

# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

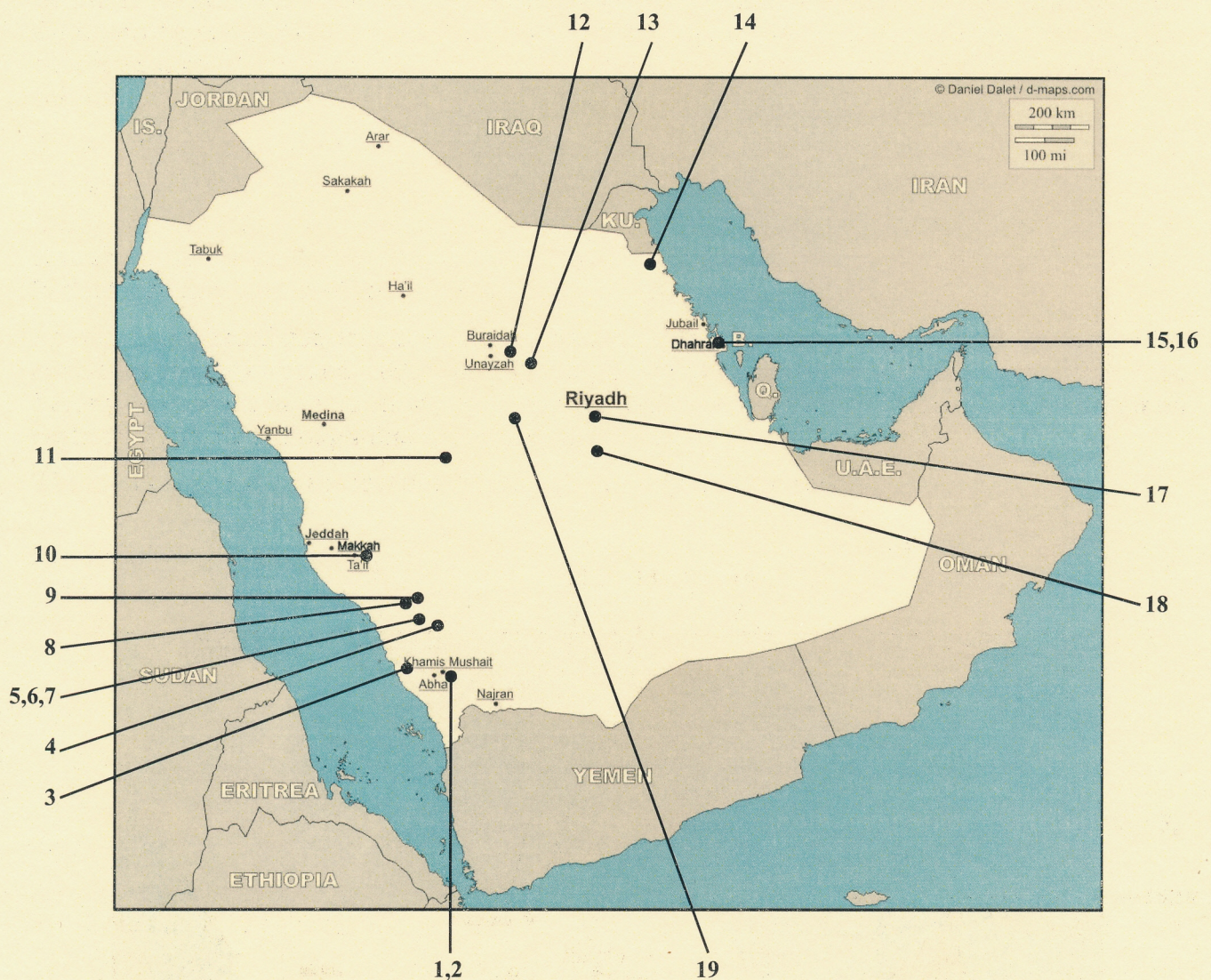
In the 1970s, Oil Caravan was a weekly newspaper published by the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco); the first issue appeared on 29 October 1953. It has attracted correspondence from all over the Kingdom to the Aramco headquarters in Dhahran since its inception; this exhibit shows some received during the 1970s.

These covers are a source of rare postmarks and registration markings, many of the postmarks being of a type apparently unique to the originating post office.

Many of the covers, ordinary and registered, have R-3404 or R-3407 in manuscript in a manner similar to that seen on registered covers, however these are not registration markings but indicate the destination office (room number) within Aramco.

As with many Saudi domestic covers, the postmarks may be incomplete or poorly inked, and the envelopes roughly opened, reduced or damaged. They are rare, so we have to live with that. Several postmarks have an empty space for the date which is usually entered in manuscript on registered letters, although that is not always the case.

