

FOREIGN POST OFFICES in THESSALONIKI :

BRIEF HISTORY and PHILATELIC RARITIES

by George Thomareis

Austrian post office

The Austrian consular office in Thessaloniki, which had been operating since the end of the 18th century, evolved, in the 1830s, to a regular post office, much better organized than before. From 1833, it was using the first ever postmark used on letters in Thessaloniki, the linear SALONICH.

The Austrian p.o. of Thessaloniki (as well as the French one) will have a continuous presence until the end of 1914, when the new Greek administration forbade the continuation of the operation of the foreign post offices in the city.

The Austrian p.o. originally used the Double Headed Eagle issued stamps, the coat of arms of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Lombardo-Venetian currency (Soldi), while from the end of the 1860's the Francis Joseph stamp issues. The Lombardo-Venetian stamps were used also by the Austrian Lloyd Agency.

The only known letter posted from Thessaloniki, franked with 10 Soldi Coat of Arms stamps perf.14



*Thessaloniki 1864 (Nov. 10): Entire folded letter posted via Vienna (Nov.30) to Udine (ar.Dec.2).
Prepaid postal rate 40 Soldi Coat of Arms: strip of 3 + 1
Postal rate: 40 Soldi: 20 Levant rate + 15 to Wien + 5 Local Vienna to Udine service*

The oldest known letter with a post office postmark posted from Thessaloniki

50%



Thessaloniki, Nov. 6 1833, to Vienna.

The letter traveled by land, via Serbia and was disinfected in Semlin (19 Nov 1833).

Arrival Wien 27 November.

Postal Rate: 2 Pia (=8 Kr), manuscript on reverse, paid by the sender,

11 Kr charged in Austria.

Austrian Lloyd agency

Austrian Lloyd shipping founded in 1835 in Trieste. It signed the first contract to transport mail to all the ports called in by its ships in 1837. Soon established postal agencies at every Mediterranean port, mainly where there were no official Austrian post offices. The company was careful not to compete the official Austrian post offices. Austrian Lloyd played an important role in the operation of the Austrian postal services in the Levant.

The Austrian Lloyd agency in Thessaloniki was not very active, probably due to the presence of the official Austrian p.o. that was very well organized and very efficient.

The only known, till now, double weight letter of the (probably inactive) Austrian Lloyd agency of Thessaloniki, Franked by 1864 Coat of Arms issue in Soldi, perf. 10.5



*Thessaloniki 1865 (Jun. 19): Entire folded letter to Constantinople (arr. Jun.26).
Prepaid postal rate: 15 + 5 Soldi DHE perf.10.5*

***Postal rate:** 20 Soldi double weight letter rate for between the Ottoman ports: after the unification of the 1866 Levant rates, only 10 Soldi should have been paid to Lloyd.*

The Greek p.o. in Ottoman Thessaloniki

December 1835: Greek p.o. was founded in Thessaloniki.

Correspondence was transported from Thessaloniki to Greece (and vice versa), twice a month, by horse riders, via Fourka Derven or Taratsa – near Lamia, where the Greek borders were. Until 1845 this mail service was very important for the Greek Postal Service, because the Greek mail to Europe was handed over to the Austrian p.o. of Thessaloniki, in order to be forwarded via Semlin to Europe. After 1845 the Greek mail was transported by ship to Thessaloniki and elsewhere. All letters postmarked exclusively by the Greek postmarks “ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ (ΤΟΥΡΚΙΑ)” and “ΕΛΛΑΣ ΔΙΑ ΛΑΜΙΑΣ”.

The Greek p.o. used the Large Hermes Heads issue stamps. The operation of the Greek p.o. was affected from the Greek–Ottoman relations e.g. the period of 1866–1869, the Ottoman administration forbade the operation of the Greek p.o. due to the Greek support to the Cretan revolt.

