

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FIELD POST SYSTEM

If we imagine a separation line between the militarily administered territory from the civilian one, we may imagine a system operating in the former, linking to the latter in certain points operating in a transit area and partially into the civilian territory; there, the postal materials were taken / handed over to be carried to their destinations, both ways.

The structure of the field post system comprised the following levels:

1- THE FIELD POST GENERAL DIRECTION (GENEAL-FELDPOSTDIREKTION) integrated in the Army High Command (Armee Oberkommando). It functioned in several locations (see FPO 11) and used a date canceller (Catalogue nr 1) reading **GENERALFELDPOSTDIREKTION**.

2- POSTAL DIRECTIONS OF THE ARMIES / ARMY CORPS, operating by each Army High Command (ARMEE KOMMANDO), or the Etappe High Command (ETAPPE KOMMANDO). For each Army there was a Postal Direction (ARMEE POSTDIREKTION Nr. ...) with the same number as of the respective Army. That Direction did not use a date cancel, using the services of one of the fieldpost offices which would operate within the operative structures of the Army Command. But seals / cachets reading KuK ARMEE FELDPST-DIREKTION... were applied there. The mail for such Directions was addressed by means of a secretized name that was periodically changed (e.g. POSTBRILLANT, POSTNADEL, POSTKARNEOL, POSTRUBIN, etc.)

3- CENTRAL (SUPERIOR) FIELD POST OFFICES. A central Fieldpost Office (= FPO) was subordinating the whole postal network within an operative area, functioning by the postal direction of an army. The identification occurs by means of the cancel text (HAUPTFELDPOSTAMT / TÁBORI FÖPOSTAHIVATAL + number). Theoretically, the mail from all subordinated offices would be collected there and then redirected towards a collecting transit office by means of the postal wagons or other vehicles. Practically, sometimes a central FPO would mostly cope with organizing and supervising the local postal network.

4- ORDINARY FIELD POST OFFICES - used cancels with the respective FPO number (K.u.K. FELDPSTAMT or TÁBORI POSTAHIVATAL + number).

5- ETAPPE FIELD POST OFFICES - used cancels with the respective EPO number (K.u.K. ETAPPENPOSTAMT or HADTÁP POSTAHIVATAL + number).

6- FIELDPOST OFFICE BRANCHES - (EXPOSITUR) - operating in different locations than the FPO they were part of. There were operational, provisional structures of a FPO, meant to expand the postal network in a front area; sometimes, these would serve for some more isolated army units. These could have cancels or could be simple mail collecting and distributing points, with or without mailboxes, lacking any cancellers. The former would apply cancels with the branch indication in form of a number in Roman numerals (or maybe applied at the mother FPO). The latter would produce an indication of origin visible on the mail, within the sender's given address in manuscript; normally, the cancels of the mother FPO would be applied on these.

7- POST OFFICE COUNTERS- the counter is visible in the cancel in the form of a supplementary letter (in lower case for the German cancels and in upper case for the Hungarian cancels - or, seldom, in lower case).

8- COLLECTING FIELDPOST OFFICES (SAMMELSTELLE) - the mail providing from the Central FPOs was collected there, being primarily processed and handed over to a sorting office.

9- SORTING FIELDPOST OFFICES (SORTIERSTELLE) - initially stationary, and subsequently -with a small number of exceptions- travelling offices; mail exchange (receiving - forwarding) with the civilian system occurred there.

10- Apart of these structure elements, mail transport means existed in the form of **travelling FPOs** (collecting, sorting, forwarding and transportation) and **postal wagons** or autos. Very seldom, the mail was also carried by other means (aeroplanes, cables, etc.). All these appear in the applied cachets. A very small number of ordinary FPOs also had attributions of a transit TPO.

11- The Navy (Kriegsmarine) had post offices aboard the ships and a land office in POLA, the date cancels comprising the ship name. Some ships even played the role of collecting offices, such as SMS MONARCH in the Gulf of Cattaro. (most of the mail, submarine mail included, was forwarded through the POLA Fieldpost Office, but other FPOs were also used, such as FPO 267). These are not produced in this catalogue.

The fieldpost mail was regulated by means of the **E-47** Regulation Book issued in 1913, according to the diagram in **Table 1** (see also Volume 1 for the conditions for postage exemption and the mail groups qualifying for it).

