-July 1957 reprint from (*The stamp collector's Magazine*, February 1867)
The Pigeons Postal Service; *LOP No.109.*
Interpostals *LOP 125* April 1972
Post Office Openings; *LOP No 113* April-July 1964; by Ibrahim K. Chaftar
The. Horse Post In The Kingdom Of The Mamalukes ; *THLP 1959* Ismail H. Tewfik Okday
Postal History of Egypt to 1900, Samir Amin Fikry
Handbook of Holy Land Philately, Vol1 & Vol2, Anton Steichele
Byam's Egypt 1961, Robson Lowe
Israel-Berichte Nr.19
Cornphila Stamp Auction April 2000
A Snapshot Of Egypt's Postal History, *The Egyptian Mail*, December 3, 1994, Samir Raafat
The Egyptian Post Museum, Webb Site
Arabic News, Webb Site.

Ancient Inventions, Peter James and Nick Thorpe Ballantine Books
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Medieval Warfare Source Book Vol2. - Long Distance Communications, David Nicolle
The Middle East, Bernard Lewis
Egypt Blue Guide, Peter Stocks
A World Atlas of Military History Vol.1 to 1500, Arthur Banks
The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History, Colin McEvedy
An Outline of the Egyptian & Palestine Campaigns 1914-1918, Maj.Gen. Bowmann - Manifold.

Recorded Postmarks of Al Arish and Gebel El Tor to August 1914

Fig 3. ERD   5 JU 86
LRD

Fig 4   ERD   25 VI 92
LRD   14 I 08

FIG 5   ERD   17 III 12
LRD.   13

Fig 3 only seen one copy on stamp. Fig 4 three postal stationery covers + stamps. Fig 5 only seen on stamps including the no value official of 1913.
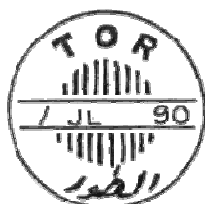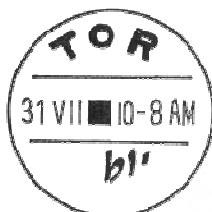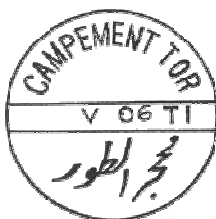
Fig 6   ERD   21 AU 89
LRD   7 NO 91

Fig 7   ERD   7 JU 90
LRD   7 JL 91

Fig 8   ERD   21 AV 93
LRD   11 MY 99

Fig 9   ERD   26 AP 00
LRD   4 MY 00

Fig 10 ERD   6 XI 09
LRD   31 VII 10

Fig 11 ERD   7 V 02
LRD   24 X 04

Fig 12 ERD   30 IV 00
LRD   5 I 08

Fig 13 ERD   12 IV 05
LRD   14 V 08

Fig 14 ERD   6 VIII ?(13)?
LRD

Fig 15 ERD   SE 13
LRD

Fig 16 ERD   12 FE 14
LRD

Fig 6 six recordings on stamp and cover one with different date slug 3 JL 95 T.1 Fig 2 several recordings also with date slug variation ?? JL 9? T? Fig 13 also seen as receiving mark on a postcard from Corfu to Tor.

محجر Fig 13 and 15 (mahjar) means quarantine camp and not mosakar the Arabic for military camp found in all other camp postmarks.

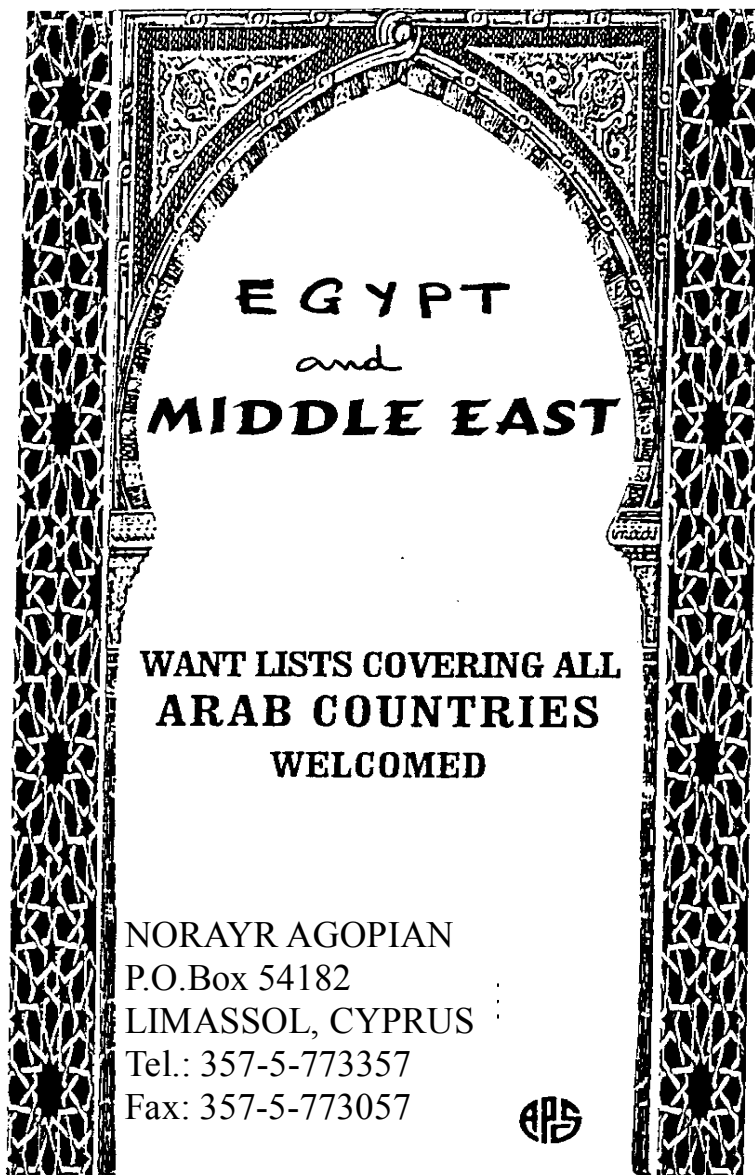خزنر Fig 14 is the normal Arabic (Hazina) for cash

Fig 17. Cover from Byam Catalogue 1961.

Fig 18. Early cover from Al Arish. This postmark nearly always found on this stationery envelope.

Fig 19. Cover as sold in the Corinphla auction of May 2000 with
the only pre-World War I registration marking for the Sinai.

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