



**Semaan Bassil is the recipient of the  
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**for**

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**&**

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**for**

***Mail in the Levant, Beirut: A Case Study in the Early Age of Steamship & Globalization (1835–1914),  
Beirut, Cedarstamps, 2023***



**British Mail in the Levant :**  
**The Beirut Postal Hub**  
**(1836 - 1914)**

**Semaan Bassil**

**All postcards, maps, covers, and other documents in this publication are from the author's collection unless otherwise stated**

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Beirut, 2025



Fig. 1. Photo of Beirut with ships in the foreground, c. 1870-1890. The view is taken from the Syrian Protestant College (renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920). This photo was produced by Maison Bonfils. Félix Bonfils (1831-1885), at age 29, landed in Beirut with the French Expeditionary Forces in 1860 and later returned with his wife and two children to settle permanently in Beirut.



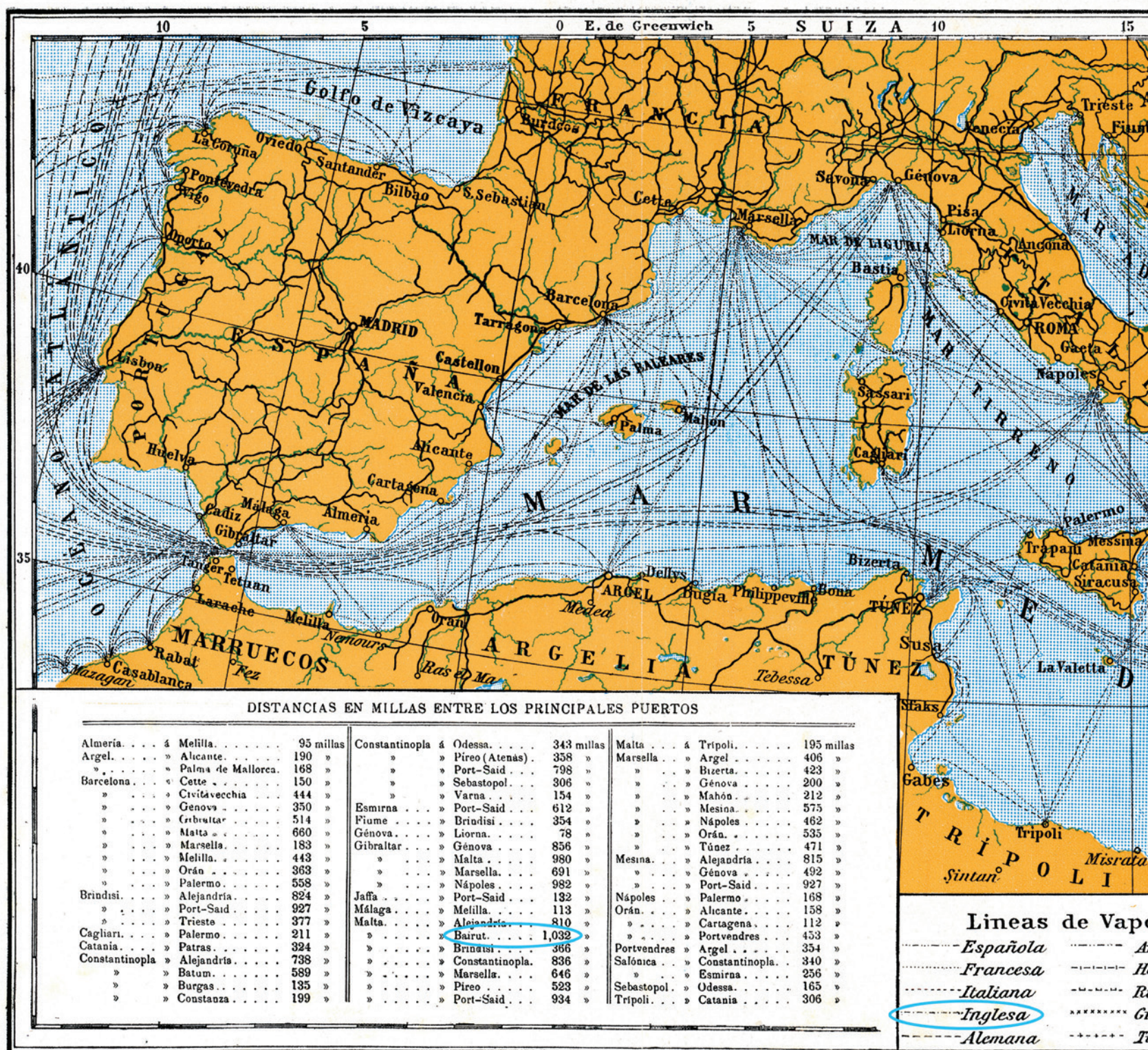
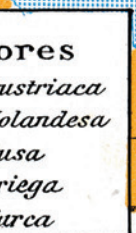


Fig. 2. A Spanish map, dated 1900, shows the Mediterranean Sea with shipping liner routes and the distance in nautical miles between key port cities.<sup>1</sup>







## FOREWARD

8

Postal history is no longer merely the orderly collection and classification of old letters, as this book so eloquently demonstrates. Once the sole means of communication, written correspondence reveals itself as a mirror of human exchange, political ambition, and economic transformation – all forces that shaped the modern world. The study of British postal communication in the Levant, and more particularly, in Beirut between 1836 and 1914, belongs to this broader perspective, where diplomatic, commercial, and technological histories intersect.

***British Mail in the Levant :The Beirut Postal Hub***, offers a meticulous exploration of how the British Empire asserted its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean through its trading, postal, and maritime networks.

The book vividly recounts the distinctive evolution of British postal service in Beirut. Between 1836 and 1840, a regular line was established between Beirut and Alexandria by the British Navy (Admiralty), securing the route to India via the Persian Gulf. The British later relied on Austrian and French Mediterranean networks, both of which opened their respective offices in Beirut in 1845. In 1873, the British introduced a new postal model: a post office operating without a dedicated shipping line – a departure from the practice of other nations, which restricted their mail to their own fleets. This gave rise to a unique and highly valued express mail system from Beirut to Alexandria for onward shipping to any destination, dispatching correspondence through a mixed franking system, combining the prepayment of mail with both British stamps and French or Italian ones.

This remarkable study combines primary research, intensive documentation (letters, bills of lading, postcards, maps, prints, photographs, invoices, advertising brochures, and more), and an approach that is analytical, comparative, and contextual. It underscores how the postal service – often viewed as a mere logistical function – emerged as an instrument of power, a vehicle of modernity, and a privileged witness to the evolution of international relations.

Beyond the British example – and following three earlier volumes devoted respectively to the French Post Offices of Beirut and Tripoli, and to correspondence in Beirut during the early era of steam navigation and globalization – this work makes a significant new contribution to the postal history of Lebanon. It retraces the flow of letters and trade, illuminating the coexistence and interaction of foreign postal services on Lebanese soil, while revealing the complexity of a territory both open to external influences and internally shaping its own development.

Through a careful analysis of postage, markings, tariffs, routes, and methods of conveyance, the author offers collectors and researchers an unprecedented reference work. By contextualizing each postal artifact to its historical and economic background, the study transcends philatelic erudition to propose a genuinely cultural interpretation of correspondence.

In contributing so meaningfully to the postal history of the Levant, the author reaffirms Beirut's place as a maritime and diplomatic crossroad within the vast network of imperial communications. This book – a combined work of postal, economic, and geopolitical history – will captivate philatelists, historians, and scholars of Mediterranean and imperial studies alike.

**Robert Abensur**

**President of l'Académie de philatélie (France)**

## FOREWARD

I am totally enchanted by ***British Mail in the Levant : The Beirut Postal Hub*** by collector Semaan Bassil. As a species, collectors perform a vital function, rescuing and transforming objects that might be discarded into treasure, preserving knowledge and history. Through this work, we are witnessing an evolution of postal history, elevated to become a full-fledged academic field with its own terminology, methodology, and rules.

In a documentary about the ancient Lebanese town of Byblos, our common friend, the archaeologist, Dr. Claude Doumet-Serhal, described the fine line between a treasure hunter and a scholar. Sometimes a small piece of glass or a fragment of cloth can alter our view of history and can be more important to the scholar than priceless marble statues, jewelry, or gold that a treasure hunter searches for. Postal history is a bit like that, collectors are like archaeologists sifting through archives and documents to find an envelope or postcard, and then for obscure stamps and inscriptions that will give a clue to its postal route. Semaan takes it a step further, linking it to broader geopolitical and historical developments, illustrating the history of Beirut.

The content of the book is curated like a museum exhibition and with its supporting documents, history comes alive in the micro level of detail with names of people and companies, zooming out to the macro with maps and photos, postcards and tables. Each document is treated like a puzzle, revealing elements of moments where diplomacy, commerce, and global communication converge.

The postal trajectories illustrated by these documents can change with the rise and fall of empires, diversions through wars, expansion of markets, technological innovations, and trade relations. Here, we are reading about the growth of Beirut at a time when it was the commercial gateway to the Syrian province in the Ottoman Empire. This was through a set of decisions, which diverted the quarantine center from other more important cities in the 18th century, like Sidon and Tripoli, which had refused it. Shipping lines were then rerouted to Beirut, as well as trading houses and post offices, making the city a hub for European powers that were fiercely competing for influence. The presence of the British Post Office was more than a simple service, it became a station on the route to India and part of imperial influence, perfectly preserved in the covers and postal markings that trace their journeys.

I have visited several postal history exhibitions; they consisted mainly of panels or posters with the envelope and a brief description of the markings. Exhibitors had to own the item to show it off. Semaan breaks these rules and has dug into several private and public collections, using primary and secondary sources and putting the story together in a most appealing manner. The depth, rigor, and multidisciplinary nature of this publication suggests the future of this field. There is still a long way to go before a program or a chair can be established at a major university, but when this happens, Semaan will be one of its pioneers.

**Nadim Shehadi**  
**Lebanese Historian**  
**Former Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies,**  
**Oxford**

CONTENTS

Forewards.....8

Abbreviations and Terminology.....12

Acknowledgments.....14

Dedication.....15

Preface.....20

Timeline of British Postal Activity in Beirut.....22

Introduction.....26

A. Mail through the British Packet Agency in Beirut (1836–1873)

1. Geopolitics and Admiralty Mail under Egyptian Rule (1832–1840).....31

    a. Muhammad Ali and the Selection of Beirut as a Hub.....34

    b. The End of the Egyptian Occupation.....41

    c. Quarantine Center in Beirut.....46

    d. Diplomatic Center in Beirut.....51

2. British Postal Agreements (1837/1840)

    a. British Contract with the French Government Packets.....55

3. Beirut Strategic Positioning and Britain’s Role

    a. British Trade with Beirut and Syria.....59

        1. Henry Heald.....63

        2. Edouard Blondel.....66

        3. Nicolas Portalis.....67

        4. Promissory Notes.....70

        5. British Banking Activities in Beirut.....72

        6. Money Exchange.....80

        7. The Race to Lead in Trade.....85

        8. The Telegraph and Railway.....87

        9. The 1860–1861 Foreign Military Expedition.....92

        10. Silk Trade.....96

        11. Protestant Missionaries and the Druze.....97

        12. British Trade with the Lebanese in Beirut and Britain.....107

        13. Dragomans and the Protege System.....109

        14. Arab Merchants in Britain.....111

        15. Emigrant Mail.....113

        16. Native Merchants Representing Foreign Companies in Beirut .....117

4. British Postal Activity with Beirut (1836–1873)

    a. The Period of the Admiralty Service and Supervision.....118

    b. The Brief P&O Service.....131

    c. Contracted Vessels and Ship Liners.....133

    d. The Evolving British Packet Agency in Beirut and the Different Liners in the early 1870s.....154



B. Pre-UPU Mail through the British Post in Beirut (1873–1875)	
1. Motive for the Establishment of a British Post Office.....	159
2. The Launching of the British Post Office in Beirut without Bilateral Agreements.....	161
3. To Subsidize or Not to Subsidize?: A Strategic Vision on Shipping Liners.....	163
4. The Unique Case of Mixed Franking Mail Use at the British Post in Beirut.....	166
5. An Illustrated Postal Journey from Britain to Alexandria via Brindisi before Reaching Beirut.....	181
C. Post-UPU Mail with the British Post in Beirut (1875–1914)	
1. Ottoman Resistance to the Presence of the Foreign Post.....	183
2. The Overland Route in 1881.....	185
3. The Establishment of the International Ottoman Post.....	186
4. New Postal Services and Competition.....	188
5. The International Reply Coupon and Post Office Order.....	193
6. Letter Boxes: A Success.....	197
7. Mail Activity at the British Post Office.....	201
8. Publication Exports from Beirut.....	201
9. Tourism and Thomas Cook.....	202
10. The British Post Office in Beirut at the Turn of the Century.....	205
11. The First World War.....	209
12. Descriptions of Selected British Mail Primarily Processed through the British Postal System in Beirut.....	211
13. Unusual Destinations with British Cards.....	247
D. Conclusion.....	250
E. Annexes	
1. British Postage Stamps Used at the British Post in Beirut.....	251
2. Date Stamps and Cancellations Used at the British Post in Beirut.....	264
3. Selective Pre-UPU Postal Rates from Britain to Beirut (1845–1875).....	265
4. Post UPU British Postal Rates from Beirut to Overseas' destinations.....	269
5. End Footnotes/Bibliography.....	270
6. Index.....	288

## ABBREVIATIONS

- AUB:** American University of Beirut (formerly the Syrian Protestant College, **SPC**) renamed as such in 1920.
- GPO:** General Post Office in London
- LAP:** Lebanese Association of Philately
- P&O:** The Peninsular and Oriental Company
- USEK:** Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik, Kaslik, Lebanon
- USJ:** Université Saint Joseph, Beirut, Lebanon
- pia.=** piasters   **d.=** penny/pence   **s.=** shilling   **c.=** circa   **c.=** centimes   **c.=** centesimi   **g.=** gram

## TERMINOLOGY

- Covers:** A term used in postal history to describe folded sheets and envelopes sent through the postal system.
- Eastern territories:** In this book, it refers to countries that included Mesopotamia, Persia, and India, which were of strategic interest to Britain.
- Levant:** Represents the western Asiatic part of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, which includes the different vilayets (provinces) of Ottoman Syria including the modern regions of southern Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan.
- Packets:** Named for the mail packets they carried, these were medium-sized boats designed for domestic mail, passenger, and freight transportation. They were mostly steam-driven and operated in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Mesopotamia:** Refers to modern Iraq.
- Messageries:** Created in 1851 as Messageries Nationales, they were later called Messageries Impériales, and from 1871, Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes. In order to simplify all the name changes in this publication, they are referred to as “Messageries” or “Messageries Maritimes.”
- Persia:** Refers to modern Iran.
- Postal History:** The study of rates, routes, markings, means of transport, postal systems, the use of postage stamps and covers (folded sheets that evolved into the envelope), and the associated postal artifacts, illustrating historical episodes in the development of postal systems.  
The term is attributed to Robson Lowe, a professional philatelist (a person who studies postal history or collects postage stamps), stamp dealer, and stamp auctioneer, who first organized the study of the subject in the **1930s**, describing philatelists as “students of science,” but postal historians as “students of humanity.” Collecting old mail (e.g., covers, postal stationery cards, and postcards with views) and exhibiting them to demonstrate the significance of the various postal rates and other postmarks is the hobby of the so-called postal history collectors.

**Syria/Ottoman Syria:** Unless mentioned otherwise, the word “Syria” or “Ottoman Syria” includes the following modern territories: Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and part of southwest Turkey, which all formed, in the 19th century, the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

**The Universal Postal Union (UPU):** Formerly founded as General Postal Union in **1874**, it was renamed in **1878**. It was set up after a decade of discussions prompted by the US, Germany and France. Heinrich von Stephann, post-master general of the Empire of Germany (formed in **1871**), advocated for much of the initiative. Its guiding purpose was to regulate international mail with a common set of standard practices.

First, the UPU sought to provide unhindered transit and standardize the extra fees for mail crossing national borders. Second, it made postal rates uniform throughout the world by a common unit of weight, identical categories of mail items (e.g., letters, printed matters, postcards, parcels), and the flattening of costs for the transport of mail across borders.

The convention was revised periodically, along with the regulations, and as new services were negotiated, additional “arrangements” were appended to the convention and were optional for members. The first, for example, was an agreement regarding the exchange of declared-value letters in **1878**, which was signed only by Egypt and members in continental Europe.

The founding members of the UPU included the following countries: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Spain, the United States, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ottoman Turkey.

The UPU was probably the first universal organization created where countries benefited from its standardization, which helped to foster global trade and postal communication in a more effective way.



*Fig. 3. The U.P.U. flag.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank specifically my very good friend Bernardo Longo who has been continuously sharing his knowledge about postal history and helped me in the thorough review of the many postal descriptions in this work.

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14

Robert **Abensur**, (President of the French Philatelic Academy), Mustafa **Achour**, Rene **Amry** (former Dutch Ambassador to Lebanon), Rida **Bazzi**, Rowina **Bou Harb** (Head of Archives, Sursock Museum), Georges **Boustany**, Rose **Brown** (Archivist, The Postal Museum, London), Lenka **Cathersides** (The Royal Philatelic Society, London), Carla **Chalhoub** (AUB, Head of Access Services Department/University Libraries), Roderick **Cochrane Sursock** (Sursock Palace Archives), Susannah **Coster** (Archivist, The Postal Museum, London), Gaby **Dagher** (Philippe Jabre Collection Curator), Nicola **Davies** (Head of Collections and Society Librarian, The Royal Philatelic Society, London), Yvette **Dickerson** (Member Services Librarian, The London Library), Lina **Ezzeddine**, Jorge **Álvarez Fuentes** (former Mexican Ambassador to Lebanon), Shermine **Iskandar**, Xavier **Gelebart**, Fadi **Ghazzaoui**, Zelfa **Hourani**, Lucy-Anne **Hunt** (Manchester Metropolitan University professor), Harriett **Joly**, Mathilde **Jourdan** (Archives Assistant, the Postal Museum, London), Roberto **Khatlab** (Director of the Latin American Studies and Cultures Center, USEK, Kaslik), Bernardo **Longo** (Philatelic expert in Lebanon and Syria), Jessica **Makdissi** (Sursock Palace Archives), Hyam **Mallat**, Houssam **Mhaissen** (LAP member), Samar **Mikati** (AUB, Associate University Librarian for Archives & Special Collections University Libraries), Samir **Moubarak** (former permanent representative of Lebanon, United Nations, NY, US), Alexandre **Najjar**, Tony **Naufal**, Alexios **Papadopoulos**, Zeina **Raphael**, Nadim **Schehade**, Nathalie **Schehade**, Isabelle **Skaff** (Chiha Archives), Camille **Tarazi**, Carlos **Younes** (Associate Director at Phoenix Center, USEK, Kaslik), Pol **Wijnants** (Director, The International Postal Library, Belgium).



*Fig. 4 . Picture of the Sursock quarter where palaces of the different Sursock family members were located at the end of the 19th century. The Sursock research was conducted in the palace seen on the left side of the picture, which is still standing, while most of the others were replaced by modern buildings.*

*I dedicate this work to the people who have been subject to injustice  
by those who claim they have been just.*

“The price of greatness is responsibility. As postal mail carried the weight of messages between nations, the responsibility of maintaining global ties became a cornerstone of international relations.” – **Winston Churchill**





Fig. 5. Map of Asia.<sup>2</sup> The red spot next to Basra represents the Shatt El Arab waterway passage to the Red Sea. It is about 120 miles in length and is formed at the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in Basra (1897).

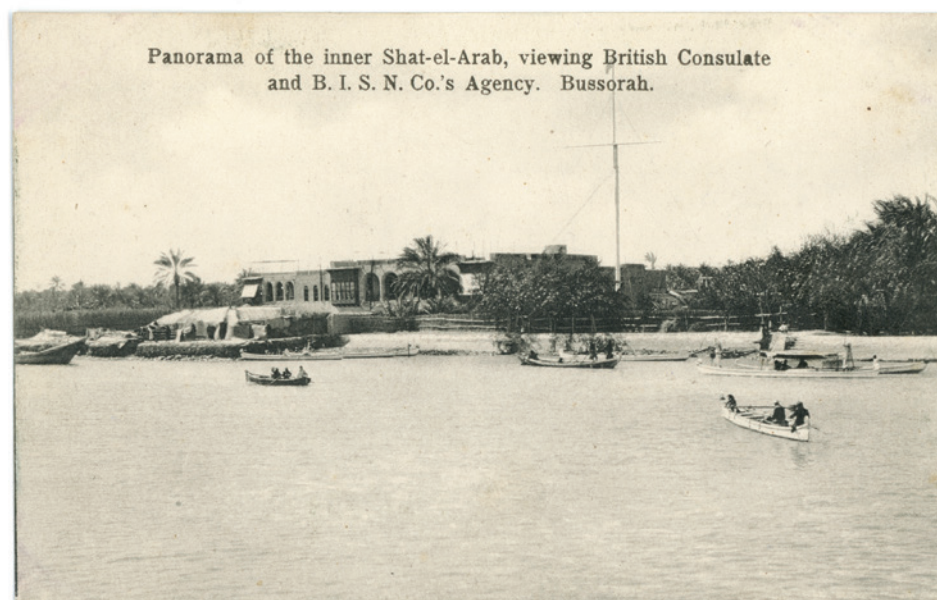


Fig. 6. The strategic Shatt El Arab River near the Persian Gulf with a view of the British Consulate (late 1890s).





Fig. 7. The Ottoman Empire in Europe and Asia with the Kingdom of Greece, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Walker J & C Engraving, London, (1860).



*Vue générale de Calis. Ansicht von Hatis. General view of Calis.*

1890

A black and white aerial photograph of Alexandrette. The city is situated along a river or coast, with a large harbor area in the foreground. Two large sailing ships are visible in the harbor. The surrounding landscape is flat and appears to be a marsh or dry lake bed. In the background, there are mountains. The text "ALEXANDRETTE" is printed in the upper center of the image.

TRIPOLI-Marine (Syrie) - Quai de la Douane

12. - TRIPOLI-DE-SYDE (Vib.) - Tawna

Beirut, Liban  
Beirouth, Liban

**JÉRUSALEM.** - *Fluxus et Refluxus Sinus Aiae* - *Mareis d'Orient et Epiplaisie du Temple*  
*Anna Kirche mit Tempelplatz - Church of the Aiae and Temple Aiae*  
 Hi altius forte mi Jerusalem, elevans deus deus mea. Adhuc lingua mea Galilee mea, i non meruisse tai.  
 Si non precorere Jerusalem, an puerilem lictum deus. — (Pb. 116. 1. 6.)

Jaffa

Hafen La rade Landing place

Verlag: Palmat, Kappas & Co., Leipzig

LATTAQUIE (Syrie) - Le Port



Photo Hans

Fig. 17. *Latakia* (Courtesy of the Philippe Jabre Collection)



**Fig. 18. Foreign Post Offices' Establishment in Ottoman Syria/Palestine (1845–1914)(\*\*\*\*)**

	 French	 Austrian	 Russian	 Egyptian	 British	 German
<b>Beirut</b>	November 1845	1845(*)	c. 1863–1864	July 1870 – February 1872	March 1873	1900
<b>Jaffa</b>	1852	1858–1862		July 1870 – February 1872		1898
<b>Latakia</b>	1852	1858–1862 1900–1905	circa 1863	July 1870 – February 1872		
<b>Alexandretta</b>	1852	1858–1862 1900–1905	1857	July 1870 – February 1872		
<b>Tripoli</b>	<i>Marine</i> 1852 <i>Ville</i> 1892	1858–1862 1900–1905	1863	July 1870 – February 1872		
<b>Aleppo(**)</b>	1856–1870	1855–1962 <sup>4</sup>				
<b>Caiffa (Haifa)</b>	1906	1858–1862				
<b>Jerusalem(***)</b>	1852	1852	1856			1900

(\*) *The Austrian Lloyd Navigation Company regularly operated the postal service in Beirut from 1845 (experimental stops started earlier in 1841) before the latter was taken over by the Austrian Postal Administration around 1850.*

(\*\*) *There was not an official French Post there, but apparently a semi-official/private courier service between Aleppo and Alexandretta (the port of the inland city of Aleppo).*

(\*\*\*) *Although Jerusalem was administratively part of Ottoman Syria, it was split from the vilayet (province) of Syria into an autonomous administration with special status in 1872. The French Post used date stamps with the denomination of “Palestine” instead of using “Syria,” which was found in the other Syrian cities (e.g., Tripoli, Beirut). Moreover, some foreign nations’ consuls in Jerusalem started reporting to their respective embassies in Constantinople rather than their consul general in Beirut.*

(\*\*\*\*) *Following the outbreak of the First World War, the Ottoman government forced all foreign post offices to close down by October 1, 1914.*

## PREFACE

After having thoroughly researched French postal history in Ottoman Syria with a focus on the cities of Beirut<sup>5</sup> and Tripoli<sup>6</sup> in the 19th century, I felt the need to do the same for France's historical archrival, Imperial Britain. Although French interest in Ottoman Syria, and more specifically, Beirut – the regional hub – was more holistic than the opportunistic British, I felt there was still an important story to tell about British postal history in Beirut. This became more pertinent when this city became part of the corridor to the British “eastern territories” (e.g., India, Mesopotamia), further strengthening its strategic postal communication position in the early **1870s**.

As we enter the second quarter of the 21st century, missile strikes in the Red Sea by “terrorists” have recently rerouted more than 50% of maritime shipping trade from the Suez Canal to Cape Horn, a much longer route. This caused the Asia-to-Europe freight cost to triple.<sup>7</sup> Ironically, in **1834** – less than two hundred years ago – the opposite scenario took place: Britain, through geopolitics, succeeded in reducing the postal communication distance from Britain to India by way of the town of Suez (instead of Cape Horn) from 11,000 to 6,000 miles (or from two or three months to five or six weeks).<sup>8</sup>

Through the lens of geopolitics, this introductory work (based on research started in 2013) describes the development of British postal communication in **1836–1914** with Beirut, the third-largest port city in the Eastern Mediterranean and largest port on the entire Syrian coast.

At that time, Beirut acted as a conduit for British mail with Syria, partly with India, Mesopotamia, and Persia, and was heavily influenced by British policies and positioning in the region among other current and new emerging global powers (e.g., France, Russia, Germany and the US).

As a whole, the study aims to render the large amount of rich information as well as the relevant mail between Beirut and Britain/British “territories” (i.e., Malta, India, Mesopotamia), in a user-friendly way through illustrations and analysis for a general readership, assuming little or no prior knowledge of postal history in the Levant. This includes mail transported by the Admiralty steamers, and the different contracted shipping liners (e.g., the French government packets followed by the Messageries, the British P&O, the Austrian Lloyd, the Russian ROPiT, the Egyptian Khedivial steamship liner).

While in my past research, primary resources came mainly from different nations' consular correspondences with Beirut, in this work, family and institutions' archives found in modern Lebanon were important sources of information in addition to materials from the Postal Museum archives in London and the British Foreign Office in Kew.

Thankfully, some of these familial historical documents were not discarded – as most were – or destroyed during the different military conflicts in Lebanon. The surviving few are, in many cases, being organized to be more accessible to researchers. Such information was of added value in this study as it offered additional insights from both the Lebanese as well as from resident foreigners in contact with each other during this period of continuous change.





Fig. 19. Shipping routes map in the Eastern Mediterranean from a French travel guide (1882), showing among others, British liner routes between Marseille and Alexandria. Starting in 1872, the Alexandria-Beirut leg would be contracted with other liners (besides the French Messagerie) such as the Russian ROPiT, the Egyptian Khedivial liner, and the Austrian Lloyd.<sup>9</sup>

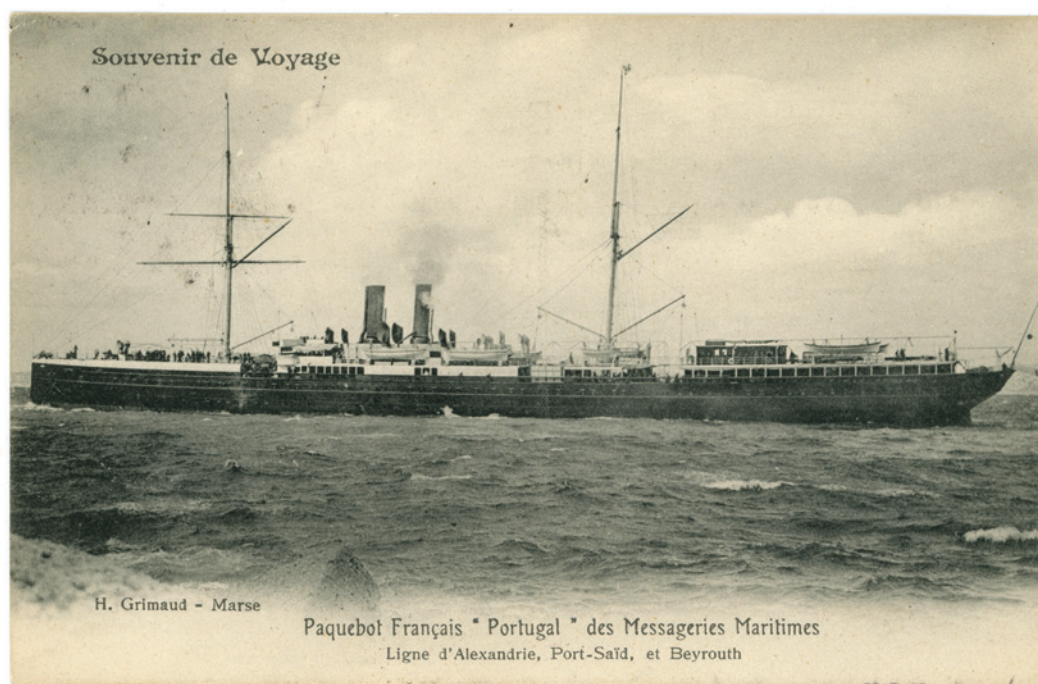


Fig. 20. The French Messageries Maritime steamer Portugal operating the Alexandria - Port Said - Beirut route.

# TIMELINE OF KEY POSTAL, GEOPOLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC EVENTS

## RELATED INDIRECTLY OR DIRECTLY TO BEIRUT

### (1801–1914)

<b>1801:</b>	British forces oust the French Napoleonic occupation of Egypt and Syria.
<b>1813:</b>	Expansion of British commercial involvement with India.
<b>1815:</b>	Return of peace and stability in the Mediterranean post-Napoleonic Wars.
<b>1832:</b>	- (September) Beginning of the Egyptian rule over Ottoman Syria (until 1840). - Set up of the British postal service only for consular use in Constantinople.
<b>1834:</b>	- (June 30) In London, a committee on steam navigation to India selected Beirut as the main port city in Syria, as an alternate route to handle a portion of the mail with India, in addition to the main route through Egypt.
<b>1835:</b>	- A regional quarantine center for Syria supervised by foreign consuls was set up in Beirut. - (February 8) <sup>10</sup> Extension of the post office Admiralty steam packet route from Falmouth via Malta to Alexandria from where an overland mail service via the town of Suez on the Red Sea to India was ensured on a monthly basis.
<b>1836:</b>	- (April) A regular direct Admiralty connection between Alexandria and Beirut to route “home-bound” mail to India via the Persian Gulf is set up (until August 1839).
<b>1837:</b>	- (May 1) The French postal administration introduced a regular steam-shipping route in the Eastern Mediterranean (Livorno-Civita Vecchia-Napoli-Malta-Syra-Constantinople-Smyrna-Alexandria). <sup>11</sup> - (May 26) The GPO reports that British letters may be forwarded from France on the route: Marseille-Leghorn-Civita Vecchia (Rome)-Napoli-Malta-Syra-Athens-Smyrna-Constantinople-Alexandria.
<b>1838:</b>	An Anglo-Turkish “free-trade treaty” removed the barriers impeding the flow of British, and more generally, European goods into the Ottoman Empire, destroying monopolies.
<b>1839:</b>	- (August 10) <sup>12</sup> The first British postal presence (through a GPO-packet agency) <sup>13</sup> in the Ottoman Empire was opened in Alexandria, Egypt, to convey commercial and official mail to and from India through the Red Sea (converted into a British Post Office on March 17, 1858), at the same time when the regular Admiralty line Alexandria-Beirut is halted. - The GPO contracts the French government packet line between Marseille and Alexandria. - (October 1) A shipping route, Alexandria-Beirut, started being outsourced by merchants in Beirut with third-party vessels under Admiralty supervision until September 24, 1852. - (October 16) The <i>Augusta</i> sailing vessel was contracted to run as a packet between Alexandria and Beirut under Admiralty supervision. - (December) The <i>Emmetje</i> steamer was contracted under the supervision of the Admiralty. - (December) An Admiralty packet line steamed on the route from Alexandria to Marseille until 1840.

<b>1840:</b> - (September)	The allied powers: Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, forced out the Egyptian occupation of Syria.
- (September 1)	The British contracted the Peninsular and Oriental Company (P&O) to transport the British mail between Falmouth and Alexandria.
- (September)	The P&O packet line for Alexandria-Malta and the Admiralty packet line for Malta-Marseille began.
-	A British GPO packet agency was set up in Beirut that handled mail between Britain (and British Possessions) and Baghdad, Persia, and India.
-	Surge in the British need for new markets to source raw materials and sell manufactured goods in the Levant.
<b>1843:</b> Around 1843/ 1844, the P&O set up routes to and from Beirut (until the early 1850s)	
<b>1844:</b> - (August)	The Beirut GPO packet agent was allowed to collect postage on prepaid letters destined for India and to collect postage on unpaid letters received in Beirut and on letters prepaid from Beirut.
<b>1845:</b> - (November 16)	The French were the first to establish a post office and a regular shipping route with Beirut, which the British used (from December) to forward their mail to and from Syria and the eastern territories.
<b>1846:</b> -	John Gordon Scott, an Englishman, established the first steam silk plant in Mount Lebanon.
- (December 24)	A local sailing 80-ton vessel, the <i>Emmetje</i> , was contracted for British mail on a monthly basis for the Beirut-Alexandria line.
<b>1847:</b> Mail stagecoach transport overland in France (e.g., between Calais and Marseille) was gradually changed to train.	
<b>1852:</b> - (September)	The British packet line under Admiralty supervision between Alexandria and Beirut was withdrawn, but local merchants continued to contract mail packets on this route, along with the Messageries French steamers, that took over from the French government steamers service in 1851
<b>1853:</b> - (January)	A P&O packet line began for the Alexandria-Marseille route.
<b>1854:</b> - (March)	Britain entered the Crimean War, and the activity of British steamers (e.g., P&O) in the Eastern Mediterranean was disrupted, except for the line between Britain and Alexandria.



**(CONT'D) TIMELINE OF KEY POSTAL, GEOPOLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC EVENTS  
RELATED INDIRECTLY OR DIRECTLY TO BEIRUT  
(1801–1914)**

24

<b>1855:</b>	Part of the reimbursement proceeds from the earliest Ottoman borrowing from N. M. Rothschild & Fils came from the ports of Syria (e.g., Beirut) and Smyrna.
<b>1857:</b> (July 1) <sup>14</sup>	The first British Post Office for public use was set up in Constantinople.
<b>1858:</b> (February 15)	Plans were initiated for the acceleration of mail communication between London and India via Beirut and Basra.
<b>1860:</b> - (August 16)	French expeditionary forces (along with some foreign/British troops) landed in Lebanon to save Christians from Druze massacres in Mount Lebanon. - The British Syrian Mission was founded following the massacres of Christians in Mount Lebanon and Damascus.
<b>1861:</b>	Beirut is connected with Damascus by electric telegraph.
<b>1863:</b> -	The most modern “highway” of the Ottoman Empire; the macadamized Beirut-Damascus French Road became operational. - The first electric telegraphic link from Beirut to Europe became operational through Constantinople and Egypt.
<b>1866:</b>	Establishment of the Syrian Protestant College (present-day American University of Beirut, AUB).
<b>1869:</b> (November 17)	The Suez Canal opened.
<b>1870:</b> (October)	British mail (through the P&O) began using the Brindisi Port and route as transit rather than the Marseille route, following the Franco-Prussian War (July 19, 1870–January 28, 1871). <sup>15,16</sup>
<b>1872:</b> - (February)	The Egyptian Khedivial liner service temporarily stopped conveying British mail every alternate week between Alexandria and Beirut.
- (March)	British mail started being conveyed by the Russian ROPiT (along with the already running Messageries) weekly to Beirut and Syria through Alexandria via Brindisi.
- (June 11)	British mail to Beirut started being conveyed by the Austrian Lloyd through Alexandria via Brindisi (which corresponded with the P&O in Alexandria).
- (August)	British mail addressed to Baghdad must be forwarded to Beirut instead of Alexandria.
- (October)	Mail from Beirut could be prepaid, but it still needed to be franked with postage and cancelled in Alexandria when addressed to the UK “via Brindisi.”
- (November 1)	The Egyptian British postmaster sent to the packect agency in Beirut an example explaining how to mark letters with the full postage of 10 d. (pence) under ½ oz. or a fraction of it, posted there for Britain.

<b>1872:</b> - (November 7)	The Beirut British packet agency officially inquired whether it can start franking postage stamps on letters for different countries out of Beirut .
- (December)	The British Post opened in Smyrna, the largest port in the Ottoman Empire.
<b>1873:</b> - (March)	The official opening of the British Post Office in Beirut took place (e.g., conversion of the packet agency)
- (September)	A mixed-franking mail-express service was introduced at the British Post in Beirut.
<b>1875:</b> -	Establishment of the only British infrastructure investment in Beirut, the Beirut Water Company concession.
- (July 1)	Britain joined the UPU.
<b>1882:</b> - (September)	Britain occupied Egypt (until 1956).
<b>1887:</b>	Company du Port, des Quais et des Entrepots de Beyrouth (Company of the Port, Quays and Warehouses of Beirut) was established with the sole rights to store and carry all the transit goods passing through the customs.
<b>1888:</b>	Beirut's ascendancy was recognized through the creation of a vilayet (province) in its name, and the city became the heart of economic and cultural life in Syria
<b>1880s:</b>	The telegraph became frequently used for commerce between Beirut and overseas.
<b>1895:</b>	The Beirut-Damascus Railway Line became operational.
<b>1900:</b>	The British Post opened in Salonika, its last post office in the Ottoman Empire, totaling five post offices, as compared with over thirty offices each for the French and Austrians.
<b>1914:</b> - (October 1)	With the outbreak of the First World War, foreign post offices were forced to shut down in the Ottoman Empire.



Fig. 21. An illustrated postcard with Ottoman postage stamps, posted at the British post office in Beirut (1905).

## INTRODUCTION

26

This introductory study briefly describes how geopolitics, economics, and steam transportation, among other factors, led to the development of British postal communication at the regional hub of Beirut and with the eastern territories in the period **1836–1914**.

From the second quarter of the **19th century**, subsequent to the advent of the steamship, the world was rapidly becoming more interconnected.

The search for new markets for goods, capital, and labor, as well as political and international movements such as migration, colonialism, and imperialism, brought new forms of globalization. The application of steam to replace wind and horsepower as sources of energy was a major transportation revolution. Steamships and postal service became, among other technologies (e.g., telegraph, railways), the basis of communication. Distance was smashed, and time was accelerating. This technologically advanced form of globalization brought a clash among superpowers. Hence, those with stronger economic and military powers dominated over weaker states (e.g., the Ottoman Empire, China, and Japan), which were forced to open up their borders and ports for foreign countries' commerce and lines of communication, including foreign post offices with their own postage stamps.

Although “slow communication by physical mail” may seem outdated today, the invention of the postage stamp in Britain was revolutionary back in **1840**, at a time when letter writing was the only means of staying in touch with people residing out of town. Prior to **1840**, a letter could cost a working-class laborer more than a day's earnings in Britain, so leaving home often meant losing touch with those who stayed. The post office – prior to the introduction of the postage stamp – charged by the distance a letter traveled and the number of letter-sheets a writer used.

In **1836**, a Franco-British postal convention allowed Britain and France to collect postage from each other.

Although they each had different currencies and systems of measurement (e.g., gram versus ounce), the major difference was that the British system was based on the number of sheets of paper, whereas the French system was weight-based. Moreover, payment in the early period fell to the receiver, not to the sender, contrary to present-day postal service.

Furthermore, if the letter was not paid by the addressee, it was returned to the sender. The postal rate table was complex, and postal clerks had to spend substantial amounts of time calculating postage on non-routine letters, especially those heavier than normal or crossing national borders, with errors commonly resulting from these calculations.

The advent of the General Postal Union (renamed Universal Postal Union, UPU, in **1878**) and its gradual application starting July 1, **1875**, brought major postal reforms worldwide.

Hence, the rate of postage was reduced, standardized, and simplified. As a result, written communication became more accessible to a broader public worldwide, leading to a surge in letter-writing. A combination of several factors also helped the flow of mail correspondence, including the increased effectiveness of steam shipping, demographic explosion, increased literacy, and a growing middle class.<sup>17</sup>

Up until the early 19th century, European geopolitical interest in the Levant was limited. Moreover, the French Revolution (**1789–1799**) and the Napoleonic Wars (**1803–1815**) frequently interrupted foreign trade and communication, rendering the Mediterranean perilous for shipping.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, the failed Napoleonic expedition in Egypt in **1798–1801** rushed Britain to secure the “Egypt-Syria” communication gateways<sup>19</sup> to India,<sup>20</sup> a strategic British “territory,” pushing back on the continuous threats from France, Russia, and Egypt with Egyptian Muhammad Ali, all eyeing some of the eastern territories (e.g. Arabia, India, Mesopotamia, Persia).

Early on, Britain sought to create a second alternative route to Egypt by accessing India through Beirut and the Persian Gulf, to eliminate the possibility of any other power obstructing its communication passage to India. Moreover, subsequent to the end of the wars in Europe, the advent of the Industrial Revolution, and the continental powers' policy of national economic protection after **1815**, Britain actively sought new markets and raw materials for its industries from faraway nations in the east. For the first time in British history, the Middle East became important in their economic model,<sup>21</sup> driven by geopolitics.



Beirut started emerging as a regional port city for the provinces of Ottoman Syria under the Egyptian occupation (**1832–1840**) at a time when British Admiralty steamers (Royal British Navy) were authorized to experiment with a direct connection between Alexandria and Beirut for “home-bound Indian mail” via the Persian Gulf.

This regular short-lived connection by the Admiralty (**1836–1839**) was eventually halted, and the Alexandria-Suez-Bombay postal route – via the Red Sea, which was clearly superior – continued to be primarily used as it was more economical and secure for mail to and from India.

Starting in **1839**, the General Post Office (GPO) in London began subcontracting the French government packets and postal system, with a route from Marseille to Alexandria and then between the latter and Beirut from **1845** for both its Syrian mail and some of its eastern mail needs (e.g., Mesopotamia, Persia, and India). British mail would be conveyed to Calais and brought across France.

The Admiralty, however, continued supervising contracted merchant vessels on the Alexandria-Beirut route until **1852**. After that, merchants and consuls in both places would directly contract with vessels on that route, along with the French Messageries that carried the bulk of British mail until **1872**.

Compared to the extensive French and Austrian postal and shipping network spreading throughout the Ottoman Empire from **1837**, the direct British postal presence in the Ottoman Empire was limited until March **1873** to Alexandria in Egypt; to Constantinople and Smyrna in Turkey; and to Beirut in Syria. Britain was clearly not interested in building its own postal network in Ottoman Syria (or in the Ottoman Empire), nor in funding an unprofitable liner operation for servicing the Ottoman port cities for the postal needs of British merchants and travelers, as the French did. However, and as compared to the French and the Austrians, the British had the largest merchant marine fleet in the world and held a leading position in foreign trade with the Ottoman Empire (see p. 63), despite the latter representing a negligible 1.35% share of foreign trade with Britain by **1906**. Thus, it is not surprising that the first British postal presence – in the whole Ottoman Empire and for a very long time – was only in Alexandria, Egypt. It was set up from August **1839**<sup>22</sup> first as a consular packet agency to ensure a vital link in the line of imperial communication with strategic India, while a post office for civilian use in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, opened much later on July 1, **1857**.<sup>23</sup> This compares to the earlier setup of French and Austrian Post Offices, respectively in **1836** and **1837**, for civilian use in the capital.

However, by **1870**, British world economic preeminence started eroding, due to increased competition from the US, France, and Germany, who were looking aggressively for a larger share of the world economy. In addition, there was increased pressure from merchants in Beirut. As a result, it had become important for Britain to speed up investment, even in a marginal way, by staking claims to spheres of interest and influence.<sup>24</sup>

The GPO in London started contracting several regular liners with Beirut from early **1872** to serve British merchants and official interests, besides the traditional French liner (Messageries).

This evolving situation led Britain to convert its packet agency (the only one in the Ottoman Empire, set up in **1840** as a transfer center for mail) in Beirut into a full-fledged post office in **1873** – after opening a post office in **1872** in Smyrna, the largest port in the Ottoman Empire. In **1900**, the British opened their last post office in the Ottoman Empire at Salonika, an important port covering the Balkans. At the end of the 19th century, official sources reported that the port cities of Smyrna, Beirut, Salonika, and Trabzon accounted for 46% of total Ottoman trade,<sup>25</sup> all locations with British Post Offices (except Trabzon). Thus, by **1914**, the British had only four post offices in different city locations as compared to over 30 offices for each the French and the Austrians.

Thus, despite the late arrival of a few scarce post offices, an analysis in this publication (see p.205) shows that the British Post in Beirut had managed to attract a market share of 27% and 32%, respectively in the **1880s** and **1890s**. These statistics covered a representative sample of correspondences processed at the then five foreign post offices (French, Austrian, Russian, Egyptian, and British) in Beirut. Britain's performance is astonishing, taking into consideration that the British Post had only opened in Beirut in **1873**, as compared to the much older and extensive postal service of the French and Austrians, serving Beirut and Syria on a regular basis from **1845**.

As we will read, the British postal administration had ignored, for many years, the calls by British officials and merchants for regular and direct postal communication with Beirut. Once the GPO finally decided to contract different regular liners (other than the French Messageries) and expand its network of post offices in **1872**, it made sure to make the most out of it, particularly after the advent of the UPU in **1875**.

The study begins with a brief description of the direct Admiralty steamer routes with Beirut for conveying British

and Indian mail, followed by the establishment of a consular packet agency in Beirut, transferring the British and eastern mail to contracted liners or independent ships.

Throughout, readers can see how Britain positioned itself as a strategic player in different areas, including diplomacy, education, missionary activities, trade, and postal communication, all in support of its geopolitical and economic ambitions.

The second chapter covers the short, but unique period between the setup of the British Post Office in **1873** and Britain joining the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in **1875** when the British introduced the ingenious use of the mixed

-franking mail, aimed at offering an active express service to merchants and trading houses in Beirut.

The last chapter covers the period when Britain joined the UPU in **1875** and its post expanded its services until the outbreak of the First World War, when all foreign post offices were forced, by the Ottoman Empire, to shut down their activities by October 1, **1914**.<sup>26</sup>

Last, but not least, maps, pictures, letters, postage stamps, and other historical documents were also used to support the diverse information gathered from primary and secondary sources.



Fig. 22. Russian ROPiT steam liner brochure (1906) describing its stops in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Beirut from around 1863–1864. The British contracted ROPiT in 1872 to transport its mail on the Alexandria-Beirut route (see p. GPO notice).



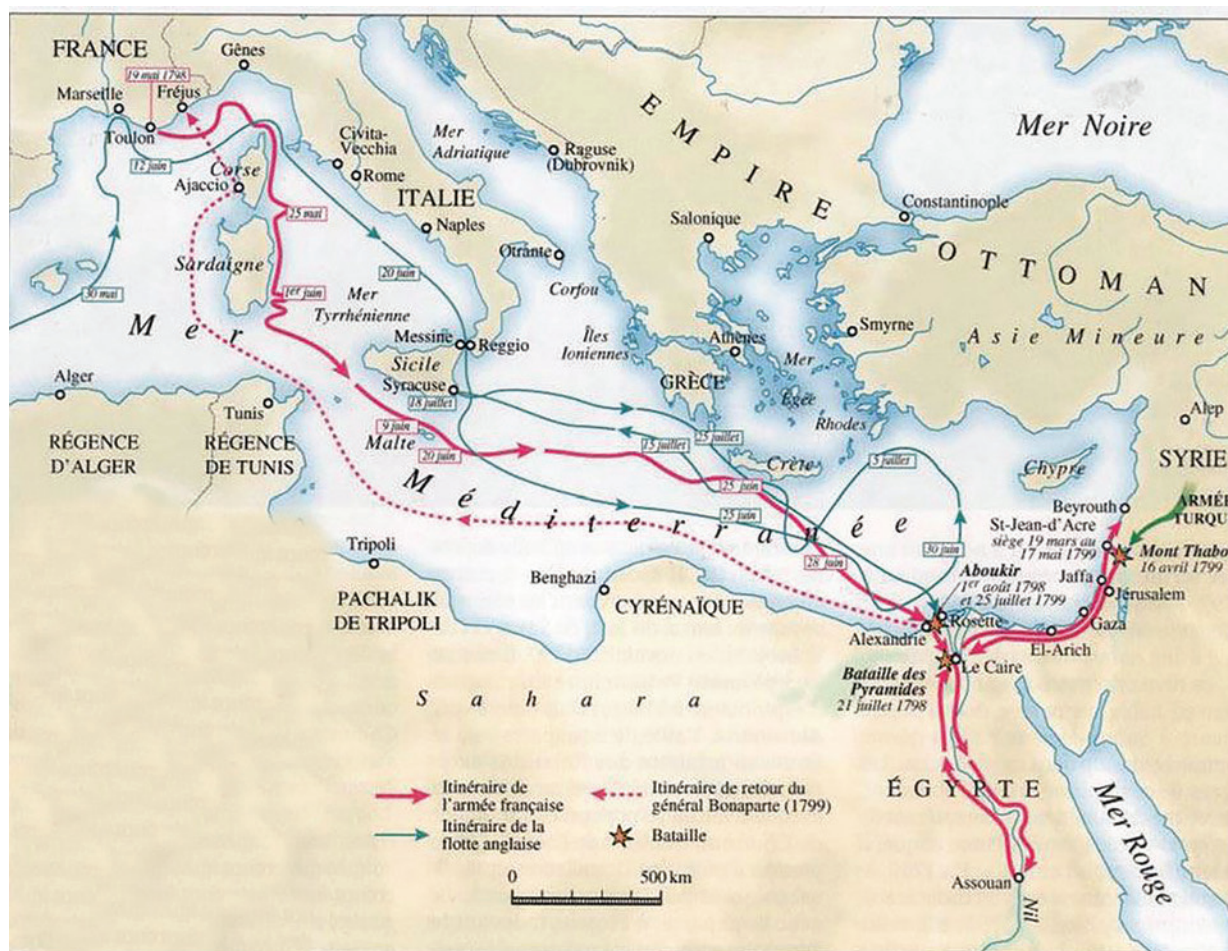


Fig. 23. Map<sup>27</sup> showing Napoleon's troops' route in Egypt, Syria, and close to Beirut in 1799.



27. RETOUR DE SYRIE (1799) — Une grave nécessité avait contraint Bonaparte à mobiliser toute la cavalerie pour le service des ambulances ; il y fit même servir ses propres équipages, partant en tête de son état-major, à pied, par une chaleur de trente degrés.

Fig. 24. A defeated Napoleon with his troops returning to Egypt from modern Syria and Lebanon (1799).



*Marine*

*Colonieα. Liberté.*

4. Division.



Egalité.

Bureau  
des prisonniers  
de guerre

Laria, le 15 Messidor au XI. de la  
République une & indivisible.

Le Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies,  
(Par intérim)

rep-le 1. verité 2e au 12.

Au Citoyen Alphonse Gueys, Comm.<sup>ce</sup> des Relations  
Commerciales de la République Française  
à Tripoly, à Syde

La reprise de l'hostilité entre la France et l'Angleterre exige  
Citoyen, que je vous rappelle quelques dispositions auxquelles je dois que  
vous vous conformiez avec la plus scrupuleuse exactitude.

Pas l'article 22 du Règlement du 29<sup>g</sup> 1793, la Commission de Relations  
Commerciales ont autorisé à recevoir les prisonniers provenant de la prise d'armes  
dans le port de leur résidence et de leur pays les vaincus de l'Etat, soit par la  
Bretagne, et à les remettre par suite aux agents de la puissance ennemie, et  
exigeant deux la Commission de rendre un nombre égal de français détenus  
dans leur port, ou de leur faire remettre la même quantité de leur détenu  
dans le Etat de puissance ennemie. Il leur enjoint par ce même  
article de mademoiselle l'Etat des prisonniers qu'ils auroient tenus aux ag-  
ents de la puissance ennemie et de ceux qui leur auroient été rendus en échange  
d'être livrés à son confinement avec la plus grande exactitude à cette  
disposition; et que, je prie vous faire inscrire sur la Nationalité tenue dans  
mon Bureau, le nom de chacun des prisonniers qui auroient été faits sur  
l'ennemi, et réclamer le prompt acquiescement de la Commission que vous auriez

Au Citoyen Alphonse Gays,  
 Commissaire des Relations Commerciales  
 de la République Française.  
 M. de la Marina à Tripoly, de Syrie,  
 Turquie d'Asie

[illegible]

Fig. 25. This consular mail dated **1803** is a living testimony of the historical Franco-British rivalry. It is sent from the French minister of Naval and Colonial Affairs to the main French consular presence in Syria, then based in Tripoli<sup>28</sup> (60 miles north of Beirut). The text highlights the resumption of hostilities between the British and French, and describes the procedures to follow regarding the exchange of prisoners of war (POW) by the two nations. It includes a handwritten form sent to the French Consulate to list the names of the British POWs. The Napoleonic Egyptian Campaign extension toward modern Syria and Lebanon, aiming to prevent the landing of Ottoman and British troops, was a fiasco. The French troops were stopped at the gates of Beirut.

# A. MAIL THROUGH THE BRITISH PACKET AGENCY IN BEIRUT (1836–1873)

Britain's geopolitical interest in the Middle East was first brought by Napoleon's short-lived invasion and occupation of Egypt and Syria in **1798–1801**. Bonaparte's campaign intended to secure the French position in Egypt "...force the Porte [Ottoman government] to make peace and to secure its consent to his march on India."<sup>29</sup>

Around **1833**,<sup>30</sup> the British Admiralty (British Royal Navy) was the first to use steamships in the Mediterranean. Its aim was to patrol and gather intelligence<sup>31</sup> on potential threats.

The British were determined to shield the vital communication and commercial routes leading to India through the Mediterranean.

It was not only plausible that anti-British belligerents (e.g., France, Russia) were scheming to disrupt British communications to India, but those schemes were actually taking place. Thus, as a secondary communication pathway, the overland route to Syria was to be preserved from the influence of any power, which could use its position to act against Britain's interests in India or sea routes to India. Egypt was the maritime gateway to India,<sup>32</sup> and Syria its backyard.<sup>33</sup> Hence, any threat, direct or indirect, blocking that passage, was unacceptable to the British.

31

## 1. Geopolitics and Admiralty Mail under Egyptian Rule (1832–1840)

The advent of regular steam navigation in the **1830s** in the Mediterranean gave impetus to the idea, as did the Indian government, of how to shorten the route to India, speeding up mail, and to a lesser extent, passenger transport, instead of going around the Cape Horn of Africa to Britain.

It wasn't until the evacuation of the French from Egypt in **1802**, and the subsequent rise of Muhammad Ali as viceroy of Egypt in **1805**, that an organized Britain-Egypt-India "overland" journey became a reality. The business and political interests of Britain, France, and Egypt were foremost in furthering the project of rapid transit between Alexandria and the town of Suez<sup>34</sup> (the Suez Canal was constructed in **1869**).

Before Muhammad Ali, there were two major obstacles to the route via Egypt: insecurity within Egypt under Mamluk rule, and the policy of the Ottoman Turks, as well as the Mamluks, that excluded non-Muslim vessels from the Red Sea in the proximity of the Islamic holy cities of the Hejaz (western Arabian Peninsula).<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the British government's growing interest in Egypt and Syria in the **1830s** was from numerous factors, including:<sup>36</sup>

- The increased threats of foreign powers to obstruct the Egyptian-Syrian corridor that leads to India,
- The end of the East India Company's monopoly of trade with India, along with the expansion of British commercial involvement in India in **1813**,
- The restoration of peace and stability in the Mediterranean following the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the European nations' war efforts in **1815**,
- The emergence of the marine steam engine in the **1830s**,
- The need for new markets to source raw materials and sell manufactured goods following the Industrial Revolution (especially after **1840**), after European states raised trade barriers to protect their own industrial development.<sup>37</sup>



Thus, until the **1820s**, mail between Britain and India traveled on the East India Company's heavy and slow-moving sailing ships that went around Africa and took from four to six months each way. This included months in port at either end, waiting for the appropriate winds. Correspondents had to wait a year, sometimes more, in order to receive answers to their letters.

Before that, slightly faster transport was possible from **1798**<sup>38</sup> via the so-called "overland" route through Ottoman Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and Syria (e.g., Aleppo), although it had considerable risks from bandits and outbreaks of the plague.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the increase in piracy in the Persian Gulf and the Shatt El Arab River was no longer safe for the Indian mail to be transported on the following route: Bombay - Basra by ship, Basra - Baghdad - Aleppo by dromedary, and then to Constantinople by horse. In **1833**, the "overland" route changed by adding Beirut as an ending point to the Mediterranean as follows: Bombay - Basra - Baghdad - Damascus - Beirut - Alexandria.<sup>40</sup> Soon, there was a monthly steamship service between Bombay and the town of Suez, coordinated with Admiralty packet boats sailing between Alexandria and Britain.

Early and active application of steam navigation by the British in the Mediterranean transported mail as well as high-value, low-bulk freight, and select passengers.<sup>41</sup>

Before the active commercial use of the telegraph (around the **1870s–1880s**)<sup>42</sup> (see p.87-89), steamer lines were the only means for guaranteeing regular and inexpensive communication between the British metropole and its key colonies. The application of the steam engine to the transportation sector brought about a revolution in communication. Over time, steamships increased in speed, versatility, and reliability of shipping (as opposed to sailing and overland transport), thereby bringing greater efficiency and new sophistication to commercial dealings.<sup>43</sup> Steamships could cope with strong currents and maneuver in difficult conditions.<sup>44</sup> Economically, they also dramatically reduced freight costs<sup>45</sup> and significantly increased the scale of operations through the setup of ship liners.<sup>46</sup>

Steamships could now be built much larger than sailing vessels, and their lower freight factor stimulated trade for the region. For example, the freight factor on wheat fell by 80% on London imports from the Mediterranean between the **1830s** and the **1850s**, and fell again by the same percentage between **1870** and **1914**.<sup>47</sup>



Fig.26. Dromedary post in the Syrian Desert.

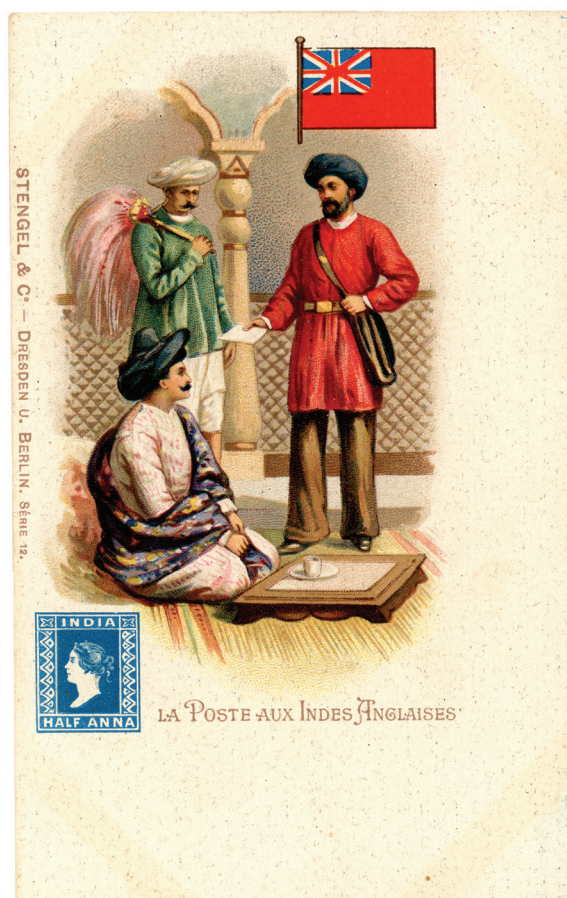


Fig.27. Illustration of the British Indian Post.



## Pre-1833, use of sailing ships



Fig. 28. A packet sailing ship H.M. Packet brig **Sheldrake** entering Falmouth Harbor <sup>48</sup> (National Maritime Museum).

## Post-1833, use of steamships



Fig. 29. An early paddle steamship;<sup>49</sup> possibly **Tweed** (Southampton City Museum).



Fig. 30. The Mahmudiyah Canal, 44 miles long, linked the Nile to the Mediterranean port of Alexandria by barge, transporting mail and passengers.



Fig. 31. Port of Alexandria in the early 1900s.

## a. Muhammad Ali and the Selection of Beirut as a Hub

Muhammad Ali, formerly an army officer of Albanian origin, who ruled Egypt from **1805**, although a supposedly subordinate vassal to the Ottoman sultan, was a visionary leader, open-minded, and with great ambitions to take over the extensively weakened Ottoman Empire and build his own kingdom.<sup>50</sup>

He was determined to assert his effective independence from the sultan. He had built up trade revenues from the west by cultivating the long-established staple, cotton, for European markets and developing key communications, including coach roads and the remarkable achievement of the Mahmudiyah Canal between Alexandria and the Nile.<sup>51</sup>

Starting in September **1840**, P&O steamers (contracted by the GPO) disembarked from Britain to Alexandria, where their passengers, along with the mail, continued their long journey in cramped canal boats before joining a caravan of horse-drawn carriages across 150 miles of desert to the town of Suez. In the **1840s**, several steps were taken to improve that journey. A Nile steamer, new carriages, 15 rest houses, horse stations, carts, landing places, and wharves were provided with the assistance of the Egyptian ruler. In **1854**, significant progress took place with the railway from Alexandria to Cairo, reducing the travel time across the desert by almost a day. By **1860**, the railway ran all the way from Alexandria to the town of Suez on the Red Sea, but not yet for mail.

Muhammad Ali had also hired Western experts – mainly French – to modernize his army, improve sanitation, reform his administration and economy, and continue to foster economic agreements with several nations, namely the French and the British.

Muhammad Ali's claim on Syria and Lebanon, as promised to him by Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II, was supposed to be his reward for his attempts to put down the Greek independence movement, which resulted in the Egyptian fleet being virtually destroyed at the Battle of Navarino in **1827**.<sup>52</sup> The sultan refused Egypt's demand that Crete and Syria be granted as a reward on the grounds that the suppression effort failed.<sup>53</sup>

Muhammad Ali's other expansionist aspirations, in particular, threatening communications with Arabia and Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and the possibility that he would go further and occupy the Arabian Gulf coast and Baghdad to establish a new empire, alarmed the British government.

Egypt's ambitions and a lack of raw materials,<sup>54</sup> which was a cause for concern, led Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, the viceroy of Egypt, to invade modern Syria and Lebanon in **1832** and claim the area's resources for his development program as well as to create a buffer against the sultan, a major blow to Ottoman power.

Pasha's aim was to secure rich farmlands, which could ensure increased tax revenues from exports, which would fund his current and future expansionary ambitions as well as acquiring wood for naval building and industrial consumption in the mint, foundries, and armory, fortifying his hold on Egypt. Pasha was motivated by the idea of a strong, centralized government and the hopes of securing support from Western powers against his dominant Ottoman suzerain in Constantinople.<sup>55</sup>

To further leverage his economic plans in the Syrian provinces, Ibrahim Pasha convinced foreign consuls to make Beirut the main Syrian port for channeling a large part of their Eastern Mediterranean foreign trade. In order to facilitate that, he established and funded an effective quarantine center in **1834** in Beirut (the second in the Eastern Mediterranean after Alexandria) for the Ottoman Syrian provinces and under the encouragement and supervision of key foreign consuls who advanced the necessary funds to ensure no diseases (e.g., plague and cholera) would reach Europe. These nations included France, Britain, the Kingdom of Sardinia, Austria, Denmark, and Spain.<sup>56</sup>

The choice of Beirut, then still a small town, was made after the Pasha failed to convince the resisting close-minded notables of Sidon and Tripoli<sup>57</sup> to introduce a regional quarantine center at their city port.

In that same year (June 30, **1834**),<sup>58</sup> in London, the Select Committee on Steam Navigation to India called Sir John Franklin Knight to a meeting to answer the questions by the committee chair, Charles Grant. The discussions were over which port city in Syria would be chosen to convey some of the mail with India. Knight states:

*Beirut is very much exposed as an anchorage, but the bay of Saint George is rather sheltered; indeed, you may shelter in that bay at most times. This is a copy of a chart of Beirut. With respect to the anchorage before the town, in the summer season you are exposed to sea breezes; the ground of the anchorage is very rocky, and therefore unsafe for merchant ships to lie there long, but*



by going round into Saint George's Bay, the bottom being sandy, the anchorage is better.

Near Beirout there are two places at which coal has been found; the one has been worked, I understood, by Muhammad Ali, but from what causes he had discontinued, whether from not having skillful men or from insufficient means I know not. There had been a good deal of British commerce at Beirut when I was there. It was increasing, as the Consul told me.

I see in my notes there is a list of eight British and Ionian vessels [Ionian Islands were under British protectorate, and their ships sailed under British flags] in the course of that season that had been at Beirout.

Sixteen had been there before my arrival, and I met two afterwards at Cyprus going there.

What do you suppose is the reason that Iskenderoon being the best [Syrian] port, Beirout has been the more frequented, and has been made the port of vessels from England? [Note that Iskenderoon also called Alexandretta was the port of Aleppo, a hinterland warehouse-trading city where caravans from the east would end.]

I should think that the cargoes of vessels discharged at Beirout are sent in a different direction from that of Iskenderoon or Latakia.

35



Fig. 32. A British Naval chart of Beirut (1859), surveyed by Commandant A.L. Mansell, aboard the H.M.S *Tartarus* showing the bay of Saint Georges, (Courtesy of the Philippe Jabre Collection).





Fig. 33. The landing site of the quarantine station by Löffler August (1822–1866), watercolor, (20.5 x 29 cm), located at the bay of Saint Georges in Beirut. In the 19th century, it was safer for ships to shelter in the bay during bad weather in winter. This bay was also chosen in 1860 by the foreign military expedition, where it disembarked military troops (6,000 French troops and 6,000 British, Austrian, Prussian, Russian, and Ottoman troops) to save the Christians from a massacre in Mount Lebanon and Damascus (Courtesy of the Philippe Jabre Collection).

Subsequent to the different hearings, the Select Committee on Steam Navigation to India recommended two simultaneous policies investigating two prime routes during 1834.<sup>59</sup> While two steamers were bought for regular service between Bombay and Suez in order to develop the route to Suez up the Red Sea, and thereafter overland to Alexandria, the Euphrates expedition would explore the feasibility of a connection from Basra to Beirut, up the Persian Gulf.

**Beirut was selected as the Syrian port city to handle the secondary route for mail with India, along with the primary Egyptian route.**

The British strategy in maintaining two mail routes to India, starting in 1834, aimed at circumventing any power trying to obstruct these routes, and was part of a new general policy of keeping the Ottoman Empire intact against Russia, Egypt, or any other power. Keeping communications open was the primary focus that forced Britain's interest in the Middle East.<sup>60</sup>

The Ottoman sultan's weakness and the Egyptian ruler's willingness gave the British the opening to win the firm, allowing them unprecedented steam access to the rivers (e.g., Mahmudiyah Canal between Alexandria and the Nile).<sup>61</sup> On December 19, 1836, a note to the editor of the *Bombay Courier* reports the following:<sup>62</sup>

- The Steam committee voted the appropriation of 1,000 rupees per month for eighteen month, for the conveyance of packets via Bussorah [Basra in modern Iraq] and Beirut.

-The admiralty are not only said to have determined to send steamers from Malta to Beirut, but they have done so already.

- That an Arab chief, in whom the utmost reliance could be placed, would carry the packets from Bussorah to Beirut.

-A packet should reach from London to Bussora in 36 days, consequently a mail from Falmouth the 4th October by steam, via Malta to Beirut, and thence by dromedaries to Bussora, should have reached that place on the 9th November.

-It is to be conceded that you have now, and that you will have for the next eighteen months, an uninterrupted steamer monthly, between Malta and Beirut; and each month. It will avail you nothing without an equally regular transport of the mails between this and Beirut; for your Beirut steamer must start at a prescribed time or she will miss the Malta steamer to Falmouth.



Thus, regular direct official and civilian postal communication between Britain and Beirut was set up early on, albeit for a short period.<sup>63</sup> This had started in April **1836** when the British Admiralty packets switched the eastern terminus to a branch service from Alexandria to Beirut. The Beirut stopover was to link up<sup>64</sup> with the erratic attempts of the East India Company to route any home-bound mail from India (Bombay) via the Persian Gulf (Basra) and Beirut. However, the “overland” route through Alexandria, and the Red Sea continued to be the most frequently used.<sup>65</sup>

From December 2, **1836**, an official British dromedary post had also been set up between Basra and Beirut<sup>66</sup> to provide back-up during the monsoon and in case the Red Sea route (through Egypt) failed. More specifically, the monthly postal dromedary service between Damascus and Baghdad was as follows: Basra -(Soukech Chouyoukh Tigris + Euphrates) Syrian Desert - Damascus - Beirut. In April **1837**, a route was added as follows: Bombay - Basra - dromedary to South Euphrates -Syrian Desert - Palmyra - Damascus - Beirut.

As reported in page 38, in June **1837**, six out of the eight “overland routes” to and from India through the Persian Gulf had a stopover in Beirut – a confirmation of the importance of the transit stop on the Syrian coast. Beirut was aided by having adequate wind protection from the mountains on its eastern front, the relative availability of deep waters, and the strategically set up quarantine center (also known as Lazaretto) in operation from **1835**, initiated by the Egyptian ruler.

In July **1837**, Colonel Chesney volunteered to carry urgent and important dispatches from India to Britain (which was part of an investigation of the Euphrates routes in the years **1835–1837**).<sup>67</sup> He crossed from Basra to the Mediterranean by the Great Desert Route. After reaching the Little Desert, he turned westward to Palmyra and Damascus, hoping to reach Beirut in time to catch the first homeward-bound mail packet. He made the estimated trip of 958 miles in 22 days with two Arabs escorting him. They rode between 50 and 60 miles a day, and were in the saddle for 19 hours. He is one of the few Englishmen to have carried dispatches across the desert at courier speed.<sup>68</sup>

Speedy and regular communication was essential for the British Empire to conduct trade and govern. Egypt was the key staging post for the transport of mail between Britain and India, while Beirut was used for receiving and transmitting official and commercial British mail with the the eastern territories.

Thus, mail with India during the short period of April **1836**–August **1839**<sup>69</sup> would be transmitted on a regular basis aboard the Admiralty ships between Alexandria and Beirut, and then until **1845** on a sporadic basis.

However, besides mail with India, the original motivation, mail between Beirut and Britain via Alexandria, was also exchanged early on, and an example was reported in November **1837**<sup>70</sup> and on May 14, **1838**, with mail from Beirut to Malta via Alexandria.

A contemporary journal in September **1837**,<sup>71</sup> reports the following shipping route used by the Admiralty for India-bound mail: Falmouth - (then Southampton from 1840) - Malta - Alexandria - Beirut - Damascus - Hit - (on the Euphrates in modern Iraq) - Mohammara (below modern Basra in Southern Iraq) - then by steamer to Bushire (Persia). From Bushire, a British steamer would transport the mail to India.



Fig. 34. Colonel Chesney (1789-1872)

This table summarizes the different routes to India in 1837 mainly via Marseille or Falmouth.

**BY THE PERSIAN GULF**

**Via Marseille**

Malta- <u>Beirut</u> -Mohammara (below modern Basra in Southern Iraq)	4,518
Malta- <u>Beirut</u> -Damascus-Mohammara (over the Great Desert)	4,698
Malta- <u>Beirut</u> -Damascus- Baghdad-Mohammara (by the Tigris River)	4,788
Malta-Souadia-Aleppo-Beles-Mohammara (by the Euphrates River)	4,823

**Via Falmouth**

Malta- <u>Beirut</u> -Mohammara.	5,590
Malta- <u>Beirut</u> -Damascus-Mohammara (over the Great Desert)	5,770
Malta- <u>Beirut</u> -Damascus-Baghdad-Mohammara (by the Tigris River)	5,860
Malta-Souadia-Aleppo-Beles-Mohammara (by Dromedary Post)	5,895

**BY THE RED SEA**

Via Marseille and Malta	5,238
Via Falmouth and Malta	6,310

**BY THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE**

Via Johannesburg	10,580
Via Mauritius	10,790

Fig. 35. Distance from London to Bombay in nautical miles, **1837** through the Beirut hub.<sup>74</sup>





Fig. 36. A steel-engraved print of an overland map route to India, by John Tallis (1851). The drawn pink line was added to show the route from London to India through Beirut operating on a regular basis by Admiralty steamers from 1836–1839 (and under its supervision until 1852) as follows: Falmouth-Malta-Alexandria-Beirut-Damascus-Hit (on the Euphrates River in Iraq)-Mohammara (below Basra), by steamer to Bushire (Persia), then to Bombay.



Egypt and modern Syria and Lebanon were at the center of an arc between the British route to India and the Turkish Straits route to the Black Sea region and sat amidst French-British rivalry for most of the 19th century, although the rivalry was kept within reasonable bounds.<sup>72</sup>

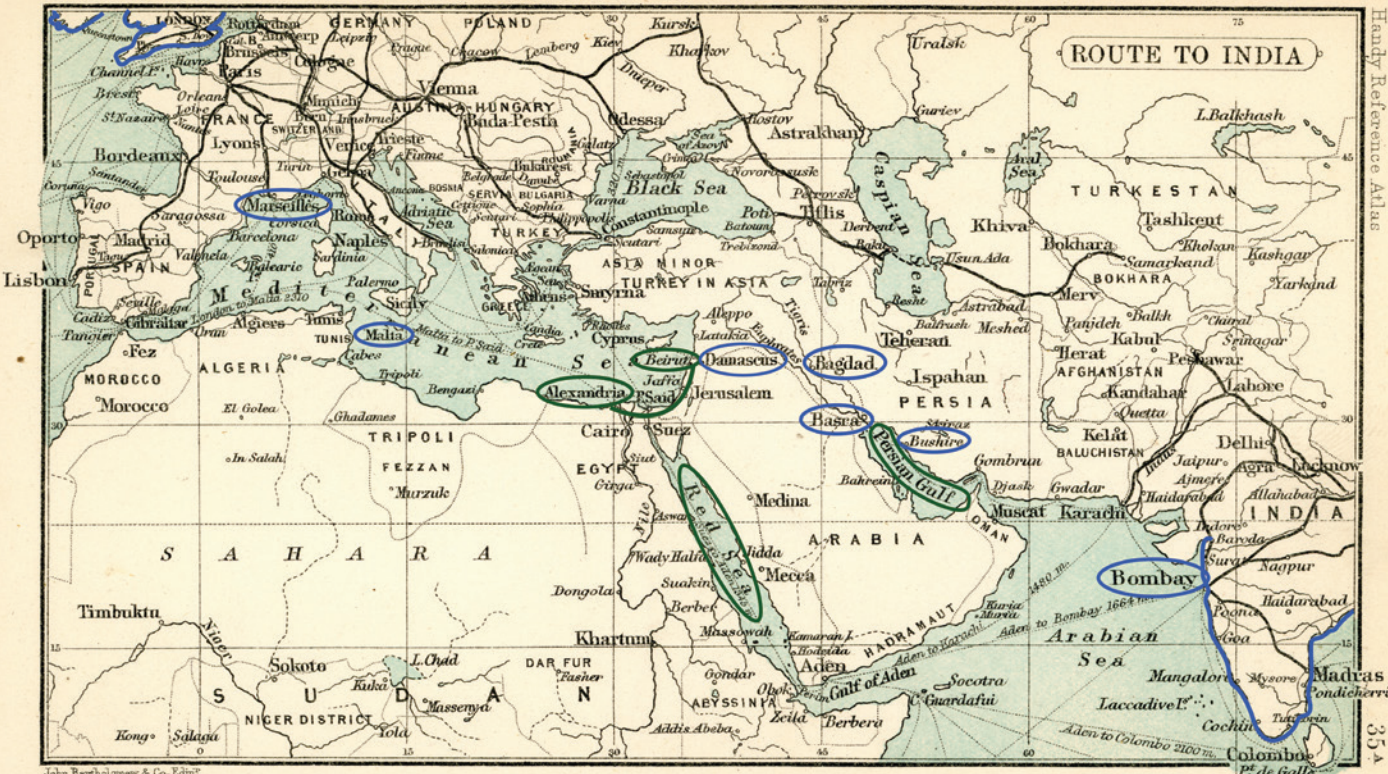


Fig. 37. The Green drawn arc on this map<sup>73</sup> shows the strategic passage between Britain and India, located in Egypt (Alexandria) and Syria (Beirut), passing respectively through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

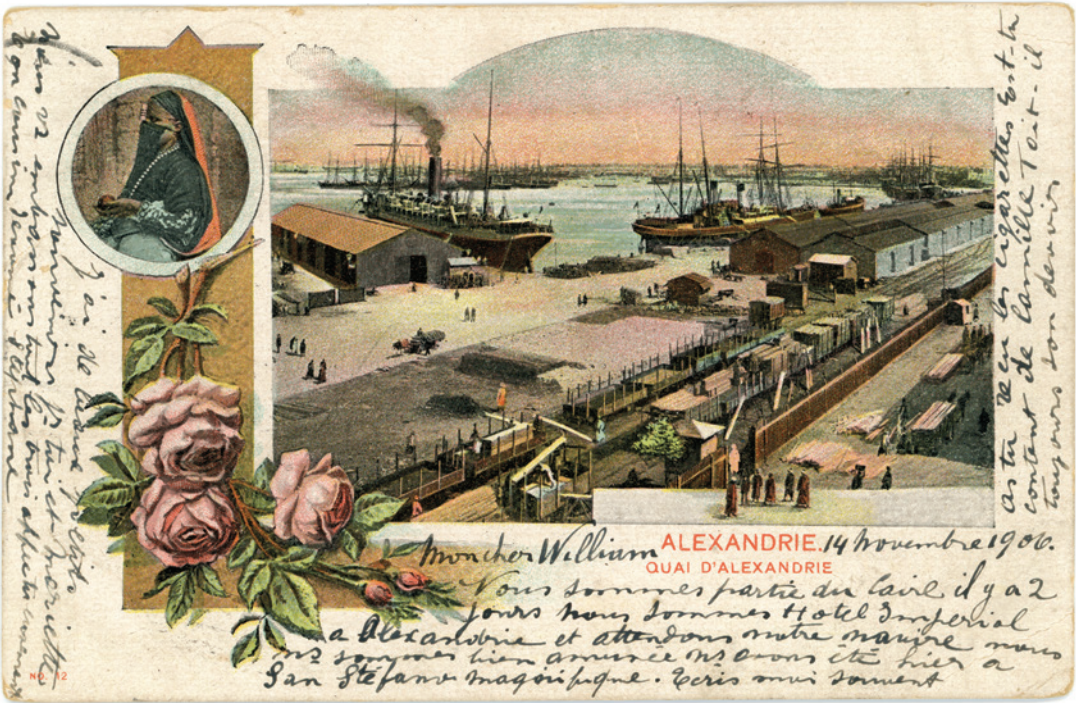


Fig. 38. Illustration of the port of Alexandria.



b. The End of the Egyptian Occupation

In July 1840, the allied powers: Britain (leading), Austria, Russia, and Prussia, finally signed a treaty with the sultan on the subject of preventing the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire by Muhammad Ali. Britain preferred a weakened but intact Ottoman Empire that would grant it the strategic and commercial advantages that it needed to maintain its influence in the region.

The Foreign Office believed that the Ottoman Empire's growing centrality was a strategic bridge and buffer zone for the defense of India. Palmerston, the British prime minister, was seized with the obsession that the Ottoman sultan was better for Syria in order to safeguard access to India than the occupying Egyptian Ibrahim Pasha.

A rare overland mail from India during the war with Ibrahim Pasha

41



Fig. 39

1840 BOMBAY-BEIRUT-LIVERPOOL (47 days) BY ADMIRALTY PACKET

**FRANKING:** Unpaid Pre-UPU double-rate commercial cover of 3/6 (3sh.6d.) due at arrival (for letter weight between ¼ oz. and ½ oz.).<sup>75</sup>

**MARKS:** *Via Persian Gulph & Marseilles* in manuscript at top left on the cover, with a red oval-framed *INDIA* on the front cover.

