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# Political Identity in Nairobi's Central Business District (CDB) : an æsthetic critique

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# Political Identity in Nairobi's Central Business District (CDB) : an œsthetic critique

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# declaration

this dissertation is my original work and has not been presented at any other university for examination

author: ----------

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# dedication

for

Sixtus N. Muthuma
Mary W. Muthuma

my beloved parents

# acknowledgements

Faced with the task of producing a dissertation, I did not know what to write about, how to write it or even why write it at all, in the first place! But with understanding, discerning and spirited assistance, many people provided the answer. And through their kind intercessions, have lent an expertise far beyond my command. They have broadened my otherwise narrow focus.

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## abstract.

To date, there has been no scholarly examination of Nairobi's symbolic space; of the discourses that comprise this national icon. How political power has *imagined*-and-*imaged* itself in this space; how it has *re*-presented and *re*-produced itself in city centre, is the subject of this study.

The question is: What material culture, specifically what built environment, has been employed to transform Nairobi's ubiquity into *place*-of-belonging? Built culture is considered as a tool (though not an exclusive one) for forging a relation between society and a given spatial context; a medium for society to 'personalise' its space. The focus is iconic buildings sited in the central, public space. It is further delimited to their architectural style.

Political authority, though not singularly responsible for collective identity, has been selected as the point of departure because its contribution is decisive. For instance, nation states in Africa, as we know them today, were a creation of a political meeting –the Berlin conference of 1884/5. The role of politics, in imagining and actualizing collective identity is by no means insignificant.

Therefore, it is as a product of political *performance* that Nairobi is interrogated. And the political power addressed includes the administration of the Uganda Railways, the colonial government and its indigenous counterpart. Each regime's iconic buildings are examined: the Railways' station and headquarters, various government offices and the monumental neo-classical High Court and City Hall. An exploration of possible connotations and nuances of this style are sketched out.

Kenyatta, the first indigenous president, distanced himself from the colonial neo-classical tradition. Stylistically, his Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) is an antithesis to the neo-classical. His preference was a *stylised-African* statement. And, in addition to selecting a

style far removed from the colonial power's, he re-oriented the spatial dynamics in City Square thus re-articulating its identity.

A plausible argument for the absence, thereafter, of culturally polarised styles is offered: there being no contestants, to be proven to that Nairobi is African, culturally loaded styles became redundant. At this juncture, identity appears to have regained native buoyancy-of-belonging, making its overtly blatant expression superfluous.

For a fuller scrutiny of the city, it is compared to neighbouring Dar es Salaam (the commercial capital of Tanzania). Once more, the point of departure is the image fashioned by political power. While Nairobi was colonised solely by the British before shifting to indigenous rule, Dar es Salaam witnessed a broader assortment of rulers: the Zanzibari Sultanate, German colonials, British superintendents and lastly home-grown presidents.

Consequently, Dar es Salaam features greater variety in architectural styles: Arab-Swahili, European classical with Omani-Arab features and the decorative saracenic compositions. There is however, a persistent stylistic expression through all the epochs –the Arab-Swahili style. That the city adheres to the built-language that is native to the coast of East Africa, to this regional common denominator, is more to be expected than surprising.

Meanwhile, architectural variety in colonial Nairobi, where the British had over six decades– undisturbed– to craft their image, is crisply neo-classical without admixture of regional features.

Presented with more (or less) polarised colonial images, indigenous presidents reacted differently. Nairobi's postcolonial image is overtly 'african' perhaps as a response to the equally overt neo classicism of the colonials. Dar es Salaam, on the other hand, is devoid of strident back-and-forth in its stylistic discourses. In this city, the longest serving foreign power, the British, ruled in restraint; Dar es Salaam was not their *colonial* city, it was a United Nations

mandate which they happened to superintend. And lacking the 'absolute' in power, they lacked too the full freedom to craft their image. Perhaps this accounts for the lack of definite British-style monuments. The King George Museum (now National Museum) and the Government House are more saracenic than European.

In conclusion, it appears the more spirited the underlying contest, the more articulate the spatial image; the more contested a space has been, the more spectacular the image it bears. Intense competition necessitates writing in bold type –in a decisive architectural style. Identity is inscribed with vigour where struggle forms the backdrop. Inversely, stylistic pluralism thrives where contest is muted; a pluralistic image emerges over time. This may not apply to all the cities in Africa but it is the close-up view, the *imaged* identity in Nairobi's central space.

# 1 introduction.

## the politics of space versus place

## 1.0 nairobi's identity

To the question: what is a city, there can be no simple answer because the entity referred to is more complex than simple. Salient factors are its territorial circumscription and the human culture within. But the question remains unanswered: what among the multiplicity and confusion of its inessentials is perennially valid and lasting? What constitutes a city's very life? It is in this light that we ask what Nairobi is.

Human activity, human intelligence and emotions, the quest for meaning, customs and ethics, in short a living human experience comprises a city's essence. It comprises the style and substance of life within a given boundary.

Various definitions of culture –this living human experience– have been offered: the original meaning used to indicate the cultivation of the human person, above all in his interior reality. In the 19th century ethnological disciplines considered culture as all that was expressed by a particular people and recognized as specific to them: their mentality, institutions, forms of existence and work, customs, inventions and creative genius. The 20th century has nuanced culture to denote a collective system for evaluating ideas, actions, events and therefore an ensemble of models of behaviour. In investigating Nairobi, I rely more on the ethnological definition. And because of the impracticability of examining the entire human experience, I select the use of central public space, what some call the *historic* city, the core or the Central Business District (CBD). The pertinent question is: what creative genius is expressed in this space? Which community has written itself into Nairobi's spatial structure; written its philosophy and its aims? What anthropological or social significance can be decoded from its built form?

Since a community's arts and lifestyle serve to demonstrate –perhaps even more than its utterances do– the workings of its mind, its commonly held beliefs, its interior reality, this study deliberates on Nairobi as an art form. An insight into society is sought through a survey of its

built environment. And this at a time when the African landscape is witnessing change with precipitate haste!

Nairobi, like other cities, is a complex and shifting terrain. It is a complexity of ideas, interests and intentions, a myriad of norms, values and traditions, a continuous social change which language, in its naked simplicity, is unable to relate. The *re*presentation of a city is far beyond the grasp of language. The following, therefore, is a partial view, one person's interpretive *re*presentation which is open to contestation and revision. This study has no pretensions of being complete, absolute or representative.

## 1.1 nairobi: space or place?

It is 1987. A sensational legal dispute –of national resonance– is being played out in the courts, in the media and on the streets. The dispute is about S.M. Otieno –a prominent Kenyan lawyer– and where he is to be buried.[1]

*Otieno should be buried at his home*

*he belonged where he was born*

*so where he was born is where he will be buried* –the court finally ruled. But in closing this dispute it raised a momentous question –WHAT IS NAIROBI? What is Otieno's Nairobi residence, where he spent a lifetime raising a family, owning properties… where he lived and worked and where his widow and children still live? If it isn't his home, if Nairobi is not home, what then is it?

"House" was the popular answer. Nairobi, a temporary residence, of houses not homes,[2] is where one may occupy property without *belonging*. A lifetime spent in Nairobi does not make one a *Nairobian,* it does not make him *a son* of the city, it does not confer the right of affiliation

[1] Cf. Cohen, D. and Atieno Odhiambo, E. *Burying S. M.: The politics of knowledge and the sociology of power in Africa*. Heinemann, Portsmouth, London, Currey, 1992. These authors discuss various issues about identity: is identity established by birthplace and what exactly are the customs and traditions that make a Nairobian? They investigate the seemingly multiple identities displayed by the people of Nairobi.

[2] The phrase belongs to John Lonsdale

to him or his posterity. Otieno is representative of a multitude of Kenyans who, without any sense of belonging, live, work and die in Nairobi. They are *place-less* in this city even when they no longer possess a rural home.

Is Nairobi a place where one belongs*? Place-of-belonging* evokes a relational quality; something belongs to or is associated with it. *PLACE* can be equivalent to cultural homeland. Is Nairobi permeated by a distinct culture, a particular community or other human experience?

Nairobi, of the houses not homes, of spaces without sense of place, appears to be more of a ubiquitous wilderness than a place where people belong. It has been fiercely contested. Many, indeed, have attempted establishing this-or-that sense of belonging making Nairobi's identity complex, multi layered and challenging to *re*present.

Who actually belongs to Nairobi? Certainly not the likes of the late S.M. Otieno! This is a review of the communities that have laid claim to the city's ubiquity, of societies that have attempted –successfully or less so– to imbue Nairobi *whereness* with their own sense of place. Some have done so through partisan legal pronouncements; others by dint of fraternising with it. Is there a 'dominant' culture within Nairobi and what distinguishes it?

## 1.2 claimants of nairobi

Information in this section roughly correspondences to the periodisation below:

| PERIOD | YEARS |
|---|---|
| pre WWI | c.1890 -1914/18 |
| inter war years | 1919-1939/40 |
| post WWII – independence | c. 1940- 1963 |
| post independence I | 1963-1978 |
| post independence II | 1978-2000* |

* This era is studied only up to 1997/8. Data after this date is too recent and inchoate

Before colonial times (before the origin of this city) the people who claimed *enkare-nyrobi* (the place of cool waters in the Maasai language) were the Kiambu Kikuyu and the Kaputiei Maasai. They appear to have assumed a recognised sense of belonging.

From 1900, the British colonial administration, with different notions of both place and space, allege to have taken possession of this same *enkare-nyrobi*. They anglicised its name and drew up an arbitrary boundary of one-and-a-half-mile radius. But did they, by this very act, turn Nairobi into their place-*of-belonging,* did they effect a cultural change overnight?

World War I brought changes with it. The colonial administration, now emboldened, destroyed many native villages within the precincts of township and deposited the inhabitants in a 'regulated' location –the Native Location otherwise called Pumwani. Passes were issued –the hated kipande– to control the natives' movement within and without this location. Nairobi's boundary, that arbitrary circle, was in 1920 and 1927, twice enlarged.

World War II witnessed yet another change, this time in policy. London announced a shift to 'more inclusive' colonial towns, among other reasons, because the dwindling imperial economy needed some support and a shift from an agrarian to an industrial-based economy was desired. In order to realise this, the labour force was directed to Nairobi –previously it had been directed to the European farms. Nairobi now welcomed the native with his family or rather the steady supply of labour for industrial development. Native housing improved from provision of bachelor bed-spaces to family housing although this grand sounding 'family housing' comprised but two rooms with communal bathroom and kitchen!

There was little change in the amount of space allocated to the increased number of natives.[3] Meanwhile, in an effort to secure settler tenure, the town's public space, the tree-lined centre, was spruced up, landscaped and the township promoted to city status from a mere municipality. But the city was given little peace. The natives challenged the immigrants' reign by aggressively seeking to re-assert their 'lost' rights. The ensuing fight, which involved the entire

[3] Population figures for Nairobi read as follows: in 1905 – 10,000. 1962 – 347,000. 1979 – 834,000. 1989 – 1.3 million and 2000 – 3 million. It was not possible to work out the exclusive native population.

White Highlands (the fertile area, in the Kenya colony, that was claimed exclusively for European settlement) ended in 1963 with political independence for the native.

The city boundary was once again enlarged, in 1963, as spatial-racial segregation was wished away. But a wish, even when phrased in governmental policy terminology, does not automatically fuse FRAGMENTED PLACES into one homogenous whole; to construct a sense of place is more than a matter of legal phraseology. What actually happened was that the economically endowed natives settled into the previously held European space. Did this confer place-status to them? In Otieno's case it did not. The majority, of independent natives, in the meantime, struggle –as each can– to create their own PLACE out of literally non-existent SPACE. Millions live in slums, on public land or some otherwise illegal space.

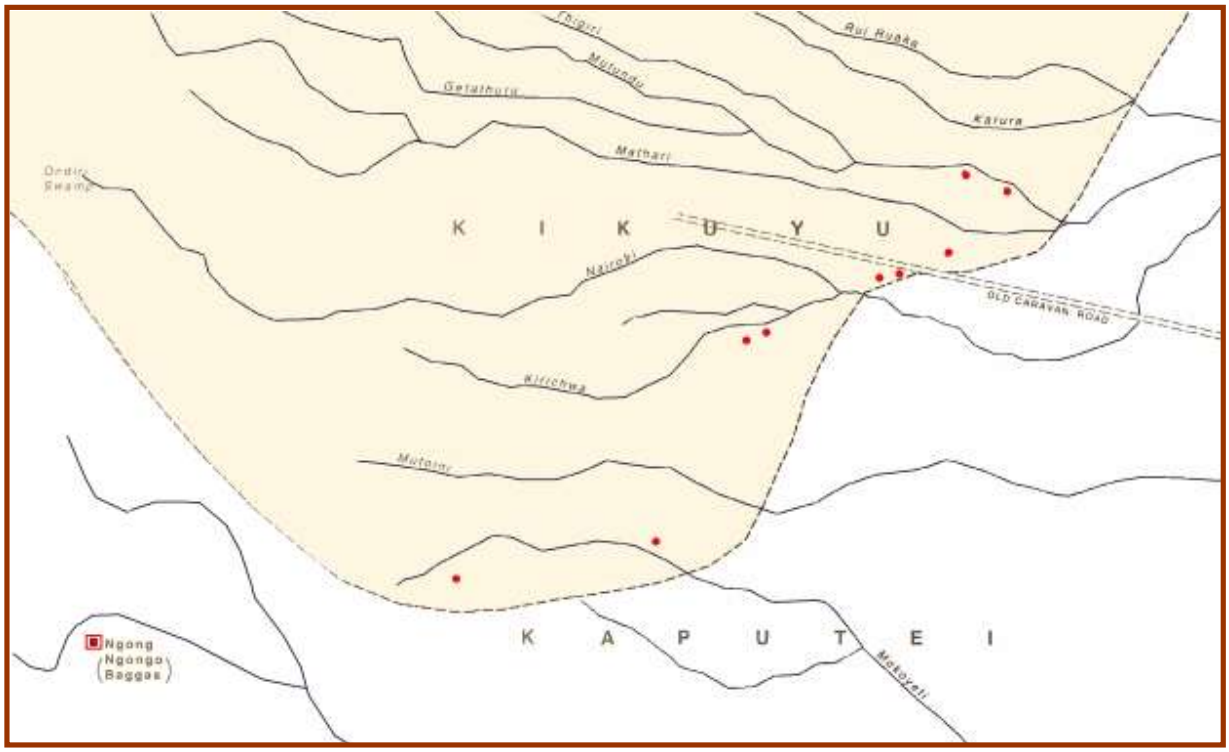
The second post independence period coincided with a shrinking of formal employment. The response was large-scale informality –the *jua kali* (under the inclement sun) livelihoods. Whether these are at home in Nairobi is an open question. Whether they have any sense of belonging, or like Otieno, belong where they were born is yet to be settled. It is curious how Nairobi-SPACE exhibits a sense of mismatching any culture that tries to make it home. It appears almost impossible (for any people) to put down roots in this city.

## 1.2.1 tabulation of nairobi's claimants

| Time Period | Spatial Boundary | Events | PLACE / SPACE status |
|---|---|---|---|
| (c. 1890-1914) pre WWI | No boundary<br>circle boundary introduced in 1900 | • Established Kikuyu villages<br>• Rail track & circle boundary<br>immigrants find site of some villages inconvenient | Through space segregation, Kikuyu place claimed by colonisation<br><br>Pumwani suggested as future native SPACE (not **place-**of-belonging) |
| inter war period (1919-1939/40) | Two boundary changes<br>1920 and 1927 | • to create ample space for an ample British municipality four townships were acquired by the Nairobi town council | spatial island marked out for nurturing colonial PLACE.<br>Asian space acts as buffer zone between European and African areas<br>African SPACE (or non-place) composed of transient bachelor bed-spaces |
| post WWII (c. 1941-1963) | No boundary change but landscaped CBD (1948 master plan) | • Growing crises in African non-place status. Meanwhile colonials etch deeper place-claim by promoting Nairobi to city status | PLACE / SPACE discord. accelerated African aggression in re-asserting & re-constituting lost place out of colonial space |
| post independence I (1963-1978) | Enlarged boundary (present one) | • social class begins to replace race in spatial segregation<br>But is it their PLACE? SM Otieno's saga demonstrates NOT | Attempt to construct PLACE & belonging out of public (government) land (re-constituted space) |
| post independence II (1978-2000) | | • Jua kali proliferation | |

hence Nairobi **NOT YET A PLACE**-of-belonging

## 1.3 nairobi's central space: historical development




( source: Moss, R. Nairobi A to Z,
a complete Guide. *map adapted by author*
Kenway publications, Nairobi, 1999 )

NAIROBI AREA BEFORE 1900

- fortified Kikuyu villages
  Kiambu-Kikuyu
- Kaputiei-Maasai
- contact between Kikuyu and Maasai (very approximate) 1892
- market

**figure 1.3.1** Kikuyu/ Maasai place

established PLACE

fortified Kikuyu villages

Nairobi as meeting point of different ethnic groups

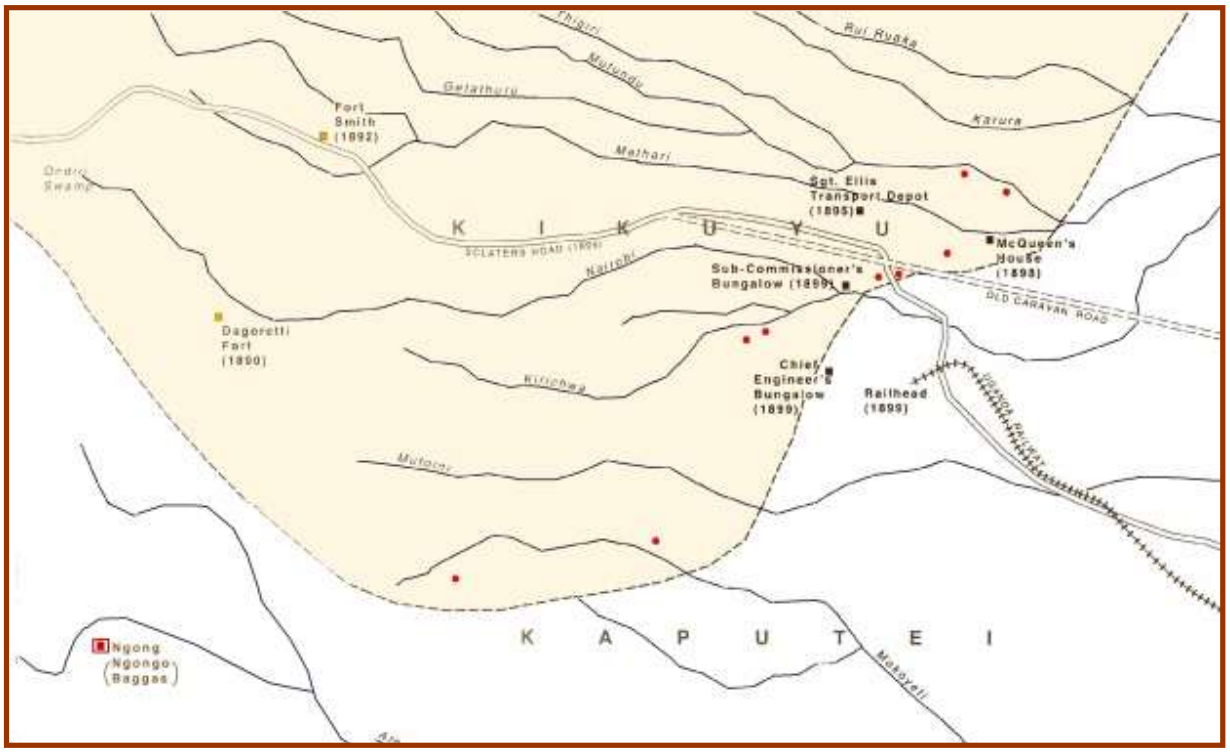
Ngongo Bagas Market, the 'great market' hence *Dagoretti* (a corruption of 'the great.' in the Kikuyu language)

figure 1.3.1 on page 7 Map of Nairobi Area Before 1900

This map shows the possible boundary between Kikuyu and Maasai territory. The date given is c. 1892. Historians like Godfrey Muriuki[4] explain that from the slopes of Mount Kenya, the agriculturalist Kikuyu had been moving southwards towards the Athi plain. And by the 1890s their southernmost homeland was the area depicted in this map. The Athi plain was home to the pastoral Maasai, hence the contact line delineated above –of Kikuyu-Maasai interaction. The two communities carried out mutual raids, intermarriages and exchange of goods. The raiding, together with the game population in the Athi plain[5] may account for the *fortified* Kikuyu villages. Maasai villages do not feature. Being pastoralists, the Maasai, are prone to a nomadic way of life.

Kikuyuland, as shown in this map, is dissected by streams: RuiRuaka, Karura, Thigiri, Getathuru, Mathari, Nairobi and Mutoini. Kikuyuland was set in the country of the ridges and valleys and was described by R. N. Lyne, an expert on agriculture who was advising the British Government, as "consisting of 2,000,000 acres of rolling downs with light earthy soil with a climate exceeded by probably no other in the world."[6] Kaputiei Maasai, on the other hand, occupy a flat plain of a lower altitude. It would be fatiguing for cattle to be driven up and down a series of ridges.

[4] Cf Muriuki, G. "The Agikuyu" in Ogot, B.A. (ed) *Kenya Before 1900, eight regional studies* East Africa Publishers, Nairobi, 1969
[5] Today this area houses a game park
[6] Report on the Agricultural Prospects of the Plateaux of the Uganda Railway, Command Paper 787-13 (1902)




( source: Moss, R. Nairobi A to Z, a complete Guide. *map adapted by author* Kenway publications, Nairobi, 1999 )

NAIROBI AREA BEFORE 1900

- fortified Kikuyu villages Kiambu-Kikuyu
- Kaputiei-Maasai
- contact between Kikuyu and Maasai (very approximate) 1892
- market
- Buildings (European style)

**figure 1.3.2** . the coming of IBEAC and the Uganda Railway

—the established PLACE, the fortified villages— are visited by Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) road-makers. These choose to see the place as unclaimed ubiquity —mere SPACE

The intrusions include:
Sclater's Road
Dagoretti Fort
Fort Smith
Elli's Transport Deport
McQueen's house

figure 1.3.2 on page 9 Same map –European arrival

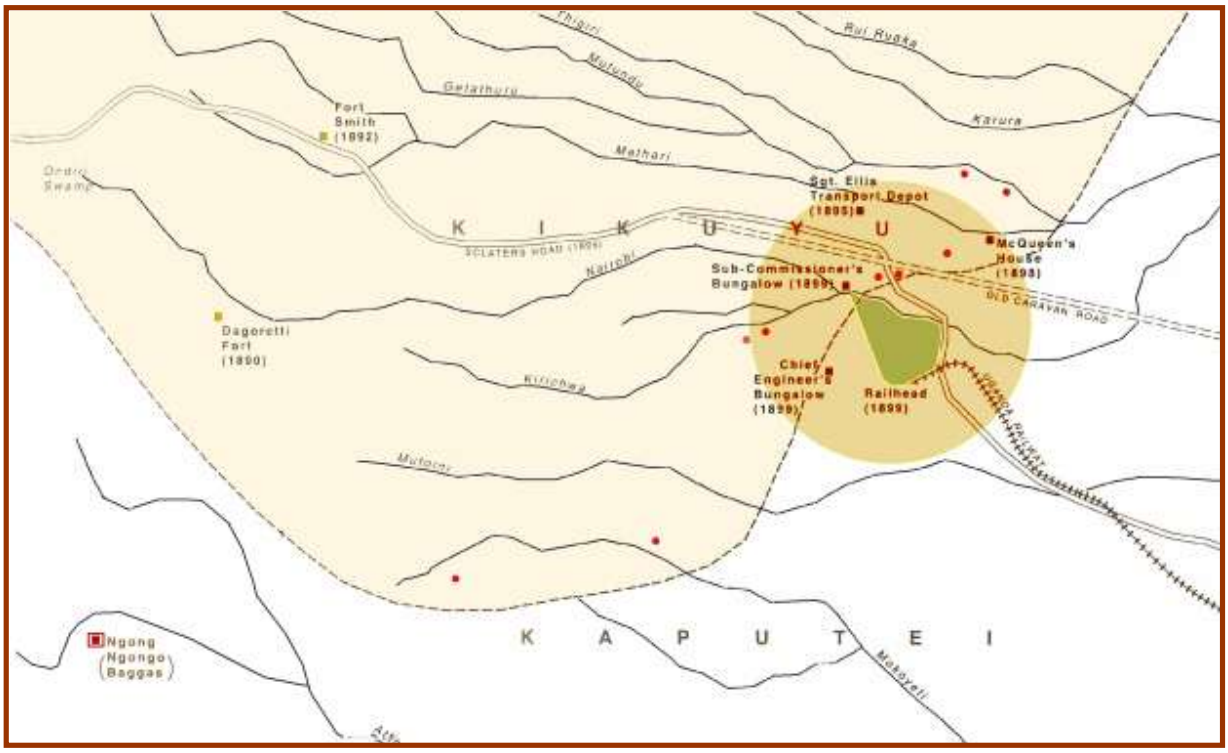
On the very same map we now see two IBEAC stations: Dagoretti-1890 and Fort Smith-1892. The stations acted as the replenishing points, for caravans from the coast headed to Uganda, and it was important to site them where food was easily available. They are sited in Kikuyuland. According to Sorenson, the locals held a market in Dagoretti.[7] Later, the Dagoretti IBEAC station was moved to 'Fort' Smith. The move is significant because it suggests that there was resistance to the founding of this station.

And early reports, perhaps unbiased by later political interests, indicate that "there was not much room for European colonization, certainly not in Kikuyu[land], which is a small country, thickly populated."[8] Both Francis Hall and Captain Lugard (employees of the IBEAC and later of the imperial government) were struck by the density of Kikuyu cultivations when [they] arrived at Dagoretti in October 1890.[9]

On the heels of the IBEAC came the Uganda Railway. The position of railhead, by 1899, is indicated. The chief engineer's residence and that of the sub-commissioner are also highlighted. One represented the commercial outfit that was to oust the IBEAC, while the other stood for the British Crown. A transport depot and a blacksmith's house are also shown. Together, these account for the 'European style' buildings.

The buildings are sited in Kikuyu country and unsurprisingly this was to be the 'trouble spot' in the future Kenya colony. The latest date given, in the map, for this European activity, is 1899. It would be correct to conclude that by this date, European immigrants entered Kikuyu country.

[7] Cf. Sorrenson, M.P.K., *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi 1968 (memoir number two of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa) and Bennett, G. who claims that the area around Dagoretti was one vast garden. In *Kenya, A Political History*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 1963
[8] (British) Foreign Office 107/51, Ainsworth to Hardinge, 10 January 1896, in Hardinge to Salisbury 12 April 1896
[9] Cf. The Diaries of Lord Lugard ed. Margery Perham (1959)




( source: Moss, R. Nairobi A to Z, a complete Guide. *map adapted by author* Kenway publications, Nairobi, 1999 )

NAIROBI AREA BEFORE 1900

- fortified Kikuyu villages
- Imperial British East Africa Co. stations
- contact between Kikuyu and Maasai (very approximate) 1892
- Buildings (European style)
- Exclusive Railway Area
- British Government Nairobi Boundary (in 1901)

**figure 1.3.3** the circle boundary -1900

Into this established PLACE comes the Uganda Railway, the 'Lunatic Express' which happens to be travelling through 'empty' SPACE to get to Uganda. It lays a kind of claim, one-mile stretch of land on both sides of the railway line. Surprisingly the land transfer negotiation is not between the railways and village settlements —the actual PLACE-holders— but with far-away London which had yet to be convinced about this extravagantly expensive 'Lunatic Express'.

figure 1.3.3 on page 11 Immigrants claim space - Circle Boundary

The Uganda Railway claimed exclusive ownership of the triangular area highlighted in the map. The sub-commissioner, the British government representative, after re-instating his authority even over the immigrant Railways, drew up and published a boundary over what was now termed the township –Nairobi. The date was April 1900.

This piece of legislation, demarcating the boundary, the legislation that claimed this space for the imperial Crown was published and gazetted. It is interesting to keep in mind the illiteracy of those who were prior in occupying this space. Could they have been aware of a proclamation claiming the space they inhabited? Was this proclamation addressed to them or to the dissenting Railway authorities?

Among the people who laid claim to this space, probably it is only the Railway engineers, who read and understood the township promulgation with its defining boundary. The imperial Crown appears to have addressed itself to immigrants, to its own subjects. By drawing up a boundary, the Crown claimed space from itself. The prior native settlers, the Kikuyu and Maasai, were not addressed. Their claim to this space, their occupancy rights were overlooked by the imperial government.

The empire's government forgot that no matter how unlettered, the native-settler was the PLACE–holder. And in overlooking his illiteracy, it overlooked his lawful claim, the claim over what he had, over the years, 'domesticated'; his fusing of traditions, customs, memories and imaginings, in short his life, with that space; his claim to Nairobi as cultural PLACE and not just as mere space.

Once London was committed to this lunatic line; committed to the East African protectorate; committed, especially, to outdoing the Germans, who were constructing a railway line in Tanganyika, it was quick to make its authority felt. The British government assumed the onerous rights of a landlord. It declared —without any negotiations or other communication with the native settlers— that all space in British East Africa, from then henceforth, was under

the discretion and protection of the mighty empire. The East Africa Protectorate was declared in 1902.

Did this grand legislation automatically infuse customs, values and norms British, thus transforming Nairobi into British PLACE-of-belonging? Creating cultural PLACE is not an automatic, immediate action; it grows out of traditions of associations between a people and space. In fact, Her Majesty's government was to spend the next sixty years, with a certain measure of success, trying to imbue Nairobi space with British PLACE*ness.*

The British government legislated a null and void land-transaction. By addressing itself, and not the native, it legislated unto itself —a rather futile act. The empire's oversight comprised the inherent weakness and ineffectiveness of monologue –as compared to dialogue– in any and all human communication. This rendered its many declarations over Nairobi, a somewhat hollow ring. It divested them of both profundity and authenticity.

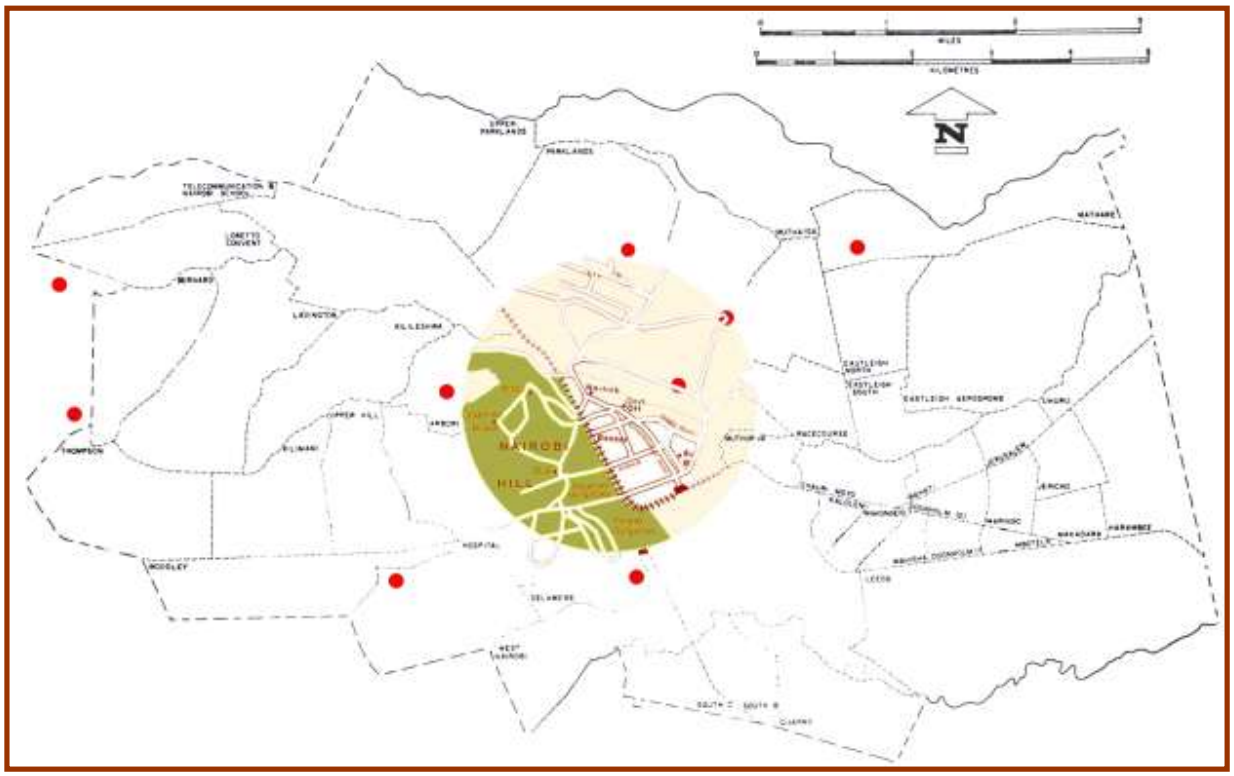



figure 1.3.4 The Hill District

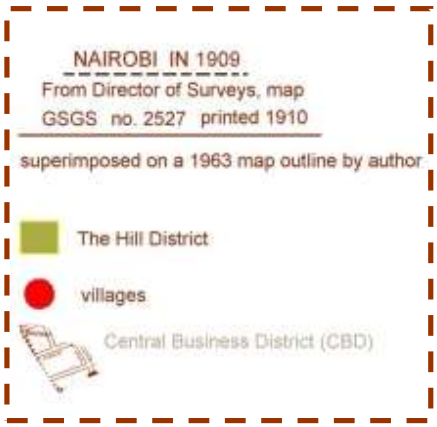



figure 1.3.4 above Map of Nairobi in 1909. The Hill District

This is a 1909 map superimposed on a later municipal map. The area that was originally claimed, in an exclusive way, by the Railways became the CBD. The European immigrants (both Government and Railway officers) created a residential area for themselves –the Hill District. It is sited on higher altitude than the CBD. Lesser officials lived, to the north, in the Parklands area.

The British Government had opened immigration to British East Africa Protectorate but not with the deliberate intention (it was recorded) of displacing native peoples, which is precisely what it did. According to archival records, native reserves were to be established 'few in number but of large extent and far removed from European centres' something which, Bennett notes, might have meant wholesale removals, particularly of Kikuyu.[10] Consequently the Kikuyu were swept out of Nairobi and settled on 'native villages'. Some were settled on European-settlers' farms on the basis of cultivation rights in exchange for labour –such natives were [to be] registered and any unregistered was [to be] removed to the reserves.[11]

In the first few decades of the 20th century, the African experience in Nairobi, began with forced removal from this site. And since 'white mates black in a very few moves' as Eliot declared, 'there was no doubt [to him, the imperial government representative] that the native must go under. It is a prospect which I [Eliot] view with equanimity and a clear conscience.'[12]

Much of Nairobi, by 1905, consisted of Government land while the European population, in the entire country, comprised 600 resident settlers. The numbers of Africans is discreetly omitted in official records of these times. But a 1907 reference (made by Colonel Montgomery to the House of Lords in London) alluded to a total of 2,000 Europeans in this supposed 'whiteman's country' among an estimated population of four million.[13] From the perspective of the African, Nairobi began to be submissive SPACE, requiring of him, a conceptual change: from PLACE-of-belonging to transient SPACE-for-wage earning.

Nairobi began its journey from an African PLACE towards an exclusive European spatial enclave. The native-settler was to relinquish his PLACE-status, with all its associations, fears and hopes, he was to relinquish it to European SPACE, which hopefully would develop into British cultural PLACE –a winter home for Aristocrats as the propaganda announced. Exclusive space (spatial delimitation) was the tool for nurturing a British social construct –which in turn was the foundation or anchor for colonial domination.

[10] Cf. Bennett in op. cit.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Eliot's letter (commissioner in Kenya) to Lord Lansdowne (of the Foreign Office, London)
[13] These figures are for the entire British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya) not for Nairobi alone.

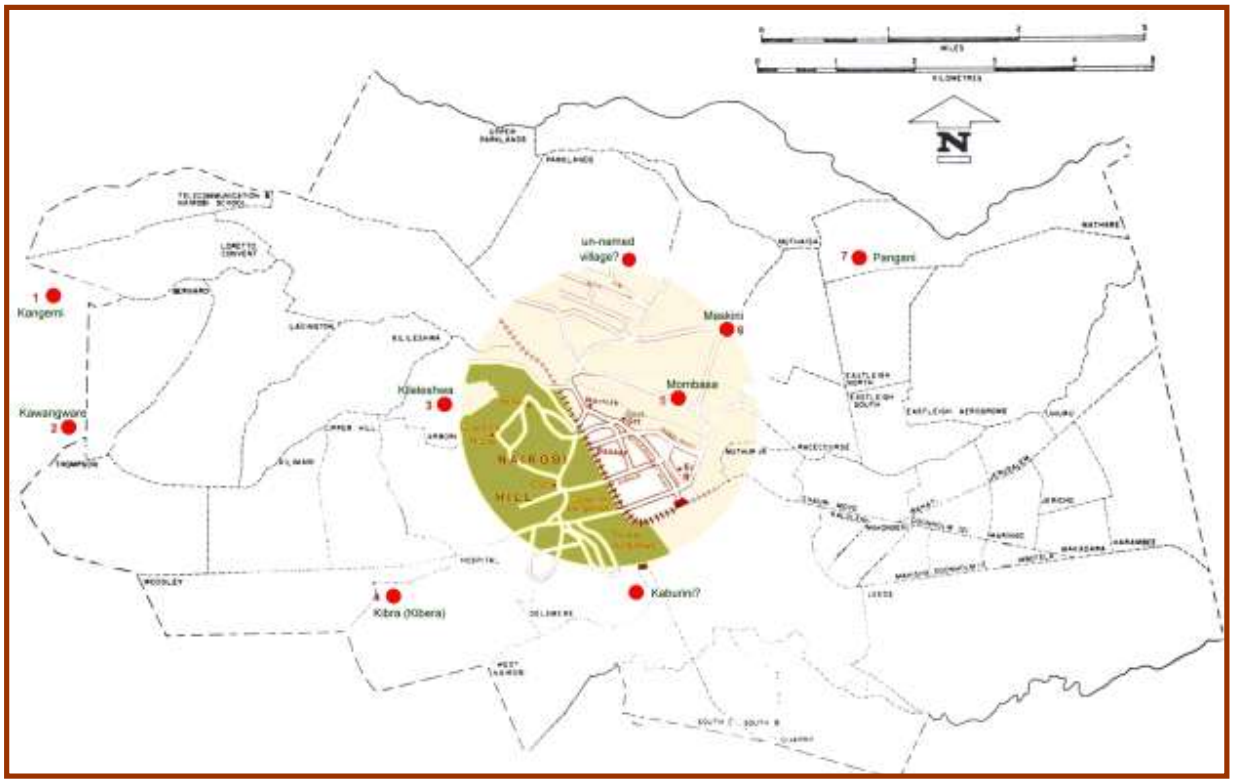



figure 1.3.5 The African Villages

figure 1.3.5 The African Villages c. 1910

Through the East Africa (Land Acquisition) Order in Council of 1901, the British Crown had convinced itself that "in native states which had no indigenous government of their own the Crown's sovereign authority extended over all lands".[14] This was the 'legal' acquisition of all land in Kenya making the natives tenants of the Crown. In Studying African housing, David Anderson mentions eight native villages in Nairobi. He does not clarify which ones preceded the land's acquisition act. Starting from the left (in the map above) there is Kangemi and

[14] Cf. East Africa (Land Acquisition) Order in Council of 1901 and Lands Ordinance of 1902.

Kawangware next to the Nairobi River and the Mutoini respectively. Then there is Kileleshwa near the Kirichwa River and Kibra (Kibera) where the Nubian soldiers –part of the Kings African Rifles– were settled.[15] Village five and six are Mombasa and Maskini. And like Pangani –village seven– they refer to areas along the coast where their inhabitants probably migrated from. These would be those natives who followed the Uganda Railway camp to make whatever fortune they could. Some authors mention an un-named village in Parklands and another near the cemetery to the south, called Kaburini (kaburi is grave in both Kiswahili and Kikuyu). Amongst all these villagers who claimed the space that is Nairobi?

change in spatial arrangement in order to alter place/space relationship

1. Kangemi
2. Kawangware
3. Kileleshwa
4. Kibera
5. Mombasa
6. Maskini
7. Pangani

"By 1921" Anderson quoting Andrew Hake says, "more than 12,000 Africans occupied the eight largest villages in the vicinity of Nairobi Township. Beyond the township boundary to the west was Kangemi … The four villages to the north-east of the town centre were all close to Nairobi racecourse. The largest was Pangani." [16]

A different source, Ross,[17] gives the following as the native villages by 1910 but he does not indicate their site.

| village | headman | village | headman |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Somali camp | Hussein Ali | 4. Maskini village | Lalli bin Hamid |
| 2. Somali camp | Hassan Hersi | 5. Pangani village | Juma bin Mahunza |
| 3. Mombasa village | Lalli bin Hamid | 6. Unguja | Bakan |

He adds that a Kikuyu settlement existed in Parklands and the headman was Karanja wa Hiti

[15] Cf. Parsons, T.' "Kibra is our Blood": The Sudanese Military Legacy in Nairobi's Kibera Location, 1902-1968.' in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997), pp 87-122. Boston University African Studies Center

[16] Cf. Cf. Anderson, D. 'Corruption at City Hall: African housing and urban development in colonial Nairobi' in *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa c. 1750-2000*, Azania special volume No: XXXVI-XXXVII, Burton, A. (ed). British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 2002.

[17] Cf. Ross, M. H. *Grassroots in an African City: political behavior in Nairobi*. MIT press, 1975

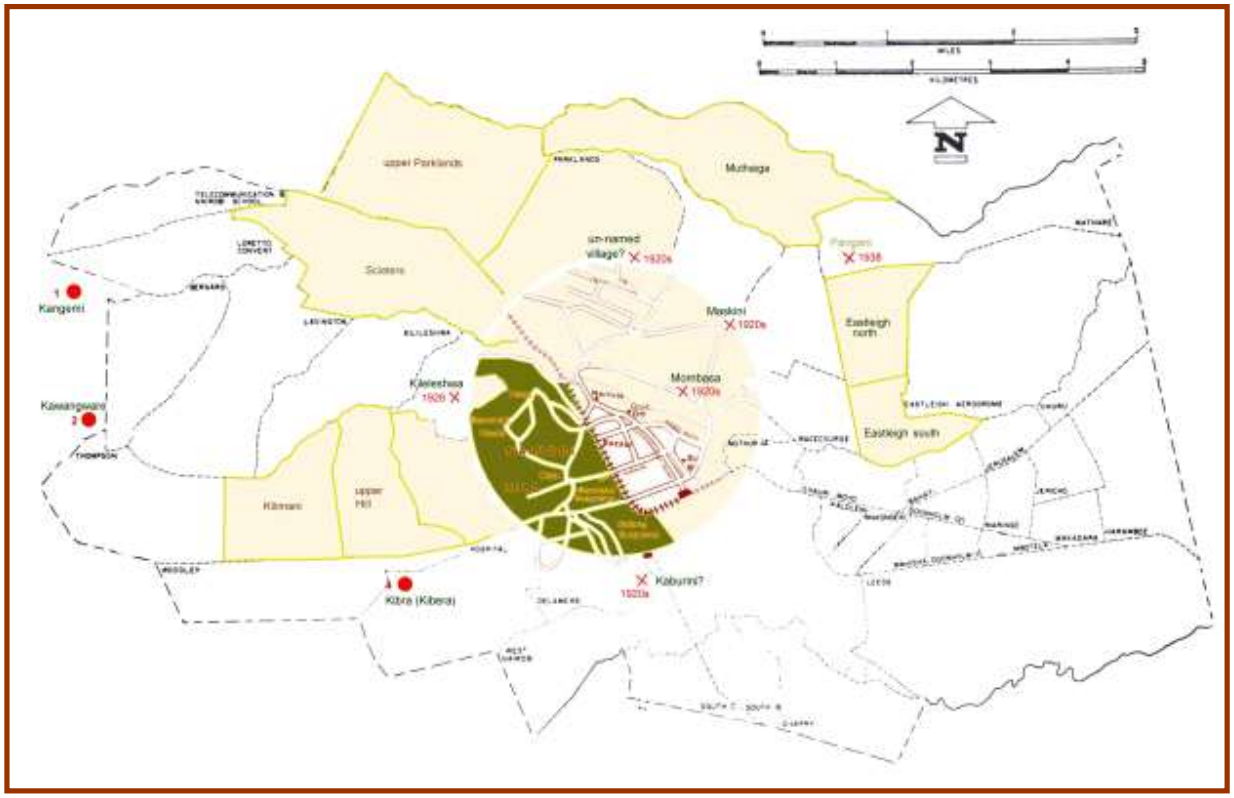



figure 1.3.6 new settlement areas

NAIROBI IN 1909
From Director of Surveys, map
GSGS no. 2527 printed 1910
superimposed on a 1963 map outline by author
1926 X village and date of demolition
new area opened up for immigrants to settle
Central Business District (CBD)

figure 1.3.6 Same Map 1911

These 'haphazardly' scattered native villages were, according to the immigrant authorities, unregulated. As the town council opened up Upper Parklands and Kilimani for European settlement, the idea of a 'regulated' native location was raised. But it was not until after world war one that this project was to be realised.

As far as land tenure was concerned, the Nairobi Township Committee, in 1912-1915 allowed Europeans freehold, Africans only usufruct. The scattered native villages, where tenure was not secure, were razed to the ground and their inhabitants forcibly moved to the 'regulated Native Location.

The villages were cleared out in order to make room for more areas of immigrant-settlement. Nairobi Township was spreading out, from the Hill District, to other areas. Some immigrant officers already lived in Parklands which was one of the first residential areas to be developed. By 1906, it was the home of many Government officials. It later became an Asian area while Upper Parklands was restricted to Europeans.[18]

Upper Parklands, Kilimani and Upper Hill were opened up in 1911. Muthaiga and Eastleigh (originally Egerton Estate) were bought as farms. Muthaiga (754 acres) was sold in 1912 for £20 an acre to Major Morrison who shortly afterwards subdivided it into four-acre plots. It was proclaimed a township in 1922 and was later incorporated into the municipality of Nairobi.

Eastleigh was named after the railway works town of Eastleigh in Hampshire, England. It was formerly known as Egerton estate and Nairobi East Township. Its 2,003 acres were bought freehold in two lots at Rs. 1 an acre in 1904 and 1905. Subsequently, in 1912, 654 acres of it was subdivided into 3,332 plots. In 1925 Government bought back 1,078 acres of Eastleigh for £5,000.[19] There it settled the Swahili and Arab servants.

[18] Ibid.
[19] Cf. Hake, A. *African Metropolis: Nairobi's self-help city*. Sussex University Press, London, 1977.

