

TUNISIA FINDS

By Johan DELBEKE

One of the great benefits of collecting Tunisia is that the literature is so incomplete that one can still make discoveries. I am sure that almost everything I list here below has been seen and noticed by some collector before, but apparently none of them have taken the trouble to record it.

Stamps

1947 Unissued 200f Neptune

This essay has one catalog number in both the Yvert and Maury catalogs but there seem to exist many color versions. I have seen :

Frame	Head	Beard
Black	Blue	Blue
Black	Brown	Dark blue
Black	Brown	Green blue
Dark blue	Brown	Blue
Dark green	Blue	Blue

Imperforates

I have seen the following as imperforates with the same color as the perforate stamps

1. 1928 Gabes au Tchad 50c
2. All values of the first parcel post stamp set
3. All values of the first parcel post stamp set
4. The 1923 2f postage due stamp

Deluxe Proofs of 1945 Tax stamps

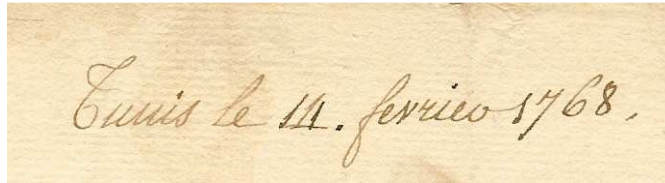
The Maury catalog mentions no épreuves de luxe 1945-50 series of postage due stamps, yet these exist for the 4f and higher values. The 4f, 10f and 20f have a protective sheet. The 30f value does not and is smaller.

Prephilately

The oldest Tunisia letter in private hands

In his article on the early mail of Tunisia, Dutau describes a 1767 letter in the Musée de la Poste in Paris. He (and I) have never seen an older letter. I do have a letter that is a candidate for the oldest letter in private hands as it is dated 1768. The reader should interpret this more as a challenge than as a statement of fact. The first Catholic parish in Tunisia dates from the 17th century, so older letters should exist.

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Tunis le 11. fevrier 1768.

French Post Offices in Tunisia

I believe the usage of French postage due stamps is unrecorded for Tunisia. Since these cannot be accidentally used when brought over by visitors, there must be more than this 1885 example used in Sfax. It is of course possible that it was never used in Tunisia, but merely remained uncanceled until arrival in Sfax.

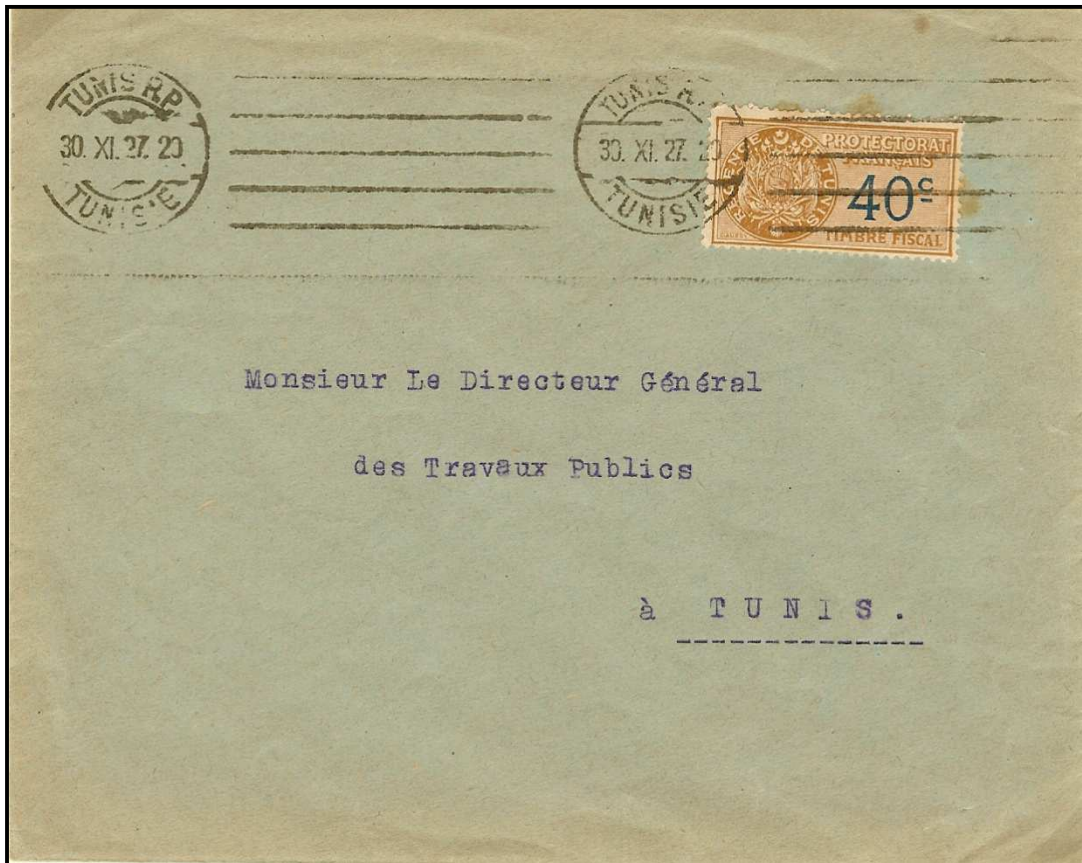


Fiscal Stamps Used as Postage

These two letters seem to use fiscal stamps for postage. The postmarks are dated 1901 and 1927 respectively, they are locally sent in decent sized towns (Gabès & Tunis) and are correctly franked. There was a 40c rate for invoices in 1927, which would be a logical use on a local letter. Still, they probably are philatelic fabrication, but I would like to hear from readers if they have encountered similar covers.



