

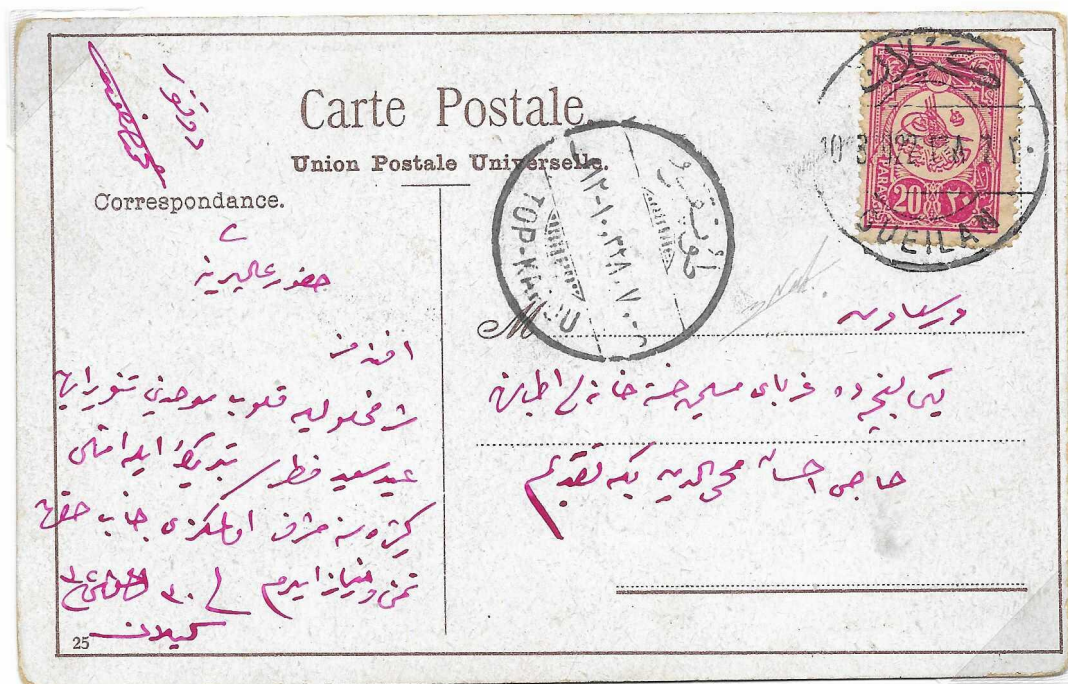
POSTAL HISTORY OF KOSOVO 1900-2000

This exhibit documents the postal history of Kosovo during essentially the 20th Century. Reflecting recent events, people have now heard of Kosovo, even if not understanding exactly where it is. Nominally an autonomous district of Serbia within the Federation of Yugoslavia, the area is in actuality a U.N. protectorate today. Its history starts in 1389 when Turkish troops defeated Serbia and its allies at the battle of Kosovo Polje, which led to their control of most of the Balkan Peninsula. During the ensuing five centuries, Kosovo was a backwater within the sprawling Ottoman Empire. In fact, up to the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912, only seven Ottoman post offices had been opened in Kosovo. (Examples of the postmarks of these towns are shown on the first three pages of the exhibit.) Even mail from the capital of Pristina and the second largest city of Prizren is scarce, while covers used from smaller towns in Kosovo are very elusive and seldom seen on the philatelic market.



Cover mailed in 1903 from the Ottoman post office in Pristina to Egypt, with postage paid at the 1 piaster rate for international letters. It has a transit marking of Constantinople and receiving postmark of Cairo.

After the victory of the Balkan allies in 1912, Kosovo was divided between Serbia and Montenegro. During World War I, it was divided again when Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria occupied those two Balkan nations. At the end of that war, Kosovo became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1928). During World War II, Yugoslavia was dismembered, and Kosovo was annexed to Italian-controlled Albania in 1941, reflecting the fact that about 90% of the Kosovars are ethnic Albanians, not Serbs. When Italy surrendered to the Allies in 1943, the Germans took over the administration of Albania, including Kosovo. However, at the end of the war, the area reverted to Yugoslavia, under a Communist government led by Marshal Tito. Finally, in 1999-2000 Serbian "ethnic cleansing" backfired and control was established by NATO and the United Nations. As will be shown, the many geopolitical changes can be documented by contemporary postal material.



