The Coat of Arms

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THE COAT OF ARMS

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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE AFRICAN NATIONS PART 3: ARMS UTILISING AFRICAN SHIELD TYPES

ROLF SUTTER, Ph.D., A.I.H.

Abstract

The description of the coats of arms and national emblems of the African nations is concluded with an account of the thirteen states which have to a greater or lesser degree been inspired by European heraldry but combined with African shield types.

Figure 1: the countries included in this, the final part of the series on the emblems of the nations of the African continent.

Figure 2: peoples and ethnic diversity on the African Continent based on George Murdock's *Ethnic Map* of 1959, public domain.

Introduction — African shield shapes and symbols

Africa is characterized by an impressive variety of ethnicities, peoples, and cultures **(Figure 2**). A precise determination of the number of indigenous tribes proves to be problematic due to the blurred separation of the terms "ethnicity" and "people" in a culture which manifests great dynamism and complexity.

According to recent estimates, there are more than 3,000 different ethnic groups living in Africa, each characterized by their unique language, traditions, and customs. They are as wide ranging as the Berbers in North Africa, the Yoruba in West Africa, the Maasai in East Africa, the San (Bushmen) and the Zulu in Southern Africa, to name only a few.

Shield shape and function

Few parts of the world offer such a wealth of shield shapes as Africa, where shields have been used both for military and everyday purposes. Just as in Europe, they have been accorded spiritual and mythological significance, and symbolic aspects.[1] The dimensions and composition of these shields, along with their paintings and motifs, provide valuable insights into their intended use. The non-military uses of shields in Africa have seen them playing an important role in ceremonies such as rain making, harvest blessing, weddings, funerals, spirit summoning, the expulsion of spirits, and dance. There have also existed special shields for warriors, wizards, fortune tellers and rulers. In **Figures 3** and **4** are illustrated some of the distinctive African shield types, some of which have a very long history. The Berber shield, for instance, dates back to ancient Roman times.

The dominant shield shape in southern and eastern Africa is the *Nguni* shield (**Figure 4),** an oval pointed shield which has many variants. Almost half of the nations (six out of thirteen), covered in this article have based their national emblems on this shield type. The Nguni people are historically a multi-ethnic Bantu speaking group which migrated to southern Africa in the remote past. There are more than 500 Bantu languages which are spoken by approximately 240 million people, or 30% of the African population. In South Africa, the historic Nguni kingdoms of the Ndebele, the Swazi, the Xhosa, and the Zulu are located in today's southern and eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. The most notable of these kingdoms is the Zulu Kingdom, ruled in the early nineteenth century by the warrior king Shaka. He further dominated the Xhosa Kingdom, that had long been in existence by the seventeenth century. Zulu shields are richly symbolic, being of different sizes depending on the rank of their bearer, and made of cowhide stretched on a wooden frame. Their characteristic patterns and colours not only serve as symbols of protection, but are also an expression of social affiliation, and of position in society.

[1] Leo Frobenius, *Der Ursprung der Kultur*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1898).

Figure 3: shields mainly from northern, western and central Africa. Top row, left: Berber shield of the Maghreb, northern Sahara, Adarga people, source Wikimedia Commons; top centre: Tutsi dancing shield from Rwanda, public domain; top right: Igbo wicker shield from Nigeria, source Musée Dapper; bottom row, left: Wandala shield from the Central African Republic, public domain; bottom centre: Dinka shield, Somba, Sudan, public domain; bottom right: Tuareg shield made of antelope skin, Saharan, Algeria 1120x710mm, source The Mary Ruth Weisel endowment for Africa, Oceania and the Americas, Minneapolis Institute of Art, item no. 2016.27.

Figure 4: shields of eastern and southern Africa. Top row, left: Zulu shield from South Africa, 775x438mm, source Horniman Museum no. 1969.403; top centre: Tswana shield made of cow hide from southern Africa, 966x533mm, source Horniman Museum no. 3.315; top right: Nguni type shield donated by Sir Apolo Kagwa, former Prime Minister of the kingdom of Buganda in Uganda in 1902, 676x302mm, source Horniman Museum no. 8.3. 50/30; bottom row, left: Somali shield 310mm, source Horniman Museum no. nn763; bottom centre: Turkana shield made of hippo hide, Uganda 930x378mm, source Horniman Museum no. 2016.36; bottom right: Ethiopian Amhara shield, nineteenth century, 450mm, public domain.

Adornments and shield decoration

The native flora and fauna which can be found in African heraldry include:

Fauna: Buffalo, Horse, Quagga (extinct), Roan antelope, Zebra, Eland antelope, Kudu antelope, Bontebok antelope, Ugandan Kob, Rhinoceros, Elephant, Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Lizard, Crocodile, Parrot, Crowned crane, Crested Crane, Secretary bird, Shuebill, Widowbird, Falcon, Faucet, Cassowary, and African fish eagle.

Flora: Palm tree, Baobab tree, Thorntree, Strelitzia, Aloe plant, Orange River Lily, Barberton Daisy, Sorghum plant, Coffee plant.

Gods: From the world of mythology can be found the gods Olorun of the Yoruba religion and Unkulunkulu of the Zulu religion; while from the world of everyday objects are used the spear, knobkerrie, machete, drum, bongo, basket, beehive and gourd.

Republic of Botswana

British Protectorate as Bechuanaland	March 31, 1885
Independence from Great Britain	September 30, 1966
Coat of arms adopted	January 25, 1966

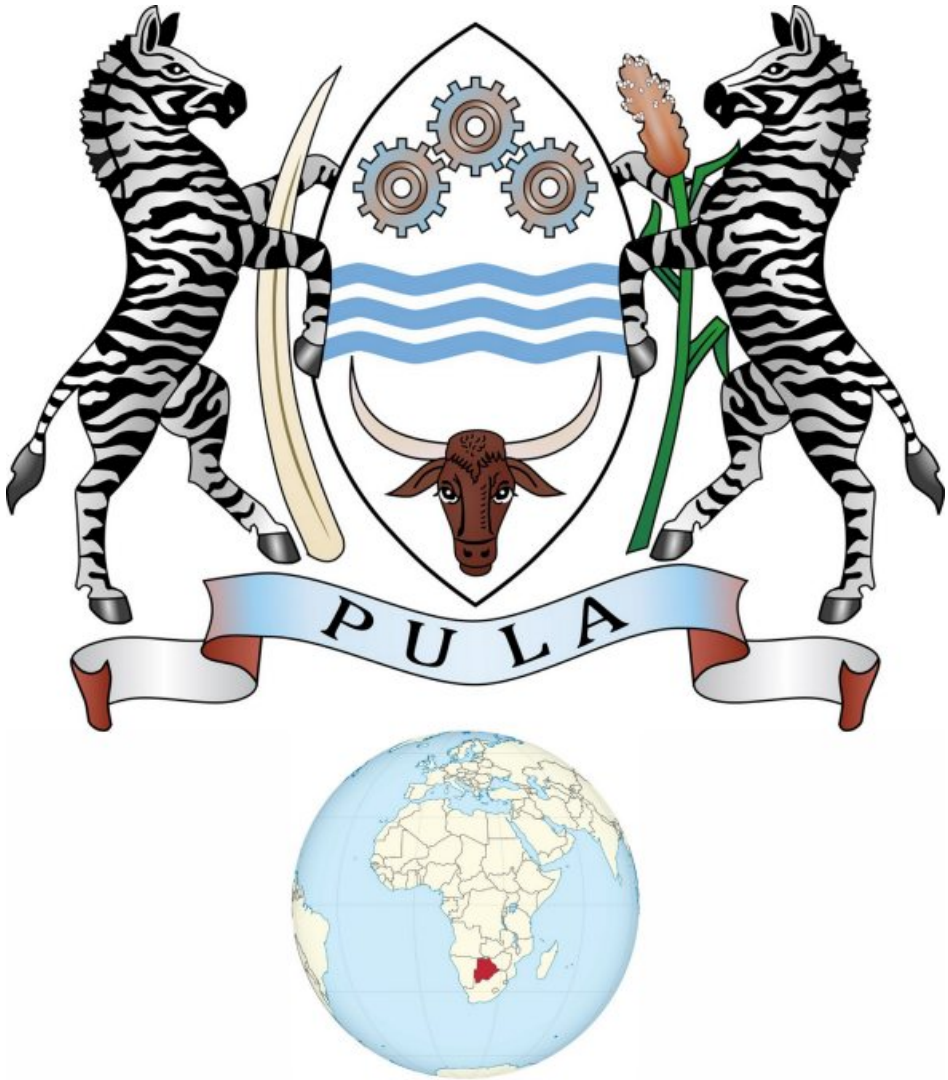

Figure 5: coat of arms of the Republic of Botswana and the location of Botswana on the globe: Wikimedia Commons.

Official description (Figure 5)[2]

Blazon: *Argent three barrulets wavy in fesse azure (Botswana blue) between in chief three cogwheels azure (Botswana blue), one above engaged with two below; in base a brown bull's head caboshed proper.*
Supporters: *on either side a zebra the dexter supporting a white elephant's tusk, the sinister a green stalk of sorghum and brown sorghum head with white grains proper.*
Motto*: "Pula" in black on an azure (Botswana blue half-tone) scroll. The reverse side of the scroll is red.*

Explanation of symbolism

The three cog wheels represent mining and industry in Botswana. The three wavy blue bands in the centre represent the importance of the few rivers in the country. The bull's head is the traditional symbol of wealth, in a country where personal wealth has been seen in terms of cattle. The two Zebras, one supporting an Elephant's tusk, represent the natural fauna of the country which are so important for tourism, while the head of sorghum represents agriculture.
The motto "Pula" means "let there be rain", hence the colour of the scroll. Pula is both a greeting, and the name of the Botswanan currency.

