

Areas of concern

Bagamoyo, Tanzania

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Be happy, my soul, let go all worries
Soon the place of your yearnings is reached
The town of palms—Bagamoyo.

Old Swahili Caravan Song



FIG. 1. The courtyard entrance of the Boma.

Historical background

Bagamoyo was one of the major caravan entrepôts which emerged during the nineteenth century on the east coast of Africa. Its development coincided with the decline of other towns in the area, such as Kaole four miles to the south on the same bay. The attraction of Bagamoyo was its fine anchorage for sailing vessels, good water, fertile hinterland and closeness to the rice-producing Ruvu River region. From the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, the area around Bagamoyo was controlled by the Shomvi diwans (a wealthy ruling class of business men); then the ruling Sultan Majid of Zanzibar (1856–70) became interested in the development of commerce in his mainland dominions. By this time Bagamoyo had already established itself as a centre in the export of dried fish, copal, salt and other foodstuffs through its trade network to the interior; later this was to be expanded to include ivory and slaves.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Bagamoyo experienced a trade boom in export, which attracted shopkeepers, craftsmen and labourers to the town. At the same time it was chosen by Father Antoine Horner of the Holy Ghost Fathers as a suitable site for the establishment of the first Roman Catholic mission on the mainland of East Africa in 1868. The result was a mixture of people of different cultures and ethnic regions—Nyamwezi, Sukuma and Manyema from the interior; and Arabs, Indians, Moslems, Parsees, Goans and Europeans from overseas. During the second half of the nineteenth century Europeans became more interested in Africa through the writings of explorers, Livingstone,



FIG. 2. Kaole: coral-built tombs and ruins.

Burton, Speke, Stanley etc. For the explorer and trader the main starting point was Zanzibar, and from there they sailed 25 miles across the channel to the mainland town of Bagamoyo to recruit porters and buy provisions for caravans to the interior. In the 1870s political problems arose between the Sultan's representative, the Liwali and the local hereditary diwans; but despite the bickering the town's economic prosperity was safeguarded as being essential to their existence.

In 1888 Sultan Sayyid Khalifa of Zanzibar signed a treaty with the Deutsch Ost-Africa Gesellschaft granting the latter the right to collect customs duties on a coastal strip opposite Zanzibar, including Bagamoyo. Political problems soon arose through the Germans requiring firearms to be registered, women to have equality in courts, and the land and property ordinance requiring ownership to be proved and property values registered. The fear of the local people about the loss of property, combined with the action of the Germans in sending their own agents into the interior to procure ivory, led finally to the Bushiri uprisings. In January 1889 the German Government appointed Major von Wissman as military commander to defend Bagamoyo against Bushiri. During a truce period, von Wissmann built blockhouses around the town (one of which is still extant at the western approach to the town). The German defeat of Bushiri at Nzole in May 1889 ended the resistance movement and led to the establishment of colonial rule, the rebuilding of the town, and a resumption of business activities.

On 17 October 1890, the Sultan of Zanzibar sold the coast of present-day Tanzania to the German Government, and German East Africa became a Crown Colony. For a few months, Bagamoyo became the capital; but in April 1891 it was decided to establish the capital at a small town further south, Dar-es-Salaam, which had a more suitable potential as a harbour for deep-water shipping. Despite the move, Bagamoyo continued to prosper and in the 1890s the Germans erected a number of buildings, including the Customs House and the Boma (administrative offices).¹ In addition, many fine private stone buildings were erected to accommodate a new influx of immigrants. But the town began to decline economically after the decision not to provide a rail link to Dar-es-Salaam; the food caravans which had traditionally linked it to the interior became obsolete once railways had been constructed to the interior, and Bagamoyo has steadily decayed from its years of prosperity at the turn of the century until the present day.

¹ The Walter Dobbartin collection of photographs in the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Federal Republic of Germany, contains a number of valuable photographs of Bagamoyo made in 1906–15. These show the buildings in their original state. There are also relevant record drawings from the German Colonial period in the National Archives, Dar-es-Salaam.

Architectural character

The earliest surviving constructions in the region are the tombs and the remains of a mosque in a picturesque setting at Kaole, four kilometres to the south (*Fig. 2*). These are constructed of coral and elaborately carved with Islamic geometric designs, but the only influence this type of

decoration seems to have exerted on the buildings of Bagamoyo is to be found in the doorposts and surrounds.

