

Zanzibar Achieves Independence

ON DECEMBER 10, two days before Kenya's independence, Britain's smallest possession in Africa, the Sultanate of Zanzibar, achieved independence within the Commonwealth after 73 years as a British protectorate.

Location

Zanzibar consists of Zanzibar Island, with an area of 640 square miles and a population of 165,000, and Pemba Island, with an area of 380 square miles and a population of 134,000. The two islands lie 30 miles off the coast of Tanganyika in East Africa.

Early History

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, Zanzibar was one of several prosperous Arab trading centres on the east coast of Africa. It was virtually unknown to the nations of Europe until Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the end of the fifteenth century. For the next 200 years, the history of Zanzibar and Pemba, as of most of East Africa, centred on a struggle between the Portuguese and the Arabs for control of the region. By 1700, the Portuguese had been driven out of all of their possessions north of Mozambique. Various Arab factions continued to fight over the region until, in 1832, the Sultan of Oman succeeded in consolidating his authority along the East African coast and took up residence in Zanzibar.

Population

Zanzibar's long connections with East Africa, the Arab world and India are reflected in the composition of its population. Its nearly 300,000 people include approximately 168,000 indigenous Africans known as "Shirazis", 60,000 Africans from the mainland, 47,000 Arabs and 18,000 Indians. There are no Europeans other than civil servants and a few persons engaged in commerce.

Economy

The economy of the island is based almost entirely on the production and export of cloves, with copra and other coconut products as a secondary, though valuable, source of income. These two items together account for about 95 per cent of the annual exports valued at \$13 million. The islands have no appreciable mineral resources and no significant manufacturing industry. An effort is being made to diversify and improve agriculture production.

Constitutional Development

Political progress has been complicated by the special problems of a multi-racial