History

The Tswana were a Bantu people from Central Africa who settled in this area around the year 400 AD, their tribal name being the origin of the current country name. A Tutsi society emerged which lasted for about a thousand years, until it was replaced by the rise of the Butwa kingdom in the fourteenth century. The Butwa were then ruled by various dynasties that lasted for over 400 years, culminating in the "Great Zimbabwe."

In the first half of the nineteenth century, conflicts and territorial disputes arose between the Boers, settled in the Cape region since the seventeenth century, and the British, who declared the region a British crown colony in 1806. In 1833 a ban on slavery, which was the livelihood of many Boers in the Cape region, having been enacted by the British Parliament, the Boers were induced to sek out new areas of settlement in the northern region from 1835 onwards. Despite a strong army, the Boers were unable to subdue the Tswana peoples, some of whose princes developed strong ties with the British Empire. In 1910, the British government attempted to unite the protectorate with the Union of South Africa, but the Tswana tribal chiefs successfully opposed this, and the plan was abandoned.

In the 1960s the colonial administration took steps to bring the country to independence through the establishment of a legislative and an executive council. The first elections that were free and open to voters were held in 1965, and in 1966 the country gained independence as the Democratic Republic of Botswana.

[2] Given in: "An Act to declare the Arms or Ensigns Armorial of Botswana, the National Flag of Botswana and the Standard of the President of Botswana; and to provide for matters incidental thereto", see botswanalaws.com.

Republic of Burundi

First contact by German missionaries and explorers	1856
German colony within German East Africa	1899-1916
Union of Ruanda-Urundi	1919/1920
Under Belgian and United Nations Governance	1922–1962
Independence from Belgium as a kingdom	July 1, 1962
Republic of Burundi, current emblem adopted	1966

Figure 6: emblem of the Republic of Botswana, Wikimedia Commons.

Description (Figure 6)[3]
Emblem: *On a shield gules bordered or a lion's face or*, the shield resting on three spears
Motto: *Unité, Travail, Progrès* (Unity, Work, Progress).

[3] As per article 11 of the national constitution of June 7, 2018.

Figure 7, left 7a: proposed coat of arms for German East Africa 1914; centre, 7b: location of Rwanda on the globe; right, 7c: coat of arms of the kingdom of Rwanda 1962-1966, all from Wikimedia Commons.

Explanation of symbolism

The current emblem is based on the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Burundi, used from 1962 to 1966 (**Figure 7c**), which was very similar to the current design. The main difference is that in the arms of the kingdom a royal karyenda drum between two green laurel branches was placed on top of the shield, the symbol of the mwami (king). The number of spears was four, corresponding to the ancient insignia of chiefs. The reduction of the number of spears to three in the modern coat of arms refers to the three main tribes, Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. The previous national motto *Ganza Sabwa*, in Kirundi means "(the Mwami) rule and rule."

History and former emblems

Rwanda and Burundi have common historical roots. The original population in these regions were the Twa, who were absorbed by agricultural Bantu-Huthu tribes from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries. In the fourteenth century Tutsi tribes established a kingdom called Banyarwanda on what was then a much larger territory in Rwanda, the majority of whose population also belonged to the agricultural Hutu people. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries pastoralist Tutsis from the northern region of what is now Rwanda migrated to the southern territory of Burundi. Although they were a minority they gained the upper hand due to falling Hutu crop yields. In around 1650 the Tutsis founded a Kingdom in Burundi and led most Hutu into feudal serfdom.

Beginning around 1856, European explorers and German missionaries began arriving in the area. In 1899, Burundi became part of German East Africa, for which arms were devised in 1914 which never came into use **(Figure 7a)**. Following the outbreak of the First World War, in 1916 Belgian troops occupied the area, and in 1923 the League of Nations transferred the territory to Belgium, which was administered with Rwanda (see below) as Rwanda-Urundi. Following the dissolution of the League of Nations in 1946 it became a United Nations trust territory, but still under Belgian administrative sovereignty. On January 20, 1959, Burundi's ruler Mwami Mwambutsa IV called for Burundi's independence from Belgium and the dissolution of the Rwanda-Urundi Union. In 1962 Burundi gained independence from Belgium and for four years the country was ruled by a monarchy until a Republic was declared in 1966.

Republic of Djibouti

French Colony	1896
Independence from France	June 27, 1977
Emblem adopted	1977

Figure 8, left, 8a: emblem of the Republic of Djibouti; top right, 8b: Location of Djibouti on the globe, both from Wikimedia Commons; bottom right, 8c, a typical regional shield, repeated from figure 4.

Description (Figure 8a)[4]

A central shield (or) surmounting a spear, the shield and the spear flanked by two hands, each holding a traditional Djibouti dagger; in chief a five-pointed-star (gules), the whole surrounded by a laurel wreath. The official description includes no mention of colours.

Explanation of symbolism[5]

Unusually, the symbolism is described by statute in the following manner: the laurel wreath shall represent peace granted to the Djibouti people after the victory obtained during the attainment of independence on 27 June 1977. The shield, the spear, and the star shall symbolize defence of the national sovereignty and integrity of the territory. The

[4] Blazoned from Law no. 91/AN/00/4th L Defining the Seal of the Republic, Article 1. The description is here translated from French and rendered into a format more intelligible to heraldists, as the authors of the law were not thinking in terms of heraldic blazon.

[5] Law no. 91/AN/00/4th L, Article 2.

two traditional daggers held by two hands shall symbolize the culture and traditions of the people as the foundations of national solidarity.

The shape of the shield on the spear in the centre of the emblem corresponds to a traditional round shield common to many parts of Africa, while the interior space between the laurel branches alludes to the shape of a *Nguni* shield. The daggers are in the forms of machetes.

History

Between the seventh and the tenth centuries the region of what is now Djibouti came under the rule of Arab sultans, who Islamized the nomadic pastoralist population. From the thirteenth century onwards the region was settled by the Afar, a nomadic Arab tribe. Their descendants remain as one of the two largest ethnic groups in the country, along with the Issas who arrived later.

Between 1843 and 1886 France acquired Djibouti through treaties with the Somali Sultans. Although it was a small, dry and sparsely populated country, it became strategically important due to the Suez Canal, completed in 1869. Originally called French Somaliland, the colony voted to remain under French rule in 1958 and 1967. In 1967, it was renamed the Territory of the Afars and Issa, but adopted the name of its capital Djibouti on June 27, 1977, when France granted the territory independence. On September 4, 1992, voters approved a new multi-party constitution in a referendum. In 1991 a conflict broke out between the Afars and the Issa-dominated government, which led to great devastation.

Kingdom of Eswatini - formerly Swaziland

British Protectorate of Swaziland	1907
Independence from Great Britain	April 19, 1968
Coat of arms adopted	April 19, 1968

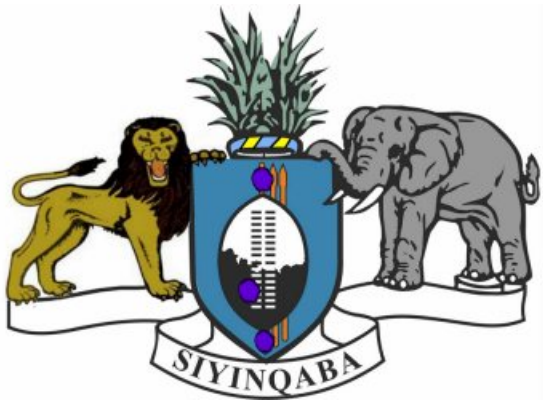

Figure 9, left 9a*:* coat of arms of the Kingdom of Eswatini; right, 9b: location of Eswatini on the globe, both from Wikimedia Commons.

Description (Figure 9)

Blazon: *Azure, a Swazi battle shield resting on two spears and a throwing stick, with purple feather decorations, all proper.*
Supporters: dexter, a lion passant , sinister, a she-elephant, both proper
Motto: SIYINQABA "We are the fortress"
Crest: A royal feather headdress proper.

Explanation of symbolism

Here we have a *Nguni* shield with the national symbols of the Swazi king placed on a classical heraldic shield, a very rare combination of African and European shield types. The shield rests on two spears and a fighting stick, the whole ensemble is decorated with bunches of feathers of the strikingly regal local bird, the Purple-crested turaco. This combination of elements was first used on a regimental flag granted by the king in 1941. On the arms, above the shield (which in turn stands for protection) is the royal headdress or lidlabe which is worn by the king at the Ncwala harvest festival. It is made of the black tail feathers of the Widowbird. The blue field of the shield is the colour of peace. The lion supporter stands for the king, and the she-elephant for the queen.

History

The Swazi language is part of the Nguni linguistic group, which includes Zulu. The Swazi people maintain a strong monarchical tradition. Their territory took the Europeanised name of Swaziland in 1839 under king Sobhuza I, whose son and successor Mswati II considerably expanded the kingdom. In the later nineteenth century Swaziland came under pressure both from the expanding Zulu kingdom, and from European powers. The British and the Dutch Boers both sought control of the region, leading to the First Boer War in 1881. After the war, the British established a border between the Boer Transvaal and Swaziland, and to the latter they granted relative autonomy under British protection.

