

The Western Thrace Autonomous Government "Muhtariyet" Issue (1913)



Posterior commemorative hand coloured post-card

Following the Hellenic Army's evacuation from Western Thrace in compliance to the Treaty of Bucharest (August 10, 1913) that awarded the region to Bulgaria, local inhabitants (Greek, Armenian, Jew and Muslim) joined forces and revolted (between August 16 and 19), occupied the cities of Gumuldjina (now Komotini) on August 31 and Isketché (now Xanthi) the following day (September 1) as well as the port of Dedeagatch (now Alexandroupolis) on September 3. They then declared the short lived (Provisional later Autonomous) Government of Western Thrace, with Gumuldjina as its capital. The Treaty of Constantinople (September 29), concluded only between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (who left the local insurgents unprotected), removed the last obstacles and the Bulgarian Army entered the region (October 25-30, 1913), thus leading to the Autonomous Government's end.

The Provisional Government consisted of the militaries Hadji Selim Samy Bey and Suleiman Askeri Bey, the civilians Reshid Bey, Raif Effendi and Hafous Salih Effendi (later senator of the Hellenic Republic), the Greek vicar general of the Bishopric of Maronia Nicodimos (later metropolitan of Grevena), the Armenian Migirditch Tabakian and the Jew Yaka Cassavi. Hafous Gali (later member of the Hellenic Parliament) was named Secretary of State, while the Military Command was given to Eshref Bey Kushchubasi. The latter was the initiator of the issuing of the Autonomous Government's overprints (on Ottoman, Greek and Bulgarian stamps and stationery) and stamps.

This exhibit deals with the seven handprinted stamps (the so called "muhtariyet"), of whom the first two bear the inscription "Provisional Government" and the rest that of the "Autonomous Government", all in Arab script. The change of the inscription was due to the fear of eventual confusion and insecurity among the population. They were died by local engraver Halil Oglou Ali Moullah. These same values were also printed on envelopes of different sizes and qualities and were sold either mint or pre-franked with negative Post and Telegraph Office cancels of the cities of Gumuldjina, Isketché and Dedeagatch. They were issued between September 8 and October 6, 1913, in sixteen different printings.

Three types of ungummed and imperforate stamps were printed, some with a red circle (in Gumuldjina) or oval (in Dedeagatch) safety mark (1 piastre equalled 40 paras):

- Type I: 1pi blue and 2pi violet with the "Provisional Government" inscription (large size)
- Type II: 1pi blue and 2pi violet with the "Autonomous Government" inscription (large size)
- Type III: 1pi violet, 10pa red and 20pa blue with the "Autonomous Government" inscription (small size)

Selected Bibliography:

- Pehlivanides, G.: Les Timbres du Gouvernement Provisoïre (Autonome) de la Thrace Occidentale, Philotelia 1935/7-10, 13.
- Κωνόρας Παρασκευάς: Προσωρινή Κυβέρνηση Δυτικής Θράκης (1913), Θρακικός Ηλεκτρονικός Θησαυρός - Ιστορία.
- Ζουρδής Γεώργιος: Τα Γραμματόσημα Θράκης, Φιλολέξια 1952/26-28.

THE "MUHTARIYET" STAMPS ISSUE (1913)

Initiator of the issuing of the "muhtariyet" stamps was an intelligent and highly educated Circassian military, Eshref Bey Kushchubasi, who later commanded the Ottoman Forces in Libya (1914) assisted by his brother Hadji Selim Samy Bey, Mustafa Kemal Pasha and Emver Pasha. He subsequently (1916) directed the massacres, deportations and forced marches against Greeks and Armenians (he admitted more than a million "purified" with an estimate of half a million killed) and was sent to the Hejaz, where he was captured during the Arab Revolt (1917). After the war in Asia Minor (1919-1922) he disagreed with Kemal Atatürk and settled in the Island of Crete (Greece) to finally pass his last years at a very old age in his native Smyrna (now Izmir).



1pi type II block of four on laid paper tied Dedeagatch



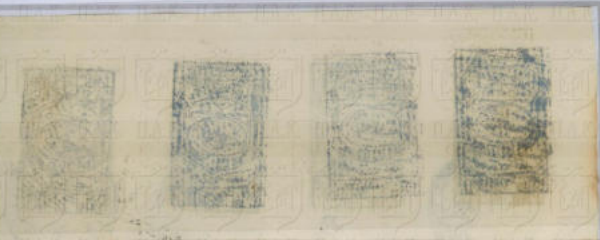
1pi type II pane of seven stamps on watermarked paper (VENUS with a six point star and radials) tied Gumuldjina



1pi type II gutter pair on horizontally laid paper tied Gumuldjina

THE "MUHTARIYET" STAMPS ISSUE (1913)

1pi type II pane of eight stamps on watermarked paper (VENUS with a six point star and radials) and mirror printing on reverse, tied Gumuldjina



1pi type II pane of eight stamps on watermarked paper (VENUS with a six point star and radials) tied Gumuldjina. One stamp trembled



THE "MUHTARIYET" STAMPS ISSUE (1913)



1pi (violet), 10pa (red) and 20pa (blue) type III "muhtariyet" stamps, small size, on plain unwatermarked paper



10pa type III pair on vertically laid paper



20pa type III pair on plain paper

COLOUR VARIETIES



10pa type III (grey) tied Gumuldjina and (blue) mint on plain paper, instead of (red)



20pa type III (violet) and (red) tied Gumuldjina on plain paper, instead of (blue)



2pi (blue) instead of (violet) and 1pi (grey) instead of (blue) type II, together with 20pa (red) instead of (blue) and 10pa (red) type III "muhtariyet" stamps on watermarked pane

