

**FLAG USE IN GERMAN COLONIES***Andreas Herzfeld*

Germany was a 'newer' imperial power. The first colonies were founded in 1884. In contrast to the classical imperial powers was Germany able to annex only rather small and insignificant colonies. Every single colony was lost after World War I.

Brandenburg (Pic.1) has had imperial ambitions and conquered 'Groß-Friedrichsburg' in 1683, the island of Arguin in 1686 (both are in Africa), the Crab Island in 1689 and half of Tobago in 1691 (both Caribbean Sea). These colonies were sold to Holland in the years between 1707 and 1720. The one and only used flag was the flag of Brandenburg: a white flag with a red eagle of Brandenburg. Germany altogether conquered six colonies and received one leased area :

- German SouthwestAfrica	24.04.1884
- Togo	05.07.1884
- Cameroon	12.07.1884
- New Guinea	04.11.1884
- German EastAfrica	04.12.1884
- Samoa	1885
- Kiautschou-Tsingtao	14.11.1897

In the early years either the German flag or the imperial war flag was hoisted (Pic.2). In the end of 1892 Emperor Wilhelm II rearranged the flag use. After April 1<sup>st</sup> 1893, special service flags were introduced and the use of the imperial war flag (Pic.3,4) was prohibited. By request of the governor of German-East-Africa Emperor Wilhelm II permitted the further use of the imperial war flag on August 21<sup>st</sup> 1893. This permit expired on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1904.

**Special colonial flags**

The first real colonial flag used, was the one of the governor of German-East Africa (Pic.5), which was introduced on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1891. On the white stripe of the German flag a Imperial eagle without a crown and a chain was placed. Size of the flag is 3.15m \* (times) 1.9m. On March 1<sup>st</sup> 1898 the same flag was given to the governor of Kiautschou.

As already mentioned a special service flag was introduced in the Foreign Office (Pic.6,8) including the German protectorates on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1893. A white circle with a crowned eagle was added to the German flag. This flag was now used by the governors and authorities of the colonies (except German East Africa + Kiautschou). On May 17<sup>th</sup> 1907 an independent institution was founded to administrate the German colonies, the Reichskolonialamt Imperial Colonial Authority. Which flag was now supposed to be representing the Reichskolonialamt ? The decision fell on the flag of the Foreign Office. The Emperor confirmed this wish by highest order.

The service flag of the Emperor's navy (Pic.7) which was as well introduced on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1893, was used in Kiautschou as a national flag on buildings of civil administration, lighthouses and the observatory since 1897. The governor and the authority used the imperial war flag.

On March 13<sup>th</sup> 1893 more service flags were introduced. On the black stripe of the Foreign Office service flag a LV or ZV in red letters and a yellow anchor in between were added for the Custom administration and the Pilotage service flags in the colonies (Pic.9-11).  
S. construction details. The image in the 'Flaggenkurier' is not correct.

The East-African railroad company had its own flag: black-white-red quartered, yellow emblem with ochre-brown, a winged wheel and the brown letters OAEG (Pic. 12).

The use of the German flag on their ships was authorized by special order to the native inhabitants: in East-Africa on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1891, on the Marshall Islands on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1893. The ships were given a flag certificate and the owner received a 'Permit to carry the German flag' (Pic.13-14).  
On February 8<sup>th</sup> 1909 the use of the German flag was officially permitted to local ships on Lake Victoria-Nyansa and Lake Nyassa.

The numeric flags of junks (Pic.15,16) in port Tsingtao had the following appearance since 1913. Junks class I and II (bigger and seaworthy ships) used red flags with white numbers, Junks class III (smaller, local ships) used white flags with red numbers. After clearance inwards a blue-red pennant with the letter **E** (German: einklarieren), and while clearance outwards a blue-white pennant with letter **A** (German: ausklarieren) had to be hoisted (Pic.17,18). Both pennants had to be hoisted underneath the numeric flag.

