

# Ottoman Railways of Macedonia 1873-1912

In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Macedonian railway network was consisted by three independent lines, each having a common starting point in Thessaloniki. At the same time, Thessaloniki belonged to the Ottoman Empire, a vivid city, active and multinational with 120,000 inhabitants. These lines were constructed and operated by European companies on behalf of the Turkish state, and were the following:

1. **Thessaloniki - Zibeftche** constructed in 1873,
2. **Thessaloniki - Monastir** constructed in 1894 and
3. **Thessaloniki - Alexandroupolis** constructed in 1896, and the extension of this line towards Pythio (already constructed by 1872) and from thereon having two branches leading to Constantinople and Sofia of Bulgaria (via Svilengrad) respectively.

After the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and the annexation of Macedonia to the rest of Greece, parts of these lines came under Greek control.

Railways at those days, used to be one of the main means for the transportation of mail. Postal services made use of them quite extensively to serve their transport needs. Post offices were established in close link with the railway or they were carried by it using special postmarks. In 1873 in the newly established railway station of Thessaloniki, the first post office was opened, which made use of special postmarks to cancell all mail deposited there which in most cases was transmitted by rail. In the early 1890s the first Traveling POs appeared. These were operating on trains to and from Thessaloniki. The term TPO refers to the services of the post offices that were serviced by the railway, i.e. that were carried on trains. In these offices a specifically assigned group of postal clerks were employed, having at their disposal a special carriage. Each one of these groups were known as "Mobile or Traveling Group" using special postmarks, bearing the distinctive sign of the Group, the route and the date on which the work was done. There were also the "Escorts", i.e. the employees that looked after the mailbags on the trains. We can therefore find:

- postmarks of post offices housed in the railway stations ("immobile" usages)
- postmarks of TPOs which were used on the train during the journey ("mobile" usages)

This exhibit includes not only the TPOs that used to operate in the railway lines to and from Thessaloniki, centre of the Macedonian Network, but also the POs that operated housed in the railway stations of these lines in the period 1873-1912.



Map of the Vilayeti of Thessaloniki, after the administrative organization of Macedonia as it was formed in the early 1880s showing the railway routes with red lines.

# The Railway Stations of Thessaloniki

The city of Thessaloniki was the common starting point of three railway lines that were constructed in Macedonia. As such, naturally came the construction of the corresponding railway stations in Thessaloniki. Thus at the end of the 19th century, functioned two railway stations. The first from 1873, was the station of "Eastern Railways" that is the line Thessaloniki - Idomeni - Geygeli - Skopje - Zibeftche and later the line of "Thessaloniki - Monastir". The second was the station of "Union Railway" that is the line Thessaloniki - Alexandroupoli - Constantinople.

In these two railway stations existed post offices from 1873, which used special postal seals. Seven different types of seals are known used up to day.

## MEMURU SIMENDEFER POSTA CIHET SELANIK 2

Employee of Railways P.O. of Thessaloniki 2, 1873-1890



Block of six 10 Paras ottoman stamps issue 1875

# The Railway Stations of Thessaloniki

## MEMURU SIMENDEFER POSTA CIHET SELANIK

Employee of Railways P.O. of Thessaloniki, 1873-1890



20 Paras ottoman stamps  
issue 1884-86

## MEMURU SIMENDEFER POSTA CIHET SELANIK 3

Employee of Railways P.O. of Thessaloniki 3, 1873-1890



10 Paras ottoman stamps  
issue 1873



20 Paras ottoman stamps  
issue 1898

## MEMURU SIMENDEFER POSTA CIHET SELANIK 4

Employee of Railways P.O. of Thessaloniki 4, 1873-1890



1 Piastre ottoman stamps  
issue 1875



1 Piastre ottoman stamps  
issue 1875

## MEMURU SEYYARI SIMENDEFER SELANIK 4

Employee of Railways of Thessaloniki 4, 1884-188..



20 Paras ottoman stamps  
issue 1888



20 Paras ottoman stamps  
issue 1888

# The Railway Stations of Thessaloniki

2<sup>nd</sup> POSTA SUBESI 1312

2<sup>nd</sup> Postal Branch 1896 (2<sup>nd</sup> railway post of Thessaloniki), 1896-189..



29 March 1897

Postcard stationery issue 1892 with printed 20 Paras ottoman stamps, from Thessaloniki to France. Posted from 2<sup>nd</sup> POSTA SUBESI and SALONIQUE 29 MAR 97 to MILLAU AVEYRON 7 AVRIL 97.

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for postcard stationery to France.

SALONIQUE

Railway Station of Thessaloniki, 1901-



23 December 1901

Printed matter with 5 Paras issue 1901 ottoman stamps, from Thessaloniki 23.12.1901 to France. Posted from SALONIQUE 23 DEC 01 to Paris.

Rate: 5 Paras (foreign rate) for printed matter to France.

# The Railway Thessaloniki - Skopje - Zibeftche of the "Eastern Railway"

The railway line of "Eastern Railways" (of Austrian interests), was the first that connected Thessaloniki and therefore the rest of Macedonia with the rest of Europe. The work of construction of its first part, between Thessaloniki and Skopje began on 10 January 1871, a length of 244 kilometres and first operated in 1873. The journey Thessaloniki- Skopje was daily and lasted 7 hours. In 1874 there was constructed the part Skopje - Mitrovitsa 119 kilometres long and later the section Skopje - Zibeftche 85 kilometres long. The total length of the line from Thessaloniki until the Zibeftche (railway station in the Turkish-Serbian borders) was 448 kilometres and the travel lasted 10 hours. In May 1888 the line reached Belgrade via Zibeftche and Njs. From there existed lines to Budapest, Vienna and Paris. The exploitation of the network were in the hands of the company "Compagnie d' Exploitation des Chemins de Fer Orientaux", that succeeded in 1878 the company "Compagnie Generale d' Exploitation des Chemins Fer de la Turquie d' Europe", both property of Baron Maurice Hirsch.

Only one Mobile Post functioned at the Ottoman period on the trains that executed the way Thessaloniki - Zibeftche. It began its operation in 1893 and stopped in 1912 immediately after the liberation of Macedonia. Up to day, nine different types of seals are known used by it till.