The nineteenth-century traditional buildings are of Swahili-Islamic culture, and normally two storeys high. The walls are constructed of coral-rag in lime mortar, rendered with lime plaster and traditionally limewashed. The ground floors are constructed of plaster on coral hardcore, and those to the first floor of mangrove poles with coral-rag infill and lime screeds (*Fig. 3*). Although the roofs were probably flat originally, most were replaced with pitched corrugated iron sheets after being damaged during the Bushiri uprising of 1889. The maximum span of a mangrove pole (2.80 m) has determined the width of elements in the plan, resulting in a regular, simple plan form. Externally the only decoration is in the doorways and fascias; internally there are often ogee-arched openings, and there is also a form of blank arch over windows and doors. In some cases there are also carved doorways between rooms. This form of construction is found in the majority of the pre-German Colonial buildings, including the Fort.

The German Colonial regime adapted these traditional techniques, but unusually employed an architect to design their new buildings in a style which is an innovative and sophisticated version of the Swahili-Islamic type combined with some recognizable Teutonic elements (*Figs 4 and 12*).

FIG. 3. Traditional Swahili-Islamic buildings.



FIG. 4. The Customs House, as originally built
(*Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; Walter Dobbertin collection*).



FIG. 5. The church of the
R.C. Mission.



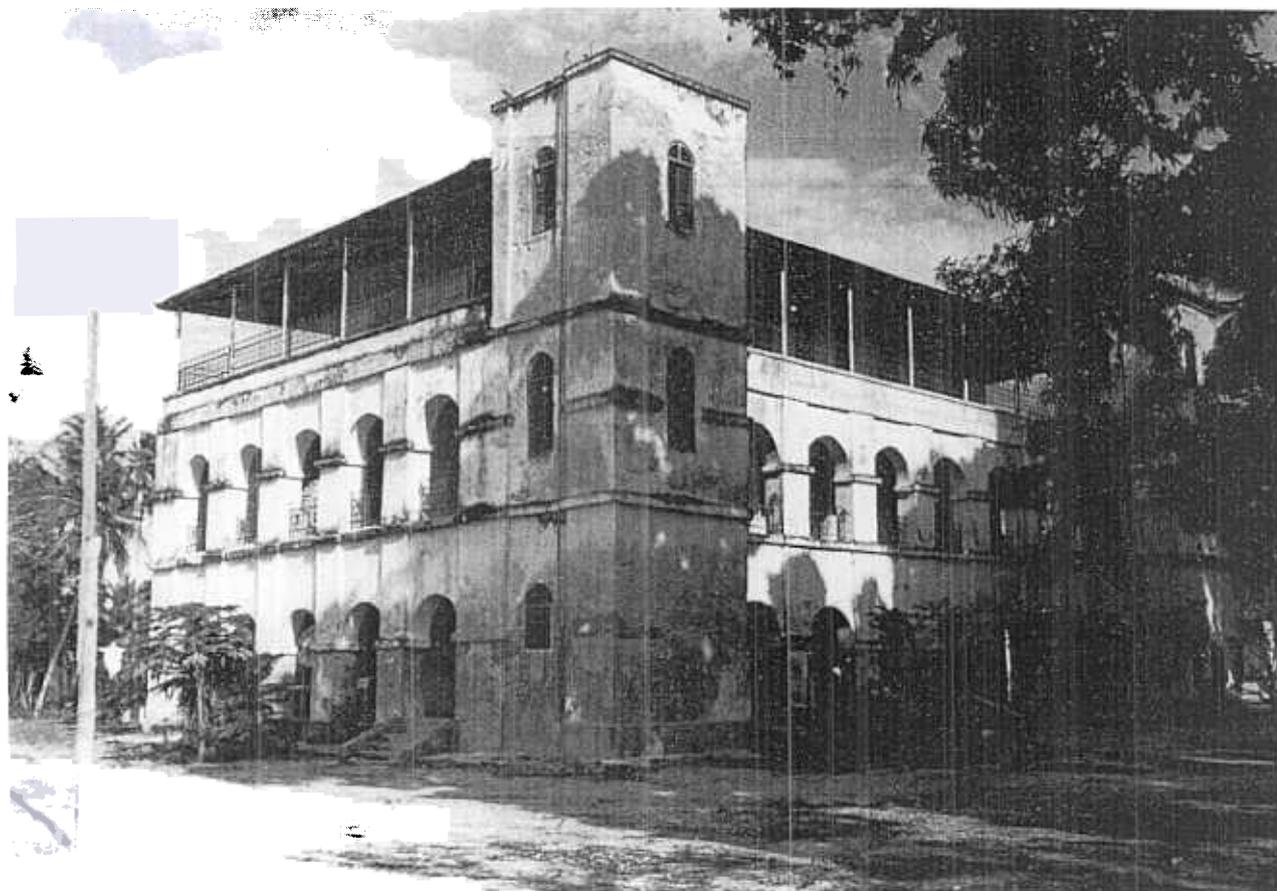
This gives the Colonial architecture of Tanzania a unique character and quality, of which Bagamoyo is a fine example.

