

What Can Philatelic Censuses Tell Us About Postal Operations in Wartime?

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Abstract

In this paper, we will discuss how the operations of two different postal systems in Colonial Africa during WWI are revealed by censuses of particular postal history items. Philatelists have long maintained censuses of valuable items, where the number of items known is relatively small (which permits the census to be maintained). Censuses of the “Inverted Jenny” [1] and the Mauritius Post Office stamps [4] are well known. These censuses permit provenance to be established for the item (*ex-Burrus*, etc.), allow the user to compare newly discovered copies to established copies, and to identify changes (repairs, removal from cover, separation of blocks) to known copies.

The author maintains censuses of used copies of the German East Africa 1 Rupie stamp on watermarked paper [2], and of Kionga stamps used on cover [3]. There are about 45 genuinely used copies of the GEA 1 Rupie watermarked stamp (and several fakes) and about thirty covers with genuine usages of the Kionga stamps (and again, several fakes). This paper will discuss the information about communication in GEA in June - August 1916, as revealed by the GEA 1 Rupie watermarked stamp census, and about international postal routes from Kionga, as revealed by the Kionga cover census.

World War I in German East Africa

The Germans began printing all stamps on paper which was watermarked lozenges in 1905, including stamps for the colonies. In late 1905, GEA changed currency, from Pesa/Rupie to Heller/Rupie. All low value stamps were reissued in the new currency (and therefore on the new watermarked paper). The Rupie value stamps, used primarily for internal post office operation (on parcel cards, money orders, etc.) did not need replenishment.

By early 1915, GEA officials requested replenishment of the 1 Rupie stamp, along with other war supplies – ammunition, artillery, medals, ‘15’ and ‘16’ year dates for cancellers, etc. The Germans prepared a blockade breaker, the captured *Dacre Hill*, outfitted as the “Danish” vessel *Nordamerika*. The *Nordamerika* left Wilhelmshaven on 9 Jan. 1916 en route to GEA, with the war supplies and its own pontoon wharf. It successfully avoided the Allied warships in the Atlantic, rounded the Cape, and avoided the Allied blockade off the GEA coast. The *Nordamerika* entered Sudi Bay, just south of Lindi, on 16 Mar. 1916 (see Figure 1). Sudi Bay was the most southerly harbor in GEA for ocean-going vessels.

