



## Robyn Appleby

### Bagamoyo – lay down your heart

#### A trip through slave history in Tanzania

In the second half of the 19th century, Bagamoyo was the main terminus for the East African slave trade. Over decades, thousands and thousands of slaves that had been captured in the African interior were chained to each other and marched in long lines to the coastal port, Bagamoyo.

A song I recently heard, written for a locally produced musical “Tears of Fear/Tears of Joy”, makes me think of how they may have felt:

*My heart is bleeding; bleed, my heart!  
On the fields at home we worked, joking and singing.  
Cruel men surrounded us, caught us like animals;  
Chaining us, one to one, like animals.  
My heart is bleeding; bleed, my heart.*

*My heart is bleeding; bleed, my heart!  
They forced us to march, miles and miles.  
Not knowing where they take us.  
No hope anymore in my life.  
My heart is bleeding; bleed, my heart!*

*My heart is shivering; shiver, my heart!  
I see water which I never saw!  
Water, water, up to the horizon!  
They push us into the water, on the dhows!*



*Dhows. Boats like this transported slaves from Bagamoyo to the marketplace on Zanzibar*

New Zealand Maori always know their whakapapa, and many New Zealanders of European descent spend time and money researching their genealogy, trying to find some connection with their family history. Perhaps the Australians with their transported prisoner ancestry have a little more in common with the Africans, and then we would need to consider those who guarded or imprisoned them.

One text we've worked with during this past semester was about early church development in Africa and how Christianity affected the slave trade. This provided opportunity for much discussion about the abolition movement and the part that characters like William Wilberforce played. Leading on to the class viewing "Amazing Grace" (a great favourite with the students) and connecting Newton's hymn to the story only added to their taste for something more.

Tanzanians are very respectful of their ancestors and, like Maori, they believe that all those who have gone before us are part of who we are today. Thanks to the amazing grace of gifts from St Stephen's church in Lincoln and St Paul's Cathedral, Wellington, a field trip to Bagamoyo became possible. The gift of making a connection with their history has been a very important event for my lucky class., from a personal perspective as well as the historical. One student wept at the amazing sight of God's creation, and there were others deeply moved at seeing the guard house, the cells and the journey that the slaves would have trekked. Coming from the central semi-arid diocese of Dodoma, most of them had not experienced the ocean either: *water, water up to the horizon* was another of God's amazing wonders, though clearly not as frightening as for their ancestors!

And so, in good class field trip fashion, we visited the historical sites and took many photos....

### Historical places visited

The Customs House. On the coast and the place where slaves were pushed into the water and shipped out on dhows to the marketplace on Zanzibar. Their last place on African soil before the unknown terrors ahead - the place where they lay down their heart; left their homeland behind.

Kaole - 6km out of Bagamoyo. The early trading town started by the Arab traders. The town was made obsolete when slaves and associated trading were taken to the better coastal area for transportation which became known as Bagamoyo (*lay down your heart*).



*Students listening intently to the details at the Customs House*

The Fort. Mid 19th century almost in ruins but being held together by the Ministry of Natural Resources and tourism money. Used for administration during German occupation. Interesting carved surrounds of the huge doorways record culture and history.

The Caravan Serai Museum. Former lodging house for ivory and slave traders. Discovered and restored as an historic building in the last 20 years.



*Msalabani Beach. (Msalabani - the place of the Cross) which was erected in 1868 (restored in 1993) when the first Catholic Missionaries arrived. The mission became a centre for ransomed slaves where there is now a chapel in place of the village which became known as "Freedom Village".*

Other highlights of the trip:

- 12 hour bus journey to Bagamoyo - included puncture and repair for two tyres
- Heat, humidity, blinding sun, sea breezes, ants in the bed, no mozzies
- Old town that's very like Zanzibar's Stonetown
- Sleeping and eating local, and therefore, budget
- Building sandcastles and burying students (not the teacher) in the sand
- A few brave students swimming in their clothes

And a special twilight Holy Communion on the beach on our last night. \_\_



*Robyn is currently a Pastor for adults in mission at All Saints Anglican Church in Palmerston North, where she leads the mid-week communion service. Prior to this, Robyn served as teacher/pastor for 6 years at the Anglican Msalato Theological College with NZCMS, then returned to New Zealand to complete an Advanced Diploma in*



*Baobab tree*



*The first Christian Church on Tanzania's mainland. The tower is all that remains. Built in 1872 also referred to as Livingstone's Tower because his body rested there for 24hrs before being transported back to England.*