In 1903, the British officially recognized the Kingdom of Swaziland as a protectorate, and it remained under British control until it gained independence on September 6, 1968. Britain attempted to establish a constitutional monarchy, which was a failure, and in 1973 King Sobhuza II suspended the constitution and seized absolute power. In 2018 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary celebrations of independence from Great Britain King Mswati III changed the name of the country to the Kingdom of Eswatini, meaning Land of the Swazis in the native tongue. The change was, in part, intended to eliminate a relic from the colonial era.

Republic of Kenya

British Colony	July 1, 1895
Member of British East Africa	1895
British Crown Colony	1920
Independence from Great Britain	December 12, 1963
Coat of arms adopted	1963

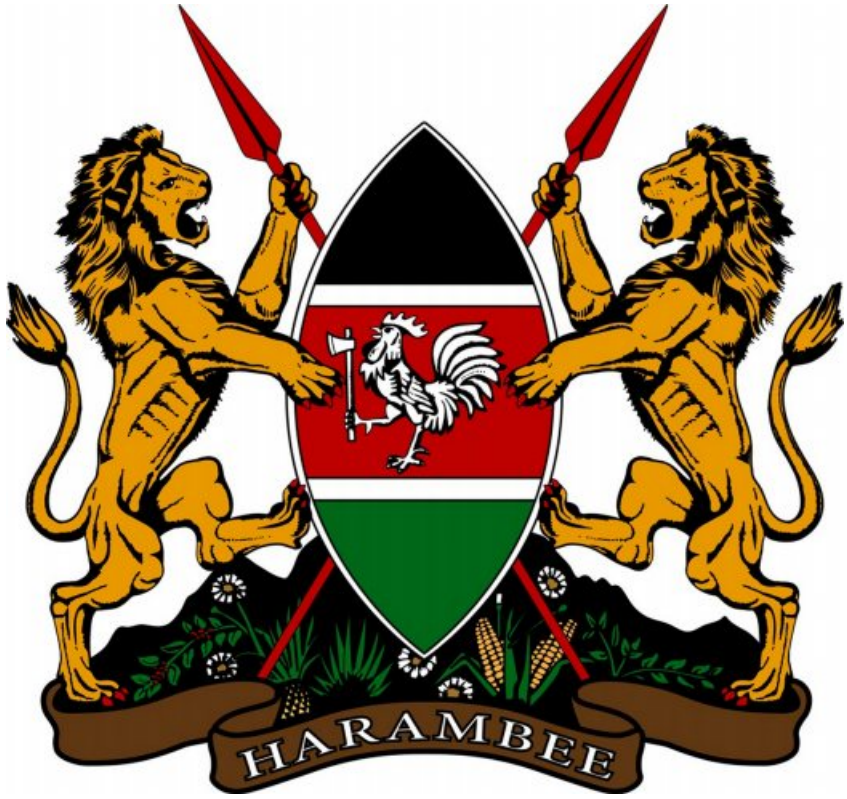

Figure 10: coat of arms of the Republic of Kenya. Wikimedia Commons.

Official description (Figure 10)[6]

Arms: *Per fess sable and vert, on a fess gules fimbriated argent a cock grasping in the dexter claw an axe also argent.*
Supporters: *On either side a lion or, grasping with the interior forepaw a spear of estate, the hafts of the spears crossed in saltire behind the shield. The whole upon a compartment representing Mount Kenya proper.*
Motto: *Harambee. "*All for One*"* (in Swahili).

[6] National flag, emblem and name Act, 10th Dec 1963, revised 2012, pp. 9-10. Online at Kenyalaw.org.

Figure 11, left, 11a: postage stamp of the British East African Company 1890; centre, 11b, location of Kenya on the globe, source Wikimedia Commons.; right, 11c: postage stamp of the British East Africa Protectorate 1896.

Explanation of symbolism

The symbolism is partially defined by law.[7] The shield (in the *Nguni* form) contains the colours of the National flag: black for the people of Kenya; red for the bloodshed during the struggle for freedom; green for the agriculture and natural resources; and white for unity and peace. The cockerel holding an axe is the symbol of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party that led the country to independence, and is variously said to represent authority, the will to work, success, and the breaking of a new dawn. The supporting lions holding spears represent protection, unity, and defence of freedom.

The compartment stands for Mount Kenya and in the foreground are examples of Kenya's agricultural produce - coffee, pyrethrum, sisal, tea, maize, and pineapples.

It is interesting to note that the lions and spears appeared in stamps of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1896, with the face of Queen Victoria where the shield now appears (**Figure 11c**). The official badge of the East Africa Company as was borne on a roundel upon a Blue Ensign, and appeared on the local stamps (**Figure 11a**) was of a sun on splendour surmounted by a crown.

History

The city of Mombasa was in existence as an important trading centre and sultanate by the twelfth century, under local rulers. It was visited in 1498 by the Portuguese Vasco da Gama, who brought his fleet here searching for a sea route to the East Indies. When Africa was divided among the colonial powers at the Berlin Conference in 1884, Europe's struggle for colonies reached its climax. One of Britain's wins was Kenya. The "Imperial British East Africa Company" was incorporated in 1888 and given remit to administer Kenya from its base in Nairobi. Quite soon, in 1895, the area was brought under direct British government control as the British Protectorate of East Africa. In 1920 Kenya became a crown colony as part of British East Africa, which also included present-day Uganda and Tanzania. There was considerable European settlement, with displacement of indigenous communities.

[7] Ibid.

Kenya played a significant role in Africa's fight for independence, with the Mau Mau Uprising being a pivotal moment in the country's history. The uprising began in 1952 with the aim of reclaiming land taken by European settlers, and demanding independence from British colonial rule. The uprising was ultimately crushed, but Kenya gained independence in 1963. Jomo Kenyatta, a leader of the independence movement, became Kenya's first president, and his party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), dominated Kenyan politics for the next several decades.

Kingdom of Lesotho

Kingdom of Basutoland	1822
British Protectorate	March 12, 1868
British Crown Colony	1884
Coat of arms of Basutoland	March 20, 1951
Independence from Great Britain	October 4, 1966
New coat of arms adopted	October 4, 1966
Coat of arms amended	October 4, 2006

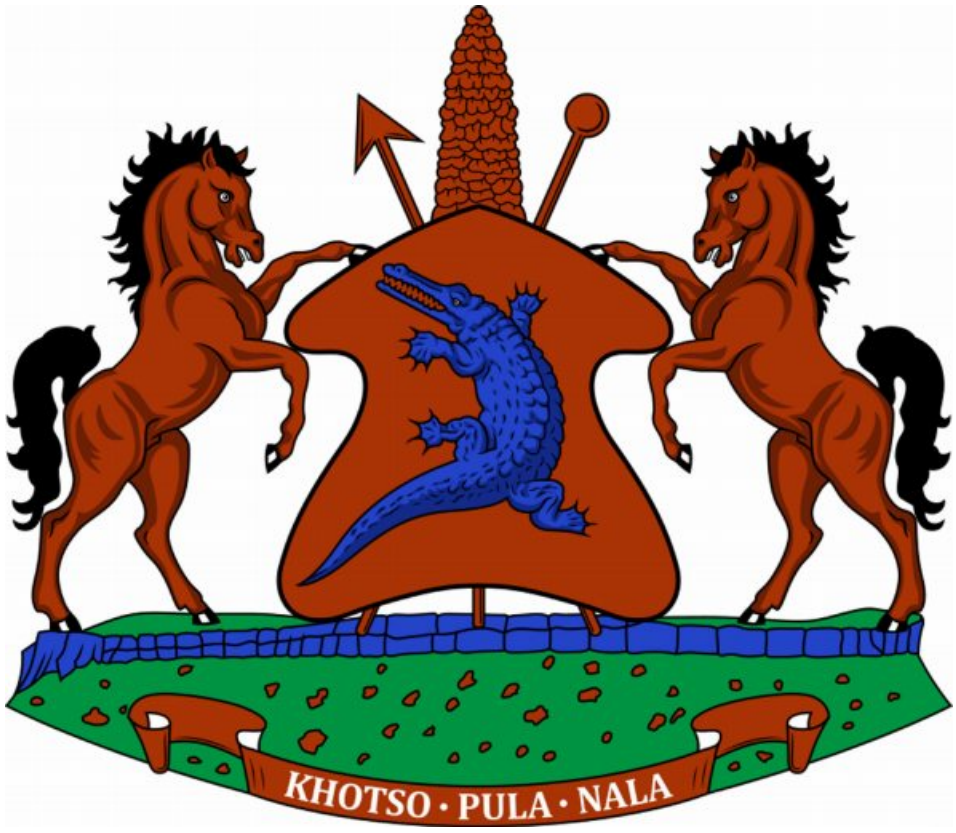

Figure 12: coat of arms of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 13, top left, 13a: coat of arms of Basutoland; top right, 13b: typical Tswana-type Basuto shield, as used on the colonial era arms, repeated from figure 4; centre right, 13c: location of Lesotho on the globe; bottom, 13d: original coat of arms of Lesotho at the time of independence in 1966, all from Wikimedia Commons.

