

## Ufficio Postale Italiano – La Canea 1900 – 1914



R. Postea Italiana e Navigazione Generale Florio Rubattino in Canea.

During the naval blockade of Crete in the period from **March 1897 to December 1898**, the Italian land and naval military forces played an important role in enforcing peace and public order between the Cretan and Ottoman populations on the island. In fact, the Italian military forces had assumed administration of the prefecture of Chania, as well as the joint administration of the city of Chania and the Bay of Souda together with the other Great Powers participating in the blockade. It was therefore natural that, immediately after the declaration of autonomy of Crete on 8 December 1898, Italy sought a way to provide postal services for the considerable number of Italian military personnel who had remained on the island, as well as for Italian citizens who lived permanently or visited Crete occasionally. The **Italian Post Office in Chania opened on 16 January 1900** and operated for more than 14 years, providing all postal services to the inhabitants of Chania.

On the left, a postcard issued by E. A. Cavaliero depicting the Italian Post Office in Chania.

This exhibit presents the operation of the Italian Post Office in Chania, Crete, through mailed items that include

- **early and late usages (pages 2 and 16),**
- **uses of specially overprinted postage stamps (pages 3, 4, 5, and 8),**
- **special rates and forms (pages 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12),**
- **maritime cancellations and special destinations (pages 13, 14, and 15).**

These are displayed in chronological order, starting from the first months of operation in March 1900 and concluding with the final month of operation in October 1914.



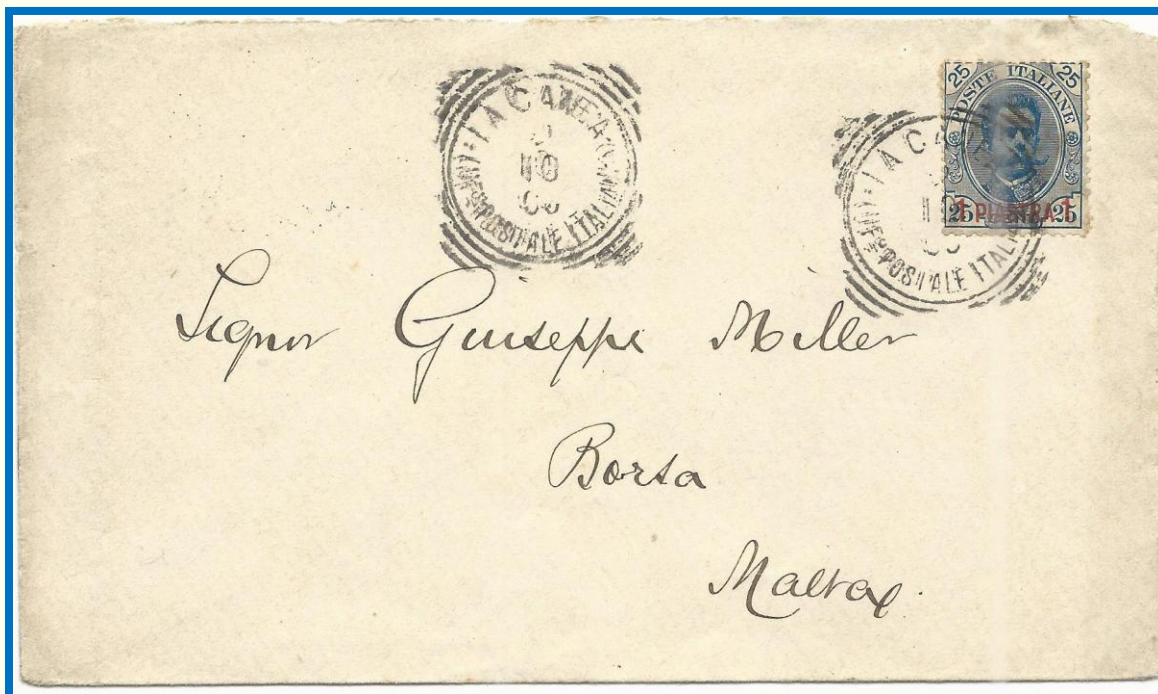
Front of registered cover sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania (7 March 1900)**, to Liège, Belgium. An early example of international mail dispatch with a **postal rate of 35 centesimi — 10 centesimi for printed matter and 25 centesimi for the registration fee**. During the first approximately seven months of its operation, the Italian Post Office in Chania used only Italian postage stamps.



