

The First Emission of the Russian Administration of Rethymnon, Crete (May 1st/June 30th, 1899)

Since the Ottoman conquest of the island of Crete in 1669, the Cretan people has not ceased to rebel against the Turkish invader: on 1770, 1821, 1833, 1841, 1858, 1866, 1869, 1878, 1896, 1897, to mention only the main rebellions! All these insurgences have been always punished by the Sublime-Porte and too often in a bloodbath. Despite the fact that the revolt of 1821, which begun in Sfakia (south-west region of Crete), has been the starting point of the independence of the modern Greece, the "big island" was still not part of the Motherland in 1897 and was still under the yoke of its Turkish oppressor... On January 29th, 1897 a general assembly of the main Cretan leaders proclaimed the Union with Greece: the "ΕΝΩΣΙΣ". To support the insurgents, the Kingdom of Greece sent expeditionary forces & ships and few days after, the Cretan flag was flying on the mount **Akrotiri** overlooking **Chania**.

The Ottoman Empire then asked the intervention of the Great Powers: Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy & Russia. The European Major Powers suggested a compromise: the autonomy of the island. The Cretans were obliged to accept it as Greece, under the pressure of the Great Powers, has removed its forces and focussed them on the battles against the Turks to reconquer continental regions.

To administrate the autonomy of the island and after the withdrawal of Austria-Hungary & Germany, which were supporting the Sublime-Porte, the four left Major Powers decided to divide the Cretan territory in four districts: the **Chania** region under the Italian administration, the **Rethymnon** region under the Russian one, the **Heraklion** region under the British one and the **Lasithi/Sitia** regions under the French one. The town of **Chania**, then capital of the island, was administrated by a consortium of the four Great Powers.

The four Major Powers installed all the components of their administration and in particular postal services. Great Britain was the first one to do it (November 25th, 1898) followed, and copied in many aspects, by the Russian in the district of **Rethymnon**. On April 24th & 28th, 1899, Colonel **Theodore von Chiotak**, the chief Administrator of the **Rethymnon** province, published orders of the day Nos. 104 & 108 to decree the establishment of a postal service starting May 1st, 1899.

The stamps of the first emission, also called provisional, were printed locally, manually and individually. The effigy, very poorly drawn, is representing the two-heads eagle of the Russian Empire. The printing matrix were manufactured by the **Rethymnon** goldsmith, **Stylianos Perpirakis**.

- The 1 metallik, blue (4.800 stamps) & yellow-green (10.440 stamps, 1.218 destroyed) and
- The 2 metallik, pink (1.200 stamps) & black (12.965 stamps, 1.290 destroyed).

They are wearing a control postmark, blue or purple, on the centre of each block of four. These stamps are unperforated, gummed and printed on three different types of paper: "quadrillé", wove & laid.

Linear postmarks with the name of fourteen town/villages of the province were used to cancel them. If the one of the main town of the district, **Rethymnon**, is common, the ones of the thirteen other villages are rare and even extremely rare for some of them.

The stamps of the first emission of the Russian administration of **Rethymnon** stayed in use only for two months: May & June, 1899 and were replaced on July 1st, 1899 by the of the second emission of the Russian administration of **Rethymnon**, printed in lithography in **Athens**.

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Colonel **Theodore von Chiotak**, the Russian Chief Administrator of the **Rethymnon** province.



Marginal block of height of the **1 metallik**, yellow-green, with the linear postmark "PEΘYMNON" (**Rethymnon**)



Mint block of four of the **2 metallik**, pink



Corner block of height of the black **2 metallik**, with purple control postmark and linear postmark of "PEΘYMNON" (**Rethymnon**)

Bibliography:

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- **Nicolas Zervoyannis**, *Les timbres-poste de Crète - 1^{ère} partie*, **Athènes**, 1971
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- **Rienk M. Feenstra & Friends**, *KPHTH - CRETE*, **Athens**, 2001

A total of 29.405 stamps of the first emission of the Russian administration were printed in two values: 1 & 2 metallik in two colours each and the unsold destroyed (order of the day No. 166 of June 10th, 1899).

The 1 metallik, blue with legend in French

All the stamps of this first emission have been manually & individually printed. The Russian soldier in charge of the printing, **Alexandre Shokatine**, drew with a pencil a set of rectangles on the blank sheet of paper before transferring the foot-print of the matrix, one after the other. These pencil lines are still visible on the multiple today. On this first value, the legend, “*provisional postage-stamp*” is written in French: “*Timbre Poste Provisoire*”. 4,800 stamps of this value have been printed and were all sold. This value was rapidly replaced by the yellow-green 1 metallik one.