The processing of the fieldpost mail occurred in the first instance, in the presentation offices, front or etappe, then at the Central FPOs and subsequently in the transit offices (SAMMELSTELLE and SORTIERSTELLE - which would carry the forwarding - receiving of the mail in railway stations mostly), where the mail would be collected, sorted and redirected, the travelling FPOs carrying it the soonest possible in both directions; the latter belonged to the fieldpost but sometimes the civilian TPOs were being used.

Instances are known where some postal structure units operated in hospital trains outside the FELDPST system (responding to the tasks of a provisional travelling FPO, collecting and sorting mail from the patients) which probably travelled along certain permanent routes. The mail was being handed over on into railway stations. The sorted mail was forwarded on in mailbags accompanied by a label on which the fieldpost cancel of the sender FPO was applied and the name of a destination Post office was inscribed, where the mail was to be distributed within the civilian postal network. Often times, on such labels a TFPO cancel is visible (or sometimes, a civilian one).

THE FIELDPOST MAIL ITEMS

These have been presented in the first three volumes of the Catalogue:

- Volume 1-2: the fieldpost cards.
- Volume 3 (in preparation at this moment) - the other fieldpost mail items.

THE PROCESSING OF THE FIELD POST MAIL

Field Post mail consists in all mail addressed by the military personnel or addressed to active military personnel (but not to the retired ones) according to the details offered in the KuK FELDPOST CATALOGUE 1914-1918 Volume 1; included are items that may appear less often in the market, such as parcel forms, money orders, labels, etc (Vol. 3).

During the postal transit from the sender to the addressee, three kinds of cancels/cachets were applied:

A- on the mail providing from civilian individuals or institutions, addressed to a military:

- 1 - the date cancel of the presentation civilian post office;
- 2 - the censor cachet for civilian mail - which was not always applied;
- 3 - the arrival cancel in the fieldpost network - rarely applied;

Also, other official cachets or manuscript annotations may detail on the provenance, directing, forwarding, forbidding or returning, repeated censoring, redirecting, processing operations, etc.

Such mail could have been affixed with postage stamps where a fully or partially postage exemption would not apply. If the mail provided from an institution benefiting of postage exemption, the origin would be certified by the cachet / seal of the respective institution which sometimes was civilian and other times, military.

B- on the mail providing from the military personnel, regardless the destination:

1- the cachet or the seal of an army unit, thus being proven the military provenance of the mail and the right to postage exemption; sometimes - not frequently, though - several army unit cachets may appear, perhaps witnessing a postal transit. Supplementary cachets may appear showing that the mail was censored or rechecked during the transit. If the mail was only partially exempted from postage (e.g. registered mail, mail addressed abroad, overweight, etc.) postage stamps were applied and applied with the FPO cancel.

2 - the date cancel of the presentation post office (civilian or fieldpost)

2.1 - if the mail was sent through a civilian post office, it was being treated differently, according to destination.

2.1.1 - if the item was considered normal civilian mail and would not qualify for postage exemption, it had to be affixed with postage stamps according to the due postage fee; when the mail was introduced in the mailbox stampless, it was charged at destination, being oftentimes (but not always) affixed with PORTO stamps; there was an exception, the postage paid reply mail; in general, this was commercial mail where the postage had been paid in advance.

2.1.2 - if the mail item provided from a military and qualified for postage exemption, it was cancelled upon presentation with a "Von der Armee in Felde" type cachet, which replaced behind the lines a military Fieldpost cancel. (In a number of cases, applied were control numeral cancels of the kind used on the parcel forms. These fall into the provisional FELDPOST cancel group). Some of the mail of the kind provides from the military hospitals behind the lines; such mail is applied with the hospital cachet / seal plus the civilian P.O. in the area. In a very few cases, hospitals had their own date cancels, military or civilian (**K.u.K. KRIEGSSPITAL / STERNTHAL bei PETTAU, ROZSAHEGY Gyogyintezet , GYULA SZANATORIUM,** etc).

2.2 - if the item was mailed by means of a FPO, it was usually cancelled at the presentation FPO. But sometimes the cancellation occurred at a different FPO, because, for a military, any occasion to send a mail away was acceptable: a courier in mission departing for a destination, an officer summoned to the headquarters or leaving for a mission and passing by a FPO, a stationary FPO used by a marching unit, a mailbox in a railway station and even a civilian met in a train, on the road, an army supplier, etc. Thus, sometimes, the applied FPO cancel would differ from the FPO in the sender's address. Some branches (Expositur) also happened, occasionally, to discharge their mail bags with other offices than the mother FPO.

