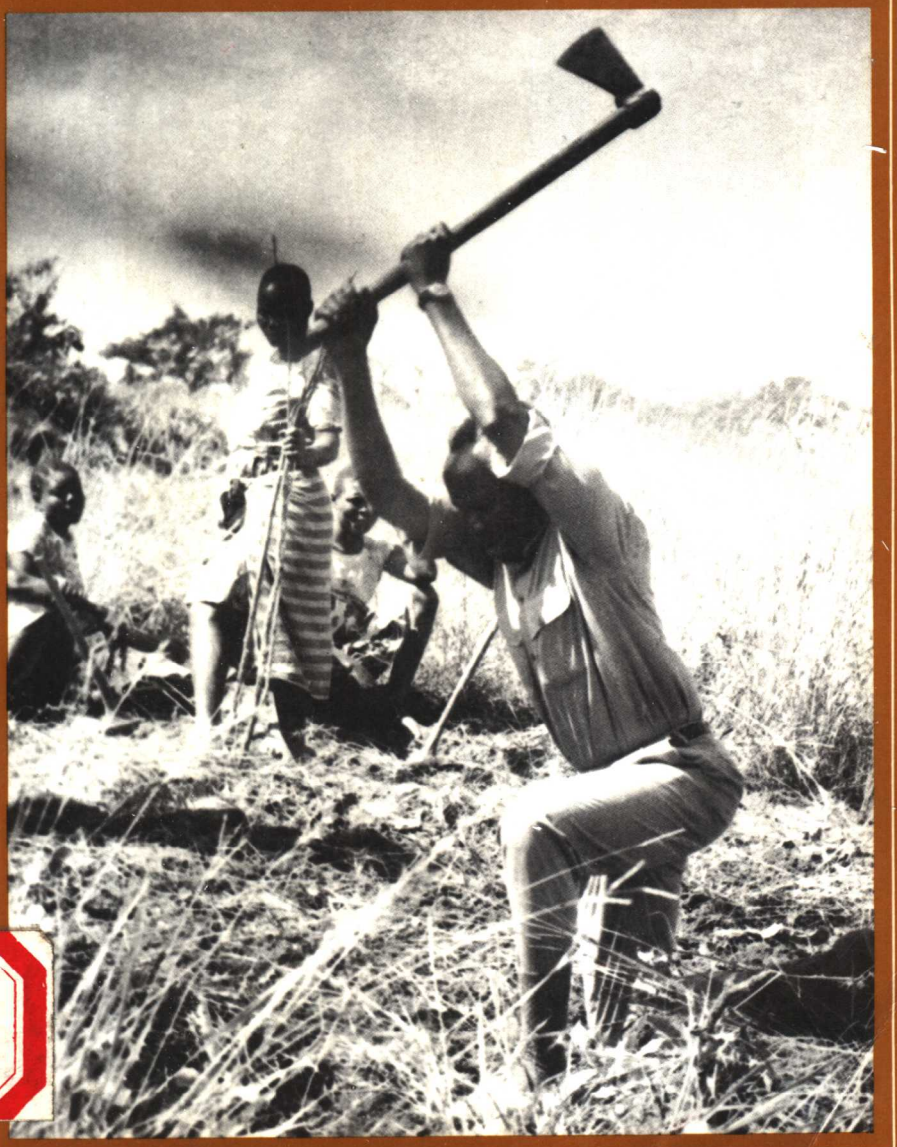
TANZANIA

An African Experiment

Rodger Yeager



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Acknowledgments

Tanzania has influenced my life since 1964, when as a young graduate student I first arrived in the country to engage in local political research and to undertake a working assignment in the Ministry of Lands, Settlement, and Water Development. I cannot hope to acknowledge everyone who, over the years, has helped me to appreciate the full significance of Tanzania. For making it all possible, I must again thank my teacher and friend Fred G. Burke.

