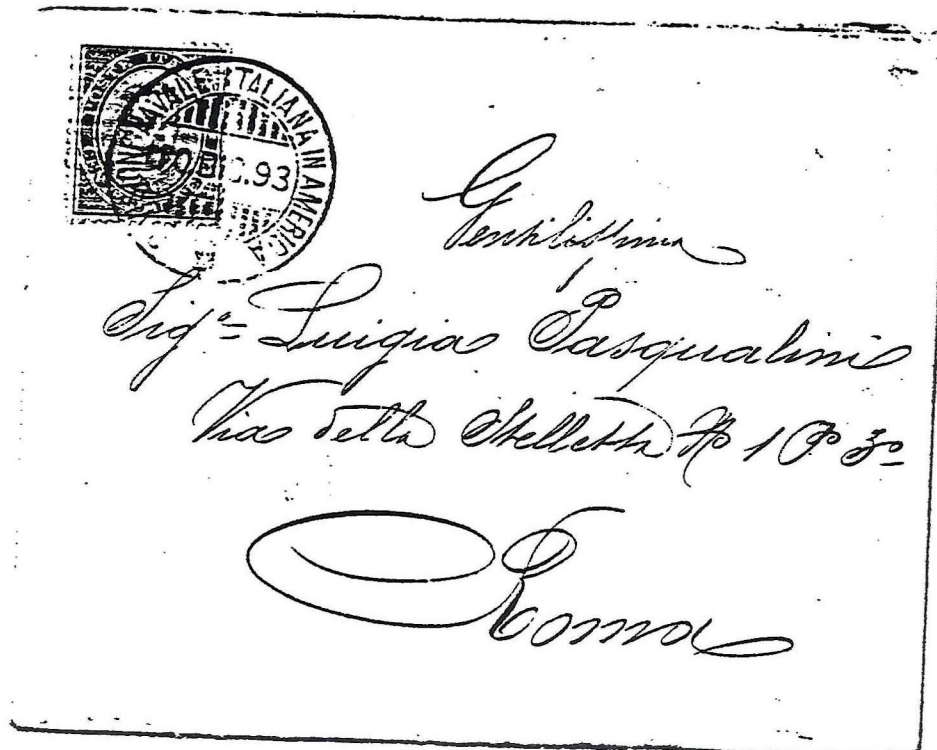


ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD 1893 - 1940 EXCLUDING THE WORLD WARS

Created in 1861, the Kingdom of Italy missed the great era of colonization. By the time Italy was in a position to have imperial aspirations, there was very little territory left that was not under the dominion (or at least the protection) of a great power. Moreover, Italian military means consistently fell short of the requirements of serious imperialism. Thus, Italy's efforts to expand her territories and increase her national prestige tended toward small, far flung nibblings at the peripheries of nations and empires suffering from some adversity, or largely symbolic shows of force aimed at gaining stature rather than land.

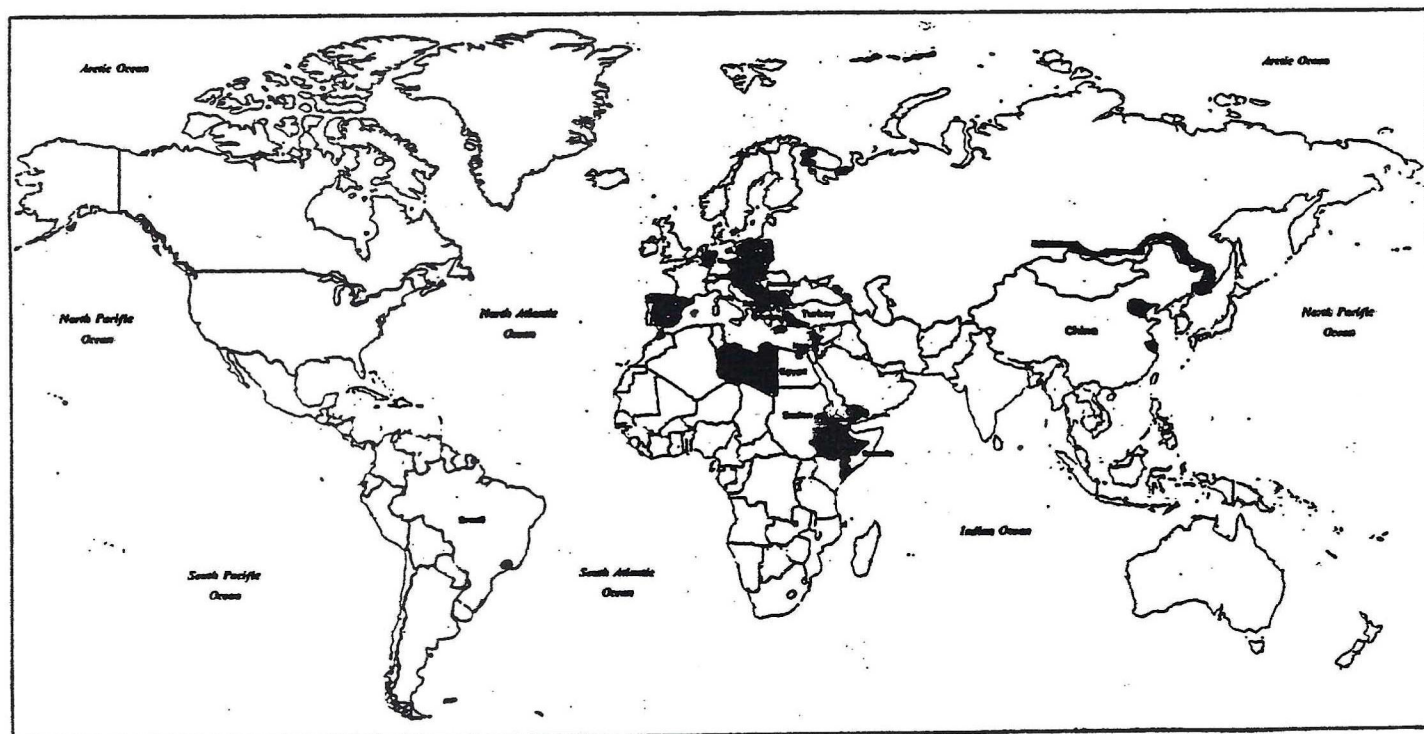


A Brazilian military rebellion raised fears for the safety of foreign nationals. Italy sent a 6-vessel naval squadron to Rio de Janeiro. Mail from members of this expedition, franked at domestic rates, was cancelled with a special postmark.

The following pages illustrate postal material from Italy's military activities in the expansion of her territory and influence from her first exercise in naval saber-rattling in 1893 until the eve of World War II, excluding the overwhelmingly large military history of World War I. During the nearly 50 years of history treated here, Italy's imperialism proceeded by fits and starts, with an inter-mixture of aggressive expansionism (Ethiopia, Turkish North Africa, etc.), what would today be called peace-keeping (e.g., Brazil, the Boxer Uprising, occupation of parts of the post-World War I Turkish, Austrian and German empires), and one of the first large efforts in organized "voluntary" military intervention (Spain). Thus, with opportunism the thread which runs through it, rather than the fulfillment of a unified plan for expansion, this presentation should be viewed as an anthology of short stories rather than as a novel. Organization is (roughly) chronological and, within operations occurring at the same times, geographical.

