

OTTOMAN FIELDPOST STAMPS OF 1917-1921

During World War I, Turkish non-coms and enlisted men were granted free postage for the mailing of letters and cards, but officers were required to pay normal domestic postage. All of this mail was subject to military censorship. In 1917, the Ottoman authorities came up with the idea of issuing specially overprinted stamps for use on officers' mail. On this basis, existing stocks of certain regular adhesives were overprinted with a crescent and five-pointed star in quantities ranging from 300 to 800 pieces, as well as 100 copies of the 1 piaster stationery envelope. These stamps were placed on sale starting in the summer of 1917, with a specific benefit to the user of these issues being that the mail would be exempt from censorship, on the basis that military officers would be considered as "trustworthy persons."

Following the surrender of the Ottoman Empire to the Allies on 30 October 1918, many serving officers remained on duty because of the insurgent activity being conducted by the Nationalist forces headed by Kemal Ataturk. As a result, the officers' fieldpost stamps continued in military use during 1919 and perhaps beyond. In addition, due to a general shortage of stamps, the Turkish post office sold some of these stamps to the general public so that their actual use is recorded as late as January 1921.

Seven different stamps were issued for this program and are listed in the "back of the book" area for Turkey in Volume 2 of the *Michel Europa Katalog* under the heading of "Military Fieldpost for Officers." There seems to have been little attention given to what stamps were actually overprinted, with what was readily available in stock in sufficient quantities apparently being the primary factor. In fact, those selected included ones originally issued as far back as 1892 and included regular issues, semi-postals (including stamps already overprinted for the benefit of war orphans) and a newspaper stamp.



Example of a 1917 semi-postal issue for the benefit of orphans that was overprinted with crescent and star for the military officers' program.

The officers' fieldpost stamps can be found with various postmarks, including those of fieldpost offices and civil post offices in various parts of the empire. Some reportedly exist with postmarks of the German Military Mission in Turkey, although these are most likely in the form of souvenirs since German officers serving with the Turkish forces had free postage through their own fieldpost offices. The order in which the material is presented in this exhibit is essentially chronological, starting with the earliest examples used in July 1917 and running into 1920. Items franked with adhesive stamps are shown before the postal stationery.

**OVERPRINT ON 10 PARA SEMI-POSTAL
STAMP TO BENEFIT WAR ORPHANS,
ITSELF PREVIOUSLY OVERPRINTED
FOR USE ON NEWSPAPERS**

Pancalti 4
13 June 1917



Very early use on 13 June 1917 of two of the (lightly overprinted in red) Officers' Fieldpost stamps on an 1892 adhesive previously overprinted "matbua" for use on newspapers in 1894 and then later for the benefit of War Orphans (issued on 30 September 1915). Only 300 copies of this stamp were issued. These examples were postmarked at the headquarters of the First Ottoman Army located at the Military Academy in Pancalti. This large piece of a cover bears the receiving mark of Arnavutkoy on 16 June.

OVERPRINT ON 10 PARA SEMI-POSTAL
STAMP TO BENEFIT WAR ORPHANS

Pancalti 4
11 July 1917



Early use on 11 July 1917 of a strip of three of the (lightly overprinted in red) Officers' Fieldpost stamps on an 1892 stamp previously overprinted for the benefit of War Orphans (issued on 30 September 1915). Only 300 copies of this stamp were issued. These examples were postmarked at the headquarters of the First Ottoman Army located at the Military Academy in Pancalti. Illegible receiving mark on reverse.

**RED OVERPRINT ON 10 PARA
SEMI-POSTAL STAMP OF 1917**

Field Post Office 38
4 November 1917



The semi-postal stamp of 1 February 1917 was overprinted with a crescent and star in both black and red for Officers' Fieldpost use. One of the red version is shown on a portion of a postal card sent from FPO 38 at Pancalti to Stamboul.

RED OVERPRINT ON 10 PARA
SEMI-POSTAL STAMP OF 1917

August 1918



This example of a red overprint on the 1917 semi-postal stamp is used accompanied by a 1916 definitive on a cover to Schehir, where it was received on 7 August 1918.

**BLACK OVERPRINT ON 10 PARA
SEMI-POSTAL STAMP OF 1917**

Beschiktasch
12 August 1918

Field Post Office 46



This pair of the black overprints is used on cover accompanied by two 1917 semi-postals overprinted on newspaper stamps. Receiving mark of Schehir of 12 August 1918 on reverse. Below is a piece cancelled at FPO 46 located at Tulkarm, Palestine.

