



The Eye of Horus - Beginners' Corner 9 - with David Ogden. If a single stamp can shed proud light on a nation's successes, why not a selection or group of stamps to enhance the glory? Egypt has issued spectacular and colourful miniature sheets for 80 years, celebrating events of all sorts from royalty to Boy Scouts

Egypt's Postal Miniature Sheets: beauty and controversy

Have you seen the wonderful range of Egypt's miniature sheets, listed as MS in SG catalogues? They combine impressive artwork, royal history, political symbolism - and occasionally controversy. For many collectors, miniature sheets represent Egypt's finest stamp designs, while a handful rank among the great rarities of world philately.

A miniature sheet (British usage) or souvenir sheet (American usage) is a small sheet of stamps issued as a single unit by a postal administration. It may contain:

- A single stamp surrounded by a wide decorated margin.
- A small group of stamps (typically 1–10).
- Extra artwork, inscriptions, portraits, maps or commemorative marginal text. Unlike a normal sheet from the printing press, the full sheet is intended to be collected as one item.

It is generally accepted that the first sheet was issued by Luxembourg in 1923. With a single 10-franc stamp set into a larger sheet, it marked the birth of Princess Elisabeth of Luxembourg.



1946: the first miniature sheet illustrated the country's first stamp and three early rulers



1951: a truly royal all-Arabic sheet celebrating the marriage of Farouk and Nariman

Miniature sheets were originally created for: royal events (births, weddings, coronations), philatelic exhibitions, national anniversaries and special commemorations. The earliest were prestige items intended to mark important occasions rather than for everyday postal needs. Egypt was early in adopting the format. While commemorative stamps had been issued since the 1920s, its first true miniature sheets appeared during the royal period under King Farouk.

The 1946 "80th Anniversary of the First Egyptian Postage Stamp" sheet, SG 311 perforated or 312 unperforated, was the first. It marked the introduction in 1866 of the country's first national postage stamps and established a format used extensively in later decades.

Special philatelic souvenirs were associated with many earlier events, including the 1934 Universal Postal Union Congress in Cairo, but these are generally treated separately from the regular MS programme.

From the 1950s miniature sheets became a recurring feature, celebrating royal events, the Revolution, archaeology, international organizations and major national anniversaries. The 1951 Royal Wedding MS marking the marriage of Farouk and Narriman Sadek is a key one to collect. . The imperforate error (where the stamp lacks the normal perforations) is considered extremely rare: just 27 sheets were printed (Nile Post MS5h). Official Post Office presentation folders containing the sheet are also scarce.



1964: part of the world-wide campaign to save Nubia's antiquities from inundation



1969: a thousand years of Cairo's art captured on one sheet

See the wedding video at [Selected Originals - Egypt Fetes Royal Wedding \(1951\)](#), but within a year Farouk would be overthrown in the 1952 Revolution.

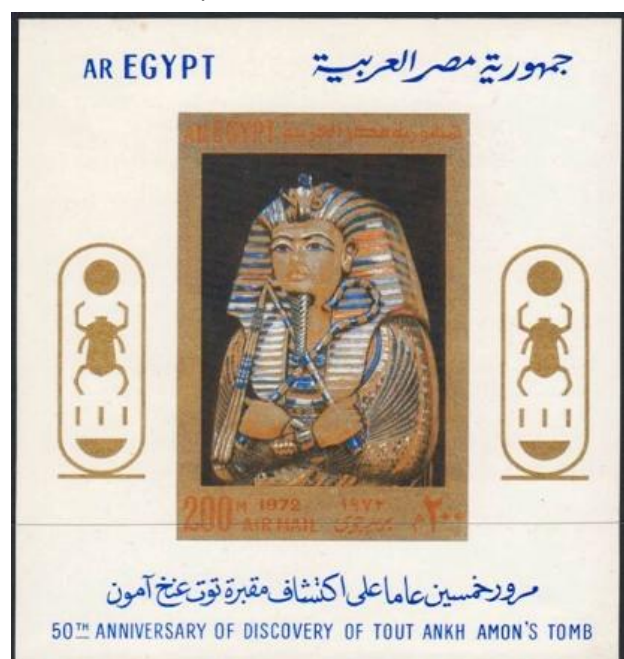
The 1952 Birth of Crown Prince Ahmed Fouad MS is popular because it was issued in May 1952, shortly before Farouk's abdication. The stamp and MS are inscribed "birth of the heir apparent" in French. The prince became King Ahmed Fuad II in July 1952, reigning only until June 1953 when Egypt became a Republic.

Another rare MS to look out for is the 1956 2nd Arab Scout Jamboree issue. They were issued perforate (SG 513) and imperforate (SG 514).

Some of the most beautiful miniature sheets were issued during the international campaign to save the temples threatened by the building of the Aswan High Dam in the mid 1960s. Nubian Monuments MSs feature Abu Simbel and other ancient temples. The combination of archaeology, architecture and elegant design makes them among Egypt's finest modern issues.

Hundreds of MSs have been issued by Egypt Post. One of my favourites is the Millennium of Cairo in 1969 MS (SG 1027) that celebrates Cairo's 1,000-year history and showcases Islamic art. Reasonably priced, MSs can build into an attractive collection.

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1972: a glorious funerary mask celebrated 50 years of Tutankhamun's discovery