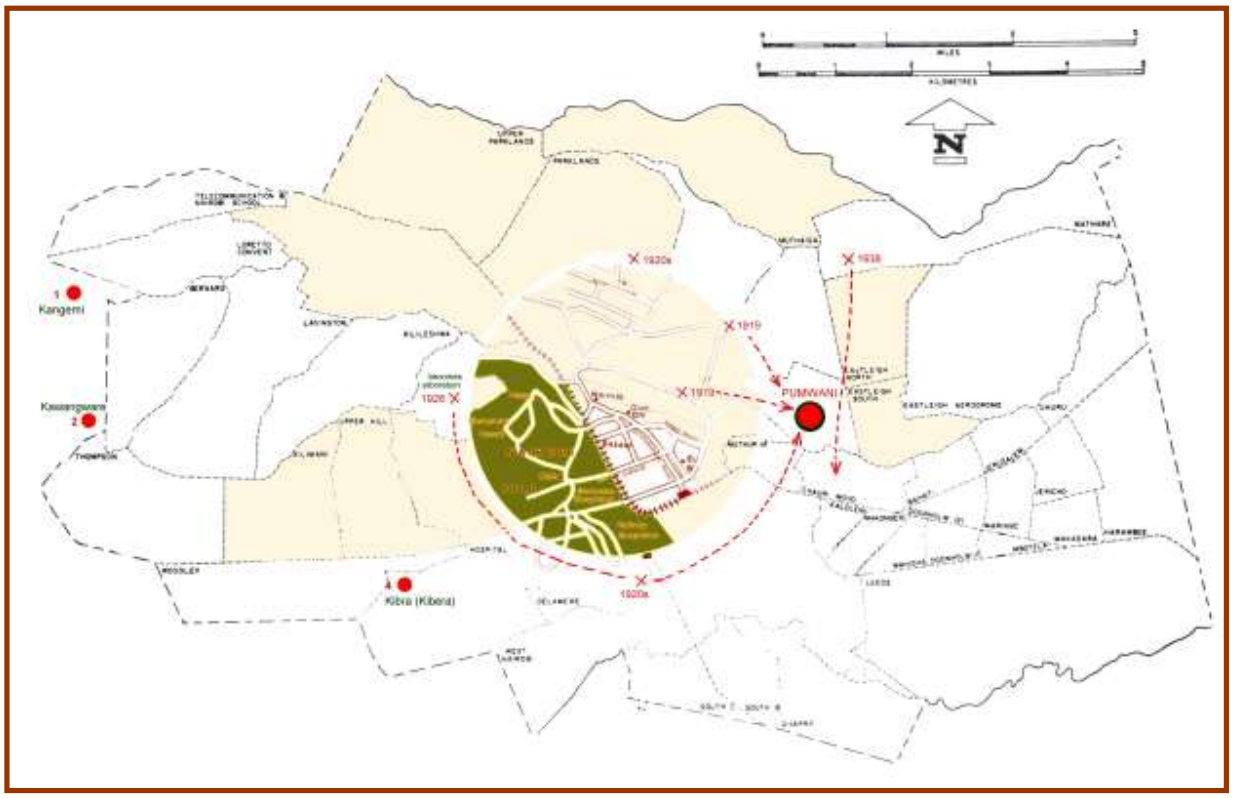



figure 1.3.7 Pumwani: the Native Location

figure 1.3.7 imposition of native SPACE –PUMWANI –Eastlands

Maskini demolished in 1919

Mombasa demolished in 1919

Kileleshwa demolished in 1926

Pangani demolished in 1938

European immigrants, not content with the portion they had claimed, were instead nervous about the surrounding settlements (that probably pre-dated them). They labelled them 'unhealthy' and more to the point 'unregulated'. (read *not sufficiently under British authority* for unregulated)

Law and order, the tool for social control, established a regulated African Location —not as PLACE with housing, but as mere resettlement space, a site-and service scheme albeit with a paucity of services.

Native, as opposed to foreign, belongs to or inheres "naturally". It has previous and deeper claim to particular place. To the natives it was already place not just mere space. To the foreigner it was mere space and he was at pains to claim it as place-of-belonging. Inconvenient settlements (read place) were those settlements too close to the newly claimed space –newly claimed by the immigrants.

A 'need' to move these established native places was concocted: to enable the immigrants nurture place-of-belonging. 'Law and order' was irked by unregulated, filthy and unhealthy native villages. What had been, to the immigrant, 'vacant space' was now condemned as native-place –in itself an admission that native Nairobi had its own living culture! That it had PLACE status. The previous argument used by the immigrants was that enkare-nyrobi was vacant, an uninhabited space –the proverbial no man's land!

figure 1.3.7 on page 20 The Regulated native Location 1920s

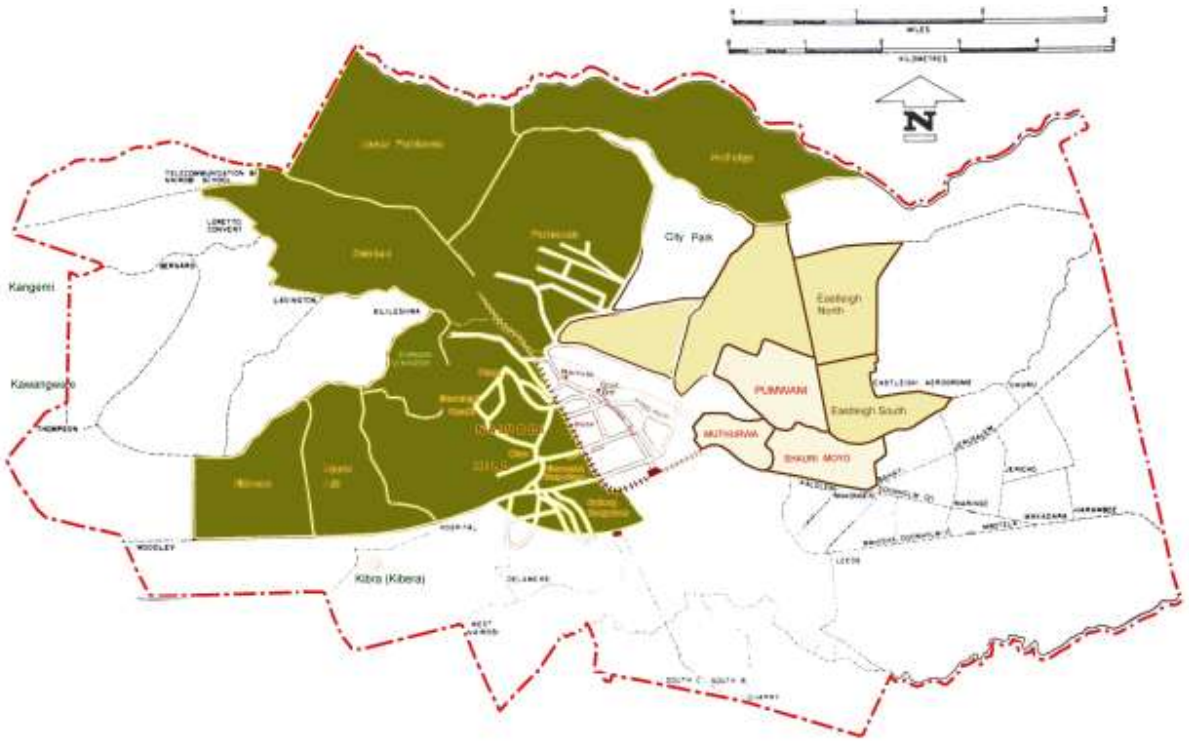
In creating a 'regulated' native location, village one and two, Kangemi and Kawangware, were considered too far from the Hill district to bother the European immigrants. But village three, Kileleshwa, was embarrassingly close to Government House. In 1926 its inhabitants were forcibly shifted into Pumwani and the site became an arboretum.

Village four, Kibera, could not be wished away. Its inhabitants, retired Nubian Kings-African-Rifles (KAR) employees, had helped the British Crown in its punitive wars when acquiring the East Africa Protectorate. Their pension was understood to be settlement upon the Kibera village. The Hill District had to ignore this village that had served well in His Majesty's military.

Mombasa, Maskini, Kaburini and any other 'unregulated' native settlement, too close to the Hill District, were razed to the ground and the villagers sent to Pumwani; there to construct new houses as they were able to. Pumwani was actually a re-settlement area.

Pangani, fairly far removed from the Hill District, was where dissenting natives, those who felt turned out of their homes, would hold meetings. The first of Harry Thuku's political meetings took place in Pangani[20]. But by 1938, Pangani, like other native villages was no more. Its people were sent to an area immediately south of Pumwani: Shauri Moyo. And between Pumwani, Shauri Moyo and Kariokor (a Kikuyu corruption of carrier corps) the collective tag 'the Regulated Native Location' was coined. Nairobi's 1920 boundary was effected by relocating natives to this location.

[20] Provoked by European action, Africans formed two political bodies in 1920 and 1921. One was the Kikuyu Association and the other the Young Kikuyu Association. The first was concerned with the defence of Kikuyu lands while the second also included labour grievances. Harry Thuku was the secretary of the Young Kikuyu Association.




NAIROBI IN 1909
From Director of Surveys, map
GSGS no. 2527 printed 1910
superimposed on a 1963 map outline by author
municipal boundary
'restricted' European area
'unrestricted' Asian area
'regulated' native location
Central Business District (CBD)

figure 1.3.8 Municipal Boundary -1927

Indigenous Space becomes crown property (But not yet Crown PLACE)

In 1920, British East Africa Protectorate became 'Kenya Crown Colony'. Nairobi became an incorporated municipality. Henceforth those with no freehold tenure of their land become 'tenants-at-will' of the British Crown –legally.

Native space (or place?) becomes crown property, to be nurtured and imbued with Crown culture. From East Africa Protectorate (EAP), the space is transformed by imperial 'law and order' into Kenya Crown Colony. In the 20th year of the last century –the 20th century.

The Feetham Commission on Local Government established, in 1926, the basis for new municipality legislation. Justice Feetham also recommended the extension of the municipal boundary, bringing several areas of European settlement, including the wealthy suburb of Muthaiga, within the council's authority. The effect, over the 1920s, was to greatly increase the revenues going to the municipality.

figure 1.3.8 on page 23 The Municipal Boundary 1927

Although the town council had been promoted to a municipal council, its funds had not witnessed a similar promotion. Finances were tight so Feetham suggested incorporating four wealthy private townships. These four, together with the Hill district, the regulated Native location and the Asian CBD with its eastwards spill-over, made up the municipal area. And this (1927) boundary was to remain unchanged until 1963.

Within the municipal boundary spatial segregation resonated with racial segregation. There was the 'restricted' European area, the 'unrestricted' Asian area and the 'regulated' native location. These latter had to possess and carry a pass (kipande) to explain their presence in the municipality since the town was both *de iure* and *de facto* a non-native area.

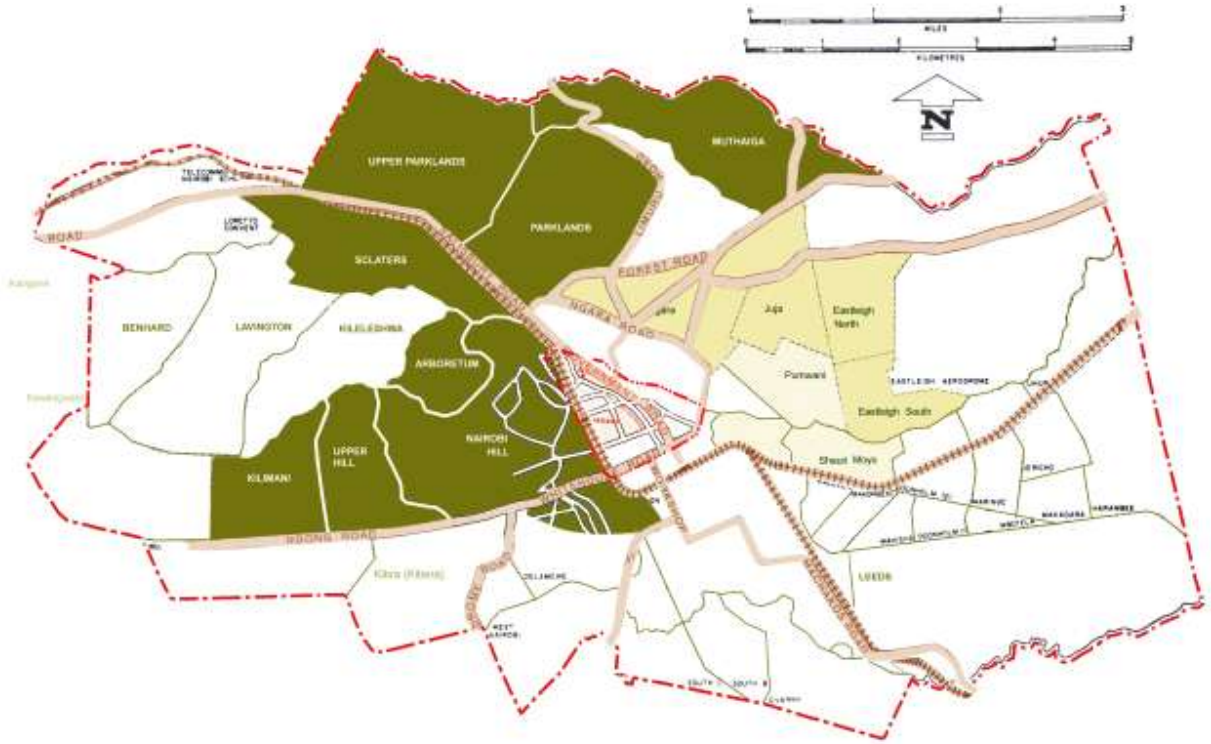



figure 1.3.9 CBD: the core of Nairobi

figure 1.3.9 Map highlighting CBD

The roads emanate from the centre. The point of their origin is the area under study. It is the show-piece of Nairobi. It was landscaped in 1950 to usher in city status for Nairobi. This space represents the successful claiming, not only of Nairobi, but of Kenya as well. It has been selected, for study, as the pointer to collective identity.

I have therefore selected CBD as the area with a clue to Nairobi's identity.

## 1.4 the site: nairobi's town plans

The buildings to be analysed are sited in Nairobi's historic space –the CBD. (see figure 2.4.2 on page 37) The following is a brief history of this site.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans were in the process of fortifying colonial rule in Eastern Africa partly by founding strategically located urban centres. Nairobi is one such centre. The construction of the Uganda Railway determined its development and it expanded swiftly into a hub of economic and administrative activity. Nairobi's subsequent growth can be recounted following its official town plans which comprise the 1899, 1927, 1948 and 1973 urban development plans.

The first town plan –the 1899 one– was drawn up by the railway authorities who established Nairobi as their administrative centre. In 1905 civil government moved into the township and declared it the capital of British East Africa Protectorate (the name designating Kenya at the time). The town acted as the British base for the campaign against the Germans in Tanganyika during World War I. And with this, the first phase of colonial Nairobi comes to a close.

In 1920, Kenya made the transition from *protectorate* status to *crown colony*, which action resulted in some amount of power, regarding local matters, being transferred to Nairobi (from centralised London). Thus the European settler community gained near-complete control over Nairobi Township. Erica Mann and others[21] claim that the interwar years (between WWI and WWII) gave Nairobi its mature urban look. The structures responsible for this look were public buildings, schools, hotels, office and business blocks.

The 1927 town plan was directed toward making Nairobi a focal point of up-country[22] settler service and export centre for agricultural produce. But World War II upset this equilibrium. For Britain, this war signified the onset of decline when the empire began to exit the world centre-stage, leaving it to North Americans.

[21] Barnow, Emig and Ismail, *Notes on the Urban Planning of Nairobi*, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen 1980. Hirst, T. and Lamba, D. *The Struggle for Nairobi*. Mazingira Institute, Nairobi, 1994. Smart, J. *A Jubilee History of Nairobi*. EAS: Nairobi, 1950.

[22] These include areas like Njoro, Nakuru, Molo, Naivasha in short the rich agricultural lands that comprised the white highlands.

So while imperial possessions got ready to decolonise, Britain sought to consolidate its waning political rule by enhancing its economic power. Nairobi was one of the stations where this 'political-economic' shift was to be realised.

Amidst this political climate, the 1948 master plan was introduced. Kenya's colonial government asked L. W. Thornton White to forward proposals for Nairobi's development as a colonial capital. This master plan was geared toward a *functional*[23] layout that facilitated modern industry; effective infrastructure for private capital. Public investment was therefore directed into infrastructure development and much needed housing for the labour force or *factory hands* that made up the third component of industrial capitalism.[24] The town also housed the regional[25] head offices in the colonial government, service business and communication systems making it a focal point for Kenya and the entire East African region.

This plan's functionalist approach created the Eastlands[26] housing for wage labourers. And the project's features –poor housing with little access to public parks and indifferent public transport– are blamed on the functional segregation which echoed the social/racial segregation since the plan advocated (and realised):

> [the] laying out of certain locations for natives –as deemed desirable, where the municipality was to erect suitable buildings thereon for natives to occupy and compel all natives residing in the municipality to reside within such locations.[27]

Among other factors, deprivation of PLACE (land) through segregation and the authorities' repressive attitude fomented the mau mau uprising which eventually led to indigenous political freedom in 1963.

During the independence upheaval (between 1952 and c. 1965) there was a resultant economic

[23] Functionalism is an architectural -planning concept which was in vogue just after WWII. Efficient functioning was its overall goal while its basic principle was the use of industrial building materials –concrete, steel and glass– with the aim of freeing architecture from the encumbrances of local traditions and history in order to cater for 'universal' man.

[24] From this point in time the colonial government 'invited' indigenous Africans to reside in Nairobi but in circumscribed areas –east of the central public space or Eastlands.

[25] The region of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar considered as falling under the direct influence of Imperial Britain.

[26] See map 2.4.1 on page 36

[27] Thornton White, L.W., Silberman, L. and Anderson, P.R. *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital. A Report Prepared for the Municipal Council of Nairobi*, H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1948, p. 35.

stagnation in industrial and commercial investments. However, with the granting of city status by royal charter, Nairobi witnessed a phenomenal transformation in its physical form. According to one of its town planners, "it completely overcame the handicap of its original siting and full advantage was taken of the difference in the levels of its various zones, its landscape, views and climate."[28]

This phase ends with the city's transformation from colonial to national capital. It ushers in the period of independent Kenya's first regime. *Uhuru* (freedom) in all its exuberance brought an increase in tempo and scale to construction activities. Tall buildings began to appear in Nairobi's city centre.[29]

Unlike earlier plans, the 1973 Metropolitan Growth Strategy for Nairobi was comprehensive rather than piecemeal. The plan was an appeal for help, in form of loans and technical assistance, toward transforming Nairobi into a metropolis with a series of centres in its peri-urban neighbourhood. The aim was to make Nairobi a *linear city* based on the intensive use of a single line of communication.

The envisaged linear area was to start from Limuru (about 40 km to the west of the city) going all the way to Thika (another 40 km east). The Metropolitan Growth Strategy (the latest urban plan for Nairobi) is a sum of recommendations concerning urban functions –economic outlook, land use, transportation and housing.

[28] Author's conversation with Erica Mann, a Nairobi town planner, in October 2006.
[29] The first was the 19 storey Hilton Hotel in 1969, then the 26 storey Kenyatta International Conference Centre in 1973 followed by Co-operative House and others.

## 2.0 political identity in central space

Focusing on civic buildings, in Nairobi's central space, this study investigates the role played by the architecture of public buildings, and more particularly their façades, in constructing collective identity. It proceeds from the understanding that public buildings, are more than merely functional; they articulate social meaning and value, they provide the spatial foundation for *imagining*-and-*imaging* notions of identity. The study casts a quick glance into those beliefs and perceptions that convey a need for the tangible expression of affiliation to specific space, creating an illusion –for a community– of inalienable belonging.

Although the confine discussed is fairly modest –the site being only about 2.5 $km^2$ – its social-political associations are significant because Nairobi's (and Kenya's) collective identity is anchored upon them. These provide an opportunity to deconstruct public space into the deliberate play of visual elements that have been employed to articulate society's expectations in regard to *place* —the metaphorical moulding of ubiquity into specific *place*-of-belonging. Interesting questions are raised about the notion of constructing, both literally and metaphorically, *imagined* social collectives and their distinctiveness. In the forging of collective identity, attention is drawn to visual experience's centrality in the urban setting.

Central space, the foremost icon of a community, is of symbolic and political import, especially in its buildings and their inherent architectural language. In colonial days, Nairobi's urban morphology emphasised spatial segregation based on race and economic class, employing central space as both the dividing block and the tool for wielding supremacy (see map 2.3.1 on page 36) Colonial public space excluded indigenous African populations and like Mumbai, Lagos, Johannesburg, Casablanca, *inter alia*, Nairobi was always a contested entity from the time of its origin.

And it is upon these legacies of exclusive, contested, colonial space that a countering inclusive, nationalist, post colonial Nairobi was to be nurtured. A nuanced re-articulation, on the very same site; a re-articulation of the existing social-historical references, those that anoint ubiquity with a current sense of authenticity, continue to be forged and negotiated to

this day. It is within these ongoing complexities and contradictions, that the deconstruction of collective identity is to be carried out; the reshaping of the iconic landscape in conformity with contemporaneous political voices.

Showcase buildings in Nairobi's SPACE engage, through their architectural vocabulary and style, various social-political histories and memories providing a forum for examining the construction, negotiation and re-negotiation of collective identity.

## 2.1 manifestation of political identity: an æsthetic critique

What is Nairobi? How and under what guise, discern its distinctiveness? In which tongue are its unique characteristics inscribed into space? And is space identical to place? Which, between these two, is elemental to a city's identity?

While **SPACE** is envisaged as the ubiquitous context –the whereness of a reality, a three-pronged attribute makes up **PLACE:** unique locale, its physicality, its assigned meaning and value. And it is this assigned meaning that transforms undifferentiated SPACE into **PLACE**-of-belonging. This study therefore, examines –in Nairobi's built environment– the prevalent style and its possible import. It endeavours to ascertain, through this style, whose PLACE-of-belonging the city really is; which community has ***em***placed its culture to a degree of mutual reciprocity.

Because the visual world offers distinctive and unique possibilities of human expression and because these are rooted in man's attempt to define himself, an exploration of the visual elements, apart from yielding the prevalent style,[30] manifests a significant aspect of Nairobi's collective identity.

Considerations of style, can capture the expression of a peoples' identity because this is society's chosen choreography. Nairobi's distinctive style is the object of study. It comprises the specific form of visibility manifested by those who purport to be 'Nairobians'.

[30] Style, a result of the creative process rather than a factor that determines it, compels a critic to reflect on its choice: why an artist chooses to express himself as he does –why a people choose to express themselves in a particular manner. Style is bound up with expression of identity.

One way of distilling style from a work of art[31] and relating it to collective identity is by carrying out an æsthetic critique. Aesthetics, a significant component of human culture, renders the story of a people in artistic language.[32]

In engaging Nairobi's identity, academicians have overlooked the visual exploration into its historic site. This study views, selects and compares the built form therein, with the aim of progressing from a formal analysis of the visual elements to a stylistic critique with its embedded social-political values, followed by a possible-cum-plausible positioning within the major art-history epochs and styles. The underlying assumption is that an analysis of perceivable visual elements will furnish, not only the prevailing style, but also insinuate its underpinning cultural inspirations.

## 2.2 definition of terms

### 2.2.1 place and space

Is Nairobi a space or a place and between these two which is essential to identity? Place and space can be confusing terms. **SPACE** is the *ubiquitous context*, the physical or metaphorical *whereness* of a reality. It can be conveyed in abstract terms –detached from material form and cultural interpretation. Hence geographic or cartographic metaphors, like boundary or territory, define conceptual or analytical SPACE. For instance, Nairobi is a total of 684 $km^2$.

**PLACE**, on the other hand, encompasses a threefold phenomenon:

- a *unique* spot in the universe or specific geographic location
- its material structure –its *physicality*– both natural and man-made
- the meaning and value assigned it by a people –how it is felt, perceived, understood, interpreted, narrated, imagined etc. [33]

**PLACE**-*of-belonging* evokes a relational quality; something belongs to or is associated with it. It is often reinforced by generations of established social hierarchies that include, though exceed, territoriality, economic productivity and political realisations. PLACE may be equated to cultural anchor, base or homeland, it may indicate a material culture, replete with

[31] In this study public buildings are considered as works of art.

[32] The work of a historian would be incomplete if he failed to give due attention to works of art both literary and figurative. Cf. Chenu, M. D., Taylor. J. and Little, L. K. *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*. Vol. 37. University of Toronto Press, 1997.

[33] Cf. Keith, M. and Pile, S. (eds) *Place and the Politics of Identity* Routledge, London, New York, 1993

memories, shrouded in legend and history and crafted-cum-claimed by a particular community. Is Nairobi anyone's PLACE-*of-belonging*? Is it permeated by a distinct culture; has its SPACE been nurtured, by any community, to the degree of mutual reciprocity? For it is only when imbued with human history that a spot in the universe becomes a PLACE; investment with meaning and value transforms undifferentiated SPACE into a **PLACE**-*of-belonging*.

Social constructs are not contrived out of spatial vacuums; society is woven into spatial references. It is anchored on either mediate or immediate space. To constitute PLACE, to establish association or affiliation, **SPACE** is indispensable. A living culture is nurtured and developed with reference to specific *whereness*. Consequently, without being identical, SPACE and PLACE, complement each other; they are different facets of the same phenomenon.

For the sake of clarity, **PLACE-***status,* in this argument, will denote a durable bond between community and ubiquity; a resilient association between geographic circumscription and the invested meaning. Contrariwise, a casual, slapdash bond, a superficial association, between a people and space, will be equated to the more token ***SPACE-****status* –ubiquity that is yet to gel with the community that claims it.

### 2.2.2 (in)significant boundaries

In searching Nairobi's identity, two tools for transforming SPACE into PLACE are considered:

- the drawing up of boundaries to delimit a 'section' of space
- the subsequent expression –of who a people are– through the buildings they erect in this 'section of space'

Boundaries signify space-community relationships and are a *type* of discourse. (In)significant boundaries (depending on ones vantage point) are drawn to mark out space for *em*placing identity. From its foundation in 1899, Nairobi has had an external boundary which has since been variously re-drawn: in 1900, 1920, 1927 and 1963. Internal borders (within the perimeter boundary) also exist, those that partition the city into zones and districts. For this study, I have divided the entire city into three districts: the *historic* central area or CBD, Eastlands and Westlands. (see figure 2.3.1 on page 36)

### 2.2.3 (the language of boundaries

Communities (common-unions) are established within spatial contexts. Spatial contexts are marked out by boundaries. Boundaries, in signifying a relationship between a people and specific *whereness,* also broadcast this fact to *others,* and may be 'read' in diverse ways: as indicators of private property, as function determiners like setting aside an area for industry or social recreation, or as notification of a children's playground etc. What all these imply, without exception, is the existence of a discourse. Their commonality is the implied 'speech', the enunciated position, the spelt out *dictum.* Boundaries are a medium of communication and their message is addressed to *another* –a different one from the boundary-delineator.

Drawing up a boundary is akin to salutation; it initiates a conversation. Now, true conversation happens only when entities are comparable. Space and community are not comparable therefore dialogue between them is not possible. Being unmatched, they cannot converse; being unmatched, they can only be related. Messages stemming from boundaries are not dialogues between space and people. They are dialogues between peoples, they are inter-communal discourses.

If a boundary did not seek an*other*'s attention, what would be the rationale behind it? If there was no *other* (other person or community) to be addressed, what purpose would it accomplish? Remove the *other* and the boundary becomes self defeating; it becomes a sign empty of meaning –a purposeless entity! To imagine that a boundary is a monologue, that it 'speaks' to the same person who draws it up, would be an argument extravagant indeed!

Boundaries are a claim to space. They cordon off a section of space wherein a people 'enunciate' who-they-are by unfolding their unique identity. This message is addressed to other peoples, other communities or other individual persons.

### 2.2.4 built environment as visual image

It is within a city's boundary that an image, signifying the *common-union* is constructed –the civic artforms. This image is often, though not exclusively, fashioned by the city administrators. And while it vies in eloquence with other cultural forms, it discloses a

people's distinctiveness in a manner most palpable. It formulates a perceivable collective identity, while 'speaking' (like other arts) in a spiritual, hence universal language. A civic image is integral to the æsthetic, artistic and historical patrimony of a community and it conveys *who-a-people-are* in a manner that words i.e. manifestos, historical narratives, charters, codes and constitutions, never could.

Image is one more means for people to commune. And when stripped of its communicative function, it ceases to have a rationale. Built form (this image) surpasses the functions of shelter and infrastructure. As a discourse it is analogous to the written or spoken word. Were there no message embedded in it, people would build in similar fashion producing a uniform, undifferentiated style that would disguise rather than reveal identity. However, multiple styles are exhibited; each culture with its distinctive style, its unique brand-style for *em*placing itself into space. A city's composite image can be seen as that community's *writing upon space*. And the image's style, somewhat analogous to handwriting, can be considered a distinguishing mark of their identity.

While Nairobi is the 'site' of this critique or the *locus* of study, its civic buildings and the style they bear is the object of study.

### 2.2.5 other technical terms

ÆSTHETIC: pertaining to the beautiful, as opposed to the useful, scientific or emotional. An æsthetic response is an appreciation of such beauty.

ÆSTHETE: one who pursues and is devoted to the beautiful in art, music and literature.

BYZANTINE STYLE: in painting, decoration and architecture, a style blending Greco-Roman and oriental components into a highly stylised art form; associated with the culture of the Eastern Roman Empire from about 500 until 1453 AD.

CAMPANILLE: From Latin "campana", bell; a bell tower especially one near but not attached to a church.

CLASSICISM: a set of æsthetic principles found in Greek and Roman art and literature

emphasizing the search for perfection or ideal forms.

COLOUR: use of hues found in nature to enhance or distort the sense of reality in a visual image.

CONTENT: the message conveyed by a work of art –its subject matter and whatever the artist hopes to convey by that subject.

CONVENTION: an agreed upon practice, device, technique or form.

CURVILINEAR: use of curved lines in a given art form.

DESIGN: the planned organisation of lines, shape and masses, colour, textures, and space in a work of art.

FORM: the appearance of a work of art –its materials, style and design.
If a good idea were all it took to be a famous artist, we all would be famous. The world is full of people who are carrying around in their heads great ideas for novels, symphonies and paintings. What is lacking is form. Unfortunately for the dreamers, form is essential to any work of art.

ICONOGRAPHY: loosely, the 'story' depicted in a work of art as well as the symbolism and conventions attached to the images used by a particular culture or sub-culture.

MINARET**:** in Islamic architecture, a tall, slender tower with a pointed top, from which daily calls to prayer are delivered.

RECTILINEAR: use of straight lines in a given art form

STYLE: the combination of distinctive elements of creative execution and expression, in terms of both form and content.

ZIGGURAT**:** a Mesopotamian stepped pyramid, usually built with external staircases and a shrine at the top.

## 2.3 maps of area of study

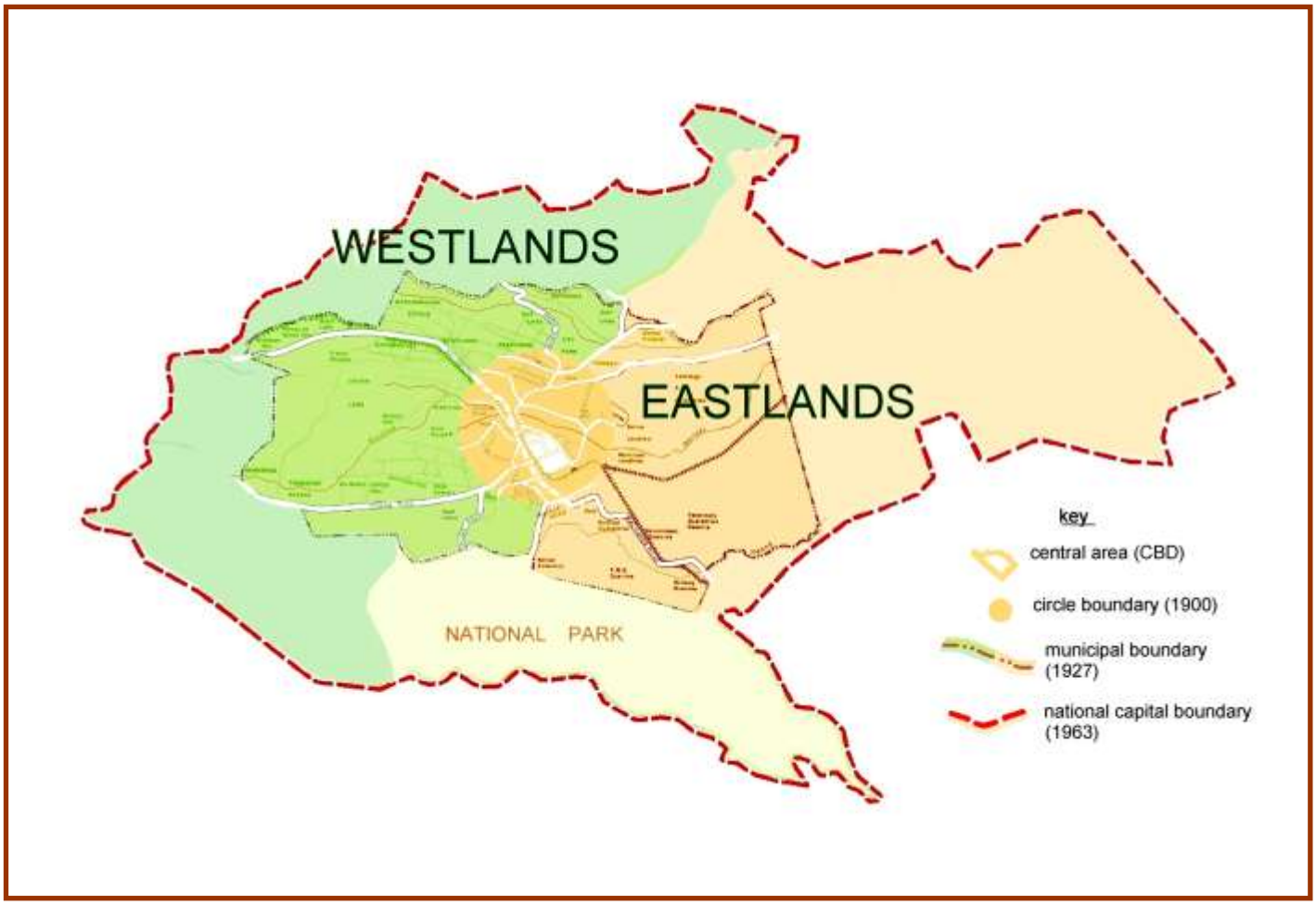



figure 2.3.1 sketch of Nairobi showing the various boundaries
source: compiled by author from maps by Moss, R.W. and the Surveys of Kenya

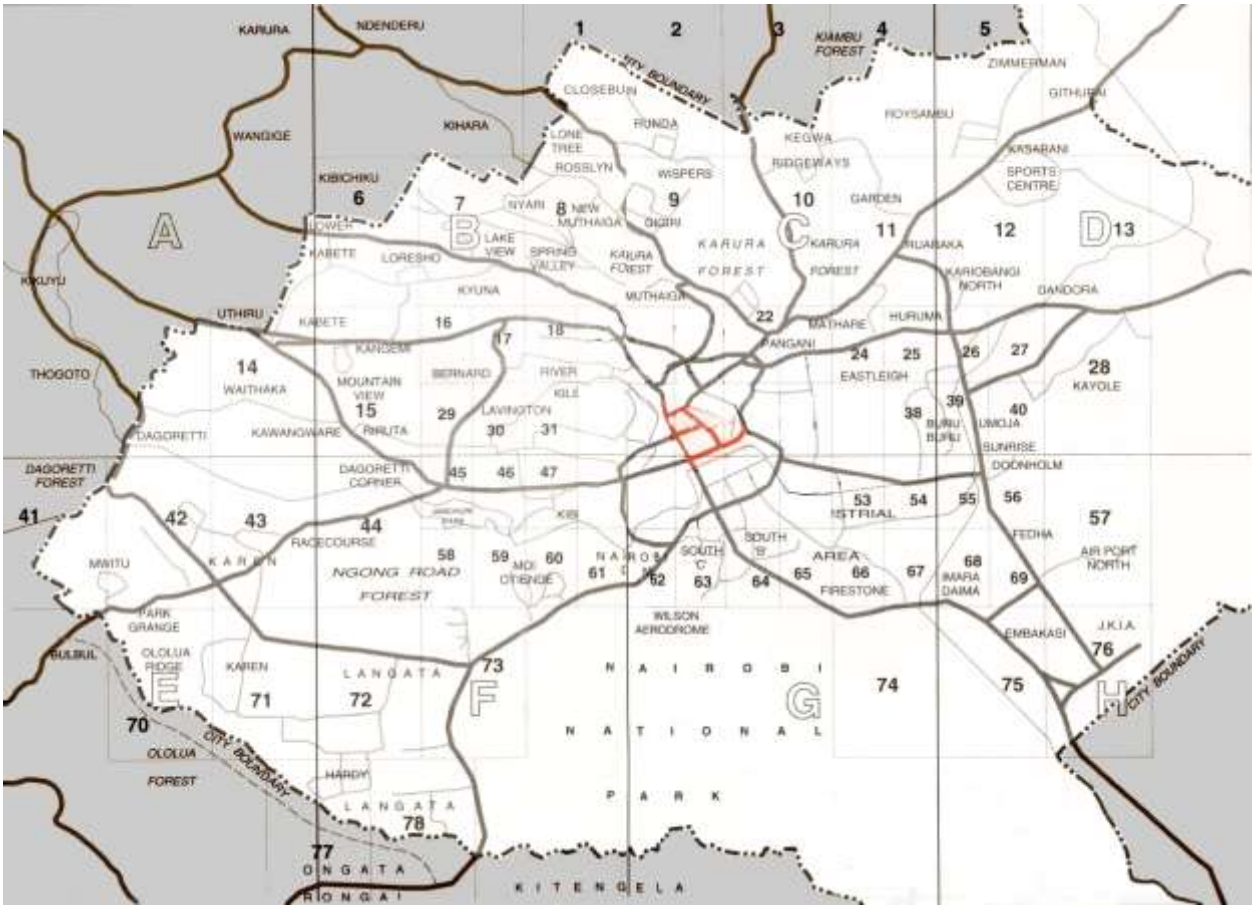



figure 2.3.2 map of Nairobi. The area of study, *central* or *historic* space (CBD) is marked red (by author)
source: Moss, R.W. Nairobi A to Z Guide, Kenway Publications, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam, 1981

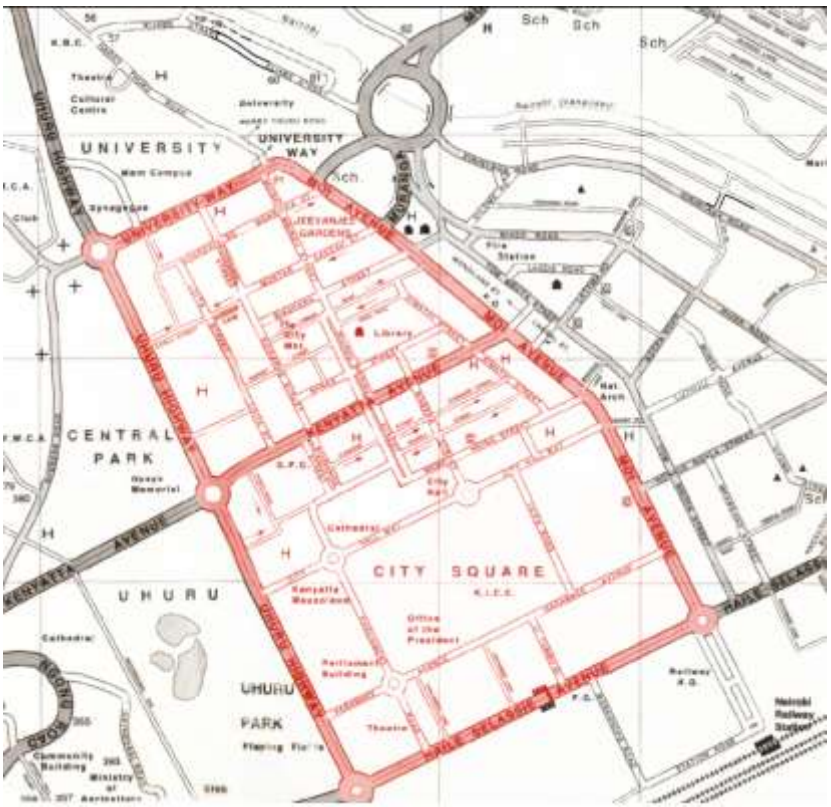





figure 2.3.3 above and

figure 2.3.4 left

map of Nairobi.
inset: *central* or *historic* space (CBD)

To the west of Moi Avenue is the up market CBD. Built form analysed in this study is sited in this section.

East of Moi Avenue was the Asian quarter, oriental CBD.

source: from aerial photo of Nairobi, 2007. Source: Regional Centre for Mapping Resource & Development (RCRMD)




figure 2.3.5 **Location of the buildings critiqued in this study** (compiled by author)

1. Railway Station
2. Railway Headquarters
3. Times Tower
4. KICC
5. Law Courts
6. City Hall
7. Parliament Buildings
8. Provincial Commissioner's office (P.C.'s) office & Nyayo Hse
9. Memorial Hall (now National Bank of India)
10. Jamia Mosque (Sunni)
11. Ainsworth's office (now Moi Avenue School)
12. Bohra Mosque
13. Shree Santan Dharam Sarba Temple

## 2.4 objectives of the study

To gain better knowledge of ones immediate environment is enriching; it is pleasurable and leads to a more involved interaction with ones environment –in this case with ones urban environment. This discourse focuses on an artistic hermeneutic of public buildings. Given that it is neither fruitful nor necessary to study all the public buildings in the city, the following objectives have been designed in order to pin point the exact data and indicate how this will be studied. The objectives include:

- To identify public buildings used for political administration and sited in the CBD
- To critique their architectural style and establish the style's relation (if any) to the governing body –the patron of the built structure
- To pick out the prevalent stylistic elements employed by successive governance
- And, according to the prevalent stylistic elements employed, draw up an æsthetic interpretation also taking into account the thoroughfares around these buildings
- To assemble a sequence of pictorial and graphical images, accompanied by a running commentary, in text *form*at, that both captures and communicates the research's findings

## 2.5 scope and limitations

The study centres on the physical structure of Nairobi's city centre. Social, political and economic activities which vivify every city will be discussed according to what light they shed on understanding the built form.

The study commences at the time of permanent human settlement in Nairobi —1899. It traces the eras of the city under successive political authority. Only the sovereign political authority is considered. The study concludes with the putting up of the last government monument/building in city centre —the Times Tower. The year was 1997/8. This is also the date when the 25 year plan of Nairobi's Metropolitan Growth Strategy came to an end. The Growth Strategy was initiated in 1973 and 25 years later, brings us to 1998.

This is not a study of cities in the universal sense rather an analysis of one city –Nairobi. It is not an abstract study of the construct *city*, it is an appreciation of a singular entity making it an empirical research about a particular circumscription. It is further narrowed down to the city's central area which is approximately 2.5 $km^2$. City centre or the Central Business District (CBD) has been selected because it is the significant space for articulating the governance of the city and the country.

Not every aspect of Nairobi's built form is examined. The architecture of the buildings related to official governance and the nomenclature of streets around them forms the focus. This approach glosses over many public buildings of note e.g. the oriental temples and mosques. It casts a very cursory glance over these and over dwelling structures which are considered to be the domain of the ruled and are therefore implicitly the habitat of the governed as opposed to the governor.

Although the study examines the formal city it is confined to the city centre and thus leaves out the western residential suburbs.

Because visual images are an appropriate medium for *re*-presenting space, this study is presented as a 'picture-story' inverting the role of text with that of visual aids. Some consider visual communication as less scholarly than text communication. Besides, a picture-story presumes a certain level of visual literacy on the part of its 'reader' while the fact is,

that in the world of academics, visual literacy has been developed to a capacity that is inferior to that of word literacy. Yet never before has culture relied on visual images as it does today. For instance, the mass media, a significant factor in present day culture, is anchored on the power of the visual image.

## 3.0 justification

### 3.0.1 space: the substantial context

Why study modelled space? Space is the necessary context from which material conditions and human response weave the story of existence. Space is the substantial context for every human action. Take away Nairobi-space and you withdraw its existence. Take away Nairobi-space and its expression, its attitude with all its artefacts wither into nothingness. Take away this space and the very image evaporates. Nairobi without its spatial context is an utopia clean of experience.

Space forms the substantial or necessary context from which a culture thrives. And one way to develop an understanding and enthusiasm for culture –for the humanities– is to place cultural achievements within their spatial-historical context. One is then better armed to claim ones cultural heritage.

Nairobi is our (Kenyan) cultural heritage and there are various ways of appreciating it. Discerning, analysing and proposing solutions to its problems, is one such approach. UN Habitat has used it to address housing issues. Hirst and Lamba[34] have similarly raised its environmental concerns while Claire Robertson[35] has drawn attention to its women entrepreneurs.

An *aspatial* view of Nairobi, with its physical context considered as either a burden to be overcome or simply irrelevant, is an abstract and idealised way of engaging its problems. Little knowledge of, or even concern about, the *spatial background* of the artistic and literary monuments, the political, economic and social milestones of Nairobi, diminishes ones ability to appreciate its full vitality and resonance. Besides, a present day propensity to, and involvement in the international popular culture, coupled with the internet which operates within virtual space, does little to promote a profound appreciation of one's immediate physical environment.

[34] Cf. Hirst, T. and Lamba, D. *The Struggle for Nairobi*. Mazingira Institute, Nairobi, 1994.
[35] Robertson, C. *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, men and trade in the Nairobi area*, 1890-1990. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

This substantial context, or material space seen through the lens of time-progression, is the basic framework for evaluating, clarifying and putting into better perspective the historical, political, economic and social developments; the cultural expression both in its attitude and idea–philosophy, religion, science; the cultural artefacts–art, music, drama, literature and film, of any society. This substantial backbone, *space-through-time*, provides an opportunity to link cultural expression with historical conditions. It is a marriage of history with literature and the arts, set in actual space. This makes it possible to analyse cultural expression and artefact within the relevant historical framework.

### 3.0.2 tenants or landlords of city centre?

Another reason for examining this spatial context is that ones relationship to space makes him either a landlord or a tenant: a landlord enjoys right of ownership; a tenant is but a temporary paying guest. Odhiambo and Wanyande have illustrated how poignant space is in Kenyan history and politics. Their term of preference is *land* rather than *space*, though the reality signified is identical. They have amply demonstrated that politics revolved around land. They point out that:

> The colonial towns were essentially non-African … where the Europeans and Asians lived in planned neighbourhoods … Africans on the edges…[36]

This spatial arrangement reflected the status quo regarding proximity to political power and influence. Since:

> [the] main administrative bomas housed the offices and residences of the colonial officers, who lived in the milimani areas, the wooded and planned areas… Most of the bomas also had a bazaar, a central shopping centre normally run by Indians, Goans and Arabs. The towns were segregated on a racial basis …[37]

And just as 'the towns were segregated on a racial basis', political power was measured out in similar vein. Spatial arrangement reflected the political position of each race and the built-*type* further articulated it:

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[36] Atieno Odhiambo, E. S. & Wanyande P. *History and Government of Kenya*. Longman Kenya Ltd. Nairobi, 1989, p. 35.
[37] Ibid.