**SELANIK - ZIBEFTCHE SEYYAR MERKEZI**  
BUREAU AMB. SALONIQUE - ZIBEFTCHE, 1899-



**10 August 1900**

Postcard stationery issue 1892 with printed 20 Paras ottoman stamps, from Thessaloniki 9.8.00 to Serbia. Posted from SELANIK - ZIBEFTCHE SEYYAR MERKEZI to BELGRADE 10.8.00.

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for postcard stationery to Serbia.

The Railway Thessaloniki - Skopje - Zimbeftche of the "Eastern Railway"

BUR. AMB. SALONIQUE - ZIBEFTCHE, 1893-1899



22 April 1896

Postcard stationery issue 1892 with printed 20 Paras ottoman stamps, from Cmpyunya (now in Serbia), via Thessaloniki to Ottoman Empire. Posted from BUR. AMB. SALONIQUE - ZIBEFTCHE 22 AVR (96) to STAMBOUL ARRIVE 24 AVR 96.

Rate: 20 Paras (interior rate) for postcard stationery into Ottoman Empire.

BUR. AMB. ZIBEFTCHE - SALONIQUE, 1893-1899



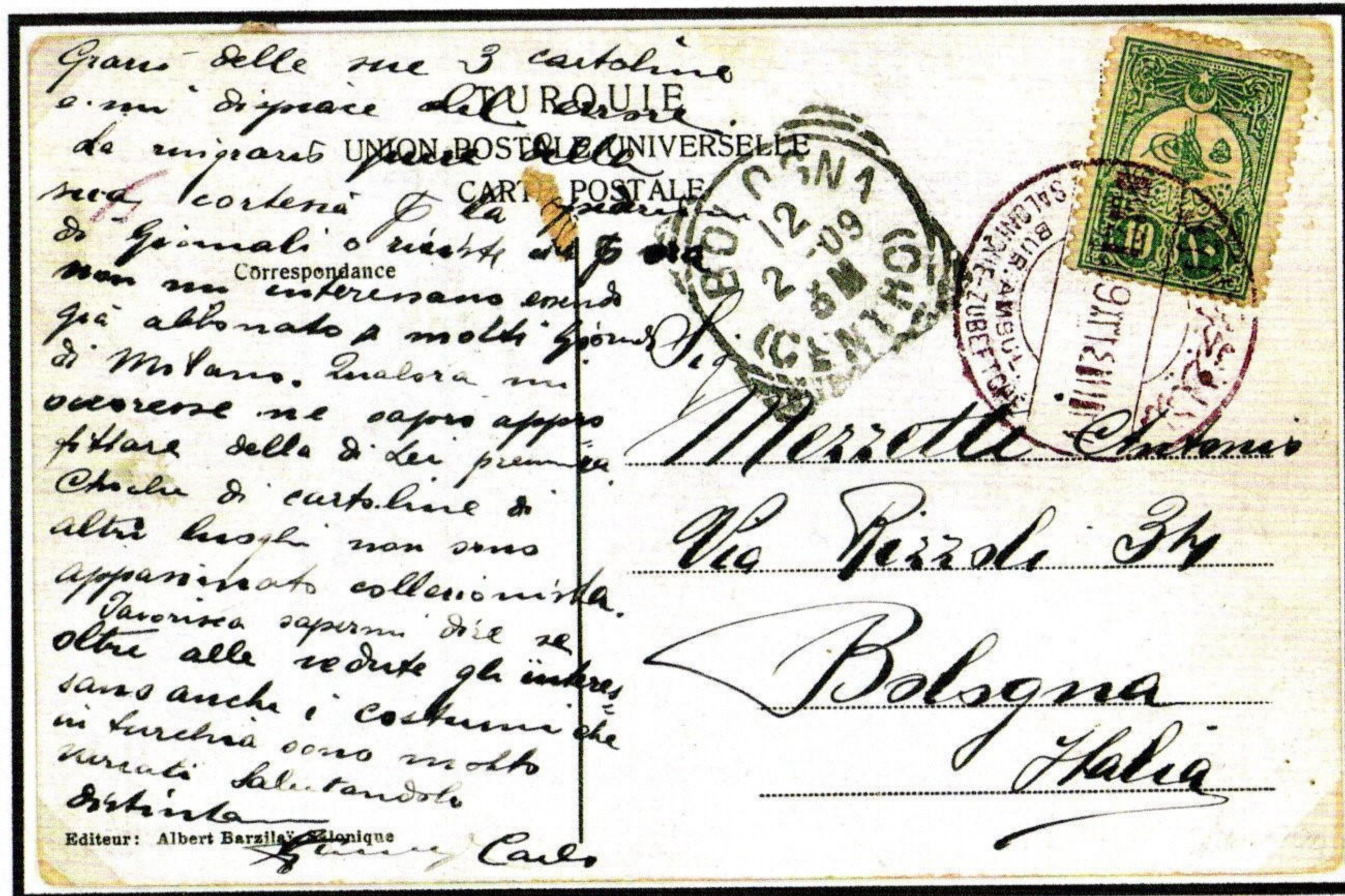
10 December 1896

Letter card issue 1895 with printed 1 Piastre ottoman stamps, from Keuprulu (now in Serbia) to France. Posted from BUR. AMB. ZIBEFTCHE - SALONIQUE 10 DEC (96), via PARIS DEPART 15 DEC 96 to NEMOURS SEINE-ET-MARNE 15 DEC 96.

Rate: 1 Piastre (foreign rate) for letter card to France.

The Railway Thessaloniki - Skopje - Zimbeftche of the "Eastern Railway"

BUR. AMBUL. SALONIQUE - ZUBEFTCHE, 1902-



8 February 1908

Picture postcard with 2x10 Paras (one back) issue 1908 ottoman stamps, from Thessaloniki 7.2.08, to Italy. Posted from BUR. AMBUL. SALONIQUE - ZUBEFTCHE 8.2.09 to BOLOGNA 12.9.09.

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for picture postcard card to Italy.

BUR. AMB. SALONIQUE - ZIBEFTCHE, 1907-



27 August 1907

Cover with 1 Piastre issue 1905 ottoman stamps, posted from BUR. AMB. SALONIQUE - ZIBEFTCHE 27.8.907, via CONS-PLÉ GALATA 29.8.07 to Antigoni Turquie.

