

EXHIBITION



HUMBOLDT  
FORUM

# HISTORIES OF TANZANIA

UNTIL 24.11.2025

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Mainland Tanzania and  
Zanzibar merge



# THE EXHIBITION



The state of Tanzania has only existed in its current form since gaining independence and merging with Zanzibar in 1964. Its territorial boundaries date back to German and British colonial rule, but Tanzania's history encompasses so much more than that. The territory of modern-day Tanzania is one of the oldest inhabited regions on earth.

Its geographical location on the Indian Ocean meant that the societies there were involved early on in interregional trade networks. Under German colonial rule, from 1884 to 1919, Tanzania was known as "German East Africa" and thereafter, until independence in 1961, it was ruled by the British under the name of "Tanganyika". The consequences of colonial oppression, exploitation, and violence can still be felt today. During this period, thousands of cultural belongings were brought to Germany. In Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) alone there are more than 10,000 "objects" from the territory of modern-day Tanzania.

The exhibition *Histories of Tanzania* tells the stories of the societies and people who inhabited the territory of present-day Tanzania, presenting an array of multifaceted accounts that

reach far back into the past. It also focuses on the cultural belongings on display in the exhibition and not only examines their origin and significance but also asks questions about the histories and contexts relating to these objects that have not been documented in the museum archive. The period of colonial oppression and exploitation is explored in particular detail, with critical scrutiny applied to colonial narratives and racist attributions. Who is writing whose history and why?

The exhibition was developed collaboratively by curators of the National Museum of Tanzania, the Ethnologisches Museum and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss.

The representatives of the societies from which the cultural belongings come were included in the process to ensure that the "objects" would be shown in a respectful way. The issue of "consent", of securing agreement for the cultural belongings to be presented, was of key importance here, so the exhibition focuses on this aspect in texts and interviews with the curators and community representatives. Works by East African artists as well as the international schools project City Research offer a critical examination of the colonial gaze.

# CURATORIAL POSITION

As curators from the National Museum of Tanzania, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, we recognize that:

- These cultural belongings (i.e. the physical things that form part of a society's heritage) are important components of the past and present cultural concepts and practices of East African societies.
- Large parts of the holdings in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin were appropriated during the period of European colonialism.
- Europeans took possession of cultural belongings and human remains (of the deceased or murdered ancestors of people who lived in the territory of present-day Tanzania) either by force or by exploiting their position of power.
- The records handed down by Europeans contain gaps and errors. They are strongly influenced by racism directed against societies in East Africa. The perspectives of the affected communities and the creators, artists, and former owners of all these cultural belongings are often absent from European depictions.
- The architecture of the Humboldt Forum, which reproduces the Baroque facade of the historic Berlin Palace, reminds us of the site's history. As the seat of the Prussian monarchy, the Palace and those who used it were part of Germany's expansive power politics and colonialism.

As curators, we are aware of these connections. Our task is to critically examine the past by asking questions: Who is writing whose history, and why? What form should reconciliation, reparation, and restitution processes take now and in the future?

We hope that this exhibition will initiate such a process, in which we jointly develop new ways of looking at the past, present, and future.

**Achiles Bufure, Flower Manase, Balthazar Nyamusya**

(National Museum of Tanzania)

**Paola Ivanov, Kristin Weber-Sinn**

(Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

**Maïke Schimanowski, Jocelyne Stahl**

(Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss)

# PRODUCING THE EXHIBITION



Nothing should be displayed without consent! This was our most important principle in preparing the exhibition. After the team of curators had made a preliminary selection of cultural belongings, a delegation travelled to modern-day Tanzania in September 2023, visiting eleven places to hold talks with representatives of various societies and the descendants of specific previous owners. Following the initial contact, the team of curators invited the representatives of the communities to a three-day conference at the National Museum of Tanzania with more than 50 representatives from over 15 communities as well as with experts from the university of Dar es Salaam and the museum.