The third architectural style represented in the area is found in the Roman Catholic Mission, north of the town. Once again it is a hybrid, a combination of local building techniques and a foreign style—in this case French. The tower remains of the relatively simple first church built by the Fathers shortly after setting up the Mission in 1868, but in 1910–14 this was superseded by the more elaborate Romanesque church built of dressed coral blocks (*Fig. 5*). The Fathers' house dates from the early years of the Mission, and is basically built in the traditional Bagamoyo manner with coral-rag walls and mangrove pole floor and roof construction. It lacks the sophistication of the German Colonial buildings but impresses by its simple form and modelling of repeated open arches around the perimeter (*Fig. 6*). The Sisters' convent is a smaller, lighter version of the same type of architecture (*Fig. 7*).

The present economy of Bagamoyo

Bagamoyo is well located geographically, and it possesses an unusually fine architectural character; but although it is rich in history it has an insecure economic basis at present. The town is dependant on income

FIG. 6. The Fathers' house.



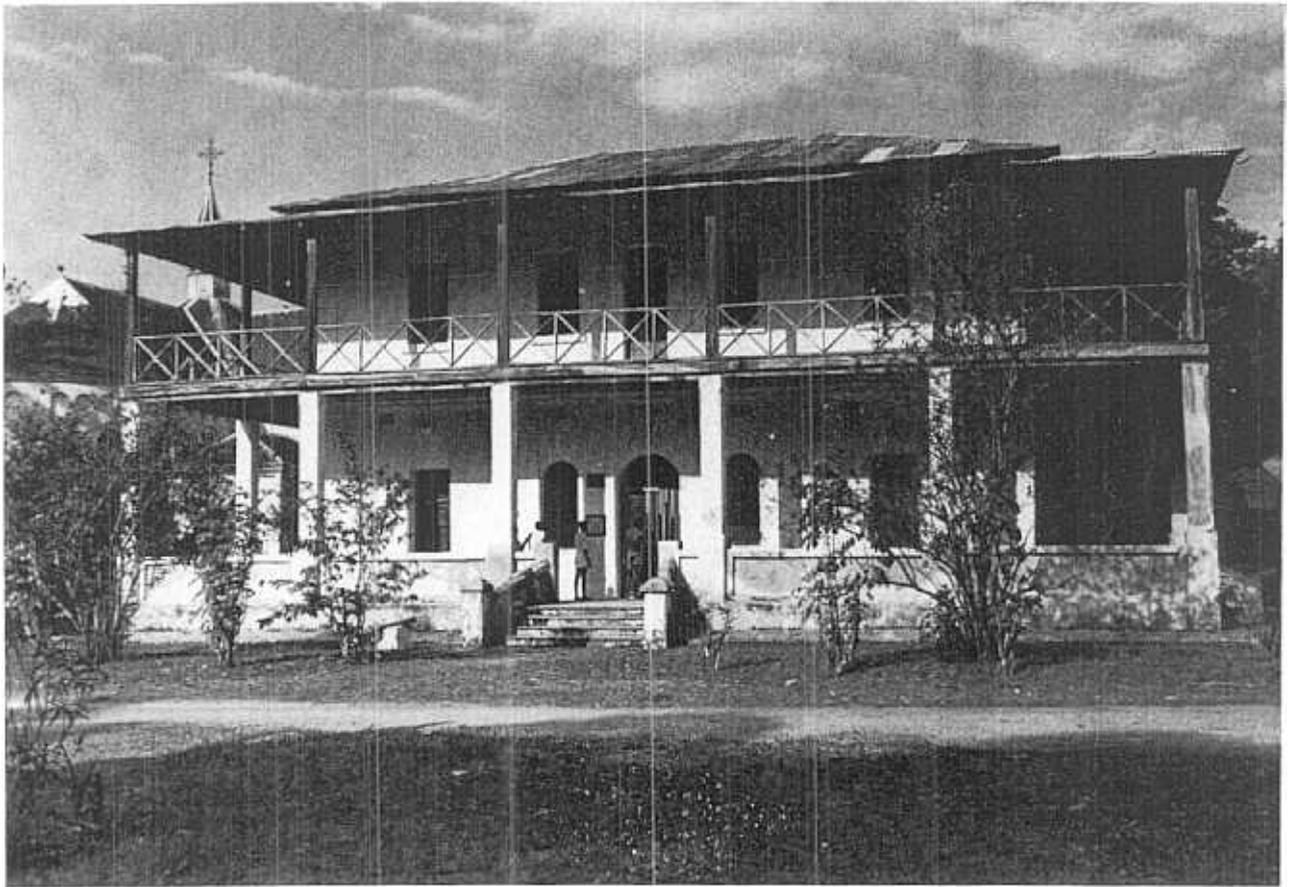


FIG. 7. The Sisters' convent.

from the peasant agriculture in the surrounding area, small traders, tidal fishing, and as a Government administrative centre. Despite its tourist attractions, there is no appropriate overnight accommodation, and roads are generally in a poor condition. There is no water-borne sewerage system within the town, although the existing water and electricity supplies are adequate and capable of being extended.

Tidal fishing is carried out as a community activity; this makes a colourful scene for the visitor, but is labour-intensive and inefficient. Women and children scale and clean the catch on the foreshore, after which it is taken to the market. The local fishing industry only produces about 30,000 kg of fish each year, which is sufficient for local consumption; but the development of fishing in Bagamoyo is now being affected adversely by the establishment of a Government fishing centre at Mbegani, six miles south, which is well equipped with deep-sea fishing vessels, piers and cold storage.

