

DESIGN OF THE OTTOMAN 1914 PICTORIAL ISSUE

by W.C. Robertson, MSc

The 1914 issue of pictorial stamps (with the complementary 1920 issue) is often regarded as the supreme achievement in stamp design of the Ottoman Empire. There were seventeen stamps in the series: the top value (200) piastres) shows a portrait of Sultan Mohammed V; the 2 piastres value is a picture of the cruiser 'Hamidiye', which had seen action in the Balkan wars; the remaining sixteen values show views of Constantinople and the surrounding area.

The stamps were produced by the English printing firm of Bradbury and Wilkinson. The four lower values (2, 4, 5 and 6 paras) were produced by litho, while the rest were produced by recess printing. The designer of the stamps themselves was Oskan Effendi.

In the each of the stamps the om picture is bordered by an elaborate frame, each of which is different. Passer states that these frames were all engraved by C.A. Taylor, while the pictures themselves were engraved by:

H. Lauchli (2 piastres)

J. E.Syson (4, 6, 20 paras; 1 3/4, 5, 25 piastres)

J. Potts (5 paras; 2 1/2, 50 piastres)

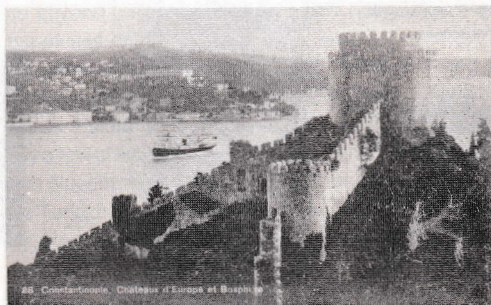
A. B.Hill (10 paras; 1, 1 1/2, 2, 10 piastres)

W. B. Downey (100 piastres)

The 200 piastre portrait of the Sultan was engraved by the Spanish engraver Enrique Vaquer.

The pictures themselves were clearly supplied to the printer as photographs, and not paintings or drawings, since the 4 paras, and 5 piastres views show figures in photographic 'action' poses, rather than stylistic poses which might have been expected from an artist. However, what is surprising is that these photographs seem to have been chosen from commercially available postcards.

Comparing a collection of postcards originating sometime around, or after 1900, with the stamps, the author has found that on at least 10 of them the picture matches exactly with that on a commercial postcard. Figure 1. shows the most commonly found postcard with a picture of 'Castle of Europe' and the



corresponding 20 paras stamp. It can be seen that as well as the angle and detail of the castle itself, the ship is also identical, proving that both card and stamp were taken from the same source, since the ship would not remain long in one place for two identical photographs to be taken.



Figure 2. shows a similar matching pair of stamp and postcard, this time of the 'Former Ministry of War', again with figures dotted about the parade ground which prove that the pictures were identical. This time, however the stamp has been seen on a postcard date 19.1.99 (*1), which would also appear to indicate that the designs on the 1914 stamps were taken from the earlier postcards, rather than the postcards printed from photographs taken specially for the stamps.

So far the following stamps have been matched to postcards:

4 paras	'Column of Constantine'
5 paras	'Leander's Tower'
10 paras	'Lighthouse Garden'
20 paras	'Castle of Europe'
1 piastres	'Mosque of Sultan Ahmed'
2 piastres	'Candilli'
5 piastres	'Former Ministry of War'
10 piastres	'Sweet Waters of Europe' (*2)
25 piastres	'Suleiman Mosque'
100 piastres	'Sultan Ahmed's Fountain'

It is suspected that the remaining stamps can be matched to postcards, including the picture of the 'Cruiser Hamidiye' since postcards of naval vessels from the period do exist; and perhaps of the Sultan, since postcards with pictures of royalty were fairly common at the time.

It seems probable that Oskan Effendi in designing the stamps chose the views from a selection of current postcards, and then designed the frames to fit round the card, before sending them to England.

Since the earlier issue of 1913 marking the recapture of Adrianople (Edirne) was also printed by Bradbury and Wilkinson and designed by Oskan Effendi, it seems possible that the picture of the Mosque of Selim was also taken from a postcard, though so far it has not been seen.

*1 Collection of Mr. M.J. Whittaker:

*2 Collection of Mr. P.I. Mc Queen.

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