

Market Report: Supplies of Post Office Postal Stationery Wrappers of Middle East Countries 2011–2020

by Dr. John K. Courtis (FRPSL)

Copyright © 2021

There are eight Middle Eastern countries and postal entities that issued Post Office postal stationery wrappers. Because of low survival rates it is of interest to know whether the supply of used wrappers coming onto the market has been stable or declining.

Some awareness of what has happened in the last decade will allow country collectors and postal stationery collectors to assess the likelihood and time involved in being able to complete their collections. Also, there is a relationship between scarce supply and higher prices so there might be a financial impact.

The figures in *table 1* are based on daily listings of used wrappers on the internet site eBay. These have been hand-collected by the author over the past decade. They represent different used wrappers; duplicates have been removed.

Although eBay is not the only auction site or source of wrappers available to the philatelic market, it is large, growing, objective, and transparent, with many buyers and many sellers. It is available to anyone worldwide who is connected to the internet. It has 182 million active buyers and more than US-\$ 10 billion in revenue in 2020.

The total supply of wrappers for the eight countries was 1,282. Two countries dominate the supply: Egypt with 690 (being 54%) and German Post Offices in the Levant with 423 or 33%. The other six countries account for the remaining 13% of the total. These countries and postal entities are examined for uncommon types and scarcity.

Table 1: Annual Listings of Post Office Used Wrappers (2011–2020)

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
British Levant POs	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	4	0	1	14
Egypt	41	80	95	93	72	69	65	66	63	46	690
German Levant POs	20	41	44	40	41	40	59	48	49	41	423
Mandate Palestine	4	2	1	3	6	6	2	2	4	4	34
Persia	3	0	0	0	1	0	4	1	0	1	10
Sudan	0	2	1	7	2	4	7	7	1	6	37
Syria	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Turkey	15	9	8	4	2	11	6	8	3	6	72
Total	84	135	151	150	126	130	145	136	120	105	1282

Egypt

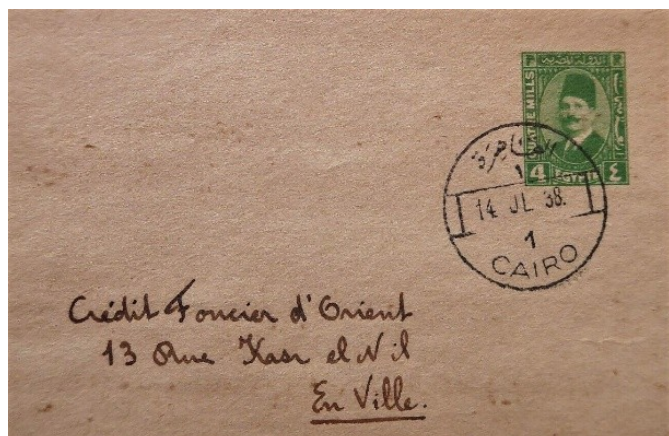
A collector of Egypt will experience difficulty in obtaining more than half of these issues. The supply is dominated by the 1889 first issues of 1m brown and 2m green sphinx and pyramids. These two issues account for about 90% of the available used copies.

In 1914, the indicia were changed to Gyassas sailboats on the Nile for the 1m brown and Cleopatra on the 2m green. These two types are listed regularly and the collector should be able to acquire these with patience.

In 1931, there was a colour change for these two indicia: 1m from brown to orange and 2m from green to black. Only four copies of the orange and a single copy of the black have been recorded in my database and these types are difficult to find.

In 1932, two types depicting King Faud were issued, 1m orange and 2m black. While the 1m appears more frequently, the 2m black, and the 4m green issued in 1937 to meet higher postal rates, appear with single issues only. They are scarce and collectors will need to consider mint copies as an interim measure.

In 1939, the first of three wrappers depicting King Farouk was issued, a 1m orange brown. In 1941, the 4m green was issued and in 1947, the 2m red orange 'Marshal' design of King Farouk was issued. The supply of these is small with six copies of the 1m, a single copy of the 4m, and two copies of the red orange 2m. Unused copies will necessarily have to suffice unless non-eBay sources are known to supply these later issue wrappers.



Figs. 1 and 2: Egypt 1937 4m King Faud and 1941 4m King Farouk

German Post Offices in Levant

There were six Post Office types issued between 1900 and 1908 for German Post Offices in the Levant. Except for the 1908 issue all are overprinted "10 PARA 10"; the location of the overprint and the bars over the "A"s of "PARA" helping to differentiate the different types. Only the first issue is a different design, being a numeral. All other types depict the 'Germania' design. Excellent illustrations of overprinting and watermarking can be found in Kośniowski's catalogue.¹

The difficulty faced by a collector when using eBay images is that the watermarked variety cannot be detected. The supply of these wrappers tends to be dominated by the 1901 issue, clearly detectable by the Jerusalem postmark 1902. The 1904 issue with flat bars over "A" can be detected

¹ Kośniowski, Jan: *Postal stationery newspaper wrapper catalogue*. 2019. 3 vols.

as can the 1905 with overprint positioned in the centre of the indicium.

