

OTTOMAN FORERUNNER POSTMARKS OF THE 20th CENTURY

This exhibit illustrates through contemporary postal material the decline and eventual collapse of the once-great Ottoman Empire in the first two decades of the 20th Century. It does this by showing a collection of postmarks used in former Ottoman territories that became independent or were annexed by other countries as a result of Turkey being on the losing side in three consecutive conflicts that occurred between 1911 and 1918. It should be viewed as a survey of examples of markings from as many different locations as feasible rather than trying to show all of the different types of markings from a limited number of places. It is organized both chronologically and geographically, as shown in the Plan of Exhibit on the next page.

The Ottoman Empire was founded in Anatolia in the late 13th Century and took control of most of the Middle East, North Africa and Southeastern Europe before reaching its high water mark in defeat at the gates of Vienna in 1683. As other nations advanced, the Ottomans remained in a medieval state, falling behind politically, culturally and industrially. Consequently, their power gradually receded over the next two centuries to the point where, by the end of World War I, there was no empire left but only Turkey proper and, even there, the dynasty was easily overthrown in the Kemal Ataturk revolt.



There was a Turkish military post on Bubiyan Island in northeastern Kuwait until at least 1904. The post office there used a marking worded "el-Kuveyt." Although it is unlisted in the literature, Pulhan certificate states "this is the only recorded cancellation of Kuwait during the Ottoman Empire."

In all, there were nearly 500 post offices in the Ottoman Empire which could theoretically provide forerunner postmarks in the 20th Century. The availability of potentially collectable cancellations varies widely, reflecting the size and literacy of the local population, state of economic development and amount of tourism, not to mention the diligence of the postal clerks. Thus, forerunners from Palestine fill two frames while those from Montenegro only two pages. Another factor is the length of time that the Ottomans were in control. Relatively developed areas such as Syria and Lebanon, which were administered by Turkey throughout the period, provided many more examples than areas in Transcaucasia occupied briefly toward the end of World War I, for which it is difficult to show more than a single page each.

While not all cancels listed in the literature are shown, there are several dozen pieces included which are newer discoveries. Moreover, approximately a hundred examples in the exhibit can be considered as extremely scarce, being ranked in the two highest rarity categories in the specialty handbooks of Coles & Walker.

20th CENTURY OTTOMAN EMPIRE POSTMARKS OF THE LOST TERRITORIES

Plan of Exhibit

This exhibit is divided into four chronological sub-sections, reflecting the various conflicts resulting in the loss of formerly Turkish territory during the period from 1911 through 1918. Within these "chapters" the 21 different areas being studied are shown, with representative postmarks of the individual towns being grouped in the order of their importance and/or geographically:

Territories Lost in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912:

Libya

Aegean Islands

Territories Lost in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913:

Albania

Serbia

Bulgaria

Montenegro

Greece

Territories Lost in World War I of 1914-1918:

Hedjaz

Syria

Transjordan

Iraq

Lebanon

Yemen

Palestine

Territories Temporarily Occupied During World War I:

Aden

Persia

Armenia

Egypt

Georgia

Azerbaijan

Romania



The only stamps issued specifically for what became the lost territories commemorated the 1911 visit of Sultan Mohammed V to Kosovo and Macedonia. For this event, 5,000 sets were overprinted with the names of the cities -- Monastir, Pristina, Salonica and Uskub. This issue was extremely unpopular with the (heavily Christian) inhabitants of these areas, who were strongly opposed to Ottoman rule, so sales were poor. As a result, Passer's handbook states that "used on genuine letters, these stamps are very rare."