**ROUTE:** Aboard the East India Company<sup>76</sup> *Cleopatra* from Bombay (July 24) - Muscat - Bussadore - Bushire - Karrack - Mohammera - Basra - Korna - (August 11) - Baghdad (18) - Beirut (24) - Jaffa (24) - aboard the Admiralty *Alecto* from Alexandria (27) - aboard the Admiralty *Prometheus* from Malta (September 1) - Marseille (4) - London (9) - Liverpool (11).<sup>77</sup>

**SENDER:** Ritchie Stewart

**RECEIVER:** John Gladstone & Co

**REMARK:** Although, the regular Admiralty connection between Alexandria and Beirut ceased in September 1839, the steamers on the Euphrates were withdrawn in late 1842. The small burst of renewed activity in 1840, resulted from the military action against Mohammad Ali by British and Austrian forces. At the time, the mail transit via Beirut was considered risky, but in fact, the Egyptian ruler continued to allow unhindered flow of mail.

The arrival of this letter brought by the East India Company (EIC) *Cleopatra* from Bombay on July 24, at the British packet agency in Beirut and its departure on August 24 towards Alexandria, corresponded to the HTSC (*The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*) report<sup>78</sup> few days later, on September 1, 1840, that Beirut harbor was closely invested by British ships summoning the Egyptian garrison to surrender and yet, the India mail was allowed to pass. Moreover, Mr. Moore, the British consul, had struck his flag and gone onboard one of the British ships.



(Cont'd)  
REMARK:

This precedes the British sea attack on the port town of Sidon about 24 miles south of Beirut. Sidon was seized on September 25, **1840**, following an assault by about 1,400 troops led by Napier British fleet from the north to force the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces. Sidon was Pasha's chief port for military supplies.

The letter business contents refer to China, opium, and shipping supplies, and states "...beginning of May...the 'Couadjee Family' & 'Sylph' with 2 opium vessels in company were attacked on the coast by three junks & Mandarin boats; the 'Couadjee' alone expended 40 round Shot, besides grape & cannister..." Mail traveled this route only in the summer monsoon period (e.g., May to September and October to April) and very few voyages were undertaken.

John, the addressee, was a merchant and politician. He built his fortune in Liverpool, and invested in merchandising activities, shipping insurance, ships and property acquisition. Initially, his wealth was based on trade with Calcutta in India.



Fig. 40. Portrait of John Gladstone (1764–1851) at age 66 by Thomas Gladstone (oil on canvas, c. 1830; 91.4 x 71.1 cm).



Fig. 41



A British squadron under Commodore Charles Napier was ordered to the coast of Syria to take possession of the Ottoman seaports there in the name of the Ottoman sultan, and to summon the Egyptian troops under Ibrahim Pasha to withdraw from the Syrian province.<sup>79</sup>



Fig. 42. Destruction of a powder house in Beirut by Admiralty ships on October 24, 1840.<sup>80</sup> Beirut was bombarded by a British fleet for nine days, and the Egyptian troops were obliged to evacuate.<sup>81</sup> It is interesting to note the different flags of each nation's consulate established in the early period close to the seashore. From left to right are the following nations' consulates' flags: Russia, Austria, France, Prussia, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United States. (Courtesy of the Samir Moubarak collection).



Fig. 43. Print of Ibrahim Pasha, the occupying Egyptian ruler of modern Lebanon and Syria from 1832 to 1840, who established a regional quarantine center in Beirut to centralize the foreign trading and shipping activity on the Syrian coast and the hinterland, facilitating the foreign postal communication between Beirut and Europe, between Europe and Egypt, and between Europe and Syria (through Beirut) and overland with the eastern territories (e.g., Mesopotamia and India).



## The Campaign on the Coast of Syria, 1840-41.



From a Lithograph.

THE ATTACK AND CAPTURE OF SIDON.

After Lieut. J. F. WARRE, R.N.

Fig. 44. This print<sup>82</sup> represents a sea attack on the port town of Sidon (about 24 miles south of Beirut), which was seized on September 25, **1840**, following an assault by about 1,400 troops led by the Napier British fleet from the north and by the Austrian archduke from the southwest to force the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces. Sidon was Ibrahim Pasha's chief port for military<sup>83</sup> supplies.<sup>84</sup> Despite the British anti-Egyptian rule, the ruler never stopped accommodating the British mail passage through both Alexandria and Beirut.



Fig. 45. Lord Palmerston (1784 – 1865)<sup>85</sup> held government office almost continuously from **1807** until his death in **1865**. Palmerston dominated British foreign policy during the period **1830** to **1865**, when Britain stood at the height of its imperial power. Palmerston always sought the strengthening of an alternative postal communication route overland through Beirut to India, Mesopotamia, and Persia.



The beginning of the overthrow of the Egyptian hold on the Levant, according to a French paper, had shaken to some degree the confidence of foreign shares<sup>86</sup> in European stock markets.

The blockade of Alexandria in September **1840** by a British fleet had not resulted, surprisingly, in any reprisal from Muhammad Ali to stop any British mail passing through. For example, two surviving pieces of mail from India through the Persian Gulf via Beirut were transported during the conflict.<sup>87</sup> This was also the case when the hostilities, to force a withdrawal of the Egyptian forces, broke out in September in Beirut “during the time the cannonading was going on, the Indian mail arrived” and was sent on to Alexandria, according to the naval commander, Charles Nappier.<sup>88</sup>

The British-led coalition had saved the Ottoman sultan from the worst effects of his defeat at the hands of his powerful Egyptian Viceroy Muhammad Ali.<sup>89</sup> By October **1840**, the GPO in London, was sufficiently confident of the route through Egypt and issued the following notice:

*The overland mails for India via Falmouth and Marseilles will be dispatched from this country on 31st inst. and 4th November in the usual manner. Impediment through Egypt is not expected.*

However, Egypt’s strategic location on the sea routes connecting Europe with the Eastern Mediterranean made it unlikely that it could escape conflict and domination by one of the powers. Britain had to wait until September **1882**, when its occupation of Egypt (until **1956**) became a reality after a protracted phase of European influence, indebtedness, and destabilization.<sup>90</sup>

The restoration of control over Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine to the Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Mejid (I) in **1840** did not affect the gradual process of pacification of the countryside and the different steps already made toward the modernization in administration and social organization during Egyptian rule.

These were sufficient in creating the necessary momentum for the continuous expansion of the port city of Beirut into a regional hub for postal routes, shipping, and commerce for the coming 143 years.

The Admiralty direct service line continued to stop only sporadically until **1845** in Beirut and not always via Alexandria.<sup>91</sup> It continued to supervise vessels until **1852**, and after that point, local merchants and consuls at both places continued to outsource vessels on the Alexandria-Beirut line for conveying their mail with Britain.

This was in addition to the GPO contracted French government packets (since **1837**), which ensured a large portion of British mail between Marseille and Alexandria, and between Alexandria and Beirut from **1845** (see p.56).



Fig. 46. Early picture of the port of Beirut c. **1870** (Courtesy of the Samir Moubarak collection).

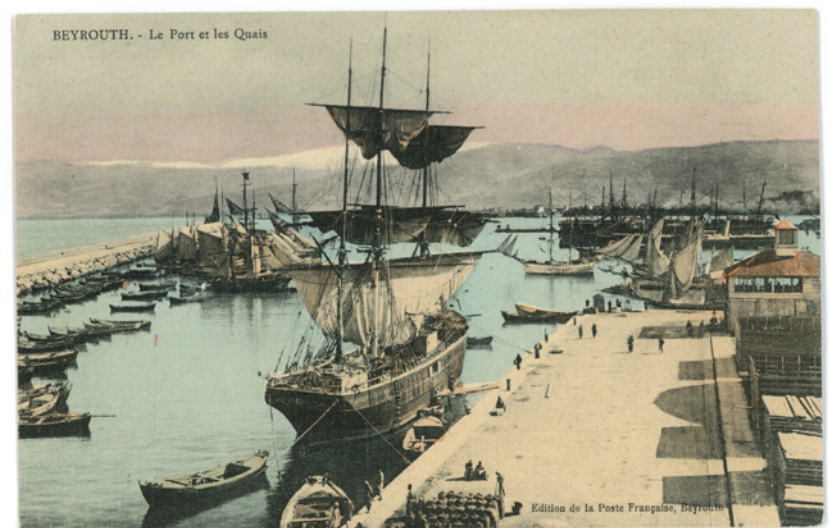


Fig. 47. Postcard published and sold at the French Post Office in Beirut, representing the pier at Beirut Port in the late **1890s**.

### c. Quarantine Center in Beirut

The increase in the number of people traveling, aided by the growth and speed of technology, while also driven by commerce and colonial expansion, accelerated the recurrence and transmission of contagious diseases.

46

Influenced by Western European and especially French sanitary practices, Muhammad Ali, who occupied the Ottoman Provinces of Syria, had set up the first quarantine center or Lazaretto (in the Ottoman Empire) in 1828, in Egypt. It included a sanitary board consisting of European doctors and consular representatives aimed at giving it an international character and satisfying Western European nations wary of epidemics entering Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean coast.

Nevin Moore, British consul in Beirut reported<sup>92</sup> in November 1835 that:

*The quarantine station for the whole coast and center for Syria- a Lazaretto- on a large scale- [second to the one*

*in Alexandria] has been erected [in Beirut] and the administration of the Health Department is confided to a committee of European consuls- the British, French and Sardinian. This office is confined to giving advice and directions with respect to the sanitary measures to be adopted, whilst the executive and financial department rests with the local authorities.*

**The strategic quarantine supervised by European consulates<sup>93</sup> was critical to the rise of Beirut as a regional port city, since it played a prominent role in keeping international trade routes free-flowing and clear of dangerous epidemics.<sup>94</sup>**

With Beirut as the key point of contact with the Syrian coast, it was mandatory that even if an epidemic was raging in the countryside, the city itself would be guarded against its spread. Europe feared from its trade with the Syrian Provinces, which was now under control in Beirut,



Fig. 48. Postcard view of the lazaretto in Beirut in the early 1900s.



as outbound steamers from Syrian ports to Europe had, in principle, to first stop there and be cleared of any epidemic diseases before continuing their journey to Europe.

Long-serving in Beirut (i.e., about 14 years from **1824**), Henry Guys started as French vice consul (a consular representative was established first in **1821**) and later became the consul general. In **1836**, he wrote:

*...the first effect of the grouping in Beirut of the principal produces of Syria would be the creation of several bulk shipments. Our Captains then would neither be obliged to spend several months gathering cargo, nor would they have to reduce their return freight since they would limit their number of calls by having the benefit of berthing at one port only – Beirut.*<sup>95</sup>

Thus, the quarantine in Beirut offered the dual function of efficiently organizing trading routes and keeping them free of epidemics. From February **1835**, all ships calling at the Beirut Port were to quarantine and be inspected at anchor before entering the harbor, and passengers rowed with their belongings (including their mail, which was disinfected) to the quarantine center, where they were regularly examined by a European doctor. The Admiralty ship logs from the *Firefly* reported on July 6, **1838**, on its return to Alexandria from Beirut that it had handed the mail to the lazaretto in Beirut for inspection.<sup>96</sup>

“Abuses and Inconsistencies,” is the title of a report of the quarantine centers in the Levant in **1839**, and describes the quarantine in Beirut as:

*...wasn't enforced upon all equally and only a little interest with the authorities was required for avoiding detention. An order from the Government, procured through the medium of a consulate, was considered equivalent to seven days' purification; and I was informed that the mules and muleteers which brought a noble lord and suite into Beyrout, during the time of the plague, were allowed, after having communicated most completely with the town, to pass the Cordon Sanitaire, the British Consul having obtained an order for them to proceed without the penalty of undergoing quarantine.*<sup>97</sup>

On July 7, **1842**, Dr. Kerns, the first agent of the Syrian Medical-Aid Association (who was granted on June 21, a free passage by the Admiralty from Beirut to Alexandria on *The Oriental*), reports in a letter the following:

*We left Alexandria the 18th of June, and, after sixty hours, anchored at Beyrout. We had to submit to twelve days quarantine; but were not obliged to go in the Lazaretto, which is a filthy place, and at present has in it a bad fever, but were permitted to occupy part of a small house near the shore.*

Britain made sure that regular reports on the quarantine center in Beirut and the sanitary situation in Syria took place, and that the appropriate measures for trade activity and sanitary precautions were covered. An official British presentation to the House of Commons in London in **1843** reported the following condition of the quarantine in Beirut<sup>98</sup> by M.D. J. Robertson, Deputy Inspector-General of Hospitals:

*The Administration of the quarantine establishments both in Egypt and Syria is most loose, irregular and even absurd, and supposing the plague to be contagious, would afford no security whatever, while the interruption to commerce, and the expense, vexations and danger produced to travelers is immense. Some of their practices is absurd: it sometimes happens that persons arriving by sea from Beyrout, at a time when it is free from plague, are placed in quarantine in Alexandria; when the disease may be extremely prevalent, travelers by land often pass without interruption, betwixt places that are not permitted to have intercourse by sea, unless accompanied by the observance of quarantine. The lazarettos are also so ill adapted for the reception of persons accustomed to the consequences of a residence in them.*

*At Beyrout the lazaretto is most swamp, the rooms are filthy and damp, being open to the weather, and it is only wonderful that all who enter do not fall victims to disease of some kind, if not to plague.*

Europeans criticized that the Ottoman public health authorities needlessly inhibited trade and the free flow of overseas traffic by imposing a 10–15-day quarantine. French studies (based on observations **1831–1846**) found that recent plague outbreaks could be explained by environmental factors rather than contagious ones. The British and French supported these findings that there was no positive evidence that the plague was transmitted by infected merchandise or mail, which was also being disinfected. Improving water supply, hygiene, and setting up rules could prevent disease, rather than isolating patients or quarantining suspected ships.

However, the Ottomans were reluctant to give up contagionist notions of epidemic disease, and wished to maintain their quarantine of foreign ships and even cities. In fact, they sought to tax naval traffic and even merchandise, and did not hesitate to use their quarantine system in order to project their power internationally.

Mr. Robert, a supervisor of British hospitals in Syria, commented:

*...the results of all my experiences leads me to believe that the disease originates in local causes, and that it is endemic in Syria and Egypt; that is not of a highly contagious nature...*<sup>99</sup>

**The forced establishment of quarantine systems and standards from Western nations on various city ports in the Eastern Mediterranean during the 19th century had the double role of enforcing preventive public health precautions and as a device for social control and colonization.** The sanitary council or quarantine board, in which foreign consuls in Beirut sat, for example, served as sites of negotiation between European agents and Ottoman officials, mirroring the competition in trade, political, and colonial interests of each of the foreign members' nations.

International regulations applied to the quarantine stations, and privileged trade vessels flying European flags and their merchandise over those from Egyptian and Ottoman ports. For example, at the Beirut Lazaretto, a three-tier classification was introduced: "healthy European," "suspect Egyptian, Syrian, and Greek," and "contaminated Ottoman."<sup>100</sup>

Quarantine measures were, then, a clear impediment to the free circulation of mail, goods, and people. In **1852**, when the contract for the conveyance of British mail between Britain and Beirut via Alexandria (then still under Admiralty supervision) came to be renewed, an active correspondence between the Beirut consul general and the British administration focused "on the need for the quarantine regulations in the Levant to be relaxed in order to organize a more extended and efficient Steam Service."<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, a British Treasury official had reported that the contracted (shipping) service, showed an annual cost of 1,600 sterling pounds against a postal benefit of 300 sterling pounds, and adding "...it seems under these circumstances, inexpedient to renew it..."

On another note, in **1906**, a report was issued by the inspection commission of the lazarettos by the Sanitary Administration in the Ottoman Empire to the higher sanitary council, over the relocation of the lazaretto in Beirut.

As the city of Beirut had expanded closer to the lazaretto, the report's conclusion demonstrated that relocating the quarantine further away would not be convenient, that the current location was the most optimal, and the best alternative would be too far away in the Gulf of Youmour-talik, located north of the Gulf of Alexandretta.

The same report shows the movement of ships over a 20-year period (**1886–1906**) whose passengers passed through the lazaretto in Beirut. About 33% of these quarantined ships were under the British flag, and 13% French, 13% Ottoman, 9% Austrian, 6% Russian, and 26% other flags,<sup>102</sup> confirming once more, the leading position of the number of ships under British flags entering Beirut.



*Fig. 49. Picture at Beirut harbor at the end of the 19th century, where passengers and mail were disembarked from ships, as there was no sufficient capacity to dock at the pier.*





Fig. 50. View of the port of Beirut at the end of the 19th century.

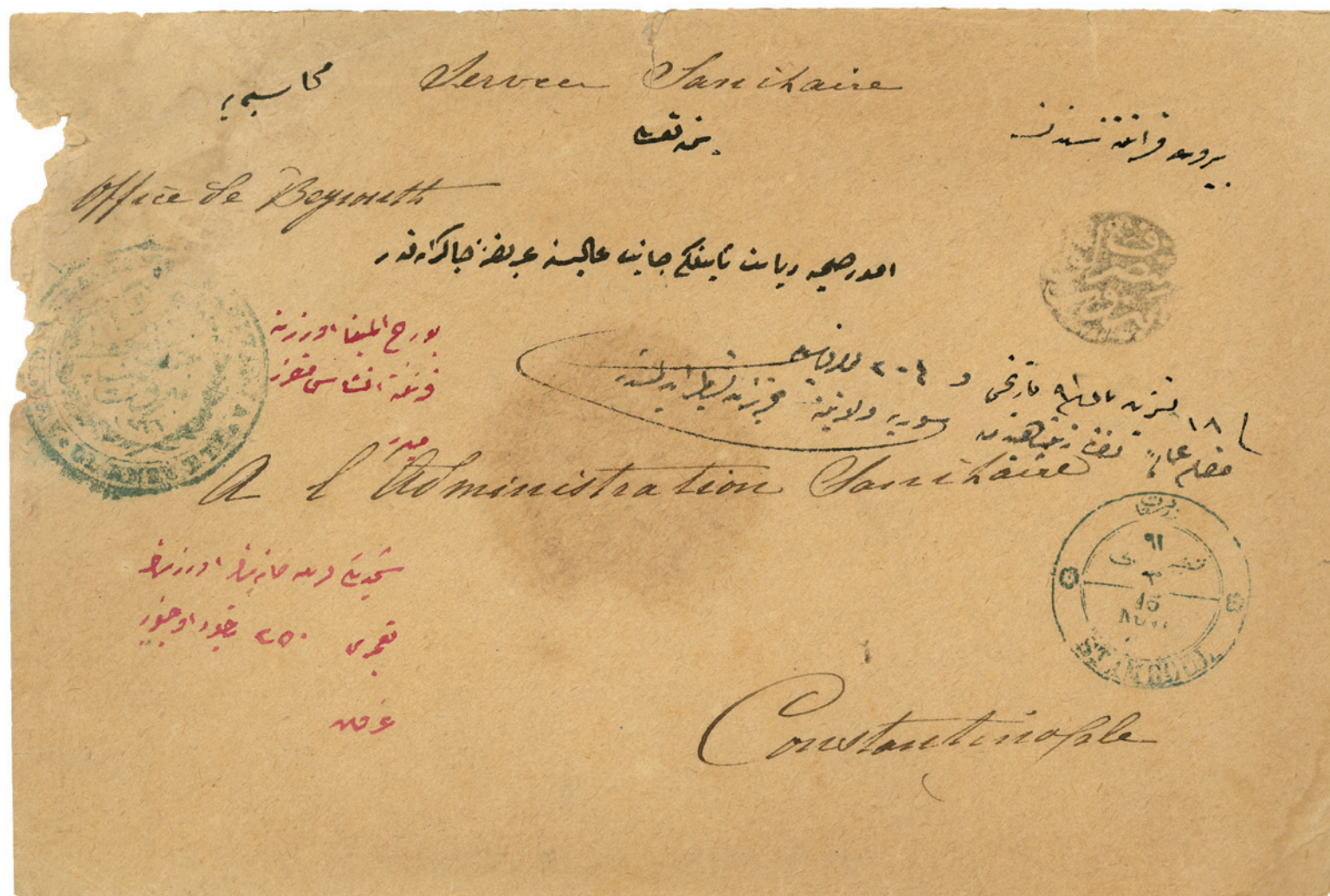


Fig. 51. This is an Ottoman cover posted from the Beirut sanitary/lazaretto office in Beirut in 1874 and addressed to the Ministry of Health Department in Constantinople. Note on the top left, the Ottoman health office stamp in Italian SANITARIA DI BERUTTI.



**BILL OF HEALTH.** [FORM No. 121.]

I, Consul of the United States of America for the Port of *Beirut Syria*  
do hereby certify that the *Schooner* called the *J.S. & L.C. Adams*  
of *Grak Egg Harbor* of the registered burden of *430 99* tons,  
whereof *John Samson* is Master, navigated by *Eight* men,  
and having on board *no* passengers, being in all *Eight* persons on board, cleared  
this day at this port for *Malaga Spain*

I hereby further certify, that in this port and vicinity, and among the shipping thereof, good health prevails,  
without any suspicion of plague, yellow fever, or any other contagious or pestilential disease whatever, in  
either an epidemic or sporadic form; and that no such disease has existed, either in the place or among the  
shipping, for the past *year* weeks or months.

GIVEN under my hand and seal of this Consular Office, the day and year  
above written.

*Geo. S. Smith*  
U. S. Consul.

Fig. 52



Fig. 53

## A Bill of Health

A Bill of Health is a document describing the health of the port at the time of the vessel's clearance. This clean bill of health certifies that, at its date of issuance, no infectious diseases were known to exist either in the port or around its neighborhood for the past year, and there were no infected passengers.

طوب  
منسوب اولدینی لیان تیرکت  
عزیمت ابتدکی محل ملود  
قبودا ک اسمی جون کسم  
طینک اسمی  
طافه سی ۸  
یولیسی  
جوله سی  
حیوانات  
حیوانات قرنیسی  
درونده خسته سی  
احوالی بالاده ذکرا و نکان سفینه ک بورادن عزیمتی اتماده درون مملکت و جوارنک حیت  
عجمیده سی بولنده اولدینی مینک اسبق باننده قعودان مرکود یرینه اعطاسند  
نکین اولدینه

وباعلی  
قولرا علی  
صاری جا علی  
حیوان خسته لئی

باتنه بن اعطایدن ماتوری

Fig. 52. Bill of Health delivered by the US Consulate in Beirut.

Fig. 53. An Ottoman laissez passer form attached to the Bill of Health written in Turkish Ottoman and dated October 7, 1890, and endorsed on the back by the Spanish Consulate (with the fee of 10 pesetas) in Beirut authorizing the US schooner, *J.S. & L.C. Adams*, transiting through Beirut to enter the port of Malaga, in Spain.



## d. Diplomatic Center in Beirut

The Levant Company employed British consuls in the Middle East until **1825**, after which the British government forced the Levant Company to terminate its activities and took over its consular establishments in order to develop the commerce of the British Empire.<sup>103</sup>

Beirut started to actively attract consular representatives and foreign traders to the city, especially after the establishment of the regional quarantine center (see p. 46) in Beirut in **1835**, when it was part of the Sandjak (sub-province) of Acre in the vilayet (province) of Sidon. Senior foreign consular representatives were quick to move from the towns of Damascus, Acre, and Sidon, in order to provide direct consular involvement that would ensure an efficient and continual flow of merchandise.

The French and British senior consuls were the first to move to Beirut, early on, in the **1820s**.<sup>104</sup> Numerous foreign consuls and vice consuls were appointed to Beirut in the course of the **1830s**. By the middle of the 19th century, the consular positions were highly institutionalized and gained roles in the socio-political decision-making processes in the city.

By the **1850s**, many countries had established their regional consulate in Beirut, represented by a consul general in charge of the other consuls or vice consuls in the region, including: US (**1832–1833**) and Russia (**1839**).<sup>105</sup> For example, Austria was first, with a representative consul in **1808**, who was elevated to a consul general starting in **1841**,<sup>106</sup> who had, an objective, among others, to protect the Jewish subjects of the Austrian Empire<sup>107</sup> in Syria and Palestine.

Other nations' consular representatives that were upgraded to consul general included: Prussia, Kingdom of Sardinia, Kingdom of Tuscany, Spain, Kingdom of Napoli, the Netherlands, Belgium (**1854**), and Greece.

As was often the case, diplomats remained in their posts for many years or even for their entire career.

Starting in **1831**, American foreign service officials were appointed in the Ottoman Empire, according to each city's importance: Constantinople, Alexandria, Beirut, and Smyrna.<sup>108</sup> The US Consulate in Beirut – which included Palestine under its jurisdiction – was maintained despite plans to close it down in **1840**, following the pressure from resident and influential American missionaries.

In **1849**, the following US consular agencies were reporting to Beirut: Damascus, Acre, Nazareth, and Ramle, and were subsequently closed as they were: "entirely useless to any American interest." From **1839** to **1858**, the Russian diplomatic mission in Jerusalem was also under the jurisdiction of the Russian consul general in Beirut. The Austrian consuls in Aleppo, Larnaca (Cyprus), Damascus, Alexandretta, Sidon, Tripoli, Latakia, Mersin, Safed-Tiberia, and even Baghdad reported as of **1846** to the Austrian consul general in Beirut.<sup>109</sup>

In **1861**, following the forced political resolution by European powers after the massacre of Christians in Mount Lebanon, French, British, and Russian consuls had a direct say in who was appointed to govern the mountain, and had strong points of reference for intervening among the local political factions.

The consulates in the Ottoman provinces followed the example of the embassies in Constantinople and interfered in every act of the local government.

Hence, Beirut became the diplomatic capital of Ottoman Syria at about the same time as it developed into its economic pivot, but before it became a cultural and administrative capital<sup>110</sup> in **1888**.

Consular presence went hand in hand with capitulations, commercial privileges granted by the Ottoman port to consuls, merchants, and citizens from European nations that had signed treaties with Turkey.

These privileges included reduced customs duties, immunity from Ottoman laws and taxes, diplomatic protection, and guarantees of personal security.

**European nations manipulated these capitulations for strategic and economic gains by giving protection to locals, European envoys, and consuls, who extended privileges to "protégés" – Arab Christians, Jews, Armenians, or to any individual whose skills and services helped advance European interests.**

An Ottoman official in Beirut, frustrated, wrote to Constantinople complaining that the British consul "adopts the attitude that this is British territory upon which we are permitted to remain out of charity; an attitude he loses no opportunity of expressing in his every word and act."<sup>111</sup> Thus, the capitulatory advantages granted to these "protégés" provided them with a competitive edge over other locals with no privileges.

The French and British consuls as well as the consuls of other countries, especially Russia (with the Lebanese Christian Orthodox community), became routinely involved in various aspects of Lebanese life.

Many British consuls served in Beirut from the 1820s–1914, including:

Peter Abbott (d. July 1834, Beirut)

A tobacco merchant and consul at Acre and Beirut.<sup>112</sup>

From 1820–1834.<sup>113</sup>

Nevin Moore

Consul from January 15, 1835–1842<sup>114</sup> (moved to Aleppo on May 15, and back to Beirut on November 27).

Acting Consul General: December 6, 1848–June 12, 1850.

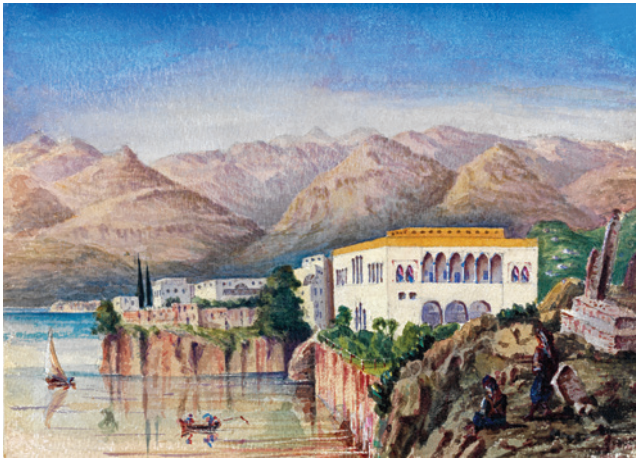


Fig. 54. Watercolor drawing (c. 1860) of the residence of Assaad Bey Malhame in Beirut, which became the residence of the British consul before being converted in 1908 into the Hotel d'Angleterre, then into the seat of the French Admiralty in 1919, (Courtesy of the Philippe Jabre Collection).

Officially as Consul General: December 13, 1853 to 1862.<sup>115</sup>

Colonel Hugh Henry Rose

Consul General in Syria based in Beirut: August 20, 1842–1848.<sup>116</sup>

In 1841, he rescued 700 American missionaries from Mount Lebanon and took them to Beirut, walking all the way, so that his horse could be available to old women.

Consul General: 1850–1852<sup>117</sup>

George Jackson Eldridge (1826–1890, Beirut)

Consul General in Syria based in Beirut, 1863–1890<sup>118</sup> and president of the corps of consuls.<sup>119</sup>

Robert Drummond Hay

Consul General: 1894–1907.<sup>120</sup>

Henry Alfred Cumberbatch<sup>121</sup> (1858–1918)

Consul General: January 28, 1908 –October 31, 1914



Fig. 55. Postcard of the British consul general residence (1905–1914) in Beirut, located in Tabaris/Sursock Street (Courtesy of the Camille Tarazi Collection).

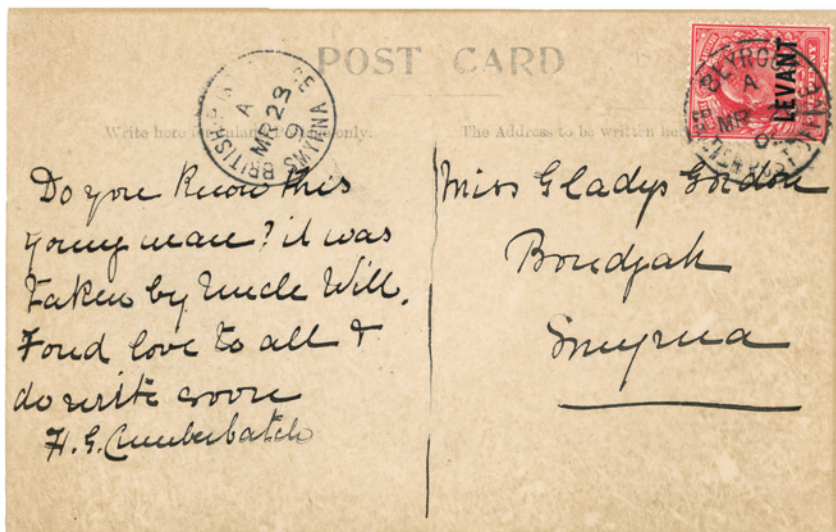


Fig. 56. Private family correspondence from the consul general in Beirut, Henry Alfred Cumberbatch, by photo postcard, a good way to keep in touch with friends and close family members.





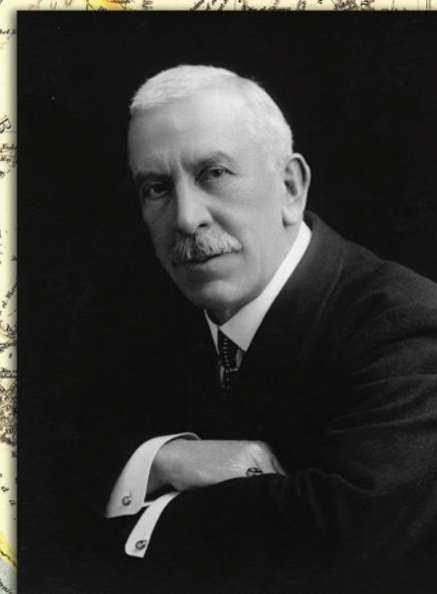


Fig. 58

Fig. 57. Map of Beirut and Syria dated 1883 with the locations of British consular presence.<sup>122</sup>

Fig. 58. Henry Alfred Cumberbatch (1858–1918) at age 50, the last consul general in Beirut (1908–1914) before the closure of the foreign post offices in Beirut on September 31, 1914.



## A TESTIMONY LETTER DATED 1842 FROM A US STATESMAN ABOUT THE PERCEIVED BRITISH AMBITIONS FOR BEIRUT

The sender; Charles Jared Ingersoll, whose father was one of the signatories of the US Constitution, was a Pennsylvania congressman and one of the few members of the US Congress with foreign experience.

He was formerly an attaché for the US consulates in France and in Germany, with a knowledge of international politics, and chaired the House Committee on Foreign Affairs during the Mexican-American War.

Ingersoll writes a brief letter, answering Charles Buckalew, then a 21-year-old law student, who went on to become a US senator in Pennsylvania during the Civil War. One of the questions from Buckalew was: "...whether the English government means to own Beirut and St. John D' Acre..." thus expanding its hegemony in this part of the world. The year of that inquiry comes about two years after the end of the period of the Egyptian occupation (1832–1840) of the Holy Land, modern Syria and Lebanon, and when Beirut was emerging as an important regional hub on the Syrian coast and an important corridor to India, a strategic territory to Britain.

The British urged the allied powers to finish off the Egyptian occupation that threatened the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. They aimed to keep a weakened, but intact Ottoman Empire, so that it could have a strong influence upon it.

Ingersoll's reply was subtle on whether the British wished to own these two places with the following pragmatic words "...that remains to be seen."

The US interest in the Levant was still relatively low, as other priorities occupied the young nation during the Antebellum Era, but this letter represents a testimony of the view of some of the American politicians about their former colonial ruler and the British presence in the Middle East.

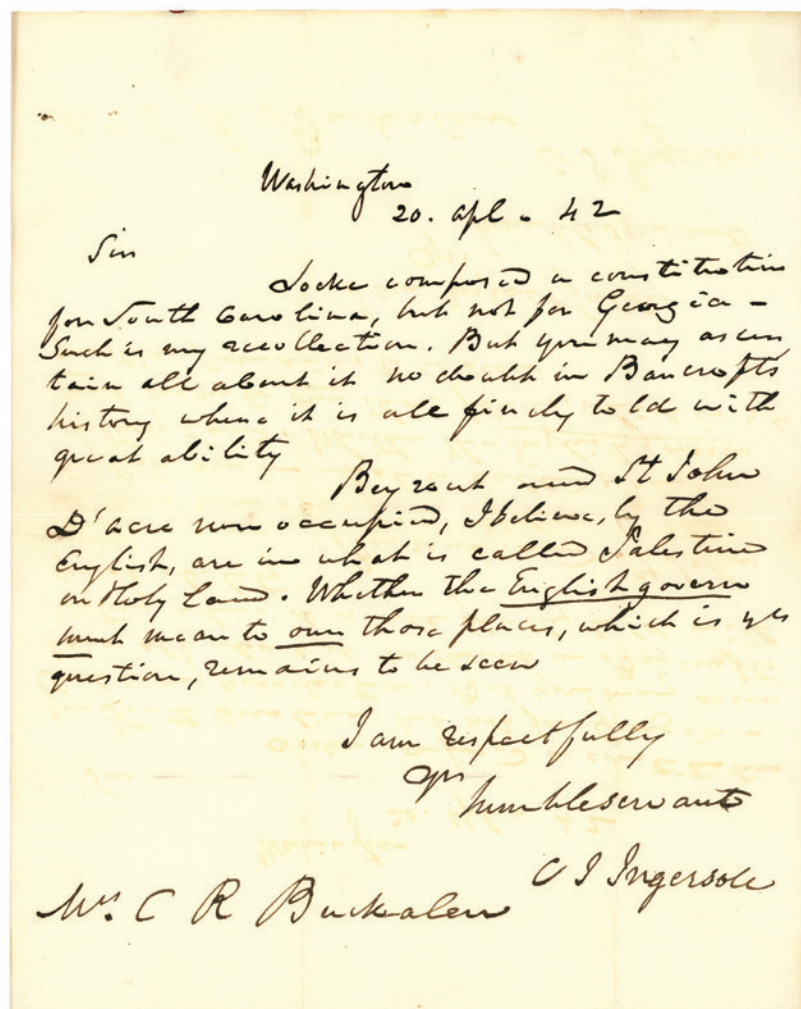


Fig. 59. Unpaid mailed US cover, since, the sender was a member of the US Congress and exempted from postage (1842).



## 2. British Postal Agreements (1837/1840)

Direct mail transport between Beirut and European destinations – before the establishment of direct and postal regular routes from **1845** by both the French government and the Austrian Lloyd packets (attracting the lion's share of the postal contracts, and therefore mail) – was served by the occasional passing-by of non-regular commercial and navy ships of diverse nations.<sup>123</sup> Early on, incoming and outgoing mail would usually be handled by the relevant foreign consulate in Beirut, which would serve its nationals there.



*Flag of the British Admiralty*

55

### a. British Contract with the French Government Packets

Coincidentally, one year after starting the postal line between Alexandria and Beirut by the British Admiralty, the French postal administration introduced a regular steam-shipping route with their government steamers on May 1, **1837**. It was first operated by the French Navy in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>124</sup> Britain took this opportunity to sign a postal convention for steamship transport in the Mediterranean with them in the same year.

A notice from W.L. Maberly, secretary of the British General Post Office, dated May 26, **1837**, reports that British letters may be forwarded from France on the route: Marseille - Leghorn - Civita Vecchia (Rome) - Napoli - Malta - Syra - Athens - Smyrna - Constantinople - Alexandria.

The French would then ensure the British and Indian mail, brought from Britain to Calais, north of France, then to coastal Marseille. It would be transported through different means: stagecoach and railway with transboardments until **1856**, when a train was used all the way from Calais or Boulogne to Marseille with no transboardment (and vice versa).

This option was used in order to reduce traveling time – although at a much greater expense – than the direct British shipping route around France.

Passengers, who could afford to do so, traveled the same route, saving at least a week and avoiding the notorious swells and rollers of the Bay of Biscay.

The French government would also ensure a shipping route between Marseille and Alexandria onboard the state-run Paquebots de l'Administration des Postes, until **1851** when it was taken over by the private Messageries Maritimes.

Then from Alexandria, the British would handle the mail to India overland through the port town of Suez by the Red Sea, and from there by steamer to India. British mail to Syria (as well as some to India, Mesopotamia, and Persia) would be conveyed through Beirut on the Alexandria - Beirut route with contracted vessels from British merchants (then under Admiralty supervision from **1839–1852**) or primarily aboard the French contracted packet line (from December **1845** onward).



*Fig. 60. Pier for British ships at Boulogne-sur-Mer in northern France, dating from the early 1900s.*

The First GPO Public Notice for the Regular Conveyance of British Mail Directly with Beirut  
by the French Government Packet Line starting from December 1845<sup>125</sup>

56

Instructions, No. 33.—1845.

By Command of the Postmaster General.

**NOTICE to the PUBLIC,**  
AND  
**Instructions to all Postmasters,  
Sub-Postmasters, and Letter Receivers.**

GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
December, 1845.

**HENCEFORWARD,** Letters posted in  
the United Kingdom and addressed to  
**BEYROUT,** by *French Packet*  
*via Marseilles,* may be forwarded  
either unpaid, or paid to destination, at  
the option of the sender.

The following Table will shew the  
rates of postage which must be taken  
on these Letters when paid in the  
United Kingdom.

Combined BRITISH and FOREIGN RATES on a LETTER				
Weighing under $\frac{1}{2}$ Ounce.	Weighing $\frac{1}{2}$ and not exceeding $\frac{3}{4}$ an Ounce.	Exceeding $\frac{3}{4}$ and under $1\frac{1}{2}$ of an Ounce.	Weighing $1\frac{1}{2}$ and not exceeding 1 Ounce.	Exceeding 1 Ounce and under $1\frac{1}{2}$ Ounce.
BRITISH. 5d.	5d.	10d.	10d.	1s. 8d.
FOREIGN 10d.	1s. 8d.	2s. 6d.	3s. 4d.	4s. 2d.
Total to destination } 1s. 3d.	2s. 1d.	3s. 4d.	4s. 2d.	5s. 10d.

Fig. 61





Fig. 62

1845 (BEIRUT)-MALTA-PARIS (30 days) BY BRITISH CONTRACTED OR PASSING-BY VESSEL

**FRANKING:** Unpaid cover written in Beirut and dated (inside letter) March 6, 1845. The total unpaid postal rate of “17” décimes due at arrival was applied in Paris. Out of these 17 décimes, the Marseille exchange office had hand-marked at first the “7” décimes on the upper left corner of the cover representing the French rate covering the distance between Malta and Marseille in accordance with the May 30, 1838, rates of French packets in the Mediterranean. The difference of “10” décimes represented the internal rate of 10 d. charged by the French Post for the distance between Marseille and Paris (as per the 1828 French rate covering mail transport from 372 to 466 miles).

**MARKS:** Two front slit marks on the cover and the Malta stamp indicate it was disinfected at Malta (the quarantine center for entering Europe by sea) coming from Alexandria

**ROUTE:** As a regular steamship line was not yet servicing Beirut until November 16 of that year (e.g. French government packets), a passing-by British ship was used as written on the back with a last minute added note dated “The 9th of March...I am told that a British vessel will be leaving for Alexandria tomorrow” (e.g., March 10)

The cover arrived from Malta (British possession) late on April 1, as evidenced by the red date stamp POSS.ANG (POSSession ANGLaise= British Possession), which was applied in Marseille on incoming letters aboard British packets. The British Admiralty had ensured the Malta-Marseille trips until 1852 and the P&O ensured that line from 1840. The arrival date of April 4, is shown by the back date stamp.

**SENDER:** Louis Lamothe

**RECEIVER:** Felix Lamothe

**REMARK:** Under the 1843 postal convention between France and Britain (Article XL), France would pay Britain 10 pence for unpaid letters from Malta, and 1 shilling 8 pence (1/8 d.) for unpaid letters from Alexandria. However, in this case, as there was neither a British date stamp from Alexandria nor from Malta, the French postal clerk at Marseille assumed the letter came from Malta and applied only a rate of 7 décimes. The delay of the ship’s arrival from Alexandria or Malta, until arrival in Marseille on April 1 could have been from a diverse number of reasons, including an accident requiring repairs on the ship or eruption of epidemics that halted maritime traffic.



A British commercial cover posted in Glasgow and transported aboard a British packet from London to Calais, then transboarded by railway to Marseille, and then transferred aboard a French government steamer to Beirut.

58



Fig. 63

**1850**      **GLASGOW-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT**      (17 days)      **BY FRENCH GOVERNMENT STEAMER**

**FRANKING:**      Prepaid quadruple commercial cover of rate 4sh.2d. (of which 3s.4d. for the French, and 10d. for the British) (rate introduced on December 5, 1845)<sup>126</sup> in Glasgow, Scotland.

**MARKS:**      *Via Marseilles* per French packet in manuscript, Red *PD* for paid to destination applied by the London Foreign Section, French entry mark at Calais (*ANGL, CALAIS. 2*) in black.

**ROUTE:**      Glasgow (March 29) - London (March 30) - Dover - Calais (March 31) - Marseille (April 4) Malta (April 7) - Alexandria (April 11) - Beirut (April 14)<sup>127</sup> - Alexandretta - Aleppo.

**SENDER:**      R. Walker & Son

**RECEIVER:**      Messrs. Riddell & Co., Aleppo (the same firm was also represented in Beirut).

**SHIPPER:**      To Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by train, and mail coach across France, then to Beirut by the French government steamer *Osiris*, and finally to Aleppo by private courier.



Fig. 64



### 3. Beirut Strategic Positioning and Britain's Role

#### a. British Trade with Beirut and Syria

Until Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, France was the leading trading nation with Syria. Hence, one of the key objectives of that expedition<sup>128</sup> was to protect its economic positioning.

Napoleon's intention was to expel the British from all their Middle Eastern possessions, to destroy their Red Sea trading establishments, take Egypt, and ingeniously dig a canal through the isthmus of Suez, to ensure French exclusive control over the Red Sea.

Following Bonaparte's geopolitical defeat, Britain replaced France as the most influential foreign power in the Ottoman Court. As a result, British interest rose in trade with Egypt and Syria, becoming a large market for British-manufactured goods and a source of raw materials like cotton, grain, and wool. Foreign trade statistics between **1900** and **1912**, show British flag ships leading in foreign trade tonnage and in the number of vessels stopping in Beirut, Syria's largest port.

The vitality of hinterland trade was best manifested by the rise of Beirut as a port immediately after the Egyptian occupation, when hinterland trade suffered the "interruption of caravans sent off to Damascus, Constantinople, and Smyrna." Steamships were diverting pilgrims and trade from caravan routes that once ended at Damascus or Aleppo to Beirut's Port.<sup>129</sup> Until the advent of steamships, a network of caravan routes linking inland capitals with each other through rural interior villages and coastal towns was the sole set of connections for imported wares.<sup>130</sup>

It was, in fact, the British who introduced the system of port-cities into the Levant, thereby shifting focus in international trade from inland urban networks (e.g., Aleppo, Damascus) to commercially linked coastal cities.<sup>131</sup>

By the **1830s**, Alexandretta was in steep decline, with poor and tedious connections with Aleppo.<sup>132</sup>

Although Alexandretta (also known as Iskendaroon; Aleppo's port) could experience high volumes of seaborne trade as a port due to Aleppo functioning as a caravan city along major long-distance routes, it could not develop into an institutionalized port-city, as Beirut did. Aleppo itself lagged behind Beirut in the volume of international trade and was no longer an important link between the east and west. Although Aleppo had retained its position as a regional trading center for northern Syria, the Mosul region, and southeastern Anatolia, it had lost its premier position as an entrepot for the Levant trade and, consequently, the wealth it generated.<sup>133</sup>

Although still a smaller port, Beirut was mentioned in a British consular letter, dated October 10, **1825**, from Constantinople to the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, stating that it was "now the most flourishing port on the coast of Syria."<sup>134</sup>

In **1828**, the president of the British Board of Trade declared that "Beirut and Smyrna were the only points [e.g., with active consular presence] retained in the Levant."<sup>135</sup>

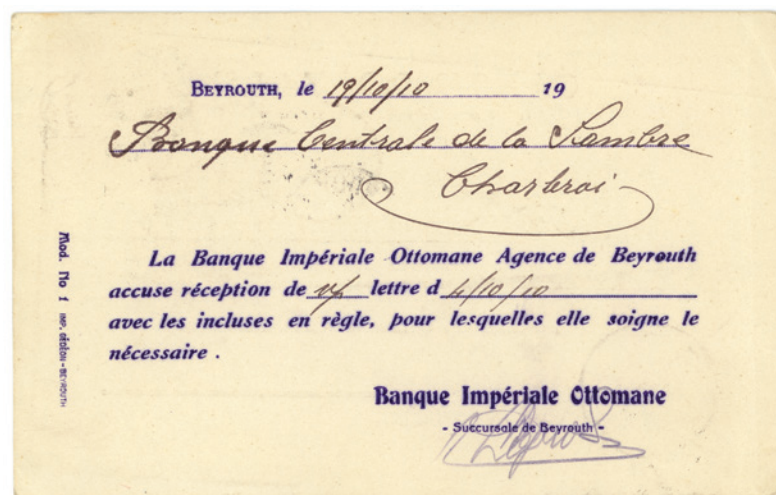


Fig. 65. A banking card produced by the Imperial Ottoman Bank with a pre-print message in its business correspondences, posted at the Russian Post in Beirut (1910).

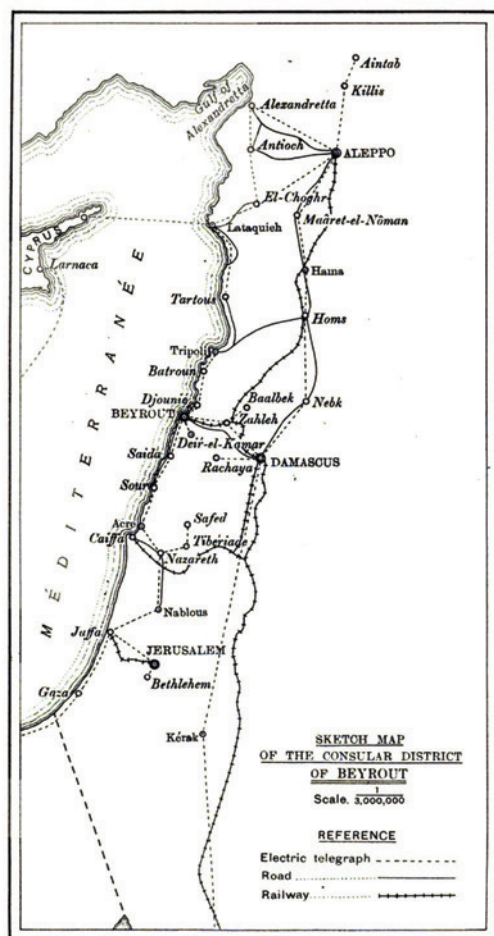


Fig. 66. Syria Internal railway network in 1907. (Diplomatic and Consular Reports, No 4142, 1908)

According to a commercial report by Nevin Moore, the British consul in Beirut on November 16, **1835**, the rise of Beirut was confirmed:

*Beirut till within the last few years almost unknown even by name in England an entirely so as a mart for British manufacturers and colonial produce, is now transformed from a third rate Arab town into a flourishing commercial city, the residence of Europeans of various nations. It is the shipping port of Damascus and of a considerable part of Syria and the market for the sale of large quantities of English manufacturers and colonial produce...*

The "free trade treaty" of **1838** (called the Balta Limani Treaty or Anglo-Turkish Convention) is regarded as a critical event for foreign trade and foreign relations in the Ottoman Empire. It is considered to have removed the barriers impeding the flow of British and, more generally, European goods into the Ottoman Empire, destroying monopolies<sup>136</sup> there.

With this treaty, Britain took a firm position against the expansionist ambitions of France and Russia, and reinforced the preservation of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as its key policy in the Middle East.

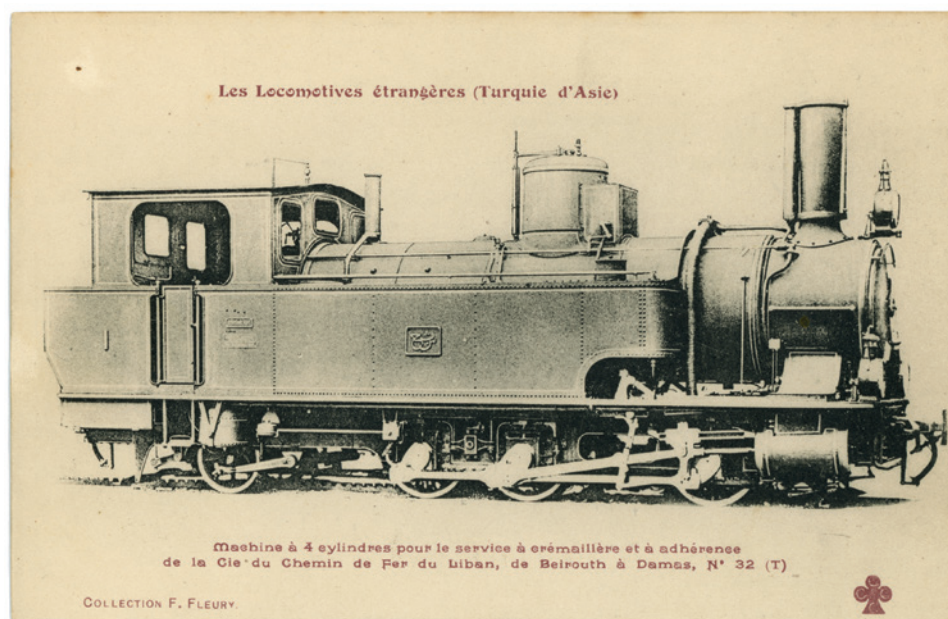


Fig. 67. Locomotive used on the Beirut-Damascus railway.

Its other policy was to encourage the internal development of the Ottoman province, so that it would become strong and prosperous for Britain's expanding trade.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, this territorial integrity would provide unified and friendly access to strategic India, and thus Britain became the main supporter of Ottoman reforms in the 19th century.<sup>138</sup> The Ottoman government, in fact, signed this "free trade treaty" in order to obtain the political support of Britain against threats from Russia and Egypt, and not because of export interests.

The subsequent free trade treaties signed after **1838** between the Ottoman Empire and European countries played an important role in the orientation of the world market toward the Ottoman economy. Most of the expansion in foreign trade came from the coastal regions of Syria, through its main port, Beirut; Anatolia, through its port in Smyrna; and Northern Greece, through its port in Salonika.

A traveler reports about his work in **1849** that, "...Beirut is now the most important sea-port in Syria, the vessels are obliged to anchor a mile from the shore."<sup>139</sup>



In his book published in **1854**,<sup>140</sup> Habib Rizkallah, a native dragoman and protégé (see p. 109) of the British Consulate, quoted that Beirut has “risen into considerable importance and may be considered now as the chief ‘entrepot’ of Syrian commerce.” This claim is again confirmed in **1858** in a long Belgian consular commercial note reporting on the economic situation and prospects in the Syrian province,<sup>141</sup> including the important port city of Beirut.

It was mainly from the **1840s** that the need for new markets and sources of supply increased Britain’s interest in free trade and in extending its powers overseas.<sup>142</sup> The Industrial Revolution in Europe led to a need for raw materials that were generally to be found in the less developed regions of the world.<sup>143</sup>

Beirut became a transit route to Mesopotamia and Persia, and by **1847**, was actively supplying Persia, via Baghdad, with European products made from cotton.<sup>144</sup>

The Ottoman foreign trade in the 19th century consisted of exporting materials and importing finished products.<sup>145</sup> (see p. 73-75). Britain’s manufacturing firms in Manchester, its industrial center, imported from Egypt and Syria, respectively, raw cotton and silk for manufacture, then marketed them back to the Ottoman Empire.

In both **1830** and **1913**, and presumably in the years between, the port of Beirut was reported to be the largest in Ottoman Syria and the third largest<sup>146</sup> in foreign trade traffic (value) in the Eastern Mediterranean (after Smyrna and Alexandria).

**Fig. 68. Number of Ships and the Tonnage of Cargo in Syrian Ports<sup>147</sup> (thousand tons)**

	1896 <sup>148</sup>		1904		1908		1910		1912		1913	
	#ships	tons	#ships	tons	#ships	tons	#ships	tons	#ships	tons	#ships	tons
Beirut	3,170	740	1,109	1,199	1,100	1,011	1,143	1,672	805	1,128	1,024	1,766
Jaffa	NAV		504	75	698	1,051	707	1,115	587	1,012	-	-
Tripoli	1,867	130	392	490	595	776	620	892	551	859	688	1,116
Caiffa (*)	626	111	354	374	614	787	555	781	404	685	-	-
Alexandretta	NAV		422	494	515	622	472	632	381	554	-	-
Latakia	621	171	110	156	125	185	137	170	89	128	-	-
Sidon	891	44	233	45	150	37	109	61	23	25	-	-

(\*) Modern Haifa

Fig. 69. Largest Ottoman Ports for Shipping Tonnage<sup>149</sup> 1830–1913:  
(rounded to thousand tons)

YEAR PORT	1830	1860	1890	1913
Alexandria	140	1,250	1,500	3,500
Smyrna	100	600	1,600	2,200
Beirut	40	400	600	1,700

In **1858**, the John Murray *British Handbook for Travelers in Syria and Palestine* reported that the Ottoman Post has no connection with those of any country. As a result, British letters destined for foreign countries must be sent through either the British consuls or the available foreign post offices (e.g., French, Austrian) at seaports.

The French mail packets (Messageries) carried the closed mailbags remitted by the British consulates (at seaports, such as Beirut, or in the hinterland, such as Damascus) to Alexandria. Forwarded mail to Britain from the interior of Syria (where no foreign post was authorized by the Ottomans) must – reports the travel guide – be remitted to a banker (e.g., Heald & Cie.) in Beirut, a merchant at a seaport, or the relevant British consulate. A courier then carries a letterbag from the British Consulate from the interior of Syria, Damascus to meet the French packet in Beirut on its way to Alexandria.

After the arrival of mail from Alexandria, he returns to Damascus with letters and dispatches. Connected with this courier is his colleague, who crosses the desert to and from Baghdad on a dromedary in 8 to 10 days. The latter is paid by the British consulate in Baghdad, which also handled incoming and outgoing mail for different destinations in Europe (i.e. French, Austrian). This service, introduced in **1836**, was reported in the French *Isambert* travel guide to be still operational in **1861**<sup>150</sup> and **1890**,<sup>151</sup> when dromedaries were then replaced by carriages drawn by relays of horses.<sup>152</sup>

Travelers would inquire at British consulates or agencies about the departure time of their mail. Letters forwarded from Britain to travelers in Syria should be addressed to the care of the consuls in Beirut, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Damascus, or else to the care of a merchant or a banker.



Fig. 70. A US incoming missionary cover care of Heald & Co, Bankers and mail forwarder received at the British Post Office in Beirut in **1890** care of Reverend Lyman B. Jefft.



## 1. Henry Heald

Heald is recorded for the first time in Beirut through a house rental lease dated January 1, **1837**. This is followed by a consular record dated **1838**, when Heald asks the British consul general in Beirut to mediate a dispute with his landlord. By **1842**, Heald became sufficiently prominent and helped the Consul General Hughes Rose welcome the visiting Anglican bishop of Jerusalem to Beirut. In **1844**, he was a correspondent of the Bank Coutts and Cie<sup>153</sup> and engaged in banking operations (e.g., issuing letters of credit and negotiating promissory and circular notes).

In banking, a circular note is a request from a bank, to its foreign correspondents, to pay a specified sum of money to a named person. The person, to whom a circular note is issued, is furnished with a letter (containing the signature of an official of the bank and the person named) called a letter of indication, which is referred to in the circular note, and must be produced on the presentation of the note to receive the amount of cash due.

As an example, Heald would provide cash to travelers against receiving these circular notes, minus a handling fee.

In **1838**, Heald was appointed as the Lloyds of London insurance agent in Beirut and was the agent of the London-based Royal Insurance Cie.

An advertisement in the Evangelical Christendom, dated March 1, **1865**, about the establishment of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) in Beirut in **1866** (see p.105), reports that Henry Heald was one of the nine members of the board of the SPC along with the British and US consuls in Beirut. The SPC was founded with both American and British funding.<sup>154</sup>

A travel guide reported in its **1875** edition that Heald & Cie. was also an agent of the Globe Express and McCracken, which forwards parcels to all parts of the world.<sup>155</sup> Harriet Joly, one of the fourth-generation heirs of the Heald & Cie. operating still today in Beirut, reported in an interview that she had lost all the company archives in a fire during the Lebanese Civil War in the **1970s**.

Her late aunt, Marjorie Drakeford, based in Britain, graciously forwarded some information her mother transmitted to her based on memories of her childhood, which was confirmed in this publication's archival research.<sup>156</sup> Last but not least, the British archives, in **1841**, confirm that Heald was an agent of the *Emmetje*,<sup>157</sup> possibly among the first contracted postal ships by local merchants under the supervision of the Admiralty, and was even interested in being appointed as the postmaster at the consular agency in Beirut.<sup>158</sup>

63

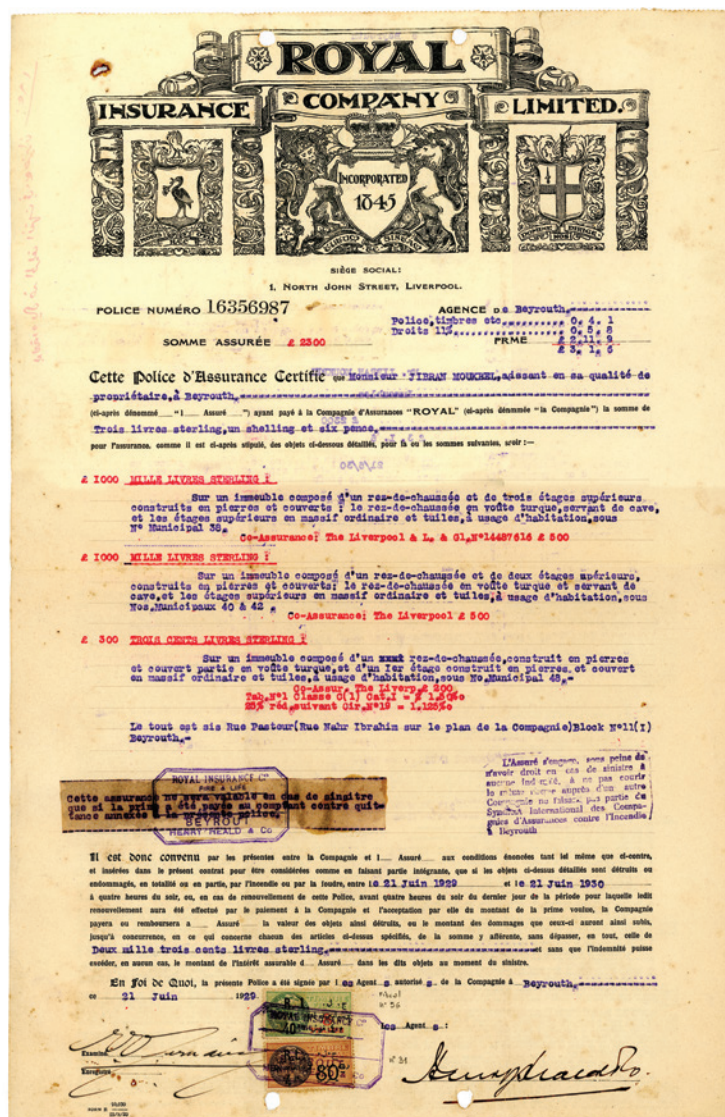


Fig. 71. A late insurance policy issued in **1929** by the Heald & Cie, which was still the agent of the British Royal Insurance in Beirut.



Delayed cover transported by a merchant vessel before the Anglo-French agreement



Fig. 72

1845

BEIRUT-LONDON

(27 days)

BY CONTRACTED VESSEL

**FRANKING:** Unpaid, single letter rate of “1/8” (e.g., 1 shilling and 8 pence) applied at Alexandria for up to ¼ oz. weight, for closed mail in that period.<sup>159</sup>

**MARKS:** Malta disinfection mark on the front *PURIFIE AU LAZARET MALTE*, London arrival date stamp on the back.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (written on May 10) - Alexandria - Malta - London (June 5)

**RECEIVER:** William Smee & Sons

**SHIPPER:** Between Beirut and Alexandria by a chartered coastal sailing ship (e.g., *Emmetje* schooner was used in 1840–1846)<sup>160</sup> contracted by local merchants, from Alexandria to London aboard a Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) steamer subcontracted by the British Post from 1840.

**REMARK:** The cover was sent by a British resident in Beirut before the opening of the first foreign post office by the French in that year on November 16, 1845. Although the text letter is dated May 10, the ship most probably picked up the mail much later.



Fig. 73

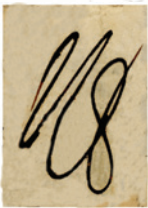


Fig. 74. “1/8’ d. (1sh.8d.)



Fig. 75. Malta disinfection mark



An extract of the below letter related to the cover in the previous page mentions Henry Heald, a well-known banker, merchant, insurance and shipping agent based in Beirut, who was contracted to transport British mail between Beirut and Alexandria – at least as recorded for most of the 1840s. The letter reports that overseas correspondence was still expensive, and wished the recently introduced (e.g., four days before his writing of that letter) penny postage for single letters within Britain would be extended to Asia, where some of the writer’s relatives resided.

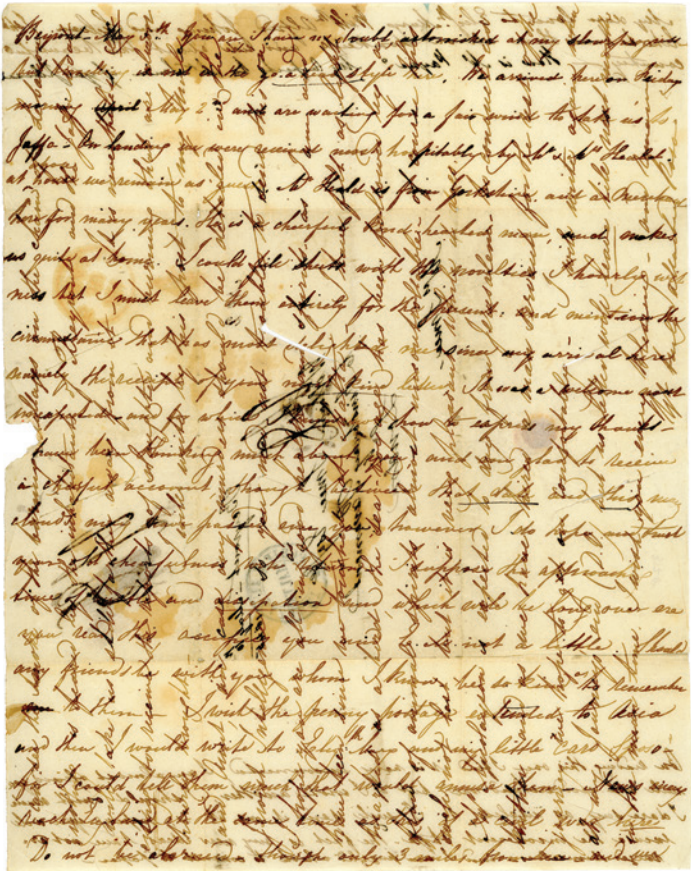


Fig. 76. To save on the number of letter sheets that would be charged, one single sheet was overwritten at 90 degrees to be able to be read (1845).

To Mr. Mees in London

Beyrout May 10th, 1845

You are, I have no doubt, astonished at my slow progress but travelling is not in the go ahead style here. We arrived here on Friday morning May 2 and are waiting for a fair wind to take us to Jaffa. Our landing we were received most hospitably Mr and Mrs Heald at whose house we remain as guests. Mr. Heald is from Yorkshire and a merchant here for many years. He is cheerful kind-hearted man and makes us quiet at home... I wish the penny postage extended to Asia and then I would write to Ely and ...



Fig. 77. The Penny Black postage stamp – the world’s first adhesive postage stamp – introduced in the British postal system on May 6, 1840 – enabled letters to be prepaid at a flat rate of one penny within Britain for up to 1/2 ounce (14 g.), regardless of the distance.

## 2. A Letter from Edouard Blondel

The letter on the right page is an extract from a four-page commercial correspondence dated March 15, **1839**, from the French merchant Edouard Blondel, a resident of Beirut who represented the Swiss-based addressee Bernard Saint Ours and his interests in Beirut.

Blondel visited Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine for two years (**1838–1839**) and published a book depicting, among other facets, life in Beirut. Interestingly, when Blondel first landed in Beirut,<sup>161</sup> he was aboard an Admiralty steamer. In that period, as reported in many other correspondences, the actively patrolling Admiralty ships would occasionally take on passengers, along with mail on their Alexandria-Beirut route.

Blondel goes on to say, that as the ship arrived, locals gathered by the pier waiting for incoming mail, the first in several weeks. He then went on to compare this event to small towns in Europe accustomed to receiving mail on a daily basis.

Also notable, Blondel writes: “The transiting British Admiralty steamer, while picking up the mail in Beirut, was in a hurry to leave with troops onboard for the ongoing war between Afghanistan and Britain.” That was one of the first major conflicts during the Great Game; the 19th-century competition for power and influence in Central Asia between Britain and Russia, primarily in Afghanistan and Persia. Britain feared Russia’s southward expansion would threaten India, while Russia feared the expansion of British interests into Central Asia. As a result, Britain made it a priority to protect all approaches to India.

Blondel writes:

*“The British [Admiralty] commanders had orders to limit their transit time in Beirut, in comparison to their more critical correspondence with the Indian mail in Alexandria.”*

-The letter mentioned goods and thread for local manufacturers from Liverpool, and shipment of money due to the Manchester office.

-It reports the following British ships stopping in Beirut: *The Racer*, the *Anna Sophia*, and the *Columbia* (the latter was an Admiralty ship that took a 30-day trip from Britain to Beirut).

-Two new steamers would start regular lines between Smyrna and Beirut and between Alexandria and Beirut (twice a month starting from the following May).

-The letter also states the import and export payments through these offices: Manchester, Liverpool, Marseille, London, Geneva, and Beirut.

- The exports from Lebanon to Marseille were almost exclusively Syrian silk and cotton.

-He mentions the war preparation in Caramania by Ibrahim Pasha, and wonders whether there was any planning of a war from the latter with the Ottomans (which took place a year later, ending with the takeover of modern Syria and Lebanon).



Fig. 78. This mail boat conveying mail on a daily basis to the French island of Chateau d'Oleron off southwestern France compares with the less irregular conveyance of foreign mail to Beirut as mentioned by Blondel in the text above.



3. Nicolas Portalis

Nicolas Portalis, a well-known competitive French merchant based in Beirut and Marseille, buys silk on consignment from Lebanese traders, reselling it in the French market. He pays with bills of exchange (e.g., promissory notes, see p. 70).

Interestingly, on March 27, 1840, the Belgian consul general in Alexandria and its dependencies – which included Beirut – recommended Nicolas Portalis (mentioned in the letter) for the new position of Belgian consul in Beirut.<sup>162</sup> However, his candidacy was subsequently rejected on the basis that he had gone bankrupt twice and was not “fit and proper” for such a position. This is a rare early cover mentioning Portalis in Beirut, who had opened the first modern silk factory in 1838.<sup>163</sup>

There is another interesting commercial letter<sup>164</sup> written in November 1845 in Beirut by a certain Delemantle to Messieurs Fate & Sons, in Livorno, Italy. The letter was taken aboard a non-regular ship from Beirut to Alexandria, where it was transboarded onto a French government steamer and disinfected before continuing to Livorno. The French Post and the French government steamliner would start serving Beirut only nine months later (it had already started with Alexandria in 1837).<sup>165</sup> However, most notable is the content of that letter: the sender clearly indicates to the addressee – most probably his forwarder in the important Italian port city of Livorno – that three fine silk bales had been shipped aboard a Sardinian Brick (a common type of small merchant sailing vessel).

The sender continues to report on the relevant bill of lading, which is enclosed in his mail and requests from his forwarder to ship the goods to the attention of Messieurs Courtaud & Taylor in London aboard a British ship after having ended its quarantine in Livorno, to send his fees, and to contract an insurance for the amount of 12,000 French francs.

This letter clearly describes the non-direct communication lines between Beirut and Britain. A direct line was frequently demanded by British, foreign, and native merchants in Beirut dealing with Britain, as non-direct lines incurred additional logistical charges when transboarded at different ports, before reaching the final destination. This letter also shows the export of silk to Britain, even though France was, traditionally, its primary buyer.

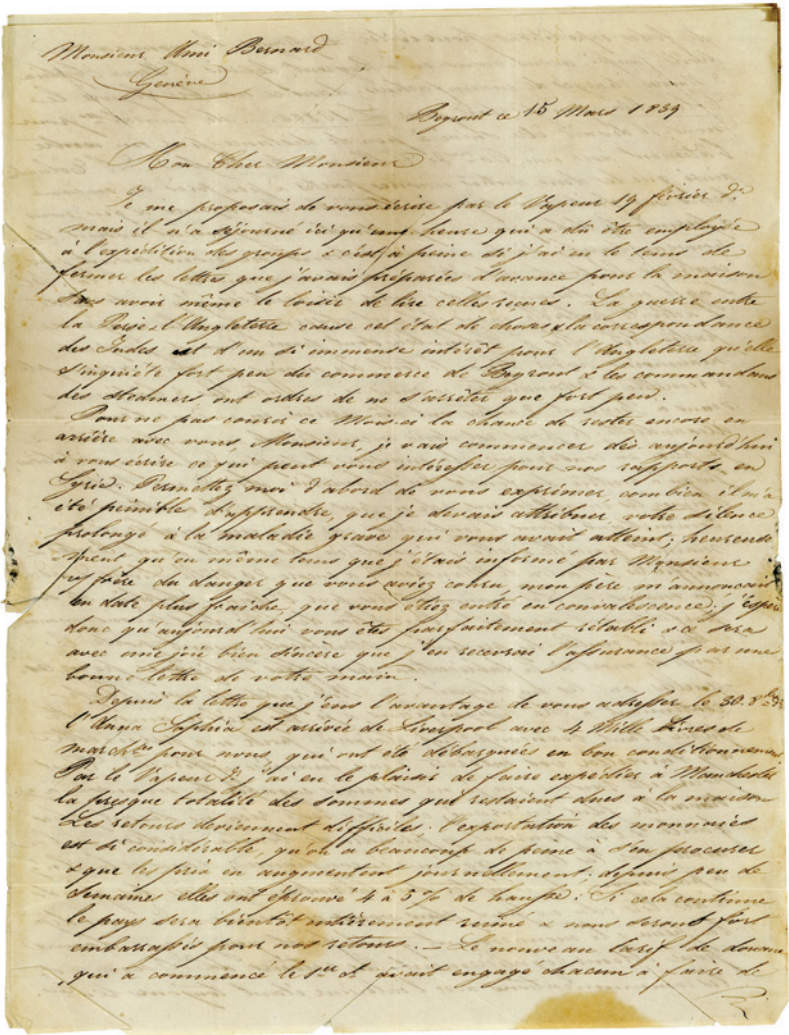
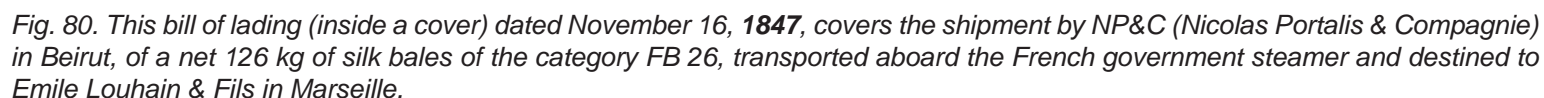


Fig. 79. The Blondel letter (1839).



68





(6)

A Marseille le 21 9<sup>br</sup> 1888

COMPAGNIE DES MESSAGERIES MARITIMES

LIGNES DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE ET MER NOIRE

Ont été chargées par M. Guerin fils sur le Paquebot à Vapeur  
 Français Le Moeris Cap<sup>e</sup> Bevilacqua ou seront chargées sur l'un des deux Paquebots  
 suivants, pour être transportées à Beirouth et être délivrées, à l'heureuse arrivée  
 du Paquebot de la Compagnie, à M. Ordre  
 les marchandises marquées et numérotées comme ci-après :

Connaissance N°

	F.	C.	MARQUES	NUMÉROS	NOMBRE de colis	CONTENU DÉCLARÉ	POIDS OU MESURES	VALEURS	SOMMES ASSURÉES	TAUX DU FRET
Fret.....										
Chapeau du Capitaine.....										
Frais et déboursés de la Compagnie.....	7	90	C	1/2	2	Deux fûts crème de tartre pesant ensemble brut cent quatre vingt dix huit Kilogr	198			4
Remboursement (Suite de frais de l'Expédition Sur valeur de la marchandise)										
Assurance jusqu'à sur fr. à %										
Jusqu'à Marseille sur fr. à %										
De Marseille à sur fr. à %										
TOTAL.....	7	90								
Change maritime.....										
Commission de remboursement.										
de consignation ou de transit au dehors										
TOTAL payé d'avance, F.										
TOTAL à payer à dest <sup>n</sup> , F.	8	00								

Vu, bon à embarquer

LA PRÉSENTE EXPÉDITION EST FAITE AUX CLAUSES ET CONDITIONS SUIVANTES, DONT LE CHARGEUR A PRIS CONNAISSANCE ET QU'IL DÉCLARE ACCEPTER.

ART. 1<sup>er</sup>.— Le Capitaine n'est pas responsable des risques et fortunes de mer, arrêts de princes ou puissances, pirates ou voleurs à main armée, sur terre ou sur mer, du jet et autres cas de force majeure, de l'abordage, du feu à bord ou dans les allées, des pertes ou avaries occasionnées par accidents de machine ou de chaudière, des dommages causés aux marchandises par les rats en la vermine, de la rouille, de la rupture des objets fragiles, du coulage des liquides, du poids, du contenu, de la mesure et de la valeur, n'acceptant quant à ce, aucune responsabilité tirée des énonciations du Connaissance.

Mod. n. 113 Régl. des Bords et 59 Régl. des Bords. (A. D. n. 609).

Imp. de Journal de Marseille, ex-J. Barila.

Fig. 81. This bill of lading (inside a cover) dated December 21, 1888, covers the shipment by Guerin Fils in Marseille, of two drums of cream of tartar weighing together 198 kg, and transported aboard the French Messageries Maritimes Paquebot de la Méditerranée steamer **Moeris** for Beirut, care of Mr. Tayyara as indicated by handwriting on the back of the bill.



## 4. Promissory Notes

Payment among merchants, was done usually through checks drawn on local or foreign banks (e.g., Imperial Ottoman Bank, Credit Suisse), or mainly by promissory notes (e.g., commercial bills) drawn on local or overseas-based commercial houses (that handled also financial transactions for third parties). Promissory notes are promises of payment; after issuance, the payer agrees to pay the stipulated amount on a specific date.



Fig. 82. Imperial Ottoman Bank logo in Beirut.

According to a Belgian consular report, promissory notes in Beirut in **1888** were usually issued with a payment maturity not stretching above three months.

When cash was needed right away these promissory notes could be discounted (e.g., sold at face value less a fee representing the interest rate) in the market through back endorsement or transfer of ownership written on the back, before the maturity date at a rate between 7% and 8% per annually of the amount due for the best credit quality for issuers.<sup>166</sup> The fiscal stamp on a promissory note is related to an official due tax as a percentage of the note amount. If they are omitted when they should have been included, they do not invalidate the document, but they can generate significant sanctions.

Why were British fiscal stamps applied to the following promissory note issued in Beirut?

Legal Requirement for the Foreign Bill Tax :

In the 19th century, British tax law mandated that financial instruments like checks, bills of exchange, and promissory notes, payable in Britain or used in transactions involving financial institutions, had to carry a British stamp tax. This law also applied to checks issued abroad but used or paid in Britain or with British connections.

The British fiscal stamps served as a form of validation for the check within the British banking network. If the check was intended to be cashed, deposited, or used in transactions involving British entities or currency, the stamp would ensure that it was legally recognized and taxable under British law.

Fig. 83. Picture of French Nicolas Portalis (1854) who ran a silk production company in Bteter in Mount Lebanon from around 1837, and where he established the first modern silk factory in Syria (Reproduction from an Albumen print, Courtesy of the Fouad Debbas Collection/Sursock Museum).



In the following case (see on the right page), the promissory note with a value of 20,000 French francs, was issued on December 11, **1873**, by the Beirut-based French silk trader Portalis to the order of the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Beirut (IOB) that was also involved in silk trading. Portalis had an account with another trader-banker in Lyon; F. De Micheaux & Co., on which that check was drawn.

On December 29, the check was endorsed (see back) by the IOB branch in Beirut to the IOB regional branch in Constantinople, which endorsed it again to the IOB head office in London on January 8, 1874. As a result, the two British stamps tax of five and three shillings applied in London represented a percentage of the value of the note. The IOB in London, endorsed the note on January 16, to the order of Krautler Thieville, who endorsed it on the same day to the French silk trader Veuve Guerin & Fils, based in Marseille (and the second largest foreign silk exporter out of Beirut).<sup>167</sup> Veuve Guerin & Fils endorsed it again on January 20, to Mrs. A. Frane Pere & Fils, who was the last owner of the note, as indicated in all the endorsements on its back. It was finally cashed on March 11 (e.g., three months from the issuing date of the note), inscribed on the top front of the note.

**Undoubtedly, the thriving business in Beirut, along with the active trading of commercial bills, stimulated the mailing of bills of exchange and the transport of specie (e.g., gold coins) and bullion by maritime shipping.**<sup>168</sup>





Fig. 84. This promissory note is issued by a local foreign-based silk merchant and producer, Portalis, with British fiscal stamps, discussed in detail on the previous page. The printed name of **PORTALIS** is hidden below the fiscal stamps (1873).



## 5. British Banking Activities in Beirut

A study<sup>169</sup> from Lewis Farley, the British resident director of the Societe Financiere d'Egypte, in Alexandria, dated **1863**, reports the business opportunities offered to British banking institutions in Turkey. Four different cities are covered: Smyrna, Alexandria, Beirut, and Salonika. Below is the average cumulated value in French francs of all imports and exports (i.e., foreign trade) between Beirut and Britain for the period **1858–1862**. It also includes a study on the different types of banking activities that British banks could offer there to support foreign trade between these two places. The information was compiled from official documents from various consulates as well as from the Beirut customs house.

72

The study reports the following potential types of banking activities of British banking institutions in Beirut:

- Discounting the (commercial) bills issued by Manchester, Swiss, and French exporters to local merchants in Beirut, whose payments are due to the exporters after 30 to 90 days. Banks would accommodate the European exporters by buying these bills from them, taking the risk of non-payment from the local buyer. For that service, the bank would charge the seller or exporter a fee representing 12–16% per annum of the due amount. Naturally, a local British bank would be able to better assess the risk of non-payment and would ensure buying the lowest-risk options on the market, thus benefiting greatly.
- Providing cash loans to local merchants against a mortgage on assets such as merchandise, produce, or property at an interest rate between 24% to 30% per annum.
- Receiving cash deposits from locals who paid interest, rather than buying diamonds, or keeping the cash underground, both of which don't have passive income.