Women are engaged in such home industries as basket making, mat weaving, mkuti making (woven palm fronds for roofing) and brewing togwa (a local soft drink). The men of the town, apart from fishing and boat building, have part-time activities such as rope-making, tin-smithing and mkuti making. The once well-established and thriving tradition of decorative wood-carving has now gone completely, although

there is a timber co-operative called 'Umoja Ni Njuvu' which employs about 70 men ranging from forestry workers and drivers to carpenters and apprentices. Builders have elementary skills in the construction of mud and wattle walling with infill coral, simple blockwork etc, and roofing with mkuti or corrugated iron sheets; but there are no highly skilled craftsmen. The stone quarries have been abandoned, and stone for new walling is generally taken from the ruins of older houses. The traditional skills of lime burning, quarrying and coral block cutting have died out in the town; and although there are still seven known boat builders and two raft builders, there is little demand for boats which, when built to order, take five months to complete. Fifty people are employed at the Nunge Salt Works north of the town, and 20 in a small copra works which produces oil from coconuts bought from local farmers; but otherwise there are only small-scale general trades such as shop keeping and trading, fruit growing and selling, charcoal production and dried fish processing, and dhow traffic with Zanzibar. Times have changed since those evoked by an old Swahili caravan song:

The dhows arrive with streaming sails
And take aboard the treasures of Uleias
In the harbour of Bagamoyo.

FIG. 8. The Bay of Bagamoyo.



Nevertheless, the beautiful sandy bay with its historical past, its easy way of life, traditional dancing and singing, is still there (*Fig. 8*). Recognizing this, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania requested UNESCO to provide a commission to report on the conservation of Bagamoyo.

A conservation report

The brief was threefold.

1. To assist the Tanzanian authorities (Department of Antiquities) with compiling an inventory of historical monuments in the old quarters of Bagamoyo.
2. To assist them with drawing up a restoration plan.
3. To help plan a training centre for specialists in coastal monuments conservation.

The report submitted put forward a number of proposals to revitalize the town and area, and to find new uses for the major buildings; it also emphasized that if conservation is to be successful it must be undertaken with the participation of the local administration and people.