Letter franked LHH of the 1st Athens Provisional issue



Thessaloniki 1862 (Aug.30): Entire folded letter to Athens via Piraeus (ar.Sept.10)

Prepaid postal rate 2x20 Lepta + 2x5 Lepta LHH Athens 1st Provisional issue.

Postal rate: 50 Lepta single rate to abroad.

POSTAL FRAUD

The only known to me cover from Thessaloniki using Revenue stamps to cheat the Post

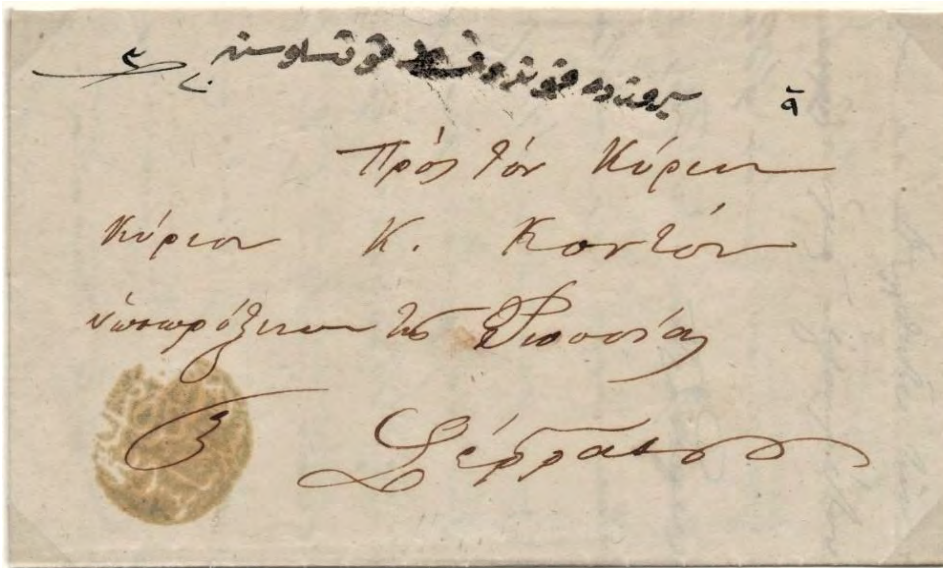


Thessaloniki 1925 (Mar. 26): Cover posted to Kazaklar (Tyrnavos, Thessaly), franked with 110 L. Revenue stamps of the Greek Administration period. The postman realized the fraud (or, perhaps, the mistake) and charged the envelope with a postage due of 2.00 Dr payable by the recipient.

The Ottoman p.o.

At the early period of the Ottoman post (1840–1860), the mail was forwarded by Tatar horsemen. The first Ottoman postmarks were in negative arabic script form and are saved mainly on postal receipt or delivery documents. The Ottoman p.o. was the last one, out of the four major post offices of Thessaloniki, to circulate stamps. The Duloz stamps were issued in the late 1860's. For unknown reasons, the first Ottoman issue of Tughra stamps was never used in Thessaloniki.

One of the 2 known letters bearing the negative AN CANIBI POSTAHANESI SELANIK



*Thessaloniki 1860
(Jan. 11): Entire folded
letter to the vice-consul of
Russia at Serres (ar. Jan. 13)
Athens via Piraeus
(ar. Sept. 10)*

Postal rate: 20 Para for 3
Dirhems (9.92 g.) &
distance to 16 hours long.

The French p.o.

From the middle of 1830's, the French Administration of the Postes organized the Naval Postal Service of the Levant, connecting Marseille to all major ports of the Eastern Mediterranean sea.

The French p.o. of Thessaloniki, opened for business officially in June 1856. The postal service was assigned to "Messageries Imperiales" and was successful. The French p.o. will be an important and continuously postal service for the city till 1914.

The first p.o. that used stamps was the French one, from 1857. The first stamps circulated were the Napoleon Empereur issue imperforated – french issues of the 2nd period of the French Empire under Napoleon III. The postal code of the French p.o. of Thessaloniki was dotted 4012 for the 1857 to 1862 period, but from 1863 replaced by the dotted 5095.