**OVERPRINT ON 5 PARA DEFINITIVE
STAMP OF 1918**

Galata 17
26 November 1919



The 5 para pictorial stamp was not issued until September 1918 and not released in overprinted form for Officers' Fieldpost use until October 1919. This pair shown on a portion of a postal card was sent from Galata to Pancalti.

OVERPRINT ON 5 PARA SEMI-POSTAL
STAMP TO BENEFIT WAR ORPHANS

Galata
24 April 1919



Only 300 copies of this stamp were issued, so they were sold out very quickly. The earliest recorded use is 18 February 1919 and the latest is the example shown above, sent a little more than two months later.

OVERPRINT ON 5 PARA SEMI-POSTAL
STAMP TO BENEFIT WAR ORPHANS

Kara-Keui Galata
1919



This cover with a pair of the 5 para overprint on the issue for the benefit of war orphans was franked with additional postage and sent to Pera where it was appropriately backstamped for receipt.

**OVERPRINT ON 2 PARA NEWSPAPER
STAMP SURCHARGED TO 5 PARA**

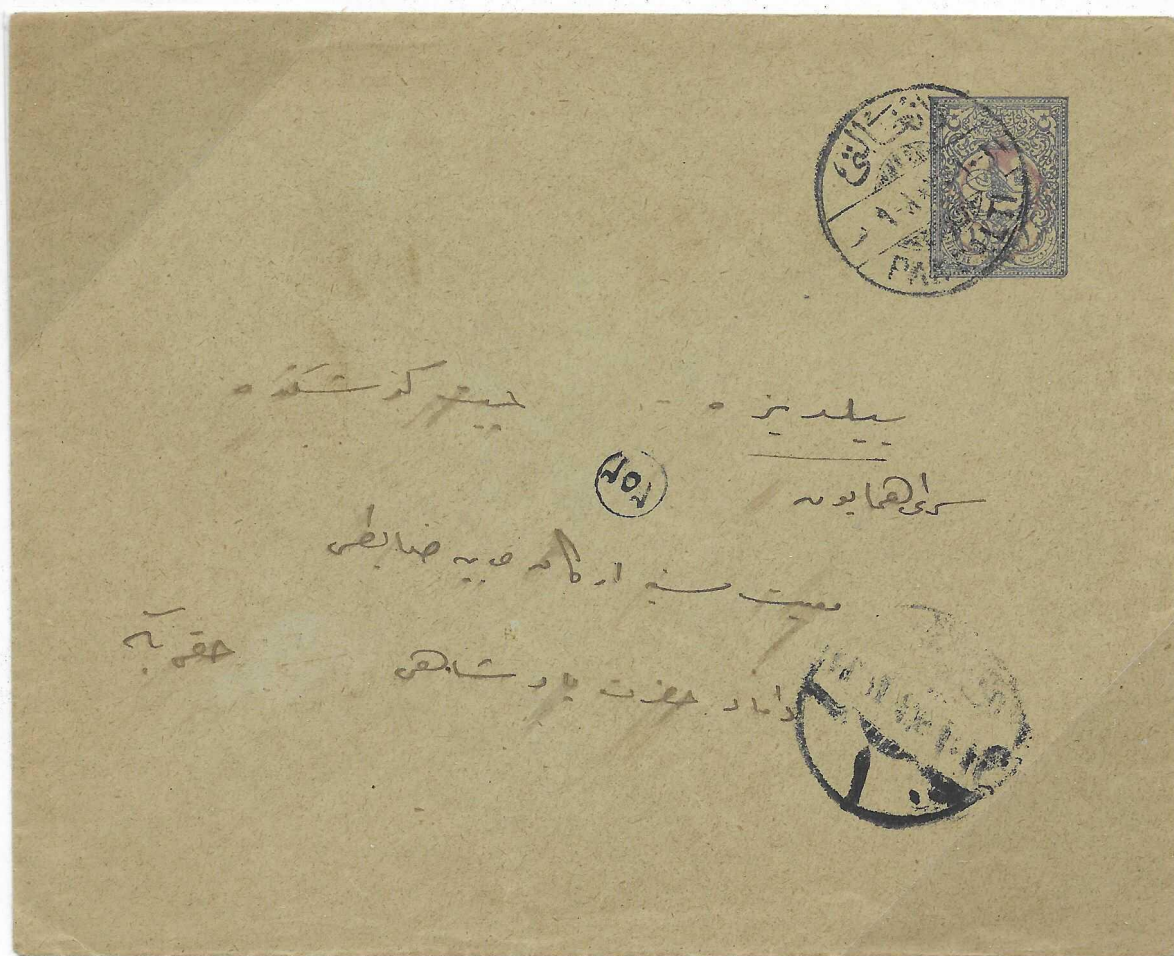
Palais Imperial
February 1920



This stamp was not issued until early 1919, and it is known used until April 1920. It is a newspaper stamp surcharged to 5 para and then overprinted for Officers' Fieldpost. This example was used on a handmade wrapper for printed matter sent from the Imperial Palace to Pera, where it was backstamped for receipt on 7 March 1920.

