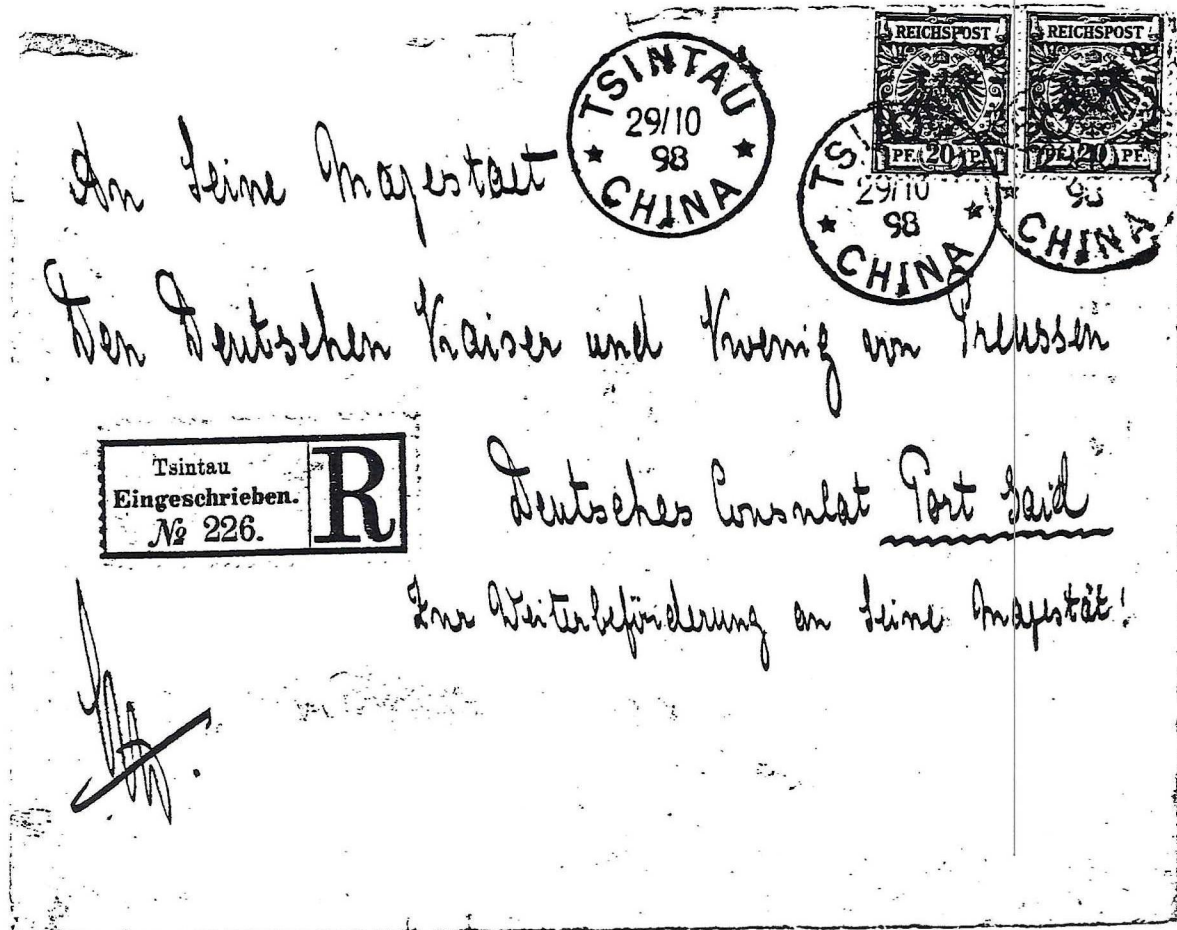


GERMAN FORCES IN CHINA 1897 - 1917

The German military presence in China and its adjacent waters never exceeded 20,000 men at any one time, and was usually well under 4,000. It lasted a mere 20 years. Yet it left a rich postal history, thanks to: Germany's desire at the time literally to make its mark on the globe, which resulted in well-developed colonial and military postal systems; the high literacy rate among German troops, which produced a need for and resulted in the extensive use of those postal systems; and the popularity of philately in Germany which not only contributed to the creation of many covers at the time, but has resulted in a high degree of preservation in the intervening years despite the depredations of 2 major wars and subsequent economic hardships. The following pages trace the course of the German military establishment in China through the philatelic materials and postal facilities that it used.



From HRH Rear Admiral Prince Heinrich of Prussia, commanding 2 Div., East Asia Cruiser Squadron, to his brother the Kaiser

The postal history of the German military in China has 3 distinct subdivisions.

Kiautschou. The protectorate (leased territory and neutral zone) in Shantung province which Germany acquired by invasion and subsequent diplomacy in 1897-1898. Military forces ranged from 700 men in 1897 to between 6,000 and 7,000 just after the outbreak of World War I.

