

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFG - 8

Babati Sanitary Authority

P.O. Box 308

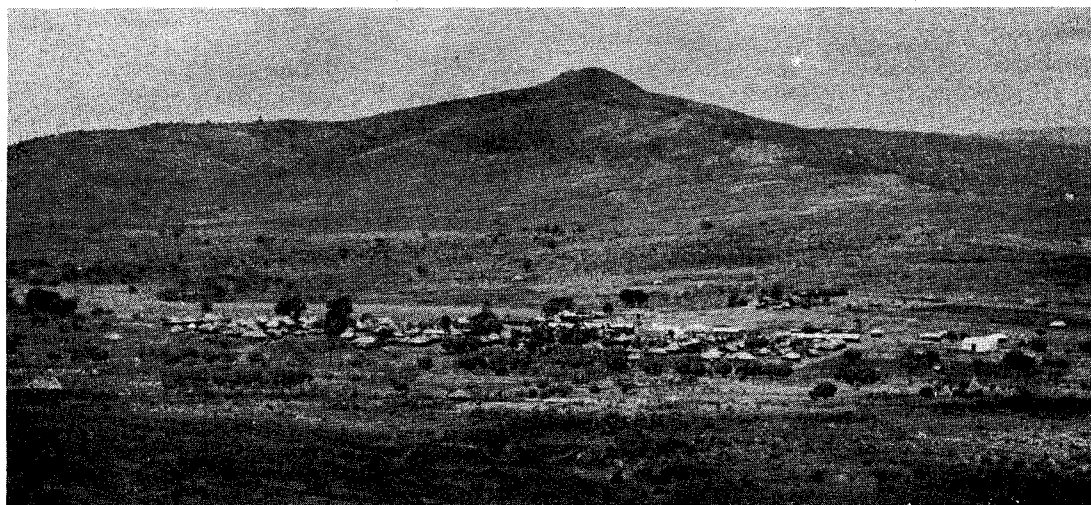
Arusha, Tanganyika

May 5, 1955

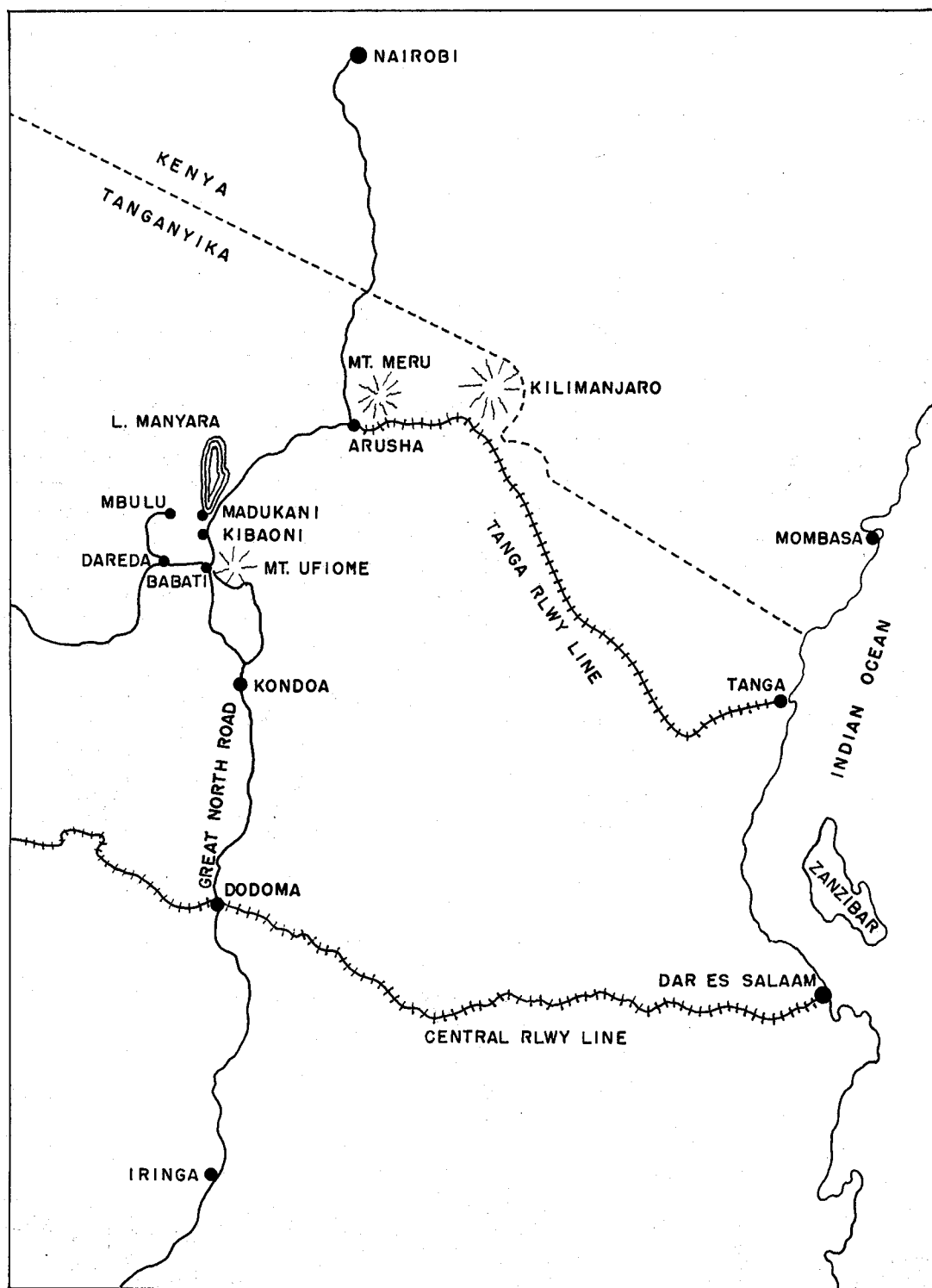
Mr. Walter S. Rogers  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
522 Fifth Avenue  
New York 36, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