Three of the smaller towns with Ottoman post offices were Frizovik (Urosevac), Gueilan (Gnjilane) and Ipek (Pec). Checking the names of the various locations is sometimes difficult, because they changed frequently depending on which country was in charge of the postal service at the time. (On this page, names are listed as in the Ottoman postmarks, with the present Slavic name found on current maps being shown in parenthesis.)

OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATION

Mitrovitza
Prizrend
Yacova



The other three towns with Ottoman post offices were Mitrovitza (Mitrovica), Prizrend (Prizren) and Yacova (Dakovica). Note that the Prizrend cancel is on a registered cover to Hungary with 2 piasters postage paying the rate for international registered letters.

SERBIAN ADMINISTRATION

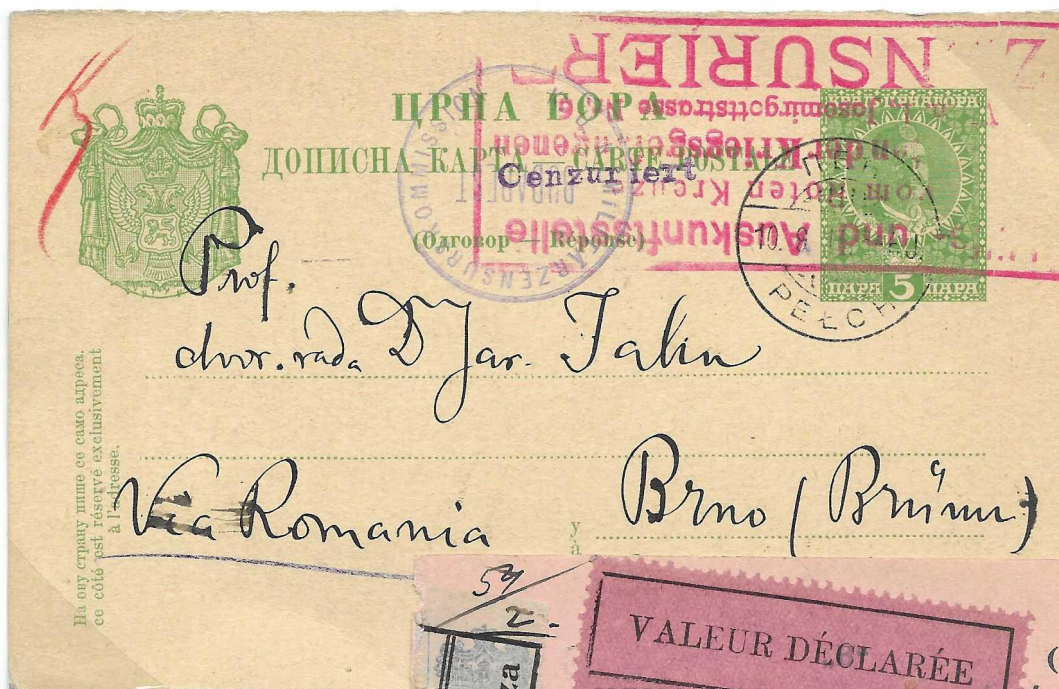
Djakovitz
Djevdjeliya
Ferisovitch
Suva Reka



Following a major victory at the battle of Koumanovo, the Serbian army occupied the western part of European Turkey in the First Balkan War of late 1912. The earliest Serb postmarks read "Vojna Posta (Military Posts)" above and below the dates. Later, such designations were replaced with vertical lines. Note postal card with civil postmark of Suva Reka and receiving mark of Ferisovitch, showing internal use between towns in Kosovo.



Examples of other types of markings used in the two largest towns of Kosovo. Above is the large bilingual cancel of Pristina. Below a special postmark for money order business in Prizren is shown used on a money order form.