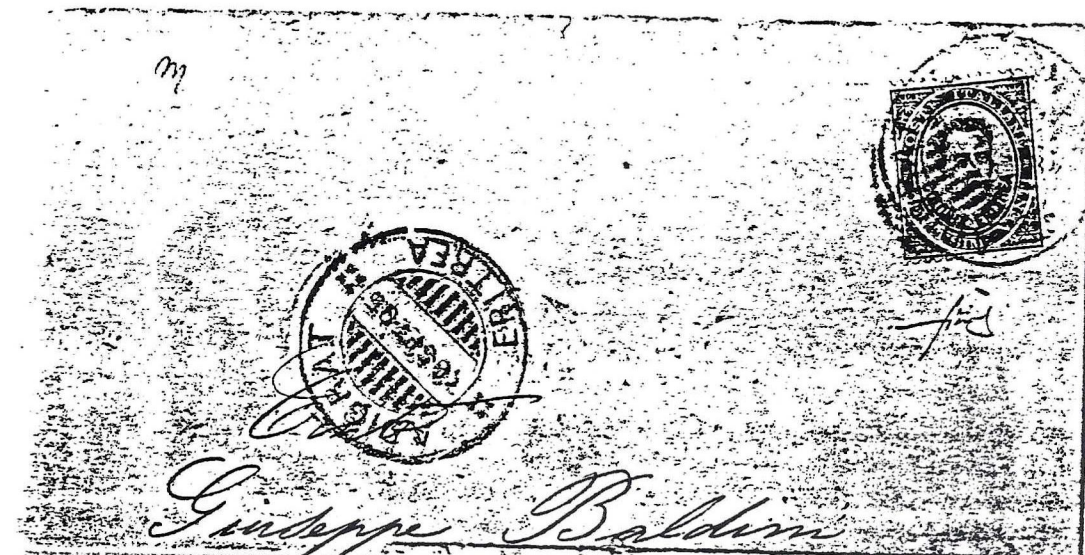
ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD 1893 - 1940 EXCLUDING THE WORLD WARS

	Frames		Frames
I. Pre-World War I	1 - 3	3. Greece	
A. Brazil	1	4. Serbia	
B. Ethiopia	1	D. Asia Minor and Mid-East	6 - 7
C. Sudan	1	1. Turkey	
D. China	1	2. Egypt	
E. Crete	1	3. Palestine	
F. Italo-Turkish War	2 - 3	E. Russia	7 - 8
1. Libya		1. Siberia	
2. Aegean Islands		2. North Russia	
II. Aftermath of WWI	3 - 8	3. South Russia	
A. Austro-Hungarian Empire	3 - 4	4. Transcaucasia	
1. Austria		III. Fascist Opportunism	8 - 10
2. Dalmatia		A. Ionian Islands	8
3. Hungary		B. Oltre Guiba	8
B. Central Europe	4 - 5	C. Saseno	8
1. Germany		D. Yemen	8
2. Czechoslovakia		E. China	8
3. Eastern Silesia		F. Saar	9
4. Poland		G. Ethiopia	9
5. Upper Silesia		H. Djibouti	9
C. Balkans	5 - 6	I. Spain	9 - 10
1. Albania		J. Albania	10
2. Bulgaria		K. Morocco	10