A tête-bêche pair of 20c. in vertical strip of 4,
of the 1862-71 Napoleon Emp. issue perf. on letter of 1865



Thessaloniki 1865 (Sept.25): Entire folded letter to Milano (ar.Oct.16) via Dardanelles (tr.Sept.29) & Naples (tr.Oct.12).

Postal rate: 80 cents. From 1861 to 1865 the postal rate from the Levant to Italy was 80c. for 7 ½ g. Tête-bêche pair; Pair of stamps, one of which is inverted at 180 degrees, due to failed placement of the clichés. The tête-bêche pairs of the first French issues are considered as great philatelic rarities.

The Egyptian p.o.

The Egyptian p.o. of Thessaloniki operated for a short period, from Jul.1870 to Feb.1872. It used the 1st & the 2nd issue of the Egyptian stamps. The circular postmark read in Italian the name of Thessaloniki, erroneously as SALONICCHI. Due to the intense competition of the Ottoman, Austrian, French & Greek post offices that operated in Thessaloniki, the Egyptian p.o. did not get enough mail volume and closed down after only 1 ½ years of operation. Only two covers and a few stamps tied by SALONICCHI have survived today.

The stamp of 5 Pia is the only known tied by the Egyptian p.o. of Thessaloniki



The Russian p.o.

In 1858, after the Crimean war, the Russian Steamer & Commerce Co. (ROPHT) signed a contract to the Russian government to provide postal services to the Black sea ports, to Aegean ports and to the Eastern Mediterranean ports. Up to 1863, ROPHT post offices were operational at 11 ports including the Thessaloniki port. But for a large period of 30+ years (1858–1892), there are no postal items, besides 3 or 4 stamps, originating from the Russian p.o. of Thessaloniki. In my opinion, this is an indication that until 1892 the postal services of the Russian p.o. were very limited (if existed at all). After 1872, the Russian p.o. operated normally, but never became competitive to the other post offices. \it used stamps issued by ROPHT, stamps of the Russian Levant (dominated in Paras & Piastres) and a special issue for Thessaloniki of Russian stamps overprinted Salonique.

Parcel post form of the Russian p.o. franked 22 Piastres

15 Dec 1910

Приложение къ циркуляру отъ 12-20

COUPON — КУПОНЪ
Peut être détaché par
Можетъ быть отрезанъ
la destination
адресатомъ

Тимбре ду bureau d'origine:
Штемпель почтового
учреждения подачи:

RUSSIE.
РОССІЯ.

Bulletin d'expédition
Сопроводительный адресъ.

Сі-joinт
При семъ.
Valeur assurée

Nombre de déclarations en douane
(число) таможенныхъ деклараций

Объявленная цѣнность:
Montant du

Сумма таможеннаго
remboursement
платежа:

А.
(Наименованіе получателя).

Тимбре ду bureau d'origine:
Штемпель почтового
учреждения подачи:

Nom et domicile de
Панменованіе и мѣсто
Гэкспедітеур:
жительства отправителя

(Lieu de destination):
(Мѣсто назначенія):
(rue et n°)
(улица или №)

Poids:
Вѣсъ:

Acheminement:
Путь:

Ф.р. В. К.

Тип. Акц. Ю.-Р. О-ва Поч. Дѣла, въ Одессѣ.

*Thessaloniki 1910
(Dec.5): Parcel Post
form for a parcel
posted to Jaffa
(arr.Dec.15)*

*Postal rate: 22 Piastres
for parcel of 31,2 Kg.*

The Italian p.o.