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Rodger Yeager

Contents

Illustrations and Tables

Introduction

This book provides an overview of Tanzania, one of the economically poorest yet socially and politically most innovative countries in tropical Africa. This venture will carry us briefly into the rich Tanzanian past, which began with the dawn of humanity itself and includes contributions from many of the world's major cultures. The main focus, however, will be on the last twenty years. During this period Tanganyika and Zanzibar gained their independence and joined to form the United Republic of Tanzania.[1] The country then undertook an experiment in political and economic development that has provoked widely differing reactions.

On the one hand, Tanzania is viewed as a conspicuously successful new state whose leaders have been able to avoid the postindependence perils of neocolonialism, elitism, and governmental instability and instead to construct an order in which brave political slogans are becoming social and cultural realities. According to this view, Tanzania is one developing country where the present generation has a real chance of achieving *uhuru* ("freedom"), *umoja* ("unity"), *ujamaa* ("socialism"), and *maendeleo* ("development").

From another perspective the picture is less bright: Tanzania is also portrayed as a case study of misplaced philosophical idealism, lost developmental opportunities, and unfulfilled political promises. To the left, the country is a professed socialist state whose elites have abandoned true socialism. To the right, these same elites have failed to make the hard investment decisions that are a sine qua non of any successful transition to modernity.

One factor upon which critics and advocates can agree is the significance of Tanzania's top political leadership, and particularly that of President Julius Nyerere. More than anything else, his words and deeds are responsible for the passion with which Tanzania is both praised and condemned by those who have observed and participated in its national life. There is little disagreement about the moral content of Nyerere's thought and his vision of a just and prosperous society. The same cannot be said for the means selected and results obtained in pursuit of this dream. Perhaps because Nyerere has stimulated his people to aim at such an alluring yet elusive target, critics are especially enthusiastic when the shot approaches its mark and equally anxious when it misses.

The Tanzanian government is highly structured and is active at all levels.

Before independence, the mainland was a United Nations trust territory under British administration, and Zanzibar was a British protectorate. Since the early 1960s, these former colonial outposts have evolved into a single-party state with a powerful central apparatus controlled by the Chama cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary party), and twenty-five regional centers of authority. Local politics and government are organized from the district level down to the individual household and workplace. Internationally, Tanzania remains adamantly nonaligned with any major power bloc but has consistently served as a leading "frontline" state in support of the southern African liberation struggle. Tanzanian armies also waged a unilateral war of liberation to free neighboring Uganda from the repressive rule of Idi Amin.

For all of the controversy surrounding its socioeconomic and political systems, in many respects Tanzania is not unlike other developing countries. Located between 2° and 10° south latitude and 30° to 40° east longitude, the country encompasses a total area of 945,262 square kilometers (378,105 square miles), including 60,000 square kilometers (24,000 square miles) of lakes and rivers. Topographically, coastal lowlands give way to a savanna that rises to 1,800 meters (5,940 feet) between two branches of eastern Africa's Great Rift Valley. Mountains and hilly highlands form natural boundaries in parts of the south, west, and north. The northern highlands are dominated by the tallest mountain in Africa, Kilimanjaro, which rises to 5,879 meters (19,340 feet).