Rate: 1 Piastre (interior rate) for cover into Ottoman Empire.

The Railway Thessaloniki - Skopje - Zimbeftche of the "Eastern Railway"

BUR. AMB. ZIBEF. SALQUE, 1906-



12 October 1907

Fragment of money order with 4 x 50 Piastres ottoman stamps, issue 1905, cancelled with BUR. AMB. ZIBEF. SALQUE 12.10.907.

Rate: 200 Piastres for money order 1500 Gurus.

BUR. AMBUL. ZUBEFTCHE - SALONIQUE, 1903-



4 May 1908

Picture postcard from Mont Athos 19/31.4.08 with 20 Paras issue 1908 ottoman stamps, via Thessaloniki to Serbia. Posted from BUR. AMBUL. ZUBEFTCHE - SALONIQUE 4.5.908 to KPY-LIEBAII 22.4/4.5.908.

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for picture postcard card to Serbia.



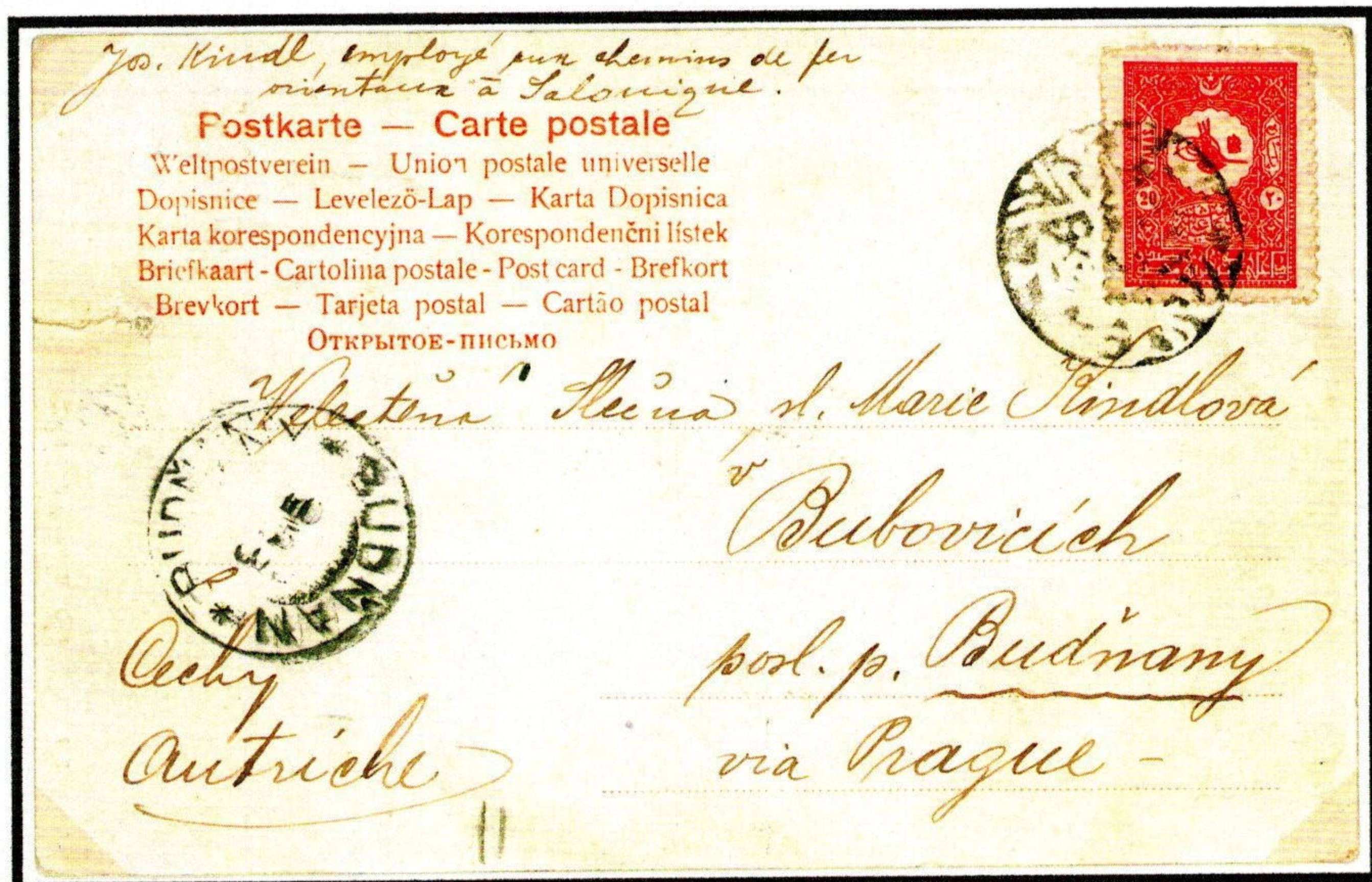
# The Railway of "Thessaloniki - Monastir"

In 1890 a group of capital raisers, that acted on behalf of the "Deutsche Bank" of Berlin, ensured at exclusivity from the Ottoman government, with Imperial decree that was published on 27 October 1890, the right of construction and exploitation of a railway line, that would link Thessalonica with Monastir. The construction of line was assigned by the "Deutsche Bank" to "Gesellschaft für den Bau der Eisenbahn Salonik - Monastir". The total length of the line was 219.5 kilometres. Its built began in 1891 and was realised in two phases: first the section Thessaloniki - Skydra 97 kilometres long that was inaugurated on 9 December 1892 and then the section Skydra - Monastir, 122.5 kilometres long that was inaugurated on 11 May 1894. In 1905 the journey time between Thessaloniki - Monastir amounted to 9:55 hours, while in 1912 was decreased to 8:15 hours. Germany maintained the control of the railway line, but its exploitation was assigned in the French company "Compagnie d'Exploitation des Chemins de Fer Orientaux", which was later renamed to "Chemins de Fer de Salonique a Monastir".