TERRITORIES LOST IN THE ITALO-TURKISH WAR 1911-1912

LIBYA
Turkish Administration

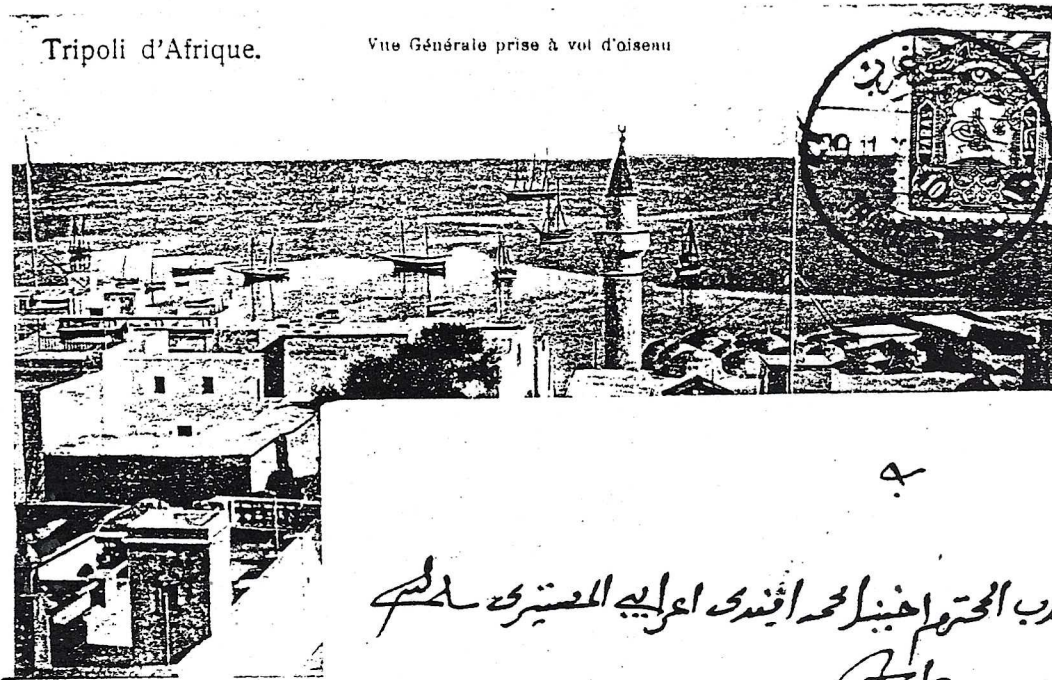
1900-1911

From around 1550, the Ottomans controlled the south coast of the Mediterranean, at least nominally. However, their sovereignty was eroded by the British and French to the point where only Libya remained in Turkish hands at the beginning of the 20th Century. Although Italy came late to the rush for colonies, it sensed that the Turkish possessions were ripe for the picking and invaded Libya on 29 September 1911, quickly capturing the major towns. The Turks accepted Italian rule in Libya by the Treaty of Ouchy signed on 15 August 1912.

Tripoli d'Afrique.

Vue Générale prise à vol d'oiseau

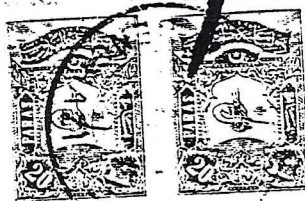
Tripoli d'Afrique
Benghazi



الى اسكندرية
ويعلم اليه حضرتك الجناب المحترم اخينا محمد ابي عبد الله المصيري سلمه
الله

Mons:

Moh: Orabi Elmestari



Alexandrie
d'Egypte

Tripoli d'Afrique was the major commercial center of Tripolitania Province during Ottoman times. (Using "of Africa" as a part of the name was to prevent confusion with another Tripoli, which was a port in Lebanon.) It was captured by the Italians on 5 October 1911. Benghazi was the capital of Cyrenaica Province, where the Italians deployed a landing force from their warships and took over the town on 4 October 1911.

Recommandé

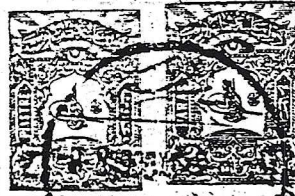
Herm

62

Rich. Konye



Canea

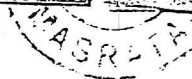
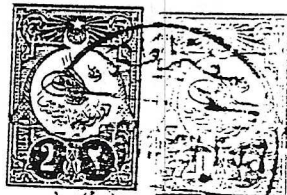


Derna

Registered letter to Crete mailed on 8 August 1906. Note special 20 para port-to-port littoral rate plus 1 piaster for registration.

Masrata (Misurata)

Registered letter mailed on 8 June 1911 to Lebanon. Handwritten notation of registration and advice of receipt. (Only 2 examples of A.R. mail are recorded from Masrata.)



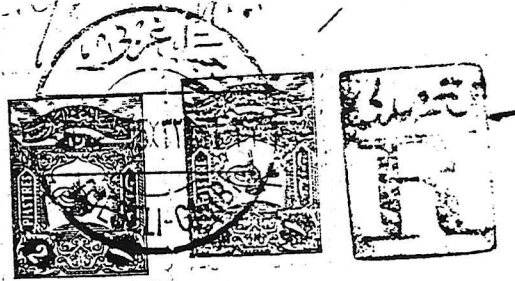
بروت
انبار جوي زبدية صاحب امتياز
موسسة السيد بابا لوانس
افند تقديري

Covers from Turkish Libya are among the most difficult of all of the forerunner areas. Registered covers are even more elusive, especially from the smaller towns. Derna, with Bengazi, were the only two locations in Cyrenaica with post offices during the Ottoman period, as most of the commerce took place in Tripolitania Province.