> In terms of physical structure, there evolved in many urban areas majengo type of houses. These were residential-cum-commercial buildings. There also evolved, from the very beginnings, slums in many of the urban centres. [38]

The structure of built environment reflected racial segregation and/or social status. Europeans belonged to the wooded milimani (higher altitude), Asians to the residential-cum-commercial bazaar, and Africans to the slums. Odhiambo and Wanyande do not supply a house-*type* for the milimani area but a majengo-*type*[39] was cited for the bazaar while the slums are ordinarily understood to consist of impermanent shanties. This can be tabulated thus:

| racial group | spatial location | dwelling-type |
|---|---|---|
| European | high ground - milimani | bungalow |
| Asian | middle ground - bazaar | majengo |
| African | town periphery | slums |

Since colonial law conceptualised space as a tool for political dominance the complete dispossession of land/space was used to articulate imperial rule. To occupy space that is owned by another is truly to be a tenant; it is a way of negating (the tenant's) identity making it dependent on his landlord. The Kenyan –the tenant-at-will– or unwilling, is defined in relation to his landlord, the coloniser. Historiography on Kenya includes copious material on the response to colonial aggression. Kenyan identity appears to have been sought against the backdrop of colonisation.

And in so doing the *native quarter*, unlike the colonial *city*, has received the lion share of Nairobi's historical research. By relegating the indigenous Kenyan to the native quarter, imperial rule stripped off him 'landlord status' as regards the colonial *city*. It is interesting to establish what effort has been made to re-possess this space, this *city proper*, that is today's city centre. It is interesting to establish what relationship indigenous Kenyans enjoy with the central-most space in Nairobi. This study, while venturing into spatial-Nairobi, does not focus

[38] Ibid.
[39] Majengo refers to square Swahili-type dwelling structure that can house more than one family and even accommodate tenants.

on its *native quarter* but its public, front-parlour milieu, the former colonial city, the city proper. And it is hopefully a contribution to the current discourse on urban identity both in colonial and post-colonial Africa.

### 3.0.3 visual learning at the service of history

Yet another justification is to proffer the services of visual learning to historical research. To some, perhaps a visual discourse is not the superlative medium for academics and there are seemingly unanswered questions about its descriptive and analytical capabilities. Consequently, in academic circles, visual-literacy skills tend to be either overlooked or cultivated to a level far inferior to that of word-literacy.

Yet visual discourse is a useful tool for investigating and *re*-presenting built form (and space in general). The present study, presented as a visual critique, presumes –of its 'reader'– a certain level of visual literacy coupled with a grasp of iconographical knowledge which, when wanting, may make the novice declare, 'on their own buildings cannot *say* much, they are just brick and mortar' perhaps not unlike books would appear to a text-novice to whom they cannot 'say' much, they are just ink on paper.

Since visual discourse is somewhat foreign to the prevailing academic habit it becomes expedient to point out that the difference between picture-story and text-story is more profound than superficial; it is a difference in concept. Images, in visual discourses, are more than mere aids. They are used to extend, clarify, complement or altogether take over the place of words. Images assume the dominant role and they are meant to be 'read' –looked at critically, appreciated, analysed and thought about.

This study offers a demonstration of some of the overlooked opportunities (in academics) that exist for learning about people and the world. It is designed to capture historical fact through æsthetic lenses and presented as a picture book.

The project is an attempt to place visual learning at the service of history in recognition of the fact that visual-art-discourse can be a rich yet untapped resource for academic inquiry. The audacious approach aims at enriching our culture of knowledge and demonstrating that academicians can be intelligent viewers, perceptive critics and sensitive interpreters of visual data; that an æsthetic education need not be a kind of optional extra. It can be more than a trivial embellishment, it can be a central concern.

### 3.0.4 challenges of a visual discourse

Where is academic merit in a visual discourse? I am aware of some of the challenges involved in presenting a 'picture-book' for academic examination. The *form* (picture-book as a dissertation) and the content (an æsthetic critique) may be unfamiliar in some disciplines. Therefore, this 'novelty' may strike a peculiar note in those whose duty it is to award the work an academic rating.

The other aspect of this challenge is that the work might be judged exclusively using text-language parameters; the visually assembled critique might be 'read' solely as 'words about political identity' which is precisely what it is not. It is, instead, a *corpus* of pictorial images depicting buildings and physical space used by governance; a *corpus* of images which happens to be aided by words. The role of the supplied text is to aid the 'reader' in viewing and *re*-viewing these images.

Besides, presenting a visual-discourse may hint at a questioning of the status quo: of the assumption that text analysis is a condition *sine qua non* for academic merit. It may smack of a 'rebellious' querying: are text-language tools an intrinsic part of scholarship? And if part of these tools (hypotheses, descriptive analyses, qualitative and quantitative measures) be wanting, is academic achievement *ipso facto* wanting? Do text-language tools constitute the EXCLUSIVE avenue to academic achievement? Mine is not a 'rebellious' stance. I am simply working in the only way I know how.

I have undertaken this project in the conviction that a visual discourse enriches ones appreciation of human culture and the world; that visual learning can augment academic inquiry. And I present this to a forum of social scientists with this challenge looming before me: that although a picture-book is more creative than descriptive, more intuitive than analytical, it will probably be judged according to the rigours of a school of thought that considers historical study a science.[40] And the picture book may then be scrutinised for the consequent *scientific* tools like a critical text-analyses of previously written documents, hypothesis formulation and testing… among others. The image-discourse might be examined only as a text-discourse. It is in the face of these myriad challenges that I invite my viewer to a 'walk-and-talk' about the city, hoping that my 'reader' will enjoy the pictures and perhaps acquire some knowledge previously not in his possession.

## 3.1 literature review

### 3.1.1 introductory remarks

History not only has to investigate culture and life as a thing of the *past*, but also has to let it remain in the *past*. The one thing history cannot do is make those past events into something present today; that would be overstepping it bounds. It is for this reason that, in studying Nairobi's built environment, I feel the need to augment the historical approach. My research is not restricted to looking at the buildings as a work of the *past*; I also view them from the present. What do these buildings signify today and what do they say to current Nairobians?

[40] According to Duggan "The 'history as science' movement was largely founded by the great German historian Leopold von Ranke at the beginning of the 19th century. It was characterized by a rigorous scholarship and an adamantine attention to the *minutiæ* of textual, diplomatic, and philological detail. Its aim was to discover, sift, analyse and free from errors of faulty transmission the narratives and records of the past … [this is how a] new 'scientific history was born … much of the endeavour was documents oriented … influenced by the desire for a 'scientific history' controlled by methods of enquiry which could stand comparison with the techniques of experimental science, and which should be as reliable and as authoritative as that science." Duggan continues to discuss two more approaches or perceptions of the discipline of history: as true knowledge or philosophy and as real history. Cf. Duggan, A., 'Times Change' in *The Past and The Present*, *Problems of Understanding*, Grandpont Papers, Grandpont House, Oxford, 1993. p 57ff. I point this out because my approach is more akin to what Duggan has called 'real history', especially because Kenyan culture is more oral than literate. Besides, just how many documented narratives have we published about 20th century urban life in Eastern Africa or Africa? Cf. Burton A. 'Urbanism in Eastern Africa: An historical overview, c.1750-2000', in op. cit.

I have therefore added an æsthetic hermeneutic to the historical approach making the study an artistic appreciation of today's built environment –which was constructed in the *past*. For the artistic appreciation, I must rely on visual language since it is the *basic text* in the plastic arts. And compiling the visual narrative takes precedence over the reconstruction of yesteryear's society.

Therefore, if the research is considered solely as an historical study, there will be an apparent want of rigour in appraisal of text documents about cities in general and Nairobi in particular. If the research is considered as plain historical *re*construction of the past this literature review can only appear shallow. It may help to keep in mind that the primary focus is not the reconstruction of past society; the primary focus is the artistic appreciation of society's artefact. The æsthetic hermeneutic approach is prominent in this project.

Because a visual artefact is made out of non-text elements; because it is made primarily for 'seeing' rather than 'reading about', its appreciation and consumption does not necessitate text documents. The idea of *written* literature about works of *visual* art is often an illusion. A visual artefact, because of its very nature, does not lend itself easily to text documentation-cum-analysis. Consequently, historiography on visual (and auditive) arts is uncommon; what would feature as material for literature review, in other disciplines, is somewhat lacking because works of a visual nature do not mix well with text-historiography. As Chinigo points out,

> auditive and visual arts penetrate the intelligence and the sensitiveness of the spectator or listener to depths which the written or spoken word with its insufficiently coloured analytical precision could never reach … art [possesses] an expressive value, without which it ceases to be true art. [If] a work of art is not sufficient of itself to express the thought, to disclose the sentiment, to reveal the soul of its author … when a work of art needs to be explained verbally [or in written language], it loses its peculiar value and only serves … as a subtle and empty game.[41]

If public buildings in Nairobi, 'on their own … cannot 'say' much, [if] they are just brick and mortar', then indeed, they do not deserve the name *work of art* which position would render my critique not only groundless, but hollow and insincere.

[41] Cf. Chinigo, M. (ed) *The Teachings of Pope Pius XII* Methuen and Company Ltd. London, 1958

If I consider Nairobi's built form (or other cities' built form) as *genuine* works of art, it would be self defeating and contradictory to search for *written* accounts on them. A work of art, or visual *re*presentation of the same, is intrinsically at odds with *written* historiography. What legitimate literature can supply to a visual artefact is the cultural context from which the artefact emerged.[42] Because this project is an æsthetic critique, social, political and economic activities –which can and are *re*-presented in written documents– will only be discussed according to what light they shed on the æsthetic quality of the artefact.

And what is æsthetics? It may be defined as a study pertaining to the beautiful, as opposed to the useful, scientific or emotional. An æsthetic response is an appreciation of such beauty. Æsthetics has, with time, developed into a philosophy of the fine arts which has the duty of seeking the deepest grounds of the pleasure derived from art. Art history, on the other hand, is a part of æsthetics and a relatively new academic enterprise, beginning as late as the nineteenth century.[43]

Unlike analyses of historical trends in, for example, politics, literature and the sciences which benefit from copious, cumulative and well sifted documented literature, art historians rely on formal and iconographical analyses together with visual *re*-presentations of artefacts as a spring board for discussion and study.

The fact is, there is a dearth of written documents on cities as *art forms* or on the *artefact* 'city'. The debate on textual-historiography versus visual-iconography has all the weight accumulated on the iconographic side. The assumption that 'text tells us more, and more accurately' is not always true when applied to visual arts, for instance, to still and motion picture.

Then, in the absence of written documents what does the æsthete rely on for *searching* and *re-searching*? "Without dispensing with an insight into the technique of artistic production; without dispensing with the knowledge of varied manifestations of beauty in nature and in life; even without dispensing with an actual exercise of one kind of art or another, the art historian

[42] I have tackled this in the section on conceptual framework page 60 of this manuscript.
[43] Cf. A brief Description of Art History, Encarta Encyclopedia, online version.

must, however, rely chiefly on a quick perceptive faculty, a systematizing talent and an intelligent appreciation."[44]

That said however, visual *re*-presentations of iconic symbols from various cities can be considered a *type* of 'literature' on cities, from the vantage of æsthetics. These images include the Sumerian *ziggurats,* the Egyptian pharaohs' burial mounds –the *pyramids,* the Greek *temples* in the Acropolis, the colossal and grand Roman structures –the *Coliseum*, the *Apian Way*, the *viaducts*. Medieval Christian cities in Europe are depicted with their Romanesque and Gothic *basilicas* and *cathedrals*.

Chinese built environment is resplendent with *pagodas* while Byzantine cities sport *onion-shaped domes* in their skyline. A different visual-iconography is displayed in Islamic settlements –the *mosque* with its characteristic minarets, absence of figurative art and captivating geometric designs. Closer to contemporary times, we have the *skyscrapers*, Paris' *Eiffel Tower*, New York's *statue of liberty*, Maasai *manyattas*, the tombs of the Baganda *Kabakas* (kings) and the British Empire's *colonial architecture*. Nairobi is examined within the context of the British Empire; the symbols or art forms that were used to signify imperial rule.

Documented history (written) on other aspects of African cities is available. Much of it —that which concerns Nairobi—can be categorised under the umbrella of 'want of provision in material well-being'. These are the studies, for instance, on health-care, housing and employment.[45] Their unstated theoretical foundation, the angle from which they spring, is modernism. They evaluate Nairobi through the prism of modern materialism: to what level is the city modern and how does it rate in provision of tangible/measurable well-being? These studies have, in addition, been 'sited' or located in Nairobi's Eastlands where a want of urban modernity and of material affluence is glaring.

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[44] Cf. Duncan, E., 'The Lack of Historical Perspective in Æsthetics' Journal of Æsthetics and Art Criticism, American Association of Æsthetics, 2000 (on line version)

[45] Cf. Anderson, D. 'Corruption at City Hall: African housing and urban development in colonial Nairobi' in Burton, A (ed) op. cit., and Hake, A. in op. cit. and Achola, M. 'Colonial policy and urban health: The case of colonial Nairobi', in Burton, A (ed), op. cit.

Nairobi (or other contemporary African city) has hardly been studied as an ICON or idealised symbol of colonial rule. A few authors have made passing reference to this aspect, for example Andrew Burton,[46] but substantial research of the African city, as an ICONIC SYMBOL of imperial rule, is yet to appear. I have not come across an *art history* of the contemporary African city; an analysis of its space and buildings viewed as the *idealised* tool for stamping on imperial and nationalist rule and this is the *lacuna* I intend to fill in.

My intended contribution is –the study of the city as an art form and the presentation of research findings according to the *modus operandi* of that research. Because the data to be examined –*re*presentation of buildings– is in form of visual images, the analytical appreciation – the architectural style– is also visual, hence, a presentation of the research findings as a visual discourse. The thesis therefore comprises a series of visual-images with minimal text.

### 3.1.2 the city: social process or physical form?

What constitutes the artefact city –the social process or the physical shell? The word *city* denotes various nuances and shades of meaning. Concepts of *city* are as diverse as scholars, who view it, each from his own vantage point. If the scholar be an architect, then the city will be *buildings* until the urban geographer walks in, to adjust this view to their *spatial distribution*. Meanwhile the social historian chats with the families who inhabit them. The concept *city* ranges from conglomerates of stone-structure to intricate social fabric. And as Nevanlinna quipped, "Indeed when cities are studied, what precisely is studied?"[47]

From the literature reviewed these varied concepts can be classified into two: those that emphasise the *socio- cultural* reality versus the ones that dwell on the *spatial-physical* aspect. Social scientists incline to the former while researchers in applied or technical fields make use of the latter. This distinction is, however, not absolute; aspects of the social entity are often manifested in its spatial dimension.

[46] Burton A. 'Urbanism in Eastern Africa: An historical overview, c.1750-2000', in Burton, A. (ed), op. cit., p. 16.
[47] Nevanlinna, A. *Interpreting Nairobi: The Cultural Study of Built Forms*. Hakapaino Oy, Helsinki, 1996, p. 21.

John Lonsdale, for instance, demonstrates the interdependence of the social and spatial paradigms. In writing about town life in colonial Kenya, he notes the use of demography as the sole determinant of urbanisation:

> The census listed thirty other settlements as towns … the largest of them had twenty thousand enumerated inhabitants, a place had only to have two thousand residents to be counted as a town…[48]

He then registers his dissatisfaction with this method by alluding to the spatial form:

> [However] few deserved the name … most of these so-called towns must have been little more than villages –a double row of *dukas* lining the road, a market place, a *hoteli* or two, perhaps a maize mill and a hide-drying banda.[49]

Demography as the sole benchmark of urbanisation is questionable to Lonsdale. The physical aspect of a town, its spatial form, is a significant determinant as well. This project takes cognisance of Lonsdale's awareness of the interdependence of the physical form and demography.

### 3.1.3 nairobi's spatial historiography: eastlands

A spatial approach to Nairobi's historiography, a spatial approach to the physical apparatus called Nairobi, reveals its concentration on the Eastlands residential suburbs. Most studies are 'sited' in the eastern part of the city. The central and western parts are yet to form the main basis of historical discourse.

Focus on the Eastlands estates or *siting* studies in this region, is understandable because this is where the African population dwelt in colonial times. It comprised the *native quarter* where social ills were, and still are legion. In this location, Nairobi's problems are smeared on in bold print; they are glaring to the eye and have therefore attracted researchers in various disciplines. So if ones aim is to expose the want of material affluence, the Eastlands site is fertile ground.

For instance, in showing how resourcefully the Kenyan woman exploited trade in the face of a supposedly male-dominant environment, in the face of unequal opportunities, to earn money,

[48] Lonsdale, J. 'Town Life in Colonial Kenya' in *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa c. 1750-2000*, Azania special volume No: XXXVI-XXXVII, Burton, A. (ed). British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 2002, p. 16.
[49] Ibid.

Bodil Frederiksen situates her study in Eastlands.[50] She could not have used another location, with as much success, to support her argument since the native quarter constrained the native woman during colonial times. Frederiksen chose a site that suited her argument or vice versa. She concentrates on Eastlands; she overlooks or forgets the central and western parts of the city.

David Hyde's analysis of the 1950 strike is also situated in the eastern locations. He considers this strike a pivotal moment in Kenya's political history that happened:

> among the landless native who flocked into the *eastern part of the city*. Growing numbers of unemployed and vagrants became dependent on crime … to eke out a meagre subsistence. The government and municipality were overwhelmed by the rising tide of rootless migrants who sought refuge in the slums of Pumwani and the mushrooming shanty areas …[51]

The strike's spatial context is the African locations which Hyde describes as:

> a protected space which Atieno Odhiambo has called an 'ungovernable republic'… firmest in … [Eastlands] Shauri Moyo and Pumwani, the areas which gave the strongest support to the strike… these were effectively no-go areas where the collapse of state authority had reached a critical state …[52]

Would the situation have altered had the strike been 'sited' in the western and central parts of the city? The reader of these studies begins to imagine that issues and actions that contribute to Nairobi's history happen mainly (if not exclusively) in Eastlands. The history of Nairobi appears to be equated to an analysis of Eastlands.

This same *ungovernable republic* forms the backdrop of Milcah Achola's study on policy and urban health. Achola investigates the causes for the prevalence of disease among the Africans.[53] These people resided in the "…plains *east and south* of the railway line."[54] She indicates the unsatisfactory health conditions obtaining in this geographical zone and other contributing factors: inadequate wages, poor housing, overcrowding and poor sanitation. The study's spatial context is the African residential locations, Nairobi's unhealthy backyard, the

[50] Frederiksen, B. 'African women and their colonization of Nairobi: Representations and realities', in Burton, A. (ed), op. cit.
[51] Hyde, D. 'The Nairobi General Strike [1950]: From protest to insurgency', in Burton, A. (ed), op. cit., p. 236.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Achola, M. 'Colonial policy and urban health: The case of colonial Nairobi', in Burton, A (ed), op. cit. p. 119f.
[54] Ibid.

same Eastlands site. If Achola's argument was to be applied to the (supposedly) *governable republic*, that part of the population which did not reside in the 'plains east and south of the railway line', would it still hold true? Concentration on Eastlands, on the one hand, together with research-silence on the non-Eastlands parts of Nairobi, gives a biased representation of the city. By confining itself to Eastlands research, so far, has painted an incomplete picture.

David Anderson in presenting, urban development in relation to the history of planning and construction of African housing,[55] adds his voice to this discussion. His discourse which is rooted in the African locations, during colonial times, re-traces the story of housing up to 1940, then turns to eradication of unregulated settlements, and culminates in the Mbotela and Ofafa estates, built in the 1950s. He presents the Eastlands shanties in all their inglorious poverty and squalor, as the inheritance handed over to post-colonial governments. In so doing he draws up a vivid image of Nairobi's Eastlands city scape. But is this the only (housing) inheritance handed over to post-colonial governments? 'Siting' most research in the eastern part of the city can create an illusion that Eastlands constitutes the entire Nairobi.

Atieno Odhiambo's contribution: Leisure consumption as an articulation of African urban identity is likewise situated in Eastlands. His *kula raha* is projected on the unhealthy, squalor-ridden backyard cited above[56] which is also sited in the native quarter –Eastlands.

For whatever reason, historical studies on Nairobi have selected Eastlands as their choice site. This is an incomplete picture of the city; it is only the *native quarter*. Research is yet to *re*possess the colonial city. There is little discussion on the engagement of the indigenous Kenyan with Nairobi the colonial city, the *city* proper. This project is an attempt to open the discussion, to break the academic silence on our relation to this once colonised space.

### 3.1.4 the imperial dual model

The international projection of Nairobi is unlike the Eastlands scenario. The image that 'sells' is not Nairobi –the squalor ridden, ungovernable republic that has been reconstructed by several

[55] Anderson, D. in Burton, A. (ed), op. cit., p. 236.
[56] Atieno Odhiambo: Kula Raha', in Burton, A (ed), op. cit. p. 119f.

historians. Another different image of the city is presented to the polite visitor, the investor, the tourist. Nairobi's schizophrenic image; its spatial dichotomy, has deep roots.

The city owes its creation to colonialism which employed the dual policy of *divide-and rule.* This policy produced spatial dichotomy; a colonial *city* distinct from the *native quarter*. Does Nairobi exhibit this duality in its most significant space, the city's centre? It is in answer to this question that the analysis of the built form is undertaken.

The city is analysed with the assumption that it rests upon a dual-policy foundation, upon a principle of socio-spatial segregation which accounts for the occidental and oriental building cultures found in the city's centre.[57]

### 3.1.5 iconic nairobi: symbol of power

In declaring Nairobi "a spatial inscription of colonial power",[58] Burton, implicitly conceptualises the city within an ideological context. The rationale behind Nairobi, the purpose for setting it up is ideological. British colonial power is the ideal, the foundation upon which the city is built. The city is a symbol of colonial power, colonial domination, and submission to the English crown. In Burton's words colonial towns were created for:

> buttressing colonial rule … through the foundation of strategically located urban centres. These … had an important *symbolic value*, forming a spatial inscription of colonial power. [59]

Although Burton refers to Nairobi as a spatial inscription of colonial power, he does not demonstrate this allegation; *expression of political power* in Nairobi's built environment forms the basis of the present study where the spatial city is examined as an expression of political

[57] These building cultures would have to be 'seen' –to be represented using visual language. Text can only allude to them hoping that the reader will recall (re-view) the iconographical *type* referred to.
[58] Burton, A. 'Urbanism in Eastern Africa: An historical overview, c.1750-2000', in Burton, A. (ed), op. cit., p. 16
[59] Idem.

ideology.

Obudho relies on the same concept since he views "the location, size and distribution of urban centres in contemporary East Africa [as] a product of British (and German) decision making". He narrates that:

> from the 1880s, to the First World War, East Africa experienced a radical spatial change during which effective administrative control was established. The basic infrastructure of colonial domination was implanted mainly through the siting of administrative headquarters, the routing of transport lines, and the identification of areas of strategic and economic importance. Thus a whole new system of locational advantages and productive potential was superimposed over East Africa.[60]

Nairobi was, and still is, one such location. According to Obudho, East African urban centres were directed toward imperial dominance. These centres were first and foremost a *spatial imposition* of colonial rule which then proceed to siphon out economic resources.

In Obudho's cities, transport network, economic importance and potential, were the tools used to realise political ideology –imperial dominance. He analyses the function of the towns and cities by investigating the apparatus and methods employed towards achieving their goal: *Pax Britannica*.

> This system of urban centres served the colonial political economy and therefore the international economic system. The social and spatial structures was [sic] designed to distribute scarce resources in such a way as to promote an exploitative emphasis in economic relations, to facilitate control and domination by a non-indigenous colonial elite… [61]

Colonial governance was responsible for managing the entire system of social and spatial relations in a bid to realise political and economic dominance. Thus Nairobi is a by-product of imperial ideology.

In analysing the location of urban centres in relation to economically productive areas, Obudho demonstrates that social and spatial systems were an expression of colonial dominance in economic terms. He delves into infrastructure development showing how it served to transfer

[60] Obudho, R.A. 'Historical perspective of urbanisation', in Obudho, R.A. (ed) *Urbanisation and Development Planning in Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1981. p. 37.
[61] Idem.

economic resources to the local capitals and later to the international markets. The expression of political dominance, he treats dissimilarly, for he only mentions but does not demonstrate it.

Obudho treats East African urban centres as a unity. He discusses them as one entity directed toward the same purpose; economic exploitation. His interest is in matters economic; this research's is in matters political. Where he bases his argument on the generic town, the urban centre in its collective, the urban *commonality*, this study focuses on specific, distinct and singular characteristics of one urban entity. A specific town, the city of Nairobi, comprises the material aspect of this study. The spatial expression of political power is examined in a singular urban centre.

### 3.1.6 nairobi: the kingdom of wealth

Researchers are not unanimous in examining Nairobi within an ideological context. To some, the practicality of modern materialism has proved a better fit. Modern and post-modern[62] theories consider built environment primarily as *utilitarian*. The city is understood as a functional object whose purpose is to supply material well-being. Consequently, cities are graded according to their ability to avail the greatest material good to the greatest number.

This is because modern man believes he has conquered the forces of nature through industrialisation and technical know-how, turning the city into a tool for wealth-creation.[63] The planned city, the city that works efficiently is the *modern* one; modern because it produces material well-being and because it is democratic. The wide-*spreading* of material goods

[62] Modernism philosophy appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. Post-modernism from 1970.
[63] Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome 2007

manifests its democratic stance. The greater the number of people with access to affluence, the more democratic and therefore more modern a city is considered to be.

This materialistic approach comes to the fore in various studies; the classification of cities into *developed* or *underdeveloped* categories is underpinned on it. Contemporary Euro-American urbanisation produces model, affluent cities which are therefore considered developed. And less-modern or underdeveloped countries ought to emulate this trend –it is implied.

Some researchers have analysed Nairobi thus. The *material good* in question may be health-care provision as in the case of Achola,[64] in whose discussion, the fallacy of attributing high disease levels within the African (and Indian) communities, to lack of education and primitive habits, is exposed. Achola cites unequal allocation of land and infrastructure as the main reason for disease prevalence. Her argument is best understood within the context of modern materialism.

In the modern city, material well-being forms the foundation. Achola views provision of health-care as part of this foundation. Equitable or democratic distribution is the other hallmark of modernism. Achola indicates the lack of it as regards health-care. In this, her expectation is identical to that of the modernists.

Hake's African metropolis[65] also functions within the same paradigm. His is an appeal on behalf of the marginalized. And they are marginalized because material resources are scarce to them. The material conditions of the disenfranchised appear to their best advantage within the context of modern philosophy: for the greatest number, greatest material well-being.

Hake wonders why there are people in material want. He immerses himself in the plight of those who "live in Nairobi's backyard".[66] There ought to be no backyard –he implies. Eradication of material indigence is a core principle, for modern cities work toward universal affluence.

[64] Cf. Achola, M. 'Colonial policy and urban health: The case of colonial Nairobi', in Burton, A (ed), op. cit.
[65] Hake, A. in op. cit. p. 9f
[66] Ibid.

This belief pervades Hake's work; he demonstrates that the poor are not a threat and liability, terms that are best understood in the light of modern materialism, where affluence is a necessary foundation. The well-being under *threat* according to Hake, includes housing, sanitation and employment. He draws attention to Nairobi's:

> two-faced city, presenting a *modern* front to the world, with a growing number of its people living in the backyard. And this [self-help] backyard is an immense potential for creative development … [but he clarifies] that examining the plight of the self-help city does not amount to, is not an attempt to romanticise the culture of poverty.[67]

On the contrary, the goal to strive for, in his words: "must mean a constant battle to improve standards of living and requires a just distribution of wealth, power and resources as well as a never-ending fight against exploitation",[68] precisely what a modern city ought to be.

### 3.1.7 wealth creation versus political articulation

The material goal of universal affluence is to be realised in a city of ideological foundations. Nairobi was not founded to improve living standards for the majority or distribute resources equitably; it was not founded to fight exploitation –but precisely to exploit in the name of imparting civilisation.

This ideological garb is to be replaced with a modern suit; colonial-Nairobi must now become an affluent post-colonial city. The required shift is twofold: in the conceptual realm and in the implied operatives; from an idealistic colonial citadel to a utilitarian, democratic and wealth-creating city. Where one sought to exploit in order to enhance an ideal, the other must fabricate material well-being (*matunda ya uhuru,* fruits of independence in English) for its majority.

[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid. p. 9ff

If the purpose of colonial Nairobi was to dominate and impose a certain ideological culture, that of post-colonial Nairobi is to raise material living standards. One is a product of an ideal, colonial culture and civilisation, while the other is born of necessity –survival's struggle against indigence. And post-colonial Nairobi is to be as justly distributive as colonial Nairobi was unjustly exploitative. One amasses resources; the other ought to distribute them widely and equitably.

Scholars have found it irresistible to fault colonial Nairobi for its exploitative tendencies yet this was precisely the aim of its founders. Conversely, disappointment is occasioned in post-colonial Nairobi by the absence of a wealth-distribution-system that is smooth, sure and efficient.

Both the colonial and post-colonial city have been weighed in the scales of modern materialism and found wanting. Neither of them manufactures material well-being for the greatest number nor distributes power, wealth and infrastructure equitably. What has yet to be done is to weigh Nairobi solely in the scales of political ideology. The examination of the symbolic expression of political ideals, in colonial and post-colonial Nairobi, is fairly unexplored territory.

Modern post-colonial Nairobi inherited a romanticised-spatial-symbol, complete with its architectural design. Colonial cultural characteristics had been deeply etched into the cityscape, by the time an indigenous government, adorned itself in this *hand-me-down* space.

An indigenous Kenyan government operates within a spatial context that was founded, designed and imbued with British colonial culture. While the *content* –political identity– changed, from ethos colonial to national, from foreign culture to indigenous, its spatial-design appears to have suffered no alteration. A national, indigenous culture seems to vivify the same *form*– the same spatial-design. To establish whether this is a fact and how it has been effected, is the rationale behind this project: change in political identity does/ or doesn't effect consequent change in the spatial form.

## 4.0 research hypotheses

Knowledge of the past is not identical to that past; we cannot bring the past to life exactly as it happened. We can only *know* about it in the present. The pertinent question is whether this knowledge (or *re*construction) is sufficient to uncover the icon that is –that was– Nairobi. I find that a genuine attempt at *re*construction leads to recognition of ones poverty in grasping the *past* and the consequent poverty of the *past's* interpretation.

Another limit of *re*constructions of the past is that they are more selective than exhaustive. Events that unfolded gradually, without awareness of subsequent happenings, are viewed (in *re*constructions) as a single *continuum*. While actual history moves from past to present into the future, *re*constructions are executed with an awareness of what happened in subsequent times. In a sense they move backwards, from the present into the past. The historian is somewhat omniscient while those who lived that history are not. As Fisher once said:

> Men more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a pre-determined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I see only one emergency following upon another … only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations …[69]

Because the attempt of any *re*construction is to identify and understand the past –as it was in itself; to find out what the author of the event in question could have said and intended to say, in the context of the mentality and events of the time, the *re*construction is always hypothetical. Every historical *re*construction has its own limits. This knowledge cannot be, and is not, identical to that actual 'past'. The impossibility of bringing the past to life exactly as it happened is evident. We can only know or interpret it in the present.

I will therefore not attempt to bring to life the Nairobi of the last century (20th). I will 'get to know it' in the present and in a rather selective manner. The Nairobi of the last 100 years happened gradually; the events of the 1920s did not –could not have— taken into account the consequent ones of the 1930s or 1940s. In my *re*construction, on the contrary, I will view the

[69] H.A.L. Fisher in 1936 quoted by Duggan, A. in 'Times Change' Grandpont Papers in loc cit p.63

events of the 1920s with an awareness of what happened in the following decades. The purpose is therefore to look at the past in order to discern the question concerning that past's meaning for *today*.

This inherently hypothetical character about knowledge of the past demands making some assumptions. This study presupposes a uniformity of the context within which the events of history (putting up the buildings) unfold. It presupposes a uniformity in a period of about 100 years.

The other assumption is that the architect and his patron intended to express their identity in and through the *form* they gave these public buildings. Further, that both architect and patron intended to express a 'collective' perception or identity. The 'collective' in this case comprised the governing section of society.

It is with an acknowledgement of this limit which necessitates the consequent assumptions; an acknowledgement that no matter how thorough and rigorous it be, history can never go beyond the domain of hypothesis, that I offer this æsthetic interpretation.

## 4.1 theoretical framework

What theory underlies this critique?
Aesthetic judgement appeals to more than the intellect. Deductive and inductive inferences are insufficient for establishing aesthetic judgments which are neither deduced nor confirmed by empirical evidence. No one can be ARGUED into a favourable verdict of a work of art. Scientific or logical 'argument' does not justify an aesthetic decision.

To imagine that one could be ARGUED into loving an art object is absurd. A critique, therefore, is not designed to modify the sensibility of others; it has no direct relation to the sense perception of its audience; it improves neither eyesight nor hearing. What it can do is assist the understanding by giving new information or fresh ways of dealing with old information.

Nevertheless our need for the familiar and expected (even in academics) far exceeds our capacity to absorb the original, sometimes unsettling experience of art. In seeking, of an aesthetic critique, a scientific theory or conceptual framework, one assumes that critics, from observation of a selection of works of art, formulate hypotheses about standards which the artists ought to achieve and by which their works may be judged… this is the familiar scientific procedure; formulating general standards and applying these to all, or to classes of various phenomena.

In inquiring an underlying theory, the supposition is that such a theory describes the nature of art and of artistic experience in a way comparable to scientific theory describing the nature of physical phenomena. Aesthetics, however, is based more on intuitive knowledge,[70] which is direct knowledge of PARTICULAR works of art. Whatever the value of generalisation in science, in art it invariably leads to sheer distortion because every work is unique and is therefore judged by no other standards but its own.

To affirm that a work of art is good or bad is to COMMEND or CONDEMN; not to describe, to illustrate or to explain. And to justify such a verdict (commendation or condemnation) is not to give general criteria as 'reasons' but rather to commune, to convey –to communicate with and to– the art work, to be in dialogue, simultaneously, with the audience. Critical talk about art is a 'construction' (a creation, a manufacture) of it by someone at a particular time, in a certain social context. Aesthetic criticism does not and cannot have the impersonal character and strict rules –applicable independently of time and place– so appropriate to science and mathematics.

A critic, instead, relates his spontaneous judgment to the canons of the specific art, but without regarding them as absolute norms, for unlike scientific laws or logical principles, these canons do not form a closed system. While they can be used as a loose framework, the final standard is the direct response to the work of art –the judgment of personal taste.

It follows that every critical interpretation is unique; it defies repeat performances. (which are necessarily different) In fact, the task of interpreting and evaluating art work seems to be never

[70] Intuition springs from the depth of the human soul, where the desire to give meaning to one's own life is joined by the fleeting vision of beauty and of the mysterious unity of things. Every genuine artistic intuition goes beyond what the senses perceive and reaches beneath reality's surface in an effort to interpret the hidden …Cf. Paul, P. J. *Letter to Artists* Catholic News Service 2005?

completed. Shakespeare's plays, for instance, witness 'new' interpretations to this day. In a sense, the work of art is what it is interpreted to be making the element of COMMUNING, of establishing a 'live' connection between the work and its audience, paramount. No work of art exists independently of any interpretation. And interpretation is a kind of construction because, like an actor or executor, a critic presents (*re*-presents) what is not obvious to a casual or uninstructed inspection of that art work.

The connection between the world around us and ideas, the act of communing, is achieved through language –be it verbal, musical, visual or otherwise. Language deals with the activity of our most distinctly human possession –the mind. It embodies and expresses culture –that intimate, internal world of our minds. Language is basic to human expression; visual language is basic. This conception gives rise to the theory of 'visual art as expression.' Indeed any art is always the expression of the artist.

And by expression we denote the outward manifestation of the artist's thoughts, values and attitudes. Considered from this conceptual angle, a work of art is inextricably connected to, and tremendously influenced by, the artist's cultural ambience. After all whatever artists may express (say), their art is not done just for themselves. It is done for observers who primarily are made up of members of their immediate societies. This is the rationale behind the theory of cultural contextualism.

When an architect designs a building, he does it according to the wishes of the one who commissioned it (the patron). The architect tries to express –using stone and brick– the request of his patron. If both architect and patron are to be relevant, if they are to express themselves, they must 'speak' in a language that is understandable to, a language that communicates with their observers. True expression or the message encoded in these buildings needs to be decipherable by the society. This assumption forms the foundation of cultural contextualism – placing an artefact within the context of the culture that produced it.
The buildings to be studied, in this project, were commissioned by the imperial government and their most immediate 'observer' was the colonised people. They are the ones who were being told: you are now under the crown law of Britain. Contextualism necessitates relating these buildings to the culture of the coloniser; relating them to his thoughts, values and attitudes. In

analysing the built form, the culture within which both the artist (architect) and his patron (government) operated, will be considered. The buildings will be 'contextualised' within this culture.

The structures under study were put up by either the colonial or post colonial governments. The possible motivation of these governments in selecting or deciding on a particular stylistic expression will be probed. Likewise, the unstated[71] intention of post colonial governments, in either choosing to use the same architectural style or in rejecting it, in favour of another, will be examined. The purpose is to unravel the cultural context of each of the buildings.

In cultural contextualism, a work of art is examined in the context of its time; it is examined in a manner which reflects its creators' motivation and imperatives; it is examined taking into consideration the desires and prejudices of its patrons and sponsors. Contextualism traces the history of the art work chronologically, within the context of the culture from which it emerged.

To arrive at some kind of understanding of the cultural context, the artefact (in this case the chosen buildings) must first be understood which calls for an analysis of its form: the physical appearance, materials, design and overall style, not for the sake of introducing another theory (formalism), but as a vehicle to get to the cultural context.[72] I am only trying to share a personal insight (rather than prove a theory) since as Prof Elton has suggested, "only experience and insight can save the intellect from its characteristic fault of over-simplifying and over-organizing every problem … and it is possible to mistake absence of understanding for clarity of vision. "[73] According to me, a reconstruction of the past is useful (regardless of theory) if it expresses in comprehensible terms a needed vision of society's collective experience –it is precisely this that I aim at, using the theory of cultural contextualism as the main tool.

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[71] The tradition of documenting or archiving the architect's brief (the desire of the one who commissions the building) has not been practised. It is therefore impossible to base the study on the stated intentions of the creators of the buildings. What has been used instead is the reaction of the observer to the work of art; to the building.

[72] This is in response to Prof William Ochieng's dictum: "Kenyan historians are extremely busy discussing delicate theories like post-industrialism, post-modernism and post-feminism … theory is the in thing and the most elaborate or complicated the theory is, the better. Our people want to read our history or literature …but scholars are busy haggling over the most acceptable theories. History will always remain history whether or not you spray it with post-industrial or post-modern theories. It is the story of our communities …" cf. Daily Nation, Tuesday 24th June, 2008. Ochieng alludes to the danger that we could be abandoning true perceptions of reality in favour of systems of ideas – theories.

[73] Grandpont Papers in loc. cit p. 9

## 4.2 methodology

Artistic criticism is an indefinite set of devices for '*presenting*', not proving, the merits of a work of art. It is 'construction' rather than discovery; it is more like creating and less like demonstration and proof. I will *construct* and *present* my interpretation of architectural styles in Nairobi without an attempt to discover, demonstrate or prove this corpus.

Information about Nairobi is sought from various sources. These include:

- archival/library research
- interviews with city architects, planners, engineers and ex colonial officers
- followed by an æsthetic critique of the actual spatial form.

Critics of culture have traditionally employed similar methods to enrich their appreciation of cultural achievements. In studying society through the *values* and *forms* it chooses to live by, both creative and analytical critiques set out –with varied degrees of success– to untangle the following points:

the intent or goal of the artist in creating the art work

the elements of *form* present in the art work

the way in which these elements contribute to the artist's goal

the context within which the art work evolved

the connection of the art form to other works.

This study centres on buildings used for political administration. The art form to be appreciated is official *government architecture* as embodied and expressed in those structures that house the executive, legislative, judicial and related functions; the architecture of both central and local government which is situated in the city's centre. The method used in this study can be likened to *literary criticism* for it entails an æsthetic critique of architecture. And according to the above outline the points to be covered include:

1) the goal or intent of the artist. In this case the goal is to provide architectural structures

that house and symbolise government's main functions

2) a critique of the building vocabulary from the perspective of æsthetic (artistic) formal elements: line, shape/mass, colour, texture and composition[74]

3) followed by an exploration of the relationship among the *formal* elements used in these buildings: rectilinear or curvilinear structure, columns, arches, triumphal obelisks or towers etc.

4) the exploration of these elements will reveal the composite image portrayed by these buildings. The purpose of the *formal* analysis is to unveil the 'architectural face' of politics

5) and this face or the architectural statement of politics will be viewed within the corresponding historical (time) context.

In order to facilitate a historical context a chronological frame that caters for categorising, analysing and comparing the data collected has been drawn up. The order of successive governance serves as this framework giving us five periods, each under a distinct authority. These include the railway settlement, the township administered by colonial central government, the young municipality and the independent capital in its first and second regimes.

The city's physical plans also fall into this same division though with a few slight differences. The representative buildings of each period will be analysed together with the related street nomenclature.

[74] An æsthetic critique on architecture can be compared to an analysis of literary work where the relationship among theme, plot, characters, setting and language-resources like word choice, tone, imagery and symbol are explored.

figure 4.2.1

| | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 | period III<br>1920 - 1962 | period IV<br>1963 - 1978 | period V<br>1979 –1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Governing Authority** | Railways | Colonial central government | Local government – municipal council (under central government) | Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| **Physical Planning** | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927* plan for a settler township | 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| **Representative Building/s‡** | Railway Headquarters and Station | Ainsworth's office<br>Native Affairs Building (Commissioner's office) | Government house<br>Memorial Hall (Legco)<br>High Court<br>Town Hall<br>Hamilton House<br>City Hall | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| **Representative Streets ⁂** | Whitehouse and Station. Roads.<br>Victoria and Duke Streets. | Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler streets<br>Government Road | Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York<br>Queensway<br>Kingsway<br>Delamere<br>Grogan | Kenyatta<br>Harambee<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mbingu<br>Koinange<br>Moktar Daddah<br>Tubman<br>Banda<br>Kaunda<br>Haile Selassie | Moi Avenue |

*The town planning of Nairobi at this date was probably delayed by the onset of the First World War in 1918. However, there is no data to confirm this view.

‡ These are buildings related to, or directly used for, purposes of political governance e.g. structures that house legislative or judicial activities.

⁂ These are streets whose names relate them to, or associate them with, political governance e.g. Kenyatta Avenue or Victoria Street.

A few public buildings of the ruled, which are mainly located in the oriental part of city centre (east of Moi Avenue), will be presented as an architecture genre of the recipients of governance. These will be Asian temples, mosques and houses of business.

### 4.2.2 writing with pictures

I find it necessary to explain the essentials of a picture-discourse since we are accustomed to telling stories (re-constructing history) using text. A picture-story is different from a word-story. It tells the story mainly or entirely with pictures and in words only what pictures cannot show. When a story is told through pictures it becomes a dramatic experience: immediate, vivid, moving. A picture story is closer to theatre and film.

Shulevitz maintains that the "preconception that writing [communicating] is strictly related to words and to [the] spoken language is false."[75] According to him, using words skilfully is not central to writing. What is of primary importance is *what* one has to communicate. *How* it is communicated, although important, is secondary. Therefore, Shulevitz concludes, those who have a natural inclination to visualise can capitalise on this preference in communicating their thoughts and ideas. "For those who are inclined to *see* pictures a visual approach makes more sense."[76]

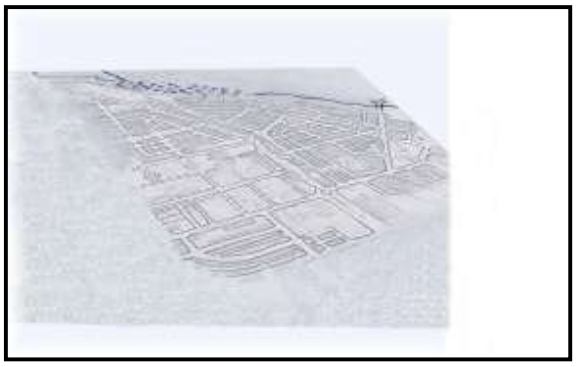
Visual thinking is essential to *picture-story-telling*. And, on the part of the narrator, it calls for elemental tools like presentation of pictures that are easily 'readable', coherence in the picture-series and a manageable pace of the sequence. An understanding of the structure of picture-books also enhances ones appreciation of this medium.

### 4.2.3 the stage and the actors

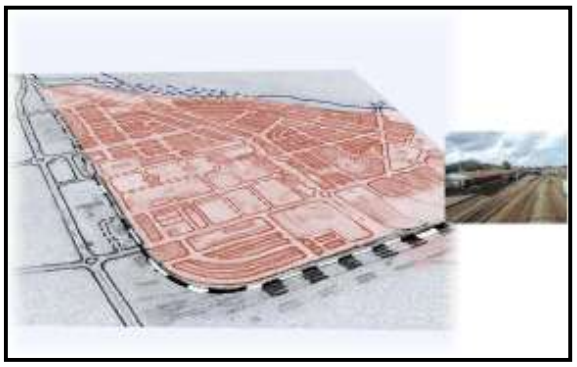
In this project, a map of Nairobi's city centre acts as the *frame* or stage upon which the action takes place. The subsequent buildings and streets introduced onto this map are the *actors* without which there would be no action and therefore no story. Both the stage (map of city centre) and the *actors* (buildings and streets) make up the 'shots' for the *visual pantomime*. It is for this reason that the map remains the same –the same map appears on each page (on each shot)– while different buildings and streets are highlighted in successive frames. The following is an example of four frames arranged sequentially.

[75] Shulevitz, U. *Writing with Pictures*. Watson-Guptill Publications, New York, 1985 p. 10
[76] Idem.

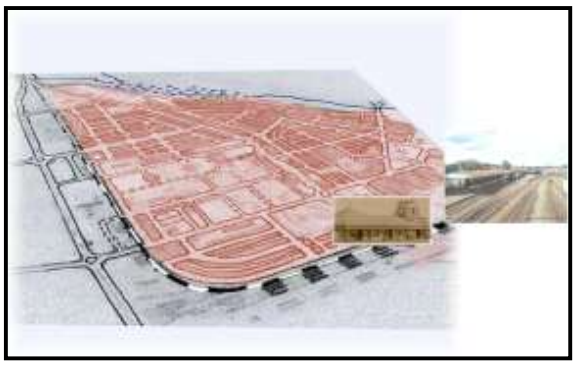
figure 4.2.3



**Frame 1**
Map of city centre. The 'stage' where the visual pantomime is to be enacted.



**Frame 2**
Railhead arrives onto this 'stage'. The date is 30th May 1898. Using the rail line and Nairobi swamp/river as boundaries, the Railways mark out this area which is today's city centre.