In 1894 began the operation with one and later with two different crews the Mobile Post Thessaloniki - Monastir, on the trains that executed the corresponding journey. Up to today we know of the use of eight different types of seals. In the early 1900s operated one more Mobile Post Thessaloniki - Karadja - Abad (Aridaia) with one only seal. In the same railway line we meet a also post office that functioned in the Railway Station of Ekchi - Sou (Xino Nero) in Florina. All the Mobile Posts interrupted provisionally their operation in October 1912 because the First Balkan war.

## MANASTIR CIHETI SEYYAR POSTA - MEMURLU 2

Mobile Post of Monastir Area - Employee 2



7 May 1905

Picture postcard from Vodena (: Edessa), Railway Station in the Thessaloniki - Monastir railway line. The postcard written by Jos. Kindl, employee of the Oriental Railways in Thessaloniki ("employe pur chemins de fer orientaux a Salonique") and franked with 20 Paras issue 1901 ottoman stamps. Posted from MANASTIR CIHETI SEYYAR POSTA - MEMURLU 2 (7.5.05), via Prague to BUDNAN 10.5.905 (Czech - Austria).

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for postcard stationery to Czech - Austria.

The Railway of "Thessaloniki - Monastir"

MONASTIR (SALONIQUE), 1907-



4 December 1907

Picture postcard from Thessaloniki to USA, with 20 Paras issue 1905 ottoman stamps. Posted from MONASTIR (SALONIQUE) 4.12.907 to GLEN RIDGE, N.J. 28.12.07.

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for picture postcard card to USA.

SALONIQUE - MONASTIR, 1910-



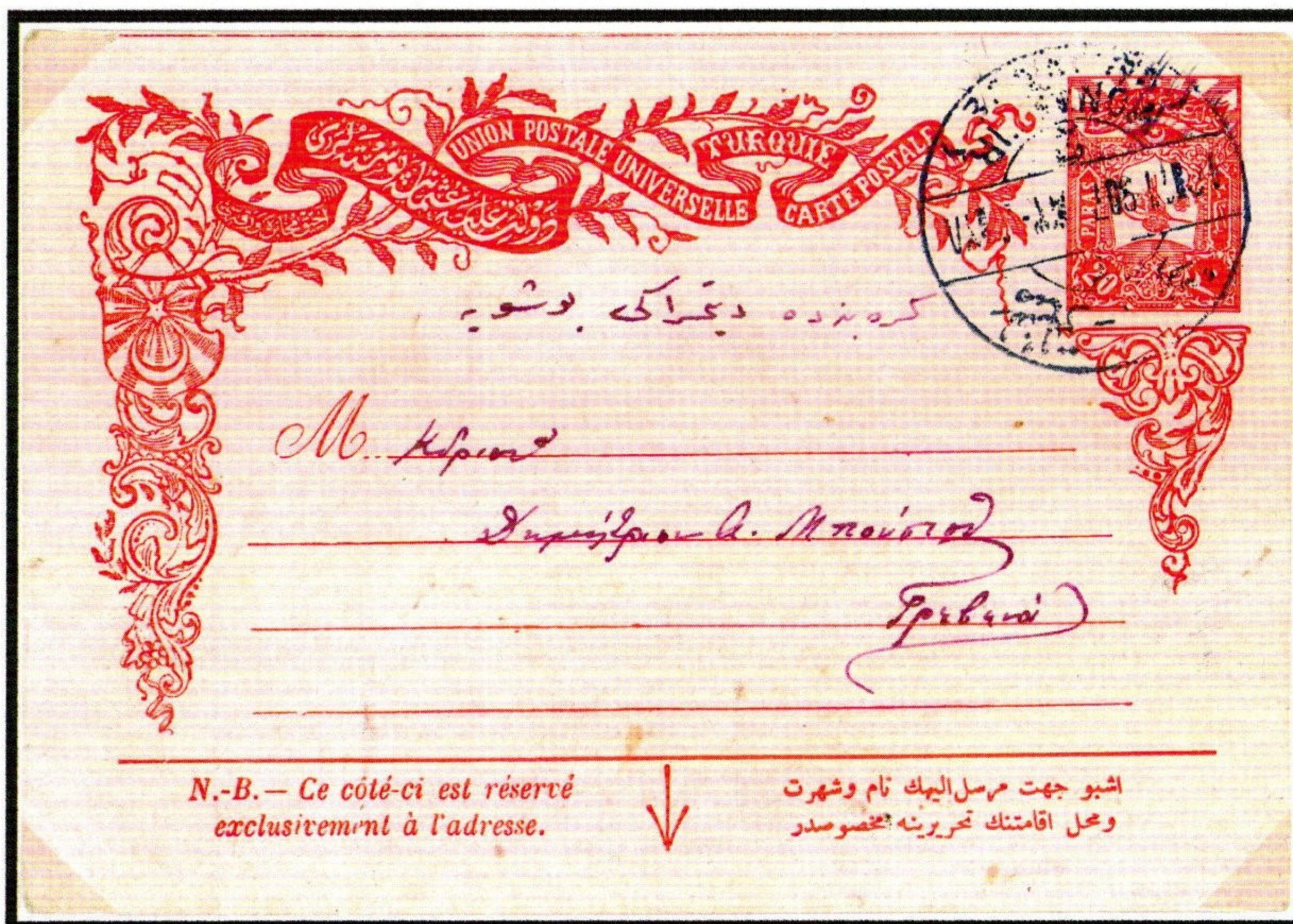
21 February 1910

Printed matter from Thessaloniki, franked with pair of 5 Paras issue 1909 ottoman stamps. Posted from SALONIQUE - MONASTIR 21.2.910, to Monastir.

Rate: 10 Paras (interior rate) for printed matter up to 50 g into Ottoman Empire.