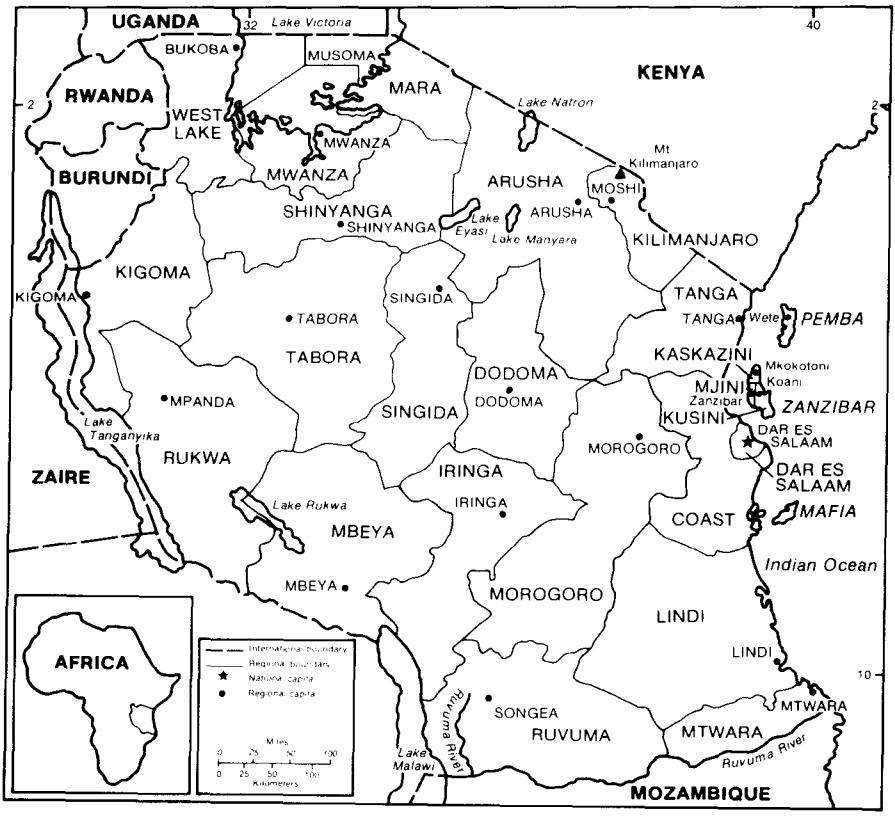
The Tanzanian climate is influenced by two Indian Ocean monsoons, which in a good year will bring one short and one long rainy season. The rains are frequently unreliable, and most of the country is dry for a large part of the year. Temperature varies with altitude; average minimum readings for June and July are between 10° and 20°C. (50° to 68°F.) and average maxima during December and January are from 25° to 30.5°C. (77° to 87°F.).

Reflecting the uneven distribution of water, arable land, and economic opportunity, Tanzania's population is concentrated on Zanzibar and at the periphery of the mainland. The population has grown from about 12 million in 1967 to more than 18 million in 1981 and continues to increase at an average annual rate of more than 3 percent. Nearly 90 percent of all Tanzanians live in the rural areas. The Tanzanian population is made up of more than 120 ethnic groups. Most of these groups are small; the largest accounts for only 13 percent of the total population. Although each group has its own language or dialect, the coastal Kiswahili language serves as an effective lingua franca.

The cash economy is managed by the government, with considerable private involvement in small-scale productive activities. The agricultural sector employs more than 80 percent of the work force and emphasizes both commercial and subsistence crops. In recent years, low agricultural productivity, oscillating world commodity prices, and rising costs of petroleum and other imports have produced widening trade and balance-of-payments deficits. Tanzania is also heavily dependent on foreign aid and must even import food. The production and distribution of sufficient nutrients for a rapidly growing population are the country's most pressing developmental problem.

These facts should hold few surprises for even the most casual observer of

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



Africa and other developing areas. But on closer examination Tanzania is not so typical of poor countries. Under unusually imaginative political leadership, Tanzanians have transformed their human environment to present a model of modernizing achievement to some and a lesson in developmental failure to others. This study seeks to help the reader determine which is the more accurate picture of what must surely be one of Africa's most important and most controversial nations.

1

The Origins of Tanzania

PRECOLONIAL TANZANIA

Eastern Africa began preparing to receive human society during the Miocene epoch, about fifteen million years ago. Huge tectonic upheavals raised a forested upland by 900 meters (3,000 feet) and created the highlands of contemporary Ethiopia, Kenya, and mainland Tanzania. Under the force of this vertical thrust, volcanoes erupted and the earth's crust cracked and collapsed. Thus was formed the Great Rift Valley, which extends from north of the Gulf of Aqaba to south of the Zambezi River. As time passed, the volcanoes became inactive and most were weathered to less than one-tenth of their former size. The floor of the valley sank even lower, and many lakes were created, of which only a few remain along the eastern and western branches of the Rift. In Tanzania, these lakes include Natron, Eyasi, and Manyara in the east and Tanganyika, Rukwa, and Malawi to the west. Areas lying between the walls of the eastern and western Rift were cast under permanent rain shadows, depriving the tropical forests of essential water and providing conditions favorable to the savanna of grass and scattered trees that now predominates in central Tanzania. This savanna country became the scene of a crucial chapter in human evolution.