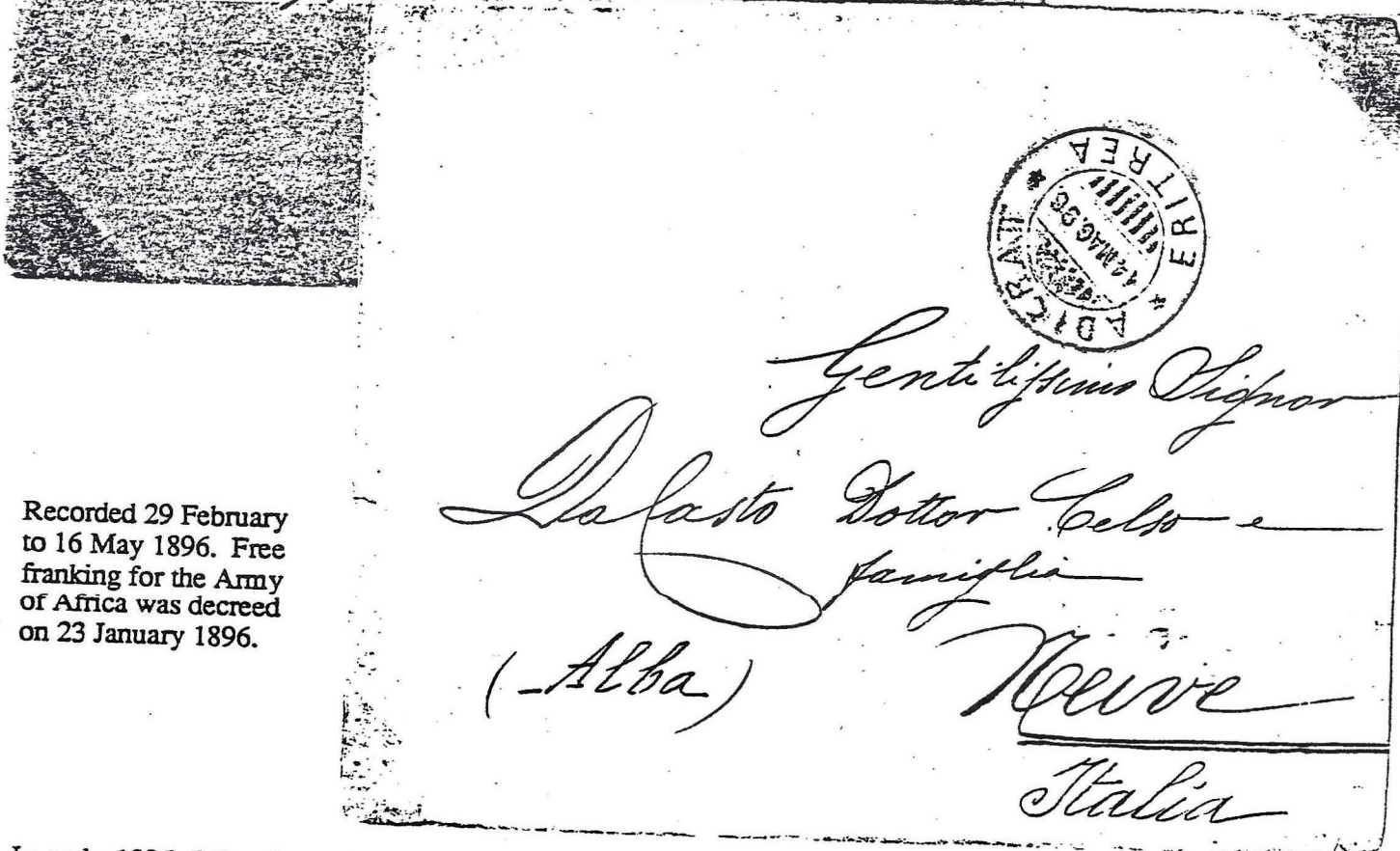


ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Ethiopia

Adigrat
20 September 1895
14 May 1896



Recorded 4 June 1895
to 16 February 1896



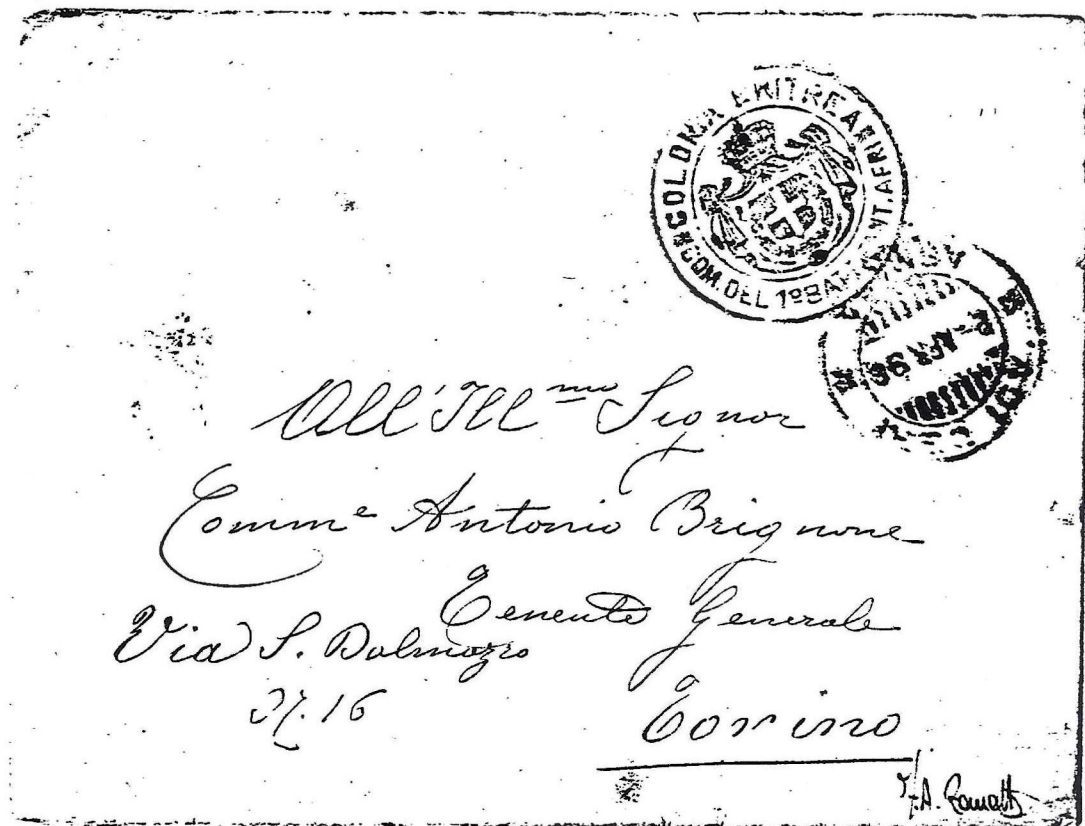
Recorded 29 February
to 16 May 1896. Free
franking for the Army
of Africa was decreed
on 23 January 1896.

In early 1895, following a dispute over the interpretation of an earlier treaty, Italy occupied much of Ethiopia's Tigre Province. This was followed by a formal declaration of war in November. However, in the ensuing fighting the Ethiopians won a decisive battle at Adua on 1 March 1896, and the Italians were forced to sign the Treaty of Addis Ababa in October. As a result, peace was restored and the independence of Ethiopia recognized.

Adigrat was occupied by Italian troops on 25 March 1895. Two similar markings (with differing ornaments on the sides of the postmarks) were used there. Lower cover, endorsed on back "4th Company, 21st Battalion of Africa," was posted just four days before the Italians withdrew from Adigrat.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Ethiopia

Adi Ugri/Asmara
2 April 1896

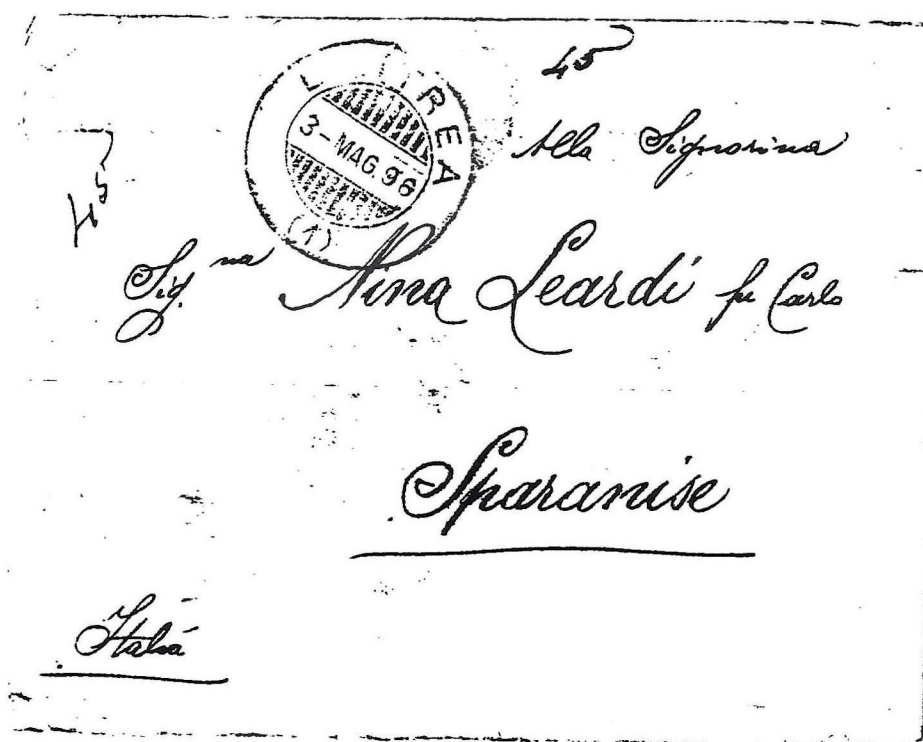
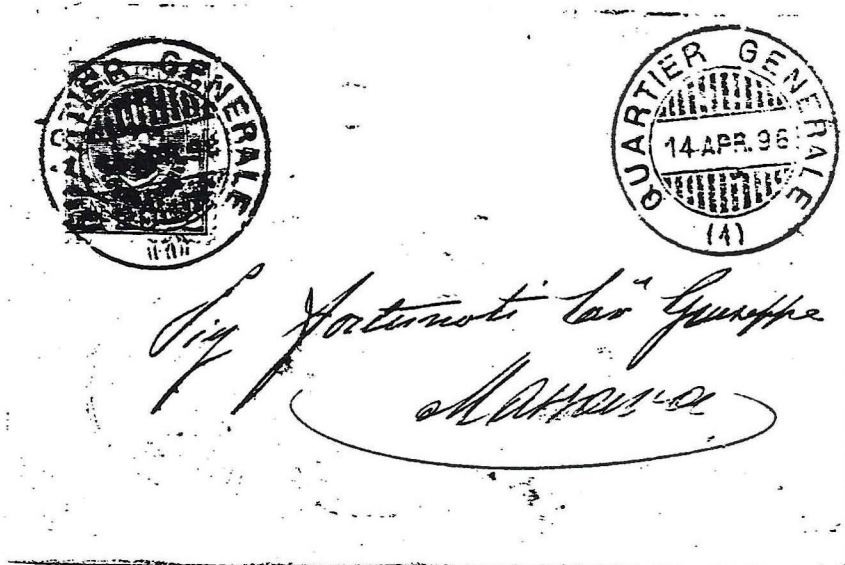


Most of the Italian forces deployed against Ethiopia were based in the colony of Eritrea, where the postal facilities were well developed. Unit marking of the Headquarters of the First Battalion of the Infantry of Africa, which permitted it to go postage free. Backstamped for receipt in Turin on 20 April 1896.