Block of eight cancelled with Rethymnon (ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ)



Double impression, cancelled
Rethymnon (ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ)



Circular postmark of
Rethymnon (ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ)

Village's cancellations:



Kastelli
(ΚΑΣΤΕΛΙ)



Melambes
(ΜΕΛΑΜΠΕΣ)



Roustika
(ΡΟΥΣΤΙΚΑ)



AgiaGalini
(ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΑΛΗΝΗΣ)

The 1 & 2 metallik blue & purple (plate-proofs or not-issued)

The legends are now in Greek. These two stamps are probably colour plate-proofs as none of them is mentioned in the very detailed & perfectly held orders of the day of the Russian Governor of the **Rethymnon** province, the colonel **Theodore von Chiostak**. They are not known on cover. The philatelic papers of the beginning of the 20th century have reported that the Russian soldier in charge of the printing, **Alexandre Shokatine**, could have, either out of boredom or out of philatelic interest, printed these vignettes from the original matrices... The two purple values are on "quadrillé" paper. **Less than ten items of each of these four values are known up to date.**



1 metallik
w/o control postmark.



2 metallik
w/o control postmark.



2 metallik with control postmark,
and cancelled **Rethymnon**
(ΠΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ).



1 metallik w/o control postmark,
printed recto-verso.
Photo of the recto on the left.



2 metallik w/o control postmark.



1 metallik w/o control postmark, double impression.

Only two items known so far.

The 1 metallik yellow-green - Type stamps

10,440 stamps of this value have been printed and 9,222 have been sold. The 1,218 left have been destroyed on July 1st, 1899 according to the order of the day No. 166 of June 30th, 1899.

Mint stamps:



Without control postmark.



With purple control postmark.



With blue control postmark.



Block of height cancelled
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).



Double impression of the linear
postmark of Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).



Blue linear postmark of
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).



Black linear postmark of
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).

The 1 metallik Yellow-green - Cancelations

Fourteen linear postmarks were used during this period: one for the town **Rethymnon** (very common) & thirteen for villages of the province which are rare to extremely rare for some of them.



Strip of four cancelled **Spili (ΣΠΙΛΙ)**.
The largest multiple known with this postmark.



Block of four cancelled **Sellia (ΣΕΛΙΑ)**.
Only very few items known.



Stamp cancelled
Pigi (ΠΗΓΗ).



Stamp cancelled
Fodele (ΦΟΔΕΛΕ).
Unique item.



Stamp cancelled
Damasta (ΔΑΜΑΣΤΑ).
Very few pieces known.



Stamp cancelled
Garazo (ΓΑΡΑΖΟ).



Pair cancelled
Roustika (ΡΟΥΣΤΙΚΑ).



Stamp cancelled
Kastelli (ΚΑΣΤΕΛΙ).



Stamp cancelled
Melambes (ΜΕΛΑΜΠΕΣ).



Stamp cancelled
Aghia Galini (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΑΛΗΝΗΣ).



Stamp cancelled
Amari (ΑΜΑΡΙ).

The 1 metallik yellow-green - Covers

The order of the day No. 23 of April 25th, 1899 has fixed the postal rates for the province:

- 1 metallik for the newspapers (5 newspapers maximum under the same strip), with 1 metallik increment per 5 newspapers under the same strip,
- 2 metallik for a letter up to 25 grams, with 2 metallik increment per 25 grams and
- 3 metallik for a registered letter up to 25 grams, with 3 metallik increment per 25 grams.



Letter from Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON) to PERIVOLIA (ΠEPIBOLIA), close to Chania.



Letter from Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON) to Iraklion (HPAKLION).

The 2 metallik pink then bistre - Pink, type stamps & cover

Only 1,200 stamps of that shade have been printed and all the them have been sold. The ink used to print this tint did not resist to the light, so that after a few days of existence, the print first red, then turned pinkish, then bistre, and sometimes completely disappeared...

This stamp was rapidly replaced by the 2 metallik black.



Mint block of height of the 2 metallik, pink - The largest multiple known of this value to date.



Red with purple with purple control postmark.

Red/pinkish with blue control postmark.

Type stamps protected from the light, cancelled Rethymnon (ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ).



Letter from Melambes (ΜΕΛΑΜΠΕΣ) to Roustika (ΡΟΥΣΤΙΚΑ).

The only item known with this value and with postmark on cover.

The 2 metallik pink then bistre - Bistre, type stamps & cancellations

Only 1,200 stamps of that shade have been printed and all the them have been sold. The ink used to print this tint did not resist to the light, so that after a few days of existence, the print first red, then turned pinkish, then bistre, and sometimes completely disappeared...

This stamp was rapidly replaced by the 2 metallik black.



Block of four, cancelled Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON)



Block of four, cancelled Sellia (ΣEΛIA).



Block of four, cancelled Margarites (MAPΓAPITAIΣ).

The largest multiple blocks known with these cancelations.

The 2 metallik pink then bistre - Bristre, cancelations

Only 1,200 stamps of that shade have been printed and all the them have been sold. The ink used to print this tint did not resist to the light, so that after a few days of existence, the print first red, then turned pinkish, then bistre, and sometimes completely disappeared...

This stamp was rapidly replaced by the 2 metallik black.



Strip of three, cancelled Spili (ΣΠΙΛΙ).



Single, cancelled
Sellia (ΣΕΛΙΑ)



Single, cancelled
Aghia Galini (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΑΛΗΝΗΣ)



Single, cancelled
Roustika (ΡΟΥΣΤΙΚΑ)



Pair, cancelled Amari (ΑΜΑΡΙ)

The 2 metallik pink then bistre - Bistre, covers

Only 1,200 stamps of that shade have been printed and all the them have been sold. The ink used to print this tint did not resist to the light, so that after a few days of existence, the print first red, then turned pinkish, then bistre, and sometimes completely disappeared...

