

# **Allied Occupation of German East Africa, 1914-1920— Synopsis**

## ***ROPEX 2019***

### **Introduction**

The philatelic history of the East African campaign during the First World War is a highly collectible but complex topic. It involves military forces from many nations, prisoners of war, internees, local volunteers and native carriers. After the military conquest of German East Africa (G.E.A), there was the transition from military control, to the partition of German East Africa among the conquerors, and finally civilian control. This exhibit presents a summary of this campaign from the Allied perspective focusing on the occupation of German East Africa.

### **Philatelic Importance**

The campaign to conquer German East Africa was the longest and most multi-national of any campaign in the German colonies.

When the First World War began, three of the German African colonies were rapidly conquered by Allied forces. However, a formidable German military force existed in German East Africa and expectations of a rapid defeat of German East Africa were dashed and the war there continued until late 1918.

Important items from the Danson, Pennycuick, Drysdall and A.J. Brown collections are present in addition to many other key pieces.

### **Treatment**

The exhibit is organized first by forces. Within this there is an order of forerunners (covers mailed prior to establishment of post offices), base office, and then field post offices. The final frame illustrates the transition from pure military control of German East Africa to the beginning of civilian administration.

Note that while several of the larger forces had their own postal system, smaller ones did not. Comingling of mail between the force's postal systems is also shown.

As the forces occupied G.E.A., German soldiers became prisoners of war, and German civilians were interned.

Finally, the occupied areas gradually reverted to civilian control.

### **Frame 1 – Nyasaland Field Force (N.F.F.)**

Begins with typewritten Northey provisionals (**showing two of the four recorded examples, both ex-Danson**), then illustrates Field Post Office markings, including

an example of the Field Force 2 cancel on a cover from Mtangula, Portuguese East Africa (**fewer than 10 recorded covers**) and “Mechanical Transport” unit cachets (**fewer than four recorded examples of each**).

### **Frame 2 – Indian Expeditionary Force (I.E.F.)**

Forerunners include a cover mailed at the civil post office at Nairobi during the one week between the landing of the I.E.F. and the establishment of the Base Post Office and a cover mailed through the civil post office at Zanzibar from a member of the I.E.F. that had just landed after the first battle of the war in East Africa. Subsequent pages show the development of the Base and Field Post Offices.

### **Frame 3 – Belgian Forces**

Forerunners include mail from Belgian forces in the Congo before their foray into G.E.A. This is followed by mail from Belgian Base Offices and Field Post Offices. **A key item is an example of the straight line F.P.O. #11 Dar es Salaam mark used at the exchange point between IEF mail and Belgian Forces mail (fewer than 6 recorded examples).**

### **Frame 4 – Smaller Contingents**

Smaller contingents of forces included South Africa and British soldiers. Shown are examples of **mail from a Canadian volunteer, the Gold Coast Regiment (only recorded cover), the British West Indies Regiment and from the native carrier corps** (used to transport supplies).

### **Frame 5 – POW/Internee**

As the Allied forces occupied G.E.A. captured German soldiers became prisoners of war and civilians were interned. Examples from internee camps in Tanga, Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and others are shown. A key item is **a cover from an internee in German Southwest Africa to an internee in G.E.A. with triple censorship.** POW mail is highlighted by **an inward cover to a POW in Nyasaland and a cover from the POW camp at Tabora, G.E.A. (ex-Pennycuick).**

### **Frame 6 – Civilian Control**

Soon after occupation, control passed from military to civilian administration. The north-western portion of G.E.A. remained under Belgian authority, eventually becoming the nations of Ruanda and Urundi. The bulk of G.E.A. was under British control and later became Tanganyika.

## **Philatelic and Related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research**

This exhibit is based on over a thirty-year study of the war in the East African theater of World War I. The exhibitor maintains an extensive personal library of historical and

philatelic works covering this area and has reported many new discoveries, culminating in a significant summary research article (reference [1]).

[1] “The Allied Occupation of German East Africa, 1914-1920”. Regis Hoffman. *German Postal Specialist*. March 2015, April 2015.

[2] *World War I in East Africa : The Indian Expeditionary Force*. Regis Hoffman. self published, 1994.

[3] “The War in East Africa (1914-18)”. K. Pennycuick, Reprinted from the *London Philatelist*, December 1967 and January to May 1968, 1968.