

Britains figures - Sudanese Infantry

Introduction

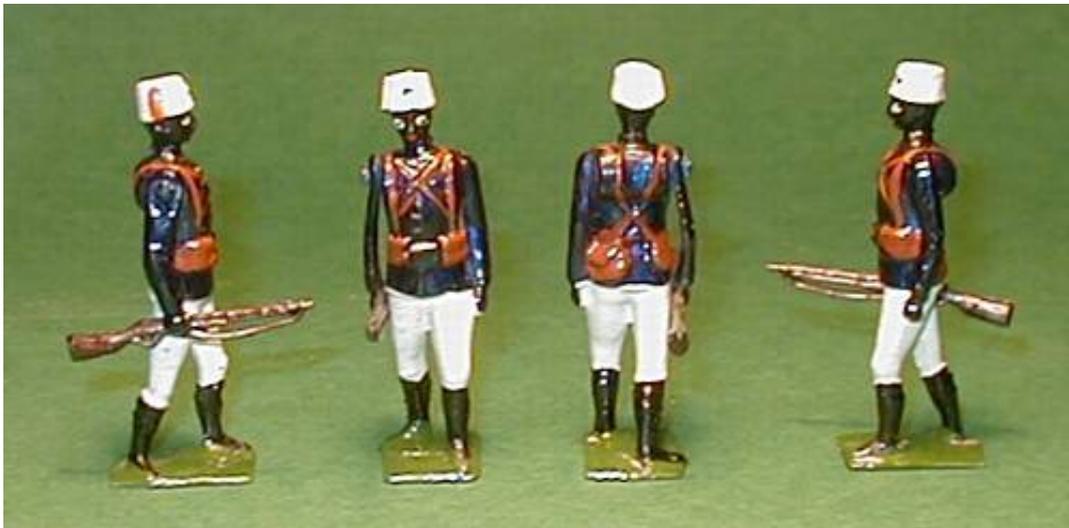
In 1901 Britains introduced 3 sets of figures portraying the Anglo-Egyptian Army, very much in focus at the time due to the recent Campaign in the Sudan; the first Anglo-Egyptian Army set, introduced in 1896, was Set 48: Egyptian Camel Corps.

The three new sets were:

- Set 115: Egyptian Cavalry
- Set 116: Sudanese Infantry
- Set 117: Egyptian Infantry.

Britains Sudanese figures

The set consisted of 8 figures, marching with rifles at the trail. It was produced up to 1941, and 1946-47.

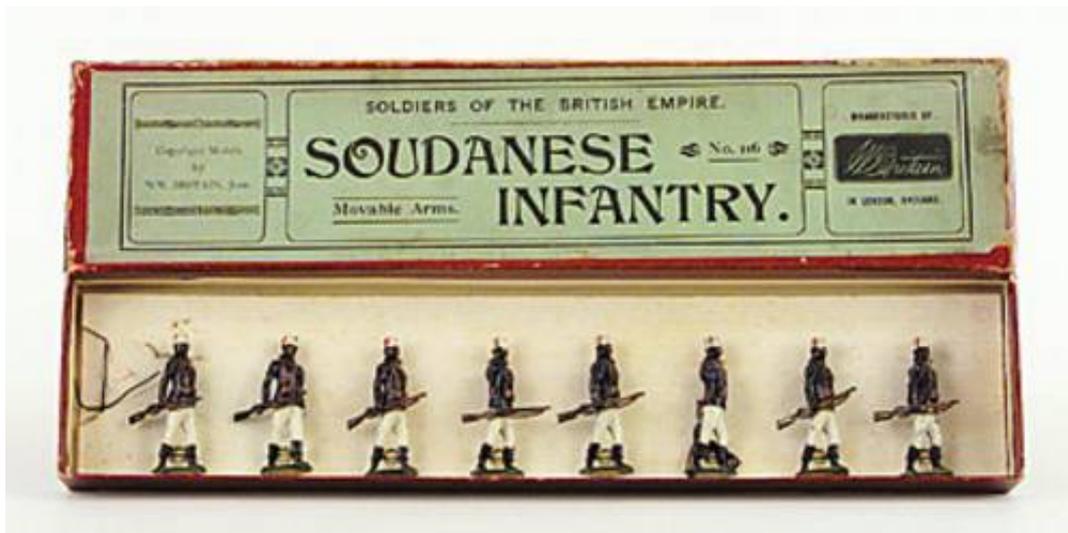


Britains Set 116: Sudanese Infantry, post-war version.

At first the figures had oval bases, changed to square bases c.1908, similar to other early Britains infantry figures.

