

# RUSSIAN MONEY LETTERS TO ATHOS

1870 - 1919

I am presenting this exhibit, because for me the story of the "Russian Money Missions at the end of the 19th c. and the beginning of the 20th" was a journey of research and knowledge as the financial support of the Russian monasteries of Mount Athos was part of history close associated with the diplomatic, religious and political visions of Imperial Russia.

This imperial policy resulted in hundreds of thousands of "money letters" traveling, the vast majority of them, without stamps and beyond the geographical boundaries of Russia, keeping alive the Slavic and especially the Russian Monasteries on Mount Athos, for about fifty years and creating a one more Post Office (Levant) in the Ottoman territory as well as special set of stamps (ROPiT).

The main Russian Monastery on Athos was the Monastery of Panteleimon and its hermitages of Aghios Andreas, Chromitsa, Xylourgos and Nea Thebaida. The Russian monks, although some settled on Athos from the 15th century, they acquired their own monastery with Patriarchal approval in 1875.

The order of presentation follows a chronological order in terms of postal history and is completed by the objects that testify to the presence and activity of the Russian monastic community and those who supported it such as ROPiT.

## Selected Bibliography

- **Postal Rate Chronology for Russian Money Letters 1872-1917**, *Compiled by Howard L. Weinert*
- **Russian Monks on Mount Athos: The Thousand Year History of St Panteleimon's**, by *Nich. Fennell*, amazon.com
- **State Goals and Private Interests in the Development of Transport Infrastructure in the Russian Black Sea Region in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century**, by *Lyubomir POZHARLIEV*, *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies*, November 2020, *Kapak Resmi Indir, Istanbul*