The Tanzanian Antiquities Act of 1964 can protect 'any building, fortification, interment, midden, dam or structure, erected, formed or built by human agency before the year 1863, or the ruins or remains thereof'. While this protection does not apply to any of the buildings in Bagamoyo, there is also provision for the Minister to declare any place, site or structure of historical interest to be a monument for the purposes of this Act. The Planning Acts did not contain any provision for declaring conservation areas or areas of special control, and the report recommended there was an urgent need to include legislation within the Antiquities Act and/or the Planning Acts to widen the scope of protection along the lines suggested.

Four areas in Bagamoyo were recommended for designation as conservation areas, three within the township boundary and the fourth 3 km to the north. All the buildings considered to be of a quality deserving listing were included within the proposed areas, of which the largest contains the original coral-stone built town and the foreshore. The other two in the township were each based on a single building which was considered to be of great importance, i.e. the Caravanserai and the Blockhouse; while the outlying area comprises the tower of the first Roman Catholic church, the later church, the Fathers' house and the Sisters' convent of the Holy Ghost Mission.

The basis of the economic proposals was the creation of Bagamoyo as a national and international cultural visitors' centre for Tanzania. There is a growing need for a recreation resort for Dar-es-Salaam, which will have a

population of over one million inhabitants in the foreseeable future; Bagamoyo, 60 km to the north, is an ideal location for relaxation. Overseas visitors would be within a 1½-hour drive (assuming an improved road) of the Dar-es-Salaam International Airport, and the town could provide a resting-point in beautiful surroundings before setting off on the coastal circuits and visits to the game parks.

The report proposed that a number of existing buildings should be converted to new uses, providing detailed accommodation schedules and sketch plans. It was suggested that conference facilities could be made within the former District Council building (*Fig. 9*), which could include galleries to show the work of contemporary Tanzanian artists, local crafts, and national and regional history, as well as an adjoining area for traditional dancing which played a great part in life in the past. 'Oh what delight to see the ngomas where the lovely girls are swaying in dance at night in Bagamoyo', sang the caravaneers. The Cotton Ginnery (*Fig. 10*), one of the first industrial buildings erected by the Germans in East Africa in the early 1900s, still contains the original drive shaft, and there are many objects in the town which could be assembled as the nucleus of an industrial museum in this converted building. The Customs House (*Fig. 11*) could become a visitors' centre with facilities for craft workshops and sales, boat building and holiday flats, and the Caravan-serai (*Fig. 12*) could be converted to a hostel. The finest building, the 1895 Boma or German Administrative Headquarters,² was suggested as the basis of an hotel designed to full international standards. Its architectural and historical quality (*Figs 1 and 13*) could be preserved while providing accommodation for 172 guests who could take advantage of the town's proximity to coastal sites and towns, many of which have fine early Colonial buildings, game parks, and Zanzibar which can be reached by dhow. Other local places of interest are the ruins at Kaole, the site of Bushiri's camp at Nzole, and interesting tomb sites at Kunduchi and Mbeni. Setting Bagamoyo in its wider context, the report indicated two possible coastal circuits which included, to the north, Zanzibar, the Sadani Game Reserve and Mikumi National Park, the Tanga/Pangani area with Tongoni ruins and Amboni caves. The southern circuit was based on Kilwa Kivinje, an early nineteenth-century Swahili/Islamic town with German Colonial buildings, and Mikindani which, while possessing a similar architectural quality, has associations also with David Livingstone who spent some time there before setting off on his last journey into the interior.

The report was submitted by UNESCO to the Tanzanian government through the Ministry of National Culture and Youth in November 1979. In the following January a seminar in the town was attended by representatives of the Ministries and Institutions whose activities have a bearing on the recommendations, and consequently a committee was formed to determine how to implement the report. The 1964 Antiquities

² During the British period the building was altered, roof and roof overlays were removed. In front was a classical monument to the Germans killed in the Bushiri wars of 1889-90, which was demolished in the late 1940s.



FIG. 9. The former District Council building.

FIG. 10. The Cotton Ginnery.





FIG. 11. The Customs House.

FIG. 12. The Caravansera.



