

Part of united Tanzania's rocky transition to multiparty democracy, general elections held in Zanzibar at five-year intervals since 1995 have received international criticism for being seriously flawed. The chief opposition party, the Civic United Front (CUF), has its stronghold in Pemba. Tensions with the mainland, arising from the ill-defined union, have yet to be resolved. Zanzibar has its own flag, president, House of Representatives, and other autonomous government bodies. Some Zanzibaris are calling for the dissolution of the political union with the mainland.

See also Archaeology and Prehistory; Colonial Policies and Practices; Gama, Vasco da; Kings and Kingdoms; Kinship and Descent; Land: Tenure; Nyerere, Julius Kambarage; Queens and Queen Mothers; Spirit Possession; Tanzania; Witchcraft; Zanzibar City; Zanzibar Sultanate.

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ZANZIBAR CITY. Zanzibar city (2002 population: 205,870) is located on the west coast of Zanzibar island, about twenty-three miles off the Tanzanian mainland. While the current site has been inhabited since at least the twelfth century, Zanzibar city is much more modern in genesis. Once known as the “metropolis of East Africa,” it became the dynamic center of the expansive Omani sultanate in the nineteenth century, shaped in equal parts by Indian merchant capitalism and Omani colonialism. The city was built on wealth extracted from slaves, spices, and ivory: a plantation economy predicated on clove production coexisted with extensive trade networks linking Africa, Arabia,

Asia, Europe, and the United States. The British imposed a protectorate in 1890, seeking to counteract German expansion on the mainland opposite, in present-day Tanzania.

European colonialism sharply curtailed the political and economic prospects of the sultanate. Colonial urban Zanzibar was often described as a highly cosmopolitan space. Nonetheless, inequalities of race and class were inscribed in the built fabric of the city as colonial officials sought to distinguish elite stone areas—which they called “town proper”—from Ng’ambo, the “other side” where the vast majority, many of them former slaves, immigrants from the mainland, or members of the emerging working class, resided. The 1964 revolution overturned these colonial socio-spatial relations as elite dwellings were nationalized and poorer Zanzibaris moved into the city center. More recently, these experiments in constructing a socialist “new city” have been abandoned in favor of privatization and tourist promotion. As the colonial urban core has been marketed as an “exotic Arab casbah,” the city as a whole has sprawled outward, resulting in burgeoning informal (and unserved) settlements.

See also Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean, History of (1500 to 1895); Tanzania; Zanzibar; Zanzibar Sultanate.

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ZANZIBAR SULTANATE. The islands of Unguja and Pemba, located off the East African coast and constituting geographical Zanzibar, along with a vaguely defined region on the African mainland, were part of the Omani state until 1862 when they were recognized by the British government as a separate Zanzibar sultanate. After the partition of Africa in 1884–1885, the two islands became a British protectorate in 1890.



Arab dhows in Zanzibar Harbor. These wooden sailing boats transport cargo between the mainland and the Indian Ocean islands. They are specially designed for the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean. They are quick, have no keel or motor, and can be easily stranded on the beach during low tide. © BOJAN BRECEL/CORBIS

The eastern African coast has been in intimate contact with the northern rim of the Indian Ocean for centuries. Immigrants from the African mainland peopled the area. They mingled with visitors from Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and India and gave rise to a cosmopolitan coastal Swahili culture.

The most prominent among these visitors in more recent centuries were Omanis from the southeastern corner of Arabia, at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. They established their overrule on the eastern African coast after expelling the Portuguese in 1698. The al-Busaid dynasty, from its base at Zanzibar, extended its control over the whole coast from Cabo Delgado in the south to the Benadir in Somalia during the nineteenth century.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Sultan Seyyid Sa'id (r. 1806–1856) laid the foundation of the Zanzibar sultanate. After his first visit as sultan to Zanzibar in 1828, he began to

evolve his policies for the economic development of Zanzibar in the two sectors of agricultural production for export and commerce. The prohibition of the slave trade to the south of Cabo Delgado in 1822 had deprived Zanzibari traders of a valuable market for captives from the mainland in the former French islands of the southern Indian Ocean. This forced them to divert growing supplies of slave labor to produce commodities for export, especially cloves, on Zanzibar and Pemba. Realizing the great potential of such a transformation, Sa'id encouraged the planting of cloves on the islands. At its height in the 1860s, about 20,000 slaves entered Zanzibar, most of them absorbed on the plantations of the islands and on grain plantations on the adjacent East African mainland.

The commercial sector, on the other hand, was galvanized by the declining cost of the manufactured goods, notably textiles that were purchased

with the proceeds of ivory and other exports, whereas the prices of these exports, especially ivory, rose with growing demand for luxuries in Europe and the United States. Such favorable terms of trade enriched the Zanzibar state and the merchant classes. To place Zanzibar's external trade on a regular footing, Sai'd negotiated most-favored-nation commercial treaties with the United States in 1833, with Britain in 1839, and with France in 1844, thus securing favorable tariff treatment in Zanzibar's principal markets in the West.

Growing demand for slaves in East Africa and for ivory, in India as well as in Europe and North America, led to a rapid expansion of Zanzibar's hinterland in the eastern half of equatorial Africa, and the creation of a vast commercial empire reaching well beyond the Great Lakes (Tanganyika, Victoria).