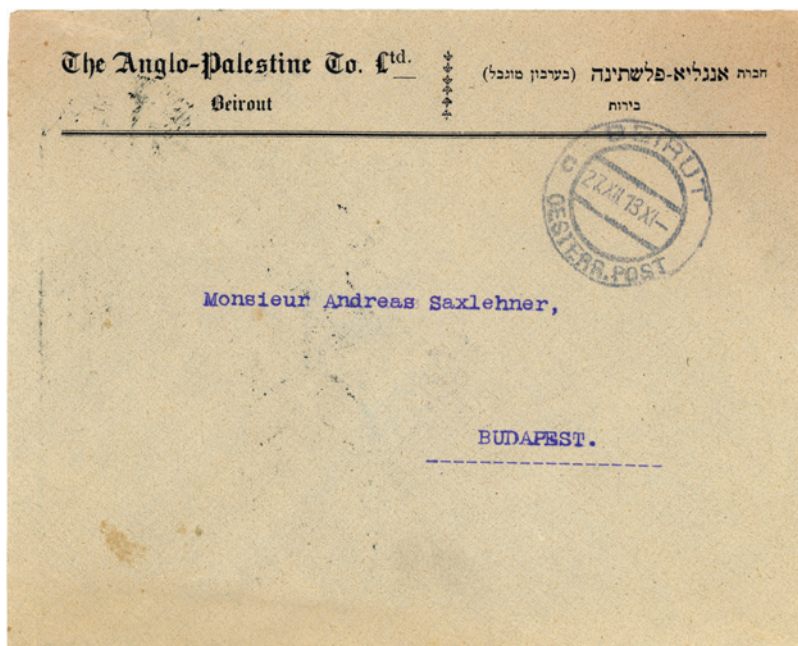


Fig. 85. This single-rate cover from the Anglo-Palestine Co. Ltd. (APC) Beirut branch (set up in **1906**), located close to the British Post, was posted at the Austrian Post in Beirut in **1913**. In April **1908**, the British Post Office issued money orders to meet the needs of money order payees, creating from time to time the need for an overdraft facility from the APC. In other times it had a positive balance which was remunerated with interest. The APC was founded on February 27, **1902**, in Jaffa as a subsidiary of the Jewish Colonial Trust in London by members of the Zionist movement to promote the industry, construction, agriculture, and infrastructure of purchased land. It acted as a development banking institution with a focus on funding activities that facilitated foreign Jews settling in Palestine.



**Fig. 86. British Exports to Beirut, 1858–1862.**

in French francs

% of total

Diverse Manchester-manufactured products	10,477,704	33.0
Specie (e.g., gold coins)	7,597,903	24.0
Silk (finished products)	2,306,812	7.2
Cotton yarn, water twist, etc	2,287,953	7.1
Flour, corn, etc	1,357,172	-
Textiles	1,282,000	-
Coffee and other colonial goods	1,058,450	-
Sugar (refined)	842,220	-
Hardware	638,422	-
Pharmaceuticals	596,964	-
Coal	585,750	-
Iron and steelcals	546,580	-
Tarbooshes (red capscals)	347,400	-
Glassware	339,325	-
Sundries	1,837,982	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,102,637</b>	



*Fig. The red cap produced in Europe for the Orient.*

**Fig. 87 . British Imports from Beirut, 1858–1862.**

in French francs

% of total

Raw silk and cocoons	10,131,825	28
Specie (e.g., gold coins)	7,425,440	21
Manufactured goods	7,181,977	20
Silk fabric	4,722,000	13
Tobacco	2,617,175	7
Oil	1,496,322	4
Wool	344,150	-
Fruit	415,500	-
Madder roots	160,175	-
Wax, gum, etc	129,255	-
Camel skins	35,500	-
Soda	24,700	-
Old copper	4,145	-
Sundries	1,235,722	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,923,886</b>	



The key products exported and imported through the port of the vilayet of Beirut in 1896 with their destinations and origins respectively (value in thousands French francs): <sup>170</sup>

<u>Key Exports from Beirut (87% of total)</u>		<u>Destinations</u>
Silk (raw and cocoons)	15,000	(France, Britain, others)
Olive oil	3,000	(France, Britain, US, Egypt, Cyprus)
Licorice	2,500	(France, US)
Scammony	2,500	(France, Britain)
Wool (washed)	2,300	(Marseille, US, Genoa,)
Cotton	1,080	(Marseille, London)
Fresh fruits	1,000	(Greece, Cyprus, Smyrna, Constantinople)
Sea sponges	600	(Egypt, Greece, Constantinople, France, others)
Dry figs	500	(France, Britain, Austria)
<u>Key Imports to Beirut (58% of total):</u>		<u>Provenance</u>
Drapery	8,000	(France, Britain, Austria, Germany)
Timber (for construction)	5,000	(Trieste, Caramania)
Coffee	3,800	(Ceylon, France, Belgium, Egypt)
Timber (for heating)	2,300	(Caramania, Alexandretta)
Petroleum	2,100	(Russia, US)
Paint/Varnish	1,500	(Britain, France, Belgium)
Candles	1,000	(Marseille, Belgium)
Marble	700	(Italy, France, Turkey)
Wool (miscellaneous)	500	(Britain, Austria, Germany)

Fig. 88

Concerning trade, the Egyptian occupation of the provinces of Syria (1832–1840) brought the inclusion of minorities, discipline, foreign trade development, and an openness with the west that continued thereafter. It had put an end to the anarchy existing before, “...equality was established between (all) subjects [including local minority groups such as Christians and Jews],” which was directly related to the Egyptian objective of gaining favors from European governments.

The British consul-general in Egypt reported to Palmerston in 1833:

*“His Highness [Muhammad Ali] assured me with great earnestness that his anxious desire was to give to British subjects every support in order to cultivate his relations with us, and to show his respect for His Majesty’s Government, and that every necessary order had been given by him in Syria to that effect.”* Equivalent promises were made to the French.<sup>171</sup>

The Egyptian rule of Syria, praised for its success in establishing an unprecedented political centralization, aided processes of incorporation into the world economy. Egypt’s dependence on Syrian raw materials for Muhammad Ali’s industrialization program, primarily favoring sericulture and arboriculture, encouraged a specialization in the production and procurement of these goods, which prospered after the Egyptian occupation.

Another development that proved to be important to the region in the decades to come: Christians were allowed to trade in grains and livestock, hitherto the exclusive domain of Muslim merchants. The Egyptian regime had also sought Christian merchants’ active participation in administering and developing the city for the first time; equal numbers of Christians and Muslims were assembled in a council to address municipal matters.

**Fig. 89. Foreign Trade Activity in Beirut in the Thousands of French Francs, Number of Vessels, and Thousands of Metric Tons.**

	1833 <sup>172</sup>	1894 <sup>173</sup>		1895 <sup>174</sup>		1896 <sup>175</sup>		1899 <sup>176</sup>	
	French Francs	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>
Britain	8,000 (*)	150	102	67	118	252	140	230	181
France	6,000	85	141	97	158	154	255	132	247
Austria	400	102	123	120	157	154	199	94	135
Russia	NAV	51	77	49	72	54	78	53	78
Greece	NAV	60	4	13	87	25	55	15	
Italy	750(**)	32	15	20	11	19	9	23	13
Germany	NAV	NAV		NAV		3	4	2	2
Egypt	NAV	107	109	98	102	89	92	32	32
Ottoman	N/P	2,432	140	2,063	111	2,268		2,739	143
Others	NAV	12	8	17	8	8	1.1	10	2

(\*) Britain represented 59% of the European foreign trade in that year, versus France with 19.5%.

(\*\*) The Kingdom of Sardinia became part of Italy in 1861.



**Fig. 90. Foreign Trade Activity in Beirut in the Thousands of French Francs, Number of Vessels, and Thousands of Metric Tons**

	<b>1900</b> <sup>177</sup>		<b>1901</b> <sup>178</sup>		<b>1902</b> <sup>179</sup>		<b>1903</b> <sup>180</sup>		<b>1904</b> <sup>181</sup>		<b>1905</b> <sup>182</sup>	
	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>
Britain	244	279	185	165	293	263	295	268	324	316	285	338
France	125	242	90	159	145	262	115	230	95	193	125	287
Austria	94	152	70	951	105	173	96	151	125	196	100	161
Russia	92	118	69	94	121	168	112	131	158	201	133	159
Greece	44	14	36	10	48	14	49	18	49	36	42	29
Italy	27	28	34	42	73	84	62	88	73	93	68	98
Germany	12	16	14	24	39	53	34	62	36	73	27	51
Ottoman	2,494	97	2,345	102	3,128	148	3,322	116	2,631	103	2,376	96
Others	15	2	3	6	32	36	47	42	22	24	21	23

	<b>1906</b>		<b>1907</b> <sup>183</sup>		<b>1908</b> <sup>184</sup>		<b>1909</b> <sup>185</sup>		<b>1910</b> <sup>186</sup>		<b>1911</b> <sup>187</sup>	
	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>	<u>vessels</u>	<u>tons</u>
Britain	278	316	260	314	255	288	250	302	240	318	256	360
France	136	322	132	315	101	46	158	388	160	395	165	400
Austria	102	158	157	274	107	190	99	191	106	220	115	214
Russia	109	134	126	175	110	149	149	198	175	236	136	199
Greece	35	32	73	59	84	5	99	76	40	27	15	11
Italy	100	173	95	166	164	293	157	350	143	287	89	161
Germany	38	62	27	39	33	54	30	58	35	67	37	61
Ottoman	2,591	69	127	36	101	46	161	83	104	47	121	40
Others	31	32	25	32	27	33	51	48	112	106	11	115

*Fig. 91*

Beirut itself did not produce much on the scale of international commerce, but it became a hub where incoming and outgoing merchandise and flow of mail passed through continuously. A consular report on the foreign trade activity with Beirut for 1894,<sup>188</sup> notes that **a very small quantity of imported yarn is consumed in Beirut, most being sent to Damascus, Homs, and Hama, where it was dyed and spun.**

**Merchandise from Europe or Egypt came directly into Beirut to be redistributed to Damascus, then subsequently to Baghdad, Persia, and India,** while raw materials and some products from the latter territories were gathered in Beirut before being exported to Europe or Egypt.<sup>189</sup>

A British consular report covering foreign trade statistics with the port of Beirut<sup>190</sup> for the year 1895, confirms that in the total amount of imports to Beirut, only 30% was destined for local consumption, the rest sent to other ports on the Syrian coast.

In 1896, based also on a consular report,<sup>191</sup> it was recorded that a number of vessels under the British flag – which ply between Alexandria, Beirut, and the smaller Syrian ports, accepting unusually low freight fees – have almost succeeded in monopolizing the coastal trade, to the detriment of the larger steamship companies, whose vessels call at the same ports.

A consular report dated 1902 notes the keen competition between the subsidized French Messageries liner and the private commercial British Prince Liner. It was said they both plied frequently between the Syrian coast and Marseille, rivaling each other in both passenger tickets and goods. Ultimately, the Messageries suffered from that competition, since it previously had a monopoly on trade with Marseille.

Beirut's status was strengthened as it operated as a link for imports flowing from Manchester to inland centers as far away as Anatolia and Persia, and for exports to Marseille and Lyon.

Another perspective on the importance of the Beirut Port in terms of revenue generation is in 1855, when the earliest Ottoman debt repayment, 125 million francs, came due, which was owed to the N. M. Rothschild & Fils in London.

In order to pay those dues, the Ottomans allocated their revenue from customs taxes from the Smyrna and Syrian ports.

N. M. Rothschild & Fils in London and Paris seem to have maintained close business activities with Beirut merchants (including those involved in silk) from at least 1847, and included the following foreigners and natives: Marc Roquerbe & Cie, J. Duchene & Cie, Eugene Thuillier de Rostand & Cie. (acting as well as a banker),<sup>192</sup> Duchene Stussy & Cie. (see p. 94), F. Morfin de Peyron (acting as well as a banker), Shehadi, and F. A. Amsler & Cie (see p.141).

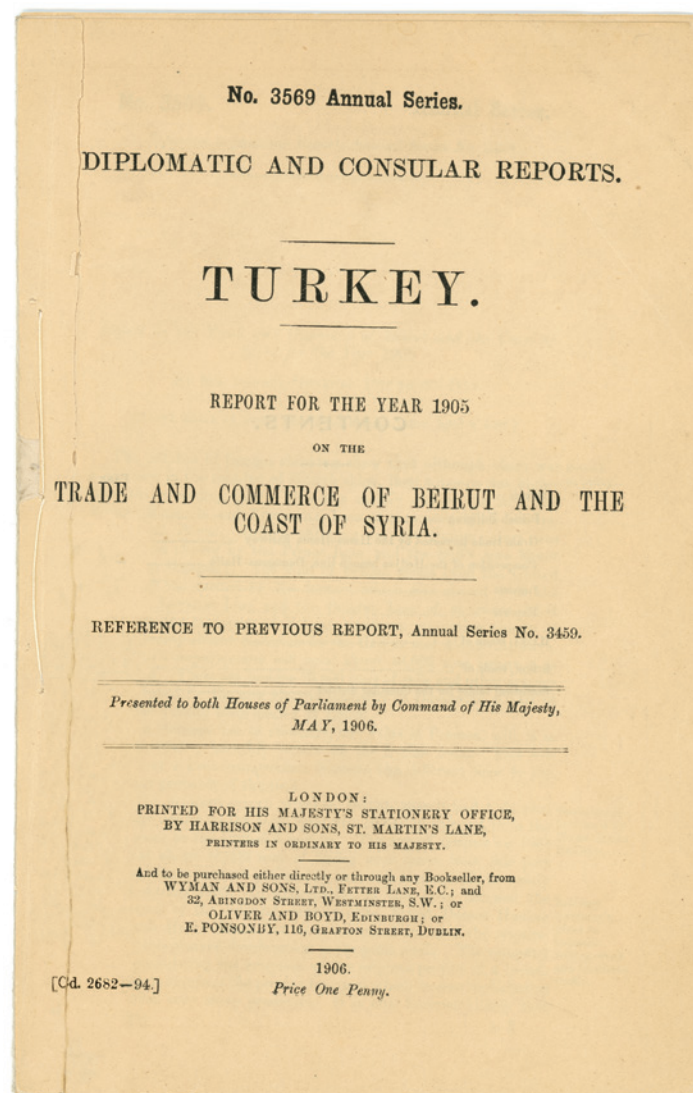


Fig. 92. Front cover of the Report for Foreign Trade of Beirut and the coast of Syria (1906).





Fig. 93. This is an insured registered cover from the Deutsche Palästina-Bank branch in Beirut (established in 1895) posted at the French Post in 1910, and addressed to its head office in Berlin. The cover included the equivalent value of 500 French francs sealed on the back with six large wax seals. This bank cover, with the printed name of the Beirut branch on the front, is a rare surviving cover.



Fig. 94. This stereoscopic picture dated 1901, shows a typical covered bazaar in Damascus on either side of the street shops. These included (as reported on the back); coppersmiths, sword-makers, tailors, shoemakers, booksellers, silversmiths, and tobacconists, and where imports like finished silk products could be bought, that were manufactured in places such as Lyon, Manchester, as well as prints, Sheffield knives, India muslins, Cashmere shawls, and Persian rugs. Nationalities such as Turks, Afghans, and Circassians,<sup>193</sup> as well as religious communities including Jews, Muslims, and Christians, are said to have traded in this bazaar, which reflected the melting pot of communities working and living together in relative peace.

6. Money Exchange

In 1856<sup>194</sup> and in 1898,<sup>195</sup> travellers’ payments were reported in foreign currencies, mainly in British (e.g., sovereign), French, and Russian gold coins. In fact, specie (e.g., gold coins) represented an important flow between Beirut and Britain (see p. 73), as well as with other European countries.



Fig. 95. Left to right: the French (20 francs), the British sovereign, and the Russian (15 rubles) gold coins were traditionally used for payment in Beirut.

Fig. 96. Exchange Rate for Foreign Currency (Gold Coins into Turkish Piasters)

<u>Gold coins</u>	1876 <sup>196</sup>		1898 <sup>197</sup>		1912	
	<u>Beirut</u>	<u>Jaffa</u>	<u>Beirut</u>	<u>Jaffa</u>	<u>Beirut</u>	<u>Jaffa</u>
French (20 francs)	100	100	108.20	124	108.30	124
British Sovereign	126	126	136.30	156	136.30	156
Russian (15 rubles)	102	102	108.20	124	108.30	124

The busy commercial port hub of Beirut in Ottoman Syria made the availability of foreign gold coins, for example, more frequent than in Jaffa; the port of Jerusalem. Thus, foreign travelers and pilgrims in Jaffa received more piasters for their gold coins, than they did in Beirut. The above table confirms the key difference in the exchange rates between **1876** and **1898** for gold coins against Turkish piasters and the favorable rates offered to gold coin sellers in Jaffa as compared to Beirut in **1898** as reported in the *Baedeker Travel Guide*.

A **1868** British travel guide confirms that Beirut is the best place in Syria for obtaining cash, due to a branch of the Imperial Ottoman Bank established there in **1856**, “...besides English mercantile firms of the very highest respectability.”<sup>198</sup>

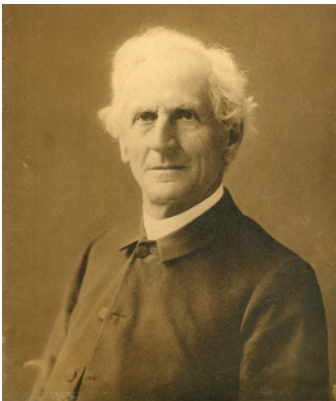


Fig. 97. Daniel Bliss, president of the Syrian Protestant College (1855–1902).



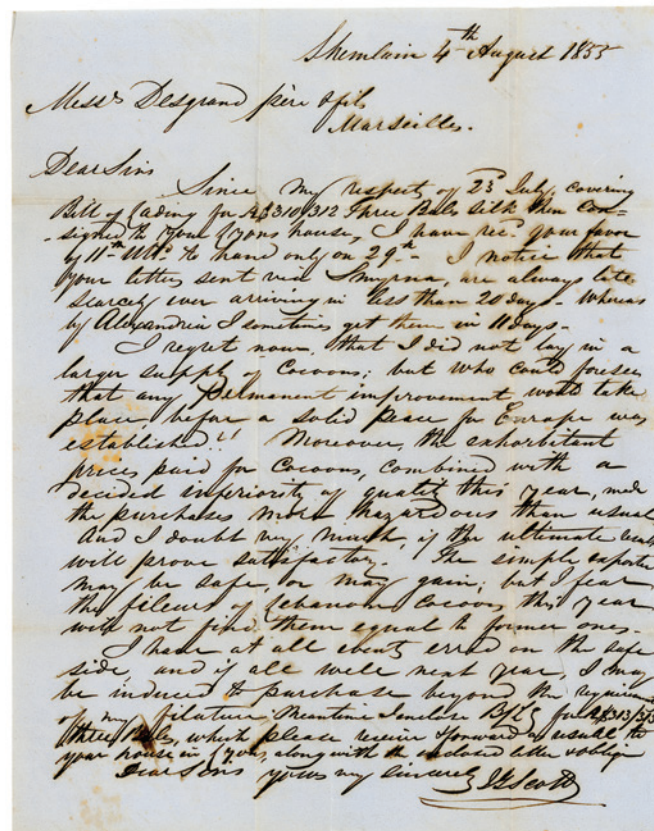
Fig. 98. Ottoman Mejidi silver coin.







The below is a commercial cover from the British John G. Scott was written in Shemlan, Mount Lebanon, and posted at the French Post in Beirut on August 6, 1855. It discusses a shipment of silk to the French merchant house Messrs Desgrands & Fils based in Marseille, the major French port trading with the Levant. Interestingly, the British silk producer advises his French counterpart to use the southern route (via Alexandria) when sending him mail, as it's faster than the longer northern route (via Smyrna). The speed of information through maritime mail was critical in conducting trade and commerce.



Shemlan 4<sup>th</sup> August 1855

Messrs Desgrands pere & fils  
Marseille.

Dear Sirs

Since my respects of 23 July, covering Bill of Lading for A\$310/312 three Bales silk then consigned to your Lyons house, I have recd. your favor of 11<sup>th</sup> W<sup>th</sup> to have only on 29<sup>th</sup>. I notice that your letters sent via Smyrna, are always late, scarcely ever arriving in less than 20 days. Whereas by Alexandria I sometimes get them in 11 days.

I regret now, that I did not lay in a larger supply of Cocoons; but who could foresee that any permanent improvement would take place before a solid peace for Europe was established. Moreover, the exorbitant prices paid for Cocoons, combined with a decided inferiority of quality this year, made the purchases more hazardous than usual, and I doubt very much, if the ultimate result will prove satisfactory. The simple exporter may be safer or may gain; but I fear the "fileurs" [spinners] of Lebanon cocoons this year will not find them equal to former ones. I hear at all events erred on the safe side, and if all well next year, I may be induced to purchase beyond the requirements of my filature [spinning factory]; Meantime I enclose B/29 for A\$313/315 three Bales, which please ... I forward as usual to your house in Lyons, along with the enclosed letter, oblige...

Yours sincerely J. Scott

Fig. 101

Messrs. Desgrand Pere & Fils, Marseilles.

Shemlan, August 4, 1855

Dear Sirs,

Since my respects of 23 July, covering Bill of Lading for A\$ 310/3112 three Bales silk then consigned to your Lyons house, I have received in your favor of 11th ... to have only on 29th. I notice that your letters sent via Smyrna, are always late, scarcely ever arriving in less than 20 days. Whereas by Alexandria I sometimes get them in 11 days.

I regret now that I did not lay in a larger supply of Cocoons; but who could foresee that any permanent improvement would take place before solid peace for Europe was established. Moreover, the exorbitant prices paid for cocoons, combined with a decided inferiority of quality this year, made the purchases more hazardous than usual and I doubt very much, if the ultimate result will prove satisfactory. The simple exporter may be safer or may gain; but I fear the "fileurs" [spinners] of Lebanon cocoons this year will not find them equal to former ones. I hear at all events erred on the safe side, and if all well next year, I may be induced to purchase beyond the require-ments of my filature [spinning factory]; Meantime I enclose B/29 for A\$313/315 three Bales, which please ... I forward as usual to your house in Lyons along with the enclosed letter, oblige... Yours Sincerely, J. Scott.



In 1888, the Ottoman authorities finally recognized Beirut's strategic role and named it the capital of a new Ottoman vilayet (e.g., one of the provinces of Ottoman Syria) bearing its name and governing an estimated territory of 8,000 square miles – twice the size of modern Lebanon – extending from Latakia on the coast of modern Syria in the north to Acre and Nablus in the south in the Holy Land. The decision to make Beirut a province of its own, separating it from Damascus, had heralded its “golden age.” The city of Beirut evolved administratively among the Syrian provinces (vilayets) over time.

In **1516–1659**: 3 vilayets; Aleppo, Tripoli, Damascus (which included the city of Beirut).

In **1660–1860**: 4 vilayets; Aleppo, Damascus, Tripoli, Sidon (which included Beirut as its capital in 1840).

In **1864–1887**: 2 vilayets; Aleppo and Syria (which included the Sanjak-sub-province of Beirut).

In **1888–1914**: 3 vilayets; Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut (which included the Sanjak of Beirut as capital of its vilayet).

83

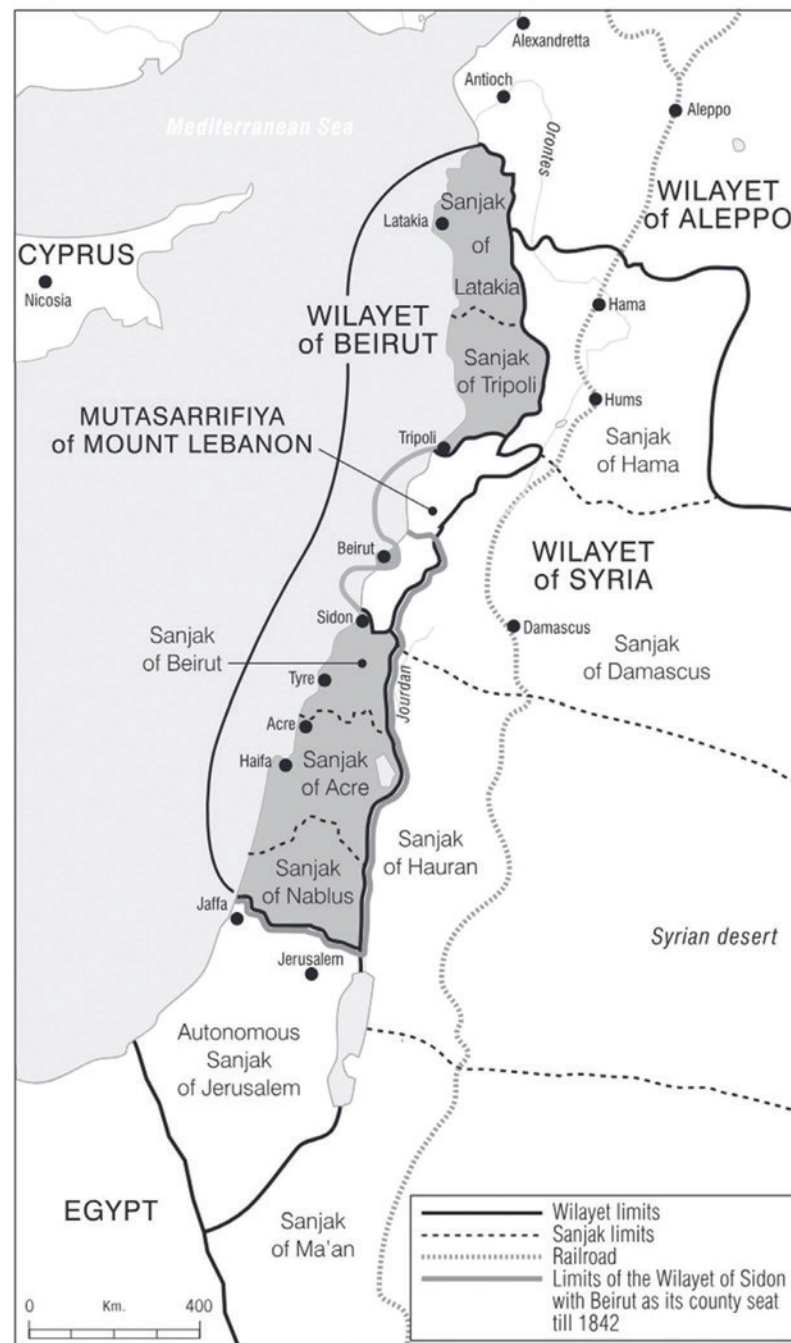


Fig. 103. Illustrative Ottoman map<sup>200</sup> showing Beirut capital of a new large province (vilayet) bearing its name since **1888**.

British trade preeminence with Beirut, the largest port in Syria, is shown in its foreign trade official statistics from **1900**, leading by far with the largest tonnage (see p.61).

An article written in a French periodical in **1906** by Georges Toulouze, former member of the French School of Athens and resident in the Levant, lamented over four pages on the loss of the leading position of French

commerce in the Levant to the British, who now ranked first.<sup>201</sup>

Britain had the largest and active merchant fleet in the world, with goods bought and sold in different distant places, including Beirut. Thus, not all shipments entering Beirut under British flags were manufactured in Britain itself. Also notable is that the Egyptian Khedivial line of steamers started flying the British flag in **1899**.<sup>202</sup>

**Fig. 104. Foreign Nations Foreign Trade with the Levant In Thousand Tons (March 14, 1905–March 13, 1906)**<sup>203</sup>

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gross Tons</u>	<u>% total</u>
Great Britain	13.763	32.8
Austria-Hungary	7.384	18
Greece	7.338	17
France	3.687	9
Italy	3.626	9
Russia	3.048	7
Germany	1.678	4
Netherlands	0.524	0.26
Romania	0.444	-
Japan	NAV	NAV
Total	41.989	100%

**Fig. 105. Suez Canal Traffic in 1907**<sup>204</sup>

<u># of Vessels</u>	<u>Gross Tons</u>	<u>%</u>
2,651	13,107,343	63.8
129	612,119	3
NAV	NAV	NAV
239	1,210,334	5.9
86	296,706	1.4
81	323,944	1.6
580	3,192,112	15.5
223	552,047	2.7
NAV	NAV	NAV
67	367,861	1.8
4,267		100%



## 7. The Race to Lead in Trade

As Beirut's regional economic role grew, competition between British and French interests became more pronounced. While the French monopolized the silk economy, the British dominated the export of manufactured goods and were gaining in insurance, maritime transport, and banking. For example, it was reported in **1900** that there were 22 foreign insurance companies in Beirut with the following nationalities:<sup>205</sup> seven British, seven German, and two from each of the following nations: France, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. The British insurance firms included the following: The London & Provincial Insurance,<sup>206</sup> Gresham, Guardian, The Liverpool London Globe Insurance Company, Marine, The North British Mercantile Company, Northern Company, Royal, and Sun.

The increasingly dynamic Germans had four bank representations in Beirut, including a branch of the Deutsche Palestina-Bank, all of which had direct relationships with their constituency and provided important services to the numerous Germans traveling to Syria and Palestine, who brought letters of credit. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, travelers commonly carried letters of credit or circular notes issued by their banks. These allowed travelers to withdraw large sums of cash from local banks along their journey. This type of letter of credit was eventually replaced by modern-day traveler's checks, credit cards, and automated teller machines.

The presence of foreign companies or their local and foreign agents required an important flow of correspondence between Beirut and several European capitals, served by the active foreign posts in the hubs of the provinces of Syria.

It is reported that there were few British banks in Asiatic Turkey. That was due to several factors, including many

local and foreign-based firms (e.g., banks and non-banks) were also handling banking transactions, including the Imperial Ottoman Bank (IOB) established in Beirut in **1856**. It was the fifth branch of IOB out of a total 80 (by the end of 1914) in the Ottoman Empire, after Constantinople, London, Galatz (Romania), and Smyrna (all opened in the same year).<sup>207</sup> Both the IOB and the Credit Lyonnais had direct corresponding banking relationships in London's financial center, but British firms transacted, generally, on a cash basis,<sup>208</sup> rather than on credit. A British consular report in **1911**<sup>209</sup> notes that British traders did not give credit to merchants in Beirut, but that German traders, being exemplary in this way, were doing so, and therefore, taking over trade, particularly in Syria.

**Although more active in trade, the British, as compared to the French, had fewer direct investments in Beirut (but more in Constantinople).**

**A consular report dated 1895 notes that the Beirut Water Company concession from 1875 to 1909 was the only British enterprise in Beirut,<sup>210</sup> which a group of French financiers<sup>211</sup> subsequently acquired.**

A more strategic asset was the port; the overt race of Britain and France for control over all means of communication and transport, including ports, roads, and railways, was an economic priority. French investments were larger, estimated at 168.3 million francs in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. The British reacted by enlarging the Palestinian port of Haifa and initiating a railway line connecting Haifa and Damascus, which ultimately failed to materialize. Finally, the race for winning the role of the gateway to the Eastern Mediterranean was taken by Beirut in the early 20th century, with the handling of 75% of the trade from the Syrian hinterland.

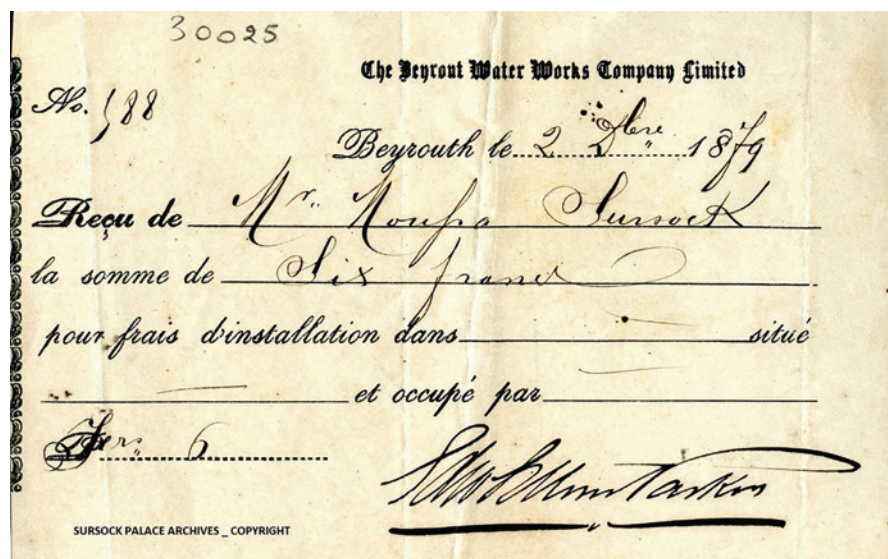


Fig. 106. A receipt for Moussa Sursock from the Water Works Company, the British sole investment in Beirut, and where a British letter box was installed (**1879**), (Courtesy of the Sursock Palace Archives).



Interestingly, an earlier US magazine dated **1882** reported that "...the future commercial importance of Beirut will depend on the terminus of the great trunk railway from the Mediterranean to India."<sup>212</sup>

By **1913**, shipping tonnage entering Beirut stood at 1,700,000 from 40,000 in **1830** and 600,000 in **1890**.<sup>213</sup> Later in **1933**, it is reported that Beirut handled about 70% of the total imports and 40% of the total exports for all of Syria. A large amount of transit trade passed through Beirut to Palestine, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Transjordan, Egypt, and Persia.<sup>214</sup>

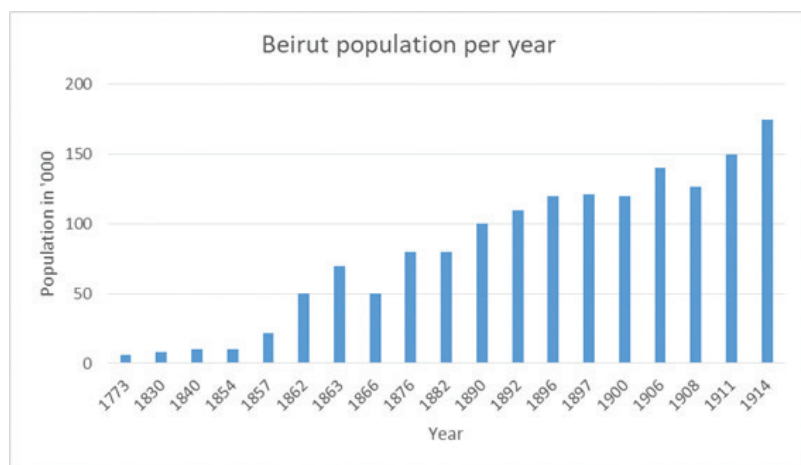


Fig. 107. Beirut population growth.<sup>216</sup>

The population of Beirut naturally grew over the years as the graph shows, from about 70,000 in **1863** to about 175,000 in **1914**.

Beirut, unlike Smyrna and Alexandria, attracted fewer foreigners, with its mercantile class composed of local Sunnis and Christians. Arab Christians moved there from Aleppo, Acre, Tripoli, and Sidon, leading the Christians to become a majority of the population in Beirut. After the **1860** massacre of Christians in Mount Lebanon, the influx of additional Christians turned Beirut into a predominantly Christian city by the late 19th century.<sup>215</sup>



Fig. 108. The development of the Beirut Port continued to accelerate due to active British trade, as it became the arrival point for British goods, which could be transferred to Syria, Anatolia, and Persia.<sup>217</sup> Beirut became the principal port of Damascus and owed much of its wealth to its practical monopoly over the seaborne trade with the hinterland.<sup>218</sup>



Fig. 109. Busy market in Beirut in the early 20th century.



Fig. 110. Martyr's Chief Square (Place des Canons), the commercial center of Beirut in the early 20th century.



## 8. The Telegraph and Railway

It was the Egyptian occupation by Muhammad Ali (1832–1840), that first helped propel Beirut into a regional economic hub for the whole of Ottoman Syria. This included an infrastructural boost in developments in and around the city of Beirut, such as the port, the strategic regional quarantine center (in operation from February 1835),<sup>219</sup> followed in subsequent decades by the most modern “highway” of the Ottoman Empire - the important Beirut - Damascus French - macadamized road (1863) with stagecoaches running through twice a day.<sup>220</sup>

A 1882 traveler’s guide<sup>221</sup> reported that a small stagecoach (operated by the French concession company) would leave from Beirut to Damascus at 6 p.m., carrying the foreign mail, whereas the larger stagecoach, transporting passengers, would leave at 4 a.m.

The trip would take 12–13 hours each way. Fortune Rampal, a French traveler, reported in 1882 that there were two hundred stagecoaches operated by the French transportation company.<sup>222</sup> By 1895, when the Beirut - Damascus railway line<sup>223</sup> was in operation, the Ottoman mail was transported aboard. A French source reports in 1896, the transport of the stagecoach mail to have been charged at 40 piasters or 9.20 French francs.<sup>224</sup>

In early January 1865, the Ottoman overland telegraph finally joined the Indo-European submarine line, allowing for the first uninterrupted telegraphic communication between India and Europe. As demanded by the Ottoman government from the British, the Ottoman line remained the major channel of electric communication between India and Britain until the 1870s, when the submarine lines finally became operational and independent from Ottoman control.

The telegraph between Beirut and Damascus was first connected in June 1861.<sup>225</sup>

A telegram in 1870 is recorded to have been sent by Daniel Bliss, the president of the Syrian Protestant College (present-day AUB) in Beirut to Damascus.<sup>226</sup>

**The first telegraphic link from Beirut to Europe was established in 1863<sup>227</sup> and was operational through a relay in Constantinople or Alexandria,<sup>228</sup> although sending a telegram through Egypt southward via the English telegraph (under British occupation since 1883) was expensive.<sup>229</sup>**

Consular use of the telegraph was quite frequent, between Beirut and France, for example, when the French consular general regularly updated the foreign ministry with local political events following the advent of the French military intervention in 1860.<sup>230</sup>

**However, the use of the telegraph was more commonly used for commerce between Beirut and overseas starting in the 1880s.**

Interestingly, a guide from 1883 reports that the astronomical and meteorological observatory (erected by Henry Lee of Manchester) of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut was in daily telegraphic communication with Constantinople, London, and Washington.<sup>231</sup>

87

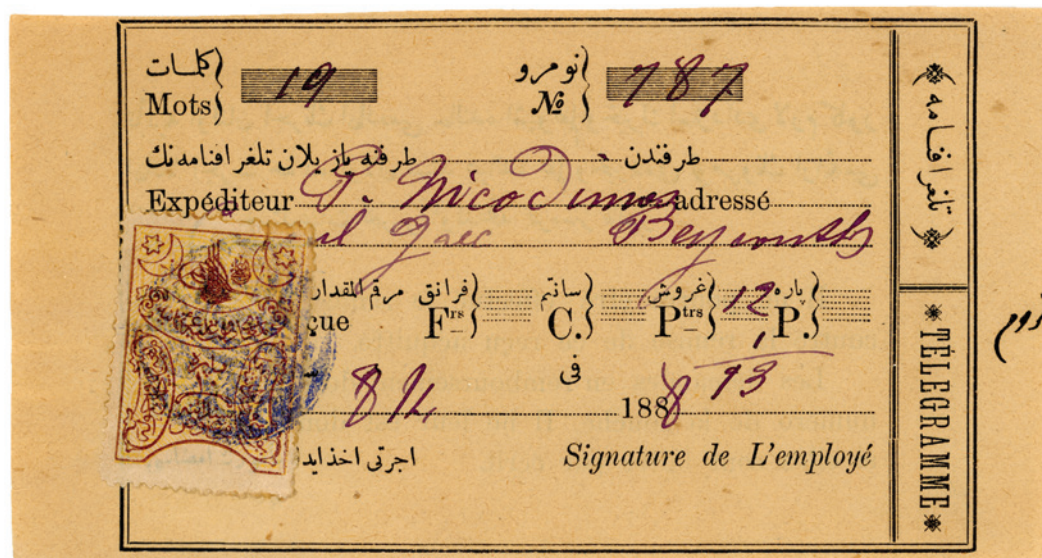
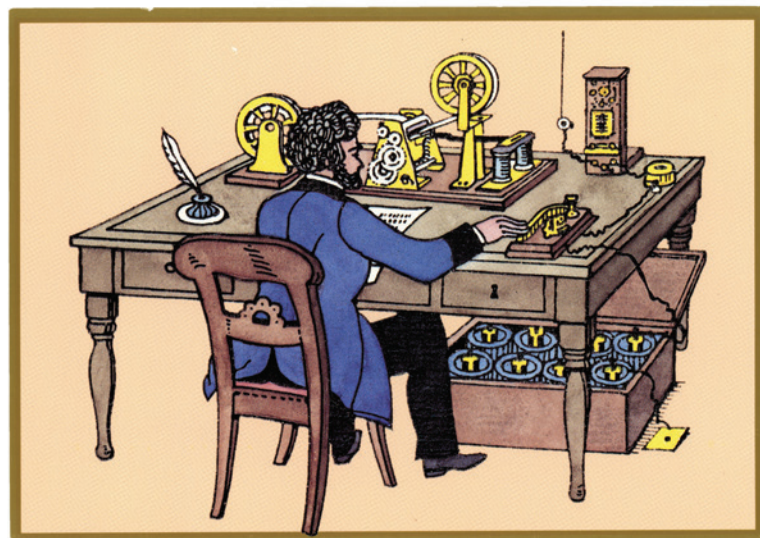


Fig. 111. This is a receipt dated April 8, 1888, for the payment of an inter-Ottoman Empire telegraphic message of 19 words which cost 12 piasters (or the equivalent of about 23 c. per word) sent by P. Nicodimos in Jerusalem to the Greek consul in Beirut as indicated. The flat fiscal stamp of 10 paras was charged for delivering this receipt and was cancelled by a Turkish negative postmark of Jerusalem.

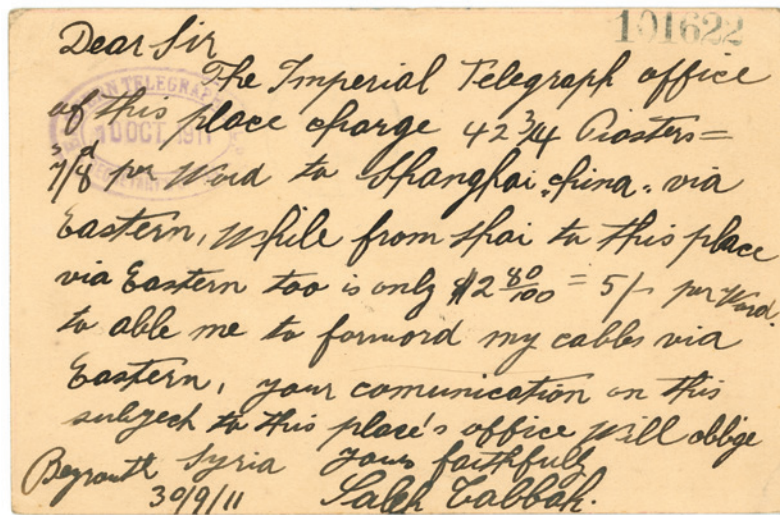
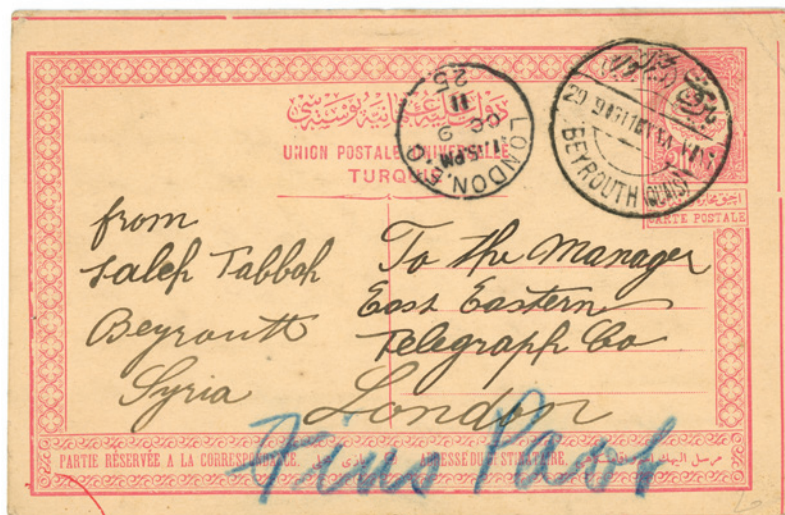
The table below shows the cost of a single word sent by telegram from Beirut to different foreign destinations in piasters, as recorded in the Baedeker travel guides of **1876**, **1894**, and **1912**. Unlike the Ottoman postal service, the telegraph was, for example, in **1898**, only available in selected Turkish telegraph stations in Syria (e.g., Aleppo, Alexandretta, Antakia, Latakia, Baabda, Beirut, Beiteddine, Gaza, Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem).<sup>232</sup>

**Fig. 112. Overseas telegraph cost in French centimes per single word (25 centimes (c.) = 1 Turkish piaster)**

	<u>1876</u> <sup>233</sup>	<u>1894</u> <sup>234</sup>	<u>1912</u> <sup>235</sup>
Great Britain	75	76	75
France	70	56	61
Austria	50	46	51
Germany	60	55	58.50
Russia	65	76	80.25
US	NAV	285	255.50



**Fig. 113. Illustration of a telegraph room.**



**Fig. 114. A local trader is writing in 1911 to the British owned Eastern Telegraph Company that operated undersea cables between Britain and India and countries enroute complaining of the expensive fee charged per word (42.75 piasters) to Shanghai through the Ottoman Telegraph in Beirut.**

At this time, **in the majority of cases, most communication was still through the postal system, since it was much cheaper than the telegraph.** Although the telegraph nominal cost per word remained the same between **1876** and **1912** – at 75 c., (e.g., three piasters) from Beirut to Britain, for example – so did the single-rate letter at a standard rate of 25 c. While lengthy commercial correspondences were usually sent by mail and arrived in Europe in less than 10 days by steamship, brief commercial messages would be sent by telegraph when urgency was needed, and especially for longer distances (e.g., the Americas). Moreover, urgent telegraphs were priced at thrice the normal rates, as reported in the *Baedeker Travel Guide 1912* edition.<sup>236</sup>



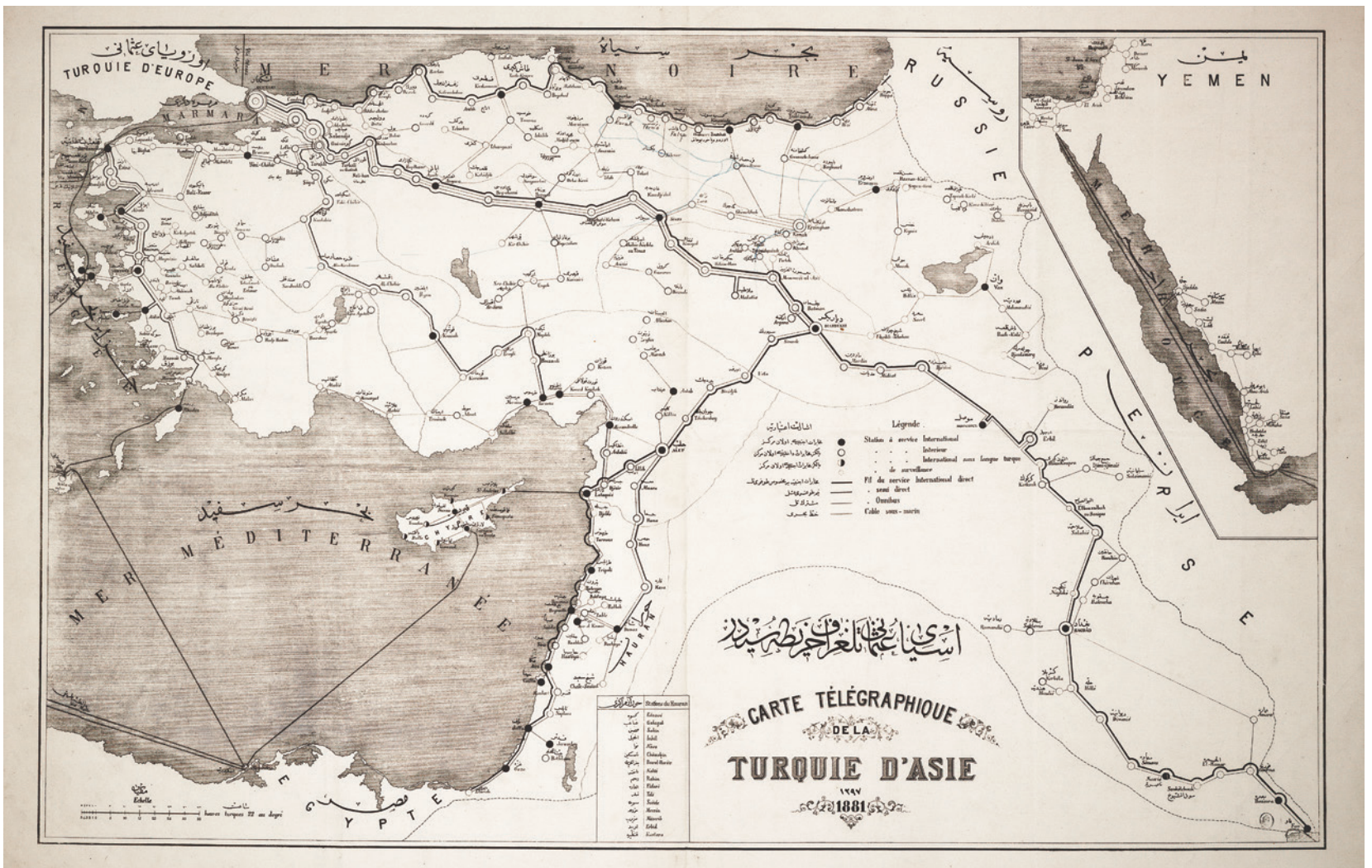


Fig. 115. This map of Asiatic Turkey dated 1881, illustrates the telegraph network in the Ottoman Empire (Carte Telegraphique de la Turquie d'Asie 1881, (Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich).

**TÉLÉGRAMME**  
مکتوبی کتونه هیچ بریده ویریه میگو  
909 1906

PEET BIBLE HOUSE CPT

Requ de	Expédie	صاحبه ارسل
في 13	في 13	في 13
Le 190	Le 190	Le 190
مأمورك امتصاص	مأمورك امتصاص	مأمورك امتصاص
L'Employé	L'Employé	L'Employé

مخابرات تلغرافین طولانی دولت هیچ برکونه مسئولیت قبول ائتم  
L'état n'est soumis à aucune responsabilité à raison du service de la correspondance par voie télégraphique.

+ BEUROUTH 2959 18 23 3 S

ELEVEN SHOPS SENDIN; BY FRENCH ORIGINAL TRANSFERS COVERIN;  
COVERING DEEDS ONE-TWO THREE EIGHT - BLISS

نونه 2

Dans les dépêches imprimées en caractères romains par l'appareil télégraphique, le premier nombre qui figure après le nom du lieu d'origine est un numéro d'ordre, le second indique le nombre des mots taxés, les autres désignent la date et l'heure du dépôt.

Fig. 116. This is an example of a telegraph form shown with a message sent by the president of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut in 1906 to Constantinople <sup>237</sup> (Courtesy of the AUB, library archives collection).



Le 3/9 1889 87  
 N° d'arrivée  
 دقيقه ساعت  
 h. m. du  
 ارسال  
 Réexpédié  
 à  
 Signature de l'employé  
 De *Athènes* pour  
 ال  
 عن  
 L'Etat n'accepte aucune responsabilité à  
 raison du service de la télégraphie. Signature de l'employé  
 3442 9/40/51 2 88

نوع	عدد	نوع	ساعت	دقيقه	روز	طريق	اشاراب مخصوصه
N° du dépôt	Nombre de mots	Group	Date du dépôt	Heure	Minutes	Voies	Indications des taxes
3442	9/40/51	2	88				

*Consul Hellenique*  
*Beirut*  
*Ex. Dir. 2, Janvier 1889*  
*Verd. 4. 37*

*N° 703*

*5107 521 1538 2806 N° 1254 520 4733*  
*0768 0119 7717 6133 2601 2228 426 1332*  
*4150 522 4909 441 4005 521 3501 0522*  
*5080 522 0545 7306 522 0545 2072 441*  
*3501 0522 7288 522 7230 4764 572 4662*  
*5033 524 1538*

*Dragoumis*



Fig. 118. Postcard mailed at the French Post in 1908. The image is of the train station in Aley, in modern Lebanon, 13 miles from the rail's starting point in the Beirut Port. It terminated in Damascus (91 miles from Beirut).

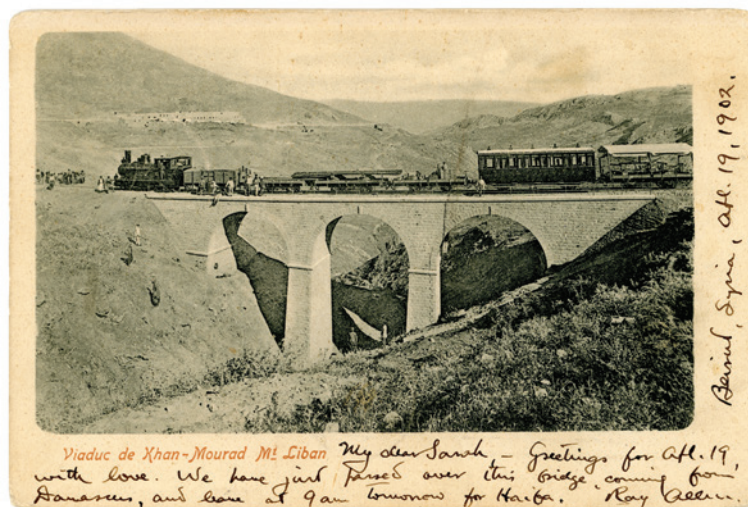


Fig. 119. Postcard posted at the Ottoman Post in Beirut in 1902 depicting a railway bridge crossing the town of Medeireije in Mount Lebanon (16 miles from Beirut) with Damascus as the terminus.

Fig. 117. A rare encrypted telegraphic message from Mr. Dragoumis, probably from the foreign ministry in Athens, to the Greek consul in Beirut on September 3, 1889, received at the Ottoman international telegraph office. Although consular telegram could be encrypted when dispatched from Beirut, it was reported by a traveler that civilians were not authorized to do so.<sup>238</sup>



The Syria Ottoman Railway Limited company backed by a British entrepreneur – originally founded in 1892 to build and operate a dedicated railway from Haifa to Damascus – was opposed by the French Chemin de Fer Damas-Hama et Prolongements (DHP), that did everything in its power to prevent the British competing initiatives to divert the traffic from the Beirut Port, which was under French influence, to Haifa Port, which was under British influence.

91

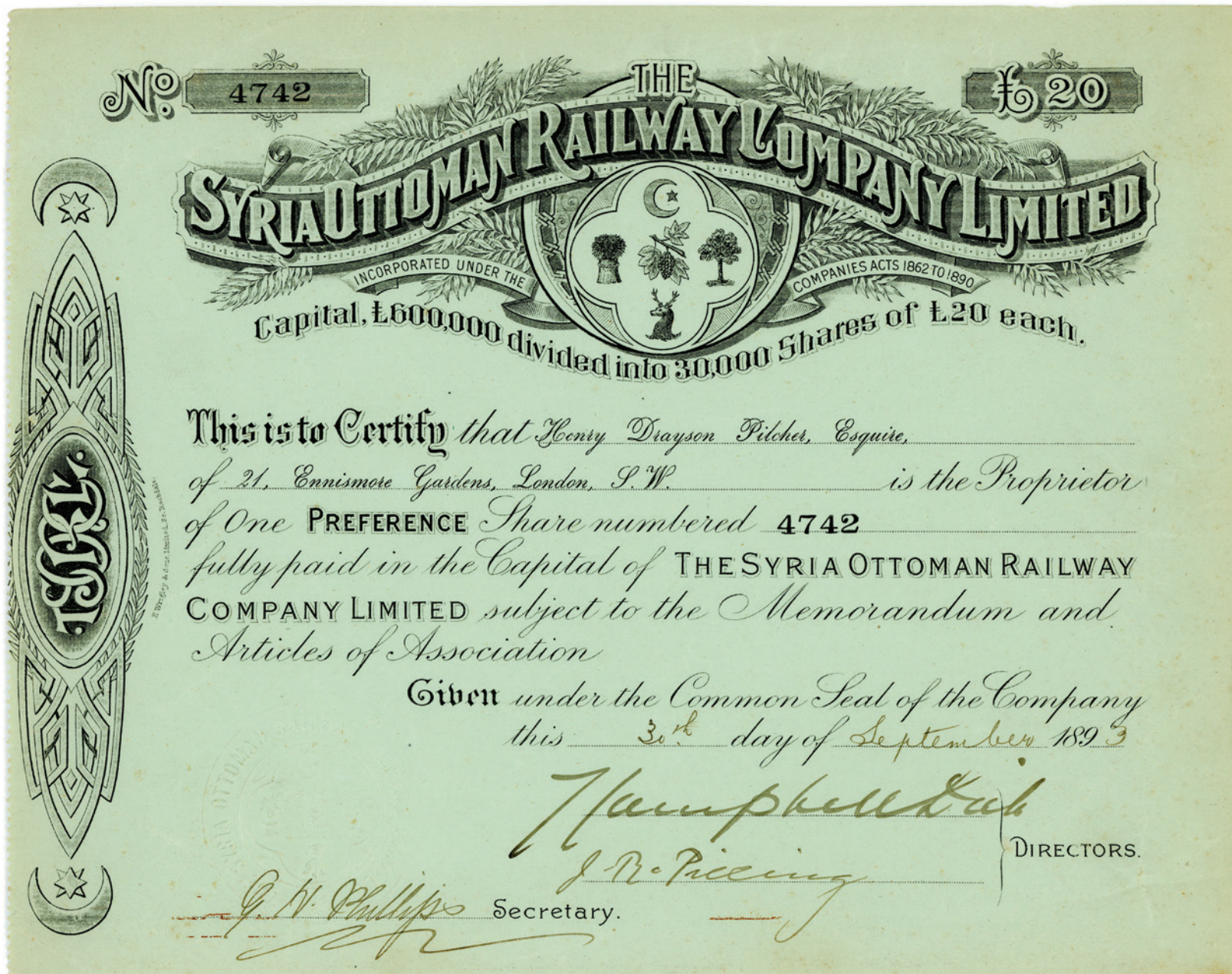


Fig. 120. This registered share of 20 sterling pounds was issued in 1893 and listed on the London Stock Exchange as the S.O.R. Ltd. (Syria Ottoman Railway Limited). The company completed only 5 miles of line. The Ottoman government subsequently took over the concession and dissolved the company in 1932.



## 9. The 1860–1861 Foreign Military Expedition

The French expeditionary forces (from August 16, **1860**, to June **1861**) in Lebanon saw another bitter geopolitical competition between France's and Britain's colonial designs and interests.

The underlying cause of the onslaught of the Christians in both Damascus and Mount Lebanon was a resentment of the rising Western influence and the economic prosperity of the Christians.<sup>239</sup>

In the region, the Muslims (Sunni, Shia, and Druze) strongly objected to the emancipation of the Christian subjects of the empire initiated with the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms, from **1839** onwards, which made the Christians lawfully equal to the Muslims.

Equality benefited the Christians, who were generally better educated and enterprising.

They achieved economic and social ascendancy through entry into the civil service, representation in provincial councils, and general prosperity, while taking advantage of the European economic presence and "protection" in the region.<sup>240</sup>

Britain stuck to its policy of defending the unity of the Ottoman Empire and sought to influence its policies through relations with the local government rather than encourage secessionist movements at the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Traditionally, they were supportive of the feudal system and the Druze, to whom they even sent arms during fighting to counter the French influence with the Maronites.

The British press and public were in favor of intervention for humanitarian reasons, and so they finally supported the French initiatives. British Ambassador Lord Russell in Constantinople conceded, fearing a Russo-French alliance that would isolate Britain, and endorsed the sending of European troops in the name of humanity.

At British insistence, the period of foreign troops was to be limited to six months, extended upon French request (with Russian support) for three more months. In record time, no less than 28 warships from the allied powers and also from small states (such as Greece and Sardinia) arrived on the coastline of Lebanon to monitor the situation.

With this intervention, France sought to enhance its influence at the expense of Britain and place a marker for the future, should "the Sick Man," as the Ottoman Empire was then known, dissolve. It aimed were to acquire Syria as a protectorate.

Britain's motives were humanitarian, so it opted for a collective intervention to keep a close eye on France. London's support for the Druze was motivated by a sense of justice – after all, the Maronites had started the insurrection – as well as a counter-weight to the French support for the Maronites. On the other hand, the French had to defend their interests and needed to rebuild the silk-reeling factories and bring the silk workers back.<sup>241</sup>



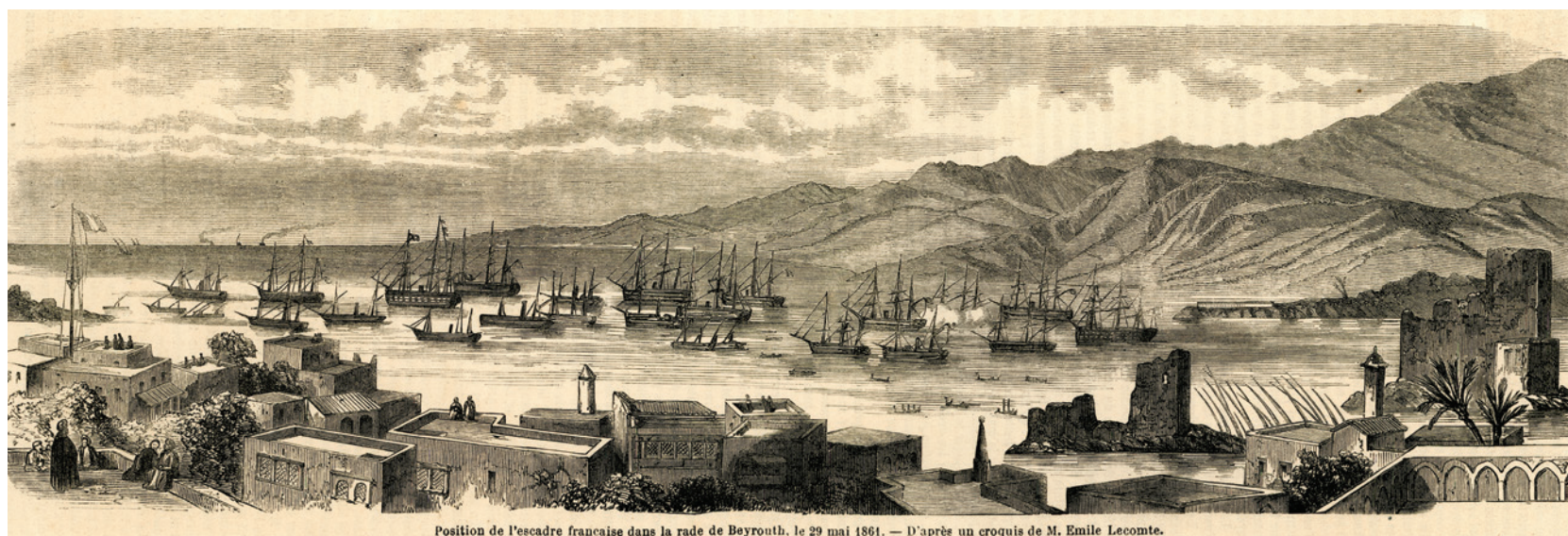
Fig. 121. The British fleet lying in the roadstead of Beirut in **1860–1861**, with the **Mars** (see picture in p. 95).





MASSACRE OF MARONITES IN THE CONSULAR COURTYARD AT DAMASCUS.

Fig. 122. Print of the sacking of the French Consulate in Damascus. The Russian, French, Austrian, Greek, Belgian, and US Consulates were also sacked and burned, and part of the city was set ablaze, as reported in a Belgian consular report. The underlying cause of the onslaught was the economic prosperity of the Christians. The Damascus massacres on July 9–11, **1860**, involved 5,000 to 10,000 Christians, from whom the author's spouse's great-grandfather escaped thanks to the help of the exiled Algerian Abdelkader, who was under house arrest by the French government in Damascus.



Position de l'escadre française dans la rade de Beyrouth, le 29 mai 1861. — D'après un croquis de M. Emile Lecomte.

Fig. 123. Print of the French Navy in Beirut's roadstead on May 21, **1861**. France provided the most troops during the foreign intervention, while the British provided the smallest contingent.



Following the foreign military expedition to stop the massacre of Christians in Mount Lebanon, a phase of reconstruction and a surge of silk investment and foreign trade took place, which benefited both Beirut and Mount Lebanon. A large flow of correspondence involving the silk trade between France and Beirut commenced, as well as the consumption of manufactured products from the Britain increased, especially among the growing bourgeoisie class in Beirut.



Fig. 124

1861

BEIRUT-MARSEILLE-LONDON

(12 days)

BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER

**FRANKING:** Unpaid triple rate cover of "2/3" (e.g., 2 shillings and 3 pence = 27 pence) due at arrival. The "3" inscribed at the top left corner of the cover represents the required three times the rate of 9 pence (27 pence) to be charged for a weight between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz. for unpaid letters (as per the new rate starting January 1, 1857).<sup>242</sup> The 9 pence amount was derived as follows: 6 pence for each weight of  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. + 3 pence per  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz for unpaid letters.

**MARKS:** Sea post date stamp of the *Indus* Messageries steamer, as evidenced by the Paquebots de la Mediterranee entry mark applied at the port entry of Marseille.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (June 3) - Jaffa - Alexandria (4) - Malta (8) Marseille (11) - Lyon - Paris (12) - Calais - Dover - London (14)<sup>243</sup>

**SENDER:** J. Duchene & Co. (Trader and consul of Belgium in Beirut).

**RECEIVER:** N. M. Rothschild & Fils, Bankers

**SHIPPER:** Beirut to Marseille by a French Messageries steamer, Marseille-Lyon-Paris-Calais by railway, to London by British steamer.

**REMARK:** The oldest surviving correspondence with Beirut from Rothschild & Fils in London is dated 1847. However, Rothschild may have been in contact with Beirut earlier. A Belgian consular report in December 1838, mentions that the N. M. Rothschild & Fils in London were recommending the Irish trader in Aleppo, Mr. Kilbee, as a candidate for the position of Belgian consul in Aleppo and Beirut.



Fig. 125



Fig. 126. Mr. and Mrs. Duchene (Courtesy of the Fouad Debbas Collection/Sursock Museum)





Fig. 127

**1862 (BEIRUT)-MALTA-LONDON** (14 days) **BY ADMIRALTY SHIP**

**FRANKING:** Concessionary rate for Royal Navy mail of 1 d. (for each ½ oz.) instead of the civilian rate of 4 d.

**ROUTE:** Malta (May 18) - London (31)

**SENDER:** Pte (Private) Joseph Pickard

**RECEIVER:** The superintendent of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, which was founded in **1681** by King Charles II, was established to take care of soldiers who were no longer able to serve due to injury or age.

**REMARK:** The cover was endorsed "From Pte Joseph Pickard Royal Marine H.M.S. Mars (in) Beyrout" and countersigned as customary done by his commanding officer, "(Lieutenant) A(ugustus) Jacob." From the engraved flowers on the back of the cover, it can be assumed that it is a private or family correspondence rather than an official one.

Inaugurated in 1848, the H.M.S. *Mars* was a British Royal Navy ship of the line (e.g., designed for combat), with two decks of 80 guns. It served as a supply carrier in the Crimean War and serviced the Mediterranean in 1859 (until 1862) as indicated by a log kept by Midshipman R.H. Hammond. As also indicated in a print in p. 92, the *Mars* is depicted as part of the British fleet that participated in the 1860-1861 foreign intervention to stop the massacres of Christians in Lebanon and Syria.

Fig. 128. H.M.S. *Mars*, Royal Navy ship



## 10. Silk Trade

Unlike Egypt, modern Lebanon did not grow cotton, but its agricultural exports increased from the development of silk cultivation, which by the **1850s** had accounted for over 50% of GDP.<sup>244</sup>

After the notorious devastation of French silk crops in the **1850s**, due to the silkworm disease known as *pebrine*, Beirut merchant investments in silk-related activities in its hinterland soared. Foreign as well as indigenous merchants capitalized on this opportunity to make lucrative profits at a time when the French silk sector remained essentially Mediterranean-looking, and Lyon factories were in desperate need of raw and semi-processed materials.<sup>245</sup>

The British consul reports in **1848** that two British establishments for spinning silk by steam were operating satisfactorily.<sup>246</sup> An Englishman established the first steam silk plant. The report must have referred to John Gordon Scott, who established a silk mill in **1846**,<sup>247</sup> in Shemlan, Mount Lebanon, on property owned by the Emir Mohamed Arslane, the Druze Muqata'ji (Suzerain Lord), his "protector". This was similar to the French Portalis, who operated under the protection of Sheikh Youssef Abdel Malek. Scott's entire silk production was reportedly sold to a British textile manufacturer.

A French silk factory with ten spinning wheels, Lemont de Laferte & Cie in Paris, established in Beirut in **1842**, was reported to have been acquired in **1846** by the prominent London silk manufacturer Courtland & Company<sup>248</sup> (as the former owed money to the latter). The British company increased the number of wheels to 80 and produced silk exclusively for their firm in London.<sup>249</sup>

**In the period 1853–1913, silk averaged almost 30% of all exports shipped from Syrian ports (including those of Palestine) and close to 70% at the Beirut Port.** Silk was one of the most important traded commodities between Syrian ports (as well as the Ottoman Empire as a whole) and France.

This activity was reflected in commercial correspondence that went through the French Post Office in Beirut, of which a portion was destined to Britain.

**The American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant, in its report dated 1912, writes that Bursa and Beirut are the chief centers of the Ottoman silk industry.**<sup>250</sup>

It is estimated that between **1895** and **1914**, silk exports from the Bursa province and Syrian provinces constituted more than 30% (22 million French francs) of the entire value (70 million French francs) of exports to France.<sup>251</sup>



Fig. 129. A stereoscopic picture from the early **1900s** of local merchants from Antioch selecting the raw silk cocoons for export to France.<sup>252</sup>



Fig. 130. A stereoscopic picture from the early **1900s** showing a busy room in the most up-to-date silk reeling plant in Syria, located in Mount Lebanon, with female and male workers connecting silk ends to the reels.



Fig. 131. Value of silk exports handled at the port of Beirut and its share in overall exports 1853–1913 (yearly average)<sup>253</sup>

Period	Beirut Silk Export Value		Beirut Total Export Value		% Silk of Total Export Value
	£	FF	£	FF	
1853–1857	257,721	6,494,568	-	-	-
1884–1888	417,680	10,525,536	680,216	17,141,460	61.4
1889–1893	610,983	15,396,780	755,312	19,033,875	89
1894–1898	487,127	12,275,600	726,981	18,319,921	67
1899–1903	514,212	12,958,142	724,069	18,246,539	71
1904–1908	668,000	16,833,600	969,270	24,425,604	68.9
1909–1913	460,000	11,592,000	649,117	26,357,740	70.8

11. Protestant Missionaries and the Druze

British Consul Nevin Moore (1835–1842, 1848–1850, 1853–1862) in Beirut was in close contact with the Americans from the start and played an important role in cementing further relationships between British officials and American missionaries.<sup>254</sup>

The latter, motivated by the aim to increase their activities, wished to regain their freedom of movement that they had enjoyed under the Egyptian regime during the 1830s. Hence, they sought to actively partner with the British in the “protégé” system developed for years by the French.

In fact, their desire for “British protection”<sup>255</sup> was originally a major consideration in choosing Beirut as the first foothold in Syria-Palestine, when the American mission decided that the city would be their residence and the center of their future operations, when they arrived on November 16, 1823.

Beirut as a commercial port also had some “Frank” (European) residents and was less subject to disease than the other towns of Syria, as well as having facilities for communication with the interior and other parts of the country. For these reasons, the committee selected Beirut as one of its stations.<sup>256</sup>

**British missionaries had also enjoyed freedom of movement under Egyptian rule during the 1830s, which continued long after.<sup>257</sup>**  
**Published in 1903, a specific chapter was dedicated to this subject in an American-published book titled *Beirut, the Center of Protestant Missionary Work in Syria*.<sup>258</sup>**

In the late 1830s, the Druze approached the British to fund schools, which subsequently promoted Protestantism.

In addition, they needed Britain's protection against the Maronites, who had fought against them with the support – in that period – of the Ottoman government.

The British were aware of the longstanding tradition of the French protectorate over the local Christians and the special Franco-Maronite relationship on which French influence in Syria was mainly based.<sup>259</sup>

Thus, the British government responded positively to the Druze overture for education and protection.

British consular agents in Syria were to work with representatives of the (Anglican) Church Mission Society to cement ties with the Druze.

"To keep peace and prevent the Christian Catholic Maronites [French "protégés"] and Turks from molesting them, the Druze chiefs were to petition the British government for protection."

The British played along with the Americans, though their interests in the Druze were for political, and not religious reasons. On the other hand, in creating a Protestant church network in Turkey and Syria, the American missionaries provided the British with a lever to use in the power struggle in the Middle East.

Due to the very self-conscious application of the doctrine of separation of church and state, American diplomats restrained from championing the interests of the Protestant community. Thus, the British took advantage where the American government feared to tread.

The American missionaries went even further in the belief that they could convert the Druze to Protestantism, as they tried with the Jews.

According to a missionary register dated **1845**:

*Although the number of Jews permanently resident in Beyrout is much less than at the other Stations occupied*

*by your Missionaries, the great importance of having a faithful Laborer stationed at this place will be at once apparent, if it is remembered that the greater part of the Jews who return from the different countries in which they have been strangers to the land and home of their fathers, land at Beyrout. There are also many constantly passing and re-passing for purposes of commerce, as the chief trade with Damascus is carried on at this port.*<sup>260</sup>

As a Protestant nation and a leading commercial power, the British were seen as guarantors of the Protestant community in the Ottoman Empire, where they could play the champion of religious liberty and obtain a reason to get involved in the domestic affairs of the empire.

**British consuls in Syria (see map. p. 53) were very eager to create a Protestant base for political influence to counter the French with the Uniats (e.g., Maronites) and Russia with the Antiochans (e.g., Eastern Orthodox).**

The *British Medical Journal* dated June 28, **1890**, reports that the plan to open a free Anglo-Syrian dispensary (chiefly for women) in Beirut: "...has the support of the English Bishop of Jerusalem, of the Greek Patriarch, and of the Emir Emin Arslem, the Druze Prince."

A large transatlantic flow of missionary mail took place between Beirut, Britain, and the US from early on, even before the establishment of the French Messageries and Austrian Lloyd regular lines with Beirut in **1845**. A British consular report dated October **1911** argues for an increase in the staff salaries at the British Post Office in Beirut, and notes the considerable amount of extra work related to answering the correspondence received from missionaries residing in different parts of the city and Mount Lebanon.



Fig. 132. A postcard from Beirut to Broumana, Mount Lebanon, where the high school of the British Syrian Mission School was located. It was served by a postman with his donkey (early 20th century), (Courtesy of the Xavier Gelebart collection).



The British Syrian Schools Association known as the British Syrian Mission, was founded in 1860 following the Christian massacres in Mount Lebanon and Damascus, and had the center of its operations in Beirut. The aim of the association was the “promotion of the temporal mental moral and spiritual well being of Syrian Females by means of ...schools and institutions.” By the 1870s, the association had 38 “diverse schools and other kindred Institutions” in “Beyrout, Damascus and other places in Syria and Palestine.” It was supported by contributions from Britain and Scotland. Missionaries were an important source of mail flow processed through the foreign post offices in Beirut in Ottoman Syria, early on, from the first half of the 19th century.



*Fig. 133. Blind school in Beirut from the British Syrian Mission (early 20th century).*

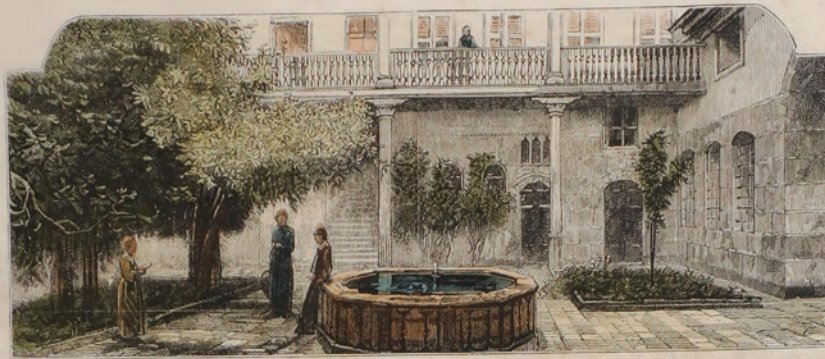


*Fig. 134. A group of religious Druze leaders in Mount Lebanon (early 20th century).*



*Fig. 135. A bishop from London speaking to Druze men in Mount Lebanon (early 20th century).*





1. Courtyard of a School at Damascus.—2. The "Charlotte" Girl's School at Beyrout.—3. Girls' Class at Mrs. Mott's School, Beyrout.  
AN ARTIST'S PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND, IV.—BRITISH SYRIAN SCHOOLS

Fig. 136. Print <sup>261</sup> representing the Girls' Elementary and Infant Schools of the British Syrian Schools (Courtesy of the Samir Moubarak Collection).



This is a rare incoming US cover through Le Havre, addressed to the US Missionary Eli Smith, in Beirut 1841



101

## 1841 NEW YORK-BEIRUT

**FRANKING:** This unpaid American missionary letter (written on September 23) was due upon arrival by the addressee. The handwritten postal rate of  $\frac{3}{3}$  represented three piasters to cover the Austrian-Constantinople route, and another three piasters for the Constantinople-Beirut route.

**MARKS:** **A.T.F** in red for **Angleterre Transit Francais**, for Britain French Transit, as per the Franco-Austrian postal convention.

**ROUTE:** New York - Le Havre (October 13) - Paris (unclear on the back) - Huningue - Basle - Vienna - Pest - Semline - Constantinople - Beirut.

**SENDER:** Edward Kirk

**RECEIVER:** Reverend Eli Smith.

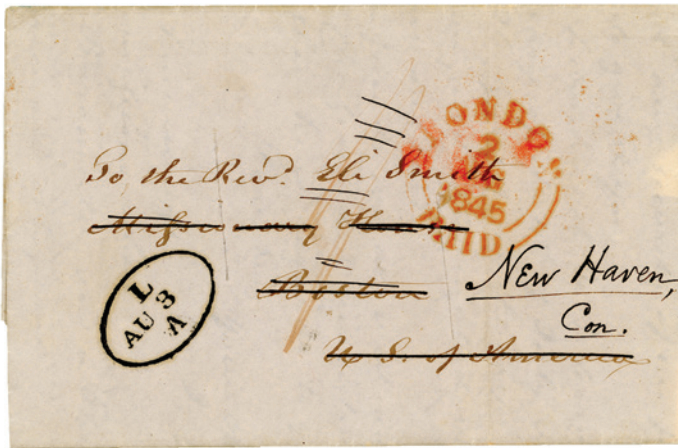
**REMARK:** The letter could have been transported by an Austrian Consular service from Constantinople to Beirut. The description of that letter needs further research as it carries no US markings, and no transit markings except the French ones.



Fig. 138. Different missionaries of the SPC posing for a picture including Reverend Eli Smith (late 19th century). (Courtesy of the AUB, library archives collection).



The below is an early US consular cover written on July 12, 1845, in Beirut by the US general consul in Beirut (1836–1850) Mr. Jasper Chasseaud (\*) to Eli Smith, about four months before the setup of the first foreign post (French) and the regular French government liner stops in Beirut in November of that year. This cover was taken aboard a transiting ship to Beirut, and posted to the US through Britain, similar to all mail from Beirut destined to the US in that period. Britain was the transatlantic hub, where many American missionaries transboarded and usually brought along mail remitted to them by their colleagues operating in Ottoman Syria. The consul is asking the prominent American missionary Reverend Eli Smith, who had been resident of Beirut, to become one of the signatories for an official blanket bond that the consul needed to issue to the US government.



Beirut 12th July 1845  
 Rev. Eli Smith  
 Dear Sir,  
 You will have been doubtless regularly informed by our friends the Missionaries here of all the horrors Bloodshed and destructions in our Mountains owing to the Civil War of extermination between the Christians and Druzes. I am happy however to say that during all that Carnage, our friends at Abayh not only remained perfectly in peace & quietly themselves, but they have done great good in having been the instruments of saving several hundreds of the Christians, some of them perhaps their greatest enemies.  
 Allow me, my Dear Sir, to call on you with my present Letter for a particular favor which I trust you will not refuse it to me being aware of my Circumstances and having known me for so many years. I believe I mentioned to you that a Sum of \$500. had been voted for me by Congress in June 1843. for acting as Consul and again \$500. equally voted in June 1844. for receiving which Sum I was however it is required by Law that a Bond for \$2000 should be signed and sealed by me and by two Citizens residing at the U.S. a Blank Bond was sent to me by the Secretary of State at the time which I signed & sealed it and I sent it to Rev. Mr. Beadle at New Albany requesting him to Sign it as one of my Securities and get some one else of his friends to do the same. Rev. Mr. Beadle kindly promised to sign as one but as yet he could find no second one to sign with him. As you are now at the U.S. how much you would oblige if you would sign the said Document together with Mr. Beadle and enable me thus to withdraw the \$1000. due to me already. Mr. Beadle will I am sure send you the said Bond regularly signed by him

Fig. 139

To Reverend Eli Smith,

Beirut 12th July, 1845

Dear Sir,

You will have been [un/doubt[edly]] left regularly informed by our friends the Missionaries here of all the horrors Bloodshed and destructions in our mountains owing to the Civil War of extermination between the Christians and Druzes.

I am happy however to say that during all that Carnage, our friends at Abayh not only remained perfectly in peace... but they have done great good in having been the instruments of saving several hundreds of the Christians, some of them perhaps their greatest enemies.

