

Perfins of Austrian Levant

Levant is a common name for eastern Mediterranean and for the seaside area of original Ottoman Empire infringing South-eastern Europe, the Middle East and northern part of Africa. Aside from the own postal services also postal administrations of many other European countries operated there till the beginning of the WWI and they also issued special stamps for this territory. Among others it was also Austrian postal administration. On this territory Austrian stamp issues for Levant (currency Para, Piaster) and also specific issues for Crete (currency Centimes, Franc) were valid simultaneously.

Perfins originated in 1868 in England and gradually expanded into other countries of the world. In Austrian Monarchy the permission to use perfins was issued on 4 April 1877. On the Levant territory perfins were used by great international companies and banks, many of them originated from European countries. Therefore their same perfins can be found on stamps of more postal administrations (Ottoman, Austrian, German, Great Britain, French, Italian, Russian etc.). Existing perfins on stamps from this territory we can generally consider as less common up to very rare and on covers or cards as rare up to extremely rare. Overwhelming number of perfins on Austrian stamps can be found on the stamp issues for Levant, perfins on Austrian Crete stamp issues are purely outstanding.

Perfin	Domicile	Stamp Issue for		Page Nr.
		Levant	Crete	
APC	Jaffa		RR	2
B.A.	Candia		RRR	2
B.H.	Smyrna	X	R	3
BIO	Constantinople			2
C.A.S.	Constantinople		RRR	4
CL (1)	Constantinople		RRR	4
C.L (2)	Constantinople		RRR	-
CL (3)	Constantinople		RRR	-
CL (4)	Constantinople	X		5
CL/J	Jerusalem		RR	4
EOB (1)	Constantinople	X		6,7
EOB (2)	Smyrna		R	6
F.C.	Smyrna		RRR	10
G.C.	Trebizonde		RR	8
G.S.	Smyrna		RRR	8
H.C.	Samsun	X	RR	9
K.B.	Smyrna	X,X		10,11
L.M.	Constantinople		RR	8
O.C.M.	Smyrna		R	4
O&M.	Jerusalem		RRR	6
P.M.	Smyrna	X,X	R	12,13
T.	Smyrna		RRR	-
WBV (1)	Constantinople	X,X		14,15
WBV (2)	Smyrna		R	14
W.B.V. (3)	Smyrna		R	14

	This combination exists, but not present
	This combination displayed
	Own research
X	Documented by letter or card
R, RR, RRR	Scarcity factor, empty cell = common perfin

This exhibit deals with perfins of Austrian Levant only and is organised by existing perfins carrying an effort to optimise the space on sheets. The overview and placing of perfins is obvious from the attached table. Also the scarcity factors of perfins based on own experience and research, are published there in this table for the first time.

Aside from the stamps with perfins also few unique covers and cards are displayed in the exhibit: perfined stationery card G.S. (in literature the only one existing item is mentioned), this one even on the Crete stationery issue (page #8), probably the only one known cover with perfin H.C., but without identified user (page #9), outstanding cover "sample without value" with perfin K.B. (page #11), heavy registered letter with perfin P.M. (page #12) etc.

Page #16 displays very interesting usage of perfins on ordinary Austrian stamps of shipping company Lloyd, which served transport connections with the territory of Levant. Their home port was Trieste.

The own research is presented by the scarcity factors as well as better specifying the period of usage of about half of perfins. Also the pictures how to distinguish very similar perfins EOB (1) a (2), WBV (1) a (2) are published for the first time. New findings of 3 perfins on Crete stamp issues are also interesting.

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