

# Mozambique

Mozambique (mō' zəmbēk' ), officially Republic of Mozambique, republic (1997 pop. 16,099,246), 302,659 sq mi (784,090 sq km), SE Africa. It borders on the Indian Ocean in the east; on South Africa and Swaziland in the south; on Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi in the west; and on Tanzania in the north. [Maputo](#) is the capital and largest city. Land, People, and Government

The Mozambique Channel separates the country from the island of Madagascar. Mozambique's c.1,600 mi (2,575 km) coastline is interrupted by the mouths of numerous rivers, notably the Rovuma (which forms part of the boundary with Tanzania), Lúrio, Incomati (Komati), Lugela, Zambezi (which is navigable for c.290 mi/465 km within the territory), Revúe, Save (Sabi), and Limpopo. South of the Zambezi estuary the coastal belt is very narrow, and in the far north the coastline is made up of rocky cliffs. Along the northern coast are numerous islets and lagoons; in the far south is Maputo Bay. The northern and central interior is mountainous; Monte Binga (7,992 ft/2,436 m), the country's loftiest point, is situated at the Zimbabwean border W of Beira. About one third of Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi) falls within Mozambique's boundaries; Lake Chilwa (Lago Chirua) is at the border with Malawi. Much of the country is covered with savanna; there are also extensive hardwood forests, and palms grow widely along the coast and near rivers.

Mozambique is divided into ten provinces. In addition to the capital, other cities include [Beira](#), [Moçambique](#), [Nampula](#), Pemba, [Quelimane](#), Tete, Angoche, and Xai-Xai. The principal ethnic groups are, in the north, the Yao, Makonde, and Makua; in the center, the Thonga, Chewa, Nyanja, and Sena; and in the south, the Shona and Tonga. Small numbers of Swahili live along the coast. The population also includes small numbers of Europeans and those of mixed African and European descent, as well as some Asian Indians and Chinese.

About 50% of the inhabitants of Mozambique follow traditional religious beliefs, and 30% are Roman Catholics and 20% Muslims (most of whom live in the north). Although Bantu languages are widely spoken, Portuguese is the official language.

Mozambique's executive branch is headed by a president who is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The unicameral legislature consists of a 250-seat assembly whose members are also popularly elected for five-year terms.

## Economy

In 1990, Mozambique was estimated to be the world's poorest nation; since then, the country has been in transition toward a more market-oriented economy and the prospect of raising its standard of living. Mozambique remains an overwhelmingly agricultural and poor country, however, with the majority of its workers engaged in traditional subsistence cultivation. The principal cash crops include cashews, sugarcane, cotton,

citrus and tropical fruits, and tea. Cattle and goats are raised, but their numbers are kept low by the [tsetse fly](#). There are forestry and fishing industries, including shrimp. The country's mineral wealth has not been determined fully; however, titanium and natural-gas deposits are being developed by foreign investors. There are also significant coal deposits, which are mined in small amounts, and hydropower potential. Many citizens work abroad in South African mines.

Mozambique's industrial sector is devoted largely to the processing of raw materials. In addition, chemical fertilizer, refined petroleum, construction materials (particularly cement), steel, aluminum, and textiles are produced. Electricity from the giant Cabora Bassa hydroelectric project (located on the Zambezi near Tete) is exported to South Africa. A smaller hydroelectric plant is situated at Chicamba Real (near Beira) on the Revue River. The economy is also reliant on foreign aid.

The annual cost of Mozambique's imports is usually much higher than its earnings from foreign sales. The principal imports are machinery and equipment, motor vehicles, fuel, chemicals, metal products, food, and textiles; chief exports are aluminum, shrimp, cashews, cotton, sugar, citrus, and timber. South Africa, the nations of Western Europe, and the United States are the country's chief trading partners. Mozambique also derives income from handling foreign trade for nearby countries; goods are shipped on rail lines that terminate at the ports of Maputo, Nacala, and Lumbo (near Moçambique); the rail line to the port of Beira is in disrepair. A toll road that opened in 1998 carries goods from South Africa's industrial north to Maputo. Mozambique is a member of the Southern African Development Community.

### HistoryEarly History and Portuguese Influence

Bantu-speakers began to migrate into the region of Mozambique in the middle of the 1st millennium A.D. From 1000, Arab and Swahili traders settled along parts of the coast, notably at Sofala (near modern Beira), at Cuama (near the Zambezi estuary), and on the site of present-day Inhambane. The traders had contact with the interior, and Sofala was particularly noted as a gold- and ivory-exporting center closely linked with—and at times controlled by—Kilwa (on the coast of modern Tanzania).

