

# More About The T Overprints

There has been a modest but very interesting response to some of the questions which I posed in my article about the Turkish T overprints of 1905-09 (Opal Journal No.160). This was followed, as members will be aware, by the reproduction, on pages 38-42 of the Opal - Tughra Times Special Issue, of a fully representative selection of the best examples in John Garton's "Higlett" collection. And I now have some very helpful additions and comments from three of our overseas members, Count Kinsky of Switzerland, Menachim Mayo of America and Eckhardt Redecke of West Germany. Thank you, gentlemen, for your interest and for taking the trouble to report your holdings.

Before touching on a few specific examples which members will probably like to see, I can perhaps sum up the present state of research as follows:

1. The story extends into and beyond the Great War period; certainly into the Angora era. The latest dated piece with a postage stamp used as a due label by the application of a T mark which I have seen or had reported to me has a cancellation of 14 September 1921. Several sheets in the "Higlett" collection are headed "Provisional Postage Due Stamps 1914-1924", but that description may be misleading. The 1914 date is too late for some of the stamps illustrated, and the 1924 date is meant to signify a terminal date for the period covered by the collection. John Garton tells me that the supposition that such very late usages exist is based upon the assumptions that (a) no postage due labels were issued during the Sultan Mohammed VI period, and (b) the T handstamps were still in use at that time. So, although I have not seen a postage stamp which was issued after 1921 overprinted or cancelled by a T mark, it seems reasonably likely that future discoveries will extend the 1921 date. We still need many more details if we are going to be able to get to the bottom of this matter, but if our members will please keep the information flowing (particularly with photocopies of complete covers and dated pieces) we may eventually be able to achieve a fairly complete survey of these very interesting usages. Their true status, within the ambit of Turkish philately and postal history, certainly deserves a wider recognition.

2. We have not seen any Turkish postal regulations or directions concerning the preparation and use of these stamps, nor any contemporary reports about them. If any member can supply that deficiency, it would be most welcome. Count Kinsky has observed, in his letter to me: "I believe that any underfranked letter should have one T from the dispatch office, and a pencilled T if a cancellation was not available, and a postage due stamp with the dated cancellation; or, if a postage due stamp was not available, a normal stamp cancelled with a T." Although I agree entirely with that observation, it would still be nice to see the official postal regulation instructing the Turkish post office staff about the use of normal postage stamps for postage due purposes.

3. No examples seem to have turned up used in Smyrna (Izmir), though Smyrna certainly had a T mark (Fig.11), which Count Kinsky showed on an underpaid reply-card used in 1916. The Smyrna T was used in the normal way, to indicate to the receiving office that postage due needed to be collected, and when the card reached Seidikeuy the charge was dealt with by the use of a 20 paras due label of the Bradbury Wilkinson 1914 issue. But has nobody ever seen the Smyrna T used to overprint or to cancel a postage stamp for postage due purposes?

4. We need to distinguish between postage stamps which were "overprinted" with a T mark in order to convert them into postage due stamps (which would then be cancelled with the ordinary town datestamp at the time of use) and the postage stamps which were used for postage due purposes (which were generally cancelled and tied to cover by a T mark). Complete entires with either usage seem to be very scarce indeed. Count Kinsky says that in old collections one could often find mint stamps, usually of the 1905 issue, with different T overprints always well centred. He understands that these were made for stamp dealers, who tried to sell them as postage due labels. He adds that he has not come across any mint stamps with a T before the 1905 issue, and none after the 1908 issue, although they may exist. These interesting observations would seem to suggest that if, as we think is certain, the postage stamps of this period were sometimes overprinted by handstamping them with the local post office's T in order to convert them from postage stamps into postage due labels.

it is not surprising that some supplies were "liberated" from stock, or specially produced by favour, in order to cater for the demands of the stamp dealers. Indeed, the dealers may have been perfectly correct, after all, in advertising them for sale as postage due stamps.