Cultural belongings are not simply “objects” as such: rather, they communicate relationships between people, places, and cultural and artistic practices that are connected with the past, present, and future. Besides the question of the historical functions and social significances of the cultural belongings, the main issue concerned whether it would be possible to show

originals or respectful representations of them. Under what conditions could consent be given or denied? Wherever a wish was expressed that a particular cultural belonging should not be presented, a substitute is used instead.

## Rituals in preparation for the exhibition – sensitive cultural belongings

Tanzanian societies consider some of the sensitive cultural belongings that are presented or addressed in this exhibition to possess special power, and as such attach great significance to them. Representatives and descendants therefore stipulated that certain rituals had to be performed in Tanzania before they could be shown at the Humboldt Forum. Such rituals are intended to prevent the spiritual power of these “objects” from bringing misfortune.

While the curators obtained permission to present a number of originals in the exhibition, in other cases, permission was not granted, so the cultural belongings in question are not on display in the original. In consultation with the representatives they therefore commissioned true-to-scale drawings of the original, which then take its place in the exhibition. These drawings are made by the artist Amani Abeid.



1 Community Consent Conference in December 2023 at the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam. © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Photo: Nicholas Calvin Mwakatobe  
2 Community Consent Conference in December 2023 at the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam. Discussions about Cultural Belongings (here: Ruga Ruga Amulet) © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Photo: Nicholas Calvin Mwakatobe



## Exhibition design

The cultural belongings and artistic works are presented in large-scale architectural structures made of teak and bamboo. This protects the exhibits while at the same time providing an aesthetic sensory experience. Made of milulu grass, the mats laid on the floor are of the kind found in many houses in Tanzania.

The honeycomb structure divides the exhibition up into different “spheres” or “knots”. This picks up on the curatorial team’s idea of relating the history of Tanzania not in the singular but rather in the plurality of histories of the country and the societies living there. The “knots” connect the cultural belongings and their associated stories with historical events, time periods, and themes and thus also create space for (hi)stories that have not yet been recounted or heard.

**The design was developed by Architectural Pioneering Consultants, a company based in Dar es Salaam.**

# ARTISTIC PERSPECTIVES

## Colonial photography

Photography is an invention of the 19th century, a period when European colonialism was at its height. The new medium proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of the colonisers, who used it to produce images that tended to reinforce racist stereotypes. Black people, for example, were photographed against their will or depicted in dehumanizing ways, whilst white people presented themselves as powerful and superior.

The landscapes shown in the photos are often empty of people, suggesting that the land was unused and free to be occupied. In this way, photography also served to justify colonial exploitation. To this day, these early photos influence our perceptions of Black and white people as well as of the societies on the African continent.

In order to demonstrate the problematic nature of colonial photography and racist representation, the Ugandan artist Charity Atukunda has undertaken a critical reworking of such images. In collaboration with the artist Liz Kobusinge and the poet Gloria Kiconco, she has created an installation and several zines (self-published magazines). In addition, zines created by school students investigate some of the historical and contemporary photos that surround us in our everyday lives.

Through *Context Not Available* the artists Charity Atukunda, Liz Kobusinge, and Gloria Kiconco ponder the afterlife of colonial-era photography from East Africa that was created by Germany as propaganda to justify colonialism. In this work they propose the burial of these harmful ideas and involve the audience in the three ritual stages of death – the wake, remembrance, and interment – which are represented in each of the circular windows.

*The wake*: After death but before burial, a fire is lit as a signal and invitation to hold space and observe the loss. The audience is asked to hold space for the grieved by being present and compassionate, and by observing the colonial wound. In remembrance, they commemorate those who resisted colonialism. In interment, the audience is asked to recognize the ‘imagistic trap’ as the effect photographs have on viewers when they are presented without context, leading them to believe what they see, and to understand how colonial photography continues to perpetuate injustice by limiting people’s imagination and understanding of Africans.

The artists encourage the audience to take a zine as a companion piece to the three stations and to carry it home as an act and symbol of remembrance.