Azizie



Djebeli-Garbi



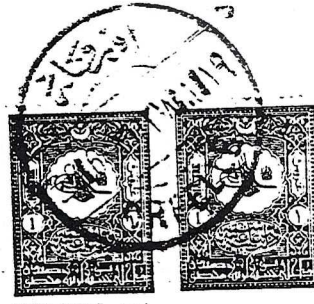
Fessato



Grian



Orfelle



Sert



Terhone



Zanzour

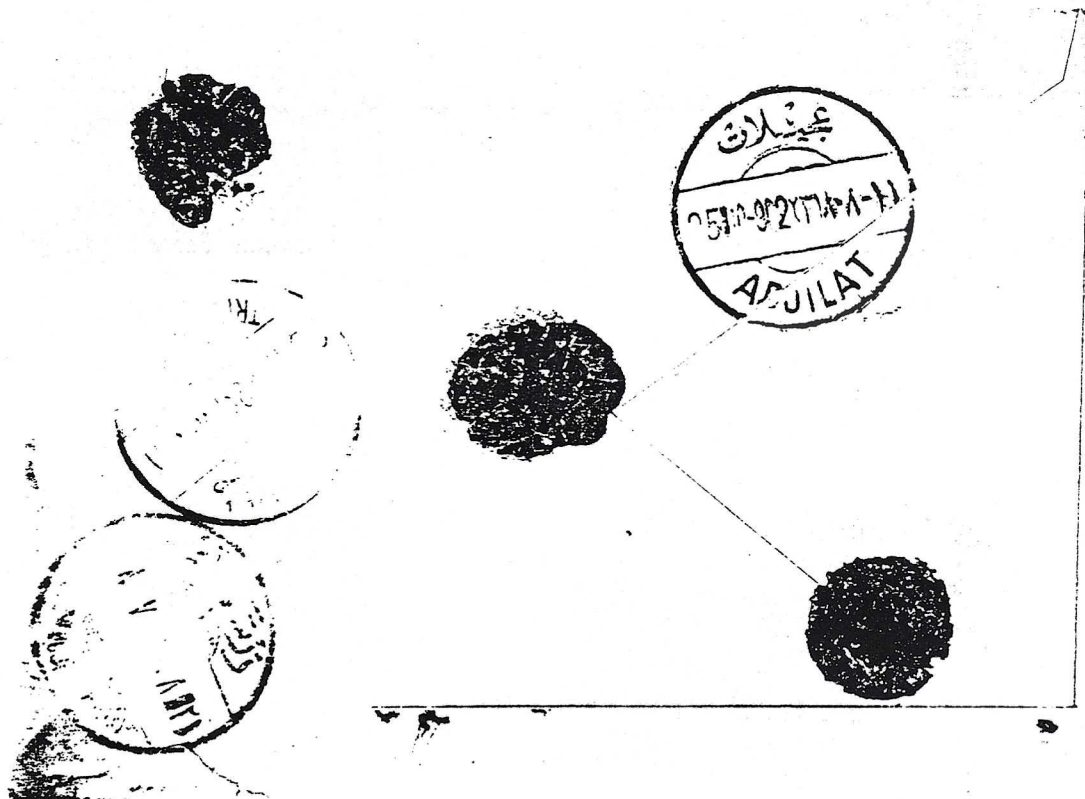


Zilletin



Altogether, postmarks from 1900 to 1912 have been reported from 21 different towns in Libya. Coles & Walker state that, with the exception of Tripoli and Benghazi, most of the known cancellations from Turkish Libya should be considered as very rare.

Adjilat

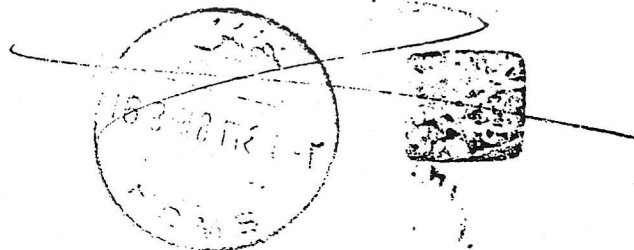


Inbound cover via Tripoli to Adjilat, backstamped on 25 October 1902. The postmark of this small oasis located about 50 miles west of Tripoli has not been recorded previously.

