Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

TANZANIA - FOOD BOWLS G13

There are over 120 tribes in Tanzania. The objects in this box show part of their traditional life. Many of the younger people now move to the city looking for work. Their home is still important to them, often returning in western clothes before changing into their tribal dress.





In 1964 the two countries of Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to form Tanzania. The country has a remarkable landscape. In the north is Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa and to the west sitting on the country's border is Lake Victoria - the world's largest lake.



Tanzania has bustling, diverse cities such as Dar es Salaam. The island of Zanzibar was once a primary trading post in East Africa, making it the home to a large Arab population.

Wooden plates



These two plates are for serving food. Ugali is one of Tanzania's main dishes, made from maize flour. It is like dough and used to scoop up other pieces of food. It is quite bland when eaten on its own but is usually dipped in a sauce with meat. A perfect way of picking up food without using knives and forks! Ugali might seem a simple food, but it is treasured by the Tanzanians. They have a phrase '*Kupyanja iti kulumanga*'. This means 'to dip ugali in a little gravy is better than to be completely without gravy'. It is a way of saying that things could be worse!



The Chagga live on the slopes of Kilimanjaro. As with many Tanzanian tribes their diet is heavily reliant upon bananas. It is so important to them that they have six different names for it! They combine it with beef, goat-meat or mutton to make a stew called *nyama na ndizi'* which means meat and banana. A very strong alcoholic drink called *pombe* is also brewed from bananas to be drunk at parties.

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Clay pot



In many tribes it is the women that have traditionally been the skilled potters. Men are discouraged from participating in pot making. Their presence is considered unlucky while pots are being made. It is said to cause personal misfortune such as sterility or the pots breaking when they are being fired.



They are made from clay that is dug out of the earth in large clumps. The best clay comes from the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro and the Pare mountains. The large pieces are taken home and broken into smaller lumps. Water is added to make the clay easier to pummel and knead. Unlike with kneading bread, this removes the air bubbles from the clay. Doing this makes the clay stronger and less likely to shatter during firing. A ball is formed and worked quickly with the whole hand. Once finished, time is spent on the simple pot designs. The sides are smoothed with water to remove the corrugated effect and then put in the shade to dry for up to four days.

When the pots are fired they are covered with wood and dried parts of the banana tree. The firing process takes an hour or two. Once the fire has died down the pots are carefully removed whilst still very hot. They are rubbed with leaves to give them a distinct colour. Then they are ready to be used for cooking food over an open fire.





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Wooden bowl



This bowl has been stained a dark colour. Feel how light it is. Many useful utensils are made from a wood locally called mpugupugu. It is a soft and light wood that is easy to shape. What do you think this bowl was used for? It might have been for milking cows. Men do the farming in most of the tribes but the women milk the animals.



Cattle are very important to Tanzanian tribes such as the Maasai who live a semi-nomadic life. From a young age the Maasai boys are allowed to look after lambs, kid goats and small calves. As they grow up they gain more responsibility until they become adults and care for fully-grown cattle.

The number of cows owned by a Maasai family represents their wealth. It means that cows are not killed for meat, except on a special occasion. When someone is ill the cow's blood is drawn from the neck. This is mixed with milk to make a thick drink that is believed to provide the sick with nourishment. The cow's wound is not serious and they quickly recover.

The Maasai tell a story that God gave them all the cattle in the world. They believed any other tribe that had cattle stole it from them, so it was legitimate to steal back!