## Film

Teams led by film-makers Nicholas Calvin Mwakatobe and Tara followed the process of developing the exhibition, which features numerous photographs of the places the cultural belongings originated from and interviews with representatives from Tanzania.

## Comic-strip stories and illustrations

The exhibition includes four stories, conceived in comic-strip form and drawn on A4 paper by artist Amani Abeid, that appeal not only to adults but also to teenage visitors. Based on historical material and presented as fictional illustrations executed by the artist, they tell the stories of the following cultural belongings: the *kigiiya* figure, the chair of a female dignitary from Urughu, a coin from Kilwa, and the pipe of the ruler Mirambo. The comic strips feature in the exhibition as A4 blocks: visitors are invited to take individual pages home with them.

For the exhibition, Abeid also made a number of portraits and illustrations of community representatives and the descendants of those who originally owned the cultural belongings. In addition to this, he produced representations of cultural belongings that are not to be put on public display, such as his *The Heroes of the Maji Maji War of Resistance* (2024). This work gives a face to the people who joined forces to fight in the Maji Maji War against the exploitation and oppression imposed by the German colonisers. His work explores the diverse nature of Tanzanian society, reflecting on the past, present, and future of the country.



# RELATIONS AND TRADE: A SOUTHERN GLOBAL WORLD

East Africa plays an important role in world history. Between around 3000 BCE and 1000 CE, a complex mosaic of languages and societies emerged as a result of interactions between hunter-gatherers, livestock herders, and crop farmers. The integration of the region into the Indian Ocean trading network was central to its history. The movement of peoples, ideas, and things led to a global world developing in the South long before European colonial expansion started in the late 15th century.

Towards the end of the millennium, towns arose on the East African coast between southern Somalia and northern Mozambique. These towns helped to promote trade between the ocean and the interior of the country and developed into powerful city-states. Natural products such as gold, iron, ivory, turtleshell, ambergris, quartz, mangrove stakes, and wood came from East Africa.

Enslaved people were also “traded” overseas. Goods such as diverse textiles, frankincense and other incense, copper wares, porcelain, and glass were imported from the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf Region, India, and China.

The golden age of the coastal towns lasted from the 13th to the early 16th centuries. Their inhabitants developed a cosmopolitan culture, and were open to foreign peoples and cultures. They adopted the Muslim religion from as early as the 8th century. And by the 13th century the main pillars of their culture had been established: Islam, coral stone architecture, and the Kiswahili language. Since the late 19th century the inhabitants have been known as Swahili (coast dwellers), a term derived from the Arabic sawāḥil (coasts).

## The cosmopolitan culture of the Indian Ocean

This fragment of a relief is an expression of the cosmopolitan culture of the Indian Ocean and the East African coast. Aesthetics played an important role here. The 14th-century relief was produced in a workshop in the city of Khambhat, which is now in the Indian state of Gujarat. It served as the side wall of a Muslim cenotaph (a monument or tomb in honour of a person who is buried elsewhere). A slab that had originally been made in the 10th century as the threshold for an Indian temple (either Hindu or Jain) was reused for this purpose.

Similar marble pieces were exported from Khambhat to all around the coast of the Indian Ocean, from the islands of South-East Asia to the sultanates of Kilwa and Mogadishu in East Africa (now southern Tanzania and southern Somalia respectively). The colonial plunder of these works can also be reconstructed: the German plantation owner Bernhard Perrot removed this section of the broken panel from an area known as Tombs of the Kilwa Sultans and sent it to Berlin’s ethnological museum, then known as the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde. The other section was found during an archaeological excavation in the 1960s and is now held by the National Museum of Tanzania.



## Martaban: the shipping containers of the global trade

The portugese expansion connected the Atlantic with the Indian Ocean for the first time. The “shipping containers” of what had become global trade were storage vessels called Martaban jars, named after a town in today’s Myanmar. They were used to transport provisions for the journey as well as fragile goods and preserved food for trade. Martaban jars are still found today in Portuguese and Dutch shipwrecks, in various locations along the Swahili coast, in Mozambique, India, South-East Asia, China, Türkei, and even in North America.



