



Imperial German Colonial and Overseas Troops 1885-1918 (Men-at-Arms)

Alejandro de Quesada, Chris Dale

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From the Boxer Rebellion to Tsingtao to German East Africa (Tanzania), and colonies across Africa and the central Pacific, the Kaiser's Second Reich created a worldwide empire, and then lost it.

Following Prussia's victory over France in 1871 and German unification, the invigorated Second Reich sought international status alongside the older colonial powers - Britain, France, Spain and Russia. Actual overseas settlement was always sparse, counted in the low tens of thousands only, but by the mid-1880s German trading companies had established footholds in what became German East Africa (Tanzania), German South-West Africa (Namibia), and German West Africa (Cameroon, and Togo). To consolidate their position against native resistance, and to extend their frontiers, the German Imperial government soon took over these enclaves as colonies or 'protectorates'. In the 1890s it established a new branch of the armed forces, the Schutztruppe, composed largely of African askaris with German officers and NCOs, backed up by German artillery and machine guns. In parallel, the Imperial Navy raised marine battalions - eventually, three Seebataillone - to protect its overseas bases and to reinforce the colonies as needed. After German participation in putting down the Boxer Rebellion (1900) their primary responsibility was the German concession territory at Tsingtao in China, where Germany also raised a local East Asia Brigade; but the marines also served in the German Pacific possessions - Samoa, New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago, the Northern Solomon Islands, the Marshalls, Marianas and Carolines. Marine companies were also rotated through the African colonies at need. In addition to small-scale 'police' work, the brief German colonial period involved putting down rebellions in East Africa (1888-98) and Cameroon, and crushing - with great ruthlessness - the determined resistance of the Herero and Nama tribes in SW Africa (1890-1907), where there was a degree of German settlement. In World War I, Germany soon lost almost all her colonies to much stronger Allied forces. In China, Tsingtao was captured late in 1914 by a Japanese force with token British assistance. Resistance was minimal in the Pacific; and in 1915 the last defenders of German South-West Africa surrendered to South African forces. However, in East Africa the Schutztruppe, commanded by the very able Col (later MajGen) Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, fought a skillful mobile war against much larger British and Empire forces, and were the very last German troops to surrender in November 1918. Meanwhile, the Navy's marine infantry branch had been enlarged, forming first one, then two Marine Divisions, which fought on the Western Front - including the Ypres and Somme sectors - throughout the war. Featuring specially drawn full-colour artwork, this book tells the story of Imperial Germany's colonial and overseas troops, who fought in a host of environments including China, Africa, and the Western Front of World War I.

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