

## Nancy in Tabora II

Presuming to Muse on Dr. Livingstone! You can't live in Tanzania without learning to love two people—Dr. David Livingstone, the great explorer, emancipator of slaves and Anglican minister; and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, still very much the hero and emancipator of the Tanzanian people. For years of course I've known about both figures but now I find that I know a quite a bit generically about the great Mwalimu (teacher) in contrast I know LOTS of the details of the great explorer's life. I'm coming off the book (which I listened to on tape) called "Into Africa" which is the account of how Mr. Stanley came to be assigned the task of finding Dr. Livingstone and how it all happened!

Most people interested in the personalities in Tanzanian history make the pilgrimage to check out the slave market and church in Stonetown in Zanzibar where Dr. Livingstone first committed his life to stopping the slave trade. These are tired but still impressive and powerful sites. Of course, when Dr. L was there in the 1840's he was distracted by so many things. The biggest mystery of the era remained the source of the Nile and he, as well as several other staunch leaders of the Royal Geographic Society, was obsessed with finding it. The next place most tourists normally see is the historical town of Bagamoyo (literally meaning where the slaves lost their hearts) about 40 kilometers north of Dar Es Salaam and now an artistic "center"—that word being rather generously used. This is where most of the slaves ended their journey from their various villages and homes all over East Africa before boarding boats to Zanzibar where they would be sold. This is also the place where the explorers made the reverse trip. They'd get well supplied for their journeys in Zanzibar and then pick up last minute things in Bagamoyo before heading into the interior. Now because all towns want some sort of claim to fame with the good doctor and the great teacher, most will endeavor to place them in their own histories. Since Nyerere lived in an era of plane travel and good photographs, this documentation cannot be so easily invented. For Dr. L, though, it is clear that some towns will go to some length of stretching the truth to place Dr. L there. This was certainly the case a couple of weeks ago when I spent a week working on the Zonal Blood Transfusion Center in Mtwara—in the Deep South. I stayed in a cute OLD town north of Mtwara where the Germans built a large "boma", or fort, that has now been nicely converted into a simple but charming hotel. Mikindani was a very important town for the Arab traders who systematically tried to relieve Africa of all of its ivory, and anything else of any value, including its most valuable resource, its people. Well before the Germans set themselves up there in the 1890's, you know who had already come by! There is historical data and references in Dr. L's journals about the town of Mikindani and he did spend a couple days there getting ready for what would be his last adventure into the unknown, again in search of the source of the Nile (he believed it to be much farther south than it was actually found to be). However, the house he stayed in was out of town and has since disintegrated but that didn't stop the local Tourism Board to rehabilitate a lovely building in "downtown" Mikindani and assert that this is where Dr. L laid his head. One needs to read the small print in the guidebooks to get the real facts, unless you prefer the romantic half truths that probably make a better story and certainly better photos! In order to support the local community development effort that is the center of the restoration of the Boma into a hotel and which is committed to enhancing community pride, creating employment and educating the local citizenry, I decided to devote a couple of hours on a slow morning to a "community walk" through Mikindani. Mohammed, my guide who was born and raised in Mikindani, walked me down the hill from the old Boma and our first stop was, of course, a nice building with a big bronze plaque on it stating exactly when Dr. David Livingstone stayed here. I teased Mohammed that I had read that it was in fact not true and he simply smiled, distracted my attention to another important site and continued my education. Next stop was the Shia mosque, a rather impressive building and recently painted robin egg blue. I asked Mohammed if this is where he prayed launching him on a roll about how the Shias are called to prayer ONLY three times a day whereas the Sunnis, his own religious comrades, go five times a day. Not only that, he did get on a bit of a rant, since the Shias have all moved to the nearby metropolis of Mtwara—what he failed to mention is that most of them, largely of Asian descent, left in the late 60's when the great Mwalimu nationalized private businesses and that hit the Shia community extra hard so they likely didn't just leave Mikindani, most of them probably left the country looking for a land where they could go about their own business! The rest of my tour seemed more focused on what a typical tourist might like to learn about village life—shopping, greeting neighbors, visiting the school, etc—but I guess I can say I've been there, done that! I did perk up towards the end when we came to a cemetery. As I attempted to read the tombstones I was suddenly horrified, this graveyard under these pretty frangipani trees was populated entirely by infants!!! How tragic! Mohammed then explained that the two dates on the stones were not birth and death dates, but death and burial dates, to my great relief. Good Muslims make sure to get their kin in the ground before they even get cold—which would not be such a trick in the sweltering heat! So now just two weeks later, I'm back in Tabora for another week—no, Michael is not amused—and I found time to visit the Livingstone Museum in Kwihara, just 10 kilometers outside of Tabora. Morton Stanley visited here twice in 1870 on his way to find Livingstone and the only other white member of his party died here—I paid homage. Then after finding Livingstone in 1871 in Ujiji near Kigoma, they return through Kwihara again and then part ways here. Livingstone ends up spending 8 months in this formerly busy little settlement, a major center of trade. Some Arab traders who he had good reason to hate but often ended up relying on when desperate for support (the old end justifies the means route) offered him a room in their fortified, old Swahili style house (called a tembe). Years after Dr. L left town, the center of trade moved to Tabora where the train station was put in and then the Germans settled and the old tembe fell down, the town of Kwihara became a pretty backwater not even deserving of electrification. But in 1957 while the British still held power here, they decided to honor Dr. L with a museum to be built in Kwihara. The rebuilt Tembe la Livingstone was finally completed by the new Tanzanian