3 - the arrival cancel at destination - applied rather irregularly.

Among the applied cachets, particularly interesting are the cachets / seals of the Fieldpost offices themselves or of the postal directions and, seldom seen, of other postal structures. - officers with postal responsibilities within certain army units, branches, special transportation units, etc. (Some army units - others than the FPOs themselves - or military individuals, were comprising FPO indications in the cachet text in their own name, or used privately printed cards inscribed with their fieldpost address and FPO indication. Such private cachets may be circular, straight-line, framed or not, a.s.o.). The circular cachets appearing in negative where the coat of arms and the text appear in white are imprints of metallic seals that the FPOs were using for wax-sealing the valuable mails or maybe a certain kind of official mail. Less frequently, cachets of courier lines are displayed, or certain temporary postal services (air, naval or land transport, especially trains) or from certain collecting and sorting units (SAMMELSTELLE, SORTIERSTELLE). A special area consists in the occupation fieldpost offices in the Etappe areas. Such cancels display the text K.uK ETAPPEPOSTAMT but instead of a number these show the place name where the FPO operated. The mail of the kind falls into two groups:

A - mail providing from the military, with cachets / seals of the army units or occupation army structures.

B - civilian mail, affixed with occupation fieldpost stamps and censor cachets.

For the Occupation FPO mail, see Volume 6 of the Catalogue.

In the Catalogue, the cancels / cachets are described and illustrated within the following Chapters:

CHAPTER 1: THE CANCELS OF THE ORDINARY FIEPDPOST OFFICES:

- 1.1 - Provisional cancels.
- 1.2 - Number cancels (2 - 1200).

CHAPTER 2: THE FIELD POST IN BOSNIA - HERZEGOVINA (1914 - 1918)

CHAPTER 3: THE OCCUPATION FIELD POST OFFICES

- 3.1 - ALBANIA
- 3.2 - ITALY
- 3.3 - MONTENEGRO
- 3.4 - POLAND
- 3.5 - SERBIA

CHAPTER 4: THE COLLECTING AND SORTING OFFICES.

- 4.1 - Transit post offices (collecting and sorting).
- 4.2 - Travelling FPOs (= TFPO)

CHAPTER 5: POW AND INTERNEE CAMP AND STATIONS

CHAPTER 6: OTHER CANCELS / CACHETS (War exhibitions, Red Cross, air mail, etc.)

With a very few exceptions, each cancel was illustrated from a circulated mail item or from an archive specimen.

The catalogue offers two kinds of information:

1- INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CANCELS USED AT EACH FPO.

• THE NUMEROTATION OF THE CANCELS

Each FPO has a head position provided, the FPO number thus being the very catalogue number itself. The numerotation occurs as follows (examples given for FPO 55):

1.1 - each cancel receives an item number according to the FPO number plus an extra number for each canceller with differing text (e.g. **55.1 = FELDPOSTAMT 55**; **55.2 = FELDPOSTAMT 55 a**).

1.2 - if Type 1 / Type 2 etc. varieties are known, another numeral is added after a hyphen. For instance, the cancel 55.1 shows two types, i.e. numbers **55.1-1** and **55.1-2**.

(For research references, where it was not possible to identify and describe both types pointed at as existing by Hans Riedel, the known type is illustrated as TYPE 1 without offering a description as long as the comparative material is missing; it follows that the new discoveries should be described as TYPE 2 etc. I have considered necessary to open the hypothetical positions in the catalogue for the types waiting to be discovered, both for description and illustration, hoping that these will raise the attention of the collectors and their discoveries would be made public or mentioned to me at my e-mail address (given at the beginning of Volumes 1 and 4)

1.3 - if defective canceller varieties are recorded, the item number is added with a letter; for instance, the cancel **K.UND K. FELDPOSTAMT 55 type 2** displays broken bars varieties: 55.1-2a, 2b, 2c, 2d. (see **Table 2**)

Where "Expositur" branches are known, these are introduced after the list of the numbered cancels, receiving the indicative letter **E** after the FPO number, and if several such locations are known, these also receive an item number (**55.E1, 55. E2**, etc.).

Finally, where different ink colours have been recorded, these are mentioned at the end of the cancel table. Since these are not **different cancel types** but mere colour varieties (even though some may be rare), these do not get an item number as cancel types but the generic FPO number followed by the letter **x**. Where more than one colour has been recorded, these will be itemised **x1, x2** etc. (item **5.x2** in Table 2 is only used for the sake of exemplification, it has not been actually recorded).