Allow me, my Dear Sir, to call on you with my present Letter for a particular favor ... a Bond for \$200 should be signed and sealed by me and by two citizens residing at the U.S. .... if you would sign the said document together with W. Beadle and enable me to withdraw the \$1000 due to me already.

(\*) Jasper was the first (non-salaried) American consul in Beirut, a native of Salonika and active as a businessman in Beirut. He was dismissed in 1850 because of "questionable practices."





Fig. 140. In 1869, this paid French missionary double-rate cover, which survived in very good condition, was addressed to William Earl Dodge Sr. (1805–1883) in New York. Dodge was an American businessman, politician, and activist. He was referred to as one of the “Merchant Princes” of Wall Street. Dodge represented New York’s 8th congressional district in the US Congress for a portion of the 39th United States Congress in 1866–1867 and was a founding member of the YMCA in the US. He was also a founding member of the board of trustees of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866, which he helped to form, and as treasurer, and laid the cornerstone of College Hall, the first building on the present campus in Beirut, on December 7, 1871. The franking of this cover is made up of 14 postage stamps in four different postage values (e.g., 10 c., 20 c., 30 c., 40 c.) totaling 360 centimes. The applied rate from the French offices in the Levant to the US from April 1, 1857, stood at 1.60 F. (or 160 centimes) per 7.5 g in that case, 2 x 160 centimes = 320 centimes. The letter was probably overfranked. The “4” in red crayon (applied in London) represents the 4 cents credit from Britain to the US for a letter weight between ½ oz. and 1 oz. For single-rate letters (e.g., less than ½ oz.) the credit would be 2 cents as per the Anglo-US convention.



Fig. 141. A print representing William Earl Dodge Sr.<sup>262</sup> (Courtesy of the AUB library archives collection).



Fig. 142. Daniel Bliss Hall Building, at the Syrian Protestant College.





Fig. 143. Interestingly, this is an entire British stationery cover posted in **1912** at Blackheath in London and addressed to the Reverend Hanauer at the Jewish Mission in Damascus, Syria, where the British tried unsuccessfully to convert Jews to Protestantism.



Fig. 144. Picture of John Wortabet dated **1870** (Courtesy of the AUB library archives collection).



Fig. 145. This cover, addressed to John Wortabet (**1827–1908**), probably translated from the Arabic “Hanna” or “Yuhanna” meaning “John,” was the son of an Armenian convert, one of the future leaders of the local Protestant community, and professor at the Syrian Protestant College. The cover was posted in Bangalore, India, on November 1, **1906**, arriving on November 14, care of the British Post Office in Beirut, with a voyage of fourteen days.



As of **1890**, the protestant schools numbered 32 versus only 6 French Jesuit schools, and the total number of pupils stood at 3,090 and 1,700, respectively. However, all foreign Catholic schools (e.g., Jesuits and others) had more pupils than the foreign Protestant schools, 4,775 and 3,090, respectively. By **1895**, about 10% of the foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire were in the vilayet (province) of Beirut (made up of the five districts: Latakia, Tripoli, Beirut, Acre, and Nablus). In the **1890s**, when none of the major Arab districts had more than 100 students per 1,000 people, Beirut had more than double that amount, 238 out of 1,000.

105

Although Germany and Italy, had both made attempts in the **1890s** to penetrate the exclusiveness of the French protectorate over Christians (both countries finally succeeded in **1902**), the papacy stood up twice, supporting the French. The French missionary presence concentrated on schooling, especially primary schools, which focused on teaching the French language and culture. Between **1901** and **1904**, the French Government subsidized congregational schools in Asiatic Turkey, and 473 out of 526 were concentrated in Syria (in the vilayets of Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, and Mount Lebanon), serving 40,144 students or about 69% of the total.<sup>263</sup>

Evangelical Christianity. ADVERTISEMENT. [March 1, 1865.]

### The Syrian Protestant College.

Successful Missions and Commercial intercourse, infusing Christian ideas and the quickening elements of Western civilization, have begun a "Revival of Letters" in the East. In Syria, and in portions of the adjacent countries, the desire for Education, and that of a higher order than has been heretofore possible, is wide-spread and urgent.

The need of Teachers, Preachers, Translators, Physicians, Lawyers, Engineers, Clerks, Secretaries, and other well-educated men, is everywhere felt. No existing Schools or Institutions can meet this demand; the instruction given, is either wholly elementary, or, as in the Roman Catholic and in some of the Native Schools, it is partial, deceptive, and perverting.

The enemies of Christianity, professed Infidels as well as Papists, fully alive to the advantages to be gained from the present state of the country, are adopting bold and energetic measures to forestall Protestantism in becoming the educators of this vast population.

In order to counteract these efforts, and secure to the people of Syria the means of a sound and liberal Education, it is proposed to establish at once an Institution which shall furnish to native youth an Education such as the country demands, in their own tongue, in their own land, and at the smallest cost.

The College will be located in Beirut, the seaport of Syria, a city rapidly growing in size and importance, and occupying a central position in respect to all the Arabic-speaking races.

The language of the College will be exclusively Arabic, the common tongue of Syria, and spoken by more than a hundred millions of people throughout the East.

The course of instruction will embrace the several departments of "Arabic Language and Literature," "Mathematics," "The Natural Sciences," "Modern and Ancient Languages," "Turkish Law and Jurisprudence," and "Medicine." The last will be made especially prominent, as the whole land is now cursed by ignorant native quacks and medical jugglers. Thorough instruction will also be given in "Moral Science and Biblical Literature," the Bible being the constant religious text-book. Theology, as a system, will not be taught; as it is thought preferable that young men preparing for the Ministry should complete their Theological training in connexion with the Missions to which they belong.

The College will be conducted on strictly Protestant and Evangelical principles; but it will be open to Students from any of the Oriental Sects or Nationalities who will conform to its laws and regulations. It is hoped that a strong Christian influence will always centre in, and go forth from, this Institution, and that it will be instrumental in raising up a body of men who will fill the ranks of a well-trained and vigorous "Native Ministry," become the authors of a Native Christian Literature; supply the educational wants of the land; encourage its industrial interests; develop its resources; occupy stations of authority; and, in a large degree, aid in carrying the Gospel, and its attendant blessings, wherever the Arabic language is spoken.

The Rev. DANIEL BLISS, D.D., for several years a member of the Syrian Mission of the American Board, has been appointed the First President. The Rev. D. STUART DODGE, of New York, has been appointed one of the Professors. Tutors, however, and as far as possible Professors, will be chosen from among pious and educated native Syrians, who have been trained in Mission Seminaries. It is not proposed to commence at once the erection of costly and extensive Buildings. At the outset, we shall be able to rent Premises adequate to the demands of the College in its beginning. To defray

Evangelical Christianity. ADVERTISEMENT. [March 1, 1865.]

the ordinary expenses of the Institution, and to carry it on with vigour and success, an endowment is needed, sufficient to secure an annual income of not less than £2,500. Scholarships should also be created for indigent and deserving Students.

More than £20,000 have already been secured, and invested in the United States, under the guardianship of a Board of Trustees, incorporated by the Legislature of the State of New York. It is proposed to raise an equal amount in England, the income annually going to the support of the College. The Trustees will have the general supervision of the Institution, but in the local administration will be aided by a Board of Managers, composed of English and American Missionaries and residents in Syria and Egypt.

Dr. BLISS is now in England, and is authorized to represent the interests of the College, and receive Donations.

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EGYPT.	
	Rev. JOHN HOGG, Alexandria.

I regard the "Syrian Protestant College" as entitled to the cordial support of American Christians. It proposes to perform for the Arabic-speaking Races a work of the greatest value, but one which the "A. B. C. F. M." cannot undertake. In saying this, I am expressing the views of my associates, Drs. Anderson and Wood, and also of the "Prudential Committee."

S. B. TREAT, Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Mission House, Boston.

Fig. 146. Advertisement dated **1865** of the establishment of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), in Beirut, Syria. Interestingly, the first members listed as board of managers at the SPC in Beirut were the British consul general, the British vice-consul, as well as different members of the well-established British merchant elite in Beirut including Henry Heald, and James Black, who supported Protestant missionary activities in Beirut and Syria.



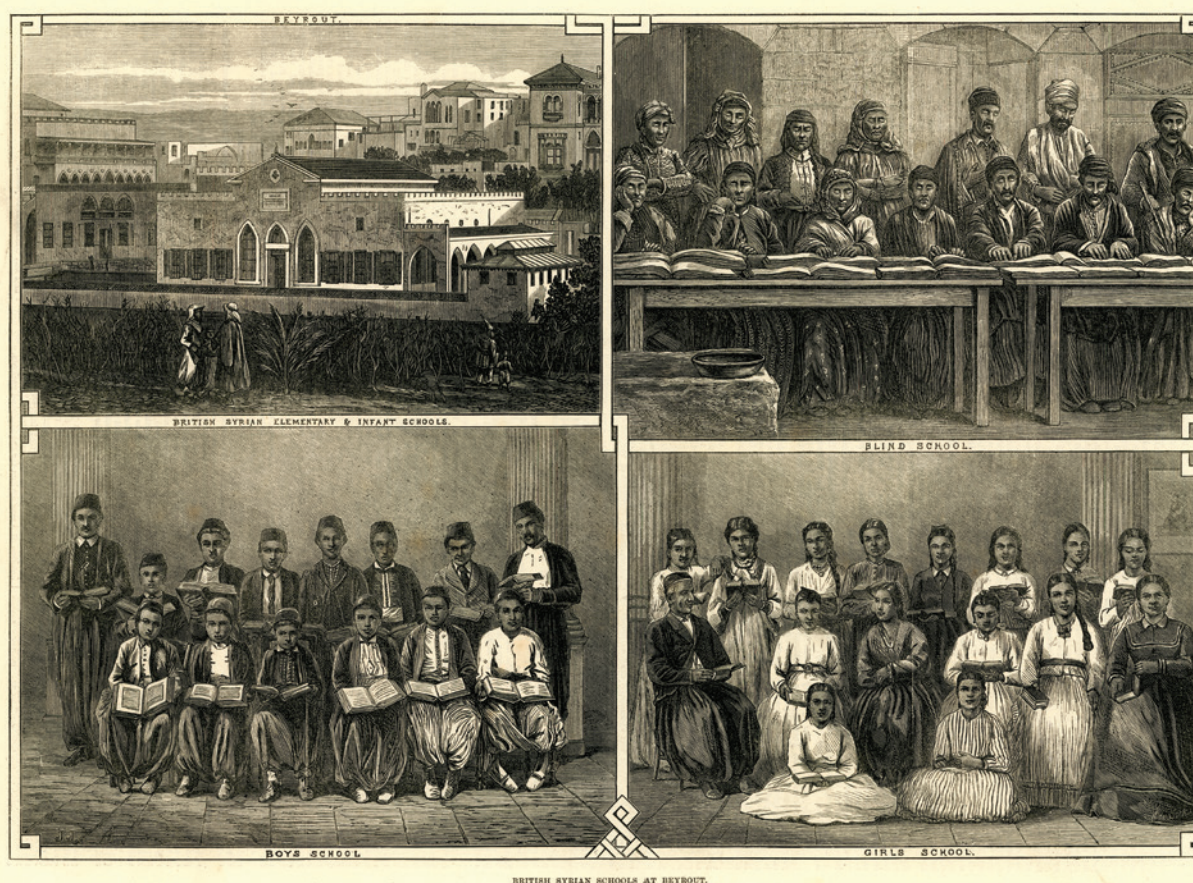


Fig. 147. A large print representing the different educational establishments run by the British Syrian Mission.

Fig. 148. Table of the Schools in Beirut by Religious Affiliation, 1890<sup>264</sup>

Directors of the Schools	Boys' School	Girls' School	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Boys	Girls	Total Pupils
Muslim sects	21	3	50	20	2000	500	2500
Greek Orthodox	6	3	21	17	900	910	1810
Maronite	5	1	85	3	1500	55	1555
Papal Greek	4	-	38	-	500	3	503
Jesuits	5	1	90	4	1500	200	1700
Sisters of Charity	2	4	10	11	175	2000	2175
Sisters of Nazareth	-	2	-	20	-	500	500
Mar Mansur	2	-	3	-	400	-	400
Capuchins (Franciscan Catholic)	2	-	4	-	150	-	150
Syriac	1	-	6	-	100	-	100
Italian	1	1	6	3	130	120	250
Jewish	5	1	25	2	500	90	590
Protestant	12	20	50	90	700	2390	3090
Armenian	1	-	3	-	150	-	150



## 12. British Trade with the Lebanese in Beirut and Britain

While Christians specialized in foreign trade and dominated it throughout the 19th century, most Beirut Muslim merchants were engaged in non-specialized internal trade with Damascus, Baghdad, other centers in the interior, as well as Egypt and the coastal provinces.<sup>265</sup>

In the late **1840s**, only 3 out of 21 local commercial houses, that were trading directly with Britain, involved Muslims. The export of silk was almost entirely in local Christian and European hands. Between **1904–1905** and **1910–1911**, Muslim-owned silk exports equaled less than 1% of the total,<sup>266</sup> and five Muslim commercial houses accounted for most of that. Christians dominated the newly established financial services as moneylenders, brokers, and commissioners.

As early as **1850**, members of the local Greek Orthodox Bustrus family distributed Manchester-manufactured products and were agents for European steamship companies, including the British Liverpool Steamer Company.

Heirs of Bustrus exported/imported agricultural products, trading between the Levant and Europe. They were protégés of the Russians and represented the British firm Spartali and Co., trading grain between Europe and the Syrian region. They also owned shares in the Beirut-Damascus Road Company (operating in **1895**) and in the Beirut Port Authority.<sup>267</sup>

The major local banks in Beirut were established and/or owned by Christian families.

The Greek Catholic Pharaon & Chiha families, for example, invested their profits from exporting silk into founding Banque Pharaon-Chiha, in **1875**, one of the first banks with indigenous owners. They were recorded to be the largest silk exporter with about 12% of total silk exported in the **1904–1911** period.<sup>268</sup>

They were also among those representing foreign transport insurance companies. In **1894**, the Pharaon family gained a quasi-monopoly on the import of British coal (the main energy source for the silk-reeling firms) transported by its merchant ship, flying the British flag.<sup>269</sup>

107



Fig. 149. This is a preprinted message business postcard produced by Pharaon & Chiha. Such cards carried the postcard mail rate of 20 paras corresponding to 10 c. The sender, the banking house Pharaon & Chiha was located in the Bustros Building starting in **1909**.<sup>270</sup>

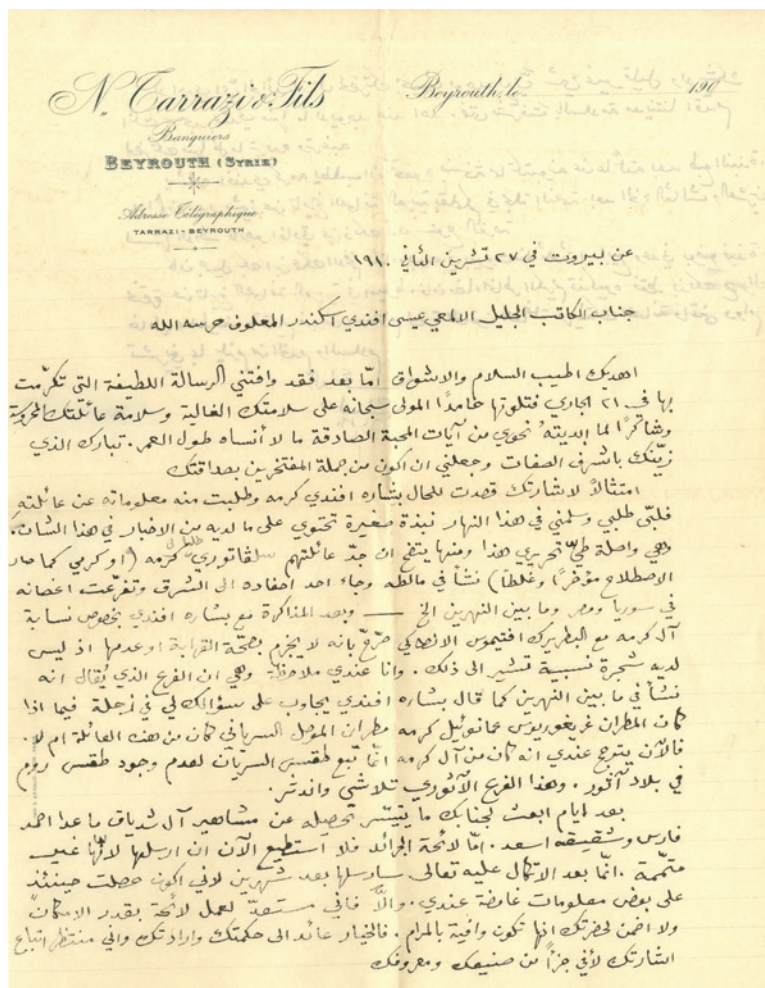


Fig. 150. This is a letter dated November 27, **1910**, from the native Tarrazi, another active banker in Beirut (Courtesy of the AUB library archives collection).



The below letter, posted at the British Post in Beirut in **1885**, was sent by the well-known trading house; Khalil Sursock & Fils. The latter was informing his counterpart Agelasto & Fils in Marseille, that a promissory note was issued to him for the amount of 21,000 French francs available after three months at the Anglo-Egyptian Bank. Moreover, Sursock is adding that the silk cocoon yield in the mountain this year will barely reach 75% of last year's, but instead the cereal yield would be better, which he hopes to sell to him at a good price. Note, at the top left corner of the letter, the telegraph address is used in case of emergency, whereas a full letter would take no more than nine days from Beirut to Marseille at a cost of only 25 c. versus a cost of 56 c. for each single word sent by telegraph to France.

The Sursock family was the wealthiest and most prestigious of all the Beirut families, and a major shareholder in the Beirut Port concession of the Ottoman company under the name of the "Company du Port, des Quais et des Entrepôts de Beyrouth" established in **1887**. The port obtained the sole rights to store and carry all the transit goods passing through customs.

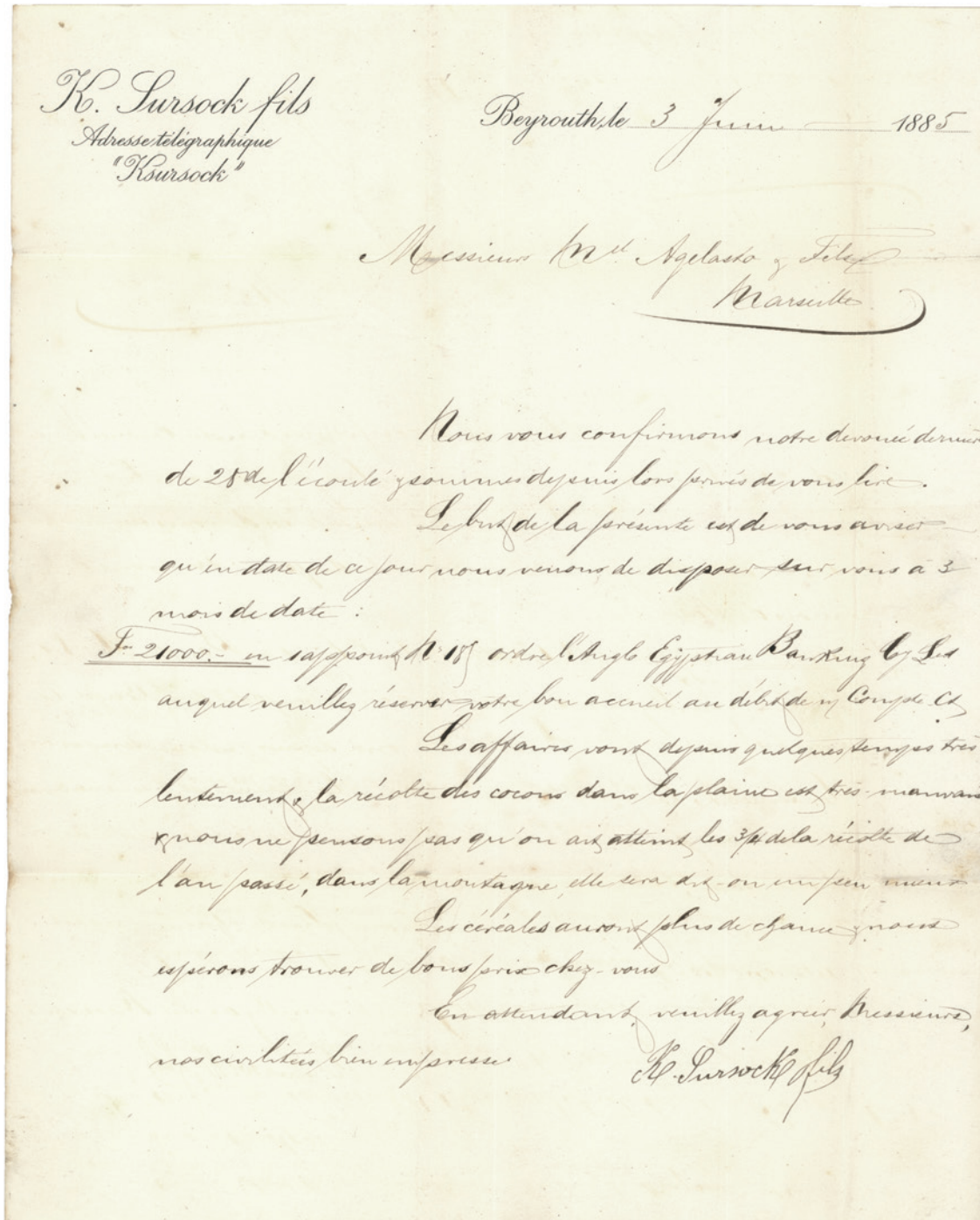


Fig. 151. The Anglo-Egyptian Bank was a British overseas bank established in **1864** in London, with branches in Alexandria (**1864**), Larnaca, and Nicosia (**1878**), Paris (**1880**), Cairo and Gibraltar (**1888**), and Malta (**1881**).



### 13. Dragomans and the Protégé System

With the expansion of trade, Europeans needed translators and local agents, who would be intermediaries between them and the local merchants and cultivators. They were mainly Christians, consisting of more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the translators serving in foreign consulates in the major cities of Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. Education and languages were important, as they were needed not only for high-level employment and trade, but they also served as social signifiers, reflecting elevated positions and skills, and thus, Christian families invested in these elements. At first, Syrian Christians served Europeans primarily as interpreters and servants, called dragomans.

As time went on, they became agents for the Europeans, receiving a percentage-based commission for deals in which they participated. Christian dominance is also attributed to the shared religion, that they had with the Europeans, as well as the Europeans' attempt to strengthen Christians against Muslims. Privileges such as the payment of lower customs and taxes, and certain impunities in law, among others, made Christians interested in serving as European dragomans.

As part of the privileges granted to foreign powers, a legal status known as "protégé," was in effect in the Ottoman Empire and was conferred on foreign consuls, who could extend the "protection" of their home country to non-Muslim residents, mainly Christians (and Jews), whether these were Ottoman-born citizens or, indeed, citizens of a different nationality. These included consul interpreters, consular staff, and also local citizens working for foreign-based institutions, including foreign post offices. Furthermore, the practice of granting European nationality to the dragoman was already spreading. Local merchants, especially Jews and Christians, were buying documents giving them European citizenship as honorary dragomans.

Many non-Muslim Ottoman subjects throughout the Ottoman Empire strove to find ways of benefiting from the capitulatory privileges enjoyed by resident nationals of Western countries at the expense of Ottoman citizens.


The Tabet, the Abella<sup>271</sup> (originally from Malta), Esper Choucair,<sup>272</sup> Michel Bustros (honorary dragoman), Nehme Trade, Michel Khalil Sursock, Assaad Khayat, Habib Rizkallah, and Philippe Ferneine were among the many dragomans/protégés of the British.<sup>273</sup>



*Fig. 152. Portrait of Khalil Sursock, 1882, Khalil Sursock (1852–1930) was the brother of Moussa (1814–1888) and father of Michel, who was a dragoman for the British Consulate and one of the signatories of the Sursock Cousins banking house(\*) (Courtesy of the USEK Museum).<sup>274</sup>*

(\*) Sursock Cousins banking house was established in Beirut in 1883, and not to be confused with Banque Sursock et Freres, which was reported to have been established earlier in 1858 by Nicolas Sursock and his brother Khalil Sursock.





Beyrouth, 8 avril 1885

Monsieur Victor Massot fils  
Perpignan (P.O.)

—

Pour solde de votre facture du 7 janvier, j'ai le plaisir de vous envoyer ci-joint un chèque n° <sup>103</sup>/<sub>1047</sub> de la maison Sursock cousins, de Beyrouth, à votre ordre et à vue, de fr. 116, 65 sur l'angle Egyptian Banking Co. Limited, 7, rue Lafayette, à Paris, que vous pouvez passer à l'ordre du Crédit lyonnais. J'aurais voulu, de préférence pour me conformer à votre désir, vous envoyer un chèque payable sur le Crédit lyonnais; mais cette maison de banque n'a pas beaucoup d'accointances à Beyrouth.

J'avais eu, un moment, l'idée de vous envoyer un billet de banque de 100 fr. et l'appoint en un bon de poste, mais j'ai pensé qu'il était plus sûr de vous envoyer un chèque à vue sur Paris. Si pourtant ce mode de paiement vous contrariait à n'importe quel point de vue, veuillez me le faire savoir. J'ai bien cherché à vous contenter, mais il est très difficile de trouver du papier ici sur le Crédit lyonnais. Je n'ai pas voulu cependant, à cause de cela, retarder inutilement de vous solder votre petite facture.

J'espère, d'ailleurs, d'un moment à l'autre, vous passer une autre commande de manches de fouets, mais les premiers ne sont pas encore écoulés. Il y a ici une grande concurrence pour cet article. Néanmoins je fais et je ferai tous mes efforts pour amener l'eau vers votre moulin.

Relevé des Titres en dépôt chez Divers																			
au 30 Juin 1854																			
Opérations	Paris	Amsterdam	Bruxelles	Paris	Amsterdam	Bruxelles	Paris	Amsterdam	Bruxelles	Paris	Amsterdam	Bruxelles	Paris	Amsterdam	Bruxelles	Paris	Amsterdam	Bruxelles	Paris
N. M. Rothschild & Co	20000	19000	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
C. J. B. de la Roche	13320	800	400	5	10000	19257	19457	18007	34	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Duglo. Goyet & Co	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	4650	150	150	21757	"	"	"	"	"	"
do Paris	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	200	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
do Amsterdam	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	254	39	"	"	"	"	"
Credit Foncier	"	4000	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
do Paris	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	24	20	3	85	3

Fig. 155. Statement of account on June 30, **1887**, held by Moussa Sursock at different financial institutions, in the financial centers of London, Paris, and Alexandria (Courtesy of the Sursock Palace Archives).



## 14. Arab Merchants in Britain

What attracted Arab merchants to Britain were the manufactured goods and, in particular, the cotton goods produced in Lancashire, which made Manchester the free-trade capital of the 19th century.<sup>275</sup> The Lancashire cotton industry sold its goods to the world through Manchester, and from the **1830s** onwards, the merchants of that city developed an increasing interest in the Middle East,<sup>276</sup> in the markets of the Ottoman Empire, while they transited through the region to India, China, and beyond. They also invested in the expansion of cotton growing in the more fertile areas.

The first Ottoman trading house was set up in **1833** by merchant “Abdallah Yadlibi” as recorded by John Scholes in his text in the *Manchester Foreign Merchant*. A study notes that “the main body” of the Syrian community in Manchester, which formed in **1860**, was mostly from regions in modern-day Lebanon.<sup>277</sup> It is also reported that the first merchant from the so-called “district” (Sandjak or sub-province) of Mount Lebanon (see p. 83) was “Abdallah Trad,” who came to Manchester in **1862**, followed by dozens of Lebanese.

Fadlo Hourani<sup>278</sup> (**1871–1960**), was another Lebanese emigrant to Manchester. In Beirut, his father converted from Greek Orthodox to the Protestant faith and passed it on to his son. The motivation for the conversion was the educational opportunities that the missionaries provided. Fadlo left Lebanon (after graduating from the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) in **1891**, to Manchester, where he took up a position in the textile trading office of his cousin, Yusef Gabriel, who had been there since **1875**. Yusef (also known as Joseph) Gabriel and his brother Mikael, had established themselves as a successful export trading company, with strong links to the major manufacturers in Lancashire and Yorkshire as well as designers and printers, with principal markets in Beirut and other Middle Eastern cities, where sophisticated clients abandoned the traditional dress styles of Syrian towns and villages for European fashions.

After 10 years, Fadlo became wealthy and returned to his hometown, Marjayoun, in southern Lebanon. He renewed his contacts with the merchant and commercial families in Beirut with whom he had been doing business while in Manchester, and with the American missionaries, and the SPC, where he contributed generously.

He also traveled three times to Brazil before **1914**, where he set up business partnerships with members of his wife’s family there. At that time, the number of inhabitants in Marjayoun stood at 3752 in the **1880s**, of whom 2500 had emigrated by **1914**. There was a Russian school before **1916**, for both boys and girls, and in **1851**, a Protestant primary school was founded. Foreign influence on the local religious communities in this village is clearly reflected in a **1916** vilayet of Beirut survey which recorded snapshots of social life in Marjeyoun. On the house walls, there were portraits of the Russia czar and the imperial family, indicating that it belonged to an Orthodox family; on others, portraits of Queen Victoria or the German emperor were Protestant, the Virgin Mary reflected a Catholic family.

111



Fig. 156. From left to right, Fadlo Hourani and his two brothers-in-law (Aziz and Sami Racy), whom he partnered in Brazil (1905).<sup>279</sup> (Courtesy of the Zelfa Hourani Collection)





Fig. 157. This is a letterhead cover of Elie Raphael's company in Liverpool in both Arabic and English, targeting both a local and Arab Middle Eastern clientele. This single-rate cover was posted on May 25, 1912, (with postage on the back) in Liverpool to Simon Ignatios, a relative, and a well-known timber merchant in the country, who was based in Jounieh – a small town port, 12 miles north of Beirut (close to the sender's village of Dlepta where this family is originally from).



Fig. 159. Dlepta the native village of Elie Raphael was located on the hill on the right side of the picture around 300 meters above sea level from the nearby town of Djounieh, in the late 19th century.

Fig. 158. Elie Raphael (1888–1980), a Lebanese emigrant based in Liverpool in 1908–1909, is posing at age 20. He was a passenger, trading, and maritime agent, as well as consul to the Ottoman Empire<sup>280</sup> (Courtesy of the Zeina Raphael collection).



15. Emigrant Mail

Linked to business and investment was the mail flow of emigrant mail to and from unusual destinations due to Lebanese migrants established in North and South America as well as the Caribbean Islands. The Mount Lebanon region (see map p. 83) received the help of Lebanese emigrants, who sent back a large proportion of their earnings made in faraway locations, especially Brazil.<sup>281</sup> Emigration from modern Lebanon and Syria to the Americas began in the **1860s**, but surged in the late **1880s** motivated by the need of families to improve their financial position,<sup>282</sup> or to escape the deteriorating economic situation by moving to places that have a higher perceived potential of prosperity.<sup>283</sup> The limited growth of cultivable land becoming precious (e.g., largely owned by the church, which remains true today) in relation to the rapid population growth, and the stagnation of silk prices were drivers for emigration.

Indeed, Mount Lebanon had the highest density of inhabitants per square kilometer (110 people per sq km) as compared to the other neighboring Ottoman Syrian provinces (8–15 per sq km).<sup>284</sup> Many emigrated by mortgaging their land, borrowing from relatives and friends, and selling jewelry,<sup>285</sup> to pay for their passage.

A British official report <sup>286</sup> notes in **1899** that two-thirds of Lebanese emigrants left for the US, Canada, Brazil, and Argentina, the remainder for Australia, South Africa, and the Pacific Islands. It reported the remarkable large number of emigrants “safely” estimated to be 13,000, mostly came from Mount Lebanon, with a small percentage from Beirut. The report continues that this emigration will continue, due to the severe regulations in the US against paupers.

Another British consular report for the year **1909** <sup>287</sup> reports that about 10,000 people emigrate yearly from Syria to the US and other countries. About half of the Ottoman emigrants of 1,200,000 in the **1860–1914** period were from Syria and Mount Lebanon. In **1913**, the total estimated funds sent home from Argentina stood at 24 million pesos, or 240 million Ottoman kurus (piasters). The inspector of public works and agriculture in Mount Lebanon, Albert Naccache estimated around **1918** that the annual income of his district stood at 220 million francs of which 41% were the net (inflow less outflow) remitted from the new world.<sup>288</sup>

Lebanese Emigration <sup>289</sup>

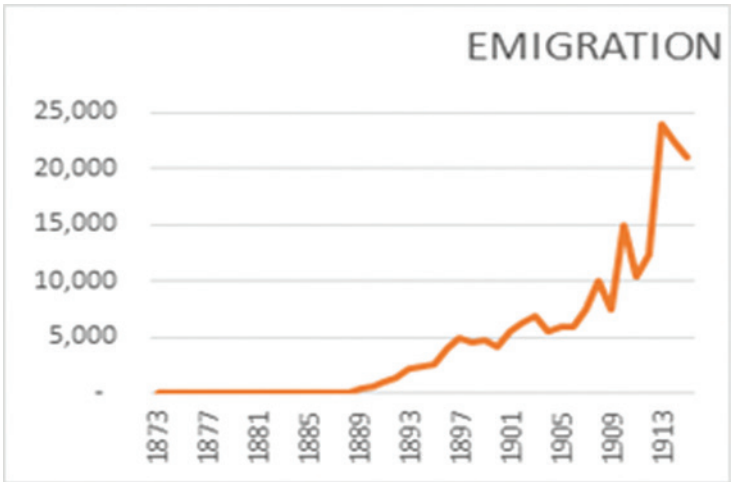


Fig. 160. Lebanese emigration increased exponentially starting in the late **1880s**, reflected as well by the postage stamp sales at the French Post Office in Beirut, which processed emigrant mail, including remittances to families back home.



Fig. 161. The identification card (ID) issued by the Mexican immigration authority to a Lebanese emigrant, a Catholic merchant from Qartaba, a town in Mount Lebanon, entering Vera Cruz, Mexico, in **1896**.



Fig. 162. Below, the ID of a Lebanese Jew from Beirut entering Vera Cruz in **1906**.<sup>290</sup> This Mexican town was a stopover used by Asian and Lebanese emigrants to enter the US illegally.<sup>291</sup>

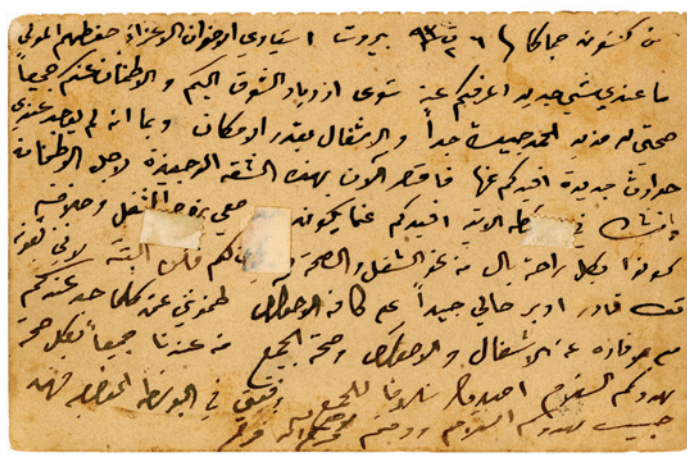


Fig. 163. A postcard from Jamaica (British crown colony since 1684) with its back text written in Arabic, from a Lebanese emigrant, who assures his family back home that he is doing well and not to worry. The card was processed on arrival by the British Post in Beirut as evidenced by the arrival date stamp in 1893 applied to the front.



Fig. 164. A registered cover sent in 1905 from Massachusetts, US, by a Lebanese emigrant Mrs. Mantura to Ferris Abdallah Karam, in Lebanon, and received at the Austrian Post in Beirut as evidenced by the date stamp on the back.

Fig. 165. Geographic distribution of Lebanese emigrants compiled in the late 1950s<sup>292</sup> vs the Lebanese population of 1.69 million in 1958.

US	400,000
Brazil	350,000
Argentina	200,000
Africa	70,000
Mexico	40,000
Canada	20,000
Australia	25,000
Venezuela	15,000
Uruguay	15,000
Cuba	12,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,147,000</b>





Fig. 166. A registered cover sent in **1907** from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil by Acle Miguel Amchite & Co, a Lebanese emigrant to the same Feres Abdala Caram as above (transliterated differently) in Lebanon, and received at the French Post in Beirut as evidenced by the date stamp on the back.

Emigrant mail must have constituted an important percentage of the overall mail with unusual destinations. These were processed by the foreign post offices in Beirut with the French and Austrian handling the majority as demonstrated in another study undertaken by the same author.<sup>293</sup> This lucrative postal business was possible due to the active shipping lines as well as the postal agreement between the French and Austrian postal administrations and the US Post in directing emigrant mail to Beirut and the rest of Syria.

A large number of emigrants went to the Americas and maintained close ties with home, sending the needed funds through the postal system to their families. Several intermediaries in Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon facilitated the cashing of money remitted by emigrant mail to relatives back home.

Below is a description of active correspondence in the period **1894–1911**, with Fares Abdallah Karam (**1858–1913**); an important financial intermediary. Many Lebanese emigrants, from different places in the Americas (e.g., Brazil, Uruguay, Cuba, US...) corresponded with Karam, a respected notable and merchant, from the

village of Amchit, in the region of Byblos, 24 miles north of Beirut. He is known to have advanced money to emigrants and handled some transactions (financial and non-financial) between Lebanese emigrants and family members who stayed behind. Karam handled international payments (e.g., money orders, bank checks) sent by mail and remitted to relatives back home through him. He was also often used as a proxy to complete some other administrative affairs (e.g., issuance of proxies for sale/purchase of properties) between emigrants and their families, which needed back and forth documents to be signed.

One of the covers described in the next page is addressed to Karam in **1901** from Chahine Boutros Moawad living in Amparo, São Paulo, Brazil, that included a money order issued in the name of Karam and drawn on Newman Bank, for 80 British sterling pounds (£), against which Karam was asked to provide the equivalent in Turkish piasters (net of a commission) to the addressee Geroges Chahine Moawad (Geroges).

In fact, Karam was acting like Western Union in modern times. A money order sent by mail was a secure way to



send money or make a payment. Many recipients preferred to send money orders because, unlike a personal check, a money order cannot "bounce" and clears almost immediately; therefore, they provided a fast, risk-free, and safe form of payment through the mail.

Interestingly, at the bottom of the letter, the sender from Brazil wrote a statement to be signed upon arrival by both the intermediary Karam and the recipient of the money, Gerges, in Amchit, who will cash the £80 from the former. At the bottom of that statement was a place for the names of four witnesses to sign as a confirmation that the money was cashed. For further security, as the recipient did not seem to be literate, Karam, as the intermediary, made Gerges sign another similar statement with the

same witnesses, whereby the beneficiary clearly stated that he is able to read and write. His signature was needed in case of a dispute on the amount of money received, committing to return it.

The US was an important country for Lebanese emigration. A British consular report noted on January 25, **1908**, a list of money orders to be paid at the British Post Office in Beirut from the following states in the US, with individual amounts ranging from 1 to 20 sterling pounds: Massachusetts, Michigan, Maine, Texas, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, New York, New Jersey, Alabama, Rhodes Island, Missouri, and Pennsylvania.

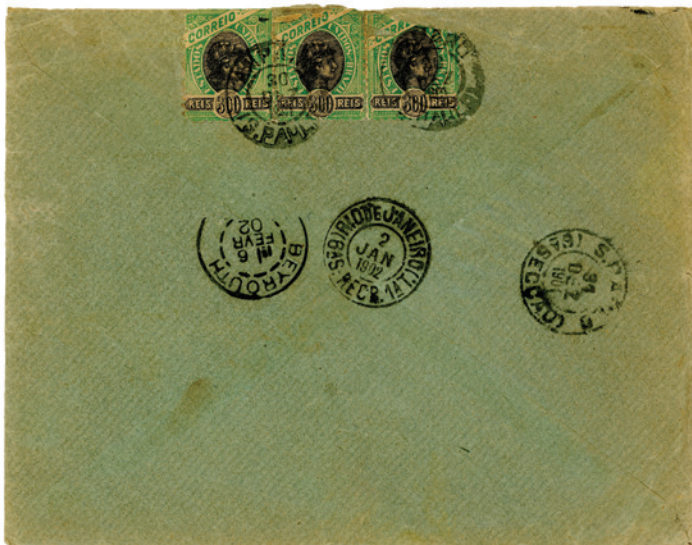


Fig. 167. Mail sent in **1901** from Chahine Boutros Moawad living in Amparo, São Paulo, Brazil to Fares Abdallah Karam in Amchit, showing the arrival French post-date stamp on the back.

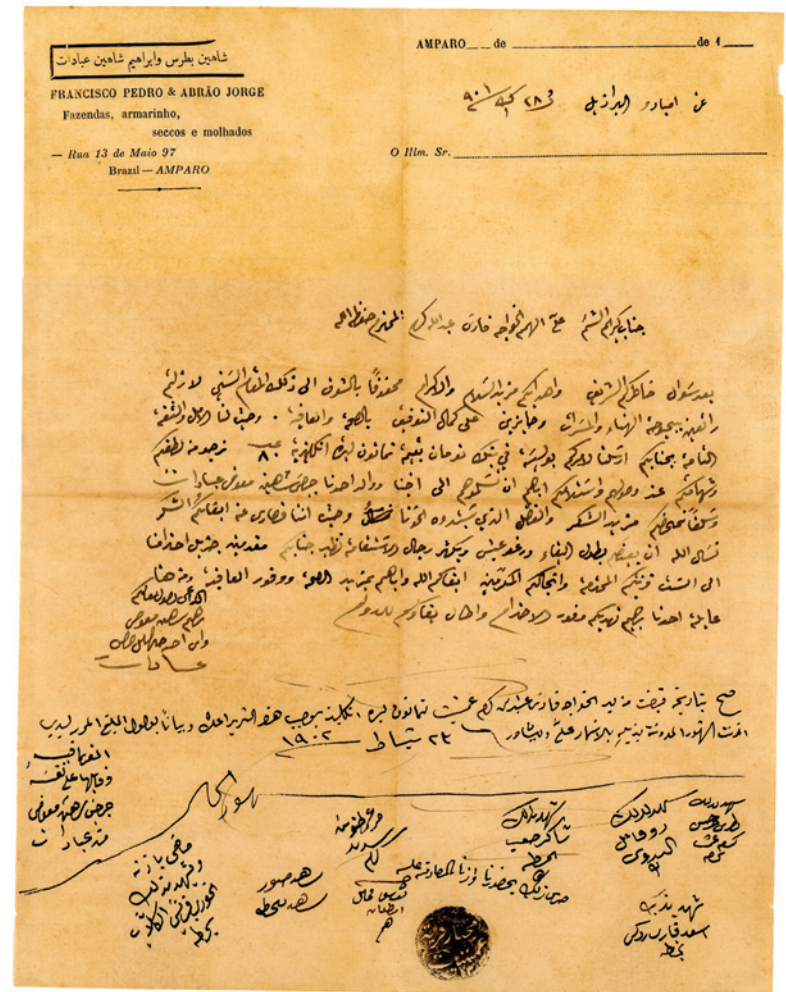


Fig. 168. The form prepared by Karam to be signed by witnesses in Amchit that confirms that the money was distributed.



## 16. Native Merchants Representing Foreign Companies in Beirut

The growing commercial links between Manchester and the Middle East naturally led to the growth of a foreign community from that area itself, and toward the end of the 19th century, up to 150 Middle Eastern merchant houses had been established. Export was not limited to their home countries, such as Ottoman Syria, but extended to places where some of their nationals had emigrated and established businesses, such as in West Africa (e.g., Nigeria).

The growth in Britain's commercial, religious, and political activity led to an increase in the number of British subjects, including Ionians and Maltese, residing in the area falling within the jurisdiction of the Beirut consul, from 75 in **1843**, to 163 in **1846**, 227 in **1849**, and 282 in **1851**. In **1908**, a British consular report notes that the British colony in Beirut consisted of 730 subjects.<sup>294</sup>

However, the number of British commercial houses in Beirut did not seem to have increased, compared to French firms. Seemingly, the increase in British trade was carried out mainly by Lebanese firms engaged in direct trade with Britain. In fact, European entrepreneurs played a smaller role in Beirut than in other Levantine ports like Alexandria. Local entrepreneurs imposed themselves as representatives of European companies, local retailers for European wholesalers, intermediaries in the silk market, and brokers for local crops, in addition

to their role as usurers. Merchants in Beirut had obtained the following tribute from the French Consul:

*The Arabs are enterprising; nothing proves this better than the extension they have given to their speculations by establishing relations with the merchants in London.*<sup>295</sup>

In **1846**, a Beirut merchant is reported to have tried, with some success, to break the British monopoly of cotton yarn imports by obtaining supplies directly from Maison Pastre & Freres, in Marseille.

A list compiled by the British consul in Beirut on December 27, **1848**, documents most of the merchant families that dominated Lebanese trade and finance, consisting of 29 houses. The agents of these in Britain included: Spartali and Lascaridi in London; P. Hava and Co. in London; N. S. Francopolo and Co. in London; Paul Cababe in Manchester. Two of these agents were Lebanese and the others, Greek. Moreover, out of the 29 merchant houses, only three were Muslim and none Jewish. The Christian ascendancy in Lebanese trade and finance had clearly been established. The competition from the entrepreneurial natives had driven the British off the field.<sup>296</sup> Furthermore, a late British consular report in **1894**<sup>297</sup> notes that a Bombay firm had even established itself in the hub of Beirut and was competing with Manchester houses in the sale of cheap cotton goods of medium and inferior quality.

117



Photos : Cassell & Co., Ltd

Fig. 169. Working in a Lancashire Cotton Mill (1906).

## 4. British Postal Activity with Beirut (1836–1873)

At the end of 1839, British mail from many parts of the world was still taken aboard private or Admiralty ships, which left on an irregular basis from various British ports. The contract system, whereby the General Post Office (GPO) in London agreed to pay an annual sum to a shipping company and in return expected the ships to adhere to strict schedules, incurring penalties for overdue arrival, was still in its infancy.

118

The Admiralty controlled the packet boats in the English Channel, as they did in the Mediterranean and on the run to South America. The Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Australia, and the whole of the east beyond India was handled by itinerant ships, many operated by the East India Company.

The following section describes the evolution of the British postal service in Beirut and the different initiatives undertaken by British officials in London, Constantinople, and Beirut to ensure more regular postal communication between Britain and Beirut, but also between Beirut and Persia, and Mesopotamia.

### a. The Period of the Admiralty Service and Supervision

Compared to other leading foreign nations, the first British postal presence in the Ottoman Empire for civilians was not in Constantinople, the capital, nor even in Smyrna – the largest port in the empire – but was located in Alexandria, Egypt, starting in 1839, through a packet agency, set up by the GPO in London to process mail, with no full post office services yet.

That year also corresponded to an additional postal convention, with the French government packets that would convey British and Indian mail between Marseille and Alexandria (brought from Britain to Calais and Marseille).

It was only on July 1, 1857, that a British Post Office for civilian use in Constantinople was finally set up, while the packet agency in Alexandria was converted into a post office on March 17, 1858. Nowhere else in the Ottoman Empire could a British Post Office be found until 1872, with the exception of a packet agency in Beirut set up in 1840 to handle British mail between Britain and Syria/eastern territories.

All the while, the French and Austrians had been steadily expanding their post office and shipping routes network from 1837 throughout the Ottoman Empire. Egypt held the strategic postal communication passage to India, and was critically much more important to the British than establishing an extensive postal and a shipping routes network on the Syrian coast, or throughout the Ottoman Empire.

Regular mail between Britain (or British possessions) and Beirut was mainly processed through Alexandria as following:

- by Admiralty steamers on a regular basis in 1836–1839, and then sporadically in 1839–1845.
- by contracted vessels on an irregular basis from British merchants under Admiralty supervision (1839–1852), and free from Admiralty supervision thereafter.
- by French government packets on a regular basis from 1837 through the Italian coast and Constantinople (the French Post Office was set up in Alexandria in 1837).
- by the following subcontracted liners, the Egyptian Khedivial Liner, the Austrian Lloyd, the Russian ROPiT, and the Bell's Asia Minor Company, all from 1872; via the Brindisi route.

Starting December 1845, the French government liner began conveying the British mail directly between Beirut and Alexandria on a regular basis (see GPO notice p.157).

The opening of the British packet agency in Alexandria in 1839 corresponded to the discontinuation of regular Admiralty service between Alexandria and Beirut (operating in 1836–1839). The strategic British packet agency in Alexandria handled and supervised the mail flow between Britain and India, as well as the mail between Britain and Beirut destined to the Ottoman Syrian Provinces and some to the eastern territories. The Admiralty service between Britain and Alexandria via Malta operated from 1835–1856.

Archival records report that in 1840, the British Consulate in Beirut employed a packet sub-agent who handled the mail between Britain/British possessions and Baghdad<sup>298</sup> and Persia. This aid to the British consul in Beirut may have been in place earlier and acted as a liaison with the previous Admiralty packet service on the Alexandria-Beirut route. The packet agency responsibilities in Beirut included taking charge of the safe transport of British mail (originating from Britain or British territories as well as India) between Beirut and Alexandria, and which was contracted out by independent ships by the British Consulate and merchants in both Alexandria and Beirut under Admiralty supervision from 1839–1852 and the regular French government packet liner from 1845. The Beirut sub-agent reported to the packet agency in Alexandria (named the postmaster), who then reported directly to the GPO in London.



Throughout history, governments have invested heavily in resources for making sure communication between their colonies and areas of strategic interest could flow effectively. The most complete of all these communication networks was the one that the British built in the 19th century to control their far-flung colonial empire. India was by far the most important colony for Britain, in fact, more important than all the other colonies of all the European powers put together.<sup>299</sup> By 1906, British trade with India stood at 31% out of all its colonies, while it constituted 7.84% of total British foreign trade. This compares with the insignificant 1.35% trade with the Ottoman Empire<sup>300</sup> (see p. 163) as a percentage of British total foreign trade.

## COLONIES ANGLAISES

— 108 —

Atlas VIDAL-LABLACHE.

119



Fig. 170. British Empire possessions and trading connections in the world, in the first quarter of the 20th century.<sup>301</sup>

An official letter dated June 2, 1841,<sup>302</sup> describes the appointment of the packet agent Naame Tabet “clerk to the (British) Consul” in Beirut with an allowance of 15 sterling pounds on an annual basis (authorized by the British Treasury),<sup>303</sup> as recommended by the British postal agent A. Jonas in Alexandria to the GPO secretary Lieutenant Colonel Maberly in London. Interestingly, the commercially minded Tabet had sent, on May 25, to the Postmaster H. Joanson Esquire in London, a suggestion to benefit from the similar financial treatment of his predecessor. The previous sub-agent earned a commission of 20% on the proceeds of postage revenues collected for the Beirut-Alexandria trip and vice versa. This early performance commission-based system is interesting to compare with the French, who culturally resisted such a reward system.

This is noticeable later in the early 1900s<sup>304</sup> when the French had to face stiff competition from both the Austrians and the Germans in Beirut, who used a commission-based performance system (see p.195) and when the French had difficulties offering similar terms as well as adapting to the competitive financial incentives offered by other foreign post offices.

Naame Tabet (born c. 1805) was mentioned in 1827 in a correspondence<sup>305</sup> assisting the British Consul Abbott, and is again reported in the 1840s to have been a dragoman (e.g., assistant and translator) of the British consul in Beirut. He was an Anglophone who converted to Protestantism and was reported to have helped British agents expel the Egyptian ruler Ibrahim Pasha from Lebanon.<sup>306</sup>

Tabet took over the position from his predecessor in November **1840**, and was charged to ensure, on a monthly basis, her Majesty's mail (official and merchants) between Beirut and Alexandria. In another internal report dated **1841–1842**, Khalil Tabet (father of Naame) is reported to have performed temporarily the duties of the packet agent.<sup>307</sup>

The table in the next pages shows the relatively low flow of mail through Beirut (**1836–1841**), which may explain the reason for the Admiralty halting the experimental Beirut-Alexandria leg in **1839**, established originally for conveying mail with India. In the period beginning around **1840** until April 5, **1841**, it is reported that a total postage value of 128.12 sterling pounds was collected at the British Post in Alexandria for letters to/from Beirut.<sup>308</sup>

### Admiralty Halts Service to Beirut

By **1837**, letters took an average of five to six weeks to travel between London and Bombay as compared to the cape route of two to three months, a considerable improvement.

It was reported earlier, that for the first time, in **1825**, a small steamer undertook the voyage from Falmouth via the Cape of Good Hope to Calcutta, arriving 113 days later (using steam for only 62 days, due to the early, inefficient engine technology).<sup>309</sup>

For the period **1836–1840**, a report confirms that the number of Admiralty ship logs corresponding to the Beirut stopovers<sup>310</sup> stood at 45 or about 9 stops on average annually, a low number.

After August **1839**, the shipping route with Beirut stopped being regular, which was the result of continuous instability in Syria, sandstorms in Mesopotamia, and the necessary investments in road work.<sup>311</sup>

It is clear from the early days that the Admiralty had regarded the Beirut line as an experiment, as the letter from the Admiralty Secretary Charles Wood reports to Robert Gordon of the East India Board:<sup>312</sup>

5 July 1837

Sir,

*Having laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 3rd instant transmitting by desire of the Commissioners for the Affairs of India the copy of a representation which has been received from Mr Farren by the secret Committee of the East India Company relation to the irregular arrival of the Steamer from Malta at Beyrout: I am commanded by their Lordships to acquaint you for the information of the Commissioners that an arrangement is in contemplation by which my Lords trust that a recurrence of this inconvenience will be obviated:- but that communication with Beyrout has hitherto hardly been considered more than an experiment.*

Fig. 171.



Fig. 172. Picture of Naame Tabet probably the second packet agent of the British packet agency set up in Beirut in **1840**.



The British Admiralty shipping route to Beirut from **1836**, whose original purpose was to handle with India, had formally ceased. This was reported by a ship log representing the last voyage on a regular basis with Beirut at the end of August **1839**.<sup>313</sup> Indeed, the British Post<sup>314</sup> had found the Beirut stopover of limited use for channeling mail to and from India.

However, Viscount Palmerston, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, believed Britain's main foreign policy objective was to increase his country's power in the world, and insisted on the paramount importance of maintaining communication between Britain and Syria through Beirut. He advocated for a route between the two places.<sup>315</sup> The objective was to maintain an alternative route to Egypt in case this one was disrupted, but also to maintain, throughout the Syrian corridor, a geopolitical presence to curb any foreign power's attempt to control that access.

### Admiralty Supervision until 1852

A British official report noted in **1839**<sup>316</sup> “if Lord Palmerston thought it was necessary that mails should be sent to Beirut, the Admiralty suggests they should be sent from Alexandria to Beirut in small (local) sailing vessels.” Subsequent to the halting of the regular Alexandria-Beirut line, the Admiralty continued for the next 13 years to supervise that route through subcontracted shippers (October 1, **1839**–September 24,<sup>317</sup> **1852**).<sup>318</sup>

Extracts from a correspondent of *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* (HTSC), a weekly newspaper with significant naval content, reports on October 16, **1839**, the following: *Merchants in Beirut, we understand,*

*will themselves provide an Austrian steam vessel to run between that place [Beirut] and Alexandria and that the British consul general at Alexandria has taken up a bombard [a small two-masted sailing vessel]; the Augusta [under the supervision of an Admiralty Commander] to run as a packet between Alexandria and Beirut.*

This latter annual contract was signed in September **1839**, between John Friend from Barclay & Friend<sup>319</sup> and the Admiralty, operating from October 1.<sup>320</sup> The contract was renewed again for another year until October **1841**.<sup>321</sup> The Admiralty always made sure that the mail was accompanied by its representative (e.g., aboard the contracted P&O steamers as well), usually a retired naval officer, who had the authority to counter-command the ships' captains, if anything arose that might affect the schedule.<sup>322</sup>

A report<sup>323</sup> on December 29, **1840**, mentioned again that the “*Emmetje* contract Packet between Alexandria and Beyrout leaves this morning to resume her station. Lieutenant Ralph Gore continues in her as agent to take charge of the mail.” The mention of the *Emmetje* is found misspelled as *Emitge* on a label “*Beyrout a bord de L'Emitge*” around **1843–1844** with Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, a pioneer photographer, who was aboard that ship in Beirut.<sup>324</sup> On June 28, **1845**, a report from Malta mentions the following “...arrived the *Emmetje* schooner [a sailing ship with two or more masts] with mails,” chartered by mercantile interests to carry mails between Alexandria and Beirut.<sup>325</sup> In another report, the *Emmetje* is again mentioned in May,<sup>326</sup> and another source<sup>327</sup> reports that on May 9, **1848**, a permanent contract was signed for a monthly service to Jaffa on its outward and return journey between Alexandria and Beirut with the *Emmetje* ship among others.



Fig.173. Cavas (security guards) of the French consulate in Beirut posted at the British post in Beirut in the early 1900s.

Fig. 174. ANNUAL POSTAGE REVENUES (STERLING) ON LETTERS FROM BRITAIN FORWARDED VIA FALMOUTH TO THE BRITISH PACKET AGENCY IN BEIRUT (Agents office Falmouth)

<u>Year</u>	<u>#Letters</u>	<u>Postage (Pound/Shilling/Pence)</u>	<u>Average number of letters per week</u>
1836	350	89.18.08	7
1837	587	210.14.10	11
1838	458	252.12.09	13
1839	487	214.9.08	13
1840	517	37.2.05 (**)	10
1841(*)	434	45.17.08	20

(\*) Up to the end of July.                      Note: postal rates for single-rate letters varied over the period 1836–1841.  
(\*\*) This information was taken from the archives as is and may have originally been reported wrongly.

Fig. 175. AMOUNT OF POSTAGE COLLECTED IN ALEXANDRIA FOR LETTERS TO/FROM THE BRITISH PACKET AGENCY IN BEIRUT QUARTERLY:

	<u>Amounts</u>	<u>Pounds</u>	<u>Shilling</u>	<u>Pence</u>
1840	April 5 .....	9 .....	13 .....	6 .....
	July 5 .....	53 .....	10 .....	6 .....
	Oct 10 .....	39 .....	18 .....	- .....
1841	January 5 .....	Nil .....		- .....
	April 5 .....	25 .....	10 .....	- .....
	Total	128 .....	12 .....	e .....



Fig. 176. Picture of a typical dragoman in costume in Beirut



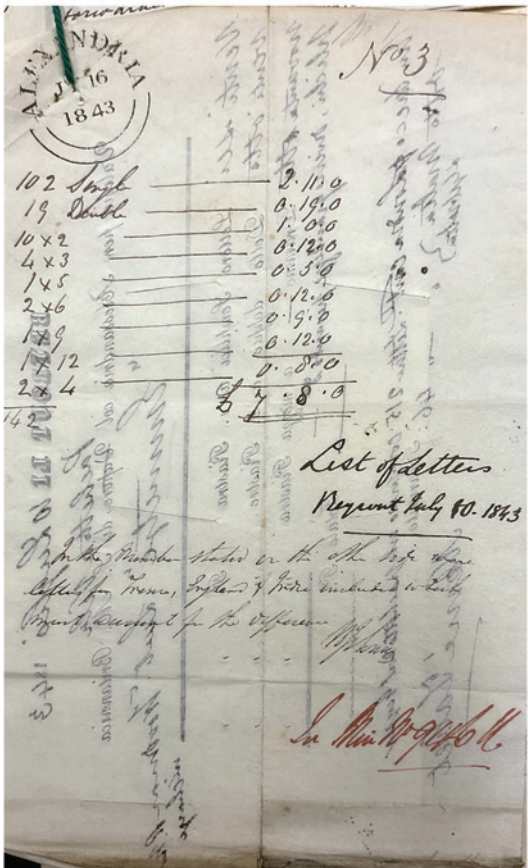
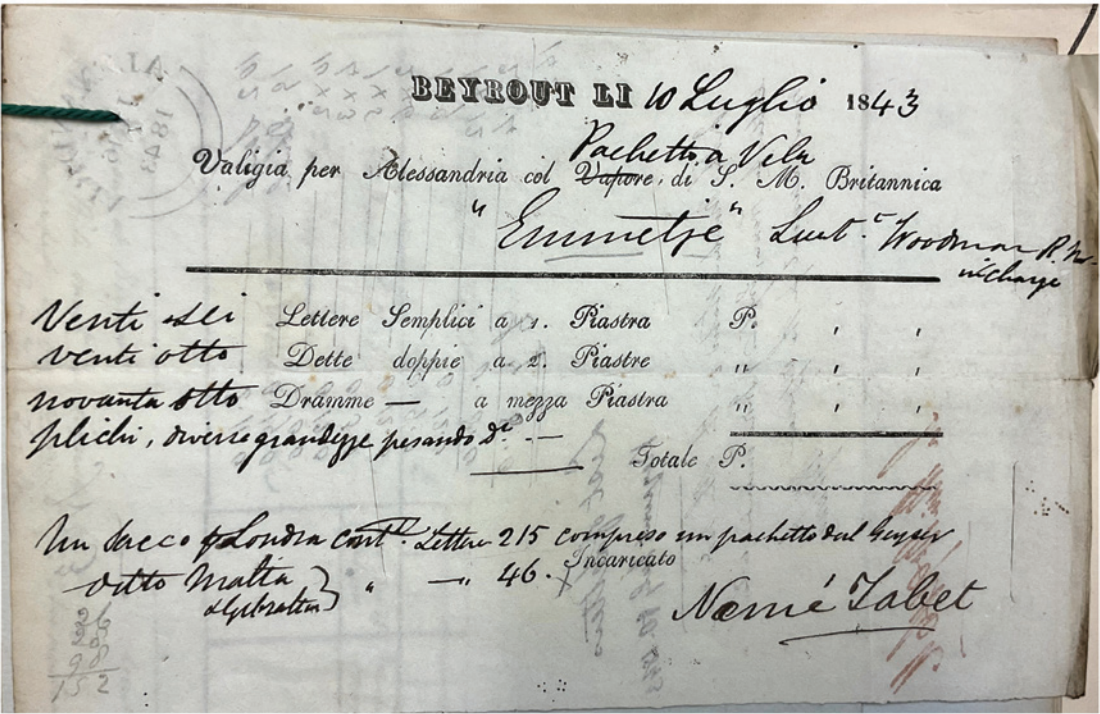


Fig. 177. This folded sheet cover<sup>328</sup> is a quarterly postal report dated July 10, 1843, and sent by the local packet agent Naame Tabet in Beirut to the packet agency in Alexandria. It covers information that 215 letters received in Beirut were addressed to London, and 46 to both Malta and Gibraltar. These were remitted aboard the contracted sailing ship **Emmetje** under the supervision of the Admiralty Lieutenant Woodman, as clearly indicated at the top of the document. On the back, there is an arrival Alexandria date stamp (July 16) on the top left of the front cover, applied on arrival by the Alexandria British packet agency.

Fig. 178. STATEMENT OF LETTERS RECEIVED FROM SYRIA AND POSTAGE CHARGED

16th July 1843: Voyage to Alexandria with the sailing packet (also called *Pacchetto a Vela*) *Emmetje*

Number of letters	Class of letters and rate of postage	Amounts		
		Pound	Shilling	Pence
102	up to ½ an ounce -/6	2	11	-
19	up to 1 ounce 1/-	-	19	-
21	Various Weights above 1oz	3	18	-
152		7	8	-



Fig. 179

**1840 ALEXANDRIA-BEIRUT BY CONTRACTED VESSEL UNDER ADMIRALTY SUPERVISION OR A PASSING-BY VESSEL**

- FRANKING:** No rate nor mark appears on this commercial cover. The chartered vessel may have charged a flat transport fee per piece of mail.
- ROUTE:** Alexandria (written on August 18) - Beirut
- SENDER:** Bruno Giovanni Auburt
- RECEIVER:** Dr Savisky
- SHIPPER:** This mail could have been possibly transported by the *Emmetje*; a sailing schooner chartered by mercantile interests to carry mail between Alexandria and Beirut (from c. **1840** to c. **1846**). Although the Admiralty shipping route between Alexandria and Beirut continued sporadically during **1840–1845**, the mail it transported was usually applied with a postal rate mark, which is not the case here, and was most likely transported by a chartered vessel or a passing-by vessel.
- REMARK:** This commercial disinfected cover, as evidenced by the different front slits performed at the Beirut quarantine center, is a rare surviving cover. The content of the letter mentions the addressee's unpaid payments. The sender informs them that the collection would be performed going forward by the French Nicolas Portalis & Cie., a well-known local silk trading company established in Lebanon around **1837**. This is one of the early covers mentioning Portalis.



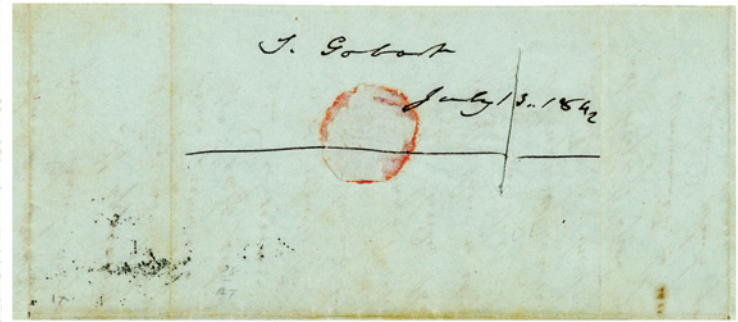


Fig. 180

1842

MALTA-ALEXANDRIA-BEIRUT

BY CONTRACTED OR PASSING-BY VESSEL

**FRANKING:** A pre-paid US missionary disinfected cover with a 6 handwritten applied rate in red ink representing a paid postage of 6 d.<sup>329</sup>

**MARKS:** Malta departing date stamp with vertical slits performed in Beirut through the cover for disinfection.

**ROUTE:** Malta (July 14) - Alexandria (18) - Beirut

**SENDER:** J. Gobat

**RECEIVER:** Elli Smith (1801–1857)

**SHIPPER:** The cover was transported from Malta to Alexandria by the P&O steamer *Tagus*, reported as arriving in Alexandria on July 18.<sup>330</sup> From Alexandria to Beirut, the cover could have been transported by a merchant contracted vessel (e.g., the *Emmetje* under Admiralty supervision, or a passing-by vessel).

**REMARK:** This cover was posted in Malta on July 13, to the well-known Reverend Eli Smith in Beirut. The latter is known for bringing the first printing press with Arabic typeface to Syria. He embarked on the lengthy process of translating the first Protestant Bible into Arabic and was reported to be the director of the American Press in Beirut in 1868.<sup>331</sup> The sender reports his sympathies over Smith's recently deceased wife, and informs him that the American Press in Malta has shut down (whose main activity had mostly moved to Beirut back in May 1834).<sup>332</sup> The cover was disinfected in Beirut on arrival, a rarity among surviving covers, as evidenced by the front slits.



Fig. 181



Fig. 182. Reverend Eli Smith and his wife.





Fig. 183

1842

BEIRUT - ALEXANDRIA - DERBYSHIRE

BY A PASSING-BY SARDINIAN BRIG

- FRANKING:
- The unpaid 1/- handwritten rate applied in black represents the postage due of 1 shilling due upon arrival.
- MARKS:
- England via Falmouth* was handwritten, Malta purification stamp on the back, two front disinfection slits.
- ROUTE:
- Beirut - Jaffa - Alexandria - Malta (unclear city date stamp on the back) - Falmouth - Derbyshire
- RECEIVER:
- M. Worsby
- SHIPPER:
- From Beirut to Jaffa by a Sardinian brig (as mentioned in the letter), from Jaffa to Alexandria, possibly by another passing-by vessel (or by land), from Alexandria to Falmouth by probably a P&O steamer.
- REMARK:
- This letter, written while waiting in the quarantine center in Beirut, is dated December 28, **1842**. On the back of the letter, an additional text was added and dated January 3, **1843**, and reports: *that we have been informed that our quarantine is to be terminated tomorrow (January 4), being thirteen instead of fifteen days...we heard that a Sardinian Brig now in the harbor is about to sail to Jaffa and the captain is willing to take us with him, better than continuing by land in that season.*

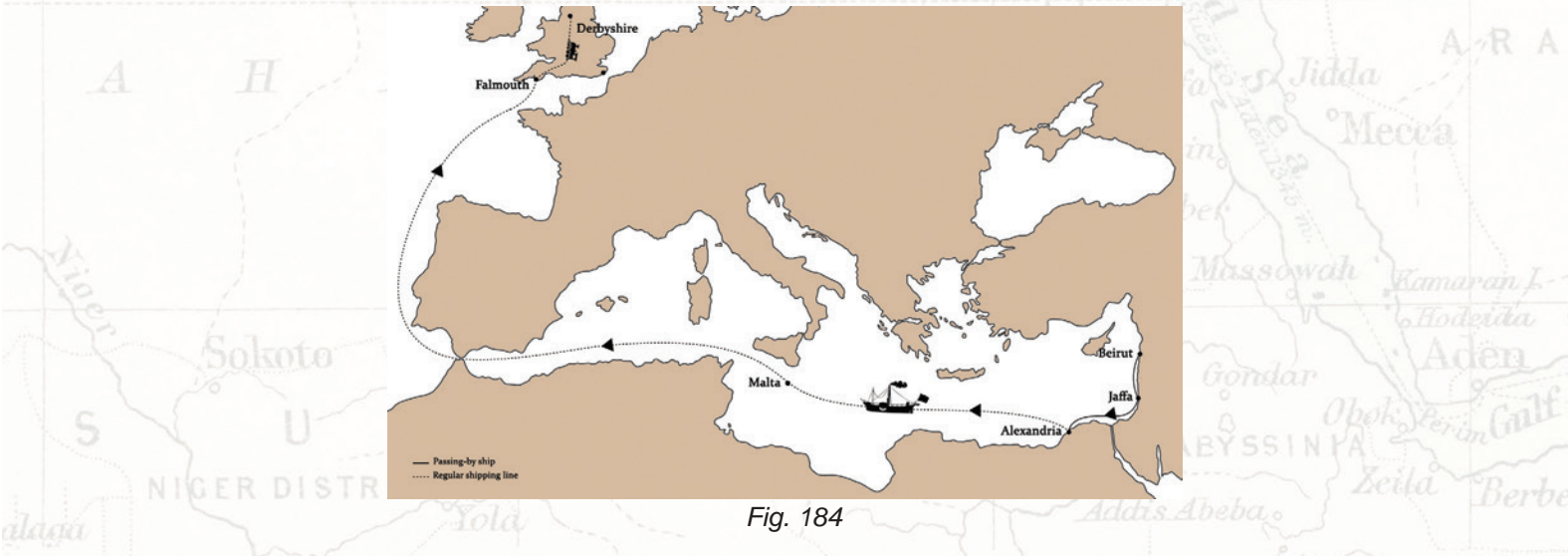


Fig. 184





Fig. 185

### 1843 BEIRUT-SMYRNA-MARSEILLE- LONDON (35 days) BY CONTRACTED OR PASSING-BY VESSEL

**FRANKING:** Prepaid cover (as indicated in manuscript on the front) from Beirut to Smyrna possibly aboard a contracted ship, then sent unpaid to London. As evidenced by the Paris date stamp on the back, and a Franco-British postal convention, this cover, destined for Britain, was handled by the French Post. The single-rate mark of 2/8 ½ (e.g., two shillings and 8 ½ pence) applied at arrival in London represents the single-rate charged for letters sent from the French offices in the Levant to Britain via France by French packets. This rate was used from May 1837 to May 31, 1843.<sup>333</sup>

**MARKS:** Malta purification mark, front two purification slits on the cover, in handwriting *postage paid to Smyrna*.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (written on April 25) - Smyrna (May 9) - Syra (11) - Malta (17) - Napoli (18) - Civita Vecchia (19) - Livorno (20) - Marseille (22) - Paris (22) - Calais - London (May 29).<sup>334</sup>

**SENDER:** Warrington Smyth

**RECEIVER:** Captain William H. Smyth R.N.K.F.M

**SHIPPER:** Beirut to Smyrna, possibly by contracted vessels from merchants or by a passing-by vessel, from Smyrna to Marseille by the contracted French government liner.

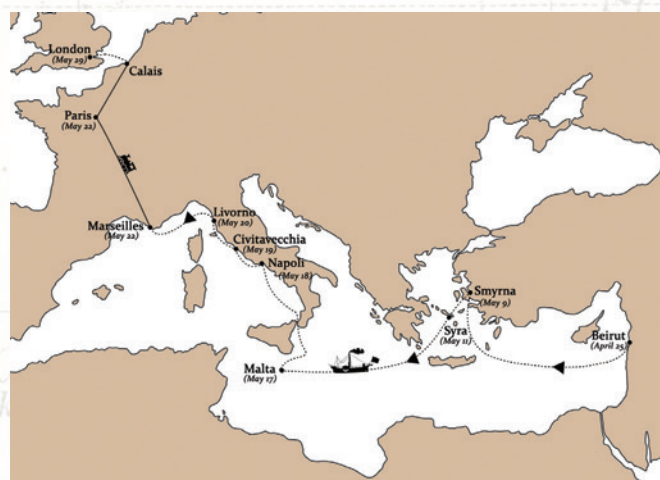


Fig. 186

In August **1844**,<sup>335</sup> the packet agent in Beirut was reported to have been authorized to collect the postage from the addressee on incoming unpaid letters addressed to Beirut and collect postage fees for outgoing prepaid letters from Beirut, for the first time. The British packet agency in Beirut continued to handle the overland mail between Britain (or British possessions), and Mesopotamia, India, and Persia.

In May **1846**, the local merchant community was not satisfied with the Beirut-Alexandria line, as per a letter reporting to London from Hugh Rose, the British consul general in Beirut. He complained of the current limited monthly communication between Alexandria and Beirut operated by the contracted *Emmetje* packet<sup>336</sup> (a steamer of 80 tons)<sup>337</sup> under Admiralty supervision, as compared to the thrice-monthly trips with Beirut (starting in November **1845**) by the French government (war) steamers that were faster and stronger at 220 horsepower.

The *Emmetje* (whose agent was the local British Heald & Cie. in Beirut, see p. 63) had ensured a regular monthly conveyance of mail between Alexandria and Beirut, where it corresponded with the P&O steamer<sup>338</sup> in Alexandria (the latter contracted from **1840**<sup>339</sup> by the GPO). The consul reported that nothing promotes the interests of commerce more than frequent, certain, and rapid communication between seaports inhabited by merchants. He goes on to say that "...two fresh British Mercantile Houses of high respectability have lately been established here in addition to those already existing both in the silk trade. It is highly desirable that these gentlemen should have rapid and certain means of exporting their silk."

At the same time, this consul in Beirut, who was in charge of the consular offices in Syria, including the one in Jaffa, was appealing for a twice-a-month transport of communication between Jaffa, the port of the holy city of Jerusalem, and between Alexandria and Beirut.

At present, he said, "the Anglican Bishop, the Consul and British subjects residing in Jerusalem are obliged to send their letters to England by foot post." This generally took from five to eight days on the road to Beirut so that they could be transferred to the monthly packet, and then face the same inconvenience when reply mail returned from Britain.<sup>340</sup> However, the GPO in London continued to ignore these requests – as they were considered economically unjustified – as mail with India through Egypt was the priority.

Interestingly, a mail dated **1850** was posted in London for Jerusalem care of Heald & Cie in Beirut, for the latter to forward it to the Anglican Lord Bishop in Jerusalem. In addition to being an agent of the *Emmetje*, Heald was an important intermediary and agent in the shipping, financial, and forwarding business in Beirut, as reported repeatedly in the different editions of the *Baedeker Travel Guide*.

On another note, an official memo from the British consulate general in Beirut to the General Post Office (GPO) in London reported in August **1847**, that for the last twelve months the number of letters which passed through the Beirut office from the Syria province and Baghdad (via Alexandria for the latter city) but destined for India stood at 134 letters (about 11 letters a month) of different weights.<sup>341</sup> It was also stated in the same memo that the largest portion of letters from India via Alexandria passing through the Beirut consular office, destined for Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, arrived in sealed packets to their addresses. In addition, an overland mail route to Constantinople also transited through Beirut, as an official memo reported on April 13, **1854**.

Interestingly, many years later, and even post-First World War, Beirut would continue to handle some mail originating from India and destined to the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, as this route was probably the fastest, if not the most convenient.





Fig. 187

**1852****GLASGOW-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT****BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Prepaid triple rate 3 sh./4 d. (e.g. 3 shillings and 4 pence) for  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz,<sup>342</sup> in Glasgow, Scotland

**MARKS:** *Via Marseilles* per French packet in handwriting, Red *PD* of the London Foreign Section, French entry mark at Calais (*ANGL, AM.2 CALAIS. 2*) in black.

**ROUTE:** *Glasgow (February 26) - London (27) - Calais (28) - Marseille - Malta - Alexandria - Jaffa - Beirut - Aleppo*<sup>343</sup>

**SENDER:** R. Walker & Son

**RECEIVER:** Messrs. Riddell & Co., Aleppo

**SHIPPER:** From Glasgow to Dover by railway, to Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by railway across France, to Beirut by French Messageries steamer, to Aleppo by courier.



Fig. 188



Fig. 189 View of Glasgow (1849).



In September 1852, Admiralty supervision of contracted vessels between Alexandria and Beirut was discontinued.<sup>344</sup> However, British mail continued to be conveyed regularly by the French Messageries on this route, which had already started in 1845, under the Anglo-French convention, supported by the French Post Office opening in Beirut that year. British merchants also continued contracting non-regular vessels, in addition to passing-by vessels that picked up/remitted British mail as well.

On October 27, 1852, which corresponded to one month after the Admiralty halted its supervision of vessels on the Beirut-Alexandria route, the British ambassador in Constantinople, advises Earl Lord Malmesbury, secretary of state for foreign affairs in London to maintain a British steam service on the Alexandria-Beirut route with a stop at Jaffa (port of Jerusalem) for the sake of British commercial and political interests.

He describes the Austrian Lloyd and the privately run French Messageries services (which took over the French packet service from the government in 1851) to have been increasing in preponderance in the Levant. He claimed that the French government gave an annual substantial amount of money for this service, more than three million francs.

He suggested letting private sector companies run such steam services with government subsidies, as the French and Austrians have been more successful in doing so.

He states "...the Peninsular & Oriental Company (P&O) or the Liverpool Levant Screw Company can ensure a

steam service which could also be advantageous to themselves as well as to our maritime service and to our general interests."

Apparently, the GPO postal cost-benefit calculations were different as compared to the diplomat's interest to satisfy merchants' trading needs. He continued, assuring that the launch of good sailing vessels and the more economical screw British steamers, opposed to the expensive paddle steamers of the French and the Austrians, will surprise the competition.

The screw ships had greater speed and potentially more power and maneuverability.<sup>345</sup> At this point, the replacement of paddle power by screw propulsion had already begun.

By the mid-1860s, the combination of iron vessels, screw propellers, and compound engines quickly made the use of steam more efficient in cargo trade as well as passenger transit,<sup>346</sup> making the limitation of transport to mail, low bulk precious goods, and few passengers, a thing of the past.



Fig. 190. The London General Post Office (GPO).



## b. The Brief P&O Service (1843–1852)



Fig. 191. Logo of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.

In 1840, coinciding with a major military campaign driven by Britain to oust the Egyptians from Syria, the British contracted the Peninsular and Oriental Company (P&O) to transport the British mail between London and Alexandria (around France) and between Marseille and Alexandria (across France from Calais to Marseille). The vast majority of British mail via France was still carried between Marseille and Alexandria by British packets, under the terms of the 1837 Anglo-French convention.<sup>347</sup>

British mail transported between Alexandria and Beirut, to or from the Syrian provinces, was handled from late 1839 by vessels contracted by British merchants or consuls at both places. From 1845, French government packets ensured British mail directly and regularly between Alexandria and Beirut, until 1872, when the British began to subcontract additional regular liners; the Egyptian Khedivial Line, the Russian ROPiT, and the Austrian Lloyd, Bell's Asia Minor.<sup>348</sup>

The British started using the Brindisi-Alexandria route with the Italian steam liner *Società Adriatico-Orientale* from October 2, 1869.<sup>349</sup> By the end of 1870, Brindisi had mostly replaced Marseille as the P&O transit port in the Mediterranean, following the Franco-Prussian War that had made access through France very difficult. Thus, mail would go through the Ostend port in Belgium instead of Calais, France, then pass through Germany, Austria and Brindisi, Italy.

The Admiralty mail communication between Alexandria and Beirut, the ambassador continued to write (on October 27, 1852), failed because it was neither supported by capital nor good management.

Moreover, the P&O failed in running successfully, he said, because their steamers between Constantinople, Smyrna, Rhodes, and Beirut were mismanaged, and many people in Beirut could testify to this.<sup>350</sup>

Other records indicate that the statement about the P&O may have been exaggerated, since it operated its Beirut lines solely on profitability, and the subsidies it repeatedly requested from the British government were rejected.