Boxer Uprising. Mid-June 1900 - 31 August 1901, involving as many as 13,000 ground forces plus the crews of dozens of warships and leased steamers. By far the most involved part of the story.

Occupation Forces and Legation Guards. German forces remaining in North China (outside Kiautschou) after the Boxer Uprising consisted of the East Asia Occupation Brigade (about 2,000 men at its height, steadily drawn down and then eliminated on 30 June 1906), plus legation guards in Peking and Tientsin (maximum 300 men) who remained on duty until China declared war on Germany in August 1917.

Philatelically significant items are "headlined" throughout the exhibit.

GERMAN FORCES IN CHINA 1897 - 1917

Frames

I. Kiautschou through 1901

1-2

A. Postal Paper

1. Regularly Issued
2. Provisionals

B. Postal Facilities and Rates

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1. Pre-Boxer
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II. Boxer Uprising

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A. Postal Paper

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1. Postage Available from Shanghai
2. Unoverprinted Numeral and Eagles
3. Unoverprinted Germanias
4. Tientsin Provisionals
5. Kiautschou Yachts used in North China

B. Feldpost Postcards

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C. Berlin Navy Post Office

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D. Navy Participation

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1. East Asia Squadron
2. Troop transports
3. Reinforcements & Hospital Ships
4. Navy Hospital, Yokohama

E. Post Offices in North China

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1. Kaiserlich Deutsche Feldpost China
2. Base Post Office
3. Numbered Feld Post Stations
4. Süd Fort, Taku
5. Peking-Taku TPO

