

Another Cover with Interesting Markings

By Zach Lawrence

Cover from Ishikari, Hokkaidō

to

Freising, Bavaria

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Further to my article published in the February issue (JP 74/36-37), on page 101 is shown another interesting cover that I acquired on eBay as a present from my wife Michiko. The cover was sent from Ishikari in Hokkaidō to Freising in Bavaria in 1894 (Meiji 27). Although the dates on the strikes of the maruichi cancellation applied at Ishikari are difficult to decipher, the handwritten notation on the back of the cover provides a sending date of 24 February 1894. In addition, we can tell that the cover exited Japan on 3 March (“3 III”) 1894 from the roman-letter cancellation applied at the Yokohama foreign mail exchange office. This cancellation was struck on the back of the cover, while a similar cancellation had been applied on the front the previous day at Tōkyō. Five weeks later the cover arrived at Freising where a receiving cancel was applied on 7 April 1894.

This cover has two interesting red markings. The first (illustrated at right) is the red boxed marking on the front which reads 獨乙國行 (*Doitsu koku yuki* or “to the country of Germany”). Although similar *yuki* (行 or “to”) markings on mail sent to other countries have been reported and illustrated in JP over the years, this appears to be the first instance of one addressed to Germany.



Also interesting to note on the front of the cover is the three rows of kana, written vertically and turned ninety degrees, which read:

ババリアミンヘン	(babariya minhen)
フライシン	(furaishin)
ベーチダーテレル	(beechi daatereru)

This is a transliteration of “Bavaria / München / Freising / Betty Datterer”, the address of the cover’s recipient which appears on the front in German.



The other interesting red marking is an oval handstamp on the back (illustrated at left). The upper part of the outer oval reads “Dai Nippon Hokkaidō” and the lower part “Ishikari (no) kuni Sapporo”. The kana in the center of the oval reads マックス (Makkusu) ポルマン (Poruman).

This is not a postal marking, but is instead the personal name stamp of Max Pohlmann, the sender of the letter. Mr. Pohlmann, a German, seems to have been quite a colorful character, as evidenced by the biographical notes about him on ISJP member Bernd Lepach’s excellent website *Meiji Portraits*.⁽¹⁾

Pohlmann worked for the Sapporo Brewing Company. He had invented a process to remove bacteria from beer by heating it, and moved to Japan in 1887. His contract was renewed in 1890 and 1892, but not in 1894, when he was forced out of his position due to allegations of irregularities in his behavior.

The last interesting detail about this cover, identified by ISJP Director Florian Eichhorn, is that Pohlmann paid triple the UPU rate to post a letter to Germany. The UPU rate at the time was 10 sen, but the cover is franked with 30 sen postage, comprised of two 15-sen new koban stamps, a denomination rarely seen on overseas mail.

Finally, I would like to thank ISJP members Bernd Lepach, Florian Eichhorn, and Ken Bryson for their generous input in helping me with the interpretation of this cover. ■

¹ URL: http://www.meiji-portraits.de/meiji_portraits_p.html#POHLMANNMax