The overprint on the 1908 issue appears on a diagonal reading upwards. Only the 1908 issue is difficult to detect because of the presence of the watermark. The supply of all of these types is regular and the collector will have little difficulty in obtaining a copy of each type, given the caveat of the watermarked issue.



Figs. 3 and 4: German Post Offices in the Levant 1904 'Reichspost' (bars above A) and 1905 'Deutsches Reich'.

Great Britain Post Offices in the Levant

There were three issues of Post Office types of Great Britain indicia overprinted "LEVANT". They infrequently come onto the market and only 14 listings were recorded for the decade ending 2020.

The first issue in 1905 was the De La Rue printing of the 1902 GB yellow green ½d indicium of King Edward VII overprinted. This is the most 'common' of the extant quantities. The second issue is the 1911 issue of the McCorquodale printing of this indicium, and the third issue is the 1912 GB King George V indicium overprinted. These second and third issues are elusive wrappers with only two copies of each in the database. Considerable patience will be needed to acquire them from eBay.

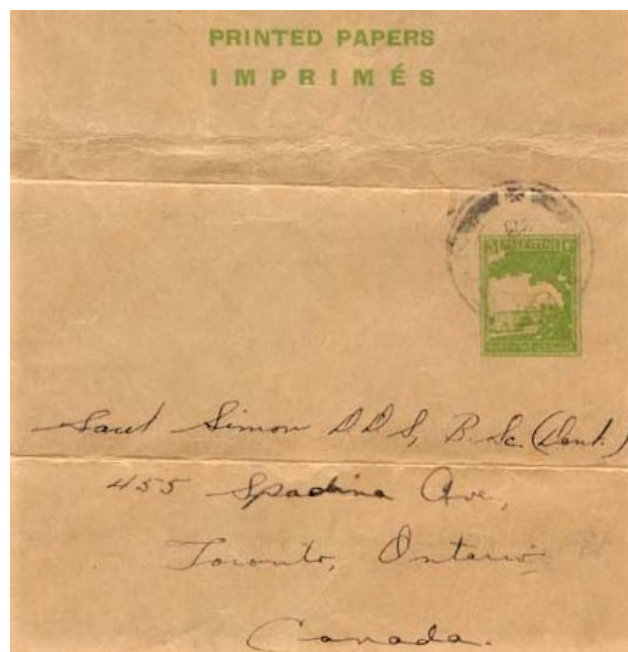


Figs. 5 and 6: GB Post Offices in Levant: 1905 King Edward VII, 1912 King George V.

Mandate Palestine

There were two Post Office issues of Palestine. In 1931 there was a 2m blue green depicting Rachel's tomb with headings in English, Arabic and Hebrew. This wrapper was intended for inland use although there is one in the database addressed to East Sussex, England without uprating.

The other wrapper is a 3m yellow green with heading in English and French. Both wrappers were printed by Harrison & Sons Ltd. The supply of both of these is constant but limited with low annual amounts being listed. Nevertheless, a collector should have no difficulty in obtaining each of these types.



Figs. 7 and 8: Mandate Palestine 1931, 2m blue to England, and 3m yellow green to Canada.



Figs. 9 and 10:

The 1931 3m wrapper used in 1945,
uprated by 2m,
sent from Jerusalem to the USA.

(contributed by the editor)

Persia

This is a difficult country to collect if used copies are required. There have been numerous listings of mint copies which may be a realistic, and perhaps the only, alternative. In the past decade, only ten copies of these wrappers have been listed, an average annual rate of one.

Persia issued 25 Post Office types if wrappers hand-stamped with control marks are included. Only two of these from 1902 onward have values for used copies in the Kośniowski catalogue. Even mint copies of the 1902 and 1904 control mark issues have high catalogue values.

The first issue in 1885 is mired in controversy and as a consequence was never officially issued for postal use, although there is a copy in the database that warrants expertising. The second issue in 1888 is also of concern because the overprint was forged. Mint copies are to be found of both the original and forged overprint.

In 1893, the first issue of the Coat of Arms with Persian Lion and Sun appeared, a 1ch lilac. This was followed in 1897 with three issues depicting the same design: 2ch brown, 3ch violet and 6ch orange. It is these four Post Office types that can be found, but with patience; they appear regularly but in small quantities. The 3ch is the most 'common' of these with 15 copies listed since 2003. The 1ch has three copies, the 2ch 5 copies and the 6ch 1 copy. Perhaps these wrappers are more readily available from non-eBay sources. The 1899 issue of the 3ch with arabesque control mark has made an appearance five times. The wrappers of Persia in used condition are some of the most elusive wrappers to challenge the collector.



Figs. 11 and 12: Persia 1897, 6ch orange, and 1899 3ch violet with arabesque control mark in violet.

Sudan

One could be forgiven for thinking every collector would like to acquire a copy of the desert postman on camel indicium on a wrapper. It is a gem in design and captures the romance of the time. Sudan issued six Post Office types, the first three of which, in 1898, were the sphinx and pyramid indicia of Egypt overprinted in Arabic and "SOUDAN" in English. There has been a steady but muted supply of these during the past decade, and a collector should be able to obtain a used copy of each. Less than ten copies of each have appeared since 2003.