# The Railway of "Thessaloniki - Monastir"

MONASTIR (SALONIQUE) 2, 1907-



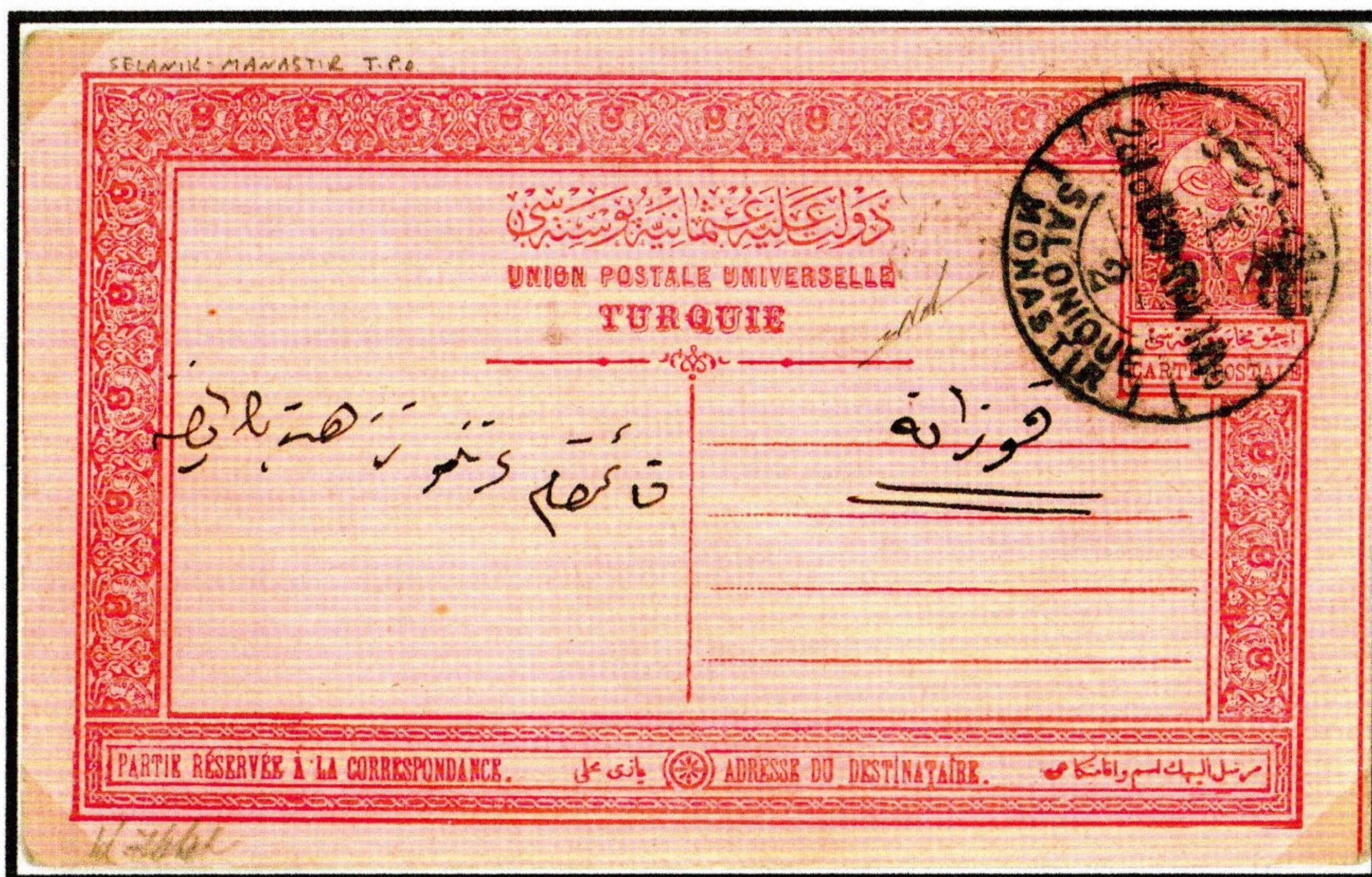
2 September 1907

Postcard stationery issue 1905 with printed 20 Paras ottoman stamps from Monastir 27.9.07.

Posted from SALONIQUE (MONASTIR) 2 27.9.907 to Grevena.

Rate: 20 Paras (interior rate) for postcard stationery into Ottoman Empire.

SALONIQUE (MONASTIR) 2, 1909-



28 August 1909

Postcard stationery issue 1908 with printed 20 Paras ottoman stamps. Posted from SALONIQUE (MONASTIR) 2 28.8.909 to Kozani.

Rate: 20 Paras (interior rate) for postcard stationery into Ottoman Empire.

