

A GUIDE TO THE ZANZIBAR NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Background Information:

The Zanzibar Archives are one of the oldest and richest Archives in the East Africa region. Though initial efforts were taken right from the beginning of the 20th Century for the care of the records, it was not until 1954 that the Archives emerged as an independent institution with full responsibilities of preserving Zanzibar records.

Traditionally, the activities were run jointly with Museum under the auspices of the Peace Memorial Museum built after the World War 1.

The First Professional Archivist - Mr. Thompson was appointed in 1955. Thereafter, the Zanzibar Archive's were building up their activities very well and the purpose - built building was completed in 1963.

After a number of years of negligence and mismanagement, the Government realised past mistakes and the possible danger of losing one of her most important and un-recoverable treasures. In 1983 they started to accord full support to the Archives. Consequently, two international salvage workshops were carried out in 1984 and 1985 attended by Archivists and Conservators from East Africa and other commonwealth countries, which proved to be great landmarks to the Archives' achievements in recent years. Then in 1987 The Department of Archive Museums and Antiquities was formed under the Directorship of Mr. H. H. Omar.

The Archives have managed to collect many records from various Gov't ministries. These are well preserved, listed and easily accessible. According to the 1988 Act, the role of the Archives has been well defined and extended to include records management.

Under this Law the Archives have the legal and sole mandate for the care and preservation of all Zanzibar records.

Content:

In view of Zanzibar importance as the 19th century commercial and historical empire and centre of administration for the whole region, the Archives possesses very important and basic material for the study of 19th century European contact with Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika as well as Zanzibar's own history. There are also a few Arabic correspondence earlier than pre-19th century which prove beyond doubt the contact between Zanzibar and Arabian World, as well as records on the famous East Africa Slave Trade, explorers and missionaries.

The Archives' records include many subjects, languages etc. including:

Arabic Manuscripts and Books:

Five hundred and twenty six (526) copies of manuscripts and books date back to the 17th century and relate to various subjects such as astronomy, astrology, history, local medicine etc.

Arabic Correspondence 1844 - 1964:

Mainly Sultans' official correspondence the local and with foreign powers. Legal contracts, treaties, records from the palace, trade and other transactions.

Consular Records 1841 - 1890:

Original correspondence of the Consul and Consul-General from 1841 when the first British Representative arrived in Zanzibar. Including correspondence to and from Bombay, India, The Coast, Mombasa and Lamu Vice Consulate etc.

Protectorate Records 1890 - 1914:

Correspondence of Foreign and the Colonial office, the First Minister and Zanzibar Government as well as material of Imperial British East Africa Company E. Africa Protectorate, Vice-Consulates of Dar es Salaam and Pemba, Foreign Representatives and the Board of Trade London.

German Records 1833 - 1914:

Correspondence of the Consulate of the Hanseatic League, Northern German Federation and the Consulate of the German Empire and the Bearmen Imperial records on various matters.

International Maritime Bureau (IMB)

1892 - 1905:

Registers of ships. IMB was established at Zanzibar for the Centralization of Information on the slave Trade.

(All records are in French).

Records of Explorers and Missionary

1848 - 1925:

Archives and documents on various 19th Century expeditions mostly started in Zanzibar to the interior of E. Africa by I. Krapf and J. Rebman who were the first European to see Mts. Kilimanjaro and Kenya and were founders of the E. Africa mission of the Church Missionary Society. There are also records of Speke and Burton on their discovery of the River Nile and on Livingstone who is probably the best known of the Regions' explorers.

Church Records:

Mainly a collection of University mission to Central Africa (UMCCA) including a register of the English cemeteries in the region.

Secretariat Records 1914 - 1962:

In 1941 the Secretariat office was established as the centre for all communication and records. These cover widespread subjects relating to the Zanzibar Protectorate.

Contemporary Records 1962 -

These are accruing records of post independence era covering all ministries and other government institutions.

Photographs:

Photographs relating to Zanzibar including former sultans, British and Foreign officials, famous and historically important persons, the slave trade, and other post independence affairs.

Maps and Plans 1846 -

Old and contemporary maps and plans mainly on Zanzibar and some E. African countries covering a range of fields, areas and periods.

Stamps:

Old stamps of Zanzibar and other countries with an accruing collection of recent stamps of Zanzibar and Tanzania.

Family History 1879 -

Registers of Births, deaths and marriages.

Gazette and Newspapers 1892 -

Copies of Zanzibar newspapers including official Gazetes. Also official Publications of E. Africa and other countries.

Private Papers:

Small collection of former Zanzibar officials such as Sir John Gray, J.T. Last, Spurrier, Ruete as well as miscellaneous papers of private organizations.

Other Activities:**Conservation Unit:**

Mainly for in house repair and restoration of Old Manuscripts and other damaged materials.

Exhibition Room:

Standing and periodic displays of selected copies of manuscripts, photographs, maps and other material from the Archive's collection are mounted for public viewing.

Library:

The Zanzibari and East African collection has been reserved in the Search Room for the purpose of providing basic information and insight to researchers on various subjects relevant to their research.

Search Room:

Guide and lists are comprehensive. A Photocopy service and microfilm reader are available. On request all queries must be handled by authorised staff only.

Access:

The Archives operates under the 30 years rule and access is free to everybody subject to archives regulations.

The Chief Archivist and Director of the National Archives Museums and Tourism is
Mr. H. H. Omar.

For Further Information Write to:

The Head of the Zanzibar National Archives,
P.O. Box 116,
Zanzibar - Tanzania,
Tel. 30342

Hours of Opening:

Monday - Saturday 7.30 a.m. - 2.30 p.m.
Friday 7.30 a.m. - 12 noon

Location:

Situated at Kilimani about one and a half km from city centre closer to Mafunzo.