



# **International Boundary Study**

No. 37 – October 26, 1964

## **Malawi – Tanzania (*Tanganyika and Zanzibar*) Boundary**

(Country Codes: MI-TZ)

**The Geographer  
Office of the Geographer  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

**No. 37**

**MALAWI – TANZANIA (TANGANYIKA AND ZANZIBAR) BOUNDARY**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<u>Page</u>
<b>I. Brief Survey .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II. Zambia and Mozambique Tripoints .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III. Politico-Geographic Setting .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV. Boundary Alignment .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>V. Present Situation .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>7</b>

# **MALAWI – TANZANIA (TANGANYIKA AND ZANZIBAR) BOUNDARY**

## **I. BRIEF SURVEY**

Historically the political status of the states adjacent to the present Malawi - Tanganyika and Zanzibar boundary has changed numerous times. The boundary was established initially to delimit territorial claims between British and German spheres of influence in East Africa. In 1890, an Anglo - German agreement<sup>1</sup> delimited generally the territories of the two European states between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Nyasa and in the latter body of water.<sup>2</sup> The present alignment of the boundary between the lakes was not determined in detail until decisions were reached by a joint boundary commission in 1898 and an agreement was signed by the United Kingdom and Germany in 1901.

In effect between World War I and the independence of Tanganyika in 1963, the boundary was interterritorial in scope with British administered states on both sides. The boundary as previously established was accepted by the Republic of Tanganyika, now the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar,<sup>3</sup> and the Republic of Malawi<sup>4</sup> upon their independence.

## **II. ZAMBIA AND MOZAMBIQUE TRIPPOINTS**

The tripoint of the boundary with Zambia<sup>5</sup> was determined in accordance with the terms set forth in a British Government paper in February 1891<sup>6</sup> relative to the extension of the field

---

<sup>1</sup> Complete titles and sources of boundary documentation are listed in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> The agreement also included that part of the present Tanganyika and Zanzibar boundary located between the Malawi tripoint and Lake Tanganyika.

<sup>3</sup> From 1946 to independence Tanganyika was a U.N. Trust Territory under United Kingdom administration. Following World War I it had been established as a League of Nations mandate. From 1885 until World War I it comprised the major part of German East Africa, the remainder being Ruanda - Urundi and Kionga triangle. As formally proclaimed in 1891, Zanzibar was characterized as a Protectorate of the United Kingdom until independence on December 10, 1963. Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to become a single state on April 27, 1964.

<sup>4</sup> With the independence of the Nyasaland Protectorate from the United Kingdom on July 6, 1964, the new state formally adopted the name of Malawi. The Nyasaland Protectorate was a member of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which was operative between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1963.

<sup>5</sup> The British Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia became independent on October 24, 1964 as the Republic of Zambia. A Royal Charter granted on October 29, 1889, afforded the British South Africa Company administrative control in the territory to be known as Rhodesia, and Northern Rhodesia remained under the administrative control of the company until April 1, 1924. By an Order in Council dated May 4, 1911, the two provinces of North-eastern and North-western Rhodesia were amalgamated under the name of Northern Rhodesia on August 17, 1911. Along with Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia was a member of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

<sup>6</sup> The part of the paper applicable to the present Zambia tripoint states that the western boundary of Nyasaland extends northward "to the point where it meets the geographical line of the Congo Basin, and will thence follow the latter line to the point where it reaches the boundary between the British and German spheres." The conditions of the paper were accepted by the company on March 5, 1891, and

of operations of the British South Africa Company north of the Zambezi, at which time also the Nyasaland territory<sup>7</sup> was delimited and excluded from the field of operation of the company. According to the delimitation, the northern part of the boundary between the chartered territory (Rhodesia) of the British South Africa Company and Nyasaland was the drainage area divide of the Congo Basin, and the tripoint was at the intersection of the northward trending divide and the boundary between the British and German spheres of influence as provided for in the Anglo - German Agreement of 1890. The location of the tripoint is shown on the map based on the report of the demarcation commission of 1898 as Nakungulu (Ngungulu) hill and is the site of boundary pillar No. 2. On a map published in 1960 by the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the tripoint was indicated by the same hill spelled Nankungulu and marked by boundary pillar No. 588.<sup>8</sup>

The point that was to become the Mozambique tripoint was established initially by a German - Portuguese declaration on December 30, 1886 relative to the delimitation of the possessions of the two states in Southeast Africa. Article II of the declaration stated that the boundary between German East Africa and Mozambique extends from the point of the confluence of the Rovuma river "with the M'singe (Messinge) river, and thence westwards as far as the bank of Lake Nyasa." An Anglo - Portuguese treaty on June 11, 1891, defined the respective spheres of influence of the two states<sup>9</sup>. Great Britain agreed to recognize the dominion of Portugal in East Africa as stated in the text of the treaty. Similar to the German East Africa - Mozambique boundary delimited in the German - Portuguese treaty of 1886, the treaty of 1891 states the boundary "is a line which follows the course of the River Rovuma from its mouth up to the confluence of the River M'Sinje, and thence westerly along the parallel of latitude to the confluence of these rivers to the shores of Lake Nyasa."