The painting stayed the same throughout:

- White fez with red flash (cast as a tassel).
- Dark blue jerseys and white trousers.
- Puttees and boots were black.
- The Slade-Wallace type equipment was red-brown.



Britains Set 116: Sudanese Infantry, 1901-version.

This photo is from Vectis Auctions.

The lid displays the French inspired spelling, used by Britains.

Although the figures may not be the most spectacular of toy soldiers, they are a fine representation of their real life counterparts in the Sudanese battalions of the Anglo-Egyptian Army.

See also similar figures in a "native" setting in my article Britains figures - King's African Rifles.

Sudanese infantry battalions in the Anglo-Egyptian Army, c.1900

Sudanese battalions	Raised	Unit flash
IX th Battalion	1884	Green
X th Battalion	1886	Black
XI th Battalion	1888	Scarlet
XII th Battalion	1888	Yellow
XIII th Battalion	1886	Blue
XIV th Battalion	1890 1)	White

The Anglo-Egyptian Army consisted six Sudanese infantry battalions, numbered from 9 to 14.

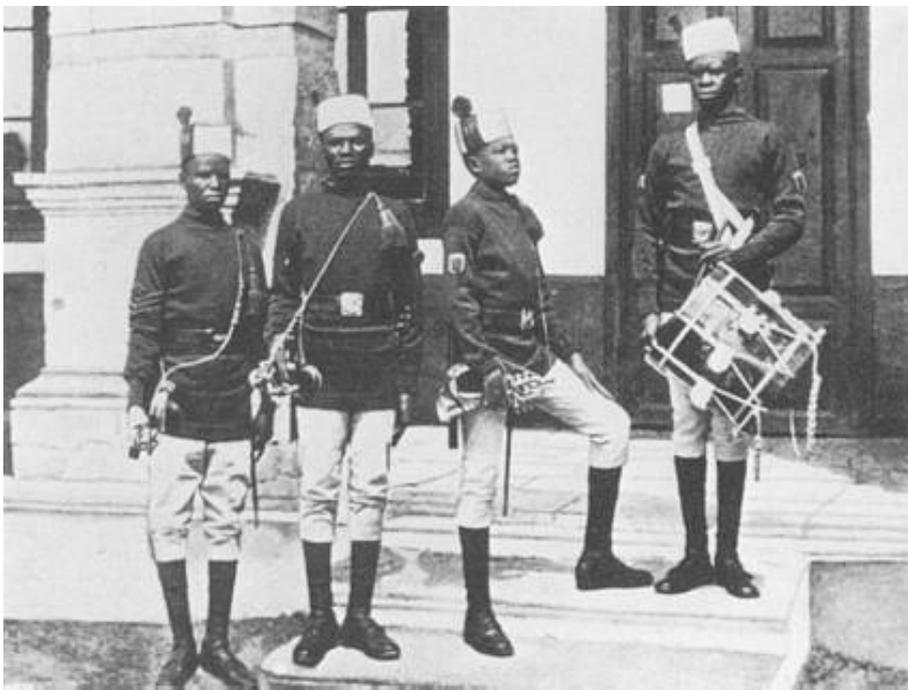
Egyptian battalion numbers was conventionally written in (European) Arabic numerals, and the Sudanese in Roman numerals.

Both type of battalions however, used Hindu-Arabic numerals on their Colours as well as on the unit flashes on their fezzes. An example of the Hindu-Arabic numerals is found in Source 1.

The Sudanese battalions were considered the elite of the Anglo-Egyptian Army, and often placed first in the firing line, with the Egyptians in support.

The Sudanese battalions were recruited from tribes in the Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. The Sudanese soldiers enlisted for life, whereas the Egyptians (from 1888) served six years in the army, five in the police, and four in the reserves. The Sudanese consequently had a higher numbers of veterans in their ranks.

White officers were seconded from the British Army, and native officers were either Egyptians or Sudanese. Almost all Egyptian officers were trained at the military academy in Cairo; all Sudanese officers came from the ranks.



Buglers and drummer from a Sudanese battalion, c.1898.
From Source 3.

Egyptian battalions wore their flashes on the front of the fez, and the Sudanese on the right side of the fez. Further information can be found in Source 1 and the accompanying plates.

The text gives the unit as the XIIth Battalion. Close-up scrutiny of the fezzes worn by the buglers Nos. 1 and 3 shows the battalion flash and Hindu-Arabic numerals.