Postal card of the Postal Service of the Cretan State, sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania (1 April 1900)** to Copenhagen, Denmark. **Postal rate: 10 centesimi for the postcard**. The use of the Cretan State postal card is entirely decorative, as in April 1900 Crete did not have postal connections with foreign countries.



The Italian Post Office in Chania opened on 16 January 1900 and was established in the premises of the company **Navigazione Generale Italiana Florio Rubattino**, which had taken over the connection between Chania and Italy through an additional stop on the Palermo–Constantinople line, which was already subsidized by the state.



On **10 July 1900**, the first Italian postage stamp specifically intended for Crete was issued. It was valued at 25 cent. and bore the overprint "**1 piastra 1**". The issuance of this stamp was designed to facilitate the exchange rate adjustment with the Ottoman currency then in use on the island.

Cover sent from the Italian Post Office of **Canea (Chania)** on **2 October 1900**, addressed to **Borsa, Malta**. It bears a **postage rate of one piastra**, which corresponded to the basic letter rate of the Italian post offices of the period.



Large registered **cover** sent from the Italian Post Office of **Chania** on **8 September 1902** to Rome. The postal rate amounted to 5 piastres, comprising the **5th internal weight rate** (4 piastres) plus the registration fee (1 piastre). The total postage was prepaid with five 1-piastre stamps overprinted "**LA CANEA**" and "**1 PIASTRA 1**" These stamps were issued on **1 July 1901**, replacing the previous overprinted issue bearing the portrait of the late Umberto I of Italy.





Registered cover sent from the Italian Post Office of **Chania on 16 January 1901** to Constantinople, bearing a mixed franking. The total postal charge amounted to **1 piastre and 25 centesimi**, comprising the foreign letter rate (1 piastre) and the registration fee (25 centesimi). This mixed franking illustrates the combined use of the two monetary denominations employed by the Italian Post Office in Chania during this period.



Italian postal card of **10 centesimi**, sent from Chania on **7 December 1901** to Turin. The use of Italian postal stationery cards in Crete is relatively uncommon, both in commercial and private correspondence, despite the fact that postal cards specifically intended for Crete and overprinted “LA CANEA” were not issued until much later, **in March 1907**.



## Parcel Post

The parcel post service was one of the first services introduced by the Italian Post Office in Chania immediately after its establishment, with the aim of serving the public. For the Italian administration, it was a matter of prestige to establish its presence alongside the Austrian and French postal offices, which were already operating in the city, and to secure a share of the postal market by serving the sizeable Italian community, both military and civilian.

Mod 251  
**BULLETTINO di SPEDIZIONE**  
 di Pacco Postale  
 diretto nel regno od all'estero  
 ove esista ufficio Italiano.

Si spedisce in Involto (involto, busta, scatola, rotolo, pacco)

Valore dichiarato Lire \_\_\_\_\_ Cent. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assegno . . . . . Lire \_\_\_\_\_ Cent. \_\_\_\_\_

Dichiarazione del contenuto: con alcune dolci

Nome, cognome, qualità del destinatario: Al Sig. Antonino Grasso  
Procuratore

Luogo di destinazione: Genova Prova di \_\_\_\_\_

Domicilio del destinatario: Via San Vincenzo n° 59-57

Nome, cognome, condizione e domicilio del mittente: Grasso Nicolo' detto nel  
6° Janis

Impronta del suggello col quale è stato chiuso il pacco (obbligatoria per pacchi con dichiarazione di valore)

Peso del Pacco Grammi: 2.700

Tasse riscosse: Lire Ct.  
 per trasporto . . . . . **60**  
 „ assicurazione . . . . .  
 „ assegno . . . . .  
 „ pacco ingombrante  
 Totale \_\_\_\_\_

Ufficio o Collettorìa di 1ª Classe che deve distribuire il pacco: Prova di \_\_\_\_\_

Stampa: LA CANEA UFF. POSTALE ITALIANO  
 444  
 60 CENT  
 10 DIC 1904

DA RIEMPIRSI DAL MITTENTE

Qui si applicano i francobolli necessari per le tasse di assicurazione, di assegno, del pacco ingombrante, nonché per complemento di natura.