The map below shows the location of the point of origin of the covers.

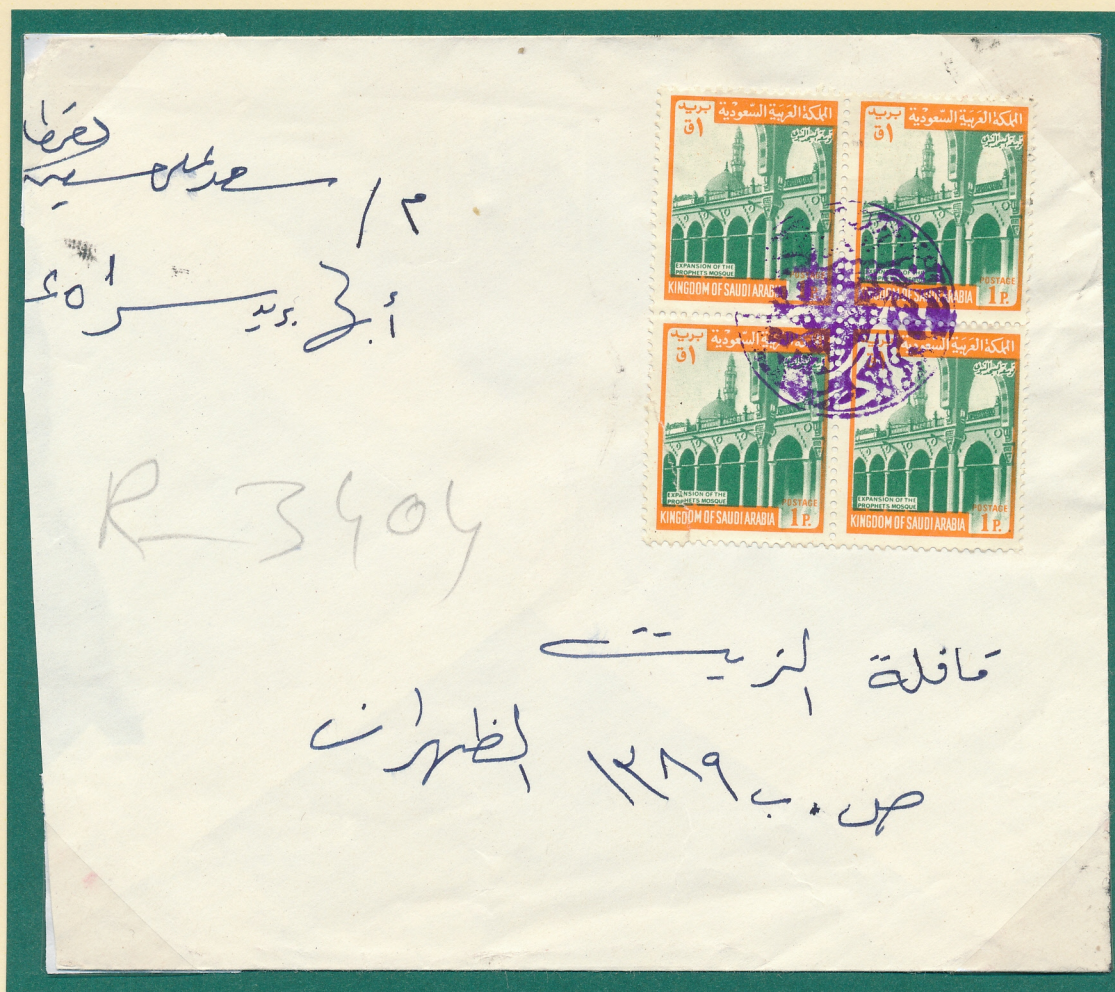




# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 1



Cover from Sarat Abidah franked 4 qirsh to pay the normal domestic rate. The stamps have been cancelled with a negative all-Arabic mark *central post, sarat abidah, abha*.

