

## The German Imperial Navy on Cretan Blockade 1897-98

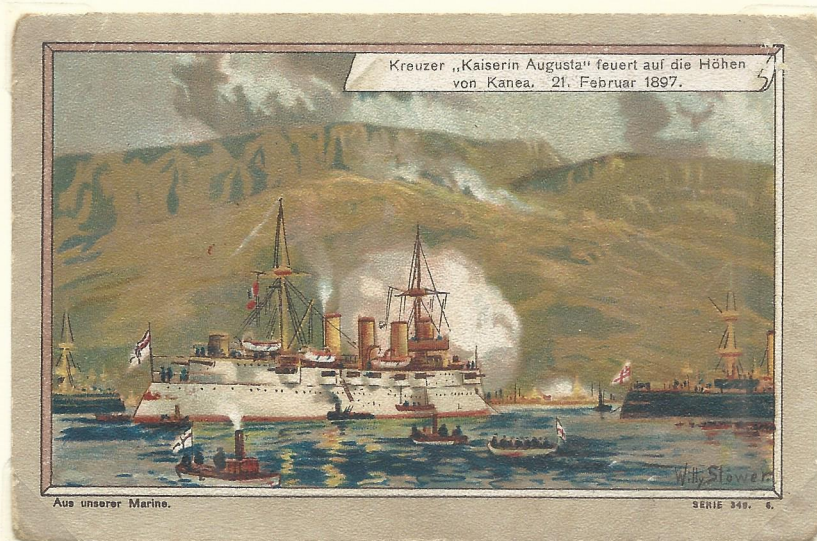
By the beginning of the year 1897 the island of Crete was still under Ottoman occupation and in great political turbulence. The island was on a very critical situation due to the great desire of the Christian population for a union with Greece and also the escalation pace of the bloody warfare between the Christian and the Ottoman population of the island. The ruling European countries of the time, Austro-Hungary, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia, decided to intervene drastically worrying for the worse to come. Their intervention became even stronger on February 1897, after the arrival of a Greek liberating army of 1500 troops under the command of colonel Timoleon Vassos. This evidently led to the naval blockade of Crete that occurred on March 6, after official order of the ruling countries governments. In the aftermath of these cataclysmic events, the naval fleets of the great European powers were ultimately ruling the island blockading any naval passage.

The only great European country that was discretely distant from these events and decisions was Germany, a traditional affiliate to the Sultan. Germany sent only two warships in Crete during the blockade: *S.M.S Kaiserin Augusta* and *S.M.S. Oldenburg*.

The aim of this exhibit is to present through postal items, the German naval fleet's intervention to the Cretan naval blockade.

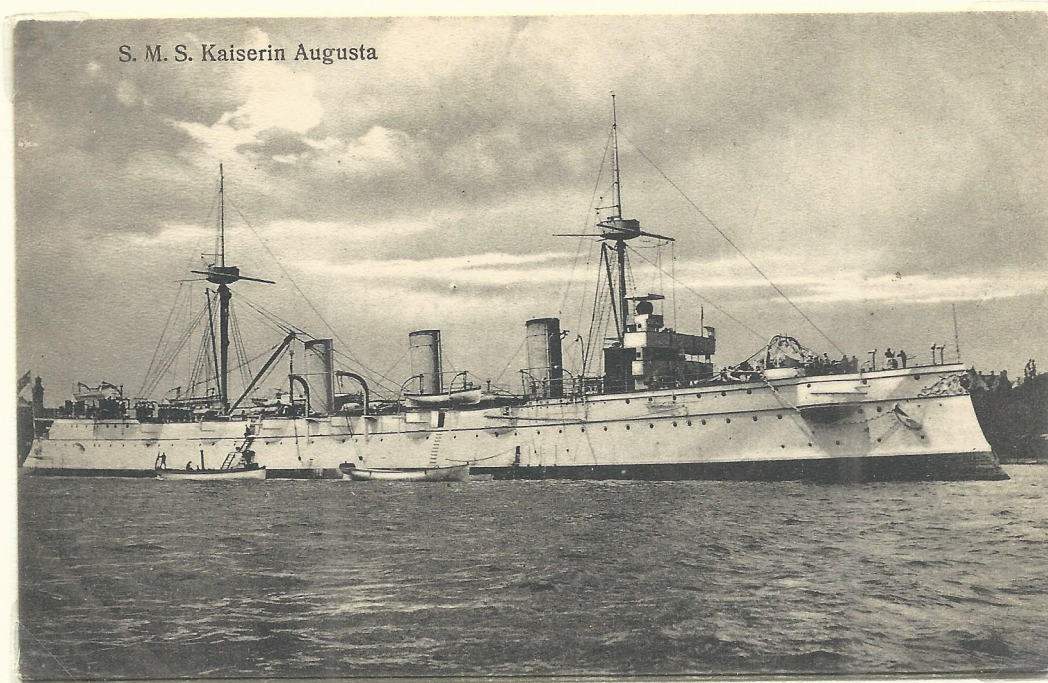
The table bellow gives details of the presence of the German army in Crete, based on dates and events