**Frame 3**
Subsequently an imposing 'mabati' station is erected by the railway authorities.



**Frame 4**
Nairobi Township in 1901 as drawn by Col. Patterson –the Railway District Engineer. Parallel streets are laid out and a residential area marked out. Today this is the civic district.

### 4.2.4 picture sequence other elements

Picture-sequence, one of the main features of a visual story can be likened to a pantomime. The picture is seen readily and understood immediately. The 'author' aims at clarity so total that the picture's message can be grasped instantly like a road sign. It is with this in mind that I have eliminated buildings that are not *actors* in the story and instead focused only on those that are emblematic.

Other features used to create this visual narrative include: the sequential arrangement of the pictures, consistency in presentation, unfolding the story (or historical fact) through the development of the sequence and managing the sequence's movement into a pace that reflects the historical action.

The pace of the sequence is designed to reflect (or echo) the actual historical change. After every era I have introduced a *pause image* before embarking on the next. This *pause image* consists of pictures that reflect the 'general look' of that period. It is a sort of visual summary of that section. Between the colonial and indigenous governments a longer *pause* comprising pictures of Asian houses of business, worship and residence, has been employed. These constitute the 'Asian-look' or the oriental city centre.

### 4.2.5 book dummy, tabulated sequence, storyboard

The other picture-story tool is a book dummy; a three-dimensional model of the picture book. A book dummy conveys how the book will read. It helps one see the unified visual entity while providing a chance to review and improve its rhythmic patterns. It is at this stage that I made decisions of actual size of the individual pictures, maps and tables. In a way it is like checking the 'visual beats' of the main elements. Identifying similarities and differences –editing the visual story– also happened at this stage of book-dummy compilation.

| Date ► | **period I**<br>**1898 - 1902** | period II<br>1902 - 1919 | period III<br>1920 - 1962 | period IV<br>1963 - 1978 | period V<br>1979 –1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government | Local government – | Indigenous government | Indigenous government |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township | 1948 master plan for a | 1973 metropolitan growth | no data available |
| Representative Building/s | • **Railway Station**<br>Railway Headquarters | Ainsworth's office<br>Native Affairs Building | Govt. house<br>Memorial Hall<br>High Court | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse and Station Rd. Victoria & Duke Streets. | Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart | Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York | Kenyatta & Harambee | Moi Avenue |

**figure 4.2.5**

In this table the highlighted area is period **I**.

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | **period II**<br>**1902 - 1919** | period III<br>1920 - 1962 | period IV<br>1963 - 1978 | period V<br>1979 –1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government | Local government – municipal council | Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous govermnt 2nd egime |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township | 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters | Ainsworth's office & Residence<br>Native Affairs | **Government house**<br>Memorial Hall<br>High Court | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse &Station<br>Victoria & Duke | Government<br>•**Hardinge**<br>•**Eliot**<br>•**Stewart**<br>•**Sadler** | •**Coronation**<br>•**Connaught**<br>•**York**<br>•**Queensway**<br>•**Kingsway** | Kenyatta & Harambee<br>Kimathi W | Moi Avenue |

In this (same) table the highlighted area is period **II**.

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 | period III<br>1920 - 1962 | **period IV**<br>**1963 - 1978** | period V<br>1979 – 1997 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government | Local government – municipal council | Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township | 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station | Ainsworth's office & Residence | High Court<br>City Hall<br>McMillan | State House<br>• Parliament<br>• KICC | Times Tower |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse and Station Roads.<br>Victoria and Duke Streets. | Government Road<br>Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart | Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York<br>Queensway<br>Kingsway<br>Delamere<br>Grogan | Kenyatta<br>Harambee &<br>Uhuru<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mbingu<br>Koinange | Moi Avenue |

In this (same) table the highlighted area is period **IV**.

### 4.2.5 tabulated information sequence

Just like the map, the same table appears on each page (on each shot or frame) with the period under discussion highlighted. In this case the table is the stage while the highlighting of various epochs belongs to the action and the actors.
The tabulated information also follows sequential progression like the example on the opposite page. It is supposed to create visual movement which reflects activity as time passes by.

Storyboard is yet another tool that has been used to plan this project. The storyboard is to a picture-story what an architect's plan is to a building. It gives a bird's eye view of the whole book; it shows all the pages on a single sheet of paper.

Since this project covers a long time (c 100 years), rather than prepare a single storyboard for the entire story, I divided it up according to chapters. These follow the various authorities that had overall charge of Nairobi's city centre. The story content for each period is further designed to fit into a single *signature*.[77] The overall idea, the visual concept emanating from each period is contained in a single signature. A signature in turn corresponds to a singular political identity: the Railways, colonial central government, colonial local government and indigenous governments.

## 4.3 chapter outline

It proved to be more practical to deal with a chapter (one signature) at a time. And for smooth reading, I decided to use a *double-spread* as one unit with text on one page and image on the other. The following are storyboards for each chapter/period.

### 4.3.1 chapter one is a summary of the proposal.

[77] Book leaves are packaged in form of separate pamphlets called signatures. A number of pages are grouped together on each sheet then printed, folded and trimmed into separate pages. The group of pages made from one sheet makes a signature. A standard signature consists of 16 pages. Books' standard sizes emanate from signatures; 2 signatures produce a 32 page book, 3 signatures a 48 page one, 4 signatures a 64 page one and so forth. Book binding takes into account the signatures and their stitching method. The arrangement has repercussions on the physical structure of the book and how it will be read. The end of a signature offers a physical pause and it is therefore convenient for a chapter-ending to coincide with it.

## 4.3.2 nairobi as railway township

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Space and Government. Introduction to story . | Map of Nairobi. Relevant area highlighted. |

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Coming of the Railway | Railhead arrives at Nairobi |

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Crafting a Railways' Identity | 'mabati' Railway Station |

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Inscribing Railways' Power | Railway Headquarters building |

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Railways' Land Use | middle level Railway Housing |

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Streets named by Railways | map showing these streets |

| pause image |
|---|
| Railways Legacy 'General Look' |

Although the land called Nairobi has been in existence since God made it, our story begins in the late 1800s when the Maasai used the Nairobi Swamp to water their herds. The story begins with land that is quite ordinary and indistinct from its surroundings as far as its political relevance is concerned. It is one more stretch of grazing land.

This spot, the Nairobi Swamp and its environs, acquires much political import from the 19th century onwards. The Uganda Railway —stretching from Mombasa to the shores of Lake Victoria— chose it as its principal site, principal because the administration of the entire railway was to be anchored on it.

When the railhead arrived in Nairobi, in May 1899, it enclosed an area of roughly 2.5 $km^2$. And because the Railways had had to compensate a private owner near the coast, the British Government had given it the right to lay its tracks anywhere regardless of ownership and acquire a one-mile-stretch of land on both sides of the line.

In Nairobi, these powers translated into an enclosed triangle bound by the Swamp to the north-east. The other boundary was the rail line itself (before it was re-routed). And the triangle is

today's city centre, the stage upon which our drama is enacted.

While it is acknowledged that the Maasai watered their herds in this site and that some kind of trading between the Kamba, Kikuyu and Maasai took place somewhere near or on this site, there is interestingly, no mention of compensation or even consideration to compensate these previous owners. The owner who was compensated at the coast was a European who had bought an Arab shamba. The *immigrant* Railways felt compelled to compensate the *immigrant* land owner —not so the non-immigrant.

The owners of Nairobi were not immigrants (at least not as newly immigrant as the European or Arab). The owners of Nairobi were users who were native to the land, they belonged *naturally* to this land. They had not carried out any money transaction in order to graze their herds. This may, or may not be related to the necessity of compensating native land occupiers. The indigenous peoples simply used the land and perhaps that is why they were also simply pushed off the land.

Enter the new occupier —the Railways— and enter too the need to visibly demonstrate their un-*natural* ownership. Maybe this was necessary because the Railways did not simply want to use the land (like the natives) but to own it, and own it for economic gain at that. Lacking a native buoyancy of belonging, un-*natural* or foreign ownership must needs be over-emphasized; an immigrant's need to assure himself of possession is usually heightened; a native, by the very fact of being native to the land takes his possession for granted.

The immigrant Railways put up an imposing building and called it the Station. It had a clock tower that could be seen "almost to the ultimate extent of the town"[78] we are told. To declare their ownership, the Railways implanted buildings on this site, they incised roads into the site thus proclaiming it theirs. No transaction, no agreements or compensation are mentioned in this change of ownership. Probably the Maasai and their cows simply walked away from the Swamp of cold waters.

In this chapter the emblematic buildings put up by the Railways are pointed out. The street names which record their governance over Nairobi city centre are also singled out.

[78] Smart, J. A. in op. cit. p 20.

## 4.3.3 nairobi as colonial capital

| text | image |
|---|---|
| Nairobi as a colonial capital | Sub-Commissioner's Residence |
| Declaration of first Township boundary | first government office in city centre |
| creation of Government Road | first government 'boma' in city centre |
| Commissioner settles in Nairobi | Railways' best residence - now Commissioner's house |
| Establishing the commissioner's office | Native Affairs Building (P.C.'s building) |
| Commissioner becomes Governor with a legislative council | Memorial Hall |
| British Monarchy commemorated in city centre streets | map- streets named for the monarchy and the commissioners |
| pause image I: 'General Look' of government buildings (first decade) ca. 1900 - 1910 | |
| pause image II: 'General Look' of government buildings (second/third decade) ca. 1911 - 1930 | |

The purpose of constructing the Uganda Railway was "to better administer the land and peoples of Uganda … to safeguard the headwaters of the Nile … to stimulate economic growth and stop slave trade"[79] all plausible reasons though the consequent domination of local culture can be accurately summed up as wholesale exploitation of resources.

After 'stimulating economic growth', after the merchants or traders, come mission schools and universities, modern medicine and sanitation, more rail roads, bridges, electricity, moving pictures, computers and a host of other modern improvements. All these, Western imperialism has brought to Kenya, to Nairobi —it is true— asking in return, however, exorbitant economic profits, a demand which has in effect subjugated the indigenous peoples to the errant will of Western powers.

This subtle tyranny of imperialism came to Nairobi via the Uganda Railway. And at this stage of our story, the British Government found it necessary to introduce 'law and order' otherwise known as *Pax Britannica*. The government man in charge of the interior or the hinterland, as it was then called, was one Colonel Ainsworth whose grand title was Her Majesty's representative

[79] cf. Brittain, H and Ripley, P. *A Simple History of East Africa*. Collins. London and Glasgow, 1963

the Sub-Commissioner for Ukamba Province. His seat was Machakos. The railway line had by-passed Machakos, an omission which rendered the site irrelevant as a see of central administration.

In the year 1900 Ainsworth moved his office to Nairobi. But alas, the land fenced in by the rail tracks and the Swamp now belonged to the Railways in a way that it never had to the Maasai. What was Ainsworth to do? Redeem it by compensation? He lacked this ability and so north of the Swamp —Ngara area— was where he pitched his tent.

Dual authority over the same land will inevitably clash —and so it did. Government and the Railways did clash and the eventual resolution was to shuffle the entire Kenya Protectorate from the Foreign-Office docket into the Colonial one. The change of papers in far away London gave Ainsworth the very powers he lacked.

The Railways ceded whatever land they did not require for strictly railway purposes and retreated southwards towards their *mabati* station; Ainsworth acquired whatever land he required and moved into the northern part of the enclosed triangle.

Once again enter a new occupier into Nairobi's central space. The new occupier, this time, is the British Government and being an immigrant like the Railways, he must visibly demonstrate his occupancy. Government —again like the Railways— lacked the native buoyancy to use the site without over-emphasizing its possession of it. The immigrant Government cut intrusions into this site, it incised roads into the site and put up emblematic buildings like a Court House and Town Hall.

In 1913, the colonial Government crowned the site with its citadel of power —the Commissioner's Office, a little gem of a building which rivalled and outshone the be-clocked Railway Station.

There was no mistaking matters, the significant owner and centre of power was no longer the cattle herding Maasai. The centre was no longer the long railway stretching from Mombasa all the way to Lake Victoria. The centre was the Commissioner, the august representative of His Majesty the King of England.

The Commissioner had moved from Mombasa into Nairobi perhaps not trusting the ability of his Sub-Commissioner. He moved into the Railway Township and occupied the residence of the Railways' Chief of Staff. He also acquired a new and grander title, from a mere commissioner he became 'His Excellency the Governor' with a legislative and executive council. This happened in 1907.

Buildings that resonated *law and order*, the kernel of imperial rule, constitute the visual narrative of this chapter.

### 4.3.4 nairobi the municipality

| text | image | text | image | text | image |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| foundations of local government | 'mabati' town hall | fully fledged municipal council | Hamilton House (second Town Hall) | *Pax Britannica* Law and Order | The High Court |
| Demanding (minority) self rule | Commensurate Town Hall | City status by royal charter | Nairobi City coat of arms | pause image<br>other buildings in colonial city centre that display same architectural language | |

The Governor's authority spread, as it were, in concentric circles from his seat to the Railways domain, from the wandering Maasai to the settled Kikuyu and the neighbouring Kamba traders, all the way to the Lake Victoria fishermen. The authority of His Excellency reached far afield. Perhaps because of its vastness, this authority needed deputies. In Nairobi, the deputy appeared in the form of local government.

From the humble mabati Town Hall, a properly constituted corporation (Local Government) moved into Hamilton House. And from this period —1920 onwards— this corporation has taken charge of the City. His Excellency the Governor ruled from Memorial Hall; His Worship the Mayor deputised from Hamilton House. Memorial Hall, the chamber for the legislative and executive councils, graced by an obelisk and carrier corps sculpture, was erected in

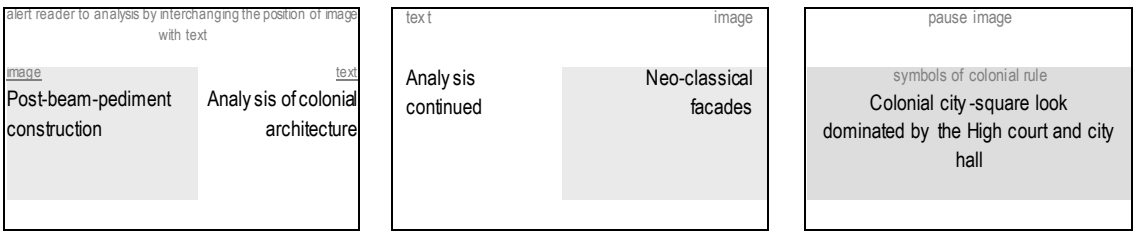
remembrance of the war for the King and Kaiser in far away Britain and Germany respectively.

Although the 'winds of change'[80] were yet to signal the rapid decolonisation of Africa, World War II marked the beginning of the end of the British Empire. The colonials were not slow of perception. In the impermanence of the Empire they saw reflected their own impermanent possession of Nairobi. That their possession was threatened, that it could slip away, fuelled the colonial immigrants to further embellish Nairobi into a spectacular regional headquarters.

Nairobi was to be pronounced a city by Royal Charter. A city at par with any in Europe. The builders of this city were demonstrating their ability to rule themselves; embellishing Nairobi was their way of demanding white minority self-rule. City status for Nairobi demanded consonant buildings: a proper residence for the Governor, a High Court of robust dimensions, a worthy Town Hall for the Mayor and all these set appropriately in a 'City Square'.

This endeavour required the services of professional town planners. So in 1948, Nairobi was subjected to the organising capacity of a team of imported town planners. The 1948 master plan, which among other adjustments re-directed the rail track in order to 'open up' and enhance the scale of the city's centre, was the result.

## 4.3.5 analysis of colonial nairobi



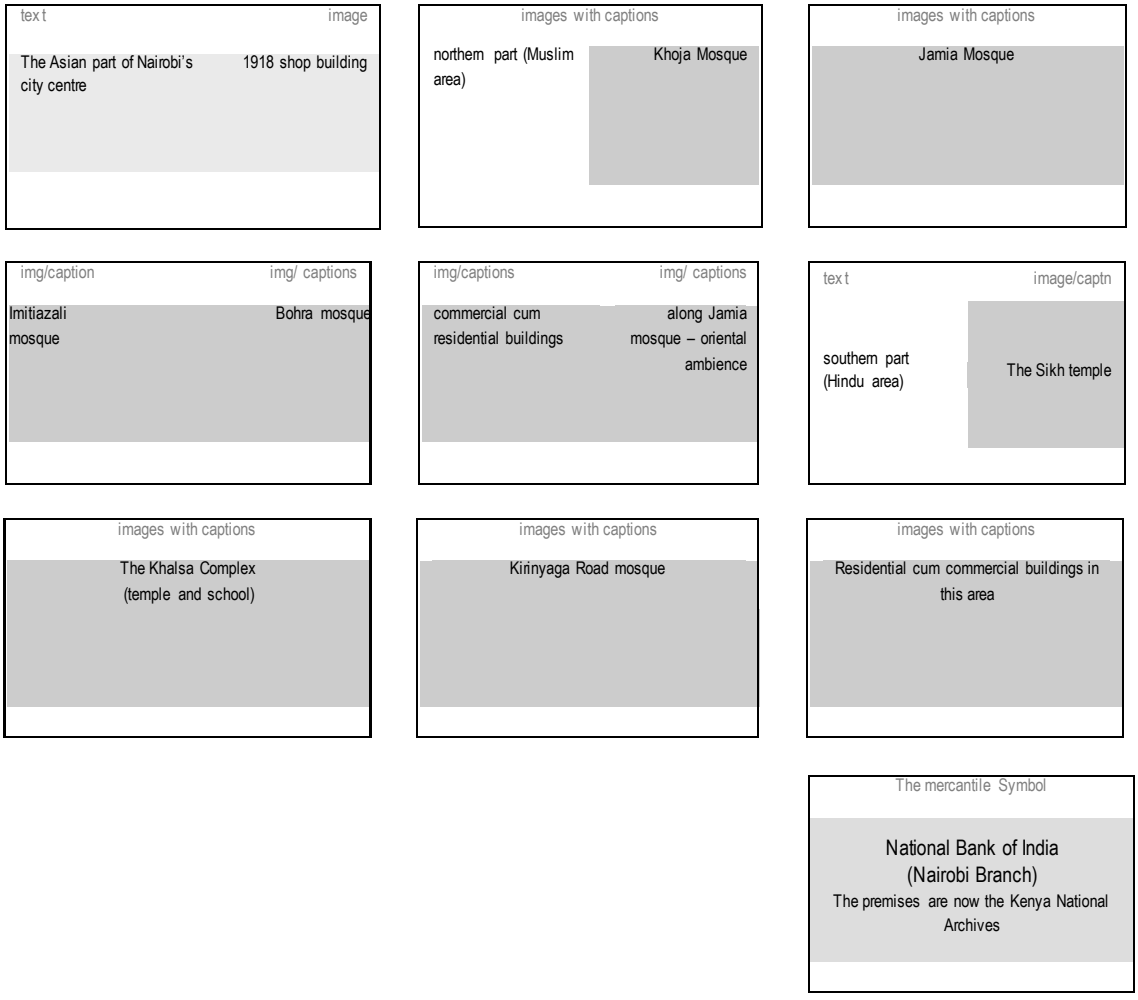

However, native buoyancy was still in short supply. The more grand Nairobi became, the more questionable its ownership. Whose was it? The Railways', the Colonial Government's or Local Government's? Where did the indigenous people feature in all this? Was their one time

[80] British Prime Minister, H. McMillan in speeches around Africa. Bennett, G. in op. cit. p. 147

occupancy reflected in Nairobi's built environment? Was there a monument to the memory of Maasai cattle-watering? Was there one to the Kikuyu traders? Where indeed was the native mark in this colonial city? Was Nairobi only and exclusively so complete a statement of native subjugation that it represented the African in absentia? The answer can only be in the affirmative.

A discussion of the predominant style in colonial government buildings is the subject of this chapter.

## 4.3.6 oriental section of city centre



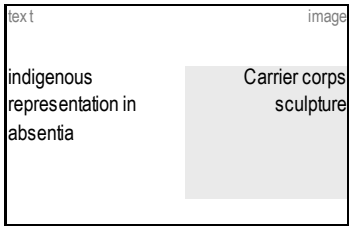
Nairobi had yet another subtle note, it subjugated more than the indigenous people, it subjugated the Asian immigrants. To the east of the 'grand political show room' —City Square— the Asian immigrant was clustered.

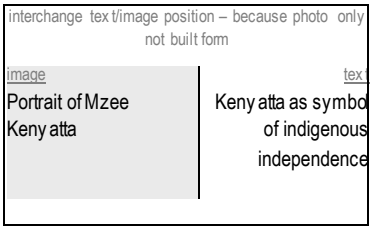
The architectural language in this area is oriental in design, detail and general ambience, complete and studded with gems oriental: Arabian-design mosques and a variety of Hindu temples. It is as eastern in culture as the 'show room' is western.

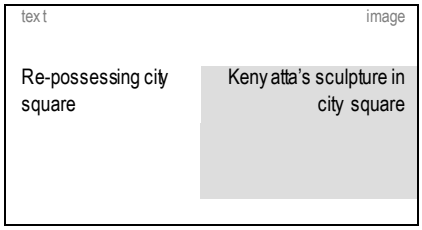
Apart from the introductory text, this section is made up of images only. It is designed to be a 'breaker' or 'long pause' separating the critique on colonial Nairobi from that on post colonial Nairobi.

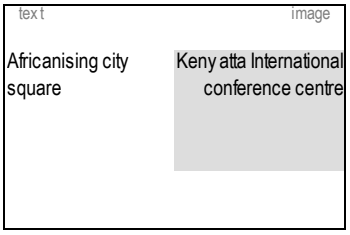
### 4.3.7 nairobi: the national capital

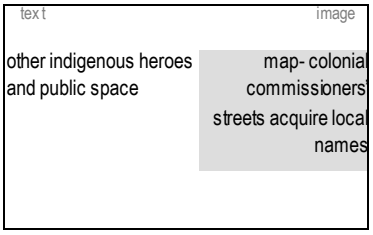
In this chapter I revert to the arrangement of text on the left with images on the right side of the double-spread unit. This is in order to signal to the reader that we are now back to our main story (third signature). Like in chapter two, three and four, the western part of city centre, where government buildings are sited, is the 'stage' of this part of the drama. Political freedom hands over the colonially-designed city centre to an indigenous authority.

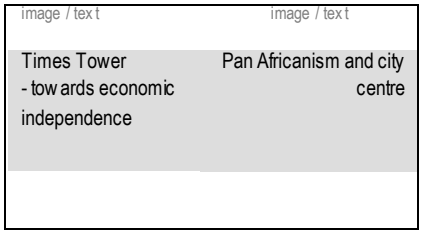


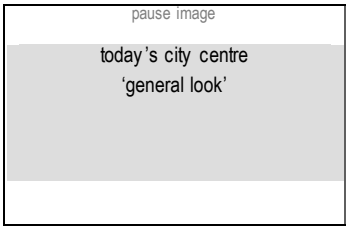



When the political 'winds of change' finally blew over Nairobi, the indigenous peoples re-occupied the centre of the city. Their symbolic and actual leader, Mzee Kenyatta, was *sculpted* into City Square; Delamere's statue was withdrawn, Kenyatta's installed in the most central of places.

The political show room, City Square, was further *Africanised* by crowning the colonial buildings with a circular tower —the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC). So different in style is this tower, so imposing over the High Court and City Hall, that it subdues and dominates the 'grand spectacle' of colonial architecture. KICC steals the show from the City Hall and High Court. It has become, together with Kenyatta's sculpture, the centrepiece of City Square.

KICC, both a cultural and political statement, is Nairobi's post-colonial signature building. It is as indigenous as the City Hall and High Court are colonial; as curvilinear as they are rectilinear. Colonial architecture lies 'massively', heavily and imposingly on the site. KICC springs upwards, poised rather than incised into the site. It exudes a lightness, a buoyancy, a sense of belonging that is somewhat lacking in the mammoth High Court and City Hall. The round tower, not unlike native freedom, stands tall and sure.

Nyayo House is a much weaker statement. It lacks the grandeur, poise and cultural significance that are resplendent in the KICC

The other tower, Times Tower, is less of a political statement and more of an economic one. If KICC declares political freedom, economic freedom is the theme of Times Tower.

Stylistically, Times Tower is in consonance with skyscrapers the world over. It represents the country's skilful ability in revenue collection, thus declaring Kenya's economic freedom. Thirty five stories high, Times Tower, with its supercilious glance at foreign aid, proclaims a sizable ability in economic self reliance.

Changes effected in the visual horizon by indigenous governments, constitute the subject of this chapter.

## 4.3.8 analysis of indigenous nairobi




The building cultures expressed in Nairobi's city centre are examined in this concluding chapter. The kind of possession or ownership of the site influences the building style. The architectural style resulting from 'foreign' ownership is compared to indigenous, native occupancy. And this drama takes place mainly in the 'political show room' —the city square.

## 10.9 comparative study dar nairobi

The use of space and choice of style, in both cities, to articulate identity forms the main argument of this chapter. Nairobi CBD is compared to Dar es Salaam CBD, specifically Nairobi's city square and Dar es Salaam's Mnazi Mmoja.

## 5.0 space and governance

This is the story of governance, the story of the interaction between governance and physical space. It is a documentation of political power made tangible; an analysis of the built environment in order to ascertain who it belongs to and how this identity has been manifested.

The story begins with the British immigrants inscribing colonial rule into the western half of Nairobi CBD. This is the area enclosed between Moi Avenue and Uhuru Highway.

The story then proceeds to examine those other immigrants who claimed —though unsuccessfully— an equal political position with the British settlers. These are the Asian immigrants who, in politics as well as in space, were confined to the lesser CBD — the eastern half. The story glimpses briefly into this oriental CBD before gathering pace to culminate with the bouncing back, into central position, of the indigenous community; the re-possession of the central space by those who are native to it.

This narration, this political articulation, is reconstructed within the confines of CBD. Political identity is identified with the buildings therein, the buildings that dispense administrative services. It is identified with some of the names —replete with associations— allotted to public space.

This is the story of who owns and commands —symbolically— the space that is referred to as *central* or CBD.




no man's land

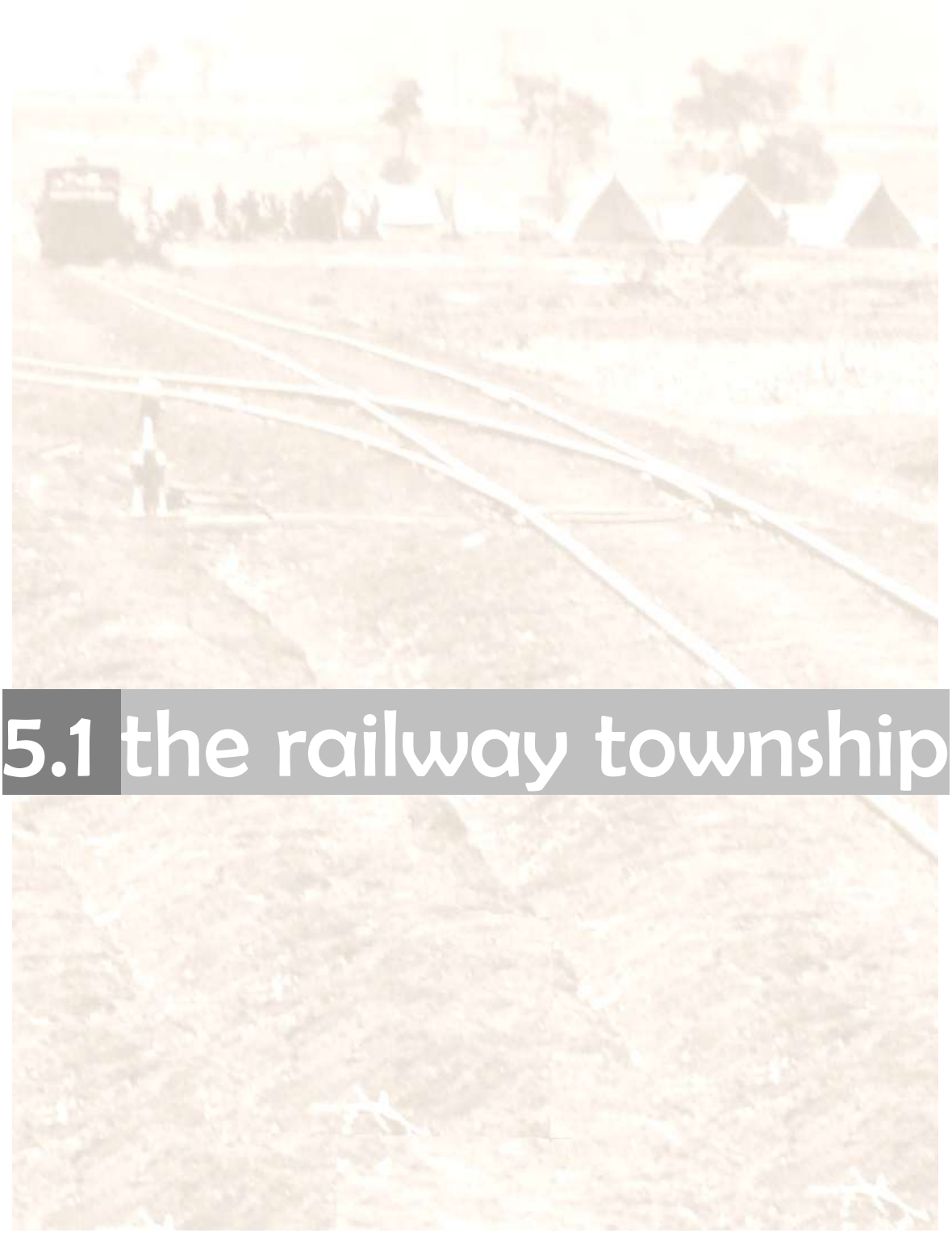
The above is a pre 1898 map of the area around Nairobi. (source: McVicar) [81] Since the rivers drain eastwards the land must be lower in the east and higher to the west. And because several swamps feature the eastwards slope cannot be too steep. The map indicates Kikuyuland to the north while Maasailand is to the south. And the two areas are separated by several streams: Getathuru, Mathare and Nairobi.

Nairobi River is our point of departure, specifically where the land is flat enough to accommodate a swamp; at the point where the railway line –from Mombasa headed to Lake Victoria– makes an interesting meander. No topographical reasons account for this meander; no obvious reason accounts for the sharp turn in a south-west direction, followed, after about a mile, by another in a north-western direction.

The outcome of this meandering is the triangular enclosure marked blue. It is approximately 2.5 $km^2$ with the railway line and the Nairobi Swamp acting as its boundary.[82] It can be argued that this triangular area is located neither in Maasailand nor in Kikuyuland, an argument which the European immigrants were quick to put forward. So although the Maasai had given a name to the swamp where they watered their herds, and the Kikuyu held trading activities in its vicinity, documented history refers to it as *uninhabited*. And on the strength of this the British claim to have occupied no man's land, an acquisition that was to give them a foothold into everyman's.

[81] as presented by Myers, D. in 'Nairobi's First Thirty Years' *Kenya Past and Present* September,1973, Volume 2, Number. 1. p. 14

[82] This was the pre-1950 railway alignment. The tracks were re-routed in order to enlarge the city's centre. Moss, R. Nairobi A to Z. A complete Guide. Kenway Publications, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam. 1999. p 82



# 5.1 the railway township



## 5.1 the coming of the railway

The area we are focusing on is the triangle shown on the opposite page (bottom). It is here enlarged and without its immediate neighbourhood. It has been drawn from a 1964 Surveys map of Nairobi. [83]

Before 1899 this triangle, having no boundary artificial or natural, was indistinct from its immediate surrounding but once the railway arrived it supplied a man-made boundary and proceeded to lay claim to the ensuing enclosure. Railway authorities wasted no time in declaring it their future headquarters and irrespective of the reasons they give for selecting this spot, what we see with hind sight is that they enclosed the future CBD and called it theirs. They could claim *ownership* owing to a previous happenstance:

> [since] an Arab shamba at the Coast had been purchased by a European who foresaw that the land would be indispensable to the Railways … He was heavily compensated, but the Chief Engineer was given carte blanche to lay his railway over any land irrespective of ownership or occupation and to reserve a mile-wide zone on each side of the line for railway purposes. At Nairobi, the effect of these powers was to secure to the Railways the whole of the plain on the south side of the swamp [the CBD triangle], which came under the absolute ownership and complete control of Railway authorities. [84] 11

The future CBD belonged absolutely and entirely to the Railways. Ownership had supposedly been transferred from the Maasai and/or Kikuyu to the Uganda Railways without any transaction, verbal or written, that we know of. A boundary, in form of a rail line, was proof enough of acquisition.

The current boundaries of this area are Uhuru Highway to the west and Haile Selassie Avenue to the south. The draining of the swamp and canalising of the stream makes Nairobi River the north-eastern boundary. The space within these boundaries has been the backdrop upon which successive governments have given *form* and *expression* to their own identity. It is the tablet upon which successive governments have engraved their symbol of identity.

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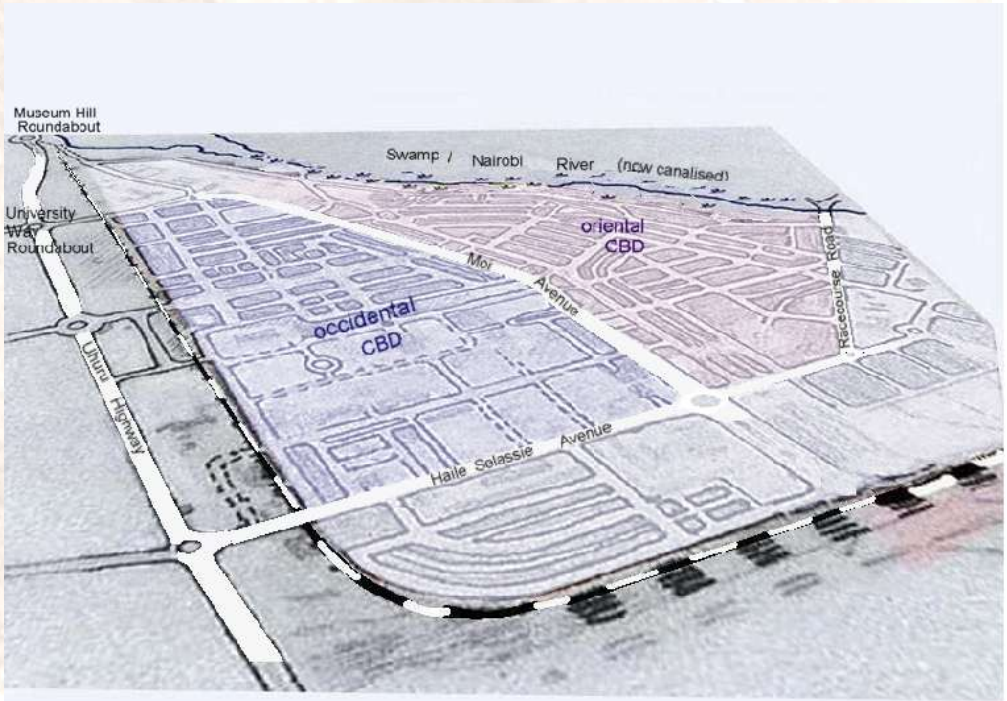
[83] Director of the Survey of Kenya, City of Nairobi. Edition 2 SK 46, published in 1964. Map was compiled from an Air Survey dated January 1961 and from other large scale map series covering the city.

[84] Smart, J. *Nairobi. A Jubilee History* His Majesty's Stationery Office. London 1950. p. 13.



May 1899. Railhead arrives at Nairobi

current boundaries of Nairobi CBD (2007)




Scale: 1:20,000

### 5.1.1 crafting a railway's identity

In chronological order, Uganda Railways was the first explicit government over Nairobi. The Railways claimed absolute ownership and asserted maximum authority over the area marked red ochre in the map. And to make their claim tangible, after camping by Nairobi Swamp, they erected an imposing railway station whose position on the map is shown by this ● symbol . More than a century later, the new railway station occupies the same site. This picture of the *mabati* (corrugated iron sheets) station was taken in 1906 and a London newspaper of those days described it thus:

> … the railway station is a splendid building with … an enormous clock that can be seen and heard almost to the utmost limits of the town. [85]

The building was an identity symbol of the new owner. And apart from the outstanding clock tower mentioned in the newspaper report, the size and layout of this building must have been imposing in the first few years of Nairobi township. Without a doubt, this was the most 'visible' building in the first decade of the twentieth century and it proclaimed that the land around the swamp was no longer in Maasai or Kikuyu hands.

The size and scale expressed in this building echo the political dominance exacted by the Railways during that era. So expressive is visual information that Nairobi township was identified with this building, the most outstanding of its time. The building becomes an avenue of communication. It expresses –visually—who the owner or occupier of this area is. Due to it's outstanding size (for those days) viewers must have associated it with the outstanding institution or persons.

[85] Smart. Op. cit. p. 20

| | period I | period II | period III | period IV | period V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date ► | 1898 - 1902 | 1902 - 1919 | 1920 - 1962 | 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1989 |
| Governing Authority | Railways | | | | |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | | | | |
| Representative Building/s | • **Railway Station**<br>Railway Headquarters | | | | |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse and Station. Roads.<br>Victoria and Duke Streets. | | | | |



Nairobi Railway Station in 1906. The building is made out of mabati (corrugated iron sheets) and wood. It has since been demolished.



### 5.1.2 inscribing the railway's power

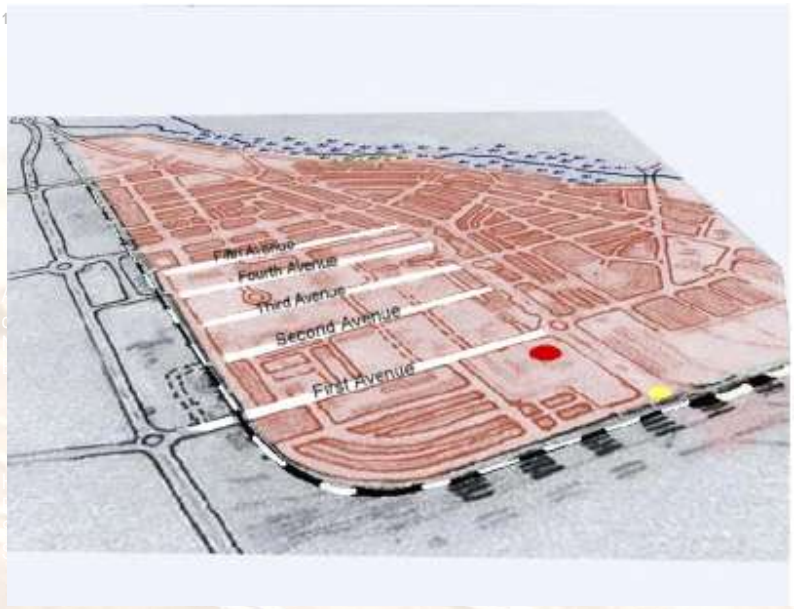
Putting up an imposing station was only the beginning of the Railways activities towards inscribing their mark into Nairobi CBD. By 1927 the headquarters building (on the next page) had been erected on the site marked ● and here it still stands in the year 2007. The building faces east and is along the First Avenue (today's Haile Selassie).

Nairobi's first town planner —the district railway engineer— set out a gridiron for the streets. Starting from the Railway Headquarters going north, the engineer planned streets to be laid equidistant. According to his 1901 map the streets are numbered chronologically from the south making the headquarters building the point of reference since the First Avenue (Haile Selassie) is closest to it while the Tenth (University Way) is farthest from it. However, in the engineer's map only First to Fifth Avenues feature. The rest must have been added as the township grew.

Railways paraphernalia was imposing in scale, size and style as evidenced by this building. The Railways was the biggest factor in the economy of the country, and was an all embracing organisation for its employees. This building is an expression of the power of the Railways and legend has it that it was constructed solely by railwaymen. [86]

[86] Cf. Martin, K., *Historic Nairobi*. Space Sellers Ltd. Nairobi 1992.

| | period I | period II | period III | period IV | period V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | 1898 - 1902 | | | | |
| Governing Authority | Railways | | | | |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | | | | |
| Representative Building/s | • Railway Station<br>• Railway Headquarters<br>Others–dwelling structures | | | | |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse and Station Roads. Victoria and Duke Streets | | | | |




This building was officially opened in 1927. It still serves as the Railways Headquarters



### 5.1.3 railways land use

The streets laid out by the Railways were thoroughfares in the sense that traffic circulated through them but they also served to demarcate distinct land use. North of First Avenue (Haile Selassie) was for residential purposes; south, for running and administering the business of railway transport. The Railways sited their offices, station and marshalling yard to the south of First Avenue. This was the 'work' area.

The First Avenue separated the offices from the residential blocks. Just north of First Avenue up to the Fourth (City Hall Way) six rows of residential houses were built. The area enclosed within Haile Selassie Avenue and City Hall Way (marked ochre in the map) was the housing estate for the middle level railway officers. Senior officers lived outside this CBD triangle. They were housed on the Hill to the west while the labourers (coolies) had their lines —Landhies— towards the east (today's Muthurwa which is also outside this map).

| | period I | period II | period III | period IV | period V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | 1898 - 1902 | 1 | | | |
| Governing Authority | Railways | | | | |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | | | | |
| Representative Building/s | • Railway Station<br>• Railway Headquarters<br>• Others– dwelling structures | | | | |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse and Station Roads.<br>_____<br>Victoria and Duke Streets | | | | |




The six rows of residential houses that were constructed for the middle level Railway Officers. They were demolished in the 1960s to make way for the present civic corner.



### 5.1.4 the legacy of the railways

The Railways operated within the British Empire and they acknowledged their sovereign in public space. To the east of the middle level railway officers' housing, Victoria and Duke Streets (marked green in the map) were laid out. Victoria was the reigning queen and duke is a title for a possible heir apparent.

Plots along Victoria Street were designated for European shops while the Asian bazaar was farther east on Duke Street, along the thoroughfare that is a continuation of Third Avenue. Duke Street is today's Ronald Ngala.

To reinforce the identity of the immediate authority, First Avenue was named after the Chief Engineer of the Railways. It became Whitehouse Road. To the west this street led to the Hill district where the senior officers lived. It actually led to Sir George Whitehouse' residence. Station Road became the natural name for the track leading to the railway station (marked red in the map).

Thus, like the railway station and headquarters building, public space in the form of streets memorialised the reign of the Railways over Nairobi. The identity of the owner and ruler of Nairobi during the first decade of the twentieth century can be deciphered from both these buildings and street names.

| | period I | period II | period III | period IV | period V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | 1898 - 1902 | 1902 - 1919 | 1920 - | 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – |
| Governing Authority | Railways | | | | |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | | | | |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters<br>Others– dwelling structures | | | | |
| Representative Streets | • **Whitehouse & Station**<br>• **Victoria & Duke** | | | | |




A close up of a middle-level-officer's house. The houses stood on stone piles and had a latticed verandah.





A Railway Officer's house constructed in the early years (1900s) and still standing

The Nairobi Railway Station in the year 2007





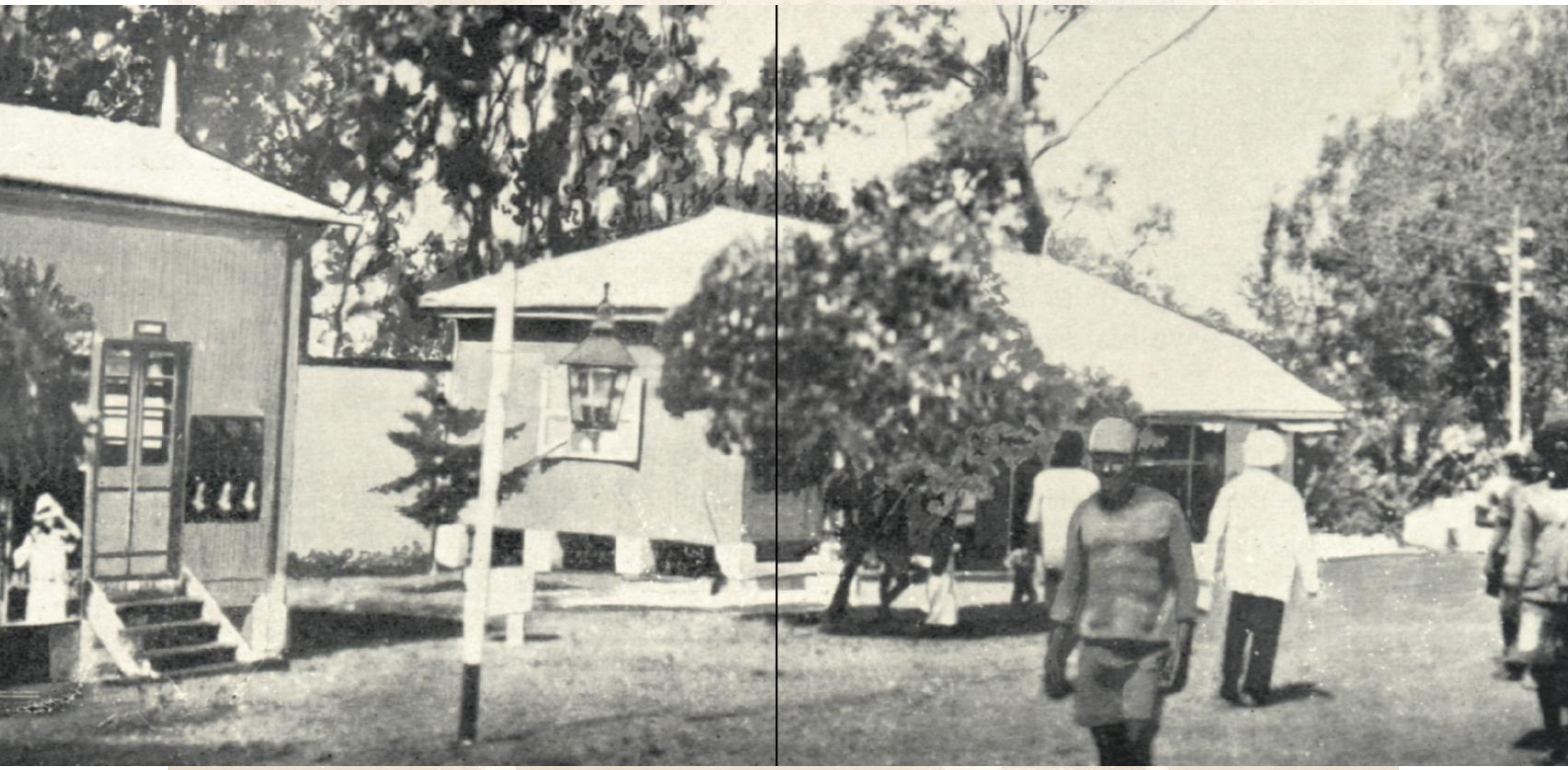
The District Engineer's Residence (Colonel Patterson). This was generic of the senior officers housing in the Railways.

Railway Headquarters. A view of the courtyard. Photo taken in 2007. The building was officially opened in 1927.





