

Indian Postal Stationery Envelopes Overprinted “British East Africa” by George T. Krieger

The inventory of stamps and postal stationery held by the Indian post office in Zanzibar was turned over to the Zanzibar authorities when the control of the post office was passed on to Sultan’s Government of Zanzibar 10 November 1895. An additional quantity was delivered in April 1896. Thomas E.C. Remington, Postmaster General of both Zanzibar and British East Africa, had the *Zanzibar Gazette* overprint the stationery both “Zanzibar” and “British East Africa”.

Hall’s article, *Zanzibar 1895-1904*, includes a reprint of the list of Indian postal stationery transferred to Zanzibar at the change of administration and a second transfer in April of 1896 is from a letter by W.D. Cowell Assistant Director-General, Post Office of India, Calcutta in 1902 to Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, Ltd. The list includes quantities defined in reams, packets and loose. Lang in his book *British India Postal Stationery* reprints a letter from to the Indian Postal Administration that defines the packaging of (newspaper) wrappers as 120 per packet and 4 packets per ream or 480 pieces. Wayne Menuz recently sent me a scan of a band for the new 2½ annas envelope, which identifies the contents as 12 envelopes. Previously in 2003 Wayne supplied me with a scan of a band that he said was for 2½ annas envelopes. My supposition is that this latter band was for the 2½ annas surcharged 4½ annas envelopes and with the issuance of new 2½ annas envelope a change to banding was made to make all reams the same total quantity, 480. Since only one packet of the ‘old’ envelope and no packets of the new envelope were transferred this makes little difference in the results. The word ream is the modern equivalent of the Middle English *reme*, which was literally a bundle; over the years it has been defined as 480, 500 or 516 sheets; in this case it was 480.



Band for 2½ annas surcharged 4½ annas envelopes



Band for new 2½ annas envelopes

Packaging of Registered Letter envelopes remains a question. Since there were 26 packets of the size A (F size) Registered Letter envelopes transferred the definition of the quantity in a packet has an impact (208) on the total number of units transferred. Unfortunately I have not been able to find any answers to this question. Since the Registered Letter envelopes are quite thick I have used 16 per pack, although it could have been 8 with a face value of 16 annas or 1 rupee. I have used the following to calculate the quantities transferred.

Envelopes (old 2½ a)	Ream = 500	Packet = 25
Envelopes (new 2½ a)	Ream = 480	Packet = 12
Post Cards	Ream = 480	Packet = 16
Wrappers	Ream = 480	Packet = 120
Registered Letter	Ream = 480	Packet = 16

Minns, in his book, provides the hypothesis that of the items shared between Zanzibar and British East Africa that 63% were used by Zanzibar and 37% for British East Africa; Minns bases this upon the documented split of postage stamps between the two colonies. I have rounded off the estimate to 60-40, and even this can leave the impression of an accurate knowledge, that does not exist, of the quantities overprinted for each postal administration. The assumption on packet quantities for size A (F size) Registration Envelopes also varies that quantity by 208 units. However the resulting estimates show that the quantity of British East Africa overprinted stationery of India was small; less than 3,000 of the most common items, Post Cards.

Post Card		Inventory transferred			April 1896 delivery reams	Total	BEA	Zanzibar
		reams	packets	loose				
1/4 a		3			2	2400		2400
1/4 a Reply		3	8	4	2	2532		2532
1 a		13			14	6720	2688	4032

	1a reply		5	13	4	8	6452	2581	3871
Envelopes	1/2 a		14	5	1		6871		7126
	1/2 a	square	1	15			660		875
	1 a		3				1440		1500
	1 a	square		30			360		750
	2½ a	old	8	1	7		4032	1612	2420
	2½ a	new	1			10	5208	2112	3168
Registration Envelopes									
	2 a	size A	3	26	7	8	5703	2281	3422
	2 a	size B	1			6	3360	1344	2016
Wrappers	1/2 a		2	66	3	4	10803		10803
	1 a		8	28	5	10	12005		12005

The above list still leaves unanswered the question of which specific postal stationery items were transferred since there were multiple types of many items printed before the transfer dates and one does not know details of the inventory control at the Indian post office in Zanzibar. Since only six stationery items were overprinted “British East Africa” most of this only concerns the “Zanzibar” overprints.

Since there is no data in the records we can only ascertain specifically which types were transferred from the surviving overprinted postal stationery. I have used Derek Lang’s numbering system for the Indian postal stationery from his book *British India Postal Stationery* published in 1997. This is the most definitive work on Indian postal stationery I have found.