Homs

طرابلس
دولت راز بنیه سولطان
مصر
حلب

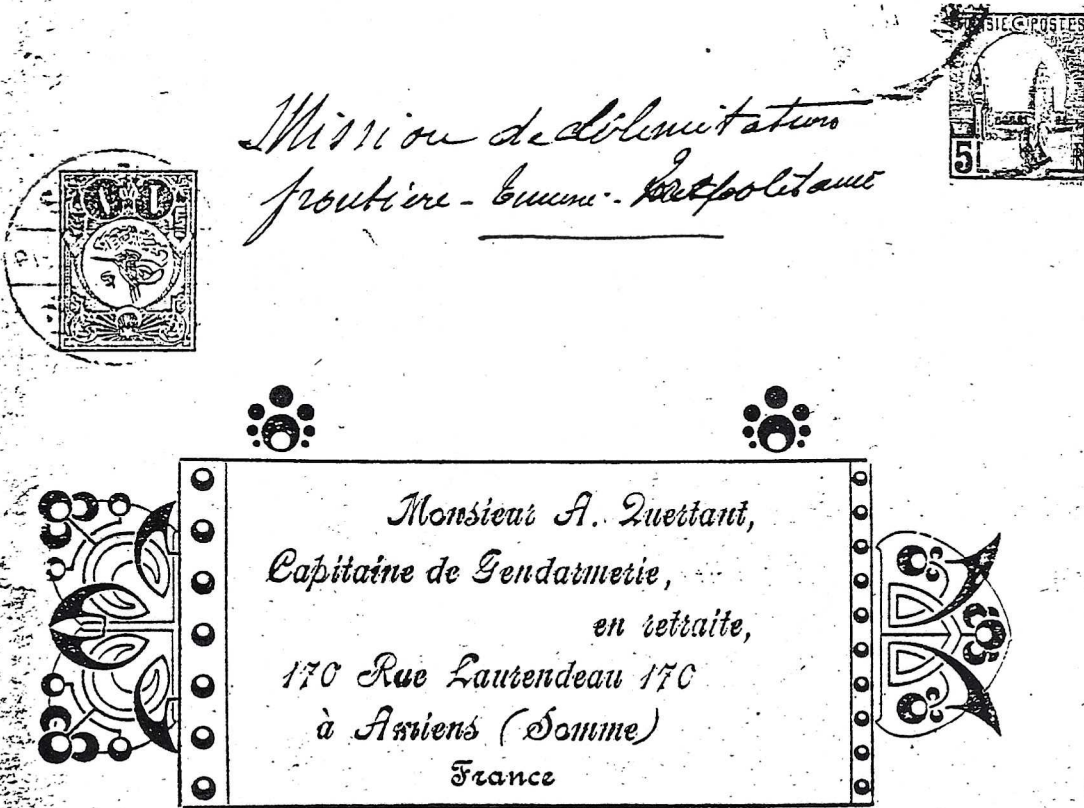
Official letter sent on
16 August 1908 from
Homs to Tripoli.



Official mail from the Ottoman period in Libya is seldom seen, especially that related to the smaller settlements.

Ghadamis

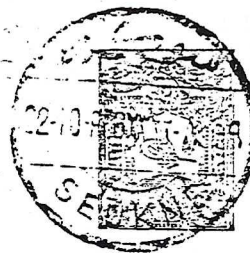
Cover sent to France on 15 March 1911 by a member of the delimitation mission sent to establish the official boundary between Tunisia and Tripolitania. A most interesting usage.



Fezzan



Seukne

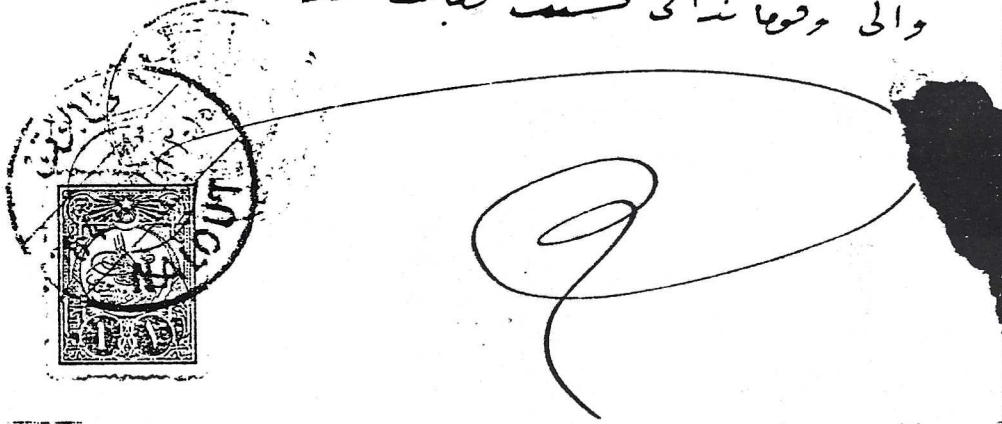


Only three Ottoman post offices were located in the interior of Libya: Fezzan, Ghadamis and Seukne. Examples of their postmarks are exceedingly elusive.

Nalout

دیس عادت
اسکندریہ سماہ انجا محکمہ من محکمہ سوختہ طرابلس
والی رفوعا ندانی نسبت رفیک مخدومی و حسن قند

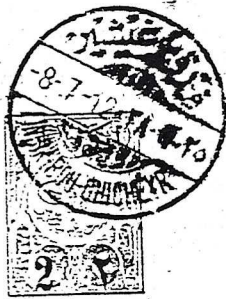
Cover from Tripolitania to Scutari on 28 April 1912 with this very elusive marking.