### Flags of German colonial companies

Four flags of colonial companies are known to us. The German East African Company was founded on February 12<sup>th</sup> 1885. It used a red flag with a lion (Pic.19,21). Around 1892 (?) the generally known flag with Southern Cross was accepted, which is supposed to be designed by Karl Peters (Pic.20). The German West African Company used a white flag with a red cross with black borders, a yellow circle with an eagle and the letters DWAG (Pic.22).

The New Guinea Company was founded on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1884. The flag is white with the German flag in the corner and a black lion with red lily (Pic.23).

The German Jaluit company (Marshall Islands) founded on December 21st 1887 used a sphere model on the German flag with white background (Pic.25). The first flag was red with white letters J.G. (Pic.24) The flag of the Ralik Islands (Pic.26) can be dated back to the visit of the HMS Ariadne in November 1878. The captain gave the chieftains the five striped flag. This flag was officially abolished on October 15<sup>th</sup> 1885. The natives used the flag till march 1894 until it was finally prohibited on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1894.

## Weather flags

The observatory in Tsingtao showed the weather situation since 1913 with the following flags (Pic.27-31):

White flag clear weather  
 Green flag cloudy weather  
 Blue flag rainy weather  
 Red flag stormy weather  
 Blue-white-blue-white flag unsettled weather

## Counterfeited flags?

In 1936 two flags were offered to the German government (Pic.32). The flags said to be German troop flags. After a proper inspection of the flags they were recognized as counterfeited and the offer was not accepted.

## Coat of arms - and flag design proposals

In 1914 six coat of arms drafts (Pic.33-38) were designed under supervision of Dr. Solf. Kiautschou was the only one without a draft design. The coat of arms was divided in two parts, on the top the Imperial eagle, on bottom a characterizing image of the colony. The coat of arms has a crown. A flag (Pic.39-44) was planned with the characterizing image put on the white stripe of the German flag without a crown and without an eagle.

The drafts were (Pic.45-50):

- **Cameroon:** Background: vermilion red / elephant head: silver with white lights and grey (- or green) outline;
- **Togo:** Background: Silver / palm tree: light and dark green / snakes: grey with green lights and brown shadows;
- **East Africa:** Background: light vermilion red / lion head: silver- with white light and grey (-or green) shadows;
- **Samoa:** Background: light vermilion red / palm trees: silver / coconuts: gold / soil: silver / two blue waves;
- **New Guinea:** Background: intense green / exotic bird, feathers: gold / two large feathers head and claws: black and green;
- **South West Africa:** Background: marine blue / ox head: silver with white lights and grey (or green) shadows / diamond white with yellow

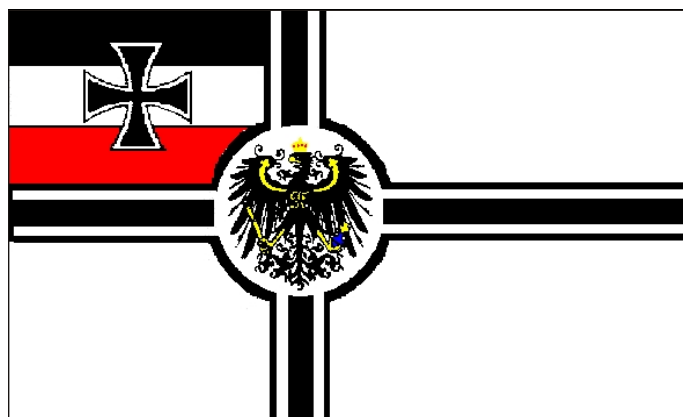
Unfortunately neither the designed coat of arms or flags were officially used.



