

Areas of

Zanzibar Old Stone Town

FLEMMING AALUND



FIG. 1. The mihrab of the ancient mosque at Kizimkazi showing Kufic characters dating the building back to 1107

Zanzibar is the embodiment of a palm-green island of exotic adventures, widely known as the place of origin of all kinds of aromatic spices, for haughtiness of the former privileged classes, and for the ruthless trade in ivory and human flesh, slavery and hideous degradation.

This widely established reputation is not proportionate to the size of this small island society on the East African coast, but maybe it can be attributed to the extraordinary importance this island played as a gateway to the African continent, whether it was in the interests of Arab or European imperialistic exploitation.

But leaving aside political or moral reflections, the Old Stone Town of Zanzibar represents a cultural heritage of great significance and calls for special attention when considering the acute needs for maintenance, preservation and renewal of the built fabric facing the town at present.

Historical background

The earliest known description of the East African coast is 'The Periplus of the Erytrea Sea', written by a Greek traveller in the first century AD as a merchant's handbook with advice on the parts and trade of countries bordering the Indian Ocean and the connecting route to China. The account mentions trade in ivory, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shells, mainly by merchants of Arab origin who were said to have intermarried with the mainlanders, whose languages they understood.¹

This early Levantine description is sporadically supplemented by succeeding Arab travellers, but on the whole very little is known of the early history of East Africa until the European voyagers navigated south of the continent in search of India and the Orient in the sixteenth century.

However, archaeological findings and local chronicles of a later time show that a great expansion of the Indian Ocean trade took place from the ninth century onwards simultaneously with the spread of Islam, and city states were established along the coastal zone from Mogadishu in the north to Sofala in the present Mozambique in the south.

The Islamic religion came to be accepted by the indigenous people, and the influx of traders and immigrants furthered the mixture of African, Arab and south-west Asian ethnic descent and the formation of the Swahili culture and language.²

The oldest surviving building on the Swahili coast is to be found on the extreme southern tip of Zanzibar island, if we may judge from the inscription on the mihrab at the mosque at Kizimkazi, dating the building back to the year 500 AH/AD 1107 (Fig. 1).³ The mosque was originally built of coral rubble set in lime with a flat roof of composite beams of mangrove poles spanning pillars and walls—a type of construction which was new to this part of the African continent.⁴

The many settlements along the coast experienced a remarkable prosperity during the succeeding centuries. Kilwa Kisiwani to the south



FIG. 2. Two slaves holding elephant tusks in front of a Zanzibar carved door.

of the coast of mainland Tanzania gained an important position as an independent sultanate, and the ruins of the Palace of Husuni Kubwa dated to about AD 1245 demonstrate in the most prominent way the high architectural achievements.⁵ The prosperity was mainly due to a

⁵ Chittick, H.N., *Kilwa, an Islamic Trading City on the East African Coast*, Nairobi 1974, vol 1-ii.

Freeman-Grenville, G.S.P., *The East African Coast, Documents from the First Eighteen Centuries*, London 1962.

J. de V., 'Town and City in Swahili Culture', *Journal of African Studies*, London 1974, pp 116.

An adjacent inscription is its rebuilding in 1184 AD 1772, and recently it has been drastically restored. See also P.S., *The Early Architecture of the East African Coast*, London 1966.

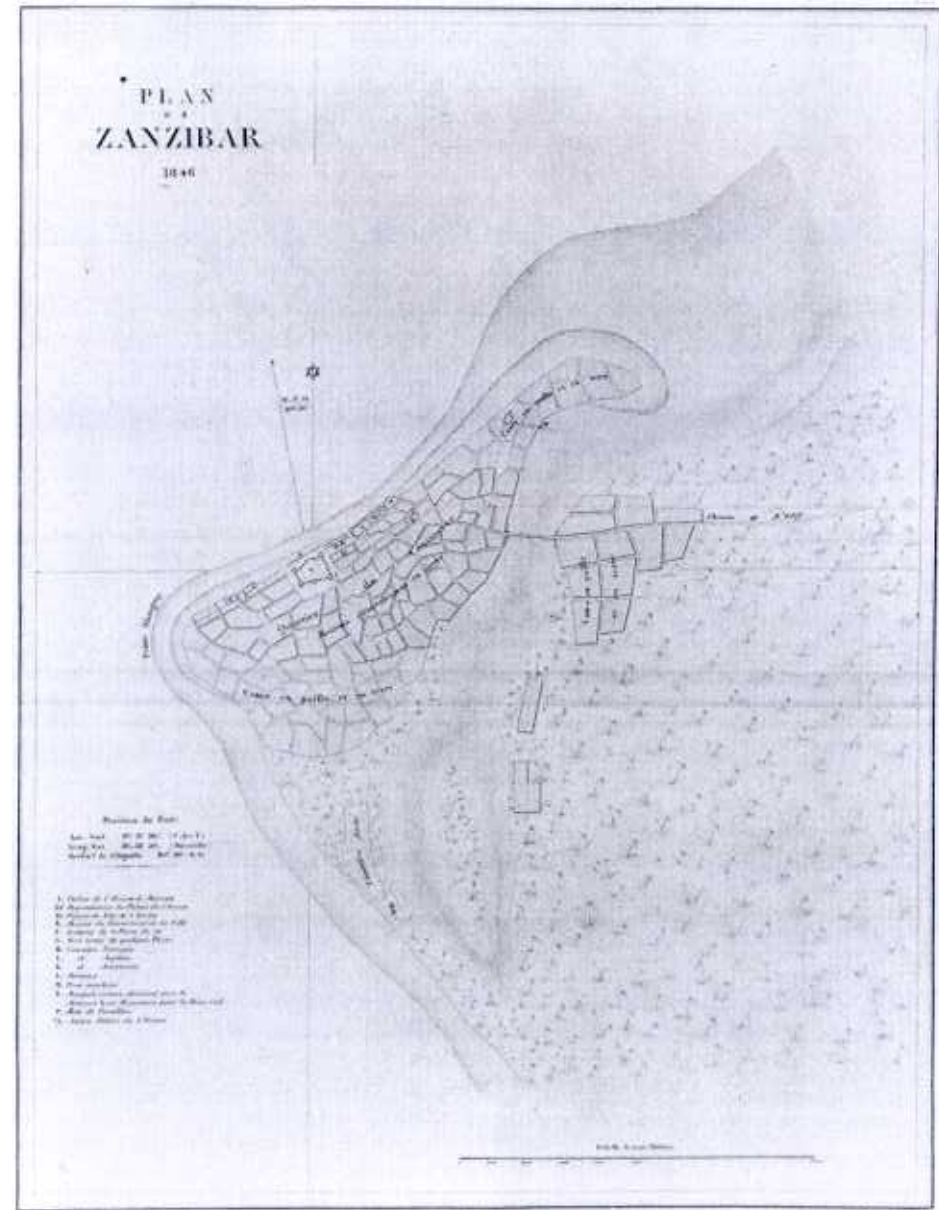
monopoly in trade with gold from the Kingdom of Monomatapa—well known from the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, but the well-established trade relations were, however, disrupted by the arrival of the Portuguese, who destroyed the influential trading centres along the coast.