In order to rectify certain inequities evident in the use of a parallel for an international boundary between the point of confluence of the Ruvuma and Messinge rivers and the shore of Lake Nyasa, a joint German - Portuguese boundary demarcation commission

---

agreement was sanctioned by the British Secretary of State on April 2, 1891.

<sup>7</sup> The following references taken from Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3v., 3d ed., (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 1, pp. 286 - 287, provide information on the status and terminology of the Nyasaland territory. A Foreign Office note "British Protectorate over Nyasaland Districts" issued on May 14, 1891 proclaimed the territory as a protectorate and delimited its boundaries similar to but in more detail than the paper of February, 1891. On February 22, 1893, a Foreign Office note, "Protectorate over Nyasaland Districts to be known as the 'British Central African Protectorate'," renamed the territory. An Order in Council, "Limits of Protectorate," dated August 11, 1902 provided for British jurisdiction in the territory and in general terms again delimited it. An additional Order in Council, "The Protectorate to be known as the 'Nyasaland Protectorate'," dated July 6, 1907, provided a new name for the entity and made reference to the fact that the protectorate "shall comprise the territories described in the first Article of 'The British Central Africa Order in Council, 1902.'"

<sup>8</sup> Recent map sheets recommended to show the correct alignment of the boundary between Lake Nyasa and the Zambia tripoint published in 1960 by the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Director, Federal Department of Trigonometrical and Topographical Surveys at a scale of 1:250,000 are as follows: 1) Karonga, S.C.-36-7; and Tunduma, S.C.-36-6.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that in accordance with the treaty Portuguese territory adjacent to Lake Nyasa extended only to the shore of the lake between the German East Africa tripoint and 13° 30' S. latitude.

made minor adjustments in 1907. Thus the present Mozambique tripoint at the mouth of the Txuinde (Kwindi) stream resulting from the boundary change is about 0.5 kilometer southward of the initial tripoint. The tripoint is located at a latitude of approximately 11°34'30" S. and is presumed to be the median or center of the stream because it is doubtful that a thalweg could be determined in such a small stream.<sup>10</sup>

### **III. POLITICO-GEOGRAPHIC SETTING**

The Malawi - Tanganyika and Zanzibar boundary has a total length of 295 miles and is demarcated throughout by water features or boundary pillars. Northward for a distance of 200 miles between the Mozambique tripoint and the mouth of the Songwe, the shore of Lake Nyasa forms the boundary. The Songwe and Katende rivers then comprise the boundary for 85 and 6 miles, respectively, to the meridian of 33° East (9°22'4" S.). Between the 33rd meridian and the Zambia tripoint, the boundary consists of a straight line drawn southwestward to the top of Nankungulu hill.

The boundary is situated in the high plateaus of East Africa, which in the vicinity of the Zambia tripoint on the drainage area divide between the Congo and Zambezi range between 5,000 and 6,000 feet in elevation. The southeastward flowing Songwe enters Lake Nyasa at an elevation of about 1565 feet. Lake Nyasa lies in the trough of the Great Rift valley. Although there are exceptions notably in the northwest, steep slopes descend to the lake shore and are continued far downward to the bottom of the lake which is well below sea level in its deepest part. Lake Nyasa is subject to sizeable seasonal and annual variations in water level which makes an exact delimitation of the lake shore difficult.

Along the relatively short boundary, climatic conditions and vegetation range broadly. Precipitation usually totals between 40 and 60 inches with the heaviest rainfall in the upland areas. The period of greatest precipitation is November through March, although the period may be extended in the uplands. The driest part of the year is usually when frost may occur on high elevations. In general, July is the coldest month with average temperatures in the vicinity of 70° F., whereas January is the warmest month with average temperatures near 80° F. Along the shores of Lake Nyasa high temperatures accompanied by high humidity are common during the hot season. Typical of the area between the Zambia tripoint and Lake Nyasa are growths of tall grasses, whereas east of Lake Nyasa is grassland with scattered broad-leaved evergreen shrubs.

