

A FEW INTERESTING COVERS FROM THE WEST BANK

by Dr. A. Kaplanian

This article deals with some very interesting postmarks used in the West Bank under the Jordanian administration, i.e. since the beginning of 1949 till the 5th of June 1967. What makes the covers shown here of interest is the fact that these were all postally used and none of them is philatelic. I am saying this, because as collectors and students of this area and era will know, many of the postmarks of smaller places and villages were done by the late Mr. Akram Kavar a dealer in the old city of Jerusalem. He started collecting and dealing in covers carrying the postmarks of the West Bank and, to a lesser extent, of the East Bank (Jordan). He did this by mailing to himself empty covers from many different places or by asking friends and acquaintances to mail covers to him from the smallest villages and postal agencies. Some were also sent with lower than the necessary rate, so that the covers would need to be

taxed in Jerusalem, where his small shop was, with "postage due" stamps.

This way, he provided us with a treasure of material and examples of postmarks that otherwise we would never have been able to document and illustrate. In fact, Dr. Josef Wallach's classic work "The Postal History of The West Bank of Jordan, 1948-1967" is based, to a large extent, on Mr. Kavar's pioneering work. Dr. Wallach writes in the acknowledgements of his book "most of our knowledge and material concerning the postal history of the West Bank area, in the first decade of its existence, can be accredited to Mr. Kavar's philatelic enterprises. His accomplishments too are the source of all the articles appearing in BAPIP and other publications."

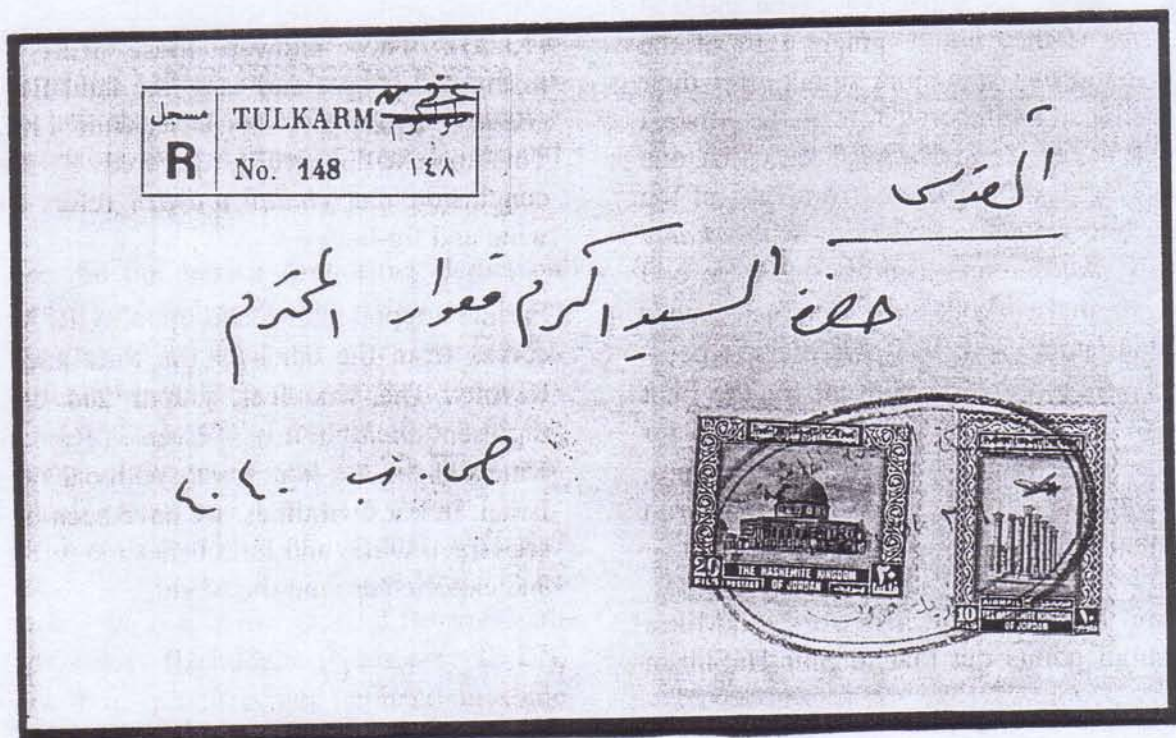


Fig. 1. (Front)