266 Diakovitza

VALEUR DÉCLARÉE (10 para) Мјесто за при-
ЦРНА ГОРА MONTENEGRO

СПРОВОДНИ ЛИСТ
BULLETIN D'EXPÉDITION

Број царин. декларација
Nombre de déclarations de douane

Означена вриједност — Valeur assurée

двадесет пергера № 201
г. Драго Јелта Марковића за
а предај, Бајна Чуфевца
Мјесто опредјељења Доцна Милкић
Лieu de destination

Улица и број куће село: Мукво
Rue et numéro

Земља
Pays

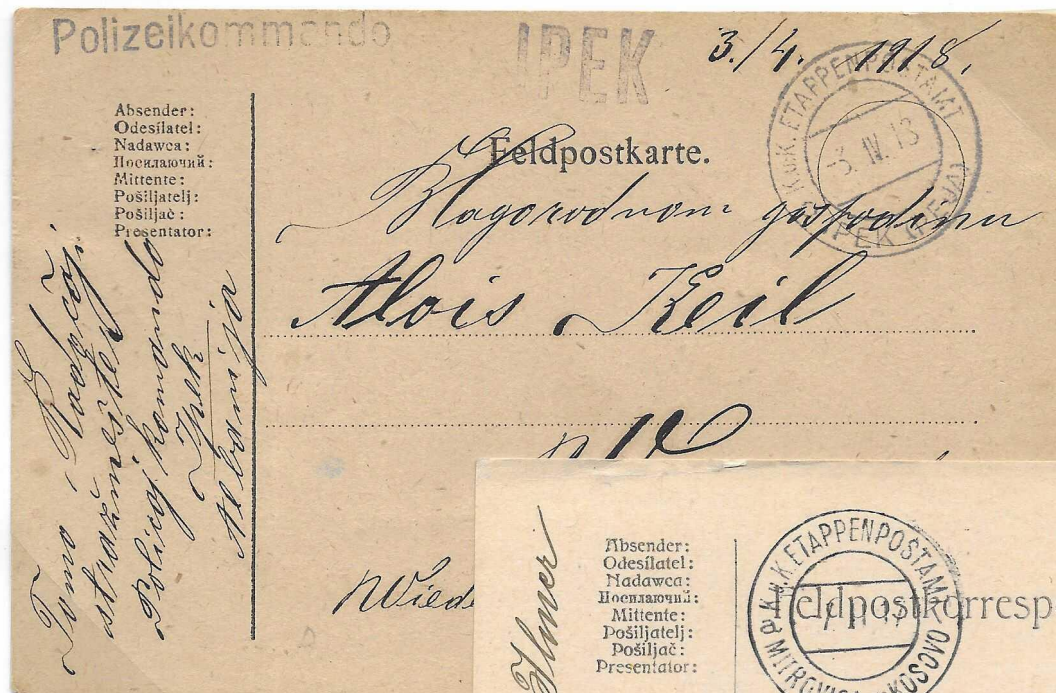
Тежина Poids	Царинске таксе Droits de douane	Пристац упућивања пошиљке Acheminement
4-к		
к		
к		

50 PARA
5 PARA

In the negotiations following the Balkan Wars, Montenegro was awarded the northern part of Kosovo, including the towns of Pec and Dakovica. New bilingual (Cyrillic/French) postmarks were introduced in the post offices there, with the latter shown used on an address card for a value-declared parcel.

AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ADMINISTRATION

Ipek (Peja)
Mitrovica am Kosovo
Peja



When the Central Powers occupied Serbia in late 1915, the country was divided roughly in half on a northeast-southwest diagonal, with the Austro-Hungarians administering the northernmost part and the Bulgarians the southernmost. This meant that the Kosovars were once again separated from each other. The Austrians introduced "Etappenpost" cancels with the names of the towns in their zone being Germanized.

The Bulgarian administrative zone in occupied Serbia was the southeastern sector, which included the two largest towns in Kosovo, Pristina and Prizren. For postal purposes, new Bulgarian stamps and postmarks were introduced from the beginning and remained in use until Bulgaria withdrew from the war on 30 September 1918. The upper example shows the special money order postmark for Pristina -- entirely in Cyrillic.