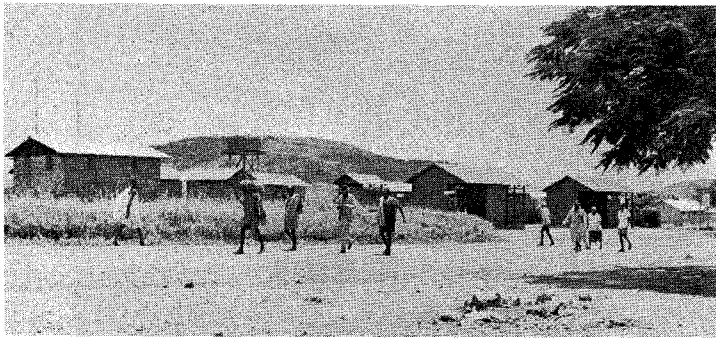
A considerable number of Americans travel through northern Tanganyika on the Great North Road every year—big game hunters, missionaries, an occasional business man, journalist, or scientist. Of all the places along this stretch of road, the name which probably sticks best in the memories of these casual travelers is Babati which is located 110 miles south of Arusha. For one thing it is clearly marked on road maps of East Africa and is mentioned in tourist guides as a place where gasoline and provisions can be obtained. Situated at the foot of Mt. Ufiome, it has the inestimable advantage, for an African village, of an abundant supply of pure mountain water which flows through a pipeline to a public hydrant. Although surrounded by superb scenery of mountain, forest, and lake, Babati itself is not prepossessing in appearance. From the road one sees a row of dusty dukas and other low buildings with tin roofs, and behind them the thatched roofs of African houses. Its importance lies in its position at the main crossroads of this part of Tanganyika. On the Great North Road it is located about midway between the railheads of Arusha on the Tanga Line and Dodoma on the Central Line. A road goes from Babati eastward to Galapo, then turns south to Kolo, passing through a string of prosperous settlements between the escarpment of Pinaars Heights and the Masai Steppe. Another road goes west to Dareda, then divides into branches to Mbulu and Singida, the latter branch connecting with a network of dry-weather roads which bring traffic from as far as Tabora and the shore of Lake Victoria.