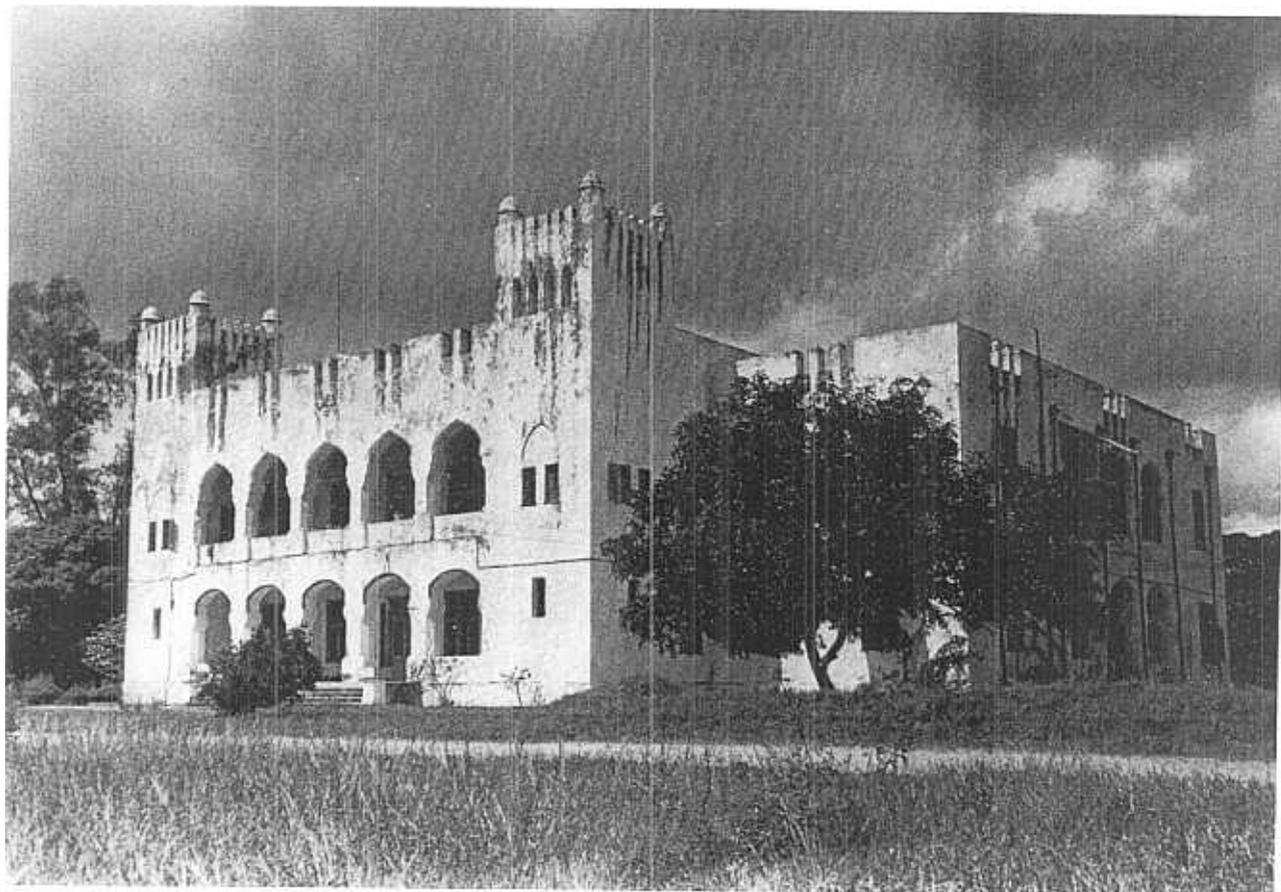


FIG. 13. The Boma.

Act was amended in 1979, and as a result the Minister is now empowered to declare as a Conservation Area any site or area which:

1. In his opinion is a valuable national heritage for its aesthetic value.
2. Contains a homogeneous group of monuments.
3. Contains buildings, structures or other forms of human settlement which, in his opinion, are a valuable national heritage for their historical, architectural, social or cultural value.

The proposed Conservation Areas in Bagamoyo have now been defined, surveyed and mapped preparatory to being designated, and in 1981 groups of students undertook a detailed study and recording of all buildings in the Areas. As a result the needs for conservation work have been categorized, and preliminary proposals have been drawn up for the major buildings recommended for conversion as a Regional Museum/Information Centre and a Crafts Centre. Expert evaluation of these schemes is now required before firm proposals are completed.