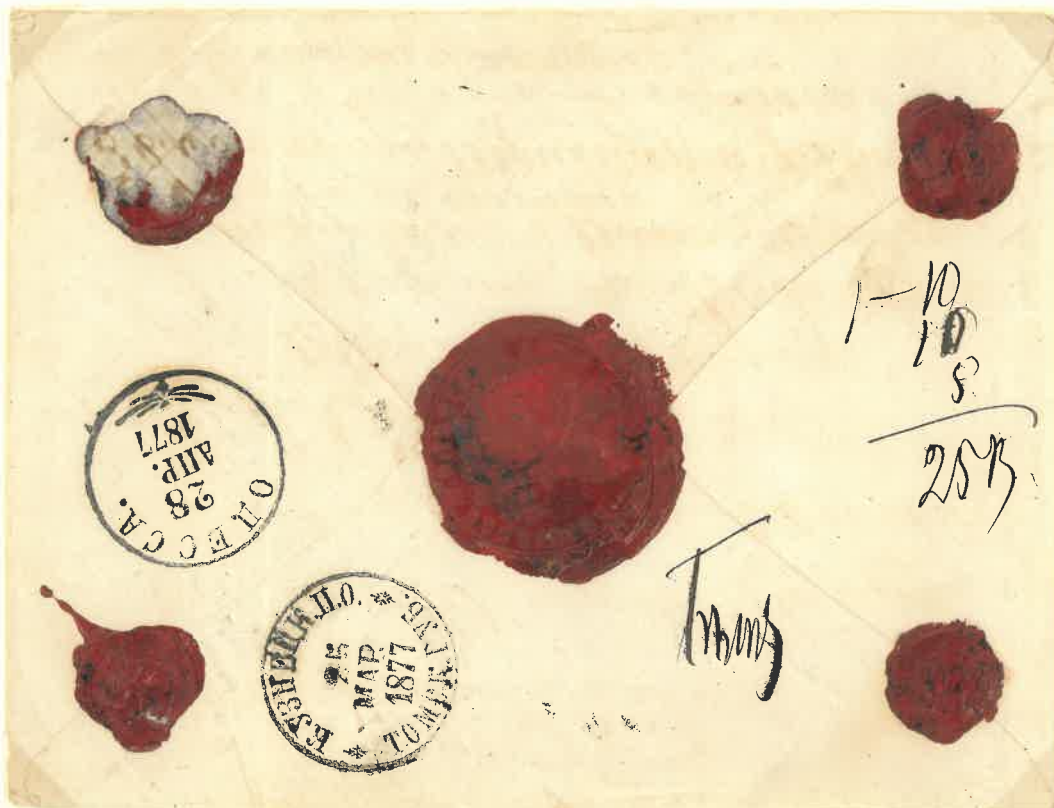




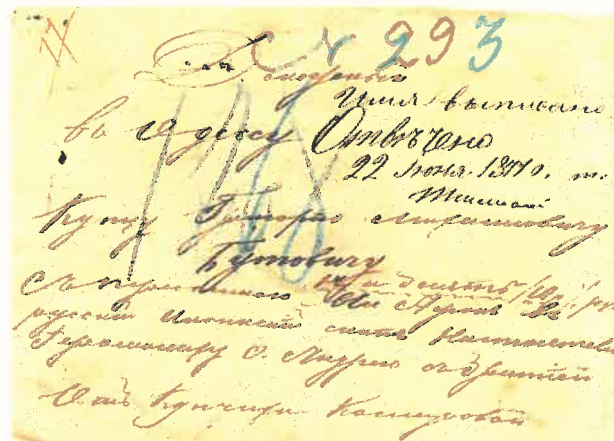
"Money shipments" arrived at Athos from every corner of the vast Russian territory, on ships from Odessa, in sacks carried on them by monks and delivered to trusted sailors of ROPiT. It was money mainly from peasants, workers and merchants of Russia who hoped to win the prayers of the monks for themselves and theirs and rarely of the upper social class.

The cost of remittances (officially) in January 1872 was: Equivalent of unit weight fee, 10 kopecks, plus insurance fee and 5 kopecks for receipt. The insurance fee was determined as follows: a) for a declared value of 1 ruble to 100 rubles – 1%, b) for a value of more than 100 rubles to 400 rubles - ½ % plus 50 kopecks, c) for a value of more than 400 rubles to 1600 rubles - ¼ % plus 1.5 rubles, d) for a price over 1600 rubles - 1/8 % plus 3.5 rubles. Values expressed in rubles and kopecks are rounded to the next ruble before the insurance fee is calculated. A full kopeck is collected for any part of a kopeck.

Frank Money letter from KUZNETSK, TOMSK district PO (25 MAR 1877) to ODESSA PO (arrival 28 APR 1877) for Athos. Bearing two very clean black round hand stamps and four small round wax post seals in the corners, plus one large wax seal hypothecaly from KUZNETSK as the seal can't be read. Has also in hand writing the sum of twenty five (25) kopeks paid for (10 k. as taxes, 10 k. as insurance and 5 k. for the receipt). Church registry no 293 (in blue handwriting). Bears also a handwriting analysis of 25 kopek taxes (10 k. tax, 10 k. Insurance + 5k receipt)



Recipient's name is written out. The text:  
 To the city of Odessa. 22 of June 1877  
 To the merchant Grigoryi Michailovitch,  
 25 rubles to Athos Russian - Iliin Monastery,  
 to the rector Father Andrew and his brothers.  
 From Mrs merchant Kasparova.



At the face the letter has the information needed from the transfer of the money.

To Konstantinopol

for the Afon - Illiin monastery courtyard, to the confidant of the monastery, for transmission to the Mountain of Afon , to the Russian - Illiin monastery .