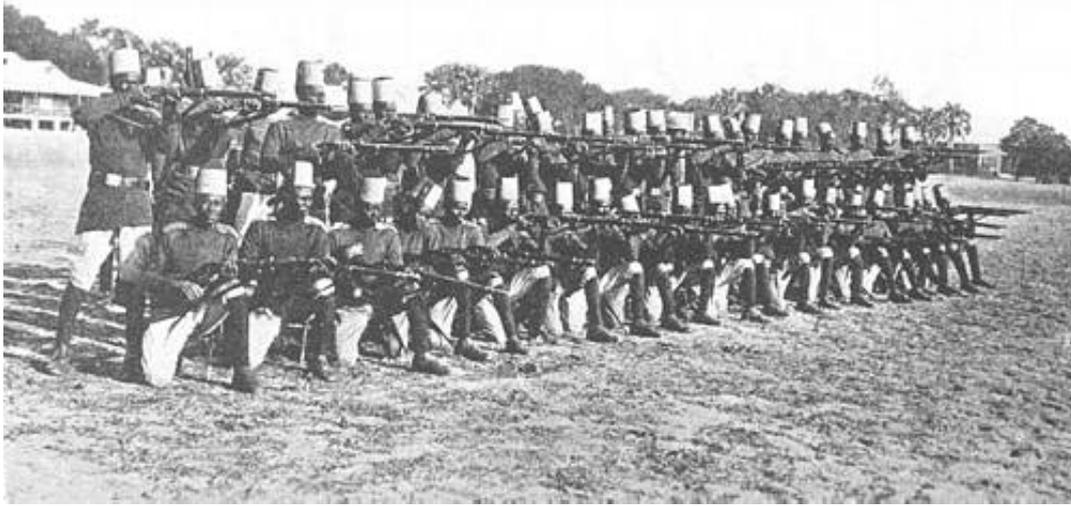
The colour of the flash however, does not match the colours given in the above table, and the numerals on Bugler No. 3 look more like ١١ (11) than ١٢ (12).



*Battalion flash
of XIth Sudanese
Battalion.*

Comparing the red flash on the Britains figure with the above table, the red flash (however painted without numerals) must indicate that the figures portray the XIth Sudanese Battalion.

The flash is my own design, based on the colour plate in Source 1 and with inspiration in the above photo. I have given the numerals in white, but they may appeared golden (= made of brass).



Sudanese soldiers at rifle drill.

From Source 2.

No information on the battalion in question or the date of the photo is given.

Close-up scrutiny reveals a single Hindu-Arabic numeral, which must indicate that the soldiers are from the IXth Battalion, thus dating the photo before 30 June 1930 when this battalion was disbanded.

Uniforms and equipment

Although khaki uniforms or brown woollen jerseys were worn as field service uniforms by the Egyptian battalions, the Sudanese battalions preferred the dark blue jerseys. Khaki coloured trousers were probably worn for field service, thus preserving the white trousers for parades etc. The jerseys had shoulder pads (similar to modern army sweaters), meant for protection of the jersey from wear from rifles and the leather equipment.

British officers wore tropical helmets, and native officers wore fezzes. Officers never wore jerseys, but probably a khaki uniform for British officers, and a dark blue uniform for native officers. Non-Commissioned Officers wore red chevrons on the right arm.



*The Egyptian Army of 1882:
Officer, in full dress; private in summer uniform.
Drawing by R.J. Marrison.
From Wolseley's Campaign in Egypt 1882, Part 5,
by D.S.V. Fosten, Military Modelling, May 1982.*

Although the uniforms shown before the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian Army in 1883, the uniform tradition continued in the army units.

The dark blue officer's uniform, with a single row of eight yellow metal buttons, is described as being of French style. The dark blue tunic with its rather full voluminous skirts was carried for normal service, and the golden epaulettes were added to the golden shoulder strap, when full dress was needed.

The private wear an all-white cotton summer uniform, with a single row of six brass buttons at the front. The trousers were loose and worn with white canvas gaiters and black shoes. All equipment was of black leather. The rifles used were of the Remington type.

The dark blue officers' uniform may be regarded as an example of the uniforms worn by native officers in the Sudanese battalions.



*Sudanese Infantry
in Zouave-style dress.*

From Source 1.

The XIth Sudanese Battalion was a former Gendarmerie battalion, incorporated into the army on 1 May 1888. The gendarmes had served in on the Egyptian-Sudanese border frontier and in Suakin in 1886 and 1887.

Uniform: Red fez with white turban; light blue uniform with yellow trim; red sash and brown belt; black boots and white gaiters.

As a Gendarmerie battalion, they wore a Zouave-style uniform of dark blue cloth, red cummerbund, white spats and yellow piping.

The retained this uniform for some time after they were incorporated into the regular army, though one photo of the battalion at Suakin in 1891 shows them in the regular khaki drill.

