



Where in the world is: Eritrea, Rhodes and Palau?

Jack Searles

This month we traverse halfway around the globe to explore the philatelic connections associated with Eritrea, Rhodes and Palau.

Let's start out in Africa, specifically northeastern Africa. The country is Eritrea. This country currently exists and is considered to have an active stamp issuing status. This country does, however, have an interesting postal history. The early history of this country/region was witness to numerous foreign invaders. These included the Axumite Kingdom, the Funji Sultans of the Sudan, the Egyptians, the Portuguese, Ethiopians and the Turks.



In the late 1880's Italy purchased the port of Assab, and with the encouragement of the British began colonizing the region. On January 1, 1890 the King of Italy formally established Eritrea as a permanent colony. Eritrea consolidated various Italian possessions in the region into one colony. In 1890, Eritrea was used as an Italian base of operations for the invasion of neighboring Ethiopia. Eritrea was Italy's first African colony. Italian immigration to this region began at the turn of the 19th century. In 1936, Eritrea was absorbed into Italian East Africa. Initially, Italian stamps were overprinted "ESTERO". On January 1, 1893, eleven definitive stamps of Italy were issued with the overprint "Colonia Eritrea". The first

pictorial stamps specifically designed for the colony would have to wait until 1910 to be issued. In 1933, airmail service and stamps were initiated. A series of 10 airmail denomination stamps were issued. Around this same period of time two parcel post stamps were issued. These stamps became the last Italian Eritrea stamps issued.

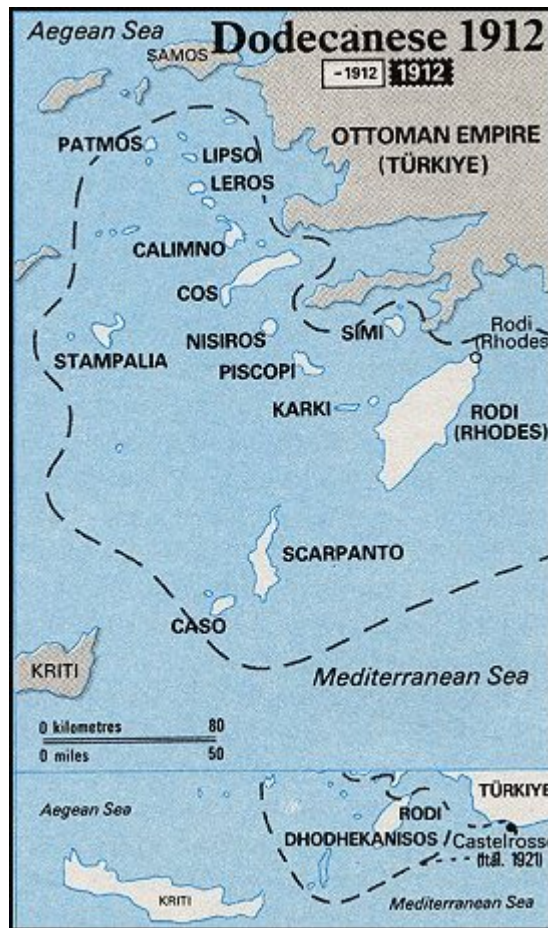


The British then occupied this area during the early months of 1941. Between 1942 and 1952 overprinted British stamps were used in Eritrea. Initially, these stamps were overprinted “M.E.F.” (Middle East Forces) and later “BMA ERITREA” (British Military Administration Eritrea) and “B.A. ERITREA” (British Administration Eritrea).

In 1950, Eritrea became an autonomous part of Ethiopia. Despite calls for independence Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1952. In 1962, Eritrea was formally annexed by Ethiopia, as a province. Eritrea never accepted Ethiopian rule, however, and after a 31 year civil war declared itself an independent republic in 1993. During the 1970’s, a few sets of stamps inscribed “POSTE ERITREA LIBERA” were issued by insurgents, but these stamps never achieved official status in most catalogues.