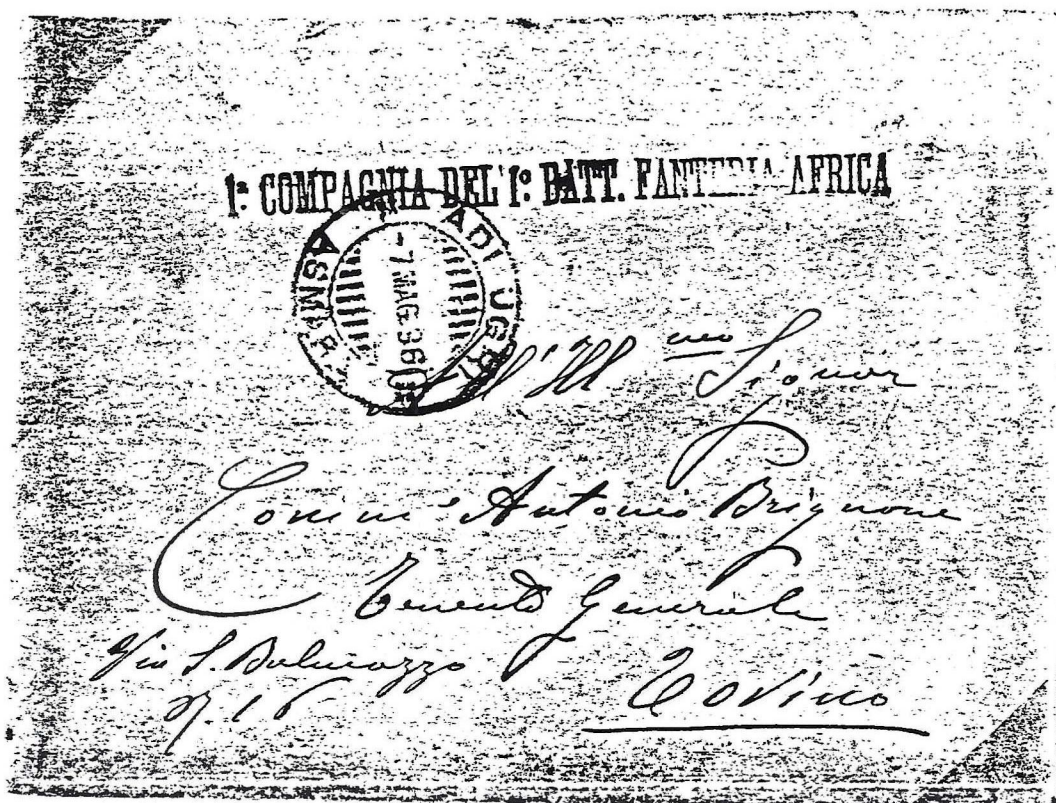
ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Ethiopia

Quartier Generale
14 April 1896

Eritrea (1)
3 May 1896



For their mobile field post offices during the campaign, the Italians introduced postmarks reading "Headquarters" and "Eritrea." The former moved with the Commander and is known to have been used at Ghinda, Adigrat and Asmara. The latter was used on the plain of Gura and at Adi Caie. These postmarks are each recorded to have been used for only one month. The above Headquarters example is the earliest and 14 May the latest. The Eritrea marking shown is earlier than previously recorded in the Sorani handbook; the latest is 4 June 1896.

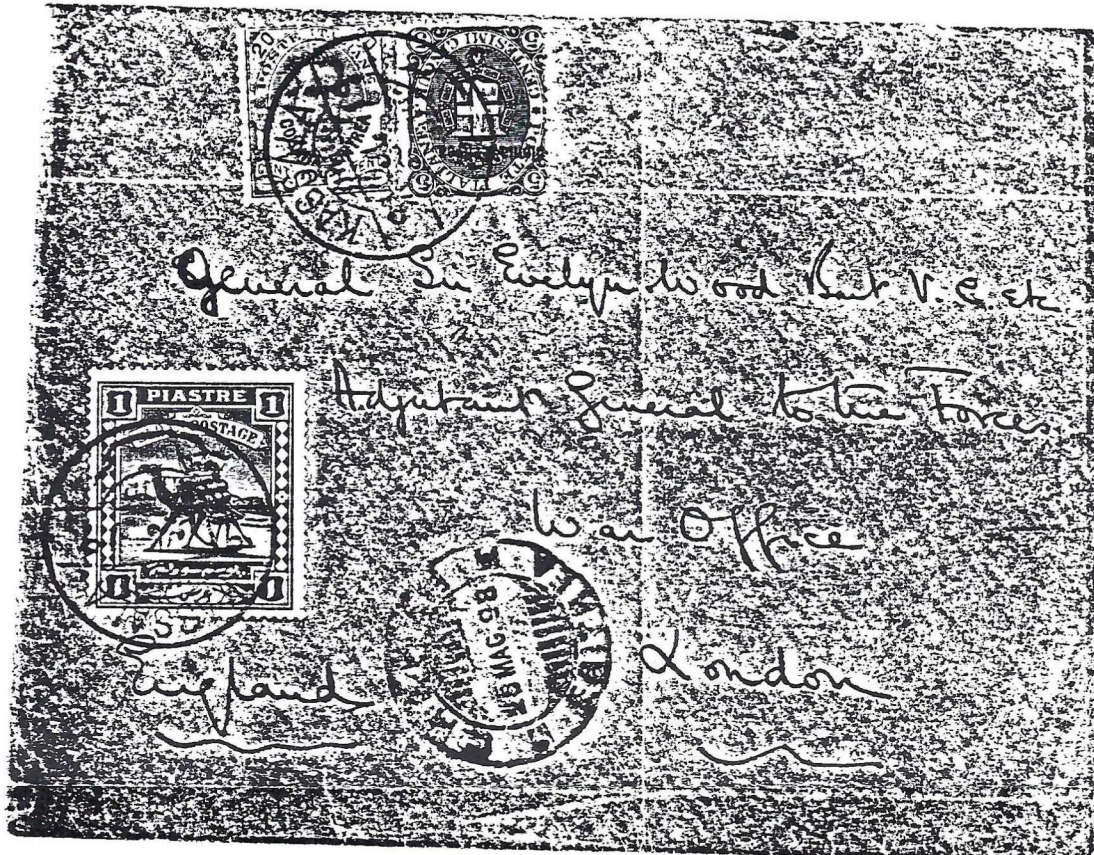


As a result of the revolt by the Mahdi against the Egyptian government, the city of Kassala in southeastern Sudan was occupied by the Dervishes in 1885. A series of Dervish incursions into the adjacent Italian colony of Eritrea followed. In 1893, the Sudanese were repulsed by the Italian forces with heavy losses, and 900 Italian soldiers occupied Kassala. In December 1896, Italy retroceded the town to Egypt.