This same zouave uniform was issued to all Sudanese battalions as a winter uniform in 1890, though the other battalions wore light blue piping. At this time the uniform was dark blue cloth, though a later photograph (1898) shows a uniform that is either medium or light blue.



A Sergeant of the IXth Sudanese Battalion.
From Source 2, with the additional information that the Sergeant is 6 feet 10 inches high.

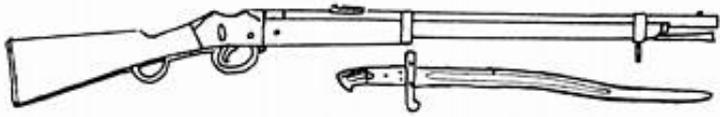


Sudanese infantryman, in campaign (blue) kit, c.1900.
From Source 1.

Around his fez, the infantryman wears a protective cover (called *imma*), made of straw, around his fez,

with an attached neck cloth.

Egyptian and Sudanese infantry battalions as well as the Camel Corps were armed with single-shot Martini-Henry rifles and triangular socket bayonet, weapons they retained into the 20th Century.



Martini-Henry rifle, 1871.

From Source 8.

British soldiers issued with Martini-Henry rifles, carried 70 rounds of ammunition, and the Anglo-Egyptian Army probably likewise. (Source 9)

Organization (From Source 1)

In 1890 the Sudanese battalions were expanded from four companies of 170 men each to six companies of 150 men each.

By 1891 the Anglo-Egyptian Army consisted of fourteen battalions of infantry (the last six were Sudanese), five squadrons of cavalry (at 100 men each), six batteries of artillery (113 men each, except one horse battery which had 137 men), and six companies of Camel Corps (at 152 men each), totalling 12,633 men. The cavalry were recruited exclusively from the Egyptian peasantry (fellahin) primarily from the Fayoum Oasis. The Camel Corps had originally been all Egyptian, but now included two companies of Sudanese. By 1898 the Egyptian infantry battalions also had six companies each

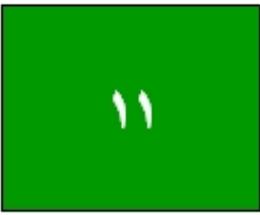
In 1896, the army had been increased by four squadrons of cavalry and the 15th and 16th Egyptian battalions had been raised from the reserves. In 1897 the Camel Corps was increased to eight companies (four Egyptian and four Sudanese), the cavalry to ten squadrons, and two more reserve battalions (the 17th and 18th Egyptians) were raised. In 1898 another battalion of infantry was included when the askaris of the Italian garrison at Kassala were re-designated "Kassala Irregulars" after the garrison was handed over to Egypt. The army now totalled 18,000 men.

The field artillery used 6.5 cm Krupp guns. These were carried on four mules (or camels) [2](#), but also had a shaft that could be attached to the gun trail for draught. In 1897 they began to be replaced by Maxim-Nordenfolt 75 mm quick-firers. This was a compact gun that also could be carried on four mules.

The Horse Battery was armed with antiquated 7.75 cm Krupp guns (sometimes referred to as a 7-pdr), which lacked brakes, had a slow rate of fire, and often had poor quality shells. Each gun was drawn by a team of eight Syrian horses, and had ammunition wagons accompanying them into battle.

Multi-barrelled Gardner and Nordenfolt machine guns were used through 1896. The first Maxim guns manned by Egyptians appeared in 1897; until 1898 all Egyptian machine guns were Maxims, including the famous "galloping maxim" of the cavalry, which was drawn by teams of six horses. Artillery batteries had six guns each, the machine gun batteries had only two.

Colours



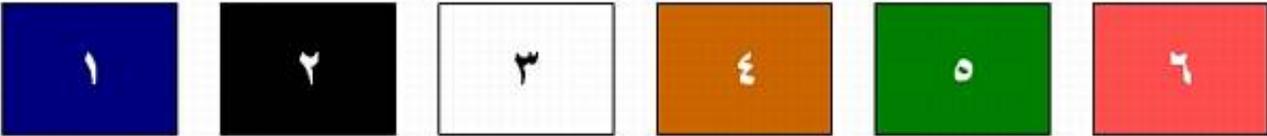
*Colour of the XIth
Sudanese Battalion.*

Own design, based
on the above information.

According to Source 1, each Anglo-Egyptian infantry battalion was issued with a plain green silk flag, approximately 100 x 80 centimetres, with white Hindu-Arabic numerals of the battalion in the centre. These Colours were carried into battle.

Each company carried a small rectangular flag of coloured cloth, with the company number, in white, in the centre.

The company colours were as follows: 1st: blue; 2nd: black; 3rd: white; 4th: amber; 5th: green; 6th: vermillion.