To the rector, hieromonk, Father Andrew and his brothers. Attachment of sixteen rubles in silver The submit of the peasant Fomin Yefrosiniy , Village Lapino , Tambov province

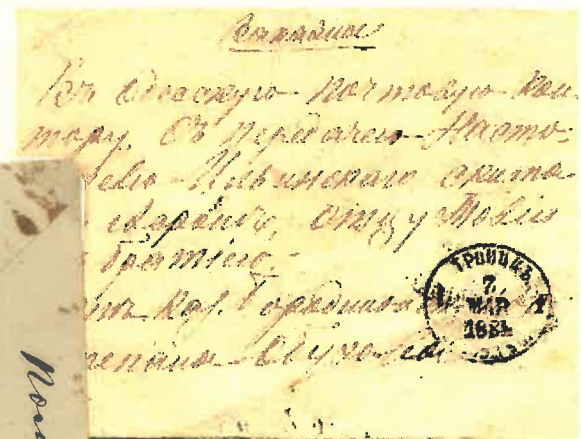
At the back page bears a large wax seal of Rablovs Post Office, which differs from most similar letters to Athos as it does not have the distinction of type (A,C,O) of a Frank Money letter, nor the price of 1 or 2 kopecks, used in case of franked letters. All the same bears a handwriting analysis of 31 kopek taxes (10 k. tax, 16 k. Insurance + 5k receipt). Has also 4 small wax seals in the corners with the letters «H.Δ». Again, normally these seals are also from the Post office, but these are initial letters probably of a person. Another point is that the sender ask to be transferred through Constantinople but the Church service send the money through Odessa, as it clears shows a hand black stamp, with the arrival date ODESSA 3 MAR 1877.



The letter that accompanied the money transfer and explained why the sender ask for the help and prayers of the monks.

Russian Post Money Letter with the registry no 895, bears two stamps of 7 Kopek each, from the 1874-75 Coat of Arms series. It also bearing three hand black round handstamps; two from TROTSK (7 MAR 1884) and one arrival cds ODESSA (17 MAR 1884, Julian calendar)

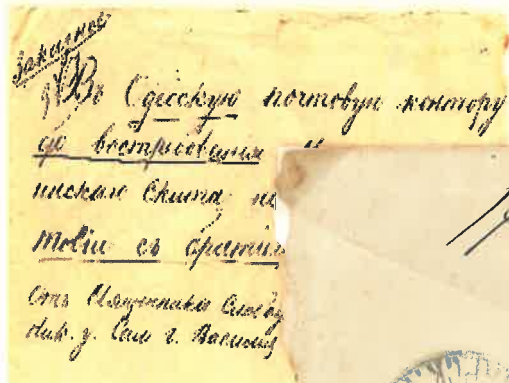
To the Ilnsk Athos hostel in Odessa, to the plenipotentiary father of the Ilnsk hermitage, for transmission to the monastery on Athos, to the rector Father Andrew and his brothers, through the merchant Grigory Michailovitch. With money enclosed- ten rubles (10 r) by Mrs merchant Kasparova, from the village of Trotsk, Chelyabinsk district. The recipient's name is written out.



ATTN! From the center of the cover has been cut the part where was a round wax post stamp.

Russian Post Money Letter with the registry no 2092, bearing two stamps of 7 Kopek each, from the 1884 -1885 Coat of Arms (Without 2 Thunderbolts Below Eagle in Oval). It also bearing two hand black round handstamps from NIKOLAEVSK (24 AUG 1884) and one arrival cds ODESSA ( 31 AUG 1884, Julian calendar) The text on the other side mention

"Money letter to the Odessa Post Office With transmission to the Rector of Iliin Monastery on Afon to the Father Tobius and his brothers from the paymaster Gorodnikovsky Stephan Obuchovitch



For legal reasons of this period in Russia, the name and address of one of the faithful is written to bypass the law ordered that "the person's name is written in the publicly released document". So, at the end of the text) comes the taking of responsibility (inside the frame)

Address to us the following (ss. old wording):

**Elena Semyonovna Senatorskaya**  
Great Vasilikovskaya street no.3 and 5c  
for transportation in Istanbul,  
**Monastery of Saint Ermolau and**  
**Panteleimonos,**  
**to Abbot Hatzis Georgiou and Partheniou**

*За симъ испрашивая ни Васъ Благословеніе Божіе и поручая покровительству Царицы небесной пребываю ко Господу молитвенникъ Духовный Вашъ Отецъ Святогорецъ Схимонахъ Хаджи Георгій, со всею о Христь братію.*

**Константинополь Монастырь св. Ермолая и св. Великомученика Пантелеимона.**

1885 года.