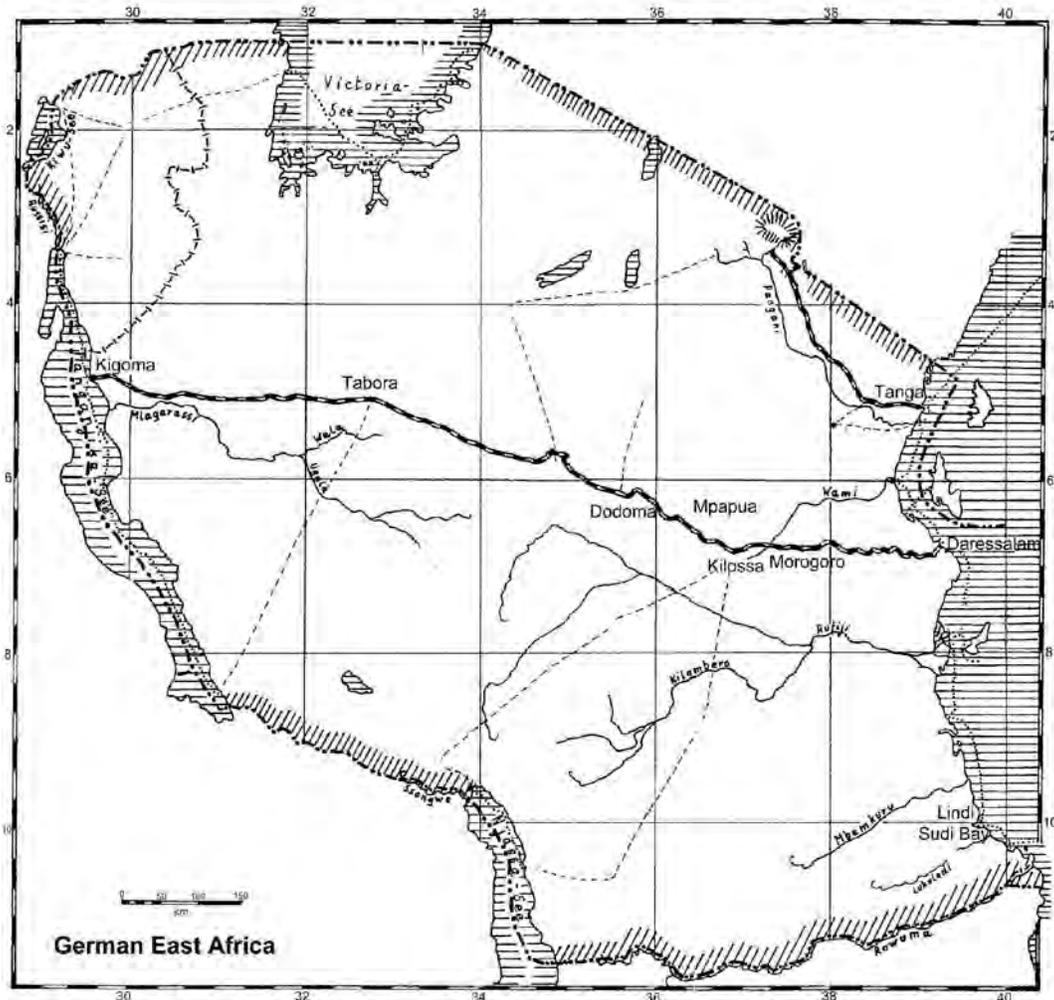


Figure 1: German East Africa in 1914

Capt. Conrad Sørensen rechristened the ship *Marie* (his wife's name) in celebration of the successful voyage. By 27 Mar. 1916, the ship was unloaded and the cargo (made up in 66 lb. parcels in Berlin) was on its way via porters. The British discovered the vessel about this time, and began shelling her. The *Marie* escaped on 22 April, and was interned in Batavia harbor in Indonesia on 13 May. Sørensen and three crew members escaped. They were captured when attempting to board a US ship in a Japanese harbor. They were interned in the US, and repatriated after the war.

The first known usages of the 1 Rupie watermarked stamp are in June 1916 in Dodoma and Mpapua, both towns along the Mittellandbahn (central railroad) – see Figure 1. The Allies captured Dodoma on 29 July and Mpapua on 12 Aug. 1916. Table 1 shows the towns from which genuinely used 1 Rupie watermarked stamps have been found, with the date they were captured by Allied forces, the number of stamps known, and the period of usage of the stamp.

Table 1: GEA Towns, Capture Date, Number of GEA 1 Rupie Watermarked Stamps, and Period of Usage.

Town	Date of Allied Capture	Number of 1 Rupie Watermarked Stamps	Period of Usage
Dodoma	29 July 1916	11	14-30 June 1916
Mpapua	12 August 1916	1	16 June 1916
Kilossa	22 August 1916	3	4-25 July 1916
Morogoro	26 August 1916	8	29 June – 10 July 1916
Daressalam	4 Sept. 1916	8	26 June – 20 August 1916
Tabora	19 Sept. 1916	2	30 August – 1 Sept. 1916
Mittellandbahn	19 Sept. 1916	9	19 June – 27 July 1916
Lindi	17 October 1916	2	26 June – 7 July 1916