Anglo-Egyptian Army Company flags, Companies Nos. 1-6.
Own design, based on the above information.

The company flags were attached to spear shafts, and carried in front of each company on the march.

A gift from the Cameron Highlanders



Colour of the IXth Sudanese Battalion, c.1930.

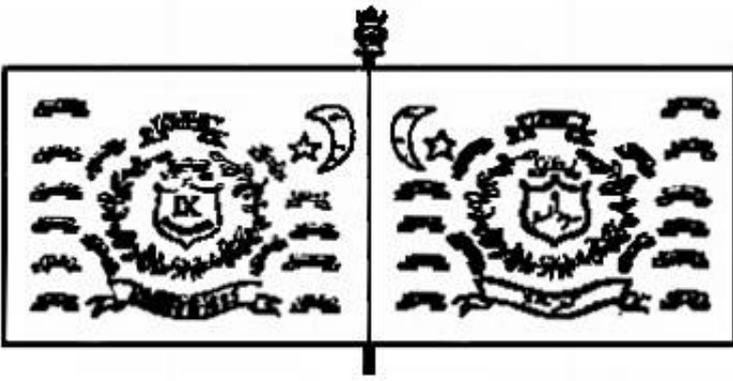
The photo is taken from Source 3, which gives the following information on the Colour:

This battalion was raised in May 1884, and disbanded on 30 June 1930. During the Nile Campaign of 1884-5 the 1st Bn. The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders and the IXth Sudanese served together at the defence of Kosha in 1885 and a close friendship grew up between the two regiments.

As a consequence of this The Camerons presented the IXth Sudanese with the Colour shown in the photograph to the left, which they carried during the whole of their existence, and on disbandment they returned it to the Cameron Highlanders.

The Battle Honours on the Colour are:

Nile, 1884-85; Kosha; Ginnis; Sarras; Gemmeiza; Toski; Argin; Firket; Hafir; Sudan, 1897; Abu Hamed; The Atbara; Kartoum; Gedid; Sudan, 1899 and Nyam-Nyam.



*Colour of the IXth Sudanese Regiment,
drawn by John Thomson.*

The drawing is from Source 1, which adds the following to the history of the Colour:

The right part of the Colour is in Arabic (with a Hindu-Arabic numeral), and the left part is in English (with a Roman numeral).

When first presented, it had only Kosha and Ginnis as honours, the others being added later. This Colour was made of maroon (red) silk.

The fringe was red and gold, the scrolls were buff edged in gold, with black lettering; the central wreath was gold with green leaves, and the staff had a gold crown and crescent start on top.



*British Sudanese troops on the Nile, c.1917.
From FirstWorldWar.com.*

Sinai, 1917

Source 4 reveals that in 1917 Sudanese troops were dispatched to Sinai, but as for numbers of men, units and/or particulars of their service, I have been unable to trace any details.

The photo was originally published in *The Great World War*, a History edited by Frank A. Mumby (Gresham Publishing Company, five volumes 1915-1917).

Turkana, 1918

Turkanaland is a district in the northern part of Kenya, laying to the west of Lake Rudolf (now Lake

Turkana). The region is inhabited by various nomadic tribes, including the Turkana People.