III. Post-Boxer Garrisons

7-8

A. Shanghai

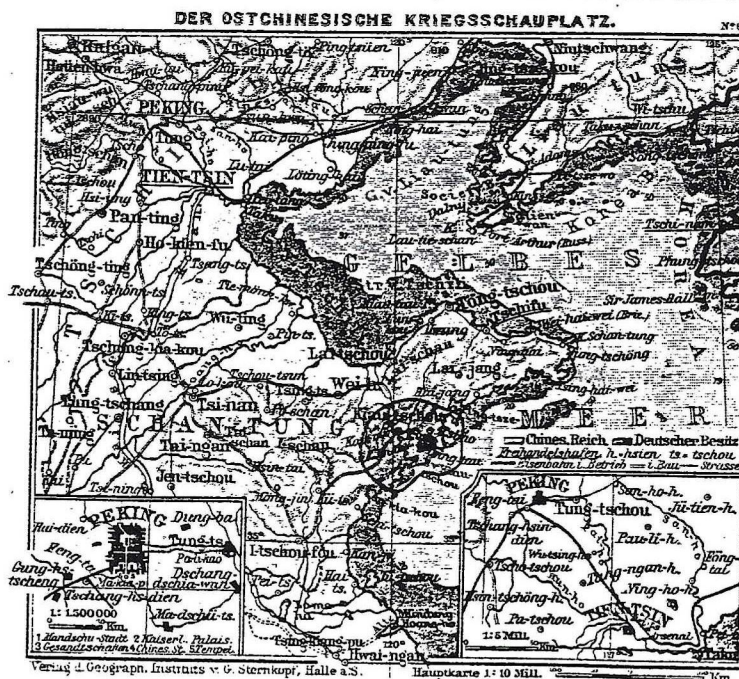
7

B. North China

7-8

C. Kiautschou

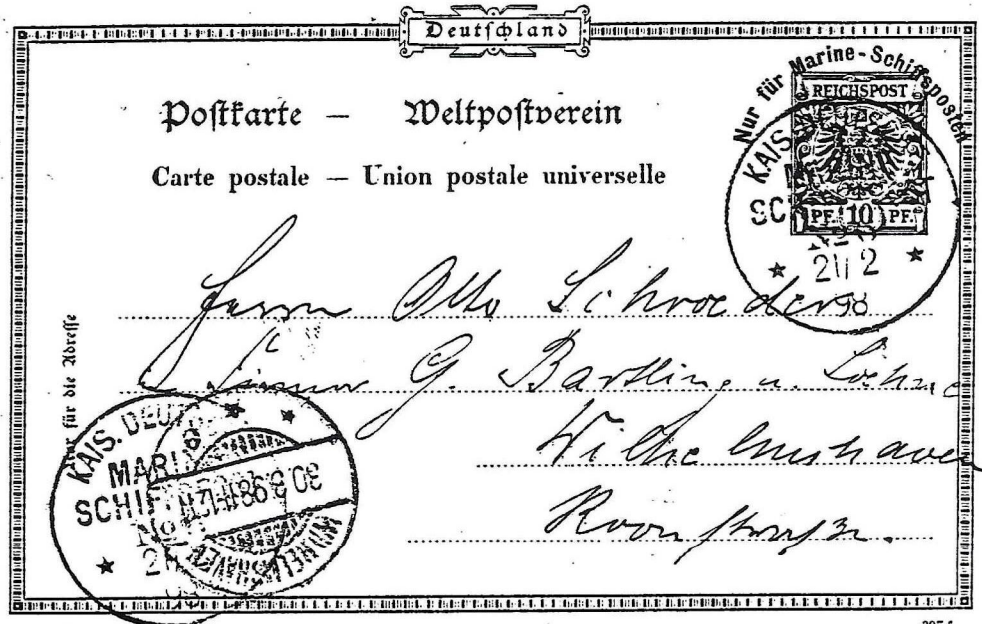
8



Vertrau auf Gott. Dich tapfer wehr.
Daraus besteht Dein ganze Ehr!
Denn wer's auf Gott herhaftig wehr.
Wird nimmer aus der Welt gejagt!
Kaiser Wilhelm an die nach China
abrückenden deutschen Truppen
in Wilhelmshaven am 2. Juli 1900

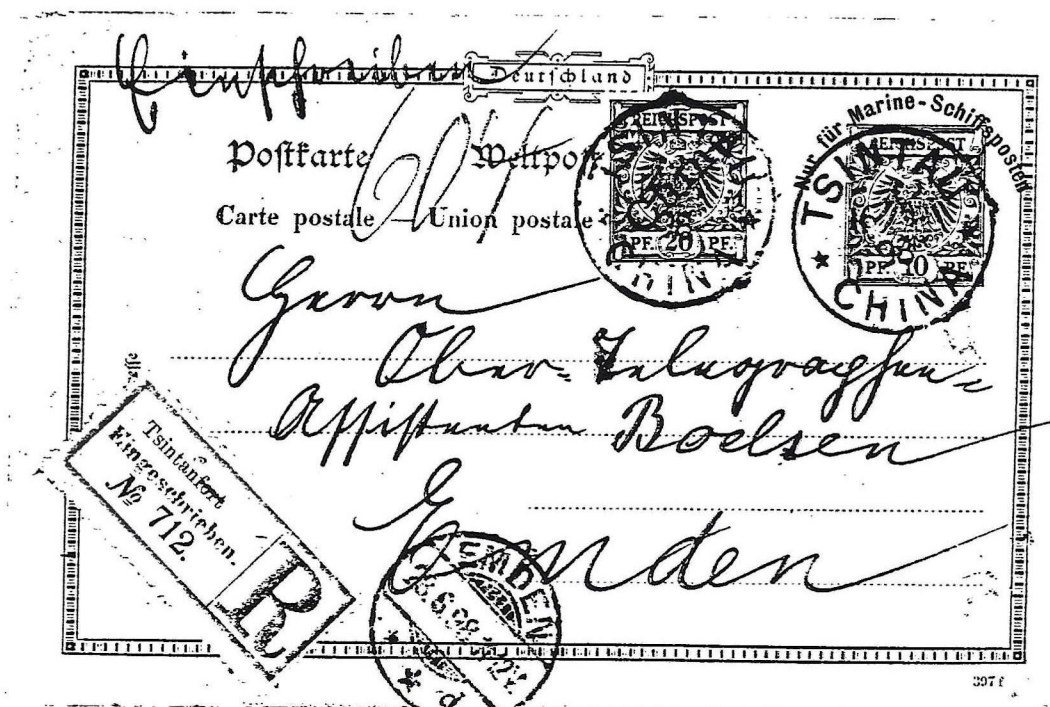
Handwritten note:
Lernst du
Wörter und
Lernst du
Wörter und
Lernst du
Wörter und
Lernst du

East Asia Squadron
14 November 1897
21 February 1898



On 17 November 1897 *SMS Arcona* reinforced the 3 warships of the Kiautschou invasion force, completing what was subsequently designated the First Cruiser Division of the East Asia Squadron. *Arcona* was assigned MSP No. 6 from that date until the end of January 1899.

Registered "Marine-Schiffsposten" cards are extremely scarce.



The first German post offices in what was to become the protectorate of Kiautschou were those on board the various warships off Tsingtau. These were stocked with the 5, 10 and 20pf. values of the unoverprinted Numeral and Eagle issue and with "Marine-Schiffsposten" postal cards. Sale of the latter was strictly limited to military personnel for, while denominated 10pf., they were sold at 5pf.

The above "Schiffsposten" card had to have come from a German ship post office, as such cards were not stocked by the Tsintaufort post office until July 1898. These cards were routinely accepted in the post office ashore, where sailors seeking a bit of local color in their postmark preferred to mail their letters. This example is datelined from the inland village of Litsun. The first post office it would have encountered was at Tsintaufort, so its posting there was less likely to have been philatelically inspired.