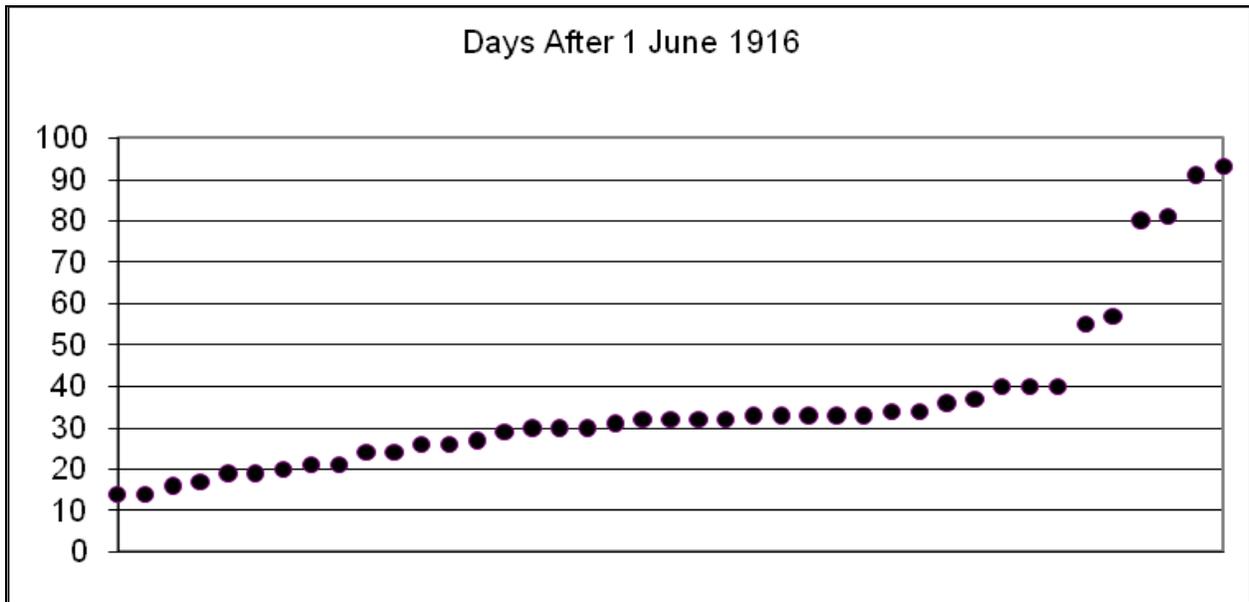


Figure 2: Cancel Usage on 1 Rupie Watermarked Stamps

World War I in Kionga

Kionga was a small triangle of land between German East Africa and Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa), south of the Rovuma River and north of the Minengani River; see Fig. 3. Various diplomatic agreements between the French, British, Germans, and Portuguese in June and December 1886 disagreed on the possession of this area. The Germans acknowledged that the area had been relinquished to “Portuguese influence,” but claimed continued “special interest” in the area. The Portuguese occupied the area in 1887. Five years later, the Germans seized the area back from Portugal.