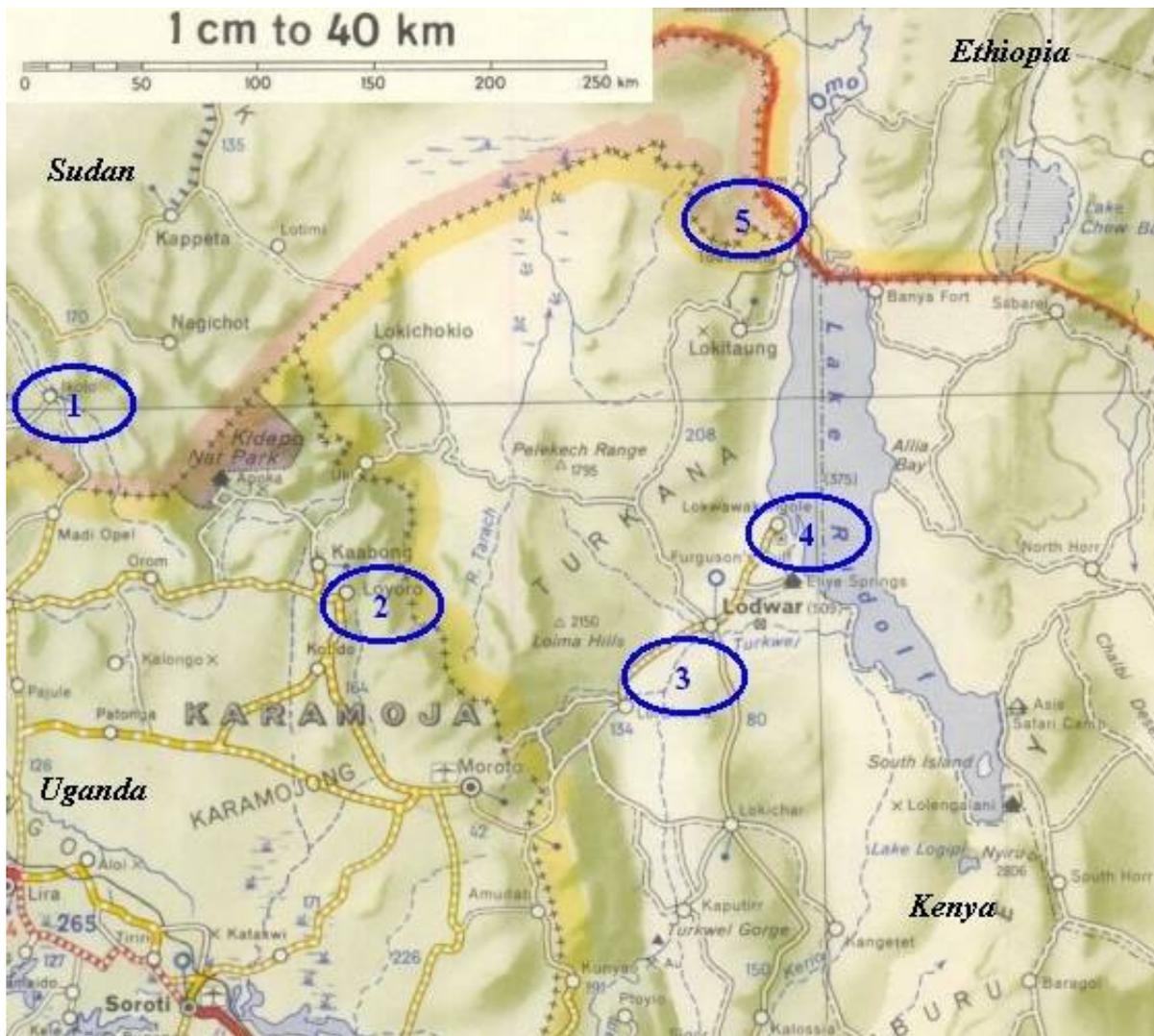
The jurisdiction is not entirely clear, since Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya at various times all claimed some sort of right to parts of the area [3](#)). Traditionally, the tribes in the area have been engaged in raids on livestock - cattle, camels, sheep and goats - belonging to any other tribe as well as fighting against various foreign traders and ivory hunters.

The article *The Turkana Patrol of 1918 Reconsidered* by Robert O. Collins (Source 4) gives a full account of the history of Turkana as well as the military involvement during the First World War.

A few military posts, manned at first by the East African Police Service Battalion and later by the 5th King's African Rifles, were situated in Turkanaland, trying to keep some sort of order. In late 1917 it was decided to send in a strong patrol, about 600 men, in order to pacify the area, disarm the various tribes and expel some armed bands of Ethiopian intruders. The Turkana Patrol consisted of Sudanese as well as East African units.

On 21 December 1917 a Sudanese force had been assembled at Ikoto (cf. Map 1) under the command of Major R. F. White, consisting of ½ Company of Mounted Infantry (Major A. H. Betterton), No. 2 and No. 5 Companies [4](#)) of the Equatorial Battalion [5](#)) (Captains Barker and Wolff respectively), a Detachment of Mongalla Police, and one Maxim Gun Section.

The Sudanese force (about 250 men) reached Murissi on 22 February where an East African contingent under the command Major H. Rayne was waiting. The British East Africa forces (about 300 men) consisted of two companies [6](#)) of the King's African Rifles, two Maxim Sections, three Lewis Guns, two mortars, and a Detachment of Uganda Police with a Maxim gun led by Mr. A. Turpin. Major White assumed the overall command, being senior to Major Rayne.



Map 1: The area of operations in Turkanaland, marked on the 1974 edition of Michelin's 1:4.000.000 map of Africa - North-East.

Before the operations in the Lorusia Mountains, Major White divided his force into two columns: One, under his personal command and consisting of the Sudanese troops, the Lewis Gun Section, and the Uganda Protectorate Police, was to sweep north around the Lorusia mountains and drive the Turkana southward into the second column under Major Rayne and the King's African Rifles which, in the meantime, were to have established themselves due west of Lake Rudolf along the Katome river.