Description (Figure 12)[8]

Arms: *On a Lesotho shield (brown) a crocodile embowed (azure). Behind the shield a thyrsus of ostrich feathers erect, together with a barbed assegai (lance) and a knobkerrie (club) in saltire (brown).*
Supporters: *two bay horses.*
Compartment: *the summit of Thaba Bosiu.*
Motto*: "Khotso, Pula, Nala"* (in Sesotho) "Peace, Rain, Prosperity."

Explanation of symbolism

The crocodile is the emblem of Lesotho's largest tribe, the Bakwena, to which belong the royal family. The horses represent nobility, while the lance, club and thyrsus denote royal power. Thaba Bosiu, Mountain of Night, is both the highest peak and the country's most important cultural site. Here is buried King Moshoeshoe I, founder of the kingdom.

History and former coats of arms

In around 1820, Moshoeshoe I (1785-1870) successfully defended the Basotho people against both the Zulu conquests and Boer property claims. In doing so, he created the conditions for a monarchical form of rule and the later identity of the Basotho nation. Almost all citizens of Lesotho belong to the Sotho ethnic group (Basotho meaning thesouthern Sotho) who speak the Sesotho language.

From 1836, there were escalating conflicts between the Sotho and the Boers, who were moving north-east as part of their Great Trek of 1835-1841. Moshoeshoe I asked the British for assistance and received a protection treaty with the British Cape Colony (the Napier Treaty) in 1843. In 1868, Basutoland became a British protectorate and in 1884 it came under British rule as a crown colony, but did not receive its own coat of arms until 1951 **(Figure 13a)**. The arms of Basutoland contain many of the key elements which are found in the current arms: the crocodile on the shield, the shield in Basuto form on the crest, and behind it the lance and club in saltire (but with an arrow rather than a thyrsus). The motto was also similar: KHOTSO KE NALA (Peace is Prosperity).

After the Second World War, the desire for independence became explosive, and the British government had to allow elections based on a new constitution with the restrictions of a constitutional monarchy based on the British example. In 1960, Moshoeshoe II was crowned king. The conservative Leabula Jonathan won the 1965 elections and became the first Prime Minister of Lesotho, which gained independence on October 4, 1966, with the new name of Lesotho, which means 'Land of the Sesotho speakers.' The coat of arms as it originally appeared was more in tune with heraldic principles, having the crocodile proper on a field or **(Figure 13d)**. It was modified in 2006 to coincide with a change in the national flag, which currently has three horizontal stripes of blue, white and green.[9] The crown of Lesotho was placed on the centre of the flag, while on the new matching royal flag the central crown was replaced with the national arms. The addition of blue to the arms is an allusion to the national colours. It is unclear why the field colour of the shield was altered to its current rather unsatisfactory brown, but a reduction in the overall number of colours might have been intended to keep down reproduction costs.

[8] Lesotho Government Gazette extraordinary, Sept 30, 1966.

[9] The new flag is detailed in the National Flag Act 2006, *Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary* 4 Oct 2006. A revision of the state arms was not included here, but can be seen on the government website.

Republic of Rwanda

First contact by German missionaries and explorers	1856
German colony within German East Africa	1899-1916
Union of Ruanda-Urundi	1919/1920
Under Belgian and United Nations Governance	1922–1962
Belgian colony	October 20, 1924
Independence from Belgium	July 1, 1962
Coat of arms adopted	1966
Current emblem adopted	May 26, 2003

Figure 14: emblem of the Republic of Rwanda, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 15: left, 15a: emblem of Rwanda 1962-2001; right, 15b: Rwanda on the globe. Both from Wikimedia Commons.

Official description (Figure 51)[10]

The Seal of the Republic is made up of a circular green rope with a green knot at the base, bearing on its upper part, the imprints "REPUBULIKA Y'U RWANDA". At the bottom of the knot is the motto of the Republic: "UBUMWE, UMURIMO, GUKUNDA IGIHUGU". All these inscriptions are in black against a yellow background. The Seal bears the following ideograms: the sun with its rays, sorghum and coffee tree, a basket, a blue wheel with teeth and two shields, one on the right and one on the left.

Explanation of symbolism

The cog wheel is for manufacturing industry, sorghum is part of the staple diet of poor farmers, while coffee is the most important cash crop for export. The basket with its pointed lid for storing produce is a ubiquitous and distinctive Rwandan product. These items are all protected by the two highly distinctively-shaped Tutsi shields, which face outwards. The motto *UBUMWE, UMURIMO, GUKUNDA IGIHUGU* means Unity, Work, Patriotism in the Kinyarwandan language.

History and former coats of arms

A long line of Tutsi kings expanded its control over much of present-day Rwanda between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries. They were placed under the control of the German East Africa Company by the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, and formally became a German colony in 1899. The Rwandans retained most of their autonomy and did not have to pay taxes, but did have to recognize the German emperor as supreme ruler. Belgium and Great Britain seized the Rwandan-Burundian part of German East Africa during the First World War in 1916 and at the end of the war the League of Nations placed the two kingdoms under Belgian administration as the mandate area Ruanda-Urundi.

[10] As defined by the Rwandan constitution of 2003 with amendments through 2015, Article 9: National Symbols of Rwanda,

Figure 16: the royal arms of Rwanda as devised in 2007.
Source: Royal House of Rwanda.

From 1925 the area was administered as the seventh province of the Belgian Congo. In 1957 an emancipation movement developed among the Hutu in Rwanda, demanding not only freedom from the Belgians but also the renunciation of the monarchy. King Kigeli V was deposed in 1961, and went into exile.

The first head of government was the Tutsi Louis Rwagasore, who was murdered after a few days. After a retaliatory strike in which four Hutu trade unionists were killed, open conflict broke out between the two peoples in Rwanda in early 1962. The original national arms of 1966 (**Figure 15a**) were centred on a shield of European shape, on which were placed a bow and arrow, a hoe and a billhook, but with an overarching message of

peace, as demonstrated by the dove resting on the shield, and the olive branch below it. Between 1990 and 1993 there was civil war in Rwanda, followed in 1994 by the genocide against the Tutsi which resulted, according to official estimates, in between 500,000 and a million deaths. It is in this context that the placement of the Tutsi shields on the 2003 arms have a certain poignancy. Rwanda joined the Commonwealth of Nations in 2009.
Arms were devised for, and adopted by, the exiled King Kigeli V in 2007 (**Figure 16**) and although not the national arms, they are of considerable interest in their use of traditional Rwandan emblems. On the shield, which is of the Nguni type, is a sacred royal drum, the Kalinga, symbol of royal authority. The shield is encircled by the collar of the Order of the Drum. The crest is the royal headdress. The lion does not surprise as a royal supporter; the crested crane (or grey-crowned crane) is a much-loved and highly endangered local species. The three golden mullets stand for the three tribes of the Tutsi, the Hutu and the Twa. The title INGOMA Y'U RWANDA translates 'Kingdom of Rwanda', while the motto IMBAGA Y'INYABUTATU IJAMBERE means 'Three Peoples United Will Prosper'.

Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe

Portuguese Colony	1935-1951
First coat of arms	1933
Portuguese province	1951-1974
Independence from Portugal	July 12, 1975
New coat of arms adopted	1975

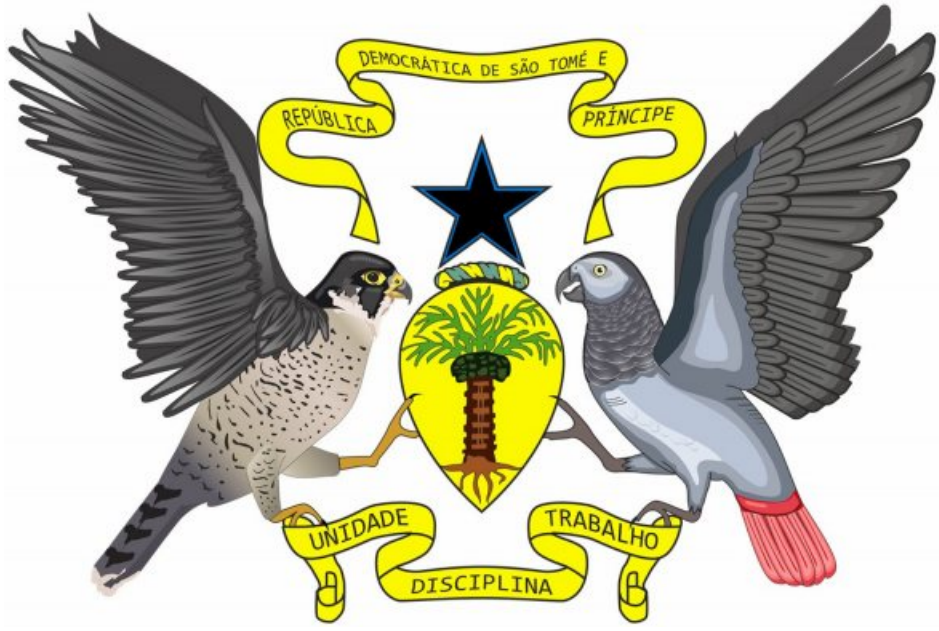

Figure 17: coat of arms of São Tomé and Príncipe, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 18, left, 18a: colonial arms of São Tomé and Príncipe 1935–1951; centre, 18b: São Tomé and Príncipe on the globe, both from Wikimedia Commons ; right, 18c, provincial arms of the island of São Tomé, source, flaggenlexikon.de.