Some cancels have been reproduced from archive specimens, where the apparent circulation dates may be random, falling outside the real circulation span of time.

N.B. - In case of some FPOs, an interesting addition of information is provided. During the local war of 1919 against Czechoslovakia and Romania, the Hungarian Communist troops used cancels reading **TÁBORI POSTA HIVATAL** which sometimes happen to be the cancellers used during WW1. As long as confusions may occur, all such cancels used by the Hungarian Red Army are mentioned, with their locations and the units using them. On checking the date on these, one may notice their use during 1919.

• TYPES 1, 2...

These provide from cancellers with the same FPO number and text but cast with a different geometry or layout. The Imperial Post Office is known having used to order two copies of cancellers for the post offices of which, one was kept in reserve by the office postmaster, a practice still recorded in Austria at least until 1975. Yet, we may notice that in case of the FPOs, all cancellers seem to have been always used on mail (sometimes, one type may be associated to some degree with certain specialised postal services such as money orders or parcels), generating the types 1, 2 and sometimes even 3 and 4 with in a few cases. The absence of some Type 2 cancels from the studied material might be perhaps explained if one canceller was kept in reserve, but that seems rather unlikely to me, seeing the amount of

demanding work required in a FPO -yet, one cannot completely rule that out. Other cancellers may have been lost or destroyed.

Sometimes, the difference between such cancel types is minor and hard to notice (see, for instance, FPOs 312, 334 or 344), therefore the illustration of cancel details was considered important. For the same reason, such differences might happen to be difficult to pinpoint in the future as well, but comparative studies carried on materials applied with complete, clear strikes, used in similar or close time intervals (say, no more than 1 -2 months), could make their identification possible.

In certain (but not many) cases, new cancel types were positively identified which doubtlessly provide from different cancellers, although the studied bibliography do not offer details on their existence. In some instances, up to 4 types were identified (see **Table 3** for a few examples).

2- INFORMATION CONCERNING THE OPERATIONAL CONTEXT.

Beside the information specifically addressed to the cancels (text, illustrative type, canceller type 1 or 2, defective lines, etc), some important information is offered on the context in which these were used, i.e:

2.1- FPO OPERATION PERIODS; these are offered under the title case, on left. For instance, we may see in **Table 4** that FPO 131 operated from September 1915 (possibly already established in August 1914) until an unknown date in March 1916 when the office is transformed into the Etappe office BELGRAD. Subsequently, from July 1916, FPO 131 is reopened (FPO 71 was transformed / transferred) and operates until 19 April 1918 when it is closed and the material is handed over to FPO 578; if we check the FPO 131 cancels, we will see that there is a canceller reading **HADTÁP-POSTAHIVATAL 131** which was in use in the first part and a canceller reading **KUK FELDPPOSTAMT 131** - a lot more common - which was in use during the second period. Both presented two types. If we go and check FPO 578, we will notice it started operating exactly on 19 April 1918 and that the office was located in Kolomea, Galicia.

The transfer of a FPO to another or the transformation of an office into another (change of number or location, etc) is always mentioned giving the known date when that had occurred. On the occasion, sometimes a new FPO would take over the tasks of the former office (which ceased operating or, other times, it would continue operating in a new location or with a new subordination, a new FPO number, etc.).

Before the transfer date of a FPO, there is sometimes another date given in parentheses; that is the date when the new office was established, but it started operating at a later date, as seen. For the closing or transfer, the date in parentheses is the alternative date advanced for the decision on the closure or transfer.

If a date is uncertain, then it is followed with a question mark.

2.2- LOCATIONS; when the locations where a FPO operated are known, there appear under the title case, on right. For instance, the following locations are known for FPO 131: BELGRAD, then in Galicia without knowing certain locations (we infer from FPO 578 that Kolomea may have been one, at least toward the end of the operation time) as well as a time on the Romanian front (in Transylvania in 1916? we know that on 15/28 August 1916, Romania joined war against Austro-Hungary); other locations are certain but these are not known. Among the information concerning the operational intervals we may see that the transfer or the transformation of some FPOs into others are notified and to whom the materials / stamps /money / cancellers were handed over when an office was closed down.