Nella tabella impressa qui sopra e quelli aggiunti devono essere annullati col timbro dell'ufficio speditore.

Parcel post item sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania** on **10 December 1904** to **Genoa**, Italy. The parcel had a declared value of **60 centesimi** and a total weight of **2,700 grams (2.7 kg)**. Unfortunately, the contents were not clearly recorded by the sender, making precise identification impossible. However, the word “dolci,” which is clearly visible on the accompanying form, suggests that the parcel contained some type of sweets or confectionery products.

## Ufficio Postale Italiano – La Canea 1900-1914

Registered cover mailed from the Italian Post Office in **Chania** on **30 December 1905**, addressed to Rome. The postage of **40 centesimi** paid the foreign letter rate for the first weight step (15 centesimi) plus the registration fee (25 centesimi).

Banking correspondence of the Bank of Athens, Canea Branch, conveyed through the Italian postal service.



Inland postcard (7.5 centesimi) used in the Italian postal system and in Crete before the introduction of the “LA CANEA” overprint. Mailed on 13 May 1914 to Foligno, Italy.

The amount of written matter on the reverse exceeded the permitted limits for postcard correspondence, necessitating an additional 5 centesimi franking, paid with a “LA CANEA” overprinted stamp.



Letter sent from the Italian Post Office in Chania to Carsoli (Province of L'Aquila), Italy, on **2 April 1907**. It bears the 15 centesimi postage rate for an ordinary letter, together with an additional **25 centesimi surcharge for transmission via the Express (Espresso) service**. The use of this service is evidenced by the special Espresso stamp and the distinctive red **"ESPRESSO"** handstamp.

Registered letter sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania on 9 September 1907 to Milan**. The total postage amounted to **40 centesimi, comprising 15 centesimi for transmission to Italy and 25 centesimi for the registration fee**. The conveyance of the letter via the Express (Espresso) service required an additional surcharge of 25 centesimi. Particularly noteworthy is the special **"Milano – Espresso"** arrival handstamp, clearly struck at the lower right of the cover upon its arrival in Milan. Items dispatched through the Espresso service from the Italian Post Office in Chania are scarce.



## Postal Money Order

The Postal Money Order Service was established at the Italian Post Office in Chania from the very first day of its operation. Its introduction brought an end to the Italian military contingent's previous reliance on the French Post Office in Chania for the handling of postal money orders, while also discontinuing the exchange of similar financial instruments through the Austrian Post Office in Chania. The establishment of this service marked an important step toward the independence and self-sufficiency of the Italian postal network in Crete.

UFFICIO POSTALE ITALIANO DI CANEA

N° 97

BOLLO DELL'UFFICIO DI PARTENZA

Lire Zero e 5/100

COMUNICAZIONI  
del mittente per destinatario

Prov. UFFICI ITALIANI ALL'ESTERO Modello 1. 5

N° (CATANIA) 97

VAGLIA<sup>(1)</sup>

in cifre in lettere

di Lire 0.05 : Zero e centesimi 5

Da riempirsi dal mittente

Al Sig. Via

a ITALIANE

(Prov. di Prov. di)

UFFICIO POSTALE ITALIANO DI CANEA 20/4/08

(2) addebi

L'Ufficiale di Posta Heer

5

Fino a lire CINQUE

(1) Ordinario o telegrafico.  
(2) Bollo lineare dell'Ufficio di emissione

Segue a tergo

UFFICIO POSTALE ITALIANO DI CANEA

Nome e cognome del mittente ...

domiciliato a ...

Via ...

GIRATA

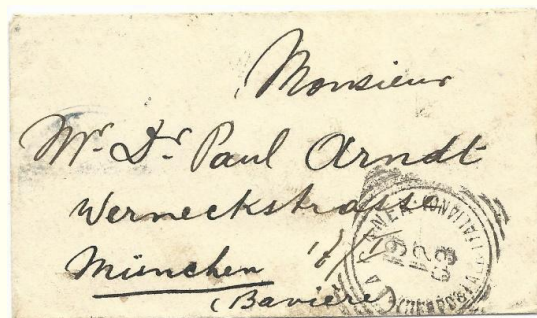
E per me pagate al Sig. ...