The Birthplace of Man

The Miocene was the age of the arboreal apes. These primates were heavily dependent on the trees for their food and shelter. As the forests receded, a small apelike hominid, *Ramapithecus*, became adapted to the wooded fringe. *Ramapithecus* eventually gravitated to the open country of the Great Rift Valley and there gave rise to still other hominids, including man.

The search for our evolutionary progenitors continues near the existing and extinct lakes of the Rift.[1] Tanzania is the scene of two pioneering discoveries in this quest, made by the remarkable team of prehistorians led by Louis and Mary Leakey. In 1959 Mary Leakey came upon the broken remains of a manlike hominid, *Zinjanthropus boisei* ("East African man"). The find was made at Olduvai Gorge, the site of a vanished lake on the edge of the Serengeti Plains. A few years later, her son Jonathan discovered *Homo habilis* ("able man") at the same sedimentary level of Olduvai. In comparison with *Zinjanthropus*, *Homo habilis* was a highly skilled toolmaker. Both creatures lived at various eastern African locations during

Figure 1.1. The Great Rift Valley.

the Lower Pleistocene epoch, between 3 million and 1 million years ago, and the latter is thought to be a direct ancestor of *Homo sapiens*.

Tanzania played host to the first chapter of the human saga. Unfortunately, no lineal connection can yet be made between the ancient hominids of Olduvai and the people who later populated eastern Africa and the rest of the world. As far as we now know, the human history of Tanzania began about 10,000 years ago, when Khoisan-speaking hunters and gatherers settled sparsely along the eastern Rift to the south of Olduvai. These forerunners of the modern Hadzapi and Sandawe peoples may have been the first Tanzanians.

The Settling of Mainland Tanzania

From the beginning of the first millennium B.C., the Great Rift Valley served as a highway along which immigrants passed into the sparsely inhabited northern and western portions of what is now mainland Tanzania. The first new arrivals were a Cushitic-speaking people from southern Ethiopia, who migrated through the eastern Rift until they reached a part of north-central Tanzania that was already occupied by the Khoisan hunters and gatherers. As cattle herders, these migrants found an ecological niche in the virgin grasslands of the north and lived interspersed with their neighbors in much the same way that the modern Burungi, Iraqw, and Gorowa Cushitic-speakers today share the same space with the Khoisan Hadzapi and Sandawe.

By the first millennium A.D., a much larger influx was beginning from the west, composed of Bantu-speaking peoples who probably originated in what is now southern Nigeria and Cameroon. These were iron-working agriculturalists who preferred the wetter areas of western Tanzania and, to some extent, the fertile volcanic mountains of the northeast. The Bantu were thus spared the necessity of competing with the established hunters, gatherers, and pastoralists of the dry savanna.

This balance of people and land use was disturbed between the tenth and eighteenth centuries by a succession of Central Sudanic, Nilotic, and Paranilotic migrations from the north and northwest.[2] These peoples included both grain producers and cattle keepers, who infiltrated the western and northern parts of mainland Tanzania, competed and biologically interacted with the Bantu-speakers already living there, and gradually spread into the southern and southwestern highlands. The same process of migration, conflict, and partial assimilation occurred east of the Rift, until the northeastern highlands were populated by sedentary farming communities bordered by seminomadic groups of pastoralists. The chief survivors of these early herders are the modern Masai, who also roam over a large area in the northwest. The lowlands adjacent to the Indian Ocean coast were occupied by small societies of Bantu-speaking cultivators.

Because of the constant movement and mixing of peoples between the tenth and nineteenth centuries, it is in most cases not possible to trace the cultural origins of Tanzania's contemporary ethnic groups. One demographic consistency does emerge from the time when the mainland was first settled. The highest human population densities were established at the periphery of the country, with relatively few people inhabiting the arid steppe between the eastern and western branches of the Great Rift Valley. This historic settlement pattern bears important implications for social, economic, and political relations in modern Tanzania.