- 1:** Ikoto - Sudanese concentration, before operations.
- 2:** Loyoro - Sudanese units arrive here on 1 January 1918.
- 3:** Believed to be the place called Murissi, where the Sudanese units joined up with the East African units on 22 February 1918.
- 4:** Forward base, at the mouth of the Kabua River.
- 5:** The Lorusia Mountains, where Sudanese units on 8 May 1918 engaged a force consisting of 200 Turkana and Ethiopian riflemen.

The Turkana Patrol was in action from 20 April to 19 June 1918. To some extent the patrol achieved its goals, however a lasting pacification was not established, and the unrest in the region continued for a number of years.

A full description of the operations is given in Source 4, but alas without any maps. A sketch map of the area is found in Source 5, but due to different spelling is almost impossible to cross-reference the locations between the two sources. The Michelin map shown above is, despite using a completely different spelling than Sources 4 and 5, is still the best map I have been able to find. My interpretation of

the actual localities may therefore be wrong, but until further information may turn up, this is my best guess.

Sudan Defence Force

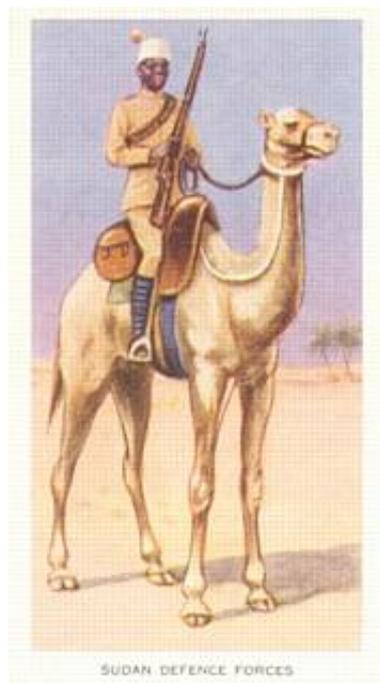


Badge of the Sudan Defence Force.

From Badges of the British
Commonwealth & British
Overseas Territories
(H.H. Booker).

Mounting Egyptian nationalism in the period after World War I culminated in Cairo on 19 November 1924 in the assassination of the British Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army (*Sirdar*) and Governor-General of Sudan, Sir Lee Stack.

One of the consequences were, that all Egyptian officials and army units were expelled from Sudan, and in January 1925 the Sudan Defence Force came into being, existing until 1 January 1956 when was Sudan granted independence.



Sudan Defence Forces.

Cigarette card No. 36
in the *Soldiers of The King*
series, published by
Godfrey Philips Ltd., 1939.

The back of card gives the following story:

The Sudan Defence Forces consist of a Cavalry Corps, Camel corps, Eastern Arab Corps, Sudanese Machine Gun Battery, Western Corps, as well as engineer troops and various departmental corps; a typical member of the Camel Corps is shown.

With the exception of the regular battalion the units are made up of irregulars who enlist for three years. The force is jointly officered by British and native officers, and consists of approximately half Arabs and half Sudanese and Equatorial Africans, the language used is Arabic. A private is known as a "Nafar", a lieutenant as "Mulazin Awal", and the commandant of the force "Kaid El 'Amm".

At the 1930'ies one half of the men were Arabs, and the other half Sudanese and Equatorial Africans. The language used was Arabic. (Source 2)



*Ford Armoured Cars of the Sudanese Defence Force, in the late 1930'ies.
From Source 7.*

Photos of the Sudanese Machine Gun Batteries can be found in the article The occupation of Merga and Oweinat by the Sudan Defence Force, 1934; an unpublished Sudan Defence Force Operations Diary and photographs by F.G.B. Arkwright (Fliegel Jezerniczky Expeditions).

In conclusion



*British East Africa Police or Kenya Police.
From the Kenya Police official website.*

(At the time of writing,
the URL is not working properly.)

Having established the history and the background of the Sudanese soldiers produced by Britains, it is also possible to use the figures to represent one of the police forces in East African during the First World War - British East Africa Police or Uganda Police.

The policemen of the Kenya Police wear a blue jersey with shoulder pads, similar to the Sudanese, but white shorts in stead of trousers. The head shown in this photo, probably taken in the 1930'ies, is a sort of kepi; during the First World War, fezzes were worn.

Sudanese soldiers in the King's African Rifles

A number of Sudanese soldiers served in the King's African Rifles and their predecessors, having recruited Sudanese Askaris from the very early days, see e.g. *The King's African Rifles*. Here it is mentioned that 3rd King's African Rifles originally included a high proportion of Sudanese and that the 4th King's African Rifles consisted quite a number Askaris of Sudanese origin in 1914.