QUIETANZA

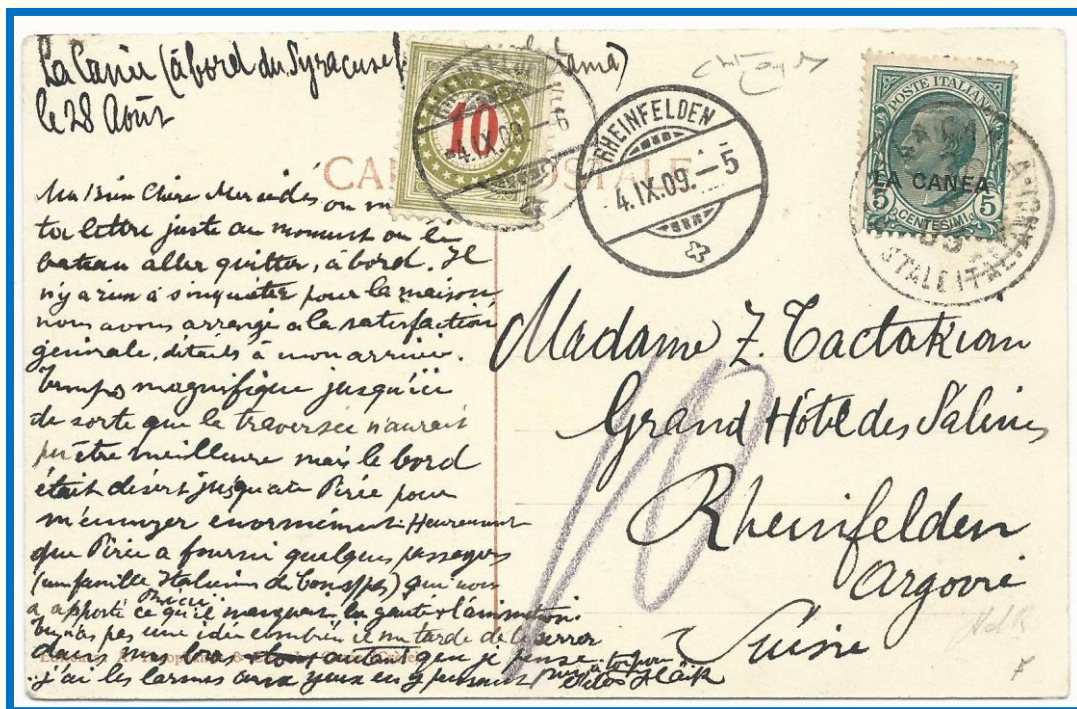
N° ... di pagamento

€ 50,-

Postal money order issued by the Italian Post Office of **Chania** on **20 April 1908**, recording a financial transaction between the **postal offices of Chania and Catania, Italy**. The value of the money order amounts to **0.05 lire (5 centesimi)** and is most likely related to the settlement of accounting or postal charges arising from the exchange of postal money orders between the two offices. To date, this specific document remains the only known example of a postal money order issued by the Italian Post Office of Chania that has been identified.



Small-size envelope, likely a **visiting card cover**, sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania on 19.12.1903 to Munich, Bavaria**. It bears the postal marking for an international visiting card rate of **5 centesimi**. (on the right the front side of the cover)



Postcard sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania on 30 August 1909 to Rheinfelden, Switzerland**. Because it contained a written message, the applicable postage should have been 10 centesimi. Upon arrival in Switzerland, the item was assessed a **postage due charge of 10 rappen: 5 rappen representing the deficient postage and 5 rappen as a penalty**.

