

Tanzania

Tanzania was formed from the union of two former British colonies: Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Tanganyika gained independence in 1961, Zanzibar in 1963, and the two joined in 1964 to form the present United Republic of Tanzania.

Tanzania is the largest country in East Africa, bordered on the south by Mozambique, Malawi, and Zambia; on the west by Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda; on the north by Uganda and Kenya; and on the east by the Indian Ocean. Tanzania boasts of some of the most spectacular and mythical scenery. This ranges from the beautiful Indian Ocean coast and its offshore islands of Mafia, Pemba and Zanzibar to the snow-covered Mount Kilimanjaro, the vast plains of Serengeti, the extinct volcanic crater of Ngorongoro and the huge inland lakes. These provide the basis for a lucrative tourism industry as people come from around the world to enjoy the warm sea, white sand beaches and coral reefs, to climb the mountain, and view the game in the Serengeti and Ngorongoro parks.

The history of human habitation in Tanzania goes back almost two million years, and the fossils found at Olduvai Gorge by Louis and Mary Leakey now stand among the most important artifacts of the origins of our species. Artifacts of later Paleolithic cultures have also been found in Tanzania. There is evidence that communities along the Tanzanian coast were engaging in overseas trade by the beginning of the first millennium AD. By 900 AD those communities had attracted immigrants from India as well as from southwest Asia, and direct trade extended as far as China. The traders who settled mixed with the African population along the coast, producing a language and culture known as Swahili. When the Portuguese arrived at the end of the 15th century, they found a major trade centre at Kilwa Kisiwani, which they promptly subjugated and then sacked. The Portuguese were expelled from the region in 1698, after Kilwa enlisted the help of Omani Arabs. The Omani dynasty of the Bu Said replaced the region's Yarubi leaders in 1741, and they proceeded to further develop trade. It was during this time that Zanzibar gained its legendary status as a centre for the ivory and slave trade, becoming in 1841 the capital city of the Sultan of Oman. Slaves were obtained inland by Arab and Swahili traders and used to transport ivory to the coast. They were then sold at the famous Zanzibar slave market, mainly for plantation labour in the islands of the Indian Ocean. In Tanzania's interior, at about the same time, the cattle-grazing Maasai migrated south from Kenya into central Tanzania.

Soon afterwards, the great age of European exploration of the African continent began, and with it came colonial domination. Tanzania fell under German control in 1886, but was handed over to Britain as a mandated territory under the League of Nations after World War I. The British did very little to develop the territory, but the mandate continued under the United Nations after World War II. This placed an international legal obligation on Britain to govern the territory for the benefit of the people, and to lead it toward independence. When African nationalist resistance to the British grew in the 1950's, and gained widespread popular support under TANU, led by Julius Nyerere, rapid progress towards independence followed. Elections were held, won by TANU, the British prepared to withdraw, and the country became independent.

Nyerere led Tanzania toward the formation of a “one-party democracy” which he hoped would lead to more even development and less internal conflict. He developed the concept of “ujamaa” and self-reliance, a form of African socialism which would rely on the work of the people and eliminate a parasitic elite. Private properties were expropriated and taken over by the state. This led to an alliance with the communist states and divorced Tanzania from western aid. The result was not development, but a descent into greater poverty. The policies were ultimately abandoned as an impractical dream after Nyerere stepped down as president in 1985. Since then Tanzania has attempted to develop through a more conventional capitalist model, and has received considerable support from western donors. Foreign investors have involved themselves in mining, agriculture and tourism.

Tanzania has been fortunate in avoiding any major political strife since independence, in spite of her poverty and agonizing search for an appropriate development model. While the country has been, since 1995, officially a multi-party state, the descendant of TANU, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi*, has retained control throughout. Trouble has occurred mainly in Zanzibar, which has its own government structures and a strong opposition party. Two contentious elections on the islands have resulted in violence.

The Tanzanian legal system is based on English common law but also shows influences of both Islamic law and customary law. It is clear that the vast majority of Tanzanians do not know the content of the law or their rights which it protects, and are unable to assert those rights in the courts. In the late 1990's the concept of paralegal was initiated by human rights NGOS. The paralegal's duty is to assist the general population to understand the law and defend their rights. They are now operating in many parts of the country, and since government has become aware of their value there is a move to give them an institutional role, especially in the lower courts.