

## German East Africa 1890 – 1927

*‘The creation, disintegration and reconstruction of a colony illustrated in its postal system.’*

**AIM :** To use the postal items of German East Africa to illustrate the confident rise of the territory as it became Germany’s greatest colony, its tragic disintegration through the Great War and the start of its reconstruction under British Mandate.

**SCOPE :** The first German post office in East Africa opened in Lamu in 1888. Examples of postal material from Lamu in 1890 and Zanzibar in 1891 are followed chronologically by items right through to 1933 when the territory’s own postal administration ceased, being amalgamated with that of Kenya and Uganda.

**METHOD :** The exhibit divides into three sections, A,B, and C to illustrate the creation of the colony, then its disintegration by war and then its reconstruction as Tanganyika Territory. Most sheets cover a single focus, but page numbers in each corner allow unlinked material to be separated into two pages on one sheet.

### PLAN :

	Starting Page	End Page
Introduction	1	1
A. Deutsch Ostafrika	2	13
B. D.O.A. at war.	14	64
C. Beginning Reconstruction	65	80

### DETAIL:

A. The examples provided demonstrate the strong sense in the development of the colony that it was part of Germany itself. Forerunner examples are shown displaying the ‘Imperial German Postal Agency’ cancel from each main postal centre - Lamu, Zanzibar, Daressalaam and Bagamoyo. (pages 3 – 5). Full mint sets of the 1893 and 1896 overprinted stamps are shown together with examples of postal stationery. ( pages 6 – 8). The German Colonies’ Yacht issue has been included in full, for both the pesa currency and the heller currency, the former being presented with scarce ‘Specimen’ overprints. (pages 9-13).

B. The impact of the war on everyday life is illustrated by Examples are presented of Fieldpost provision for each of the military forces engaged.

Cash frankings are illustrated in their various formats and colours.(pages 27-40)

Examples of dhow mail are shown together with a unique copy of the War Prize Court letter (page25).

A complete set of Wuga provisional printings are displayed.(page 21-22)

Complete and exploded booklets of yacht stamps are exhibited, which may not have arrived because of the naval blockade.(pages 23-24)

Examples of mail which did manage to exit the colony are included (page 19-20)

POW mail from the colony’s early settlers is provided (page 45-48)

C. The final section provides an insight into the methods adopted by the various Allied forces of handling a broken postal service and creating a new system between 1917 and 1922.

### Symbols :

A red dot or red outline signifies a unique or uncommon item.

A green dot signifies an item which has expertising mark(s)

### Abbreviations :

DOA : Deutsch-Ostafrika	– the German language title for the colony
GEA : German East Afrika	– the English language title for the colony.
TT : Tanganyika Territory	– the name for the colony under the League of nations mandate
BEA : British East Africa	– the original English title for the Protectorate, later Kenya

### References :

Vorläufer	: The journal of the German Colonies Collectors Group
Michael G. Farrant	: The Postal History of German East Africa in the First World War
K. Pennycuick	: The Postal History of German East Africa
Brian Gardner	: German East
B.E.A.	: The bulletins of the East Africa Study Circle.

**NOTE :** Following the St. Louis Expo, this title page has been updated from that shown in the exhibit.

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## Synopsis

The thesis undergirding this exhibit is that German East Africa was developed in one of the most difficult parts of Africa, became the finest of German colonies in the world, but was decimated by the decisions of military commanders in the Great War.

At the heart of that destruction was conflict, not just between the military forces in East Africa, but between each military force and the civilian populations they claimed to be defending.

Throughout the period in view there was a conscious awareness that the stamps, postal stationery and postal history of the territory, served a secondary purpose as propaganda both inside the colony as well as in the wider world.

The selection of all postal items for this exhibit has been made to highlight the creation, disintegration and reconstruction of the territory.

- A. The pre-war section illustrates the ways in which the colony was presented to the world as a progressive part of Germany itself, within Africa. All stamps, postal stationery and cancels reveal the strong Germanic identity of the new colony. Postal rates for items sent to Germany were charged at local rather than international rates.  
Forerunner examples are shown displaying the '*Imperial German Postal Agency*' cancel from each main postal centre - Lamu, Zanzibar, Daressalaam and Bagamoyo.  
Full mint sets of the 1893 and 1896 overprinted stamps are shown together with examples of postal stationery.  
The German Colonies' Yacht issue for Deutsch Ostafrika has been included in full, for both the pesa currency and the heller currency, the former being presented with scarce 'Specimen' overprints.
- B. The war section illustrates the deprivations experienced by the civilian population as German and Allied military decisions fractured the infrastructure of the colony. The impact of conflict on the postal system serves as an analogy of the disruption to life being experienced by residents. Most of the native populations had no affection for the colonial powers. The civilian Governors of both DOA and BEA had foreseen the damage to colonialism itself which military action would cause.  
  
Postal items are selected to emphasise the loss to the civilian population of the normal ways of communicating for family, business and community life, both domestically and internationally.  
  
Along with the normal war-time elements of Fieldpost, On Active Service, POW and censorship, are many examples of paper shortage, stamp shortage and naval blockades.
- C. The exhibits in the reconstruction section have been chosen to show how complex was the task of rebuilding the broken postal service. The process had to begin during 1916 as Allied occupation of GEA territory left those areas devoid of postal systems.  
The efficiency of the previous system had been built around the railways, roads and bridges constructed in the pre-war era.  
Military personnel had callously destroyed these as they retreated, ignoring the needs of the community as well as industry, commerce and trade.  
Once again, the difficulties evidenced in the postal administration are symbolic of the challenges posed in every part of society.