# 5.2 the colonial capital.



### 5.2.1 civil government

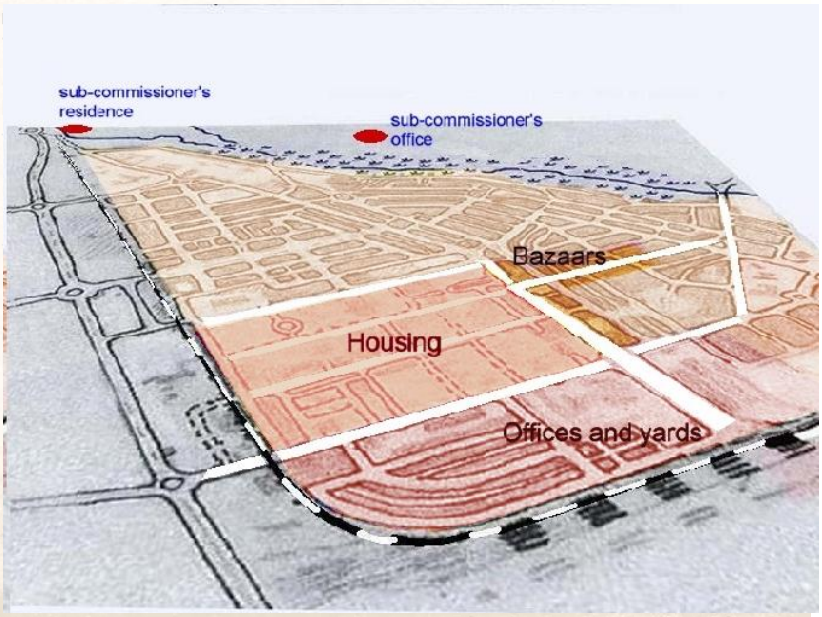
The whole point of establishing a railway line was to usher in British political dominance; to better administer East Africa and to secure the headwaters of River Nile –so what more natural than the government *factotum* moving into Nairobi. The Railways, after all, in bypassing Machakos had rendered it irrelevant. Machakos was not within the line of communication and was therefore not convenient as a base for central administration.

But on arrival, the government representative discovered that there was no room for civil government in the prime slot of land —the future CBD— since it belonged entirely and absolutely to the Railways. So to the north of the swamp, what we call Ngara today, was where government first pitched its tent. Ngara was outside the Railways territory. It was beyond the mile-wide-zone along the rail track.

The Commissioner was irked by this arrangement and he made it clear that "he would not tolerate playing second fiddle to the railway authorities."[87] London (the parliament) solved this problem by shifting the affairs of British East Africa (as Kenya was then called) from the Foreign to the Colonial office. The move gave the Commissioner precedence over railway authorities.

[87] cf. Smart. Op. cit

| Date ► | period I 1898 - 1902 | **period II 1902 - 1919** |
|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan | 1927 plan for a settler township |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station & Headquarters | •Ainsworth's office & Residence<br>Native Affairs Building |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse & Station. Victoria & Duke | Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler |




Colonel Ainsworth (sub-commissioner's) residence at the extreme north end of CBD (Museum Hill)



### 5.2.2 nairobi's first boundary

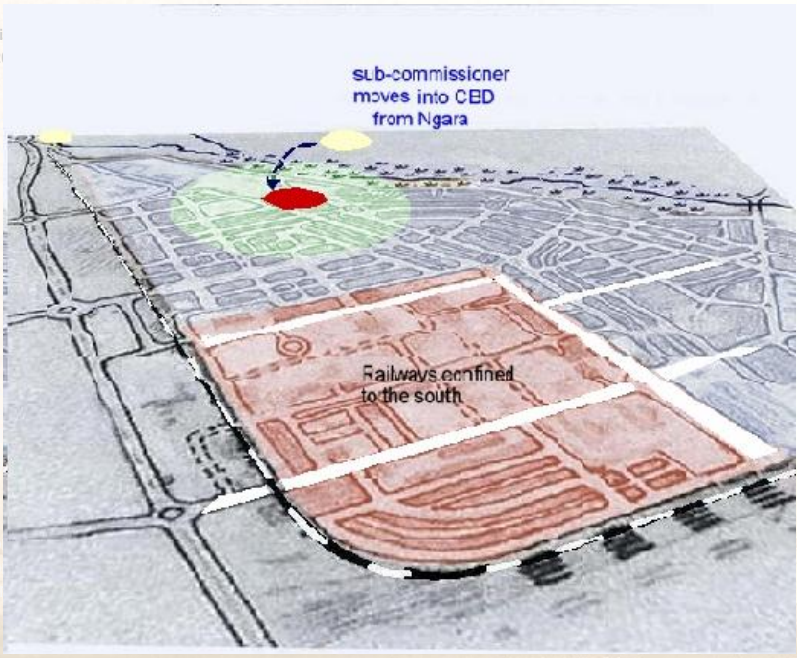
Once the Commissioner had become the main boss, he was quick to act in the matter of acquiring appropriately sited government offices. In March 1901, his Sub-Commissioner announced that his office and the other government offices had been removed south of the swamp, the new site being shown by a flagstaff flying the Protectorate flag. [88] Today this is the site of Moi Avenue Primary School and the principal's office is the very building that was erected for the Sub-Commissioner. The building still bears an EAP plaque on one of its doors declaring to all who care to read that it was once the office of the East Africa Protectorate.

And it is from this office that the first documented boundary of Nairobi takes its bearing. The Commissioner, using the powers vested in him declared "Nairobi Township as the area comprised within a radius of one-mile-and-a-half from the present office of H.M.'s representative the Sub-Commissioner…"[89] He was referring to the Sub-Commissioner of Ukambani whose previous base was Machakos; the Sub-Commissioner who moved into Nairobi and had to settle in Ngara for want of a better site. This same Sub-Commissioner, Colonel Ainsworth, using the powers extended to him, took the bold move of vacating the Ngara site to settle in what had been till then exclusively Railways' territory.

In a sense, March 1901 is the legal birthday of Nairobi Township and it was achieved by 'gazetting' the one-mile-and-a-half radius emanating from the august office of the East Africa Protectorate. Thus the unsuspecting township became a new link in the imperial chain; a new note in the imperial cadence. The first official step towards establishing *Pax Britannica* in Nairobi had been taken — irrevocably.

[88] cf. Smart. Op. cit.
[89] cf. Ibid.

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 | peri<br>192 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government | |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township | |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters | •Ainsworth's office &<br>Residence<br>Native Affairs Building | |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse<br>&Station.<br>Victoria &<br>Duke | Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler | |




East Africa Protectorate (eap) office in CBD. It is now the principal's office in Moi Avenue Primary School



### 5.2.3 government road gains prominence

Nairobi's functions were changing fast. From a Maasai watering place it became, in 1899, a campsite for railwaymen. It developed into their administrative headquarters in July of the same year. Civil government, in the person of Sub-Commissioner Ainsworth, moved in shortly after, and declared Nairobi a government base in March 1901. Subsequently all administrative arms of government —for the Protectorate— were established in this township.

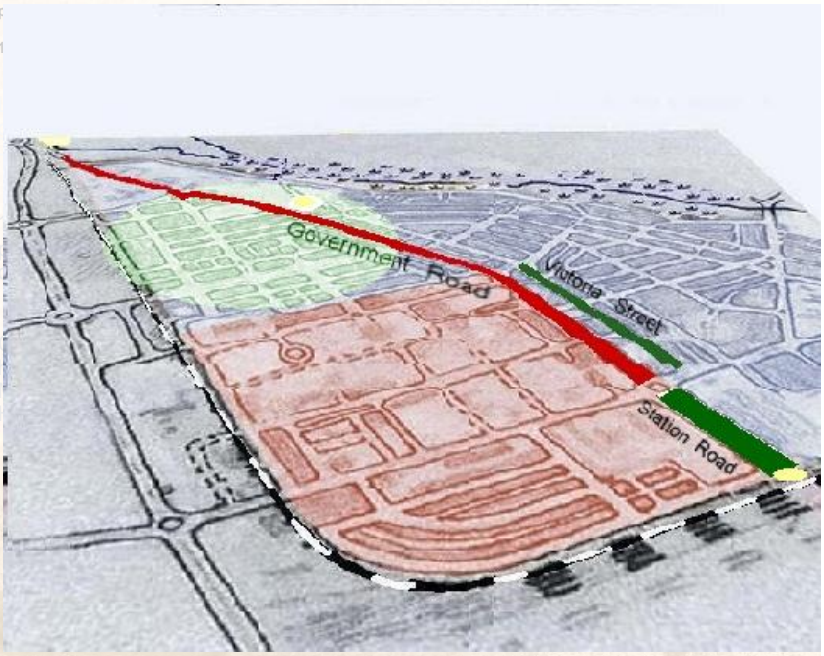
Therefore, after demarcating what land they required for purely railway purposes, the Railways retreated to the south around the station and marshalling yard. They withdrew from their holdings in the northern part of CBD in order to make room for civil government.

Civil government, unlike the Railways who stamped their identity in a linear fashion following the one-mile stretch, developed in a concentric style. Government's influence was to spread from the centre of the one-mile-and-a-half radius zone. Great was this government's power but not so great its premises —the Railways' buildings were far superior— for these were early days yet. The *mabati* camp shown in the opposite page was the first government cluster in CBD.

Meanwhile the streets, like space-allocation, also suffered a re-alignment. The main north-south thoroughfare, Station Road *cum* Victoria Street, was elongated towards the government boma to become Government Road. And after the fire of 1904 which wrecked Victoria Street, the entire track (marked red in the map) assumed the name Government Road. Station Road was reduced to the section south of First Avenue (Whitehouse Road and today's Haile Selassie Avenue). Station Road became less prominent just like the Railways who were now subject to civil government. To the east of Government Road, another track was laid out and given the name Victoria Street (today's Tom Mboya).

Government Road, the main north-south axis in CBD, became the dominant street at this early date. It led to the government boma linking the railway station with the EAP offices. It ran along the Stanley and Norfolk hotels. Government Road linked the previous authority —Railway headquarters— to the authority of the day. Government Road, like the Uganda Railway, was a communications lifeline. It linked the important sites in this new township. Where the Railways had created an east-west axis, using the First to Fourth Avenues, government changed it into a north-south axis; the prominence that First Avenue (Whitehouse Road) had enjoyed in the days of Railway governance was transferred to Government Road with the settling of civil government. It is thus that power politics resonated in public space.

| | period I | period II |
|---|---|---|
| Date ► | 1898 - 1902 | 1902 - 1919 |
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township |
| Representative Building/s | ● Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters | ● Ainsworth's office & Residence<br>Native Affairs Building |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse & Station.<br>Victoria & Duke | •Government Road<br>Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler streets |




Mabati offices for Civil Government along Government Road. They were used until the 1990s to house the Department of Survey.



### 5.2.4 extending the reign of civil government

In 1905 the Commissioner moved his office from Mombasa into Nairobi. In the Protectorate (Kenya) he was the representative of the British Government. His person and office symbolized the English crown. He therefore had to be housed in a commensurate manner. The residence of the Railways Chief Engineer was given over to him.

On the opposite page is a picture of a senior officer's residence (the chief engineer's was not available) and on the assumption that senior officers were housed in similar bungalows we can conclude that the residence made over to the Commissioner probably looked like this one. By 1906, a proper residence for the Commissioner had been built on the site of today's State House (it is outside the CBD triangle —to the west).

As a reflection of the power position, the Commissioner occupied the most outstanding residence in the township since his was the most outstanding power in political terms. The in-coming bearer of highest authority occupied the residence of the previous high authority —the Railways Chief Engineer. Symbolically the Commissioner appropriated First Avenue (Whitehouse Road) to himself because this thoroughfare now led to his residence.

The last street, towards the north, led to the residence that was purposely built, in 1906, for the Commissioner; it led to Government House. The street was to be later named Kingsway. References to civil government, in street names, spanned the First to the Tenth Avenue –the area marked green in the map on the opposite page. The Commissioner realised what his Sub-Commissioner had timidly initiated; he widened the territorial scope of government's influence; he established his capital in Nairobi.

The only space that remained entirely under Railways' jurisdiction was south of First Avenue (marked red ochre). Here the Railways had their offices, station and marshalling yard. Here, under the shadow of civil government, they seemingly reigned supreme.

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 |
|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters | Ainsworth's office &<br>Residence<br>Native Affairs Building |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse & Station.<br>Victoria & Duke | Government<br>Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler |




Residence of a senior Railway Officer. The EAP Commissioner was given a similar residence before Government House was built.



### 5.2.5 ministry of native affairs (the commissioner's office)

Civil government approached space management from a concentric perspective unlike the Railways' linear approach. In setting out the town's boundary government defined its space from the centre of the one-mile-and-a-half radius while the Railways spoke of one-mile-stretch along the rail track.

Perhaps because of the concentric approach the next government office –a proper stone structure– was sited somewhat in the middle of the CBD triangle. It was the District Commissioner's (D.C.'s) office (later the P.C.'s.). The new dominance in the land was government and a proper office was set up in a 'proper' position, the better to communicate this fact.

The structure shown on the opposite page was built in 1913 for the Ministry of Native Affairs which handled the concerns of the conquered peoples, the natives, the subjects of political dominance. It is in this sense that the building is viewed as a symbol of political authority.

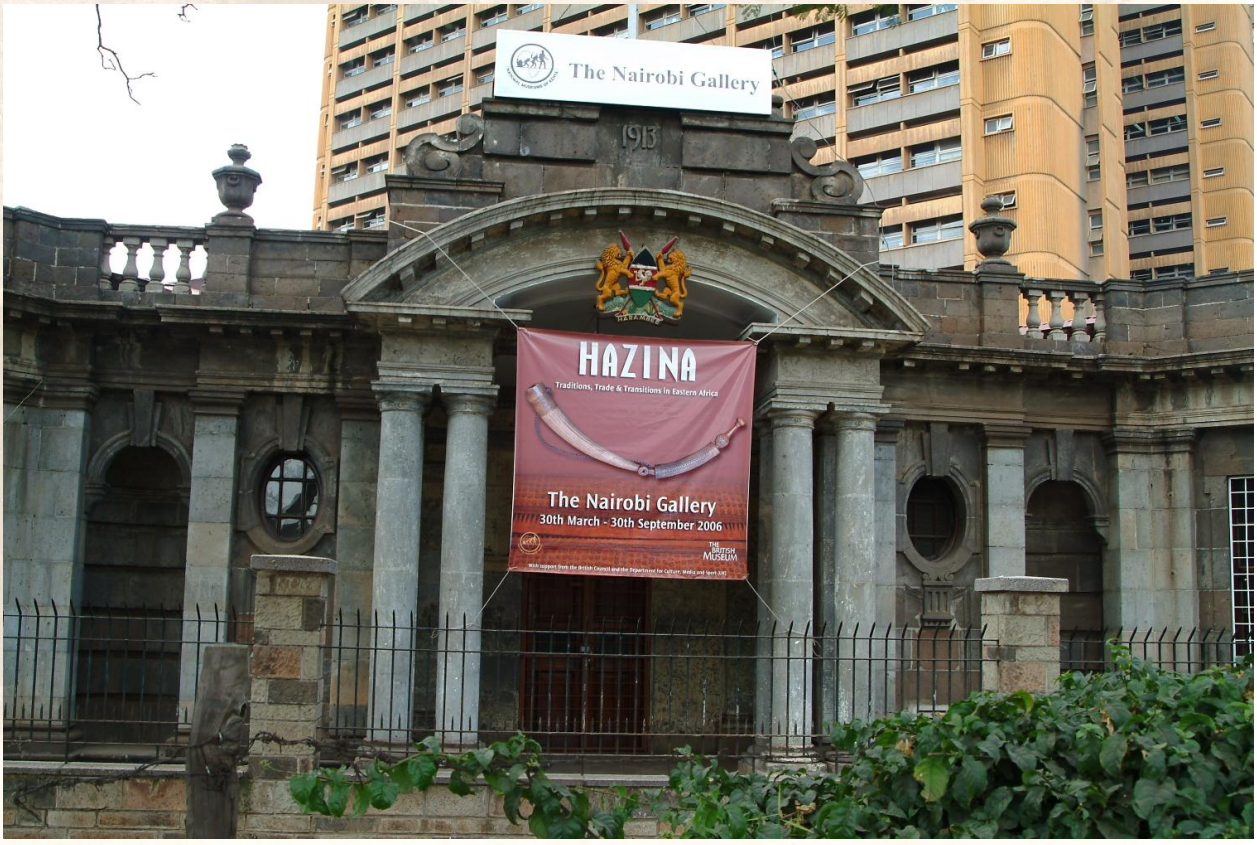
The original government town plan consisted of a square of official buildings around what is now Kenyatta Avenue and Uhuru Highway roundabout. The Ministry of Native Affairs building was part of this design. And the second building was the Treasury sited where the Nyayo-mountain monument stands today. In the map this site is marked by a white dot. However, this particular town layout was never fully carried out and the Treasury building was later demolished.

The Native Affairs building occupied a relatively central position in the CBD triangle just as civil government occupied the central position in politics.

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 |
|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br><br>Railway Headquarters | Ainsworth's office & Residence<br>● Native Affairs Building |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse and Station Roads.<br><br>Victoria and Duke Streets. | Government Road<br>Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler |




Built in 1913 for the Ministry of Native Affairs this building was later used as the D.C.'s, then P.C.'s office and because of its historical significance was gazetted in 1993 and pronounced a national monument in July 1995



### 5.2.6 the legco –chamber of law and order

In 1907 the British Government yielded to the political pressure of about 600 European settlers, and a legislative council was created.[90] The larger Asian community that was pioneering mercantile trade was only nominally represented while the enormous African community was represented not at all. The Commissioner presided over the sessions of this legislative council (legco); he presided over this minority-rule council.

The legco came to be because with the transfer of the protectorate (Kenya) from the Foreign to the Colonial office, the government of the empire —located in London— asked it's representative in East Africa to remedy the inequality of the fact that Africans were taxed but not the immigrants. The European settlers' reply was "no taxation without representation".[91] They wanted a crown colony with a legislative council containing elected members from their midst. They wanted a say in how the money was to be spent if they were to contribute. They wanted to be empowered so that they could direct Nairobi's (and Kenya's) affairs both politically and economically.

The Commissioner supported the settlers' idea and London conceded making the Commissioner governor with executive and legislative councils. Memorial Hall and the obelisk in front of it – pictured on the opposite page– was built to commemorate the First World War. It served as the colonial version of parliament from 1924 to 1954.

The first of many legco meetings was held in August 1907. And it is from the deliberations of this house that the highlands were reserved for exclusive European occupation. It is from this house that they became the politically charged 'white highlands'. It is also from this house that the idea of establishing native reserves emerged. These reserves restricted the numerous Africans to specific areas within the country and not always the productive ones.

It is from this house that the settlers further urged the removal of native reserves far from their centres. Nairobi was a European centre and therefore no longer a natural home to Africans. Africans now needed authorisation to live in this centre. Maybe this was what Elspeth Huxley — the literary voice of the settlers— referred to as "law and order which the native had got on without but had not got on very far."[92] Legco's law and order placed the native not just far from this chamber but very far from any justice, without which there can be no law. Memorial hall, the symbol of settler legislature, is centrally positioned and on the same axis as the other administrative building —the ministry of Native Affairs.

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[90] Cf. Bennett, G. *Kenya. A Political History The Colonial Period*. Oxford University Press, Ibadan, Nairobi, Accra. 1963 p 21f

[91] Cf. Ibid. p. 20

[92] Meinertzhagen, R. *Kenya Diary 1902-1906*. Eland Books, London and Hippocrene Books, New York. 1957 and 1983. p. vi

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 |
|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters | Ainsworth's office & Residence<br>Native Affairs Building |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse & Station Roads. | Government<br>Hardinge<br>Eliot<br>Stewart<br>Sadler |




Memorial Hall served as the parliament in colonial times and today, with a new frontage, it is the bank of India along Kenyatta Avenue.





### 5.2.7 the british monarchy is branded into public space

Government house was built in 1906 for the Governor of the East Africa Protectorate. It has since undergone many alterations and the picture on the opposite page depicts the front façade of the same building but in its present state.

Political power was inscribed into Nairobi on behalf of the British Royal House. This fact was branded into public memory by allotting monarchical names to the streets. Railway governance had already supplied Victoria and Duke Streets; *Victoria* being the reigning queen at the turn of the century (early 1900s) while *Duke* is a title of a possible heir apparent.

| Date ► | period I 1898 - 1902 | period II 1902 - 1919 | period III 1920 - 1962 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Governing Authority | Railways | Colonial central government | Local government – municipal council |
| Physical Planning | 1898 plan for a railway town | 1927 plan for a settler township | 1948 master plan for a colonial city |
| Representative Building/s | Railway Station<br>Railway Headquarters | Ainsworth's office & Residence<br>Native Affairs Building | **Government house**<br>Memorial Hall<br>High Court<br>Town Hall<br>Hamilton House<br>City Hall |
| Representative Streets | Whitehouse &Station<br>Victoria & Duke | Government Road<br>•**Hardinge**<br>•**Eliot**<br>•**Stewart**<br>•**Sadler** | •**Coronation**<br>•**Connaught**<br>•**York**<br>•**Queensway**<br>•**Kingsway**<br>Delamere<br>Grogan |

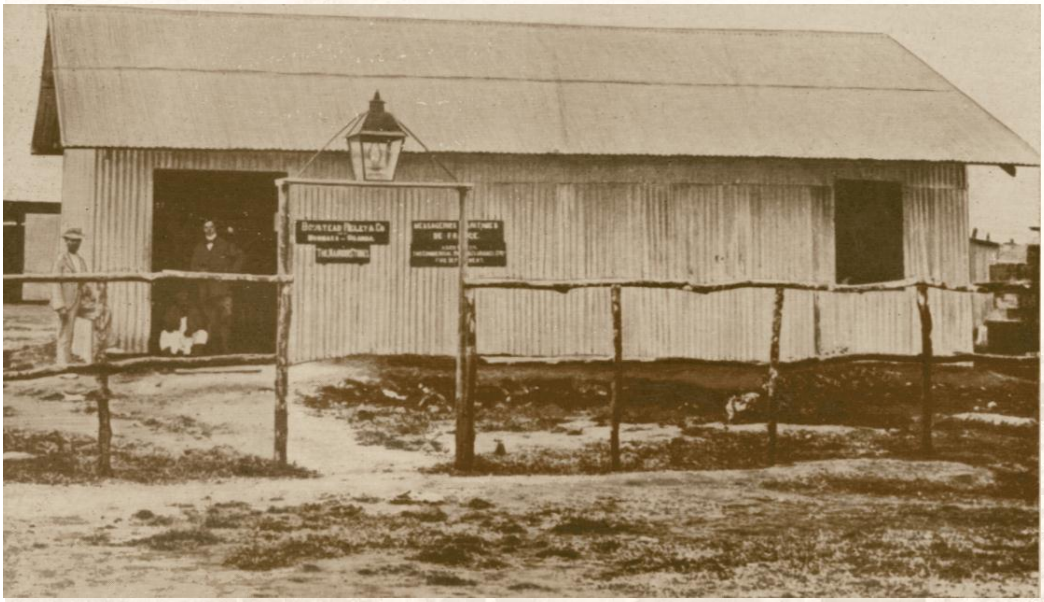



The 1906 visit of the duke and duchess of Connaught was memorialised by Connaught Street. The accession of King George VI (1937), after Edward's abdication, was celebrated by Coronation Avenue. So synchronised was Nairobi with empire affairs that the day to day life of the British monarchy found expression in it's streets.

Queensway, Kingsway and York (duke of York) all bear a reference to the monarchy. The fact that Kenya was a British colony was trumpeted by the streets of Nairobi. And the surrogates of this government –the commissioners of EAP—were also not forgotten. The first four — Hardinge, Eliot, Stewart and Sadler-Hayes— had each a street named after them. Well had civil governance established its presence in this space. By the time some of Nairobi's affairs were handed over to a properly constituted town council, reference to the Railways in CBD streets had retreated into second place. Just as the dominant political voice now belonged to civil authority. dominant landmarks, in the form of streets, now referred to civil governance.

## The 'Nairobi look' in c. 1899—1910 The 'Tinfointein' or Tin Town.

The earliest government structures were made out of mabati and often raised on stilts. This was Nairobi's general 'look' or style in the first decade of the twentieth century.



one of Nairobi's earliest stores.



The Goan Institute



The first D.C.'s office and court house in Nairobi. 1900.
It was sited in Ngara

Some of the first government offices to be constructed in CBD. This building (and others) was later used to house the Department of Survey up to c. 1995.






The plaque on the door says EAP (East Africa Protectorate). This building was constructed by Jeevanjee for Col. Ainsworth. It is now a school principal's office.



This obelisk in front of Memorial Hall (now Bank of India) was built as a memorial to those who perished in the World



The residence of Col. Ainsworth (2007). It now serves as the office of the curator of the National Museums of Kenya -Nairobi.

## Nairobi Township c. 1911-1929

Permanent stone structures –for the government–began to feature in the second decade of the twentieth century.




Bank of India, along Kenyatta Avenue. It was the legco building until 1954. The frontage was added when it became a bank.

The D.C.'s building/ Ministry of Native Affairs now belongs to the National Museums of Kenya.





# 5.3 the municipality.



### 5.3.1 foundations of local government

The Nairobi Municipal Regulations were published in April 1900 under powers vested in the then Commissioner, Sir Arthur Hardinge. Apart from defining the township boundary, these regulations authorized the Sub-Commissioner to nominate annually a number of the leading residents or merchants to act with him as a town committee. They further laid down the rules of conduct for the committee and prescribed the method by which a rate for lighting, policing and cleaning the town might be levied.

This committee held its first meeting in July 1900 when Ainsworth sat down with his council to tackle the problems of the new township. This was not the appropriate venue for these meetings. From 1903 they were held in premises that had been erected specifically for this purpose. The *Town Hall*, as the premises were called, was built on Government Road at the junction of Sixth Avenue (later Delamere then Kenyatta Avenue). The site is marked ● in the map on the opposite page and the current building on this plot is Imenti House, popularly known as Universal College.

The mabati construction pictured here –very much in the style of temporary government buildings in the early years— was the seat of Local Government. It was post office, court house and town hall, all in one. The building was on the same axis as other Government edifices: Memorial Hall where the Legco met and the District Commissioner's office in the Native Affairs building. All were sited along Sixth Avenue. More interesting however is the fact that the Town Hall stood right in the middle of Government Road (Moi Avenue). Thus the business of governing the town was carried out in the thoroughfare bearing the same name.

| Date ► | period I 1898 - 1902 | period II 1902 - 1919 | period III 1920 - 1962 | period IV 1963 - 1978 | period V 1979 –c. 1990s |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Local gov ernment – municipal council (under central gov ernment) | Indigenous gov ernment 1st regime | Indigenous gov ernment 2nd regime |
| | | | 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan grow th strategy | no data av ailable |
| | | | Gov emment Hse<br>Memorial Hall<br>High Court<br>• Tow n Hall<br>Hamilton Hse<br>City Hall | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tow er |
| | | | Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York<br>Queensw ay<br>Kingsw ay<br>Delamere<br>Grogan | Keny atta &<br>Harambee<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mbingu<br>Koinange | Moi Av enue |




Mabati town hall which was used from 1903 to 1923. It was post office, court house and town hall, all in one.



### 5.3.2 a fully fledged municipal council

British East Africa discarded protectorate status to become a crown colony in 1920. Henceforth it was referred to as Kenya Colony. With this change, the town gained a constitutional advance; Nairobi Municipal Council received full corporation status.

Up until 1920 the town committee had been advisory in its function. Up until then final responsibility for running the township lay in the hands of the Governor. With the change to crown colony, the Governor announced that London would support all reasonable plans for improvement in the management of municipal affairs. And he realised the application made in 1909 by the town committee; he granted the committee the Corporations Ordinance.

The council could now convert court fines into municipality revenue. It also received full responsibility for roads and drains among other chores. With these new responsibilities it was deemed appropriate to improve the council's premises and image.

The newly constituted council took its seat in February 1920. It had Hamilton as its chairman. He was the one who proposed that a more distinctive title be adopted for the chief of the municipality and he went on to suggest that that title be *mayor*. The town council offices were re-sited in 1923; from Government Road they moved to Hamilton House on Eliot Street (now Wabera).

The building featured here, Hamilton House, was put up by the Civil Servants' Co-operative Society. Hamilton, for whom the building is named, was a one time civil servant and very active in the affairs of this society. The grand title of *His Worship the Mayor* was officially used for the first time in 1923 and a corporation seal was designed within the same year. The motto *Consilio, Fide, Vigilantia (*by counsel, faith and vigilance) was adopted by the council. Thus both the premises and image of the municipal council were greatly enhanced.

In this same year —1923— the council invested in the production of a special street map which I have unfortunately been unable to locate.

| Date ► | period I<br>1898 - 1902 | period II<br>1902 - 1919 | period III<br>1920 - 1962 | period IV<br>1963 - 1978 | period V<br>1979 –c. 1990s |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | | | Local government – municipal council (under central government) | Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| | | | 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| | | | Government Hse<br>Memorial Hall<br>High Court<br>Town Hall<br>●Hamilton Hse<br>City Hall | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| | | | Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York<br>Queensway<br>Kingsway<br>Delamere<br>Grogan | Kenyatta & Harambee<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mb.<br>Koinange | Moi Avenue |

**Hamilton House- the second premises for Nairobi's town council was built in 1923. This photograph was taken in the year 2007.**



### 5.3.3 the high court –law and order

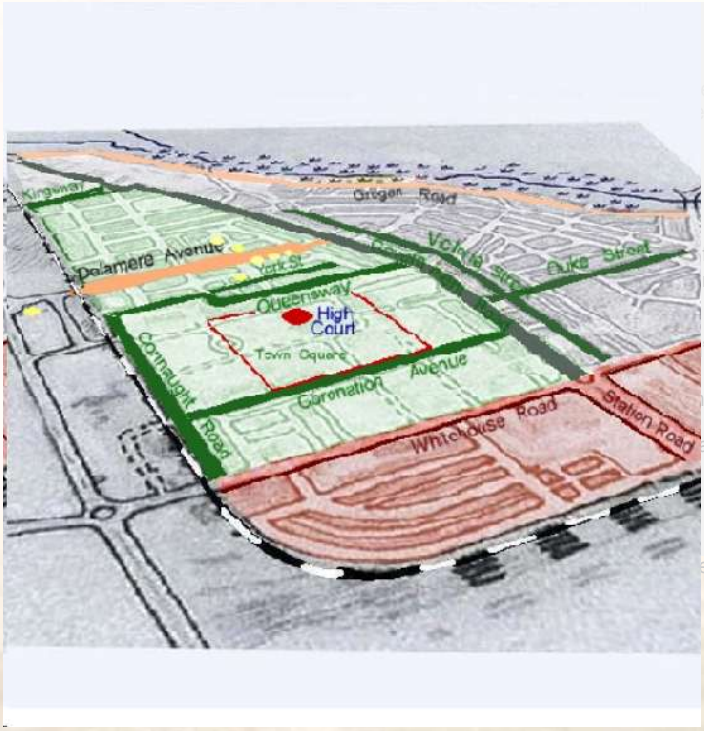
*Pax Britannica* was about establishing the proverbial *law and order*. This fact made court houses a significant feature of the empire. The first court house in Nairobi was in the same premises as the District Commissioner's office. It was later transferred to the mabati Town Hall on Government Road which however ceased acting as Town Hall premises in 1923. Subsequently, court proceedings were held in the Theatre Royal next to Memorial Hall.

The High Court is imperial *law and order* made tangible; law and order presented in brick and stone. The building pictured here is the repository of justice. It was built between 1932 and 1934 and was officially opened on the occasion of King George V's silver jubilee —May 1935. The team charged with the 1948 master plan for a colonial capital was keen to include several prominent public buildings linked by various axes, as the basis of Nairobi's design. To this team the High Court –this majestic, massive building– presented itself as the obvious centrepiece for a grand *Kenya Centre* square. Eliot Street (now Wabera) would form one of the axes linking the High Court and McMillan Memorial Library.

In theory the High Court has jurisdiction over all matters civil, criminal or admiralty and over all persons; the High Court had universal jurisdiction even over the natives. It was all-embracing and by the same token meant to be a point of convergence. Maasai or Kikuyu law may have been equally just and rigorous but Nairobi (and the entire colony) was governed according to the version of law encapsulated in this building. And according to this version the British believed that they had obtained rights of permanent transfer of land and occupation; a belief they had the power to enforce. They also believed that they were the only race fit to govern a mixed population.[93]

*Pax Britannica* or colonial law and order is the message of this building which is grand in size, scale, and setting. It is as grand as the empire 'where the sun never set' —though this *status quo* was to change in the latter half of the twentieth century. The High Court can be considered as one of the representative buildings of imperial rule. It is the most articulate symbol, the most powerful image, of the inscribing of colonial *law and order* onto Nairobi.

[93] Delamere, in an angry cable to the Secretary of State declared [the Settlers]… could not accept the implication of equality for East Africa colonists stand on principle that the White race is the only people which has proved its capacity to govern. Cf. Bennett. op. cit p 72.




| period III 1920 - 1962 | period IV 1963 - 1978 | period V 1979 –c. 1990s |
|---|---|---|
| Local government – municipal council (under central government) | Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| Government Hse<br>Memorial Hall<br>●High Court<br>Town Hall<br>Hamilton Hse<br>City Hall<br>McMillan Lib. | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York<br>Queensway<br>Kingsway<br>Delamere<br>Grogan | Kenyatta & Harambee<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mbingu<br>Koinange | Moi Avenue |

The High Court was built in 1932 to 1934.



### 5.3.4 centre of opinion and thought

The 1923 Devonshire White Paper was a diplomatic masterpiece that disappointed the Europeans and Asians alike. For London, this paper provided a neat escape from the supremacy battles that were being waged by the immigrant communities. It achieved this feat by re-discovering the overwhelming majority of Kenya's population —the native African. The momentous re-discovery revealed that all the noise about paramountcy had come from some 10,000 Europeans and 23,000 Asians acting before an estimated two-and-a-half million Africans. Wise London reserved for itself sole trusteeship on behalf of the Africans albeit without asking what their wishes were.

The European settlers were not ready to accept the White Paper which they derogatively called *the Black Paper*. And in their bid for minority self government; in their aspiration to build a white man's country, they sought a federation of the East African territories, with Nairobi as the grand regional capital.

Sir Edward Grigg –governor from 1925 to 1930— had high hopes of bringing about this federation. He expected to become East Africa's first Governor-General and this ambition fuelled his zeal to re-build Government House. He wanted it to be a worthy centre for the newly established Governors of East Africa conferences. In this he echoed Delamere (the *de facto* leader of the settlers) who declared that Kenya –and particularly Nairobi– should become the centre of opinion and thought in Eastern Africa –with a civilizing influence.[94] The Kenya European settlers wanted the lead in political power in the region of Eastern Africa; a desire they demonstrated by building Nairobi accordingly.

And it was during Grigg's governorship that the municipal council requested a loan of £ 84,000 for new offices to be erected in the town square (called city square from 1950). The offices' foundation stone was laid in July 1934 and by May 1935 the new Town Hall (together with the High Court) were officially opened in honour of king George V's silver jubilee. This happened at a time when European settlers were still not paying taxes inspite of being granted the legco;[95] this happened during the New York financial crash of 1929-31 that caused a near world wide depression.

These buildings —Government House, the High Court and City Hall— were outstandingly monumental; as monumental as the settlers' quest for absolute political power. These buildings were the settlers' wishes writ large. They were designed to show case Nairobi and declare to all and sundry how able and ready the settlers were for minority self rule. It is interesting to note that all three buildings are adequate for the needs of today —some seventy years later. So grand were they in 1935 that they still command notice amongst Nairobi's forest of modern skyscrapers.

[94] Cf. Bennett. op. cit p 61
[95] [22] Ibid. p 19 and 79




| period III 1920 - 1962 | period IV 1963 - 1978 | period V 1979 –c. 1990s |
|---|---|---|
| Municipal council (under central government) | Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1948 master plan for a colonial city | 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| Government Hse<br>Memorial Hall<br>• High Court<br>Town Hall<br>Hamilton Hse<br>• City Hall<br>McMillan Lib. | State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| Coronation<br>Connaught<br>York<br>Queensway<br>Kingsway<br>Delamere<br>Grogan | Kenyatta &<br>Harambee<br>Kaunda<br>Haile Selassie<br>Banda<br>Tubman<br>Moktar Daddah | Moi Avenue |

**City Hall was built in 1935.**
**This photograph is from Nairobi's official Jubilee History –1950.**



### 5.3.5 city status –the first city of east africa

It was suggested that Nairobi Town should seek city status as a fitting celebration of its golden jubilee. The petition was addressed to His Majesty the King since the municipal council was anxious that a Royal Charter of incorporation be granted. The king consented, charging the Duke of Gloucester to present the letters patent in person. While the Kenya (colonial) Government would present a mace to the new city, a grant of new arms for the seal which had been in use since 1923, was requested. This was in order to formally submit a *Nairobi Coat of Arms*.

Post world war II exuberance was reflected in the plans for Nairobi Town. First, the Nairobi Regional Town Planning Board was inaugurated. This body encouraged the erection of multi-storeyed buildings of architectural merit and undertook the planning of City Square. Secondly, in answer to the 1945 Railways declaration:

> [that]… it was essential that the rail tracks ... be removed from the centre of the town and … an alternative route to the Highlands [be worked out] [96]

The town planners were examining in detail the consequent deviation of essential roads with the result that after 1950 CBD gave up the rail track (it was re-routed) to acquire the Princess Elizabeth Highway (today's Uhuru Highway).

These preparations culminated in the Nairobi charter ceremonies of 30th March 1950. According to the official jubilee chronicle,

> Nairobi stepped out [of the year] 1949 … to gather [unto] itself … the first traditions of a land which has no memory yet … [ in its coat of arms] the golden crested cranes were retained as supporters … the motto remaining the same [by counsel, faith and vigilance] and the Masai (sic) shield was incorporated in the crest where a golden lion symbolises the peace-bringing character of British rule … the field is quartered green and gold … [to] represent the wealth of Kenya colony. There is a central motif in the form of a heraldic fountain commemorating the swamp that once inundated the Nairobi area, and from which it received its Masai name the place of cold waters. [97]

Nairobi was now a city; a city like any other in Europe. And this city basked in the peace bringing character of *Pax Britannica*.

However, the peace-bringing character, that which is symbolised in Nairobi's coat of arms proved to be short lived. Just two years after the promotion to city status, Nairobi experienced not peace but war, in the form of political agitation from the colonised peoples. These sought to do away with *Pax Britannica* —in a manner that was anything but peaceful. The ensuing endeavour is usually referred to as the Mau Mau war of independence. And it brings to a close our appreciation of Nairobi's built environment from the perspective of colonial architecture.

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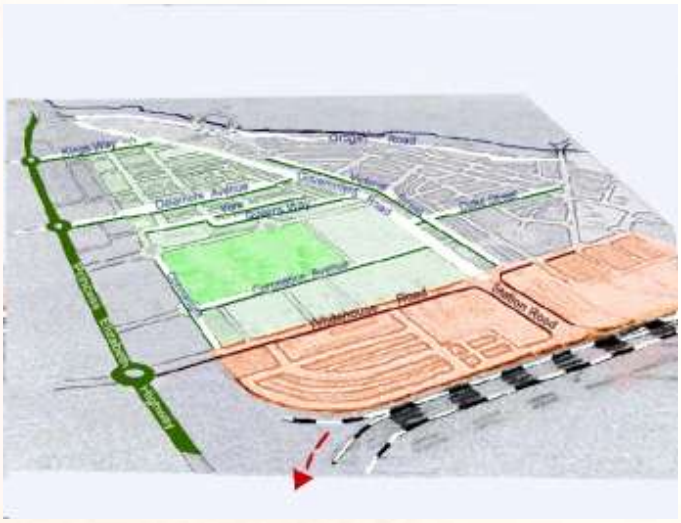
[96] Smart, op. cit p. 97
[97] Ibid. p. 104




Nairobi Coat of Arms



Rail track re-directed in order to 'open up' the centre of the city.

This building named Rhodes House (after Cecil Rhodes?) was built in 1930. later it was renamed Shell House, Pan Africa Insurance and now Family Finance Building Society. Its design, according to Katie Martin, was intended to proclaim the permanence and lofty ideals of British rule.[25]





This building, built in 1923 out of red brick and developed by Major Grogan as Torr's Hotel, is today a bank. Grogan — an eccentric character who walked from Cape to Cairo and left behind Gertrude's Garden Children's Hospital in honour of his wife, owned the swamp estate — the land adjoining the Nairobi swamp. The road along the river, marked orange in the map on page 45 —Grogan Road (and now Kirinyaga)—was named for him.

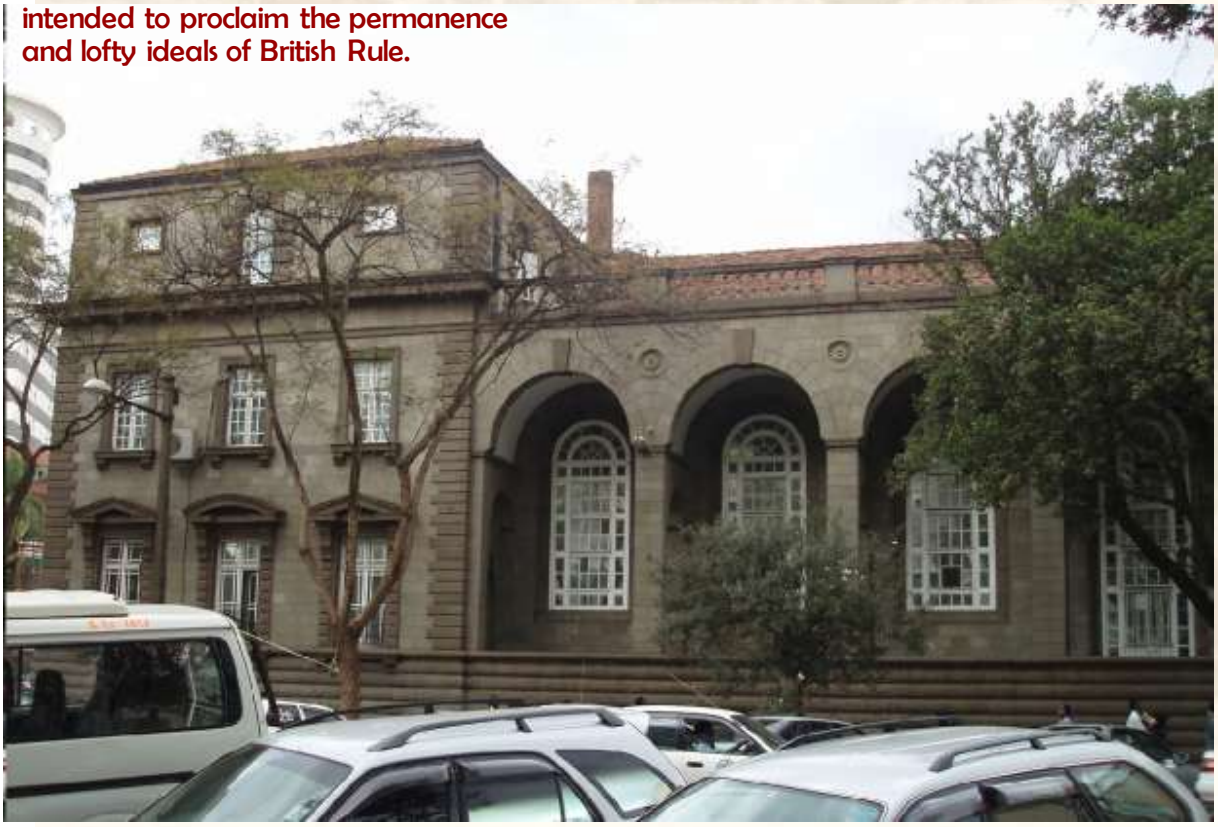
Built as a memorial to Sir William Northrup Mcmillan, an explorer-politician, this building is the most 'classical' in Nairobi CBD.



The buildings pictured in pages 43, 44 and 45
are along or near Delamere Avenue (Kenyatta Ave).
Their sites are marked • in this map.




This bank was built in 1930 as the head office of the Standard Chartered and according to Martins, it says all that a bank is supposed to say in terms of durability and conservatism, like Rhodes House (now Family Finance), and was intended to proclaim the permanence
and lofty ideals of British Rule.



## 5.4 analysis of colonial nairobi

### Monumental front facades



The High Court

The front façade is very like Government House making the viewer associate both buildings.



Government House

The Governor's Residence. In 1907 the Commissioner was named Governor with executive and legislative councils and here is a residence worth his station. The building was remodeled in 1933 and is used today as state house –the president's residence.

The British built out of so deep a tradition as to indelibly imprint their rule on the face of Nairobi. And we can be stirred by their buildings without being aware of what they imply.

Western civilisation —which the British are part of— claims to be built on the ruins of Rome. So vast was Rome's dominion and so powerful its influence that until the 18th century, Rome was the exemplar of power and wealth. The British appear to have aimed at creating a 19th century Roman-style empire.

A clue to the Roman's success was their flair for blending the utilitarian with the æsthetic in creating *colossus* and *grandeur* out of humdrum military acquisitions. For in their proverbial empire building, the Romans harnessed art to politics for propaganda purposes. Likewise the British harnessed architecture to politics in their imperial expansion. They used a specific style in public buildings —a style which we could call *colonial architecture*— to proclaim imperial rule. This style became the standard bearer of British political dominance.

And as the Romans adopted and modified the Greek temple for civic functions; as they used architecture as a vehicle for proclaiming *Pax Romana*, so did the British employ the same building vocabulary to articulate *Pax Britannica*. The ethos were from classical Rome in an effort to re-create a (neo) classical British dominion.

The supreme achievement of classical art forms in the Western tradition —the Greek temple— was rectilinear and of *post-beam-pediment* construction. *Post* refers to the columns, *beam* indicates the horizontal members resting on the columns and *pediment (*also called *lintel)* denotes the triangular area above the beam. In addition, influenced by the Pythagorean quest for harmony through mathematical rules, Greek builders standardized six as the perfect number of columns for the ends of these temples. To classical architecture, Roman builders contributed the arch and a flair for colossus.

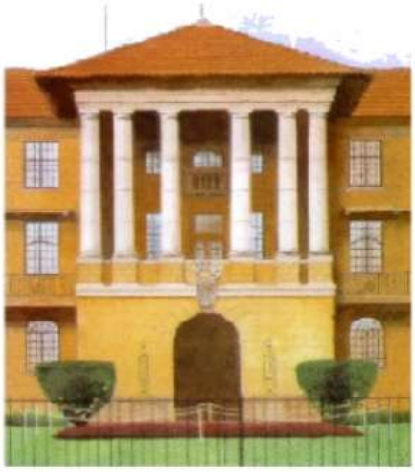
Public buildings in Nairobi —Government House, Railway Headquarters, City Hall and the High Court— are rectilinear and of post-beam-pediment construction as shown in the photographs in the opposite page. And with the exception of City Hall all have six columns on their front facades. City Hall does not denote highest authority since a municipal council is usually dependent on central

government. The High Court does signify supreme authority because it is at the apex of all matters judicial, while the Railways was at one time the sole government over Nairobi. Government House indicates the seat of executive power vested in the governor on behalf of the British crown. The Roman arch features in almost all these buildings. Most of them exude colossus and grandeur.