The initial brief included a request for assistance in the planning of a training centre for specialists in coastal monuments conservation, and the report confirmed the urgent need to establish a systematic approach to the techniques of conservation since no professional, supervisory or artisan

skills are available to maintain the ruins and historic buildings even in their present state. Structures which have been excavated recently are often at risk because of a lack of protection from climatic change, fungi and plant growth; but a quite different threat exists to some of the Colonial buildings which can have a secure future only if new uses can be found for them. Following the general recommendations made on the level of training needed, UNESCO granted the Tanzanian government another consultancy in 1979; the consequent report³ is now under discussion with UNESCO and UNDP with a view to setting up a training centre in the 1982–86 UNDP Tanzania Country Programme. Nevertheless, the situation is still critical and the advice of experienced architects and craftsmen is essential when work is undertaken. Despite the general acceptance of the two reports it is not yet possible to sing with the old Swahili caravaneers:

Be quiet my heart, all worries are gone.
The drum beats and with rejoicing
We are reaching Bagamoyo.

Résumé

Bagamoyo était pour les caravanes un des entrepôts majeurs qui se sont développés au cours du dix-neuvième siècle sur la côte est de l'Afrique. Ce qui attirait les fondateurs, c'était son bon havre pour les voiliers, de la bonne eau, et des environs fertiles. Au milieu du siècle est arrivée une vague de prospérité, fondée sur l'exportation, et la ville a été choisie comme siège de la première mission catholique dans l'est de l'Afrique en 1868. Vingt ans plus tard, le Sultan de Zanzibar a signé un traité avec la Deutsch Ost-Africa Gesellschaft, et par la suite, l'Afrique Orientale Allemande (y compris Bagamoyo) est devenue colonie impériale, en 1890. Bagamoyo était pendant quelques mois la capitale, et même après le transfert de ce titre à Dar-es-Salaam la prospérité de la ville a continué; au cours des années '90 les allemands ont construit une quantité de bâtiments qui a survécu au déclin continu de Bagamoyo pendant le vingtième siècle.

Le caractère architectonique de la ville est en partie swahili-islamique, en partie une version sophistiquée de l'architecture islamique avec des éléments teutons ajoutés, et en partie (la mission catholique) une combinaison des techniques de construction locales avec le style roman français. Mais malgré ses richesses historiques, Bagamoyo n'a aujourd'hui qu'une base économique assez faible. Pourtant, la belle baie aux plages de sable est toujours là, ainsi que plusieurs bâtiments qui rappellent l'importance historique de la ville. C'est en conséquence de cela que le gouverne-

³ *Proposed Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property* (Serial No. FMR/CC/CH/80/130).

ment de la République Unie de Tanzanie a fait demande à l'UNESCO d'une commission d'enquête pour dresser un compte-rendu pour la conservation de Bagamoyo.

Le compte-rendu a proposé quatre sites comme secteurs sauvegardés, dont trois à l'intérieur de la ville, et le quatrième (la mission catholique) 3 km au nord. Le projet se base sur la création d'un centre de visites culturelles national et international pour la Tanzanie. Le site de Bagamoyo s'y prête parfaitement, et le rapport a proposé la conversion à de nouveaux emplois de plusieurs anciens bâtiments; celui qui avait abrité le Conseil Régional fournirait un centre pour des congrès, la filature de coton deviendrait un musée de l'industrie, la Douane un centre d'accueil et d'orientation pour les visiteurs, et le caravansérail une pension. Le bâtiment le plus imposant, le Boma, ou Quartier General de l'administration coloniale allemande, qui date de 1895, pourrait servir de base à un hôtel conforme aux normes internationales les plus élevées. Fourni d'un tel équipement, Bagamoyo se verrait bien placé comme centre d'excursions côtières vers le nord comme vers le sud.

Le gouvernement tanzanien a reçu le compte-rendu de l'UNESCO en 1979, et au cours de la même année la loi sur les antiquités, de 1964, a été changée afin de permettre au ministre responsable de nommer des secteurs sauvegardés pour des raisons spécifiées. Les secteurs proposés pour Bagamoyo ont maintenant été

délimités, les relevés sont faits, ainsi que les cartes, et en 1981 un groupe d'étudiants a fait une étude détaillée, et a préparé des dossiers pour tous les bâtiments des secteurs. Dans la première instruction à l'UNESCO se trouvait une demande d'aide pour la préparation d'un centre d'instruction pour des spécialistes de la conservation des monuments côtiers, un besoin urgent que le compte-rendu n'a fait que souligner. Suivant les avis rendus en ce qui concerne le niveau requis d'instruction, l'UNESCO a offert au gouvernement tanzanien un autre expert conseil en 1979, et le rapport qu'il a dressé est maintenant le sujet de discussions entre le gouvernement, l'UNESCO et l'UNDP, avec l'intention d'établir un centre d'instruction au cours du programme de développement 1982-86 (*UNDP Tanzanian Country Programme*). Il est néanmoins vrai que la situation reste grave et qu'il est essentiel de chercher l'avis d'architectes ou d'artisans qui ont de l'expérience quand on commence les travaux.