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Military and censored mail

Censor Marks in WWI

A double red circular mark with the Seated Republic in the centre has been recorded by Morat. On the top it shows the words MINISTERE DE LA GUERRE, while on the bottom it reads CONTROLE POSTAL TUNIS. These marks are usually accompanied on the reverse of the envelope by a square mark reading OUVERT PAR / L'AUTORITE MILITAIRE on two lines. Of both the circular and square mark, I have found 3 types.

Type 1 Seated Republic

- The top and bottom text lines are separated by a star
- The top line has a font with serifs

Type 2 Seated Republic

- The top and bottom text lines are separated by four points arranged in a square
- No serifs

Type 3 Seated Republic

- The top and bottom text lines are separated by a *fleuron*
- No serifs
- Double outer circle

Type 1 Framed OUVERT PAR

- Size 36x36mm

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Type 2 Framed OUVERT PAR

- Size 30x30mm

Type 3 Framed OUVERT PAR

- Size 27x33mm
- Top line has a serified font

It seems that type 1 Seated Republic goes together with Type 1 Framed mark, and so on for type 2 and 3.

Another type I have has a double lined rectangular box (71x18mm) with the text *Vérifié au départ / par l'autorité militaire*, again on two lines

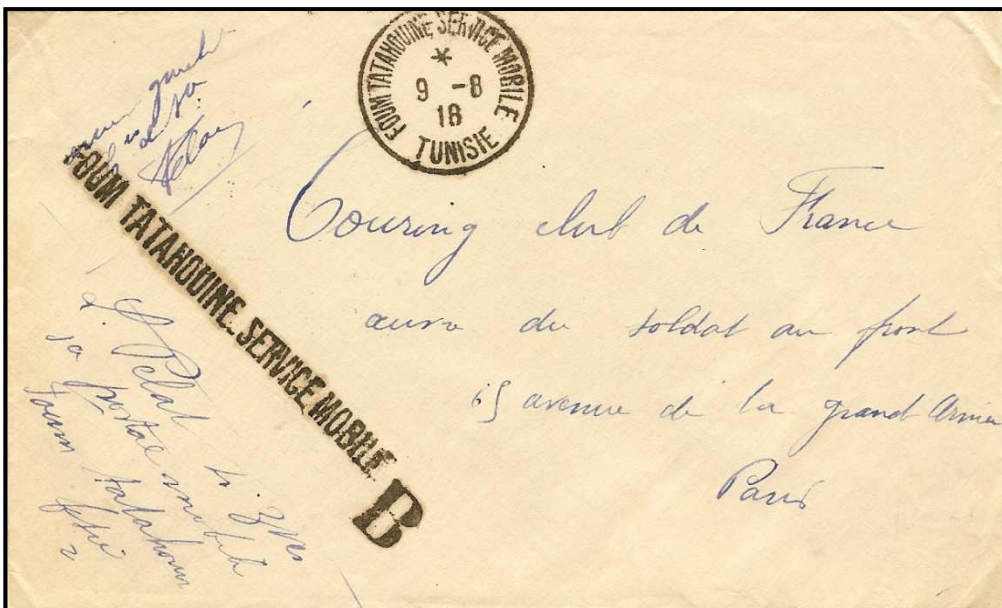
Censoring of POW mail in WWI

I have a December 1914 letter from a German POW in the camp of Kairouan, addressed to Germany. Unlike later letters from the Camps of Porto Farina and Gafsa, which have a censor mark, this one has a manuscript notation indicating that the letter was censored.