One Anna Post Card, 122 x 87 mm, Lang’s type CL4

One Anna Reply Card, 122 x 87 mm, perforated between, Lang’s type CL5

2½ Annas, ‘old’ envelope, Four Annas Six Pies envelope with gold-yellow embossed stamp overprinted ‘India Postage, Two Annas Six Pies’ in black, 132 x 76 mm, Lang’s EL2

2½ Annas, ‘new’ envelope, yellow embossed stamp, 146 x 83 mm, Lang’s EK1

2 Annas Registered Letter Envelope, size A, Lang’s REA1, size F

2 Annas Registered Letter Envelope, size B, Lang’s REA2, size J

There are a number of variations of the “British East Africa” overprint circumscribed by the following:

Height: 12 mm. 11½ mm and 10 mm

Stop (period) after Africa: with or without

Color: black, blue (some overprints are easy to define, others are difficult when a transition in ink occurred; I define those where blue can be seen in sunlight as blue)

Fonts: as with the overprints used on the stamps of India, there are a variety of fonts used and an occasional broken or damaged font, there are too many to give a listing for each.

I have only seen a few combinations of these factors on envelopes. A simplified listing could be done leaving out the presence or absence of a stop; this appears to be what Ascher and H&G did in creating their listings, although defined differently.

Overprint Type	Simplified Overprint Type	Height (in mm)	Color	Stop	
T1	S1	12	Black	No	
T1a	S1a				Birtish error
T2	S2	11½	Blue	Yes	
T3	S3	10	Blue	No	
T4		10	Blue	Yes	

With the small quantity of envelopes overprinted these are difficult envelopes to collect. When divided by the overprint types the quantities become very small. Even using a simplified list of overprint types, quantities receiving a specific overprint were relatively small with few examples surviving with unused examples being more common.



Wide B

T1 (12 mm high black without stop)



Narrow B



Wide B

T2 (11 1/2 mm high blue with stop)



Narrow B



Wide

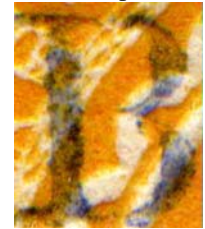


Narrow

T1



Wide



Narrow

T2



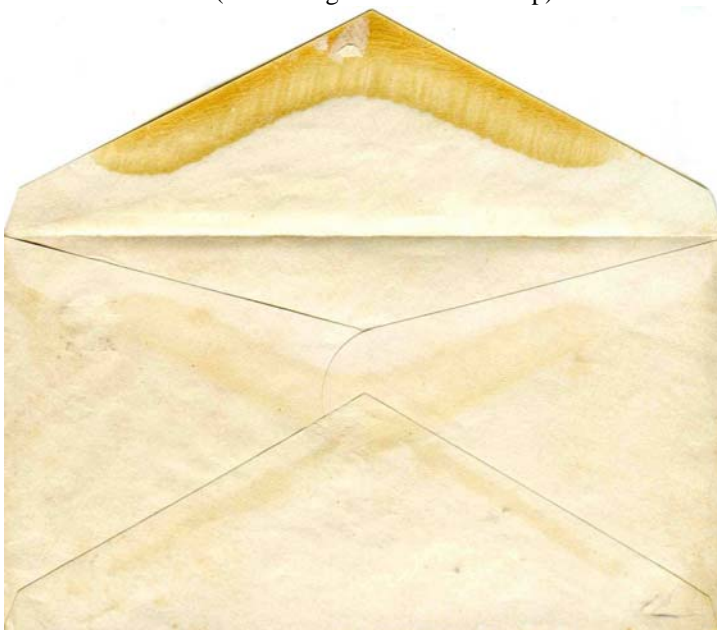
T1a, (British error)



T3 (10 mm high blue without stop)



T4 (10 mm high blue with stop)



EK1

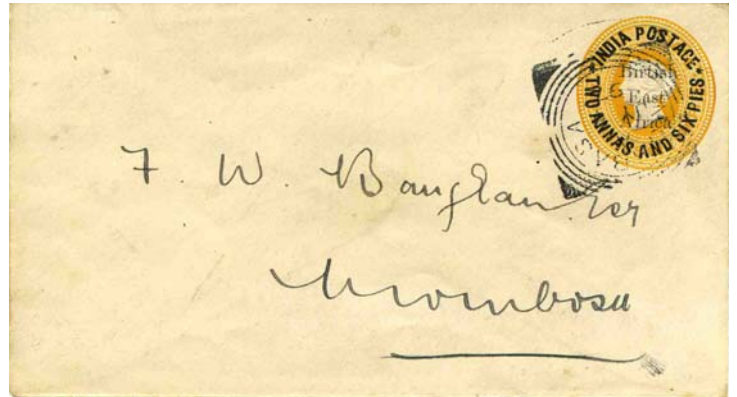


EL2

2½ Annas, ‘old’ envelope, Four Annas Six Pies envelope with gold-yellow embossed stamp overprinted ‘India Postage, Two Annas Six Pies’ in black, 132 x 76 mm, Lang’s EL2