- **21 Febr.1897:** *S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta* arrived in Canea Crete
- **26 Febr.1897:** *S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta* arrived in Suda Bay Crete
- **29 Apr.1897:** *S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta* left Crete to Phaleron Greece
- **29 Apr.1897-18 Nov.1897:** A detachment of 15 German marines remained in Crete as a presence of German army. At the same time *S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta* had moored in Phaleron Bay as guarantor for the preservation of peace between Greece and Turkey.
- **8 Nov.1897:** *S.M.S. kaiserin Augusta* left Phaleron bay to Crete.
- **18 Nov.1897-19 Nov.1897:** *S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta* received the, remained in Crete, German marines force and permanently left Crete to Far East.
- **5 Jan.1898-16 Mar.1898:** *S.M.S. Oldenburg* arrived in Suda Bay Crete as a representative of German naval fleet in Crete. On 16<sup>th</sup> of March the German battleship left Crete as Germany and Austro-Hungary withdrew their naval contingents in a show of dissatisfaction over the compromise solution, which left Crete under Ottoman control, but with a Greek prince.



### The arrival of German Imperial Navy in Crete

The protected cruiser “Kaiserin Augusta”, a unique battleship of the German Imperial navy, arrived in the island of Crete on 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1897 as the sole German contribution to the international force of naval blockade of Crete.



### S.M.S Kaiserin Augusta anchored in Canea port



Postal card from Chania (27 Febr.1897) to Germany, written by a German Marine just four days (25 Febr.1897) after the arrival of S.M.S Kaiserin Augusta to Crete and only one day before the arrival to Suda Bay. On the very interesting text the soldier gave information about the presence of an international fleet of 20 warships and the bombardment of the Greek rebellions in Chalepa on 21<sup>st</sup> of February.

The first days of the blockade

Short letter from Chania (10 Mar.97) to Germany by the Ottoman post, the fourth day of the blockade of Crete. The extended and interesting text is about the situation in Canea territory, the battles and the casualties of combats between the international forces and the Greeks and Turks. The writer is not sure if the battleship would stay in Crete or moved to Athens the next days.



Köf. Ob. Mdt. G. Dose,  
L. M. S. Kaiserin Augusta.

short letter from Chania (12 Mar.97) to Germany sent by the Ottoman post just six days after the declaration of Cretan naval blockade. The sender is a German marine from "Kaiserin Augusta" as indicated on the back side of the letter.

## The first days of the blockade – From “Augusta” to Germany via Constantinople



Ottoman postal card from Constantinople (14 Mar. 1897) to Neuenkirchen. The German marine C.Dose wrote this card a week earlier (7 Mar. 1897) in Chania, as a member of S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta force.

## The last day on Crete – Kaiserin Augusta moved to Phaleron Bay

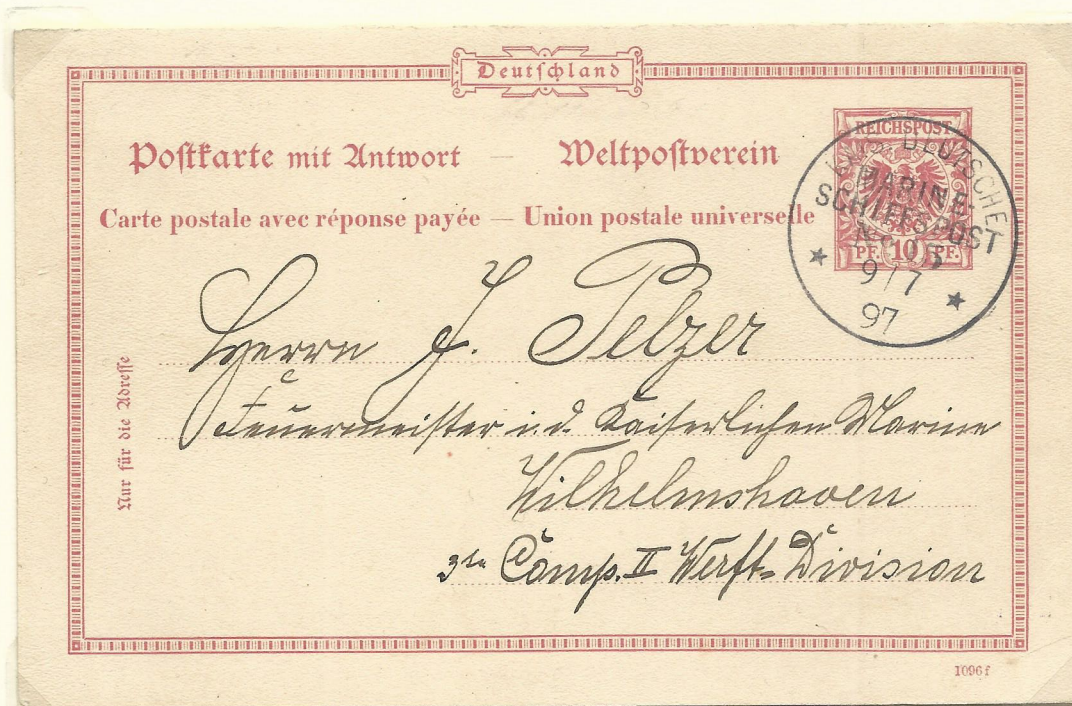
On 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1897 the German Cruiser, followed specific orders from the highest commission, left Crete and moved to Phaleron Bay Greece. Two main reasons were the cause. First the dissatisfaction for the decisions of the other Great Powers about the Cretan mater, and second the importance of the presence of the German army in Greece as a guarantor of peace between Greece and Turkey.



