



# **International Boundary Study**

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

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# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

No. 51

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (Kinsasha) [ZAIRE, CONGO (Leopoldville)] - TANZANIA BOUNDARY

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**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (Kinsasha)  
[ZAIRE, CONGO (Leopoldville)] - TANZANIA BOUNDARY**

**I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

The Congo (Leopoldville) - Tanzania boundary is the median line of Lake Tanganyika. Tripoints with Burundi and Zambia also are located on the median line. The exact position of the Zambia tripoint remains unresolved because of the indefinite status of the Congo - Zambia boundary between Lake Mweru and Lake Tanganyika. The all-water boundary between the Congo and Tanzania has a length of approximately 285 miles.

**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 Belgian Congo. A declaration by the Administrator-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Congo Free State on August 1, 1885<sup>1</sup> stated that the limits of the entity were determined by:

The median line of Lake Tanganyika;  
A straight line drawn from Lake Tanganyika  
to Lake Moero [Mweru] by 8° 30' latitude.

The limit of the state in Lake Tanganyika was reiterated as the median line in a declaration of neutrality by the Congo Free State in December 1984.

Between 1885 and World War I, Tanganyika was the major part of German East Africa, the remainder being Ruanda - Urundi and Kionga triangle. On August 11, 1910 a convention was signed by Belgium and Germany fixing the boundary between their respective possessions in central Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 German, 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. On all three treaty maps the limit of the Congo on Lake Tanganyika was shown as the western shore. 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.

Following World War I the Kionga triangle was returned to Portuguese Mozambique and Ruanda - Urundi became first a Belgian mandate and then, after World War II, a Belgian trusteeship. In a similar manner Tanganyika, under British administration, became first a League of Nations mandate and then a United Nations trusteeship.

Beginning with the emergence of the Belgian Congo as the Republic of the Congo on June 30, 1960<sup>2</sup>, all states adjacent to Lake Tanganyika now have been granted independence. Tanganyika became independent on December 9, 1961. The United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar<sup>3</sup> 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. Urundi acquired independence on July 1, 1962 as the Kingdom of Burundi<sup>4</sup> and Northern Rhodesia became independent from the United Kingdom as the Republic of Zambia on October 24, 1964.

### **III. POLITICO - GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS**

Lake Tanganyika, through which the Congo - Tanzania boundary passes, has an area of 12,700 square miles and is about the size of the states of Maryland and Delaware combined. The lake occupies the southern end of the western arm of the Great Rift valley of Africa and has a length of 420 miles and ranges in width between 30 and 45 miles. For most of its length, the land rises steeply from the shores of the lake and some adjacent uplands have elevations in excess of 8,000 feet. The lake surface is considered to be at an elevation of about 2,540 feet, although seasonal and annual changes in water level are common. The deepest part of the lake is 2,172 feet below sea level, which affords a total water depth of 4,712 feet. The only outlet is the Lukuga near Albertville, which is often silted up and raises the level of the lake. Important streams draining into Lake Tanganyika include the Rusizi carrying overflow water from Lake Kivu, the Malagarasi entering 50 miles south of Kigomo, and the Kalambo in the south.

Lake Tanganyika is located in a savanna climatic region. Temperatures are hot in summer and warm throughout the winter. Precipitation ranges between 20 and 40 inches and falls almost entirely during the summer months. Most of the area immediately adjacent to the lake consists of a grassland with scattered areas of forest.

Historically, African peoples have migrated across Lake Tanganyika with the movement being made primarily from west to east. The origins of some of the people living on the eastern shore of the lake at the present time can be traced to areas in the Congo. Recent movements of people and contacts across the lake have been on a limited scale.

Except for higher densities in the north, the population along most of the Congolese side of

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Ruanda also was granted independence on July 1, 1962 as the Republic of Rwanda.

the lake ranges between 50 and 100 persons per square mile as compared to between five and 50 for the Tanzania side. In addition to fishing, most of the people are engaged in grazing and a shifting or rudimentary sedentary type of agriculture. In a few places, plantation agriculture is the dominant activity.

Lake Tanganyika is an important link in the transportation system of Africa. Although recent political events in the area undoubtedly have affected lake transportation, previously steamers served a number of ports including Mupulungu in Zambia; Bujumbura in Burundi; Kalundu (port of Uvira), Albertville, and Moba (near Baudouinville) in the Congo; and Kigomo in Tanzania. Of particular importance to east-west communications is the steamer connection between Kigomo, the terminus of the railway line from Dar es Salaam, and Albertville, which is the terminus of a railway line from the Lualaba river.