British rule was made physically tangible by scattering classical architecture over CBD. Thus was *Pax Britannica* symbolised, manifested and actualised in Nairobi's space. Like the August Cæsar who established his celebrated *Pax Romana* among the peoples he conquered, the British crown sought to establish 'British peace' among conquered peoples. Nairobi became an annex of the British Empire not solely in name but also in symbolic architecture. The role of these buildings is similar to a flag —the Union Jack— in asserting British claims of possession and dominion.

These monumental buildings were crystallisations of a whole social order.
What the viewer must ask is: was colonial architecture a dead stereotype of another culture? Was it an expression of the culture of the day? If so whose culture? And why has it not engendered like buildings? How does contemporary Kenya view colonial architecture?

## Monumental front facades















City Hall from the eastern end. The clock tower (seen extreme left) was added after the construction of the main building.

This campanile was put up in honour of Tommy Wood, a one time mayor of Nairobi

According to the 1948 master plan for a colonial city, the High Court was supposed to be the centrepiece of a 'Kenya Centre'. The buildings was designed by the famous South African architect, Sir Herbert Baker. The arched pointed gate is a recent addition and not in keeping with the general style of the building. Perhaps a rounded arch similar to the one used on some windows and the doorway would have suited the gateway better.





City Hall –a detail of the building

A view of City Square — from the south—
with the tall buildings, of a later date, erased, in an effort to
capture the 'feel' of City Hall and the High Court in colonial times.



# 5.4 the eastern CBD



## .5.5 the eastern cbd

According to Zarina Patel, in addition to troops and labour for building the railway, the British Foreign Office brought traders from India, to introduce a monetary economy in East Africa's hinterland. A group of Indian merchants and coastal traders erected a small market-area in Nairobi in the year 1899. And what started as a large encampment of tents was developed into a thriving township. By 1900, Nairobi had a flourishing Asian bazaar situated between the present Tom Mboya Street and River Road. This bazaar was and still is more of an Asian than a European township.

The bazaar was first sited in a marshy area at the north end of Victoria Street (today's Moi Avenue) near Accra Road. But because of overcrowding and repeated plagues, in 1906, this nine-acre bazaar was removed to the present Biashara Street.

The bazaar Asians were the less dominant immigrants. Although they fought to be recognized as equal subjects of the Crown —equal to the British settlers— they never attained an upper hand in Nairobi politics. The physical area they occupied reflected this political position. They were squeezed into the eastern side of CBD, they were very crowded. As regards politics, they had no monumental public buildings. They were not an active ingredient in dispensing political governance.

The plots in the bazaar area are as crowded as occidental CBD is expansive. This smaller approach to physical space reflects the small political space allotted to the Asians. However, they articulated oriental culture in this limited space with admirable skill. The area is studded with gems of eastern architecture.




The Indian Bazaar 'spills over' from River Road into Biashara Street.

Shop building along Duke Street (today's Ronald Ngala).
Built in 1918 according to the date inscribed on the façade.



## 5.5.1 the northern end of eastern cbd –the muslim area




According to the houses of worship the Muslim community occupied the northern part of oriental CBD.
Mosque sites are marked ●.
The ones in the southern part marked ● are temples.

Oldest surviving mosque –the Khoja Mosque (Shia)






Khoja Mosque is prominent in its antiquity. Its proper name is the Darkhana Jamatkhana. Martin[98] suggests that it is western in design (has a western façade) thanks to the then Aga Khan who exhorted his followers in East Africa to adopt British and European customs. It was built in 1920.



[98] Cf. Martin, op. cit





The foremost Sunni mosque in Nairobi is the Jamia. It was built in 1925-1933. It is a splendid display of Islamic art. The mosque is Arabian not Turkish in style with two main minarets, three silver copulas and a façade of spire-lets, inscriptions and arches.



## The Jamia Mosque



Before the new gateway was constructed

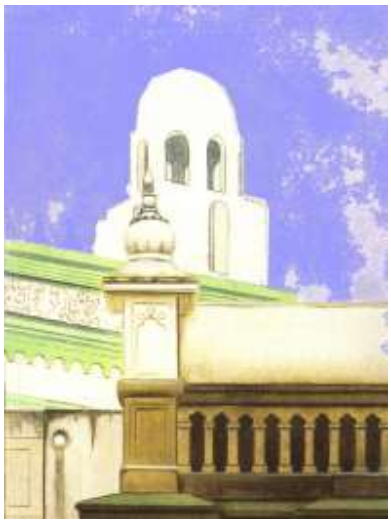





## Imitiazali Mosque



Other mosques include the Bohra Mosque, built in 1931, for the Bohra community and the Imitiazali Mosque hidden behind Khoja Mosque. It is small and was built in the 1940s for a wealthy Punjab businessman.



## The Bohra Mosque




KEFIELD
NG CO.LTD.


AMRITLAL HARDWARE STORES
SOLO
SOLO





This part of town is oriental up to today.
The architecture of this shopping bazaar, the shoppers in buibui are some of the details that contribute to the oriental ambience.





## 5.5.2 the southern end of oriental cbd –the hindu area




Along Racecourse Road is a complex of the Sikh military order 'Khalsa'. The association of the Guru's Lions —Siri Guru Singh Sabha built the complex.



Gate of an older and smaller Sikh house of worship





Inside the Shree Santan Dharm Sarba




Going by antiquity this temple —Shree Santan Dharm Sarba comes first for its foundation stone was laid in 1917. The temple is part of a large Hindu complex which includes schools and meeting rooms.








a view of the inside

The Satsang Temple







a view of the inside



In close vicinity to the Khalsa complex is the Satsang Temple (now converted into a school — Temple Road High School). It is a Hindu temple unlike the Sikh Khalsa. However, the relationship between Sikhs and Hindus is close. They share many gods and festivals.






શ્રી કચ્છ ભુજ નરનારાયણદેવ મંદિરના તાબાનું
"શ્રી કચ્છ સત્સંગ સ્વામિનારાયણ મંદિર - નાઇરોબી"
SHREE KUTCH SATSANG SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE
(UNDER SHREE KUTCH BHUJ NARNARAYANDEV TEMPLE)
KIRINYAGA ROAD NAIROBI 1954 A.D.




## Shree Kutchi Satsang Swaminarayan Temple




Celtel shop




KIRINYAGA CRESCENT



## 5.5.3 the mercantile symbol

This building, the Kenya National Archives, was the National Bank of India – Nairobi Branch. The bank now occupies what was Memorial Hall on Kenyatta Avenue.

The Asians were brought in to start a money economy.
They were the first ones to put up a bank in Nairobi

## The Kenya National Archives in the year 2007



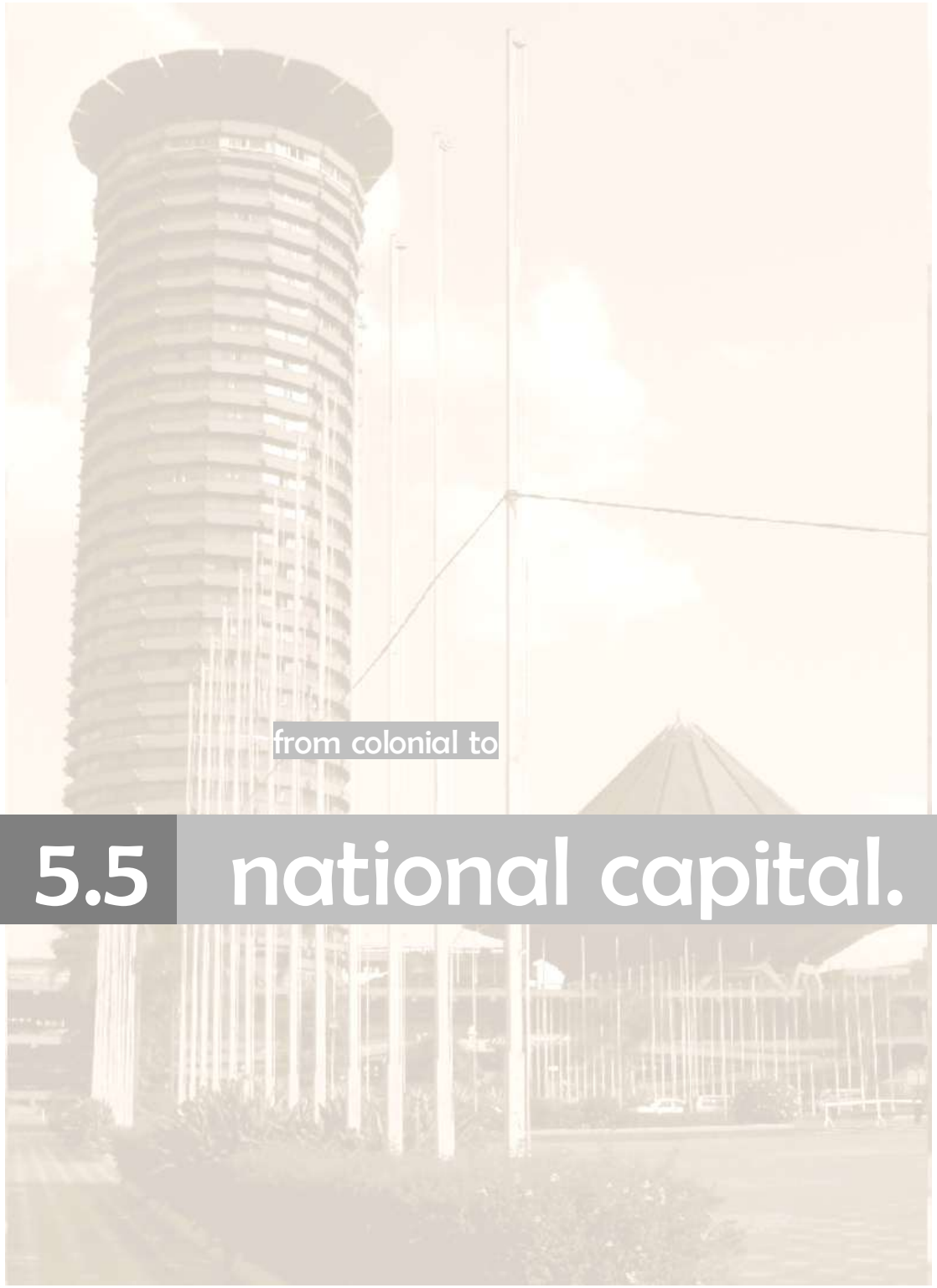
The National Bank of India built an imposing stone building at the corner of Government Road (Moi Avenue) and Reata street (Accra Road). Built in 1905, it was the first bank in Nairobi. Its original premises was a mabati structure similar to early government buildings.




## The National Bank of India —Nairobi Branch

This structure was built in 1930.





from colonial to

# 5.5 national capital.





### 5.6.1 representation in absentia

In Kenya, the world wars acted as political catalysts. The First War was followed by increased European settlement which went hand in hand with the registration of every African male leaving his reserve –the hated *Kipande* system. Forced labour, land expropriation and the Kipande system formed the basic African grievances during the colonial era; by 1930, Jomo Kenyatta was busy in London claiming for independence by writing newspaper articles. In one of them he wrote of "an agitation that will not cease until we are our own rulers again." But the outbreak of World War II halted his patriotic efforts.

There was much post World War II discontent in Nairobi. African men had gone off to serve in the British army and service overseas had widened their horizons. In coming back to Nairobi, these ex-servicemen found frustration not jobs. The numbers of unemployed grew rapidly, reaching 10,000. Housing conditions were also bad. According to the colonial Government, in 1948, "there were 22,000 people in the African locations of Nairobi who could not possibly find … accommodation, 4,000 of these being completely homeless."[99]

It must have been from these that the '*Forty Group*', said to have been ready for violent action against the colonial Government, emerged. *Mau Mau* also began to feature. While its beginnings lay behind the mounting disturbances in the Kikuyu reserves, its open action promised a future with little peace.

This monument to the *carrier corps* was put up by the colonial government in honour of those who fell during the two World Wars. It is hardly ever noticed by the indigenous people it purports to represent; by the time it was being erected the Africans were too busy with other concerns. May be they did not feel identified with the World Wars because the politics behind them were not of their making. And perhaps, just as the political wrangles underlying the World Wars were far removed from the Africans, this monument is similarly far removed from the African feeling. It is a beautiful work of art as far as technical execution goes. But it lacks human affiliations to enliven it, making it like an orchestral array that emits deafening silence.

[99] Bennett in op cit p. 112



| period IV | period V |
|---|---|
| 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1990s |
| Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| Kenyatta & Harambee<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mbingu<br>Koinange | Moi Avenue |



## The Carrier Corps

(Kariokor) sculpture in honour of the over 112,000 Africans who were involved in the world wars and a further 200,000 that made up the Carrier Corps that supported the fighting forces.



| period IV | period V |
|---|---|
| 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1990s |
| Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| Kenyatta & Harambee<br>_____<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi Mbingu<br>Koinange | Moi Avenue |



In the colonial CBD Africans were represented in absentia since the only monument that was placed there for them the (*carrier corps*), they did not identify with.

Jomo Kenyatta, who struggled for more than half a century to free his country from colonial rule, was to become that political monument.

This painting depicts Kenyatta in his robes as Chancellor of the University of Nairobi. But his principal role was political leader in championing the revolt against colonial aggression. He became the symbol of Kenyan political independence.

### 5.6.2 kenyatta –symbol of indigenous independence

On his return to Kenya from his long sojourn in England, Kenyatta received a 'hero's' welcome especially from the African press. The year was 1946. He had published *Facing Mount Kenya*, an anthropological study, also a subtle political challenge. Kenyatta was one of the continent's nationalist leaders. In 1945 his voice had joined others, in the fifth Pan-African Congress, in declaring that "racial discrimination must go, and then the people can perhaps enjoy the right of citizenship, which is the desire of every East African. Self-independence … is our aim."[100]

The World Wars, if anything served to show up the disparity between the immigrants and the indigenous peoples. While the Africans were sinking into utmost indigence, the settlers were attempting to build a white island, a state within a state. The 1949 publication of the *Kenya Plan* was preceded by a brochure entitled 'We are here to stay' alleging in the most unequivocal terms that European settlement in Kenya was a permanency, and that the maintenance of British leadership would be 'paramount'.

It is hardly surprising that by 1951 Kenyatta's speeches were challenging European immigration and land-holding. And neither was crowd participation lacking; to tunes learned from missionaries, words subversive of governmental authority were set. Even the British national anthem was treated similarly. So the momentum grew towards inevitable political disagreements.

Attacks on European farms and Chief Waruhiu's assassination led to the declaration of a state of emergency on 20th October 1952. British troops were flown in since "the men on the spot [the settlers] had failed to solve the problems of Kenya".[101] London (the imperial government) found it necessary to provide men and money on a large scale to curb the Mau Mau movement. Kikuyuland lived under a reign of repression, curfews, villagisation and tight controls on movement. The arrest of Kenyatta, and others, on 20th October 1952 appears to have been taken by the Mau Mau as a declaration of war –a very expensive war. Between 1952 and 1959, the emergency and the curbing of Mau Mau activities cost the colonial government £ 55.5 million,[102] and in political terms it cost the surrender of power to the indigenous peoples.

The infamous Kapenguria trial was a mockery of justice –a travesty– since the colonial government stooped so low as to use perjured testimony to prove their case against Kenyatta.[103] The *peace-bringing* character of British rule had brought many things but peace. And these events signified the untenable position of white minority rule in Kenya.

Kenyatta, the symbol of indigenous political independence, was to languish in detention until 1960. Indigenous independence and its symbol were yet to find their way —even physically— into the colonial CBD.

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[100] Cf. Amin, M. and Moll, P., *Mzee Jomo Kenyatta* Marketing and Publishing Ltd. Nairobi 1978. Introduction
[101] Bennet op cit
[102] Bushan, K. 'Kenya Fact Book 1995-1996' Newspread International. Nairobi
[103] Cf. Macharia, R. *The truth about the Trial of Jomo Kenyatta*. Longman, Kenya. Nairobi, 1991

### 5.6.3 repossessing city square

With indigenous political freedom, that 1963 momentous shift in governance, CBD's spatial symbols underwent a change. The statue of Lord Delamere, like colonial power, withdrew from centre stage. This statue, which had graced the principal street in the occidental CBD, was moved to Delamere's farm in Elementaita; it withdrew from *public* to *private* space, from civic to family possession.

The statue of Lord Delamere symbolised white settler power –de facto colonial supremacy. The street that bore the same name had no more reason to hang onto the name –Delamere Avenue– once the statue and what it stood for were withdrawn. The street, therefore, assumed another name, the name of the new political leader –Kenyatta. But Kenyatta's statue was not to grace only one street, albeit the main one. It was installed in the more central space, the City Square, Nairobi's *show room*. Change in governance effected change in the spatial form.

The 1948 town planners had made the High Court the centrepiece of City Square; Kenyatta placed himself (his sculpture) in prominence to this High Court –an action that can be variously interpreted. Did it signify that he was above the law? Above *colonial law* and by that very fact symbolise the rise of indigenous people beyond the reach of colonial law and order? Whatever the answer is, the sculpture alters the visual dynamics of the square by imposing a *Kenyatta look*. This has been achieved by the *central-positioning* which automatically makes the sculpture the visual-focal-point in the square —it is what one sees when one looks into the square. It usurps the *grand spectacle* of the High Court building, reducing it to a more pedestrian and utilitarian function. The centrepiece of the square is Kenyatta's sculpture.

And because of the political relation between the man and his motto, between Kenyatta and Harambee, the southern boundary of City Square –Harambee Avenue– appears natural. It also enlarges the square. Kenyatta's political battle cry resounds from Kenyatta Avenue to Harambee Avenue.

The motto *harambee* is from *Hari Ambe*, as Zarina Patel explains.[104] It was the cry used by the coolies when building the railway. "Praise be to God" —*Hari Ambe* in Hindi— they cried when pulling or pushing heavy loads, especially when all had to heave together to make the load move. *Hari Ambe* slowly evolved into harambee. And in June 1963, when Kenyatta was sworn in as Prime Minister of Kenya, he remarked, "This is one of the happiest moments of my life. We are now embarking on the final stage which will lead this country to independence. … I therefore give you the call: HARAMBEE! Let us work hard together for our country: Kenya."[105]

From the Coolie Hari Ambe, HARAMBEE became the national motto. In 1964, among other public works and spaces, Kenyatta renamed, thus appropriating unto himself, King George VI Hospital. This king's possession became, at least in name, the president's. Public works and spaces, especially between Second and Sixth Avenue (Harambee to Kenyatta Avenue) are imbued with national sounding names – Taifa Road, Sheria House, Jogoo House, Uhuru Highway—to reflect a national government. As the king, like Delamere, withdrew, Kenyatta and national ideology came to the fore. And thus was an African government inscribed into CBD.

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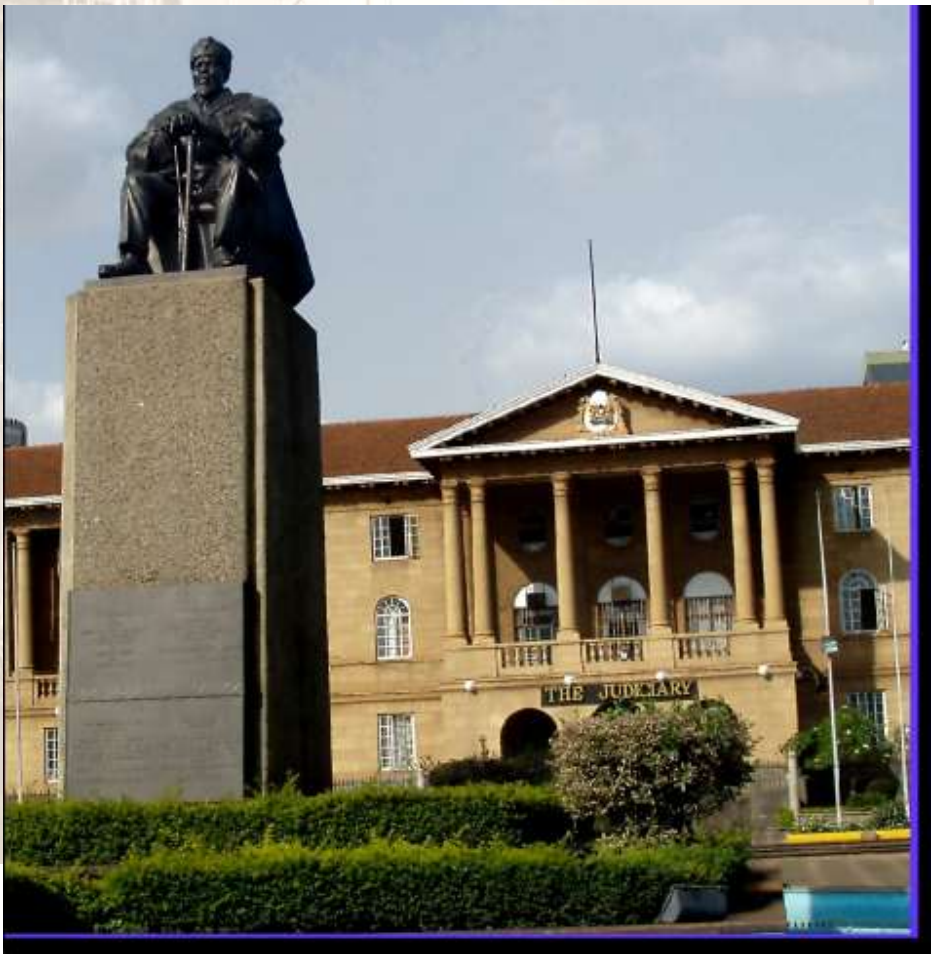
[104] Cf. Patel, Z. in op cit
[105] Cf. Amin, M. and Moll, P. in op cit




| period IV | period V |
|---|---|
| 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1990s |
| Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower |
| • Kenyatta &<br>• Harambee<br>Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi<br>Mbingu<br>Koinange | Moi Avenue |

**Mzee Kenyatta** in city square. Is he 'defying' colonial law and order? His back is to the High Court.



### 5.6.4 africanising city square

Mzee Kenyatta installed himself in City Square making it his own. To City Hall and the High Court, he added an imposing *obelisk-like* building —the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC). This building is like a tower —of independence?— or a spear planted in one's homestead. It has dominated Nairobi's skyline, both literally and culturally, for many years. KICC emerges as a symbol of indigenous re-possession of CBD, a re-possession of Nairobi, a re-possession of the country.

It is as curvilinear as the High Court and City Hall are rectilinear. And lacking the *post-beam-pediment* construction, it stands in stark contrast to classical colonial architecture. KICC's stylistic distinctiveness marks a clean break from previous government architecture. It is a bold statement declaring a major change in Nairobi's ( and Kenya's) governance.



To celebrate ten years of Uhuru, in September 1973, president Kenyatta opened the Kenyatta Conference Centre, the tallest building in Nairobi at the time.

It dominated Nairobi's growing skyline and was a symbol of the national party's (KANU's) ambitious approach to development.




| period IV | period V |
|---|---|
| 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1990s |
| Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| State House<br>• Parliament<br>• KICC | Times Tower |
| Kenyatta Harambee & Uhuru | Moi Avenue |
| Kimathi<br>Wabera<br>Muindi<br>Mbingu<br>Koinange | |

Counterpart of Memorial Hall –post colonial parliament facing the city (Kenyatta) Square. If ever a building was decorated it is this one.



### 5.6.5 local heroes in public space

A city in its spatial and social dimensions constitutes the *urbs* which describes a physical space for habitation (urban space) and the *civitas* (civic or community life) in which its citizens participate. Likewise a city's thoroughfares provide a twofold function: a network for physical mobility and a foundation upon which a civic identity can develop. This identity, this commonality or communal life, is a significant ingredient in transforming an informal *urbs* into a civic community; in transforming technical space into a convivial reality.[106]

To inscribe names in streets is to inscribe the citizens' life into urban space. The life of the community, its history and achievements, its aspirations and goals are metaphorically emblazoned into the street; the old street-names preserve the memory of the people that chose them while the contemporary ones perpetuate the memory of great men and their grand gestures. And this is precisely what makes urban space an artefact, a vehicle of the citizens' culture, an art-form like song and dance or literature.

Urban space not only *registers* and *records* the actions of its citizens, it also captures the attitude embedded in this action. For instance, it is telling that in indigenous Nairobi, women heroes are distanced from the public arena. Waiyaki wa Hinga, exiled for his patriotism, is commemorated in Waiyaki Way. Mekatili wa Menza, a quasi-national woman political leader, also exiled for her patriotism is absent in Nairobi's public space. Another woman, Nyanjiru, died protesting Harry Thuku's detention. A street is allocated to Thuku, none to Nyanjiru.

A change in street names often reflects a corresponding change in the country's history. In the case illustrated in the map on the opposite page, the highlighted streets shed off their colonial names — Hardinge, Eliot, Stewart and Sadler— to take up those of indigenous heroes. This corresponded to the change in political governance; colonial governors were replaced with indigenous heroes. They were replaced with those who performed great deeds for their country —Kimathi, Wabera, Muindi Mbingu and Koinange.

Kimathi wa Waciuri countered colonial aggression. In his capacity as Field Marshal, he led groups in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya to wage a campaign against the British Army. Dedan Kimathi defied the British Forces for four long years before being shot and wounded. In 1956 he was tried and hanged but the state of emergency continued!

Daudi Wabera was a District Commissioner (D.C.) in the Northern Frontier (now North Eastern Province). He was killed in a machine gun ambush, in the desert, about 120 miles from Isiolo on his way to Wajir. The year was 1964.

Samuel Muindi Mbingu was a leader of the Taita Hills Association. In 1938 when the Ukamba Members Association was formed, he led a march into Nairobi to protest against the colonial Government policy of destocking. For his pains he was deported to Lamu.

Senior Chief Koinange (wa Mbiyu), a colonial chief, unlike many other collaborator-chiefs, was man enough to go against the government that elected him chief. He fought hard to ensure that Africans were allowed to grow coffee and other cash crops. He was the first African to be allowed to grow coffee in Kenya. Since nation-building is not a one-man affair, these heroes, together with Kenyatta are memorialised in CBD's public space.

[106] Cf. Farvaque-Vitkovic, C., Godin, L., Leroux, H., Verdet, F. and Chavez, R. *Street Addressing and the Management of Cities* World Bank, Washington D.C. 2005



| period IV | period V |
|---|---|
| 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1990s |
| Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| State House<br>Parliament<br>KICC | Times Tower<br>• Nyayo House |
| Kenyatta<br>Harambee &<br>Uhuru Highway | Moi Avenue |
| • Kimathi<br>• Wabera<br>• Muindi Mbingu<br>• Koinange | |

**Nyayo House**

**Nyayo is the motto of the second president. It means footprint perhaps signifying his wish to follow in Kenyatta's 'leadership' footprints**



**Apart from Kenyatta's this is the only other free standing sculpture of a local hero in Nairobi's CBD.**



**Kimathi's sculpture**

## Towards Economic Independence



Times Tower is said to be East Africa's tallest building (135m) with 35 floors.

Four decades after political independence, the country is now concentrating on economic independence.

This is a monument to the Kenya Revenue Authority and it symbolizes the country's ability to manage itself economically.




| period IV | period V |
|---|---|
| 1963 - 1978 | 1979 – c. 1990s |
| Indigenous government 1st regime | Indigenous government 2nd regime |
| 1973 metropolitan growth strategy | no data available |
| State House Parliament KICC | • Times Tower Nyayo House |
| Kenyatta Harambee & Uhuru Highway | • Moi Avenue |

## 5.6.6 pan africanism –solidarity in the freedom struggle

Colonial aggression was not a phenomenon unique to Kenya; the aggression was continent wide. Pan Africanism, that solidarity in claiming indigenous political freedom as opposed to European rule, supplies the broader context for decolonisation. This Pan African phenomenon is *recorded* in Nairobi's public space.

Emperor Haile selassie led the only country in Africa that successfully defied colonisation. Kenyatta, a personal friend of the emperor, described Ethiopia as 'The last remaining relic of the greatness of an Africa that once was'. When the emperor was forced into exile in 1936, it was Kenyatta who broke through the police cordon to express the solidarity of Africa in the stand against colonialism. Haile Selassie was twice head of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which has now become the African Union (AU).

Presidents Kaunda and Banda were also heads of the OAU. Moreover they were in the Rhodesias —counties that had a lot in common with Kenya as far as colonisation was concerned. The Rhodesias like Kenya had been earmarked for permanent British settlement.

Tubman, a Liberian president and Moktar Daddah of Mauritania also served as heads of OAU.



The Holy Family Minor Basilica.

A view of city square



The two independence towers —one political, the other economic; one curvilinear the other rectilinear.



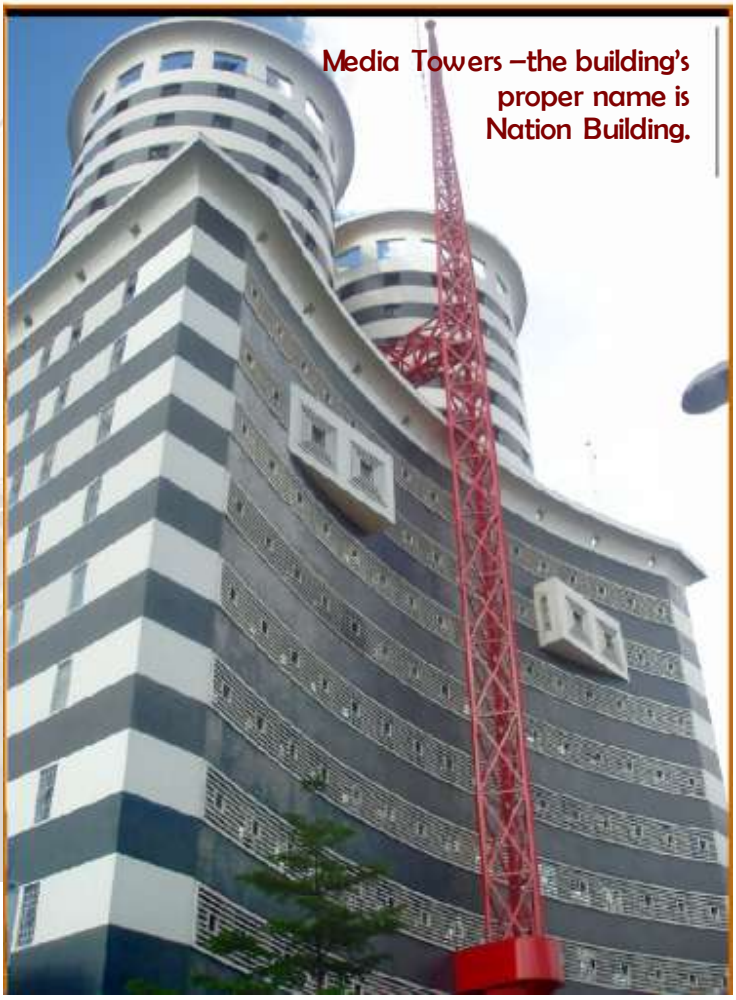
## Other Architecture in Nairobi's skyline

Co-operative Building



Jogoo House





Media Towers –the building's proper name is Nation Building.

## 5.7 analysis of indigenous nairobi

From the architectural point of view CBD contains two vibrant cultures, one western, the other oriental. Both cultures, boldly articulated, are in such close proximity that their distinctness is thrown into sharp focus. These styles represent the cultures that fought for political dominance in colonial Nairobi. The two architectural dialects wrestled blindly, unaware of their indigenous hosts, and never working out a common language, never producing a hybrid style.

*Foreign* possession of a city needs to be re-asserted, guarded and defended. Foreign possession calls for a demonstration in spectacular, expressive architecture. On the other hand, native, natural possession which is therefore sure and secure, appears to have less need of 'show-case' architecture, giving it a character that is somewhat pedestrian, low key, inexpressive and even dull in its everyday functionality. The underlying principle seems to be, 'Why prop up ownership with show-case architecture if by law immutable the city is native to you? Why claim what you already possess? And if it is yours, no amount of foreign architecture will wrest it from you'.

With the exception of KICC, there is little else to express the indigenous spirit in the brick and mortar of Nairobi's CBD. Why this omission? Why the conspicuous absence of an 'overtly African style'? A possible explanation is that both the culture and the city, being mutually native to each other, render it futile to claim that which is already in their possession.

Again, with the exception of KICC, in government's architecture, the articulation of local culture is but the gentlest of whispers. A light hand must have been entrusted with giving form to indigenous identity, a light hand indeed that attempted imbuing CBD's brick-and-mortar with ethos indigenous. Could this be a portrayal of how nascent this identity is?



Kenwood House fits snugly into the Islamic curves of Jamia Mosque.

On the same street further south the architectural language is very different .



Fountain of
Knowledge

One of the few
sculptural monuments
In Nairobi CBD



An answer in the affirmative is tantamount to declaring that a peoples' identity is expressed solely and exclusively in their architecture —an assessment lacking in perspective.

That indigenous expression is absent in the built form, does not mean that indigenous ownership is therefore less true —perhaps less domineering. Conjuring up æsthetic buildings is not the singular mode of owning one's city. Besides, the priorities of local culture may be different.

The indigenous has to build with moral, rather than political, intensity. He has to build, not magnificent brick and mortar structures, saturated with political overtones, but build himself, that true, magnificent bearer of every shade of politics. Local culture has to build the man it wants, before building the structures that declare who he is.

Where the colonial raised stone structures in order to impose his rule, the indigenous must raise the man —not structures— to carry out the rule. Local culture is compelled to first nurture the social process before indulging in buildings' æsthetics.




urban identity

# 6.0 comparative study

## 6.0 comparative study

This chapter is a comparison of Nairobi (Kenya) with Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), a comparison of their central spaces, of their prevalent architectural style, of the identity articulated by this style.

Both CBDs are explored in search of the prevalent style in their public buildings. And the buildings' selection criterion comprises:

- that they be sited in the historic centre
- that they be used for administrative purposes i.e. rendering public service
- and that their style be outstanding enough to merit discussion.

The selected buildings are designated "significant built forms" and their common æsthetic characteristics the "prevalent style". Further, because historic centres are not composed exclusively of buildings, *otherwise*-disposed-of space, use (or lack of use) of symbolic space is also considered under the term "symbolic public space". And this space may comprise streets, parks or squares. What matters is that it is within the historic centre.

This is the manifestation exhibited by political authority –the identity imparted upon the city.

### 6.0.1 a city's identity

What identity can 'space' possess? What culture or life can be gleaned from space?
For city-space to acquire a culture it must be enlivened by human agents. Mere physical space (of and by itself) has no culture and therefore no identity; it is bare of all immaterial values. But its constructed image, often fashioned by its administrators, is indubitably a cultural artefact.

Identity expresses that which makes an entity singular, unique and clearly distinct from others. It declares intimately what comprises an entity. Since the cities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam came to be as administrative centres, it is opportune –in searching for their identity– to study the character engraved on them by their respective administrators. And the administrators

taken into account are the senior-most political rulers. Rather than view them singly, they have been grouped according to epochs and historical periods e.g. the *Arab sultanate period* in Dar es Salaam incorporates Sultan Majid, Barghash and Khalif, *colonial Nairobi* includes the railway authorities, governors or government representatives and settlers while *post independence Dar es Salaam* stands for Nyerere and other leaders after him etc.

Without recourse to any idealised categories of urbanism, both cities are analysed simply as political artefacts. Their CBDs are considered as medium for communicating a particular political identity. And the rationale behind this point of departure is that the East African city often started as a mere geographical boundary drawn up for administrative purposes; it developed into a polity imposed from the top by those who had the power; most were created by the colonial administration in a bid to remould the local economies. This was the cities' starting point, whether they have retained this raison d'être or have evolved another, is the current topic of research; the exploration of political symbols embedded into the built environment through approximately 100 years. The point of interest is the use, political administration has made, of historic city-space, the character it has imprinted, the spatial icons it has erected, the identity it has created out of this central space.

### 6.0.2 political identity

Political authority, though not always the most cohesive factor, is significant in creating a city's identity. It can be decisive in forging a *civitas* –a social-political entity that bears a (somewhat) unifying culture. After all, modern African nation states –as we know them today– were created out of a political meeting: the Berlin conference of 1884/85 which carved out the continent into colonies and protectorates. After this conference, diverse peoples were perceived as homogenous units. Apparently, they acquired a common identity overnight and were governed without their consent. The mere penciling of lines onto a map converted them into nations! Political authority's role may not be the sole force in binding people together, but to overlook its contribution would be an oversight. Politics is responsible, to no small degree, for moulding a polity out of diverse peoples, making it legitimate to investigate the identity it imparts not just on a nation but also on a city.

And just as the Berlin conference delegates ignored the consent of the people to be governed, this chapter does not analyse the attitude of the 'governed' in their reception of the spatial symbols; it focuses on the symbols themselves, as they were designed, by arrogant or otherwise-disposed rulers. The focus is the organisation of space by political rulers.

And why would political authority impress its identity onto space? Why fabricate a tangible image to speak for it? Put another way, what relationship exists (if any) between spatial symbols and political identity?
Politicians may want to 'brand' space in order to:

- declare ownership of that space and whatever appertains to it
- impress their mandate (licit or illicit) upon the local population
- ward off possible competitors who are interested in the same space and power.

Identity-image, being analogous to the written word, is designed to serve the needs of communication without which any language would lack meaning. Symbols of political identity exist in order to communicate. Political authority addresses 'another' through the image it constructs. This other can be the local population or/and the possible or actual competitor to the same space and power. With hindsight –which is never practical– it would be priceless to know how this 'built-message' was received by the contemporary 'other'. It would be equally interesting to 'see' this spatial identity through the eyes of that powers' contemporaneous competitor. As it is, we can only be guided by conjecture and by the built environment itself, keeping in mind that our judgements are necessarily a little out of 'actual' historical context. We cannot bring to life the past city, we can only get to know it –and selectively at that– in the present. LIFE and *knowledge* are not identical; one is actual (belongs to the order of reality) the other hypothetical (belonging to the order of the mind).

The possibility of carrying out a 'formal' appreciation of the identity-image, without trying to gauge its effectiveness in communicating to the 'historical other', also exists, for space, unlike the minds of the contemporaries for whom the images were set up, is an open book to any willing reader.

## 6.1 comparative figures of the cbds

### 6.1.1 nairobi cbd aerial photo



source: RCRMD

### 6.1.2 dar es salaam cbd aerial photo



source: aerial photo

### 6.1.3 tabulation: general survey of nairobi

| EPOCH | DATE | SIGNIFICANT BUILT-FORM | PREVALENT STYLE | SYMBOLIC PUBLIC SPACE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **origin of the cities** | | | | |
| Railway administered Nairobi | 1899-1905 | Railway Station | functional | Station, Whitehouse, Duke & Victoria streets |
| **european colonisation I** | | | | |
| Nairobi: capital of British East Africa protectorate | 1905-1920 | Native Affairs building | Neo-classical | Government Rd, Harding, Eliot, Stewart & Sadler streets |
| **european colonisation II** | | | | |
| Nairobi: capital of European settlers | 1920-1963 | Government House, City Hall, High Court | Neo-classical | City square, Delamere statue & Ave, Grogan Rd |
| **post independence** | | | | |
| Kenyatta's Nairobi (and others) | 1963-1995 | Kenyatta International Conference Centre and Kenyatta's sculpture | Iconic-African | Kenyatta & Moi Ave, Kimathi, Uhuru, Wabera, Koinange streets |

## 6.1.4 tabulation: general survey of dar es salaam

| EPOCH | DATE | SIGNIFICANT BUILT-FORM | PREVALENT STYLE | SYMBOLIC PUBLIC SPACE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arab sultanate Dar es Salaam | 1862-1891 | Sultan's palace | Arab | Arab, India, Mosque & Market streets |
| origin of the cities | | | | |
| Dar es Salaam: capital of German East Africa | 1891-1914 | Gouvernuers Palais, Kulturgebäude, Krankenhaus, office buildings | Classical with Arab features | Kaiser, Bismarck, Wissmann statues & streets |
| european colonisation I | | | | |
| British administered Dar es Salaam | 1918-1961 | King George Museum, Askari monument | Arabesque | Neutral zone between natives and Asian, European settlers |
| european colonisation II | | | | |
| Nyerere's Dar es Salaam (and others) | 1961-1995 | Independence torch | eclectic | Mnazi Mmoja Uhuru, Jamhuri, Sokoine streets |
| post independence | | | | |

## 6.1.5 comparison framework nairobi and dar es salaam

| EPOCH | DATE | SIGNIFICANT BUILT-FORM | PREVALENT STYLE | SYMBOLIC PUBLIC SPACE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arab sultanate Dar es Salaam | 1862-1891 | Sultan's palace | Arab | Arab, India, Mosque &Market streets |
| origin of the cities | | | | |
| Railway administered Nairobi | 1899-1905 | Railway Station | functional | Station, Whitehouse, Duke & Victoria streets |
| Dar es Salaam: capital of German East Africa | 1891-1914 | Gouvernuers Palais, Kulturgebäude, Krankenhaus, office buildings | Classical with Arab features | Kaiser, Bismarck, Wissmann streets |
| european colonisation I | | | | |
| Nairobi: capital of British East Africa protectorate | 1905-1920 | Native Affairs building | Neo-classical | Government Rd, Harding, Eliot, Stewart & Sadler streets |
| British administered Dar es Salaam | 1918-1961 | King George Museum, Askari monument | Arabesque | Neutral zone between natives and Asian, European settlers |
| european colonisation II | | | | |
| Nairobi: capital of European settlers | 1920-1963 | Government House, City Hall, High Court | Neo-classical | City square, Delamere Ave, Grogan Rd |
| Nyerere's Dar es Salaam (and others) | 1961-1995 | Independence torch | eclectic | Mnazi Mmoja Uhuru, Jamhuri, Sokoine streets |
| post independence | | | | |
| Kenyatta's Nairobi (and others) | 1963-1995 | Kenyatta International Conference Centre and Kenyatta's sculpture | Iconic-African | Kenyatta & Moi Ave, Kimathi, Uhuru, Wabera, Koinange streets |

## 6.2 summary of findings

### 6.2.1 the colonial image

Dar es Salaam, like Nairobi, owes its origin to colonial designs. It was a creation of the Zanzibari sultanate. As a burgeoning Swahili town, it offered up-country immigrants if they wanted to belong a Kanzu or buibui to don (Islamic dress), Islam for a religion, madrasa for school and a swahili-type dwelling to call their own. Dar es Salaam had a dominant native culture, an integrative culture. Three decades later, this town was acquired by other colonisers the German Reich who, for the next two decades, tried to make it their own but lost it with the onset of World War I. They lost it to the League of Nations with the British acting as chaperon.

The British supervised Dar es Salaam for a little over four decades. The same British enjoyed 64 uninterrupted years in Nairobi, where they seemingly had right of ownership. Nairobi was at the centre of the whiteman's country, it was the capital of a British Protectorate and later, of a crown colony. The looser the colonial noose got in Dar es Salaam the tighter it closed in on Nairobi, this integral jewel of the imperial crown.

Thanks to nuances in political management and longevity, the colonial image, in the two cities, is very different. Nairobi's is sharp, clear, confident almost arrogant. Without a doubt (the image seems to declare) colonial Nairobi, neo-classical Nairobi, was a possession authentic unto the British. It was even declaimed, by royal charter, the *first* colonial city in eastern Africa.

Matters were different in Dar es Salaam where the colonial image is as blurry as its foreign shackles were loose. And perhaps in acknowledgement of the towns Arab-Swahili foundations and surroundings, its European colonial icons include saracenic-style features making the European coloniser appear timid and light of tread. Besides, passage of time has blurred the German heritage while *Pax Britannica* stands doubtfully upon this coastal city. European Imperial visibility in Dar es Salaam is unclear, poor, out of focus.

This was the legacy of the colonizer; he was more visible in the one landscape and less so in the other. Consequently, in Dar es Salaam, indigenous rulers inherited a lightly traversed central space where the coloniser's identity was barely skin-deep while in Nairobi it was knee-deep, in fact almost drowning deep. It would appear that the firmer the colonial grip, the sharper its spatial image: the surer the colonists footing, the deeper his incision.

### 6.2.2 the post-colonial image

Presented with a confident colonial image, Kenyatta, the first indigenous ruler, responded in similar vein. His imprint on Nairobi is no less bold. The Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC), his answer to the monumental high court, redirected public gaze to himself to his statue. Both, KICC and his statue, are the *de facto* centre-piece; the unmistakable focal point of city square. KICC is as strident as the high court is monumental; as African as the court is western; as indigenous as the court is foreign. Buildings in historic Nairobi are anthems to various political orders. Their architectural language vibrates with the underlying political contest.

### 6.2.3 nairobi's symbolic space




City Square- Nairobi's symbolic space

1 High Court

2 KICC

3 Office of the President

4 Attorney Generals Chambers

5 Jogoo House

6 Sculpture (Kenyatta)

Because this is the site where colonial government placed its icons and the 1948 master plan considered it a possible locale for a 'Kenya centre', this is the symbolic space. It was designed as the city's square.

1 This building, the High Court, is the tangible expression of the colonial government's slogan

*law and order*. It was fronted by a sculpture (or bas relief) of King George (which was removed perhaps to the now empty niche, set in a fountain, on Parliament Road). And it is around this massive structure (the High Court) that a square was created.

2 KICC, the post colonial addition to city square, manages to overshadow the high court. It is designed upwards where the court is horizontal. Because of the sculpture (no. 6) in front of the court, spectators' view of the court's grand portal is distracted. The blocking of Third Avenue also contributes to obscuring the court's front façade –that façade that is directly to the back of Kenyatta's sculpture.

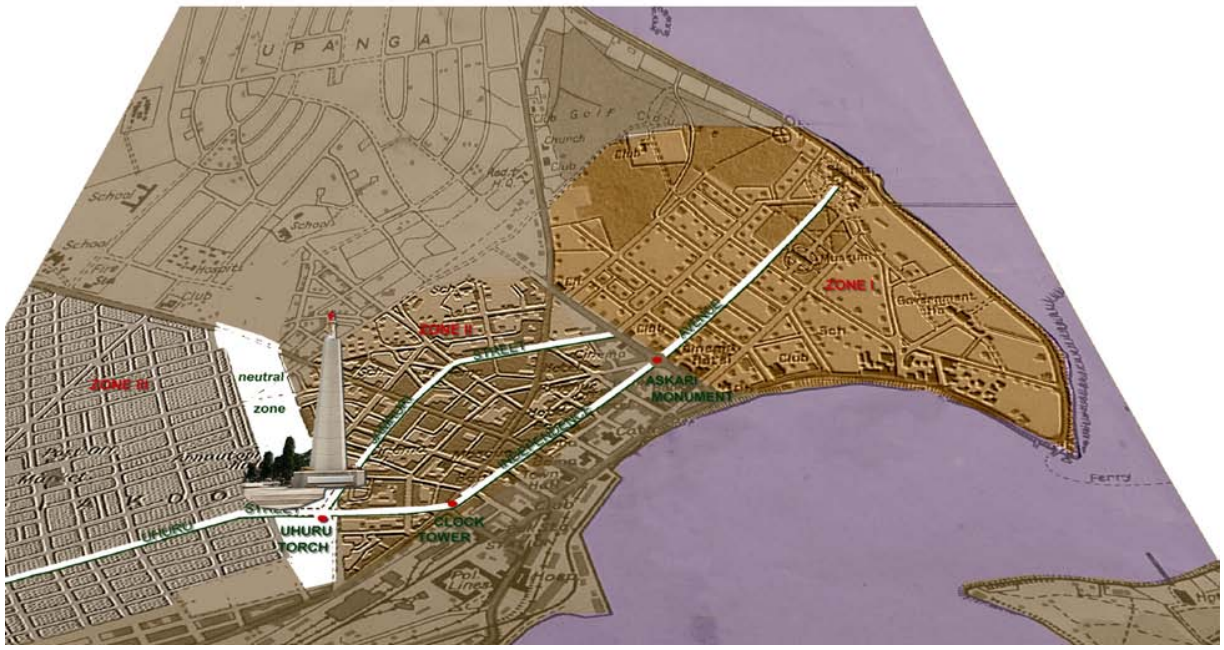
By accessing City Square through the City Hall Way entrance, the viewer's line of vision is directed to the KICC and the sculpture of Kenyatta. The visual connection between this sculpture and the tower is immediate. And since both are engaging, the viewer thinks of the adjacent high court only as an afterthought.