Short letter from Chania (30 Apr. 1897) to the German battleship “Condor” in Zanzibar. One day earlier “Augusta” left Crete and moved to Phaleron bay. The German marine wrote in 29<sup>th</sup> of April from Suda Bay “...Machen soeben dampf auf nach Athen zur Revolution ... sonst der Teufel los...” “we are ready to move to Greece in order to prevent a revolution”

### S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta on Phaleron bay

After a period of more than two months (21 February 1897 – 29 April 1897), the cruiser “Kaiserin Augusta” left Crete following specific orders from the higher command. The battleship moved to the port of Piraeus, watching discreetly the military operations of the other ruling European countries on the island. Germany was an ally of Ottoman empire and did not wish to engage in hostile acts against it. On March 1897 released special postcards that were printed especially for German marines and overprinted with “Nur für Marine-Schiffsposten” means “Only for Navy Ship Post”



German response card without overprint “Nur Fur Marine-Schiffsposten”, from Phaleron bay (9 Jul. 1897) to Germany, canceled with the “Kaiserin Augusta” special canceller “Marine Schiffspost No.15”. At this time the battleship was at Phaleron bay waiting for orders.

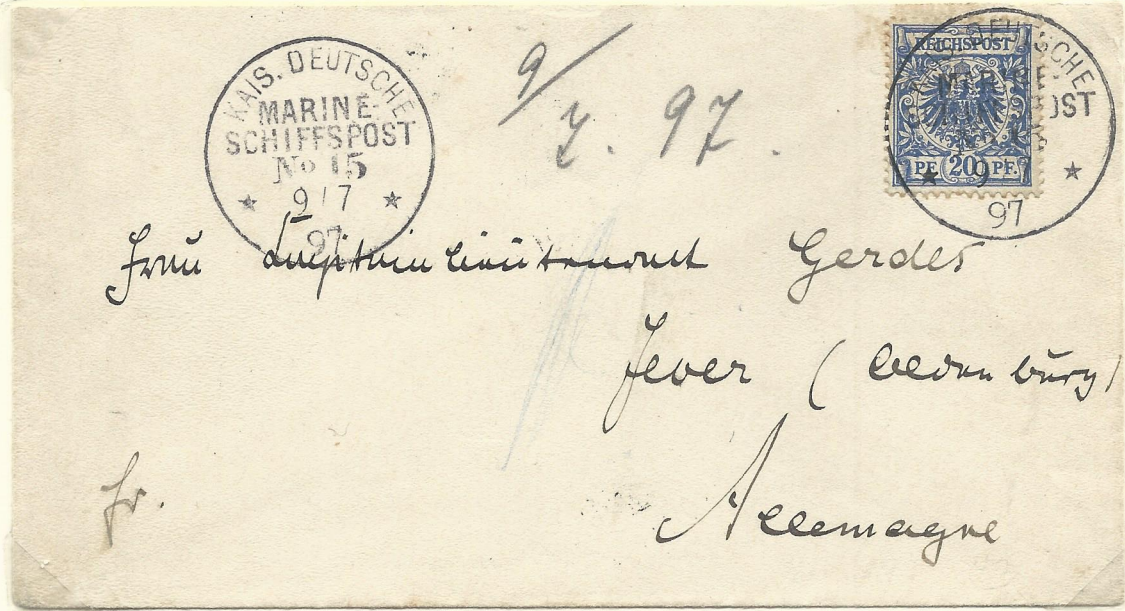


German postal stationery from Phaleron bay (20 Jul. 1897) to Germany, canceled with the “kaiserin Augusta” special canceller. The stationery is overprinted by “Nur Fur Marine-Schiffsposten” means “Only for Navy Ship Post”

S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta in Phalelon bay



The route of S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta from Suda bay Crete to Phaleron bay Greece, on April 1897, under the orders of Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany



Cover from "S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta" (9 Jul. 1897) to Germany canceled by the postal canceler of the battleship "Kas. Deutsche Marine Schiffspost No 15". At this time "Augusta" was at Phaleron bay.

The 20 Pf. Rate was the tax for officers of the German army.

## The German detachment in the city of Chania

On April 1897, "S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta" moved to Phaleron bay, but left in Chania a small detachment of about 10-15 men. Although Kaiser Wilhelm wanted to keep neutrality because of the alliance with the Sultan, retained in Crete this detachment in order to be able to participate in possible future negotiations with benefits for Germany.