2.3- INFANTRY REGIMENTS. The cancel catalogue is followed by an informational supplement with details about the **infantry regiments** which used the services of a FPO (in our case, FPO 55) grouped on years; at the end, in parentheses, information is provided on other regiments using the same FPO services where no other details are known (according to Dixon-Nuttall).

Only some FPOs were used directly by infantry regiments, other FPOs being in the service of army commands, etappes or other military structures.

(see **Table 5**)

2.4- THE MOVEMENT OF THE FPO. Details concerning the movement of a FPO are offered below the infantry regiment list; the information in Romanian are offered immediately thereunder, while, in the blue background table, there is a translation into English (sometimes, more complete and self evident); the information comprises data on the army units using the FPO service (marked in yellow in the Romanian table for a quick reference), the fronts where these were displaced, accompanied by different interesting data (among others, the battles 1 to 12 are given for the Isonzo front) and, in the end a table with the periodization of the movement (**a1-, a2-** etc) as well as the territorial scarcity coefficients (**Q**). In our example, period **b2-** sometime in 1916, FPO 55 was for a short time with the Tirol Defense command - has a **value / scarcity coefficient of 1.5** compared to the other periods. In other words, an item positively confirmed as providing from the Tirol Command period (and maybe displaying relevant cachets from the said Command) will qualify for a catalogue value of **1.5 x the cancel value**. Lest we should forget that the

territorial factor is regarded as most important. The territorial scarcity coefficients are provided with a most conservative point of view, much under the comparative scarcity of the service time in a certain territory.

A compex (full) catalogue number illustrating the periodization of the movement would comprise the catalogue number plus the period code, e.g. 55.1-2a / b2

THE CANCEL FEATURES

Some FPO cancels reading K.U.K. FELDPPOSTAMT / (Nr...) had already been in use prior to WW 1, for military manoeuvres, see the example with FPO 5. Therefore, checking on the cancel type and date is important from the very beginning. Such cancels are scarcer than the WW1 mail and deserve a special attention. Ideally, a fieldpost mail collection should dedicate a specialised section to the military manoeuvres before 28 July 1914.

Fieldpost cards also existed as early as 1880s. Some obsolete models may have been used during the war, probably for necessity reasons (see Vol. 1).

• NUMERALS

- double circle FPO (small numerals) cancels present the FPO number either in straight or curbed line.
- the numerals may show different sizes, producing Type 1 and Type 2 cancels.
- the circles may present different distances in between, producing Type 1 and Type 2 (e.g. FPO 339).

(see **FIG. 1**)

- sometimes the numerals are in thin lines, other times in thick (bold) lines, see **FIG. 2**.
- numeral 2 base may present a pointed end on left or a vertical-line end.
- numeral 3 may present a flat or a round top, in any German cancel type.
- numeral 4 may present a shorter or a taller vertical bar and the slant bar may be straight or curbed.
- numeral 5 may present a straight or a curbed horizontal top bar.
- numeral 8 may present made of two oval or two circular loops.
- numeral 9 may present the top more or less round, even an apparently "pointed" top.
- the Roman numerals may present variable distance in between or variable height varieties.

• TEXT

- the text may be variably tall, the distance between the circles may be larger or narrower.
- the letters in the counter indication may differ, belonging to different alphabet types, see the cancel type tabel where the features of the letters are introduced (mostly visible with letters **a** and **b**). - see also **FIG. 3**

• THE DATE BRIDGE LINES (BARS)

- the lines / bars present the most visible wear, being sometimes broken and missing in a variable degree; sometimes the canceller wear is advancing, producing new varieties; in some cases, a canceller appears having been repaired but the wear becomes again visible after some time. (**FIG. 4**)
- a manufacturer's flaw often seen consists in the unparallel bars above and under the date, see **FIG. 5**.

• TYPES

- the types 1 / 2 may sometimes appear from the use of different graphic elemente (numerals mostly).
- noticeable is the different layout of the letters vs. the date bridge lines; with the Hungarian cancellers, the identification is a lot easier due to the existence of the vertical lines in the sector above the date; they make possible a definite reference of the letter positions against these lines, while the agraffes below the date may be in noticeably different positions.
- sometimes, the whole text may be seen rotated, and this is visible when we compare the position of the first **K** in K.u.K vs. the letter **T** in AMT, see **FIG. 6**.