It was the dirty business in ivory and slaves (*Fig. 2*) which became the sad background of the early rising of Zanzibar town from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Caravans were sent into the mainland from Bagamayo at the coast⁶ and further via Tabora and Ujiji to the Lake District of Central Africa, 'where the snakes danced to the flutes and drums of Zanzibar', and from where the valuable 'commodities' were brought back for selling and redistribution. Realizing the profitable opportunities offered in Zanzibar, Sultan Sayyid Said (1828–54) decided to move his capital with the aim of establishing a better control of his African dominions. For his residence in Zanzibar he had erected, between 1832 and 1837 the seaside palace Beit-el Mtoni, and Beit-el Sahil in the town itself. Soon the town was to become the biggest on the coast with the whole commerce of East Africa passing through the hands of the merchants of Zanzibar.

However, the days of unrivalled Arab dominance were numbered by the Europeans' exploratory and commercial efforts culminating in the imperialistic 'scramble for Africa' during the later part of the nineteenth century and the foundation of overseas European colonies. Commercial treaties were negotiated with the USA in 1833, Great Britain in 1839, France in 1844 and Germany in 1860 followed by the establishment of consulates. A major factor in the European expansion of commercial interests was the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 which significantly reduced the distance between Europe and the markets of East Africa.

Largely because of continued political pressure by the British for an abolition of the infamous slave trade, an agreement was made with the Sultan Seyyid Barghash in 1873 to prohibit the export of slaves and to close down the humiliating slavemarket at Mkunazini. The legal status of slavery was finally abolished by a decree issued in 1897—but the majority of the Swahili African population was still occupying an inferior position in the society.

A continuous rivalry between Germany and Britain was finally settled by a 'diplomatic' agreement in 1890 between the two states only, as part of which the North Sea island Heligoland was offered to Germany in exchange for the right to declare a British protectorate over the Arab state of Zanzibar, which lasted until 1963 when independence was achieved and Pemba and Zanzibar islands were declared a sovereign sultanate. But this lasted only a few months until the majority of the populace of mainly African origin overthrew the Arab oligarchy and formed a new government aiming at the building of a socialist state, which subsequently united with the Republic of Tanzania.



Yarson, T.N., 'Bagamayo, Tanzania', *Monuments* 25, pp 29–42, March

3. (Facing page) Plan of Zanzibar 1846. Engraving by M. Guillaumin: *Voyage à l'Orientale d'Afrique*, Paris, Bertrand (ed.), Paris



FIG. 4. Typical street scene of Stone Town.

The environmental setting

The Stone Town is situated on a peninsula, triangular in shape, jutting out from the hinterland with an extension of 1.5 km in a southwest-northeast direction, covering approximately an area of 0.7 km². The site was from the very outset approached from the sea, and naturally the early settlement took place at the most western fringe of the salient land.

The topographical conditions are shown in an engraving made in 1846 (Fig. 3), which clearly illustrates the well protected location of the early settlement on a low ridge of land linked to the main island by a sandy isthmus to the south only.⁷ The creek was partly reclaimed in 1915 and subsequently turned into a green recreational belt which has maintained the distinct demarcation to the west and favourably preserved the Stone Town as an identifiable entity.

Urban texture

During the early time of settlement—whether by Arabs, Indians or Africans—each migrating tribe or group of people tended to keep together, and the town became subdivided into wards reflecting the original ethnic or kin affinities of their inhabitants.⁸ According to family needs, these developed as clusters of interrelated buildings and courtyards. The interjacent land became 'a no man's land' of paths and alleys, which constantly change direction and were used only by donkeys, carts and pedestrians.