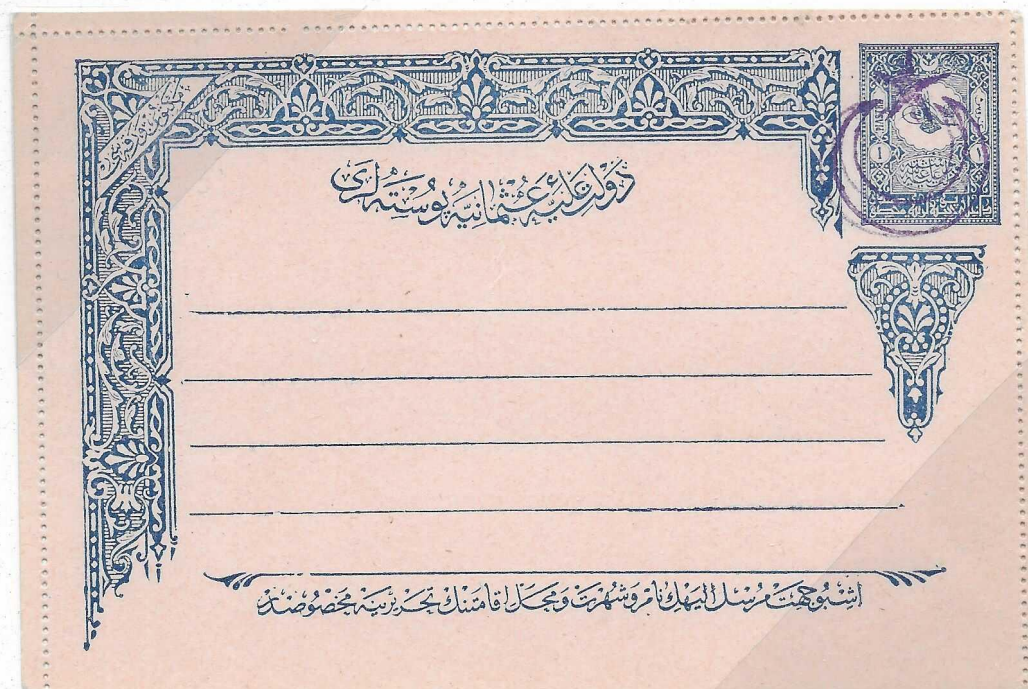
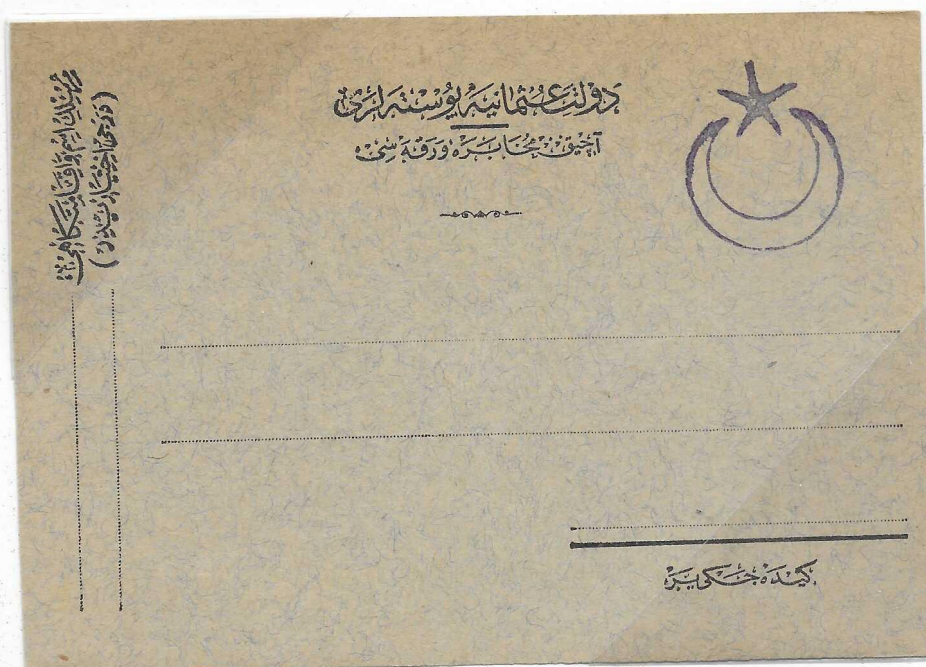
OVERPRINT ON 1 PIASTER
STATIONERY ENVELOPE

Pancalti
21 October 1918



In addition to the adhesives, 100 copies of the 1901 postal stationery envelope were overprinted with the crescent and star in red. This one was sent from Pancalti in late 1918 but the receiving mark is illegible. Examples of this envelope are highly elusive.