Unusually for these unregistered Oil Caravan covers, this one has a DAMMAM receiver mark and is dated 20 March 1976.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 2



Cover from Rufaidah franked 4 qirsh paying the standard domestic rate and cancelled with a bi-lingual RUFAIDAH dated 25 March 1976. The Arabic above the datebelt reads *rufaidah post*. This type of cancel with the word 'post' is rare and has been recorded from only 10 locations.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 3



Registered cover from Al Confudah franked 10 qirsh to pay the standard rate for domestic letters and cancelled with a bi-lingual KUNFODAH dated 28 March 1976. The Arabic on the postmark reads *Al Confudah outgoing*. The cover routed via Riyadh (2 April 1976) and bears a scarce Al Confudah-2 registration cachet.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 4



Cover from Bisha and franked 4 qirsh to pay the normal domestic rate. Although a private letter, the stamps have been cancelled with a bi-lingual BISHA official device dated 17 March 1976. The top two lines of Arabic read *bisha/official*.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 5



Cover from Al Baha, franked 4 qirsh paying the ordinary postage rate for domestic mail and cancelled with an undated all-Arabic circular cancellation with space for the date to be entered in manuscript. The three main lines of Arabic text reads *ordinary/al baha post office/outgoing*. The text in the datebelt reads simply *date*. The cover dates from the 1970s.

This type of cancellation is unique to Al Baha.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 6



Cover from Al Baha, franked 10 qirsh paying the domestic rate for registered letters and cancelled with an undated all-Arabic circular cancellation with space for the date to be entered in manuscript. The three main lines of Arabic text reads *registered/al baha post/outgoing*. The text in the datebelt reads simply *date*. The cover dates from the 1970s.

This type of cancellation is unique to Al Baha.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 7



Cover from Bani Thubyaan franked 4 qirsh to pay the normal domestic rate. The stamps have been cancelled with an undated all-Arabic mark *bani thubyaan post, al baha*. This type of cancel has not been recorded for any other location.

The cover dates from the 1970s.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 8



Printed envelope from Mandak with four 1 qirsh stamps cancelled with clear strikes of an undated MANDAK cancel in violet. It is not unusual to see the use of multiple low denomination stamps from villages and small towns in the kingdom as most stock a very limited range of the definitive series in use at the time. The cover dates from the 1970s.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 9



Cover from location near Al Tawilah, franked 4 qirsh to pay the normal domestic rate. The stamps received a clear strike of an undated all-Arabic rectangular cancel with four lines of text. The translation is *postal affairs/villages post office/in al tawilah/date*. This type of cancel is not known for any other location.

The cover was routed via Taif but only the year (1976) is visible in the postmark.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 10



Franked with 4 qirsh to pay the normal domestic rate, the stamp received a circular travelling postmark with *travelling post* at the top and *villages of al hawiyah* at the bottom.

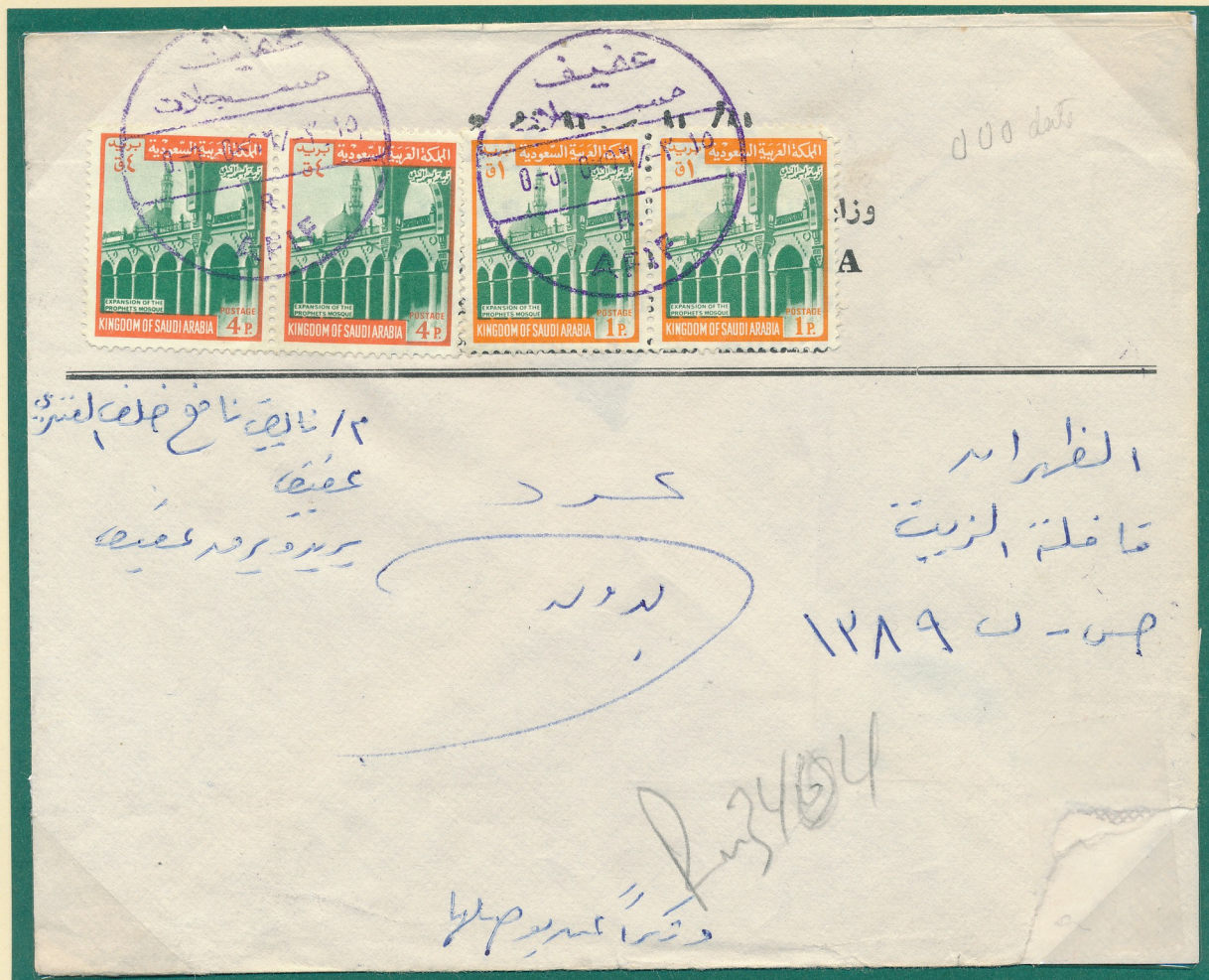
The cover passed through Taif on 21 March 1976. Other covers seen with this type of travelling postmark and also having transit marks, have been routed through Taif.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 11