This self-grown, 'organic' structure generates an exceptionally varied spatial richness; intimate enclosures alternate with ever-changing vistas and sudden panoramic views to the sea. Not surprisingly it became the prerogative of the most influential citizens to live along the seashore and enjoy an undisturbed view and constant breezes. The limited space available on the peninsula was expensive and scarce, and the result was a densely built-up fabric with a great number of houses built back to back.⁹

The Islamic urban tradition in which the houses are mainly oriented towards internal courtyards for privacy is found also in Zanzibar town; but the aloof external appearance is modified by the Swahili culture, and the general character of the town is comparatively more inviting to social interaction. This is particularly apparent along the bazaar streets; although they act as the main pedestrian thoroughfares of the town they do not separate the houses, but on the contrary unify them into an 'urban interior' where the communal life is encouraged by the existence of low stone benches (*barazas*) in front of the buildings (Fig. 4).

The involvement of the British in Zanzibar affairs significantly changed the character of the town during the early years of this century through public work constructions and the erection of a number of public buildings, mainly in the periphery. The southern part of the town

⁷ The map may not be very detailed, but it does show the early established habitation pattern, which has governed the later development, and the location of substantial buildings discernible today. The key features of the town are the Fort, the then Palace of the Imam of Muscat and related buildings along the waterfront, surrounded by a commercial area to the east made up of buildings mainly constructed in stone, and dwellings of less durable materials sited at the periphery.

⁸ Allen, J. de V., 'The Swahili house: cultural and ritual concepts underlying its plan and structure', *Art and Archaeology Research Papers* (AARP), London 1979, pp 1–32.

⁹ This compounded space problems, thereby reducing light and ventilation and increasing the frequency of rising damp in the lower floors—a factor which may indicate the nature of space standard being extremely insanitary in some parts of the town.



FIG. 5. The foreshore anchorage depending on the height of the tide before the construction of the new wharf.

was laid out as a spacious 'garden suburb' of new buildings, mainly for administrative and representative functions; as a result the less privileged classes were gradually pushed out of the Stone Town and ultimately forced to move to the N'gambo area, literally meaning 'living on the other side' of the Creek.

The first approach to a formal planning guiding the future development of the town dates from 1923.¹⁰ The planning proposals were based on a concept of 'diagnostic survey' inspired by the most advanced principles of the time, introduced by the British pioneer town planner Patrick Geddes (1854–1932). It 'unravels the old city's labyrinth and discerns how this has grown up' as a point of departure for a 'conservative surgery', which fully recognized the socio-economic conditions and the existing urban qualities of the historic town.

A plan proposal of the usual colonial type would probably have taken a much more radical approach with the introduction of a rigid grid of intersecting streets without any regard for the existing environmental conditions. Several of the outline proposals put forward by the Lanchester scheme were implemented during the succeeding years. Of specific importance may be mentioned the port reclamation for improvement of the foreshore anchorage dependent on the height of the tide

¹⁰ Lanchester, H.V., *Zanzibar, A Study in Tropical Town Planning*, Cheltenham 1923.

(Fig. 5). The plans for the Jubilee Garden, now the Forodhani Park, in front of the House of Wonder provided a much needed recreational park with public access to the sea front, and the construction of the ocean wharf and access road in 1929 created a new centre of gravity to the north of the town.

However, the declining economy and also the outbreak of World War II prevented new constructions on any substantial scale, and the Stone Town's favourable topographical location has helped to preserve it from later developments of an alien character (Fig. 6). As a result, a unique historical entity exists; the bulk of the buildings in the core of the town are of traditional Swahili character, and there is a fringe only of early twentieth-century development of European influence.

Architectural character

Swahili culture has been accumulated during a period of at least a thousand years, but the fabric of the Stone Town represents a period of about a hundred years only, during which time the cosmopolitan propagation of African, Arab, Indian and European culture has shaped architectural form and the articulation of buildings.

The early indigenous habitations were presumably houses of a 'wattle



Fig. 6. The housing scheme at Michenzani immediately to the east of Stone Town.



Fig. 7. Traditional 'Swahili house' in 'wattle and daub' construction with thatched *makuti* roof of palm leaves.



Fig. 8. The roovescape of Stone Town.

and daub' construction with a thatched *makuti* roof of palm leaves, very similar to the 'Swahili houses' prevalent in Zanzibar and Pemba and all along the Zaramo coast of Tanzania (Fig. 7).

Typically, the main entrance is in a recessed part of the front facade, where an open porch with a raised platform, a *baraza*, faces the street as a semi-private sitting place from which the dwellers have the possibility to take part in the public life and make informal contacts with passers-by. The plan arrangement is characterized by a corridor through the middle of the house, from which there is access to the individual rooms and to the walled-in courtyard behind the front building. Secondary rooms are located in a separate building at the rear of the courtyard, where all domestic functions are carried out by the women well secluded from public life.

The introduction of stone-built houses with load-bearing solid walls of coral rag bonded with lime mortar and a roof supporting structure of mangrove poles subsequently changed the plan arrangement. Because of the method of construction, the house became a series of rectangular rooms, 2.5 to 3 m in width due to the maximum structural span of the mangrove poles; these rooms were arranged parallel to the main facade, but otherwise the plan retained the courtyard and the back premises.¹¹

From early photographs of the townscape, and by direct observation today, it will be seen that most of the buildings were originally

¹¹ The impact of Arab culture and Islamic religions had a decisive influence on the further development of the built form between 1830 and 1880, as it is often found to be the case, when parts of a community have migrated to other places, where old habitation patterns are repeated, even though the climatic conditions are different.

two-storeyed, often with a crenellated parapet wall surrounding a flat roof terrace. But the bulk of the buildings have been subject to successive changes and extensions of one or two storeys as the need has arisen. Some of the early stone houses were provided with a thatched roof of palm leaves for protection against direct sun radiation and the rainy seasons of the tropical climate. Photographs from the 1920's show, however, that corrugated iron sheets had by then become the predominant roofing material to be used for mainly hipped roof forms; this has drastically changed the roofscape, and the reddish brown colours of the rusted sheets have become a characteristic feature of the town (Fig. 8).