Further information on the Sudanese askaris in the King's African Rifles can be found in Appendix IV of *History of the Great War, Military Operations East Africa, Volume I, August 1914 - September 1916* by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Hordern, HSMO, London 1941

Sudanese soldiers in German service

Further, it must be added that Sudanese soldiers played a part in the early German East African troops as well.



German East African troops, 1889-1891, as drawn by Richard Knötel.

From *Geschichte der Kaiserlichen Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika (Reichskolonialamt)*
by Major Ernst Nigmann, Mittler-Verlag, Berlin 1911.

The Wissmann troops served with distinction during the Arab Revolt (*Araberaufstand*) in 1889-91.

Lieutenant Hermann von Wissmann recruited among others 650 Sudanese from Egypt and 350 Zulus from Mozambique to quell the revolt.

Figure 4 (from the left) is a Sudanese Askari in field service dress of the so-called Wissmann troops (*Wissmann-Truppen*), in service before the establishment of regular Imperial troops, the *Schutztruppen*, on 22 March 1891.

For further reference to these early colonial struggles in what became German East Africa, refer to The German Colonial Encyclopaedia of 1920 and the headwords Wissmann and Araberaufstandes (Das Deutsche Koloniallexikon, 1920) (Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main).

Sources

1. The Egyptian Army 1880-1900 by Doug Johnson. (Savage & Soldier Online). The article originally appeared in *Savage & Soldier*, Volume VIII No. 1. I have relied heavily on this article for information on the Anglo-Egyptian Army and especially its six Sudanese battalions.
2. *The Black Battalions* by Captain F.A.M. Webster, in *The Wonder Book of Soldiers* of Harry Golding (ed.), Ward, Lock & Co., London, c. 1940. A 1930'ies description of the Sudanese battalions, King's African Rifles West African Frontier Force etc. The same article is also found in an earlier edition of the book.
3. *Military Bands and their Uniforms* by Jack Cassin-Scott and John Fabb, Blandford Press, Poole/Dorset 1978, ISBN 0-7137-0895-6. Only the photo used here can be found in this book, although the text may not be reliable.
4. The Turkana Patrol of 1918 Reconsidered by Robert O. Collins (Department of History, University of California, Santa Barbara). An extensive study of the clashes on the borders of Sudan, Ethiopia and the British territories of Uganda and Kenya (then British East Africa).
5. *The King's African Rifles. A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890-1945* by Lieutenant-Colonel H. Moyse-Bartlett, Gale & Polden Ltd, Aldershot 1956. Reprinted by Naval & Military Press, London, ISBN 1-84342-394-4.
6. Sudan Defence Force by Dr Yunan Labib Rizk (Al-Ahram Weekly On-line). Information on the political background and nationalistic movements leading up to the assassination of Sir Lee Stark and the establishment of the Sudan Defence Force in January 1925.
7. *The Great Tank Scandal - British Armour in the Second World War, Part 1* by David Fletcher, HSMO Books, London 1989, ISBN 0-11-290460-2.
8. *British Infantry Regiments, 1660-1914* by A.H. Bowling, Almark Publications, London 1970, ISBN 1-85524-001-6.
9. *Weapons & Equipment of the Victorian Soldier* by Donald Featherstone, Blandford Press, Poole/Dorset 1978, ISBN 0-7137-0847-6.
10. *Armies of the World, Britains Ltd. Lead Soldiers 1925 - 1941* by Joe Wallis, Private publication, 1993, ISBN 0-9605950-2-3.
11. *Regiments of all Nations, Britains Ltd. Lead Soldiers 1946-66* by Joe Wallis, Private publication, 1981, ISBN 0-9605950-0-7.

Per Finsted

Noter:

- 1) The year is not mentioned in Source 1, but it is mentioned that the Anglo-Egyptian Army included six Sudanese battalions in 1890.
- 2) The artillery used both mules and camels in each battery, alternating the mounts depending on the type of terrain (mules being used for rocky or hilly country and camels for the desert).

- 3) The jurisdiction of the northern part of Turkanaland, the Ilemi Triangle, is still unsettled; cf. Ilemi Triangle (Wikipedia).
- 4) No. 2 Company was later replaced by the No. 6 Company of the Equatorial Battalion (Captain Yardley), due to an outbreak of cerebrospinal meningitis which necessitated the isolation and restricted use of these troops. When the troops later moved off into the Turkanaland, No. 2 Company remained behind to patrol the lines of communication.
- 5) So far I have been unable to trace the history of the Sudanese Equatorial Battalion as well as connections (if any) to any of the six Sudanese battalions of the Anglo-Egyptian Army.
- 6) The companies were 'A' and Mounted Infantry Company of 5th King's African Rifles. (Source 5)