



International Boundary Study

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Burundi – Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Zaire*) Boundary

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

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BURUNDI – DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (KINSHASA) [ZAIRE, CONGO (Leopoldville)] BOUNDARY

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BURUNDI – DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (KINSHASA) [ZAIRE, CONGO (Leopoldville)] BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Burundi - Congo (Leopoldville) boundary has a length of approximately 145 miles. Northward from the Tanzania tripoint, it follows the median line of Lake Tanganyika for about 79 miles, the thalweg of the Rusizi Rutoya (Petite Ruzizi) for 8 miles, and the thalweg of the Rusizi (Ruzizi) for 58 miles to the Rwanda tripoint. The Rwanda tripoint is at the junction of the Rusizi and Ruwa (Luhwa) rivers.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Berlin Conference of 1884 - 85 recognized King Leopold II of Belgium as the sovereign head of state for an International Association of the Congo. On July 1, 1885, the entity was renamed the Congo Free State, and in 1908 the state was accorded colonial status as the Belgium Congo. A declaration by the Administrator-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Congo Free State asserted on August 1, 1885¹ that the eastern limits of the entity, which included the sector adjacent to Burundi, were determined southward from the intersection of the 4th parallel of north latitude with the 30th meridian of east longitude as follows:

- The 30th degree of longitude east of Greenwich up to 1° 20' of south latitude;
- A straight line drawn from the intersection of the 30th degree of longitude by the parallel of 1° 20' of south latitude as far as the northern extremity of Lake Tanganyika;
- A straight line drawn from Lake Tanganyika to Lake Moero [Mweru] by 8° 30' south latitude.

The limit of the state adjacent to Burundi was reiterated similarly in a declaration of neutrality by the Congo Free State in December, 1894.

¹ Prior to the declaration of the boundaries of the Congo Free State in 1885, treaties were signed by the International Association of the Congo with Germany, France, and Belgium. Maps attached to the treaties indicated the limits of the Congo that the three states would accept as reproduced on a map opposite page 604 in the book by Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 vols., 3rd ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909) Vol. 2. The limits shown on the German map immediately north of Lake Tanganyika approximated closely the present Burundi - Congo boundary, whereas the limits drawn on the French and Belgian maps resembled more closely that of the declaration of 1885. Referenced treaties are as follows: 1) Convention between the German Empire and the International Association of the Congo, Berlin, November 8, 1884. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 572 - 573; 2) Conventions between the Government of the French Republic and the International Association of the Congo, Paris, February 5, 1885. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 564 - 565; and 3) Declarations exchanged between the Belgian Government and the International Association of the Congo, Berlin, February 23, 1885. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 544 - 545.

Between 1885 and World War I, Burundi, formerly Urundi, was administered, along with Ruanda and Tanganyika, as part of German East Africa. On August 11, 1910, a convention signed by Belgium and Germany modified the limits formerly claimed by the Congo Free State and established the present boundary between Burundi and the Congo. Following World War I, a Belgian mandate was established for Ruanda - Urundi, and after World War II, Belgian administration of the entity continued as a trusteeship. Similarly under British administration, Tanganyika became first a League of Nations mandate and then a United Nations trusteeship.

All states adjoining the Burundi - Congo boundary have recently become independent beginning with the Congo² on June 30, 1960. Both Urundi and Ruanda became independent on July 1, 1962 as the Kingdom of Burundi and the Republic of Rwanda, respectively. Tanganyika became independent on December 9, 1961. The United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar³ was constituted by a merger on April 27, 1964, and the name of the state was changed to the United Republic of Tanzania on October 29, 1964.

III. POLITICO - GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

The Burundi - Congo boundary is located in the western branch of the Great Rift Valley. The southern part of the boundary follows the median line in Lake Tanganyika whose surface is about 2,540 feet above mean sea level. For most of its length, the land rises steeply from the shores of the lake. Narrow plains along the eastern and western shores coalesce north of the lake to form a relatively broad lowland along the Rusizi. In general, elevations in the lowlands range between 2,550 and 3,500 feet. The only route of significance crossing the boundary is the road between Bujumbura, Burundi, and Uvira, Congo.

The northern part of the boundary comprising the Rusizi and the Rusizi Rutoya, a tributary of the former west of the main stream, passes through marshland or former marshland. The streams are characterized by numerous meanders which lengthen the boundary considerably over what would be the straight-line distance between Lake Tanganyika and the Rwanda tripoint. Recently a number of marsh areas adjacent to the streams have been drained for agricultural purposes.

Located only a short distance south of the equator, the boundary area has a tropical climate. There are two wet and two dry seasons. Precipitation on adjacent uplands ranges between about 40 and 55 inches, however, within the downfaulted valley immediately along the boundary, precipitation is less and steppe conditions prevail. Temperatures are considerably cooler in the uplands than in the valley of the Rusizi.

² The name of the Republic of the Congo was officially changed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo on August 1, 1964.

