

Baie du Cap: Part III

A 1905 Heritage Building out of Hewn-rock Bricks being Privatized

The MonRoze *Integrated Resort Scheme* project is busy destroying *patrimoine*. Not only has the project eaten a hole in the mountain in Baie du Cap, not only has it suppressed the source and dried up the river everyone used, but the old police station, up on the hillside, with its characteristic stairways on each side (photo 1), built in 1905 (photo 2) out of unusually small hewn-rock bricks, is being dismantled. Already the doors and windows have been removed, leaving the place with an abandoned air, bricks missing here and there. Already the building behind the police station has been dismantled; only the lower part is left standing (photo 3). As inhabitants put it, had any one of them been tempted ever to remove so much as one brick, the repressive arm of the State would have been on to them.



Photo 1

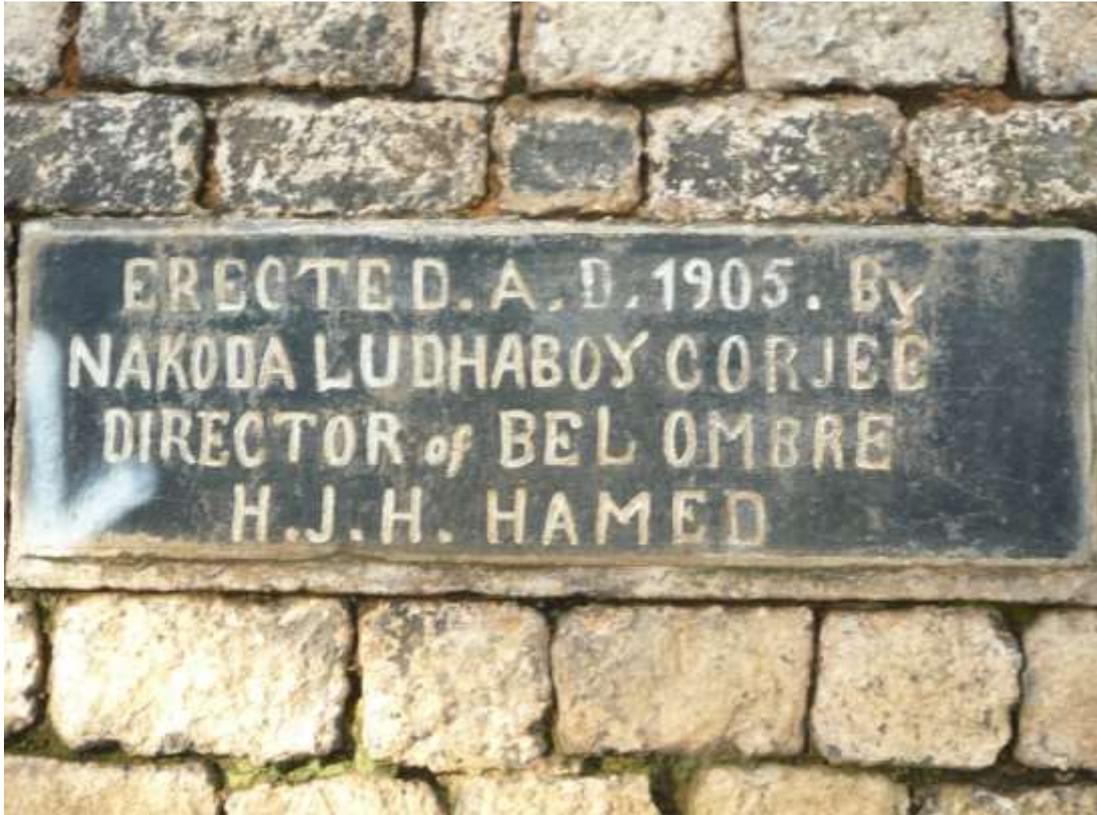


Photo 2



Photo 3

The buildings are part of the *patrimoine* of Baie du Cap, and of the whole country. Each brick in them reminds us of the workers who, over a hundred years ago, carved them out of basalt rock, and then erected a building to last over a hundred years. It is part of the memory of the place. Now turned into signed reading: "No trespassing: Keep out! Private property."

And the sign thus points to the privatization of the commons, the public land. So, this Government is trying to get away with privatising water, the Port and even the very little State Land that there is.

The argument that this destruction of Baie du Cap heritage is in the interests of job-creation are just eye-wash. It is clearly in no other interest except that of real estate speculation by the very rich for the very rich.

The interests of the people of Baie du Cap would be served better elsewhere; for example, in proper agricultural diversification by Bel Ombre and St. Felix, and fishing development guided by the Sate, alongside food preservation plants. *That* would give work to everyone: labourers, skilled workers and professionals like agronomists and marine biologists. That would be in the interests of the people of Baie du Cap.

What the MonRoze project is is more like the kind of Colony that the Israeli government gives permits to settlers to set up in Palestine.

And the people of Baie du Cap, like those of Bambous when Medine sugar estate began its road towards getting all the exemptions leading up to full "Smart City" status, will, after having their water source closed down, be offered "a market place" as a kind of sop. And like in Bambous, it will fail and, in due course be closed down. This is for a simple reason: a market is not just a place that the powerful set up for the powerless: it is a cultural phenomenon that grows organically over time. And that reminds us that the powerless are many, the powerful few.

The inhabitants of Baie du Cap on Saturday 26 March submitted a petition to the new Minister of the Environment, Hon. Alain Wong, calling on him to get the MonRoze project's permits annulled. The many are just beginning to demand the due of all human beings: to take their destiny into their own hands, collectively.

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For LALIT