Valeur Declaree

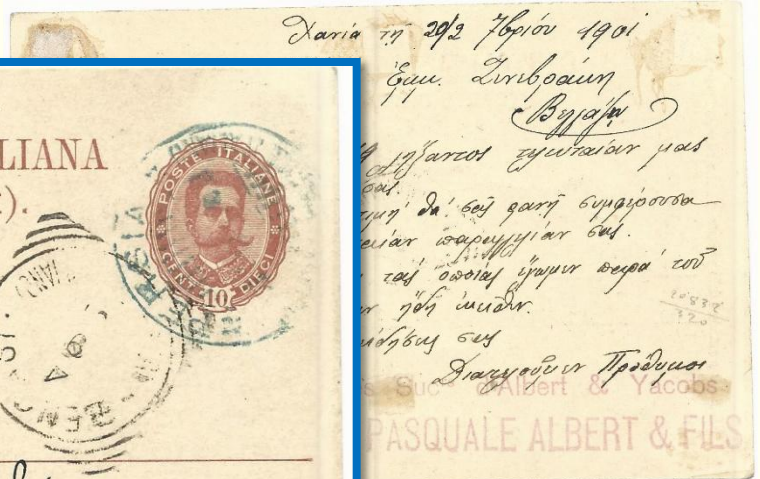


Envelope with a **declared value of 100 francs**, mailed from the Italian Post Office in **Chania on 27 November 1909** and addressed to **Dresden, Germany**. The total postage of **80 centesimi** was composed of **25 centesimi** for the registration fee, **25 centesimi** for the first weight step (up to 20 grams), **15 centesimi** for the second weight step (the envelope weighing 34 grams), and **15 centesimi** for the insurance fee corresponding to the declared value of 100 francs. The insurance fee for international mail handled by the Italian Postal Administration varied according to the country of destination.



Η οπίσθια όψη του φακέλου με τα ίχνη από τις απαραίτητες για την αποστολή κέρνινες σφραγίδες

## Maritime Corespondence



Italian postal card, **10 centesimi**, mailed from **Chania** on **2 September 1901** to **Benghazi**. The card was carried aboard the steamship **"PERSIA"** and bears the circular ship postmark **"PIROSCAFO POSTALE ITALIANO PERSIA"**, indicating its handling within the Italian maritime postal service. At the time, the Italian Postal Administration maintained contracts with private and state-affiliated shipping companies to ensure regular mail connections across Mediterranean routes, thereby enabling efficient and structured postal communication between key port cities.

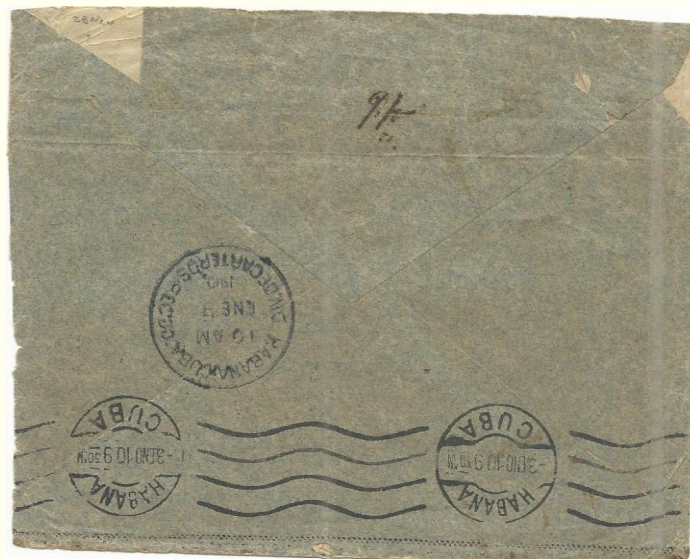


Postcard sent from Souda via the Italian warship **"Ferruccio"** (18 January 1911). The card bears the naval postal cancellation of the ship **"R. NAVE FERRUCCIO"** and was addressed to Ferrara, Italy. The postage paid amounts to 10 centesimi, using affixed stamps of the **"LA CANEA"** issue.