This stamp was rapidly replaced by the 2 metallik black.



Letter from Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON) to Amari (AMAPI).



Letter from Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON) to Kastelli (KΑΣTEΛI).

The 2 metallik black - Complete trial sheet of 20 stamps

12,965 stamps of this colour have been printed and 11,675 have been sold. The 2,290 left have been destroyed on July 1st, 1899 according to the order of the day No. 166 of June 30th, 1899.



Complete sheet of 20 stamps (4 X 5) on "quadrillé" paper.

The stamps of the last row don't have any control postmark and those of the first & the third lines are cancelled with the linear postmark of Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON). This sheet was probably used as a trial for the control postmark and the postmarks.

Unique item known as of today.

(©)

The 2 metallik black - Type stamps

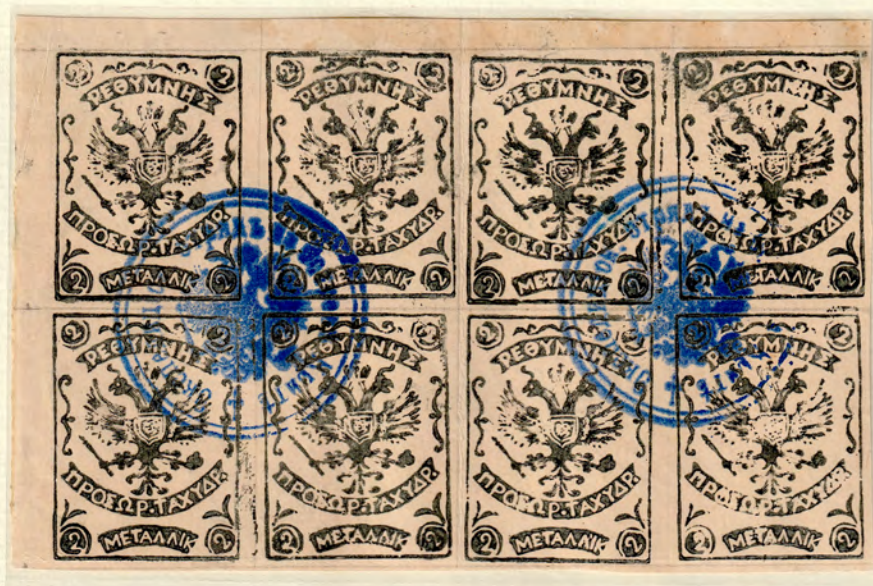
12,965 stamps of this colour have been printed and 11,675 have been sold. The 2,290 left have been destroyed on July 1st, 1899 according to the order of the day No. 166 of June 30th, 1899.



Mint block of eight.



Stamp w/o control postmark, neatly printed.



Block of four w/o control postmark.

One can appreciate the very irregular placement of the stamps.

The 2 metallik black - Type stamps & varieties

12,965 stamps of this colour have been printed and 11,675 have been sold. The 2,290 left have been destroyed on July 1st, 1899 according to the order of the day No. 166 of June 30th, 1899.



Block of four dark black, cancelled
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).



Block of four greyish, cancelled
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).

Double impressions:



Single cancelled with
circular postmark of
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).



Pair cancelled
Rethymnon (PEΘYMNON).
Double impression on the right stamp.



Single cancelled
Amari (AMAPI).

The 2 metallik black - Cancellations

12,965 stamps of this colour have been printed and 11,675 have been sold. The 2,290 left have been destroyed on July 1st, 1899 according to the order of the day No. 166 of June 30th, 1899. Fourteen linear postmarks were used during this period: one for the town **Rethymnon** (very common) & thirteen for villages of the province which are rare to extremely rare for some of them.



Stamp cancelled
Fodele (ΦΟΔΕΛΕ).
Unique item.



Pair cancelled
Anogia (ΑΝΩΓΙΑ).
Unique item.



Stamp cancelled
Damasta (ΔΑΜΑΣΤΑ).
Only very few items known.



Stamp cancelled
Roustika (ΡΟΥΣΤΙΚΑ).



Stamp cancelled
Pigi (ΠΗΓΗ).



Stamp cancelled
Amari (ΑΜΑΡΙ).



Stamp cancelled
Sellia (ΣΕΛΙΑ).

©



Stamp cancelled
Aghia Galini (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΑΛΗΝΗΣ).



Pair cancelled
Garazo (ΓΑΡΑΖΟ).



Stamp cancelled
Kastelli (ΚΑΣΤΕΛΙ).

Le 2 metallik black - Covers

12,965 stamps of this colour have been printed and 11,675 have been sold. The 2,290 left have been destroyed on July 1st, 1899 according to the order of the day No. 166 of June 30th, 1899.



Letter from Garazo (ΓΑΡΑΖΟ) to Rethymnon (ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ).

Only very few pieces known.



Letter from Rethymnon (ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟΝ) to Roustika (ΡΟΥΣΤΙΚΑ).