The Office of the President (3) and the Attorney General's Chambers (4) are accessed from Harambee Avenue. It is from without, the city square, that Jogoo House (5 A) is accessed; from Taifa Road and (5 B) from Harambee Avenue. By giving their back to the square, these buildings (3, 4 &5) do not interfere with the view of the KICC. In effect, this arrangement compels one to gaze at KICC upon entering the square. Thus did Kenyatta's sculpture and KICC steal the show from colonial *law and order;* from the *spectacle* of the High Court.

KICC, the venue of many national and international conferences, is the television code-image for Nairobi. The media uses it to symbolise the city and by so doing confirms its iconic role.

### 6.2.4 dar es salaam's symbolic space

Dar es Salaam, on the other hand, offers a placid assortment that is as accommodating as it is cosmopolitan. It accepted whatever architectural vocabulary chosen by its various colonisers. And being pluralistic in style, it reflects a rich, truly varied, if somewhat inharmonious architectural mosaic. This is the outcome of its often-changing political identity. No singular style, not one epoch or leader, clamours for undue attention. Pride of place belongs to no specific identity, all appear lightly-sketched and uniformly-perched upon this canvas that is Dar es Salaam's CBD.




Mnazi Mmoja- Dar es Salaam's symbolic space

The space that was designed to separate the immigrants from the natives is what Nyerere chose as his symbol. The Uhuru torch was lit here. The centrality of the roads makes it possible to traverse the Residential Quarters (zone I or Uzunguni), the Commercial Quarter (zone II or

Uhindini) and zone III (Uswahilini) the Native Quarter. Rather than use spectacular architecture, Nyerere appears to have liberalised the space. Read in this way, the Mnazi Mmoja becomes iconic and a symbol of home grown leadership.

# 6.1 majid's dar



The 19th century –a period of intense commercialization along the east African coast– benefited principal sites close to Zanzibar, the hub of Arab political power. The immediate vicinity of today's Dar es Salaam was not one of these sites. Instead, it was a meeting point between the local ethnic Zaramo and the Shomvi –a *Swahili* or *Shirazi* people who traced their origins to the northern coastal town of Barawa in present day Somalia.[107] Both the Shomvi and the Zaramo were mainly farmers but also specialized in fishing, boat-building and slave trading. Their neighbourhood was peripheral to the long distance commerce in ivory and slaves.

Dar es Salaam (Arabic: دار السلام *Dār as-Salām* and formerly Mzizima –the healthy city) is a contraption of bandar as-salâm or 'Harbour of Peace'. This name, coined by Sultan Majid, alluded to his wish to make it a refuge perhaps from the growing pressures of courtly and diplomatic politics. A Father LeRoy, writing in 1866, had this to say:

> Good harbours are comparatively rare on the East Coast of Africa. There are however some [on which] the European powers cast their envious glances[one] was a peaceful bay, sheltered by a narrow passage...The Portuguese do not seem to have known this spot, nor the Arabs, nor the Persians. But the last but one Sultan of Zanzibar, Seid Madjid [Seyyid Majid] found it pleasing and decided to make it a town [108]

The wish of a sultan was quickly translated into fact. Work began. The stones piled up... houses rose from the ground, the bush was cleared and the sultan was soon receiving Europeans there in princely fashion.

LeRoy continues:

> The all powerful Seid [Majid] had ordered that a town be built; he had bought all the surrounding land, amassed stones, limestone, wood, set to work an army of slaves, he assigned a residence to each prince of his family, cut streets (right-angled streets, unheard of in East Africa) wished all the inhabitants to be his people, the masters, the slaves, the merchants, the local people, the strangers…

[107] Cf. Brennan, J. and Burton, A. The Emerging Metropolis: A history of Dar es Salaam, ca 1862-2000

[108] Cf. Reverend Father LeRoy, of the Congregation du Saint Esprit et du Saint Coeur de Marie. In Les Missions Catholiques, vol. 18 (October 1886), p 512 ff



**fig. 6.1.1** Dar es Salaam harbour. This photograph was taken after the Germans had colonized what is today Tanzania. Both the Lutheran church (extreme right) and the Catholic church (centre) are visible. The structures were built during Germany's rule over this section of east Africa.

photo source www. Reichstagh internal affairs

> And trusting in the word of Seid and in the beauty of his harbour, a good number of Indian merchants had come to establish themselves. On the well-aligned streets they built a few stone houses where they set up shop; Banyans were ready to receive ivory and copal from the interior; Arabs to try cultivation and trade in slaves; local inhabitants ready to do everything [109]

Majid put up, together with other buildings, a coral-rag-and-lime palace. He cultivated plantations, invited Arab and Indian settlers to carry out a lively trade. He did not forget his Baluchi soldiers.[110] A report from the British Consul in Zanzibar notes:

> The Sultan is expending large sums upon erecting a palace, a fort and dwellings for his officials. He hopes to form the nucleus of a trading port. The conception is good but want of labour promises to be fatal to its realization. To attract cultivation, the Sultan offers land in any reasonable measure to those who will undertake the agriculture… The sole condition attached to the gift is that the land be made to yield produce of some sort[111]

And in the following year, 1867; Bradshaw, also writing about Dar es Salaam comments:

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[109] Idem.

[110] According to Brown, W.T. these Baluchis were a potent, if somewhat ambiguous, force along the Mrima coast. They had a stake in political affairs along the Mrima coast. Their dispersal point had been Mombasa and Zanzibar. And theirs was a reputation of being mercenaries. In 18th-19th century Swahili military history, they played an active role.

[111] Report from Dr. G.E. Seward of the British Consulate in Zanzibar (India Office Archives, London.) to the Chief Secretary Government, Political Department, Bombay. Zanzibar, Nov. 10th, 1866

> ...it was observed that a new palace was nearly completed and a town laid out, the allotments of which were nearly all taken. It is thought that this port will supersede Kilwa... on account of its proximity to Zanzibar[112]

Lastly, Sulivan, he that provided the wood engraving adds:

> Dar es Salaam has just become the Sultan's new abode, he having built himself a palace here; another building had also been erected, a kind of official hotel for foreign consuls, or others, on their visits from Zanzibar [113]

The town's growth appears to have been checked by Majid's death in 1870. His half brother Barghash, who preferred Zanzibar to Dar es Salaam, wasted little time and effort in this so called *harbour or abode of peace*.

What identity did Dar es Salaam bear between 1862 and 1891? (the Germans took it over in 1891) Who did it belong to and what customs, civic life, or social values did they breathe into the coral-rag-and-limestone that was Dar es Salaam?

To inscribe himself into this space, to make it his place-of-belonging, Majid built a palace, fort and hotel (Arab tea house) and laid out streets. He supplied the town, not only with buildings, but with inhabitants as well. Sutton observes:

> Conscious efforts were made to develop the town, encourage settlement, cultivation and trade. [For] the building project slaves were brought from Zanzibar. Hadrami Arabs (wa-Shihiri) ...were encouraged to settle and develop plantations, a number of Indians very quickly set up business[114]

And the town, perhaps, was becoming an extension of Zanzibar's commercial and political interests. It was the Sultan's city; the property of an Omani-Arab prince. Abdul Sheriff points out that at the time (the second half of the 19th century) Zanzibar was the largest and most

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[112] Bradshaw, R. "Darra Salaam —Africa" in TNR no. 71, reprinted from *The Mercantile Marine Magazine*, XV (no. 172, April 1968), pp. 117-8

[113] Cf. Tanzania Notes and Records number 71

[114] Sutton, J.E.G., "Dar es Salaam A sketch of a hundred years" in Tanzania Notes and Records no 71, Tanzania Society, Dar es Salaam. p. 3 ff

successful Swahili town. It had a culture that was distinctly urban, mercantile and cosmopolitan.[115] Dar es Salaam was an embryonic echo of Zanzibar.

In the last decades of the 19th century, Dar es Salaam's identity must have reflected Hadrami-Arab customs and social set up, flavoured with Indian ways –those barometers of economic life. The new town was the last born in that large family of eastern Africa's coastal towns referred to as *Swahili*. True, it was not yet a fully grown member of the 18-19th century Swahili towns, but rather aspired to join this category though somewhat late in the day. Dar es Salaam was Zanzibar's little sister.



**fig. 6.1.2**
"Panoramic view of Darra Salama" in 1869: an engraving based on captain Sulivan's photograph showing harbour, Sultan's palace (left) and the old Boma building (right centre)
source: Dar es Salaam Museum

[115] Sheriff, A. The spatial dichotomy of Swahili towns: The case of Zanzibar in the nineteenth century, in Burton, A. (ed), op. cit., p. 63 ff

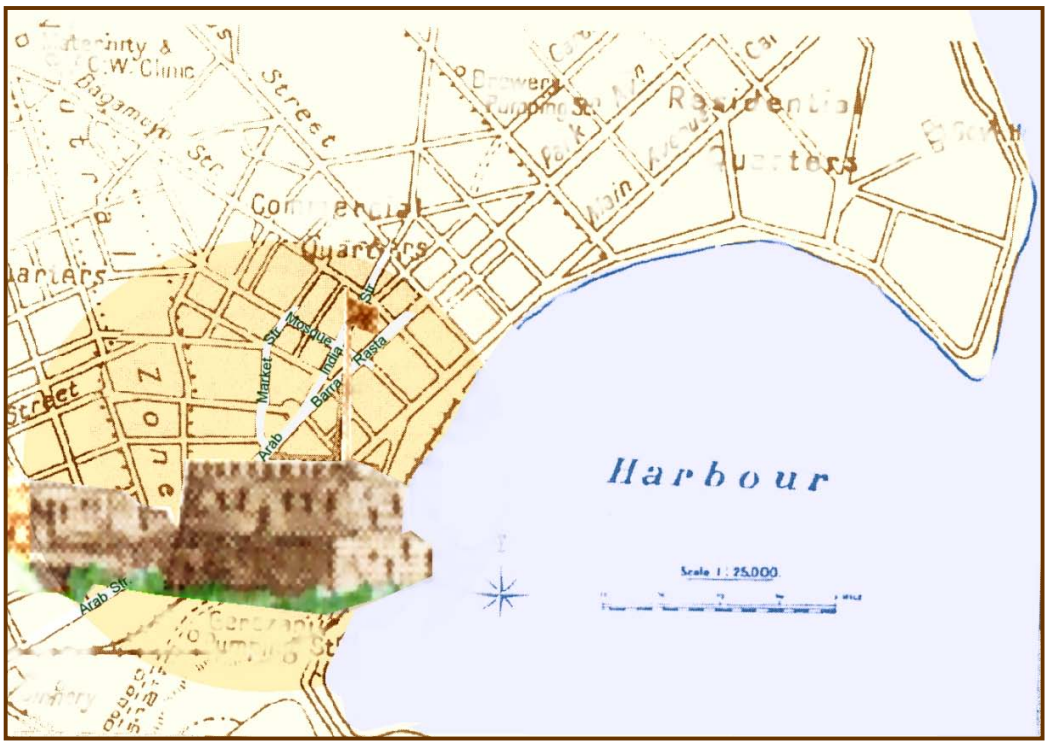



**fig. 6.1.3**

Possible location of sultan Majid's palace. Market street, India street, Arab street and Barra Rasta (main street). This approximation has been worked out (by the author) from a reproduction of an engraving from G. L. Sulivan, *Dhow chasing in Zanzibar waters, 1873* and from literature from the other sources.

source: author

Under the Zanzibari sultanate, Dar es Salaam had been structured in three concentric zones – at its centre, the stone buildings of administration and business nearest to the harbour along what is now Sokoine Drive; beyond this, *shamba* fields, mainly coconut plantations, owned by the Sultan or his Arab allies and worked primarily by unfree labour; and finally outlying Zaramo and Shomvi villages.



**fig. 6.1.4**

The old Boma now used as the city hall. (different views of the same building)

source: photo author

The sultan's palace did not survive to present day but this old boma did. It later housed the Police charge office and Prison. More recently it housed an office of the Forestry Department and is today's city hall. "In style and construction, this old Boma includes a number of features that are traditional of East African coastal architecture. The thick walls are of coral rubble set in lime mortar and plastered white. The floors are of coral blocks laid on cut rafters and mangrove poles. The pointed crenellations to the tower and the carved entrance door with geometric pattern can be paralled in other nineteenth century buildings."[116]

Sykes and Waide, writing after Casson, point out that the Germans enlarged and securely fortified the old Boma… [making it an] administrative headquarters, by joining two Arab buildings. They used them to house their naval headquarters, with a prison behind. The second

[116] cf. Casson, Antiquities Department Report for 1967. Dar es Salaam Museum

of these buildings was demolished in 1968… next is the city council… built by the Germans as the new Boma, or District Office. It dates from 1903.[117]

This old/new boma is said to be the oldest surviving building in Dar es Salaam. It was constructed in 1867 by Sultan Majid bin Said to accommodate his guests. Its location is given as next to his palace (no longer standing) while the carved door is from Zanzibar. Today it is the City Hall and Council chamber.[118]



**fig. 6.1.5**

Staff of the Kaiserhof (New Africa Hotel) in their service uniform —an Islamic*kanzu*

source: Dar es Salaam Museum

[117] cf. Sykes, L and Waide, U in op cit.
[118] www. internal affairs of the Reich

The official dress of these workers is a reflection of Dar es Salaam's dominant culture: Islamic, Swahili. It was also, from the beginning, cosmopolitan, as demonstrated by its African settlements. These were mostly ethnically mixed. For instance according to a 1931 native census, members from 167 different African ethnic groups were identified.[119] They came from throughout Tanganyika and beyond. There were substantial immigrant communities from Uganda, Nyasaland and Portuguese East Africa: Ganda numbered 213, Nyasa about 1,000, Yao (1,268) Makonde (492) Makua (237) –the latter three being from Portuguese East Africa. Nyamwezi (846) and Ngoni (540) were from the southern part of Tanganyika. Coastal Africans who were numerically predominant, included the Ndengereko (642), Kami (941), Rufiji (2,022) and the Zaramo (6,642). The Manyema (1,221) consisted of former slaves and their descendants or simply runaway slaves.

An urban Swahili culture, noted for its cosmopolitanism, formed an important integrative response to dare s Salaam's urban environment. The mere donning of a *kanzu* (Islamic dress for men) was a simple but effective membership card allowing the up country immigrant acceptance to the *uungwana* (civilized culture) of Dar es Salaam.

And, as attested to by the dress in fig 6.1.4, the town was more socially cohesive than Nairobi or other contemporaneous East African city.

[119] Fryer, District Officer to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Tanganyika. 10th July 1931, Native Census Results, Tanzania National Archives 61/167

# 6.2 german dar



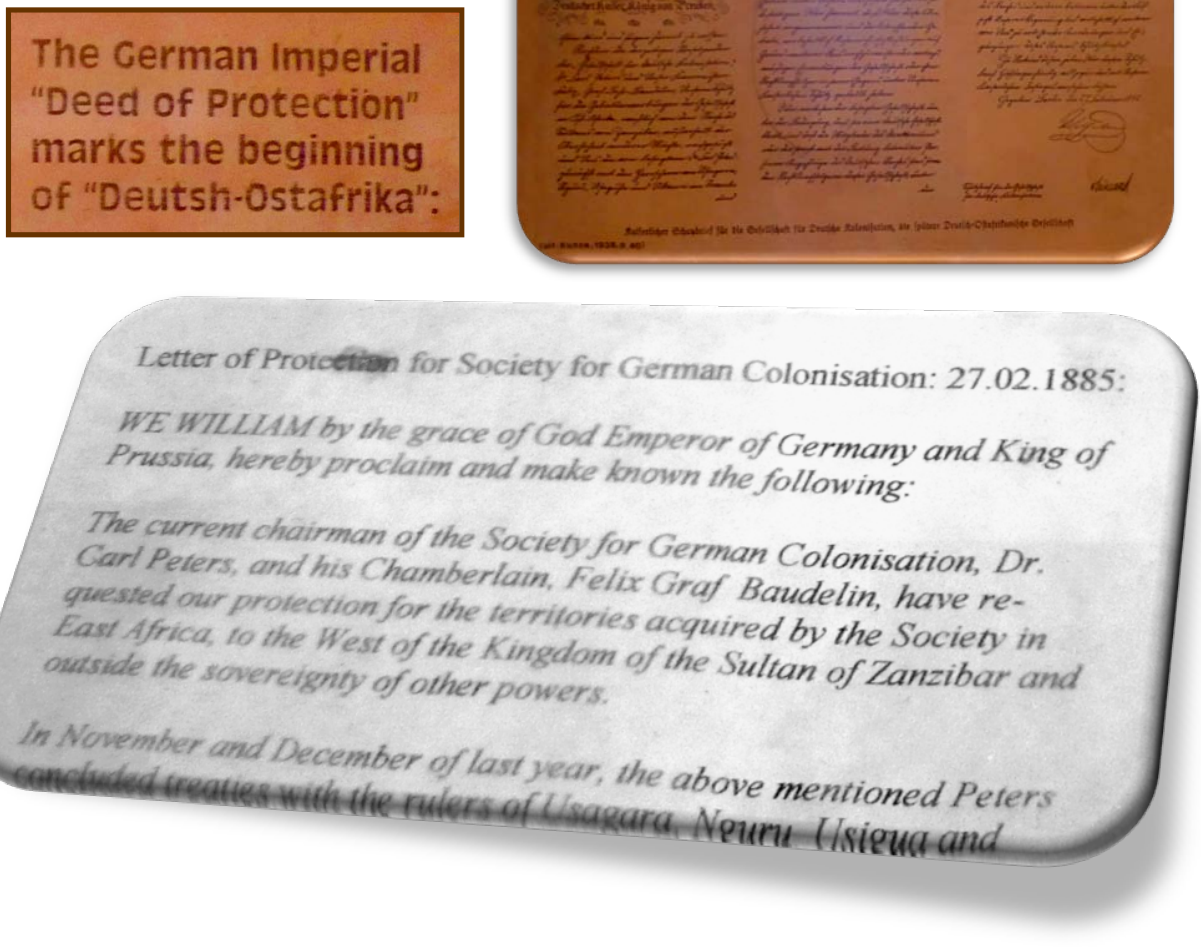


**fig. 6.2.1 *i***

**right:** Carl Peters arrives in Dar e s Salaam.

**fig. 6.2.1 *ii* bottom:** German Imperial "Deed of Protection" which marks the beginning of "Deutsh-Ostafrika". Dated 27-February-1885.

source: Bagamoyo Museum



"WE WILLIAM, by the grace of God emperor of Germany and king of Prussia, hereby proclaim and make known the following:

The current chairman of the Society for German Colonisation, Dr. Carl Peters, and his chamberlain, Felix Graf Baudelain, have requested our protection for the territories acquired by the society in East Africa, to the west of the kingdom of the sultan of Zanzibar and outside the sovereignty of other powers.

In November and December of last year, the above mentioned Peters concluded treaties with the rulers of Usagara …" [120]

Thus started "Deutsh-Ostafrika". By this deed the Germans, under the protection of their emperor, assumed the administration of Tanzania's coast —Dar es Salaam included. But by 1888, more than this deed was required for when it was read to the public it ignited the Abushiri-led war.



**fig. 6.2.2**

Reading (to the local public) the German deed of protection.

source: Bagamoyo Museum

[120] Bagamoyo Museum

The late 18th to the 19th century saw a number of communities living along the east coast of Africa. Among these were the Shirazi confederacies, fishing villages and trading centres. This coastal strip, from Mogadishu to the Rovuma River, was officially, even after the British/German partition, an integral part of the Sultan of Zanzibar's sovereignty. In April 1888 the sultan granted a concession to both the British and the Germans, allowing them to administer the ten mile strip along east Africa's coast. The *Deutsch Ost-Afrika Gesellschaft* (DOAG) represented their nation. But within four months of signing the agreement, they violated it. A flagship arrived, armed soldiers disembarked, DOAG officials ordered the Sultan's flag be lowered. And upon refusal, they removed the flag themselves and chopped down the flagpole.

DOAG had acquired trading rights which later became formal rights to collect custom duties. This transaction was 'aided' by August Leue (representative of DOAG) placing a gun on the heads of the Sultan's *wajumbe* (representatives). Carl Peters was the 'witness'.

Leue established a station for the company and the customs office became a full military station. He also occupied the *wali's* (also representatives or deputies) residence after arranging for this wali's recall to Zanzibar. Custom dues were collected by the Germans now that Leue had apparently extracted a concession of the land in return for a 'payment' to the sultan's wajumbe. As Sutton points out:

> Bwana Loya (as he is locally remembered) was attempting to give the impression that nothing had changed save for the legal transfer of control —himself for wali and the Company [DOAG] for the Sultan ...but the alliance forged between the Zaramo … the Swahili and Arabs was worth defending against the take over. This armed resistance of 1888-9… involved the whole coastal region that the Germans were trying to bring under control. [121]

And Mercer adds:

> Discipline was at the heart of German rule in East Africa, and its excesses … at the root of much unpopularity. The Germans got things done, but were in a great hurry to do so...their overbearing attitude fomented revolt.[122]

German insensibilities enraged the coastal people, who, united under Abushiri ibn Salim al-Harthi, revolted and were soon hunting down German agents. By January 1889 the German

[121] cf. Sutton, J.E.G., in op. cit.
[122] Cf. Mercer G., GT Guide Tanzania. New Holland Publishers, 2007

government was constrained to come to the aid of the company (DOAG). Forces were trained, Herrmann von Wissmann appointed commander-in-chief and off to east Africa, force and commander went, to quell the Bushiri uprising. Once von Wissmann had quelled the uprising in Bagamoyo, he marched southwards into Dar es Salaam declaring it the administrative capital of German East Africa.

After buying their sector of the coast from the Sultan of Zanzibar, for four million marks, Germany established official colonial rule in her east African territories. This was early in 1891.

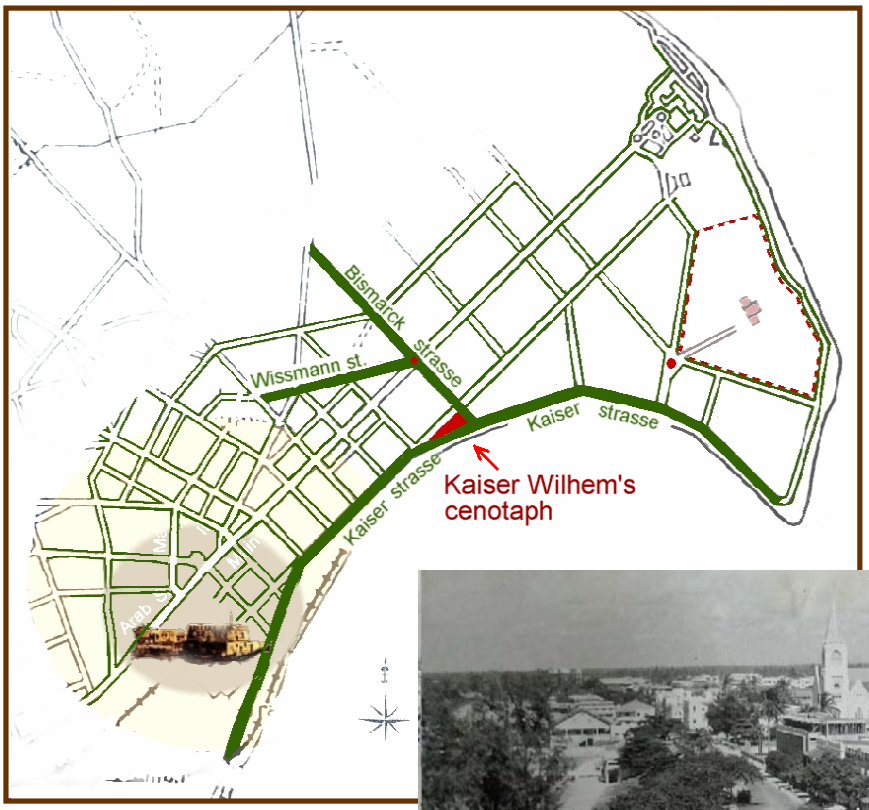



**fig. 6.2.3**

—northern and southern area combined from two sheets, printed in scale 1:10.000 by the Department of Surveys and Town Planning (1209). The original, used for this [to reproduce this one] belongs to the Architect firm —French and Hastings. (sic)

source: Dar es Salaam Museum including the caption

map of German Dar es Salaam (the Germans extended Majid's Dar es Salaam to the north and east)



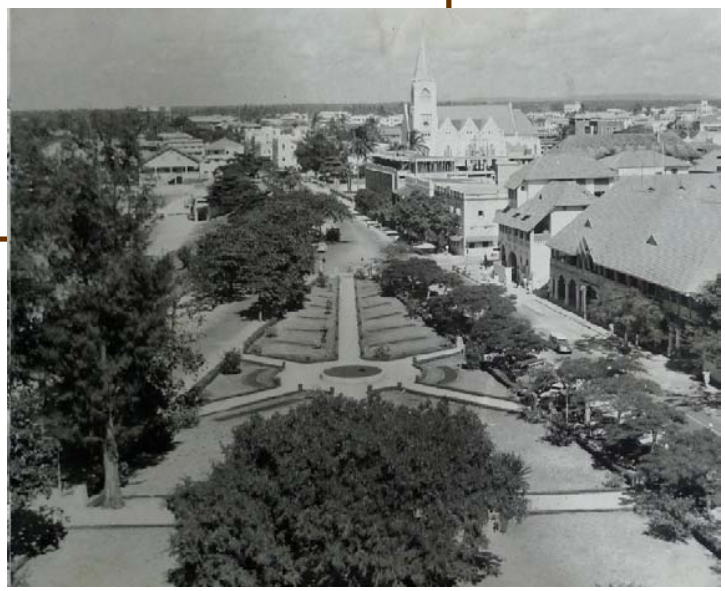



**fig. 6.2.4 *i* (map)**

The map above is developed (by the author) from fig. 6.2.3. It shows the possible site of Sultan Majid's palace and (again possible) extent of his town. The subsequent expansion by the Germans is also shown. Highlighted, in red, are the German monuments and the governor's palace. The site of the kaiser's cenotaph (today's Sokoine Gardens) is labeled.

**above: fig. 6.2.4 *ii* (photo)** Sokoine Gardens. Formerly gardens around Kaiser Wilhelm's cenotaph. View of Dar es Salaam as capital of German East Africa Protectorate.

source: Dar es Salaam museum

German town planning, in this enlarged Dar es Salaam (see fig. 6.2.4) had a clear reference to its political leaders. There was a Kaiser Wilhelm *strasse*, a Bismarck *strasse* and a Wissmann *strasse*. The Kaiser was the German emperor, Bismarck his chancellor and von Wissmann their immediate representative in German East Africa.

This Arab-Swahili town (though still in the making) began to bear German names in its public space; in the thoroughfares where human traffic trod, day in day out. One wonders how the local inhabitants 'sounded' the German street names. How they pronounced *Liebert, Rob Koch, Stuhlmann, Schele …*

Some streets got an additional visual aid. Memorials or monuments to the great men in German politics were erected in corresponding streets. A Kaiser Wilhelm *denkmal*, a Bismarck *denkmal* and a Wissmann *denkmal* were installed. (see figs. 6.2.6, 6.2.7, 6.2.8 and 6.2.9) Whether as orienteering landmarks, as simple decorative landscaping, or as both, is difficult to tell. No documentation of the rationale behind these monuments was discovered by this author. But, it seems reasonable to assume that the main purpose was: to remind the Germans in east Africa of their sovereign Lord the Kaiser; to make them feel attached and still bound to their far away homeland; to 'introduce' the colonised peoples to their foreign sovereign and his assistants. However, whatever the reason, come the Kaiser's birthday, and an annual military parade was enacted. These *denkmals* were an active ingredient in Dar es Salaam's public life.

As far as the planning of public space goes, taking the harbour as the natural reference point, the first street was named for the Kaiser, complete with his cenotaph. Then, in front of government house, Bismarck's monument was mounted while the main street going into the town, from the harbour, was named for him. (see fig. 6.2.4)

A majority of the local population may not have known the Kaiser or Chancellor Bismarck but they knew, without a doubt, who and what von Wissmann was! The military governor whose word was law and whose word could be further reinforced by none-too-gentle military tactics.

von Wissmann, having just quelled the Bushiri uprising, was a well known figure to many in Dar es Salaam. His statue therefore must have evoked a lively response.
Both the man and his memorial had immediacy of impact. The street connecting the 'German area' with Sultan Majid's town was appropriately named for him. His statue occupied a "crossroads" in the middle of the new and enlarged town. It was, in comparison to the Kaiser's and Bismarck's, closer –in physical distance and in meaning– to the local town-dweller.

In reality too, von Wissmann was the man on the ground. He was the authority to reckon with. His statue depicts him in triumphant stance. He has just slain a lion with the help of the askari or is the askari his victim as well? (see fig. 6.2.8)

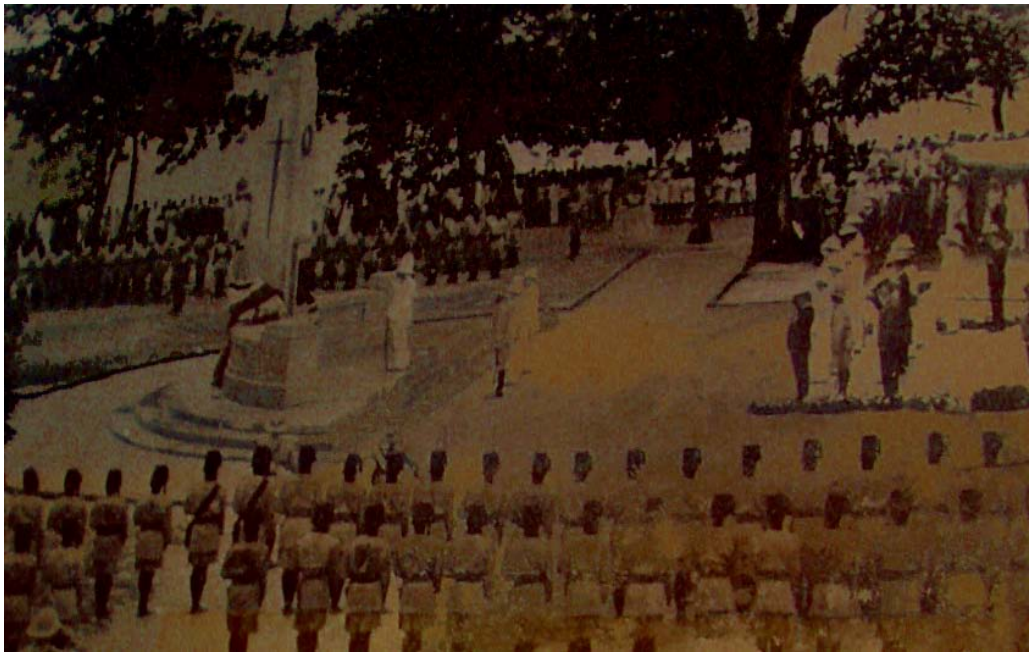


**fig. 6.2.5**

1901, the Kings (or Kaiser's) African Rifles mark Kaiser Wilhelm's birthday in his gardens –now Sokoine Gardens

source: Bagamoyo Museum

**fig. 6.2.6** below:

Military parade in honour of the kaiser's birthday in 1916. Bismarck's memorial is seen in the foreground.

source: Schnee, heinrich: Deutsch Ost Afrika im Weltkriege Wie wir lebten und kämpften. tafel 8. Leipzig 1019



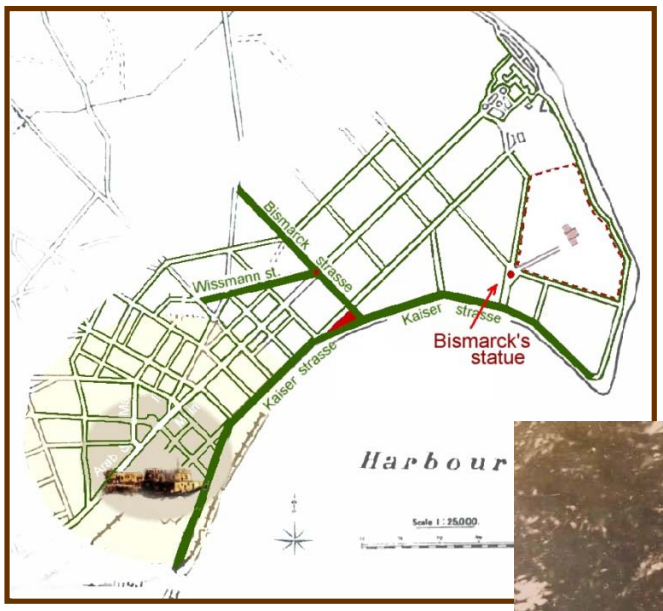






**fig. 6.2.7 *i* (above)**

**fig. 6.2.7 *i* (below)**

The Bismarck Memorial in Dar es Salaam.

1901, Chancellor Bismarck. This is a copy of the famous Regas bust of Bismarck. It was donated by the explorer, Dr. Hans Meyer, between 1899 and 1902. It stood in front of Government House in what was called Bismarck platz. (Wilde and Sykes, in op cit.).

source: Dar es salaam Museum, from photo in Bruckner collection

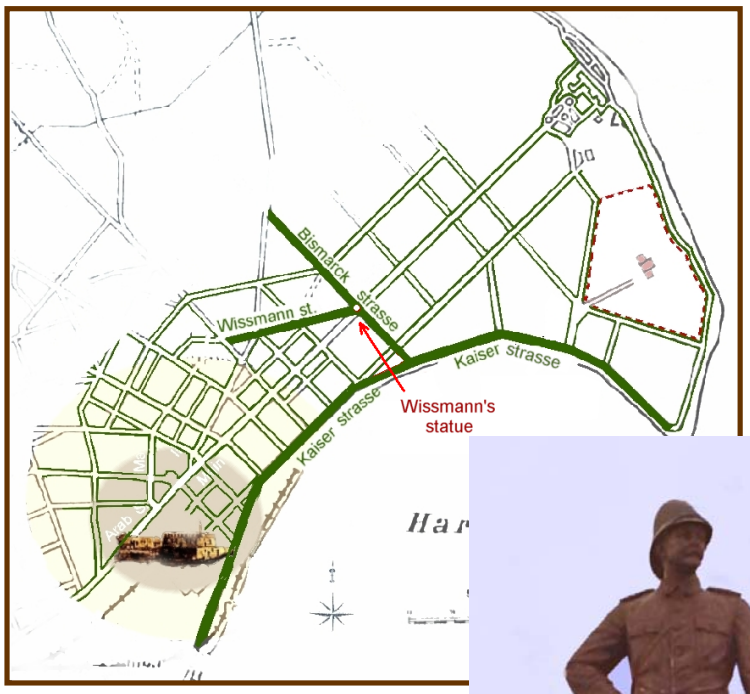





**fig. 6.2.8 *i* (above)**

**fig. 6.2.8 *ii* (right)**

German explorer and soldier who led the suppression of the Abushiri uprising and was governor in 1895-96. Herrmann von Wissmann's *denkmal* was erected in 1911 and removed after the British occupation-1916
It was sited on Wissmann strasse where the askari monument now stands

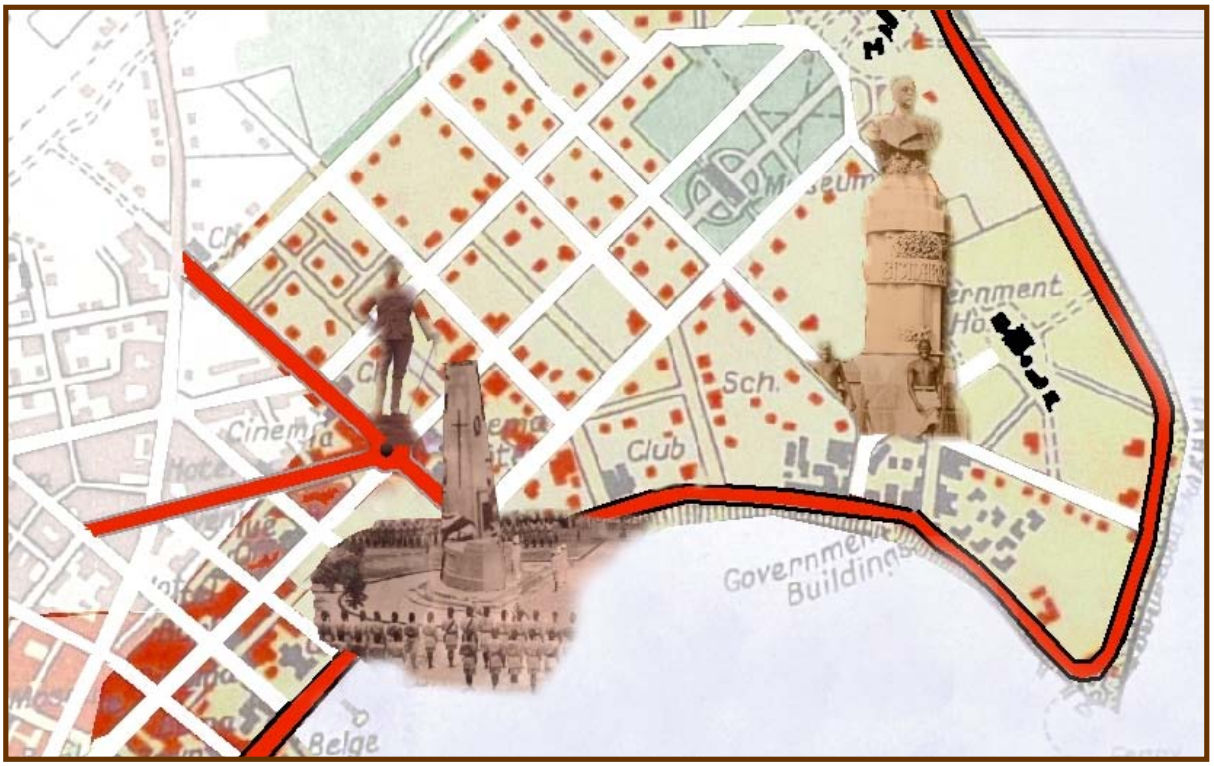



**fig. 6.2.9**

Impression of the denkmals in situ

Germany established official colonial rule in East African early in 1891, thereafter German identity was enhanced by monuments to the great men in politics: Kaiser Wilhelm, Bismarck and von Wissmann. However, Dar es Salaam retained its Arab- Swahili identity even after the erecting of these monuments.

source: compiled by author

There was considerable effort to make colonization by the Reich 'visible'. Perhaps as a reflection of the mere space-status (as opposed to established place-status) that obtained between the town and its administrators. The Germans fashioned Dar es Salaam's physical structure, its built urban form, using classical European architecture.

This style was displayed along Dar es Salaam's harbour frontage; along the area where the Germans intended to operate from; along the vista gleaned by any visitor's eye on his way into the town or when sailing past. (see fig. 6.2.12) The following is a survey of the colonial power's property sited on the harbour front.

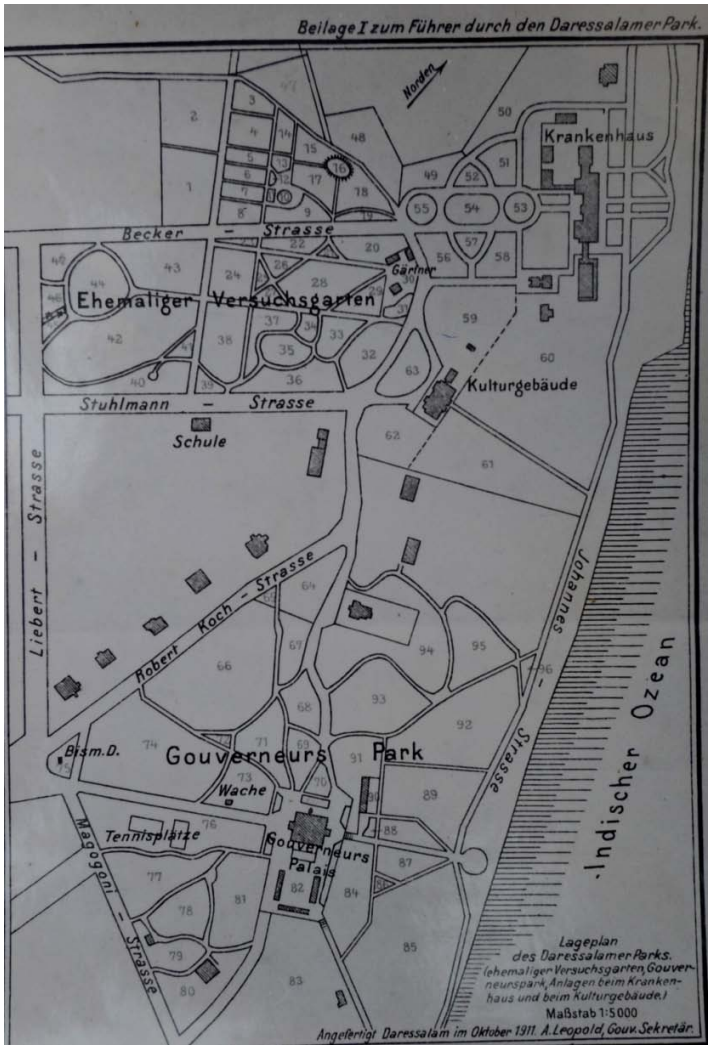



**fig. 6.2.10**

Map showing the botanical gardens in Dar es Salaam. October 1911. A Leopold, gouvv. Secretary. The German text indicates that "The Dar es Salaam parks" consists of the former Research Garden, the Governor's Park, the Hospital Gardens and the garden around the "Kulturgebäude" (culture building now Ministry of Health) The red numbers refer to specific vegetation described in the booklet to which this map is attached.. The booklet is under the word Führer




| number | Building | number | building |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Krankenhaus | 6 | club |
| 2 | Mortuary and Laboratory | 7 | Lutheran Church |
| 3 | Kulturgebäude | 8 | Post office |
| 4 | Gourverneur Palais | 9 | Catholic Church |
| 5 | Government offices | 10 | Town Hall –old Boma |

**fig. 6.2.11 *i* (above)**

This map (drawn in perspective) shows the main German buildings along the harbour (hugging the coast) The buildings are examined following the sequential ordering. And this indicates the site of each building.

**fig. 6.2.11 *ii* (below)** tabulation of sites marked

source: compiled by author from fig. 6.2.3




This map is identical to fig. 6.2.3. It has been rendered in earth and ocean colours for emphasis and sharper visibility. It is used throughout the rest of this section to point out the site of the building under discussion.

**fig. 6.2.12** ***i*** (number 1 on the map) is the building shown on the following page. Krankenhaus (now Ocean Road Hospital) was built in 1897. It has twin square towers, each surmounted by a dome flanked by minor cupolas. The repetition of the pointed arch along the entire façade is a distinctive characteristic. source: Tanzania Notes and Records no.71 , Casson, Architectural notes on Dar es Salaam

2 Building used as the laboratory attached to the Krankenhaus

right: **fig. 6.2.13 *i*** Mortuary and Laboratory number 2 on map 6.2.12

photo: author.

below: **fig. 6.2.12 *ii*** Krankenhaus number 1 on map 6.2.11 *i*

photo: author.








**fig. 6.2.14 *i*** (above): shows site of the Kulturgebäude

below: **fig. 6.2.14 *ii*** number 3 on map 6.2.11 *i*

White building occupied by ministry of health. This building, erected c. 1897, was the so-called "Kulturgebäude" (Culture Building) with different institutions. E.g. The first German "Sammlung" (museum) was housed here. Perhaps it also housed Dr. Robert Koch's office (he discovered tuberculosis -TB) source: Dar es Salaam Museum, photo author.



**fig. 6.2.15 *i*** right above: site of Government palace and park. Also site of the Evangelical Mission

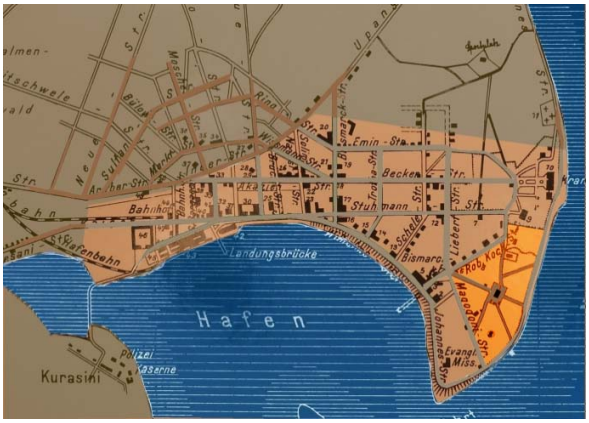



**fig. 6.2.15 *ii*** right middle: **fig. 6.2.16** The Evangelical Mission which has since been pulled down

source: quote Sykes and Wilde. photo Dar es salaam Museum



**fig. 6.2.15 *iii*** below: **Government House** number 4 on map in p. 230 This was Government House during German times; a classical building with horseshoe arches

source: Tanzania Notes and Records no.71 ,



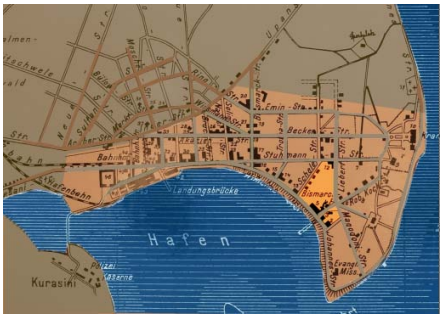


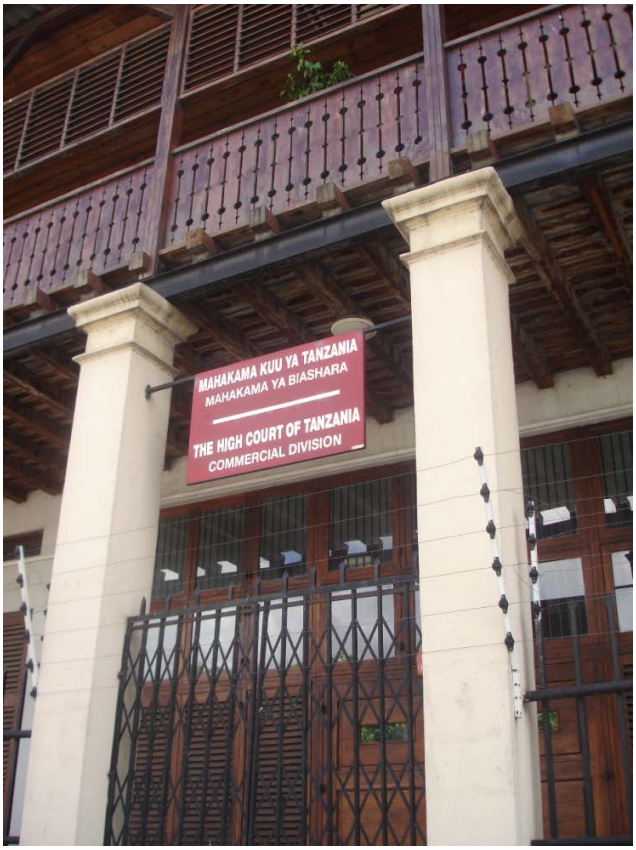



**fig. 6.2.16 *i*** above left: the site of government offices

**fig. 6.2.16 *ii*** above right: gouvernement, Bezirksgericht, Kommando der Schutztruppe, Hauptkasse and Handwerkerschule according to the information on map 6.2.3

**fig. 6.2.16 *iii*** left: number 5 on map 6.2.11 *i*, Government offices. Imported from Germany and assembled in Dar es salaam. These buildings are still in use today (2010)

photo: author.



