

THE POLITICS OF BUSINESS: RELATIONS BETWEEN ZANZIBAR
AND BAGAMOYO IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Walter T. Brown

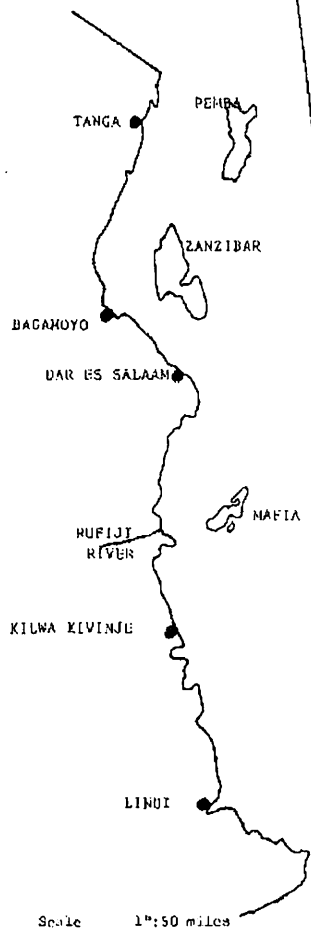
More than five hundred miles inland from the East African coast, two men had gained special recognition in their respective homelands. One, an elderly Musambiro, "had seen Bagamoyo and consequently [was] regarded as an oracle in the country."¹ The other was an Uvinza village chief "who had seen the world -- he having travelled to Bagamoyo."² This coconut-palm-laden town had emerged as a symbol of man's ability to satisfy his physical, material, and spiritual expectations. Indeed, one of the proudest achievements of an East African was that he had seen this town and lived, even if for only the briefest time, the "comfortable life."³

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, no other Tanzanian coastal town could or would sustain a consistent challenge to Bagamoyo's widespread reputation. Her position as "the door to Ugogo, Unyanyembe, Ujiji"⁴ attracted representatives of numerous ethnic and religious groups, including Africans, primarily from Uluguru, Udoe, Uzaramo, Uzigua, and Ukwere, Arabs from Muscat and Suihiri, Indians of Khoja, Memon, Bohora, and Hindu persuasion, Hanafi Baluchis, Catholic Goans, and Zoroastrian Parsis. By the 1870s the growing number of permanent and transient townsmen⁵ was paralleling the steady increase in the import-export trade.

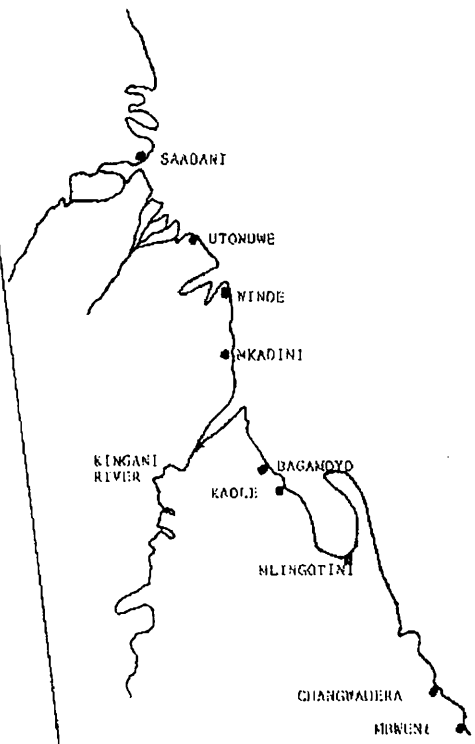
This paper will examine the symbiotic commercial relationship between Bagamoyo and Zanzibar and, consequentially, between Bagamoyo and its

1. Chronique Trimestrielle, 45 (Janvier 1890), 150.
2. E. C. Hore, Urambo to Ujiji, August 5-23, 1879 [mistakenly dated; it should read 1878], Box 2, Journals: Central Africa, 1878-1880, No. 8, London Missionary Society Archives (London). See also, "Diaire Notre Dame de Kamoga (Bukumbi)," 23 Juli 1891, White Fathers Archives (Nyegezi, Tanzania). Eugen Krenzler, Ein Jahr in Ostafrika (Ulm, 1888), 71, noted that African porters considered the town the Eldorado, the "Petit Paris von Ostafrika."
3. For a brief history of Bagamoyo, see Walter T. Brown, "Bagamoyo: An Historical Introduction," Tanzania Notes and Records [hereafter T.N.R.], 71 (1970), 69-83.
4. Charles New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa (London, 1873), 46.
5. In the early 1870s an estimated three thousand people lived in Bagamoyo. Leopold von Jedina, Um Afrika: Skizzen von der Reise Sr. Majestät Corvette "Helgoland" in den Jahren 1873-75 (Vienna and Leipzig, 1877), 111-112.

coast of TANZANIA



Scale 1" = 7 miles



section of the coast

hinterland, Uzaramo. During the late sixties and early seventies, disputes among the leaders of these three places occurred when land grants were made to a group of Europeans. Amid the complicated interactions of the Bagamoyo diwans, Wazaramo pazis, and Sultans, the jemadars emerged as potent forces. Often portrayed as obedient employees of the Sultanate, the jemadars' military reputation beclouded their intimate involvement in the political and economic history of the coast. One jemadar in particular played a direct crucial role in the Sultan's visit to Bagamoyo in 1872 and indirectly in a later confrontation with the Wazaramo. In spite of bold moves and reckless encounters throughout the period under discussion, relative security had been established and the free flow of goods from Bagamoyo to Zanzibar continued. Rather than undertake an analysis of the internal management of Bagamoyo's market system, this paper will attempt to contribute to our understanding of the degree of influence which the Sultanate could, or perhaps would, exercise over a "subject" port only twenty-five miles from its capital.