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL UPHEAVALS

In the 19th century, the capitalist world market expanded into the interior of Africa. In East Africa and the western Indian Ocean this expansion was initially driven by regional actors – only later did European powers come into play. The Sultanate of Oman established a new sultanate on Zanzibar that subjected the East African coastal region to a loose form of control. The caravans of Arab and East African traders, often backed by Indian financiers, travelled further westwards until they reached the Upper Congo basin. Their main commodity was ivory, which was in great demand in Europe.

The region went through a period of political and socio-economic upheavals. The porters for the caravans, as well as the armed troops that protected them, came from local segments of the population. Powerful figures in the interior of modern-day Tanzania gained wealth and influence through trade connections. The trade in enslaved people grew, and imports of firearms soared.



## Kilimatinde door

Kilimatinde is located in Tanzania's Singida region, at a distance of 94 kilometres to the country's capital, Dodoma. Before German colonial occupation in East Africa, the long-distance caravan route stopped in Kilimatinde on the way to Tabora and Lake Tanganyika. Later, during German colonial rule, Kilimatinde became the colonialists' boma, or military station. By the 19th century, Kilimatinde had opened up to the outside world through trade routes and contacts.

The Kilimatinde door was produced in 1900 by a Swahili carpenter from Mdaburo called Songoro. It was then acquired in 1901 by Georg Hermann Küster, a captain in the German East Africa

colonial army, and donated to Berlin's ethnological museum, the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde.

The Swahili doors (mlango in Kiswahili) were developed on the Swahili coast and peaked in the 19th century as Swahili architecture made by Swahili craftsmen. These doors were predominantly found in trading towns and cities on the East African coast such as Bagamoyo, Zanzibar, Mikindani, Tanga, Lamu, and Malindi. Further inland in Tanzania, the doors featured in Ujiji, Tabora, and Moshi, which were once on the caravan trade routes to the coast. The Sultan of Zanzibar, Sultan Barghash bin Said (1870–1888), imported Swahili doors to his palace in Muscat, Oman.

## Mirambo's power

Mtyela Kasanda, also known as Mirambo (c. 1840–1884), was an important ruler of the Nyamwezi people who bore the title ntemi. He ruled over a large area that extended from Lake Victoria across what is now central Tanzania to Lake Tanganyika. He controlled numerous trade routes and was particularly successful as an ivory dealer. Mirambo purchased goods such as firearms and ammunition from his profits. His hold on power was ensured by the ruga-ruga, a feared group of armed henchmen.

At the beginning of the period of colonial expansion, East African rulers like Mirambo – who, according to museum documents, was the owner of this pipe – were far more powerful than colonial actors. The latter included Hermann von

Wissmann, who had no resources at his disposal when he met Mirambo in the early 1880s. Mirambo helped Wissmann and his companions, supplying them with money and bartering goods that enabled them to reach the East African coast. According to Wissmann, Mirambo gave him this pipe and Pomery & Greno champagne from France as a token of his goodwill. Mirambo's generous gifts are a sign of his confidence in his position, which allowed him to act as Wissmann's patron.

Under Mirambo's successors, the state began to disintegrate until German colonizing forces finally broke the power of the batemi (the plural form of ntemi) in the 1890s. As the "governor" of "German East Africa" (1895/96), Wissmann was

responsible, among other things, for the violent enforcement of colonial rule in East Africa.



1 Kilimatinde door; © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Photo: Timo Weißberg  
2 Pipe; © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Photo: Nina Bätzing

# CONQUEST AND RESISTANCE

Colonial expansion and control, marked by violence and terror, defined the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Tanzania. European powers, particularly Germany, sought dominance through military force and strategic manipulation, prompting significant acts of resistance. The Germans implemented harsh direct rule and, where challenged, fell back on indirect rule using local leaders as puppets.