Population densities average between 50 and 100 persons per square mile on the lowlands northwest of Lake Nyasa and are somewhat lower on adjacent uplands. The

---

<sup>10</sup> The "Karte der Deutsch - Portugiesischen Grenze zwischen dem oberen Rowuma und dem Njassa (Deutsch - Ostafrika)" accompanying references 7 and 8 of the Appendix indicates boundary pillars numbered 1 through 26 eastward from the mouth of the Txuinde by the demarcation commission of 1907. Also the Portuguese series Carta Da Colonia de Mocambique at a scale of 1:250,000 published in 1945 by the Ministerie das Colonias, Junta das Missoes Geograficas e de Investigacoes Coloniais, shows the positions and numbers of the boundary pillars on sheet Lago-Rovuma No. 25.

boundary divides the territories of Lambya and Nyakyusa peoples. Although fishing is important in Lake Nyasa, most of the people are engaged in rudimental sedentary farming.

Only trails or tracks cross the boundary, although secondary roads from Karonga and Tukuyu serve areas adjacent to the boundary in Malawi and Tanganyika, respectively. Steamers emanating from Monkey Bay, Malawi formerly operated regularly to ports in Tanganyika; however, the recent rise in the water level of Lake Nyasa has tended to disrupt services between the two states.

#### **IV. BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT**

The alignment of the boundary will be discussed in two parts in accordance with the treaties establishing them: 1) Lake Nyasa and 2) between Lake Nyasa and the Zambia tripoint.

In accordance with the terms of Article I of the Anglo - German agreement of 1890, the boundary from the Mozambique tripoint on the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa strikes northward and follows the eastern, northern, and western shores of the lake.<sup>11</sup>

The Anglo - German agreement of 1901<sup>12</sup> affords the alignment of the boundary between Lake Nyasa and the Zambia tripoint as indicated in Section 1. "It begins at the mouth of the Songwe River at Lake Nyasa and follows this river upwards to its junction with the Katendo (Katende) Stream in the Shitete district; it then follows the Katendo upwards to its intersection with longitude 33, east of Greenwich, ascertained by the Commission, which is marked on both sides of the Katendo by a boundary pillar (1); it then runs in a straight line at an azimuth of 230° (from true north) to the top of Nakungulu (Nkungulu) Hill (2), which is on the water parting of the geographical Congo Basin.

#### **V. PRESENT SITUATION**

There are no known disputes about the boundary at the present time. Future economic activity in the area might require that additional attention be given the boundary because of problems that may arise over water rights and transportation needs. Likewise, a detailed delimitation of the shore boundary of Lake Nyasa might be necessary because of the large fluctuations of the water level of the lake.

---

<sup>11</sup> A number of texts and maps erroneously indicate the boundary to be the center or median line in Lake Nyasa instead of the shore as indicated in the treaty.

<sup>12</sup> The context of the Anglo - German agreement of 1901 apparently clarified or changed the location of the boundary from the northern bank of the Songwe to the thalweg or middle of the bed. Section 2 of the agreement states, "In all cases where a river or stream forms a boundary, the 'thalweg' is to be distinguished, it shall be the middle of the bed." Likewise, the agreement of 1901 clarified that part of the 1890 agreement which stated the boundary followed the Songwe to the point where it approaches most nearly the boundary of the geographical Congo Basin.

## APPENDIX

1. Declaration between Portugal and Germany, respecting the Delimitation of the Possessions of the two Countries, and their respective Spheres of Influence in South Africa, Lisbon, December 30, 1886. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3v., 3d. ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 2, pp. 703 - 705.
2. Agreement between the British and German Governments, respecting Africa and Heligoland; Berlin, July 1, 1890. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 899 - 906.
3. Conditions on extending the Field of the Operations of the British South Africa Company to the North of the Zambezi, February, 1891. Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 277 - 279.
4. Treaty between Her Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the King of Portugal, defining their respective Spheres of Influence in Africa; Lisbon, June 11, 1891. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 1016 - 1026.
5. Protocol containing the decisions of the Commissioners appointed to delimit the Nyasa - Tanganyika Boundary; signed at Ikawa, November 11, 1891. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 916 - 919.
6. Agreement between Great Britain and Germany relative to the Boundary of the British and German Spheres of Interest between Lake Nyasa and Tanganyika; signed at Berlin, February 23, 1901. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 925 - 926.
7. Schlobach, M., "Allgemeiner Bericht über den Verlauf der deutsch - portugiesischen Grenzexpedition Zwischen dem Knie des Rowuma - Flusses und dem Ostufer des Njassa," Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten, Band XXIII (1910), pp. 49 - 54.
8. Ambronn, L., "Bericht über die astronomischen Bestimmungen der deutsch - portugiesischen Grenzexpedition unter Hauptmann Schlobach," Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten, Ibid., pp. 54 - 56.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared by the Geographer, Office of Research in Economics and Science, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16.

Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Geographer, Room 8744, Department of State, Washington 25, D.C. (Telephone: Code 182, Extension 4508).