Even though its passenger space was taken up by merchants and by adventurous tourists in search of Greek temples, Byzantine churches, and shrines in the Holy Land, the P&O line was “chiefly a cargo trade”<sup>351</sup> and needed to be profitable for its shareholders.

Furthermore, in 1840, the P&O was not enthusiastic about the contract service on the Marseille-Malta-Alexandria route with the British government.

Of greater importance to the P&O were the two other branches: one from Britain to Marseille, replacing the Admiralty steamers, and the other to Constantinople.

A subsidy for the Marseille branch was ruled out by the Admiralty: the mail with India via France was faster than P&O's service, and Admiralty vessels could bear the cost to speed between Malta and Marseille.

Several applications for a government contract for the Eastern Mediterranean by the P&O were made between **1841** and **1843**, but all were rejected, although the P&O reduced the price with each offer. The treasury, the department in charge of providing subsidies, reckoned that postage revenue from that area would not be large enough to justify a contract. In any case, it was clear that there were profits to be made on that line, and the P&O did not need support. In **1844**, the company was able to make an experimental voyage eastward, on which the P&O called at several ports on the way to Constantinople, and the ship showed that the line “was likely to be remunerative.” Earlier, during his trip to Syria in **1843**, Elliot Warburton, an Irish traveler and novelist, confirms in his book “....that the P&O have now placed a steamer on the station of Beirut, an important event to the traveler.”<sup>352</sup> Another source reported that the P&O’s first “cruising” from **1844** maintained a passenger and cargo service from Malta to Athens, Smyrna, and Constantinople, and then on from Beirut to Jaffa (a port where Jerusalem could be reached by a horseback or carriage journey) and then on to Alexandria.<sup>353</sup>

Despite the Treasury’s rejection to subsidize the Eastern Mediterranean route, the P&O announced that a regular monthly steam service would start in January **1845**. The P&O was content to run minor lines either as feeders to the main lines, which the British government considered supposedly profitable enough without public support, and didn’t need to be subsidized like the major routes.

Constantinople acted as a feeder to bring trade to the Alexandria line and to transport passengers between Malta and Southampton, which subsequently became so busy that it was able to run directly to and from Southampton.

As a result, ports in the Black Sea and the Levant, including Trabzon, Samsun, Smyrna, and Beirut, were added to the schedule, and within two years, more powerful ships were added on the Constantinople line. It is not clear, however, the exact frequency, and the period the P&O stopped in Beirut, but it could have ended some time in **1852**, when the written complaint from the British ambassador in Constantinople, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London was sent. Finally, this line was halted following the outbreak of the Crimean War in March **1854**,<sup>354</sup> when few months afterward, there were no British mail packets in any part of the Mediterranean apart from those on the P&O’s Southampton-Alexandria line.

All available steamships were taken up by the government’s transport needs.<sup>355</sup> P&O’s subsequent shipping routes resumed the British presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and were as follows: Marseille Line **1856–1867**:<sup>356</sup> Marseille-Malta-Alexandria and return journeys both linked with Southampton packets at Malta, Marseille-Alexandria in **1867–1870** and returned via the Strait of Messina. As far as the Brindisi Line<sup>357</sup> was concerned the following was reported: December **1870–1888**: weekly Brindisi-Alexandria.



Fig. 192. *Pera*, a P&O steamer launched its maiden voyage Southampton-Alexandria-Southampton in **1855**.



### c. Contracted Vessels and Ship Liners (1852–1873)

In **1852**, the main contracted regular liner from Beirut to Alexandria continued to be the French Messageries and from Alexandria to Britain, it was the P&O. In **1858**, the British Chief accountant of the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Beirut (with mainly French and British interests) – in which the great grandfather of the author worked as an accountant in the late 19th century – reported<sup>358</sup> there was no extensive direct passenger steamer service between Britain and Beirut, but there were three indirect routes by which travelers from Britain could reach the Syrian coast:

1. Weekly steamers between Southampton and Alexandria with the P&O and then between Alexandria and Beirut by the Austrian Lloyd vessels. Then in December **1870–1888**, weekly by the P&O between Brindisi and Alexandria<sup>359</sup> and between the latter and Beirut by different contracted liners,
2. By railway via Vienna to Trieste and then weekly to/from Beirut with the Austrian Lloyd,
3. Every 15 days by railway – the most effective and chosen route – via Paris-Lyon-Marseille, (in operation since **1855**), then by French Messageries steamers directly between Beirut and other Syrian port cities (until **1870** when the Brindisi versus the Marseille route was actively used instead for the weekly British mails).

However, despite the non-availability of direct passenger steamer service between Beirut and Britain, it is reported in many commercial and private correspondences, as well as several British newspapers that commercial British vessels sailed to Beirut. These included, for example, the following: Thursday, August 1, **1850**, the *Mary Stewart*,<sup>360</sup> the *Istamboul*,<sup>361</sup> on Friday, August 15, **1856**, the *Levant*,<sup>362</sup> on June 21, **1857**.

Around **1857**, it was reported that the Liverpool Steam Services to the Mediterranean were servicing the principal ports (e.g., Alexandretta, Constantinople, and Alexandria), including Beirut. Other liners included the Levant Screw Steamship Co. twice a month with their steamers: *African*, *Spartan*, *Arabian*, *Persian*, and the Liverpool & Mediterranean SSS Co, which also stopped in Beirut.

In **1858**, a plan dear to Lord Palmerston was initiated to accelerate mail communication between London and India via Beirut and Basra.<sup>363</sup> This confirms again the importance of maintaining the Beirut packet agency for the British mails with India. Beirut had also become an increasingly important conduit for “overland” mail originating from India and destined to Persia and Mesopotamia. For example, on a cover posted in **1864** on Mauritius Island – in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar, under British rule since **1835** – Egypt and Beirut<sup>364</sup> were handwritten on the front cover, as was common for mail destined to Persia to pass through both places.

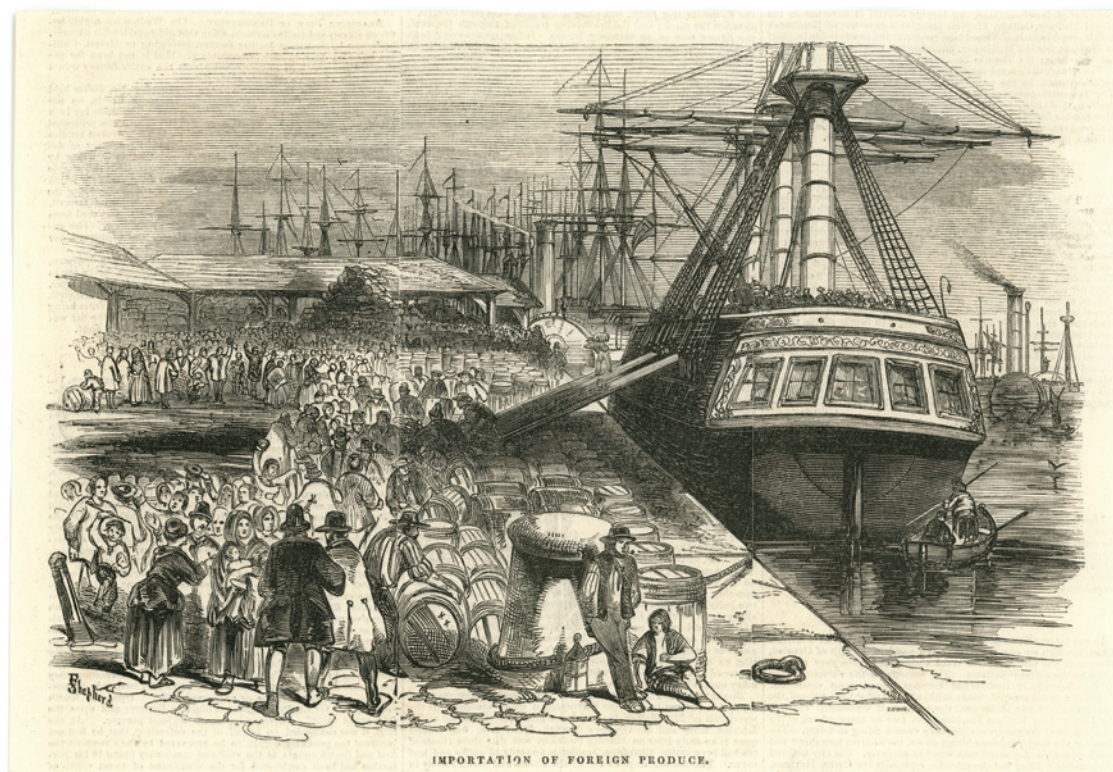


Fig. 193. Importation of foreign produce at the port of Liverpool (1846).





Fig. 194

## 1852 GLASGOW-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT...(ALEPPO) BY CHARTERED VESSEL UNDER ADMIRALTY SUPERVISION

- FRANKING:** Prepaid single rate 1/8 d. (1 sh. 8 d. ) per ¼ oz<sup>365</sup> in Glasgow, Scotland. This rate was applied from Britain to the Levant via Marseille with a British packet.
- MARKS:** *Via Marseilles per British packet* in manuscript, Red *PD* of the London Foreign Section.
- ROUTE:** Glasgow (June 7) - London (June 8) - Dover - Calais - Marseille - Malta - Alexandria - Beirut - Aleppo.
- SENDER:** John Archinsoli
- RECEIVER:** Messrs. Riddell & Co., Aleppo (which also had an office in Beirut)
- SHIPPER:** From Glasgow to London and Dover by railway, from Dover to Calais by steamer then to Marseille by railway, to Alexandria by British steamer, to Beirut with possibly a contracted vessel under Admiralty supervision, and to Aleppo by courier.
- REMARK:** The disinfection front cover slits were performed in Beirut. The contracted Heald & Cie. steamers<sup>366</sup> conveyed, on a monthly basis, British mail between the two places. The letter discusses, among other things, the stock of yarn consigned in Beirut as well as future goods shipment, and the expectation that they will be sold at a fair price there. On September 24 of that year, the Admiralty supervision of contracted vessels for the Alexandria-Beirut leg initiated from 1839 was withdrawn.

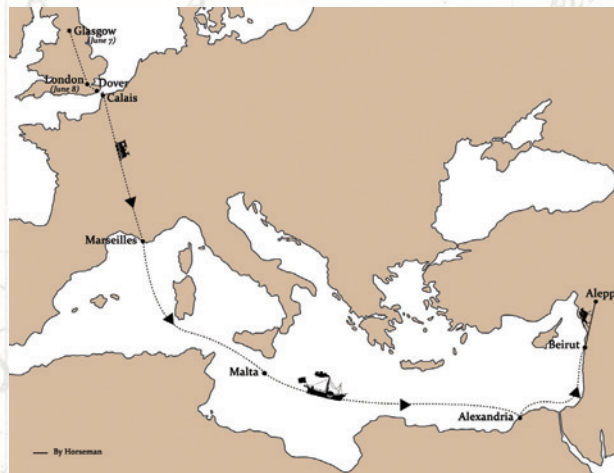


Fig. 195





Fig. 196

## 1854 LONDON-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT....(ALEPPO) (17 days) BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER

**FRANKING:** Unpaid single-rate letter of 13 décimes (for each 7.5 g. of weight)<sup>367</sup> due at arrival. This rate was applied from August 1, 1849, for unpaid letters from Britain to the French Post Offices in the Levant for up to 7.5 g.

**MARKS:** *Via Marseilles* per French Messagerie Imperiales packet written in Italian, in London departing date stamp in a cross shape, French entry mark at Calais *ANGL.AMB.2 (CALAIS)* in black, Beirut back transit date stamp.

**ROUTE:** London (August 3) - Calais (4) - Marseille - Malta (6) - Alexandria - Jaffa - Beirut (19) - Aleppo.

**SENDER:** M. Bzagiotti

**RECEIVER:** Marcopoli, is a well-known merchant trading house in the strategic caravan city of Aleppo in the Syrian hinterland. They were of European origin, established there for several generations.

**SHIPPER:** To Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by railway across France, to Beirut by French Messageries steamer, to Alexandretta by courier, to Aleppo by the forwarder Cino Belfante.



Fig. 197



Fig. 198. The pier at Marseille.





Fig. 199

1856

LONDON-TRIESTE-BEIRUT

(12 days)

BY AUSTRIAN LLOYD STEAMER

**FRANKING:** Prepaid 1 1/2 d. (1 shilling and 2 pence) for up to 1/2 oz. weight in London, England.

**MARKS:** *Via Ostend & Trieste* in manuscript, London date stamp, Red *PD* applied at the London Foreign Section.

**ROUTE:** London (October 27) - Calais (28) - Ostend - Trieste - Alexandria - Beirut.

**SENDER:** Thurn & Co.

**RECEIVER:** The Medawar Freres, were wealthy merchants, active silk traders, and acting bankers.<sup>368</sup> One of the brothers Mikael (or Michel) was a dragoman of the French consulate in Beirut, and member of the elite in that city. Michel helped establish and support the first Arab newspaper in Beirut in 1858, *Hadiquat al-akhbar* (The Garden of News).<sup>369</sup>

**SHIPPER:** From London to Dover by railway, from Calais to Trieste by railway, then from Trieste to Beirut by Austrian Lloyd steamer.

**REMARK:** There may be an overfranking for this cover, as the franking via France was set at 1 s. (as at August 1, 1852), and at 1/1 d. via Belgium and Austria.<sup>370</sup>



Fig. 200



Fig. 201. Picture of Michel Medawar likely with his two children (Courtesy of the Fouad Debbas Collection/ Sursock Museum).





Fig. 202

# 1861 LONDON-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT (15 days) BY MESSAGERIES MARITIME STEAMER

**FRANKING:** Prepaid double rate 1/1 d. (for up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz) commercial cover, with two postages of 1 s. (shilling), and 1 d. (penny), each cancelled by the London cancel number 2.

**MARKS:** *Via France* in manuscript, red *PD* at the London Foreign Section, French entry mark at Calais (ANGL.AMB.CALAIS 3).

**ROUTE:** London (May 10) - Dover - Calais (May 11) - Marseille - Alexandria (20) - Beirut (24).<sup>371</sup>

**SENDER:** Arles Dufour & Cie, from Lyon, France, had just set up that year a trading house branch in London, and the proportion of Lebanese silk used in Lyon justified its quotation by Arles Du Four in Lyon from 1854.<sup>372</sup>

**RECEIVER:** W. Riddell & Co., Beirut.

**SHIPPER:** From London to Dover by railway, to Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by railway, to Alexandria and Beirut by Messageries Maritime steamer.

**REMARK:** There may be an overfranking for that cover as the franking via France was set at 1 shilling. for a double-rate paid letter (as of January 1, 1857), and at 11 d. via Belgium (as of February 1, 1858)<sup>373</sup> Letter content: *Wishing to refer the enclosed circular of our new establishment house, and shall be happy if our services can be of any use to you either for the sale of silk or for the purchase of goods in Manchester or other manufacturing districts. Our markets are very calm...to the uncertainty of things in America and many is in great demand at Bank Rates. We have had yesterday the Suspension of 2 Greek houses manufacturing F. Rallioli and Lascarides, the latter with liabilities supposedly from 70 to 80000 but a considerable surplus which is respected.*



Fig. 203





Fig. 204

**1862 LIVERPOOL-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT (17 days) BY MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Prepaid single-rate commercial cover, franked with 6 d.<sup>374</sup> for weight not more than ¼ oz., rate applied from January 1, 1857, for letters via Marseille per French packet), with one postage stamp cancelled by the Liverpool cancel number 466.

**MARKS:** Via France per French Pkt. in manuscript, Red PD at the London Foreign Section, French entry mark at Calais (ANGL.AMB.CALAIS G).

**ROUTE:** Liverpool (February 26) - London (27) - Dover - Calais (27) - Paris (28) - Marseille (March 3) - Malta (6) Alexandria (10) - Beirut (14)<sup>375</sup>

**SENDER:** A&G. Martin

**RECEIVER:** W. Riddell & Co., Beirut.

**SHIPPER:** Liverpool to Dover by railway, from Dover to Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by railway across France, to Beirut by a Messageries steamer.

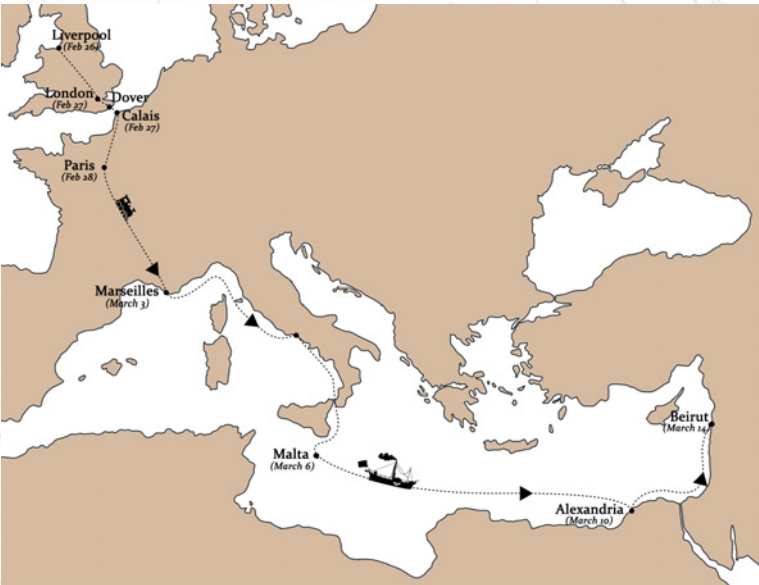


Fig. 205



Partially unpaid cover through the Franco-British Postal System



Fig. 206

1863	BEIRUT-PERAMBUR	(26 days)	BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER
FRANKING:	Single-rate pre-UPU paid letter of 50 centimes to cover the voyage up to Alexandria and then 1 shilling (1/-) written by hand due at arrival to cover the Alexandria-India leg by British steamer.		
MARKS:	In a rectangular box OT & CO (may be the sender's company stamp), PD mark, black circular St. BG. / As. 8 for postage due of 8 annas covering Bombay to Madras that seems to have been crossed over probably because it was paid in Madras before the cover was forwarded to Perambur, the St. BG. stands for "steamer bearing." The date stamp IM.Bombay (February 27) must be an error, the "IM" stands for "Import." The "2" is inverted in the date stamp Bombay GPO dated March 27, black hexagonal sorting mark dated April 2.		
ROUTE:	Beirut (March 8) - Alexandria/French PO (10) - Alexandria/British PO (11) - IM.Bombay (February 27) - Bombay GPO (March 27) - GPO, Madras (April 1) - Madras (1) - Perambur (2)		
RECEIVER:	John McKenzie		
REMARK:	The handwritten destination marked as "Perembbody," may be a mistake and could have been instead Perambur, which is very close to Madras. So far, this cover is recorded as being the earliest mail addressed to India from any foreign post office in Beirut.		



Fig. 207 View of Bombay.





Fig. 208

**1864** **FAREHAM-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT** **BY MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Prepaid single rate 6 d.<sup>376</sup> up to ¼ oz.<sup>377</sup> via France with French packets (as per the rate applied from January 1, 1857).

**MARKS:** *Via Marseilles* in manuscript, Red *PD* at the London Foreign Section, French entry mark at Calais (ANGL.AMB.CALAIS F) in black.

**ROUTE:** *Fareham* (November 21) - *London* (22) - *Dover* - *Calais* (22) - *Paris* (23) - *Marseille* (23) - *Beirut* by a Messageries steamer.

**RECEIVER:** Lieutenant Kelsak R N aboard the H.M.S. frigate *The Phoebe* in Beirut.

**SHIPPER:** From Fareham - London - Dover by railway, to Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by railway, to Beirut by a Messageries steamer.



Fig. 209



Fig. 210. The launching of the H.M.S. *The Phoebe* on April 12, 1854.<sup>378</sup>






Fig. 211

Fig. 212

**1868** **BEIRUT-MARSEILLE-LONDON** (16 days) **BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Unpaid single-rate cover of 9 pence applied and due at arrival. The 9 pence were derived as following: 6 pence for an unpaid letter (for each weight scale of ¼ oz. or fraction of it) with an additional rate of 3 pence (per tranche of ¼ oz.) for demotivating letters to be posted unpaid. The 6 pence (or the equivalent of 60 french centimes for each weight tranche of ¼ oz. or 7.5 g) represents ¼ of the 2 francs 40 centimes or 240 centimes bulk rate per 30 g, evidenced by the mark  as per the January 1, 1857 , Franco-British postal convention, for exchanged mail.

**MARKS:** Alexandria transit French date stamp (back), Marseille red transit mark PAQ.ANG. applied on letters when remitted by British ships (e.g., P&O steamer)<sup>379</sup> red arrival London date stamp (back). The octagonal sea ship date stamp was allocated to Beirut stops on the Syrian Line (as per the X No 5) and was affixed on mail remitted aboard Messageries steamers<sup>380</sup>

**ROUTE:** Beirut (July 12) - Alexandria (19) - Marseille (25) - Calais (25) - Dover - London (27).

**SENDER:** F.A. Amsler & Cie. an active foreign trading house in Beirut

**RECEIVER:** N. M. Rothschild & Fils, N.M. or Nathan Mayer Rothschild first settled in Manchester, where he established a business in finance and textile trading. He later moved to London, founding N. M. Rothschild & Sons in 1811 at New Court, which is still the location of Rothschild & Co's London headquarters today. It was Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild who was running the firm (1836–1879) during the posting of that cover.

**SHIPPER:** By French Messageries from Beirut to Alexandria, then from Alexandria to Marseille aboard a P&O steamer, then from Marseille by railway to Calais, then aboard a ship to Dover, and by railway to London.





Fig. 213

1870

**BEIRUT-MARSEILLE-LONDON**

(14 days)

**BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER****FRANKING:**

A quadruple unpaid letter rate cover of 3/- (3 shillings) equivalent to 4 times of 9 pence = 36 pence = 3 shillings as the letter had a weight between  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz. and 1 oz. The handwritten 3 ports (or triple rate) was subsequently replaced by 4 on the cover, the accurate quadruple rate. The 9 pence was derived as per the information described in the previous cover.

**MARKS:**

The octagonal sea ship date stamp was allocated to Beirut stops on the Syrian Line (as per the X No 4) and was affixed on mail remitted aboard the Messageries steamer. The arrival London back date stamp in red includes the day and the month.

**ROUTE:**

Beirut (March 25) - Alexandria (28) - Marseille (April 4) - Calais (5) - Dover - London (7).

**SENDER:**

F.A. Amsler & Cie. was an active foreign trading house in Beirut

**RECEIVER:**

N. M. Rothschild & Fils (see more info in previous page).

**SHIPPER:**

By French Messageries from Beirut to Alexandria, and from Alexandria to Marseille, then from Marseille by railway to Calais, then aboard a steamer to Dover and railway to London.



Fig. 214. Photograph of the building at New Court in London housing Rothschild & Co.'s headquarters, where it is still located today. The company was founded in 1811.





Fig. 215

**1868****BEIRUT-TRIESTE-LONDON**

(17 days)

**BY AUSTRIAN LLOYD STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** An Austrian unpaid single-rate letter with the front linear cancel mark *BEYRUT 18.OTTO*. The  $7\frac{1}{4}$  sgr. (silbergrosschen) boxed blue rate affixed at the Austrian Post represents  $4\frac{1}{4}$  sgr. credit for the Austrian Lloyd and 3 sgr. credit for the G.A.P.U. (German Austrian Postal Union). The handwritten  $\frac{1}{1}$  (1 shilling and 1 pence = 13 pence) represents the 9 pence converted from  $7\frac{1}{4}$  sgr in addition to 4 pence (for the internal rate) applied and due at arrival.

**MARKS:** Arrival date stamp *London NO 1.*, no transit postal marks as probably shipped in a closed bag.

**ROUTE:** *Beirut (October 18) - Trieste - Vienna - Aachen - Ostend - Dover - London (November 1).*

**SENDER:** Duchene Stussy & Co. an active foreign trader in Beirut.

**RECEIVER:** N. M. Rothschild & Fils.

**SHIPPER:** By Austrian Lloyd steamer from Beirut to Trieste, by train from Trieste to Ostend, then by ship to Dover, where a daily connection was available.



Fig. 216. View of the port of Trieste.



In **1867**, the incoming British Conservative Government signaled that “all the world” would be invited to tender, including the French Messageries, and termination notices were issued on P&O and other existing mail contracts. This confirms Britain’s pragmatism in finding the lowest-cost shipping liner for its communication needs globally.

In **1868**, *Porter’s* British travel guide<sup>381</sup> describes the Anglo-French postal agreement as having enabled the French packet system to be quick and safe for conveying the British mail, although the routes were frequently altered. For the Eastern Mediterranean, French steamers departed every fortnight from the coast of Syria (Beirut-Tripoli-Alexandretta-Latakia-Jaffa) with British mail to Alexandria and Constantinople, where the mail was then transboarded onto ships for Britain.

The Anglo-French convention enabled the Messageries steamer to carry closed mailbags remitted by the British consulates in Syria to the British postal hub in Alexandria for sorting/redirecting the mail to Britain or to British possessions/territories. The *German Baedeker Travel Guide* (actively used by English travelers) mentioned that those wishing to forward letters from Syria to Britain had to entrust them to (British) bankers or merchants at a seaport (e.g., Heald & Cie. in Beirut).

British mail would be transported in closed mailbags in the 19th century primarily for the following reasons:

#### 1. Security and Integrity:

- Closed bags ensured that mail was protected from tampering, theft, or loss, especially when passing through foreign or colonial territories.
- Seals and labels identified the origin, destination, and official handling instructions.

#### 2. Efficiency in Handling:

- Closed bags allowed faster transfer between postal stations or ships without sorting each letter.
- Each bag was labeled for a specific destination (e.g., Beirut), so it could move through multiple transport stages without being opened.

#### 3. Diplomatic and Commercial Sensitivity:

- British consular and commercial correspondence often included sensitive material.
- Closed bags (sometimes diplomatic pouches) preserved confidentiality when transiting through Ottoman or foreign ports.

#### 4. Postal Conventions:

- Under international postal agreements (e.g., bilateral treaties or later the Universal Postal Union), countries agreed to exchange mail in sealed bags, with the receiving country responsible only for final delivery.

So, closed mailbags were a practical and strategic solution in the era of expanding imperial, commercial, and diplomatic networks.

In May **1870**, it is reported that the Lebanese Alexander Misk became the postal (packet) agent following the death of his predecessor.<sup>382</sup> Later, on September 7, **1872**, the postmaster in Alexandria (to which the Beirut sub-agency reported) documented that Misk’s position as dragoman at the British consulate general had been vacated, and that his postal duties would be carried on by a certain Philip Garabet. Moreover, it is suggested that the Beirut packet agency at the British consulate started collecting (from Syrian addressees) the postage on the closed mails currently received from Alexandria (coming from the eastern territories through the Suez Canal) for the Alexandria British Post.

These were conveyed by French Messageries steamers and the French Post in Beirut. For that service, it was reported that the French Post would be credited with 60 centimes or 6 d. per ounce for letters and 5 d. for newspapers.

This closed mail, originally posted in India and China, was, in fact, destined to Damascus and Baghdad, which the packet agency in Beirut actually remitted to the addressee.

A rate of 1 s. 5 d. = (1 s. = 12 d. + 5 d. = 17 d.) was charged in India for the British Imperial Post, which included the 6 d. due to the French for the mail conveyance between Alexandria and Beirut, thus, leaving a net 11 d. (17 d. – 6 d.) per letter for the British Imperial Post.



From October 1870, the British halted the conveyance of their mail using the traditional Marseille-Alexandria route, due to the Franco-Prussian War (July 19, 1870–January 28, 1871) that disrupted the service, and used instead the Brindisi route. The different routes included the following routes: 1837–December 1870<sup>383</sup> between Britain and Alexandria, 1839–October 1870 between Marseille and Alexandria, and December 1870–1888 between Brindisi and Alexandria. Other P&O routes were mainly focused on North America, East Asia, and Australasia.

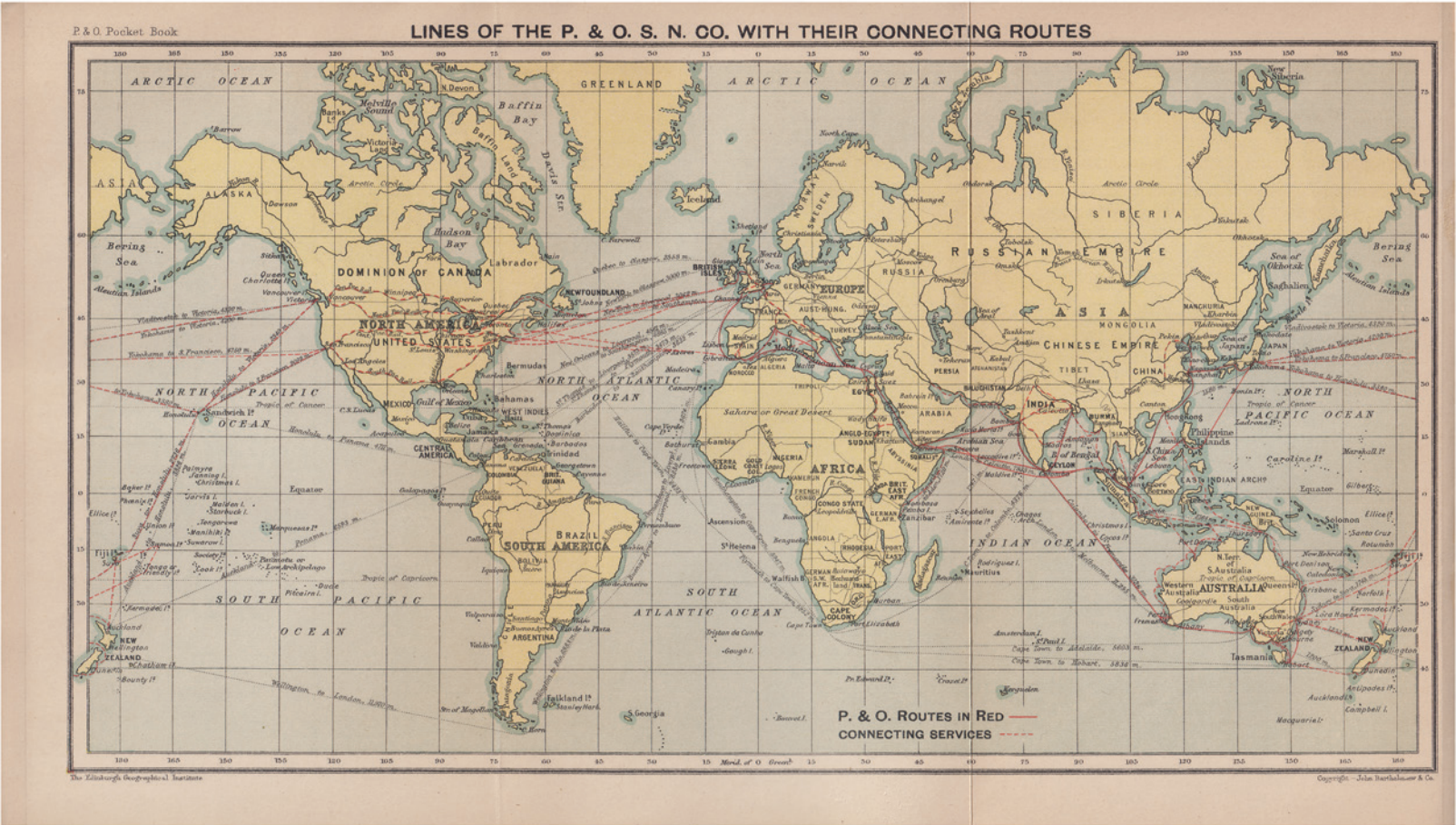


Fig. 217. Map<sup>384</sup> showing P&O continental communication routes in 1907 between Britain and India through Egypt, either by going straight from Britain or passing through Marseille or Brindisi. Note the P&O made stops in Beirut from around 1843 to around 1852.

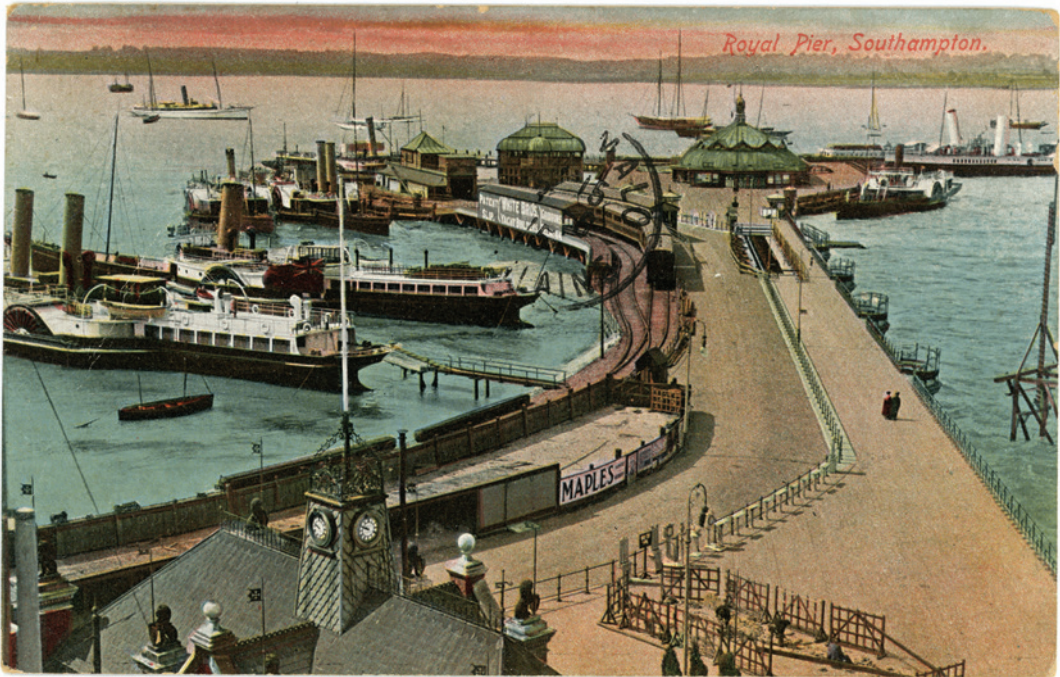


Fig. 218. The Royal Pier, Southampton, Britain.



In **1870**, the British postmaster in Constantinople reported to the GPO in London that the large flow of mail addressed to British travelers in Egypt could not – after the travelers had left the country for a tour of Syria, Palestine, the usual route of British tourists – be redirected to them at the packet agency of the British Consulate in Beirut. The first reason was that no postage fee had been set to cover the payment of such (unpaid) mail to Beirut to be collected from addressees in Syria. Secondly, even if such a rate existed, the British Consulate in Beirut did not possess the “machinery” for collecting the postage due from the addressees for the letters they would remit. The report continues:

*This correspondence must - when redirected from Egypt - be handed over instead from the British post in Alexandria to the French post there and be forwarded by the latter to the French post in Beirut... I found moreover that the traveler themselves might be subjected to inconvenience if unpaid letters addressed to them were forwarded to the British consulate in Beirut instead of the French post office there. The French having a network of [eight] post offices in the Syrian province (see p.19) could in many cases send the letters after the traveler and collect the postage at the place of delivery, whilst our office [at the consulate] in Beirut could not dispatch the letters to another destination, we having no such means of collecting the postage.”*

Contrary to the subsidized French Messageries Maritimes or the Austrian Lloyd



Fig. 219



Fig 220

that had longer term contractual agreements for handling their respective nations' mails in the Eastern Mediterranean, the pragmatic British would from **1872** start introducing short-term contracts on certain routes in the Levant; for example, the Beirut-Alexandria route with the Egyptian Khedivial Liner, the British Bell's Asia Minor Co., the Russian ROPiT, and the Austrian Lloyd. The British were flexible in replacing any ship liner with another if it made more sense economically or if it was more convenient or even subcontracting a vessel whenever needed. For example, the packet agency in Beirut in **1872** was reported in a consular report contracting the independent trading vessel *Fortuna* in wintertime.

In June **1871**, a written memorandum from Beirut forwarded in August to the postmaster general in London by several members of the British, foreign and native residents in Beirut, reported that commercial and other correspondences between Britain and Syria had for many years been dependent almost exclusively on the mail through France, carried between Marseille and the coast of Syria by the Messageries steamers. It is worth noting that back in **1842**, there were some proposals that originated at the British Foreign Office to remove the handling of the British Indian mail from French control and employ potentially the Austrian postal system, Austria being left to arrange matters with Bavaria, and Britain to arrange matters with Belgium through all of which countries the mail would pass till Venice or Trieste, before heading to Alexandria by ship.<sup>385</sup> The major reason for such a proposal, was that the British distrusted or disliked the possibility of official dispatches to and from the east being tampered with while in transit through France.

Following the Franco-Prussian War, the communication had been reduced from once every 10 days to once a fortnight, to the great inconvenience of residents in Syria, who needed to correspond with Britain, and vice versa.<sup>386</sup> The facilities approved for the weekly Anglo-Indian mail between Britain and Egypt, via Southampton and Brindisi, might, with advantage to all concerned, be extended to Syria by means of a postal arrangement with the Egyptian Khedivial Steam Navigation Company (e.g., the Khedivial Line), which already operated a weekly line of steamers from Alexandria to Mersin, calling at Port Said, Jaffa, Beirut, Tripoli, Latakia, and Alexandretta, and vice versa



Fig. 221. Flag of the Khedivial Line

The advantage to residents in Syria and their correspondents in Britain would be the service of weekly mail each way, and the transit of the Brindisi journey would be shortened by at least three days. Such increased and accelerated postal communication might also be available to residents in Turkish Arabia (e.g., Mesopotamia) by an alteration in the dromedary post across the Syrian Desert, so it would coincide with the arrival and departure of mail to Beirut.



Such improved means of postal communications would materially tend to promote the commercial and other relations between countries to their mutual advantage. Signatories in Beirut were the most respected British residents as well as notable native and foreign residents of the petition addressed to Her Majesty's Postmaster General, including: Henry Heald, Moussa Bustros & Nephews (Nepoti), Nicolas Sursock, Massaad Freres, Weber & Co., Jackson; the British consul general, J. Misk, F. Zalzal & Fils, G. Tattarachi, John Wortabet, N&S Bassoul, Richard Somerville, George E. Post, W.N. Thomson, R.M. Brigs Tock, James Nixon, Whitehead Peart, Black G., Aias Brothers, Henry Van Dyck, C.N.A Van Dyck, Edwards Van Dyck, John Wilson Bl., Daniel Bliss, Edwin R. Lewis, Samuel Hallock, L.M. Johnson, US consul general, Harvey Porlir, Chaf A. Smith, Shakal Freres, Klai Speich, Edde & Pharaon, J. Habbaz, G. Bianchi, G. Naggiar, Elia Hazzan, Louisa Gibbons, Clara Herdegg, Lissie Bellany Mary Hamilton, Fann James, Ellen Wilson, Mar Lindsay, Martha Bergheim, Sarah Adie, Harriet E. Seelby, Anna S. Collett, Frances M. Collett, Sophie Lloyd, and Theophilus Waldmerie.

As of August **1871**, and before the UPU advent on July 1, **1875**, the single-rate letter from Britain to Beirut via Marseille stood at 6 d. per  $\frac{1}{3}$  oz., while from Britain to Alexandria it stood at 8 d. Plans were discussed in September **1871**, to impose a postage rate increase for mail from Britain to Alexandria via Brindisi (e.g., 8 d. the  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.) an additional rate of 2 d. for the conveyance of that mail by an Egyptian packet between Alexandria and Beirut, hence a total of 10 d. It seems probable, therefore, that only a small amount of correspondence would be sent this more expensive way, even if it was shorter. Moreover, the establishment of such postal route would precipitate the establishment of a regular post office in Beirut, where at present there is only a sub-agent with a very small salary. The French and Austrian agencies at the other Syrian ports, where the dispatch/receipt and distribution of the British closed mail would have to be trusted. Although the expenses for this mail transport was not justified, given the amount of correspondence between the UK and Syria.<sup>387</sup>

However, as the French had reported in **1871**, the establishment of a weekly service to the coast of Syria by two lines of packets; one leaving Marseille every fortnight on Fridays and the other leaving every fortnight on Saturdays, the principal argument given by the signatories, the infrequency of the French Service, fell through.

And again, a petition explaining the advantage of using the Khedivial line is petitioned by the following in December **1871**: Black & Co., Heald & Cie., Whitehead, Pearl Co., James Nixon, The Imperial Ottoman bank; J. Von Haas/director, Watkins/accountant.

On January 21, **1872**, it was reported that the following lines of steamers were running between Alexandria and the Syrian ports through Beirut:<sup>388</sup>

#### **From Alexandria to Beirut/Departure:**

**Russian:** Alternate Saturdays, February 3, 17, March 2, 16.

**French:** Alternate Saturdays: February 10, 24, March 9, 23.

**Austrian:** Alternate Fridays: February 9, 23, March 8, 22.

**Egyptian:** Every Wednesday.

#### **From Beirut to Alexandria/Arrival:**

**Russian:** Alternate Sundays, February 11, 25, March 10, 24.

**French:** Alternate Mondays, February 12, 26, March 11, 25.

**Austrian:** Alternate Mondays, February 5, 19, March 4, 18.

**Egyptian:** Every Monday

Even after the Egyptian Khedivial packet line service, that has been conveying British mails every alternate week between Alexandria and Beirut (along with the French Messageries Maritimes) was temporarily discontinued in February **1872** (as the Egyptian steamers were under repair),<sup>389</sup> it was replaced by the "willing" Russian ROPiT line of steamers. The latter also ensured a route every alternate week, and along with the Messageries steamers<sup>390</sup> "provided payment was made monthly for gross weight of letters and papers sent by steamer on the Beirut-Alexandria route; rate for letters stood at 2 d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz." The British Post would charge the full rate of 10 d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. for letters of which the 2 d. was passed on to the ROPiT.

By **1871**, the only British Post Offices in the entire Ottoman Empire were still located in Egypt and Constantinople. In December **1872**, a British Post Office was opened in Smyrna – the largest trading port city in the Ottoman Empire, followed by another at the largest port in Syria, Beirut, in March **1873**, and then the last one in **1900** at the port city of Salonika<sup>391</sup> – the export outlet for the entire Macedonian region. British motivation for this new modest postal network, which included the establishment of additional postal contracted routes between Britain and Beirut through Brindisi and via Alexandria, was derived from a reaction to consolidate its position from an increasing politico-economic competition from new players (e.g., Germany, the US, France).

Few years later, interestingly, and at the request from the Egyptian government directly (itself highly influenced by the British government), the two British Post Offices in Egypt, in Alexandria and Suez were shut down in **1878** by the British<sup>392</sup> "...in view of the good relations that had always existed between the Egyptian Postal Administration, and of the excellent manner in which the Egyptian Post Office performed its work..."

As a replacement for these post offices, British Packet Agencies were established in these places, "...to superintend the transfer of the Eastern mails" and from the Transit Administration to the mail packet, and to ensure their transmission in each case to the right packet.

In **1883**, several months after the takeover of Egypt (in September **1882**) by Britain, the British packet agencies were also shut down.

It is worth noting that Britain, unlike France, is reported to have partially let go of the subsidized postal service in some parts of the globe. For example, in **1876**, the GPO in London did not renew the contracts with Cunard and Inman to transport mail to the United States, but adopted a consistent system of using the most suitable alternatives. Instead of a subsidy, they remunerated owners for the weight of letters and publications that they actually transported.<sup>393</sup> It seems that this system was already applied earlier in some other areas, such as on the Beirut-Alexandria route subcontracted with the Egyptian Khedivial, the Russian ROPiT, and Bell's Asia steamship liners from **1872**, as opposed to operating exclusively with the French Messageries on a regular contractual basis.

In March **1872**,<sup>394</sup> the difficulties of ensuring a weekly transport of British mail from Britain to the Syrian coast through Brindisi via Alexandria were reported. An official note on June 11, **1872**, suggested using the Austrian mail packets between Beirut and Alexandria (which corresponded with the P&O lines at Alexandria) in addition to the French steamers via Marseille which were slow.<sup>395</sup>



Fig. 222. Russian ROPiT ship *Empereur Nicolas II*.





Fig. 223

- 1878 BEIRUT-BRINDISI-GLARUS (10 days) BY EGYPTIAN KHEDIVIAL STEAMER**
- FRANKING:** Prepaid single rate 2.5 d.
- ROUTE:** Beirut (April 11) - Egyptian Post Office in Alexandria (14) - Brindisi (17) - Glarus (20)
- RECEIVER:** H. Brunner
- SHIPPER:** From Beirut to Alexandria by Khedivial steamer, as evidenced by the Egyptian Post Office arrival date stamp applied in Beirut on the back cover, from Alexandria to Brindisi by a diverse number of different shipping liners (e.g., British P&O, Italian, Austrian) to Glarus by railway.
- REMARK:** Although in early 1872, the Khedivial steamship line had stopped temporarily servicing the Beirut-Alexandria route, this line resumed thereafter.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

**DIRECT STEAM COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ALEXANDRIA and CONSTANTINOPLE, SMYRNA, SYRA, THE PRINCIPAL PORTS OF THE LEVANT AND SYRIA.**

His Highness the Khedive of Egypt, has established Lines of First Class Steamers to run between the above-mentioned Ports, carrying Mails, Passengers, and Goods, on the lowest scale of charges. The Steamers employed on these Lines are all First Class, provided with every accommodation for the comfort and convenience of Passengers.

Steamers on the principal Lines are commanded by European Officers, and provided with European Stewards.

A Weekly Departure from Alexandria to Constantinople every Thursday, via Syra.  
From Constantinople to Alexandria, via Syra, every Wednesday.

**ALEXANDRIA AND SYRA LINE—WEEKLY.**

DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.	DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.
Alexandria Every Thursday.	Syra Every Sunday.	Syra Every Sunday.	Alexandria Every Wednesday.

This Line is the quickest communication between Greece, Candia, Thessaly, Egypt & Syria.

**THESSALY LINE—WEEKLY.**

DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.	DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.
Syra Every Sunday.	Constantinople Every Monday.	Constantinople Every Monday.	Syra Every Tuesday.
Volo Tuesday.	Gallipoli Wednesday.	Gallipoli Wednesday.	do. do.
Salonica Wednesday.	Dardanelles Thursday.	Dardanelles Thursday.	do. do.
Kavalla Thursday.	Lagos Friday.	Lagos Friday.	do. do.
Lagos Friday.	Salonica Saturday.	Salonica Saturday.	do. do.
Dardanelles Saturday.	Volo Sunday.	Volo Sunday.	do. do.
Gallipoli do.	Syra do.	Syra do.	do. do.
Constantinople do.			do. do.

**SMYRNA LINE—WEEKLY.**

DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.	DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.
Syra Every Sunday.	Constantinople Every Monday.	Constantinople Every Monday.	Syra Every Tuesday.
Scio Monday.	Gallipoli Tuesday.	Gallipoli Tuesday.	do. do.
Smyrna Tuesday.	Dardanelles Wednesday.	Dardanelles Wednesday.	do. do.
Mitylene Wednesday.	Tenedos Thursday.	Tenedos Thursday.	do. do.
Tenedos Thursday.	Smyrna Friday.	Smyrna Friday.	do. do.
Dardanelles Friday.	Scio Saturday.	Scio Saturday.	do. do.
Gallipoli Saturday.	Syra Sunday.	Syra Sunday.	do. do.
Constantinople Sunday.			do. do.

**SYRIA LINE—WEEKLY.**

DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.	DEPARTURES.	ARRIVALS.
Alexandria Every Wednesday.	Mersyne Every Tuesday.	Mersyne Every Tuesday.	Alexandria Every Wednesday.
Port Said Thursday.	Alexandretta Wednesday.	Alexandretta Wednesday.	Port Said Thursday.
Jaffa Friday.	Latakia Thursday.	Latakia Thursday.	Jaffa Friday.
Beirut Saturday.	Tripoli Friday.	Tripoli Friday.	Beirut Saturday.
Tripoli Sunday.	Port Said Saturday.	Port Said Saturday.	Tripoli Sunday.
Latakia Monday.	Jaffa Sunday.	Jaffa Sunday.	Latakia Monday.
Alexandretta Tuesday.	Alexandria Monday.	Alexandria Monday.	Alexandretta Tuesday.

A Steamer leaves Suoz every alternate Monday for the Red Sea Ports, and Passenger Steamers run on the Nile between Cairo and Upper Egypt, at short intervals from November to March.

(L.O. 49)

Fig. 224. Khedivial Liner time schedule dated 1871,<sup>396</sup> for carrying Egyptian and other nations' mails (i.e. Britain, Germany), passengers and goods.





Fig. 225

1871

**CHELTENHAM-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT** (22 days) **BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Prepaid single rate 6 d.<sup>397</sup> (for not more than ¼ oz. weight) for letters via France with French packets (applied from January 1, 1857) with three postage stamps of 2 d. each.

**MARKS:** Red *PD* at the London Foreign Section, French entry mark at Calais (illegible) in black.

**ROUTE:** Cheltenham (November 16) - Charlton Kings (16) - London - Calais (17) - Marseille (25) - Alexandria (December 4) - Port Said - Jaffa - Beirut (December 7).

**RECEIVER:** Agnes Dautery, care of Henry Heald. The latter was the recipient of letters on behalf of many British travelers visiting Syria, where Beirut was the hub for correspondence.

**SHIPPER:** To Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by railway across France, to Beirut by French Messageries steamer as evidenced by the French Post Office arrival date stamp applied in Beirut on the back cover.



Fig. 226





Fig. 227

**1872****BIRMINGHAM-MARSEILLE-BEIRUT (24 days) BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Prepaid commercial single rate cover of 6 d.<sup>398</sup> (for not more than ¼ oz weight) for letters via France and French packets (as from January 1, 1857) with two postages of 3 d. each.

**MARKS:** *Via Marseilles* in manuscript, Red *PD* at the London Foreign Section, two French entry marks at Calais, one in black and one in Blue, and a Beirout arrival date stamp.

**ROUTE:** Birmingham (March 13) - Calais (14) - Marseille - Smyrna - Beirut (April 5)

**SENDER:** Maue & Maue merchants

**RECEIVER:** Lutticke & Cie., was a foreign firm based in Beirut with branches in Damascus and Aleppo. In Beirut, they supplied items usually purchased by travelers, as reported in the *Baedeker Travel Guide* edition of 1898. It also transacted banking business, as well, and packed and shipped to travelers' destinations.

**SHIPPER:** To Calais by British steamer, to Marseille by train across France, to Beirut aboard the French Messageries steamer as evidenced by the French Post Office arrival date stamp applied in Beirut on the back cover.

**REMARK:** This cover took a voyage of 24 days as compared to the cover in the next page with 17 days. This is because on March 14, when transiting through Paris, the letter missed the morning departure from Marseille on that day. As a result, the letter was taken instead on March 22 aboard the *Tanaïs*, the Messageries steamer for Smyrna (March 30), and then from there to Beirut using the northern route.



Fig. 228





Fig. 229

**1872****BIRKENHEAD-TRIESTE-BEIRUT**

(17 days)

**BY AUSTRIAN LLOYD STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Prepaid single-rate incoming missionary cover with 6 d.<sup>399</sup> franking (for not more than ¼ oz. weight), rate used via Belgium with Austrian packets (starting on July 1, 1870).<sup>400</sup>

**MARKS:** *Via Trieste* in manuscript, red *PD* at the London Foreign Section, Vienna, Trieste, and Beirut arrival date stamp.

**ROUTE:** Birkenhead (June 29) - London - Dover - Ostend - Aachen - Vienna - Trieste (July 5) - Ancona (8) - Alexandria - Beirut (15).

**RECEIVER:** Miss Bellamy, care of H.B.M. Consul General, British Syrian Schools.

**SHIPPER:** Austrian Lloyd steamer from Dover to Ostend then to Trieste by train, from Trieste to Beirut by an Austrian Lloyd steamer, as evidenced by the Austrian Post Office arrival date stamp, applied in Beirut on the back cover.

**REMARK:** The 2 in red crayon, applied on the front cover in London, is a credit of 2 pence from the British to the Austrian Post as it was transported by the Austrian Lloyd. Since 1865, following a British-Austrian postal convention, British mail was sent in closed bags. Besides bankers and merchants who received mail care of British travelers, the British Consulate in Beirut also offered the same service.



Fig. 230





Fig. 231

**1873****BEIRUT-LONDON**

(15 days)

**BY AUSTRIAN LLOYD STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** Austrian prepaid single rate cover of 23 soldis (15+5+3), hand cancellation in blue *Berutti*.

**MARKS:** Red *PD*, arrival date stamp London *E.C PAID 27 JA. 73* in a red circle, and *W.f 8* in black is a credit of 8 neukreuzers due from the Austrian to the British Post, (*Wf* = *weiterfranco*=credit). No available postal marks on the back.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (January 13) - London (27).

**SENDER:** Assaad Malhame (see p. 52).

**RECEIVER:** Anglo-Hungarian Bank

**SHIPPER:** By Austrian Lloyd steamer from Beirut to Trieste, by railway to Trieste to Vienna- Aachen-Ostend then by ship to Dover-London.

**REMARK:** Very unusual hand cancellation.

This is a letter from the native silk trader and banker, Assaad Bey Malhame, in Beirut addressed in 1873 to the Anglo-Hungarian Bank in London, which he must have had accounts with for the sale of silk in Britain, and where the sale proceeds were deposited. The bank was founded in 1868 by a consortium of Austrian and British capitalists with local Hungarian investors. Despite a board bristling with illustrious names – Prince Sapiaha, Count Szechenyi, and Budapest's leading private banker, Maurice Wahrmann – the bank made a number of poor investments and closed in 1879.<sup>401</sup>

## d. The Evolving British Packet Agency in Beirut and the Different Liners in the Early 1870s

154

A note by the influential British merchant, James Black to the Consul General Eldridge in Beirut dated June **1872** had reported that the previous convenient Khedivial Egyptian steam service that conveyed British mails via Brindisi and Alexandria to the Syrian coast was discontinued<sup>402</sup> (temporarily) and the use of various foreign steamers in Alexandria was the best arrangement for the commercial community in Beirut, that corresponded with Britain. In July **1872**, a letter from James Black, forwarded by the British consul general in Beirut to the Foreign Office, also suggested that mail from Britain to Beirut should be conveyed via Alexandria to Beirut by both Russian and Austrian steamers alternatively. Originally from Roxburghshire, Black was an active British merchant in Beirut in the mid-19th century and a partner of the firm of Robert and William Black<sup>403</sup> (trade and banking).

William Riddell, was also another Englishman from Roxburghshire and active in trade in Beirut with an office in Aleppo as well as an active recipient of commercial correspondence from Britain.

The Foreign Office's reply was to replace the French by Austrian steamers whenever necessary "...when thought more advantageous...in order to afford [the] greatest advantage to [the] public [in] Beyrout."<sup>404</sup>

This confirms once more the flexibility of the pragmatic British in establishing short-term contracts from one steamliner to another in the Levant, as compared to the French or Austrians, using longer term subsidized liners. It also begins to show clearly the British Treasury and the GPO's readiness to satisfy British commercial interests in a period when British world economic preeminence started to decline.

A note from the Foreign Office to the British Consul General Eldridge in Beirut on August 11, **1872**,<sup>405</sup> reiterates the almost same response to Black "...correspondence addressed to Baghdad must in the future, be sent via Beirut instead of Alexandria, and if any correspondence for Baghdad paid only for conveyance as far as Alexandria, it should be surcharged with deficient postage and claim raised against Agent in Beirut."<sup>406</sup>

The latter consular note in August **1872** confirms the important role of Beirut as the coastal transit for the Baghdad mail.

This is again confirmed later around March **1873**, where British archives<sup>407</sup> notes that "...a small postal agency had already been in existence at Beyrout for many years for the purpose, mainly of forwarding and receiving mails to and from Baghdad."

Note this statement introduces the words "postal agency" instead of the mere "packet agency" previously used, and stresses on the important role of Beirut as a hub for British mail with Baghdad<sup>408</sup> (e.g., through the desert route). Official correspondences in August and in September **1872**, report on arrangements to be made for the dispatch of direct mails to Beirut via both Southampton and Brindisi.<sup>409</sup>

From November **1872**, mail from Beirut could be prepaid, but were still franked with postage and cancelled in Alexandria when addressed to Britain "via Brindisi."<sup>410</sup> The postal agent in Beirut (residing at the British Consulate offices at the Khan Antoun Bey building) is to receive and send to the Alexandria British Post all letters destined to Britain, when marked "via Brindisi" and prepaid (by the sender) at a rate of 10 d. per ½ ounce or a fraction of it.<sup>411</sup> At the same time, the British consul general in Beirut, General Eldridge, describes the postmaster general having authorized mail from Beirut to Britain via Alexandria or via Brindisi to be fully pre-paid or paid to destination, with the PD mark allowed to be applied on the front covers and collect postage for prepaid letters to be addressed to Britain as opposed to unpaid letters, which payment was due at their final destination.<sup>412</sup>

Since **1872**, the establishment of the weekly mail to Beirut through Brindisi via Alexandria had proven to be a success, including those who had postal communications with Britain and the US<sup>413</sup> On November 1, **1872**, the British postmaster in Egypt sent the postal agent in Beirut a specimen explaining how to mark letters, on which full postage is paid. It also describes how the mark should be made to the left of the address, so it does not interfere with the latter, and red ink should be used.

The amount marked on the letter should be the full postage to the destination, 10 d. (pence) under ½ oz. or a fraction of it, according to the enclosed scale and the set of weights used for weighing the letters.<sup>414</sup> However, letters still needed to be sent to the British Post in Alexandria to be franked and cancelled.



Thus, starting from 1870, the British packet agency in Beirut experienced more attention from the GPO in London as they were seen gradually accepting the Beirut packet agency evolving into a normal post office with increased postal responsibilities. Moreover, the year 1872 experienced the setup of contracts with different liners for the Alexandria-Beirut route, rather than limiting itself to the French liner contracted back from 1837. Thus, the years 1870–1872 can be seen as transitional for the GPO conversion of the packet agency into a normal post office in Beirut by March 1873, just after the setup of a post office in Smyrna in December 1872.

On November 7, **1872**, a letter from the British Post Office in Beirut inquires at the British postmaster in Alexandria whether it:

The advanced discussions for forming the UPU, which were ongoing for several years (since around **1864**) were getting closer to closure, and could have been another motivation for Britain to set up the new post offices for when the UPU was signed.

*Fig. 232. Khedivial line time table (1907). A note in red was printed diagonally in the middle of the timetable: "Subject to modification without notice in the event of quarantine."*

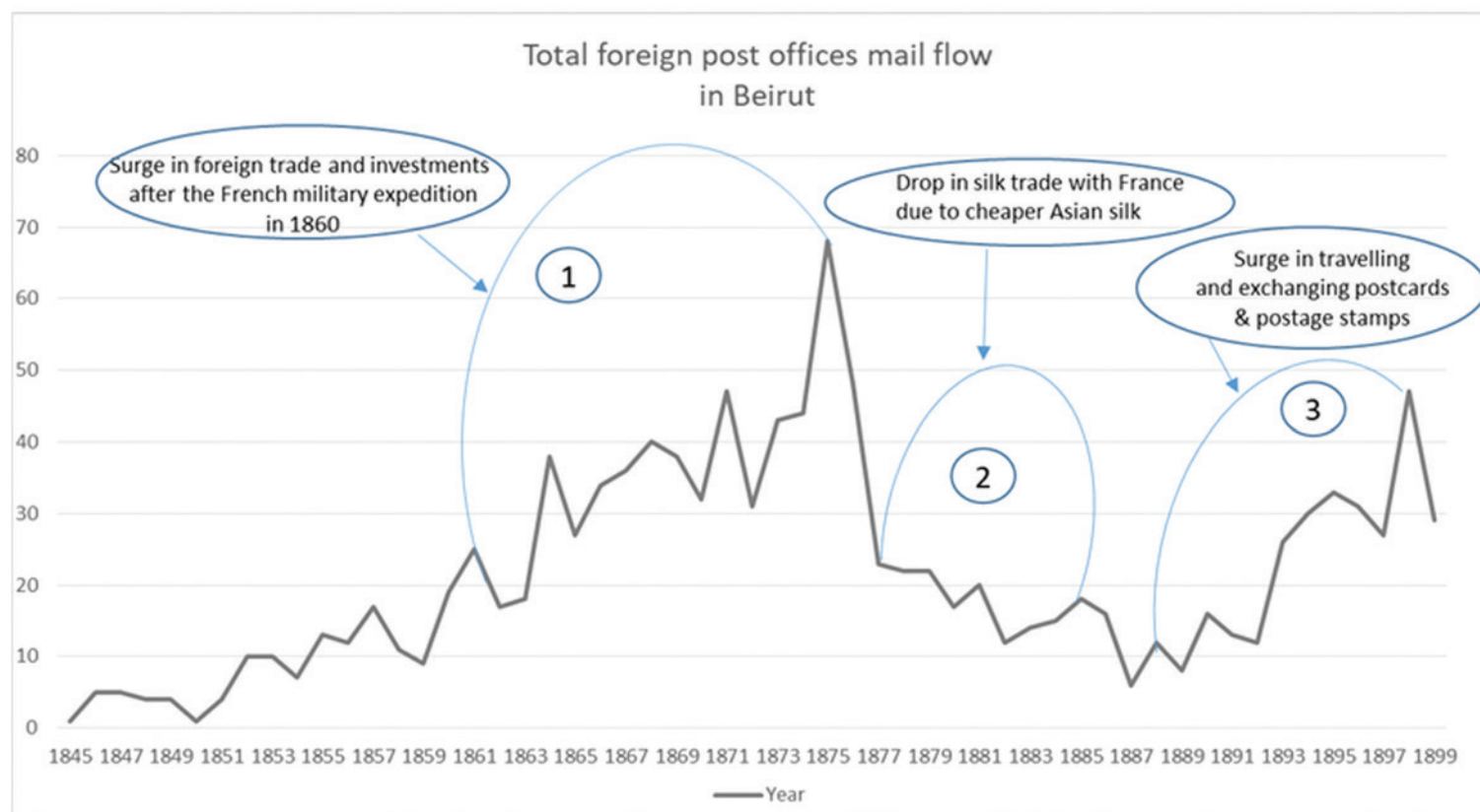


Fig. 233. Mail flow processed at the then five operating foreign posts in Beirut (1845–1900), based on a representative sample of 1,300 for the following foreign nations' foreign post offices: France, Austria, Russia, Egypt, Britain. Note the Egypt sample used is negligible as few covers survived during a short operation of no more than two years.

### SOME KEY EVENTS REPORTED IN BRITISH CONSULAR REPORTS AFFECTING THE ABOVE FLOW OF MAIL

#### (1)

##### 1861–1875

Peak in silk trade, foreign direct investments, and reconstruction following the foreign military expedition to save the Christians from the massacres in Mount Lebanon and Damascus.

#### (2)

##### 1876–1886

The Turkish currency devaluation and Asian silk competition led to a collapse in the market in Beirut in 1875, which resulted in lower economic activity, also reflected in the mail flow. The opening of the Suez Canal, which cut the distance between London and Bombay in half, decisively helped the East Asian silk producers to enter the market, and lowered the cost of transportation for shipments between East Asia and Europe.

#### (3)

##### From the late 1880s

A surge in traveling by Lebanese emigrants, foreign tourists, and pilgrims, who all used postage stamps for letters, postal cards, and postcards, had increased the exchange/trading of stamps and postcards with views.



The below is a notice from the postmaster general in London,<sup>415</sup> dated November 1872 when, for the first time, the French packet liner ceased to be the main regular liner for conveying the British mail to Beirut through Alexandria. Despite the newly contracted liners – the Russian (ROPIT), the French (Messageries), and the Austrian (Lloyd) – being mentioned in the notice, the Egyptian Khedivial and the Bell's Asia Minor liners as well as independent steamers were contracted for British mail dispatch in Beirut (through Alexandria and via Brindisi). This notice preceded the opening of the British Post Office in Beirut, by a few months, in March 1873.

No. 27.

2904



# LETTERS FOR BEYROUT.

---

LETTERS and Newspapers for Beyrout can be forwarded every Friday evening from London, in the Mail for Alexandria, *viâ* Brindisi.

From Alexandria they will be despatched to their destination by the Russian, French, or Austrian Mail Packets, which maintain a weekly communication with Beyrout.

The rates of postage chargeable on such Letters and Newspapers will be:—

10d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce for Letters,

4d. per 4 ounces for Newspapers,

and all Letters and Newspapers prepaid at that rate, and marked "*viâ* Brindisi," will be forwarded accordingly.

**By Command of the Postmaster-General.**

GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
4th November, 1872.

Printed for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by W. P. GRIFFITH, Prujean Square, Old Bailey, London, E.C.



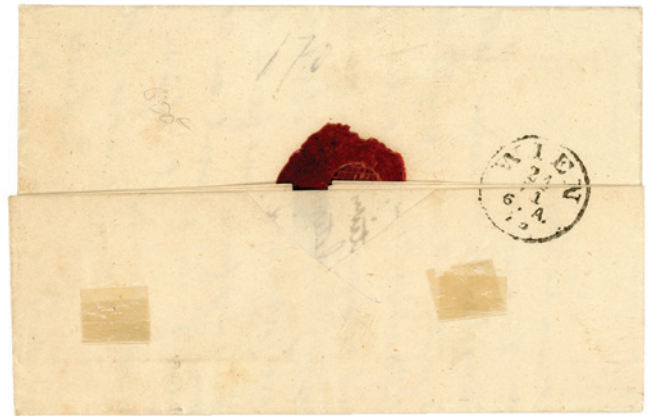


Fig. 235

**1873** **BEIRUT-TRIESTE-LONDON** (29 days) **BY AUSTRIAN LLOYD STEAMER**

- FRANKING:** Prepaid single rate 23 soldis
- MARKS:** Arrival date stamp London *E.C PAID 24 NO. 73*, the 8 in red is a credit of 8 neukreuzers due from the Austrian to the British Post, Vienna transit date stamp on the back.
- ROUTE:** Beirut (November 5) - Trieste - Vienna (21) - London (24).
- SENDER:** Tabet Freres & Co.
- RECEIVER:** Anglo-Hungarian Bank
- SHIPPER:** By Austrian Lloyd steamer from Beirut to Trieste, by railway to Vienna-Aachen-Ostend, then by ship to Dover-London.
- REMARK:** The Tabet brothers; Naame and Constantin, the former was the packet agent at the British Consulate in the **1840s** (see p. 119). The brothers were involved in silk trading through Tabet Freres & Co. They converted to British Protestantism and were British "protégés" (see p. 109). Although this cover and the one in p.153 were both conveyed by the Austrian Lloyd steamer from Beirut to London, the former's voyage was 15 days versus 29 days for this one.



Fig. 236. A share certificate of 100 florins from the Anglo-Hungarian Bank (1875), (Courtesy of the M. Veissid & Co. Collection).



## B. PRE-UPU MAIL THROUGH THE BRITISH POST IN BEIRUT (1873–1875)

### 1. Motive for the Establishment of a British Post Office:

A British consular report notes that the British Post Office was set up in **1873**, “..in response to memorials from British residents in that city..”<sup>416</sup> These appeals, to establish more regular and direct postal connections between Britain and Beirut, had been going on for sometime, although other foreign nations’ postal services in Beirut had been established much earlier, for example: France, and Austria from **1845**, and Russia from **1857**.

It would then be legitimate to ask the following question: Why did the British have finally decided to set up post offices in the three key ports of the Ottoman Empire: Smyrna in December **1872**, Beirut in March **1873**, Salonika in **1900**, in addition to a sub-agency of the Constantinople office in Stamboul in **1884** (that was disrupted between August 25, **1896** and February 9, **1908** due to anti-Armenian riots).

One should note that by **1870**, Britain’s relative industrial decline was taking place due to competition with other nations for economic and political influence outside Europe, as well as facing severe foreign competition in its own national market. Moreover, Germany and the United States had evolved a form of finance capitalism to meet the needs of businesses in the Second Industrial Revolution, while in Britain, this did not occur.<sup>417</sup> Core industrial production increased around five times between **1870** and **1913**, mainly due to the rapid growth in German and US industries capitalizing on chemicals, electricity, and motor cars. Thus, Britain ceased to be the primary industrial power and was surpassed in total industrial output

by the US sometime before **1875**, and by Germany sometime after **1900**. Britain’s principal trading partners in the first Industrial Revolution phase **1842–1873**, the US and Europe, achieved mature industrialization behind increasingly protective tariffs. Britain’s trade with these regions stagnated, and its annual investments there actually declined. Moreover, Germany, the US, and France became competitors in the world market and at home. The world economy became increasingly competitive for Britain after the **1870s**.<sup>418</sup>

Financial expansion and international competition for overseas investment opportunities led to extensions of control. This is noted in China and the Middle East, where investment, even in marginal quantities, was important to ensure claims to areas of interest and influence.<sup>419</sup>

The increased competition was also the beginning of the division of the Ottoman Empire into strong spheres of influence. The relatively late establishment of British Post Offices in the Ottoman Empire must have been part of a reaction to that competition already felt strongly by **1870**.

Although Britain continued to maintain its leadership in foreign trade internationally and within the Ottoman Empire, its direct investment share, for example, had dramatically dropped by **1914**, mostly benefiting the more aggressive Germans and French (see table p. 160).



Fig. 237. View of the quay in Salonika (1910).

Fig. 238. Foreign Direct Investment Stock by Countries in the Ottoman Empire<sup>420</sup>








	1888 (thousand sterling pounds)	%	1914 (thousand sterling pounds)	%
 France	5,020	31.7	37,383	45.3
 Germany	166	1.1	28,007	34.0
 Britain	8,895	56.2	11,516	14.0
Others	1,744	11.1	5,500	6.7
Total	15,825	100.0	82,406	100.0

Fig. 239. World Commerce and Shipping in Tonnage (1897, 1899)<sup>421</sup> in thousands.

	Value of Goods Traded (1897)	Shipping (1899)
 Britain	\$3,823,000	3,905
 Germany	\$2,056,000	2,161
 United States	\$1,914,000	2,097
 France	\$1,817,000	1,232

Britain had free ships and free trade, while Germany had free ships and partial trade protection. The US and France had protection systems; France encouraged the increase of its shipping through subsidies, and the US proposed to do the same.

From the **1880s**, Germany began to expand its share in Ottoman foreign trade (e.g., German exports rose from 6 million marks in **1882** to 35 million marks in **1895**)<sup>422</sup> primarily at the expense of Britain, which nonetheless retained until **1913** the largest share in Ottoman exports and imports.



## 2. The Launching of the British Post Office in Beirut without Bilateral Agreements

Although the authorization for the setup of a British Post Office in Beirut under the authority conveyed by the Treasury Letter No 4084/73 was dated March 13, **1873**,<sup>423</sup> it is highly probable that during that month, a fully functional post office was not in place<sup>424</sup> and instead, increased its services gradually.

In any case, the earliest recorded mail sent through the British Post in Beirut is dated May 22, **1873**. On May 3, **1873**, an official letter from Beirut states that P. Carabe was appointed the post office clerk and has a messenger to assist him. A copy of the *Post Office Guide* is also reported to be requested regularly, together with other necessary information. Since postal activity did not take place inside the consulate offices, located at Khan Antoun Bey,<sup>425</sup> the postal agent was instructed to work in an adjoining room and obtain the necessary tools. In June, a suggestion to send Beirut an iron safe, then in use at the British Post Office in Cairo (to be shut down in **1878**), was subsequently received in Beirut.

Why, then, when the British Post Office finally opened in Beirut in March **1873**, had it not established at the same time bilateral postal agreements with the French and Austrian postal administrations? This would have enabled the British Post to convey its mail out of Beirut to any mail destination in Europe and the Mediterranean basin, for example, through the use of the extensive shipping network of the French Messageries and the Austrian Lloyd.

The answer may have possibly been the following: as discussions for forming the UPU among several nations (including France and Austria) were now closer to agreement, the calculating British may have preferred instead to wait until the UPU was signed by all members and thus benefit automatically from other nations' existing larger postal and shipping networks without incurring the high cost of establishing bilateral agreements and eventually having to reciprocate in other geographic areas where Britain was more strongly networked.

Although unable to offer the direct transport of mail to European destinations (except through Alexandria), Britain still decided to open a post office in Beirut in **1873** without ensuring any bilateral agreements for transport. Evidently, the pragmatic British must have found it more appropriate to continue instead, to outsourcing different

liners for short-term contracts on specific routes in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, the British chose to convey the Syrian/eastern mail via selected routes (e.g., Brindisi-Alexandria, Alexandria-Beirut).

Short-term contracts were performed with the following shipping liners on a regular basis for the Beirut-Alexandria leg, besides the traditional French Messageries (starting in **1845**); the Egyptian Khedivial line, the Russian ROPiT; the Austrian Lloyd; and the private Bell's Asia Minor Company all starting in **1872**. Another interesting case to note, for example, and reported in a consular report, is the independent small trading steamer the *Fortuna*, contracted in the winter of **1872** by the British Post for mail between Beirut and Alexandria.

In another case, Bell's Asia Minor (formed by British ship owners) had six steamers and had been trading on the coast of Syria since its establishment in **1868**. It was based in both Alexandria and Smyrna.

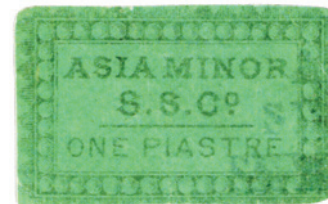


Fig. 240. Bell's Asia Minor Company provided its own adhesive stamps from **1868** onward. They were cancelled with hand stamps.

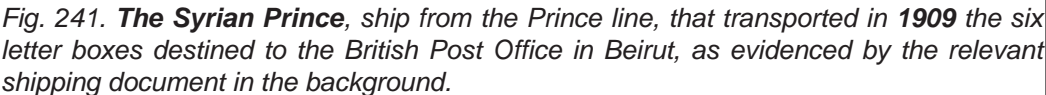
Bells' steamers sailed under the British flag between Smyrna and Adalia (modern Antalya), carrying mail, parcels, and cargo, and calling at the various ports of Chios, Chesme, Samos, Calymnos, Syris, and Rhodos.

In **1878**, the managing owner, John Bell, reported to Postmaster General Lord John Manners in London that "... the British residents and visitors in Syria have been almost entirely dependent upon my Company's Steamers for their correspondence [since **1872**] for which service the remuneration has hitherto only been ship letter postage...". (e.g., the 2 d. postage fee between Beirut and Alexandria).<sup>426</sup>

162

Merchants, trading houses, and travelers in the Ottoman Empire were using, in great part, the extensive French and Austrian subsidized shipping routes and postal networks for their mail needs anywhere in the world until **1873**, when the British Post became operational, increasing gradually its market share (see p. 203).

Based on a study concerning a sample of 1,300 mail items, more than 50% of the mail destined to the US, Britain, and British territories was handled by the British Post in Beirut in the period March **1873**–January 1, **1900**, as compared to 90% of that mail handled by the French Post in the period **1845**–March **1873**, before the British Post Office opened.





### 3. To Subsidize or Not to Subsidize?: A Strategic Vision on Shipping Liners

Due to Britain having the largest marine merchant fleet in the world, controlling more than 45% of world foreign trade, and leading the commerce with the Ottoman Empire (although it represented a negligible share of 1.35%

overall), it had no need to subsidize one main large shipping liner and build an extensive postal network in the Ottoman Empire to help grow its trade.

Fig. 242. Value of British Foreign Trade in 1906<sup>430</sup> in Millions of Sterling Pounds.

Countries	Imports	Exports	= Foreign Trade	%	
<b>With British Colonial Possessions</b>					<b>31%</b>
British India	38	46	84	31%	<b>(7.84%)</b>
Australia	29	23	52	19%	
North American Colonies	31	16	47	17%	
Other Possessions	44	46	90	33%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>With Foreign Countries</b>					<b>69%</b>
United States	131	53	184	17%	
Germany	38	48	86	8%	
France	54	29	83	7.80%	
Netherlands	37	17	53	4.95%	
Russia	30	16	46	5.78%	
Belgium	29	17	46	5.78%	
Turkey	6	8	14.5	1.35%	
Other Countries	141	142	64	8%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>1,069</b>		<b>100%</b>

163

Fig. 243. The Merchant Navies of the World in 1907. As recorded in Lloyd’s Register Book<sup>431</sup> (Excluding vessels of less than 100 tons register).

	Total Steam and Sailing Vessels		
	Number	Million Tonnage	%Ton.
British (UK & Colonies)	11,517	18.3	45.64
American (US)	3,558	4.5	11.78
Norwegian	2,161	2.2	7.15
German	2,094	2.1	6.93
French	1,483	1.76	4.91
Italian	1,107	1.22	-
Japanese (above 300 t.)	835	1.07	-
Russian	1,359	0.94	-
Swedish	1,538	0.88	-
Dutch	547	0.81	-
Danish	859	0.73	-
Spanish	578	0.71	-
Austro-Hungarian	326	0.69	-
Greek	411	0.47	-
Others	1,830	1.30	-
Total	30,203	30.44	

In contrast to the British, the French subsidized maritime postal service was an instrument to introduce and maintain the French presence worldwide, including in the Ottoman Empire, which the state needed in the absence of a sufficiently developed French marine merchant fleet. It had three objectives: assurance of the transport of postal dispatches in overseas countries with certainty, regularity, and rapidity; maintenance of regular communications between Paris and the colonies; opening commercial markets to national industry in faraway lands.

Furthermore, Britain had no interest in establishing a long-term influence in culture and education in Beirut and Syria, as the French proactively did.<sup>432</sup>

The French emphasis on this was an important element in their imperial expansion into the Ottoman Empire.<sup>433</sup> Indeed, if the British generally outshone the French in many ways as they competed forcefully in the Levant, the French invariably won most of the cultural battles, in the decades following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.<sup>434</sup>

Thus, despite Britain not championing a main national shipping liner, its private merchant fleet was able to maintain its lead in foreign trade in tonnage and number of vessels in the Ottoman Empire, including Syria.



Fig. 244 and 245. Postcards of Khan Antoun Bey Building shown from the quay side, building on the right side with arcades on the last two floors (left) and its backside (right) with entrances. Built in 1853, this major commercial business center, an Ottoman structure, was located conveniently at the Beirut Port's central pier. It became a landmark for the city's residents, and aside from being a boarding house, it accommodated a number of officials and commercial spaces. The British consular offices and the British Post Office were located on the first floor<sup>435</sup> (since its opening in 1873). The khan included foreign maritime agencies, banking agencies, commercial representations (such as the French travel agency Agence-Lubin on the ground floor), several foreign consular offices along the post offices of Russia, France, Austria, and Germany.

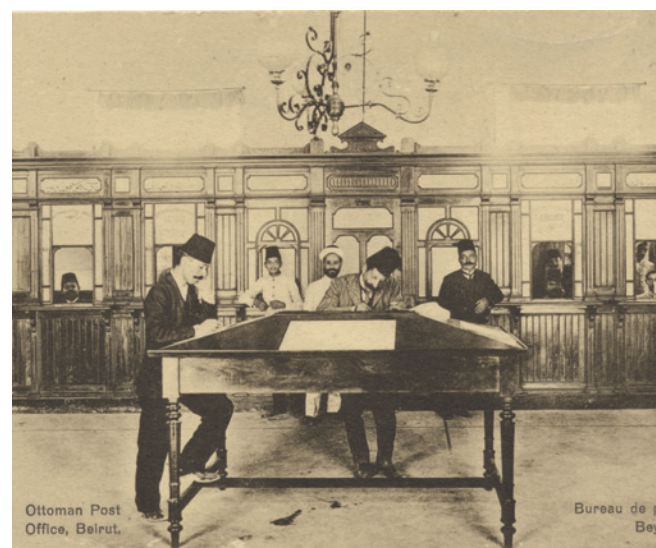


Fig. 246 and 247. The main branch of the Ottoman Post in Beirut located outside the Khan Antoun Bey. Exterior view (left) and interior view (right).





Fig. 248

1873

BEIRUT-LONDON

(12 days)

BY CONTRACTED LINER

**FRANKING:** This pre-UPU single-rate cover franked with 10 d. made of two postage stamps of 6 d. and 4 d. was cancelled with the first cancellation G06 mark used at the British Post in Beirut. An additional domestic postage of 1 d. was applied when the cover was redirected from London to the Isle of Wight.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (May 29) - Alexandria (June 1) - London (9) - Isle of Wight (June 10).

**RECEIVER:** Mrs. Cornthorpe

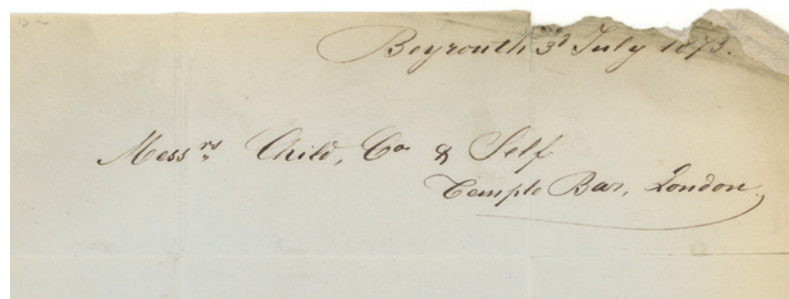
**SHIPPER:** Beirut to Alexandria by contracted liner (e.g., Russian ROPIT, Khedivial Liner), to London by P&O steamer.