The Tsintanfort post office was opened as a Navy Field Post Office, and its early clientelle consisted almost entirely of German sailors and marines. It was initially supplied from Shanghai with the 5, 10, 20, 25 and 50pf. stamps with diagonal China overprints, 3, 5, 10, 20, 25 and 50pf. unoverprinted Eagle and Numeral series stamps, and 10pf. Eagle postal cards. Postage supplied later included the steep "China" overprints, the yacht issue, and related postal stationery. However, introduction of these later items was not directly related to a need caused by the German military presence in China.

First Issue: "5 Pfg."

Steep (56°)
"China"Diagonal (45°)
"China"

It is estimated (Munk) that between 1/4 and 1/3 of the surcharges occur on the diagonal "China" overprint.

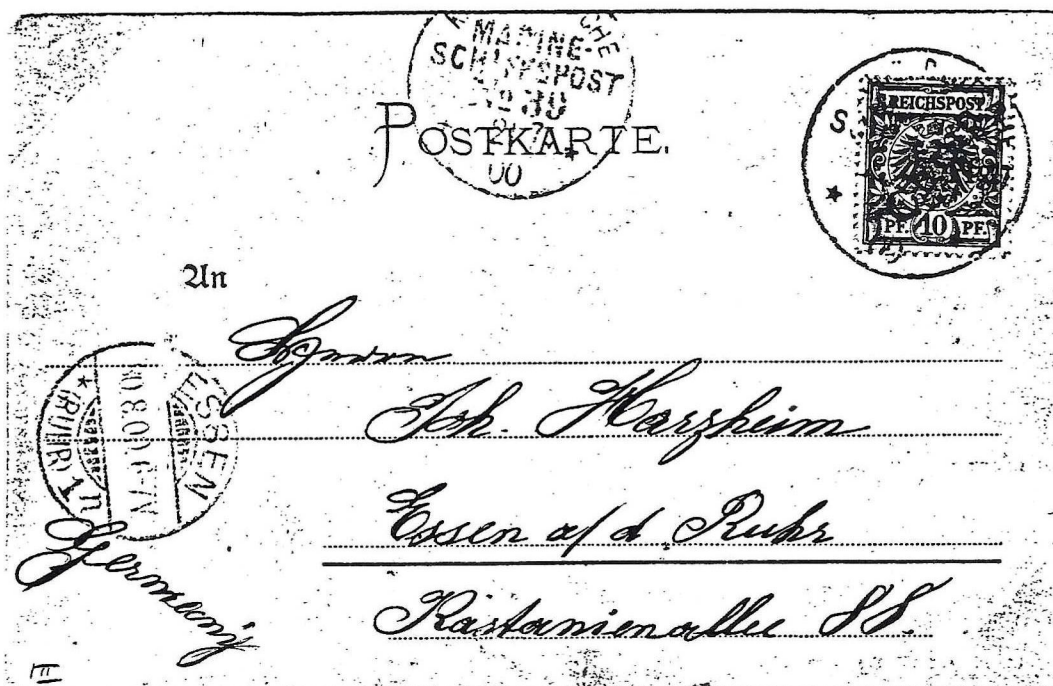
Second Issue: "5 Pf."

Additional
"5" handstampAdditional
"5 Pf." handstamp

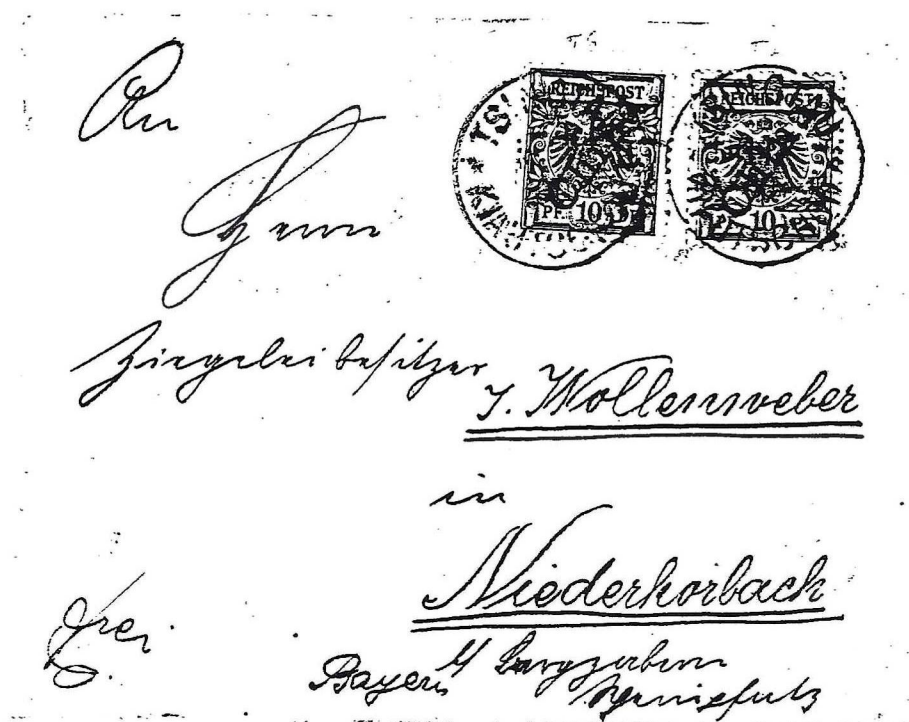
Issuance of the Tsingtau 5pf. provisionals is directly related to the arrival of substantial numbers of military personnel in April and June 1900. Until 30 April 1899 mail from Kiautschou to Germany was paid at UPU rates. As a result the need for 5pf. stamps (initially to pay the UPU printed matter rate) was small. Though local stocks were sufficient for the needs of the existing garrison even when the postcard rate to Germany changed from 10pf. to 5pf. upon the extension of German domestic rates to all German colonies on 1 May 1899. However, the arrival of thousands of fresh troops created a tremendous volume of picture postcard mail to Germany. Five different major varieties of the provisionals were issued, two on 9 May and three on 19 July 1900.