In 1498, Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese navigator en route around Africa to India, visited Quelimane and Moçambique. Between 1500 and 1502 Pedro Álvares Cabral and Sancho de Tovar, also Portuguese explorers, visited Sofala and Maputo Bay. In 1505, the Portuguese under Francisco de Almeida occupied Moçambique, and Pedro de Anhaia established a Portuguese settlement at Sofala. The Portuguese also set up trading stations N of Cabo Delgado (near the mouth of the Ruvuma), but their main influence (especially after 1600) in E Africa was in the Moçambique region.

Between 1509 and 1512 António Fernandes traveled inland and visited the Mwanamutapa kingdom, which controlled the region between the Zambezi and Save rivers and was the source of much of the gold exported at Sofala. Soon after, Swahili traders resident in Mwanamutapa began to redirect the kingdom's gold trade away from

Portuguese-controlled Sofala and toward more northern ports. Thus, Portugal became interested in directly controlling the interior. In 1531, posts were established inland at Sena and Tete on the Zambezi, and in 1544 a station was founded at Quelimane.

In 1560 and 1561 Gonçalo da Silveira, a Portuguese Jesuit missionary, visited Mwanamutapa, where he quickly made converts, including King Nogomo Mupunzagato. However, the Swahili traders who lived there, fearing for their commercial position, persuaded Nogomo to have Silveira murdered. Between 1569 and 1572 an army of about 1,000 Portuguese under Francisco Barreto attempted to gain control of the interior, but Barreto and most of the soldiers died of disease at Sena. In 1574, an army of 400 men under Vasco Fernandes Homen marched into the interior from Sofala, but most of the men were killed in fighting with Africans.

In the late 16th and early 17th cent. the official Portuguese presence in the interior was limited to small trading colonies along the Zambezi. At the same time Portuguese adventurers began to establish control over large estates (called *prazos*), which resembled feudal kingdoms. They were ruled absolutely and often ruthlessly by their owners (called *prazeros*); Africans were forced to work on plantations, and considerable slave-raiding was undertaken (especially after 1650). Some of the *prazeros* maintained private armies, and they were generally independent of the Portuguese crown to which they were theoretically subordinate.

From about 1628 the Portuguese gained increasing influence in Mwanamutapa, and they became intimately involved in the civil wars that led to the demise of that kingdom by the end of the 17th cent. Mozambique was ruled as part of Goa in India until 1752, when it was given its own administration headed by a captain-general. Although the Portuguese helped introduce several American crops (notably corn and cashew nuts) that became staples of Mozambique's agriculture, the impact of their presence on African society was mainly destructive.

### Colonial Struggles and Portuguese Domination

From the mid-18th to the mid-19th cent. large numbers of Africans were exported as slaves, largely to the Mascarene Islands and to Brazil. In the 1820s and 1830s groups of Nguni-speaking people from S Africa invaded Mozambique; most of the Nguni continued northward into present-day Malawi and Tanzania, but one group, the Shangana, remained in S Mozambique, where they held effective control until the late 19th cent. From the mid-19th cent. to the late 1880s the *mestiço* Joaquim José da Cruz and his son António Nicente controlled trade along the lower Zambezi. Thus, when the scramble for African territory among the European powers began in the 1880s, the Portuguese government had only an insecure hold on Mozambique. Nevertheless, Portugal tried to increase its nominal holdings, partly in an attempt to connect by land its territory in Mozambique and in Angola (in SW Africa).

Portuguese claims in present-day Zimbabwe and Malawi were strongly opposed by the British, who in 1890 delivered an ultimatum to Portugal demanding that it withdraw from

these regions. Portugal complied, and in 1891 a treaty establishing the boundaries between British and Portuguese holdings in SE Africa was negotiated. Beginning in the 1890s and ending only around 1920, the Portuguese established their authority in Mozambique by force of arms against determined African resistance. Between 1895 and 1897 the Shangana were defeated; between 1897 and 1900 the Nyanja were conquered; in 1912 the Yao were pacified; and in 1917 control was established in extreme S Mozambique. In the 1890s several private companies were founded to develop and administer most of Mozambique. In 1910 the status of the territory was changed from province to colony.

After the 1926 revolution in Portugal, the Portuguese government took a more direct interest in Mozambique. The companies lost the right to administer their regions, and at the same time the government furthered economic development by building railroads and by systematically forcing Africans to work on European-owned land. Portuguese colonial policy was based on the egalitarian theory of assimilation: if an African became assimilated to Portuguese culture (i.e., if he was fluent in Portuguese, was Christian, and had a good character), he was to be given the same legal status as a Portuguese citizen. In practice, however, very few Africans qualified for citizenship (partly because there were inadequate educational opportunities), and they were directed to work for Europeans or to grow export crops.