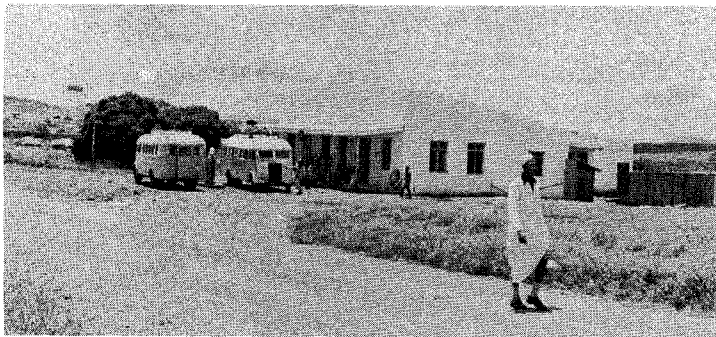
View of Babati



Sketch Map of North-Eastern Tanganyika



Tanganyika Bus Station



Harchand Singh Bus Station

The ever increasing volume of passenger traffic over these roads is served by two bus lines, each having a rest station at Babati. The East African Railways and Harbours provides bus service between Arusha and Dodoma and maintains a station at Babati with comfortable restrooms and lavatories. These busses, which the Africans call "Tanganyika," pass through Babati three times a week each way. They usually travel in convoys of three vehicles--two busses followed by a baggage van which carries a mechanic to repair the breakdowns which are not infrequent. "Tanganyika" busses also carry the mail along the Great North Road. The other bus line is operated by the Indian firm of Harchand Singh. These are faster but less comfortable busses which run daily between Arusha and Dodoma, and less frequently to Mbulu and Singida. There is a small restaurant at the Harchand Singh station as well as rest rooms.

Babati is the administrative headquarters of the Gorowa Tribe. The Chief's house is built on a hill near the village, and the central baraza for the tribe is located at Gendi two miles away. A District Officer is now permanently stationed at Babati, and there is a government rest house nearby on the slopes of Mt. Ufiome. Very little anthropological information is available about the Gorowa except for some scattered writings in early German travel books in which the tribe is referred to as "Wafiome." I recently made several visits to Babati for the purpose of investigating the Gorowa tribe. Altogether I spent a month camping at the rest house. I finally decided that Babati is not a favourable station for anthropological research. It is located on the edge of the tribal territory; the population of the area represents a mixture of tribes; and the traditional customs of the Gorowa are not closely followed there. But in the meanwhile I became acquainted with the village community of Babati, which offers some interesting comparisons with the smaller villages of Madukani and Kibaoni which I described in previous letters. On my last visit I was invited to attend the monthly meeting of the Babati Sanitary Authority. A summary of my notes on the meeting should give some insight into the structure of an emerging African town.

The Chairman of the Babati Sanitary Authority is Amri Dodo, Chief of the Gorowa Tribe. The other seven members include the District Officer of Babati, the Medical Officer of Mbulu District, the Provincial Health



Babati Sanitary Authority at the Village Hall: (L.to R.) Clerk, Mohamed Abdallah, Chief Amri Dodo, District Officer, Zuberi Sige, Mchinja, Taki Shermohamed.

Inspector from Arusha, Mr. Zuberi Sige who is Deputy Chief or Wakili of the Gorowa, Mr. Mohamed Abdallah the Jumbe of Babati, and two private citizens, Mr. Shermohamed, the owner of a duka and the only Asian on the committee and Mr. Mchinja, the proprietor of the Babati Bar. The Health Inspector was not present at the meeting, which was held in the tiny little town hall.

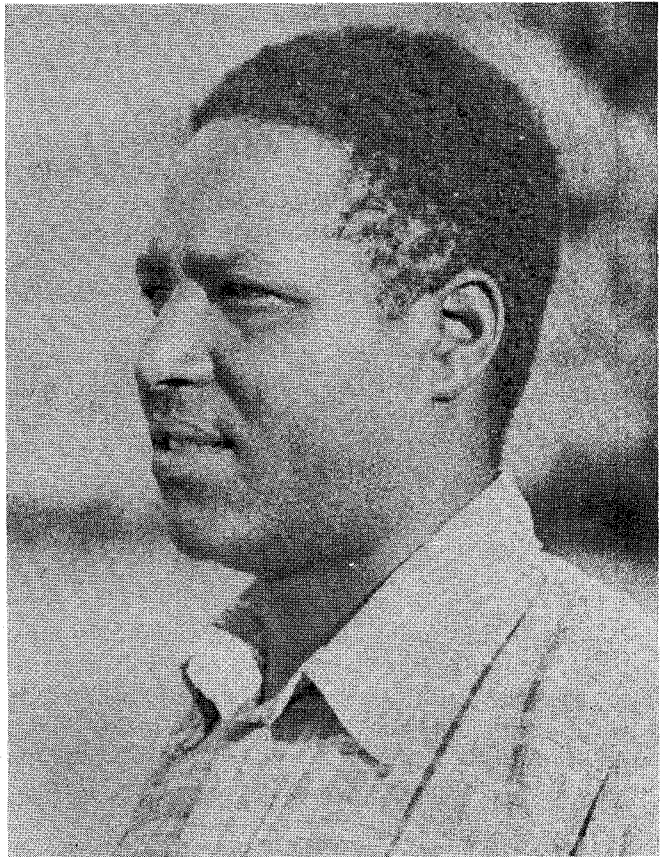
Speaking in Swahili, which was used throughout the proceedings, the chairman opened the meeting by introducing subjects for discussion, beginning with those that had been left unfinished at the last meeting. Ten questions were discussed in all. I shall list and comment on these in the order in which they came up.