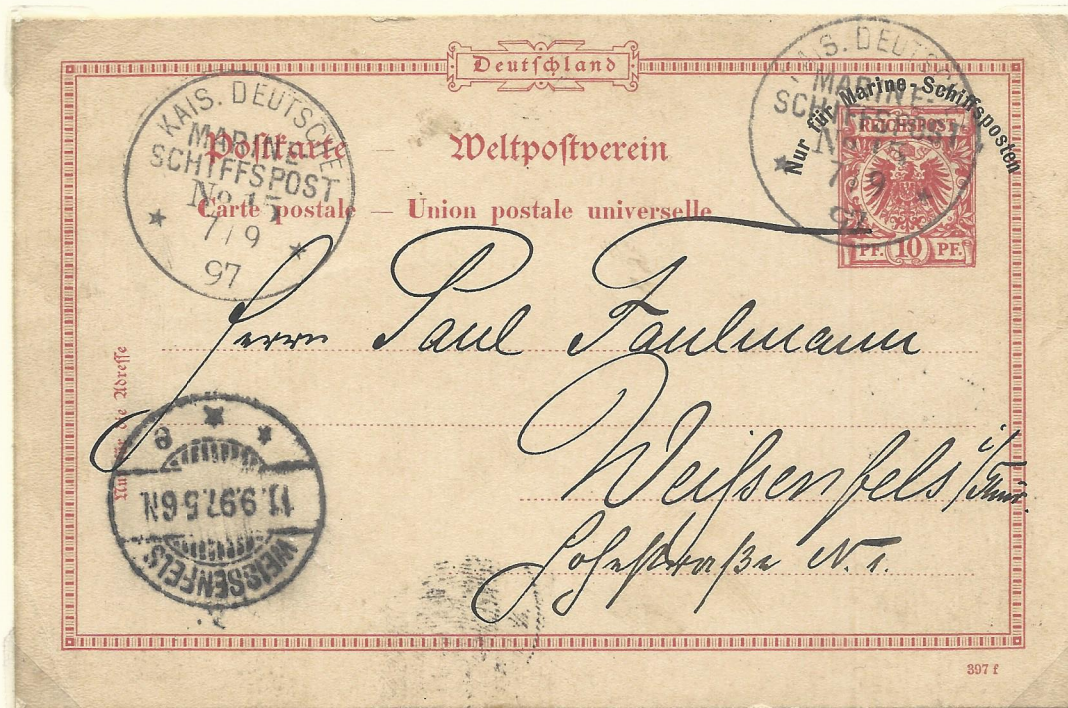
Short letter from Chania (10 Aug. 1897) to Hong Kong with redirection to Yokohama (18 Sep. 1897) via

- Alexandria 15 Aug. 1897
- Suez 16 Aug. 1897
- Colombo 28 Aug. 1897
- Hong Kong 11 Sep. 1897

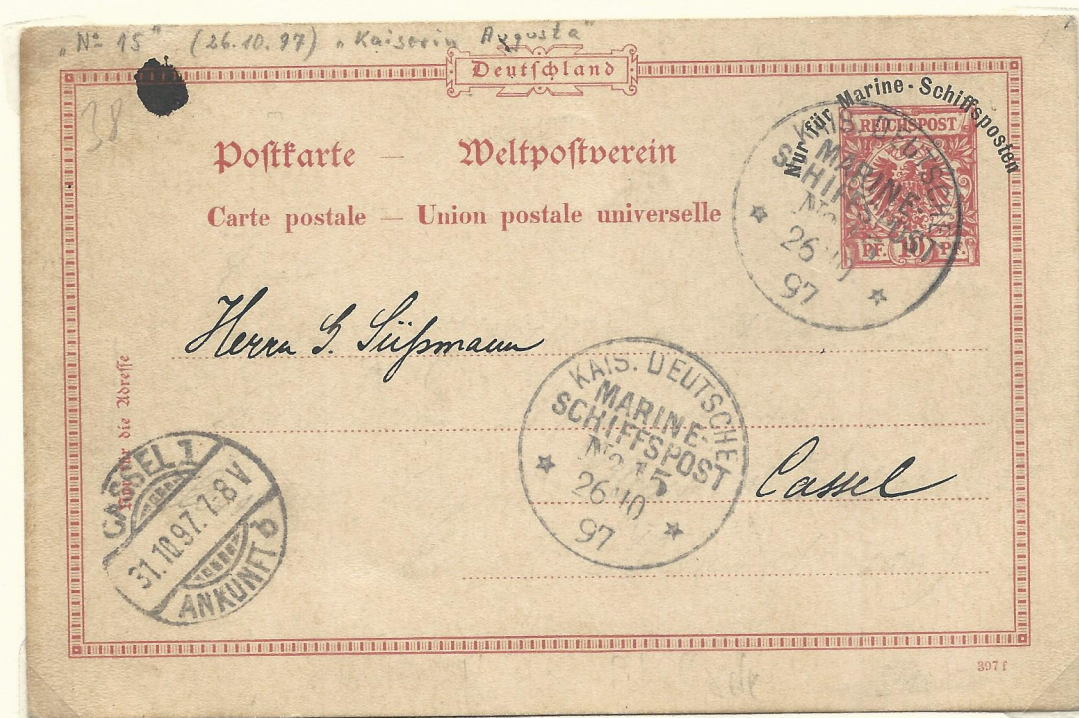
Sent by Walthof Urbanek, a German marine of the detachment of Chania.