**REMARK:** This cover was posted on May 29 at the British Post in Beirut, less than three months after the British Post Office opening. On arrival in London on June 9, the cover was redirected to the Isle of Wight.



Fig. 249

Although this cover was written in Beirut on July 3, 1873 about a month after the above described cover, it was not conveyed from Beirut to Alexandria by a regular British contracted steamer, but probably by a passing-by commercial steamer. This possibly franked mail in Beirut with the correct postage of 8 d. covered the distance between



Alexandria and Britain, which took a trip of six days from Alexandria (posted there on July 8) to Britain, compared to nine days with the above described cover for the Alexandria-Britain route. The probable reason for remitting the mail on a passing-by ship from Beirut to Alexandria is that no regular liner was available on that day. The postage difference between these two covers is 2 d., which was paid to the contracted vessel transporting the mail from Beirut to Alexandria leg.

The period between the British official setup of a post office in Beirut in March **1873**, and when Britain joined the UPU on July 1, **1875**, was a brief 28 months. Some collectors enjoy collecting postal covers, specifically of the pre-UPU period. That period includes a more diverse and rich variety of postmarks and postal rates based on different nations' bilateral postal agreements, which usually offer more challenges to analyze than the straightforward standard rates and postmarks known and applied on most mail following the advent of the UPU (see p. 265,269).

Although the British packet agency set up in Beirut in **1840** by the GPO to handle incoming and outgoing mail, was converted into a British Post Office, 33 years later in **1873**, it would be used gradually by the public at large from late **1876**, following the advent of UPU on July 1, **1875**. After the agreement, the member countries formed, in principle, a single postal territory for the automatic reciprocal exchange of correspondence between their post offices.

#### 4. The Unique Case of Mixed Franked Mail Use at the British Post in Beirut

Between the authorization of a post office in March **1873** and the UPU gradual application from July 1, **1875** (but with full application much after, from around October **1876** (as compiled records show see p. 174) the ingenious British managed to offer an express overseas postal service used mainly by merchants in Beirut and unseen elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire.

Trading houses and merchants, not able to dispatch their urgent mail aboard the extensive shipping liners (e.g., French Messageries, Austrian Lloyd) as they were not calling in Beirut on certain days of the week, had the option to post their urgent mail either at the British Post in Beirut or hand it over directly to independent or passing-by ships, connecting at the more active Alexandria hub for onward transmission to other places.

The British introduced a scheme whereby their post office in Beirut would ensure to several European destinations (via Alexandria), any mail franked with either Italian or French postage, in addition to the British postage of 2 d. The British would convey this so called mixed -franked mail from Beirut to Alexandria with shipping liners it had contracts: the Bell's Asia Minor Company, the Russian ROPiT liner and the Egyptian Khedivial liner operating on days, when in principle, neither the French Messageries nor the Austrian Lloyd steamers were available. The British postage of 2 d. (increased to

2 ½ d. post UPU) was, in fact, passed on to the ship liner per letter shipped for the Beirut-Alexandria leg. Once this mixed-franked mail was forwarded to the British Post in Alexandria, it was then taken either to the French or to the Italian Post for cancelling the relevant nation's postage originally franked in Beirut, and then was subsequently taken aboard an Italian or French shipping liner in Alexandria for its final European destination. Note that the 80 French centimes (reduced to 30 c. and then to 25 c. respectively on January 1, **1876**, and May 1, **1878**) to a France destination or the 40 Italian centesimi (reduced to 30 centesimi on July 1, **1875**) to an Italy destination would cover the Alexandria-France or the Alexandria-Italy leg, for example.

As the mail was properly franked with the French and Italian postage on the top right side of the cover (e.g., most of the time) as per regulation, there should not have been any reason for the French or the Italian Post to not accept such mail at their respective post offices in Alexandria and pass it on their respective shipping liner.

Although the mixed-franked mail recorded in the sample was destined to five different European destinations (France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium), more than 61% (48) were sent to France, 25% (20) to Italy, and 10% (8) to Switzerland.



**This is an exceptional surviving example of a post-UPU mixed-franked mail from Ethiopia, not a member of the UPU until 1908.**

The British post office in Beirut had applied the mixed-franked mail actively in the pre and even in the post-UPU periods for a different purpose than performed by some other countries. For example, post-UPU, sending international mail was complex, and in some cases, it was necessary to affix the stamp of the intermediate UPU member country to enable the conveyance of the mail to the destination of the UPU member country, in addition to the stamp of the departing office.

Post-UPU countries that were not yet members of the UPU and from where mail was sent to a UPU member country, also operated this way.

167

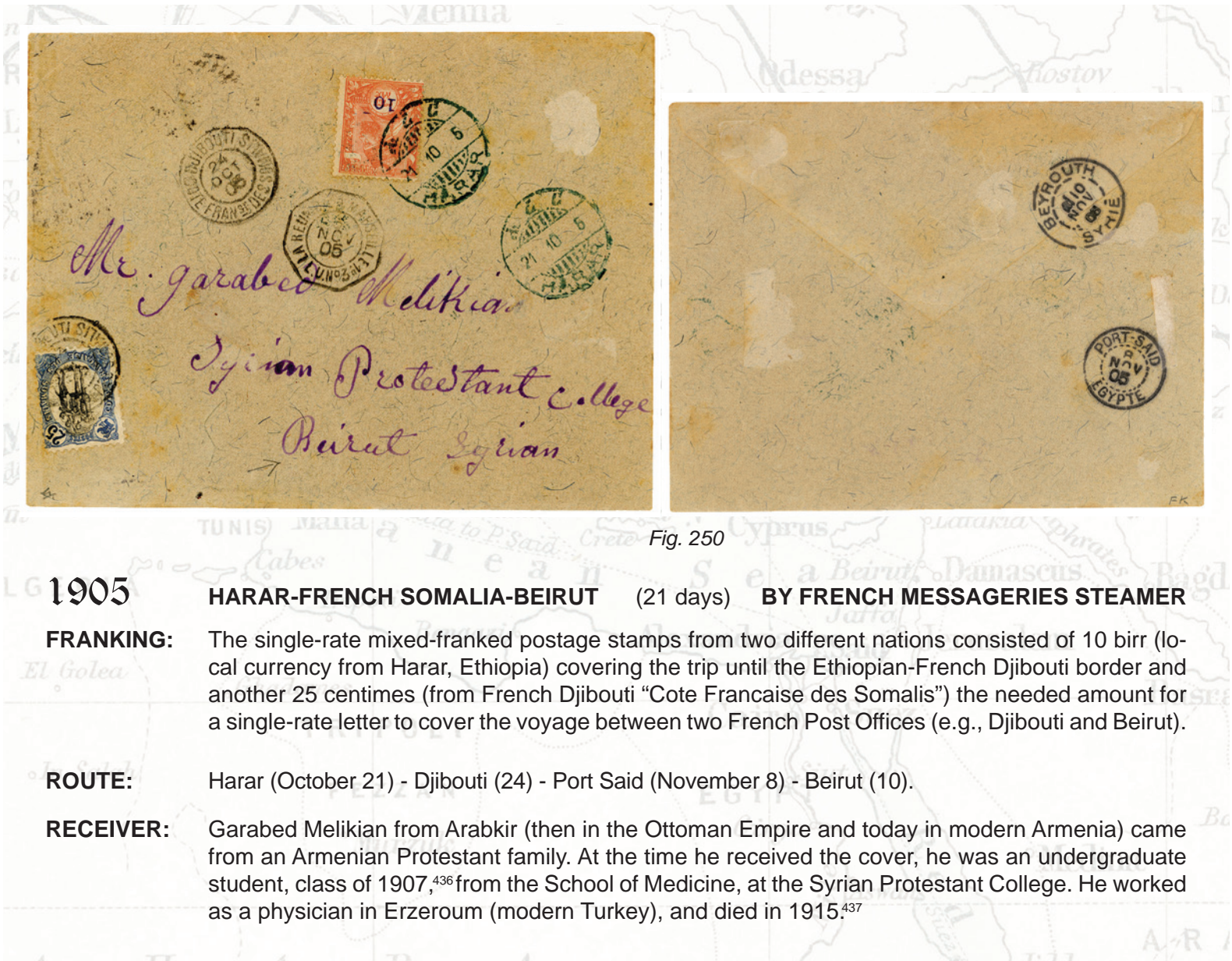


Fig. 250

**1905**

**HARAR-FRENCH SOMALIA-BEIRUT** (21 days) **BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER**

**FRANKING:** The single-rate mixed-franked postage stamps from two different nations consisted of 10 birr (local currency from Harar, Ethiopia) covering the trip until the Ethiopian-French Djibouti border and another 25 centimes (from French Djibouti “Cote Francaise des Somalis”) the needed amount for a single-rate letter to cover the voyage between two French Post Offices (e.g., Djibouti and Beirut).

**ROUTE:** Harar (October 21) - Djibouti (24) - Port Said (November 8) - Beirut (10).

**RECEIVER:** Garabed Melikian from Arabkir (then in the Ottoman Empire and today in modern Armenia) came from an Armenian Protestant family. At the time he received the cover, he was an undergraduate student, class of 1907,<sup>436</sup> from the School of Medicine, at the Syrian Protestant College. He worked as a physician in Erzeroum (modern Turkey), and died in 1915.<sup>437</sup>





Fig. 251

**1873****BEIRUT-MARSEILLE**

(17 days)

**BY CONTRACTED LINER**

**FRANKING:** This pre-UPU single rate pre-paid commercial mixed-franked cover was franked with the British 2 pence postage value to cover the distance between Beirut and Alexandria, and passed on to the transporting shipping liner. It was canceled with the very first cancellation number mark G06 used at the British Post in Beirut. In addition, a French postage of 80 centimes was affixed for this single-rate cover in Beirut to pay for the Alexandria-Marseille distance and was cancelled at the French Post in Alexandria with the 5080 numeral mark.

**MARKS:** PD boxed mark for paid until destination, Paquebots de la Mediterranee boxed mark affixed at arrival in Marseille on mail transported by Messageries steamers, transit date stamps from both the British and French post at Alexandria, arrival date stamp in Marseille.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (October 24) - Alexandria British Post (31) - Alexandria French Post (November 1) - Marseille (10)

**SENDER:** E. Peyron (French merchant and banker)

**RECEIVER:** Jacques Pardieu

**SHIPPER:** From Beirut to Alexandria by a contracted ship liner, from Alexandria to Marseille by a French Messageries steamer.

**REMARK:** A normal (non-mixed) cover posted at the French Post Office would have cost the sender just 80 centimes out of Beirut instead of 100 centimes (2 d. representing then 20 centimes + 80 centimes).

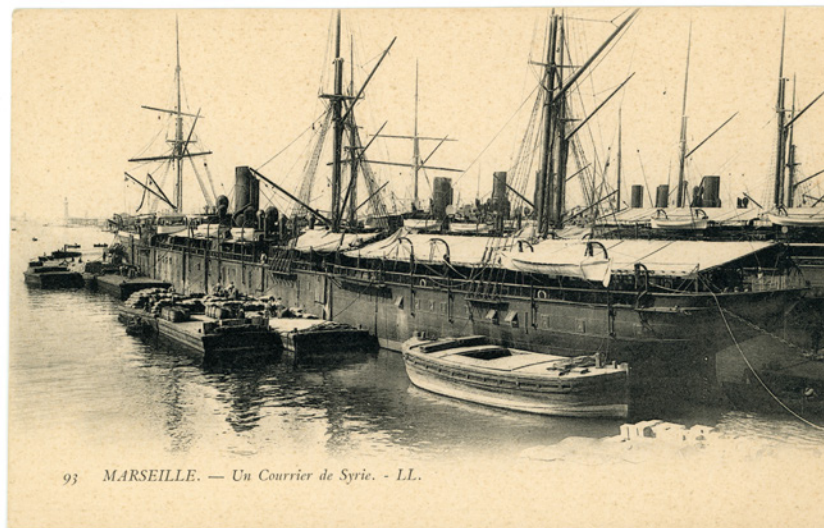


Fig. 252. Mail from Syria arriving to Marseille.





Fig. 253

1874

BEIRUT-LYON

(14 days)

BY CONTRACTED LINER

**FRANKING:** This pre-UPU double-rate commercial mixed-franked cover had a British 2 pence postage value to cover the distance between Beirut and Alexandria and conveyed on shipping liner. It was canceled with the very first numeral cancellation mark G06 used at the British Post in Beirut. In addition, a total double rate franking of 160 c., composed of two French postage stamps of 80 c. was affixed out of Beirut by the British Post to pay for the Alexandria-Hamburg distance, which were cancelled at the Italian Post in Alexandria.

**MARKS:** Red *PD* mark for paid until destination, transit date stamps at Alexandria, the ambulant (train) Marseille to Lyon and the arrival date stamps at Lyon.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (December 3) - Alexandria (8) - Marseille (15) - Lyon (16)

**SENDER:** Nicolas Portalis

**RECEIVER:** F. De Micheaux & Cie. (see p.180)

**SHIPPER:** Beirut to Alexandria by a contracted ship liner, from Alexandria to Marseille by *Said*,<sup>438</sup> a French Messageries steamer.

**REMARK:** It is interesting to note that this cover was relatively heavier than the previous one described, the British sea postage charge of 2 d. per piece of mail was flat and not correlated to the weight of the mail.





Fig. 254

1875

**BEIRUT-HAMBURG**

(16 days)

**BY CONTRACTED LINER**

**FRANKING:** This pre-UPU single rate pre-paid commercial mixed-franked cover was franked with the British 2 pence postage value to cover the distance between Beirut and Alexandria and passed on to the transporting shipping liner. It was canceled with the very first cancellation numeral mark, G06, used at the British Post in Beirut. In addition, a total of 55 centesimi made of three Italian postage stamps were affixed in advance in Beirut for the single-rate cover to pay for the Alexandria-Hamburg distance, which were then cancelled at the Italian Post in Alexandria.

**MARKS:** PD mark for paid until destination, transit date stamps at Alexandria, Napoli, and arrival date stamp at Hamburg.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (June 3) - Alexandria (5) - Napoli (15) - Bologna (15) - Hamburg (18)

**SENDER:** Amsler & Hulse

**RECEIVER:** Daniel Becker

**SHIPPER:** From Beirut to Alexandria, possibly with a contracted liner (e.g., the Russian ROPiT, Khedivial Liner), from Alexandria to Napoli, possibly aboard the Italian Rubattino & Co.'s Liner and then to Bologna by railway.

**REMARK:** A regular, non-mixed franking cover posted at the French Post Office in Beirut would have cost the sender just 60 French centimes (for up to 10 g. weight) instead of the more expensive total mixed franking of 100 French centimes = (2 d.= 20 French centimes) (\*) + 55 Italian centesimi = 80 French centimes) representing the equivalent of 10 d.

(\*) 20 centimes was equivalent to 2 pennies for mail in that period.



(Cont'd)  
**REMARK:**

Based on a sample of mail posted in the period **1866–1874** (pre-UPU period) when the mixed franking was not yet available, for the sub-period **1866–March 1873** Amsler & Hulse used the French Post exclusively. However, in the previously described cover, on that day of **1875** (pre-UPU), Amsler & Hulse selected the British Post in Beirut as the other liners contracted by their nation's postal administration (e.g., France Messageries and the Austrian Lloyd) were not operating the Syrian line on that specific day.

Amsler & Hulse brought their mail to the British Post in Beirut, which used, for example, either the contracted Russian ROPiT or the Egyptian Khedivial steamer for the Beirut-Alexandria trip. Once in Alexandria, the mail would rapidly be remitted by a British postal clerk at the Italian Post for cancelling the relevant stamp (applied in Beirut), and for the mail to be forwarded aboard the Italian Rubattino & Co.'s ship liner until Napoli, and from there to Hamburg through the railway system.

As speed was of the essence, the British seem to have offered such an express service to their demanding commercial customers. In this case, the mixed franking with both British and Italian stamps affixed in Beirut would cover the entire postage until its final destination. Totalling 16 days, that cover's journey was rather quick despite going first down south to Alexandria and before going back up north to Italy, and then carried by railway to Hamburg in Germany.

In comparison, the **1876** Beirut-Lyon mixed-franked cover in the next page took 13 days, even though it went a much shorter distance, going directly south from Beirut to Alexandria, and then to Marseille and Lyon. By using mixed franking and flexible shipping outsourcing, the British offered express service on days not served by the other large shipping liners.



Fig. 255. Stereoscopic picture of the port of Hamburg (c. 1877).





Fig. 256

**1876 BEIRUT-LYON (13 days) BY CONTRACTED LINER**

**FRANKING:** A single-rate post-UPU mixed commercial franked cover was franked with the British 2½ d. postage value (new rate applied post UPU up from 2 d.) to cover the distance between Beirut and Alexandria, and passed on to the transporting shipping liner. It was canceled with G06, the first British numeral cancel mark used at the British Post in Beirut from around May 1873. The single-rate letter of 30 centimes (rate used from January 1, 1876, to April 30, 1877 for up to 15 g. was reduced on May 1, 1878, to 25 c. and covered the destination, Alexandria-Lyon.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (August 10) - Alexandria - French Post (14) - Alexandria-British Post (14) - Marseille (21) - Lyon (22)

**SENDER:** E. Batailh (silk merchant), in Ayn Macherah, Mount Lebanon

**RECEIVER:** Messieurs F. de Micheaux (silk merchant, see p. 180)

**SHIPPER:** From Beirut to Alexandria by a contracted ship liner, from Alexandria to Marseille by *Said*,<sup>439</sup> the French Messageries steamer.

**REMARK:** Although France was a founding member of the Universal Postal Union when it was established in 1874 (taking effect on July 1, 1875), it only started applying its regulations on January 1, 1876. France reduced its single-rate letter from 80 c. to 30 c. on January 1, 1876, and then to 25 c. on May 1, 1878. The Franco-Prussian War had taken a toll on French finances, and the latter waited a bit longer before reducing the standard single-rate letter to the new international standard rate of 25 c. (equivalent to 2½ d.) in order to give itself time to improve its finances.



## British Mixed-Franked Mail from Beirut Compiled Over the Last 20 Years

The creative British were the only ones in the Ottoman Empire to have come up with the use of foreign mixed-franking mail for expediting mail out of their post office in Beirut. The archives consulted in the UK; at the National Archives at Kew, and the Postal Museum in London, do not specifically report it as a competing postal initiative to those better established and more active foreign post offices and liners (e.g., the French Messageries, and the Austrian Lloyd) serving Beirut.

At their post office in Smyrna, which opened a few months earlier in December **1872**, that tactic wouldn't have worked, as it was the busiest port city in the Ottoman Empire, and had a much wider, diverse, and active shipping liner schedule.

Despite the advent of the UPU on July 1, **1875**, the mixed-franking mail system offered at the British Post Office in Beirut lasted for more than a year, until at least October **1876**, as the below sample compiled shows.

It is important to note that the full implementation of the UPU regulations was gradual, as pre-UPU practices among certain countries were kept for some time as a result of previous bilateral agreements (or even due to the absence of them) and through provisions authorized by the UPU itself. One notable provision was the presence of foreign post offices in the Ottoman territories, which could have been the reason that the French and the Austrians delayed the application of UPU regulations for mail remitted by the British Post in Beirut.

That would mean not accepting mail remitted by the British Post to be conveyed out of Beirut (but only out of

Alexandria as per established postal conventions with Britain) directly on their respective subsidized steamers.

For that reason, the British Post may have continued to offer its customers the mixed-franking express mail system until, at least, October **1876**, after which the French and Austrians started accepting the British mail directly remitted on their subsidized steamers out of Beirut.

Probably quite interesting to analyze as well, are the covers (outside those destined to the US, UK, and British possessions) posted at the British Post in Beirut just following the UPU advent on July 1, **1875** with normal British franking of 2½ d. while the mixed franking continued being used till October **1876**. The destination of this mail (e.g., not mixed franked), as the sample shows, was to Switzerland, France, Italy, and Austria.

Now, the question to ask is: What shipping liner transported those covers post-UPU July 1, **1875** out of Beirut?

With the start of the forced UPU regulations, many British Post Offices without direct postal exchange contracts with liners such as the Messageries or the Austrian Lloyd, but with limited transport contracts were deprived of the UPU full advantages. Among these was the British Post in Beirut, which most likely used vessels under British postal contract from Beirut to Alexandria and from there to Brindisi and to European destinations. In this case, the postage on letters with a UPU rate of 2.5 d. was considered satisfactory.

173



Fig. 257. The Victoria Railway Station in London, in the early 20th century. Outbound passengers who wished to go to the fastest way to the continent, left the station at Dover and boarded a ship to Calais, France.


















**Fig. 258. BRITISH MIXED-FRANKED MAIL COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT PRIVATE COLLECTIONS AND AUCTIONS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS**

174

**1873 (7)**

	Destination	British Postage Mixed Franking with the Follow- ing Nations	Franking
1873, May 22, from Beirut to Pratt Lauenders, Ireland			10 d.
1873, May 29, from Beirut to Mrs Cornthope, Isle of Wight			10 d.
1873, June 6, from Beirut to Wm. H. Cook, New York			10 d.
1873, July 3, from Beirut to Ghild Co. & Self, London			10 d.
1873, <sup>440</sup> September 11, from Beirut to France			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, December 18, from Beirut B.E. Sabbagh to Sarral Frs. Marseille			2 d. + 160 c.
1873, October 6, from Beirut to Demosthene Macio, Florence			2 d.+ 40 c.
1873, October 16, from Beirut to Demosthene Macio, Florence			2 d.+ 40 c.
1873, October 24, from Beirut, E. Peyron to Jacques Pardieu, Marseille			2 d.+ 80 c.
1873, December 11, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			4 d. + 80 c.
1873, December 18, from Beirut B.E. Sabbagh to Sarral Frs. Marseille			2 d. + 160 c.

**1874 (24)**











































1874, January 1, from Beirut to Miss Daubeny, Cheltenham,			10 d.
1874, Jan 1, from Beirut to Miss E. Crawford, NY			10 d.
1874, January 1, from Beirut B.E. Sabbagh, to Cesare de Antony, Milan			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, January 5 from Beirut (fragment) to France			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, January 15, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, March 5, from Beirut B.E. Sabbagh, to Cesare de Antony, Milan			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874(*), April 13, from Beirut to France			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, May 7, from Beirut to Mrs Braysher, Bristol			10 d.
1874, June 4, from Beirut Giuseppe Parodi to Fratelli Dalla Orsodi Jco, Genoa			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, August 6, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			2 d.+ 40 c.

(\*) These covers are reported from third-party sources, of which there is limited information.

NB: In **green** are the regular mails (e.g., non-mixed) found posted in Beirut during the same period the mixed-franking covers were being posted at the British Post Office in Beirut.




































**(CONT'D) BRITISH MIXED-FRANKED MAIL COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT PRIVATE  
COLLECTIONS AND AUCTIONS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS**

	<u>Destination</u>	<u>British Postage Mixed Franking with the Follow- ing Nations</u>	<u>Franking</u>
1874, August 13, from Beirut, A.F. Portalis to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			4 d. + (160 c. + insufficient 40 c.)
1874, <sup>441</sup> August 16, from Beirut to Italy			2 d. + 40 c.
1874, August 24, from Beirut, to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d. + 80 c.
1874, August 27, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux & Cie, Lyon			2 d. + 160 c.
1874, September 10, from Beirut, A.F. Portalis to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d. + 160 c.
1874, September 10, from Beirut to Bazin & Cie, Marseille			2 d. + 80 c.
1874, September 24, from Beirut Amsler & Hulse to Pietro Capanna, Livorno			2 d. + 40 c.
1874, October 8 from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1874, October 22, from Beirut A.F. Portalis to F. De Micheaux & Cie, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1874, October 22, from Klasi Speich & Cie. to M. Leiss, Frankfort			2 d.+ 60 c.
1874, November 5 from Beirut E. Batailh to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1874, November 19, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1874, December 1, from Beirut B.E. Sabbagh to Cesar de Antony, Milan			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, December 1, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			2 d.+ 40 c.
1874, December 3, from Beirut to Arles Dufour, Marseille			2 d.+ 80 c.
1874, December 3, from Beirut E. Batailh to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2 d.+ 160 c.
1874, December 3, from Beirut A.F. Portalis to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2 d.+ 160 c.
<b>1875 (36)</b>			
1875, January 29, from Beirut Klasi Speich & Cie, to H. Brunmer, Glarus			2 d.+ 60 c.
1875, <sup>442</sup> January 29, from Beirut to Italy			2 d.+ 40 c.
1875, February 11, from Beirut, to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1875, February 13, from Beirut Jacques Altina & Cie. to Comptoir d'Es- compte de Paris			2 d.+ 80 c.

(CONT'D) BRITISH MIXED FRANKED MAIL COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT PRIVATE COLLECTIONS AND AUCTIONS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS

176

	<u>Destination</u>	<u>British Postage Mixed Franking with the Follow- ing Nations</u>	<u>Franking</u>
1875, February 25, from Beirut, to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d. + 160 c.
1875, March 9, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			2 d. + 40 c.
1875, March 10, from Beirut Klasi Speich to H. Brummer, Glarus			2 d. + 60 c.
1875, April 22, from Beirut George H. Tramer, Connecticut			1 s.
1875, April 22, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d. + 80 c.
1875, May 13, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			4 d. + 80 c.
1875, May 20, (fragment) from Beirut to H. Brunmer, Glarus			2 d. + 120 c.
1875, May 20, from Beirut to Henri Palluat & Testenoire, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1875, June 3, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			2 d.+ 40 c.
1875, June 3, from Beirut Amsler & Hulse, to Daniel Becker, Hamburg			2 d.+ 55 c.
1875, June 3, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1875, June 3, from Beirut to H. Palluat & Testenoire, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1875, June 14, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			2 d.+ 40 c.
1875, June 15, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1875, June 16, from Beirut A.F. Portalis to F.de Micheaux, Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.
1875,* June 16, from Beirut to Switzerland			2 d. + 40 c.
1875, June 17, from E.Batailh to F. De Micheaux & Cie.Lyon			2 d.+ 80 c.


































**(CONT'D) BRITISH MIXED FRANKED MAIL COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT PRIVATE  
COLLECTIONS AND AUCTIONS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS**

July 1, 1875: by joining the UPU, Britain introduces the new single-rate letter at 2½ d. (up from 2 d.), while France joined the UPU later on January 1, 1876, reducing its previous single rate from 80 c. (for each 10 g) to 30 c. (for each 15 g) on January 1, 1876, and then to 25 c. on May 1, 1878, matching the British rate of 2½ d. The single-rate mail to Switzerland from the French Post Office in Alexandria stood at 60 c. for each 10 g from July 1, 1871.

The single rate to Germany from the Italian Post Office in Alexandria stood at 30 c. (since November 1, 1873) per 15 g.





The single rate to Belgium from the Italian Post Office in Alexandria stood at 30 c. (since November 1, 1873) per 15 g.

177

	<u>Destination</u>	<u>British Postage Mixed Franking with the Follow- ing Nations</u>	<u>Franking</u>
1875, July 1, from Beirut Klasi Speich & Co. to H. Brummer, Glarus			7½ d.+ 240 c.
1875, <sup>443</sup> July 13, from Beirut to Switzerland			7½ d.+ 240 c.
1875, <sup>444</sup> July 13, from Beirut to Switzerland			2½ d.+ 180 c.
1875, <sup>445</sup> July 14, from Beirut to Italy			2½ d.+ 40 c.
1875, <sup>446</sup> July 15, from Beirut to Glarus			5 d.+ 180 c.
1875, August 6, from Beirut to R. Gentner & Fils, Verviers			2½ d.+ 50 c.
1875, August 12, from E. Batailh to F. De Micheaux & Cie. Lyon			2½ d. + 80 c.
1875, September 2, from Beirut Amsler & Hulse to Pietro Capanna, Livorno			2½ d. + 40 c.
1875, September 9, from Beirut Amsler & Hulse to Pietro Capanna, Livorno			2½ d. + 40 c.
1875, <sup>447</sup> September 16, from Beirut John Ramsey to O. Ramsey, Nebraska			8 d.
1875, September 23 from Beirut to Mr. Debuissou, Paris			2½ d.+ 80 c.
1875, <sup>448</sup> September 24 from Beirut to Italy			2½ d.+ 40 c.
1875, October 4, from Beirut to President of Jewish community, Paris			unpaid(see p.x)
1875, October 7, from Beirut E. Batailh to F. De Micheaux & Cie Lyon			2½ d. + 80 c.
1875, October 14, from Beirut to Demosthene Maccio, Florence			2½ d.
1875, October 14, from Beirut Klasi Speich to H. Brummer, Glarus			2½ d.
1875, October 19 from Beirut Klasi Speich to J. K. Speich Jenny, Glarus			2½ d.
1875, October 21, from Beirut to Henri Palluat & Testenoire, Lyon			2½ d.+ 80 c.

(CONT'D) BRITISH MIXED FRANKED MAIL COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT PRIVATE COLLECTIONS AND AUCTIONS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS


















178

	Destination	British Postage Mixed Franking with the Follow- ing Nations	Franking
1875, November 11, from Beirut to Mr. Brown London,			2½ d.
1875, November 11, from Beirut Klasi Speich to J. K. Speich Jenny, Glarus			2½ d.
1875, November 17, from Beirut Klasi Speich to H. Brummer, Glarus			2½ d.
1875, November 18, from Beirut J. Kfourri & Cie. to Cesari & Zurecher, Lyon			2½ d.+ 80 c.
1875, December 3, from Beirut A.N. Ziffo & Cie. to J.B. Camoin, Marseille			2½ d.+ 80 c.
1875, December 3, from Beirut (fragment) to France			2½ d.+ 80 c.
1875, December 18, from Beirut to Reverend Branbridge, Ireland			2½ d.

JANUARY 1, 1876, FRANCE APPLIES GRADUALLY THE UPU REGULATIONS

For example, the single rate letter of 80 c. (introduced on July 1, 1871, following the costly Franco-Prussian War) was first reduced to 30 c. on January 1, 1876, and then to 25 c. on May 1, 1878, matching the equivalent British 2½ d.

1876 (12)

1876, January 13, from B. John Ramsey to Oberlin Ramsey, Nebraska			2½ d.
1876, February 3, from Beirut to F.M. Heilgers & Co., Calcutta, India			2½ d.
1876, February 17, from Beirut John Ramsey to O. Ramsey, Nebraska			5 d.
1876, February 25, from Beirut E. Batailh to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2½ d. + 60 c.
1876, March 16, from Beirut Klasi Speich to H. Brunmer, Glarus			2½ d.
1876, March 30, from Beirut A. Punam to John Woods, MA.			2½ d.
1876,* April 6 from Beirut to France			2½ d. + 30 c.
1876, April 20, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux			2½ d.
1876,* June 13, from Beirut to France			2½ d. + 30 c.
1876, June 13, from Beirut John Ramsey to O. Ramsey, Nebraska			2½ d.
1876, <sup>449</sup> June 13, from Beirut to France			2½ d. + 30 c.
1876, June 15, from Beirut, A.N. Portalis to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2½ d. + 30 c.



(CONT'D) BRITISH MIXED FRANKED MAIL COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT PRIVATE COLLECTIONS  
AND AUCTIONS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS





















	Destination	British Postage Mixed Franking with the Follow- ing Nations	Franking	
1876, June 15, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux & Cie, Lyon			2½ d.	
1876, June 22, from Beirut Klasi Speich to H. Brunmer, Glarus			2½ d.	
1876, <sup>450</sup> July 13, from Beirut (fragment) to France			2½ d.+ 30 c.	179
1876, July 13, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2½ d.+ 30 c.	
1876, July27, from Beirut E. Batailh to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2½ d.+ 30 c.	
1876, August 10, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2½ d.+ 30 c.	
1876, August 10, from Beirut John Ramsey to O. Ramsey, Nebraska			2½ d.	
1876, August 24, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Marseille			2½ d.+ 30 c.	
1876, August 31, from Beirut Klasi Speich & Cie. to Austria			2½ d.	
1876, August 31, from Beirut John Ramsey to O. Ramsey, Nebraska			2½ d.	
1876, September 14, from Beirut to Baring Brothers Bankers, London			2½ d.	
1876, September 21, from Beirut to F. De Micheaux, Lyon			2½ d. + 30 c.	
1876, <sup>451</sup> October 5 from Beirut to F. De Micheaux & Co, Lyon France			2½ d. + 30 c.	



Fig. 259. This is a mixed franked cover whose British postage of 2½ d., was probably peeled off by a philatelist from the location where the “Alexandrie, Egypte 22 Nov. 75” date stamp is shown.

### **Analysis of the Mixed-Franked Mail Sample**

All mixed-franked mail processed either through the French or Italian Post in Alexandria was destined mostly to France (48 or 61%) and Italy (20 or 25%) with the rest to Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium.

The study's list of 79 mixed franked mails was compiled over more than 20 years from private collections, auction catalogs, and from the *Great Britain Overprints Society* journals. The sample size can be considered an adequate representation to analyze the mixed-franking express service offered by the British Post in Beirut. In some of the sources, there was missing information on some covers, such as the name of the sender, the addressee's name, or the destination (i.e., for the cover fragments). Also note in the list that the non-mixed franked mail destined to the US was processed along the British mail out of Beirut via Alexandria until Britain before being transboarded to the US as per a US-Anglo postal agreement.

The mixed franked covers destined for France (48) and Switzerland (8), affixed with the French postage, in addition to the British postage, were transboarded in Alexandria either aboard a French Messageries steamer or by a British steamer.

The remaining mixed-franked covers destined to Italy (20), Germany (2), and Belgium (1), were affixed with Italian postage, in addition to the British postage, and were transboarded in Alexandria onto an Italian steamer, for transit through Brindisi.

During the period of mixed-franking mail use, the British continued to contract different steamship liners between Beirut and Alexandria to offer that express service out of Alexandria.

### **Active Senders of Mail from Beirut, Both Pre- and Post-UPU, While the Mixed-Franking Mail Service Was Still in Use.**

An interesting case to note, is the trading house Klasi Speich & Cie in Beirut that had been actively corresponding with Switzerland in both pre-UPU and post-UPU periods. Recorded mail compiled for the period October 1871–August 1880 in the study shows that Klasi has been using the Austrian, and French Posts for normal mail (non-mixed) and the mixed-franked mail in the period August 1875–August 1876 at the British Post. Then, from January 1877, Klasi started using the French, British, and Austrian indiscriminately for posting its normal mail (e.g., non-mixed).

Klasi, thus, had used the British Post express mail system whenever needed to speed his mail delivery during the period this service was offered, and when neither the Austrian Lloyd nor the French steamers operated on certain days of the week.

The mixed-franked mail may have enabled the British Post to position itself for more than two years among the business community, so by the time it halted that service, customers were not exclusively using the well-established French and Austrian Posts. This could, in fact, have been the real benefit of the British Post offering the mixed-franking mail service, to gain clientele.

Besides, possibly gaining some prestige and positioning itself, there was no real financial benefit for the mixed-franked mail service, as the charge applied for the Beirut-Alexandria leg would go to the shipper, and the Italian or French postage would go to the foreign offices that took care of conveying the British mail to their destination out of Alexandria.

### **Most Addressed Overseas Merchant with Mixed Franking Mail**

F. De Micheaux, a silk merchant from Lyon, France, was the most addressed party with the mixed-franked mail, as they represented about a third of the total correspondence in the sample. Active silk-related correspondence from Mount Lebanon to France represented an important percentage of correspondence during the 1860–1880 active silk trading period, after which silk prices from Japan and China became more competitive for European importers.

### **Mail Destined to the US: The Case of Ramsey**

John Ramsey at the US Consulate in Beirut had been actively corresponding (until at least 1880) with his sister Oberlin Ramsey in Nebraska, US, using consulate stationery envelopes (see p. 215) from January 1876 to October 1876 – in the period of mixed-franking use. As all mail destined to the US was remitted at the British Post, and transited through Britain, it was considered as part of British mail and processed the same way (e.g., using the Beirut-Alexandria-Britain route, and then transboarded to the US).



## 5. An illustrated postal journey from Britain to Alexandria via Brindisi before Reaching Beirut



Fig. 260. *La malle des indes* (1881) lithograph<sup>452</sup> shows the mail destined to India and other eastern destinations arriving from London by train and being transboarded at Dover Port in South East England for Calais in France.



Fig. 261. *La malles des indes* <sup>453</sup> (1881) lithograph, shows the arrival of the **Douvres-Calais** steamer from Dover, England, at the port of Calais in France,<sup>454</sup> with the British mail being transboarded onto the train in order to cross France to Marseille, the main commercial port with the Levant.





Fig. 262. The fast cargo train from Calais to Brindisi, which transported mail every week to India and the east, starting in 1880.

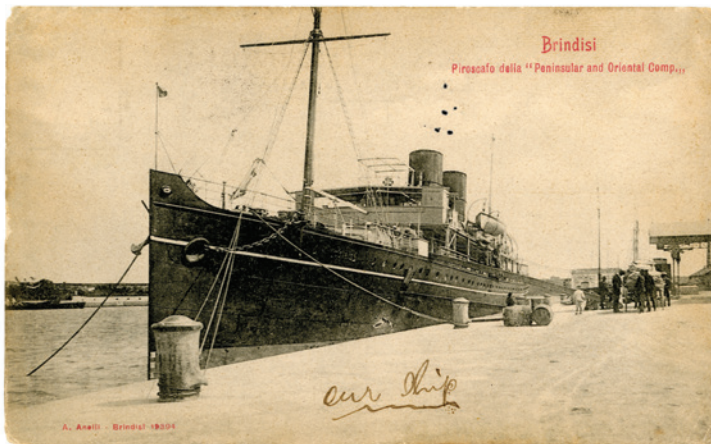


Fig. 263. A Peninsular and Oriental Co. steamer at a quay in Brindisi that would transport the British mail (destined to India and the east) to Alexandria.

Mara. Je voulais ramener mon lieutenant pour qu'on l'enterrât à Koussouri, à côté de l'autre, le commandant Lamy, qui est mort d'une balle, au moins lui, comme doit mourir un soldat... et je suis arrivé... ignoble, sale... maigre... éreinté... portant le cadavre sur le dos, chez le commandant !...

« Tout le camp me suivait, et le malheureux lieutenant commençait à puer dur — on pourrait vite dans ces pays; — ça ne fait rien, je ne voulais pas le lâcher. Je l'ai mis contre un arbre. Des tirailleurs avaient pris les instruments et les portaient derrière nous. Un défilé pas banal encore... »

« Alors le commandant m'a dit : — Où sont les autres? »

« Je lui répondis : — Nous ne sommes plus qu'un en vie !... » Alors il m'a serré la main ! Passe-moi le bidon, le gosier me serre un peu, et il m'a donné la médaille militaire !... »

... Ainsi dit le brigadier Lavergne et nous, les bleus, restâmes immobiles autour de lui avec un frisson dans le creux du dos et des larmes au coin de nos yeux rougis par l'émotion...

Le Courrier des Deux-Mondes

### La Malle des Indes

Pour les voyageurs embarqués sur les grands paquebots qui font le service des

Mais l'encombrement ne veut pas dire ici qu'il y ait désordre, car la matière postale a été soigneusement triée par les agents embarqués sur le navire, au cours de la traversée de la Méditerranée.

Et vous pouvez être certains que les lettres recommandées, que les lettres simples, que les imprimés, que les échantillons, ne voisinent pas dans les mêmes sacs. Peu importe la quantité de matière embarquée ! La distribution pourra commencer en ville moins de deux heures après le départ du steamer, grâce à une méthode de classification qui est tout à l'honneur des postiers.

Un moment, la confusion paraît régner à bord : c'est quand s'effectue l'échange de courriers, les postiers égyptiens apportant à peu près autant de sacs à destination d'Aden et des ports asiatiques qu'ils en remportent en provenance d'Europe.

Et il faut que l'échange s'effectue rapidement, car le commandant d'un paquebot postal met son point d'honneur à partir et à arriver toujours à l'heure, à une minute près.

C'est la politesse de la mer !

JEAN RENAUD.

JACQUES D'HER.

Quelques heures avant l'arrivée à Alexandrie, le pont du navire s'encombre de sacs de grosse toile, qui renferment le courrier égyptien.

Fig. 264. An early 1900s newspaper clipping showing mail bags aboard a ship a few hours before arrival in Alexandria, ready for either delivery in Egypt or transbordment to either India, or other destinations, such as Beirut in Syria.



Fig. 265. Treaty of Commerce between the Russian and Ottoman Empire, 1783.<sup>456</sup>

British and Dutch merchants are reported in **1729** to have used the overland official courier service between the Austrian Embassy in Constantinople and Vienna before a more regular service from **1784** and the setup of an Austrian postal agency in Smyrna.<sup>458</sup> Austria, the only Western European nation bordering the Ottoman domain, would ensure to foreigners, through a postal agreement with these foreign nations' postal administrations, a mail service to different cities in Europe via Vienna, as the Ottomans offered no international postal service.

British postal service in the Ottoman Empire was instituted in Constantinople in **1832**<sup>459</sup> for official embassy use in line with a treaty of commerce concluded between Britain and the Ottomans that year.<sup>460</sup> For 25 years, the British postal service had been used, in principle, for consular correspondence until the setup of a British Post Office in Constantinople for civilian service, which was its first in the Ottoman Empire in **1857** (except Alexandria in Egypt where both a packet agency and later on a post office was operational for both official and commercial use respectively in **1839** and **1858**).

There is nothing in the official records to show that the Ottoman Government (also called the Sublime Porte) was informed of the intention of the British to open a post office in Constantinople, nor in Beirut when a post office was set up there in March **1873**. The Sublime Porte reports<sup>461</sup> said that they were not dissatisfied at first with the postal arrangements, which were, at that time, only provided by foreign governments until early **1864**.

However, the justification the Ottomans gave against the presence of foreign postal systems in their domain was clearly pointed out in a letter<sup>462</sup> addressed on February 4, **1864**, to the British Charge d'affaires at Constantinople. It stressed that in the future, foreign post offices were not to send or transit mail to places within the empire. Their postal business was to be limited only to the reception and dispatch of mail with places abroad. Words in that letter, also sent to representatives of other countries, which maintained post offices in Turkey, were clear: *"En un mot, tout espece d'immixtion des Administrations étrangères et de leurs délégués dans le service des dépêches de l'Empire Ottoman, soit par terre, soit par mer, sera prohibée comme une atteinte aux droits privilégiés de l'Etat."* [In a word, any kind of interference

by foreign administrations and their delegates in the dispatch (mail) service of the Ottoman Empire, whether by land or by sea, will be prohibited as an attack on the privileged rights of the State.] In vain, this firmly addressed letter was not respected by foreign nations.<sup>463</sup>

British archives show that Western extraterritorial postal rights exercised on Ottoman territories were an often internally discussed topic. In an internal official letter<sup>464</sup> dated **1874**, the British postmaster general, expressed the opinion that:

*...from a postal point of view it may be desirable that the British Post Office should be maintained, but, as it is impossible to deny that Turkey has a claim to exercise all the rights of an independent civilized state if the Foreign Office is to resist her demand to manage her own postal affairs- it must be on very strong grounds.*

In addition, a report by M. Creswell, the surveyor of post offices in the Mediterranean commissioned by the postmaster general confirmed that:

*Turkey has no postal system worthy of the name in the interior of the Ottoman Dominions*

*... postal communications which Turkey foreign commerce has rendered necessary between her capital and her seaports on the one hand, and with foreign countries on the other, and also between one Turkish port and another, have been provided and are maintained exclusively at the cost of foreign countries*

*... manner in which the Turkish Administration is conducted offers no reasonable guarantee, if the existing foreign postal agencies were superseded by Turkish Post Offices, that those offices would be properly conducted, and would not by mismanagement greatly prejudice the interests of foreign merchants residing in Turkish ports and engaged in the Turkish trade*

*...that if the foreign postal agencies are to be suppressed, they should all be suppressed at the same time, and that the discontinuance of all interferences by foreign states with the interior and coastal postal services should precede any change in the present arrangements for carrying on the international service.*



## 2. The Overland Route in 1881

An official memo dated August **1881** confirms that the Ottoman postal authorities gave formal approval to renew the contract for the transmission of the British “Baghdad mails” through Beirut, in which the government of India was largely interested and dependent upon as a communication route.<sup>465</sup> This renewal took place despite previous years’ threats to revoke the permission for the British mail service and force foreign postal services to use instead the Ottoman postal system.<sup>466</sup>

Note that this overland mail service was not covered by the UPU provisions, and both the Ottomans and British had separately established an overland route between Baghdad and Beirut. Additionally, this overland route (faster than the route through the Suez Canal) was costlier for the British to operate and must have been probably used for important mail.<sup>467</sup>

A cover in a private collection is seen to have been mailed from Paris to Basra in Iraq through the British Post in Beirut in **1881**. Another high-value registered cover – six times the single rate (e.g., six piasters) – with an acknowledgment of receipt and three wax seals on the back, is sent from the Ottoman Post in Basra in **1894** for Sierra Leone in Africa. That cover passed through Damascus and the Beirut Ottoman Post (as requested on the front cover by the sender in handwriting *via Damas-Beyrout*), then landed in the London sorting post office before going to Liverpool, and then back down to Sierra Leone, its final destination.



Fig. 266. The busy Mount Pleasant Sorting Office: Foreign Section (FS) letters (c. **1914**) (Courtesy of the Royal Mail Archive).

Note that Beirut and Baghdad were both Ottoman territories and the Baghdad mail was referred to as the “postal service in Turkish Asia.”<sup>468</sup> Despite the strong geopolitical position of the British, the latter always made sure to accommodate the Ottomans and get official approval for maintaining such extraterritorial postal desert route privileges. Since **1861**, the British had controlled the concession to organize river transport along the Tigris and Euphrates.<sup>469</sup> The British wanted to preserve their supremacy in the Persian Gulf for the inevitable day when the Ottoman Empire, the “sick man of Europe,” (term first introduced by the Russian czar) would finally collapse. The British position was focused on the region chiefly to defend the empire’s “Jewel in Crown”: colonial India.



Fig. 267. GPO foreign mail sorting, London (c. **1910**).

### 3. The Establishment of the International Ottoman Post

186

In view of the foreign nation's resistance and their arguments against the shutting down of their postal activities in the Ottoman Empire, the Grand Vizier told Sir Henry Elliot, British ambassador in Constantinople, in the first quarter of **1875**, the Ottoman government's intention to establish an international post office. To put this into effect, an Englishman was hired as the director, as well as other Europeans to head the departments, with the goal of Turkey carrying out its postal duties under the Treaty of Berne, which it was invited to take part in **1874**, becoming one of the signatories.

In Berne, the question of foreign post offices in Turkey was brought to the attention of the Berne Congress by the Ottoman representative, even though it did not come under the province of that assembly. However, the postmaster general's instruction to the Foreign Office was that: "inasmuch as the present proposals of the [Sublime] Porte afford a guarantee the foreign correspondence will be dealt with by experienced European Officers, and it appears to be certain that the Porte will avail itself of its presumed rights under the Berne convention to effect the desired change, it is desirable..." It continued that Britain should lend its aid to help make the new Turkish Post as efficient as possible.<sup>470</sup>

In March **1875**, the British Government had agreed, on certain conditions, to the abolition of the British Post Office then existing in Egypt (technically part of the Ottoman Empire but with strong British and other foreign influences), and the Postmaster General Lord John Manners thought that a similar step would have to be taken in Turkey. However, on the other hand, the postmaster general shared another opinion that there would be little reason to doubt that the postal exchange between Turkey and European States could be efficiently conducted.

At the request of the Turkish authority for assistance, to abide by the Berne Convention for ensuring an effective postal system and thus liberate its territories from postal presence, the British postmaster general provided Frank Ives Scudamore, his second secretary, to the disposal of the Ottoman Government to help in organizing the establishment of their International Postal System. However, Lord Derby, then secretary of state for Foreign Affairs made it clear to the Ottoman ambassador that their assistance in the establishment of an efficient postal administration, should be understood that it did not necessarily imply on their part an adherence to the principle of submitting to a central post office for the foreign postal agencies existing in the Ottoman Empire, as also other foreign nations were entitled under "Treaty stipulations to maintain such Agencies in Turkey."

Thus, it appears each nation waited for the other to close their offices first, before taking any action.<sup>471</sup>

After all, relinquishing one's current extraterritorial rights in front of a weakening Ottoman government was not a pressing priority, and thus the situation persisted.

Despite general improvements with the appointment of Scudamore as director general of the International Ottoman Post in Turkey, his proposals for the abolition of foreign post offices in Turkey as well as his suggestion to have an officer from the British Post Office inspect the Ottoman Post Office, with a view that if those arrangements were found to be in a satisfactory state, they would close the British Post Offices established in Constantinople (July **1857**), Smyrna (December **1872**), and Beirut (March **1873**).<sup>472</sup>

Interestingly, few years later, and at the request of the Egyptian government directly (which, in fact, was still technically part of the Ottoman Empire), "...in view of the good relations that had always existed between the Egyptian Postal Administration, and of the excellent manner in which the Egyptian Post Office performed its work, the British Post Offices at Alexandria and Suez were closed on April 1, **1878**." However, British Packet Agencies were established in these places by the GPO in London "to superintend the transfer of the Eastern mails [e.g. India] from the Mail Packet to the Transit Administration, and from the Transit Administration to the Mail Packet, and to ensure their due transmission in each case by the right line of Packets."

In **1883**, the British packet agency in Alexandria was also closed and arrangements were made for the Indian sorting officers who traveled between Bombay and Suez to carry the mail to Alexandria where they would receive the outbound mail, returning with them overland to Suez.<sup>473</sup>

At the same time, the year **1883** corresponded to when Egypt was finally taken over by Britain.

The position of the foreign post offices in Turkey was again raised by the Ottomans in **1894** when they caught Constantinople papers at the British Post Office, which were prohibited by the Ottoman government. This situation led Sir Philip Currie, then British ambassador, to suggest to the Foreign Office that:

*...the attention of the Postmaster General should be called to the exact basis on which our claim to maintain a Post Office rests. The only ground besides that of a long established usage on which we can claim a privilege is the right to most favored nation treatment founded on Article 76 of the Russian treaty of June 10, **1783**.*



The treaty article was written in French, the international diplomatic language, on which Foreign Governments relied for maintaining their postal privileges in the Ottoman Empire.

The issue of the detention of postal packets, which included prohibited papers by the Ottomans was referred to the lawyers of the British Crown for their legal opinion, who expressed the following:

*The Constantinople Office is not subject of any express Treaty stipulation, but was established in 1857, shortly after the close of the Crimean war and has since been maintained on the ground that Great Britain is entitled under Treaties between her and the Porte to the same privileges as are enjoyed by other countries.*

As far as can be ascertained, the only treaty provision which specifically alludes to postal facilities is contained in Article LXXVI of the Treaty of Commerce between Russia and Turkey on June 21, 1788, which is as follows:

*Article LXXVI : Pour faciliter le commerce des sujets respectifs, ainsi que la correspondance réciproque, la Sublime Porte s'engage à pourvoir aux moyens de la célérité, sûreté et commodité de la poste et des courriers russes, qui vont et viennent aux frontières de la Russie.*

[Articles LXXVI: To facilitate the commerce of the respective subjects, as well as reciprocal correspondence, the Sublime Porte undertakes to provide the means for the speed, safety, and convenience of the Russian Post and couriers, who come and go to the borders of Russia.]

On another note, before the outbreak of the First World War, in 1913, an interesting article by the Arabic-language periodical *Kawakab al Barriyah* published by Saint Antoine between 1911 and 1914, at the Baabda convent, was headlined "The Ottoman Post." The article was a scathing critique of the Ottoman postal service, particularly its performance in modern Syria and Lebanon. The writer, expressed deep frustration over:

- Severe postal delays, especially in rural areas.
- Missing and damaged issues of delivered newspapers and magazines.
- Incompetence or illiteracy among postal workers, especially in handling addresses.
- Losses in time, money, and intellectual effort as magazines and articles failed to reach readers.
- The impact on cultural life, noting how literature and journalism suffered due to these logistical failures.

Eventually, the problems became so severe that the publication was forced to cease operations.

The article reflects the administrative decay of the Ottoman Empire, especially in its Syrian provinces in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. The postal service, once a tool of centralization and reform (e.g., Tanzimat), had deteriorated, particularly outside major cities. In Beirut, at the time, educated elites were increasingly frustrated with Ottoman governance. Their dissatisfaction often appeared in periodicals. Part of a wider Nahda (Arab Renaissance) movement focused on modernization and reform.

Ottoman postal authorities both in Constantinople and locally in the Levant continued to find ways to affect the service of foreign post offices on their soil.

One example were the reports in September and October 1910,<sup>474</sup> which stated that the local authority in Beirut, had a plan to impose a 1% duty upon goods exported from Turkey by parcel post, which demanded that parcels tendered at the British Post should not be accepted for transmission unless they went through local customs first.

When the postal administration established an Ottoman office in 1901, all foreign post offices that were previously levied with that duty were nullified. The Ottomans tried in 1904 to reinstate the duty on parcels dispatched only from foreign post offices, but they resisted by saying they would only follow that procedure if the Ottoman Post also had that duty.

The German Post Office, which received the same note as the British, decided to coordinate with the latter and answered the local authorities that they would need to refer to their respective embassy in Constantinople and confer with all the embassies whose countries are concerned and this would need to be settled with the Ottoman authorities in the capital, as a way to pressure the local authorities to leave them alone.

# 4. New Postal Services and Competition

Despite the late setup of a British Post Office in Beirut in March **1873** (conversion from a packet agency), the *Baedeker Travel Guide* continued reporting in its **1876** edition<sup>475</sup> that letters forwarded from Britain to travelers in Syria ought to be addressed to the care of the British Consulate in Beirut. This statement was probably due to the possibility that the British Post did not have time to advertise its postal presence in Beirut or was not fully set up yet – following the recent UPU agreement on July 1, **1875**. Although officially authorized in March **1873**, the first mails reported to have been sent out of the British Post Office in Beirut date two months later, in May, as probably some logistic preparations were still underway. Additionally, it was reported that the “killer” cancel mark “G06” and the first circular date stamp were both introduced on March 22.<sup>476</sup> In the first 3½ years, the British Post Office in Beirut seems to have attracted mainly local trading houses and merchants as shown in the sample of regular mail and mixed-franked mail (see p.174-179), an express service was used on specific days when neither the Messageries nor the Austrian Lloyd steamers stopped in Beirut.

In May **1878**, less than six years after the setup of the British Post Office in Beirut, an official memo from Beirut to London reports a petition signed by 82 British subjects, foreigners, and natives. They were interested in a regular and rapid weekly delivery of the mail from Britain to Beirut by adding another shipping liner route.<sup>477</sup> This memo follows the signing of Bell’s Asia Minor Steam Ship Company contract service in **1872**, and then again in **1878**<sup>478</sup> to run steamers from Alexandria to Beirut in conjunction with steamers on route to India from Brindisi (and vice versa), which would guarantee rapid delivery of mail to Beirut. The Brindisi to Beirut route (initiated regularly from January **1872**) had become the preferred route for British mail as it was indeed faster and more economical (as compared to the French Marseille route) since the completion of the Mont Cenis Tunnel and the railway from Calais through the Brindisi Port. An agreement between the British Post and John Bell, would schedule Bell’s steamers to leave regularly from Alexandria after the arrival of the mail steamer from Brindisi (coming from London) and would guarantee correspondence with Beirut – the hub in Syria – regularly, every 7½ to 8 days.



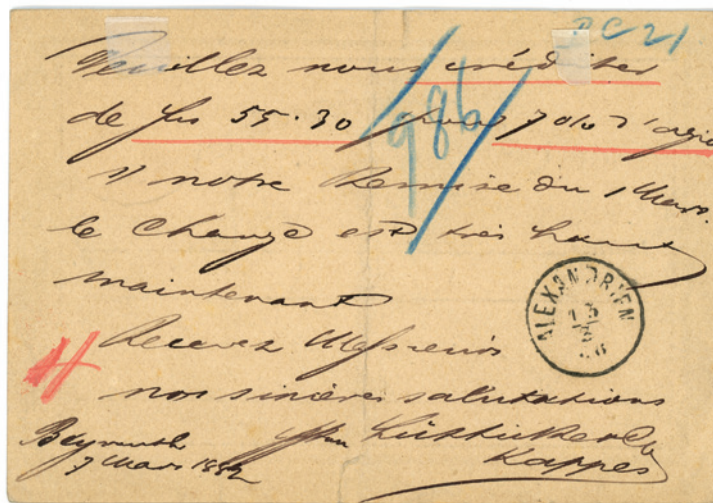
Fig. 268. P&O shipping routes in the Mediterranean (1906).<sup>479</sup>





Interestingly, direct and regular schedules for British ships to Beirut were not yet in place, since they were not published as the other regular liners were. For example, a travel guide reports in **1875**<sup>481</sup> that British mail arrives once a week but not on a fixed day.

A travel guide in **1882**<sup>482</sup> finally reports that Bell's Asia Minor line, which runs frequently up and down the coast between Alexandria and Alexandretta (where Beirut laid in the middle), coincides with the arrival of the P&O steamer. A note from the P&O to the GPO in London dated August 23, **1888**, confirms that P&O steamers will forward, as requested, from Brindisi to Alexandria, the mail destined to Beirut in addition to those destined for Cyprus every Friday.



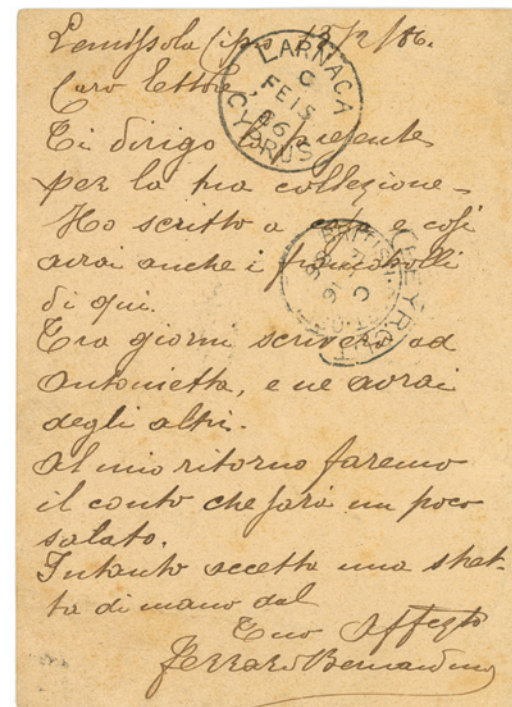
*Fig. 269. Austrian postal stationery with the Modane to Paris transit date stamp, showing the use of the Brindisi route and the Mont Cenis Railway all the way to Calais before reaching London (1882).*

The current arrangements with the Russian mail boats (ROPiT) arriving from Brindisi to Beirut via Alexandria on alternate Mondays and the Austrian Lloyd mail boats arriving on alternate Wednesdays, respectively in 9½ and 11½ days were disrupted.

They had ceased running during the last 12 months due to the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War in **1877–1878**, and Bell's liner tried to fill that gap, but needed to be granted the same privileges as those enjoyed by the French Messageries and the Austrian Lloyd vessels on the Beirut route.

British archival records<sup>480</sup> report that by May **1879**, the number of mails received and dispatched from Beirut had more than doubled from 69 in **1873** to 153.

That same report also adds that the sale of postage stamps increased fourfold.



*Fig. 270. A British postal stationery card from the British Post in Limassol, Cyprus (a British possession) destined for Napoli, Italy through Beirut and via Alexandria. Note the transit date stamp applied at the British Post in Beirut on the back (1886).*

Aside from Bell's steamers, other British and foreign steamers frequently stopped – albeit irregularly – at Beirut and other ports of the coast of Syria. The local Beirut almanac *Al Jamiyy'aa* dated **1888**, reports in the foreign ships time-table section, the schedule of arrivals and departures (e.g., day and time) in Beirut of the French, Austrian, Russian, and Egyptian Khedivial ships. Under the British ships, the following statement was printed: “does not have specific schedules.” However, in their later editions in **1889** and **1890**, they began recording that some British ships were stopping in Beirut on a regular basis. For example, the agent Levi Franck & Cie reported a British ship coming from Alexandria each Monday and leaving on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. for Iskendaroon (Alexandretta) and Mersin. A second British ship would also stop in Beirut each Monday from Iskendaroon and Mersin, and leave on the same day at 2 p.m. to Alexandria.

### Attracting Customers with New Services

As a latecomer among the older established, more extensive, and well-entrenched network of French and Austrian Post Offices in the Ottoman Empire, including at Syrian ports, the British knew their limitations in attracting a flow of mail through their single office in Syria and undertook several measures to attract customers. This included the selling of postage stamps at a discount for large institutional buyers, installing letter boxes in **1907**, as well as the setup of 40 private mail boxes at the post office to be rented at 1.10 sterling pounds per year.<sup>483</sup>

Other postal services were gradually introduced at the British Post in Beirut. A letter from the French Postal Ministry on November 16, **1886**, to GPO Secretary A. Blackwood in London reports that the French will authorize the exchange of international money orders through the British Post Offices in Beirut, Salonika, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Smyrna under the same conditions as those in France. The currency denomination of money orders issued in Britain and to be paid by the French Post Office in Beirut, as well as at other offices, will be in francs and centimes. British archives report, however, that the number of such transactions were low in volume at the time.

Postal orders (June **1905**) and money orders (June **1907**) were introduced directly at the British Post Office in Beirut. However, later on, a report notes that starting in **1908**, there was a large reduction in cashed money orders, mainly due to the American money order business switching to the Austrian Post Office.

By November **1906**, the amount of money orders processed in Beirut for the prior 12 months through the Austrian Post was as follows:<sup>484</sup> 704 money orders advised from the UK for payment in Beirut for a total amount of 5,402 sterling pounds, and 113 money orders advised from Beirut for payment in the UK for a total amount of 198 sterling pounds. All money orders for Beirut were issued through the Austrian Post Office, whereas orders issued in Beirut for payment in the UK are only occasionally rerouted through the French or German Post Offices.

Before the issuance of money orders at the British Post in Beirut on June 1, **1907**, it was handled through both the French and the Austrian Post. At that time, more than 85% of orders from the UK to Beirut through the Austrian Post were “through orders” mostly originating in the US (e.g., from Lebanese emigrants). A “through order” refers to a postal or shipping order that passes through multiple postal systems or carriers without being interrupted or reprocessed at each stage.

In **1886**,<sup>485</sup> post offices in the UK began sending small parcels (not exceeding 7 pounds) to Beirut, helping its export trade. Although parcel mail from the United Kingdom for the British Post Office in Beirut was dispatched directly on British packets to Egypt for onward transmission starting around **1886**, a new service to Beirut was being introduced through France and Italy via British packets to Egypt, which started on June 1, **1910**.<sup>486</sup> When the outward service was established, there was not enough traffic to justify service to Britain. The GPO proposed on October 21, **1910**,<sup>487</sup> to commence a similar service in the reverse direction.

Interestingly, in the same note, the GPO describes the introduction of a parcel postal service from November 1, **1910**, between Beirut and Tongo (an island country in Polynesia in the South Pacific Ocean, under the protection of Britain since **1901**) through the New Zealand Post Office.

On April 1, **1908**, it was reported that arrangements have been completed for the direct exchange of insured (for up to 40 sterling pounds) and uninsured parcels, not exceeding 5 kg in weight, between the British Post Office at Beirut and the Egyptian Post Office, which included parcels destined to Egypt, India, Turkey (Smyrna and Constantinople) and other countries farther east.



These parcels would be conveyed in each instance by the steamship of the Khedivial Mail Steamship and Graving Dock Company, formed in **1898**, when it took over the business from the Khedivial Line owned by the Egyptian government.

As agreed, a payment of 25 c. would be made to the Alexandria office for each parcel, irrespective of weight, for the transport from Beirut to Alexandria and then a payment of 50 c. for the Egyptian territorial service. The postage to be collected on parcels sent from the Constantinople office to the Beirut office was 10 d. (1 franc), and the profit for the company was 50 c. per parcel.

In its **1898** edition, the *Baedeker Travel Guide* reports that letters may be addressed *poste restante* at the British Post in Beirut. This was a service where the post office holds the mail until the recipient calls for it (see p. 236). It is commonly used by travelers who are visiting a particular location and have no need or way, of having mail delivered directly to their place of residence at that time. That was a handy service offered by the post office during a period when tourism to biblical Syria and the Holy Land surged.

191

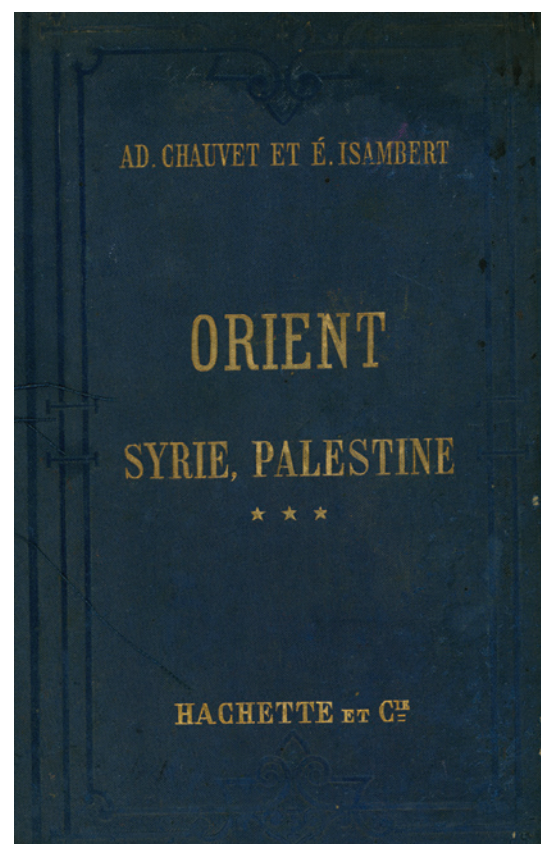
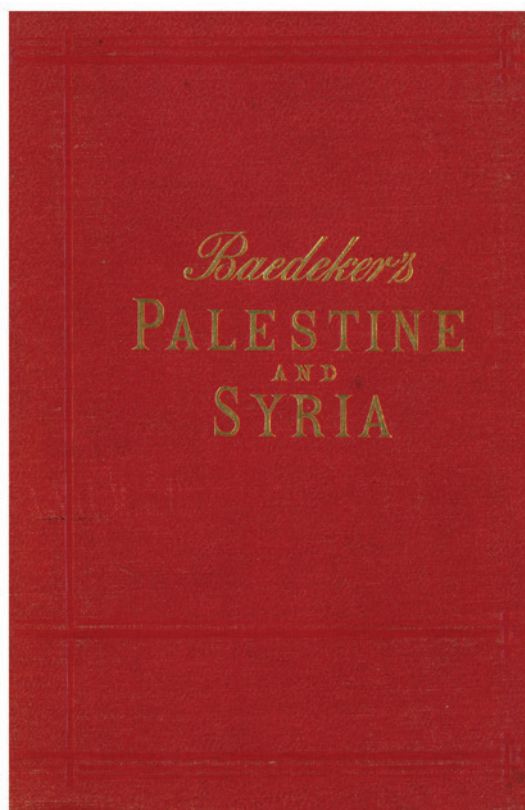
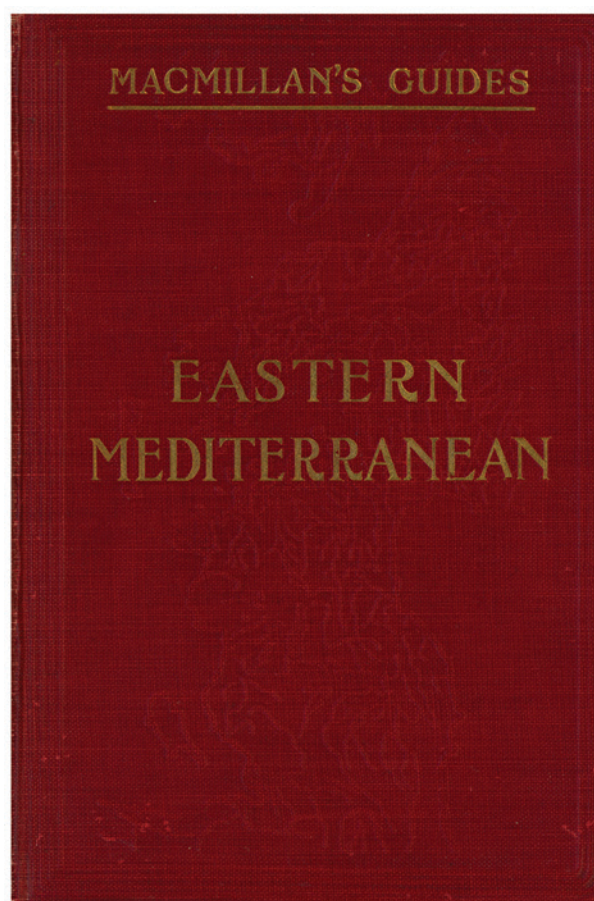


Fig. 271. These are the front covers of three different travel guides used by travelers in Beirut in the late 19th and early 20th century.



Salonica 21/4/98

Sir,

I should be very much obliged to you if you would kindly inform me a list of all the Towns in the Ottoman Empire where there are British Post Offices.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most humble and obedient servant

David Allatini

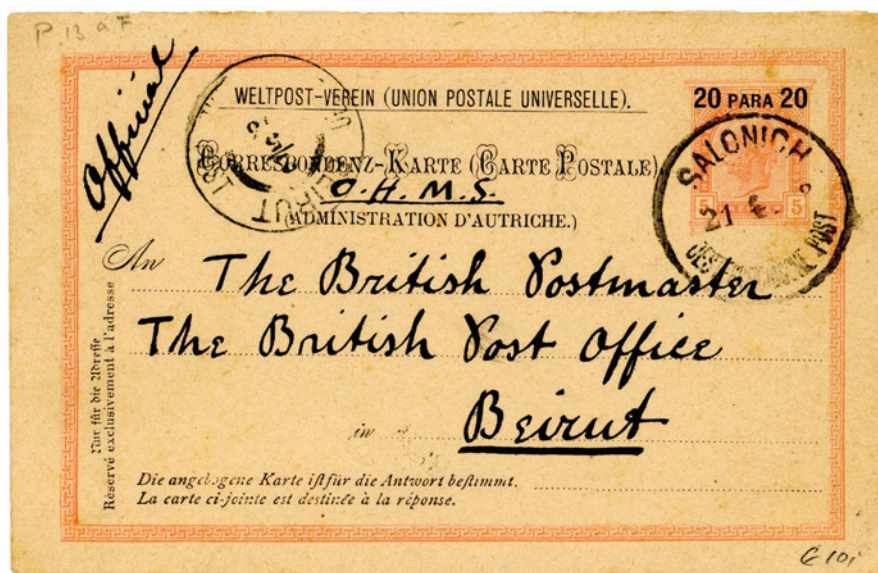


Fig. 272. This is an incoming postal stationery card from the Austrian Post in Salonika dated **1898**. The sender is inquiring about a list of all the towns in the Ottoman Empire with a British Post Office from the British postmaster in Beirut. This demonstrates the strong perception of the British sphere of influence in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the British had by then, far the lowest number of post offices, with only four locations as compared to over 30 each by the French and the Austrians. The fifth British postal location opened in Salonika in **1900**, two years after this card was posted.

In addition to the poste restante service offered by the British (as well as by other foreign nation's posts), firms such as the Heald & Cie., a British banker based in Beirut, continued receiving letters "in care of" for British residents and travelers passing through Beirut (see p. 62), forwarding letters from the Syrian hinterland (e.g., Damascus) and being a focal point where letters to Britain could also be remitted to him. Other merchants, who were bankers at the same time, such as Riddell and Co., and the local Sursock Freres could also be consulted for obtaining the schedule for dispatching British mail and of the sailing of the steamers as they were liable to change.

5:30 p.m., and on Sundays from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. It notes that the post office staff often arrive before 7 a.m. and stay after 6 p.m. to order to cope with the heavy work flow, "...which had to be done as to give every possible satisfaction to the local public so to retain their loyalty and give them no pretext for transferring their business to one of the other competing foreign post offices."

This unusual time schedule, as compared to post offices in Britain, was due, among other reasons, to the irregular arrivals and departures of the steamers transmitting to and from Beirut, although the staff worked longer with no additional remuneration.

In October **1911**, a consular report shows the long opening hours of the British Post Office in Beirut from 7 a.m. to



# 5. The International Reply Coupon and Post Office Order

New forms of international payments were later provided at the British Post, this included the International Reply Coupon (IRC) and the Post Office Order (POO), which allowed customers to send money through the post office.

The back of the below British postal stationery card posted on March 18, 1911, is quite interesting as it shows the British Post in Beirut actively answering a philatelist

based in Belgium about the available postage stamps on sale at its office ready to be delivered once settled by POO or IRC. In this case, the recipient was the British Post in Beirut, which could redeem the order by clearing it with the Belgian postal system. POOs are similar to money orders and can be used for various transactions, especially in places where banking services may not be readily available. On the other hand, the purpose of the IRC is to allow the recipient to send a letter to the British Post in Beirut along with the cost of postage for a reply.

193

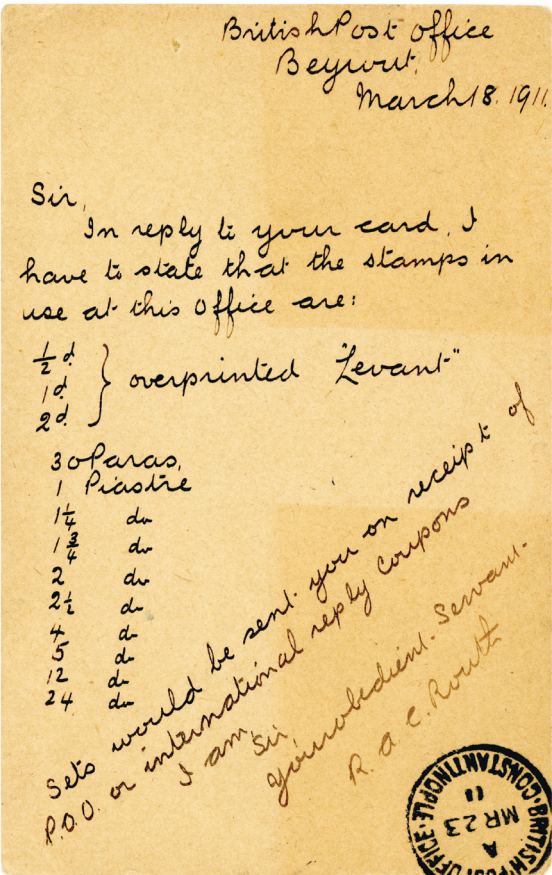


Fig. 273. Postal stationery card posted in Beirut on March 18, 1911.

In fact, the growth of postage stamps sales at the British Post in Beirut was due, in part, to the active new rising hobby of philately, as noted for example in the sales records, when about 25% of the revenues in 1910, were due to the exceptional sale of postage stamps to stamp dealers in Beirut.

## Competition among the Post Offices

Competition among the Ottoman and foreign post offices was strong, with the former attracting customers through different initiatives.

An Arabic newspaper dated April 25, **1881**, reports the following note from the Ottoman director of Telegraphs and Posts in Beirut:

194

*Having heard that some of the merchants have imagined that notwithstanding the reduction of the postage on letters sent to Europe at half its value, the other will be charged at place of destination, we now confirm - having omitted to do so in our previous notice - that although a letter is reduced to half the rate of postage, the full value of postage stamps is affixed on it namely 1 piastre; 20 paras only (instead of 40 paras= 1 piastre) being charged for every 15 grammes in order to afford the Public greater facilities. Therefore, in order to set at ease the mind of everyone who sends his letter by the Ottoman International Post Office, we inform him, that his letter will be considered fully prepaid.*

On April 30, **1881**, a letter was sent from Berne, Switzerland, to the GPO in London stating that the German Post Office in Constantinople complained that the Ottoman Post Office had reduced charges levied on letters to foreign destinations. A copy of the letter to the Ottoman authorities was enclosed pointing out that such reductions were in direct opposition to Article V of the Convention of Paris and demanded immediate reversion to the charges in the article.

In May **1881**, the British Post Office in Beirut (following a note from the office in Constantinople) reported that the Ottoman Post Office was selling 40 paras postage stamps for 20 paras, thus the GPO entered into a long correspondence with Berne inquiring whether it was justifiable for union offices to surcharge letters from Turkey bearing the 20 paras postage.

The Ottoman Post Office began selling its stamps at half their face value in order to gain customers from foreign post offices. This led, in fact, to a 20% decrease in British Post Office sales. On top of this, there was the devaluation of the Turkish currency, through which the postage of 2½ d. represented a counter-value of 50 paras.

The German Post Office in Constantinople had noted that the parity of 2 pfennigs = 40 paras or 2½ d. was no longer realistic.

For this reason, it had sold the 2-pfennig stamp for 2 d. and had gained customers from the British Post Office. For active users, the small difference of ½ d. for a letter represented a significant reduction in postage costs.

In a letter dated February 22, **1882**, the British Post in Smyrna suggested to the GPO that they should be authorized to sell the 2½ d. stamp for 40 paras instead of 50 paras, if the price was paid in Turkish coins. The full price of 2½ d. should have been demanded if it was paid in British or any other hard currency. Although this suggestion was finally approved by London, it was to be applied only for the Constantinople office, not for Smyrna or Beirut, since there were no German Post Offices yet in those cities, and the currency situation and exchange rates were quite different.

In June **1881**, the British postmaster in Beirut had reported the competitive, unfair activity from the Ottomans, who were sending newspapers overseas, charging only half of the normal rate, in the places where foreign post offices existed in the Ottoman Empire. The French and the British agreed, starting August **1885**, to sell at their respective post offices in the Ottoman Empire, 2½ d. and 25 c. postage stamps for 40 paras in order to be on equal terms with the other foreign post offices. However, this would not apply to postage stamps remaining in sterling. Following the reduction of the cost of 2½ d. stamps from 50 paras to 40 paras, the sales of postage stamps increased.

In another event, the local Beirut almanac *Al Jamiyy'aa* edition of **1889**<sup>488</sup>, reported that the Ottoman Post in Beirut is "...now managed by a special director, who started offering better services than those at the foreign post offices, and had allocated specific staff to distribute the mail to the addressees directly wherever they are..." This statement is then followed at the bottom of the article by a warning "...that the Khedivial steamers [under British flag since **1899**] will only be authorized to remit mail franked with Ottoman postage stamps and not with foreign postage stamps."

Despite different complaints from the foreign posts in the Ottoman Empire; of "inappropriate competitive practices," the Ottoman Post continued. The French consul general in Beirut reported in **1898** that the Ottoman Post's reduction of the single rate (from 1 piaster to ½ piaster)<sup>489</sup> for mail transported between Ottoman port cities, intended to curb foreign postal activity, was ignored by foreign post offices.



Foreign post offices in the Ottoman Empire sending mail within the Ottoman territories, which was forbidden, was at times intercepted by the Ottomans and reintroduced through the Ottoman mail system and the addressee taxed with the required Ottoman postage. Thus the Ottoman Post ignored the original foreign franking applied on Ottoman territories. The newly introduced lower rate by the Ottomans affected the performance of the French Post in Beirut, as reported by an official correspondence.

In **1901**, a French official report notes that the Ottoman Post offered a 20% discount when a total value of 50 piasters of postage stamps for international use was purchased. In other words, the Ottoman postage for overseas correspondence would cost 20 c. per letter versus 25 c. at foreign post offices.<sup>490</sup> This was introduced following an Austrian aggressive marketing strategy, and as a result, several trading houses moved to the Ottoman Post Office.

Competition among foreign post offices for selling postage stamps was fierce, and some hired agents, such as the Austrian and German Posts, the French report noted. Discounts were offered on large purchases of postage stamps and commissions to salesmen were attractive. The French Post in Beirut reported to the postal administration in France in October **1904**, that the director of the Austrian Post does not get a fixed salary, but receives an annual 20% commission on all postage revenues generated.<sup>491</sup> Although the French did not offer large stamp discounts to their customers, they used a different strategy by sending their statement of accounts directly to merchants, which was copied by the British Post soon after.

Interestingly, a French consular note reports in **1905**,<sup>492</sup> that the concierge of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut; Amine B. Hilal, was in charge of selling Austrian postage stamps to the 800 professors and students, and, in fact, was reported to have sold about 3,000 French francs of stamps every year.

The Austrian Post was selling 130 postage stamps of 1 piaster value for 1 sterling pound versus 120 postage stamps offered by the French Post. The Austrian Post seems to be giving more than the 3-5% discount, contrary to what was claimed by an Austrian minister in Vienna, following a formal complaint from the French.

On April 20, **1906**, a letter from the British Post Office in Beirut to the GPO requests the establishment of private letter boxes and the refurbishment of the post office premises to increase revenues.

He furthermore adds that the “...original wooden fitting dating back from **1873** when the office was established were unfitted anymore, was in a state of decay, and compares unfavourably with those at the Austrian, French, and German offices. ...There is considerable competition in these days between foreign post offices in Syria. The French have sub-agencies at Tripoli, Jaffa, and Haifa; the Austrians and Germans, at Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa. The offices at the latter port were opened quite recently, and by the French as late as April, 2nd, and each is provided with a salaried sub-agent and assistant.