Brutal campaigns, forced relocations, and heavy taxes sparked resistance. Land confiscations displaced communities, destroying livelihoods. Efforts to suppress the Indigenous culture included banning traditional practices and supporting Christian missions. Women played crucial roles in resisting oppression. The violent legacy of colonialism continues to affect the political, economic, and social dynamics in former colonies, influencing global relations and shaping debates about justice and compensation.

## Ngoma Kuu

The Ngoma Kuu (Great Drum) belonged to the people of the village of Winde on the Mrima Coast, which stretches from the Kenyan border to the Rufiji Delta. According to the Kiswahili inscriptions in Arabic letters, the Ngoma Kuu belonged to the majumbe (the title of high-ranking Swahili dignitaries) of Winde. It was used as a symbol of power in rituals and ceremonies in the Swahili coastal societies. The Ngoma Kuu was played in the presence of the jumbe (sing. of majumbe) and his subordinates (maakida) during Islamic religious holidays, festive rites, and community rituals and to mourn the death of leaders.

The Ngoma Kuu was most probably appropriated during resistance efforts between 1888 and 1890, led by the coastal rulers and traders Bwana Heri bin Juma and Bushiri Bin Salim in opposition to the German colonizers. German soldiers invaded Winde twice after naval attacks and destroyed the village and the jumbe's residence in 1888. Ismael of Winde is believed to have been killed during the attacks.

In 1897, the Ngoma Kuu was sent to Berlin's royal ethnological museum, the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, by Hermann von Wissmann, the former captain of a military unit that bore his name, which fought against the resistance troops of Bwana Heri and Bushiri. Traditionally, the Ngoma Kuu was passed down through the lineage of the coastal Swahili leaders. Its loss during the war signifies the fall of the coastal leadership and brought danger and calamity to the people of Mrima north of Bagamoyo.



## Makunganya: a powerful trader

"Eight iron bullets. Mavudji. Hassan bin Omari." This was the description in the general catalogue of Berlin's then royal ethnological museum, the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde. Hassan bin Omari, known as Makunganya, was one of the most influential traders in what is today south-eastern Tanzania. He controlled the caravan routes from Lake Nyasa to the coast that were used for trading enslaved people and ivory. Like several other East African traders he initially profited from the capitalist expansion. Although he long resisted German colonial ambitions, 500 soldiers from the German colonial army went to war in 1895 with the aim of destroying him.

Makunganya was executed along with many of his advisors and followers, his residence was demolished and his correspondence and possessions confiscated – including these projectiles. Hans Glauning, a member of the

military, donated them to the museum in 1896. The actual weapons used by the local population to fight German troops had been produced in Europe and then exported; however, these are not represented in the museum's holdings. They did not conform to the image of African societies having no history of their own, and as such the ethnologists found them uninteresting.

So why did Makunganya's ammunition, of all things, end up in Berlin? Perhaps the German military saw the bullets as trophies? They are testament to the bloody war that the colonizers waged against the East African population and their political and economic elite. Moreover, they show that the people of East Africa actively shaped their own history.

1 Bullets; © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum

## Chair of the female chief of Urughu

In the 19th century, the Kimbu community (in the present-day Singida region) was led by a female chief known as Mwana Mgandu. This chair belonged to her and served as a repository of spiritual power for the Kimbu community. It also symbolized the pre-eminent position of Mwana Mgandu, who lived in Urughu (a place name that literally means “battlefield” in the Kimbu language). It is embellished with lavish decorations to signify her royal status, power, and authority. The chair also betokens the presence of the ancestors, who protected Mwana Mgandu from her enemies and safeguarded the Kimbu community as a whole.

At a 2023 conference at the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam, Chief Ndovu Sengi (today the paramount chief of Singida), reported that there had been disputes between the Nyamwezi, Kimbu, and others. After a period of war, they fled to Singida Iramba, where they established their chiefdom and built a fort in Urughu; they made this chair for their protection. The Germans colonizers found out about the chair and were told that it would not be simple to conquer and rule Kimbu under Mwana Mgandu because of its power. But they started a war nonetheless and killed Mwana Mgandu, her mother, and the people in the palace.