## German special marine schiffspost postal stationary from Phaleron bay

From June 1897 a 10 pfennig postal stationary overprinted "Nur Fur Marine – Schiffsposten" (only for Navy Ship post) was available for use by crews of German vessels. This Marine Schiffspost postal stationary used from June 1897 to 30 of April 1899.



From "Kaiserin Augusta" (Phaleron bay, 07 Sep. 1897) to Wiessenfels Germany. Cancellation "Marine Schiffspost No 15".

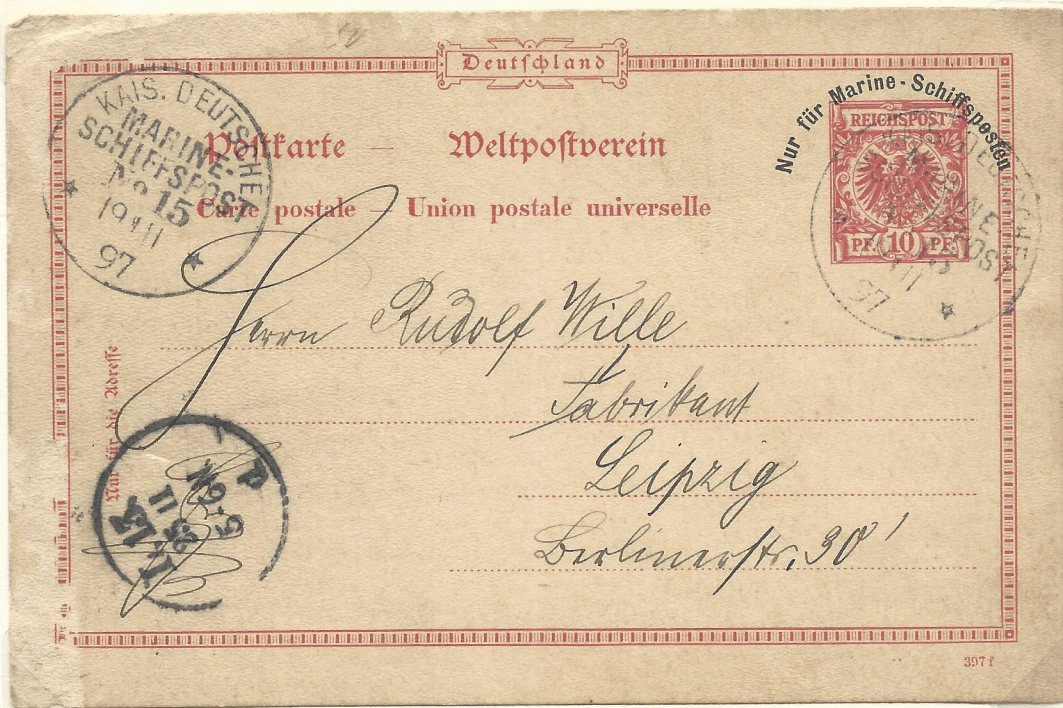


From Kaiserin Augusta (Phaleron bay, 26 Oct. 1897) to Cassel Germany. Cancellation "Marine Schiffspost No 15". The postal stationary mailed about two weeks before the return of "Kaiserin Augusta" to Crete (8 Nov. 1897).



### The return of "Kaiserin Augusta" to Crete

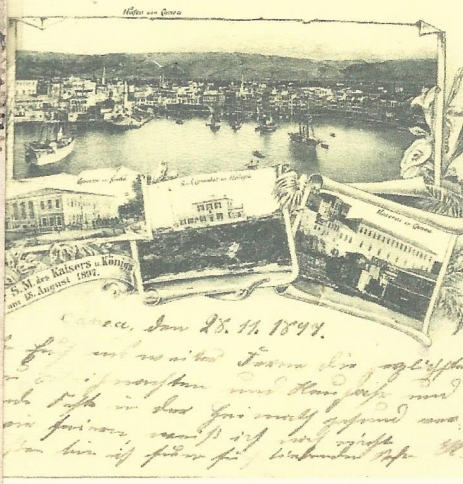
The German battleship returned to Crete on 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1897. The main purpose was to take the small detachment of marines who left in Chania on April and move to Far East.



Marine Schiffspost Postal stationary from Chania (19 Sep. 1897) to Germany one day after the arrival to Crete. Canceled "Marine Schiffspost No 15".