5. There seem to be some forerunners of the more regular usages of 1905 onwards. Herr Redecke has shown me a 20 paras carmine of the EMP:OTTOMAN 1884 issue, Perf.11½, which looks like part of a T mark (Fig.12); but, being on a loose stamp, it is impossible to know exactly what it is or how it was used. The portion of the double-ring datestamp which also appears on the stamp shows the starting letters ST (perhaps for Stamboul), but no legible date. It may not be a postage due usage at all, for the supposed T is not very clear, and, even if it is a T, it could have been used on an underpaid cover and been struck by mistake partly over the stamp which represented the insufficient franking. However, if it is a postage stamp used as a due, it corresponds to a usage which was shown to me by Count Kinsky, and mentioned also by Max Mayo. On the reverse of an underpaid letter sent from Damiette in August 1897 (with an Egyptian T mark on the front and a manuscript "fr.10" due calculation on the back) are a one piastre printed matter stamp and a vertically bisected two piastres, each tied separately by Beyrouth's T mark but sharing a double-ring Beyrouth datestamp (Fig.13). I think that these are just exceptional usages, and were only employed because of some temporary shortage of postage due labels. I have, in my own collection, a similar 2 piastres bisect, used at Brousse in 1898 (Fig.14). These things are interesting curiosities, but I do not think they advance our researches into the post-1905 period, when postage stamps had to be used on a more regular basis for postage due purposes.

Let me now look at a few items which have not been noted previously.

Eckhardt Redecke sent me, among his collection, an Angora 20 paras depicting Smyrna Harbour (listed as a 1922 issue by Gibbons, but as 1921 by Passer, and illustrated on Passer's Plate 34) centrally "overprinted" with the large T mark of Stamboul and tied to piece by a Stamboul datestamp of 7 September 1921 (Fig.15). He also has another stamp with identical markings but loose, rather than tied to piece, this being in

all respects, including date, the same as John Garton's exhibit at the bottom of page 42 of the recent Opal - Tughra Times Special Issue. Another loose stamp from Herr Redecke's collection shows the same markings on a 10 paras pictorial of 1920. It was used in 1920 with the Stamboul datestamp, and has the T mark struck sideways, rather than upright, and about one-third of the T mark off the stamp. This suggests usage of the postage stamp as a due label, rather than a preliminary overprinting of the stamp in order to turn it into a label. It would be instructive to find some examples on cover.

Count Kinsky also contributes another splendid Angora piece, a cover dispatched to Konia on 9 September 1921 from an illegible office. It was posted unpaid, and collected, in addition to the datestamp of origin, a T mark which closely resembles the contemporary Stamboul type. Count Kinsky explains that the letter rate at the time was 5 kurush, so 10 kurush was payable for postage due. This double deficiency is represented by two 5 kurush Angora stamps, each tied by a Konia datestamp of 14 September 1921 and sharing a T mark which must obviously belong to Konia. It is a very attractive item (Fig.16).

One of the T marks which I mentioned but did not illustrate in my original article was the rectangular handstamp from Pera. It is shown as No.8 among Higlett's illustrations. This is one of no fewer than nine examples which are in John Garton's "Higlett" collection, two of which can be seen on page 40 of the Opal - Tughra Times Special Issue. All of these are on postage stamps which seem to have been "overprinted" for use as due labels, and John Garton has two late examples (a one piastre of the 1914 issue and a one piastre "Gallipoli Map") which also show portions of datestamps. However, this particular T mark was also used as a canceller on postage stamps: Eckhardt Redecke shows a 20 paras of 1909 tied to piece (Fig.17), and Count Kinsky the same stamp, also tied to piece but otherwise uncanceled, alongside a one piastre postage due label of the 1908 series, with a Stamboul arrival datestamp. If these belong together, to make up a 60 paras postage due charge, it raises the question whether the Stamboul office was also equipped with an identical rectangular type of T mark. \*

Also in the Kinsky collection is a 2 pi GPO stamp of

1913, cancelled by an unframed bilingual T (Fig.18). Unfortunately, we have no lead as yet regarding the provenance of this unusual style of T mark.

Max Mayo points out one of his T marks which has, in the Turkish portion, a crescent with a small dot above it, instead of two dots (Fig.19). He asks whether this may be a fake. I think not; it seems to be just an oddity of design, or a variation through damage suffered by the handstamp in course of use. The marking with the crescent was attributed by Higlett to Galata. I showed one of my own examples of it as Fig.6, on page 112 of Opal Journal No.160, and John Garton another, as "Galata Type C" on page 39 of the Opal - Tughra Times Special Issue. However, in the Redecke collection is a 5 paras clearly cancelled at Pera (Fig.20). So! There are two different "crescent" types; and when you look at Fig.19 and Fig.20 together they are very obviously different. Perhaps, therefore, it is Max Mayo's exhibit (Fig.19) which belongs to Galata, and Fig.6, Fig.20 and "Galata Type C" (Higlett's No.3) to Pera. Or may it, as I strongly suspect, belong to Angora? For I have now seen two postmarked examples, one with "A..." and the other with "...ORA" in the datestamps. We live and learn!