195

The British general consul's role in Beirut was to promote as much as possible British interests. An official note<sup>493</sup> sent by the Foreign Office on behalf of the British general consul in Beirut to the General Postal Office in London requested better postal facilities for British merchants in Beirut, which was approved by the postmaster in London in December **1906**.

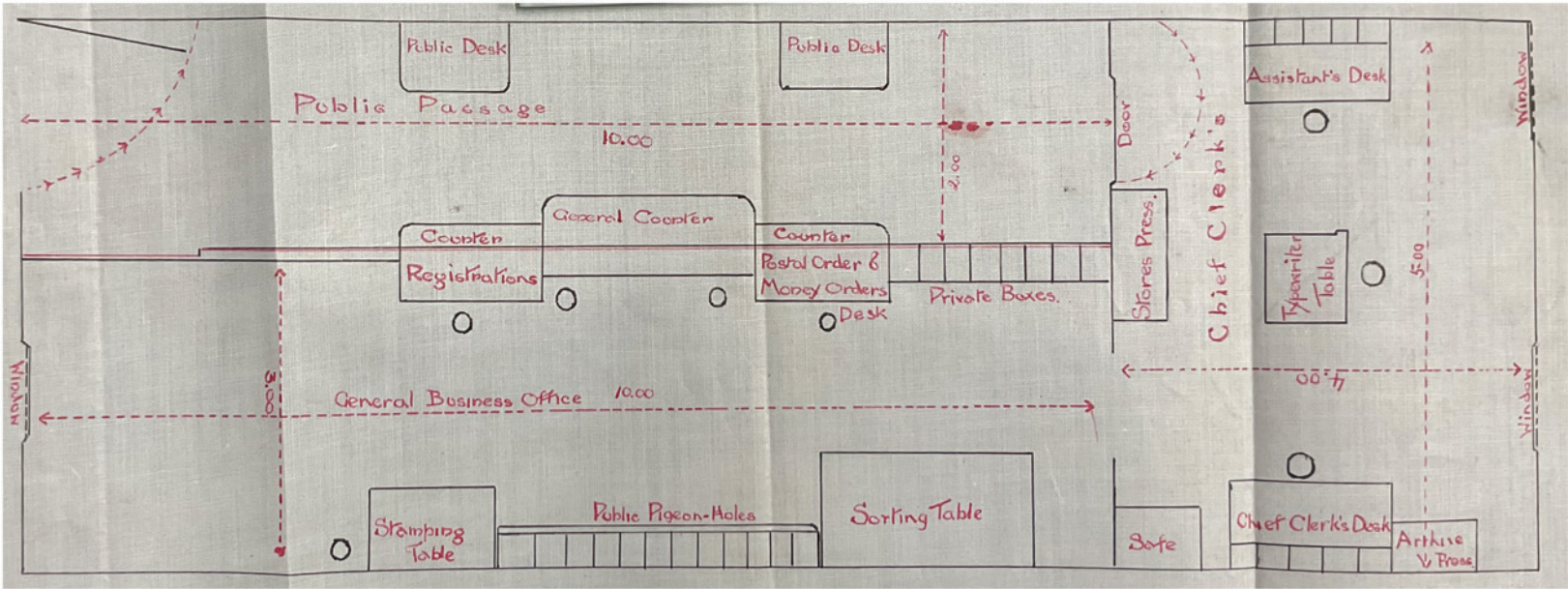


Fig. 274. The drawing plan of the new layout of the interior of the British Post Office in 1906 was subsequently approved for a budget of about 116 sterling pounds of which about 90 sterling was finally disbursed.

132, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET.  
LONDON, E.C. May 13th 1909

PRIZE MEDAL, SYDNEY, 1879.

The Controller of Stores, G.P.O.  
The General Post Office.  
17/19 Bedford Street, W.C.

CONTRACTORS TO H.M. POST OFFICE.

**BOUGHT OF W. T. ALLEN & CO**  
(LATE TURNER & ALLEN.)  
ARCHITECTURAL, ARTISTIC & GENERAL IRONFOUNDERS, ENGINEERS, &c.  
ESTABLISHED 1847.

Claims for Breakages, or Losses in Transit, must be made by the Purchaser upon the Carriers, from whom clean Receipts are always taken.  
SETTLEMENTS 10th MONTHLY, WHEN CREDIT IS GIVEN. FOREIGN ORDERS PAYABLE ON OR BEFORE EXECUTION.

Two THIRDS ALLOWED FOR EMPRIES RETURNED CARRIAGE PAID.

Demand No. 71c.	Supplying 6 Wall Letter Boxes "B" size, each fitted with Chubb's lock and two keys, escutcheon plate, tablet receptacle &c. and painted and wrapped in canvas.	£ 12/15/10 ea.	16 15 0	✓
	Carriage Mansfield to London.		16 10	✓
	Freight, Shipping and Insurance Charges.		1 9 2	✓
	Shipped Per S.S. "SYRIAN PRINCE"	Nett 14/10/10	19 1 0	✓

Mark. O. H. M. S.

The Post Office Agent  
British Post Office  
Beirut  
SYRIA.

WTA

Nos. 1/6

6 Boxes, each 2' 9½" x 1' 5" x 1' 2½"

cwt 2 qrs. 1 each.

Warrant issued 14th May 1909

for CONTROLLER OF STORES

14th May 1909

W. T. ALLEN & CO LONDON

Fig. 275. Invoice related to the order and shipment of the second batch of letter boxes from London aboard the Prince Liner; Syrian Prince to Beirut (1909).



Fig. 276. British W. T. Allen & Co. "B" size wall letter box.



## 6. Letter Boxes: A Success

Nine letter boxes were first installed by the French Post in **1904**, and reported to have yielded good results. The pick-up of the French mail from the boxes at 4 p.m. by the postman, along with the additional pick-up by car a half an hour before steamship departure<sup>494</sup> was recognized to be rapid and regular. Mail destined to Europe stood at 500–600 letters, and it was estimated that without these boxes at least 50% of the franked mail would have gone to the competition. However, agents of the French Post selling postage stamps were complaining of a low 1% commission paid to them as compared to the more competitive Austrians.

A home mail delivery was also provided by the French, German, and Austrian Posts in Beirut, and the French even sent updates about the schedule of mail pick up/delivery each Saturday and sometimes on a daily basis to about 400 homes in the city.

A British consular note claimed that the German Post Office (the last nation to open a foreign post in Beirut in **1900**) had recently placed letter boxes in different parts of the town, which had proven to be successful. Fearing a reaction from the local Ottoman authorities, not necessarily happy to see foreign posts expanding, Sir Robert Drummond Hay, general consul in Beirut and agent of the British Post Office, stated that the Ottomans were not likely to raise any objection to the provision of similar letter boxes.

In May **1907**, four wall letter boxes were dispatched aboard the *S.S. Moorish Prince* (Prince Liner) to offer better posting facilities to the British community, the main hotels, and the larger companies that transacted business on a wider scale with the Britain.

The following convenient sites were selected in Beirut:<sup>495</sup>

1. Outside the Khan Antoun Bey building (see p. 164), where the offices of the British Post, other foreign posts, major consulates, and steam ship liners were located.
2. Outside the Thomas Cook & Sons office under the Hotel d'Orient (see p. 200).
3. At the Chief Square-Place des Canons (see p. 86) outside the Club of Beirut, frequented by affluent members of the business community.
4. In the European and American quarter of Ras Beirut either outside the British Syrian Mission or the Syrian Protestant College (SPC). The members of the SPC and the American Colony in general use the British Post Office in preference to any other, according to the consul general Robert Hay Drummond Hay in his note to London.

It was also approved to hire an additional messenger not only to clear the letter boxes but also deliver letters regularly to known customers in order to reduce the crowds of people coming to the post office.

At that time, the Ottoman Post had not ensured letter delivery service, but the Germans did offer a partial delivery.



Fig. 277. Post boxes have been used in Britain for more than 200 years. To celebrate this anniversary, the Royal Mail released in **2009** this miniature sheet of four stamps featuring iconic wall-mounted post boxes from the 19th century.

### Letter Box Collection Times (Printed on the Box)

#### MORNING COLLECTION<sup>496</sup>

7.00 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 8.00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 9.00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10.00 a.m.

#### AFTERNOON COLLECTION

2.00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 3.00 p.m., 3.30 p.m., 4.00 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 5.00 p.m.

Even British postal uniforms were supplied to the postmen collecting the letters from the boxes. More than two years later, in March **1909**, another approval was given to the British Post that had request of placing

another six letter-boxes following the claim that the French and Austrian Post Offices in Beirut had each placed ten letter boxes in various part of the town, in addition to the German Post that had erected seven boxes and received three more to be put up.

#### Locations of Letter Boxes<sup>497</sup>

1. The SPC which had an educational staff of 70 (professors and teachers) most of whom were American.
2. The British Syrian Mission which, employed many British female teachers was located in a quarter of the town where several British and American families resided.
3. The American Press located on the campus of the SPC with its several buildings (see p. 201).
4. The British Consulate General located in an affluent residential quarter.
5. The Office of the Beyrout Waterworks Co. located in the center of the business quarter (Martyr's Square).
6. The British Pharmacy<sup>498</sup> located near the most central hotel (e.g., rue George Picot immeuble Wehner, at the location of the modern Starco building site).

From the locations of the letter boxes, the British Post was clearly targeting certain segments of society that dealt directly or indirectly with the Anglo-Saxon institutions in Beirut or with firms in Britain. The British Post must have also provided discounts on bulk purchases of postage stamps, as the Austrian and German Posts did.

It's interesting to compare the number of letter boxes installed by the British Post in Constantinople (11) versus the one in Beirut (10).<sup>499</sup> The local newspaper *Lissan-el-Hal*<sup>500</sup> in January **1910**, criticized the local Ottoman postal authority for not installing letter boxes, for the convenience of merchants in Beirut, who relied only on foreign letter boxes.



## LOCATION OF THE DIFFERENT LETTER BOXES INSTALLED BY THE BRITISH POST IN 1906 AND 1909<sup>501</sup>

The British letter boxes in **1906** and in **1909** were located in well-chosen places where affluent members of the local and international community regularly visited. This led to an increase in the sale of postage stamps at the British Post Office.

199

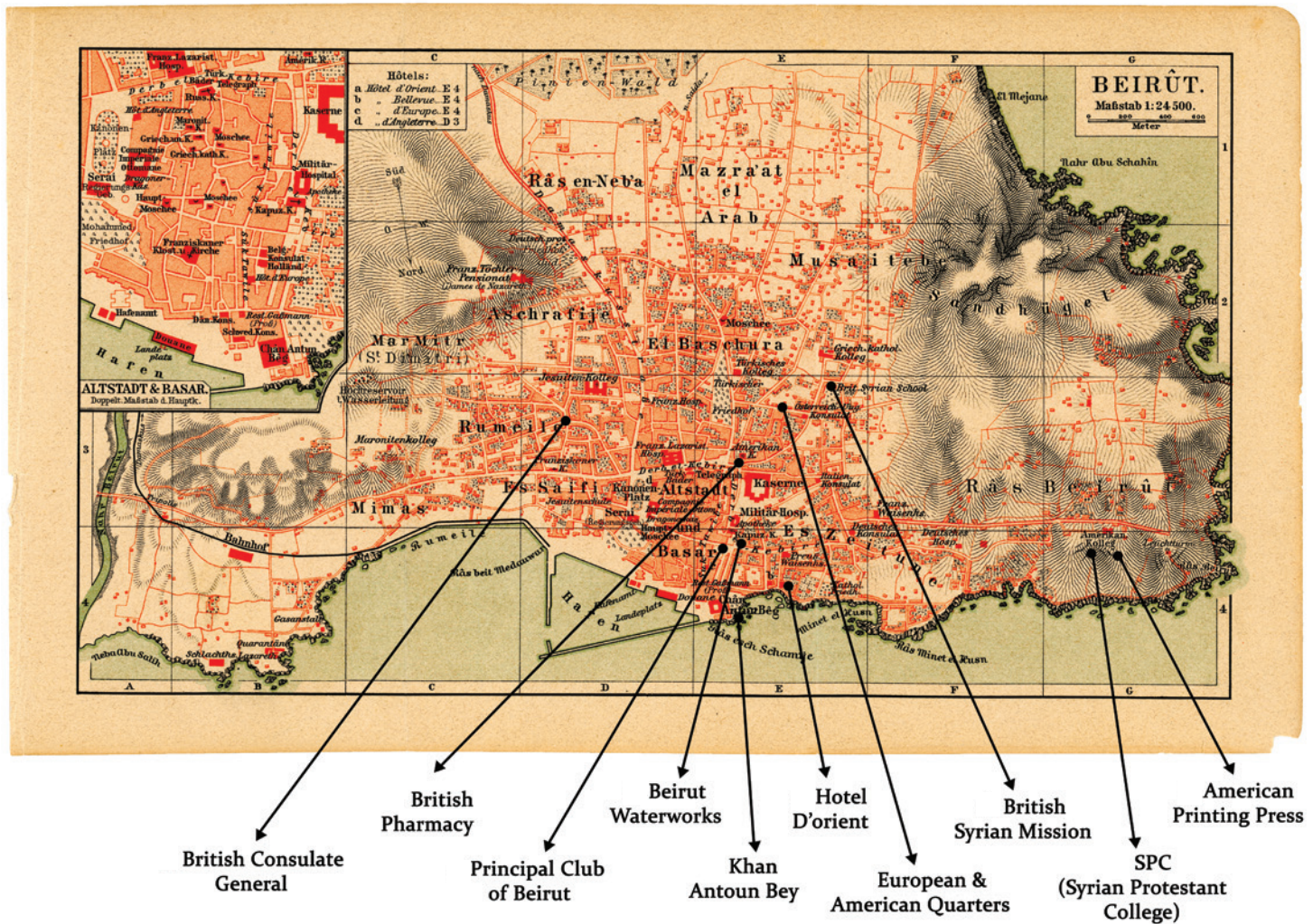


Fig. 278. Map of Beirut (Baedeker guide, 1912).

The British wall letter boxes installed in Beirut were shipped from London and had the following specifications: W. T. Allen & Co. "B" size, each fitted with Chubb's lock and two keys, an escutcheon plate, and a tablet receptacle. They were 2 ft, 9 in. high, 1 ft ¾ in. wide, and 1 ft. deep. Each box costed two pounds, 15 shillings, and 10 d. It is reported that a certain number of these boxes would have been erected on pedestals surrounded by masonry, while others could be secured to the wall (this excluded an outside letter box on the post office wall on the 1st floor at the Khan Antoun Bey building).



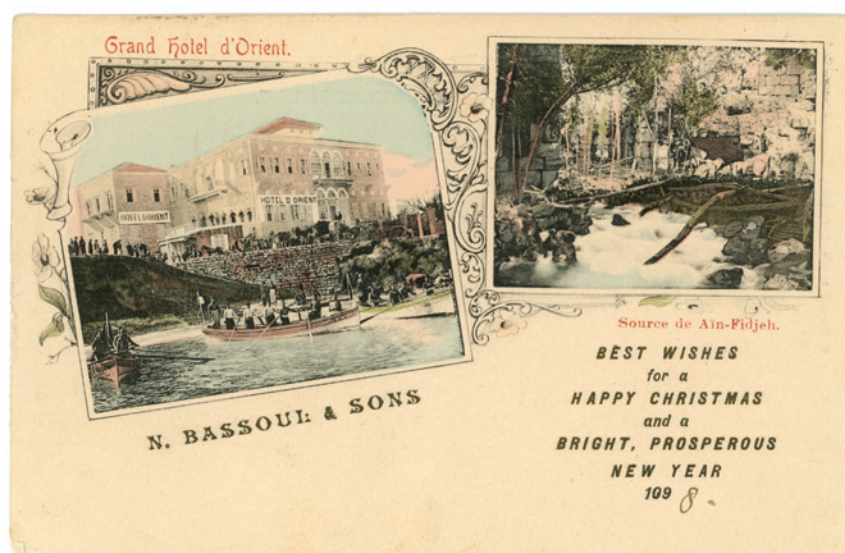


Fig. 279. Hotel d'Orient where the office of Thomas Cook was located, and travelers could drop their letters, franked with British postage stamps, in the British letter box installed there. The picture shows the hotel's small private boats shuttling the guests between the ships and the hotel located by the shore.

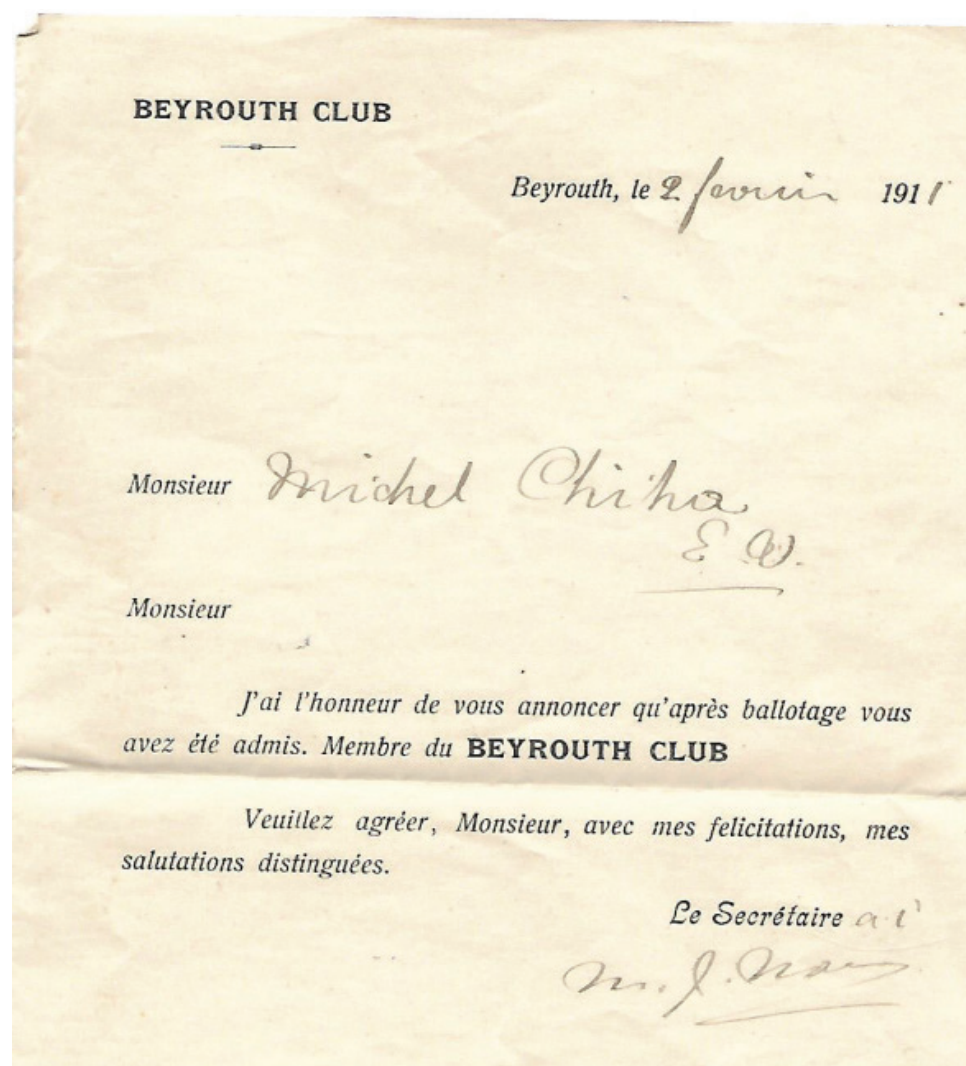


Fig. 280. This is a brief note sent to Michel Chiha (then around 21 years old) confirming his nomination to the prestigious Beyrouth Club founded in 1880, and located in Martyr's Square, the business center of Beirut in the Sursock building.<sup>502</sup> This club was set up along the lines of British clubs and reserved exclusively for men, targeting the affluent members of the business community. A British letter box was conveniently installed outside the club to facilitate the dispatch of overseas correspondence franked with British postage stamps (Courtesy of the archives of the Michel Chiha foundation collection).



## 7. Mail Activity at the British Post Office

As discussed previously, the British did not possess, until **1871**, any other postal presence in the Ottoman Empire except in strategic Egypt, the Ottoman capital Constantinople, and the Beirut packet agency. The British had no single primary contracted shipping liner that stopped on a regular basis at the different Ottoman port cities, as the French Messageries and the Austrian Lloyd did to serve their respective postal administration.

British postal interest in Alexandria and Beirut was to maintain and secure postal communication with strategic India and the eastern territories (e.g., Mesopotamia and Persia). British, and other foreign merchants as well as native traders continued using the existing extensive postal network of the French and Austrians along their respective subsidized liners, for conveying their mail needs between Beirut and Britain/British possessions.

## 8. Publication Exports from Beirut

The published materials from the American and French printing presses were sold globally through agents worldwide. The American Press had foreign-based agents in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Zanzibar, Syria, Iraq, Persia, India, Philippines, Australia, the US, and Brazil. Its publications were translated into several languages: Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Hebrew, Greek, Kurdish, and Spanish.



Fig. 281. The American Press was located on the campus of the Syrian Protestant College, where a British letter box was installed.

However (based on a sample study of 719 mails processed by all five foreign post offices in Beirut in March **1873–1900**), the share of mail processed by the British Post alone for the **1870s** decade stood at 29%. This share in the **1880s** and **1890s** decades stood respectively at 27% and 32% despite the British being the fifth foreign post (preceding the Germans in **1900**) to have opened in Beirut in March **1873**.

This British postal performance was at the expense of France's postal activity that dropped between these two decades from 45% to 26% (see p. 203). This performance could be possibly explained by the specific targeting of Anglo-Saxon establishments in Beirut; namely the active correspondence of the missionaries' staff at the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), at the 38 British Syrian Schools, and at the active American Press that shipped publications overseas.



Fig. 282. Logo of the American Press in Beirut.

The export of all types of publications was accompanied by a flow of correspondence through the foreign post offices in Beirut, with the British Post playing a role with their letter box located at the American Press. The table below<sup>503</sup> gives an idea about the quantity of publications generated by the American Press in Beirut that shipped through the British Post Office, whose postmaster and British consul general also sat on the SPC board:

	1876	1890
Number of Presses	10	20
Publications	207	461
Volumes printed	38,450	76,700
Bibles, religious pamphlets, books	31,362	102,720

Fig. 283

## 9. Tourism and Thomas Cook

A very important segment of clientele were the numerous tourists and travelers using the postal system in their grand tour to the Mediterranean that was promoted by advertisements or reported in specialized journals, such as by the *Scientific American* in **1867**, “for a voyage undertaken from the foot of Wall Street, New York to the fine steamer Quaker City, for an excursion for that most attractive of all parts of the world, the Mediterranean” that included a stop in Beirut.<sup>504</sup>

In **1896**, the *British Medical Journal* included an article about the well-advertised Roman site of Baalbeck<sup>505</sup> and its Heliopolis temple (in modern Lebanon) as well as the city of Damascus, which made the transit through Beirut unavoidable.<sup>506</sup>

One of the direct results of the Industrial Revolution was modern-day tourism introduced by Thomas Cook;<sup>507</sup> travel that was affordable, conducted by professionals, and involved large numbers of people on fixed itineraries. Thomas Cook personally inaugurated the first grand tour of the Middle East in spring **1869**, which included Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. These “tourists” included missionaries, teachers, traders, developers, bankers, and messianic dreamers. In the subsequent years, Cook accompanied his son, John, in his “Eastern Tours” which were “Biblical, Educational and General Tours” and meant for clergy and church members. Cook was reported to have brought about 4,200 tourists to Palestine and Syria in the period **1869–1882**, of which about two-thirds went to Palestine.<sup>508</sup>

Many foreign travelers and tourists stayed in Beirut at the Hotel d’Orient (in operation from the **1850s**) as reported in several travel guides. This hotel was promoted by Thomas Cook Travel, which had an office nearby with a letter box installed by the British Post on its outside wall for tourists to drop mail franked with British postage stamps.

Thomas Cook so actively promoted the Hotel d’Orient, that they even printed stationery envelopes and letterheads with fine print that said: “The only Hotel recommended by Cook.”



Fig. 284. Stationery envelopes from the Hotel d’Orient, “The Only Hotel recommended by Cook.”

Travel guides reported the difficulties of landing and embarking at Beirut and other Syrian ports, and note this was reduced to a minimum by the introduction of Cook’s Landing and Embarking Tickets, which were provided for the conveyance of the traveler and his baggage from steamer to quay (or vice versa), through customs, from quay to the hotel or railway station, together with the services of an interpreter. A travel guide dated **1892**<sup>509</sup> adds that “...once met by a Cook representative on board their ship, the travelers may dismiss all care of anxiety from their minds.”

Circular notes and letters of credit could also be obtained at the office of Thomas Cook, offering a convenient and secure means of carrying large amounts of money. The notes were issued for sums of 20 sterling pounds and upward (in notes of 20, 10, and 5), and letters of credit for sums of 100 sterling pounds and upward. These could be cashed at Cook branch offices and by numerous correspondents in all parts of the world. Drafts are issued, cable transfers effected, and foreign moneys are exchanged at the best rates.<sup>510</sup>



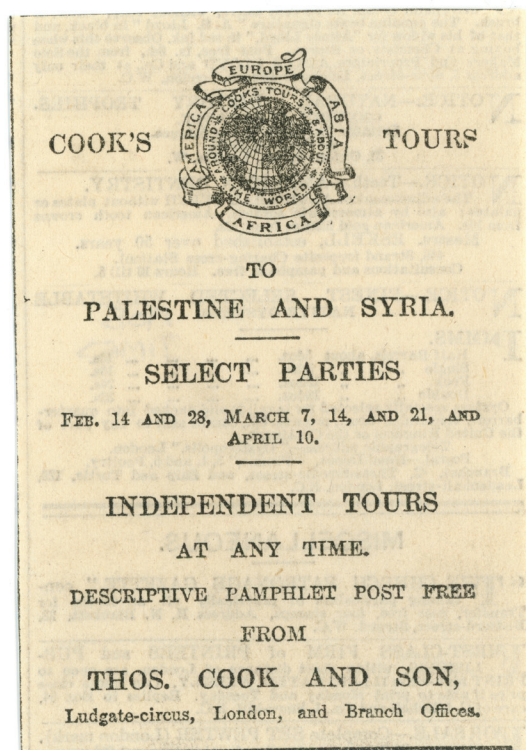


Fig. 285. Thomas Cook advertisement in the Times from 1905.

Moreover, from the **1880s**, the quantity of travelers' and collectors' mail surged.

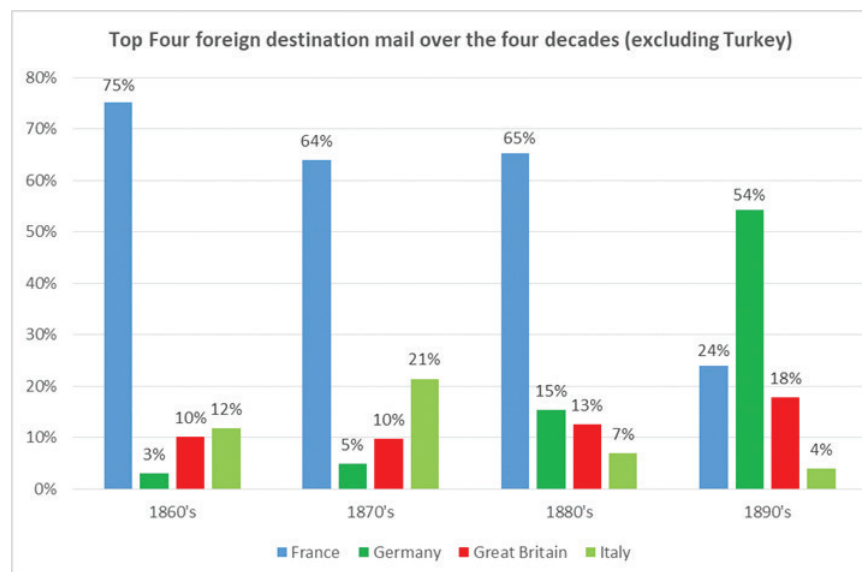


Fig. 286. France was the leading recipient of mail from Beirut, shifting in the **1890s** to Germany, and then Britain (mail flow based on a sample of 1300 correspondences).

## The Flow of Mail to Far Destinations

By **1906**, the percentage of British Empire foreign trade with the Ottoman Empire represented less than 1.5% of the total, and the percentage with Beirut much lower. The city's foreign trade was mainly conducted with Europe mainly with France (e.g., Syrian raw silk exports from Beirut), Britain (e.g., manufactured products), Austria, Russia, and Italy, reflected partly in the mail flow in fig. 286.

However, an important flow of mail between Beirut and unusual destinations was linked to a new surging hobby worldwide among collectors; the trading and exchange of postcards with views and postage stamps, especially from **1900** onward. This new collecting passion mushroomed across continents and oceans thanks to specific publications connecting collectors together. The medium of communication for the exchange was through the active use of postcards and stationery cards supplied by foreign post offices and merchants in Beirut. The postcard's low postal rate stood either at 5 centimes or 10 centimes (for the latter for cards written with five words or more).

The card was used to gauge first the potential interest in an exchange, to be subsequently followed through the dispatch of the postage stamps, for example, in a registered envelope.

Consequently, increased education and literacy, a growing middle class, and information circulating faster due to the new technologies (e.g., railway, steamship, newspapers/magazines, telegraph) made the exchange easier for a wider segment of the population.

**Although the hobby of collecting postage stamps (e.g., philately) began in the 1860s in Britain and Europe, it started to be noted in Beirut in correspondences from the 1880s.<sup>511</sup> In a separate study, the author demonstrated through a representative sample that the main flow of mail activity from the late 1880s between Beirut and many unusual destinations resulted from the exchange of postage stamps, postal stationery cards, and postcards with a view.**



# THE MONTHLY ADVERTISER.

No. 1. DECEMBER 15, 1862. PRICE 1d.

## TO OUR READERS.

POSTAGE STAMP collectors and dealers have long felt the want of a publication which should devote itself entirely to their interests, and serve as a medium for their advertisements. To supply this want in some measure has been our aim in publishing the MONTHLY ADVERTISER, and we hope to be favored with the support of all whom it is designed to benefit. We shall be happy to receive original articles on the subject of Postage Stamps, and early information of rare varieties or new issues, not to be found in existing Catalogues, which shall be inserted in our following numbers. We shall also be glad to afford any assistance in our power to Collectors through the column devoted to Correspondents, though we cannot undertake to answer enquiries through the post.

Advertisements will be inserted at the following moderate charges:

Under 40 words..... 1s. 6d.  
" 60 " ..... 2s. 3d.  
" 80 " ..... 3s. 0d.  
" 120 " ..... 4s. 6d.

Orders for which, as well as all other communications, should be sent before 7th instant, addressed to

MESSRS. EDWARD MOORE & CO.

DEALERS IN FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMPS, LIVERPOOL.

## THE COLLECTION OF POSTAGE STAMPS.

BY FRED. BOOTH.

It is curious to see how much public opinion has been modified lately upon the subject of stamp collecting. Some two or three years ago, when collectors were to be numbered by units, (they are now numbered by hundreds) they were looked upon as hopelessly, but harmlessly, insane on the subject; and their friends and acquaintances were willing to gratify their mania, for after all they only asked for "old postage stamps," of no possible use to any one excepting themselves. If those same sneerers could now see the really beautiful books which the more tasteful, fortunate, and persevering collectors possess, they would be obliged to acknowledge that there is a latent beauty even in a disfigured postage stamp. The books themselves in their gay, album like bindings, which are now to be obtained of almost every stationer, are no unpleasing objects; but when ornamented on the left-hand page, as I have seen them, with gay illuminated borders which surround the arms, flags, crown, and cockade of the respective countries, with the appropriate stamps on the right side (which is also surrounded with a light illum-



Fig. 288. French postage stamp market in 1860 (postcard from a wood print by Jules Germain).

Fig. 287. This is the front cover of the first issue of a stamp collector's publication, the world's first dedicated British journal named *The Monthly Advertiser*, from 1862.<sup>512</sup>

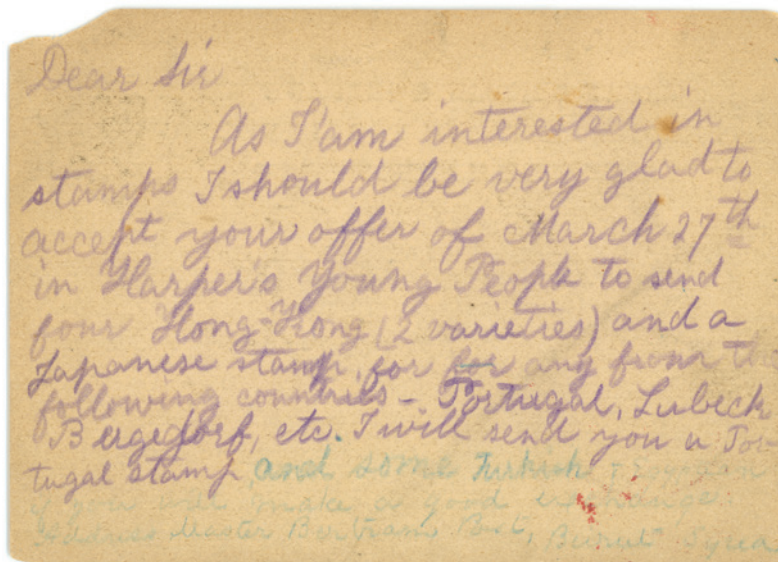


Fig. 289. One of the oldest overseas correspondences from Beirut for trading postage stamps is dated 1883, in this case with San Francisco in the US.



Based on a representative sample of 1,300 mails, the graph below shows the increased market share of the mail flow processed at the British Post Office in Beirut operating from around May 1873 to December 31, 1899.

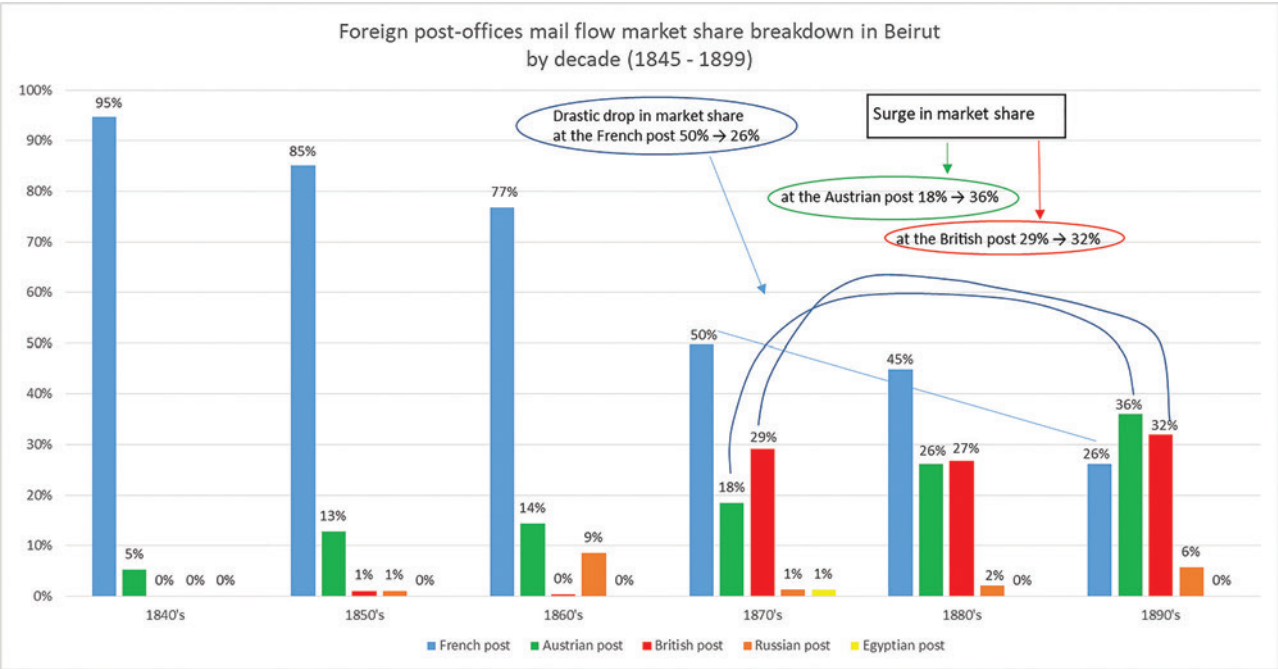


Fig. 290

## 10. The British Post Office in Beirut at the Turn of the Century

On December 31, **1904**, a note was sent to the GPO in London by the British Post Office “agent” (e.g., or post-master position held by the consul general Drummond Hay) in Beirut concerning an increase in the annual rent (from sterling, shilling, pence 11:10:8 to 15:17:6) of the British post office occupied as requested by the owner Mr. Cailard of the Khan Antoun Bey, where the other foreign post offices were also located.

Here is a comparative table sent to London which finally led to the approval of the rent requested on April 8, **1905**.<sup>513</sup> Clearly, the premises of the British Post was one of the smallest, with the lowest rent, located on the 1st floor next to the Austrian Post, which had the largest and most expensive rented premises, while both the French and the German Posts were located on the ground floor.

Foreign Post Offices in Beirut	Length Feet. In.	Breadth Feet. In.	Annual Rent New
<b>British</b> (1st floor)	45. 6	15. 9	400 francs (or rounded sterling pounds 15)
<b>Austrian</b> (1st floor) 1st room: 2nd room:	45. 6 30. 4	15. 9 16.	700 francs (or rounded sterling pounds 27)
<b>French</b> (ground floor-GF) 1st room: 2nd room:	45. 6 28. 9	15. 9 17	1000 francs (or rounded sterling pounds 39)
<b>German</b> (GF)	36. 5	17	600 francs (or rounded pounds 23)

Fig. 291

Fig. 292. Incoming number of British mails to Beirut from different places 1874-1904

<u>From</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>1884</u>	<u>1894</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1896</u>	<u>1897</u>	<u>1898</u>	<u>1899</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1902</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1904</u>
London	52	55	84	97	128	121	115	109	110	96	98	117	124
Larnaca		47	62	104	114	86	100	69	60	75	99	78	91
Limassol										19	37	33	25
Smyrna		65	94	78	100	77	77	64	65	76	94	78	90
Constantinople		61	62	56	70	64	66	37	39	47	73	62	94
Sydney (*)							20	51	45	47	49	50	42
Melbourne (*)			46	55	57	61	52	49	46	48	48	47	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>509</b>

(\*) Mail addressed most probably from Lebanese emigrants in Australia.

Fig. 293. Outgoing number of British mails from Beirut to different destinations 1874-1904

<u>To</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>1884</u>	<u>1894</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1896</u>	<u>1897</u>	<u>1898</u>	<u>1899</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1902</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1904</u>
London	80	80	125	137	133	128	134	117	80	74	91	106	119
Port Said		73	129	108	85	122	133	121	112	133	115	136	140
Alexandria		90	107	114	117	119	121	109	96	80	77	69	88
Cairo			103	112	114	116	123	101	93	67	65	58	72
Larnaca		29	39	49	100	78	50	45	59	59	79	45	41
Limassol											34	33	30
Smyrna		54	90	90	84	84	52	59	36	44	52	52	71
Constantinople	80	72	88	111	115	161	139	127	122	104	116	113	113
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>674</b>



**Fig. 294. Postal Revenues (in sterling pound rounded off) at the British Post Office in Beirut (1894-1910)**

	<u>1894</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1902</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1904</u>	<u>1905</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>1907</u>	<u>1908</u>	<u>1909</u>	<u>1910</u>
Postage Stamps sale	734	702	704	758	771	823	709	624	731	782	825	1218(1)
Money Orders issued(2)									846	1684	1176	999
Money Orders paid(2)									4094	5387	982(4)	1689
Money Orders commission(2)									7	14	10	10
Postal Orders issued(3)							731	1243	1260	1555	1883	2318
Money Orders paid(3)							110	418	652	906	1083	1146
Letters & postcards from UK during four weeks (lb.)							185	nav	243	233	282	292

(1) It is estimated that 300 (25%) of this amount represented exceptional sales to stamp dealers.

(2) Service introduced in June 1907.

(3) Service introduced in June 1905.

(4) The US Post Office ceased to allow the withdrawal of money orders on the British Post Office in Beirut in 1909.

**Fig. 295. Postal Revenues at the Beirut British Post in 1910 (in sterling pound rounded off)**

<u>REVENUES</u>		<u>EXPENSES</u>	
Sale of stamps	1218(*)	Salaries, wages, allowances	378
Postage collected on unpaid		Rent, lighting, etc.	20
and insufficiently paid mail	21	Individual dental expenses	4
Private box fees	29	Printing done locally	10
Commissions on money	10	Mail conveyance-boat hire	25
orders issued			
Poundage on PO issued	15	Transit charges	375
Interest on bank deposit	7	Balance	488
account			
Total	1,300	Total	1,300

(\*) It is estimated that 300 pounds of this amount represents exceptional sales to stamp dealers.

In **1911**, a consular study shows the need to adjust the salaries of the staff at the British Post Office in Beirut, following the alarming increase in the cost of living, and as the scales of pay were on the whole lower than the staff at the other foreign post offices. Interesting to read at this time is a comment by the postmaster general in London:

*...it is not practicable to apply to the case of the Levant Agencies the general principle observed in the Inland Service that the salaries of the staff at any given office should be regulated solely or principally by the amount of business transacted... the British post office agencies in the Levant are however, maintained not for the purpose of increasing revenue, but mainly on general grounds of political expediency and for the convenience of the British communities in the Ottoman Empire.*

This kind of remark, several decades ago when the British Empire economic power was pre-eminent, was unheard

of from the GPO or the Treasury. Finally, it is no more a cost-benefit exercise, which will be used as a basis for maintaining a postal activity, the element of politics became an important motive for subsidizing the operations of the still modest British Post Office network in the Levant, including the one in Beirut. The British post offices set up respectively in **1872**, and **1873**, in Smyrna and Beirut was in a period of growing economic competition from Germany, France, and the US.

Below is listed the number and type of staff employed at the British Post Offices respectively at Smyrna (the largest port in the Ottoman Empire) and Beirut (third largest port in the Ottoman Empire). The difference in numbers and pay is reflected by the more important activity in Smyrna and probably by a higher cost of living.

**Fig. 296. Annual Salaries Comparison (in sterling pounds),<sup>514</sup> 1911**

	<u>Beirut</u>	<u>Smyrna</u>
	<u>Sterling.Shilling.Penny</u>	
Post Office Agent	80	100
Chief Clerk	140-6-180	200-10-300
Assistant Clerk	-	70-8-150
First Assistant Clerk	55-5-90	60-6-100
Second Assistant Clerk	26-2-32	50-5-75
Office Porter & Messenger	1.12/-a monthly	30-2.10/-40
Postman	25-2.10/- 35	40-2.10/-50



## 11. The First World War

Following the outbreak of the First World War, the Ottoman postal administration sent a telegram to the foreign embassies in Constantinople on September 20, **1914**, informing them that foreign post offices would be abolished and closed by October 1.<sup>515</sup>

The British ambassador in Constantinople reported in a telegram<sup>516</sup> to London, that: *...it will be almost impossible to allow British correspondence to go through Turkish Post without some safeguard, as letters would fairly be opened or not delivered regularly although Turkish postal service has greatly improved under Oscan Effendi.*

Five days later, on September 26, a telegram was sent to the British Post Offices in Beirut, Smyrna, Baghdad, and Basra that the post office should be closed and external signs removed on the evening of September 30. The message added:

*...you should not resist measures taken to give effect to the letter from the Director of Post, you should, however, call on the Vali (governor of Beirut) and intimate to him that closing of the office must not be construed as abandoning rights based on treaty and usage, but you should add that the question is a diplomatic one and as such is being dealt with in Constantinople, and that His Majesty's Government reserve all their rights pending a bilateral settlement.*<sup>517</sup>

Interestingly, the British ambassador reports that his French counterpart had received instructions from his foreign affairs minister to keep the French Post Offices open on October 1, and only close under threat of force, and to resist step-by-step all attempts by the local authorities to close. The pragmatic British postal authorities had agreed with their Russian counterparts that resisting would serve no purpose, and that it could lead to incidents, which are best avoided.

209

The Foreign Office reported on September 30, **1914**, to the General Post Office in London, that following some negotiations, arrangements with the Ottoman Post were made for mails, which will reach the British Post Office in Constantinople within 55 days and the British Post Offices in Beirut and Smyrna within 30 days from October 1, to be opened by British postal officials. The postmaster general plans (with the agreement of the Foreign Office) was to keep sending all mail — which is expected to arrive at the destination offices within the specified timeframes — to the British Post Offices. Subsequent mails will be addressed to the Ottoman Post. All correspondence undelivered by October 1, will be handed over to the Ottoman Post Office, and the cash in hand and papers of value would be deposited at the consulate general in Beirut.<sup>518</sup>

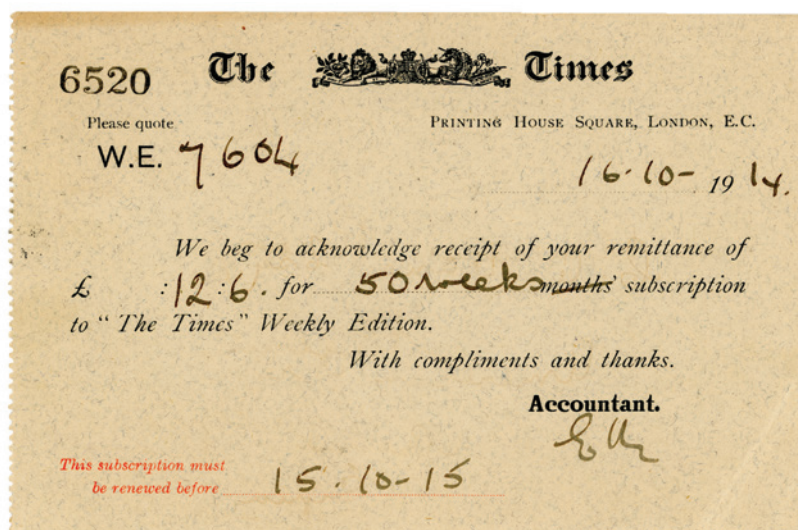


Fig. 297. This incoming stationery postal card was received in Beirut on October 21, **1914** (under the 30 days agreed upon with the Ottoman authorities from the closure date of October 1). Although it was received by the Ottoman Post as evidenced by the arrival Turkish Post date stamp, the British postal staff would have been the ones to have opened the mail as stipulated by the agreement signed with the British and mentioned above.



CABLE ADDRESS  
"INSULCATE" NEW YORK

TELEPHONE  
822 GRAMERCY

THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS  
OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.  
156 Fifth Avenue  
NEW YORK

DWIGHT H. DAY  
TREASURER  
RUSSELL CARTER  
ASSISTANT TREASURER

July 20, 1915.

Mr. James J. Oliver,  
Commercial Bank of Scotland, Ltd.,  
Hawick, Scotland.

W.W.I

My dear Mr. Oliver:-

Replying to your letter of July 5th I would say recent information seems to indicate that mail service between here and Syria, either way, is very greatly retarded and we have reason to believe that possibly our entire correspondence for perhaps two months or even more is accumulated somewhere and undelivered. On the other hand, we have received nothing from Syria since the mail dated by them May 15th. I should not advise therefore the forwarding at present of any matter which could remain in hand. I will send forward your letter which you enclose along with our next consignment of mail, but I can give you no assurance that it will reach its destination within a comparatively short time. My fear is that it will be quite otherwise.

Yours very truly,

RUSSELL CARTER, Asst. Treasurer,

By *RC*

G/B

*P.S. Since this was dictated mail matter  
has come from Syria, dated June 12 & 14.*

Fig. 298. This BFMP (Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church) correspondence dated July 20, 1915, to its banker in Scotland illustrates the continuous and dire situation of mail disruption in Syria, 15 months after the forced closure of the foreign post offices on September 30, 1914.



# 12. Descriptions of Selected British Mail Primarily Processed through the British Postal System in Beirut

This section lists chronologically 35 samples of incoming, outgoing, and transiting mail processed through the British Post Office in Beirut. The postal items for the period March 1873–October 1875 and more specifically those with mixed-franked covers can be found in pages 165-172. The postal description of these correspondences was possible whenever the information was clearly apparent on the postal item itself, but also from information obtained from specific official publications of the period

(e.g., GPO notices, official postal guides of the time) and from different specialized modern sources mentioned in the bibliography section. In some cases, for example, the shipping routes and transit stops may not be apparent, and obtaining them would have been outside the scope of this publication. In other cases, the sender's name and other information could not be obtained from the piece of mail described, and thus the relevant info was not added.

## REJECTED BRITISH COVER FORWARDED TO THE FRENCH POST



Fig. 299



Fig. 300. Chief Rabbi Moise Isidor

1875	BEIRUT-FRANCE	(19 days)	BY FRENCH MESSAGERIES STEAMER
FRANKING:	This Pre-UPU unpaid single-rate cover was dropped by the sender at the British Post in Beirut where it was date stamped there, but then forwarded the next day to the French Post where 10 French décimes were applied on the front and were due on arrival.		
ROUTE:	British Post Beirut (October 4) - French Post Beirut (5) - Tripoli - Latakia - Alexandretta - Mersin - Rhodes - Smyrna - Syra - Napoli - Marseille - Paris (23).		
RECEIVER:	Moise Isidor (1813–1888), President (e.g., Chief Rabbi) of the Jewish community in France. He united the heterogeneous elements of the community into one harmonious body. He was conservative, and his enthusiasm for unity led him to oppose the Reform party. He was the creator of the rabbinical missions, and especially devoted himself to the task of assimilating Algerian Judaism with that of France.		
REMARK:	It is the only recorded unpaid, date stamped cover at the British Post in Beirut that was forwarded to the French Post, as the British Post in that period only accepted mixed-franked mail to destinations such as France (see pages 174-179) and that was shipped out of Alexandria (after ensuring it there from Beirut aboard contracted ships). The cover may have been remitted to the British Post Office late in the day, and was forwarded only the following day to the French Post. The French Post graciously accepted to forward the unpaid mail with the due rate, as it would charge the addressee at arrival twice the rate than if it had been paid at departure.		





Fig. 301

1876

BEIRUT-INDIA

(36 days)

BY A CONTRACTED LINER

**FRANKING:** Pre-UPU (India became UPU member only in July 1876) single-rate paid cover of 10d. with four postage stamps of 2½ d. and cancelled by the numeral cancel mark G06, the first cancellation mark to be used in Beirut.

**MARKS:** In manuscript, in French *voie Suez & Bombay*, meaning "via Suez & Bombay."

**ROUTE:** Beirut (February 3) - Alexandria (6) - Sea Post Office (14)

**RECEIVER:** F.M. Heilgers & Co.

**REMARK:** This is one of the earliest surviving cover posted at the British Post in Beirut destined to India. The Bombay-Aden-Suez Sea Post Office service was introduced in 1868 to speed the delivery of mail to and from India. It was operated by the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) on their steamer service: Suez with Bombay via Aden. The sorting of mail at sea in either direction was carried by up to six teams under the control of the Indian Post Office. An intermediate stop was made at Aden for the discharge and collection of mail to and from East Africa and the Arabian coast, as well as for refueling the ships. Although, the arrival date stamp in Calcutta is not apparent on the back, the receiver has handwritten the arrival date of March 11.

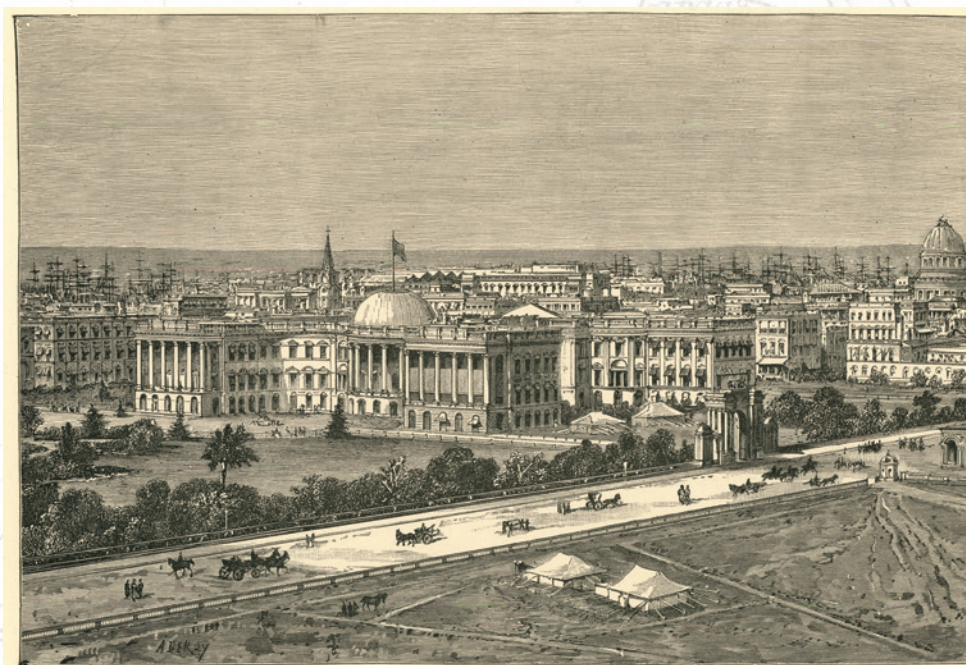


Fig. 302. Print of Calcutta (c. 1885).





Fig. 303

1876

BEIRUT-TORONTO (29 days)

**FRANKING:** A single-rate paid cover of 2½ d. with an additional 1½ d. applied by the British Post and due to the Canadian Post for national mail transport.

**MARKS:** 1½ d. red stamped credit note.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (December 7) - London (17) - Toronto (January 4)

**RECEIVER:** P. Paterson

**REMARK:** In the late 19th century, Canada was still quite a rare destination for correspondence with Beirut. Canada only joined the UPU on July 1, 1878, more than a year and a half after the posting of that mail. The British single-rate letter of 2½ d. postage is the correct franking from Beirut until arrival on Canadian land. However, as Canada had not joined the UPU at that time, the 1½ d. red hand stamp was applied by the British as a credit due from Britain to Canada representing the internal rate for the Canadian Post transporting the mail within Canada.



Fig. 304. Toronto Street in Toronto



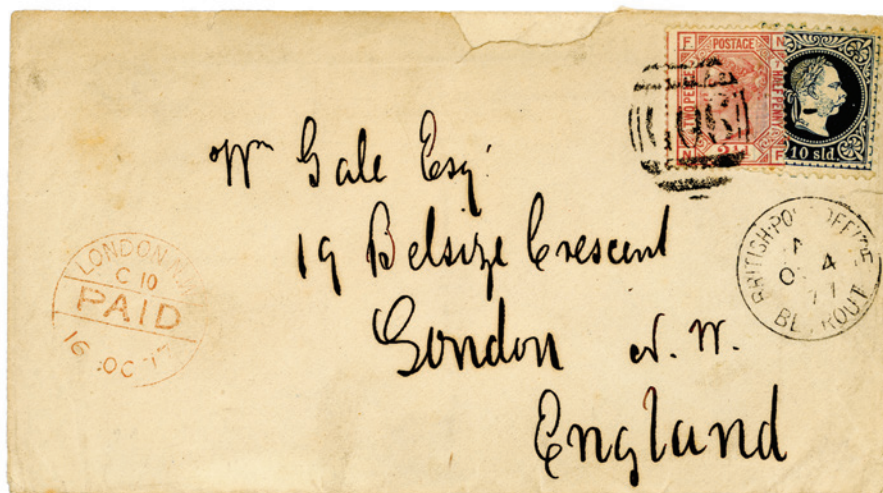


Fig. 305

1877

BEIRUT-LONDON (13 days)

**FRANKING:** This cover, destined to Britain, was first franked with a single-rate Austrian postage of 10 soldis but was then subsequently franked for the same value with a British postage of 2½ d. which was finally the only postage cancelled at the British Post in Beirut.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (October 4) - London (16)

**RECEIVER:** W. Gale

**REMARK:** The sender must have apparently planned at first to post the cover at the Austrian Post, then subsequently, applied a British postage and went to the British Post. The sender could have just used another cover to apply the British postage in order to save the Austrian postage and use it another time, but ended up posting the cover with the two postage stamps of which the only the British one was cancelled, and the other (e.g., 10 soldis stamp) was left untouched. The sender may have reached the Austrian Post late after it closed, while the British Post was still open, or else found that the Austrian Lloyd ship was not available on that day, and instead remitted it to the British Post that had a contracted steamer at the port ready to accept the mail. By 1872, archival records show that the GPO in London had contracted on the Beirut-Alexandria and Beirut-Brindisi shipping routes different liners (e.g., the Austrian Lloyd, the Khedivial steam liner, and the Russian ROPIT) to transport British mail from Beirut to Britain.



Fig. 306. Belsize Park, London





Fig. 307

**1877** **BEIRUT-OMAHA** (33 days)

**FRANKING:** Quintuple rate cover of 12½ d., a very unusual high-value mail.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (December 27) - London (January 12) - New York (24) - Omaha (28).

**SENDER:** John Ramsey

**RECEIVER:** Mrs. Oberlin N. Ramsey in Omaha, Nebraska was a frequent recipient of private correspondences from her brother John, who worked at the US consulate in Beirut, where he used the postal stationery of the consulate.

**REMARK:** In general, the majority of letters in Beirut by John Ramsey were franked with the standard single-rate of 2½ d. for up to ½ oz. (e.g., 14.17 g) of weight in that period. The twelve covers found in several private collections addressed to Miss O.N. Ramsey in the period 1876–1880, were all single-rate letters except one double rate, and this high-value quintuple-rate cover. This cover was franked five times the single-rate letter, represented by five postages of 2½ d., so the weight of that cover must have been between 56.68 - 70.85 g, not a common letter weight.

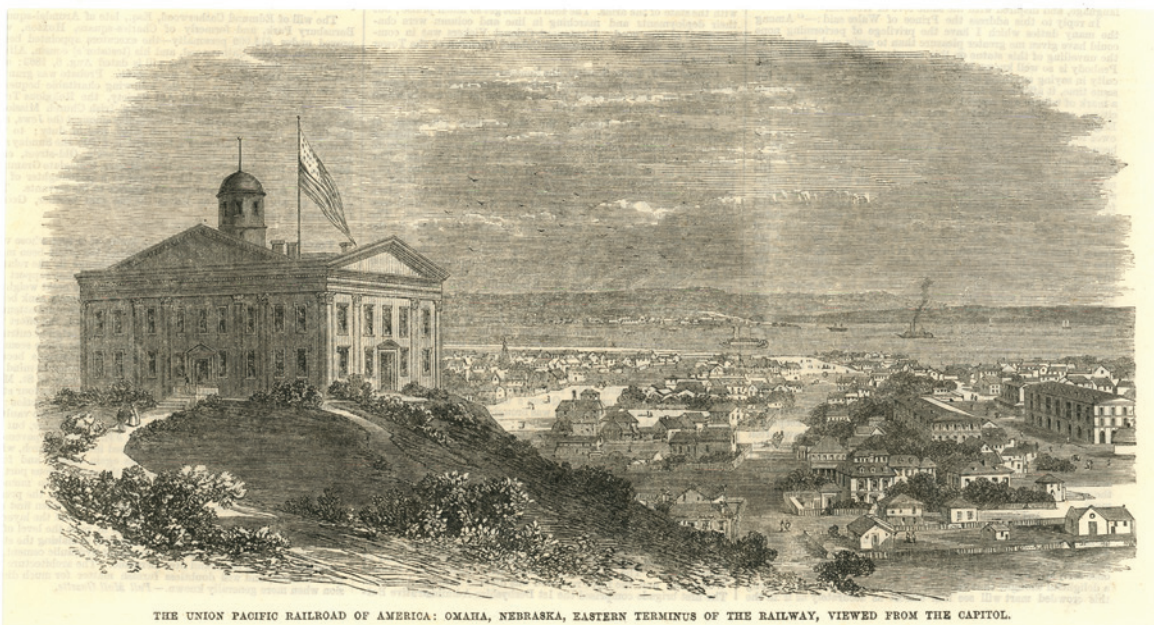


Fig. 308. Omaha, Nebraska (1869)





Fig. 309

1879

NEW YORK STATE- BEIRUT

(30 days)

BY KHEDIVIAL STEAMER

**FRANKING:** Single-rate missionary printed matter cover charged 3 US cents.

**ROUTE:** New York State (June 9) - Brindisi (25) - Messina (27) - Alexandria (28) - Beirut (July 6)

**SENDER:** Schwann & Co.

**RECEIVER:** Miss Mary M. Lyon care of Reverend Dr. W.E. Eddy

**REMARK:** As with any printed matter envelope, the back flap was left open to enable the postal clerk to verify and assure that the content was indeed a printed matter item.

This cover must have been forwarded as it was customary through Britain, the hub of transatlantic mail between the US and continental Europe. The route from Britain must have been through Ostend, Belgium, by railway to Brindisi (a faster route than through Marseille), where an Italian steamer brought the mail to Alexandria, and remitted it to the Egyptian Post there (as evidenced by the back stamp). The cover could have possibly been transboarded to a Khedivial steamer until Beirut.



Standing, from left to right, Dr. DENNIS, Dr. FOOT, Dr. HEART JESSUP, Mr. SAMUEL JESSUP and Mr. BIRD  
Sitting, Dr. VAN DYCK, Mr. CALHOUN, Dr. EDDY, Dr. BLISS and Dr. THOMPSON  
Taken about 1874

Fig. 310. A group portrait of the faculty at the SPC (1874) with Dr. Eddy seated in the middle, crossing his arms (Courtesy of the AUB library archives collection).





Fig. 311

217

## 1880-1883 BEIRUT-BENDORF

**FRANKING:** Single-rate printed matter mail with a postage of ½ d. cancelled with the first Beirut cancel mark G06. As a date stamp was not applied on the cover (as it was not required), and no date was included in the document, it can be deduced that the posting took place between November 1880 (the printing year of the document) and October 17, 1883 (the last year the cancel mark G06 was used).

**SENDER:** M. Volenskov

**RECEIVER:** Mr. M. Jacoby

**REMARK:** This is a fundraising printed letter dated 1880 in Rashi; old cursive Hebrew originating from Odesa (then in Russia), that was posted in Beirut, and then forwarded to Germany, to members of the Jewish community at all three places, asking for help. The letter is specifically from a father whose son (Shlomo Ben David, 18 years old) was supposed to get married, but did not have the money to pay for the wedding. As a result, the bride's parents refused to hold the wedding until he paid his part. He is asking for help to raise money so his son can marry. This letter may be one among many copies that entered Beirut, the commercial hub of the Syrian Ottoman province extending from Latakia in the northwest to Acre and Nablus in the south in the Holy Land. The involved several parties in this letter seem to have been part of a religious and communal distribution chain. The document combines elements of marketing, communal networking, and spiritual appeal, common in the late 19th-century Jewish diaspora.



## A RESENT REGISTERED COVER



Fig. 312

**1883** **LOTHBURY-DAMASCUS-BEIRUT** (11 days)

**FRANKING:** A double rate registered cover of 7½ d. (three postages: ½ d., 1 d., 6 d.) in addition to the registered fee of imprinted postage located underneath the 6d. overprinted postage. The reason for the 6 d. red overprinting is to distinguish between the 3 d. and 6 d. value that were of the same color. As the cover was resent, it was franked by the Ottoman Post with four postage stamps of 20 paras each = 80 paras (equivalent to 5 d.), paid by the sender in Damascus.

**ROUTE:** Lothbury (June 8) -British Post Beirut (18) - Ottoman Post Beirut (18) - Damascus (19)

**SENDER:** Schwann & Co.

**RECEIVER:** Julius Euting, care of the German Consul in Damascus. Euting was the director of the National Library of Strasbourg (German-occupied city following the Franco-Prussian War). He was 43 years old when he received that cover. Starting in 1867, he made numerous trips to the Middle East especially Syria and Arabia. Euting made a significant contribution to the study of Canaanite and Aramaic inscriptions, particularly in Phoenician and Punic, becoming the most cited name in the literature of Semitic epigraphy between 1875 and 1920.

**REMARK:** As foreign post offices were in principle not authorized to operate within the Ottoman territory, the British Post Office in Beirut forwarded the cover on the same day it was received to the Ottoman Post in Beirut, which in turn forwarded it to the Ottoman Post in Damascus. While the cover in Damascus was taken out of the Ottoman postal system and the addressee was found to have left Damascus, the cover was reintroduced in the Ottoman postal system, and as per UPU regulations, the cover had to be franked with the proper postage of 80 paras (i.e., 5 d.) before being resent to Beirut. Had the cover not been taken out from the Ottoman Post Office in Damascus, it could have been redirected back to Beirut without any additional Ottoman franking.



Fig. 313. Julius Euting (1839–1913).





Fig. 314

1885

BEIRUT-BISHOPS STORTFORD

**FRANKING:** A single-rate cover unusually franked with five ½ d. postage stamps.

**MARKS:** The arrival date stamp on the back is unknown, as the day on the date stamp was not set adequately.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (August 11) - Stortford

**RECEIVER:** G.E. Pritchett

**REMARK:** On August 1, 1885, the British Post Office overprinted stamps in Turkish currency (except for the low values of ½ d. and 1 d.). Single-rate franked letters constituted the majority of letters posted. In this case, one postage of 2½ d. would have been easier to frank on the letter, instead of five different stamps of ½ penny. The rise of philately or the collecting of postage stamps had already taken place in Europe earlier, and the addressee may have asked the sender to frank the letter with these many stamps instead of just one. Although it's a speculation, this cover is uncommon compared to the majority of single-rate letters posted and franked with fewer stamps to make up for the 2½ needed postage.





Fig. 315

1886 BEIRUT-CONSTANTINOPLE (12 days)

**FRANKING:** Single-rate franked cover, however, taxed by the Ottoman Post for being conveyed within the Ottoman territories by a foreign post.

**MARKS:** The tax due is evidenced by a *T* mark applied by the Ottoman Post in Constantinople.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (February 16) - Constantinople - Ottoman Post (25) - Constantinople - British Post (27)

**RECEIVER:** His Excellency the Commander in Chief of the Ottoman Army.

**REMARK:** The above single-rate cover posted at the British Post in Beirut in 1886, was addressed to Constantinople within the Ottoman territories. The Ottoman authorities had tolerated foreign post offices in the Ottoman Empire to handle only the incoming and outgoing overseas international mail. From 1864, any mail to be conveyed within the Ottoman domain out of foreign post offices located in the Ottoman Empire needed to be handed over to the Ottoman Post, which applied the adequate postage for the destination. In this case, as the cover was posted at the British Post in Beirut for a destination within the Ottoman borders: Constantinople, it was affixed with the *T* mark by the Ottoman Post when the British Post in Constantinople remitted the cover to the Ottoman Post there. The postage due to be collected from the addressee would be twice the standard single rate for that cover; 2 piasters representing 80 paras (= 40 paras x 2) being the penalty for the cover not having been franked at departure from one Ottoman location (e.g., Beirut) to another Ottoman location (e.g., Constantinople). Despite the applied *T* mark, the postage due may not have been collected at arrival, as the relevant postage adhesive was not applied on the cover once it arrived at the Ottoman Post, as it was commonly practiced.



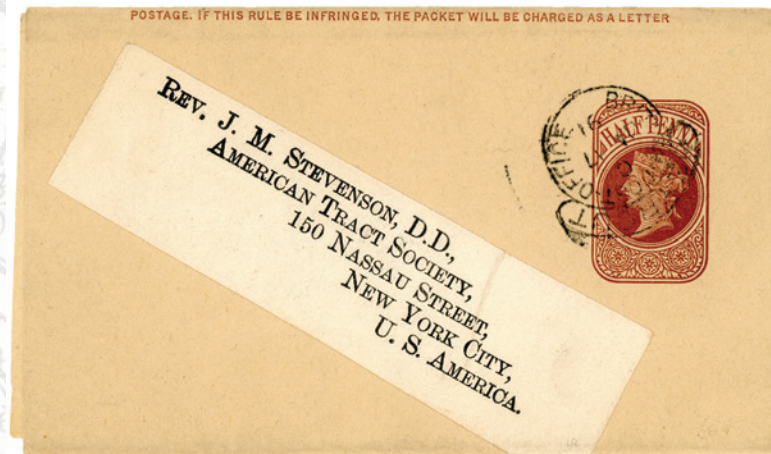


Fig. 316

1891

BEIRUT-NEW YORK

**FRANKING:** Single-rate stationery printed matter rate mail of ½ d. for up to 50 g.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (January 17)

**RECEIVER:** Reverend J.M. Stevenson, D.D., American Tract Society.

**REMARK:** Besides books, the active American Press at the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), printed and distributed religious tracts (pamphlets). Tracts, newspapers, and commercial catalogs conveyed by mail benefited from the lowest postal rate (e.g., ½ d. or 5 centimes for each 50 g. or fraction of it to promote culture and trade.) The sender of that pre-imprinted postage wrapper – postal stationery supplied by the British Post Office in Beirut was used to insert a tract, possibly. Interestingly, the addressee was the American Tract Society (ATS), a nonprofit, evangelical organization founded on May 11, 1825, in New York City for the purpose of publishing and disseminating tracts of Christian literature. It funded tract and evangelistic resource distribution, in regions including Africa, Asia, India, South and Central America, Canada, Australia, and Europe. Finally, it is interesting to note on the wrapper band a pre-printed warning message reminding the public that if a letter was inserted in that wrapper mail instead, a letter rate (e.g., 2½ d.) taxed twice would be charged at arrival.

THIS WRAPPER MAY ONLY BE USED FOR NEWSPAPERS, OR FOR SUCH DOCUMENTS AS ARE ALLOWED TO BE SENT AT THE BOOK-RATE OF POSTAGE AND MUST NOT ENCLOSE ANY LETTER OR OTHER ARTICLE LIABLE TO LETTER POSTAGE. IF THIS RULE BE INFRINGED, THE PACKET WILL BE CHARGED AS A LETTER

Fig. 317



## DOUBLE-RATE INCOMING PRINTED MATTER MAIL



Fig. 318

1897

LONDON - BEIRUT

**FRANKING:** Double-rate stationery printed matter rate mail of 1 d. made up of the imprinted postage of  $\frac{1}{2}$  d. and an additional affixed postage adhesive of  $\frac{1}{2}$  d.

**ROUTE:** London (February 24)

**RECEIVER:** Dr. Brigstoche

**REMARK:** As this stationery wrapper band (e.g., for a newspaper) with an imprinted postage of  $\frac{1}{2}$  d. had a weight between 50 g. and 100 g., an additional postage of  $\frac{1}{2}$  d. was affixed. The rate for printed matters stood at  $\frac{1}{2}$  d. for every 50 g. The used London datestamp on this cover is a typical cancellation performed at the London Newspaper Department which handled printed matters mail.



SORTING NEWSPAPERS AT THE GENERAL POST OFFICE, LONDON.

Fig. 319. Print showing the sorting newspaper department at the General Post Office in London (1906).



# FORGED INVERTED OVERPRINT OF 40 PARAS



Fig. 320

1894

BEIRUT-MENTON

(15 days)

BY KHEDIVIAL STEAMER

**FRANKING:** This is a paid, registered British entire stationery cover supplied by the British Post in Beirut. The imprinted postage rate of 2½ pennies was overprinted with 40 Turkish paras, the standard rate for a single-rate letter, post-UPU. The additional postage stamp of 2½ d. overprinted 40 paras represented the rate for the registered fee.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (February 22) - Port Said (24) - Marseille (March 2) - Menton (3)

**RECEIVER:** Jacques Casetelli

**SHIPPER:** From Beirut to Port Said, possibly by Khedivial steamer (as evidenced by the back cover Egyptian date stamp), then transboarded onto a Messageries ship (as shown by the front red date stamp), that came through the Suez Canal as evidenced by the *Ligne T* handstamp affixed aboard a ship coming from Noumea via Australia. Once it arrived in Marseille, the cover was transboarded onto a train for Menton as evidenced by the arrival date stamp of that final destination.

**REMARK:** To compete with foreign post offices established on its territory, the Ottoman government lowered its UPU rate in 1880. The German and Russian Post Offices soon followed by aligning with the Turkish rate, and in 1882, the Austrians did the same. From that point on, these three administrations sold their postage stamps in local currency at roughly 10% less than their actual value, without applying any overprint in Turkish currency, thereby exposing themselves to the risk of speculative purchases. In 1884, Germany began overprinting its postage stamps in Turkish currency and officially adopted the reduced rate. Austria followed suit in 1886. Initially, France and Great Britain refused to lower their rates despite the disadvantage this posed to their postal operations. However, on August 1 for Great Britain and August 16 for France, overprinted stamps in piasters were released for sale by mutual agreement. Thus, both countries had agreed to the rate reduction.

The inverted overprint of 40 paras on British postage, was created by a forger in 1894<sup>519</sup> and a post office decision dated July 14, 1894, was made to treat these items as unpaid. Although prior to that date these covers were accepted with the fake inverted overprint as having paid the 2½ penny overprint charge.



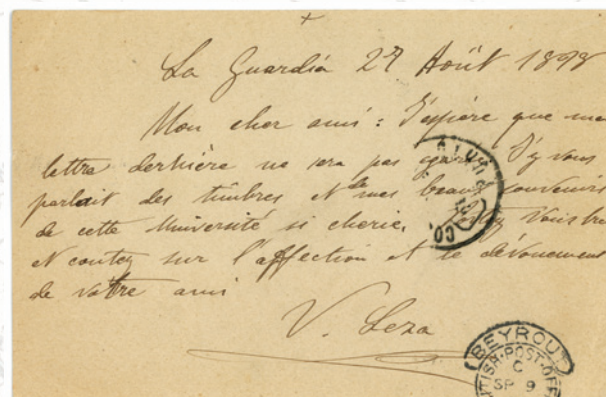


Fig. 321

1898

**CAMINHA-BEIRUT** (14 days)

**FRANKING:** A private postal stationery card of 10 reis posted in Caminha, Portugal.

**MARKS:** S.W. in a red small triangle

**ROUTE:** Caminha (August 27) - Porto - Beirut (September 9)

**SENDER:** V. Lera

**RECEIVER:** Mr. l'abbé (abbott) Lammens, Université Saint Joseph.

**REMARK:** This is a beautiful illustrated postal stationery card celebrating the four centuries (1498–1898) of Portuguese presence in India. Lammens is reminiscing in his correspondence about the good times there, he also mentions his earlier correspondence about postage stamps, so probably both parties were stamp collectors.

Lammens was a Belgian Orientalist historian and Jesuit, who wrote (in French) and taught in 1903 the early Islamic history at the Oriental Studies Department at Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut. He joined the Society of Jesus in Beirut at the age of fifteen, and settled permanently in Lebanon. Between 1886 and 1891 he taught the Arabic language at USJ and published writings on the subject of Arabic language. In 1907 he went to the Jesuit-run universities at Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt to do the same, and returned to Beirut in 1919.



Fig. 322. View of the Christ Convent in Thomar of which a part is represented on the above stationery card.

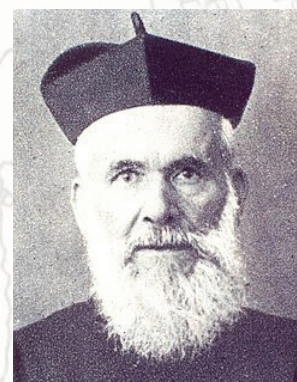


Fig. 323. Abbott Henri Lammens (1 July 1862–23 April 1937).



# MOURNING COVER



Fig. 324

1899

BEIRUT - COPENHAGEN (10 days)

FRANKING: Single rate covers of 2½ d. with 40 paras overprint.

ROUTE: Beirut (November 27) - Port Said (29)

RECEIVER: Miss A. Carstensen care of Admiral Carstensen



Fig. 325. A stereoscopic view of Copenhagen (early 1900s).



## UNUSUALLY DISINFECTED POSTCARD



Fig. 326

1899

BEIRUT-MALTA (9 days)

**FRANKING:** Postcard rate of 1 d. up to five words written (e.g., 1½ d. was used for more than 5 written words)

**ROUTE:** Beirut (November 2) - Alexandria (23) - Malta (28)

**SENDER:** Alfred Vassalo

**RECEIVER:** Lewis Haneleft c/o Smith M., Steam Ship Agents

**REMARK:** The sender may have been a tourist traveling in Egypt, and Syria, as the card he wrote on, represents Damascus, and the posting of the mail took place in Beirut, the postal hub of the region, to possibly another traveler like him in Malta, as the card was addressed "in care of" a firm based there.

Most interesting is the disinfected date stamp in Malta applied on the view side of the card, a very uncommon Malta hand stamp seen on a card.

This disinfection date stamp confirms the presence of a disease (e.g., cholera, plague) in Beirut, signaled to the Maltese authorities, who made sure to disinfect all incoming mail from Beirut onto their Island, the transit maritime quarantine for Levant mail entering Europe.





Fig. 327

**1902** **SOUTHAMPTON-BEIRUT-BAGHDAD** (41 days)

**FRANKING:** A mourning single-rate cover of 2½ d.

**ROUTE:** Southampton (January 21) - Beirut - Ottoman Post (February 15) - Baghdad - Ottoman Post (30).

**RECEIVER:** Captain G. Ramsey, Residency Surgeon

**REMARK:** In manuscript at the top left, the sender wrote *via Beyrout*, indicating to the post office to use the overland route through the Syrian Desert, which was faster than through Suez. The cover was introduced right away into the Ottoman postal system on arrival to Beirut.



Fig. 328. Main street in Baghdad (1917).





Fig. 329

1906

BEIRUT-ASWAN

(16 days)

BY KHEDIVIAL STEAMER

**FRANKING:** Single-registered cover with a pair of the rare provisional stamp cancelled with the registered date stamp. The additional 1 piastre franking is to cover the registration fee.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (July 3) - Cairo (10) - Assouan (11) - Aswan (18) - Cairo (19)

**SENDER:** R.R. Young, most probably a philatelist (see next cover p. 230 from the same sender)

**RECEIVER:** Rachel G. Tabet, British Mission School, resent to R.R. Young.

**REMARK:** The pair of the rare British provisional stamps in Beirut was limited to the issue of a total number of 480 postage stamps, according to a correspondent of the *London Philatelist Journal*, the monthly journal of the Philatelic Society, in London (renamed the Royal Philatelic Society London), in the August 1906 issue. The addressee in Aswan, Egypt, was not found, and the cover was redirected back to Beirut. Stanley Gibbons – one of the largest retail philatelic houses – recognized the acquisition of this item with a certificate that was in the private collection of King Farouk of Egypt (1920–1965), an active philatelist.

It is reported that this provisional issue was very much sought after by philatelists following the success of the French provisional issue in Beirut the previous year. Probably also a philatelic coincidence, an identical cover was also posted on the same day, with the same franking, by the same sender and to the same addressee, with the same typewritten note at the top.



**(Cont'd) REMARK:**

The reason for that provisional issue is explained in the letter written by the British Post Office in Beirut to the American Press in Beirut:

*Dear Sir,*

*Due to the exhaustion of ONE PIASTRE (overprinted) POSTAGE Stamps in the British Post Office, due to non-arrival of a requisition dispatched to the General Post Office on the 4th ultimo, I must request you to kindly have the enclosed two sheets (480 stamps of 2 d. LEVANT overprinted in black under the word "LEVANT" with the following.*

*"1 Piastre"*

*You are also requested to have the order ready at the earliest moment possible in order that the Post Office may be able to supply the public with their demand.*

*I have the honour to be, Sir,*  
*Your Obedient Servant,*  
*D. P. Davey*  
*Post Office Agent*

*The Manager,*  
*The American Press,*  
*Beirut.*

229

Fig. 330

The printing of that provisional stamp was done under the supervision of Mr. Fryer (American), the director of the press, and Mr. Glockler (British), the manager of the printing department, all under the authority of the British vice-consul, who was also the postmaster.<sup>520</sup>

However, one forgery is known with two traceable differences: Maroun Attallah, a native philatelic merchant, had several sheets made at another local press, which possessed a similar type of font, however the inking, setup, and printing were not so carefully done as the genuine issue. The mint sheets were sold to a German dealer. The difference in the forgery is the space of 3 mm between the letter "i" and the "p" of "Piastre," instead of 1½ mm for the genuine issue. The other difference, which was less detectable, is found in the "e" in "Piastre" which is slightly taller.

## AN UNUSUAL SEXTUPLE RATE COVER

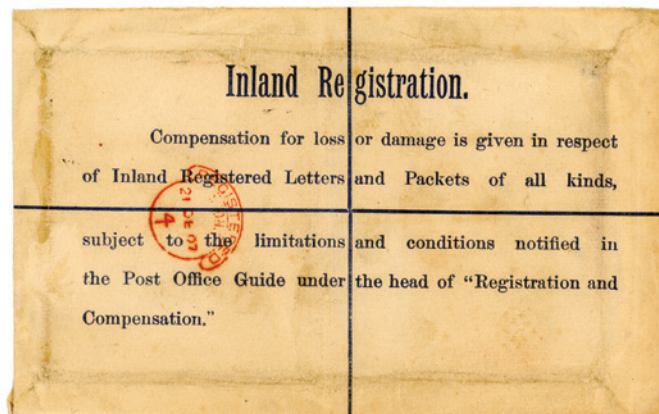


Fig. 331

**1907**

**BEIRUT-LONDON** (10 days)

### FRANKING:

This is a high-value registered unusual large postal stationery cover (with a combined LEVANT and PIASTER overprint postage). The total equivalent franking of..... **260** para postages were split as following: an imprinted postage ..... 40 paras

1 d. LEVANT overprint postage..... 20 paras

4 piaster overprint postage..... 160 paras

1 piaster overprint postage..... 40 paras

The **260** paras postal rate covered the following:

40 paras for the registered fee (represented by the imprinted postage),

40 paras for the first 20 g.,

30 paras was charged for each subsequent 20 g or

fraction of it (from October 29, 1907), so in this case (6 x 30 paras) or a total of

180 paras was charged

### ROUTE:

Beirut (December 12) - London (21)

### SENDER:

R.R. Young

### RECEIVER:

Mr. Burr c/o Henry Holmes, Esq.





