

Ottoman Maritime Mail

Rare Cachet: Agenzia Del Lloyd Austriaco Alessandria

German Post Constantinople: Pre-UPU Routes

Advertising Postcards Bethlehem/Jerusalem 1899/1903

Ottoman Censorship Markings: Wax-Seals on Insured Letters

The FLAK-Schule at San Stefano

A.D.P.O. – “Palestine” Revenue Stamps in French

Walter Mittelholzer’s Persia Flight 1924/25

***Archive: Pre-Philatelic Period Postage-Paid Seals of the Ottoman Empire
plus Book Reviews, Reactions, Comments, Queries, and more!***

The Air Defence School (FLAK-Schule) at San Stefano (Yeşilköy)

by Peter B. Feuser

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Once again it was worthwhile for me to rummage through a bundle of covers of German colonies and foreign post offices material at a stamp auction. At first sight there was nothing exciting, but the lot contained very good unused postal stationery and various interesting postmarks, like the following field post cover, which is cancelled with the regular mark “MIL. MISS. KONSTANTINOPEL” on 24th November 1917 and went to Hamburg. There is no arrival postmark, but the cover is surely a neat example of commercial mail.



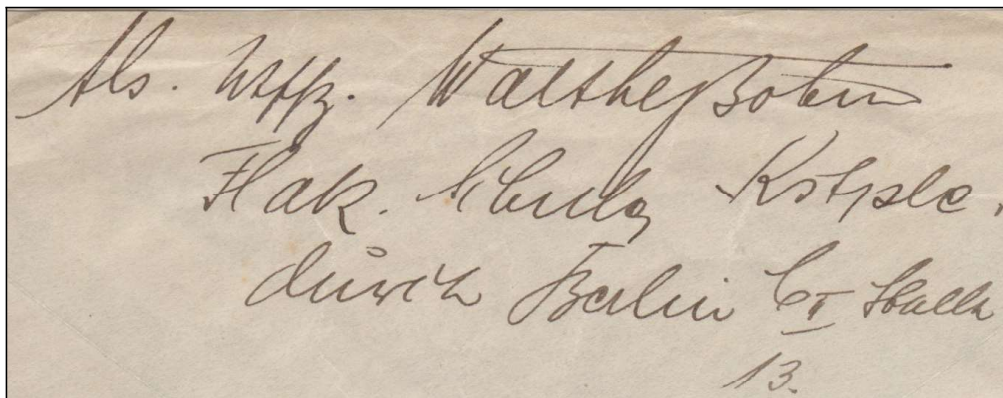
Fig. 1: Field post cover (1917) from San Stefano to Hamburg.

The sender is “Uffz. Waltheßohn / Flak. Schule Kstple. / durch Berlin C II Stelle / 13”, i.e. Corporal¹ Waltheßohn / Air Defence School Constantinople / via Berlin C II Office 13.” Until then, I was completely unaware of the unit cachet of the “Flak-Schule San Stefano” struck in violet on the cover’s front-side. That didn’t really sound like Ottoman Empire, so I did some research!

¹ Unteroffizier is a non-commissioned officer, equivalent to Corporal.

Fig. 1a:

Detail of the cover's reverse.



From the various language versions of Wikipedia, we can compile the following information on the location:²

In today's Bakırköy district of İstanbul, about 11 km west of the city centre and directly on the Sea of Marmara shore, lies Yeşilköy (also known as Yechilkeuy, ايشيلكوى, English: "green village"), which was – until the 1970s – a small health resort. Until 1926, the village, dominated by Greeks and Armenians, was called San Stefano (Άγιος Στέφανος, Aya Stefanos, ايا سنفانوس). During the Crimean War, French forces erected the lighthouse that still exists today. After the Russo-Turkish War, the peace treaty was signed here on 3rd March 1878. During the Balkan Wars, cholera victims were concentrated here, of whom over 3,000 died.