1. A village meat market building. The chairman inquired about when the building would be finished. The D.O. explained that the government contractor was in Arusha hospital as the result of a car accident. It was hoped that he would be out in about a month, at which time the building of the meat market would be resumed.

2. A kettle for boiling infested meat. The committee voted thanks to the District Veterinary Officer for sending a large iron kettle from Mbulu where it was no longer needed. This is to be used, as the law requires, for boiling the meat of animals who are found to be infested with worms. To

supply the village with meat, one or two goats or sheep are killed every day, and on Saturdays a bullock is killed. There are several butchers in the village who now pay a license fee for every animal slaughtered. It is planned to change over to a yearly license system for butchers.

3. Dance tax. At the previous meeting it was voted to impose a tax of twenty shillings for Saturday-night dances which are sometimes held at the two village bars, but no provision had been made for spending this revenue. The D.O. suggested that the money be used for sanitary improvements in Babati. Mohamed Abdallah stated that the three village sweepers had too much work to do and that a fourth was needed. This expenditure was authorized by the D.O., and Mohamed Abdallah promised that the fourth sweeper would be at work the next day.



Zuberi Sige: Deputy Chief of Gorowa

4. Minors in bars. The question of a minimum age limit for admittance to bars was discussed. Mr. Mchinja, himself the proprietor of one of the bars, argued for seventeen years as a minimum age. The committee, however, voted that an order be sent to the two bars and the chief of police stating that children of sixteen years or under are not to be admitted to bars after six P.M.

5. Constructing a drainage pit. The chairman inquired about progress on the drainage pit that had been ordered to be constructed at the site of the village water hydrant. Mohamed Abdallah stated that the pit had been dug by the sweepers, but that the stone filling would have to be done by the government contractor who was then in hospital.

6. Public lavatories. The D.O. stated that 3,000 shillings had been allocated at Mbulu Boma for building two public lavatories at Babati. "Tenders" had been invited for their construction but no bids had yet been received. It was agreed that before further action be taken the Health Inspector be asked to prepare plans for the most satisfactory type of lavatory.

7. The privy of Asha bint Kambangwa. The chairman said that certain members of the committee had told this woman that she was not allowed to build a privy before her house was finished. He asked to know the reason for this. The

committee finally agreed that there was no real objection to building the lavatory before the house was built. Even if Asha should move away and never build her house, the lavatory would be there for the next person to be given the plot.

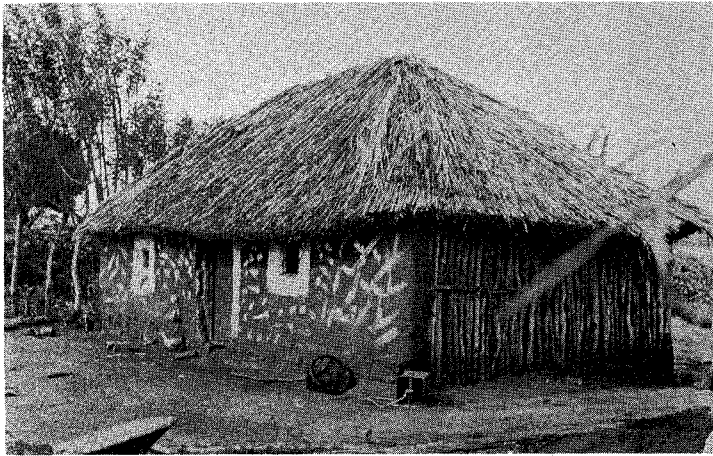
8. A market building for selling fruit and tobacco. The need for such a building was generally recognized, but the D.O. explained that this year's budget had already been made out and that no funds for the building would be forthcoming till 1956. He suggested that a temporary shelter of poles and thatch be built. The members voted in favor of this plan, but it was not clear where the money would come from for even this small project.