Cover from Afeef and franked 10 qirsh to pay the domestic registered rate. The stamps have been cancelled with a bi-lingual AFIF device dated 15-3-1396H (15 March 1976) but the western date is shown as 0-0-0. The top two lines of Arabic read *afeef/registered*.

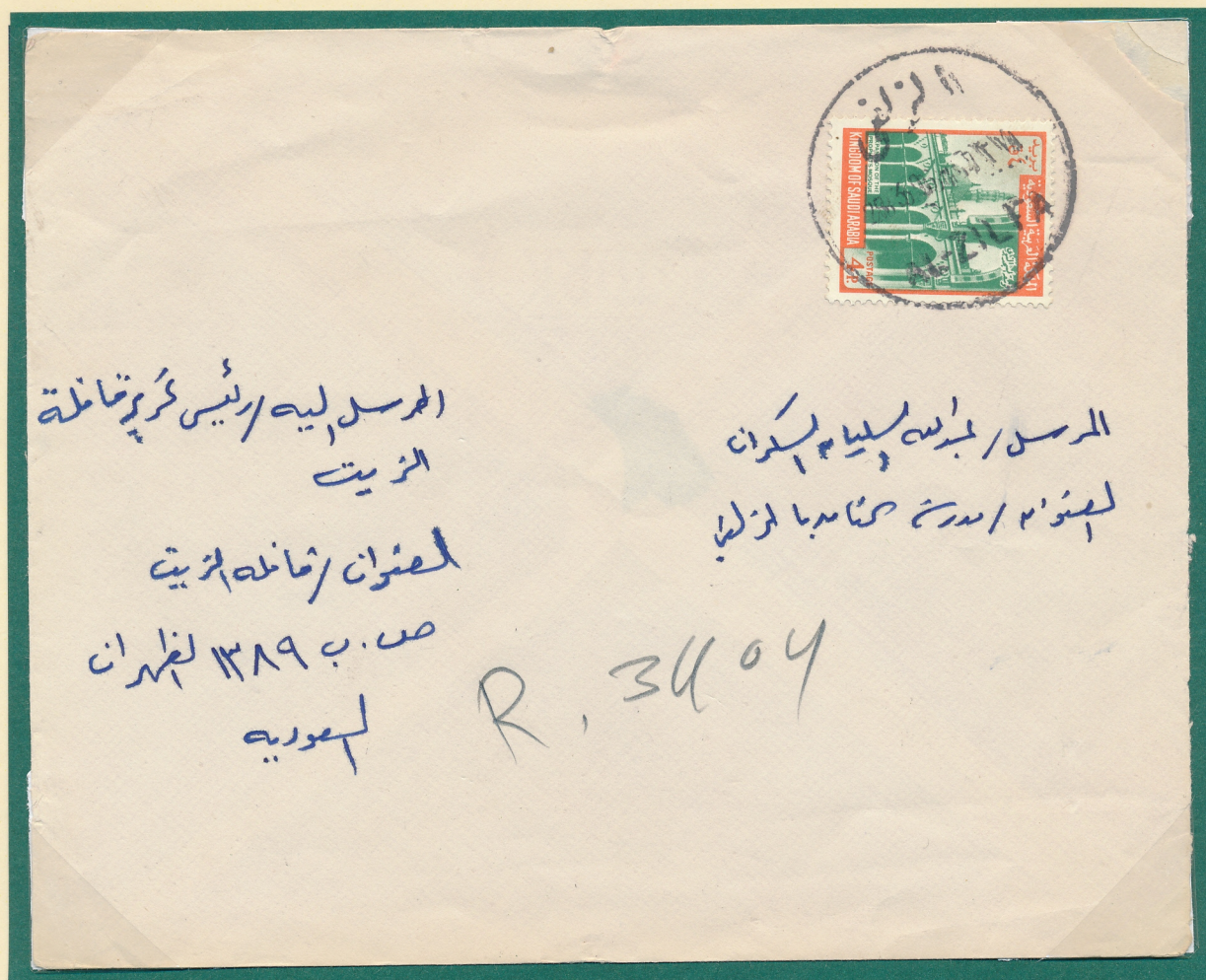
The cover was routed via Riyadh (17 March 1976)