Sent by a member of the 1st Company, 1st Battalion of the Infantry of Africa. Field post status was recognized as the letter entered the mails at Adi Ugri, Eritrea on 7 May 1896.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Sudan

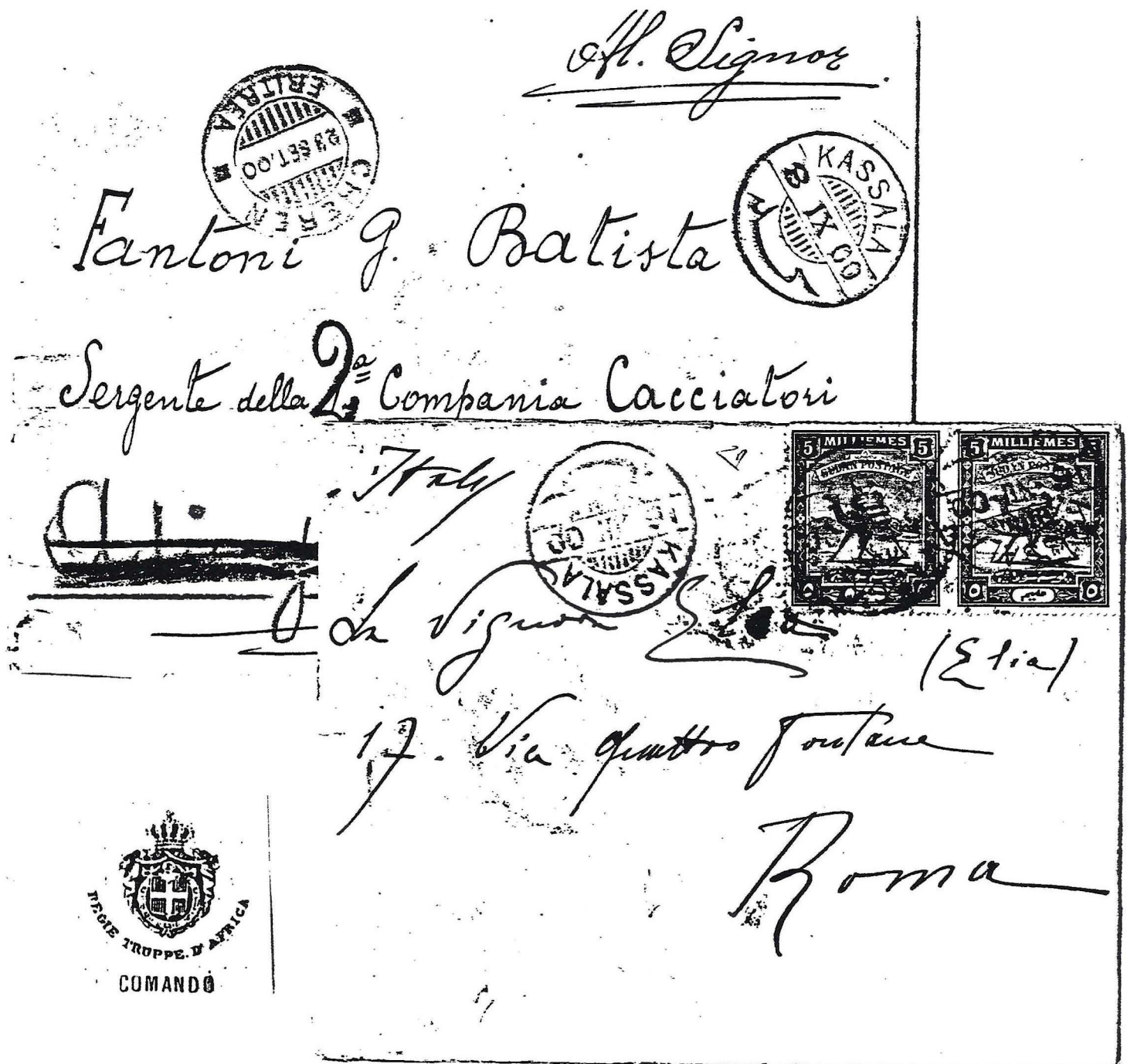
Kassala
19 May 1898



Although the Italians had recognized the sovereignty of Egypt in the Sudan, extensive areas of the country were either unoccupied or in disputed ownership for some time, even after the defeat of the Dervishes at Omdurman in September 1898. Thus, the Italians continued to maintain a presence in Kassala.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Sudan

Kassala
8 September 1900
16 December 1900

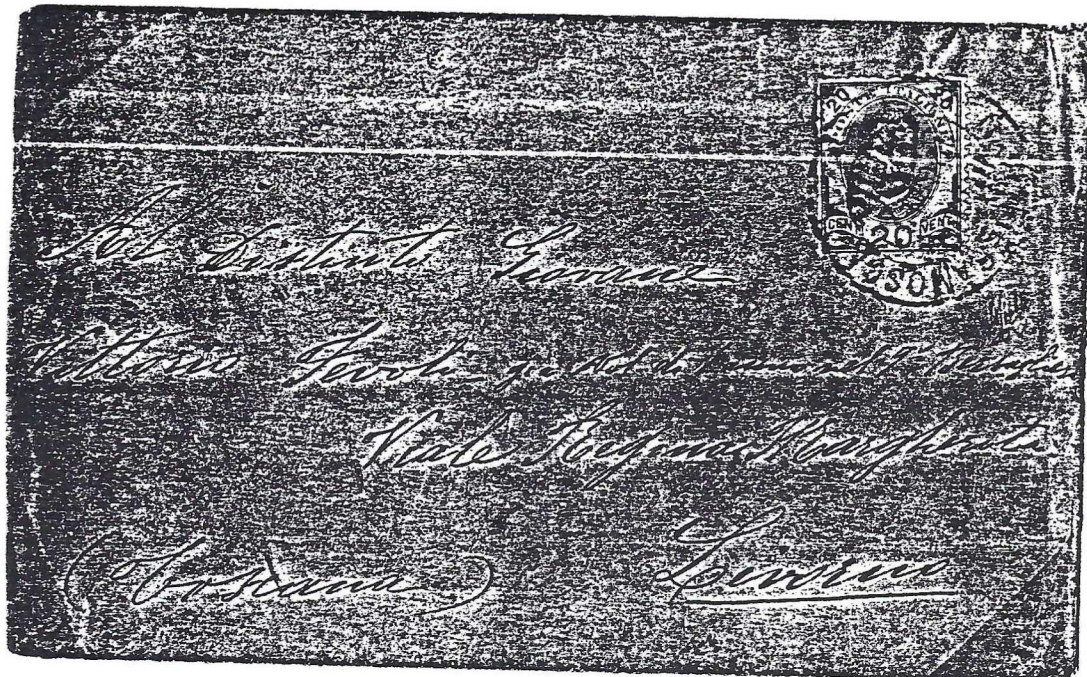


In July 1899 a treaty established an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium for the administration of the Sudan, bringing to an end the long period of political upheaval. Nevertheless, the Italian presence in Kassala continued for another 18 months.

Upper cover franked on the reverse with two Sudanese 5 milliemes stamps. It was sent to Sergeant Fantoni at "Keren" in Eritrea, where it was received on 17 September. Lower example is the latest recorded cover of the Italian involvement in the Sudan. Official usage is indicated by the imprinted "Royal Troops in Africa/Headquarters" on the reverse of the envelope.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
China