The question of a shelter for the tea vendors was also discussed. As it is, they cook in the open exposed to sun and rain. Mr. Mchinja inquired why hungry travelers could not go to one of the tea shops in the village during inclement weather. It was pointed out that the tea shops charged 25 cents (3½ cents U.S.) for tea, while the vendors in the market place charged only 10 cents; differences in food charges were proportionate. Moreover, many of the travelers were simple country people who were afraid to enter tea shops and hotels.

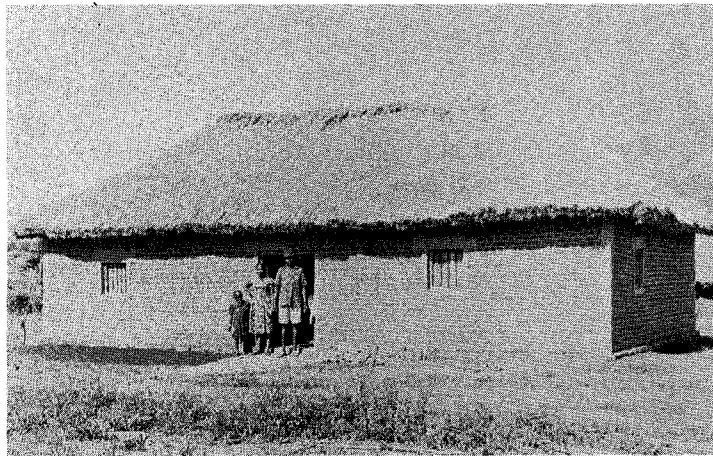
9. Spraying of houses with insecticide. A motion was discussed to petition the Government to spray the village houses with insecticide during the rainy season in order to eliminate mosquitoes and other insect pests. It was to be hoped that the people would come to appreciate the value of insecticides and thereafter supply their own. Action on the motion was postponed till the Health Inspector could be consulted.

10. Water fees. The final question on the agenda was concerned with the best method of taxing people for using water from the public hydrant. The hydrant is enclosed by a metal grating with a gate that locks, and is supervised by a water guard. The old method of charging one cent a debe (a four-gallon kerosine tin) had proved to be unsatisfactory. One-cent pieces are not plentiful in East Africa, and people rarely had the exact change when they needed water. Since the water guard could not write, it was impossible to keep an accurate record of water drawn on credit. The D.O. suggested that a new system be started whereby a flat rate of one shilling a month or ten shillings a year be charged for the use of the public water supply. This solution was too simple for the liking of the committee members and a number of cogent objections were raised. In the first place, someone asked, who should be taxed: heads of families or house owners, for the two are not always the same. It would be manifestly unfair to impose the same tax on a large family who used, say, ten debes of water a day and a bachelor who might take his meals with relatives and use only one debe a day. Should the water tax be optional or compulsory? What should be done about a poor man who was willing to walk a mile to the lake to draw part of his water in order to save the water fee? Should brickmakers who used public water industrially and hotel keepers who used it in commerce get by with the same tax as a simple household? The members got positively indignant as they discussed these and other faults in the plan. But as no alternative plan was proposed, they decided to postpone action on the problem till a later meeting, and meanwhile to investigate all aspects of the situation and ponder the justice of different possible solutions. With this decision, a session of two hours and a half was brought to a close. We then strolled through the village streets as a body, bestowing praise or blame on householders according to the merits or faults of their "sanitation".





Old Style Babati House



New Style Babati House

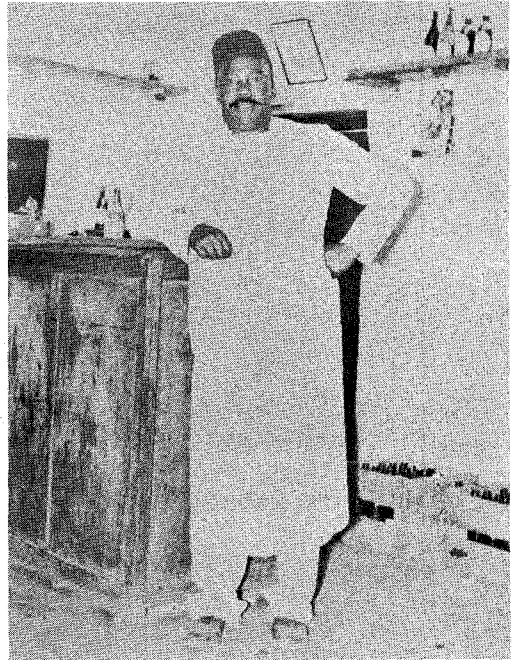
Babati were abandoned; those on the higher land near the Rift Wall and on Dareda Ridge were mostly broken up into smaller farms and sold to South African and Greek farmers. At Dareda the Cooper Estate and one now owned by Mrs. Gladys Rydon are the only large estates which have been maintained intact. While all this was going on, a sizable African village had grown up at Babati.