At the end of World War I, a new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was declared, with King Peter of Serbia as the monarch and his son, Alexander, as Prince Regent. The King of Montenegro had lived in exile in France during the occupation and was not invited back, with his country simply being absorbed in the new South Slavic entity. The first stamps (with the heads of both Peter and Alexander) were inscribed "Kingdom of Serbia." Note the use of a provisional postmark on the postcard from Pristina on 7 December 1918.



28-VI-1939
1389 ■ КОСОВСКА ПРОСЛАВА ■ 1939



Gospodin
Dušan J O V A N O V I Ć
B E O G R A D
Hadži Milentijeva 4/III



During the inter-war period, the main events were the change of name of the new South Slav kingdom to Yugoslavia in 1928 and the assassination of King Alexander in 1934 by a Croat nationalist. The latter reflected increasing discontent among the non-Serb ethnic groups who felt that the country was being run as a "Greater Serbia" with the Serbs taking the largest share and the highest ranking of the government and military posts. The one occasion that related to Kosovo was the celebration of the 550th anniversary of the famous Serb defeat in 1389, for which a set of commemorative stamps and a special postmark were provided in 1939.

ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION

Gjakove
Peje
Prizren

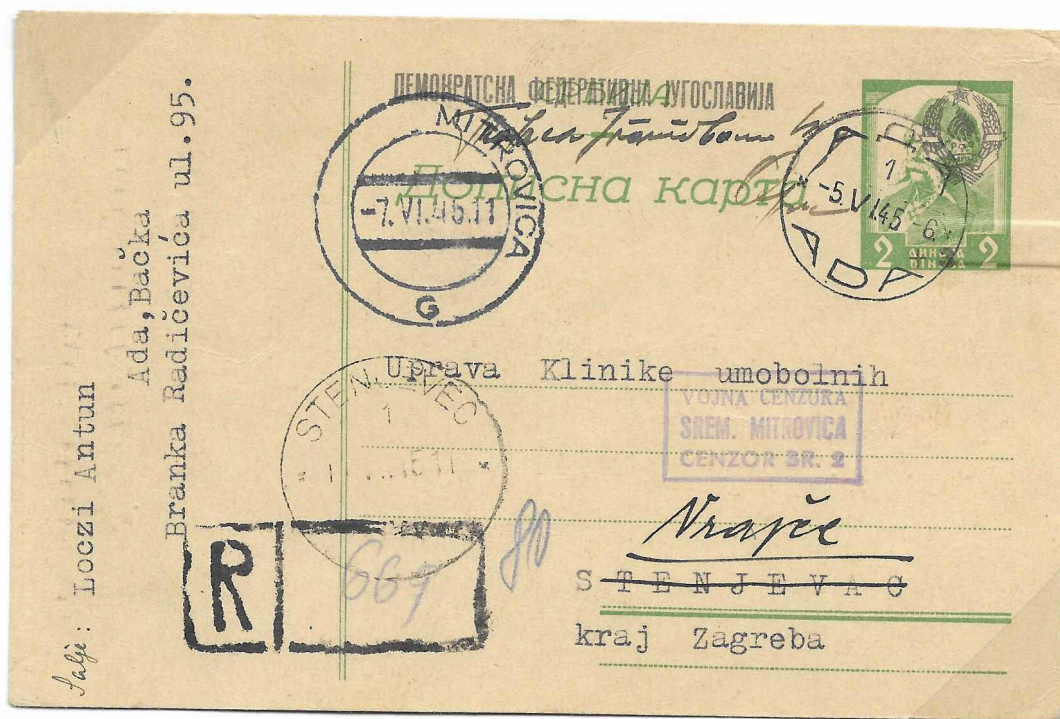


Italy had taken over Albania in 1939 and, when the Axis invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, it lost no time in annexing Kosovo to its Albanian possession. As 90% of the population of the province consisted of Moslem Albanians as opposed to Orthodox Slavs, this decision was widely approved in the area. Normal Albanian stamps were used, and new postmarks without the Cyrillic spelling of the town names were introduced. Covers from the Italian occupation of Kosovo are quite elusive and sought after by Albanian specialists.