Foum Tatahouine – Service Mobile Postmark used in 1918

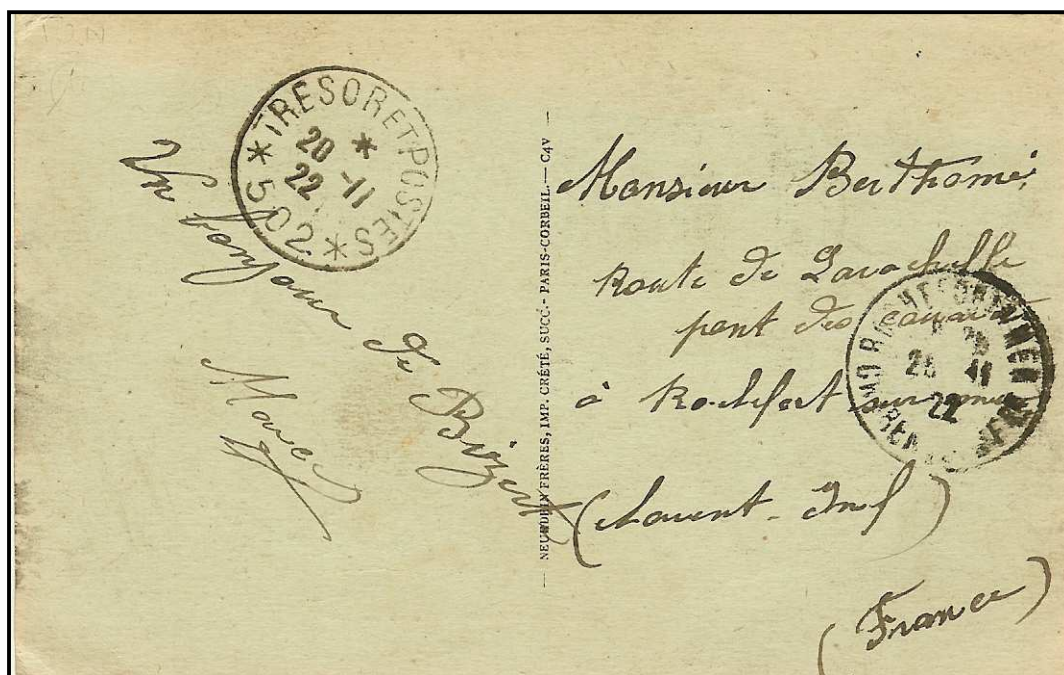
Morat describes the use of this postmark during the Senoussi rebellion in 1916-17. After the rebellion had ended, the region was still heavily garrisoned, and apparently still in need of the Service Mobile as this cover dates from June 1918.



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Military Mark Trésor et Postes 502 used from Tunisia in 1922

B. Sinais says about the TRESOR ET POSTES postmarks from the 500 series that they were used in the Armée d'Orient from 1915 to 1923. The 502 in particular was used in Saloniki by the command of the Allied Armies. They were resurrected in 1939 to serve in North Africa. The card below does not fit that description because clearly used in Tunisia. The message reads "Un bonjour de Bizerte", while the front shows the Cercle des officiers in the same town. Being addressed to France, it is hard to imagine it passing by Saloniki.



Postmarks

Type R2R¹ (double circle with levée hour)



- Beja on a May 1905 stamp
- Ferryville on a January 1906 postcard. The diameter of the postmark is 24.5mm. It does not have a levee hour or number.
- Manouba on a 1903 postcard

Type R3R (double circle with 27.5mm diameter)

- Grombalia on a September 1904 postcard

¹ I use the typologie of the Morat book (see bibliography)

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Type R5R (single circle with Regence de Tunisie at bottom)



- Sidi Tabet on a 1928 letter

Type R5 (single circle with Tunisie at bottom)

- TUNIS R.P. - SECRETARIAT on 1941 official letter.

Type A1 (double circle without levée number or hour and with Regence de Tunis at bottom)



- Cap Blanc: dated June 1909 on a postcard. This is an unrecorded office.

Type A3R (octagonal with Regence de Tunis at bottom)



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- Sidi Tabet: dated November 1905. This is not a true A3R since it is much smaller. In fact it rather resembles the contemporary maritime postmarks of France.

Type A5 (solid hexagonal)

- Bou Ficha dated November 1955
- Smala des Souassi dated June 1956

Type A6 (interrupted hexagonal)

- Oued Mellegue dated April 1955

Type F (interrupted circle with Tunis at bottom)

- Ebba Ksour dated April 1912

Type DRT (bilingual, undated, circular with bridge with Regence de Tunis at bottom)



- Guellala on April 1933 letter
- Ksiba Soussa on April 1937 letter
- Messadine on an April 1937 letter
- Ras el Djebel on an unused lettercard
- Slouguia on piece

Type DT (bilingual, undated, circular with bridge with Tunis at bottom)

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- Aram on March 1926 letter
- Allouet el Gounna ? on undated philatelic postcard
- Djebibina on February 1920 letter
- Henchir Bagbagh on March 1932 letter. Morat recorded this cancel for Henchir Bagbag.
- Ksar Mesrob on October 1914 letter. This is an unrecorded office.
- Sedjenane on a December 1912 postcard
- S?echet el Agudji on an unaddressed cover with Y&T 76. This is an unrecorded office.

Untyped postmark



- El Guettar: Morat mentions a date of use for this telegraph mark used as postmark of September to November 1904. I found a postcard dated January 1903 with the same mark. Maybe this is a first use or maybe the telegraph mark was used for much longer. On the front of the card, the same postmark cancels the stamp.

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Note: The French tax stamp used in Sfax and most of the imperforates I have only as a scan, all other pieces come from my collection.

Bibliography

- G. Dutau: "Les débuts de la philatélie tunisienne", *La Philatélie Française*, #534, 1999, pp. 7-9
- J. Morat: *Tunisie - L'histoire postale et les émissions de timbres durant la regence 1888 – 1955*, 2000, 146 pp.
- B. Sinais: *Catalogue des Oblitérations Militaires Françaises 1900-1985*, Paris, 1987, 323 pp.