In 1912, the first airport in the Ottoman Empire was built in San Stefano and an aviation school was founded: pilots for the Ottoman Air Force were trained here by German officers; and among other aircraft, the Parseval airship PL 9 was stationed here.³ This aviation tradition still continued until recently: Istanbul's Atatürk Airport was located here.



Fig. 2:

Before the outbreak of the 1st World War, the French were still able to practise and land at San Stefano, as this photograph shows.⁴

² Cf. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeşilköy> (includes links to English and Turkish articles).

³ Cf. German Wikipedia: "The Parseval airship PL 9 replaced the PL 5 in Breslau, which burnt out in Hann. Münden, and was sold to the Turkish military in 1913" (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Parseval-Luftschiffe#PL_9).

⁴ Source unknown.

At the end of November 1914, the Turkish army asked for German assistance in establishing its own aviation school. General von Falkenhayn provided several pilots, technicians and aircraft and as part of the “Militär-Mission”, the “FLAK-Schule San-Stefano” was established under Captain Erich Serno.⁵

So far I have only been able to find one other cover with this unit cachet (on eBay), but unfortunately it had already been sold. There the cachet is much more clearly marked, as the following images and the enlargement show (fig. 3).



The German pilots were of great importance on the Palestine front and the Ottoman war effort in general. In addition to reconnaissance flights, attacks were also launched from here.