*Kanea (Kreta) 18. 11. 97.  
Rudolf!  
Ich bin glücklich angekommen. Am 16. d. d.  
wurde ich über Kanea, Port Said, Sues  
nach Japan. Für 5 Mr. in Kanea einget.  
am 17. d. d. am Montag 22. in Port Said.  
Ich habe alles mit Erfolg erledigt.  
22. d. d. wird folgen. Ich bin in Japan  
zu kommen. Engländer haben  
Japan. Mit prof. Glück in alle Hände.  
Sein altes besitzes, trainiert  
M. d. d. d. d.*

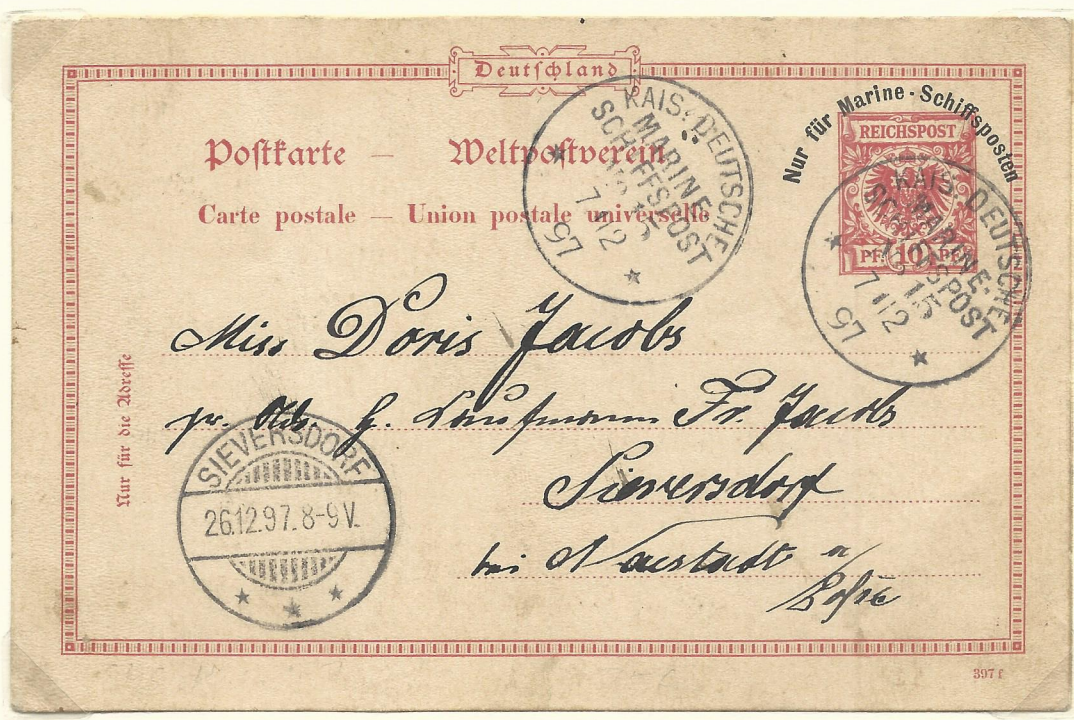
### The final departure to China



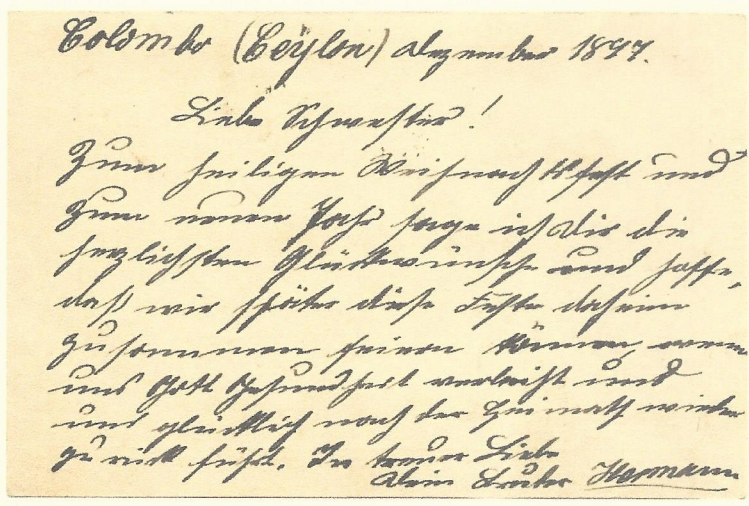
Postal card from "S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta" (28 Nov. 1897) to Germany. It is strange why the German marine wrote "Canea" next to the text date, as "Augusta" was not in Canea at this date, but in Aden, on the road to Kiautschu!!

“S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta” on the road to Far East

After the departure from Crete, “Kaiserin Augusta” moved to Far East and specifically to Kiautschou bay in China. It arrived there on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1897.



Postal stationery from Colombo Ceylon (07 Dec. 1897) to Germany. The warship left Crete on 19<sup>th</sup> of November and twenty days later had reached Ceylon, on the road to China.

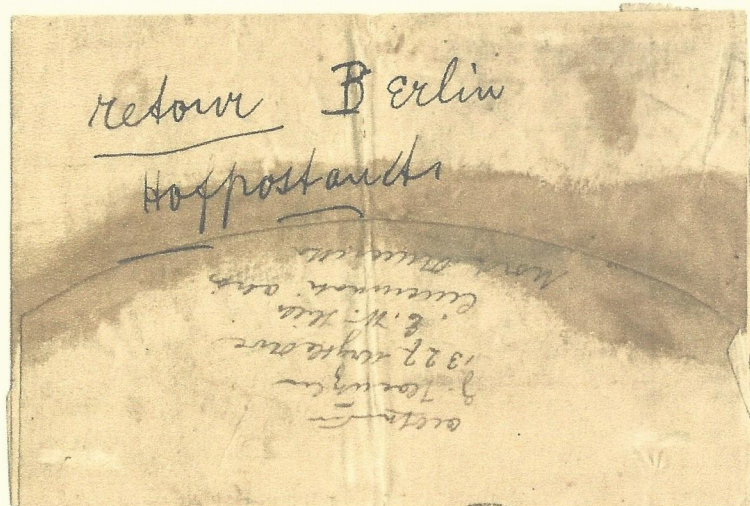


The back side of the stationery (reduced 70%)