Kiautschou
SMS Irene
SMS Hertha

Tsingtau Provisional
22 July 1900
21 July 1900

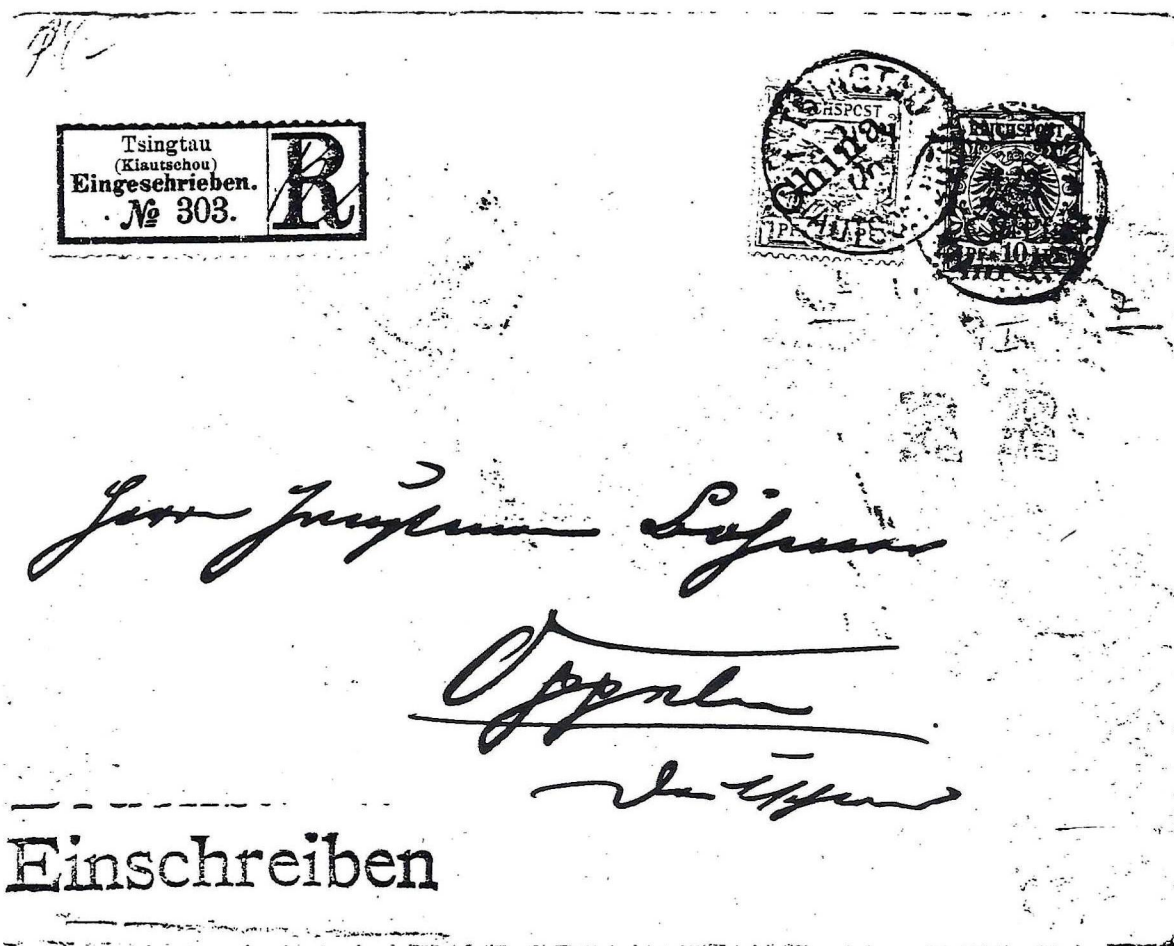


Covers mailed prior to extension of free franking privilege to military personnel suppressing the Boxer Uprising. German warships carried stocks of the 5, 10 and 20pf Numeral and Eagle issue, but accepted other stamps obtained by crewmen from the Shanghai and Tsingtau German post offices.