Description (Figure 17)[11]

Arms: *On an oval shield (or) a palm tree (proper).*
Crest: *(On a torse or and azure a mullet sable fimbriated azure).*
Supporters: *sinister, a parrot; dexter, a falcon.*
Motto: UNIDADE, DISCIPLINA, TRABALHO (Unity, Discipline, Work).

Explanation of symbolism

The shield is in fact a tear-drop shape, coincidentally not dissimilar to a shield of the Maasai tribe from Kenya, a country on the same latitude but on the opposite side of the African continent; but clearly intended to closely match the shape of the island of São Tomé. The tree is a coconut palm, the characteristic tree of the islands, although the greater proportion of the cultivated land is now used to produce cocoa pods. The black star is taken from the two black stars on the national flag, which in turn was inspired by the black star on the flag of Ghana and stands for African emancipation. The birds, representing the two islands, are the Lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus*), the sacred falcon of the Ancient Egyptians; and the African grey parrot (*Psittacus Erithacus*), one of the greatest bird mimics, and therefore a popular pet.

History and former coat of arms

On December 21, 1471, the Portuguese seafarers João de Santarém and Pedro Escobar discovered the island of São Tomé off the west coast of Africa, and on January 17, 1472, the island of Santo António, which was renamed Príncipe in 1502. The first Portuguese settlements were established between 1485 and 1500, serving both as a trans-shipment point for the slave trade between Africa, Portugal, Brazil and the Caribbean islands, and as a place to keep expelled Portuguese Jews and prisoners. A plantation economy emerged with changing crops of sugar cane, coffee and, from around 1850, cocoa, which made the

[11] Rendered into heraldic blazon from the Constitution of República Democrática de S.Tomé e Príncipe of December 6, 2002, published January 25, 2003, part I Article 14.

islands the largest cocoa producer in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century.

On August 13, 1913, a treaty was signed by Germany and England stipulating that the two islands should be transferred to the German colonial empire in the event of a potential international insolvency of Portugal. Due to the loss of the German colonies in the Peace Treaty of Versailles in 1919, this treaty of 1913 became invalid. The islands became a Portuguese colony with their own coat of arms (**Figure 18a**) in 1935, and in 1951 were integrated into the Portuguese state as a province. The key feature of the arms used in the colonial period was *Gules a mill-wheel or spilling drops of water argent*, the personal emblem of King Alphonso V of Portugal, during whose reign (1438-1481) the islands were discovered.

The end of the colonial period began with the emergence of various liberation movements on the African continent. In Ghana, the Comité de Libertaçao de São Tomé e Príncipe was founded in 1960 as the forerunner of the MLSTP Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe (from 1972). After the Portuguese Carnation Revolution in 1974, the MLSTP was recognized as a legitimate representative body, with independence finally achieved on July 12, 1975. The MLSTP dominated the country, which was a one-party state for the first 15 years after the end of the colonial era.

Republic of South Africa

Portuguese discovery by Bartolomeu Dias	June 6, 1488
Trading post by the Dutch East India Company	1652
British colony	1806
Boer Republics	1836-1886
South African Republic	January 17, 1852
Union of South Africa	May 31, 1910
Independence from United Kingdom	May 31, 1910
Coat of arms adopted	September 17, 1910
Current coat of arms adopted	April 27, 2000

Official description (Figure 19)[12]

Arms*: Or two San human figures of red ochre, statant respectant, the hands of the innermost arms clasped, with upper arm, inner wrist, waist and knee bands argent, and a narrow border of red ochre; the shield ensigned of a spear and knobkierie in saltire sable. Thereabove a demi-secretary bird displayed or, charged on the breast with a stylized representation of a protea flower with outer petals vert, inner petals or and seeded of nine triangles conjoined in three rows, the upper triangle gules, the second row vert, or inverted and vert, and the third row vert, or inverted, sable, or inverted and vert. above the head of the secretary bird an arc of seven rays facetted or and orange, the two outer rays conjoined to the elevated wings.*

[12] Government Gazette Statskoerant No. 418. No. 21131; Government Notice No. 425 (www.gov.za).

Figure 19: coat of arms of the Republic of South Africa, Wikimedia Commons.

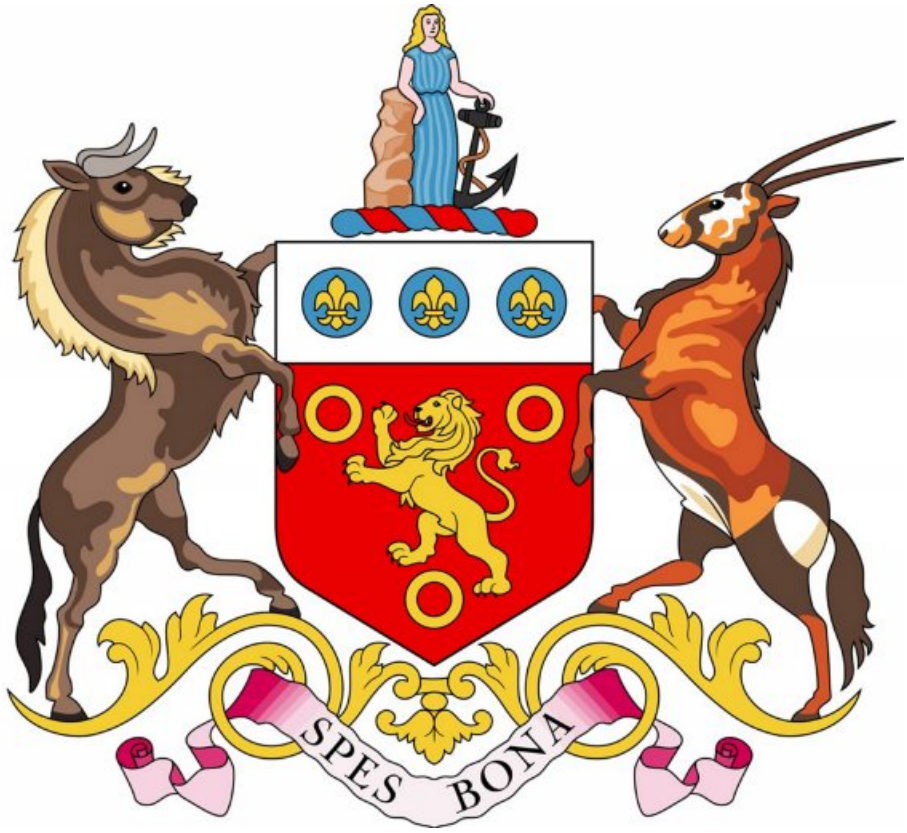

Figure 20: coat of arms of the Cape Colony as a British colony from 1875 to 1910, Wikimedia Commons.

Motto: *Upon a riband vert, the motto !KE E: /XARRA //KE in letters argent. Issuant from the ends of the riband two pairs of elephant tusks curving inwards, the tips conjoined to the wings of the secretary bird, Or, there within and flanking the shields, two ears of wheat.*

Explanation of symbolism

The coat of arms was designed by Mr Iaan Bekker of the design agency FCB.[13] It is perhaps the most richly symbolic of any national coat of arms. To begin with the human figures on the drum-shaped shield are taken from the ancient Linton Stone, a piece of rock art now in the South African Museum in Cape Town. They were drawn by the oldest inhabitants of southern Africa, the Khoisan or Khoe-San. The name is a combination of the names given to the Khoe herders and the San hunter-gatherers. The language which they spoke, and which is still used by descendants of these most ancient inhabitants of the region, has been used for the motto. The two figures link their arms in greeting, and represent unity. The motto "Unity in Diversity" underscores this message.

[13] Foote, Cone & Belding (FCB), is one of the largest global advertising agency networks.

The ears of wheat are for agriculture, fertility, and the germination of new ideas, while the elephant tusks stand for wisdom, strength and moderation. Moving up to the spear and knobkierie which rest on the drum, these are emblems of defence and authority, but they have been laid down to represent the desire for peace. The protea flower, that most iconic of South African species, stands for the flowering potential of the nation. The secretary bird is a snake hunting bird which therefore protects the nation, but is also regarded as a messenger to heaven. The bird rises up towards the sun as the source of light and life. The whole design is intended to resemble a bird hatching from an egg as a sign of rebirth, renewal and ascendancy.

History and former coats of arms

The original inhabitants of southern Africa were Khoi peoples comprising the Khoikhoi (at that time called "Hottentots") and the San (Bushmen), names combined in the collective name 'Khoi-San'. Genetic studies indicate that these peoples are older than other ethnic groups of modern humans and that their origin dates back around 100,000 years. It is assumed that around 25,000 to 40,000 years ago, the Khoi-San (a hunter-gatherer society) migrated from the north to southern Africa and left behind cave and rock paintings that still exist today throughout southern Africa. The Khoi-san peoples were expelled, conquered, and absorbed by Bantu-speaking peoples from more northerly regions in the fourth and fifth centuries AD.

The first visual contact with the southern tip of Africa (later called Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese King John II) was made by the Portuguese seafarer Bartolomeu Diaz in June 1488. In the seventeenth century as Portugal's naval power waned, English and Dutch merchants began to push Portugal out of the spice trade. The Dutchman Jan van Riebeeck founded the first permanent trading settlement at the Cape of Good Hope on an expedition with 90 Calvinist settlers on behalf of the United East India Company in 1652.