Resumen

Bagamoyo fue uno de los principales centros de convergencia de caravanas de entre los que surgieron en la costa oriental de África durante el siglo diecinueve. Su atracción estribaba en proporcionar excelente fondeadero para las embarcaciones de vela, tener buena agua y un fértil hinterland. A mediados del siglo diecinueve, la ciudad experimentó un gran auge en las exportaciones, y fue también escogida como emplazamiento adecuado para establecer la primera misión católica del África Oriental en 1868. Veinte años después, el sultán de Zanzibar firmó un tratado con la Ost-Afrika Gesellschaft holandesa, y más tarde, en 1890, el África Oriental Alemana (Bagamoyo incluido) se convirtió en colonia de la Corona. Durante algunos meses, Bagamoyo fue la capital, y, aunque ésta pronto fue trasladada a Dar-es-Salaam, la ciudad siguió prosperando y en la década de los años 90 los alemanes levantaron diversos edificios que han sobrevivido la gradual decadencia de Bagamoyo durante el siglo actual.

El carácter arquitectónico de la ciudad es en parte swahili-islámico, en parte una versión sofisticada de éste con la adición de elementos teutónicos, y en parte (en la misión católica) una combinación de técnicas de la construcción locales y románico francés. Pero a pesar de que Bagamoyo tiene una rica historia, su

actual base económica es inestable. Con todo, la hermosa bahía de arena y muchos edificios representativos del pasado histórico de la ciudad todavía están vivos. En reconocimiento de esto, el gobierno de la República Unida de Tanzania solicitó a la UNESCO que formase una comisión para informar sobre la conservación de Bagamoyo.

Se recomendaron cuatro áreas para ser designadas como Areas de Conservación, tres en el interior de la ciudad y la cuarta (la misión católica) a 3 km al norte. La base de las propuestas económicas fue la creación de un centro para visitas culturales nacionales e internacionales en Tanzania. Bagamoyo cuenta con un emplazamiento ideal para este fin, y el informe proponía que varios de los edificios existentes se destinasen a nuevos usos; todo lo necesario para celebrar conferencias puede ser situado en el antiguo edificio del Consistorio (*District Council*), un museo industrial en el Almacén del Algodón (*Cotton Ginnery*), un centro para visitantes en la Aduana (*Customs House*), y un hostel en el caravasar (*Caravansera*). El mejor de los edificios, el Boma o Centro de la Administración alemana, de 1895, se propuso como la base de un hotel a pleno nivel internacional. De proporcionarse todos estos servicios, Bagamoyo sería un buen centro para efectuar circuitos costeros hacia el norte y hacia el sur.

El informe fue sometido por la UNESCO al gobierno de Tanzania en 1979, y durante el mismo año se revisó la Ley de Antigüedades de 1964 a fin de otorgar poderes al Ministro para la declaración de Areas de Conservación para fines específicos. Las zonas propuestas de Bagamoyo han sido ya definidas, estudiadas y cartografiadas, y en 1981 varios grupos de estudiantes han emprendido el estudio y clasificación detallada de todos los edificios en las zonas. El documento inicial incluía la petición de ayuda para la planificación de un centro de formación especializada en la conservación de monumentos del litoral, y el informe confirmó la urgente necesidad de establecerlo. De acuerdo con las recomendaciones generales sobre el nivel de formación requerido, la UNESCO concedió nuevos servicios de consulta al gobierno de Tanzania en 1979, y el informe que siguió se estudia ahora en la UNESCO y UNDP para establecer un centro de formación durante el Programa UNDP 1982-86 para el país de Tanzania. Sin embargo, la situación es aún crítica y el asesoramiento de arquitectos y artesanos expertos resultará esencial cuando se inicien los trabajos.