The prominent Arab mansions have an aloof introvert character as 'self-contained' units centred around an open courtyard surrounded by open galleries, and they display a functional simplicity in form and detail, largely attributable to the purist Ibadhi Islamic tradition (Fig. 9).

The architectural enrichment is almost exclusively concentrated on the carved doorways for which Zanzibar town has become particularly famous (Fig. 10). The door is set in an ornately carved frame with a moulding often taking the form of a chain and provided with features of symbolic significance. Both the door leaves and the carved centre post are studded with pointed brass bosses, and the size and quality of finish corresponded to the status of the owner. Generally, the stone built houses were occupied by the wealthy inhabitants and served therefore as a source of cultural identification.

The Indian proportion of the population was mainly associated with the service and business activities of the town, which were largely centred along the bazaar streets characterized by a 'shop front' type of row houses opening directly on to the street at ground floor level with living quarters above for the use of one family only. Medium-sized houses with several individual compartments within the main structure, or buildings constructed for use solely as tenant houses (*chawls*), are frequently found and constitute the most congested areas of the town; they offer the poorest living conditions, with insufficient light and ventilation and without decent sanitary arrangements.

The Indian type of door is more functional, with plain workmanship; it is characterized by a square style and rail panelling of the door leaves, but the buildings themselves are generally more ornamented by stucco work or lavishly decorated with wood work (Figs 11 and 12).

The diversified cultural background of the population and strong religious affiliations are exemplified by some 48 mosques, 4 Hindu temples and 2 Christian churches within the Stone Town area.

The mosques are small buildings of an austere design scattered throughout the town and there is no extravagant decoration to distinguish them from the general appearance of buildings (Fig. 13). They are mainly recognizable by the mihrab protruding as a semi-circular shape, and minarets are rarely found. Interior decoration may be confined

to arches of trefoil or multifoil shape spanning the pillars and a panel of incised stucco work surrounding the mihrab.

The general homogeneity of the town changes astonishingly when the ribbed sakhara of the Hindu temple or the spires of St Joseph's or the Cathedral become visible as points of identification in the labyrinthine system of paths and lanes.

The European architectural styles of the late nineteenth century were characterized by a strong preference for historic revival and the picturesque possibilities of a mixture of motifs of widely different origin, a concept for which cosmopolitan Zanzibar seems a fertile soil. The French Catholic church of St Joseph's (Fig. 14) is a true replica of the Romanesque basilica in Marseille. The Anglican Cathedral (Fig. 15) displays a free interpretation of Gothic and Islamic architectural features of unique interest, as well as being located on the former open slave market.

Because of its grand scale and conspicuous shape, as well as its location and visual exposure to the sea front the principal landmark building is the House of Wonder (Fig. 16) built in 1883 during the reign of the Sultan Seyyid Barghash. This building also incorporates the technological innovations of the late nineteenth century, which were introduced to Zanzibar when it became economically advantageous to transport heavy



FIG. 12. Street elevation of the Ithnashiri Dispensary.

FIG. 13. Street elevation of mosque.



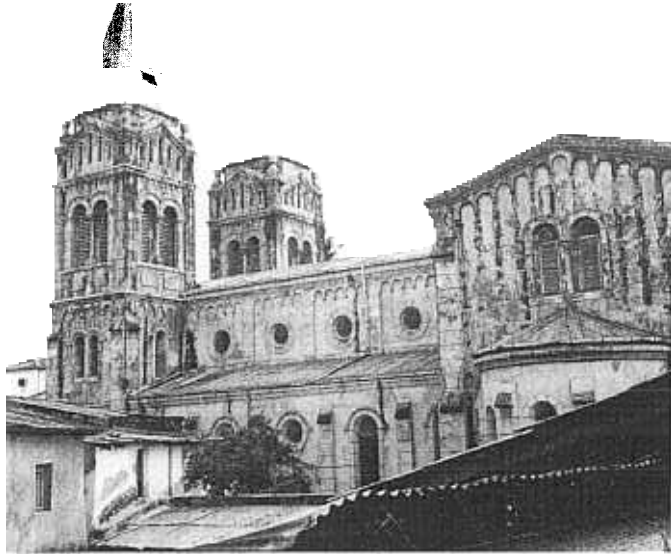
Fig. 9. Street elevation of typical Arab mansion.



Fig. 10. Zanzibar carved doorway.



Fig. 11. Street elevation of building with Indian-influenced stucco decor and wood work.



The St Joseph

and bulky materials over long distances. Steel beams, cast iron columns, and brackets, and similar mass-produced and prefabricated building materials were imported and used also for extensions and improvements of vernacular architecture when European stylistic elements became fashion (Fig. 17).

The early twentieth-century development was influenced in particular by the architect J.H. Sinclair, who was consul, Chief Secretary and British Resident in Zanzibar from 1896 to 1923, during which period he designed a great number of private and public buildings. The most prominent ones are the British Residency, now the State House (1903), the High Court Building (1904), the Post Office building (1906), and the Peace Memorial Museum (1924).

Whereas the Arab/Islamic concept of architecture is characterized generally by a domination of 'solid' compared with 'void', the European influence introduced the use of colonnades, porticos and verandahs, which opened the interior of the buildings to the outside environment and gave more contact with the surrounding nature.