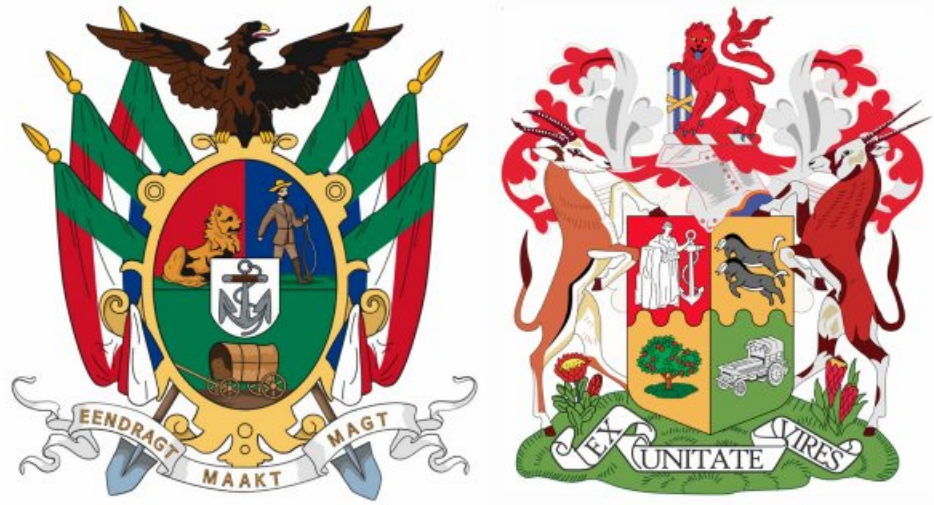

Figure 21, left, 21a: South African Republic, 1857–1902; right, 21b: South African Union from 1910, both from Wikimedia Commons.

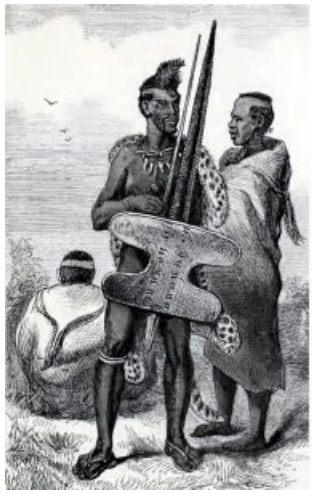

Figure 22, left, 22a: Bechuana warrior carrying a Tswana-type shield from Keith Johnston, *Africa* (London, 1878), p. 448; right, 22b: arms of Bophuthatswana 1972, source www,geocities.com Armoria Patriae.

In 1795, French troops under Napoleon invaded the Netherlands. British troops then landed in Cape Town to secure it for the Netherlands against a presumptive French invasion. The governor of Cape Town handed the area over to the British on September 16, 1795. After failed Dutch reconquest attempts in 1801 the area fell to the Napoleonic Batavian Republic. In 1806, the British re-occupied the Cape region as part of the Anglo-French colonial conflict to keep Napoleon's forces away and to control maritime trade routes. On January 8, 1806, after the Battle of Blaauwberg, the Cape became a British colony, and in 1910 it became part of the Union of South Africa as the Cape Province. The Cape Colony was granted arms by the College of Arms in 1875 (**Figure 20**). These featured annulets from the arms of Jan van Riebeeck, fleurs de lis for the Huguenot settlers, the crest of a figure of Hope resting on a rock, and supporters of a gnu and an oryx.

During the "Great Trek" of 1835-1841, large numbers of Boers left the Cape area and founded new republics in the interior. They had lost their dominant position due to increased British immigration from around 1820, such that in 1828 English became the official language of the courts. A decree in the same year enabled the natives to acquire their own land, which ultimately meant the abolition of slavery, and deprived many Boers of their economic livelihood. The Boers established their own South African Republic (or Transvaal Republic) for which their government authorised a coat of arms in 1858 **(Figure 21a)**. This republic was annexed by the United Kingdom in 1877, following which two major wars were fought between the protagonists, the First and Second Boer Wars of 1880-1881 and 1899-1902, from which Britain emerged as the victor.

In the early nineteenth century the Zulu built a powerful kingdom under their king Shaka by subjugating neighbouring tribes and establishing a centralized military system. In 1879 an undeclared war broke out between the Zulu people and the British Empire. After initial Zulu successes Zululand lost its sovereignty and was incorporated into the

Figure 23, top left, 23a: arms of the Northern Cape, granted in 1998; top right, 23b: arms of KwaZulu-Natal, granted in 2004; bottom left, 23c: arms of the KwaZulu homeland 1972-1994 with a Nguni (in this case Zulu) shield; bottom right, 23d: South Africa on the globe. All from Wikimedia Commons.

British colony of Natal. On May 31, 1910, the South African Union was created by the unification of the four British colonies and former Boer republics. These were Cape Province, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal, of which the two latter were former Boer republics. A new coat of arms was granted by the College of Arms later the same year with emblems taken from the earlier arms of the four provinces (**Figure 21b**). There was Hope with her anchor (the Cape Colony), two black wildebeest (Natal), an orange tree (Orange Free State) and a trek waggon (Transvaal), The supporters were a springbock and an oryx, while the motto EX UNITATE VIRES, 'Strength from Unity' prefigures the rather different message of inclusivity in the current national motto. Of

these arms only the Proteus flower from the compartment found its way onto the revision in the year 2000.

The Natives Land Act of 1913 restricted the land ownership of the black population and divided it into areas that were intended exclusively for whites and exclusively for blacks. Blacks were not allowed to acquire land in the "white" areas and vice versa. As a result, the black population only had around 7% of the territory of the Union of South Africa as living and usable space. In 1931, the "Statute of Westminster" gave formal full independence to the Dominions of the British Commonwealth of Nations and granted South Africa formal independence from Great Britain.

South Africa became the Republic of South Africa on May 31, 1961, leaving the Commonwealth because of international criticism of apartheid policies. In 1963 the republic established its own Bureau of Heraldry under a State Herald, an office which still thrives today. Between 1959 and 1994, apartheid policies in South Africa created ten Homelands (Bantustans) for the black population. The independent status of these homelands was not internationally recognized, and they ceased to exist on April 27, 1994, when they were reincorporated into South Africa with the adoption of the new democratic constitution. From 1972 the Bureau of Heraldry began to create coats of arms for the Homelands using a mixture of shield types: European, round, oval, Nguni (Zulu) and Tswana. The latter type of shield is closely related to the Sotho shield (from a related tribe) found on the arms of Botswana, being a small shield used in stick-fighting exercises. It was utilised in 1972 for the arms of Bophuthatswana (meaning the Tswana people) [**Figure 22b**].

President F.W. de Klerk began abolishing Apartheid laws in 1990 and the same year released Nelson Mandela after 20 years of imprisonment. The system final ended in 1994 with a democratic change of government, and the first general election in which people of all races could vote, with Nelson Mandela elected as the country's first black president. With the dissolution of the Homelands, South Africa was divided into nine new provinces, each of which was granted arms by the Bureau of Heraldry between 1996 and 2004. Two of these are illustrated to show the fine work of the Bureau. The Northern Cape (**Figure 23a**), granted in 1998 feature a majestic Sweet-thorn Tree (which has medicinal properties, and was formerly used in the manufacture of Gum Arabic), two marigolds, a diadem of Bushmen beadwork, an Oryx, and a Kudu. The motto means 'Strive for a better life' in the Bushmen language. In the merger of Kwazulu with Natal, to form Kwazulu-Natal, (**Figure 23b**) the Zulu-shaped shield and lion supporter was retained from the former (**Figure 23c**), while from the latter the mountain-scape of the Drakensberg range and one of the two black wildebeest from the shield was kept, with the animal recruited as a supporter. The Strelitzia or Bird of Paradise flower, a native species now cultivated all over the world, was entirely new, as was the crest of the local beehive hut. These were the last of the provincial arms to be granted, and were approved in the same year as the new national arms.

Republic of South Sudan

Part of Turkish-and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan	1821-1956
Autonomous Region of Sudan	2005–2011
Unofficial coat of arms devised	2011
Independence from Sudan	July 9, 2011
Current coat of arms adopted	July 2011

Figure 24: emblem of South Sudan. Wikimedia Commons.

Description (Figure 24)[14]
Arms: A south-Sudanese shield or resting on a spade and spear in saltire.
Supporter: An African fish eagle proper standing on a ribbon or with the name of the Republic of South Sudan
Motto: JUSTICE LIBERTY PROSPERITY, on a white scroll.

[14] Government of South Sudan website, www.goss-online.org.

Figure 25, left, 25a: unofficial coat of arms of Southern Sudan 2005–2011; right, 25b: South Sudan on the globe. Both from Wikimedia Commons.

Explanation of symbolism[15]

The shield represents the people and is of the characteristic shape of the shields borne by the Dinka and Nuer tribesmen in the South Sudan region. It is deliberately plain so as not to resemble the specific markings of any of the sixty different tribes.[16] The crossed spear and spade symbolize the people's resolve to protect the sovereignty of their republic and to work hard to feed it. The eagle is also on the arms of Zambia and Namibia. It is a large and powerful bird, one common in most areas of South Sudan, and intended to represent strength, resilience, vision, and majesty.