Here are some newly seen and recently reported single-ring bilingual T markings:-

Dia-meter	T size	T width	Used at	Seen used on:
18	14½x9	9	Salonique	1905, 1 pi (Fig.21)
19	12½x10	10		1905, 10 pa
19	13½x10½	9½		1913 GPO, 20 pa
20	13x11	9½	Konia?	1908, 10 pa (Fig.22); same as(?):
19½	13x11	9½	Konia	1921, as illustrated (Fig.16)
23½	15½x13	11½	...hia	1905, 10 & 20 pa; Angora Min.of Justice, 5 pi (Fig.23)

Also to be noted is a single-ring T (not bilingual) with a 16mm diameter circle and the T measuring 11½x9mm. It has been seen used on a 10 paras of the 1905 issue, whereabouts unknown. And the Stamboul bilingual T shown as Fig.7 in my previous article has been reported used on the 1916 GPO Jubilee 20 paras postage stamp.

My Fig.8 and Fig.9 (on page 112 of Opal Journal No.160) unfortunately had the captions reversed. But the true Fig.8, which is a Beyrouth mark, has been also seen on a 10 paras of the 1905 issue, and again on a 20 paras. The T marks have been struck centrally in both cases, so as to convert the postage stamps into postage due labels, and both have been cancelled at Beyrouth. And, as before, the T marks have been applied in blue ink, a colour apparently favoured by the Beyrouth postal staff for this kind of operation.

Higlett's No.9 (attributed by him to Taxim, and illustrated on page 39 of the Opal - Tughra Times Special Issue) appears on a loose "Gallipoli Map" postage stamp of 1917, which has been cancelled by a datestamp of indecipherable origin. In Max Mayo's copy the T mark is central and upright; so, since the stamp has been cancelled as well by a normal datestamp, it would seem that the stamp was probably part of a stock overprinted T for use as postage due labels. It would be nice to see a few more examples, and possibly one on cover to confirm the Taxim origin.

Finally, by way of postscript, let us look at something quite different but which is not entirely unconnected.

Our Swiss correspondent, in comparing the Turkish methods of dealing with underfranked mail with what happens today in Britain and Switzerland, comments that "The Swiss Post Office collects the double amount and sticks stamps on the letter as a receipt and cancels them. They have no postage due stamps and no T."

This I found very interesting, for it marks a fairly recent departure by the Swiss from previous practice. They were using postage due labels in Switzerland until 1956 and T marks until about 1975 (see A. J. S. MacMillan's article in "Stamp Collecting" magazine, 31 January 1980). However, during the intervening period, while T marks were being used though postage due labels had been discontinued, the ordinary postage stamps which were used for postage due purposes were often shown as such by being cancelled by the Swiss T, typically a T of the large hollow design which is almost a classic in the history of Swiss postal markings. I cannot resist ending this article by showing one such example (Fig.24) from my own collection. (No, I don't really collect Switzerland, but have always been fascinated

by post office manuscript markings, and the "T60" is refreshingly flamboyant!)

Ian McQueen.

\* This must be so. John Garton has kindly drawn my attention to an illustration of the reverse of a cover from a David Feldman auction catalogue which shows several Turkish pictorials overprinted with the rectangular T and all cancelled in July 1921 by the Stamboul datestamp. We must now try to discover how many of these rectangular T marks were made, and to which offices they were distributed.

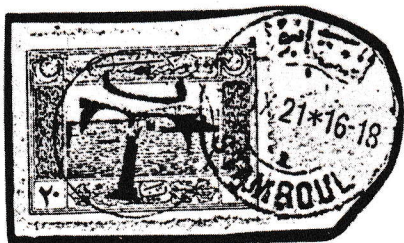


Fig.15



Fig.17



Fig.12



Fig.19



Fig.20