**Cover to “Kaiserin Augusta” sent to Crete and redirected to Germany**



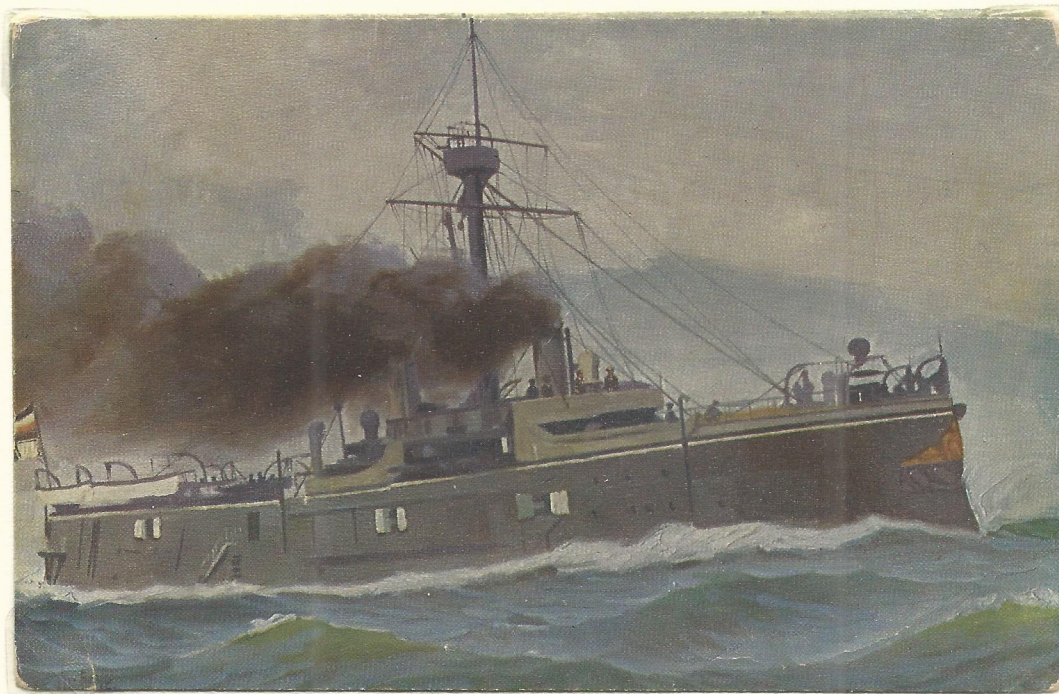
Cover from Cincinnati U.S.A. to Canea looking for “Kaiserin Augusta”. Unfortunately for the sender, the ship had already moved to Kiautschou – China and the Ottoman post office in Chania redirected the cover to Germany. It is noteworthy that the cover arrived in Chania the same day (30 Dec. 1897) that “Kaiserin Augusta” arrived in China!



On the back side of the cover the manuscript from the Chania Ottoman post office “retour Berlin Hofpostamt” (reduced 70%)

## S.M.S. Oldenburg arrived in Suda bay

“S.M.S. Oldenburg was an armored warship that returned to active duty to replace “S.M.S. Kaiserin Augusta” as a representative of German empire in naval blockade of Crete. “Oldenburg” arrived in Crete on 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1898



The German Battleship “S.M.S. Oldenburg”