# The Railway of "Thessaloniki - Monastir"

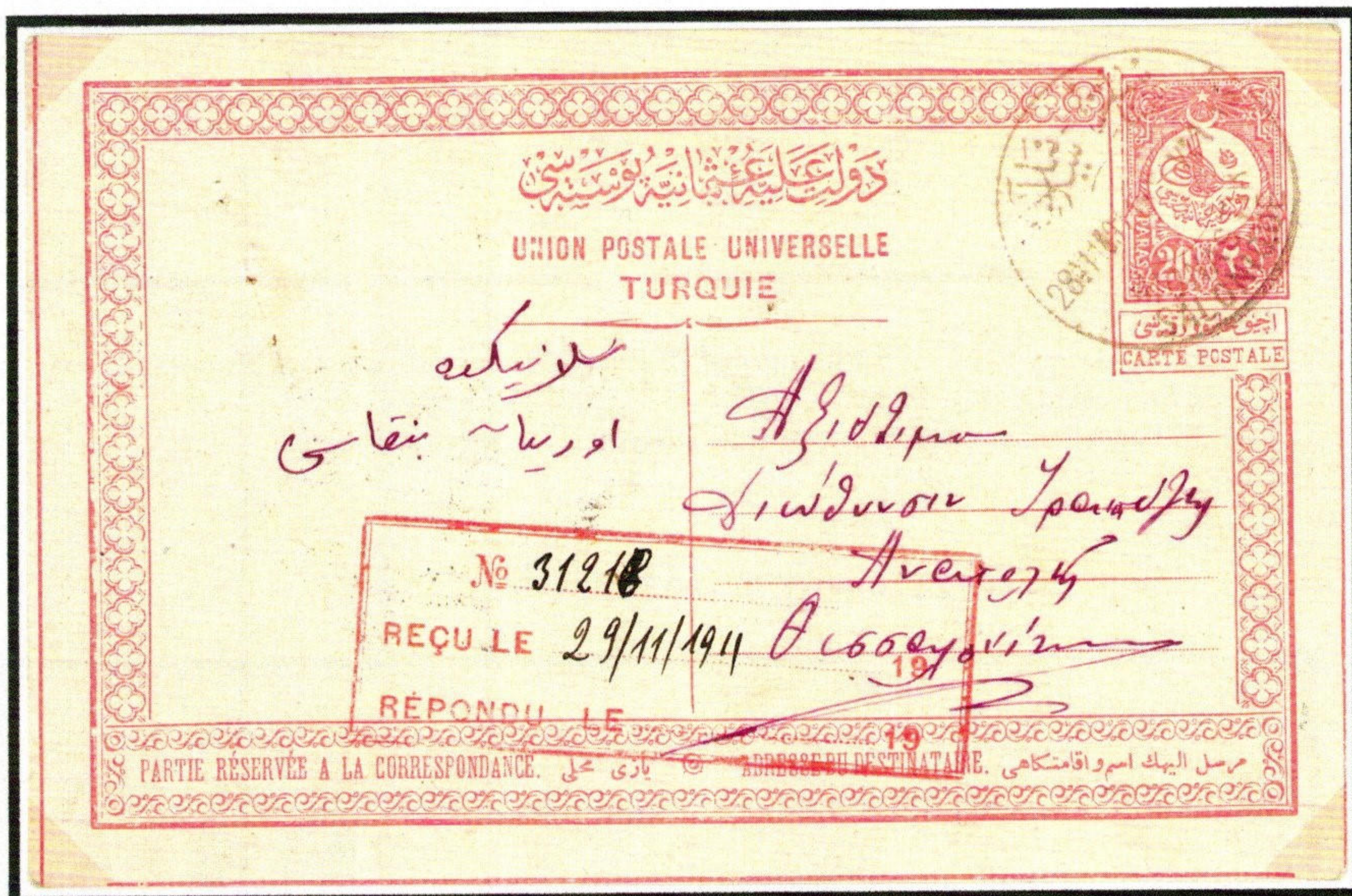
MONASTIR (SALONIQUE) 1, 1909-1912



22 June 1909

Fragment with 20 Paras issue 1908 Ottoman stamps, cancelled with MONASTIR (SALONIQUE) 1 22.6.909

MONASTIR SALONIQUE, 1910-1912



28 November 1911

Postcard stationery issue 1910 with printed 20 Paras Ottoman stamps, from the Railway Station of Veria 15/28.11.11. Posted from MONASTIR SALONIQUE 28.11.911 to Thessaloniki. Rate: 20 Paras (interior rate) for postcard stationery into Ottoman Empire.

KARADJA-ABAD  
(SALONIQUE)



... September 1909

1 Piastre issue 1909 Ottoman stamps, cancelled with KARADJA-ABAD (SALONIQUE) .. .9.909.

EKCHI-SOU - STATION  
(FLORINA)



4 September 1911

10 Paras issue 1909 Ottoman stamps, cancelled with EKCHI-SOU - STATION (FLORINA) 4.9.911.

# The "Union Railway"

## Thessaloniki - Alexandroupoli - Constantinople

On 10 September 1892 by force of Imperial decree, was ceded to the French banker of Constantinople Rene Beaudouy, for ninety nine years, the privilege of construction and exploitation of the railway network from Thessaloniki to Dedeaghadj (Alexandroupoli). For this purpose, the banker in question brought together a group of capital raisers, in which there were included French-Belgian economic institutions, with the Ottoman Bank leading the effort. This company was named Company of Railways of "Jonction Salonique - Constantinople", as it would connect the pre-existing railway lines Constantinople - Philippopolis - Sofia - Nis and Thessaloniki - Skopje - Nis. The works of construction of began in 1893 and its inauguration took place in April 1896. The length of line Thessaloniki - Alexandroupoli was 406.6 kilometres and the total time of journey from Thessaloniki to Alexandroupoli in 1900 was 12:40 hours.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there began to function two Mobile Post Offices in the trains that were moved in this journey. The first was the Mobile Post Thessaloniki - Dedeaghadj (Alexandroupoli) with two crews. It functioned from the beginning of 1900 until 1912 and made use of two different types of seals. The second was the Mobile Post Thessaloniki - Constantinople. It began its operation in 1901 and finally stopped in 1912. In the beginning it had one and later five crews and up to day we know of the existence of eleven different types of seals.