• CONFUSIONS

- sometimes, due to the uneven or double strikes of a canceller, the illusion of a different FPO number may arise, see **FIG. 7**. The FPO 15 canceller was struck twice, leaving the illusion of number 115.
- other times, the FPO number may be confounded with the number of a TPO (train) whose cancel is weakly visible (**FIG. 7**. on right).
- an ink spot may accidentally incur the illusion of a different number- in **FIG. 8**, **186c** looks like **186d**.

• OTHER FLAWS

- beside the flaws already presented above in respect with the date bridge lines / bars, flaws of the outer circles may be noticed due to accidental contacts incurring indentation or circle breaks.

- sometimes, a defective imprint may incur the illusion of a broken bar, see **FIG. 9** on far right. Therefore, only the cases confirmed on at least three items, cancelled at different dates, are considered for the catalogue.

• **ERRORS**

Errors may be noticed, which can be reduced to a few cases:

- cancels with erroneous, impossible dates (see **FIG. 10**), for instance day 39, year 1919, 1920, 1924, 7, wrong month (only inferrable on German cancels if one compares the month given by the sender on mail, and visible with the Hungarian cancels where the month is given in letters - e.g. JANUARY 1914).

- date elements obturated (in black) or wrongly mounted up - see K.u.K ETAPPENPOSTAMT OSTROWICE, occupation in Poland.

Sometimes, the date device is incompletely or only partially rotated, the date imprint appearing incomplete, doubled or with displaced elements. These are not errors but flawed usage.

• **NEUTRALISED FPO NUMBERS**

A few rare cases are known when the FPO number was neutralised, probably being covered with some material. The reason for this is not known to me but the circulation dates show they were applied during WWI, thus excluding their use after the war, when such neutralization would be due to the disappearance of the FPOs. We may notice that these were applied at Central FPOs (see **FIG. 11**) where part of the mail was being processed. A hypothesis could be their use on mail providing not from the subordinated FPOs but from other sources, or maybe some other cases requiring secretization of the mail provenance.

• **COLOURS**

Beside the usual black ink (with shades of grey according to the dilution degree or how often the pad was refreshed), the following ink colours were used - see **Table 6** - listed according to the known frequency of use: The distribution of these in space (by FPOs) and time (1914-1918) suggests that the most often used colours, violet and blue, were preferentially supplied to some Army postal directions. The colour blue is seen more often during the first part of the war (1914-1916), especially in 1915-1916, and the colour violet is seen more often in the second part of the war (1917-1918), especially in 1917. Territorially, no formal conclusion could be drawn; although blue and violet are seen throughout the duration of the war, there is a clear concentration of them in certain areas and periods. Also, one may notice that many cancels in blue were applied at Etappe post offices.

A rather small number of FPOs used more than one ink colour (the most often seen combination being blue and violet, including the greyish shades):

- **2 colours:** 35 offices (17, 22, 24, 27, 51, 68, 72, 73, 76, 87, 94, 95, 140, 160, 169, 195, 217, 218, 220, 255, 260, 264, 277, 307, 308, 338, 346, 347, 351, 487, 600, 611, 617, 645, 650).

- **3 colours:** 5 offices (12, 116, 203, 223, 345);

- **4 colours:** 1 office (186);

Throughout the catalogue, 317 cases of coloured cancels were noticed. Despite the apparent abundance which could be inferred from above, the coloured cancels are scarce and hard to come by, with a very few exceptions.

• **FORGERIES**

Surprising as it may seem, the FPO cancels do present forgeries. They do not appear to be linked to their scarcity, most of them occurring with common cancels, which begs the question of the time when these were carried. In my opinion, most of them may have been made by amateurs, in a time when the information was circulating rather more difficult than nowadays, probably before the Rainer catalogue was published. Some items were forged individually by merely modifying the cancel elements in ink by hand, especially the FPO number. More seldom, forgeries surfaced where metallic cancellers had been manufactured to that end, but again I have not noticed a connection to the FPO number scarcity as shown in catalogues. For instance, the forgery for FPO 138 made with a metallic canceller refers to a low catalogue value cancel in Rainer, which I suggest other motivations than the FPO number itself (maybe in order to be applied on fabricated items?) or maybe the ignorance of the perpetrator.

In some cases (for instance FPO 134, FPO 262), the author(s) made up inexistent cancel types. This is one of the main reasons for which I have tried to illustrate each cancel in the catalogue, as that would allow a quick reference basis to exposing fraudulent items and maybe carrying one's own personal expertization.

Where forgeries are known, either from literature or seen personally, an **F** was added at the catalogue number to the user's attention, as seen in **Table 7** (and sometimes comments were also included).