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

Because of the indefinite status of the Congo - Zambia boundary between Lake Mweru and Lake Tanganyika, the exact location of the Zambia tripoint is unresolved. An agreement in May, 1894 between the United Kingdom and King Leopold II, terminated the boundary about 15 minutes northward of the point on the west shore of Lake Tanganyika indicated in the declaration of the limits of the Congo Free State in 1885. The agreement stated the following:

The frontier between the Independent Congo Free State and the British sphere to the north of the Zambezi shall follow a line running direct from the extremity of Cape Akalunga on Lake Tanganyika, situated at the northernmost point of Cameron Bay at about 8° 15' south latitude, to the right [east] bank of the River Luapula [Luvua], where this river issues from Lake Moero.

For purposes of delimiting the boundary, the exact location of Cape Akalunga has remained unresolved. A relatively recent map of the Congo prepared by a Belgian-sponsored Special Committee of the Katanga indicated Kipimbi (Chipimbi), which places the tripoint at about 8° 17' S. latitude. Recent maps published both by the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia indicated the boundary reached the shore on the northern point of Cape Pungu, which places the tripoint at about 8° 12' S. The extension of a line drawn northeastward from the right bank of the Luvua on Lake Mweru, through 8° 15' S. on the shore of Lake Tanganyika, and thence to the median line of Lake Tanganyika, would place the Zambia tripoint at about 8° 13' S., which is the recommended location of the tripoint for cartographic representation.

The Convention signed by Belgium and Germany on August 11, 1910 gives the Congo - Tanzania boundary as follows:

The boundary, leaving the median line of Lake Tanganyika, curves in order to follow the thalweg of the main western branch of the Russizi [Rusizi] delta as far as the

northern tip of the delta.

Although the 1910 convention between Belgium and Germany gave the median line of Lake Tanganyika the status of an international boundary, no known attempt has been made to determine an exact median line. Maps of Lake Tanganyika have shown the boundary with a considerable amount of cartographic license.

The Burundi tripoint is located on the median line of Lake Tanganyika at about 4° 27' S. Following the establishment of a mandate of 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:<sup>5</sup>

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.

## **V. PRESENT SITUATION**

Although the position of the median line and the Zambia tripoint have not been determined precisely, probably future problems will stem primarily from the fact that the boundary is located strategically astride of Lake Tanganyika and is associated with one of the most important water bodies in central Africa. Four states adjoin Lake Tanganyika and areas of activity on which cooperation is needed along them include: transportation facilities, movement of people and goods, fishing, and water supply.

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<sup>5</sup> 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 about 13 feet (four metres) from the water's edge and at the outlet of the Ndyakalika Ravine; thence up the thalweg of this ravine to B.P. No. II situated at its head.

## APPENDIX

### DOCUMENTS

1. Circular of the Administrator-General of the Department 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. Agreement between Great Britain and His majesty King Leopold II, Sovereign of the Independent State of the Congo, relating to the Spheres of Influence of Great Britain and the Independent State of the Congo in East and Central Africa. Brussels, May 12, 1894. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 578 - 580.
3. Declaration of the Neutrality of the Congo Free State. Brussels, December 28, 1894. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 557 - 561.
4. Convention en vue d'approuver l'arrangement signed a Bruxelles, le 14 mai 1910, fixant la frontiere entre le Protectorat allemand do 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 (Leipzig: Librairie Dieterich, 1913) pp. 366 - 372.
5. 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.
6. British Mandates for the Cameroons, Togoland and East Africa, January, 1923, United Kingdom Command 1794 (boundary map included).
7. 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.
8. Protocol respecting the Boundary between Tanganyika Territory and the Belgian Mandated Territory of Ruanda - Urundi, May 27, 1926, United Kingdom Treaty Series No. 6 (1927), Command 2812 (includes three boundary map sheets).
9. Jentgen, P., "Notice de la Carte des Frontieres du Congo Belge." Atlas General du Congo (Bruxelles, 1953).
10. Jentgen, P., "Les Frontieres du Congo Belge," Institut Royal Colonial Belge, Memoires, Tome XXV, 1952.

## **MAPS**

1. World (Africa): Series 1301, scale 1:1,000,000; published 1962 by United States Army Map Service; sheets SA 35, SB 35, and SB 36 and part of SB 35.
2. Northern Rhodesia: Scale 1:250,000; Federal Department of Trigonometrical and Topographical Surveys; published 1960 by Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; map sheet Abercorn (SC 36-1).
3. Congo Belge, (Katanga): Scale 1:250,000; Service Geographique et Geologique Comite Special du Katanga; published 1959 by Institut Geographique Militaire, Belgium; reprinted by United States Army Map Service 1960; sheet Moliro (SC 36-a).



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