government in 1964 which was a kind tribute to the old adventurer. It is quite grand in size but simple in layout. Inside there is nothing except a lock of the Doc's hair, copies of many contemporary US and British newspapers telling the tale of Stanley finding the doctor and the horrors of that trip, several maps and some prints of what things looked like back then. I was asked to sign the registry and was sad and surprised to see that no one else had signed in since last July! That definitely means the museum caretaker is far from a full time job!!&mdash;we had to go to four houses to find him and the key! Back in Tabora I needed to do some work that took me to the local post office, a place I normally work hard to avoid. While sitting at the counter, I came face to face with a picture of President Nyerere&mdash;looking very fresh for a man who has been dead for several years. The Taasisi (literally the 'light is us' but meaning foundation) of Julius Nyerere is actively promoting the national lottery! I've got to believe this was not his original idea. What is interesting is that this lottery has non-monetary prizes including cars (gari), tractors (trekta), bicycles (baiskeli), TVs (televisheni), radios (redio) and plows (plau) so maybe it would have been something he wouldn't have been allergic to after all. And you can see from the list of prizes why I have had so much success learning Kiswahili! Last time I wrote, I spoke of the gazillions of students all over town with their colorful and often clashing uniforms. Turns out the great Mwalimu studied in Tabora so worked hard to establish many of the other educational institutions found here still today. It is definitely a very collegiate place to be even with its own functioning library&mdash;where I plan to go on my next visit. On the work side, all is going well even with the little speed humps in the road of public health. I'm trying to learn as much about what I'm putting together as I can but honestly I end up doing a lot of nodding and hoping that I'll gain a fuller understanding as time goes on. I can now recognize a centrifuge, I don't get so jumpy when they light up the giant medical incinerators in which someday we will be burning contaminated blood and other hazardous waste, I know how to evaluate the state of the very special lab tables and I definitely know how important it is to get these centers up and running. I'm thrilled that my world is full of my own mwalimus&mdash;folks that try to explain to me how blood breaks down and its various uses, how our water purifiers can purify water for various lab purposes and how to set up a computer network using a PBX (I do a LOT of nodding on that one!). What I'm not doing very well at is dealing with real blood! I was just in the hospital lab yesterday and Dr. Makingi was showing me their current blood supply and honestly I could barely look at it. I think my tolerance is lowering&mdash;not good for my new career! Its not like I want to faint but I'd almost rather faint than throw up&mdash;potentially VERY embarrassing. This evening I took a fabulous jog through old Tabora. I found a great route that is almost entirely shaded by giant trees (some said to be planted by chance by the slaves leaving their mango pits along the road on their long, terrible walk to Bagamoyo) and thus I'm protected from the harsh sun. People are friendly along the way and everyone with a couple of glasses and a table and two chairs is trying to attract customers for some sort of liquid pleasures and entertainment. The corn ladies are stoking up their charcoal burners, the peanut guys are setting up the little nickel priced piles of their wares and the chipsi oils are all starting to boil. Small groups of men gather to play bao, checkers on just a piece of cardboard and bottle caps or just to chat about which local enterprise might be worthy of their business. I don't think I've ever been in such a charming Tanzanian town&mdash;certainly some are more beautiful and many have more going on but I'm really taken by the low key, semi-prosperous and academically serious population. In the future I hope to read more about the great Mwalimu and follow the various trails of Dr. Livingstone. In the meantime our current leaders all seem out of sorts. On the American frontier, while George Bush may enjoy some self-deprecating comments at the annual press dinner to distract the nation, I'm terribly distracted by the seeming lack of action by the SADC leadership and their stance on Zimbabwe's Mugabe. Their lack of action is such a throwback to terrible models of African leadership. I can only hope that behind closed doors more was actually said than what we were informed about on prime time. I look forward to reading about it in the local papers, I'm sure they will be all over the map on their take on it, but even more than that, getting back to family and home. More later from the birthplace of humans one and all.