No special recognition was given to the urban status of the community till 1938, when the Sanitary Authority was established to regulate housebuilding and sanitary conditions in the village. At that time there were several dukas in Babati, the most prominent being that of the Shermohamed family which was established in 1935. Haji Shermohamed Sajan, who died just after his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1951, was a pioneer trader in this part of Tanganyika. His sons claim that he opened the first shop in Arusha in 1900, supplying it by porter caravans which were sometimes plundered by the Masai as they traveled cross-country from Pangani on the coast. The Babati duka was one of several that the old man opened in up-country stations. It was operated for many years by his two sons, both of whom were educated at the Mohamedan School at Pangani

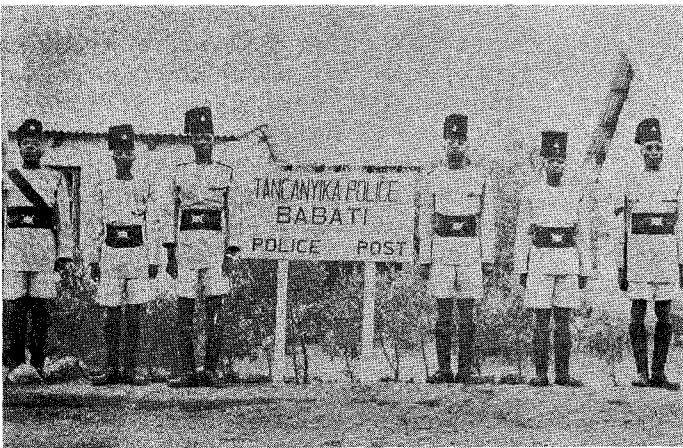
It will be evident from reading the agenda of this meeting that the authority of the Babati Sanitary Authority extends beyond the field of sanitation. In fact it is the only local governing body for the community and functions as a village council. The origin of the village dates from about 1920 when Dodo, who was then Chief of the Gorowa, moved his headquarters from Galapo, which is on the other side of Mt. Ufiome, to Babati. Previously, even in German times, the place had been a favourite camp site, but there was no settlement. Shortly after the tribal headquarters had been established at Babati, a group of Europeans "discovered" the region and leased large areas of land with optimistic hopes of developing estates. These men, who included such well known characters as Baron von Blixen and Lord Lovelace, prospered at first. A hotel, whose ruins still stand, was built on the shore of Lake Babati, and for a few years a miniature model of Kenya's "Happy Valley" was in existence in the Babati neighborhood. Then the vagaries of Tanganyika rainfall brought crop failures, and the estates near



Babati Carpenter



J.S. Mchinja. Proprietor  
of the Babati Bar.



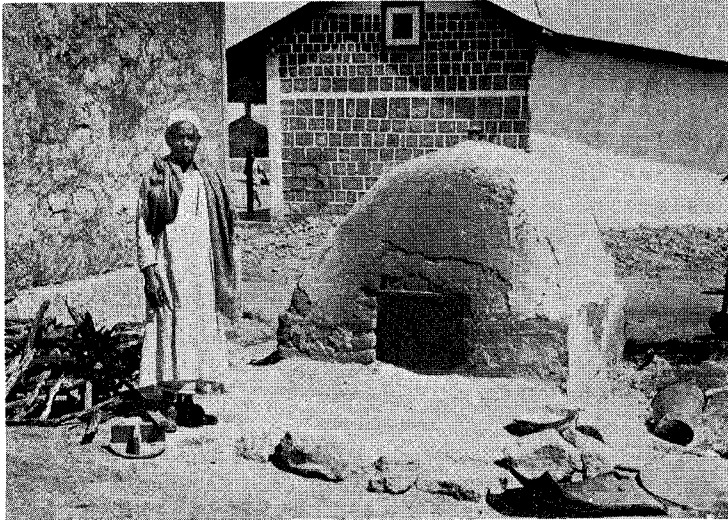
Babati Police Force

and speak excellent English. The elder son Hasanali left the insalubrious climate of Babati for health reasons two years ago and moved to Tanga. The other son Mohamedtaki Shermohamed (commonly called "Taki"), who is a member of the Sanitary Authority, is now managing the Babati duka alone, but the competition from the new dukas in the village has considerably reduced his profits and he now wants to sell out and join his wife and children in Arusha.