Since then, life has been difficult for the Kimbu. While their descendants die, their collective trauma is increasing day by day because the members of the community live away from their ancestors (as embodied by the chair). Those whose ancestors survived the war still perform their rituals in the area, but without the chair it is not the same as it was



in Mwana Mgandu’s time. Her family’s descendants have given their consent for the chair to be displayed on two conditions: that cleansing rituals are conducted

before the exhibition, and that the chair is returned after the exhibition – to mitigate their loss and alleviate the difficulties they have experienced in life.

1 Comic by the Tanzanian artist Amani Abeid; © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Artist: Amani Abeid

# COLONIAL POWER RELATIONSHIPS – DESTRUCTION, EXPLOITATION, RESISTANCE

Germany and Tanzania share a long history with respect to economic, diplomatic, and cultural matters. Their connection initially took the form of exploitive colonialism when Germany took violent control of Tanzania after the 1884/1885 Berlin Conference on East Africa, which had regulated the partitioning of Africa by European powers. The representatives of the German East Africa Company, including its founder Carl Peters, used fraudulent and extortionate practices to establish “German East Africa”.

The colony was made up of various societies, which presented challenges for its effective economic exploitation and rule. The harsh labour and tax policies imposed by Germany led to significant social changes and continuous resistance, including the Maji Maji War of 1905–1907. The protagonists’ recollection of their acts of resistance, as well as the memories of specific events, victims, and practices that may be associated with the “objects” on display, continue to be part of the store of knowledge in these societies.

## The Maji Maji war of resistance (1905–1907)

*“Cotton uprooting was caused by our bitterness at the rule of suffering. The purpose was to exasperate him [the German] and make him come to war. It was not simply just to destroy the cotton but to bring war.”*

Mzee Elisei Simbanimoto Upunda,  
4 September 1967, Nandete

Frustration and despair was felt by many of those who suffered from the exploitative German system. Matumbi and Ngindo chiefs and traditional healers called on their people to fight the Germans and their collaborators, and the movement spread like wildfire to a number of societies including the Mwera, Ngoni, Ndendeule, Bena, Sangu, and others in the southern half of today’s Tanzania. They challenged the forceful exploitation by German colonialists in terms of how they should live, what they should produce (i.e. cotton), and who they should worship. The war took its name from the use of a “medicine” concocted from water, maize, and sorghum seed that was believed to make the recipient immune to bullets. The German forces responded with the greatest possible brutality by means of a “scorched earth” policy. Recent sources believe that up to 300,000 Africans died during and after the war.

## Medicine bag

The history of this bag containing 96 medical items is connected with the resistance shown by the East African population during the Maji Maji War (1905–1907). The bag (nkoba) is connected to the traditional Indigenous knowledge and spiritual faith that southern Tanzanian communities employed before and during the Maji Maji War. Its original owner was a healer in the south of Tanzania.

Among the healers whose name is known was Kinjeketile Ngwale Bokelo, who became a key figure in the Maji Maji War on account of his prophecies and his preparation of sacred water (maji). The war was named after a “medicine” concocted from water, maize, and sorghum seed that was believed to make the recipient immune to bullets.

In 1905, Kinjeketile Ngwale was hunted down by the German colonial army and taken prisoner; on 4 August of the same year he was executed in Mohoro, where this medicine bag came into the possession of the Germans. Kinjeketile was buried by German soldiers at

Mwamba Mkuu near the Mohoro River, but the grave was swept away when the Rufiji River flooded. In 1907, the colonial division of the German Foreign Office had the bag sent to Berlin’s then royal ethnological museum, the Königlich-Museum für Völkerkunde, as the “spoils of war”. It was recorded in the main catalogue of the time under the racist and derogatory description: “Sack made of animal skin with a magician’s utensils”.