A few examples of forgeries are illustrated in **FIG. 12**:

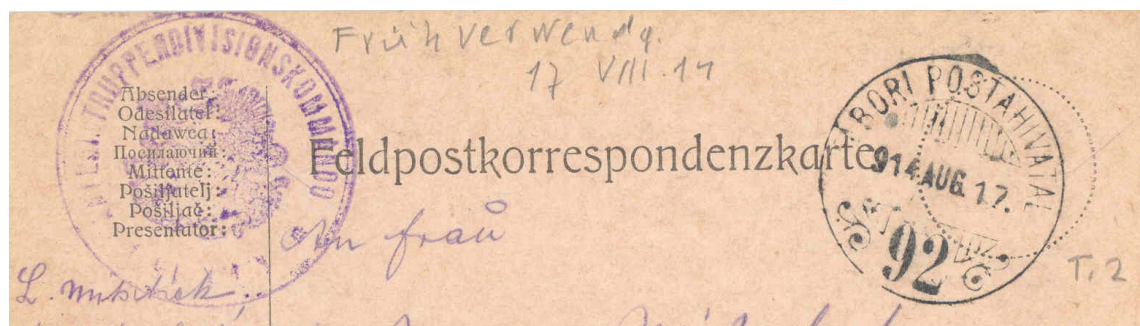
- provisional cancel boxed **IX / 311**, forgery made on a PC probably circulating without a presentation office cancel; forged cancel in rubber compared to an original metallic canceller of the kind;
- **FPO 134**, forgery - non-existent type, manually made in ink, over a weakly imprinted FPO number.
- **FPO 138**, forgery - metallic canceller of a non-existing type (Hungarian text, European date and not Hungarian, month in numerals vs. letters as in a genuine device, lower bar missing above FPO number etc.)
- **FPO 262**, forgery - metallic canceller, fairly close to a genuine cancel, non-existent type (K.u.K. FELDPOSTAMT vs the genuine K.u.K. ETPPENPOSTAMT) used to fraudulently cancel the occupation overprinted stamps for Serbia, targeting the collectors. Noticeable is the lack of symmetry in the numerals of the FPO number, which does not occur with genuine cancels.
- **FPO 533**, forgery - made on a fieldpost card initially cancelled at FPO 3; non-existent type, the numerals 3 in the original cancel present a flat top (with FPO 3, the top is round). The first and the third numerals were added in ink, probably by hand.

• EXPEDITION

Checking the dates on the mail, one may notice that most of the times a postal item comes to cancellation in one or several days after it was written and dated. The cancellation in the same day is by no means a common occurrence although it may be seen. Also, we may notice that sometimes the FPO number given in the sender's address differs from the cancel's number. Finally, rather peculiar are the cases where several FPO cancels appear on mail and none seem to be connected either to the presentation or the addressee offices. Such cases are rare, seen mostly in the first part of the war, maybe these were connected to a swift redeployment of troops (see **FIG. 13**).

An early date, in August 1914 (see **FIG. 14**) or in the first or the last days of a FPO operation time, or in a time when a FPO was in transit, or in a rare location where it was in service for a short time only (indicated by a higher territorial scarcity index) may be the most important element of a fieldpost item. The earliest known date so far is 31-st July 1914, but any date prior to 15 August 1914 should be regarded as very early and 15-31 August, as early. The cancel date deserves being thoroughly checked, as these may offer interesting and maybe valuable items of information.

We may recognize a cancel applied in the early stage of its use by the good imprint it leaves and net, maybe sharp lines, free of wear (see also **FIG. 15**).



• SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Sometimes, one may notice that the cancels with certain counter letters seem to have been used preferentially, for certain specialized services. For instance, many cancels presenting counter letter **a** may be seen on money order clips (see **FIG. 16**). Maybe such a canceller was entrusted to a certain postal clerk who would preferentially carry the said service, or maybe such details were linked to the way a postmaster would have organized his office. The situation is not general.

