

Modernity and Development

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The choice of Tanzania as the venue for a seminar on housing is most appropriate because it represents cultural crossroads of remarkable fertility and importance. Here in Zanzibar for over a thousand years exchanges between the Arabian peninsula and East Africa continued on a daily basis. A century of colonial rule could not erase the cultural bridge that Zanzibar represented and still does.

Zanzibar is the intersection of the Arab and African cultures. It is the meeting place of Muslim and non-Muslim expression. Buffeted for centuries by the winds of trade and commerce, it is also the point at which east and west, north and south have not only met, but profitably enriched each other's culture. The vestiges of that rich past are all around us. In Zanzibar and indeed in Tanzania and Eastern Africa, because of the historical past, the influence of a variety of cultures, both occidental and oriental has been profound and continues to be so.

Yet the pressing demands of a modernising world, eager to make up for the lost time, has strained its continual existence. We have, however, to remember that the preservation and enhancement of the indigenous heritage is very important. It is pleasing to note that much effort is being made in this direction. Two examples come immediately to my mind, in which His Highness The Aga Khan has some interest. I refer to the Bahari Beach Hotel in Dar es Salaam and the Serena Beach Hotel in Mombasa. I would also like to mention here that the Mosque at the University of Dar es Salaam, that was donated in the sixties by His Highness The Aga Khan, is an outstanding example of retaining the excellence of Islamic authenticity within modern concepts.

The subject of the seminar, housing, is most pertinent to our present needs. It provides an opportunity to reflect and to consider the demands of the community at large in the rural and urban areas to have inexpensive homes. It would be a pity if we build row upon row of matchboxes and call them homes.

We should focus our attention on the need for privacy, the desire for beauty, and the serenity of a harmonious environment. These timeless human needs should not be hostage to fashion and technology. There is much to learn from the

experience of earlier generations, gathered by centuries of trial and error, before we seek to discard this legacy for the often illusory promise of solutions imported from the western world. This is not to deny the importance of remaining open to what is best in the world around us, no matter from which country it originates. It is simply to underline the importance that we in Tanzania attach to self-reliance knowing who we are and standing proud to defend our identity.

My government, dedicated as it is, to promote modernity while protecting the cultural heritage and roots of our people will do everything possible to try to preserve the parallel existence of an earlier time. This constant struggle to find the right balance between stability and change, between modernisation and tradition, between internal and external influence is a dilemma that all governments in the developing world face today.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture has in its decade of existence established itself as the most important force for the cultural revival of an authentic architecture in the entire developing world. It is the first major architectural enterprise to focus exclusively on the problems of the Muslim world. It also recognises that the *Ummah* is diversified in terms of climate, culture, history and economic conditions. The work done by the Award, therefore, is applicable to all societies — Muslim and non-Muslim alike. That is why the Aga Khan Award for Architecture has achieved world-wide recognition.

It was the first such enterprise to extend without prejudice or political favouritism, international recognition to the great Third World architects who have devoted their lives to creating an authentic architectural expression that respects the ethos of their societies and yet opens the door to a future full of modernity and promise. It is the first award that not only permeated architecture but also gave societies pride in their own culture.

To us in Tanzania, who have long championed cultural authenticity and self-reliance, it is most appropriate that the Aga Khan Award for Architecture should come to our country for this major seminar. It has brought together an impressive

array of distinguished specialists in the many different aspects of housing. The fruits of their deliberations will, with frankness and candour, help the whole world with one of its most intricate problems.