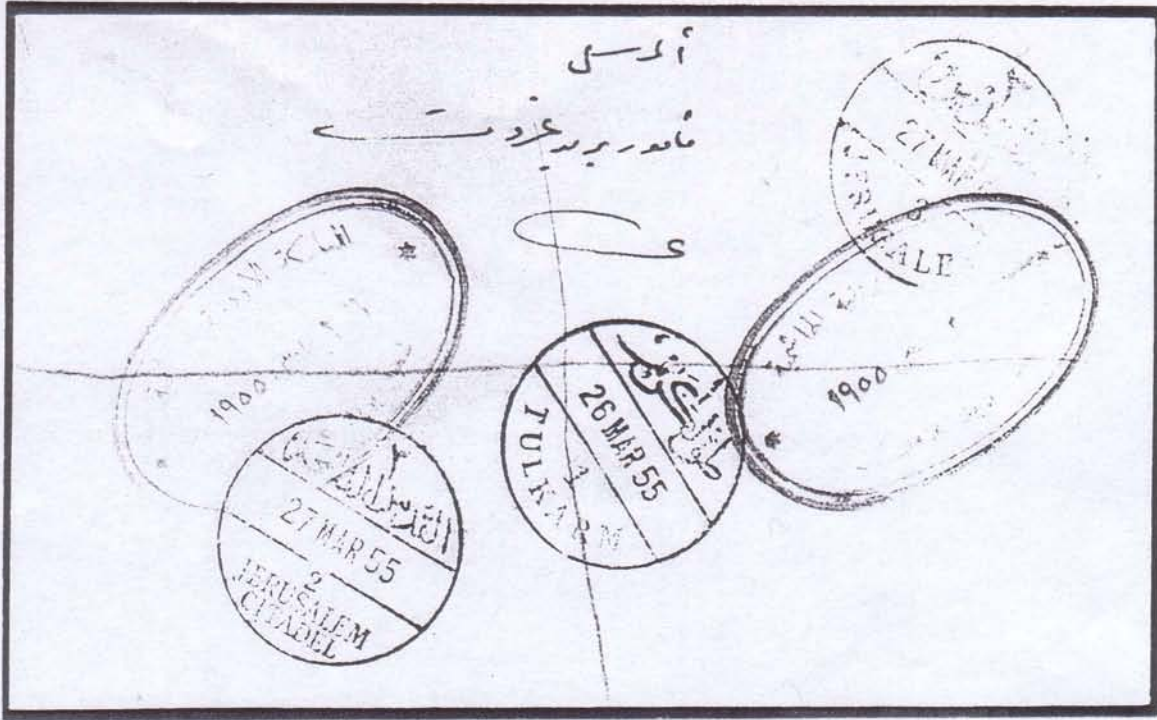


Fig. 1. (Back)

The first cover shown here in figure I is sent from AZZUN to Jerusalem and, although it was mailed to Mr. Kawar himself, it is not a philatelic cover. It was mailed by the head postmaster of the Azzun postal agency, probably with some material in it. It has a registration label with the Arabic Tulkarm name crossed out and replaced by hand with the Azzun name. The cancellation of the stamps is done by the all Arabic double oval postmark with the date 26 March 1955. The postmark is also visible on the back with transit circular postmarks of Tulkarm, Jerusalem 3 and Jerusalem Citadel 2.

Figure 2 shows the almost distorted double circular postmark of Beit-Sahour, dated 3 Jan. 1954, on a cover to Beirut, Lebanon. The cover carries the interesting unboxed handstamped slogan "Visit The Holy Land/Bethlehem Jerusalem/Kingdom of Jordan". An arrival machine cancellation of Beirut is found on the back.

In figure 3 we see a cover mailed in Beit Jala on the 22nd of September 1953. It was taxed on

arrival the same day in Hebron by attaching the following "Postage Due" stamps: three 1Fils stamps, one 4 Fils stamp and one "Palestine" overprinted 1 Fils stamp making a total of 8 Fils, double the amount of 4 Fils to make the needed 15 Fils. The "Palestine" overprint is inverted. Furthermore, the cover carries the Arabic "MUSTAHAK" handstamp, meaning DUE and the letter T under it.