Twelve Indian dukas now handle general merchandise, though there is a degree of specialization. All of them are provided with sewing machines and one or two tailors, and three of them have gasoline pumps. In addition to the dukas and bus stations there are two tea shops on the main road, one of which has a bakery, and two licensed bars where European style beer is served. Several "hotelis" where simple refreshments can be obtained are located in the African quarter of the village. Six or seven carpenters and masons live in Babati. Some of these have work shops in their homes. The present meat market is simply the veranda of a "hoteli," but a special building will soon be constructed for this purpose.

There are about 100 houses in Babati and the Jumbe estimates the population at ca 400. Thanks to the supervision of the Sanitary Authority,





Sheikh Ali Abedi at his Baking Oven



The Mwalimu before the Mosque  
The New Ablution Tank Leaks

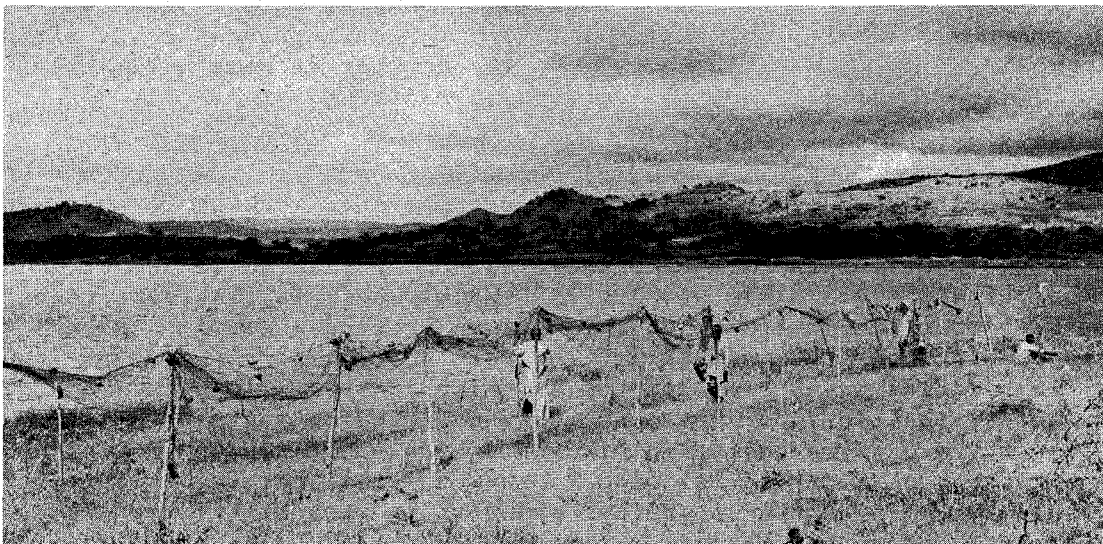
the houses are neatly laid out along lanes which divide the village into blocks. In 1951 Babati was officially declared a Minor Settlement, and the Sanitary Authority was reconstituted with increased powers. A building code was formulated which aims at the progressive improvement of the quality of housing. New houses must be built in line with others in its lane. Every house is required to have an outside privy, bathroom, and kitchen built on a standard plan. Land tenure is based on Gorowa tribal custom. A person wishing to build a house applies to the Sanitary Authority which allots him a plot to remain his, provided he builds an approved house within a reasonable period and maintains it properly. Houses may be bought and sold, but not empty plots. If a house is abandoned and falls down, the ownership of the plot reverts to the state, which in theory is the Gorowa Tribe. All the houses have thatched roofs, and most of them have walls of unbaked bricks. A recent trend of the more prosperous inhabitants is to build with baked bricks, and brick-making is a booming industry in the village. In general appearance the African quarter is remarkably clean and neat.