THE "MUHTARIYET" STAMPS SAFETY MARK



Two 1pi type II "muhtariyet" stamps on piece with oval safety marks, tied Dedeagatch



CIRCLE AND OVAL SAFETY MARK

1pi and 2pi type II "muhtariyet" stamps, as well as a 1pi type II pair on vertically laid paper with circle safety marks, all tied Gumuldjina



Two 2pi type II "muhtariyet" pairs on yellow-brown pre-franked cover, with oval safety marks, one gutter pair, tied Dedeagatch



1pi and 2pi type II "muhtariyet" gutter pairs on piece, with oval safety marks, tied Dedeagatch



1pi type II "muhtariyet" stamp with circle safety mark on cover tied Gumuldjina, with transit bilingual meter stamp CONSTANTINOPLE Oct. 19, 1913 (on reverse) and arrival PARIS R.P. ETRANGER Oct. 24, 1913 cds



1pi and 2pi type II "muhtariyet" stamps with circle safety marks on cover tied Gumuldjina and arrival SMIRNE (UFFICIO ITALIANO) Oct. 27, 1913 cds (on reverse)

THE "MUHTARIYET" PRE-PRINTED ENVELOPE VALUES

1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed envelope (111X143 mm) with added pair of 20pa Ottoman stamps on transit tied ANDRINOPLE Sept. 24, 1913 bilingual cds, with arrival bilingual meter mark CONSTANTINOPLE Sept. 26, 1913 and SCUTARI cds of the following day (on reverse)



1pi + 1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed envelope (139X203 mm) tied Gumuldjina, checked with circle cancel (234 in Arabic), bearing arrival bilingual meter mark CONSTANTINOPLE Oct. 16, 1913 and GALATA ARRIVÉE, as well as CONSTANTINOPEL 1 DEUTSCHE POST cds of the same day (on reverse)

2pi + 2pi type II
 "muhtariyet" pre-printed
 envelope (148X222 mm)
 tied Dedeagatch with
 arrival bilingual
 DEMIRTACHE 2 Oct. 31,
 1913 cds (on front and
 reverse)



2pi type II "muhtariyet"
 pre-printed DISCRET envelope
 (110X143 mm) tied
 Dedeagatch with
 Constantinople arrival cds
 in Arabic (on reverse)



THE "MUHTARIYET" PRE-PRINTED ENVELOPE VALUES

1pi + 2pi type II
 "muhtariyet" pre-printed
 envelope (152X233 mm)
 tied Dedeagatch with
 arrival DEDEAGH Oct. 25,
 1913 cds



Mosiem
 P. Panas



Dedeagh



1pi + 2pi type II
 "muhtariyet" pre-printed
 envelope (117X180 mm)
 tied Gumulgina



کتابخانه پوزیتوئیو جنرل کورنہ برادرس محمد علی

Handwritten signature and scribbles in brown ink.

THE "MUHTARIYET" PRE-PRINTED ENVELOPE VALUES



Two 1pi + 2pi + 2pi type II "muhtariyet" never mailed, pre-printed and pre-franked envelopes (154X238 and 136X214 mm) and a fragment tied Dedeagatch, Gumuidjina and Isketche respectively

THE "MUHTARIYET" PRE-PRINTED ENVELOPES



1pi + 1pi (138X203 mm) off yellow and two (111X143 mm) DISCRET and PANAMA type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed mint envelopes plus (bottom) a 1pi (111X143 mm) yellowish type II one with the cover's flap in lower part



1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed "ELEGANT" envelope (111X143 mm) tied Dedeagatch with arrival SMIRNE (UFFICIO ITALIANO) Oct. 27, 1913 cds (on reverse)



1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed "PANAMA" envelope (111X143 mm) tied Gumuldjina addressed to Smyrna

THE "MUHTARIYET" PRE-PRINTED ENVELOPES



1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed "DISCRET" envelope (111X143 mm) tied Dedeagatch with arrival CONSTANTINOPEL 1 DEUTSCHE POST Oct. 24, 1913 cds (on reverse)



1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed "DISCRET" envelope (111X143 mm) tied Dedeagatch with arrival bilingual meter mark CONSTANTINOPEL, as well as GALATA ARRIVEE and CONSTANTINOPEL 1 DEUTSCHE POST, Oct. 16, 1913 cds (on reverse)

THE "MUHTARIYET" PRE-PRINTED ENVELOPES



1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed yellow-brown envelope (111X143 mm) tied Isketche (red) addressed to Prousa (Bursa) with transit bilingual meter mark CONSTANTINOPEL Oct. 16, 1913, redirected to Scutari with new transit bilingual meter mark CONSTANTINOPEL Oct. 19, 1913 (on reverse), and final destination arrival bilingual SCUTARI cds



1pi type I "muhtariyet" pre-printed yellow-brown envelope (111X143 mm) tied Isketche (red) with arrival bilingual KONIA cds

(e)



2pi type II "muhtariyet" pre-printed DISCRET (110X143 mm) envelope tied Dedeagatch and arrival SMIRNE (UFFICIO ITALIANO) Oct. 27, 1913 cds (on reverse)



50%

2pi type II "muhtariyet" pre-printed DISCRET (110X143 mm) envelope tied Dedeagatch and arrival SMIRNE (UFFICIO ITALIANO) Oct. 27, 1913 cds together with A.P.B. 497 rubber stamp (on reverse)



2pi type II "muhtariyet" pre-printed DISCRET (110X145 mm) envelope tied Isketche (black) with arrival bilingual GALATA - ARRIVÉE cds (on reverse)



2pi type II "muhtariyet" pre-printed yellow-brown (128X195 mm) envelope tied Isketche (blue) addressed to Gumuldjina