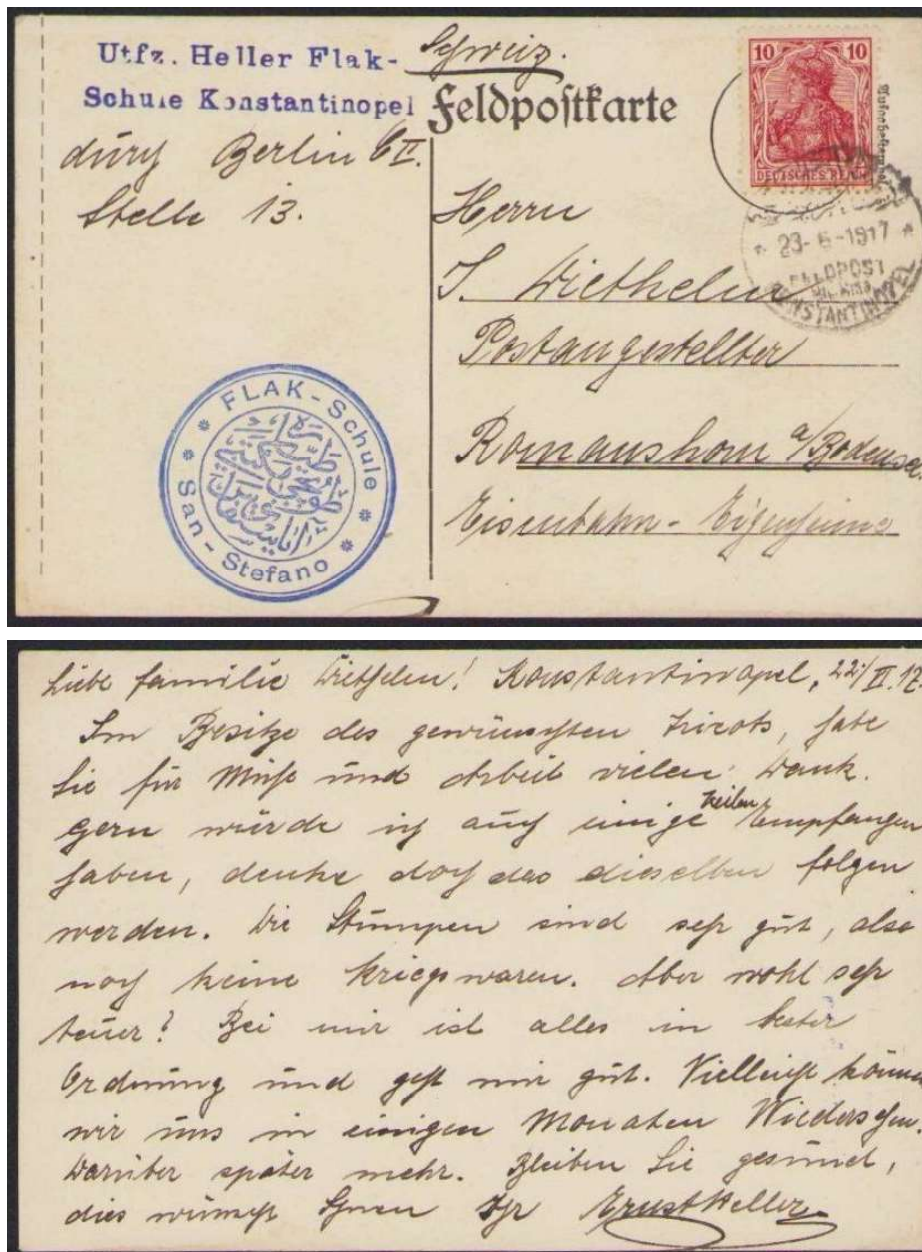
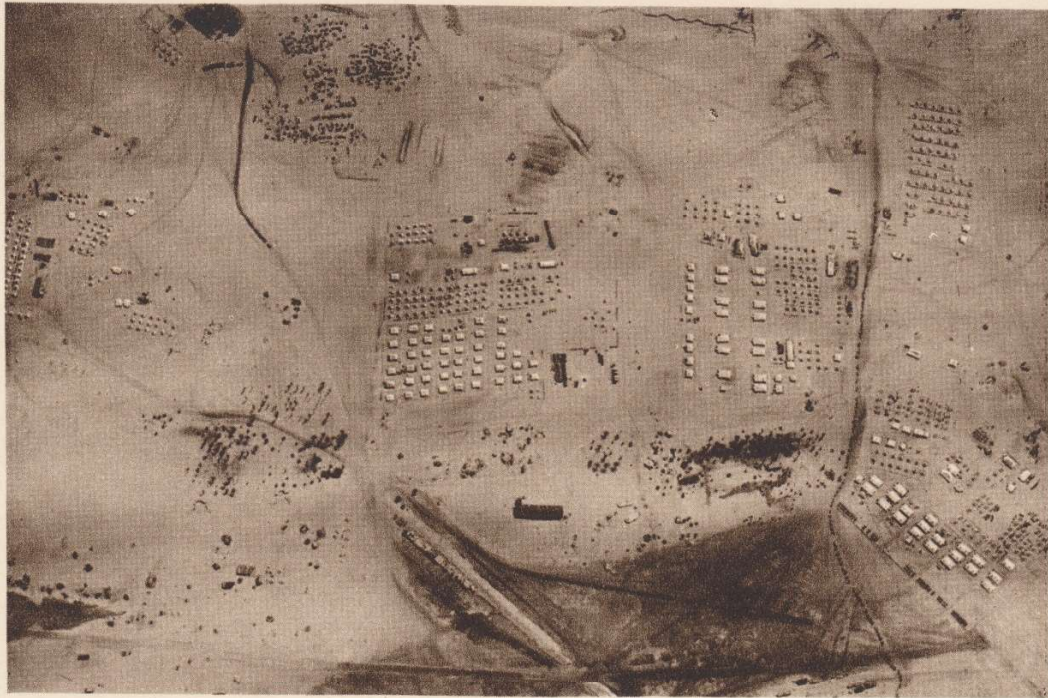
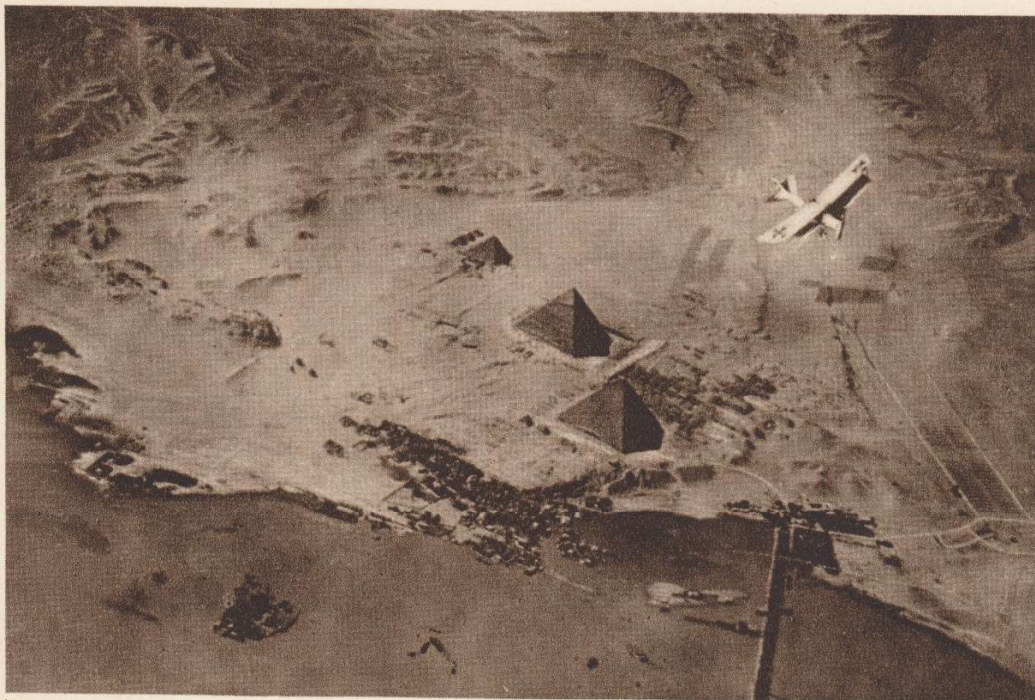