Changes in architectural form were made possible by the use of steel, which allowed more freedom in plan arrangement as may be exemplified by the former Sultan's Palace, now the Peoples Palace (Fig. 18) and by

buildings facing on to the seashore of early twentieth century origin (Fig. 19). Relatively few modern buildings of a non-conforming character have as yet violated the general character of the historical townscape.

Development after 1964

The post-1964 policy has been aimed at the creation of a society based on self-reliance with equal rights to all men, without economic exploitation and human degradation; but the realization of this ideal has been hampered by limited economic abilities which have not improved during the intermediate time.¹²

Public tenancy was made virtually free with charges imposed only on services such as water and electricity, and likewise private landlords are obliged to charge rents which cannot equal the cost of upkeep and maintenance of buildings. The abolition of interest on loans and mortgages, together with an uncertainty vis-à-vis confiscation of property, have been discouraging to reinvestment of funds in the private sector. Redevelopment of housing by the Government has been hampered by economic constraints, and the abolition of ground rents meant that there has been no way to recapture the infrastructure costs of

¹² The communal disturbances were followed by a massive dislocation of the population, which also drastically changed the social stability of the society. Today approximately 50 per cent of the populace are immigrants and their children from rural areas of Pemba and Zanzibar, who have moved into Stone Town within the last twenty years. But in spite of the influx of newcomers the population has slightly decreased from 16 604 in 1967 to 15 493 in 1978 according to the respective census data with a demographic structure showing that 55 per cent of the inhabitants are under twenty years of age.

The social upheavals and the exodus of the rich merchants and landlords and the subsequent alienation of property have brought about a situation in which the government has become the biggest single owner of real estate in Stone Town. The aggregate number of buildings is amounting to about 2300 of which the ownership is almost equally shared between the Government, private landlords or being property put under guardianship of the Waqf and Trust Commission.

The Waqf and Trust Commission is an institutionalized body according to a long established tradition within Islam for administration of lands and properties. The revenue is given for social welfare or for charitable purposes, and the property cannot be reverted from the use for which it was dedicated to Waqf. However, it is assumed that the nationalisations of land applied also to land on which Waqf property was built.

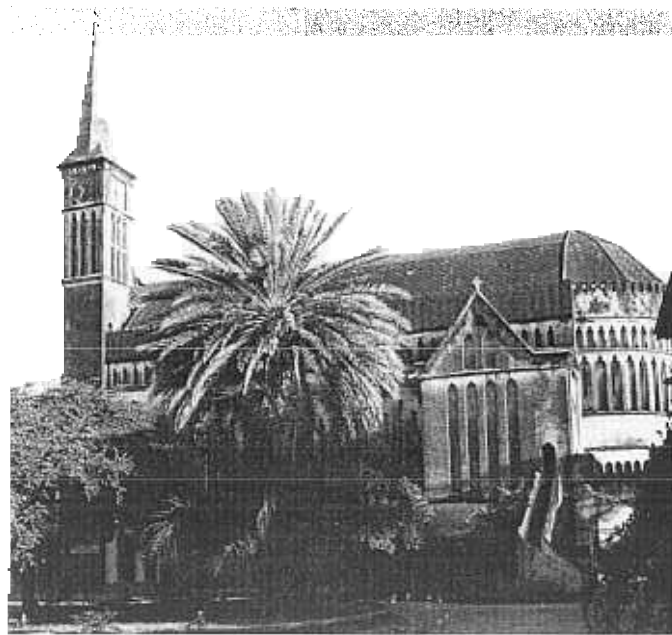


Fig. 15. The Anglican church (the Cathedral).

maintenance. However, the housing policy is presently under review, and provision for the service of the Tanzanian Housing Bank is about to be implemented on the islands.

Only very little maintenance and redevelopment have thus been catered for, and consequently the bulk of the urban fabric is deteriorating at an accelerating rate. The principal fault is penetration of rainwater and sewage into walls and the subsequent weakening of structural timber; obviously this brings about a situation in which many residential buildings are unsafe and injurious to health. From a street to street survey of houses it appears that 30 per cent of the building stock may be broadly characterized as being in an advanced stage of neglect or showing structural failures, and that approximately ten per cent are dilapidated and abandoned or totally collapsed.

The aggravated situation is corollary to cultural changes, such as the inhabitants being alien to the tradition of living in stone-built houses and the general tendency towards the smaller nuclear family unit or even single member households, creating difficulties in demarcating areas of responsibility within buildings constructed for extended family use. The policy of wholesale state corporations naturally also uprooted the former



FIG. 17. Fret work fascias, iron railing and other details of mainly European influence.

