

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century found Crete as an Autonomous State under the High Commission of the four protecting powers and Greece. It would take another 12 years for the Union with Greece to be realized. During this first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, not only beautiful stamps were produced in Crete, but an efficient Postal System and, especially, a widespread Rural Postal Service was founded. This system successfully replaced the Foreign Post Offices which were operating in Crete during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, under the legal status of capitulations.

The rural Cretan Postmen were covering various routes in the Island, in order to serve the small and widely scattered villages and hamlets of the mainland. Their services were vital for these areas because they were delivering and collecting letters, selling stamps, handling money orders and even serving for judicial affairs (handing Court summons etc). They were using their own Numeral Postmarks, corresponding to the Route they were serving.

The **Rural Postal Service** started during the period of Autonomous Crete, and continued and expanded after the Union. For 50 Years after the Union, the postal system was extended to include all small towns, villages, communes, even hamlets of the Island. There were 4 Classes of Offices (A to D), plus the travelling rural postmen and their itineraries.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> WW.**

Crete was conquered by the Germans on the last days of May 1941, after fierce battles. It was the last European stronghold, close to Middle East. Consequently it was always considered as “Front” and named “Festung Kreta” (Fortress of Crete).

For almost 1 year (Summer 1941 to May 1942) Cretans were obliged to exchange correspondence written only in German. For the whole period of the (severe!) German Occupation, correspondence was only allowed with Cards – Covers were forbidden.

This, of course, is not the case for the period (winter 1941 to autumn 1943) of the (light) Italian Occupation of Lasithi.

### **The Difficult Times after Liberation**

Because of the High Inflation and the continuous changes in Currency and Postal Rates during the Period 1944-46, lack of stamps, mostly of higher denominations, was observed in a few cases, especially in smaller Rural Post Offices.

In these rare cases the prepayment was certified by the local Postal Employee by a note with his signature.

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