History and former coat of arms

The history of South Sudan as the youngest nation in Africa begins with the declaration of independence in 2011. Although it was part of the Republic of the Sudan (see next) for almost 55 years, it is culturally very different from the remainder of that country. Its religious composition is 60% Chrisitan and 33% Animist, in contrast to the predominantly Islamic north. After decades of secession wars in from 1955 to 1972, and again from 1983 to 2005, it became an autonomous region in 2005. An unofficial coat of arms then came to be used by certain government departments (**Figure 25a**), although the emblem of the Sudan continued to be the official version. The unofficial arms featured the new regional flag on a shield of *Nguni* shape, with supporters of a shoebill and a rather strangely conceived rhinoceros, above a compartment of the flowing waters of the Nile surrounded by its fertile black earth. The rhino was taken from the pre-Islamic arms of Sudan. Since independence Sudan and South Sudan have been enemies, but a peace agreement was signed in September 2018 after five years of civil war.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Worksthatwork.com/4/branding-south-sudan.

Republic of the Sudan

Anglo-Egyptian Condominium	1899-1956
Independence from Great Britain	January 1st, 1956
Coat of arms adopted	1956
Current coat of arms adopted	1969

Figure 26: emblem of the Republic of Sudan. Wikimedia Commons.

Description (Figure 26)
The 'shield' of Muhammad Ahmad the self-proclaimed 'Mahdi' borne upon the breast of a Secretary bird with wings outstretched. Above it a scroll bearing the national motto *An-nasr lanā* النصر لنا "Victory is ours", in Arabic ; below it a second scroll with the words 'Republic of the Sudan.'

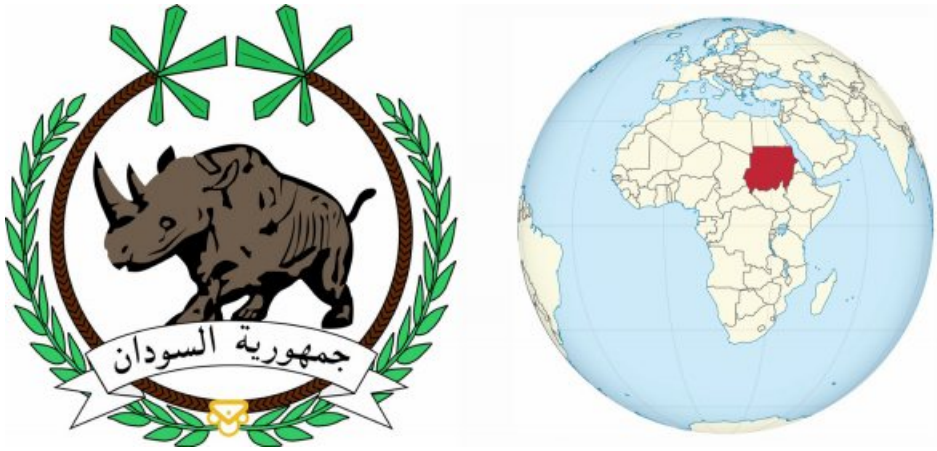

Figure 27: left, 27a: emblem of Sudan 1956 -1970; right, 27b: Sudan on the globe. Both from Wikimedia Commons.

Explanation of symbolism

The Secretary bird is a large species admired as a killer of snakes. It was chosen as a distinctively Sudanese and indigenous variant of the a coat of arms, the 'Eagle of Saladin' which was adopted by neighbouring Egypt (and by other Arab states), as a mark of Arab nationalism. Egypt and Libya, with which the country became politically merged in 1969, adopted their similar devices in the same year. The 'shield' of Muhammad Ahmad, as it is described on the website of the Sudanese embassy in London, seems more likely to be a breastplate, as no shields of this type are known from Sudan. There are many shields from the period in museums, and their shapes are either circular, oval, or of the Nguni type.

History and former coat of arms

In the nineteenth century the Khedives (Ottoman viceroys of Egypt) began to conquer Sudan, and in 1820 they founded Khartoum as a military camp. In the late-nineteenth century the movement of the Sudanese Islamic religious leader Muhammad Ahmad spread. He defeated the Egyptians in battle in 1881, and in 1885 he defeated and killed the British governor, General Gordon, in Khartoum, founding a new capital at Omdurman, where he died on June 12, 1885. He remains a national hero to Sudanese Muslims. The 'Mahdi's' successor, Caliph Abdallahi ibn Muhammad, was defeated by Egyptian troops under the command of the British general Lord Kitchener at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898. The country was governed until 1956 as an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. Civil war broke out between the Christian-black south and the Islamic-Arab north of the country in 1955. On attaining independence in 1956 the country adopted the emblem of a Brown rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) encircled by palm trees and laurel branches (**Figure 27a**).

In 1969 a military coup established a new regime and a new coat of arms. The country's history since that time has remained difficult and unsettled due to ongoing civil wars.

United Republic of Tanzania
Formerly Tanganyika

German Protectorate	1891
British Mandate of Tanganyika Territory	1922
British United Nations Trust Territory	1946
Independence from Great Britain as a kingdom	December 9, 1961
First coat of arms adopted	1961
Republic of Tanganyika	June 9, 1962
Republic of Tanzania	November 1, 1964
Revised coat of arms adopted	1964

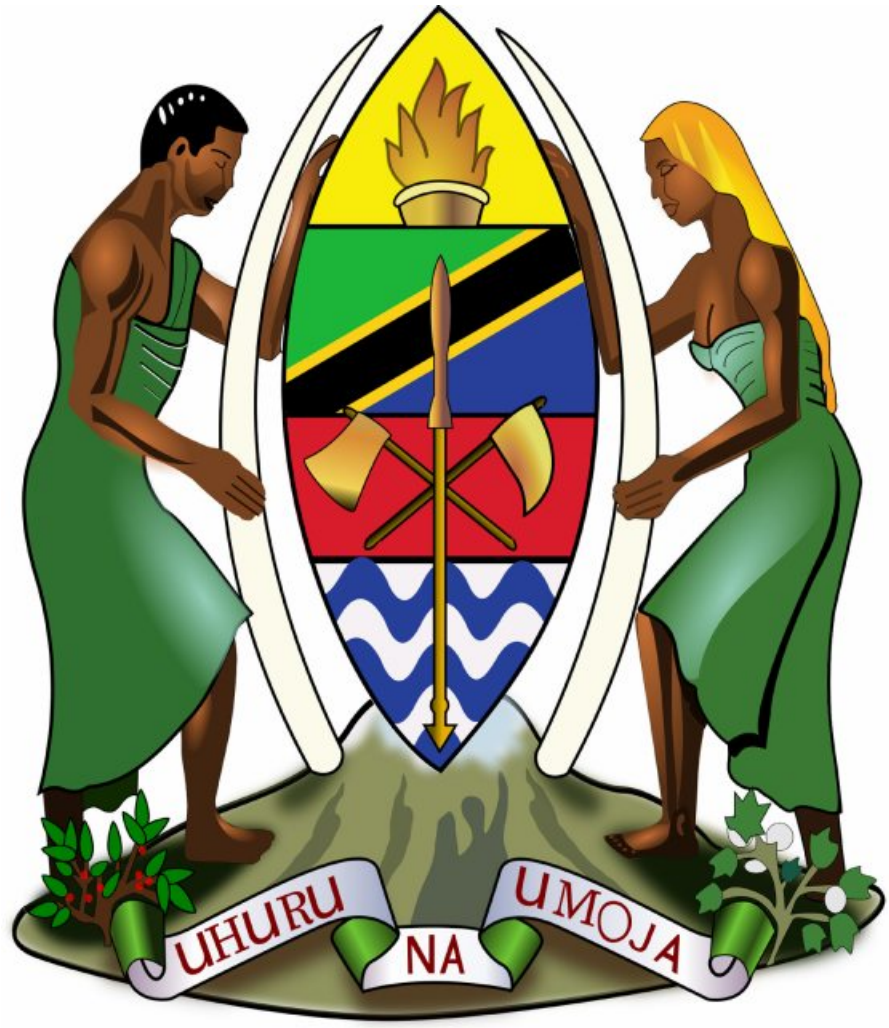

Figure 28: coat of arms of Tanzania, Wikimedia Commons.

Description (Figure 28)[17]

Arms*: On a Nguni shield, per fess of four: first, a torch couped or, its flame proper; second, the flag of Tanzania (Per bend sinister vert and azure, a bend sinister sable, fimbriated or); third, Gules an axe and hatchet in saltire or; fourth, Barry wavy argent and azure; over the lower three a spear in pale or.*
Supporters: *Dexter, a Tanganyikan man vested vert, supporting an elephants' tusk; Sinister a Tanganyikan woman vested vert, her headscarf orange, supporting an elephants' tusk.*
Compartment: *Mount Kilimanjaro, with a clove bush at the feet of the man and a cotton bush at the feet of the woman.*
Motto: *Uhuru na Umoja* (in Swahili) 'Freedom and Unity'

Explanation of symbolism [18]

The original designer of the arms and also the reviser in 1964 was Jeremiah Wisdom Kabati. The torch is that which was lit on Mount Kilimanjaro on independence day in 1961. It represents freedom, enlightenment and knowledge. The crossed axe and hatchet and the spear were added following the union with Zanzibar in 1964, and are said to be tools for the defence of freedom and the development of the country. Tanzania is a country of great lakes, including Lake Tanganyika to the west and Lake Victoria to the north; the wavy bands of water represent these lakes, as well as the sea and coasts of the United Republic. Cotton is one of Tanzania's most important exports (now with coffee and cashew nuts), while cloves are a principal export of Zanzibar.