R. Nave Fieramosca
12 January 1901

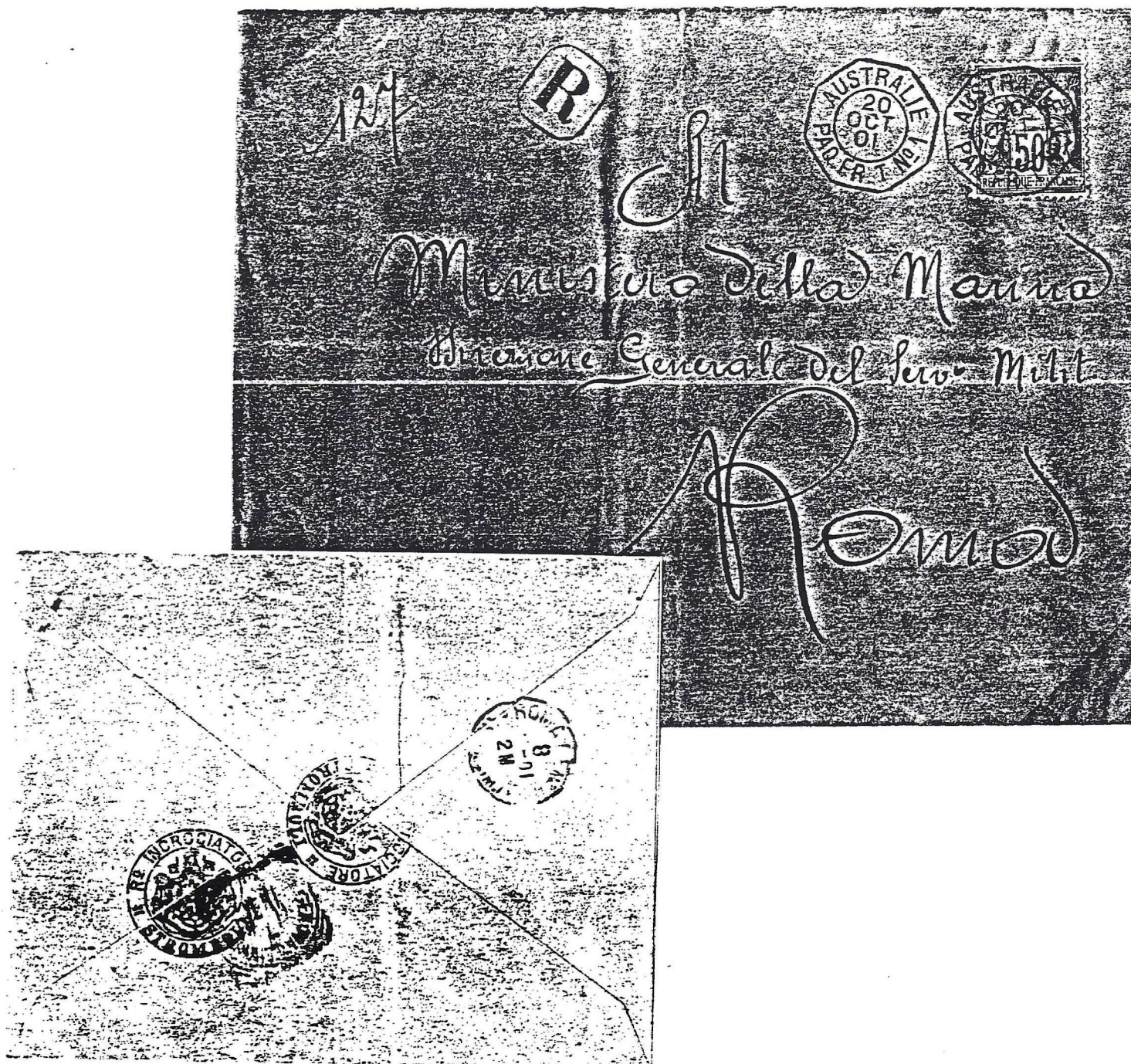


At the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising, the only Italian forces in China were four ships of its East Asia Cruiser Squadron, including the *Fieramosca*, each with its own post office. An officer and 28 sailors from this squadron were sent to the defense of the legations in Peking, and a small number of Italian sailors participated in Admiral Seymour's abortive relief effort, the capture of the Taku forts, and the relief of Peking on 14 August 1900.

Subsequently, some 2,000 Bersaglieri and infantrymen were sent to China, some of whom saw combat at Paotingfu and Kalgan. No shore-based postal facilities were created for this force, so mail continued to be sent via the naval post offices.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
China

R. Nave Stromboli
20 October 1901

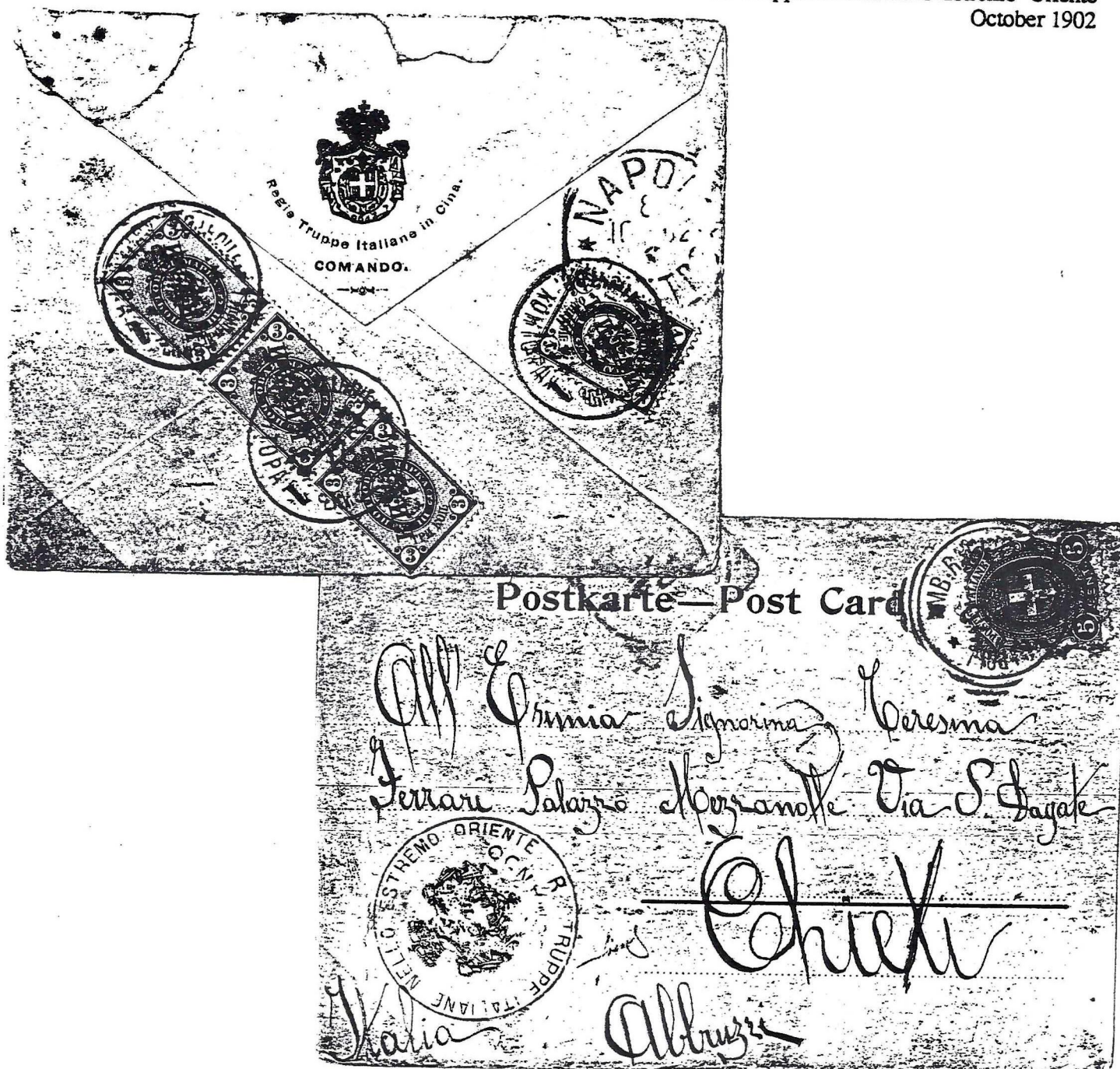


The cruiser *Stromboli* arrived in China after the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising. As official mail, this envelope could have been sent through the ship's own post office at no charge. The best explanation for the unusual routing was that there was a need for haste to send a report to the Naval Ministry in Rome but no Italian mail ship in North China at the time. Thus, it was sent out of the mails from China to Colombo, where it was posted on board the French packet *Tonkin*. Postage was paid at the full international rate of 25 centimes postage plus 25 centimes registry fee, providing the only example of French franking of Italian military mail during the Boxer period.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
China