The Italian government for years pressed the Ottoman government to accept the reoperation of the Italian post offices in Constantinople and in Smyrna (closed down in 1883 due to increased tensions in the Italo–Ottoman relations), and the establishment of 3 new Italian post offices into the Ottoman Empire: in Thessaloniki, Avlona and in Jerusalem. The High Gate was denied and only after the display of Naval power in 1907, (by three squadrons of the Italian fleet), was finally granted the permission. The Italian p.o. inaugurated on May.26,1908 and it was the last p.o. of the great western powers that operated in Thessaloniki the all 19th ce. until 1914.

The only known until today usage of the extremely rare
double cds with bridge, on registered cover.



Thessaloniki 1913 (Jan.16):
Registered cover to Milano
(arr. Jan.21)

Postal rate: 40 Paras single rate to
Italy + 1 Piastre registration fee

The British p.o.

The British Chamber of Commerce in Constantinople and local powerful financial groups, including the banker Allatini, convinced the Ottoman government to permit another British p.o. in the Ottoman empire.

The British p.o. of Thessaloniki, inaugurated in May.1900 and it was the last British p.o. to operate in the Ottoman Empire. It used stamps of 3 Kings: Victoria, Edward, George V, and three type of postmarks BRITISH POST OFFICE A, B, C. (not ascertained if they different counters or annexes.)

The only known acknowledge of delivery of a registered letter of the British p.o.

Postmasters—No. 68.
Administration des Postes de la Grande Bretagne.
Post Office of the United Kingdom.

AVIS DE RÉCEPTION
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DELIVERY

Enregistré en valeur déclarée au bureau
registered or insured at the Office

d'un objet recommandé } *lettre* } (1)
of a Registered Article }
d'une lettre avec valeur déclarée de }
of a letter insured for } Numéro ()
d'un colis postal avec valeur déclarée de }
of a parcel insured for } No.

de } *la Poste Anglaise-Salonique* } (on the) *28. Novembre 1903* } (2)
of }
et adressé à } *M^r Luciani Agostino* } (at) *Verona (Italie)*
and addressed to }

Le soussigné (qu'un objet recommandé
déclare } qu'un lettre avec valeur déclarée } à l'adresse susmentionnée
The undersigned acknowledges that } (a registered article) } addressed as above
et provenant de } *M^r D. Kondoropoulos* } (a) (was duly
and sent by (S)) } *de Salonique (Turquie)* }

livré le } _____ } 190 .
delivered on the }
du destinataire : } Signature (S) }
of the addressee: } *[Signature]* }
du Chef de bureau distributeur : }
of the Postmaster of the Delivering Office: }

1. Nature de l'objet (lettre, échantillon, imprimé, colis postal, etc.)
2. Nature de l'article (lettre, échantillon, imprimé, papier, parol, etc.)
3. Bureau d'origine, numéro : date de dépôt à ce bureau.
4. L'office et adresse, numéro : date de dépôt à cet office.
5. Nom et adresse du Destinataire.
6. Nom et adresse de l'expéditeur.
7. Nom et adresse de l'expéditeur.
8. Nom et adresse de l'expéditeur.
9. Nom et adresse de l'expéditeur.
10. Nom et adresse de l'expéditeur.

Nota.—Ce avis doit être signé par le destinataire ou, si les règlements du pays de destination le nécessitent, par le chef du bureau distributeur, et lorsque l'avis est donné par le bureau distributeur le destinataire doit désigner le nom et l'adresse de l'expéditeur. When this form is filled out by the office of origin, the sender must designate the name and address of the addressee, and when it is made out by the delivering office the addressee must designate the name and address of the sender. It must then be put in an envelope and sent, as registered, by the first mail, to the Office at which the article referred to was posted.

