The Jaffa Interpostal Forgery

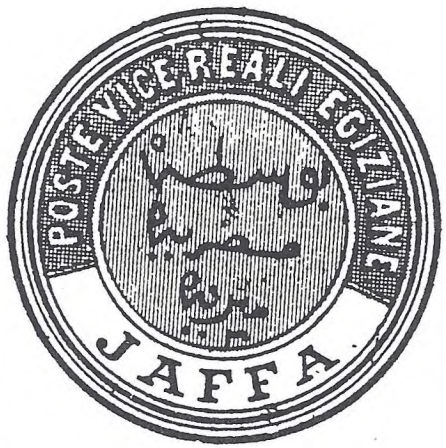
By Ernest A. Kehr

Following the partition of Palestine and the establishment of Israel as an independent nation, philately has experienced a sensational interest in the stamps of that country. Enthusiasm was great — particularly among collectors who have a religious or patriotic feeling toward Israel. Not only did they put up a tremendous demand for the stamps of Israel itself: They concentrated upon everything which might be considered a "forerunner." It is not surprising then, that many of these specialists would want a copy of the Interpostal seal, issued by Egypt at the time an Egyptian postoffice was maintained in Jaffa.

The unprecedented demand was so great that auction prices for this round, blue adhesive soared, even though copies could be bought for $1.50 or less only ten to fifteen years ago. At one sale a copy brought £23!

Neither is it surprising that such high prices would tempt fakers to make imitations, particularly since few specialists know too much about the Interpostals.

The writer's attention was called to the existence of "a counterfeit" Jaffa seal about the end of 1954, by an eminent Israel - Palestine specialist, of Chicago, when he inquired whether I knew of the item. His written warning was not sufficiently clear to be accepted as more than an admonition to be on the alert.



In January, when I chanced to be in Chicago, I had a meeting with "Spying Eye" whose reputation as a philatelic sleuth is widely recognized. He had been in close contact with others interested and when he assured me that the item about which he had heard in fact was a fake, I gave a bit more credence to the possibility of its existence, even though he had no example to show me for examination.

Finally in March, a New York dealer student showed me two copies of the questionable item which he said were acquired from a dealer in London. Because the seals looked good, I was reluctant to pass judgement before comparing them with my reference specimens.

In the first place, these were made from copies of a genuine seal which represents a definitely known position of the printing stone. It clearly shows the distinctive transfer flaws of this position: the lines in the frame below the F of JAFFA; the line in the frame above the first E of Egiziane; the retouch above the RE of Reali; the retouch above the Arabic, "BUSTAH," and the flaw between the Ta and Saad of the center Arabic inscription.

I might point out that original research devoted to Interpostal seals suggests that these were printed in the following manner:

1. An original drawing was made of the seals' design except that the name of the town was omitted.
2. This master then was transferred to a printing stone twenty times[1].
3. In transferring the master to the printing surface, certain flaws occurred so that one may "plate" the issue by observing such things as shifted or creased transfers, or retouches[2].
4. The name of the town then was lettered into the panel at the bottom and a number of sheets pulled. This name then was erased and another inserted. This erasure and entry of a new name was continued until a sufficient supply for each city was produced.

A comparison of the questionable items with known genuine copies discloses the following differences:

A. The guide dot outside the frame and below the J of JAFFA is missing.
B. There is white spot at the base of the P of Posta.
C. There are tiny dots of color after the A of JAFFA.
D. The Saad of Masria is slightly misshapen.
E. The Ah of Myryah is thinner than in the original.

The paper of the fake is whiter and slightly thinner than that of known originals. Under a quartz lamp, the blue of the ink has a distinctly different fluorescence.

It is the first time that an Interpostal Seal of Egypt is known to have been imitated to defraud and deceive collectors.

1. In my collection I possess a proof sheet of the Alessandria seal which confirms my conclusions.

2. A discussion of the printing methods of Interpostals is the subject of a treatise which the writer prepared for the "London Philatelist" and which is scheduled to be published by the Royal Philatelic Society, London, in the near future.

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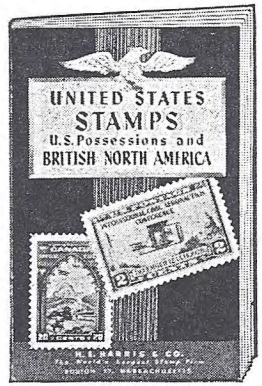

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