Picture 1  
Brandenburg's flag



Picture 2  
German Reich's flag



Picture 3  
War Flag (1892 variant)



**Picture 4**  
**War Flag in use**



**Picture 5**  
**Flag of the governors of East Africa and Kiautschou**



Picture 6  
Service flag of Foreign Office



Picture 7  
Service flag of Foreign Office in use



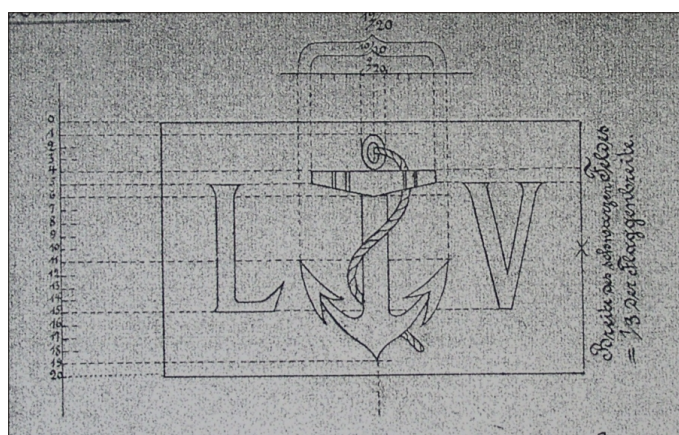
Picture 8  
Service flag of the Navy



Picture 9  
Service flag for pilots



Picture 10  
Service flag for customs



Picture 11  
Construction details



**Picture 12**  
**Flag of the East-African Railroad Company**



**Picture 13**  
**Flag use by native people**



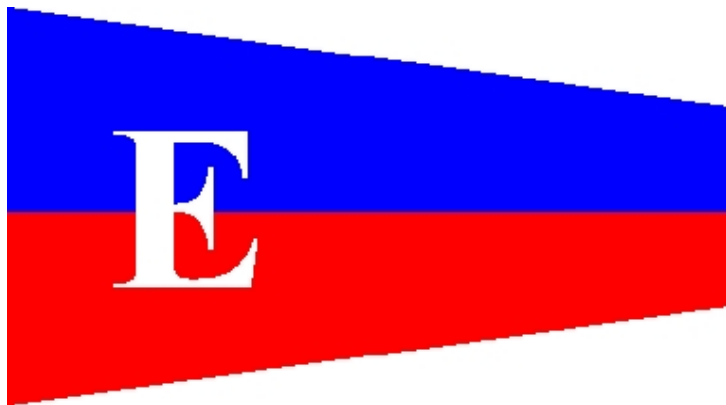
Picture 14  
Flag permit



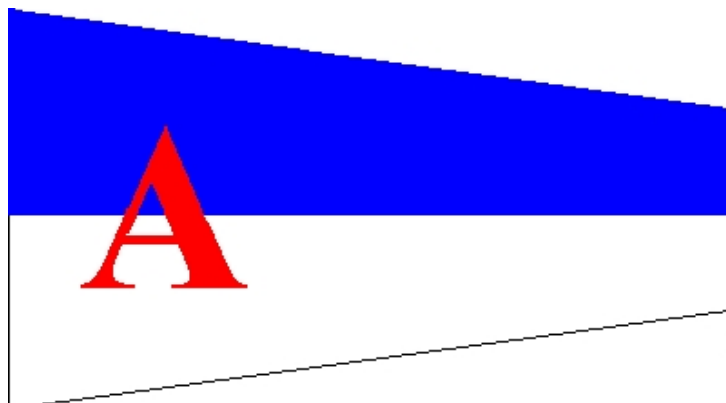
**Picture 15**  
**Junks Class I and II**



**Picture 16**  
**Junks Class III**



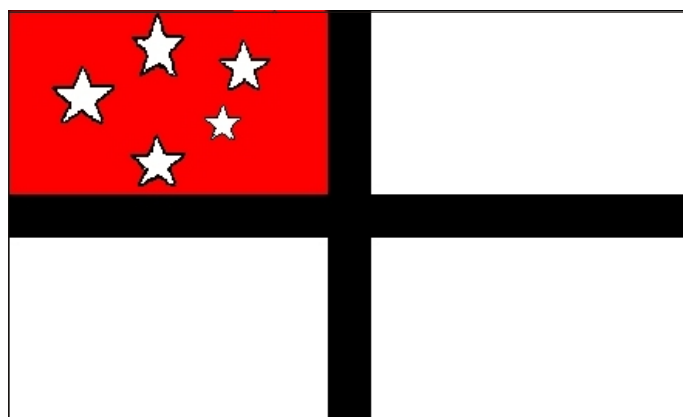
**Picture 17**  
**Custom flags (reconstruction)**  
**After clearance inwards**