**Адресъ къ намъ слѣдующій:**

**ВЪ Г. КІЕВЪ**

**ЕЛЕНЪ СЕМЕНОВНЪ**

**СЕНАТОРСКОЙ,**

*Большая Васильковская, домъ № 3 и 5.*

**ДЛЯ ПЕРЕДАЧИ**

**ВЪ КОНСТАНТИНОПОЛЬ**

**ВЪ МОНАСТЫРЬ СВ. ЕРМОЛАЯ И**

**ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНА О. ИГУМЕНУ**

**Хаджи Георгію и Пареенію съ**

**братію.**



## СЛОВО О ИСПОВѢДИ.

ХРИСТОЛЮБИВЫЕ БРАТІЯ МОИ!

Молюся о спасеніи Вашемъ, прошу и Васъ помянуть меня смиреннаго въ своихъ молитвахъ! Слово мое къ Вамъ объ исповѣди. Согрешилъ, палъ, скоро исповѣдуй грѣхъ, свой, ибо новая рана удобно и скоро излѣчивается: еслибы кто сломалъ руку или ногу и чѣмъ скорѣе предупредитъ докторъ, тѣмъ легче и скорѣе будетъ вылѣчена болѣзнь. Я видѣлъ своими глазами, свидѣтель сему Богу,—какъ одинъ молодой человѣкъ пришелъ ко мнѣ исповѣдаться, но для того чтобы не забыть ни одного грѣха, онъ выписалъ на бумагу и со слезами мнѣ исповѣдалъ и съ твердымъ намѣреніемъ впредь оныхъ неповторять. Я же видя его умильнiе и вѣру, и вѣсть великіе содѣянные имъ грѣхи, пошелъ съ нимъ къ духовнику, и что же? Пришедши, вижу великое и преславное чудо—молодой человѣкъ вынимаетъ бумагу и подаетъ духовнику, на которой не было ни одного слова написано—все было изглажено; духовникъ видя сіе чудо, замѣтилъ ему, что Господь простилъ тебѣ всѣ твои грѣхи, иди въ миръ и впредь не согрѣшай, видя на себѣ такую благодать. Тогда же молодой человѣкъ рѣшился на всегда остаться на Аѳонѣ и быть монахомъ не возвращаясь въ миръ.

Христоролюбивые мои братія! Видите таинство покаянія,—исповѣди чистосердечной и рѣшимости впредь несогрѣшать; въ одинъ часъ времени онъ получаетъ оставленіе всѣхъ грѣховъ. Да и разбойникъ благоразумный,

This is an 1885 publication printed at the Monastery of Aghios Panteleimon in Odessa and sent to the counterpart in Constantinople to be distributed to the faithful seeking their help (financial) for the Monastery of Panteleimon on Mount Athos.

The text bears the seal of the Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos and begins with the title and phrase :

*Confession in Christ, my Brothers!*

*I pray for Eternal Salvation and this I ask of you as you remember...*

Constantinople, Monastery of Saint Ermolaou and Saint Panteleimon, 1885

Frank Money Letter from PESTRAVKA PENZA PO (1 .. 97) to Mount Athos via ODESSA (arrival 15 Mar 1897) according to black, round handstamps. It bear also a large wax stamp from Pestravka Penza PO, partially destroyed so we cannot identify the type of letters bearing. Registered first No292 from Pestravka Penza PO and later is registered from the Iliin monastery with no 3091 (handwritten in red). Does not bear the four wax security seals in the corners.