Without
colored lineShort
colored line

Long blue and violet lines

A 1,000 man relief force arrived at Tsingtau aboard the *SS Dresden* on 20 April 1900. The new troops immediately set to work sending home postal souvenirs from their exotic duty station, and soon exhausted Tsingtau's supply of 5pf. stamps. Local postal authorities had 50,000 of the 10pf. stamps surcharged "5 Pfg." at the mission printing plant. These were placed on sale on 9 May 1900. For a portion of the first day of issue, the stamps were issued without additional markings, and for the remainder of the first day they were marked with a short blue line. Beginning on 10 May, the stamps were issued with a colored line (either violet or blue) drawn completely across each row at the bottom of the stamp, to make them more easily distinguishable from unsurcharged 10pf. stamps.

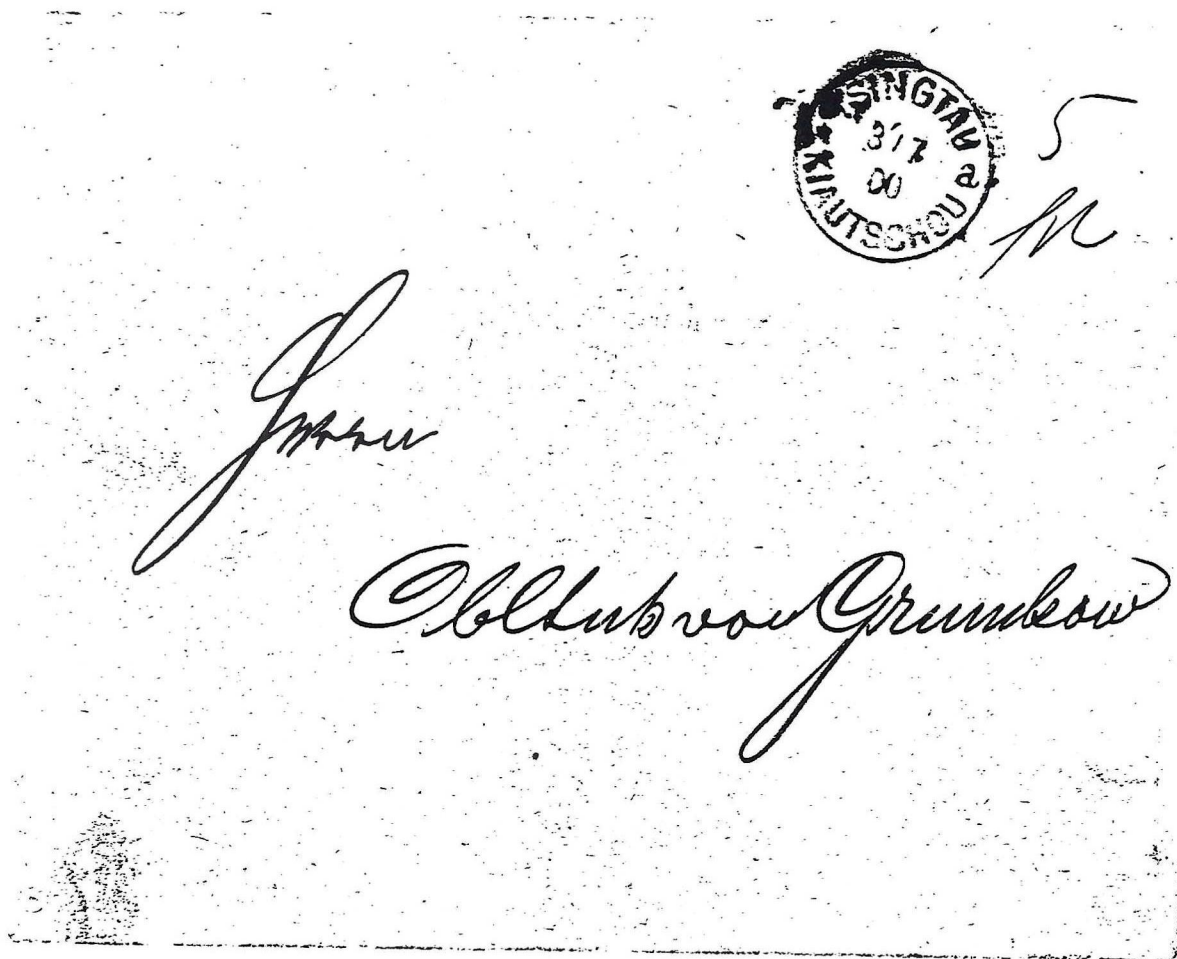


Properly rated philatelic usage well after the shortage of 5pf. stamps had been resolved, making an unusual combination franking.