Rhodes currently is inactive as a stamp issuing entity. Rhodes is the largest of the Dodecanese Islands in the eastern Aegean Sea, off the coast of Turkey. The strategic location of Rhodes in the eastern Mediterranean lent itself to repeated occupations by a variety of powers including the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, the Crusaders and, after 1522, the Turks.



Dodecanese Islands

Source: <http://www.sandafayre.com/atlas/greia.htm>

Between 1845 and 1948 ten postal administrations operated on Rhodes, giving this area a rich postal history. These administrations included: Austria, Great Britain, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, and Italy, Russia and Turkey and all maintained postal facilities on Rhodes.

In 1912, Italy seized Rhodes from Turkey. Italy became the greatest source of philatelic presence on Rhodes. On May 19, 1929 Italy issued a set of nine definitive Italian stamps overprinted with “Rodi”, for use on Rhodes.

Between 1943-45 Germany occupied this island. In 1945, the British occupied the island.

In 1947, Rhodes was ceded to Greece. Greek stamps are currently used on Rhodes for postage.

Palau is a new Pacific Island republic that is currently very active in issuing stamps. This republic is composed of about 100 island and islets at the western end of the Caroline Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean. It was estimated that in 1997 this area had a population of 17,240 individuals.

Europeans first contacted these islands in 1783 when the ship *HMS Antelope*, under the command of British Captain Henry Wilson, ran aground on a reef near Ulong. With the assistance of a local chief Wilson and his men repaired/rebuilt their ship. The chief's son was transported back to England on the return voyage. He later died of smallpox in England.

Foreign governance of these islands formally began when Pope Leo XII asserted Spain's rights over the islands in 1885. These islands were part of the Spanish Caroline Islands.

In 1899, Spain sold the Carolines to Germany, who sought to exploit the islands, natural resources. Germany issued stamps for use in the islands.

These islands were seized by the Japanese during World War I and administered by Japan under a 1919 mandate from the League of Nations. In 1922, Koror became the administrative center for all Japanese possessions in the Pacific.

In 1944, these islands were invaded by the United States and were the scene for many of the bloodiest fighting of the war.

After the War, the islands became part of a United Nations mandated US Trust Territory of the Pacific. In 1947, Palau was named as one of six island districts. After

World War II, Palau was financially dependent upon the United States. In 1994, US assistance exceeded \$35 million and Japan provided another \$10 million.



The islands became a republic in 1981 and began to issue its own stamps in 1983. In November 1993, the residents of Palau voted to become a self-governing nation in free association with the United States. This new political status took effect on October 1, 1994. Under the terms of this agreement, Palau manages its internal and external affairs, except for defense. The United States is responsible for defense and retains strategic



rights to Palau. Under the Compact of Free Association, residents of Palau are allowed free entry to work and reside in the United States. On December 15, 1994, Palau became a member of the United Nations. Currently, the government of Palau employs about half of the nation's 6,000 salaried workers. Palau has issued stamps regularly since 1983.

So...with that we finish another sojourn in our continuing efforts to answer the question....Where in the world is...?

Sources used:

Carlton, R. Scott. The international encyclopedic dictionary of philately. Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 1997.

“History of Eritrea” found at: <http://www.open.org/~th/eritrea/history.html>

Linn's Stamp News Web Page found at <http://www.linns.com>

“Palau, Republic of”, Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2000 found at <http://encarta.msn.com>

“Palau: History”, Britannica Online found at <http://www.britannica.com>

“Palau history”. Found at <http://www.palaunet.com/htm/history>

“Rhodes: History”. Found at: <http://www.vacation.net.gr.p/histrodo.html>

Sandafayre auctions online located at: <http://www.sandafayre.com/atlas/greia.htm>

Wood, Kenneth A. Where in the world: An atlas for stamp collectors. Albany, OR: Van Dahl Publications, 1985.