Remarque.—Cette formule s'emploie pour l'objet recommandé ou avec valeur déclarée dont il s'agit on doit

Posted from Thessaloniki to Verona (dep.Nov.28,1903)

The Bulgarian and the Serbian post offices

With the outbreak of the 1st Balkan war, the Greek and the Bulgarian armies began a road race aimed at capturing Thessaloniki. The Greek army entered Thessaloniki on Oct.26,1912, while the Bulgarian army under General Todoroff reached the hills of Panorama village on Oct.27,1912. Bulgarians demanded from the Greek administration, at first that some of their units to enter and camp inside the city and secondly the permission to operate a Bulgarian p.o. Since the Balkan Alliance was maintained and no border arrangements had been made, permission granted to Bulgarians as also to the Serbs.

Bulgarians operated a regular civilian p.o. in Thessaloniki from November of 1912. The Bulgarian p.o., in contrast to the very careful behavior of the administration of the Greek p.o., used Bulgarian metropolitan stamps and postal stationery, as opposed to the international practice and legislation. Bulgarian p.o. closed down on Jul.17,1913 on the beginning of the 2nd Balkan war.

The Serbian p.o. operated in Thessaloniki from the spring to the summer of 1913, when 2nd Balkan War started. Since Serbs had no interest in the city, the Serbian p.o. hardly operated at all. Three or four posted items saved today just to certify its operation.

An historical cover: A unique combination of post offices and dates and the only known usage of the Bulgarian p.o. of Thessaloniki with stamps affixed and cancelled on arrival.

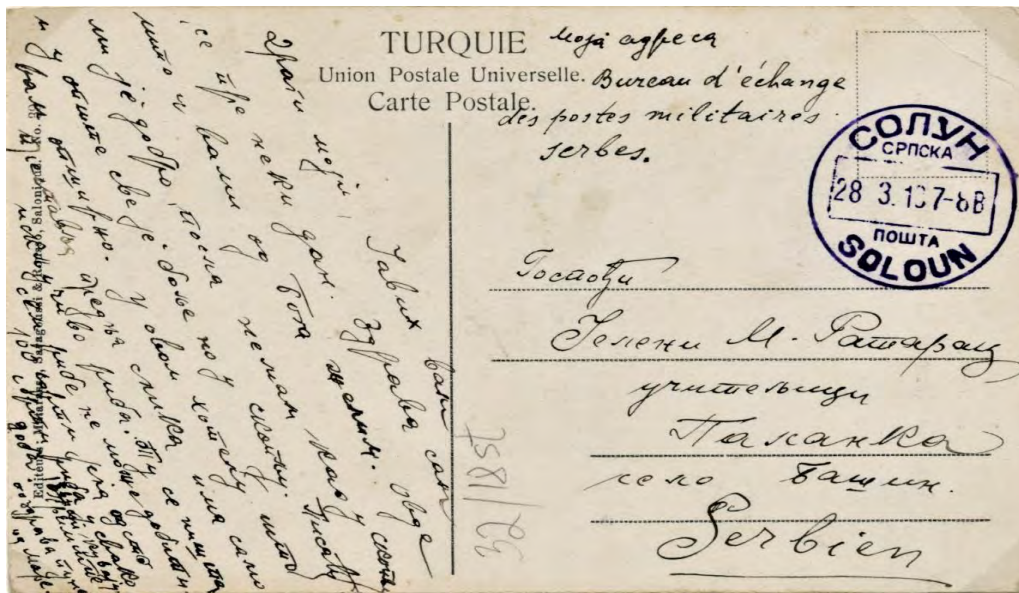


Cover deposited on Nov.22,1912 and posted on Nov.23, from the newly occupied by Bulgarians, Ottoman p.o. of Xanthi.

Canceled by the Ottoman postmark XANTHI, without bulgarian stamps (or the stamps affixed but not canceled). Bulgarians had just occupied the city of Xanthi.

Cover forwarded to Thessaloniki to the operational Bulgarian p.o. where stamps for 25 Ct. were affixed? and canceled SOLOUN (ar.Nov.27,1912). (Domestic postal rate + Registered fee)

and a Picture Postcard posted from the Serbian p.o. – Extremely scarce.



Thessaloniki 1913 (Mar.28): Postcard posted to Serbia.