Findik Bou Chicheyr

Military Postal Stations
Findik Bou Ghomdje

Santiet Bin Adem



The literature lists postmarks for the above three military postal stations during the war with Italy. Recorded examples have the same date, suggesting that they were applied by favor.

AEGEAN ISLANDS

Turkish Administration

1900-1912

Due to their close proximity to the mainland of Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands had long been in Turkish hands although they had a substantial Greek ethnic population. In the spring of 1912, the Italians decided to open a second front against the Turks, landing a substantial force at Rhodes on 5 May and eventually seizing all of the islands in the group.



Rhodes
Rhodes (Echelle)

A. S. Belmont 69

c/o J. Williams 69

Elon College

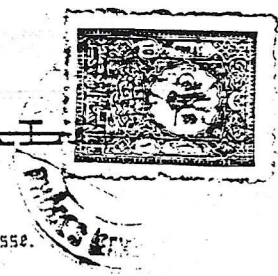
England

لورد
فادو بريستال

CARTE POSTALE

TURQUIE

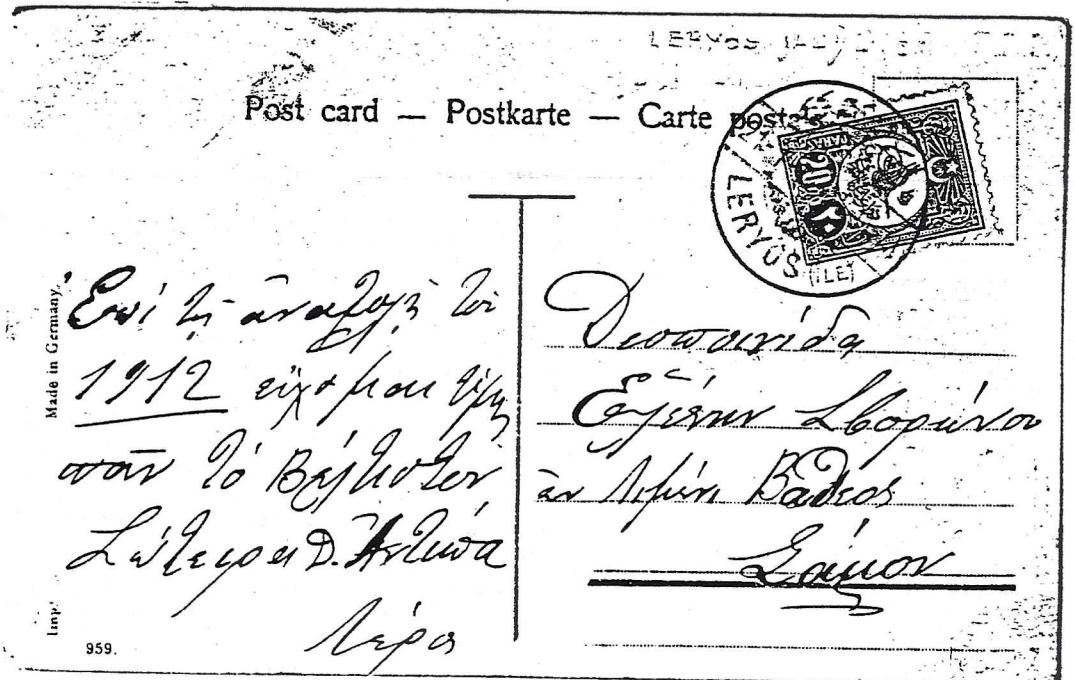
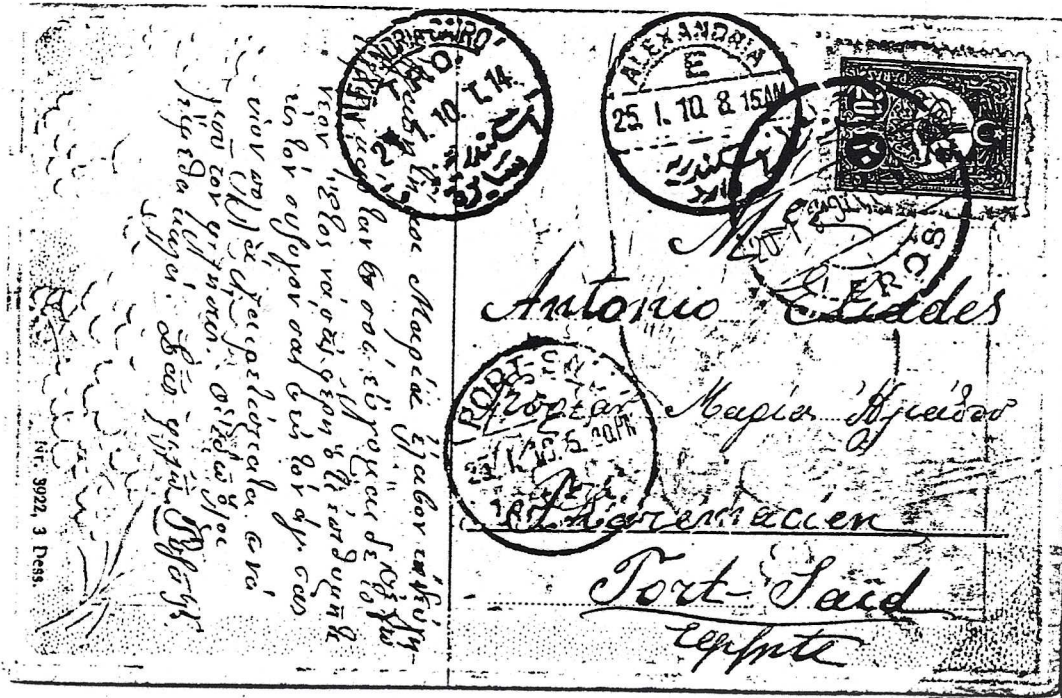
ce côté est exclusivement réservé à l'adresse.