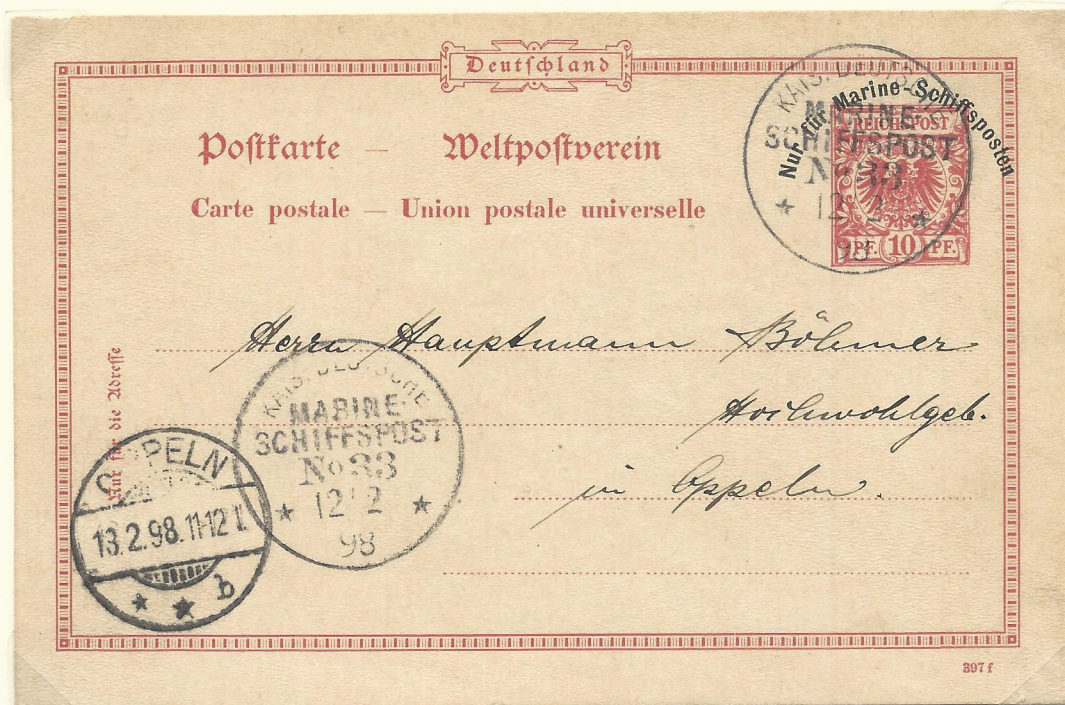


Postal card from Chania (11 Jan. 1898) to Germany sent by a marine from S.M.S. Oldenburg the first days in Suda bay. The warship arrived in Crete on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1898.



Part of the back side of the card

Mail from Chania by S.M.S. Oldenburg marines to Germany



Marine Schiffspost postal stationary canceled by the S.M.S. Oldenburg canceller (marine schiffspost No33, 12 Feb. 1898) to Germany.



Postal card from Chania Ottoman post (20 Feb. 1898) to Germany sent by a marine of "Oldenburg"

*Chania, le 18. Febr. 1898.  
Lieber Herr P. M. T. Oldenburg.  
Aufwacht demnächst Ihren Brief.*

### Cretan Postal card sent from S.M.S. Oldenburg with 10 pf. Stamp

Common Cretan postal cards are rarely seen posted by "S.M.S. Oldenburg" and taxed by German stamps.

German Marines Postal Rates: 10pf. for postcards and covers, 20pf. for officers mail.



Postal card sent by S.M.S. Oldenburg (Marine Schiffspost No 33, 05 Mar. 1898) to Kiel Germany. The card taxed with a 10 pfennig stamp used by a marine soldier of the battleship.

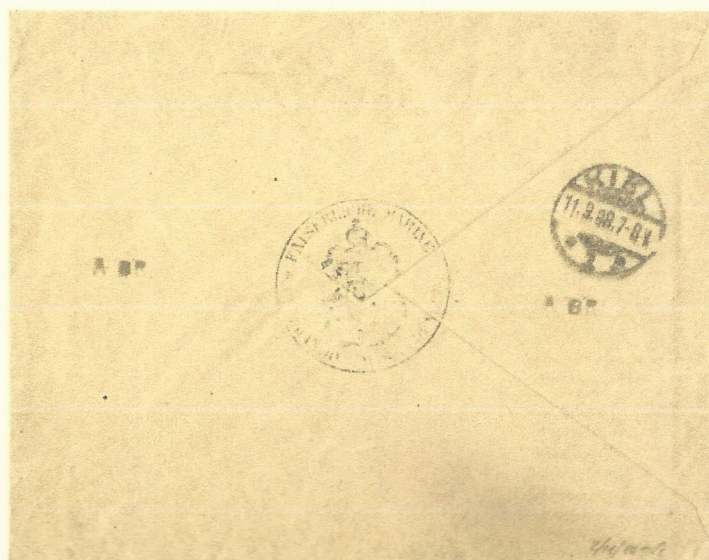


Back of the card (reduced 70%)

Official S.M.S. Oldenburg cover from Suda Bay Crete to Kiel



Official cover without stamps, mailed from "S.M.S. Oldenburg" to Kiel Germany. The cover canceled by the "Marine Schiffspost No33" cancel and the three line official administrative cancel "Kommando S.M.S. Oldenburg B.Nr." on the front side. On the back side, the cover stamped with the official round seal of the warship "KAISERLICHE MARINE - KOMMANDO S.M.S. OLDENBURG"



The back side of the cover (reduced 70%)

## German Imperial Navy left permanently Suda bay and the Naval Blockade of Crete

“S.M.S. Oldenburg” remained in the force of the naval blockade until March 1898, when Germany and Austria – Hungary withdrew their naval contingents in a show of dissatisfaction over the compromise solution which left Crete autonomous under Ottoman control. In the second half of March “Oldenburg” left Crete for a new destination in the Mediterranean.



Postal card sent from an S.M.S. Oldenburg marine (Chania 17 Mar. 1898 to Berlin Germany by the Ottoman post) who inform that the battleship will permanently leave the island of Crete on 16<sup>th</sup> of March. Direction the port of Messina Italy.



Marine Schiffspost Postal stationery sent from “S.M.S. Oldenburg from Messina Italy (Marine Schiffspost No33, 29 Mar. 1898) to Kiel Germany. The battleship had left Suda bay on 16<sup>th</sup> of March.