Regie Truppe Italiane in Cina
27 August 1902

R. Truppe Italiane nello Estremo Oriente
October 1902

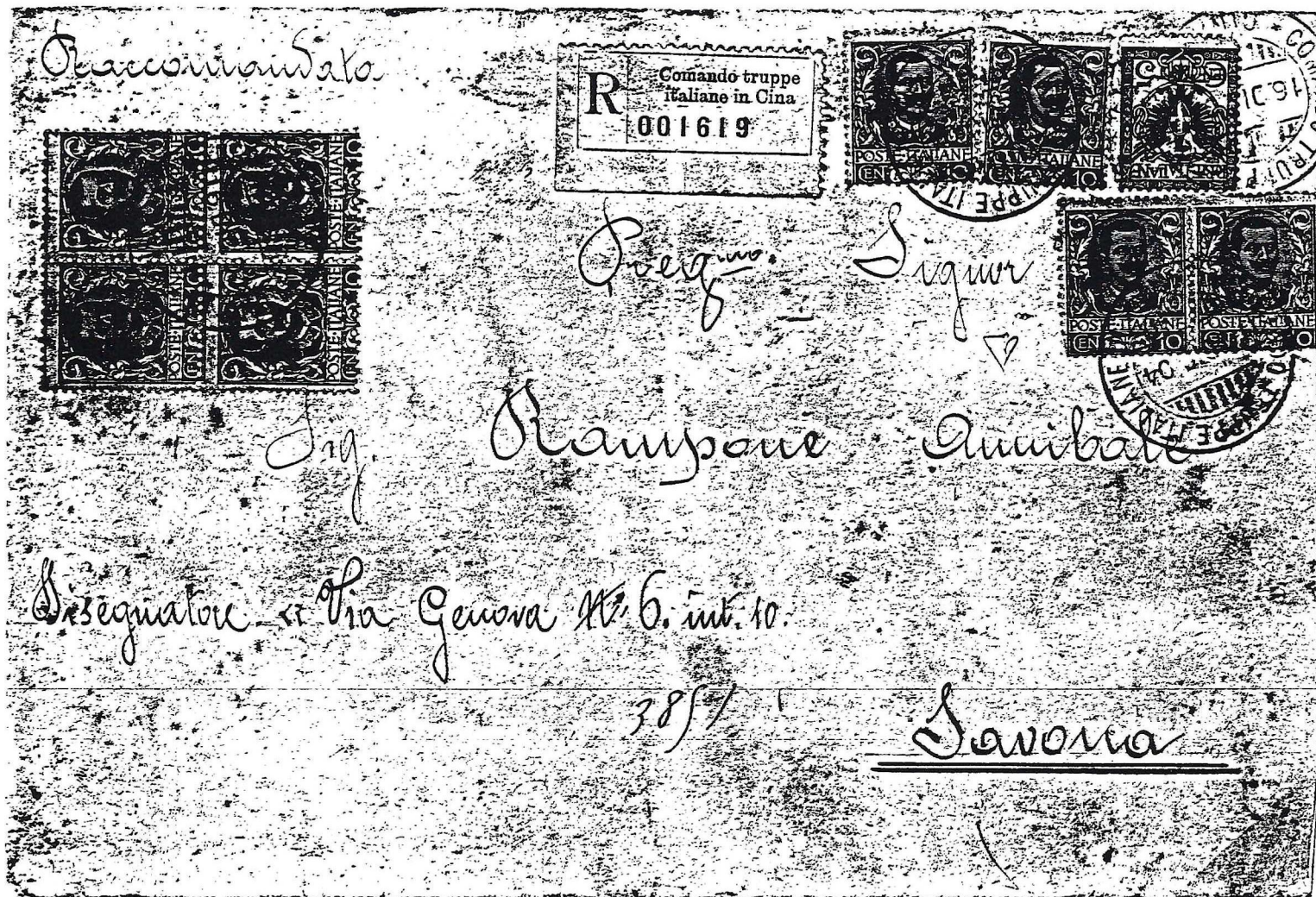


Following the signing of the Peace Protocols, Italy continued to maintain military forces in Peking, Tientsin and along the rail line between these cities. These troops were gradually withdrawn until, in 1905, there remained in North China only the legation guard detachment of 219 men (divided between Peking and Tientsin).

There is no record of an Italian field post system for its land forces in the Boxer Uprising, and the earliest date of a postmark for such forces in North China is December 1902. Cover above was mailed through the Russian post office in Tientsin. The post card was either sent from China or mailed aboard ship by a returning soldier, but it did not enter the mails until reaching Italy -- documented by the postage being cancelled with a T.P.O. marking.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
China

Comando Truppe Italiane in Cina
10 December 1904



This postmark is recorded used from December 1902 to 1908. The special registry label is previously unrecorded. It appears that all Italian military postmarks for land-based troops during 1902-1916 were applied in Peking. Soldier's mail was charged at domestic rates as if mailed in Italy. Regular Italian postage was used until December 1917, when stamps overprinted for China were introduced.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
China

Tientsin
5 September 1919
September 1919
1919



Datestamps incorporating the names of the military commands were discontinued with the establishment of civil post offices in the Italian Legation at Peking and the Italian Consulate at Tientsin on 20 September 1917.

A new unit marking for the Italian Detachment in China was introduced in 1918. This cachet appears in its original form with "Irredenti," and also with that text excised, on mail from former Austrian POWs in Russia who were being repatriated to areas that became a part of Italy after World War I.