Kiautschou

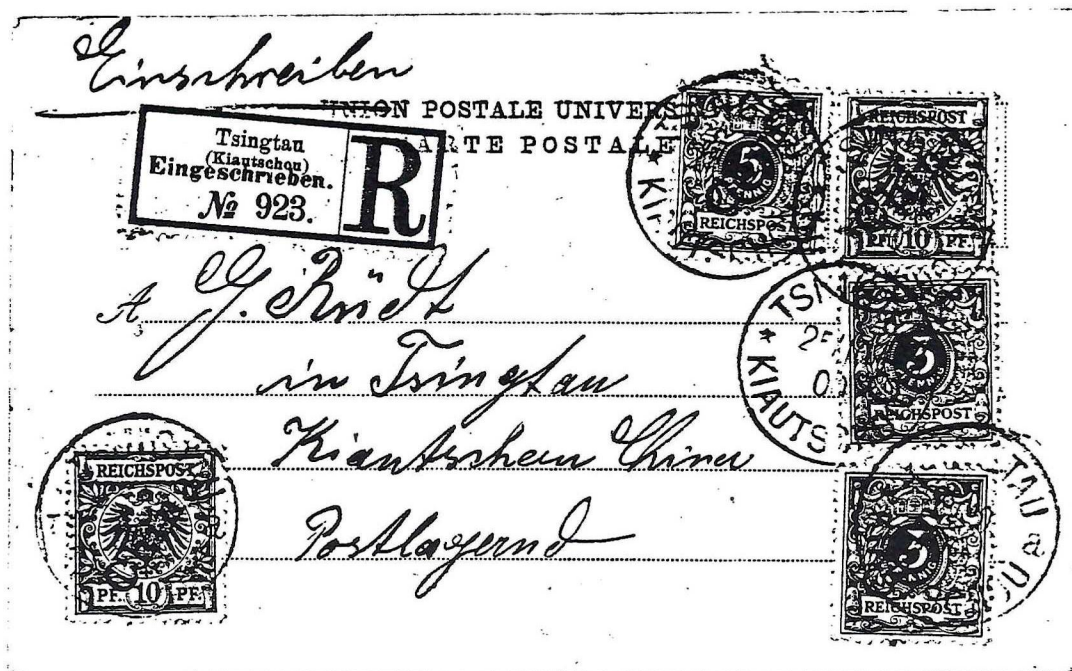
Tsingtau Provisionals
3 July 1900

Postage Paid in Cash



In an effort to avoid the need for further surcharging, it was decided in late June 1900 to employ a manuscript cash payment marking on "letters" (Dr. Ey) presented at the counter of the Tsingtau post office addressed to Tsingtau and its suburbs. Only 15 examples of such mail have been recorded (postmarked between 29 June and 19 July, with one example postmarked 31 July): 12 with the initials "Sch" (of Tsingtau Postmaster Schulte), 2 with "M" (Assistant Postmaster Messer) and the late example with an "S" (of unknown origin, but nonetheless accepted as genuine by Friedemann).

The rating of the above cover (and another of the same date to Lt. Koch) at 5pf. suggests that there was a local (city) rate then in effect within Tsingtau. Such a local rate, requiring 5pf. for both postcards and letter mail, existed in Germany, but both Ey and Friedemann are vague to contradictory on its existence within the Kiautschou protectorate at this time.