History and previous coat of arms

In 1698 the offshore island of Zanzibar became an overseas province of the Sultanate of Oman, and the archipelago became a centre both of the slave trade and of the cultivation of cloves. In the 1840s, German missionaries reached Mount Kilimanjaro on the mainland for the first time. The Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone settled beside Lake Tanganyika in Ujiji (near Kigoma) in April 1867, where Henry Morton Stanley found him on November 10, 1871 after a long search.

In the course of the "Scramble for Africa", the German Empire in East Africa concluded numerous contracts with regional tribal chiefs from 1884 onwards, to build a private-sector colonial empire. In 1886 and 1890, Anglo-German treaties were concluded, which established the British and German spheres of influence in East Africa. The "Protectorate" of German East Africa was established, and in 1891 the colony of German East Africa was created. Arms were devised for Deutsch Ostafrika in 1914 (**Figure 7a**) but did not come into use as during the First World War, in 1916, the territory was occupied by Great Britain and Belgium, and in 1922 the League of Nations transferred the territory to Great Britain as a mandate. When Tanganyika gained its independence in 1961 it was initially a kingdom, with Queen Elizabeth II as monarch. The original national arms (**Figure 29a**) were quite similar to those used today, but the shield was divided into only three parts with the torch overall, and a different flag. On June 9, 1962, a republic was declared with Julius Nyerere as President.

[17] The arms are pictured in the Tanzanian *National flag and coat of arms Act* of May 7, 1971, but are not blazoned therein. They are backdated in this document as being the official arms since April 26, 1964.
[18] Archived from the Tanzanian National website.

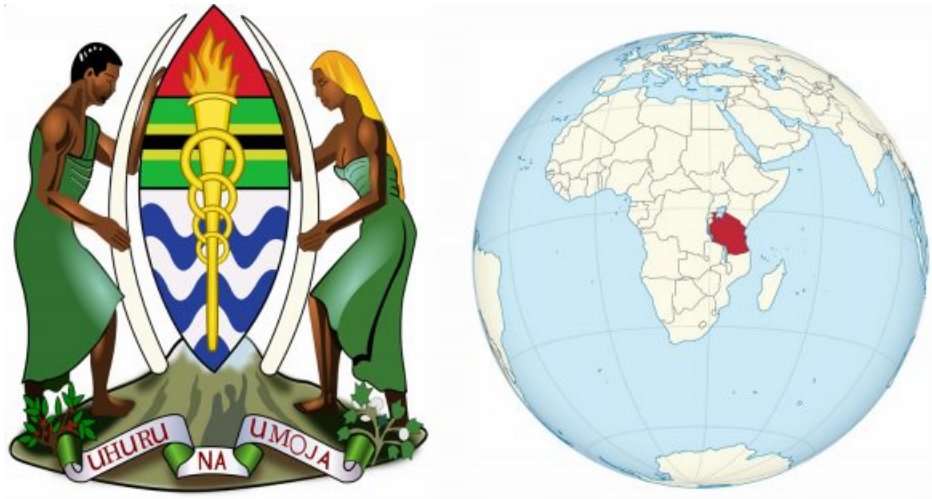

Figure 29, left, 29a: coat of arms of Tanganyika 1961-1964; right, 29b: Location of Tanzania on the globe. Both from Wikimedia Commons.

Nearby Zanzibar itself became independent in 1963, and April 26, 1964 the two countries merged under the name "United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar". This required a new flag, and a change in the arms. On November 1, 1964 the name of the country was changed to the "United Republic of Tanzania", a combination of the names of the two countries which has no specific meaning.

Republic of Uganda

British Protectorate of Uganda	1894-1962
Independence from Great Britain	October 9, 1962
Coat of arms adopted	October 9, 1962

Official Description (Figure 30)[19]

Arms: [on a Nguni shield] *Sable upon the fess point a sun in splendour and in base a Ugandan drum or, the skin and guy-ropes argent, a chief barry wavy of six azure and argent; behind the shield two Uganda spears of estate crossed in saltire proper.*
Supporters: *dexter, a male Uganda kob proper; sinister, a crested crane proper.*
Compartment: *A grassy mound down the centre of which flows a river between, in dexter, a sprig of coffee, and in sinister, a sprig of cotton, both leaved and fructed proper.*
Motto: *FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.*

[19] National Flag and Armorial Ensigns Act October 9, 1962.

Explanation of symbolism

The radiant sun is taken from the badge of the British East Africa Company (**Figures 11a** and **31b**). The drum is a symbol of power for the Ugandan kings, the country having possessed a variety of kingdoms concurrently in its recent history. The waters in chief are for Lake Victoria, the source of the White Nile. The black field of the shield is for the rich black soil which that river carries north. The river on the compartment is the same river Nile which traverses the country, helping to produce the main export cash crops of coffee and cotton. The spears are for the authority of the state. The crested crane was the badge of Uganda during the British Protectorate (**Figure 31a**), used as a roundel on the Blue Ensign; while the Uganda Kob is a characteristic local subspecies of this type of antelope.

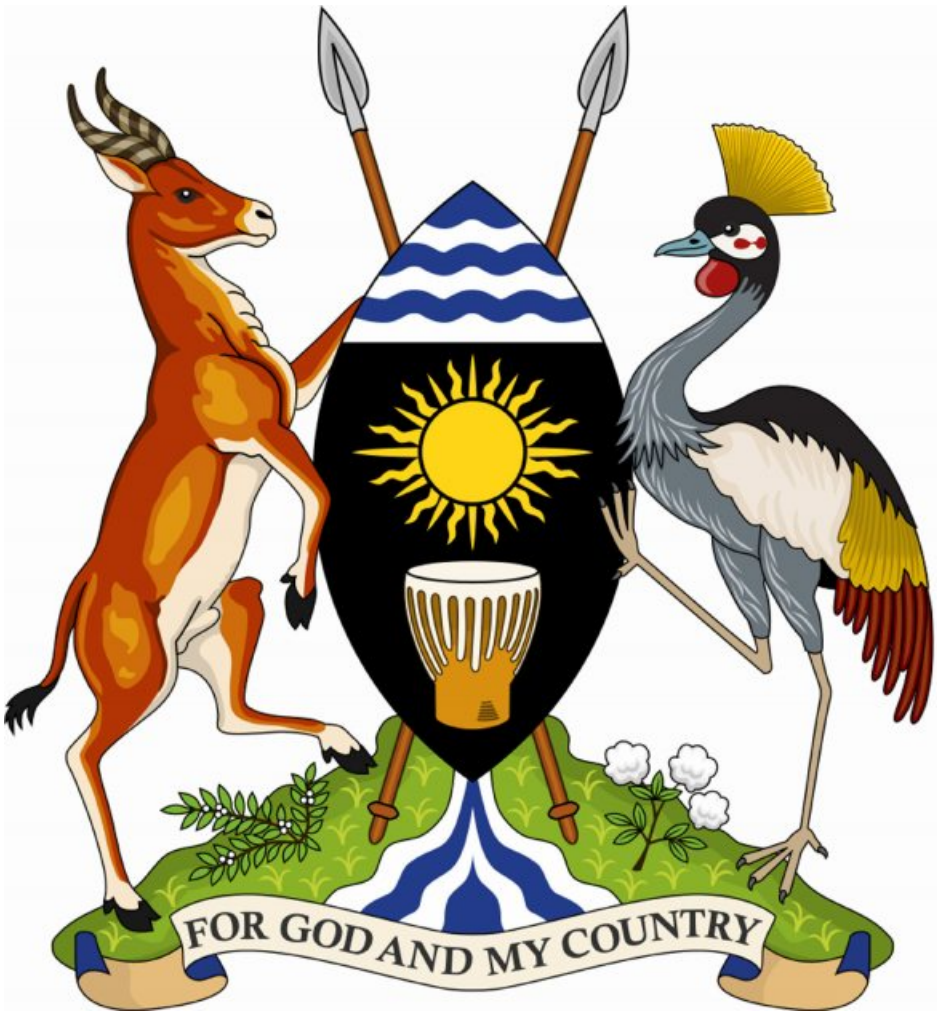

Figure 30: Coat of arms of the Republic of Uganda, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 31, left, 31a: badge of Uganda as a British protectorate, Wikimedia Commons; centre, 31b: badge of the British East Africa Company as drawn by Martin Grieve; right, 31c: *location of* Uganda on the globe, Wikimedia Commons.

History

The oldest ethnic group, the Twa, were displaced about 2,000 years ago by migrating Bantu peoples, who in turn fled south to escape Nilotes from the South Sudan region. Migrant herders, including Hima and Tutsi, arrived in the area around the fourteenth century and formed connections with the Bantu, from which the empire of the Kabaka kings of Buganda emerged. The succession of the Kabaka kings has been almost uninterrupted since 1374. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the kingdom of Buganda, which gave the current state its name, dominated the regions around Lake Victoria. In the first centuries AD, there were already Greek and Roman contacts on the East African coast. However, it was only from the seventh and eighth centuries that there was an extensive Ottoman trading system there, with an impact on the inner regions such as Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Export items included slaves and ivory. Buganda became the largest slave exporter in the region of the northern lakes.

At the end of the nineteenth century, during the "Scramble for Africa" Great Britain extended its rule to East Africa and the Imperial East Africa Company was commissioned to occupy Uganda in 1888. In 1896, Uganda, including the Kingdom of Buganda, became a British protectorate. On gaining its independence in 1962 the first President was King Mutesa of Buganda.