### DEDE-AGHADJ (SALONIQUE) 2



17 Joule 190..

1 Piastre issue 1908 Ottoman stamps, cancelled with DEDE-AGHADJ (SALONIQUE) 2 17.7.90...

### SALONIQUE (DEDE-AGHADJ) 2



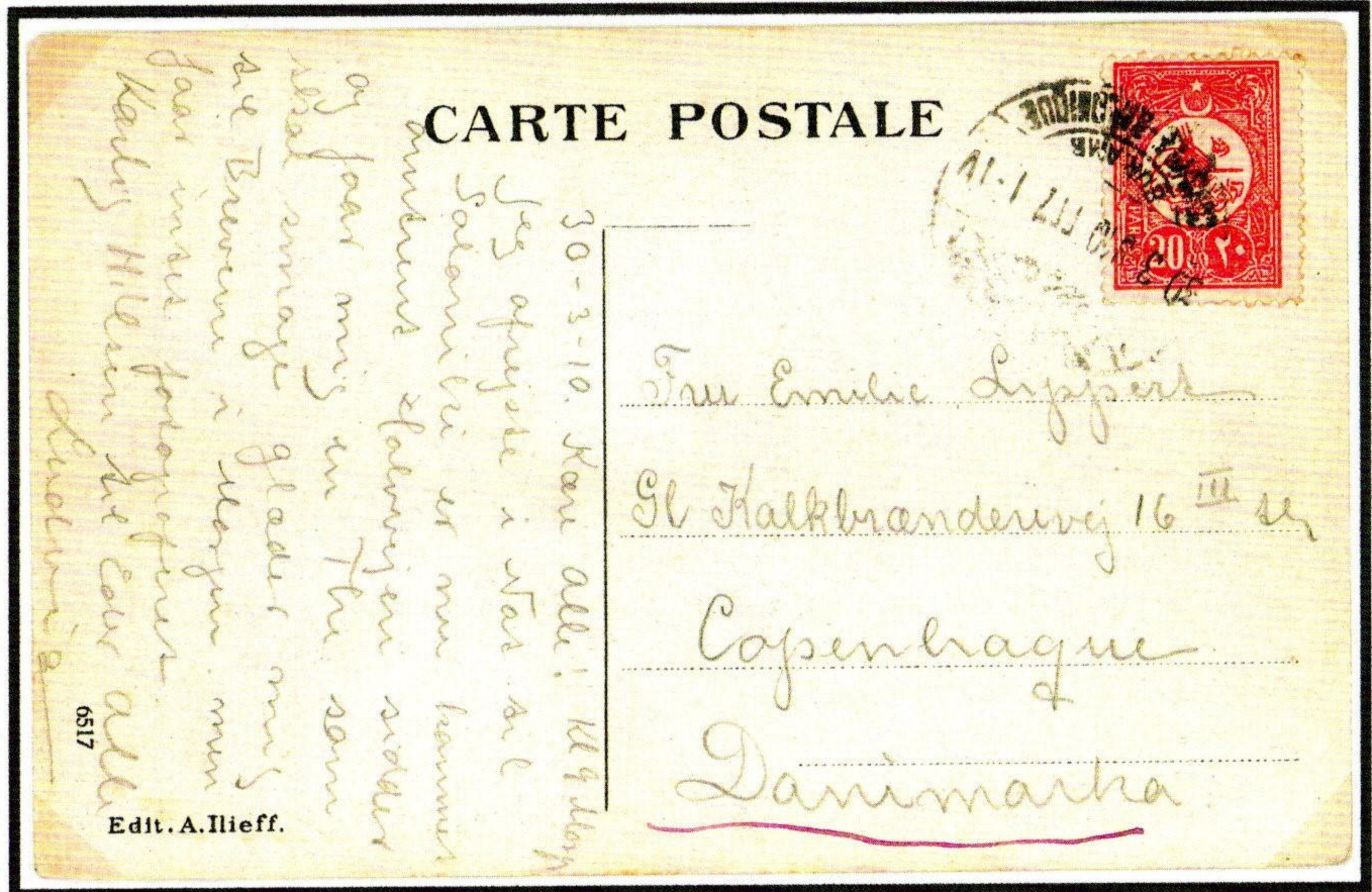
20 Paras issue 1908 ottoman stamps, cancelled with SALONIQUE (DEDE-AGHADJ) 2



1 Piastre issue 1908 ottoman stamps, cancelled with SALONIQUE (DEDE-AGHADJ) 2

The "Union Railway" Thessaloniki - Alexandroupoli - Constantinople

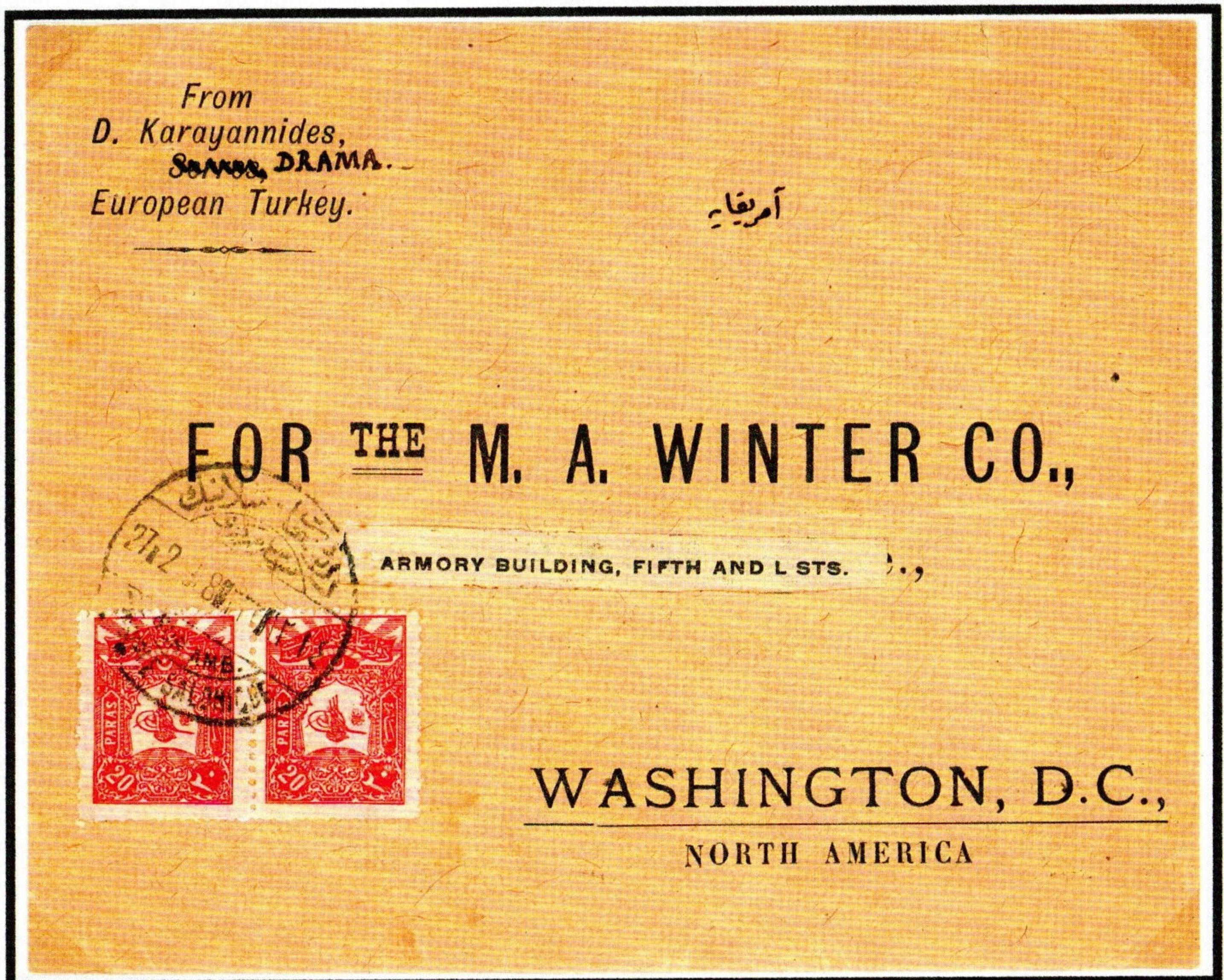
DERSAADET - SELANIK SEYYAR MERKEZI - BUR. AMB. CONS/PLE - SALONIQUE, 1901-191..