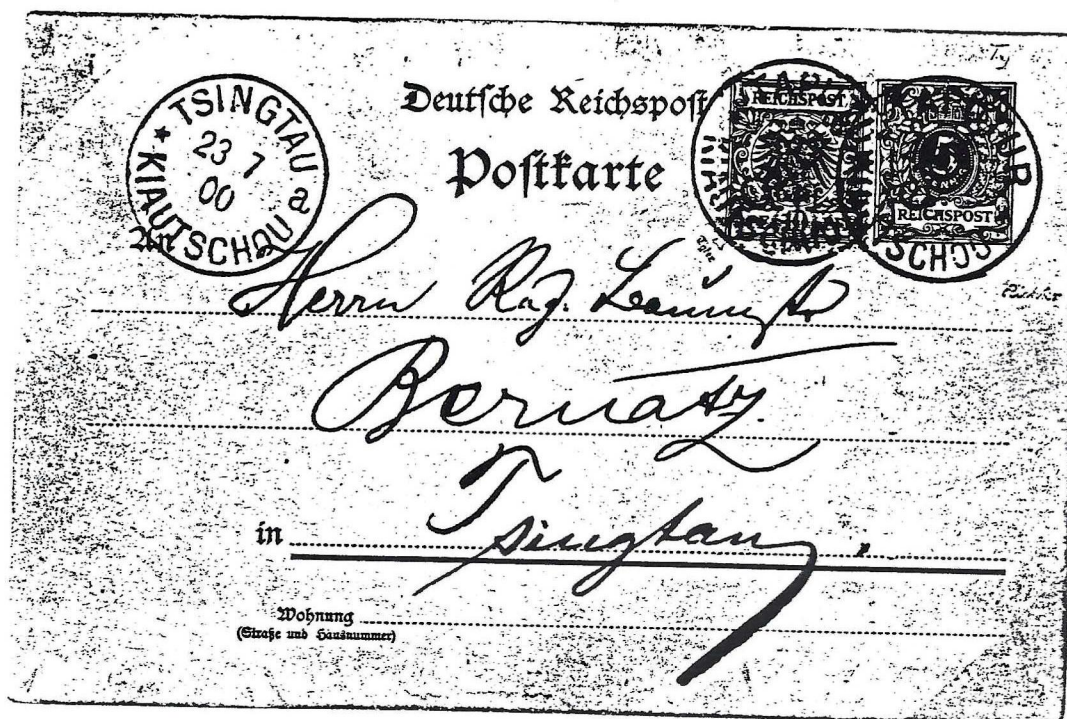
The arrival of an additional 1,260 men (new crewmen for ships of the East Asia Squadron) aboard the *SS Köln* on 16 June 1900 created an additional large demand for 5pf. stamps. Replacement stocks had already been ordered, and Tsingtau postal officials unsuccessfully attempted to avoid further surcharging by restricting use of 5pf. stamps to mail leaving the Protectorate. On 19 July a second provisional surcharge was required. A total of 2,000 stamps were prepared. Due to poor registration, surcharges on the 5th and 10th rows of each sheet were very difficult to see. As a result, no more than 300 (and probably substantially fewer) of these 400 stamps were further surcharged with a large "5" (much the scarcer) or a large "5 Pf." as previously shown.

Late, philatelic usage. The Tsingtau provisionals remained valid for postage until 31 December 1901.

Kiautschou

Tsingtau Provisionals
Second Issue

Used at Taputur



Of the 2000 stamps printed for the second provisional issue, 200 copies were sent to Taputur.

The Taputur postal agency opened on 23 July 1900 and used the above cancel from that date until it closed in mid-September 1914.

Kiautschou
SMS Deutschland
SMS Gefion

East Asia Squadron
11 May 1899
6 November 1898

Prinze Maximilian

dem Kaiser und Königin



[Handwritten signature]

Postkarte — Weltpostverein

Deutschland.

Carte postale — Union postale universelle



Maximilian

Grete Senger

Berlin

Blumenshagen



Adm. Prince Heinrich von Preussen arrived at Kiautschau aboard his flagship, *Deutschland*, escorted by the cruiser *SMS Gefion*, on 5 May 1898. On arrival in Kiautschou each ship was assigned an MSP postmark: No. 38 to *Gefion* (used until 31 December 1901), and No. 40 to *Deutschland* (used until 17 October 1899). As ships of the East Asia Squadron sailed in and out of Tsingtau fairly frequently, not all mail from them during this period is from Kiautschou.

Prince Heinrich was given command of the Second Cruiser Division of the East Asia Squadron. This command included *SMS Deutschland*, *Gefion*, *Irene* and *Kaiserin Augusta* (the latter 2 ships having arrived at Tsingtau in December 1897).

SMS Gefion card is from an officer as indicated by 10pf franking. Prince Heinrich's cover is correctly franked at the UPU rate for international mail. The "military" concessionary 5pf postcard and 10pf letter rates were only for enlisted men -- a pleasantly unusual case of rank not having its privileges!

Kiautschou

SMS Irene

Marine Feldpost Auxiliary Markings

23 February 1898

20 February 1898

14 March 1898



Shipboard supplies of the "Schiffsposten"-overprinted cards were not adequate to meet demand, resulting in the use of unoverprinted 10pf cards by the troops. As these were still sold to marines and sailors for only 5pf, a means of distinguishing them as military mail was required, and both manuscript and handstamp notations were used to meet this need. Friedemann ascribes the origin of the single-line marking shown above to SMS Irene, which is supported by the dateline of the center card above. It appears that the 2-line handstamp is the same device, fully struck on the card. The 2-line version is considerably the scarcer.

Navy Field Post Office Tsintaufort
26 January 1898



Due to a printing error in official records of the German telegraph office, the postmark brought to Tsingtau on 26 January 1898 reads TSINTANFORT

Kiautschou
Infantry Battalion in Kiautschou

Navy Field Post Office Tsintaufort
12 February 1898



The Navy Field Post status of the Tsingtau post office allowed this cover to be posted at the military concessionary (domestic) rate. On conversion of this office to civilian status in mid-March, military mail was charged UPU rates.