Zanzibar and the Coast

The early societies of the Tanzanian coast and offshore islands, facing eastward instead of toward Africa, evolved quite differently from those of the interior.[3] Before 500 A.D., written reference was made to what is now coastal Tanzania in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a Greek traders' guide. It is fairly certain that still earlier visits were made by merchants from Egypt, Assyria, Phoenicia, Greece, India, Arabia, and Persia. By the ninth century, Arabs and Shirazi Persians were trading regularly with the coastal peoples; they eventually established a string of settlements on the islands of Pemba, Zanzibar, Mafia, and Kilwa Kisiwani. As these outposts became permanent settlements, the Arab and Shirazi communities intermingled with the Bantu-speaking mainland groups, and a new culture—the Swahili—began to emerge.[4] By the thirteenth century, the Shirazi-ruled city-state of Kilwa Kisiwani controlled the entire eastern African trade in gold, ivory, slaves, and other up-country products. Kilwa's dominance lasted until the fifteenth century, when the Arab city-states of Zanzibar and Mombasa (in what is now Kenya) gained ascendancy.

Portuguese conquest of the coast delayed the further development of the

increasingly Africanized Arab hegemony. The explorer Vasco da Gama first visited eastern Africa in 1498, and by 1506 Portugal had taken control of the city-states and their Indian Ocean trade. Portuguese suzerainty over the Tanzanian coast was lengthy but tenuous. By 1729, a group of Omani Arabs had seized power over all settlements north of the Ruvuma River, which later became the boundary separating Tanzania from the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. Omani domination of the coast continued into the nineteenth century under the aggressive Busaidi dynasty. During this time, trade increased with the interior and began with the United States and several European countries. Recognizing the potential of this trade, Sultan Said (1791–1856; reign, 1806–1856) transferred his capital from Oman to Zanzibar in 1840. There he sponsored the development of a slave-dependent plantation economy that quickly made Zanzibar the world's leading producer of cloves. Said also extended commercial relations with the mainland, emphasizing the slave trade for the first time and enlisting the support of several particularly acquisitive African societies, including the Nyamwezi of central Tanzania. By the early 1850s an important trading center had been established at Tabora, in the heart of Nyamwezi country.

Mainland Tanzania experienced its last great migration in the 1840s, when the southern African Ngoni crossed into Rukwa and proceeded to conquer and mix with peoples living in a vast area between the southern coast and Lake Tanganyika. The invasion actually furthered Zanzibar's commercial involvements on the mainland to the extent that some Ngoni enthusiastically participated in the slave trade. Far more powerful invaders were required to destroy this blossoming mercantile empire. These were the colonizing Europeans.

THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD

The colonial "scramble" for Africa began in a rather desultory manner throughout the continent, and no less so in Tanzania where Europeans and Americans pursued limited interests for more than fifty years before the establishment of full-scale colonial rule. Chief among these early interests was trade, which focused outside attention on Zanzibar and the commercial network controlled by Sultan Said. On the basis of private-sector initiatives and a treaty concluded with Said in 1833, the United States opened a consulate on Zanzibar in 1837. Britain followed suit in 1841, a move that allowed her freer access to the Tanzanian trade and permitted more effective implementation of the Moresby Treaty of 1822, the Anglo-Zanzibari treaty that formalized Britain's attempt to eliminate the eastern African slave trade. Zanzibar agreed to free trade treaties with France in 1844 and the Hanseatic German republics in 1859. Trade and the political influence of the British continued to expand until formal colonial rule was established.

Using Zanzibar as a point of departure, European explorers and missionaries penetrated the mainland during the middle and late nineteenth century. If sometimes inadvertently, secular and proselytizing explorers helped to define future colonial boundaries. They also paved the way for Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries. Although their achievements in religious conversion were lackluster, the missionaries made two important contributions to the massive