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 12



Cover from Al Zilfa franked 4 qirsh paying the standard domestic rate and cancelled with a bi-lingual AL-ZILFA dated 28 March 1976. This type of cancel is rare from locations other than the major cities.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 13



Cover from Hurmah franked 10 qirsh paying the domestic rate for registered letters and cancelled with an all-Arabic mark dated 24-3-1397 (24 March 1976). This type of cancel is one of the most widely used for that period, but registration labels from small towns are rare.



# Saudi Arabia

قافلة الزيت  
(Oil Caravan)

Cover 14



Printed envelope from Al Khafji with an undated bi-lingual AL KHAFJI POST OFFICE EXPORT cancellation. The translation of the Arabic is *al khafji post office outgoing*. This type of cancellation is unique to Al Khafji. The 3 qirsh postage rate was that for post within the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

The cover dates from the 1970s



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 15



Cover from Dammam franked with 2 qirsh paying the domestic rate within the Dammam/Dhahran/Al Khobar complex. The stamp is the rare Prophet's Mosque design with redrawn frame but on paper with the first watermark. The postmark is a bi-lingual widely used type, dated 10 August 1972.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 16



From Umm Al Hammam, this cover is franked 3 qirsh to pay the standard rate within the Eastern Province. The postmark has only been recorded from Umm Al Hammam and the three lines of Arabic are *director of eastern province postal affairs/umm al hammam/directorate of qatif post*.

The cover was routed via Qatif and Dammam on 2 March 1976.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 17



Printed envelope from Riyadh and franked 10 qirsh paying the domestic rate for registered letters. The stamp is cancelled by a bi-lingual RIYADH No 8 dated 5 June 1972 and has a Riyadh 8 registration cachet applied in the same colour as the postmark. It is unusual for the registration cachet to have the same counter number as the postmark and has only been noted for Riyadh and Jeddah. Presumably the two devices are issued in pairs to the counter clerks.



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 18



Cover from Al Dilam, franked 10 qirsh paying the domestic rate for registered letters and cancelled with the widely used all-Arabic circular cancel with Hijra date of 24-3-1396 (25 March 1976). Also on the front is a very clear strike of the rare DILAM registration cachet in violet.

The cover was routed via Riyadh (28 March 1976)



# Saudi Arabia

## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Cover 19



Cover from Ifgara', a small village close to Al Dawadmi, and franked 4 qirsh to pay the normal domestic rate and cancelled with an all-Arabic mark with three lines of Arabic plus a datebelt containing the first three digits of the Hijra year 139. The first line of the cancel is a mystery; the exact meaning of this single character(ق) is not known. The other two lines are *post/ifgara'*.

The cover passed through Riyadh on 26 December 1975.



# Saudi Arabia

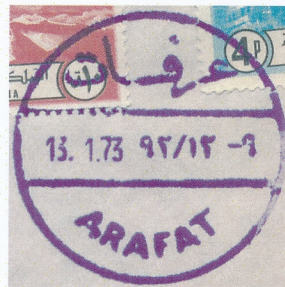
## قافلة الزيت (Oil Caravan)

Postmarks in general use during the 1970s

The codes used are those allocated by OPAL member Kenneth Knight in his series of articles '*The Postal Markings of Hejaz, Nejd, Hejaz and Nejd, and Saudi Arabia*', published in Random Notes, the Journal of the Arabian Philatelic Association.



Type S25



Type S170



Type SA100