1 Medicine bag; © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Photo: Martin Franken



## Rukonge and the violence against kigiilya

This kigiilya's scars testify to its violent appropriation. Omukama Rukonge, ruler of the Kerebe, lived together with those loyal to him on the island of Bukerebe in Lake Victoria. In 1895, the German colonial army waged a war against Rukonge and the island's population, in the course of which soldiers destroyed his residence, Bukindo. This was where the figure of the kigiilya was kept. Its exceptional importance to Rukonge meant that it was guarded particularly closely.

When the residence was ransacked the figure was looted and subsequently displayed in the White Fathers Catholic mission station on Bukerebe. A group of believers beat the figure – probably with sticks and machetes – and mutilated it, presumably in order to show the inhabitants of Bukerebe that their overthrown ruler was powerless.

In 1897, Paul Kollmann, a member of the colonial army, took possession of the badly damaged figure and presented

the looted kigiilya as a “gift” to Berlin's then royal ethnological museum, the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde*. European missionaries likewise benefited from Rukonge's deposal and said so in no uncertain terms: “We used this opportunity to gain a foothold on the island. Here, too, instilling a fear of the Germans was the precursor to a fear of the wrath of the Lord.”

\*Quotation from Pater O. Smoor, in *Annalen der Afrikaansche Missien*, 1901, p. 298

1 Comic by the Tanzanian artist Amani Abeid; © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Artist: Amani Abeid

# INDEPENDENCE AND THE CREATION OF THE NATION STATE

After Germany's defeat in World War I, a period of British colonial rule began in 1918/19. The effects of the war in East Africa were catastrophic, with an estimated one million deaths among the East African population. The people of Tanganyika achieved their independence in 1961, and this was followed by unification with Zanzibar in 1964 to form the "United Republic of Tanzania".

Tanzania's first president, Julius K. Nyerere, developed the socialist concept of Ujamaa (which means community or family) with the aim of promoting autonomy and social justice. The British had established a system of indirect rule that divided East African society into "tribal" groups. Nyerere abolished this system along with the racist categorization into Europeans, Asians, and Africans. Kiswahili became the official language. National policies after independence emphasized Tanzanian solidarity under the motto "Uhuru na Umoja" (freedom and unity).



## City Research

The project "City Research" is part of the exhibition "Histories of Tanzania", which can be seen at the Humboldt Forum from November 29th 2024. Two groups of students - one in Berlin and one in Dar es Salaam - researched in Berlin and Dar es Salaam and looked at traces of colonialism that are visible today. This includes, for example, buildings, monuments or street names. In Tanzania, many (re)names were already initiated after independence in the 1960s but many buildings of colonial times are still present; in Germany, renaming of streets have been discussed for a long time and are currently partly being implemented. The students research led to creating short films about their findings. In their examination of the colonial city heritage, interviews with self-selected experts, personal positions of themselves as well

as critical questions about the remembrance of colonialism are convening. The films will be presented in "Histories of Tanzania" at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin and complement the mostly adult voices in the exhibiton. The project is a link between the current debates on the legacy of German colonialism in Tanzania and Germany. It raises questions of how to remember colonial past in the presence, what changes are needed and how a future generation should be included in debates about remembrance.

## Songs of independence

Musical milestones and historical photos give insights about Tanzania's history after it gained independence from colonial rule. The music excerpts date from the period between 1960 and 2013. The drawers of this console can be opened in order to listen to samples of music from across the decades and read anecdotes from musician John Kitime, who selected the songs.

John Kitime was born in 1955 in Ininga, a town on the Tanzanian mainland. He has been a musician since the 1960s and was a member of several famous Tanzanian bands. He now runs a music archive and lives in Dar es Salaam.



1 Still from the Film „Train“ by Sharif Chacha, Mwanaid Janabi, Nickson Nelson, Rachel Nenula and Myles Rajab as part of the school project „City Research“; © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss / Elnora Gerson, Nickson Nelson, Collin Chipaka, Richard Magumba  
2 John Kitime; © John Kitime

# EVENTS, WORKSHOP AND GUIDED TOUR



## Guided tour

The guided tour of the exhibition provides insights into the origin stories of the items on display, examines questions of restitution, and sheds light on how museums are now dealing with cultural belongings. The tour includes a look at current debates, e.g. on politics after Tanzanian independence or the renaming of streets with names dating to the colonial era.