The majority of the men follow urban occupations, working in the dukas and bus stations or practicing a trade or selling produce in the market place. A group of about twenty fishermen make their living by fishing in Babati Lake, a comely body of water which was stocked with edible talapia fish some years ago. The fishermen are mostly Jaluo from Nyanza Province, Kenya. Babati Lake is also a hippopotamus sanctuary. The rest of the men are farmers who cultivate their fields which are close by and live in the village. The tribal origins of the people are diverse, only a few belonging to the local Gorowa Tribe. There is no Christian mission in the vicinity and the community is almost entirely Mohamedan in religion. Sheikh Ali Abedi, the village baker, is the religious leader of the community, and next in rank is the Mwalimu, Mohamed Kibrwana, who gives the children desultory instruction in the Koran. The small mosque is so well attended that the fifty-gallon water drum which had

been used for ablutions proved to be too small, and last year the wealthier muslims subscribed funds for building a large concrete ablutions tank at the mosque. Unfortunately the work was not properly done and the bottom of the tank cracked so that it does not hold water. Mohamed Abdallah, the Jumbe, is also a devout Muslim who has a fixed idea that Babati deserves a "Mohamedan" school which should be built by the government. Nevertheless it is a tolerant community with no evidence of religious fanaticism, perhaps because of the large number of travelers of all races and religions who pass through. There seems to be much less drinking of native beer than one might expect in an African village of this size, but some of the "advanced" members, including Zuberi Sige who is Deputy Chief of Gorowa, patronize the bar of Mchinja who is himself a Mohamedan.

The people have some cause to complain of education facilities, because the nearest school is in a sparsely inhabited area three miles away. The Education Department has recognized this inadequacy and plans to build a new school at Babati in the near future. Some of the officials with whom I talked deplore this plan on the grounds that it is mutually advantageous for rural tribal children and the more sophisticated children from Swahili-speaking villages to attend the same school. In Babati I saw something which was wholly lacking in the small villages of Madukani and Kibaoni: gangs of small boys trooped together about the village playing and sometimes getting into mischief. Occasionally these urchins are brought before the baraza for their misdeeds. For example, the Court Record reveals that last November a seven-year old boy, Keya bin Biyeda, was convicted of stealing a knife and twelve shillings. He was ordered to repay the stolen money and suffer a punishment of four strokes of the cane.

No special medical facilities are provided for Babati. The sick of the village are tended at a government dispensary which also takes care of the tribesmen of the region. It is located between Babati and Gendi.



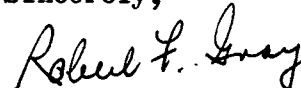
Fishermen at Babati Lake

Unlike the alien settlement at Magugu in the tribal territory of the Wambugwe (see RFG - 7), Babati does not have its own baraza with subchief and court elders. Instead its legal problems are judged at the Gorowa tribal court. The village lies within one of the four subchiefdoms into which the tribe is divided, and in theory it comes under the jurisdiction of the subchief of this division. Each of the subchiefdoms has its own baraza, and in addition there is a central court of appeals at Gendi where the Chief or Deputy Chief judge special cases. Actually the Babati cases are judged at the Chief's court rather than the Subchief's. The Tanganyika Government is represented at Babati by a Police Station—one of five in Mbulu District—staffed by seven African policemen, and a D.O. who resides there. These officials are supposed to act through the tribal courts in disciplinary matters, but their executive powers allow for a wide scope of direct action. Government has decided to build a special boma for the D.O. stationed at Babati. As the District Headquarters is at Mbulu eighty miles away over mountain roads, this will greatly facilitate the processes of appeal and will permit the special urban problems of Babati to come before the D.O. rather than the tribal court.

The local governing body, the Babati Sanitary Authority, is appointed by and responsible to the D.C. Its authority is limited to special village problems, and it is not meant to conflict with tribal authority. The Jumbe of Babati is simply the executive agent of the Sanitary Authority. There is some confusion about the rank of this official. The Gorowa subchiefs bear the traditional title of Gausmo which is commonly translated to the Swahili term Jumbe. For this reason the Babati people claim that their Jumbe is equal in rank to a Gausmo, but this is obviously not the case.

That there is no conflict between tribe and village despite the great cultural differences between them is largely due to the mediating abilities of Amri Dodo, the Gorowa Chief, and Zuberi Sige, the Deputy Chief. Both men, who are patrilineal cousins, are fully integrated with the Tribe and belong to the traditional ruling family. However, they are both Mohamedans and are accepted as leading members of the Babati community. As such they have been appointed to the Sanitary Authority, Amri being chairman, while as tribal officials they sit in judgement over all inhabitants of their realm. Most important, both men are well educated and have progressive ideas. Amri Dodo speaks good English and has the breadth of vision which is necessary for a modern African Chief. I am counting strongly on his help if I attempt to investigate a more primitive community in the hinterland of his territory.

Sincerely,



Robert F. Gray