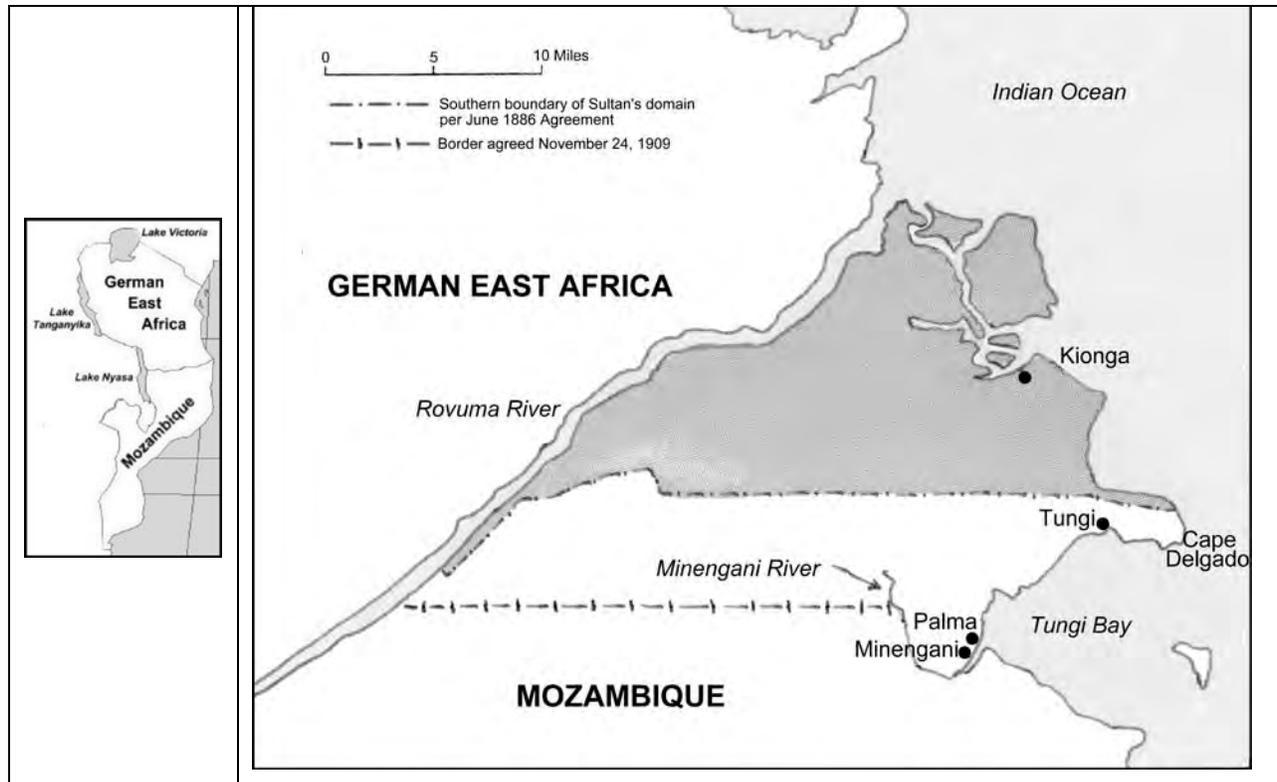


Figure 3: The Kionga Triangle

After many more years of “discussions”, the British pressured Germany and Portugal to divide the area, with the northern half to Germany and the southern to Portugal. This was the position when WWI began in August 1914. Portugal was neutral until March 1916 (and in fact permitted mail from GEA through Mozambique to Portugal and then to Germany for some months). Portugal entered the war on 9 March 1916, and occupied the Kionga triangle on 10 April. Seven weeks later, on 29 May, they issued a set of four stamps overprinted ‘KIONGA’ for use in their new territory.



Figure 4: 5C. Kionga stamp

The underlying stamps depict King Carlos, and are from the 1898 issue of Lourenço Marques (a province of Portuguese East Africa). King Carlos was assassinated in 1908, and the Portuguese

monarchy overthrown in 1910. These Lourenço Marques stamps were locally overprinted 'REPUBLICA,' and issued in 1916. These obsolete stamps were further overprinted 'KIONGA' and issued on 29 May 1916.

In 1913, the currency changed from 1,000 Reis = 1 Milreis, to 100 Centavos = 1 Escudo. Kionga stamps are also surcharged with new values in Centavos:

- ½C. – printed matter rate
- 1C. – domestic postal card rate
- 2½C – domestic letter rate
- 5C. – foreign letter rate.

The order of the two overprints and the surcharges is not clear. We presume 'REPUBLICA' first, new value surcharges second, and 'KIONGA' last, but we have no direct confirmation of this.

There was great interest in "War Stamps" in WWI – stamps issued by the combatants for use in occupied territories. The Kionga stamps were very popular, and are quite available even today, both mint and used. There are 50 covers and cards known from Kionga in WWI. Of these, at least 30 went through the mails (they bear appropriate censor marks, transit cancels, and/or receiving cancels).

Table 2: Destinations of Kionga Covers

Brazil	2	Nyassa	3	Switzerland	7
Denmark	1	Portugal	6	United Kingdom	7
France	1	South West Africa	2	United States	1

The destinations of these covers are shown in Table 2. Of the two covers to Brazil, both went to Rio de Janeiro via Lisbon. One was censored in Mozambique, and the other in Lisbon. Finally, one bears a Rio receiving cancel, the other does not. The one cover to Denmark (Copenhagen) went via Palma (a border town in northeast PEA) and Lisbon, and was censored in Dieppe, France.