*To the city of Odessa. To the courtyard of Russian - Athos Monastery. To the confidant of this monastery for transmission to Athos, Iliin monastery. To the Father Superior Archimandrite Gavriil. From Seyaprivko Vilhelm , from Penza Provence, Gorodishche district.*



Card Postale.  
Mount Athos.  
St.Panteleimon  
Monastery,  
c. 1890-1900  
Unknown editor



FRANK Money Letter to Athos of 3 roubles bearing a large wax seal from the Voronez P.O. and four smaller in the four corners. The large one bear the indicative number 1 franking the money transfer. The other side it has one black handstamp from the Kapibelki P.O. (19 IX 00) plus two from the Odessa P.O upon arrival (20 IX 00). There is also a red handwritten date "22/12/98" from the Church agency and the "5394" list number. Handwritten account of 14k Tax + 2 k Insurance + 7k receipt, total 23k.

The text: *Money included. To the city of Odessa. To the house of Russian - Afon messenger, from the monastery that is standing of Pushkin str, near the railway station (still today at the same point), to the confidant of that monastery, for transmission to the Afon , to Illiin monastery , to the rector , archimandrite , to the Fathef Gavriil with his brothers . With attachment of three rubles From the peasant Yadakov Ivan Ivanovitch, that lives in a village of Upper Kapibelki, Zemlyan county, Voronezh province.*



### ROPIT - Russian Steam Navigation & trading

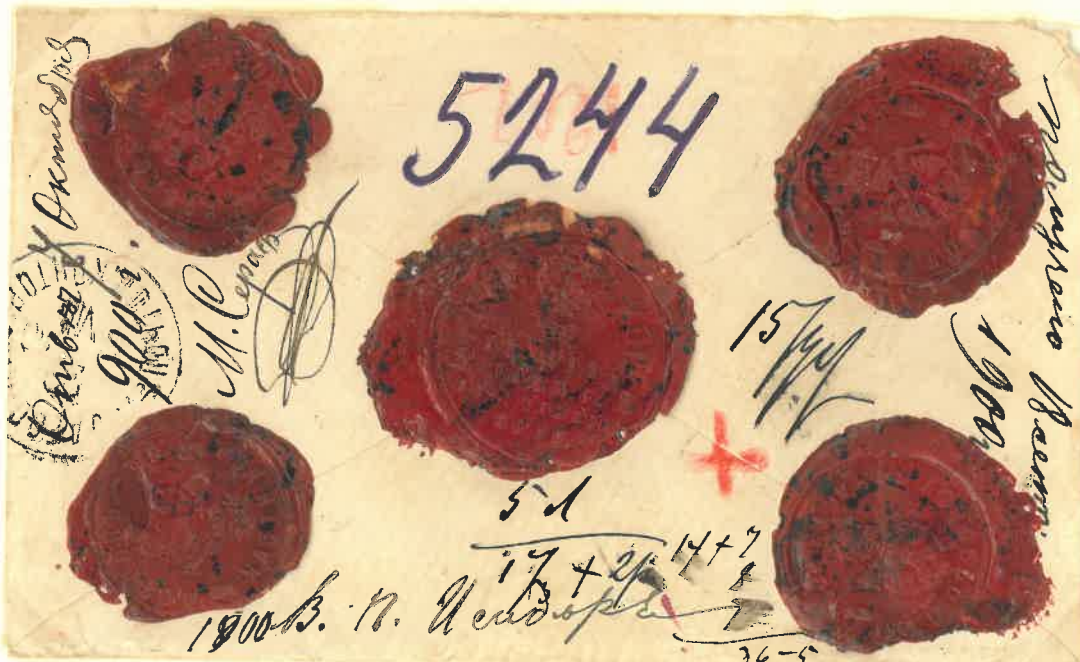
**Company ROPIT**, founded on August 3, 1856, provided shipping & postal services to Mount Athos and the Holy Places, as well as throughout the territory of the Ottoman Empire. In 1901, the Company had 71 of its own steamships and a system of organized pilgrim transport, granting "Pilgrim Passports" and providing auxiliary services to pilgrims for a fee. She had been given the right to issue Russian Postage Stamps for "Levante" use. Some examples for AGION OROS/AFON ROPIT stamps



From BARNAUL TOMSK P.O (15 XI 1900) to Mount Athos, via Odessa. Frank letter, bears 4 small wax Imperial Post seals of the BARNAUL TOMSK with indication 1 and a large one from BARNAUL TOMSK PO, with indication of 2k. Odessa arrival round stamp (27 XI 00) hand written 6949 is the register number in Odessa. On the other side a purple hand stamp from the register office of the Odessa Financial Service of the Holy Synod (6409/29.11.1901) and a round handstamp from the Barnaul Tomsk Post Office. Does not report the amount of rubles donated but the large handwritten red 3, means 3 rubles.