The population of Zanzibar Town grew from 10,000–12,000 in 1835 to 35,000 in 1910. It became the hub where the Indian Ocean and the world economies met, and progressively integrated a large part of the African interior, exchanging African ivory for *merekani* cloth from Massachusetts textile mills and beads. Burton, Livingstone, Stanley, and others used Zanzibar Town as a starting point for explorations of the African interior. Zanzibar Town was also the channel through which European and North American values, including Christianity and the antislavery impulse, made their entry into the region.

ADMINISTRATION

The sultan's direct political control rarely extended beyond the offshore islands and the narrow coastal belt. In all the principal towns along the coast, the sultan was represented by a *wali* (governor) and a customs agent. His influence in the interior was based more on his control over the trade outlets at the coast and on common commercial interests with coastal merchants and the trader chiefs, such as Mirambo in present-day western Tanzania, than on direct rule.

His administration at the coast was fairly simple. Many of the Omani tribes and clans (and even some of the other communities) continued to enjoy considerable autonomy over their internal affairs. Most of the decisions were handed down at the daily *majlis* (sittings), when he met members of the public. *Qadis* (Islamic judges), who belonged to the ruling Ibadi and the majority



Ancient ruins in Stone Town, Zanzibar, East Africa. The East African islands of Unguja and Pemba, along with a vaguely defined region on Africa's mainland, constitute Zanzibar, which was part of the Omani state until 1862. Stone Town is the cultural heart of Zanzibar and the only functioning historical town in East Africa. ADAM McCONNACHIE/GETTY IMAGES

Sunni schools, handled judicial matters. Customs administration was farmed out to the most prominent Indian merchant, who appointed his own agents at various ports on the mainland.

Even on the islands of Zanzibar, Omani rule was superimposed over indigenous polities that retained considerable autonomy. On Unguja, the most prominent local ruler was the *mwinyi mkuu*, who ruled over the indigenous Shirazi population. He recognized the suzerainty of the Omani sultan, to whom he paid an annual tribute, over external affairs. In northern Unguja and Pemba, there were lesser chiefs (*shehas* or *diwanis*).

The loosely organized Omani state depended much on the personality of the ruler, and it was

correspondingly fragile even during the life of Sai'd. In 1844, Sai'd tried to divide the sultanate between Oman and Zanzibar and guarantee succession to a son in each place. A dual succession was contrary to Omani constitutional practice, and he failed to gain the support of the British, who were jealous of their imperial interests along the sea routes to their possessions in India and who did not wish to be embroiled in a succession dispute. After Sai'd's death in 1856, the British in India decided it was more expedient for the two halves to be ruled separately under British hegemony and the sultanate was formally partitioned in 1862.

COLONIAL INTERVENTION

Zanzibar's reliance on the exports of slaves and on slaving as a source of labor for its plantations exposed it to British antislavery pressures over the same years. The trade south of Cabo Delgado was prohibited in 1822, and that north of Lamu (an island at the northern limit of Zanzibar's influence on the mainland coast) in 1845. All slave trade by sea was prohibited in 1873, and slavery itself was abolished in 1897.

This British interference was a prelude to more direct intervention by European powers in the 1880s. The struggle for markets, raw materials, and areas of expansion led to a scramble for territories claimed by the sultan. Eventually, a delimitation commission narrowed the sultan's area of effective control to the offshore islands and a ten-mile coastal strip. Inland from this narrow zone of Zanzibari influence, the Germans and the British divided the interior between them. They pressured the sultan to lease the coastal belt to them, to give these landlocked possessions outlets to the sea. In 1890 Zanzibar itself was declared a British protectorate.

Zanzibar's commercial empire, which had extended beyond the western limits of the German and British colonies, left a more lasting heritage. Based on the ethos of trade, it gave rise to a cosmopolitan society on Zanzibar and the coast, in which all the peoples of the Indian Ocean, and even Europeans and Americans, mingled, and religious tolerance was the norm. From there Swahili culture, including the language and Islam, spread throughout the interior to the Great Lakes and beyond.

See also Barghash Ibn Sa'id; Eastern Africa and Indian Ocean, History of (1500 to 1800); Ivory; Madagascar and Western Indian Ocean, History of

(1500 to 1895); Mombasa; Slave Trades: Indian Ocean; Tanzania; Tippu Tip; Zanzibar; Zanzibar City.

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ZARA YA'IQOB (1399–1468). Zara Ya'iqob was emperor of Ethiopia from 1434 to 1468. The son of Emperor Dawit (1380–1412), Zara Ya'iqob's education at his father's court was probably entrusted for a time to the noted theologian Giyorgis of Gascha. When his father died and his brother Téwodros became emperor, he was confined in the mountain prison of Amba Gishan, where he remained for more than twenty years until called to the throne.

Zara Ya'iqob was probably the most formidable of all Ethiopia's rulers: both militarily powerful and intellectually determined. It was he who imposed the celebration of the two Sabbaths (Sunday and Saturday) at the Council of Dabra Mitmaq in 1449. This reconciled the southern, Dabra Libanos monastic tradition of commitment to Sunday observance with the tradition of the monks of northern Ethiopia who followed Saint Ewostatewos in insisting upon the celebration of Saturday as the true biblical Sabbath. His principal writings, the *Mashafa Milad* and *Mashafa Berhan*,