GERMAN ADMINISTRATION

Peje
Prizren
Tetovo

With the surrender of Italy in September 1943, Germany had to send troops to occupy the various territories being administered by the Italians, including Albania. Italian stamps were overprinted "14 September 1943" (the date of the take-over) and used throughout Albania, including Kosovo. Covers from this area during the German occupation are exceedingly difficult to find and are particularly sought after by specialists in German occupation material.



in 1945, the Tito's Partisans took over Yugoslavia and quickly established a Communist government. The Province of Kosovo was restored to Serbia. Examples of mail shown are of a postal card from the German occupation of Serbia but overprinted "Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia" with 1945 transit marking of Mitrovica and a pictorial postal card of Pristina sent from there in 1956.

[illegible]

Росподин
Горже Николчевич
ч. Гуров Сиргера стр. 11



CENTROTEKSTIL
— UNUTRAŠNJI PROMET —
 KNEZ MIHAJLOVA 1 — 3
 POŠTANSKI FAKS BROJ 82
 11000 BEOGRAD

R SORH 208

For much of the post-World War II period, the Kosovars enjoyed a degree of autonomy as a part of Serbia. In fact, by the mid-1970s, new Albanian/Serbian bilingual postmarks were introduced with the Cyrillic lettering removed. However, after Slobodan Milosevic became President of Yugoslavia, he took away most of the autonomy and began a program of "ethnic cleansing" aimed at forcing the ethnic Albanians to leave the country.

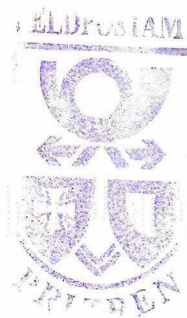
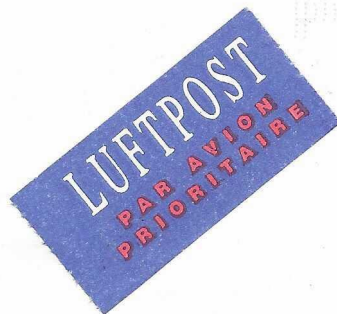
NATO INTERVENTION FORCES

Mitrovica
Prizren



Mousian Revolta
65 Rue D'Angou
45200 AMilly

LTCOL Th. Löbbbering
Staff MNB(S) KOS
MOC Prizren
Fieldpost
D-64 298 Darmstadt



Mr
Dragan Udovicic
138 New Bond Street
London W1Y 9FB

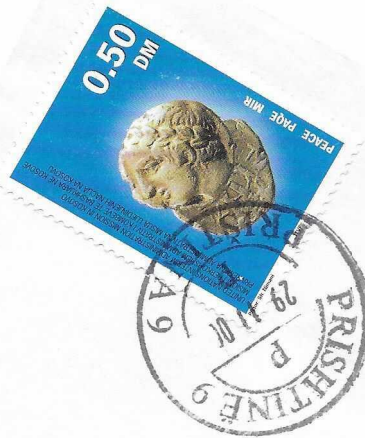
United Kingdom

NATO intervention in 1999 forced the Serbian army and paramilitary units to withdraw from Kosovo. They were then replaced with troops from several NATO member nations. Examples of military mail shown above are from the French Gendarmerie in Mitrovica (through field post office 663) and from the German Contingent in Prizren (through FPO 731).

UNITED NATIONS ADMINISTRATION

Pristina
Podujevo

After the Serbs were forced to withdraw from Kosovo by the NATO intervention, the ethnic Albanian inhabitants did not wish to use the old Yugoslav stamps or money. Hence, the German mark was introduced as currency, and a set of new stamps was issued on 31 May 2000 in DM denominations.



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The new stamps were inscribed "United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo."

UNMIK
United Nations Interim Administration
Mission in Kosovo
Office of the Special Representative of the
Secretary General
Press and Information Department
Pristina, Kosovo

From: Lt Col HD ALFREY
SCOTS DG
Op Agricola 3
BFPO 559

**AIR MAIL
ME AEROPLAN**



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