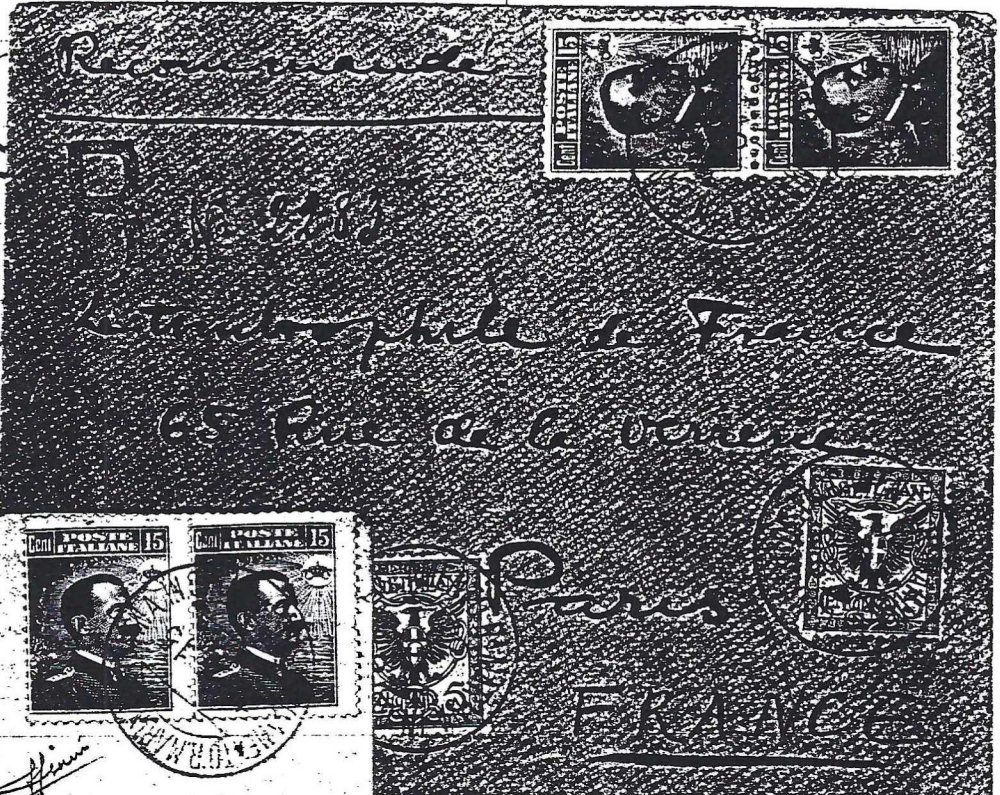
ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
China

Distacamento R. Marina Italiana in Cina

6 April 1905

12 June 1908

12 June 1915



Three different postmarks using this terminology are recorded used, in 1904-08, 1908 (three recorded) and in 1914-1915. Due to the scarcity of material, it is not known which postmarks were used by the Marine Detachment in the period 1908-1914. Registered mail from this unit is especially elusive.

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Crete

Distacto. R. Truppe in Creta
25 November 1906



RIPRODUZIONE
E VENDITA
PUNITE
ART. 268 E 270 C.P.

Cartolina postale italiana in Francia
Corrispondenza del R. Distacco

Indirizzo del mittente da riprodurre nelle risposte

Cognome Fornelli
Nome Fornelli
Grado Sergio
Reggimento Lombrico
Arma Lombrico
Compagnia del corpo d'armata
Squadrona Cretesi
Battaglia Cretesi
Riparti speciali

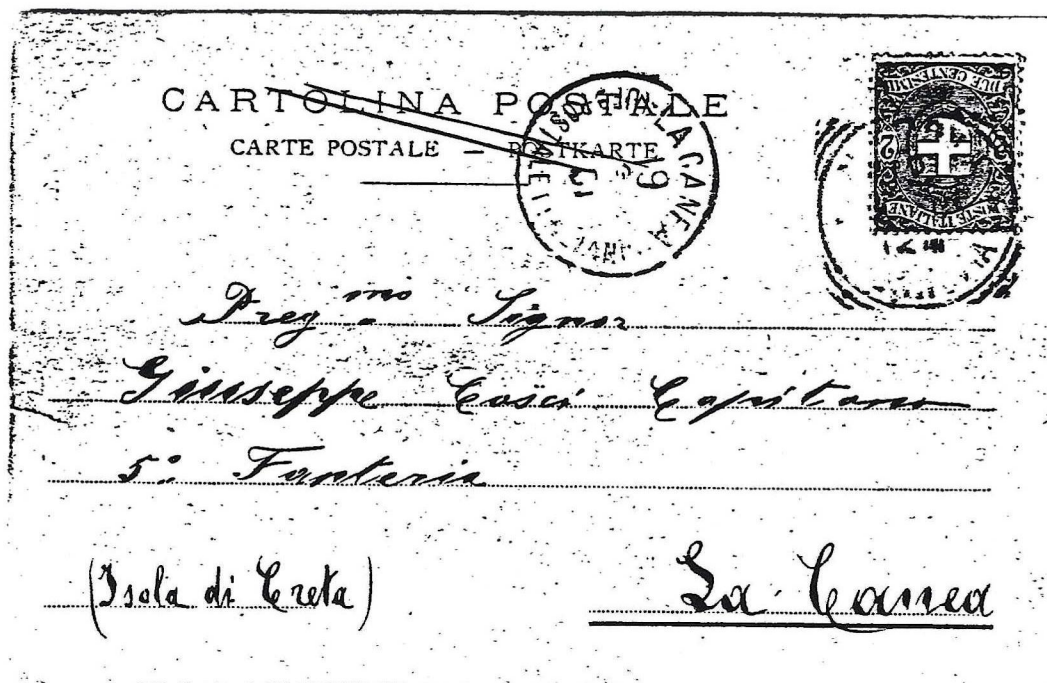
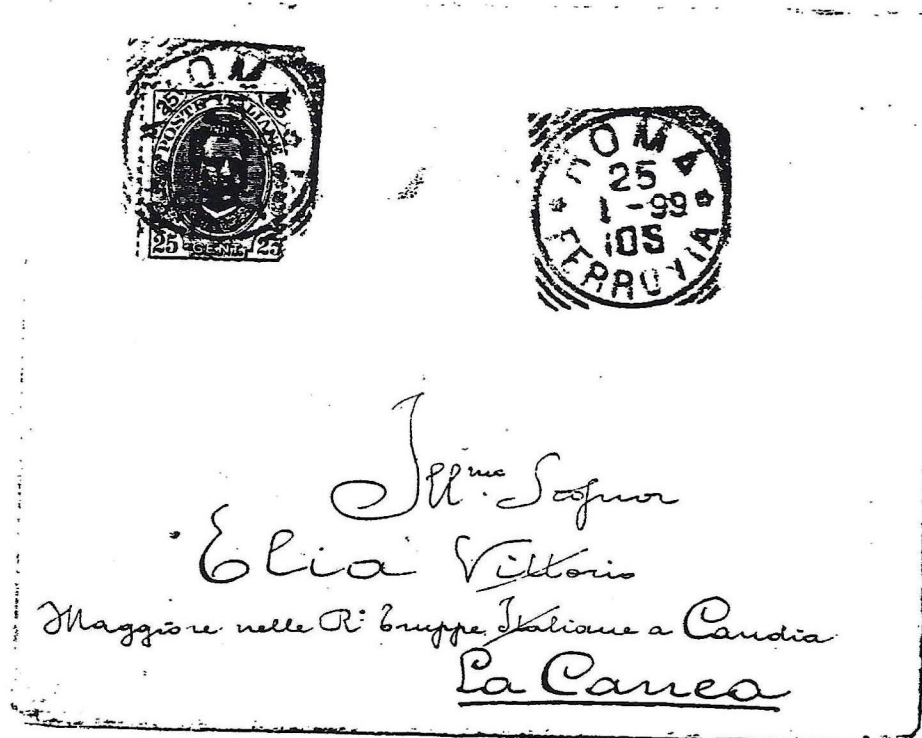
Al Capo
Comandante Fornelli
Enrico Fornelli
Officiale
(Prov. di)

TIP. ED. ROM. - ROMA

As part of a multi-national force sent to protect the Greek inhabitants from excessively harsh treatment by the Turks in response to an insurgent uprising, Italian troops participated in the occupation of Crete in the early 1900s. A special postmark was used on mail from the members of this expedition, reading "Detachment of Royal Italian Troops in Crete."

ITALIAN FORCES ABROAD
Crete

Inbound
2 February 1899
19 March 1901



Inbound cover and card addressed to a major and captain, respectively, in the Royal Italian forces in Crete. Arrival markings have been applied at the Italian civil post office in La Canea.