³ Prior to the merger, Zanzibar had gained its independence on December 10, 1963.

Population densities are between 100 and 250 persons per square mile and the people are mainly rural dwellers. Coffee and some cotton are grown on the lowlands for cash crops. Important subsistence crops include rice, cassava, and peanuts. Apparently the most numerous people of Burundi, the Bahutu, originally migrated eastward from the Congo centuries ago to the present location.

IV. BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

The Tanzania tripoint is located on the median line of Lake Tanganyika at about 4° 27' S. Following the establishment of a mandate for Ruanda - Urundi, an Anglo - Belgian commission demarcated the boundary with Tanganyika between 1922 and 1924. A protocol dated August 5, 1924 approved the work of the commission and indicated in Paragraph 51 that the international boundary in Lake Tanganyika had been decided upon as follows:⁴

By common agreement it is suggested that our respective Governments consider the boundary in the waters of Lake Tanganyika to be the parallel due west from Boundary Pillar No. 1 to the point of intersection with the north and south median line of the lake.

The convention signed by Belgium and Germany on August 11, 1910 gives the alignment of the Burundi - Congo boundary as follows:⁵

From Lake Tanganyika to Lake Kivu:

The boundary, leaving the median line of Lake Tanganyika, curves in order to follow the thalweg of the main western branch of the Russisi [Rusizi or Ruzizi] delta as far as the northern tip of the delta.

It then takes the thalweg of that river to the point where it flows out of Lake Kivu.

The Rwanda tripoint is located at the junction of the Rusizi and Ruwa rivers between Lake Tanganyika and Lac Kivu. There are no known treaties establishing the tripoint, and the Burundi - Rwanda appears to be a traditional line between the two states.

V. PRESENT SITUATION

⁴ The Burundi - Tanzania boundary on the shore of Lake Tanganyika is described in Paragraph 1 of the Anglo - Belgian protocol of 1924 as follows: "1. B.P. No. I, situated on the Eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, at above 13 feet (four metres) from the water's edge and at the outlet of the Nyakolika Ravine; thence up the thalweg of this ravine to B.P. No. II situated at its head.

⁵ The convention also included that part of the present Congo - Rwanda boundary between the Burundi tripoint, junction of the Rusizi and Ruwa rivers, and the Uganda tripoint, Volcan Sabinyo.

There are no known boundary areas disputed officially by the Congo and Burundi; although recently unofficial Congolese claims were made to the delta area between the Rusizi Rutoya and the Rusizi.

APPENDIX

DOCUMENTS

1. Circular of the Administrator-General of Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of the Congo, declaring the Neutrality of that State, within its Limits as defined by Treaties. Brussels, August 1, 1885. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 vols. 3rd. ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909) Vol. 2, pp. 552 - 553.
2. Declaration of the Neutrality of the Congo Free State. Brussels, December 28, 1894. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 557 - 561.
3. Convention en vue d'approuver l'arrangement signe a Bruxelles, le 14 mai 1910, fixant la frontiere entre le Protectorat allemand de l'Afrique Orientale et la Colonie du Congo belge; signee a Bruxelles, le 11 aout 1910 (Les ratifications ont ete echangees a Bruxelles, le 27 juillet 1911). De Martens, G. Fr., Recueil De Traités, Troisieme Serie, Tome VII, pp. 372 - 375.
4. Protocole concernant l'abornement de la frontiere entre la Colonie du Congo belge et celle de l'est Africain allemand; signe a Goma, le 25 juin 1911, approuve par un Echange de notes du 7 juin 1912. Ibid., Tome VII, pp. 372 - 375.
5. Correspondence regarding the modification of the Boundary between British Mandated Territory and Belgian Mandated Territory in East Africa, October 1923, United Kingdom Command 1974 (In continuation of Cmd 1794). A map of the boundary is included.
6. Protocol respecting the Boundary between Tanganyika Territory and the Belgian Mandated Territory of Ruanda - Urundi, Kigoma, August 5, 1924, United Kingdom Treaty Series No. 6 (1927) Command 2812 (includes three boundary map sheets).
7. Jentgen, P., "Notice de la Carte des Frontieres du Congo Belge." Atlas General du Congo (Bruxelles, 1953).
8. Jentgen, P., "Les Frontieres du Congo Belge," Institut Royal Colonial Belge, Memoires, Tome XXV, 1952.

MAPS

1. Ruanda - Urundi: scale 1:200,000; Service Cartographique, Ministere des Colonies; published 1937 by Institut Cartographique Militaire, Bruxelles, Belgium; sheets 2 and 4.
2. Ruanda - Urundi: scale 1:100,000; Service Cartographique, Ministere des Colonies; published 1936 by Institut Cartographique Militaire, Bruxelles, Belgium; sheets 15, 19, 23, 26, and 27.
3. Rwanda and Burundi: Series 1301, Edition 2, scale 1:500,000; published 1964 by United States Army Map Service.

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