In 1951 the status of Mozambique was changed to overseas province in a move designed to indicate to world opinion that the territory would have increased autonomy; in a similar move in 1972, Mozambique was declared to be a self-governing state. In both instances, however, Portugal maintained firm control over the territory. Between 1961 and 1963 several laws (one of which abolished forced labor) were passed to improve the living conditions of Africans. At the same time, many African nations were becoming independent, and nationalist sentiment was growing in Mozambique.

### The Struggle for Independence

In 1962 several nationalist groups were united to form the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), headed by Eduardo Mondlane. The Portuguese adamantly refused to give the territory independence, and in 1964 Frelimo initiated guerrilla warfare in N Mozambique. In 1969, Mondlane was assassinated in Dar es Salaam; he was succeeded by Uria Simango (1969) and by Samora Moisés [Machel](#) (1970). By the early 1970s, Frelimo (which had a force of about 7,000 guerrillas) controlled much of central and N Mozambique and was engaged in often fierce fighting with the Portuguese (who maintained an army of about 60,000 in the territory).

In 1974 the government of Portugal was overthrown by the military. The new regime (which favored self-determination for all of Portugal's colonies) made an effort to resolve the conflict in Mozambique. Talks with Frelimo resulted in a mutual cease-fire and an agreement for Mozambique to become independent in June, 1975.

### Upheaval in the New Nation

In reaction to the independence agreement, a group of white rebels attempted to seize control of the Mozambique government but were quickly subdued by Portuguese and Frelimo troops. As black rule of Mozambique became a reality (with Machel as president) and as increased racial violence erupted, there was an exodus of Europeans from Mozambique. As the Portuguese left, they took their valuable skills and machinery, which had an adverse effect on the economy. Frelimo established a single-party Marxist state, nationalized all industry, and abolished private land ownership. Frelimo also instituted health and education reforms.

Mozambique became a base for the nationalist rebels of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), a move that angered Rhodesia and South Africa. In 1979, Rhodesia invaded Mozambique, destroying communications facilities, agricultural centers, and transportation lines; many civilians were killed in the attacks. After Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) obtained majority rule in 1980, the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR or Renamo), a powerful dissident group financed in part by South Africa, waged guerrilla warfare against Frelimo.

In addition to the chaos created by economic and political conditions, Mozambique was foundering under the weight of a large and inefficient bureaucracy. In the 1980s, Machel cut the size of the government and began to privatize industry. In 1984, Mozambique signed a nonaggression pact (the Incomati accord) with South Africa; the terms of the pact prohibited South African support of Renamo and Mozambican support of the [African National Congress](#). Mozambique accused South Africa of violating the accord, and fighting continued between the government and Renamo throughout the 1980s. In 1986, Machel was killed in a plane crash and succeeded by Joaquim Chissano.

In 1992, Mozambique suffered from one of the worst droughts of the century and from the widespread famine that ensued. Renamo rebels, who controlled most of the rural areas, blocked famine relief efforts. Civil war and starvation killed tens of thousands, and more than a million refugees fled the country. In 1992, Frelimo and Renamo signed an accord ending the civil war. In multiparty elections held in 1994, with the presence of UN peacekeepers, Chissano, the Frelimo candidate, won the presidency, and his party secured a slight majority in parliament.

The Chissano government had begun repudiating Marxism in the 1980s, pledging itself to develop a market-oriented economy. In the 1990s it privatized a number of state-owned companies and appeared to be making progress in cutting inflation, stabilizing the currency, and stimulating economic growth, and by the end of the decade it had largely recovered from the civil war, although widespread poverty remained a problem. The Dec., 1999, elections were again won by Chissano and Frelimo, but the Renamo presidential candidate, Afonso Dhlakama, denounced the results as fraudulent and called for a recount; foreign observers, who were denied access to the final vote tabulation, expressed concerns about the vote-counting process. The supreme court denied (Jan., 2000) Dhlakama's request for a recount, stating that Renamo had failed to provide evidence of ballot fraud. In February and March, 2000, the Limpopo and Changane river valleys in S Mozambique experienced severe flooding as a result of heavy rain from a

cyclone (hurricane); an estimated one million people were affected. The results of the elections led Renamo to boycott the national assembly for much of 2000, and protest demonstrations in November resulted in scattered violence in central and N Mozambique.

#### Bibliography.

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