اندر پست و ديور عمريه نظام نزنه سا بورد بورد عمريه ناظري م
سار سركه اردو رتقو رار عالبند سم اهنه
زنه مهنه نزنه .
#

Rhodes was the most important of the Dodecanese Islands, which lie in the southern portion of the Aegean Sea adjacent to the Turkish coast. It was an important commercial center, generating substantial postal activity. There was also considerable tourist traffic, which led to a branch office being opened at the port (Echelle).

Leros



Leros was the second most important of the islands, and its excellent harbor became the site for an Italian naval base in the Aegean colony. Versions of its postmark differ in size and spelling.

Kalymnos (Calimno)

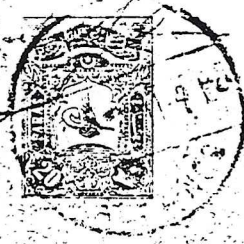
*Banque Impériale
ottomane*

Απόστολος Ρίζος

Αρ. Νέων Π. Γραμμάτων

~~*Απόστολος Ρίζος, Crédit Lyonnais*~~

B. J. O. & Παναγιώτης



Cover sent
February 1906
Kalymnos to
Constantinople.



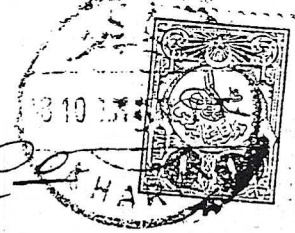
J. PIPINOS & FILS - HALKI
(ARCHIPEL - TURQUIE)

Kharki (Calchi)

Cover sent in October
1911 from Kharki to
Michigan.

The Wilpen Co.

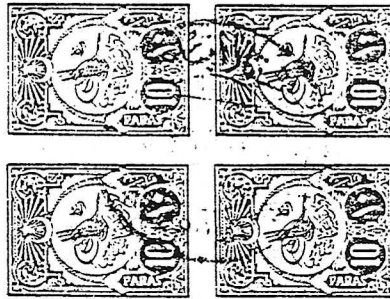
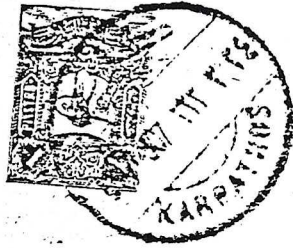
100-110 Bates St.