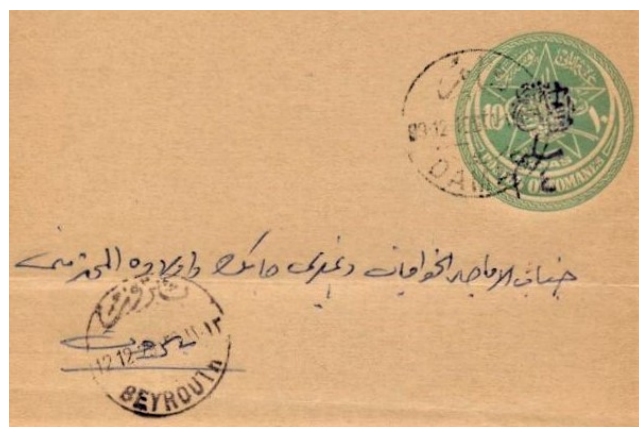
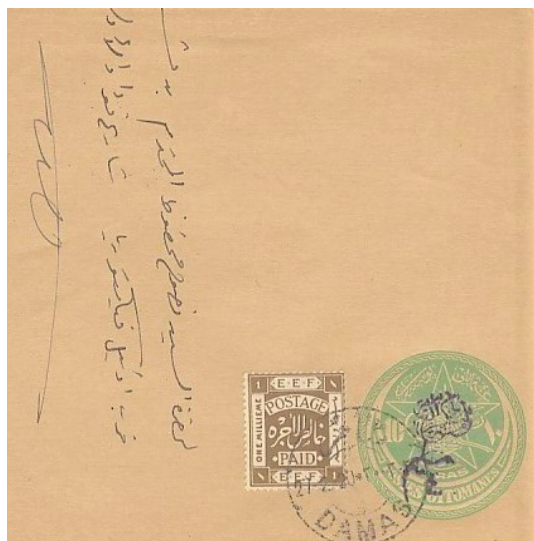
The larger postman on camel indicium issued in 1898 comprised a 1m brown and a 2m green and both have appeared regularly with 14 copies of the 1m and 18 copies of the 2m since 2003. Only the smaller 1921 issue of the same design in 2m orange brown is scarce. Only a single copy has appeared since 2003 and is a difficult wrapper to find.



Figs. 13 and 14: Sudan 1908, 1m brown, and 1921 2m orange brown 'Desert Postman on Camel'.

Syria

In the past decade only two Post Office types have been issued. In 1920, two indicia of Turkey were overprinted with symbol and value in Arabic: the 1m on 2p violet and the 4m on 10p green. Kośniowski notes there have not been any genuine used copies recorded. The database has no copy of the 1m, but three copies of the 4m, two of which are shown in *figs. 13 and 14* for inspection of alleged non-genuine usage.



Figs. 15 and 16: Syria 1920, overprinted Turkey 4m on 10p green, genuine usage questioned.

Ottoman Empire (Turkey)

There were eight Post Office issues of Turkey. In 1901, a set of four were issued showing a small Tughra design printed on thin oily paper. They were printed locally by the Public Debt Department of the Ministry of Finance.

During the past decade the supply of wrappers of Turkey was 72, with an annual average of about seven and a range of two to 15. The supply has been regular, but it is mostly the last issues in 1914

that are available. The earlier issues do exist in small quantities and the patient collector should be able to obtain a used example of each of the 5pa violet, 10pa green, both intended for inland mail, and a 5pa yellow brown and 10pa yellow green intended for foreign mail.

The 1902 issue of the 20pa carmine and the 1p blue are shrouded in mystery. They were not needed because there was no increase in postal rates and it is possible they were issued in error. There are five copies of the 20pa and four copies of the 1p and these are shown in *fig. 16*. The 1914 issues are larger and circular, a 2pa brown and a 10pa green. These should pose little difficulty in acquisition.



Figs. 17 and 18: Turkey 1902, 20pa carmine, 1p blue.

Summary

Post Office postal stationery wrappers of Middle East countries and postal entities examined here show a mixed response in terms of supply coming onto the market in the decade ending 2020. While eBay is not the only philatelic source of wrappers, it serves to identify wrappers that can be acquired from this source as used copies, and those that are best acquired as unused copies, at least temporarily.

Only German Post Offices in the Levant and Mandate Palestine are relatively easy to collect with all types having appeared on eBay (assuming the watermarked Levant variety appeared). Egypt has experienced a big supply over the decade, but later issues are difficult to find, a story that can be told for many other worldwide entities. This slowdown in supply is easy to understand when the demand for wrappers decreased as alternative media enables speedier transmission of news and other printed matter.

For Syria, and the Persia issues with control marks, eBay is not a reliable source for acquiring these wrappers. Sudan's final issue is scarce. Issues of Great Britain Post Offices in the Levant are also elusive. Turkey's 1902 issues with higher denominations are difficult to find, possibly because their issue was a mistake.

Taken overall, the region offers some interesting challenges for the collector. There would need to be compromises, some wrappers can be acquired used, but some would need to be acquired in unused condition because there are degrees of doubt as to whether they were actually used commercially.