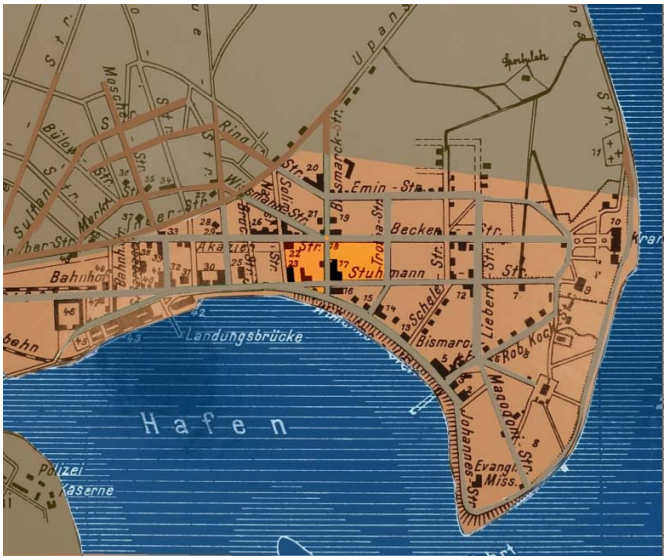



**fig. 6.2.17 *i*** right: site of post office number 8 and club? number 6

**fig. 6.2.17 *ii*** middle: **fig. 6.2.14** the post office number 8 on map 6.2.12.

**fig. 6.2.17 *iii*** below: **The Kaiserhof, now the New Africa Hotel** number 6 not sure that it was converted nito the club at some point.








**fig. 6.2.18 *i*** above: site of **Evangelische Kirche** number 7 on map 6.2.12. seemingly other buildings on this site were Baureferat, Club and Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches ???

**fig. 6.2.18 *ii*** below: Evangelische Kirche number 7 on map 6.2.12. Note the snow draining roofs in Bavarian style

photo: author.






**fig. 6.2.19** ***i*** left: site of the **Katholische Kirche** number 9 on map 6.2.11 *i*. and there is refernce to a Katholische Mission that was a block away

**fig. 6.2.19** ***ii*** below: **Katholische Kirche**
photo: author.






**fig. 6.2.20 *i*** left: site of the Kommando of the flotilla and today's city hall. number 10 in the map

**fig. 6.2.20 *ii*** below: **The old boma** from the sultan's time. This building was renovated and combined with another one. It serves today as the city hall. (Wilde and Sykes, in op cit.).



Between 1890 and 1914 the Germans had put up all these buildings. The built environment of Dar es Salaam was classical but incorporating Arab-Swahili features. It was erected with an eye to aesthetics.

Was Dar es Salaam still an Arab-swahili town? Perhaps it was, in the older district (Majid's town), along *Araber strasse, Inder strasse* and *Sultan strasse*. In these quarters, urban coastal religion was proclaimed by the minarets of the many mosques; by the dress –white *kanzus, buibuis* or double khangas. This quarter was still similar to other towns along the east coast of Africa.

It is true that in 1891, Dar es Salaam ceased to be the sultan's –legally; it gave up Zanzibari leadership. But its lingua franca was never German; it was Kiswahili. Even with the raising of German monuments, Dar es Salaam retained its Arab-Swahili*ness*, in its cultural manifestations. Under German rule it surely was, but it displayed an Arab-Swahili identity.

Quoting Marcia Wright, Iliffe points out that:

> After defeating Abushiri, the Germans made allies of the coastal muslims rather than establish[ing] a new power centre inland… the governor wanted to restrict administration to the coast and establish commercial relations with the interior, using the coastal people and their Swahili language as his intermediaries. Secular, Swahili-speaking government schools … were opened… by 1911 government was operating 83 schools with 4,312 pupils…These state schools were the foundation of the civil service ….the official language of …administration was Swahili. It was adopted for administrative convenience … it became the language of intertribal communication …[123]

Those who came into Dar es Salaam from the hinterland, the wa Nyamwezi, Hehe, wa Zaramo, did not imbibe German dress, German cuisine or the German language. They gradually became closer to coastal wa Swahili.

With Arab architecture, Swahili language, Islamic dress and religion, it would have been difficult to 'see' the panorama that was Dar es Salaam, in the 1890s to 1916, as essentially German. Its *German-ness* did not go beyond the written letter of the law. Its *German-ness* was confined to the legal and commercial contracts that had been drawn up in the early 1890s. In everything else the town was a veritable Arab-Swahili settlement.

[123] Cf. Ilife in op cit.

# 6.3 british dar



The First World War transformed Dar es Salaam into a full-scale military encampment. It became the site of juxtaposition of struggles between Germany and Britain for military control. A fact reflected in the removal of German monuments in exchange for British ones. And the choice of the architectural style was telling.

The use of an arabesque style transformed the German government house into a British one: after its bombardment it was rebuilt and re decorated according to a style already used by the British empire in that region.

The botanical gardens, which had been the setting for the German kulterdebauge (laboratory and culture building) and the krakenhaus (Ocean Road hospital) now provided the physical context for the British *King George Museum* (Tanzania National Museum), al;so in saracenic style.
These two, architecturally bold, statements erected by the Germans were 'spiced up' with the museum, again in saracenic style in order to allude to the British imperial stamp along that latitude.

The German heroes who embody the Reich, e.g. von Wissmann, and Bismarck, were exchanged for a generic *askar*i monument.; exchanged for an ordinary soldier from the 'conquered' peoples …perhaps it was not seemly to replace von Wissmann or Bismarck with His Majesty the British King.

The Catholic, and more to the point the German Lutheran church, was countered with the Anglican St. Albans church. Interestingly this Anglican church is in a style that relates it coastal Omani Arab buildings,particularly with in its tower (bell tower?).

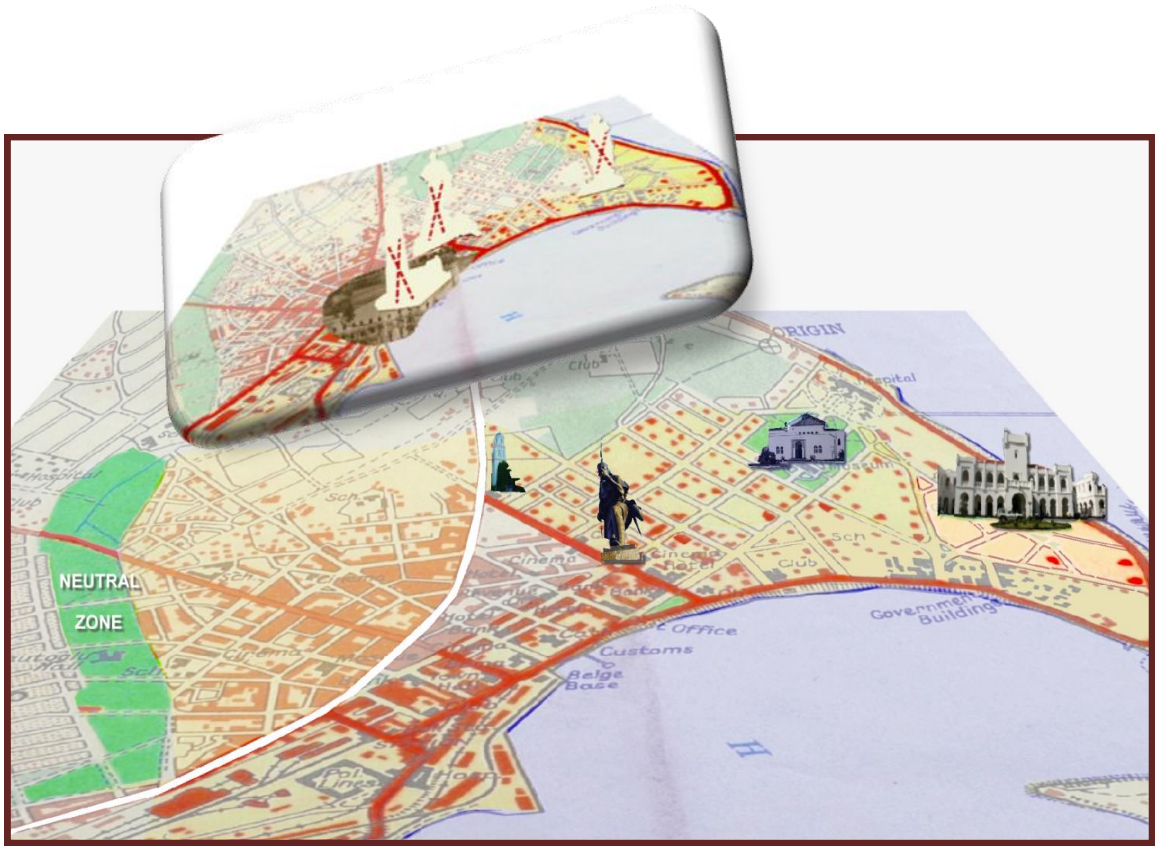



fig. 6.3.1 *i*:German monuments were removed from public space.

fig. 6.3.1 *ii*: British contribution to Dar es Salaam's image.

1 Government House
2 King George Museum
3 Askari monument
4 Anglican church
5 neutral zone

No. 5 The Neutral zone or Mnazi Mmoja Park was "originally intended to segregate the Asian and African. However, the Sikhs, whose religion stresses the oneness of the human family, decided to establish themselves on the 'African' side". Sykes, L. and Waide, U. in op cit. p 30

source: compiled by author

## 6.3 british administered dar es salaam

Just as German Dar es Salaam had began with a bang –the quelling of the Bushiri revolt by von Wissmann– so did another bang, world war I, witness the beginning of British Dar es Salaam. This time the change was not from an Arab overlord to a German emperor; the change was from one European emperor to his equally European cousin. This situation presents a classical case of *passive* identity where the city speaks not for its native culture but rather for its captors and the mark they inscribe on it. At this point in history, Dar es Salaam's identity appears to have been dependent on its political captors.

The use of third-party-territory to settle a quarrel between European principals was not uncommon in colonial days. African land and its inhabitants became a mere battlefield in settling eccentric European rivalries. And this foreign (European) differences are responsible for the inscription of a passive identity upon the cities of eastern Africa.

Thus was Dar es Salaam to change identity by being caught up in political wrangles of a mainly European nature:

> In December 1915 the British cabinet ordered the conquest of this German colony with as little delay as possible. General Smuts was appointed to command the imperial forces … Fear that [German] submarines … might act against imperial communications led the British cabinet to favour annexation … [And] the British Mandate, as agreed in July 1922, gave Britain full power of legislation and administration … On 1st February 1920 the Tanganyika Territory took its …place in the British empire.[124]

Upon inheriting or annexing Dar es Salaam the British proceeded to inscribe their own identity in order to communicate that the city was now part of the British Empire and no longer at the Kaiser's disposal. They did this by

Removing German memorabilia from public space

Installing British Empire symbols e.g. The King George Museum and others (clocks)

Establishing a neutral zone to clearly demarcate the *governed* from the *governor* –Mnazi mmoja grounds as cordon sanitaire.

[124] Illife in op cit

Erecting (an empire-look) enigmatic memento –the askari monument

All German monuments disappeared from Dar es Salaam's public space. Gone was the Kaiser, gone too was his *denkmal*; gone was Bismarck's empire, gone too was his *denkmal*. The German empire was confined to history; German Dar es Salaam became history as well by shedding off its German identity –it was now the British *House-of-Peace*.



fig. 6.3.2

Government House, Dar es Salaam , 1914. After bombardment by the British War ships.

Source: Dar es Salaam museum

The 1914 -1918 war disrupted activities in Dar es Salaam. The Germans were defeated and their East African possessions distributed. Rwanda-Urundi went to the Belgians while, what was from now on Tanganyika, went to the British as a League of Nations Mandate. These rather abstract words had significant, observable effects on Dar es Salaam's built environment.

The British Navy bombarded Government House and the railway workshops in December 1914, but otherwise the town itself did not figure in military action until British forces moved in unopposed to occupy Dar es Salaam on 4 September 1916 after a protracted siege.63 The former German capital became the principal military cantonment of allied forces in East Africa, supporting the campaign against the famously elusive German military. It also became a veritable infirmary. The city's European hospital, Kaiserhof Hotel and government buildings served to care for over 2,000Europeans; tent hospitals accommodated over 3,500 Africans.64 The strain of feeding and housing military forces and interned enemy subjects, a massive drought in 1917-18, and the collapse of local German currency and hinterland trade networks, together brought economic breakdown and severe food shortages to the town and surrounding areas that did not abate until 1920.

Some German built-forms disappeared from public space. The first were the *denkmals*: the Kaiser's, Bismarck's and von Wissmann's. Probably the British reasoned out that, since the Germans were gone, so too must their statues and memorials. What importance and significance man attaches to lifeless statues! The symbolic language appears to speak louder and clearer than any verbal or written proclamation.

Where the Germans had used a classical style with some Arab-Swahili features for their public buildings, the British adopted the Saracenic style which "was beloved to them in that part of the empire that was east of the Suez Canal.

The Saracenic style, sometimes called Moslem or Mohammedan by the western world because it was produced by the followers of Mohammed, is characterised by the pointed or horseshoe

arch. It is also characterised by the form of its domes but above all, by its decoration.

The designs are geometrical, tiles are used lavishly and stained glass features too. The style has been called a triumph of the decorator's art. With very few –almost no– changes we could apply this description to the King George Museum put up by the British in the city of Dar es Salaam.

Following the same along-the-coast design that had been used by the Germans, the British 'filled' in this outlay. They rebuilt the Gourvernour's palace which they had bombed. And erected, to King George, a museum as a monument bearing the same name. Both buildings were in the saracenic style. The previous classical style with Arab-Swahili features was transformed, in these two building, to the highly decorative Saracenic style.

If the style appears incongruent we have to remember that:

> When the British went around amassing an empire, they considered themselves the legitimate rulers rather than [mere] conquerors. They therefore sought to justify their presence by relating themselves to the previous ruler, [in this case the Arab sultanate not the German Reich. Like in] the case of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in the late 19th century where the British state engineer favoured a Mahometan (sic) style over a neoclassical one to reflect Islamic mores in the region.[125]

By encapsulating such mores, the empire-builders sought to make their presence legitimate and more palatable to the local community. It is a telling feature that the same empire-builders chose a neoclassical style for Nairobi's civic buildings unlike Dar es Salaam's saracenic ones.

[125] wikipedia



**fig. 6.3.3**

Government House, Dar es Salaam. The building stands on the foundations of the old German Government Palace which was destroyed in December 1914 by shells from British warships. It is in Moorish style and was designed by Mr. J. H. Sinclair, CMG a one time British resident in Zanzibar.

Source: Dar es Salaam museum

This building was reconstruction in 1922, to a larger scale and is much more ornate. It incorporates pointed horseshoe Saracenic arches, intricate multifoil arches and pierced ornamental stone balconies at upper floor level, with crenellated square tower as the central feature of the composition. [126]

Sykes and Waide add that the British rebuilt it using green (living) coral brought in from the sea dhows and that its saracenic features [were] so beloved by the British for all government buildings east of Suez… [127]

[126] Tanzania Notes and Records no. 71. Casson in Architectural Notes on Dar es Salaam.
[127] Sykes, L. and Waide, U., Dar es Salaam, A Dozen Drives around the city, in op cit.




fig. 6.3.4 *i*
No. 2 The King George museum
detail of the decorated doorway

photo: author




fig. 6.3.4 *ii* front façade of The King George museum (No. 2 on map)

Arab like features in the structure

The central tower, the small round windows for shooting through (military defence function of forts) and the horse shoe doorway

source: Dar es Salaam Museum



fig. 6.3.5
No. 3 The Askari monument

photo: author

The city's most striking monument was erected and unveiled in November 1927 "to the memory of the native African troops… the carriers corps… to all other men who served and died for their king and country in Eastern Africa …in 1914-1918

But in this great war (1914-1918) which 'king and country' did the native Tanganyikan fight for? The Kaiser or the British king?

Perhaps in erecting this memorial, the British forgot the actual historical position of the native

soldiers in German East Africa who fought and died for the Kaiser NOT the English king. This is another example of 'imposed on' or passive identity. Who does this icon really speak for?

The askari monument occupies a very central position in Dar es Salaam's city centre. It occupies the site of Herrmann von Wissmann's statue. After the British takeover in 1916, Wissmann's statue was removed and in 1927 the *askari* was erected in its place. The artist was James Alexander Stevenson. On the base of the monument, the dedication reads "To the memory of the native African troops who fought; to the carriers who were the feet and hands of the army; and to all other men who served and died for their king and country in eastern Africa in the Great War 1914-1918." The words are those of Rudyard Kipling, composed by him at the request of the Imperial War Graves Commission.

The monument is not in Zone III, the native quarter, yet it purports to be in memory of the native African troops, the carrier corps. Rather than reflecting and recording actual happenings (from the point of view of the majority African) it is more about 'owning' the space; defeating the Germans and dethroning von Wissmann. Despite Kipling's caption 'to the memory of native African troops … who served and died for their king and country…' it is a 'mass produced' empire artefact which has little to do with appreciating the actual role of the Tanganyikan native troops. These fought for the Kaiser anyway, not the British King. No, the askari monument is about rendering an empire-look or bringing Dar es Salaam into the fold of the British Empire.

Perhaps Nairobi's Kariokor (also a corruption of carrier corps) would have been a more fitting site for this askari and his caption. Nairobi's Kariokor is the site where those native Africans who were the hands and feet of the British army, in WWI, were recruited. It was in Nairobi's Kariokor that Kenyan (not Tanganyikan) carrier corps was assembled. The Nairobi counterpart of the askari monument is also not in the native quarter. And it enjoys less success perhaps because of its positioning –in the heart of the colonial city, where segregation was more strictly enforced in comparison with Dar es Salaam.

These askari monuments were produced by empire builders for consumption by British

subjects. They are mementos to 'proper' civic ethos addressed to the far flung British subject. The War Graves commissioned both monuments. The Dar es Salaam one was cast by Morris Bronze Founders of Westminster. Eric Muspratt, a traveller and writer, claims to have posed for the statue as well as for the soldiers and porters portrayed on the two bas-reliefs which are on either side of the tall pedestal. (the side plaques bear the Swahili and Arabic translations of Kipling's dedication) Before coming to Dar es Salaam, the statue was shown at the Royal Academy's summer exhibition.




**fig. 6.3.6**
**No. 4 Anglican Church**

It is interesting that the main feature of this church is a tower –the better to fit in with the Omani-Arab crenellated towers? It has a copula for a dome at the top of the tower ( not unlike the European Hospital and reminiscent of Byzantine architecture) The equivalent of this church in Nairobi, the All Saints Cathedral, has no considerations for the regional or local style. It is simply Gothic.

photo: author

After removing German monuments, after putting up a government house and museum, in a style that was as grandiose as it was ostentatious, the British still felt the need to *image* themselves in Dar es Salaam. A distinction, with no ambiguity, between the governor and those governed, was desired. A law-and-order clearly imaged in spatial arrangement was sought after. It was realised by creating a neutral zone, a cordon sanitaire to act as social demarcation.




**fig. 6.3.7**

Zone I: Uzunguni, (white area) – King George Museum
Zone II: Uhindini, (Asian area) – Askari monument
Zone III: Uswahilini (native area) – Mnazi Mmoja park

source: compiled by author

Up till the Second World War downturns in the urban economy had occasioned significant African outmigration, such as occurred during World War One and in the early 1930s. With the British at this time reluctant to bear the cost, or responsibility, for radical interventions, German plans for urban segregation were adopted and put into effect in 1924. These split the township into three zones. Broadly reflecting the pre-existing social geography of Dar es Salaam. This planning legislation had a profound effect on the town's future development; resulting in racially and/or socially segregated neighbourhoods that in some cases have existed up to the present. Through their prescription of differing building standards in each of the three zones, the new rules were mostly successful in entrenching segregation. European inhabitants were overwhelmingly located in Zone I, which included the old German quarter, northeast of the city centre, and embryonic coastal suburbs to the north.

Indians were concentrated in Zone II, the congested bazaar which provided both residential and commercial quarters for what was, between the wars, Dar es Salaam's fastest growing community. The core of the African population was in Kariakoo and, from the late 1920s, in Ilala; though a number of urban 'villages' were also incorporated within the township boundary, notably Gerezani (demolished in the 1920s/30s) and Keko. British intentions to effect racial zoning are amply demonstrated by the removal of houses occupying a so-called 'neutral zone' that was to act as a sanitary buffer between the African township and Zones I & II. This area of racially mixed housing was by the 1930s cleared to form the 'Open Space', colloquially re-named Mnazi Mmoja after an urban locale of the same name in Zanzibar Town.

This up market area of tree-lined avenues and surfaced roads acquired the colloquial name of Uzunguni, or place of the Europeans. African entry was restricted to those in European employ, notably servants, though, to the consternation of officials and the convenience of local residents, itinerant salesmen would periodically hawk their goods there from house to house.69 Acacia Avenue, stretching from Kivukoni towards the railway station, formed the main European shopping area, though most businesses here were owned by Indians. These blended in with the principal concentration of Indian businesses in the contiguous 'bazaar', an area also

known as Uhindini. By the 1920s, this area consisted of two- and three-storey stone buildings, alongside more numerous makeshift single-storey structures doubling as both home and *duka*. Living conditions and sanitation were poor, a fact frequently bemoaned by European officials.

The most striking response to deteriorating conditions was actually stillborn. This involved a 1940 proposal to excise Zone III from the remainder of the town and declare it the autonomous

However, such a bold initiative turned out to be politically unfeasible.

# 6. 4 independent dar



## 6.4 post independence dar es salaam

Nyerere towers over his city for his was a character of outstanding significance. He was a man of authority and won universal loyalty. So towering was his figure, his moral fibre, that he had little need of physical structures to validate him and his philosophy. It is therefore difficult to pick out built form that represented him, built form that singled him out. After all, Nyerere, the moderate man, preached co-operation. He had a passion for egalitarianism, for a society in which equality was to find expression in all the institutions and offices of state. And he was determined to set an example himself.

In vain do we seek a tangible material expression of his identity. His arena was not physical space; the Tanzanian psyche, the Tanzanian mind, of each citizen was his field of action. Indeed, vain it is to search Dar es Salaam space for a physical manifestation of Nyerere‟s belief, Nyerere‟s rule, legacy or philosophy. These are buried in the hearts of the people of Tanzania. For his philosophy shunned flamboyant symbolism, which according to him, often lead to a "false and sycophantic deferene on the part of others …"[128] Instead "… the basic needs of Tanzania can only be met through the endeavor of every citizen … Ujamaa, African socialism, has at its core a constant striving after equality … the commitment of individuals in society to the building of a just society …"[129]

[128] Legum C. and Mmari G., (eds) *Mwalimu: the influence of Nyerere*. James Currey Ltd. 1995
[129] Ibid

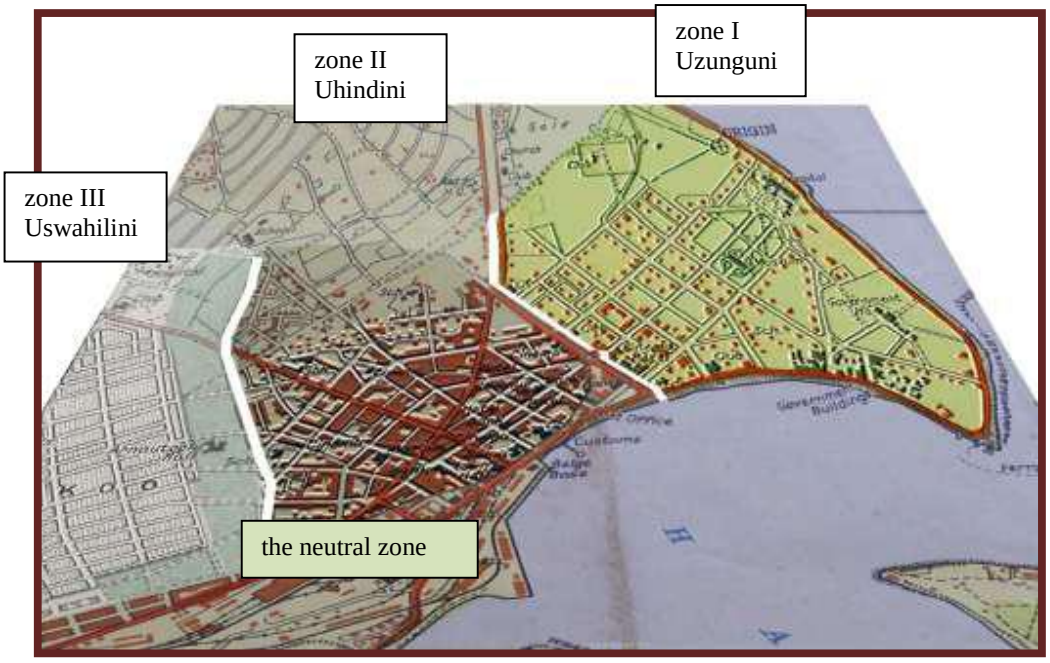



**fig. 6.4.1**

Nyerere inherited a fragmented Dar es Salaam. The streets highlighted white, mark the divisions of each zone. Zone I was Uzunguni, zone II Uhindini and zone III Uswahilini. As can be seen in this map, the street layout and densities in each zone vary. Socio-economic distribution may have fallen into this same pattern. What is now Kariakoo [zone III] was originally part of Sultan Majid‟s shamba (plantation). In the early days of German rule, part of it was bought by one Herr Schoeller. He rented it to Africans, who cultivated its palms. German urban policy was to separate the races, and they earmarked Schoeller‟s shamba, which they bought in 1914, for the African township…[but war broke out] and in 1916, General Smuts and his allied forces housed their porters, the Carrier Corps, in a tented camp.

The site acquired the name Kariakoo, a Swahili rendering of the troops‟ name.[130]

[130] Sykes, L. and Waide, U., in op cit.




**fig. 6.4.2 *i***
mnazi mmoja accessed through the main thoroughfares

source: author

Mnazi Mmoja grounds was the cordon sanitaire separating the natives from the settlers. This is the site that Nyere chose to articulate political freedom. Mnazi Mmoja park became the centre for political rallies [in the 1950s] and it is no accident that the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) offices border the park. There is a Mnazi Mmoja Fountain and the Uhuru (freedom) torch… Nyerere offered his vision of a future independent Tanganyika in these words, „Tanganyika will be the first, most truly multiracial democratic country in Africa. When we get our freedom, a light… will be put high upon Kilimanjaro for all to see…" The Uhuru Torch monument [in Mnazi Mmoja] is a reminder of that beacon that was placed on top of Kilimanjaro.[131]




**fig. 6.4.2 *ii***
same name metaphorically „linking" Uhuru Street and Independence Avenue

source: author

[131] ibid



**fig. 6.4.3 *i*** above: the parliament that was to be built

source: Brennan in op. cit.

**fig. 6.4.3 *ii*** below:The Karimjee Hall, used as parliament in Dar es Salaam, a donation/gift from the Karimjee family

source: wikipaedia








**fig. 6.4.4 *i*** above left: site of monuments in independent Dar es Salaam
source: author

**fig. 6.4.4 *ii*** above right: the Uhuru Torch (beacon of independence) source: author

**fig. 6.4.4 *iii*** below:announcement of future monument to Mwalimu Nyerere the nation‟s founding father. Nyerere had forbidden the construction of a monument to him seeing it as needlessly extravagant. source: author






**fig. 6.4.5** above: site of various public building, from different periods, in the Arab style. This is the dominant built- language in Dar es Salaam.

source: compiled by the author

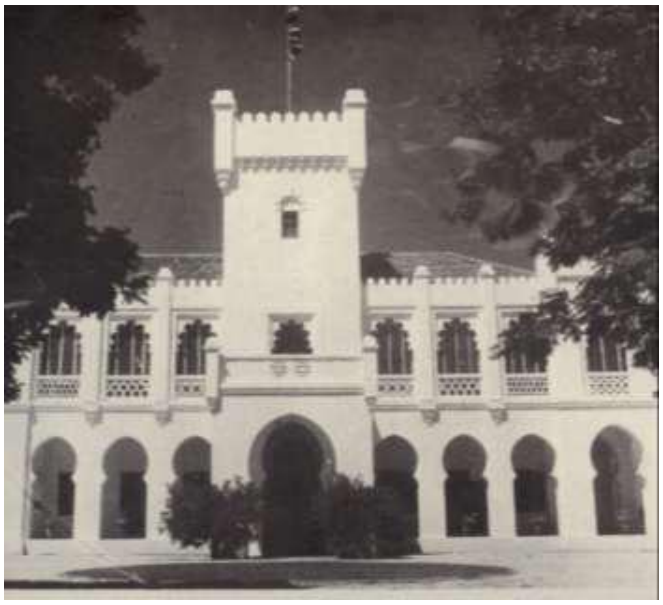




**fig. 6.4.6 *i*** right: state house

**fig. 6.4.6 *ii*** left: city hall

Both buildings have a central square tower in the Omani Arab style

source: compiled by the author





**fig. 6.4.7 *i*** right: The High Court

**fig. 6.4.7 *ii*** left: Tanzania Revenue Authority building

Both buildings have a central square tower, crenellated at the top, in the Omani Arab style

source: compiled by the author





**fig. 6.4.8 *i*** right: Ocean Road Hospital

**fig. 6.4.8 *ii*** left: The Post Office

Both buildings have a central square tower, (Ocean Road Hospital has a Byzantine-domed tower in addition) in the Omani Arab style

source: compiled by the author



**fig. 6.4.9** : The Kilimanjaro Hotel

Not all buildings in Dar es Salaam are in the Omani Arab style. This modern structure was built by TANU (today Chama cha Mapinduzi)

photo: author




**fig. 6.4.10** : Mkapa Pension Towers

Not all buildings in Dar es Salaam are in the Omani Arab style. This modern structure was built by the Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) It marks the advent of a change in economic policy: from socialism (Ujamaa) to capitalism (Mageuzi)

photo: author

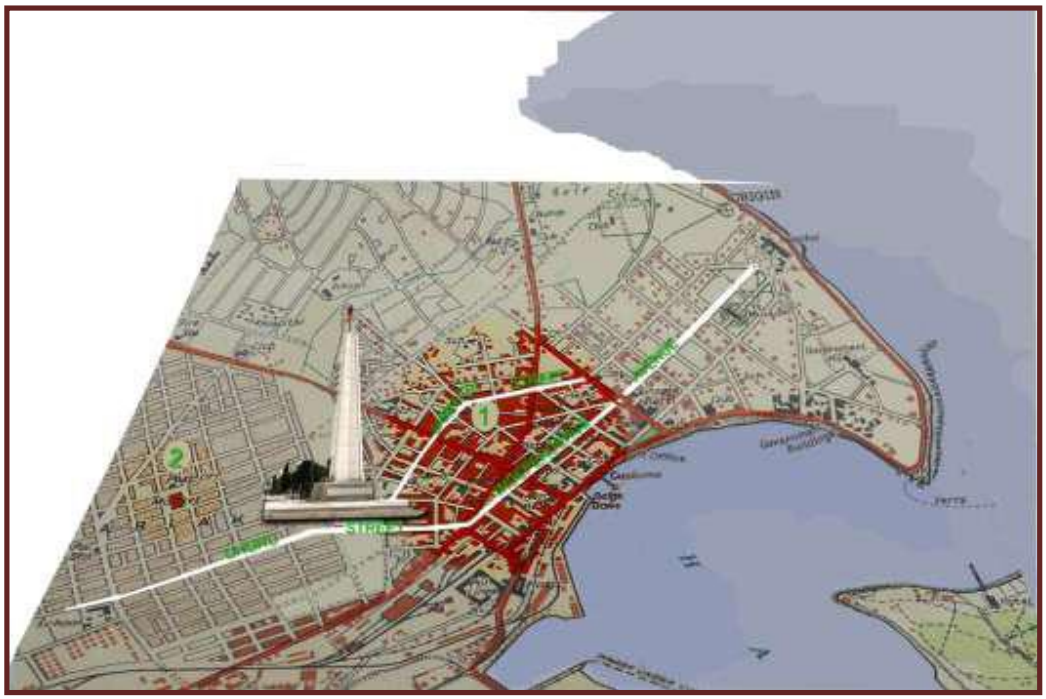


**fig. 6.4.11** : cohesive Dar es Salaam

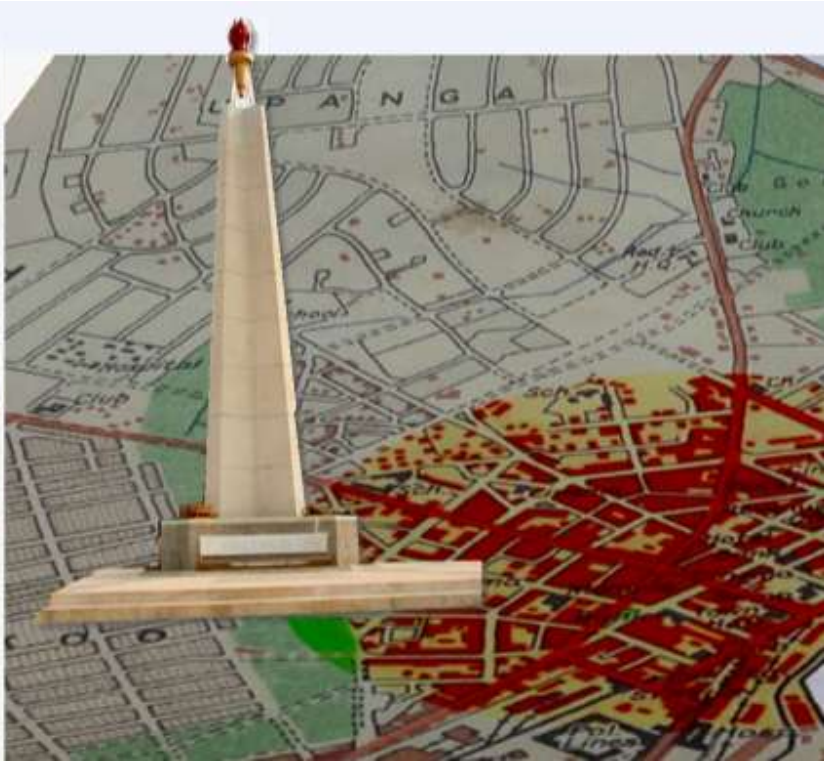
The city does not have spectacular buildings to image its political process. Perhaps this very absence points to the significant level of cultural cohesion and want of contest in claiming to be identified with Dar es Salaam.

source: compiled by the author

# 7 conclusion




nairobi's symbolic space




dar es salaam's symbolic space

## 7.1 visual comparison nairobi

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nairobi: capital of British East Africa protectorate 1899-1905 | buildings |  |  | |
| | other icons | | | |
| Nairobi: capital of British East Africa protectorate 1905-1920 | buildings |  | | |
| | other icons | | | |
| Nairobi: capital of European settlers 1920-1963 | buildings & other icons |  |   |  |
| Independent Nairobi 1963-1995 | buildings and other icons |  |  |  |

## 7.2 visual comparison dar es salaam

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arab sultanate Dar es Salaam (1862-1891) | buildings |  | | |
| | other icons | | | |
| Capital of German East Africa (1891-1914) | Buildings |  |  |  |
| | other icons |  |  |  |
| British administered Dar (1918-1961) | Buildings |  |  |  |
| | other icons | | | |
| Independent Dar es Salaam (1961-1995 | buildings and other icons |  |  |  |
| | | | |  |

## 7.3 conclusion

The African city is an important site and symbol of social change according to J. Roger Kurtz. [132] Although for most of its citizens the key issue is simply survival, the city can be discussed and analysed in order to deepen our understanding of the urban landscape. It is worthwhile, in an effort to confront its present conditions, to view it in a historical and geographical perspective: considering its position as a post-colonial city in the context of global issues, its historical function in the region and beyond, and this may yield an insight into the reasons behind the present critical situation.

If the artist's task, in this endeavour, is to provide forms that help make sense of the society, forms artistic or cultural, that help make meaning of a place like Nairobi, then here has been one more aid to delve into some aspect of Nairobi's urban dynamics. It consists in explaining and *re*presenting the city's official central space. For the symbols with which we choose to identify ourselves are important in expressing the values we hold.

Probably the first question is: why an aesthetic critique; to what purpose? It is because, much as city-as-artwork is viewed for individual enjoyment, its aesthetic has other social purposes. Its built image is a symbolic expression of social reality which both reflects and influences the social, cultural and personality systems of which it is a part. A critique, though it treats of images, is concerned with what any political and economic arrangement does to the spirit and values governing human relationships.

Western scholars, perhaps from force of habit or from what they observe in major cities of Europe and America, when faced with modern African cities, have often asked: why the abject poverty, the degradation, the impoverishment of millions, amidst plenty and luxury enjoyed by only a few? This is the overriding question about emerging urbanities in Africa. Consequently, the *Kibera*s and *Korogocho*s[133] have attracted many research projects. Slum upgrading, good governance for poverty eradication, democratizing elections, millennium development goals …

[132] Cf. Kurtz, J.R., *Urban Obsessions Urban Fears: The postcolonial Kenyan Novel*. Africa World Press, Inc. Trenton NJ and Asmara, Eritrea. 1998 p 156

[133] Both Kibera and Korogocho are slum areas in Nairobi

are a few of the preferred research tools. They have been employed in investigating and explaining the ailment of the contemporary African city.

Commendable though this approach is, one feels the want of an in-depth search for the vivifying spirit, the art and culture, of these urban realities. Where is modern Africa in art and culture? Where is it at? And what direction can (or should) it take?[134] It is in response to this that the iconic and symbolic image; the historic city of Nairobi has been re-viewed in this research.

Art forms –in general– have the primary duty of illuminating a people's animating spirit, of showing how it meets new challenges and investigating possible areas of involvement and development. The specific role of a critique retains the same rationale. What spirit animates the iconic image of Nairobi? How does the contemporary 'Nairobian' interact with it? What possible direction can this interaction take? All questions that have been investigated in this study.

The evolution of human culture through the ages –society in motion through time and space– is important to the critic of art forms, who examines their past for a better appreciation today. A city –through time– is captivating in many ways: by its latent power of colours and shapes, planes and voids, textures and street-maps. These are to be admired as the work of society's creative genius. A city is one more field where human inventiveness asserts itself. We have witnessed the colonial genius in creating city square and the no less creative response in *Kenyan*ising (or *Kenyatta*nising) it. We have explored the strident architectural styles; the contesting language that has been employed to fashion colonial *place-of-belonging*, and the subsequent *un*making or *re*modeling of the same city space into a Kenyan *place-of-identity* –a place of political identity.

In shaping a masterpiece, and cities are masterpieces, the artist/s not only summon their work into being, giving aesthetic form to ideas conceived in the mind, but also reveal their own personalities. Through art forms, they speak to others and communicate with them. The art

[134] Kurtz's work, *Urban Obsessions Urban Fears: The post colonial Kenyan Novel* is an interesting exploration into this specific art form. In op cit

work –in this case the city– speaks of its authors, enabling us to know their inner life while revealing the original contribution art makes to the history of human culture. In comparing Nairobi's symbolic space with that of Dar es Salaam, the German and British 'political personality' has revealed its similarity of approach –grand buildings to stamp an equally grand imperial rule– and its points of variance: German colonial architecture had an eye to aesthetics where British colonial architecture was more *generic* with a 'cut-copy-paste look'. For instance, Nairobi's High Court can be transplanted to any British colony, in any part of the world, and comfortably merge with the architectural style of this empire. It is not specific (not an exclusive style) to stamping imperial rule in Nairobi; it would be at home in Bombay (now Mumbai) in Pretoria, Salisbury (Harare) or Kampala. While the Ocean Road Hospital in Dar es Salaam would never be congruent in Rwanda Urundi,which territory was witnessed the same German imperialism.

Who is the artist (the author) responsible for the art-form-Nairobi? And for whom does this art form speak? Whose inner life does Nairobi reveal? What culture is embodied in the forms and figures that are Nairobi? This study has not provided a categorical answer but has suggested a possible way of decoding this built environment.

It is with this in mind that Nairobi's CBD, as a political artefact, was analysed. What was sought is the city's identity: who constructed the icon and for what purpose? Civic buildings were singled out as elemental to iconic Nairobi. Their architectural style was examined and contextualised within the related culture. The method followed is that of art history, specifically of histories of style. And Nairobi's *aesthetic* was the substance of the critique, centering on City Square, that 'show piece', the visual focal point of the city.

What emerged was the predominantly neo-classical style in colonial city square. The High Court and City Hall are proudly neo-classical. And this neo-classicism of the *Pax Britannica* is perhaps an echo of the classical *Pax Romana*. After all the aims and goals of both empires were similar despite the many centuries that come between them.

African political independence effected a change in this icon. The Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) became the spectacle of city square. Maybe, KICC broke with the neo-classical style to mark the change from colonial to indigenous management. It has become the preferred background for photo-sessions of ordinary 'Nairobians'. In a sense, the citizens use it to 'autograph' their sojourn in this city –to identify with the place. And by KICC rising well above colonial law and order (embodied in the High Court) it symbolises *independent* Kenya.

Thereafter, no more iconic buildings appear in CBD. Times Tower is not 'stylised' African. It is not executed in the language of cultural communiques.

An insight was gained in comparing Nairobi with Dar es Salaam. Similar though their history might appear, *prima facie*, there are important differences. Dar es Salaam is older than Nairobi. The coastal Arab-Swahili milieu was its first cultural context. Nairobi, according to its foreign founders, is a brand new creation of European colonisation. It was seen as devoid of cultural context preceding the British.

Dar es Salaam experienced colonisers from different parts of the world: the Zanzibari sultanate, the Germans and the British. Each spent several decades trying to shape the city into his image. Nairobi, on the other hand, had an exclusively British colonial experience. The British had over six decades to stamp –their image– onto Nairobi –their *first* colonial city in East Africa. And having no cultural predecessor to take into account, while selecting an architectural style, they inscribed neo-classicism with abandon. Colonial Nairobi is neo-classical pure and simple.

Dar es Salaam's initial style (unlike Nairobi's) was no different from its neighbours' –the coastal Arab-Swahili. The Germans, sensitive to this preceding style, took it into account while 'building' themselves into Dar es Salaam. Classical though their style was, they included Arab features like the horse-shoe arch and the crenellated tower. The European Hospital (now Ocean Road Hospital) and the Kulture Building (ministry of Health) are apt examples.

Their successors, the British, aware of their status in Dar es Salaam (it was a United Nations mandate not a colony or protectorate) were sparing in infrastructural investment. They re-built

the German Government palace (which they had bombed during WWI) and in honour of their monarch, put up the King George Museum. Dar es Salaam's style was no longer Arab-Swahili but arabesque –some call it Moorish or saracenic. It is outstanding for its decorative elements. The British were responsible for executing the city's 'native township as conceived by the Germans. What was interesting was the imposition of the neutral area, the cordon sanitaire, the Mnazi Mmoja grounds.

And it is this section (Mnazi Mmoja) that Nyerere chose as symbolic space. Here is where he wrote himself and his philosophy into Dar es Salaam. What once divided the citizens (the cordon sanitaire) was now the symbol of unity. Nyerere 'ignited' his 'Uhuru torch' (lighted beacon) upon Mnazi Mmoja. He did not employ spectacular buildings with spectacular styles to announce 'native' management for Dar es Salaam.

Kenyatta, his counterpart in Nairobi, had 64-years-worth of colonial neo-classicism to contend with. It took him about a decade to re-orient, to Africanise Nairobi's city square. He 'completed' City Square (the symbolic space) with his statue and the KICC.

It appears that the more contested a space is, the sharper the split between the governor and those governed. Subsequently, the more emphatic or categorical the governor's symbol becomes. The British had to *shout loud enough*, to built 'shouting' or spectacular symbols in order to convince themselves and the natives that Nairobi was theirs. Likewise, Kenyatta did not answer in a whisper, he 'shouted back' with the KICC, shouted that he, the tower, and the natives were now above colonial 'law and order'.

The articulation of British colonial power in Nairobi is incisive, clear and powerful. Kenyatta's answer is no less clamorous. Both bespeak a vibrant underlying contest. The art form (that is city square) reflects this dispute. It *re*presents *contested* Nairobi. It *re*-lives an aspect of the city's history. It is at once symbolic and conserves the fighting spirit that underwrites Nairobi.

In the case of Dar es Salaam, where the contest is muted, its identity is also mellow. There are reasons for Dar's contest to be less abrasive: the colonial ruler changed guard severally and the

one who stayed longest had incomplete authority over the city. The British were overseers for the League of Nations (later United Nations). The ruler's identity-image (excepting the German buildings) is consequently restrained. The underlying style, that which is sustained through the years, is the Arab-Swahili one. Introduced by the Sultan of Zanzibar, it was respected by the Germans who discreetly included some of its features in their buildings. Once the British set foot in Dar es Salaam, they stretched this style to its flamboyant limit e.g. Government House – today's State House. The style can still be seen today in buildings like the Tanzania Revenue Authority, the Court, and the City Hall. Their basic architectural language is Omani Arab.

It appears that, in Dar es Salaam, there is a certain level of integration between the cultural reality and the built form. The image mirrors the predominantly peaceful history of the city and is most eloquent in its *narrative* function. The style is foremost a record of the happenings in Dar es Salaam. It lacks the strident notes of Nairobi's image. Dar's image, Dar's story is delivered in a calm, quiet key.

Maybe less 'contest' for a space allows better social and cultural integration. It allows more pluralism, more democracy and minimises the need for showy, spectacular, overstated and domineering architecture. Where the contest is sharper, like Nairobi's, the process of integration is interfered with. The expression of pluralism is diminished; autocratic rule is imaged, it is stamped on through imposing buildings. Seemingly, there is a need to impose a *spectacular* plastic identity through spectacular plastic arts.

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