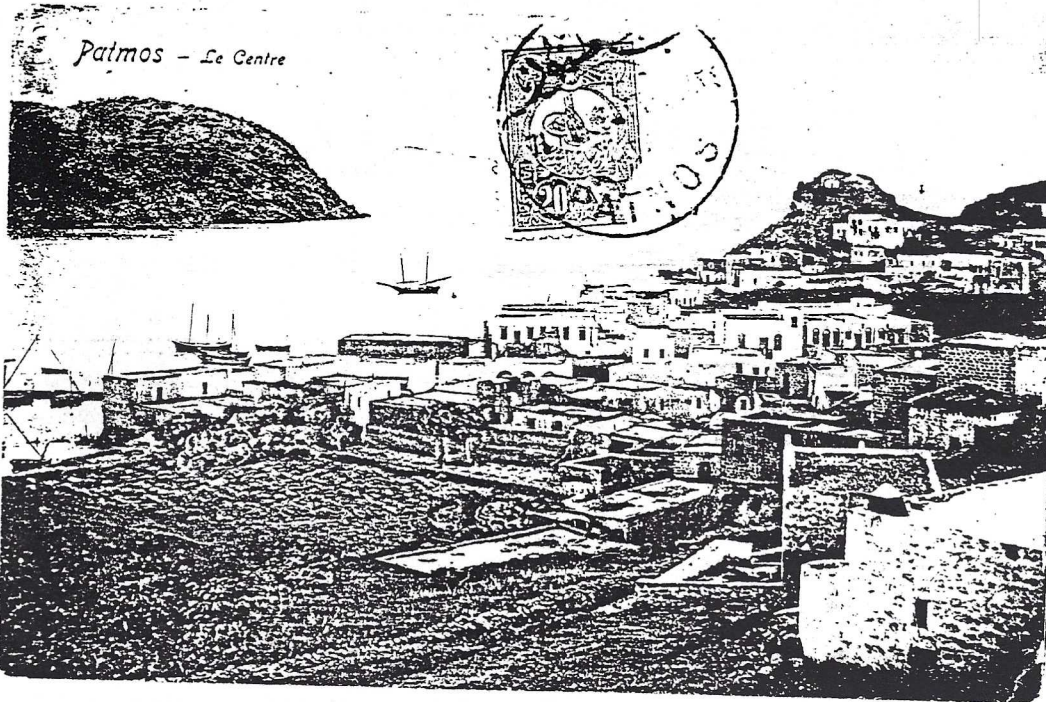
Detroit, Mich

U. S. of America

Karpathos (Scarpanto)



Kassos



Patmos - Le Centre

Patnos (Patmo)

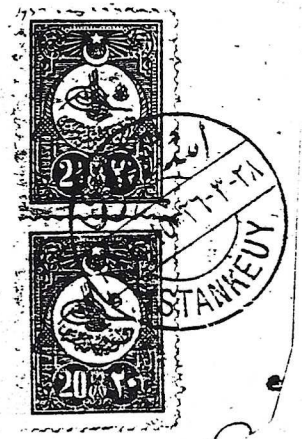
Picture postcard
sent on 7 October
1910 from Patnos
to Marseille.

Many of the islands had multiple names, reflecting their mixed Turkish and Greek heritage as well as attempts to provide a Westernized version - initially French and, after 1912, Italian. For example, postmarks reading Karpathos and Scarpanto refer to the same island, the second southernmost in the Dodecanese chain.



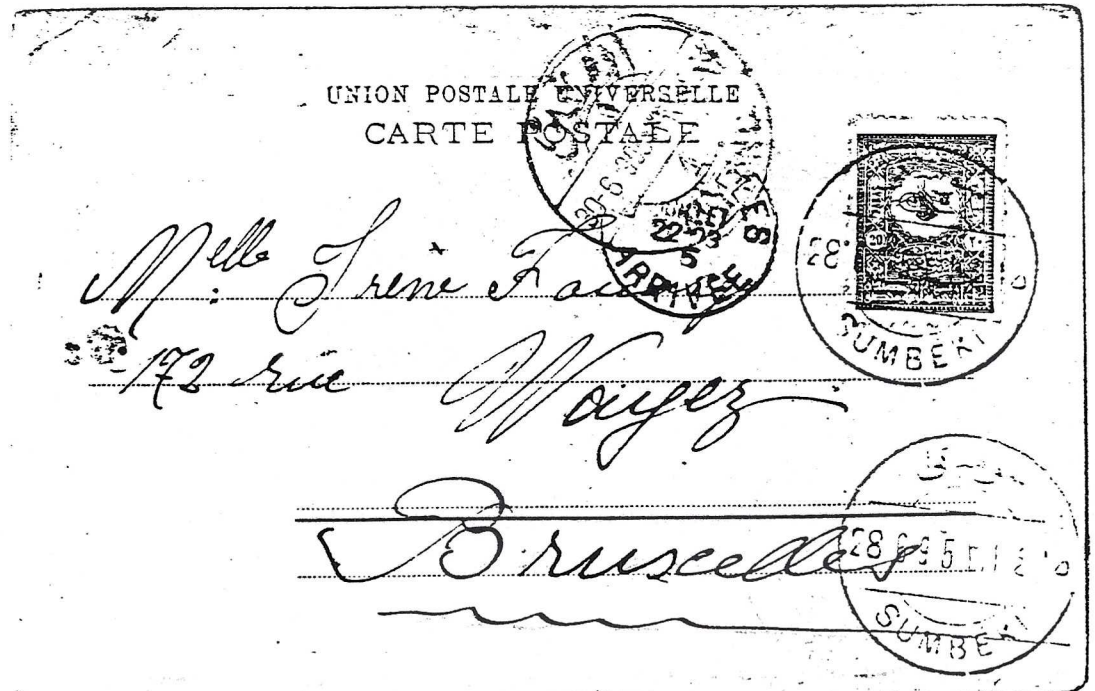
Stankeui (Cos)

Postcard sent 12
January 1906 from
Stankeui to Smyrna.



