

THE FIRST STAMPS OF TRANS-JORDAN

By I. N. CAMP

THAT part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan which lies to the east of the River Jordan, the Dead Sea and the Wadi al-'Araba was included in the old Ottoman Empire until its liberation in September 1918 from Ottoman rule by the armies of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces and of the Arabs under the Emir Faisal, subsequently King of Syria and then of Iraq; during this period Turkish stamps were in use in this area.

Then this area formed occupied Enemy Territory (East) until December 1919, of which the Emir Faisal was the Chief Administrator, with his headquarters at Damascus. E.E.F. stamps were in use in civilian post offices during this period, but there were both British and Indian Army post offices in some places.

The third period in the postal history of Trans-Jordan began in January 1920, and came to an end in July of the same year, when the short-lived Arab Kingdom of Syria came to an end as a result of the victory of the French troops over the Arabs near Damascus. During this third period the stamps of the Syrian Arab Kingdom were in use in Trans-Jordan, sometimes in conjunction with the E.E.F. stamps.

When the Syrian Arab Kingdom came to an end, delegations began to arrive in Jerusalem to see the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert (now Lord) Samuel, and to request him to take over control of the country and to prevent its falling into the hands of the French, their principal aim being to avoid French occupation and the payment of part of a collective fine which they said the French had or would levy. As the area fell south of the famous (some Arabs would say infamous) Sykes-Picot line, and so within the British sphere of influence, the High Commissioner paid a visit to Es-Salt on August 20th, 1920, and later appointed Political Officers or Advisors, officially styled British, and Assistant British, Representatives, to various Districts east of the Jordan. It fell to my lot to be appointed Representative to the District of the Balqa, with my office at Es-Salt, while Major the Hon. FitzRoy Somerset (now Lord Raglan) was sent to the 'Ajlun District, and Capt. A. S. (now Sir Alec) Kirkbride was sent to Karak. There was no central Government or name for the country as a whole, but only various local governments or administrations, and in some places almost a complete lack of either. The postal services had broken down completely.

The country had no name, and as people living west of the Jordan usually talked about going to the East, I suggested that it should be called Arabic East of Jordan. As this might be

either Sharq al-Urdun or Sharqi al-Urdun, I consulted the best Arabic scholar at Es-Salt, who advised me that the latter was the preferable form in Arabic, although the former appears in the 1925 overprints on stamps of Palestine (S.G.143-158a). I also suggested that the name of the country in English should be Transjordan, which the late Major Darlow some time later criticized very severely, saying quite mistakenly that the country had been previously known as Trans-Jordan. It was not until 1921, after the transfer of Palestine and Trans-Jordan affairs from the Foreign to the Colonial Office, that a friend of mine in the Colonial Office suggested successfully that Transjordan should be shortened to Trans-Jordan, which it remained until April 24th, 1950, when the lands east of the Jordan were amalgamated with Arab lands west of the river to form the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

In 1920 the boundaries on nearly all sides of Trans-Jordan were not defined; for instance, the District of Ma'an formed a part of the Kingdom of the Hejaz until 1925, when the rest of that Kingdom fell into the hands of Ibn Sa'ud. In addition, a small area in the upper part of the Jordan valley, east of the River Jordan and south of the Yarmuk River, formed a part of the Sub-District of Baisan in Palestine until after Emir 'Abdullah took over the Government of Trans-Jordan as a whole in 1921.

FIRST PRINTING

The first printing of stamps for Trans-Jordan was made late in October or early in November 1920, and consisted of the two following E.E.F. stamps, perforation 14, overprinted "Sharqi al-Urdun" in Arabic only: 50 sheets of the 2 millieme and 1,000 sheets of the 5 millieme, the sheets consisting of two panes of 120 stamps each. In addition to the usual plate varieties of the originals, the following errors occur in the overprints:—

- (1) *Stamp No. 17* in the *upper* pane has two dots instead of one on the Arabic letter Nun (pronounced noon), this being the last letter in the overprint.
- (2) *Stamp No. 109* in the *lower* pane has a dot over the next-to-the-last letter; that is, Dhal for Dal, which makes Urdhun for Urdun (dh has the sound of th in English "that").

SECOND PRINTING

The second printing was made late in November or early in December, 1920, and

consisted of the following denominations and numbers of sheets, all of the stamps being perforation 14: 2 milliemes, 50 sheets; 3 milliemes, 10 sheets, 4 milliemes, 10 sheets, 1 piastre, 50 sheets, 2 piastres, 10 sheets.

The same errors occur in the overprints as in the first printing but both are in the lower pane as follows: Two dots over the Nun on stamp No. 16 and Dhal for Dal on stamp No. 49. Both errors can thus be found in a block of twenty stamps.

The 3 millieme stamps of this second printing are on the chestnut and not on the more common yellow-brown, and are not yet listed in any catalogue that I have seen. I had a number of them in my collection, both mint and used, from December 1920 until January 1956 before I noticed that the colour was chestnut, and so are neither S.G. 3 nor S.G. 11.

LATER PRINTINGS

The rest of the first issue of Trans-Jordan appeared for the most part in December 1920, or early in 1921, with the exception of the 9, 10 and 20 piastres, which had not appeared before the end of February 1921, as I ascertain from a copy of a letter which I then wrote to Messrs. Whitfield King and Co. The two errors previously described occurred only in the first two printings, as the Director of Posts and Telegraphs for the Balqa had spotted them and had them removed from the type in Jerusalem just after the second printing had been made.

On at least two denominations of the first issue, the 1 millieme, perforation 15 x 14, and the 4 millieme, perforation 14, the Director of Posts and Telegraphs for the Balqa had the additional Liwa al-Balqa (District of the Balqa) overprint experimentally applied. I do not know how many stamps were so overprinted or whether it was applied to other denominations. They were not approved for issue and I know of none that were ever used. About 25 years ago, I sold, if I remember correctly, three stamps with the Liwa al-Balqa overprint to the late F. B. Smith, in the Strand, and I should now be very glad to know what has become of them. I also sold him at the same time a vertical pair of 10 piastre stamps with a *tête-bêche* Sharqi al-Urdun overprint in a much type than the one that was officially approved. Can anyone supply me with information as to what has become of them? Es-Salt was the centre of administration for the Government of the Balqa until it was amalgamated with other Districts under Emir (later King) 'Abdullah in 1921.

In conclusion I might add that before the first overprinted stamps arrived at Es-Salt I experimented with some 1 piastre Turkish Revenue stamps and overprinted them in various kinds of type on an old Hammond Multiplex typewriter for local use. As they were necessarily in English only, and as Arabic was the only official language of the country, none of them as ever issued or used. I still have five of them in my collection, and know of no others now existing.



Basic type without overprint