**More information:**  
[humboldtforum.org/en/guided-tour/histories-of-tanzania](https://humboldtforum.org/en/guided-tour/histories-of-tanzania)

## Workshop

The workshop (World) Images: Reading Colonial Photography focuses on the colonial period in former German East Africa as a means of engaging with historical colonial photography. Participants will make zines (folded magazines) that will feature as part of a growing installation in the exhibition.

**More information:**  
[humboldtforum.org/en/workshop-en/weltbilder](https://humboldtforum.org/en/workshop-en/weltbilder)

## Brochure

A 50-page brochure produced in German simple language makes the exhibition accessible to visitors with learning difficulties. It presents a selection of the exhibition texts in simple language and copious visual material.

## Events on the opening weekend

A diverse programme of events accompanies the exhibition, with a focus on the opening weekend. Films, dance performances, communal eating, photography and VR presentations, concerts, and workshops on the East African game of bao present contemporary artistic positions from Tanzania and the Tanzanian diaspora. The Tanzanian artists reflect critically on the long shadows cast by the colonial era and formulate visions of the future that transcend colonial narratives. Audiences will gain insights into the current debates, aesthetics, and strategies of cultural (re)appropriation and get a taste of the dynamic, young, burgeoning cultural scene in Dar es Salaam, one of the world's fastest-growing metropolises.

**More information about the programme:**  
[humboldtforum.org/en/exhibition/geschichten-tansanias](https://humboldtforum.org/en/exhibition/geschichten-tansanias)

1 African Cosmology; © Fue66o  
2 Still from the film „WonDarLand“; © Mathieu Nieto



# HISTORIES OF TANZANIA

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Duration	<b>Until 24.11.2025</b>
Location	<b>Room 211 and 212 (2nd Floor)</b>
Opening hours	<b>Wed–Mon: 10:30–18:30, last admission 17:30; Tuesdays closed</b>
Admission	<b>Free</b>
Information	<b>Humboldt Forum Schloßplatz, 10178 Berlin T +49 30-99 211 89 89 humboldtforum.org</b>
Curatorial Team	<b>Achiles Bufure, National Museum of Tanzania Paola Ivanov, Ethnologisches Museum – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Flower Manase, National Museum of Tanzania Balthazar Nyamusya, National Museum of Tanzania Maike Schimanowski, Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss Jocelyne Stahl, Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss Kristin Weber-Sinn, Zentralarchiv – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin</b>
Press Images	<b><a href="https://humboldtforum.org/en/press">humboldtforum.org/en/press</a></b>
Press Contacts	<b>Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss</b>  <b>Michael Mathis, Spokesperson</b> T +49 30 265 950-525 <a href="mailto:michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org">michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org</a>  <b>Hendrik von Boxberg, Project PR</b> T +49 177 737 92 07 <a href="mailto:presse@von-boxberg.de">presse@von-boxberg.de</a>  <b>Andrea Brandis, Press Officer</b> T +49 30 265 950-237 <a href="mailto:andrea.brandis@humboldtforum.org">andrea.brandis@humboldtforum.org</a>  <b>Staatliche Museen zu Berlin</b>  <b>Timo Weißberg, Press Officer Dahlem</b> T +49 30 266 42 6803 <a href="mailto:t.weissberg@smb.spk-berlin.de">t.weissberg@smb.spk-berlin.de</a> <a href="https://smb.museum.de">smb.museum.de</a> ; <a href="https://preussischer-kulturbesitz.de">preussischer-kulturbesitz.de</a>

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The exhibition is a collaboration between the National Museum of Tanzania, the Ethnologisches Museum, and the Zentralarchiv (Central Archive) of the Staatliche Museen Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss.

The exhibition is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.