Frank Money Letter from KOZLOV (18 XIII 00) to ODESSA (25 XII 00 ?) A number of different believer's offer 71 rubles. The register no is 2544 handwritten and purple. Large wax seal from KOZLOV with Г and 2, plus 4 simple Imperial Post wax seals in the corners. Indicates also that they have been paid 21 kop. taxes, plus 8 k. for insurance and 7 k. for registry.



Frank Money Letter from ZEMETCHINO (10 XI 00) to Mount Athos, via St. Petersburg. Round blue handstamp St. Petersburg (arrival, 12 NOV. 1900) and a registry number 2802 handwritten in purple. A cachet also in purple from the (probably) Odessa monastery "Received 15 MAR 1901". Has four corner wax stamps and a large one in the center from ZEMETCHINO TAMBOVSK with the letter Г & 1. Shows a tax of 3,5 k and receipt of 1k. In the front side we can read

*"Cash deposit of three rubles. In St. Petersburg, through the Financial Service of the Holy Synod, please transfer to the Holy Mount of Athos, to the plenipotentiary of the Ilinsk Skete on behalf of Vasilisa Karevaya, from the village of Otorma, Morzansk Province".*

Has also a blue, handstamp unclear in the upper right corner.






Frank Money Letter with the no 6351, bearing four wax seals in the corners and a large round wax seal at the center, from the Post Office of KINEL CHERKAS of Samara province with the number 1. In addition has four round handstamps one from Kinel Cherkas (blue, 16 X 01), two from Samara (17 X 01) and two from Odessa (arrival 19 X 01). The other side it has one rectangular blue handstamp from the Kinel Cherkas Post Office and the registry number 122 plus one from the Registry Church office of the Odessa P.O with nr. 6156, (of 24th X). The text it is as follow:

(Addressed) to the Ilinsk Athos hostel in Odessa, to the plenipotentiary father of the Ilinsk hermitage, to be transferred to the hermitage itself in Athos to Abbot Archimandrite father Gabriel and the brothers. Deposit of a sum of thirty rubles (30 r) by father Nikanor Alapovich Filippov, from the village Cherkasy of the Buguroslavsk District of the Samara Governorate (District).



Τῆ	10/7/	1919
Ἀριθ.	32	Συστημ. <i>hlych</i>
Διὰ	<i>Δημ</i>	
Σφραγισμένος Σφραγισμένος 	Τέλος .....	1 60
	Ἀπόδ. παραλ.	.....
	Ἐν ὄλφ	1 60

The receipt is for a registered letter from Athos to Athens, with the Nr. 32 in the P.O. books of the 10/7/1919. The price was 1, 60 drachmas and in signature position handwritten someone signs as "ΑΟρος" (St. Mountain).

Καβάλλα, τῆ 25 Κοζιάς 1911.

Εἰς τὴν Μίχρον Πόρον

Εἰς Κοζιά

Δόματα

Εἰς

Η "ΧΙΟΣ" Γ. Κ. ΣΑΡΙΚΑΝ & ΥΙΟΝ



1911.	Εἰς Κοζιάς	3609
14	αἰμαίνω	5
21	αἰμαίνω	10
25	μπίρα - παρὶ	12
	βερ. 1 παρὶ # 236. 32	472
	" 1 παρὶ # 318, 2	636
	4 ἑν' ἡμερῶν # 53 1/2, 7 3/4	414. 20
	2, , , , 25, 5 1/2	137. 20
	Χειρ-αγμά	30
	Εὐφροσύνη - ἑμισί	6
		3352
		3609

Τόπος, ἔργοσ. Μ. Α. Τόκκου. - Ἀρ. 466

Remittance of a Wine & Olive Oil Warehouse called HIOS of G K. Sarikan & Fils, Cavalla, 1911. It assures that the items purchased and transported to Metohi Rusikon have been paid for. The two stamps are Ottoman Revenue stamps and bear handmade cancelations.



