



One Beat of a Butterfly's Heart: A Tanganyika Police Notebook

Ronald Callander

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In this book we are given a unique view of East Africa of the 1950s; not the stereotyped picture of wildlife safaris and leaping Masai, but the emerging independence struggle of a new African nation from the viewpoint of a white police officer, in an exceptionally detailed, thoroughly readable, firsthand account of a rare period of recent history. It tells how an Australian veteran, fresh from the Korean War, became a colonial police officer in Tanganyika Territory (later Tanzania after federation with the offshore islands of Zanzibar in 1964).

The reader is taken on a journey which tourists in Africa never see: from back alleys and police cells in the polyglot city of Dar es Salaam, to snake-infested camps on Uganda–Ruanda border patrols, and on police field force emergency operations from barracks at the foot of Kilimanjaro. There is much here to discover about a mostly benign semi-colonial period in Africa which lasted less than fifty years, passing, in one African's description, as briefly as a butterfly's heartbeat; where a few conscientious white administrators and their loyal African assistants managed vast regions of a desolate territory with remarkably selfless care and scarce resources; where things worked most of the time, but sometimes where chaos reigned. It is about the country itself, its ubiquitous animals and its people at close range, including villagers, criminals, hunters, witch doctors, and colonial officials, but most of all, the African askari policemen who were the author's close—and often only—companions.

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