T1a on EL2 (3a)



T1a on EL2 (3a), canceled Mombasa 7 July 1897

Error: Birtish for British



T1 on EL2 (3), canceled Mombasa 29 February 1896



T4 on EL2 (3b), canceled Mombasa 16 August 1896

2½ Annas, ‘new’ envelope, yellow embossed stamp, 146 x 83 mm, Lang’s EK1

The first Queen Victoria stamped envelopes probably reached the Protectorate along with the first delivery of the Queen Victoria stamps in May 1896. On 8 April 1896 De La Rue invoiced for 4,368 large (140 x 78 mm) and 5,016 small (120 x 93 mm) Queen Victoria 2½ annas envelopes. The invoice date for these envelopes is the same as for the Queen Victoria stamps that are recorded as being received on 19 May 1896 and it is likely the postal stationery was included in the same shipment.

Minns records the earliest usage of the overprinted ‘new’ Indian 2½ annas envelopes (EK1) as October 1896, well after the Queen Victoria envelopes were available. This raises questions: are there earlier usages, and if not why were these envelopes released?

Of the 5,208 envelopes available for overprinting 4,800 were not available until a transfer from India in April 1896. This is a most elusive issue in used condition. I have only 1 used example of a “British East Africa” overprint (T2), dated October 1896, as the one recorded by Minns. It is possible these were not required and primarily done to use up inventory and fulfill demand from the philatelic market?

I have three used examples of the ‘new’ 2½ annas envelope with a “Zanzibar” overprint, all are very late usages; 1898, 1901 and 1902, well after regular issues were available. This supports my theory that these envelopes were overprinted to use up inventory for the philatelic market.



T2 on EK1 (4), canceled Mombasa 26 October 1896



T3 on EK1 (4),

Minns and Archard Lists

John Minns and Victoria Archard both record an 'old' 2½ annas envelope (EK2) with a 11½ mm high blue overprint without stop (Minns E3b). They also record a 'new' 2½ annas envelope (EL1) with a 10 mm high blue overprint with stop (Minns E4a).

Minns wrote me that he does not have images of either and that his notes do not record in whose collection they were seen. Since he has recorded the date used, he is quite certain the examples were genuine. These notes are from prior to 1980 and the examples may have been in collections that have since been broken up. Archard copied the listing from Minns and has not seen any examples.

Since I do not have conclusive proof of their existence I have not included either of them in my list.

However, they may very well exist. The printers at the *Zanzibar Gazette*, who applied these overprints, made a number of errors in overprinting stamps. Some of these errors were quickly found and corrected but the error stamps were shipped as normal. This could be the case here and only one, or a few, examples were created. A missing stop can also have several alternate explanations including a temporary obstruction of the type rather than a missing font.

Concordance Table

Indian stationery	Krieger OP type	Simplified	H&G	Minns	Ascher	Archard	Krieger
EL2 (2a6p on 4a6p)	T1 (12 mm black w/o stop)	S1	B3	E3	3I	3	3
	T1a (British error)	S1a		E3a	3a	3a	3a
	T2 (11½ mm blue w stop)	S2	B3a	E3b (no stop)		3b	
	T4 (10 mm blue w stop)	S3		E3c	3II	3c	3b
EK1 (2a6p)	T2 (11½ mm blue w stop)	S2	B4	E4		4	4
	T3 (10 mm blue w/o stop)	S3		E4a	4II	4a	4a
	T4 (10 mm blue w stop)	S3		E4a (with stop)		4a	

References:

British Indian Postal Stationery by Derek Lang, published by the Stuart Rossiter Trust Fund, 1998

Zanzibar 1895-1904 by Thos. Wm. Hall, published by the East Africa Study Circle, 2002

British East Africa; The Stamps, Postal Stationery and Cancellations, by John Minns; edited and published by George T. Krieger, 2006.

Postal Stationery of East Africa by V.S.K. Archard pub. *Bulletin of the East Africa Study Circle* Vol. 6 No 42 pg 748