**Picture 18**  
**Custom flags (reconstruction)**  
**After clearance outwards**



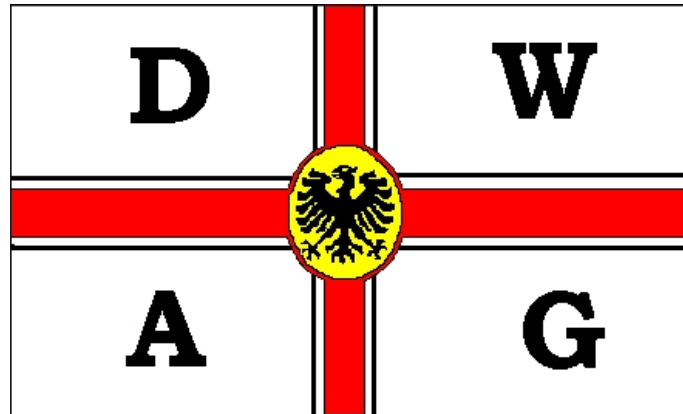
Picture 19  
German East African Company first flag



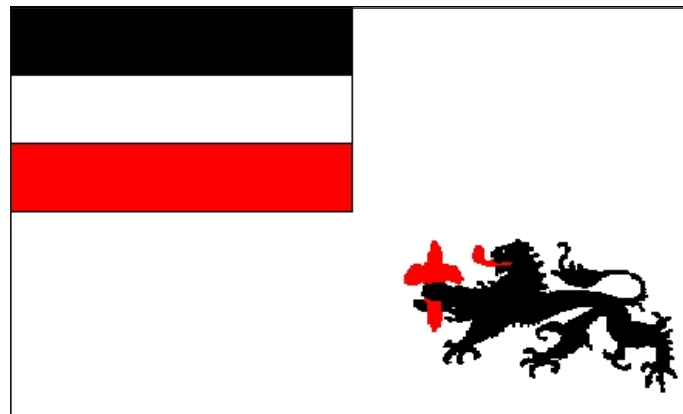
Picture 20  
German East African Company second flag



Picture 21  
German East African Company coat of arms



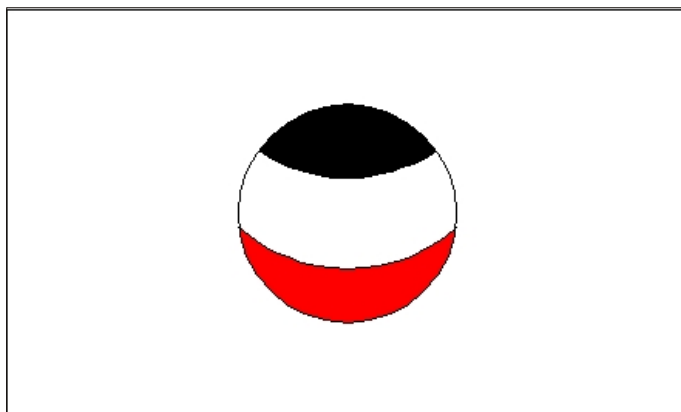
Picture 22  
German West African Company flag



Picture 23  
New Guinea Company flag



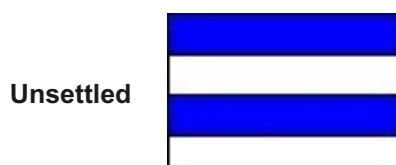
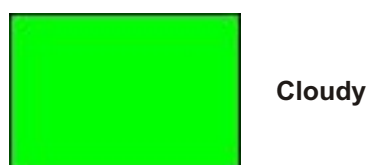
Picture 24  
German Jaluit Company flag (first variant)



