

I was traveling alone. Vitali Maembe, a Tanzanian activist musician whom I had recently met in Western Sahara, was waiting for me at the Dar es Salaam airport. His friend Mohamed was driving the car. The journey from the capital to Bagamoyo, a coastal town in the Panwani region, it gets long; the cars move very slowly through the multitude of street vendors who offer everything you can imagine through the window. The periphery of the capital, for kilometers, continues to be a large mobile market in permanent activity.

One of my first surprises was seeing long exposures of beds on both sides of the road, on the shoulder or on the sidewalk, both unpaved. In the midst of the dust and plunged into apparent chaos to Western eyes were rows of stately beds: wooden, iron, upholstered, small and large, with or without a canopy for the indispensable mosquito net. I thought it must be the economic activity of that neighborhood on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam, an area specialized in the sleep market.

But as we entered the rural area, each time we approached population centers, we were once again surrounded by splendid beds exposed in a row on both sides of the road. The same thing happened days later on the long bus trip from Bagamoyo to Arusha, at the foot of Kilimanjaro: every so often the window showed, like in a documentary, large sisal plantations, new mountains and a new and unusual exhibition of beds.

My first home in Bagamoyo was a beautiful house that belonged to a Norwegian anthropologist who lent it to me during her absence. My room had a wonderful wooden bed with a splendid mosquito net. I thought it probably came off one of those roads.

I had never been so aware of sunrise as in those days. In the background the ocean sounded. The Indian Ocean ! It surprised me when I thought about it. The breeze blew the purple curtains over the windows and blended with the first ridge of the muezzin before the start of the day. At the same time that the voice of the prayer faded and the dawn appeared, a couple of exotic birds gathered every day at my window and sang a totally new song for me.

In that trance, I, like everything solid things, vanished into thin air.

My second Bagamoyo house was much more humble than the first, the running water was scarce and the electricity was intermittent, but the two rooms that were there were occupied almost entirely by two splendid beds.

Bagamoyo's name is made up of two Swahili words: Baga, throw or detach yourself and Moyo, which means heart. It was laid after 1,500,000 slaves left the city harbor.

There I also threw my heart and from all this experience the idea of a bed in which to shelter a huge embrace of black and white arose. After all, my specialty is shaping dreams.

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