**VIOLET PROOF OVERPRINTS ON
FIELDPOST CARD & POSTAL CARD**



Prior to the actual issuance of the first Officers' Fieldpost overprints on adhesives in June 1917, some proof copies of the overprint (differing from the final version in the size and shape of the star) were applied to fieldpost cards and postal cards. These were likely privately produced, but could have been experimental on the part of the Ottoman authorities since some examples were used later through the German Naval Post Office.

VIOLET OVERPRINT ON
10 PARA POSTAL CARD

Marine Schiffspost No. 14
24 April 1916



More than a year before the Officers' Fieldpost overprints appeared, some postal cards have been seen bearing a similar crescent and star overprint and bearing the postmark of seapost office #14 on the German vessel *SMS Loreley* in Constantinople. Such items have not been reported in the literature but were apparently sent uncensored and could have been forerunners of the stamps that appeared later.

VIOLET OVERPRINT ON
1 PIASTER LETTER CARD

Marine Schiffspost No. 14
4 May 1916



Similar crescent and star overprint and postmark of SMS Loreley in Constantinople. On the reverse is the message "Greetings. Ismail Nakki." and handstamp reading "Adjutant of Field Marshal von der Goltz Pasha," who was the head of the German Military Mission in Turkey.

VIOLET OVERPRINT ON OLD
1 PIASTER LETTER CARD

Marine Schiffspost No. 14
14 May 1916

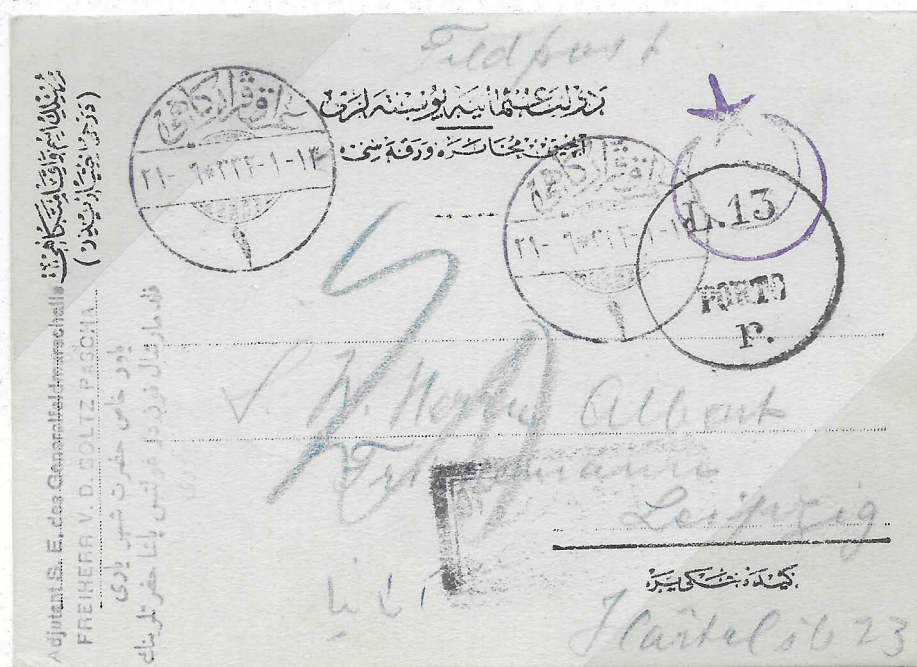


Another piece of postal stationery with similar crescent and star overprint and postmark of *SMS Loreley* in Constantinople. These were all sent by Nakki to noted philatelist Albert Friedemann in Leipzig.

VIOLET OVERPRINT ON FIELDPOST
CARD & REVERSE OF LETTER CARD

Marine Schiffspost No. 14
29 April 1916

Ministere de la Guerre



Two additional pieces of stationery from Nakki to Friedemann. Upper example on the reverse of a letter card. Lower example on a fieldpost card with postmark of the Ministry of War on the reverse and message "A greeting from Iraq, Ismail." Also has cachet inscribed "Adjutant to Field Marshal von der Goltz Pasha."