The one cover to France (Paris) went via Biera (a town on the PEA coast), was censored both in Biera and Paris, and bears a Paris receiving cancel. The three covers to Nyassa are all to Mocimboa da Praia. Two are via Palma, and one is reported as via Tipo, but no censoring or receiving cancels are reported. There are six covers to Portugal (five to Lisbon, one to Coimbra). Three are fieldpost cards, with two censored in Lisbon (Aug. 1918) and one not censored (Sept. 1918). The other three are commercial covers, one censored in Lourenço Marques, one probably in Lisbon, and one at an unknown location. Two of these bear Lisbon receiving cancels.

There are two covers to South West Africa in the census, both to Keetmanshoop. The Jan. 1917 cover was censored in Lourenço Marques; the June 1918 cover was censored in Beira. Both were also censored in Capetown. The Jan. 1917 cover travelled via Lourenço Marques; the June 1918 cover travelled via Palma, Moçambique, and Beira. Finally, both covers bear Keetmanshoop receiving cancels.

There are seven covers in the census to Switzerland, all to philatelic addressees (but all of which actually travelled through the mails). Four covers went to Moudon, and three to Basel. Two of the Moudon covers were sent in April 1917 – these were both censored in Lourenço Marques, and one was also censored in Capetown. Two other covers to Moudon were sent in October 1917 – these were both censored in Lyon, France. All four covers to Moudon bear Moudon

receiving cancels. One cover to Basel in January 1918 was censored by the French in London, with Palma, Moçambique, and London transit cancels. Another cover to Basel, sent on 12 Feb. 1918, was censored in Capetown, with a Lourenço Marques transit cancel. Another cover to Basel, sent only two days later on 14 Feb. 1918, was also censored in Capetown, but with Palma and London transit cancels. All three covers to Basel bear Basel receiving cancels.

There are seven covers recorded to the United Kingdom (five to London, one to Nottingham, and one to Oxford). A June 1916 cover to London was censored in Lourenço Marques, and bears a London receiving cancel. Two covers to London in October and November 1916 were censored in Moçambique, with Lisbon transit and London receiving cancels. A February 1917 cover to Nottingham was censored in Lourenço Marques and Moçambique (only the front has survived). A February 1917 cover to London was censored in Lisbon (?) and London, and bears a London receiving cancel. A June 1917 cover to Oxford was censored in Beira, and has Beira and Liverpool transit cancels. Finally, an August 1917 cover to London was censored in Lourenço Marques.

There is one cover recorded to the United States (New York). It was sent April 1917, was censored in Lourenço Marques, bears a New York receiving cancel, and no other censor or transit cancels.

Conclusions

We see that usage began in two towns in the middle of the Mittellandbahn, thence to Morogoro, Daressalam (both farther east on the Mittellandbahn) and Lindi in the far south, then Kilossa, then Tabora on the Mittellandbahn. Almost all the usages were in towns along the Mittellandbahn. Almost all the usages occurred in less than a month (from 14 June to July 10) – see Figure 2. Given the great importance of the railroad to efficient communications, we suggest that this probably models most of the mid-1916 communication within GEA. Covers are known which were carried by runners in the interior of GEA, and others which were carried on dhows along the coast, but we suggest most communication was along the Mittellandbahn as long as possible.

Also the routing and censorship was generally predictable – e.g., Kionga to Brazil through Portugal – that makes sense. The local covers (to Nyassa, also in PEA) were not censored. Finally, there are detail differences (in censoring, routes, transit and receiving cancels) even for covers sent on the same day, and certainly for those sent at different times.

References:

- [1] George Amick, *Jenny!*, Amos Press, Sidney (1986).
- [2] John Kevin Doyle and Jürgen Fricke, “The Queen of German Colonial Philately”, *The Congress Book 2001*, Chicago (2001): 53-72.
- [3] John Kevin Doyle, Alfred F. Kugel, and Robert E. Lamb, “The Portuguese in Kionga”, *The Congress Book*, Columbus (2003): 149-176.
- [4] Helen Morgan, *Blue Mauritius*, Atlantic Books, London (2006).