Frank Money Letter from SARATOV to ODESSA. With the no 1196 (purple), bears four wax seals in the corners and a large round wax seal at the center, from the Post Office of SARATOV, Saratovskaya District with the letter Г & 1. More has three hand black round handstamps. One from BALASOV (18 II 01), two from SARATOV (arrival 19 II 01). None from arrival in Odessa. Paid for taxes are 16 k (7 K for taxes, Insurance 2 K. and 7 K for the receipt).

On the other side has one rectangular blue handstamp from the SARATOV Post Office and the registry number 227, plus one purple from the Registry office of the Odessa Financial Service of the Holy Synod with no 1476, of 24 /2, date given to the monastery of Iliin. The text it is as follow:

*...of 3 rubles. To Russian - Athos-Iliin monastery, that is on Pushkin Street, number 7, near to Railway Station. (In Odessa) To the confidant of the monastery, for transmission to Athos, to the Iliin Monastery, to the Father -abbot of the Iliin monastery of Athos. With an attachment of 3 (three) rubles in silver. From peasant Yelizar Gorin.*



Carte Postale, Mount Athos, ed. Conseil de Pelerinages, 4, Av. De Breteuil, Paris. "Les pelerins accompagnes par l'Hiqoumene quittant la monastere du Russikon". From Constantinople to Reims, Fr. through the British PO. Two British levante stamps surchar-gees 30 paras & 1 1/4 pi. Black round handstamp of British PO (AU 18 13) and arrival at Gare Centrale- Post Reims (3 9 13)

Les pelerins accompagnés par l'Hiqoumène quittant le monastère du Russikon

Conseil gé des Pèlerinages, 4, av. de Breteuil, Paris

Frank Money Letter with the no 7188, bearing four wax clear seals in the corners and a large round wax seal, from the Post Office of GRAVEBSK of SAMARA province. In addition has six hand black round handstamps. They are one from GRAVEBESK ( 3 ΔΕΚ 1901,) three from TULA (19.12.1901) and two from ODESSA upon arrival (19. XII 01). Bears also 3 rectangular purple hand stamps from registration in Church's service (Ο.Α.Γ.Π) . The text it is as follow:

*(Addressed) With money attachment of 25 rubels. To the city of Odessa. To the Afon - illin courtyard, To the confidant from illin monastery, for transmission to the Afon , to the Abbot Archimandrite Father Gavriil with his brothers. From Samara Provence. Kuzminovka county. From Michail Choroshov.*



Υπόδ. βιβλίου ἀριθ. 21

Τῆ	.....	191	.....				
Ἀριθ.	757	Συστημ.	.....				
Διὰ	.....						
	Τέλος	.....	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Λ. Ρ.</td> <td>Δ.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>.....</td> <td>.....</td> </tr> </table>	Λ. Ρ.	Δ.	.....	.....
	Λ. Ρ.	Δ.					
	.....	.....					
Απόδ. παραλ.	.....	.....					
Ἐν ὄλφ	.....	.....					

This is a receipt for a registered letter from Athos to Odessa, with number 757 of 8 IV 1919, with an obligation to pay a fee of 40 Drachmas. It bears a double round stamp with the words AGION OROS and inside the 8 APR...(unspecified). There is an indication (upper left) that the receipt belongs to the PO book 21.

Rubles (notes of 5 & 10) issued by the Bank of Russia, in 1909 and circulating through remittances to the Slavic Monasteries of Mount Athos. At the bottom, a 50 rubles note, depicting Tsar Nicholas II (1899).