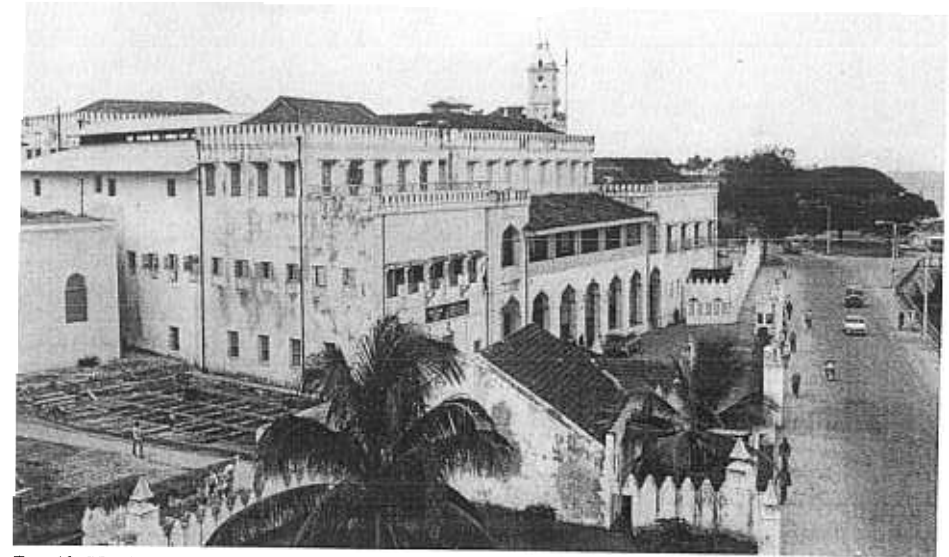


FIG. 18. The Peoples Palace (the former Sultan's Palace).



FIG. 19. Buildings of early twentieth-century origin facing the seashore.

close-knit commercial network of retail sale shops and considerably drained the bazaar streets of their former economic and communal life.¹³

A comprehensive planning act was passed in 1958; this is still applicable and quite appropriately provides the legal framework for building control, urban preservation and future development, but the scheme was allowed too short a time in functioning to give any visible results before 1964, and the relevant planning authorities have not been reinstated.

A new physical development plan for Zanzibar was prepared with technical assistance from East Germany shortly after the revolution, but the plan proposals were changed and only partially implemented by the construction of the housing scheme at Michenzani (*Fig. 6*) immediately to the east of Stone Town, which was not directly affected.

However, different planning initiatives have been taken recently for a review of the land and housing policy of the islands, which may also apply to Stone Town. At present a masterplan for the greater Zanzibar city area is under preparation by a Chinese team of experts, who will present their proposals by the end of 1982. Possibly this could result in the utilisation of Stone Town as the administrative centre for the central government and the subsequent move of the various ministries presently located mainly in Arab mansions.

In view of the actual condition and the uncertainties of the future prospects of Stone Town the Ministry of Lands, Construction and Housing requested the United Nations Centre of Human Settlements (Habitat) to carry out an Outline Integrated Development Plan complementary to the Chinese Master Plan Study. The UN-mission was accomplished in early 1982, and the report is now in the process of completion.

Furthermore, with regard to its overall historic and architectural significance, Stone Town is under consideration for possible inclusion in the World Cultural Heritage List; Unesco is writing a project document dealing with restoration of selected monuments, which may be submitted to the UNDP for eventual financing, subject to approval by the Tanzanian government.

Future prospects

The many abandoned and collapsed buildings (*Fig. 20*) add to the general impression of decay and generate a climate favouring the new and modern; this sets in motion a vicious spiral, whereby the historic townscape falls into discredit regardless of its otherwise obvious qualities as a place in which to live.

However, the building stock represents an accumulated capital asset, which conservatively can be estimated in excess of 700 million Tanzanian Shillings in current value, even allowing for the present generally poor condition of the properties. It is important that measures are taken for its

preservation, not only because it represents an important historical and architectural heritage, but because the amount of accommodation is quite substantial—a reality not to be ignored by a society with limited resources and a predictable housing shortage.

An integrated development plan, as suggested by the UN-mission, will imply proposals for changes in the present legal framework of land tenure and land use vis-à-vis the present emphasis in public control and action, with only a limited role for private initiative. Terms of land-lease need to allow a sufficient length of time to make it worthwhile for individuals and institutions to invest time and money in developing urban land. The owners and investors should be assured of their rights in buildings, and groups of sitting tenants should be encouraged by law to group themselves into cooperative societies and to buy the house they occupy. Generally a system of financial assistance towards renovation and preservation is to be introduced; this would also be an incentive to small-scale building contractors to assist the Government and the public in the housing programme by the use of materials locally available and appropriate technology.

The number of buildings presently owned by the Government is so large that the Ministry of Lands, Construction and Housing cannot possibly cope with its responsibilities of maintenance, housing management, land allocation and urban development generally; this might favour the delegation of responsibilities to the people living and working within the area, e.g. representative groups or committees and the Municipal Council. These representative groups should be given every opportunity to participate in discussions and the making of draft area plans and proposals for town improvements and development.

A Zanzibar Urban Development Corporation (ZUDC) should be established as an independent institution, empowered to act as a focal point and stimulator of such plans, which should also be aimed at an economic revitalization through development of the rich potential of tourism, fisheries and small-scale industries and manufacturing. The lack of qualified people and finance generally will make policies designed to revive Stone Town difficult to implement, but the first step must be a political commitment to such a programme. It is to be hoped that the appraisal of the historical, architectural and social importance of Stone Town now being generated may be convincing also to the policy makers, and that corollary action may be initiated to signal to the world at large that Stone Town of Zanzibar is being treated as a special and important case.

Acknowledgements

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FIG. 20. Characteristic townscape with collapsed buildings.

¹³ The only industrial development within Stone Town is a clove distillery employing 100 workers and a drink factory. The employment pattern appears from the 1978 census suggests that 40 per cent of the labour force is employed service activities, such as wharf, retailing, government services, or in the private vice sector such as tailoring, carpentry or mechanics. Professionals and teachers count for 8 per cent and the employment rate is estimated at 32 per cent.

Résumé

La Vieille Ville de Pierre de Zanzibar représente un patrimoine culturel très important dont l'entretien très négligé jusqu'à présent et la conservation demandent une attention toute particulière, d'autant plus qu'il y a actuellement un renouveau de la construction.