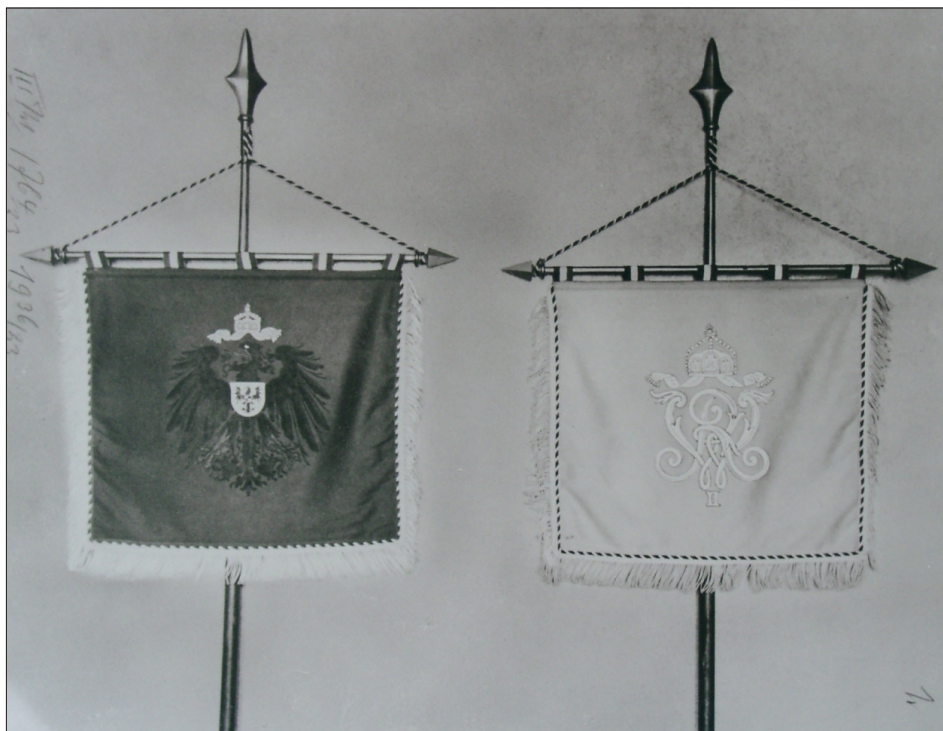
**Picture 25**  
**German Jaluit Company flag (second variant)**