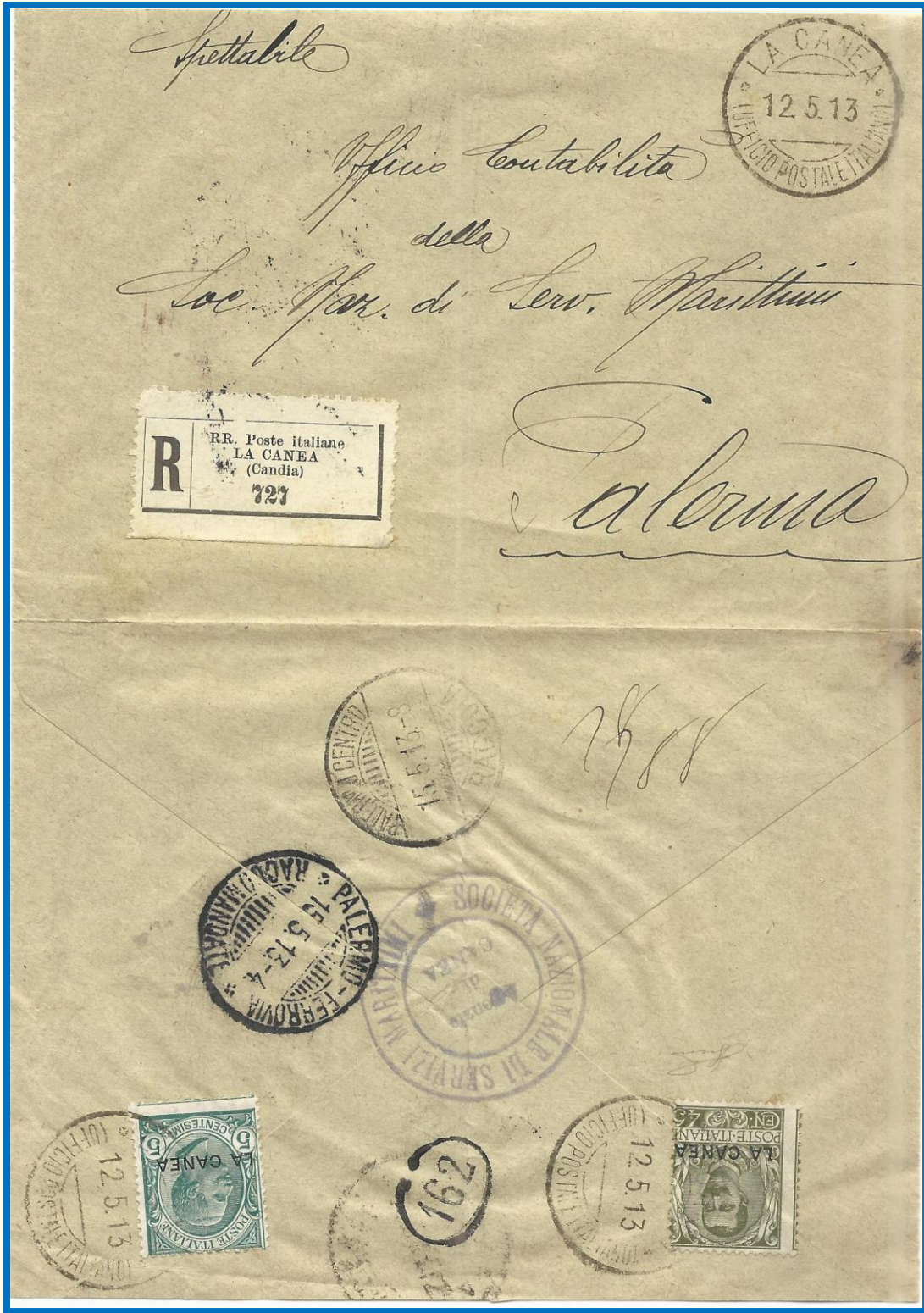
## Destination to Cuba



Cover sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania** on **9 December 1909** to **Havana, Cuba**. On the reverse, arrival postmarks in Havana dated 3 January 1910 are present. The postage paid amounts to **25 centesimi, covering the standard foreign postage rate**. This is a transatlantic mail item of particular rarity from Crete, addressed to a distant overseas destination



The back of the cover reduced



Registered cover sent from the Italian Post Office in **Chania** on **12 May 1913** to **Palermo**. The postage paid amounts to **50 centesimi**, covering the registration fee (25 cent.) and the standard domestic postage (25 cent.). On the reverse, a circular cancellation reading “**SOCIETÀ NAZIONALE DI SERVIZI MARITTIMI**” is visible, associated with the successor of the shipping company **Florio Rubattino**, which maintained an office in Chania and housed the Italian postal service. The company ceased operations approximately one month after the dispatch of this cover, on 30 June 1913.



Registered cover mailed from the Italian Post Office in **Chania** on **11 October 1914**, addressed to **Constantinople**. The total postage of **50 centesimi paid the foreign letter rate for the first weight step (25 centesimi) plus the registration fee**. Of particular philatelic interest is the manuscript endorsement "**Via Postes Ottoman**" at the upper right of the front of the cover, indicating transmission through the Ottoman postal network. This cover represents **a very late usage of the Italian Post Office in Canea**. Only a few weeks later, at the end of October 1914, the office ceased operations following the suspension of the regular postal routes and mail conveyance services between Italy and the Ottoman Empire.



The back of the cover reduced