

THE TURKISH POST WITH EGYPT.

Notes by E. F. Hurt.

In the following very brief notes I am only speaking of the period roughly between 1840 and 1867.

During this period probably the main bulk of all mail between Constantinople and Egypt was carried by the French Mail Boats and through the French Offices in Alexandria, etc. and the French office in Constantinople. A small portion too was undoubtedly carried by the Egyptian Mail Boats though it is doubtful if very much was so borne to Constantinople. A little too may have filtered through from the Greek Consular Office in Alexandria to that in Constantinople.

In so far as Turkey itself was concerned it does not seem to have troubled very much about its postal interests and, in fact, at least up to 1867 the Turkish Postal Services were far from organised anywhere. There was rather a tendency to laissez faire and to leave the matter to anyone or any power who was interested sufficiently to the work in place of the Turkish Government.

As proof of this latter contention are the following facts:- Turkey issued no stamps until 1862 but in 1859 had given even the Government mail to the "Admiralty Steamship Company" run by Italian interests.

But prior to that, at least as early as 1840 another Italian Mail Boat Company, the Pirosoafi Ottomani had been taking care of mail to and from Turkey and many ports in Asia Minor.

Quite recently two very interesting facts have come to my notice which are of considerable interest to Egypt collectors.

The first of these was the discovery of a cover of 1863 from Alexandria bearing the frank of the Pirosoafi Ottomani reading "Agenoia Piri Ottomani-Aloxandria". This cover which I illustrated on page 40 of the "Illustrated Philatelic Record". Hitherto no marking of any agency of this Company in Egypt was known but this discovery tends to show that the Pirosoafi Ottomani was a link, at least during a certain period, between Egypt and Turkey and we know that the greater portion of mail overseas in the Eastern Mediterranean was handled by this company from about 1840 to as late as 1863 the Alexandria cover above mentioned being as far as I am aware the latest date for any Pirosoafi Ottomani marking. From all this evidence we can gather that the Pirosoafi Ottomani did not operate to or open an Agency in Alexandria until a very late date and then probably only in the hope of being able to snatch some of the traffic largely held by France and further that they did not find it a paying proposition and soon closed down. That it was unlikely to be a paying proposition is obvious when we realise that French Mail Boats of several lines were doing the round trip of the Mediterranean every week and that the calls at Alexandria and Constantinople were only, so to speak, in transit and also that they had established connections with the Austrian Lloyd and Danube Steam Navigation Company thus forming a very efficient bloc.

We now come to another interesting point on which I am able to throw a little new light.

So bad had the Turkish Postal Service become in 1865 that by a firman of the Sultan a private concern was authorised to establish and carry on a local post not only for Constantinople and Galata but for both banks of the Bosphorus as far as Yeni-Mahalé the Prince Islands and the two sides of the Golden Horn with extension to San Stefano. This concern was known as the Entreprise-Liannos.

Here it may be as well to settle once and for all the proper spelling of this firm's title as it has been variously ascribed to LANNON, LIANOS and LIAUNOS. In listing the stamps of the Company Yvert spells it LAINOS. But I happen to have one of the original postal notices of this firm autographed by the owner himself and he spells his name LIANNOS, so we will presume he is correct!

The first issue of adhesive stamps by this Company were the upright rectangular type in three values, printed by Perkins Bacon of London and issued in the autumn of 1865. These stamps were used on all mail.

Another issue were those of oblong rectangular form which bore at the top POSTS LOCALE in one line with, below that, SERVICE MIXTE. The remainder of the stamp (see illustration in Yvert World Catalogue) consists of three lines reading : TAXE EXT.- ; TAXE INT 20-; TOTAL---

My readers will probably be asking, "What has this to do with Egypt ? Just this - (I quote from a letter dated June 1866 from a well known philatelist in Constantinople D. E. MAVROGORDATO, "Following certain engagements contracted with the Egyptian Post Office, Mons. Liannos, Director of the Local Post in Constantinople has undertaken the delivery of letters from the Egyptian Post Office. The supplementary delivery fee will be paid by the recipient. Unfranked letters or those underfranked will have the amount shown on the Foreign Mail stamp which has been issued today (and which I have last described above - E.F.H.). These stamps indicate the amount due to the Egyptian Post Office to which will be added the amount due to the Local Post. There are four values; 10 paras on yellows 20 paras on rose 1 piastre red on white ; 2 Piastres blue on white".

The above now explains the wording on the stamp of which we are speaking. The "SERVICE MIXTE" indicated the combined Lainnos--Egyptian P.O. agreed service. In other words Liannos was not only acting as a Local Postal service agent for the Turkish Government but also in a similar capacity for the Egyptian Post Office.

Of the last three lines of inscription on these stamps the amount due to the Egyptian P.O., which was presumably paid first by Liannos on receiving the mail from the Egyptian P.O., was inserted after the words TAXE EXT. The Local Postage Delivery due was fixed according to weight by the values indicated of the four stamps described. The Total was then filled in.

While these stamps have boon heavily forged - at least five different types I have two genuine used copies. The only existing cover that I have been able to record was one in the collection of Turkey of the late famous philatelist and member of the R.P.S. Dr. Passer.

Previous to 1866 and the issue of the "Service Mixte" stamps, the other issue, according to Moens was used on letters from Egypt arriving in Costantinople. This was previous to the agreement with the Egyptian P.O.

The Liannos service did not pay and in March 1867 there occurred a strike of the employees due to non-payment of wages, which as reported in the "Etoilo d'Orient" brought about a forcible interruption of the service. The Liannos service had lasted about a year and the Egyptian contract only some nine months.

On March 31st. in the evening, the Local Post had to close down, although notice of this was given in a more optimistic vein by the posting of Notices on the letter boxes which indicated that "the service is suspended until further orders". This threw back the postal arrangements in Costantinople, the then capital of Turkey to the time of the Janissaries. The Lianos service had other difficulties to contend with as not only did the Turkish Government not give it the encouragement and support which it undoubtedly deserved but did not even fulfil the letter of the contract it had made with Mr. Lianos in 1865 after the Sultan's firman. It was this official neglect which largely led up to the strike and reports at the time show that the public felt they had been let down by the Government and not by Liannos who had served them well, although they felt a little aggrieved that they did not receive one or two week's notice of the sudden closure, as many were left with unusable stamps on their hands.

At the same time the "Levant Herald" announced that it was proposed to put up for sale the rights to run the Local Post at a fixed payment of 40,000 piastres per year, but this did not materialise.