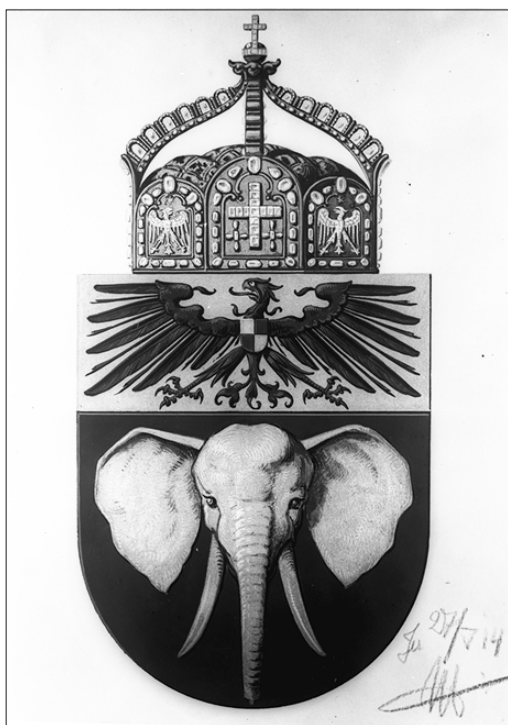
**Picture 26**  
**Ralik Islands flag**



**Pictures 27-31**  
**Weather flags**



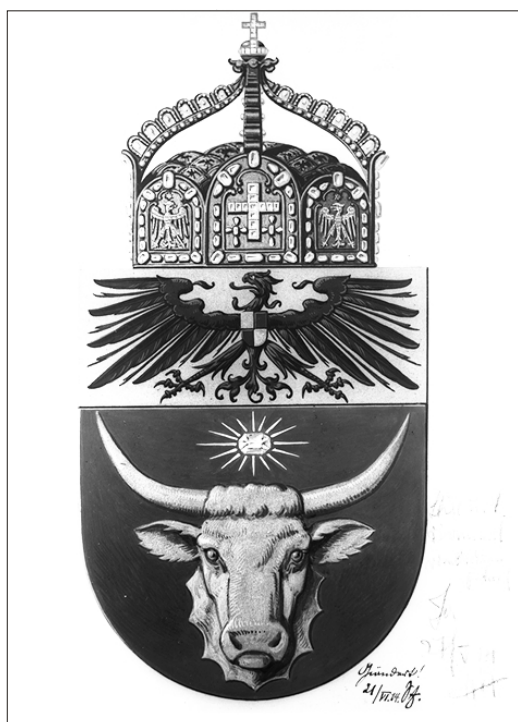
**Picture 32**  
**Counterfeited flags**



**Picture 33**  
**Proposal of coat of arms: Cameroon**



**Picture 34**  
**Proposal of coat of arms: Togo**



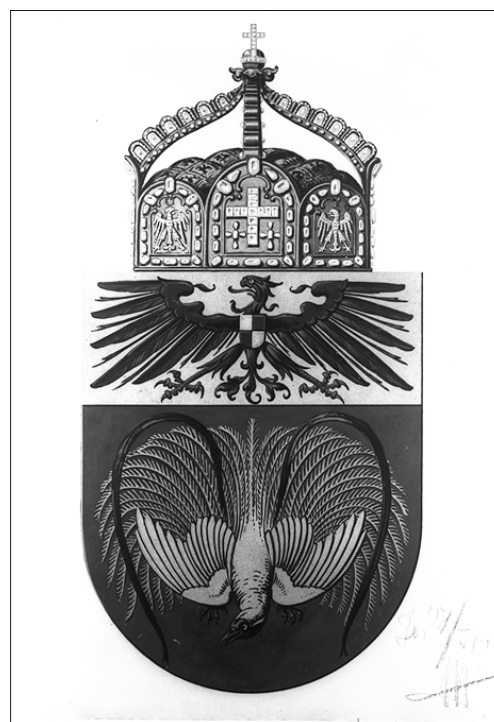
Picture 35  
Proposal of coat of arms: South West Africa



Picture 36  
Proposal of coat of arms: Samoa



Picture 37  
Proposal of coat of arms: West Africa



Picture 38  
Proposal of coat of arms: New Guinea



Picture 39  
Flag proposal: Kamerun - Cameroon



Picture 40  
Flag proposal: Togo



Picture 41  
Flag proposal: Deutsch Südwestafrika - German South West Africa



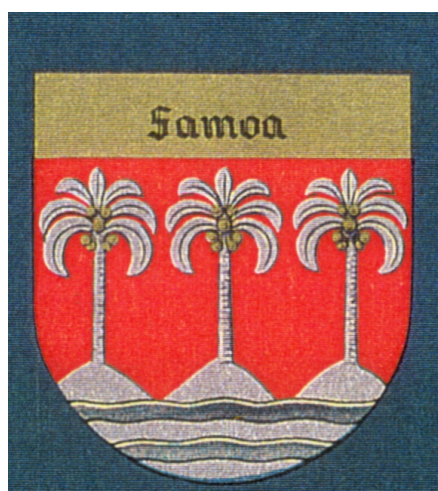
Picture 42  
Flag proposal: Samoa



Picture 43  
Flag proposal: Deutsch Ostafrika - German East Africa



Picture 44  
Flag proposal: Deutsch Neu-Guinea - German New Guinea



Pictures 45-50  
Coloured coats of arms proposals