La Ville de Pierre est située sur une péninsule triangulaire d'environ 700 mètres carrés à laquelle on accédait par la mer; aussi les premières constructions furent-elles élevées à l'extrême ouest de l'île, sur une bande de sable reliée au sud au corps principal de l'île par un isthme de sable également. La crique fut partiellement asséchée en 1915 et transformée en ceinture verte réservée aux loisirs ce qui permit de conserver la démarcation de la Ville de Pierre à l'ouest et sa préservation en un ensemble distinct. L'expansion de la ville aboutit à la création d'un espace exceptionnellement varié avec vues panoramiques sur la mer dont jouissent les maisons des habitants les plus riches. La tradition islamique qui veut que les habitations soient essentiellement ouvertes sur des cours intérieures existe aussi ici; mais l'influence de la culture swahilie rend la ville plus propice aux rapports sociaux; ceci est particulièrement vrai des rues du bazar qui, tout en étant les voies principales de la circulation piétonnière, relie les maisons en une sorte 'd'intérieur urbain' où les rapports sociaux sont encouragés par l'existence de bancs bas placés le long des murs.

L'érection de bâtiments publics, dus à la Grande-Bretagne, changea le caractère de la ville dont la partie sud fut transformée en banlieue verte; de plus, les familles modestes furent progressivement chassées de la Ville de Pierre.

La première tentative de planification, qui date de 1923, tient compte du 'diagnostic' que 'la vieille ville est un labyrinthe' dont la croissance est analysée comme point de départ 'd'une opération chirurgicale conservatrice' qui respecterait les conditions socio-économiques et les qualités intrinsèques de la ville historique. Mais le déclin économique et la déclaration de la deuxième guerre mondiale empêchèrent toute construction importante; de plus, le site même de la Ville de Pierre a contribué à la préservation de constructions nouvelles étrangères à son style, d'où cet ensemble historique unique: en effet, la plus grande partie des bâtiments au centre sont de style swahili traditionnel et seule une frange de constructions du début du siècle est de style européen. Si la culture swahilie a au moins mille ans, la Ville de Pierre, elle, ne représente qu'une centaine d'années pendant lesquelles les cultures africaine, arabe, indienne et européenne ont essaimé et influencé les formes culturelles;

ces influences diverses sont analysées dans cet article qui souligne le fait que, jusqu'à présent, seuls quelques bâtiments modernes sont dans un style qui ne s'harmonise pas avec le paysage urbain de la cité historique. Mais, ce qui est grave aujourd'hui, c'est que la détérioration de la ville va s'accroissant. Le résultat du manque d'entretien est que trente pour cent des bâtiments sont très abîmés ou présentent des faiblesses de structure et dix pour cent sont dilapidés, abandonnés ou même effondrés. L'une des causes de cette situation est le déplacement, par suite du changement de culture, des activités commerciales et des boutiques qui autrefois animaient les rues du bazar.

Les dispositions légales de 1958 ont bien formé un ensemble cohérent pour contrôler les nouvelles constructions, la conservation de la ville et son expansion future; malheureusement elles ne furent respectées que jusqu'en 1964, date à laquelle la fonction d'inspecteur de l'urbanisme fut supprimée. Un nouveau plan fut préparé avec l'aide de l'Allemagne de l'Est et plus récemment il a été décidé de réviser la politique de l'habitat et de l'occupation des sols. Actuellement, un nouveau plan, qui concerne toute la ville de Zanzibar, est mis au point par une équipe chinoise; il suggère de l'utilisation de la Ville de Pierre comme le centre administratif du gouvernement. Mais le futur de la cité historique est encore incertain aussi le Ministère de la Terre, de la Construction et de l'Habitat a demandé au Centre de l'Habitat des Nations Unies de présenter les grandes lignes d'un plan de développement intégré qui compléterait celui des chinois. La mission des Nations Unies a fini son travail au début de 1982 et son rapport est attendu. De plus, il est possible que la Ville de Pierre, étant donné son importance historique et architecturale, soit incluse dans la liste du Patrimoine Culturel Mondial établie par l'Unesco qui, d'ailleurs, prépare un projet de restauration pour certains monuments, projet qui pourrait éventuellement être financé par le PNUD avec l'accord du gouvernement de Tanzanie.

L'ensemble des bâtiments a maintenant pris une grande valeur économique aussi bien qu'historique et architecturale et les possibilités substantielles de logement qu'il offre ne peuvent être négligées par une société aux ressources limitées et dont l'habitat sera bientôt insuffisant.

Un plan de développement intégré tel que le propose la mission des Nations Unies devra inclure la modification des règles de droit qui gouvernent actuellement la propriété et l'usage des sols ainsi que des fonds pour la restauration et la rénovation des bâtiments. D'autres propositions ont été faites, par

exemple de rendre responsables de leur environnement les gens qui vivent ou travaillent dans la Ville de Pierre ou encore la création d'une Société de Développement Urbain pour Zanzibar. Mais le manque de personnel qualifié et plus généralement de ressources financières rendront difficiles l'application de toute politique de revitalisation de la Ville de Pierre. Pourtant il est nécessaire avant tout que le projet de sauvegarde soit soutenu par une volonté politique d'action et que le monde sache que la Ville de Pierre de Zanzibar a une valeur spéciale de toute première importance.

Resumen

La antigua Ciudad de Piedra de Zanzibar representa un legado cultural altamente significativo y requiere atención especial al considerar la fuerte necesidad de mantenimiento, conservación y renovación de la construcción actualmente frente a la ciudad.