Figure 4 shows the rarest of all the West Bank postmarks. It is the Egyptian circular bilingual Beit Jala which was used when the Egyptian army entered Beit Jaia in the war of 1948. This postmark was used during a period of a few weeks only at the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949. This cover is one of only two known registered covers and carries the blue registration label Beit Jala No. 0287 and is mailed on 14 Feb. 1949 to Alexandria, Egypt. It has the Beth Lahem Egyptian transit post mark on the back as well as the transit Cairo and arrival Alexandria postmarks.

Fig. 2.

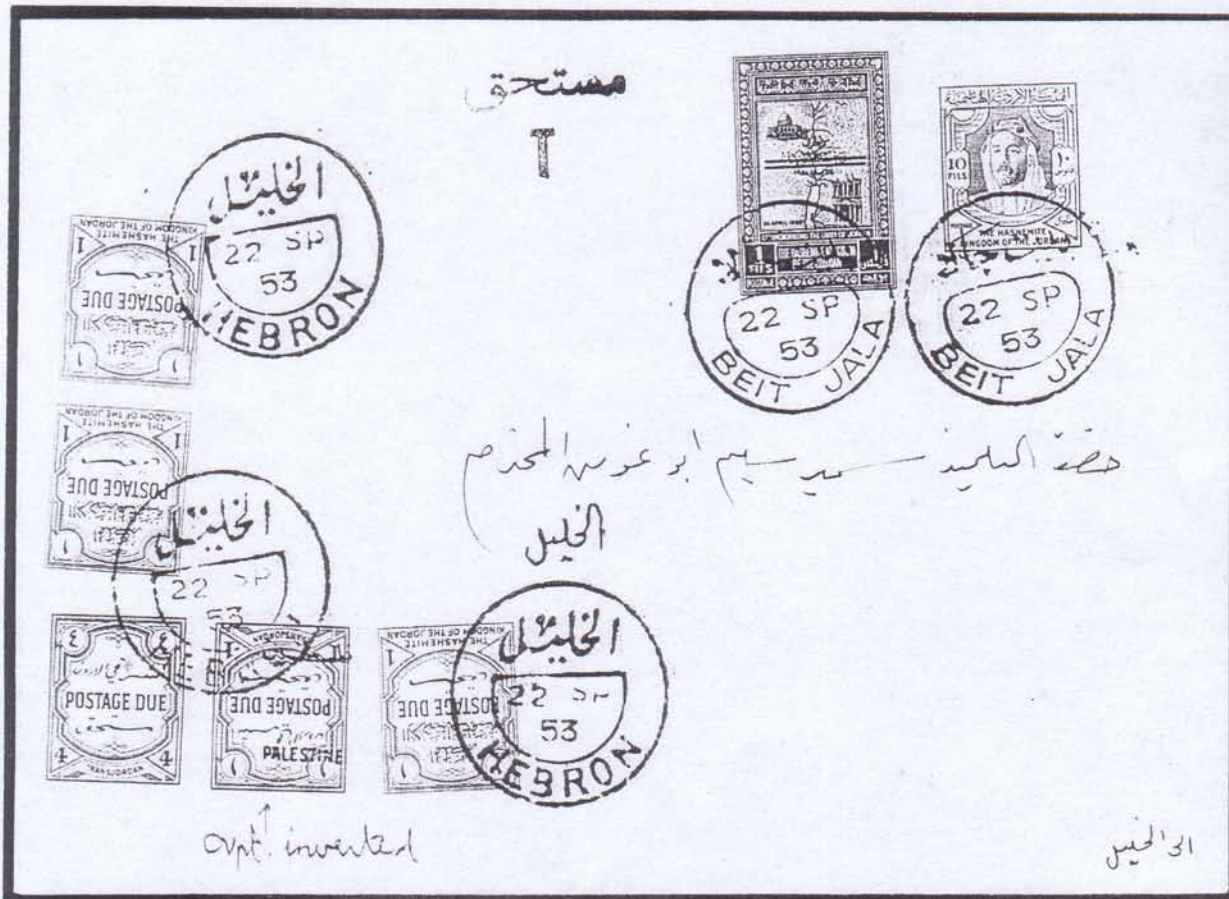
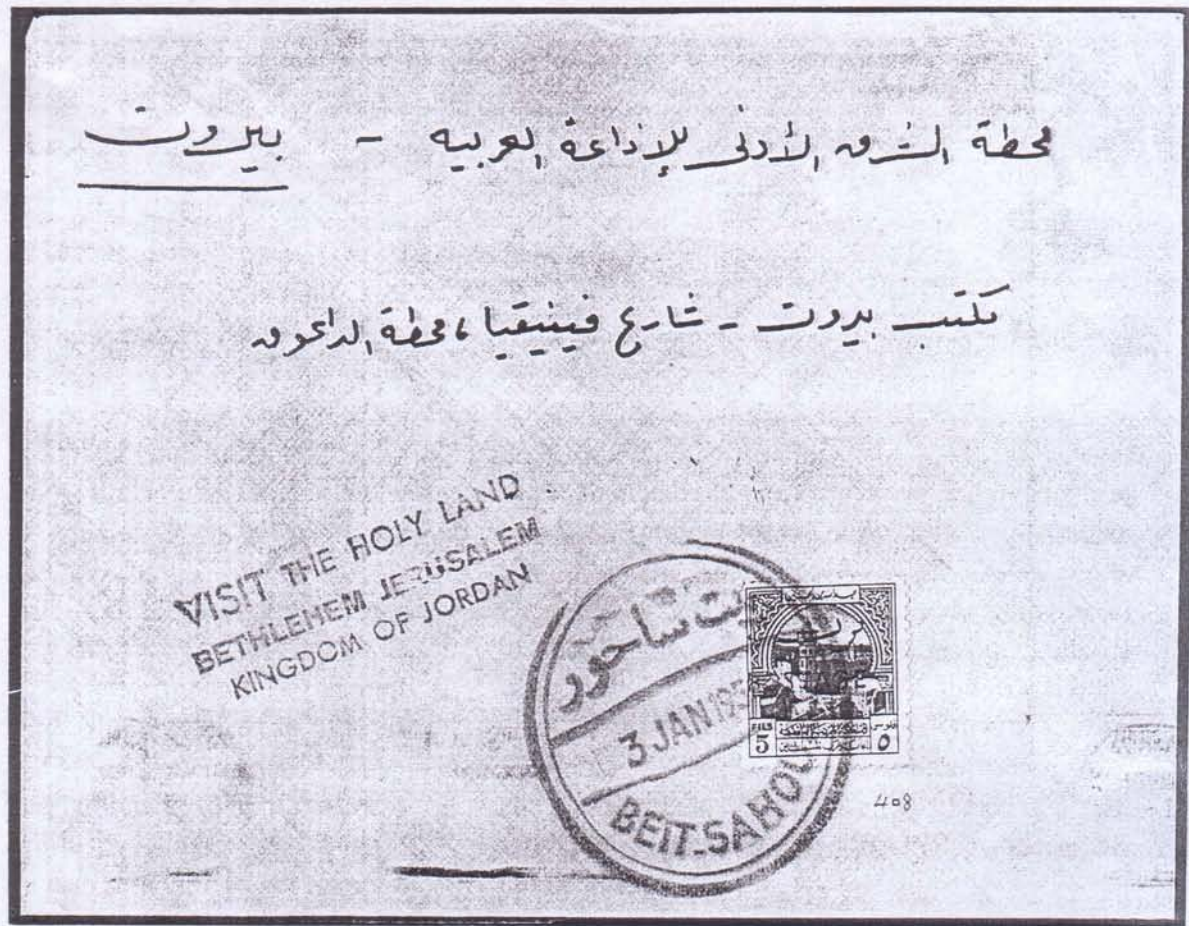
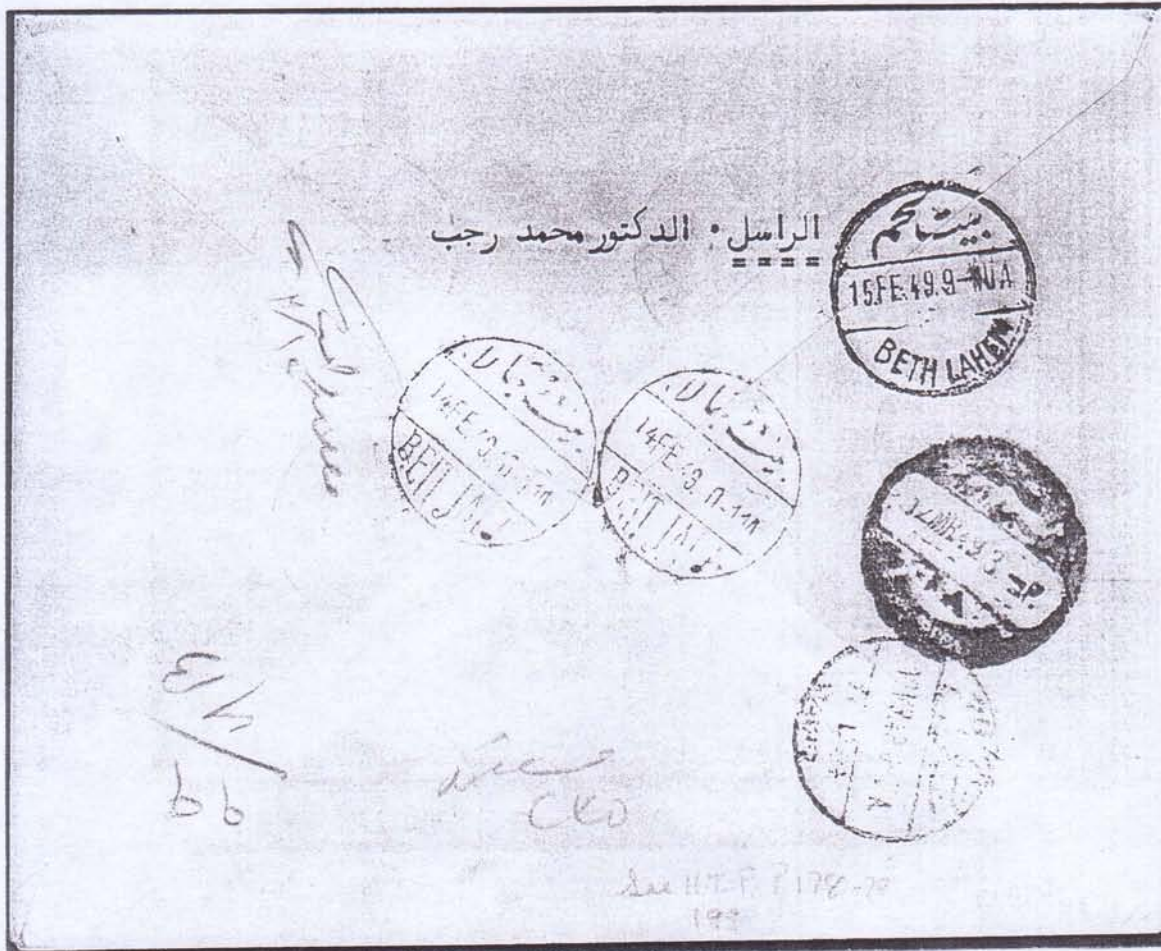
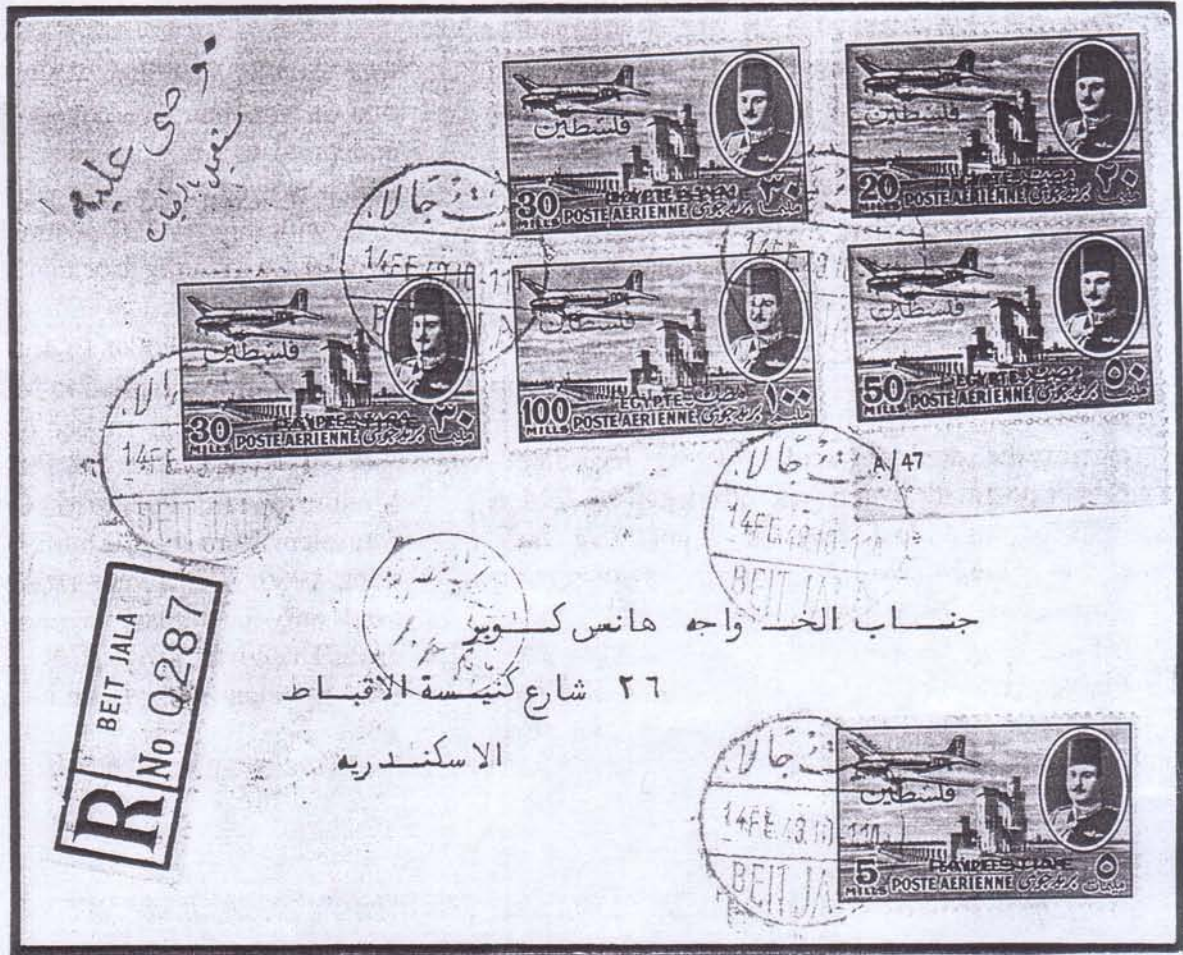


Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.
(Front)



(Back)

Figure 5 shows a cover mailed from Hebron to Jerusalem with the bilingual Jordanian circular postmark reading "Hebron" in English and "Al-Khalil" in Arabic. What is interesting about this postmark is its date, viz. 20 Feb. 1950 which is much later than the latest known date of 4 Dec. 1949 given by Dr. Wallach in his book.

Figure 6 takes us to an unstamped envelope mailed from Jerusalem to Cairo, Egypt. The cover carries the double circular "PAID Jerusalem" rubber postmark which was introduced by Jordan in the period 23 to 28 July 1953 when there was a big shortage of postage stamps in Jerusalem and Amman due to the transition rule of King Talal, the late King Hussein's father, who abdicated the throne because of his poor health. The shown date on this cover is 3 Dec. 1953 which is more that

four months later than Wallach's date. It is also one of less than five covers really used and not addressed to Mr. A. Kavar or Mr. R.T. Ledger, which is usually the case with the covers known to us with this "PAID" postmark. The cover has a circular Egyptian censor mark too.

The last cover shown in figure 7 is also from Jerusalem. It was mailed to Marseille, France and has the rectangular rubber postmark which was specially designed for the Fifth Middle Eastern - Mediterranean Pediatric Congress, held in Jerusalem from the 30th of August to the 4th of Sept. 1966. It is a very rare postmark as it was used only in Jerusalem and during these four days. The cover also carries the circular cachet of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem.



Fig. 5.

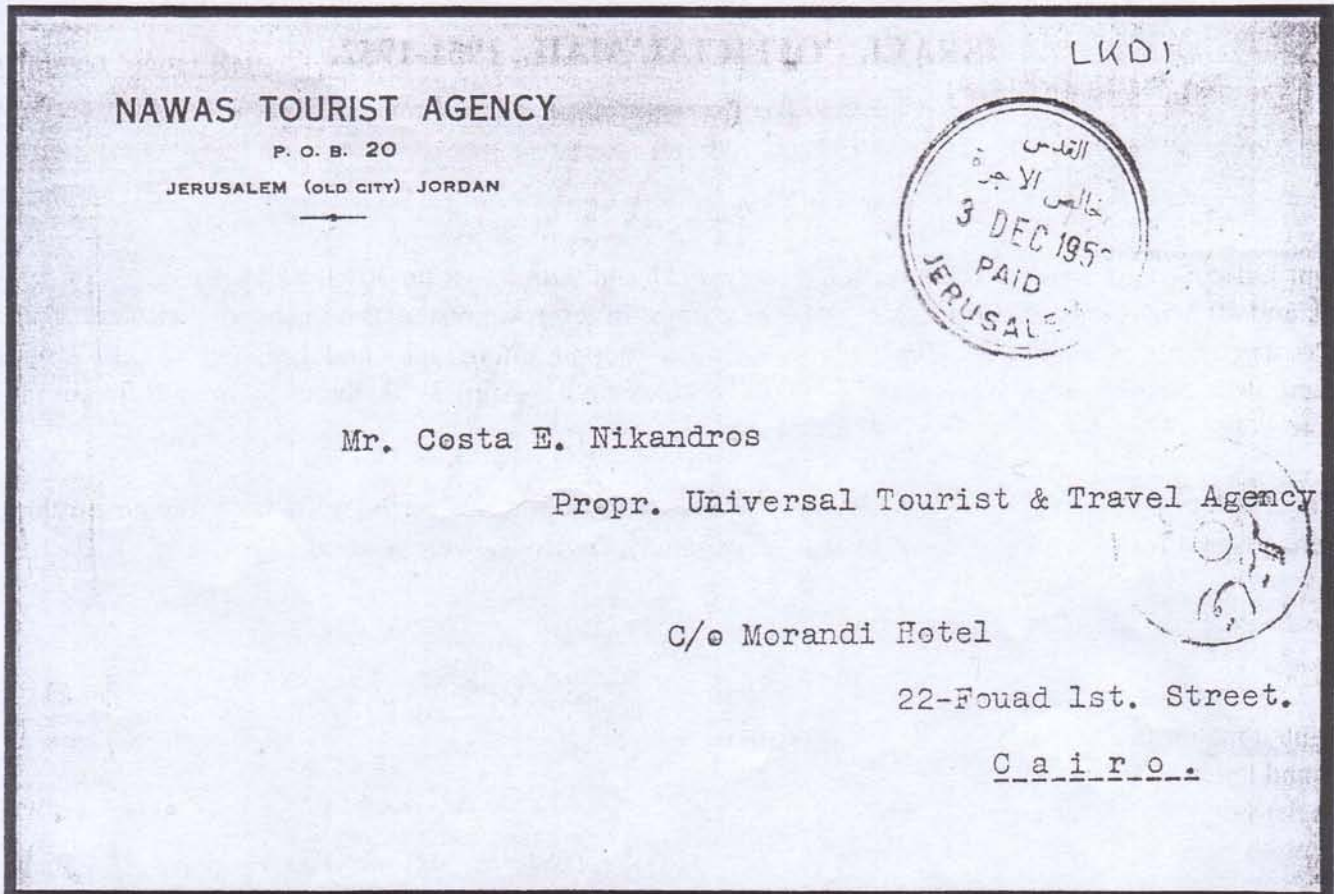


Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.