CATALOGUE VALUATIONS

Compared to other similar catalogues, this book advances netto market prices / quotations, resulted from a survey carried on a long and fairly recent period (2005-2015) and capped at both ends, as lowest and highest prices. Some are totally different from the hierarchy suggested by the previous catalogues because some apparently rare items proved to be more common than suggested by the advanced quotations, in some cases being at the same parity with certain rather cheap lots. Others turned out to be even scarcer, but in general the study begs the conclusion that the more recent works may be regarded as acceptable in terms of general orientation, even though they may prove to be incomplete and uneven or, sometimes, contradicted by what the market has to offer (true, this is itself a criterium hard to quantify, although we speak here about apparently scarce or maybe rare items that actually appear in more copies than some catalogue prices may suggest and, on the other hand, about seemingly common stuff which turns out to be pretty hard to come by). But, in any given circumstances, the numbers over 1000 are truly elusive or maybe rare.

Actually, regardless the scarcity of an item, there is a top price over which a postal item of the kind would not find a buyer. Certainly, the catalogue valuations are average and, as any price, these are ultimately subjective. They try to offer a hierarchy of value as well, according to scarcity and maybe rarity. The minimum value of such a collectible is around 2 - 2.5 USD when the cancel grade is acceptable for a collection, whereas the highest price may step well above 100 USD for scarce or rare items (for instance, FPO 7, 81 or 82 specials, 152, 159 a.s.o.), and above a realistic and unspeculative 1,000 USD in prestigious international auctions for truly rare lots or highly specialised cachets - for instance, certain cachets of the military (not the civilian) courier air line WIEN-KIEV. A scarcer card (see Vols 1-3) does show some effect on the selling price of an item - sometimes more substantially (with lower catalogue price lots) and sometimes less than moderate (with lots displaying scarce cancels/cachets).

Understandably, regarded exclusively as merchandise, a collectible with a fieldpost cancel may represent variable value on different markets, and this is why the valuations are offered in value points, in the same parity as with the first three volumes of the Catalogue, i.e:

1 USD = 4 value points

1 EUR = 5 value points

1 GBP = 6 value points

We should also add that, sometimes, the market price oscillates around 50% to 200% vs. the catalogue value calculated against the above point value, according to variable factors, such as (first and foremost) the quality of the strike, the place where the sale/purchase occurs, the presence of certain topical cachets or some highly interesting unit cachets (for instance, navy, aviation, some trains, epidemic hospitals, TPOs, etc. or significant dates of use, all these effecting into a rise of price above the catalogue value), or the minutiosity of the specific details offered with the postal history accompanying a certain item. Where such details would not be offered by the seller, an item may not reach its market potential. Among all elements, beside the cancel / cachet strike grades, the army unit and the territorial elements are the most significant.

Where offering a catalogue valuation is not realistic (mostly due to the scarcity of such material in the market), an estimation of rarity is expressed - **R**, **RR**, or **RRR**, and in case of certain items that are practically absent from the market and an estimation is not possible, the collector's price (**CP**) is indicated. Some very rare and highly specialised items, like the cancellers that were not activated and which were only applied in very restrictive amounts on uncirculated cards, as specimens, fall into this group. These may be regarded as items maybe sooner fit for a postal museum, but then again, such items may add a lot of prestige to any collection, despite lacking the spectacularity that a postal circulation may bring along.

• ABBREVIATIONS:

Tabel / Table 8

AL	ALBANIA	DAL	DALMAȚIA DALMATIA	KA	CARINTHIA CARINTHIA	SL	SLOVENIA
AU	AUSTRIA	EPA	Etappenpostamt	KU	Küstenland Litoral / Littoral	SY	SIRMIA SYRMIA
BA	BANAT	FPA	Feldpostamt	MA	MACEDONIA	TRA	TRANSILVANIA TRANSYLVANIA
BES	BASARABIA BESSARABIA	FPO	Fieldpost office	MO	MUNTENEGRU MONTENEGRO	UKR	UCRAINA UKRAINE
BO	BOSNIA	FR	FRANȚA FRANCE	OPM	Oficiu poștal militar	WFF	Frontul de vest, Franța Western front, France
BOH	BOEMIA BOHEMIA	GA	GALIȚIA GALICIA	OTT	IMPERIUL OTOMAN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE	WFB	Frontul de vest, Belgia Western front, Belgium
BUK	BUCOVINA BUKOWINA	HU	UNGARIA HUNGARY	PO	POLONIA POLAND	WFG	Frontul de vest, Germania Western front, Germany
BUL	BULGARIA	IS	ISTRIA	ROM	REGATUL ROMÂNIEI ROMANIAN KINGDOM	WO	VOLÂNIA WOLHYNIA
CR	CROAȚIA CROATIA	IT	ITALIA ITALY	SE	SERBIA		

CATALOG

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