Bagamoyo's economic expansion in relation to its sister Mrima ports and Zanzibar itself was dramatically manifested in an administrative report entitled "Produce of the Zanzibar Dominions on the Coast and Adjacent Islands, Imported into Zanzibar, 1872-73."⁶ It delineated eight geographical areas from Cape Delgado to the Somali ports and included a detailed list of the items each exported to Zanzibar. If we single out the two royally-monopolized articles, the following chart results:

	<u>Copal</u>	<u>Ivory</u>
Delgado to Kwale	\$8,000	\$79,000
Kilwa (statistics on slaves only)	--	--
Pemba	--	--
Bagamoyo	200,000	400,000
Pangani and Tanga	400	140,000
Mombasa and Lamu	500	7,000
Somali ports	--	21,000
Various other ports along the coast	--	10,000
Totals:	\$208,000	\$657,000

In other words, in one of the first detailed statistical accounts, Bagamoyo was cited as having exported 60.9 per cent of all the dollar value of ivory, and an incredible 96.1 per cent of the dollar value of gum copal received at Zanzibar.⁷

6. W. F. Prideaux, "Administration Reports for the Years 1873 and 1874," Zanzibar Blue Books, 1875-1880, 96, India Office Archives (London).
7. During the following fiscal year, Bagamoyo accounted for 55.2 per cent of the dollar value of ivory and 64 per cent of the gum copal. Subsequent German East African statistics revealed that Bagamoyo continued to dominate the ivory and gum copal export trade. For example, see Deutsch Kolonialblatt, III (1892), 372. See also "Zolltariff In-und Auslandes," Consulat des Deutschen Reichs zu Zanzibar 1878-1884, G65/4, Tanzania National Archives (Dar es Salaam).

During the same period Bagamoyo also exported \$2000 worth of coir and baskets, \$1000 worth of cereals, \$1000 worth of hippopotamus teeth, \$10,000 worth of rhinoceros horn, \$200 worth of tortoise shell, \$2000 worth of wax, \$5000 worth of miscellaneous items, and \$100 worth of slaves.⁸ The total value of all ten categories was \$621,300, or about 35.7 per cent of the \$1,739,559 total imported into Zanzibar. Bagamoyo was by far the largest coastal contributor to Zanzibar's coffers.

An examination of the ivory and gum copal statistics provides an interesting background for a discussion of the relationship between the Wazaramo and the diwans.⁹ The volume of ivory was not recorded and thus one cannot assume that if Bagamoyo contributed over three-fifths of the total dollar revenue, it also exported an equivalent weight percentage. There have been only sparse references to the quality of ivory exported, a vital factor in determining the profit margin for merchants, who classified ivory either as gendi (hard) or pembe (soft). The former is brittle and difficult to cut; it is translucent and thus when mounted requires some type of backing. (This classification also includes hippopotamus teeth, which are even harder to cut.) The pembe, which is opaque and easily carved, has three subdivisions based on weight: pembe calasia, less than twenty-five pounds; pembe bab Cutch, twenty-five to forty pounds; and pembe bab Ulaya, more than forty pounds. As a general rule, a frasila (thirty-five pounds) of pembe was three times as valuable as an equivalent amount of gendi.¹⁰

In the mid-1890s the Zanzibar Gazette reported that Bagamoyo (along with Kilwa and Dar es Salaam) was primarily an outlet for gendi.¹¹ Other coastal ports were credited with shipping the more valuable soft ivory. If -- and only if -- gendi constituted the greater percentage of ivory exported in the early 1870s, the volume must be multiplied almost threefold; that is, the volume of ivory carried from the interior through Uzaramo and into Bagamoyo must have been considerably more than 60.9 per cent of the total.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, gum copal invariably ranked as one of Zanzibar's leading exports.¹² This product was obtained by digging in the soil surrounding the msandarusi tree and in places where the tree once grew.

8. In mid-1871, Sir John Kirk remarked, "it is impossible to estimate even roughly, the number of slaves that first reached the Coast . . . and . . . never pass the Zanzibar Customs. . . . Bagamoyo receives a large number." Kirk to Foreign Office, Zanzibar, 27 June 1871, FO 84/1344, Public Record Office (London) [hereafter P.R.O.].
9. Of course the statistics do not include a considerable amount of smuggled goods.
10. A few tusks were a combination of both hard and soft, i.e., the lower portions including the point is labeled hard and the remainder soft. The word chotara, which designates this variety, also refers to the offspring of Indian traders and Swahili women.
11. Zanzibar Gazette, 5 December 1894.
12. For example, in 1862-1863 gum copal ranked fifth in export value while in 1877 it ranked third. Alfred Grandidier, Notice sur l'isle de Zanzibar (Reunion, 1868), 23-24; Charles Courret, A l'est et a l'ouest dans l'Ocean Indien (Paris, 1884), 129.