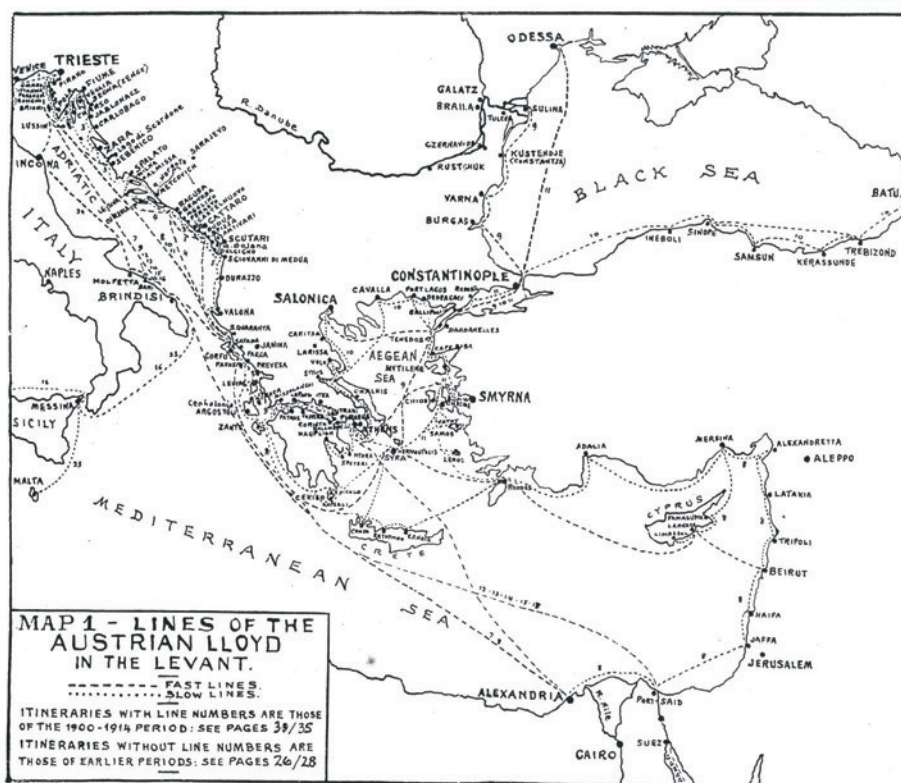
Fig. 332

**1908****BEIRUT-VIENNA**

(8 days)

**BY AUSTRIAN LLOYD STEAMER****FRANKING:** A single-rate cover with two overprinted LEVANT 1 d. postage stamps.**ROUTE:** Beirut (April 7) - Vienna (14)**RECEIVER:** Human Oskar

**REMARK:** This single-rate cover should have paid 40 paras or 2½ d. However, the franking was instead either intentionally or unintentionally underpaid by ½ d., and went unnoticed at the departing post, and thus the receiver escaped being taxed at arrival. The relatively short voyage of only eight days, was possible thanks to the fast-shipping route line available (versus the slow line) by the Austrian Lloyd.<sup>521</sup>

Fig. 333. Fast vs slow Austrian Lloyd shipping routes<sup>522</sup>



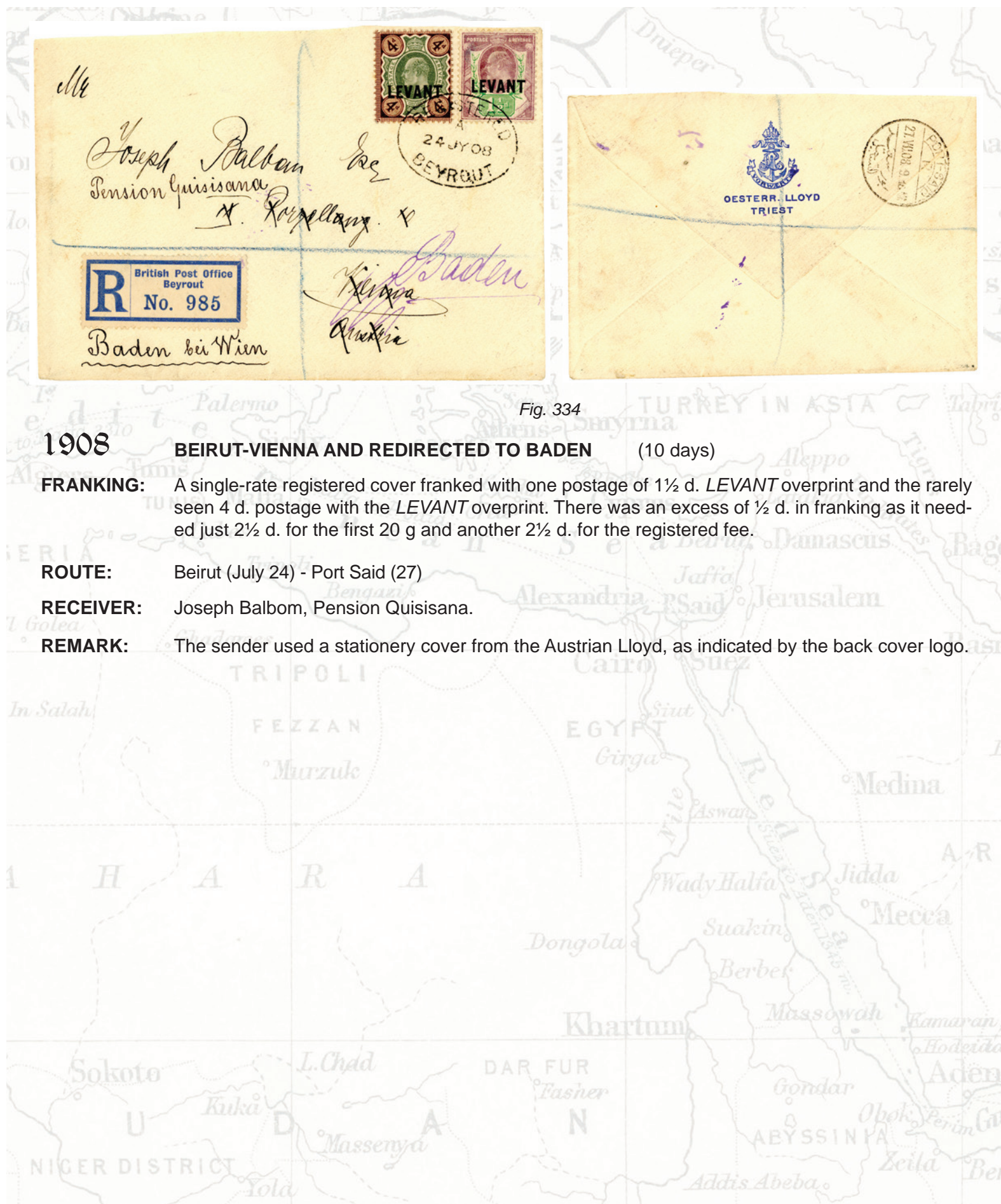


Fig. 334

1908

BEIRUT-VIENNA AND REDIRECTED TO BADEN

(10 days)

**FRANKING:** A single-rate registered cover franked with one postage of 1½ d. *LEVANT* overprint and the rarely seen 4 d. postage with the *LEVANT* overprint. There was an excess of ½ d. in franking as it needed just 2½ d. for the first 20 g and another 2½ d. for the registered fee.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (July 24) - Port Said (27)

**RECEIVER:** Joseph Balbon, Pension Quisisana.

**REMARK:** The sender used a stationery cover from the Austrian Lloyd, as indicated by the back cover logo.



## A REPLY POSTCARD

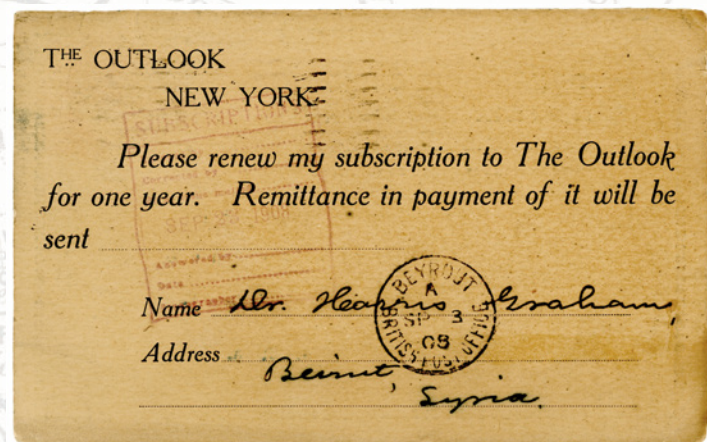
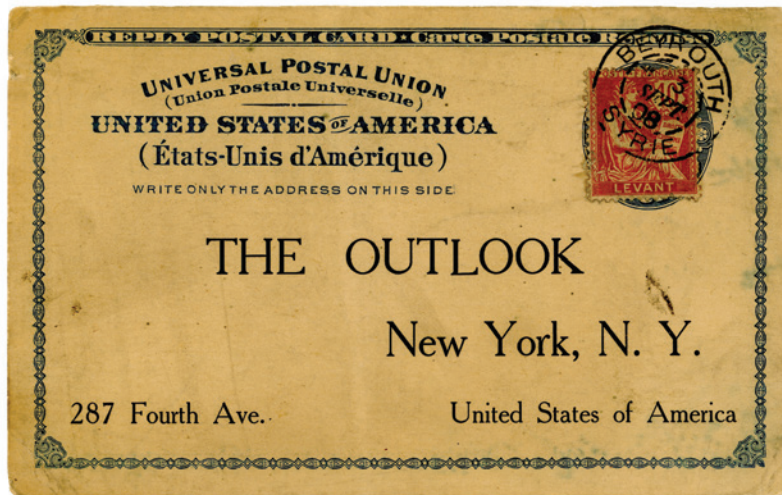


Fig. 335

**1908**

**BEIRUT-NEW YORK** (21 days)

**FRANKING:** A 2 cent reply US postal stationery card franked with a 10 french centimes and cancelled at the French Post in Beirut on September 3. The British date stamp on the back corresponds to the arrival day of this double stationery card.

**ROUTE:** Beirut French Post Office (September 3) - Beirut British Post Office (September 3) - *The Outlook* magazine back company date stamp (23).

**SENDER:** Dr. Hearris Esaham

**RECEIVER:** *The Outlook* (magazine)

**REMARK:** This reply card of a US postal stationery with a pre-imprinted postage of 2 US cent (equivalent to 10 French centimes – a printed matter rate) is hidden by the subsequently franked French postage of 10 centimes, as the value of 2 US cent was not accepted at the French Post although by UPU regulation it should have. This prepaid stationery double card was supplied by the US Post, and enabled firms to preprint texts on the back, as performed by *The Outlook* magazine to its readers to enable them to automatically renew their subscription (see on the back the relevant pre-printed message) by using the attached reply card. *The Outlook* (established in 1870) was a weekly magazine, published in New York City from 1893 to 1928, reflecting a shift of focus from religious subjects to social and political issues. The sender may have been a US resident in Beirut.





Fig. 336

1909

LEWISHAM-BEIRUT (24 days)

**FRANKING:** A single-rate letter of 2½ d.**ROUTE:** Lewisham (March 8) - Beirut (18) - Beirut (May 31)**RECEIVER:** Mr. Giblon

**REMARK:** This mail from Lewisham in London, addressed to Mr. Giblon care of the British Post Office in Beirut, arrived on March 18, 1909. As the addressee had not claimed his mail at the British Post, his mail was sent back from Beirut on May 31, or after 14 days, a quite unusually long time after it first came to Beirut. A handwritten *Unclaimed* in red was affixed on the front cover with the address crossed out in red as well. It is interesting to note that both British date stamps applied respectively on the back (at arrival in Beirut) and when returned to the British Post Office in Beirut several days later, had each a different lettering, *A* and *B*, respectively. It could be deduced that the “*A*” date stamp was applied on incoming mail while the “*B*” was used when the mail was resent through the same post office or when the mail originated from the post office (as seen in many instances). However, when comparing it to other postal items, the use of the “*A*” and “*B*,” was not used as such, so one can deduce that the different letters were used indiscriminately.



Fig. 337. View of High Street in Lewisham (c. 1907).



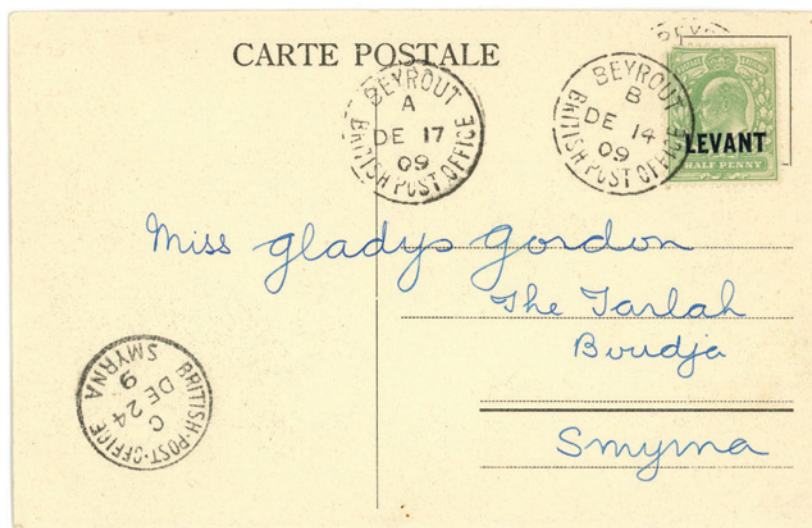


Fig. 338

1909

BEIRUT-SMYRNA (11 days)

**FRANKING:** Postcard franking rate of ½ d. up to five written words (same rate as for printed matters mail).

**ROUTE:** Beirut (December 14) - Beirut (17) - Smyrna (24)

**SENDER:** R.A.E. Roult

**RECEIVER:** Miss Gladys Gordon

**REMARK:** This is an uncommon and unseen yet mail from Beirut with two dated stamps applied three days apart, both at departure from the same British Post Office. The first was applied on December 14, cancelling the postage with a letter "B", and the second date stamp three days after on December 17 with a letter "A". Was it possible, that when the canceling date stamp with the letter "B" was applied and the mail left the post office on December 14, the mail could not have taken aboard a ship for several days? Many reasons could have delayed the shipping out of that letter. One reason could have been that in December the sea was rough, or possibly the eruption of plague or cholera could have stopped all shipping movements.

Usually, two applied date stamps with one-day difference at the same British Post means the letter was posted after the closing of the mailbag, and received an extra date stamp on the following day. The "B" would be applied usually in the afternoon, the "A" in the morning, and the "C" in the evening. The "C" on incoming letters (e.g., in that case in Smyrna) would mean the mail received for delivery by the post office arrived in the evening. However, this was not always the case, and sometimes the letters were possibly assigned to different clerks within the post office (e.g., A and B in Beirut in this case).<sup>523</sup>





Fig. 339

1910

BEIRUT-BESANCON (10 days)

**FRANKING:** A commercial, registered, quintuple rate cover with a total postage value of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  piastres split as follows: a registered fee of 1 piaster, the remaining  $4\frac{1}{2}$  piastres for letters up to 100 g, the remaining 20 paras ( $\frac{1}{2}$  piaster) is an overpayment resulted probably from the unavailability of the exact postage franking by the sender.

**MARKS:** An adhesive registration mark, and a R in oval on the front cover were affixed.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (April 4) - Alexandria (5) - Basel (12) - Besancon (13)

**SENDER:** The American Press of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut as shown by the logo on the front cover, an American Press private production.<sup>524</sup>

**RECEIVER:** Reverend W. Thon

**REMARK:** The cover was forwarded from Basel in Switzerland to the French Post in Besancon in France as *poste restante*.



Fig. 340. The main post office in Basel, Switzerland.





Fig. 341

1910 SOUTH AFRICA-BEIRUT (34 days)

**FRANKING:** Insufficiently franked single-rate cover. The 1 d. franking applied was insufficient, as the rate of 2½ d. was required instead for this single-rate letter. The resulting penalty due of 3 d., would be twice the value of the missing rate (e.g., 1½ d. x 2) indicated on the front cover.

**MARKS:** The British tax mark of T/30c. was applied in Lovedale, South Africa, while the T/L is from Britain and the 3D/FB/D is from the London Foreign Branch office.

**ROUTE:** Lovedale (April 23) - Beirut (May 26)

**RECEIVER:** To the principal of the Syrian Protestant College.

**REMARK:** The incorrect franking of a cover could result from simple ignorance of the correct rate, a recent rate change unknown by the sender, postage paid for an incorrect class of mail, or a cover exceeding the weight class for the postage affixed. These are the most common of rate-related problems. A redundant to above Covers marked for a postage deficiency were usually still put in the mail stream and sent to the addressee, who was expected to pay the amount due. A postage due stamp may be applied, and the shortage collected from the addressee. The latter, had no obligation to pay, and in this case, the mail would be returned to the sender for the collection of the amount due.





Fig. 342. British Regimental Barracks in Aden.

## 1910 BOMBAY-BEIRUT-JERUSALEM (23 days)

**FRANKING:** A postcard franked with 1 (Indian British) anna equivalent to 1 d.

**ROUTE:** Bombay (March 8) - Beirut (22) - Jerusalem (30)

**RECEIVER:** Miss Slade, L & L Girls School

**REMARK:** For mail conveyed between India and the provinces of Syria, it was, in principle, faster to reach Jerusalem via Beirut through the Syrian Desert and the Persian Gulf than via Alexandria through the Red Sea. Once it arrived at the British Post in Beirut, this card was forwarded onto an Austrian Lloyd ship, which brought it to the Austrian Post in Jerusalem, the final southern destination. Although it was forbidden to transmit mail between foreign post offices within the Ottoman Empire, this restriction was not often respected.



Fig. 343. A view of religious Jerusalem (beginning of 20th century).





Fig. 344

1910

**CHITTAGONG (Bangladesh)-BEIRUT- SMYRNA** (39 days)**FRANKING:** A postcard franked with 1 (Indian British) anna, equivalent to 1 d.**ROUTE:** Chittagong (May 18) - Beirut (June 17) - Smyrna (25)**SENDER:** Dimosthenis.**RECEIVER:** Joseph J. Murat c/o International College

**REMARK:** As in the previous card, Beirut was in many instances the transit hub for the mail between the Indian subcontinent and the provinces of Ottoman Syria as well as in further places in the Ottoman Empire such as northern Smyrna, the busiest port of the Ottoman Empire. The sender is conveying his regards to his correspondent and informing him, he is well. The receiver of the mail, Joseph Muratis (originally a Greek name), 20 years old (1890–1943) was a member of the important Greek Orthodox community in Smyrna, visiting the town of Chittagong.



Fig. 345. View of Smyrna Port





Fig. 346

## 1910 DECCAN (India)-BEIRUT-JERUSALEM (16 days)

**FRANKING:** A postcard franked with 1 (Indian British) anna equivalent to 1 d.

**ROUTE:** Railway Travelling Post Office (TPO) (November 14) - Beirut (29) - Suez - Port Said - Jerusalem (Ottoman date stamp on the picture side).

**SENDER:** V.S. Azariah

**RECEIVER:** L.M. Forder

**REMARK:** The sender, possibly a tourist, may have sent his postcard after his visit to Deccan Temple on the train on his way from Dornakal, one of the largest towns in Mahabubabad district of Telangana, in India, an important railway junction. The postage was cancelled with a TPO (Travelling Post Office), datestamp.



Fig. 347. The Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem.



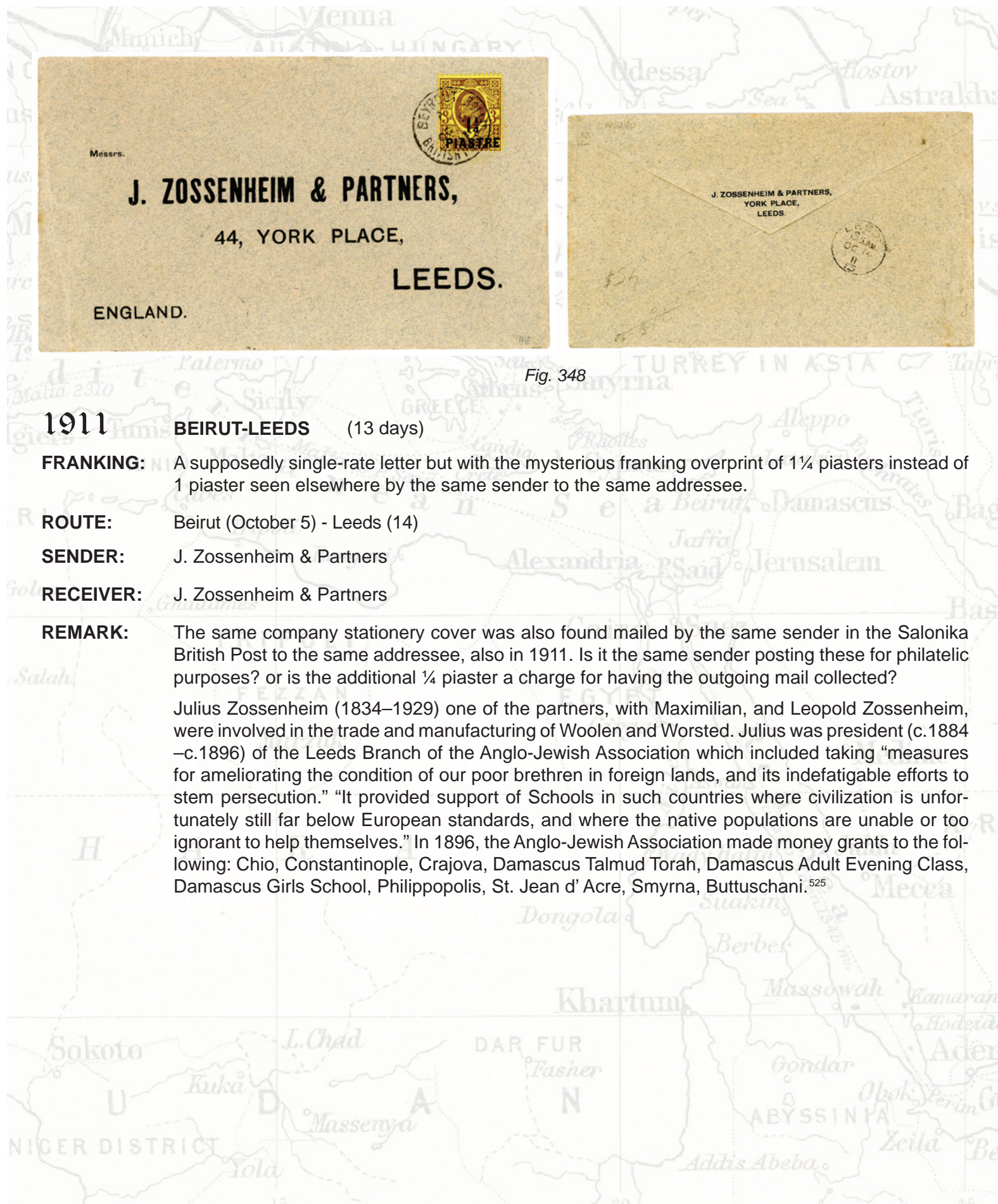


Fig. 348

**1911** **BEIRUT-LEEDS** (13 days)

**FRANKING:** A supposedly single-rate letter but with the mysterious franking overprint of 1¼ piasters instead of 1 piaster seen elsewhere by the same sender to the same addressee.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (October 5) - Leeds (14)

**SENDER:** J. Zossenheim & Partners

**RECEIVER:** J. Zossenheim & Partners

**REMARK:** The same company stationery cover was also found mailed by the same sender in the Salonika British Post to the same addressee, also in 1911. Is it the same sender posting these for philatelic purposes? or is the additional ¼ piaster a charge for having the outgoing mail collected?

Julius Zossenheim (1834–1929) one of the partners, with Maximilian, and Leopold Zossenheim, were involved in the trade and manufacturing of Woolen and Worsted. Julius was president (c.1884 –c.1896) of the Leeds Branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association which included taking “measures for ameliorating the condition of our poor brethren in foreign lands, and its indefatigable efforts to stem persecution.” “It provided support of Schools in such countries where civilization is unfortunately still far below European standards, and where the native populations are unable or too ignorant to help themselves.” In 1896, the Anglo-Jewish Association made money grants to the following: Chio, Constantinople, Crajova, Damascus Talmud Torah, Damascus Adult Evening Class, Damascus Girls School, Philippopolis, St. Jean d’Acre, Smyrna, Buttuschani.<sup>525</sup>





Fig. 349

1913

## BEIRUT-GENEVE

**FRANKING:** This 1 piaster single-rate letter is paid by a combination of a 30 paras overprint postage and a ½ d. (=10 paras) LEVANT overprint postage.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (December 22) - Port Said - (28)

**SENDER:** Veuve Guerin & Fils, (the second largest foreign silk exporter in Beirut).

**RECEIVER:** Le Comte R. Berlier.

**REMARK:** As early as the 1840s–1860s, the Lyonnais silk manufacturers participated in the development of sericulture in Syria and Lebanon, by establishing around ten factories there. However, by 1901, the Guérin family was no longer content with merely financing them. They purchased a cocoon-spinning mill (in Krey, Mount Lebanon) and a trading agency in Beirut, and began investing their own capital to compete in the bustling overseas silk industry.<sup>526</sup>



Fig. 350. View of Rue de Mont Blanc in Geneva (1913).



# DOUBLE-RATE REGISTERED LETTER WITH A POSTAGE OF 1¾ PIASTERS

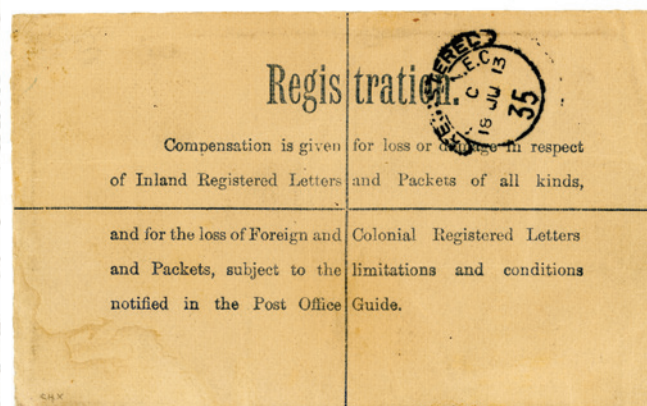
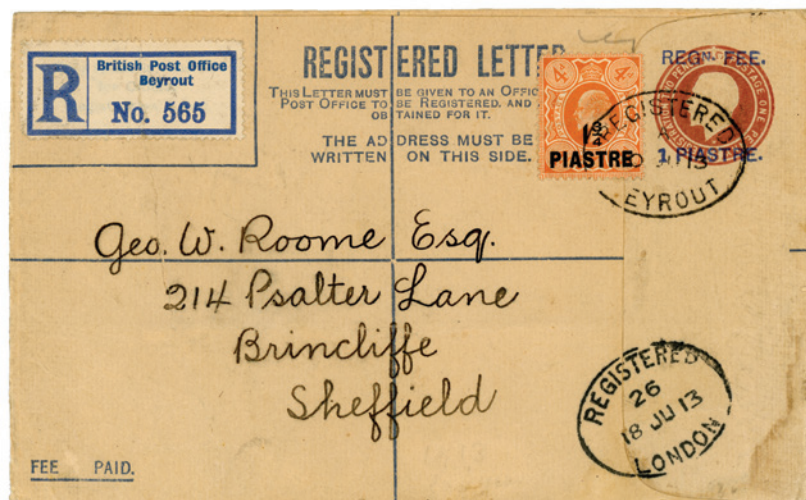


Fig. 351

1913

BEIRUT-SHEFFIELD (9 days)

**FRANKING:** A double-rate postal stationery registered cover with one postage of 1¾ piaster (70 paras) split as following: one postage of 40 paras (1 piaster) for the first 20 g, and the reduced 30 paras (75% of 40 paras or 75% of 1 piaster) for the second 20 g, and any subsequent additional 20 g, or fraction of it and 1 piaster for the registered fee.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (July 10) - London (July 18).

**RECEIVER:** W. Roome

**REMARK:** Starting from October 20, 1907, letters were charged for 40 paras for the first 20 g, and any additional weight above 20 g (or fraction of it) was charged 30 paras instead of the 40 paras charged previously.



Fig. 352. Psalter Lane in Sheffield



# POSTAL STATIONERY WITH A REPLY CARD

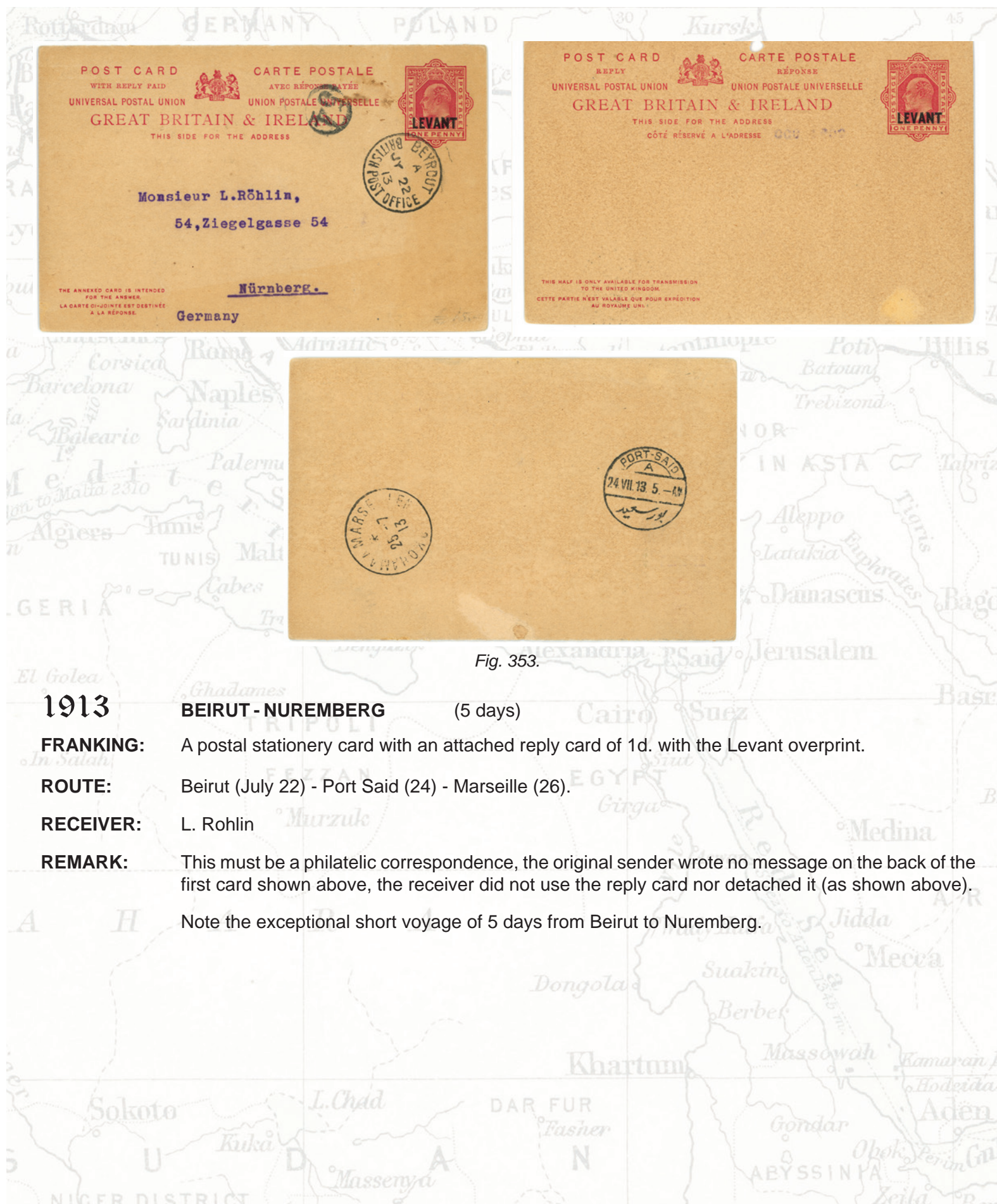


Fig. 353.

**1913**

**BEIRUT - NUREMBERG** (5 days)

**FRANKING:** A postal stationery card with an attached reply card of 1d. with the Levant overprint.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (July 22) - Port Said (24) - Marseille (26).

**RECEIVER:** L. Rohlin

**REMARK:** This must be a philatelic correspondence, the original sender wrote no message on the back of the first card shown above, the receiver did not use the reply card nor detached it (as shown above).

Note the exceptional short voyage of 5 days from Beirut to Nuremberg.



# PRE-PRINTED CONSULAR MESSAGE ON POSTAL STATIONERY

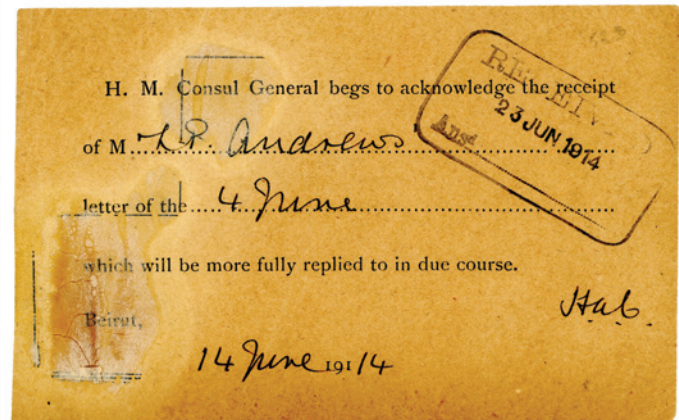


Fig. 354

1914

BEIRUT-LONDON (9 days)

**FRANKING:** Consular postal stationery card with the imprinted postage of 1 d., with the LEVANT overprint.

**ROUTE:** Beirut (June 15)

**SENDER:** British consul general in Beirut

**RECEIVER:** L.P. Andrews Esq., Andrews & Co. Limited

**REMARK:** British consulates overseas' responsibilities included the promotion and the protection of British interests. This effective pre-printed message on such a postal stationery card from the Beirut British general consul enabled him to confirm automatically the sender, the receipt of his inquiry, with a minimum added handwritten words. On the back, the consular stamp arrival date of June 23, enabled the identification of the length of the voyage as no date stamp was applied on arrival in London.



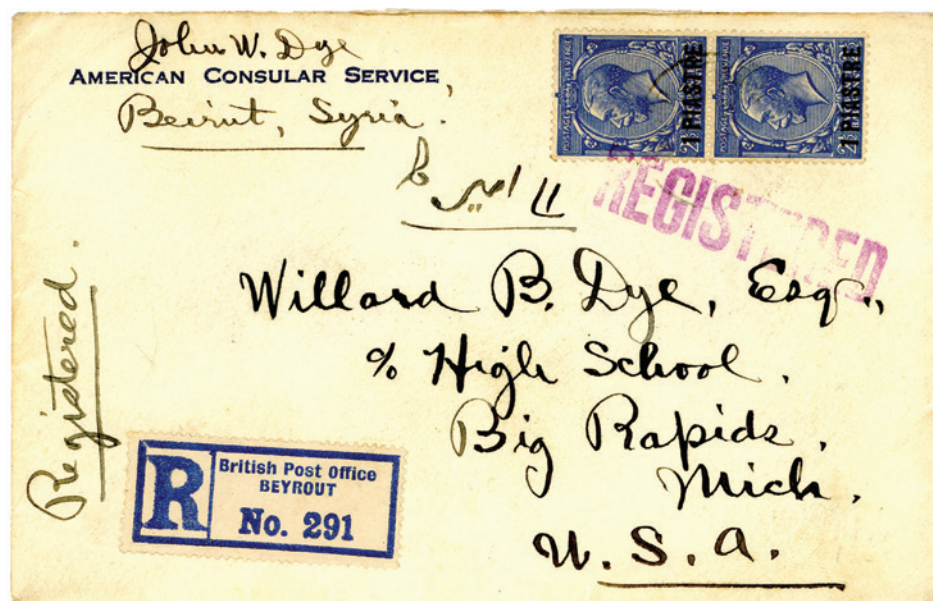


Fig. 355

## 1913-1914 BEIRUT-MICHIGAN

- FRANKING:** Single registered cover with a pair of 1 piaster overprint postage stamps of which one to cover for the registered fee.
- MARKS:** Besides the registered label adhesive, a rarely seen large *REGISTERED* stroke mark in violet, slightly stamped on the postage on the left side.
- ROUTE:** Beirut unclear cancellation date stamp.
- SENDER:** John W. Dye from the American Consular Service in Beirut.
- RECEIVER:** Willard B. Dye, c/o High School Big Rapids
- REMARK:** As the cancellation is unclear to identify the date, we know that this postage was issued in April 1913<sup>527</sup> and the British Post closed down on September 30, 1914, so the cover was posted in Beirut between these two dates.



Fig. 356. View of the High School in Big Rapids , Michigan.



## 13. Unusual destinations with British cards

Although postal stationery cards were first introduced in Europe in **1869**, they started being used and posted in Beirut by travelers starting in the late **1870s**, with the first postcard with a view posted in **1897**.

A large sample, compiled in the last publication of the author,<sup>528</sup> shows that from the late **1880s**, a massive flow of postal stationery cards, supplied largely at first by the Austrian Post in Beirut, started being used actively. Many of these were posted by (foreign and native) collectors of postage stamps to gauge the interest of their counterparts for a potential exchange. These were cheaper at 10 c. than the cost of letters at 25 c. These cards provided sufficient space to communicate adequate messages.

247

Below, was selected incoming and outgoing postal stationery cards processed by the British Post Office in Beirut with unusual destinations for that period, along with the motive of the mail.

1883	BEIRUT-US.....(29 days).....Stamp collecting.	Fig. 357
1897	BEIRUT-DENMARK.....(11 days).....Travel.	Fig. 358
1899	CANADA-BEIRUT.....(19 days).....Cards collecting.	Fig. 359
1900	BEIRUT-SOUTH AFRICA.....(29 days).....Travel.	Fig. 360
1907	BEIRUT-HONG KONG.....(55 days).....Stamp collecting.	Fig. 361
1910	BEIRUT- HONDURAS.....(32 days).....Stamp collecting.	Fig. 362
1910	BEIRUT-MOROCCO.....(21 days).....Commerce.	Fig. 363
1911	BEIRUT-INDIA.....Commerce.	Fig. 364
1913	BERMUDA-BEIRUT.....(20 days).....Stamp collecting.	Fig. 365
1913	JAPAN-BEIRUT.....(49 days).....Cards collecting.	Fig. 366
1914	ANGOLA-BEIRUT.....(72 days).....Stamp collecting.	Fig. 367



Fig. 357



Fig. 358





Fig. 359

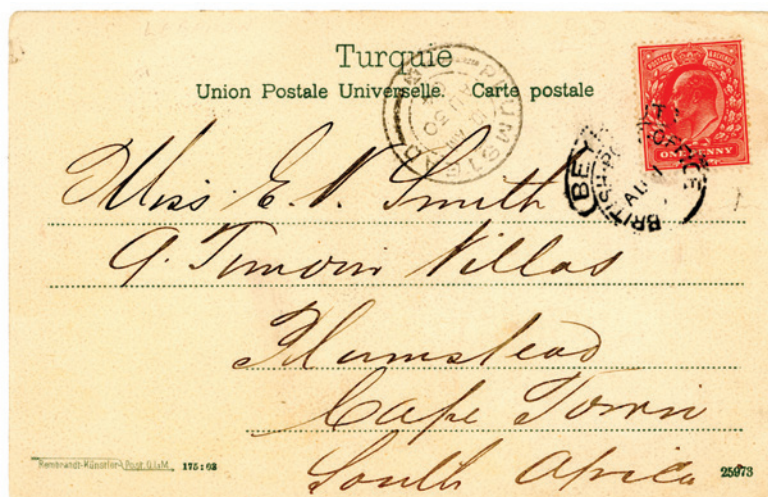
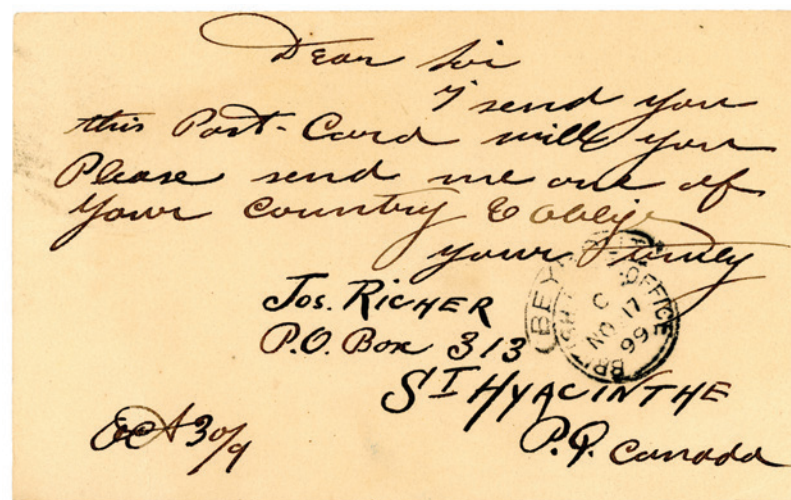


Fig. 360



Fig. 361



Fig. 362



Fig. 363





Fig. 364



Fig. 365



Fig. 366



Fig. 367



## D. CONCLUSION

250

In contrast to the French and Austrians, who used Beirut primarily as a hub for their postal and shipping communication with Ottoman Syria, Britain had first selected Beirut in **1836–1839** as a secondary postal communication route to India, through the Persian Gulf. Following the halt of the British Admiralty stopping regularly in Beirut, British merchants and consuls in Beirut and Alexandria contracted independent shipping liners/vessels for the Alexandria-Beirut leg to transport the British mail. At the same time, the General Post Office (GPO) in London ensured a British packet agency in Beirut in **1840** for the transfer of official and non-official correspondence between the eastern territories (e.g., India, Mesopotamia, Persia) and Britain/British possessions, keeping the Persian Gulf communication route open. From **1845**, the GPO contracted the French government liner to ensure British mail directly to Beirut via Alexandria, while merchants/consuls in both places continued contracting vessels to transport British mail between these two locations.

Archival records show that throughout this period under study (**1836–1914**), continuous demands from British consuls and merchants in Beirut were recorded to develop frequent and direct postal communication routes between Britain and Beirut, the hub of Syria – similar to the better-established and active subsidized French and Austrian liners. However, the British Treasury always made sure that any established postal agency or shipping route had to be profitable, without providing subsidies, as the French had done.

In the meantime, Britain's merchant fleet, the largest in the world, led global foreign trade, and its merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean used the extensive network of postal agencies and shipping routes of the French and the Austrians.

Following the decline of Britain's leading economic position in the world by **1870** due to countries such as Germany, France, and the US, as well as the increased pressure from British merchants in Beirut, Britain finally gave in. Starting in **1872**, the GPO began contracting various small and large liners between Alexandria and Beirut to increase the frequency of British mail transport with Beirut (via Brindisi), when up until then, it mainly used the French Messageries (via Marseille).

In March **1873**, Britain also finally decided to convert its packet agency office in Beirut into a full post office for its mail with the Ottoman Syrian provinces and the eastern

territories. Geopolitics and economics finally overcame the short-term cost-benefit analysis of the British Treasury as a reason to establish a post office and more frequent routes with Beirut. This included the opening of a post office a few months prior in December **1872** in Smyrna, the largest trading port in the Ottoman Empire, and in **1900** at Salonika.

The British, although comparably late with their post office in Beirut, were able to be creative and proactive in capturing an estimated market share of respectively 26% to 30% of the total foreign mail processed by the then four foreign posts operating in Beirut in respectively the **1880s** and **1890s**, largely at the expense of the French Post Office.



## E. ANNEXES

### 1. British Postage Stamps Used at the British Post in Beirut

The postage stamp “technology” was invented and introduced by the British in **1840**. Originally, it was only used within the United Kingdom. For this reason, compared to other nations’ stamps, the country name is not mentioned within the design until today, and by agreement with other nations’ postal administrations on the condition that the British sovereign’s effigy appears on the stamp.



Fig. 368. Postage stamp issued in Britain in 1980.

251

Subsequently to the success of that ingenious invention, other postal nations followed and introduced their own postage stamps, although they included their respective nation’s name (e.g., Zurich and Geneva in **1843**, the US in **1847**, France and Belgium in **1849**, Austria and Prussia in **1850**, Russia in **1857**, Turkey in **1863**, Egypt in **1866**).

This section does not claim to have the full listing of British postage stamps used (e.g., cancelled) at the British Post Office in Beirut, although it includes a substantial part of it. Continuous observation over time of postage stamps at auctions, postal history exhibitions, private collections, and other sources will help complete that list. Some postage stamps brought by travelers from the United Kingdom or elsewhere and posted at the British Post in Beirut may not have been supplied originally from the GPO to the post office in Beirut. Each postage stamp listed chronologically below has been given a number along with the period of its use, in Beirut.



Fig. 369

Postage stamps were first cancelled in Beirut with the numeral mark **G06**, until **1884**, and then by different **BEYROUT** date stamps thereafter (see p. 264). Both the Smyrna and Beirut British Post Offices used stamps valued up to 5 shillings until **1905**, when the British currency stamps overprinted **LEVANT** were introduced.<sup>529</sup>



Fig. 370. Overprinted **LEVANT 1 piastre** on the 2d. provisional stamp (see p. 228).

In the early days of British postage stamps – particularly in the Victorian era – different plate letters were included in the stamps. This was especially common with the famous “Penny Black,” “Penny Red,” and “Two Pence Blue” stamps. This system helped prevent forgery and track the position of a stamp on a sheet. These numbers were usually small and located in the design or the margin area of the stamp.



Fig. 371. A Two Pence Blue Postage Stamp with different plate letters in the corners.

In later issues, as stamp production techniques evolved, this practice gradually faded, but remains an attraction to stamp collectors today, and thus is clearly described in stamp catalogs.

Some postage stamps of the same value had slight variations in color, plate numbers, types of paper used, number of dots and number of perforations. Examples of these variations can be found for example in the Stanley Gibbons (SG) edition of 2024.<sup>530</sup> The list below includes pictures of postage stamps with only different values and colors (e.g., excluding those with the slight variation of color, different plate numbers, different paper used, or different number of perforations). The listing was compiled from both the author collection and from the collection of a Beirut-based collector<sup>531</sup> Houssam Mhaissen focused on collecting foreign postage stamps used at the foreign post offices in Beirut. However, some postage stamps information listed (e.g., value and color) without the relevant picture was taken from the 2024 Stanley Gibbons (SG) catalog, which ascertain the use of such postage stamps at the British Post Office in Beirut.

Queen Victoria, 1873–1900

Stamp info

Year of Use

1: ½ d. rose-red .....(1870–1879) .....



2: 1 d. rose-red .....(1864–1894) .....



3: 1½ d. lake-red .....(1870–1874) .....



4: 2 d. blue .....(1858–1869) .....



5: 2½ d. rosy-mauve .....(1875–1876) .....



6: 2½ d. blue .....(1881) .....



7: 3 d. rose .....(1881) .....



8: 4 d. vermillion .....(1865–1873) .....





(cont'd) Queen Victoria, 1873–1900

Stamp info

Year of Use

9: 4 d. sage green .....(1877).....



10: 4 d. grey brown .....(1880).....



11: 6 d. mauve .....(1870).....



12: 6 d. pale buff .....(unrecorded in SG).....(1872–1873).....



13: 6 d. chestnut .....(1872).....



14: 6 d. grey .....(1872).....



15: 8 d. orange .....(1876).....NAV



16: 10 d. red-brown .....(1867).....



17: 1 s. green .....(1863–1877).....



18: 1 s. orange-brown .....(1867).....



(cont'd) Queen Victoria, 1873–1900

Stamp info

Year of Use

19: 2 s. blue .....(1867).....



20: 5 s. rose .....(1867).....NAV

21: ½ d. deep green .....(1880).....



22: ½ d. pale green .....(1880).....



23: 1 d. Venetian red .....(1880).....



24: 1½ d. Venetian red .....(1880).....



25: 2 d. pale rose .....(1880).....



26: 2 d. deep rose .....(1880).....





(cont'd) Queen Victoria, 1873–1900

Stamp info

Year of Use

27: 5 d. indigo .....(1880).....



28: 1 d. lilac .....(1881).....



29: ½ d. slate blue .....(1884).....



30: 1½ d. lilac .....(1884) .....NAV

31: 2 d. lilac .....(1884).....



32: 2½ d. lilac .....(1884).....



33: 4 d. dull green .....(1884).....



34: 5 d. dull green .....(1884).....



35: 6 d. dull green .....(unrecorded in SG).....(1884).....



36: 9 d. dark green .....(unrecorded in SG).....(1884).....



**(cont'd) Queen Victoria, 1873–1900**

**Stamp info**

**Year of Use**

37: 1 s. dull green .....(1884).....



38: ½ d. vermillion .....(1887–1892) .....



39: 2½ d. purple blue .....(1887) ..... (unrecorded in SG) .....



40: 1½ d. dull purple and green .....(1887–1892) ..... **NAV**

41: 3 d. purple yellow .....(1887–1892) ..... **NAV**

42: 6 d. purple/rose-red .....(1887–1892) ..... **NAV**

43: 10 d. dull purple & scarlet.....(unrecorded in SG).....



44: 1 s. dull green .....(1887–1892) .....



45: ½ d. blue green .....(1900).....



46: 1 s. green and carmine .....(1900).....





**King Edward VII, 1902–1914**

**Stamp info**

**Year of Use**

47: ½ d. blue-green .....(1902–1904) .....



48: pale green .....(unrecorded in SG) .....



49: ½ d. yellowish-green .....(1902–1904) .....



50: 1 d. scarlet .....(1902–1904) .....



51: 1½ d. dull purple and green .....(1902–1904) .....



52: 3 d. dull purple/yellow .....(1902–1904) .....NAV

53: 4 d. green and chocolate-brown .....(1902–1904) .....  
(unrecorded in SG)



54: 6 d. pale dull purple .....(1902–1904) .....NAV

55: 1 s. dull green and carmine .....(1902–1904) .....  
(unrecorded in SG)



OVERPRINTED BRITISH POSTAGE STAMPS

BRITISH POSTAGE STAMPS USED IN BEIRUT WITH AN OVERPRINT PERFORMED AT THE LEVANT BRITISH POST OFFICES

Introduction of overprinted stamps with Turkish currency from August 1, 1885.

Prior to August 1, 1885, British ordinary single-rate postage stamps were sold by the British Post in the Levant, including Beirut, at the rate of 2½ d. (pence). The devaluation in Turkish currency in 1884 reduced the equivalent value of 1 piaster (or 40 paras) to 2 d. (from 2½ d.). Thus, by purchasing postage stamps from these offices still at 1 piaster and exporting them to Britain, it was possible for a speculator to realize a safe profit of ½ d. In order to avoid this, it was decided to overprint the postage stamps with their equivalent values in Turkish money, rendering them invalid for use in Britain. Un-overprinted stamps (including those brought from Britain by travelers) continued to be accepted and used at the Levant British Post Offices.

This overprint was also necessary because of the competition between foreign post offices in the Levant, especially those of France and Germany. At the beginning of its tenure, the British Post began to lose its position as the main office for letters to Britain and the US. The first issue of overprinted stamps was for 40 paras and 80 paras for overseas and double-weight letters and 12 piasters for parcels.

As the stamps were overprinted with the Turkish currency (except for the low values of ½ d. and 1 d.), it gave each stamp actually two face values: a 2½ d. stamp overprinted “40 paras” that would cost 40 paras if paid in Turkish currency and 2½ d. if paid for in British currency (e.g., sterling); the latter was an uncommon alternative used. This period when stamps of both British and Turkish currency were used and accepted at the British Post Offices in the Levant, is often referred by postal historians as the “Mixed Accounting Period.”

Queen Victoria, 1885 August 1, 1914..... with TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT

Stamp info

Year of Use

56: 40 pa. on 2½ d. lilac.....(August 1, 1885–1888).....



57: 80 pa. on 5 d. green.....(August 1, 1885–1888).....



58: 12 pia. 2 s.6 d. lilac/bluish.....(August 1, 1885–1888).....





**Queen Victoria, 1885 August 1, 1914..... with TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT**

Stamp info

Year of Use

59: 40 pa. on 2½ . purple/blue.....(June 1887– 1896).....



60: 80 pa. on 5 d. purple and blue.....(June 1887– 1896).....



61: 4 pia. on 10 d. dull purple and carmine...(June 1887– 1896).....



**King Edward VII, 1902–1913.....with TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT**

**Stanley Gibbons**

Stamp info

Year of Use

62: 40 pa. on 2½ d. ultramarine .....(1902–1905 ).....



63: 80 pa. on 5 d. dull purple and ultramarine .....(1902–1905 ).....



64: 4 pia. on 10 d. dull purple and carmine...(1902–1905 ).....



65: 12 pia. on 2 s.6 d. lilac.....(1902–1905 ).....



66: 24 pia. on 5 s. bright carmine.....(1902–1905 ).....



67: 1 pia. on 2½ d. ultramarine .....(1905–1908 ).....



68: 2 pia. on 5 d. dull purple and ultramarine...(1905–1908 ).....



King Edward VII, 1902–1913.....with TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT

Stamp info Year of Use

69: 1 pia. on 2 d. grey-green and carmine. ....1906 (July 20) .....



*Introduction of a provisional postage stamp in the Beirut office:*

As the stock of the commonly used 2½ d. postage for (single-rate) letters on the outgoing European mail was in short supply, a provisional 1-piaster postage stamp was created. That took place by surcharging two complete sheets of 240 stamps (total 480 stamps) of the 2 d. green postage and carrying the overprint *LEVANT*, with the words *1 piastre* in black at the foot. There seems to be little doubt that the issue was philatelically inspired by the “success” of the French provisional stamp that was also issued in Beirut in January **1905**.

In 1909, a rate re-adjustment for the surcharged Turkish currency introduced in 1885 and a series of stamps was issued in 1909 and 1910. Sales of stamps at the British Post during 1909 were reported to have been slightly inflated by new issues, and in 1910 the sales were largely increased from the same cause and also on account of the death of the late King Edward.

King Edward VII, 1902–1913.....with TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT

Stamp info Year of Use

70. 30 pa on 1½ d. pale dull purple and green.....1909 (November 16–December).....



71: 1 pia. 10 pa. on 3 d. dull purple/orange yellow..1909 (November 16–December).....NAV

72: 1 pia. 30 pa. on 4 d. green and chocolate–brown. 1909 (November 16–December).....NAV

73: 1 pia. 30 pa. on 4 d. brown-orange.....1909 (November 16–December).....NAV

74: 2 pia. 20 pa. on 6 d. dull purple .....1909 (November 16–December).....NAV



**King Edward VII, 1902–1913.....with TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT**

Stamp info

Year of Use

75: 5 pia. on 1 s. dull green and carmine.....1909 (November 16–December).....



76: 1¼ pia. on 3 d. dull purple.....1910 (January 24).....



77: 1¾ pia. on 4 d. pale orange.....1910 (January 24).....



78: 2½ pia. on 6 d. dull purple.....1910 (January 24).....



79: 1 pia. on 2½ d. bright blue (perf.14).....(1911–1913).....



80: 30 pa. on 1½ d. reddish purple and bright green.....(1911–1913).....



81: 2 pia. on 5 d. dull reddish purple & bright blue.....1910 (January 24).....



82: 4 pia. On 10 d. dull purple and scarlet.....(1911–1913).....



83: 5 pia. On 1sh. dull red and green.....



**King Edward VII (1905 August 15)–1912.....with “LEVANT” overprint**

In **1905**, the overprint LEVANT was introduced on British currency stamps.

**Stamp info**

**Year of Use**

84: ½ d. pale yellowish-green.....1905 (August 12)–1912.....



85: 1 d. scarlet.....1905 (August 12)–1912.....



85: 1½ d. dull purple and green .....1905 (August 12)–1912.....



87: 2 d. grey-green and carmine-red .....1905 (August 12)–1912.....



88: 2½ d. ultramarine.....1905 (August 12)–1912.....NAV

89: 3 d. dull purple/orange-yellow .....1905 (August 12)–1912.....



90: 4 d. green and grey-brown.....1905 (August 12)–1912.....




91: 5 d. dull purple and ultramarine .....1905 (August 12)–1912.....







King Edward VII (1905 (August 15)–1912.....with “LEVANT” overprint


<u>Stamp info</u>	<u>Year of Use</u>	
92: 6 d. slate-purple .....	1905 (August 12)–1912.....	NAV

93: 1 s. dull green and carmine .....	1905 (August 12)–1912.....	
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94: ½ d. dull yellow-green .....	1905 (August 12)–1912.....	
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King George V, 1911–1913.....with “LEVANT” overprint

<u>Stamp info</u>	<u>Year of Use</u>	
95: ½ d. green .....	1911–1913 .....	

96: 1 d. carmine-red .....	1911–1913 .....	
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97: 1/2 d. green .....		
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with... TURKISH CURRENCY OVERPRINT

<u>Stamp info</u>	<u>Year of Use</u>	
98: 1 pi on 2½ d. cobalt blue .....	1913 (April)–1914.....	

## 2. Cancellation Marks and Date Stamps Used at the British Post in Beirut (1873–1914)

This list represents the postal cancellations (\*) used at the British Post Office in Beirut.



March 22, 1873 - October 17, 1884  
Cancelling Numeral Mark



July 4, 1884 - May 25, 1906  
Cancelling Datestamp



1905 - September 30, 1914  
Cancelling Registered  
Datestamp



1905 - September 30, 1914  
Cancelling Registered  
Datestamps



July 3, 1905 - September 30, 1914  
Cancelling Datestamps

(\*) The datestamps' images were taken from the Bernardo Longo Catalog (*The Foreign Post Offices Cancels in Lebanon (1845-1914)*) Beirut 2010.



### 3. Selective Pre-UPU Postal Rates from Britain to Beirut (1845– May 1875)

source: British Postal Guides<sup>532</sup>

The pre-UPU rates of postage on mail from Britain to Beirut through Alexandria via Marseille is a complicated matrix. The variables for these rates included the following: routes used, destinations, date period, the weight scale (determined by date and route), and the shipping liner used. There was an important difference in weight scale; the all-sea routes used half-ounce stages from **1840**, whereas the French computed postage by the quarter ounce (7.5 g). The overland route (through France) gained in importance as the efficiency of land transport and cost was reduced, and by **1850**, the majority of mail was directed via Marseille. Connection to Marseille from Egypt was made by both British and French packets operating on different time tables and necessitating different postal rates. The sender of mail would usually endorse, for example, with the following: “via Southampton,” “via Marseilles by British packet,” “via Marseilles by French packet.” The sender’s choice would not always be based on cost, but often, based on which ship was expected to leave first.

An improvement in mail speed took place in **1869**, with the opening of a rail route over the Mont Cenis pass, connecting Piedmont and Savoy, which made a land route possible all the way from the southern tip of Italy, at Brindisi. Completion of the Mont Cenis Tunnel in **1870**, further improved this route.

The British reform-minded Roland Hill, who invented the postage stamp, published in January **1837**, his famous book, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability*, and soon after, the Royal Mail adopted the most revolutionary idea of modern postal service: the uniform rates based on weight alone, and no longer on distance and number of sheets. This uniform rate was introduced on December 5, **1839**. A few weeks later, the rate was drastically reduced from 4 d. to 1 d. for a letter not exceeding ½ oz. Ship letters were also standardized, but at a higher rate.

The postal rates for the different periods reported below (starting in **1845**) for mail from Britain to Beirut through Alexandria and via various routes, were selected from the *M.M. Raguin*, and *Moubray* publications, as well as from the *British Postal Guides*. As for the British postal rates from Beirut to Britain, these were available when the British Post Office was finally set up in Beirut in March **1873**. Before that date, most British mail destined for the Levant was contracted with the French government packet liner, first run by the French state and then taken over in **1851** by the private sector Messageries Maritimes until **1872**, when the British contracted several other liners for mail.

**The sterling pound was made of 20 shillings, and a shilling equaled 12 d. (pence).**

**The abbreviation for shilling is the forward (/ or s.) and the sign for the penny is d.**

**s.= shilling, d.=penny/ pence 1 s.= 12 pence**

**¼ oz.= 7.087 g**

<sup>533</sup>  
**1845:**

The first time the city of Beirut is mentioned with a table of postal rates for prepaid letters sent from Britain, is through a notice from the GPO issued in December **1845**.

This corresponded with the date November 15, **1845**, when the French government packets started to make stops in Beirut coming from Marseille through Alexandria and following the setup of a French Post Office in that city (the first foreign post to do so).

Clearly, the British mail with Beirut benefited from that newly established route, which was included in the Franco-British postal convention.

Letters posted in Britain and addressed to Beirut, by French Packet via Marseille, could be forwarded either unpaid or paid to the destination, at the option of the sender.

Combined British & Foreign rates on letters

	under ¼=>weight<½	½=>weight<¾	¾=>weight<1	1=>weight<1 ¼	
	<u>¼ oz.</u>	<u>of an ounce</u>	<u>of an ounce</u>	<u>ounce</u>	<u>ounce</u>
British .....	5 d.	5 d.	10 d.	10 d.	1 s. 8 d.
Foreign.....	10 d.	1 s. 8 d.	2 s. 6 d.	3 s. 4 d.	4 s. 2 d.
Total to destination .....	1 s. 3 d.	2 s. 1 d.	3 s. 4 d.	4 s. 2 d.	5 s. 10 d.

1852<sup>534</sup>

The GPO on August 1, 1852, reduced the prepaid single-rate letters to 1/1 (1 s. 1 d.) from the UK to Beirut, forwarded in the Prussian closed mail **via Belgium**.

1853<sup>535</sup>

GPO Notice for the year 1853 reports that the British rates of postage from the UK (Southampton) to Beirut “**per French packet**” (Messageries) was as follows:

Letter ¼ oz. = 1 s. 3 d.

Letter ½ oz. = 2 s. 1 d.

1855<sup>536</sup>

A GPO notice dated March 1855, reports that prepaid letters forwarded by the **French packets** (e.g., French Mediterranean mail packets) were charged the following postages and so on, increasing one shilling for every additional quarter of an ounce.

Up to	above	between ½ oz.	between ¾ oz.
<u>¼ oz.</u>	<u>¼ oz. less ½ oz.</u>	<u>less - ¾ oz.</u>	<u>less - 1 oz.</u>
1 s.	2 s.	3 s.	4 s.

1857<sup>537</sup>

On January 1, 1857, the postal rate was reduced for prepaid letters from the UK **via France** to Beirut as follows:

Up to ¼ oz.= ..... 4 d.

Above ¼ oz. less ½ oz.=..... 8 d.

Above ½ oz. less ¾ oz.=..... 1 s.

Above ¾ oz. less 1 oz.=.....1 s. 4 d.

(Registered fee was equivalent to double rate charged for ordinary letters, unpaid letters will be charged with a rate of 9 d. per ¼ oz. instead of 6 d. previously)



1857:

The new rate was cheaper than the route **via Belgium** (1 s. 1 d. per ½ oz.) One major aspect of this 1856 Anglo-French convention was the provision for the exchange of closed mails, which was applied with the opening of the civilian British Post Office in Constantinople in July 1857.

56092. Instructions No. 69. (GPO, December 20), in effect from January 1, 1857.

The 50% reduced rate of postage for pre-paid letters forwarded from the UK to Beirut in the mails to France by **French Messageries steamers** or by private ship, of which the entire postage can be paid in advance, and when asked to be registered, the postage must be pre-paid at double the letter rate. **Letters posted** unpaid from the UK to Beirut and Syria were charged with a rate of 9 d. per ¼ oz. instead of **6 d.**

267

Not more than ¼ oz.	above ¼ oz. but no more than ½ oz.	above ½ oz. but no more than ¾ oz.	above ¾ oz. but no more than 1 oz.
6d.	1s.	1s. 6d.	2d.

1858<sup>538</sup>

From February 1, 1858, letters from the UK to Beirut **via France and Austria** destined to the Beirut Austrian Post Office:

Max. ¼ oz.	¼>weight<½ of an ounce	½>weight<¾ of an ounce	¾>weight<1 ounce
1 s. 2 d.	2 s. 4 d.	3 s. 6 d.	4 s. 8 d.

(if specifically not mentioned via France and Austria, the letter will be forwarded instead from Marseille by a French packet at the lower rates enumerated in the British postal guide).

1863<sup>539</sup>

From January 1, 1863, prepaid letters (not exceeding ½ oz.) from the UK forwarded through Germany **via Belgium**, and destined to Beirut were charged as following: 11 d.

(For registered letters, an additional fee of 6 d. was added).

1866 (January)

65185. POC Instructions No. 62. (GPO, December 26), effective from January 1, 1866

Letters from the UK for Austria, superscribed “**via France**” to Beirut can be posted in the UK either pre-paid or unpaid. The following rates are for pre-paid letters, for those unpaid, they are liable to an increased charge on delivery.

Not more than ¼ oz.	above ¼ oz. but no more than ½ oz.	above ½ oz. but no more than ¾ oz.	above ¾ oz. but no more than 1 oz.	above 1 oz. but no more than 1 ½ oz.	for each add. of 1 oz.
11 d.	1 s. 1 d.	2 s. 4 d.	2 s. 10 d.	3 s. 9 d.	6 d.

1866 (February 1)<sup>540</sup>

From February 1, 1866, the registration fee from the UK directly to Beirut will be reduced from 6 d. to 4 d. When addressed via France the fee will remain the same as before. When addressed **via France** and Austria the fee will be reduced to 7 d.

1866 (November)<sup>541</sup>

The prepaid rate from the UK to Beirut forwarded in the Austrian mails when especially addressed **via France and via Austria** from November 12, 1866:

Not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.	above $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. <u>but no more than <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> oz.</u>	above $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. <u>but no more than <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> oz.</u>	above $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. <u>but no more than 1 oz.</u>	above 1 oz. <u>but no more than <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> oz.</u>
8 d.	1 s. 2 d.	1 s. 10 d.	2 s. 4 d.	3 s.
		for each <u>add. of <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> 1 oz.</u>	for each <u>add. of <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> 1 oz.</u>	
		6 d.	2 d.	

(For registered letters, an additional fee of 9 d. was added).

1867:

67040, 2500, Instructions No. 6, (GPO, March 20)

Letter rates from the UK through Germany **via Belgium** to Beirut were reduced as below. At the option of the sender in the UK, the mail can be posted unpaid or pre-paid.

Not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	above $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. <u>but no more than 1 oz.</u>	for each <u>add. of <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> oz.</u>
9 d.	1 s. 6 d.	9 d.

1871<sup>542</sup>

Single-rate letter from UK to Beirut.....**via Marseille**.....6 d. ( $\frac{1}{3}$  oz.)  
Single-rate letter from UK to Alexandria.....8 d.

1872 (November 1):<sup>543</sup>

Letter rate from Beirut to the UK **via Brindisi**

Not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	above $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. <u>but no more than 1 <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> oz.</u>	above 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. <u>but no more than 2 oz.</u>	for each <u>add. of <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> oz.</u>
10 d.	2 s. 6 d.	3 s. 4 d.	6 d.

1873 (May 7)<sup>544</sup>

Single-rate letter from Beirut to the UK **through Alexandria:**

Via Brindisi.....10 d. (\*)

Via Southampton.....8 d.

(\*) additional sea postage of 2 d. over and above 8 d. was to be paid for the conveyance of letters to ship liners from Beirut to Alexandria

1873 (August 6):

Single-rate letter from Beirut to India, China, Australia, New Zealand, via Alexandria, 10 d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.



#### 4. Post-UPU British postal rates from Beirut to overseas' destinations (June 30,1875–September 30,1914)

	UPU advent		(3) from	(2) from
	from	from	from	from
	<u>1/7/1875</u>	<u>1/1/1878</u>	<u>1/4/1879</u>	<u>29/10/1907</u>
Printed matter rate (5) .....	½ d. (per 2 oz.)			
Postcard rate .....	1 ¼ d.		1 d. (3)	
Single-rate letter (1) .....	2½ d.			
Double-rate letter .....	5 d. or 2 pia		1 pia. 30 paras (2)	
Registration fee (4) .....	4 d.	2 d.		
Acknowledgment of Receipt .....	2½ d. or (1 pia)			

269

- (1) Rate applied for each 15 g.
- (2) From October 29, 1907, the rate applied is 30 paras (= 1 ¾ d.) for each additional 20 g (or fraction of it) after the first 20 g still being charged 1 piaster (= 2½ d.).
- (3) The postcard rate stood at 1 d. when 5 words or more were written, for less than 5 words written, a rate of ½ d. was applied like printed matter rate items.
- (4) Registered rate was set for 1 piaster or 40 paras for postage stamps applied, otherwise the 2 d. imprinted on the postal stationery supplied by the postal administration was accepted.
- (5) Printed matter rate (1/2 d. per 2 oz.) and postcard rate (with less than five words written, 1 d.), were small values and expressed in British currency, and carried no Turkish value overprint.

#### Note:

1 piaster (pia)= 40 paras= 2.5 d.  
 1 d.= 20 paras  
 ½ d.= 10 paras  
 ½ oz.= 14.17 g  
 0.70 oz.= 20 g  
 1 oz.= 28.35 g  
 2 oz.= 56.7 g

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**BeNA:** State Archives of Belgium, (also known as the “Belgian National Archives”), Brussels, Belgium.

**CADN:** Centre D’Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Nantes, France.

**ONA:** Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi; The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office (“Ottoman National Archives”), Istanbul, Turkey.

270

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- <sup>521</sup> S.D. Tchillinghirian, and W.S.E. Stephen, "Austrian Post Offices Abroad, Part I: Austrian Lloyd Adriatic Lines, Mediterranean Lines," The Austrian Club of Great Britain, (1962), 27.
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6. INDEX

- Africa (19, 32, 35, 38, 51, 58, 59, 62, 83, 86, 88, 94, 105, 129, 134, 135, 151, 154)
- Aleppo (19, 32, 35, 38, 51, 58, 59, 62, 83, 86, 88, 94, 105, 129, 134, 135, 151, 154)
- Alexandretta (18, 19, 48, 51, 58, 59, 61, 75, 88, 133, 135, 144, 146, 189, 190, 211)
- American (97-98, 101-103, 111, 163, 190, 197, 198, 202, 246)
- American Printing Press (125, 198, 201, 221, 229, 236)
- Anglican Bishop (63, 98, 99, 128)
- Anglo-Palestine Co. (72)
- Argentina (113, 114)
- Armenian (51, 104, 106, 159, 167)
- Australia (113, 114, 118, 163, 201, 221, 223, 268,
- Baghdad (32, 33, 37, 38, 41, 51, 61, 62, 78, 107, 118, 128, 144, 154, 185, 227)
- Banking (72, 81, 85, 94, 107, 109, 110, 151, 154, 164, 193)
- Bell’s Asia Minor Steamship Co. (118, 131, 146, 148, 157, 161, 162, 166, 188, 189, 190)
- Bermuda (247)
- Bills of exchange (67, 70)
- Bill of lading (67, 68, 69, 82)
- Black James/William
- Bliss, Daniel (80, 81, 87, 103, 147)
- Bombay (27, 32, 36-38, 41, 117, 120, 139, 156, 186)
- Brazil (111, 113, 114-116, 201)
- Brindisi (131-133, 145-149, 154, 155, 157, 161, 173, 180-182, 188, 189, 250, 265)
- British
  - Pharmacy (198)
  - Colonial (26, 30, 46, 48, 54, 60, 72, 92, 119, 144, 163, 185)
  - Schools (97, 99, 100, 105, 106)
- Bustrus (107)
- Cababe (117)
- Canada (113, 114, 213, 221, 247)
- Cape of Good Hope (20, 31, 38, 118, 120)
- Caribbean (113)
- Chesney (Colonel) (37)
- China (26, 42, 111, 144, 159, 180, 268)
- Christians (36, 51, 75, 79, 86, 92-95, 98, 102, 105, 107, 109, 156)
- Circular notes (63, 85)
- Closed mail (62, 64, 144, 147, 286)
- Collectors (203, 224, 247, 251)
- Cook & Sons, Thomas (197, 200, 202, 203)
- Cotton (34, 59, 61, 66, 73, 75, 96, 111, 117)



Cuba <sup>(114)</sup>

Damascus <sup>(32, 36, 37, 38, 39, 51, 59, 60, 62, 78, 79, 83, 85, 86, 87, 90, 91, 92, 93, 98, 99, 104, 105, 107, 144, 185, 192, 202, 218, 226, 241)</sup>

Deutsche Palestina Bank <sup>(79)</sup>

Disinfected mail <sup>(47, 57, 67, 124, 125)</sup>

Dromedary post <sup>(32, 37, 38, 146)</sup>

East India Company <sup>(31, 37, 41, 118, 120)</sup>

Education <sup>(98, 106, 109, 111, 164, 198, 202, 203,)</sup>

Emmetje Ship <sup>(22, 23, 63, 64, 121, 123, 124, 125, 128)</sup>

Epidemics <sup>(46, 47, 57)</sup>

Exports <sup>(34, 66, 72, 73, 75, 78, 86, 96, 97, 107, 160, 163, 201)</sup>

Falmouth <sup>(33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 45, 120, 122, 126)</sup>

Fiscal Stamp <sup>(70, 71, 87)</sup>

Foreign trade <sup>(27, 34, 51, 59, 60, 61, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 84, 94, 107, 119, 159, 160, 163, 164, 203, 250)</sup>

Glasgow <sup>(58, 129, 134)</sup>

Gold <sup>(9, 70, 73, 74, 80, 81)</sup>

Haifa <sup>(18, 19, 61, 85, 88, 91, 195)</sup>

Hava <sup>(117, 272)</sup>

Henry Guys <sup>(47, 272)</sup>

Hotel d'Orient <sup>(197, 200, 202)</sup>

Imperial Ottoman Bank <sup>(59, 70, 81, 85, 133, 147)</sup>

Imports <sup>(32, 72, 74, 75, 78, 79, 86, 117, 160, 163)</sup>

Insurance <sup>(42, 63, 66, 67, 85, 107)</sup>

Ionian <sup>(35, 117)</sup>

Iraq <sup>(12, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 185, 201)</sup>

Jaffa <sup>(18, 19, 61, 65, 72, 80, 121, 126, 128, 144, 146, 195)</sup>

Jamaica <sup>(114)</sup>

Jerusalem <sup>(18, 19, 51, 62, 63, 80, 87, 88, 98, 128, 195)</sup>

Jews <sup>(51, 72, 75, 79, 98, 104, 106, 109)</sup>

Karam, Fares Abdallah <sup>(114, 115, 116)</sup>

Khan Antoun Bey <sup>(113, 117, 154, 161, 164, 197, 199, 205, 211, 217, 241)</sup>

Khedivial mail shipping <sup>(20, 21, 24, 84, 118, 131, 146, 147, 148, 149, 154, 155, 157, 161, 165, 166, 170, 190, 191, 194)</sup>

Letters of credit <sup>(63, 85, 202)</sup>

Liverpool <sup>(41, 42, 66, 85, 107, 112, 130, 133, 138, 185)</sup>

Livorno <sup>(67, 127)</sup>

Lyon <sup>(70, 78, 79, 82, 96, 133, 171, 180, 242)</sup>

Malhame Assaad <sup>(52, 153)</sup>

Malta <sup>(36, 37, 38, 39, 55, 57, 64, 95, 108, 109, 118, 120, 121, 123, 125, 132, 226)</sup>

Manchester <sup>(61, 72, 73, 78, 79, 87, 107, 111, 117, 137, 141)</sup>

Marcopoli <sup>(135)</sup>

- Maronites** (92, 98)
- Mauritius Island** (38, 118, 133)
- Medawar** (136)
- Mesopotamia** (12, 20, 26, 27, 32, 34, 43, 44, 55, 61, 86, 118, 120, 128, 133, 146, 201, 250)
- Messageries Maritimes** (12, 20, 27, 55, 62, 69, 78, 98, 130, 133, 144, 146, 147, 148, 157, 161, 166, 173, 180, 188, 189, 201, 250, 265)
- Mexico** (113, 114)
- Military** (20, 26, 36, 41, 42, 44, 87, 92, 94, 131, 156)
- Mount Lebanon** (36, 52, 70, 82, 86, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 99, 105, 111, 113, 156, 172, 180, 242)
- Money Orders** (72, 115, 116, 190, 193, 207)
- Muslims** (31, 75, 79, 92, 106, 107, 109, 117)
- Napoleon** (26, 29, 30, 31, 59, 164)
- Navy** (27, 31, 55, 93, 95, 183)
- Ostend** (131, 136, 143, 152, 153, 158, 216)
- Palmerston, Lord** (44, 121, 133)
- Parcels** (13, 63, 187, 190, 191, 258)
- Pasha, Ibrahim** (34, 41, 43, 44, 119)
- Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co.** (20, 34, 121, 128, 130, 133, 144, 145, 148, 188, 189)
- Persia** (3, 20, 26, 27, 37, 39, 44, 55, 61, 66, 78, 86, 118, 128, 33, 201, 250)
- Persian Gulf** (16, 26, 27, 32, 36, 38, 40, 45, 128,185, 238, 250)
- Pharaon Chiha Bank** (107)
- Philately** (193, 203, 219)
- Postal Revenues** (207, 208)
- Post Restante** (191, 192, 226)
- Prince Liner** (78, 98, 162, 196, 197)
- Publications** (148, 201, 203, 211)
- Raphael, Elie** (112)
- Red Sea** (16, 20, 27, 31, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 55, 59)
- Riddell & Co** (58, 129, 134, 137, 138, 154, 192)
- Rizkallah, Habib** (61, 109, 274)
- ROPiT Russian Navigation Company** (28, 118, 131, 146, 147, 148, 157, 161, 166, 189)
- N. M. Rothschild & Fils** (78, 94, 141, 142, 143)
- Russia** (13, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 41, 43, 48, 51, 52, 59, 60, 66, 75, 76, 77, 80, 94, 88, 92, 93, 98, 107, 110, 111, 147, 156, 159, 163, 164, 183, 186, 187, 189, 203, 209, 251)
- Saint George Bay** (34, 35)
- Salonika** (25, 27, 60, 72, 102, 148, 159, 190, 192, 241, 250)
- Sardinia** (34, 46, 51, 67, 76, 92, 126)
- Scott John Gordon** (82, 96)
- Sea post** (94, 169, 212)
- Sericulture** (75, 242)



Sidon (9, 34, 42, 44, 51, 83, 86)

Silk (10, 23, 61, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 78, 82, 85, 92, 94, 96, 97, 107, 108, 113, 117, 124, 128, 136, 137, 153, 156, 158, 172, 180, 203)

Singapore (274)

Smith, Elli (101, 102, 125, 147)

Smyrna (27, 51, 55, 59, 60, 62, 66, 72, 75, 78, 82, 85, 86, 131, 132, 148, 155, 161, 173, 184, 186, 190, 194, 206, 208, 209)

Southampton (37, 132, 133, 146, 154, 227, 265, 266, 268)

Steam (22, 23, 26, 31, 32, 34, 36, 48, 96, 120, 121, 130, 132, 133, 154)

Subsidies (130, 131, 132, 160, 250)

Suez Canal (20, 27, 31, 32, 34, 36, 55, 59, 84, 144, 148, 156, 185, 186, 212, 223)

Sunnis (86, 92)

Sursock (14, 52, 85, 108, 108, 109, 110, 147, 192, 200)

Syrian Protestant College (81, 101, 105, 111, 197, 198, 201, 216, 221)

Tabet, Naame/Khalil (109, 119, 120, 123, 158)

Tarrazi Banker (107)

Tonnage (61, 62, 64, 86, 160, 163, 164)

Tourism (131, 146, 156, 191, 202, 226, 240)

Travel guides (14, 62, 63, 80, 81, 87, 88, 128, 144, 188, 189, 191, 202)

Travelers (27, 47, 62, 62, 80, 85, 133, 144, 146, 150, 151, 152, 162, 188, 191, 192, 200, 202, 203, 247, 251)

Treaties (41, 60, 183, 184, 186, 187, 202)

Trieste (133, 143, 146)

Tripoli (3, 9, 19, 20, 30, 34, 51, 61, 83, 86, 105, 144, 146, 195)

Uruguay (114, 115))

Venezuela (114)

Wortabet, John (104, 147)

The background of the back cover (and of the front cover)  
is an extract of the map in page 35.

On back cover:  
Block of the four provisional postage stamps overprinted  
locally in Beirut with 1 Piaster and used on July 3, 1906.