

A Question and Answer About OSMAN PASHA...



I have a postcard showing Osman Pasha, Turkish commander during the Bulgarian War of Independence (1877-1878) and I have a couple of questions which are non-philatelic : the card shows a view of Shipka village near the famous Pass where much fighting took place. Also shown are Osman Pasha and "Suleika". Was this lady his wife ? Why wasnt she veiled and why is Osman Pasha shown with what looks like a glass of beer on his knee ? The card was used 1903 by which time Osman had been dead for three years....

COMMENT:

The Post Card showing Shipka village (I'm not sure it is Shipka since the village in question is in the foothills of the Balkan Range and this little hamlet looks to be located in a very flat geography) and a bearded gentleman allegedly to be Osman Pasha is of a series prepared by Austrian Businessmen usually printed in Germany for consumption especially in Bulgaria. Apparently the subject matter being a most memorable episode during the Russo-Turkish War of 1876 / 1878 for the citizens of the new Bulgarian State; must have been the main reason for such a business venture. I don't know if the cards were sold in great numbers as expected; but I can assure you of three things;

1) Osman Pasha being a most respected historical personage in Turkey as well as in Russia; every single photograph of his, is well known and well documented, even his kind reception by the Russian Czar who has honoured this brave soldier for his endeavours during the war. I must therefore, inform you that such a photograph was never taken, nor seen by any of the historians who have poured endless hours on the subject in Turkey as well as in Russia.

2) Since the sumptuous Villa on the Bosphorus presented to Osman Pasha by the Ottoman Emperor is a well known building even today (it has been transformed into a school); the background of this photograph is also totally wrong since the building in question is a wooden construction and not of stone or brick with plaster as shown in the picture. A short note on the subject; the unswept floor in the background is another dead giveaway for this bogus picture. The Pasha and his family lived in a small Palace of approximately 30 rooms which was looked after by an army of helpers, gardeners and servants. To think that such an important person would sit to

pose for a photograph in the middle of such debris cannot be swallowed easily.

3) Understandably, the lady supposedly to be Züleyha Hanım and the gentleman with a glass of something in his hand are at best Austrian or German "Artists" hired for the occasion for you could not catch an Ottoman man even of simplest means with such a device in his hand nor a Lady directly related to the Imperial Palace without a head cover at the time in question (Contrary to general belief, Ladies of high rank never used the veil but covered only their hair) for in Ottoman society, having your picture taken was a most serious and solemn affair. Furthermore, as to Government Officials, Army Commanders etc; a picture without a uniform would have been the ultimate insult.

Hoping to have been of some help; please accept my Best Regards.

Osman Levend...