Fig. 4: Front and back of a field postcard sent via Berlin to Switzerland.

5 Cf. <https://www.gallipoli1915.de/fliegerstaffeln-1-und-6>.



Fliegeraufnahme eines großen Zeltlagers in der Wüste an der Palästinafront bei Romani, westlich von Katia. Der Wüstenmarsch im August 1915 stellte die höchsten Anforderungen an Mann und Tier.



Eine äußerst seltene und geschichtlich ungemein wertvolle Aufnahme: Ein deutsches Flugzeug über den uralten Pyramiden von Gizeh in Ägypten. Die Schatten des sichtbaren und jenes Flugzeuges, von dem aus die Aufnahme erfolgte, zeichnen sich deutlich im Sand der Wüste ab.

Fig. 5: The field camp near Romani (Palestine) and the pyramids (1915).⁶



Fig. 6:

(Adolf August) Hans-Joachim Buddeke (also Buddecke or Budaecke, 1890-1918), called "El Şahin" (falcon).

Initially with Feldfliegerabteilung 23, went at the end of 1915 with Feldfliegerabteilung 6 (part of the "Militärmission") to Turkey.

September 1916: Western Front (Kampfeinsitzerkommando Vaux), in January 1917 return to the Dardanelles at Feldfliegerabteilung 5 as chief of the airmen in Gallipoli and Asia Minor.

From spring 1918: Jagdstaffel 30 on the Western Front, where he was fatally shot down.

Eisernes Kreuz und Ritterkreuz (1915). Imziz Medal, Golden Liakat Medal, Golden Crescent, and Pour le Mérite (1916).

Further Research

At this point, I would like to ask for readers to report any other covers of this kind and to send me scans. In times of COVID-19 we are more than ever dependent on communication via printed and electronic publications or e-mail. Perhaps a reader can help me with my request.

6 Source: Soldan, George: *Der Weltkrieg im Bild*. Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1927. Plate on p. 342.