Sumbeki (Symi)

Postcard sent on 28
June 1905 from
Sumbeki to Belgium.



ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΔΕΛΤΑΡΙΟΝ
Post card-Carte Postale-Postkarte
Union postale universelle

Nissyros (Nisiros)

Picture postcard
sent on 2 January
1906.

Imp. Pallis & Cozias. Athènes



Κύριε
Γ. Μουζαΐδη
Συναδινί
Καρχόβας
Η Πόρτα των Αρμενίων

Castellorizo



The postmark of Castellorizo (Castelrosso) is included here although it is not in the Aegean but, instead is located south of Asia Minor. However, for administrative purposes, it was treated as a part of the Aegean Islands colony during the period of Italian rule.

TERRITORIES LOST IN THE BALKAN WAR 1912-1913

ALBANIA
Turkish Administration

1900-1912

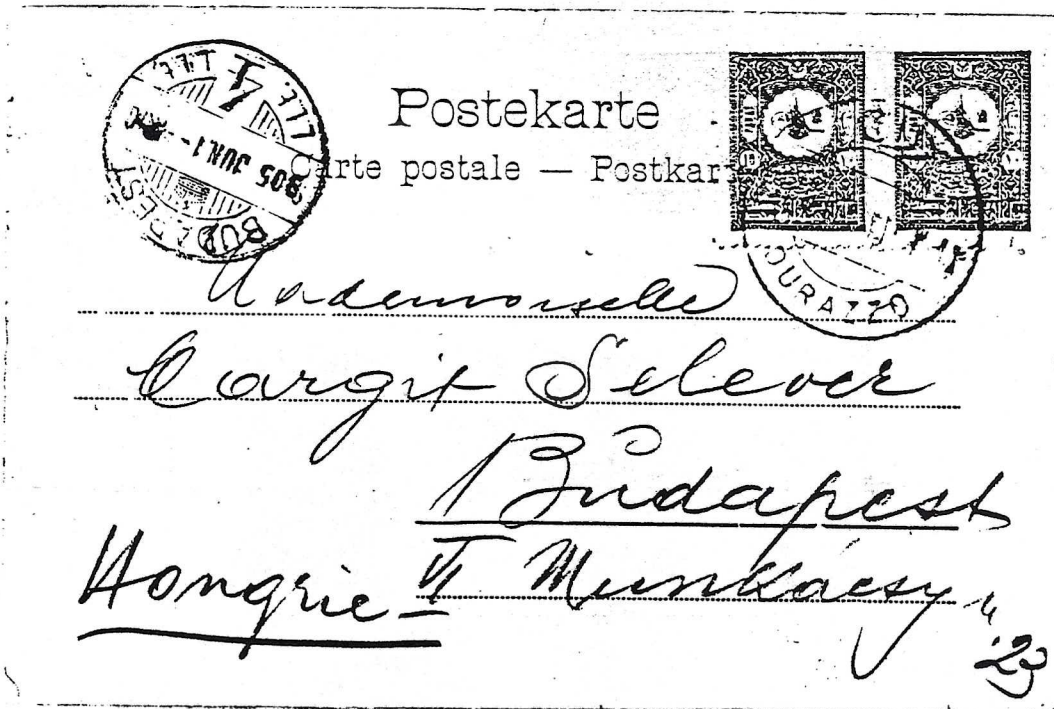
The Albanian national hero, Skanderbeg, successfully defended the country from the Turks until his death in 1468. Subsequently, Turkey took control of the entire country, which it held for over four centuries. However, once the allies inflicted major defeats on the Ottoman forces in the Balkan War, an opportunity was created, and the Albanians were able to declare their independence on 28 November 1912.

Scutari d'Albanie



Scutari d'Albanie was the major commercial center of the province during Ottoman times. (The use of the terminology "of Albania" as part of the name was to prevent confusion with another Scutari, which was an Asian suburb of Constantinople.)

Durazzo (Dradj)



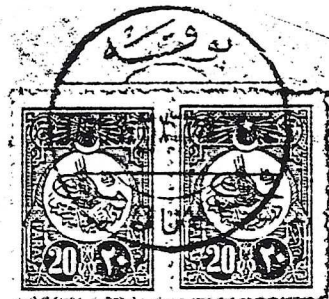
Elbassane



Lovichne
(Lushnje)



Pouka
(Puke)



Tiran



There were relatively few Ottoman post offices in northern and central Albania. Aside from Scutari, only the port of Durazzo (sometimes spelled Dradj) would have been considered significant, although Tiran (Tirana) became the capital of the new country.