30 March 1909

Picture postcard from Adrinople to Denmark, with 20 Paras issue 1909 ottoman stamps. Posted from BUR. AMB. CONS/PLE - SALONIQUE 30.3.909 to Copenhagen.

Rate: 20 Paras (foreign rate) for picture postcard card to Denmark.



27 February 1908

Cover with pair of 20 Paras issue 1905 ottoman stamps, from Drama to USA. Posted from BUR. AMB. CONS/PLE - SALONIQUE 27.2.908 to WASHINGTON D.C. 11.3.08.

Rate: 1 Piastre (foreign rate) for cover to USA.

# The "Union Railway" Thessaloniki - Alexandroupoli - Constantinople

SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 2, 1911-1912



**1 June 1912**

Fragment with a pair of 5 Paras issue 1909 ottoman stamps, cancelled with SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 2 1.6.12



**15 Joule 1912**

Fragment with 1 Piastre issue 1909 ottoman stamps, cancelled with SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 2 16.7.12



**22 August 1911**

Printed matter from Thessaloniki with 5 Paras issue 1909 ottoman stamps. Posted from SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 2 22.8.911 to KAVALA 1 23.8.911.

Rate: 5 Para (littoral rate) for printed matter up to 30 gr into Ottoman Empire.

The "Union Railway" Thessaloniki - Alexandroupoli - Constantinople

SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 5, 1911-1912



23 May 1912

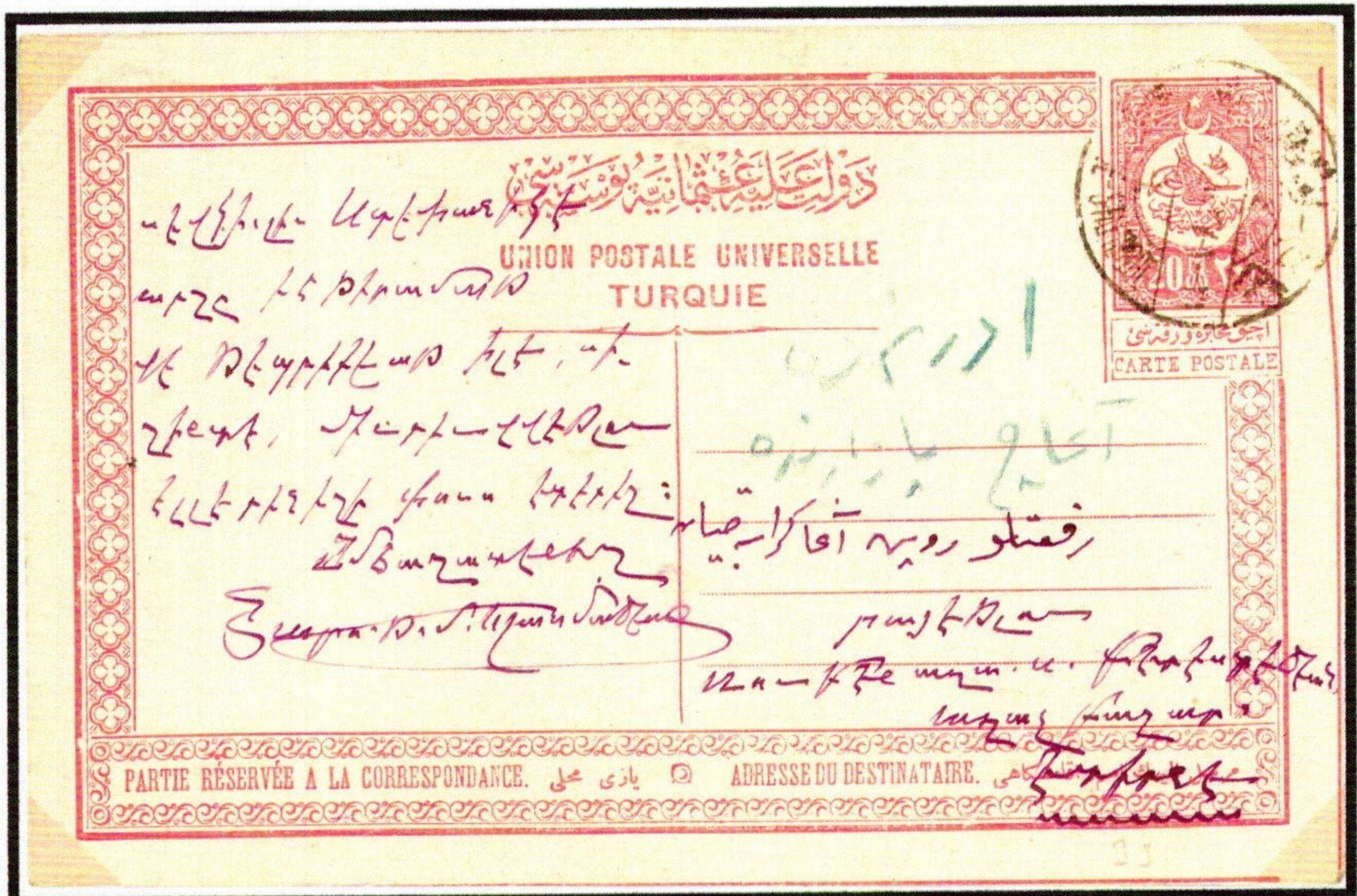
Fragment with 1 Piastre issue 1909 ottoman stamps, cancelled with SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 5 23.5.12



7 October 1911

Fragment with 20 Paras issue 1909 ottoman stamps, cancelled with SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 5 7.10.11.

SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 4, 1911-1912



12 January 1912

Postcard stationery issue 1910 with printed 20 Paras ottoman stamps, from Gumuldjina (Komotini) 13.1.1912. Posted from SALONIQUE - STAMBOUL 4 13.I.12 to Constantinople. Rate: 20 Paras (interior rate) for postcard stationery into Ottoman Empire.