

THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN IN EGYPT

by

John Firebrace, ESC No. 71The Recordings of the SIOUTH handstruck town stamp

Some confusion may unfortunately have arisen in the size classification of the SIOUTH handstruck town stamp, of which there are two distinct sizes.

The two sizes have been contrasted as follows, in articles illustrating reproductions of these handstamps. Taking the larger as Type I and the smaller as Type II, and referring to the measured lengths of the illustrations (drawings) and the lengths as described, we find:-

			<u>Type I</u>	<u>Type II</u>
L'Orient Philatelique	Jan. 1949	measured	23.5	20 mms.
L'Orient Philatelique	Apr. 1953	measured	25.5	23.5
		described	27	24.5
L'Echo de la Timbrologie	Jul. 1957	measured	26	23.5
		described	26	23.5

The concern is not accuracy, for its own sake, correct to half a millimetre, knowing how difficult it is when considering such factors as over-inking and uneven surfaces at the time of stamping with a handstamp of rubber or similar soft substance, but merely to differentiate between the two types. The lengths quoted above show the difficulties.

As the two handstamps are very similar in appearance except for their size, it will be readily understood how important it is for illustrations to be true to scale and the dimensions clearly stated. The cover illustrated on page 4 of L'Orient Philatelique for January 1949 (A. Leralle) measures 21 mms. as shown but in fact measures 25.5 mms. and is illustrated thus as lot 885 in the Byam Sales (Robson Lowe). The example on page 65 of Egyptian Topics for May/June 1969 is accurate.

SIOUTH (Assiut) is the only town for which this difficulty occurs as the two types for Alexandria are completely different, one being in lower case lettering. Thanks to the checking of their own collections and of collections known to them by those later acknowledged, the date bracket now stands as follows:-

<u>Type I</u> Large	Earliest date: 17 June 1800
	Recorded by Cicurel in L'Orient Philatelique April 1953.
	Confirmed by Boulad, February 1975.

Latest date: 18 January 1801

Recorded by Firebrace April 1973.

Type II Small Earliest date: 30 October 1800

Recorded by Cicurel in L'Orient Philatelique
April 1953.

Confirmed by Boulad February 1975.

Latest date: 5 March 1801

Recorded by Boulad April 1975.

There is another most interesting aspect which has recently been reported. This concerns the spelling of Type II, examples having been recorded with the second letter resembling a 'Y' and therefore appearing to be spelled 'SYOUTH'. It has been possible to check all known covers of this period, thanks very largely to Jean Boulad, to establish the date bracket of this variety. Details are as follows, with Egypt Study Circle 1975 record numbers:-

Serial 6 31 December 1800. Collection Peter Smith.

This cover is illustrated in Egyptian Topics May/June 1969, page 65. No claim is made that the handstamp reads other than 'SIOUTH', but as printed the top of the 'I' does appear broader than the bottom.

Serial 7 4 January 1801. Collection Leon Dubus. Written
4 days later.

A photostat of this cover shows both the top and the bottom of the 'I' broader than in the reproduction of Peter Smith's cover. The top of the 'I' is still broader than the bottom and the letter suggests an hour glass more than anything else. Whilst the strike is clear of the address, it is heavy looking and none of the letters are clear cut.

Serial 8 19 January 1801. Collection Rudi Jeidel. Written a
further 15 days later.

Although the strike slightly overlaps the address, especially the foot of the 'I' and part of the 'H' it is much more clear cut and the serifs are plainly visible in the middle of the word. The second letter has a clearly pronounced 'Y'-look, much more so than the two previous examples.

Serial 9 5 March 1801. Collection E. Antonini.

Boulad has confirmed that the 'letter has a clear SYOUTH'.

This is the evidence of the covers known to us from 30 December 1800 to 5 March 1801. It is clear from at least 4 January 1801 the second letter more closely resembles a 'Y' than an 'I'. From the evidence I think we should deduce that it is the same handstamp which we have recorded initially from 30 October 1800.

It is obviously a clearly visual and an important state and I suggest that it should be described and referred to as the 'Y'-state and further that it has come about through either a dirty or a worn letter and/or from over-inking.

As a matter of further interest Serial 4, 30 December 1800, collection Rudi Jeidel has a perfect 'I' but a 'T' (in a photograph) that resembles a perfect 'Y'.

Students should be most grateful to Rudi Jeidel for having first reported and exhibited the 'Y' variety. He points out, very rightly, that there are other differences in the strikes of SIOUTH, notably in the letter 'S'. The conclusion that all strikes of Type II come from the same handstamp is not the only one which can be drawn from the presentation of the evidence, but is the one to which the writer subscribes.

My grateful thanks are due to all those whose material is quoted, and also to those who have sent photographs or photostats, factual recordings and their own views.

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