La Ciudad de Piedra está situada en una península de forma triangular que cubre aproximadamente 0,7 km². Como los primeros contactos se efectuaron desde el mar, el poblamiento inicial tuvo lugar en la faja más occidental de la isla, en un saliente de arena unido a la isla principal por un istmo arenoso al sur. Parte de la cala se adaptó en 1915 y se convirtió en zona verde de esparcimiento que ha mantenido la clara demarcación por el oeste y ha conservado a la Ciudad de Piedra como entidad identificable. El crecimiento orgánico de la ciudad resultó en una riqueza espacial excepcionalmente variada, con vistas panorámicas al mar a lo largo de las cuales construyeron sus casas los habitantes más acomodados. Puede hallarse aquí la tradición urbana islámica, en la que las casas se orientan principalmente hacia patios interiores; pero debido al influjo cultural swahili el carácter general de la ciudad invita más a la interacción social. Resulta esto especialmente aparente en las calles de los bazares, las cuales, aunque sirven para el tráfico principal de peatones, unifican las casas a manera de 'interior urbano' donde la vida comunal recibe aliciente por medio de bancos bajos de piedra delante de los edificios.

La intervención de los ingleses cambió el carácter de la ciudad mediante la erección de edificios públicos; la parte sur fue organizada como espacioso jardín suburbial y los menos privilegiados fueron gradualmente apartados de la Ciudad de Piedra. El primer intento de planificación formal data de 1923 y se basa en el concepto de 'diagnóstico' que 'desenmaraña el laberinto de la antigua ciudad y discierne el porqué de su crecimiento' como punto de partida de 'cirugía conservadora' que reconozca las condiciones socio-

económicas y las cualidades urbanas existentes de la ciudad histórica. Sin embargo, el declive económico y el estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial impidieron nuevas construcciones a ninguna escala considerable, y el emplazamiento de la Ciudad de Piedra ha contribuido a preservarla de cambios posteriores de carácter extraño. Como resultado, existe una entidad histórica única; el conjunto de edificios del corazón de la ciudad es de carácter swahili tradicional, y sólo hay una franja de principios del siglo veinte en cuyo desarrollo han influido las ideas europeas. A pesar de que la cultura swahili se ha acumulado durante un periodo de al menos mil años, la edificación en la Ciudad de Piedra representa solamente unos cien, en cuyo tiempo la propagación cosmopolita de la cultura africana, árabe, india y europea ha decidido las formas arquitectónicas. El artículo trata en detalle de estas influencias y hace hincapié en el hecho de que relativamente pocos edificios modernos inconformistas han dañado hasta el momento el carácter general de la ciudad histórica. Pero lo que preocupa en la actualidad es que el conjunto de la edificación urbana está deteriorándose a un nivel acelerado. Debido a la falta de mantenimiento, ocurre que el 30% de la construcción se encuentra en estado avanzado de deterioro o sufriendo fallos estructurales, y el 10 por ciento está dilapidado y abandonado o totalmente derruido. La situación está relacionada con cambios culturales y el desarrollo de la antigua red comercial de comercios minoristas que daban a las calles de los bazares su antigua vida económica y comunitaria.

Un amplio plan de ordenación aprobado en 1958 proporcionaba el marco legal adecuado para el control de la edificación, conservación urbana y futuro desarrollo; pero contó con poco tiempo para funcionar antes de 1964, y las relevantes autoridades de planificación no han vuelto a ser establecidas. Mediante ayuda de la Alemania del Este se preparó un nuevo plan de desarrollo físico de Zanzibar, y más recientemente ha existido la iniciativa de revisar la política de ordenación y vivienda. En la actualidad, un plan total del gran Zanzibar está siendo elaborado por un equipo chino, y dicho plan podría resultar en la utilidad de la Ciudad de Piedra como centro administrativo del gobierno central. Pero, a causa de la incertidumbre sobre las perspectivas de la Ciudad de Piedra, el Ministerio de Territorios, Edificación y Vivienda solicitó al Centro de Comunidades Humanas (Habitat) de las Naciones Unidas que efectuase un Plan Esquemático de Desarrollo Integral, complementario del plan chino. La misión de las NU se realizó a principios de 1982 y se espera el informe. Además, con respecto a su significado histórico y arquitectónico, se está estudiando la posible inclusión de la Ciudad de Piedra en la Lista del

Legado Cultural Mundial; la Unesco está redactando un proyecto de restauración de monumentos seleccionados, que se someterá al Plan de Desarrollo de las NU para su financiación, mediante la aprobación del gobierno de Tanzania.

El conjunto edificado representa bienes de capital acumulado, así como un legado histórico y arquitectónico, y el considerable alojamiento que ofrece no puede ser pasado por alto por una sociedad de recursos limitados y de predecible escasez de vivienda. Un plan de desarrollo integral, como sugiera la misión de las NU, implicará propuestas de cambios en el actual marco legal de propiedad de la tierra y de su uso, así

como la introducción de ayuda financiera destinada a renovación y restauración. Otras propuestas incluyen la delegación de responsabilidades a los que vivan y trabajen en la zona, y el establecimiento de una Corporación para el Desarrollo Urbano de Zanzíbar. La falta de personal cualificado y de financiación hará que, en general, sean difíciles de llevar a cabo los planes para reanimar la Ciudad de Piedra, pero el primer paso ha de ser la consagración política a dichos planes y la indicación a escala mundial de que se está tratando a la Ciudad de Piedra de Zanzíbar como caso especial e importante.

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